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The Asahi Glass Foundation Survey on the Awareness of Environmental Issues Among the General Public (in Japan and 24 other countries)

Climate change was rated as the top issue

As of 2023, the average perceived level of SDG achievement across all age groups was 35%. The average for 18-24-year-olds was 41%, slightly higher than the older generation.

Regarding the SDGs that participants thought will have the lowest level of realization, there was a global trend of expressing concerns about equality and peace.

The Asahi Glass Foundation, chaired by Takuya Shimamura, conducted an online survey of 13,500 people in Japan and 24 other countries in total, with 6,589 participants aged 18-24, and 6,911 participants aged 25-69. Its goal was to assess awareness and action regarding environmental issues. The survey was supervised by Professor Norichika Kanie of Keio University. Its main findings were as follows:

- Overall, participants rated "Climate Change" as the most pressing environmental issue in the country or region where they reside and expressed concern over extreme weather conditions. This was followed by "Society, Economy and Environment, Policies, Measures," and "Water Resources."
- The participants chose Japan as the country that is making progress in terms of public awareness and action on environmental issues, followed by the USA and China. The reasons for choosing Japan included "the people are disciplined" and "it has excellent technology."
- As of 2023, the average perceived level of SDG achievement across all age groups was 35.0%. The average for 25-69-year-olds was 33.9%, while 18-24-year-olds was 41.1%, slightly higher than the older generation.
- Out of the 17 SDGs, "No Poverty" (1st), "Zero Hunger" (2nd), and "Good Health and Well-being" (3rd) were selected as the goals that interested participants most in their daily lives. "Climate Action" did not rank within the top 3.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that participants thought will have the highest level of realization by 2030 were "Zero Hunger" (1st), "Good Health and Wellbeing" (2nd), and "No Poverty" (3rd). The SDGs that participants thought would have the lowest level of realization were "No Poverty" (1st), "Reduced Inequalities" (2nd), and "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" (3rd). The percentage of people who were concerned about equality and peace was higher than last year, possibly due to the influence of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- When showing the time on the Environmental Doomsday Clock (environmental crisis awareness time), from 0:01 to 12:00, participants of all age brackets averaged out at 7:23, meaning "fairly concerned." 18-24-year-olds averaged out slightly lower at 7:03, while 25-69-year-olds were at 7:27, meaning they were slightly more concerned. The average time given by global environmental experts was two hours ahead of the general public, at 9:31, "extremely concerned." But both experts and the general public expressed a sense of crisis.

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■ Survey Overview

- Goal: To assess the general public's awareness and behavior regarding environmental issues
 - Participants: 13,500 people (18-24-year-olds: 6,589, 25-69-year-olds: 6,911)
 - Locations: Japan and 24 other countries
(South Korea, China, Singapore, Indonesia, India, Australia, USA, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Poland, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, UAE, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa)
 - Method: Online research
 - Survey period: June 9th to July 5th, 2023
 - Number of valid responses: 13,500
 - The survey was conducted by the Asahi Glass Foundation.
- * Questions 1, 4, 5, and 6, shown on the following pages, are taken from the "Questionnaire on Environmental Problems and the Survival of Humankind", a 2023 survey conducted among global environmental experts by the Asahi Glass Foundation. The questions have been simplified for the general public.
- * The "Questionnaire on Environmental Problems and the Survival of Humankind" has been carried out annually since 1992. It assesses awareness of environmental issues among global environmental experts registered in the Asahi Glass Foundation's database, including those in national or local governments, NGOs NPOs, universities and research institutions, corporations, mass media, and so on, worldwide. Every year, the experts are asked to show their current sense of crisis regarding the environment and the survival of humankind, using the hands on the "Environmental Doomsday Clock."

■ Survey Details 1

- Overall, participants rated "Climate Change" as the most pressing environmental issue in the country or region where they reside and expressed concern over extreme weather conditions. This was followed by "Society, Economy and Environment, Policies, Measures," and then "Water Resources."

Q1. Please select the three most pressing environmental issues from the list below, for the country or the region where you reside. Rank them in order of importance. Please give detailed reasons for your responses.

* The issues listed are the same as those used in the "Questionnaire on Environmental Problems and the Survival of Humankind."

