

Drinking Water Quality in Private Group Schemes and Small Private Supplies – 2025

KEY FINDINGS 2025

- Water quality in private water supplies is not as good as public water supplies.
- The total number of small private suppliers remains unknown as there is no legal obligation on suppliers to register. Unregistered supplies are not sampled by local authorities.
- Fourteen private group schemes failed to meet the *E. coli* standard in 2025, an improvement from 24 in 2024. However, six supplies had persistent failures over consecutive years.
- There was limited improvement in private group schemes meeting the Trihalomethanes standards with 17 schemes failing in 2025, compared to 19 in 2024.

INTRODUCTION

This report deals with drinking water quality in regulated private water supplies. These supplies are not operated by Uisce Éireann or connected to the public supply network.

The report covers two types of private water supplies:

Private Group Schemes (PGS) are community-run supplies that source, treat and supply drinking water to their members. There are about 370 schemes serving over 194,000 people.

Small Private Supplies (SPS) provide drinking water through commercial or public activities such as schools, crèches, nursing homes, self-catering accommodation and hotels. These often rely on private wells for their water supply. Over 1,600 are registered with local authorities, though many remain unregistered.

Local authorities regulate private water supplies. They are responsible for maintaining a register of supplies and making sure all registered supplies are sampled to check compliance with drinking water standards. Sample results for 2025 are available on the [EPA SAFER website](#) and summarised in this report.

Water suppliers (PGS and SPS) are legally responsible for ensuring their water is safe and meets the Drinking Water Regulations 2023, as amended. Supplying unsafe drinking water is an offence and puts consumers at risk of illness.

This report does not deal with household wells as they are exempt from the drinking water regulations, but householders are advised to test their well to ensure it is safe to drink.

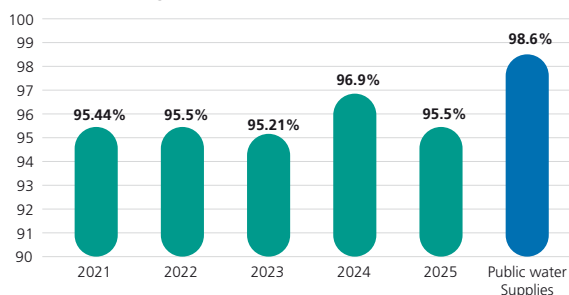
SMALL PRIVATE SUPPLIES (SPS)

E. coli Compliance

The presence of *E. coli* bacteria indicates that a supply has been contaminated, and the drinking water has not been fully disinfected. Consuming water contaminated with *E. coli* can lead to serious gastrointestinal illness.

While compliance with the *E. coli* standard in 2025 was 95.5% this shows no significant improvement over recent years (Figure 1) and continues to be lower than the quality of the public water supply. Sampling in 2025 identified 67 small private supplies which failed the *E. coli* standard.

Figure 1: *E. coli* Compliance in SPS



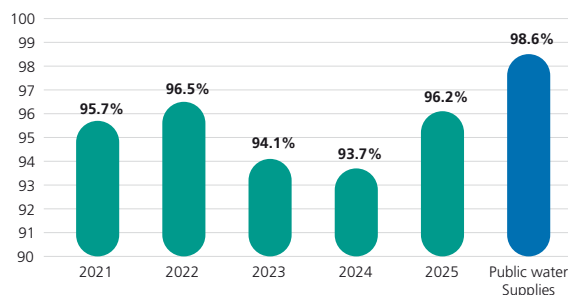
A water source can become contaminated from a range of activities including, septic tanks, slurry spreading and animal access. Water suppliers must protect their customers health by making sure their well is properly sealed and has appropriate disinfection.

PRIVATE GROUP SCHEMES (PGS)

E. coli Compliance

E. coli compliance in private group water schemes improved significantly to 96.2% in 2025, up from 93.7% in 2024. However, this is still lower than public water supplies which consistently reach 98.6% compliance. A total of 14 PGS supplying 1,854 people failed the standard compared to 24 schemes in 2024 supplying 4,085 people.

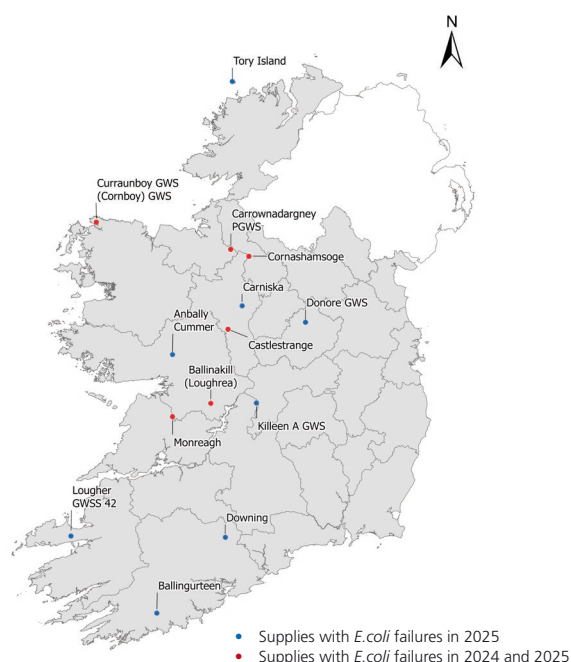
Figure 2: *E. coli* Compliance in PRG



Six schemes had repeat failures of *E. coli* in both 2024 and 2025. These were Monreagh/Tubber (Clare/Galway), Ballinakill Loughrea (Galway), Curraunboy (Mayo), Castlestrange (Roscommon), Cornashamsoge, (Leitrim) and Carrownadargney (Sligo). Most of these schemes are on long-term boil water notices to protect public health.

