

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Regional overview

Water is a vector of sustainable development and is key to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Although there is an abundance of water on the planet, it is not always available in the quantity and quality needed. Water scarcity caused by climate change and ineffective management, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation all negatively impact food security, livelihood choices, health conditions and educational opportunities for poor families across the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. In recent years, there has been significant but still insufficient progress toward universal access to basic drinking water services. The cascading crises of the pandemic, inflation, increases in poverty, slow economic growth and fiscal restrictions mean that achieving Goal 6 by 2030 will be difficult. While Latin America and the Caribbean is expected to deliver on SDG target 6.a by 2030, targets 6.4, 6.6 and 6.b are significantly off course from being achieved on time. Although the region is making progress toward targets 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.5, progress has been too slow. The situation of each subregion and country is different, with some more advanced and others further behind the regional average.



> Key messages from the region

- Although the region has improved in ensuring availability of water and sanitation in recent years, in 2020, there were still 161 million people without access to safely managed drinking water and 431 million without access to safely managed sanitation. Access to these basic services is particularly limited for vulnerable groups, including Indigenous and Afrodescendent people.
- The region is facing a complex scenario in terms of water extraction and use, further exacerbated by water scarcity. As a result, water-related conflicts have increased considerably in recent years with an impact on economies, the political sphere, social stability, populations and the environment.
- Insufficient technical and statistical capacity, primarily at the local level, is one of the main limits on water governance in the region, leading to a lack of a harmonized series of indicators for monitoring and managing water basins throughout the region.
- ECLAC estimates that investing 1.3% of regional GDP annually over a 10-year period, with current technical capacities, would universalize access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation for the millions currently left behind. This would have multiple socioeconomic, health and environmental benefits, including creation of 3.6 million green jobs per year in construction, maintenance and operation, prevention of the spread of diseases including COVID-19, a reduction in contamination from untreated wastewater and higher enrolment of girls and women in education.

> Good practices from the region

- The Ministry of the Environment and Energy in Costa Rica recognized water “as an asset with economic, environmental and social value” and established a fee for the use of water. The scheme promotes rational water use, includes environmental sustainability criteria into drinking water rates and recognizes the importance of the maintenance of forests to protect the environment.
- The Dominican Republic created a Water Cabinet through its 2021–2036 National Water Pact to convene authorities and water managers on a weekly basis and strengthen inter-agency coordination and management of national water resources. As a result, commitments have been made to increase investments in water infrastructure, expand and improve existing networks, and build aqueducts and sanitation systems.
- The Regional Water Dialogues organized by ECLAC in February 2023 brought together multiple stakeholders from government, civil society, development banks and the private sector with the common aim of fulfilling Goal 6 and the human right to water and sanitation. At the meeting, the Regional Water Action Agenda 2023 was adopted, as an urgent call to mobilize political, technical, and financial resources for water management. The agenda is aligned with various agreements and treaties, including the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) and the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030.
- In Central America, ECLAC, in cooperation with seven ministries of finance or treasury and three ministries or secretariats of planning of the Central American Integration System (SICA) member countries, is implementing the multisectoral project “Disaster risk reduction and sustainable and inclusive adaptation to climate change in public investment” (RIDASICC), which seeks to build capacities for designing public investment projects, including water infrastructure investments.
- The ECLAC Regional Network and Observatory for Water Sustainability (ROSA) project aims to enhance national capacities for water transition and set up a Water Network and Observatory in the region. Five countries from Latin America and the Caribbean have already expressed their political commitment to pursuing a sustainable and inclusive water management transition in this context (Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Panama).

> Recommendations from ECLAC

Robust governance and effective national institutional frameworks are essential to implement policies and plans for the water transition. Improving cooperation across borders and sectors can help strengthen the links between development and humanitarian approaches. The mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the governance of water as well as the inclusion voices of youth and indigenous communities in public water policies and programmes can reduce water-related conflicts in the region. To overcome the water challenges in the region, ECLAC is promoting a sustainable and inclusive water transition based on the following four pillars of action:

- (i) Provide universal access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation in order to guarantee that human right, leaving no one behind.
- (ii) Eliminate water poverty, promoting equitable and affordable access through efficient, inclusive and progressive rates.
- (iii) Reverse the negative externalities related to pollution, overexploitation and increasingly frequent water-use conflicts.
- (iv) Transform water management from the current, linear model to a more circular model, promoting innovative practices and technologies in all sectors with a strategic dependency on water.

