

WORLD TOILET DAY 2024: FACTSHEET



19 November
**WORLD
TOILET
DAY**
2024 Sanitation for peace



Quick facts about World Toilet Day

- **World Toilet Day is held every year on 19 November.** It has been an annual United Nations Observance since 2013.
- **World Toilet Day raises awareness** of the 3.5 billion people living without access to safe toilets.
- **World Toilet Day is about the ‘Countdown to 2030’** – accelerating action to tackle the global sanitation crisis and achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030.
- **The World Toilet Day global campaign**, coordinated by UN-Water, is live at www.worldtoiletday.org and on social media with the hashtag #WorldToiletDay. In support of the campaign, individuals, organizations, governments, companies and schools promote the issues online and hold real-life events.
- **World Toilet Day and World Water Day share the same theme**, proposed every year by UN-Water – the United Nations’ coordination mechanism for water and sanitation. Explore previous themes [here](#).

World Toilet Day 2024 campaign: ‘Toilets: A Place for Peace’

This year’s campaign, ‘Toilets – A Place for Peace’, highlights how broken or inadequate sanitation systems affect people’s lives, and shows how sustainable sanitation is essential to a healthy and stable society.

Here, we explain the three key messages of the campaign:

1. **“Toilets are a place for peace. This essential space, at the centre of our lives, should be safe and secure. But for billions of people, sanitation is under threat from conflict, climate change, disasters and neglect.”**
 - Sanitation is a human right, yet billions of people still live without a safe toilet. Many of these people live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
 - A toilet should be a secure, hygienic and private place where people can relieve themselves in dignity and safety – and it should be connected to a safely managed sanitation system to properly dispose of waste.
 - Conflict can lead to damage, destruction and disrepair of toilets, sanitation infrastructure and services, and can prevent people from freely using sanitation facilities or being able to collect enough water for their needs.
 - Attacks on civilian infrastructure, including water systems, violate international humanitarian law. In armed conflict, attacks can destroy sanitation infrastructure, injure workers and cut off the power that keeps sanitation and water systems running.

- Extreme weather events, and disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis, can destroy or disrupt sanitation systems. Drought can affect water-based sanitation systems and waste treatment processes, and flooding can damage toilets, buildings and pipes, and cause faecal waste to spread into the environment.
- The institutional neglect of sanitation in many parts of the world – in prioritization, funding and maintenance – affects the quality and reliability of services and undermines progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) – water and sanitation for all by 2030 – promised by all UN Member States.
- Displaced people can struggle to access safe sanitation. In turn, interventions by governments or agencies to provide WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) in temporary or emergency settings can cause tensions with local communities over access to services, use of local resources, location of toilets and boreholes, among other issues.

2. “Toilets are a place for protection. By creating a barrier between us and our waste, sanitation services are essential for public and environmental health. But when toilet systems are inadequate, damaged or broken, pollution spreads and deadly diseases get unleashed.”

- A safely managed sanitation system consists of a four-stage ‘sanitation chain’:
 1. Containment: Human waste must be deposited into a hygienic toilet and stored in a sealed pit or tank, separated from human contact. On-site containment can also safely treat waste in-situ.
 2. Transport: If not treated onsite, pipes or latrine emptying services must move the waste to the treatment stage.
 3. Treatment: Waste must be processed into treated wastewater and waste products that can be safely returned to the environment.
 4. Disposal or reuse: Safely treated human waste can be used for energy generation or as fertilizer in food production.
- Improperly disposed human waste, alongside unsafe water and poor hygiene practices, spreads diseases such as cholera and typhoid, with profound effects on infant mortality rates, malnutrition and chronic illness in the general population. To protect against these diseases, everyone in a community needs to have and use a safe toilet connected to safe treatment.
- Due to population growth, accelerated urbanization and economic development, the quantity of wastewater being generated and its overall pollution load are increasing globally.
- For maximum public and environmental health benefits, sanitation services and systems for all must be safely managed and resilient to all shocks and stressors.

3. “Toilets are a place for progress. Sanitation is a human right. It protects everyone’s dignity, and especially transforms the lives of women and girls. More investment and better governance of sanitation are critical for a fairer, more peaceful world.”

- As a human right, sanitation is fundamental to everyone’s health, dignity and prosperity. The right to sanitation entitles everyone to have safe and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life – at home, school, work and in public places – that is private, hygienic, and socially and culturally acceptable.
- The world is seriously off track to achieve safely managed sanitation for all by 2030 – one of the targets of SDG 6. This lack of progress hinders efforts across many other SDGs, particularly on nutrition, health, gender equality, education, sustainability and a clean environment.
- For women and girls in particular, a lack of safely managed sanitation, water and hygiene services leaves them more vulnerable to abuse, attack and ill-health, affecting their ability to study, work and live in dignity.
- Governments must ensure that sanitation and water services can withstand and be sustained during and after extreme weather events, disasters and conflicts, to enable hygiene, protect public health, reduce the displacement of people and minimize tensions within and between communities.
- More investment in sanitation systems and in the essential workers needed to run them has many wider benefits, including the provision of a critical basic service to underpin a clean and resilient society and economy and also to boost the economy and social stability through the creation of decent work.

