

FAST FACTS



On climate and water

1. Climate change is exacerbating both **water scarcity** and **water-related hazards** (such as droughts), as rising temperatures disrupt precipitation patterns and the entire water cycle.
2. About **two billion people worldwide don't have access to safe drinking water today** (SDG report 2022) – a number that is expected to increase, exacerbated by climate change and population growth.
3. Only **0.5 per cent of water on Earth is useable** and available freshwater – and climate change is dangerously affecting that supply. Over the past twenty years, terrestrial water storage – including soil moisture, snow and ice – has dropped at a rate of 1 cm per year, with **major ramifications for water security**.
4. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C **would approximately halve the proportion of the world population expected to suffer water scarcity**, although there is considerable variability between regions.
5. Most of the freshwater used, about **70 per cent, is used for agriculture** (it takes between 2000 and 5000 liters of water, on average, to produce a person's daily food).
6. Since 2000, **flood-related disasters have risen by 134 per cent** compared with the two previous decades. Most of the flood-related deaths and economic losses were recorded in Asia.
7. Wetlands such as **mangroves, seagrasses, marshes and swamps are highly effective carbon sinks that absorb and store CO₂**, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
8. Wetlands also serve as a **buffer against extreme weather events**. They provide a **natural shield against storm surges** and **absorb excess water and precipitation**. Through the plants and microorganisms that they house, wetlands also provide water storage and purification.
9. Early warning systems for floods, droughts and other water-related hazards **provide a more than tenfold return on investment** and can significantly reduce disaster risk: a 24-hour warning of a coming storm can cut the ensuing damage by 30 per cent.
10. Water supply and sanitation systems that can withstand climate change could **save the lives of more than 360,000 infants every year**.