DRAFT DETERMINATION RESEARCH 2024

Summary report – South West Water

Prepared for **Consumer Council for Water** and **Ofwat**
Prepared by **Impact Research**

October 2024

FROM INSIGHT TO INFLUENCE

South West Water: key points…

Household finances

12% of billpayers struggled to pay at least one household bill in the past year, either most of the time or all the time.

13% billpayers currently find it **quite or very difficult to manage their finances.**

Looking to 2030, **41% of billpayers think their household finances will get worse by then and 26% better.**

Water bill affordability

46% find their current water bill easy to afford; this falls to 27% for the proposed bill from 2025-2030.

17% find their current water bill difficult to afford; this increases to 40% for the proposed bill.

South West Water billpayers who would not find the proposed bills easy to afford were asked what they would do to help pay for the increase in their water bills. Most would spend less on non-essentials (54%) or use less water (51%).

Acceptability of investments

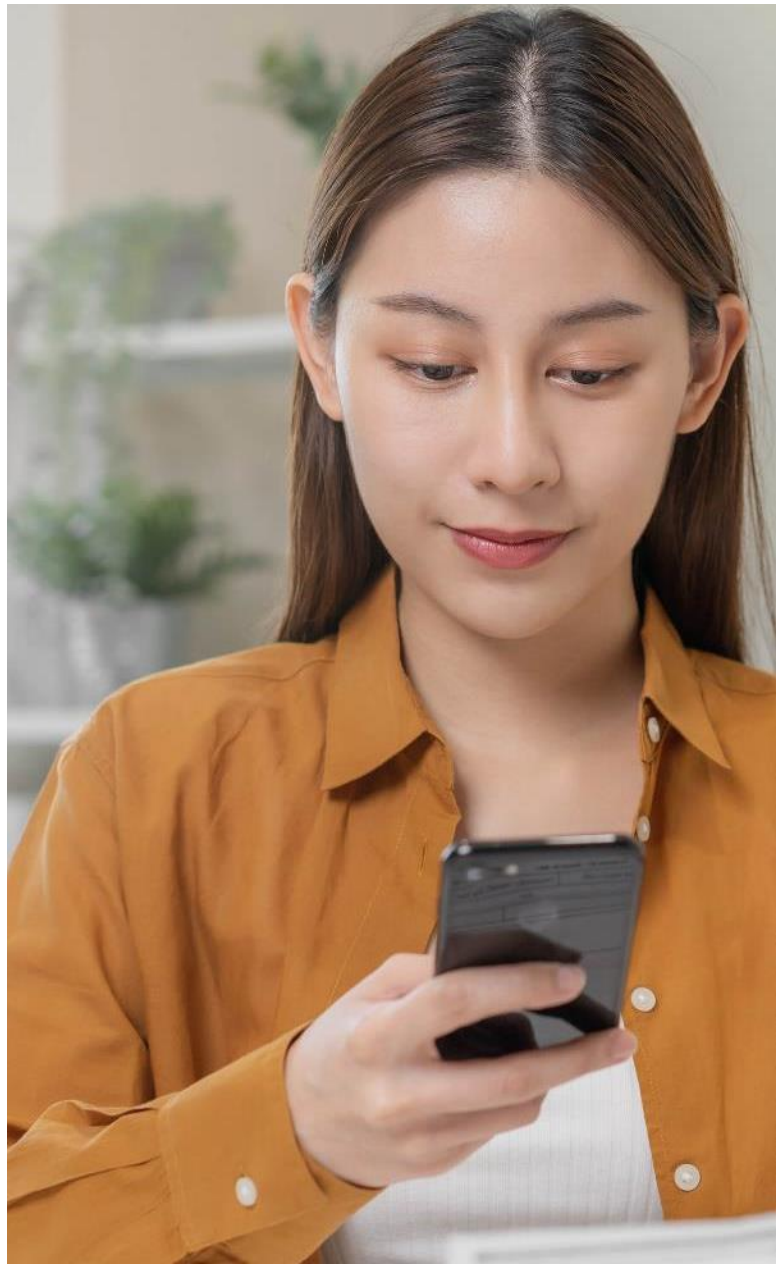
73% find the investments acceptable, with the most commonly cited reasons being that the proposals focus on the right services (47%) and support for the longer term (34%).

However, when billpayers consider the proposed bill changes, acceptability goes down from 73% to 59%.

The primary purpose of the research was to gauge the opinions of water companies' customers about Ofwat's Draft Determinations, published in July 2024.

THE RESEARCH AIMS TO DETERMINE:

- Affordability of current household water bills and proposed 2025 – 2030 bills.
- Acceptability of proposed service levels and investments and determine which investment areas are more important to customers.
- Where views in the nations of England and Wales are different to the total combined view across England and Wales.
- Identification of water companies which are outliers from the total combined view across England and Wales.
- Additionally, this research aims to compare these Draft Determination results to the Business Plan research conducted by each water company as set out in the Affordability and Accessibility research guidance.



516 South West Water customers were interviewed;

RESEARCH TYPE:	**An online quantitative survey with an option to participate through a paper questionnaire.**
TARGET:	A **representative sample of South West Water billpayers** (who are at least jointly responsible) **aged 18+**. Participants must have been customers of South West Water and be aware of who their supplier is. Industry exclusion was applied. Data were weighted to reflect the population of the South West Water customer base.
SAMPLE SOURCE SPLIT:	The sample was drawn from **two** sources: **online panels** managed by Prodege and **customer databases** from South West Water.
SAMPLING METHOD:	Online panel participants were invited via email invite. The customer database was contacted through '**push-to-web**' approach – either emails or postal letters with a survey 'push-to-web' link.
SAMPLE MODE SPLIT:	375 through the online panel, 133 push-to-the web through an email invite, 6 push-to-the web through postal letter invite, 2 postal.
QUESTIONNAIRE:	**15 minutes long on average**, available in English. The questionnaire was tested before the main launch through cognitive interviews and a pilot survey to ensure clarity, relevance, and effectiveness in capturing accurate responses from participants.
FIELDWORK:	Data was collected from 1st August 2024 to 26th September 2024.

Billpayers were initially asked about their **financial situation** and the **affordability of the current bill.**

Then, they were presented with the **proposed bill**, including water & sewerage charges and inflation and asked about affordability based on these changes.

Billpayers were then informed about South West Water's **performance and investment plans** before being asked about the **acceptability of the proposals**.

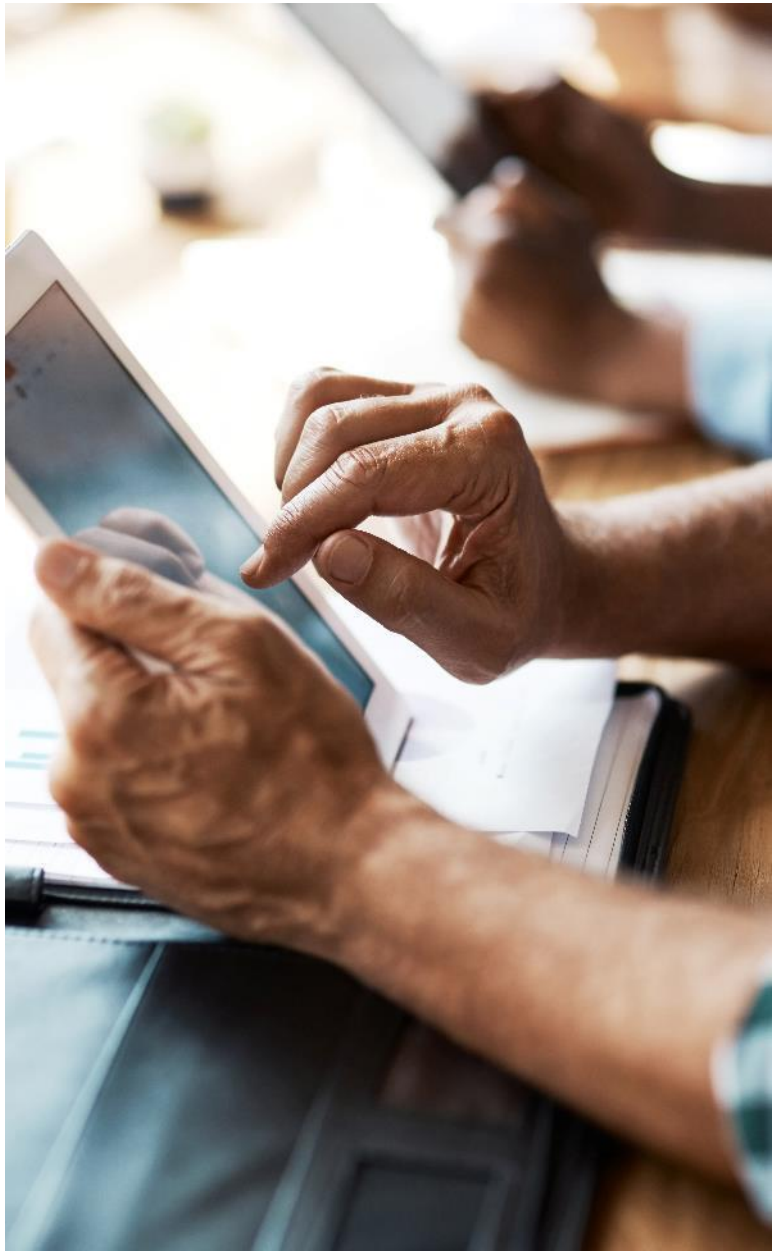
Acceptability was then sought again, with a reminder of the proposed bill changes linked to the investment plans.

