



Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council

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Media / Statistics

The cold, hard facts.

Numbers don't lie. Statistics on sanitation, hygiene and water supply around the world tell a shocking story.

WSSCC's communications staff can help you find the right statistics to fill out your story or broadcast. A selection of key statistics is below. As well, you can visit the statistics section under the "Resources" tab in the main menu, or you can write to one of WSSCC's communications officers. You can also get more statistics on the [UN-Water Key Water Indicator Portal](#).

Read key statistics on:

[Sanitation and human health](#)[Sanitation and the environment](#)[Sanitation and economic benefits](#)[Hygiene](#)[Sanitation and dignity](#)[Drinking water](#)

Sanitation and human health

- On a typical day, more than half the hospital beds in Sub-Saharan Africa are occupied by patients suffering from faecal-related disease; most of them would not be there if they had a way to safely dispose of their faeces and wash their hands.
- Diarrhoea is one of the biggest killers of children under five worldwide, alone accounting for 17% of deaths in this age-group. More than 5,000 children die every day from diarrhoea.
- Providing access to a toilet can reduce child diarrhoeal deaths by over 30%, hand washing by more than 40%.
- Sanitation and hygiene could also prevent most of the 130 million annual cases worldwide of serious worm infestation. This matters since worms can divert up to one-third of the food a child consumes, and malnutrition is at the root of 50% of childhood illness.
- Toilets and basic hygiene facilities can significantly improve the quality of life and survival rates of people suffering from major diseases like HIV/AIDS, as well as making it easier for those who care for them.
- The link between sanitation to health is not just theoretical. A recent city-wide sanitation drive in Salvador, Brazil resulted in a 43% fall in the prevalence of diarrhoea in the poorest areas of the city.

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Sanitation and economic benefits

- Improved sanitation in developing countries yields about US\$9 worth of benefits for every US\$1 spent.
- Conservative estimates from the World Health Organization suggest that alone the time saved by people using a toilet close to home would have an annual economic value in excess of US\$114 billion.
- Toilets save lives and enhance productivity; investments in sanitation and

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News

27 December 2011
Beninese journalist interviews Executive Director

13 May 2011
Activities of GSF sub-grantees in Madagascar officially launched today

28 April 2011
West African journalists formalize the regional WASH media network

22 December 2010
WSSCC teams up with WaterAid to support journalists in West Africa

23 November 2010
AMCOW AfricaSan Awards 2010 Winners

Resources

Photo

Journalists from the West Africa WASH Journalists Network working in Liberia

News Archive

Beninese journalist interviews Executive Director

Speeches & Presentations

Speech by Barry Jackson upon commissioning the first sub-grantees that will implement the GSF programme in Madagascar

News Archive

Activities of GSF sub-grantees in Madagascar officially launched today

News Archive

West African journalists formalize the regional WASH media network

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hygiene are investments in a nation's economy.

- Twelve percent of the total health budget in Sub-Saharan Africa is spent treating preventable infectious diarrhoea. Progress in sanitation and hygiene would enable that money to be spent on other critical needs.
- Improving sanitation would have a profound impact on education. Currently, almost 200 million days of school attendance are lost due to the lack of sanitation each year, and up to two-thirds of children in some African schools are infested with worms and unable to concentrate and learn effectively. School enrolment and retention rates for girls will rise when there are appropriate toilets and bathrooms for them to use, particularly after menstruation starts.
- Investments in sanitation protect scarce water resources and enhance the value of water supply. They also protect tourism revenues, which in some countries account for upwards of 10% of GDP.
- Hygiene promotion is often the single most cost-effective public health intervention.

