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Most of world's rivers damaged by humans – 21st February, 2021

Level 0

Humans have damaged most of the world's rivers. Researchers looked at over 2,500 rivers, but none in the Arctic and Antarctica. Humans have seriously damaged biodiversity in over half of rivers in the past 200 years. Reasons include new species of fish in rivers, pollution, dams and climate change.

The worst rivers are near big cities in Europe and America. These rivers have a lot of factories near them. The least-affected rivers are in Africa and Australia. This is because there are fewer factories in Africa and smaller populations around rivers in Australia. Rivers in rich nations are very different to how they were 200 years ago.

Level 1

Humans have damaged 86 per cent of the world's rivers. Researchers looked at data on over 2,500 rivers, but none in the Arctic and Antarctica or in deserts. The scientists looked at biodiversity changes over the past 200 years. Humans have seriously damaged biodiversity in over half of rivers. There are many reasons for this. One reason is new species of fish that are in rivers. Other reasons include pollution, dams and climate change.

The worst-hit rivers are in the big cities of Europe and America. The lead researcher said rivers which have the most economic development near them, like the Mississippi River or River Thames, are the most strongly impacted. The least-impacted are in Africa and Australia. This is because of fewer factories in Africa and smaller populations around rivers in Australia. He said rivers in rich nations are totally different to how they were 200 years ago.

Level 2

A study shows that humans have damaged 86 per cent of the world's rivers. The study is from a university in France. Researchers examined data on over 2,500 of the world's rivers. They did not look at rivers in the Arctic and Antarctica or in deserts. The scientists looked at changes to biodiversity over the past 200 years. Biodiversity in over half of rivers has been seriously damaged by humans. There are many reasons for this damage. A big reason is the new species of fish are in rivers. Other reasons include pollution, dams, overfishing, farming and climate change.

The worst-hit rivers are in western Europe and North America. These regions have big, rich towns and cities. The lead researcher said: "Rivers which have the most economic development around them, like the Mississippi River, are the most strongly impacted." London's River Thames is one of the worst-affected in the study. The least-impacted rivers are in Africa and Australia. The researcher said this is because of less industrialisation in Africa and low populations around rivers in Australia. He said rivers in rich nations are completely different to how they were 200 years ago.

Level 3

A new study shows that 86 per cent of the world's rivers have been damaged by human activity. The study was conducted by researchers from a university in Toulouse, France. They examined data on over 2,500 rivers around the world. They did not look at rivers in the polar regions of the Arctic and Antarctica or in deserts. The scientists looked into changes to biodiversity over the past 200 years. They discovered that biodiversity in over half of rivers has been seriously damaged by humans. The researchers said there were many reasons for this damage. A big reason is the introduction of new species of fish into rivers. Other reasons include pollution, dams, overfishing, farming and climate change.

The researchers say the worst-hit rivers are in western Europe and North America. This is because these regions have large and rich towns and cities. The lead researcher said: "Rivers which have the most economic development around them, like the Mississippi River, are the most strongly impacted." The River Thames in London was one of the worst-affected rivers in the study. The least-impacted rivers are in Africa and Australia. The researcher said: "This is probably due to a slower rate of industrialisation in Africa and low population density around rivers in Australia." He added that rivers in many rich nations are unrecognisable compared with how they were 200 years ago.