A quantitative approach was adopted, the majority of interviews conducted via an online survey.

Online panelists or water company customers were invited to participate through an email invite or letter with a link to the online survey. Customers of water companies were given the option to ask for a paper postal questionnaire to include those digitally disadvantaged.
Data were weighted to match the customer profile of South West Water to match the 2021 census profile for gender, age and socio-economic group (SEG).

Additional analysis found that there was a difference in responses from the online panel sample and the push-to-web sample around the affordability of bills, over and above variations in demographics. **The general effect of push-to-web vs. panel was to lower the proportion of customers saying that paying their bill was 'easy'.* We therefore applied a further level of weighting to adjust the proportion of survey mode** (panel vs. push-to-web) within each company, to approximate as closely as possible the mix of these two modes over the whole sample.

- All reported **base sizes are unweighted**; all **% reported are weighted.**
- **Significance testing** (on a 95% confidence level) has been applied **to compare vs. the total figure for England and Wales (i.e. all water companies) combined.**
- **The margin of error** e.g., 50%: England +/-1.1%, Wales +/- 3.1%, water company +/- 4.4% (assuming base of 500).
- Key **scale questions,** e.g., affordability, have been **netted** for simplicity. E.g., very easy & quite easy have been combined into **NET easy.**
- When referring **'water bills'**, it includes sewerage charges as well.
- When referring to **Total**, this means England and Wales combined.



* This effect could be due to the mode of contact or the presentation of a personalised bill profile in the push-to-web sample vs an average bill profile in the online panel sample.

Before asking about their current and then proposed bills' affordability, respondents were asked how they felt about their household finances and how well these were going.

12% of South West Water billpayers struggled to pay at least one household bill in the past year, either most of the time or all the time.

13% of South West Water billpayers currently find it 'quite or very difficult' to manage their finances. Looking to 2030, 41% of billpayers think their household finances will get worse by then and 26% better.

COST OF LIVING	TOP 2 / BOTTOM 2 NET %	PROPORTION FOR SOUTH WEST WATER	RANGE FOR ALL WATER COMPANIES (ENGLAND AND WALES)	AVERAGE PERCENTAGE FOR ALL WATER COMPANIES (ENGLAND AND WALES)	AVERAGE PERCENTAGE FOR ENGLAND
STRUGGLE TO PAY AT LEAST ONE HOUSEHOLD BILL	Rarely or Never	64% ↑	51% - 66%	57%	57%
	All or most of the time	12%	11% - 20%	16%	15%
CURRENT FINANCIAL SITUATION	Living comfortably or doing alright	52%	43% - 61%	47%	47%
	Finding it quite difficult or very difficult	13% ↓	12% - 22%	18%	18%
CHANGE IN BILLPAYER FINANCIAL SITUATION BY 2030	A bit or a lot better	26%	25% - 35%	29%	29%
	A lot or a bit worse	41%	32% - 45%	36%	36%

Arrows next to the numbers mark significant differences from the Total for England and Wales, ↑ = significantly more ↓ = significantly less on a 95% confidence level.

Q1: Thinking about your household's finances over the last year, how often, if at all, have you struggled to pay at least one of your household bills? BASE: ALL (516)
Q2: Overall, how well would you say you are managing financially now? BASE: ALL (516)
Q3: Thinking about your household's financial situation over the next few years up to 2030, do you expect it to get: BASE: ALL (516)

After the introductory questions, participants were asked how easy or difficult it is to afford their current water bill.

Each billpayer was then presented with a bill profile chart including the current 2024/2025 bill and proposed annual bill changes up to 2029/2030, and the impact of inflation.

Respondents in the 'push to web' sample saw a bill profile based on their current bill; respondents in the online panel sample saw a bill profile based on the current household average bill for South West Water customers. The bill profiles included forecast inflation.

Nearly half of South West Water households find their current water bill easy to afford, while a sixth say it's difficult to afford.
The affordability of the proposed water bill drops to 27% from the current 46% .

AFFORDABILITY	TOP 2 / BOTTOM 2 NET %	PROPORTION FOR SOUTH WEST WATER	RANGE FOR ALL WATER COMPANIES (ENGLAND AND WALES)	AVERAGE PERCENTAGE FOR ALL WATER COMPANIES (TOTAL)	AVERAGE PERCENTAGE FOR ENGLAND
CURRENT WATER BILL	Easy	46%	36% - 52%	45%	45%
	Difficult	17%	13% - 22%	18%	18%
PROPOSED WATER BILL	Easy	27%	19% - 36%	26%	27%
	Difficult	40%	29% - 49%	40%	39%

Arrows next to the numbers mark significant differences from the Total for England and Wales, ↑ = significantly more ↓ = significantly less on a 95% confidence level.

Q4: How easy or difficult is it for you to afford to pay your current water and sewerage bill? BASE: ALL (516)
Q5: How easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to afford these water and sewerage bills <based on the bill profile chart presented>? BASE: ALL (516)

The groups that find the proposed water bill more difficult to afford are among 35-44 and 45-54 years old, females, DE social grade and/or lowest household income bands.

AFFORDABILITY BY SUBGROUPS		CURRENT AFFORDABILITY	CURRENT AFFORDABILITY	PROPOSED AFFORDABILITY	PROPOSED AFFORDABILITY	BASE SIZE
ROW%		NET EASY	NET DIFFICULT	NET EASY	NET DIFFICULT	ROW N
	Total	46%	17%	27%	40%	516
Age groups	18-24	46%	19%	39%	33%	23 !
	25-34	50%	14%	25%	39%	70
	35-44	31%	33%	32%	47%	81
	45-54	36%	22%	25%	46%	93
	55-64	50%	11%	19%	43%	93
	65-75	50%	13%	28%	36%	100
	75+	62%	8%	34%	22%	56
Gender	Female	47%	19%	25%	44%	273
	Male	46%	15%	29%	36%	238
	Non-binary / prefer not to say	8%	14%	0%	22%	5 !
Social Grade	AB	55%	13%	36%	34%	161
	C1	47%	16%	28%	37%	180
	C2	39%	17%	23%	40%	84
	DE	35%	24%	14%	54%	91
Household income	Up to £15,599 a year	35%	26%	9%	56%	65
	From £15,600 to £25,999 a year	35%	20%	20%	47%	103
	From £26,000 to £36,399 a year	44%	24%	31%	44%	99
	From £36,400 to £51,999 a year	47%	14%	25%	30%	91
	From £52,000 to £72,799 a year	68%	10%	35%	33%	65
	From £72,800 and above a year	59%	7%	56%	16%	50
	Don't know or Prefer not to say	42%	6%	19%	47%	43 !
Ethnic group	NET: British	47%	17%	26%	41%	470
	NET: Other British	37%	14%	37%	30%	45 !
	NET: White	47%	17%	26%	40%	489
	NET: Other than White	38%	17%	41%	28%	26 !

