

Research Report



Ofwat SIM Survey 2018/19 Annual Report

Prepared for: Ofwat

Prepared by: BMG Research

Ofwat SIM Survey 2018/19 Annual Report

Prepared for: Ofwat

Prepared by: BMG Research

Date: April 2019



Produced by BMG Research

© BMG Research Ltd, 2019

www.bmgresearch.co.uk

Project: 9938

Registered in England No. 2841970

Registered office:

BMG Research
Beech House
Greenfield Crescent
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 3BE
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 121 3336006

UK VAT Registration No. 580 6606 32

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Member No. B4626

Market Research Society Company Partner

The provision of Market Research Services in accordance with ISO 20252:2012

The provision of Market Research Services in accordance with ISO 9001:2008

The International Standard for Information Security Management ISO 27001:2013

Investors in People Standard - Certificate No. WMQC 0614

Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) Member Company

Registered under the Data Protection Act - Registration No. Z5081943

A Fair Data organisation

Cyber Essentials certification

The BMG Research logo is a trade mark of BMG Research Ltd.

Table of Contents

1	Executive summary.....	1
1.1	Satisfaction	1
1.2	Reason for, and method of contact	1
1.3	Complaints and resolutions.....	1
1.4	Areas for improvement and what companies do well	2
2	Introduction.....	3
2.1	Background.....	3
2.2	Objectives	3
2.3	Methodology	4
2.3.1	Confidence levels	6
2.3.2	Weighting.....	6
3	Sample quality	7
3.1	Total number of individual records sent.....	7
3.2	Proportion of duplicates in sample	8
3.3	Proportion sent for number matching	8
3.4	Proportion of unobtainable numbers	9
3.5	Total proportion of useable records.....	9
4	SIM survey 2018/19 industry key annual results	10
4.1	Satisfaction	10
4.2	Reason for contact.....	14
4.3	Method of contact	15
4.4	Complaints and resolutions.....	16
4.4.1	Complaints.....	16
4.4.2	Resolutions.....	17
4.4.3	Proportion of resolved contacts - by company.....	18
4.5	Areas for improvement.....	20
4.6	What companies do well	21
5	Additional insights	22
5.1	Industry comparison.....	22
5.2	The use of social media to contact.....	23
5.3	General satisfaction with water company	24
5.4	Representation	24

5.4.1	Size of area in which customers reside	24
5.4.2	Social grade.....	25
5.4.3	Ethnicity	25
6	Conclusions	26
7	Appendix.....	27

Table of Figures

Figure 1:	Proportion of duplicates in sample	8
Figure 2:	Proportion sent for number matching	8
Figure 3:	Proportion of unobtainable numbers	9
Figure 4:	Total proportion of useable records.....	9
Figure 5:	Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)	10
Figure 6:	Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)	11
Figure 7:	Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)	11
Figure 8:	Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)	12
Figure 9:	Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)	12
Figure 10:	Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – unweighted)	13
Figure 11:	Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – unweighted)	13
Figure 12:	Q5 Could you confirm how you had contact with the company on this occasion? (Base: all – unweighted).....	15
Figure 13:	Q6 Did you regard this contact as a complaint? (Base: all – unweighted)	16
Figure 14:	Q7 Do you consider the matter you contacted the company about fully resolved? (Base: all – unweighted).....	17
Figure 15:	Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (All respondents).....	18
Figure 16:	Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (Billing only)	18
Figure 17:	Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (Clean only)	19
Figure 18:	Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (Waste only)	19

Figure 19: Q17 Apart from receiving bills and receiving everyday service, have you had contact with any of these organisations in the last three months? (Base: all Quarter 2 only – unweighted)	22
Figure 20: Q18 How satisfied were you with the latest contact you had with... (Base: all Quarter 2 only – unweighted)	22
Figure 21: NQ2 Likelihood to contact your water company using social media channels, such as Facebook or Twitter (Base: all Quarter 4 only – unweighted)	23
Figure 22: NQ1 In general, how satisfied are you with the level of service that [Water Company Name] provides you with? (Base: all Quarter 4 only – unweighted).....	24
Figure 23: Q14 Would you say you lived in.. ? (Base: all Quarter 3 only – unweighted)	24
Figure 24: Q15 Social Grade (Base: all Quarter 3 only – unweighted)	25
Figure 25: Q16 How would you describe your ethnic background? (Base: all Quarter 3 only – unweighted)	25

Table of Tables

Table 1: Number of interviews achieved per company	5
Table 2: Total number of individual records sent	7
Table 3: Q4 What did you contact the company about? (Base: all – unweighted)	14
Table 4: Q9 What, if anything, could have been better? What else could the company have done for you in relation to this matter? (Base: all – unweighted)	20
Table 5: Q10 And what if anything, do you think the company did well? (Base: all – unweighted)	21

1 Executive summary

The overall objective of the research is to provide a robust comparable measure of consumers' experience and satisfaction with the handling and resolution of a recent water or sewerage query by their supplier.

The resultant data is required to be statistically robust based on the sample received from the water companies, to allow comparison both between companies each year, and for each company on a year on year basis. This report contains the findings from all four waves of the 2018/19 research. The total number of interviews achieved in 2018/19 was 15,154.

1.1 Satisfaction

The overall weighted mean satisfaction score for 2018/19 is 4.39. Customers were significantly more satisfied with the handling of Billing enquiries (4.50) than either Clean (4.21) or Waste (4.44) enquiries.

Satisfaction with query handling has significantly improved across the industry since 2016/17. This increase is driven by the significant improvements in satisfaction with the handling of Billing and Waste queries.

Anglian Water achieved the highest overall satisfaction score in 2018/19 with a SIM score of 4.61. Thames Water reported the lowest overall satisfaction score (4.11).

1.2 Reason for, and method of contact

Billing calls dominated the reason for contact with 16% of the total sample contacting their water company due to a recent or planned move or to make a payment (8% each). A further 9% contacted their water company about a blockage in the sewer/drains (a Waste reason) and 6% contacted about no supply and 5% about a water leak/burst on the road (Water reasons).

Telephone is by far the most common method of contact (88%). A small proportion of customers chose to contact through the company website (6%).

1.3 Complaints and resolutions

Overall, 14% of customers who contacted their water company considered their call a complaint. Billing enquiries were significantly less likely to be considered a complaint than Clean or Waste enquiries. Waste queries were significantly more likely to be considered a complaint than Billing or Clean queries.

Overall, four in five (81%) customers considered the matter they contacted about fully resolved. Billing enquiries were significantly more likely to be resolved than Clean or Waste enquiries.

Portsmouth Water had the highest proportion of customers who felt their query was resolved. Thames Water had the lowest proportion of resolved contacts.

1.4 Areas for improvement and what companies do well

Three in five (63%) customers could not think of anything that their water company could have done better. Where an improvement was stated, a quicker response (4%), keeping in contact, a quicker resolution of the query and fixing the problem (3% each) were the main areas that customers felt could be improved

Approaching one in four (24%) customers felt that companies had polite/friendly telephone staff. The speed of response was also an area where customers felt water companies performed well (20%).

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Since the Water Industry in England and Wales was privatised in 1989, individual water companies have been regulated by the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat), whose job is to ensure that the industry provides a good quality service at a fair price. There are currently 18 water companies operating in England and Wales. A key focus of Ofwat's involvement is monitoring customer service levels; they use a number of key measures which assess qualitative aspects of customer service e.g. overall satisfaction with call handling.

Ofwat introduced the Service Incentive Mechanism (SIM) in 2010 as a way of encouraging water companies to improve their customer service. An industry-wide consultation on modifications to this measure took place between October 2013 and January 2014 and changes to the survey were piloted between September 2014 and January 2015.

This report contains the findings from all four waves of the 2018/19 research.

2018/19

Wave 1:

- Sampling period for Water & Sewerage companies 9th – 15th April 2018
- Fieldwork was conducted 20th April – 9th May 2018

Wave 2:

- Sampling period for Water & Sewerage companies 3rd – 9th September 2018
- Fieldwork was conducted 14th September – 3rd October 2018

Wave 3:

- Sampling period for Water & Sewerage companies 15th – 21st October 2018
- Fieldwork was conducted 26th October – 14th November 2018

Wave 4:

- Sampling period for Water & Sewerage companies 4th – 10th March 2019
- Fieldwork was conducted 15th March – 3rd April 2019

2.2 Objectives

The overall objective of the research is to provide a robust comparable measure of consumers' experience and satisfaction with the handling and resolution of a recent water or sewerage query by their supplier.

The survey is designed to capture all aspects of the company's business (billing, water operations & waste operations) and all customer contact channels (e.g. telephone, email and letter).

The resultant data is required to be statistically robust based on the sample received from the water companies, to allow comparison both between companies each year, and for each company on a year on year basis.

Combined data for 2015-16 to 2018-19 will be used to support Ofwat's decision on financial incentives in 2019.

2.3 Methodology

For each water company taking part, a target was set of 200 telephone interviews per wave with customers who have had a water or sewerage query resolved in the previous week, equating to 800 interviews per Water Company per year.

Some of the smaller companies have struggled to provide enough contacts to be able to achieve the desired number of interviews and, therefore, each of the 'Water Only Companies' have been asked to provide operational contacts over a period of up to five weeks.

The following targets have been set for the different aspects of service:

- 100 billing interviews and 100 operation interviews for Water only companies
- 67 Billing interviews, 67 Clean operation interviews and 66 Waste interviews for water and sewerage companies

A slightly different approach is required for Bristol and Wessex, who share call handling for billing, but have separate call handling for operations.

The target number of interviews for the operations elements for Bristol and Wessex is as outlined above (i.e. 100 for Bristol as a Water only company, and 134, split equally between water and waste, for Wessex as a WaSC).

For billing, Water only companies have a target of 100, and WASCs have a target of 67 interviews. Consequently 167 billing interviews are undertaken on behalf of Bristol and Wessex (100 for Bristol and 67 for Wessex), and these are included for both of the companies.

In July 2018 Dee Valley (WoC) became Hafren Dyfrdwy supplying both water and sewerage services to Wales, a WaSC. Given that Hafren Dyfrdwy receive an extremely low number of Wastewater contacts which resulted in the utilisation of inflated weighting factors for the company, the decision was taken by Ofwat to combine all completed Hafren Dyfrdwy Wastewater surveys with Severn Trent's Wastewater surveys given they share a contact centre for queries in an effort to reduce the high weight factors applied to the data. The same approach has been taken with Severn Trent and Hafren Dyfrdwy as is currently taken with Bristol and Wessex Billing services and noted above.

