

Wessex Water 'have your say'

Online survey number 32

Bill Design

March 2025

Prepared by Future Focus Research

Wessex Water

YTL GROUP



Methodology

- The objective of this survey was to gather views on bill design.
- Customers were routed differently throughout the survey depending on whether they had a water meter or not.
- 3,000 invitations were sent out to panel members on 21st February 2025.
- The first reminder was issued on the 24th February 2025.
- The second reminder was issued on the 28th February 2025.
- A third reminder was issued on the 3rd March 2025.
- A final reminder was issued on the 7th March 2025.
- The survey was closed at midnight on Sunday 9th March 2025.
- A total of 768 panel members completed the survey.
- The average time to complete the survey was 8 minutes.
- The breakdown by mode of completion was as follows:
 - Desktop/laptop 54%, Smartphone 44%, Tablet 2%

Executive Summary

- Overall, customers had positive impressions of the bill's readability and visual appeal. A large majority, found the print size, colors, layout, and overall design easy to read and understand. Only a small percentage considered the layout too crowded or the information excessive. Further, 89% of respondents reported finding the bill very or quite easy to understand.
- Section 1 of the bill was also well received, with 92% of customers agreeing that it was clear and easy to understand. Over three quarters could correctly explain the meaning of the figure labeled “amount brought forward,” and the majority of metered customers found the abbreviations "CR" and "DR" easy to understand.
- In Section 2, 90% of metered customers stated that the payment plan was easy to understand. However, the section explaining increases in direct debits proved less effective, with only 69% finding it clear and 22% feeling that more detailed explanations were necessary.
- Section 3 was also well-received, with 91% of metered customers reporting that the graph showing daily water usage was easy to understand. Additionally, 75% of unmetered customers appreciated the information provided on how water and sewerage charges are calculated.

Executive Summary (Cont.)

- Section 6 provided valuable insights into water usage. A total of 84% of metered customers found the information about average household water use easy to understand, and 63% compared their usage to the national average. Of those, 66% stated that they would be motivated to reduce their water consumption if it exceeded the national average, while others cited reasons like already being careful (33%) or only using necessary amounts (25%). 87% of customers also found the “using more water than expected” section helpful. Most importantly, 82% agreed that the information in this section should remain unchanged.
- For unmetered customers, 64% found the information about switching to a water meter useful, though only 15% said it would persuade them to make the switch. The main concerns were a lack of information (25%) and fears of increased costs or insufficient benefits (21%).
- When ranking the sections of the bill, customers deemed the "amount due" section the most important, while "other general information" was considered the least important.
- Overall, the survey highlights that the bill is well-designed and effective in presenting key information. There is, there is room for improvement, with some useful suggestion made.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF BILL

Metered



Customer number:
00000000
Payment reference:
000000000000
Bill/tax point date:
12/02/2025
Schedule number:
01
Bill number:
0000000000



Unmetered



Customer number:
Payment reference:
Bill/tax point date:
07/02/2025
Schedule number:
01
Bill number:

E00000

Your water services bill

1 Amount due

Charges for:
04 Sep 2024
to
11 Feb 2025
Amount brought forward:
£79.71 CR
New charges:
£78.99
Supply address:

Total due
£0.72 CR
See section 3 for more detail

2 Your payment plan

We have reviewed your payments in line with your usage and current balance, so you don't have to do anything.

► **Your next payment: £15.50**
Your first Direct Debit payment will be taken on or just after 03 Mar 2025.

► **Future payments: £18.50**
Payment will be taken monthly on or just after your preferred payment date until further notice.

Please check your payments and bill carefully. We review your payments at least once per year; however, it is your responsibility to ensure your payments are enough to clear your bill.

For more information on how to pay see section 5.

View your bills online
Sign up today and go paper free

Scan Me

wessexwater.co.uk/ebilling

Struggling to pay your bills?
We're here to help

Call 0345 600 3 600 or visit:
wessexwater.co.uk/help-to-pay

Extra help when you need it
Priority support when you are without water, and more.

Call 0345 600 3 600 or visit:
wessexwater.co.uk/priority-services

British Wessex Billing Services Ltd is the duly appointed agent of Wessex Water Services Limited for the marketing and collection of sums due for water and sewerage services. Wessex Water VAT Reg No 5203430762
British Wessex Billing Services Limited, 1 Cleveland Walk, Nailsea, Bristol, BS48 1WA.

Find out more about your bill and our services online:
wessexwater.co.uk/info

Your annual water services bill

1 Amount due

Charges for:
01 Apr 2025 to
31 Mar 2026
Amount brought forward:
£0.00
New charges:
£1183.17
Supply address:
Bath

Total due
£1183.17
See section 3 for more detail

Please be aware that payments received after 7th February will not have been deducted.

2 Options to pay

Your payment reference is:

► **Spread the cost:** From:
With 10 monthly Direct Debit payments **£118.32**

It's simple to set up. Complete the enclosed form or visit: wessexwater.co.uk/direct-debit

OR

► **1 payment:** £1183.17 due 01 Apr 2025

OR

► **2 payments:**
(1st payment) £591.58 due 01 Apr 2025
(2nd payment) £591.59 due 01 Oct 2025
Please be aware if you miss the April instalment, the full amount will be due immediately.

View your bills online
Sign up today and go paper free

Scan Me

wessexwater.co.uk/ebilling

Struggling to pay your bills?
We're here to help

Call 0345 600 3 600 or visit:
wessexwater.co.uk/help-to-pay

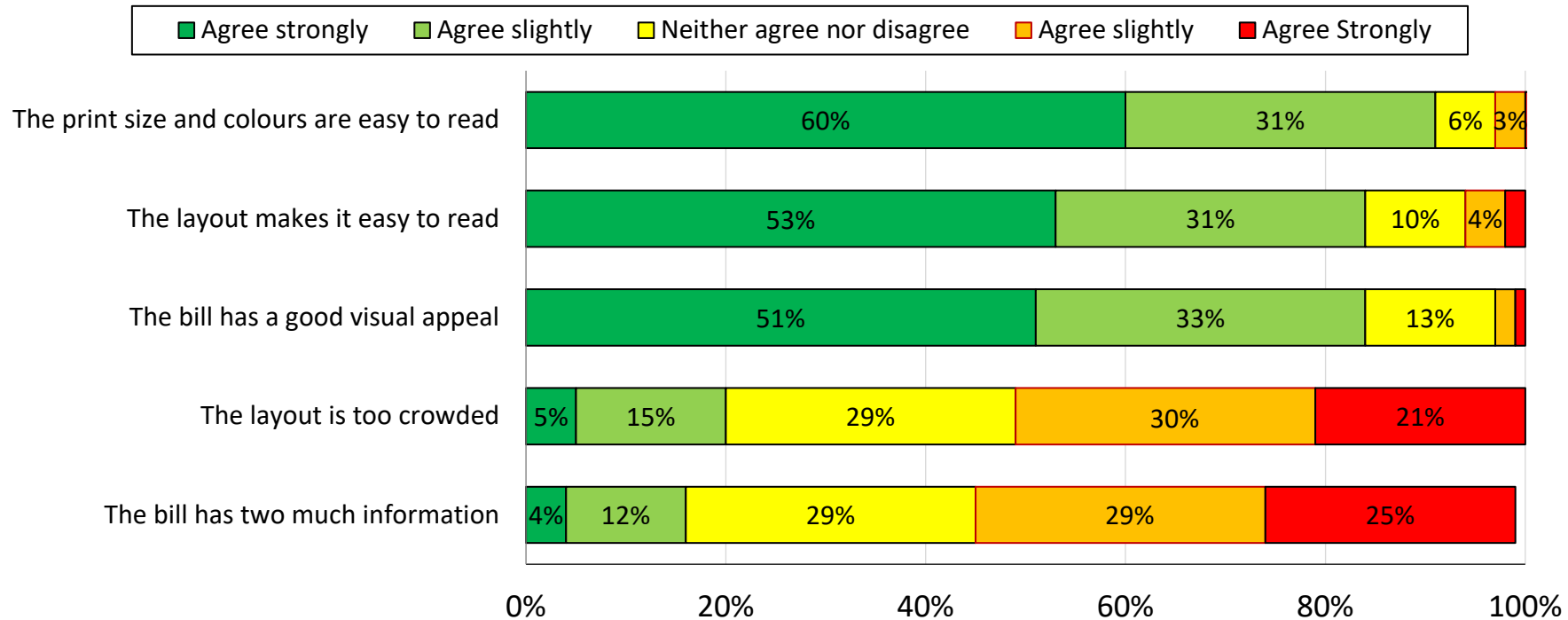
Extra help when you need it
Priority support when you are without water, and more.

Call 0345 600 3 600 or visit:
wessexwater.co.uk/priority-services

British Wessex Billing Services Ltd is the duly appointed agent of Wessex Water Services Limited for the marketing and collection of sums due for water and sewerage services. Your current balance due is your sum due for water and sewerage services and you must pay that sum to British Wessex Billing Services Ltd as set out in this bill. Wessex Water VAT Reg No 5203430762
British Wessex Billing Services Limited, 1 Cleveland Walk, Nailsea, Bristol, BS48 1WA.

Find out more about your bill and our services online:
wessexwater.co.uk/info

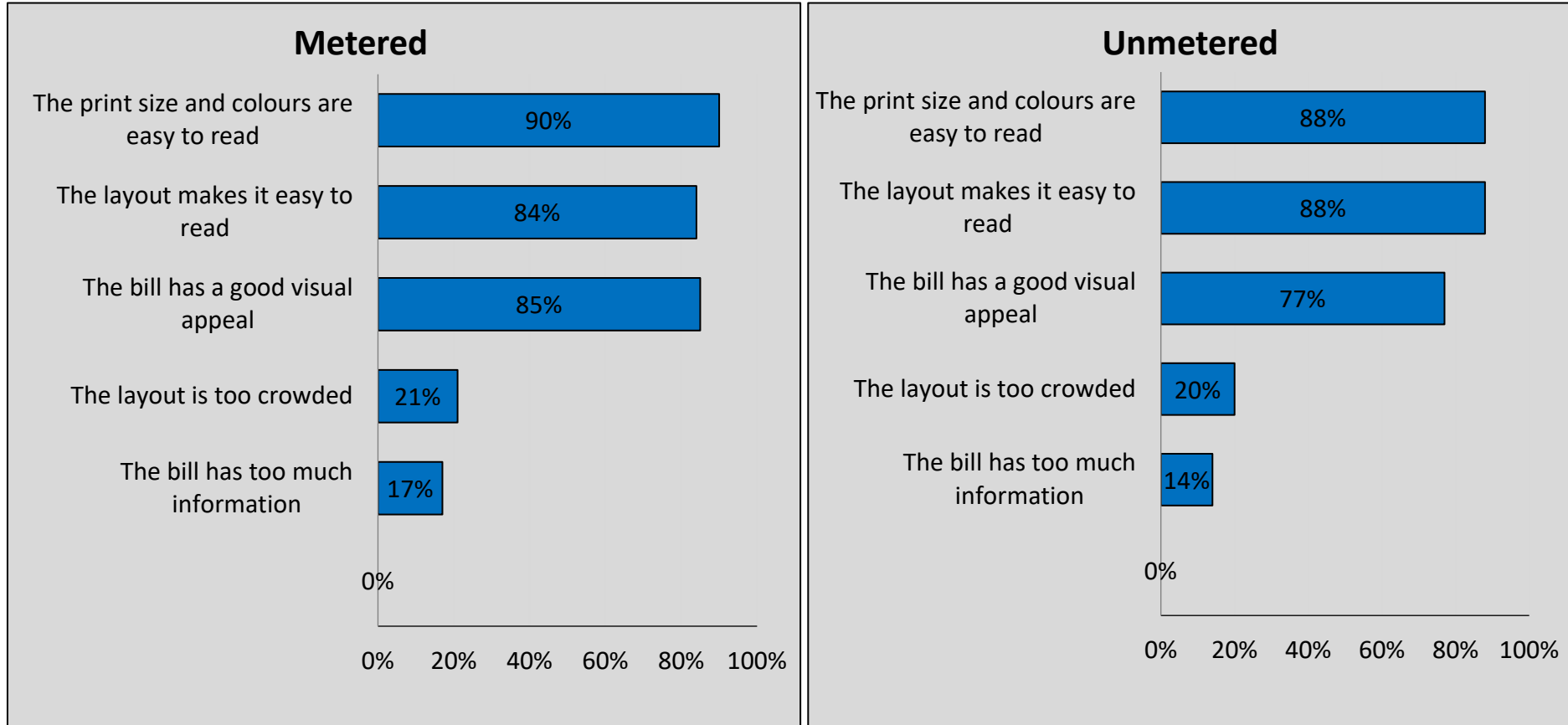
Q1 - We would like to understand your initial impression when you see the bill. Which of the following statements do you agree with?



