Business customer insight survey 2022

Report of findings

Opinion Research Services
January 2022

Opinion Research Services
The Strand Swansea SA1 1AF
01792 535300 | www.ors.org.uk | info@ors.org.uk

Contents

1. Executive Summary

Summary of Main Findings

1.1 Since April 2017, business customers across England (including charities and public sector organisations) have been able to choose who supplies their water and sewerage retail services. As part of its regulatory role, the Water Services Regulation Authority (henceforth Ofwat) has been responsible for overseeing the introduction of competition across the water industry in England and Wales and is responsible for ongoing monitoring of how the market is performing for customers.

1.2 Ofwat appointed Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a quota-controlled telephone survey in 2021, aimed at gathering further insight from business customers about their experiences and views concerning the business retail water market. Where available, comparisons are made with results obtained in previous years in which a very similar survey has been conducted. The following paragraphs highlight some key findings; however readers are referred to the detailed graphics for the full story.

Overall Satisfaction

1.3 There has been a drop in the level of overall customer satisfaction with current retailers over the last three years: the result in 2021 (73%) is lower than those seen in 2020 (78%) and 2019 (80%). Moreover, the level of dissatisfaction has increased: 17% in 2021, compared with 6% in 2020 and 8% in 2019. Large organisation customers, as well as those in the information and communication; mining, quarrying and utilities; and business administration and support sectors, were among the sub-groups significantly less likely to be satisfied with their clean water and waste water retailer.

1.4 Dissatisfaction with the retailer (17%) is at a higher level in 2021 than was seen in either 2020 (6%) or 2019 (8%). A quarter of large organisation customers were dissatisfied (25%) as were around a fifth or so (21%) of customers who were not aware of the market situation prior to the interview. Dissatisfaction was also higher than average in the business administration and support, information and communication, and accommodation and food sectors.

1.5 The most frequent reason given by customers for being dissatisfied with their current clean water and waste water retailer services was billing issues (65%), followed by issues around customer service (45%) and metering issues (34%). The results to this question suggest that overall, around a tenth of customers (11%) are dissatisfied with their current retailer because of some form of billing-related issue.

Awareness of the market

1.6 Fewer than half (43%) of eligible business customers were aware, prior to taking part in the survey, that since April 2017 organisations have been able to change who supplies their clean water and their waste water retail services, or potentially move to a better deal with their existing provider. This signifies a significant decrease compared to previous years in which the survey has been undertaken: 58% of customers were aware in 2020 and 53% were aware in 2019.

1.7 Awareness remains strongly linked to organisation size, with larger customers showing higher levels of awareness of their ability to switch provider of water and wastewater retail services: 40% of micro businesses are aware of the market situation in 2021, compared with 50% of small, 69% of medium and 75% of large businesses.

1.8 It is also worth noting that the overall decrease in awareness is primarily driven by a decline among the smallest (i.e. 'micro') businesses, which comprise the majority of the eligible non-household population (only 40% claim to be aware in 2021, compared with 58% in 2020).

1.9 Other possible reasons for this decline in awareness are considered in more detail in the main body of this report, but it is possible that there is some connection with the disruption and changes to working practices experienced by organisations as a result of the pandemic, which has undoubtedly had a negative impact on participation rates in 2021. These factors may have affected the type of organisations and/or respondents engaged as part of this survey, with possible implications for awareness and other results.

Market Engagement

1.10 Based on the survey results, we estimate that 8.5% of all customers have been "active" in the market in the last 12 months (by "active" we mean those who have switched or renegotiated in the last 12 months, those currently in the process of switching/renegotiating, those who are actively considering switching or renegotiating, those who had tried to switch or renegotiate and failed, or those who had considered switching or renegotiating and decided not to). Larger organisations are significantly more likely to be 'active customers' (27.5%).

1.11 Around one in twenty-five (3.9%) of all customers had switched or renegotiated at some point in the previous 12 months (specifically: 1.7% had switched and 2.2% had renegotiated).

1.12 Despite the fact that overall awareness is down significantly, the proportion of active customers is broadly in line with 2020 and 2019, as is the proportion of customers who have switched and/or renegotiated. This *might* imply that while, for many customers, water-related issues might currently be a slightly lower priority due to the pandemic, for other customers (e.g. larger companies and/or where water usage and spending remains a more significant concern for the business) water related issues remain a relatively higher priority.

1.13 The small number of respondents who had recently switched or renegotiated a contract were asked various questions about their experiences of switching or renegotiating. The results are summarised in the main body of the report from page 44 onwards; please note, however, percentages should be interpreted with some greater caution due to low sample sizes (as a consequence of the questions having only been asked of a very small subset of respondents).

Searching and Comparing

1.14 Among those who had switched and/or had been active in the last 12 months, the most common means of searching for information about alternative retailers was via a price comparison website (used by just over a quarter, 27%), followed by a consultant (19%) or a broker (16%), or through direct contact with another retailer (16 %). Around two thirds of these customers found it easy to find the information they required to make an informed choice; a similar proportion found it easy to compare retailers.

1.15 Customers who had not considered switching or renegotiating (despite being 'aware' of the market) were most likely to say this was because they were happy with their current retailer or contract (this was given as a reason by around a third of these customers – 34%). Just over a tenth (14%) felt there was no point in switching; however, the proportion giving this as a reason has decreased since 2020 (when around a third of customers gave this as a reason for not having considered switching/renegotiating).

1.16 Price and bills appear to be the most important factor (by some distance) in terms of encouraging customers to switch and/or renegotiate. However, a fifth of customers who are unaware of the market and/or have not yet considered switching or renegotiating indicated that they might be encouraged to do by a better level of customer service (20%), while others might be encouraged by more frequent or reliable meter readings (13%), improved metering or consumption data (12%), water efficiency services (12%), better billing (11%) and/or leak detection services (10%).

Covid-19

1.17 Just over two fifths of organisations (43%) had experienced a significant reduction in revenue or ability to trade/operate as a result of Covid-19, with a further fifth (20%) experiencing some more moderate reduction. The remainder (37%) had been able to continue operating fairly normally, with medium and large organisations and those in the construction and health sectors significantly more likely to have done so.

1.18 Over half (55%) had seen some reduction in their water consumption over the previous 12 months due to the pandemic, while only a small proportion (6%) had increased their consumption (the remaining 39% had seen no real change). Retail, hospitality and more office-based industries (e.g. information and communication; professional, scientific and technical services; and business administration and support) were among sub-groups more likely to report a reduction in their water consumption.

1.19 Customers who have been active in the water market were less likely than average to report that consumption had reduced, and more likely to report that it had remained unchanged, which *might* support the possibility that water-related issues have been a bigger ongoing concern for those operating under a more 'business as usual' scenario (i.e. those less affected by lockdowns or other restrictions) while perhaps being less of a concern for certain types of other, more disrupted sectors (including those where there has been a greater switch to homeworking, given that their water consumption is perhaps more likely to have reduced).

1.20 The vast majority (88%) of customers had experienced no issues with water billing that they felt could be attributed to the pandemic, although small proportions identified issues such as overcharging (5%) and problems receiving bills (e.g. due to their premises being closed) (5%). Organisations who had experienced reductions in their ability to trade or operate were more likely to have encountered these kinds of issues than those who had been able to continue trading normally.

1.21 Overall, 7% of customers stated that they had experienced difficulties paying their water and wastewater bills as a result of the pandemic – similar to the proportion (6%) who reported having issues with payment of electricity and gas bills. Customers who had reported disruption to their trading and/or revenues as a result of the pandemic were more likely to report difficulties than those who had been able to continue trading as normal.

1.22 Small, medium and large organisations were all significantly less likely to report issues with the payment of water and waste bills as a result of Covid (3%, 2% and 1% respectively said they had experienced difficulties), compared with micro businesses (7% experiencing difficulties). A similar picture was seen in relation to customers' ability to pay their electricity and gas bills.

Contact with retailers

1.23 Around three in ten customers (29%) had some form of contact with a retailer (excluding contact as part of a switch or renegotiation): approximately 2% had had a Covid-related contact with a retailer, while 27% had been in contact for other reason(s), and the remaining 71% or so had not had any contact.

1.24 For those who had been in touch for a reason not related to Covid, the most common reason for having contact was billing enquiries (51%) followed by issues with water quality (9%) or pressure (8%). In most instances the enquiry had been resolved, either directly by the retailer (63%) or by some other organisation the retailer had directed it to (6%); however, for the remaining customers (approaching a third of all who had been in contact) the issue remained unresolved at the time of interviewing.

1.25 Overall, around three in five customers (59%) who had been in contact with a retailer stated that they were satisfied with this contact; however roughly a third (32%) were dissatisfied. Small organisations were less likely to be satisfied (41%).

1.26 The most common reason for dissatisfaction was billing-related (e.g. an unresolved billing issue), which was identified as an issue by almost half of all who were dissatisfied (48%). It is worth noting that an unresolved billing issue could be an obstacle to switching (on the basis that the current retailers might be able to block a switch where the customer has an outstanding debt), therefore it may be relevant to consider potential longer-term implications for the market if these kinds of queries were to remain unresolved over a longer period.

Summing up

1.27 When asked about what is most important to them as a customer, around half (51%) mentioned a reliable water supply and/or no supply interruptions. Around two fifths mentioned price (41%), while others mentioned customer service (26%), billing services (11%) and water efficiency (11%). These were also the five most widely identified factors in 2020.

1.28 Three fifths of customers (60%) are satisfied with the water market as a whole. While this has not changed since 2020, there has been an increase in dissatisfaction (16% in 2021, up from 9% in 2020), driven largely by a decrease in neutral (i.e. 'neither satisfied not dissatisfied' responses).

1.29 The views of those who have switched/renegotiated in the last 12 months are not significantly different to the overall result (although this may be due to low sample sizes for switching/renegotiating); however, those who have been active in the market without actually switching/renegotiating are less likely to be satisfied (*possibly* implying that for some, the market might not be offering what they would need to persuade them to actually switch). Customers who are not active but aware of the market are more likely than average to be satisfied, along with medium organisations and customers in some water regions and in sectors such as retail, motor trades and education.

Participation rates and future implications

1.30 As described more fully in chapter 2, it was originally envisaged that the survey would target 1,000 completed interviews; however, this was subsequently reduced to 700 due to the considerable difficulties experienced in engaging organisations. ORS estimates the participation rate may have been as little as half of what it had been, when we undertook the same survey in 2019.

1.31 The factor behind this change is likely to have been the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in more organisations (particularly in certain sectors) having closed or being unavailable at the point they were contacted (and therefore, being essentially uncontactable); a much greater shift towards home working meaning key decision makers could not always be reached; and trading pressures on companies meaning that for many, water issues and/or taking part in surveys are currently a lower priority than they would otherwise have been in previous years.

1.32 At the time of writing, it seems likely that the difficulties described above in relation to contacting businesses will (to a greater or less extent) remain an ongoing issue throughout 2022, and potentially well beyond this point, and consideration will need to be given to any future research with the sector (for a discussion of what this might potentially involve, please see the 'Participation rates and future implications' section of the Project Overview, starting on page 6 below).

2. Project Overview

Background

The Commission

2.1 Since April 2017, business customers across England (including charities and public sector organisations) have been able to choose who supplies their water and sewerage retail services. This follows the model set by the electricity, telecoms and gas industries which separate the customer supply and infrastructure elements of the business from billing, customer service and meter readings (retail services). Customers in Wales who use 50,000,000 litres (50Ml) of water or more a year are also able to switch retail services. These retail services include billing, water meter reading and customer services.

2.2 The overall aim of introducing competition was to save customers time, water and money as well as improve the quality of customer service. The opening of the market means that (like many other utility markets) eligible business customers will be free to either switch suppliers or negotiate a better deal with their existing retailer. In addition, customers also have the option to become their own retailer and 'self-supply' their own sites with retail services.

2.3 As part of its regulatory role, Ofwat has been responsible for overseeing the introduction of competition across the water Industry in England and Wales and is responsible for ongoing monitoring of how the market is performing for customers.

2.4 In February 2021, Ofwat appointed Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake research with a sample of eligible business customers (i.e. who would be eligible to switch supplier for clean and/or waste water services). The research was commissioned and funded as a collaborative research project between Ofwat and the Consumer Council for Water (CCW). The objective for the research is to gain further insight from business customers about their experiences and views concerning the business retail water market, including the extent to which they have engaged with the market, how far their needs and expectations have been met, and the reasons for these outcomes, as well as concerning the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research includes eligible business customers who have switched provider, renegotiated a new deal with their existing provider, or not switched or renegotiated.

2.5 The research consisted of a quota-controlled telephone survey. It was originally expected that this would consist of 1,000 interviews; however, due to a reduction in survey participation rates relative to previous years (understood to be mainly a consequence of the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic), and following consultation with Ofwat and CCW, this sample size was subsequently reduced to 700.

The Survey of Eligible Business Customers

2.6 The aim of the survey was to gather views from a representative sample of all types and sizes of businesses, charities and public-sector organisations in England (also including eligible high water users in Wales) and to investigate their experiences interacting with the market.

2.7 The survey was carried out by telephone between late June and late November 2021 and included questions on the following topics:

- Awareness of changes in the market
- Overall satisfaction

- Behaviour in the market
- Experiences of switching and renegotiating (only asked of those who had switched and/or renegotiated in the previous two years)
- Searching and comparing
- Impacts of Covid-19 on business customers
- Contact with the retailer
- Summing up and general views of the market

2.8 A stratified sample was designed to ensure that differences between organisations of different sizes and in different sectors, and differences between water company regions could be measured[1]. Quota controls[2] were then used to ensure the sample achieved an appropriate number of responses from different sub-groups and 700 full interviews were achieved overall.

2.9 A copy of the questionnaire has been included as an annexe to this report.

The Sample

2.10 The sample comprised registered businesses, charities and public-sector organisations based wholly or mainly in England. It was purchased from Datascope, a commercial source of business contacts. Additional contacts were sourced from Dŵr Cymru, which provided a list of all eligible organisations in Wales (using 50 Ml or more per year).

Organisation Eligibility

2.11 Not all businesses, charities and public-sector organisations are eligible to switch water and/or wastewater retail services in the business retail water market. The organisation must operate from a business premises and not use a household water supply (i.e. those who run a business from their own home are not eligible). Furthermore, some organisations that rent their business premises will do so with the utility services provided by the landlord, so they are not responsible for who supplies their water and/or wastewater retail services (along with other utilities) and are not able to choose the retailer[3].

2.12 Customers in Wales will only be able to switch if they use 50 Ml of water a year at their property. These eligible Welsh customers were identified with help from Dŵr Cymru for inclusion in the research. The survey is therefore representative of all eligible business customers in England and Wales.

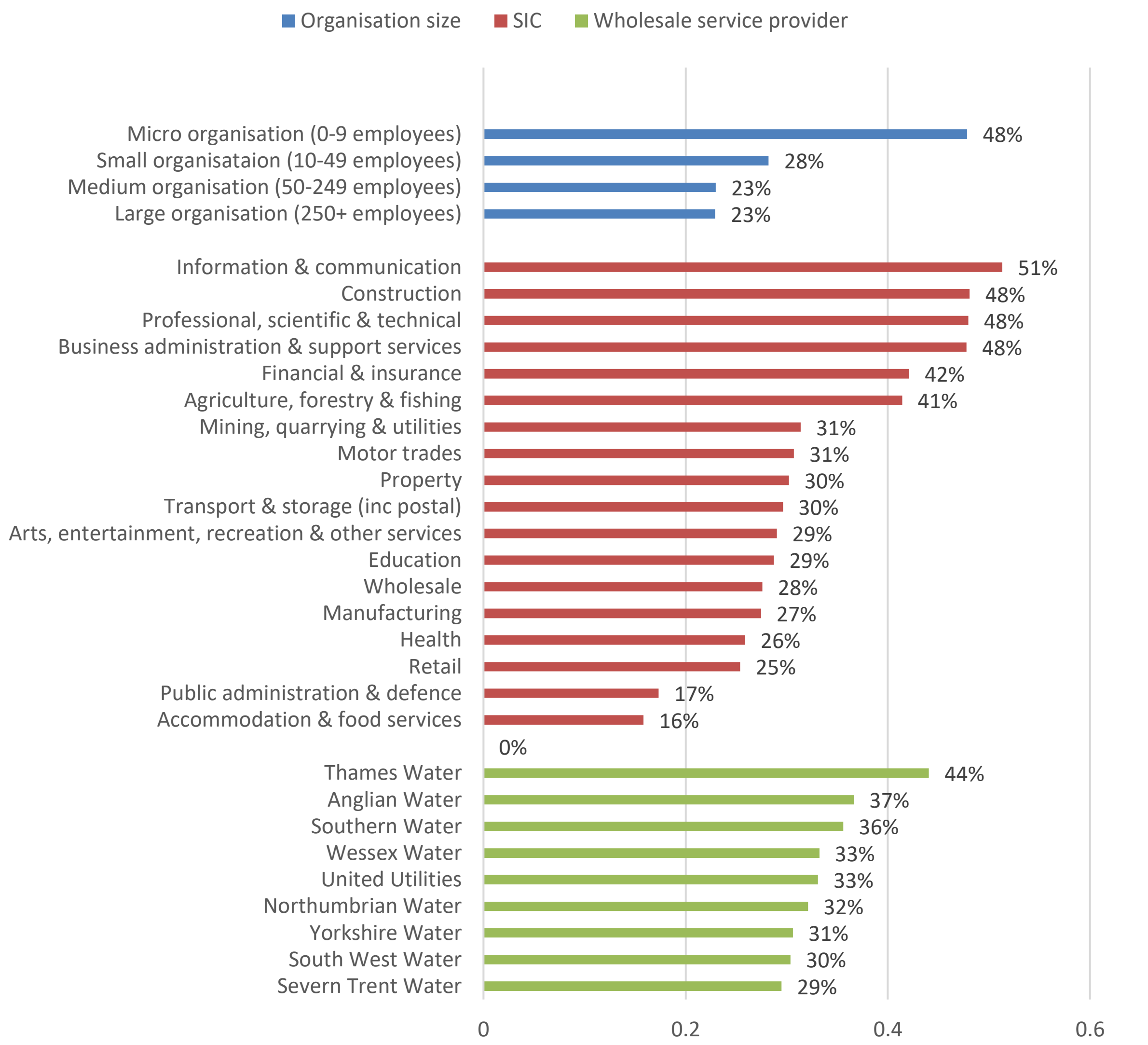
2.13 During Ofwat's Customer Awareness Survey, conducted in 2016[4], an estimate of the eligible non-household population was created using screening questions to assess eligibility. This exercise excluded

[1] Stratified sampling involves first dividing the eligible population (in this case, the population of business customers who are eligible to switch their water and waste water retailer) into various groups, or strata, based on common characteristics. In this case, a disproportionate stratified sampling approach was used to intentionally over- and underrepresent certain groups relative to their incidence in the population; this is standard research industry practice and is done to better enable comparisons to be made between different sub-groups (in this case, for example, comparisons between different organisation size bands). The sampling approach is taken into account at the final weighting stage to give each case a proportionate influence on the results.
[2] A means to control the numbers of people interviewed from within a particular group.
[3] For more information on which non-household customers are eligible for the market see Ofwat's website
[4] https://www.open-water.org.uk/uploads/2017/01/2016-01-19-OFWAT-Customer-Awareness-Survey-Final-Report-5-1.pdf

around a third (34%) of all successful contacts overall, but the proportion varied substantially by business size, type and region.

2.14 It is important to note that eligibility was assessed on the raw contact sample, which reflected the sample design (i.e. intentionally did not match the profile of the overall population). The figures quoted in this section from 2016 are based on unadjusted data. However, when the eligibility was applied to the final achieved sample, it was weighted in order for it to appropriately reflect the differences by size, sector and region.

Figure 1: Ineligibility of organisations in the contact sample (unadjusted)[5]



2.15 Almost half (48%) of all micro organisations included in the purchased contact sample in 2016 were not eligible (partly due to many being home based and not having a dedicated premises or retail supply point), but approaching a quarter (23%) of medium and large organisations were also not eligible (mainly as services were provided by the landlord).

2.16 The proportion of ineligible organisations in the sample in 2016 was also higher in the Thames Water region (44%), due to 42% of small organisations, 40% of medium organisations and 38% of large

[5] 'SIC' stands for 'Standard Industrial Classification' – 'SIC codes' are assigned to businesses to describe the primary activity of the company.

organisations being ineligible in this region. This is partly due to the type of organisations in the area, though possibly also due to the prevalence of serviced offices in and around Greater London.

Weighting

2.17 The number of eligible organisations varies considerably by region, size and sector. To better enable comparisons to be drawn, smaller regions were therefore oversampled. Small (10-49), medium (50-249 employees) and large (250+ employees) organisations were also oversampled in order to draw more meaningful comparisons between organisations of different sizes. Businesses with fewer than 10 employees (often termed 'microbusinesses') were split into two categories, with the very smallest (i.e. 'nano') businesses with 0 to 4 employees weighted separately from those slightly larger microbusinesses with 5 to 9 employees.

2.18 In line with standard research industry practice, any differences between the achieved sample and the overall population were corrected by statistical weighting. This process ensures that the overall results are representative of all eligible organisations across the whole of England and Wales, taking into account the difference in eligible population in Wales.

2.19 The profile tables below and overleaf show the differences between the weighted and un-weighted percentages.

2.20 Full details of the profile characteristics (unweighted and weighted) of participating organisations are shown in the table below. Any value denoted by a * represents a percentage which is less than 1%.

Table 1: Response profile to the survey, compared with the eligible business population

Characteristic	Unweighted Count	Unweighted Valid %	Weighted Valid %	Population %
BY SIZE OF ORGANISATION				
Nano (0 to 4 employees)	119	17	76	76
Micro (5 to 9 employees)	77	11	11	11
Small (10 to 49 employees)	216	32	11	11
Medium (50 to 249 employees)	138	20	2	2
Large (250+ employees)	135	20	*	*
Total valid responses	**685**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Not known	*15*	-	-	-
BY WATER REGION				
Anglian Water	100	14	10	11
Northumbrian Water	49	7	3	3
Severn Trent Water	120	17	15	16
South West Water	43	6	4	3
Southern Water	78	11	11	10
Thames Water	81	12	33	33
United Utilities	78	11	13	12
Wessex Water	59	8	3	3
Yorkshire Water	84	12	8	8
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	8	1	*	*
Total valid responses	**700**	**100**	**100**	**100**
BY SIC BROAD INDUSTRIAL GROUP				
Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)	66	9	6	3
Mining, quarrying & utilities (B,D and E)	23	3	*	*
Manufacturing (C)	71	10	6	6
Construction (F)	29	4	6	11
Motor trades (Part G)	23	3	7	3
Wholesale (Part G)	31	4	4	5
Retail (Part G)	53	8	13	10
Transport & storage (inc postal) (H)	17	2	5	6
Accommodation & food services (I)	57	8	10	8
Information & communication (J)	43	6	7	6
Financial & insurance (K)	11	2	3	2
Property (L)	34	5	6	4
Professional, scientific & technical (M)	40	6	10	14
Business administration & support services (N)	42	6	3	7
Public administration & defence (O)	3	*	*	*
Education (P)	51	7	1	2
Health (Q)	45	6	2	5
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services (RSTU)	61	9	9	7
Total valid responses	**700**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Participation rates and future implications

2.21 As noted above in the introduction, Ofwat originally envisaged that the survey would target 1,000 completed interviews; however, this was subsequently reduced to 700 due to the considerable difficulties experienced in engaging organisations (ORS estimates the participation rate may have been as little as half of what it had been, when we undertook the same survey in 2019).

2.22 The overwhelming factor behind this change has undoubtedly been the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in more organisations (particularly in certain sectors) having closed or being unavailable at the point they were contacted (and therefore, being essentially uncontactable), potentially contributing to greater levels of non-response bias.

2.23 Moreover, the shift towards homeworking in some sectors also presents difficulties, for example: by increasing the scope for companies not to answer the telephone at all, and (even where they do) making it less likely that the interviewer is able to obtain a direct line for the relevant person within the organisation (i.e. the person responsible for making decisions about utilities). There is also reduced scope for the person answering the phone to confer with colleagues about decisions regarding utilities, and so on.

2.24 Finally, the pressures on companies are likely to mean that for many, water issues and/or taking part in surveys are currently a lesser priority than they would otherwise have been in 'normal' times: this is supported by the survey results which suggest that over two-fifths of companies had seen a significant reduction in revenue or ability to trade, while more than half felt their water consumption had reduced.

2.25 Furthermore, a third of customers (34%) answered 'don't know' when asked to identify what proportion of their running costs are spent on water and waste water bills; in 2020, the equivalent result was nearer 22%. This increase could be a reflection of greater variability and uncertainty around running costs and turnover in the period since March 2020, with organisations therefore having less knowledge of what proportion of costs their water bills might end up representing. It might perhaps signify that for some companies, water is not or has not been an overriding concern compared with other, more significant trading challenges in the context of the pandemic.

2.26 It is difficult to assess what implications these issues might have for any future waves of the survey that might be conducted in the years ahead, due to the ongoing uncertainty about the future course of the pandemic and associated government policies, and around the extent to which remote working (and similar practices) will become more embedded and remain in place over time.

2.27 However, at the time of writing, it seems almost inevitable that the difficulties described above in relation to contacting businesses will (to a greater or less extent) remain an ongoing issue throughout 2022, and potentially well beyond this point.

2.28 In considering any future similar research, some possible means of mitigating or addressing the issues might include:

- Using the MOSL sample to directly contact those who have switched, to better understand their experiences of switching and the impacts of doing so (i.e. more in line with the approach adopted in previous years);

- Approaching retailers directly to ask for access to customer contact data, as another means of engaging those who have recently switched and/or renegotiated;

Focusing any survey at the sizes and types of businesses that are most impacted by water use, leading to a smaller sample (maybe 200 - 400 cases) but increasing participation by targeting those that are likely to be more interested in taking part;

Exploring the experiences of switchers and renegotiators more qualitatively, through c. 30-50 more in-depth interviews (identified via MOSL and/or contacting those for whom water is more likely to be important to their business).

Interpretation of the Data

2.29 It should be remembered that a sample, and not the entire population of organisations has been interviewed. In consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences between different groups within the population are necessarily statistically significant. Throughout the report significant differences by sub-group of the population are noted.

2.30 Where differences between surveys (or, for example, demographic groups) have been highlighted as significant there is a 95% probability that the difference is significant and not due to chance. Differences that are not said to be 'significant' or 'statistically significant' are indicative only. When comparing results between demographic sub-groups, on the whole, only results which are significantly different are highlighted in the text.

2.31 Results based on small sample sizes (for example, results for small demographic sub-groups, and/or for questions that have been routed to only be asked of a small number of customers) may need to be interpreted with some caution.

2.32 Please note that where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to rounding, the exclusion of 'don't know' categories, or multiple answers.

2.33 In some cases, figures of 2% or below have been excluded from graphs.

2.34 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (in percentages) of residents making relevant responses, and, where appropriate, they indicate positive responses in green and negative responses in red.

Further analysis

2.35 A key driver analysis, based on multiple linear regression analysis, was conducted in order to better understand the associations between awareness of the market and other survey variables. A similar analysis was also undertaken to better understand factors that relate to being active in the water retail market. Ultimately, however, the identified models were relatively weak (as evidenced by a low R-squared value) and provided only limited further insight[6]. On that basis, while the full results of these key driver analyses have been shared with Ofwat and CCW, they have not been included in this report.

[6] This is likely to be a consequence of many sections of the questionnaire being heavily routed, which resulted in relatively few questions being asked to *all* of the respondents who took part in the survey.

3. Survey of business customers

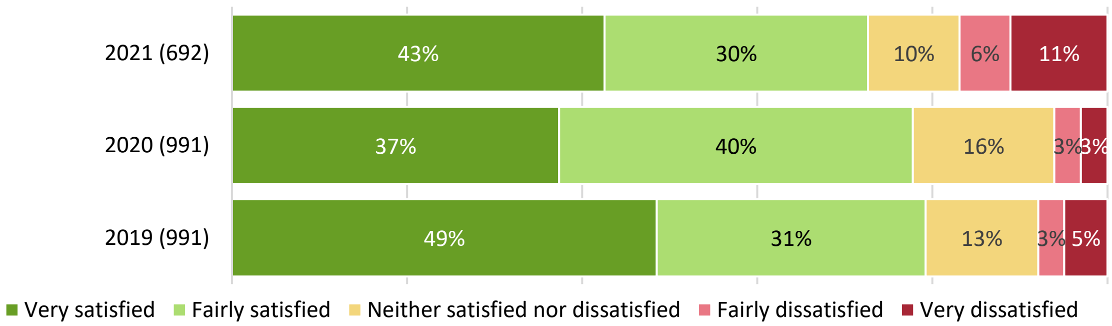
Results from Quantitative Telephone Survey

Overall Satisfaction

3.1 Customers were asked overall how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with their current clean water and waste water retailer(s). Just under three quarters (73%) were satisfied with their current retailer, with nearly a fifth (17%) saying they were dissatisfied.

3.2 Satisfaction levels are lower than those seen previously (78% in 2020 and 80% in 2019); moreover, the level of dissatisfaction has increased (17% in 2021, compared with 6% and 8% in 2020 and 2019 respectively).

