



Flash Eurobarometer 344

ATTITUDES OF EUROPEANS TOWARDS WATER – RELATED ISSUES

SUMMARY

Fieldwork: March 2012

Publication: March 2012

This survey has been requested by Directorate-General for Environment and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM "Research and Speechwriting" Unit).

This document does not represent the point of view of the European Commission.
The interpretations and opinions contained in it are solely those of the authors.

Flash Eurobarometer 344 - TNS Political & Social

Flash Eurobarometer 344

**Attitudes of Europeans towards water – related
issues**

Conducted by TNS Political & Social at the request of Directorate-
General for Environment

Survey co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
1. LEVEL OF INFORMATION ABOUT PROBLEMS FACING GROUNDWATER, LAKES, RIVERS AND COASTAL WATERS	6
2. SERIOUSNESS OF WATER-RELATED PROBLEMS	8
3. CHANGES IN THE QUALITY OF GROUNDWATER, RIVERS, LAKES AND COASTAL WATERS	10
5. MAIN THREATS TO THE WATER ENVIRONMENT	13
6. THE PRICE OF WATER	15
7. TACKLING WATER PROBLEMS	17

ANNEXES

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that the quality and quantity of water available in Europe is an important issue. In 2000 the EU adopted the Water Framework Directive, and progress has been made in adopting an integrated approach to freshwater management, with the goal of achieving 'good status' for all EU waters by 2015¹. Many countries across Europe have adopted River Basin Management Plans for 2009 - 2015 to better manage water resources².

The "Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources"³ is being developed as the EU policy response to the continuing challenge of delivering the EU's water policy goals. The Blueprint is a wide-ranging set of policy recommendations for future EU freshwater policy to appear later in 2012. It draws on a range of ongoing assessments, including the River Basin management plans, and the EU Action on Water Scarcity and Drought. The Blueprint will identify current gaps and future priorities and provide guidance to water policy development until 2020. It will also take advantage of analysis that integrates economic and climate modelling till 2050.

The questions in this Flash Eurobarometer expand on these themes to provide greater insight, and to establish whether awareness of water issues has improved over time.

This summary focuses on the following questions:

- ◆ the level of knowledge about problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters;
- ◆ the seriousness of water-related problems and perceived changes in the quality of groundwater, rivers, lakes and coastal waters;
- ◆ opinions about the impact of various sectors and activities on the status of water;
- ◆ the main threats to the water environment;
- ◆ the price of water;
- ◆ the most effective ways to tackle water problems;
- ◆ measures the EU should take.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/objectives/status_en.htm

² http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/participation/map_mc/map.htm

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/blueprint/index_en.htm

In the course of this survey, 25,524 European citizens aged 15 and above were interviewed by telephone (fixed-line and mobile phone) by the TNS Political & Social network between 5 and 8 March 2012 in all 27 European Union Member States⁴, at the request of the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Environment. The methodology used is that of surveys as carried out by the Directorate General for Communication ("Research and Speechwriting" Unit)⁵. Some replies are compared to a similar Flash Eurobarometer survey on Water carried out in 2009⁶, where some of the same questions were asked.

A technical note on the methodology for interviews conducted by the institutes within the TNS Political & Social network is annexed to this report. This note indicates the interview methods and the confidence intervals.

The Eurobarometer web site can be consulted at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all the respondents across the continent who gave their time to take part in this survey.

Without their active participation, this study would not have been possible.

⁴ Further information on the methodology used can be found in the technical note which specifies the interview methods as well as the confidence intervals.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

⁶ Flash Eurobarometer n°261: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_261_en.pdf

Note**ABREVIATIONS**

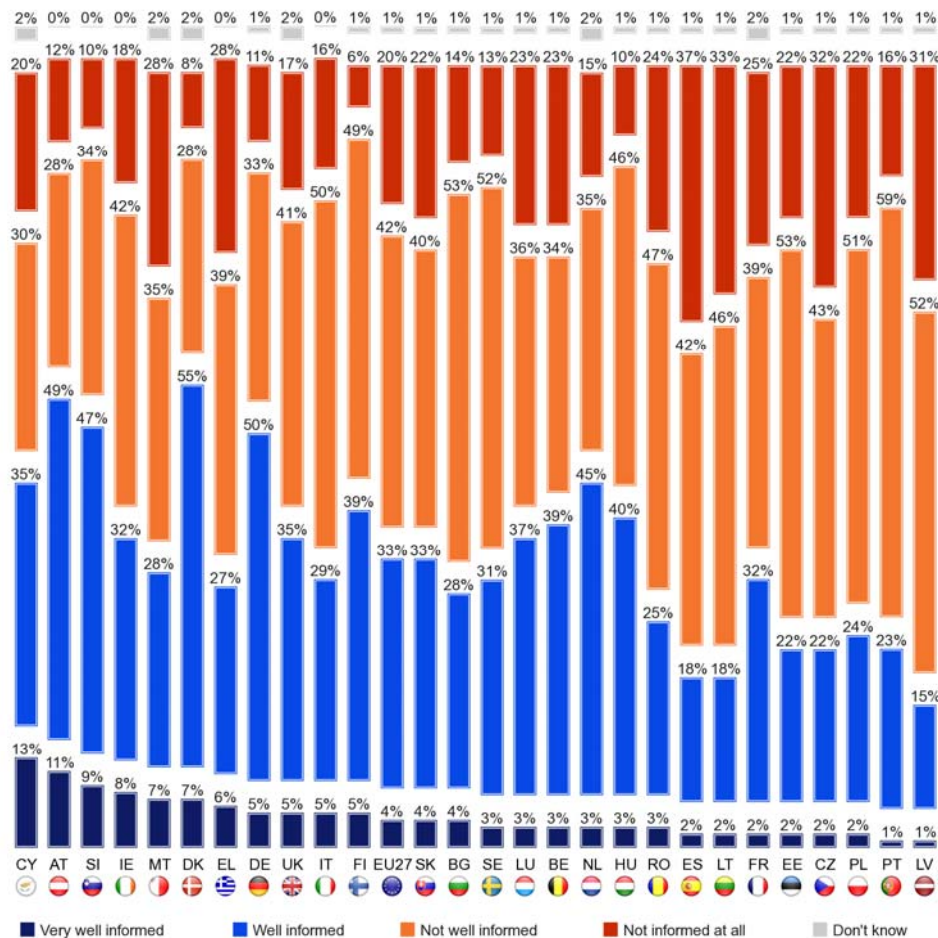
EU27	European Union - 27 Member States
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czech Republic
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
IT	Italy
CY	Republic of Cyprus
LV	Latvia
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	The Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom

1. LEVEL OF INFORMATION ABOUT PROBLEMS FACING GROUNDWATER, LAKES, RIVERS AND COASTAL WATERS

Europeans feel less informed about problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters in their country than they did in 2009.

Fewer than four out of ten respondents feel well or very well informed (37%) about problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters in their country⁷. This is a decrease of 6 points since 2009. Respondents living in Denmark are most likely to say they feel informed about problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters in their country (62%), compared to 16% of those living in Latvia.

Q1T. How informed do you feel about problems facing groundwater, lakes and rivers in (OUR COUNTRY)?



⁷ Q1a How informed do you feel about problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters in (OUR COUNTRY)?

In Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia the following question was asked that way Q1b How informed do you feel about problems facing groundwater, lakes and rivers in (OUR COUNTRY)?

Respondents living in Denmark (62%) and Austria (60%) are most likely to feel well or very well informed about problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters in their country. More than half of those living in Slovenia (56%) and Germany (55%) also say they feel well-informed about problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters in their country. Respondents in Cyprus (13%) are the most likely to say they feel very well-informed, followed by those in Austria (11%).

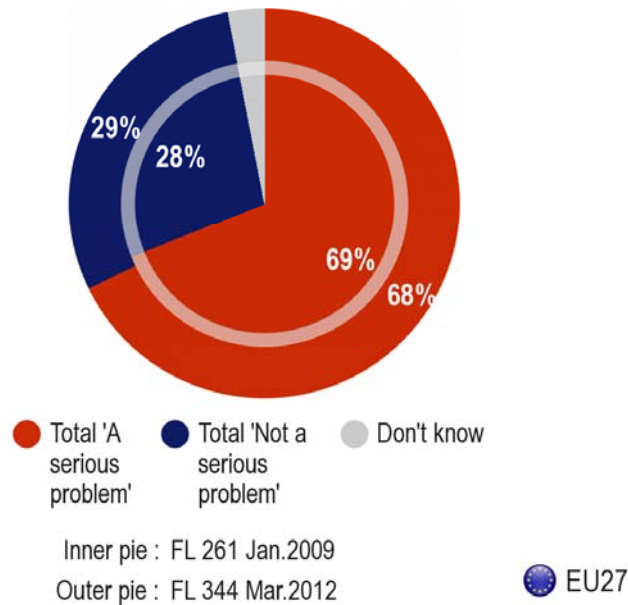
2. SERIOUSNESS OF WATER-RELATED PROBLEMS

A majority believe that water quality and quantity problems are serious.

Most respondents (68%) think that water quality problems are a serious issue⁸. This proportion has decreased by one percentage point since 2009.

Q2.1. Would you say that the following is a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, not a very serious problem or not a serious problem at all in (OUR COUNTRY)?





























Water quality problems



Around nine out of ten respondents in Romania (94%), Italy (91%) and France (89%) consider water quality a serious problem for their country. In fact in all three countries at least half say that water quality is a very serious problem (Romania: 64%, Italy and France: 53%). This is also the case in Bulgaria, where 52% consider water quality to be a very serious problem.

By contrast, more than half of the respondents in Finland (59%), Austria (58%), Germany and the Netherlands (both 52%) do not consider water quality to be a serious problem in their country, and one in five Austrian respondents say that water quality is not a serious problem at all (20%).

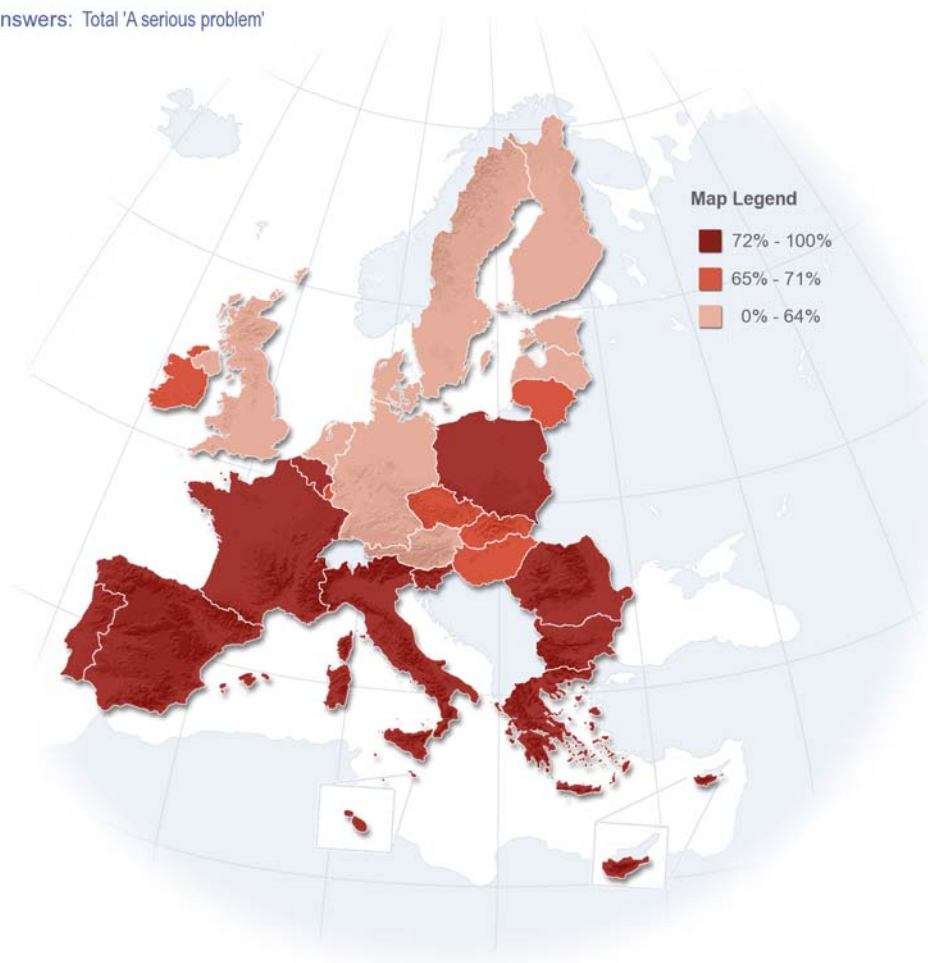
⁸ Q2.1 Would you say that the following is a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, not a very serious problem or not a serious problem at all in (OUR COUNTRY)? Water quality problems

