

CCWater Investigating low take up of Water Industry Redress Scheme

Survey Results – May 2017

Background and objectives

The water industry introduced an escalation level for water complainants who are still not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint they have about their water company even after CCWater's intervention. Complainants in this situation are now offered the opportunity to have their case looked into further by the Water Industry Redress Scheme (WATRS).

To date, take up of WATRS has been low. This survey has been commissioned to understand why this is so and to look at ways of overcoming barriers/ resistances to using WATRS:-

- why customers who are unhappy with the outcome of their case following CCWater's involvement, do not approach the WATRS (the Water Industry Redress Scheme)
- what signposting would make an impact on eligible customers
- if the end-to-end industry time frame is deemed acceptable by consumers and if not, what is a reasonable timeframe.

Approach

- 100 telephone interviews were carried out with unsatisfied CCWater customers who were offered a further escalation channel to the Water Industry Redress Scheme for their complaint about a water company to WATRS.
- Data collection was carried out between 29th March and 5th April 2017.

Key findings

- Awareness of WATRS is low (31%) even among the sample of those informed about WATRS and so evidently the message is not getting through. Increasing awareness will increase take up. Those aware of WATRS before being reminded of what it is are four times more likely to take it up than those not aware.
- The main reason for not taking up WATRS or not considering WATRS are:-
 - just given up/ see no point in continuing
 - they are unaware of WATRS
 - consider their complaint is now resolved
 - feel it is too stressful to continue
 - told that there was nothing more they could do
- Suggestions for making the communication about WATRS stronger basically boil down to making it bigger, making it stand out more or having a separate email and/ or letter. Don't bury the message along with other communications. Giving them hope that the WATRS process does indeed increase their chance of a successful outcome (if this is the case) would also help by addressing the first major barrier listed above

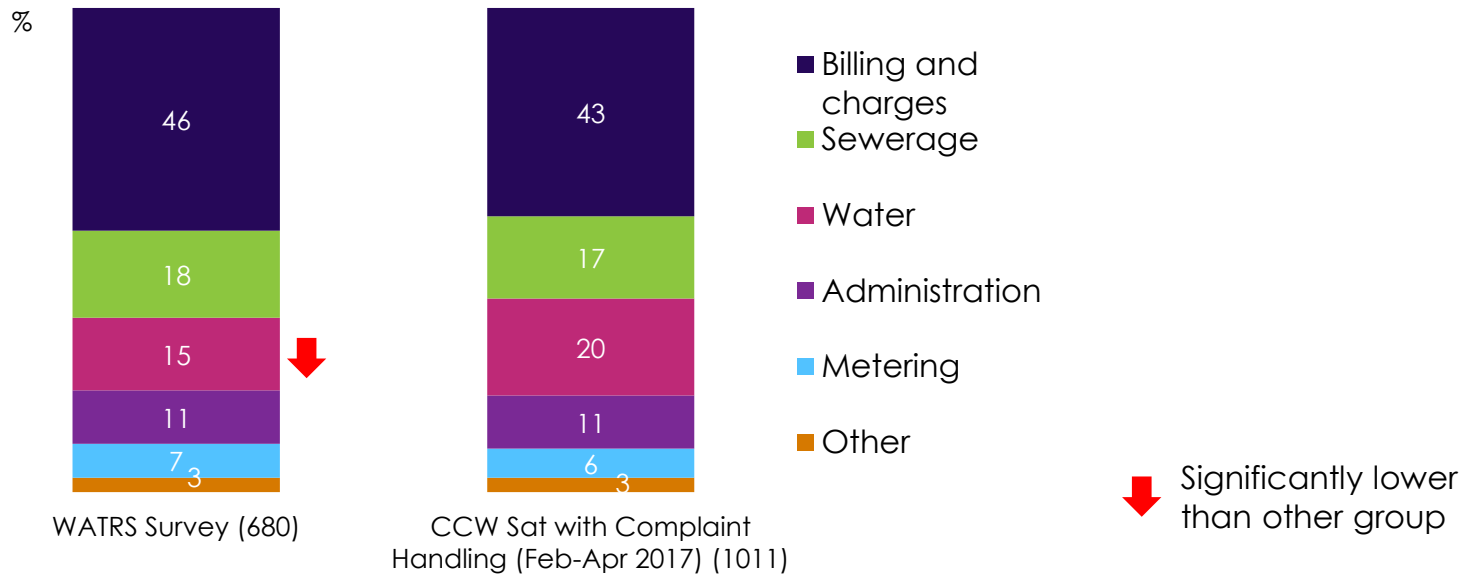


Key findings (2)

- Asked how long it has taken to get a resolution to their complaint from when they first raised it with their water company, 57% claim that it has taken longer than three months but only 14% think that it should take this long.
- Suggestions for speeding up the process include more effort from the water companies to deal with the complaint in the first place, more legal clout/ more powers for CCWater, employ more staff/ resources and be more decisive – don't keep passing things up and down the line.

