

FS 3.2 Water and Sanitation Access Data Gaps in LAC

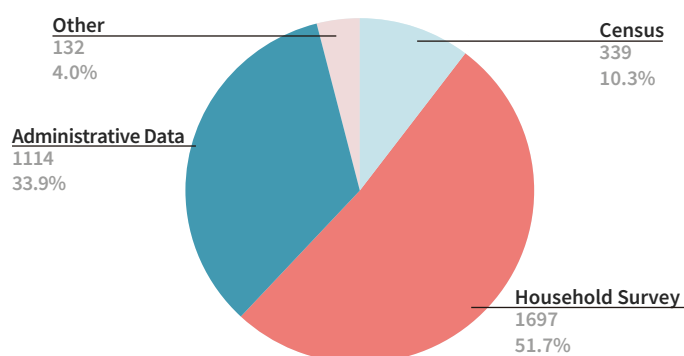
Key Takeaways

- Data gaps throughout the region make measuring clean drinking water and sanitation access in Latin America and the Caribbean a challenge.
- Household surveys are one of the most common sources of information related to water and sanitation access; however, an analysis of household surveys from the region found that only 15 of the 22 household surveys examined specifically ask about drinking water sources, and only 4 of 22 properly categorize improved water sources and sanitation facilities.
- These data gaps largely stem from the complexity of the concept of “safely managed access”. Concepts like continuity of water service, exclusivity of sanitation facilities, and proper disposal of waste are often ignored.

This factsheet outlines the key findings in the 2022 publication by the Water and Sanitation Division of the Inter-American Development Bank, entitled “Water and Sanitation Services in Latin America and the Caribbean: Overview of databases and information gaps”. The publication is available [here](#).

Proper metrics are essential to measuring the success of any initiative. The Joint Monitoring Program (JMP), the entity responsible for measuring progress on water access and sanitation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has established metrics with clear definitions that should be used by countries when collecting data. The JMP relies heavily on household surveys, with household surveys accounting for over 51 percent of their drinking water data sources and 50 percent of their sanitation data sources.

Drinking water



Sanitation

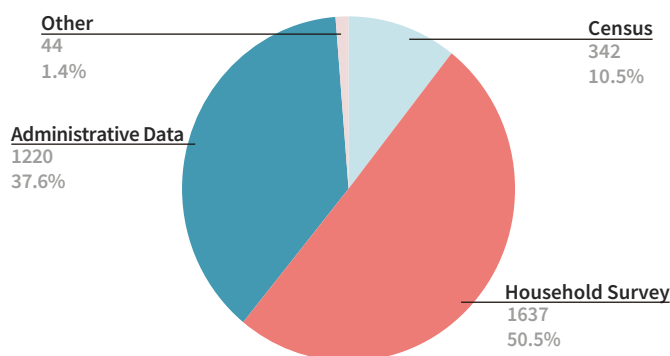


Figure 1: Data sources used by the JMP in the JMP 2021 progress update on WASH in households worldwide (JMP, 2021).

Quantifying access to clean drinking water and sanitation is a difficult task. The complexity of the subject requires equally complex metrics – for example, a household cannot be classified as having clean drinking water because it has piped water access. Is that water potable? Is it available consistently? Metrics measuring water and sanitation access must capture these various facets, which in turn requires the collection of a lot of information. The JMP metrics use specific terminology to measure different levels of access to make information comparable across countries, only some of which can be measured through household surveys (Table 1).

	Water	Sanitation
SDG	6.1. By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.	6.2. By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.
Indicator	6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	6.1.2. Proportion of population with access to (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water (available at home).

	Water	Sanitation
Definitions	Safely managed drinking water services: Drinking water from an improved water source that is accessible on premises, available when needed and free from faecal and priority chemical contamination.	(a) Safely managed sanitation: Use of improved facilities that are not shared with other households and where excreta are safely disposed of in situ or removed and treated offsite. (b) Available at home: a handwashing station with soap and water must be available in the home or on the property.
Sub-definitions	<p>Improved drinking water source: piped supplies, boreholes and tubewells, protected dug wells, protected springs, rainwater, water kiosks, and packaged and delivered water.</p> <p>Accessible on premises: the point of collection is within the dwelling, compound, yard or plot, or water is delivered to the household.</p> <p>Available when needed: if households report having 'sufficient' water, or water is available 'most of the time' (i.e. at least 12 hours per day or 4 days per week).</p> <p>Free from faecal and priority chemical contamination: water meets international standards for microbiological and chemical water quality specified in the WHO Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality.</p>	<p>Improved sanitation facilities: Improved sanitation facilities include wet sanitation technologies such as flush or pour flush toilets connected to sewer systems, septic tanks or pit latrines; and dry sanitation technologies such as dry pit latrines with slabs (constructed from materials that are durable and easy to clean), ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines, pit latrines with a slab, composting toilets and container-based sanitation.</p> <p>Not shared: not shared with other households.</p> <p>Excreta are safely disposed of in situ or removed and treated offsite: Excreta from on-site storage containers (pit latrines and septic tanks) can be treated and disposed of offsite, when faecal sludge is emptied from containers and delivered to treatment plants designed to receive faecal sludge. Excreta flushed into sewer networks can also be treated off-site, if the excreta reaches treatment plants and receives at least secondary treatment.</p>

Table 1: Definitions of terms associated with SDGs 6.1 and 6.2 (JMP, 2021).

