

July 2022

Data sharing: research findings

Of **w**at

Background

Regulators across multiple sectors support the use of data to deliver better outcomes for customers, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances. Earlier this year, the Financial Conduct Authority, Northern Ireland's Utility Regulator, Ofcom, Ofgem, and Ofwat published a [joint statement](#) setting out our shared aims and approach to customer data use, including data sharing.

Within Ofwat, we continue to support industry efforts - for example, between the water and energy sectors - to improve data sharing to increase the number of customers on priority service registers.

But data sharing must comply with data protection law. In particular, it should be proportionate, undertaken with care, and with an understanding of customer concerns.

The findings in this report look at people's attitudes and awareness towards data privacy. Companies may use the findings to consider how to develop their approaches and communications on data sharing.

Fieldwork

Ofwat added questions to an online survey on data privacy conducted by the research agency Accent.

This report includes the findings from these questions, and some findings from the wider Accent survey.

The findings from some questions are compared with the findings from a previous Accent survey conducted in early 2020. For those questions, the more recent findings are referred to as Wave 2, with the earlier survey findings referred to as Wave 1.

The findings are taken from a nationally representative survey of 1,001 respondents. The sample for England and Wales was 889. Quotas were set on demographics (age, gender and social grade) and region.

Fieldwork took place 15 - 28 October 2021.

1,001
UK respondents



889
Sample for England
and Wales



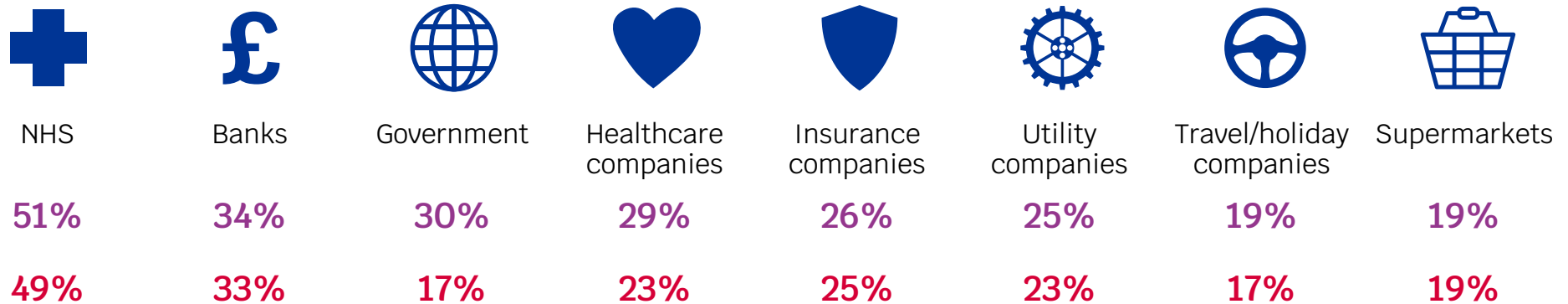
Trust in different types of organisation

 People were twice as likely to report being comfortable sharing data with the NHS compared to utility companies

The top 3 most reassuring pieces of information when sharing data were...



Types of organisations that people were more comfortable sharing data with*



*Scoring 8 to 10 on a ten point scale (0 = very uncomfortable, 10 = very comfortable)

Sharing information with utility companies

43% agreed they were comfortable with utility companies sharing personal data if it means they get the service they need

63% agreed they would need to know more about how utility companies use information before sharing personal details

In general, older people felt less comfortable sharing information about health, particularly their mental health

