



gent:

Ghent sustainability report 2025

Voluntary Local Review

Foreword by the mayor

Dear reader,

Before you is our fifth sustainability report. It reflects where we stand as a city, where we have made progress and where we should step it up. The SDGs constitute the guidelines in this context. As always, we take a data-driven approach and map SDG developments. Measure twice, cut once! An approach that makes Ghent unique.

At the outset of the previous administration, we started with a baseline measurement for all SDGs (2020 report). We then issued sustainability reports focusing on People (2021), Prosperity (2022) and Planet (2023). Each time listing inspiring Ghent-based projects. For this sustainability report, we used the SDG Monitor, a website available to all Flemish cities and municipalities. This allows us to compare us with other Flemish cities and explore where our city's challenges and strengths lie.

This report should not be read as an assessment of Ghent's policies. The indicators used describe the environment in which we work, reside and live, which reaches far beyond policy. Where does Ghent stand? For which goals does Ghent score high? For which goals do we work in a challenging environment?

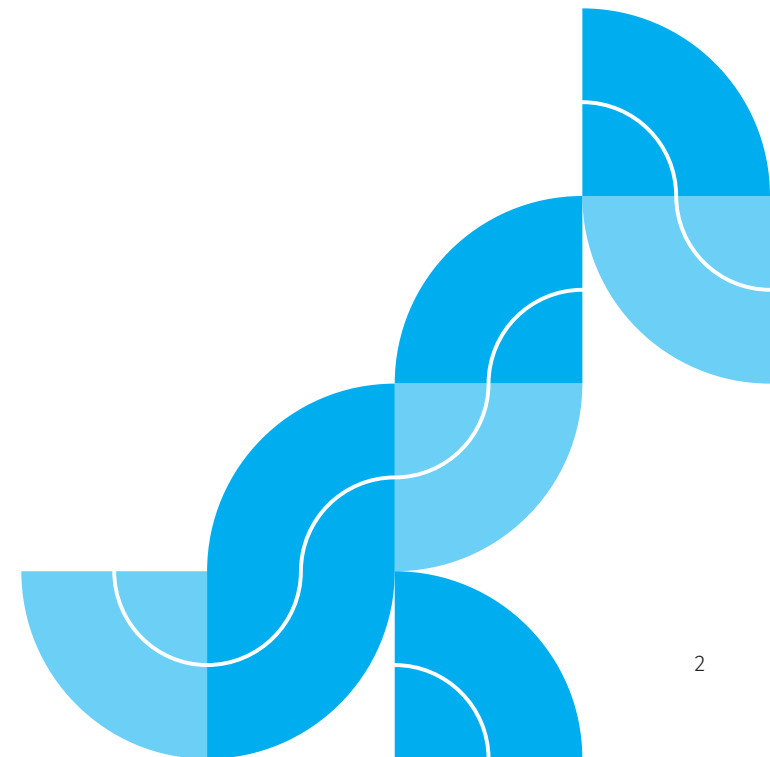
Both domestically and internationally we have been a pioneer in sustainability reporting. We are seen as an example by other cities. It was a great honour for me to be able to explain our approach before the United Nations in 2022. We will submit this administration's last sustainability report to the UN as a Voluntary Local Review, setting an example of good practice. In this way, our approach can inspire other administrations.

Ghent is a unique city in several ways. And we are not afraid to look at ourselves with a critical eye. These sustainability reports serve as a barometer and an incentive to further develop and adjust our sustainable approach. Thank you wholeheartedly to everyone who contributes to it. Changing the world starts at the local level. In terms of sustainability, we can never be too ambitious.

The current administration will also step up to the plate together with all the forces active in our city. From Ghent, we lead by example. Out of love for our city and for our planet, for which we need to care now more than ever.

Mathias De Clercq

Mayor
City of Ghent



Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) developed the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). These are 17 goals that all UN Member States aim to achieve by 2030.

Over 15 years, the 17 SDGs - linked to 169 goals with indicators - represent an action plan to free humanity from poverty and get the planet back on track towards sustainability. These goals, which are one and indivisible, encompass three aspects of sustainable development, i.e., economic, social and environmental.

Member States report at least twice on which goals have been achieved and which still pose a challenge. But national governments cannot possibly achieve these goals alone: more than 60% of all SDGs reflect local issues. Therefore, the role of cities is crucial in achieving the SDGs.

Five Ghent sustainability reports

The City of Ghent has been committed to achieving the SDGs since 2015 and is taking a pioneering role in this context. We keep the SDGs high on the agenda, strengthen Ghent's network around sustainability and issue inspiring reports. The City of Ghent opted to write an annual sustainability report during this administration. This report is submitted as a [Voluntary Local Review](#) to the UN. This is the latest report in a series of five Ghent sustainability reports.

In 2020, we published the first report: a picture of the urban environment for each sustainable development goal. The first report contains numerous indicators (or data) and an analysis for each goal. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, we published inspiring reports each time with Ghent-based sustainable projects. The focus was on the three sustainable development aspects, i.e., social (2021), economic (2022) and environmental (2023).

Ghent's 2025 sustainability report: a final report

With this latest report, we once again focus on indicators and reach conclusions for each SDG. The SDGs' sustainability framework and comparability with other Flemish cities allowed us to explore where Ghent's challenges and strengths lie.

Our conclusions rely on two sources:

- > [The SDG Monitor](#): this online tool provides a picture of how Flemish cities and municipalities are doing in terms of sustainable development goals using 240 indicators. The [scientific analysis](#) by UNU-CRIS and UGent provides insight into where Flemish municipalities rank collectively with respect to SDGs. Comparability with other cities allows us to explore where growth opportunities lie for Ghent.
- > In addition, we rely on [the environmental analysis of the City of Ghent](#) and analyses by our own domain experts and departments. They provide additions and nuances to the signals from the SDG Monitor. Sometimes we have our own additional indicators, describe additional trends or notice shortfalls in the datasets.

In the analyses and conclusions, we focus on the most important trends. For more interpretation and analysis, we refer to the 2024 environment analysis. Both documents complement each other: the environment analysis provides a state of affairs for the environment, describes trends and societal trends. The sustainability report provides a state of affairs for the environment as seen through a sustainability lens (additional themes are covered that are not described in the environment analysis). We make comparisons with other Flemish cities and municipalities and draw conclusions where possible.



Signals for each SDG

Based on the indicators and analyses, we identified three SDG groups. Later in this report, we explain how we arrived at these analyses and what important nuances can be added to the signals.

We use the SDG Monitor as an important source, in addition to our own analyses. The SDG Monitor has the advantage that we can use fixed indicator sets per SDG for each Flemish city, that these indicators can be analysed over a period of (typically) 10 years, and that we can perform a number of equation-based analyses. The drawback of the SDG Monitor is that our own analyses and indicator sets are not taken on board. We therefore complement the SDG Monitor in this report with our own analyses. Both sources together enable us to reach meaningful signals for each SDG.

For these SDGs, we work in a challenging environment:

SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 13, SDG 15, SDG 16

For these SDGs, conditions and expectations are favourable in Ghent:

SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 12

For these SDGs, the signals are more mixed and we do not draw any conclusions at this time:

SDG 2, SDG 11, SDG 17



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1 NO POVERTY



SDG 1: End poverty everywhere and in all its forms

This SDG primarily aims to eradicate extreme poverty. Poverty is to be halved by 2030. This goes hand in hand with building strong social protection systems and accessibility to basic services and economic resources. Poverty reduction is invested in equal rights and focuses on all areas of life. In addition, efforts must be made to build the resilience of those in vulnerable situations and to reduce the impact of economic, social and environmental disasters. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

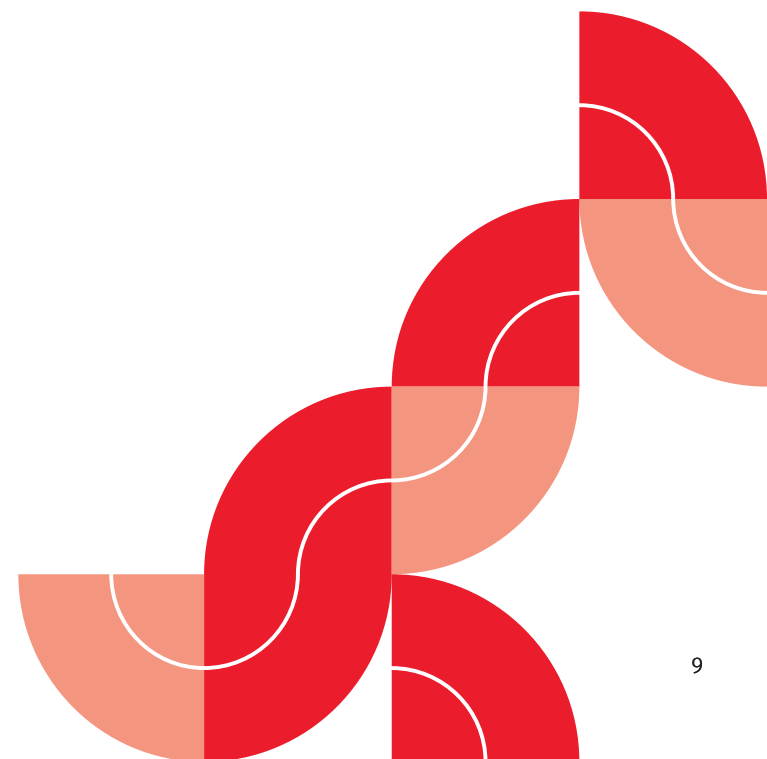
Signals for SDG 1

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) poverty in Ghent in 2023 is a challenge. We score lower than what can be expected¹ and are far from the Flemish median.

The selected indicators for measuring SDG 1 in the SDG Monitor include:

- > Relative poverty: [Fiscal income below critical limit](#) with measurement points between 2010 and 2021
- > [Subjective poverty](#) with measurement points between 2010 and 2023
- > [Low work intensity](#) with measurement points between 2010 and 2021
- > Payment issues: [Residents with payment difficulties](#), [Overdue instalment loans](#), [Overdue mortgage loan](#) with measurement points between 2010 and 2023.

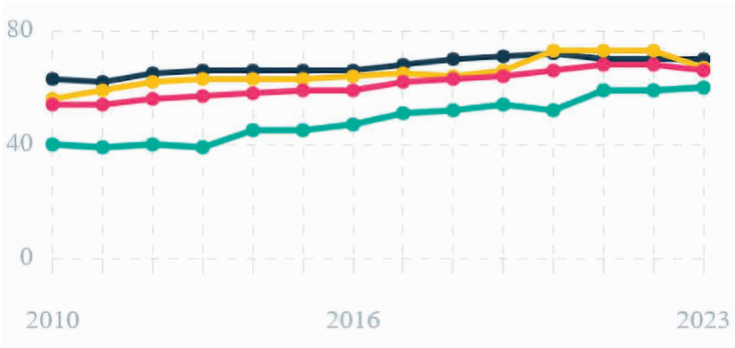
¹ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, city location, age structure, surface area.



SDG 1: END POVERTY EVERYWHERE AND IN ALL ITS FORMS

In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. Therefore in this case, an upward curve means falling poverty and a downward curve means rising poverty. Poverty dropped in Ghent until 2022, according to the SDG Monitor. Afterwards, we see a slight increase.

Chart 1 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

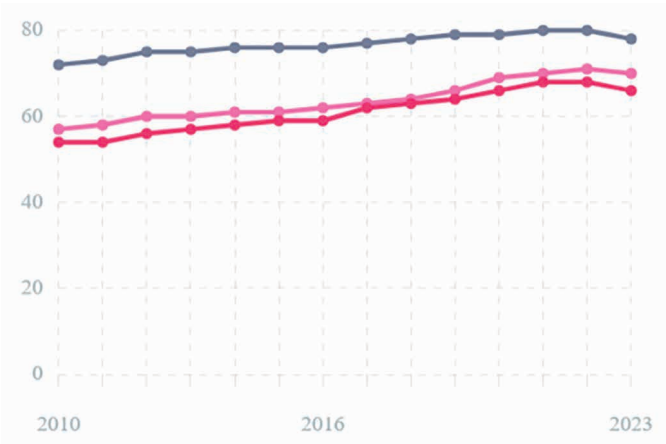


- Relative poverty
- Low work intensity
- Payment problems
- Average score for Ghent based on the underlying indicators

Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scores lower than average for Flemish cities and municipalities for SDG 1. We also score lower than average for large and regional cities, here the difference is less noticeable.

Chart 2 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



- Flanders
- Large and regional cities
- Ghent

Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent are happy to add to the signals from the SDG Monitor:

- > The weighting and selection of indicators in the SDG Monitor provide a distorted picture. Other Ghent indicators describe a positive and/or average trend compared to other centre cities.
- > Besides figures based on relative poverty (having insufficient resources to meet a certain standard of living), we also look at objective data (having an income below 60% of the median income).
- > If we compare parameters such as low work intensity, we see that Ghent ranks sixth among centre cities. Among households with payment difficulties for housing and energy, Ghent also scores in the middle of the pack of centre cities.
- > Until recently, we only used the Belgian poverty rate in Ghent, as it best reflected the situation in a metropolitan context. We recently accessed the municipal poverty risk based on administrative, fiscal data for the 2015-2021 period. These figures from Statbel's recent publication at Ghent level show that the poverty rate (Administrative poverty risk at municipal level, available until 2021) specific to Ghent has shown a decreasing trend since 2015. Due to an improvement in the methodology, the figures up to 2019 are comparable to those from 2020 only to a certain extent, even if this is not noticeable in the graph for Ghent. In other areas, this different methodology does impact the figures.
- > We conclude that the poverty rate has declined in Ghent since 2021 and note that those below the poverty line have an even more difficult time than in previous years (POD Maatschappelijke Integratie, Armoedebestrijding, 2022). We also note that the number of people finding their way to help and rights is increasing. The housing crisis persists. This housing crisis is impacting different groups, especially people in poverty.