League tables have been revised to reflect the merging of Hafren Dyfrdwy and Severn Trent Wastewater completed interviews from Q2 onwards. In summary, total figures for Hafren Dyfrdwy contain one quarter (Quarter 1, 2018/19) of Dee Valley operating as a WoC and the remaining quarters are based on Hafren Dyfrdwy operating as a WaSC with Wastewater surveys combined with those achieved for Severn Trent. Severn Trent total figures contain one quarter (Quarter 1, 2018/19) of Severn Trent only Wastewater survey completes and the remaining three quarters of 2018/19 Wastewater scores are based on combined survey completes for Severn Trent and Hafren Dyfrdwy.

These anomalies are reflected in the table overleaf which outlines the number of interviews achieved per company.

All surveys were administered using our in-house Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) unit.

Each individual water company's survey was undertaken by multiple interviewers to prevent any possibility of interviewer bias.

The total number of interviews achieved in 2018/19 was 15,154. This was split by company as shown in Table 1 below.

Notes on tables

- Where figures do not add up to 100% this is due to computer rounding, the exclusion of don't know or refused categories or multiple responses;
- Where it is possible to identify billing interviews conducted on behalf of Bristol or Wessex specifically, these are not 'double counted' in these results;
- An * is used to indicate where the proportion of respondents is lower than 0.5% but is not 0%.

Table 1: Number of interviews achieved per company

	Total 18/19
TOTAL	15,154*
Affinity Water	814
Anglian Water	816
Bournemouth Water	755
Bristol Water	1,080
Hafren Dyfrdwy Water	794
Northumbrian Water	816
Portsmouth Water	806
Severn Trent Water	838
South East Water	812
South Staffs Water	809
South West Water	746
Southern Water	819
Sutton & East Surrey Water	744
Thames Water	823
United Utilities Water	817
Welsh Water	812
Wessex Water	1,232
Yorkshire Water	821

*15,154 is the total number of observations reported as a result of the sampling approach taken for Bristol and Wessex billing and Hafren Dyfrdwy and Severn Trent wastewater. The total number of interviews achieved is 14,261 with an associated confidence interval of $\pm 0.79\%$.

Of the 14,261 interviews completed, less than 1% was challenged by water companies for removal; of these, 29 interviews were removed.

2.3.1 Confidence levels

At the 95% confidence level, these sample sizes provide overall levels of accuracy for individual percentages of at least:

- 15,154 \pm 0.79%;
- 1,232 \pm 2.79%;
- 800 \pm 3.46%;
- 744 \pm 3.59%.

2.3.2 Weighting

For the purpose of comparing overall satisfaction between companies, water and sewerage company (WASCs) data is weighted to 50% Billing, 25% Clean operations and 25% Waste operations. Water only company (WOC) data is weighted 50% Billing and 50% Clean operations. As a result, direct comparisons can be made between companies with regard to billing and operational results.

3 Sample quality

3.1 Total number of individual records sent

Total number of contacts sent by each company.

Table 2: Total number of individual records sent

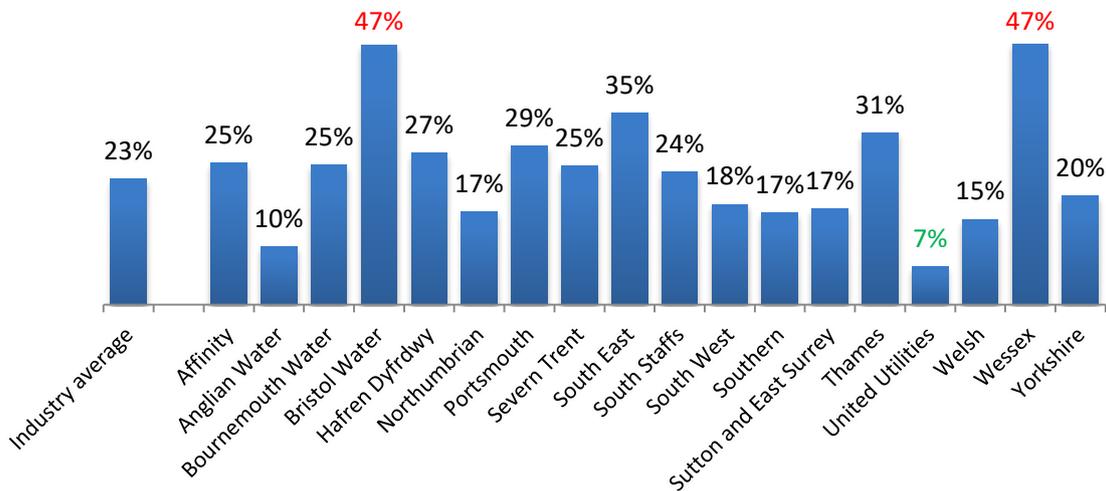
WASC Records Received			WOC Records Received		
	Sample received	Exc. Duplicates		Sample received	Exc. Duplicates
Thames	432442	231966	Affinity	102410	73836
United Utilities	139529	121855	Bristol*	118504	58504
Severn Trent	277836	196699	South East	86161	52465
Yorkshire	174871	127275	South Staffs/Cambridge	70499	52192
Southern	128312	99037	Sutton and East Surrey	17883	12909
Anglian	250207	216570	Bournemouth	14566	8856
South West	80734	63131	Portsmouth	17199	11451
Welsh	119807	95887			
Northumbrian	116454	89350			
Wessex*	114336	56183			
Hafren Dyfrdwy	12995	8706			

*Bristol and Wessex Billing contacts are all shown in both Bristol and Wessex sample figures

3.2 Proportion of duplicates in sample

Bristol and Wessex Water had the highest proportion of duplicate records in the sample provided in 2018/19 while United Utilities had the lowest.

Figure 1: Proportion of duplicates in sample



Figures indicate % of duplicate records in the sample prior to tele-matching

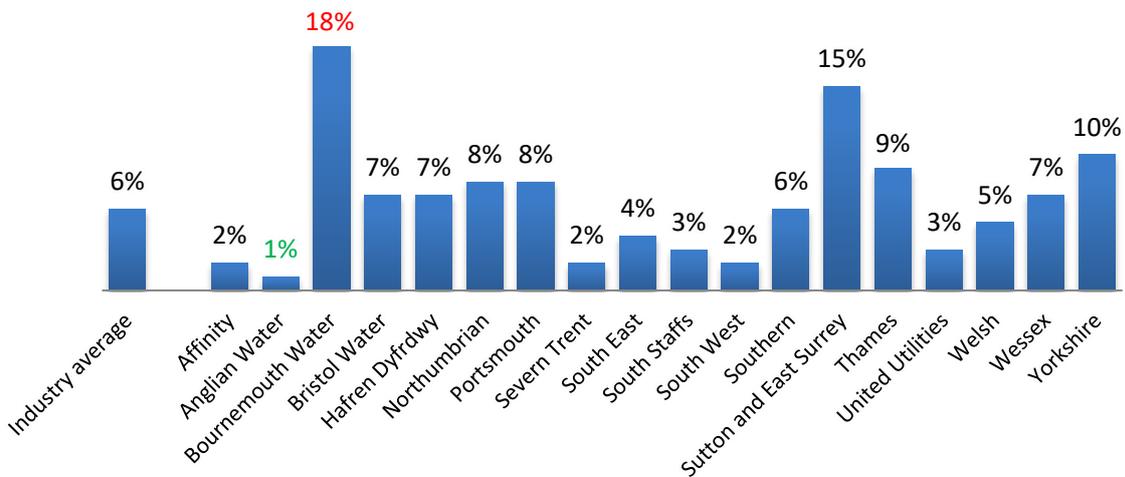
3.3 Proportion sent for number matching

The proportion of records without a useable telephone number indicates the quality of sample and how up-to-date company records are.

Bournemouth Water had the highest proportion that had to be sent for number matching as telephone numbers were either not present or not complete.

Anglian Water's sample contained the highest proportion of valid telephone numbers.

Figure 2: Proportion sent for number matching

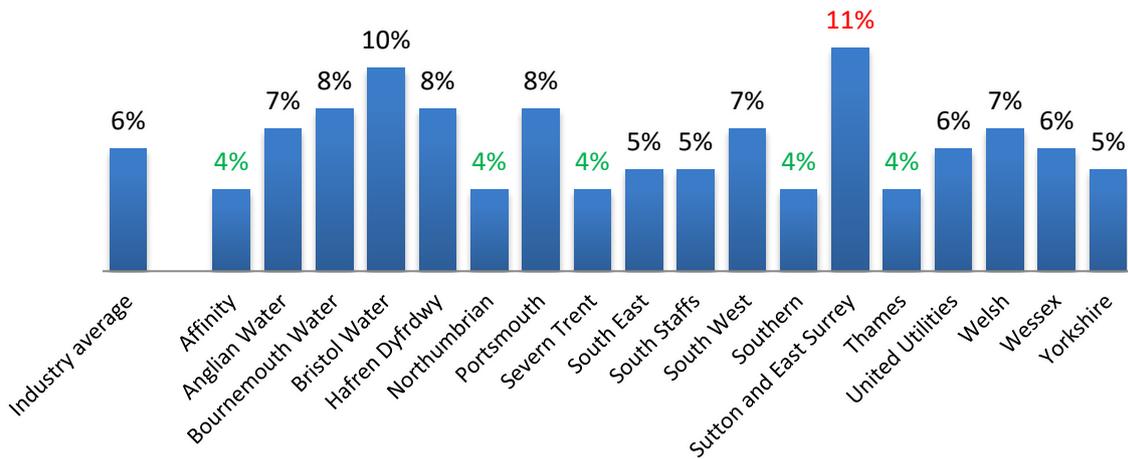


Figures indicate % of records without a useable telephone number

3.4 Proportion of unobtainable numbers

Sutton and East Surrey Water’s sample contained the highest proportion of unobtainable numbers, while a number of water companies had a very low proportion of unobtainable numbers; Affinity, Northumbrian, Severn Trent, Southern and Thames.

