

ccw

The voice for water consumers
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr



Don't Let People Suffer In Silence



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Don't Let People Suffer In Silence

We believe that a reliable and consistent supply of water is the minimum water consumers should be able to expect. However, we know that repeat low pressure and supply interruptions affect tens of thousands of customers every year.

Although we know water companies work hard to address these issues, we were not confident that the industry had been engaging with and focussing on those worst served water customers in an effective or consistent way.

To try to change this, in 2022-23 CCW established the Don't Let People Suffer In Silence campaign. As part of this work, we planned to work with water companies to agree an effective and consistent framework for recording low water pressure and supply interruptions with a specific focus on repeat contacts.

In addition, we also wanted speak to consumers to understand what barriers stop them seeking help, and encourage them to stop suffering in silence.

Why we developed the campaign

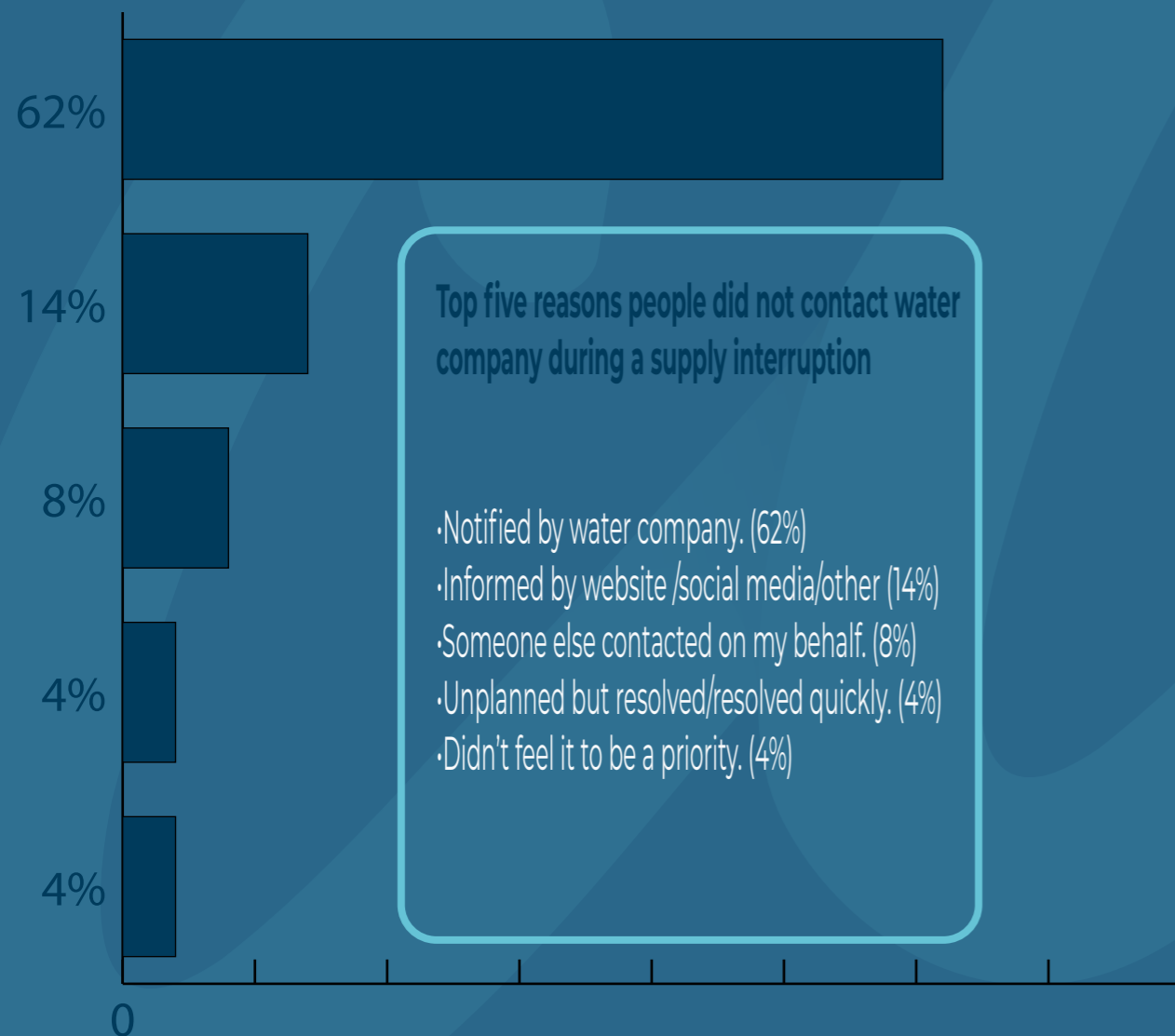
Understanding why people continue to suffer in silence when it comes to supply issues is an important first step for the industry to be able to focus on and help customers that really need it. We believe it will also help companies to look at strategies for reaching people who have not previously reached out to their water company.

