State of the Nation

(Wave 6)

April 2023

Background, approach and summary

Research objectives and approach

The 'state of the nation' looks at customers' general views and behaviours with regards to household finances, their concerns both at a national and regional level, expectations of brands and the environment.

The research sought to answer the following objectives:

1. Customers' key concerns and what's important to them
2. Household finances and concerns around meeting bill payments
3. Changes in water usage in the home
4. Expectations of brands
5. Environmental attitudes and behaviours

Certain aspects of the survey were previously run on WaterTalk; responses have been tracked where comparable.

What we did:

A 15-minute quantitative survey with 1,000 customers

Fieldwork took place 17th April – 5th May 2023

Customers were recruited from the 'In the Flow' panel and from an external access panel.

Data has been weighted to be representative of the United Utilities customer base.

Details of the sample can be found in the appendix.

What external factors were affecting consumers during fieldwork?

Fieldwork dates: 17th April – 5th May

River spills

THE TIMES

No river safe for bathing

● Toxins at highest levels since testing began ● Watchdog 'leaves water companies free to pollute'

Coronation

Evening Standard

KING WANTS CORONATION TO BRING JOY

Industrial action

theguardian

Disruption across UK as strikes hit schools, trains, universities and border checks – as it happened

UK public warned of 'significant disruption' from strikes involving teachers, civil servants, Border Force staff and train drivers

Conflict

The INDEPENDENT

What is happening in Sudan and why? The war and conflict explained

Climate change

CNBC

'A New Spike' in Global Temperatures in the Forecast

The World Meteorological Organization reports increased odds that El Niño, the global weather pattern often tied to intense heat, will arrive by fall.

Immigration

BBC NEWS

Newspaper headlines: 'Cruise ships and barges' to house migrants and 'fresh cash for NHS'

Executive summary

Executive Summary

Financial concerns remain most concerning with the ongoing cost of living crisis

- There is a significant decrease in customers who are concerned/very concerned about the economy.
- Immigration & Asylum has significantly increased two waves in a row now, signaling a shift in concerns.
- Tackling social issues remains the most important issue but has significantly declined to pre-Apr-22 levels. The condition of roads has significantly increased to Apr-22 levels.
- In context of the negative economic outlook, 66% of customers consider it more important to keep on top of their finances, a significant decrease from Sep-22, while the majority of aspects measured see ‘no change’.

Concerns around environmental issues have remained stable

- While environmental concerns are behind economic, 88% still continue to recycle as much as they can.
- However with cost of living crisis we have seen a decline in environmental behaviours i.e. less customers are willing to pay more for eco-friendly products or services and we see a drop in customers looking to buy sustainably produced products.
- Customers spontaneously mention that they want UU to prioritise leakage and stop water wastage
- The second most spontaneous response is pollution, with river health and pollution very prominent.

Household discretionary income has remained stable

- Household discretionary income has remained stable with no significant change in the last 6-months.
- Energy remains the highest level of concern at 74% worried.
- Concerns surrounding electricity/gas bills, water bills, mortgage/rent, car tax/insurance, personal loan, holidays, and streaming have all seen significant declines.
- Just over 2/5 of customers express difficulty in meeting monthly bill payments at current, significantly declining from just under 1/2. This trend of significant decline is present for water bill payment specifically also.

Executive Summary

Keeping bills low has seen a significant decline in importance, with protecting river health seeing a significant increase

- 47% ranked keeping bills low in their top 3 most important issues for UU, a significant decline from 52% in Sep-22.
- Protecting river health and protecting wildlife and biodiversity have seen significant increase at the expense of low bills and reducing leakage.
- With habits accrued, actions to reduce spending have dropped, perhaps in line with the decline we have seen with customers finding it difficult to meet monthly bill payments now and in the following 6-months.
- Although cheaper/bills rates is high for unprompted additional requirements of United Utilities, pollution and leak fixes are leading themes.

Customers report less water related activities in the past 6-months but expect to be doing more gardening

- Water related activities have significantly declined since Sep-22, this include examples like hand washing, water/tea/coffee drinking, gardening, taking baths.
- However, as expected gardening in the next 6-months has significantly increased, a symptom of seasonality as fairer weather approaches.
- Doing of other activities has seen significant declines across current and next 6-months for going for walks and working from home, when compared to Sep-22.
- Visiting areas of natural beauty, socialising, UK and abroad holidays, and going to restaurants are all higher when looking 6-months ahead compared to now.

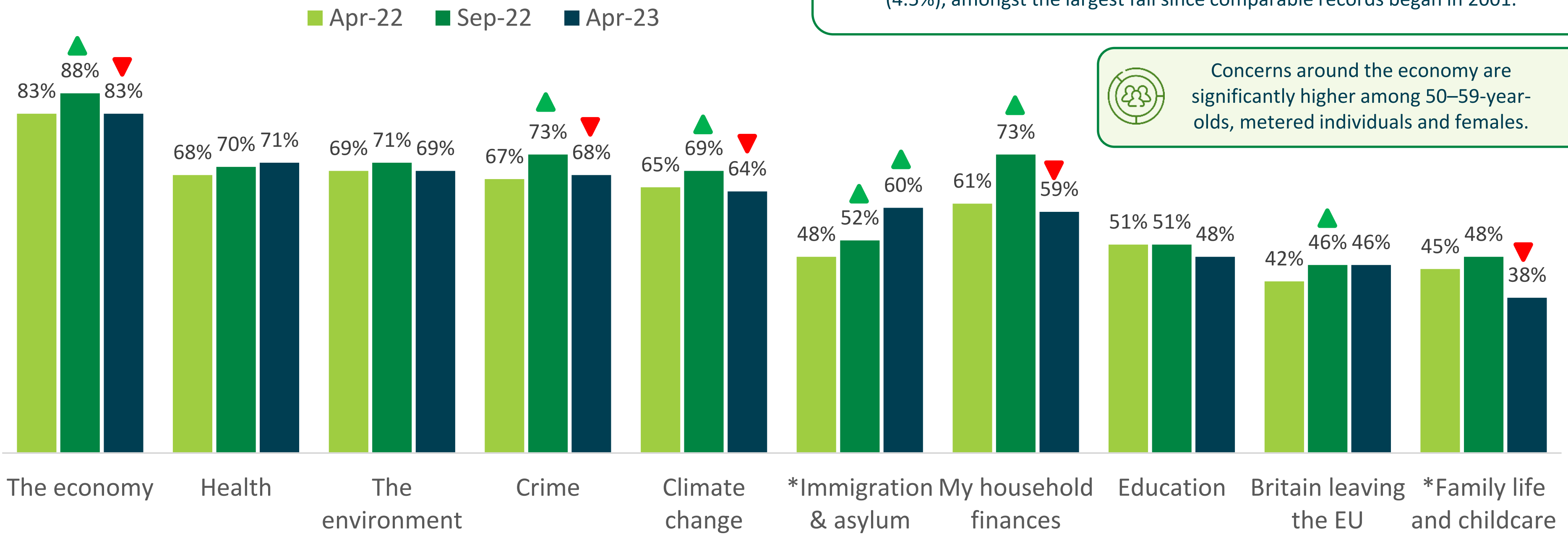
Customers would like to engage in leisure activities like accessing country parks or reservoirs and want light relief, something fun to distract

- 64% of customers are interested in communications that relate to water quality, how to save money, and what United Utilities are doing in their local area/community.
- Water saving tips has seen a significant decline since Sep-22, while light relief returns a significant uplift
- Information to relating specifically to schemes for customers struggling to pay their water bill has significantly declined 10% since Sep-22. This correlates with a significantly lower percentage of customers struggling to currently pay their water bill and into the next 6-months.

Customer Mindset

Concerns around the economy remain the most salient despite a decrease in Sep-22. Concern for household finances has fallen to Apr-22 levels, from 73% to 59%.

Current concerns (Very / quite concerned)



An Office for National Statistics report* found that real wages declined 3% between December-February 2023, the biggest hit on record since February to April 2009 (4.5%), amongst the largest fall since comparable records began in 2001.

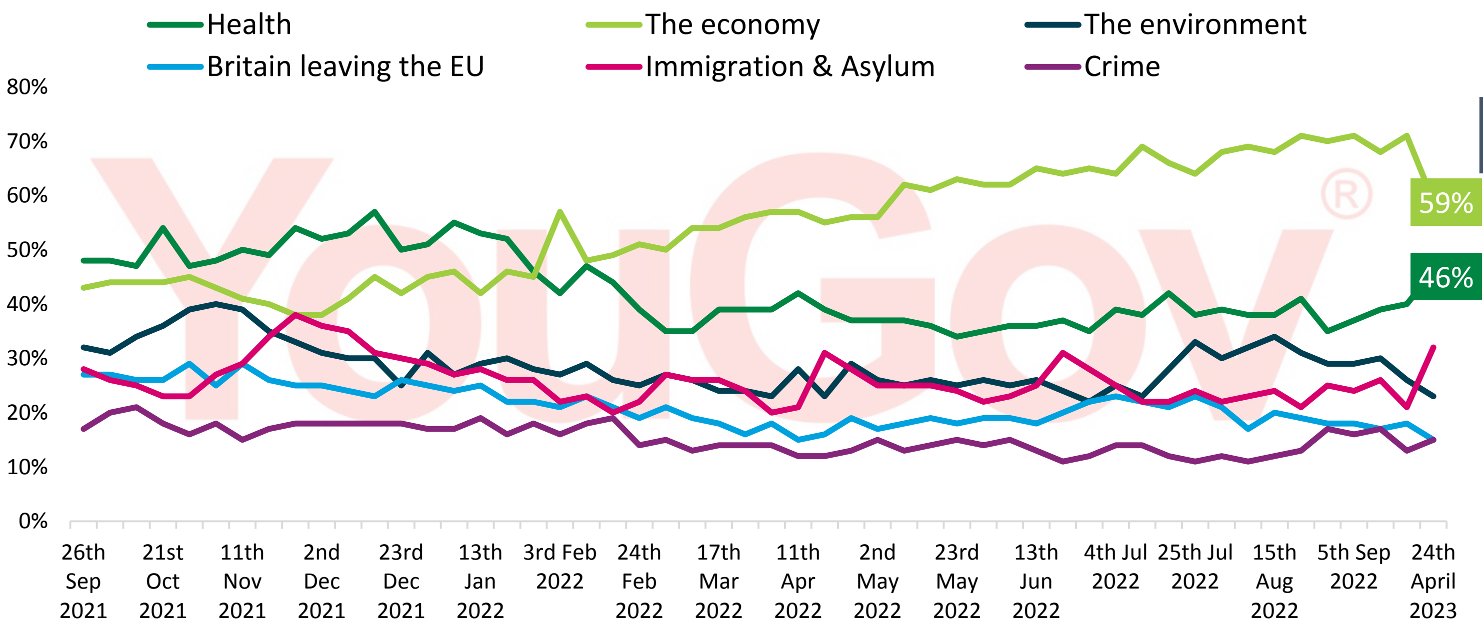
Concerns around the economy are significantly higher among 50–59-year-olds, metered individuals and females.

Q1. Thinking about the country as a whole, to what extent are you concerned about the following issues at this time?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)
Source: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/averageweeklyearningsingreatbritain/april2023#main-points-for-december-2022-to-february-2023

Significant difference at 95% CI between Sep-22 and Apr-23

The economy, although still the most important issue, is seeing a decline since October 2022, health has seen a gradual increase, as well as immigration which has seen an increase in April.

