

Streetwatch 3

The AA's big pothole count



For the third Streetwatch survey we returned to the subject of the first - the state of streets local to AA members' homes.

At the end of October, around 1,000 AA Streetwatchers walked around their UK neighbourhoods for an hour noting nine road and path-related issues.

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Roads in many parts of the UK are already plagued with potholes before any winter freeze gets to work on them.

For councils trying to get on top of the plague, only the South West has on average more repaired potholes than new ones.

The latest AA Streetwatch survey, at the end of October, involved around 1,000 AA Streetwatchers walking around their UK neighbourhoods for an hour noting nine road and path-related issues.

Overall, they found that the average pothole count per AA Streetwatcher was 14.9 potholes compared to 12.5 a year ago. The survey defined a pothole as being at least six inches in diameter and at least two inches deep.

The results leave a strong sense of councils struggling courageously to tackle the pothole problem. However, they seem to have been overwhelmed trying to patch up roads that are crumbling through years of inadequate funding of structural repairs.

As well as potholes we also looked at marked potholes in this survey because we were keen to establish a pattern of how many are repaired, marked for repair or how many untreated ones remain.

Summary

- Overall, the North East and Scotland had most potholes per survey, averaging 19.0 and 20.1 respectively against a national average of 14.9 potholes per survey.
- Across the Midlands, for every three repaired potholes, there is one that the councils have marked but not repaired yet. This compares with a UK average of six to one.
- Against a national average of 12.8 repaired potholes per neighbourhood, the South East averages 13.7, South West 13.8, Scotland 14.0 and North East 16.4.

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Comment

"The AA Streetwatch volunteers have once again shown that the UK has a pothole plague which has not gone away despite extra repairs this year. Highways authorities need to get to grips with the pothole problem, as compensation claims will soar when cold weather strikes and roads start breaking up again placing greater burdens on already strained budgets," says Edmund King, the AA's president.

"Drivers don't want to spend the winter trying to zig-zag round even more potholes and paying out when their cars are damaged by repairable road defects. The poor condition of the roads is of particular concern to those on two wheels when the consequences of hitting a pothole can be fatal."

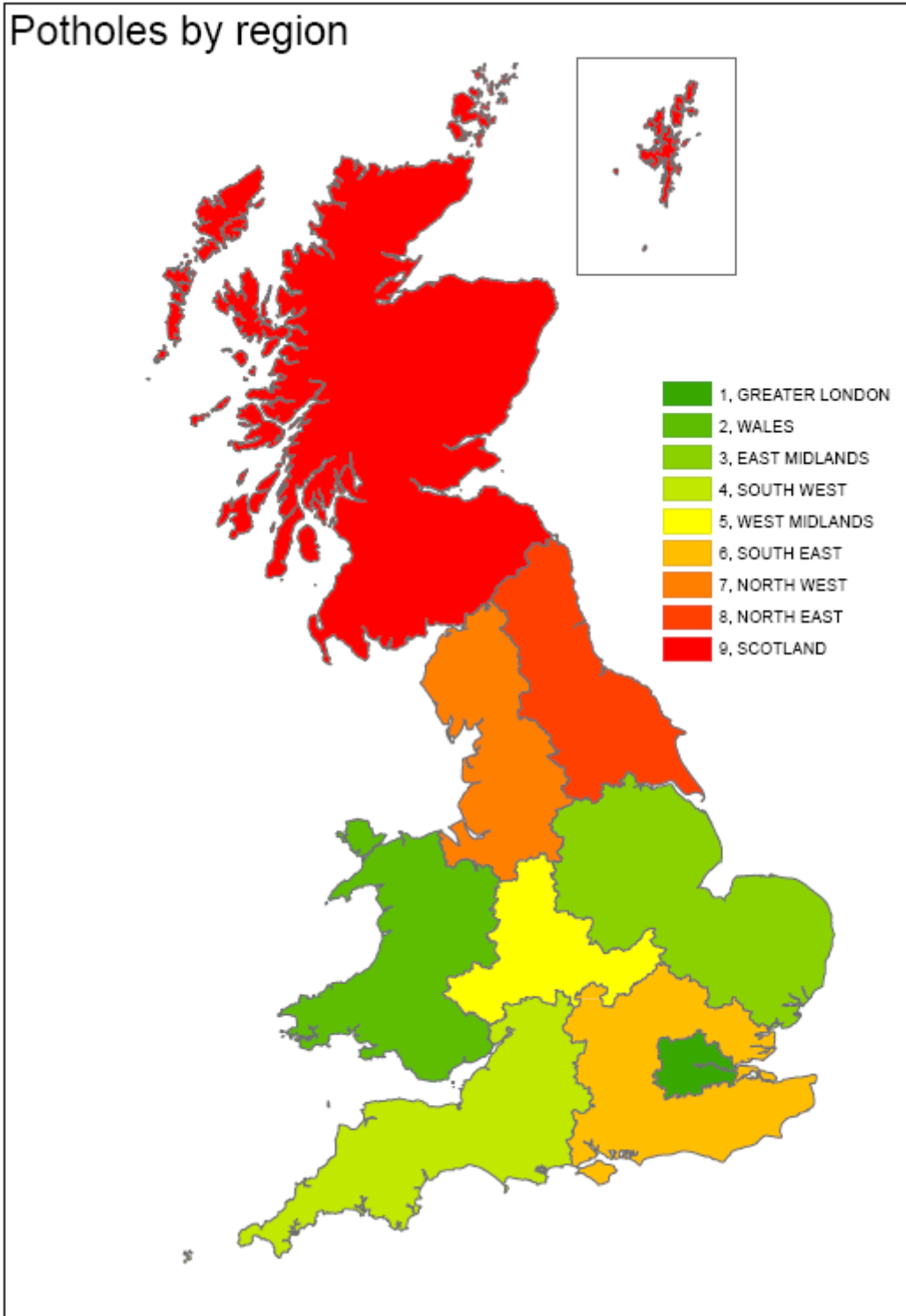
Many councils have been swamped by the deluge of potholes, yet the evidence from the South West suggests the problem can be turned round. Although we are sympathetic with the plight that councils find themselves in austere times, the fact remains that we are seeing the legacy of a 'Cinderella' approach to road maintenance funding over many years. The job now falls to them to rectify past failings and prevent drivers, cyclists and pedestrians paying a price on roads they pay tax to have properly maintained.

With many councils now looking at their budgets we need to establish a colour coding system for marking potholes so the public know how quickly they can expect a pothole to be repaired if it is not an immediate danger.

