

YouGov / River Action Survey Results

Sample Size: 2150 Adults in the UK
Fieldwork: 2nd - 3rd December 2025

	Vote in 2024 GE						EU Ref 2016		Gender		Age				Social Grade		Country				Region in England			
	Total	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Reform UK	Green	Remain	Leave	Male	Female	18-24	25-49	50-64	65+	ABC1	C2DE	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	North	Midlands	London	South
Weighted Sample	2150	374	533	194	226	114	761	765	1043	1107	226	888	533	503	1225	914	1800	112	178	60	494	342	247	716
Unweighted Sample	2150	358	564	213	245	118	857	756	909	1241	159	844	572	575	1281	863	1839	105	178	28	501	367	206	765
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Treated sewage sludge, also known as biosolids, is a by-product left over after waste water is treated and solids are removed.

Before taking this survey, were you aware that treated sewage sludge from water companies is commonly used on farmland in the UK?

I was aware	36	42	35	41	48	42	39	40	45	28	36	26	41	49	38	34	37	27	38	18	35	37	27	42
I was not aware	61	56	62	59	50	56	59	57	53	69	60	71	56	49	59	63	60	71	60	82	61	59	69	56
Don't know	3	2	2	0	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	4	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	0	4	4	4	2

How much of a risk to the following, if any, do you think there is from using treated sewage sludge on farmland?

Soil health

A large risk	18	14	19	20	17	26	16	19	15	21	17	17	17	22	17	20	18	11	20	24	17	16	23	18
A moderate risk	28	27	29	23	25	28	28	28	26	30	36	27	26	28	28	27	28	36	19	33	25	28	28	31
TOTAL LARGE / MODERATE RISK	46	41	48	43	42	54	44	47	41	51	53	44	43	50	45	47	46	47	39	57	42	44	51	49
No real risk	21	27	20	24	29	13	22	21	25	17	24	18	24	22	23	19	20	23	29	9	22	24	15	19
No risk at all	7	10	7	5	7	9	6	8	11	4	10	7	8	7	8	7	8	5	5	14	9	7	7	7
TOTAL NO REAL RISK / NO RISK AT ALL	28	37	27	29	36	22	28	29	36	21	34	25	32	29	31	26	28	28	34	23	31	31	22	26
Don't know	26	22	25	28	21	24	27	24	24	28	14	32	24	21	25	28	26	26	27	20	27	25	26	25

Water health

A large risk	28	25	30	30	31	36	24	34	23	34	28	24	30	35	28	29	29	23	26	36	28	27	30	30
A moderate risk	34	37	36	32	30	36	37	31	37	31	38	34	34	33	35	32	34	38	30	34	34	32	35	35
TOTAL LARGE / MODERATE RISK	62	62	66	62	61	72	61	65	60	65	66	58	64	68	63	61	63	61	56	70	62	59	65	65
No real risk	12	15	10	13	17	9	13	11	16	9	17	11	11	12	13	11	12	13	13	8	15	14	9	10
No risk at all	3	4	3	2	3	1	2	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	5	1	4	3	3
TOTAL NO REAL RISK / NO RISK AT ALL	15	19	13	15	20	10	15	14	20	11	21	14	14	14	16	14	15	15	15	13	16	18	12	13
Don't know	23	19	22	24	18	18	24	21	21	24	13	29	21	18	22	24	22	24	28	17	23	22	23	21

Food quality

A large risk	19	15	20	20	18	25	15	21	14	24	23	18	18	22	18	21	19	13	20	21	18	18	25	19
A moderate risk	31	31	31	30	32	24	31	31	30	31	34	30	29	31	30	30	31	34	23	39	27	30	30	34
TOTAL LARGE / MODERATE RISK	50	46	51	50	50	49	46	52	44	55	57	48	47	53	48	51	50	47	43	60	45	48	55	53
No real risk	21	27	20	19	25	21	24	20	26	16	22	17	23	23	22	19	20	21	25	19	24	21	16	19
No risk at all	5	7	6	5	5	7	5	5	8	3	9	5	5	5	7	4	6	2	4	8	5	8	5	5
TOTAL NO REAL RISK / NO RISK AT ALL	26	34	26	24	30	28	29	25	34	19	31	22	28	28	29	23	26	23	29	27	29	29	21	24
Don't know	24	20	23	26	20	23	26	23	23	26	13	30	24	19	23	26	24	29	29	14	26	23	24	23

