

MENA Is The Most Water-Stressed Region on Earth, Research Finds

Research by the World Resources Institute (WRI) [revealed yesterday](#) that 17 countries – home to a quarter of the world’s population – face ‘extremely high’ levels of baseline water stress. Of 17 identified in this category, 12 are located in the Middle East and North Africa.

The WRI found that water withdrawals globally have more than doubled since the 1960s due to growing demand – and they show no signs of slowing down. The [Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas tool](#) ranked the water stress, drought risk and riverine flood risk across 189 UN member countries and their sub-national regions, like states and provinces.

Within the categorical ranking on the baseline water stress scale, the "extremely high" and most water-stressed countries were Qatar, Israel, Lebanon, Iran, Jordan, Libya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, the U.A.E., San Marino, Bahrain, India, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Oman and lastly at Botswana at number 17. In an average year, agriculture, industry and municipalities drink up 80% of available surface and groundwater in these nations.

Because of the naturally hot and dry climate in the MENA region, water supply has always been lower than in other parts of the world. In 2017, the [World Bank found](#) that this region has the greatest expected economic losses from climate-related water scarcity, estimated at 6-14% of GDP by 2050. Total water productivity in MENA is [only about half](#) the world’s average water productivity.

However, it’s not all bleak news. The 16th ranked water-stressed nation, Oman, has begun taking action by treating 100% of its collected wastewater and reusing 78% of it. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, ranked 8th, has developed a program to incentivize public water conservation. Via [the Qatrah initiative](#), the Kingdom’s ministry aims to reduce daily consumption from 263 liters to 150 liters by 2030. Across the GCC though, only 44% of wastewater is ultimately reused, despite 84% wastewater being collected.

“If we think of water resources as a bank account, then the region is now seriously overdrawn,” [said Hafez Ghanem](#), World Bank Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa. Yet the statistics offer an opportunity for policymakers and corporations to tackle this one dimension of water scarcity with forethought and strategic management.

<https://forbesmiddleeast.com/mena-is-the-most-water-stressed-region-on-earth-research-finds>