Sustainable Development of Israel: What do We know About It and What Can We Offer?

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Ten years ago, on 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," which established 17 global goals and 169 targets of sustainable development. Taken together, they can be considered the baseline program for humanity's progress toward a single shared objective: the greatest possible happiness of all people living today, ensured without undermining the happiness of future generations.

These Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be roughly divided into three groups: social, environmental, and governance-related.
The social goals include the eradication of poverty and hunger, improvements in health and well-being, access to quality education, water, energy, and sanitation, reduction of gender inequality and income inequality, decent employment, personal safety, and effective justice.

Environmental goals include climate preservation, conservation, restoration and sustainable use of the world's oceans, marine resources and terrestrial ecosystems, and the transition to more sustainable models of consumption and production.

Governance goals involve creating conditions for effective economic growth, industrialization and innovation, building resilient infrastructure, forming peaceful and open societies, strengthening governance institutions, and reinforcing mechanisms of global partnership.

This UN resolution became the first and remains the only international document that provides a legal and methodological foundation for the systematic and uniform assessment of countries' progress toward shared goals, helping identify their challenges, anticipate their escalation, and plan solutions. These tools are relevant not only for less developed countries but also for highly developed nations like Israel. However, to use such a tool effectively, one must first learn about it and recognize its value.

This has guided my efforts as a person who arrived in Israel from Russia a little over a year ago and, thanks to my long-time and new colleagues, soon became involved in the work of the New Israeli Association of Sciences. It was within this organization that, at my initiative, a Sustainable Development Division was created and a model proposal was prepared for municipal authorities in Israel on jointly developing local sustainable development programs.

Below, Israel is examined in terms of its progress toward the SDGs in comparison with three countries that are major sources of new Israeli citizens. Among the 361,000 immigrants who arrived during 2014–2023, most came, in descending order, from Russia, the United States, Ukraine, Belarus, and France. Comparison with Ukraine and Belarus would be inappropriate given their unique circumstances during this decade. I therefore included Finland—a country that has advanced more than any other toward achieving all 17 SDGs.

The main source of information is the latest UN-published data on 124 SDG indicators for 193

countries, along with their trends. Under contract with the UN, this monitoring is carried out by the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

According to the UN, Finland has only 13% of the path left to fully achieve all 17 SDGs. Among the four countries compared with Israel, France is closest to achieving the goals—it ranks fifth, with 17% of the path remaining. Meanwhile, the United States, Israel, and Russia are positioned around 50th place, each with 25–26% of the path still ahead. The difference between 13% and 26% may seem modest, but a detailed analysis of indicator dynamics shows how challenging each additional percentage point of progress becomes for nations.

Observed Sustainable Development Indicators

Their number ranges from 3 to 17 per goal. For SDG-1 "No Poverty", there are only three indicators: the share of the population living on less than $2.15 per day, the share living on less than $3.65 per day, and the share of the population below the national poverty line.

For SDG-2 "Zero Hunger," 10 indicators are tracked: prevalence of undernourishment, stunting in children under 5, wasting in children under 5, minimum dietary diversity among children aged 6–23 months, obesity (BMI > 30), trophic level of the human diet (2 = fully plant-based, 3 = fully animal-based), cereal yield (quintals per hectare of harvested land), the Sustainable Nitrogen Management Index (an indicator of the balance between economic and environmental efficiency in agriculture), the level of potential land productivity achieved, and exports of hazardous pesticides (tons per million people).

