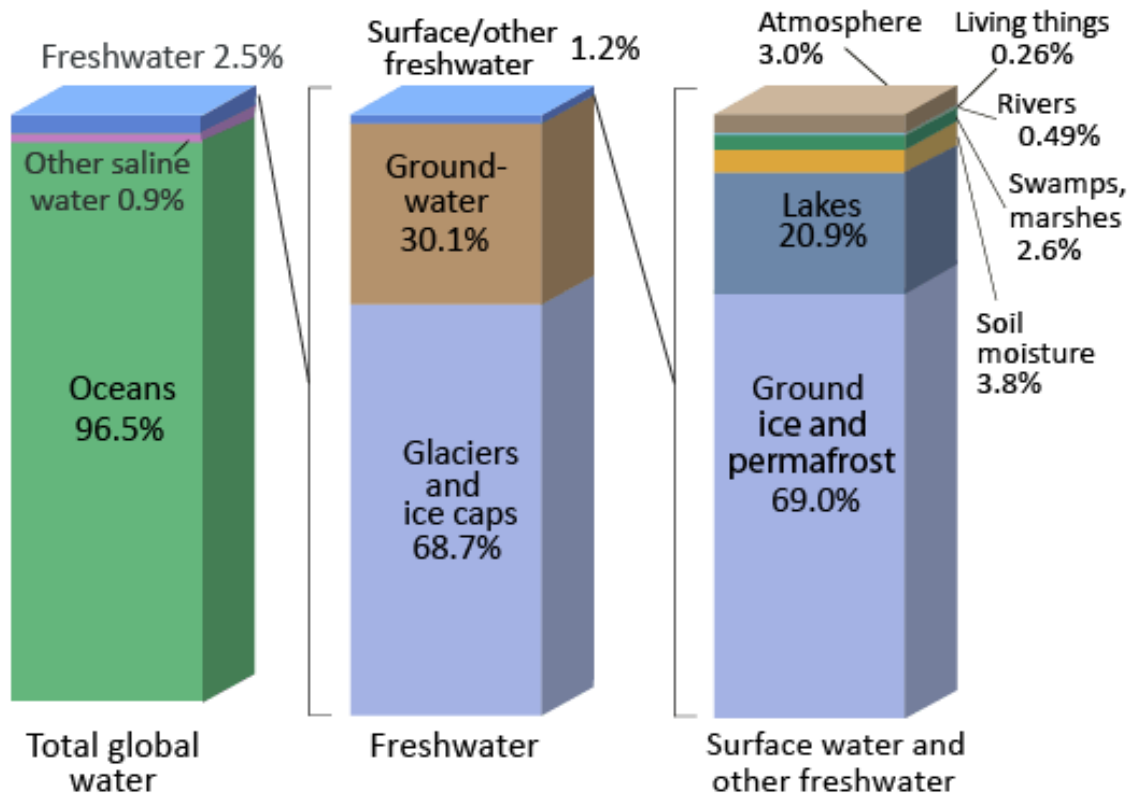


The water cycle describes the movement of Earth's water; the chart and the table below represent the presence of Earth's water at a single point in time. If you check back in a thousand or a million years, these numbers will be different.

Where is Earth's Water?



Source: Igor Shiklomanov's chapter "World fresh water resources" in Peter H. Gleick (editor), 1993, *Water in Crisis: A Guide to the World's Fresh Water Resources*.

NOTE: Numbers are rounded, so percent summations may not add to 100.

- In the first bar, notice how only 2.5% of Earth's water is freshwater - the amount needed for life to survive.
- The middle bar shows the breakdown of freshwater. Almost all of it is locked up in ice and in the ground. Only a little more than 1.2% of all freshwater is surface water, which serves most of life's needs.
- The right bar shows the breakdown of surface freshwater. Most of this water is locked up in ice, and another 20.9% is found in lakes. Rivers make up 0.49% of surface freshwater. Although rivers account for only a small amount of freshwater, this is where humans get a large portion of their water from.