Share of complaints by CCWater defined complaints category

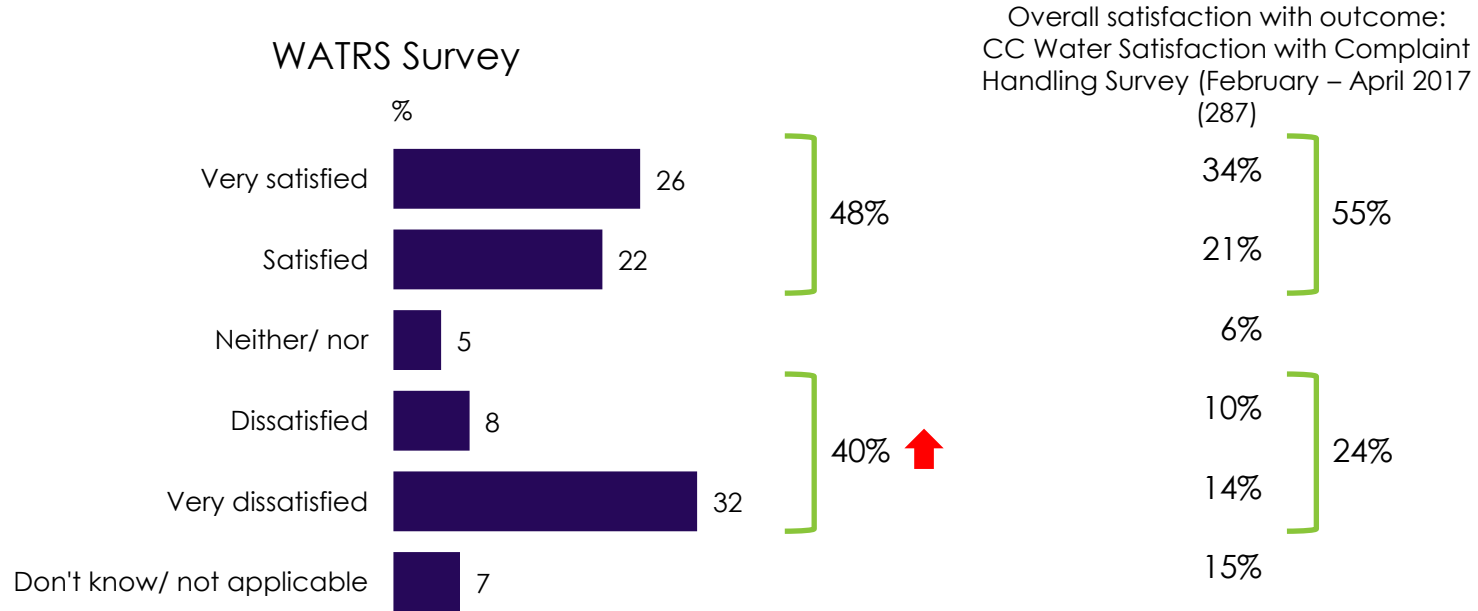
Comparing total sample profiles (that's the complete databases supplied for the surveys) between the WATRS survey and CCWater Satisfaction with Complaint Handling (February-April 2017), it is interesting to see that there is little difference in the samples by broad category of complaint. In other words those who are offered the WATRS escalation route are no more likely to be complainants about billing and charges, sewerage etc. than all CCWater complainants. They are less likely to be complainants about water.



SAMPLE FIELD CATEGORY MAIN
Base: All records supplied for survey

Satisfaction with outcome of complaint after taking it to CCWater

Amongst the sample offered the WATRS escalation channel, the proportion satisfied overall with CCWater for the outcome of their complaint is still 48% (very or fairly satisfied). This is not significantly lower than the proportion overall satisfied with outcome in the latest wave of the CCWater satisfaction tracker (55%). It may be that not all of those invited needed to be. However, there is a significantly higher proportion dissatisfied among the WATRS invitees (40% versus 24%).