Figure 3: Proportion of unobtainable numbers

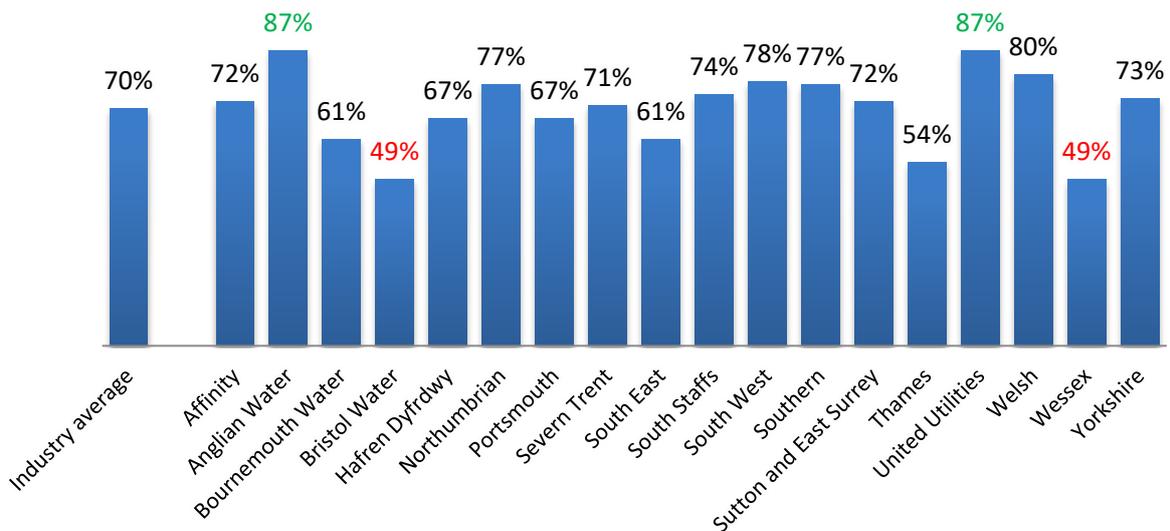


Figures indicate % of unobtainable records in loaded sample; those records that visually appear correct but are not in service when dialled. This indicates how up-to-date and accurate customer records are

3.5 Total proportion of useable records

The proportion of useable records across the industry was in line with the previous year. Anglian Water and United Utilities have the highest proportion of useable records in the sample and Bristol and Wessex had the lowest.

Figure 4: Total proportion of useable records



Figures indicate % of useable records (excluding duplicates) after removing those without telephone numbers that cannot be tele-matched and unobtainable numbers. The higher the figure, the more representative the sample is.

4 SIM survey 2018/19 industry key annual results

4.1 Satisfaction

All respondents were asked to take everything into account and answer how satisfied they were with the way their water company handled the matter.

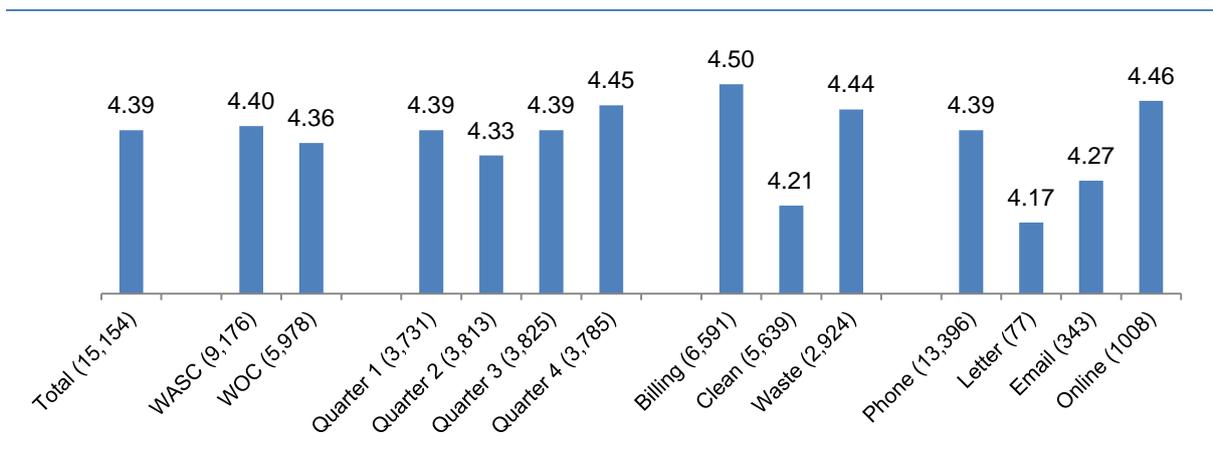
Customers were significantly more satisfied with the handling of Billing enquiries than either Clean or Waste enquiries and those with Waste enquiries were significantly more satisfied than those with Clean queries. Those who contacted their water company online were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the handling of their matter than any other method of contact.

Satisfaction is significantly higher in Quarter 4 of the SIM than in any other Quarter of 2018/19.

Customers of WaSC's displayed a significantly higher satisfaction with the way their water company handled the matter compared to WoCs.

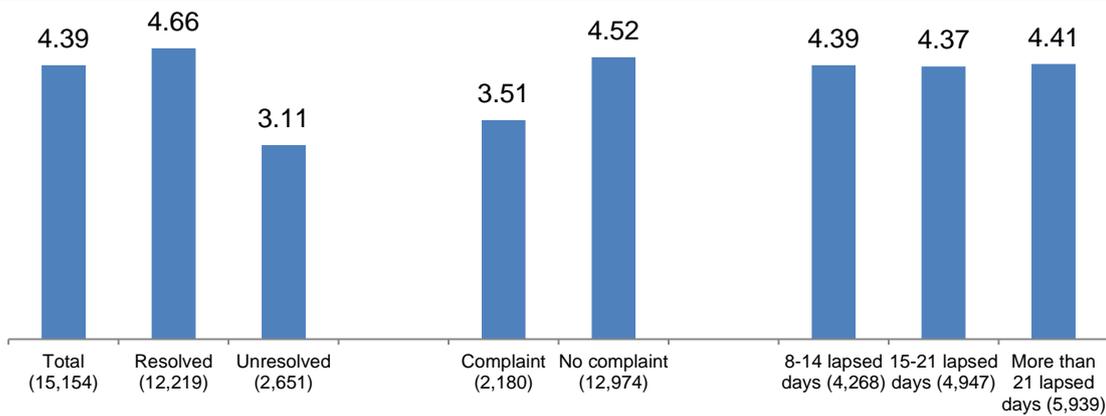
No other significant differences exist between the sub groups below.

Figure 5: Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)



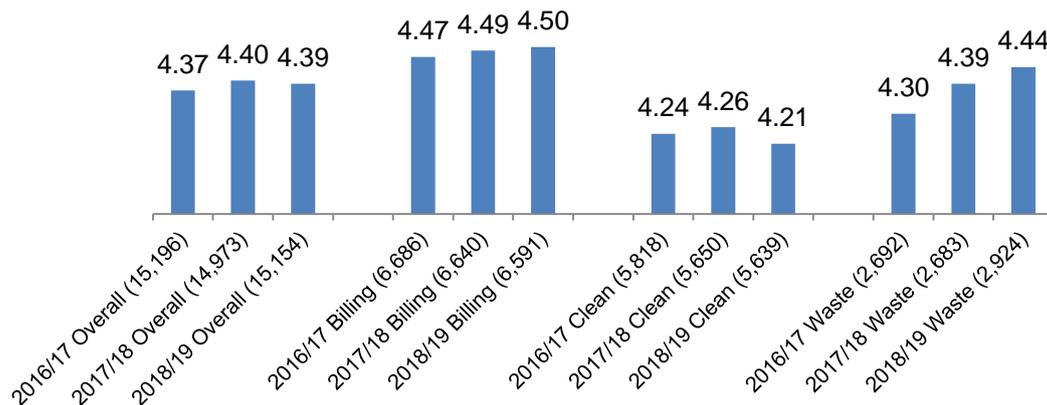
Customers who considered their matter resolved were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way their enquiry was handled as were those who did not consider their enquiry to be a complaint. Customers whose initial contact with the water company was more than 21 days from the time of interview are more likely to be satisfied with the way their call was handled, significantly so between those where 15-21 days had elapsed.

Figure 6: Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)



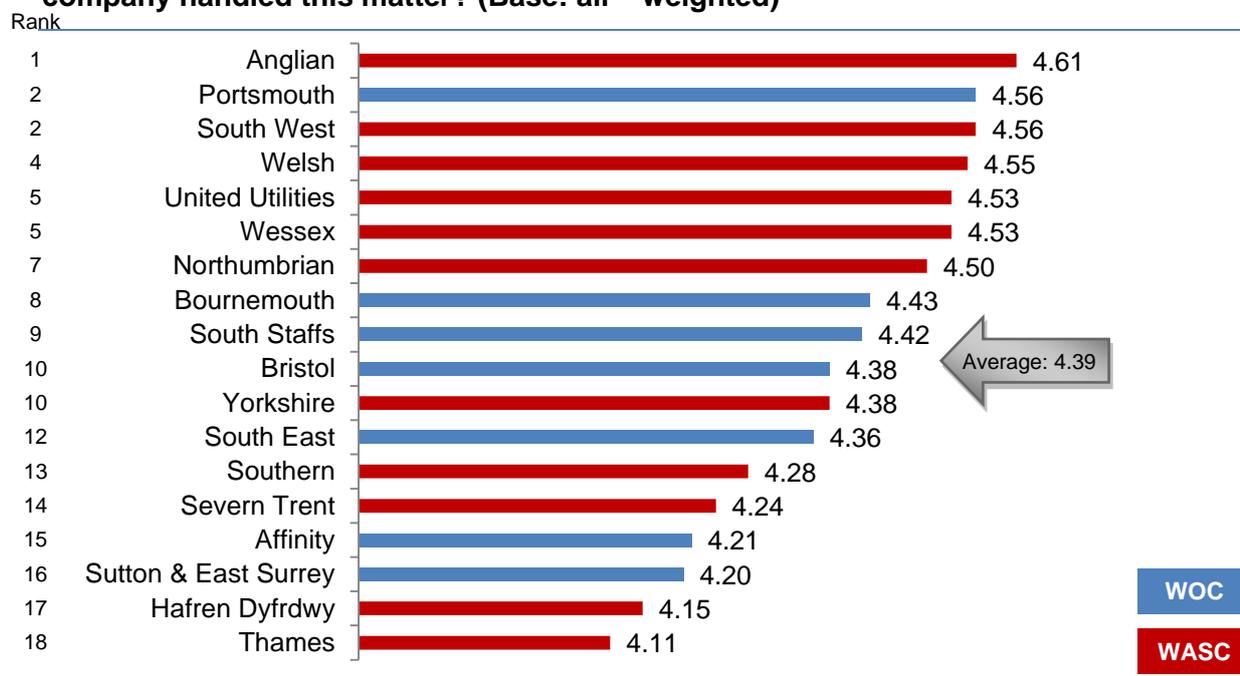
Satisfaction with query handling has significantly improved across the industry since 2016/17. This increase is driven by the significant improvements in satisfaction with the handling of Billing and Waste queries.

