UNSD showcase of practical use of country-owned water data for SDGs

Environment Statistics Section
United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)
Prepared for tenth meeting of the Expert Group on Environment Statistics (EGES)
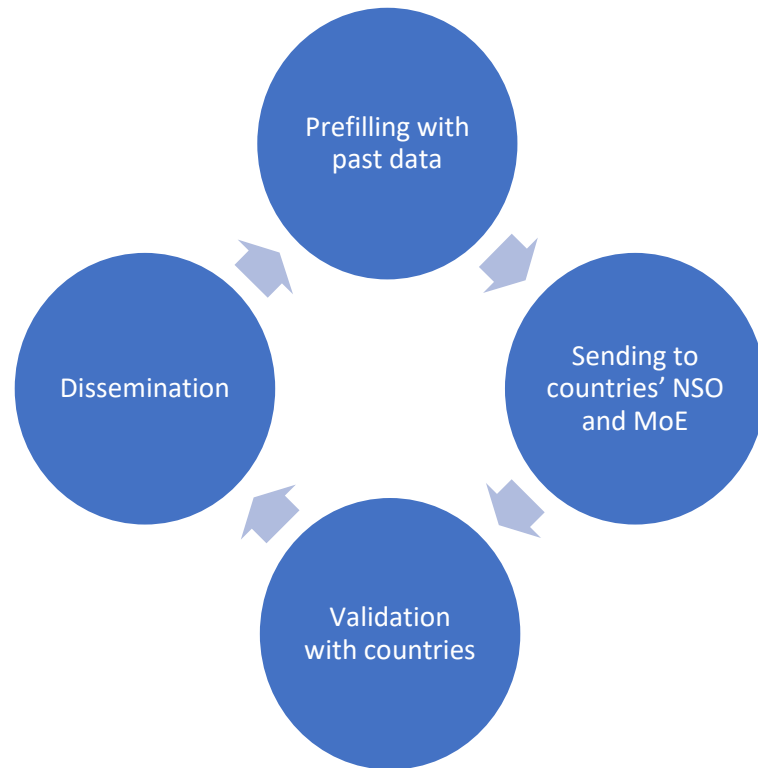3, 4, 6 and 10 October 2023

1. UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics

- Since 1999, UNSD has completed 11 data collections on water and waste data (usually biennially) from about 160-170 UN member states. Mandated by UNSC 28th session (1995); reinforced at 34th session (2003).

- [Questionnaires](#) are sent to National Statistical Offices and Ministries of Environment.

- Questionnaires are not sent to Eurostat and OECD members and candidate members. 170+ member states in previous years; about 163 member states in the 2022 collection cycle

- Response rate typically hovers around 50% (2018: 52%; 2020: approx.: 46%; 2022: 47%).

- No imputation, no estimation. No change in variables collected in 2022 compared to 2020. Instead, focus is more on boosting response rates, especially to those variables related to SDG indicators

- The current (2022) data collection has just been finalised. Thank you for your collaboration!

Prefilling with past data

Sending to countries' NSO and MoE

Validation with countries

Dissemination

1. UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics: disseminated outputs

- **UNSD environmental indicators**: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/qindicators Time series, or most recently available data for selected variables provided by countries. Disseminated after completion of collection cycle.

- **Country files**: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/country_files Individual country data on water and waste. Disseminated periodically during collection cycle. Demand from key users to view Country files as soon as possible.

- **Country snapshots**: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/snapshots/ Individual country data spanning many environmental themes.

- **SDG Global Database:** https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal Country Files are referenced as a source throughout.

- **UNdata**: https://data.un.org/Default.aspx refer to Environment Statistics Database.