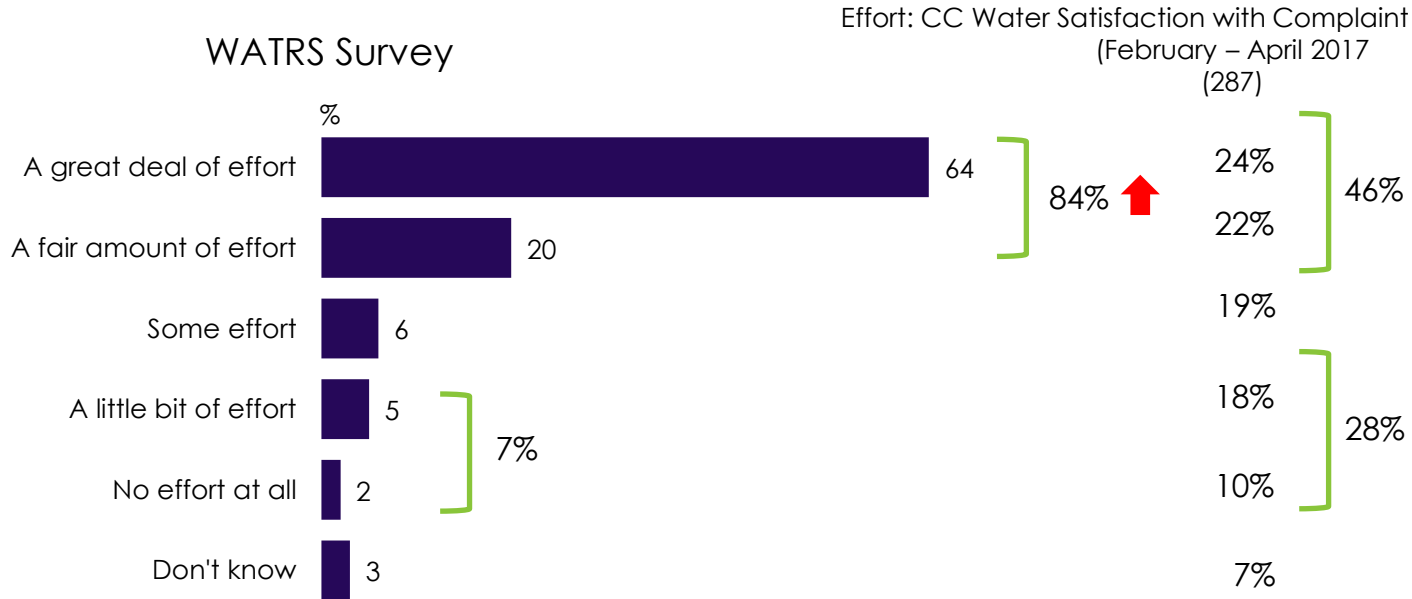


Q3. How satisfied were you with the outcome of your complaint after you took it to CCWater? Were you ... READ OUT
Base: All (100)

↑ Significantly higher than other group

Effort

Almost two thirds in the WATRS survey claimed they had to put a great deal of effort into getting their water complaint resolved. The proportion saying they had to put a great deal or a fair amount of effort into it stands at 84%. This is significantly higher than for CCWater complaints in general from the latest February – April quarter of the CCWater Satisfaction with Complaint Handling tracker (46%). This is not surprising. The additional WATRS escalation channel will undoubtedly make people feel that more effort is being called upon to get the complaint resolved



