



The voice for water consumers  
Llais defnyddwyr dŵr

# Water Voice Extreme heat report

July 2026

Survey dates: 25.06.26 to 30.06.26

Delivered by Taylor McKenzie Research

[ccw.org.uk](http://ccw.org.uk)

# Background

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This scheduled Spotlight survey topic was brought forward in response to the extreme heat event affecting the UK in late June 2026. The survey was sent to Water Voice community members, while temperatures were unusually high and community members were experiencing the impacts in real time.

During the fieldwork period, the UK recorded its hottest June day on record, with a provisional high of 37.7°C in Lingwood, Norfolk on 27 June. The survey gave community members the opportunity to tell us how they were coping during the event, what information they had received, whether they had changed their water use and what more they felt water companies should do during periods of extreme heat.

We are publishing this summary report only a few days after closing the survey so the findings can inform communications and planning for the rest of summer.

The aim of this report is to provide timely, real evidence while extreme heat remains a live issue - helping CCW and water companies understand what customers need before, during and after periods of very hot weather.

## Spotlight survey | Fieldwork dates 25<sup>th</sup> June – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026

Overall sample: 665 community members

**Note:** This is a headline report and full findings will be published along with our Barometer report on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2026. The overall sample size is lower than usual, reflecting the shorter fieldwork period for this survey compared with the standard monthly Barometer and Spotlight reports.

# Executive summary

This Spotlight survey captured views from 665 Water Voice community members with a short fieldwork period covering the late June extreme heat period.



The clearest finding is that extreme heat materially changes household water use. **81% of Water Voice community members said their household used more mains water than usual** and the average temperature at which people think their household starts using more water is around **25°C**. Increased use was mainly linked to practical coping behaviours, including drinking more water, taking extra showers or body washes, keeping children and pets cool, watering gardens and doing extra laundry.

Whilst 81% of community members said they used more water than usual, **82% of community members said they engaged in at least one water-saving activity** either regularly or during this period of very hot weather. The most common activities include: **running full dishwasher and washing machine loads at 55%** and **using leftover drinking water on plants at 43%** (full data on slide 11).

Demand increased across both indoor and outdoor activities. Indoors, the most common increases were **taking showers more often at 71%**, **running taps to get cold drinking water at 64%** and **using the washing machine more often at 31%**. Outdoors, the largest increases were **filling or topping up paddling pools, hot tubs or swimming pools at 69%**, **watering plants, vegetables or gardens at 68%**, **using water for children to play or cool down outdoors at 64%** and **using water to cool pets at 58%**.

The research also highlighted an important awareness gap. Many community members were unaware that increased water demand during hot weather can put pressure on water supplies, particularly when many people use water at the same time during peak periods, such as the early evening. Only **37%** of community members were fully aware that high water use at the same time can contribute to low pressure or temporary supply issues for some customers, even when there is water available in the wider system. Shifting water use away from busy periods is not yet a mainstream behaviour: **53%** had not moved the timings of any activities, **21%** rarely did so and only **26%** said they sometimes or often moved water using activities to another time of day.

Customers are willing to act, but they need clearer prompts, stronger reasons and more practical guidance. The top factors that would make people more likely to move water use to a different time of day were **a financial reward or incentive at 44%**, **lower bills or lower charges at certain times at 42%**, **a clear request from their water company at 35%** and **advice on the best times to use water at 31%**.

## Build trust by showing shared responsibility

Water providers are expected to lead communications during extreme heat, with **77%** of community members expecting to hear water saving messages from their provider.

However, customers want this communication to demonstrate shared responsibility: practical advice on what they can do, alongside evidence that companies are tackling leaks, investing in resilience and preparing local networks for high demand periods.

**Extreme heat communications need to move from general water saving messages to specific instructions that explain what customers should do, when they should do it and why it matters.**



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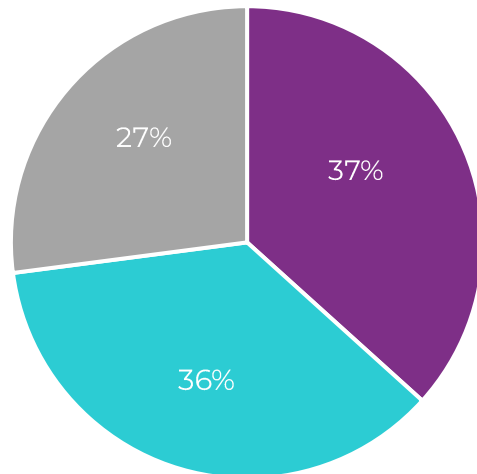
# Overall community: spotlight findings

## Awareness of supply issues

Community members were asked whether they were aware that when lots of people use more water at the same time, it can lead to low water pressure or supply issues for some customers, even when there is enough water available across the wider system. 37% said they are aware of this. A further 63% had lower levels of awareness, either saying they had some idea but were not fully aware, or that they were not aware of this at all. When asked how concerned they would be if high water usage during very hot weather meant some households in their area had lower water pressure or temporary supply issues, 42% of community members say they would be concerned (45% were neutral and 14% said not concerned).

