



BRISTOL  
WATER



Future**Focus**Research  
Innovation and Insight



# Annual Stakeholder Survey

2023

It's what we're made of.

## Survey Objectives

The main objectives of the survey were:

- To explore, monitor and benchmark attitudes and opinions of key influencers.
- To identify which factors are having the greatest impact on their perceptions of Bristol Water.

## Executive Summary

- We were provided with a stakeholder list of 69 potential contacts. 21 of the list were either undelivered or no longer in post/not relevant which meant that 48 were eligible contacts.
- We were able to complete interviews with 22 of these stakeholders during April and May 2022, a response rate of 46% of eligible contacts.
- There has been a continuing improvement in stakeholder satisfaction with the four main performance indicators improving from 2022, except for *doing business with* which fell slightly.
- With regards to the other performance measures, Bristol Water have maintained its score of 100% very good/good for *reliable supply and water quality*, however *being a local company, management, customer service* and *looking after the environment* have all seen a decrease since 2022.

## Performance Indicator results

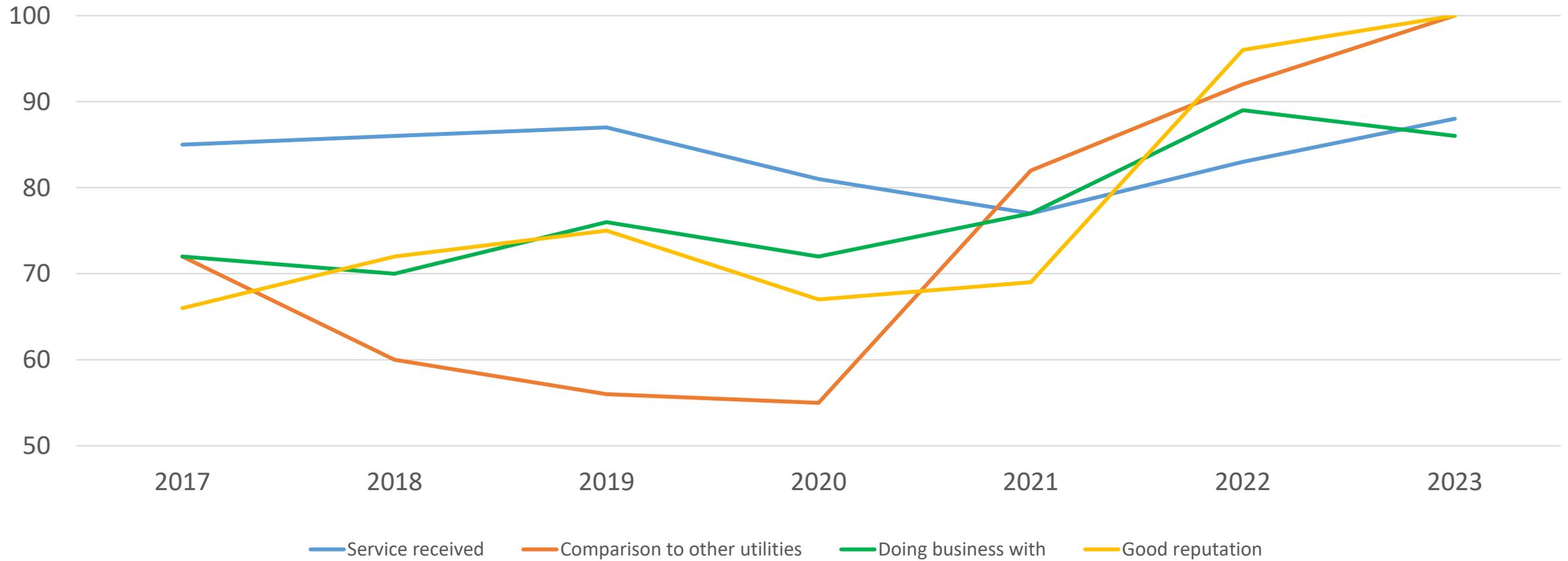
Main Performance indicator	Scale used	Total 2017	Total 2018	Total 2019	Total 2020	Total 2021	Total 2022	Total 2023
Service received	Very good + good	85%	86%	87%	81%	77%	83%	88%
Comparison other utilities	Very well + quite well	72%	60%	56%	55%	82%	88%	100%
Doing business with	Very good + good	72%	70%	76%	72%	77%	92%	86%
Good reputation	Agree strongly + agree slightly	66%	72%	75%	67%	69%	96%	100%

Other Performance Measures	Scale used	Total 2017	Total 2018	Total 2019	Total 2020	Total 2021	Total 2022	Total 2023
Reliable Supply	Very good + good	91%	93%	97%	99%	94%	100%	100%
Water Quality	Very good + good	83%	90%	95%	98%	100%	100%	100%
Being a local company	Very good + good	64%	83%	86%	87%	77%	88%	83%
Customer Service	Very good + good	64%	58%	67%	54%	75%	90%	75%
Management	Very good + good	54%	56%	50%	34%	81%	80%	71%
Looking after the environment	Very good + good	52%	62%	67%	49%	78%	92%	78%

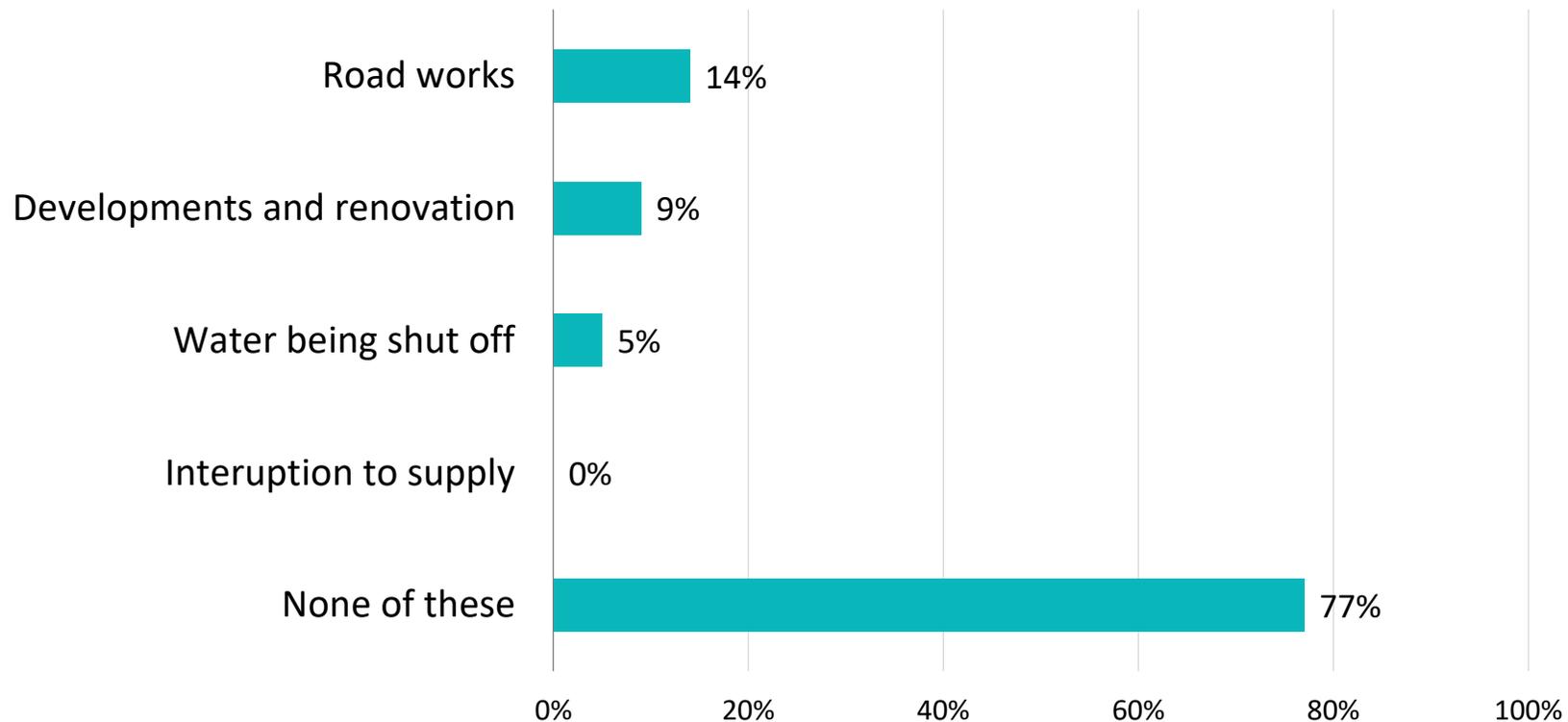


BRISTOL  
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## 5-year trend



## Q2 Has Bristol Water's work affected you in any of the following ways over the last year?



- 77% of respondents had not been affected by any work conducted by Bristol Water (76% in 2022)
- 14% had been affected by road works in the last year (17% in 2022, 22% in 2021)
- 9% have been affected by developments and renovation (0% in 2022) and 5% by water being shut off (7% in 2022)

## Q3 How did Bristol Water Perform in relation to each of the following (if affected)

- Road works

*“Generally they are on the up but there are overruns (on street works) which are preventable. However the overruns have reduced significantly over the last two years. I do appreciate the improvements which have been made are they are amongst the very best utilities we work with for engagement and willingness to communicate and receptiveness to change in terms of the management of their street works.”* (Bristol City Council)