Table 1. SDG-1 and SDG-2 Indicators: Poverty and Hunger Eradication

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
1.1	Share of poor with income < $2.15/day	%	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.2
1.2	Share of poor with income < $3.65/day	%	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.3	0.3
1.3	Share of poor by national criteria	%	16.8	-	18.1	8.3	6.7
2.1	Prevalence of undernourishment	%	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
2.2	Prevalence of stunting <5	%	2.6	2.6	3.4	2.6	2.6
2.3	Wasting in children <5	%	0,7	3,3	0,1	0,7	0,7
2.4	Minim. dietary diversity (children 6–23 mo.)	%	90,0	90,0	-	90,0	90,0
2.5	Obesity preval. (BMI > 30)	%	22,5	24,2	42,0	9,7	21,5
2.6	Trophic level of humans (2-3)	units	2,4	2,4	2,4	2,5	2,5
2.7	Cereal yield	t/ha	3,2	3,4	8,1	6,7	3,8

2.8	Sustainable nitrogen management index (0–1.41)	units	1,1	0,8	0,5	0,6	1,0
2.9	Share of potential yield obtained	%	-	-	-	75,0	52, 7
2.10	Export of hazardous pesticides per 1M pop.	t	0,6	0,1	12,3	4,1	0,5

In these and subsequent tables, Israel's indicator values are color-coded to reflect their trend:
• green — goal achieved or on track
• beige — moderate progress
• brown — stagnation
• red — movement away from the goal
• black — insufficient data to estimate the trend.

SDG-3 "Good Health and Well-Being" includes 17 indicators: maternal mortality, neonatal mortality, and under-5 mortality per 100,000 live births; tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population; new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected people; the share of deaths from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases among those aged 30–70; mortality due to household and ambient air pollution per 100,000; road-traffic mortality per 100,000; life expectancy; births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19; share of births attended by skilled health personnel; share of newborns receiving two WHO-recommended vaccines; universal health coverage index (0–100); subjective well-being ("happiness index," 0–10); gap in life expectancy between regions (years); income-based gap in self-reported health (%); and daily smoking prevalence among people aged 15+.

Table 2. SDG-3 Indicators: Health and Well-Being

No.	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
3.1	Maternal mortality per 100,000 births	persons	2.5	9.4	16.3	7.3	7.9
3.2	Neonatal mortality per 100,000	persons	1.7	1.7	3.4	2.7	1.3
3.3	Under-5 mortality per 100,000	persons	3.4	4.5	6.5	4.3	2.3
3.4	Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000	persons	2.8	38.0	3.1	8.7	3.4
3.5	New HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected	persons	0.0	-	-	0.1	-
3.6	Mortality from major NCDs (age 30–70)	%	7.6	22.4	13.7	10.2	9.6
3.7	Air pollution mortality per 100,000	persons	15.0	67.0	14.0	10.0	7.0
3.8	Road traffic deaths per 100,000	persons	4.2	10.6	14.2	4.7	4.2
3.9	Life expectancy	years	82.4	73.2	79.3	83.3	81.9

3.10	Births per 1,000 girls aged 15–19	persons	6.7	13.4	13.5	6.4	3.3
3.11	Share of births attended by skilled personnel	%	-	99.7	98.6	97.6	99.5
3.12	Newborns with 2 vaccinations	%	98.0	97.0	92.0	95.0	91.0
3.13	Universal health coverage index (0–100)	units	75.5	79.2	85.7	84.8	85.7
3.14	Subjective well-being (0–10)	units	7.2	5.9	6.7	6.6	7.7
3.15	Regional life expectancy gap	years	2.7	-	68.2	10.9	3.5
3.16	Self-rated health gap by income	%	8.4	-	22.8	21.8	22.8
3.17	Share of smokers (15+)	%	16.9	-	8.9	25.3	11.3