Figure 2: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current clean water and waste water retailer(s)?



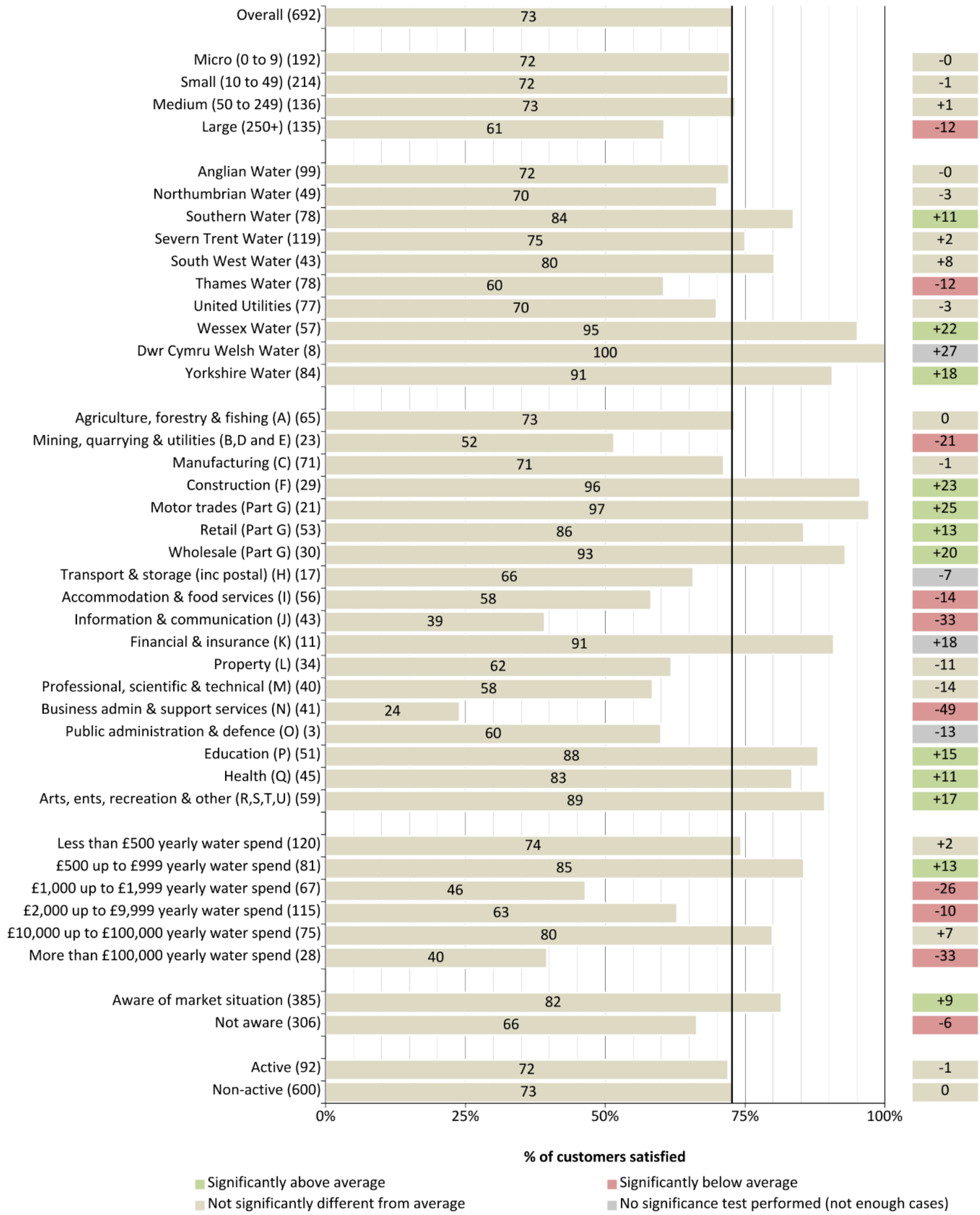
3.3 While satisfaction with overall service is generally high, Figure 3 overleaf shows how levels of satisfaction with water and waste water retailers varied by sub-group (again, differences significantly higher than the overall result are highlighted green; those significantly lower are highlighted red).

3.4 Some groups were significantly more likely to be satisfied, relative to the overall result; for example, customers in the Southern Water, Wessex Water and Yorkshire Water regions (customers in the Thames Water region, on the other hand, were less likely to be satisfied).

3.5 Customers in a number of sectors, including the construction, motor and wholesale sectors, were more likely than average to be satisfied. On the other hand, fewer than half of customers in the information and communication and the business administration and support sectors were satisfied. Customers in other sectors, including accommodation and food services and mining, quarrying and utilities also reported lower than average satisfaction.

3.6 Large organisations and customers with an annual water spend of between £1,000 and £9,999 or above £100,000 were also less satisfied than the overall result.

Figure 3: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current clean water and waste water retailer(s)?

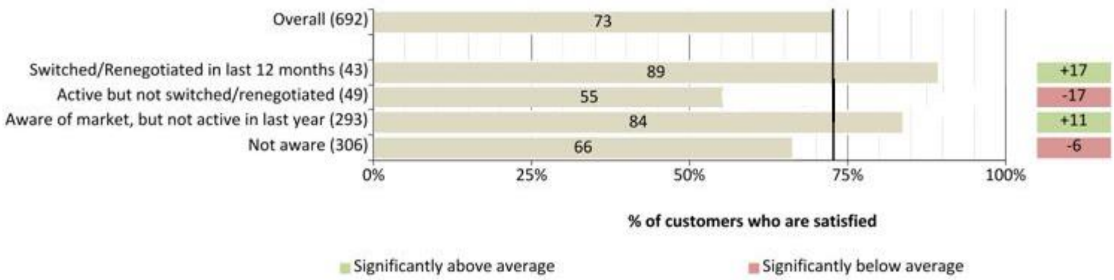


Base: All customers (number of customers shown in brackets)

3.7 While there is little difference overall between active and non-active customers[7], it is worth noting some differences within these groups: customers who have switched or renegotiated in the last 12 months are significantly more likely to be satisfied than the overall result (89%), whereas those who are otherwise active (i.e. have considered switching/renegotiating but did not or could not, or are in the process of switching/renegotiating) are less likely to be satisfied with their current retailer (55%), which provides some context for their decision to consider switching or renegotiating.

3.8 In addition, inactive customers who are aware of the changes are more likely to be satisfied (84%) compared to those who are simply unaware of the market (66%) – perhaps suggesting that some aware customers might have made a conscious choice not to switch or renegotiate in the last 12 months, due to being content with their existing retailer and/or contract.

Figure 4: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current clean water and waste water retailer(s)? By activity/awareness



3.9 Looking **only** at those customers who have ever switched: those who have done switched in the last 12 months are more likely to be satisfied with their current retailer (95%); however this does not hold true for those who switched longer ago, with these customers less likely to be satisfied (35%) compared with the overall result (albeit these results are based on low sample sizes, which means they should be interpreted with some caution).

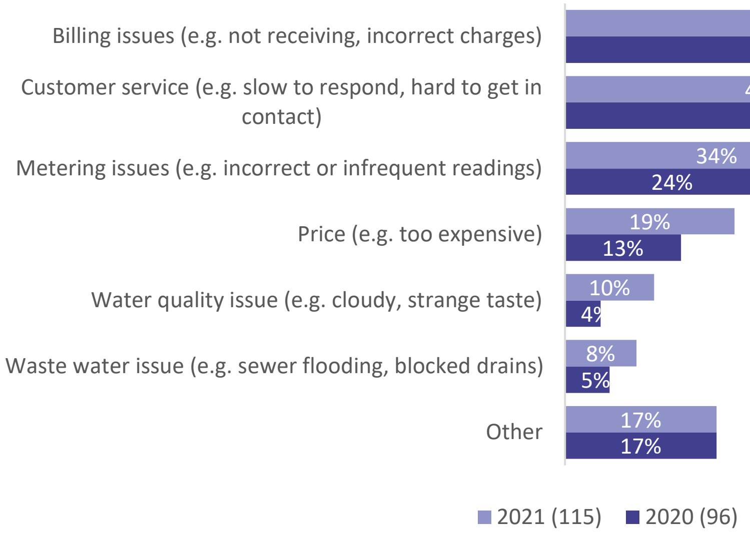
3.10 In relation to dissatisfaction: it is worth noting that a quarter of large organisation customers were dissatisfied (25%) as were around a fifth or so (21%) of customers who were not aware of the market situation prior to the interview. Dissatisfaction was also higher than average in the business administration and support, information and communication, and accommodation and food sectors.

3.11 When asked to explain the reasons why they are dissatisfied, customers were most likely to mention billing issues, such as not receiving bills, or being charged incorrectly (mentioned by 65% of dissatisfied customers – equivalent to around 11% of customers across the whole sample); followed by issues with customer service (45%) and with metering (34%) (and it is worth noting that those with a metered supply, were also less likely to be satisfied with their retailer overall). Around one in five (19%) gave price as a reason for being dissatisfied.

3.12 These were also the most frequently mentioned reasons in 2020 (NB the differences between 2021 and 2020 results in the chart below are all within error margins).

[7] For an explanation of active and inactive customers, please see the 'Market Engagement' section below

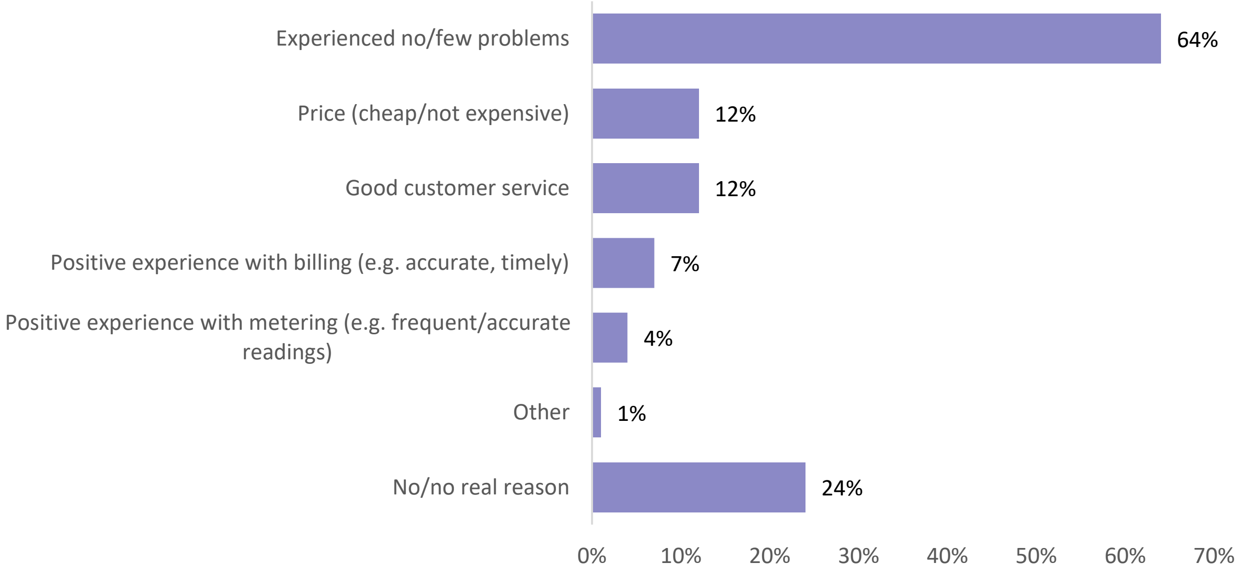
Figure 5: Why were you dissatisfied? 2021 and 2020



Base: All dissatisfied customers (numbers shown in brackets)

3.13 Of those customers who were satisfied with their current retailer, nearly two thirds (64%) mentioned that they had experienced no/few problems. Just over a tenth mentioned that the customer service was good (12%) and/or that the price was cheap/inexpensive (12%), while smaller proportions referred to positive experiences with billing (7%) or metering (4%). Around a quarter (24%) could think of no particular reason for their satisfaction.

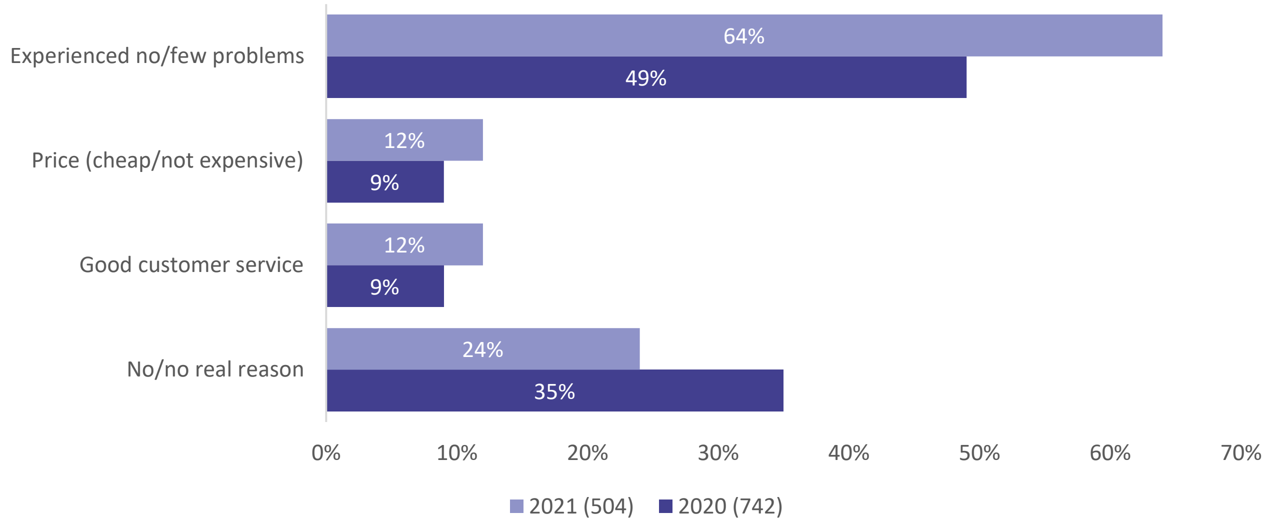
Figure 6: Are there any particular reasons you are satisfied? What are they?



Base: All customers who said they were satisfied with their current clean water and waste water retailer (504)

3.14 Not experiencing any/many problems was also the primary reason for satisfaction in the previous year's survey, albeit this was mentioned by proportionally fewer customers in 2020 (49%) - with more customers in 2020 citing 'no / no reason in particular' for being satisfied (35%).

Figure 7: Comparison with 2020 (top reasons only): Are there any particular reasons you are satisfied? What are they? 2021 and 2020



Base: All customers who said they were satisfied with their current clean water and waste water retailer (numbers shown in brackets)

3.15 To summarise: there has been a reduction in satisfaction with current retailers, with a corresponding increase in dissatisfaction. In line with last year, billing and customer service issues remain the biggest reasons for being dissatisfied; however there appears to have been some increase in levels of dissatisfaction linked to metering issues (potentially linked to frequency of readings and/or data quality suffering as a result of Covid-related disruption).

3.16 There is very little mention of value-added services in terms of customers' reasons for being satisfied; however, this is in line with previous years' findings.

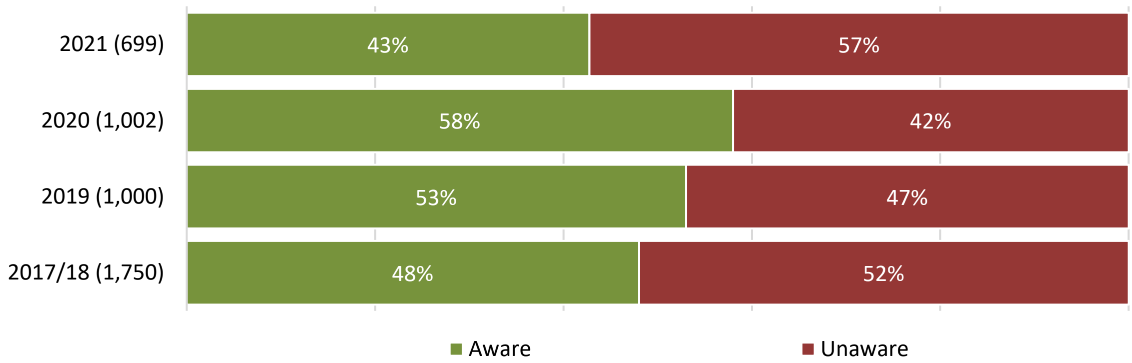
Awareness of market

3.17 One of the key questions in the business customer survey seeks to establish whether customers are aware of the market changes that occurred in 2017 i.e. which allow organisations to change their retailer for clean and waste water and/or to negotiate a better deal with their existing retailer.

3.18 Over two-fifths of 2021 customers were aware of the changes to the non-household water market (43%), which represents a significant decrease since 2020 (when 58% were aware). Awareness is also at a lower level than when the surveys were conducted in 2019 (53%) and 2017/18 (48%).

3.19 Some of the possible reasons for this considerable decline in awareness are discussed in more detail later in this section.

Figure 8: Since April 2017, organisations have been able to change who supplies their clean water and waste water or potentially move to a better deal with their existing retailer. Prior to this survey were you aware of this?



Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

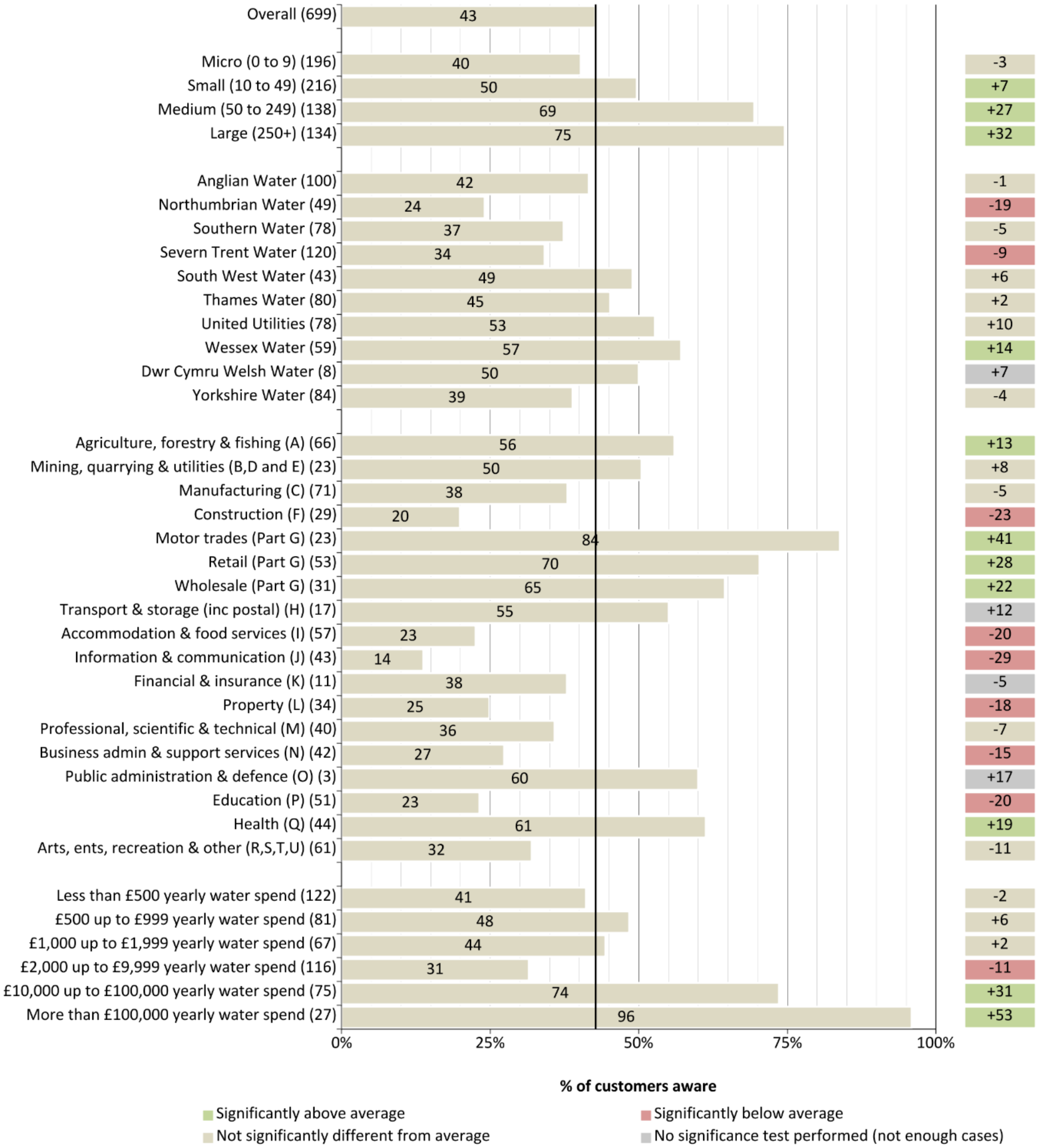
3.20 The figure overleaf (Figure 9) shows how levels of awareness differ by sub-group, with differences that are significantly higher than the overall result highlighted in green, and ones significantly lower highlighted in red.

3.21 There are clear links between awareness and the sizes of businesses, with large businesses being most likely (75%), and micro businesses being least likely (40%) to be aware of the changes to the non-household water market, with the awareness levels of small (50%) and medium (69%) businesses lying in between. Organisations with a yearly spend on water of £10,000 or more (presumably correlating with some of the larger businesses) are also more likely to be aware.

3.22 The results also suggest that awareness is higher than average in the Wessex Water region, and lower in the Northumbrian Water and Severn Trent Water regions.

3.23 In terms of business sector, awareness is higher than the overall result among agricultural, forestry and fishing businesses, as well as in the motor trades, retail, wholesale and in health-related organisations. Awareness is lower in sectors including construction, accommodation and food, information and communication, business administration and education (however, it is worth remembering that the results for different sectors are based on relatively small sample sizes for each segment).

Figure 9: Since April 2017, organisations have been able to change who supplies their clean water and waste water or potentially move to a better deal with their existing retailer. Prior to this survey were you aware of this?



Base: All customers (number of customers is shown in brackets)

Considering the decrease in awareness

Impact of organisation size

3.24 The figure below shows the differences between 2021 and the previous two years' surveys in terms of awareness by organisation size, where size is defined by the number of employees within the organisation, as follows:

Micro: Up to 9 employees

Small: 10 to 49 employees

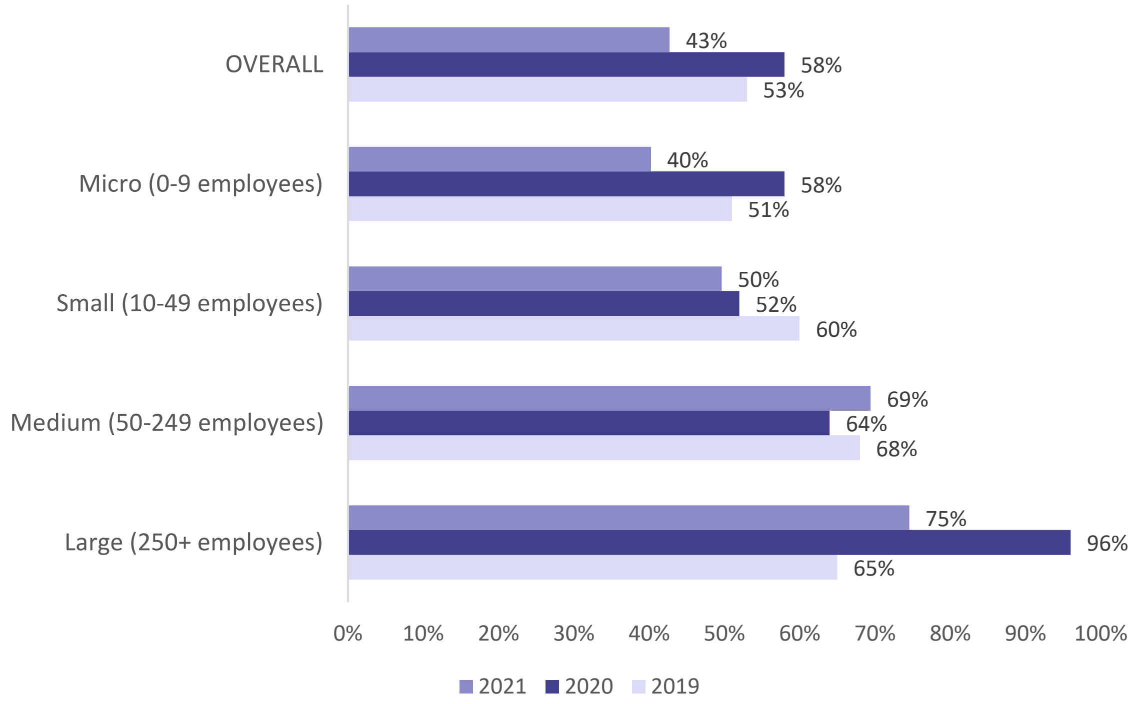
Medium: 50 to 249 employees

Large: 250 employees or more

3.25 This illustrates that awareness levels among medium and large organisations (notwithstanding an unusually high result of 96% awareness for large in 2020) have remained broadly consistent, or at the very least, have not declined since 2019. Moreover, while awareness among small businesses has declined relative to 2019 (50% cf. 60%), it is still broadly comparable with the level seen in 2020 (50% cf. 52%).

3.26 Instead, the decrease in awareness is being driven primarily by lower awareness among micro-organisations (particularly in terms of the difference between 2021 and 2020, when awareness among micros appears to have declined substantially, by around 18 percentage points).

Figure 10: By Size of Organisation: Since April 2017, organisations have been able to change who supplies their clean water and waste water or potentially move to a better deal with their existing retailer. Prior to this survey were you aware of this?



Base: All customers

3.27 Moreover, awareness levels are not consistent across the whole body of microbusinesses: only 39% of very smallest or 'nano' businesses (with 0-4 employees) are aware of the market situation, compared with 47% of the other micro businesses (with 5-9 employees).

3.28 As Table 1 above shows, micro businesses account for nearly nine-tenths (87%) of the eligible population; moreover, the micro business population itself is strongly dominated by these smallest 'nano' businesses (which account for 88% of all micro businesses, and 76% of businesses overall).

3.29 As such, results for micro businesses, and nano businesses in particular, will have a very considerable influence on the weighted overall results, including this headline figure for overall awareness.

3.30 It is very difficult to isolate any specific causes of this marked decrease in awareness for the smallest businesses; however it is worth at least considering the possibility of greater 'churn' in the nano and micro business population i.e. smaller businesses being more likely to be newly created, and newer businesses being more likely to fail. As such many of the smallest businesses may have been created since the changes to the market in 2017, which *may* contribute to some lower awareness in this group over time (albeit this is less convincing in explaining the drop since 2020).

3.31 Awareness appears to have decreased across most industrial sectors[8], but the most substantial decreases (a reduction of half or more) are seen in relation to information and communication, construction, education, financial and insurance/property, accommodation and food, and manufacturing, at least some of which are likely to have been severely impacted by the pandemic, with some of the possible implications for the survey discussed in more detail below.

Potential factors due to Covid-19

3.32 The fieldwork for the previous survey was undertaken between January and March 2020. Clearly, the intervening period (i.e. since March 2020, which coincided with the start of the first Covid-19 related lockdown) has been one of unprecedented change for many businesses, and it is worth considering how this might have impacted on the eligible business customer population, as well as on the survey and its findings.

3.33 Firstly, it is almost certain there would have been a disproportionate number of businesses ceasing trading or temporarily closed in certain sectors (e.g. retail, hospitality) compared to previous years, while other companies will have seen considerable disruption to working practices, such as a shift to home working in certain sectors.

3.34 Participation rates were far lower than in previous years when ORS has conducted the survey (hence why the sample size subsequently had to be reduced to 700 from the original 1,000 interviews): while these rates will have varied considerably by factors such as region, size and sector, overall participation may be as little as half the level seen in the past. To a large extent this will be influenced by the factors above, for example:

Both homeworking and temporary closures have considerably increased the scope for organisations (or individuals within organisations) to **not answer telephone calls**;

Where companies do answer, homeworking **reduces the likelihood of being provided with a direct line for the person responsible for utilities**, possibly due to factors such as: being less likely to know if the relevant person is available, being less able to confer with a colleague as to which particular staff member is most qualified to answer the survey, and not knowing a direct telephone number/being more likely to offer a call-back than to transfer the call directly.

[8] The main exceptions being agriculture, forestry and fishing; motor trades, wholesale and retail; and transport and storage.

Recent pressures on companies[9] may mean that **responding to surveys might be of lower importance** to them than in previous years (it is also possible that some may have simultaneously been approached to take part in more surveys than normal e.g. to assess Covid impacts);

Changes to working practices may mean that **water-related issues are seen to be lower priority** than they were in the past (i.e. either because other issues linked to remote working have simply become more pressing, and/or because water consumption has reduced due to the usual premises being closed[10]); when combined with other recent pressures, it is not impossible that some companies are taking less interest, or may have simply forgotten about the changes to the water market.

3.35 These factors do not necessarily imply that lower awareness levels would be inevitable, however they may well influence the characteristics of those businesses taking part, compared to pre-covid surveys, and may be a factor behind the change in awareness.