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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Personal health

A large risk	18	13	18	23	18	21	14	21	14	23	20	17	16	22	16	22	19	15	19	18	18	17	24	18
A moderate risk	32	34	37	27	30	31	34	33	32	33	32	32	35	31	33	31	32	38	27	43	31	32	32	34
TOTAL LARGE / MODERATE RISK	50	47	55	50	48	52	48	54	46	56	52	49	51	53	49	53	51	53	46	61	49	49	56	52
No real risk	20	27	18	19	22	28	22	20	24	16	26	16	20	24	21	18	20	17	22	17	22	20	15	21
No risk at all	5	6	5	5	7	1	5	5	8	2	6	5	5	4	6	3	5	4	4	5	5	8	5	4
TOTAL NO REAL RISK / NO RISK AT ALL	25	33	23	24	29	29	27	25	32	18	32	21	25	28	27	21	25	21	26	22	27	28	20	25
Don't know	24	19	23	27	22	20	25	22	22	26	15	30	24	18	23	26	24	27	28	17	25	23	25	24

As far as you are aware, do you think there is or is not the potential for treated sewage sludge to contain harmful contaminants?

There is a potential for treated sewage sludge to contain harmful contaminants	63	59	66	67	61	69	63	66	62	65	65	60	65	66	65	60	63	67	59	72	61	60	62	67
There is NOT a potential for treated sewage sludge to contain harmful contaminants	8	13	7	6	11	4	7	8	11	5	12	7	8	9	8	9	8	3	9	3	9	10	7	8
Don't know	29	28	27	27	28	27	30	26	28	30	23	33	27	26	27	31	28	30	32	26	30	31	31	26

Before taking this survey, had you seen or heard reports of treated sewage sludge containing any of the following? Please tick all that apply.

[Asked only to those who said there is a potential for treated sewage sludge to contain harmful contaminants; n=1375]

Microplastics	36	38	35	45	40	47	40	39	39	34	31	32	34	48	39	34	37	40	36	24	36	33	35	39
Forever Chemicals that don't break down (PFAS)	27	30	28	32	23	42	32	28	29	26	22	23	25	40	28	26	28	29	21	19	27	27	30	29
Pharmaceuticals	22	25	19	26	23	33	24	27	25	19	12	17	21	36	23	21	22	23	16	17	21	23	19	25
Hormone-disrupting chemicals (including endocrine disrupters)	21	19	24	22	24	30	25	23	21	21	13	19	21	28	23	19	22	23	19	3	19	21	22	24
Pathogens	18	15	21	20	18	22	17	19	20	15	22	17	14	20	18	18	18	24	18	3	19	17	13	18
Metals	15	15	16	15	17	18	16	17	18	13	12	14	14	19	15	14	16	10	12	7	16	14	17	16
Other	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	0	3	2	1	2	2	1	4	2	1	5	1
Don't know	55	53	56	49	54	45	51	54	53	58	56	61	59	43	52	59	55	53	59	64	56	57	53	54

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2025

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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

For each of the following, please say how much responsibility they should have when it comes to ensuring that sewage sludge that will be used on UK farmland is not contaminated.

