PROGRESS ON DRINKING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

SPECIAL FOCUS ON COVID-19

WHO/UNICEF JOINT MONITORING PROGRAMME FOR WATER SUPPLY, SANITATION AND HYGIENE
The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), through the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), produce internationally comparable estimates of progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and are responsible for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets related to WASH. Since the establishment of the SDGs, the JMP has published global baseline reports on WASH in households (2017), WASH in schools (2018) and WASH in health care facilities (2019), and a progress update on households (2019). This report presents updated national, regional and global estimates for WASH in schools up to the year 2019, with a special focus on the implications for ensuring the safety of students and school staff during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

The JMP uses service ladders to benchmark and compare progress across countries on WASH in schools (Figure 1). These service ladders are designed to track progress towards a basic level of service, which is the indicator used for global monitoring of SDG targets related to WASH in schools. This report also highlights additional indicators that have been used for national monitoring of WASH in schools and identifies those most relevant for monitoring efforts to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 (Box 1).

**HIGHLIGHTS**

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need to accelerate progress on WASH in schools

Global school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic present an unprecedented risk to children’s education and wellbeing. Prolonged closures will have negative impacts on learning outcomes and disrupt school-based services essential for the nutrition, health, welfare and protection of vulnerable children. WHO and UNICEF guidelines on COVID-19 infection prevention and control in schools identify a range of measures that need to be in place for schools to reopen and operate safely. They emphasize the importance of hygiene for reducing transmission and recommend all schools enforce regular handwashing, ensure daily disinfection and cleaning of surfaces, provide basic water, sanitation and waste management facilities, and follow appropriate environmental cleaning and decontamination procedures. However, in the 60 countries identified as having the highest risk of health and humanitarian crisis due to COVID-19, one in two schools lacked basic water and sanitation services and three in four lacked basic handwashing services at the start of the pandemic. Accelerating progress in countries with the lowest coverage of WASH in schools will therefore be critical to improve school safety during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

---

**BOX 1** WASH and COVID-19 infection prevention and control in schools

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need to accelerate progress on WASH in schools

Global school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic present an unprecedented risk to children’s education and wellbeing. Prolonged closures will have negative impacts on learning outcomes and disrupt school-based services essential for the nutrition, health, welfare and protection of vulnerable children. WHO and UNICEF guidelines on COVID-19 infection prevention and control in schools identify a range of measures that need to be in place for schools to reopen and operate safely. They emphasize the importance of hygiene for reducing transmission and recommend all schools enforce regular handwashing, ensure daily disinfection and cleaning of surfaces, provide basic water, sanitation and waste management facilities, and follow appropriate environmental cleaning and decontamination procedures. However, in the 60 countries identified as having the highest risk of health and humanitarian crisis due to COVID-19, one in two schools lacked basic water and sanitation services and three in four lacked basic handwashing services at the start of the pandemic. Accelerating progress in countries with the lowest coverage of WASH in schools will therefore be critical to improve school safety during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

---

In 2019,

- 120 countries and 6 out of 8 SDG regions had estimates for basic drinking water services in schools, representing 60% of the global school-age population.
- 69% of schools had a basic drinking water service (improved source with water available at the time of the survey); 16% had a limited service (improved source with water unavailable); and 15% had no drinking water service (unimproved source or no source at all).
- 584 million children lacked a basic drinking water service at their school, including 297 million whose schools had an improved source with no water available, and 287 million whose schools still had no water service.
- Global coverage of basic drinking water services in schools had increased by 0.4 percentage points per year since 2015. Achieving universal access by 2030 would require a seven-fold increase in the current rates of progress.
- Coverage of basic water services in schools ranged from 44% in sub-Saharan Africa to 100% in Australia and New Zealand.
- 3 out of 4 secondary schools (74%) and 2 out of 3 primary schools (66%) had a basic water service. There were insufficient data to calculate global estimates for pre-primary schools.
- 61% of rural schools had a basic water service and 17% had no service. 6% of urban schools had no water service but there were insufficient data to estimate coverage of basic services.
- Nearly half (48%) of all children with no water service at their school lived in Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- In the 60 countries at highest risk of health and humanitarian crisis due to COVID-19, half of children (50%) lacked a basic water service at their school at the start of the pandemic.

Globally, 69% of schools had a basic drinking water service in 2019

6 out of 8 SDG regions had estimates for basic drinking water services in schools, representing 60% of the global school-age population.