Figure 7: Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)



Anglian Water achieved the highest overall satisfaction score in 2018/19 with a SIM score of 4.61 followed jointly by Portsmouth Water and South West Water (4.56 each). Thames Water reported the lowest overall satisfaction score (4.11).

Figure 8: Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)



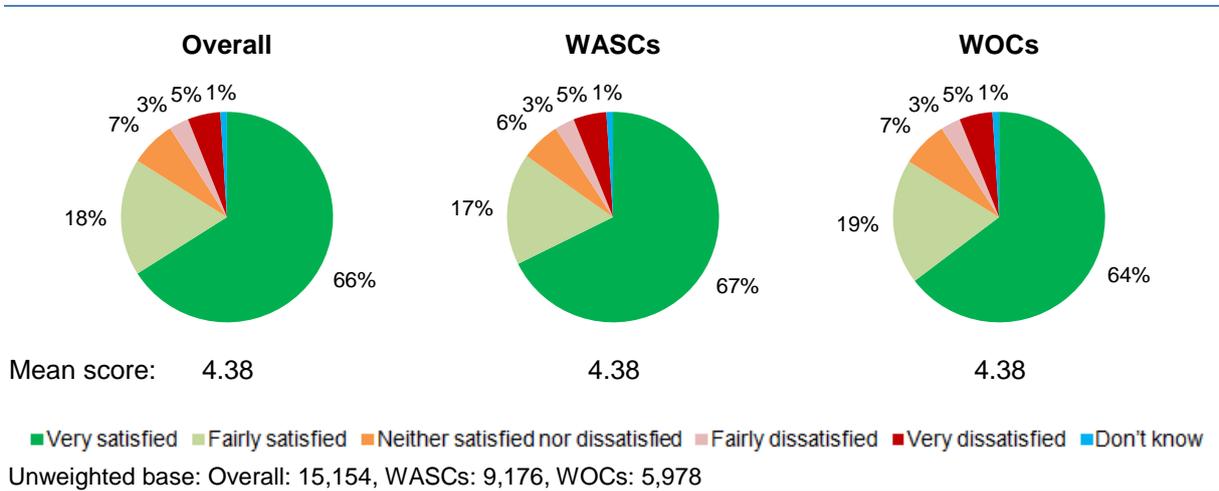
Weighted scores for each company for the four waves in 2018/19 are shown below.

Figure 9: Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – weighted)

Company	Q8	Confidence Interval	Rank	Significant Difference
Anglian	4.61	0.06	1	Significantly above industry average
Portsmouth	4.56	0.06	2	Significantly above industry average
South West	4.56	0.07	2	Significantly above industry average
Welsh	4.55	0.07	4	Significantly above industry average
United Utilities	4.53	0.06	5	Significantly above industry average
Wessex	4.53	0.05	5	Significantly above industry average
Northumbrian	4.50	0.07	7	Significantly above industry average
Bournemouth	4.43	0.07	8	
South Staffs	4.42	0.07	9	
Industry average	4.39	0.02		
Bristol	4.38	0.06	10	
Yorkshire	4.38	0.08	10	
South East	4.36	0.07	12	
Southern	4.28	0.08	13	Significantly below industry average
Severn Trent	4.24	0.08	14	Significantly below industry average
Affinity	4.21	0.08	15	Significantly below industry average
Sutton & East Surrey	4.20	0.09	16	Significantly below industry average
Hafren Dyfrdwy	4.15	0.09	17	Significantly below industry average
Thames	4.11	0.08	18	Significantly below industry average

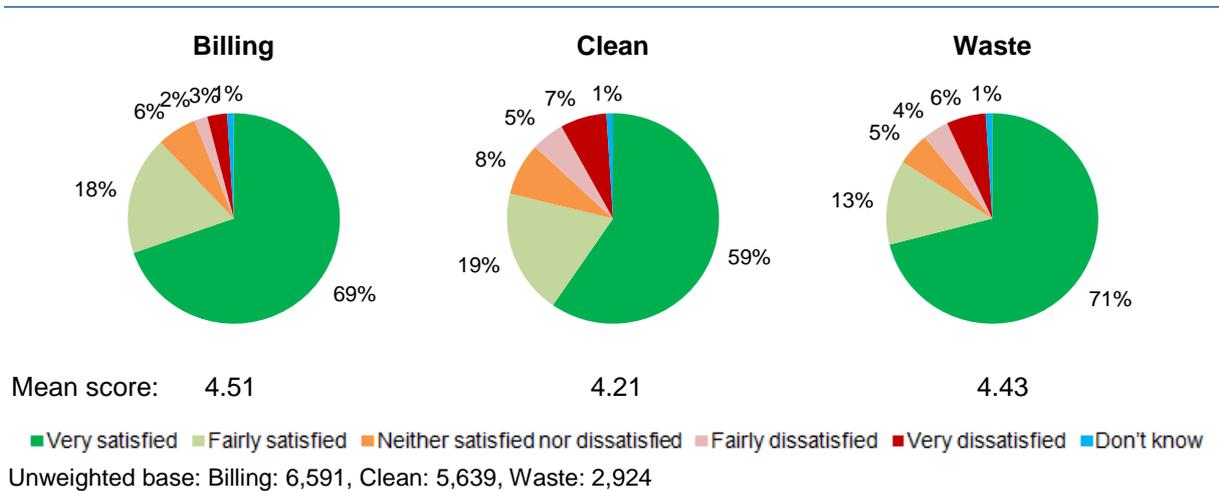
Looking at the difference between satisfaction of WaSC and WoC customers it can be seen that WaSC customers were significantly more likely to be very satisfied with the way the company handled the matter compared to customers of a WoC.

Figure 10: Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – unweighted)



Customers were significantly more likely to be very satisfied with their Billing queries and Waste queries than their Clean queries.

Figure 11: Q8 Taking everything into account how satisfied were you with the way the company handled this matter? (Base: all – unweighted)



4.2 Reason for contact

All respondents were asked to explain in their own words what they called their water company about.

Respondents were prompted with the date on screen and reason for contact available. The reason for this question is to ensure that the contact discussed is the correct contact sent to BMG by the water company for the specified sampling period.

Evident in the table below, Billing calls dominated the reason for contact with 16% of the total sample contacting their water company due to a recent or planned move or to make a payment (8% each).

A further 9% contacted their water company about a blockage in the sewer/drains (a Waste reason) and 6% contacted with a query about a bill (Billing reason) or about no supply whilst 5% about a water leak/burst on the road (Water reasons).

Table 3: Q4 What did you contact the company about? (Base: all – unweighted)

	Proportion of respondents	Proportion satisfied
About a blockage in the sewer/drains/manholes	9%	91%
Due to a recent move/planning to move	8%	92%
To make a payment	8%	92%
A query about a bill (general)	6%	84%
No supply/water gone off	6%	84%
Because of a water leak/burst on the road (incl. fields/public footpaths)	5%	77%
About flooding with sewage or foul water	5%	80%
Regarding low pressure of water	4%	78%

Unweighted data. Total responses below 4% not shown

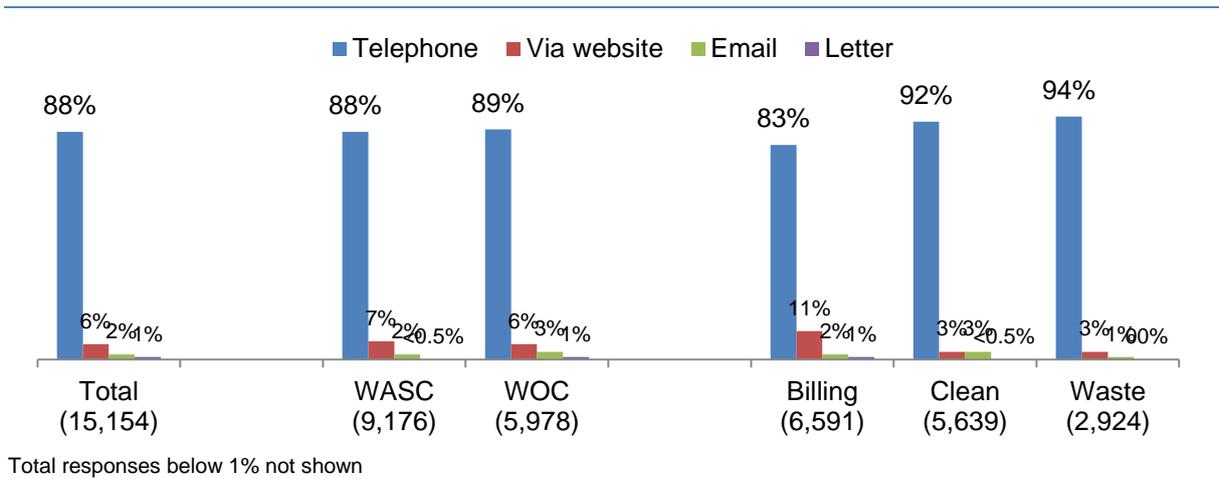
4.3 Method of contact

Respondents were asked to confirm how they contacted the company on that particular occasion.

Telephone is by far the most common method of contact (88%). A small proportion of customers chose to contact through the company website (6%).

Waste queries were significantly more likely to be made over the telephone compared to Billing or Clean queries. Billing queries were significantly more likely to be made online compared to Clean and or Waste queries.

