



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable in Latin America and the Caribbean¹

Key regional statistics on SDG 11

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 80% of the population live in urban areas.
- Although the proportion of the urban population living in slums fell from 29% in 2000 to 21% in 2015, more than 100 million people still live in urban slums.
- Households living in severely deficient housing are three times more likely to lack adequate antenatal care (9.2%) than non-deficient households (3.4%).
- Similarly, the incidence of early motherhood in the most disadvantaged households in urban areas stands at 24.2%, compared to 9.4% in households that are not in precarious situations.
- In addition, 27.4% of adolescents aged between 12 and 14 living in urban households in severely deficient housing conditions do not attend school, compared with 12.5% of the same age group who live in better conditions.
- Although 60% of the population in the region's metropolitan areas travel on foot, by bicycle or on public transport, analysis of investment in these areas shows that private transport receives the lion's share. In 2010, private transport accounted for more than 60% of investments, compared with around 20% for mass transit.
- An automobile occupies 30 times more space per person transported than a bus and five times more than a bicycle. At the same time, a bus ride lasts between 50% and 220% longer than a car journey, as a result of the increasing expansion of urban areas to peripheral areas and public mobility systems that favour higher-income sectors.
- The motorization rate in Latin America and the Caribbean has risen drastically, by 61% between 2005 and 2015.

¹ The analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented here is the outcome of the discussions held within the framework of the third meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and Caribbean on Sustainable Development, convened under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago, from 24 to 26 April 2019.



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Key messages from the region on the issues addressed by SDG 11 and its targets

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, rural-urban migration is slowing and migration between cities has increased, as the percentage of the population living in large cities stagnates and medium-sized cities emerge as poles of growth.
- Despite the need for policies addressing the high levels of urbanization —which coincide with the demographic transition that will result in older populations— the region's urbanization pattern continues to produce urban areas with fragile economies, high levels of inequality and worrying levels of environmental degradation.
- An increasing number of people in Latin America are abandoning the public transport system and acquiring private vehicles. Consequently, motorization rates in the region are increasing rapidly, with effects including traffic congestion and higher emissions of greenhouse gases and local pollutants that have a negative impact on the population's health, mainly children and persons older than 60 years.
- As recognized in the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) held in Quito in October 2016, the territorial dimension is important, and urban sustainability policies can support the cross-cutting implementation of several of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, beyond SDG 11.

Challenges and opportunities identified for the implementation, follow-up and review of SDG 11 and its targets

Challenges

- Increasing motorization not only brings problems related to congestion, travel times and fuel consumption, pollutant emissions and environmental degradation, the encroachment of residential areas and increasingly poor road safety with very high rates of injuries and deaths, but also makes it difficult for most people to have full access to the public transport system.
- The challenge in terms of infrastructure and sustainable patterns of production and consumption is even greater considering the rapid growth of the vehicle fleet in the region, albeit at rates that are still much slower than in developed countries.
- Efforts to address housing informality by adopting a strategy of granting legal titles to land without the comprehensive development of settlements have not automatically guaranteed better access to public services.
- While many countries in the region have been able to reduce the quantitative housing deficit, mainly through demand-side subsidies, locating social housing in peripheral areas has driven urban sprawl and deepened socioeconomic residential segregation.
- The use of early childhood development centres in cities is also quite stratified by socioeconomic status: higher-income groups have the most access, while coverage of children living in poorer households is much lower.
- The lack of access to clean energy sources, safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities in slum dwellings also has adverse impacts on health.



Opportunities

- Urbanization affects the sustainability of development at the national, regional and global levels. This is why public policies must address the problems of cities — where economic and social power are concentrated — as well as the opportunities offered by action in this sphere to meet the challenges of sustainable development.

Lessons learned and good practices with respect to SDG 11 and its targets

- With few exceptions, cities' territorial expansion coincides with a reduction in urban density, which affects the environment and drives up the per capita costs of infrastructure (such as water, electricity, transport, communication and road networks). Urban planning, land policies and new incentives and regulations should reduce urban segregation and the economic and environmental costs of services.
- In 2013, the city of Medellín, Colombia was recognized as the most innovative in the world, owing to its creative solutions to urban mobility and sustainability challenges, including the public system of cable cars (Metrocable) and escalators, which cut travel times between the hills and the valley (from hours to minutes), reduce the environmental impact and ease congestion of main roads with traditional means of transport.

Recommendations from Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve SDG 11 and its targets

- Greater investment in public transport systems and urban infrastructure is needed to achieve SDG 11 in the region. Special attention must be paid to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons, to improve the quality and efficiency of public transport, and to ensure the inclusiveness, safety and environmental sustainability of cities.
- The world has seen unprecedented urban growth in recent decades. Thus, urban planning and management must be improved to ensure that urban spaces worldwide are more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Environmental and social impacts must be considered in the design, planning and construction of infrastructure works to ensure that services are provided and the concerns of the affected communities are met.





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