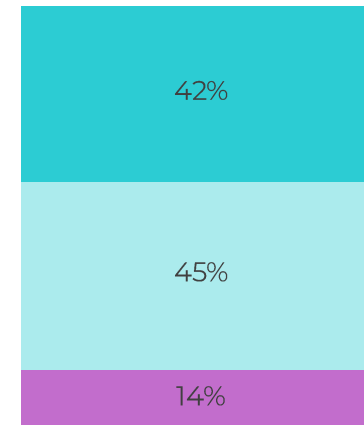
Before today, were you aware that high water use at the same time can contribute to low water pressure or supply issues for some customers, even when there is water available in the wider system?

- Yes, I was aware of this
- I had some idea, but was not fully aware
- No, I was not aware of this



**Notes:**  
Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding and omission of 'unsure/don't know' responses. Data points may marginally change vs. previous reports due to panel member attrition and removal of that individual's responses from the data set.

How concerned, if at all, would you be if high water usage during very hot weather meant some households in your area had lower water pressure or temporary supply issues?



- Concerned
- Neutral
- Not concerned

# Overall community: spotlight findings

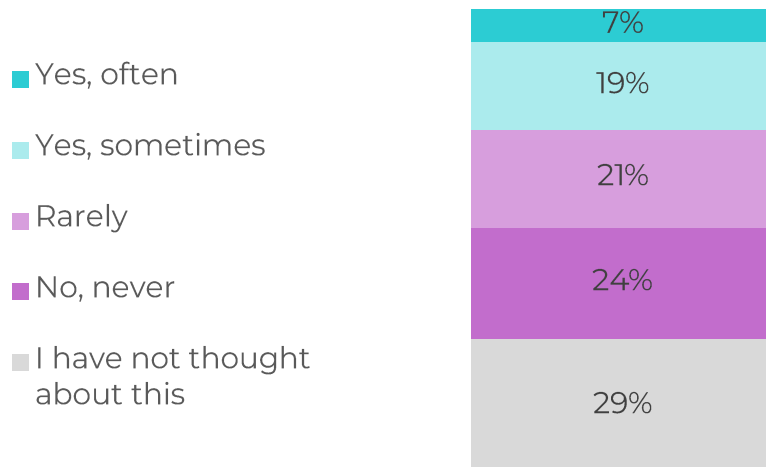
## Droughts and restrictions



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Community members were asked if they had moved any water-using activities to non-peak periods and if so, which ones. The majority (53%) said they had not moved any activities and 21% said they rarely did so. Amongst the 26% who said they had, six main activities were shifted.

During this particular period of very hot weather, have you moved any water-using activities to a different time of day specifically to help reduce demand on the water network or avoid busy periods?



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Base Size: 665

### What water-using activities do you move to help reduce demand on the network?

#### Gardening and plant watering

- Moved to early morning or late evening

#### Laundry and washing machine

- Shifted to late evening or overnight
- Some wait for fuller loads

*"We have showers really late into the evening when most people are in bed and running water overnight such as dishwasher"*