Important issues facing the country – YouGov data



Issues	Diff vs. April 2022
Economy	+3%
Health	+9%
Environment	-6%
Immigration	+4%
Leaving EU	-4%
Crime	+2%

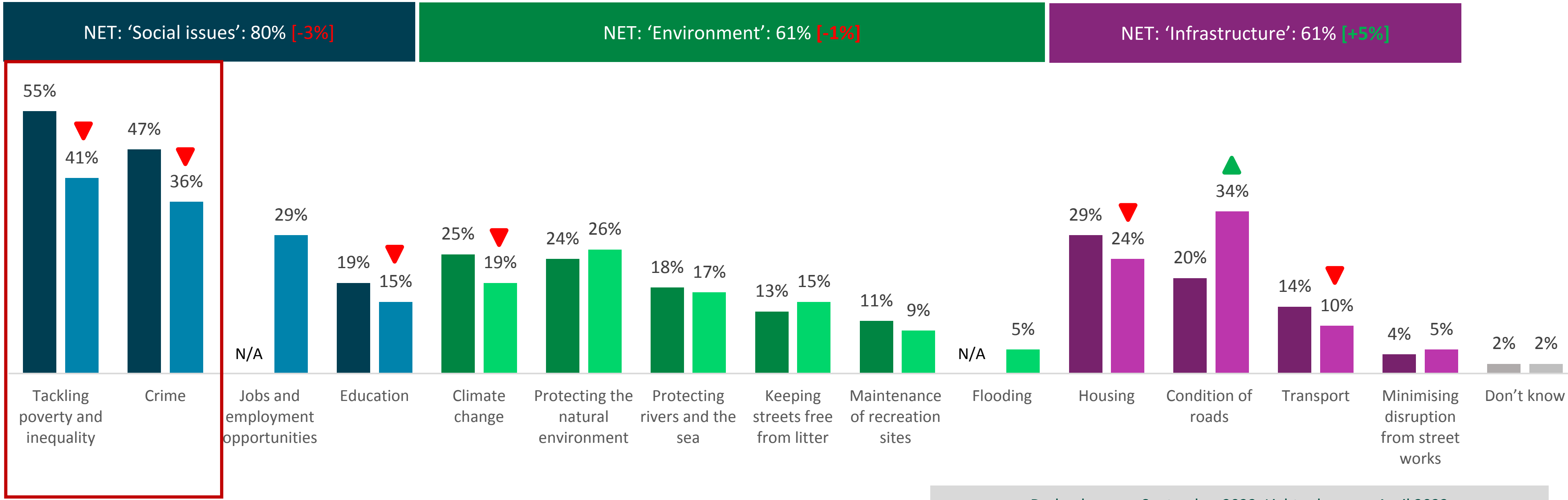
Source: YouGov tracker
https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/the-most-important-issues-facing-the-country?period=1yr

Significant difference at 95% CI

In the North West, social and environmental issues slightly declined overall, while infrastructure significantly increased, driven by a 14% increase in the importance of the condition of roads.

Current concerns – North West specifically

Customers in Merseyside are significantly less likely to select NET infrastructure. Greater Manchester is significantly more likely to select NET Social



Darker bars are September 2022; Lighter bars are April 2023

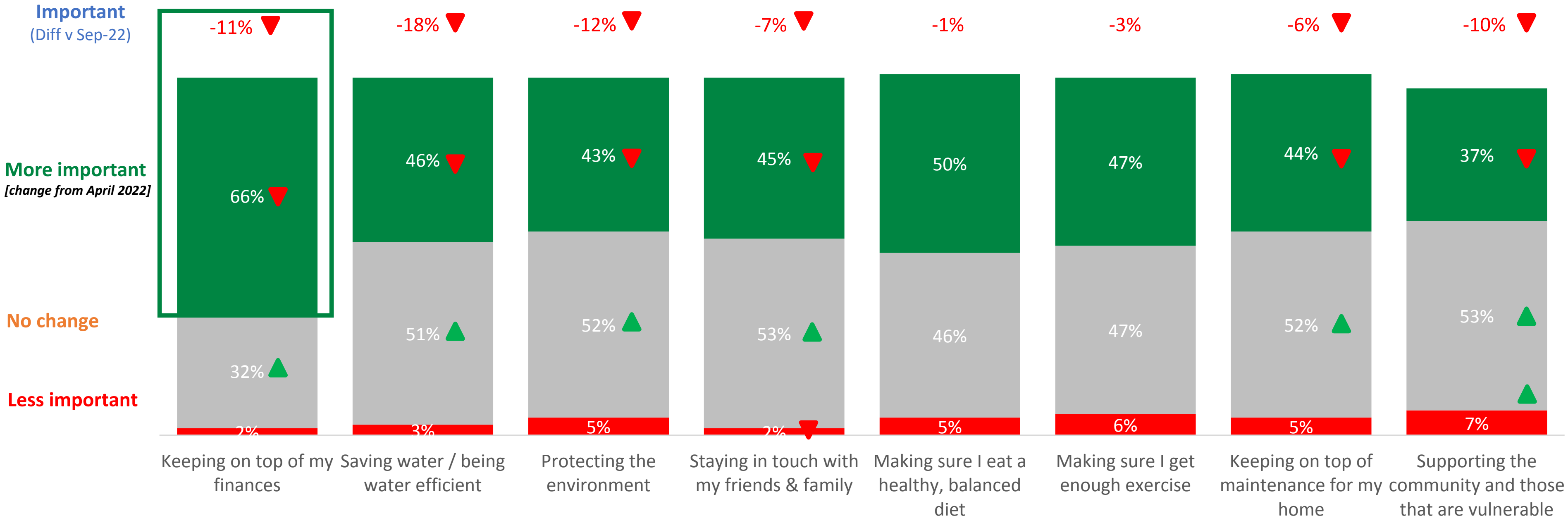
Q2. Now thinking specifically about the North West, which of the following do you think are the most important issues at this time? Please select up to three.
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

In the past 6 months most aspects have remained the same with an increase in ‘no change’ and a significant decline in importance for saving water & protecting the environment .

Important aspects – change in L6M

Females are significantly more likely than males to agree the majority of options are important.

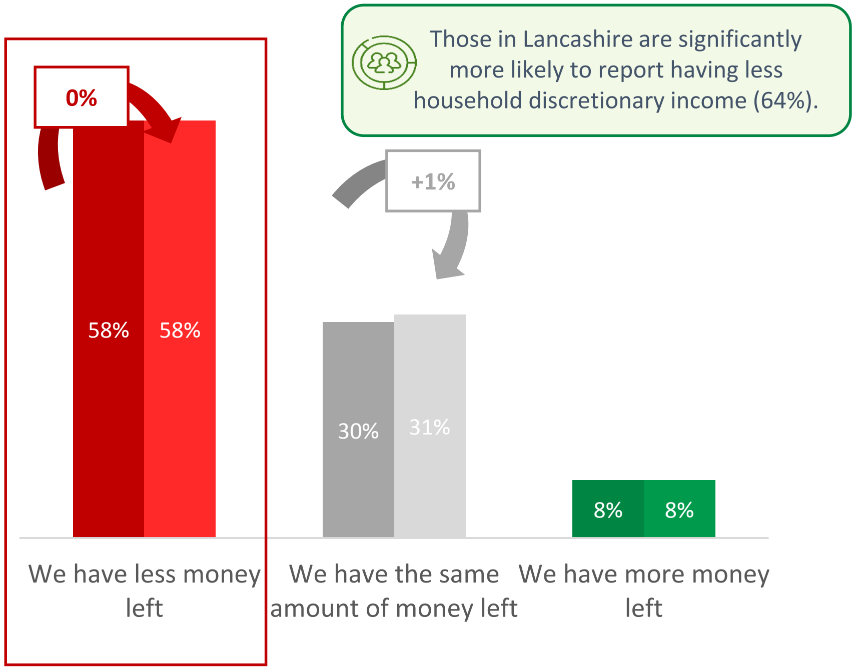


Q4. Over the last 6 months, would you say the following aspects have become any more or less important to you?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

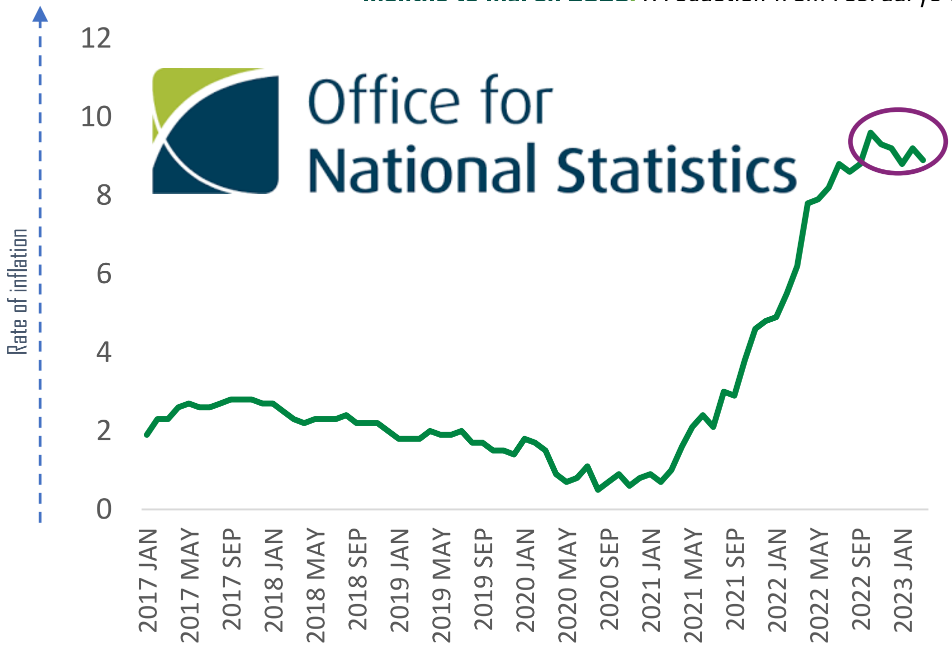
Discretionary income remains stable with no change. Whilst ONS consumer price index displays a continuous growth, increasing 1.1 points since Apr-22.

Household discretionary income



Darker bars are September 2022; Lighter bars are April 2023

The '**Consumer Price Index**', an index of the variation in prices for a representative basket of retail goods and services, rose by 8.9% in the **12-months to march 2023**. A reduction from Februarys 9.2%

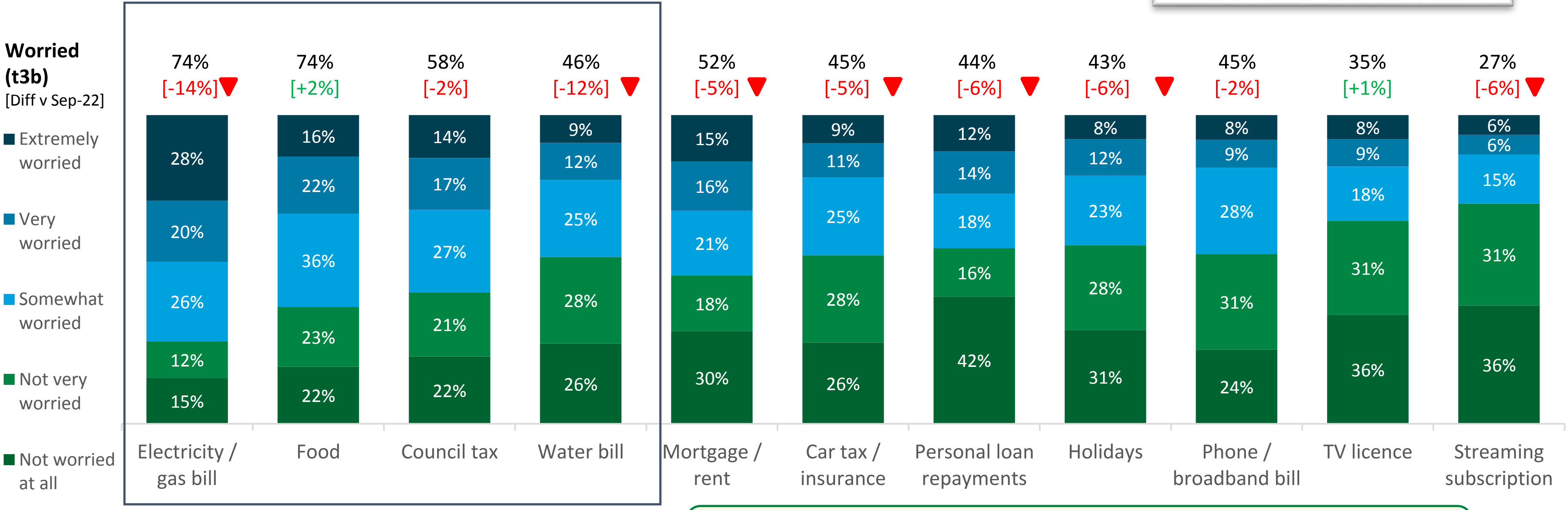


Q8. How have each of the following changed for you compared to 6 months ago?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023), https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/July2022

Significant difference at 95% CI

Energy and food remain the highest areas of worry, but have seen a significant drop since Sep-22 (-14%), with only food and TV license seeing a % increase.