The indicator of subjective well-being (the country's happiness index) seems to be so important that it is worth looking at it more closely. It is calculated based on the results of a survey of a representative sample of the country's residents conducted by Gallup under a contract with the United Nations, the results are officially published in the annual UN reports on world happiness. According to the average value of this index for 2012-2025, Israel is tenth in the ranking of the happiest countries in the world, Russia is 67th, the USA is 17th, France is 25th, Finland is second (over the past few years it has been in first place). I have no doubt that Israelis who know about their country's high place in the world happiness rankings, this adds pride to their country. But it is worth considering that, unlike in many other countries where a significant part of the population consists of minorities, here the participation in surveys of representatives of the main minorities - Arabs (20%) and Haredim (14% of the population), if their representation is ensured in the samples, does not reduce, but significantly increases the country's happiness index.: according to Israeli researchers (https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/5262472), these minorities demonstrate the highest satisfaction with life (Arabs – 8.1, Haredim – 9.0 on a 10-point scale). It is easy to calculate that with a total happiness index of 7.2 for Israelis in 2025, without the proportional participation of these minorities, the happiness index for the majority (two–thirds of the population) would be about 6.7, as in the United States and France.

SDG-4 “Quality Education” includes 8 indicators:
• share of children aged 4–6 enrolled in organized early childhood education
• share of children receiving primary education
• share of students completing upper secondary school
• literacy rate among people aged 15–24
• share of citizens aged 25–34 with higher education
• PISA results (0–600 scale)
• socio-economic inequality in math achievement
• share of low performers in mathematics among 15-year-olds.

Table 3. SDG-4 Indicators: Quality Education

No.	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland

4.1	Share of children aged 4–6 in pre-primary education	%	96.8	83.4	86.5	99.9	96.5
4.2	Share of children in primary education	%	96.3	95.1	96.0	100.0	98.4
4.3	Upper secondary graduation rate	%	98.9	97.0	98.8	98.4	99.7
4.4	Youth literacy rate (ages 15–24)	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
4.5	Share of population aged 25–34 with tertiary education	%	48.0	-	50.4	51.9	39.2
4.6	PISA scores (0–600)	points	465.5	-	489.4	428.3	495.1
4.7	SES-related performance variation in mathematics	%	19.6	-	14.9	21.5	12.4
4.8	Share of low performers in mathematics (age 15)	%	37.3	-	33.9	28.8	24.9

SDG-5 “Gender Equality” includes 5 indicators: share of women 15–49 using modern family-planning services; ratio of average years of schooling for women vs. men; ratio of employed women vs. men; share of women in national parliament; and the gender pay gap (median female wage relative to median male wage, %).

Table 4. SDG-5 Indicators: Gender Equality

No.	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
5.1	Share of women (15–49) using modern contraception	%	69.2	75.4	80.2	91.3	90.4
5.2	Ratio of average years of schooling (women/men)	index	100.7	101.3	101.2	97.2	103.0
5.3	Female-to-male labor force participation	%	91.0	79.4	83.9	86.8	91.0
5.4	Women in national parliament	%	24.2	16.4	28.7	36.2	45.5
5.5	Median wage gap (women vs. men)	%	20.8	-	16.4	5.3	16.1

SDG-6 “Clean Water and Sanitation” includes 7 indicators: population using at least basic drinking-water services and basic sanitation; freshwater withdrawal as a share of available resources; share of wastewater requiring treatment; water-consumption deficit driven by virtual-water exports; and shares of population using safely managed water and sanitation services.

SDG-7 “Affordable and Clean Energy” includes 4 indicators: share of population with access to electricity and clean cooking technologies; CO_2 emissions from electricity generation (megatons per terawatt-hour); and the share of renewables in final electricity consumption.

Table 5. SDG-6 and SDG-7 Indicators: Water, Sanitation and Energy

No.	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
6.1	Population using basic drinking water services	%	100.0	97.1	100.0	100.0	100.0
6.2	Population using basic sanitation services	%	99.9	89.4	99.6	98.6	99.4
6.3	Freshwater withdrawal as % of available resources	%	129.7	4.1	28.2	21.4	7.1
6.4	Share of wastewater safely treated	%	97.0	55.1	67.7	82.0	85.0
6.5	Water deficit due to exports (per capita)	m^3	2726	12440	2147	2777	2219.3
6.6	Population with safely managed drinking water	%	99.5	-	97.5	99.7	99.6
6.7	Population with safely managed sanitation	%	96.3	-	97.0	89.7	90.0
7.1	Access to electricity	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
7.2	Access to clean fuels and technologies	%	100.0	99.4	100.0	100.0	100.0
7.3	CO_2 emissions per kWh of electricity	Mt	0.8	1.6	1.2	0.5	0.4
7.4	Share of renewables in electricity consumption	%	6.2	3.5	10.9	16.2	50.2

