

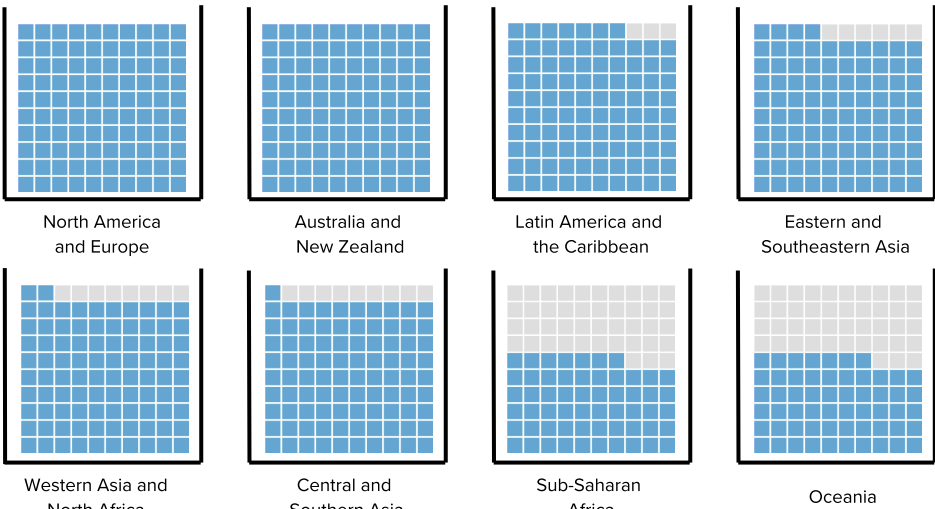
GLOBAL ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER

Universal access to safe drinking water is a fundamental need and human right. Securing access to clean, easily accessible water for all could have a major role in reducing preventable illness and death, particularly children. Though progress has been made to provide safe drinking water and sanitation to people throughout the world, billions of people still lack access to these services every day.

One-in-four people do not have access to clean drinking water.

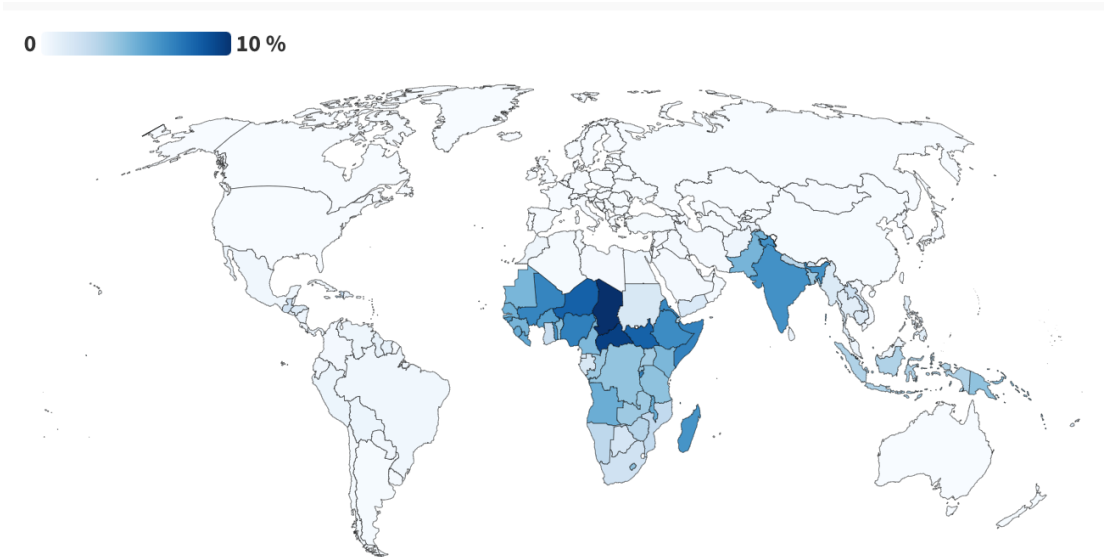
As of 2020, 2 billion people globally lack access to safely managed drinking water at home, with almost 800 million of those lacking even basic drinking water service.¹

Basic drinking water service means access to drinking water from an improved source such as a piped household water connection or public well, in which provided collection time is not more than 30 minutes for a round trip, including lining up and waiting.² There are considerable disparities in such access; while many developed countries have now achieved universal access, coverage with safely managed drinking water sources varies widely in developing regions.



