

Child-related SDGs: Tracking Progress towards 2030 in Europe and Central Asia (ECA)

A data-driven assessment of progress and gaps
in UNICEF programme countries

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PROGRAMME PLANNING AND DATA SECTION
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Acronyms

DTP	Diphtheria–tetanus–pertussis
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HPV	Human papillomavirus
MCV	Measles-containing vaccine
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
NEET	Not in education, employment, or training
PCV	Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UHC	Universal health coverage
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why this report matters now

With five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda, understanding progress for children is increasingly important. This report provides a data-driven overview of child-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators across 21 UNICEF programme countries in Europe and Central Asia (ECA). By assessing progress at the level of individual data series and country-series observations, the analysis offers a more granular view of trends than aggregated goal-level summaries. This approach helps identify variation in progress and highlight where data gaps limit visibility. The aim is not only to track progress but to support more informed use of available data.

Overall progress: uneven and constrained by data gaps

Overall progress across child-related SDG indicators remains mixed and, in many cases, difficult to assess. A large share of country-series observations cannot be evaluated due to missing or insufficient data, limiting the ability to track trends consistently. Among the available data, only a small proportion of observations are classified as on-track, while others show varying degrees of progress, stagnation or regression. In many cases, progress differs across indicators within the same goal, reinforcing the importance of looking beyond aggregated summaries.

What the evidence shows across goals

The analysis highlights a contrast between areas of strong performance and those where progress is limited or uneven.

Child survival remains a consistent area of strong performance. Under Goal 3, most countries are on track in reducing maternal, neonatal, infant and under-five mortality. This is supported by strong civil registration systems under Goal 17, where birth registration is near universal in countries with recent data.

In contrast, outcomes more closely linked to children's daily environments show more mixed patterns. Under Goal 2, reductions in stunting coexist with limited progress on overweight and worsening anaemia among women. Under Goal 4, learning outcomes show declining trends despite high levels of school completion. Social protection under Goal 1 remains difficult to assess due to limited and uneven data.

Other areas are heavily constrained by data gaps. For several goals, including Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (child labour) and Goal 10 (discrimination), a large share of observations are missing or insufficient, making it difficult to assess progress or identify trends. Similar challenges affect indicators related to violence under Goal 16 and environmental risks under Goal 13, where available data are limited, volatile or difficult to interpret.

Implications and priorities

The findings point to two central challenges: uneven progress across key areas of child well-being, and persistent gaps in data availability. These challenges are closely linked. Where data are missing, outdated or inconsistent, it becomes difficult to identify patterns, track changes over time or assess progress.

Strengthening child-focused data systems is therefore essential. This includes expanding the availability of regular, comparable data, improving coverage of underrepresented areas such as violence, discrimination and child labour, and ensuring that data systems are embedded within national statistical systems.

Efforts such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) provide an important foundation, but further investment is needed to ensure continuity, comparability and use of data. Strengthening data systems is not only a technical requirement, but a necessary condition for more effective and equitable progress for children.



1. Context and Rationale

The SDGs provide a shared framework for advancing child rights and well-being, with a clear commitment to monitor progress and identify those at risk of being left behind. For countries in Europe and Central Asia, this requires not only tracking overall trends, but also understanding variation in progress and the extent of data gaps.

This assessment draws on the [ECA Child-Related SDG Progress Dashboard](#), which compiles data for 47 child-related indicators (113 series) across 12 SDGs. While the dashboard includes data for 55 countries and territories in the ECA region, this analysis focuses on 21 UNICEF programme countries. The dashboard organises data at the level of individual series, allowing progress to be assessed across specific measurements rather than aggregating across different series. This approach supports more transparent and comparable analysis across countries, while remaining grounded in the structure of the global SDG indicators framework.

The analysis follows an adapted version of the UN ESCAP SDG progress methodology. Adjustments have been made to reflect data availability and comparability across countries, including defining baseline and latest values based on available observations, avoiding extrapolation where recent data are missing, and applying aspirational targets where global targets are not specified.

1.1 Why this approach

Existing global and regional SDG assessments provide valuable overviews of progress but often rely on summary measures that can mask variation across different areas of performance. In practice, progress may differ substantially across components of the same indicator or across related measures within a goal.

By focusing on series-level data, this assessment retains the granularity of the underlying data and avoids combining conceptually distinct measures. This allows for a clearer view of where progress is being made, where it is slowing, and where data are not available.

At the same time, this approach does not attempt to replace existing SDG monitoring frameworks. Rather, it provides a complementary perspective that highlights patterns across available data while remaining transparent about data gaps and methodological constraints.

1.2 What this analysis can and cannot show

This assessment provides a structured overview of progress across child-related SDG indicators, based on available data and standardised methods. It is designed to support comparison across countries and to highlight broad patterns in progress and data availability.

However, it does not capture all dimensions of child well-being or fully explain the drivers behind observed trends. The analysis is limited to reported quantitative data and does not account for policy choices, institutional factors or subnational disparities that may influence outcomes.

In addition, differences in data availability across indicators and countries mean that some areas are better represented than others. Several indicators rely on limited time series, perception-based data or aspirational targets, which further affect comparability and interpretation. As a result, findings should be interpreted as indicative of patterns in the available data, rather than as a complete or definitive assessment of progress.



2. Scope and Methodology

2.1 Scope of analysis

This assessment draws on the [ECA Child-Related SDG Progress Dashboard](#), which compiles data for 47 child-related indicators (113 series) across 12 SDGs. All figures and calculations in this report are based on UNICEF's analysis of data from the UN DESA Global SDG Indicators Database. Data were extracted in May 2026.

While the dashboard includes data for all 55 countries and territories in the ECA region, this analysis focuses on a subset of **21 UNICEF programme countries**:

Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

By narrowing the scope to this group, the report provides a more targeted assessment aligned with UNICEF programme contexts, while maintaining comparability through standardised global SDG data. A full list of indicators and series, along with further methodological details, is available in the [dashboard technical note](#).

2.2 Analytical approach

The primary unit of analysis is the **series**, as defined in the global SDG database. Each SDG indicator may include one or more series representing different measurements (for example, different service components or population groups).

In some cases, a series is only reported in disaggregated form, with no overall total available. Where this occurs, each disaggregation is treated as a separate analytical unit. For example, SDG indicator 4.1.1 (minimum proficiency) is reported as a single series, but data are only available separately by level of education (primary and lower secondary) and by subject (reading and mathematics), and these are analysed as distinct units.

Progress is calculated at the level of a **country-series observation**, meaning the change of a given series for a specific country over time. These observations form the basis for all progress classifications.

To support interpretation, results are presented in two complementary ways:

- **Distributions of country-series observations:** used in the overview sections to show the overall pattern of progress across goals (for example, the share of observations classified as on-track, progressing, or lacking data)
- **Series-level analysis:** used in the data insights sections to examine how countries are performing within specific indicators or thematic areas

This combined approach allows broad patterns to be identified while retaining the ability to interpret results in a more meaningful policy context.

Detailed series-level results for individual countries can be explored through the [ECA Child-Related SDG Progress Dashboard](#).

2.3 Targets

Target values represent the level of achievement expected by 2030 and are primarily based on globally defined SDG targets. These take two forms:

- **Absolute targets**, defined as fixed values to be reached by 2030 (*e.g. universal access to basic drinking water*)
- **Relative targets**, defined as proportional improvements from a baseline value (*e.g. reducing multidimensional poverty by at least half*)

For indicators without a specified global target, **aspirational targets** are used. These are defined as the average of the top five performing countries across the full set of 55 ECA countries and territories included in the dashboard. As these targets reflect the level achieved by top-performing countries, they represent a high bar. As a result, countries may not be classified as on-track even when they are making substantial progress.

To support consistent classification, small margins are applied around target values, meaning that values very close to the target may be considered as having achieved it.

2.4 Progress assessment

Progress is assessed based on the change from the baseline value to the latest available value, relative to the remaining distance to the target. This provides a standardised measure of how far a country has progressed towards the target.

Each country-series observation is classified into one of five categories:

1. On-track
2. Moderate progress
3. Marginal progress
4. Stagnation
5. Regression

Two additional categories capture data gaps:

6. Insufficient data (missing baseline or recent data)
7. No data (no available data in the SDG database)

In cases where only a single data point is available, an observation may still be classified as on-track if the target has already been achieved. Otherwise, it is classified as insufficient data.

2.5 Limitations

Because progress is calculated at the country-series level, all observations are weighted equally in the overall distributions. Indicators with many series or disaggregated observations may therefore have a greater influence on goal-level patterns.

Differences in reporting years and frequency reduce comparability across countries, as baseline and latest values may reflect different time intervals. The methodology also does not account for the pace of change, meaning that countries with shorter or longer observation periods are assessed using the same approach.

Small negative changes in indicator values may result in a country-series observation being classified as regressing, even where differences are minimal. Similarly, countries already close to target thresholds may be classified as regressing despite maintaining high levels of performance relative to the target.

Finally, the analysis is based on available quantitative data and does not capture policy changes, service disruptions, or broader contextual factors. Differences in definitions, measurement methods, and data quality across countries may also affect comparability, and data gaps limit conclusions in some areas.



3. Overall Progress

Uneven outcomes and persistent data gaps

Across the child-related SDG series included in this assessment, progress is uneven and often constrained by data limitations. Stronger performance is observed in core survival and service-related areas, particularly under Goal 3, where maternal and child mortality continue to decline and skilled birth attendance remains near universal in most countries. High completion rates in education, widespread birth registration, and strong performance in some areas of infrastructure and legal frameworks also point to important areas of progress.

At the same time, several goals show limited or slowing progress. Nutrition outcomes remain a concern, with rising anaemia and little change in overweight. Learning outcomes are declining across much of the region despite strong participation and completion in education. Access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation

remains uneven, with limited progress in many countries. Progress towards clean cooking access is also uneven, with some countries close to universal coverage but others stagnating or regressing.

A further challenge is the scale of data gaps. In several goals, particularly those related to gender equality, decent work, discrimination and violence, missing or insufficient data account for the majority of country-series observations. This limits the ability to assess trends, compare countries and identify where action is most needed.

Taken together, the findings point to a mixed regional picture. Some child-related outcomes are improving and, in a few areas, are already close to universal achievement. However, progress is not broad-based, and major evidence gaps continue to obscure the situation in several areas critical to children's well-being and rights.

Figure 1. Overall progress – Distribution of country-series observations by progress status

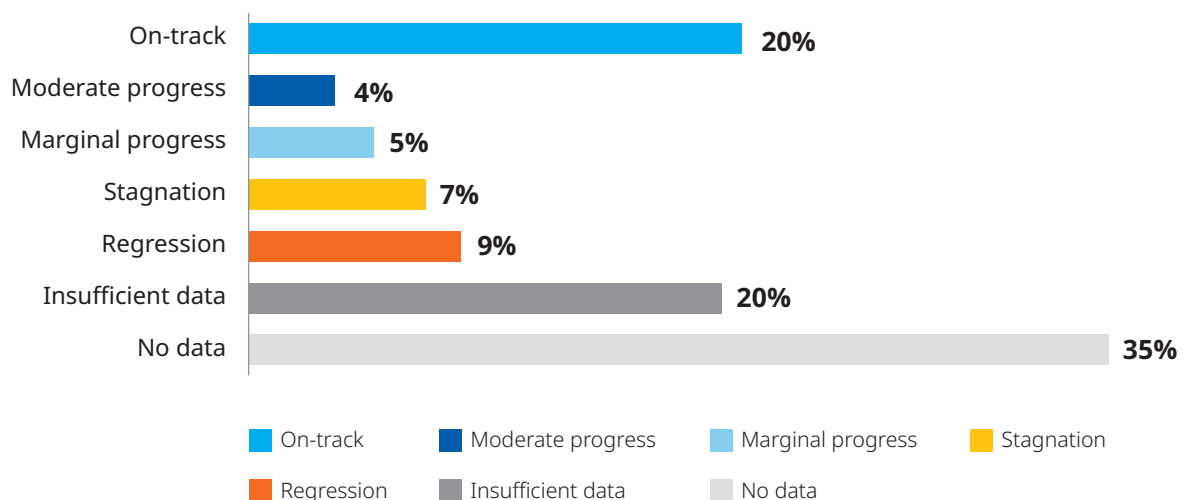
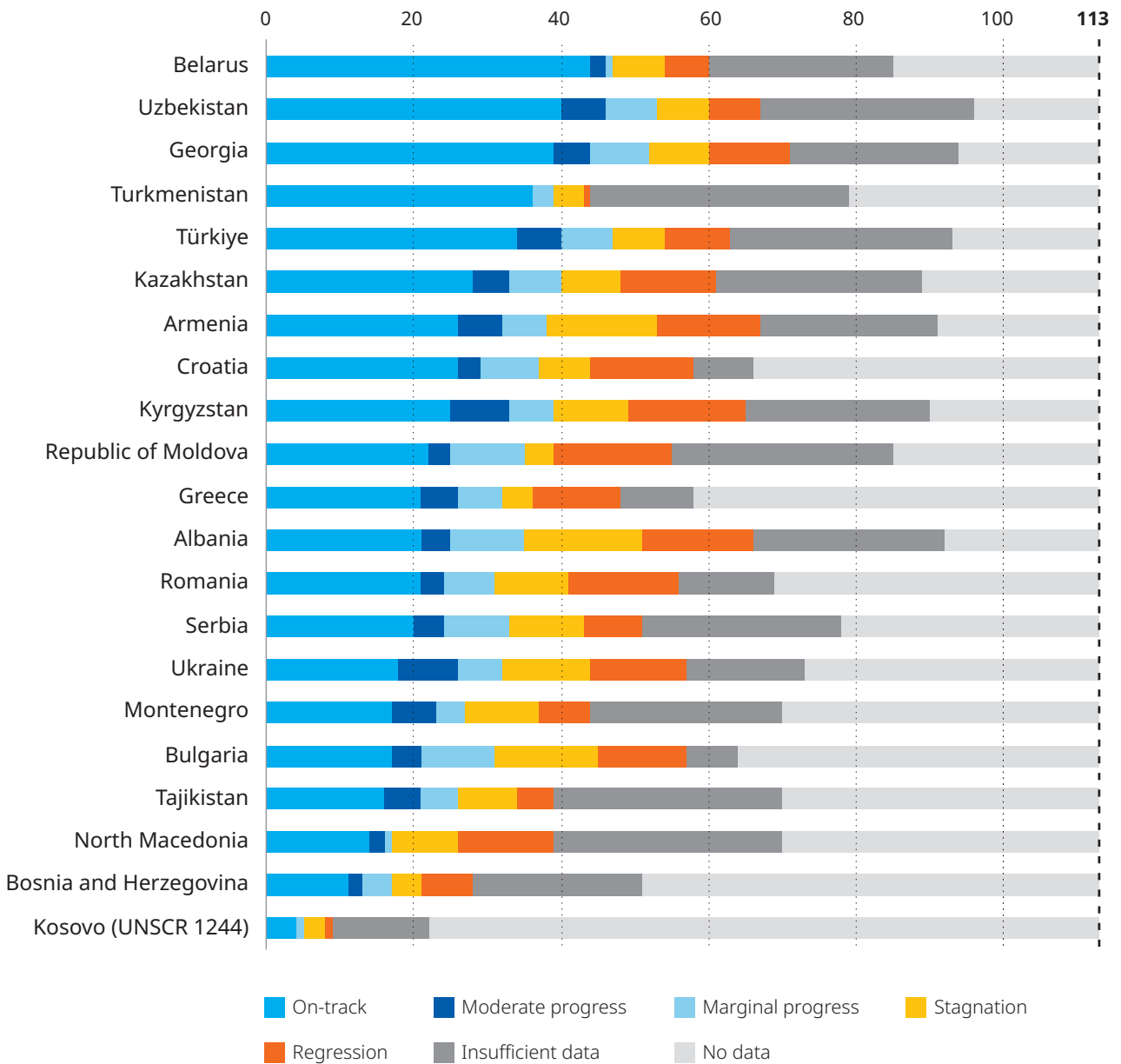