- **Tailored queries**: Per solicitation from key users (often World Health Organization, UN Environment Programme, UN-HABITAT, academia).
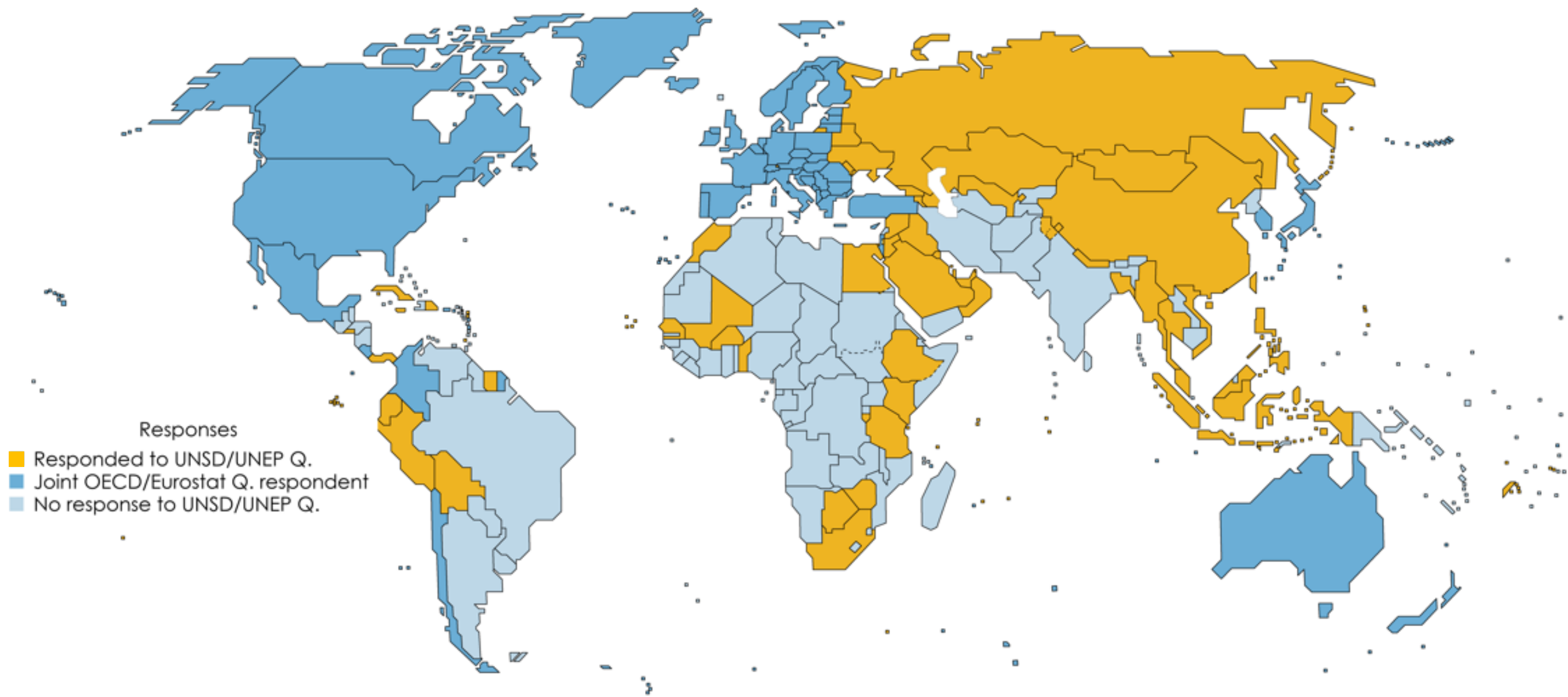
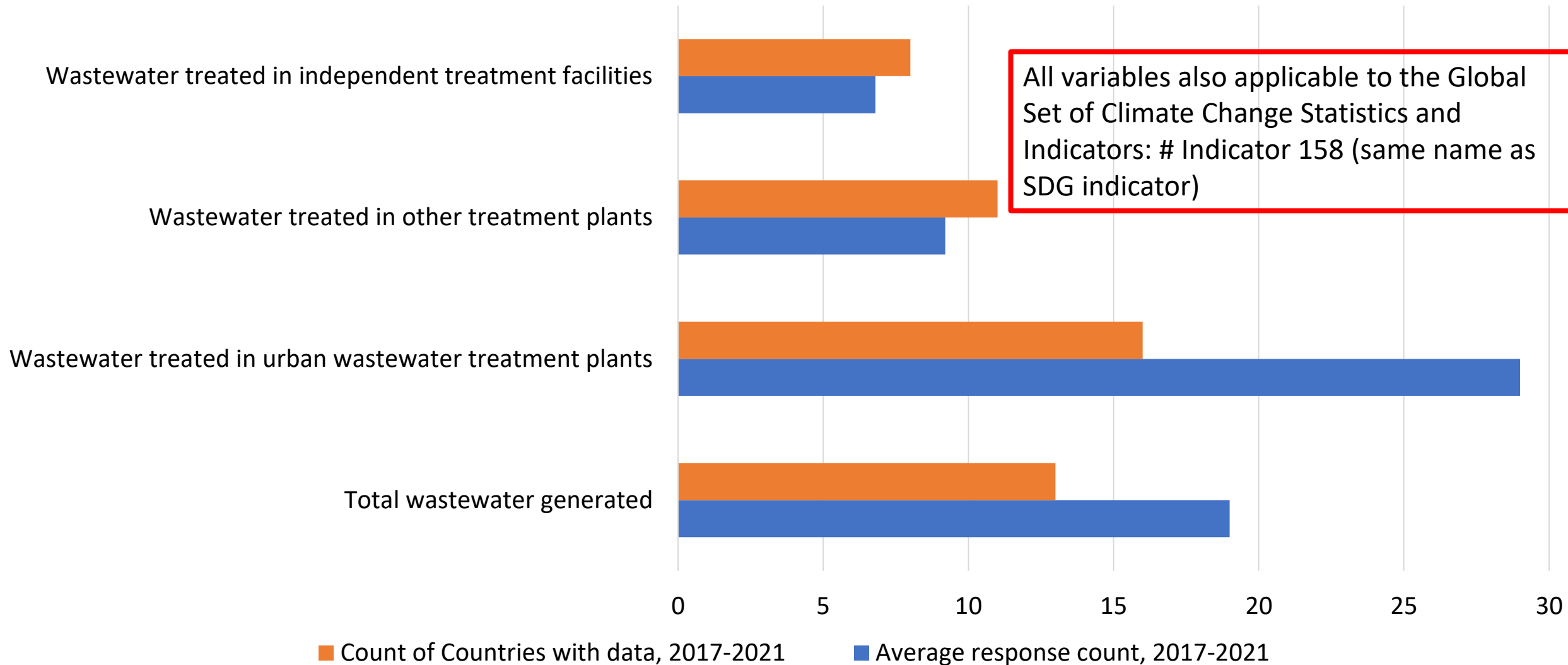# 1. UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics

- **References for further details on the Questionnaire:**

- **Presentations from the 2022 EGES:**

  - Stressed the multiple uses of the Questionnaire and other issues at the time of the 2020 data collection cycle

    - https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/fdes/EGES9/Sess2.1_UNSD_Water.pdf
    - https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/fdes/EGES9/Sess2.7_UNSD_Waste.pdf

- **Generic information on the UNSD webpage:**

    - https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/questionnaire

- **12 months ago, 2022 cycle had just been sent, hence methodological advancements were presented at the EGES**

- **Today, 2022 cycle is almost completed, hence some data and results are being presented.**

Responses to UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics (2022)

Responses
- Responded to UNSD/UNEP Q.
- Joint OECD/Eurostat Q. respondent
- No response to UNSD/UNEP Q.

Responses to UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics (2022) - Water Section

Responses

- Responded to UNSD/UNEP Q.
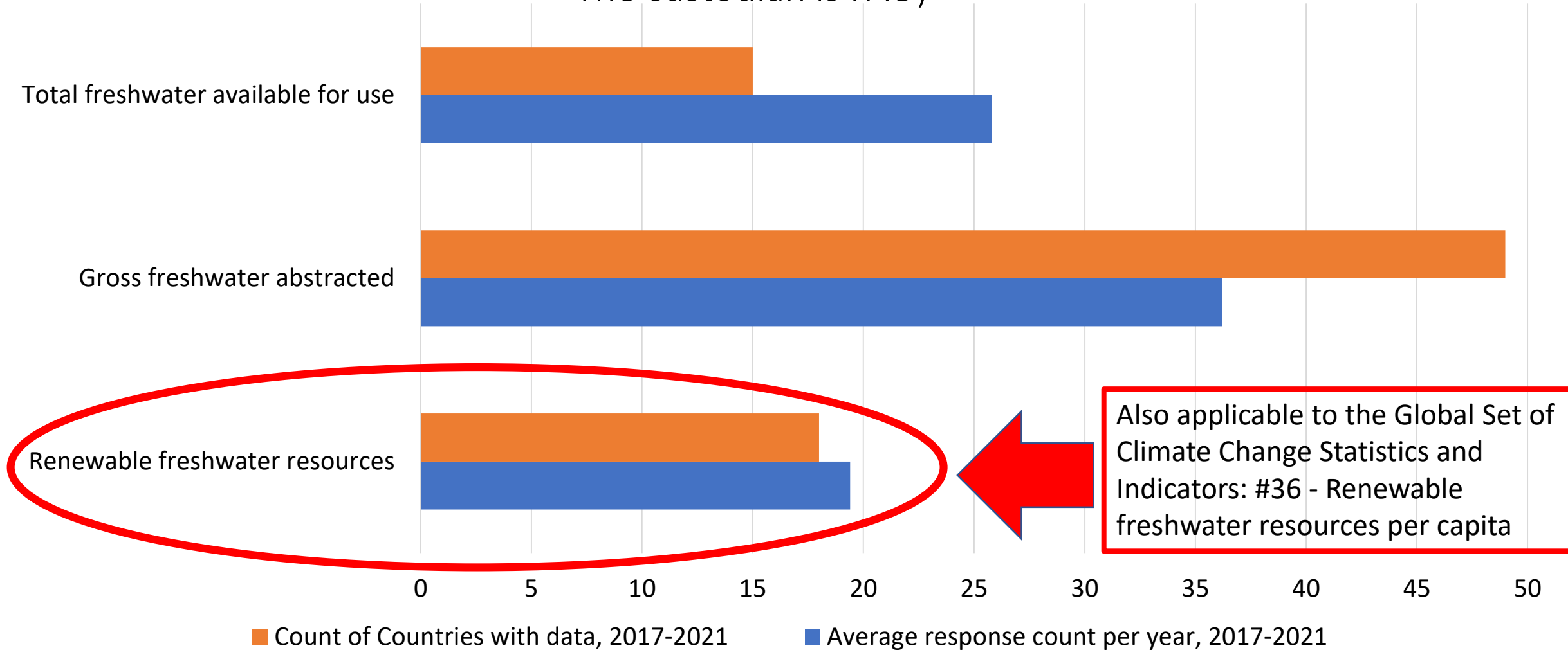- Joint OECD/Eurostat Q. respondent
- No response to UNSD/UNEP Q.