Share of households with at least basic level of drinking water service, 2020

Unsafe water sources are responsible for 1.2 million deaths each year.



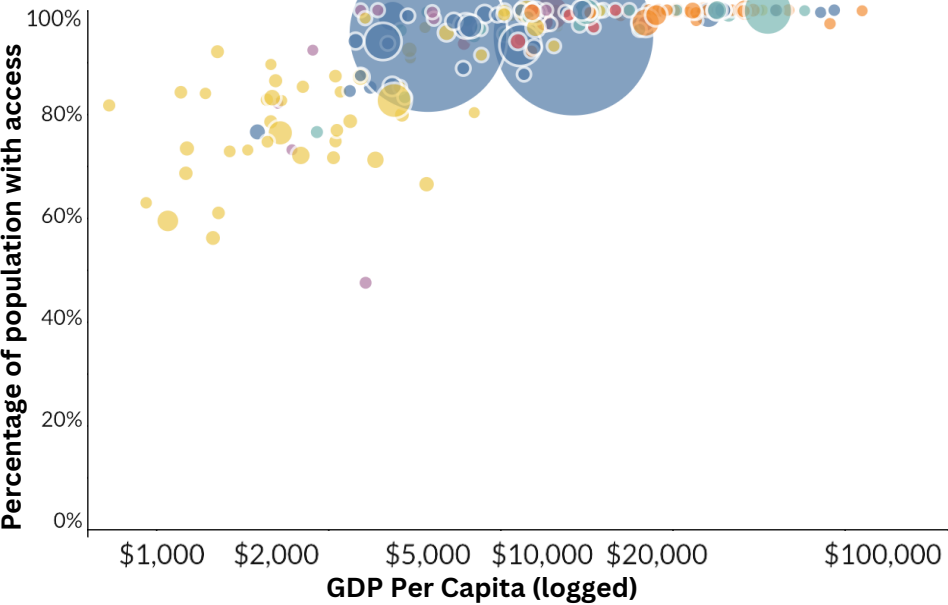
Percentage of deaths attributed to unsafe drinking water by country, 2020

Diseases from dirty water kill more people every year than all forms of violence, with 43% of those deaths are children under five years old.¹ Lack of access to safe water sources is a leading risk factor for infectious diseases, including cholera, diarrhea, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio.³ It also exacerbates malnutrition and childhood growth stunting.⁴

In 2017, the estimated 1.2 million people who died as a result of unsafe water sources represented 2.2% of global deaths. In low-income countries, it accounted for 6% of deaths.¹ According to the World Bank, it is estimated that universal access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene has the potential to reduce the global disease burden by 10%.⁵

Only 29% of people in low income countries have safely managed water supply, compared to 98% in high income countries.

Share of population with access to improved water sources vs. GDP per capita, 2020