2 ZERO HUNGER



SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

This SDG aims to end hunger for all. This means that everyone has access to affordable and healthy food, also known as food security. Healthy nutrition is committed to combating malnutrition but also pays attention to the consequences of unhealthy diet (patterns). At the same time, this SDG aims to commit to using farming techniques to grow healthy and quality food in a sustainable manner, with fair remuneration for family food products. Moreover, this SDG focuses on maintaining the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated crops and bred and domesticated animals. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

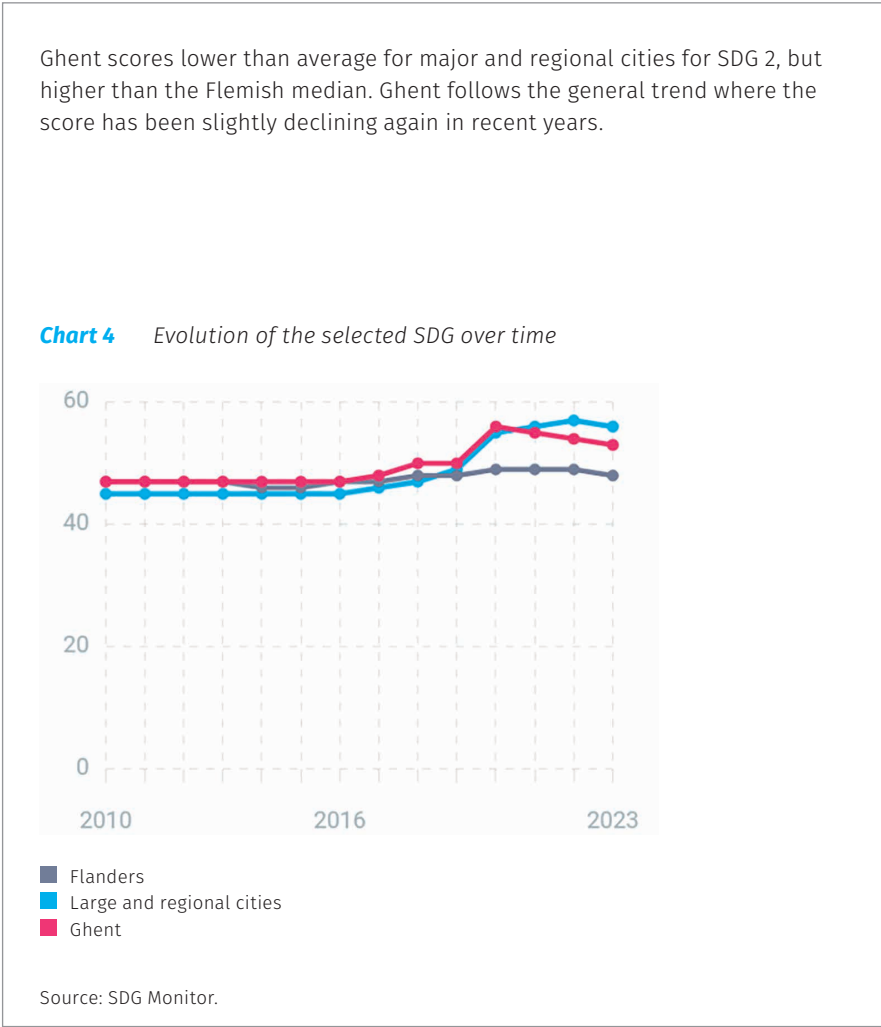
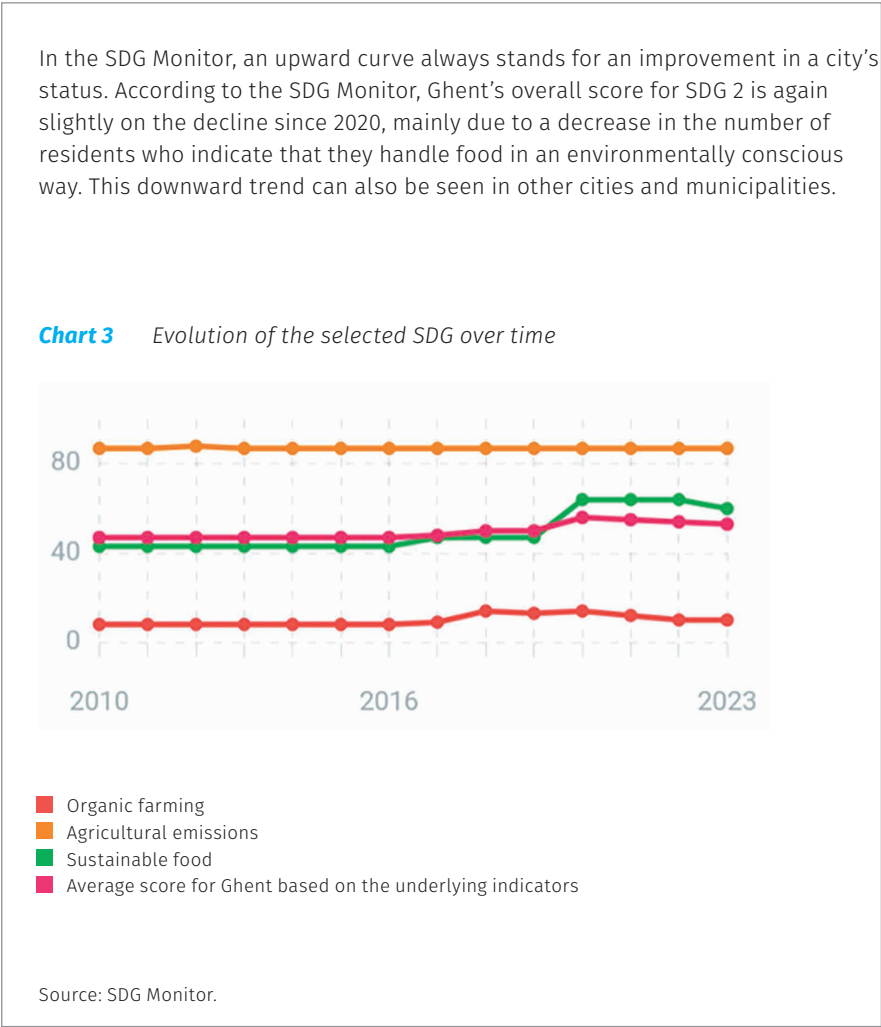
Signals for SDG 2

SDG 2 is a challenge for Ghent, according to the [SDG Monitor](#). It is a goal where Ghent scores lower than expected² but still higher than the median score in Flanders.

The selected indicators for measuring SDG 2 in the SDG Monitor involve 'organic farming' with measurement points between 2015 and 2022, 'agricultural emissions' ([non-energy related emissions: N2O from soil](#), [non-energy related emissions: Livestock](#), Ammonia emissions Agriculture, CO₂ emissions agriculture) with measurement points between 2011 and 2021 and 'sustainable food' [Eco-conscious action: local vegetables or fruits](#), [Eco-conscious action: organic products](#), [Eco-conscious action: vegetarian](#), [Eco-conscious action: seasonal vegetables](#), [Eco-conscious action: Tap water as drinking water](#) with varying measurement points between 2014 and 2023.

² The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

SDG 2: END HUNGER, ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE



The domain experts with the City of Ghent are happy to add to the indicators in the SDG Monitor to paint a nuanced picture.

Specific indicators around hunger are not included in the SDG Monitor, therefore the signals say nothing about hunger in the city. The indicators do provide (limited) information on sustainable agriculture and food production and consumption. We do not have enough Ghent indicators to describe a complete trend in terms of hunger, sustainable agriculture and sustainable food consumption (blind spot in our own environment indicators). But we are able to describe a trend in terms of policy and strategy:

Data on urban hunger is lacking for a nuanced conclusion. Data on food support is not 100% reliable. We developed our own recording tool that should eventually allow for accurate monitoring and adjustments. We note that there is an increase in the number of aid seekers during the successive crises (Covid, Ukraine, energy) and that the number of aid seekers did not fall again after these crises ended, but stagnated at this high level.

- > Food support often eases budget pressures rather than fighting hunger (Van Lancker, 2023).
- > The indicators within 'environmentally aware action' only provide a partial indication for this goal. For instance, 'vegetarian' or 'local' says nothing about a sustainable production method. The indicators are coarse-grained (at least monthly/at least weekly). We do not currently have more accurate figures for Ghent.
- > Nuance for the declining trend around sustainable food: we see this not only in Ghent, but throughout Flanders.
- > No indicator is included for (the quality of) policy and strategy on nutrition and sustainable agriculture, while Ghent relies heavily on it. Moreover, this is in fact recognised internationally as a prerequisite for sustainable food transition.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

SDG 3 aims to significantly reduce maternal mortality, preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5, and epidemics such as AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria by 2030. It also focuses on reducing premature deaths from non-communicable diseases, bolstering the prevention and treatment of addiction problems, halving traffic-related deaths, universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, universal health coverage, and a significant reduction in diseases caused by hazardous chemicals and pollution. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 3

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 3 proves to be Ghent's strong suit. Ghent scored higher for SDG 3 in 2023 than expected³ and higher than the median in Flanders.

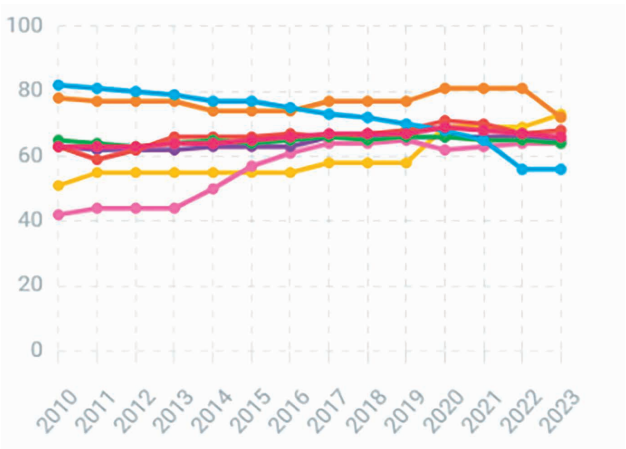
The selected indicators for monitoring SDG 3 include:

- > Physical health: [Diabetes](#) (measurement points between 2010 and 2021) and [Chronic diseases](#) (measurement points between 2013 and 2022)
- > Mental health: [Use of mental health medications: antidepressants](#), [Use of mental health medications: antipsychotics](#), [Use of mental health medications: alcohol dependence](#), [Use of mental health medications: antimentia](#), [Use of mental health medications: stimulants](#), [Happiness](#) (measurement points between 2010 and 2023)
- > Traffic safety: [Traffic casualties](#), [Traffic casualties among vulnerable road users](#), [Getting to school safely](#) (measurement points between 2010 and 2023)
- > Health facilities: [Health facilities satisfaction](#), [Sufficient GPs in the neighbourhood](#), [Healthcare payment difficulties](#) (measurement points between 2011 and 2023)
- > Senior citizen facilities: [Satisfaction with senior citizen facilities](#), Sufficient care facilities for senior citizens (measurement points between 2011 and 2023)
- > Preventive care: [Exercise and sports: Cancer screening: cervix](#), [Cancer screening: breast cancer](#), [Cancer screening: colon cancer](#), [Preventive oral care](#) (measurement points between 2010 and 2022)
- > Exercise and sports: [Satisfaction with sports facilities](#) (measurement points between 2017 and 2023). [Active exercise](#) (Daily walking, stepping, cycling) (measurement points between 2011 and 2023). [Sports participation](#) (at least weekly) (measurement points in 2020 and 2023).

3 The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. We also see a stable score for SDG 3 in Ghent, with a slight decrease since 2020.

Chart 5 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

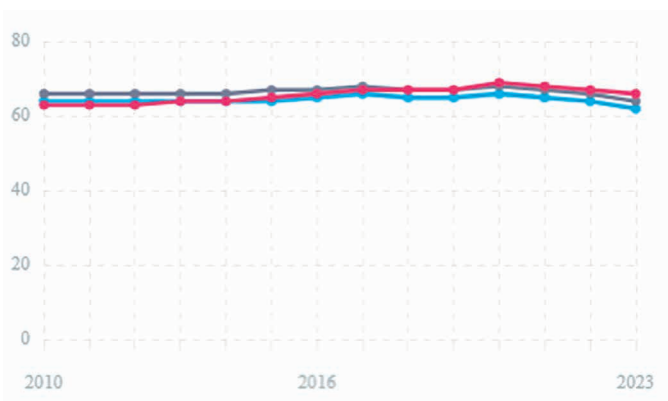


- Physical health
- Mental health
- Traffic safety
- Healthcare facilities
- Elderly care facilities
- Preventive care
- Exercise and sports
- Average score for Ghent based on the underlying indicators

Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scores similarly to the Flemish median and to the average of major and regional cities.

Chart 6 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



- Flanders
- Large and regional cities
- Ghent

Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor with the necessary nuances.

Ghent scores better compared to Flanders for several indicators. This is partly due to the fact that Ghent is a young city. Although the number of senior citizens has been on the increase in recent years (and is projected to be the strongest growing group in the next 10 years), the proportion of children and young people is high. As a result, Ghent often scores slightly better than Flanders on indicators that score worse in older age groups (such as chronic conditions, diabetes, antidepressants). As a centre city, Ghent boasts numerous health facilities (hospitals, psychiatric institutions, seniors' facilities, first-line care, etc.) with a central function. This has a positive impact on indicators regarding satisfaction with healthcare facilities, senior facilities and GPs (Municipal and City Monitor), but also with sports facilities (education centre function).

The domain experts therefore paint a more balanced picture for Ghent based on different trends:

We see a positive trend in the following cases:

- > Healthcare use: the percentage of Ghent residents with a regular GP (Global Medical Record) has increased, as has the percentage of Ghent residents who visit the dentist annually.
- > Vaccinations in young children: vaccinations against polio, whooping cough and measles in young children score well. Vaccination rate remains high even after the Covid-19 vaccination campaign.
- > Preventive oral care: Ghent residents visit the dentist more often for preventive consultations.
- > Exercise: Ghent residents put more emphasis on daily exercise and weekly intensive sports.

We see a negative trend in the following cases:

- > Physical health: there has been an increase in the percentage of children struggling with obesity. There is also a higher percentage of Ghent residents who suffer from (multiple) chronic conditions such as diabetes, dementia, mental health issues and others. That rise in chronic conditions increases pressure on care.
- > Mental health: although the convention of front-line psychologists (2021) has made mental health front-line care more affordable and accessible, we note that after the Covid pandemic, the mental health of Ghent residents, especially young people, has come under more pressure. Waiting times for specialist mental health care are long, which often leads to distressing scenarios, especially among young people.
- > Healthcare and senior services: healthcare and senior services are under increasing pressure. Waiting times for dentists are long, GP practices are introducing patient limits, and residential care centres and hospitals are unable to fill vacancies for care workers and nurses. Compared to 2020, satisfaction with health facilities, GPs and senior facilities has decreased markedly. In addition, the pressure on informal care is also clearly increasing.
- > Health inequality: there is still major inequality in health. We notice that people with an increased allowance or living in the 19th-century belt struggle more with chronic conditions or long-term disability. They also make less use of the preventive care options.

We identify the following additional health challenges:

- > The impact of climate and pollution on health. Figures for this have only recently become available. We cannot yet speak of a trend, but the impact of heat stress on excess mortality certainly appears to be increasing from the projections.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



SDG 4: Ensure equal access to quality education and promote lifelong learning for all

This SDG aims to ensure access to learning and education for all. This starts from early childhood through access to quality development, care and education. It is about equal educational opportunities in primary, secondary and higher education, regardless of gender, origin or disability. The education offered should be aligned with the labour market. Throughout time, there has been a focus on functional literacy, but also on knowledge and skills regarding sustainability. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 4

According to the SDG Monitor, equal access to education is a challenge for Ghent: we score lower than expected⁴ and close to the median score in Flanders.

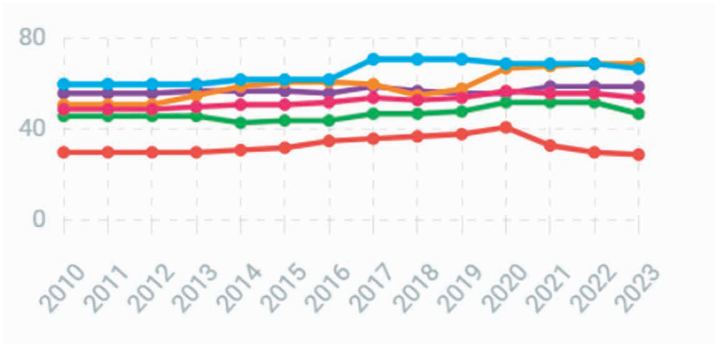
The selected indicators to measure SDG 4 in the SDG Monitor involve:

- > [Satisfaction with education facilities](#), [Payment difficulties with school fees](#) (with measurement points between 2011 and 2023)
- > [Pre-school care centres for babies and toddlers](#), [Pre-school care centres for babies and toddlers at income-based rate](#) (with measurement points between 2014 and 2022)
- > [Childcare satisfaction](#), [Childcare payment difficulties](#) (with measurement points between 2011 and 2023)
- > Indicators for preschool and primary education: Participation in preschool education (measurement points between 2010 and 2021), [Minimum preschool attendance](#) (%) (measurement points between 2018 and 2022), [School delay primary education by place of residence](#) (measurement points between 2013 and 2023), [Extracurricular childcare facilities per 100 children](#) (measurement points between 2015 and 2021)
- > Indicators on secondary education: Early school leavers in secondary education, Early school leavers: Females, Early school leavers: Non-Belgians, Early school leavers: Non-EU (measurement points between 2011 and 2020) and School children falling behind secondary education, by place of residence (>=2years) (measurement points between 2012 and 2023)
- > [Higher education, by place of residence](#) (measurement points between 2011 and 2022), Adult education enrolment (measurement points between 2014 and 2020)

⁴ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status.
According to the SDG Monitor, the quality of education and childcare in Ghent increased until 2020. After that, we note another slight decline.