Concern about meeting household bills



18-29s are significantly more likely to be worried about the majority of options, while men are significantly less likely than females to be worried.

Q5. Which, if any, bills or costs are you worried about paying?
Base: April 2023 (excludes those who said 'not applicable – based varies per bill; (n=500-980)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Concern about bill payment has fallen across all but two options, significantly so across seven, including electricity and gas, as well as water bills.

Concern for meeting bills (Net: Worried)

Concern for meeting bills (NET: Worried – T3B)	April 2020	March 2021	September 2021	April 2022	September 2022	April 2023	Diff vs. Sep-22
Electricity / gas bill	21%	28%	56%	84%	88%	74%	-14% ▼
Food	21%	27%	38%	61%	72%	74%	+2%
Council tax			36%	60%	60%	58%	-2%
Water bill	21%	21%	33%	52%	58%	46%	-12% ▼
Mortgage / rent	22%	19%	28%	50%*	57%	52%	-5% ▼
Car tax / insurance	21%	18%	27%	45%	50%	45%	-5% ▼
Personal loan repayments	15%	22%	21%	43%	50%	44%	-6% ▼
Holidays	24%	21%	21%	42%	49%	43%	-6% ▼
Phone / broadband bill	19%	20%	26%	44%*	47%	45%	-2%
TV licence	17%	14%	20%	32%*	34%	35%	+1%
Streaming subscription	11%	12%	13%	27%	33%	27%	-6% ▼

***Wave-on-wave differences driven by younger sample in April 2022**

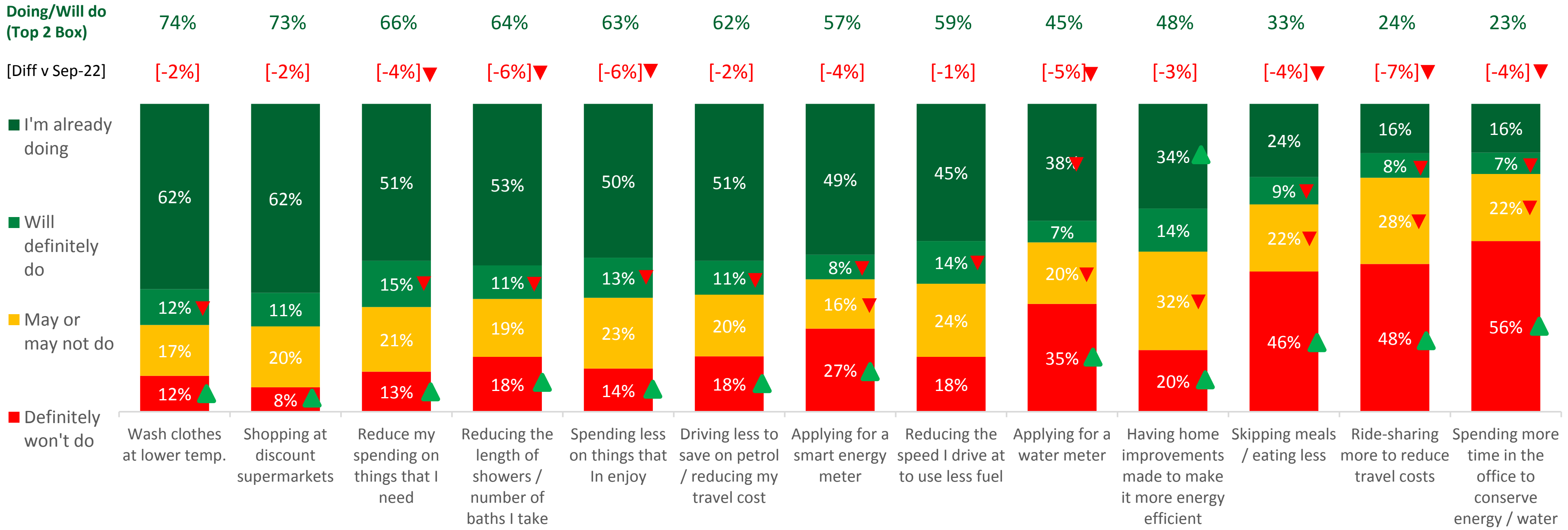
Q5. Which, if any, bills or costs are you worried about paying?
Base: April 2023 (excludes those who said ‘not applicable – based varies per bill; n=720 – 1,237)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

▲▼ Significant difference at 95% CI

Many respondents have already made active changes in order to save money, ‘definitely won’t do’ has significantly increased in its place across most options

18-29s are significantly less likely to wash their clothes at lower temperatures or reduce shower lengths. However, they are significantly more likely to definitely drive less, drive at a slower speed, and skip meals.

Behaviour change to save money



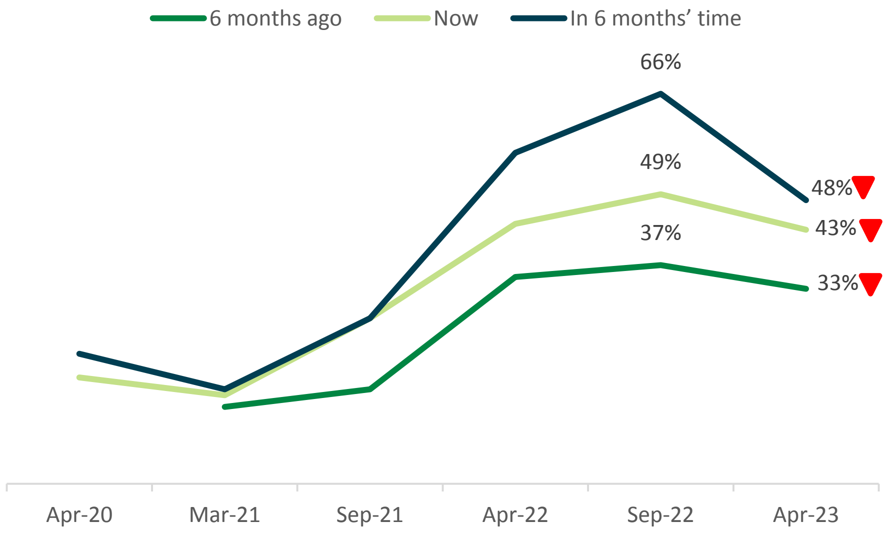
Copyright © United Utilities Water Limited 2019

Q8a. To what extent are you doing any of these this year in relation to your budgeting and spending?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

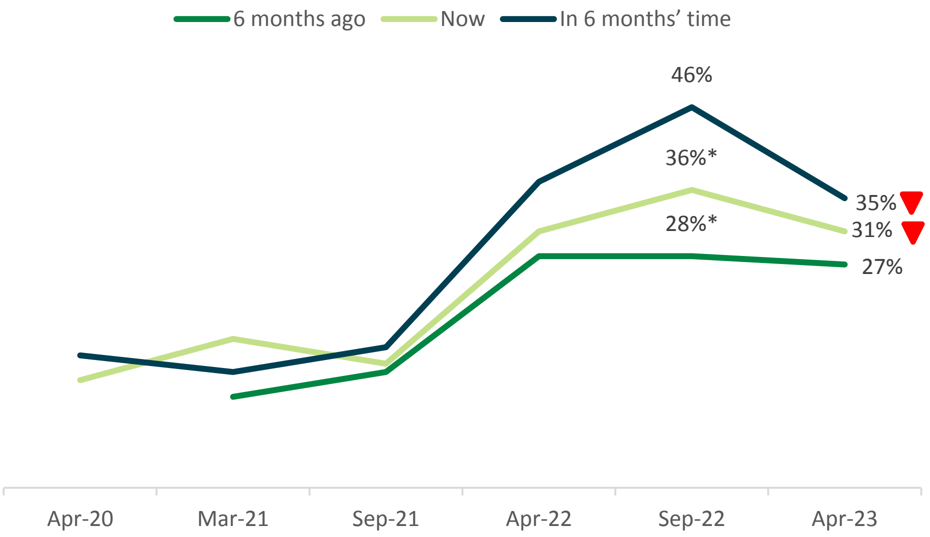
Significant difference at 95% CI

Difficulty in meeting monthly bills has fallen significantly across all time periods, while significant drops are present for current and 6 months time for water bills.

Difficulty with meeting monthly bill payments (general)



Difficulty with meeting monthly bill payments (water)



***Wave-on-wave differences driven by younger sample in April 2022**

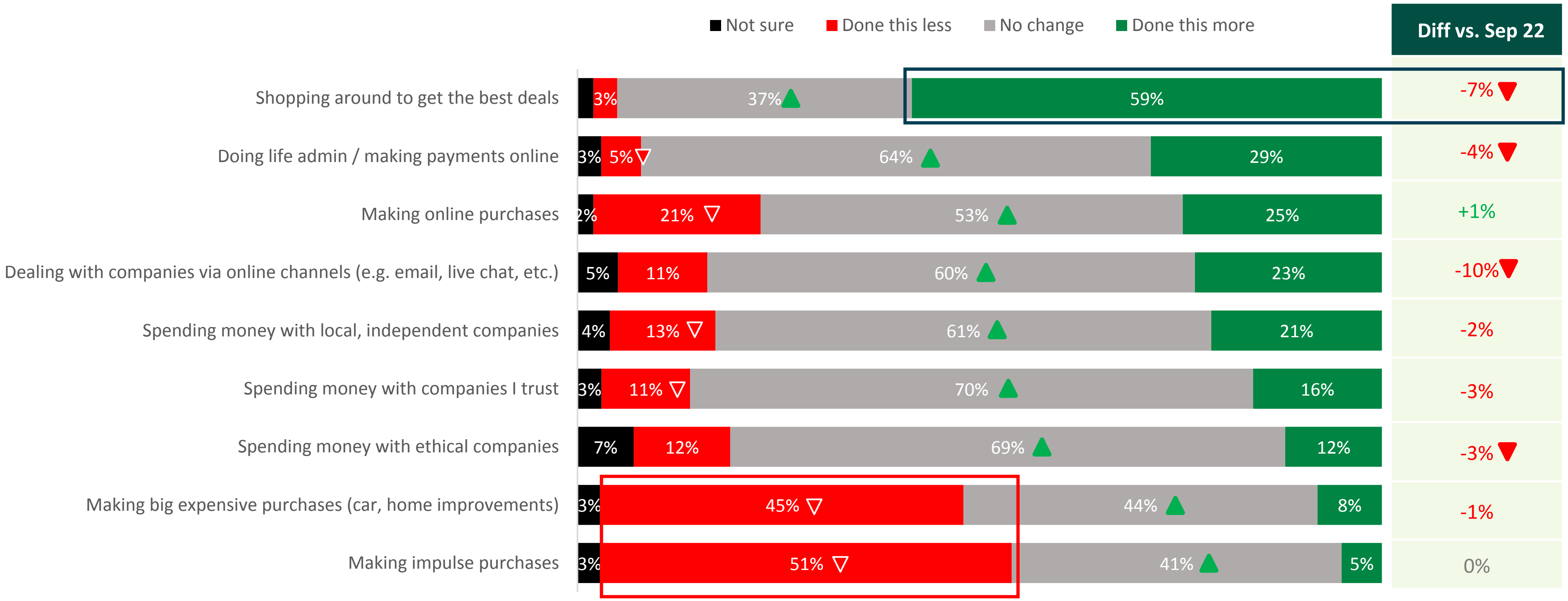
Those who are 70+, those with a water meter and males are all significantly more likely to find monthly bills 'not difficult at all' to pay now. This trend is mirrored with monthly water bills.