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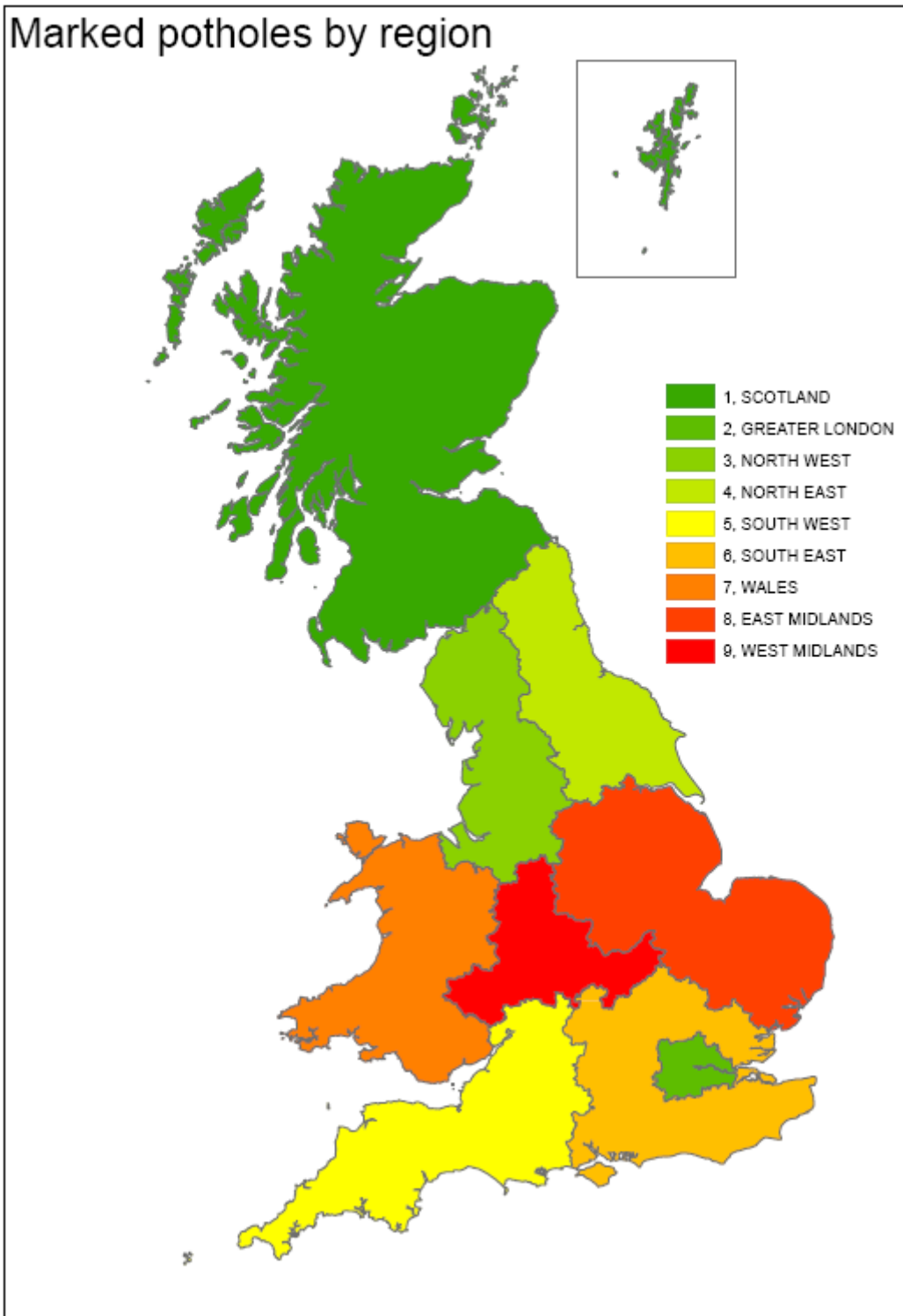
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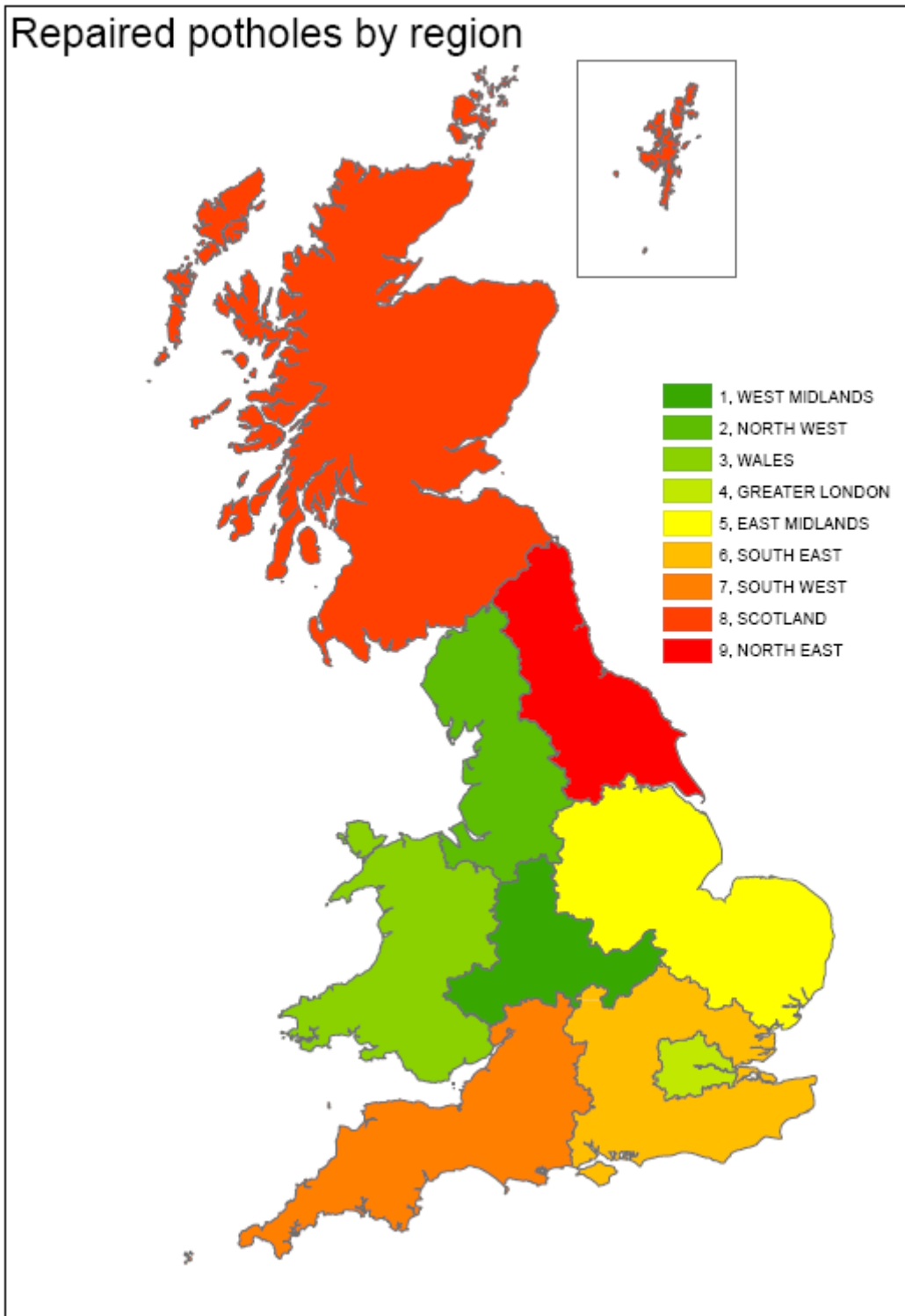