 RO	94%
 IT	91%
 FR	89%
 EL	86%
 BG	86%
 SI	85%
 PL	82%
 CY	75%
 PT	73%
 MT	73%
 ES	72%
 BE	72%
 HU	70%
 LT	70%
 SK	69%
 EU	68%
 CZ	67%
 IE	67%
 LU	65%
 LV	64%
 DK	59%
 SE	57%
 EE	49%
 DE	46%
 UK	44%
 NL	44%
 AT	40%
 FI	39%

Question: Q2.1. Would you say that the following is a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, not a very serious problem or not a serious problem at all in (OUR COUNTRY)?

Option: Water quality problems

Answers: Total 'A serious problem'



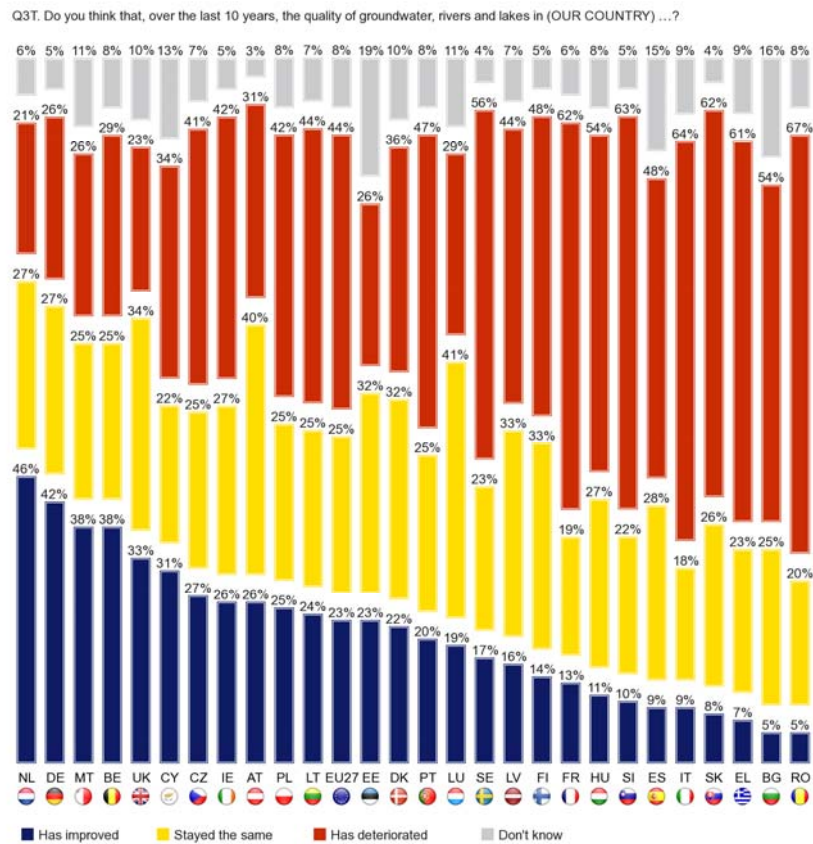
At least three-quarters of respondents across the EU also consider floods (79%), and droughts and overconsumption of water (75%) to be serious problems⁹.

Views on the seriousness of floods, water quality and droughts are inter-related. A respondent who thinks one of these issues is serious is more likely to think the others are also serious. For instance, those who think water quality is a serious problem are also more likely to say droughts/overconsumption are a serious problem than those who say that water quality is not a serious problem (85% vs 52%).

⁹ Q2. Would you say that the following is a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, not a very serious problem or not a serious problem at all in (OUR COUNTRY)? 2. Floods ; 3. Droughts/ overconsumption of water

3. CHANGES IN THE QUALITY OF GROUNDWATER, RIVERS, LAKES AND COASTAL WATERS

Europeans are concerned by water quality. The most widespread view among Europeans is that the quality of groundwater, rivers, lakes and coastal waters has either improved (23%) or remained the same (25%) over the past ten years, while 44% believe it has deteriorated¹⁰. Regional differences are marked, with 67% in Romania believing it has deteriorated.



¹⁰ Q3a Do you think that, over the last 10 years, the quality of groundwater, rivers, lakes and coastal waters in (OUR COUNTRY) ...? In Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia the following question was asked: Q3b Do you think that, over the last 10 years, the quality of groundwater, rivers and lakes in (OUR COUNTRY) ...?

