

**Portsmouth Water Barometer Panel (Water Talk) – PULSE 6 – AUGUST 2023**

**Questionnaire Draft 31.07.23**

**INTRODUCTION: DISPLAY TO ALL**

**Welcome back to Portsmouth Water's University Water Talk!**

We hope you'll enjoy taking part in this survey, it should take around 10 minutes.

Just a reminder that when you complete today's survey, you will receive a £5 voucher as a thank you for your time.

**ASK ALL**

**QA.** Are you currently solely or jointly responsible for paying your household's water and sewerage bill?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

**ASK IF QA = 1, ELSE GO TO [INFO A](#)**

**Q1.** How much do you agree or disagree that the total water and sewerage charges that you pay are **affordable to you?** **(SC)**

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know / don't pay bill

**[ASK ALL](#)**

**Q2.** And now thinking only about the water charges that you pay; how much do you agree or disagree that these charges are **affordable to you?** **(SC)**

1. Strongly agree
2. Tend to agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know / don't pay bill

**[ASK ALL](#)**

**Q3** How much do you expect each of the following bills will change over the next 6-12 months? **(RANDOMISE ORDER OF A, B, C. SC FOR EACH)**

**A) Energy bill**

**B) Water bill**

**C) Council tax**

1. Go up a great deal
2. Go up quite a lot
3. Go up slightly
4. Stay the same

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5. Go down
6. Don't know

### INFO A: DISPLAY TO ALL:

As you may know, Portsmouth Water is one of the smaller water companies in England – especially compared to the much larger water and sewerage companies like Southern Water and Thames Water. To remind you, Portsmouth Water only supply water. They are not responsible for your sewerage services which are provided in your area by Southern Water.

### INFO 1 - DISPLAY TO ALL

This information compares Portsmouth Water with other water companies in the south of England. Portsmouth Water is the smallest of the 20 water companies operating in England. Thames Water is the largest. South East Water and Southern Water provide medium-sized comparisons.

	Water only companies		Water and sewerage companies	
				
Number of customers	740,000	2.2 million	2.6 million	15 million
Number of staff	262	950	2,092	7,086
Income	£45.4m	£250m	£823m	£2.1bn

### ASK ALL:

**Q4.** Do you think there are any advantages to being served by a smaller company? **SC**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

### ASK IF Q4=1, ELSE GO TO Q7

**Q5.** What do you see as the main advantage? **SC**

1. Smaller companies offer better customer service
2. Smaller companies offer a better response to service issues such as leaks and bursts
3. Smaller companies are more innovative
4. Smaller companies are more likely to have a local presence (community schemes, schools programme)
5. Smaller companies are more likely to support local charities / debt agencies etc.
6. Smaller companies are more accountable
7. Smaller companies are more accessible
8. Smaller companies are more likely to use local businesses/contractors
9. Smaller companies offer wider benefits e.g. social value activities
10. Other, specify

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11. Don't know

**ASK IF Q5≠11, ELSE GO TO Q7**

**Q6.** What **other advantages** do you see of being served by a smaller company?

1. Smaller companies offer better customer service
2. Smaller companies offer a better response to service issues such as leaks and bursts
3. Smaller companies are more innovative
4. Smaller companies are more likely to have a local presence (community schemes, schools programme)
5. Smaller companies are more likely to support local charities / debt agencies etc.
6. Smaller companies are more accountable
7. Smaller companies are more accessible
8. Smaller companies are more likely to use local businesses/contractors
9. Smaller companies offer wider benefits e.g. social value activities
10. Other, specify
11. No other advantages

**ASK ALL:**

**Q7.** Do you think there are any disadvantages to being served by a smaller company?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

**ASK IF Q7=1, ELSE GO TO 'INFO 1'**

**Q8.** What do you see as **the main disadvantage?** SC

1. Smaller companies offer worse customer service
2. Smaller companies offer a worse response to service issues such as leaks and bursts
3. Smaller companies are less innovative
4. Smaller companies are less likely to have a local presence (community schemes, schools programme)
5. Smaller companies are less likely to support local charities / debt agencies etc.
6. Smaller companies are less accountable
7. Smaller companies are less accessible
8. Smaller companies are less likely to use local businesses/contractors
9. Smaller companies don't offer wider benefits e.g. social value activities
10. Other, specify
11. Don't know

**ASK IF Q8≠11, ELSE GO TO 'INFO 2'**

**Q9.** What **other disadvantages** do you see of being served by a smaller company?

1. Smaller companies offer worse customer service
2. Smaller companies offer a worse response to service issues such as leaks and bursts
3. Smaller companies are less innovative
4. Smaller companies are less likely to have a local presence (community schemes, schools programme)
5. Smaller companies are less likely to support local charities / debt agencies etc.
6. Smaller companies are less accountable
7. Smaller companies are less accessible
8. Smaller companies are less likely to use local businesses/contractors
9. Smaller companies don't offer wider benefits e.g. social value activities





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- 10. Other, specify
- 11. No other advantages

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### INFO 2 - DISPLAY TO ALL

The following information shows how Portsmouth Water performs against its neighbouring companies. All these performance measures are gathered and published by the water regulator Ofwat.