Figure 2. Overall progress – Progress status distribution by country



Note: For a detailed breakdown of progress status by individual SDG series and country, please refer to the [ECA Child-Related SDG Progress Dashboard](#).

4. Progress by Goal

Patterns across indicators and series

4.1 Goal 1 – No poverty

Extreme poverty low, broader gaps persist

4.1.1 Overview

Goal 1 focuses on ending poverty in all its forms, including extreme, national and multidimensional poverty, as well as access to basic services, social protection and public spending. This assessment covers seven child-related indicators (28 series) across these areas.

A large share of country–series observations are classified as no data (26 per cent) or insufficient data (22 per cent). Among the remainder, 15 per

cent are on-track, while the rest are distributed across moderate progress (4 per cent), marginal progress (8 per cent), stagnation (13 per cent) and regression (13 per cent).

This reflects a mixed picture. While extreme poverty is largely eliminated across the region, progress in national poverty reduction and social protection coverage remains uneven. Data gaps remain a key constraint, particularly for multidimensional poverty and pro-poor public spending.

Figure 3. Goal 1 – Distribution of country–series observations by progress status

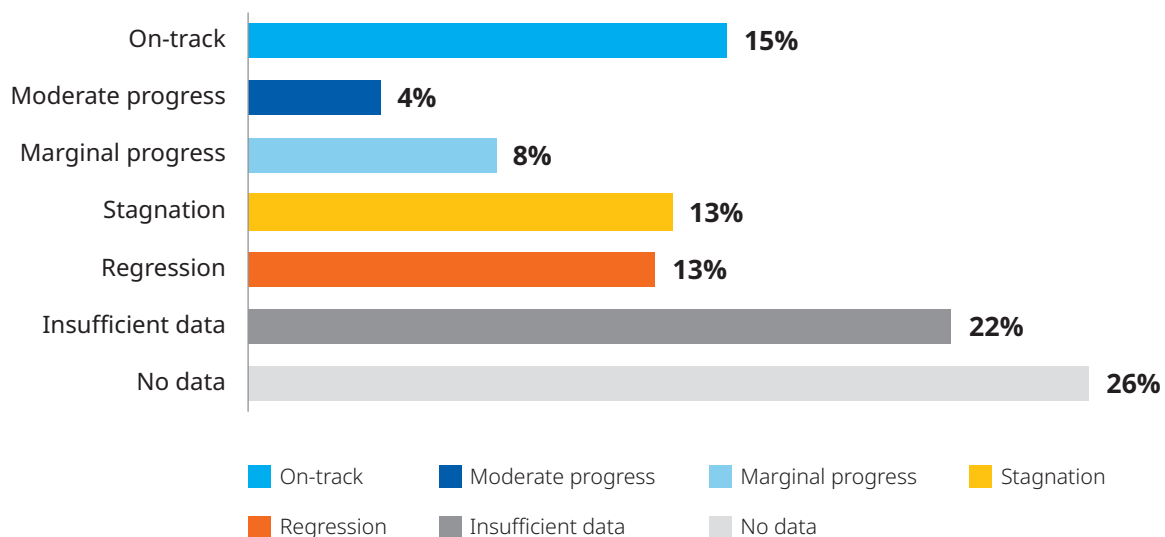
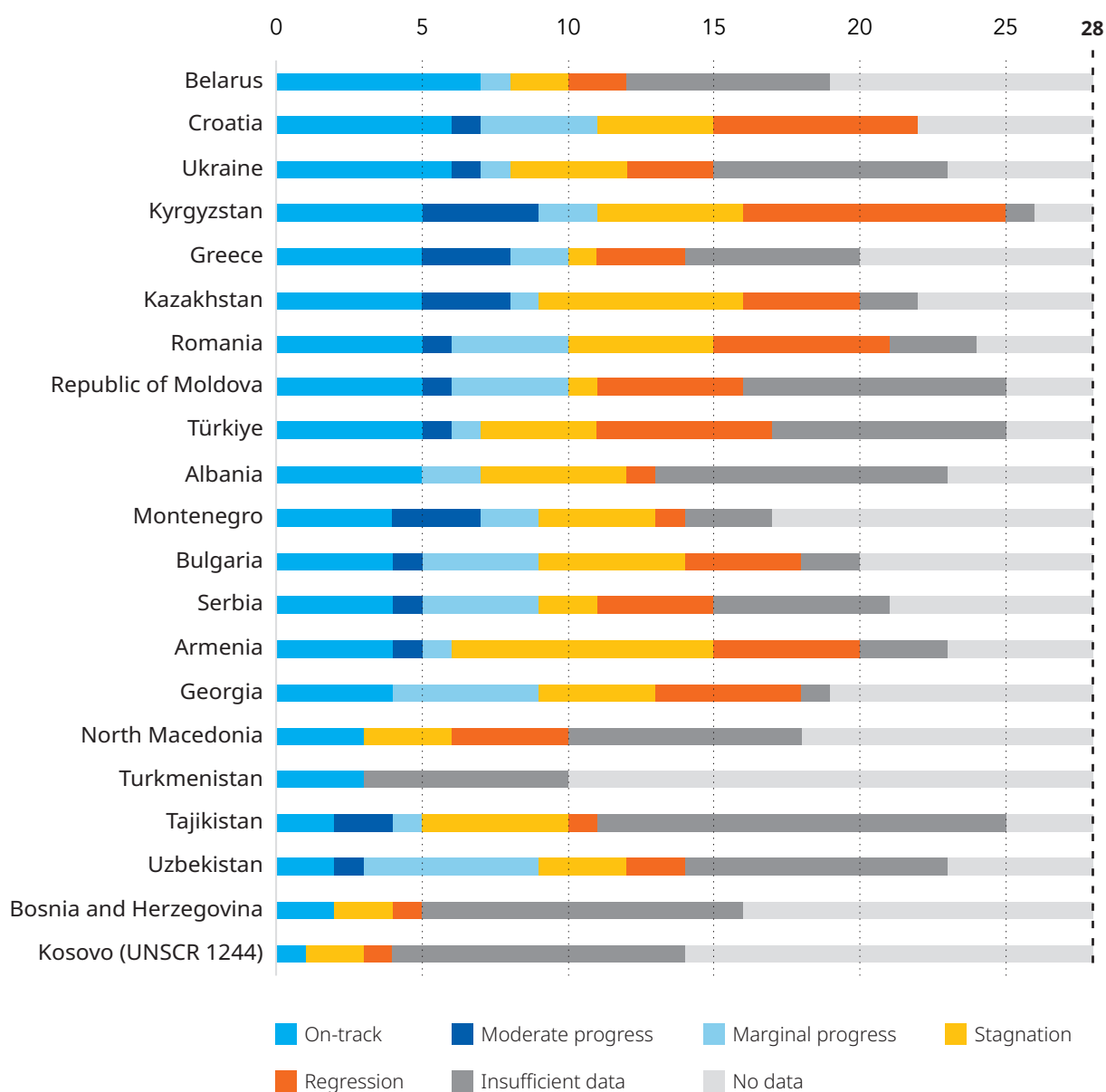


Figure 4. Goal 1 – Progress status distribution by country

4.1.2 Data insights

- **Extreme poverty (SDG 1.1.1)**

Across the UNICEF programme countries, levels of extreme poverty, based on the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day, are very low. Among countries with available data, most are at or close to zero and therefore on-track. Data availability is lower for employed populations living below the international poverty line, but levels are also generally close to zero where data exist.

- **National poverty (SDG 1.2.1)**

This indicator uses a relative target, defined as halving poverty levels from a national baseline. Trends are more mixed than for extreme poverty. Among the 14 countries with trend data, most show little progress and some have regressed. The Republic of Moldova experienced a marked increase in poverty over three years, while Georgia is one of the few countries showing strong progress.

- **Multidimensional poverty (SDG 1.2.2)**

Data are extremely limited. Only Armenia has data for both child-specific and household measures. Among the 11 countries with data on the proportion of the population living in multidimensional poverty, none are on-track, although nine are making steady progress.

- **Social protection coverage (SDG 1.3.1)**

Coverage of social protection varies widely across benefit types and countries. Child and family cash benefits have low coverage across most countries, with Romania and Ukraine as exceptions, both reaching universal coverage. Maternity and newborn benefits vary considerably, with nine countries at full coverage but levels as low as 6 per cent in Uzbekistan and 10 per cent in Tajikistan. Disability benefits show the strongest coverage overall, with most countries close to or at full coverage.

Other forms of support, including pensions, unemployment benefits and social assistance, show uneven coverage and are often affected by limited data.

Coverage by at least one social protection benefit also shows mixed progress, with countries distributed across progress, stagnation and regression.

- **Access to basic services (SDG 1.4.1)**

Access to basic drinking water and sanitation is high across most countries. Many report near-universal coverage, particularly for drinking water. Sanitation coverage is slightly lower in some cases, but overall differences are limited, with most countries maintaining high access levels.

- **Government spending on essential services (SDG 1.a.2)**

This indicator is assessed against an aspirational target rather than a fixed global target.

Government spending on essential services has remained broadly stable since 2015, with most countries allocating at least half of public expenditure to these areas. Ukraine is the only country showing a notable decline, with spending on essential services halving over the period.

- **Pro-poor public spending (SDG 1.b.1)**

Data availability for government spending benefiting the poorest 20 per cent is extremely limited, making it difficult to assess progress. Kyrgyzstan is the only country with trend data, although it shows little change over time.

4.1.3 Key message

Extreme poverty is largely eliminated across the region, but progress in national poverty reduction and social protection coverage remains uneven. Significant data gaps, particularly for multidimensional poverty and pro-poor spending, limit a comprehensive assessment of child poverty.

4.2 Goal 2 – Zero Hunger

Uneven progress, rising anaemia

4.2.1 Overview

Goal 2 focuses on ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition, including stunting, wasting, overweight and dietary quality. This assessment covers five child-related indicators (five series).

A large share of country–series observations are classified as regressing (23 per cent) or stagnating (8 per cent). Twenty-one per cent are on-track, while a further 13 per cent show marginal or moderate

progress. Data availability is relatively good, with 21 per cent of observations classified as no data and 15 per cent as insufficient data.

This reflects an uneven pattern of progress. Anaemia is increasing across most countries, while overweight prevalence shows little overall change over time despite several countries already meeting the target threshold. Stunting levels are generally low, with most countries showing steady progress.

