

Are we running out of water?

Write in the word that is related to the one in brackets.

From space, our planet appears to be more ocean than Earth. But despite the water covering 71% of the planet's surface, more than half the world's population endures extreme water (SCARCE) for at least one month a year. Current estimates predict that by 2040, up to 20 more countries could be experiencing water shortages. Taken together, these bleak statistics raise a startling question: are we running out of clean water?



Well yes, and no. At a (PLANET) scale, Earth can't run out of freshwater thanks to the water cycle, a system that continuously produces and recycles water, morphing it from vapour, to liquid, to ice as it (CIRCLE) around the globe. So this isn't really a question of how much water there is, but of how much of it is (ACCESS) to us. 97% of earth's liquid is saltwater, too loaded with minerals for humans to drink or use in agriculture. More than two-thirds is frozen in ice caps and glaciers. Just 1% is available for sustaining all life on Earth, spread across our planet. These sources of water that are being (RAPID) depleted by humans, but slowly replenished by rain and snowfall.

Besides, this limited supply isn't distributed evenly around the globe. Diverse climates and geography provide some regions with more rainfall and natural water sources, while other areas have (GEOGRAPHY) features that make transporting water much more difficult. And supplying the infrastructure and energy it would take to move water across these regions is extremely expensive.

In many of these water-poor areas, as well as some with greater access to water, (HUMAN) is guzzling up the local water supply faster than it can be replenished. And when more quickly renewed sources can't meet the demand, we start pumping it out of our finite underground reserves. Of Earth's 37 major underground reservoirs, 21 are on track to be (REVERSE) emptied. So while it's true that our planet isn't actually losing water, we are depleting the water sources we rely on at an (SUSTAIN) pace.