

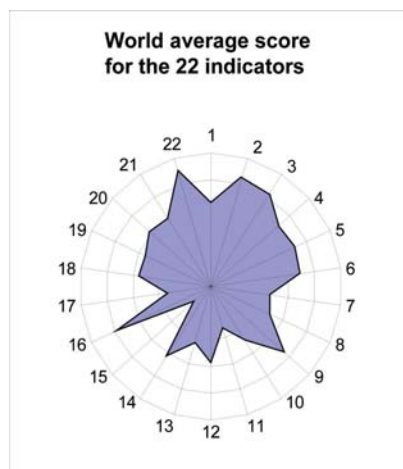
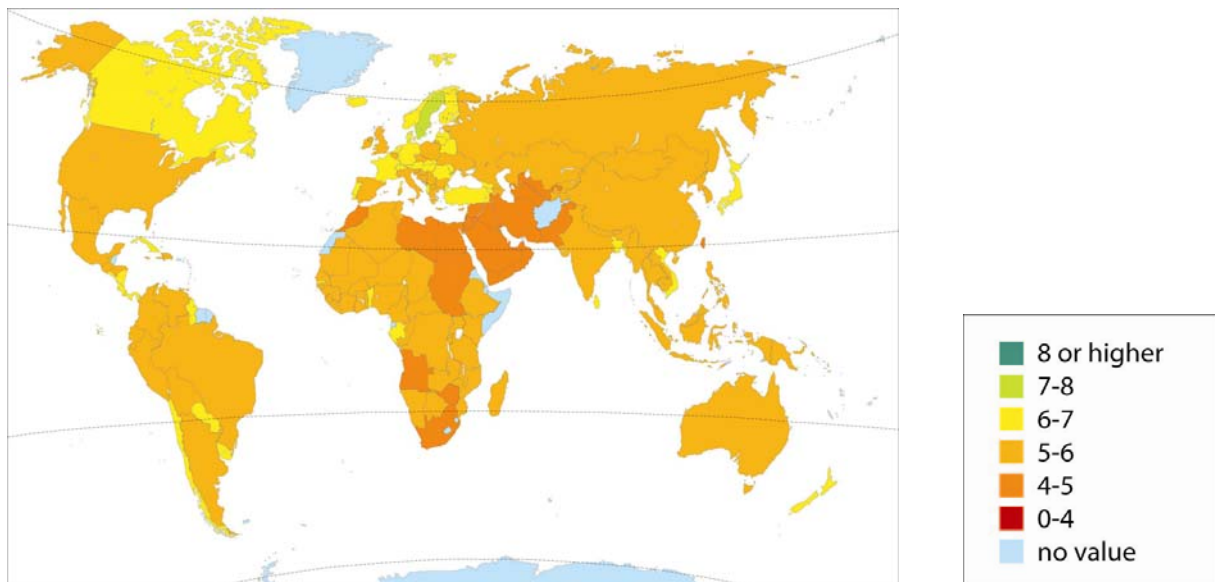
Press release
December 2008

Sustainable Society Index 2008: The world's sustainability scores a mere 5.7

In two years the world made a small step towards sustainability. However, the issues which may be of decisive importance for this century, are in decline, in spite of all plans and targets.

Main results

The Sustainable Society Foundation has published its two-yearly update of the Sustainable Society Index, the SSI, which assesses the sustainability of 151 countries. The SSI combines the main aspects of Quality of Life and Sustainability, which are relevant for development towards sustainability. The world average score is 5.7 on a scale of 0 to 10.



I Personal Development

1. Healthy Life
2. Sufficient Food
3. Sufficient to Drink
4. Safe Sanitation
5. Education Opportunities
6. Gender Equality

II Healthy Environment

7. Air Quality
8. Surface Water Quality
9. Land Quality

III Well-balanced Society

10. Good Governance
11. Employment
12. Population Growth
13. Income Distribution
14. Public Debt

IV Sustainable Use of Resources

15. Waste Recycling
16. Use of Renewable Water Resources
17. Consumption of Renewable Energy

V Sustainable World

18. Forest Area
19. Preservation of Biodiversity
20. Emission of Greenhouse Gases
21. Ecological Footprint
22. International Cooperation

For none of the 22 indicators which compose the SSI, full sustainability is achieved, which would mean a 10, expressed by the outer circle of the spider web. The lowest scores of the

indicators are for Consumption of Renewable Energy (3.2) and Waste Recycling (1.7). The highest score is for International Cooperation (9.2).

Progress

Compared with the results of the SSI-2006, the world has made a very small step towards sustainability. The positive news is that the scores of all 6 indicators of the category Personal Development have increased, be it modestly. However, the largest contribution to the progress comes from Employment and Public Debt, thanks to a worldwide growth of the economy during the period considered.

The bad news is that some issues which may be of decisive importance for this century, are deteriorating. In spite of all plans and targets, the increase in renewable energy production does not keep in step with the rapidly growing energy consumption, resulting in a decrease of the score for the indicator Consumption of Renewable Energy. The emission of greenhouse gases has, also very contrary to all targets set, further increased, resulting in a decrease of the score for this indicator.

Priorities

On a worldwide scale it is obvious that the direction of indicators that now are in decline, should be reversed urgently to avoid further deterioration. This is particularly important for Emission of Greenhouse Gases and Consumption of Renewable Energy, as well as for Ecological Footprint and Income Distribution.

Inequality in Income Distribution is still growing in many countries and may become a possible threat for a well-balanced society in these countries. Special attention is also needed for the indicator with the lowest score: Waste Recycling. This does not alter the fact that actually all indicators need attention, in one region more than in another.

151 countries

The website www.sustainablestudies.com gives the data for all 151 countries. The full publication can be downloaded for free from this site.

More information

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