



ccw

The voice for water consumers
Y corff sy'n rhoi llais i ddefnyddwyr dŵr

Right First Time: A review of water companies' complaint handling in England and Wales

1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020



ccwater.org.uk

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Introduction

A year of change and contrast in the performance of water companies

The Consumer Council for Water (CCW) was created in 2005 to champion the interests of water consumers across England and Wales. Consumer complaints provide a strong indication of how individual companies are performing for their customers. Our 2019-20 report supports our strategic ambition that water companies provide ‘outstanding services that are always delivered right first time.’

As highlighted in our 2018-19 report, we have made a number of changes to the data that we collect from the water companies to help us make a more reliable comparison over their performance in future reports. A consequence of this change meant that for 2019-20, we were unable to directly compare companies’ performance with previous years in a number of ways. Companies began to report on telephone complaints from October 2019 as 2018-19 brought to an end companies’ reporting of ‘unwanted contacts’¹. As part of the transition, our 2019-20 report shows only the aggregated numbers of telephone complaints across the industry. We plan to include detailed analysis on a full year’s set of individual companies’ telephone complaints in 2020-21 but this time our main analysis has focused on written complaints.

Additionally, to simplify the way in which complaints are classified and to help drive consistency of reporting across the industry, we have reduced the number of complaint categories from five to three. We removed ‘metering’ and ‘other’ categories leaving all complaints to be categorised as relating to either ‘water’, ‘wastewater’ or ‘billing’. While this limits the extent to which direct comparisons can

be made with previous years, it will enable CCW to provide a more robust and accurate analysis of complaint reporting for future reports.

The primary focus for comparative purposes in our 2019-20 report is on overall levels of written complaints to companies and complaints received by CCW. For the first time our report provides comparative data on complaints made through social media, webchat, short messaging service (SMS) and customers visiting a company’s premises. The introduction of C-MeX from April 2020 offers financial incentives for companies who provide five or more channels for consumers to make complaints. We include our initial findings on this and it is our intention that from 2021-22 we will report on total complaints regardless of the channel through which they are raised.

In the final quarter of 2019-20, the COVID-19 pandemic began to have an impact in both England and Wales. Monthly data suggests that this had little bearing on complaint levels, with the impact of lockdown from mid-March 2020 arriving too late to dramatically affect the numbers captured in this report.

Detailed information on complaint numbers is given in the appendices accompanying this report.

If you have questions or would like to comment on our report, you can send your feedback to feedback@ccwater.org.uk.

¹ An ‘unwanted contact’ was when a customer called their water company to get an issue resolved. The contact was unwanted from the customer’s perspective because they did not need to make the call if they had no issue with their bill or water or sewerage service.

Executive Summary

Changes to the way we report

Our 2019-20 report marks a departure from previous years as CCW makes the transition in how we assess and compare the water industry's performance. Changes made to the data we collect will improve the robustness and consistency of reporting in future years but this means that we have been unable to directly compare performance across a number of measures for 2019-20.

This report gives an overview of how companies performed in terms of complaints, but overall company performance is much wider than this. In October 2020, we will be publishing Water Mark, which will give our assessment of how companies performed relative to each other on all aspects of service that matter most to consumers.



14/21

companies in England and Wales saw a reduction in written complaints



13%

overall increase in the number of written complaints

Complaints to companies

We collected information on telephone complaints in 2019-20 for the first time, with companies providing data from October 2019. This initial dataset tells us that the majority of complaints to companies are made by telephone (87%). As highlighted in our 2018-19 report, we have not used this data to directly compare company performance for 2019-20, instead using our initial findings to help drive consistency of reporting across the industry. For future reports we remain committed to reporting on all complaints to companies regardless of the contact channel used by a consumer.

Written complaints accounted for around 11% of the total made to companies. Where a consumer is unhappy enough to have raised their grievance in writing, this suggests that they are among the most dissatisfied complainants. The performance of companies is variable in this area but there are some encouraging signs with 14 of the 21 companies in England and Wales reducing the level of written complaints received. Across the industry, total written complaints rose by c.10,000 (+13%) but this number is skewed by the performance of Thames Water which received over 12,000 more complaints than in 2018-19.

For the first time this year, we have included analysis on complaints submitted through other channels, including webchat and social media. Although complaint numbers were relatively small, companies are starting to develop these contact channels and there is a sense that some suppliers are more developed in this area than others.

Escalated complaints

There was variable performance in resolving complaints without the need for escalation. Out of 21 companies, 12 reported worse performance than in 2018-19, causing the overall number of escalated complaints to deteriorate by 30%.

Complaints to CCW and Investigations

Complaints to CCW decreased by 7% with the majority of companies (14) improving against this measure. However the number of investigations that CCW undertook into the most serious cases of poor complaint handling rose from six in 2018-19 to 31 in 2019-20. CCW remains concerned that the decision not to include investigations as part of the C-MeX incentive may undermine the importance that companies place on avoiding these. We will continue to monitor investigations closely in 2020-21.

Poor performing companies

Thames Water and Southern Water stand out as the poorest performing companies. Both companies rated poorly against each of our performance measures, with increased written complaints and escalated complaints to CCW putting them firmly in the worst performing quartiles for these metrics.

Last year's poor performers

Hafren Dyfrdwy, Northumbrian Water and Essex and Suffolk Water were all named alongside Thames Water as poor performers in our 2018-19 annual report. With the exception of Thames Water all of these companies received fewer written complaints in 2019-20, although each one remained in the worst performing quartile. While the improvements provide some encouragement, there remains more work to do for all of these companies to bring complaint performance to more acceptable levels.

Good performing companies

Four companies - Bournemouth Water, Bristol Water, United Utilities and Wessex Water - performed well across all performance measures. In our previous annual reports, CCW identified both Bournemouth Water and Bristol Water as companies needing to improve so it is very encouraging to see both join the group of best performers.

Future reporting

CCW is committed to reporting on all complaints regardless of the channel through which they are raised. The changes we have made to the data we collect in 2019-20 will help to meet this objective. CCW will continue to work closely with the industry to drive consistent reporting of water companies' performance.



+25

The number of CCW investigations into poor complaint handling rose from 6 to 31



-7%

a decrease in complaints to CCW



12/21

companies reported a worse performance on escalated complaints

Overview of industry complaint performance

Our analysis of complaints across the water industry is derived from two main sources:

- Complaints received directly by companies. These are reported to CCW on a quarterly basis.
- Complaints against water companies that customers raise directly with CCW.

CCW continuously monitors complaint numbers to help identify issues and solutions. We also push companies to successfully resolve customer complaints in a timely way.

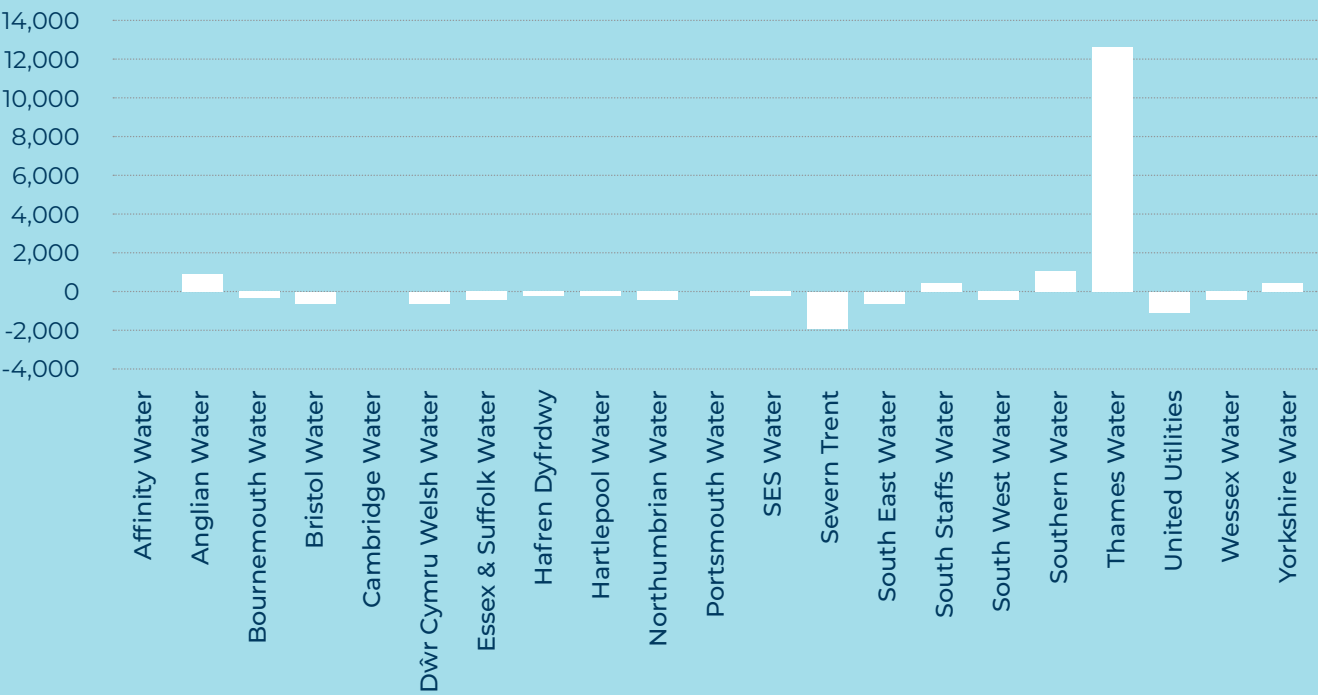
Complaints received directly by companies

CCW acknowledges that written and telephone communications are not the only channels through which consumers can now express dissatisfaction with their service. Ofwat's new customer measure of experience (C-MeX) also recognises this and rewards companies that have five or more communications channels. We now ask companies to share data on complaints from all of the channels open to customers and this will help to provide a more complete picture of complaint reporting across the water industry in future years.