#### Dishwashing

- Delayed till evening or overnight
- Timed with laundry use

#### Outdoor cleaning and car washing

- Flexible outdoor tasks e.g. patio cleaning moved to quieter periods

*"Filling paddling pool up in the morning"*

#### Showers and bathing

- Personal washing shifted to early or late hours

*"I only use my washing machine from 10:30pm"*

#### Pools and water play

- Pool filling done outside early afternoon peak e.g. in the early morning

Base Size (those who shifted activities): 171

# Overall community: spotlight findings

## Water usage

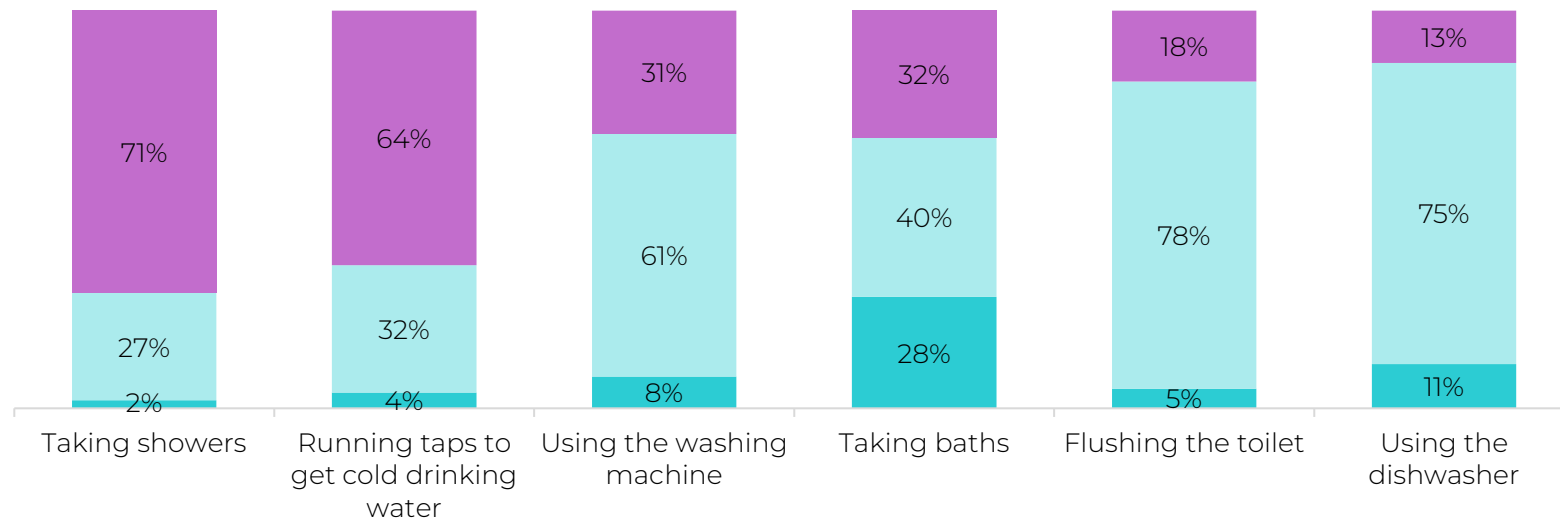


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Community members were asked about how their indoor water usage changed during the period of very hot weather across a range of activities. 71% of community members said they were taking showers more often than usual, this is followed by running taps to get cold drinking water (64%) and using the washing machine (31%).

How has your household's indoor water usage changed during this period of very hot weather?

■ More water than usual ■ Use about the same as usual ■ Less water than usual



N.B: Responses marked as "Do not do this/not applicable" have been excluded from the analysis, as they do not provide a basis for assessing whether the activity changed as a result of the period of very hot weather.

### Notes:

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- Community members who live with a child/children are significantly more likely to say they use more water for taking showers (80%), taking baths (40%) and running taps to get cold drinking water (66%)
- During the heatwave, those aged 18-34 said they used the washing machine (46%) and the dishwasher (28%) more significantly than other age groups.

Total Base Size: 665  
Bases of individual question varies

# Overall community: spotlight findings

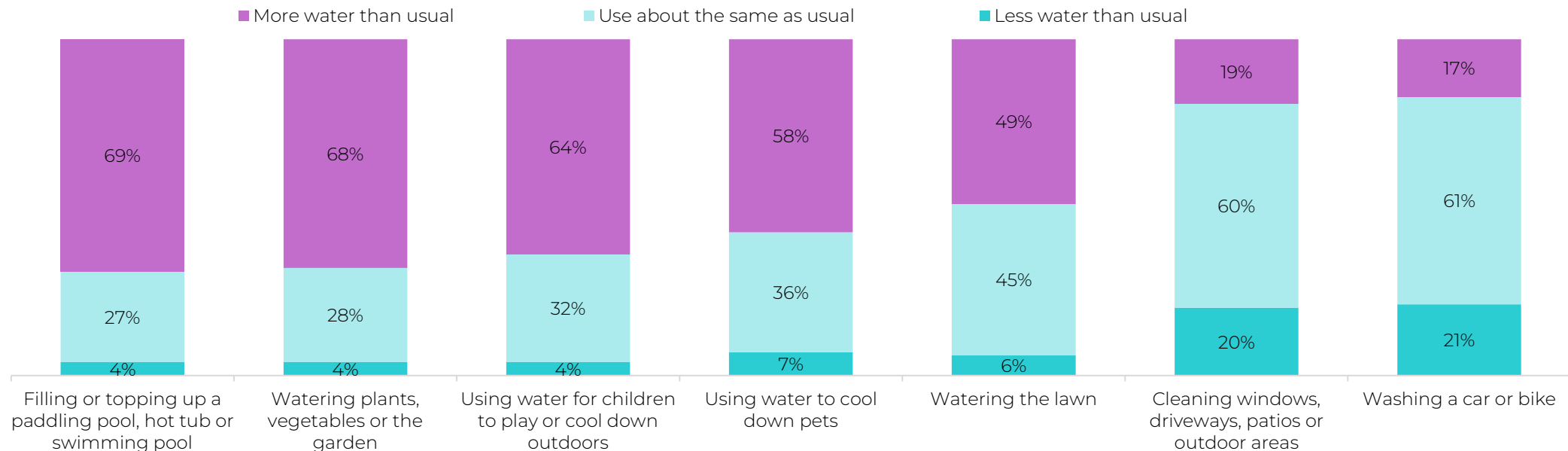
## Water usage



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Community members were asked about how their outdoor water usage changed during the period of very hot weather across a range of activities. 69% of community members said they were filling or topping up a paddling pool, hot tub or swimming pool more than usual, this is followed by watering plants, vegetables or the garden (68%) and using water for children to play or cool down outdoors (64%).