Chart 7 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

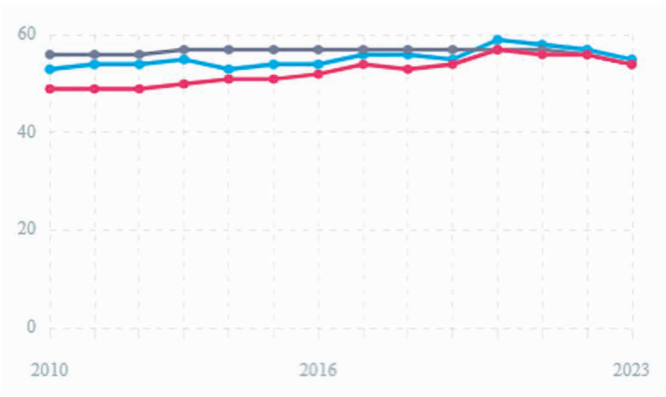


■ General
■ Babies and toddlers
■ Preschool and primary education
■ Secondary education
■ Higher education and adult education
■ Average score for Ghent based on the underlying indicators

Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scored worse than average for Flanders and major and regional cities between 2010 and 2020. Ghent currently scores the same as Flanders and major and regional cities.

Chart 8 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



■ Flanders
■ Large and regional cities
■ Ghent

Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor with the necessary nuances.

General: SDG 4 is about education quality. But we are unable to measure it, due to a lack of figures to describe a trend.

- > We do see signs that the quality of education is not great: shortage of teachers and childcare workers in childcare. In addition, education is a Flemish competency.
- > In centre cities (such as Ghent), some issues are more distinct: affordability, participation, teacher shortage, etc.
- > Payment difficulties with respect to school fees and childcare: Despite the indicator involving payment difficulties with school fees underestimating reality, the score remains stable for Ghent. We see this as a positive sign for Ghent: in the difficult context of inflation and rising prices in other sectors, the score remains stable. That score is likely to remain stable because, among others, we are committed to income-based childcare facilities, which keeps payment issues low in Ghent. We are also taking as many steps as possible to proactively grant reductions.
- > The share of early school leavers remains worryingly high and only saw a decline in the last seven years due to Covid. In 2021 and 2022, there were about 500 school dropouts out of 2,500. In Ghent, we make great efforts to combat early school leaving, but it remains a challenge. The share of unqualified female school-leavers among all female dropouts remains worryingly high at 15% after years of falling and rising.

5 GENDER
EQUALITY



SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

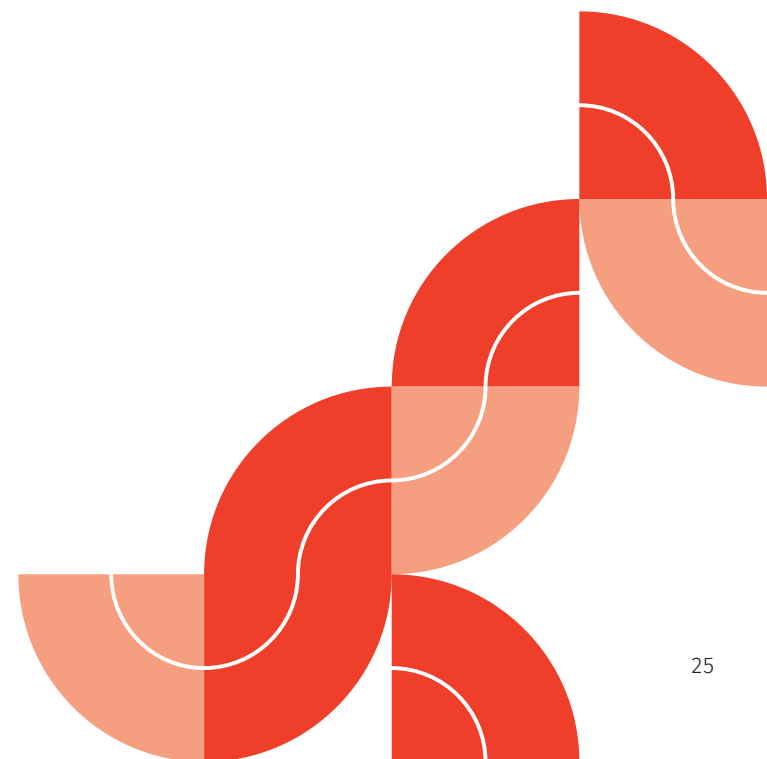
SDG 5 focuses on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. With this goal, we aim to ban violence and discrimination against women worldwide. We also want women's full and active participation in political, economic and public life. This goes hand in hand with the recognition of unpaid care and home-based work. We can only achieve this goal if women have equal access to healthcare, education and economic resources. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 5

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 5 represents a challenge for Ghent in 2023. It is a goal for which Ghent scores slightly lower than expected⁵ and lower than the median score for Flanders.

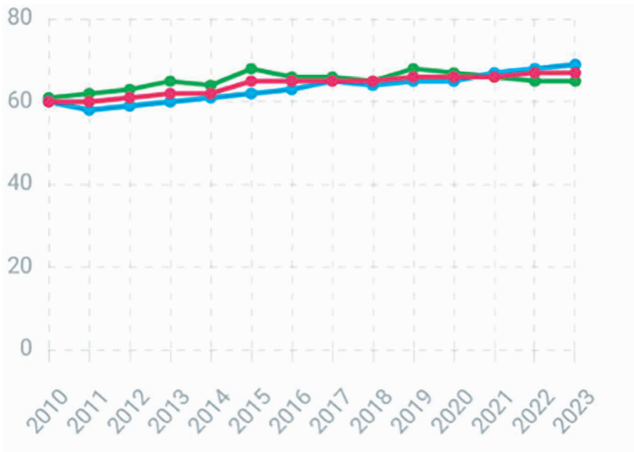
The selected indicators for SDG 5 in the SDG Monitor consist of 'Employment equality' ([Female employment rate \(20-64 years\) divided by the male employment rate \(20-64 years\), absolute value of \(% women in part-time employment - 50%\), absolute value of \(% women in long-term SSW - 50%\)](#)) with measurement points between 2010 and 2021 and 'Discrimination and violence' (Number of residents who felt hurt, insulted or disadvantaged due to gender over the past year. Number of acts of physical domestic abuse per 10,000 inhabitants. Number of acts of sexual domestic abuse per 10,000 inhabitants. [Number of acts of psychological domestic abuse per 10,000 inhabitants. Number of acts of financial domestic abuse per 10,000 inhabitants](#)) with measurement points between 2010 and 2022.

⁵ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.



In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. We note that the gender equality score shows a slightly positive trend over time.

Chart 9 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

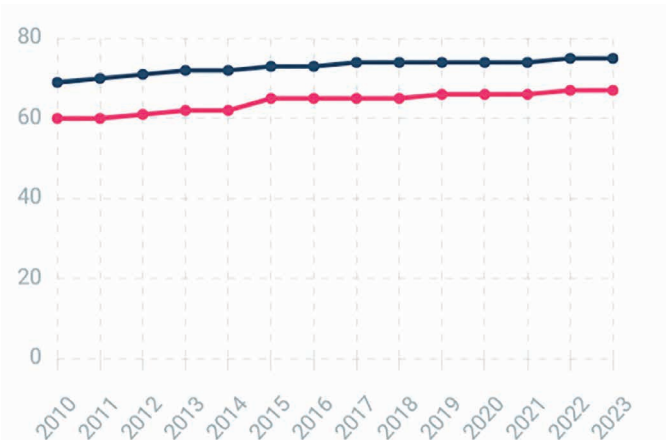


■ Equality in employment
■ Discrimination and violence
■ Average score for Ghent based on the underlying indicators

Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scores lower than the Flemish median for SDG 5.

Chart 10 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



■ Flanders
■ Ghent

Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor and add the following nuances:

The indicators in the SDG Monitor focus on gender equality from a woman's point of view. The City of Ghent views its gender approach more broadly than just women and looks at gender in a non-binary way. Anyone can experience unequal treatment based on gender. Topics such as unpaid care equally involves men, a safe public domain is also about people from the LGBTQIA+ community ... In addition, we also think it makes sense to look more broadly at employment rates and violence. We like to include indicators such as education (opportunities) and safety. Lastly, we want to take intersectionality into account. The dependence between certain indicators - migration background, age, education level - provide a more nuanced picture of gender equality in our city.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

SDG 6 is about access to clean drinking water for all and use of clean and good sanitation. We still discard too much waste into the water. In order to improve the quality of our water, this pollution must stop and we must clean wastewater more frequently. By 2030, all countries should have functioning water management systems and commit to sustainable water harvesting in order to curb water scarcity. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 6

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 6 is a strong point for Ghent. It is a goal for which Ghent scores better than expected⁶ and less well than the median score for all Flemish cities and municipalities.

Selected indicators for SDG 6 in the SDG Monitor consist of:

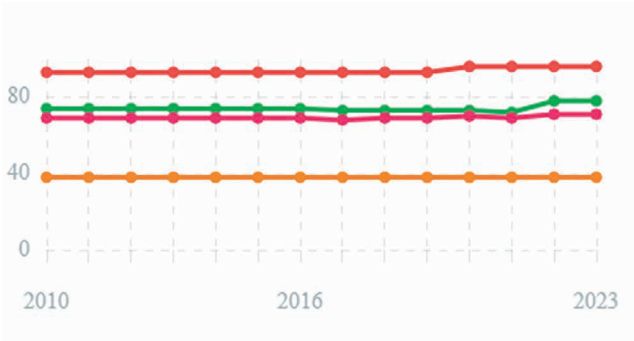
- > Drinking water: [People cut off from the water supply network \(per 10,000 inhabitants\)](#) with measurement points in 2019 and 2022, Average water consumption across households with 1-5 residents with measurement points in 2019 and 2022, [Proportion of customers with requested or imposed instalment plans for drinking water](#) with measurement points in 2015, 2017 and 2022.
- > Sewerage: [Sewerage rate](#) and [treatment rate](#) with measurement points between 2015 and 2022.
- > Protection of watercourses: [Ecological average water quality watercourses and physiochemical average water quality watercourses](#) with 1 measurement point from 2021.

⁶ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.



In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. We note a stable result in Ghent over time with a slight increase since 2021.

Chart 11 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

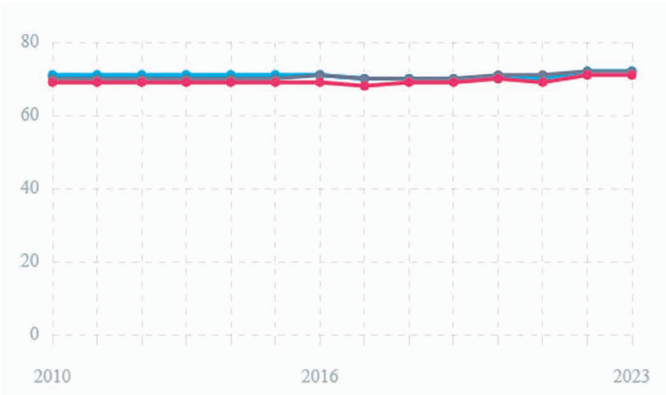


- Drinking water
- Sewerage
- Protected waterways
- Average score for Ghent based on the underlying indicators

Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scores similarly - or slightly lower - compared to major and regional cities for SDG 6. The same is seen compared to the Flanders median. Ghent follows the general trend: after a minor decline in 2021, the score has been rising again since 2022 to the level at the start of the measurement (2010).

Chart 12 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



- Flanders
- Large and regional cities
- Ghent

Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor and add a number of nuances.

Water quality has improved significantly over the past decade⁷, but the overall water quality of Ghent's waters is still moderate to insufficient today.

The Flemish river basin management plans define the necessary actions to achieve good water quality in watercourses. The target date varies from watercourse to watercourse (2027, 2033 or later).

⁷ At the Flemish level, water quality is assessed and monitored on the basis of physico-chemical and ecological status. The assessment uses a classification system of 'poor', 'insufficient', 'moderate', 'good' to 'very good' (only for natural bodies of water). Ecological status is determined by a few biological indicators (including macro-invertebrates, fish, phytoplankton) and hydromorphology (including bank structure, bottom, meandering, water flow, etc.). Physico-chemical status is determined by five guide parameters, i.e., oxygen, dissolved oxygen, total nitrogen, conductivity and total phosphorus.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

By 2030, everyone should have access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. We can draw renewable energy from natural sources such as water, wind and sun. In order to achieve this sustainable development goal, we need to better explore these energy sources, as well as the technology with which we can generate renewable energy. Energy efficiency should also double by 2030. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 7

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 7 is a strong point for Ghent. We score better than the median in Flanders and also higher than expected⁸ for Ghent.

Selected indicators for SDG 7 from the SDG Monitor consist of:

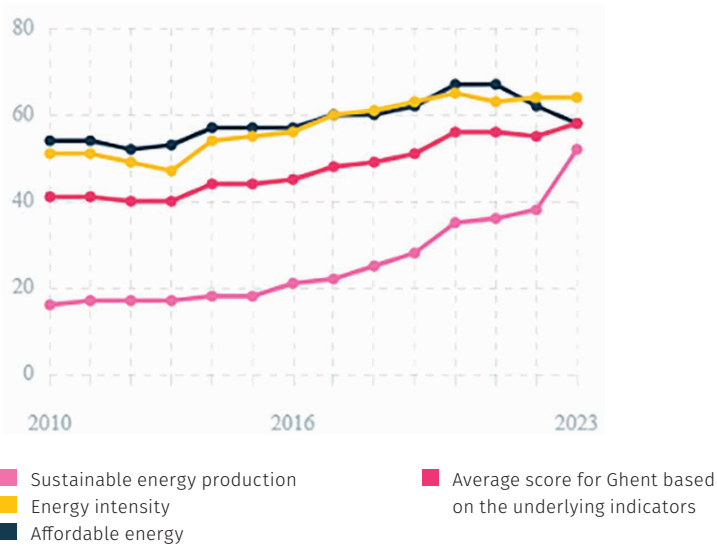
- > Renewable energy production: [Local renewable energy production \(% consumption\)](#) with measurement points between 2011 and 2021, [Photovoltaic \(PV\) utilisation rate rooftops \(%\)](#) with measurement points between 2018 and 2022), [Installed capacity of wind turbines with measurement points](#) between 2010 and 2023
- > Energy intensity: Energy intensity of households relative to number of inhabitants with measurement points between 2011 and 2021, Energy intensity of companies relative to value added, [Percentage \(%\) of LED street lighting](#) with measurement points between 2014 and 2022
- > Affordable energy: [Electricity budget meter](#), [Natural gas budget meter](#), [Energy and water affordability](#) with measurement points between 2011 and 2023

⁸ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

SDG 7: ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. According to the SDG Monitor, Ghent's energy sustainability is heading in the right direction. In renewable energy production, Ghent scores well with a strong upward trend towards 2023. Energy intensity has also been on a slight upward curve, indicating declining consumption. Energy affordability suffered a setback in 2022 (energy crisis).

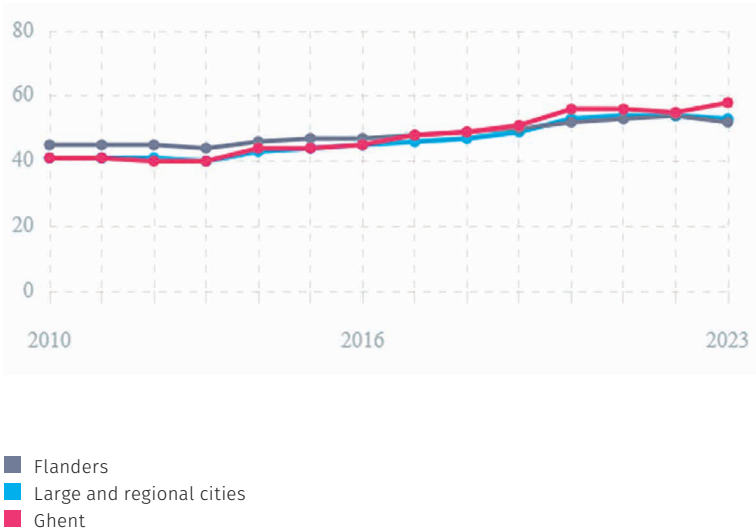
Chart 13 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scores similarly to large and regional cities for SDG 7: a steady improvement in affordable and sustainable energy. We notice an increase (improvement) for Ghent since 2022, contrary to the general trend in Flanders and other major cities and municipalities. This is mainly due to sharp increases in PV and wind power.

