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Achieving 30×30: How different nations report their contributions to international marine conservation targets

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In 2022, the Convention on Biological Diversity's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted. This framework includes Target 3—commonly referred to as '30×30'—which calls for at least 30% of land and sea to be effectively conserved and managed by 2030. Of all the nations listed on the Marine Conservation Institute's Marine Protection Atlas (MPAtlas), 52 nations show progress towards their nations 30×30 targets through fully or highly protected Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within 200 nautical miles of their own coastline (in their direct waters). However, six nations: the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Argentina, France, and Aotearoa New Zealand, claim progress towards their 30×30 target through MPAs in their direct waters and in waters they claim as overseas territories, such as the waters around remote islands and other nations, further offshore (wider waters). This research raises important questions about where and why nations designate MPAs in particular locations, and what this means for equitable and effective action towards global conservation targets.

The future of the ocean is uncertain. Facing warmer ocean temperatures^{1,2}, rapidly declining fish stocks^{3,4}, and degrading ecosystems^{5,6}, along with significant knowledge gaps related to our important ocean habitats^{7,8}, our seas are under stress. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in December 2022 to address these issues. The GBF includes four goals and 23 action-oriented targets to be achieved by 2030⁹. Target 3—commonly referred to as '30×30'—aims to conserve and manage at least 30% of the Earth's terrestrial and marine environments by 2030. This Target includes provisions for achieving 30% through systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, while ensuring sustainable use, and recognising and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities over their traditional territories⁹. Of all Targets agreed by the GBF, the 30% area-based ambition of Target 3 is widely publicised as being key for effective conservation and sustainable management of our marine environments.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a common area-based conservation tool and have been emphasised as a core strategy for achieving 30% marine protection by 2030^{10,11}. MPAs have been shown to support positive biodiversity outcomes, improve species biomass and abundance, restore degraded marine ecosystems, and contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation through carbon sequestration and coastal protection^{12–17}. MPAs can also provide benefits to local people and communities through enhancing human wellbeing and livelihoods^{18,19}, creating a spillover effect that can increase fish stocks in local fisheries^{20,21}, and supporting local knowledge, values, and connections^{22–24}.

However, MPAs are only one of many conservation tools and do not always lead to outcomes which are environmentally effective or socially just^{25–27}. An MPA's size, design, location, age, purpose, implementation, evaluation, and management all play vital roles in its success^{14,28,29}. Even when well designed, not all MPAs will achieve their goals^{27,30,31}, and some MPAs have been termed 'paper parks', where they appear to be designated on paper but are not implemented or enforced^{32–34}. There has also been criticism of nations designating MPAs in areas of convenience rather than areas where they could be most ecologically valuable^{35,36}. For example, it has been argued that Australia's Coral Sea Marine Reserve was identified for an MPA because of its lack of oil, gas, and commercial fishing habitats, rather than primarily for its biodiversity value³⁷, suggesting ease of establishment has been prioritised over need for protection³⁸.

As nations advance MPA designations to achieve their 30% protection targets, it is important to consider how social and environmental considerations are accounted for. Large MPAs with an area of more than 150,000 km²³⁹ are becoming increasingly common as nations race towards their conservation targets^{36,37,40}. For example, Papahānaumokuākea and the Pacific Remote Islands are two large MPAs covering more than 1.5 million km² of ocean. While supporters suggest the push for large MPAs is necessary to protect our marine environments for people and nature⁴¹, critics of this approach suggest a focus on designating large MPAs can foster a quantity-over-quality mentality^{26,36,42}. Further criticisms have been levied at nations for designating large MPAs far from environments they may access and use themselves^{38,42}. This includes designating strict no-take MPAs in areas that

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nation claims as overseas territories, such as remote islands and the waters around other nations, while designating lower levels of protection in the waters within 200 nautical miles of their own coastline, which often allows access for industry and economic interests^{43,44}. These lower levels of protection are not considered to contribute to the 30×30 target, suggesting some nations could be designating large MPAs with high protection elsewhere in attempt to meet global commitments^{26,42,45}.