SDG-8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth” includes 8 indicators: adjusted GDP growth index (0–100); victims of modern slavery per 1,000 people; share of adults 15+ with a bank or mobile-money account; share of workers with guaranteed fundamental labor rights; fatal work-related accidents linked to imports per 1,000,000 people; victims of import-related modern slavery per 100,000 people; employment-to-population ratio; and share of youth 15–24 not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

Table 6. SDG-8 Indicators: Economic Growth and Decent Work

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
8.1	Adjusted GDP growth index (0–100)	unit	72.7	82.8	73.5	69.9	71.1
8.2	Modern slavery victims per 1000 people	persons	3.8	13.0	3.3	2.1	1.4
8.3	Adults 15+ with bank account	%	92.9	89.7	95.0	99.2	99.5
8.4	Worker rights protection (0–1)	unit	-	0.58	0.56	0.77	0.82
8.5	Import-related fatalities per million	persons	2.5	0.3	2.2	2.4	2.9
8.6	Import-related modern slavery per 100k	persons	81.4	11.8	64.5	67.7	95.8
8.7	Employment-to-population ratio	%	69.3	70.3	71.9	69.0	72.6
8.8	NEET youth 15–24	%	13.0	-	13.0	11.3	9.0

SDG-9 “Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure” includes 11 indicators:
• rural population with access to all-season roads
• internet use
• mobile-broadband subscriptions
• logistics performance index (1–5)
• average score of the three best universities (0–100)
• academic publications per 1,000 people
• R&D expenditure (% of GDP)
• patent applications per million people
• researchers per 1,000 employed
• income-based inequality in digital access
• share of women graduating in STEM fields.

Table 7. SDG-9 Indicators: Infrastructure, Industrialization and Innovation

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
9.1	Residents with access to all-season roads	%	100.0	94.1	99.8	98.3	99.8
9.2	Residents with internet access	%	87.0	92.0	93.1	86.8	93.5

9.3	Mobile broadband subscriptions	%	153.3	118.9	184.8	109.3	159.3
9.4	Logistics performance index (1–5)	unit	3.7	2.7	3.9	3.8	4.2
9.5	Avg. score of top 3 universities (0–100)	unit	54.0	56.8	97.8	74.1	59.7
9.6	Academic publications per 1000 people	unit	2.7	0.7	1.8	1.7	4.1
9.7	R&D expenditure share of GDP	%	6.0	0.9	3.6	2.2	3.0
9.8	Patent applications per 1M population	unit	1706.1	187.7	1561.2	1002.4	2596.1
9.9	Researchers per 1000 employed	unit	n/a	n/a	10.6	1152	16.2
9.10	Income-based digital access inequality	%	39.9	n/a	26.9	0.7	9.2
9.11	Women graduates in STEM	%	33.9	n/a	38.6	42.6	32.2

SDG-10 “Reduced Inequalities” includes 3 indicators:
• the Gini coefficient (measuring income inequality),
• the Palma ratio (the income share of the richest 10% divided by that of the poorest 40%),
• the poverty rate among people aged 65+.

Table 8. SDG-10 Indicators: Reducing Income Inequality

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
10.1	Gini coefficient	%	37.9	35.1	41.3	31.5	27.7
10.2	Palma ratio	unit	1.3	1.4	1.8	1.1	1.0
10.3	Share of poor among population 65+	%	15.3	-	22.9	6.1	5.5

SDG-11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities” includes 6 indicators:
• share of population living in slums,
• annual average PM2.5 concentration (mg/m³),
• share of population with access to improved drinking water,
• share of residents burdened by rent,
• share of people living within 15 minutes of a place of interest,
• share of residents with convenient access to public transport.

