

# Six in ten people worldwide lack access to flush toilets or other adequate sanitation

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Flush toilets connected to sewage treatment facilities and similar forms of sanitation remain a rarity for 6 in 10 people in the world. Credit: Ingram Publishing/Thinkstock

It may be the 21st century, with all its technological marvels, but 6 out of every 10 people on Earth still do not have access to flush toilets or other adequate sanitation that protects the user and the surrounding community from harmful health effects, a new study has found. The research, published in ACS' journal *Environmental Science & Technology*, says the

number of people without access to improved sanitation is almost double the previous estimate.

Jamie Bartram and colleagues explain that the current definition of "improved sanitation" focuses on separating humans from human excrement, but does not include treating that sewage or other measures to prevent it from contaminating rivers, lakes and oceans. Using that definition, 2010 United Nations estimates concluded that 4.3 billion people had access to improved sanitation and 2.6 billion did not.

The new estimates used what the authors regarded as a more realistic definition from the standpoint of global health, since untreated sewage is a major cause of disease. They refined the definition of "improved sanitation" by discounting sewage systems lacking access to sewage treatment. They concluded that about 60 percent of the world's population does not have access to improved sanitation, up from the previous estimate of 38 percent.

**More information:** Article: [Sanitation: A Global Estimate of Sewerage Connections without Treatment and the Resulting Impact on MDG Progress](#), *Environmental Science & Technology*

Provided by American Chemical Society

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