

Progress on Ambient Water Quality

Mid-term status of SDG Indicator 6.3.2
and acceleration needs, with a special
focus on Health

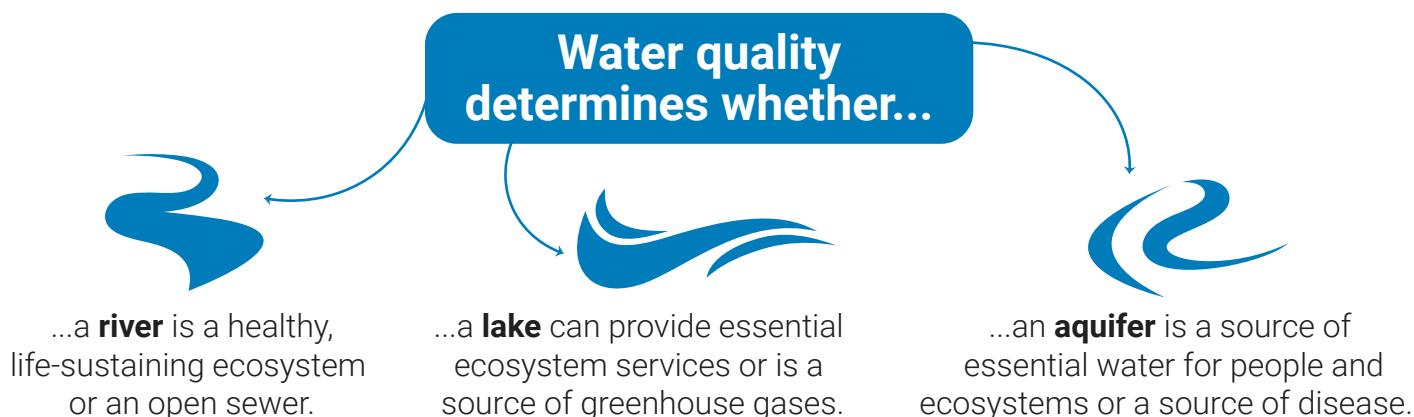
2024



Introduction

This Visual Summary presents the key messages and findings from the full 2024 Progress Report for SDG Indicator 6.3.2: **Progress on Ambient Water Quality Mid-term status of SDG Indicator 6.3.2 and acceleration needs, with a special focus on Health** ([full report here](#)).

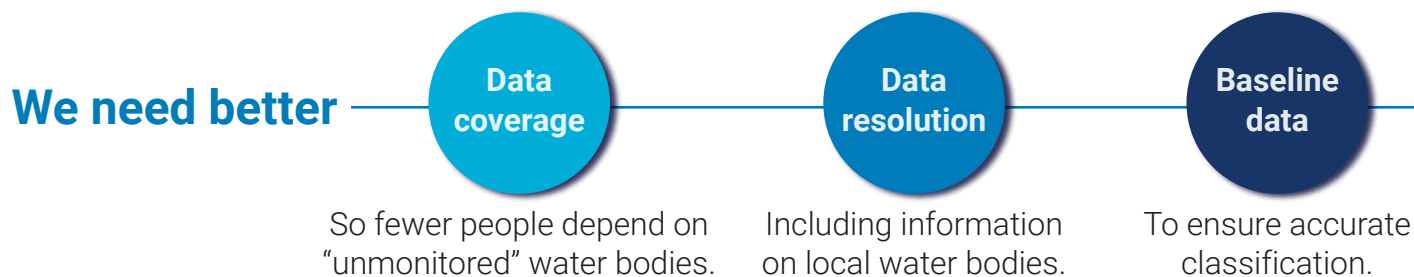
Water is universally valued, but its source is often not.



We need to recognize the interlinkages of water quality across sectors to leverage the synergies between **protecting and restoring water quality** and advancing other ambitions related to **health, social, economic and agricultural objectives**.