A number of large MPAs have been designated around island nations without consent or consultation with local people and communities, while designating nations tend to claim the MPA area towards their own targets^{40,46}. Where social consequences are not adequately accounted for, MPAs can be imposed to the detriment of local and Indigenous rights^{22,26,50}. MPA designation has led to a range of inappropriate and unjust actions with negative social consequences, including a lack of consultation, inequitable social impacts, disempowerment, undermining existing connections to place, and in some circumstances, the physical displacement of communities from their own land and waters^{22,25,47,48}. Despite explicit provisions for respecting Indigenous and local community rights being central to 30×30, and the text of Target 3, many MPAs still fall short of this goal, failing to deliver positive long-term outcomes for people and biodiversity.

MPAs could therefore be considered ineffective where they are not managed appropriately^{28,34}, are designated in lower-value conservation areas just to meet targets^{35,37}, are inequitable^{26,30}, and/or lead to negative social or cultural outcomes^{49–51}. It is also important to consider how large remote MPAs are difficult to monitor and enforce, providing little to no conservation benefit, despite these large areas being counted toward a nation's 30×30 coverage target^{29,38}. A number of remote MPAs could be viewed as primarily serving as geopolitical strategies to meet international targets whether or not they are effectively managed^{36,40}, as well as a way to expand a nation's access to resources and influence far from home^{42–44}.

The Marine Conservation Institute's MPAtlas integrates science-based assessments to identify MPAs that are fully or highly protected^{52,53}, and could be considered to contribute towards protecting 30% of the global ocean by 2030. MPAtlas builds upon data from the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)^{53,54}; who compile protected area information from around the world, including information provided by governments and non-governmental organisations⁵⁵. MPAtlas independently categorizes WDPA data using peer-reviewed frameworks^{56,57} to assess MPAs based on their stage of establishment and level of protection⁵³. In doing so, MPAtlas can provide a more nuanced understanding of national and global marine protection based on levels of protection and implementation status.

MPAtlas protection levels reported as fully or highly protected, which are both strictly no-take, are considered to count towards national and global 30×30 targets. On 26 August 2024, MPAtlas data suggested that two nations had already met their 30×30 target of fully and highly protected areas, with Palau at a total of 78% protection and the United Kingdom at 39%⁵². But while Palau protects waters around their own nation, the United Kingdom has very low levels of protection in the waters within 200 nautical miles of the UK coastline and instead achieves this level of protection through designating protected areas in waters the UK considers their overseas territories, including around remote islands and nations far offshore. Such an approach raises questions around how different nations designate MPAs and report their progress towards 30×30. Reanalysing MPAtlas data to determine protection designated within 200 nautical miles of a nation's own coastline (hereafter referred to as 'direct waters'), compared to protection that nation claims in overseas territories, such as the waters around islands far offshore and other nations (hereafter referred to as 'wider waters'), can provide important insights around where different nations designate MPAs. This research reanalyses MPAtlas data to determine how nations are designating fully or highly protected MPAs in their (i) direct waters, and (ii) wider waters, to better understand how different nations report progress towards 30×30.

Results

Protection in direct waters and wider waters

The United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Argentina, France, and Aotearoa New Zealand all have more MPAs in wider waters than direct waters, substantially reducing their adjusted figures for MPA protection in direct waters versus overall figures for protection reported (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

The largest discrepancy between MPAtlas figures and adjusted figures is the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom data shows 39% of its waters are fully or highly protected on MPAtlas when all waters are considered⁵². However, adjusted figures correct this to 0.0004% (3 km²) within the United Kingdom's direct waters, and 2,282,519 km² protected elsewhere. This is significant given the direct waters around the United Kingdom's coastline are less than one eighth of the size of the wider waters claimed under the nation's jurisdiction. Comparatively, adjusted figures show 44% of the United Kingdom's wider waters are fully protected as MPAs, including an 836,092 km² MPA covering more than 99% of the Pitcairn Islands marine area, a 1,141,940 km² MPA within Saint Helena, Ascension, and Tristan de Cunha, and a 307,487 km² MPA within South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. This compares to 2.4 km² within the Lamlash Bay Community Marine Area and 0.8 km² within the Flamborough MPA in the waters directly around the United Kingdom.