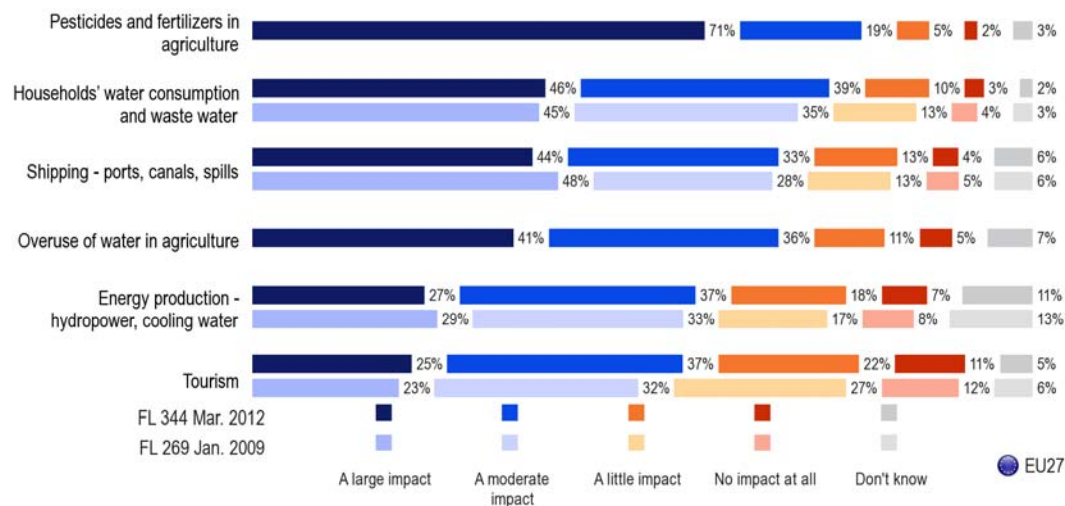
Respondents in the Netherlands (46%) and Germany (42%) are most likely to say that water quality has improved - although this is not a majority opinion in either country. Only 5% of respondents in Bulgaria and Romania think water quality has improved in the last 10 years.

In 15 Member States, a majority of respondents believe that the water quality of water has either improved or remained the same over the past ten years. More than 65% of the respondents in the Netherlands (73%), Germany (69%), the United Kingdom (67%) and Austria (66%) are of that opinion. In 10 Member States the dominant view is that water quality has deteriorated. In Portugal and Finland, respondents are divided.

4. IMPACT OF VARIOUS FACTORS ON THE STATUS OF WATER

At least eight out of ten respondents consider that pesticides and fertilizers in agriculture (90%) and household water consumption and waste water (85%) have an impact on the quality and quantity of water¹¹. Household water consumption is more likely to be seen as having an impact in this wave than it was in 2009 (85% vs 80%).

Q4. Can you please tell me how much impact you think each of the following has on the status (quality and quantity) of water in (OUR COUNTRY)? Does it have a large impact, a moderate impact, a little impact or no impact at all?



Compared to the previous Flash Eurobarometer survey on water in 2009¹², more respondents now think that tourism has an impact on the status of water in their country (up 7 points from 55% to 62%). Respondents are also more likely to say that household water consumption and waste water has an impact on the status of water than they were in 2009 (85% - up 5 points). There has been little change regarding the other items that were asked about in both surveys.

Nine out of ten respondents think that agricultural chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides) have an impact on the status of water in their country, with seven out of ten (71%) saying they have a large impact. The majority of respondents in every country say that such agricultural chemicals have an impact on the status of water. This view is almost universal among respondents in Greece (97%), France and Slovenia (96%), but is less widespread in Estonia (66%) and Malta (76%). In fact, 22% of respondents in Estonia think that pesticides and fertilizers have no impact on the status of water.

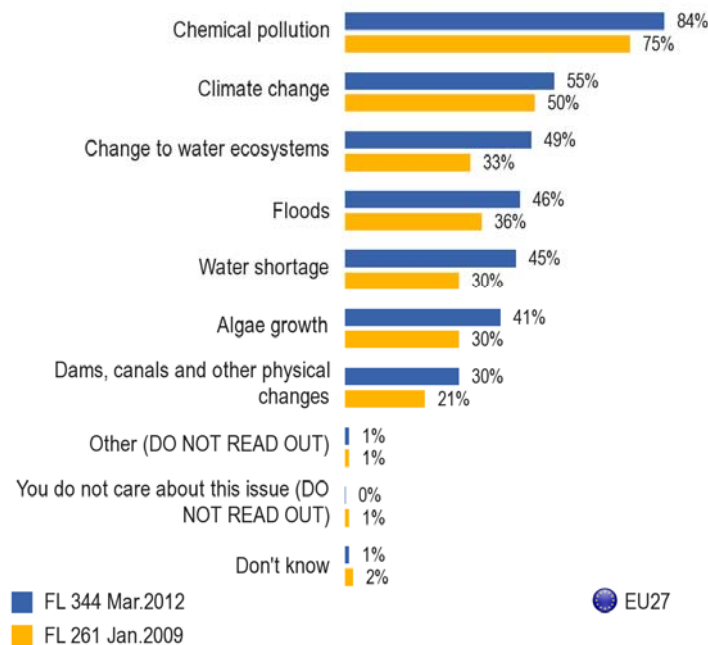
¹¹ Q4. Can you please tell me how much impact you think each of the following has on the status (quality and quantity) of water in (OUR COUNTRY)? 1. Households' water consumption and waste water; 2. Overuse of water in agriculture; 3. Pesticides and fertilizers in agriculture; 4. Energy production - hydropower, cooling water; 5. Tourism; 6. Shipping - ports, canals, spills

¹² Flash Eurobarometer n°261: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_261_en.pdf

5. MAIN THREATS TO THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

At least eight out of ten Europeans (84%) believe that chemical pollution is a threat to the water environment¹³. Climate change is the next most commonly mentioned threat (55%), followed by changes to the water ecosystem (49%). At least four out of ten consider floods (46%), water shortage (45%) and algae growth (41%) to be threats to the water environment. Three in ten (30%) see dams, canals and other physical changes as threats to the water environment.