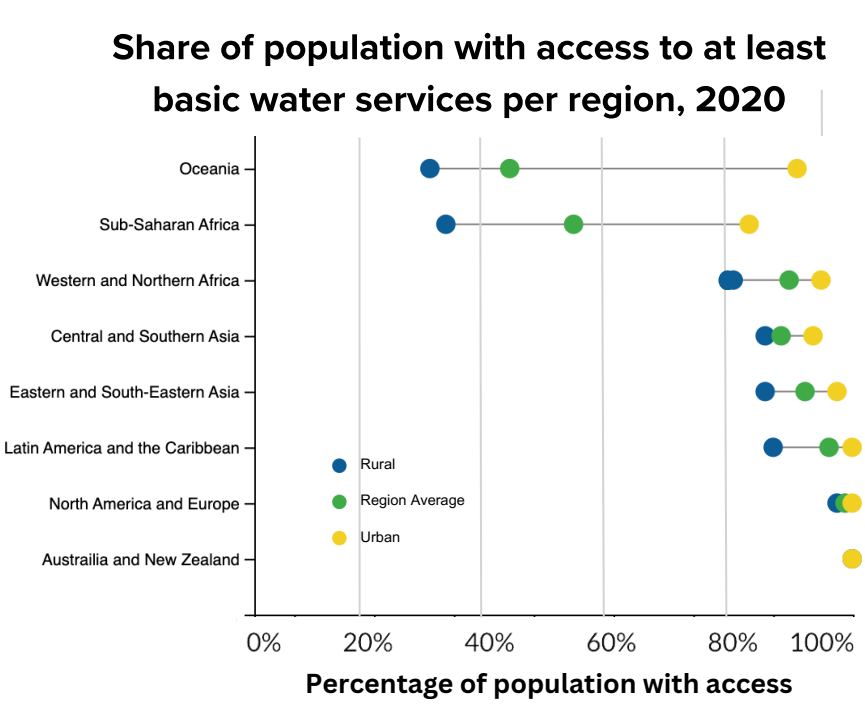
There are large disparities in both access to safely-managed clean water and deaths due to unsafe water between high-income and low-income countries. Safely managed drinking water is water from an improved water source which is located on premises, available when needed and free from contamination.

Most countries with greater than 90% of households with improved water have an average GDP per capita of more than \$10,000. We see, however, that there is a range of levels of access within groups

of countries with similar GDPs per capita, suggesting that there are other factors, such as population structure, natural location, governance and infrastructure, which may be contributing to the disparities.

8 out 10 people who continue to lack basic drinking water services live in rural areas.

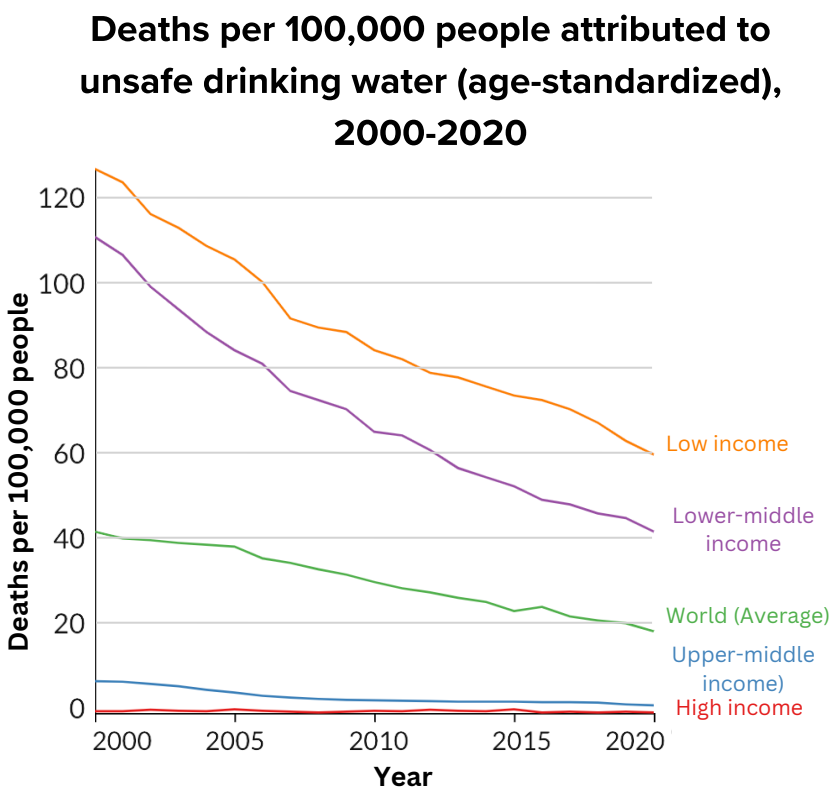
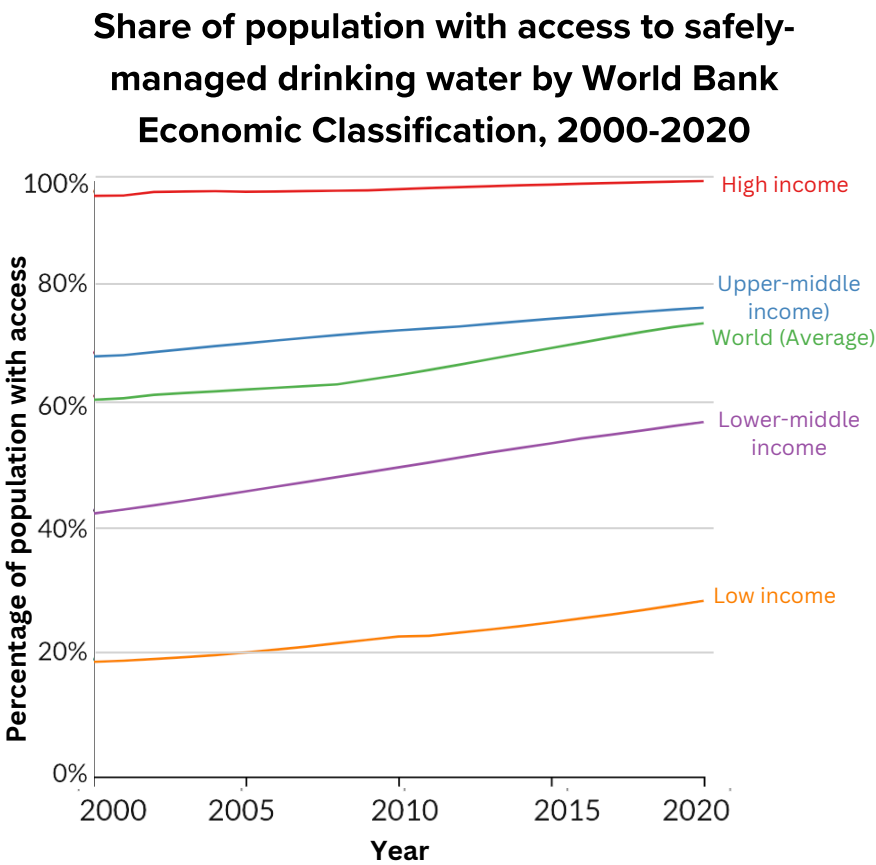
In addition to disparities across countries, there are also differences in access between rural and urban populations within countries. In 2020, 97 percent of the world's urban population had access to at least basic drinking water services, compared to just 82 percent of the rural population. This difference is even more stark for access to safely-managed drinking services, where 86% of urban populations had access, compared to 60% of the rural populations. While some of these differences may be due to urbanization and disproportionate economic growth in urban versus rural settings, infrastructure and natural boundaries also may play a role.



