

**BR-MeX Working Group -
R-MeX**

Ofwat

15th February 2024



Aim of the session and agenda

This workshop aims at discussing findings and recommendations for the Retailer survey “R-MeX” component of BR-MeX. The aim of this session is to outline and invite discussion and views regarding:

1. Brief recap work and thoughts to date on R-MeX
2. IFF update on findings and recommendations from pilot work
3. Next steps

We will publish both the slides and a summary of the meeting on our [website](#).



The background features a large, solid blue shape on the left side, which is a quarter-circle or a similar curved form. To the right, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent light blue shapes, including a large circle and a larger, more irregular shape, creating a layered, abstract effect. The text 'Recap R-MeX' is positioned on the blue shape.

Recap R-MeX

Recap on R-MeX

Ofwat's PR24* final methodology set out that BR-MeX would be included as a common performance commitment for PR24.

It set out that the incentive would rely on two primary sources to measure wholesaler performance:

1. **Feedback from end business customers (B-MeX)**

We propose to seek feedback from business customers on company performance following a specific contact the water company. We will build on the work already undertaken by the B-MeX working group.

2. **Feedback from Retailers (R-MeX)**

We propose to build on and further develop the current R-MeX survey that is currently part of MOSL's market performance framework. The current survey seeks bi-annual survey feedback from Retailers on water company performance across a number of areas.



R-MeX history

- MOSL already run R-MeX survey twice yearly – a survey that provides a quantitative, as well as qualitative, measurement of wholesaler service to their retailer(s). It evolved from a Retailer Wholesaler Group (RWG) workstream, which began in August 2018
- R-MeX currently comprises eight questions covering topics such as engagement, communication and data quality, asking retailers to provide a score between 0-10 with the option to provide additional feedback via an open text field.
- R-MeX results reported but not currently part of holistic report. Latest results for [October 2023](#)

R-MeX and BR-MeX

- R-MeX scores for wholesalers, where included in BR-MeX and used to help determine financial outperformance payments or penalties, need to be robust
- IFF commissioned to pilot, test and where relevant make recommendations for form and method of R-MeX survey



*PR 24: [PR24 Final Methodology – Ofwat](#)

BR-MeX: §3.3 [Appendix 7 Performance commitments](#)

Outcome Delivery Incentives: §4.3 [Appendix 8 Outcome delivery incentives](#)



IFF reporting back on findings

Retailer Measure of Experience



Introduction

A target with a white bullseye and red center, surrounded by blue and orange rings. Numerous blue and orange arrows are shown in motion, hitting the target. The background is a blurred green field.

Objectives

Overarching aim: To design, test and pilot all aspects of the R-MeX survey to ensure the survey methodology is robust for a full-scale shadow run in spring 2024.

The specific objectives of the research were to:

1. Design a pilot methodology for R-MeX.
2. Conduct fieldwork to pilot and test both surveys and reflect on findings.
3. Analysis of findings and presentation of recommendations and guidance for the shadow year.

Overview of our approach

JULY



Scoping phase

To get a firmer understanding of key questions that might cause us to adopt our approach.

This was crucial in helping us design the pilot.

AUG - SEP



Cognitive testing

10 interviews with a range of retailers to test their understanding of, and thoughts on how to improve, the existing R-MeX survey.

Feedback here helped inform the design of the pilot.

SEP - OCT



Pilot exercise

The pilot exercise involved minor changes to the survey and format mentioned later in the presentation.

MOSL administered the refined pilot R-MeX survey to Retailers in October 2023.

NOV - DEC



Follow-up qual

5 Follow-up qualitative depth interviews were conducted to test the refined R-MeX survey and explore any additional feedback that arise during the pilot.

JAN - FEB



Analysis and reporting

Presentation of key results and recommendations.

Final report to be published online.

Guidance documents for shadow runs of surveys in Spring 2024.

Cognitive testing

Cognitive testing process

01

A total of **10 cognitive interviews were conducted** between 17th August and 19th September 2023.

Interviews were **conducted virtually** via Microsoft Teams and **lasted 55 minutes on average** (ranging from 47 to 78 minutes each).

