

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

One in 7 Mexican Households — Nearly 6 Million— Report Water Insecurity, Latest Survey Reveals

- **Data from Mexico’s National Institute of Public Health shows water problems are worse than infrastructural measures suggested, with wide disparities in problems with water access, use and reliability across states.**
- **Water insecurity is an indicator that would permit powerful assessment of the impact of the Mexican Government [National Water Plan 2024-2030](#), which is currently lacking specific indicators to measure its success. This can help the government assess if the strategy has had impact on people’s lives.**
- **Water insecurity experiences will be measured for the first time in 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries in the 2025 Gallup World Poll, allowing cross-country comparisons for the region.**
- **Researchers who developed the water insecurity indicator to receive Champions of Health Award from National Institute of Public Health March 4, 2025.**

MEXICO CITY (MARCH 3, 2025) — More than one in seven households in Mexico—16.1%— struggle to meet basic water needs such as drinking, cooking and handwashing, according to findings from the latest National Health and Nutrition Survey ([ENSANUT](#)) announced today. The results reveal in more detail than ever before how issues with water access, use, and reliability – known as water insecurity — are affecting the economic potential and health of more than 6 million households across Mexico.

Typical assessments of water issues have usually focused on the presence of drinking water infrastructure, i.e., piped water availability. This can greatly underestimate the extent of the problem; even when there is a tap in the home, the water provided can be cut or unaffordable.

This latest figure on the prevalence of national water insecurity in Mexico, 16.1%, paints a different picture than the data showing that [3.9% of households in Mexico don’t have piped water](#). It suggests that many more Mexicans are impacted by issues with water than previously thought.

The 2024 ENSANUT survey provides representative data at the federal and state levels, and reveals some significant disparities. While some states like Yucatán have few problems, with only 3.9% facing moderate to severe water insecurity, in others such as Guerrero, some 30.6% of the population faces serious water challenges. The prevalence of water insecurity in Mexico City is 16.9%; much remains to be understood about where the biggest problems are at the municipal level.

“Water insecurity is a powerful indicator of human, environmental and economic health,” said Dr. Sera Young, Professor of Anthropology at Northwestern University. Young led the development of the [Water Insecurity Experiences \(WISE\) Scales](#), which have been used to measure water access and use around the world. “By measuring how water shows up in people’s lives, we get a much more accurate picture of water security than we do by knowing if their drinking water comes out of a tap.”

“Water matters for thirst’s sake, but it matters for so much more – for nutrition, for mental health, for prosperity, for disease, and even for societal stability.” Young said. Young’s team worked with the National Institute of Public Health to implement the WISE Scales in Mexico. Their goal was to get information not only about the extent of the problem, but also to focus [local efforts](#) on solving the most serious water challenges.

National Water Plan 2024-2030 and the Urgent Need for Accurate Evaluation

These estimates come at a timely moment. In December 2024, the Federal Government introduced the [National Water Plan 2024-2030](#), aiming to “guarantee the human right to water in sufficient quantity and quality, ensure resource sustainability, and promote responsible water management.” However, the plan currently lacks specific indicators to measure its impact on people.

“We salute the government’s prioritization of water for human use. At the same time, Mexico has been a leader in measuring water insecurity in the region,” said Dr. Pablo Gaitán Rossi, director of the Research Institute for Development with Equity (EQUIDE) and collaborator in the WISE research. We can use these ENSANUT public data to monitor the success of the National Water Plan on people’s well-being.”

“It is now possible to measure the effectiveness of the proposed solutions – and build better, stronger, more resilient communities. When we measure our success and adjust our course of action to meet the challenges, everybody wins,” Dr. Gaitán said. “This is the path to a better water future.”

Water Insecurity Across Latin America and the Caribbean

Water insecurity is not a problem unique to Mexico, and has wide-reaching ramifications across the region for drinking, irrigation, hydropower generation and even navigation. According to the [World Bank](#), water crises “often magnify the structural water and food insecurity challenges, leaving vulnerable people with little choice but to migrate.”

[The WISE Scales](#), which have already been used by more than 100 organizations, have [revealed significant disparities](#) across Latin America. Based on Gallup World Poll data, the national prevalence of moderate-to-severe water insecurity shows Honduras among the most stressed.

- [Brazil](#): 16.1%
- [Guatemala](#): 24.2%
- [Honduras](#): 47.2%

At a conference at the National Institute of Public Health on March 3, scientists from across the region convened to discuss progress on water insecurity. Discussions will be had on the region’s pressing water challenges with members from UNICEF, FAO, the Center for Latin American Rural Development (RIMISP), the [Caribbean Public Health Agency](#), and Cuba’s National Institute of Hygiene, Epidemiology, and Microbiology, among many others.