How has your household's outdoor water usage changed during this period of very hot weather?



N.B: Responses marked as "Do not do this/not applicable" have been excluded from the analysis, as they do not provide a basis for assessing whether the activity changed as a result of the period of very hot weather.

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# Overall community: spotlight findings

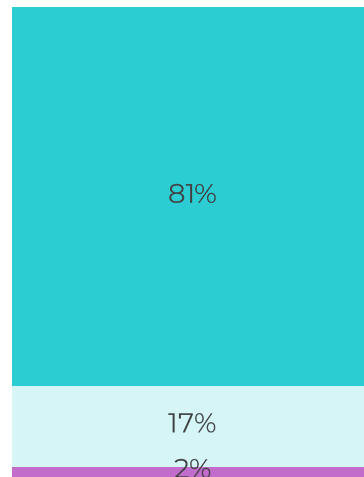
## Water usage



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Community members were asked whether their water usage changed during the current period of very hot weather. 81% believe they used more water than usual, 17% use about the same and 2% say they were using less water than usual.

Do you think your household is using/used more or less water from your mains supply at home than usual?



- More water than usual
- Used about the same amount of water as usual
- Less water than usual

- Those aged 18-34 were more likely to believe they had used more water than other age groups (85%). Those aged 65+ are less likely to believe they have used more water (72%).
- Those living alone are significantly less likely to say they have used more water than usual (62%), this contrasts with those living with child/children who are significantly more likely to say they have used more water (87%).
- No significant differences were observed between those in water stressed areas when compared to non-stressed areas, or those with/without a water meter.

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# Overall community: spotlight findings

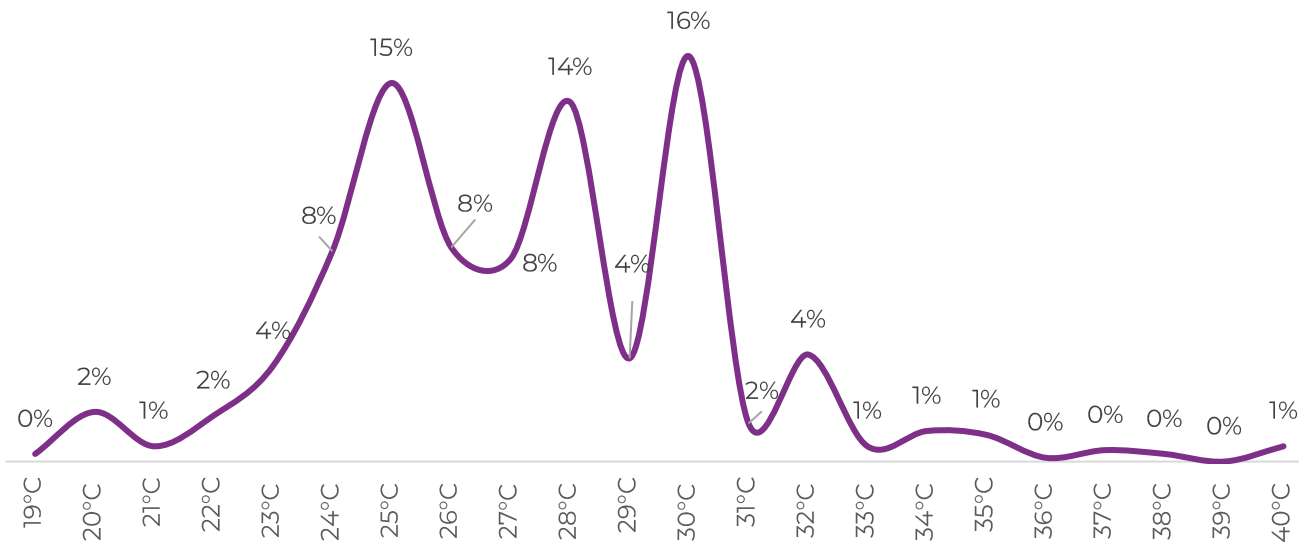
Hot weather



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Community members were asked at what temperature they think their household starts to use more water than usual. The average temperature community members think their household starts to use more water than usual is 25°C.