Q6. How difficult would you say it is for your household to meet the monthly payments on your bills?
Q7. And, specifically, how difficult would you say it is for your household to pay your water bill?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

In the past 6 months, behaviors have remained stable, with *'no change'* in behaviors seeing a significant increase

Changes in shopping behaviour vs. 6 months ago



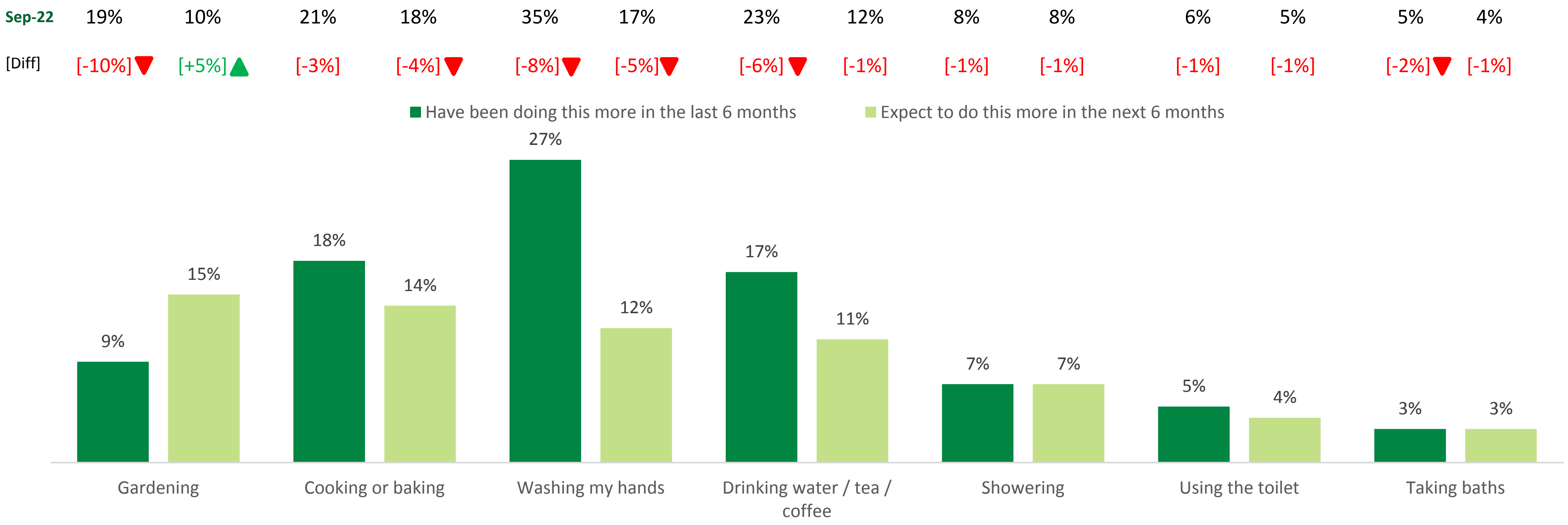
Q8. How have each of the following changed for you compared to 6 months ago?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Lifestyle & water usage

Time spent doing activities related to water are expected to fall over the next 6 months, with gardening seeing an increase, perhaps indicative of better weather.

Time spent doing activities – 'spent more time L6M / N6M' [water activities]

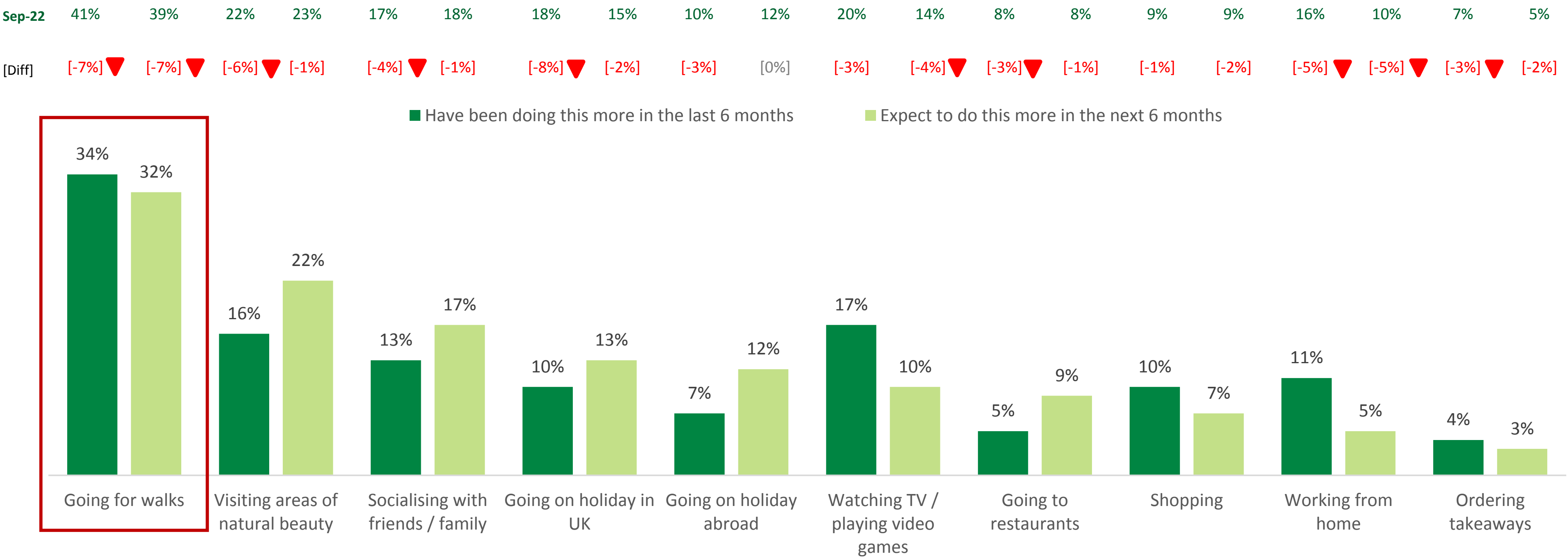


Q10. Which of the following have you been spending more time doing or doing more often in the last 6 months?
Q11. And, which of the following do you expect to spend more time doing or doing more often in the next 6 months?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Walking is the most popular activity, remaining stable into the next 6 months. More outdoor leisure activities are expected to grow in the next 6 months.

Time spent doing activities – 'spent more time L6M / N6M' [non-water activities]



Q10. Which of the following have you been spending more time doing or doing more often in the last 6 months?
Q11. And, which of the following do you expect to spend more time doing or doing more often in the next 6 months?
Base: April 2023 ((n=1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Moist toilet tissues, non-toilet tissues and pet/human hair are the most common item to be disposed of down the toilet. Most items have seen a significant decline.

Items disposed of down toilet, sink or drain in last 6 months

Hygiene / Personal care

		Difference vs. Sept 2022
Moist toilet tissue wipes	14%	-3% ▼
Tissues (not toilet tissues)	12%	0%
Tampons	4%	-3% ▼
Baby wipes	2%	-4% ▼
Dental floss	3%	-1%
Cotton pads, cotton buds	2%	-2% ▼
Contact lenses	3%	0%
Cigarettes	2%	-1%
Sanitary towels / panty liners	2%	0%
Make-up wipes	1%	-1% ▼
Plasters	1%	-1% ▼
Condoms	1%	-1% ▼
Nappies	0%	-1% ▼

Cleaning

		Difference vs. Sept 2022
Cleaning / disinfectant wipes	3%	-1%
Contents of vaccum cleaner	1%	-1% ▼

Kitchen

		Difference vs. Sept 2022
Cooking fats / oils	7%	-2%
Food waste	7%	-3% ▼
Kitchen towel	4%	-1%

Pet

		Difference vs. Sept 2022
Pet hair / human hair	12%	-4% ▼
Pet mess	4%	-2% ▼
Pets that have passed away	0%	-1% ▼

61%
haven't disposed of any of the above via toilet, sink or drain in the last 6 months.

Q12. Which, if any, of the following items have you disposed of down the toilet or sink/drains in the past 6 months?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

▲▼ Significant difference at 95% CI

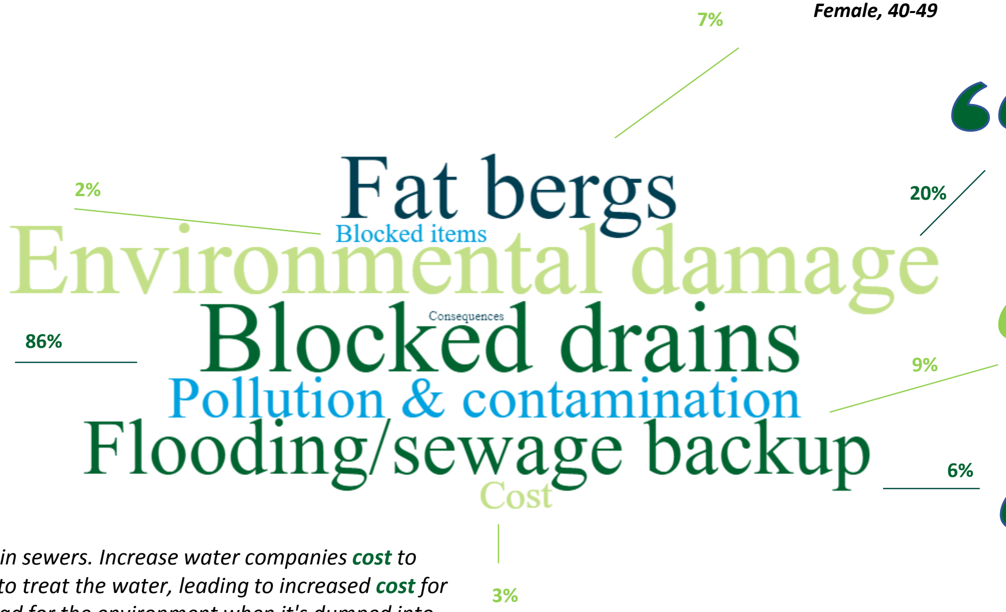
Blocked drains is the key consequence of putting non-flushable items down the drain, with environmental damage, flooding/sewage and pollution being key secondary concerns among customers.

Consequences of disposing products down toilet, sink or drain (themes from open-ends)

Fats can solidify and block brains. These items may not block the area of drain household is responsible for but further down network.
***Female,* 40-49**

They will eventually cause a blockage. We had a blockage due to ***hair****. A large* ***hairball*** *had formed in our drainpipe causing it to fail! Luckily we noticed and removed it quickly. I now try if I remember, to bin* ***hair*** *instead.*
***Female,* 40-49**

Block the toilet which can then use more water. Also bad for wildlife and ***environment*** *when the get through.*
***Female,* 30-39**



Blocked drains pollution in the seas damage to fish and sea creatures.
***Female,* 60-69**

They cause ***blockages*** *that lead to flooding. It also jams up pumps and cost thousands to rectify.*
***Male,* 55+**

It can cause blocked drains and sewage overflow in the public system which is a health and safety hazard and is expensive to rectify, resulting in increased water bills.
***Female,* 50-59**

Block the main sewers. Increase water companies ***cost*** *to unblock and to treat the water, leading to increased* ***cost*** *for customers. Bad for the environment when it's dumped into natural water ways by water companies*
***Male,* 30-39**

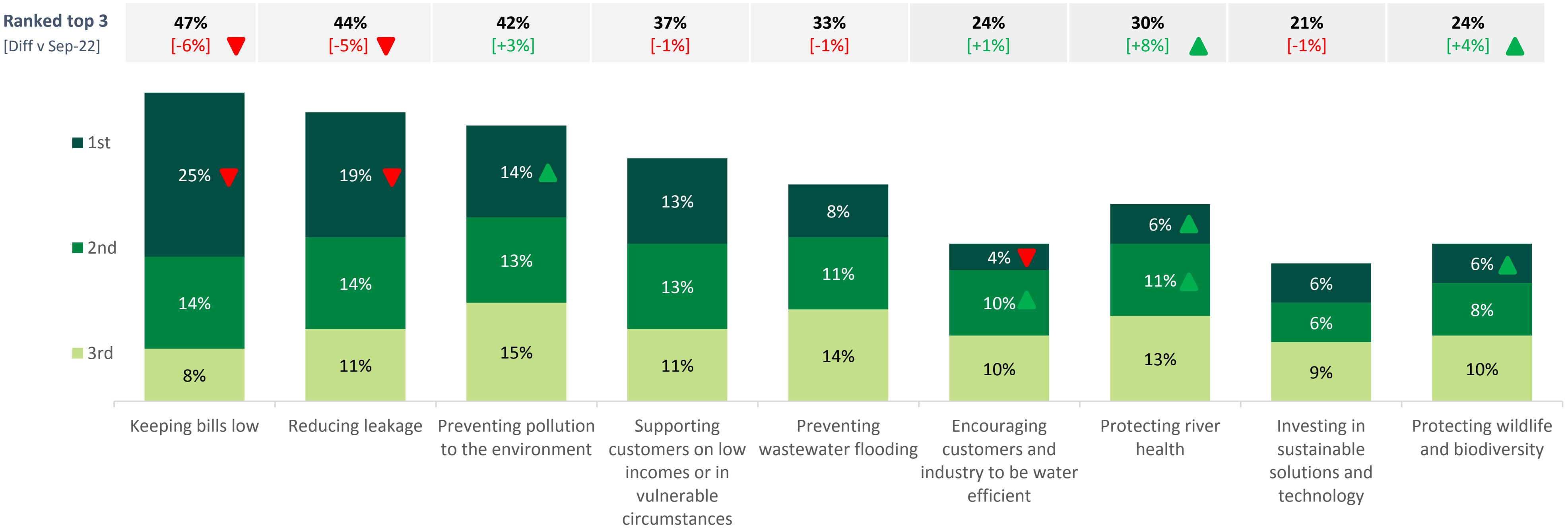
Q13. What do you think are some of the possible consequences of items being flushed or put down the drain when they shouldn't be?
Base: September 2022 (n= 966) (Excluding nothing/don't know/N/A, and 'other' base is n=954, % is based off this figure)
Source: State of the Nation (September 2022)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Customer needs

Keeping bills low is a key area of importance, while protecting river health records an 8% significant increase within the context of wider decreases across most options.