02

During the cognitive interviews retailers were asked about their **overall thoughts** of the R-MeX survey, their **prior experiences** of completing it, **their views on each of the specific questions** included in the survey.

Retailers were also asked their thoughts on whether their engagement with the R-MeX survey might change in light of scores collected in future waves feeding into the BR-MeX incentive.

03

Following the cognitive interviews analysis of all the findings were conducted **and recommendations created on how to improve the survey going forwards.**

Overall retailers that participated in cognitive interviews were **largely positive about the R-MeX survey** in its current form however feedback received formed three recommendations for changes taken forward for the pilot.

High level findings: Retailers spend significant time and resource completing the survey

Scoring



Some retailers highlighted how they considered potential discrepancies in how different individuals in their organisation might score a wholesaler using the 0-10 scoring system.



Those who highlighted this stated they took actions to prevent this by having an individual responsible for moderating scores submitted across their organisation to prevent inconsistent and anomalous scoring.

Responsibility



All retailers reported that the R-MeX survey is completed by multiple individuals within their organisation, but that one individual has the ultimate responsibility of leading on the completion and for collating responses.

Time



Retailers reported that completing the R-MeX survey is time-consuming and resource intensive.



However, this was caveated by most saying they are willing to dedicate this time and resource to the R-MeX survey because they understand why it is being conducted, why this is important, and because they see the process as being of benefit to their own organisation.

Recommendation 1: Issue the survey with some 'scoring guidance'

Feedback



Retailers were positive about the current 0-10 scoring system. Most found this to be clear and straightforward and there was generally a very low appetite for the adoption of an alternative scale.



Despite this some retailers expressed concern of a potential lack of consistency when it came to how individuals scored wholesalers using the current 0-10 scoring system; both internally to their organisation and across retailers.



Recommendation



Based on the feedback collected ahead of and hence for the pilot stage; MOSL added guidance on scoring wholesalers through the addition of labels to the 0-10 scoring system. 0 was labelled as 'very dissatisfied', 10 as 'very satisfied' and the mid-point as 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied'.

"[R-MeX] is lacking some guidance from MOSL around how they expect the survey to be completed, and particularly around the scoring and the scoring is subjective, and it varies a lot from retailer to retailer and it can impact the overall scores."

Retailer

Recommendation 2: Removing the macro from the Excel spreadsheet

Feedback



Several retailers reported that they found the macros in the current Excel spreadsheet to be too restrictive. They felt removing them could make the process of completing the survey easier and less time consuming.



Whilst a few retailers suggested that MOSL should consider a return to an online format, we do not think that this is feasible given how MOSL plans to administer the R-MeX in the future.



Recommendation



MOSL redesigned the spreadsheet including the removal of macros to make the spreadsheet less restrictive to retailers when filling it out.

“It would be easier for us to just send in a spreadsheet with all of the scores and information on it. We think Excel is the best format. Excel is the easiest option. Not seeing all the information compiled in a single spreadsheet would lose a lot of the value for us. But the macros work less well and are not that helpful because you have to select a wholesaler which takes you to a separate page.”

Retailer

Recommendation 3: Optional free text response box to the pilot survey

Feedback



We did not propose making any major changes to the question wording. Some feedback showed that a few specific terms were not universally understood in the context of the question, however this was limited with the vast majority of retailer feedback positive on the survey questions.



Retailers generally felt that the questions were clear, easy to understand, and easy to answer. Retailers also felt that the questions covered all the areas that they felt important to be able to provide feedback on.



Recommendation



IFF recommended adding a catch-all optional free text response box to the pilot survey only, to capture retailers' feedback on how they found the revised survey. Responses to this could help inform any post-pilot amends and to monitor if the pilot changes resulted in an improved experience for those completing the survey.

Pilot testing

Pilot testing process

01

The R-MeX questionnaire was amended in the light of the 3 above recommendations. This amended questionnaire was pilot tested in October 2023 to all retailers. This pilot testing simultaneously formed the 6th wave of the R-MeX survey.

