HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

REPORT 2021/2022

OVERVIEW

Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World

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The 2021/2022 Human Development Report

The 2021/2022 Human Development Report is the latest in the series of global Human Development Reports published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1990 as independent and analytically and empirically grounded discussions of major development issues, trends and policies.

Additional resources related to the 2021/2022 Human Development Report can be found online at http://hdr.undp.org. Resources on the website include digital versions and translations of the Report and the overview in more than 10 languages, an interactive web version of the Report, a set of background papers and think pieces commissioned for the Report, interactive data visualizations and databases of human development indicators, full explanations of the sources and methodologies used in the Report's composite indices, country insights and other background materials, and previous global, regional and national Human Development Reports. Corrections and addenda are also available online.

The cover aims to project the sense of uncertainty that is unsettling lives around the world.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
REPORT 2021/2022

OVERVIEW

Uncertain times, unsettled lives

Shaping our future in a transforming world

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Foreword

We are living in uncertain times. The Covid-19 pandemic, now in its third year, continues to spin off new variants. The war in Ukraine reverberates throughout the world, causing immense human suffering, including a cost-of-living crisis. Climate and ecological disasters threaten the world daily.

It is seductively easy to discount crises as one-offs, natural to hope for a return to normal. But dousing the latest fire or booting the latest demagogue will be an unwinnable game of whack-a-mole unless we come to grips with the fact that the world is fundamentally changing. There is no going back.

Layers of uncertainty are stacking up and interacting to unsettle our lives in unprecedented ways. People have faced diseases, wars and environmental disruptions before. But the confluence of destabilizing planetary pressures with growing inequalities, sweeping societal transformations to ease those pressures and widespread polarization present new, complex, interacting sources of uncertainty for the world and everyone in it.

That is the new normal. Understanding and responding to it are the goals of the 2021/2022 Human Development Report, *Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*. It caps a trilogy of Reports beginning with the 2019 Report on inequalities, followed by the 2020 Report on the risks of the Anthropocene—where humans have become a major force driving dangerous planetary change.

Thirty-two years ago, the very first Human Development Report declared boldly that "people are the real wealth of nations." That powerful refrain has guided UNDP and its Human Development Reports ever since, with its messages and meanings taking on richer hues over time.

People around the world are now telling us that they feel ever more insecure. UNDP's Special Report on Human Security, launched earlier this year, found that six out of seven people worldwide reported feeling insecure about many aspects of their lives, even before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Is it any wonder, then, that many nations are creaking under the strain of polarization, political extremism and demagoguery—all supercharged by social media, artificial intelligence and other powerful technologies?

Or that, in a stunning reversal from just a decade ago, democratic backsliding among countries has become the norm rather than the exception?

Or that, in a stunning first, the global Human Development Index value has declined for two years in a row in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic?

People are the real wealth of nations, mediated through our relationships with our governments, with our natural environments, with each other. Each new crisis reminds us that when people's capabilities, choices and hopes for the future feel dashed, the wellbeing of their nations and the planet are the accompanying casualties.

Now let us imagine the reverse: what our nations, our planet, would look like if we expanded human development, including people's agency and freedoms. That would be a world where our creativity is unleashed to reimagine our futures, to renew and adapt our institutions, to craft new stories about who we are and what we value. It would be not just a nice-to-have; it would be a must-have when the world is in ongoing, unpredictable flux.

We got a glimpse of what is possible in the Covid-19 pandemic. A battery of new vaccines, including some based on revolutionary technology, saved an estimated 20 million lives in one year. Let that sink in, that extraordinary achievement in the annals of humankind. Equally extraordinary is the number of unnecessary lives lost, especially in low- and middle-income countries, from highly unequal vaccine access. The pandemic has been a painful reminder of how breakdowns in trust and in cooperation, among and within nations, foolishly constrain what we can achieve together.

The hero and the villain in today's uncertainty story are one in the same: human choice. It is far too glib to encourage people to look for silver linings or to state that the glass is half full rather than half empty, for not all choices are the same. Some—arguably the ones most relevant to the fate of our species—are propelled by institutional and cultural inertia, generations in the making.

This year's Report invites us to take a hard look at ossified and oversimplified assumptions about human decision-making. Institutions assume away people's messiness—our emotions, our biases, our sense of belonging—at our peril.

As with its predecessors, the Report also challenges conventional notions of "progress," where self-defeating tradeoffs are being made. Gains in some areas, as in years of schooling or life expectancy, do not compensate for losses in others, as in people's sense of control over their lives. Nor can we enjoy material wealth at the expense of planetary health.

This Report firmly positions human development not just as a goal but as a means to a path forward in uncertain times, reminding us that people—in all our complexity, our diversity, our creativity—are the real wealth of nations.

Achim Steiner
Administrator
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Acknowledgements

We live in a world of worry: the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, continuing regional and local conflicts, record-breaking temperatures, fires and storms. Many reports document these challenges and initiatives and offer recommendations on how to address them, but this year's Human Development Report is an invitation to take a step back. Many challenges, rather than being separate, may be troubling manifestation of an emerging, new uncertainty complex that is unsettling lives around the world. The 2019 Human Development Report explored inequalities in human development, the 2020 Human Development Report focused on how those inequalities drive and are exacerbated by the dangerous planetary change of the Anthropocene, and the 2022 Special Report on Human Security examined the emergence of new forms of insecurity. The 2021/2022 Human Development Report unites and extends these discussions under the theme of uncertainty—how it is changing, what it means for human development and how we can thrive in the face of it. The lingering effects of the pandemic made preparing the Report challenging, including through delays in key data availability. The Report was made possible because of the encouragement, generosity and contributions of so many, recognized only imperfectly and partially in these acknowledgments.

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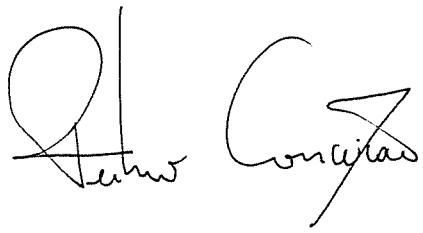

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Uncertain times, unsettled lives

Uncertain times, unsettled lives

We live in a world of worry. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which has driven reversals in human development in almost every country and continues to spin off variants unpredictably. War in Ukraine and elsewhere, more human suffering amid a shifting geopolitical order and strained multilateral system. Record-breaking temperatures, fires and storms, each an alarm bell from planetary systems increasingly out of whack. Acute crises are giving way to chronic, layered, interacting uncertainties at a global scale, painting a picture of uncertain times and unsettled lives.

Uncertainty is not new. Humans have long worried about plagues and pestilence, violence and war, floods and droughts. Some societies have been brought to their knees by them. At least as many have embraced emerging, unsettling realities and found clever ways to thrive. There are no inevitabilities, just tough unknowns whose best answer is a doubling down on human development to unleash the creative and cooperative capacities that are so essentially human.

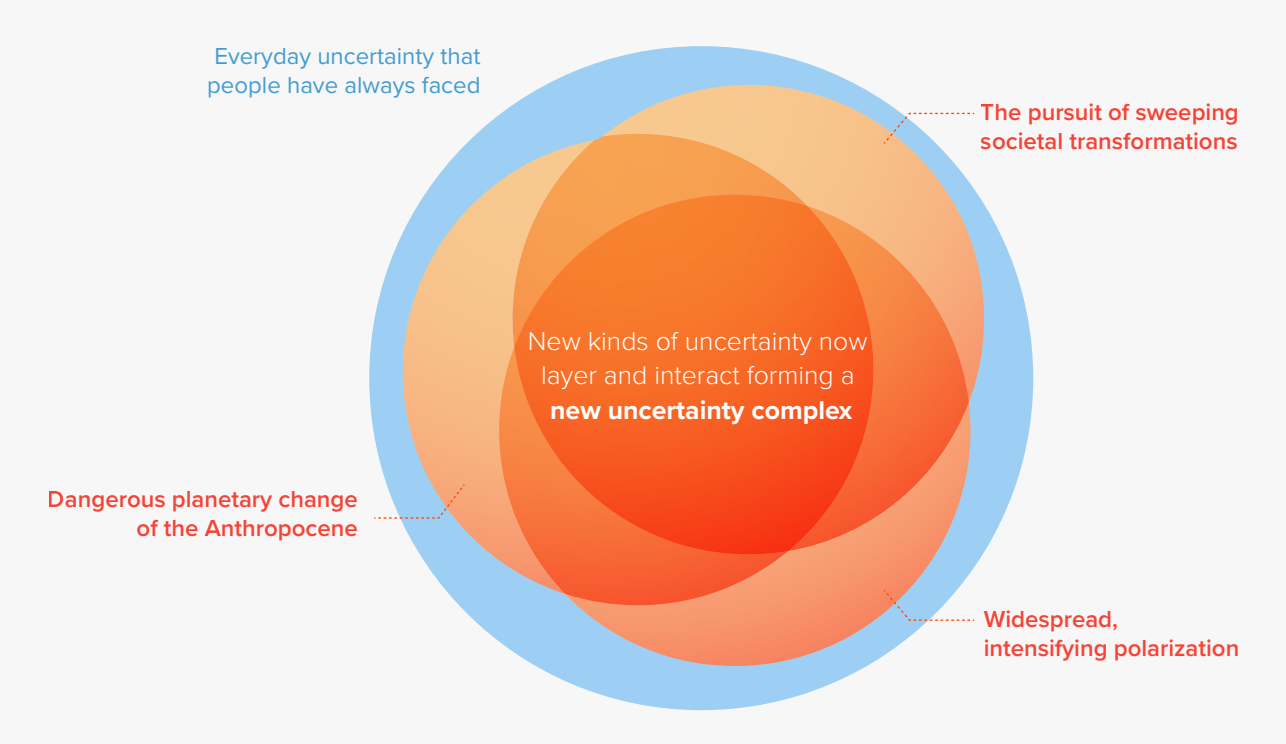
Novel layers of uncertainties are interacting to create new kinds of uncertainty—a new uncertainty complex—never seen in human history (figure 1). In addition to the everyday uncertainty that people have faced since time immemorial, we are now navigating uncharted waters, caught in three volatile crosscurrents:

- The dangerous planetary change of the Anthropocene.[1]
- The pursuit of sweeping societal transformations on par with the Industrial Revolution.
- The vagaries and vacillations of polarized societies.

Navigating this new uncertainty complex is hampered by persistent deprivations and inequalities in human development. The past decade finally placed inequality under a spotlight, but less illuminated were the ways that inequalities and uncertainty contribute to insecurity and vice versa. The variation in opportunity and outcome among and within nations is mirrored by—and interacts with—the volatility that people experience in their lives. Complicating matters is a geopolitical order in flux, hamstringing a multilateral system designed for postwar, not postmillennium, challenges and creaking under the weight of naked national interests.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine are devastating manifestations of today's uncertainty complex. Each exposes limits of—and cracks in—current global governance. Each has battered

Figure 1 A new uncertainty complex is emerging



Source: Human Development Report Office.

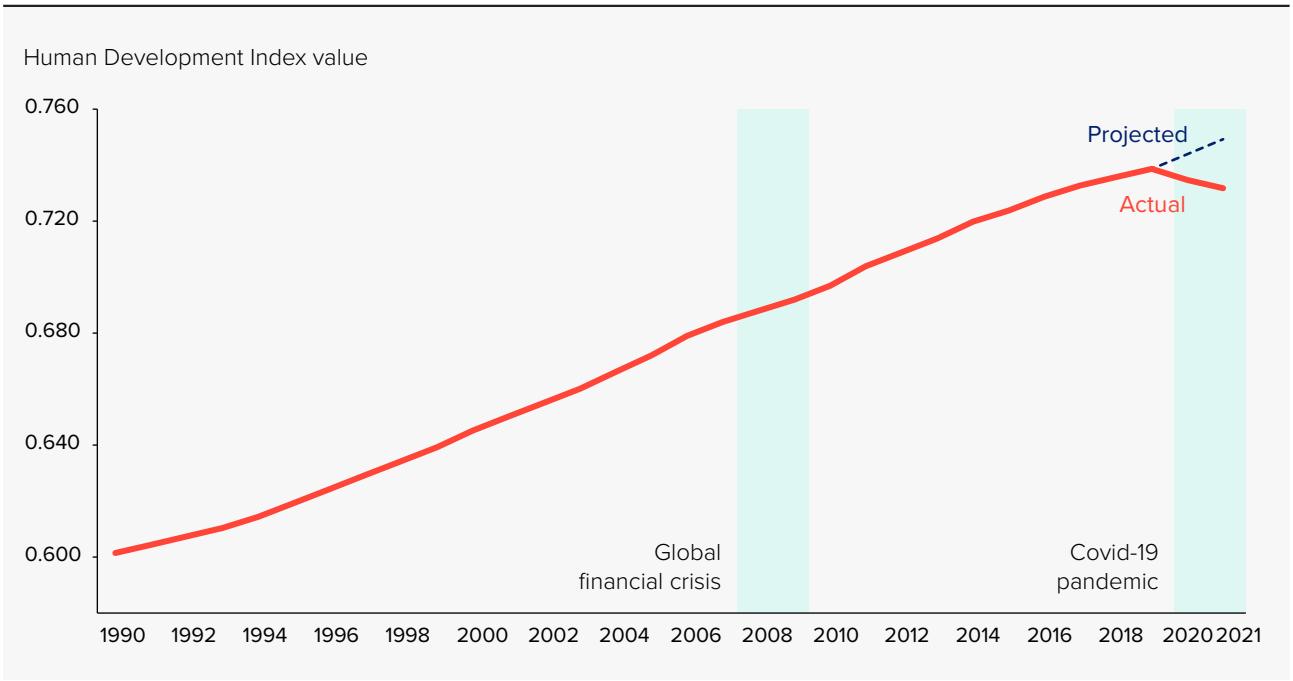
global supply chains, driving up price volatility in energy, food, fertilizers, commodities and other goods. But it is their interaction that, at the time of this writing, is transforming shocks into an impending global catastrophe. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has repeatedly warned of a prolonged global food crisis due to the confluence of war, pandemic and warming temperatures.[2] Billions of people face the greatest cost-of-living crisis in a generation.[3] Billions already grapple with food insecurity,[4] owing largely to inequalities in wealth and power that determine entitlements to food. A global food crisis will hit them hardest.

Global crises have piled up: the global financial crisis, the ongoing global climate crisis and Covid-19 pandemic, a looming global food crisis. There is a nagging sense that whatever control we have over our lives is slipping away, that the norms and institutions we used to rely on for stability and prosperity are not up to the task of today's uncertainty complex. Feelings of insecurity are on the rise nearly everywhere, a trend that is at least a decade in the making and that well precedes the Covid-19 pandemic and the attendant tailspin in global human development (figure 2).