Summary

3.36 Ultimately, the above factors mean that the survey is potentially reaching “different” respondents than would have been the case in the past e.g. failing to reach many businesses at all, and potentially reaching different types of respondent in the new working-from home environment (bearing in mind that the respondent is a proxy for the whole business, it is also likely that this has resulted in some self-selection bias, although this is very difficult to quantify). It is also conceivable that general turnover in members of staff may have eroded awareness (particularly as one moves further from 2017, and especially if staff turnover and/or changes in roles has been accelerated by the disruption caused by Covid).

3.37 To summarise: in 2021, ORS has therefore potentially been speaking to more respondents who had less knowledge and were less able to check with colleagues about aspects of utilities, and/or that have a more passing or casual interest in water supply issues (corresponding with lower awareness), as a result of being less likely to obtain an interview with a dedicated person with responsibility for utilities.

3.38 Among certain types of business (e.g. potentially the smallest businesses, who are presumably least likely to have a dedicated staff member overseeing utilities) it may be that other, more substantial pressures have simply taken on more precedence in the past year, possibly leading to lower interest in water-related issues and potentially poorer recall of the water market situation.

[9] The Covid-19 section of the survey asked respondents about the impact of the pandemic on revenue and their ability to trade normally: 63% indicated there had been at least some disruption in this respect (43% reported a significant disruption).

[10] When asked about the impact of the pandemic on their water consumption: 55% of customers indicated that it had reduced due to the pandemic, with some office-based sectors more likely to have seen a decrease in consumption due to the pandemic. Many of the same sectors have also seen a decrease in awareness (although they are by no means the only sectors to have done so).

Market Engagement

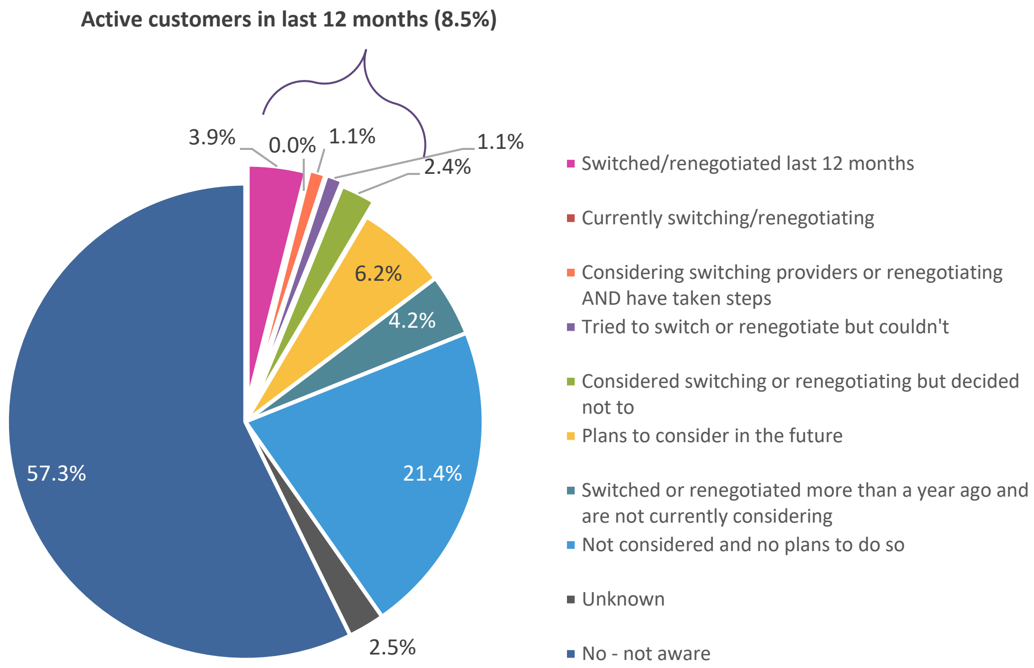
3.39 For the purposes of the analysis, those who have switched or renegotiated, those who are currently in the process of switching/renegotiating, those who are actively considering switching, those who had tried to switch but could not, and those who considered switching but decided not, **all at some point in the last 12 months**, have all been grouped into a category of 'active customers'.

3.40 Meanwhile, those who report that they plan to consider switching/renegotiating in the future, those who switched or renegotiated more than a year ago and have no current plans to do so again, those who have not considered doing so and those who are not aware of the market changes, have all been grouped as 'inactive' customers. A summary is shown in Figure 11.

3.41 Across all organisations, including those who were not aware that they were able to switch retailers prior to the survey, 8.5% of customers can be classed as 'active'. Around one in twenty-five (3.9%) had switched or renegotiated at some point in the previous 12 months (specifically: 1.7% had switched and 2.2% had renegotiated). Roughly one in a hundred (1.1%) said they were considering switching/renegotiating and had already taken steps to do so, while the same proportion (1.1%) had tried to switch/renegotiate but unsuccessfully. A slightly larger proportion (2.4%) had considered switching/renegotiating but had ultimately decided not to go ahead.

3.42 Just over a fifth of customers (21.4%) had not considered switching or renegotiating (despite being aware of the changes introduced to the non-household water retail market), while smaller proportions were planning to consider it in the future (6.2%) or had already done so more than 12 months previously and had no current plans to do so again (4.2%). The remaining customers (around three in five overall) were either unaware of the market changes (57.3%) or could not give any clear indication of which scenario applied most closely to their organisation (2.5%).

Figure 11: Which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation?



Base: All customers (700)

3.43 Table 2 shows the percentages of 'active customers' by each organisation size band (as defined by the number of employees). There is a statistically significantly higher proportion of 'active customers' among large organisations (27.5%) in relation to the overall average (8.5%).

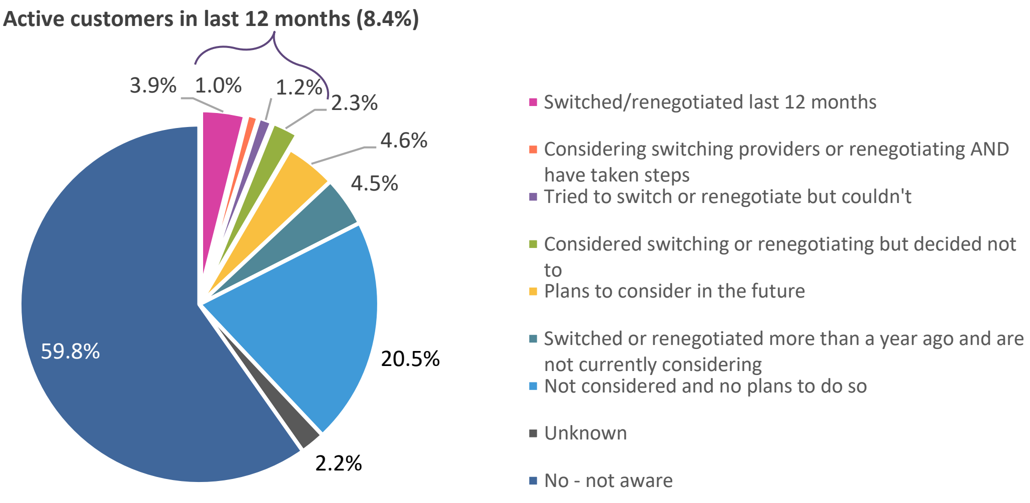
Table 2: Proportions of eligible customers who switched / renegotiated / were active in last 12 months, broken down by organisation size (base numbers in brackets)

% eligible customers	Switched in the last 12 months	Renegotiated in the last 12 months	Switched or renegotiated in the last 12 months	TOTAL ACTIVE
Micro businesses (0-9 employees) (196)	**1.5%**	**2.5%**	**3.9%**	**8.4%**
SME customers (10-249 employees) (354)	**2.5%**	**0.9%**	**3.4%**	**8.4%**
Small only (10-49 employees) (216)	2.3%	0.7%	3.1%	7.6%
Medium only (50-249 employees) (138)	3.1%	1.8%	5.0%	12.7%
Large customers (250+ employees) (135)	**6.8%**	**3.2%**	**9.6%**	**27.5%**
All eligible customers (700)	**1.7%**	**2.2%**	**3.9%**	**8.5%**

3.44 Figure 12 through to Figure 16 provides a more detailed summary of market engagement by size of organisation and confirms higher levels of activity among larger organisations. While medium-sized organisations are more likely (than the overall result) to be aware of the market opening, they are also more likely to fall under the scenario of having not considered and/or not be planning to consider switching or renegotiating (35.2% cf 21.4% overall).

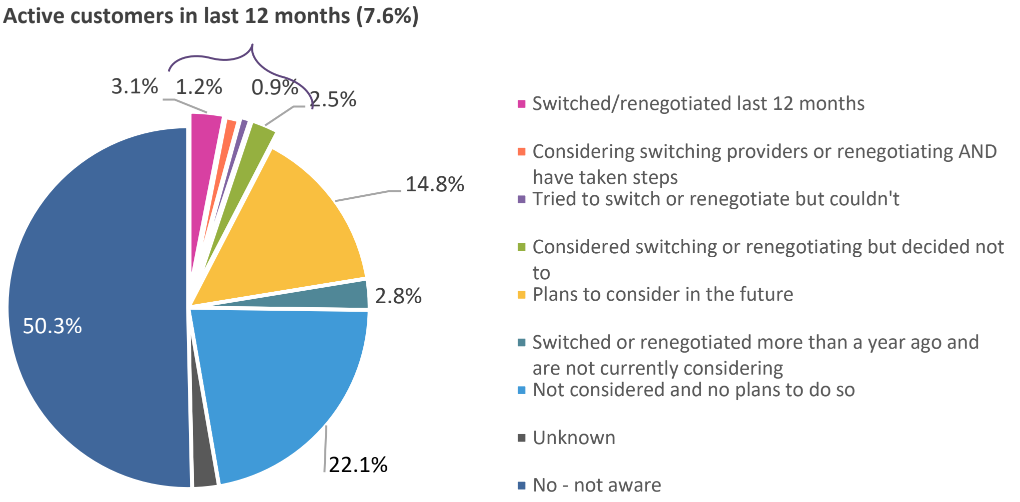
3.45 Although awareness of the market changes has reduced, the proportion of active customers is broadly in line with that seen in the 2020 survey (7.8%) and in 2019 (9.8%) (i.e. there has been no statistically significant change in the proportion of 'active' customers over the past three surveys) (see Figure 17). Moreover, the proportion of customers who have switched/renegotiated in the last 12 months (3.9%) is more-or-less identical to that observed in both the 2020 survey (3.8%) and in 2019 (3.9%).

Figure 12: By organisation size: Which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation? MICRO BUSINESS CUSTOMERS ONLY



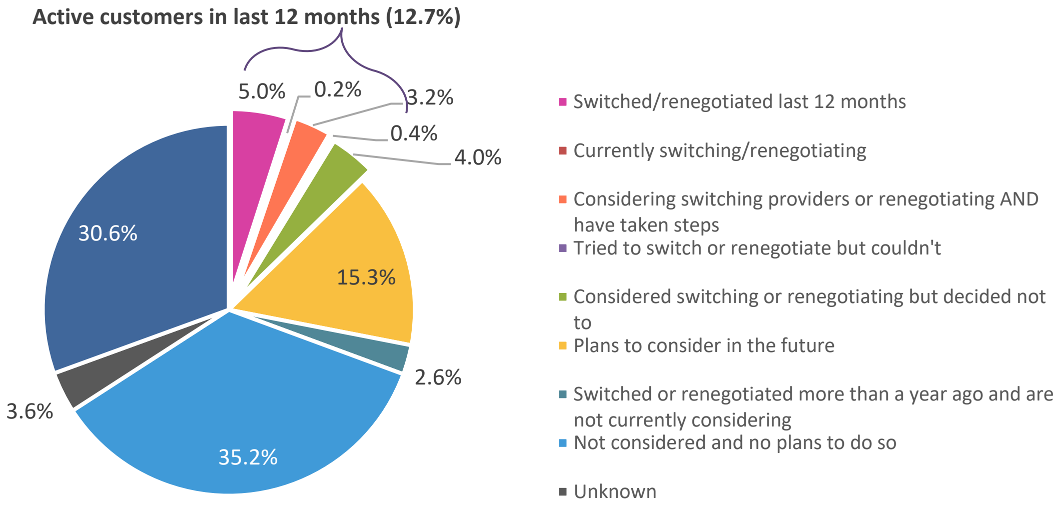
Base: All Micro customers (196)

Figure 13: By organisation size: Which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation? SMALL BUSINESS CUSTOMERS ONLY



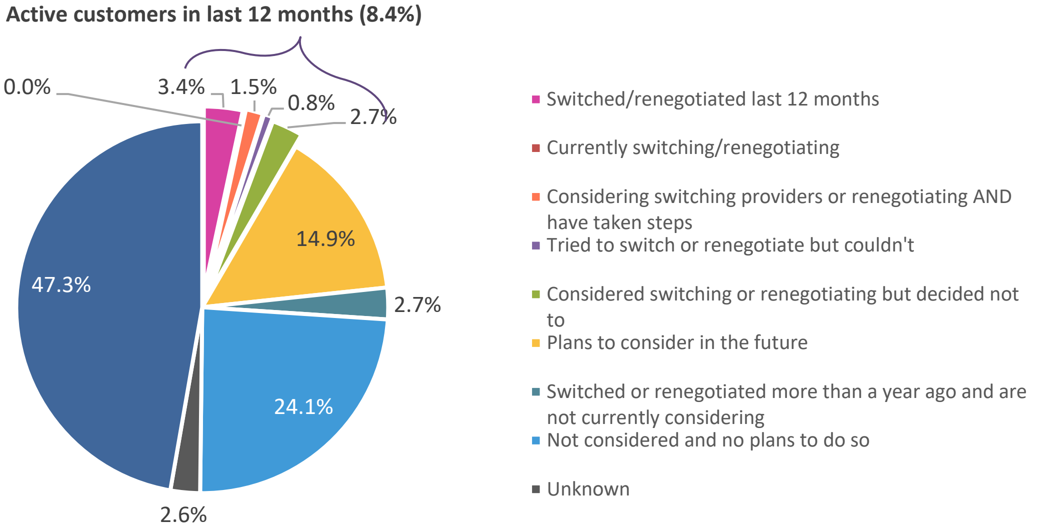
Base: All Small customers (216)

Figure 14: By organisation size: Which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation? MEDIUM BUSINESS CUSTOMERS ONLY



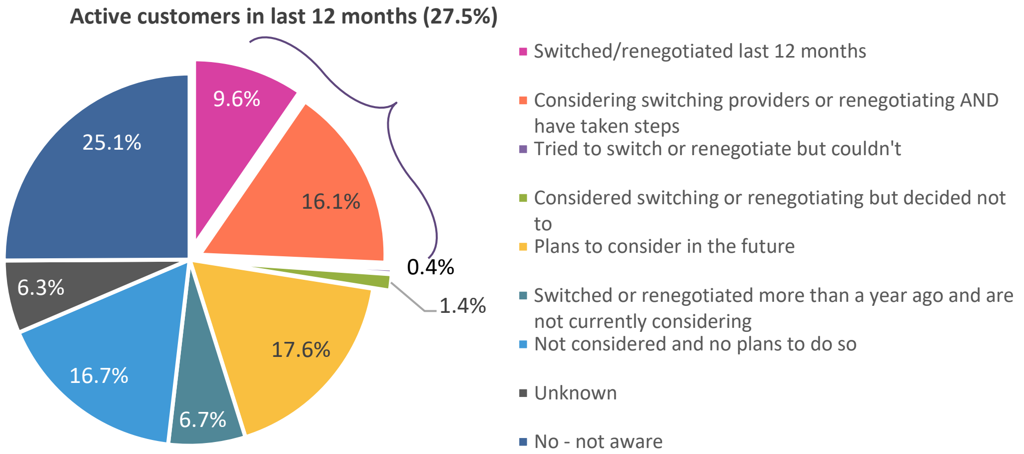
Base: All Medium customers (138)

Figure 15: By organisation size: Which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation? SME (i.e. small and medium combined) BUSINESS CUSTOMERS ONLY



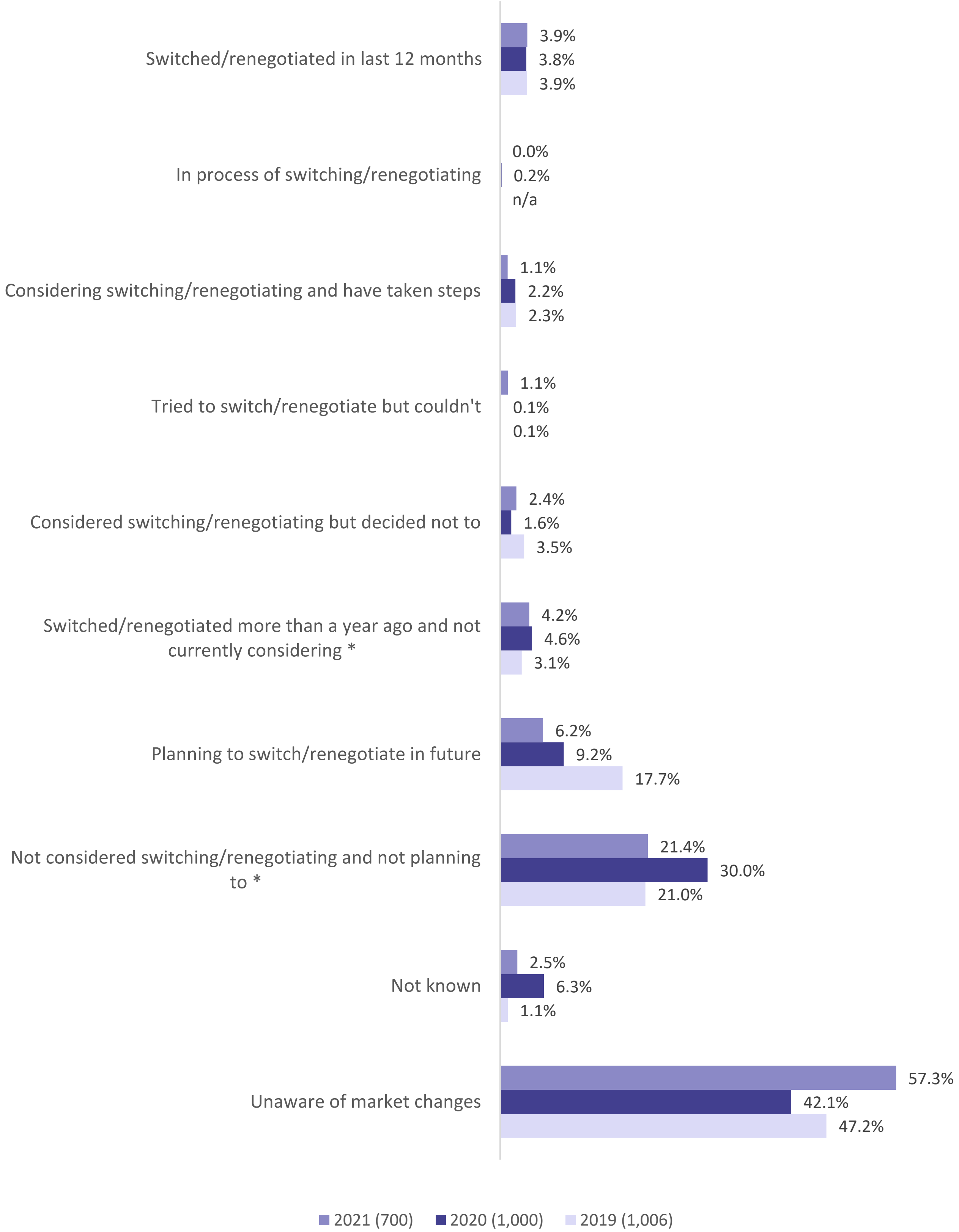
Base: All SME customers (354)

Figure 16: By organisation size: Which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation? LARGE BUSINESS CUSTOMERS ONLY



Base: All Large customers (135)

Figure 17: Comparisons with previous two surveys: Which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation*?



Base: All customers (number shown in brackets)

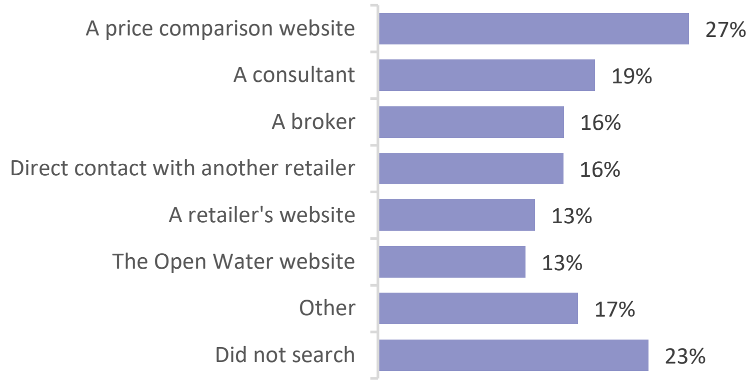
* 2019 results may need to be interpreted with caution (particularly for categories with an asterisk) due to some slight issues with comparability: for these categories in 2019, switching/renegotiating and failed attempts to switch refer to an organisation's status since market opening (i.e . since 2017) rather than the last 12 months (and organisations who had switched longer ago were not asked about any changes to their status) therefore results are not directly comparable.

Searching and Comparing

Customers who searched for information about other retailers

3.46 Among those who had switched and/or had been active in the last 12 months, the most common means of searching for information about alternative retailers was via a price comparison website (used by just over a quarter, 27%), followed by a consultant (19%) or a broker (16%), or through direct contact with another retailer (16%).

Figure 18: Which of the following, if any, have you used to search for information about alternative retailers?



Base: All customers who been active in the last 12 months, and/or have ever switched (108)

3.47 Around two thirds (67%) of customers found it easy to access the information they needed to make an informed choice. Only 4 respondents found it difficult: 2 on the basis that the information they found was not clear, or they could not understand it; 1 on the basis that they did not know where to look for information; and 1 who stated that it was not available via their preferred communication method.

3.48 A similar proportion (64%) found it easy to compare different retailers, although 11% found it difficult. The main reasons for finding it difficult to compare retailers were due to prices being unclear and/or hard to compare (mentioned by 6 out of 10 respondents) and/or information being inconsistent (mentioned by 3 respondents).

Figure 19: How easy or difficult was it for you to find the information you felt like you needed to make an informed choice? (Base: 78)

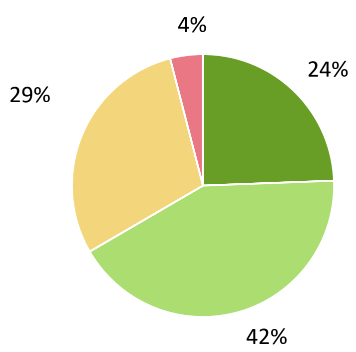
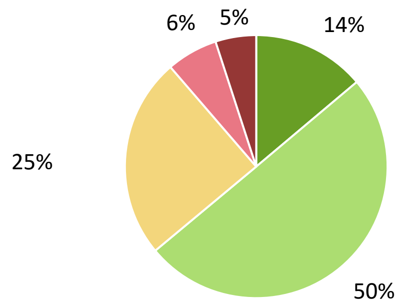


Figure 20: How easy or difficult was it to compare different retailers? (Base: 70)

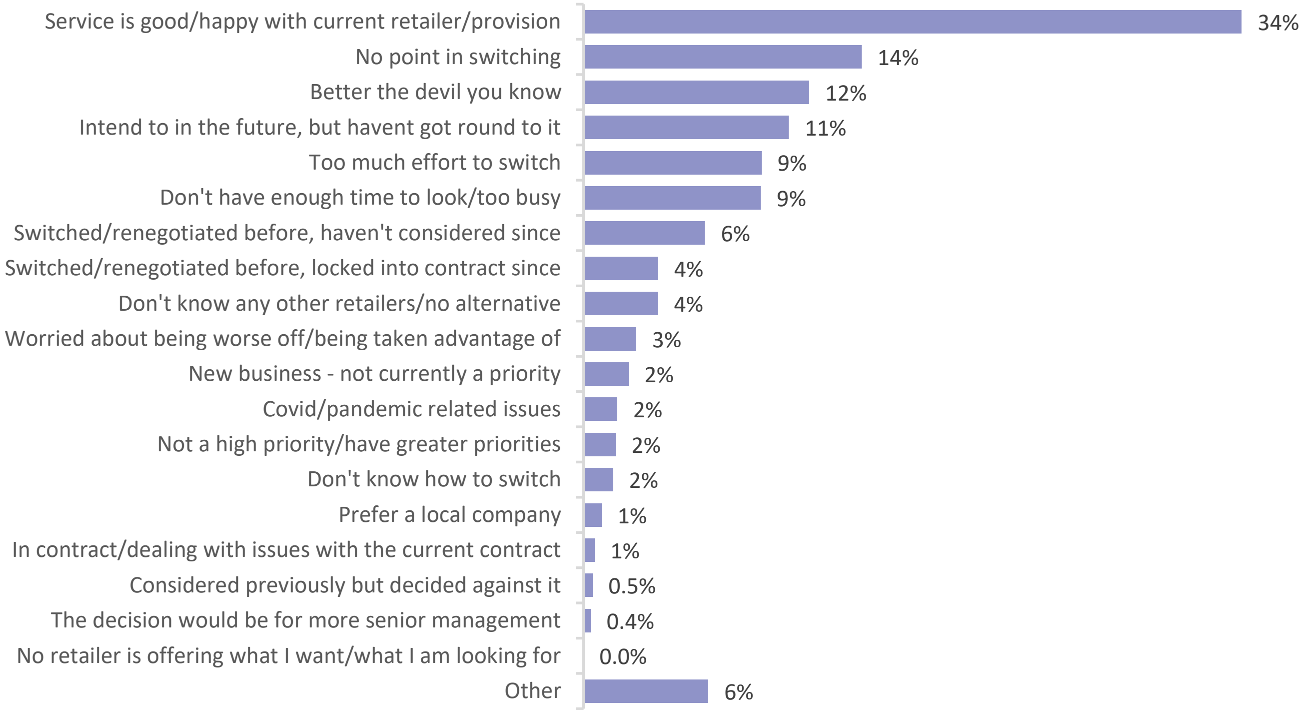


Base: All active and/or swiching respondents who searched/compared (numbers shown in brackets above)

Customers who have not considered switching or renegotiating (despite being 'aware')

3.49 The most common reason for not having considered switching/renegotiating in the past 12 months (selected by around a third of respondents: 34%) was due to being satisfied with the current retailer or provision. Customers' next most common reasons were thinking that there would be no point switching or renegotiating (14%), or that they were better off sticking with a retailer they knew *('better the devil you know')* (12%). Around a tenth had not got round to it (11%), perceived it would be too much effort (9%), or had not had time to look/were too busy (9%).

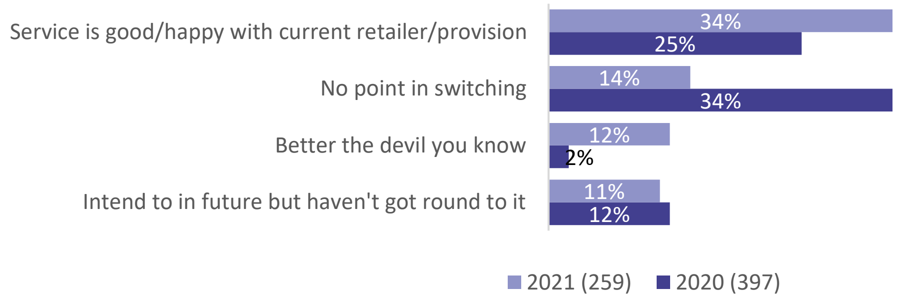
Figure 21: Why have you not yet considered switching retailer or renegotiating with your existing retailer in the last 12 months?



Base: All customers who are aware of the market situation, but have not considered switching/renegotiating in last 12 months (i.e. either plan to do so in future, or not currently planning to consider) (259)

3.50 Since 2020 there has been an increase (from a quarter up to around a third) in the proportion of customers who mentioned the current service being good/being happy with their existing retailer as a reason for having not yet considered switching. More customers than in 2020 also indicated that they were of the view that 'better the devil you know'. On the other hand, the proportion who stated that they felt there was no point in switching has decreased (down to 14%, from around a third in 2020).

Figure 22: Comparison with 2020 (top reasons only): Why have you not yet considered switching retailer or renegotiating with your existing retailer in the last 12 months?