Table 9. SDG-11 Indicators: Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
11.1	Population living in slums	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
11.2	Annual PM2.5 concentration	mg/m³	21.2	11.3	8.7	8.6	4.8

11.3	Access to improved drinking water	%	100.0	97.2	99.6	100.0	100.0
11.4	Rent-burdened population	%	-	-	29.0	11.3	24.1
11.5	Residents near cultural sites	%	83.7	-	57.7	97.9	96.3
11.6	Access to public transport	%	99.9	86.3	62.1	96.4	95.5

SDG-12 “Responsible Consumption and Production” includes 7 indicators:
• unrecycled electronic waste per capita (kg/day),
• air-pollution impact from domestic production measured in DALYs (years of healthy life lost per 1,000 people),
• air-pollution impact from imports (DALYs per 1,000 people),
• nitrogen emissions from production (kg per capita),
• plastic-waste exports (kg per capita),
• unrecycled municipal solid waste (kg per capita per day).

Table 10. SDG-12 Indicators: Responsible Consumption and Production

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
12.1	Unrecycled electronic waste per capita	kg	8.4	1.2	9.3	9.1	5.1
12.2	Air pollution impact of production (DALY/ton)	unit	3.9	12.4	4.5	4.6	7.0
12.3	Air pollution impact of imports (DALY/ton)	unit	12.0	10.0	10.2	8.6	11.1
12.4	Nitrogen emissions from production per capita	kg	30.3	3.0	67.2	52.9	51.2
12.5	Nitrogen emissions from imports per capita	kg	37.4	35.8	26.8	32.4	38.7
12.6	Plastic waste exports per capita	kg	2.7	12.5	1.5	5.3	4.9
12.7	Unrecycled municipal waste per day	kg	1.4	0.2	1.5	0.9	1.1

SDG-13 “Climate Action” includes 4 indicators:
• CO_2 emissions from fossil-fuel combustion and cement production (t CO_2 per capita),
• greenhouse-gas emissions embodied in imports (t CO_2 per capita),
• CO_2 emissions embodied in fossil-fuel exports (t CO_2 per capita),
• estimated carbon-cost impact at €60 per ton (scale 0–100).

SDG-14 “Life Below Water” includes 6 indicators:
• average share of protected marine biodiversity areas,
• Ocean Health Index: water cleanliness (0–100),
• share of fish catch from overfished or collapsed stocks,

• share of catch obtained by trawling or dredging,
• share of catch discarded after being caught,
• threats to marine biodiversity from imports (per million people).

SDG-15 “Life on Land” includes 5 indicators:
• protected terrestrial biodiversity areas (%),
• protected freshwater biodiversity areas (%),
• Red List species survival index (0–1),
• permanently deforested land (% over 3 years),
• imported deforestation (m² per capita).

Table 11. SDG-13, SDG-14 and SDG-15 Indicators: Climate Stability and Ecosystem Protection

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
13.1	Production-based CO_2 emissions per capita	t	6.5	12.6	14.5	4.2	5.7
13.2	Import-based CO_2 emissions per capita	t	6.6	1.4	5.5	5.2	7.4
13.3	Export-based CO_2 emissions per capita	t	0.3	9.4	2.9	0.0	0.0
13.4	Carbon cost estimate	M€	37.9	n/a	22.6	64.6	38.6
14.1	Protected marine areas	%	14.8	22.8	33.9	80.9	60.9
14.2	Ocean health index: clean waters (0–100)	unit	35.0	63.6	73.6	57.7	70.8
14.3	Share of fish from depleted stocks	%	-	36.6	23.9	21.0	3.1
14.4	Share of fish caught by trawls/dredges	%	46.4	4.2	22.0	26.6	0.0
14.5	Share of discarded catch	%	22.4	23.4	8.7	12.9	0.2
14.6	Threats to marine biodiversity from imports	unit	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.48	0.1
15.1	Protected terrestrial biodiversity areas	%	17.1	25.5	38.3	81.1	71.9
15.2	Protected freshwater biodiversity areas	%	22.7	26.2	31.1	78.0	75.9
15.3	Species survival index (0–1)	unit	0.73	0.95	0.83	0.84	0.99
15.4	Forest area loss (3-year change)	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
15.5	Forest loss from imports per capita	m²	31.5	4.3	18.6	14.4	34.9

