

Q: Freshwater

There have been significant improvements in both chemical and biological river quality in English rivers since 1990, bringing more of them up to the standard found in the rest of the UK.

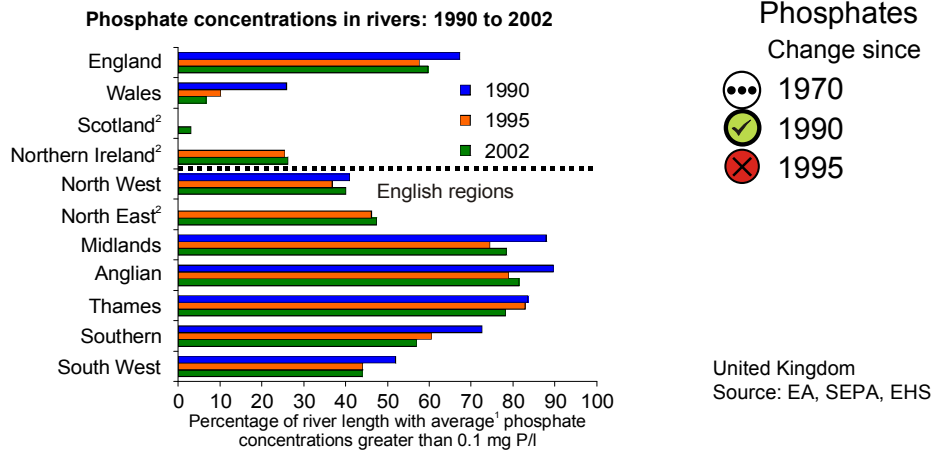
In 2001, abstractions for public water supply were 8 per cent lower than in 1991.

In 2002-3, 30 per cent less of the water put into the supply by water companies in England and Wales was lost through leakage than in 1994-5.

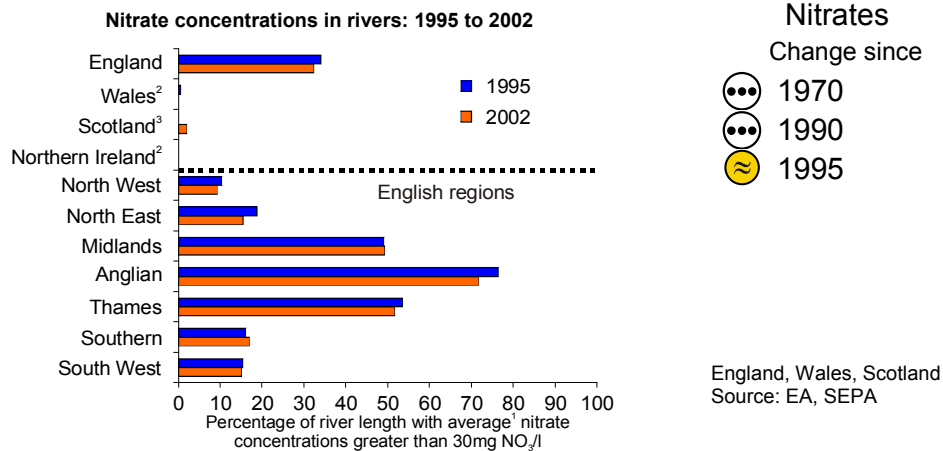
Ref. no.	Indicator		QOLC 1999		QOLC Updated Assessment		
			Change since		Change since		
			1970	1990	1970	1990	Strategy
H12	River water quality: Chemical and biological river quality (headline)						
Q1	Nutrients in water	Phosphates					
		Nitrates					
Q2	Water demand and availability						
Q3	Water affordability						
Q4	Water leakage						
Q5	Abstractions by purpose	Public water supply					
		Other					
Q6	Sites affected by water abstraction						

Indicator: Nutrients in water

Q1



Notes: 1. Three year averages ending in the year shown. Annual average for Scotland.
2. No comparable data for Scotland in 1990 or 1995; or for either Northern Ireland or the North East region in 1990.