PGS operators and management committees need to make sure disinfection treatment is working correctly to address *E. coli* failures, so that people are not living under boil water notices for extended periods of time. Funding is available to these schemes from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and should be used to carry out the necessary remediation works.

Figure 3: Private Group Schemes with *E. coli* failures 2025



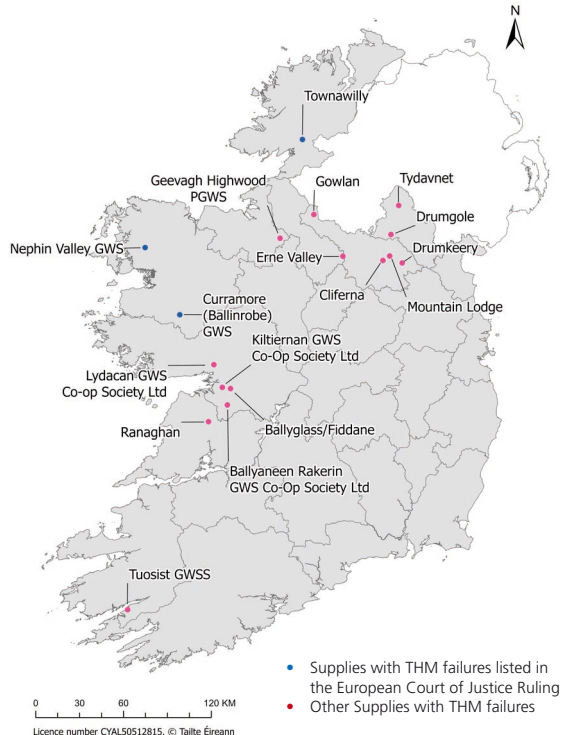
Trihalomethanes Compliance

Trihalomethanes (THM) can form when natural material like leaves or other organic matter in the water source (river or lake), react with chlorine used to disinfect the drinking water. This is an issue for private group schemes with surface water sources.

In 2025, 17 PGS serving 19,362 people failed to meet the THM standard (see Figure 4). This is similar to 2024, when 19 PGS failed, showing little improvement in compliance. In January 2024, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that Ireland had not done enough to ensure THM compliance in 9 PGS. Three schemes that failed to meet the THM standard in 2025 are included in this ruling.

Actions should be taken at supplies to meet THM standards, for example reducing organic matter levels in the raw water intake and investing in water treatment plant upgrades. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage funding is available to carry out upgrades.

Figure 4: Private Group Schemes with THM failures 2025



LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Local authorities have responsibility for sampling and maintaining a register of private drinking water supplies. Each year, the EPA audits a number of local authorities and reviews sampling data to determine compliance with regulatory requirements.

Key findings in 2025 include:

- **Registration of supplies:** Not all private supplies are registered.
- **Bacterial sampling:** The number of registered SPS being sampled for *E. coli* as a minimum health requirement is improving each year. In 2025 94% of SPS were sampled for *E. coli* compared with 75% in 2022.
- **Chemical sampling:** Not all small private supplies are sampled for all chemical parameters required under the regulations, such as pesticides and lead.

What needs to be done:

- Water suppliers must install and maintain water treatment systems to prevent *E. coli* & THM failures.
- Legislation must be amended to make it mandatory for private water suppliers to register with their local authority.
- The DHLGH must implement measures to strengthen the management and governance of private water supplies.
- Local Authorities must sample all private drinking water supplies for all the required parameters and take any necessary appropriate enforcement actions, where supplies fail to meet drinking water quality standards.

Local Authorities should take appropriate enforcement actions against suppliers that consistently fail to meet drinking water quality standards. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH's) review of the water sector in 2023 identified the need for measures to strengthen the management and oversight of private water supplies, but progress to implement these measures is slow. It is important that the DHLGH expedite these actions to improve private drinking water quality.

Registration of private supplies

Current drinking water regulations do not require private suppliers to register, which is a gap in the legislation, and this needs to be addressed. Because of this, the total number of small private supplies in the country remains unknown, as not all private suppliers are registered with their local authority. Water suppliers that register with their local authority will have their supply monitored by the local authority at least once a year. This gives both suppliers and consumers greater confidence that the water is safe to drink.

Some local authorities have made notable progress in registering additional supplies but there are 11 Local Authorities with 40 or less SPS registered in 2025, See Table 1. All private suppliers should register with their local authority so their supplies can be sampled annually.

Table 1 Local Authorities with 40 or less SPS registered in 2025¹

Local Authority	SPS Registered 2025
Donegal	39
Westmeath	37
Offaly	30
Mayo	24
Roscommon	21
Clare	19
Longford	13
Monaghan	11
Louth	10
Sligo	10
Leitrim	5

UPCOMING REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Source protection risk assessment

The Drinking Water Regulations 2023, as amended, place more focus on identifying and managing risks to water supplies. By July 2027, suppliers serving over 50 people or providing more than 10m³ of water per day must assess risks to their water source.

Suppliers will need to map the catchment area for their source, identify contamination risks and develop a plan to prevent or manage those risks. Organisations such as the Geological Survey of Ireland, Local Authorities, National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) and River Basin Management Service, provide support to suppliers carrying out this assessment. The EPA have a [guidance document](#) for carrying out source protection risk assessment along with worked examples for group water schemes and small private supplies.

Water suppliers who have not yet started their risk assessment should contact their local authority or the NFGWS as soon as possible.

¹ This table excludes local Authorities that are predominately urban areas.