Figure 12: Q5 Could you confirm how you had contact with the company on this occasion? (Base: all – unweighted)



4.4 Complaints and resolutions

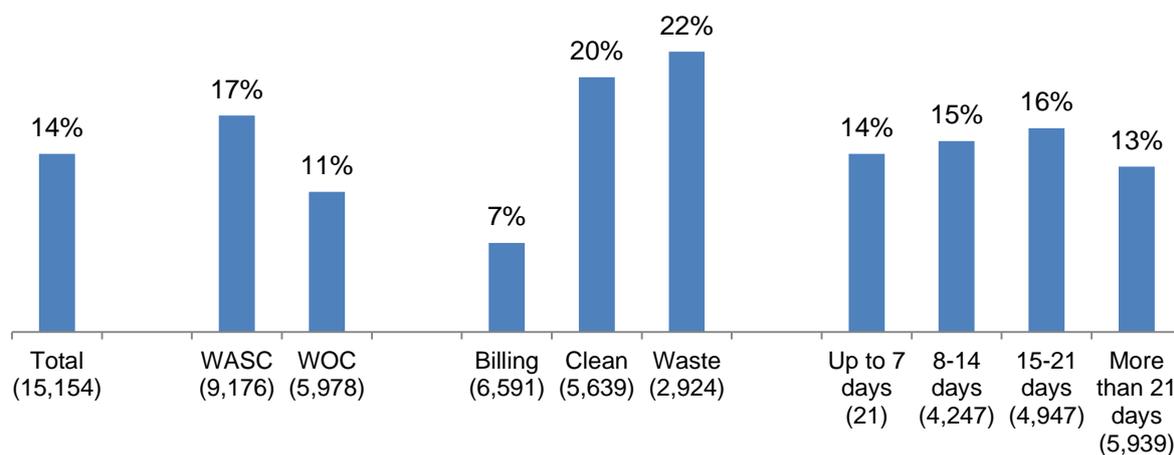
Respondents were asked if they considered their reason for contacting their water company a complaint. Furthermore, they were also asked during the survey if they consider the matter they contacted about fully resolved.

4.4.1 Complaints

Overall, 14% of customers who contacted their water company considered their call a complaint. Billing enquiries were significantly less likely to be considered a complaint than Clean or Waste enquiries. Waste queries were significantly more likely to be considered a complaint than Billing or Clean queries.

WaSC customers were significantly more likely to consider the matter they contacted about a complaint.

Figure 13: Q6 Did you regard this contact as a complaint? (Base: all – unweighted)



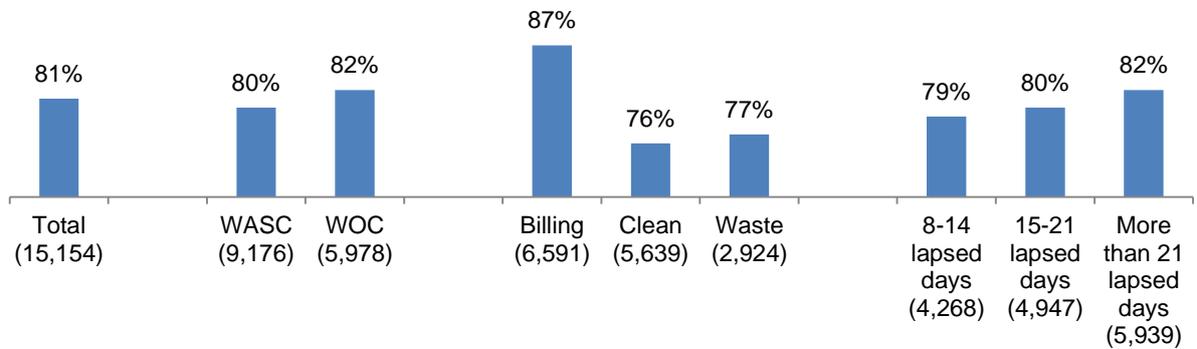
4.4.2 Resolutions

Overall, four in five (81%) customers considered the matter they contacted about fully resolved. Billing enquiries were significantly more likely to be resolved than Clean or Waste enquiries.

WOC customers were significantly more likely to consider the matter they made contact about resolved.

Customers who had made initial contact about their query more than 21 days prior to the interview were significantly more likely than those where elapsed time was 21 days or less to consider the matter they called about resolved.

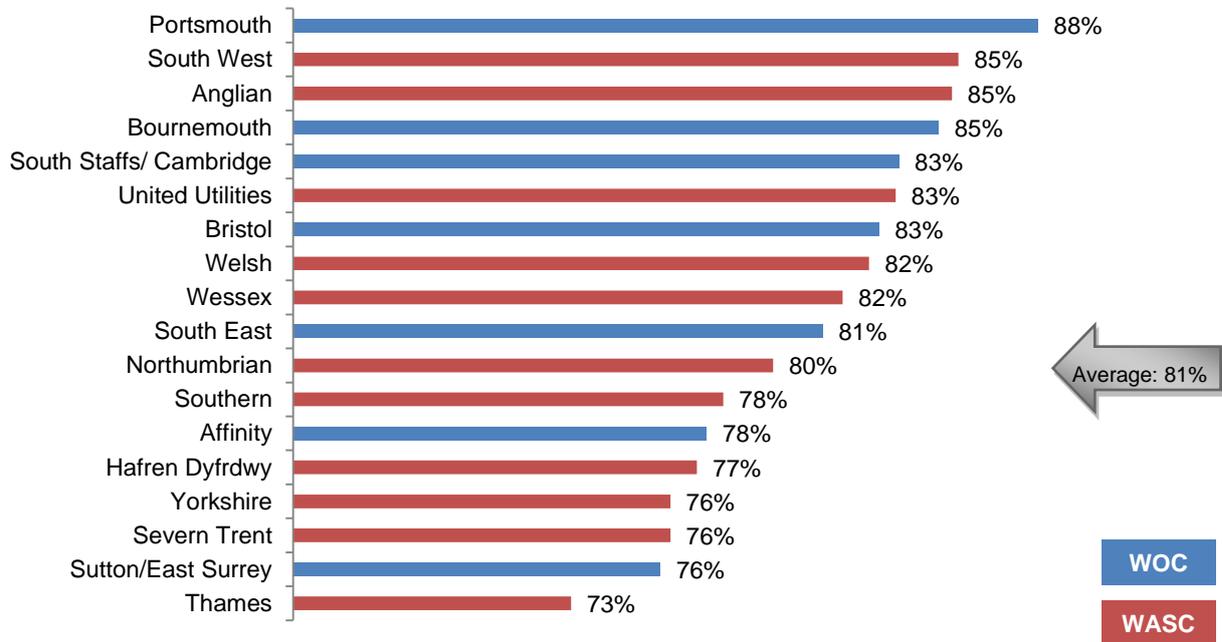
Figure 14: Q7 Do you consider the matter you contacted the company about fully resolved? (Base: all – unweighted)



4.4.3 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company

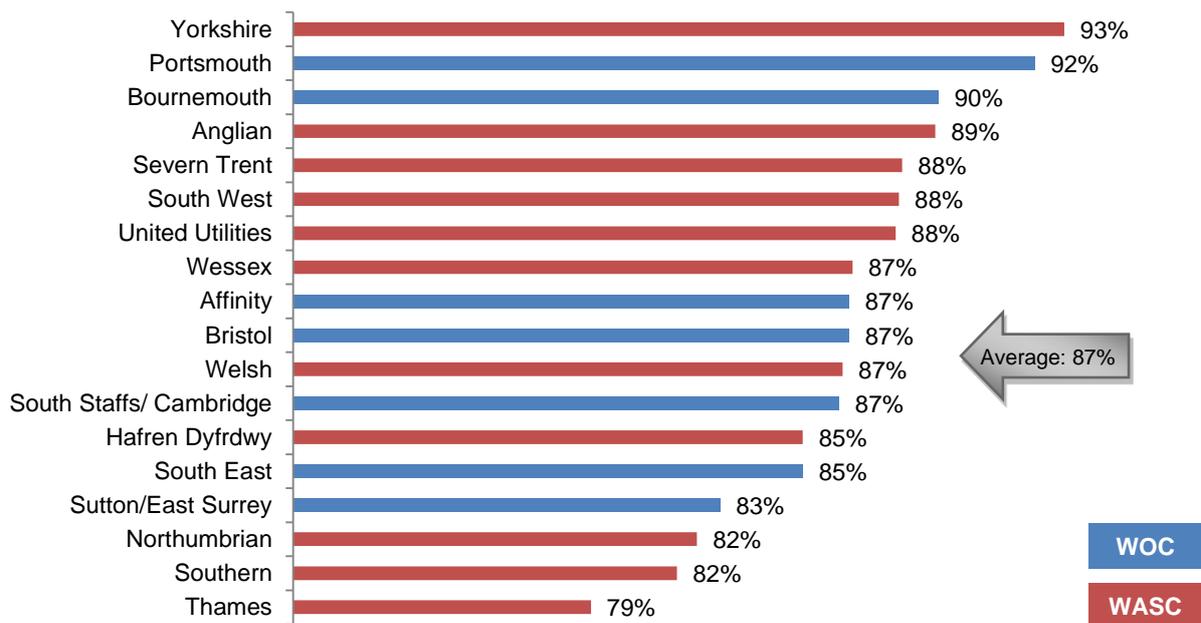
Portsmouth Water had the highest proportion of customers who felt their query was resolved. Thames Water had the lowest proportion of resolved contacts.