At roughly what temperature, if any, do you think your household starts to use more water than usual due to the temperature being hotter?



7% state that temperature does not really affect how much water they used

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Base Size: 665

## What were you using more water for?

Most common reason

1. Drinking more water
2. Extra body washes to cool down
3. Maintaining gardens and watering plants
4. Children's water play and paddling pools
5. Hydrating pets and keeping them cool
6. Direct cooling methods e.g., chilled bottles, mist sprays, wet flannels
7. Extra laundry

*"Twice daily showers, drinking water and washing sweaty clothes"*

*"wet flannels, putting jugs of water in the fridge"*

Base Size: 536

# Overall community: spotlight findings

## Water usage



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How did you manage to use the same amount or less water than normal, despite the warmer weather?

### Maintained usual routines

- No changes to washing, drinking and showering habits.

### Avoided outdoor water use and relied on stored water

- Avoided water-heavy activities like watering the garden.
  - Some had no outdoor spaces (e.g. no garden to water)
- Others used water butts and stored rainwater to maintain plants and garden.

### Used alternatives to household mains water

- Bought bottled water
- Used water outside the home e.g. showering at the gym or using work taps
- Headed to the office for air conditioning.

### Cooling down without using extra water

- Used non-water based cooling methods, like fans, air conditioning and closed curtains over extra showers or baths

### Conscious water-saving and reuse

- Intentionally minimised usage
- E.g. Reused bath water, used washing up bowl in sink to water plants, had shorter-than usual showers

### Less cooking, washing up or domestic activity

- Avoiding cooking or washing up due to reduced appetites or not wanting to further heat up their homes
- Eating out, having cold food or doing less laundry

# Overall community: spotlight findings

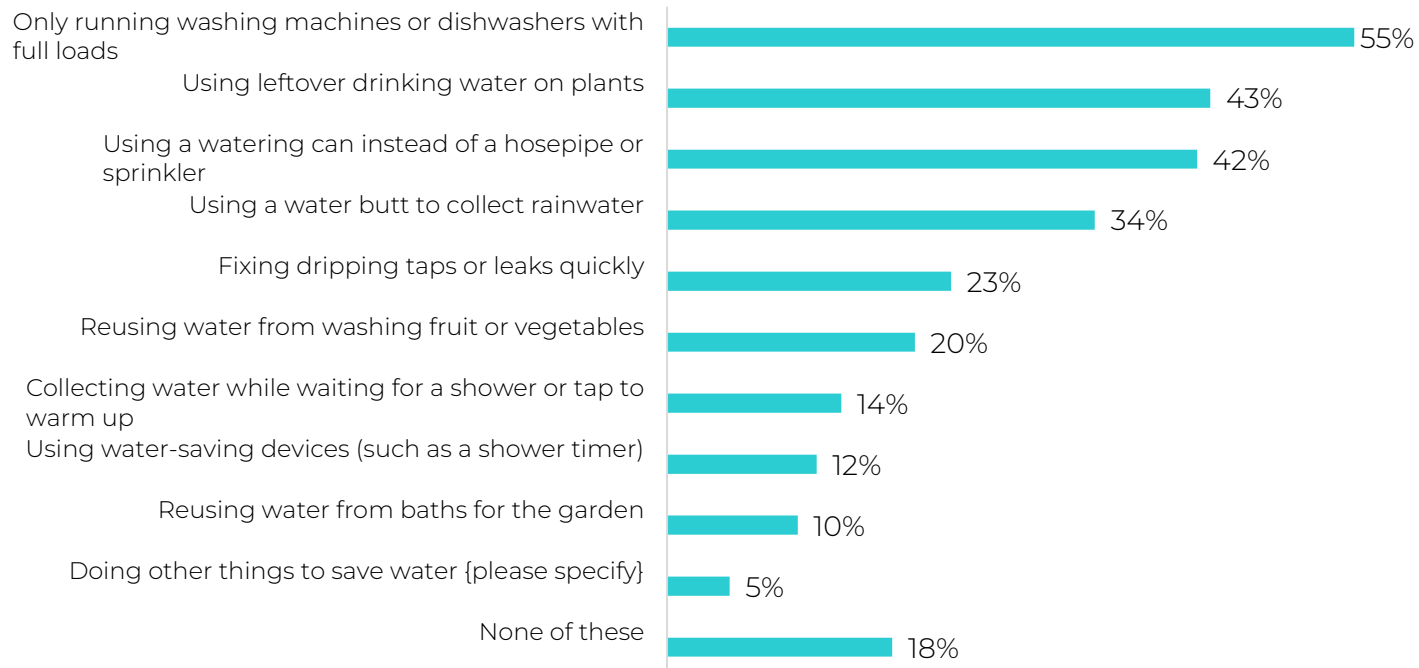
## Water usage



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Community members were asked which activities they said they have done to save water during this period of hot weather. The top three activities include: only running washing machines or dishwashers with full loads (55%), using left over drinking water on plants (43%) and using a watering can instead of a hosepipe or sprinkler (42%).

