



Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Gníomhaireacht Comhshaoil Thuaisceart Éireann
Norlin Airlan Environment Agency

Groundwater Classification Statistics Report 2026

September 2026



An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
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Gníomhaireacht de chuid na Roinne
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

An Agency wi'in the Depairtment o
**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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1. Key Points

1.1 Groundwater Status 2026

In 2026, 48 (64 per cent) of the 75 groundwater bodies achieved good overall status, lower than the 51 (68 per cent) which achieved good overall status in 2021.

When assessing the status, both the quantitative and qualitative (chemical) status is considered.

In 2026, 71 (95 per cent) of the 75 groundwater bodies achieved good quantitative status which was the same as the number achieving good quantitative status in 2021.

In 2026, 49 (65 per cent) of the 75 groundwater bodies achieved good qualitative (chemical) status which was lower than the 53 (71 per cent) achieving good qualitative (chemical) status in 2021.

1.2 Data Availability

Across Northern Ireland, within the time period 2020-2025, 39 per cent of groundwater bodies had chemical monitoring, and 15 per cent of groundwater bodies had level monitoring. If a groundwater body did not have sufficient monitoring for each specific subtest of classification then the respective classification was defaulted to 'good status', i.e. there were no data to indicate 'poor status'.

2. Background

2.1 Introduction

Water is of fundamental importance for life and our natural environment. Our water bodies provide us with drinking water and are critical for businesses, generating and sustaining wealth through activities such as agriculture, fishing, industry, services, transport and tourism. Our economy, health and enjoyment of the environment depend on the way we maintain our rivers, lakes, transitional (estuarine) waters, coastal waters and groundwater. The protection of our aquatic environment underpins our well-being and our livelihoods.

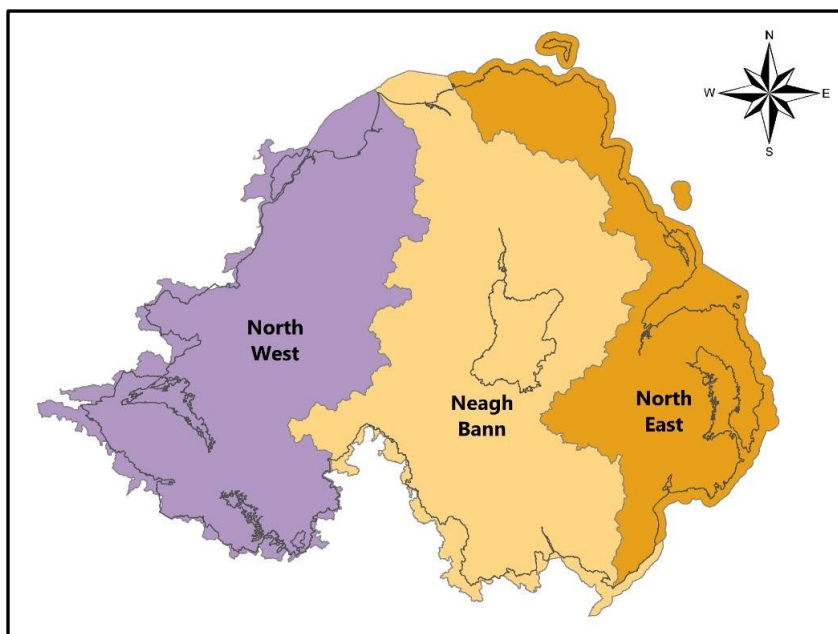
Within Northern Ireland, Integrated Catchment Management is implemented through a number of regulations, including:

- The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017
- The Water Framework Directive (Classification, Priority Substances and Shellfish Waters) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015
- The Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and amendments

The Water (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 ensure that the Water Framework Directive (as transposed) and the supporting legislation continue to operate.

2.2 River Basin Management Plan

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) Regulations are implemented through a River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). Northern Ireland has three river basin districts: North West, Neagh Bann and North East (Figure 1). The North West and Neagh Bann are international river basin districts shared with the Republic of Ireland.

Figure 1 Northern Ireland's River Basin Districts

2.3 Northern Ireland Statistics - Water Environment

Each year DAERA release official statistics through the [Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report](#). This report is a compendium of 7 key environmental themes and provides updates on associated indicator measures and monitoring programmes linked to government strategies. Water is one of the 7 key themes and is included each year. The water data included in this Groundwater Classification Statistics report is not updated each year due to the timescales of the monitoring. Groundwater status statistics are updated each six year cycle. The previous Groundwater Classification Statistics report is available at: [Water Framework Directive Statistics Report, December 2021](#).

This report is an update on the status of groundwater bodies and is predominantly based on monitoring data for the six-year period of 2020-2025, the results are referred to as the '2026 classification'. Classification of all surface water and groundwater bodies will be updated in 2027 for the 4th cycle River Basin Management Plans.

2.4 Classification Units – Groundwater Bodies

Water bodies are the basic management units for reporting and assessing compliance with the environmental objectives. There are 571 water bodies in Northern Ireland, 496 are surface water bodies: including 450 rivers, 21 lakes, and 25 transitional and coastal

water bodies (marine); the remaining 75 are groundwater bodies. Of the 75 groundwater bodies, 66 are bedrock groundwater bodies and 9 are superficial groundwater bodies.