Chart 14 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

SDG 7: ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

SDG 8 focuses on decent work for all. This implies that everyone who can work should have the opportunity to work, under proper and safe working conditions. Special attention is paid here to young people and people with disabilities. Work should boost economic growth without damaging the environment. Sustainable tourism is also part of healthy economic growth. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 8

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 8 represents a challenge for Ghent. We score lower than expected for Ghent⁹ and are slightly further from the median in Flanders.

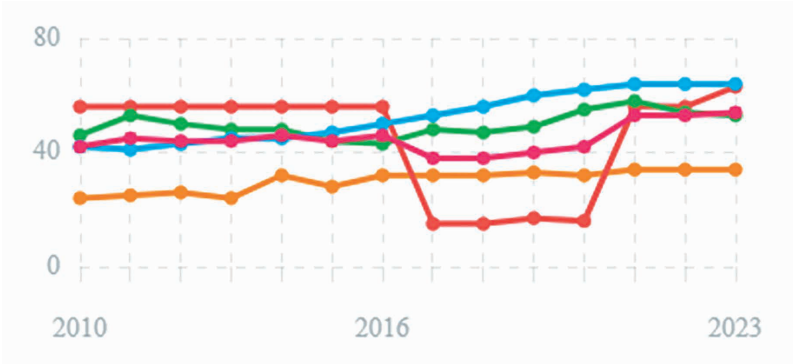
The selected indicators for SDG 8 in the SDG Monitor cover:

- > Employment with measurement points between 2010 and 2021 ([Employment rate for 20-64-year-olds \(%\)](#), [Female employment rate](#), [Employment rate for older people \(55+\)](#), [Employment rate for non-Belgians, EU](#), [Employment rate for non-Belgians, non-EU](#))
- > Unemployment with measurement points between 2010 and 2023 (Female job seeker rate, Youth job seeker rate (20-24 year olds), Job seeker rate older people (55-64-year-olds), Long-term unemployment rate, [Low-skilled unemployment rate](#))
- > Circular and social economy:
 - > [Target group employees in social economy employment](#) (measurement points between 2017 and 2020)
 - > [Employment: circular jobs ratio](#) (measurement point in 2021 and 2023)
- > Growth with measurement points between 2010 and 2022 ([Net growth ratio companies](#), [Gross value added per capita](#))

⁹ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. An upward curve therefore means that Ghent's economy is growing with a focus on fair and decent work. Things are moving in the right direction with fair work and Ghent's economy is growing. Within the circular economy, we observe an upward curve from 4% to 8%.

Chart 15 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

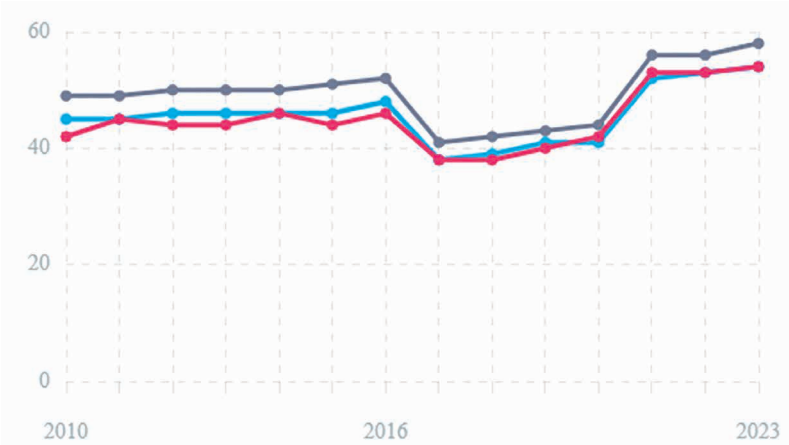


- Employment
- Unemployment
- Circular and social economy
- Growth
- Average score for Ghent based on the underlying indicators

Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scores similarly to major and regional cities for SDG 8. After Ghent scored slightly below average in 2020, the city caught up and scores at the same level. The lower score for the 2017-2020 SDG is due to 2 breaks in the time series of the 'circular and social economy' indicator. It is therefore not possible, or only in a very limited way, to compare the absolute figure before and after each of those breaks. As a metropolis, we score slightly below Flanders in absolute terms, but the gap has systematically narrowed in recent years.

Chart 16 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



- Flanders
- Large and regional cities
- Ghent

Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent are happy to add to the conclusions from the SDG Monitor a broader set of indicators that take into account the context of a centre city such as Ghent:

Ghent's economy is characterised by robust growth, which between 2011 and 2021 was systematically higher than Flanders and the median for the 13 centre cities. More under 'Ghent's look at targets for SDG 8'.

For two indicators used in the SDG Monitor, we would like to provide the following:

The SDG indicator 'gross value added per inhabitant' from the SDG Monitor reduces the gross value added per inhabitant to scores from 0 to 100 based on a comparison with all other Flemish municipalities. Here, the municipality with the highest gross value added per inhabitant scores 100 and the one with the lowest scores 0. Because of this methodology, scores are distorted by outliers. For example, a municipality with few inhabitants but accommodating large affluent companies scores the maximum. Due to this methodology, like other centre cities, Ghent scores relatively low for this indicator (especially compared to the maximum score). If we compare the gross value added per Ghent inhabitant with the other centre cities or the median score, Ghent does score above average.

'Circular and social economy' uses figures that sometimes have a circular focus (employment) and sometimes do not (unemployment figures). In Ghent, we like to add data on potential jobs in the circular economy. Or we add information on Ghent companies that are committed to developing a circular business model and circular processes.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructures, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

SDG 9 is about developing a quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure. The infrastructure must be upgraded with increased efficiency and sustainable technology. We can achieve this goal with scientific research and by focusing on innovation. In addition, Internet access plays a key role in developing this goal. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 9

According to the SDG Monitor, SDG 9 is a strong suit for Ghent. We score above the expected value¹⁰ and well beyond the Flemish median.

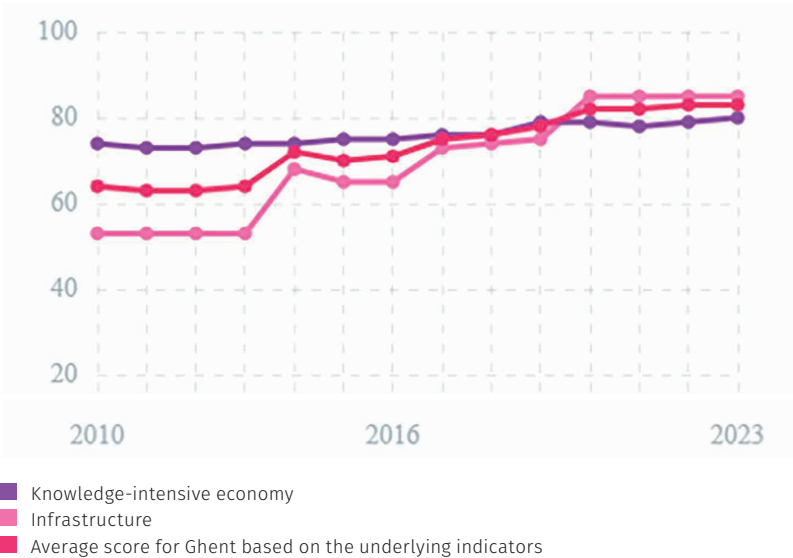
The selected indicators for measuring SDG 9 in the SDG Monitor are about a knowledge-intensive economy ([Share of self-employed in knowledge-intensive service sectors and high and medium high-tech industries](#) with measurement points between 2010 and 2023, The share of workers in knowledge-intensive and creative sectors out of the total number of workers employed in the city/municipality with measurement points between 2017 and 2023) and infrastructure ([Share of inhabitants with internet access in their homes](#) with measurement points between 2011 and 2023, [Share of occupied area of business parks on the municipality's territory](#) with measurement points between 2014 and 2023)

¹⁰ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.



In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. Therefore an upward curve means things are moving in the right direction for Ghent's industry, innovation and infrastructure. According to the SDG Monitor, Ghent has experienced consistent growth in industry, innovation and infrastructure since the 2010 measurement. Growth is strongest for the infrastructure indicator. Knowledge-intensive economy shows a flatter progress over time.

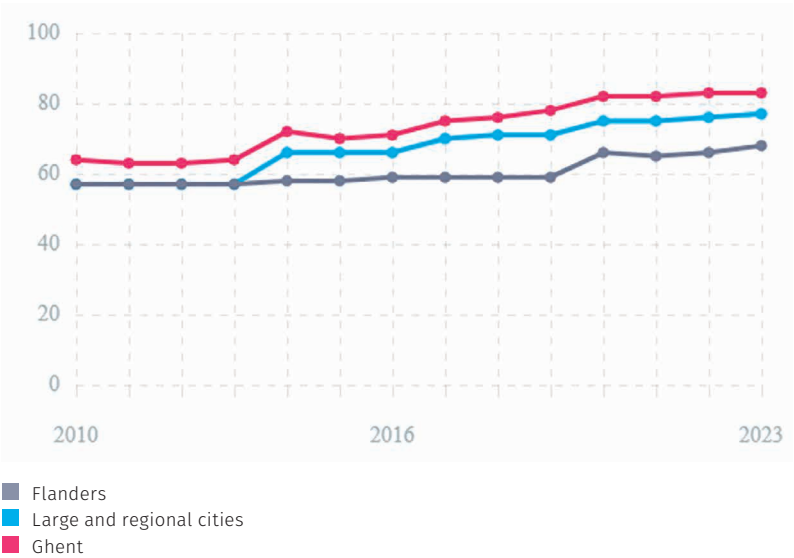
Chart 17 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

For SDG 9, Ghent scores better compared to large and regional cities, and Flanders. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure have shown consistent growth since the measurement began in 2010, with a tendency to level off since 2020.

Chart 18 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

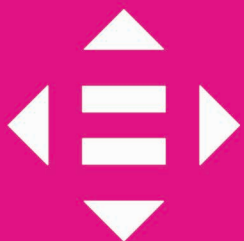


Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor with the necessary nuances:

- > Only in the area of innovation can we underpin potential signals; only for this are relevant indicators available through the SDG Monitor. Based on these indicators, Ghent scores remarkably high.
- > The SDG indicators for infrastructure are about 'the number of internet connections in homes' and 'business parks occupancy rate'. The strong growth for that first indicator dominates the overall trend for SDG 9. Based on these two indicators, we cannot describe a complete trend regarding infrastructure.
- > The SDG Monitor does not include indicators on inclusive and sustainable industrialisation.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



SDG 10: Reduce inequalities within and among countries

By focusing on this goal, countries will pay more attention to the income growth of poor people. By 2030, the income of the poorest 40% of the national population must grow faster than the national average. For global financial institutions, this requires improved regulation and oversight. Migration and mobility of people must be organised in a better and safer way. Discriminating laws and practices that increase inequality must be eliminated. Everyone must have equal opportunities and be involved in all social, economic, and political aspects of society. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 10

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 10 represents a challenge for Ghent. In 2023, Ghent's score for SDG 10 was well below the score to be expected ¹¹. We also score lower than the median for Flemish cities and towns.

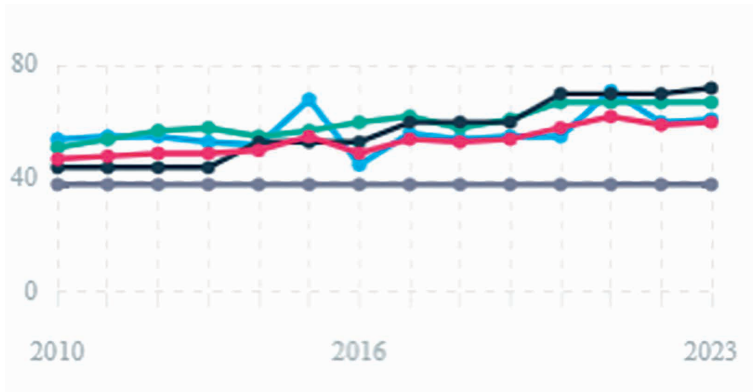
The selected indicators for SDG 10 in the SDG Monitor cover:

- > Attitude towards diversity: [Presence of people of different origins means enrichment \(% agree\)](#) with measurement points between 2020 and 2023, [People of different origins live well together \(% agree\)](#) with measurement points between 2017 and 2023, [Not so nice if neighbours would have different origins \(% disagree\)](#) with measurement points between 2011 and 2023, [Sympathetic if they get to know them better \(% agree\)](#) with measurement points between 2011 and 2020, [Too many people of different origins living in municipality/city \(% disagree\)](#) with measurement points between 2011 and 2023, [Makes sense to organise meeting activities \(% agree\)](#) with measurement points between 2011 and 2023
- > Income inequality: [Income inequality: interquartile coefficient \(ratio Q3-Q1 to median\)](#) with measurement points between 2010 and 2020
- > Discrimination: percentage of residents who have felt hurt, insulted or harmed because of their sexual orientation (where applicable), percentage of residents who have felt hurt, insulted or harmed because of their origin (where applicable), percentage of residents who have felt hurt, insulted or harmed because of their physical or mental impairment (where applicable) in the past year with 1 measurement point from 2020
- > Origin gap in employment: [The origin gap represents the difference between the employment rate of individuals of Belgian origin and the employment rate of individuals of non-EU origin. Employment rate refers to the share of individuals employed among the population aged 20 to 64 by origin group, difference in long-term unemployment \(>= 1 year\) relative to total unemployed jobseekers between non-EU and EU citizens](#) with measurement points between 2010 and 2023

¹¹ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. Therefore an upward curve implies that urban inequality is decreasing, a downward curve that urban inequality is increasing. According to the SDG Monitor, inequality in Ghent has been decreasing slightly since 2010.

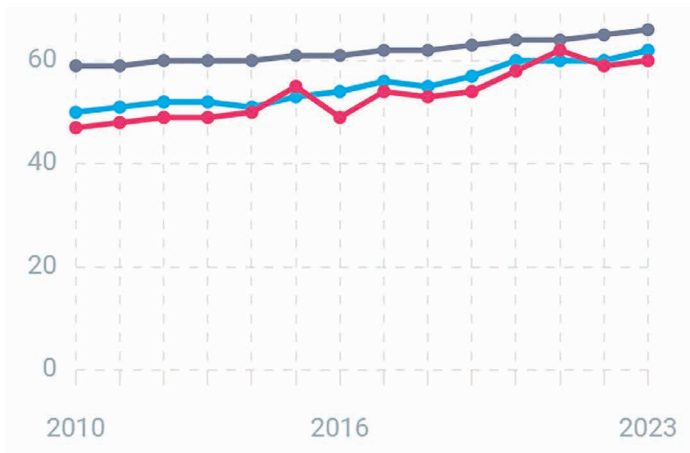
Chart 19 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

Ghent scores lower than the median for Flanders and major and regional cities. Ghent does follow the same slightly positive trend (inequality is decreasing).

Chart 20 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent are happy to add to the signals from the SDG Monitor:

- > The comparison between the Flemish centre cities in terms of discrimination is based on a snapshot from the 2020 city monitor. This showed that 1 in 5 Ghent residents had felt discriminated against in the past year, a figure higher than average for Flemish centre cities. The 2024 Urban Monitor did not revisit this question, resulting in a missing evolving view.
- > Complementing the signals from the SDG Monitor, here we refer to the 2021 Safety Monitor. In terms of experiences of discrimination, Ghent scores better than the average for the five major cities combined (Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi, Liège and Ghent).

Table 2 *Discrimination*

| DISCRIMINATION | Victim (Ghent) | Report (Ghent) | Major cities (average of 5 major cities combined) |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|---|
| 9. origin/nationality discrimination | 4.8 | 2.2 | 7.03 |
| 10. gender discrimination | 4.4 | 0.0 | 4.85 |
| 13. discrimination on other grounds (disability, politics, religion, etc.) | 3.8 | 0.0 | 4.89 |
| 19. sexual orientation discrimination | 1.9 | 0.0 | 2.11 |

- > From the City of Ghent’s own field tests, we note that discrimination in the rental and labour markets has declined over the years. (Christiaens A. & Mollen F., 2024).
- > Rental market: overall, we note a downward trend. We explain a slight reversal in this trend by a limited number of (new) players in the rental market.
- > Labour market: the results of the 2021 versus 2024 field tests show a decrease in discrimination against individuals from a migrant background (from 16% to 6%). The results also suggest a decrease in discrimination based on transgender identity, but these results are not significant. Therefore we cannot rule out coincidence in this case. Lastly, we observe an increase in discrimination based on disability: deaf individuals were 42% less likely to receive an invitation to a job interview in the first measurement; in the follow-up measurement, that number rose to 54%.
- > The 2023 city monitor shows that Ghent systematically scores better when it comes to openness/attitudes towards ethnic-cultural diversity/different orientation (an important protective factor to mitigate the risk of discrimination).