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 6 in 7 people at the global level felt insecure.[5] This against a backdrop of incredible global progress (notwithstanding the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic) over the longer run on conventional measures of well-being, including on many of the human development metrics tracked by the Human Development Report. What is going on? How does the wide-angle lens of human development help us understand and respond to this apparent paradox of progress with insecurity? Such questions animate this year's Report (box 1).

One of the frustrating ironies of the Anthropocene is that while we have more power to influence our future, we do not necessarily have any more control over it. From the climate crisis to far-reaching technological changes, other important forces—many of our own making—are expanding the set of possible outcomes, some unknowable, of any given action. For many, getting from point A to point B in their lives and in their communities feels unclear, unsure, hard—harder still when persistent inequalities, polarization and demagoguery make it difficult to agree on what point B even is and to get moving.

Figure 2 The global Human Development Index value has declined two years in a row, erasing the gains of the preceding five years



Note: The period of the global financial crisis is indicative.
Source: Human Development Report Office calculations based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), IMF (2021b, 2022), UNDESA (2022a, 2022b), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), UNSD (2022) and World Bank (2022).

Box 1 The 2021/2022 Human Development Report extends the conversations of earlier Reports

How to understand and navigate today's uncertainty complex—driven by the Anthropocene, by purposeful societal transformation and by intensifying polarization—is the topic of this year's Human Development Report. Much attention over the past decade has been rightly paid to inequalities. Indeed, inequalities and their emerging dimensions were the focus of the 2019 Human Development Report,[1] carried forward into the following year's Report on the socioecological pressures of the Anthropocene.[2] The variations in opportunity and outcome among and within nations also happen within people's lives, giving rise to more and new forms of insecurity, which were explored in the United Nations Development Programme's Special Report on Human Security earlier this year.[3] The 2021/2022 Human Development Report unites and extends these discussions under the theme of uncertainty—how it is changing, what it means for human development and how we can thrive in the face of it.

Notes
1. UNDP 2019. **2.** UNDP 2020. **3.** UNDP 2022.

All is not well, but all is not lost, either. Policies that focus on the Three I's—investment, insurance and innovation—will go a long way in helping people navigate the new uncertainty complex and thrive in the face of it (see chapter 6 in the full Report).

- *Investment*, ranging from renewable energy to preparedness for pandemics and extreme natural hazards, will ease planetary pressures and prepare societies to better cope with global shocks. Consider the advances in seismology, tsunami sciences and disaster risk reduction following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.[6] Smart, practical investments pay off.
- *Insurance* does too. It helps protect everyone from the contingencies of an uncertain world. The global surge in social protection in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic did just that, while underscoring how little social insurance coverage there was before and how much more remains to be done. Investments in universal basic services such as health and education also afford an insurance function.
- *Innovation* in its many forms—technological, economic, cultural—will be vital in responding to unknown and unknowable challenges that humanity will face. While innovation is a whole-of-society affair, government is crucial in this regard: not just in creating the right policy incentives for inclusive innovation but also in being an active partner throughout.

Deeper still are the assumptions underpinning institutions that develop and implement policy at all levels. Assumptions about how people make decisions are often oversimplified. The dominance of these assumptions has occasioned a narrower set of policy options than what is needed to navigate the new uncertainty complex (see chapter 3 in the full Report). Widening the set of policy options starts with recognizing the many cognitive biases and inconsistencies we all have in our decisionmaking. Moreover, what we decide is often rooted in what we value. What we value is in turn rooted in our social context. It is contextual, malleable. Scrutinizing unhelpful social inertias and experimenting with new narratives must be part of the toolbox going forward (see chapter 3 in the full Report).

So must technology. True, technology is more double-edged sword than silver bullet. Fossil-fuel combustion technologies are warming the planet while nuclear fusion promises to bottle the sun, ushering in a new era of limitless, clean energy. With every internet search, retweet and like, our digital footprints generate more data than ever, but we struggle to use it for the common good, and some deliberately misuse it. In a voracious scramble for more of our data, technology giants are concentrating in their hands more and more power over everyone's lives. The trick for us is to bend technology purposefully towards inclusive, creative solutions to challenges old and new rather than allowing it to function like a bull in a china shop, breaking things just because. We need technologies that augment labour rather than displace it, that disrupt selectively rather than indiscriminately (see chapter 4 in the full Report).

As we drift further into this new uncertainty complex, unknown challenges loom—more tough questions without easy answers, more self-defeating opportunities to retreat within borders that are as porous to climate and technology as they have been to Covid-19. If the pandemic is seen as a test run of how we navigate our shared, global future, then we need to learn from it, from the good and the bad, to figure out how to do better. Much better.

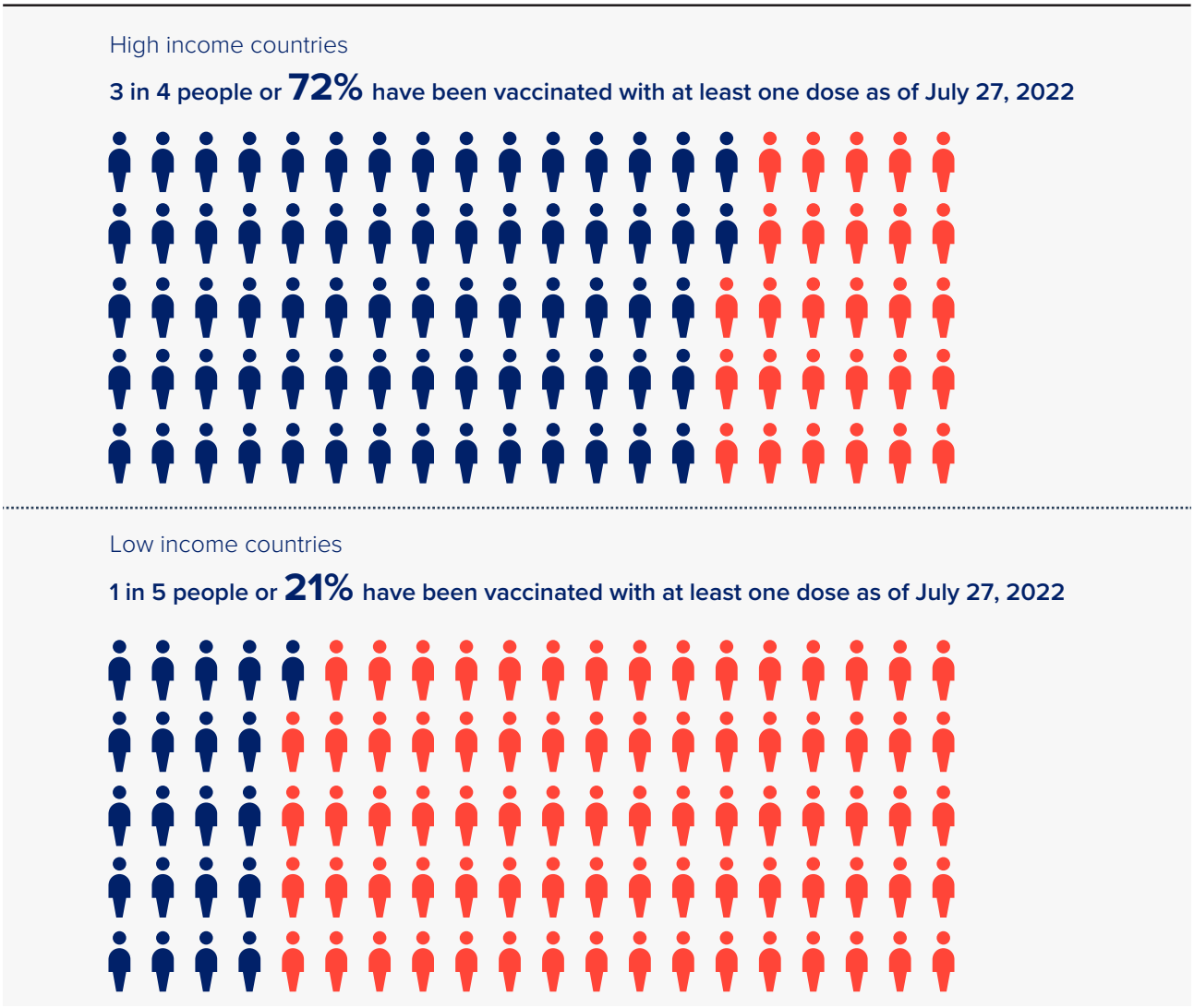
The Covid-19 pandemic is a window into a new reality

Now in its third year, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacted a terrible toll in lives and livelihoods around the world. It is more than a long detour from normal; it is a window into a new reality, a painful glimpse into deep, emblematic contradictions, exposing a confluence of fragilities.

On the one hand, an impressive feat of modern science: the development of safe, effective vaccines to a novel virus in less than a year. Having saved tens, perhaps hundreds, of millions of lives over the past century, especially of children, vaccines remain one of humanity's greatest, most cost-effective technological innovations—ever.[7] The battery of Covid-19 vaccines is no exception. In 2021 alone Covid-19 vaccination programmes averted nearly 20 million deaths.[8] It is a lesson of the power of technology to transform lives for the better at a time when we hear so much about the ways technology can do just the opposite.

But access to Covid-19 vaccines remains appallingly low or virtually nonexistent in many low-income countries (figure 3), especially in Africa, which have endured age-specific infection fatality rates twice those of high-income countries.[9] Reaching rural areas with weaker cold chains and fewer healthcare workers remains difficult. Meanwhile, vaccine uptake in many richer countries has stalled, due partly to

Figure 3 Countries' access to Covid-19 vaccines remains highly inequal



Source: Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity (https://data.undp.org/vaccine-equity/), accessed 27 July 2022.

perplexing disputes about vaccines generally.[10] The last mile is long in every country.

Unequal, unjust access to Covid-19 vaccines is one of many inequalities that have weighed heavily throughout the pandemic. Indeed, those inequalities have helped fuel its spread. The groups most likely to be left behind have borne the brunt of its health and economic risks. Women and girls have shouldered even more household and caregiving responsibilities, while violence against them has worsened (see chapter 2 in the full Report).[11] Pre-existing digital divides have widened gaps in children's education access and quality.[12] Some fear a "lost generation" of learners.[13]

For people everywhere the Covid-19 pandemic has generated questions without easy answers, foremost among them: When is this "over"? Answers have proved fleeting, often dashed by upticks in cases or the setting of new restrictions, forcing us back to square one. Global supply chains remain stubbornly knotted, contributing to inflation in all countries —and in some, at rates not seen in decades.[14] The implications of unprecedented monetary and fiscal interventions aiming to rescue ravaged economies, many still scarred by the global financial crisis, remain largely uncertain. They unspool before us in real time and alongside resurgent geopolitical tensions. The pandemic is more than a virus, and it simply is not "over."

With successive waves that have caught countries flat-footed time and time again, ongoing mutability and the seesawing of lockdowns, the Covid-19 pandemic and its seemingly endless twists and turns have—perhaps above all else—entrenched a climate of dogged uncertainty and unsettledness. And this is just one pandemic, having emerged seemingly out of nowhere, like a phantom that cannot be exorcised. We were long warned about the threat of novel respiratory pathogens.[15] As we move deeper into the Anthropocene, we have been warned that there will be more.

A new uncertainty complex is emerging

The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on economies pale beside the upheavals expected by powerful new technologies and the hazards and transformations they pose. What do investments in people's education and skills—a key part of human development—look like in the face of the disorienting pace of technological change, including automation and artificial intelligence? Or in the face of deliberate, necessary energy transitions that would restructure societies? More broadly, amid unprecedented patterns of dangerous planetary change, what capabilities matter and how?

"The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on economies pale beside the upheavals expected by powerful new technologies and the hazards and transformations they pose

Recent years have seen more record temperatures, fires and storms around the world, alarming reminders that the climate crisis marches on, alongside other planetary-level changes wrought by the Anthropocene. Biodiversity collapse is one of them. More than 1 million plant and animal species face extinction.[16] As much as the Covid-19 pandemic caught us by surprise, unprepared and fumbling for paths forward, we have even less of an idea of how to live in a world without, say, an abundance of insects. That has not been tried for about 500 million years, when the world's first land plants appeared. This is not a coincidence. Without an abundance of insect pollinators, we face the mindboggling challenge of growing food and other agricultural products at scale.

Human societies and ecological systems have long influenced—and surprised—one another, but not at the scales and speeds of the Anthropocene. Humans are now shaping planetary trajectories,[17] and the dramatically changing baselines—from global temperatures to species diversity—are altering the fundamental frame of reference humans have been operating under for millennia. It is as if the ground beneath our feet is shifting, introducing a new kind of planetary uncertainty for which we have no real guide.

Material cycles, for example, have been upended. For the first time in history, humanmade materials, such as concrete and asphalt, outweigh the Earth's biomass. Microplastics are now everywhere: in country-sized garbage patches in the ocean, in protected forests and distant mountaintops and in people's lungs and blood.[18] Mass coral bleaching is now commonplace rather than extraordinary.[19]

The latest International Panel on Climate Change Report is a "code red for humanity."[20] While we still

have the possibility to prevent excessive global warming and avoid the worst scenarios, human-induced changes to our planetary system are expected to continue well into the future. In essence, as science has advanced, the models are, with better precision than before, predicting more volatility.[21]

Any one of the rapid, planetary-level, human-induced changes of the Anthropocene would be enough on its own to inject frightening new uncertainties into the fate of not just individuals, communities or even nations, but of all humankind. Recall just a few decades ago when chlorofluorocarbons entered global consciousness. Or the insecticide known as DDT before that. Or nuclear proliferation before that (and, sadly, still today). The human-induced forces at work in the Anthropocene are not atomized or neatly sequenced. They are not islands of perturbations in a sea of relative stability. Instead, they are stacked on top of each other, interacting and amplifying in unpredictable ways. For the first time in human history, anthropogenic existential threats loom larger than those from natural hazards.[22]

> "The layering and interactions of multidimensional risks and the overlapping of threats give rise to new dimensions of uncertainty, if for no other reason than human choices have impacts well beyond our weakened socioecological systems' capacities to absorb them

For this reason, in its portraiture of uncertainty, the Report does not build scenarios. Instead, it explores how three novel sources of uncertainty at the global level stack up to create a new uncertainty complex that is unsettling lives and dragging on human development (see chapter 1 in the full Report):

- The first novel uncertainty is associated with the Anthropocene's dangerous planetary change and its interaction with human inequalities.
- The second is the purposeful if uncertain transition towards new ways of organizing industrial societies—purporting transformations similar to those in the transition from agricultural to industrial societies.[23]
- The third is the intensification of political and social polarization across and within countries—and of misperceptions both about information and across groups of people—facilitated by how new digital technologies are often being used.[24]

The layering and interactions of multidimensional risks and the overlapping of threats give rise to new dimensions of uncertainty, if for no other reason than human choices have impacts well beyond our weakened socioecological systems' capacities to absorb them. In this new uncertainty complex shocks can amplify and interact rather than dissipate; they can be propagated in systems rather than stabilized by them.