*“Bristol Water are working even better with us this year in street works. I now get notified of any emergency works straight away. They are our biggest customer but also the best performing in terms of street work permits.”* (South Gloucestershire Council)

*“We were told about it and were given advanced notice.”* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

- Water being shut off

*“We are aware that the past year has been difficult with numerous serious bursts and leaks and we have relaxed our definition of a leak to help the company to respond as quickly as possible to these emergencies.”* (Bristol City Council)

## Q3 How did Bristol Water perform in relation to each of the following (if affected) ?

- Development and renovations

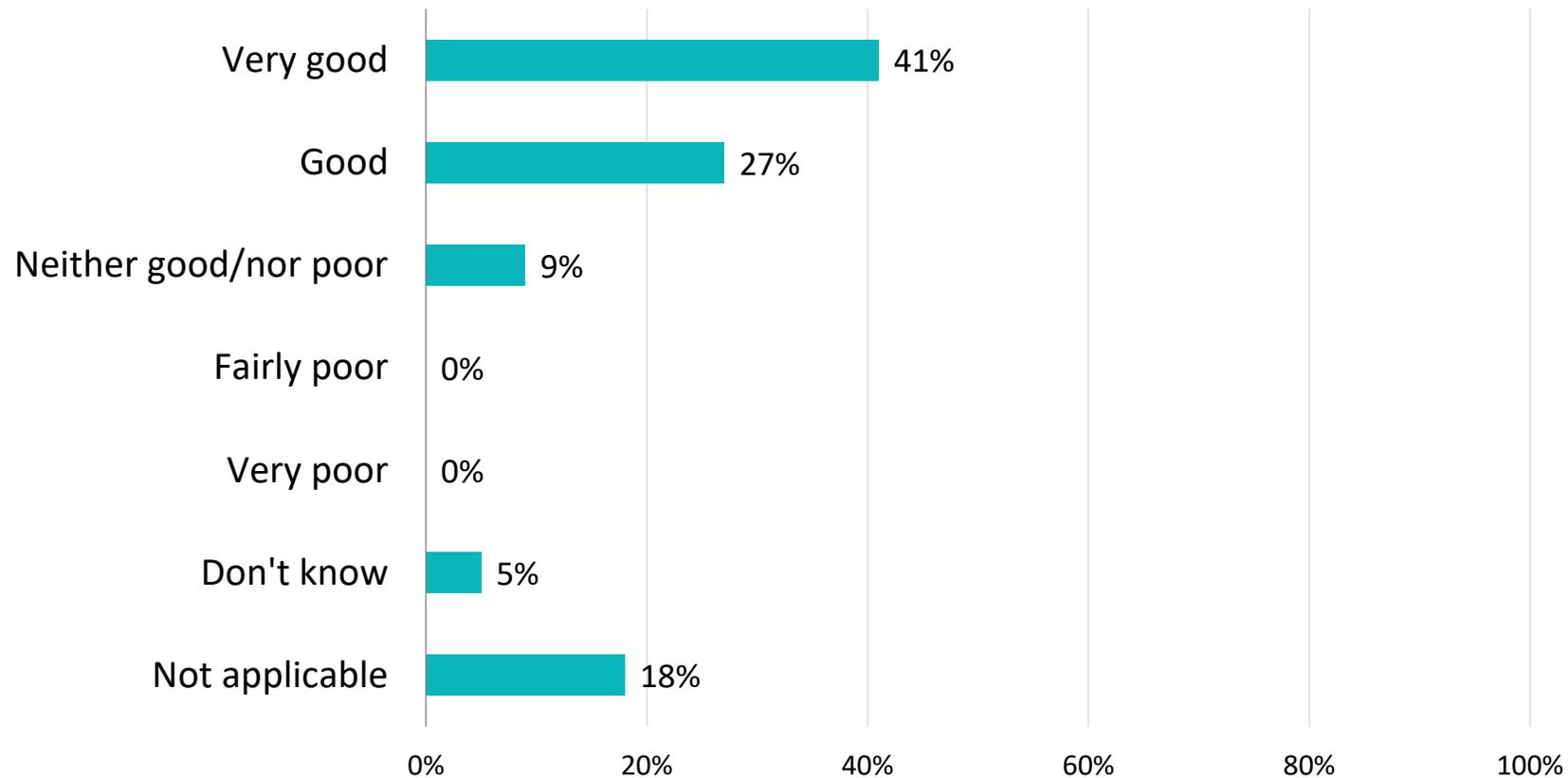
*"Many in the village feel very positive about the new lakeside path but we had to fight quite hard to get agreement to the idea of link with paths and lanes coming from the village." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"I love the new play areas and the tea shop. The new path is a great bonus. I love the way they protect the wetlands at the lake for the ducks and birds. I think its brilliant the way they keep the public out of these areas." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

*"We see that Bristol Water are proactive in protecting the water environment. They have recently targeted investment at improving water quality and we welcome that but we would also like to see discussions with farmers about opportunities for multi -use storage or rainwater harvesting projects." (National Farmers Union)*

*"A new development this year is in terms of emergency works. They have to notify us within two hours if there is a problem but now, they tend to notify us before they go out on site. Previously we wouldn't find out there was a problem until a member of the public rang in but now we get involved at an earlier stage and they ask us what we want them to do e.g. shut the road, use temporary traffic lights etc." (South Gloucestershire Council)*

## Q4 How would you rate the service you receive from Bristol Water?



- 68% regard the service that they receive from Bristol Water as very good or good (63% in 2022).
- Excluding the don't know and not applicable responses from the base, this rose to 88% (83% in 2022). This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

## Q4 How would you rate the service you receive from Bristol Water?

- There was again recognition that Bristol Water deliver their core services of providing water extremely well, but also recognition that partnerships are strong and working well.
- Their communication and responsiveness were praised and where there were areas of improvement suggested, these were mainly to do with lack of interaction, communication and decision making, and some issues relating to the takeover.

## Q4 Quotes

*"Bristol Water are one of the best companies we work with. I have worked with them now for nearly 25 years and the relationships are strong and the communications good. Their support to indebted clients is second to none."* (Bristol CAB)

*"It is a good relationship and I am grateful for the changes they have made and will make. I canvassed my team just before this interview as they have much more contact with Bristol Water than I do and they say that generally working relationships are good."* (Bristol City Council)

*"We get very good support from them. There is nothing they could do better."* (Unattributed)

## Q4 Quotes (Cont.)

*"To be fair, amongst all the companies we work with they are the most helpful, responsive and lenient. They are quick to act which is vital to our clients. We do an online form and generally get an immediate response."* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"They keep on plodding along doing the right thing. Even when their systems are down they contact us to let us know."* (South Gloucestershire Council)

*"Bristol Water has worked well with partners on catchment management initiatives for a number of years."* (National Farmers Union)

*"As a custodian of the environment they have both good intentions and mostly good practice."* (Wessex Ecology Consultancy)

*"There is a very close working relationship with Bristol Water each year on the Glastonbury Festival site."* (Mendip District Council)

*"Overall, it works really well. They are very good with what is in their control. They are always looking to improve. However, budget is always an issues. We need to work on relationship building so you know each other better for events and emergencies. We are working with them now on this."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"In the lake their wildlife control is amazing, they let the hedges grow but on the outside it is terrible. They cut the verges right up to the hedges and cut the hedges right back."* ( Baths &NE Somerset Climate Forum)