Overall levels of written complaints

There were contrasting performances across the water industry in relation to written complaints made directly to companies in 2019-20. The total number of complaints across the industry increased by 9,960 (13%) but this was skewed by the 12,619 additional complaints received by Thames Water. More encouraging was that two-thirds of all companies received fewer complaints in comparison to 2018-19.

Chart 2: Change in written complaints to companies since 2018-19



Type of written complaint

The move to classifying complaints from five to three categories makes a like-for-like comparison with 2018-19 problematic. However, the largest proportion of written complaints continued to be related to issues around billing, accounting for 65% of the overall total. As well as the re-categorisation of metering and other complaints, industry totals were significantly impacted by the poor performance of Thames Water which received c. 24,000 billing complaints.

Chart 3: Written complaints by category

2018/19 2019/20

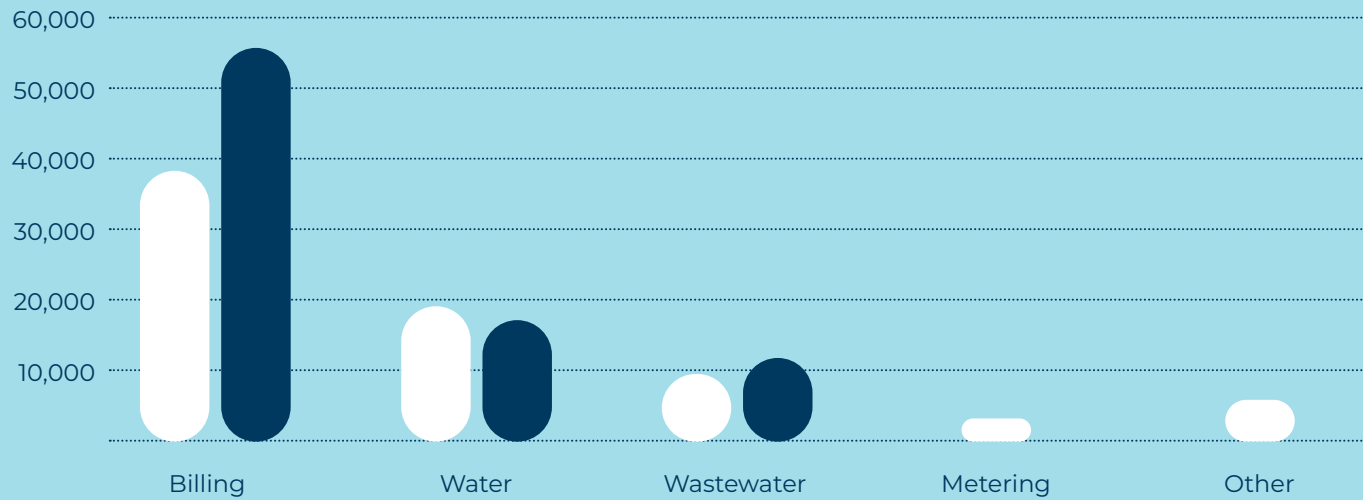


Chart 1: Written complaints to companies over five years



Telephone complaints

Companies began reporting telephone complaints in the final two quarters of 2019-20. As outlined in our 2018-19 annual report, we are not using this initial set of telephone data to assess company performance. We have instead used the data from October 2019 to initially analyse and aid our focus on the consistency of companies reporting telephone complaints.

Companies reported 341,307 telephone complaints in the last six months of 2019-20. This is approximately one-third of the number of unwanted contacts reported in the corresponding period for 2018-19. Chart 4 shows the significant variance of companies reporting telephone complaints.

We will continue to work with companies in 2020-21 to refine this data and strengthen our confidence in the integrity and consistency of reporting of customer telephone complaints in 2021-22.

New reporting channels for 2019-20

In 2018-19, we collected data for the first time on complaints which were made via social media, webchat, SMS and through in-person visits to company premises. Our engagement with companies throughout 2019-20 informed us that some companies are more advanced in the development of this area, particularly in the use of webchat. The data therefore provides more of an indication of maturity in the development of alternative channels for raising complaints, rather than a reflection of performance.

Chart 4: 1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020 - telephone complaints per 10,000 connections (anonymised)

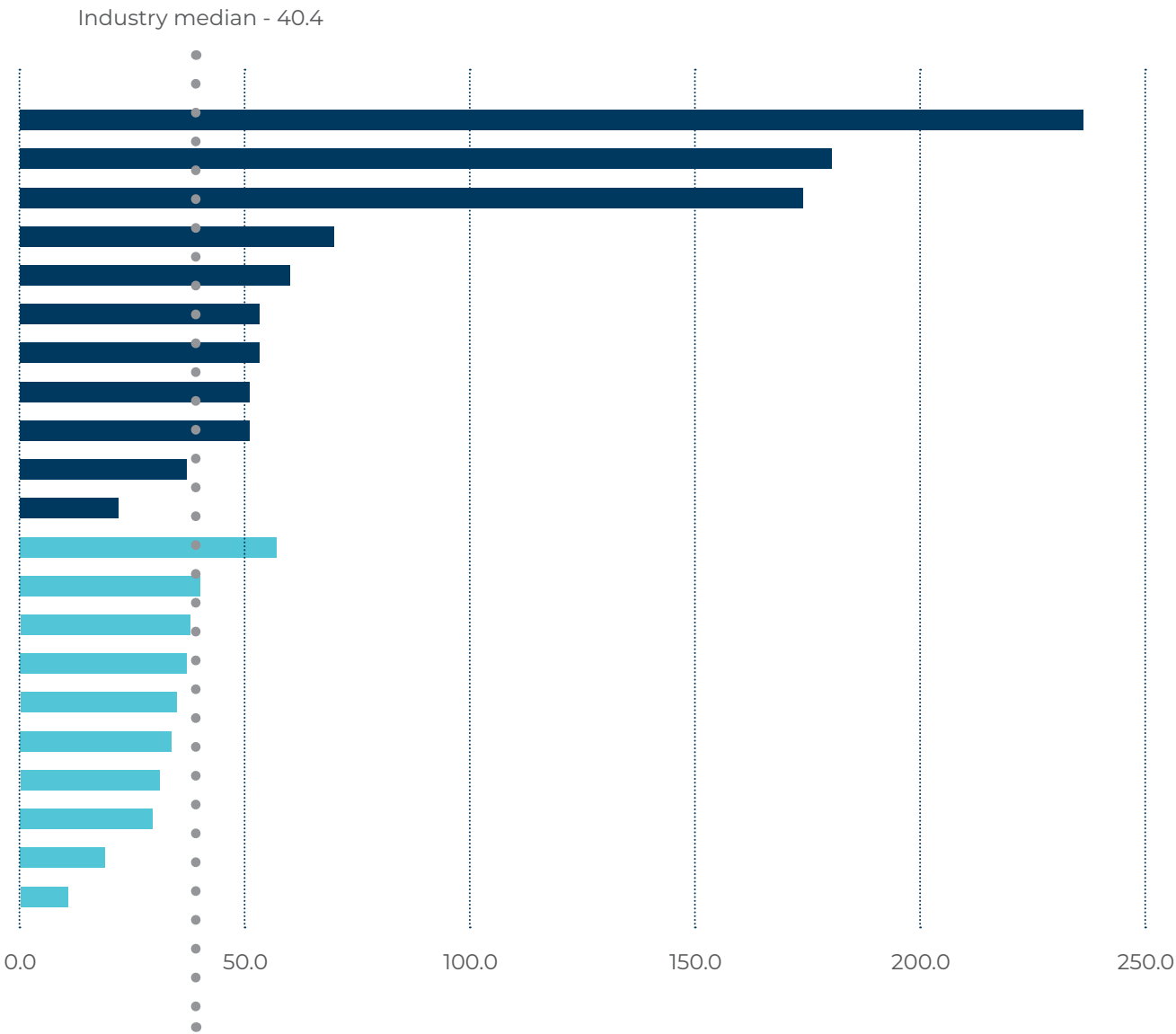
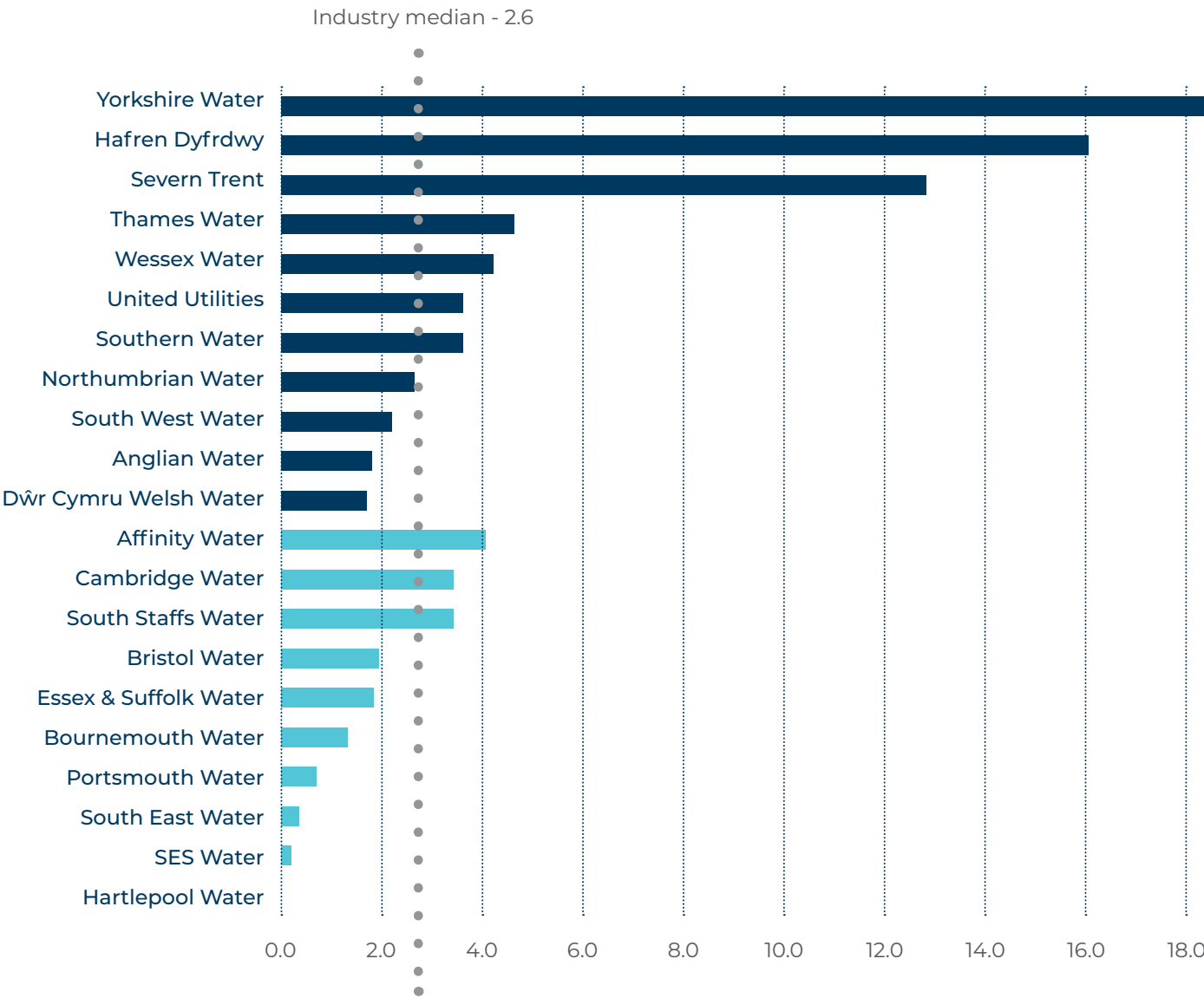


