

Policy Matters



Your weekly digest of policy reports that **matter**.
Edited by [Toby Green](#) and [Gary Price](#) of *Policy Commons*.

What's new in our *Global Think Tanks* module?

Mariupol: "The hope left us"

[This report by international human rights foundation Global Rights Compliance](#) publishes evidence of Russian and pro-Russian forces using starvation as a method of warfare against Ukrainian civilians during their eighty-five-day siege of Mariupol City in 2022. The investigation utilized cutting-edge, open-source research, analyzing data collected between May 2022 and February 2024. It looked at over 1.5 billion square meters of satellite imagery, photographs, videos, official public statements, and other digital data, including the [Eyes on Russia Map](#).

Political trust and confidence in the UK

The outgoing UK Parliament has been turbulent and challenging. Two Prime Ministers have been brought down. Parliament has had to wrestle with getting Brexit "done," the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian invasion. So what does the public think? [This report, prepared by Sir John Curtis, Britain's leading psephologist, looks at political trust and confidence during this Parliament compared with others from the 1970s onwards.](#)

Migration: one in every sixty-nine of us is displaced

At a time when many countries are tightening their borders, [UNHCR's reports](#) that the number of displaced persons due to persecution, conflict, human rights violations, and disturbed public order has doubled over the past decade to 1.5% of the world's population. An [accompanying dataset](#) has 70 years' historical data.

G7 discusses more sanctions to choke Russia's military effectiveness

Ukrainian authorities are publicizing the components of numerous weapon units to show that Russia circumvents sanctions through evasion networks. [This paper, discussed by G7 leaders at their recent meeting](#), proposes further measures and sanctions to choke the Russian military-industrial complex.

Spending on nuclear weapons surged in 2023

[In its annual appraisal of spending on nuclear weapons](#), The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons reports a 13% surge last year, to a total of \$91 billion. They also note that the companies that build these weapons spent \$118 million lobbying in the US and France and a further \$6 million funding research in think tanks.

YouTube, WhatsApp and TikTok ahead of X/Twitter as news channels

An astonishing 31% of us get our news from YouTube, according to the latest [Digital News Report](#) from Reuters Institute of Journalism. Elections boost our appetite for news, but the overall trend for news consumption is still down.

US ranks last in global cooperation

Last week, we shared news of the UN Secretary-General's report on progress towards the SDGs. This week, [SDSH released their assessment](#). SDG targets related to food and land systems are particularly off track. They include a new Index of country support for and engagement with the UN system: Barbados, the US.

What's new in our *North American City Reports* module?

Boston's Gross City Product: post-pandemic recovery

In 2023, [Boston continued its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic](#), showing signs of both resiliency and settling into a post-pandemic new normal. Breaking down real GCP by industry, transportation and warehousing, accommodation and food services, and arts, the highest real GCP growth rate in 2022 was in entertainment and recreation.

What's new in our *World Cities* module?

Understanding how big cities prosper

Very little is understood about how the economic performance of G7 cities affects their national economies. For the first time in [this report](#), it's shown how the underperformance of the UK's secondary cities explains the prosperity gap that exists between the UK and the G7's top performers, the US, France, and Germany.

What's new in our *Public Health and Social Care* module?

Cass Report on gender identity services criticized

In April, we drew your attention to the [Cass Report](#), a review of gender identity services for children in the UK. At the time, it triggered a significant media reaction. Now, a large group of academics from across the world [have published a critical appraisal](#), citing methodological flaws and unsupported claims.

Blue Zones: lifestyle choice or administrative failure and fraud?

Dan Buettner, a National Geographic Fellow, is famous for describing Blue Zones, places where there are clusters of people who claim to be over 100 years old. However, the zones are in regions associated with poverty, low per capita income, and worse health—usually predictors of lower life expectancy. So, what's the explanation? [A recently updated preprint might have the answer.](#)

Preventing suicide

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP), [which reported in 2016](#), was a milestone Aboriginal-led, evidence-based initiative to reduce suicide rates. But has it worked in practice? [This review](#) identifies where implementation has been successful and provides solutions to overcome barriers to implementation by directing PHNs and peak Aboriginal bodies to areas where uptake can be increased.

Read more about our new *Public Health and Social Care* module [here](#).

Mentions—a new tool for measuring impact

“There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.” – Oscar Wilde

Until now, it's been very hard to measure how often an organization is being talked about and by whom. Now, with our new *Mentions* tool, you'll know.

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Toby Green & Gary Price
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