Figure 5. Goal 2 – Distribution of country–series observations by progress status

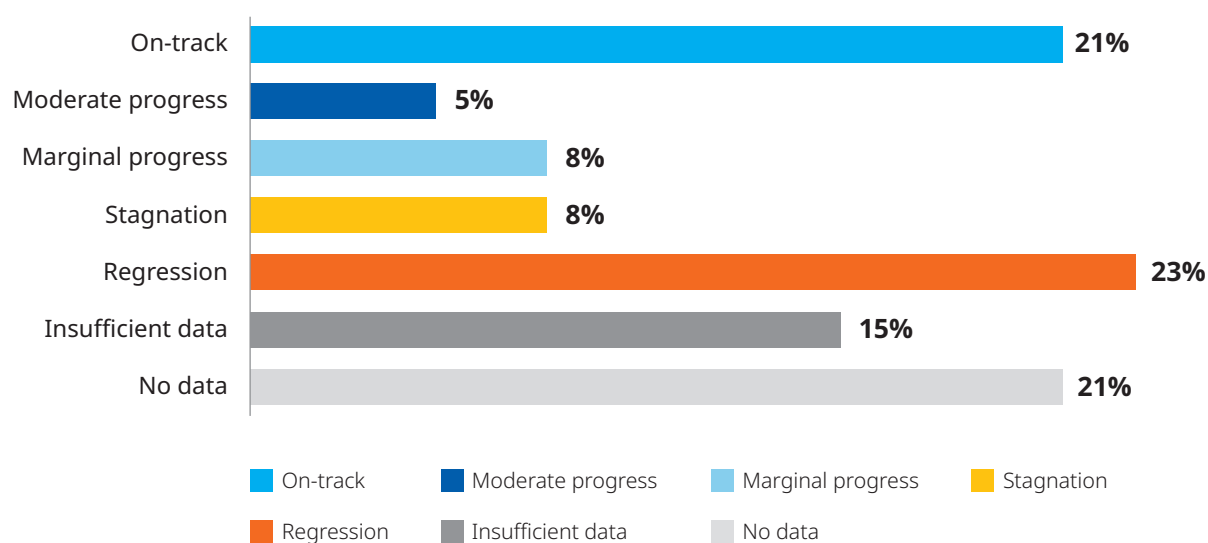
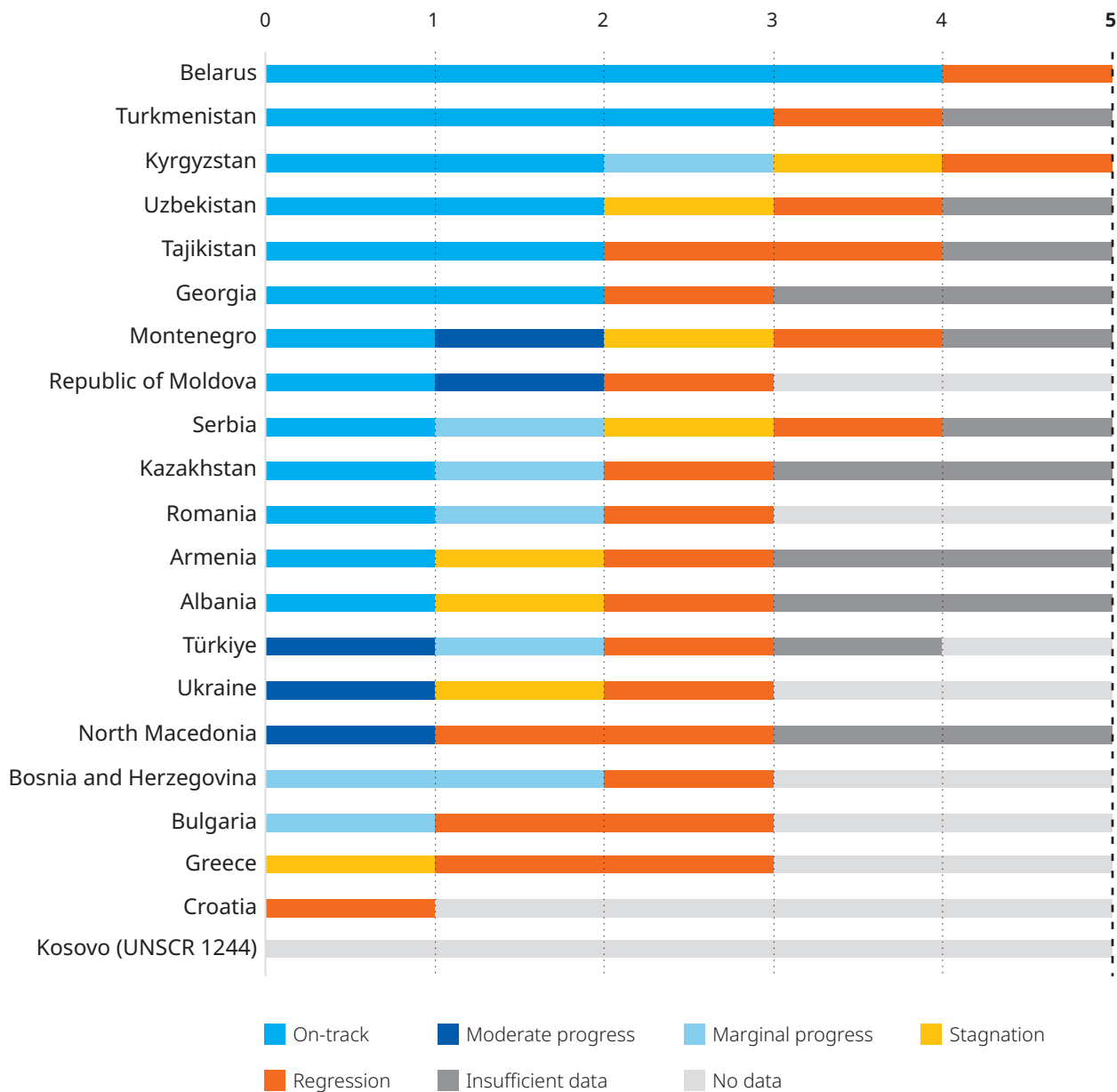


Figure 6. Goal 2 – Progress status distribution by country

4.2.2 Data insights

• Stunting (SDG 2.2.1)

The target for stunting is a 40 per cent reduction relative to baseline levels, and rates are generally low across the region. Eight countries are on-track, with particularly strong performance in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. This reflects the relative nature of the target, where countries with higher initial rates have achieved larger reductions. For example, Tajikistan has

reduced stunting substantially over time, although it still records one of the higher rates in the region. By contrast, countries with already low stunting rates may show limited reductions and are therefore less likely to be classified as on-track despite maintaining very low levels.

• Overweight (SDG 2.2.2a)

The target for overweight is a prevalence below 5 per cent. Among the 19 countries with available trend data, six are classified as on-track,

reflecting already low prevalence levels. Most countries show little change over time, with only small increases or decreases in prevalence. A few countries, such as Georgia, show clearer reductions. Overall, however, there is no consistent regional trend of improvement.

- **Wasting (SDG 2.2.2b)**

As with overweight, the target for wasting is a prevalence below 5 per cent. Data availability is extremely limited, with 17 countries classified as having either no data or insufficient trend data. Among the four countries with trend data, three are classified as on-track. However, Tajikistan shows increasing prevalence over time.

- **Anaemia (SDG 2.2.3)**

The target is to reduce prevalence by half. Data availability is strong, with only one country missing data, but trends are overwhelmingly negative. In 18 out of 20 countries, the prevalence of anaemia among women increased between 2015 and 2023. Levels are highest in Central Asia, where approximately one in three women are anaemic.

- **Minimum dietary diversity (SDG 2.2.4)**

This is a newer indicator and does not yet have a fixed global target. Data availability remains very limited, with no countries currently having sufficient trend data to assess progress over time. Recent data are available for only four countries, ranging from around 28 per cent in Tajikistan to approximately 80 per cent in Turkmenistan.

4.2.3 Key message

Progress towards Goal 2 remains uneven. While stunting levels are generally low and improving in many countries, anaemia is increasing across most of the region. Overweight prevalence shows little overall change over time, although several countries already meet the target threshold. Significant data gaps, particularly for wasting and dietary diversity, continue to limit comprehensive assessment of malnutrition across the region.

4.3 Goal 3 – Health

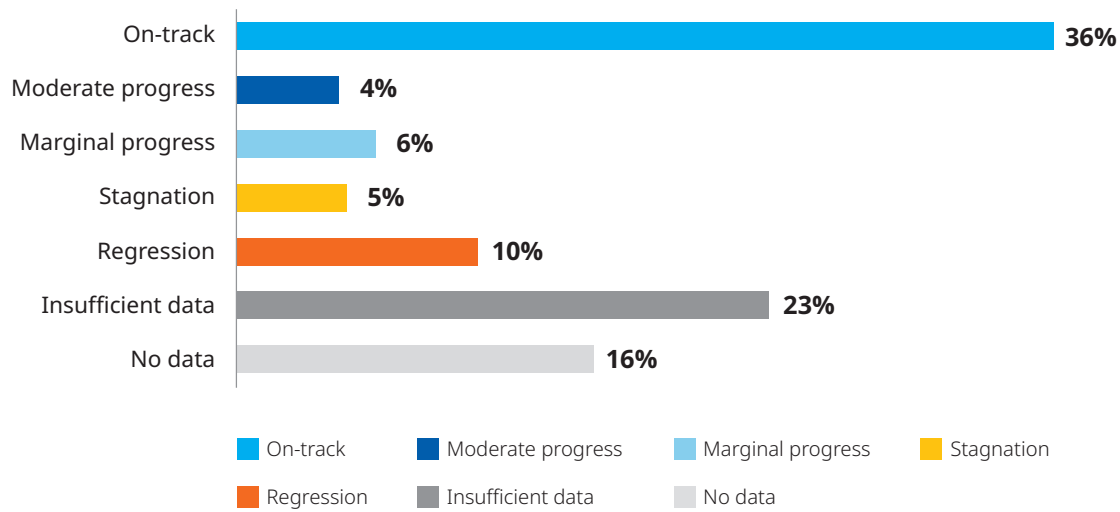
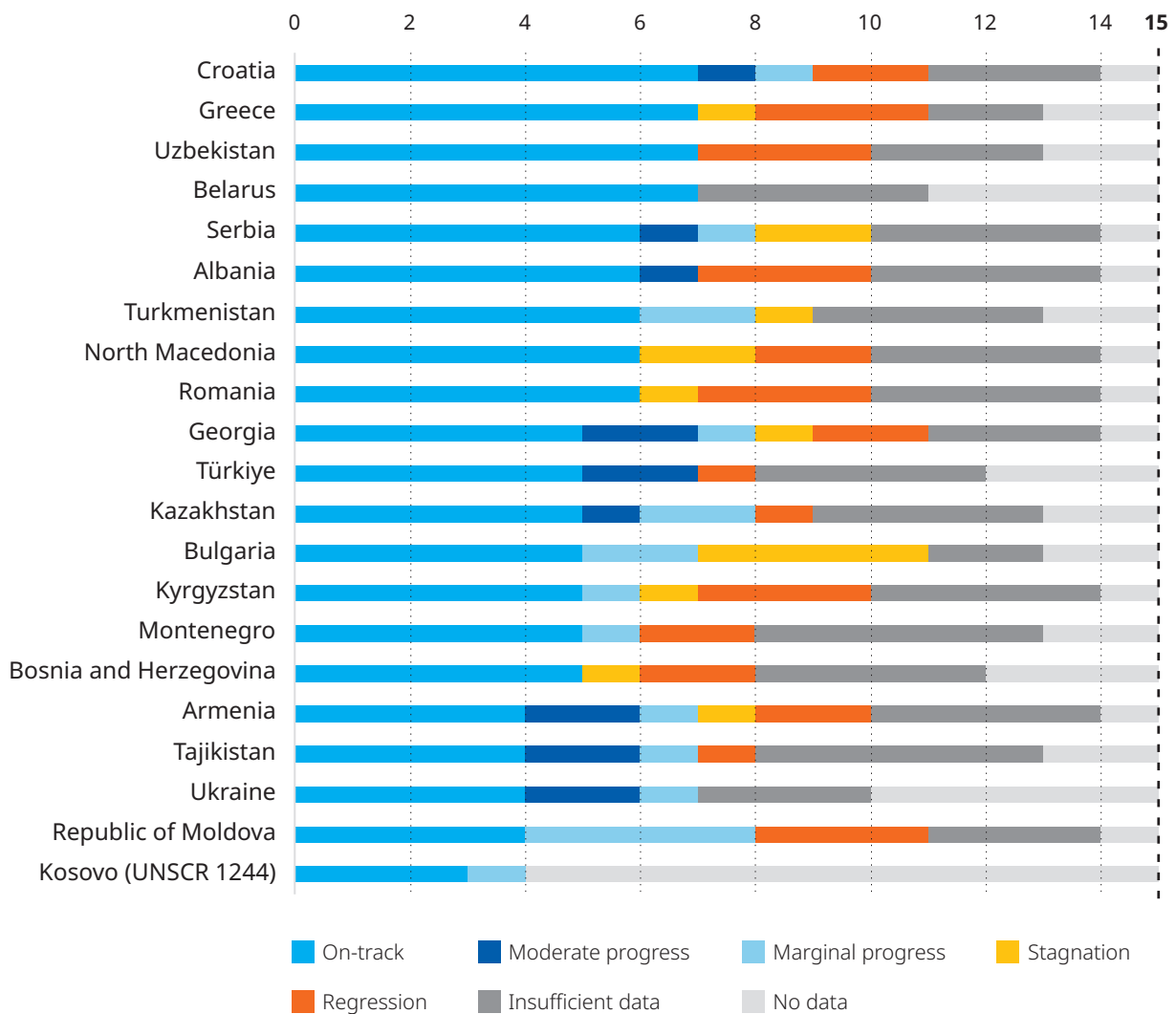
Strong survival, mixed immunization trends

4.3.1 Overview

Goal 3 covers a broad range of health outcomes, including maternal and child survival, infectious diseases, reproductive health and health system coverage. This assessment covers nine child-related indicators (15 series).

Overall performance is strong. Around 36 per cent of country–series observations are on-track, with a further 4 per cent moderately progressing and 6 per cent marginally progressing. At the same time, 5 per cent are stagnating and 10 per cent are regressing, while 16 per cent of observations are classified as no data and 23 per cent as insufficient data.

This reflects a largely positive but uneven picture. Maternal and child mortality indicators show consistently strong performance, with nearly all countries on-track and continuing to improve, supported by high levels of skilled birth attendance. Declines in new HIV infections and adolescent birth rates are also observed in most countries. However, progress is not consistent across all areas. Universal health coverage shows little improvement, while immunization coverage has stagnated or declined in several countries. Data limitations also constrain assessment of air pollution-related mortality.

Figure 7. Goal 3 – Distribution of country–series observations by progress status**Figure 8.** Goal 3 – Progress status distribution by country

4.3.2 Data insights

- **Maternal health (SDG 3.1)**

Progress on reducing maternal mortality is strong across the region, with all 20 countries with available data on-track and well below the global target of 70 deaths per 100,000 live births. Coverage of skilled birth attendance is also consistently high, with most countries reaching near-universal levels of at least 98 per cent.

- **Child mortality (SDG 3.2)**

Infant, under-five and neonatal mortality rates are low and continue to decline in most countries. For infant mortality, 20 countries are on-track, with Turkmenistan the only country still above the target of 25 deaths per 1,000 live births. For under-five mortality, 19 countries are on-track. The highest rates are observed in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, although both are decreasing over time. Neonatal mortality follows a similar pattern, with most countries already below the target and only a small number showing slower progress.