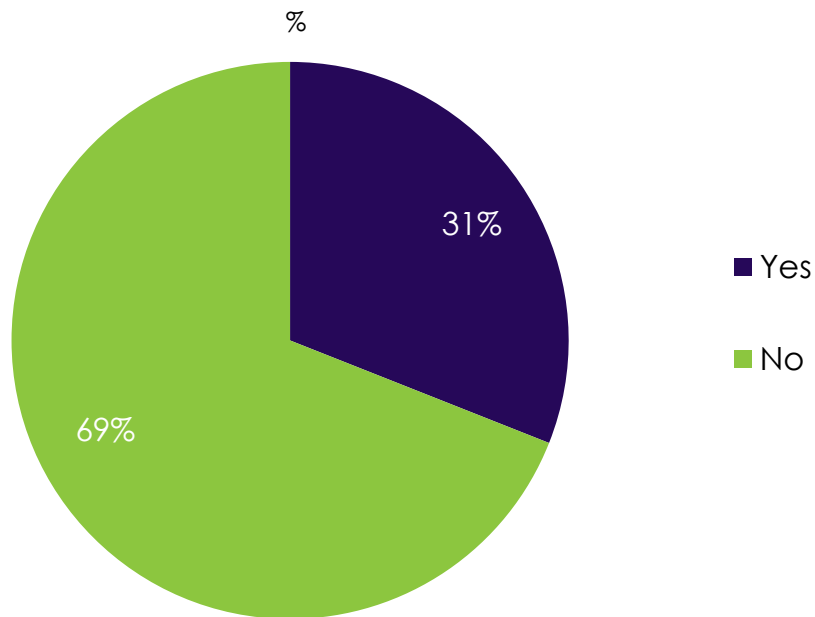
Effort: CC Water Satisfaction with Complaint Handling Survey (February – April 2017) (287)

Q3b. How much effort would you say you had to put into getting your complaint about your water company resolved? READ OUT
Base: All (100)

↑ Significantly higher than other group

Awareness of WATRS

Only three in ten (31%) of those offered the WATRS escalation route claimed they had heard of WATRS. This suggests that the communication of this service needs to be stronger



Q4. Have you heard of the independent adjudication service WATRS [INTERVIEWER THIS IS PRONOUNCED 'Waters'], which stands for the Water Redress Scheme?

Base: All not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint after they took it to CCWater (52)

How CCWater could make information about WATRS stand out more

Suggestions for making the communication about WATRS stronger basically boil down to making it bigger, making it stand out more or having a separate email and/ or letter. Don't bury the message along with other communications.

I don't really know. Make it bigger. If there was information just keep it short and sweet.

Make the text font 20 on the emails so I can actually see it – bigger with bold red letters so I can see it.

Probably by letter.

I would say rather than bury it in other hard copy documents, I'm pretty sure that CCW has everybody's email addresses. I would send a dedicated email with it on.

I hadn't heard of it so it's an unknown thing for me. It's up to them to make better contact with us.

Send a letter notifying me.

I didn't notice it so maybe make it more outlined.

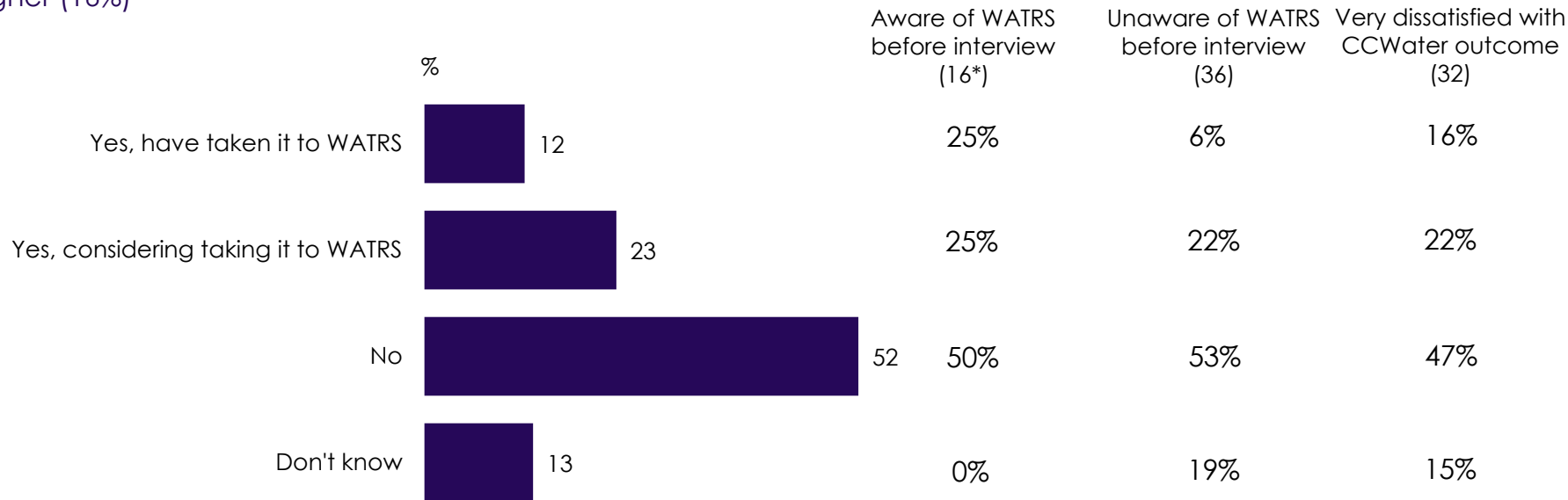
I don't care about them. There should only be one body.