Dr. Young also announced expansion of the WISE Scales implementation to [40 additional countries](#) around the world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, these include 9ct. These will be a key resource for local researchers to bolster policy-relevant action, in a region where climate change is a shared threat to water security.

These estimates will be produced in collaboration with the [Gallup World Poll](#), which measures some of the most important issues worldwide, such as food security, happiness, leadership performance, and modern slavery. A [WISE impact report](#) with Gallup was released in 2023.

“This comes at a critical moment as the world faces accelerating water crises,” said J. Carl Ganter, managing director of [Circle of Blue](#), the internationally recognized center for original frontline reporting, research and analysis on global water resource issues and the water-food-energy-climate nexus.

“Now is the pivotal moment when key data, context and informed action can shift the world’s dangerous course,” he said. Ganter serves on the World Economic Forum Global Future Council on Energy and Circle of Blue was among the first to report on water scarcity as a driver of human migration in Mexico. The WISE Scales are informing Circle of Blue’s initiative, [Designing Water’s Future](#), a new operating system for the world’s fresh water.

Recognition from Mexico’s National Institute of Public Health

The WISE initiative will receive the inaugural "Champions of Health" Award from Mexico’s [National Institute of Public Health](#) for its leadership, commitment, and humanitarian contributions to health in the Americas and beyond. Professor [Young](#) will accept the award on Tuesday, March 4, at 5:00 PM at the [Teopanzolco Cultural Center](#) in Cuernavaca.

Background

WISE-LAC Research Network

The WISE-LAC Research Network is a regional initiative dedicated to addressing water insecurity by overseeing the generation of comparable data, research tools, and policy recommendations. Today, the network is launching:

- [The WISE Scales Manuals in Spanish and Portuguese](#)
- A dedicated [website](#) with water insecurity resources in Spanish for academics, policymakers, civil society, journalists, and the public

Available resources include [newsletters](#), maps, infographics, reports, manuals, databases, academic articles, case studies, and event listings. Interested individuals can sign up for the WISE-LAC Network newsletter [here](#).

The Water Insecurity Experiences (WISE) Scales

Water insecurity is the inability to reliably access and use water for essential needs such as drinking, cooking, and hygiene, and can be measured with the [Water Insecurity Experiences \(WISE\) Scales](#). The WISE Scales are composed of 12 universal questions about the frequency that life-disrupting water-related problems occurred. The questions take 3 minutes to answer, and include experiences with worry and anger about water, having to change what was eaten due to water problems, and having no water to drink. The WISE Scales have been used in more than [60 countries](#).

Water insecurity can arise from issues related to availability, accessibility, quality, acceptability, and stability of water supply. Water insecurity is closely linked to critical issues such as [climate change](#), health, [food security](#), poverty, and gender inequalities.

Regional Disparities in Water Insecurity

Since 2021, ENSANUT has incorporated the Household Water Insecurity Experiences Scale (HWISE) to monitor national and regional trends, making Mexico a leader in tracking water insecurity as part of the human right to water.

The states with the highest percentages of households facing moderate or severe water insecurity include:

- Guerrero (30.6%)
- Baja California Sur (29%)
- State of Mexico (23.3%)
- Hidalgo (23.3%)
- Aguascalientes (23.1%)

In contrast, the states with the lowest water insecurity levels are:

- Yucatán (3.9%)
- Chihuahua (7.3%)
- Guanajuato (8.1%)
- Colima (8.3%)
- Coahuila (9.4%)

What is the contribution of the WISE scales to public interventions and programs in Mexico?

The WISE scales are a measure for impact evaluations of social programs since they allow estimating differences by gender, urban or rural residence, socioeconomic level, age or indigenous population. This is useful for the targeting of strategies that seek to reduce inequalities between groups. For example, combining the measurement of water insecurity with [food insecurity](#) allows the development of programs for the mitigation of both conditions.

The WISE Scales provide a crucial metric for evaluating the impact of social programs, allowing for gender-, region-, and income-based comparisons. By integrating water insecurity assessments with food insecurity data, policymakers can design more effective interventions to address both issues simultaneously, as was already done in [Nuevo León](#).

For more information, contact WISE.lac@ibero, or visit www.WISEscales.org and <https://jhasua.com/wise-lac/>.