From 2015 to 2020, we saw an increase of 4% (70 to 74%) in global access to safely managed drinking water access.

We've seen many improvements over the past few decades in both an increase in access to safe drinking water and a reduction in the deaths attributed to unsafe water. These improvements have affected the lives of millions. Between 2015 and 2020, 107 million people gained access to safely managed drinking water at home, and 115 million people gained access to safe toilets at home.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Target 6.1 is to “achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all” by 2030. When the SDGs began in 2015, 70% of the global population had safe drinking of the global population had safe drinking water. In 2020, five years later, we’ve seen an increase of four percentage to 74%. At the current rate, however, the SDG target *will not* be reached. Further work and monitoring is necessary.



Achieving global universal access to safe water will be especially challenging for the 41 countries where over one-fifth of the population used unimproved drinking water sources in 2015, which are largely concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. Special emphasis in these countries and the global community writ-large should be placed on rural and impoverished populations, as significant disparities fall upon these lines. While progress has undoubtedly been made, additional work to reach the most vulnerable is of great importance.

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Sources

- ¹ Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 (GBD 2019) Results. Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2021.
- ² WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP)
- ³ World Health Organization. Guidelines for drinking-water quality: second addendum. Vol. 1, Recommendations. World Health Organization, 2008.
- ⁴ World Health Organization. WHO (2019) – Fact sheet – Sanitation. Updated June 2019.
- ⁵ World Health Organization. Global costs and benefits of drinking water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage. Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO), 2012.

Data from: The World Bank, World Health Organization/UNICEF's JMP, and the Institute for Health Metrics. For more information on the data, please visit https://github.com/atowey-uchi/data_visualization/tree/main/drinking_water