Water Companies

A great deal of responsibility	79	82	79	83	82	90	81	83	78	80	72	71	87	88	79	80	79	84	76	73	78	78	76	82
A fair amount of responsibility	13	12	14	10	13	7	12	10	14	12	23	16	8	8	14	11	13	7	15	21	13	15	14	11
TOTAL GREAT DEAL / FAIR AMOUNT	92	94	93	93	95	97	93	93	92	92	95	87	95	96	93	91	92	91	91	94	91	93	90	93
Not very much responsibility	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	5	1	1	2	1
No responsibility at all	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
TOTAL NOT VERY MUCH / NO RESPONSIBILITY AT ALL	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	5	2	2	4	1
Don't know	6	4	5	5	4	1	6	5	6	7	4	10	4	3	5	8	6	6	8	0	8	5	6	6

The Government

A great deal of responsibility	59	61	57	51	59	64	56	65	54	64	44	54	63	69	56	63	58	61	61	59	61	61	64	54
A fair amount of responsibility	30	29	32	39	32	30	34	26	34	25	42	30	29	25	33	25	30	25	29	36	27	28	26	34
TOTAL GREAT DEAL / FAIR AMOUNT	89	90	89	90	91	94	90	91	88	89	86	84	92	94	89	88	88	86	90	95	88	89	90	88
Not very much responsibility	4	4	5	5	4	3	3	3	6	3	9	5	3	2	5	3	5	7	1	5	5	5	4	5
No responsibility at all	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL NOT VERY MUCH / NO RESPONSIBILITY AT ALL	5	6	5	5	4	4	4	4	7	4	9	6	4	3	6	4	6	7	2	5	6	5	4	6
Don't know	6	4	6	5	5	1	6	5	6	7	4	10	4	3	5	7	6	7	8	0	7	6	6	6

Farmers

A great deal of responsibility	35	32	39	29	29	35	37	39	32	38	15	33	40	42	33	37	33	41	42	53	33	31	36	33
A fair amount of responsibility	41	45	40	46	47	38	40	41	43	40	52	40	41	40	41	41	42	40	37	35	40	49	36	42
TOTAL GREAT DEAL / FAIR AMOUNT	76	77	79	75	76	73	77	80	75	78	67	73	81	82	74	78	75	81	79	88	73	80	72	75
Not very much responsibility	14	14	12	16	16	22	14	12	16	12	26	14	12	11	16	11	15	13	10	12	14	12	17	15
No responsibility at all	2	3	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	0	2	0	3	2	4	3
TOTAL NOT VERY MUCH / NO RESPONSIBILITY AT ALL	16	17	13	18	19	24	16	14	19	14	29	16	15	13	19	13	18	13	12	12	17	14	21	18
Don't know	7	6	7	7	5	4	7	6	7	8	4	11	5	5	6	9	7	6	9	0	9	6	8	7

Which of the following comes closest to your view?

Water companies should find a different way of disposing of treated sewage sludge, even if this means water bills are more expensive	39	36	43	48	31	43	42	36	34	43	43	36	38	41	40	36	38	40	35	55	36	33	44	41
Water companies should do everything they can to keep water bills down, even if this means water companies continue to sell treated sewage sludge to farmers	30	39	28	26	43	26	25	35	37	23	33	28	30	32	30	30	31	28	25	19	30	35	27	31
Don't know	31	25	29	26	26	31	33	29	28	35	24	36	32	26	30	34	31	32	41	26	34	32	29	28

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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Would you support or oppose the following actions to address the application of potentially contaminated sewage sludge to UK farmland?

Requiring water companies to report publicly on levels of contamination in treated sewage sludge

Strongly support	64	61	68	70	59	79	67	67	61	66	57	59	66	74	64	63	63	65	66	73	61	61	61	67
Tend to support	24	31	21	23	27	15	24	23	27	21	32	25	24	20	27	21	25	22	22	27	24	26	25	24
TOTAL SUPPORT	88	92	89	93	86	94	91	90	88	87	89	84	90	94	91	84	88	87	88	100	85	87	86	91
Tend to oppose	1	1	1	0	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	1
Strongly oppose	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPPOSE	1	1	1	0	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	1
Don't know	10	7	9	7	10	5	8	9	10	11	9	14	8	6	8	13	10	12	12	0	13	10	12	8

