



More than one-third of West Africans have no handwashing facility at home

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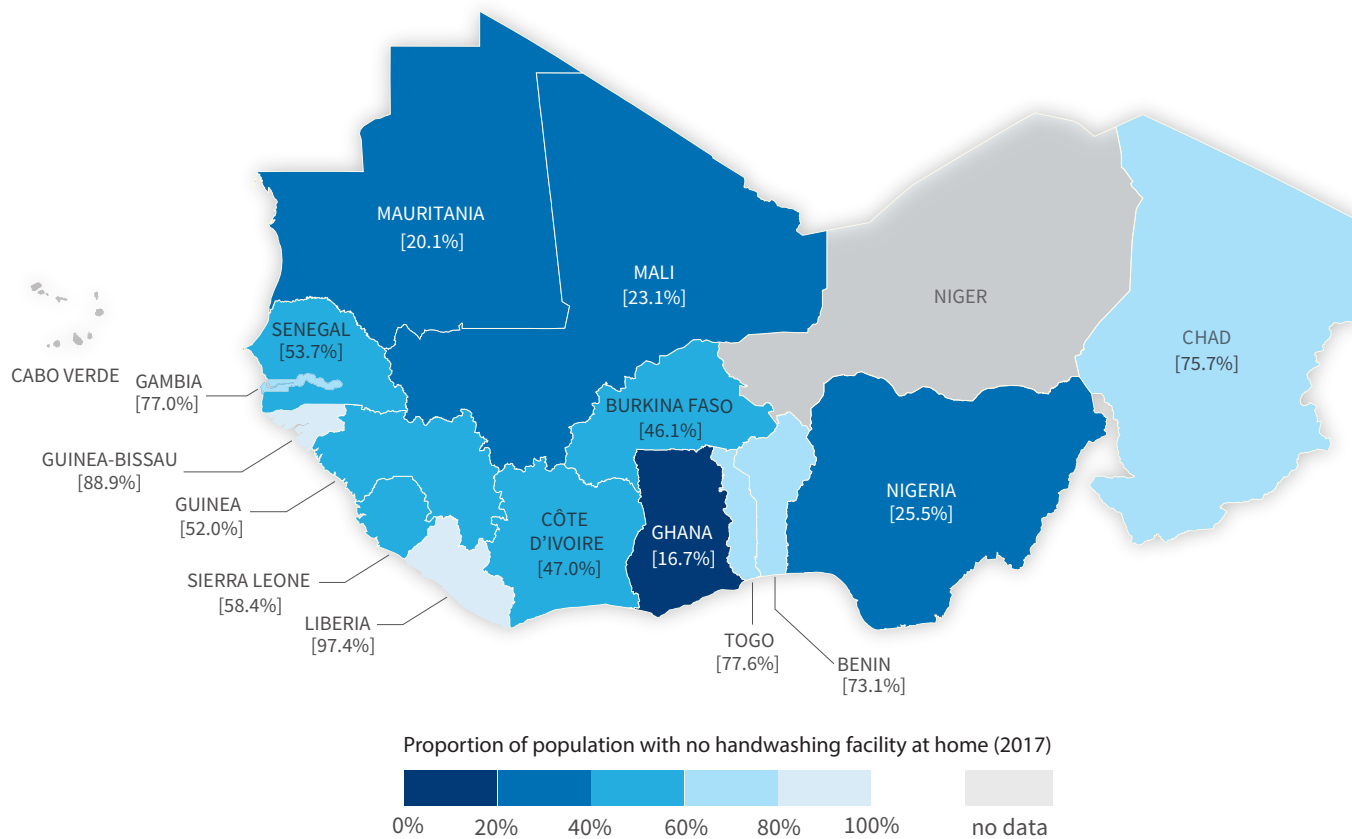
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MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF WEST AFRICANS HAVE NO HANDWASHING FACILITY AT HOME

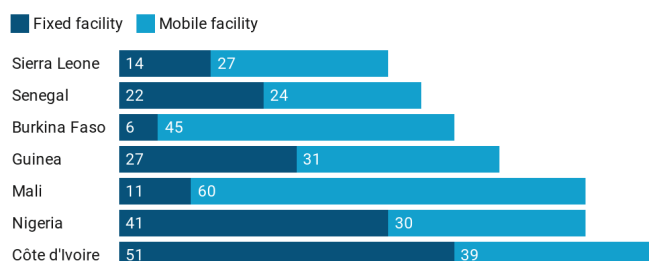


Source: UNICEF (2019); <https://data.unicef.org/topic/water-and-sanitation/hygiene>

Handwashing is one of the top preventive measures recommended to reduce the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). However, current levels of handwashing with soap are generally low across the region. Monitoring handwashing behaviour is difficult but the presence of soap and water at a designated place is generally used as a proxy indicator. According to UNICEF data from 2017, the majority of Sahelian and West African people did not have basic handwashing facilities available at home. Only Ghana, Mali, Mauritania and Nigeria were above the global average of 60% of people with access to basic facilities. The situation was particularly bad in small countries such as Benin, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Togo where at least three-quarters of the population had no handwashing facility at home. Nigeria is among the countries with the largest number of people with no facility in the world (49 million), following Indonesia (78 million) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (69 million). There are significant gaps between the richest and poorest within a country. Rural areas are generally less well-equipped than urban areas. However, urban populations are particularly at risk considering the higher population density and the large number of crowded places such as markets or public transport.

Public handwashing facilities are generally rare and often lack soap. Mobile handwashing facilities are very common in the region; for example, the use of jugs or basins to wash hands before and after meals. However, mobile facilities often lack soap and sufficient water. Washing hands is also a basic preventive measure, which can help eradicate many other communicable diseases such as cholera, which is still prevalent in the region.

Fixed versus mobile handwashing facilities (%)



Source: UNICEF, WHO (2019), Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (2000-2017), special focus on inequalities.