Chart 5: Complaints directed to companies through other channels



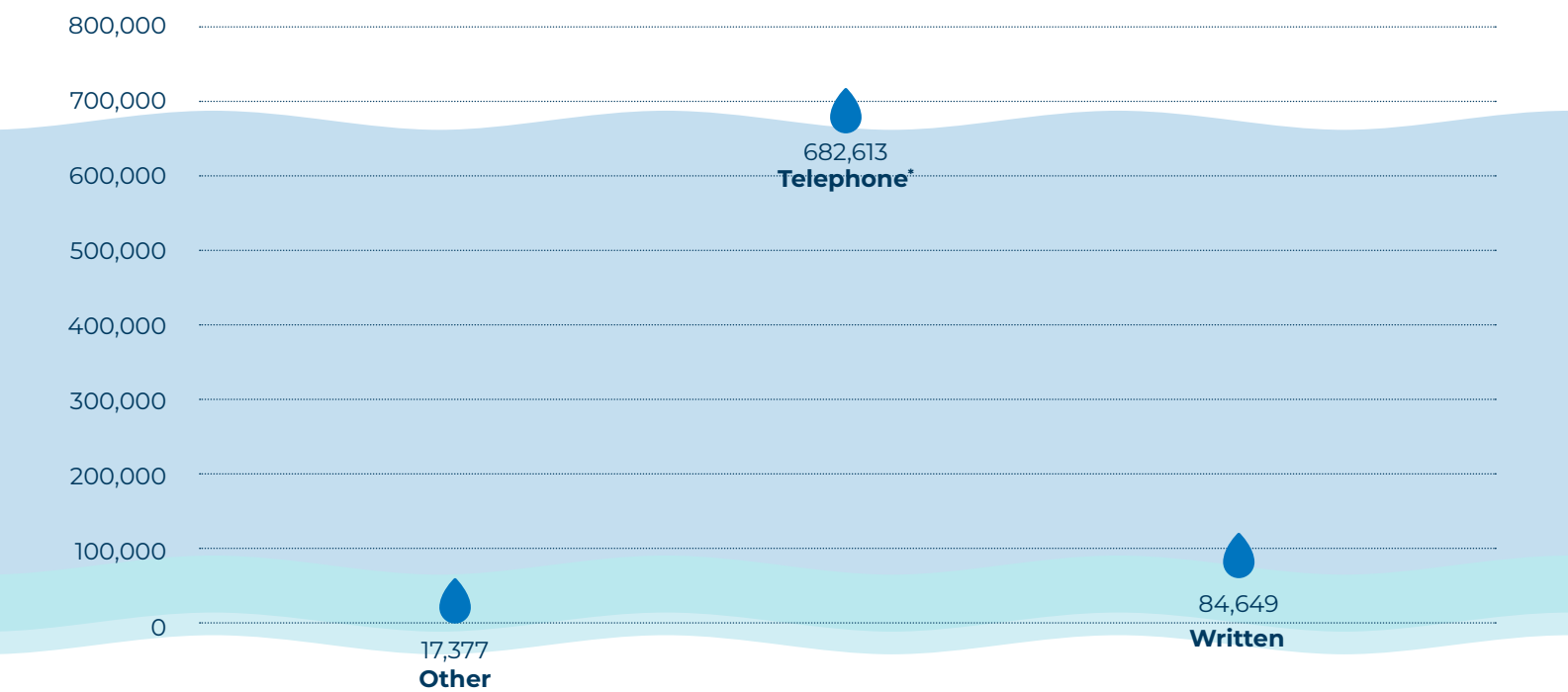
Complaint breakdown by contact channel

For indicative purposes, Chart 6 shows the extrapolated half-year data (1 October 2019 – 31 March 2020) received on telephone complaints to illustrate the volume of complaints to companies by contact channel. While the robustness of the telephone data collected in the final two quarters of 2019-20 makes analysis difficult, it is clear from the data CCW received that, not unexpectedly, the largest volume of complaints to companies was through telephone. It is therefore important that we move towards comparing all complaints received by companies in a robust and consistent way, regardless of the contact channel used by customers.

Escalated complaints

Complaint volumes provide a useful indication of a company's service to consumers. However a company's ability to resolve the customer's issue at the first time of asking provides strong evidence of effective complaint handling. If complaints are not resolved at the initial stage of a company's complaints process (Stage 1), these become escalated complaints within the company (Stage 2). Performance in this area once again shows a mixed picture across the industry. While the total number of escalated complaints across the industry increased by 30%, individual company performance was variable. Twelve companies (57%) saw their performance deteriorate with the remaining nine companies (43%) improving. CCW will look to work with underperforming companies and share evidence of good practice to help avoid, wherever possible, customers having to escalate complaints.