To mimic actual data collection and conditions, MOSL administered the survey in line with previous waves. **17 out of 20 retailers took part in the pilot** with MOSL providing full results to IFF for analysis.

02

A total of **5 qualitative post-pilot interviews were conducted** between the 19th December 2023 and 12th January 2024.

Interviews were **conducted virtually** via Microsoft Teams and **lasted 30 minutes on average** with both retailers who had and had not taken part in the cognitive research.

03

Following the qualitative pilot interviews, analysis was conducted of the findings of these interviews, the R-MeX results (including the new optional question at the end of the survey) as well as the previous cognitive research.

Findings continue to suggest retailers remain largely positive about the R-MeX survey. Retailers perceive that the survey provides a robust and reliable way of assessing wholesaler performance.

Pilot survey results (1)

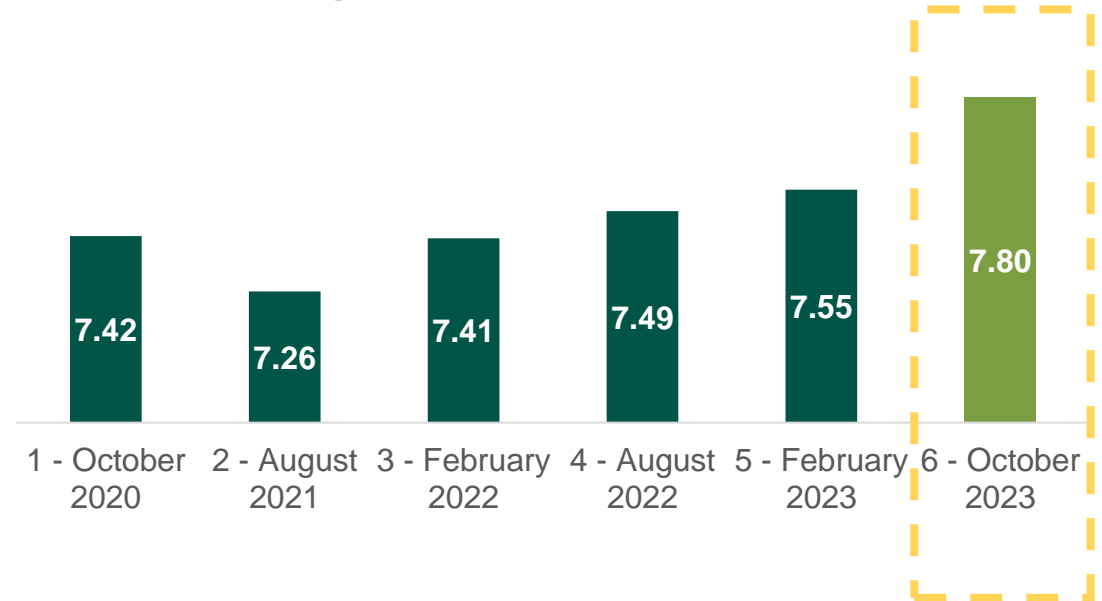


Average scores for overall service and each of the 6 elements of service measured have broadly remained consistent or inline with upwards trends of previous waves since the launch of R-MeX.



The latest wave, which includes the changes made for the pilot on the scoring guidance, appear to mostly mirror this trend and therefore, suggests our revised approach including guidance is consistent with retailers' previous understanding for scoring wholesalers. This is despite concerns from retailers expressed in cognitive interviews that this may not have been the case.