- **HIV infections (SDG 3.3.1)**

Among the 14 countries with sufficient data, 9 report very low rates of new HIV infections and are considered on-track as they are close to the target of zero new infections. The Republic of Moldova has achieved a substantial reduction, halving its rate over time, although it still records the highest rate in the region. Armenia is the only country showing an increasing trend and now has the second highest rate in the region.

- **Adolescent birth rate (SDG 3.7.2)**

The target is zero births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 years, and no countries are currently on-track to achieve this. However, most countries show declining trends, indicating gradual progress. The most notable reductions are observed in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan is the only country showing a regressing trend, with rates increasing substantially and remaining among the highest in the region.

- **Universal health coverage (SDG 3.8.1)**

As of May 2026, historical national estimates for the universal health coverage service coverage index are temporarily unavailable in the Global SDG Indicators Database due to the annual update process. As a result, all country-series observations for this indicator are currently classified as no data in the dashboard.

Prior to the temporary removal of national estimates, data availability for this indicator was high, with only one country lacking data. Earlier estimates also indicated limited progress over time across most countries, with coverage levels generally showing little change since 2015.

- **Air pollution (SDG 3.9.1)**

Data on mortality attributed to ambient and household air pollution are only available for 2019, preventing trend analysis. Among the 19 countries with data for that year, only 2 have reached the target of zero deaths per 100,000 population. Central Asia records the highest mortality rates linked to ambient air pollution, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro show the highest rates related to household air pollution.

- **Immunization (SDG 3.b.1)**

Data availability is strong for key vaccines such as MCV2 and DTP3, allowing for robust trend analysis. Progress, however, is uneven. For both MCV2 and DTP3, coverage has declined in around half of countries (10 of 20 for MCV2 and 9 of 20 for DTP3). Only a limited number are on-track, with six for DTP3 and fewer for MCV2. While some countries have made strong improvements, such as Ukraine, others have experienced notable declines, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Romania.

Progress for PCV3 and HPV is more mixed, with greater variation across countries. Some countries, including Georgia and Armenia, have made substantial increases in PCV3 coverage since 2015. HPV vaccination shows the greatest variation, with very low coverage in some countries alongside rapid increases in others, reflecting differences in rollout and uptake. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan stand out with very high coverage, whereas rates drop to as low as 2 per cent in Serbia.

4.3.3 Key message

Goal 3 shows strong performance in core child survival indicators, with most countries on-track for reductions in maternal and child mortality. However, this progress is not consistent across all areas. Declines in immunization coverage across several countries represent a key concern, while improvements in universal health coverage remain limited. Data gaps continue to constrain assessment of environmental health risks.

4.4 Goal 4 – Quality education

Strong access, declining learning outcomes

4.4.1 Overview

Goal 4 focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, including learning outcomes, completion, early childhood development and school environments. This assessment covers five child-related indicators (30 series).

The relatively large number of series is driven primarily by SDG 4.a.1, which captures multiple dimensions of school infrastructure disaggregated by level of education (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary).

As with several earlier goals, overall progress is mixed. Based on all country-series observations, 23 per cent are on-track, while 8 per cent are regressing and 4 per cent stagnating. At the same time, a substantial share of observations lack sufficient data, with 47 per cent classified as no data and a further 13 per cent as insufficient.

Overall performance is driven by strong completion rates and school infrastructure, while learning outcomes are declining across much of the region and key data gaps persist, most notably in early childhood development and inclusive infrastructure.

Figure 9. Goal 4 – Distribution of country-series observations by progress status

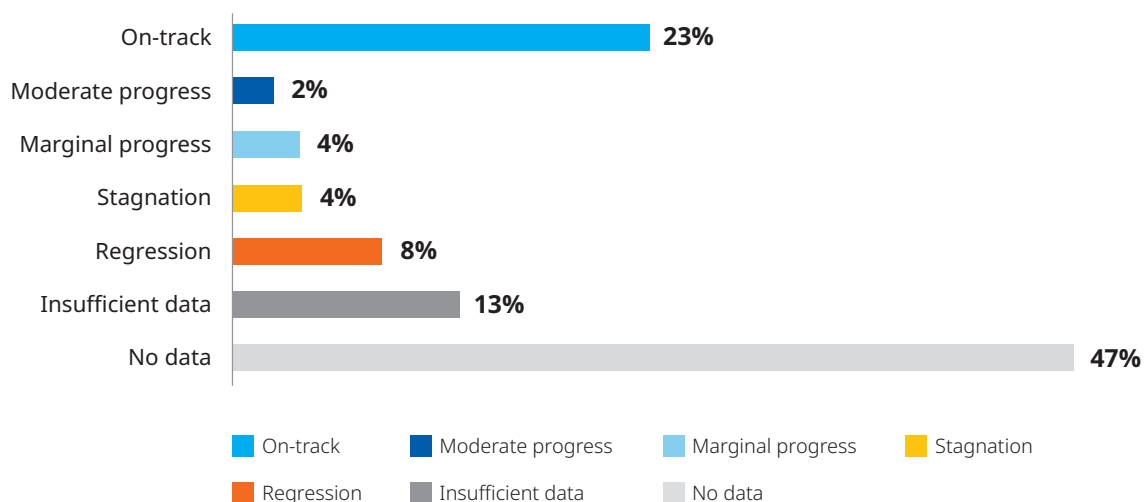
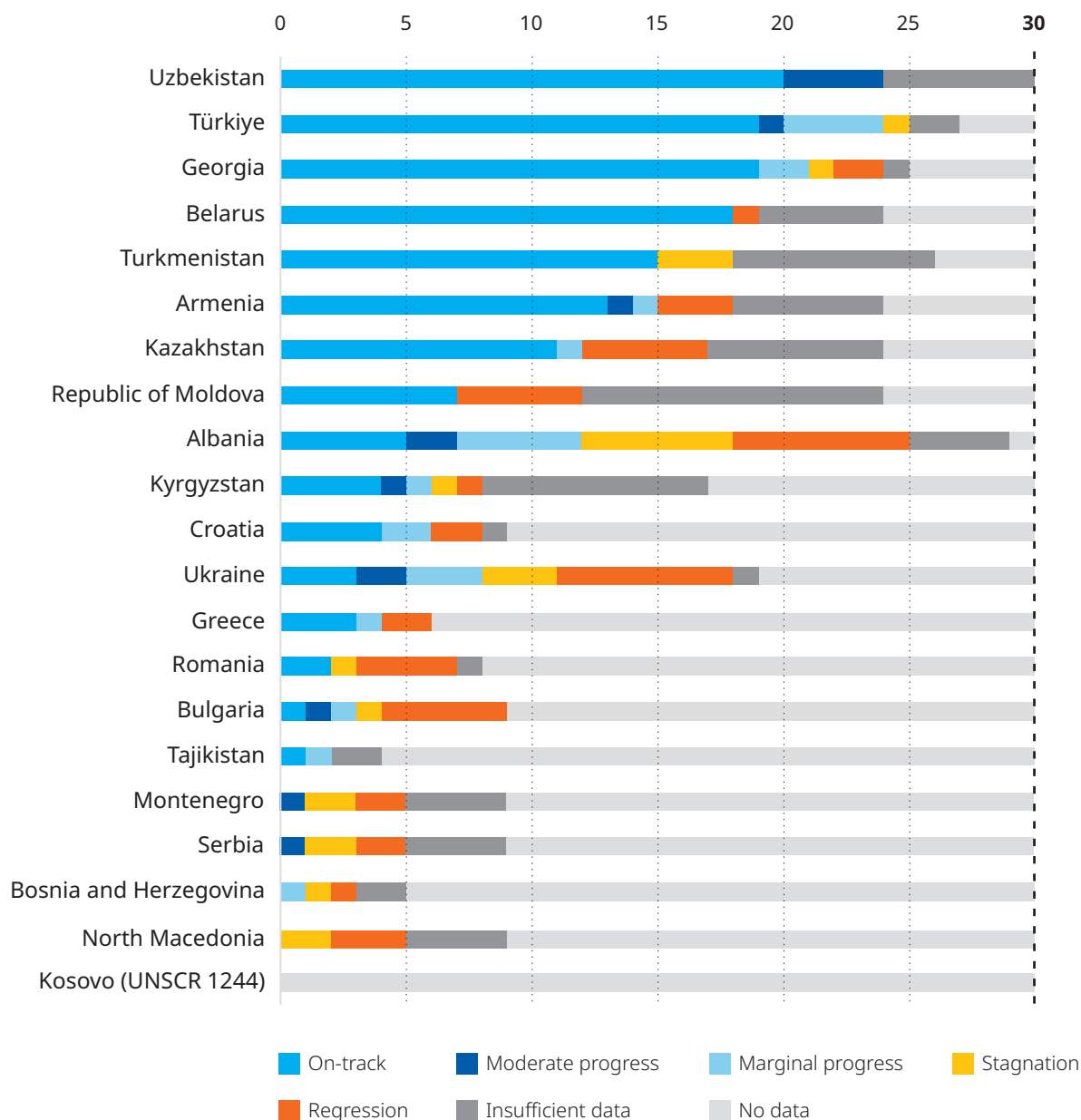


Figure 10. Goal 4 – Progress status distribution by country

4.4.2 Data insights

• Learning outcomes (SDG 4.1.1)

Learning outcomes show widespread and concerning declines across the region. At the lower secondary level, regression is nearly universal in both mathematics and reading. Türkiye stands out as a notable exception, demonstrating progress in both subjects. At the end of primary education, data availability is

lower, particularly for reading where only three countries have trend data. Across both subjects, around half of countries with available data show declining proficiency. Some countries consistently perform at lower levels across both subjects and education stages, with Uzbekistan among those recording comparatively low levels of minimum proficiency despite stronger performance in other areas of education.

- **Completion (SDG 4.1.2)**

Completion rates are high across the region, particularly at primary and lower secondary levels, where most countries are on-track or close to universal completion. At the upper secondary level, progress is more mixed and no countries are on-track against the target of full completion. However, overall trends remain broadly positive, with most countries either progressing or maintaining high levels. Armenia has made notable gains, while Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan report completion rates above 95 per cent.

- **Early childhood development (SDG 4.2.1)**

Data availability for early childhood development remains extremely limited, with only a small number of countries collecting data and no sufficient time series available for trend analysis. Comparability over time is further constrained by recent methodological changes, including adjustments to the age range used to measure development outcomes, meaning progress cannot currently be assessed across the region.

- **Participation in organised learning (SDG 4.2.2)**

Participation in organised learning varies widely across the region. Among the 17 countries with available data, four are on-track with near-universal participation, while six are progressing towards full coverage. Four countries show substantial declines over the period. Participation remains comparatively low in some countries, including Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, while others, such as Uzbekistan, have made substantial improvements over time.

- **School infrastructure (SDG 4.a.1)**

School infrastructure and access to basic services are generally strong where data are available, with many countries reporting high levels of access to electricity, drinking water, sanitation, handwashing, internet and computers. Countries are typically either close to universal coverage or progressing steadily towards it. However, data availability varies considerably across components, with only around half of countries having sufficient data for trend analysis in many areas. The largest gap relates to infrastructure adapted for children with disabilities, where 18 out of 21 countries lack sufficient data, limiting the ability to assess inclusivity within education systems.

4.4.3 Key message

Education systems across the region show strong performance in access, with high completion rates and generally well-developed school infrastructure. However, declining learning outcomes, particularly at the lower secondary level, signal a critical challenge. At the same time, data gaps, especially in early childhood development and inclusive infrastructure, constrain a full assessment of progress.

4.5 Goal 5 – Gender equality

Limited evidence, persistent inequalities

4.5.1 Overview

Goal 5 focuses on gender equality across areas such as legal frameworks, violence against women, child marriage, unpaid care and domestic work, and decision-making on sexual and reproductive health. This assessment covers six child-related indicators (10 series).

Overall progress is difficult to assess due to significant data limitations. Based on all country-series observations, 8 per cent are on-track, while

around 3 per cent show some level of progress and 7 per cent are stagnating. At the same time, 50 per cent of observations have no data and a further 32 per cent are classified as insufficient.

Where data are available, progress is limited and uneven, most clearly in legal frameworks, where performance varies across areas. However, substantial data gaps across indicators on violence, unpaid care and decision-making limit a comprehensive assessment.