## Q4 Quotes (Cont.)

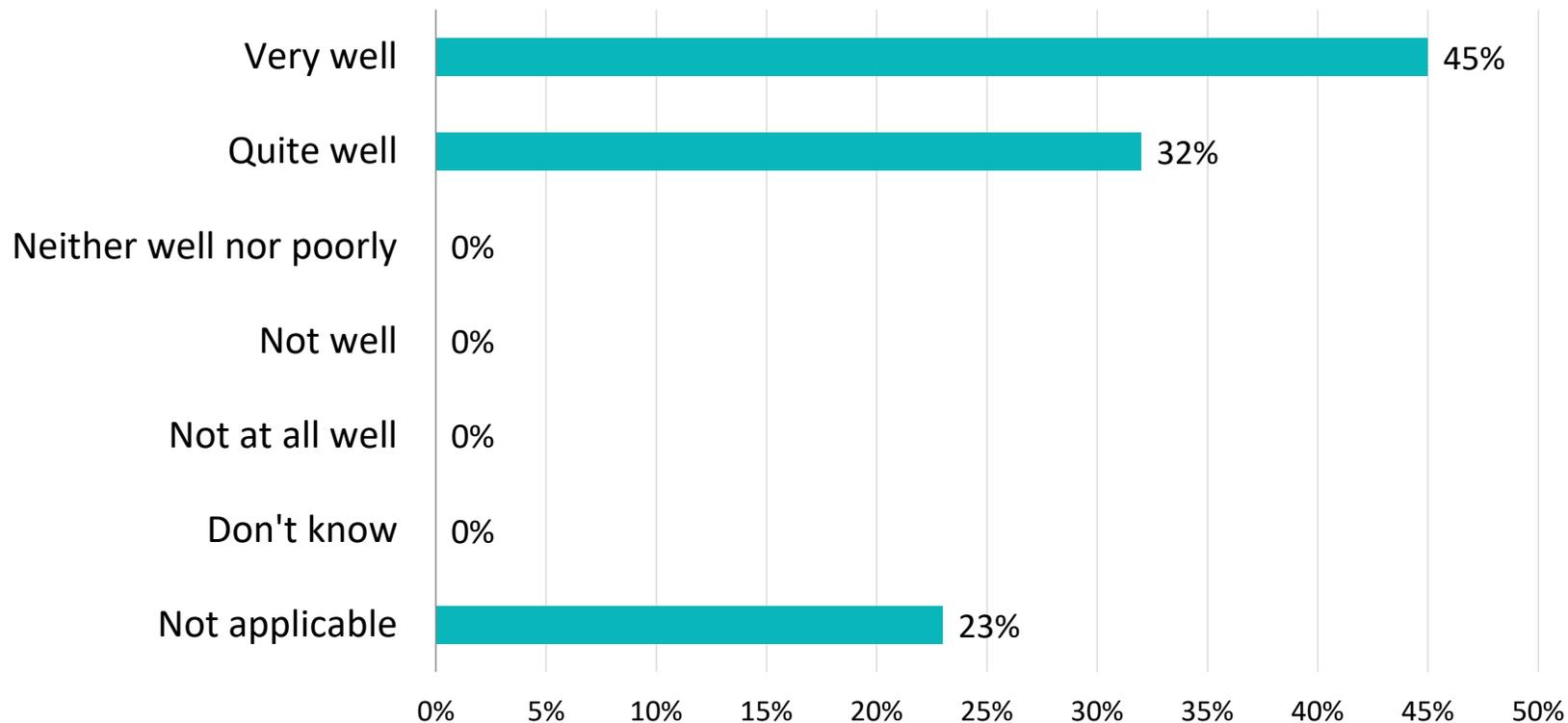
*"They are one of the main landowners in the parish. They should be an integral part of our community, but we have little interaction with them." ( Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"We have had less interaction with them this year, but some things have been done but some remain outstanding like the lease for the Island Garden." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"It has been brought to our attention that they have installed some new water refill fountains without the Refill logo on and they've not spoken with us about it and are no longer paying to work with us, so it's a little unexpected. We have tried to reach out, but no one has responded as yet..." (City to Sea)*

*"Since the takeover it's been difficult to know who is doing what. They are not through the restructure yet and there are delays in turnaround." (Wessex Water)*

## Q5 How would you compare the service Bristol Water provide with the service you receive from other utilities?



- 77% felt that Bristol Water compared very well or quite well to other utility providers (77% in 2022).
- Excluding the don't know and not applicable responses from the base, this rose to 100% (88% in 2021). This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

## Q5 How would you compare the service Bristol Water provide with the service you receive from other utilities?

- For many, Bristol Water were viewed as providing a better service than other utilities. A minority, felt that they were the same as others they dealt with, or that they had a slightly better relationship or more interaction with others.

### Q5 Quotes

*"With Bristol Water we get a quick response. This compares very well to other utilities. I was on the phone with one company for an hour the other day and then the line went dead and I had to email."* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"Since the crisis of 2019 they have been one of the top two utilities we work with."* (Bristol City Council)

*"One of the best companies in terms of support to customers and the best utility."* (Bristol CAB)

*"Their approach is quite different to other companies. One in particular just turns up, closes the road, diverts the traffic and then claims it is an emergency. This is not what Bristol Water do. They work with us and there is mutual respect for the jobs we all have to do."* (South Gloucestershire Council)

## Q5 Quotes (Cont.)

*"I have very good engagement with staff at Bristol Water in both my roles and they are as good as any other partner we work with." (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)*

*"We have a stronger relationship with Bristol Water due to more incidents. They are the best one of them all." (Avon Fire and Rescue)*

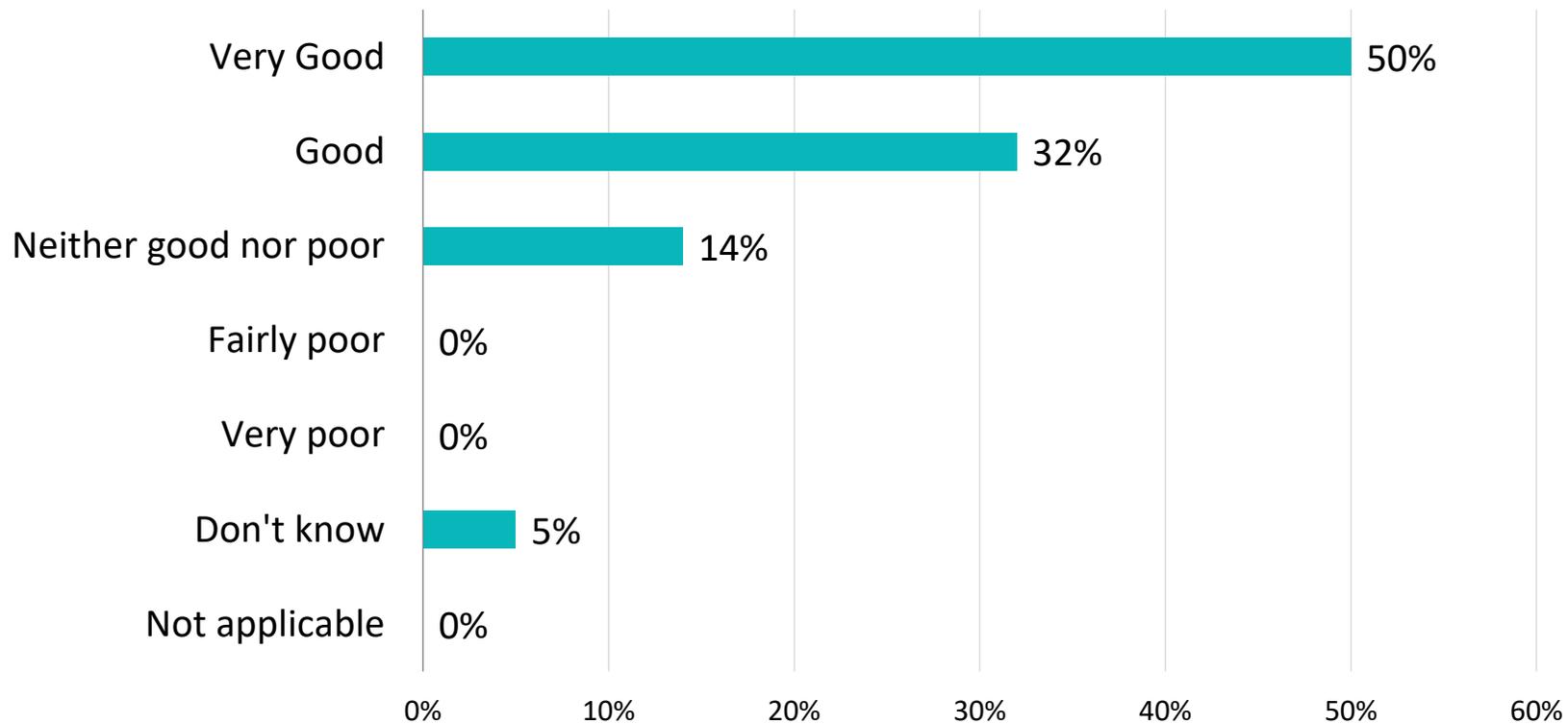
*"They are very supportive, and we work well together." (Unattributed)*

*"We are slightly less engaged with Bristol Water but it's not really an issues." (CBI)*

*"They are a giant company and own a lot of land in the parish. I think they could be a lot more community minded like another company who operate in the area and have made several donations. We do however appreciate the pepper corn rent arrangement for the Island Garden." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"Its difficult to say yet as we are working with different people." (Wessex Water)*

## Q6 What is Bristol Water like to do business with?



- 82% felt that Bristol Water is good or very good to do business with (80% in 2022)
- Excluding the don't know and not applicable responses from the base, this rose to 86% (92% in 2022)

## Q6 What is Bristol Water like to do business with? What could they do better?

- The comments confirmed that Bristol Water are a very good/good company to do business with. However, where suggestions for improvement were given, this mainly centred around communication issues.