How is the supply of data to meet demand for SDG 6.3.1 (proportion of domestic and industrial wastewater safely treated)? (UNSD co-custodian with WHO, HABITAT, OECD and Eurostat)

All variables also applicable to the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators: # Indicator 158 (same name as SDG indicator)

How is the supply of data to meet demand for SDG 6.4.1?(change in water use efficiency over time)
UNSD serves as a partner agency only for this indicator, and the data may be used for validation. The custodian is FAO)

Also applicable to the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators: #36 - Renewable freshwater resources per capita

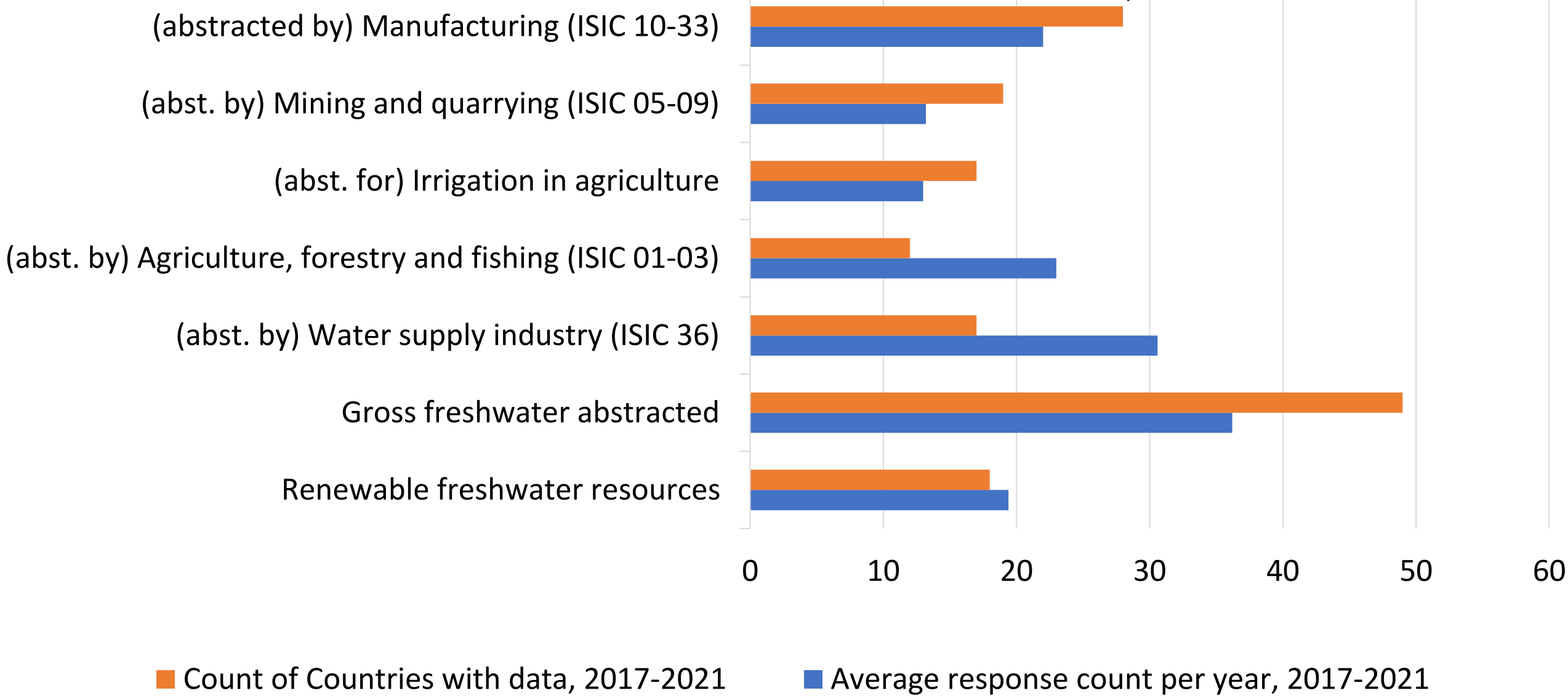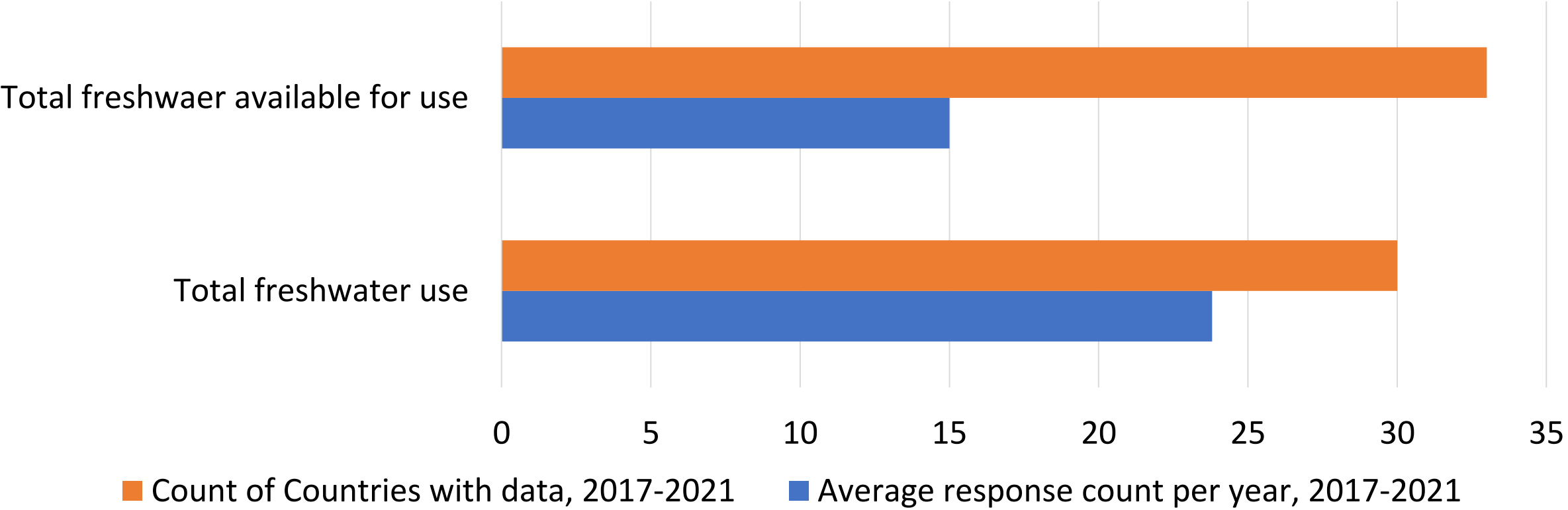# How is the supply of data to meet demand for [SDG 6.4.2](#)? (level of water stress) UNSD serves as a partner agency only for this indicator, and the data may be used for validation. The custodian is FAO)

Legend:
- ■ Count of Countries with data, 2017-2021
- ■ Average response count per year, 2017-2021

How is the supply of data to meet demand for the Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators?

