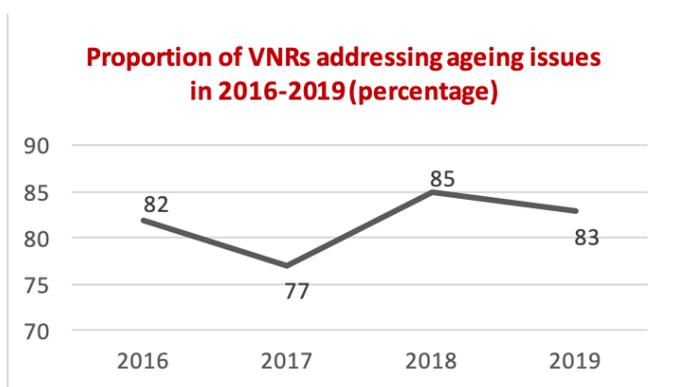




Ageing-related Policies and Priorities in Voluntary National Reviews (2016-2019)

Despite recording efforts to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Member States' national plans and policies, the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) also shed light on challenges in fully implementing the Agenda 2030.

In the period 2016–2019, 158 voluntary national reviews were presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development by 143 countries, over two thirds of which included references to ageing.



A forward-looking vision of sustainable development is impaired by a general slow advancement in achieving the SDGs. While positive improvements have been reported in the VNRs in areas such as awareness-building about the SDGs, providing disaggregated data statistics, building resilience (with an emphasis on accommodating environmental changes), population groups with documented disadvantages largely remain excluded.

The principle of leaving no one behind is mentioned by several countries in their VNRs, but it often lacks a tailored focus on older persons in vulnerable situations. Like other age groups, many older persons contribute to advancing the SDGs to improve the lives of people in their families and community, however, their social and economic contribution are often overlooked.

Trends of population ageing

Many VNRs acknowledged that ageing populations would have important implications for the achievement of the SDGs. Challenges highlighted relate to increased demand for basic services, the need for physical environments to be adapted to the needs of older persons, as well as the increased pressure on funding of social services, especially in the healthcare and retirement sectors. Ensuring decent lives for older people in an ageing society was identified as one of the main challenges in reducing inequality. Other countries reported initiatives aimed at addressing the challenges of rapidly ageing societies.

National policies, strategies and legislation

Some countries reported on their national strategies and action plans that specifically address ageing-related issues. Few countries reported the inclusion of ageing-related priorities in their national sustainable development strategies. Others reported on relevant legislative frameworks.

Stakeholder engagement and consultations

Few countries emphasized the importance of engaging with older persons as a stakeholder group in the process of preparing their VNRs. Others reported on the holding of preparatory workshops and consultations with the participation of older people.

Discrimination

Some VNRs drew attention to discrimination against older people, highlighting efforts to eliminate age-based discrimination against older workers.

Violence, neglect and abuse

Some countries acknowledged the issue of violence, neglect and abuse of older persons as a growing concern; reporting an increase in incidents of verbal, physical and financial abuse of older persons. Several countries reported initiatives aimed at addressing the neglect, abuse and violence against older persons.



Science, technology and innovation

Some VNRs noted the importance of science, technology and innovation for achieving the SDGs. Some countries highlighted initiatives aimed at closing the digital gap by offering digital skills training to older persons. Others stressed the importance of harnessing the nexus of institutional, social and technological innovations to meet the challenges caused by rapidly ageing populations. The importance of new technologies in ensuring the safety of older persons, especially in severe weather conditions, was also highlighted.

Incorporating SDGs at the local level

Some countries noted that achieving the SDGs requires local action in synergy with policies, as well as action at the national level, including steps towards incorporating an analysis of cross-cutting issues that takes into account the participation of older persons. Some VNRs showcased good practices of the role that local governments play in providing support for housing and healthcare to older persons with low incomes. Others raised concern over the ageing populations of many municipalities, noting that the demographic change would affect territorial cohesion, give rise to severe inequalities and exacerbate the loss of culture and heritage.

Leaving no one behind

Many countries referred to older persons in the context of their pledge to leave no one behind. Some Member States reported on targeted measures to mainstream that commitment into policies and programmes.

Some VNRs identified the need to take into account, inter alia, the ageing workforce when preparing for, and responding to, national and international challenges, while others drew attention to the vulnerability of older women to homelessness as a result of income insecurity and violence. The need to strengthen national systems and processes of accountability to monitor progress and provide remedies to address the needs older populations affected by conflict, natural disasters and health emergencies was highlighted.

A number of Member States highlighted challenges presented by population ageing in the context of leaving no one behind. Some noted that population ageing and a decline in the dependency ratio were holding back the economy and competitiveness.

Data collection and monitoring

Some VNRs highlighted the need for disaggregation of data by age. Others included specific age-related indicators or statistical annexes that exhibited those indicators. Reference was made to the Titchfield Group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data, established in 2018 by the Statistical Commission. Led by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and in partnership with other national statistical institutes, the Titchfield Group aims to develop standardized tools and methods for producing data disaggregated by age and ageing-related data. The Group also includes the participation of United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and academia.