SDG-16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” includes 12 indicators:

• homicides per 100,000 people,
• crime-control effectiveness (0–1),
• share of unconvicted detainees among all prisoners,
• share of registered births among children under 5,
• Corruption Perceptions Index (0–100),
• share of children in child labor,
• arms imports (million USD per 100,000 people),
• Press Freedom Index (0–100),
• access to and affordability of justice (0–1),
• timeliness of administrative procedures (0–1),
• rule of law and fairness of compensation in expropriation (0–1),
• prison population per 100,000.

Table 12. SDG-16 Indicators: Peace, Justice and Institutional Quality

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
16.1	Homicides per 100k population	persons	1.6	6.8	5.8	1.3	1.0
16.2	Effectiveness of crime control (0–1)	unit	-	0.79	0.83	0.81	0.95
16.3	Share of unconvicted among prisoners	%	25.7	15.6	26.2	26.3	23.0
16.4	Children <5 with registered birth	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
16.5	Corruption perception index (0–100)	unit	64.0	22.0	65.0	67.0	88.0
16.6	Child labor prevalence	%	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	0.0
16.7	Arms imports per 100k people	M$	9.6	1.5	3.6	4.2	0.5
16.8	Press freedom index (0–100)	unit	51.1	24.6	65.5	76.6	87.2
16.9	Access to justice (0–1)	unit	-	0.63	0.48	0.63	0.71
16.10	Timeliness of administrative processes (0–1)	unit	-	0.59	0.55	0.7	0.8
16.11	Legal certainty & fair compensation (0–1)	unit	-	0.35	0.71	0.75	0.79
16.12	Prisoners per 100k	unit	165.5	214.4	524.4	111.7	51.6

SDG-17 “Partnerships for the Goals” includes 7 indicators:

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
17.1	Gov. expenditure on health & education (% of GDP)	%	11.3	8.9	14.5	14.4	14.4
17.2	Share of official international assistance	%	0.1	-	0.2	0.5	0.5
17.3	Tax haven index (100–0)	unit	0	-	46	65	60
17.4	Financial secrecy index (100–0)	unit	59.3	-	72.6	47.9	51.8
17.5	Profit redistribution of multinationals	%	0	0	0	0	0
17.6	Statistical capacity index (0–100)	unit	87.9	82.9	93.4	92.8	95.1
17.7	Support for UN international cooperation (0–100)	unit	25.6	43.3	5.1	49.6	61.6

• government spending on health and education as % of GDP,
• share of concessional international public financing (including official development assistance),
• tax-haven score (0 = best, 100 = worst),
• financial-secrecy score (0 = best, 100 = worst),
• redistributed profits of multinational corporations,
• statistical capacity index (0–100),
• UN multilateralism-support index (0–100).

Many SDG indicators are not measured directly but constructed from several sub-indicators. For example, the last indicator above (multilateralism-support index) is derived from six components:

1) ratification of key UN treaties;
2) voting alignment with the majority in the UN General Assembly;
3) membership in UN bodies;
4) involvement in conflicts and militarization;
5) use of unilateral coercive measures;
6) financial contributions to the UN budget.

