

SOUTH CAROLINA WATER QUALITY & WATER RECREATION PERCEPTION REPORT MAY 2025



University of South Carolina

Institute for Clean Water

Richardson Family SmartState Center for Economic Excellence in Tourism and Economic Development

1. Perceived Water Quality

Scores range from 1 (worst possible) to 10 (best possible); **higher is better**.

Daily use

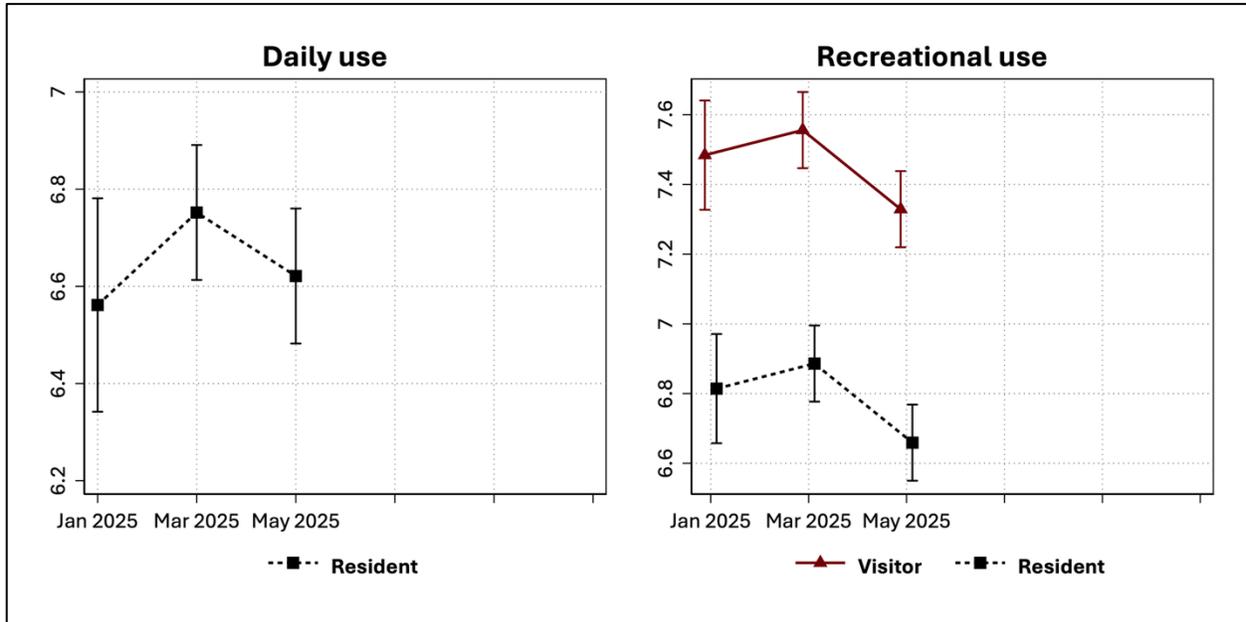
Perceptions about drinking water supply and water in streams and creeks in the neighborhood.

- Residents: **6.62** / 10 (-1.9%)

Recreational use

Perceptions about water in rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds for recreation activities.

- Residents : **6.69** / 10 (-3.3%)
- Visitors : **7.30** / 10 (-3.0%)
- Combined : **6.99** / 10 (-3.1%)



2. Perceived Risk of Water-based Recreation in South Carolina

Scores range from 1 (low perceived risk) to 7 (high perceived risk); **lower is better**.