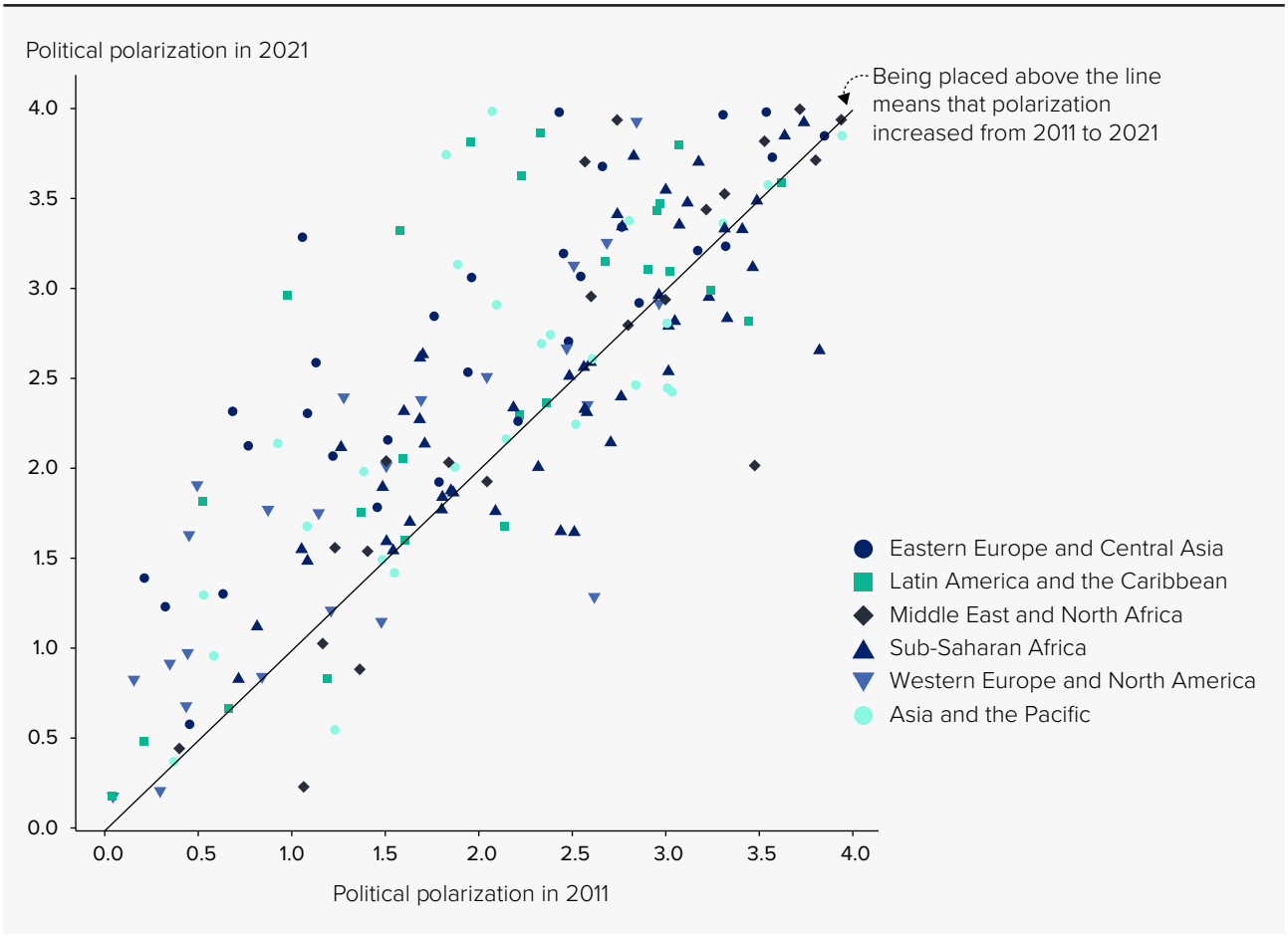
Human pulsing of natural systems at unprecedented intensities and scales is one side of the uncertainty coin. On the other are stubborn social deficits, including deficits in human development, which make it more difficult to navigate unpredictable outcomes and to dial down those pulses in the first place. Consider the Covid-19 pandemic, which has as much to do with inequalities, poor leadership and distrust as it does with variants and vaccines. Or competition for environmental resources, competition that does not typically break down into conflict. While stressed ecosystems can parallel grievances, grievances become conflicts due to social imbalances.[25] Political power, inequalities and marginalization contribute more to environmental conflict than does access to natural resources.

Political polarization complicates matters further (figure 4). It has been on the rise, and uncertainty makes it worse and is worsened by it (see chapter 4 in the full Report). Large numbers of people feel frustrated by and alienated from their political systems.[26] In a reversal from just 10 years ago, democratic backsliding is now the prevailing trend across countries.[27] This despite high support globally for democracy. Armed conflicts are also up, including outside so-called fragile contexts.[28] For the first time ever, more than 100 million people are forcibly displaced, most of them within their own countries.[29]

The conjunction of uncertainty and polarization may be paralyzing—delaying action to curb human pressures on the planet. The real paradox of our time may be our inability to act, despite mounting evidence of the distress that human planetary pressures are causing ecological and social systems. Unless we get a handle on the worrying state of human affairs, we face the Anthropocene's vicissitudes with one hand tied behind our backs.

Even when functioning properly, conventional crisis response and risk management mechanisms,

Figure 4 Political polarization is on the rise across the world



Source: Adapted from Boese and others (2022).

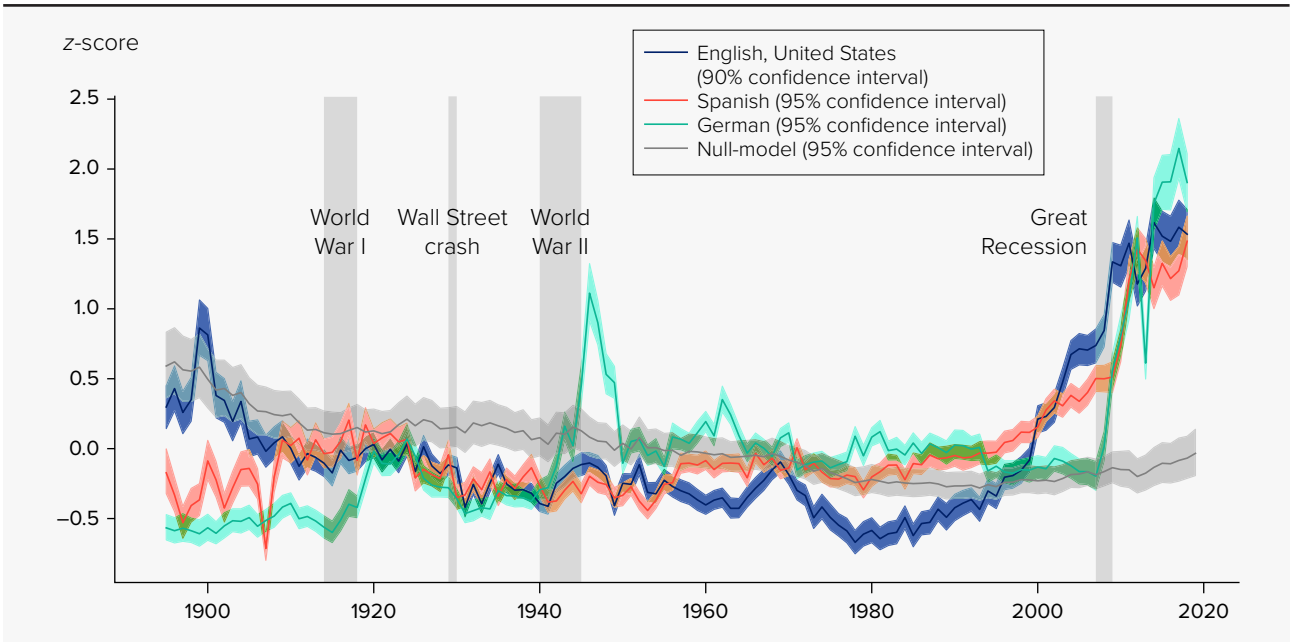
such as various forms of insurance, are not up to the task of global, interconnected disruption. The uncoordinated responses to the Covid-19 pandemic are a case in point. New strategies are needed for tail events synchronized at the global level. Addressing risk through diversification is difficult when volatility affects the entire system rather than only parts of it. Yet, numerous countries around the world have been steadily chipping away at risk sharing in many ways.[30] New forms of work and their uncertainties have become more important in technology-enabled gig economies. Altogether, insecurity has long been on the rise.

And it has been on the rise for some groups more than others. Against a backdrop of novel, interacting uncertainties, people with power, wealth or privilege have the means, to some degree, to protect themselves privately and to shift more of the burden on to others. The groups most likely to be left behind face a world with complex new uncertainties in which most of those uncertainties are directed at them, heaped on persistent discrimination and human rights violations.[31] It is not just that typhoons are getting bigger and deadlier through human impact on the environment; it is also as if, through our social choices, their destructive paths are being directed at the most vulnerable among us.

Feelings of distress are on the rise nearly everywhere

An analysis of more than 14 million books published over the last 125 years in three major languages shows a sharp increase in expressions of anxiety and worry in many parts of the world (figure 5).[32] Other research on smaller time scales reports steady increases in concerns about uncertainty since 2012, well before the Covid-19 outbreak.[33]

Figure 5 Negative news about the world surges to unprecedented highs



Note: Negative views are defined as textual analogues of cognitive distortions in one- to five-word sequences reflecting depression, anxiety and other distortions, published in 14 million books in English, Spanish and German over the past 125 years. The prevalence of these word sequences in publications are converted to *z*-scores for comparability. They are compared with a null-model that accounts for over-time changes in publication volumes and standards.
Source: Bollen and others 2021.

Earlier this year, the United Nations Development Programme's Special Report on Human Security found similarly troubling levels of perceived insecurity. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 6 in 7 people at the global level felt insecure.[34] Perceived human insecurity is high across all Human Development Index (HDI) groups, and it has increased, even in some very high HDI countries (figure 6). Polarization has moved in tandem in recent years. In parallel, there is a breakdown of trust: globally, fewer than 30 percent of people think that most people can be trusted, the lowest value on record (see chapter 4 in the full Report).

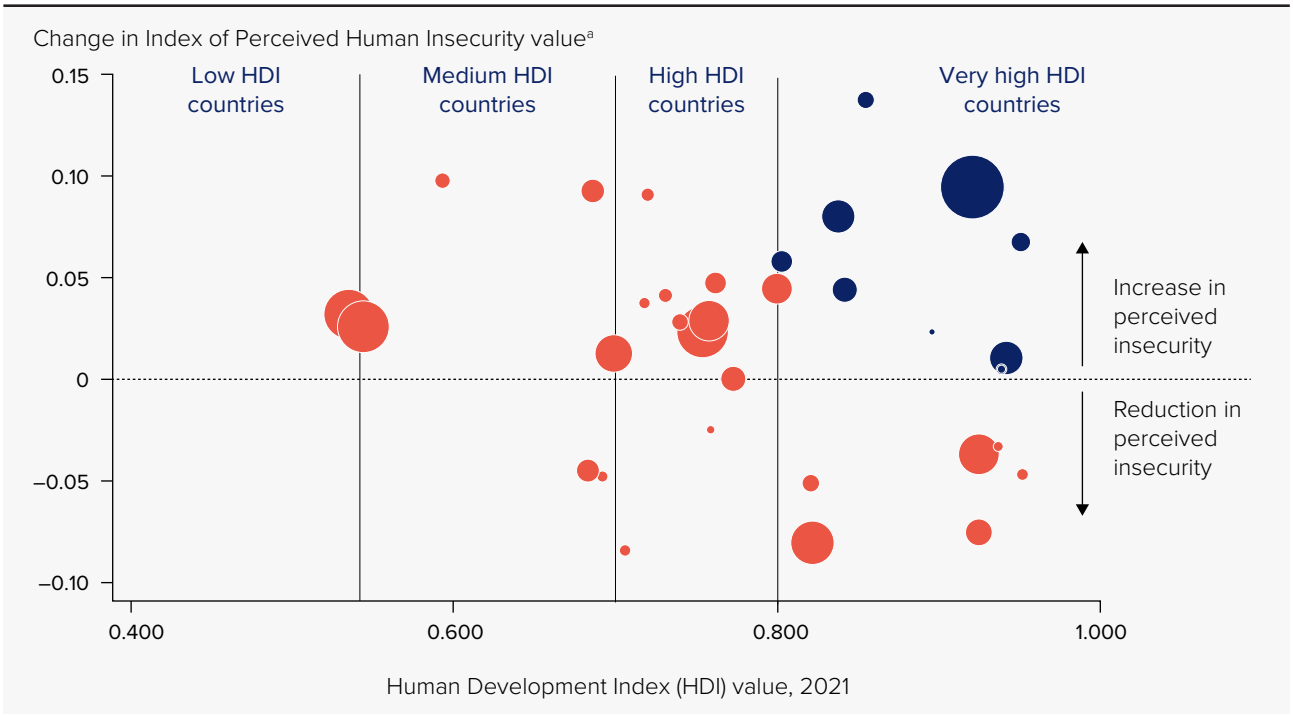
These and other data paint a puzzling picture in which people's perceptions about their lives and their societies stand in stark contrast to historically high measures of aggregate wellbeing, including longstanding multidimensional measures of wellbeing, such as the HDI and other indices that accompany this Report. In sum, twin paradoxes: progress with insecurity and progress with polarization.

What is going on?

Too often the answer is reduced to fault-finding inquiries about whether the data or the people are wrong. Most likely, neither. Although people tend to express a holistic view of their lived experience, the questions asked about their lives often focus on specific, measurable subsets of that experience: years of schooling, life expectancy, income. However important these metrics are—and they are—they do not capture the totality of a lived experience. Nor were they ever intended to reflect the full concept of human development, which goes well beyond achievements in wellbeing, such as reducing poverty or hunger, to include equally important notions of freedoms and agency, which together expand the sense of possibility in people's lives. Nor do individual achievements necessarily capture social cohesion and trust, which matter to people in their own right and for working together towards shared goals. In short, the twin paradoxes invite a hard look at narrow conceptions of "progress."

The 2019 Human Development Report emphasized going beyond averages to understand the wide and growing variation in capabilities within many countries. It identified widening gaps in enhanced capabilities, such as access to higher education and life expectancy at age 70, gaps that might also help explain the apparent disconnect between what people say about their lives and what we measure about them. These are not either-or explanations; all are possible, even probable.[35]

Figure 6 Perceived human insecurity is increasing in most countries—even in some very high Human Development Index (HDI) countries



Note: Bubble size represents the country population.
a. Refers to the change in Index of Perceived Human Security value between waves 6 and 7 of the World Values Survey for countries with comparable data.
Source: UNDP 2022.