Important issues for United Utilities to be tackling



Q28 - Please rank the following issues in order of importance, where 1 = the issue United Utilities should prioritise tackling first.
Base: April 2023; Coded themes from n=1000
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Customers spontaneously mention that they would like less pollution, while leaks are a prominent theme, whether to reduce the number of them or fix them quicker.

Additional requests of United Utilities (themes from open-ended responses)

Fix leaks (c.22%)

Reducing leakage is the most important to me. water is too precious to have it flowing out of leaks in the roads and streets due to broken pipes.
Female, 70+

Stop ripping customers off, stop polluting our waterways with sewage, fix leaks so they don't waste 430 million litres per day.
Male, 50-59

Updating old water supplies to prevent leaks and to work to prevent waste being dumped into natural waterways.
Male, 30-39

Less pollution/dumping (c.16%)

Seeing river health, wastewater management, protecting wildlife and preventing pollution as all examples of the same thing.
Prefer not to say, 40-49

I am horrified at the numerous reports of water pollution by water companies and the private sector . There should be very heavy fines and any money raised should be used to reduce bills , particularly for those families who are constantly battling to care for their kids.
Female, 70+

Stop dumping effluent into the water system and process it properly like we handsomely pay you to do...
Male, 50-59

Cheaper bills/rates (10%)

not to raise water bills to household every year. Ensure not to pollute watercourse.
Male, 30-39

Fixing leaks so we don't have water shortages, also so it keeps the bills as low as possible.
Male, 50-59

take accurate funds from customers and don't over charge.
Female, 30-39

Less money to shareholders/bosses (c.5%)

Stop dumping sewage, reduce the 425,491 hours of spills (2022, Environment Agency data). Nearly twice as much as any other British water company. Pay your shareholders and senior executives less. Invest that £600M profit in what you should be doing.
Male, prefer not to say

Stop paying excessive dividends and bonuses and use the money instead to invest in infrastructure which is what they should have done from day one.
Male, 60-69

Stop waste! Be more concerned about customers than shareholders and salaries of bosses.
Female, 60-69

Q17. Is there anything else you'd like to see United Utilities doing more of?
Base: April 2023; Coded themes from n=1000 open-ended responses (Excluding nothing/don't know and 'N/A, base is n=399, % is based off this figure)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Of those who left a comment, fixing leaks is mentioned by over 1 out of 5 customers, with less pollution/dumping following in what they want to see United Utilities do more of.

Additional requests of UU (coded themes from open-ended responses)

Q17. Is there anything else you’d like to see United Utilities doing more of?
Base: April 2023; Coded themes from n=1000 open-ended responses (Excluding nothing/don’t know and ‘N/A, base is n=399, % is based off this figure)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)
All codes less than 1% have been omitted

Participants expect brands to innovate through technology, whether they ensure convenience, provide better customer service, or be more environmentally friendly.

Brand innovation (open-ended responses)

Successful harnessing of technology makes the experience more efficient and enjoyable across numerous fields.

HSBC banking introduced the ability to pay in cheques using the app and a camera, good use of technology and made up for closing the branch nearest home.
Male, 60-69

Apple - overall has made my life easier in terms of keeping in touch with friends and family, payment methods using Apple Pay both online and in store and general entertainment.
Female, 50-59

I experienced innovative in the field of water flow is their use of advanced technology to improve the efficiency, performance, and reliability of water management systems. By incorporating sensors, analytics, and advanced control systems, Xylem is able to provide solutions that are more effective and cost-efficient than traditional approaches. Additionally, Xylem's focus on sustainability and water conservation aligns with the growing global need for more efficient and sustainable water management solutions.
Female, 30-39

Customer service that prioritises efficiency and in-person interactions is enjoyed

I had a heart attack at the age of 39. A certain company made sure my health was well looked after sending me a Food hamper and flowers to my wife.
Male, 50-59

A company that offers a range of communications so that you don't feel excluded discriminated against. EG I don't use a smart phone, apps, social media and at times these are the only options available.
Female, 60-69

Brilliant video from Amazon showing the different uses an Alexa could be put to in the home and by different people.
Male, 60-69

Innovations in environmentalism shows that customers favour alternatives to conventional less eco-friendly methods

All smol packaging is recyclable, letterbox size and childproof - great company to use.
Female, 40-49

There was a company that could tell you your carbon footprint for your delivery- dependent on size, weight, distance to travel ect. But I can't remember which one it was!
Female, 40-49

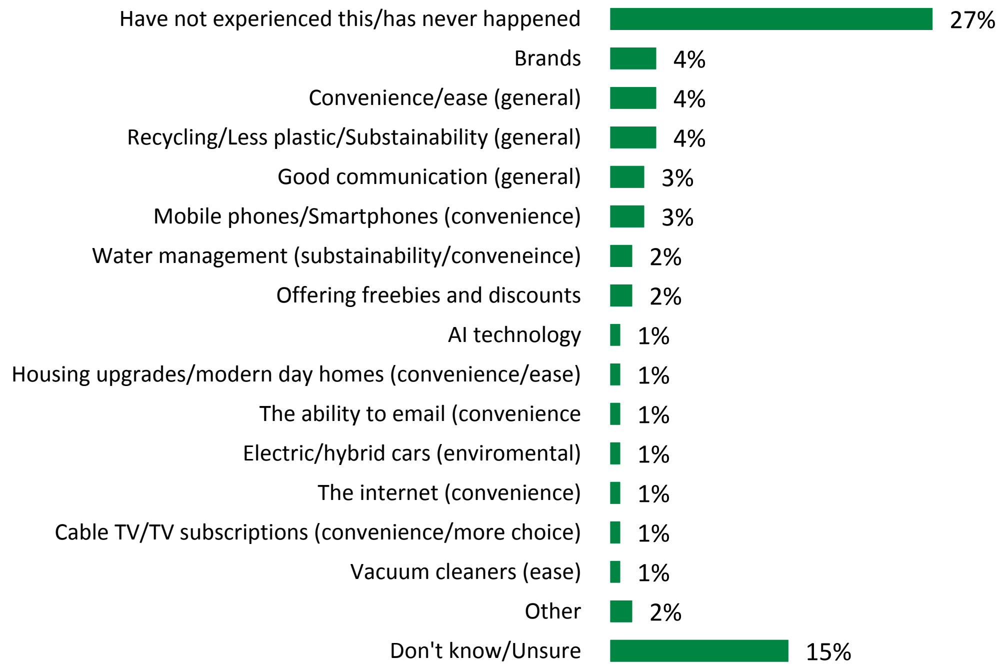
M&S stopping plastic bags on click and collect purchases. We have to bring our own and it has greatly reduced amount of plastic they use (and we have to dispose of!).
Female, 60-69

Q15. Please tell us about a time when you experienced great innovation from a company and what made it so innovative?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000) (Excluding 'nothing/no and 'other-N/A, base is n=670, % is based off this figure)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Just under 3/10 have not experienced innovation from a brand. Of those who had, general brand mentions, convenience and recycling are the most prominent features recalled.

Brand innovation (coded themes from open-ended responses)

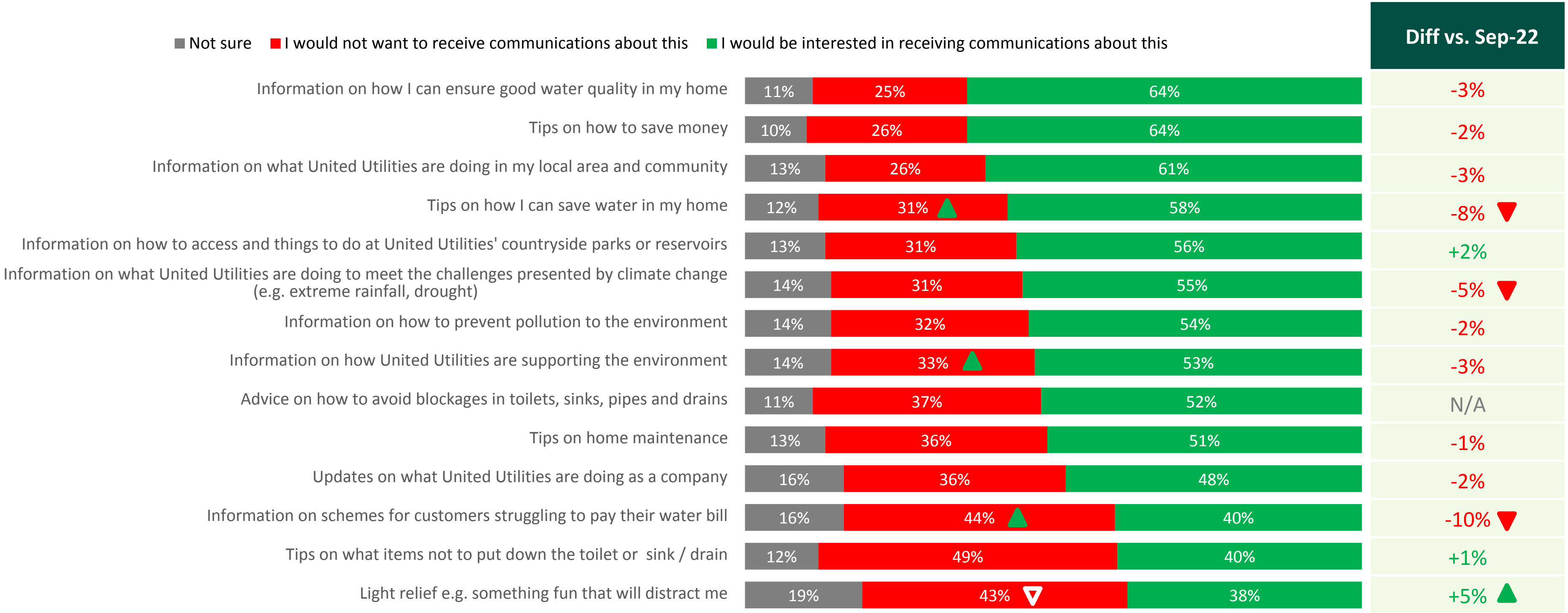


Q15. Please tell us about a time when you experienced great innovation from a company and what made it so innovative?
Base: April 2023; Coded themes from n=1000 open-ended responses (Excluding ‘nothing/never and ‘N/A, base is n=673, % is based off this figure)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)
All codes less than 1% have been omitted

Information on ensuring water quality, how to save money, and what UU are doing in the local area have the highest level of interest in receiving.

Interest in receiving comms from UU

60+ and those with a water meter, are significantly more in favour of receiving communication relating to ensuring water quality, driving interest.



