

Key water + sanitation facts | for use in FY24

Water | Water is essential to life, yet millions of people live without it.

- 2.2 billion people – 1 in 4 – lack access to safe water.
- More than 2x the population of the United States lives without a household water connection.
- 115 million people depend on surface water, like a river, to meet their basic needs.
- Millions of people take multiple trips each day to collect water. More than 292 million people spend more than 30 minutes each time.

Sanitation | Access to a toilet empowers people in need with time, health, safety, and privacy.

- 3.5 billion people – 2 in 5 – lack access to a safe toilet.
- 419 million people – 5% of the global population – defecate in the open.
- More people have a mobile phone than a safe toilet.

Note – Combining the water and sanitation stats is not an option, given some people may fall into both groups and we want to avoid double counting. See FY24 key facts FAQs + key topics document for more information.

Health + hygiene | Access to safe water and sanitation improves health.

- More than 1 million people die each year from lack of access to safe water and sanitation (due to health impacts alone.)
- Every 2 minutes a child dies from a water or sanitation-related disease.
- 2.3 billion people globally don't have access to soap and water to wash their hands at home.
- 1 in 4 children under the age of 5 around the world suffer from stunting and malnutrition linked to water and sanitation.
- More than one million people die from diarrhea-related disease each year, and more than two-thirds of these deaths could be prevented with access to safe water and sanitation.
- More than 395,000 children under the age of five die from water and sanitation-related diseases each year.

Women | Access to safe water and sanitation at home empowers women.

- Women and children bear the primary responsibility for water collection.
- Women and girls spend 200 million hours every day collecting water. This is time not spent working, caring for family members, or attending school.
- Access to improved sanitation leads to a reduction in assault and violence on women and girls.

Education | Access to safe water and sanitation gives kids the time and health for school.

- Reductions in time spent collecting water increases school attendance, especially for girls.
- Globally, 29% of all schools lack access to basic drinking water.
- Kids are more likely to attend school when water and sanitation are available there. (In one study, attendance increased from 58 to 80%.)
- Having a sanitation solution at home means children are more likely to have higher cognitive test scores.
- For every year a girl stays in school, her income as an adult is expected to increase by 20%.

Economic | Access to affordable financing for safe water and sanitation helps people in need break the cycle of poverty.

- Every \$1 invested in water and sanitation provides a \$4 economic return from lower health costs, more productivity, and fewer premature deaths.
- \$260 billion is lost globally each year due to lack of basic water and sanitation.
- Investing in water and sanitation has considerable economic benefits, including an overall estimated gain of 1.5% of global GDP.
- Universal safe water access will lead to time savings that, in turn, could lead to US \$342 billion in income-generating activities.

Climate change | Access to sustainable safe water and sanitation helps people living in poverty become more resilient to the effects of climate change.

- By 2025, 50% of the world's population is projected to live in water-stressed areas as a result of climate change, with low-income families bearing the greatest burden of this crisis.
- 1.4 billion people live in countries experiencing high freshwater shortage.
- About two-thirds of the world's population will face at least one month of water shortages by 2050.
- Water is the primary way in which we will feel many of the effects of climate change.
- The potential risks to water and sanitation services posed by climate change include damage to infrastructure, leading to the loss of services and to deterioration in water quality – impacts that will increase risks to health.
- The water sector is currently estimated to contribute up to 5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, lower than other sectors and industries.

Finance | Breaking down financial barriers between people in need and water and sanitation solutions can help end the global water crisis.

- Globally there is an \$18 billion demand from individuals for affordable financing to meet their water and sanitation needs.
- \$114 billion per year, starting in 2016, is needed to achieve safely managed water and sanitation for all by 2030, meeting Sustainable Development Goal 6.
 - Current investments for water and sanitation amount to \$28.4 billion per year. This represents a gap of \$85.6 billion.
- It will take three times more than what is currently being invested each year to bridge the financial gap and achieve universal access to safely managed water and sanitation.

WaterCredit | Our solutions break down the financial barriers between people in need and lasting access to safe water and sanitation.

- Families who use WaterCredit to gain safe water access at home save an average of 267 hours a year that was previously spent finding, collecting and/or queuing for water.
- Families who use WaterCredit to gain improved sanitation at home save an average of 85 hours a year that was previously spent finding a place to go and/or queuing for sanitation.

For more details on the impact of our work, please visit the [Global Impact Reports](#) (on the Insights Resources SharePoint site) for impact stats and metrics updated each quarter.

Key References

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- Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2022: special focus on gender. New York: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), 2023.
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- World Economic Forum (2023). Global Risks Report 2023.

For a full list of references, please visit the [FY24 Facts Master Spreadsheet](#).

Note – Proportional stats are based on 2020 JMP survey data (the latest available information) compared to 2023 global population data.