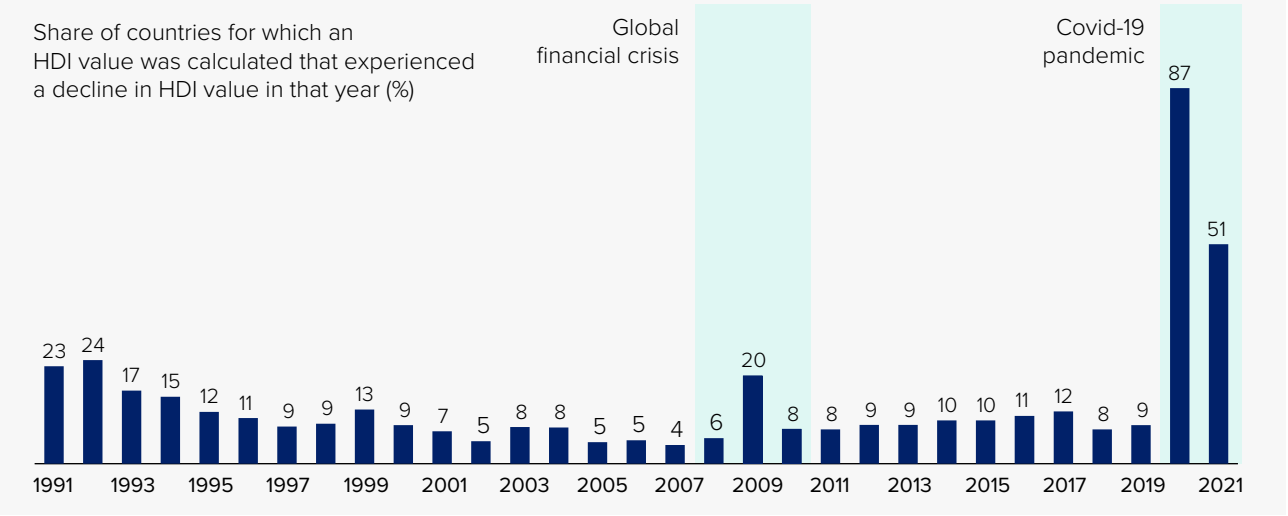
Capabilities face more volatile futures while becoming ever more important for helping people navigate the systemic uncertainties of a new epoch. Achieving gains may become harder, securing them harder still. Backsliding may become more sudden or common or both; it has already become evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. For the first time on record, the global HDI value declined, taking the world back to the time just after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Every year a few different countries experience dips in their respective HDI values. But a whopping 90 percent of countries saw their HDI value drop in either 2020 or 2021 (figure 7), far exceeding the number that experienced reversals in the wake of the global financial crisis. Last year saw some recovery at the global level, but it was partial and uneven: most very high HDI countries notched improvements, while most of the rest experienced ongoing declines (figure 8).

The goal of human development is to help people lead lives they value by expanding their capabilities, which go beyond wellbeing achievements to include agency and freedoms. If uncertainty forms storm clouds over all aspects of human development, then it hurls lightning bolts at the idea of agency. It can disempower. Choices mediate the translation of one's values and commitments into achievements, but the idea of choice becomes ever more abstract, no matter how formally educated or healthy we may be, if we doubt that the choices we make will yield the outcomes we desire. Losing perceived control rather than simply not having it in the first place has its own negative consequences, as do the knock-on effects: a tendency to identify culprits or villains, a distrust of institutions and elites, and greater insularity, nationalism and social discord. Uncertainty can turn up the heat on a toxic brew.

Technology use is a double-edged sword

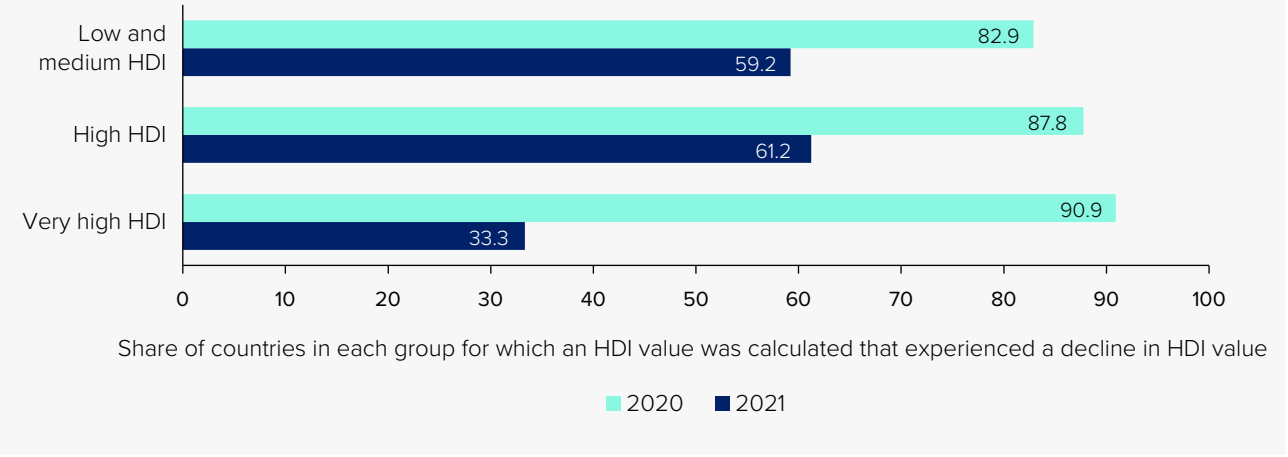
Powerful new technologies turn it up further. From the news, products and advertisements served up to us to the relationships we build online and in real life, more and more of our lives are being determined

Figure 7 Recent declines on the Human Development Index (HDI) are widespread, with over 90 percent of countries enduring a decline in 2020 or 2021



Note: The period of the global financial crisis is indicative.
Source: Human Development Report Office calculations based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), IMF (2021b, 2022), UNDESA (2022a, 2022b), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), UNSD (2022) and World Bank (2022).

Figure 8 Almost all countries saw reversals in human development in the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, most low, medium and high Human Development Index (HDI) countries saw continued declines in the second year



Source: Human Development Report Office calculations based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), IMF (2021b, 2022), UNDESA (2022a, 2022b), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), UNSD (2022) and World Bank (2022).

by algorithms and, in particular, by artificial intelligence. For people who are online, every aspect of their lives becomes commodifiable data, raising worrying questions about who has access to what information, especially sensitive personal information, and how it is being used.[36]

The political, commercial and personal all get mixed together in social media, which is full of loud echo chambers because they draw eyeballs, which draws advertising and other revenues. At least half the online noise is from bots designed to stir the pot.[37] Misinformation moves faster and farther than information that has been subjected to reasoned scrutiny, sowing distrust and fanning perhaps the gravest kind of uncertainty: not knowing how to distinguish between the two. Making the distinction goes beyond clear-cut objectivism or the reliance on an agreed set of universal facts, scientific or otherwise. Motivated reasoning,

in which people select facts, experts and other trusted sources of information that confirm their already-held beliefs, is widespread across political spectra and education levels (see chapter 3 in the full Report). Polarization can take dangerous forms when different groups operate with entirely different sets of facts and, thus, realities, especially when those realities are bound up with group identities. Technologies then turn mere disagreements into pitched battles for survival (see chapter 4 in the full Report).

Given the ways technology use can aggravate at the societal level, its harmful effects at the community and individual levels may come as no surprise. As it is in so many parts of our lives, technology is a double-edged sword. Artificial intelligence will both create and destroy tasks, causing tremendous disruption. Synthetic biology opens new frontiers in health and medicine while raising fundamental questions about what it means to be human. From the invention of writing to Gutenberg's printing press to Marconi's first radio transmissions, technologies have been connecting people ever faster in new ways, now instantaneously and across great distances. Today, telemedicine is especially valuable in digitally connected rural areas and has been vital for mental and physical health during the pandemic.[38]

At the same time, rather paradoxically, technology can isolate. Internet use has been found to reduce offline interaction, political participation and various forms of civic and cultural engagement.[39] The consequences of substituting the digital for the real are complex and will be made more so as virtual worlds —the metaverse—take up more real estate. Cyberbullying is an issue on social media, and angry Twitter mobs, mobilized sometimes by disinformation, can digitally tar and feather someone faster than in real life. Sometimes that spills over into real-life violence or into real-life policy. Digital addiction is a real concern. Random rewards in the form of likes on Instagram or TikTok or the adrenaline rush of clickbait are essentially cognitive hacks that lie at the heart of most real-life casinos (see chapter 2 in the full Report).[40]

Mental wellbeing is under assault

Mental wellbeing is an important, complex issue globally without any single driver, technological or otherwise. Mental distress, whose prevention is a critical aspect of overall mental wellbeing, is aggravated by uncertainties and insecurities of all stripes: by major Anthropocene phenomena, such as climate change; by age-old scourges of discrimination, exclusion, conflict and violence; and by relatively newer entrants, such as social media and other technologies.

The uncertainties of the Anthropocene are expected to undermine people's mental wellbeing through four main pathways: traumatizing events, physical illness, general climate anxiety and food insecurity (see chapter 2 in the full Report). The effects these and other pathways have on children in particular are profound, altering brain and body development, especially in families on lower social rungs, potentially diminishing what children can achieve in life. The 2019 Human Development Report explored how inequalities in human development are perpetuated across generations;[41] it is not difficult to see how the confluence of mental distress, inequality and insecurity foment a similarly injurious intergenerational cycle that drags on human development.

"The uncertainties of the Anthropocene are expected to undermine people's mental wellbeing through four main pathways: traumatizing events, physical illness, general climate anxiety and food insecurity

Violence—even the threat of violence, its uncertainty—is a major driver of mental distress. Some survivors of and witnesses to violence suffer trauma, which if not addressed properly can develop into post-traumatic stress disorder, among other chronic health conditions, that can weigh heavily on the choices available to them. Violence may be directed at one person or group of people, but it affects everybody in its blast radius. Even perpetrators of violence can suffer trauma due to the violent setting that often surrounds them, as with organized crime or gang violence.[42]

The losses exacted by violence extend well beyond direct physical, mental and emotional injury or trauma. Violence can cause and exacerbate all kinds of insecurities—food, economic and so forth—that are themselves major drivers of mental distress. Many kinds of violence, from interpersonal violence to organized crime to armed conflict, perniciously undermine trust in people we know and in people we do not

know. Breakdowns in trust may then beget more instability, more violence.

“Mental disorders weigh on human development in many ways. A health issue themselves, they are often linked to other health challenges. They can impede school attendance and learning, as well as the ability to find a job and be fully productive at it. The stigma that often accompanies mental disorders makes matters worse

Then there is the loss of agency due to violence. The complex interplay of forces, rooted in asymmetries of power, is powerfully at work in intimate partner violence, whose survivors are predominately women and which is correlated with some measures of women's economic dependence (see chapter 2 in the full Report). Channels of dominance at the societal and institutional levels can take concentrated, wicked forms—especially for women, children and older people—behind what are meant to be the safe walls of a home, leaving those subjected to domestic abuse with either the perception or the reality of no escape. The ensuing entrapment of people violates human rights, constrains agency and ultimately undercuts our collective ability to navigate a turbulent new era.

As it has been in so many ways, the Covid-19 pandemic is ominously illustrative. During the first year of the pandemic, the global prevalence of depression and anxiety increased by more than 25 percent.[43] Low-income people, especially those who struggle to afford basic needs such as rent and food, suffered disproportionally in several countries.[44] Women, who assumed most of the additional domestic and care work that emerged during school closures and lockdowns,[45] faced much higher mental distress than before the crisis.[46]

Stressors need not reach the level of globalized trauma to cause mental distress. In fact, one of the most serious economic threats to mental wellbeing seems to stem from repeated financial shocks, such as income loss, especially for poor people and for men.[47] Economic insecurity—or just the perception of such insecurity, even if transitory—is a major factor. Mental distress is one reason why economic dislocations, whether from globalization or automation or phasing out fossil fuels, carry some large, underappreciated risks.

Mental disorders, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, can develop when mental distress is severe and untreated. Almost 1 billion people—roughly one in eight of us—live with a mental disorder,[48] providing a lower-bound estimate of the broader problem of mental distress. Globally, mental health issues are the leading cause of disability. Yet, of those who need mental health attention or treatment, only about 10 percent receive it.[49] On average, countries spend less than 2 percent of their healthcare budgets on mental health.[50]

Mental disorders weigh on human development in many ways. A health issue themselves, they are often linked to other health challenges. They can impede school attendance and learning, as well as the ability to find a job and be fully productive at it. The stigma that often accompanies mental disorders makes matters worse. Mental disorders are uniquely challenging because the primary instrument to navigate life's challenges—the mind—is precisely the thing that people living with a mental disorder may not be able to rely on. The other thing we tend to rely on is relationships. If those also suffer, people are left even more isolated and vulnerable.

Purposeful transformations introduce their own uncertainties

Today's new uncertainty complex is not just about the planetary pressures of the Anthropocene and political and social polarization; it is also about purposeful societal transformations that seek to ease planetary pressures and leverage the positive potential of new technologies (see chapter 1 in the full Report). From energy systems to food production to transportation, easing planetary pressures demands fundamental changes to much of the way the world currently operates. It is a necessary, wildly worthwhile investment—ethically, environmentally, economically—but it comes with its own significant uncertainties, especially for economies, livelihoods and pocketbooks.[51]

The energy transitions required to confront the climate crisis would be challenging even in the best of times. They become more so when stacked on top of inequalities and social fragmentation, the rapid clip of technological disruption and dangerous planetary change. The backlash in some countries to various

forms of energy taxation or carbon pricing is a case in point. However welcome new renewable energy technologies may be at competitive market prices, they carry their own environmental costs and risks, including those related to mining to supply the materials for the world's solar panels and wind turbines.[52]

People rightly worry about winners and losers when big change is on the horizon. Yes, the green economy could add more than 24 million jobs worldwide by 2030.[53] This is an exciting opportunity for people and planet. But these jobs will not necessarily be in the same regions that stand to lose jobs as fossil fuel industries shut down. Nor will they require the same skills as a fossil fuel–based economy. No one seems especially interested in a bigger overall pie if his or her piece is feared to be getting much smaller.

Nor do people need forecasts or history books to know that societal transformations—however well planned or not, however "good" or not—can radically reshape the communities they live in, often in unexpected ways where "do-overs" are not possible if things go wrong. Many around the world have lived through transformations, some ongoing, in their lifetimes. They see them with their own eyes. The transformations in energy and materials required now in the Anthropocene portend even more upheavals, which some believe to be as large as the shift from agricultural to industrial societies.[54]

Whether it is the advent of agriculture or the Industrial Revolution, previous tectonic shifts have typically stretched across multiple generations. Now, they can happen within a generation, in a matter of years, introducing a new kind of uncertainty or worry. Whether through foresight or experience, that will influence how people think about and invest in their lives, families and communities and hold their leaders accountable. These are not reasons to give up on a green economy; we cannot afford to throw in the towel. But if we do not understand people's present and future anxieties and address the underlying drivers, if we do not build trust and the promise of a better future, progress towards purposeful, just, sustainable transformations is going to be even harder.