- As in the last year, the environmental issue most commonly rated as the most pressing was "Climate Change" (37.5%). Many participants expressed concern over the increasing frequency and severity of abnormal weather conditions and temperatures.
- The second and third most pressing issues were "Society, Economy and Environment, Policies, Measures" (13.9%), and then "Water Resources" (10.9%).
- "Climate Change" was also rated as the most pressing issue in this year's survey directed at global environmental experts, conducted by the Asahi Glass Foundation.
- A selection of the most common reasons given for each issue are listed below.

<Climate Change>

"Unprecedented events like extreme heat and wildfires are occurring." (USA)

"Recent summers see new record high temperatures each year, and I sense that spring and fall have become shorter." (Japan)

"The drastic climate change affects livestock, withers crops, and leads to hunger." (South Africa)

<Society, Economy and Environment, Policies, Measures>

"The government doesn't prioritize environmental issues and lacks incentives for encouraging the purchase of environmentally friendly products." (UK)

"There should be strict laws and substantial fines for environmental law violators." (India)

"While there are several solutions to global climate issues, the most urgent problem is hunger." (Indonesia)

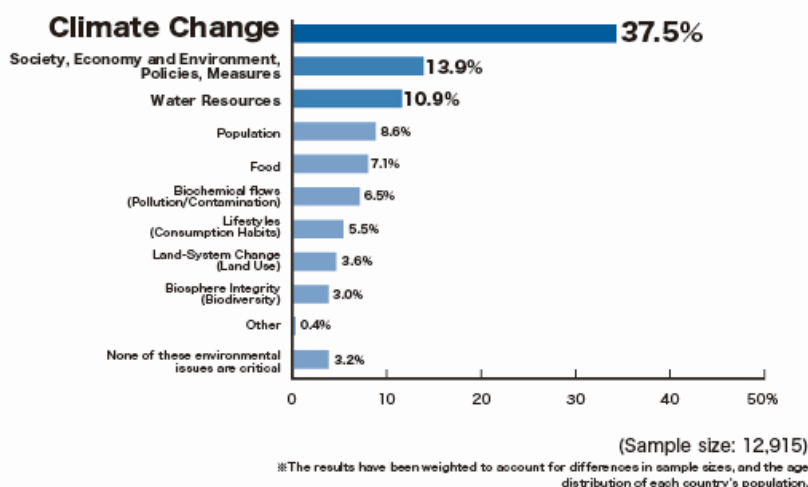
<Water Resources>

"We are not aware of our water consumption and are not engaging in water-saving activities." (Australia)

"Droughts have occurred in many parts of the world, including my country, and the amount of water available is decreasing." (Sweden)

"Water shortages are common in many retail stores, and the price of bottled water is increasing year by year." (China)

Environmental issues thought to be most pressing in respondents' country or region of residence



Climate Change
Global warming; CO ₂ , ocean acidification; climatic aberrations (droughts, torrential rains and flooding, severe storms, heavy snow, abnormal temperatures, desertification, etc.)
Biosphere Integrity (Biodiversity)
Acceleration of species extinction rate; effects of contamination, climate change, land use
Land-System Change (Land Use)
Change in the amount of forest cover remaining at the tropical, temperate and boreal biomes. Change in the amount of cropland
Biochemical flows (Pollution/Contamination)
Increase in river, ocean and soil pollution; eutrophication caused by excessive nitrogen and phosphorus and contamination by microplastics and chemical substances; atmospheric pollution: particulates suspended in the atmosphere, soot and chemical substances
Water Resources
Diminution of usable fresh water resources (depletion, contamination)
Control and degeneration of green water quality (water contained in soil and used by plants)
Population
Population growth beyond what the Earth can support; aging of the population
Food
Diminution of food supply from land and oceans
Lifestyles (Consumption Habits)
Transformation of lifestyles away from excessive consumption of resources like energy
Society, Economy and Environment, Policies, Measures
Establishing a green economy with environmental economics and accounting
Environmental awareness at the individual and societal levels, progress of environmental education, Legal system, social foundation; poverty, governance; the status of women

Fig. 1 Environmental issues thought to be most pressing in respondents' country or region of residence

■ SurveyDetails 2

- The participants chose Japan as the country that is making progress in terms of public awareness and action on environmental issues, followed by the USA and China. The reasons for choosing Japan included "the people are disciplined" and "it has excellent technology."

Q2. Please select three countries from the list below that you think are making progress in terms of public awareness and action on environmental issues, and rank them from 1st to 3rd. Please give detailed reasons for your responses.

* The list was drawn from the top 50 countries shown in the "2022 SDG Index & Dashboards," a by-country ranking of the progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the United Nations.