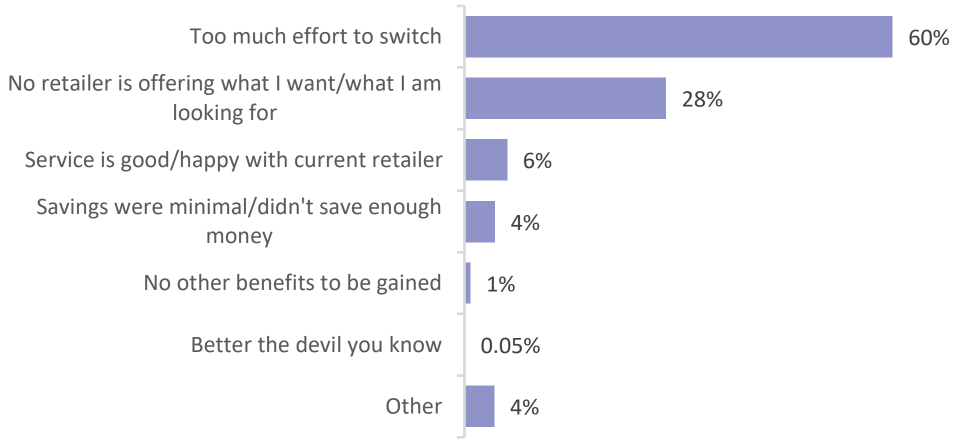


Base: All customers who are aware of the market situation, but have not considered switching/renegotiating in last 12 months (either plan to do so in future, or not currently planning to consider) (number shown in brackets)

Customers who have considered switching or renegotiating, but decided not to

3.51 Respondents who had **considered switching or renegotiating in the past 12 months without actually doing so**, were asked to provide an explanation for why they chose not to go ahead. The most commonly given reason was that it would be too much effort to switch.

Figure 23: In the last 12 months, why did you decide not to switch retailers or renegotiate with your existing retailer after considering it*?



Base: All customers who considered switching/renegotiating in last 12 months but decided not to (17)

*Percentages should be interpreted with caution due to the very low base size.

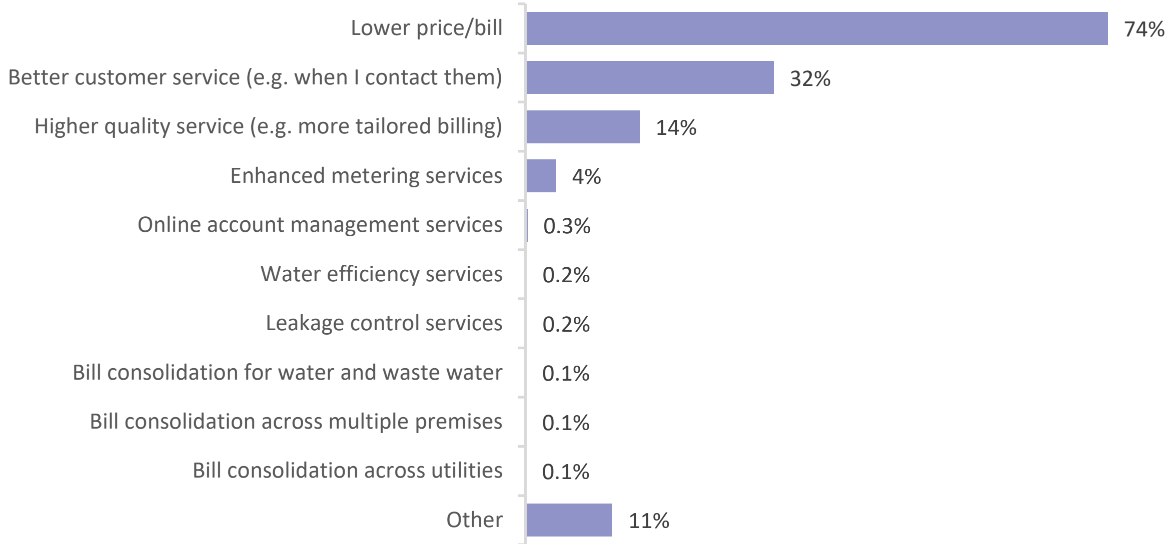
Customers who are active but without actually completing a switch/renegotiation

3.52 All active customers who did not or have not actually made a switch/re-negotiation (i.e. because they are in the process of doing so, are currently considering and have taken steps, considered and decided not to, or tried and were not able to) were asked to explain why they had initially begun to look into switching or renegotiating a new deal.

3.53 The most common reason (by some distance) was for lower prices/a lower bill (74%) although around a third (32%) had hoped for better customer service.

3.54 While price was also the most commonly mentioned reason in 2020, it was mentioned by a smaller proportion of customers (38%). It is possible that communications from retailers during the Covid pandemic have increased customers' awareness and understanding of their usage, which *may* have translated into increased interest in the possibility of cost savings that might be achievable through switching or renegotiating (however it is hard to say with certainty due to the low numbers of respondents who were asked this question).

Figure 24: In the last 12 months, why did you start looking into switching or renegotiating?



Base: All active customers who have not completed a switch/renegotation (46)

Bill reductions and other factors that might encourage customers to switch/renegotiate

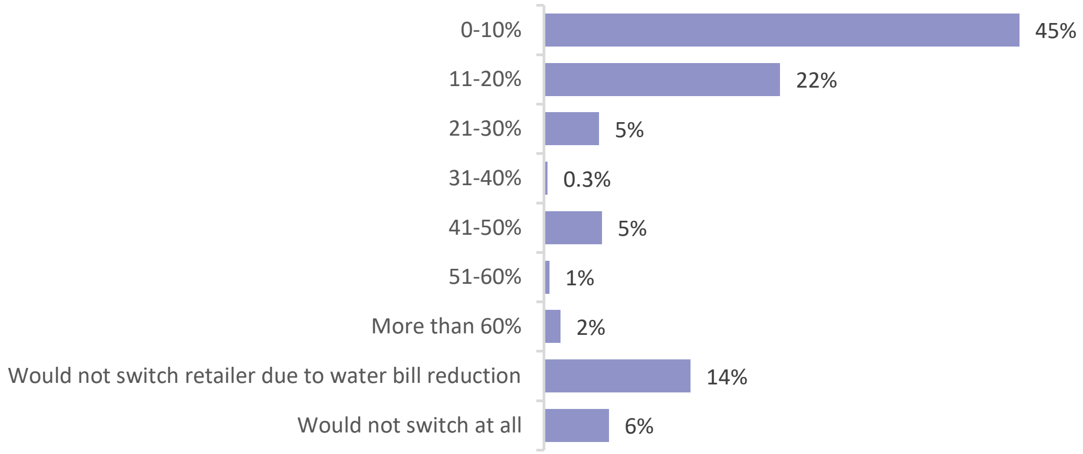
3.55 When customers were asked about what sort of water bill reduction would encourage them to switch or renegotiate, nearly a fifth indicated that they would either not switch for any level of bill reduction (14%) or would not switch at all (6%).

3.56 On the other hand, nearly half (45%) might be encouraged to switch or renegotiate by a reduction of up to 10%, while an additional fifth or so (22%) might be encouraged by a reduction of 11-20% (meaning that overall, around two thirds of customers – 67% – would be encouraged to switch/renegotiate by a reduction in their bills of up to 20%).

3.57 However, it is worth noting that over a fifth of business customers have been excluded from the chart below, on the basis of answering 'don't know' or declining to answer this question.

3.58 Large organisations were more likely than other customers to indicate that a small decrease in bills (i.e. of up to 10%) would encourage them to switch or renegotiate.

Figure 25: In percentage terms, what level of annual water bill reduction would encourage you to switch or consider switching retailer?



Base: All customers (505)

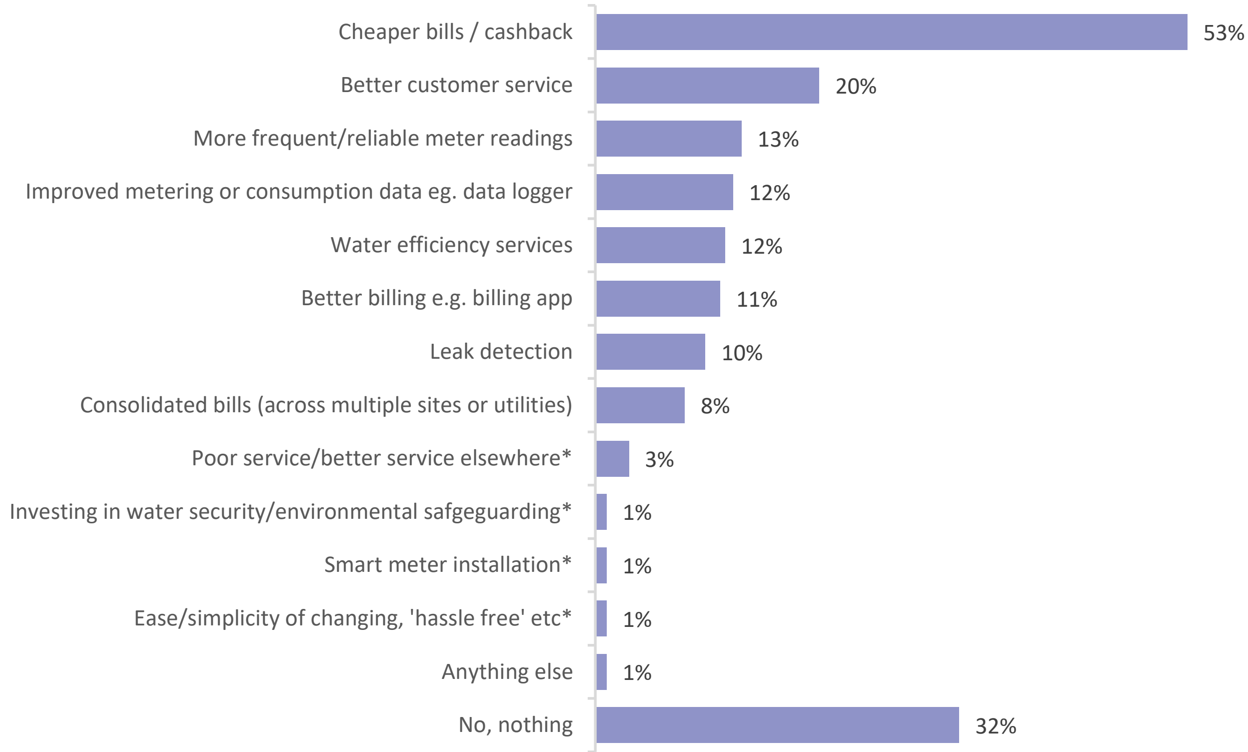
3.59 Respondents who **were either unaware of the market changes or had not considered switching or renegotiating**, were provided with a list of possible reasons for switching/renegotiating and asked to indicate which might encourage them to switch retailer or renegotiate a contract.

3.60 Over half would be encouraged by the possibility of cheaper bills/cashback (53%) and a fifth by better customer service (20%). A tenth or more might be persuaded by more frequent or reliable meter readings (13%), improved metering or consumption data (12%), water efficiency services (12%), better billing options (11%) or leak detection services (10%), while only slightly fewer (8%) indicated that they might be encouraged by opportunities for bill consolidation. However, roughly a third (32%) indicated that nothing would encourage them to switch or renegotiate.

3.61 The question also invited customers to nominate 'anything else' that might persuade them to switch or to renegotiate. Suggestions put forward by respondents included: if they received poor service from their existing provider and/or felt they could get a better service elsewhere (3%); environmental safeguarding or investing in water security (1%); smart meter installation (1%) and if they perceived that it would simple and/or easy to change provider (1%).

3.62 SMEs and large organisations were more likely than the overall result to indicate that consolidated bills, better customer service, better billing and improved metering or consumption data might encourage them to consider switching or renegotiating.

Figure 26: Is there anything else which would encourage you to switch or consider switching retailer or renegotiate or consider renegotiating with you existing retailer, such as...?



Base: All customers who were unaware of the market situation and/or have not yet considered switching or renegotiating (544)

An asterisk (*) indicates answers that were given spontaneously by respondents when prompted for 'anything else' – they were not part of the prompted list of options and the percentages for these anwers should therefore be interpreted in this context (i.e. with caution).

Covid-19

3.63 Just over two fifths of organisations (43%) had experienced a significant reduction in revenue or ability to trade/operate as a result of Covid-19, with a further fifth (20%) experiencing some more moderate reduction. The remainder (37%) had been able to continue operating fairly normally.

3.64 Medium and Large sized organisations were significantly more likely than average to have continued operating as normal, along with those in the construction and health sectors.

3.65 Over half (55%) had seen some reduction in their water consumption over the previous 12 months, while only a small proportion (6%) had increased their consumption (the remaining 39% had seen no real change in their water consumption).

Figure 27: As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, has your organisation experienced a sizeable reduction in revenue and/or a reduction in your ability to trade or operate as usual? (Base: 694)

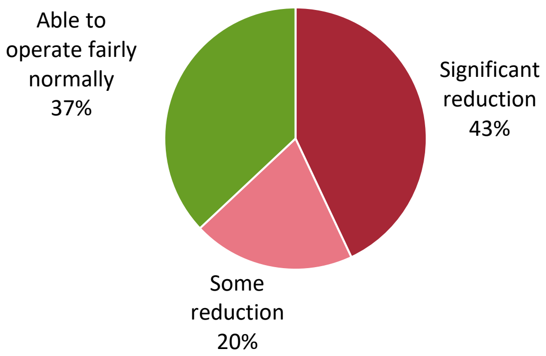
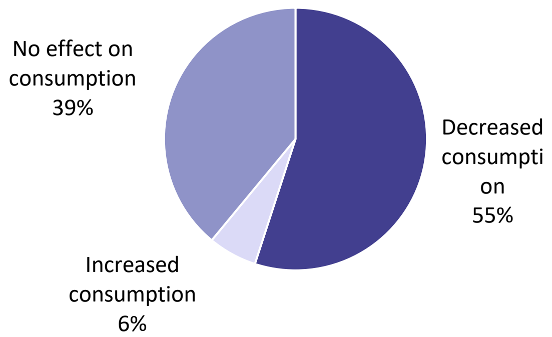


Figure 28: As a result of Covid-19, over the last 12 months has your organisation's water consumption decreased or increased, or has there been no impact on your level of consumption? (Base: 671)

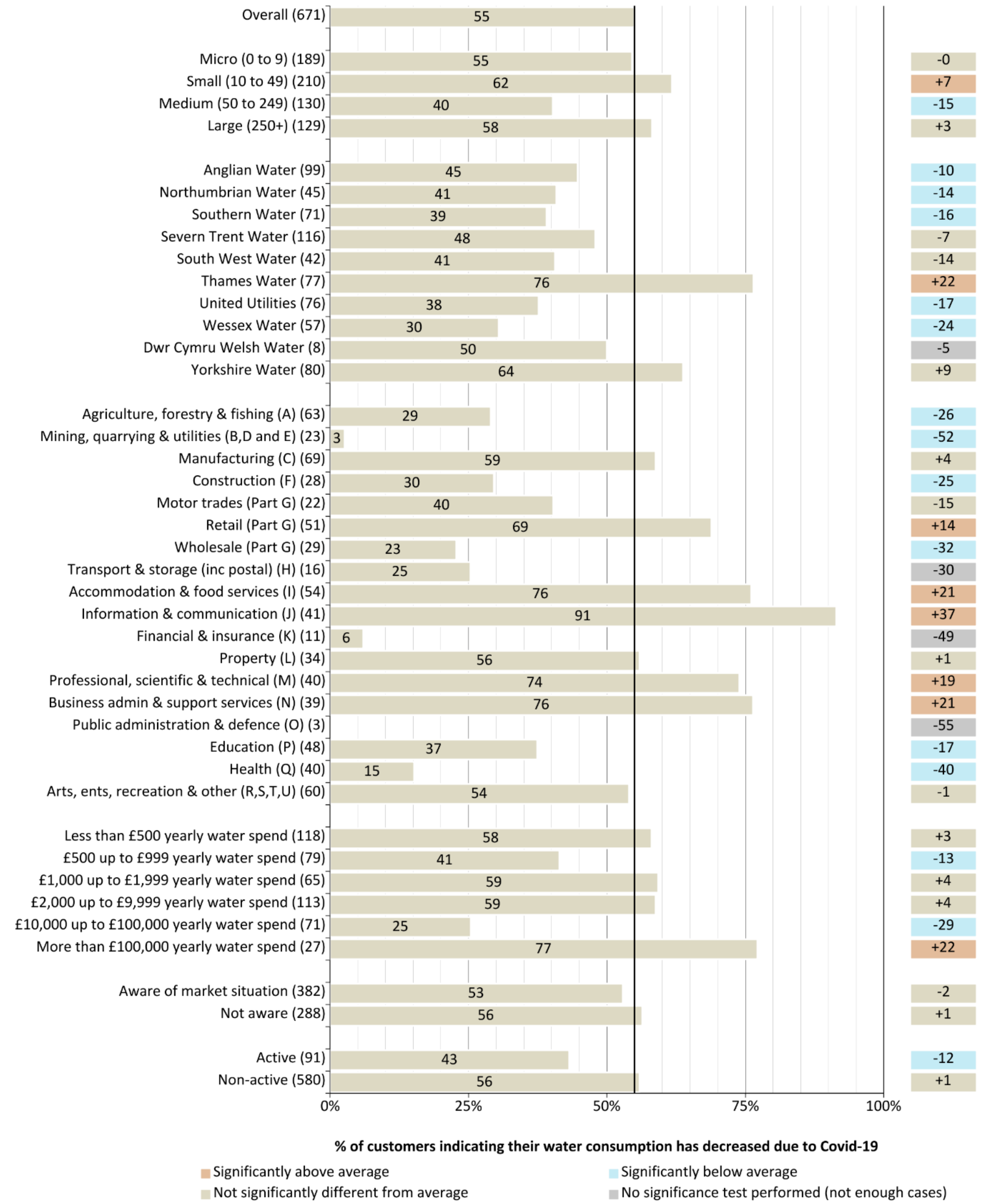


3.66 Figure 29 overleaf shows which sub-groups were more or less likely to report a decrease in their water consumption (groups more likely to report a decrease are highlighted orange; those less likely to have reported a decrease are highlighted blue).

3.67 An analysis by sector suggests that more office-based industries (e.g. information and communication; professional, scientific and technical services; and business administration and support) are more likely to have experienced reduced consumption, possibly due to a greater shift towards remote working. Retail and hospitality (i.e. accommodation and food) also, probably unsurprisingly, reported a reduction in their water consumption as a result of Covid. The health sector and industries whose activities are more likely to be based outdoors (such as agriculture and construction) were less likely to report a reduction, which tallies with these sectors being more likely to report that they were operating as normal during the pandemic.

3.68 Customers who have been active in the water market were less likely than average to report that their water consumption had reduced, and more likely to report that it had remained unchanged (i.e. suggesting that active customers are less likely to have been affected by the pandemic).

Figure 29: As a result of Covid-19, over the last 12 months has your organisation's water consumption decreased or increased, or has there been no impact on your level of consumption? DECREASED

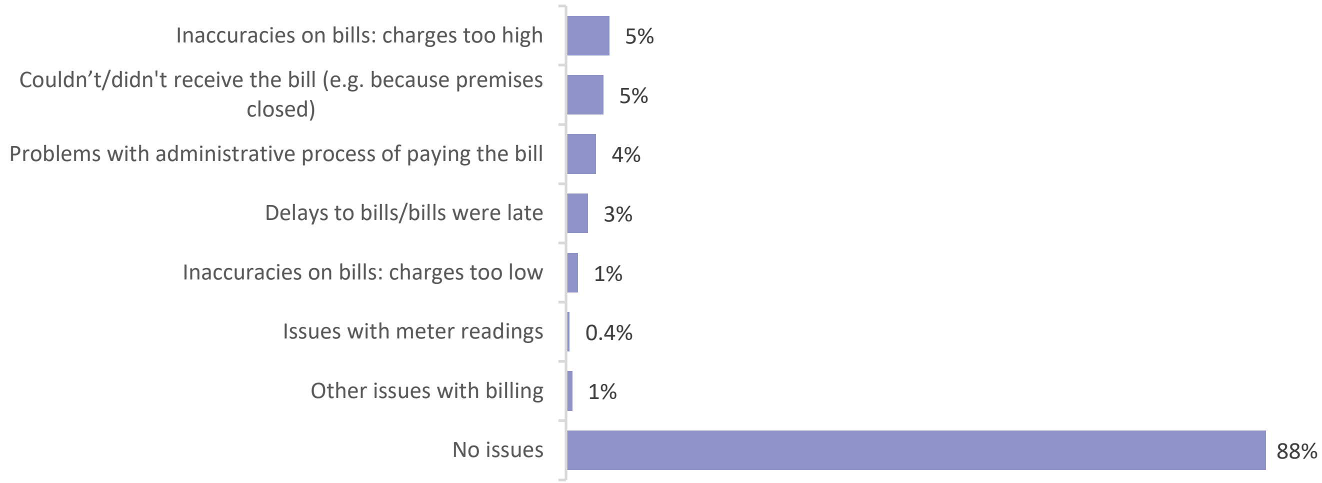


Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

3.69 The vast majority (88%) had experienced no issues with water billing that they felt could be attributed to the pandemic. However, small proportions identified issues such as overcharging (5%), problems receiving bills (e.g. due to their premises being closed) (5%), administrative problems affecting the payment of their bills (4%), and delays to bills/bills being late (3%).

3.70 It is nevertheless worth noting that organisations who had experienced reductions in their ability to trade or operate were more likely to have encountered these kinds of issues than those who had been able to continue trading normally. Around a quarter of businesses in the accommodation and food services sector (23%) and the property sector (25%) experienced issues around not receiving a bill (for reasons such as a premises being closed).

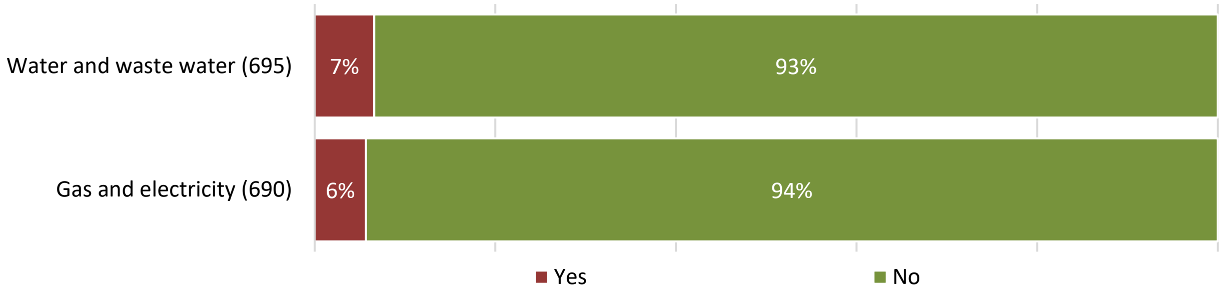
Figure 30: Thinking about the last 12 months, have you experienced any issues or problems with your billing that you believe resulted from the impact of Covid-19?



Base: All customers (682)

3.71 Overall, 7% of customers stated that they had experienced difficulties paying their water and wastewater bills on time as a result of the pandemic. A fairly similar proportion (6%) reported issues with the payment of electricity and gas bills.

Figure 31: Over the last 12 months have you had any problems paying your water and wastewater bill on time as a consequence of the financial impacts of Covid-19 on your business? And over the last 12 months have you had any issues paying your electricity or gas bills as a consequence of the financial impacts of Covid-19 on your business?



Base: All Respondents (number of respondents shown in brackets)

3.72 Small, medium and large customers were all significantly less likely to report issues with the payment of water and waste bills as a result of Covid (3%, 2% and 1% respectively said they had experienced difficulties), compared with micro businesses (7% experiencing difficulties).

3.73 A similar picture was seen in relation to customers’ ability to pay their electricity and gas bills: 3%, 2%, and 1% of small, medium and large businesses respectively had experienced difficulties, compared with 6% of micros.

3.74 Customers who had reported disruption to their trading and/or revenues as a result of the pandemic were more likely to report difficulties than those who had been able to continue trading as normal.

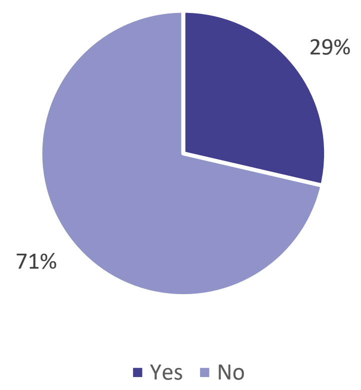
Contact with retailers

3.75 Although similar questions about contact with the retailer were asked in previous years, changes made to this section of the questionnaire make comparisons less reliable; therefore only 2021's results are reported here.

3.76 Around three in ten customers (29%) had been in contact with a retailer in the past year (customers who had switched or renegotiated were asked to exclude any contact relating to switching or renegotiating their contract).

3.77 Large organisations and those with higher annual spending on water (£2,000 or more) were among sub-groups that were significantly more likely than average to have had contact with their retailer, along with those customers who have a metered supply.

Figure 32: [Aside from contacts regarding switching or renegotiating your contract...] Have you been in contact with your water and waste water retailer for any reason in the last 12 months?



Base: All customers (694)

3.78 Of those respondents who had been in contact, small proportions had been in contact for Covid-related reasons e.g. to discuss changes in consumption or the affordability of their charges (3%) or some other Covid-related enquiry (4%); however the vast majority (94%) had been in contact for a different reason.

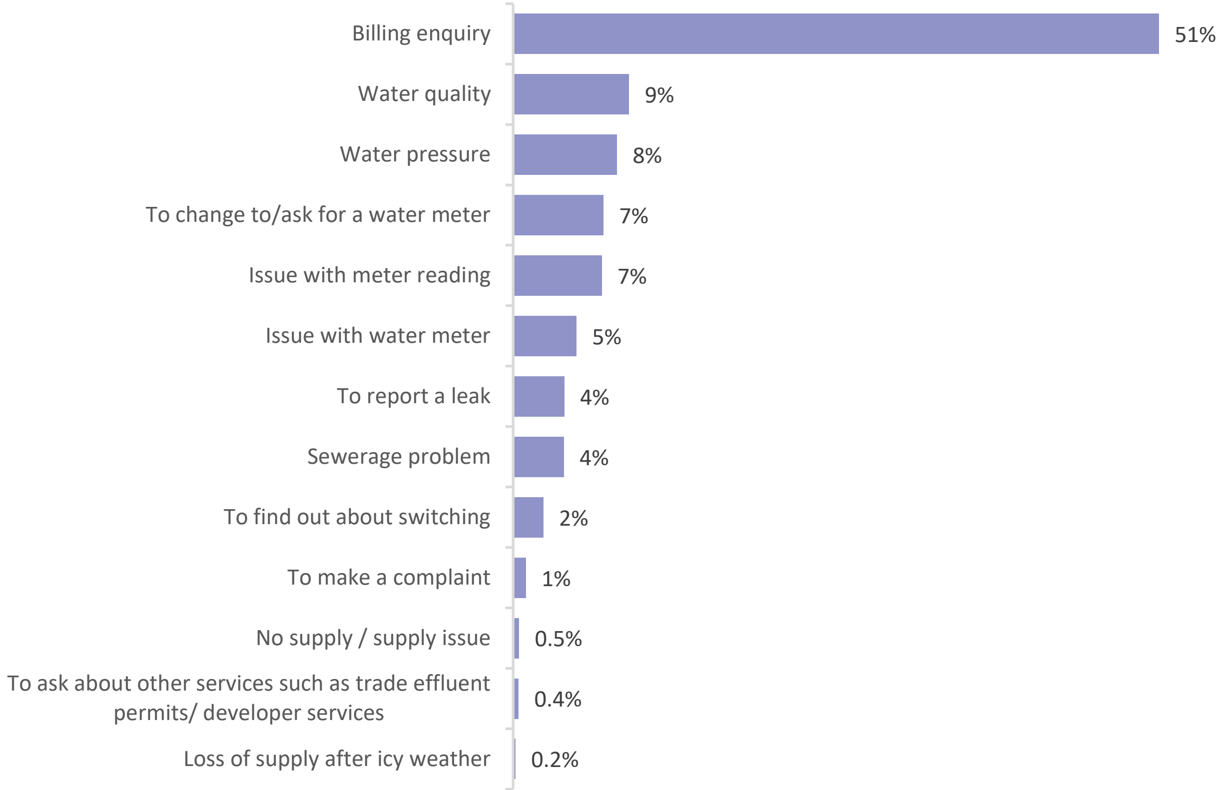
3.79 This implies that overall (i.e. across the whole of the sample), around 2% of customers had had a Covid-related contact with a retailer, while 27% had been in contact for other reason(s), and the remaining 71% had not had any contact.

3.80 Of 11 respondents who were in contact the retailer **regarding a Covid-related matter**: 7 contacted the retailer themselves, 3 were approached by the retailer, and 1 could not recall whom it was that made the initial contact.

3.81 Of the 4 respondents who were **in contact as a result of Covid, to discuss consumption changes and the affordability of their charges**: 2 received a payment holiday, 1 received an amended bill, and 1 received nothing from their retailer.

3.82 Customers who had been in contact with the retailer in the last year **for a non-Covid-related reason** were asked to identify what the *most recent contact* was about. Around half of the contacts (51%) related to billing queries, while just under a tenth were about water quality (9%) or pressure (8%). Smaller proportions were in contact with the retailer to enquire about moving to a water meter (7%), to discuss an issue with a meter reading (7%), or to report an issue with their meter (5%).

Figure 33: What was the most recent contact with your retailer about?