We wanted to understand why people do not speak up about water supply issues, so we carried out research which specifically set out to identify the top five reasons. Alongside this research, CCW used other methods to engage with customers to better understand how those who do not speak up can be supported.

What we found

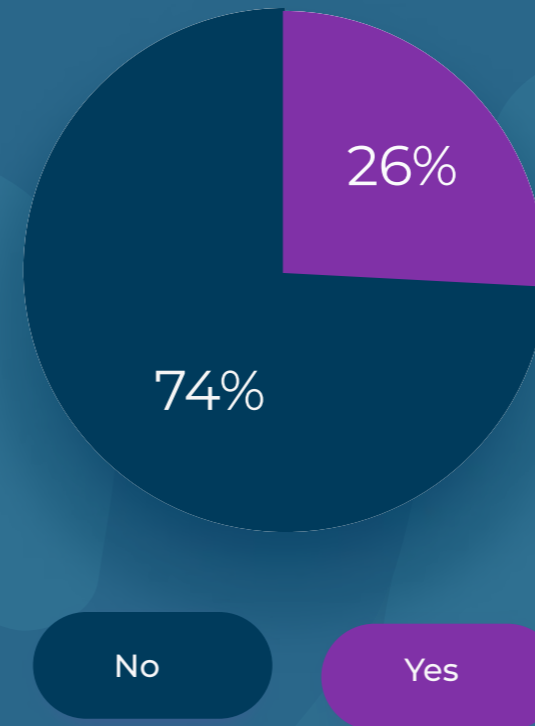
Our annual Water Matters survey tracks the views of household customers on the services they receive from water companies in England and Wales. As part of this research, we were able to include questions relating to water supply issues and low pressure. This enabled us to identify customers that had experienced either of these issues and the reason they had not contacted their water company if they had not done so.

In addition to the results of this survey and the insights we gather from the complaints and contacts we receive, CCW also visited an area of the country where we knew there had been recent supply issues and met people in the community to discuss their experiences first hand.



