



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS

# Tracking investment to safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

Results of the 2020 UIS  
Survey on Expenditure on  
Cultural and Natural Heritage  
(SDG Indicator 11.4.1)





## UNESCO

The constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was adopted by 20 countries at the London Conference in November 1945 and entered into effect on 4 November 1946. The Organization currently has 195 Member States and 11 Associate Members.

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## Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 11.4.1 measures expenditure on cultural and natural heritage and is the first cultural indicator developed for the Agenda 2030. Target 11.4 explicitly calls on countries to *"strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage"* and data for Indicator 11.4.1 is one step on the way there.

In 2015, the UN recognized the role of culture as an enabler and driver for sustainable development. Culture is mentioned in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda and several targets reference culture and heritage. In addition to Target 11.4, Target 4.7 advocates *"for promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."* Target 8.9 calls on countries to *"devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products,"* and Target 12(b) promotes the value of sustainable tourism.

The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) developed the Indicator 11.4.1 which is defined as the *"total per capita expenditure on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by source of funding (public, private), type of heritage (cultural, natural) and level of government (national, regional and local/municipal)."* The data available for the first time in this report are the result of a survey conducted between June 2020 and February 2021.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 62 countries responded to the UIS questionnaire. However, this report is based on analysis of the 29 countries able to provide sufficient data to calculate the indicator. Of the 33 countries for which data could not be used, 13 indicated that they did not collect these data. The UIS was not able to use the data received from the remaining 20 countries due to incompleteness, inadequate data coverage, or confidentiality or data quality issues.

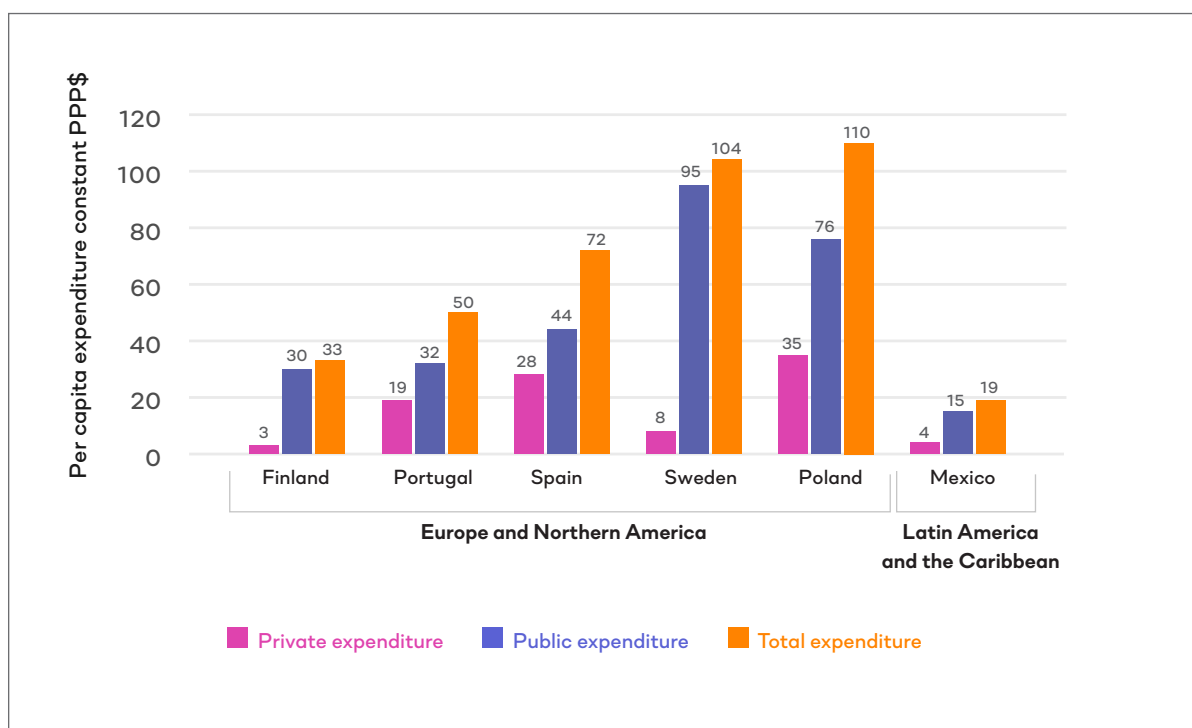
Going forward, the UIS plans to develop a strategy to support countries in data reporting to improve the response rate. Before launching the next data collection exercise, the UIS will consult with countries and key experts to better understand the challenges faced in completing the questionnaire. The UIS will also launch a series of webinars to guide Member States through the survey process and refine survey instruments to facilitate data reporting.

