

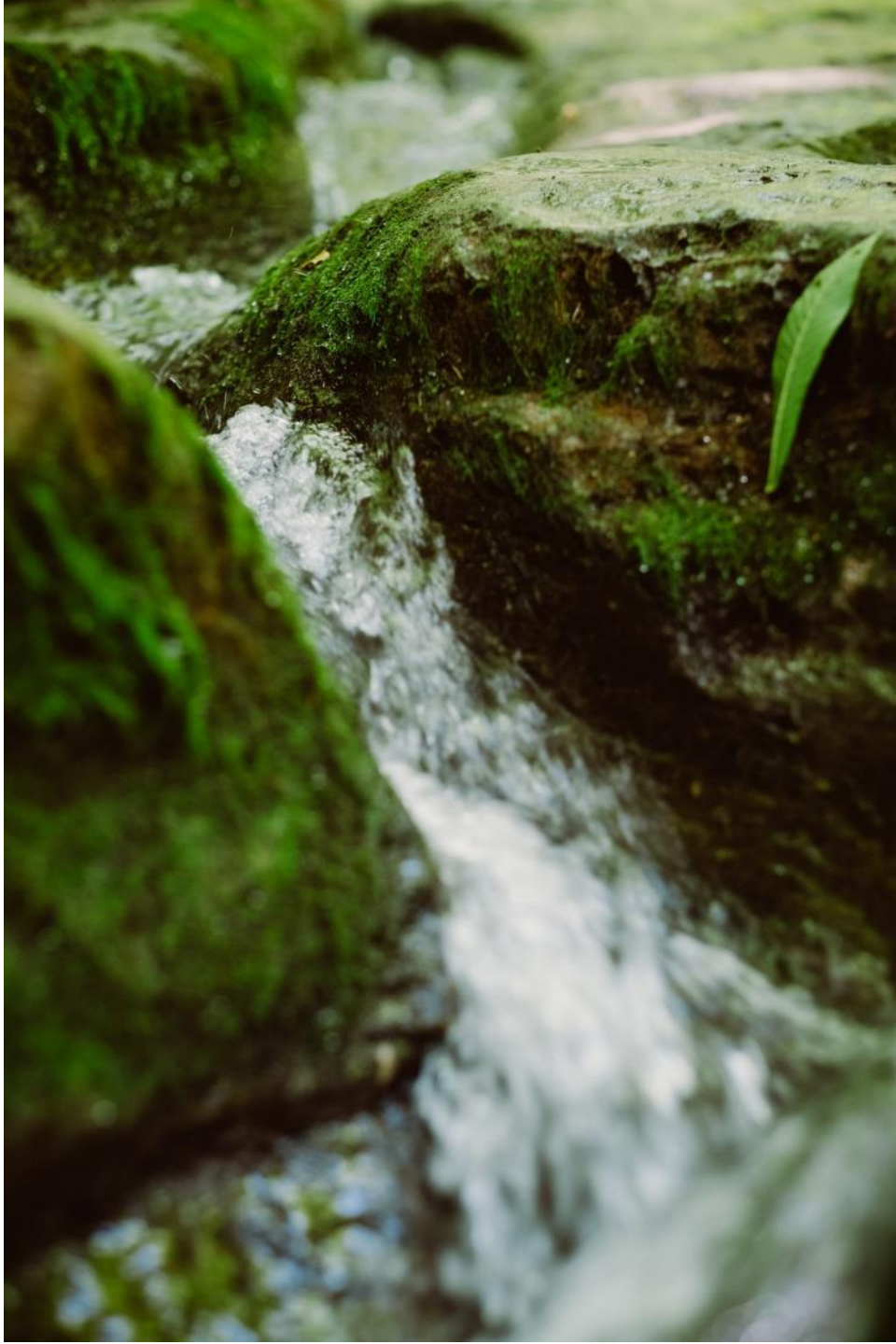


Exploring customer views on Designated Bathing Water sites

August 2022



InSites Consulting



Background

As Yorkshire Water prepare for the next investment period, one area of focus is to work alongside the Environment agency to identify actions needed in order to improve the environmental situation at bathing waters across the region as part of the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). Whilst some actions are statutory, others are optional; evidence of customer support is required in order to fulfil these optional actions.

To help inform the plan, research is needed to understand what customers want from bathing waters in Yorkshire, and to determine whether additional investment should be made at these sites.