Table 13. SDG-17 Indicators: Global Partnerships for Sustainable Development

Assessment of Israel's Progress Toward the SDGs

According to the 2025 UN Country Report, Israel has fully achieved only one out of the 17 SDGs. For the remaining goals, challenges persist. Five SDGs show "serious challenges", nine — "significant challenges", and two — issues classified as "remaining problems."

For SDG-1: limited progress, insufficient to reach the goal; significant problems remain in reducing poverty by national definition.

For SDG-2: stagnation overall; two indicators deteriorate — obesity prevalence and nitrogen-management efficiency in soils.

SDG-3 is the only SDG that Israel has fully achieved across all 17 indicators.

Still, moderate improvement continues for most, except 5 indicators that stagnate:

• road-traffic mortality,
• subjective well-being,
• regional gaps in life expectancy,
• income-based health self-assessment gap,
• daily smoking prevalence.

Additionally, universal health-coverage scores are not very high.

For SDG-4:

• serious problem — high and rising share of low-performing students in mathematics,
• significant problem — growing socio-economic inequality in math outcomes,
• worsening PISA results.

For SDG-5: relatively weak and worsening indicators of modern family-planning coverage among women 15–49, a large and persistent gender pay gap, and a low share of women in parliament.

SDG-6 and SDG-7: note the relatively low share of renewable energy in electricity production.

SDG-8: positive — decreasing share of NEET youth aged 15–19.

SDG-9: only one challenge — inequality in internet access based on income.

SDG-10: inequality indicators close to Russia, worse than European countries, better than the U.S., but worsening; poverty among people 65+ remains high.

SDG-11: very high and rising PM2.5 concentration.

SDG-12: all 8 indicators problematic — especially unrecycled municipal waste and nitrogen emissions.

SDG-13, SDG-14, SDG-15: out of 14 indicators, 13 indicate environmental problems; 7 of them indicate serious problems.

SDG-16: major problem — high and rising homicide rate; significant problem — low press freedom.

SDG-17: serious problems — financial-secrecy score worse than Europe (better than U.S.), low international aid, weak support for UN multilateralism.

Table 14 contains indicators of sustainable development, which seem to me to be the most problematic for Israel when compared with selected countries.

Table 14. Relatively Problematic SDG Indicators for Israel

No	Indicator	Unit	Israel	Russia	USA	France	Finland
1	Share of poor by national criteria	%	16.8	-	18.1	8.3	6.7
2	Share of poor among population 65+	%	15.3	-	22.9	6.1	5.5
3	Gini coefficient	%	37.9	35.1	41.3	31.5	27.7
4	NEET youth (15–24)	%	13.0	-	13.0	11.3	9.0
5	Universal health coverage index (0–100)	unit	75.5	79.2	85.7	84.8	85.7
6	Median wage gap (women vs men)	%	20.8	-	16.4	5.3	16.1
7	Women 15–49 using modern contraception	%	69.2	75.4	80.2	91.3	90.4
8	Low math proficiency among 15-year-olds	%	37.3	-	33.9	28.8	24.9
9	SES-based math performance gap	%	37.3	-	33.9	28.8	24.9
10	Income-based digital access inequality	%	19.6	-	14.9	21.5	12.4
11	Daily smokers (15+)	%	16.9	-	8.9	25.3	11.3
12	Mortality due to air pollution (/100k)	persons	15	67	14	10	7
13	Annual PM2.5 concentration	mg/m^3	21.2	11.3	8.7	8.6	4.8
14	Unrecycled municipal waste per day	kg	1.4	-	1.5	0.9	1.1
15	Renewables in electricity consumption	%	6.2	3.5	10.0	16.2	50.2
16	Protected marine areas	%	14.8	22.8	33.9	80.9	60.9
17	Ocean health index: clean waters	unit	35.0	63.6	73.6	57.7	70.8
18	Trawling/dredging share of fishing	%	46.4	4.2	22.0	26.6	0.0
19	Discarded catch share	%	22.4	23.4	8.7	12.9	0.2