Chart 6: Extrapolated complaint levels by channel

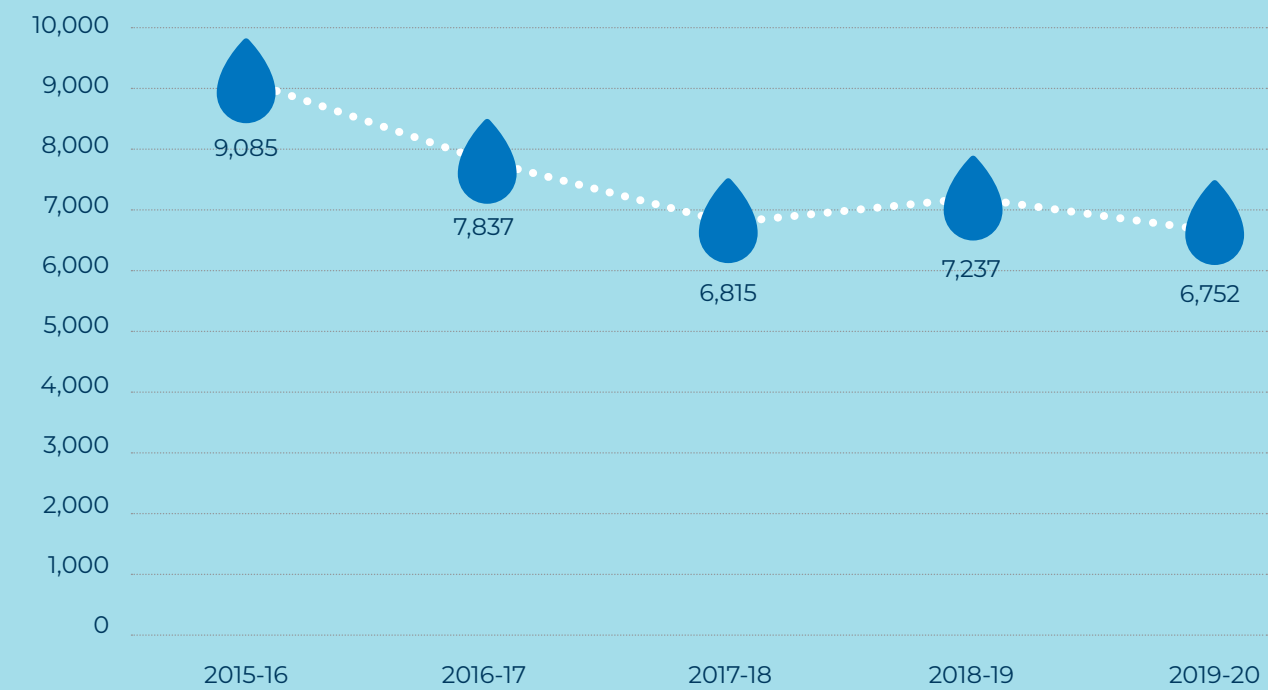


*Estimated annual total based on October 2019 – March 2020 complaints

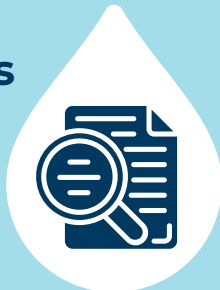
Complaints to CCW

Similarly, customer complaints made about companies to CCW provide evidence that some are not resolving problems effectively at the first opportunity. Chart 7 shows CCW received 6,752 complaints in 2019-20 and, while this represents a 7% fall in total complaints, seven companies saw year-on-year increases. There was also a significant spike in the number of investigations² carried out by CCW - rising from 6 in 2018-19 to 31 in 2019-20. Companies must work harder to resolve complaints within their own complaint stages, even in the absence of a regulatory incentive to avoid investigations due to serious case handling failure.

Chart 7: Complaints to CCW over past 5 years



-7% fall in complaints handled by CCW, but 7 companies saw year-on-year increases



+25 new CCW investigations against poor complaint handling

² Investigations are our most serious involvement in complaints and are undertaken when significant case handling failure has occurred.

Individual company complaint performance

Telephone complaint reporting commenced in October 2019 and as stated in our 2018-19 complaints to the industry report, we have not used this as a measure of performance for individual companies for 2019-20. Our main analytical focus has centred on written complaints to companies and complaints to CCW.

To compare performance across the industry we have developed a number of performance indicators and have rated each company against these.

Table 1: Performance indicator definitions

Measure	Red	Amber	Green
Written complaints to company per 10,000 connections	Poorest Performing Quartile	Between best performing and poorest performing quartiles	Best Performing Quartile
Complaints to company change on 2018-19	> 0		</= 0
Stage 2 Complaints	Poorest Performing Quartile	Between best performing and poorest performing quartiles	Best Performing Quartile
Stage 2 Complaints change on 2018-19	> 0		</= 0
Complaints to CCW per 10,000 connections	Poorest Performing Quartile	Between best performing and poorest performing quartiles	Best Performing Quartile
Complaints to CCW change on 2018-19	> 0		</= 0
Investigations	> 0		0
Investigations change on 2018-19	> 0		</= 0

Key: > 0 greater than zero, </= 0 less than/equal to zero

Against each of the performance indicators detailed in Table 1, easy identification of individual company performance is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Individual company performance

Company	Written complaints to company		Stage 2 Complaints		Complaints to CCW		CCW Investigations	
	per 10,000 connections	Change ⁺	% of total	Change [#]	per 10,000 connections	Change ⁺	Total	Change
Affinity Water	15.6	4%	6.3%	12%	1.6	-18%	0	-1
Anglian Water	24.7	13%	3.6%	77%	1.1	3%		
Bournemouth Water	10.1	-5%	0.5%	-50%	1.0	-6%	-	
Bristol Water	17.2	-34%	3.9%	-48%	0.5	-45%		
Cambridge Water	27.3	77%	3.5%	-19%	2.1	35%		
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	14.6	-22%	5.1%	-19%	2.5	-15%	1	1
Essex & Suffolk Water	31.6	-13%	4.1%	91%	1.2	-2%		
Hafren Dyfrdwy	34.5	-26%	3.8%	-38%	3.4	-63%		
Hartlepool Water	20.6	-1%	2.2%	Increase*	0.7	201%		
Northumbrian Water	31.4	-8%	3.3%	50%	0.9	-25%		
Portsmouth Water	10.9	6%	7.2%	33%	0.3	65%		
SES Water	11.3	-5%	3.1%	43%	2.3	-5%	2	2
Severn Trent	22.5	-16%	5.3%	-7%	1.9	-4%	7	6
South East Water	13.0	-31%	8.1%	51%	1.5	-25%	2	2
South Staffs Water	16.8	87%	5.3%	25%	1.2	-5%		
South West Water	19.0	-17%	3.9%	-31%	2.4	-31%		
Southern Water	27.8	22%	17.3%	275%	3.4	26%	9	9
Thames Water	58.3	57%	9.6%	19%	3.8	3%	10	6
United Utilities	18.2	-16%	3.0%	-4%	1.2	-21%		
Wessex Water	11.8	-23%	4.2%	-40%	0.5	-26%		
Yorkshire Water	17.6	12%	4.4%	100%	2.1	11%		
Median	18.2		4.0%		1.45			
Best Performing Quartile	14.6		3.4%		1.0			
Poorest Performing Quartile	27.3		5.6%		2.3			

+ Percentages based on change in rate per 10,000 connections
* Increase from zero value in 2018-19 therefore percentage value cannot be calculated.
Percentage difference on Stage 2 numbers in 2018-19

Poor performers

Thames Water and Southern Water are the only two companies that are rated ‘Red’ across all eight indicators. This illustrates their poor performance in both the prevention of complaints being raised and their subsequent ability to effectively resolve complaints in a timely manner to the satisfaction of their customers.

Companies we called on to improve in 2018-19

There were more encouraging signs from the three companies who, along with Thames Water, were named as poor performers in the 2018-19 report.

Hafren Dyfrdwy saw fewer written complaints to the company and to CCW but remain in the poorest performing quartile for both measures. It also reduced the proportion requiring escalation and did not generate any CCW investigations in 2019-20.

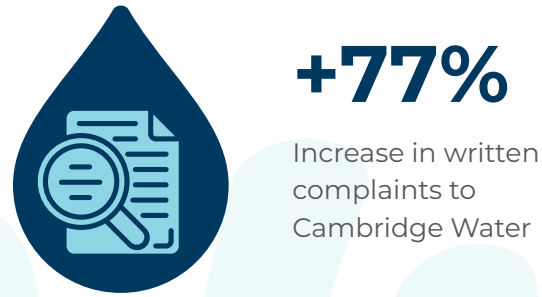
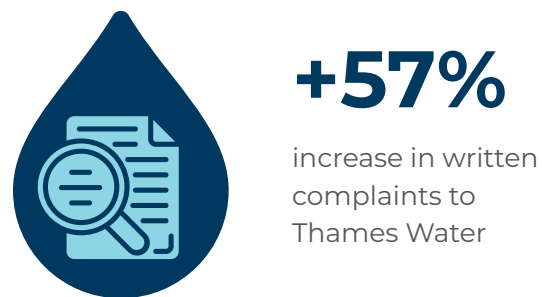
Northumbrian Water also received fewer written complaints but remained among the worst performers for this measure. However, for both the proportion of complaints resolved at Stage 1, and complaints to CCW, the company was in the best performing quartile. It was also not subject to any CCW investigations.

Essex and Suffolk Water’s performance in relation to written complaints improved but it remained in the poorest performing quartile. While its performance in respect of Stage 1 complaints and complaints to CCW was better than the median levels for both measures, the significant rise in Stage 2 complaints needs to be addressed if the company is to continue to improve. It was not subject to any CCW investigations in 2019-20.

CCW is committed to understanding the challenges faced by these companies and through our complaint analysis and insights role, we will look to constructively support their efforts to improve.

Good performers

CCW acknowledges the good performance of Bournemouth Water, Bristol Water, United Utilities and Wessex Water, all of whom performed strongly across all indicators. As CCW has previously criticised Bournemouth Water and Bristol Water (in the 2015-16 and 2017-18 annual reports respectively) it is particularly encouraging to see both companies fall within this group. Bournemouth Water had both the lowest rate of written complaints and the lowest percentage of complaints escalated to Stage 2.



Written complaints to companies

Table 3 shows written complaint performance for all companies.
Table 3: Written complaints 2019-20 and increase/decrease on previous year

Company	Connected properties	2018/19 Number of complaints	2019/20 Number of complaints	2018/19 Complaints per 10k connections	2019/20 Complaints per 10k connections	Annual change (%)
Water and Sewerage companies						
Anglian	2941631	6313	7280	21.8	24.7	13%
Welsh Water	1469043	2720	2143	18.6	14.6	-22%
Hafren	98552	458	340	46.6	34.5	-26%
Northumbrian	1235909	4168	3878	34.1	31.4	-8%
Severn Trent	4251485	11335	9574	26.9	22.5	-16%
South West	787575	1794	1495	23.0	19.0	-17%
Southern	2010081	4544	5594	22.8	27.8	22%
Thames	5784390	21108	33727	37.1	58.3	57%
United Utilities	3270039	7007	5942	21.7	18.2	-16%
Wessex	1243120	1889	1467	15.3	11.8	-23%
Yorkshire	2318572	3623	4089	15.8	17.6	12%
Water only companies						
Affinity	1451129	2149	2260	14.9	15.6	4%
Bournemouth	195496	207	197	10.7	10.1	-5%
Bristol	512485	1328	880.3	26.2	17.2	-34%
Cambridge	137655	207	376	15.4	27.3	77%
Essex & Suffolk	774450	2781	2448	36.2	31.6	-13%
Hartlepool	43159	90	89	20.8	20.6	-1%
Portsmouth	305595	312	334	10.3	10.9	6%
SES Water	281117	331	319	11.9	11.3	-5%
South East	974248	1823	1271	18.9	13.0	-31%
South Staffs	562336	502	946	9.0	16.8	87%
Total	30648067	74689	84649	24.6	27.6	12%

In our 2018-19 annual report we identified four poor performers; Hafren Dyfrdwy, Thames Water, Essex and Suffolk Water and Northumbrian Water.