For a nuance on the indicator on income inequality, we refer to the feedback on the SDG on poverty.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Half of the world's population, some 3.5 billion, lives in cities. We expect this to only increase. SDG 11 is comprehensive, covering lots of topics: housing, sustainable mobility, participatory and sustainable planning, culture, environmental impact of cities, air quality & waste management, safe, inclusive and green space. Sustainable growth is the greatest challenge facing cities of the future. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

For SDG 11 we separately discuss trends for housing, sustainable transport, participatory and sustainable planning, culture, environmental impact of cities, air quality and waste management, safe, inclusive and green space.



Ghent's perspective on the targets for SDG 11

The number of people taking up residence in Ghent has continued to grow since 2000. In recent years, the increase has been slightly less significant, but still greater than the median for the 13 centre cities.

On 1 January 2024, Ghent counted 270,263 official residents¹². Compared to the Flemish Region, our city has a young profile with more people in the 20-44 age group, more 0-4-year-olds and fewer seniors. We note an increase in the number of people over 65, but there is still no sign of an ageing population in Ghent, unlike Flanders and the surrounding municipalities. The number and share of children under 12 is decreasing, therefore we can speak of a dejuvination. The number of births is decreasing compared to 2010, but there are still relatively more births in Ghent than in the Flemish Region. The mortality rate is lower in Ghent than in the Flemish Region.

More and more people are moving to, within or from Ghent. Our city is experiencing population growth through births, but mostly through migration. The majority of new Ghent residents come from abroad, followed by East Flanders and West Flanders. (Stad Gent, 2023b)

Target 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrade slums

Ghent is experiencing a pressing housing crisis, especially in the rental market. Many Ghent residents, especially the most vulnerable, spend a large portion of their income on rent, leading to affordability issues. The rental market is struggling with a shortage of available affordable housing, long waiting lists for social housing and unbalanced price-quality ratios (Atelier Romain, 2023). About half of tenants spend more than a third of their income on rent. Rented social housing in Ghent is also becoming more expensive, on the one hand due to a new calculation method and on the other due to general costs that are not income-related.

In addition to the problems in the rental market, Ghent also faces a growing shortage of affordable houses for sale (Atelier Romain, 2023). This results in a growing number of people without a suitable accommodation to live in. Rising rental and sales prices are partly caused by increasing demand on the part of higher-income, higher-educated individuals. They can offer more than lower-income families and buy or rent homes in the rental market, squeezing out other families. It may no longer be possible for a number of population groups to stay or come to live in Ghent. There is also a lack of child-friendly housing in the city, especially in older neighbourhoods. Besides affordability, there is also a significant problem with housing quality, especially in the rental market. Landlords often ignore necessary renovations. Half of rental properties do not meet basic standards and one in five have structural issues (Van den Broeck, 2015). Vulnerable tenants often stay in sub-par housing because of a lack of alternatives. Overcrowding is not the exception.

In social housing complexes, the highly diverse population of residents, each with their own habits, lifestyles and problems (mostly people from vulnerable backgrounds) leads to disruption and tensions.

Ghent struggles with a significant number of homeless. The latest homeless count shows that 2,490 people are homeless in Ghent, 633 of whom are minors. Compared to 2020, the number of homeless counted has increased by a quarter. Extreme poverty, the inaccessible housing market especially for the vulnerable, precarious accommodation, health issues (psychological, physical, addiction, a combination), etc., all contribute to increasing homelessness in Ghent. We developed a plan to solve homelessness by 2040 through housing coupled with counselling. To do so, it is critical that there be sufficient quality and affordable accommodation and a differentiated housing offer that includes care homes (e.g., robust housing, care hostels, etc.). Currently this is still missing.

¹² Source: (Rijksregister, 2023)

Target 11.2 Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons by 2030.

Ghent scores well on nearly all sustainable mobility indicators. The share of sustainable travel by Ghent residents has been increasing in recent years and the vehicle fleet is also becoming more sustainable. Unfortunately, today there is a lack of sufficiently measurable indicators for transport poverty and access to the transport system with sufficient attention to the needs of people in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and seniors. Traffic safety is still a major focus. For example, the share of Ghent residents who feel that children can move around safely on their own in their neighbourhood has not changed significantly over the past 9 years (Flemish Government - Domestic Administration Agency, 2023). The number of traffic accidents involving bodily injuries and fatalities also remains relatively high in Ghent compared to many other municipalities (Vlaamse Overheid - Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur, 2023a). As a centre city, Ghent has more traffic (e.g., commuters, (dorm) students). This also partially explains the higher number of accidents.

In Ghent cyclists are the ones most often injured in traffic accidents. Nearly half (48%) of the 1,371 traffic victims in 2023 involved cyclists.¹³ The proportion of cycling accidents increased from about 40% in 2015 to 54% in 2022 (Provincies in cijfers, 2022).

With [15 action points](#) the city of Ghent aims to lower physical, mental, financial, digital and communication barriers so that everyone has every opportunity to opt for sustainable mobility. We eliminate as many barriers as possible in the public domain, public transport and for cycling. Ghent residents should be able to move around independently, regardless of their financial, physical or mental status. At the same time, we are also tackling financial barriers, for example through cheap second-hand bikes for vulnerable groups, or extra support for bus travel and car sharing. Ghent's

approach consists of a mix of long-term solutions and quick, temporary ones while waiting for a more sustainable solution, when it is not yet possible all at once.

Target 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

As in previous editions, Ghent achieves good scores in the 2019 EU Cultural and Creatives City Monitor (European Commission, 2019): Specifically, within the list of 44 cities of similar size (250,000 - 500,000 inhabitants), the city ranks 4th in terms of overall score (after Bratislava, Florence and Tallinn).

Ghent residents' satisfaction and participation in cultural events remains high. In Ghent and other places, culture is increasingly being used as a lever for social change.

In addition, the City of Ghent was recognised as an immovable heritage municipality on 1 July 2023. Immovable heritage is a major asset for our city. That is why we pursue an active heritage policy, which is committed to a proactive and reassessing attitude that co-deploys heritage values for the development of tomorrow's city.

Immovable heritage comprises both archaeological (with the Prinsenhof, Ghent boasts a protected archaeological site and nearly all of its historic centre has been identified as an archaeological zone), architectural (Ghent features 152 landscape entities or landscape elements on the agency's inventory; 84 of them have been identified) as landscape heritage. Ghent lists 6,574 architectural relics in the Heritage Agency's inventory; 5,359 of them have been identified. From our authority as a immovable heritage municipality, we assume responsibility for our own valuable heritage and support private parties in their care for it. A generic heritage reflex and a qualitative heritage approach constitute the starting point here. For valuable architectural heritage, we look for appropriate uses that capitalise on meaningful preservation, sustainability and building layering. These are the critical prerequisites to preserve our heritage for future generations.

¹³ A study by Fietsberaad Vlaanderen did show that the number of deaths per bicycle kilometre did fall in Flanders between 2019 and 2022 (Fietsberaad Vlaanderen, 2024). These figures are not available for Ghent.

We currently have no or insufficient figures/information to measure natural heritage. With the green structure plan, we do commit to 'protecting valuable trees', including biotic and cultural-historical ones.

Target 11.6 Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality, municipal and other waste management by 2030.

The amount of reported tonnage of collected illegal dumping in Ghent has increased. Ghent residents view the waste issue in their neighbourhood as problematic and are less satisfied with overall cleanliness in the city.

Although air quality in Ghent has improved (VMM, 2023), high nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter concentrations still prevail. High nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations are linked to road traffic. The WHO advisory value for NO₂ is exceeded across the entire Ghent and Flanders territory. An estimated 100 Ghent children and adolescents (0-19 years old) and 335 Ghent adults (30-74 years old) develop asthma annually due to NO₂ exposure. (Departement Zorg & VITO, 2023)

Ghent's particulate matter concentrations are 39% due to wood combustion, which is more than road traffic. In 2022, there was an increase in air pollution from wood burning compared to 2020 and 2021 (Vlaamse Milieumaatschappij, 2023a). An estimated 164 Ghent adults (>30 years old) die every year due to long-term exposure to particulate matter. Also, an estimated 132 Ghent children and adolescents (0-19 years) are said to start suffering annually from asthma and 201 Ghent adults (30-74 years) from higher blood pressure due to exposure to particulate matter (Departement Zorg & VITO, 2023).

Currently, estimates assume that 33.5% of Ghent's children under the age of 4 and people over 65 are at risk of health issues due to heat stress (Klimaatportaal, 2022). During an average summer, there are currently around 19 heat-related deaths in Ghent. According to estimates this could reach 108 deaths by 2050, taking into account climate change, increasing ageing and population density. The greatest impact is seen among those over 85 (Departement Zorg, 2024).

We have no figures on the contribution of greenery to heat reduction or water infiltration (the city as a sponge). The canopy of street trees can also help reduce adverse environmental impacts.

An estimated 21.6% of Ghent residents (>20 years) are impacted by severe noise pollution from road traffic (Departement Zorg & VITO, 2023). Noise pollution can lead to various physical and mental health issues, such as heart disease and sleep disturbance.

The waste problem in Ghent remains visibly present in the streetscape and is on the increase. We note that this also bothers Ghent residents, due to the numerous reports of illegal dumping and other cleanliness-related issues such as full bins, litter, abandoned shopping trolleys. In 2023, we recorded 61,252 reports, or almost double the number in 2019 (i.e., 32,158). 78% of reports in 2023 are about pure illegal dumping. The 19th-century belt is particularly sensitive to illegal dumping (Stad Gent, Departement Stedelijke Ontwikkeling, Regie Netheid, 2024).

Target 11.7 Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, particularly for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities by 2030.

In order to make public spaces as inclusive and accessible as possible, the city is investing in an accessibility policy, in which we are committed to Universal Design. We do this by including accessibility as a cross-cutting theme in commissions, specifications and designs, and by being involved in consultation meetings (IKZ-Interne Kwaliteit Zorg-Internal quality care) that look at accessibility as a theme and focal point in its own right. We lay down concrete actions to increase accessibility biennially in [an action plan](#).

Despite a slight increase in a feeling of insecurity, Ghent residents still feel safe in their neighbourhood and in the city (and safer than the average residents in the other centre cities). However, the increased number of bicycle thefts and pick-pocketing does require additional measures, and there are concerns about sexual harassment and open drug use and dealing.

The increasing use of public spaces by different social groups can lead to conflicts and tensions between them and cause nuisance and disturbance to local residents.

According to the Municipal and City Monitor, 67% of Ghent residents rarely or never felt unsafe in their neighbourhood in 2023. On the other hand, 7.6% of Ghent residents always or often felt unsafe in their neighbourhood in 2023. This is slightly better than the 8.1% in 2020, but significantly worse than the 6.3% in 2017. Yet Ghent residents feel less unsafe in their neighbourhood than residents in other centre cities (i.e., 9%, range 4.4%-11.4%) (Vlaamse Overheid - Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur, 2023i).

58% of Ghent residents rarely or never felt unsafe in the city in 2023, compared to 62% in 2020.

8.7% always or often felt unsafe in the city, which is similar to 8.5% in 2020, but significantly lower than 7% in 2017. But here too, Ghent sets itself apart positively from centre cities, where in 2023 an average of 12% (i.e., range 5%-24%) of residents always or often felt unsafe in their city (Vlaamse Overheid - Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur, 2023j).

Inappropriate behaviour by motorists is the most common reason for feeling unsafe (52.8%), followed by rundown surroundings (25%), public nuisance (23.6%) and crime (23.2%) (Federale Politie, 2022a).

When we decided in late 2022 to switch off street lights at night as a result of the energy crisis, darkness also proved to have a major impact on feelings of insecurity, i.e., the fear of being harassed, of assault, of thefts, etc. But also of falling while on foot or when cycling.

The Safety Monitor shows a sharp increase in the number of Ghent residents who always or often avoid certain locations in the municipality, i.e., 18% in 2021 compared to 12% in 2018. This avoidance behaviour is higher than the Belgian average (13%), but lower than the average in 5 major cities (24%). Other avoidance behaviour, such as not opening the door to strangers (28%) and staying home after dark (17%), is remarkably less prevalent among Ghent residents than for the average Belgian (39%/19%) and the average resident in the 5 major cities (48%/25%) (Federale Politie, 2022a).

The youngest (15-24) and oldest age groups (65+) exhibit the greatest avoidance behaviour: 27% of 15-24-year-olds avoid places in the municipality, 23% stay home after dark. 32% of 65+ers stay home after dark, 41% do not open their doors to strangers.

Those who completed higher education exhibited less avoidance behaviour than other education levels.

Respondents living in Gent-Centre (24%) avoided locations in the municipality the most.

In addition, the quality of the living environment, i.e., how well-maintained residents consider their neighbourhood, has a negative impact on the feeling of safety: 32% of those who consider their neighbourhood to be neglected always/often feel unsafe, compared to 3% in very well-maintained neighbourhoods.

A quarter of those who feel unsafe cite a rundown environment as the reason (Federale Politie, 2022a).

There is a persistent and justified concern in the Ghent professional field around the breeding grounds for radicalisation, extremism and polarisation. Any scenario perceived as unlawful (at home, at school, at work, in society, etc.), frictions and issues, can give rise to radical ideas and statements, both in the physical and online world (social media). Fuelled by different beliefs and philosophies, this leads to radical behaviour and, in extreme cases, deviant, criminal behaviour. This puts pressure on safe and liveable coexistence.

Whilst until 2019 the number of judicial offences in the categories 'drugs' and 'public intoxication' increased, in 2023 we see a 26.8% drop in drug offences and a stabilisation of public intoxication (these recorded drug and alcohol offences should be interpreted with caution, as they are mainly brought to light by active detection and targeted police checks). There is increasing 'normalisation', 'social acceptance' of certain drug and alcohol use, such as cannabis. Since the Covid crisis, drugs are used and dealt more openly, both in schools and in public spaces (Eerstelijnszone Gent et al., 2023). Police have also been observing drug-related disturbances in parks for some time.

According to the Municipal and City Monitor, in 2023, 10% of Ghent residents experienced nuisance from drug dealing and drug use in their own neighbourhood during the previous month. This is a significant decrease compared to 2020 (12.4%) and equal to the average for the 13 centre cities.

The number of crimes against 'bodily integrity' increased by 16% compared to 2019 and accounted for 8.3% of total crimes in 2023 with 2,976 offences. These crimes consist of 90% assaults and injuries, 2/3 of which take place outside the family (mostly in public spaces or publicly accessible places).

In the 2023 Municipal and City Monitor, 1.6% of Ghent residents (compared to 2% in 2020) report that they were harassed on the street during the previous month. This is lower than the average of 2.2% in centre cities. Residents of neighbourhoods in the 19th-century belt were most frequently harassed (i.e., more than 3% of respondents) (Flemish Government, Domestic Administration Agency, 2023).

In the 2021 Safety Monitor, 12.5% of respondents consider 'being harassed on the street' a problem in their neighbourhood. It is experienced as more problematic by women (14%), by 15-34-year-olds (18.5%) and in Ghent-Centre (18%).

The willingness to report Sexual Transgressive Behaviour (=SGG) or harassment is low because of taboo, victim guilt and passive/minimising reactions on the part of bystanders. The taboo surrounding reporting is presumably even greater among men than women.

The Ghent youth sector (education, leisure, assistance) sees SGG increasing, but does not always know how to react.

The percentage of Ghent residents affected by noise pollution has decreased significantly by 19.6% in 2023 compared to 22.6% by 2020. Still, this is the second highest score among centre cities. Noise pollution from people in public is a problem in their neighbourhood for a fourth of respondents, noise pollution from neighbours for a fifth. 10.8% consider noise pollution from pubs or parties a problem in their neighbourhood, 15% in Ghent-Centre (Federale Politie, 2022b). Noise pollution is often also the first sign of a more complex conflict between social groups for urban space and urban functions.