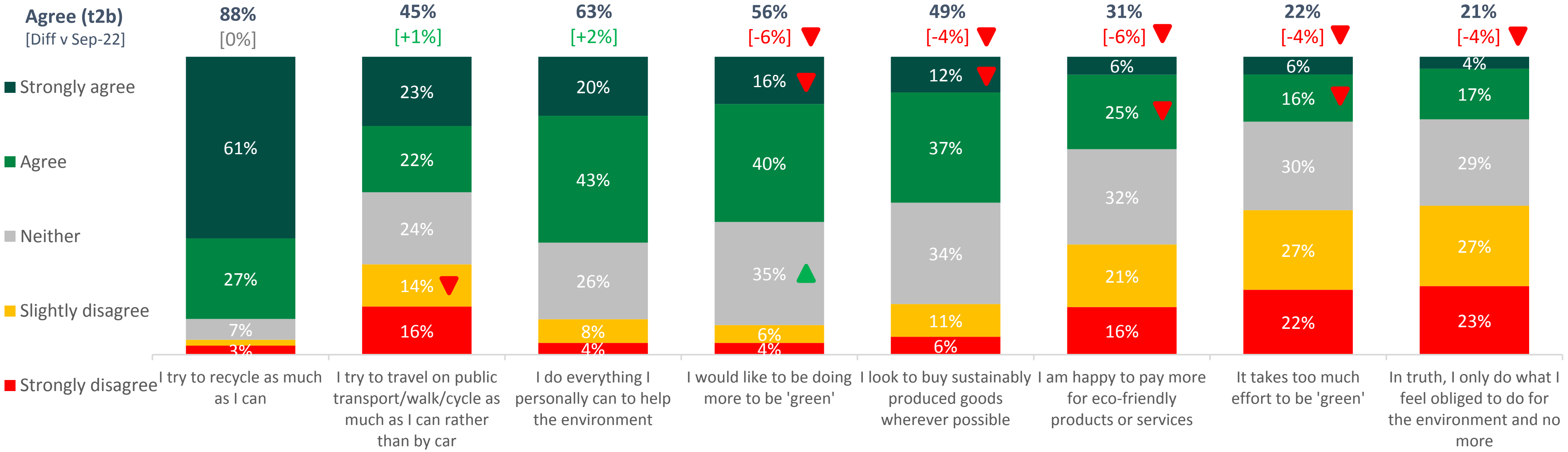
Q16. Which of the following types of communications would you be open to receiving from United Utilities during this time?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Around 9 out of 10 customers try to recycle as much as they can, remains stable since Sep-22. Desire to be more ‘green’ and purchasing sustainable products have significantly declined.

Attitudes toward the environment

18–29-year-olds are significantly more likely to agree that it takes too much effort to be ‘green’, while females are significantly more likely to agree that they would like to do more to be ‘green’.

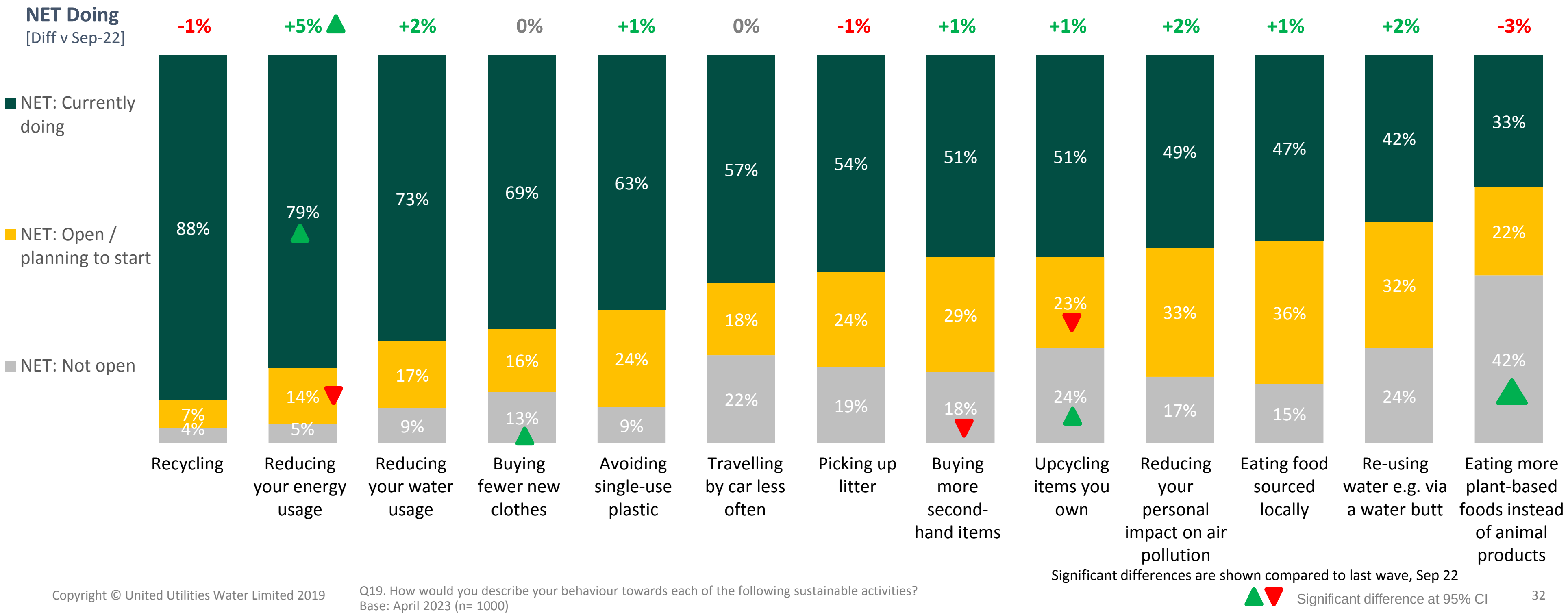


Q18. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Consumers continue to engage in pro-environmental behaviours, with reducing energy usage increasing significantly

Engagement in pro-environmental behaviours

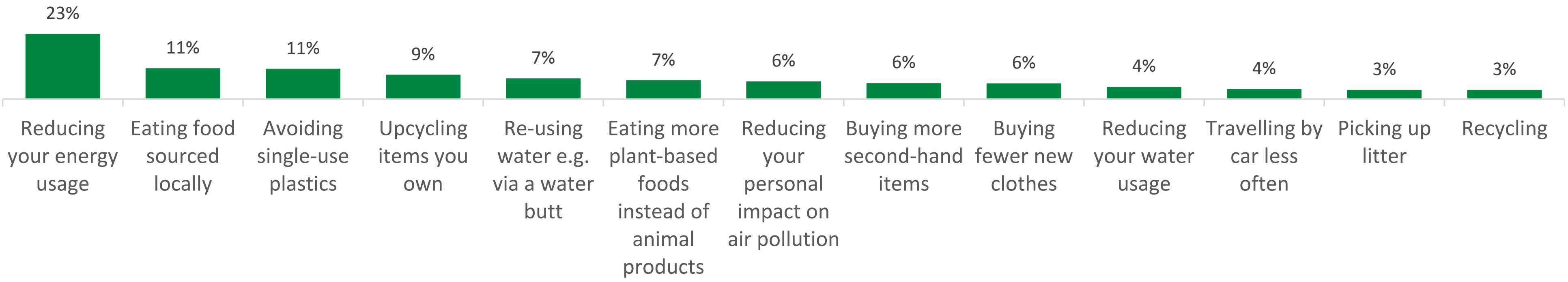


Q19. How would you describe your behaviour towards each of the following sustainable activities?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Despite the decline in open/planning to for reducing energy usage, this is the area customers are most interested in/passionate about, at just under ¼.

Interest/passion in pro-environmental behaviours

Those in Cheshire and those aged 70+ are significantly more likely to be most interested/passionate in reducing your energy usage



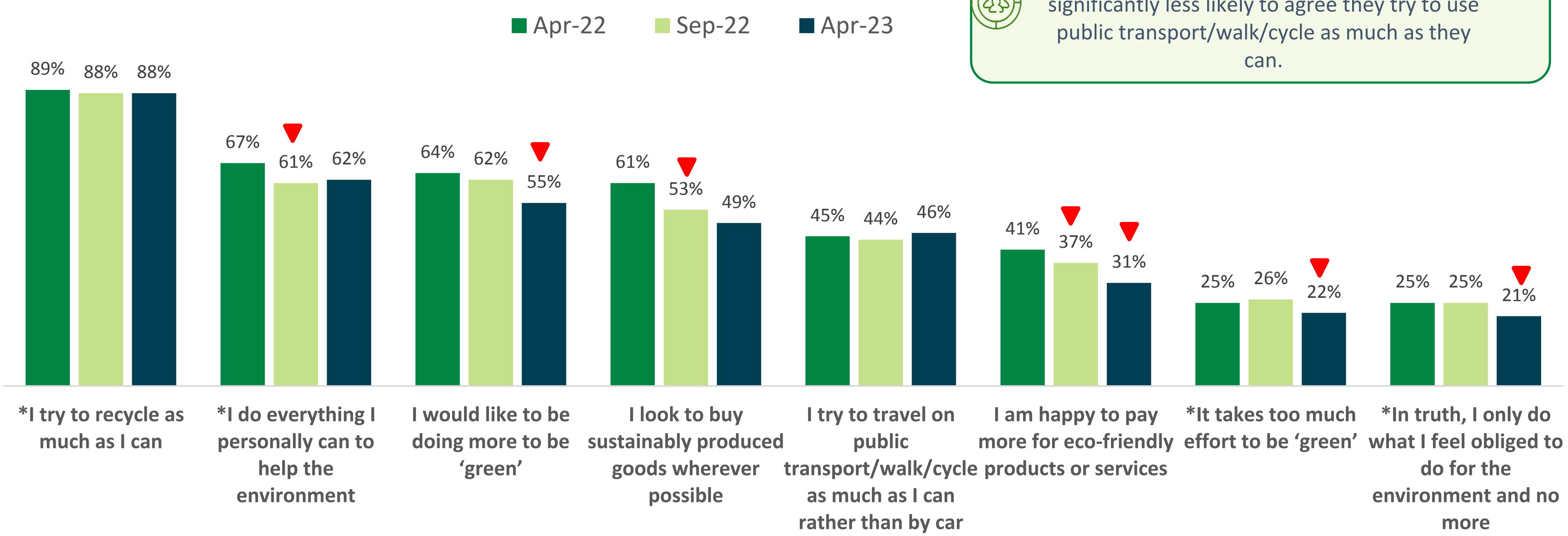
Significant differences are shown compared to last wave, Sep 22

Significant difference at 95% CI

Q20. And which of the following are you most interested in / passionate about?
Base: April 2023 (n= 892)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Consumers remain positive toward recycling, agreement in effort to be 'green' and doing what feels obliged have also significantly declined, signalling a shift in attitudes toward environmental actions.

Attitudes towards the environment (Strongly agree / somewhat agree)



Those in Cheshire and 40-49-year-olds are significantly less likely to agree they try to use public transport/walk/cycle as much as they can.