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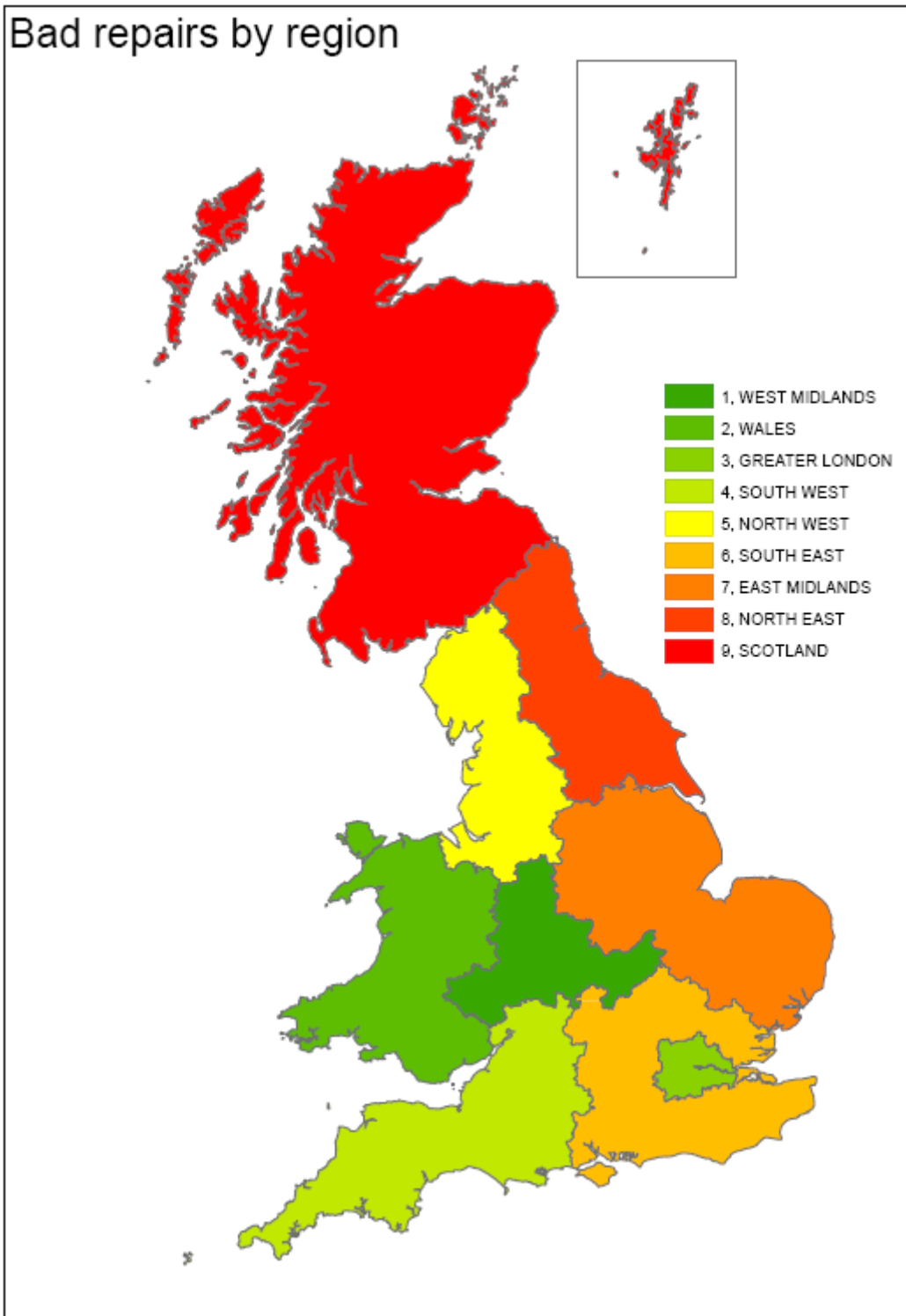
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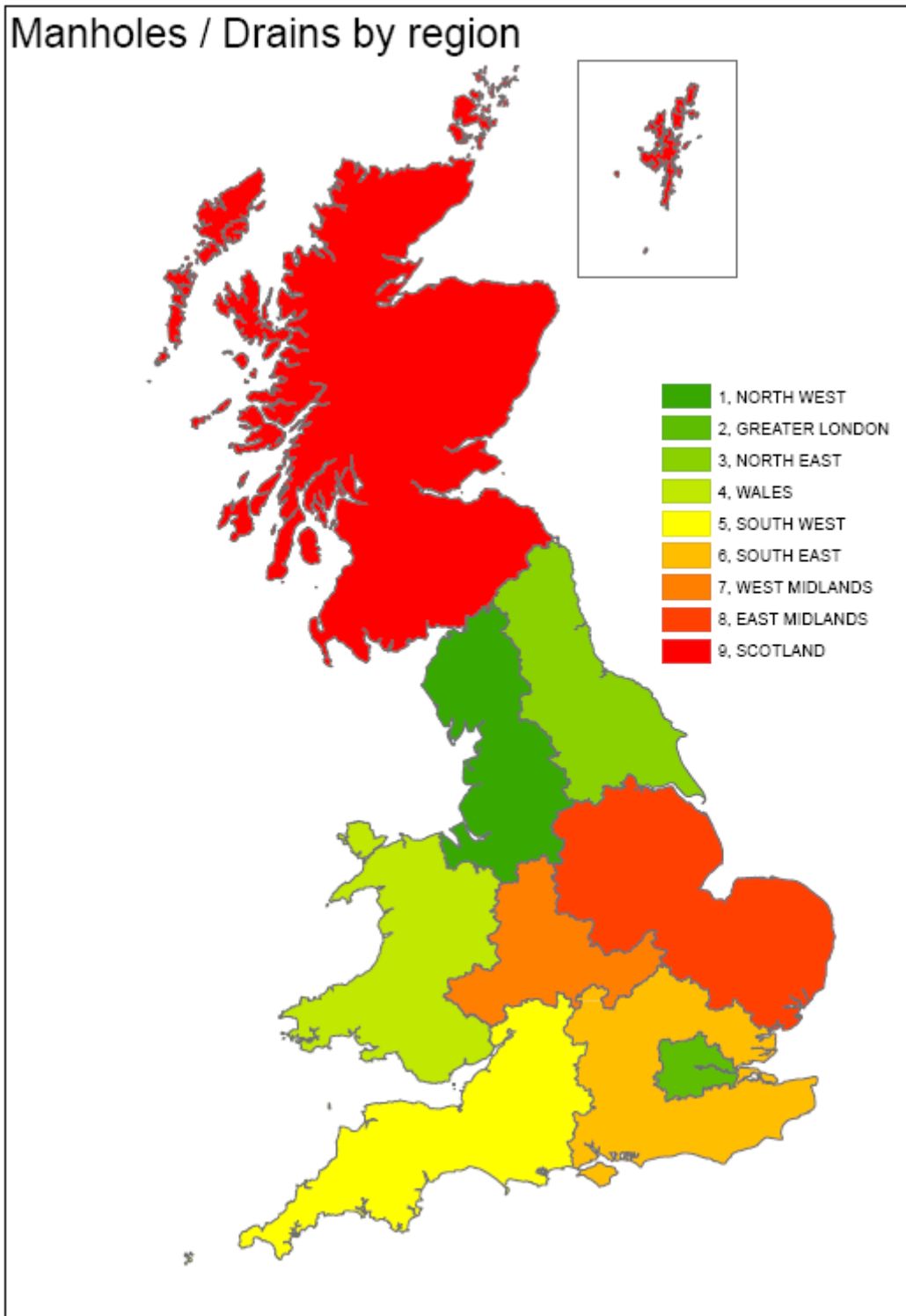