- Overall, the countries thought to be making progress in terms of public awareness and action on environmental issues were Japan (1st), the USA (2nd) and China (3rd). In Indonesia and Turkey, there were many respondents who ranked Japan in first place, citing reasons such as "people are disciplined" and "there is excellent technology."

- Out of the 25 countries surveyed, excluding Indonesia, Turkey, Nigeria, Belgium, and Poland, respondents in 20 countries ranked their own country in first place.

- A selection of the most common reasons given for each issue are listed below.

<Japan>

"Japan is known for its strong discipline and excellent technology." (Indonesia)

"Japanese people keep the environment clean in the places they visit and set an example for others." (Turkey)

"Surprisingly, many foreigners say that Japan has a good waste separation system. (Japan)

<USA>

"A country that has initiated movements for every issue related to global warming and climate change." (Indonesia)

"The most developed country in the world, possessing all resources and technology to overcome heat." (India)

"There are many companies that are working harder than anywhere else to be more environmentally friendly." (USA)

<China>

"Promoting clean energy, electric vehicles, and the planting of millions of trees." (Singapore)

"In a very short time, China transformed from one of the most polluted countries on Earth to one of the least polluted." (Spain)

"China Implemented regulations banning all activities that harm the environment and issued relevant laws." (China)

Countries thought to be making progress on public awareness and action on environmental issues

	1	2	3
25 countries	Japan	USA	China
 Japan	Japan	Finland	Sweden
 China	China	Singapore	Japan
 India	India	Japan	USA
 USA	USA	Canada	Japan
 UK	UK	Sweden	Australia
 Sweden	Sweden	Denmark	Norway
 South Africa	South Africa	USA	China

(Sample size: 12,915)

※The results have been weighted to account for differences in sample sizes, and the age distribution of each country's population.

■ Survey Details 3

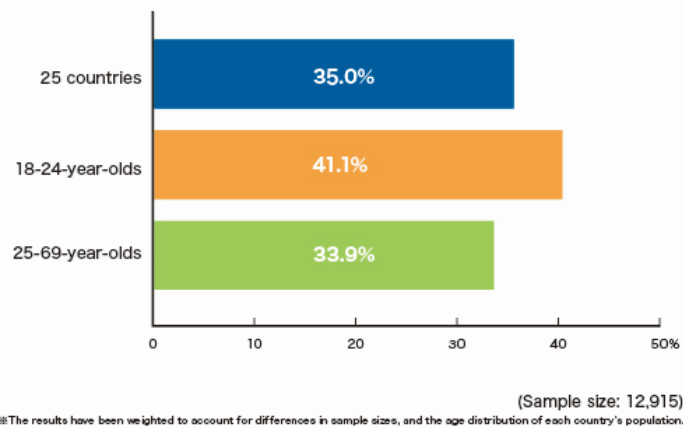
- As of 2023, the average perceived level of SDG achievement across all age groups was 35.0%. The average for 25-69-year-olds was 33.9%, while 18-24-year-olds was 41.1%, slightly higher than the older generation.

Q3. Toward the goals for 2030, to what extent do you think the 17 SDGs as a whole will have been achieved as of 2023? Please provide a number from 1 to 100, assuming 100% means achieving all goals. If you don't think any particular initiatives are underway to achieve the goals, please enter "0 (zero)."

* The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted at a United Nations summit in September 2015, are an international plan to build a better, more sustainable world by 2030.