Q5. When CCWater wrote to you and closed your complaint it gave some information about WATRS in its letter. The letter explained that WATRS is a free and independent dispute resolution scheme that customers can use to obtain a final decision in a dispute with a water or sewerage company if they are not satisfied after CCWater's involvement. WATRS aims to make a decision about a case within 20 working days of an application being accepted, and if you choose to accept its decision this will be binding on your water or sewerage company. How could CCWater make this information stand out more? PROBE FULLY

Base: All not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint after they took it to CCWater and not aware of WATRS (36)

Take up and consideration of WATRS

Those who were not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint after taking it to CCWater, were asked whether they had taken their complaint to WATRS or whether they were considering doing so. Only 12% said they had taken it to WATRS and a further 23% were considering WATRS. Amongst those unaware of WATRS, take up and consideration are lower (6% and 22% respectively). Amongst those very dissatisfied with the outcome, take up is higher (16%)



No differences by complaint category

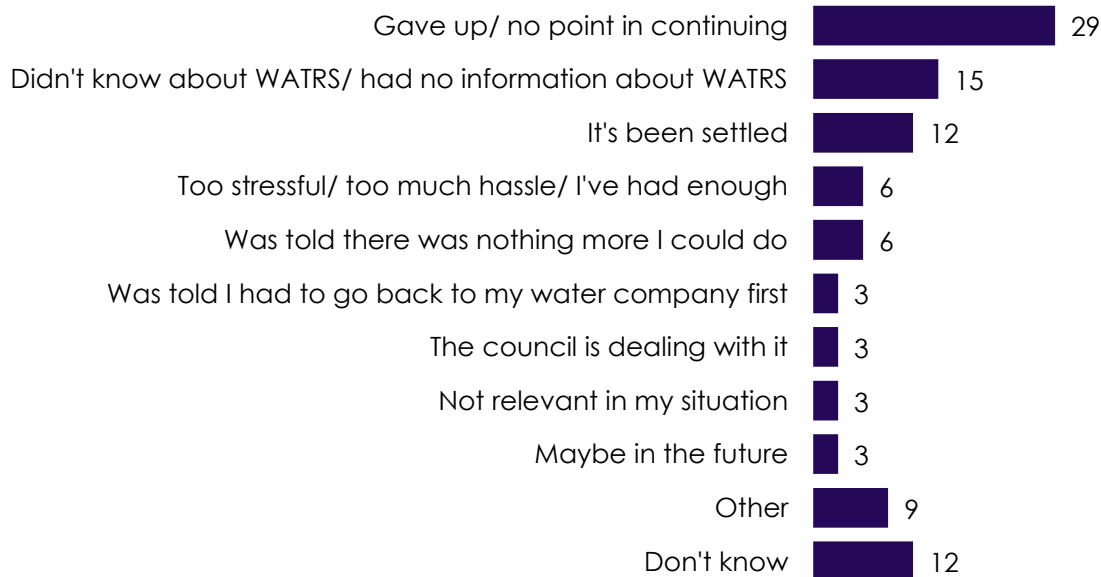
Q6. Have you or are you considering taking your complaint to WATRS? READ OUT
 Base: All not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint after they took it to CCWater (52)

* Beware low base size

Why WATRS is not taken up/considered

The main reason for not taking up WATRS or not considering WATRS is that they have just given up/ they see no point in continuing (29%). 15 percent didn't approach or are not considering approaching WATRS because they are unaware of it. One in eight (12%) do not need to approach WATRS as they consider their complaint is now resolved. Other reasons for not taking WATRS up are that they feel it is too stressful to continue (6%) or that they were told that there was nothing more they could do (6%).