Average score for overall service¹

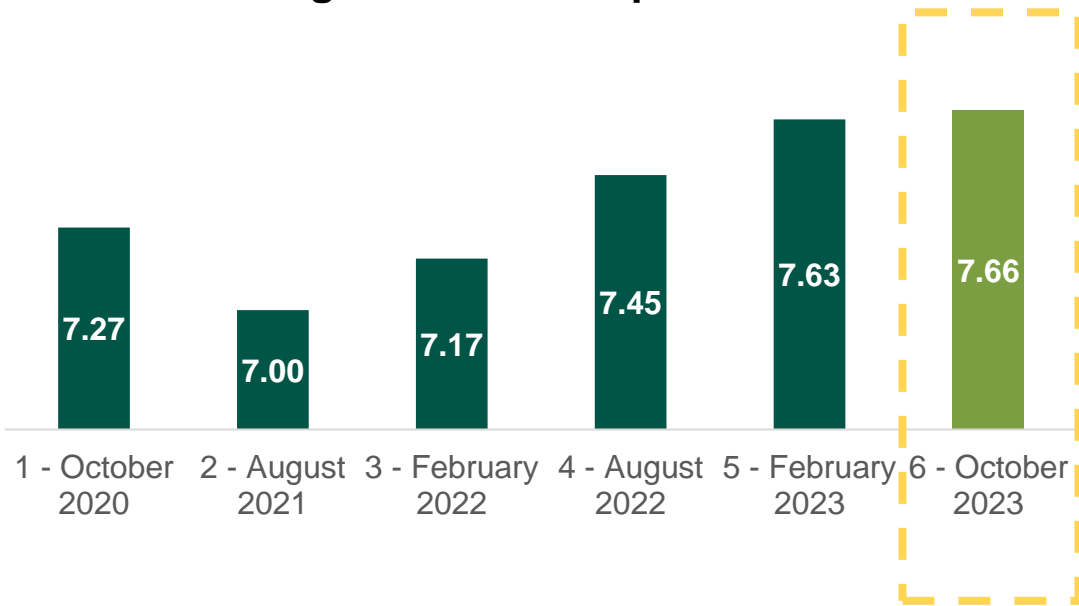


¹This average score will be used by Ofwat & MOSL to help construct each wholesale's performance score for BR-MeX

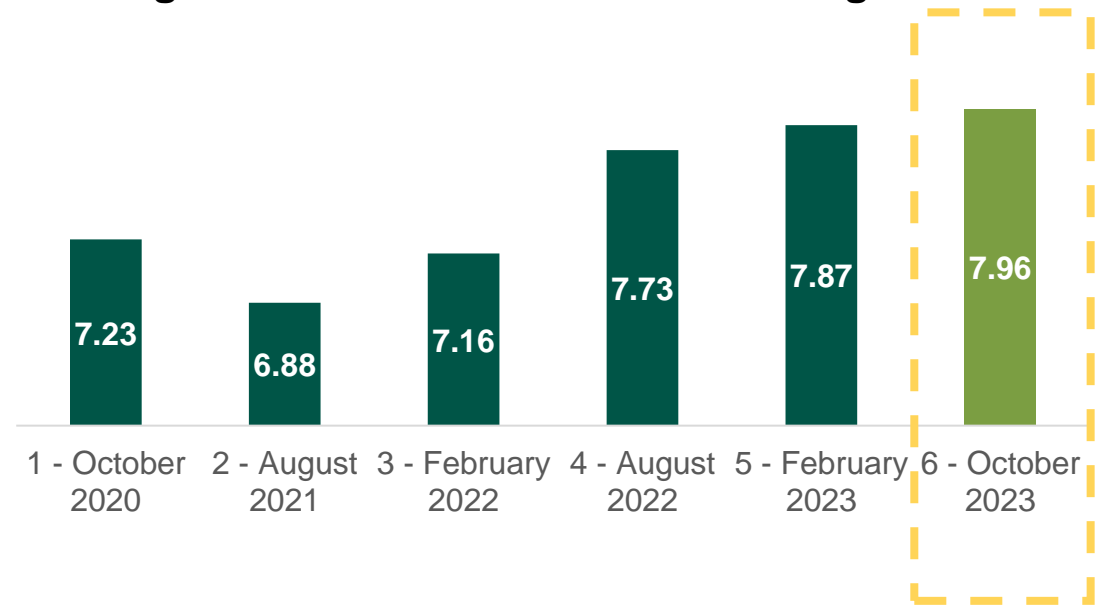
Base: October 2020 (n=14), August 2021 (n=14), February 2022 (n=13), August 2022 (n=16), February 2023 (n=15) and October 2023 (n=17)