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Sanitation and dignity

- Many women and girls must wait until nightfall to relieve themselves, putting their safety at risk. In Darfur and Chad, aid agencies construct latrines close to settlement camps because of the risk of attack and rape faced by women who must walk any distance to use sanitation facilities.
- In India, around 800,000 people make a living by removing faeces from other people's latrines and carrying it away in baskets on their heads, a livelihood that bars their inclusion in mainstream society.
- Evidence from Alwar District, India, showed that school sanitation increased girls' enrolment by one-third, and improved academic performance for boys and girls by 25%. Similar results from Bangladesh showed that the provision of girls' bathrooms increased girls' enrolment by 11%.
- Recent efforts in Bangladesh and India have resulted in significant numbers of rural communities declaring themselves "open defecation free" – meaning that the entire community had jointly committed to
- eliminate open defecation and use basic covered latrines. These achievements not only have health benefits but draw communities together and provide a route for them to engage with higher levels of government. The effect is widespread, with more than 10,000 villages in Bangladesh claiming open defecation-free status.
- Household, school, and community sanitation are not just the means to economic growth, they are essential tools to enable communities to live in dignity and to realise their full potential. Equity and justice demand that we support their efforts.

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Sanitation and the environment

- The sheer volume of untreated human waste demands attention. Without effective sanitation systems, human waste flows directly into water courses and contaminates groundwater. Water supplies are compromised, rivers become stinking sewers, and fisheries are threatened.
- In Southeast Asia alone, 13 million tons of faeces is released into inland water sources each year, along with 122 million m³ of urine and 11 billion cubic metres of greywater. This pollution costs Southeast Asia more than US\$2 billion per year.
- Prevention can be achieved through a combination of simple household technologies and more complex collection and treatment systems. The technologies exist – all that is needed is the political will to spend public money in this crucial sector.

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Hygiene

- Over 1.5 million children under five die each year as a result of diarrhoea. It is the second most common cause of child deaths worldwide.
- Hand washing with soap at critical times - including before eating or preparing food and after using the toilet - can reduce diarrhoea rates by more than 40%.

- Hand washing with soap can reduce the incidence of acute respiratory infections (ARI's) by around 23%.
- Pneumonia, is the number one cause of mortality among children under five years old, taking the lives of an estimated 1.8 million children per year.
- Hand washing can be a critical measure in controlling pandemic outbreaks of respiratory infections. Several studies carried out during the 2006 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) suggest that washing hands more than 10 times a day can cut the spread of the respiratory virus by 55%.
- Hand washing with soap has been cited as one of the most cost-effective interventions to prevent diarrhoeal related deaths and disease.
- A review of several studies shows that hand washing in institutions such as primary schools and daycare centers reduce the incidence of diarrhoea by an average of 30%.
- Rates of hand washing around the world are low. Observed rates of hand washing with soap at critical moments – i.e, before handling food and after using the toilet - range from 0% to 34%.
- A study shows that hand washing with soap by birth attendants and mothers significantly increased newborn survival rates by up to 44%.

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Drinking water

Proportion of households in major cities connected to piped water (house or yard connection):

- World: 94%
 - Africa: 43%
 - Asia: 77%
 - Europe: 92%
 - Latin America and the Caribbean: 77%
 - North America: 100%
 - Oceania: 73%
- To ensure our basic needs, we all need 20 to 50 litres of water free from harmful contaminants each and every day. In addition, a child born in the developed world consumes 30 to 50 times as much water as one in the developing world. The state of human health is inextricably linked to a range of water-related conditions: safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, minimized burden of water-related disease and healthy freshwater ecosystems. Urgent improvements in the ways in which water use and sanitation are managed are needed to improve progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to human health.
 - 894 million people lack access to improved water supply
 - Developed countries show a wide range in variation in water pricing, ranging from the lowest cost in Canada to costs five times as high in Germany.
 - Meeting the MDG on drinking water supply coverage ('to reduce by 2015 the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water'): 10 to 30 billion US dollars more than what is currently being spent;
 - Water is used in Buddhist funerals, poured till overflowing into a bowl placed in front of the monks and the dead body.
 - In Christianity, water is used in several rites, including baptism and washing. In this religion, water symbolizes purification and cleansing.
 - To Hindus, all water is sacred, especially rivers. It is thought to have cleansing properties, and is used to attain both physical and spiritual purity. It is an essential element in nearly all rites and ceremonies.
 - In Islam, water is used for ablutions: worshippers must be pure for prayers. Small pools of water are found within or just outside all mosques for this purpose.

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