- Most customers agree that:
 - the print size and colours are easy to read (81% agree strongly or slightly)
 - the layout makes it easy to understand (84 %)
 - the bill has a good visual appeal (84%)
- Very few customers agree that:
 - the layout was too crowded (20% agree strongly or slightly)
 - the bill has too much information (16%)

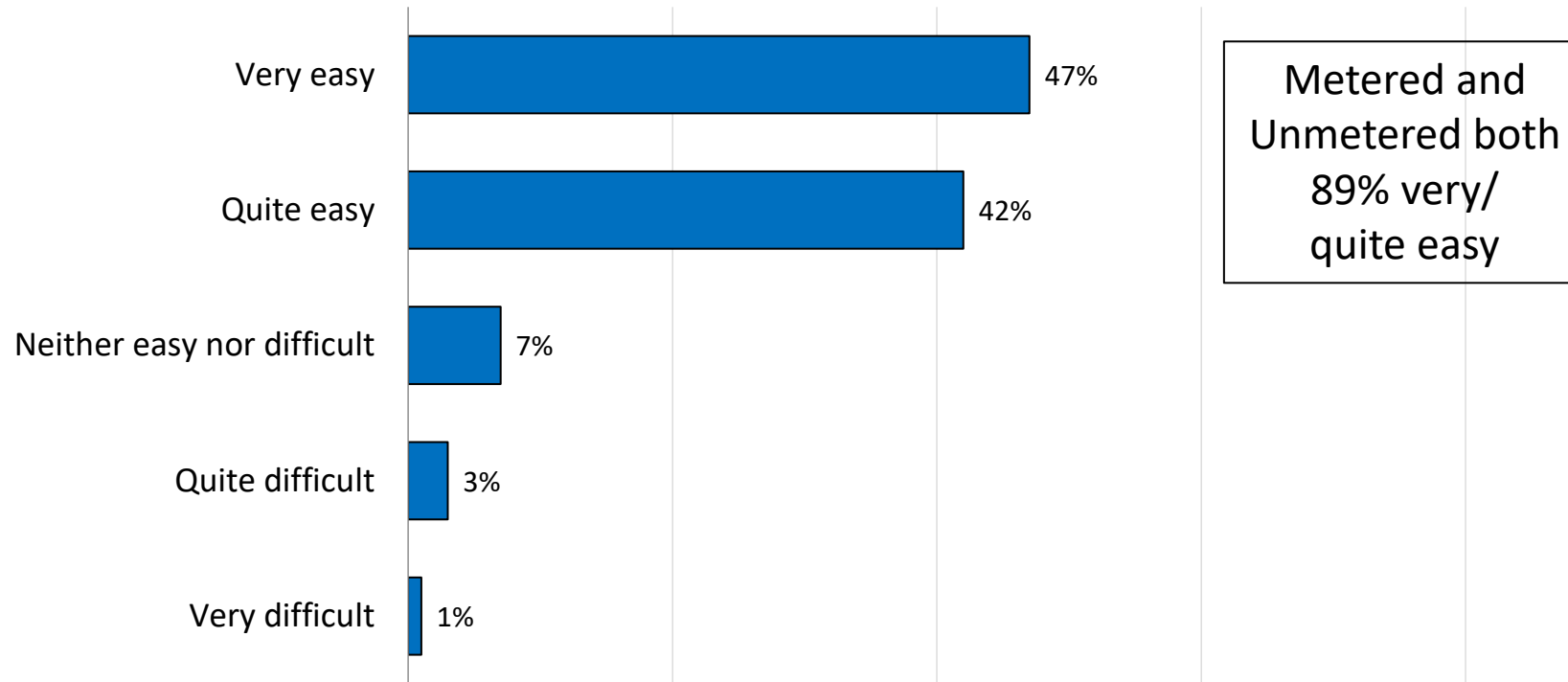
Q1 - We would like to understand your initial impression when you see the bill. Which of the following statements do you agree with?

Metered v Unmetered
% Agree



- Despite metered and unmetered customers being shown different bill images, their initial impressions of the bill are very similar.

Q2 - Overall, how easy or difficult is the bill to understand?



- Most customers think the bill is very/quite easy to understand (89%).
- There was no difference between those receiving metered or unmetered bills (both 89%).

SECTION 1

Metered

1 Amount due

Charges for:
04 Sep 2024
to
11 Feb 2025

Amount brought forward:
£79.71 CR

New charges:
£78.99

Supply address:

Total due
£0.72 CR

See section 3
for more detail

Unmetered

1 Amount due

Charges for:
01 Apr 2025 to
31 Mar 2026

Amount brought forward:
£0.00

New charges:
£1388.94

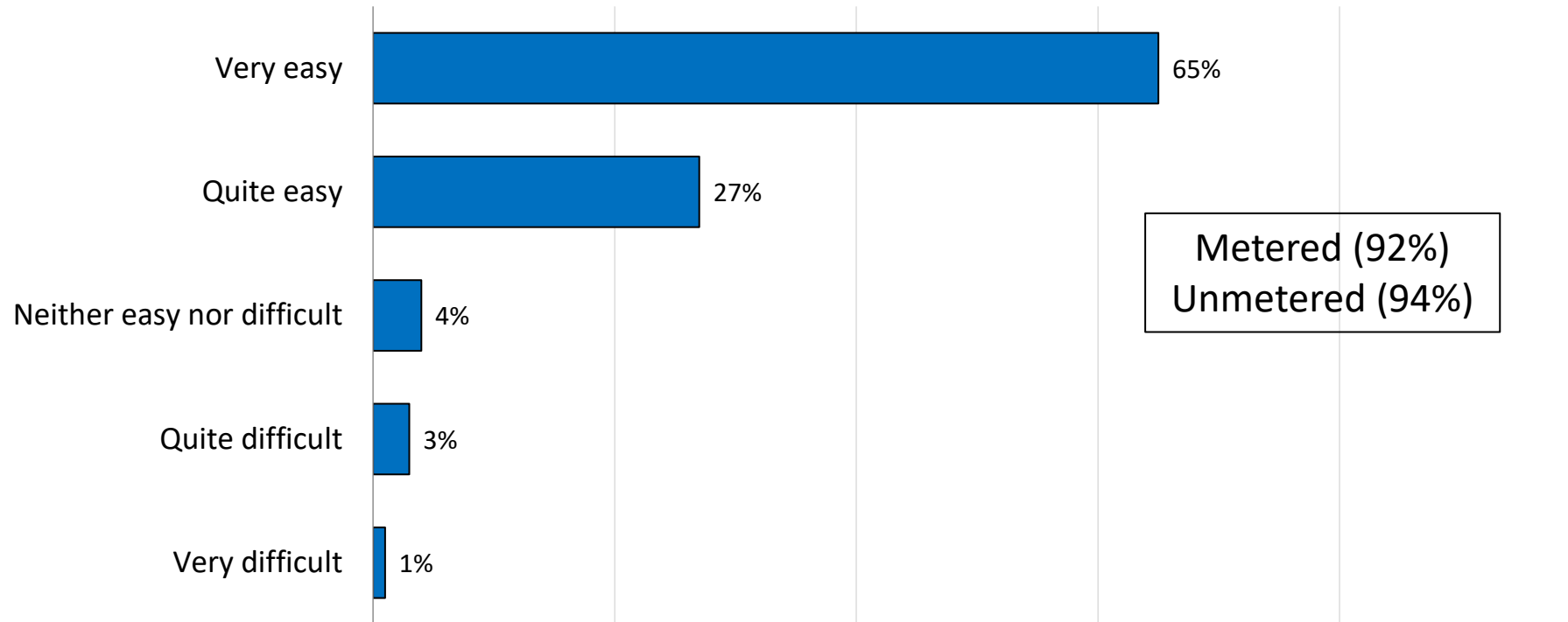
Supply address:
Taunton, Somerset

Please be aware that payments received after 8th February will not have been deducted.

Total due
£1388.94

See section 3
for more detail

Q3a - How easy or difficult is this information to understand? (Section1)



- Most customers think that section 1 of the bill is very/quite easy to understand (92%).
- There was no significant difference between those receiving metered or unmetered bills (92% and 94%).

Q3b - What is your understanding of the figure labelled 'amount brought forward' ?

- Most customers (78%) understand the term and gave a correct explanation. A further 4% gave a partially correct answer. The remaining 18% either gave an incorrect answer or did not know.