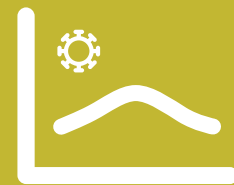
The human right to water and sanitation



Equitable and affordable access



Reversal of negative externalities

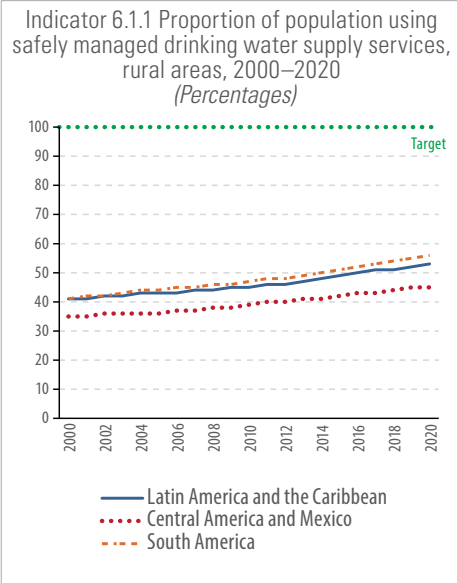


Promotion of innovative practices

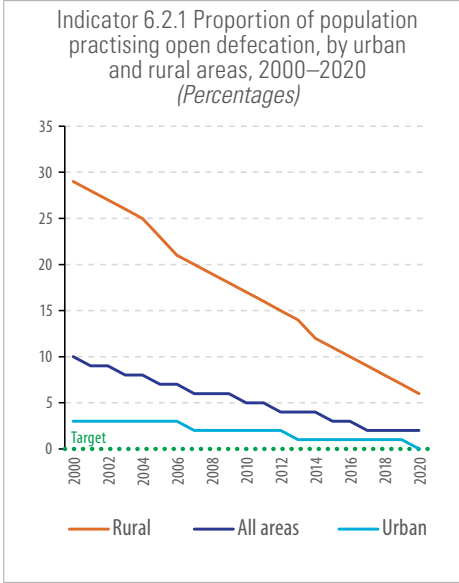


Key regional statistics

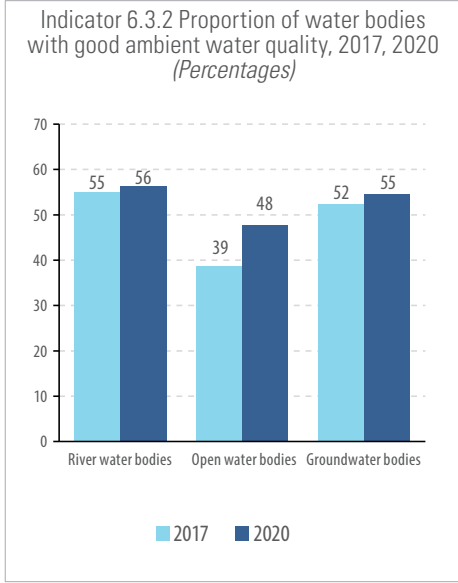
Target 6.1 Universal access to drinking water



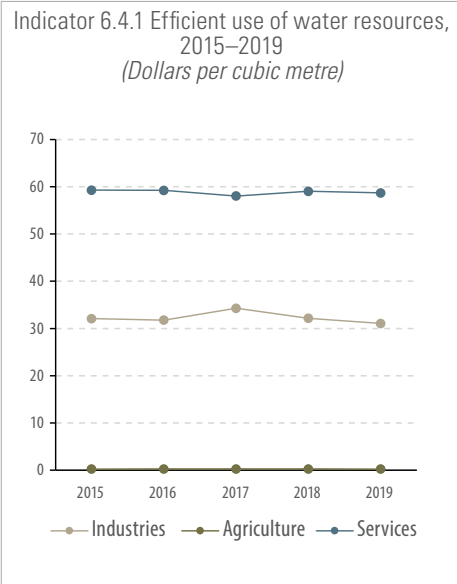
Target 6.2 Universal access to sanitation and hygiene



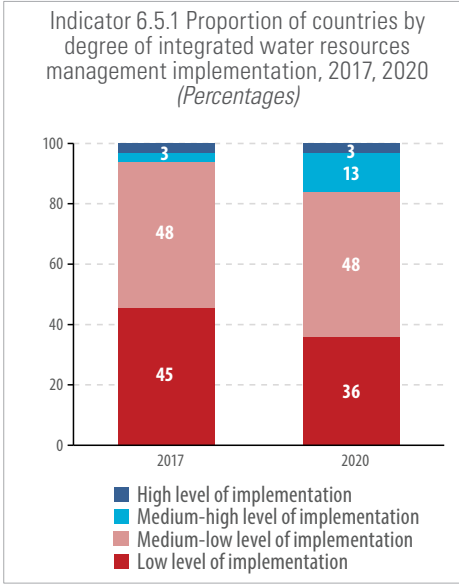
Target 6.3 Improve water quality



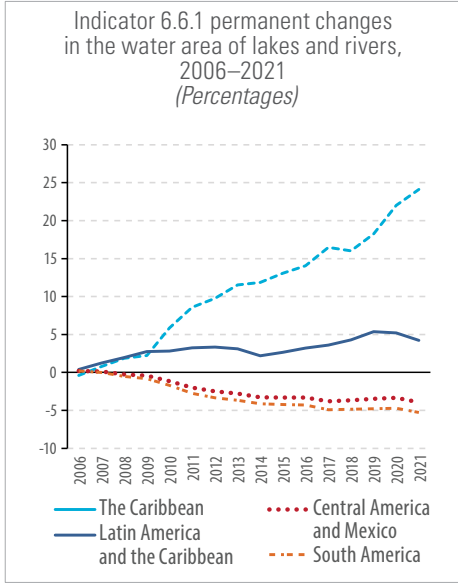
Target 6.4 Increase water-use efficiency



Target 6.5 Improve integrated water resources management



Target 6.6 Restore water related ecosystems by 2020



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of United Nations, Regional Knowledge Management Platform for the Sustainable Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean, "SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean: Statistical knowledge management hub" [online] <https://agenda2030lac.org/estadisticas/index.html>.

Note: Each indicator is comprised of one or more statistical series, which partially or fully cover the corresponding indicator. In the figures presented here, one or more statistical series were used for the respective indicator.