Figure 15: Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (All respondents)



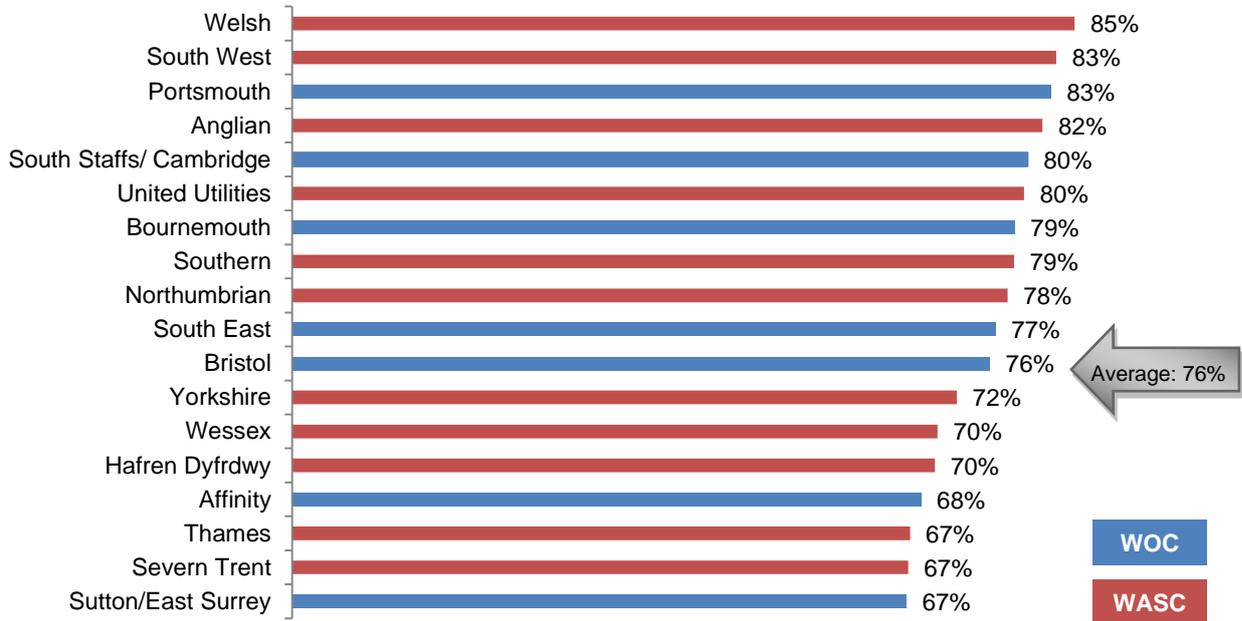
Yorkshire Water had the highest proportion of Billing only customers who felt their query was resolved. Thames Water had the lowest proportion of resolved contacts.

Figure 16: Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (Billing only)



Welsh Water had the highest proportion of Clean only customers who felt their query was resolved. Sutton & East Surrey Water had the lowest proportion of resolved Clean contacts.

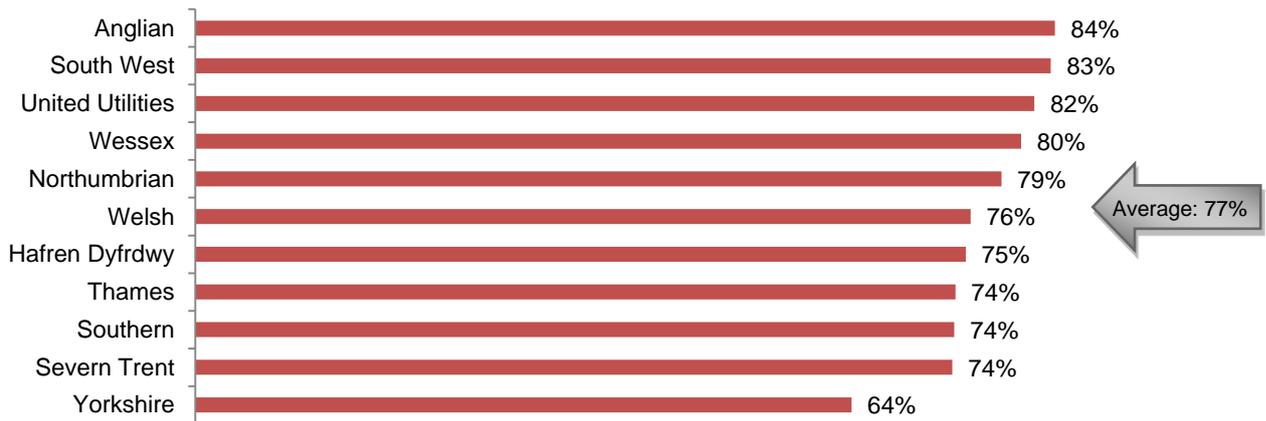
Figure 17: Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (Clean only)



Unweighted base: 5,639

Anglian Water had the highest proportion of Waste only customers who felt their query was resolved. Yorkshire Water had the lowest proportion of resolved Waste contacts.

Figure 18: Q7 Proportion of resolved contacts - by company (Waste only)



Unweighted base: 2,924

4.5 Areas for improvement

Three in five (63%) customers could not think of anything that their water company could have done better. This figure was significantly higher amongst those with Billing queries compared to Clean or Waste queries.

A quicker response (4%), keeping in contact, a quicker resolution of the query and fixing the problem (3% each) were the main areas that customers felt could be improved. Those with Clean queries were significantly more likely than those with Billing or Waste queries to say that keeping in contact could be better.

Table 4: Q9 What, if anything, could have been better? What else could the company have done for you in relation to this matter? (Base: all – unweighted)

	Total 18/19	Billing	Clean	Waste
Base	15,154	6,591	5,639	2,924
Nothing	63%	70%	54%	63%
Quicker response	4%	2%	6%	6%
Keep in contact/progress reports/updates/outcome	3%	1%	5%	3%
Quicker resolution of problem/query	3%	1%	6%	4%
Fixed the problem/sorted the query (not necessarily quickly)	3%	1%	4%	5%
Better communication	2%	1%	3%	2%
Given a full explanation/more information/answers	2%	2%	2%	1%
Get it right the first time - avoiding multiple visits/calls	2%	1%	3%	4%
Better billing service/accurate/timely/clear bills	2%	4%	<0.5%	0%
Keep promises/do what they say they will	2%	1%	2%	2%
Improved workmanship/better management of	3%	<0.5%	3%	2%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%	2%

Total responses below 2% not shown

4.6 What companies do well

Approaching one in four (24%) customers felt that companies had polite/friendly telephone staff. The speed of response was also an area where customers felt water companies performed well (20%).

Table 5: Q10 And what if anything, do you think the company did well? (Base: all – unweighted)

	Total 18/19	Billing	Clean	Waste
Base	15,154	6,591	5,639	2,924
Polite/friendly/good telephone staff	24%	29%	21%	18%
Speed of response/prompt/quick to act	20%	12%	22%	34%
Sent someone to visit	18%	4%	23%	39%
Polite/friendly/good workmen	17%	3%	24%	38%
Called me back/kept me informed/good communication	15%	7%	21%	21%
Nothing	13%	16%	12%	7%
Solved the problem/answered the query (not necessarily quickly)	13%	9%	15%	19%
Informative/explained everything/answered questions/good advice	9%	10%	11%	6%
Handled the situation/query well/dealt with the issue	9%	11%	8%	9%
Helpful	8%	10%	7%	6%
Good service/customer service	7%	7%	6%	7%
Solved the problem quickly/work carried out quickly	7%	5%	9%	8%
Efficient	5%	5%	4%	6%
Excellent/fantastic/brilliant	5%	3%	5%	9%
Everything	5%	6%	4%	7%
Did a good job	4%	2%	4%	7%
Found the source of the problem/fully investigated	4%	2%	7%	6%
Don't know	2%	3%	2%	1%

Total responses below 4% not shown

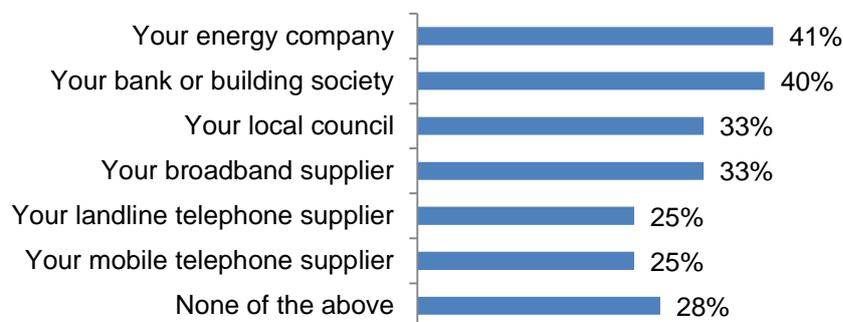
5 Additional insights

5.1 Industry comparison

In the interests of understanding how people’s contact with their water company compares with contact they may have had with other organisations they deal with, respondents were asked to think about the last time they had contact with another provider and rate their satisfaction with the service provided.

Approaching three in ten (29%) respondents have not contacted any other organisation in the last 3 months. Where contact had been made, energy companies and bank/building societies were the most likely to have been contacted.

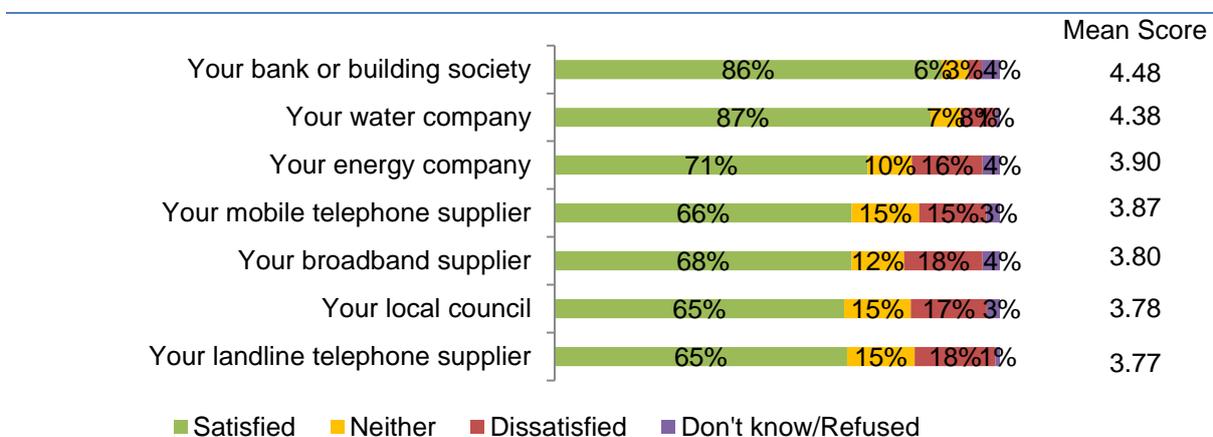
Figure 19: Q17 Apart from receiving bills and receiving everyday service, have you had contact with any of these organisations in the last three months? (Base: all Quarter 2 only – unweighted)



Unweighted base: 3,813

Respondents were most satisfied with contact with their bank/building society. Satisfaction with contact with the bank/building society is the only organisation which is higher than satisfaction with contact with the water company (4.38 unweighted).