The credit to the account as a result of payments made prior to the date of the bill

The credit or debit balance from the last billing period

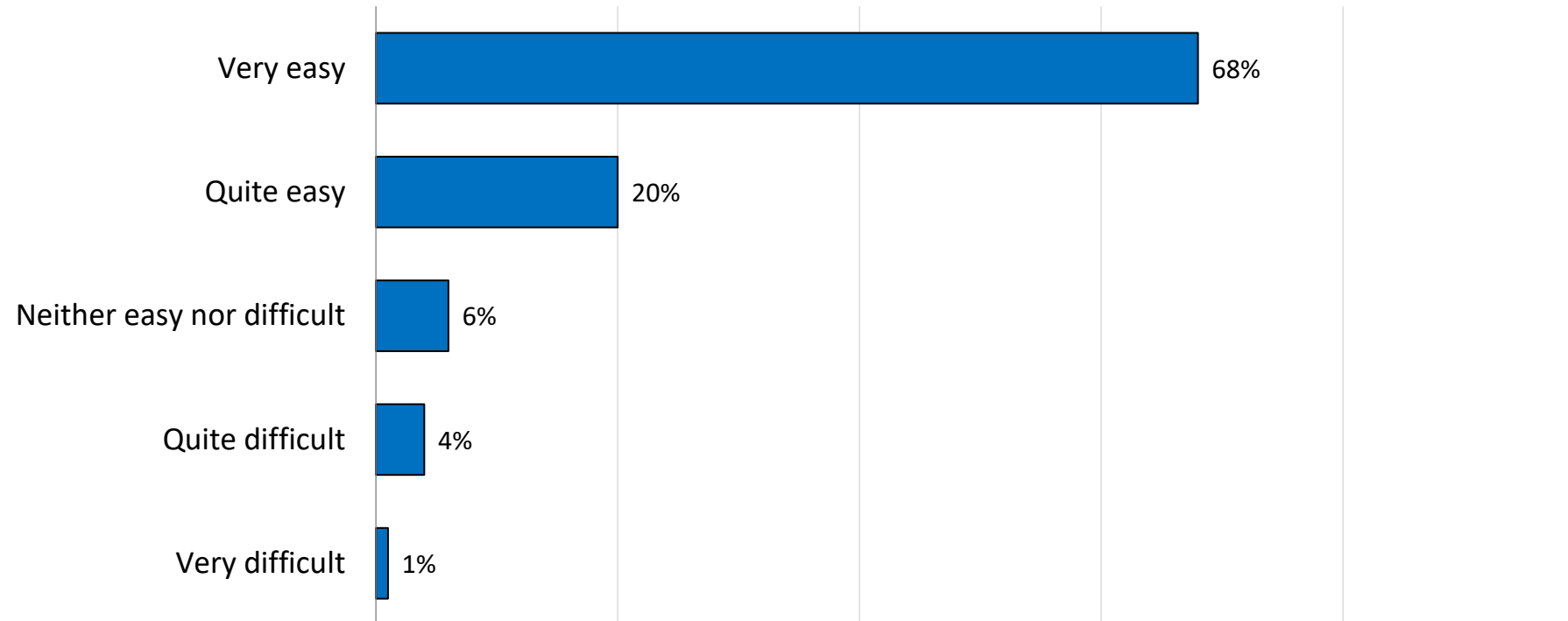
It is the amount due or in credit at the start of this charging period

The amount still owing, or in credit, from the previous period.

It's not clear enough

No idea, why not use plain English?

Q3c - We use the abbreviation 'CR' to show when you are in credit and 'DR' when there is an amount outstanding. How easy or difficult is this to understand? (Metered)



- Most customers think that the abbreviations CR and DR are very/quite easy to understand (88%).

SECTION 2

Metered

2 Your payment plan

We have reviewed your payments in line with your usage and current balance, so you don't have to do anything.

▶ **Your next payment: £15.50**

Your first Direct Debit payment will be taken on or just after 03 Mar 2025.

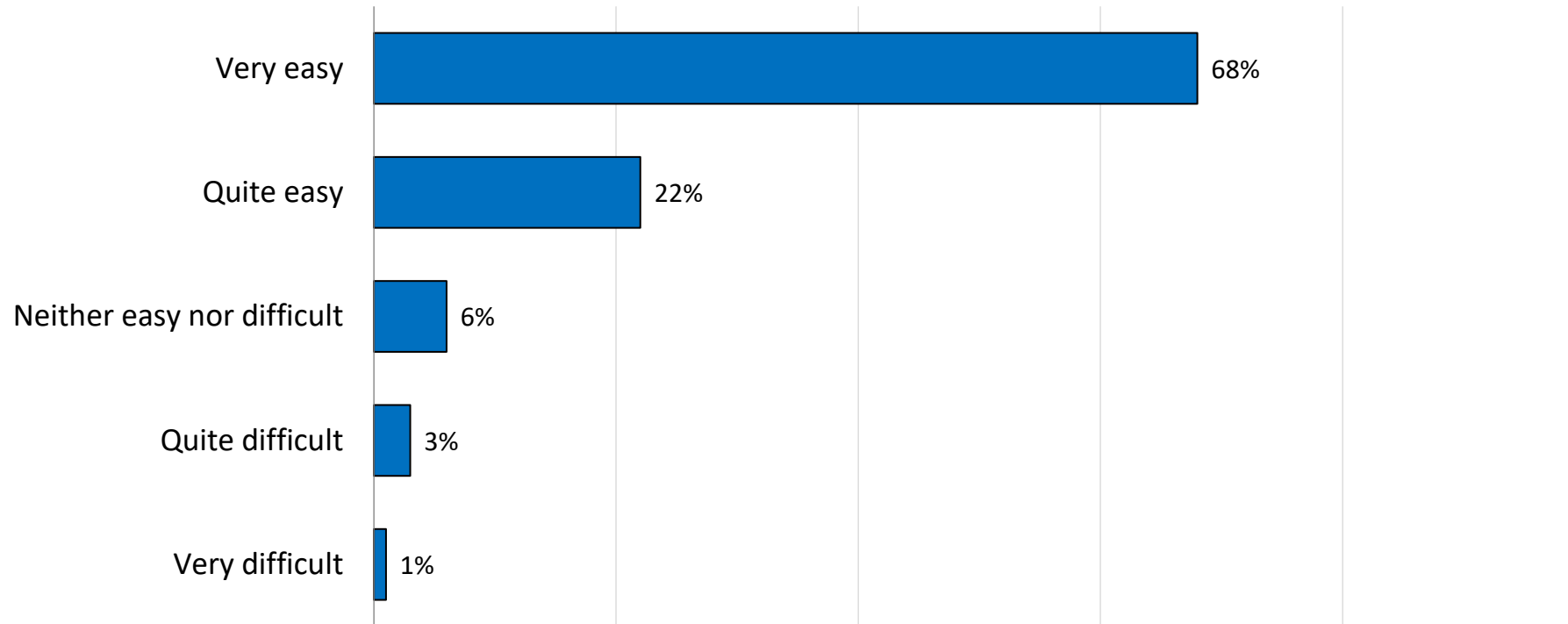
▶ **Future payments: £18.50**

Payment will be taken monthly on or just after your preferred payment date until further notice.

Please check your payments and bill carefully. We review your payments at least once per year; however, it is your responsibility to ensure your payments are enough to clear your bill.

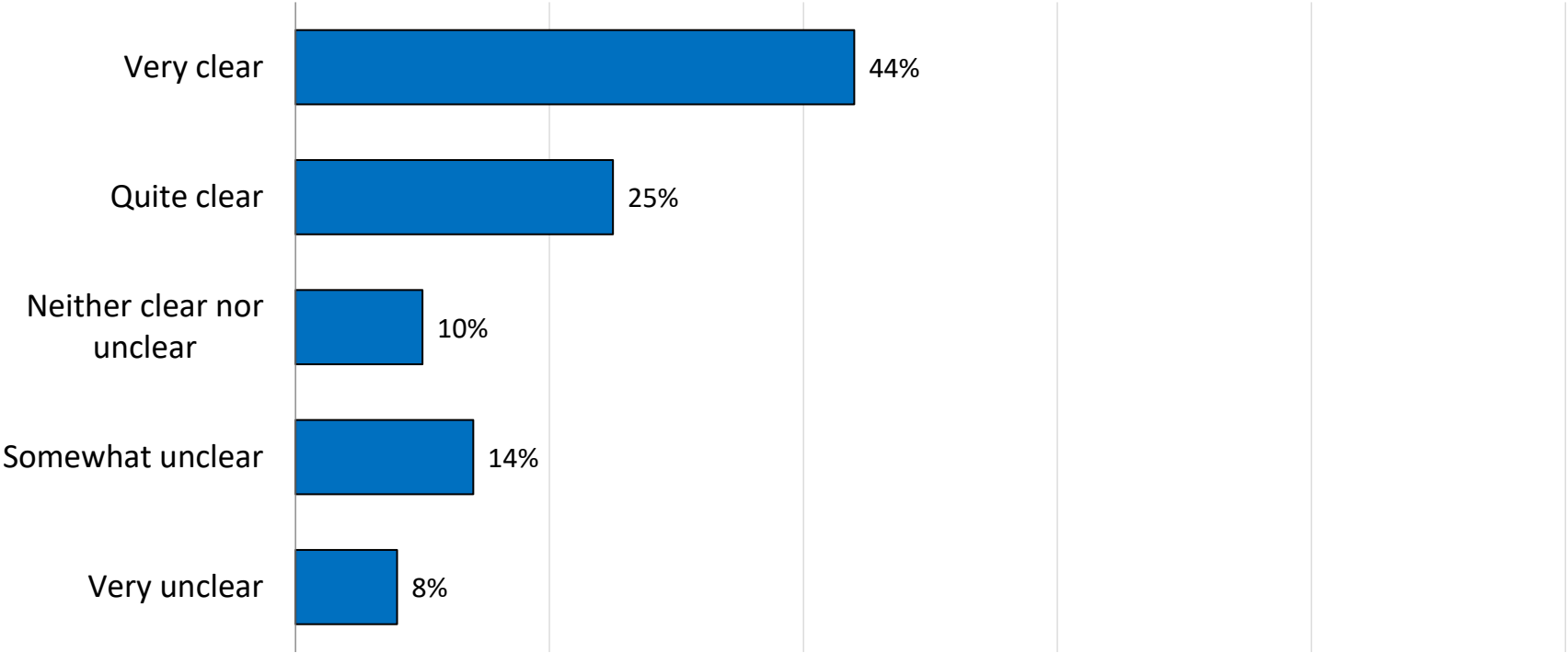
For more information on how to pay see section 5.

Q3d - For customers who pay by direct debit, in section 2 of the bill we show them their payment plan. How easy or difficult is this information to understand? (Metered)



• 90% of customers think that the payment plan is very/quite easy to understand.

Q3e - In this example payment plan, you can see that future direct debit payments will increase from £15.50 to £18.50. Based on the information provided, how clear or unclear is the reason for this increase in direct debit payments? (Metered)



• 69% of customers think that the reason for the increase in direct debits is very or quite clear.

Q3f - Do you have any thoughts about how we can make this section clearer for customers?

- 50% of customers do not have any suggestions on how to make this section clearer.
- The main suggestion made is to explain the reason for the increase, by 22% of customers.
- Other suggestions include:
 - explain payments better (3%)
 - make simpler/plain English (3%)
 - make payment date clearer (2%)
 - Explanation of CR/DR (1%)
 - Change colours/font (1%)

Show how much usage or price has increased to explain why direct debit needs to be increased

The bill needs to explain in simple terms why the monthly payment has increased and by the amount it has.

If my account is already slightly in credit, I don't understand why the payments are going up. You have not explained why the bill is going up. It's really confusing.

Maybe highlight the direct debit date, so it draws the eyes to read it

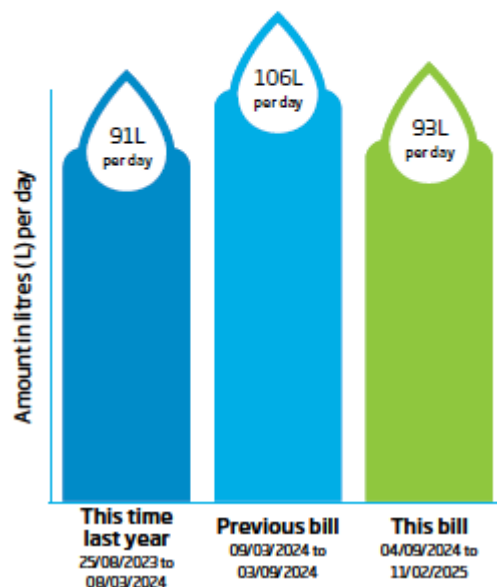
SECTION 3

Metered

Daily water use

The graph below shows your average daily water use per day in litres (L). Did you know there are 1,000L per cubic metre (m³)?