! Small base size warning <50

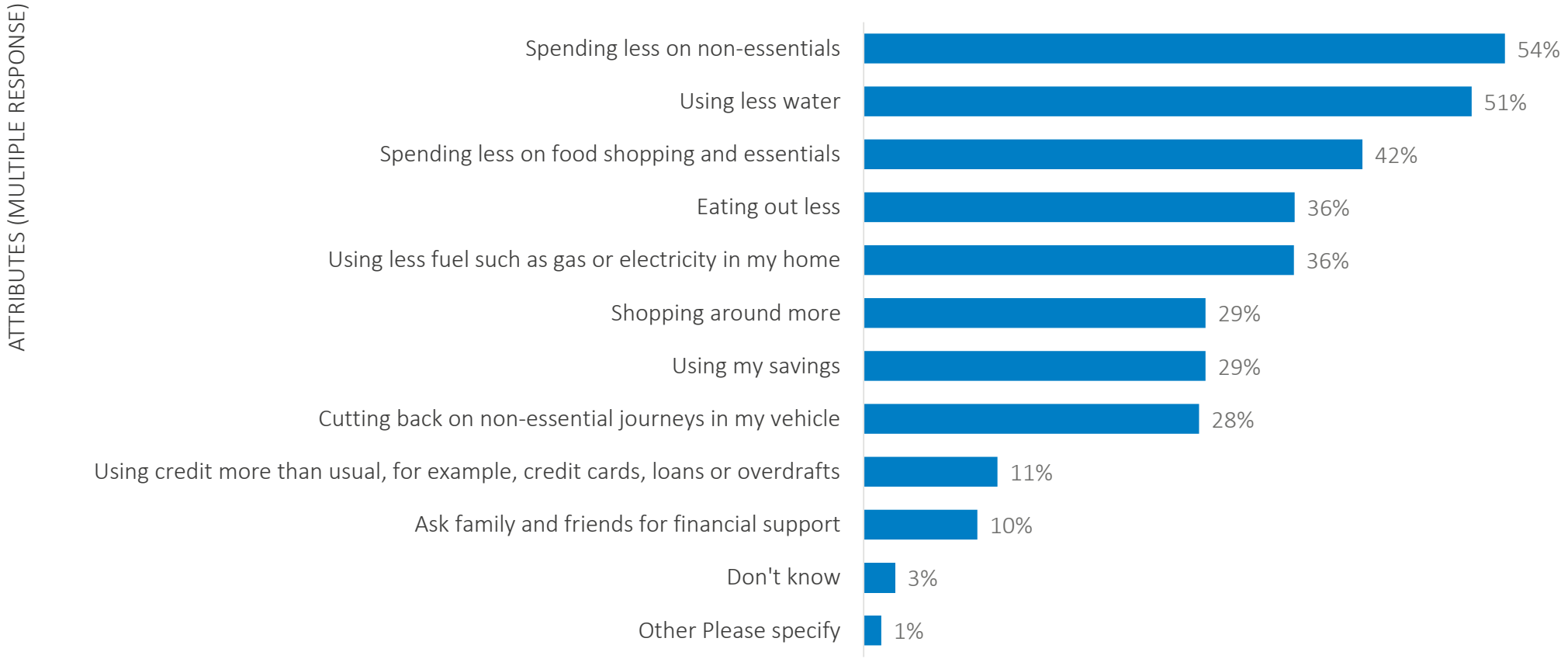
The groups that find the proposed water bill more difficult are billpayers who are finding the current financial situation difficult and/or those who struggled to pay at least one household bill over the last year all or most of the time.

AFFORDABILITY BY SUBGROUPS		CURRENT AFFORDABILITY	CURRENT AFFORDABILITY	PROPOSED AFFORDABILITY	PROPOSED AFFORDABILITY	BASE SIZE
ROW%		NET EASY	NET DIFFICULT	NET EASY	NET DIFFICULT	ROW N
	Total	46%	17%	27%	40%	516
Vulnerability	None	47%	17%	29%	35%	270
	Medical	41%	23%	24%	51%	139
	Communication	55%	8%	42%	27%	65
	Life Stage	55%	9%	26%	29%	86
	Other	47%	16%	25%	41%	230
	Prefer not to say	12%	35%	12%	80%	16 !
Struggled to pay at least one household bill over the last year	Rarely or Never	62%	2%	36%	22%	332
	All of the time or most of the time	8%	63%	9%	86%	63
Current financial situation	Living comfortably or doing alright	68%	1%	44%	15%	268
	Finding it quite difficult or very difficult	9%	64%	8%	88%	73
2030 financial situation outlook	A bit better or A lot better	48%	22%	38%	39%	128
	A lot worse or A bit worse	35%	19%	10%	51%	205
Water meter	Yes	47%	16%	27%	39%	421
	No	43%	22%	23%	43%	88
	Don't know	14%	72%	32%	40%	7 !
IMD Quintile	1	22%	24%	17%	53%	10 !
	2	38%	23%	8%	53%	35 !
	3	33%	11%	24%	37%	43 !
	4	46%	15%	15%	52%	30 !
	5	38%	10%	18%	20%	23 !
	Unknown					0
Social Tariff	Yes	28%	15%	13%	37%	16 !
	No / not available	47%	17%	27%	40%	500

! Small base size warning <50

South West Water billpayers who would not find the proposed bills easy to afford* were asked what they would do to help pay for the increase in their water bills. Most would spend less on non-essentials or use less water.

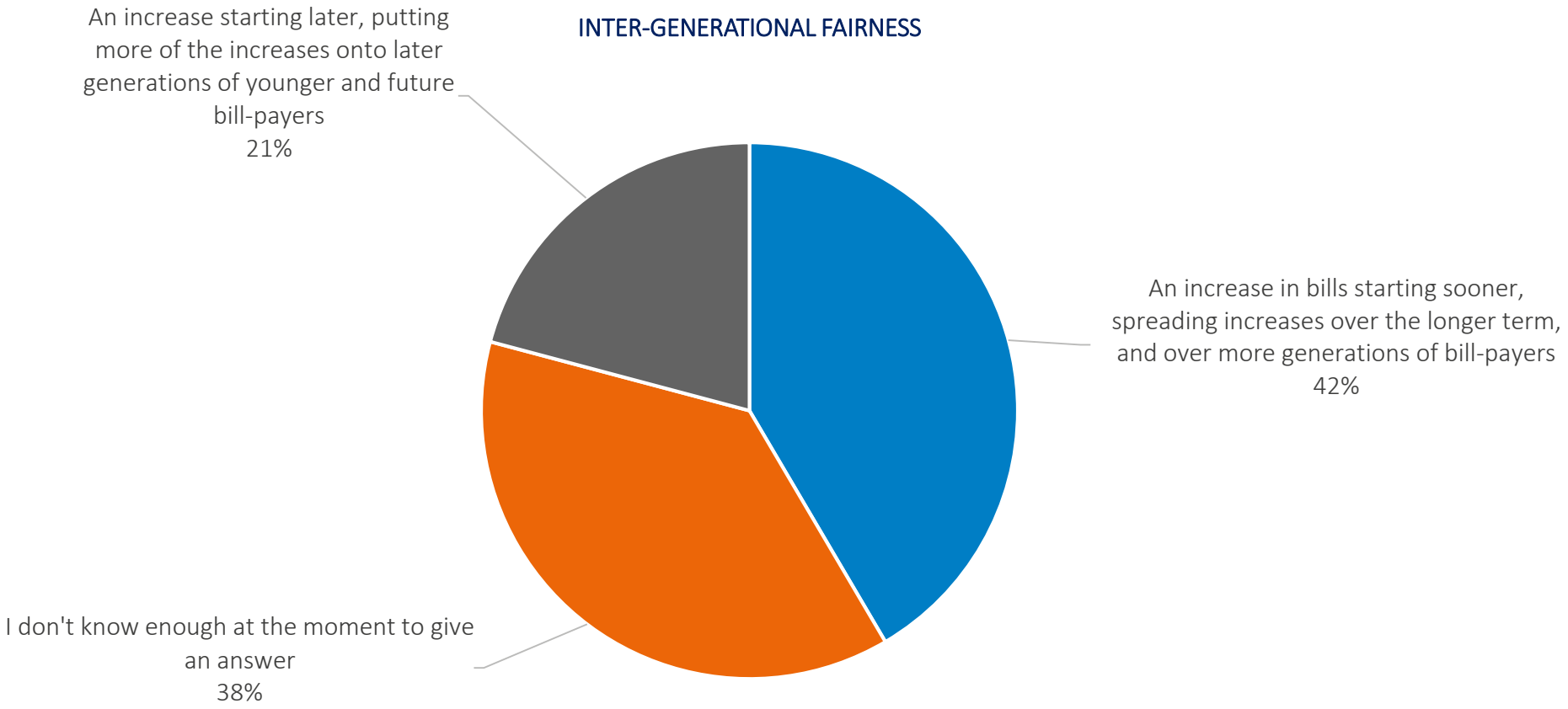
HOW WILL THEY PAY FOR PROPOSED BILL CHANGES



* Includes those who found the proposed bills to be neither easy nor difficult to afford

Q6: Which of the following do you think you would need to do to pay for the increase in your water bills between 2025 and 2030? BASE: THOSE WHO FOUND THE PROPOSED BILL NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT, DIFFICULT OR VERY DIFFICULT TO PAY FOR (357)

South West Water billpayers were asked an in principle question about how they would prefer bill increases for long-term investments to be phased. 42% would prefer the bill increase starting sooner vs. 21% later. Over a third didn't know enough to give an answer.