NIEA is statutorily required to classify groundwater body status, prevent that status from deteriorating and aim to restore any poor status groundwater bodies to good status. When assessing the status, both the quantitative and qualitative (chemical) status are considered. A number of tests are used to determine status, resulting in either 'Good Status' or 'Poor Status'. The overall status is determined by the lower of the status', using the one-out – all-out rule.

2.5 Data constraints

The United Kingdom Technical Advisory Group (UKTAG) Guidance on monitoring groundwater states that “the establishment of high-quality long-term monitoring programmes is essential if the implementation of WFD is to be effective” (UKTAG 2007¹). Both sufficient chemical and quantitative monitoring is essential for the classification of groundwater body status and trend assessment.

The NIEA groundwater monitoring programme consists of the collection of groundwater samples and levels from boreholes and springs that are mostly owned and operated by third parties. The network is currently limited due to the reliance on third-party owner permissions/access, the specific criteria required for monitoring sites and limited resources.

Table 1 shows the percentage of groundwater bodies which have been monitored within 2020-2025. Across Northern Ireland, within 2020-2025, 39 per cent of groundwater bodies had chemical monitoring, and 15 per cent of groundwater bodies had level monitoring. Annex I provides further information on the NIEA Groundwater monitoring of each groundwater body. For transboundary groundwater bodies the monitoring statistics presented only include those within Northern Ireland.

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https://www.wfduk.org/sites/default/files/Media/Characterisation%20of%20the%20water%20environment/Groundwater%20monitoring_Draft_010807.pdf

If a groundwater body did not have sufficient monitoring for each specific subtest of classification, then the respective classification defaulted to 'good status'. i.e. there was no data to indicate 'poor status'. The NIEA may change the way that groundwater bodies without sufficient monitoring data are accounted for and reported on in future assessments.

Table 1 Data Constraints of the NIEA Groundwater Monitoring Network within 2020-2025

Data constraints of the NIEA Groundwater Monitoring Network				
Number of groundwater bodies with chemical monitoring station/s	%	Number of groundwater bodies with level monitoring station/s	%	Total groundwater bodies
North East				
9	64	4	29	14
Neagh Bann				
10	63	2	13	16
North West				
10	22	5	11	45
Northern Ireland				
29	39	11	15	75

3. Northern Ireland's Groundwater Classification Status

3.1 Groundwater Overall Status

The data in Figure 2 and Table 2 compares the 2021 and 2026 overall status for the 75 groundwater bodies. Figures 3 and 4 show the spatial distribution of overall status.

In 2026, 48 (64 per cent) of the 75 groundwater bodies achieved good overall status. In 2021, 51 (68 per cent) of the 75 groundwater bodies achieved good overall status.

Under the "one-out, all-out" principle, changes in chemical or quantitative status do not necessarily result in a change to the overall status classification of a groundwater body, as overall status is determined by the poorest-performing element.