Figure 11. Goal 5 – Distribution of country-series observations by progress status

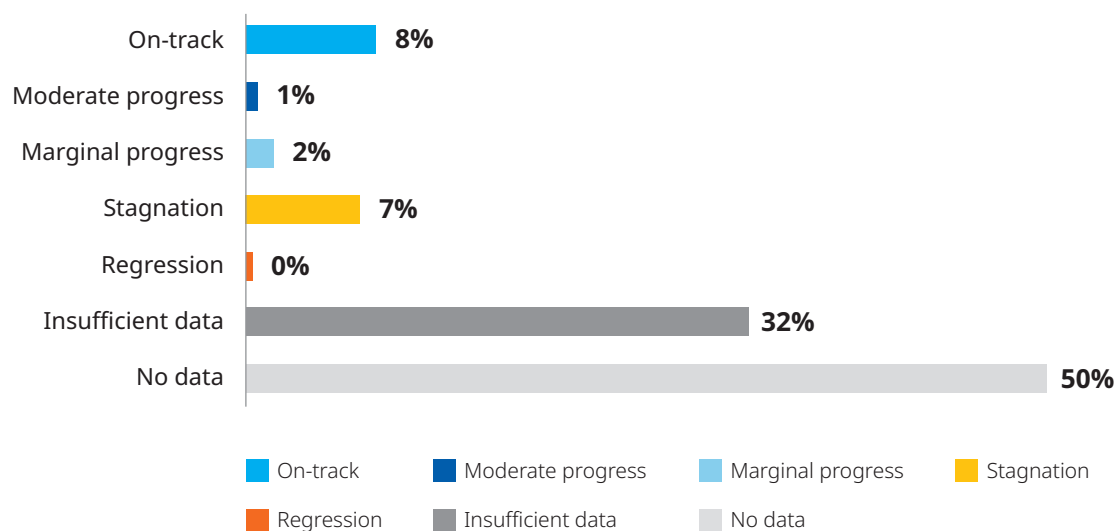
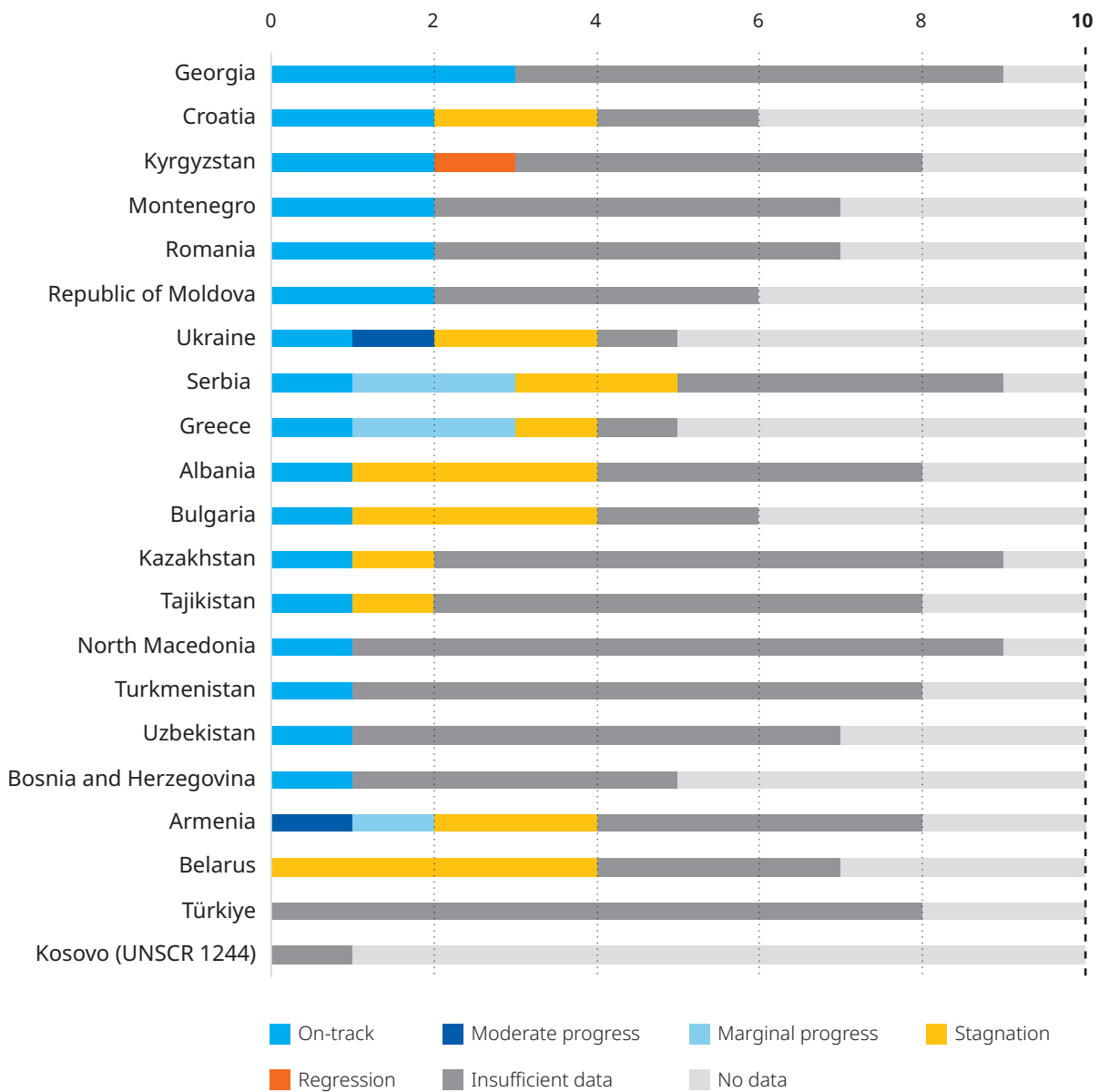


Figure 12. Goal 5 – Progress status distribution by country

4.5.2 Data insights

- **Legal frameworks (SDG 5.1.1)**

Legal frameworks for gender equality, covering areas such as violence against women, economic rights, employment, public life and family law, show mixed performance across the region. Countries tend to perform better in overarching legal frameworks and in public life and employment, while scores are generally lower in

areas such as violence against women and family law. Recent data availability is high, with most countries reporting values for 2024, but baseline data are often missing, limiting assessment of progress over time. As a result, classifications are frequently based on current values rather than demonstrated improvement. Where trend data exist, there is generally little change, reflecting the infrequent nature of legal reforms.

- **Violence against women (SDG 5.2)**

Data are limited and do not allow for trend analysis. For intimate partner violence, data are available for many countries but refer to a single reference period around 2023. Reported prevalence varies across countries, from very low levels to over 10 per cent in countries such as Tajikistan and Türkiye. For violence by non-partners, no data are currently available, reflecting broader methodological and data collection challenges.

- **Child marriage (SDG 5.3.1)**

Data are sparse and do not support trend analysis. Marriage before age 15 is rare, with most countries reporting rates close to zero. Marriage before age 18 shows greater variation, with higher prevalence in countries such as Türkiye and Albania.

- **Unpaid care and domestic work (SDG 5.4.1)**

Data are extremely limited, with most countries lacking observations and only a small number reporting recent values. Among the five countries with recent data available, the proportion of time spent on unpaid work ranges from 8 to 19 per cent.

- **Decision-making on sexual and reproductive health (SDG 5.6.1)**

Trend data on women's decision-making regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health remain extremely limited, with only Tajikistan reporting sufficient data to assess change over time. Tajikistan shows a small increase since baseline levels but continues to record the lowest prevalence in the region at around 33 per cent. For the other four countries with recent data available, prevalence ranges from around 70 per cent to 95 per cent.

4.5.3 Key message

Progress towards gender equality cannot be comprehensively assessed due to major data gaps, particularly for survey-based indicators. Where data exist, legal frameworks show mixed performance, while limited evidence on violence, unpaid care and decision-making obscures both progress and persistent inequalities. Strengthening data availability and frequency is essential to better understand gender disparities.

4.6 Goal 6 – Clean water and sanitation

Moderate coverage, slow progress towards universality

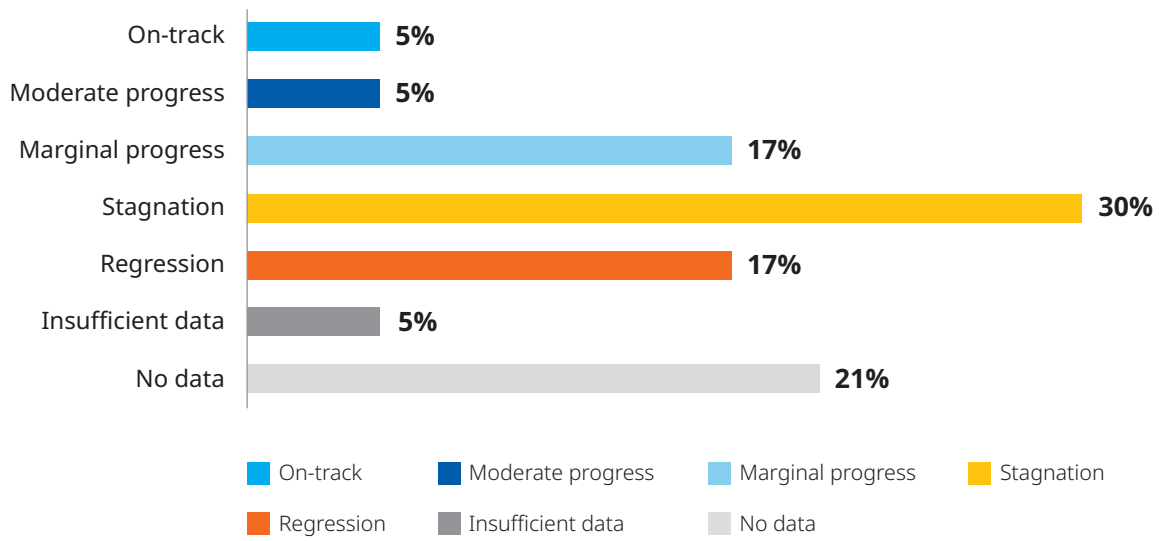
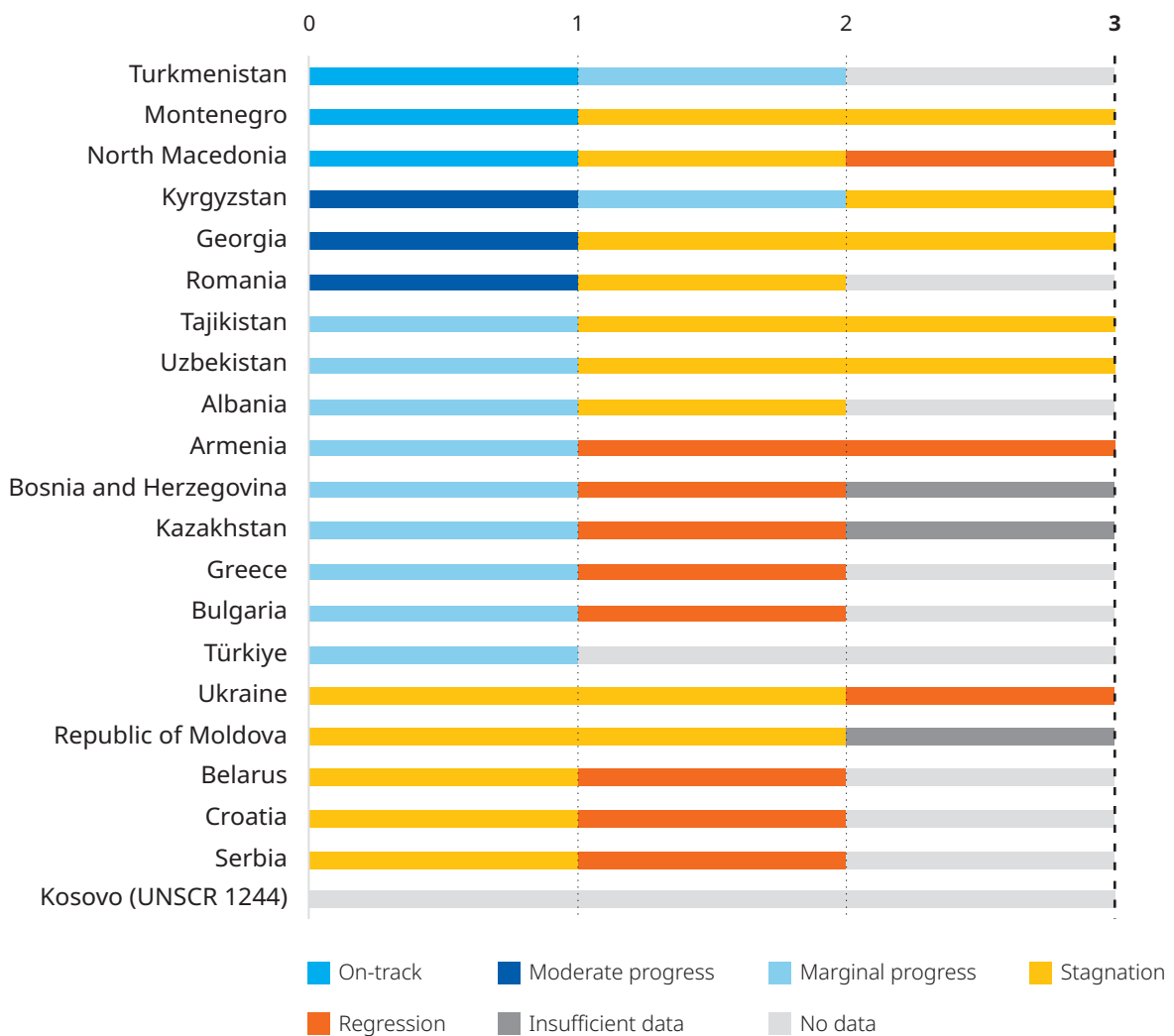
4.6.1 Overview

Goal 6 focuses on access to safely managed drinking water, safely managed sanitation, and basic handwashing facilities at home. Data availability is relatively strong compared to several other goals, particularly for drinking water and sanitation, although important gaps remain for handwashing.

Across the three indicators (three series), 30 per cent of country-series observations are classified as

stagnating and a further 17 per cent as regressing. Only 5 per cent are on-track, while 5 per cent are moderately progressing and 17 per cent are making marginal progress. At the same time, 21 per cent of observations have no data and a further 5 per cent are classified as insufficient.

Overall, progress is slow, with many countries showing little to no change rather than sustained improvement towards universal access.

Figure 13. Goal 6 – Distribution of country-series observations by progress status**Figure 14.** Goal 6 – Progress status distribution by country

4.6.2 Data insights

- Safely managed drinking water (SDG 6.1.1)**
 Access to safely managed drinking water varies widely across the region, ranging from around 65 per cent in Tajikistan to 97 per cent in Greece. Data availability is strong, with most countries reporting trend data. Despite generally moderate to high coverage, no countries are on-track to reach universal access and progress has been limited. Among the 19 countries with trend data, most show little to no change over time, with the exception of countries in Central Asia, where noticeable gains have been made.
- Sanitation and hygiene (SDG 6.2.1)**
 Coverage of safely managed sanitation shows even greater disparities than drinking water, ranging from around 11 per cent in Armenia and 12 per cent in North Macedonia to over 90 per cent in countries such as Kyrgyzstan. Progress is mixed, with countries showing improvement, stagnation and regression, and no countries are

on-track to reach universal coverage. Georgia stands out for making substantial gains, increasing coverage by around 40 percentage points over time.