For a household to have safely managed drinking water, the highest classification of drinking water access, the location of access, frequency of availability, and water quality must be known. Establishing whether a household has access to safely managed sanitation facilities requires being able to determine if their facilities are “improved”, of exclusive use to the household, and safely separate waste from contact with humans or the environment. The JMP 2021 reports broad data gaps for Latin America in the Caribbean, especially related to safely managed water access, drinking water quality, on site waste management, and hygiene (Table 2).

Data coverage for global WASH indicators	Water Access					Sanitation						Hygiene
	Basic water access	Safely managed	Accessible on premises	Available when needed	Free from contamination	Open defecation	Basic sanitation	Safely managed	Safely disposed of in situ	Emptied and treated	Wastewater treated	Basic Hygiene
Percentage of regional population with data available	93%	77%	94%	91%	77%	93%	93%	82%	13%	0%	91%	19%

Table 2: Data coverage for global WASH indicators in Latin America and the Caribbean (WHO/UNICEF, 2021).

While the JMP provides sample questions that allow for collection of the proper inputs for these metrics, many household surveys throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) do not follow these guidelines. As a result, countries throughout the region have incomparable metrics, and often use terminology to describe metrics imprecisely.

In the realm of water access, for example, 12 of the 22 countries included in the National Household Survey data set do not ask about the frequency of piped water availability while 15 do not have questions specifically about drinking water source. 41 percent neglect to ask if households have exclusive access to sanitation facilities. These inconsistencies lead to poor benchmarking and inappropriate comparisons, making it difficult to truly assess the status of SDG 6.1 and 6.2 throughout the region (Table 3).

Country	Asks about drinking water	Asks about location of water access	Asks about trucked water	Asks about bottled water use	Properly classifies springs and wells	Asks about continuity of water access	Asks if sanitation facilities are exclusive use	Properly classifies non-WC sanitation
ARG EPH 2020	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
BOL Encuesta de Hogares 2020	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗*	✗*	✓
BRA PNADC 2019	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
CHL CASEN 2020	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
COL GEIH 2020	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
CRI ENAHO 2020	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
DOM ENCFT 2020	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
ECU ENEMDU 2020	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗*	✓
GTM ENEI 2019	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
HND EPHPM 2018	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
HTI DHS 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
JAM SLC 2018	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
MEX ENIGH 2020	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
NIC EMNV 2014	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
PAN EHPM 2018	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
PER ENAHO 2020	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
PRY EPHC 2020	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
SLV EHPM 2020	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
SUR SLC 2017	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
TTO CSSP 2015	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
URY ECH 2020	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
VEN ENCOVI 2019	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗

* Questions are present in the survey for other years

Table 3: Thematic coverage from National Household Surveys from select countries in LAC (authors own elaboration for National Household Surveys in the region).

Considering these shortfalls, it is important to use supplemental information to close these data gaps. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) partnered with the Latina American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) to carry out the AmericasBarometer survey in 2018/19 and 2020/21 with the hope of closing some of these gaps. To do this, the IDB team designed and incorporated water access questions that aimed to differentiate the use of water sources and types of sources and include measurements of service continuity and water treatment options, while they incorporated sanitation questions that allowed for precise differentiation of facility types and types of drainage, as well as incorporating exclusivity of sanitation facilities.

The resulting analysis from the AmericaBarometer survey will be published in the Water and Sanitation Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (OLAS). A detailed breakdown of water and sanitation gaps in National Household Surveys throughout the region is available in the recent publication “Water and Sanitation Services in Latin America and the Caribbean: Overview of databases and information gaps” (IADB, 2022).

Sources: 1. JMP, 2021. “Data Sources.” Joint Monitoring Program. Accessed at: <https://washdata.org/monitoring/methods/data-sources>, April 3, 2022. 2. Datshkovsky, Libra, Gómez Vidal, 2022. “Water and Sanitation Services in Latin America and the Caribbean: Overview of databases and information gaps.” Inter-American Development Bank. 3. WHO, UNICEF, 2021. “Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2020: Five years into the SDGs.” Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2021. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

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