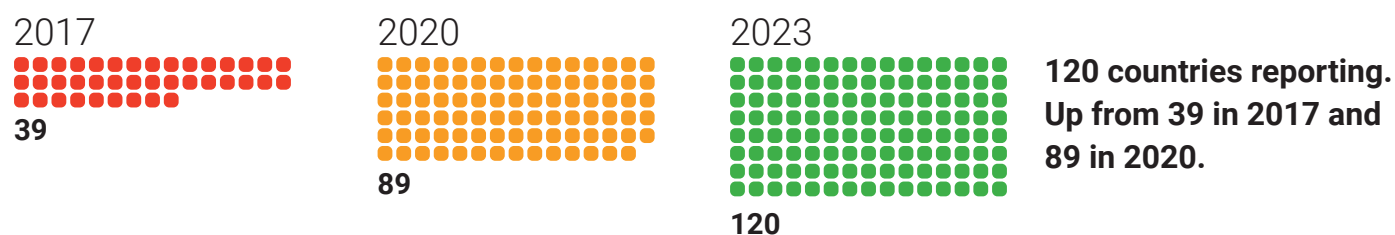
What will better data give us?

Robust water quality trend information is essential to understand how the anthropogenic stressors of water quality are impacting our freshwaters and their ability to provide the services we rely on.




Key Messages

Increased engagement is a positive sign, but this has further highlighted the critical need for monitoring to be improved in many countries.

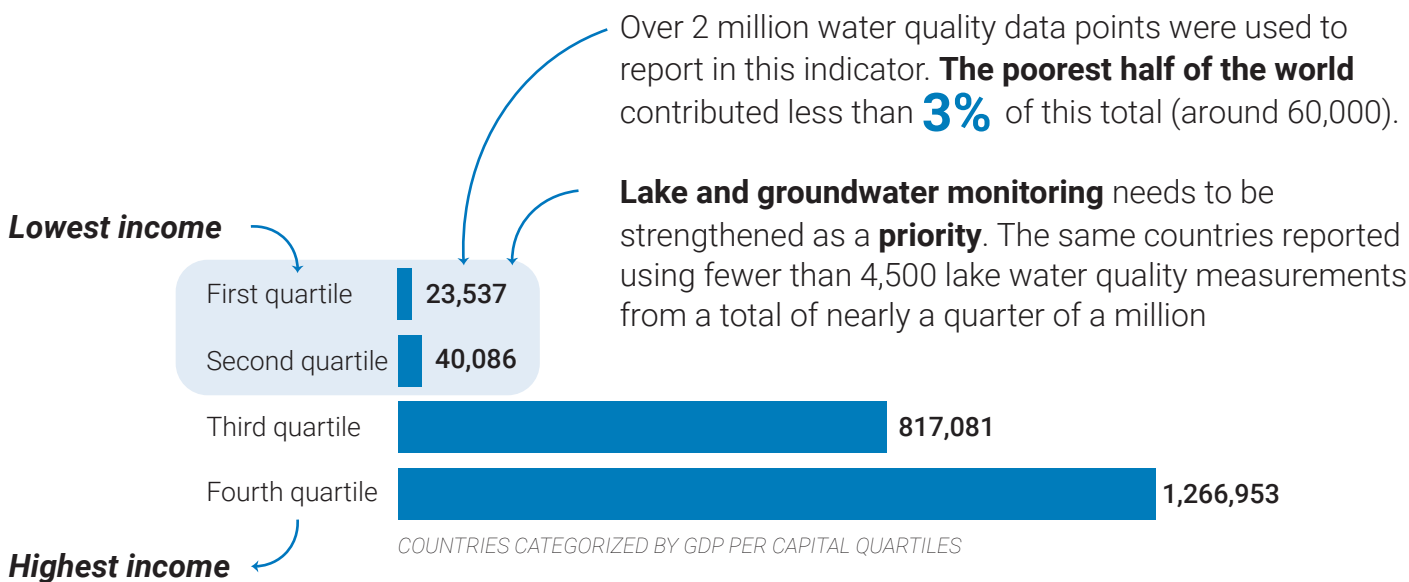


By 2030, the health and livelihoods of **4.8 billion people** could be **at risk** if current rates of water quality monitoring are not improved.