How much water are you using?



Unmetered

Account summary

Previous balance	£1117.58
Total payments made	£1117.58 CR

Amount brought forward **£0.00**

Charges for: 01 Apr 2025 - 31 Mar 2026

The rateable value (RV) of your property is 241.

Water charges

Supply Charge	£3.0184 (per year) x	RV 241 =	£727.43
Standing Charge	£8.00 (per year) x	365 days =	£8.00

Sewerage charges

Service Charge	£2.6785 (per year) x	RV 241 =	£645.51
Standing Charge	£8.00 (per year) x	365 days =	£8.00

Total **£1388.94**

Our charges

These are for water and sewerage services. Any changes are controlled by law and our operating licence. Charges run from 1 April every year with changes published by 1 February. These charges are agreed with Ofwat, the water industry regulator.

What is a rateable value (RV)?

Your bill is not based on how much water you use, it's worked out on the rateable value of your property. This isn't the same as council tax bands. Your rateable value was set by the Inland Revenue before 1990 and cannot be changed.

What are standing charges?

They're fixed amounts payable by all customers which cover the billing costs, plus some fixed costs for water and/or sewerage services.

To find out more about your charges, visit: wessexwater.co.uk/charges

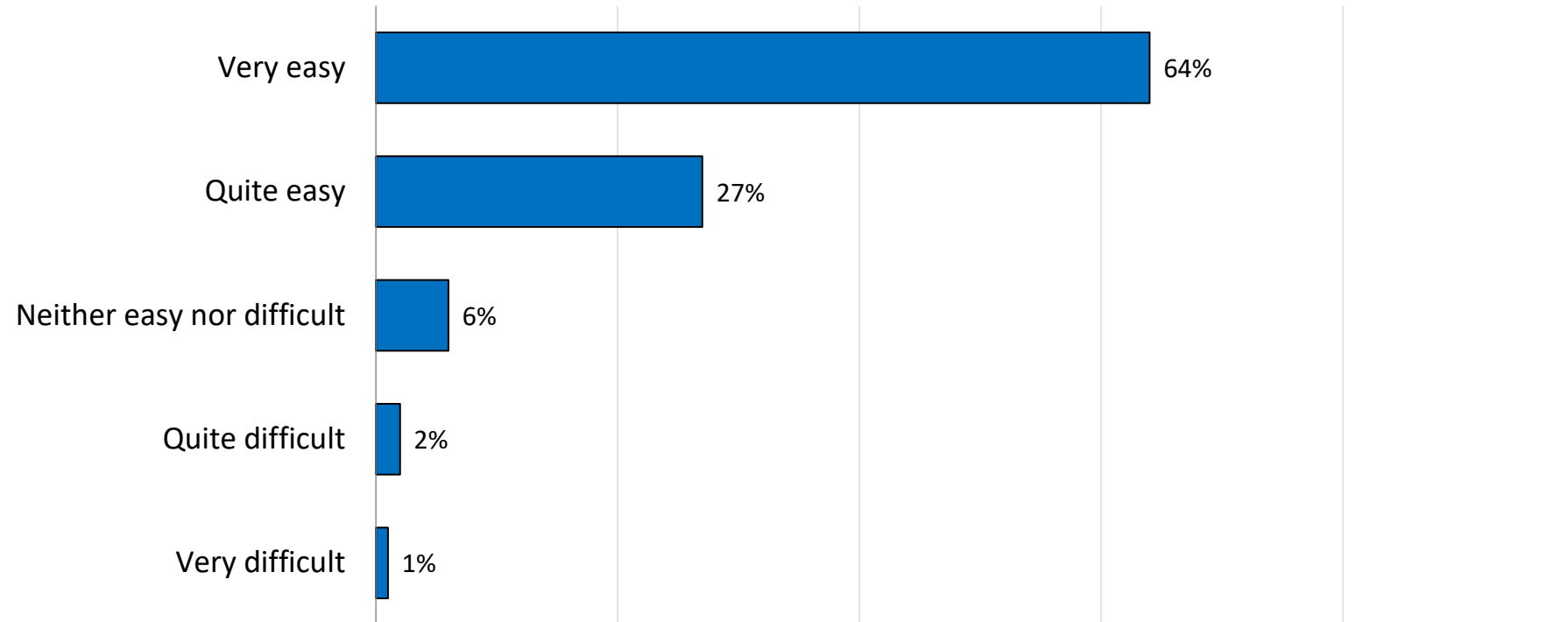
Where does your rainwater go?

You pay a charge for rainwater draining from your roof to the sewer. Rainwater can overwhelm some sewers during intense rainfall and result in storm overflows operating. Save around £27 off your bill by disconnecting downpipes and distributing any surplus rainwater across your garden or into a soakaway. Visit: wessexwater.co.uk/rainwater-allowance

You could save money by having a meter

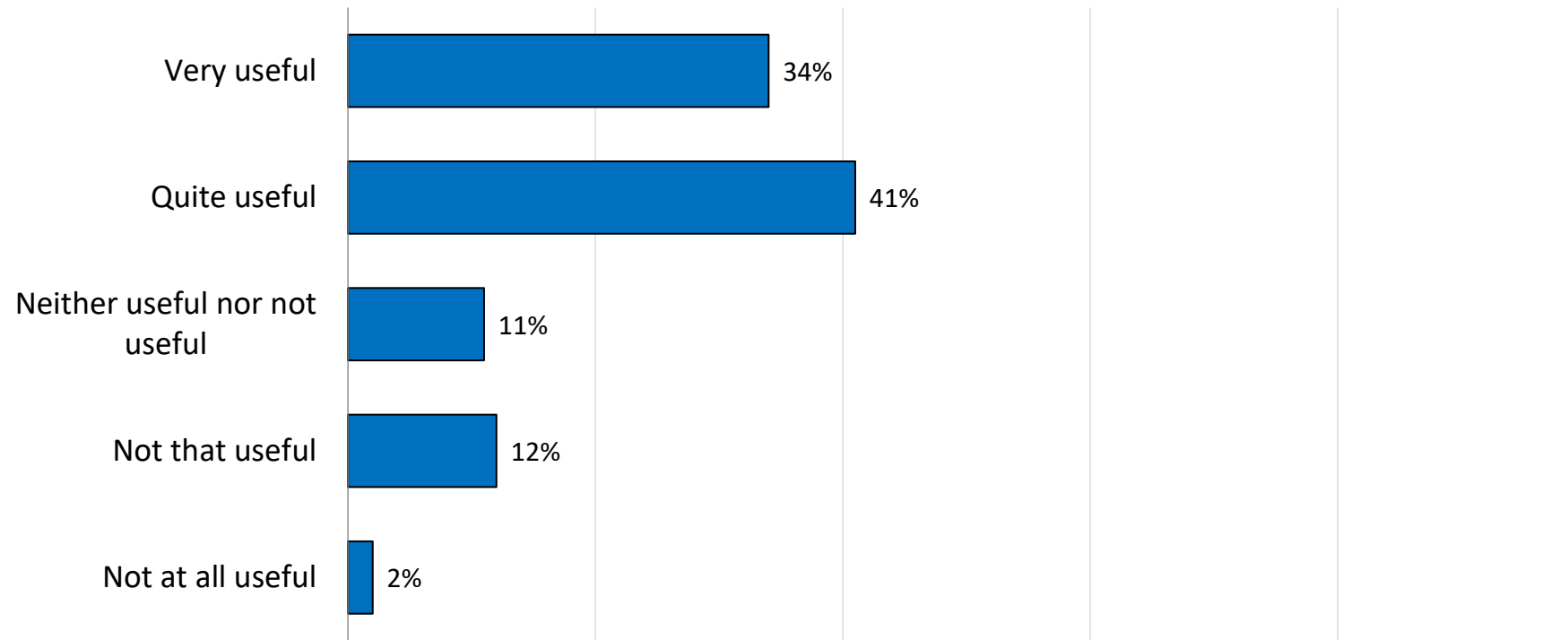
Find out more in section 6.

Q4a - In section 3 of the bill, we show you a graph of your daily water use. How easy or difficult is this graph to understand? (Metered)



- 91% of metered customers think that the graph is very/quite easy to understand.

Q4a - In Section 3 of the bill, we present information to explain how your water and sewerage charges are calculated (right side). How useful is this information? (Unmetered)



• 75% of unmetered customers think that the information is very/quite useful.

Q4b - Do you have any further thoughts on how we can make this section more useful? (Unmetered)

- Most do not have any suggestions on how to make this section clearer (77%).
- The main suggestion made is to provide a breakdown or costs/how money is spent (12%).
- Other suggestions include:
 - less text/simpler (3%)
 - explain RV (3%)
 - tell us what you are doing (3%)

Explain what services are paid for by the service charge?

give some clarity on what the figures mean

use simpler language - you could also add in how much you've invested and how much has been taken in shareholders profit so we can see exactly how our money is being used

more useful to know how the money is spent

explain what the rv bit is

SECTION 6

Metered

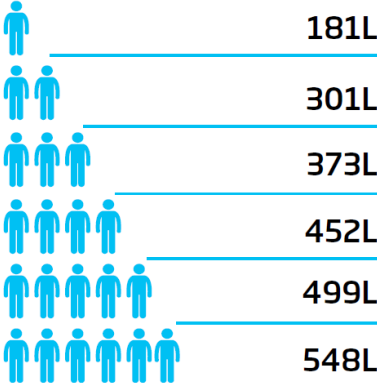
Unmetered

What is a cubic metre (m³)?

A cubic metre of water is 1,000 litres or 220 gallons of water. That's the equivalent of 13 baths.

How do you compare to the national average?

Your average daily use is 0 litres per day.



6 Could you benefit from a water meter?

Most customers save money with a meter

Take control of your bill with a meter, nearly three quarters of customers now have a water meter and only pay for what they use. 9 out of 10 customers that switch to a meter save over £125 a year.

You can try out a meter for two years and with our Money Back Guarantee you won't end up paying more. You can go back at any time during the first two years but must keep the meter for the full two years to be eligible for the Money Back Guarantee.