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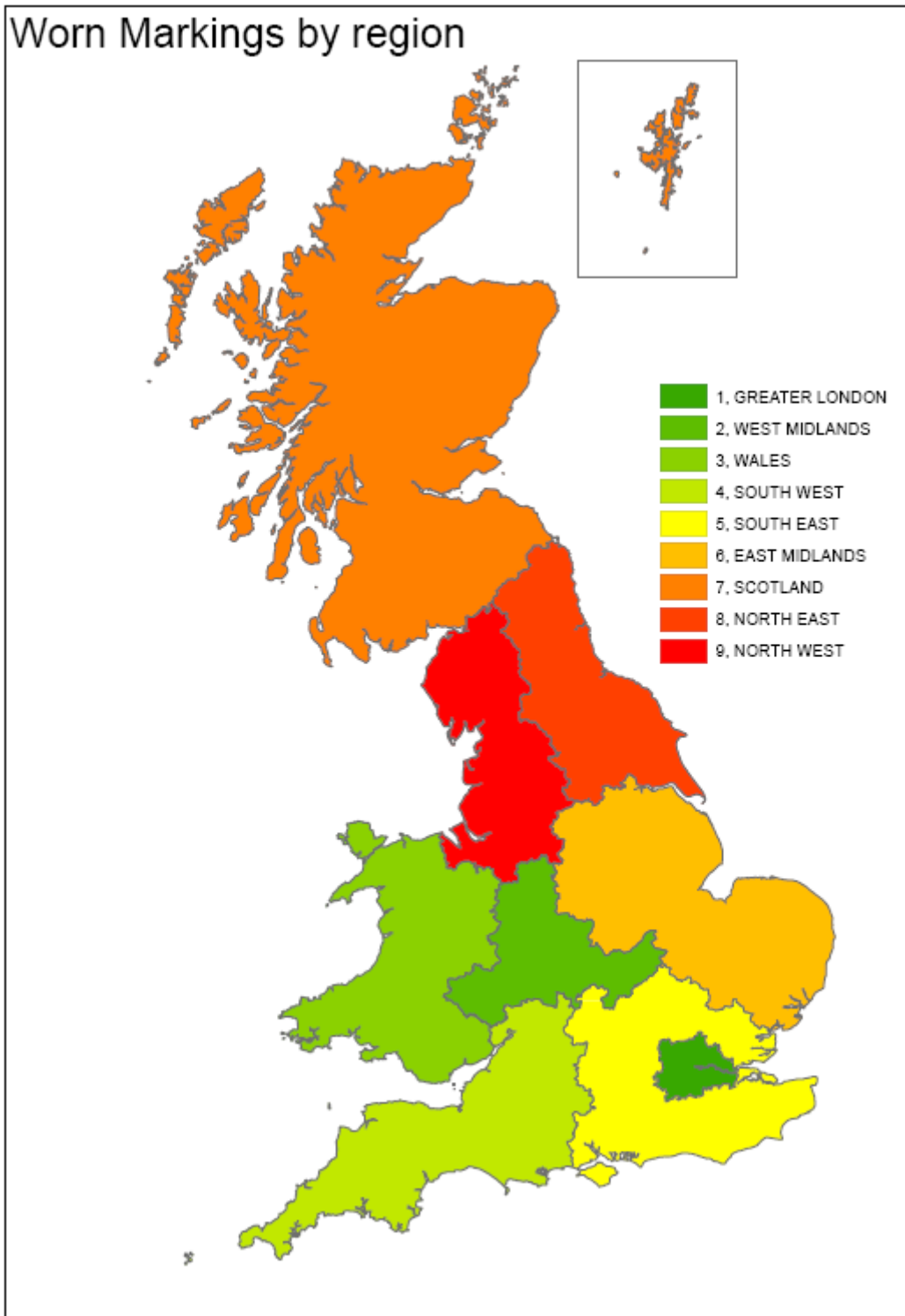
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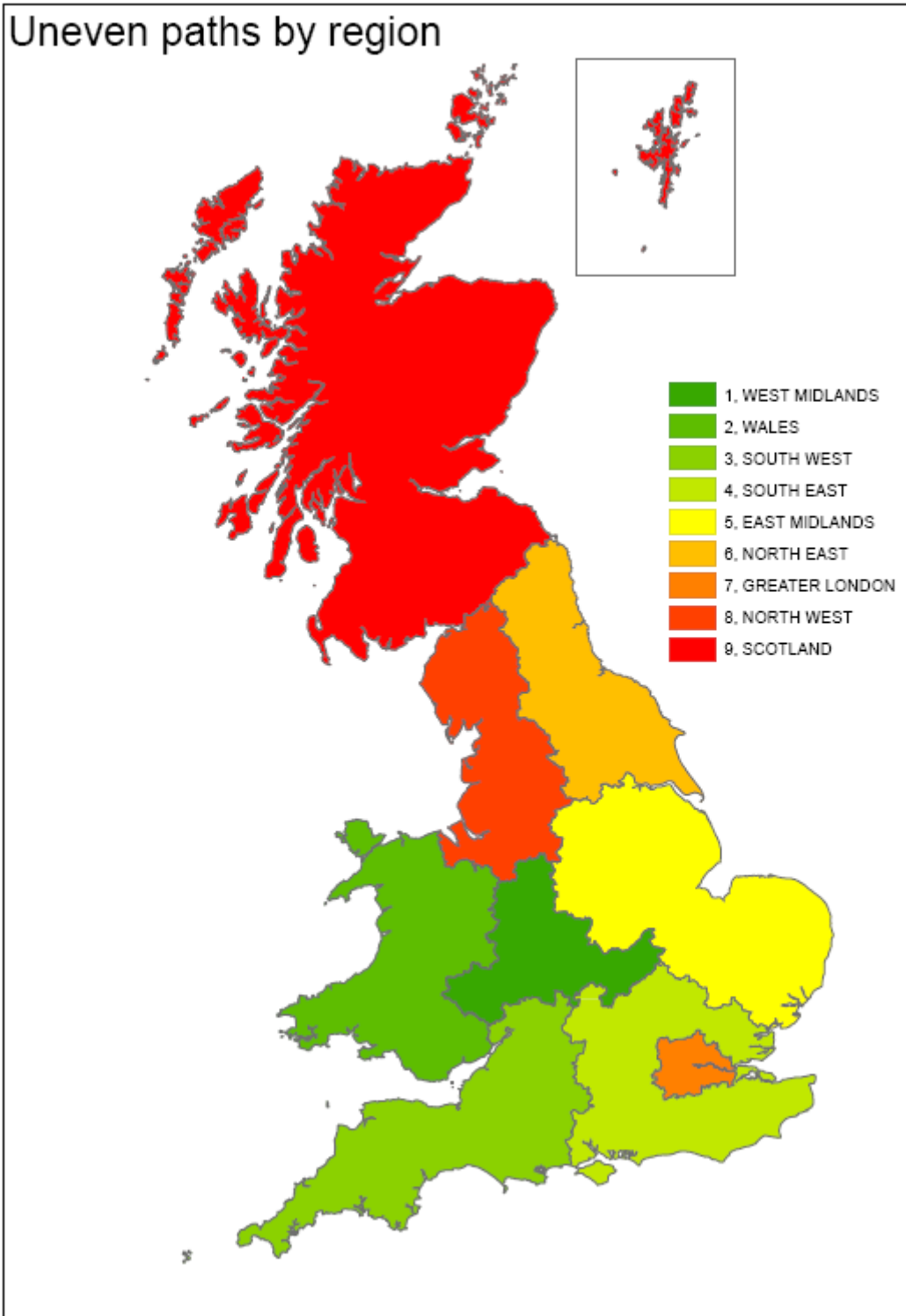
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