	Water only companies		Water and sewerage companies	
				
<b>Number of customers</b>	740,000	2.2 million	2.6 million	15 million
<b>Average water-only bill</b> <small>(2023-4)</small>	£117	£242	£186	£258
<b>Customer satisfaction score</b> <small>(2021-2)</small>	84%	77%	72%	69%
<b>Litres leaked per property per day</b> <small>(2021-22)</small>	77 litres	96 litres	83 litres	152 litres
<b>Number of customer contacts about appearance of tap water</b> <small>(2021)</small>	1.7 per 10,000 customers	9.8 per 10,000 customers	8.1 per 10,000 customers	2.6 per 10,000 customers

**INFO 3 - DISPLAY TO ALL**

**Commented [ML1]:** highlighted table indicating size and profit vs other water companies

Before we continue, please read the following information:

Portsmouth Water believes that being smaller means they can provide you with a better level of service by responding to issues more quickly and tailoring their services to the local community. They are also more likely to employ people from the local areas and buy goods and services from other local businesses.

However, being a smaller company means that companies like Portsmouth Water do not have the same purchasing power as larger water companies and lenders can view smaller companies as riskier. In the same way that you can often borrow larger sums of money (think of personal loans for example) at lower rates of interest, larger water companies are able to borrow the larger amounts of money they require at lower rates of interest than say Portsmouth Water can.

It means that your current bills from Portsmouth Water are a bit higher because of these borrowing costs. The impact of these higher costs on the current average bill is estimated to be about £0.87 per household per year on the 2022/23 average bill of £112.90. This is already included in your bills.

It is called a **small company premium**.

As you may know, Portsmouth Water is currently working on its business plan for the period 2025 to 2030. This plan will determine how your bills will change over that period and the plan will have to be agreed by the water regulator Ofwat during 2024.

As part of this process the regulator, Ofwat, assesses the extra amount that Portsmouth Water is allowed to charge customers to borrow the money needed for its operations and future plans.

As part of this process, Portsmouth Water must ask customers if they support paying the extra amount which is effectively a premium for being served by a smaller water company.

**ASK ALL**

**Q10.** Portsmouth water estimates that the small company premium for the period 2025 – 2030 will add £1.08 per year to an average water bill. How acceptable is this figure for you? **(SC)**

1. Completely acceptable
2. Acceptable
3. Unacceptable
4. Completely unacceptable
5. Don't know/can't say

**ASK IF Q10=1 OR 2**

**Q11.** And what if the small company premium would add £1.61 per year to an average water bill. How acceptable would that figure be? **(SC)**

1. Completely acceptable
2. Acceptable
3. Unacceptable
4. Completely unacceptable
5. Don't know/can't say

**ASK IF Q10=3 OR 4 OR 5**

**Q12.** And what if the small company premium would add £0.54 per year to an average water bill. How acceptable would that figure be? **(SC)**

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1. Completely acceptable
2. Acceptable
3. Unacceptable
4. Completely unacceptable
5. Don't know/can't say

**ASK ALL**

**Q13.** If this small company premium was removed from bills through, for example, Portsmouth Water being merged or taken over by a larger company do you think you would end up better off or worse off?

1. Much better off
2. A bit better off
3. Neither better nor worse off
4. A bit worse off
5. A lot worse off
6. Don't know/can't say

**ASK IF Q13=1 OR 2:**

**Q14.** Why do you say you would be better off?

**OPEN END**

**ASK IF Q13=4 OR 5:**

**Q15.** Why do you say you would be worse off?

**OPEN END**

**INFO 4 - SHOW ALL**

**THANK YOU, THAT'S ALL OUR QUESTIONS FOR TODAY. IF YOU HAVE ANY OTHER THOUGHTS YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE ABOUT THE DETAILS OF THE PLAN WE HAVE SHOWED YOU, PLEASE WRITE IN THE BOX BELOW, OTHERWISE, PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU CLICK THE 'SUBMIT' BUTTON BELOW TO RECORD YOUR ANSWERS. YOU WILL THEN BE ENTERED INTO THE PRIZE DRAW**

**SUBMIT ANSWERS**