

River water quality – sentiment tracking

All wave results



Executive summary

While scores have dropped over the weeks as media coverage as lessened, respondents remain concerned about the quality of our rivers, with scores for the South West continuing to track higher than national results across all waves.

On average, **29%** of respondents have **thought** about river water quality in the last 7 days and **24%** had **heard** about river water quality from family, friends and news / social media in the same period.

63% of respondents in the South West and **61%** nationally stated they are worried, with **19%** of those in the South West very worried.

However, river pollution is seen to be less of a concern as compared to other environmental issues, and is ranked **5th out of 9**. Deforestation and ocean pollution are viewed as the most serious issues

40% of respondents in the South West feel that water companies should be responsible for funding investment to improve river quality with 22% saying this should be government funded and 11% that local councils should be responsible.

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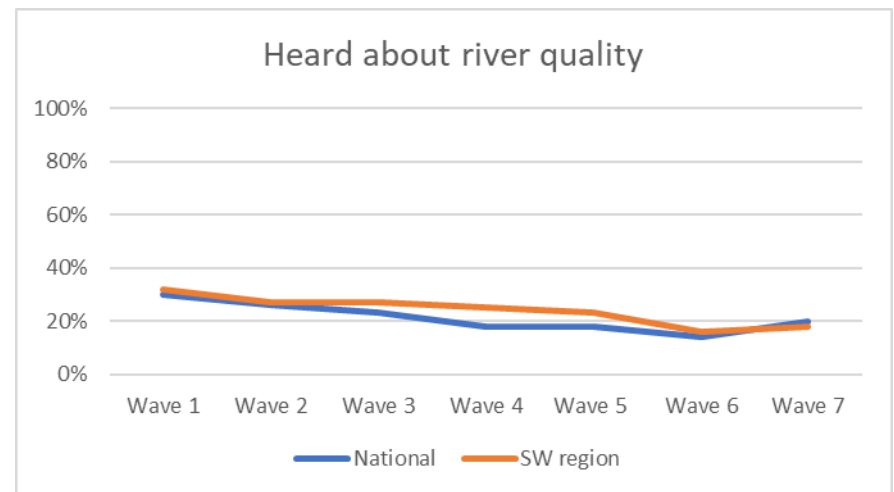
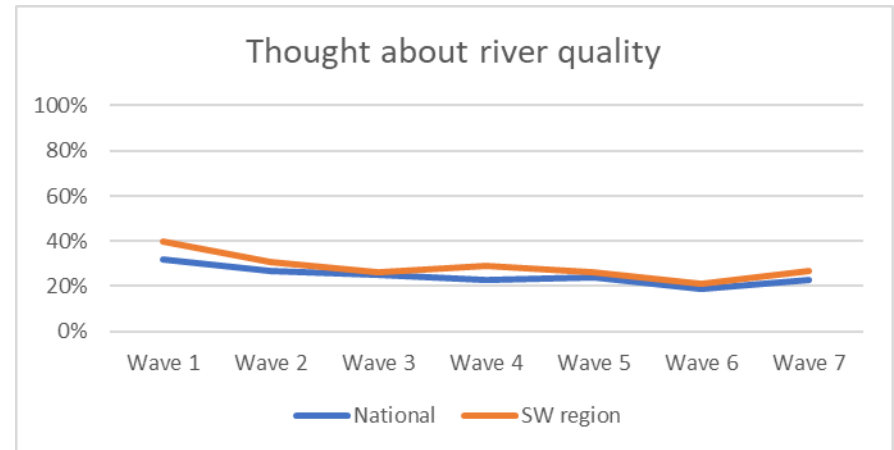
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River water quality

Respondents were asked how many times in the last 7 days they had personally thought about **river quality** and how much they had heard about river water quality (from friends, news, social media):

- Scores have trended downwards from W1 to W7 both nationally and in the South West
- 40% of people in the South West had **thought** about river quality in the last 7 days at W1 and this reduced to 27% at W7, averaging 29% across all waves
- 32% had **heard** about river quality in W1, dropping to 18% at W7, averaging 24% across all waves
- Nationally, 32% had **thought** about river quality at W1, falling to 27% at W7 and those **hearing** about river quality fell from 30% at W1 to 20% at W7