## First survey results

The following analysis of Indicator 11.4.1 represents **all SDG regions and all levels of development**. Almost half of the countries analysed (14) were from Europe and Northern America followed by 17% (5) from Latin America and the Caribbean and 14% (4) from Northern Africa and Western Asia. The remaining SDG regions accounted for 21% of countries analysed with three countries from Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, two from sub-Saharan Africa, and one from Central and Southern Asia. No country from Oceania reported data. Half of the 29 countries reported data for 2019, while most others provided data for 2018.

**Figure 1** shows the six countries that were able to report **total public and private expenditure** on cultural and natural heritage. Of the five countries from Europe and Northern America, Poland reported the highest per capita total expenditure on cultural and natural heritage of PPP\$ 110, followed by Sweden at PPP\$ 104, and Spain at PPP\$ 72. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico reported total expenditure on cultural heritage of PPP\$ 19 per capita.

**FIGURE 1. SDG 11.4.1 Total per capita expenditure on cultural and natural heritage, constant PPP\$, 2019**

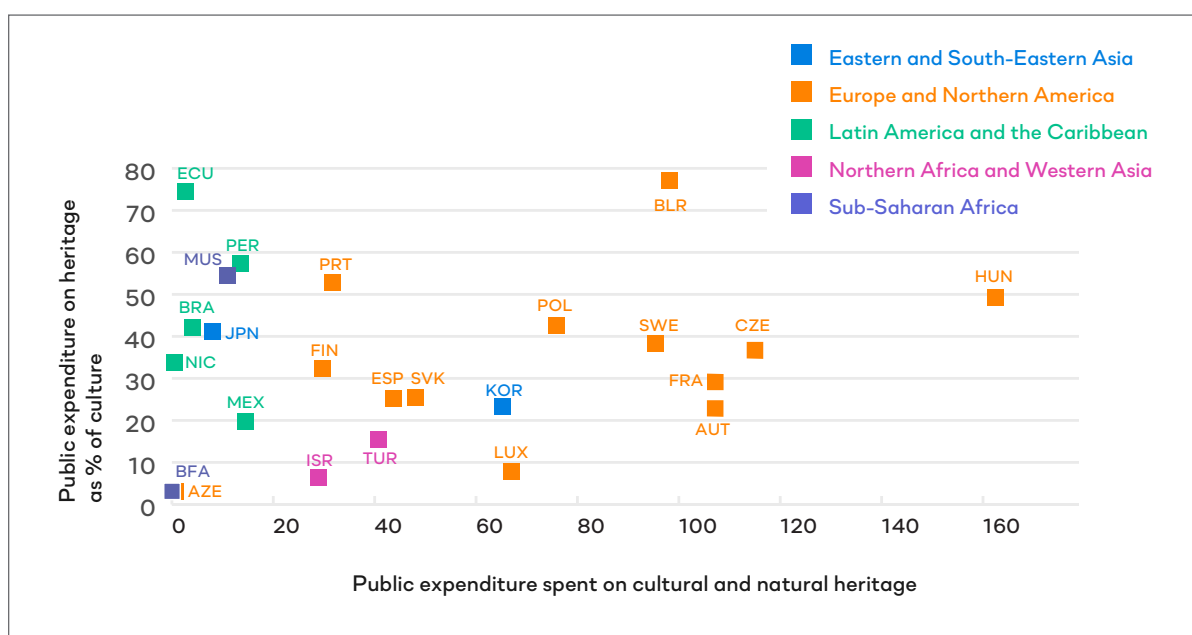


All indicators are in PPP\$ at constant price 2017

When considering only **public expenditure on heritage**, 28 of the 29 countries analysed were able to report data. Countries from Europe and Northern America represented half of the countries reporting data during this first round of data collection and they spent on average PPP\$ 75 per capita from public sources to protect heritage in 2019. Expenditure ranged a low of PPP\$ 6 per capita in Moldova to PPP\$ 162 per capita in Hungary.