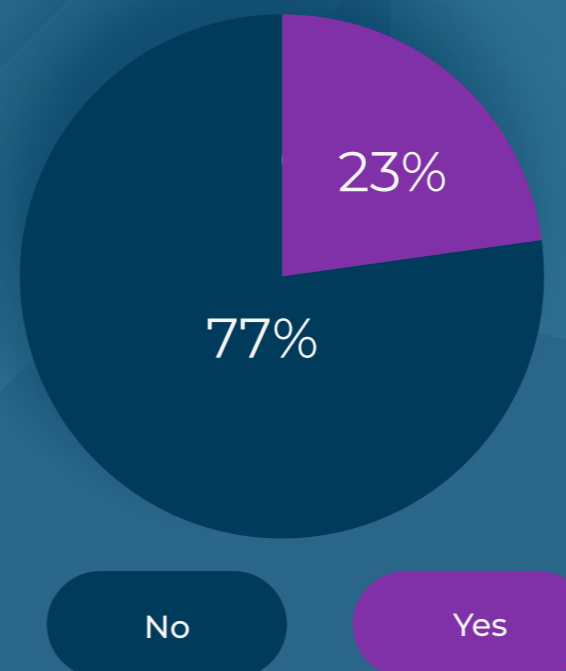
Supply interruptions

Customers who have experienced a supply interruption



My company usually rings to tell me it's going off

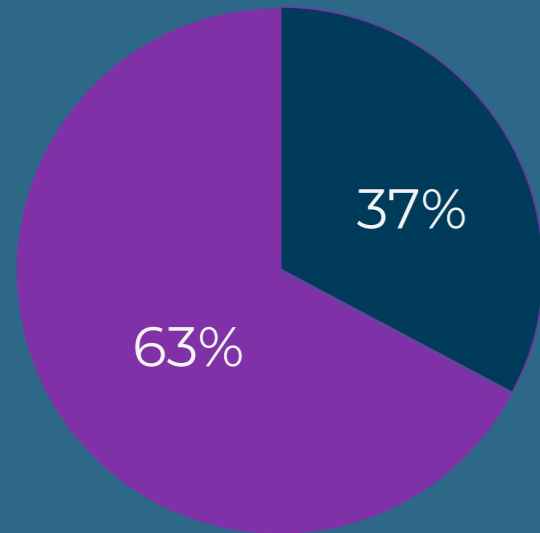
Customers who made contact with their water company during a supply interruption



My family made contact because the free bottled water wasn't being delivered. We got one lot but we didn't know we had to be on the list everyday and it came the day they'd switched the water back on.

Water pressure

Customers who made contact with their water company about a low pressure incident



All of my neighbours have the same issue and from talking to them it has always been that way, they have tried things before and nothing has happened.

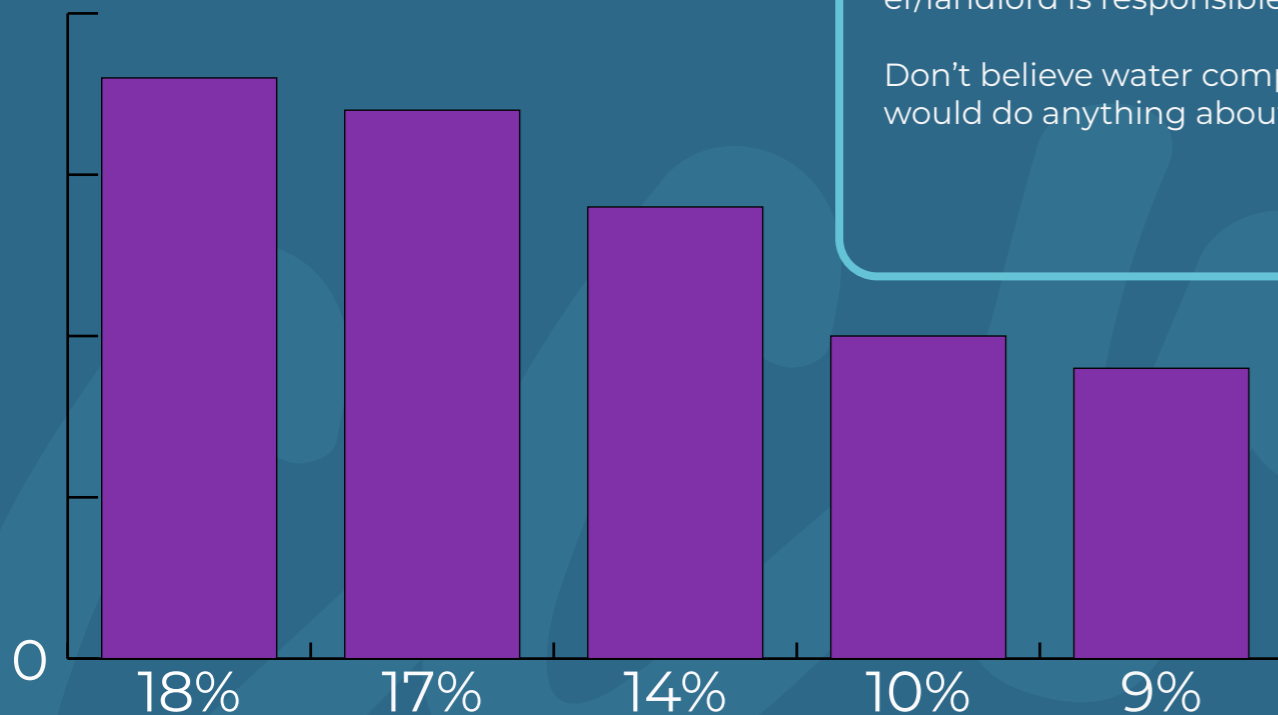
Just live with it/it comes and goes. (18%)