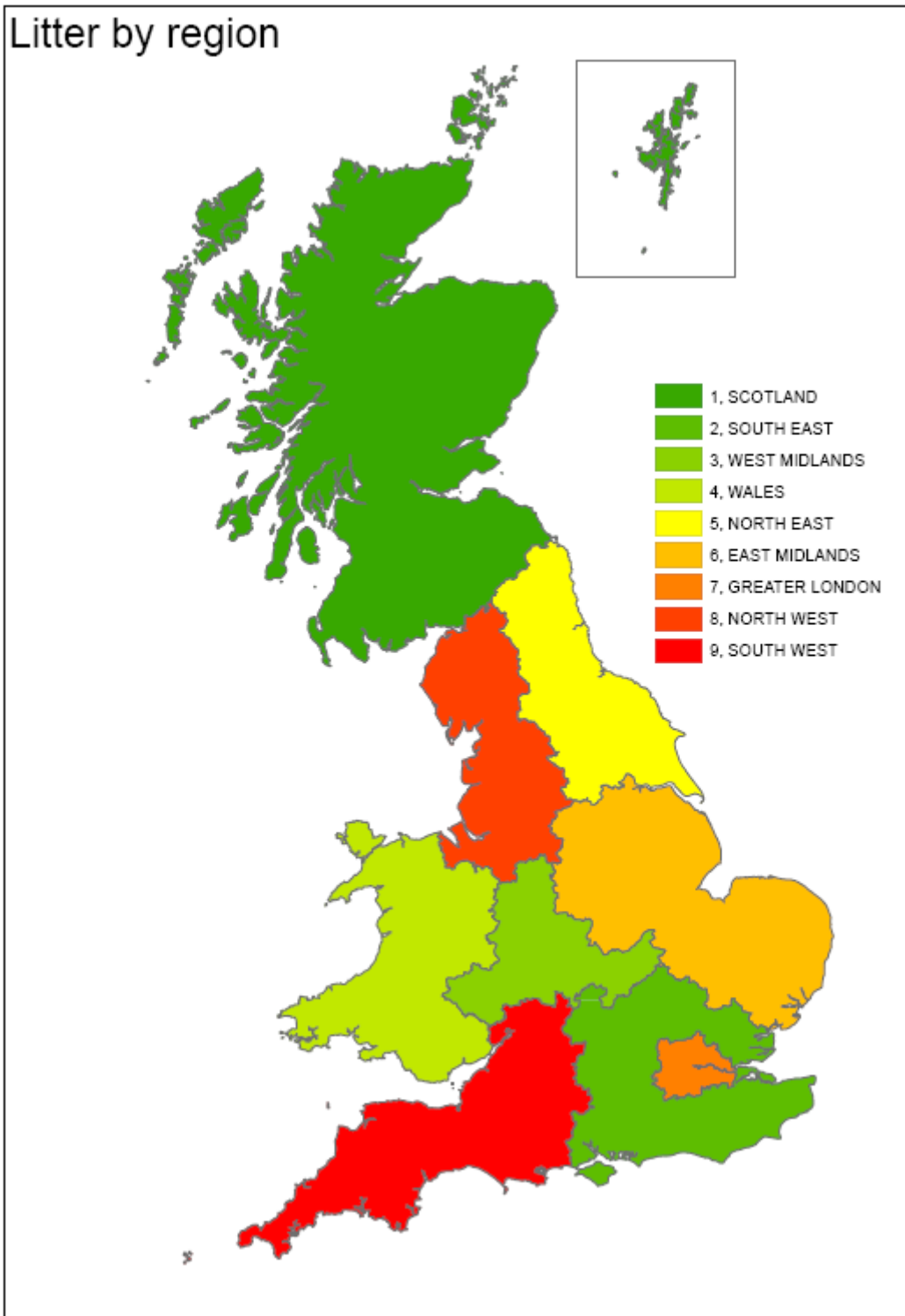
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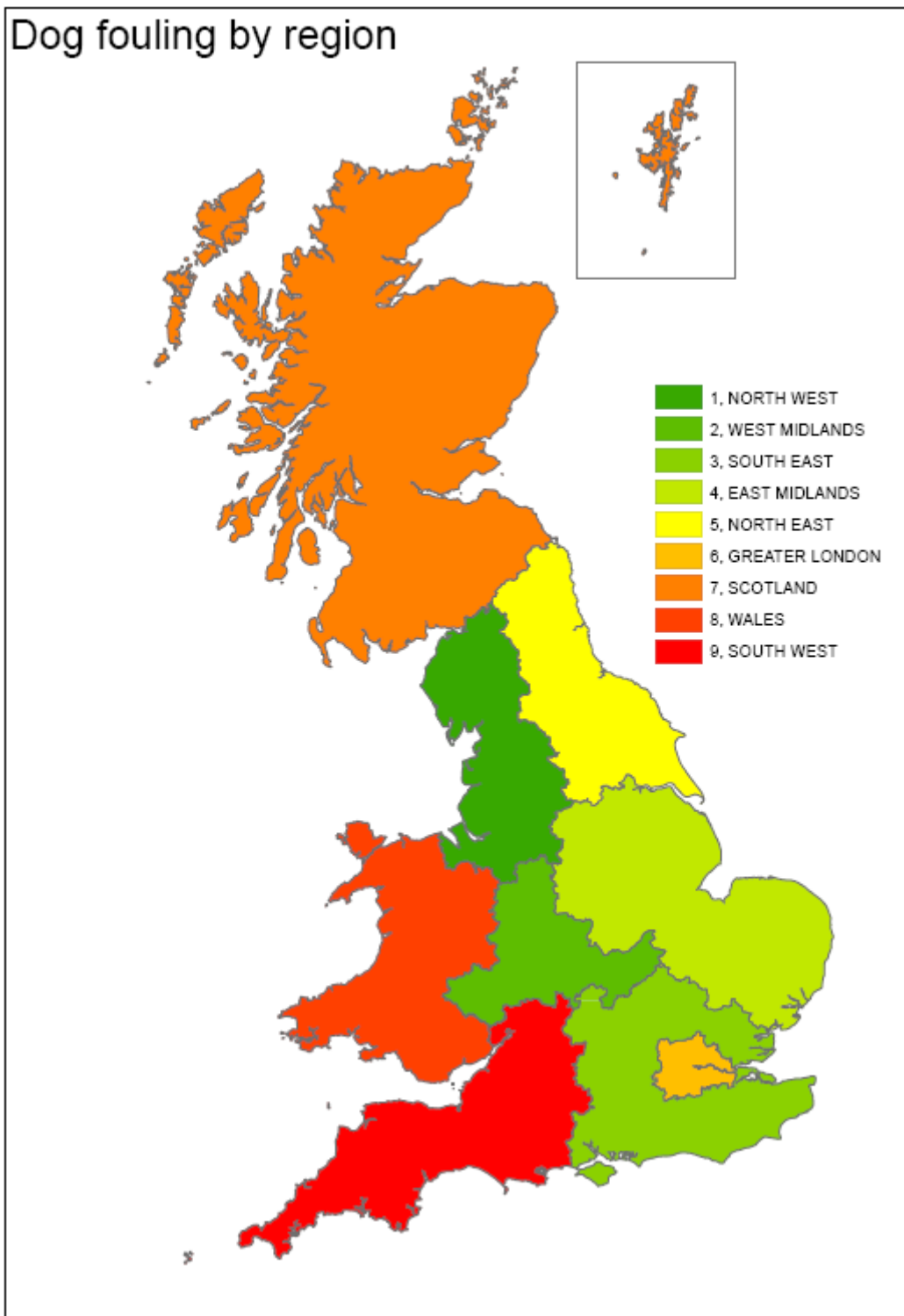
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