 Action on **water quality is needed** but collecting and reporting on basic water quality parameters is **beyond the capacity of many low-income countries**.

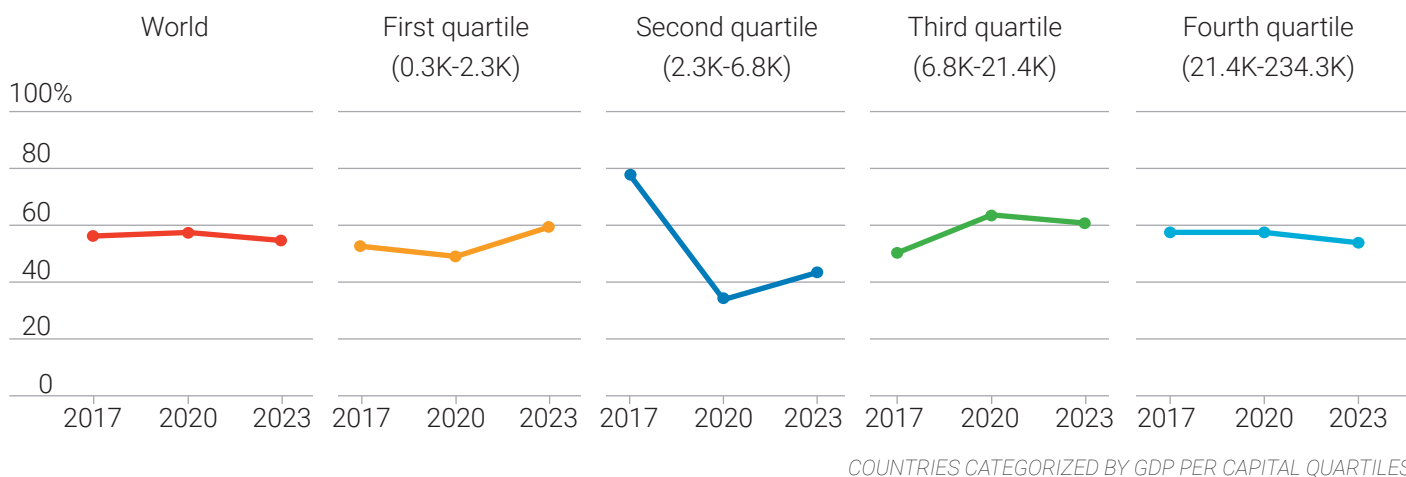


NUMBER OF MONITORING VALUES USED TO REPORT IN 2023



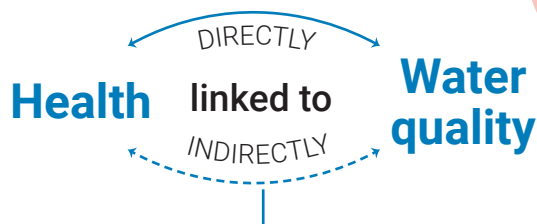
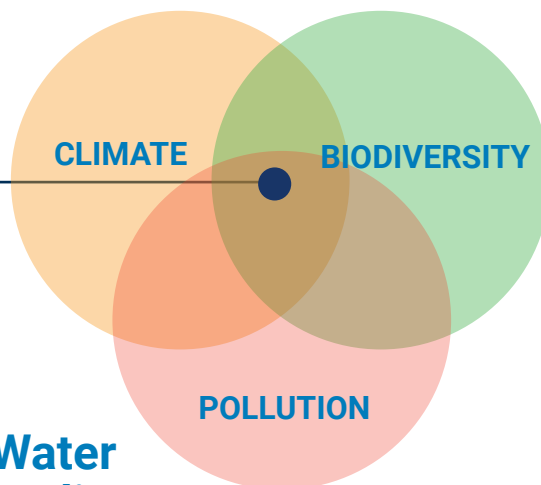
Where we have good data, this indicator shows that water quality is degrading. Where data are limited, we simply don't know—but the signs are not promising.