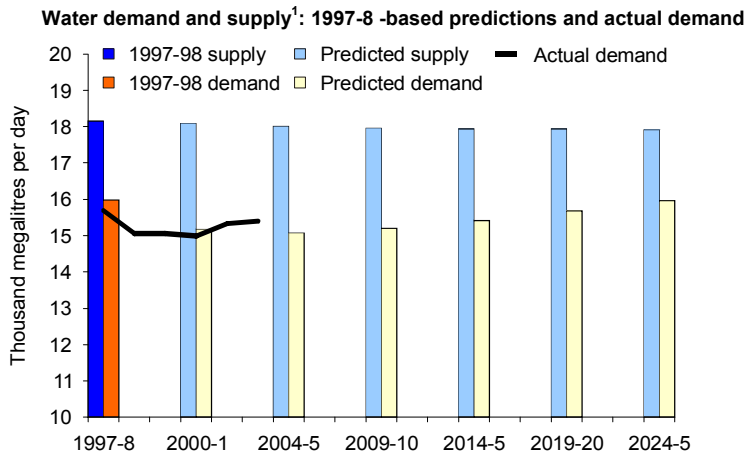
Notes: 1. Three year averages ending in the year shown. Annual average for Scotland.
2. Wales had no river length above 30 mg nitrate/litre in 2002, Northern Ireland had none in 1995 or 2002.
3. No comparable data for Scotland in 1995.

Objective: Improving river quality

- Higher levels of nitrate and phosphate tend to be in central and eastern England, reflecting pressures due to geology, sewage effluent and agriculture.
- Between 1995 and 2002, the percentage of river length with more than 0.1 mg phosphorus per litre increased overall in England, and increased slightly in Northern Ireland, but fell in Wales.
- There was relatively little change in the percentage of river length with nitrate concentrations above 30 mgNO₃/l in most regions between 1995 and 2002.

Indicator: Water demand and availability

Q2



Change since

- 1970
- 1990
- 1997-8

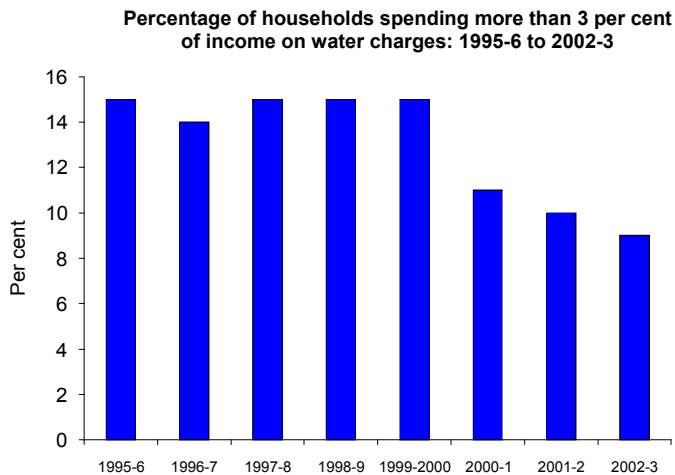
Note: 1. Supply = Water Available For Use (WAFU); demand = distribution input.

Objective: Safeguarding resources and ensuring affordable supplies

- Projections for England and Wales show a decreasing margin between supply and demand up to 2024-5, even allowing for planned demand management methods, and before allowing for climate change. New projections taking account of updated demand management plans are being made as part of the current periodic review of the water industry. These will be available later in 2004.
- Actual demand fell by 4.4 per cent between 1997-8 and 2000-1, since when it has increased slightly. In 2002-3, demand was 1.8 per cent below 1997-8 levels.