20	Protected terrestrial biodiversity areas	%	17.1	25.5	38.3	81.1	71.9
21	Protected freshwater biodiversity areas	%	22.7	26.2	31.1	78.0	75.9
22	Species survival index (0–1)	unit	0.73	0.95	0.83	0.84	0.99
23	Gov. spending on health & education (% GDP)	%	11.3	8.9	14.5	14.4	14.4
24	Prison population per 100k	persons	165	214	524	112	52
25	Press freedom index (0–100)	unit	51	25	66	77	87
26	International assistance share	%	0.1	-	0.2	0.5	0.5
27	Support for UN cooperation (0–100)	unit	25.6	43.3	5.1	49.6	61.6

These indicators do not prescribe what the authorities or civil society of Israel should do. Instead, they offer information that, in my view, should be taken into account when discussing development programs and plans for the country as a whole and for its individual parts — cities and regions.

As stated at the beginning, a model proposal has been prepared for municipal authorities in Israel on jointly developing local sustainable development programs. Below are the draft sets of sustainable development indicators for cities and the structure of the Terms of Reference for developing and supporting such a program.

International Sustainable Development Indicators Applicable to Cities / Data Sources:

1. Share of population below the national poverty line / Bituach Leumi (BL)
2. Share of population aged 65+ below the national poverty line / BL
3. Share of women aged 15–49 using modern family-planning methods / Sociological Surveys (SS)
4. Mortality among people aged 30–70 from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases / BL
5. Prevalence of obesity (BMI > 30) / Health Insurance Companies (HIC)
6. Share of smokers among residents aged 15+ / HIC, SS
7. Share of low performers in mathematics among 15-year-olds / City Hall (CH)
8. Life expectancy / BL
9. Subjective well-being index (life satisfaction) / SS
10. Employment-to-population ratio / BL, SS
11. Share of youth aged 15–19 not working, not studying, and not receiving vocational training / BL, SS
12. Ratio of median wages of women to men / CH, SS

13. Share of residents burdened by rental payments / SS
14. Average PM2.5 concentration in the city's air (mg/m³) / CH
15. Amount of unrecyclable electronic waste per resident / CH
16. Amount of unrecyclable municipal solid waste per resident per day (kg) / CH
17. Production-based CO_2 emissions per resident (kg) / CH

Structure of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for Developing and Supporting a City Sustainable Development Program:

1. Justification of the need and validity of the City's Sustainable Development Program
1.1. Goals and main indicators of the Global Sustainable Development Agenda
1.2. Current values and trends of Israel's sustainable development indicators
1.3. Objectives of developing sustainable development programs for cities and regions of Israel
1.4. Methodology for developing and implementing the City Sustainable Development Program
1.5. Organization of the development and implementation process
1.6. Financing of the development and implementation of the Program
1.7. Priority action plan for ensuring the development and implementation of sustainable development programs for cities

2. Procedure for Developing the City Sustainable Development Program
2.1. Assessment of current values and trends of monitored sustainable development indicators for the city
2.2. Selection of the goals of the Program and its indicators
2.3. Assessment of options and selection of optimal methods for improving values and/or trends of the city's sustainable development indicators
2.4. Development of a comprehensive set of action plans aimed at improving each indicator, including responsible executors, co-executors, timelines,
sources and amounts of funding, and expected results of each action and plan

3. Procedure for Approval, Monitoring, and Adjustment of the Program
3.1. Establishment of a Working Group under the Mayor to develop the Program and ensure its operation
3.2. Public discussion of the draft Program in the city, revision of the draft based on results, and approval by the Mayor / City Council
3.3. Systematic monitoring of Program implementation by an organization independent of the Municipality, which may propose adjustments to the Program
3.4. Regular public review of the Program's progress and of proposals for its improvement

I invite cooperation from all those interested in this topic and who have the opportunity to bring our proposal to the attention of those responsible for its practical implementation.