International and regional cooperation

International and regional cooperation are central to implementing the 2030 Agenda and play a significant role in promoting issues related to older persons. Some countries showcased relevant initiatives aimed at investing in social cash transfer programmes that target vulnerable households, including those of older people. Others noted programmes that support the provision of healthcare services delivered to older refugees. Countries also reported on regional initiatives aimed at sharing knowledge and expertise gained from national experience, on long-term care and social welfare.



Reporting on Older Persons under specific Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2019)

GOAL 1 (no poverty)

Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Eswatini, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania, Malta, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and State of Palestine

Most efforts were reported under Goal 1 (no poverty) and highlighted the importance of social protection measures, which encompassed a wide range of policies and measures designed to address the risks and vulnerabilities of older persons. Some Member States reported on the progress made in reducing the risk of poverty among older persons, while others noted that reducing poverty among older persons remained a challenge. In a few national reviews, Member States highlighted the need for national indicators to ensure that Governments could track and report progress on Goal 1 with regard to older persons.

GOAL 2 (zero hunger)

Albania, Argentina, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Jamaica, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malta, Mauritius, Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Slovenia and Sweden

Some Member States addressed Goal 2 (zero hunger) by highlighting measures undertaken to ensure appropriate and adequate provision of accessible nutrition and food for older persons, in particular in the context of institutionalized care.

GOAL 3 (good health and well-being)

Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Cabo Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Montenegro, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand and Turkey

Several Member States explicitly referred to older persons

under Goal 3 (good health and well-being), examining issues related to access to appropriate and affordable healthcare, preventive care and long-term care. The effects of a rapidly ageing population on the sustainable financing of healthcare systems was underscored in several national reviews.

GOAL 4 (quality education)

Croatia, Greece, Kuwait, Netherlands and Romania

Few Member States highlighted ageing-related measures under Goal 4 (quality education), particularly in the context of lifelong learning.

GOAL 5 (gender equality)

Algeria, Canada, Israel, Latvia, Singapore and Timor-Leste

Older women often face multiple forms of discrimination resulting from gender inequality. However, only six voluntary national reviews addressed issues related to ageing under Goal 5 (gender equality). The references explored income security in old age and access by older family members to care services.

GOAL 8 (decent work and economic growth)

Australia, Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, Czechia, Ecuador, Estonia, France, Greece, Japan, Lithuania, Mauritius, Romania, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste and Thailand

In the context of Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), some Member States stressed the importance of enhancing the participation of older persons in the labour market. Others referred to population ageing as a factor that limited long-term economic and income growth and emphasized the need for structural reforms.

GOAL 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure)

Serbia and New Zealand

Under Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), Serbia and New Zealand reported investments in resilient infrastructure to better digitally connect remote and rural communities and to decrease barriers that prevent access by older persons to public transport, communal areas and other resources.



GOAL 10 (reduced inequalities)

Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Canada, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Fiji, Guatemala, Guyana, Israel, Jamaica, Kuwait, Lesotho, Latvia, Mongolia, Namibia, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Several Member States highlighted policies and plans targeted at older persons for reducing inequalities under Goal 10 (reduced inequalities). Measures reported included social protection strategies and programmes, vulnerability baseline assessments to identify causes of vulnerability and opportunities for further improvement, and measures to address urban-rural inequality.

GOAL 11 (sustainable cities and communities)

Andorra, Bhutan, Cameroon, Iceland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Palau, Tunisia, Turkey, Singapore and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Progress within the scope of Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities) was reported by some Member States in terms of providing safe, affordable and sustainable transport for all, as well as universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces.

GOAL 13 (climate action)

Andorra and Palau

Many Member States identified the adverse impacts of climate change in their VNRs; however, only two reported on ageing-related efforts in that regard. Under Goal 13 (climate action), Andorra referred to its energy and climate change agency, which was aimed at building resilience to climate change by means of research, systematic observation and training. In collaboration with other national partners, the agency provided basic relief assistance and natural risk management training targeted at older persons. With reference to natural disasters, Palau enacted a climate-informed building code that considers climate mitigation and adaption measures. Among other things, a state-of-the-art code will ensure buildings are constructed to minimize damage during adverse weather and enhance accessibility of public spaces for older persons and persons with disabilities.

GOAL 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)

Palau and Timor-Leste

In line with its cultural tradition of inclusivity, Palau noted that youth have an important role in their communities while learning traditions, skills and leadership from their elders. Timor-Leste reported on the adoption of key legal instruments to promote inclusion and representation veterans and older persons to ensure social cohesion and continued peace.

GOAL 17 (partnership for the Goals)

Turkey and Vanuatu

Turkey reported on support provided to older persons through projects and activities undertaken by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). Reporting under Goal 17 (partnership for the Goals), Vanuatu noted that its National Sustainable Development Plan for the period 2016 to 2030, provides the strategy for upholding human dignity and the rights of all citizens, including older persons, in national legislation and institutions.

KEY MESSAGES

- Ageing-related policies and priorities are still absent in many national plans and sustainable development strategies.
- Most Member States address older persons, as a vulnerable group, in the context of leaving no one behind.
- VNRs often portray ageing issues as a challenge, including by focusing on concerns over the sustainability of social services, pensions and healthcare systems, and as a factor that limits long-term economic and income growth.
- **As the longevity agenda gains traction, there is a need for a paradigm shift that leverages ageing as an opportunity and recognizes older persons as active agents who already make substantial contributions to development efforts.**