Objectives

- How do customers feel about the statutory requirements for designated bathing sites?
- Do customers want us to carry out investigations/improvements at our coastal/inland designated bathing sites that exceed the statutory requirements?
- Do customers want Yorkshire Water to carry out these investigations/improvements non-designated bathing sites?
- Would customers across the region support the additional treatment on the treated wastewater which is returned to the river from the Yorkshire Water sewage treatment works in Ilkley?
- Would customers support reducing the operation of the storm overflow at the sewage treatment works in Ilkley?

Methodology



On the Your Water community we ran:

A survey:
353 members took part



And a discussion:
108 took part
(20 Ilkley residents)

DATE: 3rd – 9th August 2022

Statutory and non-statutory duties

Statutory

Our statutory (compulsory) duties, where customer support is not required, are:

- ❑ Investigate bathing waters with a current classification of 'Poor' to see how our sites impact them.
- ❑ Take actions to improve waters with a current classification of 'Poor' if they are impacted by our sites.
- ❑ Take actions to improve waters at risk of reducing to a classification of 'Poor' (>20% risk of failing 'Sufficient').
- ❑ Investigate waters that are failing their Baseline class.
- ❑ Take actions to improve waters that are failing their Baseline class.

Non-Statutory

Our non-statutory (optional) duties, where customer support is required, are:

- Investigate how our sites impact on 'Sufficient' and 'Good' bathing waters.
- Take actions to improve our sites so 'Sufficient' and 'Good' bathing waters can be improved to 'Good' and 'Excellent'.
- Investigate bathing waters which are not officially designated.
- Take actions to improve our sites if they impact non-designated bathing waters.

Ilkley Bathing Water

Yorkshire currently has the first riverine bathing water in Ilkley, West Yorkshire. It is monitored by the Environment Agency who regularly take samples to test the river water quality. Downstream of the location where the Environment Agency collects their samples, YW also have a sewage treatment works which returns treated wastewater (final effluent) into the river, and also two storm overflows which act as a relief valve during storm conditions. This stretch of river is also used for recreation.

In 2021, the storm overflows at the works operated as below:

- ☐ Storm Overflow 1: 929 hours of operation across 84 spill events
- ☐ Storm Overflow 2: 328.8 hours of operation across 72 spill events

Since the sewage treatment works is downstream of where the regulatory samples are taken by the Environment Agency, improvements to this site would not be classed as statutory under bathing water improvements. YW could carry out improvements at this site to improve the water quality for bathers that use this stretch. This could include:

- ☐ Additional treatment on the treated wastewater which is returned to the river from this site. This could include installing ultra-violet disinfection at this site – a treatment that is used at most of YW's coastal sites to improve bathing water quality. This would cost customers an additional £0.27 per year.
- ☐ Reducing the operation of the storm overflow at this site. This could include storing the additional flows during wet weather, managing the surface water in Ilkley, or a mix of solutions. This would cost customers an additional £0.11 per year.

Key insights & recommendations



Key insights

Both coastal and in-land bathing site cleanliness is considered important. This is particularly the case for those who live nearby, and applies for both designated and non-designated sites.

The statutory duties feel like the bare minimum, customers would expect more from Yorkshire Water. As a result, most are in favour of optional investigations and improvements.

For all sites most accept that customer bills would increase to fund the cost – though there's (only slightly) more reluctance to pay toward non-designated sites. The proposed costs feel reasonable, although are hard to judge in isolation without the wider context of bill increases.

For Ilkley in particular, improvements to the site are welcomed. There is a positive reception to both UV and storm overflow solutions. With the former gaining more support, but people need more information.



Recommendations

Move ahead with the proposed bathing site investigations, and improvements. Given the current media focus on water cleanliness, going above and beyond the statutory requirements will be appreciated.

At Ilkley (and others where applicable) progress with UV treatments, but be sure to educate locals on the safety of this measure, and if possible, consider minimising use of storm overflows as an additional measure.

When evidence building – use layman's terms and provide enough context that customers can understand the issue, it's resolution and any knock on effects. Make clear that this step is a mandatory requirement which will allow Yorkshire Water to go above and beyond for its customers and the environment.

The proposed cost increases in isolation are unlikely to alarm customers, but need communicating sensitively. Make clear that any additional charges would be reserved solely for the purpose specified. If numerous optional improvements are under consideration/more arise over time – Yorkshire Water may need to research acceptance of these as a whole, and identify a priority list to prevent bill increases escalating too high.