The net result of today's uncertainty complex on development is profound. We might be facing a growing mismatch between what is needed to navigate novel, interacting uncertainties and the current state of affairs, categorized by social arrangements (what to do—in terms of policies, institutions) and the behaviours shaped by social context, culture and narratives (how to do it—in terms of prevalent identities, values and beliefs). The interplay of forces—their scales, speeds, unknown interactions and consequences—have made development pathways simultaneously far less obvious and far more open. What should happen next can no longer be taken for granted. A linear march of progress in which low-income countries chase higher income ones is less relevant. In a sense all countries are developing countries, charting a new planetary course together, regardless of whether they work together to do so.

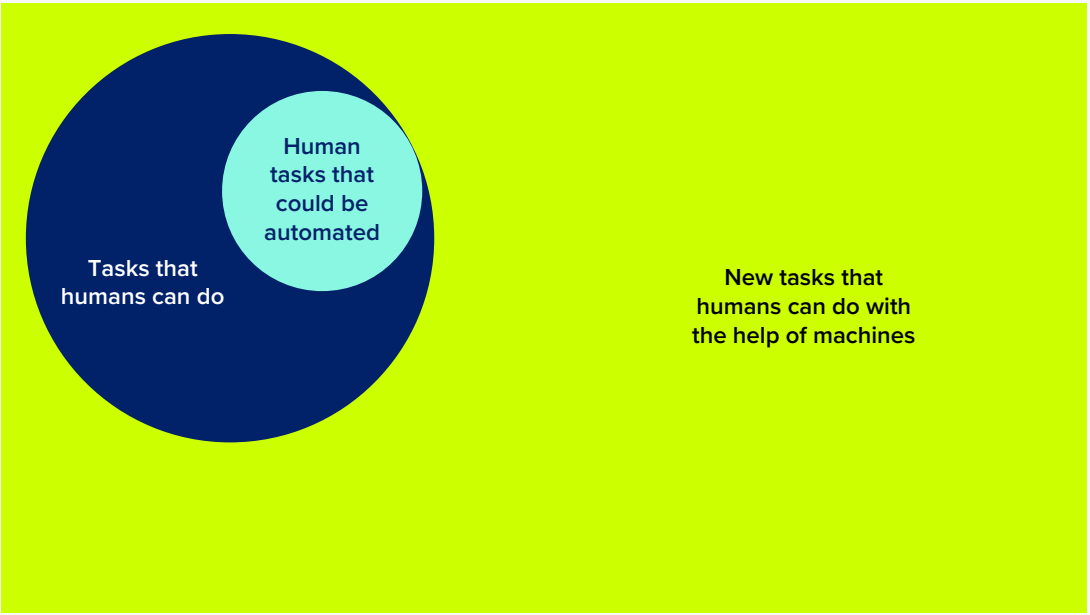
"In a sense all countries are developing countries, charting a new planetary course together, regardless of whether they work together to do so

The question is no longer simply how some countries get from point A to point B; instead, it is how all countries start moving from wherever they are to points N, T or W—or letters in some new alphabet—and then course correct along the way. Development is perhaps better seen as a process characterized both by adapting to an unfolding unknown reality and by purposefully transforming economies and societies to ease planetary pressures and advance inclusion.[55]

There is promise and opportunity in uncertainty

If necessity is the mother of invention, then the very forces that give rise to today's uncertainties also offer the means to navigate them. Uncertainty engenders the possibility of change, also for the better. Consider artificial intelligence, a disruptive opportunity at least as much as a disruptive threat. Its potential for enhancing labour is bigger than its potential for automating it. New tasks, new jobs, new industries are all possible (figure 9). Recall that most jobs came into being in part through the task-creating effects of new technologies: around 60 percent of people in the United States are now employed in occupations that did not exist in 1940.[56] We do not, however, have the luxury to wait around for the long run. The negative displacement impacts of artificial intelligence are too big, too likely and too fast, especially if labour-replacing incentives dominate its development. Policies and institutions

Figure 9 There is much more scope for artificial intelligence to augment human activity than to automate existing tasks



Note: Figure is illustrative.
Source: Human Development Report Office based on Brynjolfsson (2022).

must be put into place that nudge artificial intelligence towards people rather than away from them, to unlock and frontload its potential for positive transformation.

We are already witnessing artificial intelligence's upside in many areas (see chapter 5 in the full Report). Among its many climate-related applications, it aids in modelling climate change impacts and in predicting disasters. In education it can facilitate individualized learning and enhance accessibility. In biology it has revolutionized protein folding prediction, a huge boon for medicine.[57]

Among the many things the Covid-19 pandemic broke open was our imaginations. It expanded the reference points for what is possible (see chapter 5 in the full Report). Consider the rapid development and distribution in many (but not all) countries of safe, effective Covid-19 vaccines, some based on new mRNA technologies that hold promise for preventing and treating many other diseases. The pandemic normalized paid sick leave, voluntary social distancing and self-isolation, all important for our response to future pandemics.

The interventions by central banks over the past two years dwarf their interventions in the wake of the global financial crisis about a decade earlier. Fiscal policy saw a sea change, too. Social protection has surged, protecting many people from even worse impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic while providing large-scale test cases of innovative ideas: linking national registries and databases for eligibility determination; expanding coverage to previously uncovered beneficiaries, such as refugees, migrants and informal workers; and adopting digital verification and delivery systems, among other pathbreaking steps.[58]

Civil society has been breaking new ground, too. In many places the Covid-19 pandemic galvanized civil society organizations to deliver emergency responses, in some cases taking on new functions.[59] In response to expanded emergency government powers, some civil society entities have beefed up watchdog activities, and still others are pushing to address social, economic and political imbalances laid bare by the pandemic.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has shown, the growing mismatch between the world as it is (or is becoming) and conventional ways of understanding and doing things, such that more and more of life lacks an obvious compass or structure, can be seen as an opportunity to do something new. It can be an opportunity to imagine, experiment and create, in ways similar to

the work of a scientist or artist. Existing institutions can be transformed, and new ones created, alongside new leaders, social movements and norms. Much like many scientists and artists, who are often responding to practical personal and societal concerns, this process of ongoing, creative reconstruction at all levels is a practical response to today's uncertainty complex. We will have to find ways to renew, adapt and create institutions in the face of their inevitable shortcomings in an unpredictably changing world. We will have to experiment, to cooperate, in order to thrive.

If we do not—if we reinforce the status quo, when the status quo is part of the problem, or limit our aspirations to a "return to normal"—the gap between a changing world and intractable norms and institutions will widen to a chasm. Opportunities for innovation and good leadership then increasingly become dangerous vacuums in power where the allure of simple recipes and the easy gratifications of finger pointing combine to make the problem worse. There is promise and peril in uncertainty and disruption; tipping the scales towards promise—towards hope—is up to us.

An evolving portfolio of perspectives helps in a world of worry

Tipping the scales towards promise requires that we keep testing the fences of conventional thinking, to embrace an evolving portfolio of perspectives from which to draw, mixing and matching as emerging contexts require. For instance, policies and institutions at all levels need to go beyond assuming that people are only, or even predominantly, self-interested (see chapter 3 in the full Report). This assumption remains highly relevant, but it is does not encompass the totality of human behaviour. Its limitations have been highlighted and addressed, at least partially, by complementary and pioneering work in behavioural economics. Still, we must reach for broader perspectives of human decisionmaking, ones that consider the roles of emotions and culture and that explore how people weave together and change value-infused narratives about themselves and the various communities they belong to. For example, our relationship with nature needs renovation, and cultural narratives are the foundation.

> "To respond creatively and nimbly to today's uncertainty complex, we need to bring down barriers to people's imaginations, identities and networks, to expand the idea of what is possible in people's lives

Just as we must widen the vista on human behaviour, notions of human development must go beyond a focus on wellbeing achievements, however important they still are, to include the vital roles of agency and freedoms in helping people live lives that they value (see chapter 3 in the full Report). Doing so illuminates the apparent paradoxes of our age: progress with insecurity and progress with polarization. A comprehensive embrace of human development can act as a lodestar through turbulent times when cookie-cutter policy lists simply will not do. To respond creatively and nimbly to today's uncertainty complex, we need to bring down barriers to people's imaginations, identities and networks, to expand the idea of what is possible in people's lives. While crises can present opportunities for pathbreaking action, we will be better off operating deliberately and proactively rather than in a chronic state of emergency response. In an age of layered and interacting uncertainties, freedoms may not translate reliably into desired achievements or outcomes. That is the unfortunate news. But individuals, families and communities can be empowered to experiment, to try new things, for their benefit and for others, without fear of being trapped in poverty, in a single identity or in one cultural narrative.

Rigidities in their many dimensions—in ideas, in networks, in narratives—act as a vise on human creativity; they constrain the generation of new ideas in response to a changing world. Agency and freedoms are antidotes. Policies, institutions and cultural change that promote them tend to be fostered by cultivating four motivating principles: flexibility, solidarity, creativity and inclusion (see also chapter 6 in the full Report). These principles, which can reinforce one another, will go a long way in making policies and institutions more fit for purpose.

The four principles can also have their own internal tensions. Building systems with some stabilizing redundancies, for example, needs to be balanced against nimble response capacities. Still, it is hard to be quick on one's feet if one is constantly getting knocked over by a financial meltdown, novel virus or

monster hurricane. Similarly, there is a give and take to creative exploration and concerted, purposeful action anchored in human rights. Striking the right balance among the four motivating principles will be key, and trust is essential to doing so. People will be suspicious of the negotiation table if they fear that the chair will be constantly jerked out from under them. Policy development will be an iterative, trial-and-error process in which we must all learn from each other.

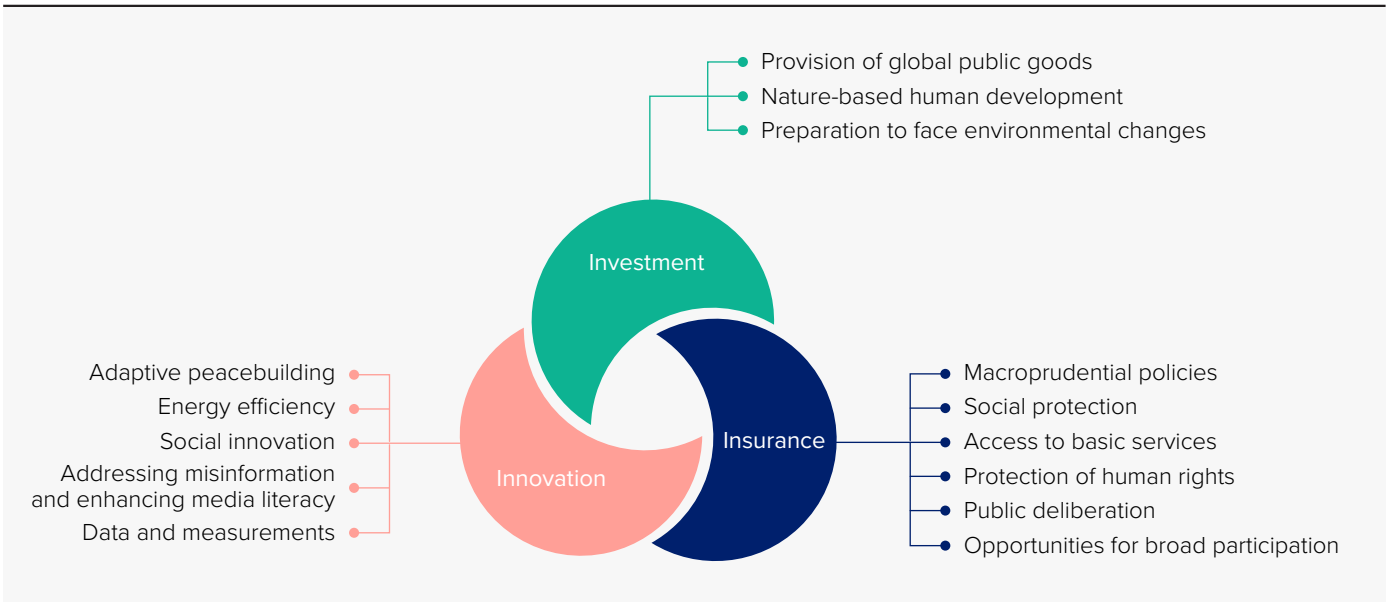
Policies and institutions to invest, insure and innovate

There are no policy panaceas, no one-size-fits-all approaches. Even so, some policies form the building blocks for countries and communities as they navigate today's uncertainty complex towards more hopeful futures. They fall into three overlapping, mutually reinforcing categories: investment, insurance and innovation—the Three I's (figure 10; see also chapter 6 in the full Report).

Investment should connect the dots. Nature-based human development can protect and enhance natural resources while protecting people from shocks, promoting economic and food security and expanding the choices available to them. Such investments are especially relevant at the local level, speaking to the need for investing in governance that is connected to people on the ground, that builds bridges among policy and institutional silos and that ensures all voices are heard. Investments are needed, too, on the other end—in global public goods. The new uncertainty complex is often driven by global phenomena, so responding to it can require global cooperation. The additional investment to avoid future pandemics is estimated to be only $15 billion a year.[60] This is a tiny fraction of the economic cost of the Covid-19 pandemic, a cost that exceeds $7 trillion in lost production and $16.9 trillion in emergency fiscal responses.[61] Investments in global pandemic preparedness make good sense, given the devastating human costs.

Insurance provides an essential stabilizing force in the face of uncertainty. To start, structures that manage a variety of risk in people's lives, primarily in various forms of social protection, need to be revitalized and modernized, including for people in informal or other precarious employment, such as gig workers. We need to reverse course away from risk segmentation and move towards a broader sharing of risk. More countercyclical social protection measures can be automatically triggered by certain indicators, such as the loss of a job or a drop in income, while ensuring their inclusivity. Such measures played important roles in many countries in protecting people from some of the worst impacts of the global financial

Figure 10 Making people more secure though investment, insurance and innovation



Source: Human Development Report Office.

crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the benefits of automatic triggers is that they require less political wrangling at already stressful moments, helping target political capital to the unique features of a new challenge rather than continually plugging holes in leaky safety nets.

Universal basic services, such as health and education, are important investments in their own right, as evidenced in the Sustainable Development Goals, and for inclusively expanding human development. They also afford an important insurance function, helping stabilize people in the face of seemingly relentless shocks. This can encourage experimentation. People are loath to try new things if doing so risks their or their family's health and education and threatens to yank them irreversibly down a yawning socioeconomic ladder.