Q9: Water companies have to plan their services well into the future, i.e., 20-30 years from now, taking into account forecasts for things like the effect of climate change and increases in population. It can take decades for some of the things that companies build to come into service - for example, a new reservoir can take 20-30 years. There are different ways in which these long-term investments can feed into bills. In principle, which one of the following options would you prefer? BASE: ALL (516)

Participants were informed of their **water supplier's current performance** and **future targets** for water supply interruptions, drinking water quality, and leakage. The **sewerage service provider's performance was also shown** and included the following service measures: sewage flooding inside properties, sewage flooding outside properties and pollution incidents.

Participants were also shown a **proposal for investments in four areas**: Sewerage services & environment, Protecting water supplies, Improving drinking water quality and Resilience of services to disruption from external events. The delivery of each investment area (e.g., what form it came in, such as the number of smart meters to be fitted) and spending within these areas were specific for each water company.

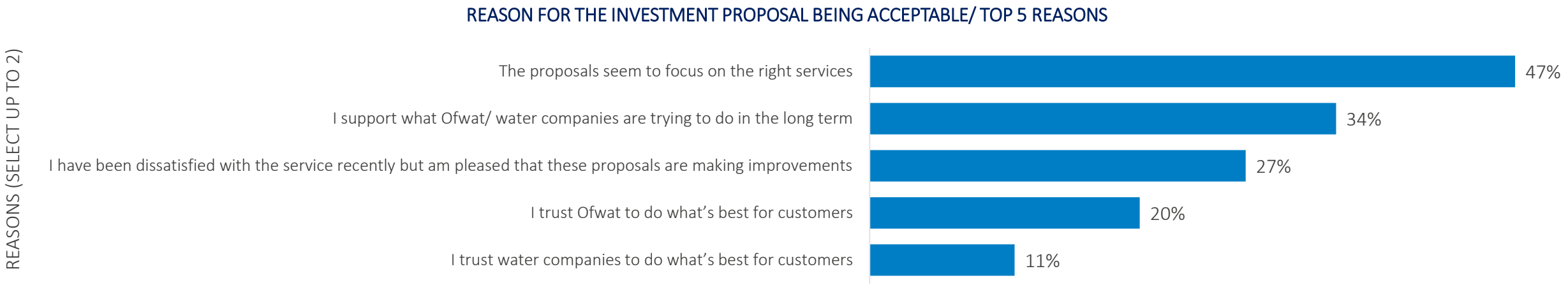
73% of South West Water billpayers find the investment proposal acceptable. After being asked about investment proposal acceptability again, but this time alongside a reminder of the proposed bills for 2025-30. The level of non-acceptance doubles, **but 59% still find the proposal acceptable.**

ACCEPTABILITY	TOP 2 / BOTTOM 2 NET %	PROPORTION FOR SOUTH WEST WATER	RANGE FOR ALL WATER COMPANIES (ENGLAND AND WALES)	AVERAGE PERCENTAGE FOR ALL WATER COMPANIES (TOTAL)	AVERAGE PERCENTAGE FOR ENGLAND
ACCEPTABILITY OF INVESTMENT PROPOSALS	Acceptable	73%	65% - 81%	75%	75%
	Unacceptable	18%	8% - 24%	15%	15%
ACCEPTABILITY OF INVESTMENT PROPOSALS WITH A REMINDER OF THE BILL CHANGE	Acceptable	59%	43% - 67%	58%	58%
	Unacceptable	37%	23% - 47%	33%	32%

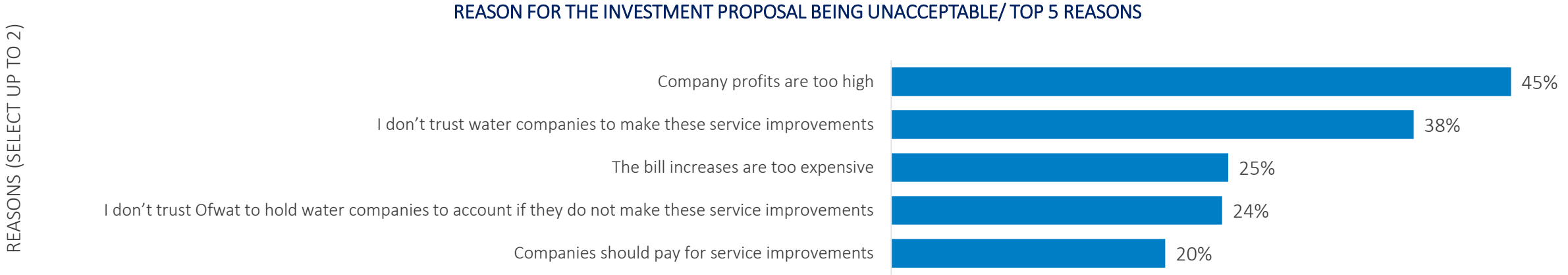
Arrows next to the numbers mark significant differences from the Total for England and Wales, ↑ = significantly more ↓ = significantly less on a 95% confidence level.

Q8: Based on everything you have seen and read about this proposal for your water and sewerage services, how acceptable or unacceptable is it to you? BASE: ALL (516)
Q10a: Now, thinking about the proposed bill levels for 2025 to 2030, the investment that is planned in services and the proposed service levels, how acceptable or unacceptable are the proposals to you? BASE: ALL (516)

The 73% who find the investment proposals acceptable most often cite that the proposals focus on the right services and support the longer term.



On the other hand, the 18% of those who find the investment proposals unacceptable say this is because company profits are too high, and there is low trust in companies fulfilling the improvements.



Q8b: What are the two main reasons that you feel the proposals for your water services are acceptable? BASE: ALL THAT FOUND THE INVESTMENT PROPOSALS ACCEPTABLE (384)
Q8a: What are the two main reasons that you feel the proposals for your water services are unacceptable? BASE: ALL THAT FOUND THE INVESTMENT PROPOSALS UNACCEPTABLE (87)

To understand the acceptability of the investment proposals, we presented billpayers with investment areas within the four categories in red text below. The investments included relevant numbers and targets from the Draft Determinations. The aim was to determine which investment proposal within each category was most important to billpayers. Some of these investment areas were shown to respondents of all water companies, and some to a subset of water companies.

The top priorities across the categories for South West Water billpayers are:

- **Reducing the use of storm overflows which release sewage into rivers** in the 'improving sewerage services and the environment' area
- **Starting to develop large scale water supply schemes** in the 'protecting water supplies' area
- **Replacement of lead supply pipes** in the 'improving drinking water quality' area
- **Improving the resilience of treatment works, pipes and technology** in the 'improving resilience to reduce the risk of disruption to services' area:

Improvements for taste, odour and colour of drinking water were included in the investment total, but not shown. It is possible that, had they been included, they would have affected the priority order for services within the drinking water quality area.

IMPROVING SEWERAGE SERVICES AND THE ENVIRONMENT	Column %
Reducing the use of storm overflows which release sewage into rivers	53%
Improving sewage treatment processes to help river water quality	36%
Monitoring river water quality	7%
Don't know/can't say	4%

PROTECTING WATER SUPPLIES	Column %
Reducing leakage	40%
Starting to develop large scale water supply schemes	27%
Improving water supply	21%
Fitting smart water meters	8%
Don't know/can't say	3%

IMPROVING DRINKING WATER QUALITY	Column %
Replacement of lead supply pipes	57%
Additional water treatment processes	38%
Don't know/can't say	5%

RESILIENCE OF SERVICES TO DISRUPTION FROM EXTERNAL EVENTS	Column %
Improving the resilience of treatment works, pipes and technology	90%
Improving security and resilience to cyber attacks	6%
Don't know/ can't say	4%

Q7a-d: Based on what you have just read, which of these is the most important to you relating to improving sewerage services and the environment / protecting water supplies / improving drinking water quality / improving the resilience of pipes, sewers and treatment works to reduce the risk of disruption to services? BASE: ALL (516)

QUOTAS VS. ACHIEVED SAMPLE

England & Wales 2021 census regional gender and age profile and 2021 Census Approximated Social Grade figures* were applied to company quotas.