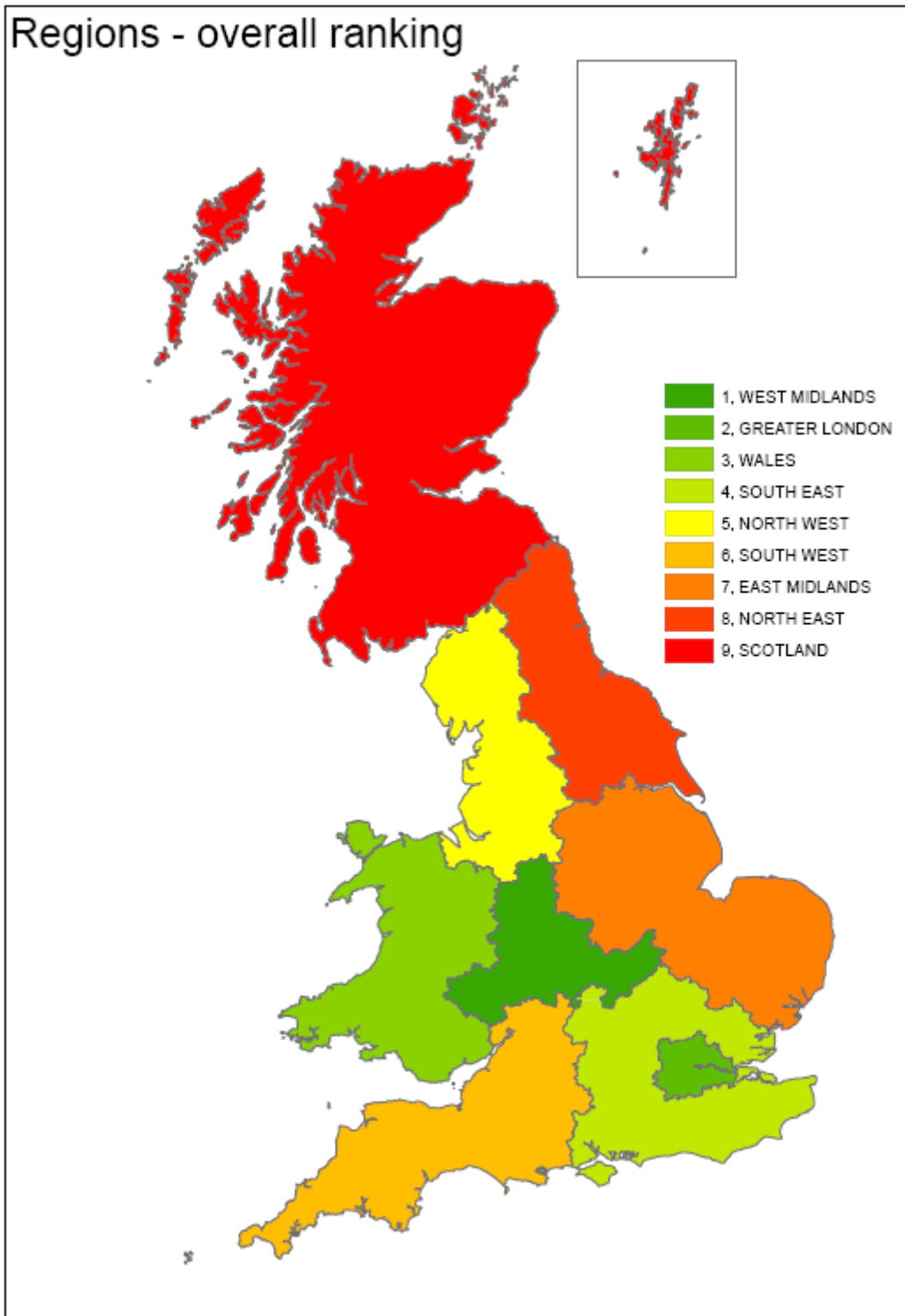
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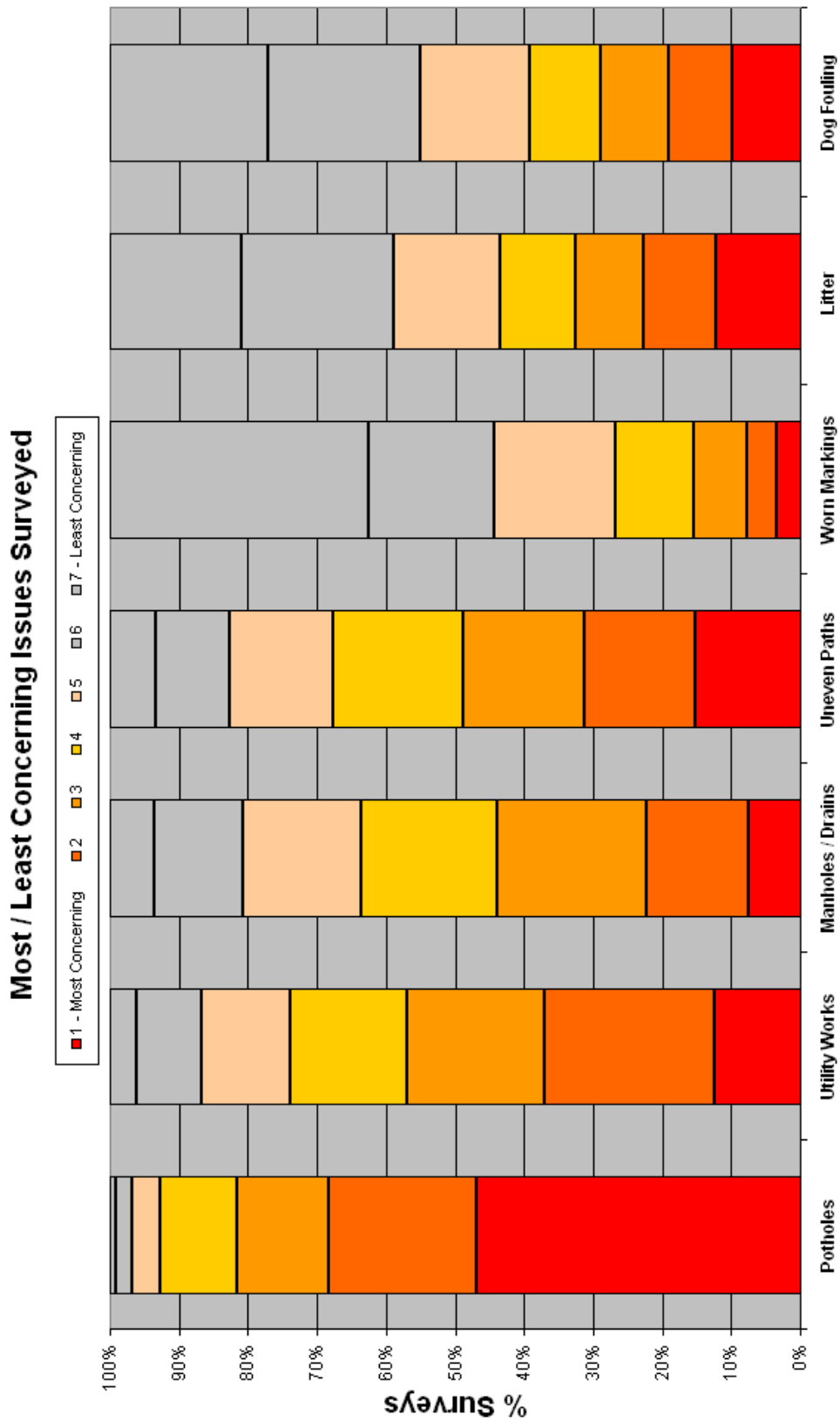
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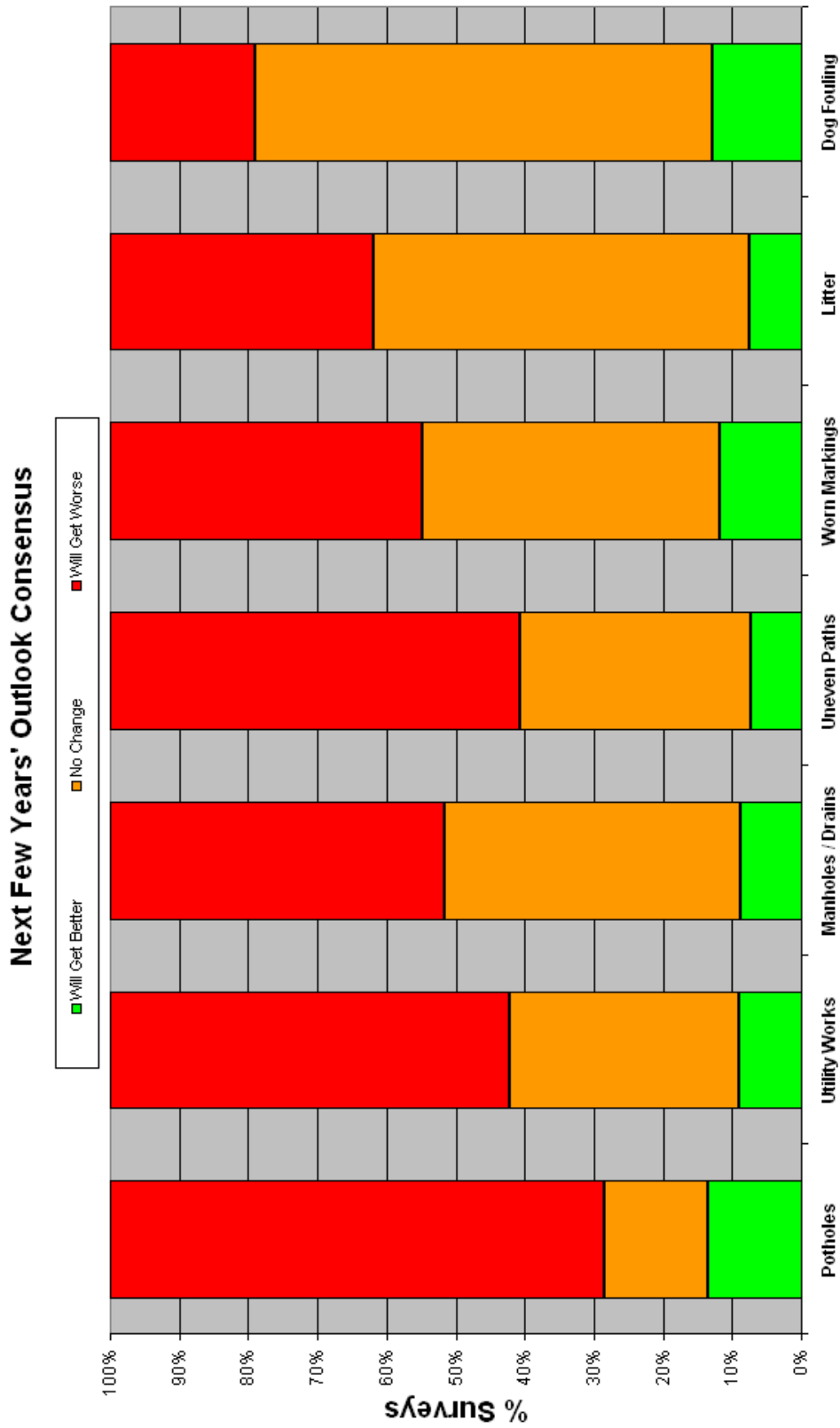