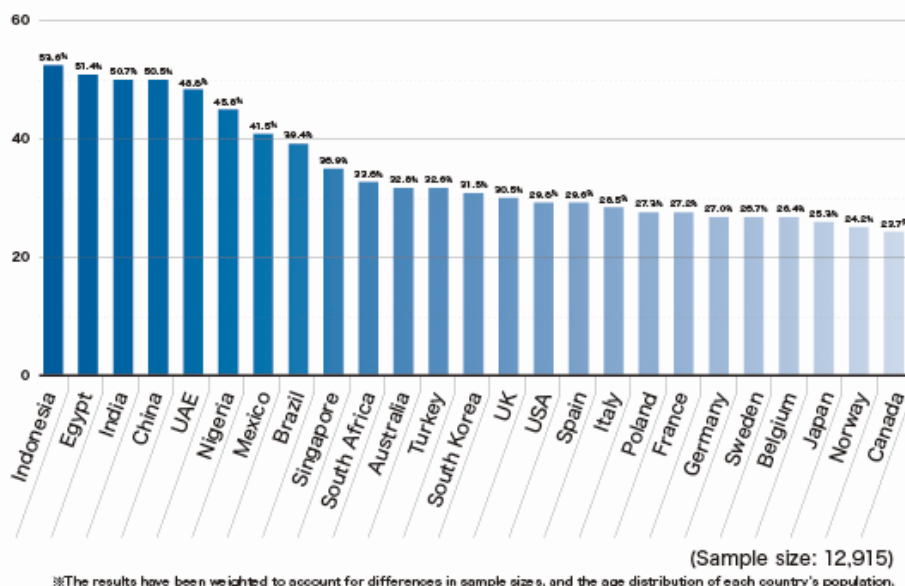
- As of 2023, the perceived level of SDG achievement varies from country to country, but the average of 25 countries was 35.0%. Developing countries tend to perceive higher levels of achievement.
- Among 25 countries, 10.8% of the respondents answered 0% for the perceived level of SDG achievement, indicating that approximately one-tenth of the respondents believe that there has been no SDG achievement at all.
- By generation, the average for 18-24-year-olds is 41.1%, while the average for 25-69-year-olds is 33.9%, indicating that the younger generation perceives a higher level of SDG achievement by 7.2 percentage points.

Perceived level of SDG achievement as of 2023



- By country, Indonesia showed the highest perceived level of SDG achievement with a rate of 53.6%, and Canada showed the lowest perceived level of SDG achievement with a rate of 23.7%.

Perceived level of SDG achievement in 25 countries



■ Survey Details 4

- Out of the 17 SDGs, “No Poverty” (1st), “Zero Hunger” (2nd), and “Good Health and Well-being” (3rd) were selected as the goals that interest participants most in their daily lives. “Climate Action” did not rank within the top 3.

Q4. Out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, please select three goals that interest you in your daily life, and rank them from 1st to 3rd. Please answer using the corresponding Sustainable Development Goal number.

- “No Poverty” (1st), “Zero Hunger” (2nd), and “Good Health and Well-being” (3rd) were selected as the goals that interested participants most in their daily lives. “Climate Action” did not rank within the top 3.
- Across generations, both 18-24-year-olds and 25-69-year-olds ranked “No Poverty” as first, followed by “Zero Hunger” in second place. However, there was a difference in the third place. Younger generation chose “Good Health and Well-being” while the older generation chose “Climate Action.”
- On a country-by-country basis, there were variations in issues of interest, such as in Sweden, where “Clean Water and Sanitation” ranked first, and in the UK where “Climate Action” was in second place.
- In the 2023 Asahi Glass Foundation's survey directed at environmental experts, “Climate Action” ranked first, followed by “Good Health and Well-being” in second place.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that interest respondents most in their daily lives

	1	2	3
25 countries	 No Poverty	 Zero Hunger	 Good Health and Well-being
18-24-year-olds	 No Poverty	 Zero Hunger	 Good Health and Well-being
25-69-year-olds	 No Poverty	 Zero Hunger	 Climate Action
 Japan	 No Poverty  Climate Action ※tied at first place		 Good Health and Well-being
 China	 No Poverty	 Zero Hunger	 Climate Action
 India	 No Poverty	 Clean Water and Sanitation	 Good Health and Well-being
 USA	 No Poverty	 Zero Hunger	 Good Health and Well-being
 UK	 No Poverty	 Climate Action	 Affordable and Clean Energy
 Sweden	 Clean Water and Sanitation	 No Poverty	 Climate Action
 South Africa	 No Poverty	 Clean Water and Sanitation	 Zero Hunger

(Sample size: 12,915)

※The results have been weighted to account for differences in sample sizes, and the age distribution of each country's population.

Survey Details 5

- The SDGs that participants thought will have the highest level of realization by 2030 were "Zero Hunger" (1st), "Good Health and Wellbeing" (1st), and "No Poverty" (3rd). The SDGs that participants thought will have the lowest level of realization were "No Poverty" (1st), "Reduced Inequalities" (2nd), and "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" (3rd). There was a global trend of expressing concerns about equality and peace, possibly influenced by the Russia-Ukraine war.

Q5. Out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, please select three goals that will have the highest/lowest level of realization in your country or region in 2030, and rank them from lowest (1st) to highest (3rd) level of realization. Please answer using the corresponding Sustainable Development Goal number.