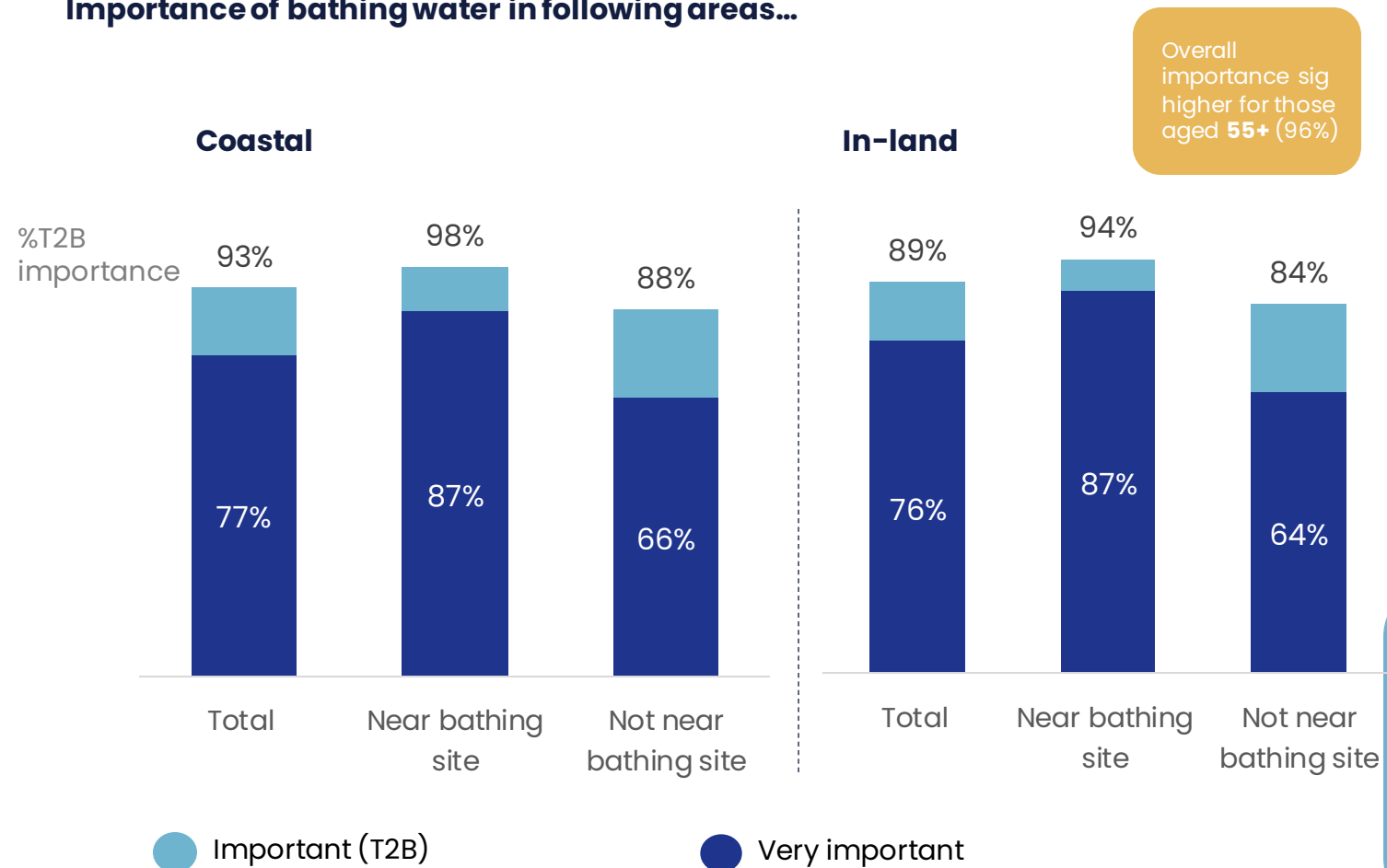


An aerial photograph of a river winding through a lush green landscape. The river is dark blue and reflects the sky. The banks are lined with dense green trees and grass. In the background, there are rolling hills, fields, and a few buildings under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds.

**The cleanliness
of bathing sites**

The cleanliness of bathing sites is important to all, but particularly so to those living close by

Importance of bathing water in following areas...