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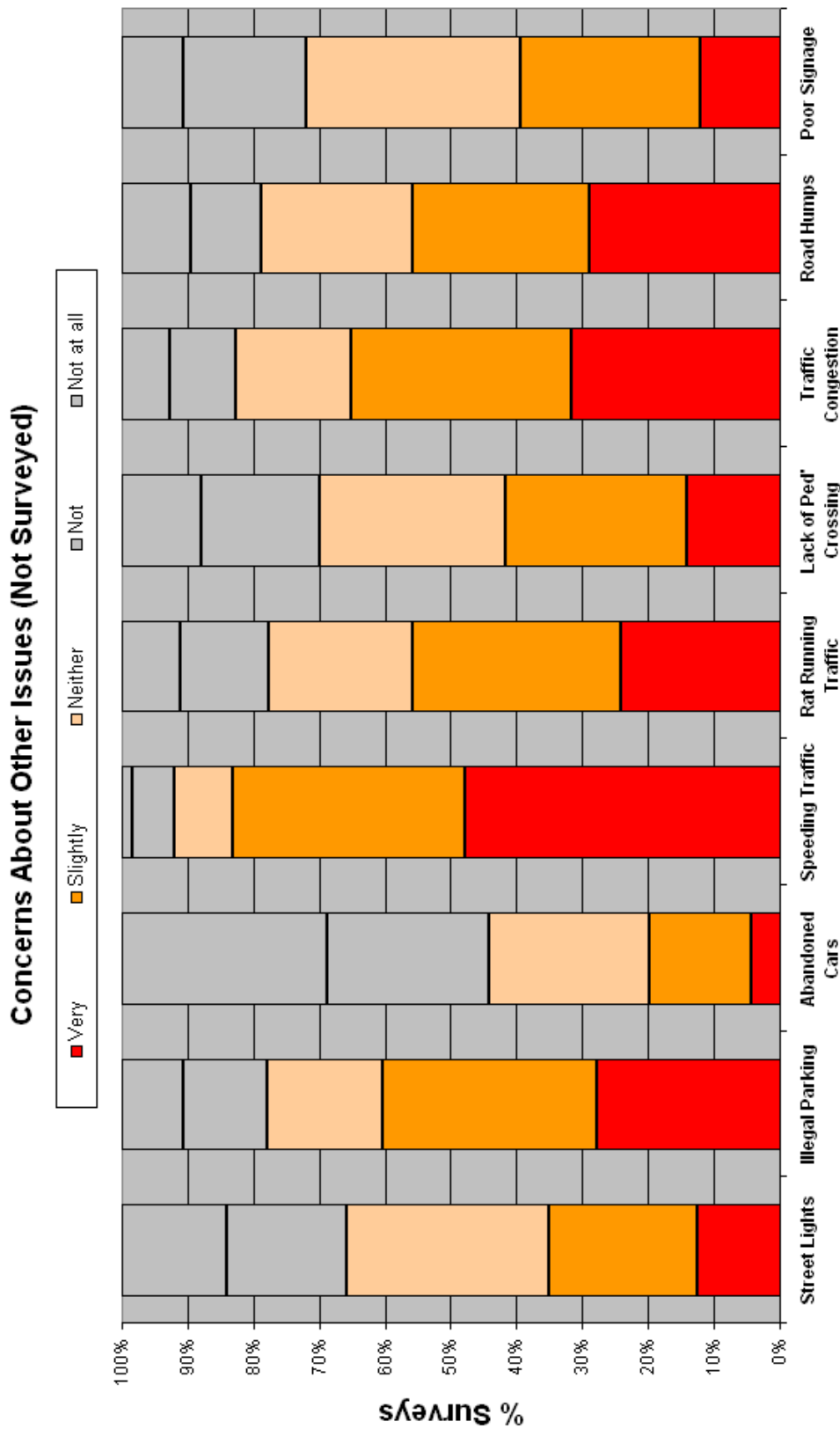
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Appendix 1 – Survey form

