WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

WRI FACT SHEET

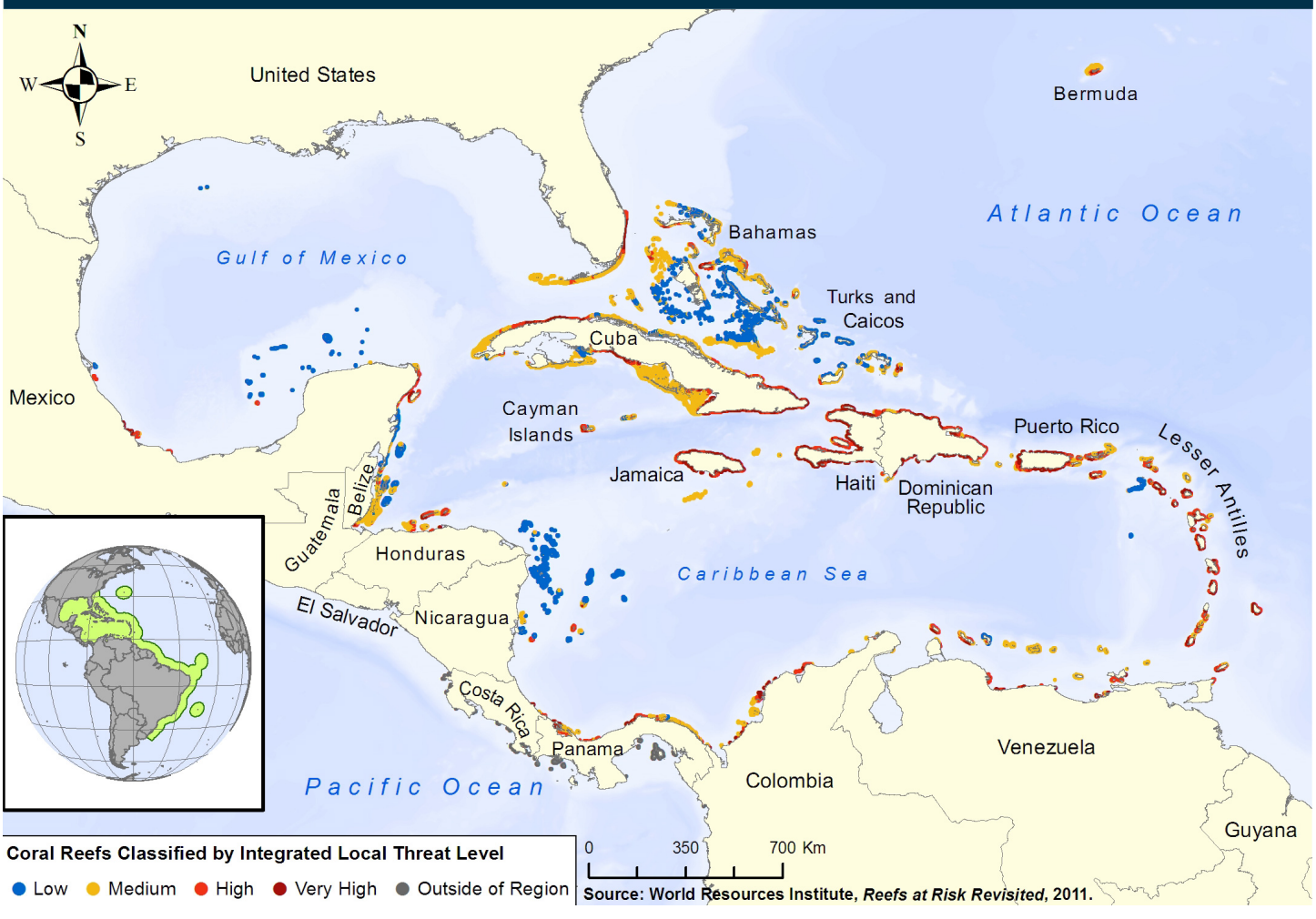
Reefs at Risk Revisited: Atlantic

The World Resources Institute (WRI) spearheaded a broad collaboration of leading conservation organizations and research institutes to conduct a global, map-based analysis of threats to the world's coral reefs called Reefs at Risk Revisited. This report provides detailed examination of human pressures on coral reefs, implications for reef condition, and projections of associated socioeconomic impacts in coastal communities.

REGIONAL KEY POINTS

- The Atlantic region includes about 10 percent (26,000 sq km) of the world's coral reefs.
- About 43 million people in this region live on the coast within 30 km of a reef, many of whom reside in densely-populated small island nations.
- More than 75 percent of reefs here are affected by local threats (coastal development, marine-based pollution and damage, overfishing, or watershed-based pollution), with more than 30 percent at high or very high risk.
- About 630 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are established in this region, covering about 30 percent of the reefs.