- Regarding the SDGs that will have the highest level of realization by 2030, the survey results across 25 countries had "Zero Hunger" and "Good Health and Wellbeing," tied at first place followed by "No Poverty" in third place.
- This year's survey directed at global environmental experts, conducted by the Asahi Glass Foundation, shows that "Clean Water and Sanitation" will have the highest level of realization in respondents' own country or region.

SDGs that respondents thought will have the highest level of realization in 2030

	1	2	3
25 countries	Zero Hunger	Good Health and Well-being ※Tied at first place	No Poverty
Japan	Clean Water and Sanitation	Zero Hunger	Quality Education
China	Zero Hunger	Quality Education	No Poverty
India	Good Health and Well-being	Quality Education	Zero Hunger
USA	Clean Water and Sanitation	No Poverty	Zero Hunger
UK	Zero Hunger	Clean Water and Sanitation	No Poverty
Sweden	Clean Water and Sanitation	Zero Hunger	Quality Education
South Africa	No Poverty	Clean Water and Sanitation	Quality Education

(Sample size: 12,915)

※The results have been weighted to account for differences in sample sizes, and the age distribution of each country's population.

- Regarding the SDGs that will have the lowest level of realization by 2030, the survey results across 25 countries show that "No Poverty" ranked first, followed by "Reduce Inequalities" in second place, and "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" in third place. There was a global trend of expressing concerns about equality and peace, possibly influenced by the Russia-Ukraine war.
- This year's survey directed at global environmental experts, conducted by the Asahi Glass Foundation, shows that "No Poverty" will have the lowest level of realization in respondents' own country or region.

SDGs that respondents thought will have the lowest level of realization in 2030

	1	2	3
25 countries	No Poverty	Reduced Inequalities	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Japan	Gender Equality	Decent Work and Economic Growth	No Poverty
China	Reduced Inequalities	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Clean Water and Sanitation
India	Gender Equality	Partnerships	Reduced Inequalities
USA	No Poverty	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Reduced Inequalities
UK	No Poverty	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Partnerships
Sweden	No Poverty	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Partnerships
South Africa	Affordable and Clean Energy	Zero Hunger	No Poverty

(Sample size: 12,915)

※The results have been weighted to account for differences in sample sizes, and the age distribution of each country's population.

■ Survey Details 6

- When showing the time on the Environmental Doomsday Clock (environmental crisis awareness time), from 0:01 to 12:00, participants averaged out at 7:23, meaning "fairly concerned." 18-24-year-olds averaged out slightly lower at 7:03, while 25-69-year-olds were at 7:27, meaning they were slightly more concerned.

The average time given by global environmental experts was more than two hours ahead of the general public, at 9:31, "extremely concerned." Both experts and the general public expressed a sense of crisis.

Q6. The following figure shows the Environmental Doomsday Clock which, by the position of the hands on the clock, shows the perceived degree of crisis towards environmental issues. Please indicate your sense of crisis toward environmental issues in your country or region by using hours and minutes between 0:01 and 12:00, e.g. "HH:MM." (* For the purpose of calculating results, please select your times in units no smaller than 10 minutes.)

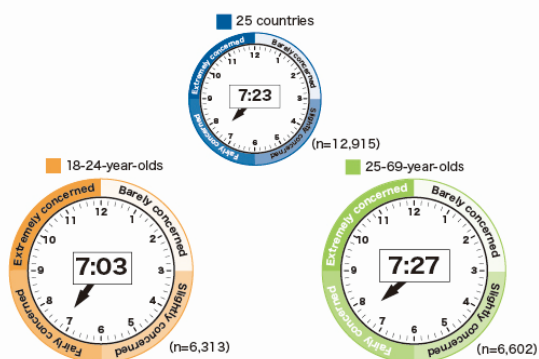
- Overall, participants from 25 countries showed environmental crisis awareness at 7:23, meaning "fairly concerned." By age group, 18-24-year-olds averaged out at a slightly lower time of 7:03 and 25-69-year-olds averaged out at a later time of 7:27. Both age groups fell into the "fairly concerned" bracket.
- The time on the Environmental Doomsday Clock of the world moved back by 2 minutes. By country, in Japan, China, Italy, and Germany, the time moved back by more than 20 minutes, while in South Korea, the UK, and France, the time moved forward by more than 20 minutes.
- Although both global environmental experts and the general public expressed a sense of crisis, the time given by the experts was more than two hours ahead of the general public, at 9:31, "extremely concerned."
- Many respondents expressed feelings of anxiety due to their concerns about climate change, a phenomenon evident around the world.
- A selection of other reasons is listed below.