Pilot survey results (2)

Average score for responsiveness



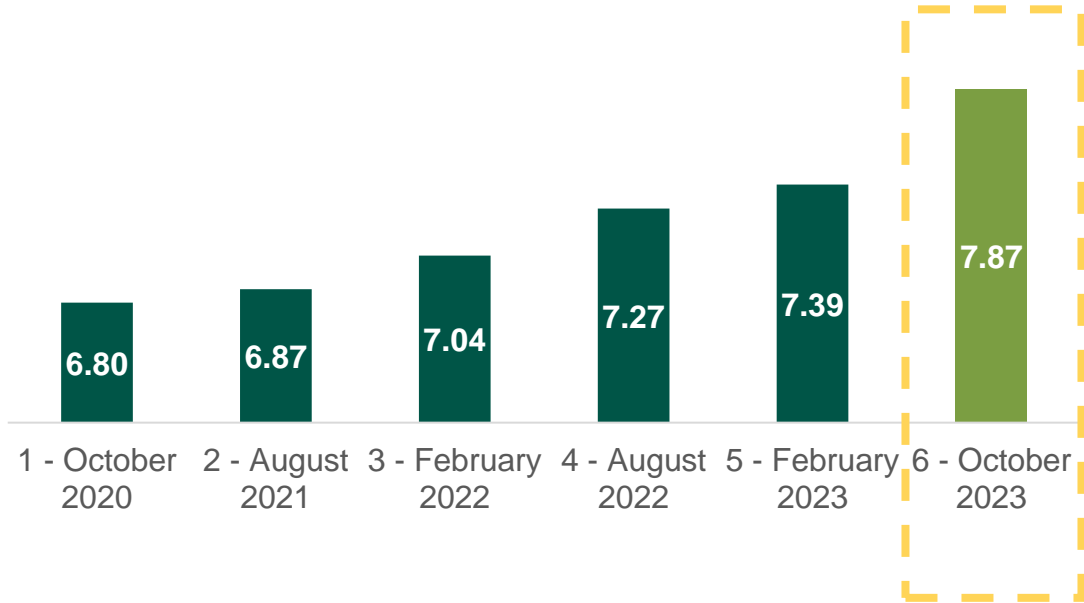
Average score for communication during incidents



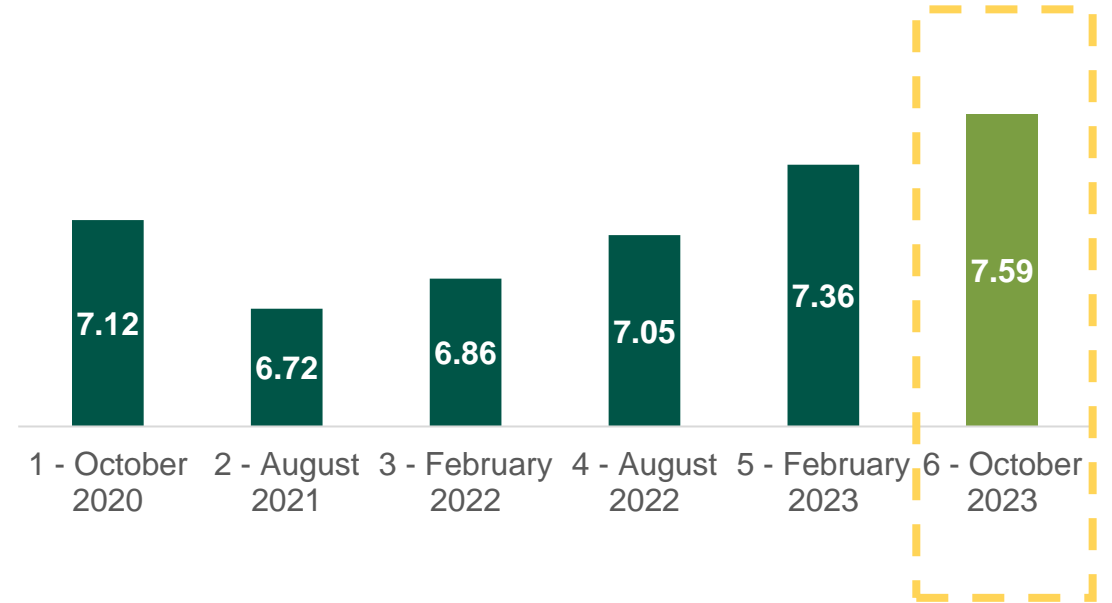
Base: October 2020 (n=14), August 2021 (n=14), February 2022 (n=13), August 2022 (n=16), February 2023 (n=15) and October 2023 (n=17)

