

SDG16 and the 2021 Voluntary National Review

An opportunity to report on providing justice for all

<https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/>

- In July 2021 44 countries will present **Voluntary National Reviews** (VNRs) at the UN's [High Level Political Forum](#) (HLPF). In their VNRs they will report national progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Fourteen of these countries are [Pathfinders](#), countries collaborating for peaceful, just and inclusive societies.
- The 2021 HLPF theme is **sustainable and resilient recovery** from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. This year SDG16 is being reviewed and countries are encouraged to describe progress on peace, justice and inclusion.
- To provide access to justice for all by 2030 (SDG 16), the world will need to **bridge the justice gap**, estimated by the Pathfinders' Task Force on Justice at a total of 5.1 billion people – two-thirds of the world's population – who lack meaningful access to justice.
- In 2020 the [UN Statistical Commission](#) adopted a **new official SDG indicator** to measure progress towards the goal of achieving justice for all. This [indicator 16.3.3](#) takes a people-centered approach and captures the justice problems people face and how they seek to resolve them.
- Pathfinder countries are encouraged to report on their **progress towards realizing access to justice for all** using available data. Countries that do not have data available yet can describe new strategies and partnerships to start collecting and using people-centered justice data.
- This factsheet provides **context and background** information to support countries reporting on progress and announcing national actions to close the justice gap in their VNR, as well as links to relevant documents and tools.

Access to justice by the numbers

Billions of people face critical unmet justice needs. In 2019, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 5.1 billion people [lack meaningful access to justice](#). These justice problems have significant individual, community, and societal costs, with disproportionate impacts falling on women, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalized or vulnerable groups.

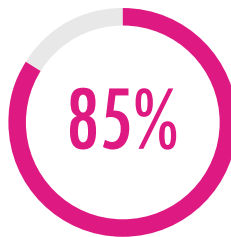
The COVID-19 pandemic is intensifying the access to justice crisis and, for the first time in years, extreme poverty is rising and human development declining. Previous crises triggered demand spikes and increased legal needs related to the six most common justice problems people face: crime and violence, housing and land, family disputes, unemployment and bankruptcy, money and debt, and access to public services.

Colombia



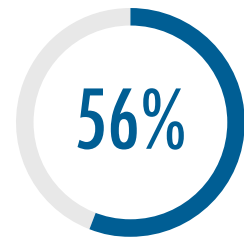
24% of [Colombians](#) took no steps to resolve their justice problems

Indonesia



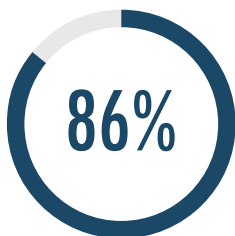
85% of [Indonesians](#) in Lampung did not seek help when facing justice problems

Japan



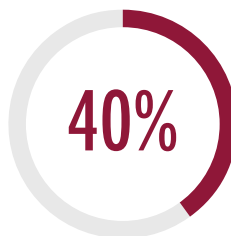
56% of elderly [Japanese](#) facing justice problems were not aware their problem had a legal dimension

Sierra Leone



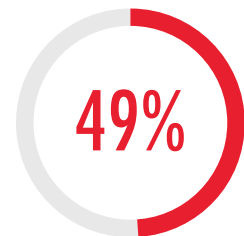
86% of justice problems negatively impacted [Sierra Leonean's](#) lives, including stress, illness, harassment and violence

Tunisia



40% of [Tunisians](#) encountered one or more serious justice problems between 2012 and 2016

Global



49% of [100,000 people](#) surveyed in 101 countries experienced at least one justice problem in the last two years

Justice for all and the 2030 agenda

Justice is a thread that runs through all 17 SDGs. Without justice, the world will not be able to end poverty, reduce inequality, reach the furthest behind, strengthen sustainability or achieve peace and inclusion.

Yet justice is often a missing link in national strategies. Economies may perform strongly, and health or education improve for some. But without justice, people will fail to reach their full potential and development will be precarious. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and deepened inequalities and injustices. This drives exclusion and fuels grievances, thereby increasing the risk of instability and conflict.

To achieve the goal of providing equal access to justice for all, we need a shift towards putting people at the center of justice systems, services, and policies. We know if we are making progress on access to justice by analyzing if people are able to resolve and prevent their justice problems, and to use justice as a platform to participate in their economies and societies.

The new SDG justice indicator

The new SDG indicator on access to justice for all (SDG 16.3.3) links sustainable and inclusive development to the justice problems people experience in everyday life: problems with health, housing, one's family, employment or basic services. [Indicator 16.3.3 measures](#) the “proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism.”

