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 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 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

- Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, 2000-2021 Data Update, UNICEF-JMP, 2022
- UN-Water Policy Brief on Climate Change and Water (2019).

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.