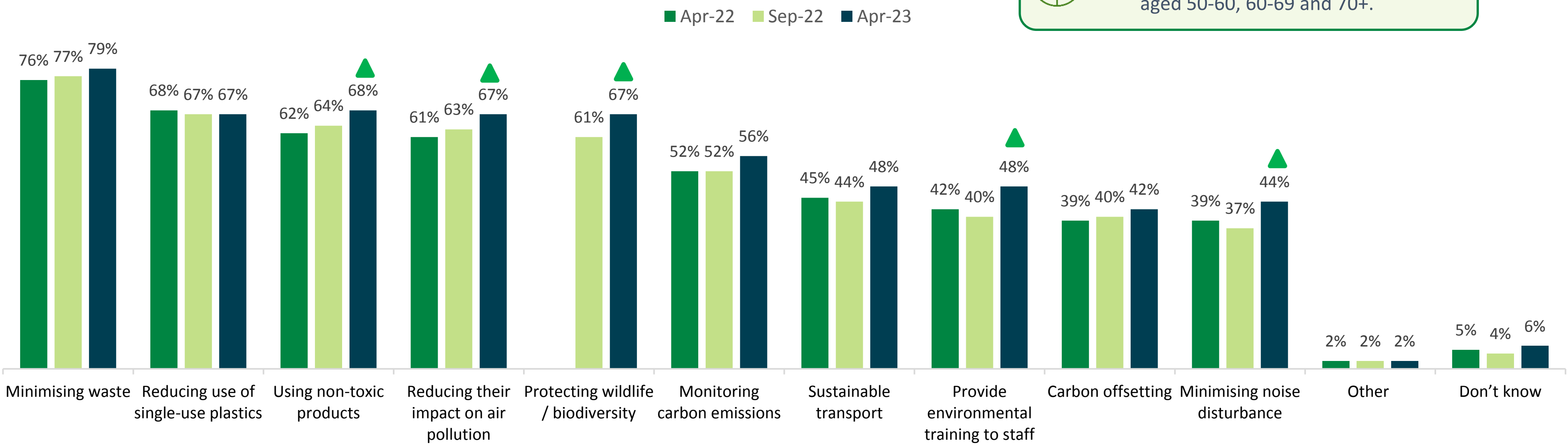
Q18. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI between Sep and Arp-22

Participants agree that minimising waste is the most important aspect, with environmental considerations leading among key areas of concern.

Expectations of companies

Minimising waste is driven by significantly higher scores among those aged 50-60, 60-69 and 70+.



Q21. Which of the following would you expect companies to be doing as part of their standard operating procedures?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Recap

Recap

Financial concerns remain most concerning with the ongoing cost of living crisis

Concerns around environmental issues have remained stable

Household discretionary income has remained stable

Keeping bills low has seen a significant decline in importance, with protecting river health seeing a significant increase

Customers report less water related activities in the past 6-months but expect to be doing more gardening

Customers would like to engage on activities like accessing country parks or reservoirs and want light relief, something fun to distract

The increase in river water pollution was a key spontaneous point for customers

Appendix

Ofwat standards for high-quality research

Ofwat have set out requirements for High Quality Research in their Customer Engagement Policy. All water company research and engagement should follow best practice and lead to a meaningful understanding of what is important to customers and wider stakeholders.

Useful and contextualised
The insight used from this research is continually used with United Utilities to evidence and track customer views and behaviours.

Fit for purpose
This research was designed to ensure robust insight was gained. The questionnaire was designed in order to track customer sentiment over time. The sample was carefully considered to ensure sub group analysis and understand differences of these groups and recruit a mix of engagement levels with water and the environment.

Ethical
This research was conducted by Explain Research who are a member of the Market Research Society. Participants were reminded that they could be open and honest in their views due to anonymity and Explain and United Utilities were subject to strict data protection protocols.

Continual
The outputs of this research were contextualised using a wide evidence base including previous State of the Nation surveys. The design of the methodology and survey allow for continual tracking over time.

Neutrally designed
Every effort has been made to ensure that the research is neutral and free from bias. Where there is the potential for bias, this has been acknowledged in the report, for example the heat wave factor. Participants were encouraged to give their open and honest views and reassurances were given throughout the research that United Utilities were open to hearing their honest opinions and experiences

Inclusive
Quotas were set based on the known profile of United Utilities' customers and weighted to mitigate variations in the sample population. The research materials went through robust testing to make sure they were accessible and engaging.

Shared in full with others
The research is published and shared on our website and through our industry customer insight newsletter, The Source.

Independently assured
All research was conducted by Explain, an independent market research agency.

Data statement

Note on analysis

Due to the natural fallout of results from ‘In the flow’ members, a small number fall outside of quota groups. These have been reclassified as ‘prefer not to say’ and ‘other’. In order for the sample to meet quota targets, these groups have been down weighted to a miniscule amount, so that, when figures are rounded to whole numbers, they equal zero, while established quota groups equal the proportions specified, which are representative of United Utilities customers. As an effect of weighting, some subgroup base sizes may not equal the total base displayed, to a minor extent.

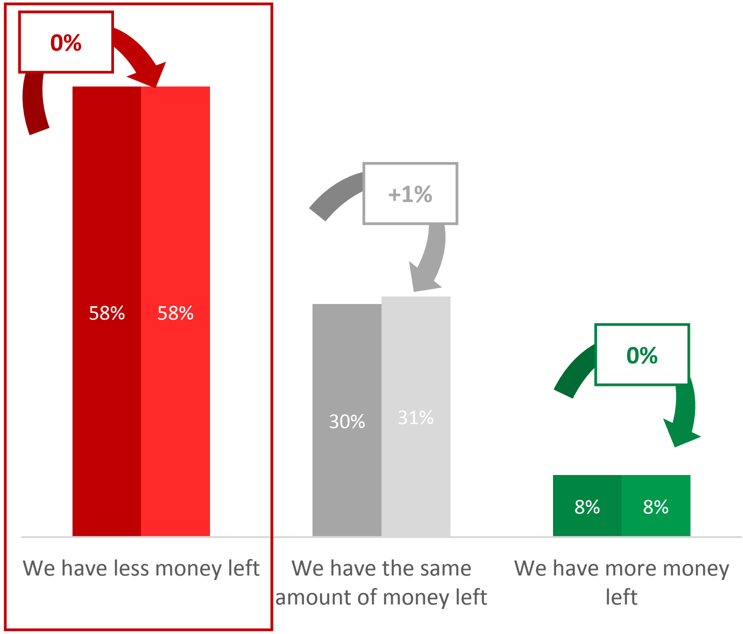
Some percentages may not add up to a sum of 100%. This is due to rounding of percentages to display a whole number, consistent with reporting formatting.

All data from external panel providers has been cleaned and vetted against rigid standards to remove those that flatline (select the first choice on all questions in order to complete the survey quicker), speeders (completion faster than 1/3 of the total LOI (15 minutes) and poor verbatim (gibberish, random characters and profanities).

All statistical significance has been calculated using a Z-Test between subgroups across all options.

Customers are beginning to regain confidence in job security and investing in the future, but the plurality report ‘no change’ on six months ago.

Household discretionary income



Darker bars are September 2022; Lighter bars are April 2023

Financial confidence vs. 6 months ago

[Difference vs. September 2022]

	Job security (yourself, friends, family)	Ability to invest in the future
Less confident	29% [-8%] ▼	47% [-12%] ▼
More confident	10% [+2%]	7% [+2%] ▲

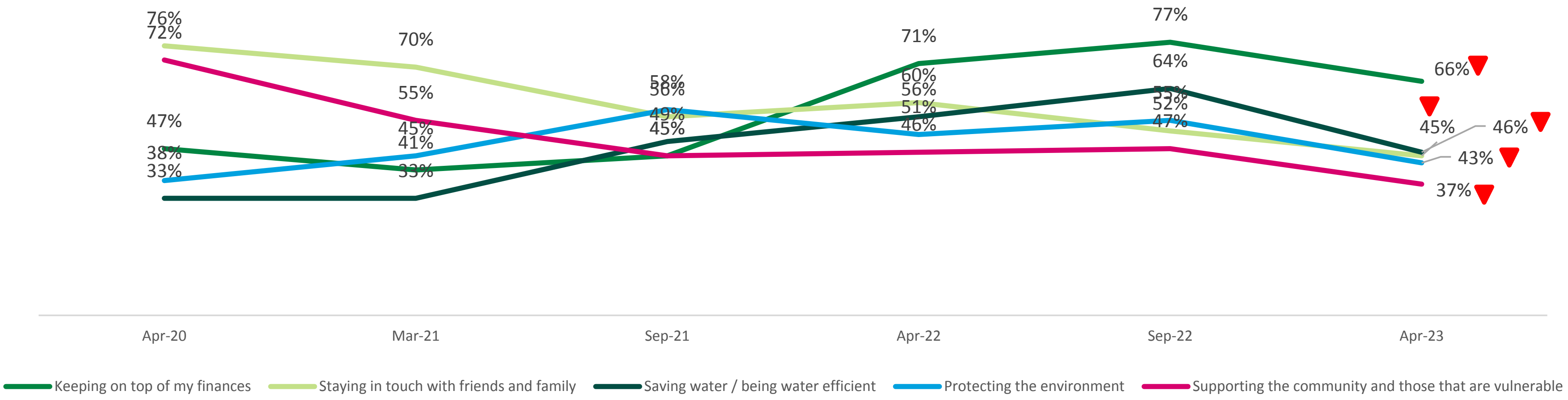
Q8. How have each of the following changed for you compared to 6 months ago?
Q9. Compared to 6 months ago, how confident do you feel about...
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

▲▼ Significant difference at 95% CI

All options have seen declines since Sep-22, with finances remaining the most salient issue. Despite these declines, the majority record no changeover the last 6 months.

Important aspects – change in L6M

More important
(Top 2 box)

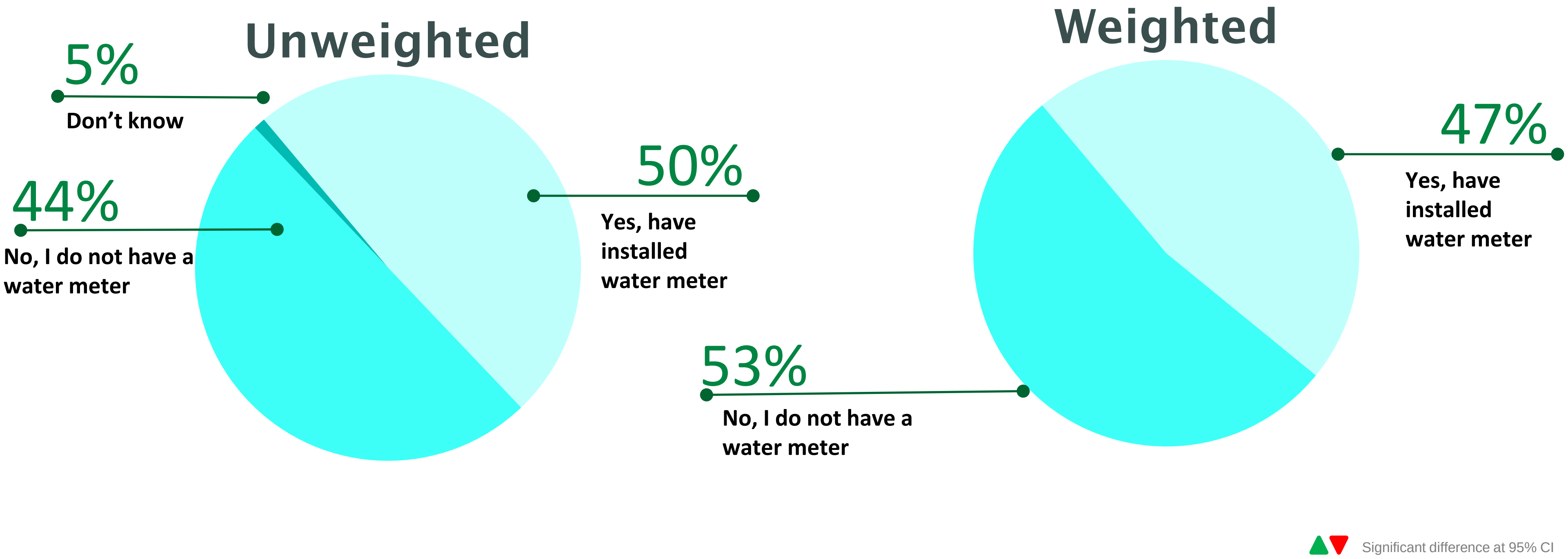


Q4. Over the last 6 months, would you say the following aspects have become any more or less important to you?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Significant difference at 95% CI

