

On Tap: Americans Rate Water Quality High

While Al Gore's trying to make water quality a campaign issue, most Americans don't seem to have a problem: Seven in 10 say – cheers! – their drinking water's O.K.

Seventy-one percent say the quality of their drinking water is either good or excellent, a tad better than it was about a decade ago. Still, there's room for improvement. Just 18 percent call it "excellent," and just over a quarter say it's not so good or even poor.

Although the United States claims the world's safest drinking water, one study this month found that 4.3 million Americans have water containing unsafe pesticides levels, and another reported more than 2,000 cases of illnesses from drinking water in 1997-1998.

	Rate drinking water:	
	Positively	Negatively
9/00	71%	27
6/89	66	33

CAMPAIGN ISSUE: Ratings of water quality are high across all demographic groups. It's one of the few areas where even those with differing political predispositions agree: About seven in 10 Democrats, Republicans and independents alike rate their drinking water positively.

Still, it's an issue that does suit Gore. His discussion of water quality plays to his strong advantage on protecting the environment, an issue that has some appeal to the key swing voter group - independents.

In an ABC News/Washington Post poll earlier this month, about six in 10 independents said protecting the environment was "very important" in their vote. That puts them more in line with Democrats than with Republicans on this issue. And among independents Gore leads George W. Bush by a huge margin, 66-26 percent, when it comes to protecting the environment.

	Environment "very important"	
Democrat	69%	
Independent	59	
Republican	38	

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone September 13-17, 2000, among a random national sample of 1,014 adults. The results have a 3-point error margin. Field work by ICR- International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

73. How would you rate the overall quality of the drinking water in your area: excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	Excellent	Good	Not so good	Poor	No opin.
9/17/00	18	53	17	10	2
6/19/89	15	51	20	13	*

End