The Covid period forced people to meet outdoors in bubbles. Many discovered more fun alternative venues in parks, squares, along waterfronts, etc., to gather, relax, drink, chat, play music, play sports, etc. For local residents, it was not always obvious to be confronted and deal with more people, more noise, more rubbish, etc., in their neighbourhood. Even post-Covid, it remains popular and fun to gather in public spaces, sometimes to the dismay of local residents who are annoyed by any potential nuisance and inconvenience.

Life in public spaces also creates tensions between groups of users who want to use the same spaces differently, depending on age, cultural background, housing situation, leisure activities, etc. Especially in more vulnerable neighbourhoods with small housing units, residents without financial means rely on those public spaces, where they can hang out, relax, play sports, meet, connect, etc., free of charge. In particular, the need for sports facilities and conflict over their (inappropriate) use are increasing, as is noise pollution caused by skaters. Also, the increase in moped and souped-up car racing leads to more complaints about noise, road safety, gatherings, etc.

As of 20 October 2023, Ghent counted 2,490 homeless, including 633 children. This is an increase of 33% compared to the record on 30 October 2020. In the two weeks before the census day, 239 people spent at least one night in public spaces (Mertens et al., 2024).

Increased homelessness is more noticeable on the streets as well as in the city centre. Homeless people literally spend the night on the streets, sheltered under shop or government building awnings. They use public bathrooms for their personal hygiene and to use drugs, often leaving the place heavily soiled. It gives passers-by an unpleasant, sometimes unsafe feeling (City of Ghent Prevention Department for Safety, 2023).

Ghent nightlife is another very specific context where various behaviours and intentions on the part of visitors can give rise to problems and tensions. Examples include noise, public urination, litter and glass, verbal and physical aggression, sexual harassment, pickpockets, etc., often facilitated by excessive alcohol consumption and/or drug use. This can lead to feelings of insecurity, to tensions between partygoers and between partygoers, business owners and local residents (City of Ghent Prevention Department for Safety, 2023).

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

SDG 12 aims to take action in the area of sustainable consumption and production. Primarily by using natural resources efficiently and by reducing food surpluses. Waste, especially chemical waste, should be reduced wherever possible. Lastly, we can further promote sustainable procurement policies and sustainable practices in public procurement and within companies. We must also raise awareness about sustainable development. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 12

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) Ghent scores high on responsible consumption and production. We score well above the expected value¹⁴ and higher than the Flemish median. The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor.

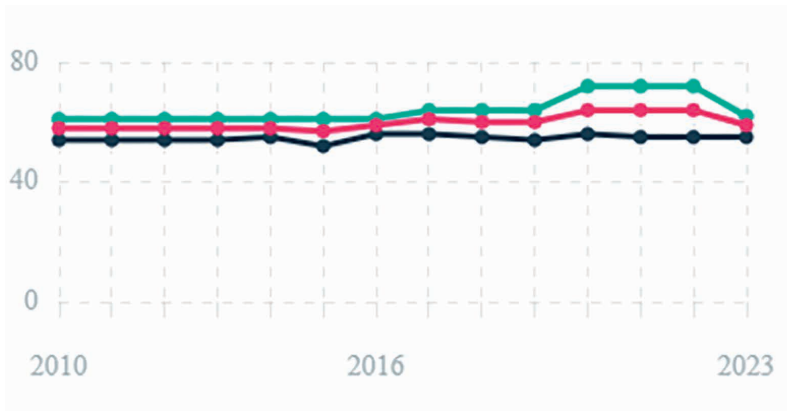
The selected indicators for measuring SDG 12 in the SDG Monitor are about 'Waste' with measurement points between 2013 and 2021 ([Total per capita waste](#), [Residual per capita waste](#), [Share intended for recycling](#)) and 'Acting environmentally consciously' with varying measurement points between 2014 and 2023 ([Acting environmentally conscious: by cycling](#), [Acting environmentally responsible: by walking](#), [Acting environmentally conscious: by limiting plastic](#), [Acting environmentally conscious: by reducing food discards](#), [Acting environmentally conscious: fair trade](#))

¹⁴ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.



In the SDG Monitor, an upward curve always stands for an improvement in a city's status. Therefore an upward curve means Ghent is well on its way to responsible consumption and production. A downward score implies the opposite. For SDG 12, the SDG Monitor shows a stable curve with increases since 2019 and then a decrease from 2022.

Chart 21 Evolution of the selected SDG over time

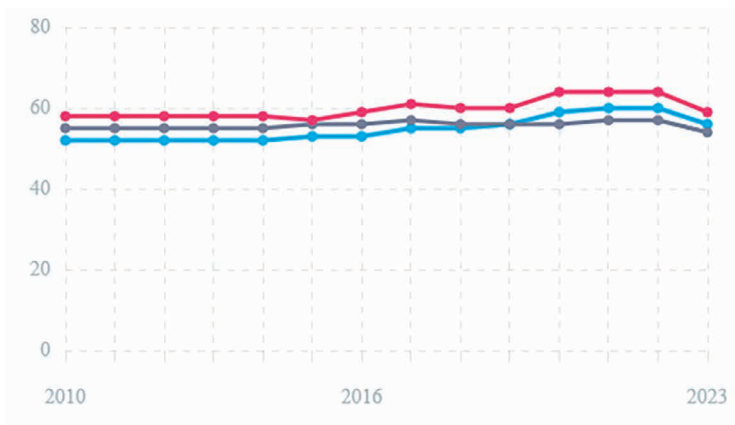


■ Waste
■ Environmentally conscious behavior
■ Average score for Ghent based on the underlying indicators

Source: SDG Monitor.

For SDG 12, Ghent shows a very similar course to major and regional cities and Flanders: stable to slightly increasing, but with a dip from 2022 onwards. Overall, the score for Ghent is slightly higher than both reference points.

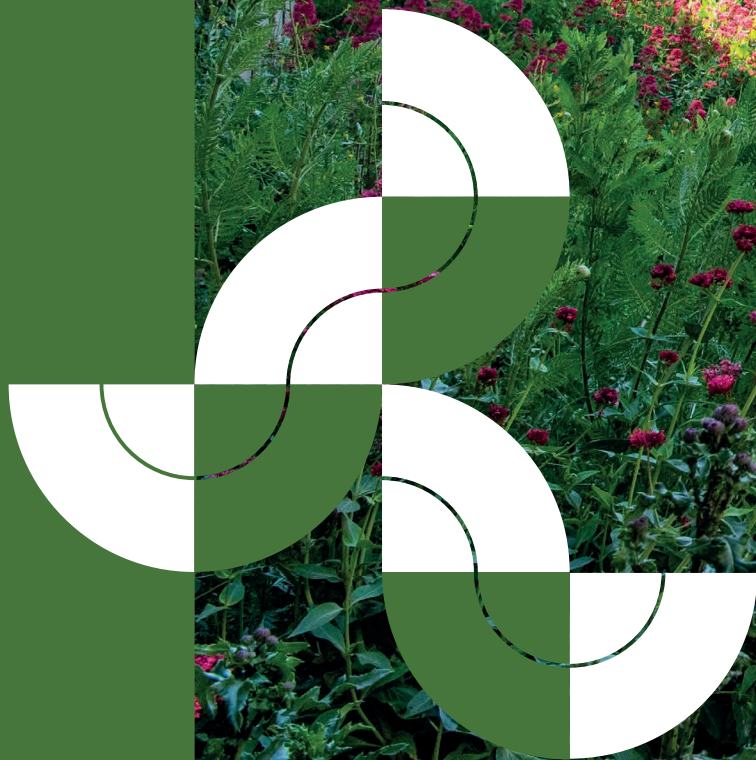
Chart 22 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



■ Flanders
■ Large and regional cities
■ Ghent

Source: SDG Monitor.

13 CLIMATE ACTION



SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact

Climate change and natural disasters pose dangers to people and the environment. In order to combat the impact of climate change, we must strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of people and their environment. SDG 13 states that this requires full integration of the climate focus into (inter)national policies. Greater awareness and support for climate action is also needed. This can be achieved through education and improving human and institutional capacity around climate information, mitigation and adaptation. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 13

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 13 is challenging. We score slightly lower than expected¹⁵ for Ghent and we are further away from the Flemish median.

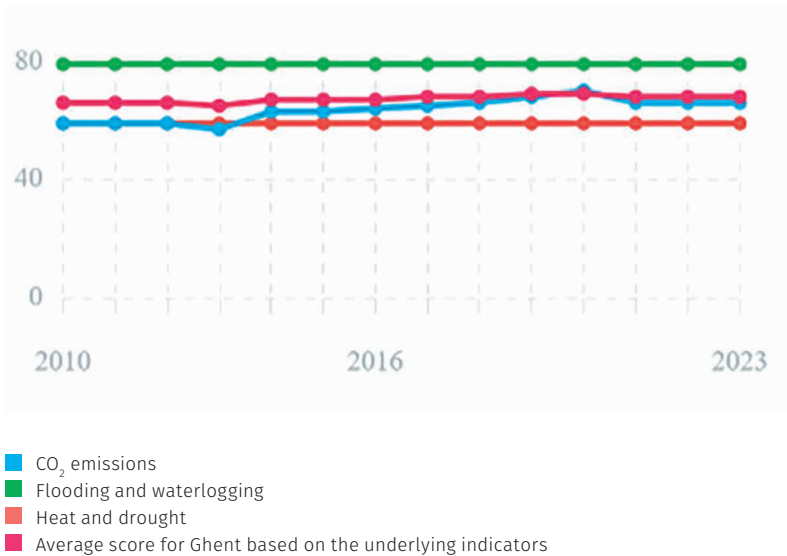
¹⁵ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.



SDG 13: TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT

The SDG Monitor shows a stable curve for SDG 13 for Ghent. The CO₂ emissions indicator shows the most movement, with a steady increase since 2013 and a decrease in 2021.

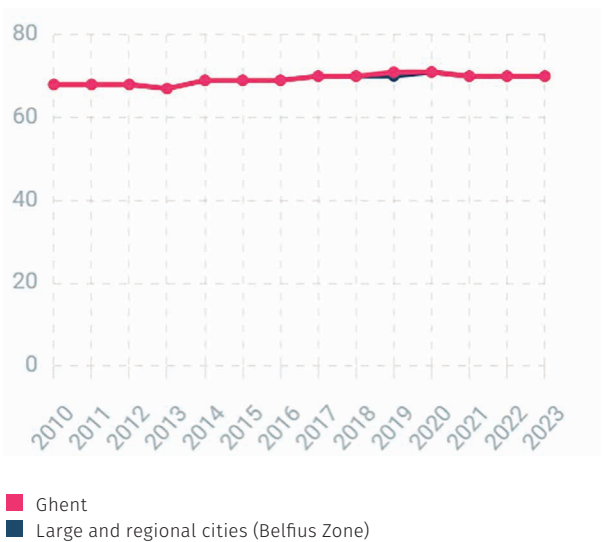
Chart 23 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

For SDG 12, Ghent shows a very similar trend to that of large and regional cities and Flanders: stable to slightly increasing, but with a decline starting in 2022. Overall, Ghent's score is slightly higher than both reference points.

Chart 24 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

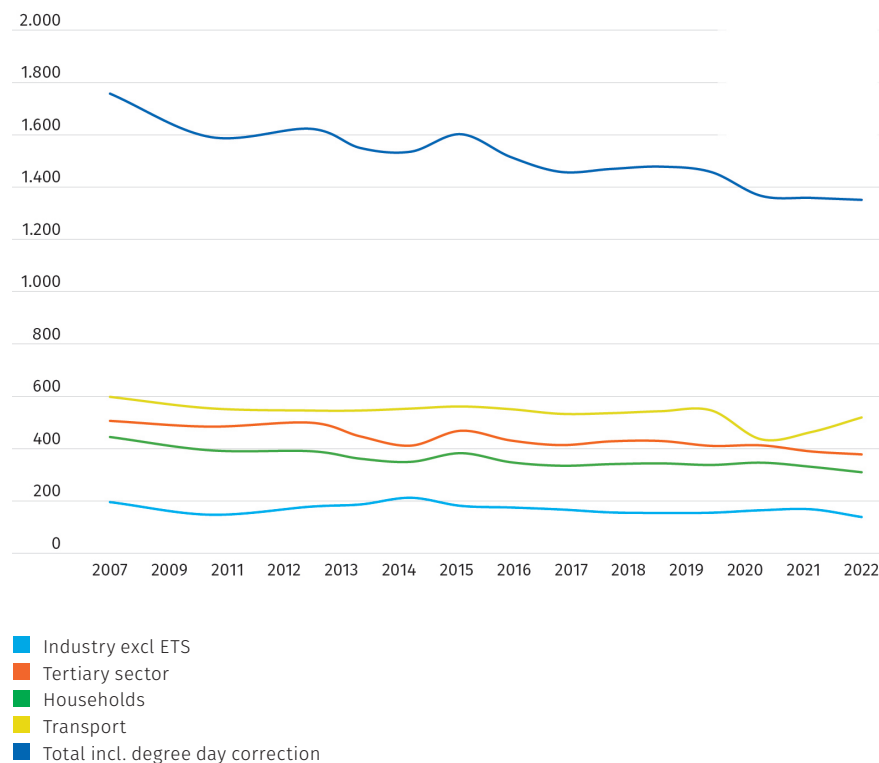
The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor and add the following comment:

The City of Ghent has its own CO₂ monitor that can be consulted at [Ghent in figures](#). Further info on the calculation of the CO₂ monitor can be found there. Between 2007 and 2022, we note a 23% CO₂ reduction. These figures also form the basis for reporting by the City of Ghent.

We note the following evolution per sector:

- > **Industry:** The non-ETS industry experienced a 29% drop in CO₂ emissions between 2007 and 2022. The 22 ETS companies in Ghent, including 5 electricity generators, account for 10,039 ktonnes of CO₂, 95% is generated by the steel industry. If we compare CO₂ emissions from industry (non-ETS and ETS combined) with the gross value added of the industrial sector, we note that the increase in production is also accompanied by an increase in CO₂ emissions, but the latter increases less in 2021 and 2022.
- > **Tertiary sector and households:** Despite a rising population, CO₂ emissions in the tertiary sector fell by 26% and in households by 31% between 2007 and 2022.
- > **Transport:** Despite a decrease in fuel consumption per kilometre due to more efficient vehicles, the number of vehicle kilometres continues to rise, keeping overall CO₂ emissions status quo.

Chart 25 CO₂ monitoring Ghent with degree day correction (kton CO₂), 2007-2022



15 LIFE
ON LAND



SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests and woodlands, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

SDG 15 focuses on the various threats facing life on land. We need to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of our ecosystems (freshwater and mountains). But we must also stop deforestation, desertification, land degradation and biodiversity loss. In addition, we must also end illegal trade in plant and animal species, we need a policy to control invasive alien species. Genetic resources must be used fairly. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 15

According to the SDG Monitor, SDG 15 represents a challenge for Ghent. We score lower than expected¹⁶ and are further away from the Flemish median than other major and regional cities. The SDG Monitor shows a stable curve for SDG 15 for Ghent, but sealing is increasing in Ghent.

The selected indicators for measuring SDG 15 in the SDG Monitor cover [the proportion \(%\) of total city/municipality surface area taken up by neighbourhood green space, district green space, urban green space and urban forest with measurement points in 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022](#), [The surface area of valuable ecotope compared to the total surface area](#) with 1 measurement point in 2020. And the [3-year change in forest surface area as a percentage of total municipality surface area](#) with measurement points in 2016, 2019 and 2022. In addition, the SDG Monitor also includes the sealing rate as indicator for measuring SDG 15 (measurement points between 2013 and 2022) and [erosion bottlenecks](#) (measurement point 2021).