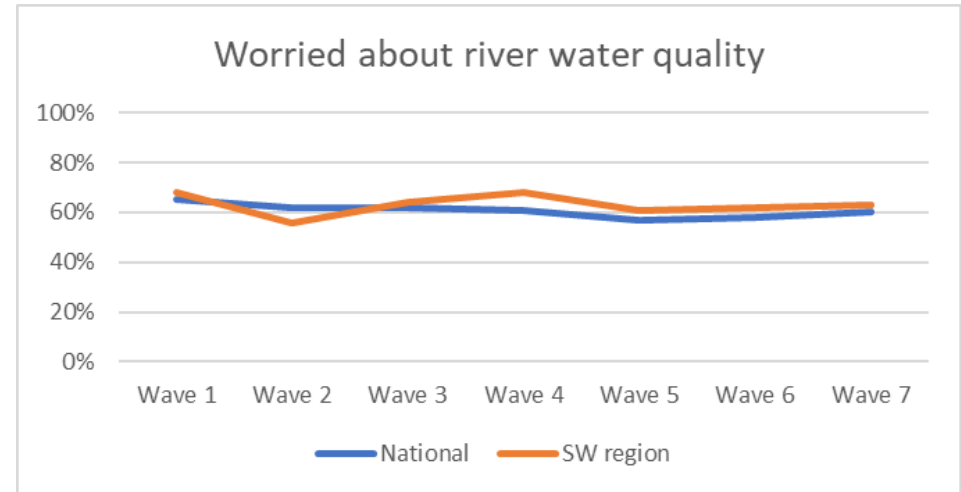
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Respondents were asked how **worried**, if at all, they were about the quality of water in Britain's rivers:

- An average of 63% of respondents in the South West and 61% nationally stated they are worried, with 19% of those in the South West very worried.
- These scores remained stable across all waves



When asked who should be fund investments to improve river quality to support the use of rivers for leisure activities such as wild swimming and paddle boarding, **40%** of respondents in the South West feel that **water companies** should be responsible.

22% feel that the Government should pay for these improvements and **11%** that local Councils should be responsible. **9%** feel that river users should pay while **11%** think investment is needed but aren't sure who should pay. **5%** don't think that any investment is required to support these activities

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Respondents were then asked who they thought were the significant contributors to pollution in rivers and bathing waters in their region:

- **Farming and agriculture** was seen to be the greatest contributor in the South West, closely followed by **water companies**
- At a national level, industrial processes were ranked as the highest contributor ahead of water companies and development, with farming and agriculture fourth
- **Development** was seen to be the third highest contributor in the South West and nationally
- Mining and quarrying ranked last across all waves and regions

Major contributors	SW	National
Farming and agriculture	57%	43%
Water companies	54%	47%
Development (i.e. building housing or commercial property)	48%	47%
Industrial processes (i.e. manufacturing)	47%	51%
Mining and quarrying	23%	21%

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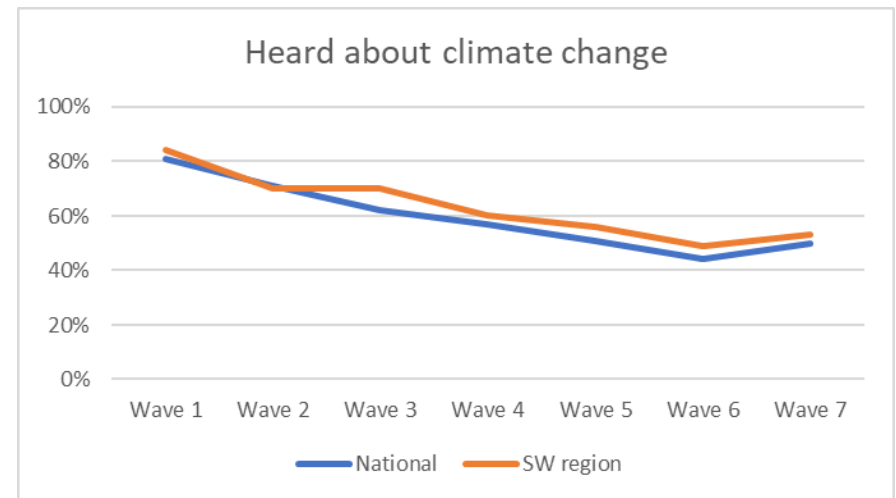
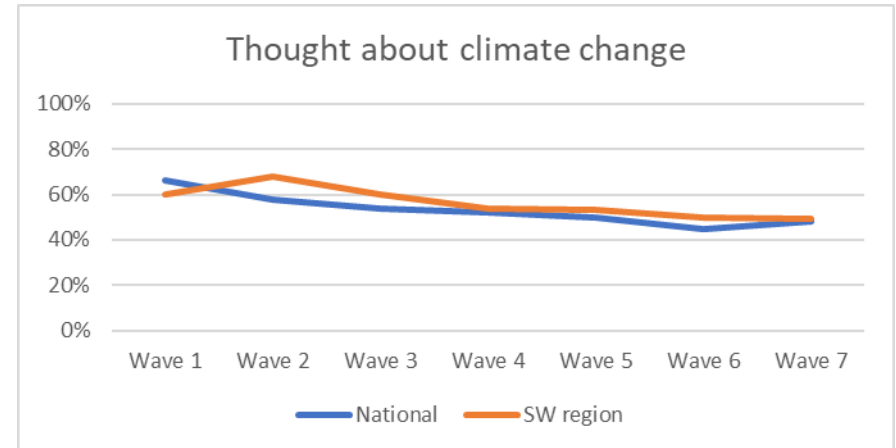
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Climate change