Banning the spread of treated sewage sludge to UK farmland

Strongly support	21	18	24	22	18	27	19	25	18	25	21	20	20	25	20	23	21	24	21	31	20	18	25	22
Tend to support	26	26	28	29	30	23	26	25	24	27	31	23	28	25	25	26	26	23	22	20	21	28	28	28
TOTAL SUPPORT	47	44	52	51	48	50	45	50	42	52	52	43	48	50	45	49	47	47	43	51	41	46	53	50
Tend to oppose	16	22	14	13	19	15	15	18	20	12	18	14	16	18	17	14	16	11	18	19	16	17	10	18
Strongly oppose	5	8	2	5	8	2	4	4	7	3	7	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	2	0	6	5	3	5
TOTAL OPPOSE	21	30	16	18	27	17	19	22	27	15	25	18	21	22	22	18	21	14	20	19	22	22	13	23
Don't know	33	27	32	31	24	32	36	28	31	34	24	38	31	28	32	33	32	38	36	30	37	32	35	28

Increasing regulation on monitoring of treated sewage sludge for contaminants

Strongly support	58	58	60	64	55	74	59	63	55	61	48	53	60	68	57	59	58	54	61	57	55	56	56	61
Tend to support	29	33	28	26	30	21	29	25	31	26	42	27	28	26	31	25	29	32	26	22	27	31	29	29
TOTAL SUPPORT	87	91	88	90	85	95	88	88	86	87	90	80	88	94	88	84	87	86	87	79	82	87	85	90
Tend to oppose	2	1	2	2	4	0	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	0	1	0	2	2	2	2
Strongly oppose	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	0
TOTAL OPPOSE	3	2	2	2	5	0	3	3	3	1	1	3	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	0	3	3	2	2
Don't know	11	7	10	8	10	5	9	9	11	11	9	16	10	5	10	14	11	13	11	21	15	10	13	8

Setting legal limits on the levels of contaminants in treated sewage sludge spread on UK farmland

Strongly support	58	59	63	64	50	70	61	62	56	60	48	52	62	68	59	56	58	59	59	67	52	58	56	62
Tend to support	27	29	26	26	33	21	26	26	30	25	39	28	25	23	29	25	28	27	26	19	30	27	29	26
TOTAL SUPPORT	85	88	89	90	83	91	87	88	86	85	87	80	87	91	88	81	86	86	85	86	82	85	85	88
Tend to oppose	2	2	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	0	1	3	1	2	2	2
Strongly oppose	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	1
TOTAL OPPOSE	3	3	2	1	4	3	2	2	3	1	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	1	1	3	2	2	4	3
Don't know	12	9	10	9	13	6	10	10	11	13	10	17	11	7	10	16	12	13	14	12	16	13	12	9

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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Requiring water companies to conduct further treatment to remove contaminants including forever chemicals and microplastics from sewage sludge

Strongly support	62	62	65	67	58	71	63	67	60	64	53	59	62	71	63	60	61	62	67	67	58	57	61	66
Tend to support	25	28	24	22	28	21	25	21	27	23	33	25	26	20	26	24	25	22	20	33	24	31	23	24
TOTAL SUPPORT	87	90	89	89	86	92	88	88	87	87	86	84	88	91	89	84	86	84	87	100	82	88	84	90
Tend to oppose	2	2	2	2	4	1	2	2	3	2	4	2	2	1	2	3	2	1	1	0	4	2	3	2
Strongly oppose	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL OPPOSE	2	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	4	2	4	3	2	2	2	4	2	2	1	0	4	2	4	2
Don't know	11	7	9	9	11	6	9	9	10	11	10	14	9	7	9	13	11	15	12	0	14	11	12	8

*Any percentages calculated on bases fewer than 100 respondents do not represent a wide enough cross-section of the target population to be considered statistically reliable. These figures should not be used.