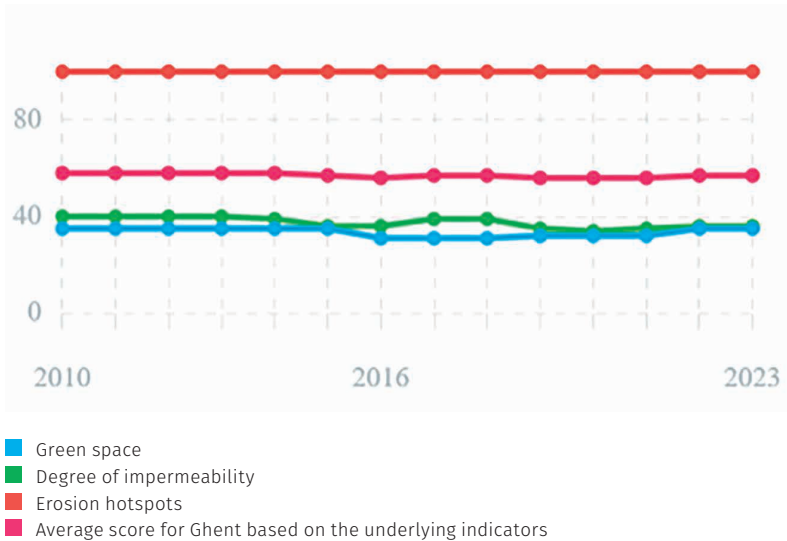
Ghent scores relatively low for green space surface area and also below the median in the SDG Monitor. Ghent scores just below what was expected for this component. The main reason for the lower-than-expected score is sealing. Here, Ghent scores very low compared to all other municipalities. Moreover, there is also a major difference with the expected value.

From our own analyses, we know that the high sealing rate in Ghent can be explained by the presence of the port.

¹⁶ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

The score for Ghent remains roughly the same over time.

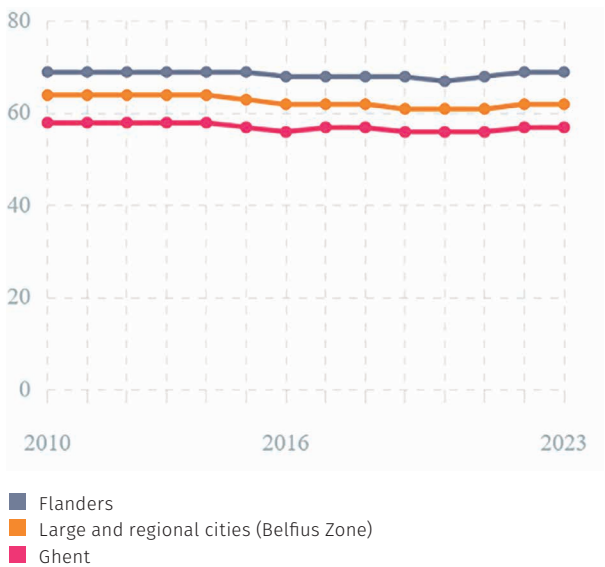
Chart 26 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

We note a similar trend for Ghent and in Flanders and major and regional cities. Yet the score for Ghent is lower than that for Flanders and major and regional cities.

Chart 27 Evolution of the selected SDG over time



Source: SDG Monitor.

The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor and add the following comments:

- > The City of Ghent has its own figures and its own green standards for public recreational green space, which point to progress. Our own figures provide no comparison.

Table 3 *Number of Ghent residents with access to green housing space and a neighborhood park within walking distance of their home*

| Year | Residents | 400m Neighborhood park |
|------|-----------|------------------------|
| 2019 | 261 957 | 45,5% |
| 2022 | 268 486 | 47,9% |

| Year | Residents | 150m green living space |
|------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 2019 | 261 957 | 39,5% |
| 2022 | 268 486 | 46,5% |

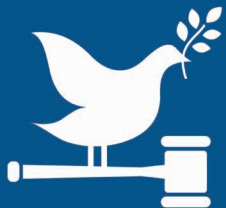
Source: City of Ghent

- > From the analyses, we can infer that nearly half of Ghent inhabitants have access to residential green space and a neighbourhood park within walking distance of their homes. The greatest deficits for residential green space and neighbourhood parks are mainly found in the (densely populated, heavily paved) inner city and the 19th-century belt. We consider deficits in 20th-century neighbourhoods and outlying areas as less of a priority to address, since residents there are more likely to own homes with large(r) gardens or have other forms of (non-public) open space, such as agricultural land.
- > We note the same picture for the capacity of neighbourhood parks. The capacity is mainly exceeded in many neighbourhood parks in the inner and centre cities.
- > As a historic industrial city, Ghent's centre experiences heavy pressure on open (green) space and quality greenery.
- > Over the past 20 years, we have made great efforts to protect and enhance existing green space and improve ecological quality, such as the designation of green poles in regional spatial implementation plans, completion of green poles, municipal RUP (Ruimtelijk Uitvoeringsplan-Spatial Destination Plan) green space, additional afforestation, etc.

- > We note a positive evolution in the surface area of (semi-)natural vegetation in Ghent. For forests, we observe a convincingly positive trend in terms of quantity. The qualitative evolution of forests in Ghent is less bright due to the loss of old forest.
- > The low score for SDG 15 is mainly due to the very poor score on the 'sealing degree'. Although there appears to be a slightly positive trend in recent years. If we look at sealing per inhabitant, Ghent scores well compared to other Flemish cities and municipalities. On the other hand we score very poorly on sealing speed (in m²/day)(Christiaens A. & Mollen F., 2024).



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Therefore, everyone should have equal access to justice. We must create effective, accountable and open institutions. We must end violence, specifically against children. This includes corruption, unwarranted financial flows, illegal arms trafficking and organised crime. In addition to strengthening legal systems and accountable institutions, representative decision-making is essential. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

Signals for SDG 16

According to the [SDG Monitor](#) SDG 16 is a challenge for Ghent. We score slightly lower than expected¹⁷ and far from the Flemish median.

The selected indicators for measuring SDG 16 in the SDG Monitor cover:

- > Safety: [Number of processed thefts and extortions divided by total population \(per 1,000 inhabitants\)](#), [Amount of processed damage to property divided by total population \(per 1,000 inhabitants\)](#), [Number of processed violent crimes divided by total population \(per 1,000 inhabitants\)](#), [Number of processed cheating crimes divided by total population \(per 1,000 inhabitants\)](#), [Number of processed drug-related crimes divided by total population \(per 1,000 inhabitants\)](#), [Number of other processed crimes divided by total population \(per 1,000 inhabitants\)](#), [Share of residents who often/always feel unsafe in the neighbourhood \(%\)](#), [Share of residents who have little trust in the police](#). Each time with multiple measurement points between 2010 and 2022.
- > Social fabric: [People in the neighbourhood want to help their neighbours \(% agree\)](#), [People in the neighbourhood can be trusted \(% agree\)](#), [Lots of contact with people in the neighbourhood \(% agree\)](#), [Feeling at home with people in the neighbourhood \(% agree\)](#). Each time with multiple measurement points between 2011 and 2023.

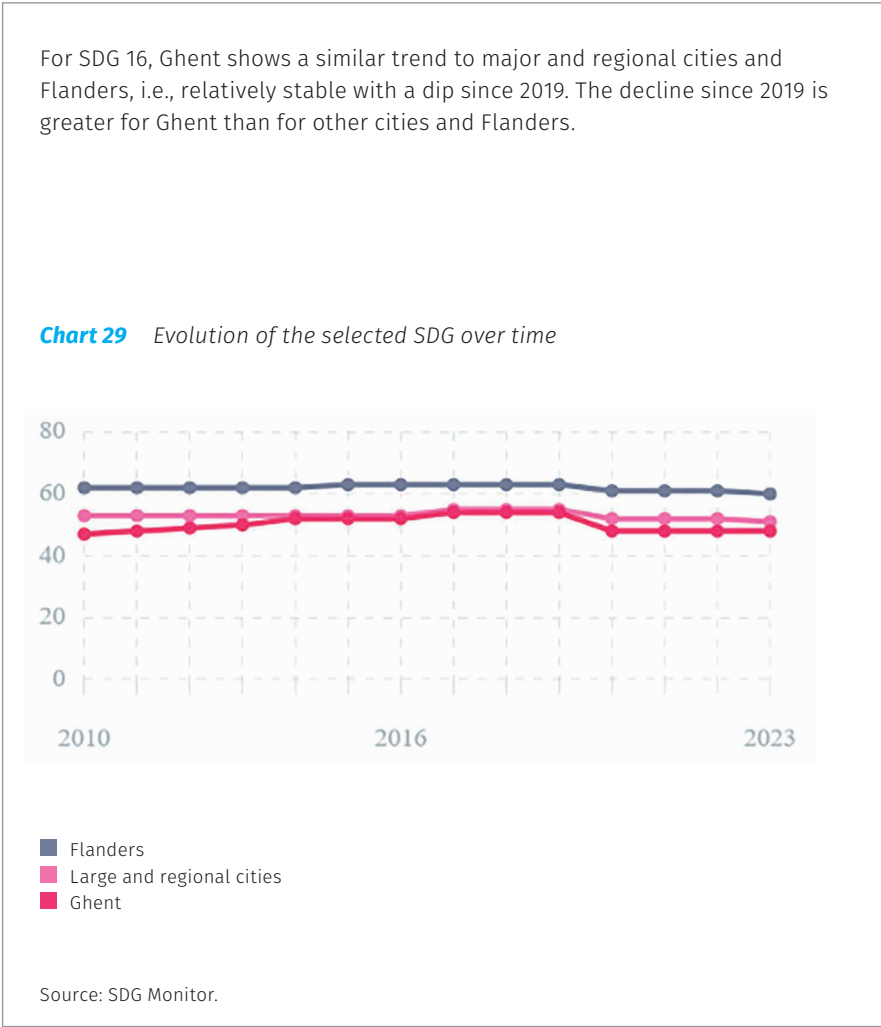
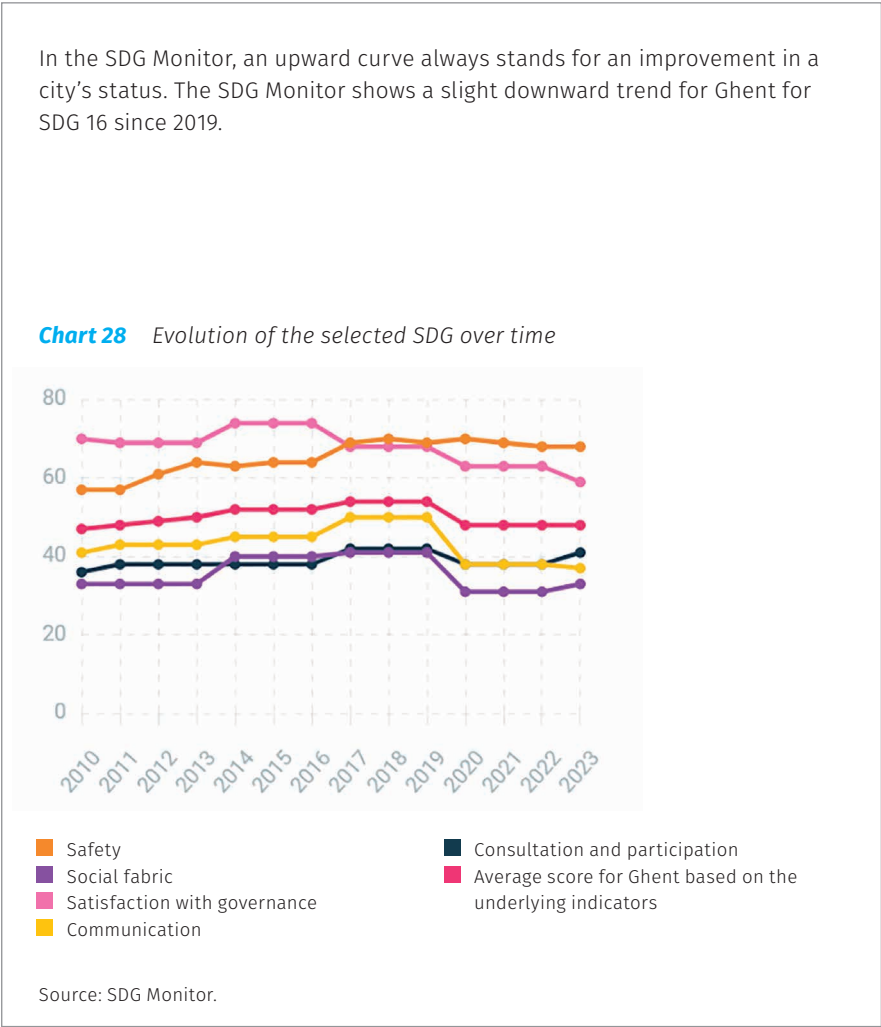
¹⁷ The difference with the expected value taking into account context factors such as median income, location of the city or municipality, age structure, surface area.

SDG 16: PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

- > Government: [Share of residents who are satisfied with front desk facilities in the municipality/city](#), [Share of residents who are satisfied with digital services in the municipality/city](#) (%), [Share of residents who are satisfied with household waste facilities \(%\)](#). Each time with multiple measurement points between 2011 and 2023.
- > Communication: [Share of residents who feel adequately informed about planned activities in and by the municipality/city](#), [Share of residents who feel adequately informed about decisions in and by the municipality/city](#), [Share of residents who feel adequately informed about initiatives in and by the municipality/city](#). Each time with multiple measurement points between 2011 and 2023. [Share of residents who feel that communication from the municipal/city government is clear and understandable \(agree %\)](#) with 2 measurement points from 2020 and 2023.
- > Consultation and participation: [Share of population indicating that local government makes sufficient efforts to know the wishes of the population](#) with measurement points between 2017 and 2023. [Share \(%\) of residents who have been actively improving something in their neighbourhood or city in the past year](#) with multiple measurement points between 2011 and 2023.



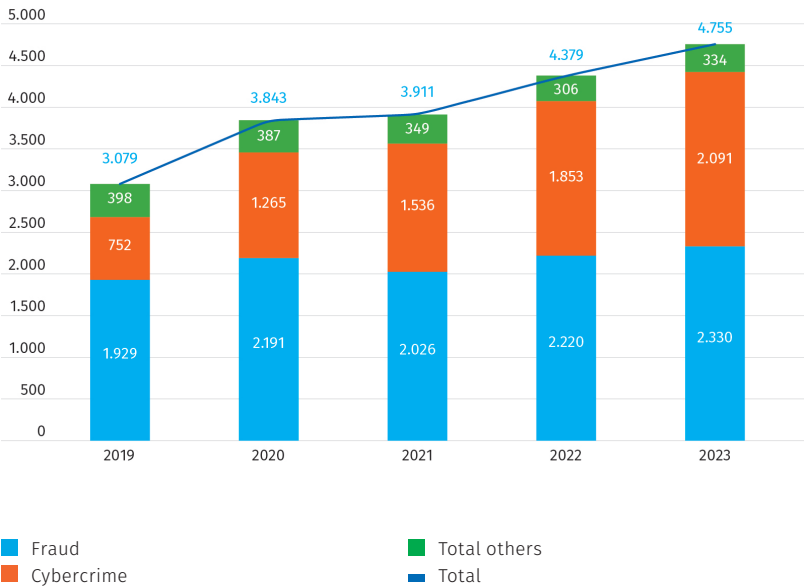
SDG 16: PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS



The domain experts with the City of Ghent follow the signals from the SDG Monitor and complement them for a balanced picture for Ghent:

- > The data in the SDG Monitor related to safety (Source: Province in figures) deviates from the data we use in Ghent. In our opinion, this has to do with the denominator used, i.e., residents (SDG Monitor) versus all Ghent users (incl. students, visitors, tourists, commuters, etc.). For example, in Ghent figures for 2023, we note 19% more recorded events.
- > Financial economic crimes are a current addition to the list of indicators, specifically IT crime and internet scams:

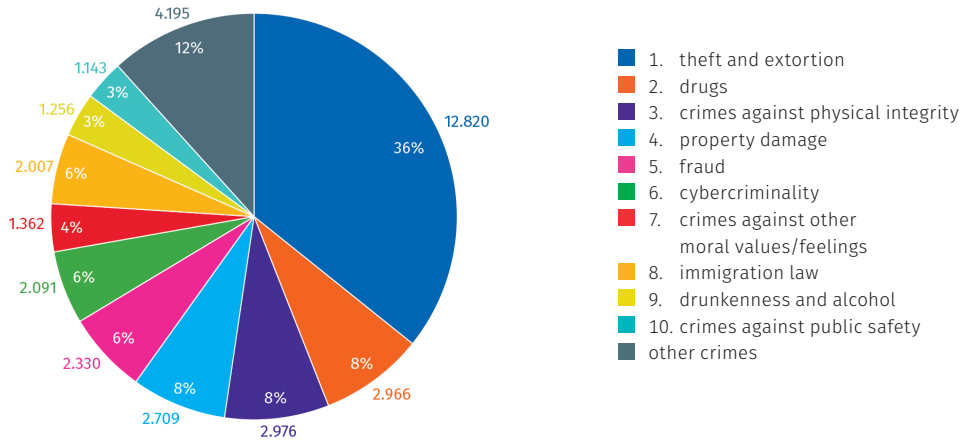
Graph 30 Economic and financial crimes, Ghent, 2019-2023



Source: (Federale Politie, 2024)

- > Based on the crime barometer, we note a 19% increase in processed offences in 2023 compared to 2013. The feeling of insecurity in the neighbourhood also increased by 4% in 2023 compared to 2011. Only trust in police improves, i.e., 19% more confidence in 2023 than in 2014.
- > The top 10 crimes with more than 1,000 recorded offences (together accounting for 88.3% of all offences in 2023), are similar in 2023 compared to 2019. There are noticeably fewer drug offences (from 12.2% to 8.3%), and more IT crimes (from 2.3% to 5.8%) (Federal Police, 2024).