Measured vs. unmeasured

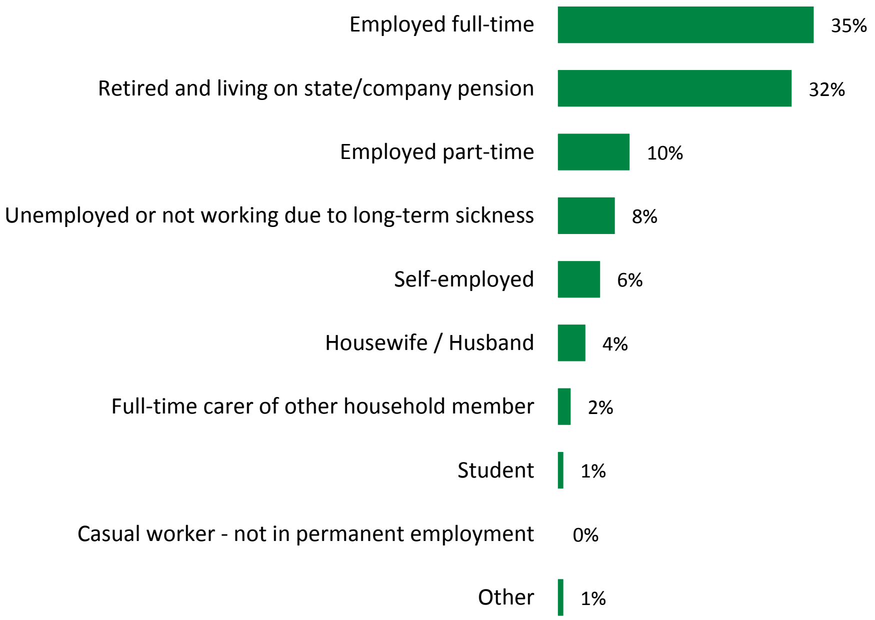
Metered vs. Unmetered



Q25: Do you currently have a water meter installed at your home?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Employment status

Employment status



Significant difference at 95% CI

Q26: Which of the following applies to you?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

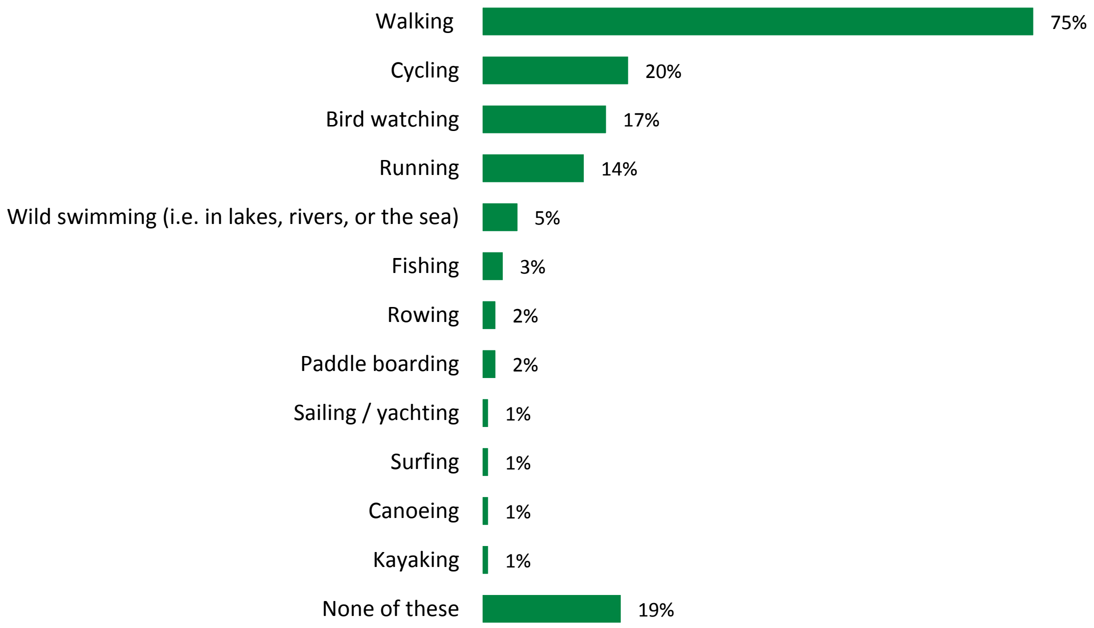
Sample profile

Total	Unweighted		Weighted	
	Count	%	Count	%
Gender				
Male	495	50%	490	49%
Female	501	50%	510	51%
Age				
18-29	58	6%	80	8%
30-39	162	16%	160	16%
40-49	171	17%	170	17%
50-59	200	20%	200	20%
60-69	163	16%	160	16%
70+	231	23%	230	23%
Region				
Cheshire	142	14%	140	14%
Cumbria	87	9%	90	9%
Greater Manchester	351	35%	370	37%
Lancashire	210	21%	200	20%
Merseyside	206	21%	200	20%

Significant difference at 95% CI

Activity engagement

Activity engagement

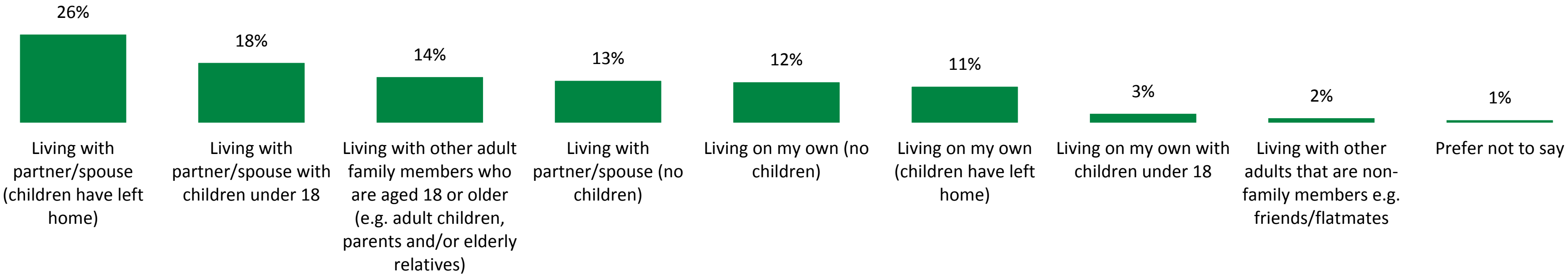


Significant difference at 95% CI

Q22: Which of these activities, if any, have you done in the last 6 months?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Household status

Household status



Significant difference at 95% CI

Q23: Please could you confirm which household situation best applies to you?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Garden access

Garden access

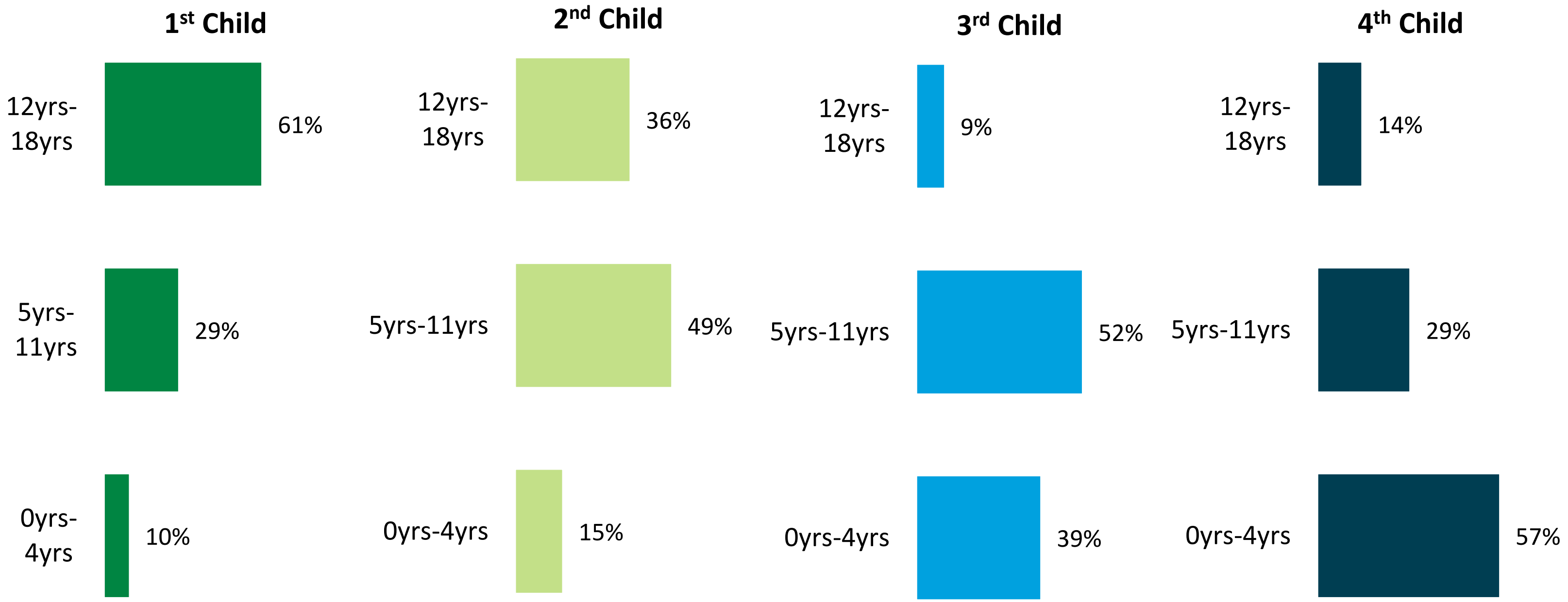
Total		
	Count	**%**
Gender		
Yes, there is a garden that I/we actively maintain (e.g. that you regularly or occasionally water)	660	66%
Yes, there is a garden but I/we do not actively maintain it (e.g. you do not regularly or occasionally water it)	190	19%
No, there is not a garden BUT there is a balcony/terrace with plants that gets actively maintained	50	5%
No, I/we do not have a garden	100	10%

Significant difference at 95% CI

Q27: Does the property you live in have a garden?
Base: April 2023 (n= 1000)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Children age breakdown (unweighted)

Children age breakdown (unweighted)

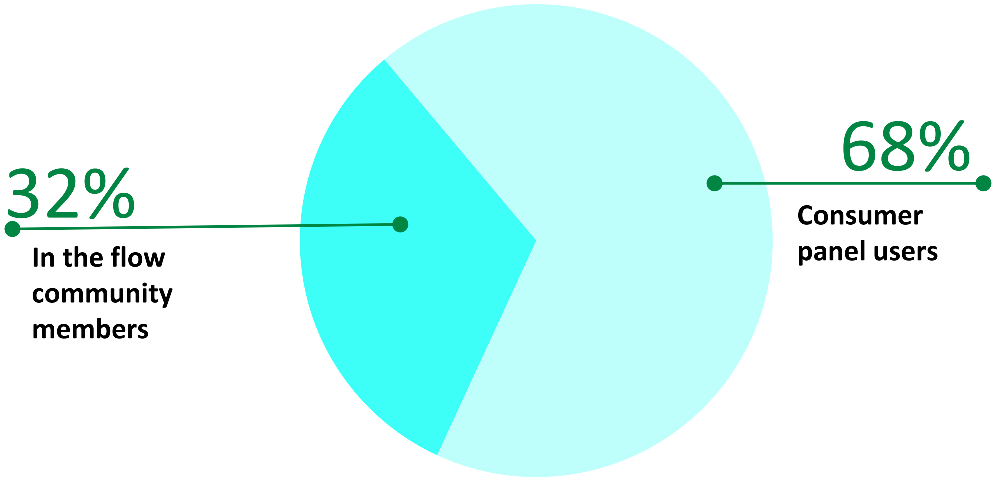


Significant difference at 95% CI

Q27: You said you have children under 18 living at home. In what year were each of your children who are under 18 born?
Base: April 2023 (n= 207)
Source: State of the Nation (April 2023)

Fieldwork breakdown

Sample source breakdown (unweighted)



The 'In the Flow' panel

- In the Flow is an online community designed to gather the views of those in the North West who have access to the internet (circa 90% of the population)
- Customer communities typically provide a deeper level of engagement with customers than ad-hoc pieces of research
- It provides rapid research access to United Utilities customers
  - This can provide fast and cost effective feedback on a wide range of issues
- Where appropriate, work is supported with other methodologies and samples to represent those not present on in the flow
- Over 1,100 United Utilities customers are on the community

To find out more about using the 'in the flow' panel to meet your business needs, please contact **Shy Sharma or another member of the Insight Team**:

Shy Sharma
Head of Customer Insight
Shy.Sharma@uuplc.co.uk

Jenny Fathers
Customer Insight Manager
Jenny.Fathers@uuplc.co.uk

Jessica Collier
Customer Insight Executive
Jessica.Collier@uuplc.co.uk