

## SDC 2018 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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**Title: Spotlight on outcomes: A country-level methodology for identifying which people and issues are getting left behind on the Sustainable Development Goals**



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are underpinned by a complex set of 169 targets spanning a diversity of policy domains, each with its own epistemic norms of measurement and reporting. This paper proposes a multi-step analytical framework for filtering targets and examining country-level SDG data. First, we propose a logic to specify targets that are outcome-focused, quantified, and measurable, of which there are 37. Second, we propose a category of “proxy targets,” of which there are 41, where the official U.N. language is not quantified but still outcome-focused, measurable, and entail an objective direction for progress. Third, we propose a logic for identifying data sources, starting with the U.N.’s own SDG database and supplementing with national sources where needed. As a case study, we take advantage of the universal nature of the goals by applying the methodology to Canada, and are able to assess relevant data for 61 targets using 71 indicators.

Fourth, we present a framework for comparing and distilling trends across the diversity of SDG policy realms. Consistent with the logic of “no one left behind,” when targets aim to reach “all” people or “universal” coverage, we interpret this literally as 100 percent coverage. We examine recent trends to classify each indicator under one of four categories: “on track” for target achievement; “needs acceleration,” meaning on course to close at least 50 percent but less than 100 percent of the remaining gap; “needs a breakthrough,” meaning on course to close less than 50 percent of the remaining gap; or “moving backward,” meaning the most recent trend data are negative.

In applying this methodology to Canada, we find the country is not yet fully on track for any of the first 16 goals, due to some population or issue being left behind on each goal. Fully eighteen indicators are found to be moving backwards. The findings underscore the universal relevance of the SDG framework, while also yielding procedural insights for how the SDGs could better inform policymaking and public debates.