Figure 20: Q18 How satisfied were you with the latest contact you had with... (Base: all Quarter 2 only – unweighted)



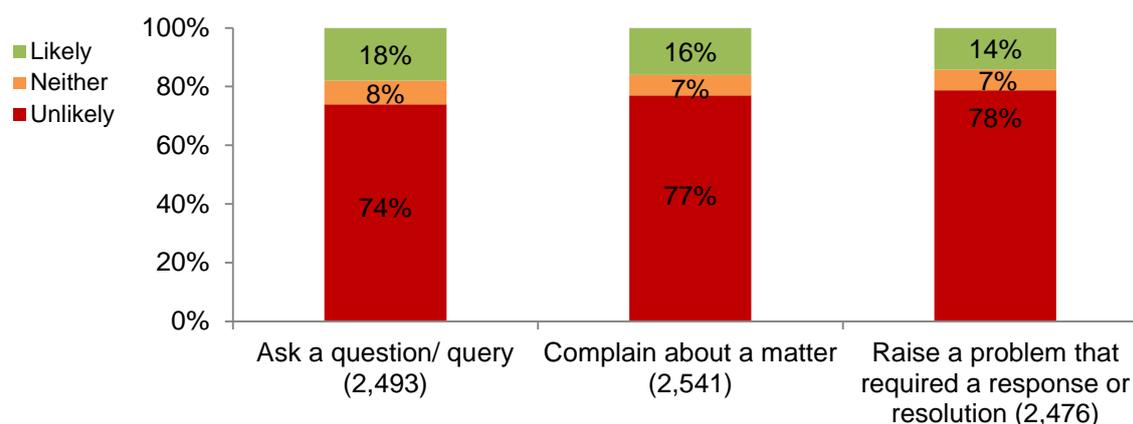
Unweighted base: Bank/building society: 622, Energy company: 611, Mobile telephone supplier: 320, Local council: 484, Landline supplier: 278, Broadband supplier: 398

5.2 The use of social media to contact

All respondents were asked in Quarter 4 2018/19 how likely they would be to contact their water company via social media for a range of matters including to ask a question/query, to make a complaint or to raise a problem that requires a response or resolution.

Amongst all customers who use social media, 18% stated they would use it to ask a question/query, 16% stated they would use social media channels to complain about a matter, and 14% would use it to raise a problem that required a response or resolution.

Figure 21: NQ2 Likelihood to contact your water company using social media channels, such as Facebook or Twitter (Base: all Quarter 4 only – unweighted)



Unweighted data. Valid responses only (excluding not applicable, don't know and refused)

Younger customers, particularly those aged 25-34 are significantly more likely to use social media in all instances to contact their company:

- To ask a question/query (29% of those aged 25-34 and 26% of those aged 35-44 vs. the average of 18%);
- To complain about a matter (26% of those aged 25-34 and 22% of those aged 35-44 vs. the average of 16%);
- To raise a problem that requires a response or resolution (23% of those aged 25-34 and 20% of those aged 35-44 vs. the average of 14%).

Those with a disability in the household are significantly more likely than those without to use social media to raise a problem that requires a response or resolution (21% vs. 12% of those without a disability).

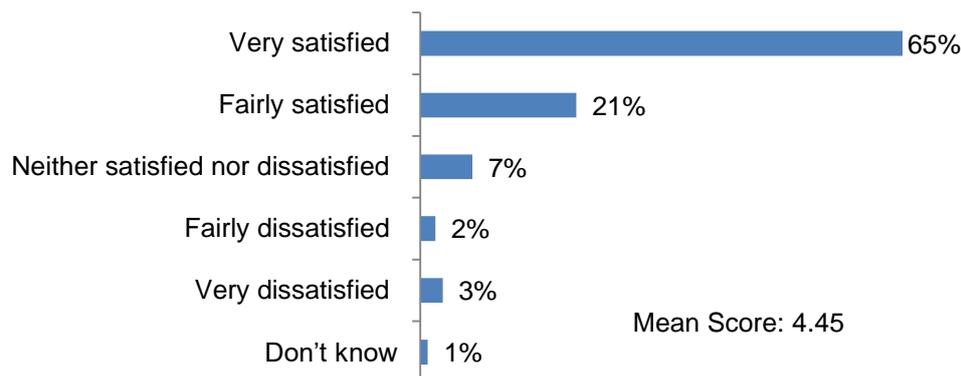
Out of all customers surveyed in Quarter 4, 3% stated they do not use the internet and 30% do not use social media.

5.3 General satisfaction with water company

All customers were also asked in Quarter 4 how satisfied they were in general with the level of service that their water company provides them with.

More than four in five (86%) customers stated they were satisfied with the level of service that water company provides.

Figure 22: NQ1 In general, how satisfied are you with the level of service that [Water Company Name] provides you with? (Base: all Quarter 4 only – unweighted)



Unweighted base: 3,785

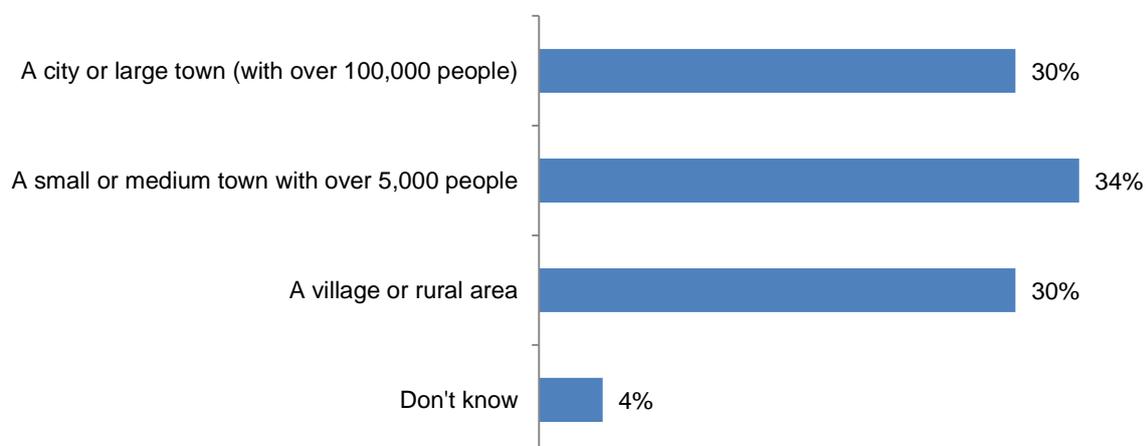
5.4 Representation

Questions were asked in Quarter 3 of the SIM Survey to understand what the profile of customers who contact water companies looks like with respect to the type of area in which they reside, social grade and ethnicity.

5.4.1 Size of area in which customers reside

The spread of customers who have contacted their water company is fairly equal by size of area in which they reside.

Figure 23: Q14 Would you say you lived in.. ? (Base: all Quarter 3 only – unweighted)

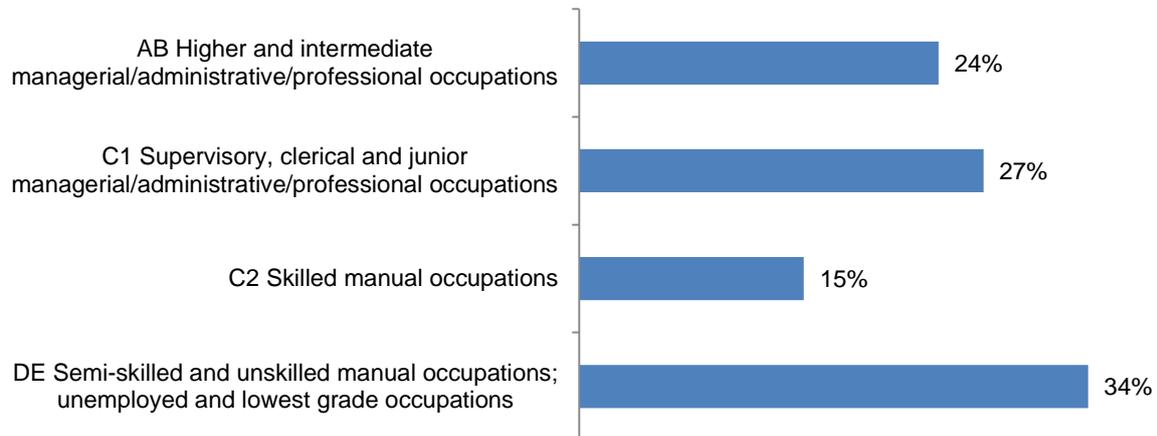


Unweighted data: 3,825

5.4.2 Social grade

Those in semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations (DE) are more likely to have contacted their water company with a query. There are fewer in skilled manual work (C2) in the profile of ‘customer contacts’.

Figure 24: Q15 Social Grade (Base: all Quarter 3 only – unweighted)

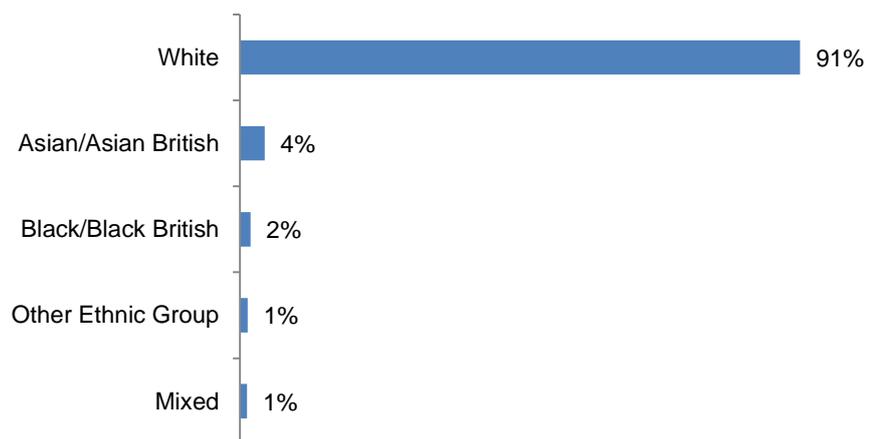


Unweighted data: 3,082. Valid responses only (excluding refused)

5.4.3 Ethnicity

Those from White ethnic backgrounds are more likely to contact their water company with a query. This is followed by those of Asian/Asian British ethnicity.