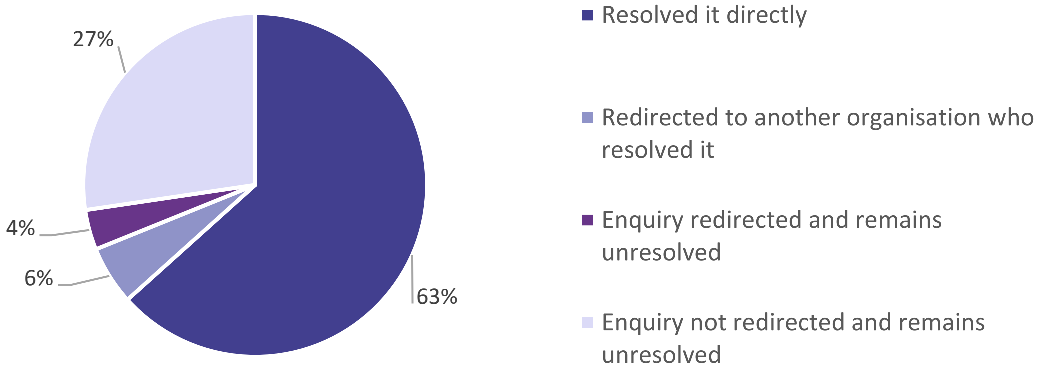


Base: All customers who were in contact with the retailer in the year prior to the interview, for reasons other than Covid and/or as part of the process of switching or renegotiating their contract (201)

3.83 In the majority of these non-Covid-related cases (63%) the retailer was able to resolve the issue directly, while in a further 6% of instances it was redirected to and resolved by another party. For the remaining customers who had been in contact with a retailer (31%), the issue remained unresolved at the time of interviewing.

Figure 34: Were they able to resolve your enquiry, or did they redirect you to another organisation?

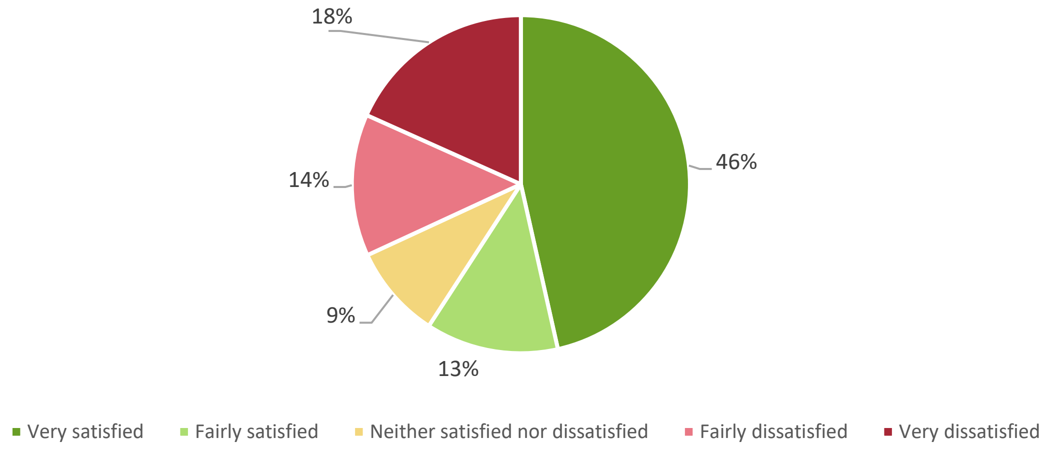
NB: an additional response option "Don't know if enquiry redirected, but remains unresolved" was selected by 1 respondent, but the weighted percentage is too small to be shown on the chart below (<0.01%).



Base: All customers who were in contact with the retailer in the year prior to the interview, for reasons other than Covid and/or as part of the process of switching or renegotiating their contract (199)

3.84 Of those who had been in contact with a retailer (for both Covid-related and non-Covid-related reasons), around three fifths were satisfied (59%); however, roughly a third (32%) were dissatisfied with the contact they experienced.

Figure 35: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the contact with your water and waste water retailer overall?



Base: All customers who were in contact with the retailer in the year prior to the interview, excluding contacts relating to the process of switching or renegotiating a contract (217)

3.85 Customers in the Anglia and Yorkshire Water regions were significantly more likely than average to indicate that they were satisfied with the contact they received, whereas customers in the Thames Water and United Utilities regions were significantly less likely to be satisfied (and also more likely to be dissatisfied).

3.86 Small organisations (i.e. with 10 to 49 employees) and organisations with an annual water spend of between £2,000 and £9,999 were also less likely to be satisfied when compared with the overall result.

3.87 The most common reason for dissatisfaction was billing-related (e.g. an unresolved billing issue), which was identified as an issue by almost half of all who were dissatisfied (48%). This result implies that, overall (i.e. across the sample as a whole), around 4% of customers have recently had contact with a retailer with which they were dissatisfied, that related to billing issues.

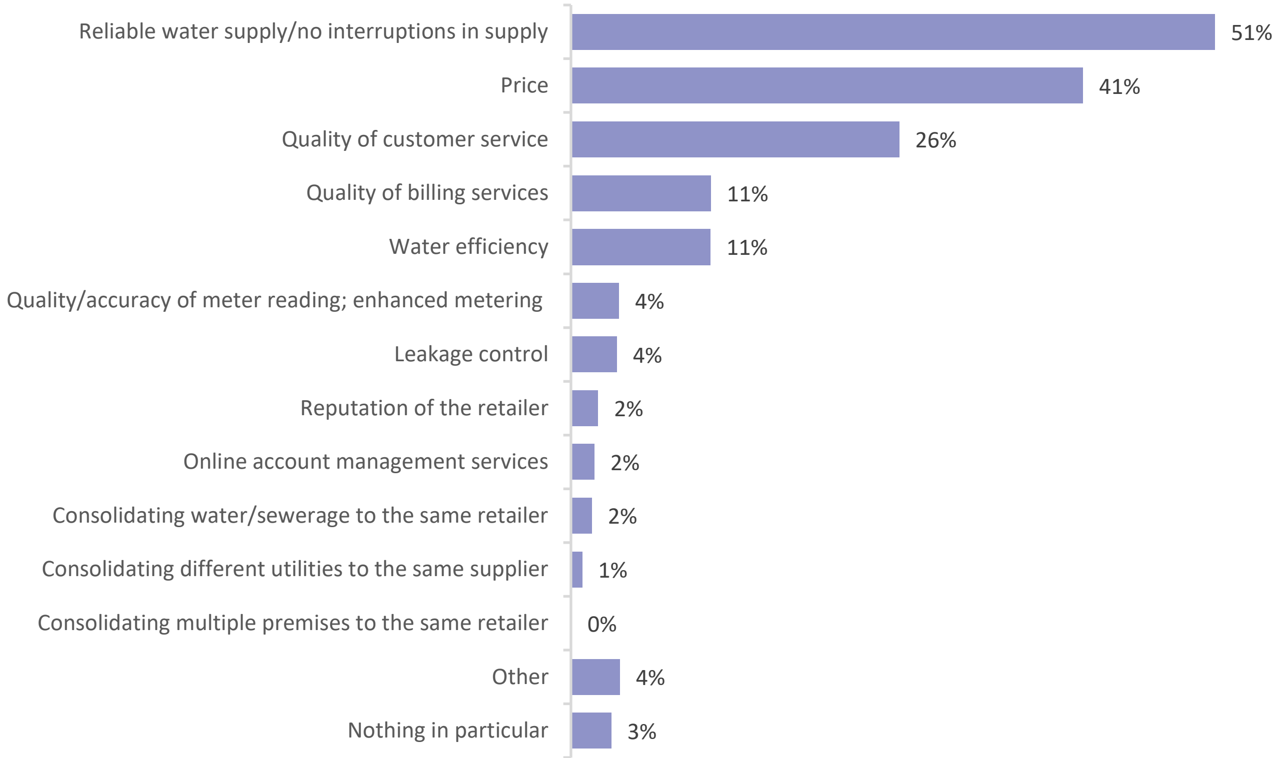
3.88 Other common reasons for being dissatisfied included poor customer service (34%), the speed of response/time taken to resolve the problem (29%) and unresolved issues relating to metering (9%), with the remaining issues raised being quite miscellaneous/only mentioned by very small numbers of respondents.

Summing up

3.89 When asked about what is most important to them as a customer, around half (51%) mentioned a reliable water supply and/or no supply interruptions. Around two fifths mentioned price (41%).

3.90 The quality of customer service was among the most important aspects to around a quarter of customers (26%), while quality of billing services and water efficiency were each mentioned by around a tenth (both 11%). A full summary of the factors that are most important to customers is provided in Figure 36.

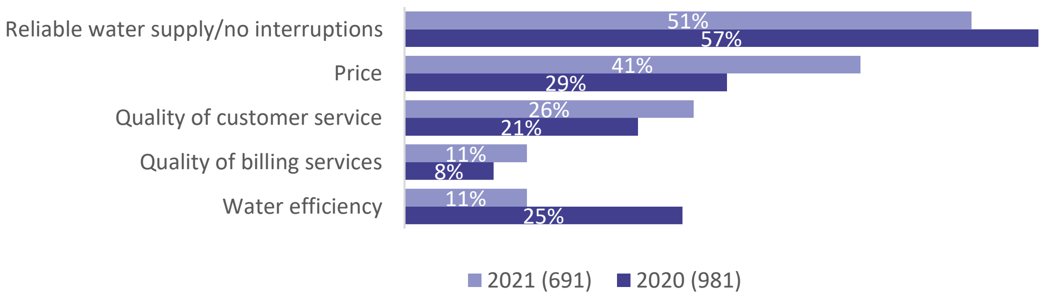
Figure 36: Overall, and taking everything into account, what is most important to you as a water customer?



Base: All customers (691)

3.91 When this question was asked in 2020, the same five issues (i.e. reliability of supply, price, quality of customer service, quality of billing, and water efficiency) were most widely identified by customers. Nonetheless it is worth noting that fewer customers in 2021 than in 2020 mentioned reliability of supply and water efficiency, while more mentioned price and the quality of customer service (see Figure 37).

Figure 37: Comparison with 2020 (top reasons only): Overall, and taking everything into account, what is most important to you as a water customer?



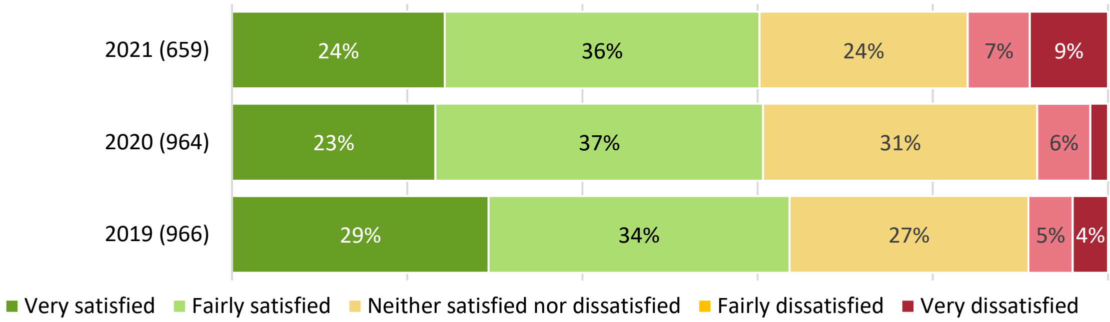
Base: All customers who are aware of the market situation, but have not considered switching/renegotiating in last 12 months (either plan to do so in future, or not currently planning to consider) (number shown in brackets)

3.92 Three fifths of customers (60%) are satisfied with the water market as a whole, which is the same proportion as was seen in 2020 (60%).

3.93 However, it is worth noting that there has been a significant increase in dissatisfaction: 16% of customers are either fairly or very dissatisfied with the water market in 2021, compared with 9% in both 2020 and 2019.

3.94 This shift towards higher levels of dissatisfaction appears to have been driven by a decrease in neutral (i.e. ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’) responses since last year (24% in 2021, compared with 31% in 2020).

Figure 38: Thinking about everything we've discussed today, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the water market as a whole?



3.95 The chart overleaf (Figure 39) shows how satisfaction with the market as a whole varied by sub-group.

3.96 Medium-sized organisations were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the market as a whole, along with customers in Southern, Severn Trent, Wessex and Yorkshire Water regions (Anglian Water and United Utilities customers were less likely to be satisfied compared to the overall result).

3.97 In terms of business sector, there was higher than average satisfaction among mining/quarrying/utilities, motor trades, retail, and education; on the other hand, satisfaction was lower for agriculture/forestry/fishing, accommodation and food services, information and communication, and business administration and support services. Manufacturing companies were also significantly more likely to be dissatisfied.

3.98 With the exception of the very highest-spending organisations (i.e. those that spend £100,000 per year or more), customers who spend more than £1,000 per year on water services are also less likely to be satisfied with the water market.

3.99 It is interesting to note that ‘aware’ organisations are more likely to be satisfied with the market; however, those that are ‘active’ are less likely to be satisfied.

Figure 39: Thinking about everything we've discussed today, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the water market as a whole? (Grouped Responses)

Base: All customers (number shown in brackets)

Switching and Renegotiating

3.100 Respondents who had recently switched or renegotiated were asked follow-up sections designed to assess their experiences of the switching or renegotiating process, and to better understand factors such as what (if any) benefits they had derived as a result of the switch/renegotiation.

3.101 The answers obtained to these questions were intended to reflect experiences that were reasonably recent; however, only asking the questions to those who had switched/renegotiated in the previous twelve months was likely to be too limiting, as it would only achieve very small sample sizes for these questions. On that basis, a decision was made to ask these follow-up questions to any customers who had switched or renegotiated in the past two years. If any customer had both switched and renegotiated during this timeframe, they were only asked one section (i.e. either about the switch or the renegotiation), depending on which they had done most recently.

3.102 As a result of the timeframe (i.e. two-year time limit), and relatively low incidences of switching and renegotiating in the population, both the switching and renegotiating sections ended up only being asked of quite small numbers of respondents (43 and 35 respectively – and not all of these respondents will have answered every question[11]). This should be borne in mind when interpreting the results that follow, which have also not been broken down by organisation demographics, on the basis of sample sizes being too small to enable useful comparisons.

3.103 It should also be considered that results based on these small sample sizes will be more sensitive to the effects of the weighting process. For example, medium and large organisations were significantly more likely than average to have switched/renegotiated compared to the rest of the eligible business population; at the same time, these larger organisations were also intentionally over-represented in the achieved sample, whereas microbusinesses were under-represented. As such, results from these sections will involve substantial weights due to the sample design; in conjunction with the small sample size overall, some individual cases will have an extremely large (or conversely, very small) impact on any given result.

3.104 It is also worth noting that in previous years, any interviews with switchers and renegotiators achieved via the representative survey were merged with an additional, much larger sample of switchers/renegotiators identified from the MOSL database, and interviewed as part of a separate switcher/renegotiator survey (to provide a bigger and therefore more reliable sample of switchers and renegotiators than could ever be achieved via the representative survey alone). This sample was then weighted to be representative of the overall population of switchers/renegotiators (as estimated based on an analysis of the MOSL database); this is not possible with the vastly reduced number of cases from the current representative survey.

3.105 Moreover, different time parameters for switching/renegotiating have been used in different years in which the survey has been carried out (a two-year limit in 2021, a one-year limit in 2020, and the entire period since market opening in 2019).

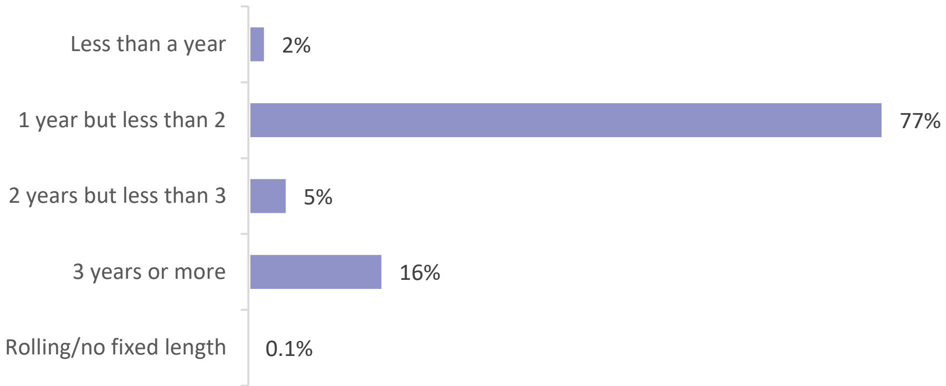
3.106 Because of these methodological differences described above, it has also not been possible to compare 2021's results with those from the switcher/renegotiator surveys undertaken in previous years.

[11] Don't know/refused are treated as invalid when calculating percentages, and have been excluded from the charts (hence base sizes vary); however where there are higher levels of 'don't knows' these are indicated beneath the charts for information purposes.

Main findings for switchers

3.107 Most recent switchers indicated that they had switched to a contract lasting two years or less, and around three quarters now had a contract lasting between one and two years (77%); however, around a sixth had moved to a contract lasting at least 3 years (16%).

Figure 40: What is the total length of your new contract? This does not mean the time remaining on the contract but the length of the new contract from start to end.

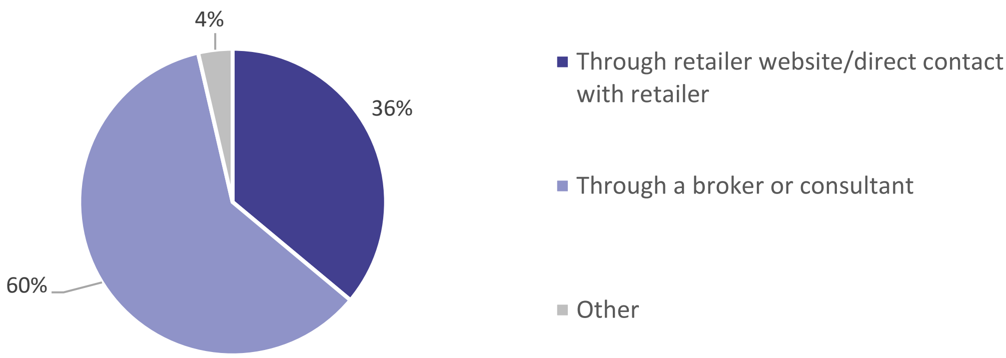


Base: All switchers (30)

(NB excludes 13 individuals answering 'don't know')

3.108 Most switchers (60%) had arranged the switch via a broker or a consultant, while just over a third (36%) had done so through a retailer website or directly contacting the retailer.

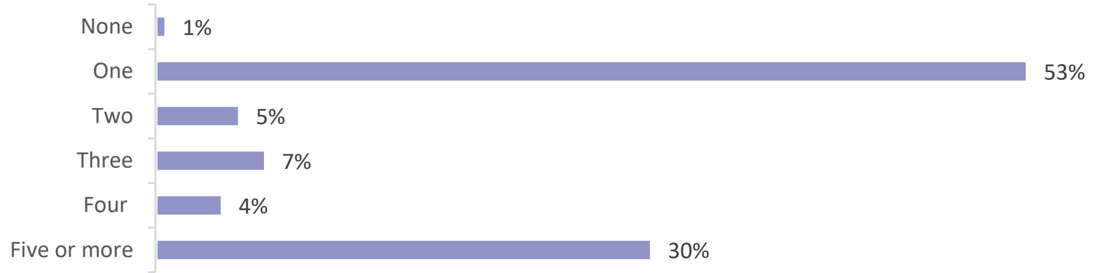
Figure 41: How did you arrange the switch?



Base: All switchers (39)

3.109 Just over half of the customers who switched (53%) had only received a quotation from one retailer before switching, although a nearly a third (30%) received quotations from five or more.

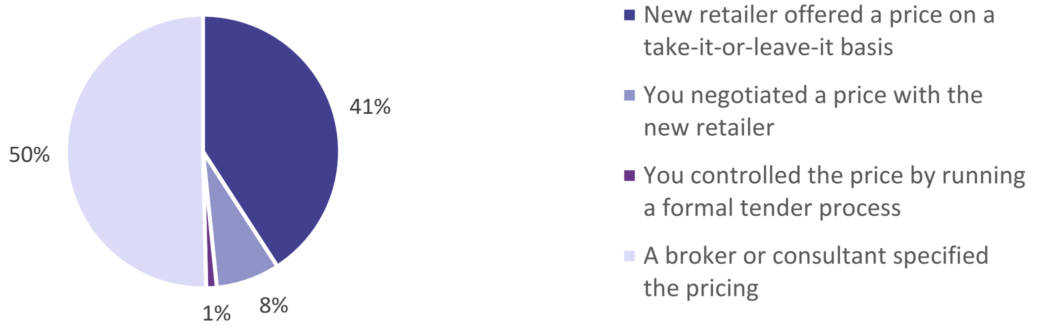
Figure 42: How many, if any, different retailers did you receive price quotations from prior to switching?



Base: All switchers (24) (NB excludes 19 individuals answering 'don't know')

3.110 Around two fifths (41%) said their new retailer had simply offered a new deal on a 'take it or leave it' basis although nearly a tenth (8%) had negotiated the price. Half (50%) said that a broker or consultant had specified the pricing, while a very small proportion (1%) had run a formal tender process.

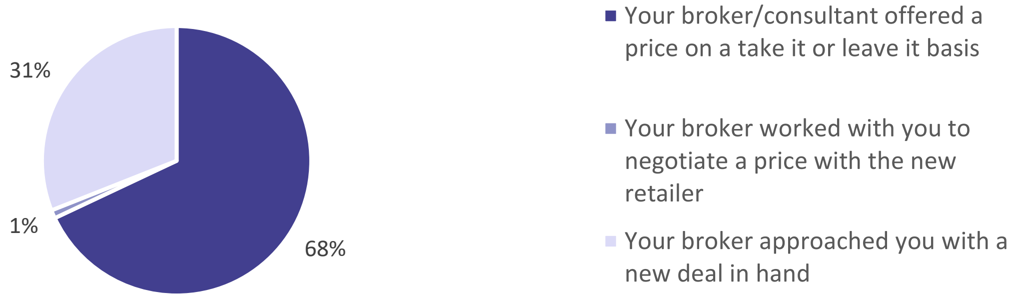
Figure 43: Which of the following best describes your experience of agreeing a price with your new retailer?



Base: All switchers (36)

3.111 Of those switchers who arranged the switch through a broker or a consultant: around two thirds (68%) said that the broker/consultant offered the price on a 'take it or leave it' basis, while around a third said they were approached with a new deal in hand (31%).

Figure 44: Which of the following best describes your experience of agreeing a price with broker or consultant?



Base: All switchers whose switch was arranged through a broker/consultant (21)

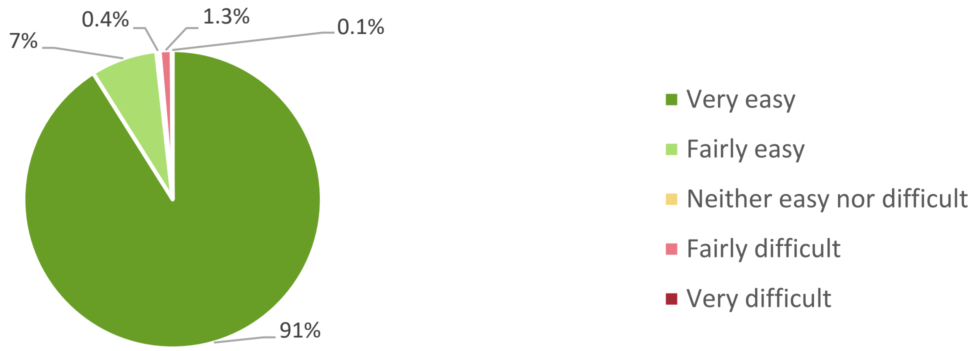
3.112 Prior to switching, most (93%) did not have any contact with their old retailer regarding the prospect of moving to a better deal. Of those who did (only 4 respondents): 2 said they were not offered anything to stay; the other 2 could not recall what had been offered.

Figure 45: Before you signed up with your new retailer, did you have contact with your previous retailer regarding the possibility of a better deal?

Base: All switchers (30) (NB excludes 13 individuals answering 'don't know')

3.113 The vast majority of switchers (98%) found it very or fairly easy to switch their retailer.

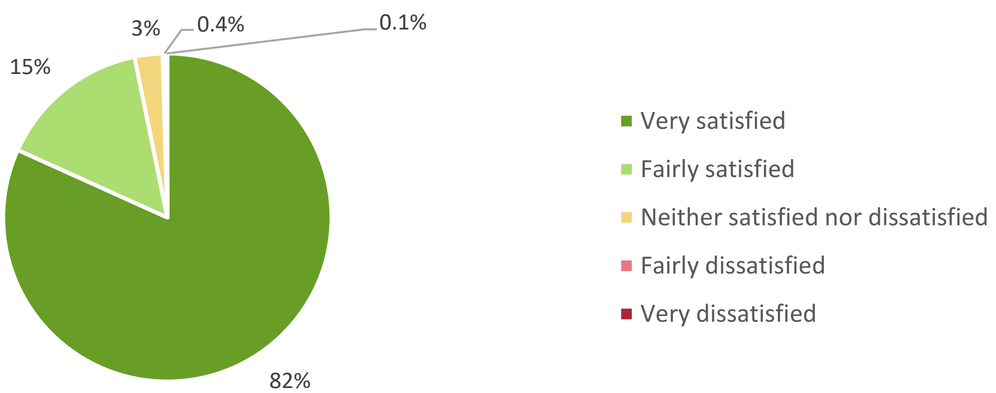
Figure 46: Once you had chosen the retailer you wanted to switch to, how easy or difficult did you find the process of switching retailer?



Base: All switchers (35)

3.114 Moreover, more than nine-in-ten were satisfied with the time it took for the switch to take place (97%).

Figure 47: How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the time it took for the switch to take place?

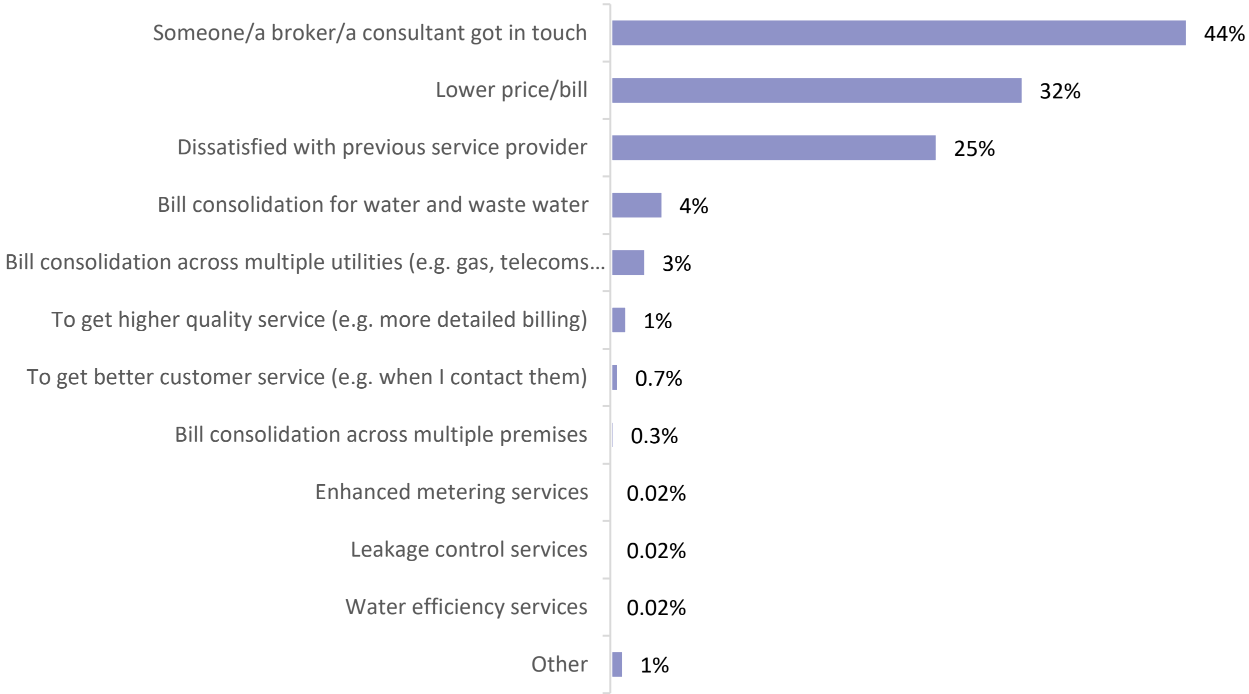


Base: All switchers (34)

3.115 When asked about the reasons why they started looking into switching, customers were first asked to answer the question without being prompted by any response options (i.e. to answer from a 'top of head basis).

3.116 At this first (unprompted) question, customers who switched were most likely to state that they were prompted to do so by somebody (such as a broker) getting in touch (44%) or by the prospect of a lower price/bill (32%).

Figure 48: Why did you start looking into switching? NB: UNPROMPTED responses only



Base: All switchers (40)

3.117 Subsequently, respondents were read a list of options and asked whether each of these had influenced the decision to switch.