Graph 31 Top 10 crimes (+ 1,000 incidents in 2023), Ghent, 2023



Source: (Federale Politie, 2024)

SDG 16: PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

In terms of services, we add the following:

- > Physical services: in 2023 and 2024, the City of Ghent conducted its own customer surveys around counter operations, both in the City Office (centre) and in the decentralised citizen affairs locations. There were more than 1,100 respondents. These figures provide another insight into the degree of satisfaction. The scores on several questions ('I easily found my way to the right counter', 'I got the right info', 'I knew how to take a ticket', 'The clerk was friendly') all score better than 4.5 on a five-point scale.
- > Digital services: Ghent is a pioneer in Flanders when it comes to proactive services. Certain services (e.g., free household bin bags, childcare discounts, Uitzendingskassas at reduced rates) are automatically granted to the most vulnerable citizens, without them having to take any action. For digital services, we are strongly committed to digital chains and building blocks. Within the digital ecosystem, we look at whether other governments have already developed certain building blocks.
- > In terms of participation, we note an increase from 2020 for active neighbourhood participants. Initiatives such as the 'neighbourhood budget' and 'samen aan zet' (Let's move together) are certainly at the root of this. The curve for consultation with residents shows a slight downward trend. The City of Ghent invests heavily in participation based on a tradition in [district-oriented work through district directors](#) but also by means of a [participation platform](#), residents' meetings, information sessions, etc.
- > Across all indicators, we note a decline in 2020, which may be related to the Covid period. From 2020, we note an upward trend for nearly all indicators, with the exception of 16C, i.e., satisfaction with local government. When we look at these indicators in detail, they are mainly about 'trust in local government' and 'satisfaction with front desk facilities'. The latter indicator is nuanced above.



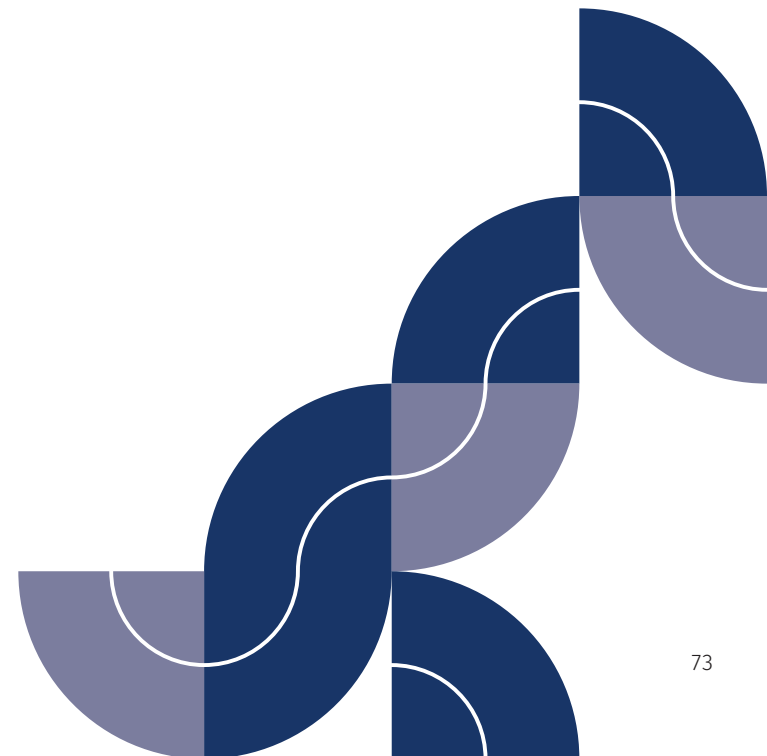
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



SDG 17: Strengthen implementation resources and revitalise global partnership for sustainable development

Cities can help to find financial resources for Global South countries. Effective partnerships can strengthen sustainable cooperation, mobilising knowledge and expertise in particular. This SDG and targets, adopted by the UN, can be found [here](#).

For SDG 17, we are unable to derive signals from the SDG Monitor: insufficient indicators fail to paint a picture for cities and towns in Flanders. Nevertheless, we can paint a picture for Ghent when it comes to a number of targets.



Ghent’s perspective on the targets for SDG 17

Target 17.2 Developed countries should fully fulfil their ODA commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to devote 0.7% of gross national income to Official Development Assistance for Developing Countries (ODA/GNI) and 0.15% to 0.20% development assistance to Least Developed Countries; ODA donors are encouraged to set a target for themselves to devote at least 0.2% of ODA to Least Developed Countries

Capacity released by the City of Ghent for international solidarity is high compared to other cities in Belgium (Verenging Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten, 2024). This is expressed both financially and in a strong professional team and the availability of a global home as a hotspot for local NGOs with global operations.

This Ghent operation contributes to national figures. Developed countries are committed to spending 0.7% of their gross national income on official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries. In the case of local governments, we are not referring to 0.7% because there is no such thing as a ‘gross Ghent income’. In order to enable a comparison between local governments, reference is often made to budget/capita. The City of Ghent spends more than 2 euros per citizen on global policy, thus contributing to the [GOLD report by PLATFORMA](#) - the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their national, EU and global associations – active in development cooperation. This argues for a target figure of 1 euro per inhabitant and, for major cities, a minimum of 1 full-time employee.

Gent Mondiaal runs a team of four staff members who focus on supporting civil society through policy work, venues, networking events and grant channels. In addition, there is close cooperation with Oxfam World Shop Ghent-Centre for, among others advice in the context of procurement policy, supporting entrepreneurs (e.g., through networking activities and providing expertise), actions, campaigns and events aimed at Ghent residents and Ghent users (students, people working in Ghent, tourists, etc.), such as the biennial Fair Fashion Festival.

Target 17.6 Strengthen North-South, South-South, regional and international trilateral cooperation on science, technology and innovation and facilitate access to it; and expand knowledge sharing in accordance with mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, particularly at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism

The data below from 2022 and 2023 paint a picture about the strengthening of North-South cooperation funded by the City of Ghent. A total of €197,016 was spent on outgoing grants for projects in cooperation with Global South countries.

We have no data on South-South collaborations.

Table 3 Cooperation projects with Global South 2022 - 2023

| Cooperation projects with Global South 2022 in industry, agriculture, health, energy, emergency relief | |
|--|----------------|
| Africa | €22,985 |
| Central/South America | €4,000 |
| Central/South Asia | €18,000 |
| Ukraine | €40,000 |
| Total | €84,985 |

| Cooperation projects with Global South 2023 in agriculture, industry, education, health, water, emergency relief | |
|--|-----------------|
| Africa | €72,946 |
| Central/South America | €6,190 |
| Central/South Asia | €32,895 |
| Total | €112,031 |

We have no data on South-South collaborations.

Target 17.10 Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organisation, also through the completion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda.

The City of Ghent has a long policy tradition when it comes to fair trade. We not only set an example with our procurement policy, but also create a climate in which entrepreneurs, knowledge institutions and civil society organisations invest in fair trade. In 2005, Ghent became the first Belgian 'Fair Trade City'; since then, we have been increasingly emphasising fair trade. For a sustainable procurement policy, in recent years we have been looking towards food (product segments such as fair wine, coffee, fruit juice, bananas), electronics and a specific choice for textiles. As a textile city, this is embedded in our DNA, on a global level we see a production process that could be improved. We promote fair raw materials (with a Fairtrade label) and engage in dialogue with our suppliers (e.g., workwear) on transparency in the production process.

The Gent Fair Trade project is making an impact. This project started in 2014 as a collaboration between the City of Ghent and Oxfam World Shop Ghent-Centre to put fair trade more firmly on the map. This collaboration allows us to combine and strengthen the knowledge, capacity and experience at both organisations, and we can at the same time make connections between Ghent citizens, civil society and the private sector.

We make a clear choice to work around specific product segments; food, ICT and textiles with a view to specialisation and a clear public outreach. But we consider to what extent criteria involving human rights and fair trade are relevant to be included as award criteria in all specifications. Besides the specific product segments, we also pay special attention to natural stone in our procurement policy, through our commitment in the TruStone partnership. In our pilot project 'socially responsible workwear', we developed a set of guidelines for buyers for the purchase of workwear. We published the results in the [toolbox socially responsible workwear](#).

Recently, we also started looking closely at fair ICT. A study of the issues and opportunities surrounding (sustainable) electronics was conducted in 2021. We then launched a collaboration with [Electronics Watch](#). Today, they monitor every ICT purchase by District09 and the City of Ghent in terms of working conditions and human rights throughout the entire production chain. They monitor the supply chain and follow up the remediation of possible violations.

Through actions, campaigns and events, we involve Ghent citizens, users of Ghent, entrepreneurs and civil society in our efforts around fair trade, and in particular, fair fashion. The Ghent Textile Platform for Sustainable Fashion brings these various stakeholders together twice a year around this topic. The biennial [Fair Fashion Festival](#), in cooperation with *De Centrale* and the *Industriemuseum*, puts Ghent on the international map of (fair) fashion lovers. The 2024 edition drew in more than 3,600 visitors.

On the initiative of European Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, the European Commission presented an award for the first time in 2018 to identify local governments that value fair trade, i.e., the 'EU Cities for Fair and Ethical Trade Award'. The City of Ghent won this first edition. It implicitly made us the European capital of fair trade, a title we proudly wear. We are among the top European companies and this also translates at the Flemish level: in 2019, we were named 'Fairest in Flanders' by the *FairTradeGemeente* campaign, and in 2021 we received the Fair ICT Award for firmly embedding the sustainable ICT procurement policy within a broader policy framework.

Target 17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries.

Today, the City of Ghent is a member of some 50 different international and European networks. Our membership is a deliberate choice, which we evaluate regularly. The lion's share of networks are theme-based.

Examples of partnerships and networks under the sustainability theme include '[ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability](#)' (the leading global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions determined to build a sustainable future), [Climate Alliance](#) (Europe's largest city network on climate action), the [Covenant of Mayors](#) (aiming to be climate-neutral by 2050), the [Mayors for Peace network](#) (global network around peace and the fight against nuclear weapons), [Civitas](#) (international network of cities for sustainable transport), and [LUCI](#) (association of cities on sustainable lighting development), [ECCAR](#) (European coalition of cities against racism), International Fair Trade Town Network (international network of Fair Municipalities).

Depending on the scope of these networks, it also cooperates with countries from the Global South. For example, Climate Alliance works closely with indigenous groups in the Amazon forest. And LUCI supports the economic and social development of cities in the Global South through partnerships under the LightLinks initiative that supports the implementation of street lighting. From an international policy perspective, much attention is structurally paid to two 'city-wide' networks in which Ghent takes an active role: Eurocities and the Global Parliament of Mayors, where SDG themes are also on the agenda. During Ghent's Eurocities presidency in 2017-2018, Ghent put the SDGs prominently on the table.

The City of Ghent is also involved in a number of communities and initiatives promoting the SDGs, such as the EU Fair & Ethical Trade award, ESDN (European Sustainable Development Network) and the UN SDG community. During the UN SDG Global Festival (Bonn, 2018), Ghent received an SDG Award for the campaign that promoted the SDGs (People) to the Belgian population. Ghent was the first city in Belgium to be awarded the title of SDG ambassador by the federal government, as a result of the first SDG actions launched in Ghent in 2016 (VNCityTalk).

Since 2016, the City of Ghent no longer enters into direct partnerships with local governments in the Global South. The impact of such cooperation is seen as too low. The focus is on working with local governments and strengthening their capacity by building international networks and collaborating on projects that strengthen a local government on a particular topic. This is how City of Ghent takes on an important role in [RUAF](#) when it comes to exchanging knowledge and expertise on a local food policy. Several cities worldwide (Quito, Tegucigalpa, Toronto, Colombo, etc.) take part, where private partners can and should also play a role. In addition, Ghent Global

Associations are encouraged to establish partnerships in the Global South aimed at introducing sustainable change in that area. The City of Ghent gives associations the opportunity to apply for subsidies for this purpose twice a year.

By winning the Fair and Ethical Trade Award in 2018, we also had the opportunity to initiate a collaboration with a partner in the Global South. This would become Sahnewal in India, with the focus on fair textiles. This short-term project will be documented by the International Trade Centre, as an example for other actors and local governments worldwide.

The City of Ghent resolutely opts for fair trade between continents (see also SDG 12 'Responsible consumption and production'). In this way, we contribute to goals around trade, but also look to a new trading system where producers and suppliers get a fair price for products or services provided.

Target 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private, and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.

In Ghent, we view collaboration as a key to innovation. The city recognises that the challenges we face cannot be solved by any one organisation or sector. Ghent opts for an open innovation strategy and an open network model to drive progress in urban ecosystems. As a result, the role of the city is shifting to that of solution provider. Instead of coming up with its own solutions using only internal resources, Ghent seeks solutions by using both internal and external innovative knowledge.

Who is Ghent working with?

- > Educational and knowledge institutions: These institutions are important partners for knowledge and methodology. They focus on socially relevant research and teaching, and often collaborate on complex issues through 'living labs'. In addition, its 80,000 students and researchers are a valuable source of talent and new knowledge for the future.
- > Citizens: Ghent involves citizens as users and critical voices. They are not only the end users of the solutions, but also producers of new ideas and services.

Initiatives such as citizen budgets and ‘citizen science’ encourage citizen involvement in urban challenges.

- > Companies: We view companies as crucial partners for innovation. Ghent collaborates with both start-ups and established companies to develop solutions to societal challenges, for example through the Ghent Economic Board.
- > Other authorities: Ghent is working with Flemish and European authorities to leverage subsidies and cooperation. The North Sea Port District was established in 2022. This cross-border network with Ghent as its founder, among others, aims to enhance the liveability and appeal of this area. Sustainability is one of the guiding principles. This strengthens innovative thinking within the city and provides opportunities to promote technology and digital transformation.

Through these broad collaborations, Ghent is creating [an open network of knowledge and innovation](#), through which the city is taking concrete steps in the transition to a sustainable city.

Target 17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement GDP, and support statistical capacity building in developing countries.

With the drafting of an annual sustainability report, the City of Ghent has contributed to measuring progress in the area of sustainability. The City of Ghent signed NYC’s Voluntary Local Review (VLR) Declaration at the end of 2020. This makes Ghent part of the growing international community that annually monitors the SDGs in their city. We do this through our sustainability reports. In 2020, we published a start-up report, a picture of the city for all 17 SDGs. We end this cycle with this final report in 2025 in function of reporting: the focus of the start-up report will be resumed in order to take a closer look at Ghent’s developments in terms of sustainability.

Between the first and final report, we highlighted one of the pillars of sustainable development every year, through some ten inspiring initiatives initiated in Ghent. For instance, in 2021 the focus was on ‘People’, in 2022 we highlighted ‘Prosperity’ and in 2023 it was all about the ‘Planet’. In each report, we included SDG 16 (‘Peace’) and 17 (‘Partnerships’) as common threads.

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