

MDG Progress on Access to Safe Drinking Water by Region

Description

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—adopted by the United Nations in 2000—established a set of targets for improving the lives of the world’s poor, ranging from eradicating extreme hunger to reducing child mortality and ensuring environmental sustainability. These targets, agreed to by all countries and leading development institutions throughout the world, consist of eight goals and 21 targets. See Chapter 4 for a fuller description of the MDGs.

Access to safe drink water is a basic human right, but this basic right is not being met universally. In many parts of the world, particularly sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania, a lack of clean water adversely affects human health and development. Using 1990 as a baseline, goal 7 of the MDGs seeks to reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.

At the global level, we are on track to meeting the target for improving access to safe drinking water. But some areas are performing better than others, highlighting a growth in regional disparities in access to safe drinking water. Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and much of Asia have met or are on track to meet the established targets. But in Sub-Saharan Africa and in many rural areas, there has been no progress or conditions have worsened. The global community must intensify efforts in these regions if they hope to achieve the established 2015 targets.

Limitations

These data give a good picture of the current lack of access to improved water and sanitation services, but comparison from different assessments should be done with extreme care, or not at all, because of changing definitions.

Country-reported data may reflect national definitions of “improved,” unlike survey data, which were standardized as much as possible. For example, in many African countries the population “without access” to improved sanitation means people with no access to any sanitary facility. In Latin America and the Caribbean, however, it is more likely that those “without access” in fact have a sanitary facility, but the facility is deemed unsatisfactory by local or national authorities. Low coverage figures for Latin

America and the Caribbean may in part be a reflection of the comparatively narrow definitions used within that region.

Changes in the source of data also complicate comparisons over time. Prior to 2000, for example, data collected by WHO was provider-based and was collected from service providers, such as utilities, ministries, and water agencies. The data shown here, however, are sometimes user-based and was collected from household surveys and censuses. User-based data are more likely to include improvements installed by households or local communities and gives a more complete picture of water supply and sanitation coverage.

SOURCES

United Nations. 2007. *The Millennium Development Goals Report*. <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Data/2007%20Stat%20Annex%20current%20indicators.pdf>.

United Nations. 2007. *MDG Progress Chart 2007*. http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2007/MDG_Report_2007_Progress_Chart_en.pdf.

DATA TABLE 5 MDG Progress on Access to Safe Drinking Water by Region

	1990			2004			2015 Target			On Target?
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	
	Northern Africa	95	82	89	96	86	91	98	91	
Sub-Saharan Africa	82	36	49	80	42	56	91	68	75	No progress or deterioration
Latin America and the Caribbean	93	60	83	96	73	91	97	80	92	Target Met or Close to Being Met
Eastern Asia	99	59	71	93	67	78	100	80	86	On Target
Southern Asia	90	66	72	94	81	85	95	83	86	Target Met or Close to Being Met
South-Eastern Asia	93	68	76	89	77	82	97	84	88	On Target
Western Asia	94	70	85	97	79	91	97	85	93	Target Met or Close to Being Met
Oceania	92	39	51	80	40	51	96	70	76	No progress or deterioration
Commonwealth of Independent States*	97	84	92	99	80	92	99	92	96	Target Nearly Met in Europe but No Progress or Deterioration in Asia

*Commonwealth of Independent States comprises Belarus, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine in Europe, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in Asia