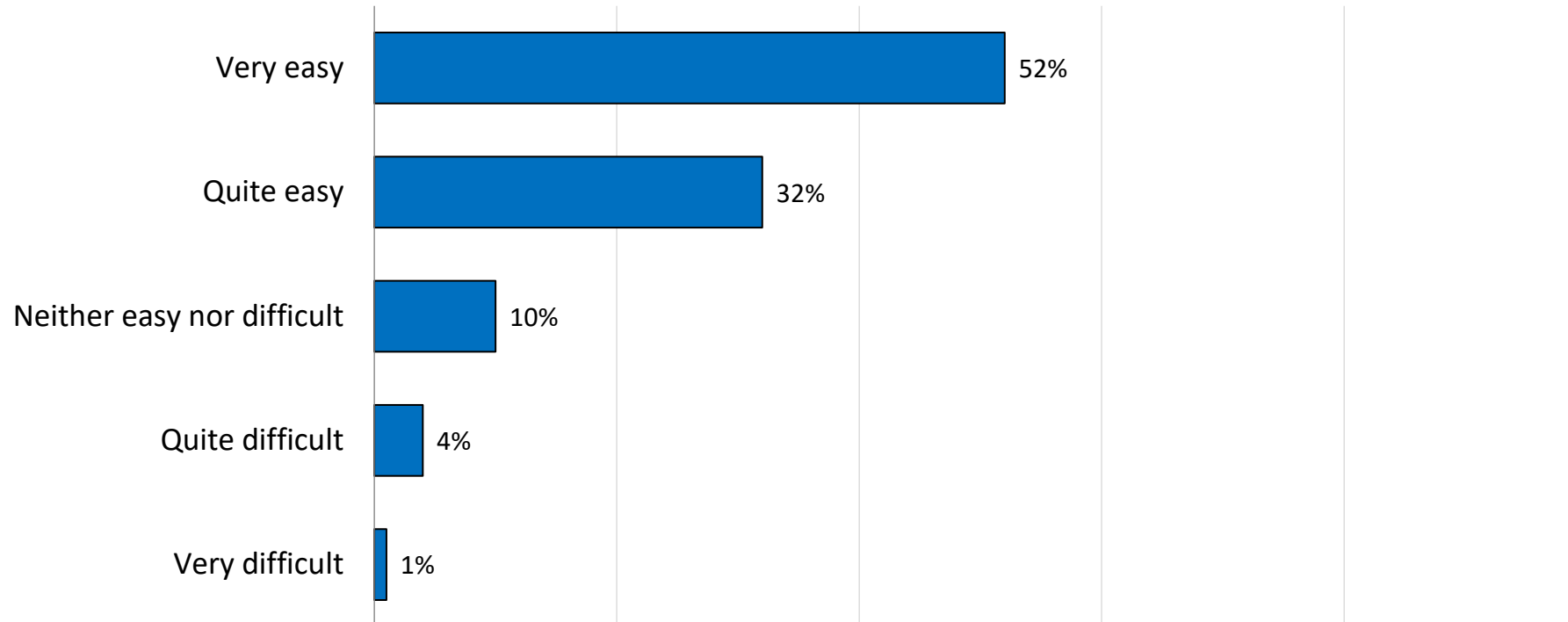
Do you use a sprinkler?

If you use a sprinkler you need to apply for a meter.

How to apply for a meter

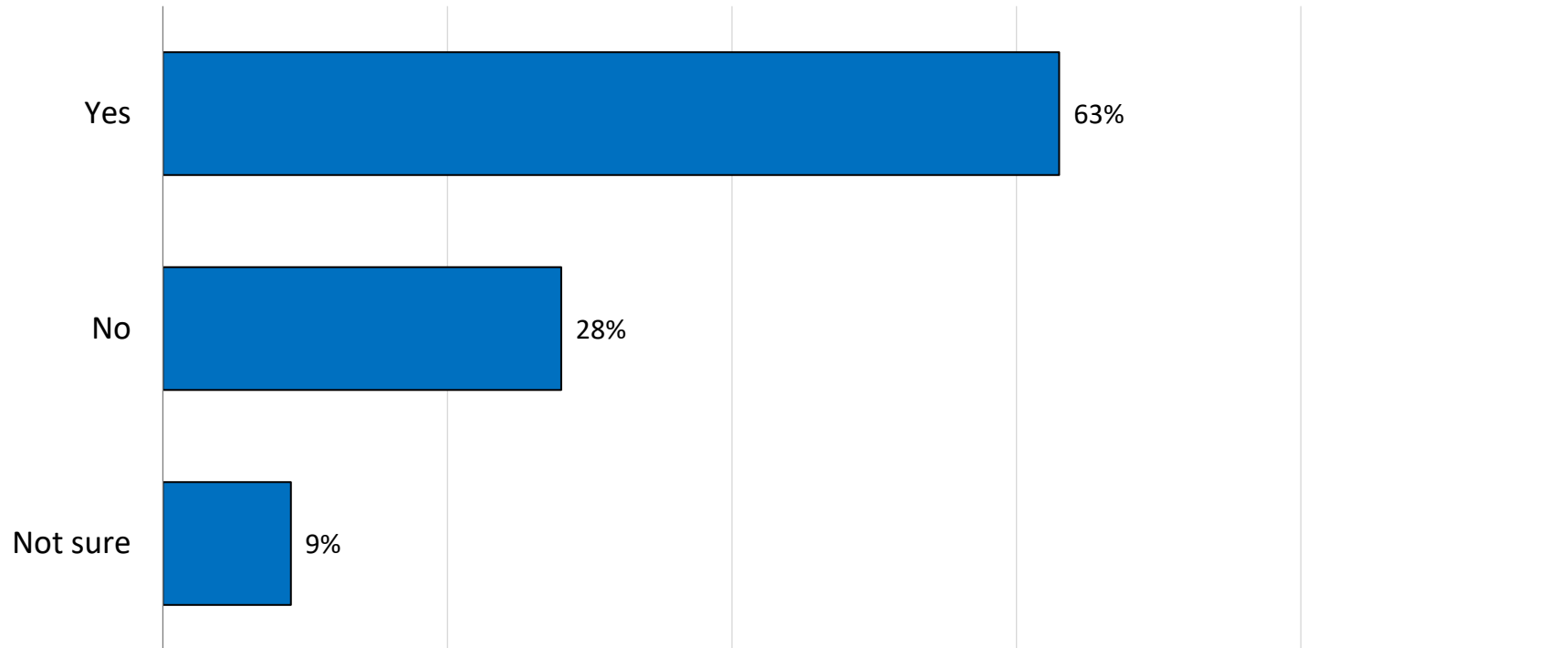
To find out more or apply visit: wessexwater.co.uk/meter or call us.

Q5a - In Section 6 of the bill, we share general information about the average household water use. How easy or difficult is it to understand the graph showing the national average of water use?(Metered)



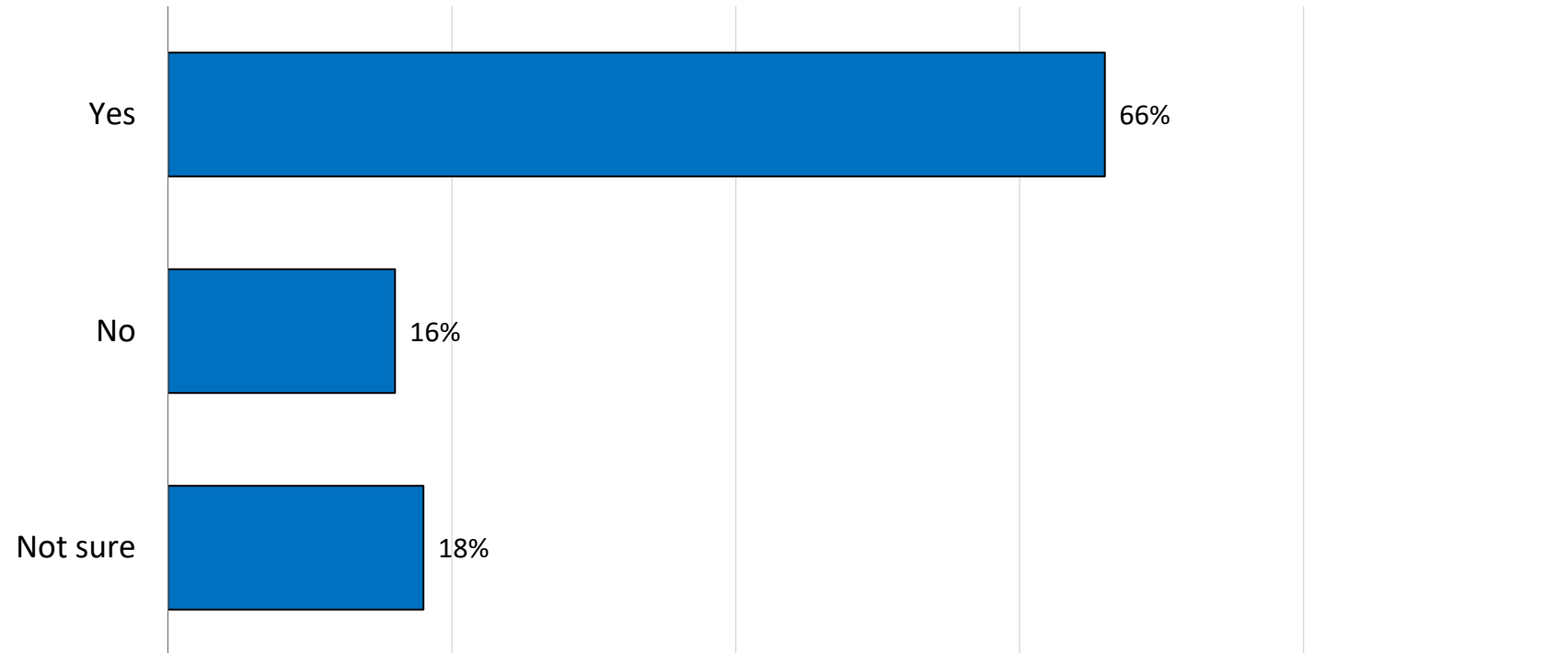
- 84% of metered customers think that the information is very/quite easy to understand.

Q5b - Do you (or would you if a billpayer) compare your own water usage to the national average graph? (Metered)



- 63% of metered customers said that they compare their own usage with that of the national average.

Q5c - If your average daily water usage was higher than the national average, would this motivate you to try reducing your water consumption? (Metered)



- 66% of metered customers said that they would be motivated to reduce their water consumption if it was higher than the national average.

Q5d - You said that you are not sure or that the information presented would not motivate you to try reducing your water consumption. Why is this? (Metered)

- The main reasons customers gave for not being motivated to reduce their water consumption were:
 - Already careful (33%)
 - Only use what I need (25%)
- Other reasons include:
 - National average meaningless/not a fair comparison (16%)
 - More information needed (7%)
 - Medical needs (3%)