%

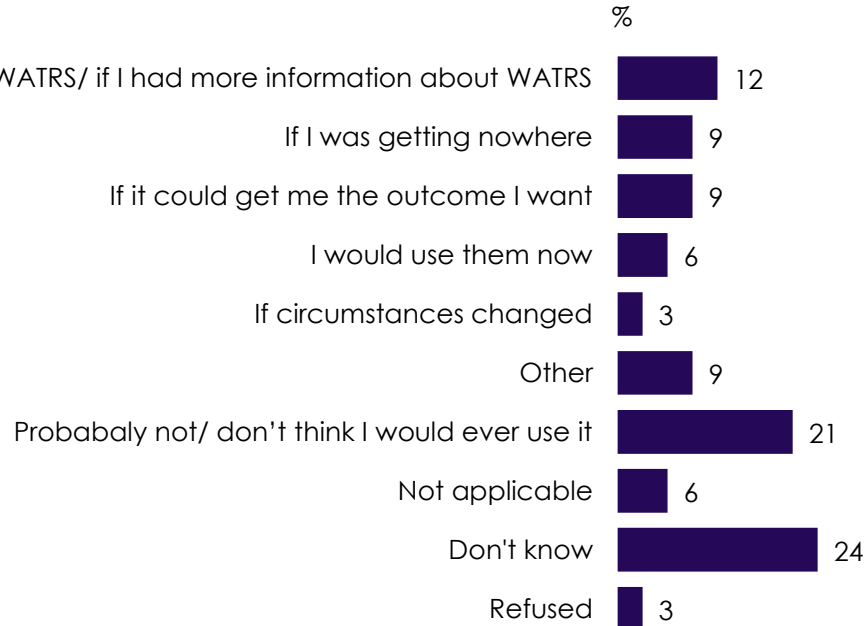


Q7. Why haven't you or why are you not considering taking your complaint to WATRS? PROBE FULLY

Base: All not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint after they took it to CCWater and not using or considering using WATRS (34)

In what circumstances would WATRS be considered

Those not taking up WATRS or not considering WATRS were asked whether there were any circumstances in which they would consider WATRS. One in eight said that they would consider WATRS if they were aware of it/ had more information about it. One in ten (9%) would use it if they felt they were getting nowhere with their complaint and another one in ten (9%), if they felt they could get the outcome they wanted through WATRS. Only 21% rule WATRS out completely. A quarter are not sure of the circumstances in which they would consider using WATRS.

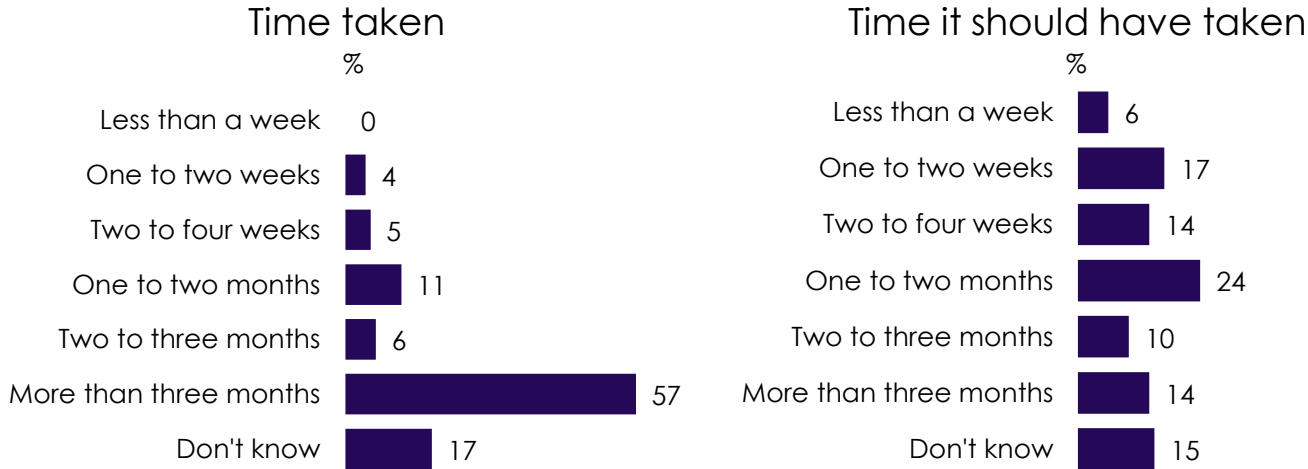


Q7b. In what circumstances, if any, would you consider using WATRS? PROBE FULLY

Base: All not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint after they took it to CCWater and not using or considering using WATRS (34)