Affective risk perception

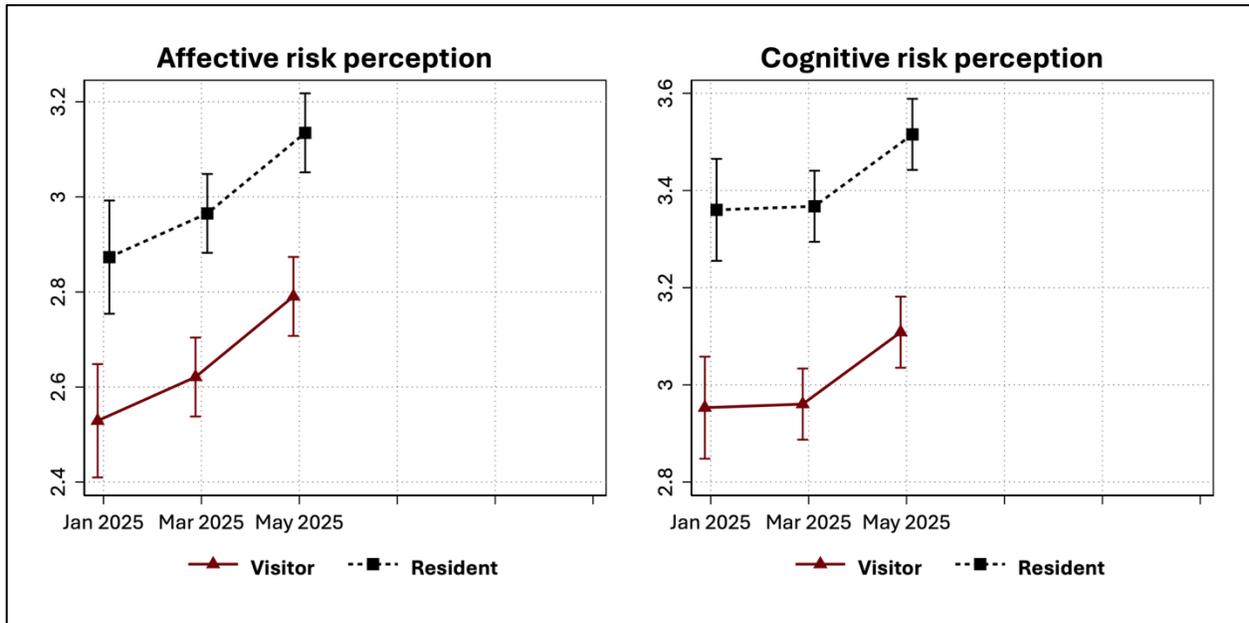
Feelings about participating in water-based recreation activities at lakes and rivers in South Carolina (afraid, anxious, worried).

- Residents : **3.11** / 7 (+5.5%)
- Visitors : **2.81** / 7 (+6.7%)
- Combined : **2.96** / 7 (+6.1%)

Cognitive risk perception

Perceived likelihood of encountering contaminated water and experiencing health issues when participating water-based recreation activities at lakes and rivers in South Carolina.

- Residents : **3.53** / 7 (+5.1%)
- Visitors : **3.09** / 7 (+4.2%)
- Combined : **3.31** / 7 (+4.7%)



3. Specific Factors of Perceived Water Quality

Multiple choices; **Bold** indicates the most frequently mentioned factor

Daily use

Factors that affected perceptions about drinking water supply and water in streams and creeks in the neighborhood.

	Residents	
	Yes	(%)
Bad smell	120	(16.0)
Murky water	250	(33.3)
Health concerns (e.g., bacterial or viral infection)	250	(33.3)
Visible pollution (e.g., algae, debris)	247	(32.9)
Water level issues	177	(23.6)
Agricultural runoff	173	(23.1)
Industrial contamination	158	(21.1)
Insufficient monitoring and reporting	227	(30.3)
Bad taste	204	(27.2)
Boil advisories	121	(16.1)
Water supply concerns (e.g., well contamination, old pipe)	166	(22.1)
Water treatment concerns	198	(26.4)

Recreational use

Factors that affected perceptions about water in rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds for recreation activities.

