**Annual freshwater withdrawals, total (billion cubic meters)**

Annual freshwater withdrawals refer to total water withdrawals, not counting evaporation losses from storage basins. Withdrawals also include water from desalination plants in countries where they are a significant source. Withdrawals can exceed 100 percent of total renewable resources where extraction from nonrenewable aquifers or desalination plants is considerable or where there is significant water reuse. Withdrawals for agriculture and industry are total withdrawals for irrigation and livestock production and for direct industrial use (including withdrawals for cooling thermoelectric plants). Withdrawals for domestic uses include drinking water, municipal use or supply, and use for public services, commercial establishments, and homes. Data are for the most recent year available for 1987-2002.

* **ID**: ER.H2O.FWTL.K3
* **Source**: Food and Agriculture Organization, AQUASTAT data.
* **License**:  CC BY-4.0
* **Aggregation Method:**Sum
* **Development Relevance:**While some countries have an abundant supply of fresh water, others do not have as much. UN estimates that many areas of the world are already experiencing stress on water availability. Due to the accelerated pace of population growth and an increase in the amount of water a single person uses, it is expected that this situation will continue to get worse. The ability of developing countries to make more water available for domestic, agricultural, industrial and environmental uses will depend on better management of water resources and more cross-sectorial planning and integration. There is now ample evidence that increased hydrologic variability and change in climate has and will continue to have a profound impact on the water sector through the hydrologic cycle, water availability, water demand, and water allocation at the global, regional, basin, and local levels. Properly managed water resources are a critical component of growth, poverty reduction and equity. The livelihoods of the poorest are critically associated with access to water services. A shortage of water in the future would be detrimental to the human population as it would affect everything from sanitation, to overall health and the production of grain. Freshwater use by continents is partly based on several socio-economic development factors, including population, physiography, and climatic characteristics. It is estimated that in the coming decades the most intensive growth of water withdrawal is expected to occur in Africa and South America (increasing by 1.5-1.6 times), while the smallest growth will take place in Europe and North America (1.2 times).
* **Limitations and Exceptions:**A common perception is that most of the available freshwater resources are visible (on the surfaces of lakes, reservoirs and rivers). However, this visible water represents only a tiny fraction of global freshwater resources, as most of it is stored in aquifers, with the largest stocks stored in solid form in the Antarctic and in Greenland's ice cap. The data on freshwater resources are based on estimates of runoff into rivers and recharge of groundwater. These estimates are based on different sources and refer to different years, so cross-country comparisons should be made with caution. Because the data are collected intermittently, they may hide significant variations in total renewable water resources from year to year. The data also fail to distinguish between seasonal and geographic variations in water availability within countries. Data for small countries and countries in arid and semiarid zones are less reliable than those for larger countries and countries with greater rainfall. Caution should also be used in comparing data on annual freshwater withdrawals, which are subject to variations in collection and estimation methods. In addition, inflows and outflows are estimated at different times and at different levels of quality and precision, requiring caution in interpreting the data, particularly for water-short countries, notably in the Middle East and North Africa. The data are based on surveys and estimates provided by governments to the Joint Monitoring Programme of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The coverage rates are based on information from service users on actual household use rather than on information from service providers, which may include nonfunctioning systems.
* **Long Definition:**Annual freshwater withdrawals refer to total water withdrawals, not counting evaporation losses from storage basins. Withdrawals also include water from desalination plants in countries where they are a significant source. Withdrawals can exceed 100 percent of total renewable resources where extraction from nonrenewable aquifers or desalination plants is considerable or where there is significant water reuse. Withdrawals for agriculture and industry are total withdrawals for irrigation and livestock production and for direct industrial use (including withdrawals for cooling thermoelectric plants). Withdrawals for domestic uses include drinking water, municipal use or supply, and use for public services, commercial establishments, and homes. Data are for the most recent year available for 1987-2002.
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* **Statistical Concept and Methodology:**Annual freshwater withdrawals are total water withdrawals, not counting evaporation losses from storage basins. Withdrawals also include water from desalination plants in countries where they are a significant source. Water withdrawals can exceed 100 percent of total renewable resources where extraction from nonrenewable aquifers or desalination plants is considerable or where water reuse is significant. Withdrawals for agriculture and industry are total withdrawals for irrigation and livestock production and for direct industrial use (including for cooling thermoelectric plants). Withdrawals for domestic uses include drinking water, municipal use or supply, and use for public services, commercial establishments, and homes.
* **Topic:**Environment: Freshwater