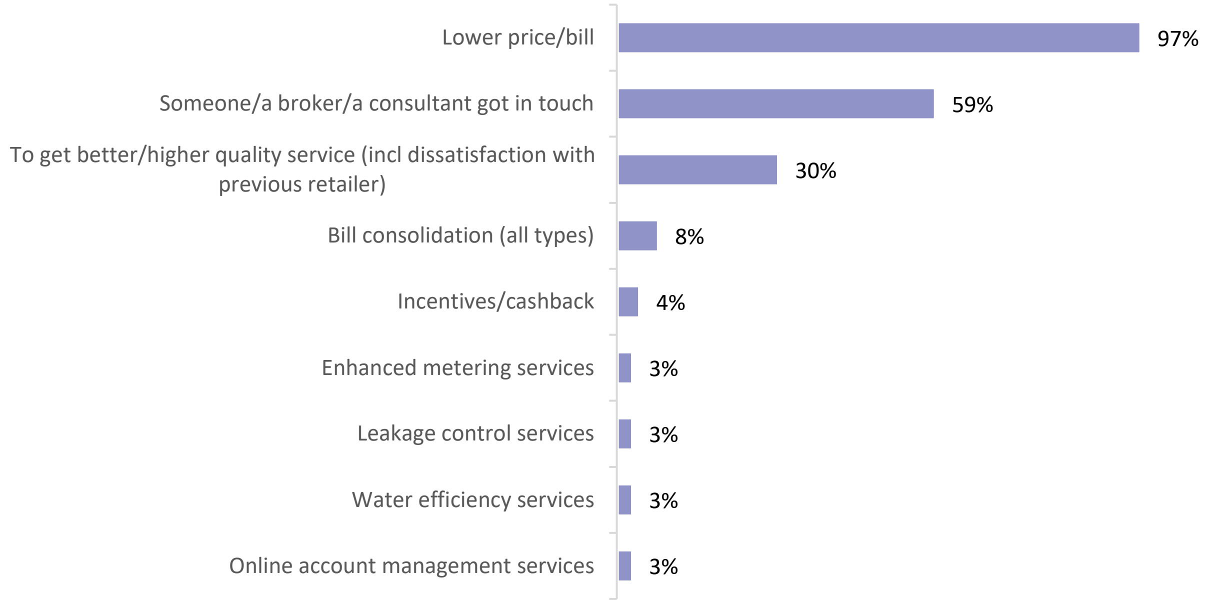
3.118 The combined (i.e. based on both unprompted and prompted results) can be seen below. A few things are worth noting: firstly, the list of options on the second, prompted question was simplified for ease of reading out; as such some categories from the first unprompted question have been merged for the purposes of charting (e.g. those relating to higher quality service, better customer service, and dissatisfaction with the existing service). The separate types of bill consolidation (i.e. for multiple premises, multiple utilities and clean/waste water) were also merged in the second question and then clarified subsequently.

3.119 The combined results suggest that lower price/bills were the primary motivation for switching, followed by somebody getting and touch, and wanting to get a better or higher quality service.

3.120 Nearly a tenth of the switchers (8%) indicated that some form of bill consolidation influenced their decision to look into switching, specifically: 4% wanting to consolidate for water and waste water, 1% wanting to consolidate across multiple premises, and 3% wanting to consolidate across multiple utilities.

3.121 Those who indicated that they would like a better or higher-quality service were asked which aspects they most wanted to see improved. The main answers were: more accurate billing (mentioned by 9 of 12 respondents), better service when contacting the provider (7 respondents), and better meter reading arrangements (6 respondents).

Figure 49: Why did you start looking into switching? / Were any of the following reasons for looking into switching? / In what way did you want to consolidate your bills?

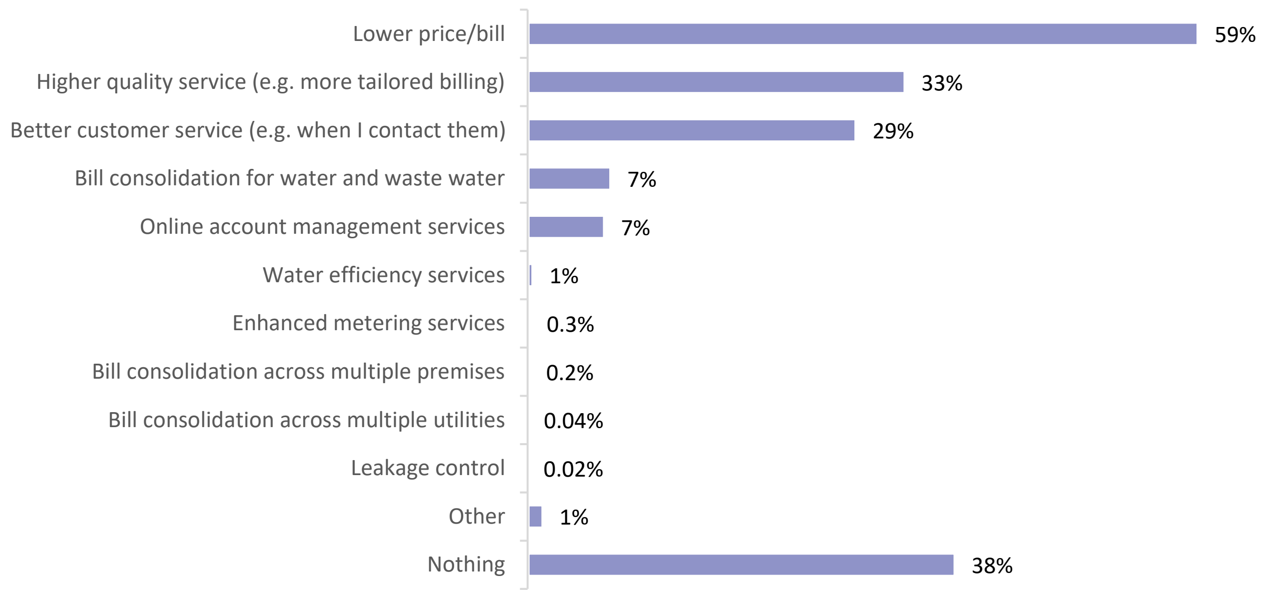


Base: All switchers who provided at least some indication of why they had looked into switching (41)

3.122 The main benefits actually derived from switching were lower prices/bills (59%), higher quality service (33%) and better customer service (29%).

3.123 However, not all customers indicated that they had derived benefits: 38% answered 'nothing' when asked to outline the benefits.

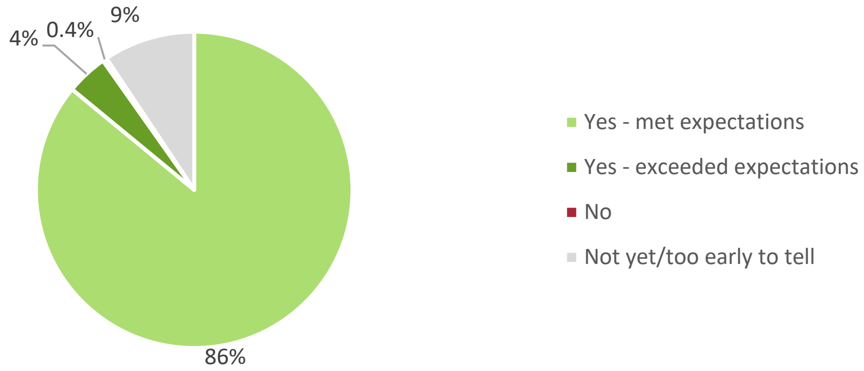
Figure 50: What benefits, if any, did you actually get from switching?



Base: All switchers (39)

3.124 The vast majority (around nine in ten) of those who indicated that they had received at least some benefit from switching, felt that these benefits had either met (86%) or exceeded (4%) their expectations. Only a negligible proportion (0.4%) felt their expectations had not been met; however, nearly a tenth (9%) indicated that their expectations had not been met *yet*, or that it was too early to tell.

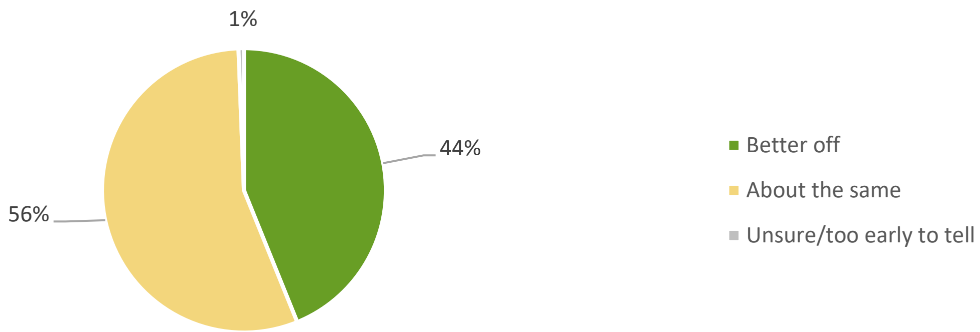
Figure 51: Did the benefits meet your expectations?



Base: All switchers who indicated they had obtained at least some benefit from switching (36)

3.125 Approaching half of customers who had switched felt that they were better off as a result of switching (44%), while more than half felt that things were about the same (56%). None of the customers said that they were worse off as a result of their switch.

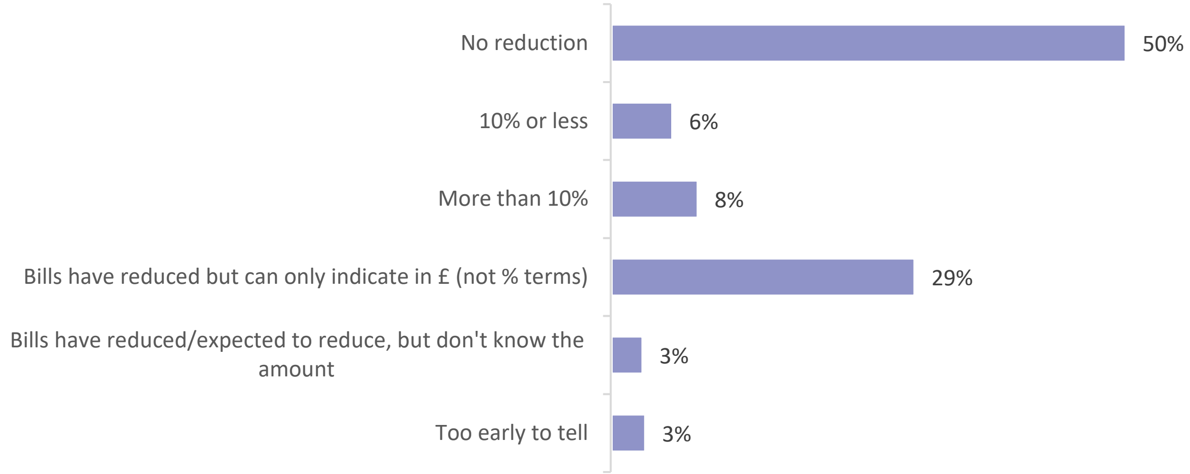
Figure 52: Overall, with regard to water and waste water retail services would you say you are better off, worse off or about the same now compared with before you switched?



Base: All switchers (43)

3.126 Many customers found it difficult to specify how much bills had reduced by in percentage terms (e.g. answering only in £, or not being able to specify the amount) - although nearly a tenth (8%) thought they had obtained a reduction of more than 10%, and a further 6% identified a reduction of up to 10%.

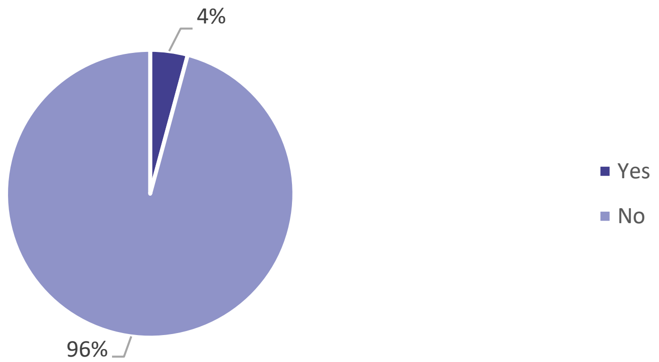
Figure 53: In percentage terms, roughly how much have your water bills reduced by, or do you expect them to reduce by, as a result of renegotiating, if at all?



Base: All switchers (28) (NB excludes 19 individuals answering 'don't know')

3.127 Only a small proportion of customers who switched indicated that they had received new water efficiency or leak detection services as a result (4%).

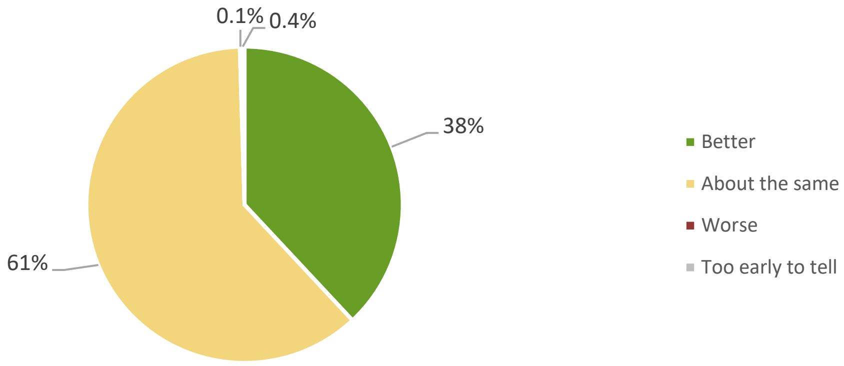
Figure 54: As well as offering lower tariffs, retailers can also offer services to make your use of water more efficient and to detect leaks better. Do you now receive any new water efficiency or leak detection services as a result of switching?



Base: All switchers (37)

3.128 While most switchers felt that the quality of retail services was about the same as before they had switched (61%), almost two fifths indicated that this had got better (38%), and only a negligible proportion (0.1%) felt it was worse.

Figure 55: Is the quality of retail services like billing and meter-reading from your new retailer better, worse, or about the same as your previous retailer?



Base: All switchers (43)

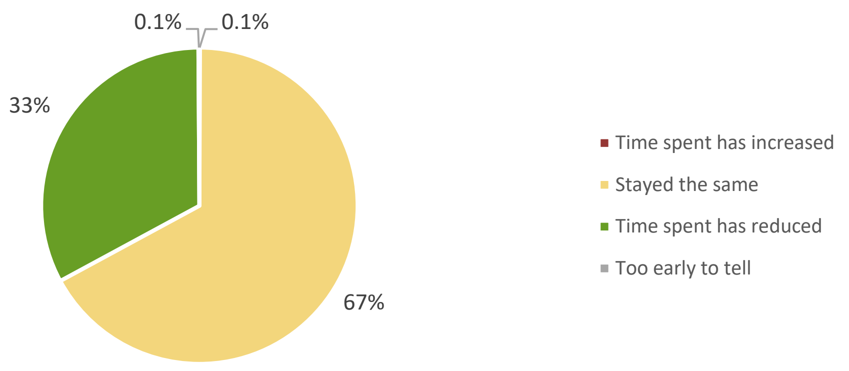
3.129 It is worth noting that the response options for the question shown at Figure 50 (i.e. about the benefits obtained from switching) were not prompted. Switchers whose organisation operates across multiple premises but who had *not* selected bill consolidation as a benefit derived from switching, were therefore asked a follow up question aimed at clarifying whether or not they had consolidated across sites.

3.130 The combined results to these two questions (i.e. the unprompted question asking customers to volunteer the benefits of switching, and the follow up prompting organisations with more than one premises to think about whether or not they had consolidated bills across sites) suggest that, overall, roughly **three fifths of multi-site organisations who switched had consolidated bills across premises as a result of switching.**

3.131 Similarly, all respondents who had switched were asked whether they had consolidated bills across multiple utilities (unless they had already indicated this in the previous question asking about the benefits derived from switching). The combined results indicate that, overall, **around 5% of customers who switched consolidated their bills for water with those for other utilities.**

3.132 Around two thirds of customers indicated that their organisation spends about the same amount of time dealing with water bills as it did before switching (67%) although around a third (33%) felt the amount of time had reduced.

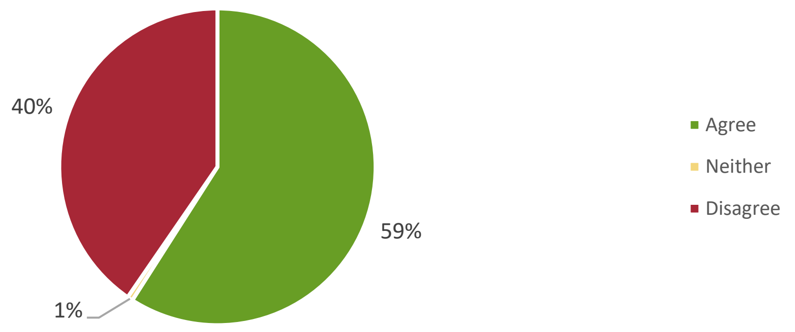
Figure 56: Has the amount of time your organisation spends dealing with your water bills each billing cycle increased, reduced or stayed the same since switching?



Base: All switchers (40)

3.133 Overall, most customers who had switched in the last two years agreed that it had been worthwhile to do so (59%).

Figure 57: Overall, taking the whole experience of switching into account, do you agree or disagree that it was worthwhile for you to switch?

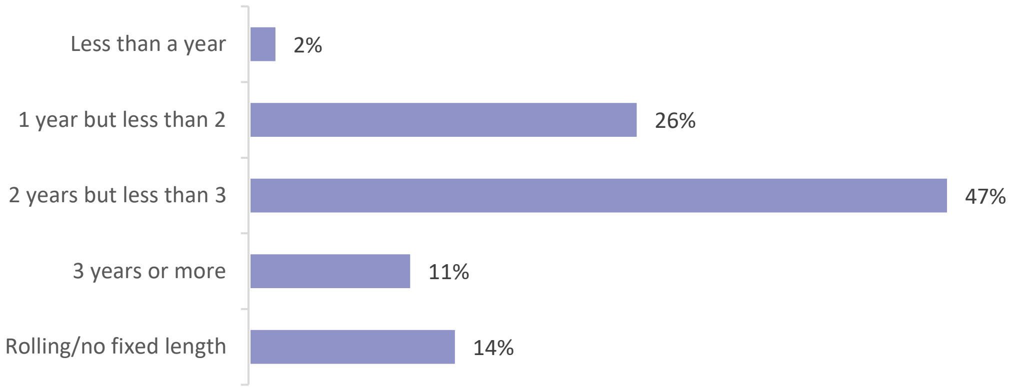


Base: All switchers (39)

Main findings for renegotiators

3.134 Most of those who had renegotiated had agreed a new contract of either one to two (26%) or two to three years (47%), although roughly a tenth (11%) had a longer contract (i.e. three years or more) and a similar proportion were on a rolling contract (14%).

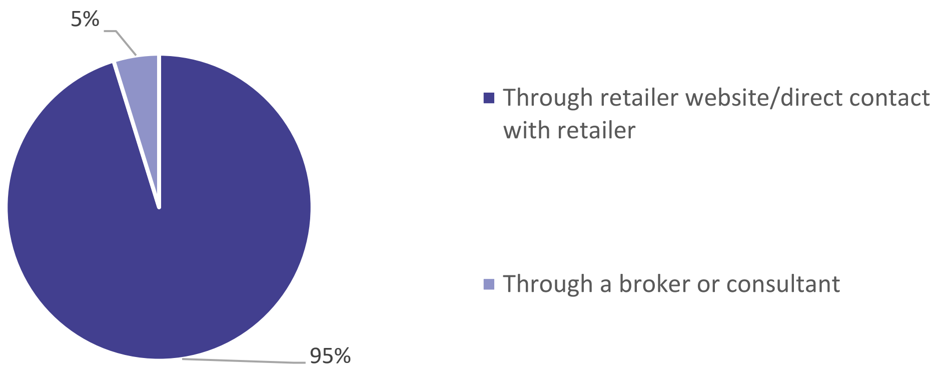
Figure 58: What is the total length of your new or renewed contract? This does not mean the time remaining on the contract but the length of the new or renewed contract from start to end.



Base: All renegotiators (28)

3.135 Nearly all those who had renegotiated (95%) had done so through a retailer website and/or direct contact with the retailer.

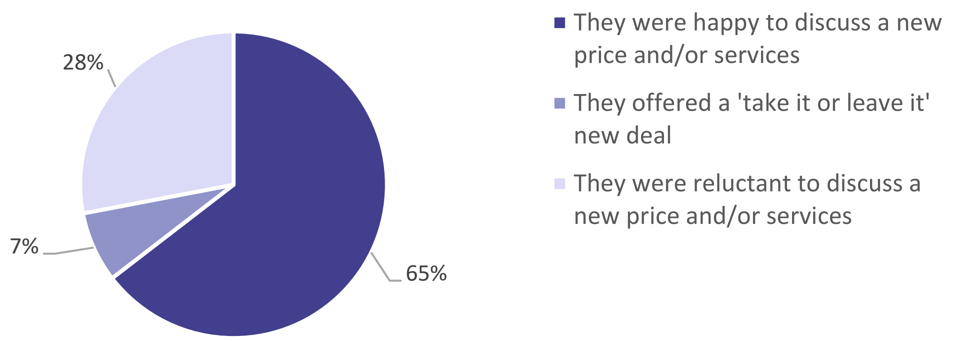
Figure 59: How did you renegotiate?



Base: All renegotiators (34)

3.136 Around two thirds who renegotiated through contact with the retailer said their retailer had been happy to enter discussions about a new price or services (65%) although more than a quarter said the retailer had been reluctant (28%) and a few (7%) said the retailer had simply offered a new deal on a 'take it or leave it' basis.

Figure 60: How did you renegotiate?

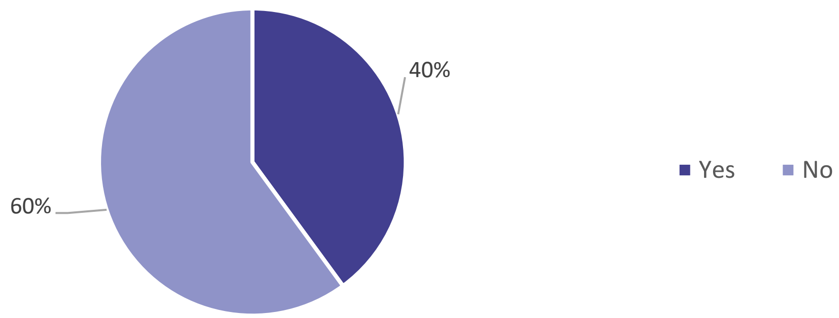


Base: All renegotiators who had contact with the retailer (21)

3.137 Two fifths (40%) indicated that they had explored what was on offer from other retailers, prior to agreeing their renewed contract.

3.138 Of those who explored what was on offer, most explored options with up to three other retailers before deciding to renegotiate with the existing retailer.

Figure 61: Before you renegotiated, did you explore what else was on offer with other retailers?

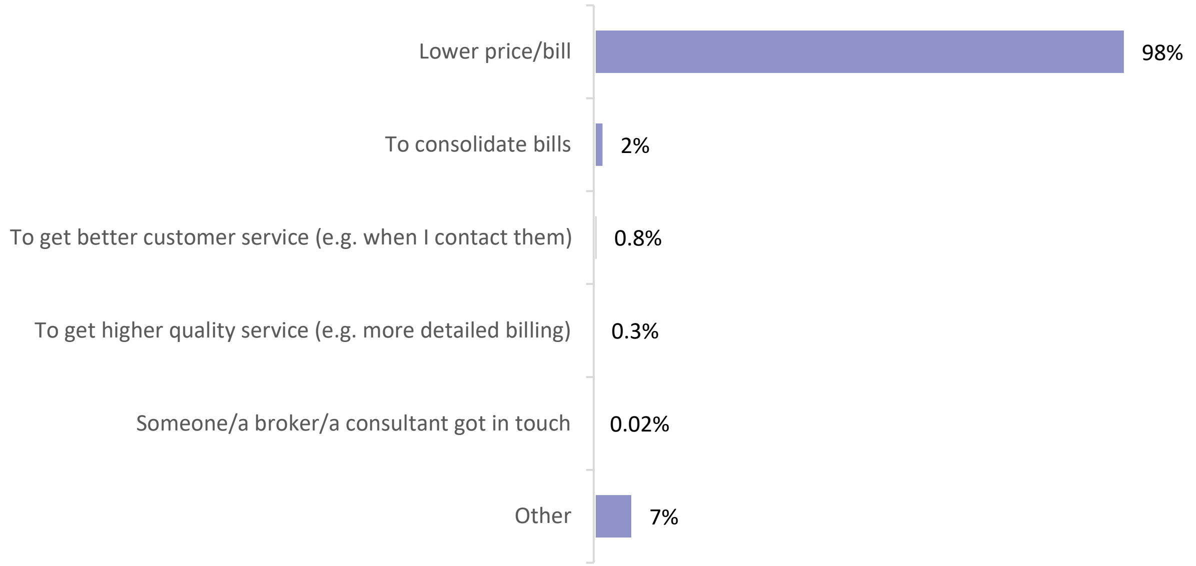


Base: All renegotiators (31)

3.139 As was the case in the switching section, renegotiators were asked to give the reasons why they had looked into renegotiating, initially without being prompted with any possible answers. The same customers were then asked to select the reasons from a prompted list.

3.140 The overwhelming reason provided when the unprompted version of the question was asked, was to get a lower price/bill.

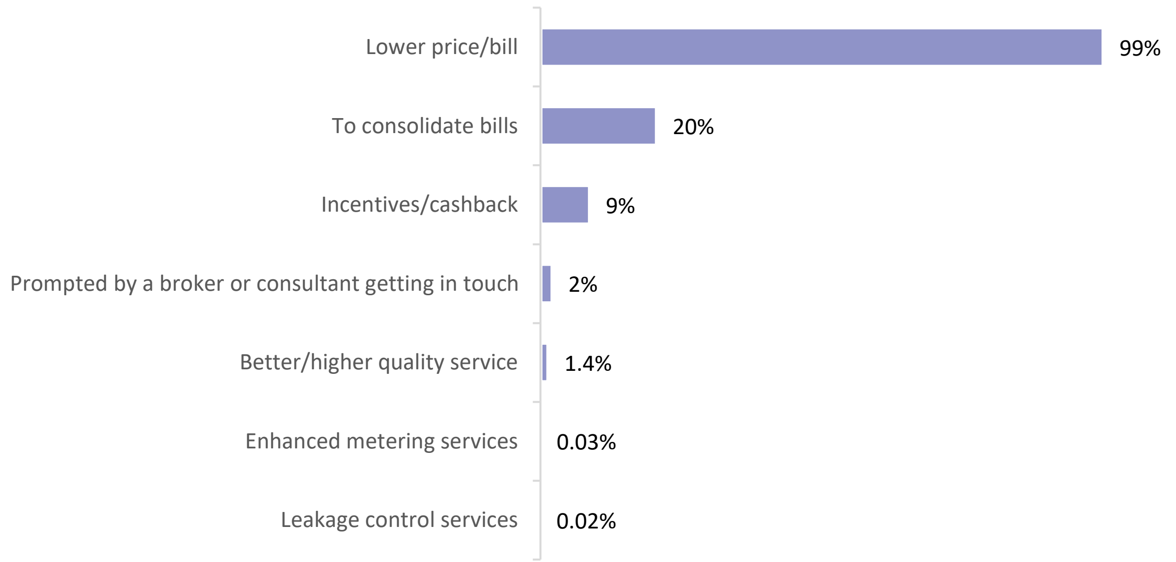
Figure 62: Why did you start looking into renegotiating? NB: UNPROMPTED responses only



Base: All renegotiators (31)

3.141 Once the prompted version of the question is taken into account, around a fifth of customers who renegotiated (20%) indicated that they did so for purposes of consolidating bills.

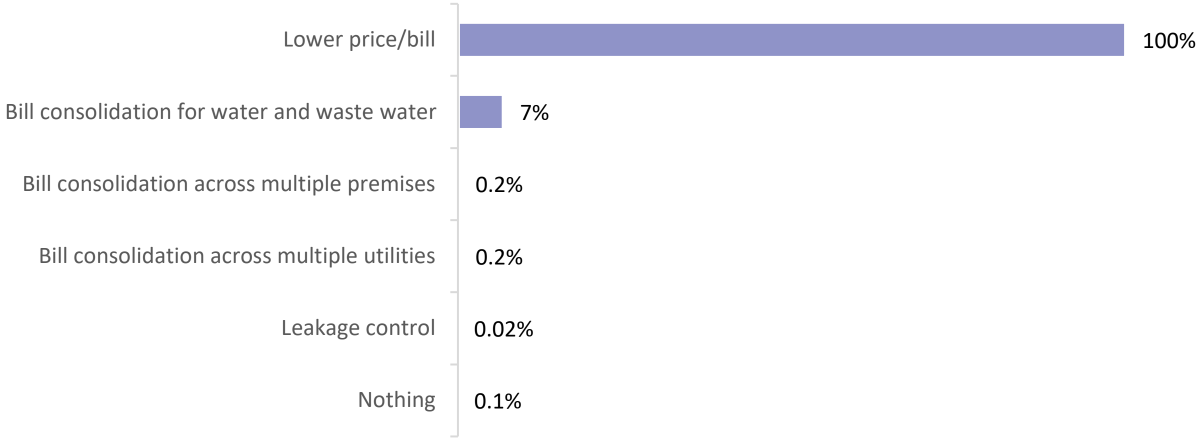
Figure 63: Why did you start looking into renegotiating? / Were any of the following reasons for looking into renegotiating? / In what way did you want to consolidate your bills?