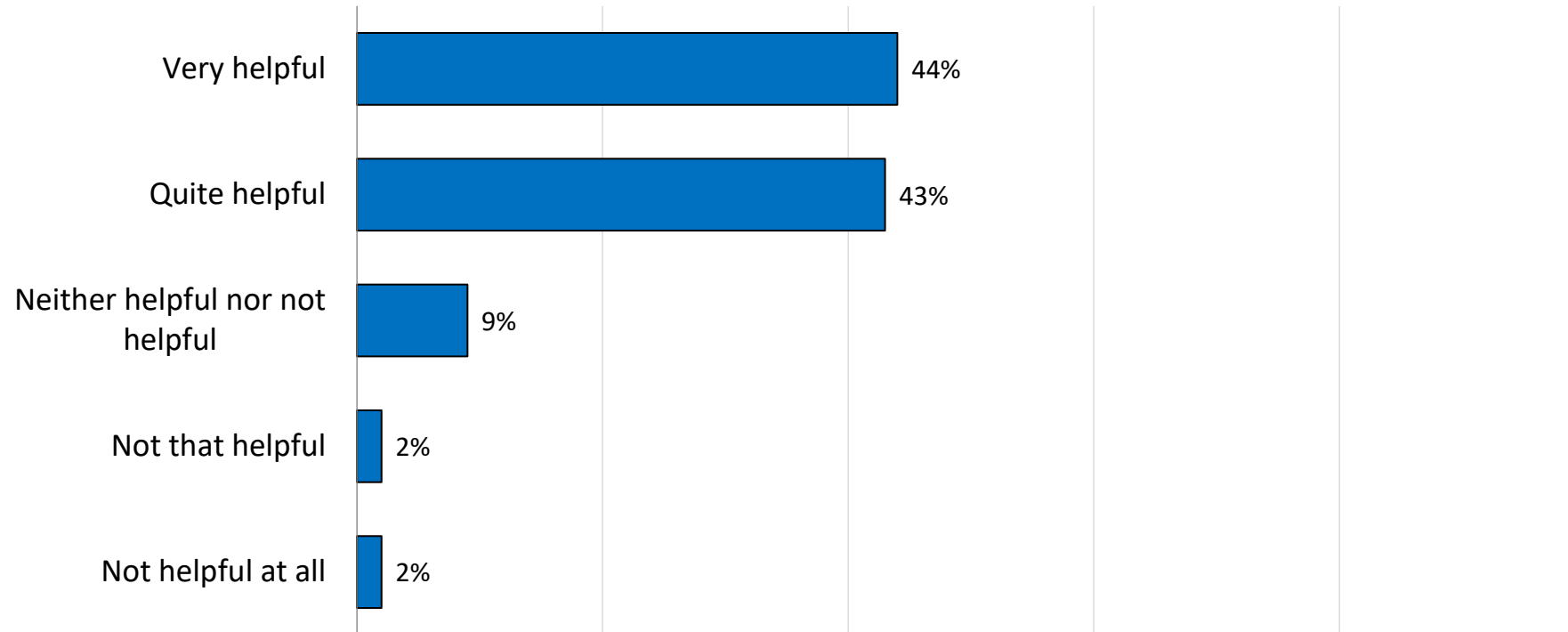
Everyone's usage is dependent on too many variables and choices to make a comparison with an average not really meaningful to me.

I use what I use. I don't waste water

we have reduced water usage to a level we are comfortable with

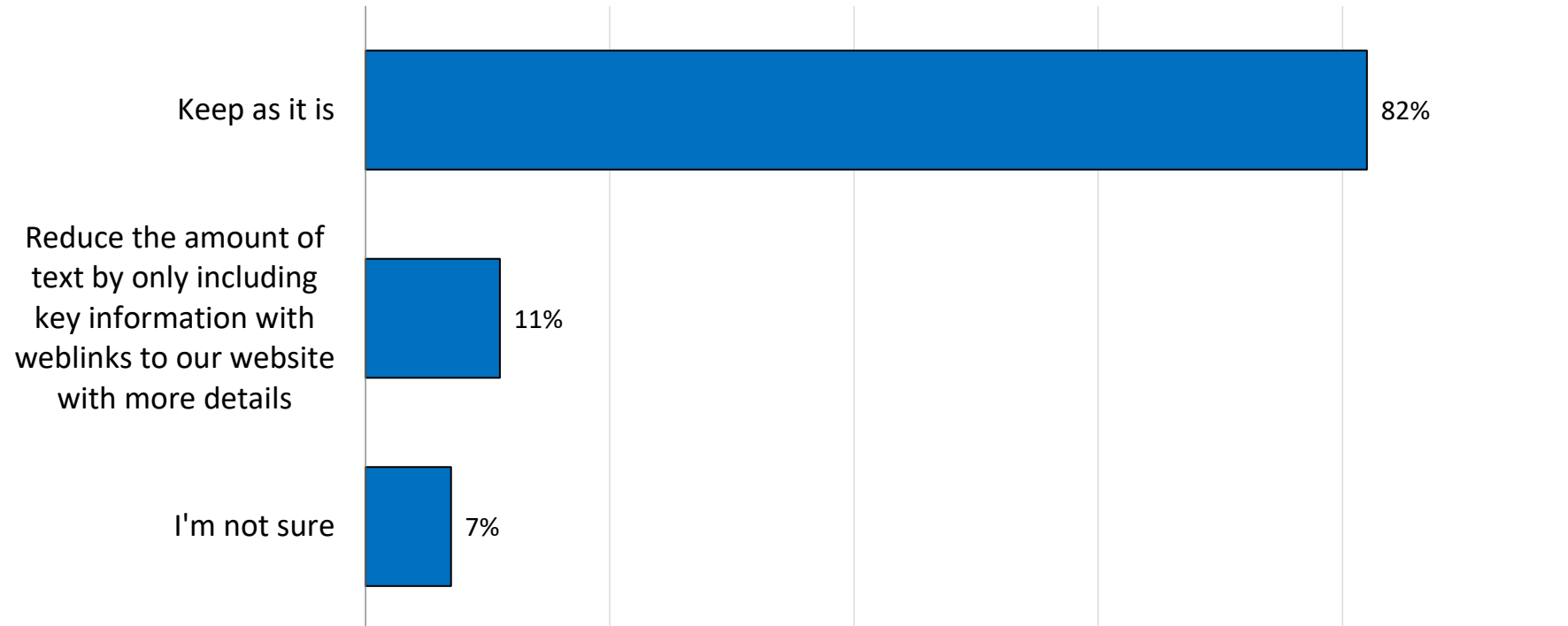
I use water as I need to but am very conscious of how much, so I don't waste it by leaving taps running unnecessarily.

Q5e - Is the information presented under the heading 'using more water than expected?' helpful? (Metered)



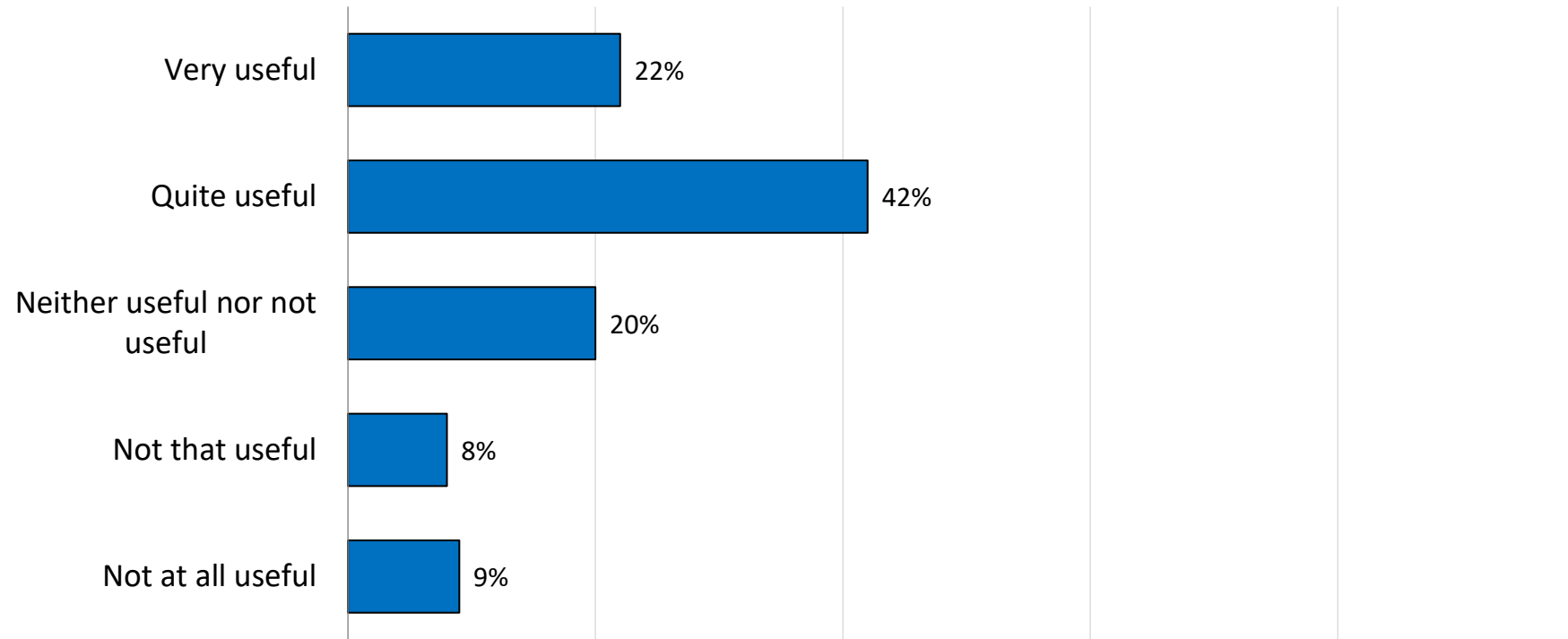
- 87% of metered customers think that the information is very/quite helpful.

Q5f - How would you prefer the text information in this section (6) to be presented? (Metered)



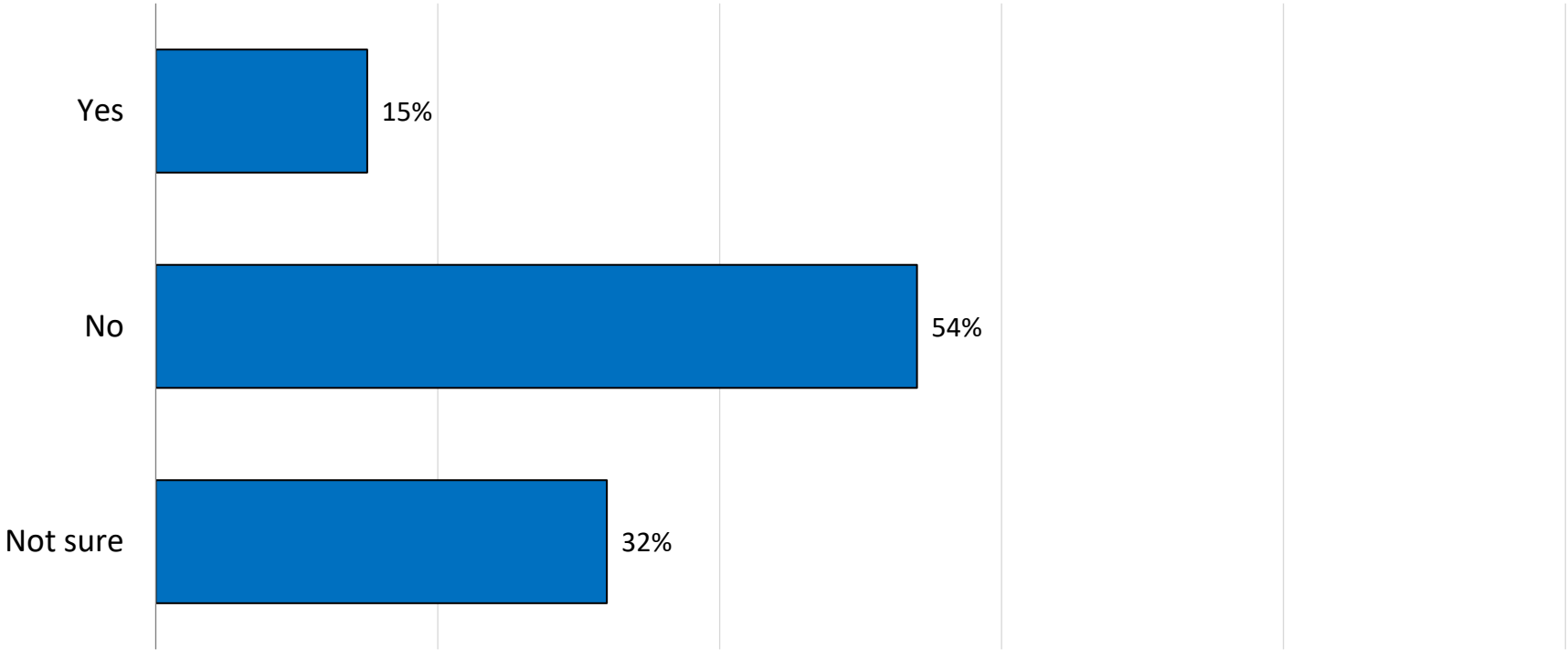
- Most metered customers (82%) feel that the information presented in this section should be kept as it is.