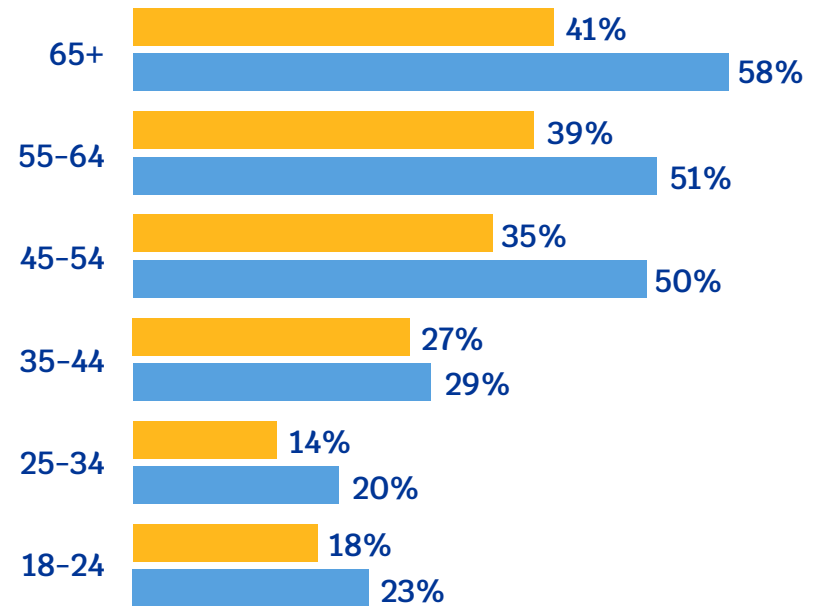


51% worried that if they share personal information, it may somehow be used against them

60% agreed they would be comfortable with personal details being shared in an emergency situation