### Q6 Quotes

*"I have only experience of the company performing well. I think the staff are professional and hard working. I have no suggestions for how they can improve as a business." (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)*

*"There is a close working relationship with the Council." (Mendip District Council)*

*"I am very positive about the company and how they work with us and our clients. That's why I want to be on the Challenge Panel sub-group to make sure things don't change after the merger." (South Bristol Advice Centre)*

*"Bristol Water are good all round. Consistency of personnel you are dealing with is the key to this. We don't want this to change." (South Gloucestershire Council)*

## Q6 Quotes (Cont.)

*"CAB's relationship with Bristol and Wessex Water is long standing and based on good communication. We can talk to someone who knows what they are talking about and have some discretion to make decisions. The Customer Services team are very quick to respond and know that they can make decisions. The funding provided jointly by Bristol Water, Wessex Water and the joint billing company is measured via the numbers of people moved onto social tariffs. At the moment the cost-of-living crisis is making it hard to get people to engage so we do lose out as it is very rare that people present with issues about their water bill alone. It is usually just a part of a wider set of problems. There is extra funding available for hard-to-reach clients, but CAB doesn't have the horsepower to take part in this."* (Bristol CAB)

*"We meet with them quarterly and they take actions back to work on. Generally, the issues are taken on board but there are things they could do to reduce overruns such as plotting the footprint of the works accurately on the street work permit and responding to requests for information with something more than a holding email."* (Bristol City Council)

*"I have always found them very professional, and they make a positive contribution to the Local Resilience Forum."* (SW Ambulance Service )

*" We have a good partnership. They are doing a fantastic job. They have given us good support with the water bowsers."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

## Q6 Quotes (Cont.)

*"They are very good, but maybe more staff resource and capacity. They are committed to delivering and are being very ambitious but they need to match with resources." (Unattributed)*

*"They are communicative, timely, they share relevant information, they are knowledgeable, and they have expertise in their area. I don't think there is anything they can do better." (CBI)*

*"They have withdrawn more and more. They are a major landowner but are absent from the Cheddar Vision discussions and other community initiatives. We are not asking for more money just someone's time and a commitment to be a bit more neighbourly. Could we meet someone during the working day if they don't want to attend our evening meetings?" (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"Our relationship is very transactional and often topic based with one person within the company at a time. We would welcome a commitment to attend a Parish Council meeting and begin a dialogue about a series of possible joint initiatives. Perhaps we could have one point of contact within the company who will understand our issues and be able to point us in the right direction." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"We have contacted them about a number of ideas and projects. One of them is the how they cut the hedges but all you get is warm words and no action. I don't know if this is due to the size of the company or that they are just trying to appease people and keep everyone happy." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

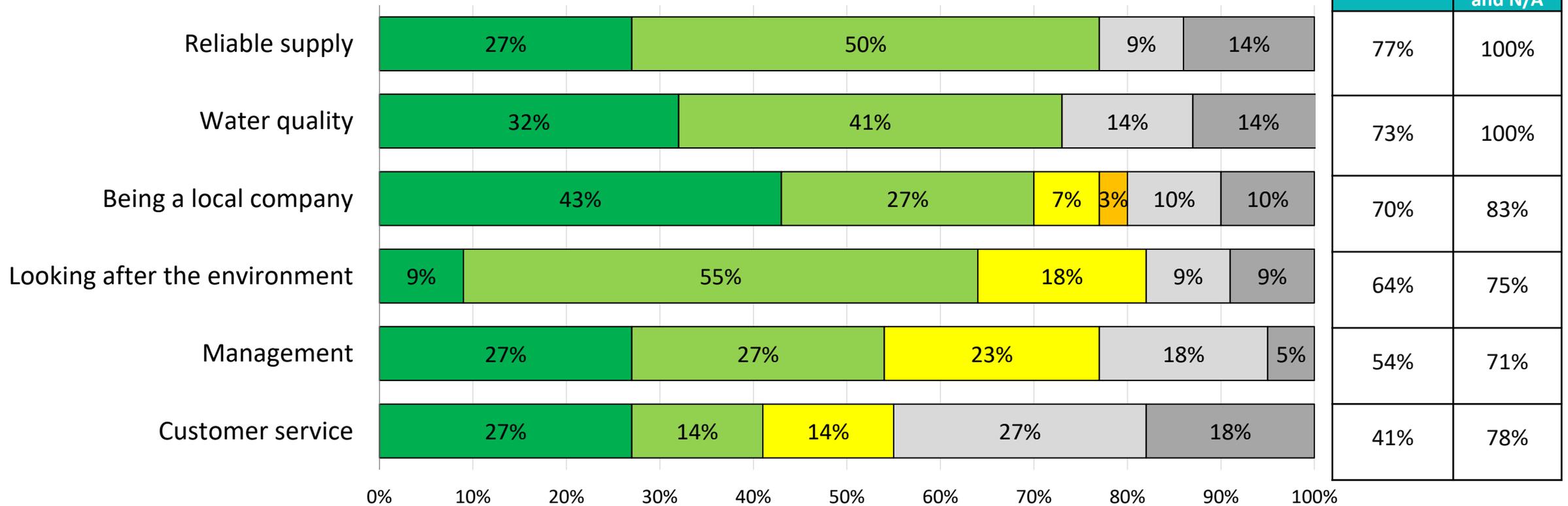
## Q6 Quotes (Cont.)

*"I feel like we don't get a lot of information from Bristol Water, but I attended the consultation on the Water Resources Plan, and I think that was positive. I would welcome more contact particularly with someone who is working on the rural or agricultural side of things."* (National Farmers Union)

*"There has been some issues since the takeover with different staff and turnaround times."* (Wessex Water)

# Q7 How do you perceive Bristol Water overall for the following?

■ Very good 
 ■ Good 
 ■ Neither good nor poor 
 ■ Fairly poor 
 ■ Very poor 
 ■ Don't know 
 ■ Not applicable



## Q8 How can Bristol Water improve? - Reliable supply

- 77% of respondents rated the reliability of supply provided by Bristol Water as very good or good.
- When excluding the don't know and not applicable responses this rose to 100% which is consistent with 2022. This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

### Q8 Quotes

*"I have never had any problems."* (South Gloucestershire Council)

*"This is not something I worry about or have experience of."* (Unattributed)

*"The farming sector recognises that the impact of climate change and changing weather patterns will lead to crop and livestock stress. They are keen to work with the water industry to implement some changes in storage, efficient use and making more of ground water resources."* (National Farmers Union)

## Q8 How can Bristol Water improve ? - Water Quality

- 73% of respondents rated the water quality as very good or good.
- When excluding the don't know and not applicable responses this rose to 100% which is the same as in 2022. This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

### Q8 Quotes

*"I have no problem with water quality or supply. I drink the stuff and am still here!"* (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)

## Q8 How can Bristol Water improve? - Being a local company

- 70% of respondents considered Bristol Water to be a local company.
- When excluding the don't know and not applicable responses this rose to 83% (88% in 2022). This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

### Q8 Quotes

*"The company does feel quite local and approachable certainly in comparison to some of the national utilities who use our roads. We are interested in the way they operate and how they relate to us as a local authority" (Bristol City Council)*

*"I think Bristol Water are quite connected with local people." (Mendip District Council)*

*"The fact that they are a local company is vital to our work. If you work with the national debt relief schemes they don't know what the local schemes are. When dealing with debt it pays to be local and our relationship with the company means that they trust us that when we put someone forward for help. The company accepts that the customer is serious about trying to get out of their problems." (South Bristol Advice Center)*

## Q8 Quotes Being a local company (Cont.)

*"The fact that they are local and so responsive means that I can have a dedicated caseworker who works with them on water forms. The fact that they provide a lot of information with their bills encouraging people to seek help and identifying locally where they can get it makes a big difference."* (Bristol CAB)

*"It is not just that they are local it is also that they want to work with us unlike some of the nationals."* (South Gloucester Council)

*"I think people like seeing the vans around."* (Unattributed)

*"The deployment of security guards in the summer to stop people swimming in the lake is an example of a decision taken far away in Bristol. If they would talk to people locally, we could help improve some of these situations."* (Cheddar Parish Council)

*"Local means different things to different people. I have seen levels of public engagement cut back over recent years."* (Chew Stoke Parish Council)

## Q8 How can Bristol Water improve? - Customer Service

- 41% of respondents rated the company's customer service as very good or good.
- When excluding the don't know and not applicable responses this rose to 75% a decrease from 90% in 2022. This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

### Q8 Quotes

*"As a customer I received a letter offering £12 off my bill or £12 worth of shares which I thought was a good way of showing interest in the customers."* (Unattributed)

*"One of the best companies in support to customers."* (Bristol CAB)

*"Someone always get back to you when you ask a question."* (South Gloucestershire Council)

*"The call centre staff are very good although we tend to email more but we never get a knock back. They have experienced people who know what they are doing. For us though the speed of response is the great thing."* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"The staff I work with are professional and hard working."* (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)

## Q8 Quotes Customer Service (Cont.)

*"I haven't had much contact since I started but when I do contact them they are good. There are a couple of people who know who I am which helps." (Mendip District Council)*

*"We have had good chats with lots of different people, but everything seems to be topic specific." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"They talk a lot about the customers and the households they supply, inevitably I guess, but when it comes to getting more water or using less the agricultural sector is a missing piece it seems." (National Farmers Union)*

*"I would say they are good but to be top notch they need to be a bit more pro-active in terms of responses to requests for additional information. It would be good to not have to chase or nag." (Bristol City Council)*

*"Some things seem to go very slowly like the lease on the Island Garden." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

## Q8 How can Bristol Water improve ? – Management

- 54% of respondents rated the company's management as very good or good.
- When excluding the don't know and not applicable responses this rose to 71% (80% in 2022). This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

### Q8 Quotes

*"We have not seen any changes due to the takeover and don't really want any. We want the same people doing the same things."* (Bristol CAB)

*"I attended a stakeholder meeting as part of the Water resources Management Plan Consultation and I found it very useful. I think they are trying to be transparent and let people know what is happening."* (National Farmers Union)

*"It has been frustrating waiting for the takeover, just waiting and waiting."* (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)

*"The training and management seems to be good. The contractors who my staff meet on the street are knowledgeable. The management recovered very well after the failed change of contractor in 2019."* (South Gloucester Council)