Which, if any, of the following things have you done to save water, either regularly or during this period of very hot weather?



- Those aged 65+ are significantly more likely to say they only run washing machines or dishwashers with full loads (68%), use a watering can instead of a hosepipe or sprinkler (59%), use a water butt to collect rainwater (49%) and reuse water from washing fruit or vegetables (35%) than any other age group

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# Overall community: spotlight findings

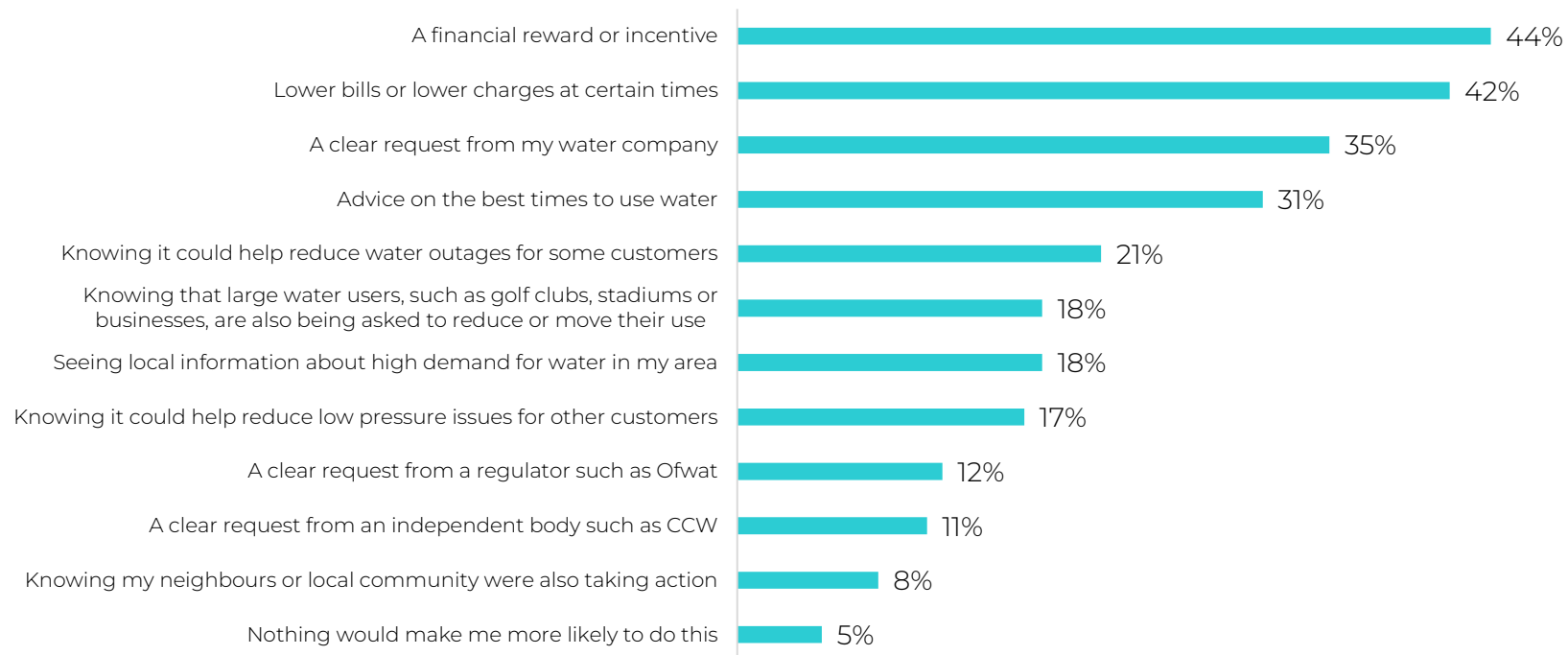
## Water usage



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Community members were asked what would make them more likely to move some water use to a different time of day during periods of hot weather. The top three factors they say would influence them are: a financial reward or incentive (44%), lower bills or lower charges at certain times (42%) and a clear request from their water company (35%).

What would make you more likely to move some water use to a different time of day during periods of very hot weather?