The United States MPAtlas figure states 25% of the nation's waters are fully or highly protected, with an adjusted figure of 18% (1,528,294 km²) in direct waters, and approximately half of the total nation's protection (1,508,497 km²) in wider waters. Protection in the United States direct waters is largely attributed to the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument, an MPA in northwestern Hawaii spanning around 1,508,721 km². Adjusted figures for the United States show 42.3% of its wider waters are fully or highly protected, largely made up of the 1,267,197 km² across the United States Minor Outlying Islands category listed on MPAtlas⁵², and includes 1,265,728 km² within the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, and 1,468 km² within the Navassa Island National Wildlife Refuge, which has overlapping claims between the United States, Jamaica, and Haiti.

While Australia claims 18% (1,658,568 km²) protection towards 30×30 across the nation's waters, only 11% (807,288 km²) of this is within direct waters, with 851,290 km² in wider waters. There are a number of MPAs around the direct waters of Australia, with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park making up 124,911 km² of this protection. Direct waters here also included Macquarie Island Marine Park (445,315 km²). Despite being located further offshore, Macquarie Island has no permanent human residents and was included within the nation's own statistics in Australia's direct waters⁵². Marine parks contributing to protection statistics in Australia's wider waters include Cocos Islands (465,845 km²) and Christmas Island (273,186 km²) in the northern Indian Ocean south of Indonesia, and the Heard and McDonald Islands Sanctuary Zone (70,588 km²) in the southern Indian Ocean.

Argentina's MPAtlas figure for protection states 11% of all waters are fully or highly protected, with an adjusted figure of 0% (0 km²) in direct waters, and 11% (307,487 km²) in wider waters. Argentina's only MPA contributing to its 11% MPAtlas figure is in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, which is jointly claimed with the United Kingdom and counts towards each nation's percentage targets.

The majority of France's areas of full or high protection fall outside of the nation's direct waters. While statistics for all waters suggest France is protecting 3% (134,524 km²) of its waters overall, 0.6 km² (0.0001%) of this protection sits within direct waters, with 404,578 km² reported in wider waters. This 0.6 km² protection in direct waters falls within the Cerdère-Banyuls National Nature Reserve. The largest contributions to France's protection in wider waters include a joint claim of protection with New Caledonia around that nation (135,926 km²), and the French Southern Territories (125,786 km²), which is mostly made up of the Terres Australes Françaises National Nature Reserve (120,162 km²) in the southern Indian Ocean.

Table 1 | Marine protected area in total, direct, and wider waters

Nation	Total waters (direct waters + wider waters)			Direct waters (within 200 nm from the nation's coastline)			Wider waters (more than 200 nm from the nation's coastline)		
	Stated total marine area (km ²)	Stated total highly/fully protected (km ²)	Stated total highly/fully protected (%)	Adjusted marine area in direct waters (km ²)	Adjusted highly/fully protected in direct waters (km ²)	Adjusted highly/fully protected in direct waters (%)	Adjusted marine area in wider waters (km ²)	Adjusted highly/fully protected in wider waters (km ²)	Adjusted highly/fully protected in wider waters (%)
United Kingdom	5,879,220	2,285,522	39	731,309	3.26	0.0004	5,147,911	2,285,519	44.40 ^a
United States	12,205,918	3,036,791	24.8	8,641,943	1,528,294	17.68	3,563,975	1,508,497	42.33
Australia	8,994,340	1,658,568	18	7,350,985	807,288	10.98	1,643,355	851,280	51.80
Argentina	2,869,491	307,487	11	1,072,053	0	0	1,797,438	307,487	17.11 ^a
France	10,110,981	404,579	2.6	780,897	0.617	0.0001	9,330,084	404,578.4	4.34
Aotearoa New Zealand	6,712,792	134,524	2	4,104,551	7,550	0.18	2,608,241	126,974	4.87

Total waters is the total marine area fully or highly protected as stated on MPAtlas on 26 August 2024 (nation (all waters) dataset). Adjusted figures are based on the areas fully protected or highly protected within 200 nautical miles (nm) from the coastline of that nation (direct waters), and in other waters that nation claims as their overseas territories, including around remote islands and other nations further offshore (wider waters). Data on total waters (nation (all waters) dataset) and direct waters (nation dataset) were retrieved from MPAtlas⁵² and WDPA⁵⁴. Wider waters was calculated by subtracting the nation dataset (direct waters) from the nation (all waters) dataset (total waters) from MPAtlas.

^aIndicates the United Kingdom and Argentina both claim South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the Falkland Islands in their national protection data.