Hafren Dyfrdwy, Essex and Suffolk Water and Northumbrian Water all reduced the levels of written complaints they received in 2019-20 but remained in the poorest performing quartile.

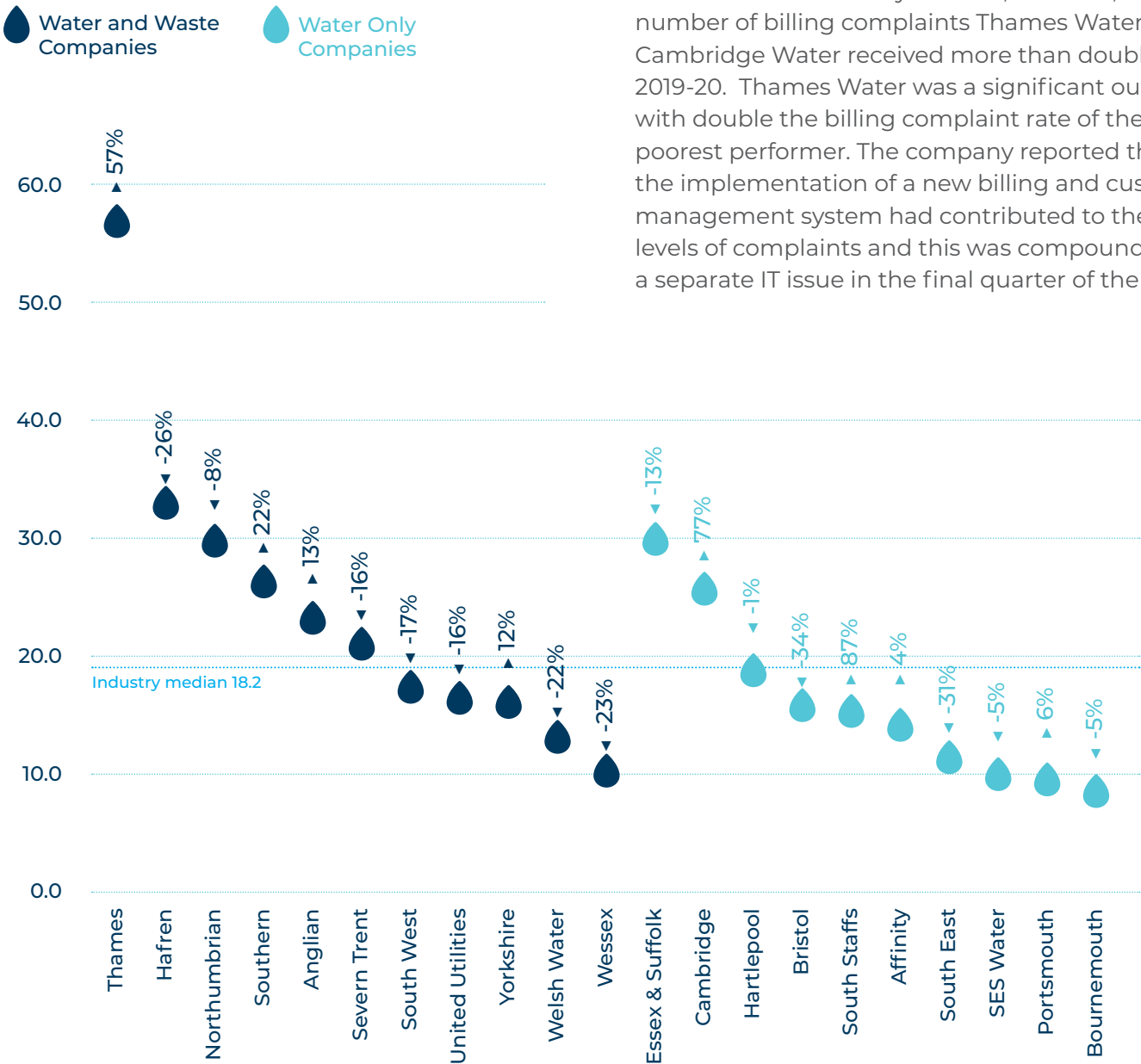
Written complaints to Thames Water increased by 57% and the company was a significant outlier in 2019-20. Its normalised rate of 58.3 written complaints per 10,000 connections was 69% greater than that of the second worst performing company, Hafren Dyfrdwy.

Southern Water saw a 22% increase in written complaints over the year to finish in the worst performing quartile.

Written complaints to Cambridge Water increased by 77%, pushing it into the worst performing quartile.

It is pleasing to report that Bournemouth Water³, a company which had previously been criticised by CCW for its complaint performance, received fewer written complaints per 10,000 connections than any other company. Bournemouth Water was joined by Portsmouth Water, SES Water, Wessex Water and South East Water in the group of best performing companies.

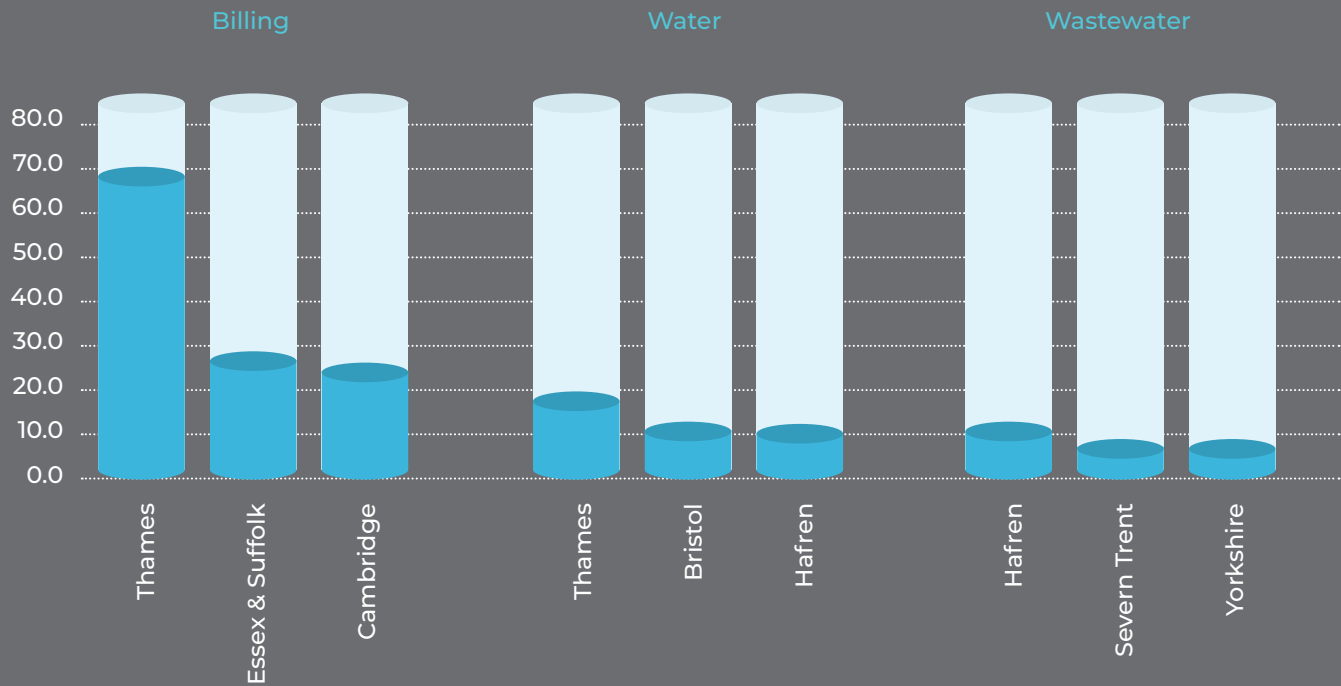
Chart 8: Written complaints to water companies in England and Wales. Median is used as the central measure of location to reduce the impact of outliers



Billing complaints

The reduction in complaint categories means that a proportion of complaints associated with water meters are now recorded under billing, whereas in previous years they would have been classified separately. This partly explains the rise seen in billing complaints in 2019-20, with a median increase of 8% across all companies. The three poorest performing companies in billing complaints were Thames Water, Essex and Suffolk Water and Cambridge Water. Essex and Suffolk Water saw billing complaints rise in line with the industry median, however, the number of billing complaints Thames Water and Cambridge Water received more than doubled⁴ in 2019-20. Thames Water was a significant outlier with double the billing complaint rate of the next poorest performer. The company reported that the implementation of a new billing and customer management system had contributed to the high levels of complaints and this was compounded by a separate IT issue in the final quarter of the year.