Bar chart legend:
- Count of Countries with data, 2017-2021
- Average response count per year, 2017-2021

Global Set of Climate Change Statistics and Indicators: #155 – Water use per capita

Improvements in application of data over time

- More accurate citation to the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire within the SDG database.
- More credibility and citation being given to **country-owned data** sourced via the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics.
- As data are validated, we see the inter-institutional collaboration required to provide responses to this Questionnaire.
- Often a stakeholder may be in possession of data for which there is policy demand, or demand for international data collection, but not necessarily be aware of it.
- **Better visibility to the collaboration between countries and UNSD via the SDG data portal**: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal Citations to country's data appearing as: UNSD, Country Files from the UNSD/UNEP data collection on environment statistics (available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/country_files). (Date of last update: 16 May 2023).
- Fine degree of detail which countries provide is being honoured all the way to the SDG data portal: e.g. "Pathological solid waste from hospitals, clinics and fly ash from incineration", appearing as a footnote on hazardous waste for a UN member state.
- This is significantly better than a citation simply being: UNSD, or no citation at all.
- Further, over the years, as new policy agendas have arisen, the UNSD/UNEP Questionniare has continually been used as an input for policy demand.

Country-owned data unavailability is not unique to environment statistics…

From the Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the high-level political forum (HLPF) on sustainable development convened at its 2023 session:
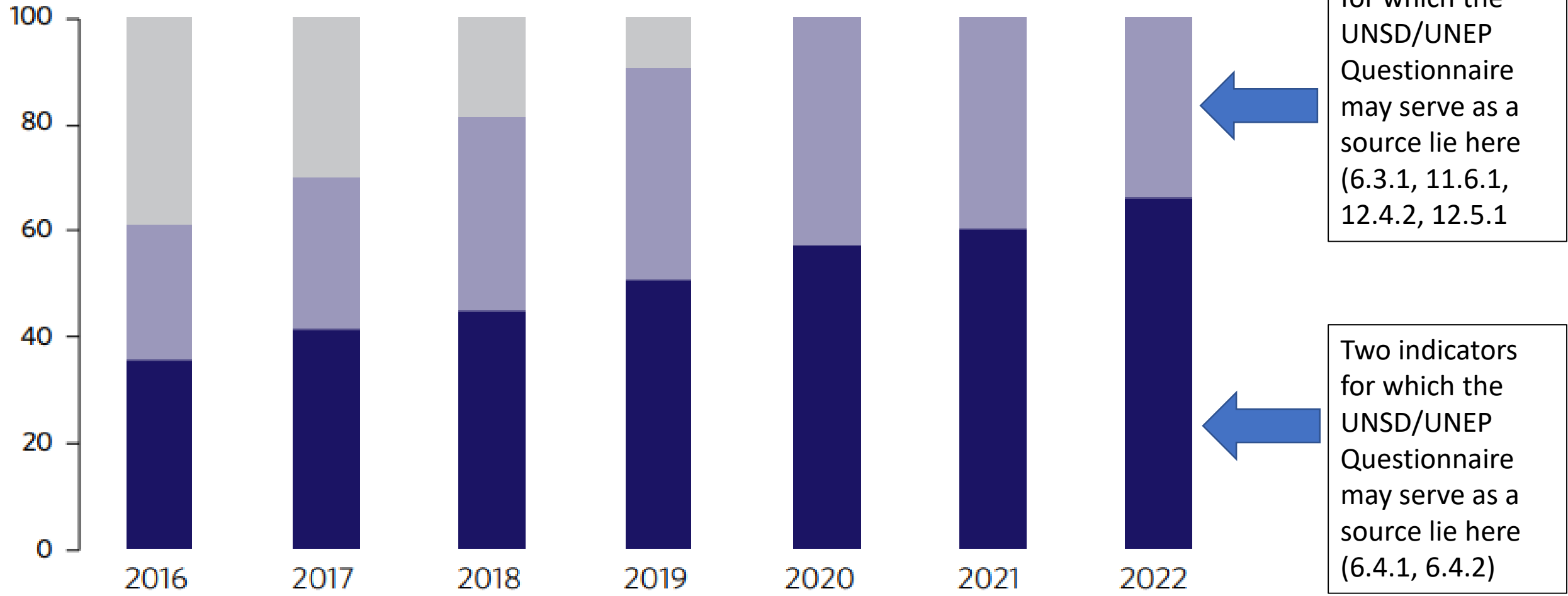
- "Data is essential for progress on the SDGs. However, many countries struggle to produce SDG-relevant data, and significant investment is needed in data gathering, data governance, and the analytical capacity to ensure that reliable, substantive, sharable, and responsive data is available to drive transformational change… a need for data-centric, evidence-based approaches and scientific validations… The importance of data was underscored by various presenting countries, which stated that data collection is crucial for the following up on and monitoring of progress."