Respondents were asked how many times in the last 7 days they had personally thought about **climate change** and how much they had heard about climate change (from friends, news, social media):

- As with river quality, scores have trended downwards from W1 to W7 both nationally and in the South West
- 60% of people in the South West had **thought** about climate change in the last 7 days at W1 and this reduced to 49% at W7, averaging 56% across all waves
- 84% had **heard** about climate change in W1, dropping to 53% at W7, averaging 63% across all waves
- Nationally, 66% had thought about climate change at W1, falling to 48% at W7 and those hearing about climate change fell from 81% at W1 to 50% at W7.



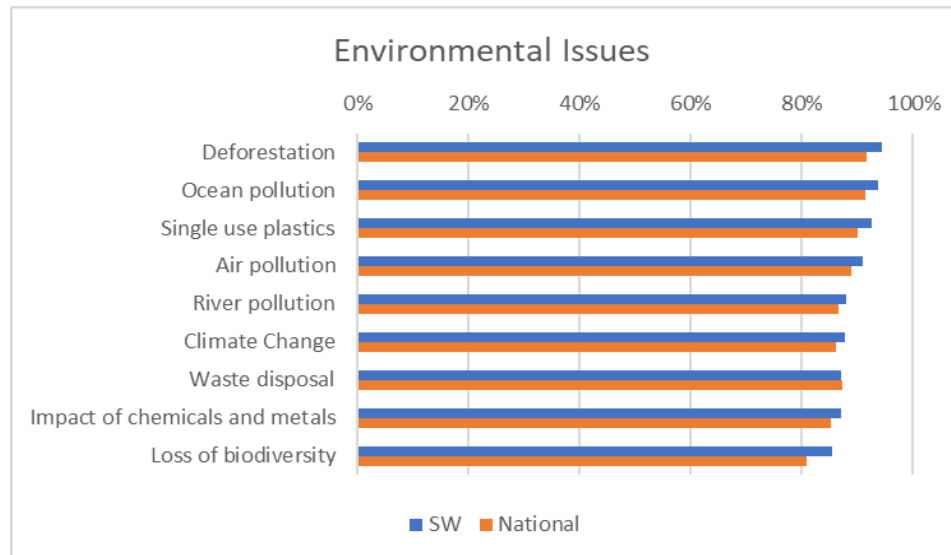
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Respondents were asked to rate how serious a set of nine environmental issues, including river pollution, are from very serious to not at all serious.

- Deforestation was seen to be the most serious issue, ranking highest across all regions on all waves. 95% of people in the South West rated this as serious (73% very serious) and 92% nationally
- Ocean pollution ranked second, at 94% serious in the South West and 92% nationally
- River pollution ranked 5th out of 9 in the South West with 88% ranking it as serious (50% very serious) vs 6th nationally.
- Loss of biodiversity was seen to be the lowest concern with 86% in the South West and 81% nationally



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Conclusions

While scores have dropped over the weeks as media coverage as lessened, respondents remain concerned about the quality of our rivers, with over 60% of people worried about it.

However, when ranked against other environmental issues river water quality is seen be less of a priority than issues like deforestation, single use plastics and ocean pollution.

People in the South West show higher levels of concern about environmental issues than the national average and across individual regions. Whilst generally inline with the national ranking, river pollution was given a higher priority than climate change in the South West.

Water companies are seen as one of the major contributors to river water pollution but it is recognised that other sources are responsible to the same or higher levels. The majority of people think that water companies should be responsible for funding investments to improve water quality, ahead of the Government and river users.

Older respondents in age brackets of 55+ and retirees show the highest levels of concern about river quality.

Those who regularly use social media, especially Facebook and Twitter have higher levels of personal engagement with these topics and are more likely to have heard and thought about the issues.