Figure 2 Groundwater Overall Status 2021 & 2026

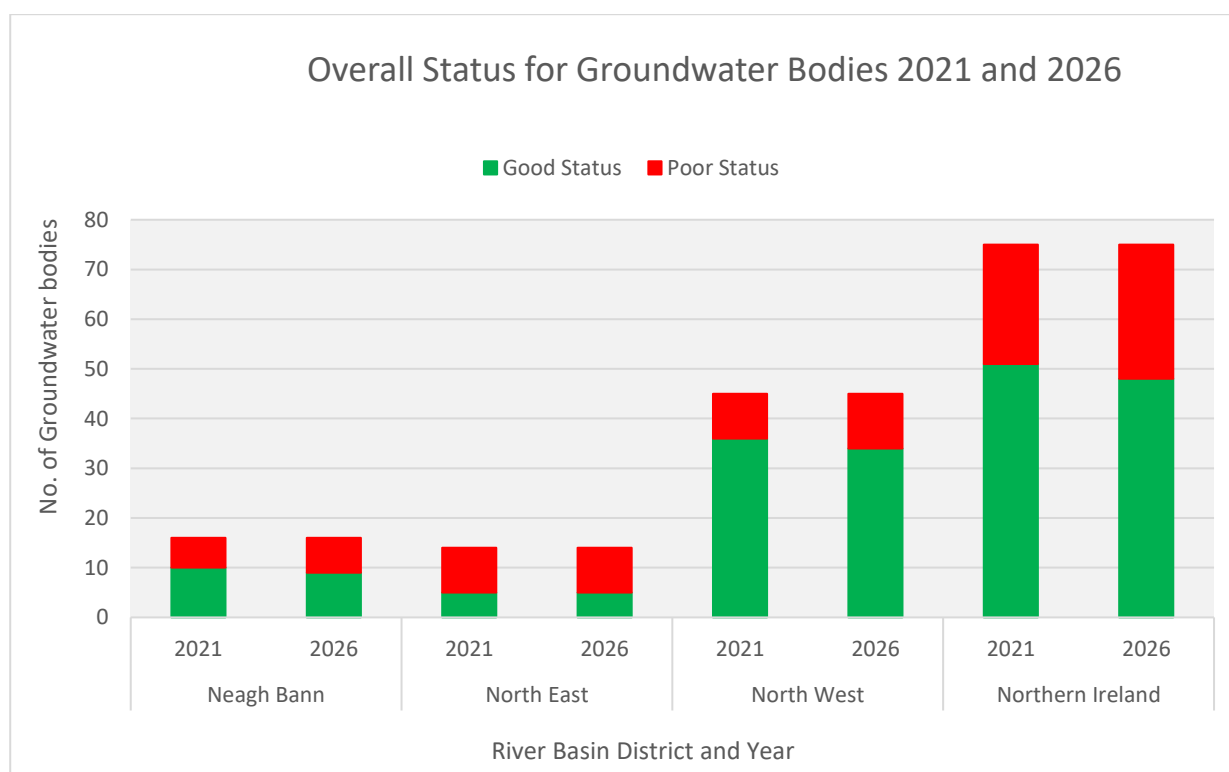


Table 2 Groundwater Overall Status 2021 & 2026

Overall Groundwater Status for 2021 & 2026				
	2021		2026	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
North East				
Good	5	36	5	36
Poor	9	64	9	64
Neagh Bann				
Good	10	63	9	56
Poor	6	38	7	44
North West				
Good	36	80	34	76
Poor	9	20	11	24
Northern Ireland				
Good	51	68	48	64
Poor	24	32	27	36

Note: totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding

Figure 3 Map of Groundwater Overall Status 2026 for Bedrock Groundwater Bodies

Northern Ireland Groundwater Classification 2026

Overall Status of Bedrock Groundwater Bodies

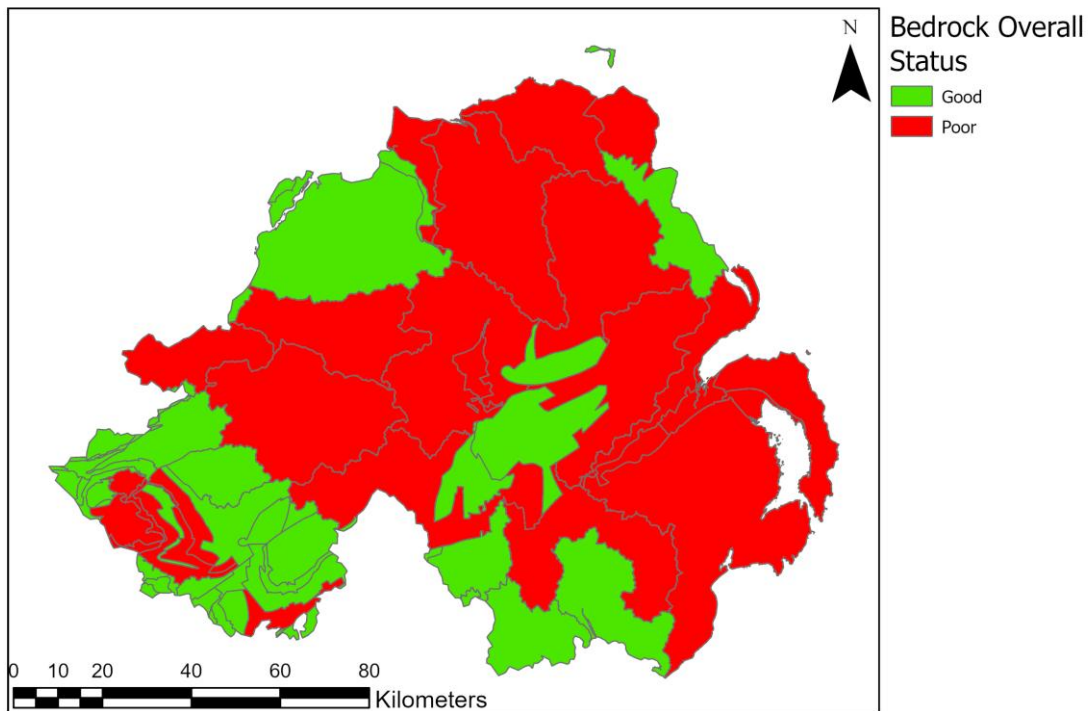
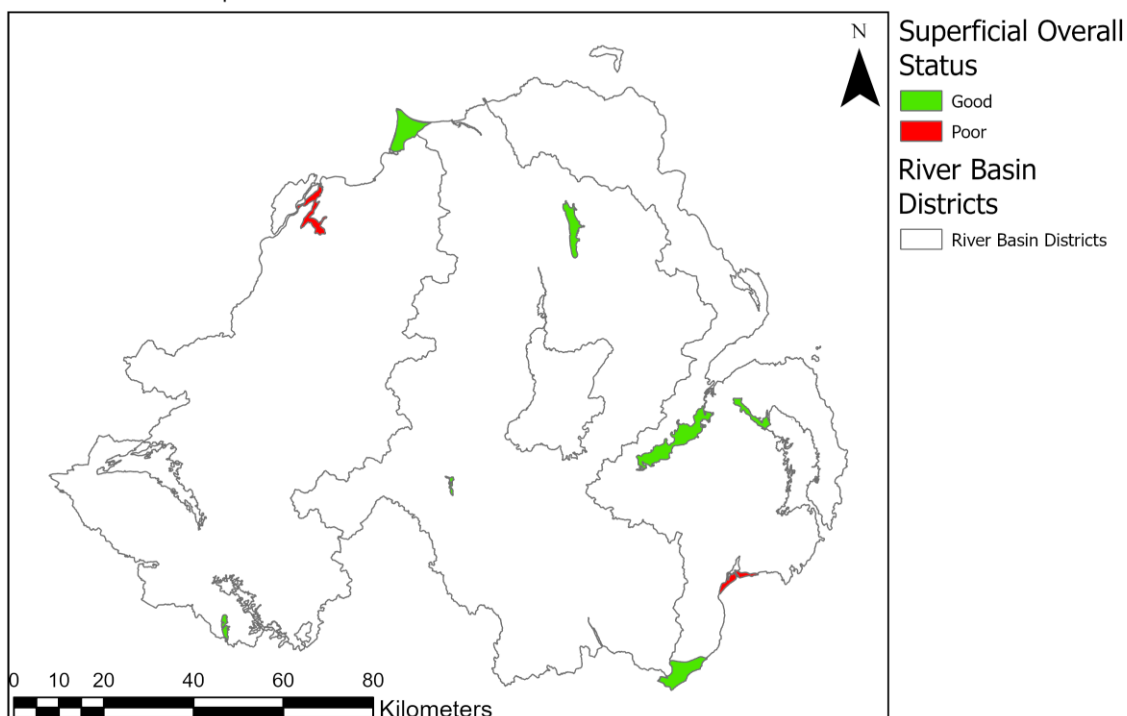


