

FACTSHEET

WORLD WATER DAY

2026

Ten things to know about World Water Day

1. World Water Day is celebrated on 22 March.
2. The 2026 World Water Day campaign – called ‘Where water flows, equality grows’ – focuses on safe water and sanitation as human rights and critical enablers of gender equality.
3. The aim of the campaign is to inspire action towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) “to ensure safe water and sanitation for all” and SDG 5 “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.
4. The 2026 campaign is led by UNICEF and UN Women, who co-coordinate a dedicated Task Force of over 30 UN-Water Members and Partners.
5. Everything you need to know about the World Water Day 2026 campaign can be found at www.worldwaterday.org
6. To support World Water Day, millions of people and organizations host events and promote the issues in real life and online with the hashtag #WorldWaterDay.
7. In 2025, the campaign reached 63.5 billion accounts across social media and online channels, with 154,400 unique authors, and 2.9 million accounts using #WorldWaterDay.
8. World Water Day is coordinated by UN-Water, the UN’s inter-agency coordination mechanism on water and sanitation.
9. Each year, a theme is selected that spotlights a key issue affecting the 2.1 billion people still living without access to safe water close to home.
10. World Water Day has been a UN observance since 1993. Explore past themes and campaigns at www.unwater.org/our-work/world-water-day

Three key messages on water and gender equality

1. **The global water crisis affects everyone – but not equally.** Where people lack the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, inequalities flourish, with women and girls bearing the brunt. It’s time to centre women and girls in water solutions.
2. **Women must shape the future of water.** Water services must withstand climate change and meet everyone’s needs. We need a transformative, rights-based approach to solving the water crisis, where women’s voices, leadership and agency are fully recognized.
3. **Where water flows, equality grows.** When women and girls have equal voice in water decisions, services become more inclusive, sustainable and effective. We must invest in women’s leadership to make water a force for a healthier, more prosperous, gender-equal future that will benefit us all.

Key facts

- The 2015 UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation called on UN Member States to “promote both women’s leadership and their full, effective and equal participation in decision-making on water and sanitation management” and ensure that a “gender-based approach is adopted in relation to water and sanitation programmes”. ([UNGA, 2015](#))
- Worldwide, between 2000 and 2024, 2.2 billion people gained access to safely managed drinking water. ([WHO/UNICEF, 2025](#))
- Since 2015, 961 million people have gained access to safely managed drinking water. ([WHO/UNICEF, 2025](#))
- Globally, more than 1 billion women – more than a quarter of all women (27.1 per cent) – lack access to safely managed drinking water services, down from over a third in 2000 (39.2 per cent). Among these, an estimated 205 million women drink water from unimproved sources or surface water. ([UN Women/UNDESA, 2023](#))
- 380 million women and girls, or 9.5 per cent of the world’s female population, live with high or critical water stress, a number projected to increase to 674 million in 33 countries by 2050. ([UN Women/UNDESA, 2023](#))
- Worldwide, women make up just over one-fifth of the water sector workforce and remain underrepresented in decision-making roles. ([World Bank Water Data, accessed 17 November 2025](#))
- 1.8 billion people still do not have drinking water on-premises, and in two out of three households, women are primarily responsible for water collection. ([WHO/UNICEF, 2023](#))
- In 53 countries with available data, women and girls spend 250 million hours per day on water collection – over three times more than men and boys. ([UN Women/UNDESA, 2024](#))
- Globally, unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene are responsible for the deaths of around 1,000 children under five every day. ([WHO, 2023](#))
- 156 million girls aged 10–19 still lack access to basic hygiene services globally, compromising their health, dignity, and education. ([UNICEF, 2024](#))
- Approximately 43% of global newborn deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa, where only half of health care facilities have a water source on site. ([WHO/UNICEF, 2023](#))
- Globally, an estimated 1.5 billion women and girls live in countries facing high or very high exposure to droughts. ([UN Women, 2023](#))
- During the 2022 drought in the Horn of Africa, 9 million women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) faced dangers to their health and aggravated risks of gender-based violence. ([OCHA, 2022](#))
- 71% of water policies and plans include specific measures to reach women and girls. ([WHO/UN-Water, 2022](#))
- About 14% of countries still have no mechanisms to ensure women can participate equally in water-related decision-making and water management. ([UNEP-DHI, GWP, UN Women, 2025](#))
- 24 countries have recognized the rights of nature in law or constitutions – a movement that began with Ecuador in 2008. This growing body of ecological jurisprudence, based on Indigenous perspectives, affirms that water and other resources hold inherent rights to protection and preservation. ([UN Women/UNDESA, 2023](#))

Make a difference

Everyone can take action to learn, share and act for a more water-secure, gender-equal world.

Learn

- Explore **the campaign**, read stories and download resources: www.un.org/en/observances/water-day
- Dive into **UN-Water's Water Facts** on water and gender: www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-and-gender
- Read the **UN World Water Development Report 2026** on water and gender, to be launched on 19 March during the World Water Day celebration: www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report
- Check out UNICEF's action brief on **Adolescent Girls' Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**: www.unicef.org/documents/adolescent-girls-access-water-sanitation-hygiene
- Learn more in **Spotlight on SDG 6: From Commodity to Common Good: A Feminist Agenda to Tackle the World's Water Crisis**: www.unwater.org/sites/default/files/202307/from_commodity_to_common_good.pdf
- Take action with **Mainstreaming gender equality in water resource management: Global status and 7 pathways to progress**: www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/policy-brief-mainstreaming-gender-equality-in-water-resources-management-en.pdf

Share

- Use the hashtag **#WorldWaterDay** and highlight **Water Heroes** in your community — the women, girls, men and boys ensuring safe water, sanitation and hygiene for all.
- Use **campaign visuals, videos and facts** to help educate others and spur discussions: www.unwater.org/our-work/world-water-day
- Create your own **content** using editable campaign assets: trello.com/b/vDCctDEY/world-water-day
- Tell us about your activities at campaigns@unwater.org with the subject line 'World Water Day 2026'.

Act

- Join the conversation and help **drive decisions** shaping a more **water-secure future for all**.
- **Engage locally** and learn how water is managed where you live. Encourage inclusive participation by supporting community initiatives led by or benefitting women and girls.
- Use the **Activation Kit** to host activities in schools, communities, or workplaces: www.un.org/en/observances/water-day/resources
- Share your views on what water for equality means to you: trello.com/b/vDCctDEY/world-water-day