This analysis also considers **public expenditure on heritage in the context of all public spending on cultural and natural activities** such as visual and performance arts, books, interactive media and creative design. Specifically, **Figure 2** compares public expenditure on heritage against public spending on all cultural and natural activities and finds a wide range of outcomes within each SDG region in both the absolute expenditure and the proportion spent on heritage alone. The five countries from Latin America and the Caribbean spent less than PPP\$ 20 per capita on heritage. However, spending on heritage as a proportion of public spending on all culture ranges from a high of 75% in Ecuador, to 20% in Mexico. In Northern Africa and Western Asia, while public expenditure on cultural and natural heritage was higher overall, for example at PPP\$ 41 per capita in Turkey and PPP\$ 29 per capita in Israel, the proportion of spending devoted to heritage compared to all spending on culture was less than 15%. In sub-Saharan Africa, public expenditure on heritage represented PPP\$ 11 per capita for Mauritius, or 55% of public spending in culture. For Burkina Faso the figures were less than PPP\$ 1 and 3%, respectively. In Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Japan reported only PPP\$ 4 per capita spent on heritage, which accounted for 42% of all spending on culture. By contrast, in the Republic of Korea, expenditure on heritage amounted to PPP\$ 65 per capita but only constituted 23% of public spending devoted to all cultural activities.

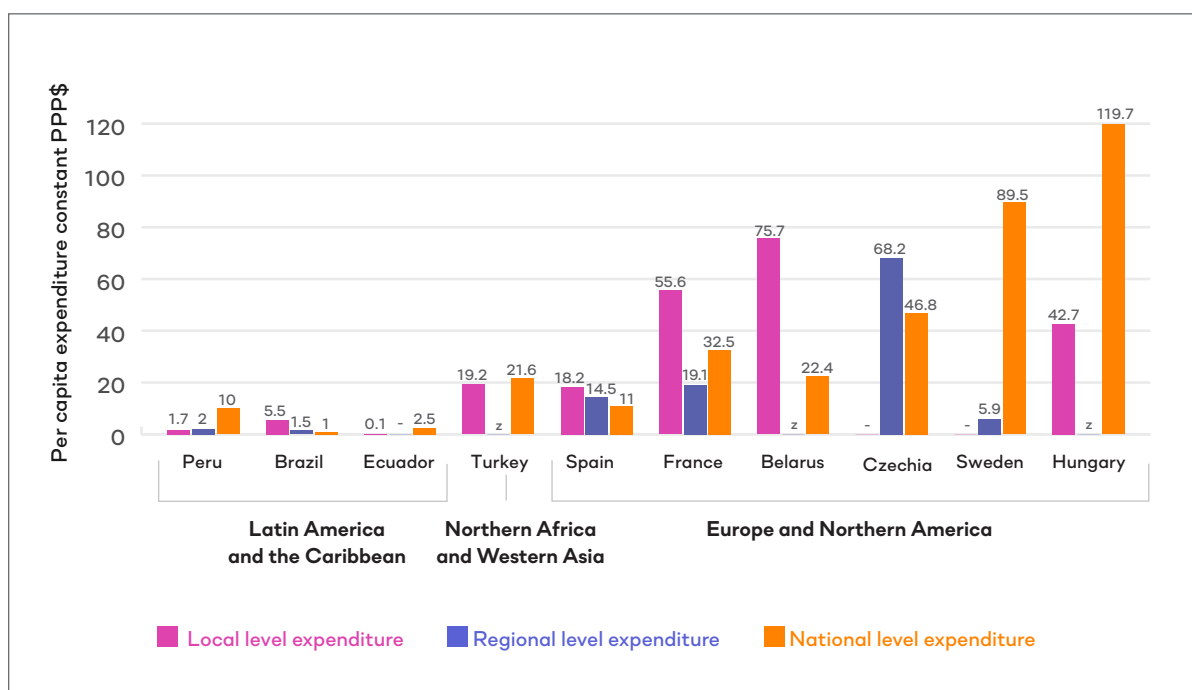
**FIGURE 2. SDG 11.4.1 Total public per capita expenditure on cultural and natural heritage, constant PPP\$, 2019**