- Those aged 65+ are significantly more likely to say they would move some water use by receiving a clear request from their water company (49%)

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# Overall community: spotlight findings

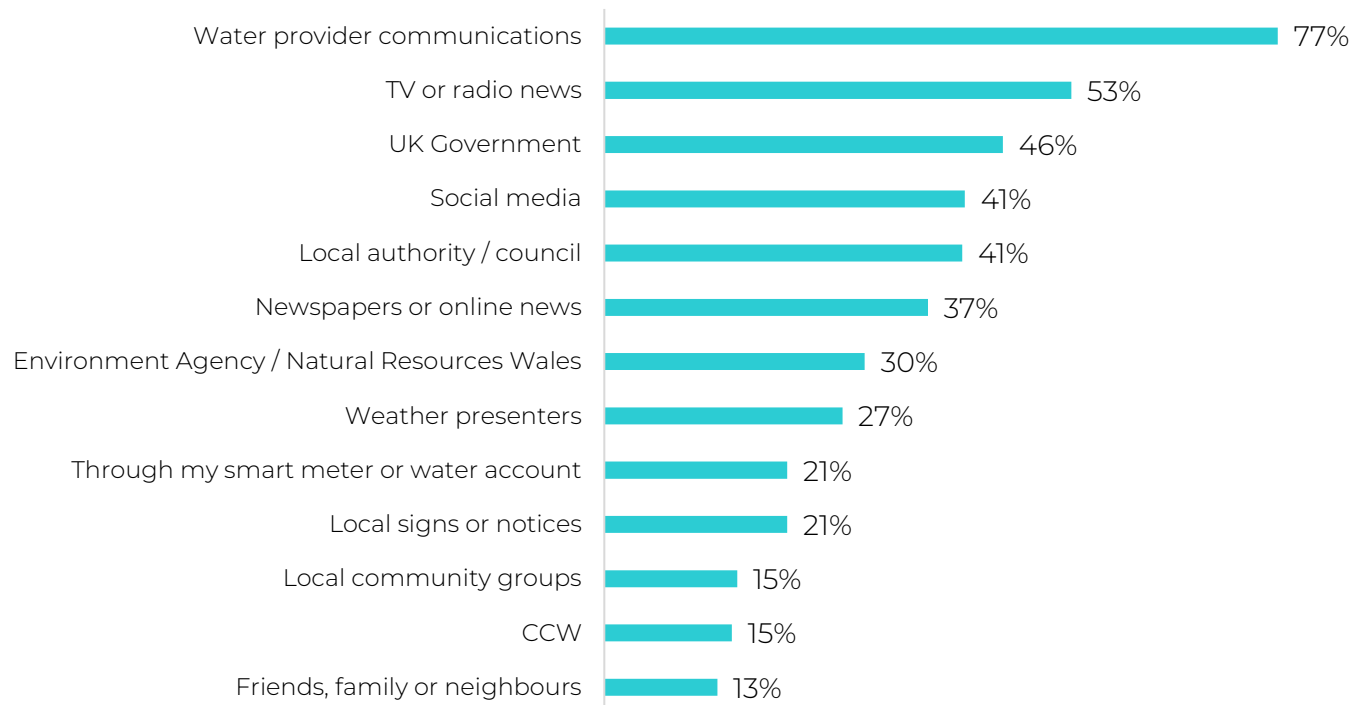
## Communication and trusted messaging



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Community members were asked where they would expect to hear water-saving communications during extreme heat, drought or high-water demand periods. 77% said they would expect their water provider to communicate this with them.

Where would you expect to hear about the need to save water during extreme heat weather, drought or high water demand periods?



- Those aged 65+ said they were significantly more likely to expect TV/ Radio news (71%) or weather presenters (41%) to be where they would hear water-saving communications

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# Overall community: spotlight findings