2023

The Sustainable Development Goals Report
Special edition

United Nations

Foreword: "This report calls for ambitious national benchmarks… (which) must be supported by strengthened national institutions… and stronger digital infrastructure and data capacity." – Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

"An assessment of the around 140 targets for which trend data is available shows…"

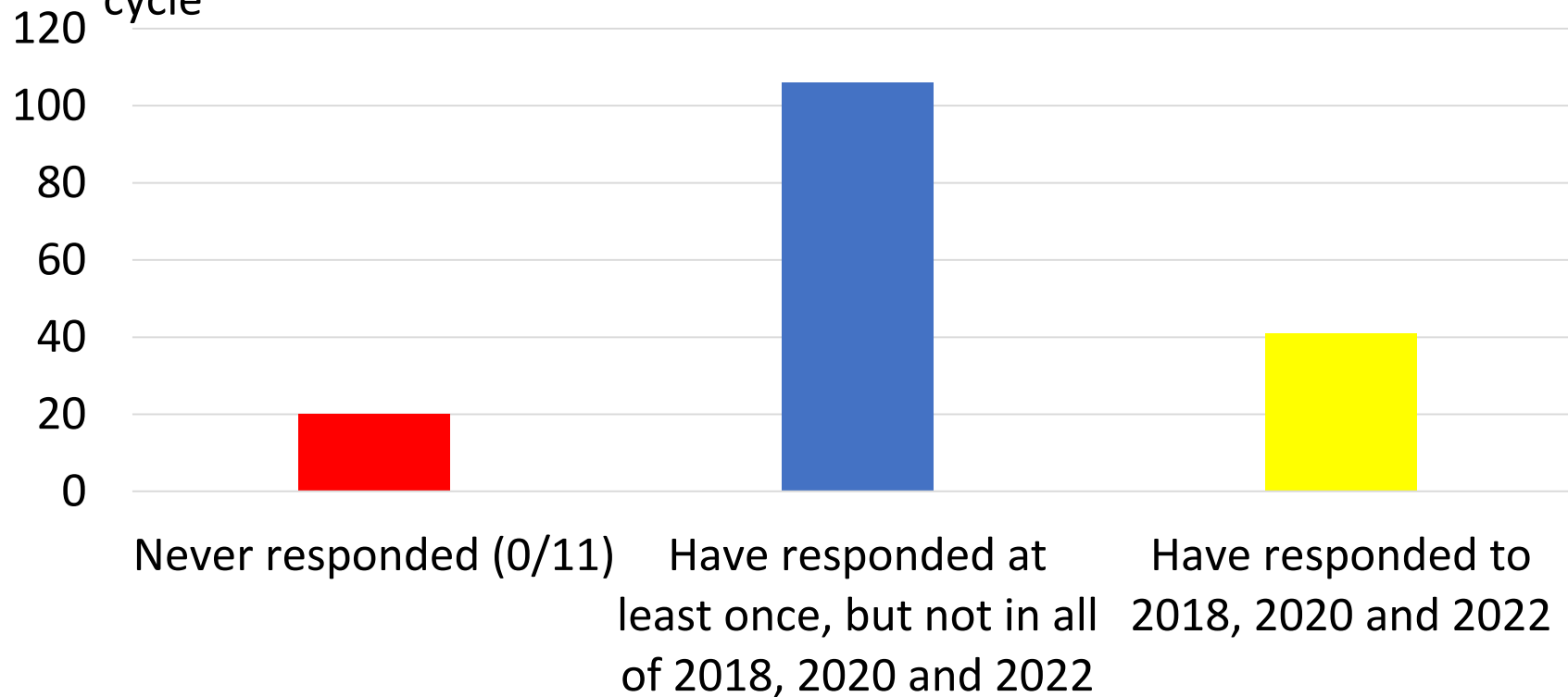# Proportion of global SDG indicators, by availability of standards and national data, 2016-2022 (percentage)

Four indicators for which the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire may serve as a source lie here (6.3.1, 11.6.1, 12.4.2, 12.5.1)

Two indicators for which the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire may serve as a source lie here (6.4.1, 6.4.2)

Sources: Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2023
Tier Classification for SDG Indicators