Indicator: Water affordability

Q3



Change since

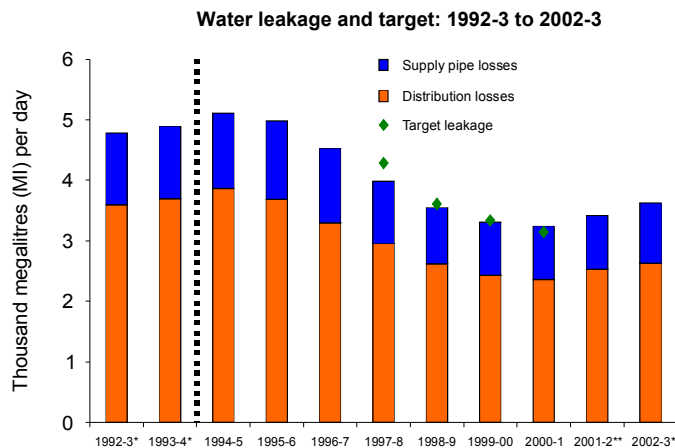
- 1970
- ✓ 1990
- ✓ 1997-8

Objective: Safeguarding resources and ensuring affordable supplies

- Between 1997-8 and 2002-3, the proportion of households spending more than three per cent of their income on water charges fell by 6 percentage points - from 15 per cent to 9 per cent.
- Prior to 1999, the proportion of households spending more than three per cent of income on water charges was fairly constant at around 15 per cent.

Indicator: Water leakage

Q4



Change since

- ☹️ 1970
- ✅ 1990
- 🌀 1998-9

England and Wales
Source: Ofwat

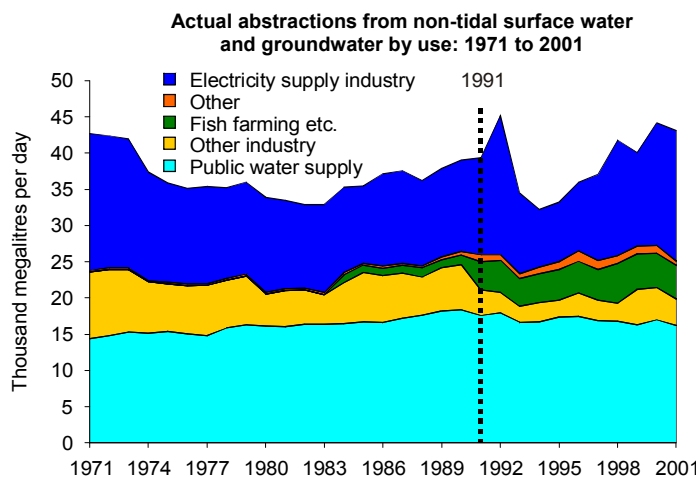
Notes: * Figures for 1992-3 and 1993-4 are on a different basis from subsequent years and slightly understate leakage.
** Targets were not set for all regions in these years.

Objective: Avoiding waste of water

- In 2002-3, 3,623 mega litres (MI) per day of water put into the supply by water companies in England and Wales were lost through leakage. This compares with 5,112 MI per day in 1994-5, a fall of 30 per cent.
- In 2002-3, total leakage was at a similar level to total leakage in 1998-9 but was 12 per cent higher than in 2001-2.

Indicator: Abstractions by purpose

Q5



Public water supply

Change since

- ❌ 1970
- ✅ 1990
- ✅ 1997

Other

Change since

- 🌀 1970
- ❌ 1990
- ❌ 1997

England and Wales
Source: Defra

Note: Data collected before 1991 are not strictly comparable with those for later years.

Objective: Avoiding waste of water

- In 2001, abstractions for public water supply were 13 per cent higher than in 1971 but 8 per cent lower than in 1991.
- Electricity supply industry abstractions have varied greatly since 1990, but recently seem to have been increasing, and in 2001 were very similar to the 1971 level.
- Total abstractions for all other purposes decreased during the 1970s, but have since increased again.

Indicator: Sites affected by water abstraction**Q6**

Objective: Ensure that abstraction controls play a full part in protecting the best wildlife and amenity sites.

The Environment Agency has been working with others to identify and catalogue abstractions contributing to unacceptably low flows in rivers and the drying out of wetlands, and where necessary to identify solutions.

At present, approximately 780 possible sites in England and Wales have been identified. However, on investigation not all of these will necessarily be found to be unacceptable or to require remedial action. It is not currently possible to construct a suitable indicator from this list.