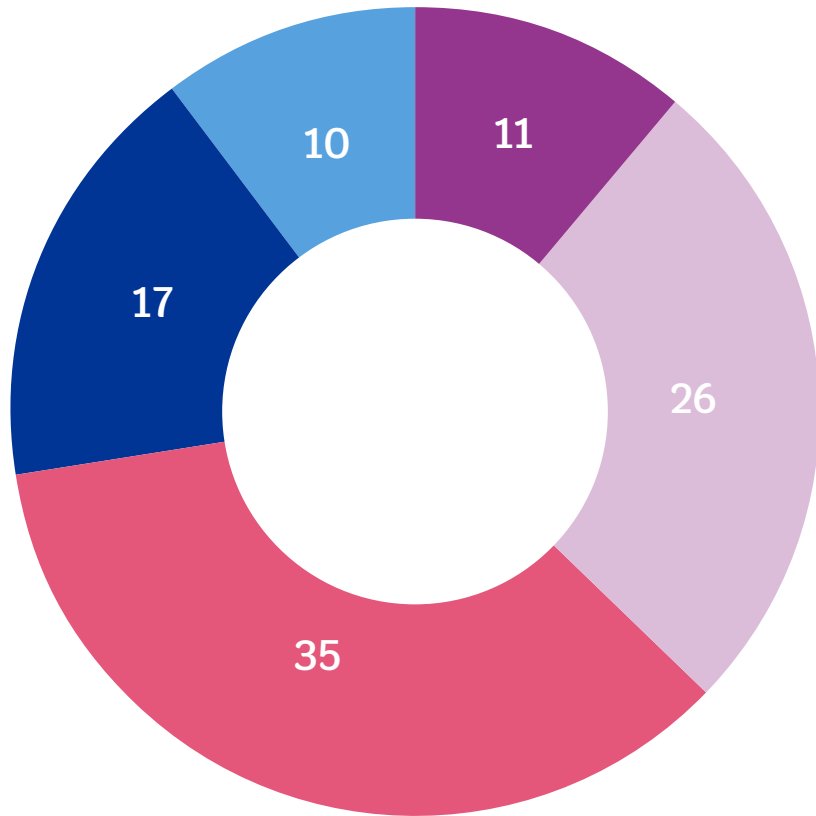


People not comfortable sharing information about health, by age



Physical health
Mental health

Sharing information with water providers



38%
felt more comfortable

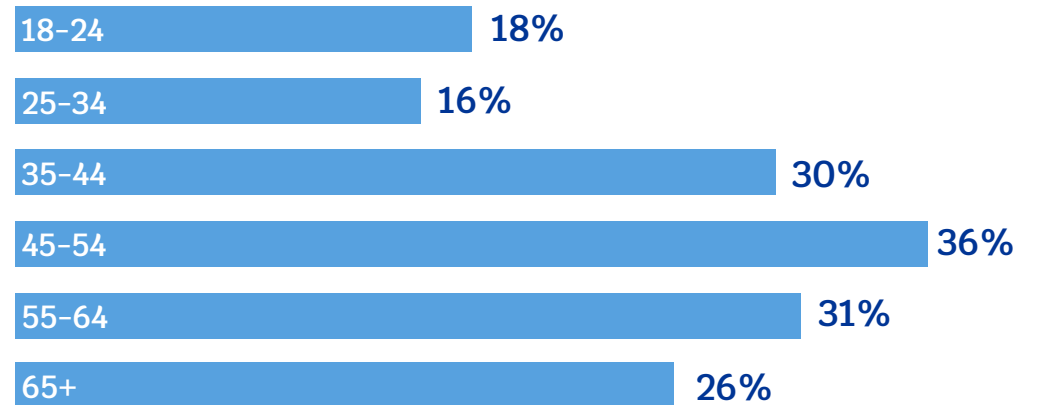


27%
felt less comfortable

- Very comfortable
- Quite comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Not that comfortable
- Not comfortable at all

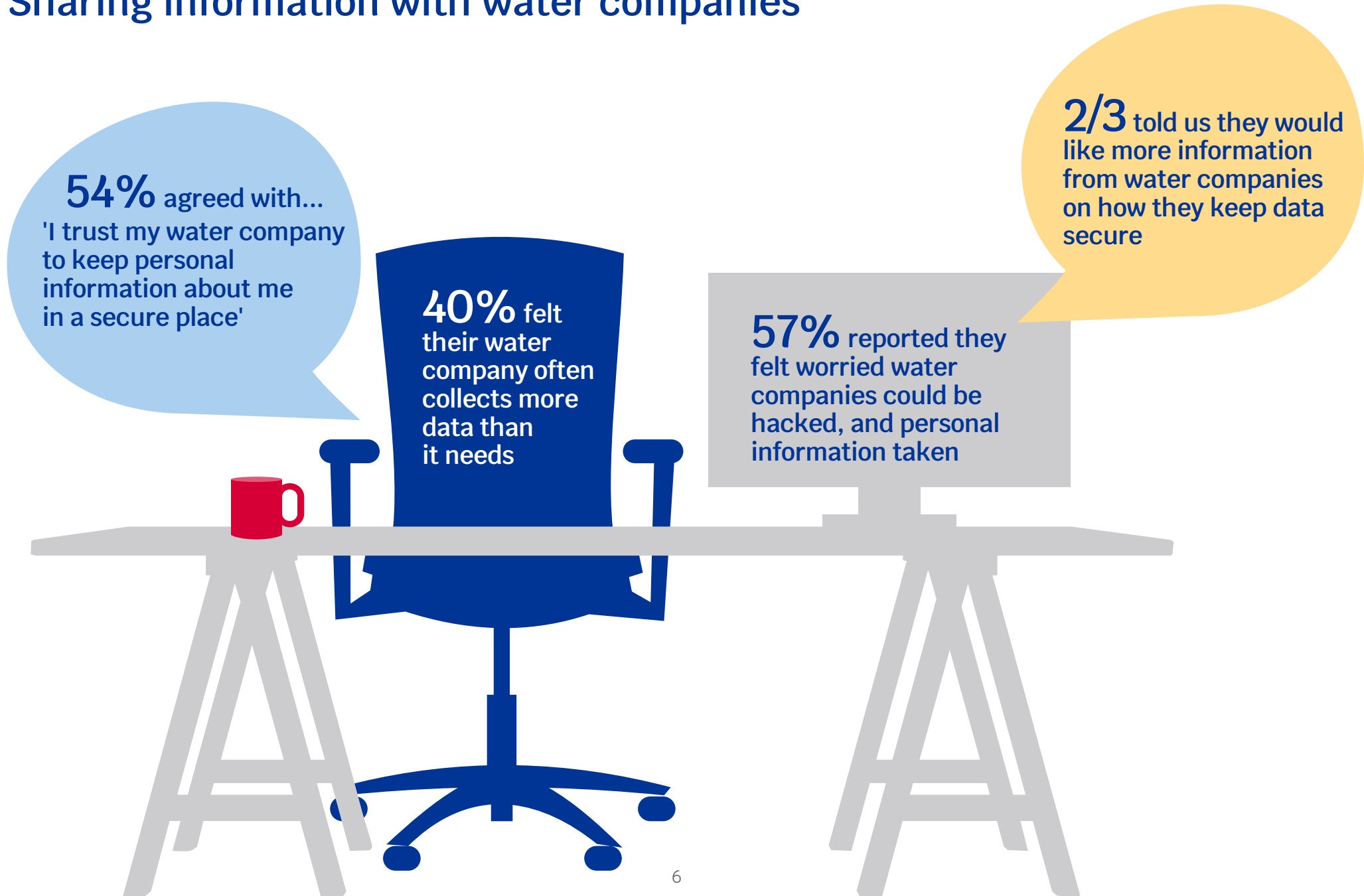
'More comfortable' - respondents who answered 'very comfortable' or 'quite comfortable'.
'Less comfortable' - respondents who answered 'not that comfortable' or 'not comfortable at all'.