"There is a prediction that if the current state continues, mass extinctions could occur by 2050; yet it appears that countries are doing very little to prevent the climate crisis." (USA)

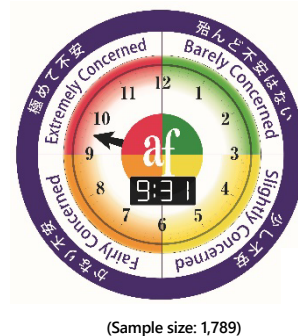
"I believe humans have come to a point where they need to seriously contemplate what they should do for the Earth and take action; otherwise, we will reach a point of no return." (Japan)

"It may be too late to stop or mitigate the worsening of the problem, but many people feel that there is still time to turn things around." (Sweden)

Environmental crisis awareness shown on the Environmental Doomsday Clock



Global Environmental Experts



Countries with above-average crisis awareness

Country	Average Time
South Korea	8:21
South Africa	8:08
Brazil	8:06
UK	8:05
Mexico	8:03
Nigeria	7:57
France	7:39
Spain	7:39
Italy	7:37
USA	7:27

Countries with below-average crisis awareness

Country	Average Time
Sweden	6:07
Norway	6:15
China	6:41
Japan	6:42
UAE	6:57
Australia	7:10
Poland	7:11
India	7:12
Germany	7:12
Canada	7:18

(Sample size: 12,915)

※The results have been weighted to account for differences in sample sizes, and the age distribution of each country's population.

■ Remarks from the Survey's Supervisor

This survey, which was conducted overseas and in Japan, was the second of its kind, and it reveals intriguing results.

Globally, this summer has seen an escalation in extreme weather patterns, and wildfires attributed to climate change have been frequently reported. As the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres termed it "global boiling," the impact of climate change is becoming obvious around the world. This is clearly reflected in the results of this survey. Respondents are most concerned about climate change, recognizing it as a pressing problem.

Research into environmental issues has highlighted progress in European countries, particularly in Northern European countries. In contrast, countries like the United States and Japan have faced criticism for lagging behind in their environmental initiatives. This trend is especially noticeable in the context of climate change.

In contrast, in response to Question 2, participants ranked Japan and the United States higher than other countries in terms of peoples' awareness and actions on environmental issues. This is probably because the questions focused on how the respondents perceive environmental technology, products, and behavior, rather than their opinions on government policies and measures. In the United States, while federal policies are poor, there is progress at the level of specific companies and states. It seems that the respondents are significantly influenced by the caliber of such "good examples." Moreover, it might also be influenced by the way the media portrays these efforts.

As of mid-2023, according to United Nation's surveys, the level of achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains below 20%. Climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the devastation of the war are recognized as major factors that caused stagnation or regression. In comparison to this actual progress level, people's awareness tends to overstate the level of achievement. Particularly in Japan, around 90% of the population is aware of the SDGs, influenced in part by the buzz surrounding the concept. However, it's important to acknowledge that the reality is quite different; significant progress in people's behavior has yet to be observed.

Having a sense of crisis is an important first step toward taking action. To cultivate a sense of urgency that is in line with reality, so we need to consider our future actions.

Profile of the Survey's Supervisor

Norichika Kanie
Professor, Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University

Kanie is also the director of the xSDG Laboratory, within the Keio Research Institute at SFC. Before joining Keio, he worked at the Tokyo Institute of Technology's Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology, and the University of Kitakyushu's Department of Policy Studies.

Kanie serves on various committees and steering groups. He is a member of the SDGs Promotion Roundtable Meeting, established by the Japanese government under the SDGs Promotion Headquarters; he is a member of the Expert Study Group for the Promotion of SDGs by Local Governments for the Japanese Cabinet Office; and for four years from 2017 he was an External Director at RENOVA Inc.



Kanie's research focuses on International Relations, Sustainability Science and Earth System Governance. He participated in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the common goals adopted by the United Nations, from the conception stage. He is a leading authority on the SDGs, and is striving to balance research and practice. He recently published "SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)" (Chukoshinsho, 2020), and has been selected as one of 15 independent scientists that will draft the second quadrennial Global Sustainable Development Report. Kanie received his Ph.D. in Media and Governance from Keio University.