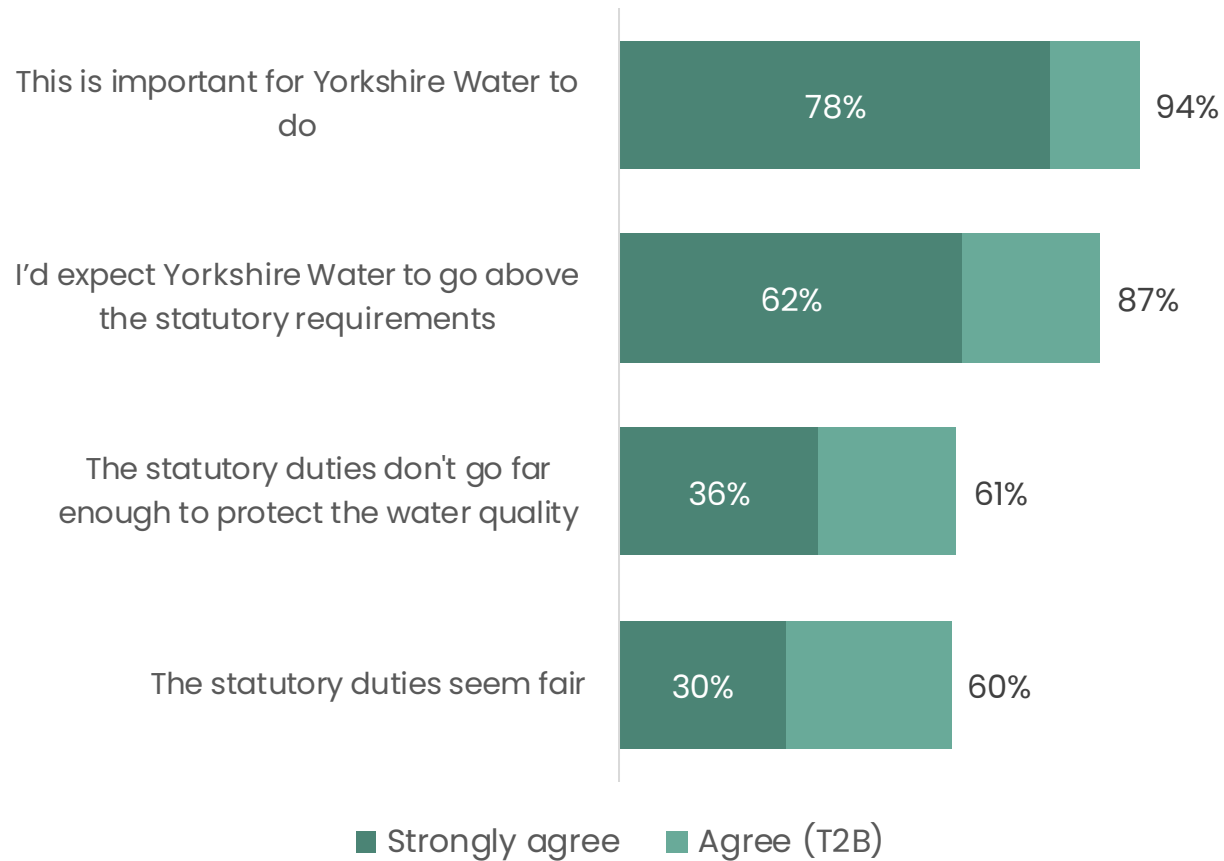
“If the site is designated as a bathing site then it should be safe to use without fear of infection. If the pollution is not from a YW source, it should still be identified if possible. YW should share its knowledge with the source so that the situation is improved. The environment would benefit as well as keeping people safer.”

Key insight

For most, human and wildlife safety trump concerns about cost and feasibility. Ultimately, irrespective of whether coastal or in-land, people recognise the importance of cleanliness at bathing sites. However, this is particularly clear to those who live close to a bathing site - having used/seen people use these sites, this group are more personally invested in this issue and its resolution.

Statutory duties feel like the bare minimum – people expect more from Yorkshire Water

% Agreement



18–34 over-index for “I’m not sure”

Women are sig more likely to Strongly agree on **importance** and **going above statutory requirements**

Age 55+ are sig more likely to Agree on **importance** and **going above statutory requirements**

Why do you feel this way?

Agree

- ✓ Safe, clean water is a fundamental necessity. People should be protected from illness.
- ✓ Wider environmental benefits/concerns i.e. remove pollution, protect and promote biodiversity, conserve beauty spots.
- ✓ Brand reputation and trust: Foster trust in YW, perception that companies more broadly should always strive to push beyond the basics.
- ✓ Maintenance and long-term investment in infrastructure. Less costly in long run.

Disagree

- × Cost concerns.

The background of the slide is an underwater photograph. It shows a swimmer's hand and arm reaching forward in the water, with light filtering down from the surface, creating a shimmering effect on the water's surface and some bubbles. The overall tone is dark and moody.