Figure 4 Map of Groundwater Overall Status 2026 for Superficial Groundwater Bodies

Northern Ireland Groundwater Classification 2026

Overall Status of Superficial Groundwater Bodies



3.2 Groundwater Quantitative Status

The data in Figure 5 and Table 3 compares the 2021 and 2026 quantitative status for the 75 groundwater bodies. Figures 6 and 7 show the spatial distribution of quantitative status.

In 2026, 71 (95 per cent) achieved good quantitative status in Northern Ireland, the same as recorded in 2021

The North East River Basin District (RBD) has 14 groundwater bodies, 12 (86 per cent) achieved good quantitative status in 2026. In 2021, 12 (86 per cent) achieved good quantitative status.

The Neagh Bann RBD has 16 groundwater bodies, all 16 (100 per cent) achieved good quantitative status in 2026. In 2021, all 16 (100 per cent) also achieved good quantitative status.

The North West RBD has 45 groundwater bodies, 43 (96 per cent) achieved good quantitative status in 2026. In 2021, 43 (96 per cent) achieved good quantitative status.

Figure 5 Groundwater Quantitative Status 2021 and 2026

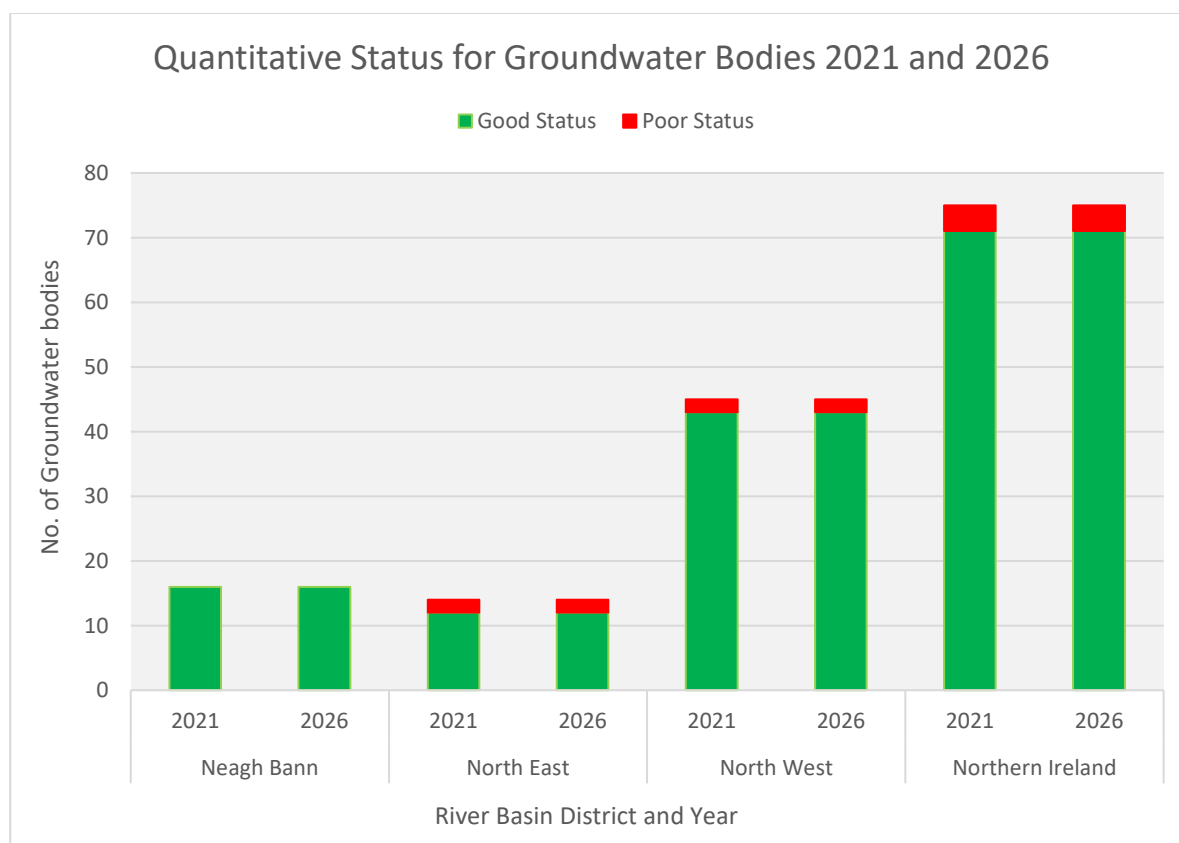


Table 3 Groundwater Quantitative Status 2021 and 2026

Groundwater quantitative status for 2021 and 2026				
	2021		2026	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
North East				
Good	12	86	12	86
Poor	2	14	2	14
Neagh Bann				
Good	16	100	16	100
Poor	0	0	0	0
North West				
Good	43	96	43	96
Poor	2	4	2	4
Northern Ireland				
Good	71	95	71	95
Poor	4	5	4	5

Figure 6 Map of Groundwater Quantitative Status 2026 for Bedrock Groundwater Bodies

Northern Ireland Groundwater Classification 2026

Quantitative Status of Bedrock Groundwater Bodies

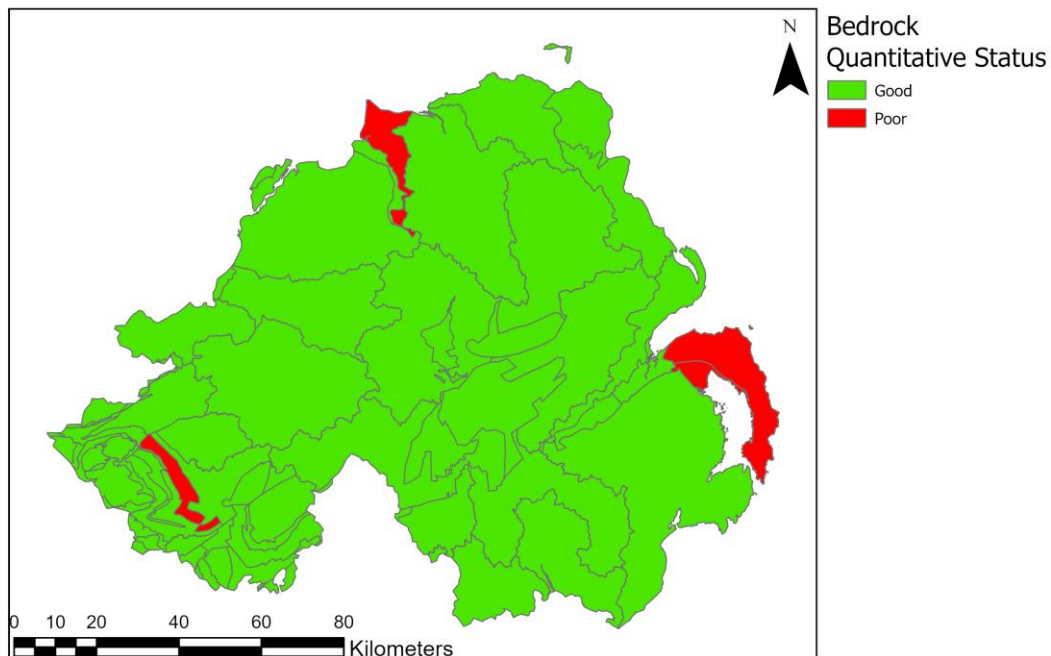
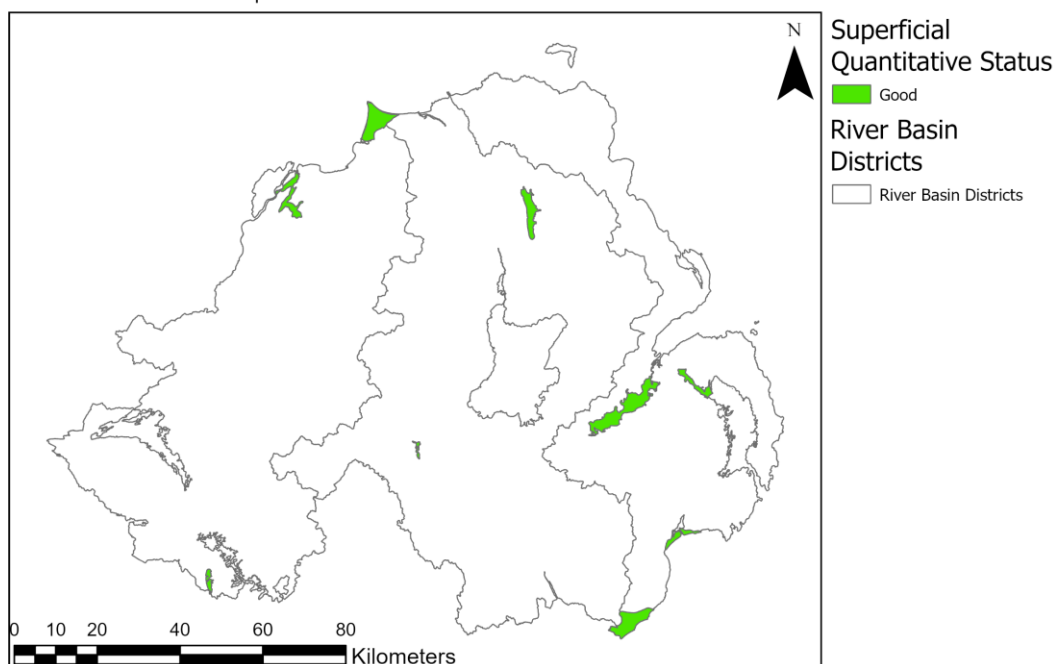