Aotearoa New Zealand also features considerable discrepancies in protection levels for direct and wider waters. MPAtlas figures show 2% of the nation's marine area is fully or highly protected. However, adjusted figures show 0.18% (7550 km²) of this protection to be in direct waters, with 126,974 km² in wider waters. The protection in wider waters falls exclusively within the Niue Moana Mahu MPA around the Pacific nation of Niue as a joint protection claim for both nations. The protection within Niue Moana Mahu is more than sixteen times the area of protection Aotearoa New Zealand implements within its own waters, and accounts for most of the overall 2% protection figure on its own.

Discussion

Of the 196 nations who adopted the GBF in 2022, 52 ocean-bordering nations are identified as having some form of fully protected or highly protected marine area on MPAtlas⁵². Most of these 52 nations are focused on how to best protect and conserve their own marine environments, with protected area data located within their own direct waters within 200 nautical miles of the coastline. However, six of these 52 nations also include protection figures from MPAs in wider waters they claim as overseas territories, including the waters around remote islands and other nations they consider under their wider jurisdiction. The United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Argentina, France, and Aotearoa New Zealand all include MPAs in offshore regions beyond their own direct waters as part of their own MPA protection figures. Including these statistics within a nation's own data raises important questions about where and how different nations are designating MPAs and reporting this protection towards their own progress towards 30x30.

Australia and the United States show similar levels of protection by km² in their direct waters and wider waters, while Aotearoa New Zealand demonstrates higher levels of protection in wider waters than direct waters. The United Kingdom and France report less than 4 km² in their direct waters, with notable levels of protection in wider waters. Argentina only reports protection in wider waters, with no protection in their direct waters on MPAtlas⁵². These research findings suggest several nations almost exclusively designate fully protected or highly protected MPAs around islands, territories, and other nations, far beyond the 200 nautical miles off their own coastline and report these statistics in their own 30x30 contributions. One example includes the United Kingdom reporting an 836,092 km² MPA covering Pitcairn's four islands and surrounding waters⁵². This single MPA is over 100,000 km² greater than the area of the United Kingdom's entire direct waters (731,309 m²). Another example is France, with most of the total protected area (404,579 km²) being made up of waters around New Caledonia (135,916 km²) in the Pacific, and the French Southern Territories (125,786 km²) in the Indian Ocean.

Large MPA designations around distant islands and other nations is not without controversy and critique. Research has shown that large MPA designations are disproportionately represented in areas claimed as overseas territories such as distant islands and the water around other nations^{29,36}, with these areas contributing disproportionately to international conservation targets⁵⁸. While these areas could provide a range of biodiversity, social, cultural, and economic benefits if managed well^{10,11,14,56}, they are often remote and so difficult to manage and enforce, calling their conservation value into question^{32,36-38}. The United Kingdom and France claim the waters around several areas a long way from their own direct waters, significantly expanding their claimed marine area. Strategic designations with substantial marine area around remote islands and around other nations, far from a nation's own direct waters, can suggest considerable progress towards the 30x30 target when this data is included in that nation's statistics. MPAtlas data suggests the United Kingdom has already achieved 30x30, with 39% of its waters fully or highly protected, yet all but 3 km² of this protection is around islands far offshore⁵². The majority of Aotearoa New Zealand's marine protection is focused around Niue. The United Kingdom and Argentina both include the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands in their own national protection data. While