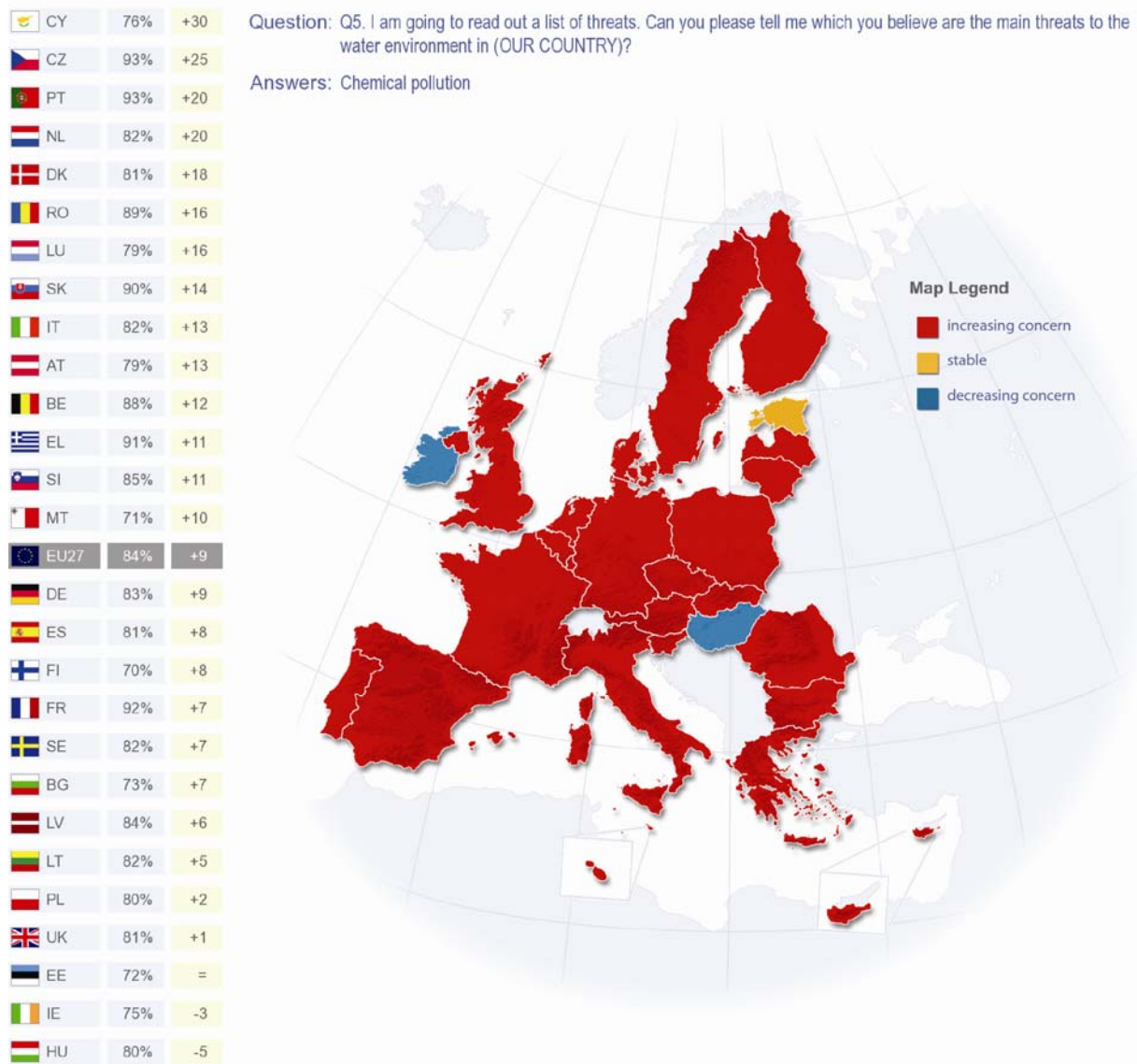
Q5. I am going to read out a list of threats. Can you please tell me which you believe are the main threats to the water environment in (OUR COUNTRY)?



Since the last wave of the survey in 2009¹⁴ there have been some large shifts in opinion. The proportion of respondents mentioning water shortage has increased by 15 points, the proportion mentioning changes to the water ecosystem has increased 16 percentage points. The proportion mentioning algae growth has risen by 11 points, and floods by 10 points. The proportions mentioning chemical pollution, and dams, canals and other physical changes, have both increased by 9 points. The proportion mentioning climate change has seen the smallest increase, up five points from 50% to 55%.

¹³ Q5 I am going to read out a list of threats. Can you please tell me which you believe are the main threats to the water environment in (OUR COUNTRY)?

¹⁴ Flash Eurobarometer n°261: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_261_en.pdf



March 2012 - January 2009

As the map shows, since 2009 chemical pollution has been seen as a threat by increasing numbers in almost all countries. The proportion has increased considerably in Cyprus (up 30 points), the Czech Republic (up 25 points), Portugal and the Netherlands (both up 20 points). In fact, the proportion mentioning chemical pollution has increased in all countries except Hungary (down 5 points), Ireland (down 3 points) and Estonia (unchanged).

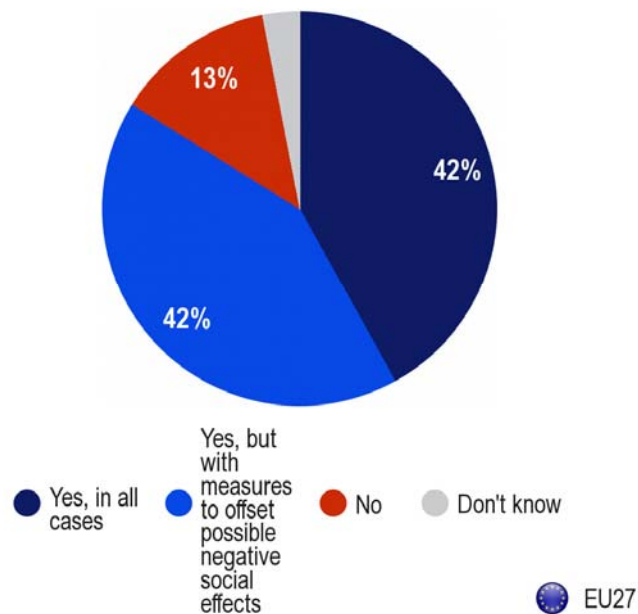
In every country, chemical pollution is the most mentioned threat to the water environment, although the proportions vary.

