



Facts and Figures around 5 Thematic Areas

The five themes of the UN 2023 Water Conference were proposed by the Conference co-hosts, The Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan, in July 2022 and were agreed on by Member States at the Preparatory Meeting in October 2022. The themes support the five principles of the [SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework](#).

Water for Health: Access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene

- A quarter of the global population – 2 billion people – use unsafe drinking water sources. Half of humanity – 3.6 billion people – live without safely managed sanitation. And 1 in 3 people – 2.3 billion – lack basic handwashing facilities at home. For at least 3 billion people, mostly in developing countries, the quality of the water they depend on is unknown because the data is not collected routinely. ([WHO/UNICEF 2021/UN-Water 2021](#))
- Almost half of the schools in the world do not have proper handwashing facilities with soap and water. Every day, more than 700 children under the age of five die from diarrhea linked to unsafe water, sanitation and poor hygiene. ([WHO/UNICEF 2020/UNICEF, 2021](#))
- Universal access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene is critical to global health. On average, a four-fold increase in current rates of progress would be required to achieve universal coverage by 2030. Achieving these targets would help save 829,000 lives annually, which is currently the number of people that die from diseases directly related to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices. ([United Nations, 2022](#))

Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-Energy-Food Nexus and Sustainable Economic and Urban Development

- Eight out of 10 people who lack even basic drinking water service live in rural areas, and about half of them live in least developed countries. In 2019, more than 733 million people lived in countries with high and critical levels of water stress. ([WHO/UNICEF](#))
- 72 per cent of all water withdrawals are used by agriculture, 16 per cent by municipalities for households and services, and 12 per cent by industries. Global water demand is expected to increase by 20-30 per cent by 2050 due to growing demands. ([UN-Water 2019](#))

- The number of city inhabitants lacking safely managed drinking water has increased by more than 50% since 2000. While 86 per cent of people in urban areas have safely managed drinking water services, only 60 per cent of people in rural areas have them. ([UN-Water 2021/WHO/UNICEF 2021](#))

Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: Source to Sea, Biodiversity, Climate, Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction

- Almost three quarters of all recent disasters are water-related, having caused economic damage of almost \$700 billion in the past 20 years. ([UN-Water, 2020](#))
- Over a fifth of the world's basins have recently experienced either rapid increases in their surface water area indicative of flooding, a growth in reservoirs and newly inundated land; or rapid declines in surface water area indicating drying up of lakes, reservoirs, wetlands, floodplains and seasonal water bodies. ([UN-Water 2021](#))
- Water-related hazards have increased in frequency over the past 20 years. Since 2000, flood-related disasters have increased by 134 per cent, and the number and duration of droughts also increased by 29 per cent. ([WMO 2021](#))
- Wetlands are considered the most biologically diverse of all ecosystems and are breeding grounds for 40 per cent of the world's plant and animal species. Over the past 300 years, over 85 per cent of the planet's wetlands have been lost. Other water-related ecosystems across the planet have also rapidly changed. One in five rivers basins have experienced high fluctuations in surface water over the past five years. Key drivers of these changes include population growth, changes to land cover and land use, and climate change. ([UN-Water, 2021](#))
- The global climate crisis is inextricably linked to water. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C, compared to 2°C, can have major implications on water resources as it may reduce the proportion of the world's population exposed to an increase in water stress induced by climate change. ([UN-Water, 2019](#)).

Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross Sectoral Cooperation and Water Across the 2030 Agenda

- Transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers are shared by 153 countries around the world. According to data collected from 129 countries, only 32 countries reported that 90 per cent or more of their transboundary water was covered by operational arrangements in 2020, an increase from 22 countries in 2017. ([United Nations, 2022](#))
- In Europe and Northern America, 24 out of 42 countries are covered by operational arrangements, compared to 5 out of 42 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and a total of three countries across the rest of the world. ([United Nations, 2022](#))
- Only 24 countries report that all their transboundary basins are covered by cooperation arrangements. ([UN-Water 2021](#))

Water Action Decade: Accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade, including through the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan

- To meet the global target on integrated water resources management, the average global implementation rate needs to double. Additional efforts are needed to increase investment in water and sanitation and to further cooperation among countries sharing transboundary waters. ([United Nations, 2022](#))
- Water-use efficiency improved by 12 per cent from 2015 to 2019 – from \$17.4 to \$19.4 per cubic metre. But in agriculture, the largest water-use sector, it was only \$0.63 per cubic metre in 2019. Increasing the productivity of agricultural water is key to improving water-use efficiency. ([United Nations, 2022](#))
- From 2016 to 2020, the world population using safely managed sanitation services increased from 47 per cent to 54 per cent. If historical rates of progress continue, the world will reach 67 per cent coverage by 2030. However, this will leave 2.8 billion people without access. Meeting drinking water, sanitation and hygiene targets by 2030 will require, on average, a fourfold increase in the pace of progress, and some countries need to work even faster. ([United Nations, 2022](#))
- Agricultural and untreated wastewater pose two of the gravest threats to environmental water quality globally. With a well-developed monitoring system, water-quality issues could be identified at an early stage, allowing mitigation measures to be introduced before severe deterioration occurs. ([United Nations, 2022](#))