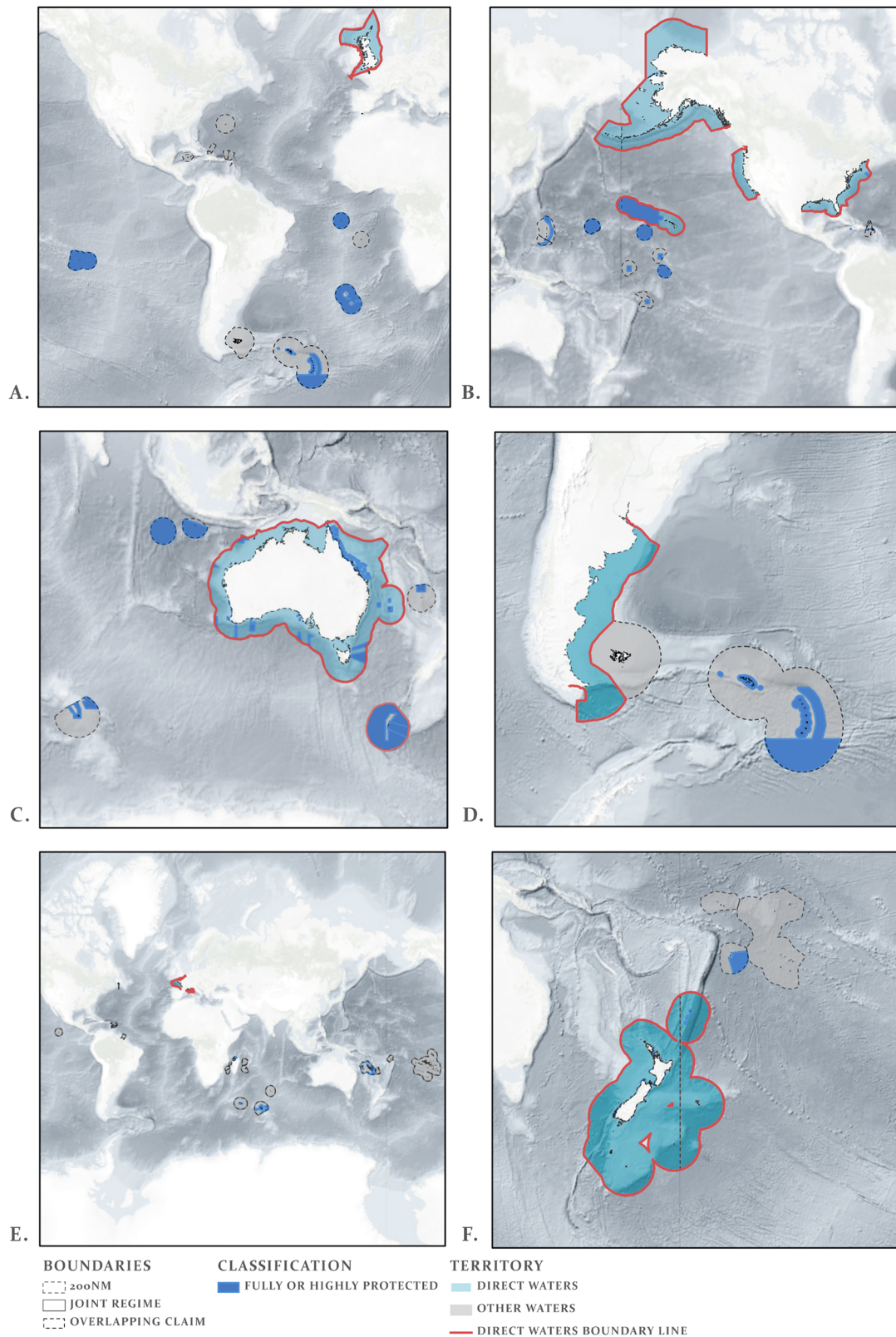


Fig. 1 | MPAs in direct and wider waters. MPAs designated by (a) the United Kingdom, (b) United States, (c) Australia, (d) Argentina, (e) France, and (f) Aotearoa New Zealand, where dark blue indicates fully or highly protected MPAs contributing

to 30x30 protection targets, light blue shows direct waters around that nation, and the red line identifies the 200 nm boundary line from the coastline. Created using data from WDPA⁵⁴ to visualise MPAs on MPAtlas⁵² on 26 August 2024.

collaboration may help progress conservation^{10,11,59}, there is also the risk of different countries counting the same protected area in their own national data, which could lead to the same area being double-counted in 30 x 30 statistics at an international level.

Further questions are raised about why the six nations identified in this research have not protected more area directly off their own coastlines in fully protected or highly protected MPAs. Instead, these nations tend to rely heavily, or mostly exclusively, on designating fully or highly protected areas

in waters they claim as overseas territories, such as the waters around remote islands and other nations further offshore when reporting their own progress towards 30×30. In contrast, these nations own direct waters often include a combination of no protection, which allows any activity to take place, or lower levels of protection allowing “moderate to extensive extraction and associated impacts”⁵², neither of which are considered to contribute to 30×30. For example, a number of marine sanctuaries in the water directly around the United States coastline and marine parks around the Australian coastline allow for multiple uses including extraction and are therefore classified as ‘incompatible with the conservation of nature’ and 30×30^{29,36,52,56}. If high levels of protection are considered so vital, it could be expected that these nations would also be designating and implementing at least 30% fully or highly protected areas within their own direct waters.