6. THE PRICE OF WATER

Most Europeans are in favour of a user-pays system for water consumption, and, to a lesser extent, that the cost should reflect the environmental impact of water use.

More than eight out of ten agree that water users should be charged for the volume of water they use¹⁵. These respondents are evenly split between those who think charges should be applied in all cases, and those who think measures should be in place to offset any adverse social consequences of water charges.

Q7. Do you think or not that all water users should be charged for the volume of water they use?

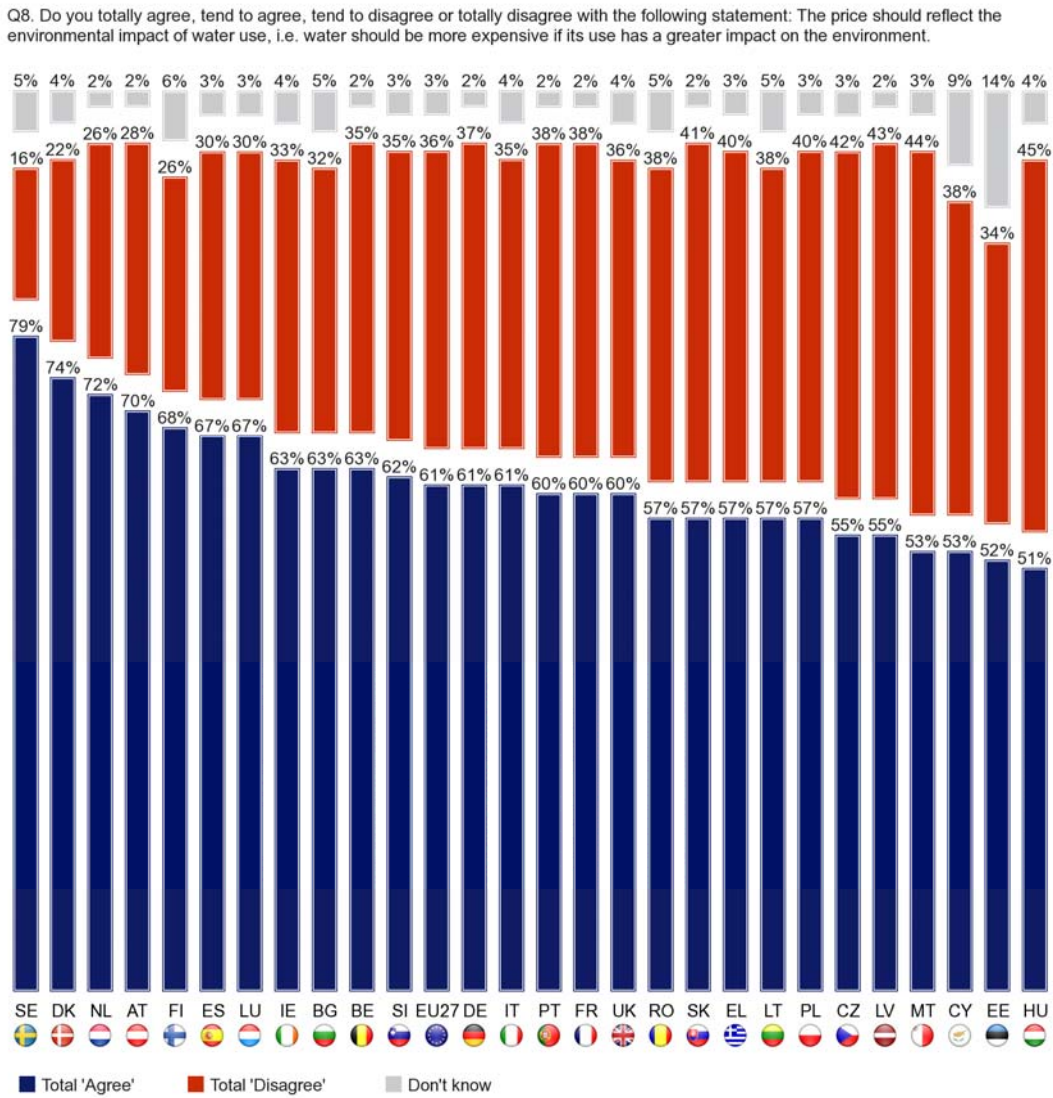


Just above six out of ten respondents agree that the price of water should reflect the environmental impact of its use (61%)¹⁶. Respondents who think droughts are a serious issue are more likely to be in favour of this approach.

¹⁵ Q7 Do you think or not that all water users should be charged for the volume of water they use?

¹⁶ Q8 Do you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree with the following statement: The price should reflect the environmental impact of water use, i.e. water should be more expensive if its use has a greater impact on the environment.

Respondents in Sweden are most likely to agree with this statement - overall 79% agree, with 38% in total agreement. At least seven out of ten respondents in Denmark (74%), the Netherlands (72%) and Austria (70%) also agree that water charges should reflect the environmental impact of water use. In fact, a majority of respondents in all countries agree with this idea, although agreement is least widespread in Hungary (51%) and Estonia (52%).

