

# 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



**Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools**  
**Special focus on COVID-19**

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# HIGHLIGHTS

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).

## JMP service ladders for WASH in schools

SERVICE LEVEL	DRINKING WATER	SANITATION	HYGIENE
<b>BASIC SERVICE</b>	Drinking water from an improved source and water is available at the school at the time of the survey	Improved sanitation facilities at the school that are single-sex and usable (available, functional and private) at the time of the survey	Handwashing facilities with water and soap available at the school at the time of the survey
<b>LIMITED SERVICE</b>	Drinking water from an improved source but water is unavailable at the school at the time of the survey	Improved sanitation facilities at the school that are either not single-sex or not usable at the time of the survey	Handwashing facilities with water but no soap available at the school at the time of the survey
<b>NO SERVICE</b>	Drinking water from an unimproved source or no water source at the school	Unimproved sanitation facilities or no sanitation facilities at the school	No handwashing facilities or no water available at the school

**FIGURE 1** JMP service ladders for global monitoring of WASH in schools

### 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<sup>1</sup> 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.

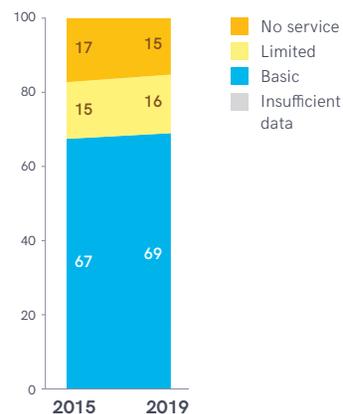
<sup>1</sup> INFORM COVID-19 Risk Index countries classified as ‘high’ or ‘very high’ risk of health and humanitarian impacts overwhelming national response capacity and requiring humanitarian assistance <<https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Covid-19>>.

# DRINKING WATER IN SCHOOLS

## In 2019,

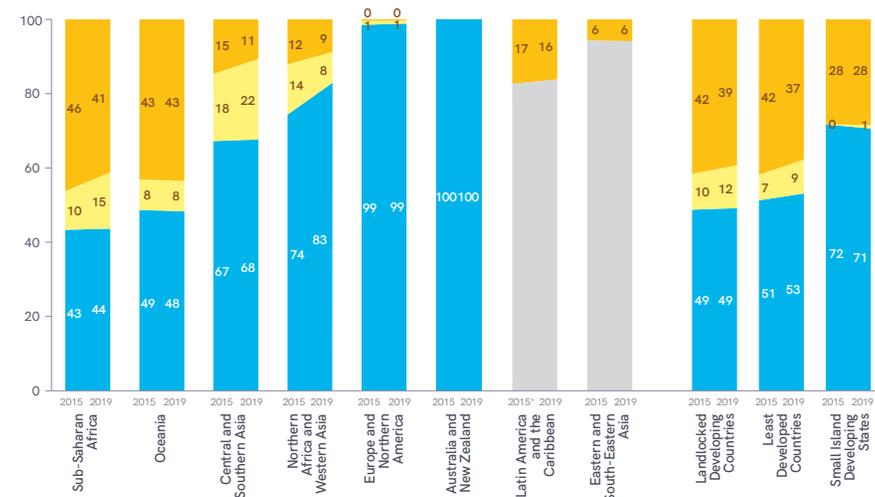
- 120 countries and 6 out of 8 SDG regions had estimates for basic drinking water services in schools, representing 60% of the global school-age population.
- 69% of schools had a basic drinking water service (improved source with water available at the time of the survey); 16% had a limited service (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<sup>1</sup>, 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



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

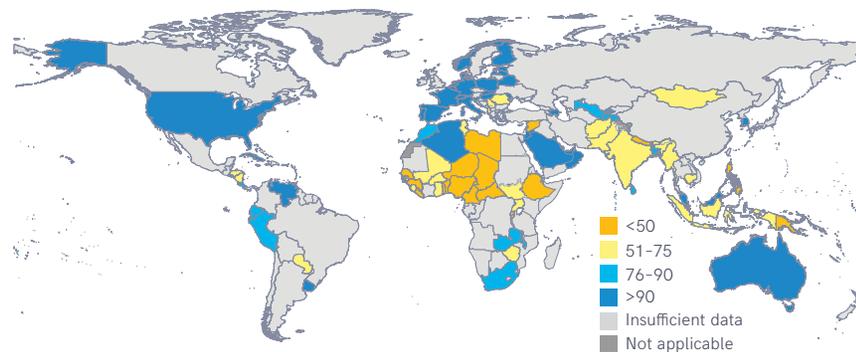
## 6 out of 8 SDG regions had estimates for basic drinking water services in 2019



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

\*The values for Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015 were 69% for basic services and 14% for limited services.

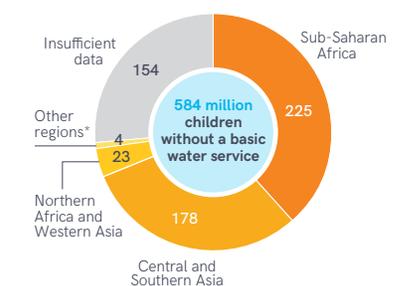
## 76 out of 120 countries<sup>2</sup> had >75% coverage of basic drinking water services in schools in 2019



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

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



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

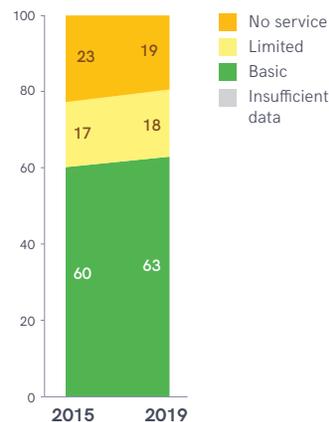
\* Oceania, Europe and Northern America, Australia and New Zealand

# SANITATION IN SCHOOLS

## 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

## Globally, 63% of schools had a basic sanitation service in 2019



**FIGURE 6** Global coverage of sanitation in schools, 2019 (%)

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



**FIGURE 7** Regional coverage of sanitation in schools, 2019 (%)

## 71 out of 117 countries had >75% coverage of basic sanitation services in schools in 2019



## Over half of children without a basic sanitation service at school lived in 2 SDG regions in 2019



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