Q5a - In Section 6 of the bill, we share information to help you decide if you should switch to having a water meter. How useful is this information to you? (Unmetered)



- 64% of unmetered customers think that the information about switching to a water meter is very/quite useful.

Q5b - Would this information persuade you to switch to having a water meter? (Unmetered)



- Despite 64% finding the information useful, only 15% said that it would persuade them to switch to having a water meter.

Q5c - You said that you are not sure or that the information presented would not persuade you to switch to having a water meter. Why is this? (Unmetered)

- The main reasons customers gave for not being persuaded to switch to a water meter were:
 - Need more information (25%)
 - Would cost more/no benefit (21%)
- Other reasons include:
 - Don't want one/not interested (14%)
 - Not able to at property (12%)
 - Prefer fixed cost (3%)
 - Concern about paying for leaks (3%)

Even if having a water meter would lower my bill i am not interested in having one

I feel a water meter would cost us more in charges due to the amount of water used.

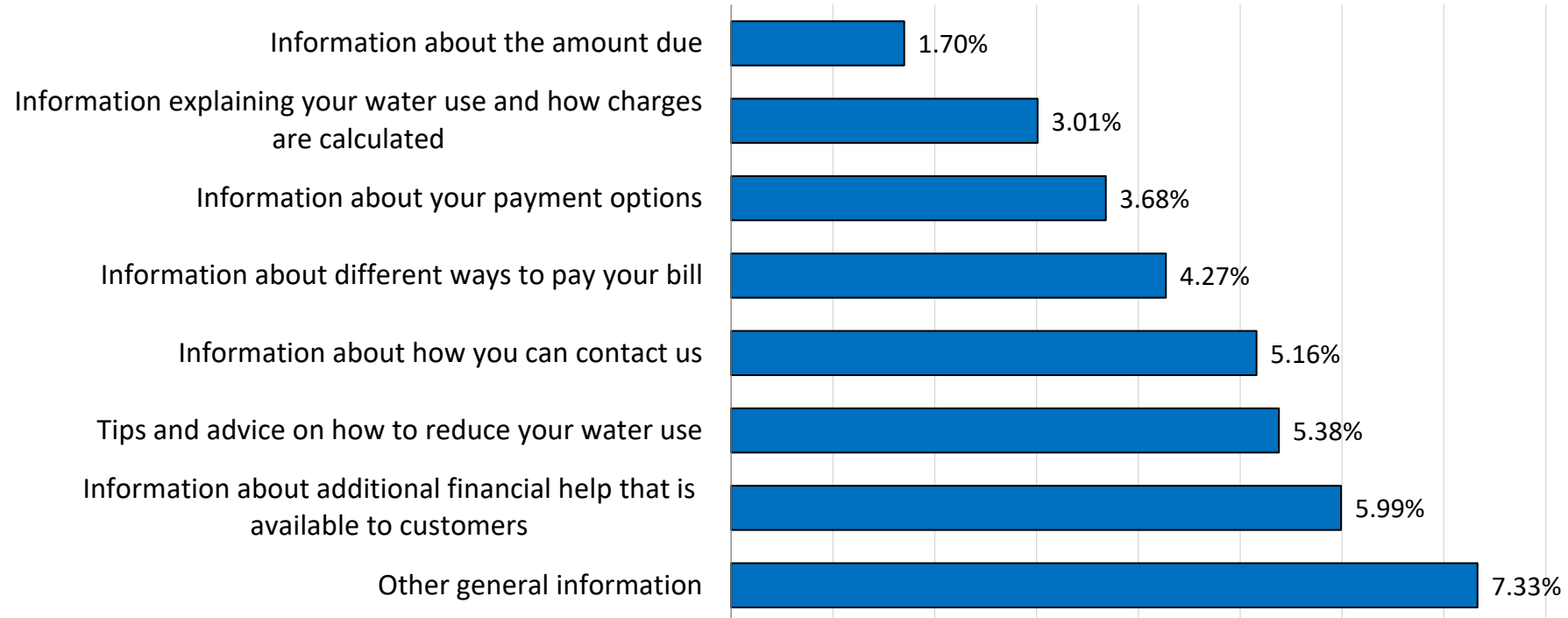
I would want further information

I had a meter in for 2 years and my bill for some reason was larger than it was before we had the meter fitted.

RANKING OF BILL SECTIONS

Q6 - Thinking about the overall layout of the bill and what information is most important to you, arrange the following sections in the order you think they should be presented on our bill (e.g., 1st = top, 8th = bottom)

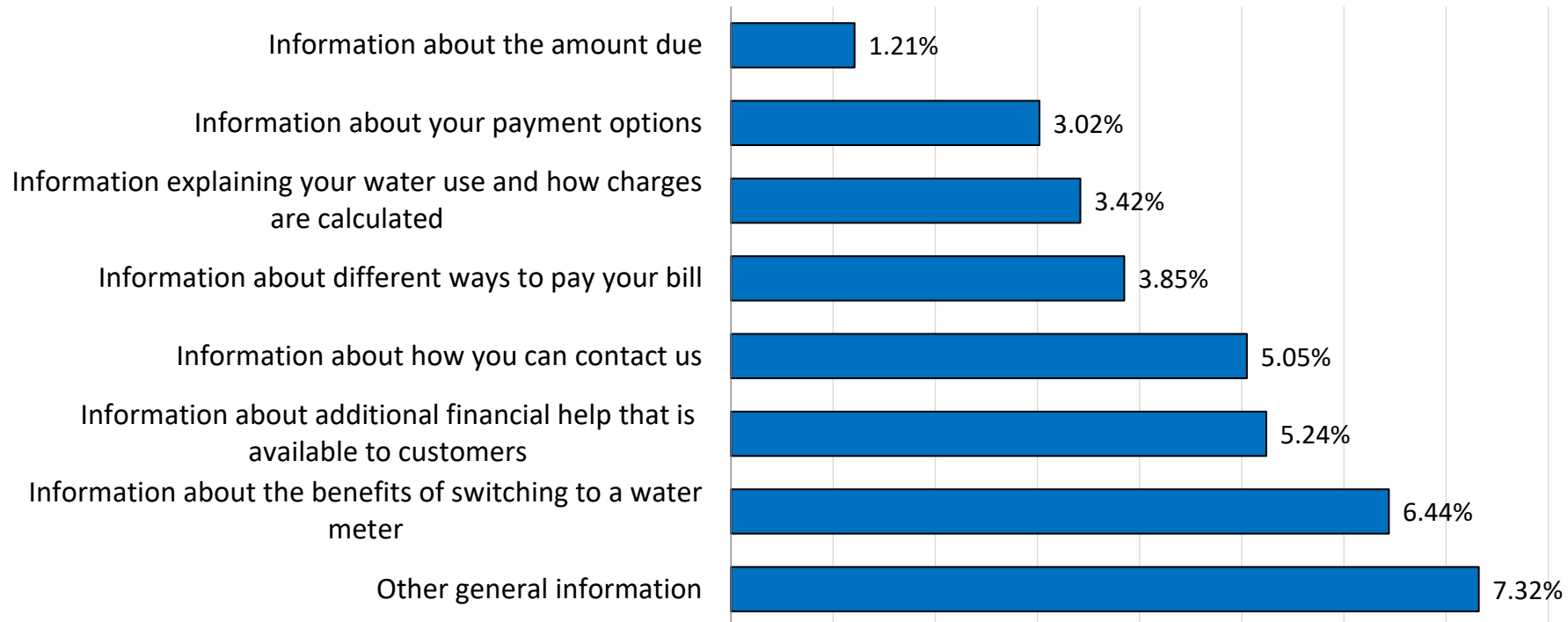
AVERAGE RANK METERED CUSTOMERS



- The above chart shows the mean ranking for each section. For metered customers, the most important is information about the amount due and the least important is other general information.

Q6 - Thinking about the overall layout of the bill and what information is most important to you, arrange the following sections in the order you think they should be presented on our bill (e.g., 1st = top, 8th = bottom)

AVERAGE RANK UNMETERED CUSTOMERS

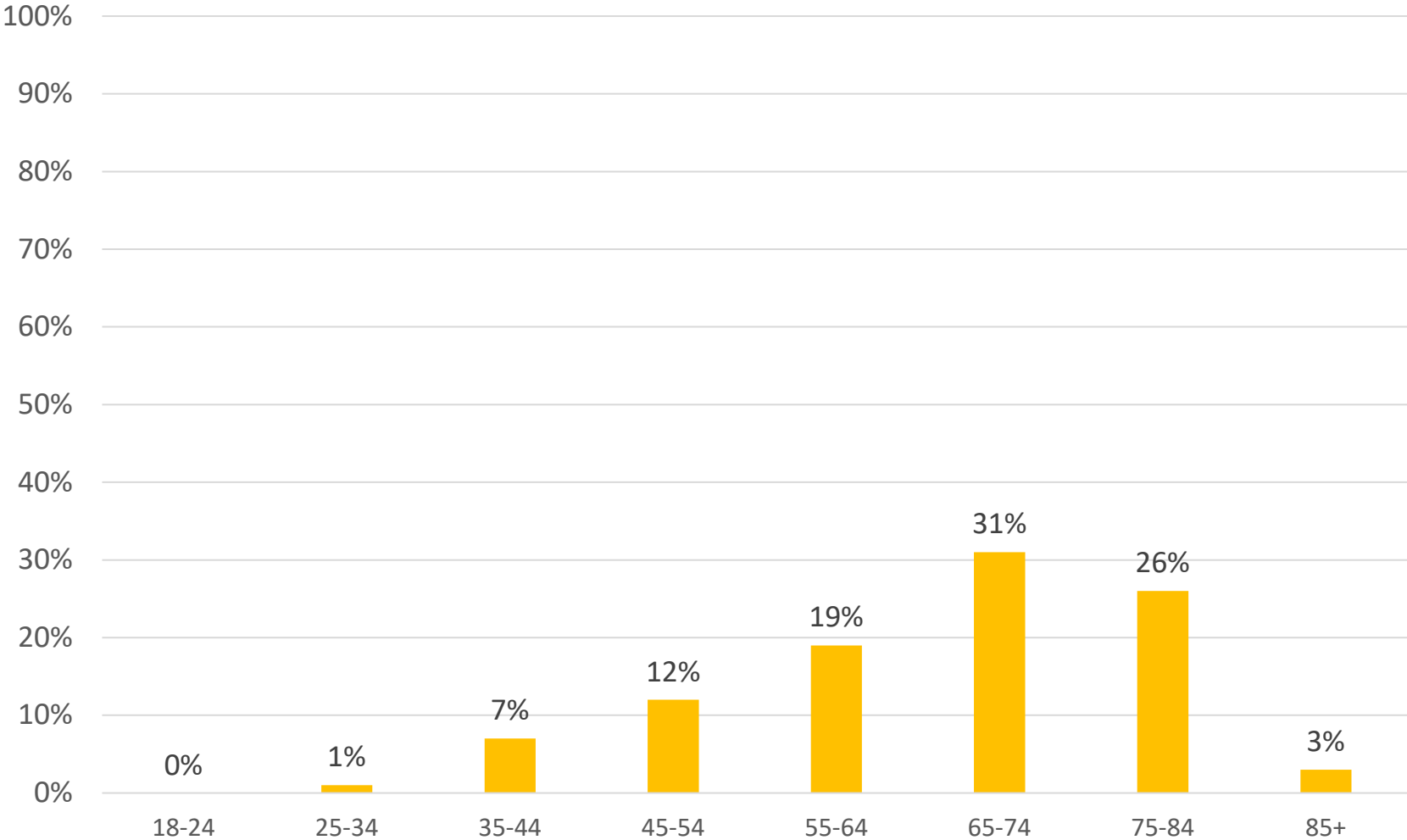


- The above chart shows the mean ranking for each section. For unmetered customers, the most important is information about the amount due and the least important is other general information. Information about the benefits of a water meter was ranked 7th on the list.