QUOTA SAMPLE STRUCTURE SOUTH WEST WATER	COLUMN %	TARGET	ACHIEVED UNWEIGHTED %	ACHIEVED WEIGHTED %
AGE GROUPS	18-24	10%	4%	5%
	25-34	15%	14%	20%
	35-44	15%	16%	14%
	45-54	16%	18%	17%
	55-64	17%	18%	17%
	65+	28%	30%	27%
GENDER	Female	48%	53%	47%
	Male	52%	46%	52%
	Other	open	1%	2%
SOCIAL ECONOMIC GRADE	AB	28%	31%	29%
	C1	34%	35%	33%
	C2	22%	16%	20%
	DE	16%	18%	18%

S1: How old are you? BASE: ALL (516)
S2: Please select your gender. BASE: ALL (516)
Q11: Please indicate which one of the following best describes the profession of the chief income earner in your household. BASE: ALL (516)
*https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/JICPOPS%20regional%20evaluation%20of%20Census%202021%20ASG.pdf

Constructing the research materials

Proposed bills from 2025-30

- For most companies, this was based on data provided by Ofwat and adjusted to include forecast inflation; push to web respondents saw a personalised bill profile, online panel respondents saw a bill profile based on the average household water charges for South West Water customers*
- For Northumbrian Water and Essex and Suffolk Water, South Staffs Water and Cambridge Water, South West Bournemouth and Bristol Water, the respective companies provided the data for CCW/Impact to build specific bill profiles for each area – this meant that respondents saw something more representative of the potential bills changes in their area
- Respondents from water only companies saw a proposed bill which included proposed sewerage service charges – this was made clear in the supporting text

Water company performance data

- Performance data was based on Ofwat's Water Company Performance report 2022-23, and future performance targets as published in the Draft Determinations

Investment proposal stimulus

- This was based on Ofwat's Overview document for each water company's Draft Determination
- Where possible the wording for these was generic to support comparisons between companies; context for Wales was included
- Where helpful for respondents, company specific examples were provided under the generic wording, e.g., for large scale water supply developments

Investment costs

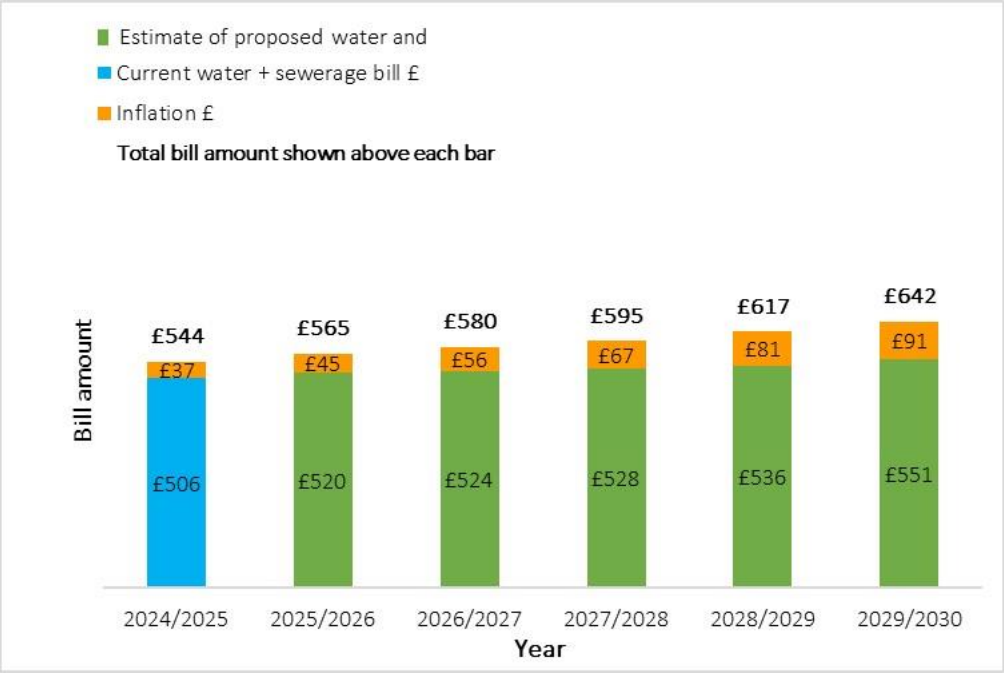
- Respondents saw the proposed investment for each investment area – the total amount over the five years from 2025-30

The questionnaire can be viewed here

* Including water & sewerage charges

Bill profile shown at Q4 & Q10a (example for panel where average bill profile was shown)

SOUTH WEST WATER



Performance tables & charts shown before Q8, TABLE 1, CHART 1: Water supply interruption over 3 hours

SOUTH WEST WATER

TABLE 1

COMPANY PERFORMANCE:
Water supply interruption over 3 hours
(the average length of time properties are without water in hours, minutes, seconds - hh:mm:ss)

Portsmouth Water	00:02:21
SES Water	00:03:51
Wessex Water	00:04:10
Cambridge Water	00:04:29
South Staffs Water	00:04:29
Bristol Water	00:08:03
Essex and Suffolk Water	00:08:17
Northumbrian Water	00:08:17
South West Water including Bournemouth	**00:08:42**
Severn Trent Water	00:09:10
Yorkshire Water	00:09:27
Affinity Water	00:12:53
Anglian Water including Hartlepool	00:14:35
Hafren Dyfrdwy	00:18:00
Thames Water	00:19:54
United Utilities	00:38:45
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	00:44:31
Southern Water	01:28:10
South East Water	03:02:21

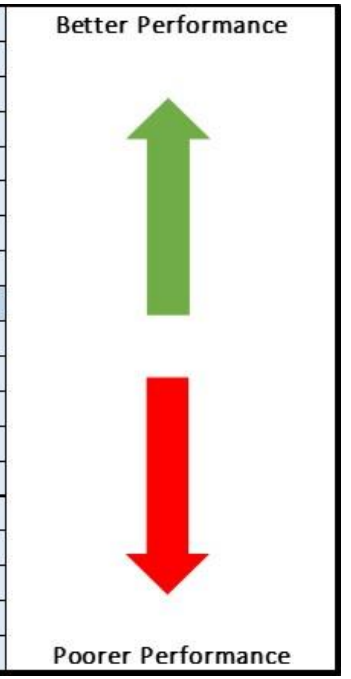
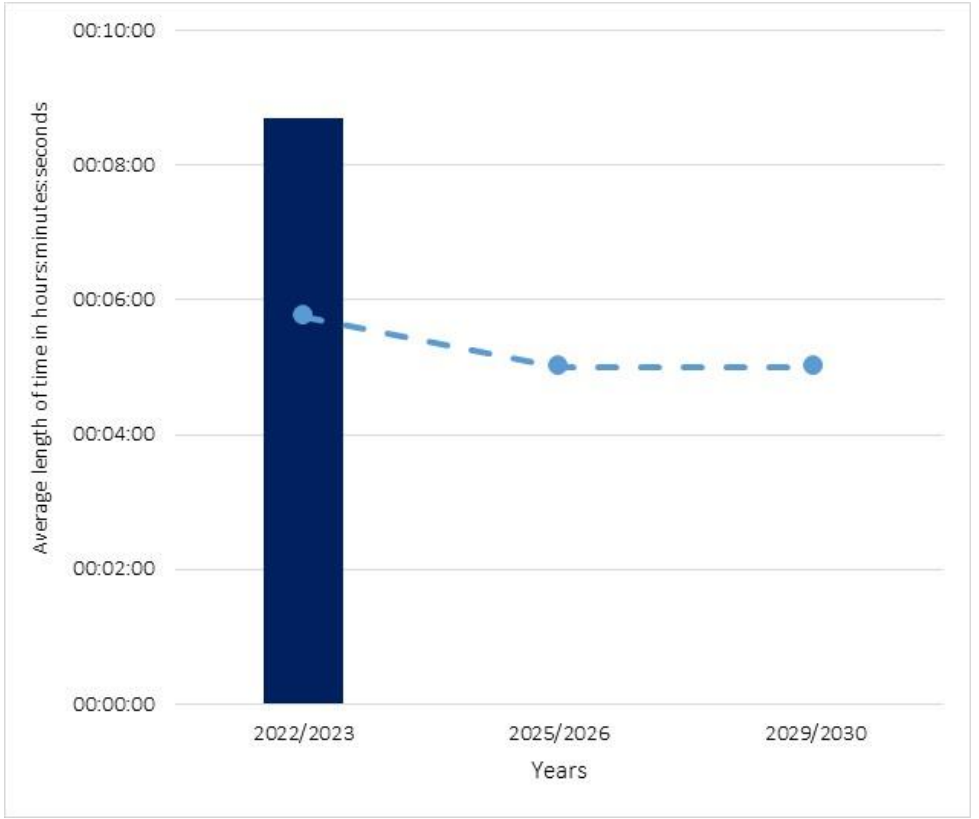