Data on handwashing are more limited, but among the nine countries with trend data, coverage is typically above 90 per cent, although lower levels are observed in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Trends are positive across all reporting countries, with three countries on-track and the remainder making gradual improvements.

4.6.3 Key message

Access to drinking water and sanitation remains uneven across the region, with slow progress and no countries on-track to reach universal access. While handwashing coverage is generally high and improving, data availability remains limited.

4.7 Goal 7 – Affordable and clean energy

Mixed progress towards clean cooking access

4.7.1 Overview

Goal 7 is assessed using a single indicator on primary reliance on clean fuels and technologies for cooking (SDG 7.1.2).

As of May 2026, historical national estimates for this indicator are temporarily unavailable in the Global SDG Indicators Database due to the annual update process. As a result, all country-series observations are currently classified as no data in the dashboard.

Prior to the temporary removal of national estimates, data availability for this indicator was strong across the region and allowed for assessment of progress over time. Estimates showed mixed performance. Around one third of

countries were on-track, while others showed marginal progress, stagnation or regression. While several countries had reached or were close to universal access, progress remained uneven across the region.

4.7.2 Data insights

- Primary reliance on clean fuels and technologies (SDG 7.1.2)**
 Based on the previously available estimates, access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking varied substantially across the region. Seven countries had reached or were close to

universal access and were classified as on-track. Among the remaining countries, progress was uneven. Some continued to improve, while others showed stagnation or decline. Bosnia and Herzegovina recorded the lowest level in the region, at around 40 per cent, followed by Montenegro at approximately 61 per cent and Uzbekistan at around 78 per cent. These countries also showed either stagnation or regression over time, indicating limited or reversing progress.

4.7.3 Key message

Progress towards universal access to clean cooking fuels appears uneven across the region. While some countries have reached or are close to universal coverage, others show stagnation or declining access, highlighting persistent disparities. However, temporary unavailability of national estimates in the Global SDG Indicators Database currently limits assessment within the dashboard.

4.8 Goal 8 – Decent work and economic growth

NEET improving, child labour largely unmeasured

4.8.1 Overview

Goal 8 focuses on promoting inclusive economic growth, decent work and employment opportunities, including for young people. This assessment covers two child-related indicators (three series), on youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) and child labour.

Overall progress is difficult to assess due to substantial data limitations. Around 35 per cent of country-series observations are classified as no data and a further 43 per cent as insufficient data, driven primarily by limited data availability for child labour.

Among the remaining observations, progress appears limited, with 8 per cent showing moderate progress, 10 per cent showing marginal progress and 5 per cent stagnating. No observations are currently classified as on-track.

NEET rates are generally improving across the region, with all countries with available trend data showing reductions over time. However, the aspirational target used for this indicator means that even countries demonstrating steady improvement are not currently classified as on-track.

Figure 15. Goal 8 – Distribution of country-series observations by progress status

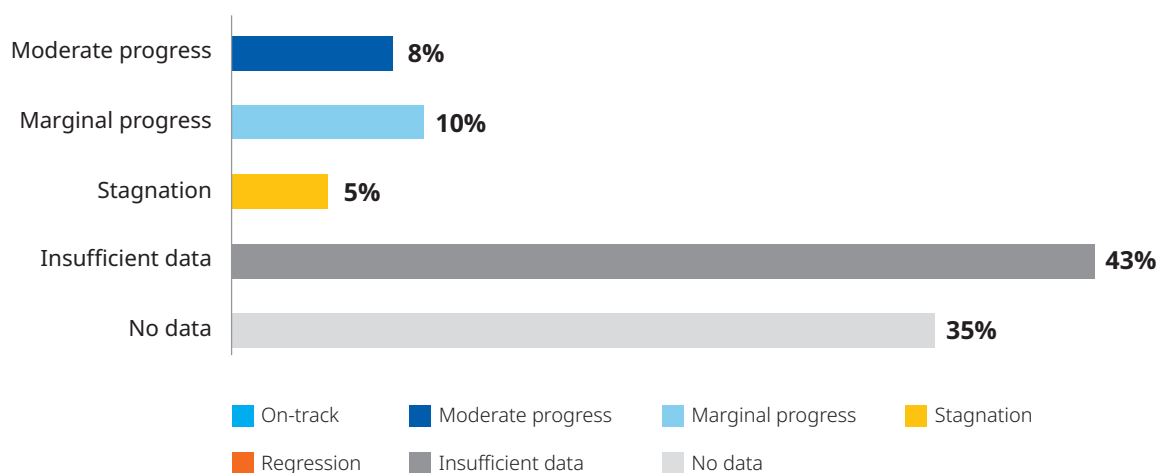
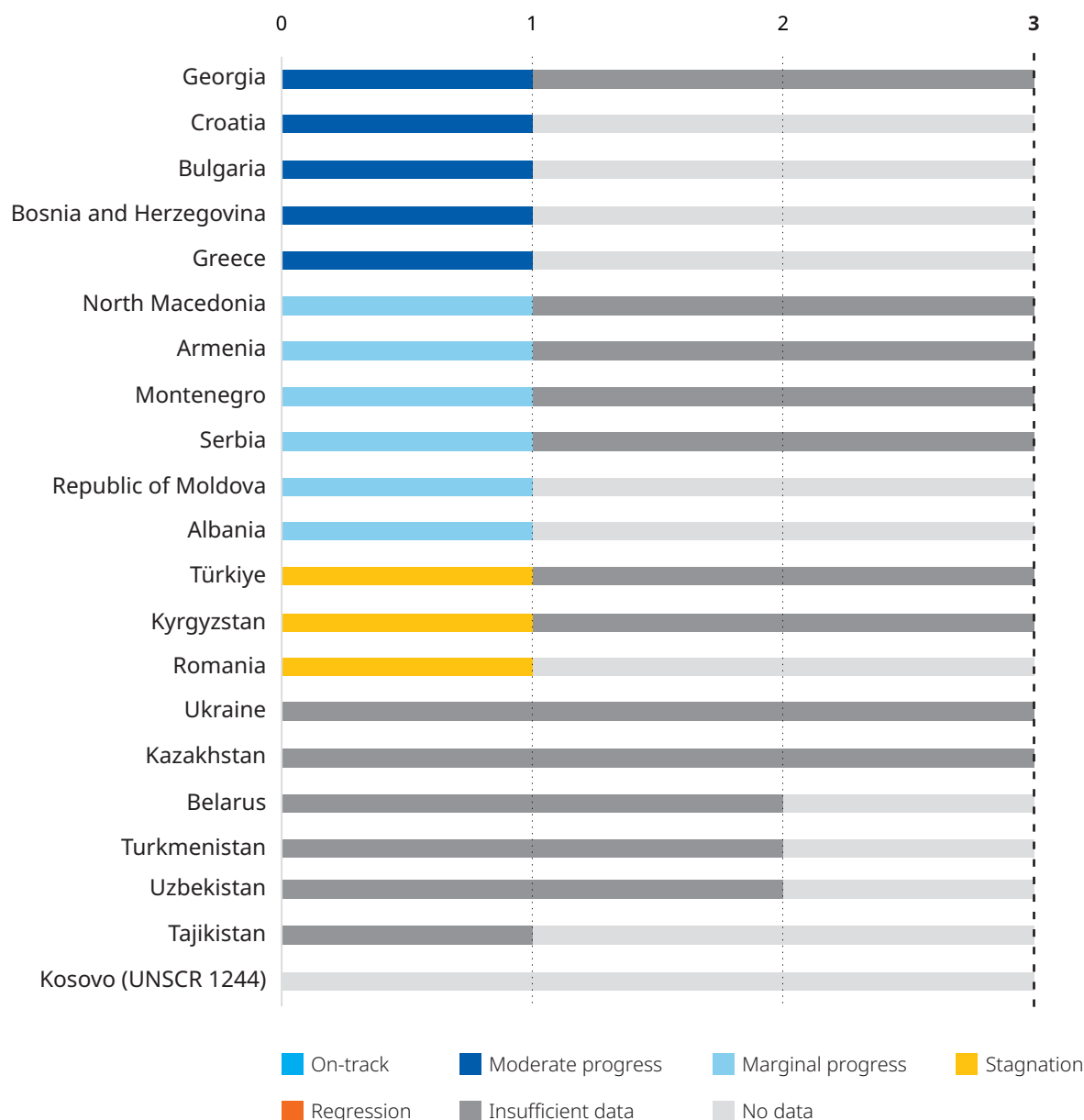


Figure 16. Goal 8 – Progress status distribution by country

4.8.2 Data insights

- Youth not in education, employment or training (SDG 8.6.1)**

Data availability for NEET is relatively strong, with most countries able to assess trends over time. However, the aspirational target, based on the average of the top five performing countries across the 55 countries and territories in Europe and Central Asia (around 5 per cent), remains

difficult to achieve and no countries are currently classified as on-track.

Across UNICEF programme countries, NEET rates range from around 8 per cent in Croatia to approximately 23 per cent in Albania and Türkiye. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan also report relatively high rates. All 14 countries with available trend data show reductions in NEET rates over time, although in several countries the declines are relatively modest.

- **Child labour (SDG 8.7.1)**

Data on child labour remain extremely limited, with no trend data available. Only four countries have recent data on child labour, combining economic activity and household chores. Rates range from around 6 per cent in Türkiye and 8 per cent in Kazakhstan to approximately 20 per cent in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

4.8.3 Key message

Progress on decent work for children and youth remains difficult to assess due to major data gaps, particularly for child labour. While NEET rates are declining across countries with available trend data, the aspirational target limits how these improvements are reflected in progress classifications.

4.9 Goal 10 – Reduced inequalities

Severe data gaps on discrimination

4.9.1 Overview

Goal 10 focuses on reducing inequalities within and between countries, including discrimination and unequal treatment. This assessment is based on a single indicator on the proportion of the population reporting discrimination or harassment (SDG 10.3.1).

Overall progress is difficult to assess due to severe data limitations. A combined 81 per cent of country–series observations are either missing (33

per cent) or lack sufficient data for trend analysis (48 per cent). Among the remaining observations, 10 per cent are classified as on-track, while 5 per cent show moderate progress and a further 5 per cent marginal progress.

The small number of on-track observations reflects the use of an aspirational target, where performance is assessed relative to the top-performing countries across the broader ECA region (55 countries), rather than against a fixed target.

Figure 17. Goal 10 – Distribution of country–series observations by progress status

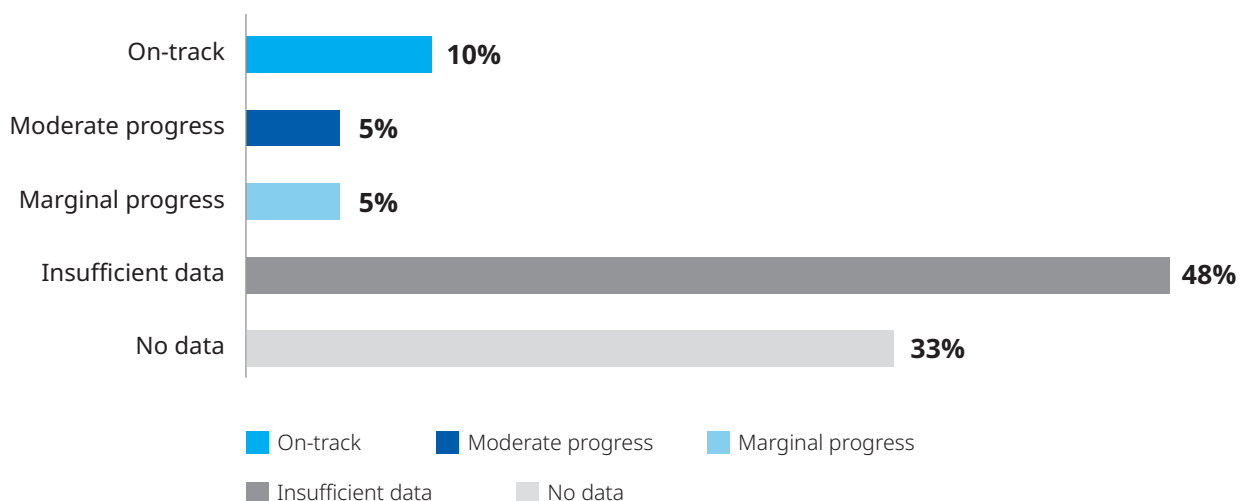
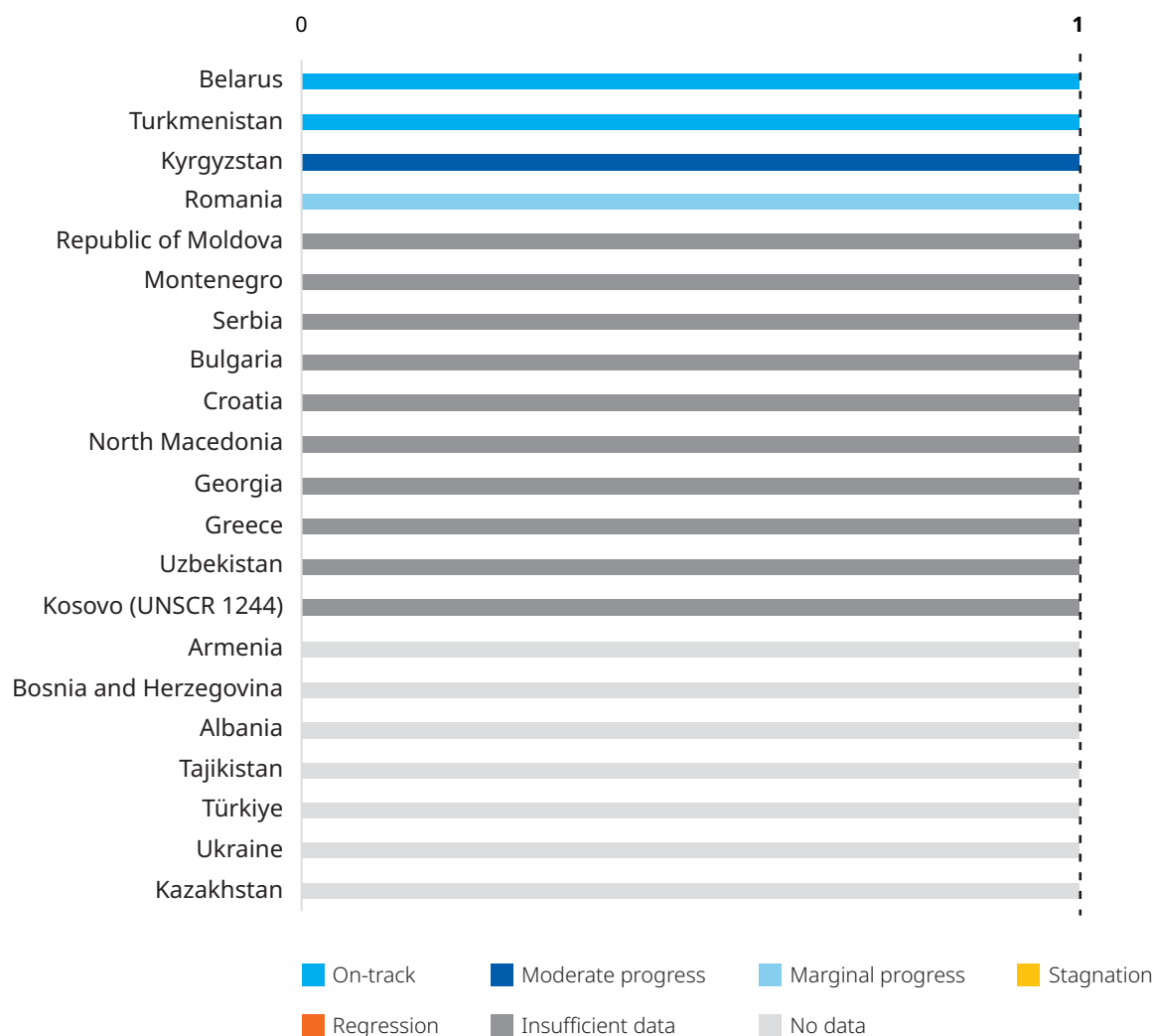