## Q8 Quotes Management (Cont.)

*"It feels like the potential for the takeover has paralyzed decision making for a very long time. We are positive about the changes though and have heard good things about the new owners. We just want to start a dialogue and get a sense of their plans for the lake and the landowning responsibilities." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"We have tried to influence them but generally it goes nowhere. It comes down to money at the end of the day." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

*"I attended a session relating to the takeover but I didn't feel it was for me. Some of the questions and exercises did not relate to me or my work. There were a lot of negatives at the session and some of those attending did find it very relevant, however it seemed like there was a lot of disquiet about the management trying to dress up the goals as more community oriented and less profit focused." (Unattributed )*

*"I have had to draw back from the Challenge Panel at the moment due to the cost of living crisis work but very much welcome the chance to join a sub group about vulnerable clients. They are really important to us. The Bristol Water relief scheme very often starts the ball rolling for our clients because it is rapid. We can then say to them - look what you can achieve!" (South Bristol Advice Centre)*

*"I am interested to see what the takeover brings. My impression of Southwest Water is that they are more community minded judging by the excellent work they have done on Dartmoor." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

## Q8 How can Bristol Water improve ? - Looking after the environment

- 64% of respondents rated the company's commitment to environmental issues as very good or good.
- When excluding the don't know and not applicable responses this rose to 78% (a decrease from 92% in 2022). This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

### Q8 Quotes

*"If Bristol Water would take responsibility for the toads crossing the main road every February and March. They open a gate for us to release them but won't do anything else like provide a way for them to cross. This could be tunnels or temporary fences which would block the road for just two months. We would provide people to collect the toads. We have spoken to the company, but we have never had any money. It is 10 miles round the lake and the toads are crossing at all points. It would be good PR for them if they did get more involved. They do protect the wetlands for the ducks and the birds. I think it is brilliant the way they keep the public out of these areas." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

*"In the lake their wildlife control is amazing. They let the hedges grow but on the outside it is terrible. They cut the verges right up to hedges and cut the hedges right back. This runs for up to 20 yards. They surely have a duty to set a good example. The hedges look scalped. They should leave the verges unless they had a legal responsibility." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

## Q8 Quotes Looking after the environment (Cont.)

*"It is primarily environmental concerns which is motivating our attempt to work more closely with Bristol Water. We want to take forward improved walking and cycling links to the new lake path, a community energy scheme using Bristol Water land and explore opportunities for the company to work more closely with the schools which have pupils who are very interested in environmental issues." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

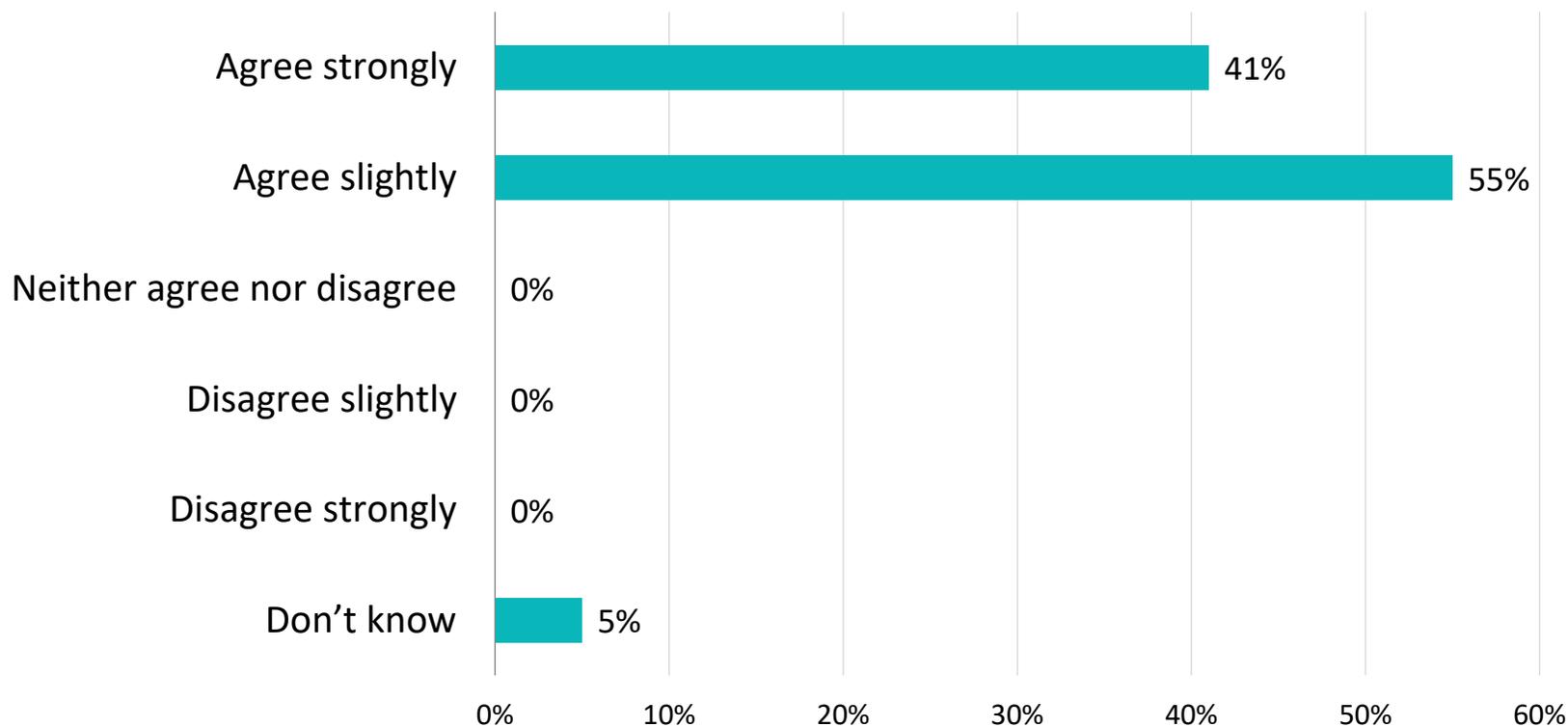
*"The problems created by the change of contractors was due to a genuine attempt to reduce their carbon footprint by changing work practices." (South Gloucester Council)*

*"We are very keen to work with Bristol Water to develop catchment approaches and support farmers in their efforts to improve the water environment. However we must be aware of the pressures on farmers in a range of environmental initiatives and work closely to avoid duplication of effort." (National Farmers Union)*

*"As a custodian of the environment they have mostly good intentions and mostly good practices. There are things they could do better and I have some reservations about the habitat management at the reservoirs at Cheddar and Blagden but mostly Chew. My concerns are things like species rich grass land management and the routine ongoing management which often gets left behind. Generally I am not in favour of free swimming or opening up greater public access as this would cause disturbance to the birds." (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)*

*"More catchment working with farmers, addressing water quality issues." (Unattributed)*

## Q9 To what extent to you agree that Bristol Water has a good reputation?



- 96% agreed strongly or agreed slightly that Bristol Water has a good reputation (90% in 2022)
- Excluding the don't know responses from the base, this rose to 100% (from 96% in 2021). This is the figure used for the performance indicator in slide 4.

## Q9 To what extent do you agree that Bristol Water has a good reputation?

- Most felt that Bristol Water had a good reputation and this was reflected in the comments with very little suggestion for improvement. Perception of reputation was either based on personal experience, the experience of or comments from their customers, or purely because they hadn't heard anything negative.

### Q9 Quotes

*"As I said last time I have worked with Bristol Water for many years and the company has a good reputation, and it is well earned."* (Bristol CAB)

*"I am new but it seems that they have a good reputation."* (National Farmers Union)

*"My predecessor always spoke well of them and their staff and people seem to think they are good."* (Mendip District Council)

*"Generally I think the company is on the up and seen that way."* (Bristol City Council)

*"From what I see the company is well liked and seen as local and small in compared to some of the big utilities."* (South Gloucestershire Council)

## Q9 Quotes (Cont.)

*"I think the reputation is good but don't really think the public think much about it." (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)*

*"I think people trust them as we speak to local people everyday." (South Bristol Advice Centre)*

*"It has been a dreadful year for water companies and this must have impacted on how people see them." (Unattributed)*

*"It's as good as the last contact or incident. It's very difficult to control. However, we don't hear anything negative." (Avon Fire and Rescue)*

*"People get confused with Water Companies as to who does what." (Wessex Water)*

*"The takeover shows it is not the community minded local asset it tries to make out it is." (Unattributed )*

## Q10 What impression do you have of Bristol Water as a brand?

- Respondents had little to offer when asked to describe the brand. Words mentioned included local, professional and trusted and strong.