● Conceptually clear and have good country coverage

● Conceptually clear but insufficient country coverage
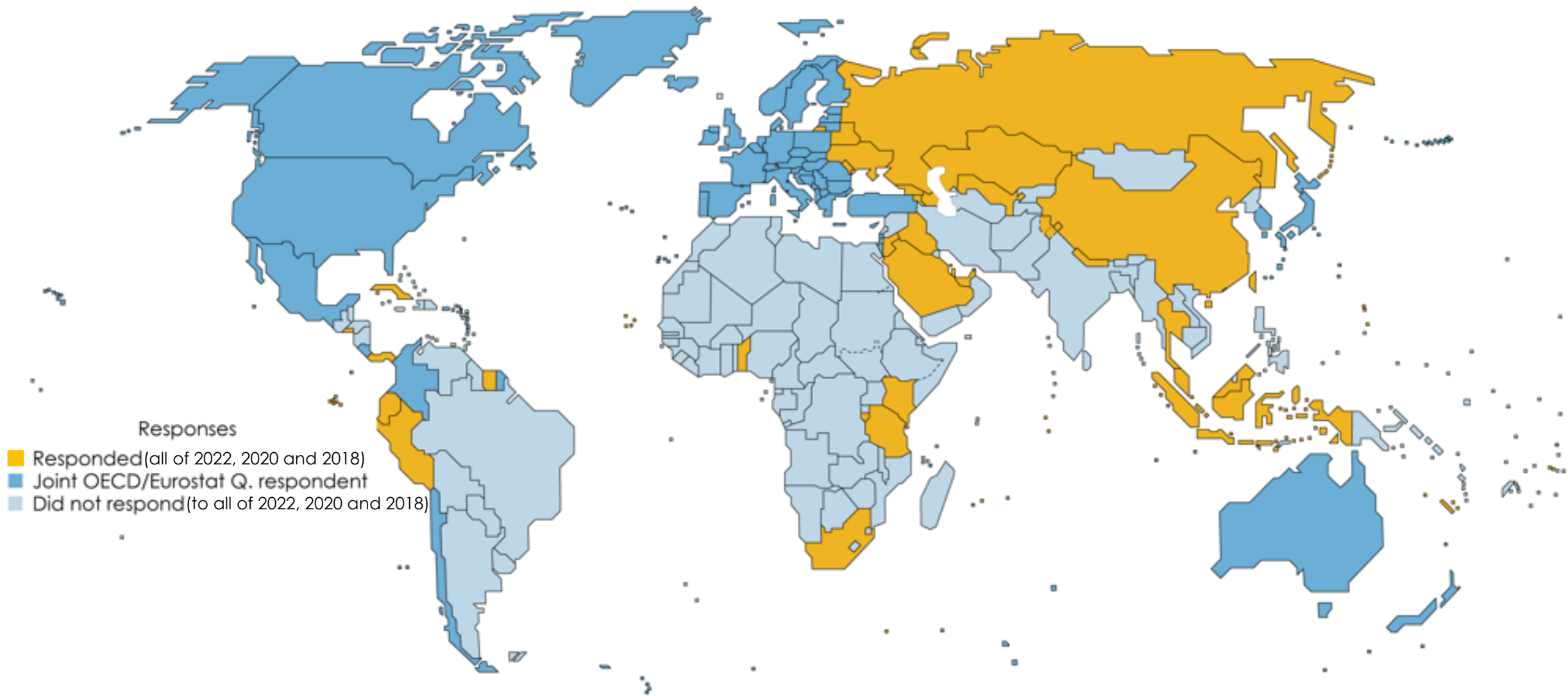
● No internationally established methods

Why, after 20+ years of effort, does the response rate remain at around 50%, and in 2020 and 2022, at 46 and 47%?

- For the 2022 collection cycle, 20 UN member states were sent a Questionnaire who have never responded (not once since 1999).
- For the 2022 collection cycle, 41 UN member states responded to the Questionnaire for the third consecutive cycle

Outside of this analysis, approximately 25 UN member states reply to the Joint OECD/Eurostat Questionnaire on the State of the Environment

Responses to UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Environment Statistics 2022, 2020 and 2018

Responses
- Responded (all of 2022, 2020 and 2018)
- Joint OECD/Eurostat Q. respondent
- Did not respond (to all of 2022, 2020 and 2018)

Grateful to countries for their contributions and for continued supply of data (and detailed footnote explanations) for this Questionnaire.

Grateful to international partners who help improve the quality of the data, and its application to policy.

Thank You!

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