CHART 1

PROPOSALS FOR YOUR COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE FROM 2025 TO 2030
Water supply interruption over 3 hours
(the average length of time properties are without water in hours, minutes, seconds - hh:mm:ss)
Current performance
Target performance



Performance tables & charts shown before Q8, TABLE 2, CHART 2: Drinking water quality

SOUTH WEST WATER

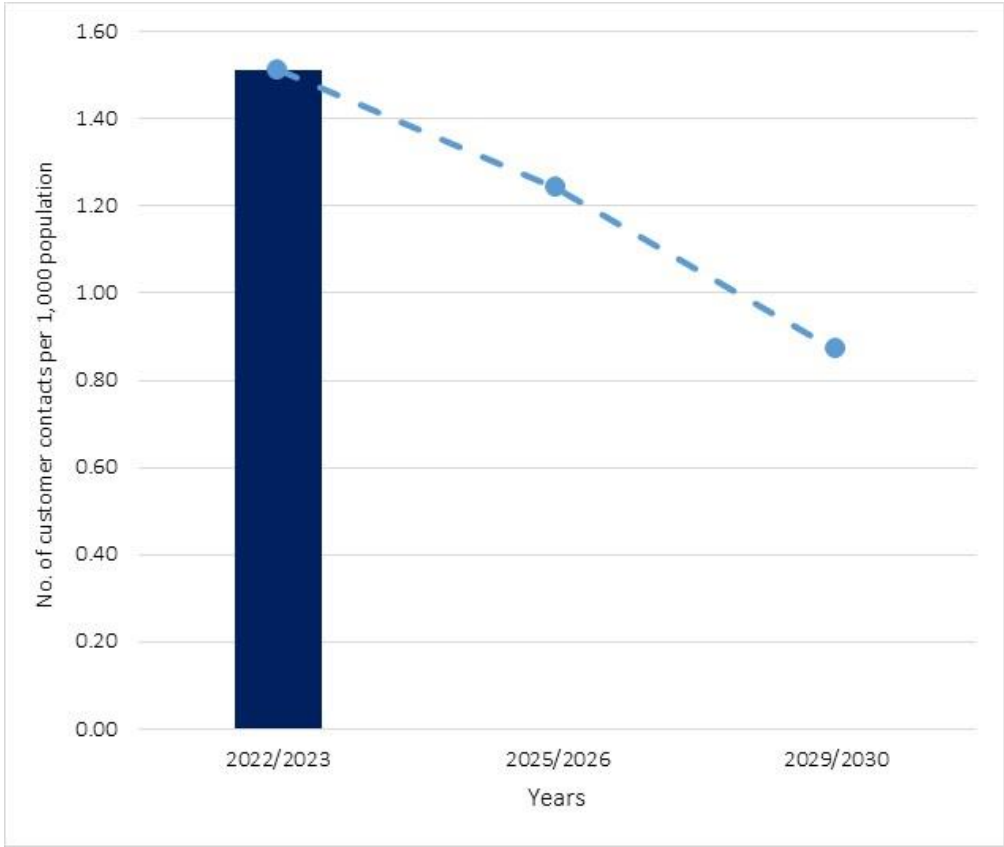
TABLE 2

COMPANY PERFORMANCE:
Drinking water quality
(number of customer contacts about drinking water quality per 1,000 population)

Portsmouth Water	0.42	Better Performance
Thames Water	0.44	
Affinity Water	0.56	
SES Water	0.64	
Cambridge Water	0.65	
South Staffs Water	0.65	
Severn Trent Water	0.85	
Essex and Suffolk Water	0.96	
Northumbrian Water	0.96	
Anglian Water including Hartlepool	1.01	
Yorkshire Water	1.02	
Wessex Water	1.14	
South East Water	1.16	
Southern Water	1.17	
Hafren Dyfrdwy	1.18	
Bristol Water	1.21	
United Utilities	1.41	
South West Water including Bournemouth	**1.51**	
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	2.35	Poorer Performance

CHART 2

PROPOSALS FOR YOUR COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE FROM 2025 TO 2030
Drinking water quality
(number of customer contacts about drinking water quality per 1,000 population)
Current performance
Target performance



Performance tables & charts shown before Q8, TABLE 3, CHART 3: Leaks

SOUTH WEST WATER

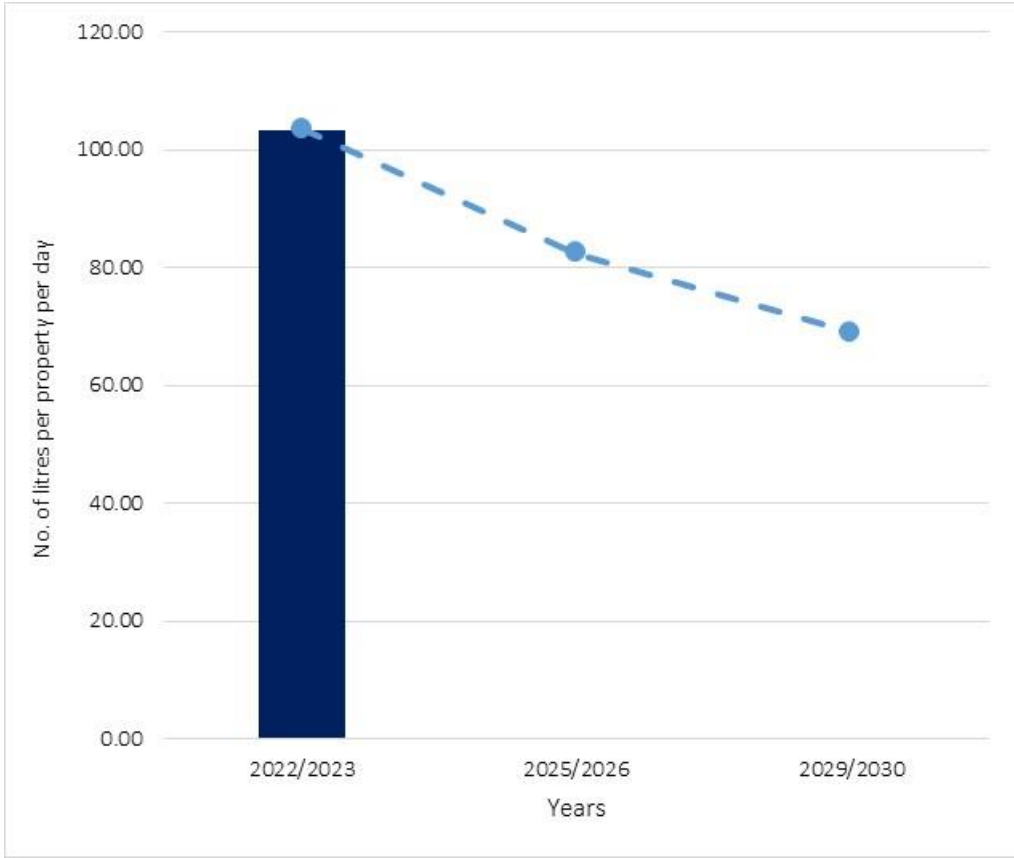
TABLE 3

COMPANY PERFORMANCE:
Leaks
(the number of litres of water leaked per property per day)

Bristol Water	66.15	Better Performance
Essex and Suffolk Water	72.43	
SES Water	76.22	
Anglian Water including Hartlepool	78.16	
Portsmouth Water	84.96	
Cambridge Water	86.44	
Southern Water	87.02	
South East Water	89.56	
Affinity Water	100.46	
South West Water including	**103.34**	
Northumbrian Water	103.68	
Wessex Water	104.15	
Severn Trent Water	107.93	
South Staffs Water	108.99	
Yorkshire Water	119.86	
United Utilities	122.26	
Thames Water	149.37	
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	164.79	
Hafren Dyfrdwy	165.17	Poorer Performance

CHART 3

PROPOSALS FOR YOUR COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE FROM 2025 TO 2030
Leaks
(the number of litres of water leaked per property per day)
Current performance
Target performance



Performance tables & charts shown before Q8, TABLE 7, CHART 7: Sewage flooding inside properties