Inadequate consultation can raise important questions over environmental justice and equity, while also risking negative outcomes for the long-term viability of MPAs. Consultation around MPA designation and management with Indigenous Peoples and local communities is often limited^{126,30,36,50}. As a result, MPA designations have led to a number of negative outcomes for the people who live in and are connected to these areas^{22,25,30,51,60}. The United States recently proposed expanding protection of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument from 1.3 million km² to nearly 2 million km²^{52,54,61}. While this expansion has been pushed by the United States, and has been supported by some, it has received resistance for not meaningfully consulting or including Indigenous People and local communities who have the strongest connections to the region^{62,63}. Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (30×30) includes text that specifies that 30% of global marine areas should be “effectively conserved” and “equitably governed... recognising and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories”⁹. It remains unclear how many of the large MPAs around islands far offshore from designating nations have adequately considered the rights of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities of these areas, as specified in the text associated with achieving 30×30. While there has been some progress on the involvement and leadership of Indigenous People and local communities in MPA design and implementation (for example in Canada^{54,65}), more research is needed on MPA processes, and how they could be improved, from the perspectives of the Indigenous People and local communities most likely to be impacted—before, during, and after MPA designation.

The role of geopolitics in MPA designation, and MPAs as a tool to expand a nation’s area of influence, must also be considered^{43,44}. The United Kingdom has previously displaced approximately 2000 Îlois (Chagossian) people from the Chagos Islands to make way for a United States military base, before later designating a large MPA around the islands^{44,66,67}. In 2015, the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that the UK’s claim over the Chagos Islands was illegal, and in 2019 the International Court of Justice found the UK in breach of international law by seeking to maintain the British claim to Chagos⁶⁸. The UK initially dismissed the decision as advisory, however, after 13 rounds of talks between 2022 and 2024, the United Nations and the International Court of Justice demanded the UK to return Chagos to Mauritius, which the UK government agreed to as long as the UK could still retain control of the military base itself^{69,70}. Chagos is no longer listed in the United Kingdom statistics on WDPA or MPAtlas^{71,72}, and is an important reminder of what can happen where there is a focus on progressing marine conservation around islands far from a nation’s own shores for geopolitical or military purposes^{40,42–44}.

This research does not mean to suggest that fully protected or highly protected MPAs are the most appropriate or only mechanism for effective and sustainable marine protection. Research is growing that highlights the importance of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) beyond protected areas for achieving 30×30^{73,74}. However, there has also been critique where OECM-based approaches have allowed nations to include “de facto” MPAs such as military exclusion zones, war graves, and areas bordering cables and pipelines towards their protection targets rather than areas that could add additional conservation benefit^{44,75}. Major gaps in

the data mean it is difficult to measure if OECMs meet the CBD criteria⁷³, are effective at conserving biodiversity over the long-term, or are equitably governed and effectively managed⁷⁶. Nor does this research intend to evaluate the work of MPAtlas or WDPA, who do valuable work, and compile MPA data based on the information provided by governments and non-government organisations^{53,55}. Instead, this research acknowledges the global push towards 30×30, and examines how different nations are reporting progress towards these targets. While the majority of nations listed on MPAtlas designate MPAs in their own direct waters, we hope this research raises broader questions about how the six nations identified in this article are designating MPAs and reporting this data as they work towards their 30×30 goals. We acknowledge that this research represents a snapshot of levels of protection on 26 August 2024, and marine protection, and the associated MPAtlas and WDPA data, is continuously evolving^{53,55,71,72}. We also recognise that MPAtlas only includes data for those MPAs assessed against MPAtlas quality frameworks⁵³. Despite these limitations, and continuous updating of new data and MPA designations, the overall trends identified between MPAs being designated in nations direct and wider waters remains clear.