Figure 7 Map of Groundwater Quantitative Status 2026 for Superficial Groundwater Bodies

Northern Ireland Groundwater Classification 2026

Quantitative Status of Superficial Groundwater Bodies



3.3 Groundwater Qualitative (Chemical) Status

The data in Figures 8, 9 and 10 and Table 4 compares the 2021 and 2026 qualitative (chemical) status for the 75 groundwater bodies. The results show that 49 (65 per cent) were good qualitative (chemical) status in 2026. In 2021, 53 (71 per cent) achieved good qualitative (chemical) status.

The North East RBD has 14 groundwater bodies, 5 (36 per cent) achieved good qualitative (chemical) status in 2026. In 2021, 5 (36 per cent) achieved good qualitative (chemical) status.

The Neagh Bann RBD has 16 groundwater bodies, 9 (56 per cent) achieved good qualitative (chemical) status in 2026. In 2021, 10 (63 per cent) achieved good qualitative (chemical) status.

The North West RBD has 45 groundwater bodies, 35 (78 per cent) achieved good qualitative (chemical) status in 2026. In 2021, 38 (84 per cent) achieved good qualitative (chemical) status.

Figure 8 Groundwater Qualitative (Chemical) Status 2021 and 2026

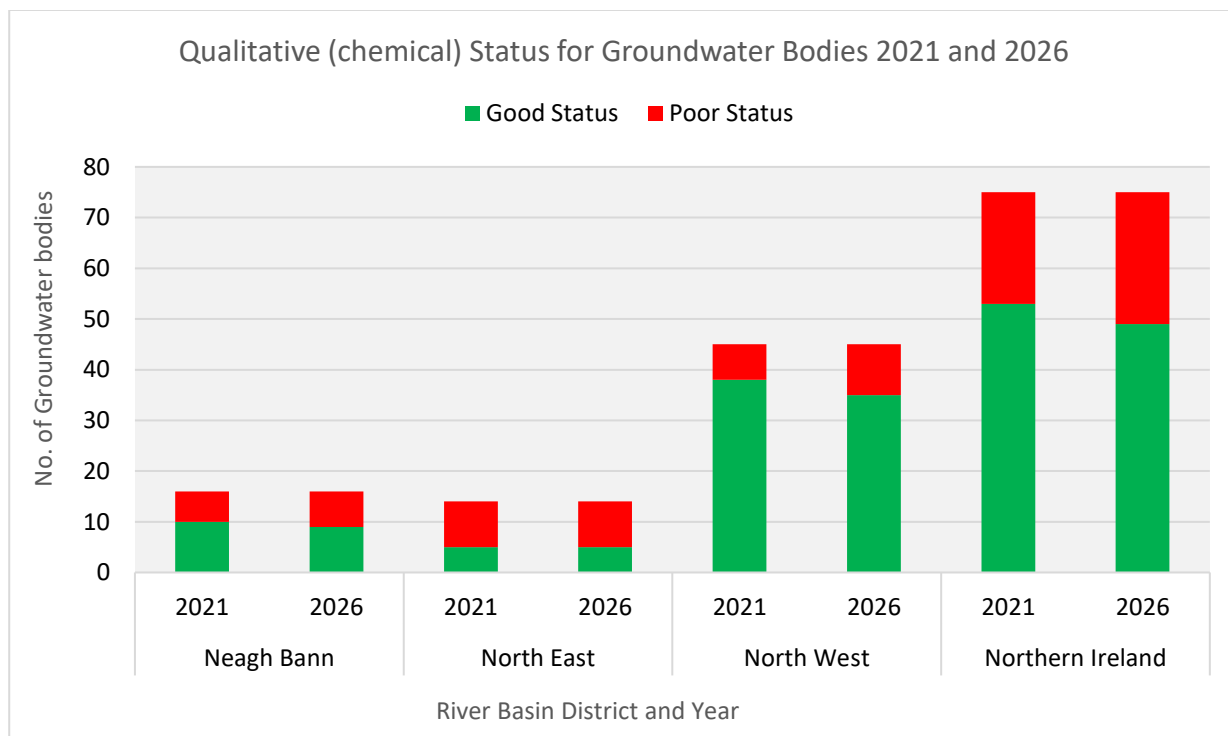


Table 4 Groundwater Qualitative (Chemical) Status 2021 and 2026

Groundwater qualitative (chemical) status for 2021 and 2026				
	2021		2026	
	Number	Percentage %	Number	Percentage %
North East				
Good	5	36	5	36
Poor	9	64	9	64
Neagh Bann				
Good	10	63	9	56
Poor	6	38	7	44
North West				
Good	38	84	35	78
Poor	7	16	10	22
Northern Ireland				
Good	53	71	49	65
Poor	22	29	26	35

Figure 9 Map of Groundwater Qualitative (chemical) Status 2026 for Bedrock Groundwater Bodies

Northern Ireland Groundwater Classification 2026

Qualitative Status of Bedrock Groundwater Bodies

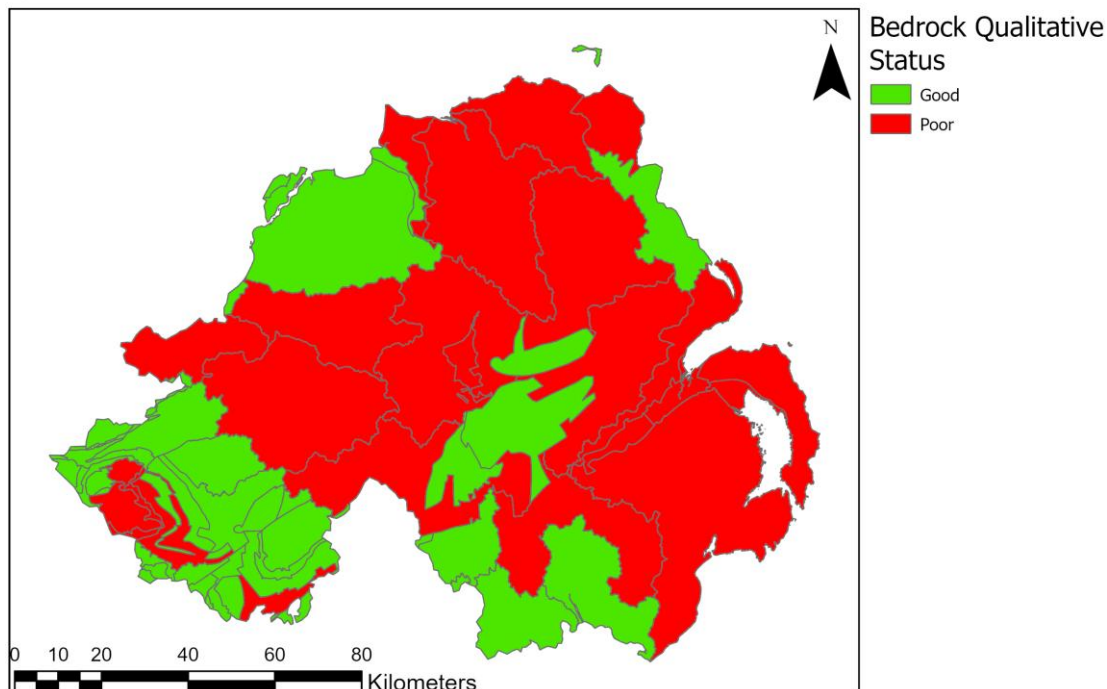
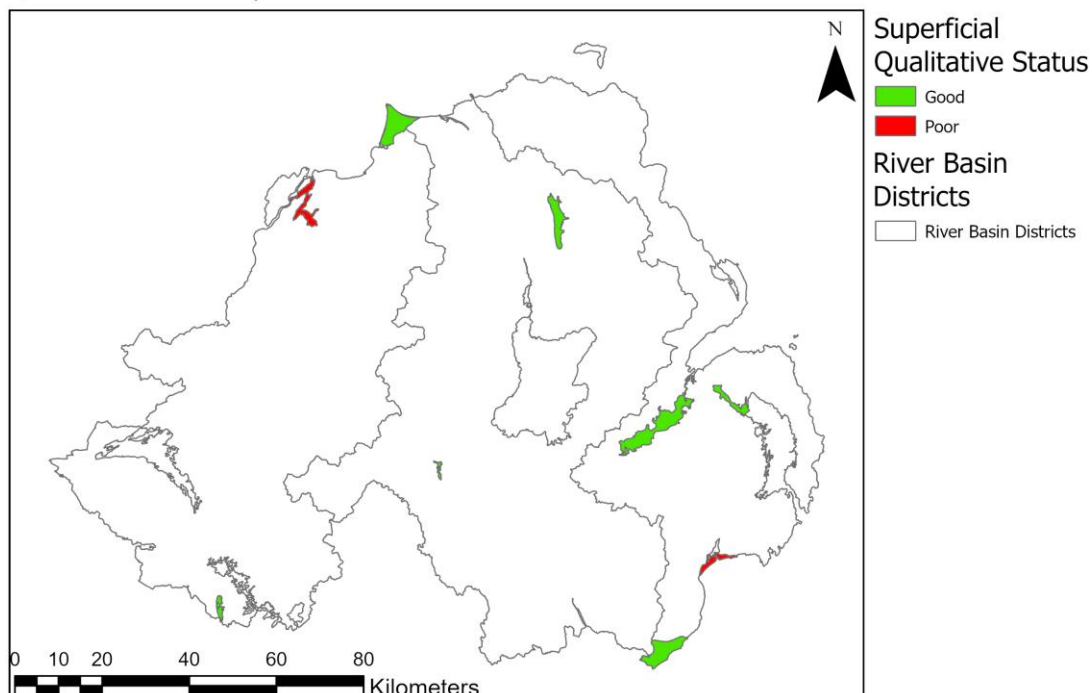