	Residents		Visitors	
	Yes	(%)	Yes	(%)
Bad smell	142	(18.9)	123	(16.4)
Murky water	352	(46.9)	235	(31.3)
Health concerns (e.g., bacterial or viral infection)	286	(38.1)	196	(26.1)
Visible pollution (e.g., algae, debris)	313	(41.7)	178	(23.7)
Water level issues	179	(23.9)	169	(22.5)
Agricultural runoff	180	(24.0)	145	(19.3)
Industrial contamination	173	(23.1)	148	(19.7)
Insufficient monitoring and reporting	232	(30.9)	143	(19.1)
Swimming advisories	176	(23.5)	196	(26.1)
Boating/fishing restrictions	137	(18.3)	199	(26.5)
Poor facility maintenance (e.g., boat access, picnic areas)	148	(19.7)	137	(18.3)
Wildlife concerns (e.g., alligators, snakes, animal feces)	322	(42.9)	224	(29.9)

4. Overall Satisfaction of South Carolina Recreationists and Visitors

Scores range from 0 (unsatisfactory) to 100 (satisfactory); higher is better.

Water-based recreations in South Carolina

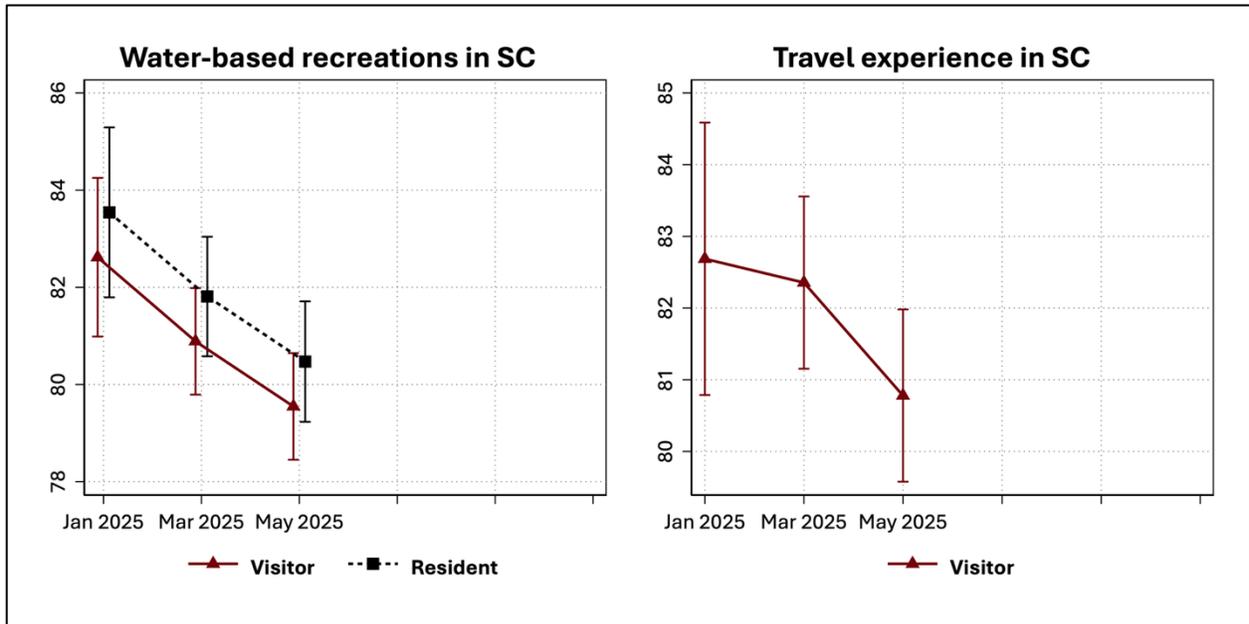
Overall, how satisfied were you with your recreation activity experiences at lakes and rivers in South Carolina?

- Residents : **80.33** / 100 (-2.2%)
- Visitors : **79.65** / 100 (-1.3%)
- Combined : **79.92** / 100 (-1.7%)

Travel experience in South Carolina

Overall, how satisfied were you with South Carolina as a travel or vacation destination?

- Visitors : **80.78** / 100 (-1.9%)



Notes. Based on survey of 750 respondents in South Carolina (Residents) and 750 respondents in the rest of the United States (Visitors). Data were collected between May 27 – June 12, 2025.