> "Innovation will be at the heart of successfully navigating the many unforeseen, unknowable challenges ahead

Investments in preparedness, not just for shocks but also for societal transitions, can be well worth the cost. Equally important are investments in promoting and protecting human rights and in deliberative mechanisms that enable public reasoning in a participatory, inclusive way. Together they help insure against polarization.

Innovation will be at the heart of successfully navigating the many unforeseen, unknowable challenges ahead. Some readymade tools will help, others will be modified and updated for new contexts and still others will be built from scratch. In part, innovation has to do with new technologies and ensuring that they reach everyone. Computational capacities amounting to millions of Apollo missions to the moon are now in the hands of everyone with a smartphone, which is just about everybody.[62] In developing countries mobile phones have reshaped financial transfers and access to information, such as weather forecasts and wholesale market prices. New insurance models are needed that respond to complex new risk paradigms: risks that are increasingly synchronized across geographies and sectors, that span generations and that harm natural resources.

The "right" role for governments in innovation is an important question, and governments have big roles in fostering climates for innovation. There was widespread support when governments threw their full weight behind Covid-19 vaccines, committing to staggering prepurchase orders of then-unproven technologies. Governments were a driving force and active development and distribution partner throughout, ushering in and deploying a lifesaving new technology at astonishing speed. (The contrast with the relatively anaemic action on climate change, no less an emergency than Covid-19, is stark.) Innovation policy frameworks, which are intimately tied to other areas such as competition and patent laws, have enormous implications across sectors, from access to medicines and energy to food and water security.

Innovation does not have to be big to produce big results. Major social media platforms have enacted policies such as notices, warnings and links to resources in a bid to combat misinformation. For example, links to official information by the World Health Organization are suggested under posts mentioning Covid-19 on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and TikTok. Twitter reminds users when they are sharing an article without opening the link first (see chapter 4 in the full Report). Fact-checking initiatives have been created by users on these same platforms, and media plurality has been strengthened through new and independent outlets that could not exist or have the means to inform in the traditional media landscape, often at the local and grassroot levels. Governments can also take prudent steps to combat misinformation while respecting and promoting people's human rights and freedoms.

Sometimes the answer might not be complex. The simple addition of the retweet button on Twitter has enabled information, including misinformation, to go viral. Modifying its use, as some have argued, could go a long way in curbing some of the more troubling features of social media.[63] Course correcting in this way—practical solutions to practical problems—will be key to navigating the new uncertainty complex.

Innovation is more than technologies as we understand them conventionally in terms of vaccines or smartphones. Equally important is social innovation, which is a whole-of-society endeavour. Adaptive peacebuilding, which focuses on emergent bottom-up, participatory processes rather than adhering to a set recipe, is a case in point.[64] Much can be

learned from its application in Rwanda for healing, transitional justice and conflict resolution (see chapter 6 in the full Report).

Cultural change opens opportunities for collective action

Policies and institutions are embedded in social contexts, so aspects such as narratives matter a lot, too. Everyone is immersed in social contexts, with culture understood not as a fixed variable working in the background but as a toolkit that changes over time and that individuals and groups use strategically in society.

When it comes to choices about the future, people appear to be motivated less by accurate scenarios of what the future may hold than by collectively held narratives.[65] Much of the current information about the future, in the form of assessments, such as those issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services,[66] are anticipatory. As crucial as they are, it is important to consider also having assessments towards imagining more desirable futures.[67]

The importance of culture is finding its way into many other areas, including economics and law. The work of Robert Shiller explains dynamics in asset prices as well as business cycles in terms of "narrative economics."[68] Karla Hoff and James Walsh suggest that law affects behaviour not only by changing incentives and information (a coordination function) or through its expressive role (as a guidepost for social norms) but also with the potential to change cultural categories.[69]

Shifting culture, for good or ill, is possible and can happen quickly. Education can be a powerful tool to open the potential for new perspectives in younger generations, not just through curricula but also by envisaging schools as spaces of inclusion and diversity. Social recognition by elites of all types, from politicians and celebrities to social media influencers and community leaders, is an important mechanism for cultural change. Media in its many forms plays a big role here. In Bangladesh a popular animated television show reduced the cultural and religious stigma of girls going to school in rural areas and increased their attendance.[70] In Ghana and Kenya the Time to Change campaign made inroads into reducing mental health stigma.[71]

The issue is not just about recipients of programmes or target audiences but also about who is deciding on and delivering the messages. For example, women's representation in political bodies shifts policy priorities and expands aspirations for other women and girls. Social movements have important roles as well in advancing human rights and changing cultural norms and narratives to expand agency and freedoms (see chapter 6 in the full Report).

> "Walls between our social connections are perhaps more insidiously damaging and polarizing than walls between nations

Essential to flexible and adaptable narratives, in building trust and social cohesion for more hopeful futures, is the freedom for each person to have and move among different identities in different social contexts (see chapter 4 in the full Report).[72] Walls between our social connections are perhaps more insidiously damaging and polarizing than walls between nations. The bridges that connect different groups are among our most important assets. Good leaders rehabilitate and strengthen them and help us use them —especially in the face of unknowns. Demagogues try to burn them down, replacing fluid connection, exchange and learning with zero-sum, us-versus-them narratives. Instead of trying out cultural scripts precisely when experimentation matters most, people become trapped by them.

Where we go from here is up to us

We must learn to live with today's uncertainty complex, just as we must learn to live with Covid-19. This year's Human Development Report challenges us to aspire to more than mere accommodation, however. By unlocking our human potential, by tapping into our creativity and diversity anchored in trust and solidarity, it challenges us to imagine and create futures in which we thrive. The encouraging words of the late, great poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou ring as true as ever, reminding us "to bring all our energies to each encounter, to remain flexible enough to notice and admit when what we expected to happen

did not happen. We need to remember that we are created creative and can invent new scenarios as frequently as they are needed."[73]

Where we go from here is up to us. One of the great lessons of our species' history is that we can accomplish a lot with very little if we work together towards shared goals. If there is a secret ingredient to human magic, that must be it. The challenges in the Anthropocene and in sweeping societal transformations are huge, even daunting, all the more so for countries and communities struggling with the most dramatic and unjust deprivations. Insecurity and polarization make things worse. Amid so much uncertainty, the truth is that we are not going to get it right, maybe not even most of the time. In this turbulent new era we can set the direction but cannot guarantee the outcome. The good news is that we have more tools than ever to help us navigate and course correct. But no amount of technological wizardry is a substitute for good leadership, collective action or trust. If we can start fixing the human side of the planetary ledger—and this Report tries to highlight how—then the future, however uncertain, will be more promise than peril, just as it should be.

Notes

1 Cognizant of ongoing discussions about whether the Anthropocene can be defined as a new geological epoch, the Report adopts the perspective of the Anthropocene as an ongoing geological event (Bauer and others 2021.) as well as a historical event. As Wagner-Pacifici (2017, p. 1) argues: "Historical events provoke an enormous sense of uncertainty. The world seems out of whack, and everyday routines are, at the least, disrupted. People often experience a vertiginous sensation that a new reality or era may be in the making, but it is one that does not yet have a clear shape and trajectory, or determined consequences. [Events imply a] complex dynamic of 'unknowing' and then reknowing a world transformed by events." With relevance to the layer of uncertainty associated with the Anthropocene emphasized in the Report, the author continues: "[P]lanetary environmental crisis is an event in which the ground *becomes* the event." (Wagner-Pacifici 2017, p. 165).

2 UN 2022a, 2022b.

3 UN Global Crisis Response Group on Food 2022.

4 FAO and others 2021.

5 UNDP 2022.

6 Satake 2014.

7 Toor and others (2021) estimate that the vaccines covered in their study averted 50 million deaths from 2000 to 2019. See also van Panhuis and others (2013) for US estimates since the early 20th century.

8 Watson and others 2022.

9 Levin and others 2022.

10 Mathieu and others (2021) based on data from Our World in Data (https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations, accessed 7 June 2022).

11 UN Women 2021a.

12 Haelermans 2022; Saavedra 2021.

13 Gill and Saavedra 2022; UNICEF 2020.

14 Reinhart and Graf von Luckner 2022.

15 Payne and Bellamy 2014.

16 IPBES 2019b; Pörtner and others 2021.

17 See UNDP (2020).

18 Jenner 2022.

19 Hughes and others 2018.

20 UN 2021.

21 IPCC 2021.

22 Ord 2020. We are grateful to Toby Ord for contributing text to this paragraph.

23 These two layers of uncertainty echo the framing emanating from assessments of the implications of climate change for financial stability (see, for instance, BIS 2021), which distinguishes between two sources of risk when it comes to valuing assets: physical risks and transition risks. Physical risks are associated with how hazards exacerbated by climate change can lower asset values—for instance, how floods can lower the value of houses located near the sea or in flood-prone areas. Transition risks are associated with changes in regulation or consumer tastes that can result in stranded assets—for instance, if coal-fired power plants are forbidden or rejected by consumers, the value of coal mining and coal-fired power plants can collapse. Chapter 1 extends this framework by looking beyond physical risks of climate change to consider the broader set of challenges associated with the Anthropocene context and by looking beyond the climate transition to consider the broader set of elements associated with a transition to ease planetary pressures.

24 Pinto and others 2022.

25 See the discussion in chapter 2 of Black and others (2022).

26 Diamond 2015; Hyde 2020.

27 Boese and others 2022.

28 Østby, Aas Rustad and Arasmith 2021; UNDP 2022.

29 UNHCR 2022.

30 Hinrichs 2021; ILO 2018.

31 See UNDP (2019).

32 Bollen and others 2021.

33 For example, Ahir, Bloom and Furceri (2022) constructed a World Uncertainty Index based on text analysis of Economist Intelligence Unit reports. They found that concerns about uncertainty have been steadily increasing since 2012, with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic prompting a historical peak on the index.

34 UNDP 2022.

35 UNDP 2019.

36 See Zuboff (2019).

37 Zeifman 2017.

38 Demeke and others 2021; Palozzi, Schettini and Chirico 2020.

39 Geraci and others 2018.

40 See Polak and Trottier (2020).

41 UNDP 2019.

42 Connolly and Jackson 2019; Maguen and others 2009; Nydegger and others 2019; Osman and Wood 2018.

43 WHO 2022a.

44 Newson and others 2021.

45 Even before the pandemic, women already assumed the lion's share of unpaid care work, and given containment measures, they shouldered even more responsibilities tending to their children while working remotely in some cases (Andrew and others 2020; Power 2020; Seedat and Rondon 2021; UN Women 2021b).

46 Etheridge and Spantig 2020; Hammarberg and others 2020; UN Women 2021b; Wade and others 2021; WHO 2022a; Xue and McMunn 2021.

47 Watson and Osberg 2017.

48 *The Lancet Global Health* 2020.

49 PAHO 2019.

50 WHO 2022b.

51 See Black and others (2022) for an exploration of the environment–security nexus, including an elaboration of different kinds of risks that must be managed in just transitions, with guiding principles and recommendations for how to do so.

52 Sonter and others 2020.

53 Kimbrough 2021.

54 Folke and others 2021; Zaremba 2022.

55 "Transformations, like adaptations, are also coming to be seen not as discrete events but rather as dynamical cascades entailing multidimensional regime shifts and associated qualitative changes in development pathways" (Clark and Harley 2020, p. 355).

56 Autor, Salomons and Seegmiller 2021.

57 Baek and others 2021; Tunyasuvunakool and others 2021.

58 Hammad, Bacil and Soares 2021.

59 Youngs 2020.

60 Okonjo-Iweala, Shanmugaratnam and Summers 2021.

61 IMF 2021a.

62 According to Statista (2022), there were nearly 6.6 billion smartphone subscriptions in 2022, about 84 percent of the global population. Another 1 billion subscriptions are expected to be added over the next five years.