This is a one hour survey on foot. No measurement or detailed inspection is required - we just want you to count a number of different features on roads and footpaths.

When to survey

Surveys are to be carried out in daylight between **Saturday 1st and Sunday 23rd October 2011**.

You will be able to submit your results using the online form up to 26th October.

How to survey

Walk a route of your own choice in your local area for between **30 and 60 minutes** - you should cover **around two miles** in this time.

Try to take in as broad a range of road types as possible including local footways or footpaths. You may feel more comfortable taking someone with you to help.

Narrow roads and footpaths - record observations across the full width.

Wider roads - limit observations to the pavement and road surface on your side of the centre line. You can record observations for the other side of the road if your walking route brings you back that way.

Use the form to record your observations as you go and at the end write the totals in the yellow circles to make it easier when you come to enter your results online.

Date:	Roads	Footpaths
Potholes More than 150mm (6") in diameter and 50mm (2") deep	(22) IIII IIII IIII IIII II	(8) IIII III
Repaired Potholes More than 150mm (6") in diameter	(19) IIII IIII IIII IIII	(3) III
Pothole marked for repair More than 150mm (6") across and 50mm (2") deep	(0) -	(2) II

If you come across any particularly noteworthy or amusing examples of any of these issues why not **take a picture** and add it to the **gallery** in the [AA Street Watch Club](#) on the [AA Zone](#)?

Road types

Try to cover a mix of **main roads** (A or B roads carrying through traffic), **minor roads** (country lanes or back streets in town carrying local traffic) and **residential streets** as well as footways/footpaths alongside or completely separated from roads.

Don't survey motorways or dual carriageways

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What to look for?

Potholes

Count single potholes larger than a saucer (approx.150mm (6") diameter) and around 50mm (2in), or more, deep. Potholes marked for repair are to be counted separately – see below)

Repaired potholes

Count filled single potholes (larger than a saucer approx.150mm (6") diameter).

Pothole marked for repair

Look for typically yellow or white spray paint marks around potholes and count single potholes larger than a saucer (approx.150mm (6") diameter) and around 50mm (2in), or more, deep.

Utility works (trenches)

Gas, water, telecoms and electricity companies dig holes or trenches to install or repair services. If not repaired properly a **raised** or **sunken** patch (including breaking up of the surface) can result. Count '1' for each failed repair more than 50mm (2in) deep or high.

Iron inspection/drain covers

Inspection covers (water, cable, telecoms etc.) and drain covers can **rise** or **sink** over time. Record any that are more than about 50mm (2in) deep/high.

Uneven footpaths

Count damage caused by tree roots, broken paving stones, and utility company trenches, resulting in a step of about 50mm (2in). Where damage is extensive, count '1' for every 3 metre (10ft) run.

Faded/worn road markings

For this survey we're interested only in markings with **arrows** or **words** and markings **across the carriageway – give way lines/stop lines**. Count '1' for each road marking where **less than half** of the original remains.

Litter

Count '1' for single pieces of litter such as cigarette packets, soft drinks cans, take-away bags/boxes, household items, garden rubbish, paper etc. Don't count smaller items such as cigarette butts, or individual sweet wrappers. (Consider grass verges to be part of the footpath for the purposes of this survey)

Dog fouling

Simply count anything that dogs have left behind that their owners haven't picked up.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You are responsible for your own personal safety at all times and should exercise due care when participating in this survey. You must ensure that at all times during your participation in the survey you comply with applicable laws, regulations and bye-laws and take all reasonable precautions to ensure your own personal safety. You should at all times respect the rights of third parties and not do anything that would constitute any form of nuisance. Neither Populus nor the AA shall be liable for any damage or loss which is incurred or suffered (whether directly or indirectly) by participants during the course of carrying out this survey, save that nothing shall exclude or limit any liability of the AA or of Populus for death or personal injury arising from the negligence of either AA or Populus respectively or for any other liability that cannot be excluded or limited as a matter of law.