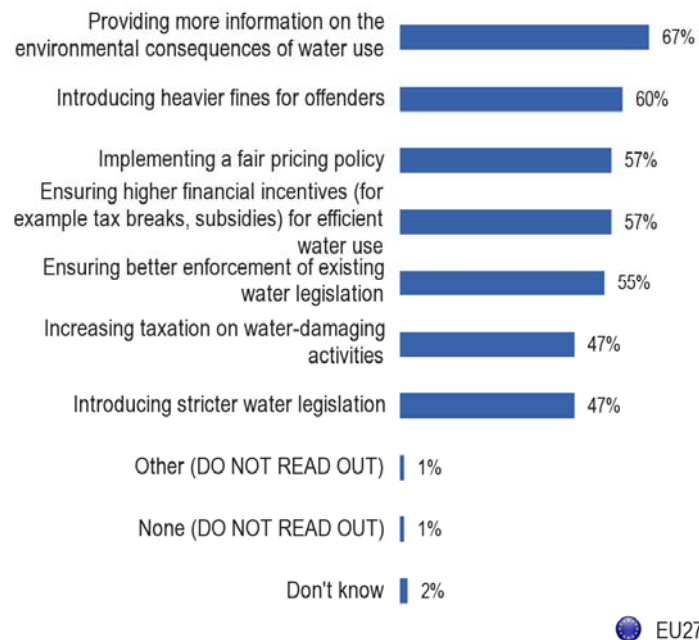


7. TACKLING WATER PROBLEMS

Two-thirds of Europeans believe that more information about the environmental consequences of water use is the most effective way of tackling water problems.

It was noted above (see section 1) that a majority of Europeans felt not well-informed about the problems facing groundwater, lakes, rivers and coastal waters in their countries. It is interesting to note that, here, almost seven out of ten (67%) think providing more information on the environmental consequences of water use is the most effective way to tackle water problems¹⁷. This is also the most commonly mentioned method of addressing these issues in 19 out of 27 countries.

Q10. In your opinion, which of the following would be the most effective ways of tackling water problems?



The majority of Europeans want the EU to propose additional measures on water issues.

Around three-quarters (73%) of respondents think that the EU should propose additional measures to address water problems, and at least half of this group would like to be able to express their views on these measures¹⁸. However, 12% of respondents think that this is not an area of EU competence.

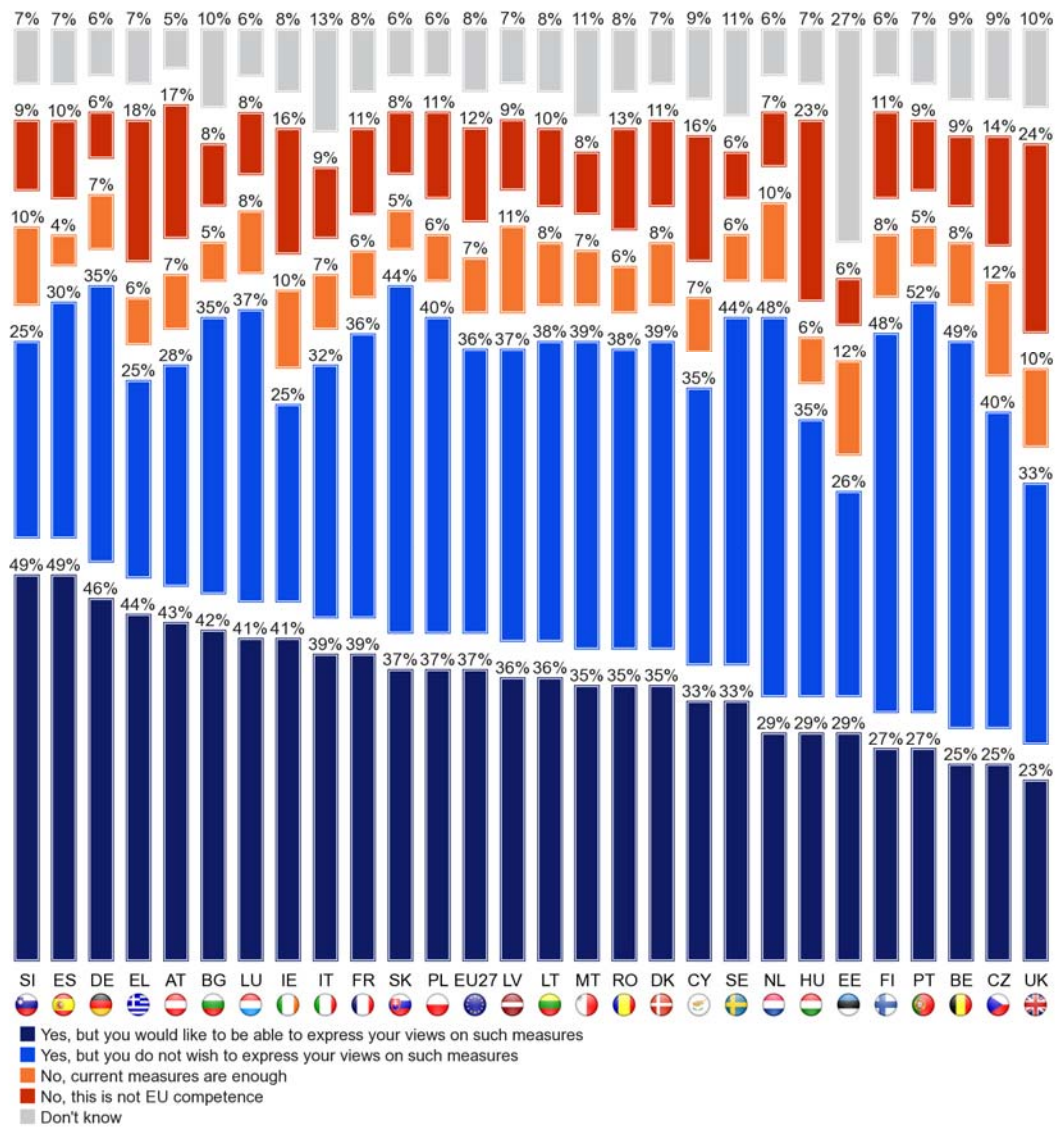
¹⁷ Q10 In your opinion, which of the following would be the most effective ways of tackling water problems? (READ OUT – MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

¹⁸ Q11 Do you think the EU should propose additional measures to address water problems in Europe?