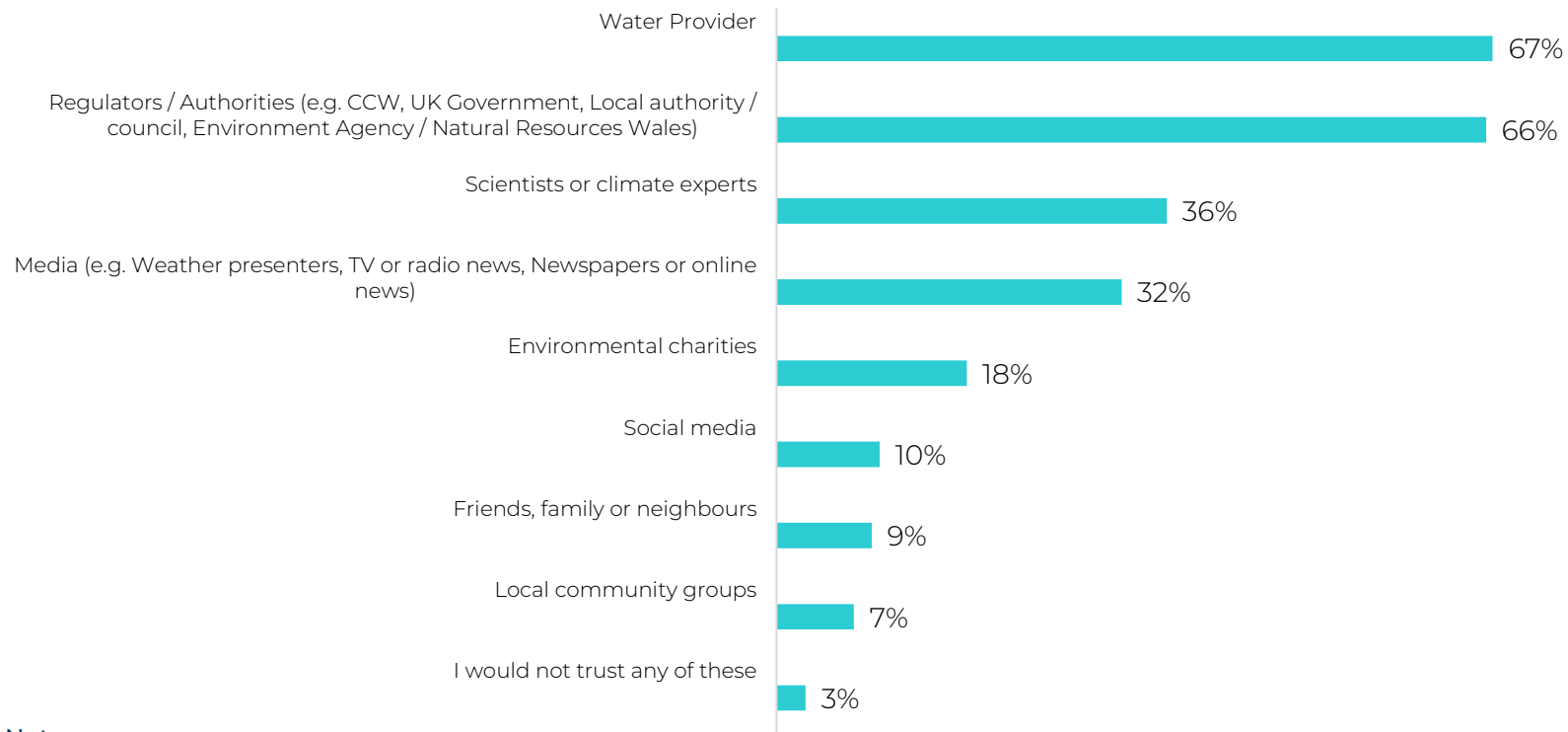
## Communication and trusted messaging



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Community members were asked which sources they would trust most for information about droughts, water shortages and water-saving messages. Information from their water provider (67%) and from regulators/authorities (66%) were said to be most trustworthy.

Which sources would you personally trust most for information about drought, water shortages or the need to save water?



- Those aged 65+ are significantly more likely to trust traditional media (e.g. TV or radio) most for information about droughts, water shortages or water-saving messages (46%)

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# Overall community: spotlight findings

Final remarks



Finally, what, if anything, should water companies do differently when communicating with customers about extreme heat weather, drought or the need to save water?

Community members say they want earlier, clearer and more localised communication, but trust depends on water companies showing action on leaks and network infrastructure investment.

- Communicate earlier, before the situation becomes urgent
- Make messages clear, simple and specific
- Provide local, real-time information
- Use more direct and varied communication channels
- Give practical, realistic water-saving advice and support tools
- Show what investment water companies are making to protect against extreme weather
- Use the right tone: honest, empathetic and not preachy

*“Give warnings about expected shortages”*

*“Communicate before the situation gets bad and explain what we can do. The advice needs to be realistic and actionable”*

*“Actually tell us for my immediate area, not somewhere 30 miles away!”*

*“Not put all the onus on the end consumer to reduce usage when we still lose loads of water to leaks every year. They need to make improvements as well.”*

*“Make it clear what the peak hours are. Early morning/evening is too vague.”*

*“Customers need clarity, exact instructions and reasons for action.”*

# What next?

What this means for the next extreme heat event

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Extreme heat is already changing household water use and customers are willing to help manage demand. However, behaviour change will depend on water companies making the issue feel local, practical and fair.

Future communications should start early in the summer, encouraging customers to use less water and spread demand more evenly, before there is an urgent need to reduce water consumption.

They should explain in plain terms why lots of people using water at the same time can affect local pressure and supply and give customers specific guidance on what to do to help manage this, when to do it and which activities to avoid at peak times.

Messages should come from trusted voices, particularly water providers, supported by regulators and local authorities. They should also show shared responsibility by making clear what water companies are doing on leaks, infrastructure, resilience and large users, not just what households are being asked to do.

After periods of extreme heat, companies should report back to customers on what happened, how demand changed and how both customer and company actions helped.

The opportunity is not just to reduce water use during hot weather. It is to build trust by showing customers that water companies are prepared, transparent and most importantly, acting alongside them.

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