### Q10 quotes

*"It is just water at the end of the day."* (Unattributed)

*"It is good – it is trusted by our clients who come into contact with them."* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"It is the people who work for it not the brand which is important. It sounds safe and local."* (Unattributed )

*"The staff are professional and that is what is people think of."* (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)

*"Well known and local"* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

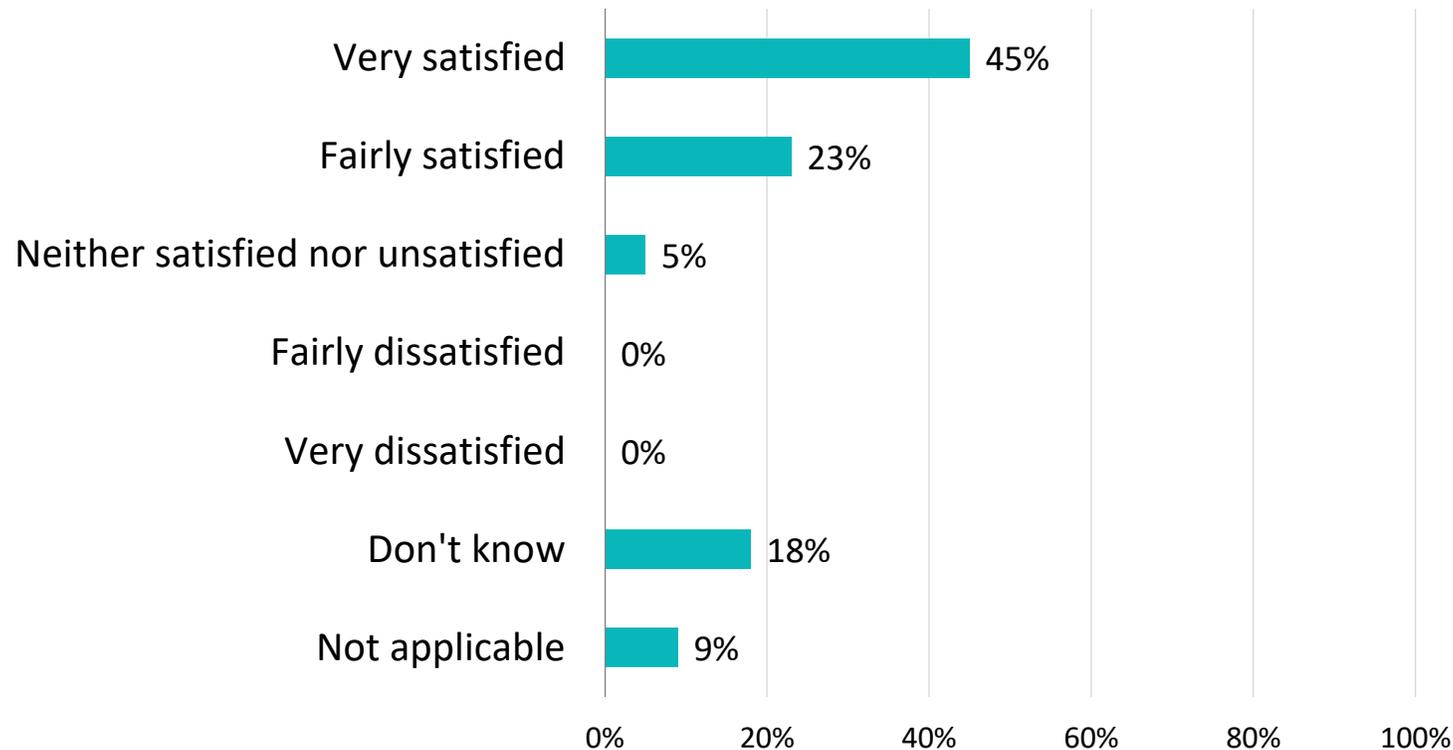
*"They are everywhere. They are a big player around here."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"They are a very strong brand."* (Wessex Water)

*"Local and focused on the community"* (CBI)

*"British and local."* (Unattributed)

## Q11 How far do you agree that Bristol Water makes a positive contribution to the communities it serves?



- 68% were very or fairly satisfied that Bristol Water makes a positive contribution to the communities it serves.
- Excluding the don't know and not applicable responses from the base, this rose to 94% (85% in 2022).

## Q12 How can Bristol Water make a positive contribution to the communities that it serves?

- Respondents were generally satisfied that Bristol Water was already making a positive contribution to the communities that it serves.
- Many suggestions were made as how to Bristol Water can further contribute to the communities shown in the quotes below.

### Q12 Quotes

*"They have done several things over the years to support our community initiatives, bringing freebies, supporting events etc". (South Bristol Advice Center)*

*"They do a lot already and they have to do it, but there is always more they can do. They have done good work with the water bottles." (Avon Fire and Rescue)*

*"I think they do the best they can." (South Gloucestershire Council)*

*"I know they do a lot of things on affordability, but I don't know about the rest." (Wessex Water)*

## Q12 Quotes (Cont.)

*"It does feel like the company is part of the City community, but the links have fallen away recently." (Unattributed)*

*"Our interactions have often been held up by delays in responding to emails or not answering telephone calls. It might be better to just explain what the problems are. We do understand that businesses have pressures and limits on what they can do. I don't see a great deal of involvement with Parish Councils or other local organizations either There is a zoom coming up soon which might explain what they are up to." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

*"We have tried to talk to them about access to the lake from Holwell Lake. This is very popular, and they have been quite negative about our suggestions. If they were more community minded and were a bit closer to the community it would help with some of these things. We are not asking for money just engagement in things like Cheddar Vision or dealing with dangerous driving around the gorge. It would be great if someone could talk to the Parish Council. We used to have representatives attending as the Police, Councils or Fire Services do. We have another organizations slot on the agenda of every meeting." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"More capacity to deliver work they are already committed to. There is a big rise is people using rivers for recreation. They need to raise awareness of issues generally in schools, community groups. Making people aware of why they need to abstract and helping with the cultural shift that's needed. People think they have the right to as much water as they want." (Unattributed)*

## Q12 Quotes (Cont.)

*"Bristol Water is one of the biggest landowners in our Parish. The amenities attract people to the Parish. They should be an integral part of our community. In my 6 years on the Council, we have had very little interaction. There is no visible enthusiasm to engage. We are keen to move forward some potentially mutually beneficial projects such as engagement with our two schools, more cycling and walking links to the new lake path the community energy scheme we have proposed and also finding out more about the company's future plans." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

## Q13 Do you have suggestion for social contract projects that Bristol Water could work with you on in the future?

- Although some said they were already working with Bristol Water on social contract projects, there were a number of suggestions for further such engagement as highlighted by the following quotes:-

### Q13 Quotes

*"We are already working with them." (Avon Fire and Rescue)*

*"We are already doing a lot. Continue working with us helping to deliver our current project." (Unattributed)*

*"We already have quite a lot going on." (Unattributed)*

*"We want to take forward improved walking and cycling links to the new lake path, a community energy scheme using Bristol Water land and explore opportunities for the company to work more closely with the schools which have pupils who are very interested in environmental issues." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"We are always open to new ideas but are very busy right now with the cost of living crisis. This is our main priority and anything to support the community around this would be welcome." (South Bristol Advice Center)*

## Q13 Quotes (Cont.)

*"We would very much appreciated Bristol Water getting more actively involved in Toad Patrol. Temporary tunnels or fences for two months of the year would be a great help and save countless toads. The community energy scheme is still alive as an idea but they seem to have backed away." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

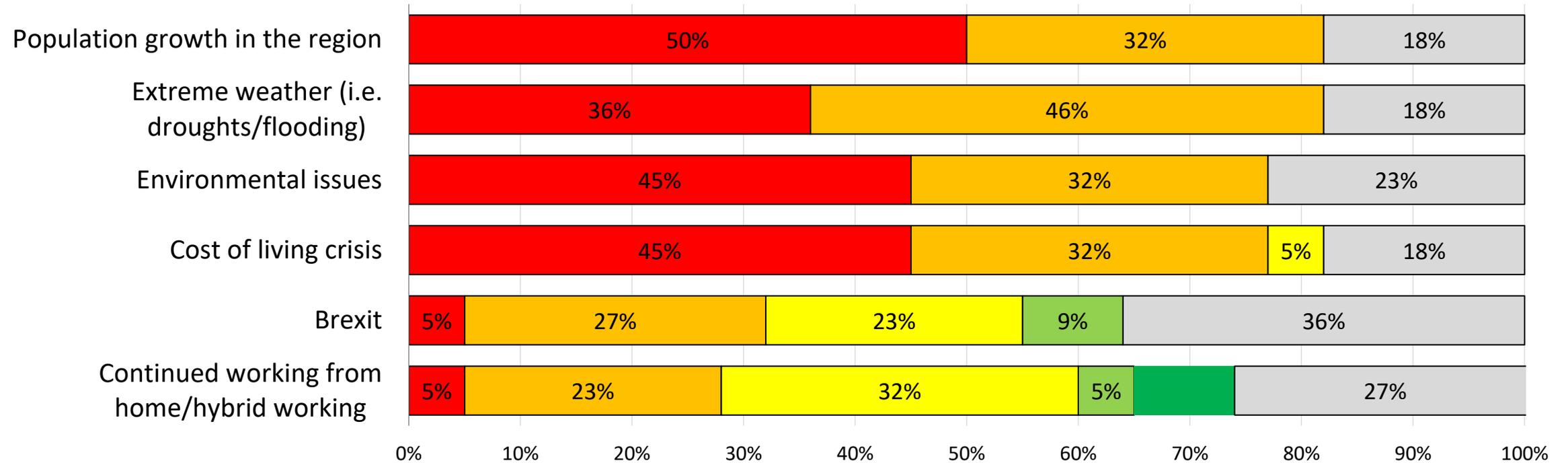
*"We are looking for more engagement and closer working on community issues. In the future with all the new developments around Holwell Lane there will be more and more people wanting to access the lake. We are keen to work together on this." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"My main concern is the ongoing resourcing of habitat management and how this develops in future." (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)*