PROFILE

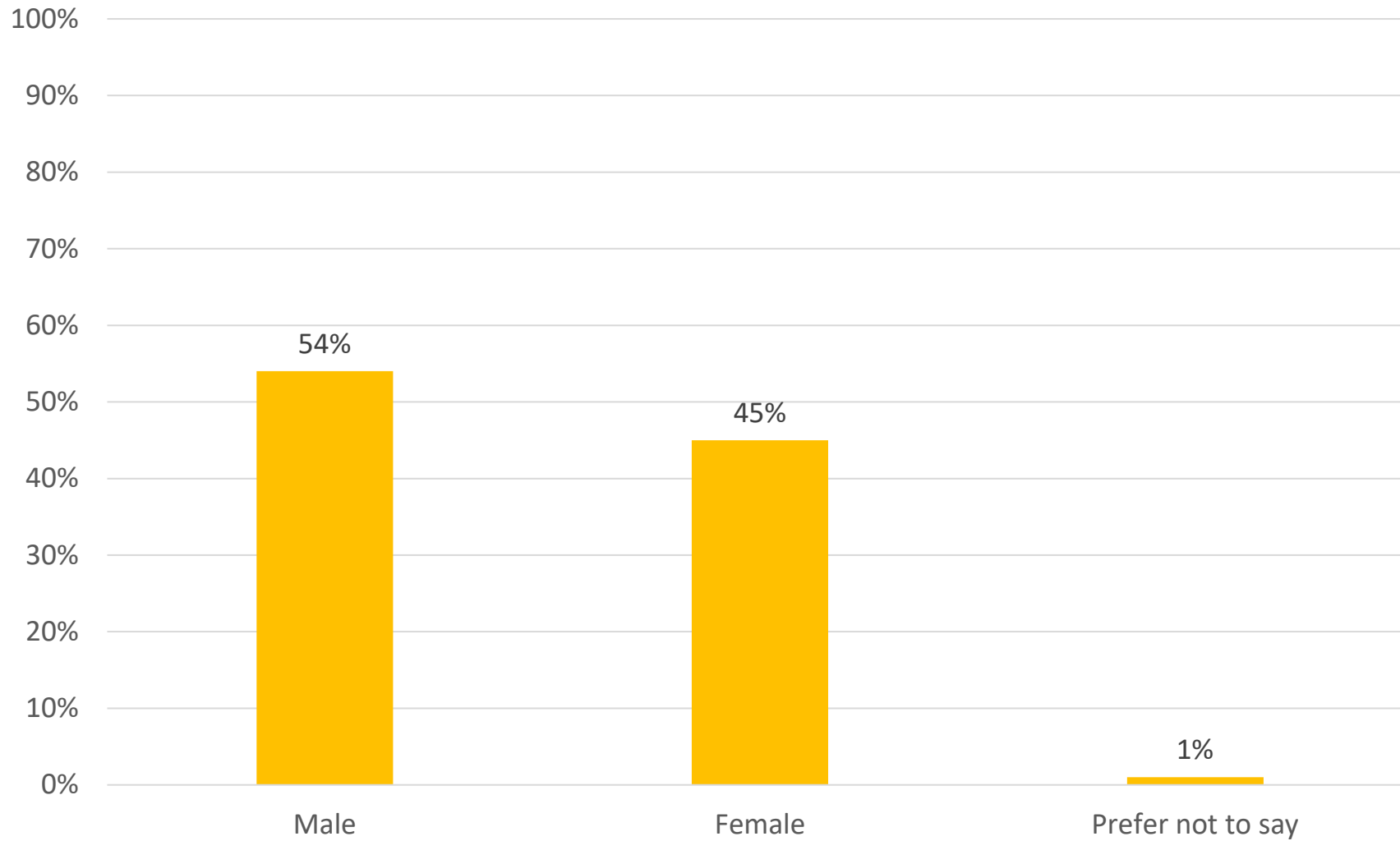
Age

% respondents



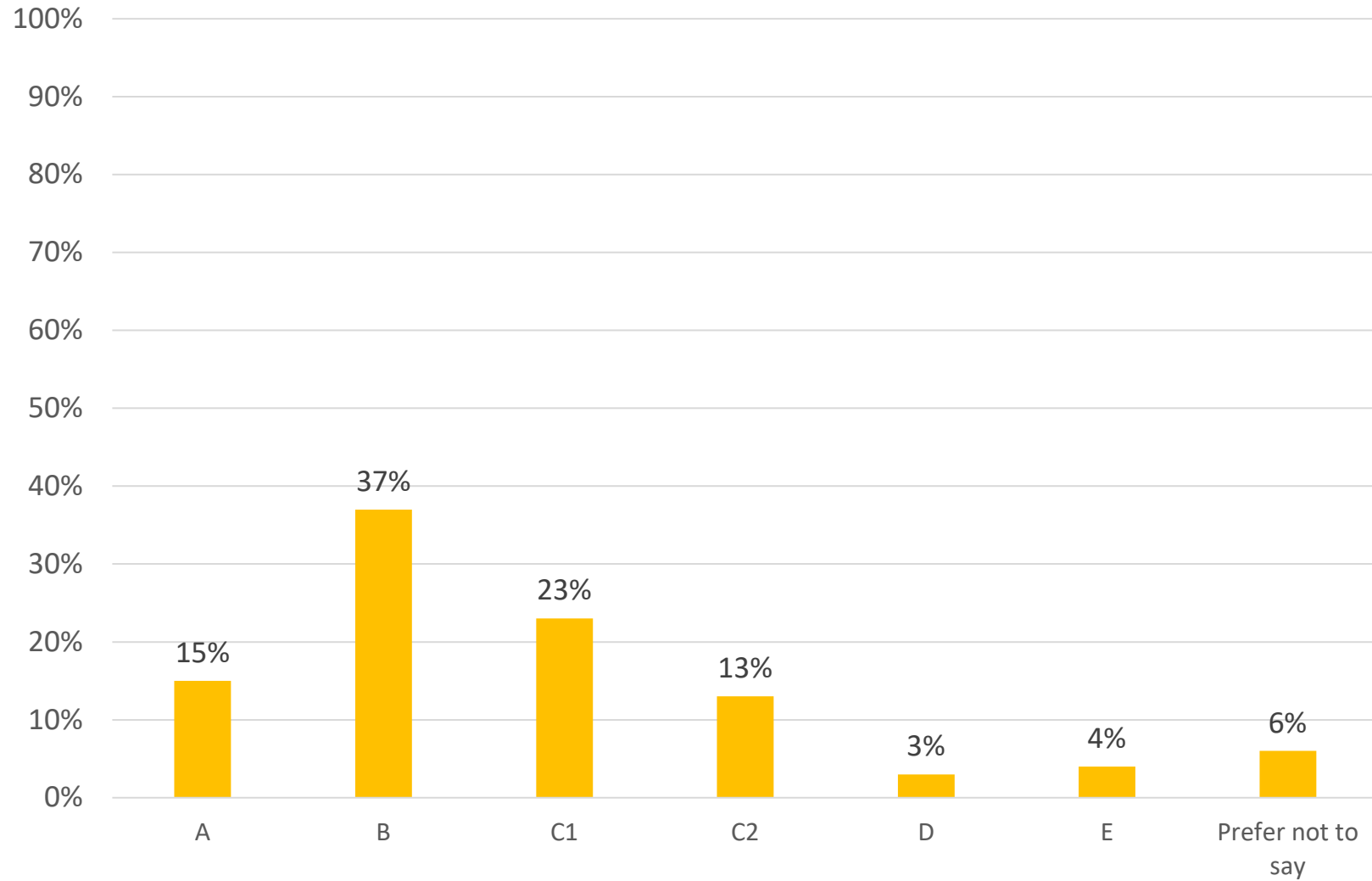
Gender

% respondents



SEG

% respondents



Summary of findings

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF BILL

- Most customers agree that:
 - the print size and colours are easy to read (81% agree strongly or slightly)
 - the layout makes it easy to understand (84 %)
 - the bill has a good visual appeal (84%)
- Very few customers agree that:
 - the layout was too crowded (20% agree strongly or slightly)
 - the bill has too much information (16%)
- Most customer think the bill is very/quite easy to understand (89%).

SECTION 1

- Most customer think that section 1 of the bill is very/quite easy to understand (92%).
- Most customers (78%) understand and gave a correct explanation of the figure labelled 'amount brought forward'.
- Most metered customer think that the abbreviations CR and DR are very/quite easy to understand (88%).

SECTION 2

- 90% of metered customers think that the payment plan is very/quite easy to understand.
- 69% of customers think that the reason for the increase in direct debits is very or quite clear.
- 22% of customers feel that this section needs to explain the reason for the increase.

Summary of findings (Cont.)

SECTION 3

- 91% of metered customers think that the graph showing daily water use is very/quite easy to understand.
- 75% of unmetered customers think that the information explaining how water and sewerage charges are calculated is very/quite useful.

SECTION 6

- 84% of metered customers think that the information about average household water use is very/quite easy to understand.
- 63% of metered customers said that they compare their own usage with that of the national average.
- 66% of metered customers said that they would be motivated to reduce their water consumption if it was higher than the national average.
- The main reasons customers gave for not being motivated to reduce their water consumption were:
 - Already careful (33%)
 - Only use what I need (25%)
- 87% of metered customers think that the information presented under the heading 'using more water than expected' is very/quite helpful.
- Most metered customers (82%) feel that the information presented in this section should be kept as it is.

Summary of findings (Cont.)

SECTION 6 (CONT.)

- 64% of unmetered customers think that the information about switching to a water meter is very/quite useful.
- Despite 64% finding the information useful, only 15% said that it would persuade them to switch to having a water meter.
- The main reasons customers gave for not being persuaded to switch to a water meter were:
 - Need more information (25%)
 - Would cost more/no benefit (21%)

RANKING OF BILL SECTIONS

- When ranking the importance of each section of the bill, the most important, for both metered and unmetered customers, is information about the amount due and the least important (again for both) is other general information.