Base: All renegotiators (35)

3.142 The overwhelming benefit derived from renegotiating was lower prices/bills (100%), although small proportions benefited from bill consolidation (mainly for water and waste water – 7%). Only a very negligible proportion indicated that there had not been any benefits from renegotiating.

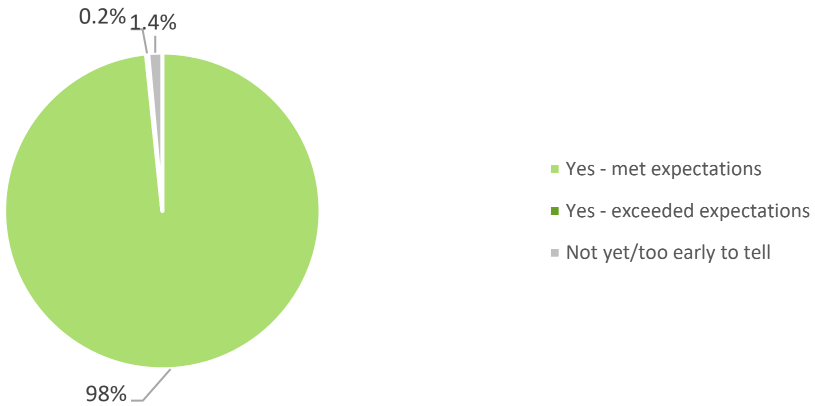
Figure 64: What benefits, if any, did you actually get from renegotiating?



Base: All renegotiators (33)

3.143 The vast majority (98%) felt that the benefits met their expectations, a very small proportion (0.2%) felt expectations had been exceeded, and 1% thought it was too early to tell.

Figure 65: Did the benefits meet your expectations?

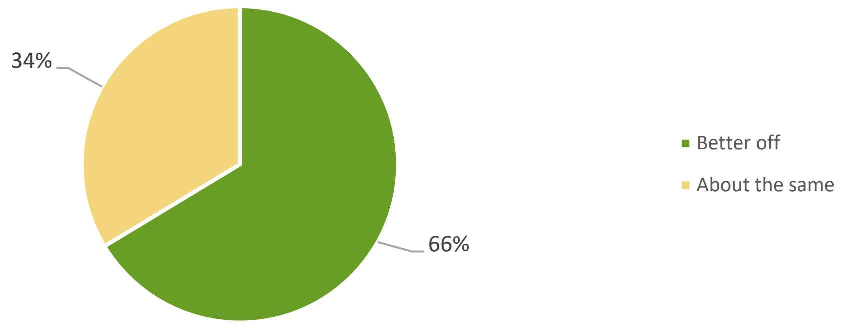


Base: All renegotiaters who indicated they had realised at least some benefit from renegotiating (32)

NB: 'No' has been not been displayed on the chart, on the basis of a very negligible result (<0.1%)

3.144 Overall, with regard to water retail services, around two thirds (66%) felt that they were better off as a result of renegotiating, while around a third (34%) felt things were about the same. Nobody indicated that their organisation is currently worse off as a result of renegotiating.

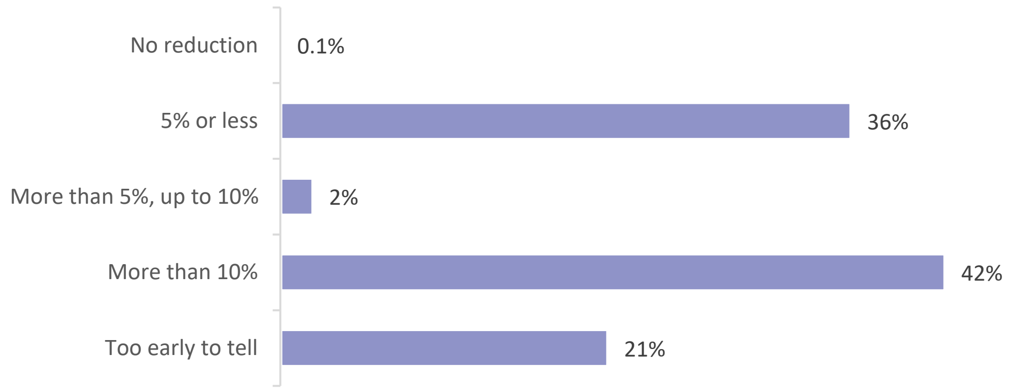
Figure 66: Overall, with regard to water and waste water retail services would you say you are better off, worse off or about the same now compared with before you renegotiated?



Base: All renegotiators (35)

3.145 Most respondents had achieved savings as a result of having renegotiated: more than a third (36%) felt bills had reduced by up to 5%, while a slightly bigger proportion (42%) thought they had reduced by more than 10%. A further fifth or so (21%) said it was too early to tell.

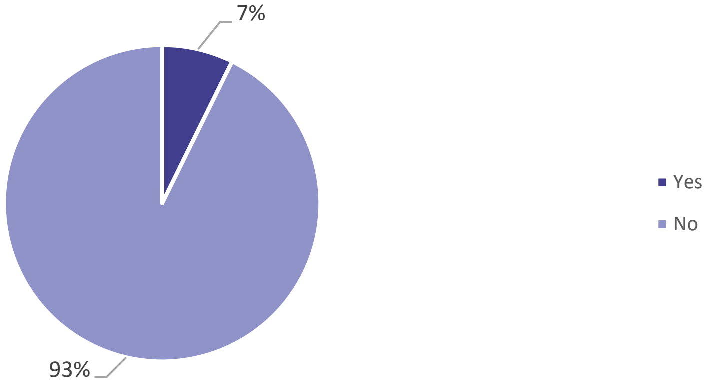
Figure 67: In percentage terms, roughly how much have your water bills reduced by, or do you expect them to reduce by, as a result of renegotiating, if at all?



Base: All renegotiators (26)

3.146 A small proportion (7%) of renegotiators indicated they had received new water efficiency/leak detection services as a result of renegotiating.

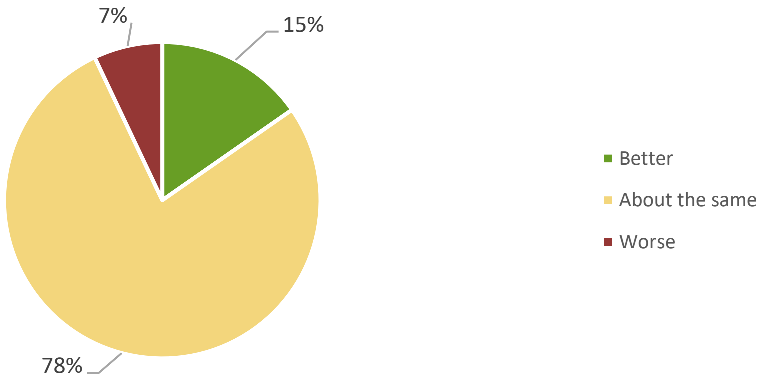
Figure 68: As well as offering lower tariffs, retailers can also offer services to make your use of water more efficient and to detect leaks better. Do you now receive any new water efficiency or leak detection services as a result of renegotiating?



Base: All renegotiators (34)

3.147 Around three quarters of customers who renegotiated in the last two years (78%) felt that the quality of retail services was about the same as before they renegotiated. While more than a tenth (15%) felt these services had improved, a small proportion (7%) felt they had got worse.

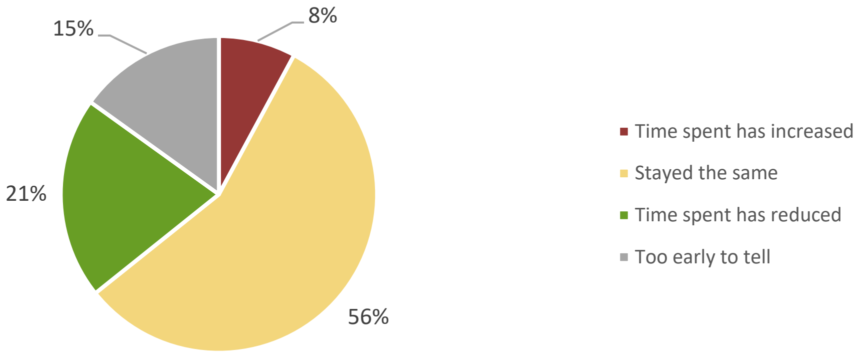
Figure 69: Is the quality of retail services like billing and meter-reading from your new retailer better, worse, or about the same as before you renegotiated?



Base: All renegotiators (35)

3.148 Most renegotiators (56%) said that the amount the organisation spends dealing with bills had remained the same each billing cycle, although around a fifth (21%) said the amount of time spent had reduced, and a further 15% had yet to determine this at the time of the interview.

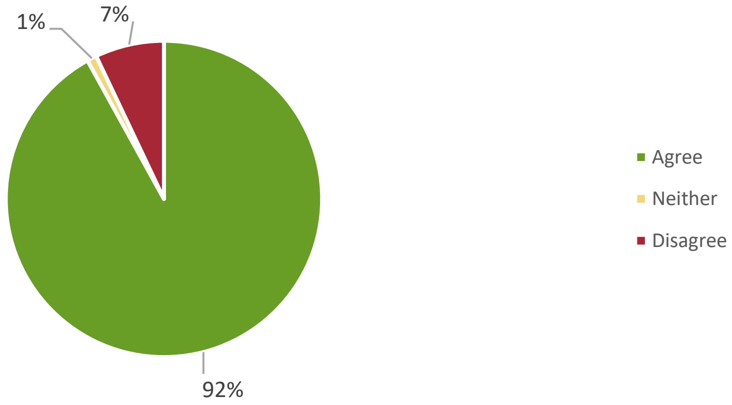
Figure 70: Has the amount of time your organisation spends dealing with your water bills each billing cycle increased, reduced or stayed the same since renegotiating?



Base: All renegotiators (35)

3.149 Overall, the vast majority agreed that it had been worth their while to renegotiate (92%), relatively few disagreed (7%).

Figure 71: Overall, taking the whole experience of renegotiating into account, do you agree or disagree that it was worthwhile for you to renegotiate a better deal with your existing retailer?



Base: All renegotiators (34)

Table of Figures

Appendix: Questionnaire

Non-Household Customer Research – Business Customer Insight Survey 2021

INTRO AND CALL MANAGEMENT

***INTERVIEWER:* Read out**

Good morning/afternoon, please can I confirm that this is [ORGANISATION NAME]?
[If No then take new name and continue]
Could I speak to the person responsible for dealing with the site's utility providers, specifically its water and waste services?
My name is &%&%% and I am calling on behalf of the water regulator, Ofwat and the consumer watchdog, CCWater on behalf of Opinion Research Services (ORS), an independent research organisation.
We are carrying out a survey to find out your experiences with water and waste water retail services, (if necessary: that is the billing, meter reading and customer service and any other value added services you receive). Would you be the appropriate person within your organisation to speak to about water and waste water retail services used at this site?
If no: Is there somebody else within your organisation who could answer questions regarding water supply to your company at that site?

Everything you say will be treated in confidence by ORS and neither Ofwat nor CCWater will receive any personally identifiable information. I also need to point out that this conversation is recorded and may be monitored for training and quality purposes. I can give you a link to Ofwat's, CCwater's or our privacy policy if you'd like.
If necessary: The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

INTERVIEWER: PROVIDE AS NECESSARY
Ofwat privacy policy: www.ofwat.gov.uk/publication/privacy-policy
CCWater privacy policy: www.ccwater.org.uk/privacystatement
ORS privacy policy: www.ors.org.uk/privacy
ORS TEAM CONTACT DETAILS: 0800 107 7890 or info@ors.org.uk
Contact details for Ofwat – Sean Mills on 07458 134894 or Sean.Mills@Ofwat.gov.uk

If the respondent doesn't wish to be contacted again for research purposes:
Are you happy for us to transfer your number to Ofwat or selected research organisations working on their behalf so that they can ensure they do not call you again in future?

Yes	☐ Thank and close
No	☐ Thank and close
Terminated before consent could be given	☐ Close

***INTERVIEWER IF NECESSARY (i.e. if respondent asks how their details were obtained)*: Your number was selected from a list of commercially available numbers. Your contact details will at no time be released to any other parties and will only be used in connection with this survey.**

Screening questions

S1 (Ask all)
Is this business run from a business premises or from somewhere else, e.g. a home residence or a mobile business? INTERVIEWER MAKE SURE THAT THIS BUSINESS IS NOT RUN FROM SOMEONE'S HOME

Business premises	1
No fixed business premises (e.g. van/home residence)	2

S2 (ASK if S1 = 2 [no fixed business premises])
Just to clarify, so your organisation DOESN'T have ANY OTHER main premises?

No other main business premises – go to display 1 and terminate interview	☐	1
There are other main business premises other than my/someone else's home	☐	2
Refused go to display 1 and terminate interview	☐	98

If business does not operate from a business premises: DISPLAY 1

> **I'm sorry we only need to speak to organisations that do not operate mainly from home. Thank you for your time anyway and sorry to have disturbed you.**
>
> **INTERVIEWER - TERMINATE THE CALL**

S3 (Ask all)
Can I check whether your organisation is responsible for making decisions about and paying for water utilities, or whether someone other than the organisation, such as the landlord or management company, is responsible for this? Probe and code one only

Organisation makes its own decisions about utilities	☐	1
Decisions about utilities are made by a third party, e.g. landlord – capture details of third party if possible, then go to display 2 and terminate interview	☐	2
Refused	☐	98

If decisions made by a third party: DISPLAY 2

> **I'm sorry we only need to speak to organisations that are able to make their own decisions regarding water utilities.**
> **Thank you for your time anyway and sorry to have disturbed you.**
> **INTERVIEWER - TERMINATE THE CALL**

S5 (ASK ALL)
Can I just check, are you a private business, a public sector organisation, or a voluntary/non-profit making organisation? Probe and code one only

Private business	☐	1
Public sector	☐	2
Voluntary/non-profit	☐	3

S6 (ASK ALL)

Does your organisation have more than one site?

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2

S7 (ASK IF YES S6=1)
Is this site at which you are based…? **Probe and code one only**

A head office	☐	1
Branch or subsidiary	☐	2
A centre with a specific function	☐	3

S9 (ASK if more than 1 premises [S6=1])
Including that site, how many premises does your organisation operate from in the UK?
Interviewer: Record number of premises
Write in number
Don't know
Refused

S10 (ASK if more than 1 premises [S6=1])
Do you make decisions regarding water and waste water retail services for all sites within the organisation or just for the site at which you are based? **Code one only**

For all sites	☐	1
Just for that site	☐	2

S11 (ASK ALL)
What is your organisation's FULL postcode [IF S6=1: at that site where you are based]?
(if S7 =>1) **INTERVIEWER: This should be the postcode of the organisation's premises where the respondent (decision maker) primarily works.**
INTERVIEWER IF NECESSARY: **This will enable your responses to be mapped to the current water region but your organisation's postcode will NOT be included in the data that is passed to Ofwat.**
INTERVIEWER: The postcode you enter below will be checked against a list of valid entries and a display will appear if the code given is invalid.

Freetext - Record word for word	☐	90
Refused	☐	98

S12 (ASK if S6=1 and postcode NOT in Scotland)
Does your organisation have any premises in Scotland?

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

S13 (Ask if postcode is in Scotland or Wales and if S6=1)

Does your organisation have any premises in England?
Yes
No - Thank and close Go to Display 3

DISPLAY if S12=yes or S13=yes
Please answer all questions in this survey focusing only on your experience in England and (if applicable) high water consumption sites in Wales.

DISPLAY TO ALL: **For one of the questions later on, it would be really helpful if you were able to locate a recent water bill for your organisation …Whilst we run the interview, could you or a colleague possibly locate a bill?**

***INTERVIEWER IF NECESSARY (i.e. if respondent asks what counts as a high consumption site in Wales)*:** **By a high consumption site in Wales, we are referring to sites which consume over 50 megalitres of water a year – equivalent to 50,000 cubic metres.**

WRONGAREA [NB High usage organisations in Wales will be flagged to prevent them being flagged as Out of Area]

Unfortunately, I can only interview people whose organisation is based in England or organisations in Wales consuming over 50 megalitres of water a year. Our system shows that your organisation does not fit this profile so I am unable to continue.Thank you for your time anyway and sorry to have disturbed you. **If necessary: Due to policy differences throughout the UK, most of the issues covered in this survey are only relevant to organisations in England and a very small proportion of organisations in Wales – for more information see www.ofwat.gov.uk/regulated-companies/markets/business-retail-market/** ***INTERVIEWER - TERMINATE INTERVIEW***

SURVEY QUESTIONS

SECTION A. Awareness

A1 (Ask all)

Since April 2017, organisations have been able to change the company providing their water and waste water retail services – that is the company or companies that provide customer services, meter reading and billing - or potentially move to a better deal with their existing retailer. Prior to this survey were you aware of this?

Interviewer, if necessary: water and waste water retailers are not responsible for the supply of and quality of the water received or for removing and processing sewerage. If necessary: 'Organisations' include businesses, charities and public sector organisations

Yes – aware	☐	1
No – not aware	☐	2
Refused	☐	98

SECTION B Satisfaction

DISPLAY 1: I'd like to ask about your current water and waste water retailer(s) – that is the company or companies that provide customer services, meter reading and billing. They are not responsible for the supply of and quality of the water you receive or for removing and processing sewerage.

B1 (ASK ALL)

***Overall*, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your current water and waste water retailer(s)?**

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from don't know or refused. Code one only

Very satisfied	☐	1
Fairly satisfied	☐	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	☐	3
Fairly dissatisfied	☐	4
Very dissatisfied	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

B2 (ASK if B1=4, 5)

Why are you dissatisfied?

INTERVIEWER: if respondent says water quality issue – probe for 'anything else?' Code all that apply

Water quality issue (e.g. cloudy water/strange taste)	☐	1
Waste water issue (e.g. sewer flooding/blocked drains; issues with repair to sewerage infrastructure).	☐	2
Price (e.g. too expensive)	☐	3
Customer service (e.g. slow to respond to issues, hard to get in contact with etc.)	☐	4
Billing issues (e.g. not receiving bills, incorrect charges)	☐	5
Metering issues (e.g. incorrect or infrequent readings)	☐	6
Other (please specify)	☐	7
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

B3 (Ask if B1 =1, 2)

Are there any particular reasons why you are satisfied? What are they? Probe and code all that apply

No/no real reason	☐	1
Price (cheap/not expensive)	☐	2
Good customer service	☐	3
Experienced no/few problems	☐	4
Positive experience with billing (e.g. accurate, timely)	☐	5
Positive experience with metering (e.g. frequent/accurate readings)	☐	6
Other (specify)	☐	7
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

SECTION C. Behaviour in the market

C1 (ASK if aware A1=1)
Has your organisation ever switched provider for water and waste water retail services?
INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from don't know. Probe and code one only.
If the organisation definitely has no retailer (i.e. because it has a licence from Ofwat to self-supply its own water services, end the interview and record the outcome as "Self supply/Org has no water retailer" - however this should be very rare/only affect a tiny proportion of organisations.

Yes	☐	1
No [treat as not having switched – don't ask section D]	☐	2
Don't know [treat as not having switched– don't ask section D]	☐	97

C2 (ASK if C1=1**)**
Just to double check, did your organisation actively <u>choose to switch</u> retailer? IF NO, CHECK: Can I confirm then that your organisation was moved to another water and waste water retailer automatically, without your organisation having taken a decision to move? (IF YES, CODE AS NO BELOW)

INTERVIEWER: If the respondent believes they were switched automatically <u>and not by choice</u> then they should NOT be coded as switched. *Also if the respondent changed to self supply, that is not counted as a switch of retailer for our purposes, we don't need to interview them - terminate and use outcome code "Self supply/Org has no water retailer"* .

Yes – actively chose to switch retailers	☐	1
No - automatically transferred to the 'default' retailer	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

If NO, <u>move back to C1 and recode as 2.</u>

If necessary: *if the switch was made automatically then you are still with the retailer that your former water company transferred you to*

C3A (ASK if C1=1)
Have you switched more than once? Probe and code one only

No – just once	☐	1
Yes – twice	☐	2
Yes – more than twice	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97

C3B (ASK if C1=1)

When did you [last] switch: was it in the last 12 months, or longer ago? Prompt if longer ago: Was it within about the last 2 years, or was it definitely longer ago than that?

If necessary: If you can't remember exactly when it occurred, please give me your best estimate.

Interviewer: if the organisation has switched more than once, please code based on when the most recent switch occurred. This is a critical question for routing, please try to code one of the first 3 options below if at all possible

In the last 12 months [Ask Sec D unless C5b=1 or C5c=1, then ask C6]	☐	1
Longer ago than 12 months, but within the last 2 years or so [Ask Sec D unless C5b=1 (then ask Sec E) or C5b=2 or C5c=1, (then ask C6)]	☐	2
Definitely longer ago than 2 years [treat as not having switched – don't ask section D]	☐	3
Don't know– go to new q C3C	☐	97

[If C3B = Don't know]

C3C Was it recent enough that you would feel able to answer a few questions about the experience of the switch?

Yes – [ask section D *unless* they've also renegotiated, in which case ask C6]

No – [treat as not having switched – don't ask section D]

Ref – [treat as not having switched – don't ask section D]

C4 (ASK if A1=1)

Since April 2017 it is now also possible for organisations to renegotiate their contract with their existing retailer. Renegotiation might include securing incentives like a lower tariff, additional services or one-off offers like cashback. [If not switched (C1= 2, 97, 98): Since April 2017,] [If switched (C1=1): As well as having switched,] have you managed to successfully renegotiate a new deal or a new contract with your existing retailer? Probe and code one only

Yes	☐	1
No [treat as not having reneg – don't ask section E]	☐	2
Don't know [treat as not having reneg – don't ask section E]	☐	97

C5A (If C4 = 1,)

Have you renegotiated more than once? Probe and code one only

No – just once	☐
Yes – twice	☐
Yes – more than twice	☐
Don't know	☐

C5B (ASK if C4=1)

When did you [last] renegotiate: was it in the last 12 months, or longer ago? Prompt if longer ago: Was it within about the last 2 years, or was it definitely longer ago than that?

If necessary: If you can't remember exactly when it occurred, please give me your best estimate.

Interviewer: if the organisation has switched more than once, please code based on when the most recent switch occurred. This is a critical question for routing, please try to code one of the first 3 options below if at all possible

In the last 12 months [Ask Sec E unless C3b=1 or C3c=1, then ask C6]	☐	1
Longer ago than 12 months, but within the last 2 years or so [ask Sec E unless C3B=1 (then ask Sec D) or if C3B=2 or C3C=1 (then ask C6)]	☐	2
Definitely longer ago than 2 years [treat as not having reneg – don't ask section E]	☐	3
Don't know– go to new q C5C	☐	97

[If C5B = Don't know]

C5C Was it recent enough that you would feel able to answer a few questions about the experience of the renegotiation?

Yes – [ask Section E unless they've also switched, in which case ask C6]

No – [treat as not having reneg – don't ask section E]

Ref – [treat as not having reneg – don't ask section E]

C6 ~~(Ask if both switched and renegotiated – C1=1and C4=1)~~ (Ask if both switched and renegotiated and it's not apparent which was more recent i.e. EITHER answers to 3b and 5b are equal (1-3) OR 3c and/or 5c needed to be asked

Which did you do most recently: Switch retailer or successfully renegotiate? Probe and code one only

If not sure: Which would you feel most able to answer some questions about, the switch or the renegotiation? Interviewer: If respondent says don't know it will route to the switch section

Switch [ask Sec D]	☐	1
Renegotiate [ask Sec E]	☐	2
Don't know – [ask Sec D]	☐	97

SECTION D. Switching

Display if: (C3B = 1 or 2, C3A=1 and C6 does not equal 2) **Thinking now about the water and waste water retailer you have switched to…**

Display if: (C3B = 1 or 2, C3A = 2,3 and C6 does not equal 2) **Thinking only about your most recent switch…**

D1 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

What is the total length of your new contract? This does not mean the time remaining on the contract but the length of the new contract from start to end.

Interviewer, if less than a year check they mean the total length of the new contract and NOT the time remaining on it. Code one only

Less than a year	☐	1
A year but less than 2 years	☐	2
2 years but less than 3 years	☐	3
3 years or more	☐	4
Rolling/no fixed length	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D2 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

How did you arrange the switch?

Read out options and code most appropriate (one only).

Through a retailer website or direct contact with retailer	☐	1
Through a broker or consultant	☐	2
Other (please specify)	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D3 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

How many, if any, different retailers did you receive price quotations from prior to switching?

Interviewer: Record number of retailers

Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D4 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

Which of the following best describes your experience of agreeing a price with your new retailer?

Read out options and code most appropriate (one only).

The new retailer offered a price on a take it or leave it basis	☐	1
You negotiated the price with the new retailer	☐	2
You controlled the process by running a formal tender process	☐	3
A broker or consultant specified the pricing	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97

Refused ☐ 98

D5 (ASK if through a broker/consultant D2=2)
Which of the following best describes your experience of agreeing a price with broker or consultant?
Read out options and code most appropriate (one only).

Your broker/consultant offered a price on a take it or leave it basis	☐	1
Your broker worked with you to negotiate a price with the new retailer	☐	2
Your broker approached you with a new deal in hand	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D6 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)
Before you signed up with your new retailer, did you have contact with your previous retailer regarding the possibility of a better deal? **Probe as necessary and code one only**

Yes – I approached my previous retailer	☐	1
Yes – my previous retailer approached me before I signed up with my new retailer	☐	2
Yes – my previous retailer approached me after I had signed up with my new retailer	☐	3
No – I didn't have any contact with my previous retailer regarding a better offer to stay with them	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D7 (ASK if D6= 1/2/3]) **[Multi]**
What, if anything, did your previous retailer offer you to encourage you to stay?
Interviewer: Do not read out. Probe. Code all that apply

Nothing	☐	1
Cheaper tariff	☐	2
Additional services	☐	3
Other (please specify)	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D8 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)
Once you had chosen the retailer you wanted to switch to, how easy or difficult did you find the <u>process</u> of switching retailer? **Code one only**
Interviewer, if necessary: this is not about the process of deciding to switch, but about the act of switching itself

Very easy	☐	1
Fairly easy	☐	2
Neither easy nor difficult	☐	3
Fairly difficult	☐	4
Very difficult	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D9 (if D8 = 4-5)
Why do you say that? **Probe fully. Record verbatim and code all that apply**

Freetext (record word for word)	☐	1

Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D10 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the time it took for the switch to take place? Code one only

Very satisfied	☐	1
Fairly satisfied	☐	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	☐	3
Fairly dissatisfied	☐	4
Very dissatisfied	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D11 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

Why did you start looking into switching?

Interviewer: Do not read out. Probe. Code all that apply

Lower price/bill	☐	1
To get higher quality service (e.g. more detailed billing)	☐	2
To get better customer service (e.g. when I contact them)	☐	3
Dissatisfied with previous service provider	☐	4
Bill consolidation for water and waste water	☐	5
[if S6=1:] Bill consolidation across multiple premises	☐	6
Bill consolidation across multiple utilities (e.g. gas, telecoms or electricity billed with water)	☐	7
Incentives/cashback	☐	8
Online account management services	☐	9
Water efficiency services	☐	10
Leakage control services	☐	11
Enhanced metering services	☐	12
Someone/a broker/a consultant got in touch	☐	13
Other (please specify)	☐	14
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D12 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

[Multi]

Were any of the following reasons for looking into switching?

SHOW WHERE CODES NOT MENTIONED IN D11– as indicated

Interviewer: Read out and code all that apply

Lower price/bill SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODE 1	☐	1
To get higher quality service SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODES 2, 3, 4	☐	2
To consolidate bills SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODES 5, 6, 7	☐	3
Incentives/cashback SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODE 8	☐	4
Online account management services SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODE 9	☐	5
Water efficiency services SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODE 10	☐	6

Leakage control services SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODE 11	☐	7
Enhanced metering services SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODE 12	☐	8
Prompted by a broker or consultant getting in touch SHOW IF D11 ≠ CODE 13	☐	9
None of these	☐	10

D13 **(ASK if higher quality service – D11=2, 3, 4 or D12=2)** **[Multi]**

What was it specifically about the service that you wanted to improve?

Interviewer: Read out and code all that apply

More detailed billing	☐	1
More accurate billing	☐	2
Different/better billing frequency	☐	3
Different/better payment method	☐	4
New/different/better metering arrangements	☐	5
New/different/better meter reading arrangements	☐	6
Better service when contacting the provider	☐	7
Other (please specify)	☐	8
	☐	9

D14 **(ASK if to consolidate bills –D12=3)** **[Multi]**

In what way did you want to consolidate your bills?

Interviewer: Read out and code all that apply

For water and waste water	☐	1
[if S6=1] Across multiple premises	☐	2
Across multiple utilities (e.g. gas, telecoms or electricity billed with water)	☐	3
Other (please specify)	☐	4
Don't know	☐	5
Refused	☐	6

D15 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

What benefits, if any, did you actually get from switching?

