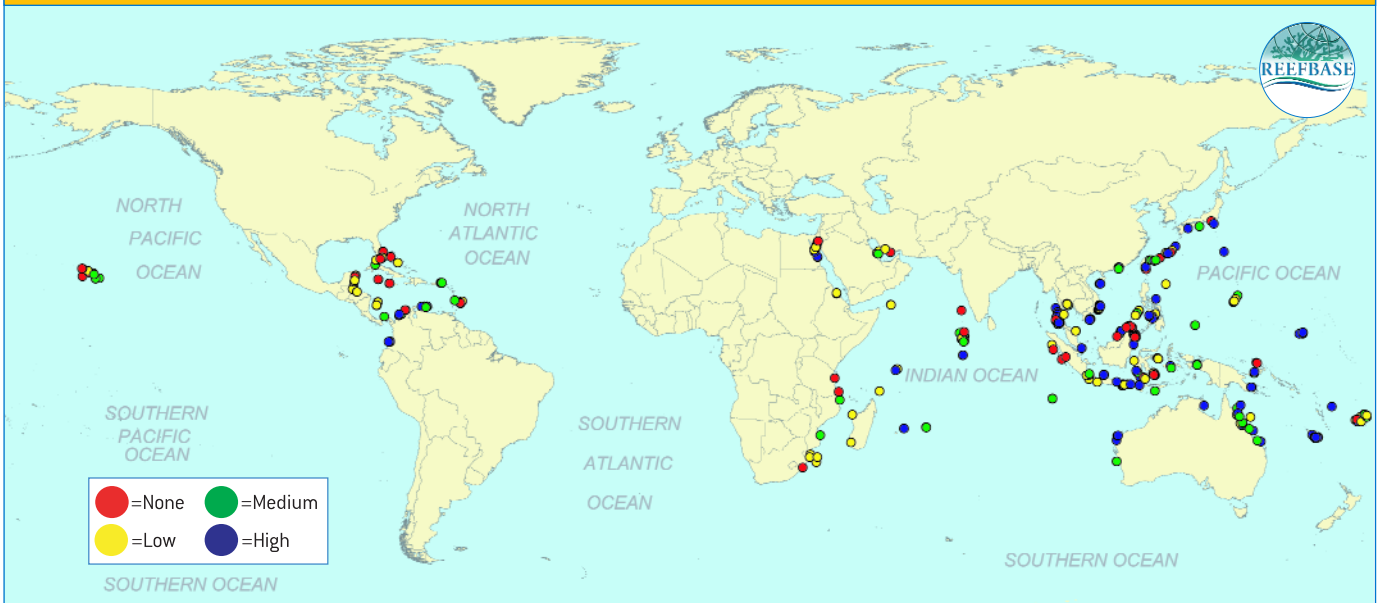


FIGURE 4.21: GLOBAL RELATIVE PERCENT HARD CORAL COVER (1997-2001).



70% hard coral cover and none had higher than 85% cover (Figure 4.21). Many of the healthiest reefs in the world have probably never had more than about 30% coral cover.

However, coral cover by itself may not be a very useful indicator of reef health unless permanent transects are resampled over time, or unless very large sample sizes are available such as in the above global analysis. Without permanent transects, it is possible that a subsequent sample of reef will hit a large patch of e.g. sand

or rubble, biasing the results. The large number of samples provides evidence of a true 10% difference between the Atlantic and Indo-pacific reefs.

A more meaningful indicator of reef health is the ratio of live coral cover to total coral cover [hard coral index], where total coral cover is defined as live coral cover plus recently killed coral. In Figure 4.23 we see no significant change in the hard coral index between years in the Atlantic region.

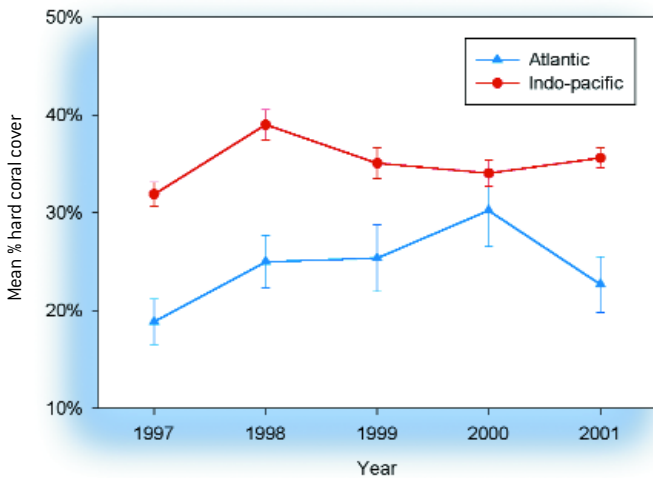


Figure 4.22: Mean percent coral cover [1997-2001] on Indo-pacific and Atlantic reefs.

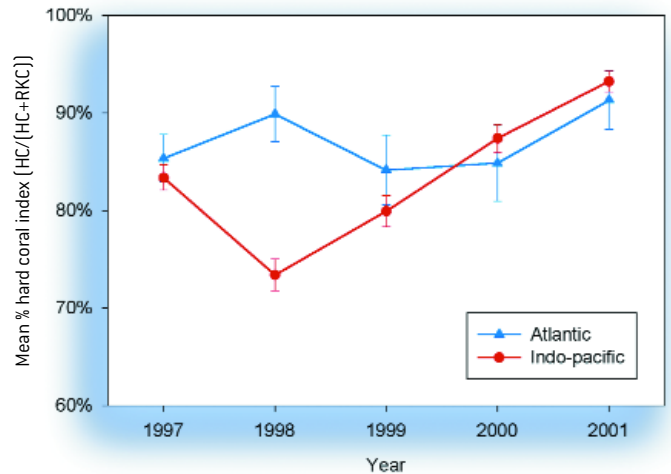


Figure 4.23: Mean percent hard coral index [hard coral/(hard coral + recently killed coral)][1997-2001] on Indo-pacific and Atlantic reefs.