Proportion of those who were not comfortable sharing information with water providers, by age

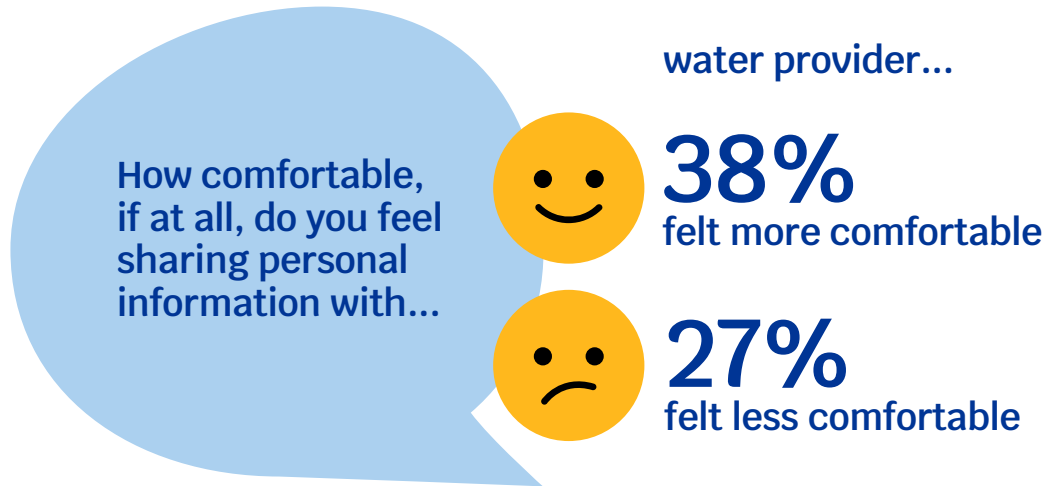


Customers age 35 or over felt less comfortable than younger people about sharing information with water providers

Sharing information with water companies



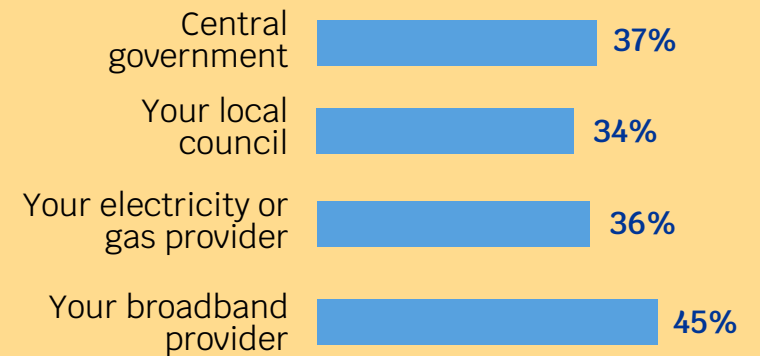
Sharing information with different organisations



More comfortable: comparison across types of organisation/service provider

	GP surgery	Bank	Central government	Local authority	Electricity/gas provider
More than water provider (↑)	68%	52%	43%	41%	38%
Less than water provider (↓)	30%	26%	26%	24%	17%
	Broadband provider	Mobile phone company	Super-market	Price comparison website	Social media company

Percentage who felt uncomfortable about their water company obtaining information about them from....



'More comfortable' - respondents who answered 'very comfortable' or 'quite comfortable'.
 'Less comfortable' - respondents who answered 'not that comfortable' or 'not comfortable at all'.

**Ofwat (The Water Services Regulation Authority)
is a non-ministerial government department.
We regulate the water sector in England and Wales.**

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