63 Weiss 2022.

64 See de Coning (2018).

65 Clark and Harley 2020, p. 367.

66 IPBES 2019a.

67 Mach and Field 2017; Pereira and others 2020.

68 Shiller 2019.

69 Hoff and Walsh 2019.

70 Anis and White 2017.

71 Potts and Henderson 2021.

72 Baldassarri and Page 2021.

73 Angelou 1993, p. 65–66.

Human development indices

HDI rank		Human Development Index (HDI)	Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)			Gender Development Index		Gender Inequality Index		Multidimensional Poverty Index[a]			
		Value	Value	Overall loss[b] (%)	Difference from HDI rank[b]	Value	Group[c]	Value	Rank	Value	Headcount (%)	Intensity of deprivation (%)	Year and survey[d]
		2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2009-2020	2009-2020	2009-2020	2009-2020
Very high human development													
1	Switzerland	0.962	0.894	7.1	-3	0.967	2	0.018	3	..	..	..	..
2	Norway	0.961	0.908	5.5	0	0.983	1	0.016	2	..	..	..	..
3	Iceland	0.959	0.915	4.6	2	0.976	1	0.043	8	..	..	..	..
4	Hong Kong, China (SAR)	0.952	0.828	13.0	-19	0.976	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
5	Australia	0.951	0.876	7.9	-6	0.968	2	0.073	19	..	..	..	..
6	Denmark	0.948	0.898	5.3	3	0.980	1	0.013	1	..	..	..	..
7	Sweden	0.947	0.885	6.5	0	0.988	1	0.023	4	..	..	..	..
8	Ireland	0.945	0.886	6.2	2	0.987	1	0.074	21	..	..	..	..
9	Germany	0.942	0.883	6.3	1	0.978	1	0.073	19	..	..	..	..
10	Netherlands	0.941	0.878	6.7	1	0.968	2	0.025	5	..	..	..	..
11	Finland	0.940	0.890	5.3	6	0.989	1	0.033	6	..	..	..	..
12	Singapore	0.939	0.817	13.0	-15	0.992	1	0.040	7	..	..	..	..
13	Belgium	0.937	0.874	6.7	1	0.978	1	0.048	10	..	..	..	..
13	New Zealand	0.937	0.865	7.7	0	0.975	1	0.088	25	..	..	..	..
15	Canada	0.936	0.860	8.1	1	0.988	1	0.069	17	..	..	..	..
16	Liechtenstein	0.935	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
17	Luxembourg	0.930	0.850	8.6	0	0.993	1	0.044	9	..	..	..	..
18	United Kingdom	0.929	0.850	8.5	1	0.987	1	0.098	27	..	..	..	..
19	Japan	0.925	0.850	8.1	2	0.970	2	0.083	22	..	..	..	..
19	Korea (Republic of)	0.925	0.838	9.4	-3	0.944	3	0.067	15	..	..	..	..
21	United States	0.921	0.819	11.1	-5	1.001	1	0.179	44	..	..	..	..
22	Israel	0.919	0.815	11.3	-8	0.992	1	0.083	22	..	..	..	..
23	Malta	0.918	0.849	7.5	2	0.980	1	0.167	42	..	..	..	..
23	Slovenia	0.918	0.878	4.4	13	0.999	1	0.071	18	..	..	..	..
25	Austria	0.916	0.851	7.1	9	0.980	1	0.053	12	..	..	..	..
26	United Arab Emirates	0.911	..	..	..	0.953	2	0.049	11	..	..	..	..
27	Spain	0.905	0.788	12.9	-12	0.986	1	0.057	14	..	..	..	..
28	France	0.903	0.825	8.6	2	0.990	1	0.083	22	..	..	..	..
29	Cyprus	0.896	0.819	8.6	2	0.972	2	0.123	35	..	..	..	..
30	Italy	0.895	0.791	11.6	-7	0.970	2	0.056	13	..	..	..	..
31	Estonia	0.890	0.829	6.9	7	1.021	1	0.100	28	..	..	..	..
32	Czechia	0.889	0.850	4.4	14	0.989	1	0.120	34	..	..	..	..
33	Greece	0.887	0.791	10.8	-4	0.969	2	0.119	32	..	..	..	..
34	Poland	0.876	0.816	6.8	4	1.008	1	0.109	31	..	..	..	..
35	Bahrain	0.875	..	..	..	0.927	3	0.181	46	..	..	..	..
35	Lithuania	0.875	0.800	8.6	2	1.030	2	0.105	30	..	..	..	..
35	Saudi Arabia	0.875	..	..	..	0.917	4	0.247	59	..	..	..	..
38	Portugal	0.866	0.773	10.7	-4	0.994	1	0.067	15	..	..	..	..
39	Latvia	0.863	0.792	8.2	2	1.025	1	0.151	40	..	..	..	..
40	Andorra	0.858	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
40	Croatia	0.858	0.797	7.1	4	0.995	1	0.093	26	..	..	..	..
42	Chile	0.855	0.722	15.6	-8	0.967	2	0.187	47	..	..	..	..
42	Qatar	0.855	..	..	..	1.019	1	0.220	54	..	..	..	..
44	San Marino	0.853	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
45	Slovakia	0.848	0.803	5.3	8	0.999	1	0.180	45	..	..	..	..
46	Hungary	0.846	0.792	6.4	6	0.987	1	0.221	55	..	..	..	..
47	Argentina	0.842	0.720	14.5	-6	0.997	1	0.287	69	..	..	..	..
48	Türkiye	0.838	0.717	14.4	-7	0.937	3	0.272	65	..	..	..	..
49	Montenegro	0.832	0.756	9.1	2	0.981	1	0.119	32	0.005	1.2	39.6	2018 M
50	Kuwait	0.831	..	..	..	1.009	1	0.305	74	..	..	..	..
51	Brunei Darussalam	0.829	..	..	..	0.984	1	0.259	61	..	..	..	..
52	Russian Federation	0.822	0.751	8.6	1	1.016	1	0.203	50	..	..	..	..
53	Romania	0.821	0.733	10.7	1	0.994	1	0.282	67	..	..	..	..
54	Oman	0.816	0.708	13.2	-7	0.900	4	0.300	72	..	..	..	..
55	Bahamas	0.812	..	..	..	..	..	0.329	78	..	..	..	..
56	Kazakhstan	0.811	0.755	6.9	5	0.998	1	0.161	41	0.002[e]	0.5[e]	35.6[e]	2015 M
57	Trinidad and Tobago	0.810	..	..	..	0.985	1	0.344	81	0.002[e]	0.6[e]	38.0[e]	2011 M
58	Costa Rica	0.809	0.664	17.9	-17	0.996	1	0.256	60	0.002[e,f]	0.5[e,f]	37.1[e,f]	2018 M
58	Uruguay	0.809	0.710	12.2	-3	1.022	1	0.235	58	..	..	..	..
60	Belarus	0.808	0.765	5.3	10	1.011	1	0.104	29	..	..	..	..
61	Panama	0.805	0.640	20.5	-19	1.017	1	0.392	96	..	..	..	..
62	Malaysia	0.803	..	..	..	0.982	1	0.228	57	..	..	..	..
63	Georgia	0.802	0.706	12.0	-2	1.007	1	0.280	66	0.001[e]	0.3[e]	36.6[e]	2018 M
63	Mauritius	0.802	0.666	17.0	-11	0.973	2	0.347	82	..	..	..	..

Continued →

HDI rank		Human Development Index (HDI)	Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)			Gender Development Index		Gender Inequality Index		Multidimensional Poverty Index[a]			
		Value	Value	Overall loss[b] (%)	Difference from HDI rank[b]	Value	Group[c]	Value	Rank	Value	Headcount (%)	Intensity of deprivation (%)	Year and survey[d]
		2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2009-2020	2009-2020	2009-2020	2009-2020
63	Serbia	0.802	0.720	10.2	5	0.982	1	0.131	36	0.000 [e,g]	0.1 [e,g]	38.1 [e,g]	2019 M
66	Thailand	0.800	0.686	14.3	-2	1.012	1	0.333	79	0.002 [e]	0.6 [e]	36.7 [e]	2019 M
	High human development												
67	Albania	0.796	0.710	10.8	5	1.007	1	0.144	39	0.003	0.7	39.1	2017/2018 D
68	Bulgaria	0.795	0.701	11.8	2	0.995	1	0.210	52	..	..	..	..
68	Grenada	0.795	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
70	Barbados	0.790	0.657	16.8	-9	1.034	2	0.268	64	0.009 [h]	2.5 [h]	34.2 [h]	2012 M
71	Antigua and Barbuda	0.788	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
72	Seychelles	0.785	0.661	15.8	-7	..	..	..	..	0.003 [f,i]	0.9 [f,i]	34.2 [f,i]	2019 N
73	Sri Lanka	0.782	0.676	13.6	-2	0.949	3	0.383	92	0.011	2.9	38.3	2016 N
74	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.780	0.677	13.2	0	0.940	3	0.136	38	0.008 [h]	2.2 [h]	37.9 [h]	2011/2012 M
75	Saint Kitts and Nevis	0.777	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	–
76	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0.774	0.686	11.4	5	0.880	5	0.459	115	..	..	..	..
77	Ukraine	0.773	0.726	6.1	18	1.012	1	0.200	49	0.001 [j]	0.2 [j]	34.4 [j]	2012 M
78	North Macedonia	0.770	0.686	10.9	7	0.945	3	0.134	37	0.001	0.4	38.2	2018/2019 M
79	China	0.768	0.651	15.2	-3	0.984	1	0.192	48	0.016 [k,l]	3.9 [k,l]	41.4 [k,l]	2014 Nm
80	Dominican Republic	0.767	0.618	19.4	-9	1.014	1	0.429	106	0.015 [j]	3.9 [j]	38.9 [j]	2014 M
80	Moldova (Republic of)	0.767	0.711	7.3	16	1.010	1	0.205	51	0.004	0.9	37.4	2012 M
80	Palau	0.767	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
83	Cuba	0.764	..	..	..	0.961	2	0.303	73	0.003 [e]	0.7 [e]	38.1 [e]	2019 M
84	Peru	0.762	0.635	16.7	-3	0.950	2	0.380	90	0.029	7.4	39.6	2018 N
85	Armenia	0.759	0.688	9.4	13	1.001	1	0.216	53	0.001	0.2	36.2	2015/2016 D
86	Mexico	0.758	0.621	18.1	-3	0.989	1	0.309	75	0.026 [h]	6.6 [h]	39.0 [h]	2016 Nn
87	Brazil	0.754	0.576	23.6	-20	0.994	1	0.390	94	0.016 [e,j,o]	3.8 [e,j,o]	42.5 [e,j,o]	2015 No
88	Colombia	0.752	0.589	21.7	-14	0.984	1	0.424	102	0.020 [j]	4.8 [j]	40.6 [j]	2015/2016 D
89	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0.751	..	..	..	0.970	2	0.390	94	..	..	..	..
90	Maldives	0.747	0.594	20.5	-9	0.925	3	0.348	83	0.003	0.8	34.4	2016/2017 D
91	Algeria	0.745	0.598	19.7	-7	0.880	5	0.499	126	0.005	1.4	39.2	2018/2019 M
91	Azerbaijan	0.745	0.685	8.1	14	0.974	2	0.294	70	..	..	..	..
91	Tonga	0.745	0.666	10.6	11	0.965	2	0.631	160	0.003	0.9	38.1	2019 M
91	Turkmenistan	0.745	0.619	16.9	0	0.956	2	0.177	43	0.001 [f]	0.2 [f]	34.0 [f]	2019 M
95	Ecuador	0.740	0.604	18.4	0	0.980	1	0.362	85	0.018 [e]	4.6 [e]	39.9 [e]	2013/2014 N
96	Mongolia	0.739	0.644	12.9	10	1.031	2	0.313	76	0.028 [p]	7.3 [p]	38.8 [p]	2018 M
97	Egypt	0.731	0.519	29.0	-21	0.882	5	0.443	109	0.020 [f]	5.2 [f]	37.6 [f]	2014 D
97	Tunisia	0.731	0.588	19.6	-7	0.931	3	0.259	61	0.003	0.8	36.5	2018 M
99	Fiji	0.730	..	..	..	0.931	3	0.318	77	..	..	..	..
99	Suriname	0.730	0.532	27.1	-18	1.001	1	0.427	105	0.011	2.9	39.4	2018 M
101	Uzbekistan	0.727	..	..	..	0.944	3	0.227	56	..	..	..	..
102	Dominica	0.720	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
102	Jordan	0.720	0.617	14.3	7	0.887	5	0.471	118	0.002	0.4	35.4	2017/2018 D
104	Libya	0.718	..	..	..	0.975	1	0.259	61	0.007	2.0	37.1	2014 P
105	Paraguay	0.717	0.582	18.8	-6	0.990	1	0.445	111	0.019	4.5	41.9	2016 M
106	Palestine, State of	0.715	0.584	18.3	-4	0.891	5	..	..	0.002	0.6	35.0	2019/2020 M
106	Saint Lucia	0.715	0.559	21.8	-8	1.011	1	0.381	91	0.007 [h]	1.9 [h]	37.5 [h]	2012 M
108	Guyana	0.714	0.591	17.2	3	0.978	1	0.454	114	0.007	1.7	38.8	2019/2020 M
109	South Africa	0.713	0.471	33.9	-22	0.944	3	0.405	97	0.025	6.3	39.8	2016 D
110	Jamaica	0.709	0.591	16.6	5	0.990	1	0.335	80	0.018 [h]	4.7 [h]	38.7 [h]	2014 N
111	Samoa	0.707	0.613	13.3	13	0.957	2	0.418	99	..	..	..	..
112	Gabon	0.706	0.554	21.5	-3	0.908	4	0.541	140	0.070	15.6	44.7	2012 D
112	Lebanon	0.706	..	..	..	0.882	5	0.432	108	..	..	..	..
114	Indonesia	0.705	0.585	17.0	4	0.941	3	0.444	110	0.014 [j]	3.6 [j]	38.7 [j]	2017 D
115	Viet Nam	0.703	0.602	14.4	14	1.002	1	0.296	71	0.019 [j]	4.9 [j]	39.5 [j]	2013/2014 M
	Medium human development												
116	Philippines	0.699	0.574	17.9	2	0.990	1	0.419	101	0.024 [j]	5.8 [j]	41.8 [j]	2017 D
117	Botswana	0.693	..	..	..	0.981	1	0.468	117	0.073 [q]	17.2 [q]	42.2 [q]	2015/2016 N
118	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	0.692	0.549	20.7	-1	0.964	2	0.418	99	0.038	9.1	41.7	2016 N
118	Kyrgyzstan	0.692	0.627	9.4	23	0.966	2	0.370	87	0.001	0.4	36.3	2018 M
120	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	0.691	0.592	14.3	14	0.983	1	0.492	123	..	..	..	..
121	Iraq	0.686	0.554	19.2	4	0.803	5	0.558	145	0.033	8.6	37.9	2018 M
122	Tajikistan	0.685	0.599	12.6	19	0.909	4	0.285	68	0.029	7.4	39.0	2017 D
123	Belize	0.683	0.535	21.7	1	0.975	1	0.364	86	0.017	4.3	39.8	2015/2016 M
123	Morocco	0.683	0.504	26.2	-4	0.861	5	0.425	104	0.027 [r]	6.4 [r]	42.0 [r]	2017/2018 P
125	El Salvador	0.675	0.548	18.8	5	0.964	2	0.376	88	0.032	7.9	41.3	2014 M
126	Nicaragua	0.667	0.516	22.6	1	0.956	2	0.424	102	0.074	16.5	45.3	2011/2012 D
127	Bhutan	0.666	0.471	29.3	-6	0.937	3	0.415	98	0.175 [e]	37.3 [e]	46.8 [e]	2010 M