INTERVIEWER: Probe but do not prompt. Code all that apply

Nothing	☐	1
Lower price/bill	☐	2
Higher quality service (e.g. more detailed billing)	☐	3
Better customer service (e.g. when I contact them)	☐	4
Bill consolidation for water and waste water	☐	5
[if S6=1:] Bill consolidation across multiple premises	☐	6
Bill consolidation across multiple utilities (e.g. gas, telecoms or electricity billed with water)	☐	7
Incentives/cashback	☐	8
Online account management services	☐	9
Water efficiency services	☐	10
Leakage control services	☐	11
Enhanced metering services	☐	12
Other (please specify)	☐	13
Worse off	☐	14
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D16A (ASK if D15 is ≠ 'nothing' [1] and D15 ≠ 'worse off' [14])

Did the benefits meet your expectations? **Probe and code one only**

Yes – met expectations	☐	1
Yes – exceeded expectations	☐	2
No – didn't meet expectations	☐	3
Not yet / too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D16B (ASK if D16A=3)

You say the benefits didn't meet your expectations. Can you say why this was?

INTERVIEWER: probe to see if retailer or broker promised something that wasn't delivered

Freetext (record word for word)	☐	90
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D17A (ASK if D15 ≠ to 'worse off' [14])

Overall, with regard to water and waste water retail services would you say you are better off, worse off or about the same now compared with before you switched? **Code one only**

Better off	☐	1
Worse off	☐	2
About the same	☐	3
Unsure / too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D17B (ASK if D15 = 'worse off' [14] or D17A = 'worse off' [2])

You say that you are worse off as a result of switching. Can you say why this is?

Freetext (record word for word)	☐	90
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D18 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

In percentage terms, roughly how much have your water bills reduced by, or do you expect them to reduce by, as a result of switching retailer, if at all? You can provide this answer in pounds sterling if you prefer

Interviewer, if necessary: if respondent can only answer in pounds, ask for the savings made/expected ANNUALLY and record in £'s

Interviewer, if necessary: probe for whether or not there has been a reduction or if they are unable to comment yet. Probe on the basis of what they've said to you in the interview so far

No reduction (0%)	☐	1
Write in %	☐	2
Write in £ - ANNUAL FIGURE	☐	3
Too early to tell (i.e. if the switch only happened recently)	☐	4
No reduction but actually bills have increased or expect them to increase	☐	5
Bills have reduced/are expected to reduce, but not sure by what amount	☐	6
Don't know	☐	97

Refused	☐	98

D19 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

As well as offering lower tariffs, retailers can also offer services to make your use of water more efficient and to detect leaks better. Do you now receive any new water efficiency or leak detection services as a result of switching?

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D20 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

Is the quality of retail services like billing and meter-reading from your new retailer better, worse, or about the same as your previous retailer?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from too early to tell, don't know or refused. Code one only

Better	☐	1
About the same	☐	2
Worse	☐	3
Too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D21 (ASK if switched in last 24 months C3B= 1 or 2, has more than one premises S6=1, and D15 ≠ 6)

As a result of switching, have you consolidated your water bill across multiple premises into a single bill?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options as necessary- apart from don't know or refused. Code one only

Yes – consolidated across premises	☐	1
No – did not consolidate across premises	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D22 (Ask if switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 and D15 ≠ 7)

As a result of switching, have you consolidated your water retail services with any of your other utilities, such as electric, telephone or gas into a single bill?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options as necessary- apart from don't know or refused. Code one only

Yes – consolidated with other utilities	☐	1
No – did not consolidate with other utilities	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D23 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

Has the amount of time your organisation spends dealing with your water bills each billing cycle increased, reduced or stayed the same since switching? **Probe and code one only**

Time spent has increased	☐	1
Time spent has reduced	☐	2
Stayed the same	☐	3
Too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

D24 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C3B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C3b but c3c=1), and respondent has also not renegotiated more recently at c5b/c6)

Overall, taking the whole experience of switching into account, do you agree or disagree that it was worthwhile for you to switch? **Code one only**

Strongly agree	☐	1
Tend to agree	☐	2
Neither agree nor disagree	☐	3
Tend to disagree	☐	4
Strongly disagree	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

SECTION E. Renegotiating

Display if: (C5A = 1, C5B=1 or 2 and C6 does not equal 1) **Thinking now about your most recent successful renegotiation…**

Display if: (C5A = 2 or 3, C5B = 1 or 2 and C6 does not equal 1) **Thinking only about your most recent successful renegotiation…**

E1 (ASK If renegotiated in last 24 months C5B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)

What is the total length of your new or renewed contract? This does not mean the time remaining on the contract but the length of the new or renewed contract from start to end.

Interviewer, if less than a year check they mean the total length of the new contract and NOT the time remaining on it

Less than a year	☐	1
A year but less than 2 years	☐	2
2 years but less than 3 years	☐	3
3 years or more	☐	4
Rolling/no fixed length	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E2 (ASK If renegotiated in last 24 months C5B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)

How did you renegotiate?
Interviewer if necessary: Read out options and code one only

Through a retailer website or direct contact with retailer	☐	1
Through a broker or consultant	☐	2
Other (please specify)	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E3 (ASK if through a retailer website/direct contact with retailer E2=1)
Which of the following best describes your engagement with your retailer regarding the renegotiation? Read out and code one only

They were happy to discuss a new price and/or services	☐	1
They offered a take it or leave it new deal	☐	2
They were reluctant to discuss a new price and/or services	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E4 (ASK if renegotiated in last 24 months C5b=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)
Before you renegotiated, did you explore what else was on offer with other retailers?

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E5 (ASK if E4=1)
How many, if any, different retailers did you receive price quotations from prior to renegotiating or getting a new deal?
Interviewer: Record number of retailers

Write in number	☐	90
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E6 (ASK if renegotiated in last 24 months C5b=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)
Why did you start looking into renegotiating? INTERVIEWER: Probe but do not prompt. Code all that apply

Lower price/bill	☐	1
To get higher quality service (e.g. more detailed billing)	☐	2
To get better customer service (e.g. when I contact them)	☐	3
Bill consolidation for water and waste water	☐	4
[if S6=1:] Bill consolidation across multiple premises	☐	5
Bill consolidation across multiple utilities (e.g. gas, telecoms or electricity billed with water)	☐	6
Incentives/cashback	☐	7
Online account management services	☐	8
Water efficiency services	☐	9
Leakage control services	☐	10
Enhanced metering services	☐	11
Someone/a broker/a consultant got in touch	☐	12

Other (please specify)	☐	13
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E7 (ASK If switched in last 24 months C5B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6) [Multi]

Were any of the following reasons for looking into renegotiating?

SHOW WHERE CODES NOT MENTIONED IN E6– as indicated

Interviewer: Read out and code all that apply

Lower price/bill SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODE 1	☐	1
To get higher quality service SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODES 2, 3,	☐	2
To consolidate bills SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODES 4,5, 6,	☐	3
Incentives/cashback SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODE 7	☐	4
Online account management services SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODE 8	☐	5
Water efficiency services SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODE 9	☐	6
Leakage control services SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODE 10	☐	7
Enhanced metering services SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODE 11	☐	8
Prompted by a broker or consultant getting in touch SHOW IF E6 ≠ CODE 12	☐	9
None of these	☐	10

E8 (ASK if higher quality service – E6=2, 3 or E7=2) [Multi]

What was it specifically about the service that you wanted to improve?

Interviewer: Read out and code all that apply

More detailed billing
More accurate billing
Different/better billing frequency
Different/better payment method
New/different/better metering arrangements
New/different/better meter reading arrangements
Better service when contacting the provider
Other (please specify)
Refused

E9 (Ask if to consolidate bills E7=3) [Multi]

In what way did you want to consolidate your bills?

Interviewer: Read out and code all that apply

For water and waste water
[if S6=1] Across multiple premises
Across multiple utilities (e.g. gas, telecoms or electricity billed with water)
Other (please specify)
Don't know
Refused

E10 (ASK if renegotiated in last 24 months C5b=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C61)

What benefits, if any, did you actually get from renegotiating? INTERVIEWER: Probe but do not prompt. Code all that apply

Nothing	☐	1
Lower price/bill	☐	2
Higher quality service (e.g. more detailed billing)	☐	3
Better customer service (e.g. when I contact them)	☐	4
Bill consolidation for water and waste water	☐	5
[if S6=1:] Bill consolidation across multiple premises	☐	6
Bill consolidation across multiple utilities (e.g. gas, telecoms or electricity billed with water)	☐	7
Incentives/cashback	☐	8
Online account management services	☐	9
Water efficiency services	☐	10
Leakage control services	☐	11
Enhanced metering services	☐	12
Other (please specify)	☐	13
Worse off	☐	14
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E11A (ASK if E10 is ≠ 'nothing' [1] and ≠ 'worse off' [14])

Did the benefits meet your expectations?

Interviewer: read out and clarify where necessary. Code one only

Yes – met expectations	☐	1
Yes – exceeded expectations	☐	2
No – didn't meet expectations	☐	3
Not yet / too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E11B (Ask if E11A=3)

You say the benefits didn't meet your expectations. Can you say why this was?

INTERVIEWER: probe to see if retailer or broker promised something that wasn't delivered

Freetext (record word for word)

Don't know

Refused

E12A (ASK if E10 ≠ to 'worse off' [14])

Overall, with regard to water and waste water retail services would you say you are better off, worse off or about the same now compared with before you renegotiated? Code one only

Better off	☐	1
Worse off	☐	2
About the same	☐	3
Unsure / too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E12B (ASK if E10 = 'worse off' [14] or E12A = 'worse off' [2])

You say that you are worse off as a result of renegotiating. Can you say why this is?

Freetext (record word for word)	☐	90
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E13 (ASK if renegotiated in last 24 months C5b=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)

In percentage terms, roughly how much have your water bills reduced by, or do you expect them to reduce by, as a result of renegotiating, if at all? You can provide this answer in pounds sterling if you prefer

Interviewer, if necessary: if respondent can only answer in pounds, ask for the savings made/expected ANNUALLY and record in £'s

Interviewer, if necessary: probe for whether or not there has been a reduction or if they are unable to comment yet. Probe on the basis of what they've said to you in the interview so far

No reduction (0%)	☐	1
Write in %	☐	2
Write in £ - ANNUAL FIGURE	☐	3
Too early to tell	☐	4
No reduction but actually bills have increased or expect them to increase	☐	5
Bills have reduced/are expected to reduce, but not sure by what amount	☐	97
Don't know	☐	99
Refused	☐	98

[ ]

[ ]

E14 (ASK If renegotiated in last 24 months C5B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)

As well as offering lower tariffs, retailers can also offer services to make your use of water more efficient and to detect leaks better. Do you now receive any new water efficiency or leak detection services as a result of renegotiating?

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E15 (ASK if renegotiated in last 24 months C5b=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)

Is the quality of retail services like billing and meter-reading better, worse, or about the same as before you renegotiated?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from too early to tell, don't know or refused. Code one only

Better	☐	1
About the same	☐	2
Worse	☐	3
Too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E16 (ASK If renegotiated in last 24 months C5b=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)

Has the amount of time your organisation spends dealing with your water bills each billing cycle increased, reduced or stayed the same since renegotiating? **Probe and code one only**

Time spent has increased	☐	1
Time spent has reduced	☐	2
Stayed the same	☐	3
Too early to tell	☐	4
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

E17 (ASK if renegotiated in last 24 months C5B=1 or 2 (OR unable to recall timing at C5b but c5c=1), and respondent has also not switched more recently at C3b/C6)

Overall, taking the whole experience of renegotiating into account, do you agree or disagree that it was worthwhile for you to renegotiate a better deal with your existing retailer? **Code one only**

Strongly agree	☐	1
Tend to agree	☐	2
Neither agree nor disagree	☐	3
Tend to disagree	☐	4
Strongly disagree	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

SECTION F: Aware non-switchers and non-renegotiators

F1 (ASK if aware AND not switched/not successfully renegotiated in the last 12 months (A1=1 AND {C1=2,97,98 OR C3B=2,3,97,98} AND {C4=2,97,98 OR C5B=2,3,97,98})

Thinking about the last 12 months, which of the following scenarios best applies to your organisation?

Interviewer: Read out options. Respondents in the process of switching or moving to a new deal should be coded 1 but only if they have actually instigated a switch/change. Code one only

You have agreed a switch to a new retailer or negotiated a new deal with your existing provider, but are waiting for this to start	☐	1
You are considering switching or renegotiating with your existing provider AND have taken steps to search for and compare different providers	☐	2
You tried to switch or renegotiate but found you couldn't	☐	3
You considered switching or renegotiating but decided not to	☐	4
You have switched more than a year ago and are not currently considering switching or renegotiating	☐	5
You have not considered switching or renegotiating but plan to do so in the future	☐	6
You have not considered switching or renegotiating and have no plans to do so	☐	7
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

SECTION G: Searching and Comparing

G1 (ASK if switched C1=1 OR F1=1, 2, 3, 4)

Which of the following, if any, have you used to search for information about alternative retailers?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from don't know or refused. Code all that apply.

The Open Water website	☐	1
A retailer's website	☐	2
A price comparison website	☐	3
Direct contact with another retailer	☐	4
A broker	☐	5
A consultant	☐	6
Other (please specify)	☐	7
I didn't search (none)	☐	8
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G2 (ASK if G1=1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

How easy or difficult was it for you to find the information you felt like you needed to make an informed choice?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from don't know or refused. Code one only

Very easy	☐	1
Fairly easy	☐	2
Neither easy nor difficult	☐	3
Fairly difficult	☐	4
Very difficult	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G3 (ASK if G2=4, 5) **[Multi]**

Why was this difficult?

INTERVIEWER: Probe but do not prompt. Code all that apply

Didn't know where to look for information/where to go	☐	1
Don't know enough about the new market	☐	2
Not enough time	☐	3
Information not available via phone/online/my preferred communication method	☐	4
Information found wasn't relevant	☐	5
Information found wasn't clear/didn't understand information	☐	6
I don't know the price I'm paying now	☐	7
Other (specify)	☐	8
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G4 (ASK if G1=1,2,3,4,5,6,7)

How easy or difficult was it to compare different retailers?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from don't know or refused.

Interviewer, if necessary: for example, in terms of price or services offered Code one only

Very easy	☐	1
Fairly easy	☐	2

Neither easy nor difficult	☐	3
Fairly difficult	☐	4
Very difficult	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G5 (ASK if G4=4, 5)

Why was this difficult?

INTERVIEWER: Probe but do not prompt. Code all that apply

Prices weren't clear/were hard to compare	☐	1
Information wasn't consistent	☐	2
Couldn't get enough quotes to compare/quotes weren't of sufficient quality	☐	3
Didn't know what to compare (lack of familiarity with the market)	☐	4
Not enough time	☐	5
Retailer failed to respond to query	☐	6
Retailers not interested in me as a customer	☐	7
Information not available via phone/online/my preferred communication method	☐	8
Other (specify)	☐	9
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G6 (ASK if F1 =5, 6, 7 [plan to in future or have not considered])

Why have you not yet considered switching retailer or renegotiating with your existing retailer in the last 12 months?

INTERVIEWER: Probe but do not prompt. Code all that apply

Switched or renegotiated before (over 12 months ago) and locked into contract since	☐	1
Switched or renegotiated before (over 12 months ago) so haven't considered it since	☐	2
Switched or renegotiated before (over 12 months ago) but had a bad experience	☐	15
Service is good/happy with current retailer/provision	☐	3
Don't know any other retailers/no alternative	☐	4
Don't know how to switch	☐	5
Too much effort to switch	☐	6
No point in switching	☐	7
Prefer a local company	☐	8
Better the devil you know	☐	9
Bad experiences switching other utilities (e.g. gas, electric, telephone)	☐	10
No retailer is offering what I want/what I am looking for	☐	11
Worried about being worse off after switching/being taken advantage of	☐	12
Intend to in the future, but haven't got round to it	☐	13
Considered previously but decided against it	☐	14
Other (please specify)	☐	95
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G7 (ASK if F1=4 [Considered but decided not to]) [Multi]

In the last 12 months, why did you decide not to switch retailers or renegotiate with your existing retailer after considering it?

INTERVIEWER: Probe but do not prompt. Code all that apply

Savings were minimal/didn't save enough money	☐	1

No way to compare services/prices	☐	2
No other benefits to be gained from switching	☐	3
Service is good/happy with current retailer	☐	4
Don't know any other retailers/no alternative	☐	5
Too much effort to switch	☐	6
Prefer a local company	☐	7
Better the devil you know	☐	8
Bad experiences switching other utilities (e.g. gas, electric, telephone)	☐	9
No retailer is offering what I want/what I am looking for	☐	10
Worried about being worse off after switching/being taken advantage of	☐	11
Had switched before and didn't want to again so soon	☐	12
Other (please specify)	☐	13
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G8 (ASK if F1= 1, 2, 3, 4) [Multi]

In the last 12 months why did you start looking into switching or renegotiating?

Probe and code all that apply

Lower price/bill	☐	1
Higher quality service (e.g. more tailored billing)		2
Better customer service (eg. when I contact them)	☐	3
Bill consolidation for water and waste water	☐	4
[if S6=1:] Bill consolidation across multiple premises	☐	5
Bill consolidation across utilities		6
Incentives/cashback	☐	7
Online account management services		8
Water efficiency services	☐	9
Leakage control services	☐	10
Enhanced metering services	☐	11
Other (please specify)	☐	12
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G9 (ASK ALL)

In percentage terms, what level of annual water bill reduction would encourage you to switch or consider switching retailer?

(Do not read out) Would not switch retailer due to water bill reduction	☐	1
(Do not read out) Would not switch at all	☐	2
Write in %	☐	90
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G10 (ASK if not aware (A1=2, 98) or if not considered/currently considering switching or renegotiating F1=6, 7)

Is there anything else which would encourage you to switch or consider switching retailer or renegotiate or consider renegotiating with you existing retailer, such as…? Read out and code all that apply

No, nothing	☐	1
Cheaper bills / cashback	☐	2
Consolidated bills (across multiple sites or utilities)	☐	3
Better customer service	☐	4

Better billing e.g. billing app	☐	5
Leak detection	☐	6
Water efficiency services	☐	7
Improved metering or consumption data eg. data logger	☐	8
More frequent/reliable meter readings	☐	9
Anything else (specify)	☐	10
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G11 **(ASK all)**
Every business premises has a unique Supply Point Identifier to identify the water and/or sewerage supplies at the property, this is sometimes referred to as a SPID number (If necessary: The SPID number is similar to the MPAN number for gas and electricity).
Prior to this survey were you aware that you had a Supply Point Identifier number? And would you know how to find it? Interviewer: We're asking them at this stage if they know what a SPID is/that the SPID exists, we're not expecting them to know their actual SPID number.

Yes, I'm aware of the SPID – Yes, I know where to find it	☐	1
Yes, I'm aware of the SPID, but wouldn't be able to find it	☐	2
No, I'm not aware of what a SPID is	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

G12 **(ASK all)**
The SPID number should appear on your water bill, it is 13 digits long. (Interviewer if necessary: there are sometimes two, one for water and one for sewage/waste water – we just need to collect the water SPID).
Are you happy to tell me your SPID number for water? We will provide your SPID to the water retail market operator (if nec: MOSL, or Market Operator Services Ltd) to obtain information about your organisation's level of water usage, in order to provide extra context for your survey answers. If necc: it will not be shared with Ofwat or CCW, and your other survey responses will not be provided to MOSL.
If the respondent has their bill open: your bill may be needed to answer another question soon, so please keep it open for now / don't file it away yet.

Yes – Freetext – record the SPID	☐	1
No, respondent can't locate the bill/can't find the SPID	☐	2
Refused	☐	98

SECTION H: Covid-19

H1 **(ASK ALL)**

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, has your organisation experienced a sizeable reduction in revenue and/or a reduction in your ability to trade or operate as usual? Interviewer: clarify between options as needed

Yes, significant reduction in revenue or ability to trade/operate	☐	1
Some reduction in revenue and/or ability to trade/operate		
No, no significant reduction in revenue / able to operate fairly normally	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

H2 (ASK ALL)

As a result of Covid-19, over the last 12 months has your organisation's water consumption decreased or increased, or has there been no impact on your level of consumption?

Yes, decreased water consumption	☐	1
Yes, increased water consumption	☐	2
No, there has been no effect on the level of water consumption	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

H3 (Ask all) [Multi-code]

Thinking about the last 12 months, have you experienced any issues or problems with your billing that you believe resulted from the impact of Covid-19? Interviewer: Clarify as necessary. We are interested in issues that the respondent thinks resulted from Covid (rather than being due to something else). This question is about problems in terms of the actual billing/bill payment process – we don't need to capture any issues paying due to financial reasons (as this is covered in the next question).

Yes – delays to bills / bills were late	☐	1
Yes – inaccuracies on bill(s): charges too high	☐	2
Yes – inaccuracies on bill(s): charges too low		
Yes – couldn't or didn't receive the bill (e.g. because premises closed)	☐	3
Yes – problems with administrative process of paying the bill		
Yes – other issues with billing (specify)	☐	4
No, no issues	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

H4 (Ask all)

Over the last 12 months have you had any problems paying your <u>water and wastewater</u> bill on time as a consequence of the financial impacts of Covid-19 on your business?

Interviewer if necessary: this is as a direct consequence of the pandemic

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

H5 (Ask all)

And over the last 12 months have you had any issues paying your electricity or gas bills on time as a consequence of the financial impacts of Covid-19 on your business?

Interviewer if necessary: this is as a direct consequence of the pandemic

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

SECTION I: Satisfaction with contact

I1 (ASK all)

[(If switched/ renegotiated C1 = 1, or C4 = 1,) Aside from contacts regarding switching or renegotiating your contract …] Have you been in contact with your water and waste water retailer for any reason in the last 12 months?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	97
Refused	98

I2A (ASK if contacted I1=1) [Multi]

What were your contact(s) with your retailer about?

Interviewer: Read out and multi-code

To discuss your current situation as a result of Covid-19. For example, to discuss changes in your consumption or the affordability of your charges	☐	1
Another enquiry linked to a Covid-19 lockdown (other than to discuss affordability/consumption/charges)	☐	2
Another matter(s)	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

I2B (ASK if I2A=3 i.e. another matter(s) and no other Covid-related contact at I2A) [Multi]

What was the most recent contact with your retailer about?

Interviewer: Do not read out except to clarify if needed; probe and code one only

Billing enquiry	☐	1
To report a leak	☐	2
Sewerage problem	☐	3
Loss of supply after icy weather	☐	4
Issue with water meter	☐	5
Issue with meter reading	☐	6
No supply / supply issue	☐	7
Water quality	☐	8
Water pressure	☐	9
To make a complaint	☐	10
To change to/ask for a water meter	☐	11
To find out about switching	☐	12
To ask about other services such as trade effluent permits/ developer services	☐	13
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

I3 (Ask if I2A=1 or 2)

Thinking about the earliest contact with your retailer around Covid-19 factors, was it your organisation or the retailer who made the initial contact? Interviewer: Only code "retailer contacted me/us" if there was some *proactive* effort on the part of the retailer to offer support/information; clarify as necessary.

I/we contacted the retailer	☐	1
The retailer contacted me/us	☐	2
We've been in contact but not sure who initiated it	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

I4 (Ask if I2A=1) [Multi]

As a result of your contact with the retailer, did you receive a payment holiday, reduced bills, or any other assistance?

Yes – payment holiday	☐	1
Yes – payment plan put in place	☐	2
Yes – waived payment(s)	☐	3
Yes – amended/corrected bill	☐	4
Yes – other assistance (specify)	☐	5
No nothing	☐	6
Don't know	☐	97

I5 (ASK if contacted I2B=1-13)

Were they able to resolve your enquiry, or did they redirect you to another organisation? Probe as necessary and code one only

They resolved it directly	☐	1
Redirected to some other organisation who resolved it	☐	2

Enquiry redirected and remains unresolved	☐	3
Enquiry not redirected and remains unresolved	☐	4
Don't know if enquiry was redirected but it remains unresolved	☐	5
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

I6 (ASK if contacted I1=1)

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the contact with your water and waste water retailer overall?

Code one only

Very satisfied	☐	1
Fairly satisfied	☐	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	☐	3
Fairly dissatisfied	☐	4
Very dissatisfied	☐	5
Don't know / can't recall	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

I7 (ASK if I6=4, 5)

Why were you dissatisfied?

Freetext (record word for word)	☐	90
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

SECTION J: Summing up

J1 **(ASK ALL)** **[Multi]**

Overall, and taking everything into account, what is important to you as a water customer?

INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ OUT. Code all that apply

Reliable water supply/no interruptions in supply	☐	1
Price	☐	2
Online account management services	☐	3
Quality of customer service	☐	4
Quality of billing services	☐	5
Quality or accuracy of meter reading / enhanced metering services	☐	6
Consolidating water and sewerage services to the same retailer	☐	7
[if S6=1:] Consolidating multiple premises to the same retailer	☐	8
Consolidating different utilities (including water) to the same supplier	☐	9
Water efficiency	☐	10
Leakage control	☐	11
Reputation of the retailer	☐	12
Other (specify)	☐	13
Nothing in particular	☐	14
Don’t know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

J2 **(ASK ALL)**

Thinking about everything we’ve discussed today, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the water market as a whole? **Code one only**

Very satisfied	☐	1
Fairly satisfied	☐	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	☐	3
Fairly dissatisfied	☐	4
Very dissatisfied	☐	5
Don’t know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

J3 **(ASK ALL)**

Can you tell me which of the following best describes how your organisation is billed for your water and wastewater services? **Code one only.**

Interviewer, if necessary: arrears refers to a situation where you are billed for water and wastewater services you have already consumed during the billing period; billing in advance refers to a situation where you are billed for water and wastewater services based on your projected rather than actual usage during the billing period

Organisation is billed in arrears	☐	1
Organisation is billed in advance	☐	2
Organisation’s usage is billed as a mix of advance and arrears	☐	3
Don’t know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

J4 **(ASK IF J3=1,2 or 3)**

Can you tell me how frequently the organisation receives bills for water and wastewater services?

Interviewer: prompt if needed

Monthly	☐	1
Quarterly	☐	2
Every six months	☐	3
Other (please specify)	☐	90
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

SECTION K: ORGANISATION DEMOGRAPHICS All Respondents

I would now just like to ask some questions about your water usage…

K1 (ASK All)

Are you on a metered supply?

Interviewer, if necessary: this means that what you pay is based on the amount of water you use, rather than a fixed amount.

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

K2 (ASK if number of premises S6=1)

To what extent are your other premises on a metered supply?

Interviewer, if necessary: this means that what you pay is based on the amount of water you use, rather than a fixed amount. Code one only

All premises	☐	1
Some premises	☐	2
No – none	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

K3 (ASK all)

Can you tell me approximately how much your organisation pays for your water and waste water services per year, [if S6=1: across all premises]?

Interviewer: Record figure if this is given spontaneously, otherwise prompt with bands

Freetext (Record exact value)	☐	90
Less than £500	☐	1
£500 up to £999	☐	2
£1,000 up to £1,999	☐	3
£2,000 up to £9,999	☐	4
£10,000 up to £100,000	☐	5
More than £100,000	☐	6
Don't know	☐	97

Refused	☐	98

K4 (ASK ALL)
Approximately what proportion of your organisation's annual running costs go on water and waste water bills?
Interviewer: Prompt for clarification only.

0-5%	☐	1
6-10%	☐	2
11%+	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97
Refused	☐	98

K5 (ASK ALL)
Has your organisation switched provider for…..

i …gas or electricity services…

i …telephone or internet provider…?

INTERVIEWER: Read out response options- apart from don't know or refused and code one only for each

	i gas/electric		ii tel/internet	
In the last 12 months	☐	1	☐	1
Longer ago	☐	2	☐	2
No	☐	3	☐	3
Don't know	☐	97	☐	97
Refused	☐	98	☐	98

K6 (ASK ALL**)**

Including yourself, how many people work for your organisation [IF S6=1: across all of your premises in the UK]?
***INTERVIEWER IF NECESSARY*: Please include both full time and part time staff and temporary or subcontract/casual staff who consider this their main place of work. If necessary: This is only your organisation and excludes any other organisations that may operate on the same site.**

Write in__________________

Interviewer: If don't know prompt with a range
1 (0 employees)
2-4
5-9
10-19
20-49
50-99
100-249
250+
Don't know
Refused

K7 RECONTACT (ASK ALL)

Finally, just to let you know that you may be contacted for quality control purposes or in the event of us wanting to speak to you very briefly again in relation to this survey only. Would we be able to contact you?

INTERVIEWER: Please explain if necessary that they will not necessarily be contacted again. It will only be in the case of us wanting to ask an additional question for the survey or for verifying something they've said for quality control purposes.

Yes	☐	1
No	☐	2
Refused	☐	98

Thank you very much for your help and time completing this interview.

To repeat: Ofwat have employed Opinion Research Services to conduct this survey. We are a member of the Market Research Society, adhere to all Data Protection regulations , and if you have any queries regarding the survey or our company, I can supply you with contact details.

INTERVIEWER: PROVIDE AS NECESSARY

ORS TEAM CONTACT DETAILS: 0800 107 7890 or info@ors.org.uk

Contact details for Ofwat – Sean Mills on 07458 134894 or Sean.Mills@Ofwat.gov.uk