Pilot survey results (3)

Average score for quality of data maintenance and improvement



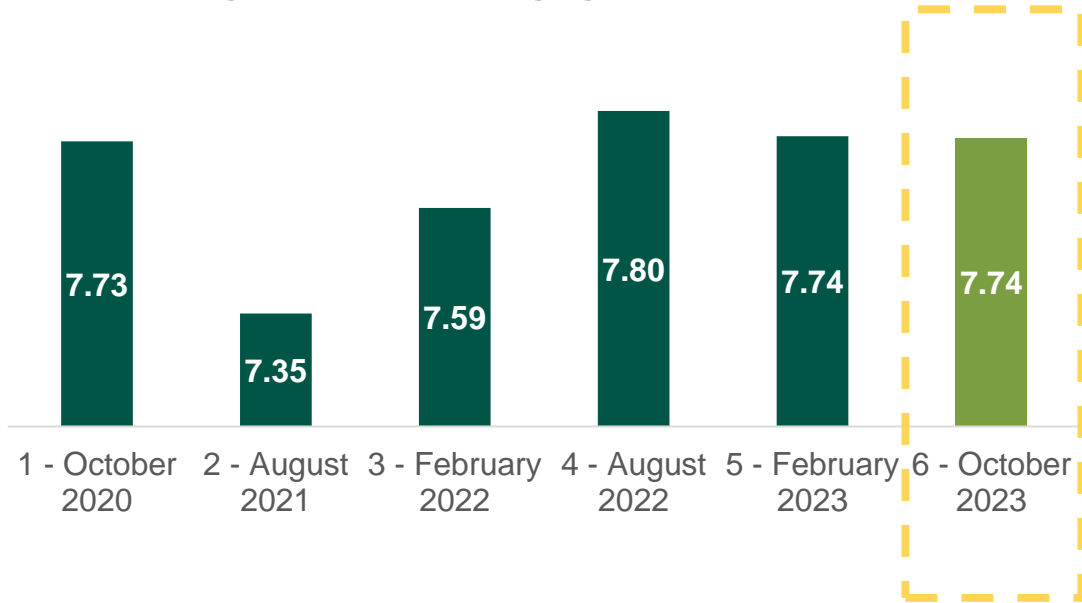
Average score for effectiveness of systems and notifications