Key facts

- 3.5 billion people still live without safely managed sanitation, including 419 million who practise open defecation. ([WHO/UNICEF, 2023](#))
- 2.2 billion people still live without safely managed drinking water, including 115 million people who drink surface water. ([WHO/UNICEF, 2023](#))
- 2 billion people still lack basic hygiene services, including 653 million with no facility at all. ([WHO/UNICEF, 2023](#))
- Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene are responsible for the deaths of around 1,000 children under 5 every day. ([WHO, 2023](#))
- Improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene can save 1.4 million lives per year. ([WHO, 2023](#))
- Climate change has been declared an imminent threat to global health by the World Health Assembly, the main decision-making body of the World Health Organization. ([WHO, 2024](#))

- Globally, an estimated 2 billion people live in fragile and conflict-affected areas. ([OCHA, 2019](#))
- Children who live in extremely fragile contexts are three times more likely to practise open defecation, four times more likely to lack basic sanitation services and eight times more likely to lack basic drinking water services. ([UNICEF, 2024](#))
- Children under the age of 15 living in countries affected by protracted conflict are, on average, almost three times more likely to die from diarrhoeal diseases caused by a lack of safe water, sanitation and hygiene than by direct violence. ([UNICEF, 2019](#))
- Water-related disasters have dominated the list of disasters over the past 50 years and account for 70% of all deaths related to natural disasters. ([World Bank, 2022](#))
- Every \$1 invested in making infrastructure disaster-resilient saves \$4 in reconstruction. ([UNDRR, 2021](#))
- 42% of household wastewater is not treated properly, damaging ecosystems and human health. ([UN-Water, 2023](#))
- Only 11% of the estimated total of domestic and industrial wastewater produced is currently being reused. ([UNEP, 2023](#))

How can I take action?

Learn:

- **World Toilet Day website:** Explore the theme, get involved, and read stories from around the world at www.worldtoiletday.org
- **UN-Water Water Facts:** Find out how water and sanitation are connected to key issues, including climate change, peace, health, food and energy [here](#).
- **UN-Water SDG 6 Data Portal:** How many people have access to a toilet in your country, and how does it compare to other places in the world? Go to www.sdg6data.org and find out.

Share:

- **#WorldToiletDay campaign resources:** Share social media posts and videos, and download social media banners, posters, branded materials and logos on the [campaign Trello board](#).
- **Get in touch:** Are you already working in the fields of sanitation, water or peace, and would like to get involved in the campaign? Send us an email to campaigns@unwater.org and tell us more about your work and how you could get involved in the campaign.
- **Water Action Agenda:** Make a commitment on behalf of your organization, or browse over 800 others made by governments, civil society and other stakeholders to accelerate progress on water and sanitation [here](#).

Act:

- **Download the 'Activation Kit':** These fun, educational activities can be adapted for any age or group to help promote the issues. [Download the kit here.](#)
- **Take action in your community:**
Here are some ideas for activities you can do on the theme of 'Toilets – A Place for Peace'. Inspire others by posting on social media using #WorldToiletDay and/or sending photos and updates to campaigns@unwater.org so we can add your story to the online gallery:
 - Make an artwork, installation, song or film and share on social media.
 - Organize a talk in your school, university, community, office or organization.
 - Host a concert, play or sports event to raise awareness of the key issues.
 - If you are a teacher or student, organize or propose a lesson based on the campaign theme.
 - Visit a wastewater treatment plant and learn how sanitation systems work.
 - Organize a photo contest or local exhibition.
 - Contribute to or launch citizen science participatory projects aimed at promoting knowledge and collecting data and information.

Explore more

- [IOM: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\).](#)
- [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, Pedro Arrojo Agudo \(2023\): *Water as an argument for peace, twinning and cooperation.*](#)
- [UN Chronicle \(2018\): *Addressing Water, Sanitation and Disasters in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals.*](#)
- [UN Women \(2024\): *Gender Alert: Scarcity and fear: A gender analysis of the impact of the war in Gaza on vital services essential to women's and girls' health, safety, and dignity – Water, sanitation, and hygiene \(WASH\).*](#)
- [UN-Water: *SDG 6 Data Portal.*](#)
- [UN-Water: *Water and Peace facts.*](#)
- [UNHCR: *WASH in Emergencies.*](#)
- [UNICEF \(2024\): *Advocacy Brief: Menstrual Health and Hygiene: Transforming Lives and Communities.*](#)
- [UNICEF: *WASH for Peace.*](#)
- [UNICEF/WHO \(2024\): *Progress on drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools 2015–2023: special focus on menstrual health.*](#)
- [WaterAid: *Disasters.*](#)
- [WHO: *Landmark resolution passed on health and climate change.*](#)
- [WHO \(2023\): *Burden of disease attributable to unsafe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene.*](#)