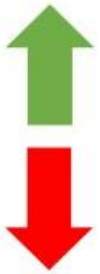
SOUTH WEST WATER

TABLE 7

COMPANY PERFORMANCE:
Sewage flooding inside properties
(number of properties flooded by sewage for every 10,000 properties connected to the public sewer)

South West Water including Bournemouth	**0.63**
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	1.14
Northumbrian Water	1.21
Wessex Water	1.31
Hafren Dyfrdwy	1.38
Severn Trent Water	1.65
Anglian Water including Hartlepool	1.69
Thames Water	1.91
Southern Water	2.25
United Utilities	2.32
Yorkshire Water	2.67

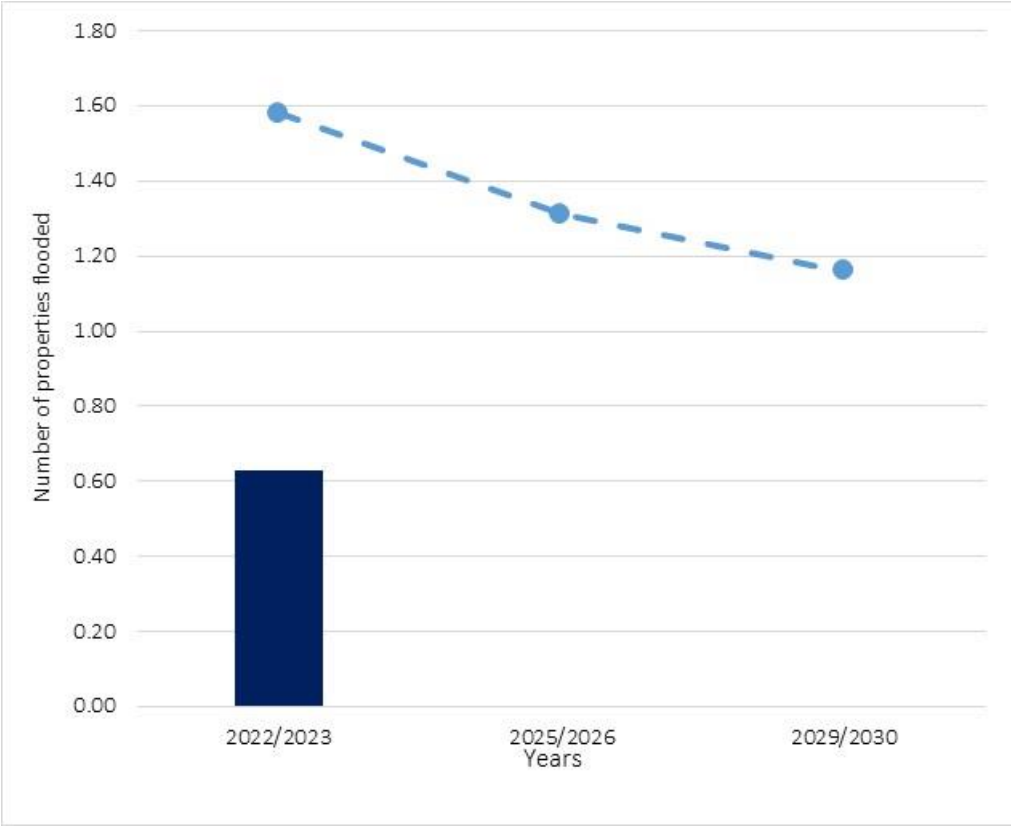
Better Performance



Poorer Performance

CHART 7

PROPOSALS FOR YOUR COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE FROM 2025 TO 2030
Sewage flooding inside properties
(number of properties flooded by sewage for every 10,000 properties connected to the public sewer)
Current performance
Target performance



Performance tables & charts shown before Q8, TABLE 8, CHART 8: Sewage flooding outside properties

SOUTH WEST WATER

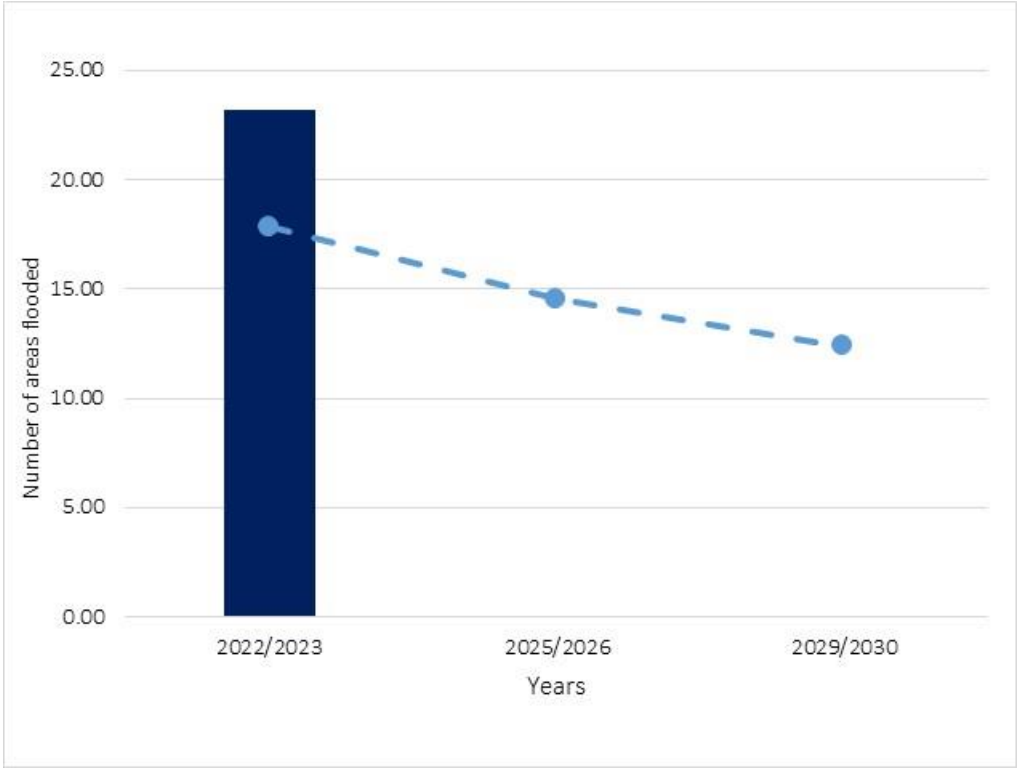
TABLE 8

COMPANY PERFORMANCE:
Sewage flooding outside properties
(number of external areas flooded by sewage for every 10,000 properties connected to the public sewer)

Severn Trent Water	12.69	Better Performance
Anglian Water including Hartlepool	16.10	
United Utilities	17.13	
Wessex Water	17.83	
Thames Water	18.41	
Southern Water	18.46	
Hafren Dyfrdwy	19.77	
Yorkshire Water	22.75	
Northumbrian Water	23.10	
South West Water including	**23.19**	
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	24.42	Poorer Performance

CHART 8

PROPOSALS FOR YOUR COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE FROM 2025 TO 2030
Sewage flooding outside properties
(number of external areas flooded by sewage for every 10,000 properties connected to the public sewer)
Current performance
Target performance



Performance tables & charts shown before Q8, TABLE 9, CHART 9: Pollution incidents