All indicators are in PPP\$ at constant price 2017

Data on **public expenditure by level of government** showed that Member States are better able to identify public expenditure on cultural and natural heritage at the national or federal level compared to regional and local levels of government. Less than half of responding countries identified local government expenditure, illustrating the lack of existing structure for compiling the data at this level. However, based on available data, **Figure 3** shows that expenditures on cultural and natural heritage were higher at local level/municipal levels compared to national level for Brazil, Belarus, France, Turkey and Spain highlighting the importance of municipalities in preserving heritage.

**FIGURE 3. SDG 11.4.1 Share of expenditure on cultural and natural heritage by level of government, constant PPP\$, 2019**



All indicators are in PPP\$ at constant price 2017

**General notes**

- All indicators are in PPP\$ at constant price 2017
- Z: Country does not have a regional government structure
- The following reported partial figures: Azerbaijan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Czechia, Ecuador, Finland, France, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden
- Figures for Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Czechia, Israel, Nicaragua, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, and Spain refer to cultural heritage only
- Figures for Spain correspond to 2017 while figures for Austria, Belarus, Czechia, France, Hungary, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden, Mexico, and Turkey correspond to 2018
- For Ecuador, Finland, Mexico, Nicaragua and Sweden, figures do not include local government
- Figures for Burkina Faso, Czechia, and Japan do not include regional and local level of government
- Figures for Brazil, Burkina Faso, Czechia, Finland, Nicaragua, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden include only direct expenditure
- Figures for Republic of Moldova do not include libraries and archives activities
- Figures for France do not include zoos, aquaria and botanical gardens, natural habitat, marine ecosystems, sanctuaries, reservoirs, urban parks, etc.;
- For Spain, public expenditure on natural heritage is not included
- Figures for the Republic of Korea and Spain do not include local net transfers.
- Due to the use of UN Division Population data, the results may differ with official national data.

## Challenges in collecting data

As it was the first time collecting data for SDG 11.4.1, several countries highlighted reporting challenges.

- 1. Multiple data sources required coordination between ministries.** Due to the combination of cultural and natural heritage in the indicator, coordination was required between ministries of environment or other entities involved in natural preservation, and cultural heritage authorities, to gather information and consolidate the figures.
- 2. Lack of disaggregated data.** Separating cultural and natural heritage by public and private expenditure was not possible for some Member States. Evaluating public expenditure on heritage requires government expenditure to be further disaggregated by the Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG) or a national equivalent. In addition, a centralized information system compiling the data from all levels of government from local to national and regional (when applicable) was necessary to calculate this indicator. This system may not be available in all countries.
- 3. Data on private funding and expenditure often not available.** Just half of the 14 countries in Europe and Northern America reported data on private expenditure on heritage, demonstrating that challenges in compiling data on private expenditure exist at all levels of development. Many countries lack a mechanism for gathering such data. Private expenditure covers a wide range of data from national and international sources. International funding from Official Development Aid is relatively simple to identify and, at the national level, household expenditure surveys usually track expenses such as entrance fees for cultural heritage sites, parks or museum entries. The challenge, however, is tracking private expenditure related to the preservation of privately owned heritage buildings not identifiable in administrative records or survey results.

