

REFERENCE

2425592

RELEASE DATE

May 2025

SUBJECT

1. The number of Loughshore residents and, if possible/figures available, residents within the Lough Neagh catchment who contacted NIW (either via helplines or through other means/channels) with queries or concerns regarding the lough and drinking water during the summer and autumn months of 2023 and 2024 versus the figures for other months of the same years and also for previous summers (2022, 2021 and 2020). Is that clear? Or should I rephrase to help with clarity?
2. For comparison, it would also be helpful to see the figures for similar helpline calls and queries/concerns re: the lough and drinking water from residents in other parts of Northern Ireland (in particular, in Belfast, given the lough supplies half of the city's tap water). Would that be possible?

RESPONSE

You subsequently clarified your definition of the term “loughshore” by providing a list of towns you wished to be captured by your request.

Please find below a table showing the numbers of water quality contacts received through all channels by NI Water since 2020 for the Lough Neagh area (according to the list of towns you sent) and for the wider Northern Ireland area, including Belfast.

In the absence of a definition of “summer months” and “autumn months”, the figures have been provided for the full calendar years. You can see even without separating out the summer and autumn timeframes that there is a noticeable increase in such contacts in 2023 and 2024, which would correspond to the presence of blue-green algae at the Lough.

While the water is treated with the possibility of algae being known and accounted for, and the water is safe to drink, it can cause a difference in taste, complaints about which would be included in the figures below.

If you would like to define more clearly what you consider to be summer and autumn months, we can review the data to extract specific timeframes.

Year	Lough Neagh WQ contacts	NI-wide (inc. Belfast)
2020	99	979
2021	126	1063
2022	127	814
2023	376	1027
2024	464	1057
2025	30	173