The Middle East: 20 Years of Building Skyscrapers

Given the location of this Journal’s case study, the Gate Towers, Abu Dhabi, we thought it would be interesting to investigate tall buildings in the Middle East. Twenty years ago, the region contained only one skyscraper over 150 meters in height. It is now estimated that by the end of 2015 the region will have 289 buildings in this category. While this massive increase has centered in Dubai, by the end of 2015 over 20 cities in 10 countries will have completed a 150 m+ project.

Mapping the Middle East 2015: Population and Skyscrapers

Map shows data on skyscrapers and population as estimated in the year 2015 (see key for details). Building outlines show the tallest building in each country by the year 2015.

Footnotes
1. The focus on buildings over 150 meters is driven by the need to ensure accuracy of data, rather than suggesting that this is the threshold for a tall building.
2. All tall building data is taken from the CTBUH Skyscraper Center as of October 1st, 2013.
3. Unless otherwise noted, all population data is taken from the CIA World Factbook 2013 population estimates.
4. Unless otherwise noted, all land area data is taken from the UN Demographic Yearbook 2009–2010.
5. “City” refers to the Urban Agglomeration, defined as an extended city or town area comprising the built-up area of the central place (usually a municipality) plus any cities and suburbs linked in a continuous urban area. Estimate of 1,000,000+ cities is based on data from the World Gazetteer.
6. Population listed is estimated population of Asiatic Turkey taken from the Turkish Statistical Institute. For the purposes of this study, Istanbul is considered to be part of Europe.

Key
1. Number of buildings 150 m+ in height in country and percentage of region total by the year 2015
2. Total population of country and percentage of region population
3. Height of country’s tallest building by the year 2015
4. Silhouette of country’s tallest building by the year 2015
5. Average height of all buildings 150 m+ in country by the year 2015

Middle East Totals
- Total Population: 381,402,626
- Total Land Area: 7,119,839 km²
- Regional Population Density: 53.6 people/km²
- Cities of 1,000,000+ Population: 38

Est. by 2015...
- Countries with at least one 150 m+ building: 10
- Cities with at least one 150 m+ building: 22
- City with the most 150 m+ buildings: Dubai (150)
- Total 150 m+ buildings: 289
- Tallest building height: 828 m
- Average height of 150 m+ buildings: 217 m
Timeline of the Skyscraper Completion in the Middle East

Dots represent building height and location.

Note: chart begins in 1987 with the completion of the region's first 150 meter skyscraper

- UAE (192)
- Qatar (28)
- Saudi Arabia (26)
- Kuwait (12)
- Bahrain (11)
- Other Countries (20)

The Middle East's Future Tallest Ten: 2015

Tallest: 828 meters   Average Height: 459 meters

Kingdom Tower, the 1000+ meter project now under construction in Jeddah, is not included in this study because of its estimated 2019 completion.

After Dubai, which is set to contain 149 buildings over 150 meters, the cities which will contain the most skyscrapers in the Middle East by 2015 are Abu Dhabi (32) and Doha (28).

Dubai's first 150 m+ skyscraper was the Burj Al Arab completed in 1999, just 14 years ago.