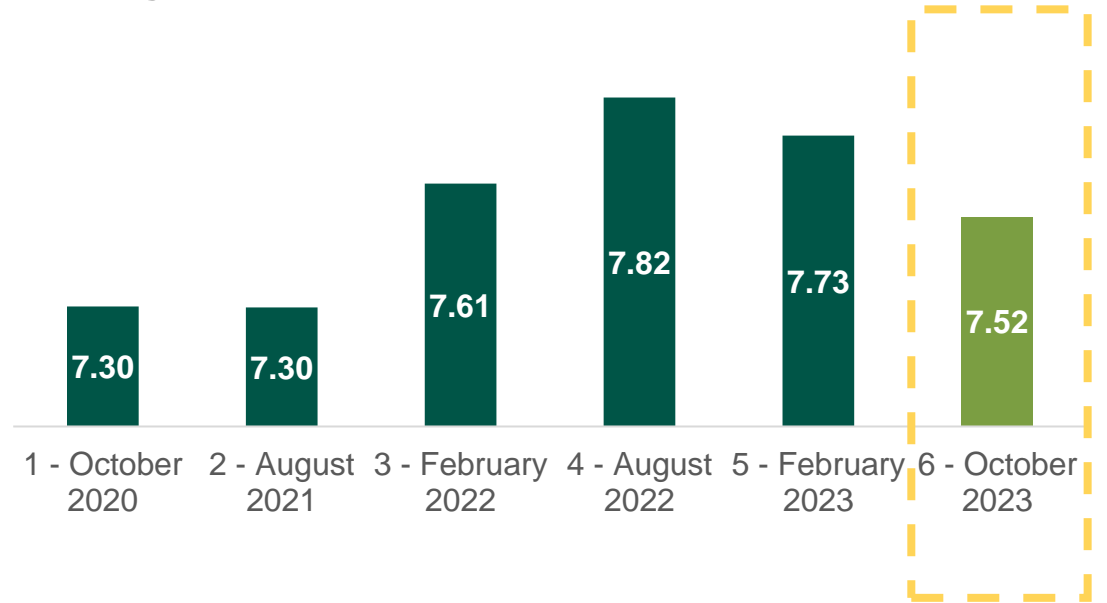
Base: October 2020 (n=14), August 2021 (n=14), February 2022 (n=13), August 2022 (n=16), February 2023 (n=15) and October 2023 (n=17)

Pilot survey results (4)

Average score for engagement and support



Average score for effectiveness of financial policies



Base: October 2020 (n=14), August 2021 (n=14), February 2022 (n=13), August 2022 (n=16), February 2023 (n=15) and October 2023 (n=17)

Pilot survey feedback & post pilot qualitative interviews



Only 5 of the 17 retailers who completed the R-MeX pilot in October 2023 survey left comments at the additional optional survey feedback question.

Four of the comments included suggestions, these were: a request for a spell check feature, further clarity in scoring (unspecified), an alternate method to submit via an online form, and requesting an additional question on the importance of engagement and collaboration around water efficiency.



Among the 5-post pilot qualitative interviews most had noticed the changes introduced. The majority agreed that both changes were beneficial, including those who hadn't noticed the changes spontaneously.



A few also suggested scope to go further, this included adding a spellcheck function to the spreadsheet and example scoring guidance to remove subjectivity.

"[Removal of macros] made it so much easier. There were no formula issues. Historically we've had real problems."

Retailer

"We'd already come up with our own [scoring labels] and definition of the scores, which was in line with what came out."

Retailer

A photograph of three people in a social setting, possibly a conference or meeting. A woman with blonde hair is in the foreground, looking towards the other two people. In the background, a woman with glasses is smiling, and another woman is partially visible. The scene is lit with warm, indoor lighting.

Thank you Any Questions?

14/02/2024



IFF Research

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Next steps

Next steps

- March 2024 – IFF report and recommendations
- MOSL to action:
 - Implement recommendations – likely to include:
 - No amendments to R-Mex survey wording (see annex)
 - Greater clarity and guidance concerning scoring scale
 - Continued use of Excel spreadsheet, with no macros
 - R-MeX surveys to be run in August 2024 and February 2025 in ‘shadow form’
 - Results to be published
 - Note question of wholesalers to be able to request information from Retailers concerning question 7: “What are the top three things this Wholesaler could do to improve their service?”
 - R-MeX surveys to be run in fully operational form from April 2025
- Spring 2024 – Ofwat Draft Determinations likely to include:
 - Direction of travel concerning use of and weightings for R-MeX scores



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Annex



R-MeX survey questions

Please note that this document is for reference only – answers must be submitted via the Excel spreadsheet sent to Contract Managers.

1. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the speed and quality of this wholesaler's responses to your service requests?
2. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with how this wholesaler responded and communicated with you and your customers during incidents and unplanned events?
3. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of this wholesaler's data maintenance and improvement?
4. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that this wholesaler's systems and notifications met your needs?
5. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the level of engagement and support you have received from this wholesaler?
6. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the clarity and effectiveness of this wholesaler's financial policies and processes, including provisions for billing, settlement, and credit?
7. What are the top three things this wholesaler could do to improve their service?
8. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service your organisation has received from this wholesaler?