Figure 25: Q16 How would you describe your ethnic background? (Base: all Quarter 3 only – unweighted)



Unweighted data: 3,570. Valid responses only (excluding refused)

6 Conclusions

SIM results have improved significantly since 2016/17 overall (improving significantly in 2017/18 and maintaining the improved SIM score in 2018/19) and this is largely driven by the significant increase in the mean satisfaction score for Billing and Waste queries. Billing's SIM score remains significantly higher than Clean or Waste. In 2016/17, the SIM scores were very similar for WoCs and WaSCs but this changed last year and has been maintained this year; the SIM score for WaSCs is significantly higher than that of WoCs.

Although customer contact via online represented only a small proportion (6%) of customers, the SIM score for online contact was significantly higher than those who contacted by any other means. Telephone was by far the most common means of customer contact and the SIM score by this method of contact was second only to the SIM score of the online contact.

One in seven customers considered the matter they contacted their water company about to be a complaint. Waste queries were significantly more likely to be considered a complaint than Clean or Billing. Unsurprisingly, those who did not consider their matter to be a complaint were significantly more likely to be satisfied with how their query was handled.

Four in five customers considered the matter they contact about to be resolved. This figure is significantly higher for Billing queries than Clean or Waste. Those who considered the matter to be resolved were significantly more likely to be satisfied than those who considered the matter to be unresolved.

There were no significant differences between in SIM scores between the lengths of time elapsed between the initial contact and date of interview. This supports the finding from 2017/18, 2016/17 and 2015/16 that there is no significant advantage or disadvantage to those companies who are required to provide more than one week's worth of sampling data.

Thinking about what water companies did well, approaching one in four said they had polite/friendly telephone staff. This was followed by their speed of response to the query.

It is clear that water companies are providing a high level of service to their customers from analysis of the SIM scores. This is supported with more than three in five customers stating that there wasn't anything their water company could have done better. Where comments were made regarding areas for improvement, these centred on providing a quicker response, keeping in contact regarding their query and a quicker resolution to the problem/query and so it is clear that whilst this is a high performing area for companies, there is room for improvement regarding communication with customers.

Overall, satisfaction with services provided by water companies is considerably higher than in other sectors; second only to the satisfaction with the service provided by banks/building societies.

It is evident from the survey results that the SIM continues its success in improving customer satisfaction with query handling within the water industry.

7 Appendix

OFWAT SIM – CONSUMER EXPERIENCE SURVEY

Initial introduction:

Good morning/ afternoon/ evening, my name is... and I'm calling on behalf of Ofwat, the regulator for the water industry, from BMG Research. We are carrying out a survey about the way water and sewerage companies deal with their customers. I understand that someone on this number has been in contact with [Water Company Name].

Q1a Firstly, can I confirm that you were the person who was in contact with [Water Company Name]?

Yes	1	Continue to A
No	2	Ask S2

Q1a/2:

Q2 Can I speak to the person who was in contact with [Water Company Name] please?

Yes	1	Wait for person and then repeat introduction
No, they are unavailable	2	Make an appointment to call back when the person is available or log another appropriate call outcome
No one has contacted the company	3	Thank and close
Refused	4	Thank and close – log call outcome as refused

A I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your contact with [Water Company Name]. This should take around 5 minutes and all the answers you give will be kept completely confidential unless you ask us to pass your comments to [Water Company Name]. Would you be willing to assist us now?

IF NECESSARY: You have been selected at random from customers contacting [Water Company Name].

Just to let you know – this interview is being recorded, for quality control purposes.

ALL:

Q3 Was this contact in regard to [Water Company Name] supplying you as a domestic or business user?

Domestic	1	Ask Q4
Business	2	Thank and Close: Thank you for your time but we are only including domestic customers in this survey

Q3/1 now equals ALL

ALL:

Q4 What did you contact [Water Company Name] about? **PROBE FULLY**

IF REASON GIVEN DIFFERS FROM SAMPLE, PROMPT WITH DATE OF CONTACT AND REASON FOR CONTACT (IF AVAILABLE) AND ASK IF ALSO CALLED ABOUT SAMPLE REASON. IF SO, INTERVIEW ON THIS; IF NOT INTERVIEW ON STATED REASON. ENSURE RESPONDENT IS THINKING ABOUT WATER COMPANY INDICATED IN SAMPLE. IF RESPONDENT CONFUSED AT ALL ABOUT WHICH ORGANISATION THEY CONTACTED THANK & CLOSE

ALL:

Q5 Could you confirm how you had contact with [Water Company Name] on this occasion [insert date]? **PROBE AS NECESSARY. SINGLE CODE ONLY**

I telephoned them	1
I wrote them a letter	2
I emailed them	3
I contacted them through their website	4
I contacted them by other media (e.g. text, social media, app)	5
I visited the water company in person	6
Other - specify	7
<i>Don't know</i>	8

ALL:

Q6 Did you regard this contact as a complaint?

Yes	1
No	2

ALL:**Q7** Do you consider the matter you contacted [Water Company Name] about fully resolved?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3
Refused	4

ALL:**Q8** Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the handling of this matter by [Water Company Name]? **SINGLE CODE**

Very satisfied	1
Fairly satisfied	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Fairly dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5
Don't know	6
Refused	7

ALL:**Q9** What if anything, could have been better? What else could [Water Company Name] have done for you in relation to this matter? **PROBE VERY FULLY**

96 NOTHING 97 DON'T KNOW

ALL:**Q10** And what if anything, do you think [Water Company Name] did well? **PROBE VERY FULLY**

96 NOTHING 97 DON'T KNOW

ASKED IN QUARTER 4 ONLY**ALL:****NQ1** In general, how satisfied are you with the level of service that [Water Company Name] provides you with? **SINGLE CODE**

Very satisfied	1
Fairly satisfied	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Fairly dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5
Don't know	6
Refused	7

ASKED IN QUARTER 4 ONLY

ALL:

NQ2 On a scale of 1 – 5 where 1 is very likely and 5 is very unlikely, how likely would you be to contact your water company using social media channels, such as Facebook or Twitter, in order to? **SINGLE CODE**

	Very likely	Likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know	Refused
Complain about a matter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ask a question/ query	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Raise a problem that requires a response or resolution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

N/A do not have access to the internet

N/A do not use any social media

READ OUT:

I would now like to ask you a few general questions so that we have some basic background information by which to analyse the results of the survey.

ALL:

Q11 Which of these age groups do you fall in? **READ OUT AND SINGLE CODE**

Under 25	1
25-34	2
35-44	3
45-54	4
55-64	5
65+	6
Refused	7

ALL:

Q12 Do you or anyone else in the household, have a registered disability? **PROMPT AS NECESSARY, SINGLE CODE**

Yes, self	1
Yes, other	2
No	3
Refused	4

ALL:**Q13** Is your home....? **READ OUT AND SINGLE CODE**

Owned	1
Rented from local authority or housing association	2
Rented privately	3
Other - specify	4

ASKED IN QUARTER 3 ONLY**ALL (TO BE ASKED ONCE PER YEAR Q14 – Q18):****Q14** Would you say you lived in...? **READ OUT AND SINGLE CODE**

A city or large town (with over 100,000 people)	1
A small or medium sized town (with over 5,000 people)	2
A village or rural area	3
Other	4
Don't know	5
Refused	6

ASKED IN QUARTER 3 ONLY**ALL:****Q15** Thinking now about the member of your household, related to you, including yourself with the largest income, whether from employment, pensions, state benefits, investments or any other source, what is their occupation?

Probe fully for occupation /position/rank/grade/qualifications /industry/type of firm/number of staff responsible for

IF RETIRED ASK IF PENSION IS STATE OR PRIVATE - IF PRIVATE ASK FOR PREVIOUS OCCUPATION ETC

ASKED IN QUARTER 3 ONLY

ALL:

Q16 How would you describe your ethnic background? **PROMPT AS NECESSARY AND SINGLE CODE**

White: British (or English, Welsh or Scottish) White: Irish	1
White: Any other White background	2
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	3
Mixed: White and Black African	4
Mixed: White and Asian	5
Mixed: Any other Mixed background	6
Asian or Asian British: Indian	7
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	8
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	9
Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian background	10
Black or Black British: Caribbean	11
Black or Black British: African	12
Black or Black British: Any other Black background	13
Chinese	14
Other - specify	15
Refused	16

ASKED IN QUARTER 2 ONLY

ALL:

Q17 We are interested in measuring how people's contact with their water company compares with contact they may have with other organisations they deal with. Apart from receiving bills and receiving everyday service, have you had contact with any of these organisations in the last three months? **READ OUT. ROTATE ORDER**

		Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
A	Your energy company	1	2	3	4
B	Your landline telephone supplier	1	2	3	4
C	Your mobile telephone supplier	1	2	3	4
D	Your local council	1	2	3	4
E	Your broadband supplier	1	2	3	4
F	Your bank or building society	1	2	3	4

ASKED IN QUARTER 2 ONLY**Q17/ANY CODE 1:**

ASK FOR THE FIRST ORGANISATION THAT RESPONDENT SAID THEY HAD CONTACT WITH.

Q18 And how satisfied were you with the latest contact you had with...? **SINGLE CODE FOR SELECTED ORGANISATION**

		Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know	Refused
A	Your energy company	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B	Your landline telephone supplier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C	Your mobile telephone supplier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D	Your local council	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E	Your broadband supplier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F	Your bank or building society	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ALL:

Q19 When we pass results on to [Water Company Name] are you willing for us to associate your answers with your household? This would help the company gain maximum benefit from the research.

Yes, willing	1
No, not willing	2

Q19/1:

Q20 Are you willing for the recording of this interview to be passed on to [Water Company Name] in order to further help them improve their customer service?

Yes, willing	1
No, not willing	2

ALL:

Q21 DO NOT ASK, RECORD GENDER:

Male	1
Female	2

THANK AND CLOSE:

Thank you for your time and co-operation in this survey. On behalf of our client Ofwat, [Water Company Name] and ourselves at BMG Research, I would like to thank you for your time and feedback, and I hope you enjoy the rest of your evening.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