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HDI rank		Human Development Index (HDI)	Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)			Gender Development Index		Gender Inequality Index		Multidimensional Poverty Index[a]			
		Value	Value	Overall loss[b] (%)	Difference from HDI rank[b]	Value	Group[c]	Value	Rank	Value	Headcount (%)	Intensity of deprivation (%)	Year and survey[d]
		2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2009-2020	2009-2020	2009-2020	2009-2020
128	Cabo Verde	0.662	..	..	..	0.981	1	0.349	84	..	..	..	..
129	Bangladesh	0.661	0.503	23.9	0	0.898	5	0.530	131	0.104	24.6	42.2	2019 M
130	Tuvalu	0.641	0.541	15.6	8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
131	Marshall Islands	0.639	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
132	India	0.633	0.475	25.0	-2	0.849	5	0.490	122	0.123	27.9	43.9	2015/2016 D
133	Ghana	0.632	0.458	27.5	-6	0.946	3	0.529	130	0.111	24.6	45.1	2017/2018 M
134	Micronesia (Federated States of)	0.628	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
135	Guatemala	0.627	0.460	26.6	-3	0.917	4	0.481	121	0.134	28.9	46.2	2014/2015 D
136	Kiribati	0.624	0.516	17.3	8	..	..	..	..	0.080	19.8	40.5	2018/2019 M
137	Honduras	0.621	0.479	22.9	4	0.960	2	0.431	107	0.093[s]	20.0[s]	46.5[s]	2011/2012 D
138	Sao Tome and Principe	0.618	0.503	18.6	7	0.907	4	0.494	124	0.048	11.7	40.9	2019 M
139	Namibia	0.615	0.402	34.6	-10	1.004	1	0.445	111	0.185	40.9	45.2	2013 D
140	Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.607	0.459	24.4	1	0.949	3	0.478	120	0.108	23.1	47.0	2017 M
140	Timor-Leste	0.607	0.440	27.5	-3	0.917	4	0.378	89	0.222	48.3	45.9	2016 D
140	Vanuatu	0.607	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..e	..e	..e	..
143	Nepal	0.602	0.449	25.4	0	0.942	3	0.452	113	0.074	17.5	42.5	2019 M
144	Eswatini (Kingdom of)	0.597	0.424	29.0	-3	0.986	1	0.540	138	0.081	19.2	42.3	2014 M
145	Equatorial Guinea	0.596	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
146	Cambodia	0.593	0.479	19.2	11	0.926	3	0.461	116	0.170	37.2	45.8	2014 D
146	Zimbabwe	0.593	0.458	22.8	4	0.961	2	0.532	134	0.110	25.8	42.6	2019 M
148	Angola	0.586	0.407	30.5	-2	0.903	4	0.537	136	0.282	51.1	55.3	2015/2016 D
149	Myanmar	0.585	..	..	..	0.944	3	0.498	125	0.176	38.3	45.9	2015/2016 D
150	Syrian Arab Republic	0.577	..	..	..	0.825	5	0.477	119	0.029[e]	7.4[e]	38.9[e]	2009 P
151	Cameroon	0.576	0.393	31.8	-6	0.885	5	0.565	148	0.232	43.6	53.2	2018 D
152	Kenya	0.575	0.426	25.9	3	0.941	3	0.506	128	0.171	37.5	45.6	2014 D
153	Congo	0.571	0.432	24.3	5	0.934	3	0.564	147	0.112	24.3	46.0	2014/2015 M
154	Zambia	0.565	0.390	31.0	-4	0.965	2	0.540	138	0.232	47.9	48.4	2018 D
155	Solomon Islands	0.564	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
156	Comoros	0.558	0.310	44.4	-21	0.891	5	..	..	0.181	37.3	48.5	2012 D
156	Papua New Guinea	0.558	0.397	28.9	0	0.931	3	0.725	169	0.263[j]	56.6[j]	46.5[j]	2016/2018 D
158	Mauritania	0.556	0.389	30.0	-2	0.890	5	0.632	161	0.261	50.6	51.5	2015 M
159	Côte d'Ivoire	0.550	0.358	34.9	-8	0.887	5	0.613	155	0.236	46.1	51.2	2016 M
	Low human development												
160	Tanzania (United Republic of)	0.549	0.418	23.9	8	0.943	3	0.560	146	0.284	57.1	49.8	2015/2016 D
161	Pakistan	0.544	0.380	30.1	0	0.810	5	0.534	135	0.198	38.3	51.7	2017/2018 D
162	Togo	0.539	0.372	31.0	-1	0.849	5	0.580	149	0.180	37.6	47.8	2017 M
163	Haiti	0.535	0.327	38.9	-12	0.898	5	0.635	163	0.200	41.3	48.4	2016/2017 D
163	Nigeria	0.535	0.341	36.3	-7	0.863	5	0.680	168	0.254	46.4	54.8	2018 D
165	Rwanda	0.534	0.402	24.7	11	0.954	2	0.388	93	0.259	54.4	47.5	2014/2015 D
166	Benin	0.525	0.334	36.4	-7	0.880	5	0.602	152	0.368	66.8	55.0	2017/2018 D
166	Uganda	0.525	0.396	24.6	9	0.927	3	0.530	131	0.281	57.2	49.2	2016 D
168	Lesotho	0.514	0.372	27.6	5	0.985	1	0.557	144	0.084[f]	19.6[f]	43.0[f]	2018 M
169	Malawi	0.512	0.377	26.4	7	0.968	2	0.554	142	0.252	54.2	46.5	2015/2016 D
170	Senegal	0.511	0.354	30.7	2	0.874	5	0.530	131	0.263	50.8	51.7	2019 D
171	Djibouti	0.509	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
172	Sudan	0.508	0.336	33.9	-1	0.870	5	0.553	141	0.279	52.3	53.4	2014 M
173	Madagascar	0.501	0.367	26.7	7	0.956	2	0.556	143	0.384	69.1	55.6	2018 M
174	Gambia	0.500	0.348	30.4	4	0.924	4	0.611	153	0.204	41.6	49.0	2018 M
175	Ethiopia	0.498	0.363	27.1	8	0.921	4	0.520	129	0.367	68.7	53.3	2019 D
176	Eritrea	0.492	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
177	Guinea-Bissau	0.483	0.306	36.6	-5	0.867	5	0.627	159	0.341	64.4	52.9	2018/2019 M
178	Liberia	0.481	0.330	31.4	2	0.871	5	0.648	164	0.259	52.3	49.6	2019/2020 D
179	Congo (Democratic Republic of the)	0.479	0.341	28.8	7	0.885	5	0.601	151	0.331	64.5	51.3	2017/2018 M
180	Afghanistan	0.478	..	..	..	0.681	5	0.678	167	0.272[j]	55.9[j]	48.6[j]	2015/2016 D
181	Sierra Leone	0.477	0.309	35.2	0	0.893	5	0.633	162	0.293	59.2	49.5	2019 D
182	Guinea	0.465	0.299	35.7	-4	0.850	5	0.621	157	0.373	66.2	56.4	2018 D
183	Yemen	0.455	0.307	32.5	1	0.496	5	0.820	170	0.245	48.5	50.6	2013 D
184	Burkina Faso	0.449	0.315	29.8	5	0.903	4	0.621	157	0.523	84.2	62.2	2010 D
185	Mozambique	0.446	0.300	32.7	0	0.922	4	0.537	136	0.417	73.1	57.0	2011 D
186	Mali	0.428	0.291	32.0	-2	0.887	5	0.613	155	0.376	68.3	55.0	2018 D
187	Burundi	0.426	0.302	29.1	3	0.935	3	0.505	127	0.409	75.1	54.4	2016/2017 D
188	Central African Republic	0.404	0.240	40.6	-3	0.810	5	0.672	166	0.461	80.4	57.4	2018/2019 M
189	Niger	0.400	0.292	27.0	2	0.835	5	0.611	153	0.601	91.0	66.1	2012 D
190	Chad	0.394	0.251	36.3	1	0.770	5	0.652	165	0.517	84.2	61.4	2019 M
191	South Sudan	0.385	0.245	36.4	1	0.843	5	0.587	150	0.580	91.9	63.2	2010 M
	Other countries or territories												
..	Korea (Democratic People's Rep. of)	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	Monaco	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	Nauru	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	Somalia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

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HDI rank	Human Development Index (HDI) Value 2021	Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI) Value 2021	Overall loss[b] (%) 2021	Difference from HDI rank[b] 2021	Gender Development Index Value 2021	Group[c] 2021	Gender Inequality Index Value 2021	Rank 2021	Multidimensional Poverty Index[a] Value 2009-2020	Headcount (%) 2009-2020	Intensity of deprivation (%) 2009-2020	Year and survey[d] 2009-2020
Human development groups												
Very high human development	0.896	0.805	10.2	–	0.986	–	0.155	–	0.002	0.5	36.6	–
High human development	0.754	0.627	16.8	–	0.973	–	0.329	–	0.016	4.0	40.5	–
Medium human development	0.636	0.481	24.4	–	0.880	–	0.494	–	0.119	26.7	44.7	–
Low human development	0.518	0.359	30.7	–	0.864	–	0.577	–	0.298	55.6	53.6	–
Developing countries	0.685	0.538	21.5	–	0.937	–	0.487	–	0.105	21.7	48.6	–
Regions												
Arab States	0.708	0.534	24.6	–	0.871	–	0.536	–	0.071	14.5	48.7	–
East Asia and the Pacific	0.749	0.630	15.9	–	0.978	–	0.337	–	0.023	5.4	42.5	–
Europe and Central Asia	0.796	0.714	10.3	–	0.961	–	0.227	–	0.004	1.0	38.0	–
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.754	0.601	20.3	–	0.986	–	0.381	–	0.030	6.9	42.8	–
South Asia	0.632	0.476	24.7	–	0.852	–	0.508	–	0.131	29.0	45.2	–
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.547	0.383	30.0	–	0.907	–	0.569	–	0.286	53.4	53.5	–
Least developed countries	0.540	0.390	27.8	–	0.894	–	0.562	–	0.278	53.2	52.3	–
Small island developing states	0.730	0.557	23.7	–	0.962	–	0.461	–	0.111	23.3	47.4	–
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	0.899	0.800	11.0	–	0.985	–	0.185	–	0.023	5.9	39.4	–
World	**0.732**	**0.590**	**19.4**	**–**	**0.958**	**–**	**0.465**	**–**	**0.105**	**21.7**	**48.6**	**–**

Notes

a Not all indicators were available for all countries, so caution should be used in cross-country comparisons. When an indicator is missing, weights of available indicators are adjusted to total 100 percent. See *Technical note 5* at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2022_technical_notes.pdf for details.

b Based on countries for which an Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index value is calculated.

c Countries are divided into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values.

d *D* indicates data from Demographic and Health Surveys, *M* indicates data from Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, *N* indicates data from national surveys and *P* indicates data from Pan Arab Population and Family Health Surveys (see http://hdr.undp.org/en/mpi-2021-faq for the list of national surveys).

e Considers child deaths that occurred at any time because the survey did not collect the date of child deaths.

f Missing indicator on cooking fuel.

g Because of the high proportion of children excluded from nutrition indicators due to measurements not being taken, estimates based on the 2019 Serbia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey should be interpreted with caution. The unweighted sample size used for the multidimensional poverty calculation is 82.8 percent.

h Missing indicator on child mortality.

i Missing indicator on school attendance.

j Missing indicator on nutrition.

k Given the information available in the data, child mortality was constructed based on deaths that occurred between surveys—that is, between 2012 and 2014. Child deaths reported by an adult man in the household were taken into account because the date of death was reported.

l Missing indicator on housing.

m Based on the version of data accessed on 7 June 2016.

n Multidimensional Poverty Index estimates are based on the 2016 National Health and Nutrition Survey. Estimates based on the 2015 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey are 0.010 for Multidimensional Poverty Index value, 2.6 for multidimensional poverty headcount, 3,207,000 for multidimensional poverty headcount in year of survey, 3,317,000 for projected multidimensional poverty headcount in 2019, 40.2 for intensity of deprivation, 0.4 for population in severe multidimensional poverty, 6.1 for population vulnerable to multidimensional poverty, 39.9 for contribution of deprivation in health, 23.8 for contribution of deprivation in education and 36.3 for contribution of deprivation in standard of living.

o The methodology was adjusted to account for missing indicator on nutrition and incomplete indicator on child mortality (the survey did not collect the date of child deaths).

p Indicator on sanitation follows the national classification in which pit latrine with slab is considered unimproved.

q Indicator on child mortality captures only deaths of children under age 5 who died in the last five years and deaths of children ages 12–18 who died in the last two years.

r Following the national report, latrines are considered an improved source for the sanitation indicator.

s Missing indicator on electricity.

Definitions

Human Development Index (HDI): A composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. See *Technical note 1* at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2022_technical_notes.pdf for details on how the HDI is calculated.

Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI): HDI value adjusted for inequalities in the three basic dimensions of human development. See *Technical note 2* at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2022_technical_notes.pdf for details on how the IHDI is calculated.

Overall loss: Percentage difference between the IHDI value and the HDI value.

Difference from HDI rank: Difference in ranks on the IHDI and the HDI.

Gender Development Index: Ratio of female to male HDI values. See *Technical note 3* at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2022_technical_notes.pdf for details on how the Gender Development Index is calculated.

Gender Development Index groups: Countries are divided into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values. Group 1 comprises countries with high equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of less than 2.5 percent), group 2 comprises countries with medium to high equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 2.5–5 percent), group 3 comprises countries with medium equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 5–7.5 percent), group 4 comprises countries with medium to low equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 7.5–10 percent) and group 5 comprises countries with low equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation from gender parity of more than 10 percent).

Gender Inequality Index: A composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. See *Technical note 4* at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2022_technical_notes.pdf for details on how the Gender Inequality Index is calculated.

Multidimensional Poverty Index: Percentage of the population that is multidimensionally poor adjusted by the intensity of the deprivations. See *Technical note 5* at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2022_technical_notes.pdf for details on how the Multidimensional Poverty Index is calculated.

Multidimensional poverty headcount: Population with a deprivation score of at least 33 percent. It is expressed as a share of the population in the survey year, the number of multidimensionally poor people in the survey year and the projected number of multidimensionally poor people in 2019.

Intensity of deprivation of multidimensional poverty: Average deprivation score experienced by people in multidimensional poverty.

Main data sources

Column 1: HDRO calculations based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), IMF (2022), UNDESA (2022a), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), UNSD (2022) and World Bank (2022).

Column 2: Calculated as the geometric mean of the values in the inequality-adjusted life expectancy index, inequality-adjusted education index and inequality-adjusted income index using the methodology in *Technical note 2* (available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2022_technical_notes.pdf).

Column 3: Calculated based on data in columns 1 and 2.

Column 4: Calculated based on IHDI values and recalculated HDI ranks for countries for which an IHDI value is calculated.

Column 5: HDRO calculations based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), ILO (2022), IMF (2022), UNDESA (2022a), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022) and World Bank (2022).

Column 6: Calculated based on data in column 5.

Column 7: HDRO calculations based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), ICF Macro Demographic and Health Surveys, ILO (2022), IPU (2022), OECD (2022), UNDESA (2022a), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and United Nations Population Division (2019).

Column 8: Calculated based on data in column 7.

Columns 9–11: HDRO and OPHI calculations based on data on household deprivations in health, education, and standard of living from various surveys listed in column 12 using the methodology described in *Technical note 5* (available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/mpi2022_technical_notes.pdf).

Column 12: Refers to the year and the survey whose data were used to calculate the country's Multidimensional Poverty Index value and its components.

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We live in a world of worry. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, having driven reversals in human development in almost every country, continues to spin off variants unpredictably. War in Ukraine and elsewhere has created more human suffering. Record-breaking temperatures, fires, storms and floods sound the alarm of planetary systems increasingly out of whack. Together, they are fuelling a cost-of-living crisis felt around the world, painting a picture of uncertain times and unsettled lives.

Uncertainty is not new, but its dimensions are taking ominous new forms today. A new "uncertainty complex" is emerging, never before seen in human history. Constituting it are three volatile and interacting strands: the destabilizing planetary pressures and inequalities of the Anthropocene, the pursuit of sweeping societal transformations to ease those pressures and the widespread and intensifying polarization.

This new uncertainty complex and each new crisis it spawns are impeding human development and unsettling lives the world over. In the wake of the pandemic, and for the first time ever, the global Human Development Index (HDI) value declined—for two years straight. Many countries experienced ongoing declines on the HDI in 2021. Even before the pandemic, feelings of insecurity were on the rise nearly everywhere. Many people feel alienated from their political systems, and in another reversal, democratic backsliding has worsened.

There is peril in new uncertainties, in the insecurity, polarization and demagoguery that grip many countries. But there is promise, too—an opportunity to reimagine our futures, to renew and adapt our institutions and to craft new stories about who we are and what we value. This is the hopeful path forward, the path to follow if we wish to thrive in a world in flux.