CHANGE IN THE PROPORTION OF WATER BODIES CLASSIFIED AS GOOD FOR COUNTRIES THAT REPORTED FOR ALL THREE YEARS



New health risk hot spots

emerge when we superimpose climate, biodiversity and pollution impacts onto water quality data gaps. Water quality information is urgently needed if mitigation and adaptation measures are to be effective.



Countries with low capacity to monitor and assess their freshwaters are unprepared to understand the impact and the subsequent effects on health and are predicted to:

Be the most impacted by **climate change**:

- Drought
- Floods

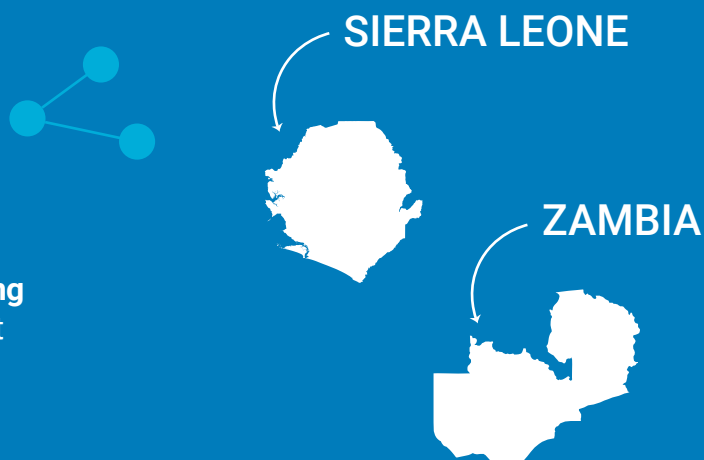
Predicted to experience the greatest **population growth**:

- Wastewater generation
- Urbanization and agricultural intensification

Prioritizing water quality monitoring will help us to understand how our freshwaters are changing, and how to minimize health risks.

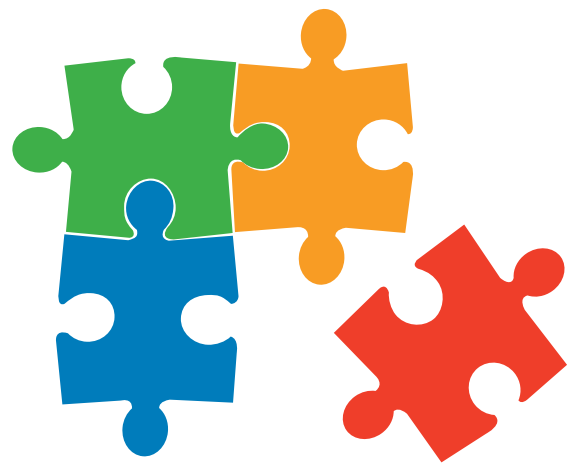
For the first time, citizen science data has been used for national SDG 6 reporting.

To improve data coverage Sierra Leone and Zambia combined **citizen-generated data with national monitoring data to report on ambient water quality**. This work is part of several pilot projects that aim to normalize the use of citizen science data for SDG 6 reporting.



The implementation of this indicator identifies capacity gaps and builds strong relationships between UNEP and countries.

This helps to ensure that the necessary capacity development is targeted and delivered where it will be **most effective**.



Data management is a weak link in the water quality monitoring and assessment chain. UNEP GEMS/Water can help to address this gap. Contact us at SDG632@un.org.

Key Recommendations

Many agencies tasked with monitoring and assessing their freshwaters lack the capacity to do so—this needs to change.

We call on:

Citizens
to collect and share
water quality data.