Chart 9: Written complaints performance by category



Water complaints

Thames Water recorded a slight decrease (-4%) against 2018-19 levels but still received 67% more water related complaints per 10,000 connections than the next worst performing company, Bristol Water. Hafren Dyfrdwy saw an even larger reduction of 27% on the previous year. Bristol Water by contrast received 111 more complaints than in 2018-19, an increase of 26% on its 2018-19 complaint rate.

Wastewater complaints

Hafren Dyfrdwy received the highest levels of complaints about wastewater. Its complaint rate of 10.5 per 10,000 connections was three-times higher than that of 2018-19. However this proportion is calculated on the basis of just 20 complaints. Severn Trent and Yorkshire Water saw increases of 16% and 80% respectively in 2019-20, receiving 2,631 and 1,384 wastewater complaints respectively.

First time complaint resolution

Analysis of company performance in resolving complaints first time shows Southern Water and Thames Water were the worst performing companies for the second year running. Southern Water resolved only 83% of complaints at Stage 1, compared to the industry median of 96%. It was also the worst performer in each of the three main complaint categories with only 78% of wastewater complaints being resolved at the first stage.

Thames Water's performance was the second worst with the proportion of complaints resolved at Stage 1 showing some signs of improvement.

Thames Water and Southern Water were joined in the worst performing quartile by Portsmouth Water, South East Water and Affinity Water. Outside of the worst performers, Essex and Suffolk Water (+91%) and Anglian Water (+77%) saw significant increases in the proportion of complaints escalated to Stage 2 when compared to 2018-19.

³ Bournemouth Water is owned by South West Water. For the year 2019-20, we received household complaints data that related to each part of the company, as such our report presents the data separately for each part of the company.
⁴ Due to updated information being provided by Thames Water, the rate of billing complaints for 2018-19 has been readjusted to 28.9 per 10,000 not 18.8 as previously reported.

Complaints to CCW

The total number of complaints to CCW fell in 2019-20, bringing the median down slightly from 1.6 complaints per 10,000 connections to 1.5.

Seven companies saw an increase in the number of complaints to CCW in 2019-20. The companies in the poorest performing quartile were Thames Water, Southern Water, Hafren Dfyrddwy, Dŵr

Cymru Welsh Water and South West Water. Thames Water and Southern Water were the only companies in this group that generated more complaints to CCW in 2019-20 than in 2018-19.

Complaints to CCW about Bristol Water and Wessex Water fell by 45% and 26% respectively, resulting in both companies being in the best performing quartile in 2019-20.

Billing and charging (including metering) remains the biggest cause of complaints to CCW for all companies. Disputed liability of a bill and debt recovery formed the bulk of these complaints. In February 2020, CCW published its report 'Getting the measure of billing and debt complaints' to lay out actions that companies could take to reduce this main root cause of customer complaints. We

followed this up by hosting a dedicated workshop with companies in March. We will monitor and evaluate the industry's progress in reducing billing and debt complaints throughout 2020-21 and further assist companies to improve in this area.

Chart 10: Percentage of written complaints resolved at Stage 1

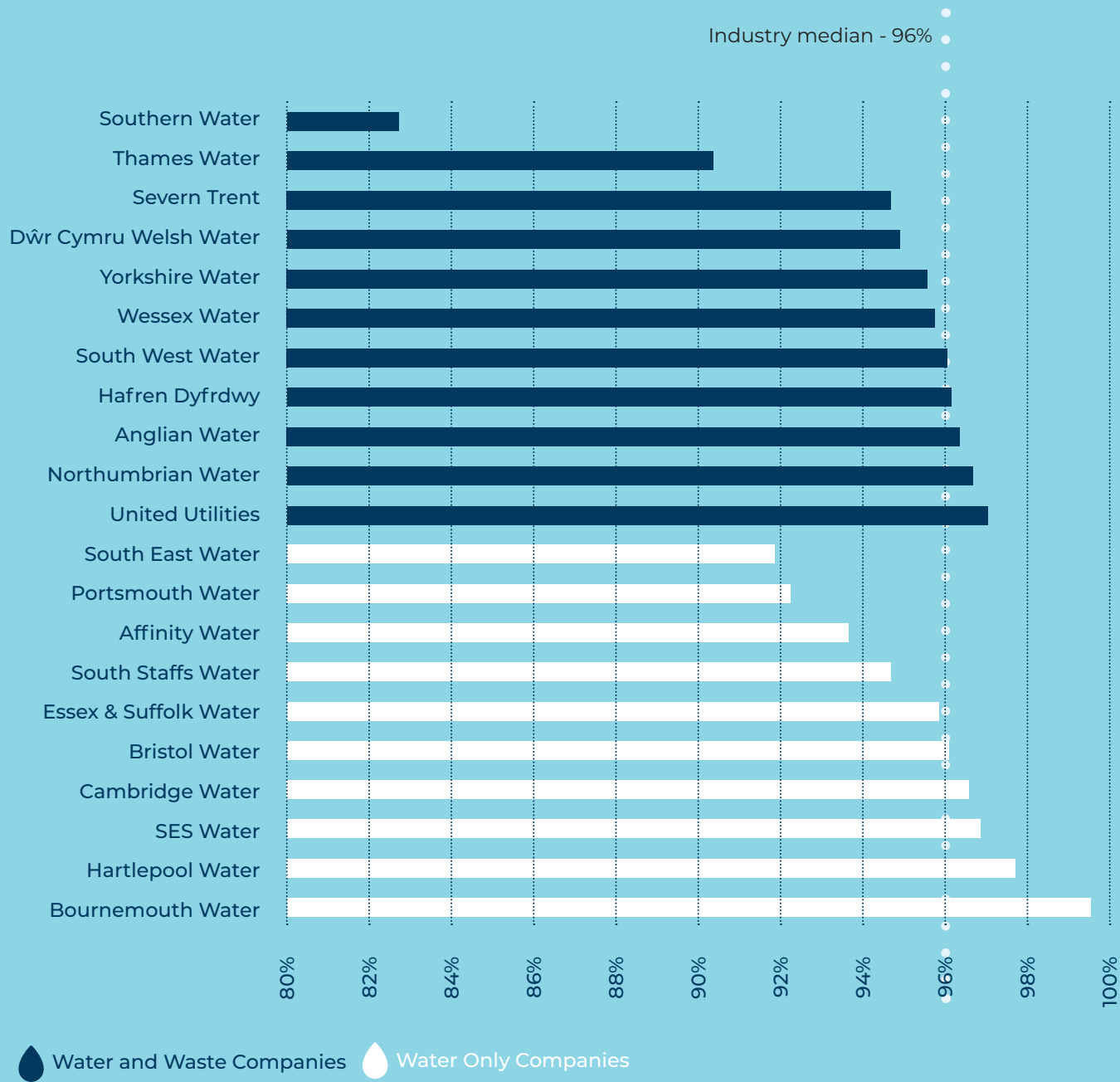
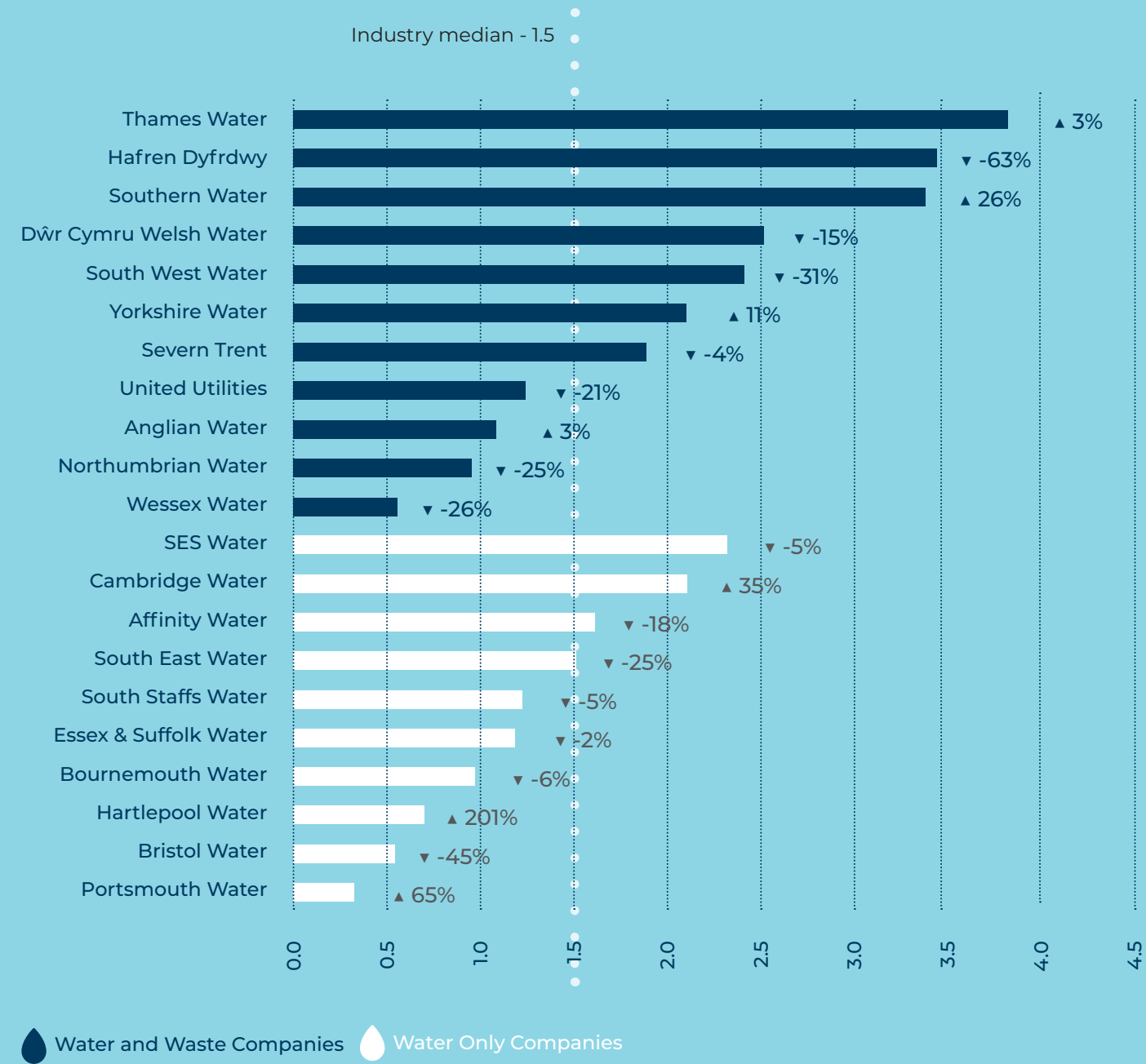