Figure 10 Map of Groundwater Qualitative (chemical) Status 2026 for Superficial Groundwater Bodies

Northern Ireland Groundwater Classification 2026

Qualitative Status of Superficial Groundwater Bodies



An Official Statistics Publication

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Annex I - Individual Groundwater Body Status and Monitoring 2026

Groundwater body status 2026 presented by groundwater body					
Groundwater body name	Qualitative (chemical) status	Quantitative status	Overall status	Groundwater monitoring within NI 2020-2025	
				Chemical monitoring	Level monitoring
North East					
Ards Peninsula	Poor	Poor	Poor	Yes	No
Ballycastle-Armoy	Poor	Good	Poor	No	Yes
Belfast East	Poor	Poor	Poor	Yes	No
Belfast Hills-Islandmagee	Poor	Good	Poor	No	No
Belfast Mid	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	Yes
Belfast West	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	Yes
Downpatrick	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Enler Valley	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Fairhead	Poor	Good	Poor	No	No
Glenariff	Good	Good	Good	Yes	Yes
Lagan Valley	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Mourne Plain	Good	Good	Good	Yes	No
Murlough Sands	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Rathlin	Good	Good	Good	Yes	No

Groundwater Body Status 2026 presented by Groundwater body					
Groundwater Body Name	Qualitative (chemical) Status	Quantitative Status	Overall Status	Groundwater monitoring within NI 2020-2025	
				Chemical monitoring	Level monitoring
Neagh Bann					
Antrim	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Aughnacloy	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Ballymena	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	Yes
Coleraine-Kilrea	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	Yes
Cookstown	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Keady	Good	Good	Good	Yes	No
Knockatallon	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Louth	Good	Good	Good	Yes	No
Maine Valley	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Monaghan Town	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Moneymore	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Moygashel	Good	Good	Good	Yes	No
Neagh	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Newry	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Shanmoy	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Tandragee	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No

Groundwater Body Status 2026 presented by Groundwater body					
Groundwater Body Name	Qualitative (chemical) Status	Quantitative Status	Overall Status	Groundwater monitoring within NI 2020-2025	
				Chemical monitoring	Level monitoring
North West					
Anierin-Cuilcagh East	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Artikelly	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Ballinamore-Swanlinbar	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Ballintempo	Poor	Good	Poor	No	No
Ballybofey	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Ballyshannon East	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Ballyshannon South	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Belcoo-Boho	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Bundoran	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Castlecaldwell Forest	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Castlederg	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Claddagh-Swanlinbar	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Claudy	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Clones	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Conagher Forest	Poor	Good	Poor	No	No

Groundwater Body Status 2026 presented by Groundwater body					
Groundwater Body Name	Qualitative (chemical) Status	Quantitative Status	Overall Status	Groundwater monitoring within NI 2020-2025	
				Chemical monitoring	Level monitoring
North West					
Cooneen Water	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Creagh	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Crilly	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Crom Castle	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Derrygonnelly	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Derrylin	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Derrylin Complex	Good	Good	Good	No	Yes
Donagh	Good	Good	Good	Yes	No
Ederney	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Enniskillen	Good	Poor	Poor	Yes	Yes
Faughan	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Florence Court-Drumgormley	Poor	Good	Poor	No	No
Glen Bridge	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Gortin	Poor	Good	Poor	No	Yes
Irvinestown	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Kilcoo	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Lough Swilly	Good	Good	Good	No	No

Groundwater Body Status 2026 presented by Groundwater body					
Groundwater Body Name	Qualitative (chemical) Status	Quantitative Status	Overall Status	Groundwater monitoring within NI 2020-2025	
				Chemical monitoring	Level monitoring
North West					
Magheraveely	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Magilligan	Good	Good	Good	Yes	Yes
Magilligan Sands	Poor	Poor	Poor	Yes	Yes
Marble Arch	Good	Good	Good	Yes	No
Newtown-Ballyconnell	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Omagh	Poor	Good	Poor	Yes	No
Pettigo	Good	Good	Good	No	No
River Foyle	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Rossinver	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Slieve Rushen	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Slieve Rushen South	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Tempo	Good	Good	Good	No	No
Tullaghan-Lough Melvin	Good	Good	Good	No	No



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