FIGURE 2 Global coverage of drinking water in schools, 2019 (%)

FIGURE 3 Regional coverage of drinking water in schools, 2019 (%)

76 out of 120 countries had >75% coverage of basic drinking water services in schools in 2019

2 out of 5 children without a basic drinking water service at school lived in sub-Saharan Africa in 2019

*Oceania, Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand

FIGURE 4 Proportion of schools with a basic drinking water service, 2019 (%)

FIGURE 5 Number of school-age children without a basic drinking water service at school, 2019 (millions)

1 The JMP tracks progress for 234 countries, areas and territories, including all United Nations Member States. Statistics in this report refer to countries, areas or territories. For further details see https://washdata.org/.

2 Insufficient data

HIGHLIGHTS
In 2019,

- 117 countries and 7 out of 8 SDG regions had estimates for basic sanitation services in schools, representing 58% of the global school-age population.
- 63% of schools had a basic sanitation service (improved single-sex facilities that were usable at the time of the survey); 18% had a limited service (improved facilities that were not single-sex or not usable); and 19% had no sanitation service (unimproved facilities or none at all).
- 698 million children lacked a basic sanitation service at their school, including 331 million whose schools had improved facilities that were not single-sex or not usable, and 367 million whose schools still had no sanitation service.
- Global coverage of basic sanitation services in schools had increased by 0.7 percentage points per year since 2015. Achieving universal access by 2030 would require a five-fold increase in the current rates of progress.
- Coverage of basic sanitation services in schools ranged from 47% in sub-Saharan Africa to 100% in Australia and New Zealand.
- 71% of secondary schools and 60% of primary schools had a basic sanitation service. There were insufficient data to calculate global estimates for pre-primary schools.
- 44% of rural schools had a basic sanitation service and 22% had no service. 10% of urban schools had no sanitation service but there were insufficient data to estimate coverage of basic services.
- Nearly a quarter of children whose school still had no sanitation service lived in Least Developed Countries.
- In the 60 countries at highest risk of health and humanitarian crisis due to COVID-19, over half of children lacked a basic sanitation service at their school at the start of the pandemic.
In 2019,

- 110 countries and 7 out of 8 SDG regions had estimates for basic hygiene services in schools, representing 57% of the global school-age population.
- 57% of schools had a basic hygiene service (handwashing facilities and soap and water available at the time of the survey); 19% had a limited service (handwashing facilities with water but no soap available); and 25% had no service (no facilities or no water at all).
- 818 million children lacked a basic hygiene service at their school, including 355 million whose schools had facilities with water but no soap, and 462 million whose schools still had no hygiene service.
- Global coverage of basic hygiene services in schools had increased by 1 percentage point per year since 2015. Achieving universal access by 2030 would require a four-fold increase in the current rates of progress.
- Coverage of basic hygiene services in schools ranged from 17% in Oceania to 100% in Australia and New Zealand.
- 58% of secondary schools and 56% of primary schools had a basic hygiene service. There were insufficient data to calculate global estimates for pre-primary schools.
- 34% of rural schools had a basic hygiene service and 41% had no hygiene service. There were insufficient data to calculate global estimates for urban schools.
- 40% of children whose schools still had no hygiene service lived in Least Developed Countries.
- In the 60 countries at highest risk of health and humanitarian crisis due to COVID-19, three out of four children lacked a basic hygiene service at their school at the start of the pandemic.

## HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

### Globally, 57% of schools had a basic hygiene service in 2019

![Graph showing coverage of hygiene in schools globally](image10.png)

- No service
- Limited
- Basic
- Insufficient data

### 7 out of 8 SDG regions had estimates for basic hygiene services in 2019

![Graph showing regional coverage of hygiene in schools](image11.png)

### 67 out of 110 countries had >75% coverage of basic hygiene services in schools in 2019

![Proportion of schools with a basic hygiene service](image12.png)

### 2 out of 3 children without a basic hygiene service at school lived in 2 SDG regions in 2019

![Map showing children without a basic hygiene service](image13.png)

* Oceania, Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand
Global coverage of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services in schools in 2019

### DRINKING WATER

- **Basic:** 69% (1.30 billion)
- **Limited:** 16% (297 million)
- **No service:** 15% (287 million)

Achieving universal access to basic drinking water services in schools by 2030 will require a **seven-fold** increase in current rates of progress.

### SANITATION

- **Basic:** 63% (1.18 billion)
- **Limited:** 18% (331 million)
- **No service:** 19% (367 million)

Achieving universal access to basic sanitation services in schools by 2030 will require a **five-fold** increase in current rates of progress.

### HYGIENE

- **Basic:** 57% (1.06 billion)
- **Limited:** 19% (355 million)
- **No service:** 25% (462 million)

Achieving universal access to basic hygiene services in schools by 2030 will require a **four-fold** increase in current rates of progress.

**JMP website:** washdata.org