*"At the moment we don't have the capacity due to the cost of living crisis work to get involved in looking for extra funding and can't take part in the offers around hard to reach groups." (Bristol CAB)*

# Q14. How much impact you think the following will have on Bristol Water in 2023 and beyond ?

■ A lot of impact  
 ■ A bit on impact  
 ■ No difference  
 ■ Not a lot of impact  
 ■ No impact at all  
 ■ Don't know/not applicable



## Q14 Why do you say that ? – Population growth in the region

- 82% of respondents said that population growth in the region would have a lot/ a bit of impact

### Q14 Quotes

*"Hopefully they will deal with all of the issues well like they have done in the past."* (Wessex Water)

*"With 150,000 plus new houses coming into the region there are bound to be challenges in terms of supply and the ability to invest at a scale which can achieve an impact"* (Unattributed)

*"The expected increase in domestic water demand is another challenge which farmers are aware of . We understand the duty to supply domestic customers so want to work closely on initiatives to safeguard supply"* (National Farmers Union)

*"We have 662 extra homes coming into the village. There will be many implications"* (Cheddar Parish Council)

*"Yes there will definitely be more demand for water and there will need to be contingencies in place."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"This is why Cheddar 2 was proposed."* (Cheddar Parish Council)

*"There are a huge number of new homes being built. This is going to put pressure on services."* (Unattributed)

## Q14 Why do you say that ? – Extreme weather

- 82% of respondents said that extreme weather would have a lot/ a bit of impact

### Q14 Quotes

*"We are very conscious of the challenges and it is important that the agricultural sector is involved in dealing with the impact of reduced water availability and the risk of flood. We would like to see Bristol Water be more explicit about how it intends to ensure levels of service to rural businesses."* (National Farmers Union)

*"If we have very dry summers and wet winters there will be problems for water supply with all the new developments across the region."* (Bristol City Council)

*"Yes this is going to continue to have an effect, when it's too hot or when it's too cold. They can only do what they can."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"Climate change is happening. There is more extreme weather and more localised flooding."* (Unattributed)

## Q14 Why do you say that ? – Environmental issues

- 77% of respondents said that environmental issues would have a lot/ a bit of impact

### Q14 Quotes

*"This is what has motivated us to want to engage with them, what is happening with the environment and its impact on the lake etc. We think there are mutually beneficial things to discuss."* (Chew Stoke Parish Council)

*"The NFU is critically aware of the impact of climate change and population growth and how this could impact on water supplies which are vital for our domestic food industries."* (National Farmers Union)

*"We have seen over the past two years the impact of environmental change in the numerous burst pipes and leaks experienced. You would think that this will only get worse."* (Bristol City Council)

*"This is why their role is vital as the changes kick in. Generally, they do a good job."* (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)

*"The threats to biodiversity and the protection of nature are really important. Things like Rewilding Chew where we advise people about how best to keep their gardens are important."* (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)

*"They need to be more active in adapting to climate change."* (Unattributed)

## Q14 Why do you say that ? – Cost-of-living crisis

- 77% of respondents said that the cost-of-living crisis would have a lot/ a bit of impact

### Q14 Quotes

*"The cost-of-living crisis means that the situation for people in debt is worse than it has ever been. It is harder than ever to get people to engage with schemes to help them. Many people I fear are just brushing it under the carpet as the number of people presenting has fallen but the debt is rising. People I think are opting to just not pay at all."* (Bristol CAB)

*"People are often just giving up and not engaging. Low-income families and those with debt are the really vulnerable ones. However, it is now stretching into people working way over their hours in low paid jobs. I have been doing this job for 5 years and it is worse now than in the 1980s. There doesn't seem to be a way out. People start a process and then something else comes in and they just give up. Someone has £14,000 of rent arrears."* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"I guess people will just not pay their water bill as they won't have their water cut off."* (Unattributed)

*"The role of water companies will depend on government legislation. They need to continue to provide help."* (Unattributed)

*"This will definitely have an impact as all their costs have gone up."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

## Q14 Why do you say that ? – Brexit

- 32% of respondents said that Brexit would have a lot/ a bit of impact

## Q14 Quotes

*"It is just one of the issues – cost of living is the biggest crisis"* (Bristol CAB)

*"It may have impacted on the cost-of-living crisis, but I don't see a big impact"* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"If the country is poorer that is bad for the company, I guess"* (Unattributed)

*"Let's see how the merger works out."* (Cheddar Parish Council)

*"This is definitely still continuing to have an effect on businesses."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"There is lots of uncertainty around protecting the environment. From an environmental perspective Brexit made no sense."*  
(Unattributed)

## Q14 Why do you say that ? – Continued working from home/hybrid working

- 28% of respondents said that continued working from home/hybrid working would have a lot/ a bit of impact

### Q14 Quotes

*"The whole pattern of water usage changed overnight at the start of the first lockdown but they seemed to be able to adapt. I imagine that due to working from home demand will have peaked now."* (South Gloucestershire Council)

*"It makes no difference if staff are working at home. The communication is the same."* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"Not sure this is a factor now."* (Bristol City Council)

*"I don't really understand the context? Does it increase the demand for water?"* (Unattributed)

*"This needs to be an option, but it needs to be blended and shouldn't be the norm."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"As long as they maintain contact/face to face meetings, this should not be an issue."* (Unattributed)

*"This has been an issue but will diminish."* (Unattributed)

## Q15 What do you see as Bristol Water's strengths ?

- Bristol Water strengths were identified as being efficient to work with, engaging and approachable. They were praised for their communication skills and were seen as being customer-focussed and committed to looking after the environment

## Q15 Quotes

*"The path round the lake is excellent and has potential for even greater benefits" (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"The wildlife control at the lake is amazing and I really like the play area and tea shop setup" (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

*"I do think they are good and are trying to engage and be transparent. They seem keen to let people know what they are doing and let them have a say" (National Farmers Union)*

*"If I had choose between engagement and receptiveness and performance I would always go with the former as you can always work with that to improve things. This is how I see Bristol Water. The team say relationships are good and that is my experience. It is all good and positive." (Bristol City Council)*

*"Consistency of personnel is the key strength and a willingness to work with us and do the right thing." (South Gloucestershire Council)*

*"They are very community focussed." (CBI)*

## Q15 Quotes (Cont.)

*"They are strong on environmental protection and mostly do well. I have good engagement with all the staff."* (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)

*"They are the best company we deal with. They are quick to act and the staff are experienced, knowledgeable and get straight back to you."* (South Bristol Advice Centre)

*"There was a very close relationship between the staff and the working together on the Glastonbury Festival. Everyone knows their roles and trusts each other. "* (Mendip District Council)

*"They are one of the best companies in terms of supporting customers. They have experienced staff who are empowered to make quick decisions."* (Bristol CAB )

*"Their great response to emergencies, the team that they have, they are going a great job"* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"They are local and know the area very well. They have been established a long time."* (Wessex Water)

*"They are supportive of partnership working. They are keen to consider the environmental impact. They are good at engaging with partners and community groups."* (Unattributed)

*"We are grateful for the pepper corn rent charged for the Island Garden and we have got some issues resolved this year "* (Cheddar Parish Council)

## Q16 What do you see as Bristol Water's weaknesses ?

- Most respondents found it difficult to identify weaknesses as they were generally happy with the service and the relationship that they have. Some weaknesses mentioned are highlighted in the quotes below, however many said that there were minor issues.

### Q16 Quotes

*"The responses are slow and tend to be just warm words without much delivery. They are restricted by money at the end of the day"* (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)

*"I think the levels of public engagement have declined. In the past for example there were regular public visits to the pumping station. We only now meet staff on a topic-by-topic basis and really need a more strategic engagement."* (Chew Stoke Parish Council)

*"They have withdrawn more and more. They are a major landowner but are absent from all the key discussions about the future of the parish."* (Cheddar Parish Council)

*"Perhaps the management could be a bit more upfront about the fact that profit is the main driver not community benefit?"*  
(Unattributed)

## Q16 Quotes (Cont.)

*"This is a small issue but the way the funding support is allocated does not benefit us as it relates to the successful applications we make to the BW/WW relief schemes. We do lots of work which isn't resolved that way." (Bristol CAB)*

*"In terms of what they might do better they perhaps could be a bit more pro-active in detecting private water supply" (Mendip District Council)*

*"I think it is the longer-term work on habitat management which I would like to see improved. I do understand why this gets a little bit left behind." (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)*

*"Being more pro-active in providing information and responding to emails promptly and with answers not just holding responses would be the things I would like to see improved." (Bristol City Council)*

*"We would welcome more information and a dialogue with someone who is involved in the rural or agricultural sector. Farmers are really important partners in solving many of the problems the company face." (National Farmers Union)*

*"Having sufficient staff available at all times. They need to be more resilient. It is a challenge for them to scale up in an emergency." (Avon Fire and Rescue)*

*"They need to ensure they are not lost with the Pennon Branding. They could do more on the lobbying front. They seem to have more of a voice. They need to drive change – they could have more of an influence as a large company." (Wessex Water)*

## Q17 How has Bristol Water changed over the last 12 months ?

- Most respondents had not noticed any changes in the last 12 months. Those who did are quoted below

### Q17 Quotes

*"I think everything has been slowed down by the takeover." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

*"We have had less interaction this year although some things have been resolved." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"The path around the lake is a great development." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"There have been no change so far this last year. It is the same people working well. I haven't noticed any impact from the takeover." (Bristol CAB)*

*"The situation is even better this year as I now get notified about emergency work as a routine." (South Gloucestershire Council)*

*"Not an awful lot has changed. There has obviously been a lot of change in the company but this hasn't made an impact on the relationship." ( South Bristol Advice Centre)*

## Q17 Quotes (Cont.)

*"I haven't noticed any change over the past year but sometimes it feels like they are treading water waiting for the takeover."*  
(Wessex Ecological Consultancy)

*"I do appreciate the improvements they make and continue to make this year."* (Bristol City Council)

*"Nothing has changed. We don't talk as often as we would like to as it is difficult finding the time."* (Avon Fire and Rescue)

*"It's a little bit messy. They need to get organised with the new structure. They are going through it."* (Wessex Water)

*"The takeover has seen a lot of people stretched. It has had an impact and has caused extra work."* (Unattributed)

## Q18 What impact do you see the acquisition of Bristol Water by the Pennon Group as having on customers and stakeholders going forwards?

