

Media Update

18 November 2021

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD TOILET DAY

19 November 2021

Life without a toilet is dirty, dangerous and undignified.

Everyone should have access to hygienic, safe, and sustainable sanitation.

Yet 3.6 billion people still live without safely managed sanitation, threatening health, harming the environment, and hindering economic development.

Every day, 700 children under five years old die from diseases linked to unsafe water and sanitation.

Toilets save lives and drive improvements in gender equality and in society as a whole.

We need urgent and massive investment and innovation along the entire 'sanitation chain', from toilets to the transport, collection and treatment of human waste.

Delivering on this basic human right – the right to water and sanitation – is good for people, business and our planet.

For every \$1 invested in toilets and sanitation, up to \$5 is returned in saved medical costs, better health, increased productivity, education and jobs.

History teaches us that rapid progress is possible. Many countries have transformed their health systems by acting on sanitation facilities and ensuring everyone has access to toilets.

On World Toilet Day, let us keep our promise to leave no one behind and take action to deliver health and sanitation for all.

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

Landmark intergenerational poll shows young people are 50% more likely than older generations to believe the world is becoming a better place – yet impatient for action on mounting crises

Amid COVID-19 pandemic, younger generation also more likely to trust scientists and embrace international cooperation, according to a UNICEF-Gallup international survey of more than 21,000 children and adults released for World Children's Day

NEW YORK, 18 November 2021 – Children and young people are nearly 50 per cent more likely than older people to believe that the world is becoming a better place with each generation, according to a new international survey by UNICEF and Gallup released ahead of World Children's Day.

The survey shows that young people are also more likely to believe childhood itself has improved, with overwhelming majorities believing that healthcare, education, and physical safety are better for today's children than for their parents' generation. Yet, despite their optimism, young people are far from naïve, expressing restlessness for action on climate change, skepticism about information they consume on social media, and struggling with feelings of depression and anxiety. They are far more likely than older people to see themselves as global citizens, and more likely to embrace international cooperation to tackle threats like the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There is no shortage of reasons for pessimism in the world today: Climate change, the pandemic, poverty and inequality, rising distrust, and growing nationalism. But here is a reason for optimism: Children and young people

refuse to see the world through the bleak lens of adults,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “Compared to older generations, the world’s young people remain hopeful, much more globally minded, and determined to make the world a better place. Today’s young people have concerns for the future but see themselves as part of the solution.”

The poll, [*The Changing Childhood Project*](#), is the first of its kind to ask multiple generations for their views on the world and what it is like to be a child today. It surveyed more than 21,000 people across two age cohorts (15-24 years old and 40 years old and up) in 21 countries. Nationally representative surveys were undertaken in countries across all regions – Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America – and income levels.

Overall, the data paint a picture of young generations as products of globalization. For example, young people (39 per cent) are on average almost twice as likely as older people (22 per cent) to identify most with being part of the world, versus their own nation or locale. With each additional year of age, people are on average about one per cent less likely to identify as a global citizen.

The survey – conducted during the pandemic – also finds that children and young people are generally more trusting of national governments, scientists and international news media as sources of accurate information. And yet, the poll shows, young people today are aware of problems the world is facing:

- The majority of young people see serious risks for children online, such as seeing violent or sexually explicit content (78 per cent) or being bullied (79 per cent).
- Just 17 per cent of young people say they trust social media platforms “a lot” to provide accurate information.
- While 64 per cent of young people in low- and middle-income countries believe children in their country will be better off economically than their parents, young people in high-income countries have little faith in economic progress. There, fewer than a third of young respondents say children today will grow up to be better off economically than their parents.
- More than a third of young people report often feeling nervous or anxious, and nearly one in five say they often feel depressed or have little interest in doing things.

- On average, 59 per cent of young people say children today face more pressure to succeed than their parents did growing up.

The poll also finds young people want faster progress in the fight against discrimination, more cooperation among countries, and for decision-makers to listen to them:

- On average, nearly three-quarters of young people who are aware of climate change believe governments should take significant action to address it. The share is even higher in low- and lower-middle income countries (83 per cent) where the impact of climate change is expected to be greatest.
- In nearly every country surveyed, large majorities of young people report that their countries would be safer from threats like COVID-19 if governments worked in coordination with other countries rather than on their own.
- Young people demonstrate stronger support for LGBTQ+ rights, with young women leading the fight for equality.
- On average, 58 per cent of 15-24-year-olds believe it is very important for political leaders to listen to children.

“We cannot know what is on the minds of young people if we do not ask them. UNICEF’s survey reinforces the importance of hearing from the next generation and understanding their perspectives,” said Joe Daly, Senior Partner at Gallup. “The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow; it is crucial for older generations to do their part to ensure our children inherit a better world.”

The survey finds some areas of strong alignment between young and older generations – notably around climate, the importance of education, global collaboration and children’s agency. By contrast, optimism, global mindedness and recognition of historical progress reflect some of the deepest divides.

“While this research paints a nuanced view of the generational divide, a clear picture emerges: Children and young people embody the spirit of the 21st century far more readily than their parents,” said Fore. “As UNICEF prepares to mark its 75th anniversary next month, and ahead of World Children’s Day, it is critical we listen to young people directly about their well-being and how their lives are changing.”

World Children's Day – celebrated every year on 20th November – aims to raise awareness for the millions of children that are denied their right to adequate health care, nutrition, education and protection, and to elevate young people's voices as critical to any discussions about their future.

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Notes to Editors

Alongside the release of the survey, UNICEF is launching a new interactive platform, <http://changingchildhood.unicef.org/>, containing the full set of data from the survey and the project report.

[The Changing Childhood Project](#) is the first survey to ask multiple generations of people across the world for their views on what it's like to be a child today. For the project, UNICEF partnered with Gallup to survey more than 21,000 adults and children in 21 countries between February and June 2021. All samples are probability-based and nationally representative of two distinct populations in each country: people aged 15-24 and people aged 40 and older. The coverage area is the entire country, including rural areas, and the sampling frame represents the entire civilian, non-institutionalized, population within each age cohort with access to a telephone.

The countries surveyed are: Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Japan, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Spain, United Kingdom, Ukraine, USA and Zimbabwe.

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children visit www.unicef.org
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About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

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