This data is crucial for addressing the justice problems experienced by a majority of people worldwide. The indicator can reveal differences in experience and outcome for different groups and inform people-centered strategies. It can also help target investments to ensure that they are effective and reach those furthest behind first.

The UN's co-custodians for indicator 16.3.3 are the OECD, UNDP and UNODC. They are refining the methodology for 16.3.3 and piloting a standardized data collection module. Many countries reporting on SDG 16.3.3 in 2021 will not yet have data generated from their national statistical office. The COVID-19 pandemic has also disrupted data collection.

Nonetheless, countries [can report](#) on the basis of available data as well as describe efforts to expand the people-centered justice data.

A [Global Alliance guide](#) for VNR reporting underscores that SDG 16 themes should be included in VNRs. However a [global review of VNRs](#) found reporting on SDG 16 lags behind other goals, with access to justice a [particular gap](#). The 2021 VNR process offers an opportunity to connect justice and sustainable development and identify steps to improve justice data moving forward.

Addressing people-centered justice in the 2021 VNR

Countries can incorporate people-centered justice data in their 2021 VNR in the following ways:



Assess SDG 16.3.3. and people-centered justice

Not all countries have national data available and the COVID-19 pandemic has further disrupted data collection. Yet several countries reporting in 2021 already have the data required for reporting on 16.3.3 and they can use this in their VNR.

Countries that do not have national data can use sources, like the [World Justice Project](#), which has 16.3.3 data for over 100 countries, or [Hiil's Justice Dashboard](#) and its underlying data.



Report on people-centered justice beyond SDG16.3.3

All countries collect data related to the most common justice problems, employment, property and evictions, family issues and access to public services, including health and education. Through VNRs, countries can analyze what this data means for people-centered justice.

For example, existing data shows that increasing poverty rates may raise the need for social safety net programs, which in turn may trigger justice problems. The loss of one's job can cause collateral justice problems with money, housing or employment benefits. Illness can trigger loss of employment or medical debt. Each area of a VNR offers opportunities to connect and document linkages between justice, sustainable development and resilience.



Highlight policy innovations for people-centered justice

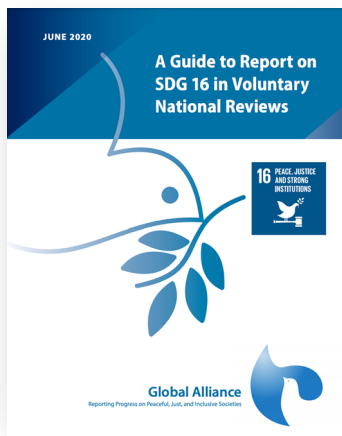
The pandemic has catalyzed tremendous change within justice systems. The 2021 VNR offers an opportunity to highlight new strategies within justice systems and within service delivery. The pandemic's disruption is having significant negative effects but also it is also catalyzing new ways of working. Several countries have turned to new technologies and new non-lawyer models to expand access to justice. New partnerships have also emerged that focus on resolving and preventing people's justice problems.



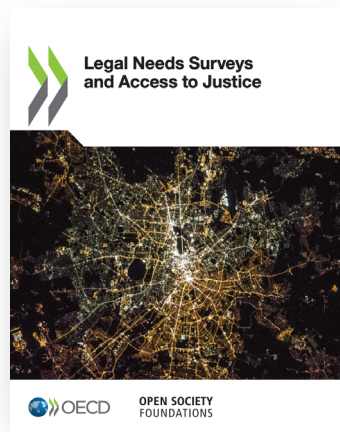
Commit to strengthening people-centered justice data

Countries can use their 2021 VNR to make commitments on gathering justice data and what steps they will take to improve people-centered justice reporting by their next VNR. Countries can commit to fielding the new survey module for 16.3.3 and access to justice. They could describe priorities to better use available data to target the delivery of people-centered justice services. And they could highlight steps to harness civil society data or data from other social sectors to inform justice strategies.

Key resources



Guide to Report on SDG16 in Voluntary National Reviews, Global Alliance, 2020



Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice, OECD and Open Society Justice Initiative, 2019



Justice for All Report Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, 2019



Grasping the Justice Gap: Opportunities and Challenges for People-Centered Justice Data, Pathfinders and World Justice Project, 2021



Praia City Group Governance Handbook, United Nations Statistical Commission, 2020



Global Insights on Access to Justice, World Justice Project, 2019

Further questions about incorporating people-centered justice into your 2021 VNR?

Please contact us at justice@sdg16.plus!