## Beyond financial statistics

Preserving cultural and natural heritage is a multifaceted and complex undertaking with many benefits to society that extend beyond what can be identified by expenditure. Looking at only the financial aspect of heritage preservation provides a partial view of the value of heritage in society. It is important to recognize that public and private investment in protecting cultural and natural heritage needs to be complemented with other quantitative and qualitative data describing how countries conserve their heritage – and the benefits accrued to the population. For example, many voluntary workers employed in heritage activities would not be taken into account in public or private spending. How should their work be valued?



In addition, local context matters. Varied museum funding systems may explain some of the differences in public expenditure on culture. UNESCO estimates that there are around 95,000 museums, with funding ranging from government sources to private philanthropy. Many heritage activities depend on entrance fees while others are free, relying on donations and government support. Further, other activities provided by museums such as educational programming and their interaction within local communities, form an important component of heritage preservation.

Finally, expenditure on heritage preservation is proportionate to the number and type of protected heritage sites. National legislation on heritage preservation also influences expenditure by defining constraints, obligations, rules and measures in conserving historical buildings as well as sites of cultural and natural significance.

## Impact of COVID-19

In April 2020, the International Council of Museums studied the impact of COVID-19 on museums. Results showed that during the first wave of lockdowns in 2020, 95% of museums around the world were closed, and 89% of UNESCO World Heritage sites were fully or partially closed. In addition, border closures resulted in a dramatic decrease in international tourism, and the revenue this brings to museums, natural parks and archeological sites. While some national museums received public support throughout the pandemic, private museums, dependent on entrance fees and philanthropy, had fewer ways to address revenue shortfalls. Further, museums that re-opened faced additional expenses to comply with sanitary measures, for example the introduction of a thermometer scanner in the Vatican museums. At the same time, social distancing measures and capacity constraints also resulted in a reduction of revenues.

Nevertheless, the crisis became a catalyst for innovation as many museums transitioned to online shops and virtual tours, when they had the resources and capacity, to keep contact with the population. However only 5% of Museums in Africa and Small Island Developing States were able to provide this service (UNESCO, 2021).

Tracking the impact of COVID-19 on public spending on heritage is essential but depends on data reporting at a time when the pandemic impeded countries' ability to collect data. Only half of countries were able to report data for 2019. Therefore, additional data collections will be necessary to track the impact of COVID-19 on public expenditure on cultural and natural heritage.

## Moving forward with support for Member States

In July 2021, the UIS will organize a meeting with countries and selected international agency/ organization representatives to share best practices for collecting data and to identify compilation issues. A second data collection cycle is planned for 2021 and to support countries during this second wave, in September 2021, the UIS is planning five webinars to provide instructions on the completion of the survey and guidance on compilation.

## Additional resources

**UIS database: SDG 11.4.1 Results and detailed metadata under the section culture**

<http://data.uis.unesco.org>

**UIS Initial launch of the SDG Indicator 11.4.1 Survey on cultural and natural heritage expenditure** <http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/initial-launch-sdg-indicator-11-4-1-survey-cultural-and-natural-heritage-expenditure>

**UIS Web page on SDG 11.4.1**

<http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/sustainable-development-goal-11-4>

**UIS glossary for culture terms**

<http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary>

**UNESCO The Tracker Culture and Covid-19, Impact & Response Tracker, Issue 2, 22 April 2020**

[https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/issue\\_2\\_en\\_culture\\_covid-19\\_tracker-4.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/issue_2_en_culture_covid-19_tracker-4.pdf)

**UNESCO The Tracker Culture and Public Policy, Special Issue, April 2021**

<https://en.unesco.org/news/tracker-culture-public-policy-special-issue>

**UNESCO Museums**

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/museums>

**UNESCO Online Debate Reflections on the future of museums, 18th March 2021**

<https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-brings-museums-world-together-reflect-their-future>

**UNESCO World Heritage Convention**

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/118/>





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