Over one-third think that the EU should propose additional measures, and want to be able to express their views on such measures (37%). An almost equal proportion (36%) think there the EU should propose additional measures, but are not interested in having a say on them. Just over one in ten (12%) think that there should be no more measures, as this is not an EU competence, and a further 7% think that the current measures are enough.

At least half the respondents in every country think that the EU should propose additional measures to address water problems in Europe. Respondents in Germany and Slovakia (both 81%) are most likely to think this, while those in Estonia (55%) and the UK (56%) are the least likely to do so.

Q11. Do you think the EU should propose additional measures to address water problems in Europe?



However, there is a generally low level of awareness of matters like the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources and the River Basin Management Plans.

Respondents were asked if they were aware that the EU is currently reviewing water policy with a view to publishing a new strategy - the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources - at the end of 2012¹⁹. Almost all respondents said they were unaware of this (93%), while 7% said they were aware.

River Basin Management Plans have been adopted in a large number of European countries, although in four Member States the consultation process is still in progress or the plans have yet to be finalised and adopted (Portugal, Spain, Belgium and Greece)²⁰.

Awareness of River Basin Management Plans is also low - 11%²¹. This is fairly consistent across countries, with only 19 points separating Finland (23%) from France and Sweden (both 4%).

¹⁹ Q12 The EU is analysing the current EU water policy with a view to publish a new Strategy – the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources – at the end of 2012. Are you aware of this?

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/participation/map_mc/map.htm

²¹ Q14 Have you heard of River Basin Management Plans?

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

FLASH EUROBAROMETER 344
"Attitudes of Europeans towards water – related issues"
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Between the 5th and the 8th of March 2012, TNS Political & Social, a consortium created between TNS political & social, TNS UK and TNS opinion, carried out the survey FLASH EUROBAROMETER 344 about "Attitudes of Europeans towards water – related issues".

This survey has been requested by the EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Directorate-General for Environment. It is a general public survey co-ordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication ("Research and Speechwriting" Unit). The FLASH EUROBAROMETER 344 covers the population of the respective nationalities of the European Union Member States, resident in each of the 27 Member States and aged 15 years and over. All interviews were carried using the TNS e-Call center (our centralized CATI system). In every country respondents were called both on fixed lines and mobile phones. The basic sample design applied in all states is multi-stage random (probability). In each household, the respondent was drawn at random following the "last birthday rule".

TNS have developed their own RDD sample generation capabilities based on using contact telephone numbers from responders to random probability or random location face to face surveys, such as Eurobarometer, as seed numbers. The approach works because the seed number identifies a working block of telephone numbers and reduces the volume of numbers generated that will be ineffective. The seed numbers are stratified by NUTS2 region and urbanisation to approximate a geographically representative sample. From each seed number the required sample of numbers are generated by randomly replacing the last two digits. The sample is then screened against business databases in order to exclude as many of these numbers as possible before going into field. This approach is consistent across all countries.

ABBR.	COUNTRIES	INSTITUTES	N° INTERVIEWS	FIELDWORK DATES		POPULATION 15+
BE	Belgium	TNS Dimarso	1.002	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	8.939.546
BG	Bulgaria	TNS BBSS	1.001	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	6.537.510
CZ	Czech Rep.	TNS Aisa s.r.o	1.000	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	9.012.443
DK	Denmark	TNS Gallup A/S	1.000	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	4.561.264
DE	Germany	TNS Infratest	1.000	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	64.409.146
EE	Estonia	TNS Emor	980	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	945.733
EL	Greece	TNS ICAP	1.000	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	8.693.566
ES	Spain	TNS Demoscopia S.A	1.001	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	39.035.867
FR	France	TNS Sofres	1.005	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	47.756.439
IE	Ireland	IMS Millward Brown	1.000	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	3.522.000
IT	Italy	TNS Infratest	1.002	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	51.862.391
CY	Rep. of Cyprus	CYMAR	500	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	660.400
LV	Latvia	TNS Latvia	1.000	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	1.447.866
LT	Lithuania	TNS Lithuania	1.001	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	2.829.740
LU	Luxembourg	TNS Dimarso	503	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	404.907
HU	Hungary	TNS Hoffmann Kft	1.003	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	8.320.614
MT	Malta	MISCO International Ltd	501	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	335.476
NL	Netherlands	TNS NIPO	1.000	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	13.371.980
AT	Austria	TNS Austria	1.003	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	7.009.827
PL	Poland	TNS OBOP	1.000	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	32.413.735
PT	Portugal	TNS EUROTESTE	1.002	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	8.080.915
RO	Romania	TNS CSOP	1.002	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	18.246.731
SI	Slovenia	RM PLUS	1.001	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	1.759.701
SK	Slovakia	TNS AISA Slovakia	1.000	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	4.549.955
FI	Finland	TNS Gallup Oy	1.006	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	4.440.004
SE	Sweden	TNS SIFO	1.000	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	7.791.240
UK	United Kingdom	TNS UK	1.011	05/03/2012	07/03/2012	51.848.010
TOTAL EU27			25.524	05/03/2012	08/03/2012	408.787.006

For each country a comparison between the sample and the universe was carried out. The Universe description was derived from Eurostat population data or from national statistics offices. For all countries surveyed, a national weighting procedure, using marginal and intercellular weighting, was carried out based on this Universe description. In all countries, gender, age, region and size of locality were introduced in the iteration procedure. For international weighting (i.e. EU averages), TNS Political & Social applies the official population figures as provided by EUROSTAT or national statistic offices. The total population figures for input in this post-weighting procedure are listed above.

Readers are reminded that survey results are estimations, the accuracy of which, everything being equal, rests upon the sample size and upon the observed percentage. With samples of about 1,000 interviews, the real percentages vary within the following confidence limits:

Observed percentages	10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Confidence limits	± 1.9 points	± 2.5 points	± 2.7 points	± 3.0 points	± 3.1 points