Not aware or don't think something can be done. (17%)

Not a high priority/not important to customer. (14%)

I or someone else e.g. plumber/landlord is responsible. (10%)

Don't believe water company would do anything about it. (9%)



Complaints

Customers who contact CCW are often not fully aware of what they can expect when it comes to supply issues. We often see private issues being raised as a complaint, with the details, including ownership of private/supply pipes not being clearly explained by companies.

There are occasions on which the resolution to a pressure complaint is simple but has taken a long time to resolve due to a lack of case management, and in particular as a result of the water company not visiting to the property to investigate. Examples of simple issues that have taken a long to resolve that CCW has seen include, problems with the supply pipe, or a stop-valve not being fully open.

It is vital that when people do speak up, concerns should be addressed quickly, fully and with care. Repeat contacts should be case managed and logged, allowing companies to be aware of previous issues.

On the ground

During our community event we found that concerns around supply issues were relatively low and those who had experienced a recent interruption felt they had received a good standard of contact from their company.

However, people are concerned about the link between other utilities and their water supply, for example, how would energy blackouts effect their supply and the impact on electric showers, boilers. Not issues directly caused by the water supply, but areas that could cause concern or effect the ability to use water in the home. This is something we need to consider as an industry when discussing how we can help and support people.

These on the ground initiatives are an excellent way to interact with hard to reach groups and, when correctly targeted, can provide both insights for the industry and opportunities to provide information and support to people who need it.

Low water pressure

The industry needs to focus on providing clear and accessible information to people regarding their rights and responsibilities. This is the case in relation to both private and company supply issues.



The industry must proactively communicate with customers who are suffering but not speaking up due to a lack of awareness or understanding. This should include not just social media and websites, but also focussing on accessing hard to reach customers through local events and face-to-face meetings within local communities.



There are valuable ways that the industry can link supply information with other topical issues, such as the environment and affordability concerns, to help increase awareness of potential supply issues among consumers. It is vital that new and innovative ways are used to make information readily available that clarifies responsibility but also encourages communication if there is a problem.



When speaking to people suffering from water pressure issues, awareness of possible causes is important, for example, stop tap issues or the presence of pressure reducing valves.



It is key to understand the circumstances of people who are experiencing pressure issues. Questions to consider should include, are consumers on the end of a supply pipe? Are they close to reservoir?



Supply interruptions

The general theme we have seen throughout this campaign is that companies' provide a high standard of pro-active communication. This should be maintained and built upon.



As well as direct notifications, the use of social media and company websites are important to keep customers informed with the latest information. It is important to make use of alternative methods of communication for those that are hard to reach, for example, the digitally excluded.



Transparency regarding the causes of and potential timescales of a supply interruption is important to customers and this should be developed further.



Mapping of and consistency in logging the details of customers repeatedly suffering from supply interruptions is important to address the root causes and provide bespoke assistance.



There should also be a continued focus on supporting vulnerable people during supply interruptions.