Chart 11: Complaints to CCW



Investigations

Six companies were subject to at least one CCW investigation in 2019-20: Thames Water, Southern Water, Severn Trent Water, SES Water, South East Water and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water. All of these companies were subject to more investigations than in 2018-19.

Ofwat has revised its approach to incentivising companies to deliver good customer service. The Service Incentive Mechanism (SIM) has been replaced by a new measure, the Customer Measure of Experience (C-MeX). Under SIM, companies received 1,000 penalty points for an investigation but this incentive has gone. Investigations will no longer form part of the incentive scheme and CCW is concerned that the removal of investigations risks lessening a company's focus on preventing complaints from reaching this stage.

This highlights the importance of CCW pressing our "right first time" message to companies and they must aim to resolve complaints within their own complaint stages, even without a regulatory incentive to avoid investigations. We will continue to monitor this situation throughout 2020-21.

Table 4: CCW Investigations

Company	2018/19	2019/20
Affinity Water	1	0
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	0	1
SES Water	0	2
Severn Trent Water	1	7
South East Water	0	2
Southern Water	0	9
Thames Water	4	10
Total	6	31

Conclusion and next steps

The changes to the data that CCW collected in 2019-20 meant that we were unable to compare performance in the way we have done in previous reports. These changes have been necessary to provide a much stronger and robust baseline for comparing the performance of companies in future reports.

Performance across the industry presents something of a mixed picture, with more companies improving rather than worsening - especially in relation to written complaints and complaints to CCW. However more companies struggled to resolve complaints without the need for escalation compared to those that showed an improvement. With the removal of SIM, the increase in CCW investigations also provides cause for concern around the ability of some companies to resolve complaints effectively for their customers in the absence of a regulatory penalty incentive.

While three of the four companies singled out for criticism in our 2018-19 report improved, there is still further work to be done if they are to meet their customers' expectations. The performance of Thames Water in particular is extremely disappointing and this is recognised by them. It not only failed to improve but deteriorated across all of the performance measures used in this report. Southern Water also performed poorly across all measures, undermining some of the progress the company made in 2018-19. CCW will seek to work with both companies to identify the underlying causes of complaints and find effective ways to address these, sharing the good practice we have seen adopted elsewhere.

CCW will also work closely with individual companies and through industry forums to understand and tackle issues identified through our analysis. We are improving the way in which we use the data we capture and will be sharing our insights with companies on a much more frequent basis to help identify areas of concern and opportunities for improvement in a timelier manner.

Following our 'Getting the measure of billing and debt complaints' report in February 2020 and industry workshop in March, we will closely scrutinise the drivers of customer complaints to companies in 2020-21. Alongside the individual actions of companies, we hope to see complaint numbers - especially in billing - reduce. We intend to use our complaint insight and data to inform our processes in undertaking complaint handling audits for each company through our annual assessment programme. It's also our intention to run more workshops in this area to support companies and share good practice.

Looking ahead, we will continue to hold companies publicly to account and actively work with the industry to report against all complaints, regardless of the channel used. We will continue to constructively challenge the industry on behalf of customers and work collaboratively with companies throughout 2020-21 to drive improvements.

Appendix 1 - Written complaints to companies from household customers 2015/16 to 2019/20

Company	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	% difference to 2018/19
Affinity Water	5,034	3,879	2,743	2,149	2,260	5.2
Anglian Water	11,173	8,606	6,382	6,313	7,280	15.3
Bournemouth Water	592	407	245	207	197	-4.8
Bristol Water	669	1,028	1,560	1,328	880	-33.7
Cambridge Water	133	460	286	207	376	81.6
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	6,052	5,430	3,148	2,720	2,143	-21.2
Essex & Suffolk Water	2,325	1,826	1,356	2,781	2,448	-12.0
Hafren Dyfrdwy	215	135	180	458	340	-25.8
Hartlepool Water	111	136	92	90	89	-1.1
Northumbrian Water	3269	2902	2,534	4,168	3,878	-7.0
Portsmouth Water	277	402	310	312	334	7.1
SES Water	583	598	567	331	319	-3.6
Severn Trent Water	10,029	11,985	9,921	11,335	9,574	-15.5
South East Water	1,982	1,400	1,476	1,823	1,271	-30.3
Southern Water	14,814	7,881	6,259	4,544	5,594	23.1
South Staffordshire Water	755	924	585	502	946	88.4
South West Water	3,436	2,513	2,202	1,794	1,495	-16.7
Thames Water	14,242	17,809	17,039	21,108	33,727	59.8
United Utilities	10,227	7,441	6,755	7,007	5,942	-15.2
Wessex Water	1,535	1,767	1,787	1,889	1,467	-22.3
Yorkshire Water	7,190	5,748	3,897	3,623	4,089	12.9
Total	94,643	83,277	69,324	74,689	84,649	13.3

Appendix 2 - Written complaints to water companies from household customers per category and 10,000 connections in 2019/20

Total Household connections	Total Complaints	Per 10,000 Connections	Company	Billing & Charges		Water Supply		Sewerage Service	
				Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
1451129	2,260	15.6	Affinity Water	1,588	70.3	672	29.7		
2941631	7,280	24.7	Anglian Water	4,938	67.8	1,350	18.5	992	13.6
195496	197	10.1	Bournemouth Water	154	78.2	43	21.8		
512485	880	17.2	Bristol Water	354	40.2	526	59.8		
137655	376	27.3	Cambridge Water	321	85.4	55	14.6		
1469043	2,143	14.6	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	1,378	64.3	526	24.5	239	11.2
774450	2,448	31.6	Essex & Suffolk Water	1,910	78.0	533	21.8	5	0.2
98552	340	34.5	Hafren Dyfrdwy	224	65.9	96	28.2	20	5.9
43159	89	20.6	Hartlepool Water	77	86.5	12	13.5		
1235909	3,878	31.4	Northumbrian Water	2,717	70.1	843	21.7	318	8.2
305595	334	10.9	Portsmouth Water	172	51.5	162	48.5		
281117	319	11.3	SES Water	192	60.2	127	39.8		
4251485	9,574	22.5	Severn Trent Water	4,031	42.1	2,912	30.4	2,631	27.5
974248	1,271	13.0	South East Water	1,003	78.9	268	21.1		
2010081	5,594	27.8	Southern Water	4,114	73.5	449	8.0	1,031	18.4
562336	946	16.8	South Staffordshire Water	814	86.0	132	14.0		
787575	1,495	19.0	South West Water	949	63.5	265	17.7	281	18.8
5784390	33,727	58.3	Thames Water	24,102	71.5	6,369	18.9	3,256	9.7
3270039	5,942	18.2	United Utilities	3,663	61.6	1,555	26.2	724	12.2
1243120	1,467	11.8	Wessex Water	827	56.4	337	23.0	303	20.7
2318572	4,089	17.6	Yorkshire Water	1,583	38.7	1,122	27.4	1,384	33.8
30648067	84,649	27.6	Total / Average	55,111	65.1	18,354	21.7	11,184	13.2

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding

Appendix 3 - Written complaints from household customers received by companies in 2019/20 - Billing and Charges

