



Brand South Africa

Research - Internal Analysis The 2022 Human Development Index

13 December 2022

Contents

- I. What is the Human Development Index (HDI)
- II. The State of the Globe in 2022
- III. South Africa enhances its position yet drops at a sub-index level
- IV. Conclusion

- I. What is the Human Development Index (HDI)

Published on a biennial basis, the HDI is seen as a wide snapshot of country and societal development. Carried out under the auspices of the United Nation's Development Programme, the HDI measures a country's development in relation to three dimensions, life expectancy, gross National Income and educational attainment. It uses UN, World Bank and domestic country statistics in its calculations, and measurements are adjusted in relation to purchasing power parity and on a per capita basisⁱ.

The education index sees a measurement of educational attainment, both in relation to the youth and those over the age of twenty-five, while life expectancy is looked at both in relation to societal norms and on a historical basis. The notion behind all three indicators sees a scale of diminishing returns beyond a certain point, 80 years in relation to age and 80 thousand dollars in relation to the GNI number.

This ensures that a very rich country for example can't fully substitute wealth for educational attainment and/or life expectancy or vice versa. The composite and aggregated factor is represented as a number between 0 and 1, with 1 being the highest that can be obtained. Further, it is noteworthy that the UNDP argues that this does not represent the

best measure of societal development, and that interpreting results and conceptualising new policies to deal with this is more significant.

II. The state of the Globe in 2022

The 2022 report, titled “uncertain times, unsettled lives”, concluded that the globe has regressed during the Covid-19 crisis in real termsⁱⁱ. 9 out of 10 countries have seen their scores drop in the past 2 years, especially from the low and medium development categories. The report argues that the globe is currently in the midst of great uncertainty, as environmental change, advances in artificial intelligence and political polarisation, and the responses to these phenomena combine to engender a sense of uncertainty and insecurity, which the report points out is unprecedented in human history.

Floods, drought and natural disasters have increased, with over 1.2 billion now finding themselves in areas of conflict, over half being from states not deemed to be fragile. Democracy, according to the report is on the wane, while polarisation has conversely increased, even in so-called democratic states. A result of this is the reported feeling of insecurity by around 6 in 7 people surveyed by the UN, with mental illness also increasing. Only 30% of people are cited as believing that most people can be trusted, indicating a clear polarisation and consequent intolerance in society. Moreover, the report also alludes to the enhancements of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the uncertainty it is spawning, arguing that citizens need to find methods of best responding to and working with such new technologies to ensure survivability and sustainability.

Around 66 of the 191 countries represented were deemed as comprising very high human development, scoring over 0.80, Mauritius being the only one from the African continentⁱⁱⁱ. 48 were recognised as constituting high human development, scoring between 0.7 and 0.8. South Africa, China, Brazil, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt amongst others were represented in this category. 43 countries were represented in the medium development level, scoring between 0.55 and 0.69, with the other 32 countries ranking in the low development score. 40 of the 48 African countries represented saw their scores drop, with Togo, Congo and Ghana the only 3 to buck the trend^{iv}.

All but Togo and Congo saw life expectancy drop, mainly owing to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Although the HDI scores have dropped to 2016 levels according to the UN, the largest decreases were seen in Latin America and the Caribbean, with Africa seeing a much smaller decline.

Selected country scores:

Position	Country	Score
1	Switzerland	0.962
2	Norway	0.961
18	United Kingdom	0.929
63	Mauritius	0.802
72	Seychelles	0.785
79	China	0.768
97	Egypt	0.731
109	South Africa	0.713
132	India	-0.633
163	Nigeria	0.535

III. South Africa enhances its position yet drops in score

The report sees South Africa increase in rank from 2020, which saw the country placed 114. In the 2021-22 version South Africa is ranked 109, despite scoring 0.014 less than the 0.727 overall score it achieved in 2019-20. The country’s score decreased in all the sub-indexes, life expectancy, for example, decreased by 1.7 years, while GNI saw a drop of over \$500. This is indicative of the fact that the Corona Virus drastically impacted the country, but that that this impact was less when compared to other countries globally.

It is noteworthy that the report is weighted in a manner which allows it to represent the globe at the current moment, with mean scores adjusted to reflect current realities, hence South Africa’s increase in position despite decreases in the actual score and sub-indexes. The 2022 report made specific mention of the Funda Wande education programme, and the Zamuk-Phila Women’s Community Project as examples of building resilience. Funda-Wande focuses on producing educational material in indigenous languages, while Zamuk-Phila is an example of cooperative formation for the process of self-sufficiency realisation.

Index	2019-20	2021-22
Overall	0.727	0.713
Life Expectancy	64.1	62.3
Education	13.8	13.6
GNI	12,903	12,451

Index and further segmentation by gender:

Index	2019-20	2021-22
Gender Development Index	0.944	0.944
HDI female	0.699	0.685
HDI Male	0.74	0.72
Life Expectancy at Birth Female	67.9	64.9
Life Expectancy at Birth Male	62.17	59.45
Expected Years of Schooling Female	13.98 (mean 9.65)	13.98 (mean 9.65)
Expected Years of Schooling Male	13.3 (mean 12.15)	13.3 (mean 12.15)
GNI female	9934.00	9505.00
GNI Male	16129.00	15562.00
Share of Seats in Parliament Female	45.6	45.9
Share of Seats in Parliament Male	54.3	54.0

Labour Force Participation Female	44	46.2
Labour Force Participation Male	57.3	59.8
Planetary Pressure Adjusted HDI	0.661	0.648
Carbon Dioxide Emissions per capita	7.6	7.6

IV. Conclusion

The UN's 2022 report paints a bleak picture of the current state of the globe, despite the tremendous gains that have been achieved in recent decades. The current situation, as mentioned above, is characterised by uncertainty and instability. However, for insecurity to not result the report points to three key factors, known as the three 'Is', "investment", "Innovation" and "insurance", as a means of building up resilience and aiding the current period of transformation^y.

The report argues that investments in technologies to promote cleaner energy would mitigate the drastic consequences of climate change, while insurance in arenas including health care and education would aid populations in dealing with the current period. Innovation, the report argues, was abundant in the development of the various COVID-19 vaccines, which saved over 20 million lives, and which would be critical in tackling future challenges- it is noteworthy that 60% of the jobs held in the US did not exist in 1940.

Further, it is noted that societal change can be quick, as evidenced by the speed of social distancing measures another implementation during COVID-19, however for this to be achieved measures need to be inclusive, with the report placing great emphasis on the school as a means of transformation and inclusivity. South Africa, being a middle-income country, was relatively successful in tackling issues around COVID-19, however, the consequences, especially in relation to unemployment will likely take an extended period to overcome.

References

ⁱ <https://www.africadatahub.org/blog/why-the-human-development-index-is-important-and-and-what-it-means>

ⁱⁱ https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2021-22_HDR/HDR21-22_Statistical_Annex_HDI_Table.xlsx

^{iv} <https://www.africadatahub.org/blog/the-intensive-process-behind-collecting-data-for-our-covid-19-vaccine-tracker>

^v <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22overviewpdf.pdf>