REEFS AT RISK IN THE ATLANTIC/CARIBBEAN



REGION

The Atlantic region includes ten percent (26,000 sq km) of the world's coral reefs. These reefs are restricted to the western half of the Atlantic Ocean, mostly in the Caribbean Sea and the Bahamas Banks. Reef types include fringing and bank reefs, as well as a number of long barrier-like systems, notably around Cuba and off the coast of Belize. The Bahamas group, which includes the Turks and Caicos Islands, is a huge system of shallow banks with reefs on their outer margins. Far out in the Atlantic Ocean, Bermuda represents an isolated outpost and the most northerly coral reefs in the world. The Atlantic species are unique-- well over 90 percent of fish, corals, crustaceans and other groups are found nowhere else.

PEOPLE

The region is densely populated and politically complex, with many small island nations across the Caribbean. In this region, about 43 million people live on the coast within 30 km of a coral reef. With the political diversity comes considerable economic diversity, and while many countries are relatively wealthy, there is still direct dependence on reefs for food and employment in many areas.

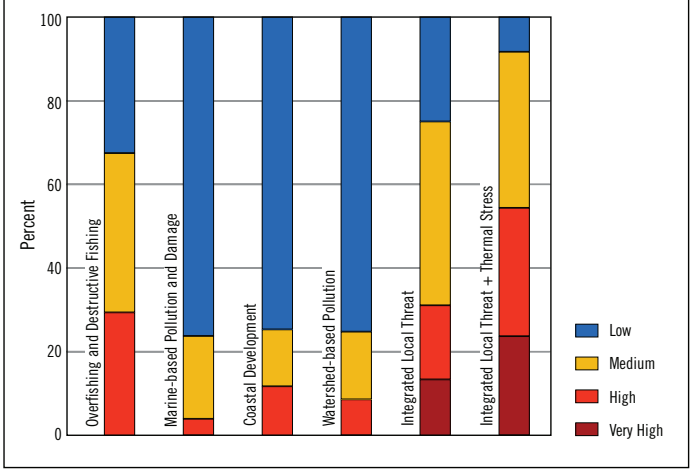
Most tourism is concentrated on the coast, a significant portion of which is directly reef-related, with snorkeling and SCUBA diving among the most popular activities in countries and territories such as the Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos, Bonaire, and Belize. Even in locations where reef visitation is lower, reefs play a hidden role: providing food, protecting coastlines, and providing sand for beaches. This region is prone to regular and intense tropical storms, and numerous coastal settlements are physically protected by barriers of coral reefs-- breaking the waves far offshore and reducing the effects of flooding and erosion.

STATUS

More than 75 percent of the reefs in the Caribbean are considered threatened, with more than 30 percent in the high and very high threat categories. Thus, while overfishing is rated as the most pervasive threat, affecting almost 70 percent of reefs, the reality may be even worse, with the only healthy reef fish populations being recorded from a small number of well-managed no-take MPAs.

There is strong evidence that coral diseases are more prevalent after coral bleaching events and that reefs subject to local human stressors such as pollution are also more vulnerable to disease. Climate-related threats are projected to push the proportion of reefs at risk to 90 percent in 2030, and up to 100 percent by 2050, with about 85 percent at high, very high, or critical levels.

Reefs at Risk in the Atlantic



REEF CONSERVATION

The Atlantic region has 631 MPAs covering about 30 percent of the region's reefs. We were able to assess the effectiveness of about half of these and of that number 40 percent (by reef area) were classified as ineffective, with only 6 percent by area (460 sq km) classified as fully effective. These very low effectiveness estimates reflect the immense challenges of establishing effective conservation when the pressures are so intense, management is costly, and full community engagement can be difficult to achieve

FOR MORE, SEE PAGES 62-65 OF *REEFS AT RISK REVISITED*

ABOUT WRI

The World Resources Institute is a global environmental think tank that goes beyond research to put ideas into action. We work with governments, companies, and civil society to build solutions to urgent environmental challenges. For more information on our coral reefs work, visit **www.wri.org/reefs.**

ABOUT REEFS AT RISK REVISITED

The groundbreaking report, Reefs at Risk Revisited, is the most detailed assessment of threats to coral reefs ever undertaken. The report was led by the World Resources Institute, along with the Nature Conservancy, the WorldFish Center, ICRAN, UNEP-WCMC, and GCRMN.

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