- Most respondents did not have a view on the impact that the takeover would have on customers and stakeholders but hoped that they would see no change.

### Q18 Quotes

*"We welcome the take over as it gives some certainty for the future. We want to engage with them positively." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"I have a positive view of Southwest Water from what I have seen they are more community minded." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"I am very positive about the company as it is now and hope nothing will change with the merger." (South Bristol Advice Centre)*

*"It has been very local as company despite who owns it. Hopefully this will continue." (Unattributed)*

## Q18 Quotes

*"Not noticed any changes and hopefully we won't." (Avon Fire and Rescue)*

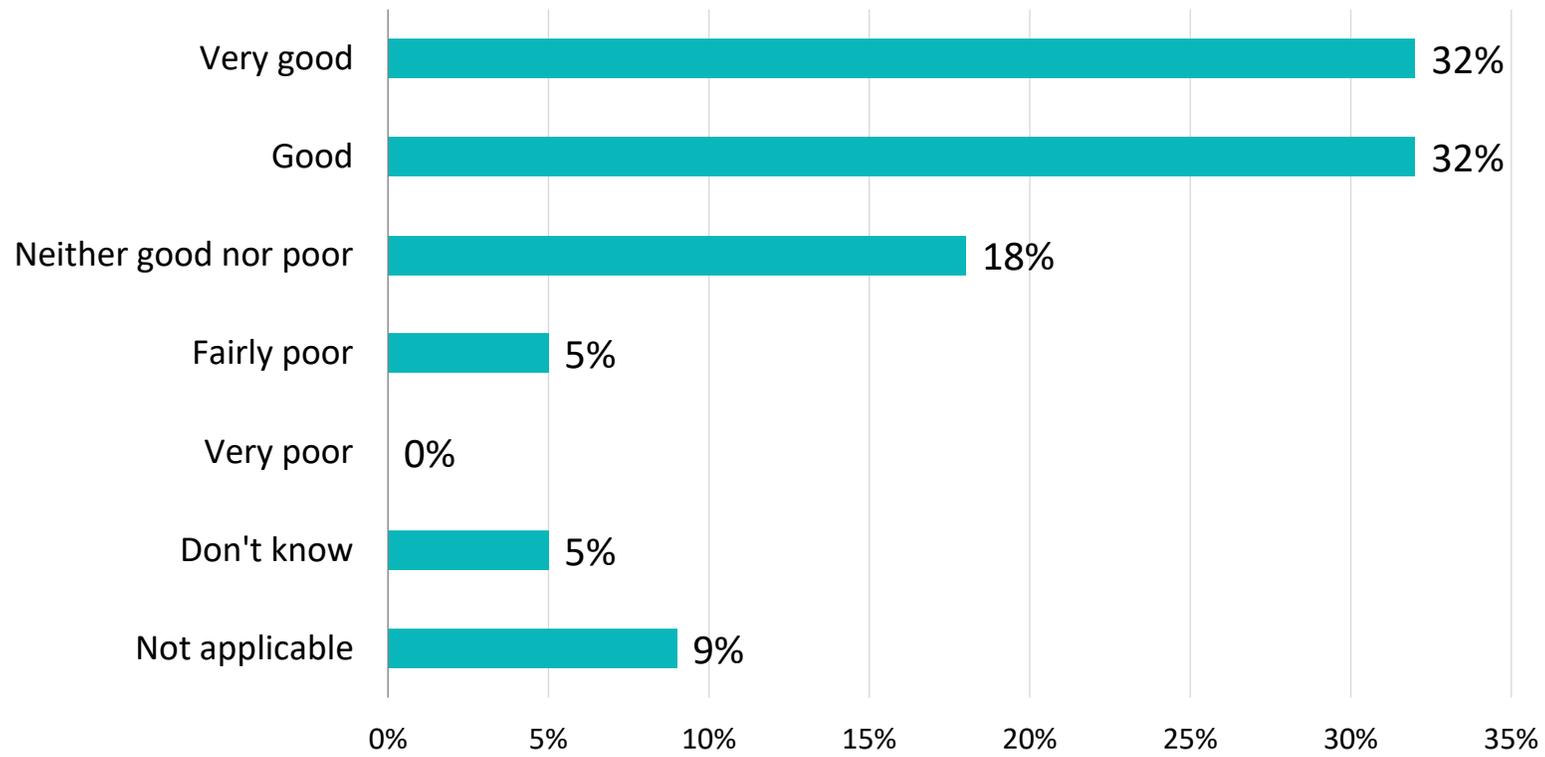
*"They need to be clear what customers identify with and hopefully won't lose their identify as a local brand." (Wessex Water)*

*"It's still very early to unknown as yet." (Unattributed)*

*"It feels like they have been treading water waiting for the takeover so I hope this will help to move things forward." (Wessex Ecological Consultancy)*

*"I've not noticed anything but it may have the potential to feel less local." (CBI)*

## Q19 Do you rate the quality of communication/information you receive from Bristol Water?



- 64% felt that the quality of communication is very good or good
- Excluding the don't know and not applicable responses from the base, this rose to 74% (71% in 2022)

## Q19 Do you rate the quality of communication/information you receive from Bristol Water?

- The majority of respondents felt that the quality of communication was very good or good, and they were making a genuine effort to keep them informed on anything that was relevant to them. Although a minority said that more communication would be welcomed. A minority were also frustrated with a lack of contact.

### Q19 Quotes

*"Their communication is the key. They even notify us when their systems are down."* (South Gloucester Council)

*"The comms is better. We still sometimes get a holding response to a request for information but there is continuing improvement."* (Bristol City Council)

*"In terms of communications I have a couple of good contacts who I can call if there are any issues but much of it is done through generic email. It helps to have a couple of people who know who you are though."* (Mendip District Council)

*"The communication is excellent. Staff can make decisions quickly but also understand their limits."* (Bristol CAB)

## Q19 Quotes (Cont.)

*"We are looking for one point of contact who would engage with the Parish Council manage the relationship and facilitate introductions to the various teams within Bristol Water." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"The responses are excellent and the communication very good." (South Bristol Advice Centre)*

*"We do get a little bit of information from Bristol Water but I would welcome more as long as it is relevant. The newsletter would be interesting, but I don't want to be bombarded" (National Farmers Union)*

*"They are withdrawing more and more. We are not asking for money just engagement and a little bit of somebody's time." (Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"We have tried to influence them and talk to them but then nothing." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum)*

## Q19b How can Bristol Water engage more effectively with you going forward?

- As in previous years, most were very positive about their engagement with Bristol Water with very few suggestions for improvement.
- Those who currently had limited, or no contact would welcome this.
- Some felt that while engagement was currently good, there was more that could be done to work more effectively moving forward.

### Q19b Quotes

*"We would like one point of contact who could perhaps attend a Parish Council meeting to get the ball rolling." (Chew Stoke Parish Council)*

*"No big changes please." (South Gloucestershire Council)*

## Q19b Quotes (Cont.)

*"Now that the takeover is complete let's see if we can have some action." (Bath & NE Somerset Climate Forum )*

*"There are no big issues, but we would like some engagement and a show of some community spirit." ( Cheddar Parish Council)*

*"Generally, they are on the up. Let's keep up the progress." (Bristol City Council)*

*"The things they need to do probably all involve our members and in terms of nature-based solutions , farmers have a lot to offer." (National Farmers Union)*

*"We are talking today. We need wider teams involved with the control rooms and more training of staff." (Avon Fire and Rescue)*

*"Lots of engagement. Ironing out problem areas with takeover. We need to always be engaging, be responsive and re-build a strong relationship." (Wessex Water)*

*"We need more activate communication going forward on how to meet the challenge of climate change." (Unattributed)*

**Research conducted by:  
Future Focus Research**



**On behalf of:  
South West Water Ltd trading as Bristol Water**

Future Focus Research is a Market and Social Research company in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with offices in Bristol, Cardiff and Belfast.

Established in 1983 we have nearly 40 years experience in helping Public and Private sector organisations with their research requirements. We provide a full range of quantitative and qualitative research services.

We have been working consistently with Bristol Water since 2010 on a range of market research projects.

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