					Complaints received by companies			
Billed Properties	Billing and Charges complaints			Company	First stage complaints		Repeat written contacts*	
	Complaints	per 10,000 connections	% of total complaints		Number	%	Number	%
1,390,926	1,588	11.4	70.3	Affinity Water	1,588	70.3	672	29.7
2,792,097	4,938	17.7	67.8	Anglian Water	4,938	67.8	1,350	18.5
194,474	154	7.9	78.2	Bournemouth Water	154	78.2	43	21.8
499,874	354	7.1	40.2	Bristol Water	354	40.2	526	59.8
134,216	321	23.9	85.4	Cambridge Water	321	85.4	55	14.6
1,468,732	1,378	9.4	64.3	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	1,378	64.3	526	24.5
742,996	1,910	25.7	78.0	Essex & Suffolk Water	1,910	78.0	533	21.8
94,755	224	23.6	65.9	Hafren Dyfrdwy	224	65.9	96	28.2
40,782	77	18.9	86.5	Hartlepool Water	77	86.5	12	13.5
1,168,575	2,717	23.3	70.1	Northumbrian Water	2,717	70.1	843	21.7
298,195	172	5.8	51.5	Portsmouth Water	172	51.5	162	48.5
271,040	192	7.1	60.2	SES Water	192	60.2	127	39.8
4,035,172	4,031	10.0	42.1	Severn Trent Water	4,031	42.1	2,912	30.4
899,900	1,003	11.1	78.9	South East Water	1,003	78.9	268	21.1
1,936,865	4,114	21.2	73.5	Southern Water	4,114	73.5	449	8.0
541,564	814	15.0	86.0	South Staffordshire Water	814	86.0	132	14.0
781,179	949	12.1	63.5	South West Water	949	63.5	265	17.7
3,586,941	24,102	67.2	71.5	Thames Water	24,102	71.5	6,369	18.9
2,954,694	3,663	12.4	61.6	United Utilities	3,663	61.6	1,555	26.2
1,217,107	827	6.8	56.4	Wessex Water	827	56.4	337	23.0
2,201,494	1,583	7.2	38.7	Yorkshire Water	1,583	38.7	1,122	27.4
27,251,579	55,111	20.2	65.1	Total / Average	55,111	65.1	18,354	21.7

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding
*Repeat contacts are where the customer remained dissatisfied after the company response and wrote to the company again

Appendix 4 - Written complaints from household customers received by companies in 2019/20 - Water Supply

					Complaints received by companies			
Connected Properties Water	Water Supply Complaints			Company	First stage complaints		Repeat written contacts*	
	Complaints	per 10,000 connections	% of total complaints		Number	%	Number	%
1,451,129	672	4.6	29.7	Affinity Water	591	87.9	81	12.1
2,072,788	1,350	6.5	18.5	Anglian Water	1,309	96.7	41	3.3
195,496	43	2.2	21.8	Bournemouth Water	43	100.0	0	0.0
512,485	526	10.3	59.8	Bristol Water	497	94.5	29	5.5
137,655	55	4.0	14.6	Cambridge Water	52	94.5	3	5.5
1,334,868	526	3.9	24.5	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	495	94.1	31	5.9
774,450	533	6.9	21.8	Essex & Suffolk Water	503	94.4	30	5.6
96,971	96	9.9	28.2	Hafren Dyfrdwy	93	96.9	3	3.1
43,159	12	2.8	13.5	Hartlepool Water	12	100.0	0	0.0
1,164,368	843	7.2	21.7	Northumbrian Water	809	96.0	34	4.0
305,595	162	5.3	48.5	Portsmouth Water	150	92.0	12	8.0
281,117	127	4.5	39.8	SES Water	123	96.9	4	3.1
3,474,059	2,912	8.4	30.4	Severn Trent Water	2,751	94.5	161	5.5
974,248	268	2.8	21.1	South East Water	247	92.2	21	7.8
1,071,821	449	4.2	8.0	Southern Water	373	83.1	76	16.9
562,336	132	2.3	14.0	South Staffordshire Water	125	94.7	7	5.3
782,361	265	3.4	17.7	South West Water	252	95.1	13	4.9
3,702,950	6,369	17.2	18.9	Thames Water	5,629	88.4	740	11.6
3,187,806	1,555	4.9	26.2	United Utilities	1,517	97.6	38	2.4
577,689	337	5.8	23.0	Wessex Water	308	91.4	29	8.6
2,196,866	1,122	5.1	27.4	Yorkshire Water	1,073	95.6	49	4.4
24,900,217	18,354	7.4	21.7	Total / Average	16,952	92.3	1,402	7.7

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding
*Repeat contacts are where the customer remained dissatisfied after the first company response and wrote to the company again

Appendix 5 - Written complaints from household customers received by companies in 2019/20 - Sewerage Service

					Complaints received by companies			
Connected Properties Wastewater	Sewerage Service Complaints			Company	First stage complaints		Repeat written contacts*	
	Complaints	per 10,000 connections	% of total complaints		Number	%	Number	%
2,733,799	992	3.6	13.6	Anglian Water	918	92.5	74	7.5
1,386,156	239	1.7	11.2	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	230	96.2	9	3.8
0	5		0.2	Essex & Suffolk Water	5	100.0	0	0.0
19,119	20	10.5	5.9	Hafren Dyfrdwy	20	100.0	0	0.0
1,222,992	318	2.6	8.2	Northumbrian Water	290	91.2	28	8.8
3,924,588	2,631	6.7	27.5	Severn Trent Water	2,477	94.1	154	5.9
1,916,660	1,031	5.4	18.4	Southern Water	808	78.4	223	21.6
721,313	281	3.9	18.8	South West Water	257	91.5	24	8.5
5,725,135	3,256	5.7	9.7	Thames Water	2,822	86.7	433	13.3
3,193,299	724	2.3	12.2	United Utilities	697	96.3	27	3.7
1,201,387	303	2.5	20.7	Wessex Water	282	93.1	21	6.9
2,202,614	1,384	6.3	33.8	Yorkshire Water	1,285	92.8	99	7.2
24,247,062	11,184	4.6	13.2	Total / Average	10,091	90.2	1,092	9.8

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding
*Repeat contacts are where the customer remained dissatisfied after the first company response and wrote to the company again

Appendix 6 - Overview of complaints to companies from household customers escalated (customers write more than once) 2019/20

Total Complaints	Per 10,000 Connections	Company	First stage complaints		Repeat written contacts*	
			Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
2,260	15.6	Affinity Water	2,117	93.7	143	6.3
7,280	24.7	Anglian Water	7,015	96.4	265	3.6
197	10.1	Bournemouth Water	196	99.5	1	0.5
880	17.2	Bristol Water	846	96.1	34	3.9
376	27.3	Cambridge Water	363	96.5	13	3.5
2,143	14.6	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	2,033	94.9	110	5.1
2,448	31.6	Essex & Suffolk Water	2,347	95.9	101	4.1
340	34.5	Hafren Dyfrdwy	327	96.2	13	3.8
89	20.6	Hartlepool Water	87	97.8	2	2.2
3,878	31.4	Northumbrian Water	3,749	96.7	129	3.3
334	10.9	Portsmouth Water	310	92.8	24	7.2
319	11.3	SES Water	309	96.9	10	3.1
9,574	22.5	Severn Trent Water	9,066	94.7	508	5.3
1,271	13.0	South East Water	1,168	91.9	103	8.1
5,594	27.8	Southern Water	4,626	82.7	968	17.3
946	16.8	South Staffordshire Water	896	94.7	50	5.3
1,495	19.0	South West Water	1,436	96.1	59	3.9
33,727	58.3	Thames Water	30,498	90.4	3,229	9.6
5,942	18.2	United Utilities	5,766	97.0	176	3.0
1,467	11.8	Wessex Water	1,405	95.8	62	4.2
4,089	17.6	Yorkshire Water	3,909	95.6	180	4.4
84,649	27.6	Total / Average	78,469	92.7	6,180	7.3

Appendix 7 - Household customer complaints to CCW about companies 2019/20

Company	Complaints*	CCW investigations
Affinity Water	233	0
Anglian Water	317	0
Bournemouth Water	19	0
Bristol Water	28	0
Cambridge Water	29	0
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	370	1
Essex & Suffolk Water	91	0
Hafren Dyfrdwy	34	0
Hartlepool Water	3	0
Northumbrian Water	117	0
Portsmouth Water	10	0
SES Water	65	2
Severn Trent Water	804	7
South East Water	148	2
Southern Water	681	9
South Staffordshire Water	69	0
South West Water	190	0
Thames Water	2216	10
United Utilities	405	0
Wessex Water	68	0
Yorkshire Water	488	0
Others**	367	0
Total	6,752	31

*Includes complaints received by telephone
**Includes HH complaints against retailers, new appointments and variations, third party intermediaries or where the company was not known. CCW also dealt with 3,436 NHH complaints in the year.

Percentages may not add to 100 because of rounding
*Repeat contacts are where the customer remained dissatisfied after the first company response and wrote again

Appendix 8 - Social media, Web chat, SMS and Visit complaints from household customers received by companies in 2019/20

Company	Social Media complaints	Web Chat complaints	SMS complaints	Visit complaints	Total complaints	Per 10,000 Connections
Affinity Water	444	138	0	1	583	4.0
Anglian Water	252	244	0	0	496	1.7
Bournemouth Water	2	23	0	0	25	1.3
Bristol Water	58	39	0	2	98	1.9
Cambridge Water	13	34	0	0	47	3.4
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	43	202	0	0	245	1.7
Essex & Suffolk Water	107	20	7	2	136	1.8
Hafren Dyfrdwy	61	96	1	0	158	16.0
Hartlepool Water	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Northumbrian Water	262	16	25	16	319	2.6
Portsmouth Water	5	14	0	0	19	0.6
SES Water	3	0	0	1	4	0.1
Severn Trent Water	1712	3751	2	0	5465	12.9
South East Water	18	2	0	11	31	0.3
Southern Water	125	515	0	64	704	3.5
South Staffordshire Water	60	126	0	2	188	3.3
South West Water	74	91	0	1	166	2.1
Thames Water	2276	357	0	17	2650	4.6
United Utilities	381	768	0	0	1149	3.5
Wessex Water	11	504	0	0	515	4.1
Yorkshire Water	486	3893	0	0	4379	18.9
Total	6393	10833	35	117	17377	5.7



The voice for water consumers
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