Figure 18. Goal 10 – Progress status distribution by country

4.9.2 Data insights

- **Discrimination and harassment (SDG 10.3.1)**

Data availability is very limited, with only a small number of countries reporting recent data and just two countries having sufficient data to assess trends over time. Among countries with recent data, reported levels of discrimination vary widely, ranging from around 6–7 per cent in Kyrgyzstan and Bulgaria to approximately 20 per cent in Romania and Croatia.

Where trend data are available, both countries show reductions in reported discrimination. However, the very limited number of observations makes it difficult to draw broader conclusions.

In addition, as the indicator is based on self-reported perceptions, it is influenced by factors such as awareness, reporting behaviour and survey design, which further limits comparability across countries and over time.

4.9.3 Key message

Progress on reducing discrimination cannot be reliably assessed due to severe data gaps. While available data suggest some reductions, limited coverage and the subjective nature of the indicator constrain meaningful regional analysis.

4.10 Goal 13 – Climate action

Disaster impacts driven by shocks, not trends

4.10.1 Overview

Goal 13 focuses on climate action, including adaptation and resilience to climate-related hazards and disasters. This assessment is based on one indicator (two series) on disaster-related mortality and the number of directly affected persons (SDG 13.1.1).

Progress patterns are highly uneven and should be interpreted with caution. Around 38 per cent of country-series observations are classified as

on-track, while 21 per cent are regressing, 5 per cent are stagnating and 2 per cent show moderate progress. At the same time, 17 per cent of observations are classified as no data and a further 12 per cent as insufficient data.

These patterns are likely influenced by the occurrence and severity of individual disaster events, which can produce sharp fluctuations between reporting periods and make longer-term progress difficult to interpret.

Figure 19. Goal 13 – Distribution of country-series observations by progress status

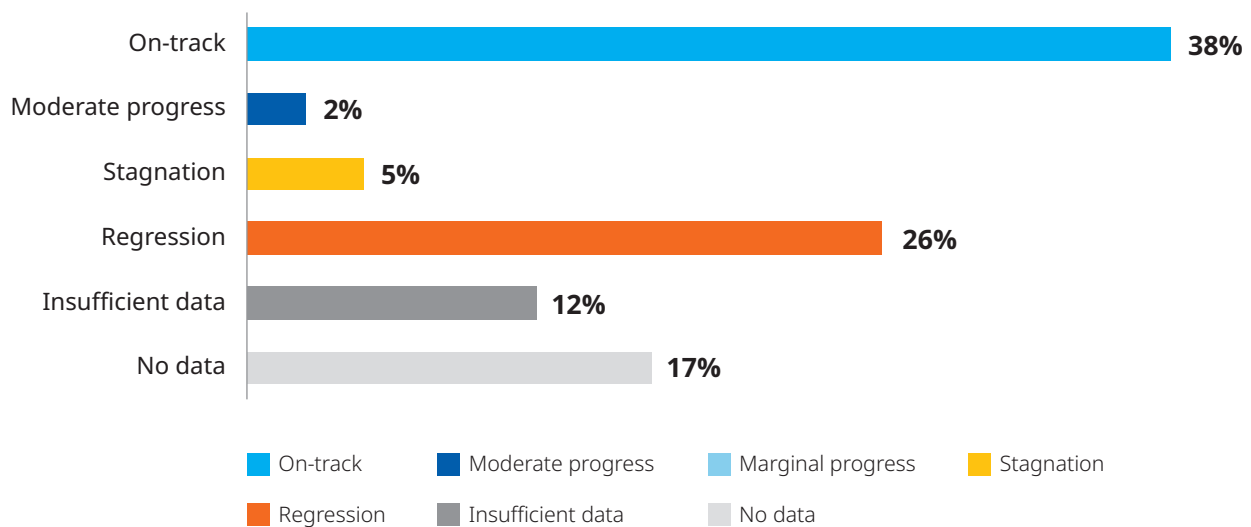
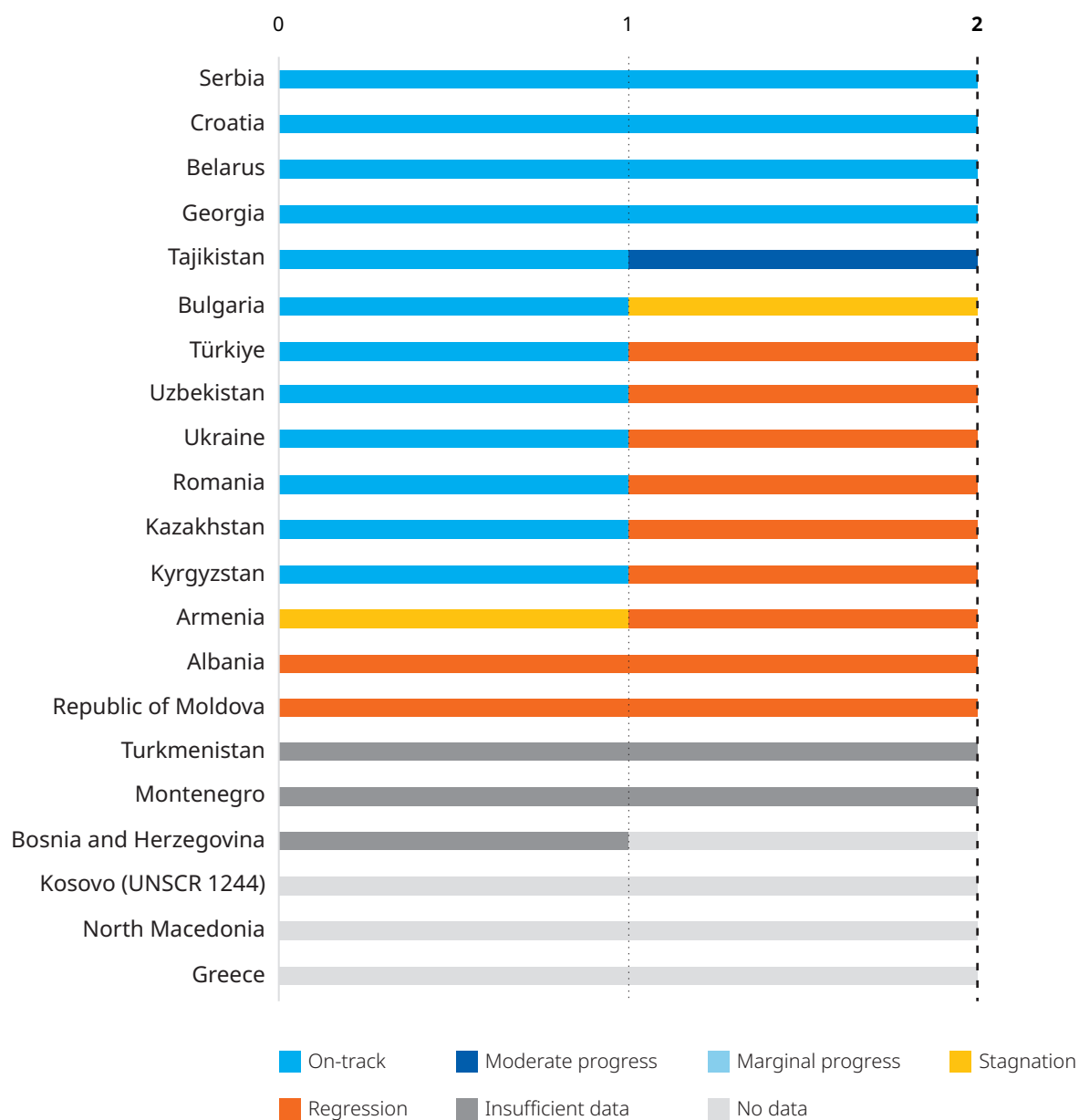


Figure 20. Goal 13 – Progress status distribution by country

4.10.2 Data insights

- **Disaster mortality and directly affected persons (SDG 13.1.1)**

Trends for these series are highly volatile, with sharp increases or decreases often reflecting individual disaster events rather than gradual changes over time. Recent data are available for around 15 countries. Rates of people directly

affected by disasters vary widely across the region, with Ukraine recording by far the highest levels, followed by Armenia and Albania. In contrast, deaths and missing persons remain comparatively low across most countries. Armenia records the highest mortality rate by a substantial margin, while most other countries report relatively low levels in recent years.

These differences reflect the type and scale of disasters, with countries experiencing high numbers of affected persons not necessarily recording the highest mortality.

4.10.3 Key message

Trends in disaster impacts are highly variable and may be largely driven by the occurrence of individual events rather than sustained changes in resilience. While some countries experience high levels of affected populations or mortality, limited and event-driven data make it difficult to assess overall progress on climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

4.11 Goal 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

Severe data gaps limit assessment

4.11.1 Overview

Goal 16 covers multiple dimensions of safety, justice and protection, including homicide, violence, human trafficking, sexual violence and birth registration. This assessment covers six child-related indicators (11 series).

Assessment is heavily constrained by data availability. A combined 75 per cent of country-series observations either have no data (56 per cent) or lack sufficient data for trend analysis (19

per cent). Among the remaining observations, 15 per cent are classified as on-track, while small shares show regression (4 per cent), stagnation (3 per cent) or progress (around 3 per cent combined).

Where data are available, some positive patterns emerge, including declining homicide rates and high levels of birth registration. However, for most indicators, particularly those related to violence and exploitation, limited data hinder a full assessment of progress.

Figure 21. Goal 16 – Distribution of country-series observations by progress status