SOUTH WEST WATER

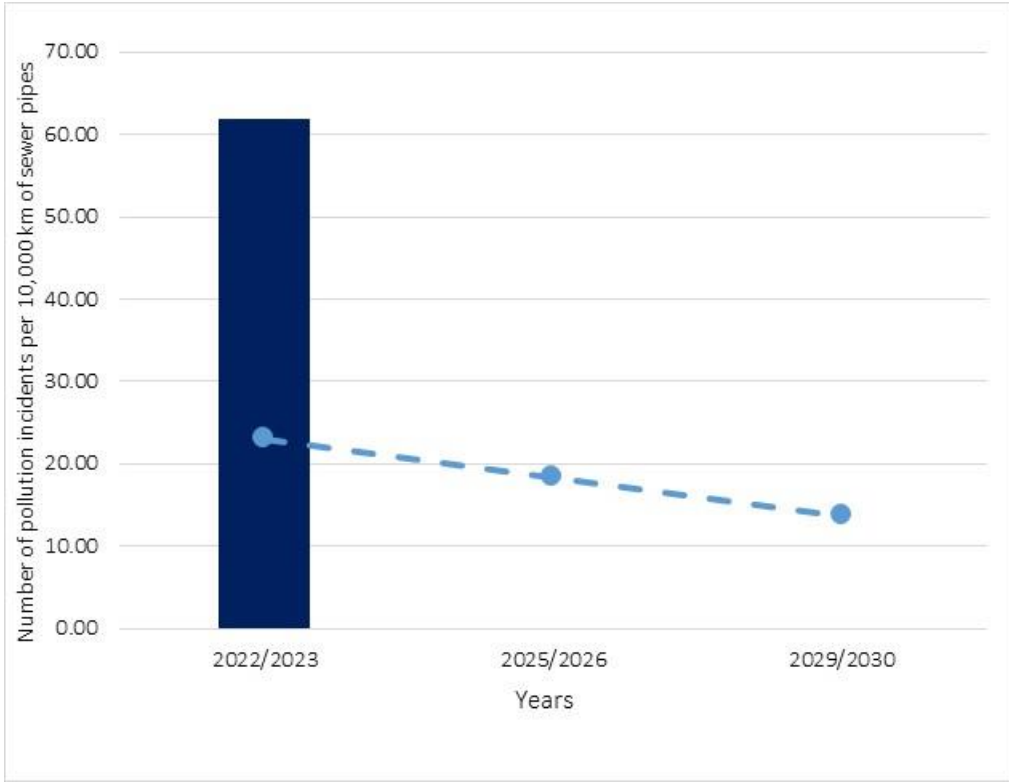
TABLE 9

COMPANY PERFORMANCE:
Pollution incidents
(the number of incidents per 10,000 km of sewer pipes)

United Utilities	16.29	Better Performance
Northumbrian Water	19.98	
Severn Trent Water	20.64	
Yorkshire Water	22.39	
Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water	24.55	
Thames Water	30.37	
Wessex Water	31.48	
Anglian Water including Hartlepool	33.36	
Hafren Dyfrdwy	39.84	
South West Water including	**61.93**	
Southern Water	90.11	Poorer Performance

CHART 9

PROPOSALS FOR YOUR COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE FROM 2025 TO 2030
Pollution incidents
(the number of incidents per 10,000 km of sewer pipes
Current performance
Target performance



Investment text for **Sewerage services and the environment** before Q7b

SOUTH WEST WATER

Sewerage services and the environment

The proposal is for South West Water to invest £1.1 billion to improve the environment from 2025 to 2030.

The biggest areas of investment are:

£750 million to reduce the use of storm overflows which release sewage into rivers.
Storm overflows release sewage, often mixed with rainwater, into rivers or seas when sewers are full. This reduces the risk of homes and properties being flooded with sewage. This practice can also affect the quality of water in rivers. By reducing spill numbers, sewage may have a less detrimental effect on river water quality. All storm overflows now have a monitor fitted to measure how often and how long each is used for.
The proposed performance target is to reduce the use of storm overflows by 58% by 2029-30, down to an average of 16.5 spills per overflow. The company will build more storage to hold rainwater into its sewerage network, and also use wetlands to slow the flow of water and help keep rainwater out of sewers.

£140 million to improve sewage treatment processes to prevent nutrient pollution in rivers.
High levels of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous occur in rivers due to things like rainwater run-off from farmland and sewage release into rivers. These nutrients mean that plants grow more quickly, taking oxygen out of the water for fish etc., harming wildlife and habitats. Improving treatment processes at sewage treatment works, will help to reduce the level of things like phosphorus before the treated water is returned to rivers and seas.
South West Water has a target to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering rivers from water company activities by 8%. It will use a mix of approaches for this, including chemical treatments and natural processes such as reedbeds to help remove nutrients from treated sewage before it is put back into rivers.

£33 million for new targets to monitor river water quality.
Companies must fit 'continuous river water quality monitors' at various points in rivers to get a broader understanding of how their sewage operations affect water quality.
245 river water quality monitors will be fitted at high priority sites by South West Water, to provide continuous real-time information on the effect of the company's activities on watercourses. **This will help the company identify pollution and water quality issues more quickly.**

Investment text for **Protecting water supplies** before Q7b

SOUTH WEST WATER

Protecting water supplies

The Bournemouth area and the Isles of Scilly within South West Water's region are classed by the Environment Agency as being areas of 'serious water stress'. This means that the gap between demand for water, and water available for supply and to protect the environment is smaller than it should be, or it will cause concern for the reliability of water supplies in the future.
The proposal is for South West Water to invest £192 million over 2025 - 30 to ensure there is enough water to go around.

The biggest areas of investment are:

£80 million to start developing the following large scale water supply schemes, working with Wessex Water
A second reservoir at Cheddar.
Redeveloping a disused quarry in the Mendip Hills to be a reservoir.
Treated sewage water from Wessex Water treatment works at Poole will be sent to a wetland for natural filtering before it is released into the River Stour. It will flow down the Stour to be taken by South West Water to be treated for drinking water.

£59 million to fit smart water meters.
Smart meters help water companies to manage leakage as they provide more frequent information about water use which alerts them to leaks more quickly than meters which need to be read manually. They also help people keep track of the water they are using.
Fit smart water meters at 509,000 properties from 2025 -2030. Most of these will replace existing water meters which need to be read manually, some will be new smart meter installations at properties that have not previously had a meter. **The target is to reduce household water use by 6% from 2025 to 2030.**

£26 million to improve water supply.
The risk of water supplies being disrupted by drought will be reduced by building new sources of water supply and helping customers save water. It includes increasing water treatment capacity to supply more customers, putting in new water mains and developing a new borehole to take water from.

£14 million to reduce leaks.
This will involve various approaches, such as reducing water supply pressure where appropriate, to reduce leakage, more sensors to monitor the water supply network to detect leaks, and renewing water mains. **The target is to reduce leakage by 15% from 2025 to 2030.**

Investment text for **Improving drinking water quality** before Q7b

SOUTH WEST WATER

Improving drinking water quality

The proposal is for South West Water, including Bournemouth Water, to invest £87 million over 2025 - 2030 to improve the quality of drinking water.

This will include:

£48 million to replace lead supply pipes which join properties to water mains.

Some older properties have lead supply pipes. To ensure water is safe to drink, it is treated with a safe chemical which stops the lead leaking out of the pipe and entering the water. However, lead can be a health risk for the very young and old, so water companies are replacing this pipework over time.

South West Water has a target to replace 7,950 lead supply pipes from 2025 to 2030 to improve drinking water quality.

£24 million for additional water treatment processes.

Sometimes, the water in the environment (rivers, lakes, reservoirs) which water companies take to treat for drinking water, needs extra levels of treatment to meet drinking water quality requirements. **The proposed investment will help to reduce contacts from consumers about the taste, odour and appearance of tap water.**

£14 million for the taste, odour and colour of water.

The company will invest in its network of pipes and/or treatment works to reduce the chance of their condition affecting the taste, odour and colour of drinking water.

Investment text for **Improving the resilience of services to disruption from external events** before Q7b

SOUTH WEST WATER

Improving the resilience of pipes, sewers and treatment works to reduce the risk of disruption to services

The proposal is for South West Water, including Bournemouth Water, to invest £72 million over 2025 - 2030 to improve the resilience of services.

This will include:

£62 million to improve resilience for the company's treatment works and other operational sites.

This includes more back-up power generators to reduce the chance of disruption due to heat or power failure and flood defences to protect key sites like treatment works. The company will also build new pipes to make it's network more 'joined up'. This will make it easier to move water around between different areas, if water resources and supply are lower in some parts than others.

£10 million on other security, including cyber.

This includes cyber security, in order to meet new statutory requirements.

IMPACT RESEARCH

Chris Ralph
Research Director
Chris.Ralph@impactmr.com

Monika Swift
Research Director
Monika.Swift@impactmr.com

Office: +44 (0) 1932 226793
Impact Research Ltd, 3 The Quintet, Churchfield Road, Walton-on-Thames, KT12 2TZ, United Kingdom

Impact Research, located in Walton-On-Thames, Surrey, was founded in 2010 by Darryl Swift and Dr. David Pearmain, focusing on research in utilities sector from the start. In 2017, we achieved ISO 20252 accreditation, which we've renewed annually since.

Over the years, we've been supporting clients by combining quantitative and qualitative methods to deliver actionable insights. Our dedicated team has built a strong reputation for excellence and innovation.

We've successfully executed projects across various sectors, including FMCG and retail, gas, electricity, water, and local authorities.

In this report, we explored water bill acceptability and affordability for the next 5 years, drawing on our expertise to provide valuable insights and recommendations for CCW and Ofwat.

IMPACT

FROM INSIGHT TO INFLUENCE