Length of time to get resolution/ how long should it have taken

Asked how long it has taken to get a resolution to their complaint from when they first raised it with their water company, 57% claim that it has taken longer than three months but only 14% think that it should take this long. Looking at water companies', CCWater's and WATRS' codes of practice for how long it should take to resolve complaints, the maximum acceptable timeframe is estimated to be 13 ½ weeks, so approaching six in ten are having to wait this long if not longer.



Water companies pledge to reply to complaints within 10 working days (2 weeks). CCWater aims to resolve 70% of complaints within 20 working days (4 weeks), 85% within 40 working days (8 weeks) and WATRS aims to decide on cases within 20 working days (4 weeks). In 85% of cases, taking the maximum target timeframes, the whole process should take no longer than 14 weeks (3 ½ months)

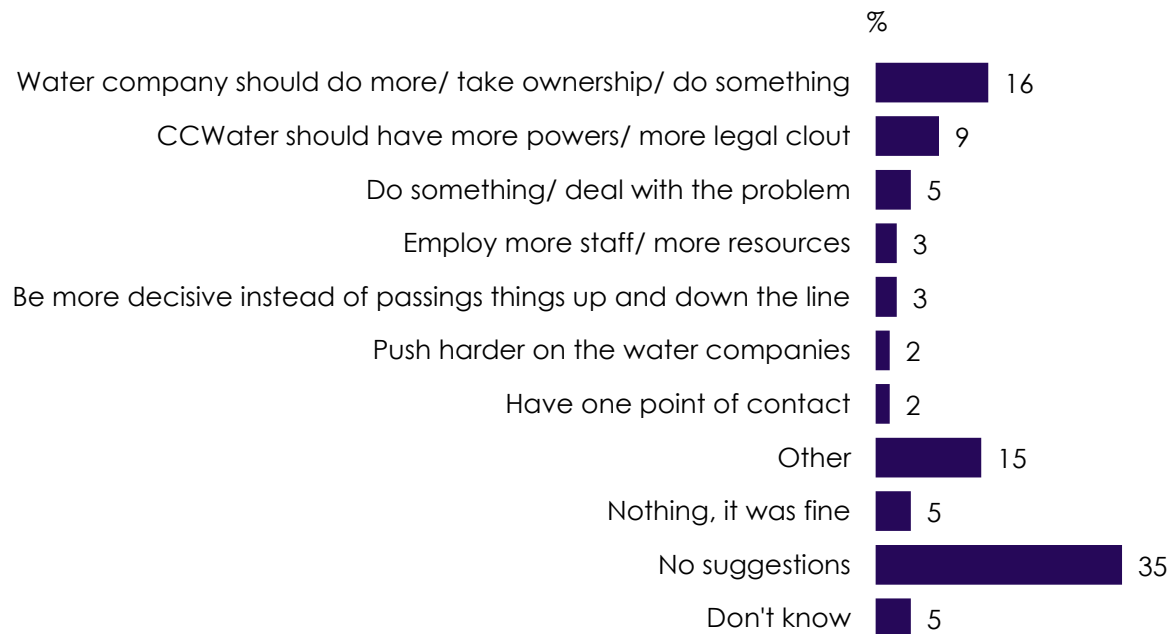
Q8. Approximately how long did it take to get a resolution to your complaint? This is right from the first time you contacted anyone about the issue (which may have been your water company or CCWater if you went to them first) until you got a resolution, or if you haven't reached a resolution yet, the time it has taken so far. READ OUT

Q9. And, considering the steps that were involved in handling your complaint, how long do you think it should have taken to reach a resolution or to get to the stage you're at now? READ OUT

Base: All (100)

Suggestions for shortening the complaints process

Suggestions for speeding up the process include more effort from the water companies to deal with the complaint in the first place, more legal clout/ more powers for CCWater, employ more staff/ resources and be more decisive – don't keep passing things up and down the line.



Q10. Finally, do you have any suggestions for how the complaint process could be shortened? PROBE FULLY

Base: All (100)

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