Governments
to fund routine and
regular monitoring
programmes.

**Private
organizations,
academic institutions
and public utilities**
to share data collected
through compliance
monitoring and
research projects.

Check how much data was used to calculate your country's indicator score at <https://sdg632hub.org/> and consider whether this is sufficient to protect national water resources.

Contact us at SDG632@un.org to find out how you can contribute to global water quality data collection.

Consider sharing your data through UNEP's global water quality database <https://gemstat.org/>

Conclusions

Progress on

Amount of **data** reported

Number of **countries**

But accelerated progress is needed if water quality is to be improved and SDG Target 6.3 is to be reached.

Water quality monitoring road map



Implementation of SDG Indicator 6.3.2 provides an opportunity for countries to **review current monitoring capacity**.

National authorities can contact UNEP GEMS/Water at **SDG632@un.org** for in-depth feedback on their submission and receive support on developing a national road map to **improve their water quality monitoring and assessment capacity**.

Future Indicator 6.3.2 implementation

Advances needed to accelerate progress towards Target 6.3:

01

FILL REGIONAL GAPS

Engagement in North Africa, and Asian regions

02

TARGETED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

To meet country needs

03

PROVIDE SDG-READY DATA

Focus on Earth Observation, Citizen Science and Modelled Data

04

RAISE AWARENESS

Water quality is interlinked with other sectors

05

SDG WATER QUALITY HUB DEVELOPMENT

Broaden its relevance for a wider audience

Way Forward

Monitoring alone will not solve the water quality crisis, but it is essential to decision making.



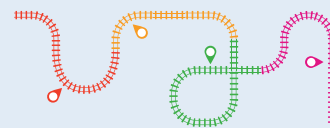
At the mid-point of the SDGs, through the implementation of this indicator **we better understand the challenges faced by national authorities** tasked with monitoring and assessing freshwater quality and the extent and type of data gaps that need to be filled.



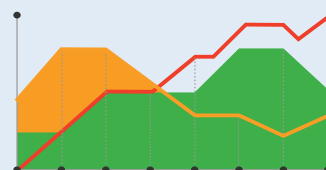
This indicator has made a significant contribution to understanding the scale of the challenge faced, and **real progress is being made to address these challenges through improved and targeted capacity development and support for the production of SDG-ready data.**



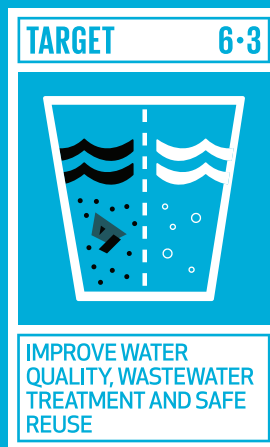
More work is needed, particularly to support efforts to protect and restore water quality, and to track progress toward SDG Target 6.3 (improve water quality).



Whether or not this progress is being made, can only be known through **the robust collection and assessment of water quality data.**



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



SDG 6 Progress Update Series, by SDG 6 global indicator

This Visual Summary is part of a series of reports providing an in-depth update and analysis of progress towards the different SDG 6 targets and identifies priority areas for acceleration: Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (SDG indicators 6.1.1, 6.2.1), Progress on wastewater treatment (6.3.1), Progress on ambient water quality (6.3.2), Progress on water-use efficiency (6.4.1), Progress on level of water stress (6.4.2), Progress on integrated water resources management (6.5.1), Progress on transboundary water cooperation (6.5.2), Progress on water-related ecosystems (6.6.1) and Progress on international cooperation and local participation (6.a.1, 6.b.1).

The reports are produced by the responsible custodian agencies, coordinated by UN-Water through the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 ([IMI-SDG6](#)). They present the latest available country, region and global data on the SDG 6 global indicators, and are published every two to three years.

See the full collection of reports and associated products at www.unwater.org/publications/sdg-6-progress-reports or scan the QR code below.

