

## Key Water.org Facts | For use in 2020-2021

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

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- 785 million people – 1 in 9 – lack access to safe water.
- More than 6x the population of the United States lives without a household water connection.
- The water crisis is the #5 global risk in terms of impact to society, announced by the World Economic Forum in January 2020.
- 144 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. 263 million people spend more than 30 minutes each time.

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

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- 2 billion people – 1 in 3 – lack access to a toilet.
- Globally, 55% of people do not have access to safely-managed sanitation.
- 673 million people – more than 10% of the global population – defecate in the open.
- More people have a mobile phone than a toilet.

### **Health + hygiene** | Access to safe water and sanitation contributes to improved health.

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- Better water, sanitation, and hygiene could save the lives of 297,000 children under the age of 5 each year.
- Nearly 1 million people die each year from water, sanitation and hygiene-related diseases.
- Every 2 minutes a child dies from a water-related disease.
- 160 million children suffer from stunting and chronic malnutrition linked to water and sanitation.
- 3 billion people globally – 2 out of 5 – don't have access to soap and water to wash their hands at home.
- Lack of basic water, sanitation, and hygiene access are known to contribute to diarrhea, the third leading cause of childhood death around the world.

### **Women** | Empowering women is critical to solving the water crisis.

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- 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.
- Women and girls living without a toilet spend 266 million hours every day finding a place to go.
- Access to improved sanitation leads to a reduction in assault and violence on women and girls.
- Improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices lead to improved health for women and girls. It reduces disease, undernutrition, injury from water collection, and stress.

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

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- Reductions in time spent collecting water increases school attendance, especially for girls.
- Globally 1 in 3 schools lacks access to basic water and sanitation.
- 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 can increase by 15-25%.

**Economic** | Water and sanitation are a smart investment.

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- Every \$1 invested in water and sanitation provides a \$4 economic return from lower health costs, more productivity and fewer premature deaths.
- Investing in water and sanitation has considerable economic benefits, including an overall estimated gain of 1.5% of global GDP.
- Universal access to basic water and sanitation would result in \$18.5 billion in economic benefits each year from avoided deaths alone.
- \$260 billion is lost globally each year due to lack of basic water and sanitation.

**Finance** | Access to affordable financing can help end the global water crisis.

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- Globally there is an \$18 billion demand from individuals for affordable financing to meet their water and sanitation needs.
- \$114 billion per year 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 to fill the financial gap and achieve universal access to safely managed water and sanitation.

**Climate change** | People living in poverty are especially vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

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- People living in poverty are especially vulnerable to the impact of climate change because of their reliance on unstable water and sanitation systems, weaker institutional protections, and limited access to funding.
- Climate change affects water and sanitation, and water and sanitation services contribute to climate change because of the use of energy.
- Increasing access to sanitation and improved wastewater management can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- 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.

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- [UN-Water Policy Brief on Climate Change and Water.](#) 2019.
- [Climate change and water and sanitation: Likely impacts and emerging trends for action](#) (2016). Howard G, Calow R, Macdonald A, Bartram J.

## Other water and sanitation resources

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- Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) is produced every two years by the World Health Organization. ([available here](#))
- UN-Water produced the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation. This represents a joint position from the United Nations on the global status of SDG 6 targets. ([available here](#))
- Water.org-IRC-World Bank working paper, “Mobilising finance for WASH: getting the foundation right” ([available here](#))
- The World Water Development Report 2019 demonstrates how improvements in water resources management and access to water supply and sanitation services are essential to addressing various social and economic inequities, such that ‘no one is left behind’ when it comes to enjoying the multiple benefits and opportunities that water provides. ([available here](#))