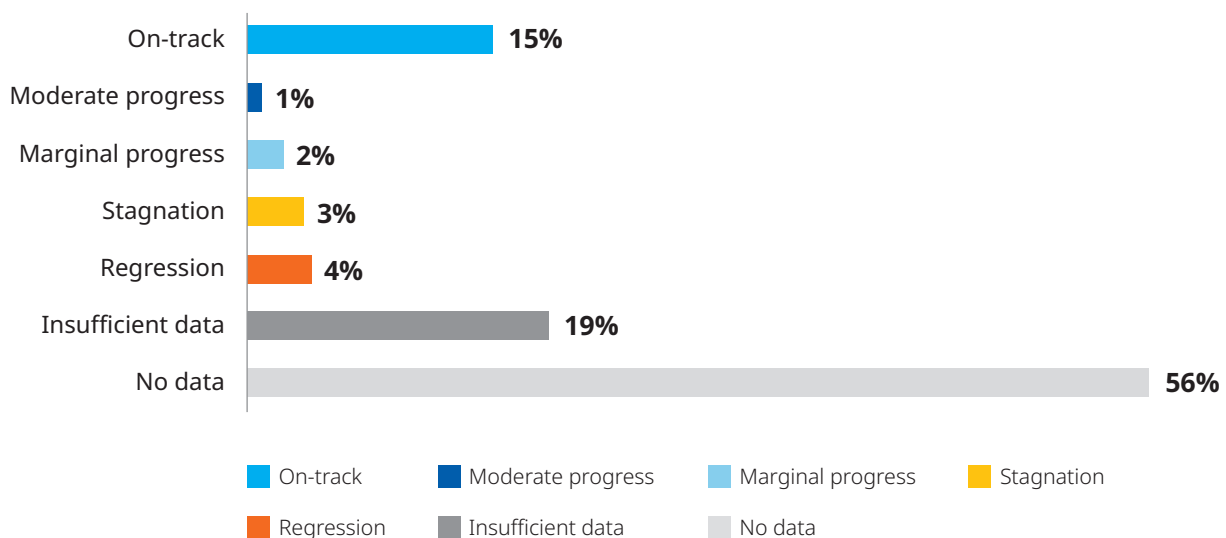
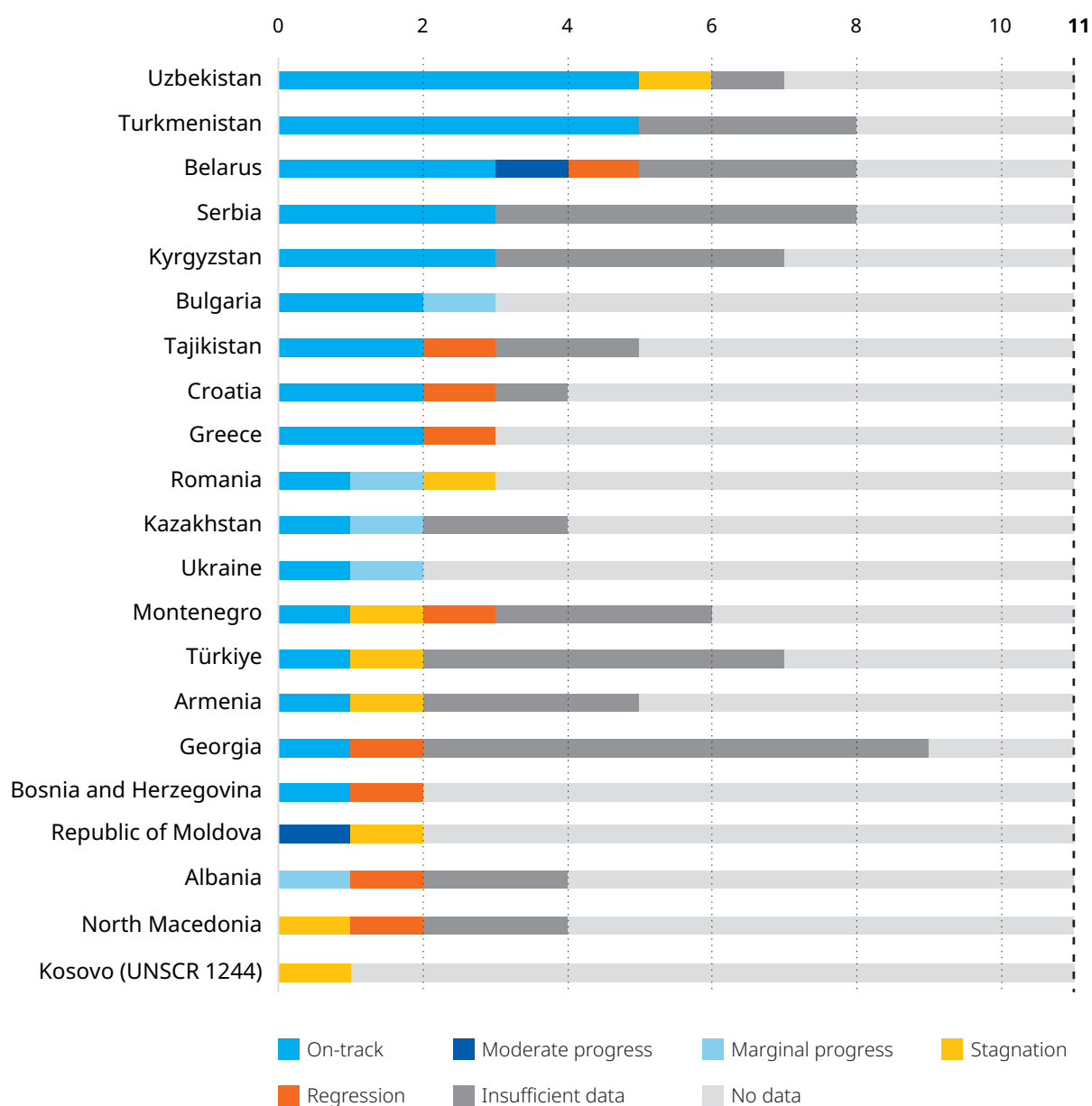


Figure 22. Goal 16 – Progress status distribution by country

4.11.2 Data insights

- **Homicide (SDG 16.1.1)**

Data availability for homicide is strong, and most countries show declining rates over time. Four countries are currently classified as on-track, while several others, including Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, have recorded notable reductions.

- **Violence and victimisation (SDG 16.1.3)**

Data on physical, sexual and psychological violence, as well as robbery and assault, remain extremely limited, with no trend data available for most series. The only exceptions are two countries with sufficient trend data for physical violence. Serbia has recorded a substantial reduction over time, while the rate in Georgia has remained broadly stable. Where data exist,

reported levels are generally low, but these findings should be interpreted with caution due to reliance on self-reported data and differences in reporting practices.

- **Violence against children (SDG 16.2.1)**

Data on violent discipline by caregivers are available for a limited number of countries, with no consistent trend data. Among countries with recent data, prevalence ranges from around 38 per cent in Kazakhstan to 67 per cent in Turkmenistan, indicating that physical punishment or psychological aggression remains widespread across the region.

- **Human trafficking (SDG 16.2.2)**

Data availability for detected victims of human trafficking is relatively strong compared to other indicators in this goal. Trends are mixed, with some countries showing increases and others decreases over time, although changes are often small. These patterns should be interpreted with caution, as variations may reflect differences in detection and reporting practices rather than underlying prevalence.

- **Sexual violence (SDG 16.2.3)**

Data on sexual violence are extremely limited,

with only three countries having recent values and one country having baseline data. As a result, no trend data are available and changes over time cannot be assessed. Given the sensitive nature of the indicator, underreporting is likely, and available estimates may not fully capture the true prevalence of sexual violence.

- **Birth registration (SDG 16.9.1)**

Birth registration shows strong performance across the region. Among the eight countries with recent data, all report universal or near-universal registration, with seven countries classified as on-track. However, trend data are not available, and for many countries only older observations exist. Despite these limitations, birth registration stands out as a high-performing area within the goal.

4.11.3 Key message

Progress on peace, justice and strong institutions cannot be comprehensively assessed due to widespread data gaps. While some areas, such as homicide and birth registration, show positive trends, limited data on violence and exploitation obscure the full picture.

4.12 Goal 17 – Partnerships for the goals

Strong performance and high data availability

4.12.1 Overview

Goal 17, as covered in this assessment, focuses on selected indicators related to data systems and enabling infrastructure, including censuses, civil registration and internet access (two indicators, four series).

Goal 17 shows the strongest overall performance among all goals, with the majority of country-series

observations on-track. Across the indicators included in this goal, 64 per cent of observations are on-track, with a further 19 per cent showing moderate progress. Smaller shares are classified as making marginal progress (4 per cent), while 4 per cent are insufficient and 10 per cent have no data.

Overall, progress is consistently high across countries, with most indicators showing widespread achievement or steady improvement.

Figure 23. Goal 17 – Distribution of country–series observations by progress status

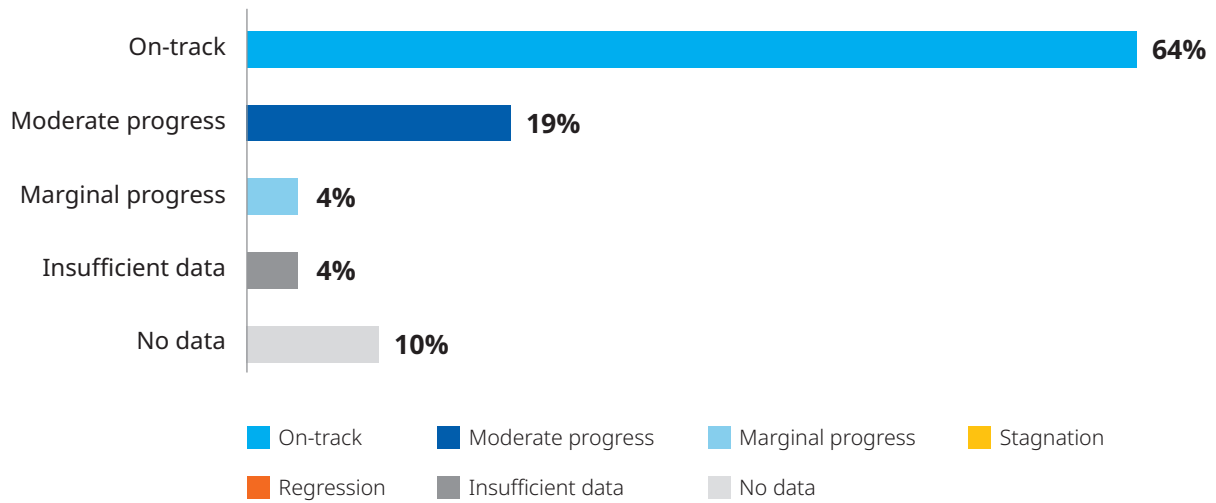
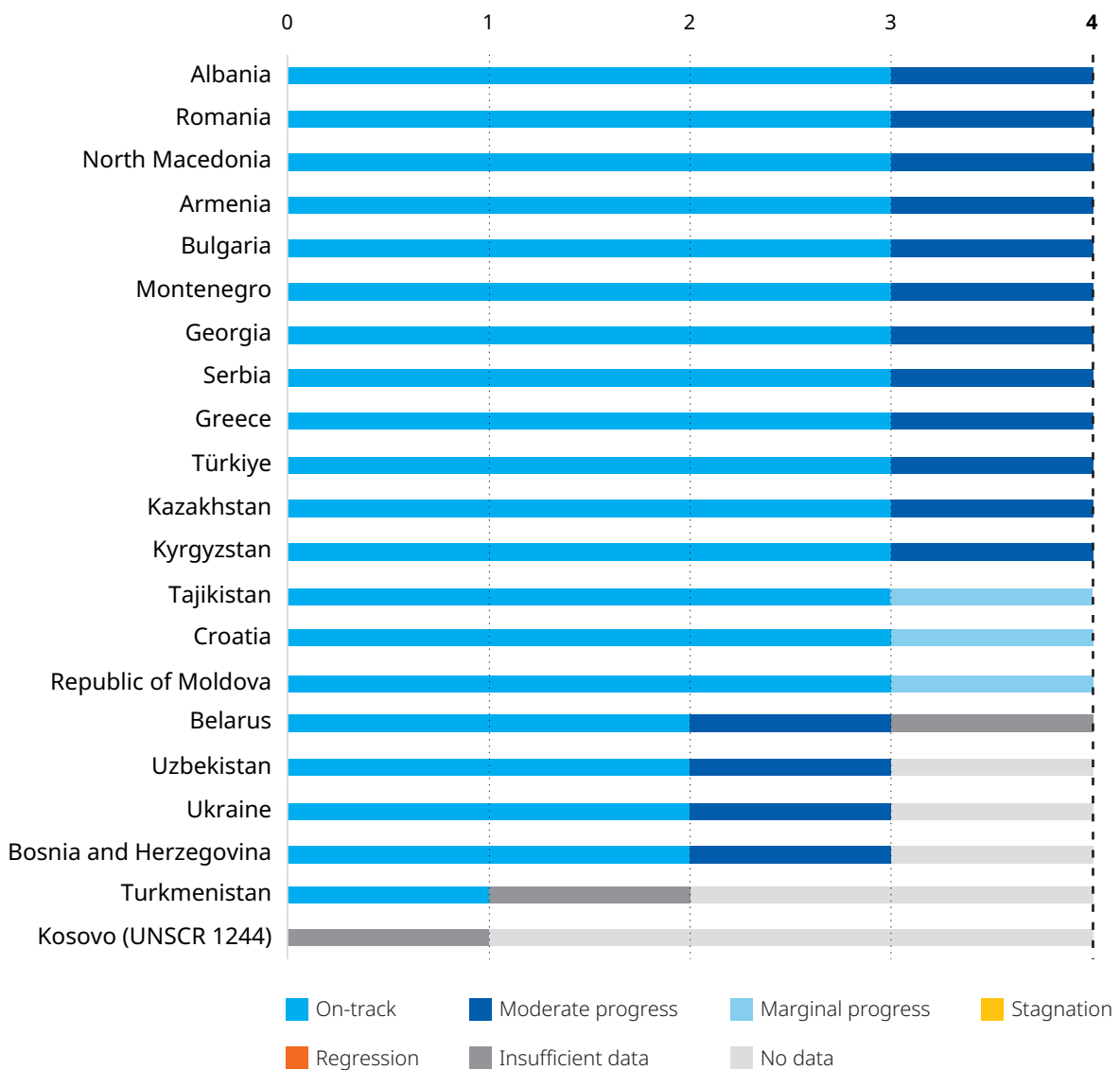


Figure 24. Goal 17 – Progress status distribution by country



4.12.2 Data insights

- **Population and housing census (SDG 17.19.2)**

Data availability for this indicator is high, and performance is strong. All countries with available data have conducted at least one population and housing census within the last 10 years and are therefore classified as on-track.

- **Birth and death registration completeness (SDG 17.19.2)**

All countries with available data report high levels of completeness in both birth and death registration systems and are classified as on-track, indicating well-functioning civil registration systems. Only a small number of countries lack data.

- **Internet use (SDG 17.8.1)**

Access to the internet has increased substantially across countries, with all countries showing

progress over time. However, none have yet reached the target of universal access. Despite this, overall levels are high, with most countries exceeding 80 per cent. Tajikistan remains an exception, with lower levels of access, although it has made substantial progress over time.

4.12.3 Key message

Goal 17 stands out as the strongest performing goal, with most country-series observations on-track or showing moderate progress. High data availability and consistent improvements across indicators point to well-developed statistical systems and expanding access to key infrastructure.

5. Conclusion

With just five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda, Europe and Central Asia face a dual challenge: progress on child-related SDG targets is uneven across goals, and persistent data gaps continue to limit the ability to assess and respond effectively. While some areas, such as health and data systems, show strong performance, others are characterised by slow progress or insufficient evidence.

Strengthening child-focused data systems will be critical in the years ahead, both to improve visibility on progress towards the SDGs by 2030 and to inform future priorities beyond the current agenda. UNICEF's collaboration with governments across

the region, including through MICS and related partnerships, provides a strong foundation, but further efforts are needed to ensure that data systems are institutionalised, adequately resourced and integrated within national statistical frameworks, such as National Strategies for the Development of Statistics.

Investing in data is not only a technical requirement, but a strategic choice that enables more timely, equitable and evidence-based decision-making. Stronger data systems will help countries better identify disparities, target interventions and accelerate progress for children.