Conclusion

Global percentage-based targets like 30×30 can encourage conservation action, and when done well, MPAs can deliver a range of positive ecological, social, cultural, and economic benefits^{11,12,19,22,29,44}. However, despite the tremendous growth in MPAs in the past two decades, the quality of protection, and their efficacy for facing the longer-term challenges of monitoring and enforcement, remain unclear^{28,36,38}. These concerns are especially true for nation’s designating large MPAs in areas they claim as overseas territories around distant islands and other nations, while designating relatively little area in the waters around their own coastline^{29,42}. Even if these remote MPAs were managed well, the focus on these areas would still mean disproportionate and unrepresentative protection at national and international levels^{10,11,36,58}. The success of 30×30 will rely on nation’s conserving 30% of their own direct waters in addition to any protection elsewhere.

As we approach 2030 and beyond, we are likely to see further increases in MPA designations as different nations race to meet their 30 × 30 targets. It is important to recognise that percentage-based area targets are inadequate metrics on their own^{13,36}, and a greater focus on representative protection of different ecosystems, conservation effectiveness, environmental justice, and the role geopolitics and international influence in MPA designation is urgently needed^{29,44,56}. Such an approach will be especially important in the face of a changing climate, emerging and future threats, and the newly signed Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement⁷⁷ which could allow different nations to make submissions for MPA designation in international waters in addition to areas they consider their own territories. While global targets like 30×30 can foster a collective sense of action and encourage nations to increase efforts to achieve conservation targets, the overarching need is for meaningful marine management that is effective and equitable to be able to deliver long-term social, cultural, and biodiversity outcomes and safeguard the future of people and nature^{22,78,79}.

Methods

Calculating protection in direct waters and wider waters

Areas classified as fully protected or highly protected on MPAtlas are both considered to contribute to a nation’s 30×30 target^{52–54}, and have been included here for analysis. MPA data was examined for all 52 nations listed on MPAtlas reporting fully protected areas or highly protected areas of greater than 0 km² on 26 August 2024. Of these 52 nations, six nations – United Kingdom, United States, Australia, France, and New Zealand, and Argentina – had two datasets: (i) *nation*, which included fully or highly protected areas within 200 nautical miles off the coastline of that nation; and (ii) *nation (all waters)*, which included fully or highly protected areas around that nation in addition to fully or highly protected areas that nation claims in overseas territories, including around remote islands and other nations further offshore. To identify where different nations were designating fully

and highly protected areas, this research compared the data on protection within 200 nautical miles of the coastline of that nation (direct waters) to data on protection that nation claims in overseas territories beyond 200 nautical miles of that nation's coastline, including around remote islands and other nations (wider waters). Protection in 'wider waters' was calculated by deducting levels of protection in the waters directly off the coastline of each nation (direct waters; the *nation* dataset on MPAtlas) from the levels of protection directly off the coastline of that nation in addition to the levels of protection in areas that nation claims in overseas territories (total waters; the *nation (all waters)* dataset). Areas with lower levels of protection, such as "lightly protected", were excluded from the analysis as they allow "moderate to extensive extraction and associated impacts"⁵², and are not considered to contribute towards 30×30. The figure has been created in ArcGIS Pro⁸⁰, using protected area data from World Database on Protected Areas⁵⁴ as used by MPAtlas⁵³, to visualise MPAs on MPAtlas on 26 August 2024, overlaid on a World Ocean Basemap⁸¹.

Data availability

Each of the six nations in this study has two sets of data available on MPAtlas (www.mpatlas.org) (i) nation, and (ii) nation (all waters)^{52,54}. Levels of protection in direct waters were (i) for each nation on 26 August 2024. Levels of protection in wider waters were calculated from subtracting (i) from (ii). The figure was created using August 2024 WDPAs data from UNEP-WCMC and IUCN (www.protectedplanet.net)⁵⁴ to visualise the MPAs in the figure. The open access journal license for the article only covers the article and does not include data available at MPAtlas or WDPAs—please refer to MPAtlas and WDPAs directly for information on data use⁵². Marine Conservation Institute (and Partners), MPAtlas. Seattle, WA. Available at: www.mpatlas.org [Accessed 26 August 2024] (2024), data use: <https://marine-conservation.org/data-use/>⁵⁴. UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, Protected Planet: The World Database on Protected Areas (WDPAs) [On-line], [August 2024]. Cambridge, UK: UNEP-WCMC and IUCN. Available at: www.protectedplanet.net (2024), data use: <https://www.protectedplanet.net/en/legal>.

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Author contributions

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Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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