“

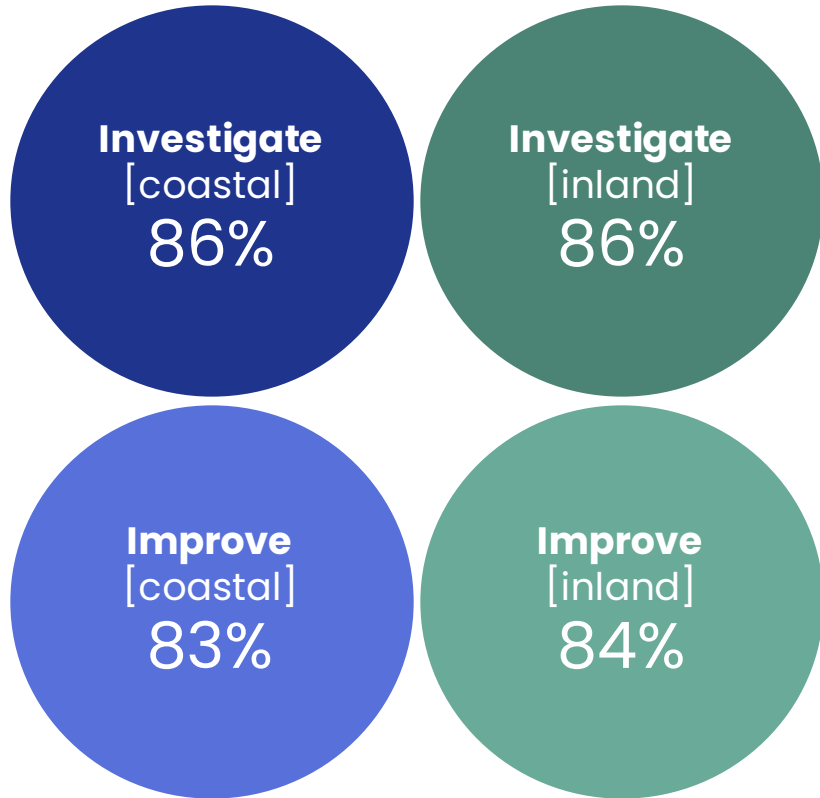
The difference between 'satisfactory' and 'excellence' is huge and I expect a company like YW to always strive for excellence. Bathing in natural environments is very beneficial to health, both physical and mental, so every action should be taken to make this not just safe but enjoyable.

Open water swimming needs to be encouraged, so adhering simply to 'statutory requirements' really doesn't scream 'commitment' or 'excellence'.

”

Customers strongly support the idea of optional improvements going ahead...

% Agreement should investigate/improve designated spaces to go above the statutory requirements



Agreement higher across the board for those **near** bathing sites

“ In an ideal world we should be striving to not only achieve the best water quality for people to play, swim or bathe in but also provide an acceptable environment for animals and water creatures. Expanding the range of duties that are carried out by Yorkshire Water would go a long way towards achieving that end.

“ I think rather than try and do all the optional duties, Yorkshire Water should concentrate their efforts on just one or perhaps two.

Why do you feel this way?

Agree

- ✓ YW should strive for excellence in all areas.
- ✓ Responsibility to bathers and the environment to provide highest safety standards.
- ✓ It's a reasonable undertaking.

Disagree

- × Cost concerns.
- × More important areas of focus e.g. leaks.
- × Too many options/need to prioritise one or two.

...but most agree there needs to be accountability in decision making

Attitude to mandatory evidence building

Customers agree they should get a say in where their money is directed...

If implementing action financed by customers, many would expect that customers would be consulted, and their cooperation evidenced. This ensures water companies are held accountable, and prevented from funding unnecessary work, where not desired by bill payers.

However...

Some feel this is bureaucratic. They feel ill-informed to make the decision, and believe Yorkshire Water as the experts would be best placed to make the call. They feel the 'red tape', will cause unnecessary delays and expense.

Key insight

As customers suspect evidence building to be timely and expensive, it's essential Yorkshire Water make clear in comms that evidence building is not only beneficial but also a mandatory step in the process.

It's imperative customers are given a comprehensive (but concise) overview of the issue at hand, clearly explained in layman's terms to ensure complex issues feel accessible.



“

YOUR
WATER

As Yorkshire Water would be charging all customers through annual bills for optional actions within their entire catchment areas, it is necessary that there is significant support for those supplementary optional actions. Yorkshire is a large County and the coastal bathing areas only affect a small minority of customers and tourists, whilst the majority are mainly concerned with river water quality.

”

Stock image: Welsh river

“

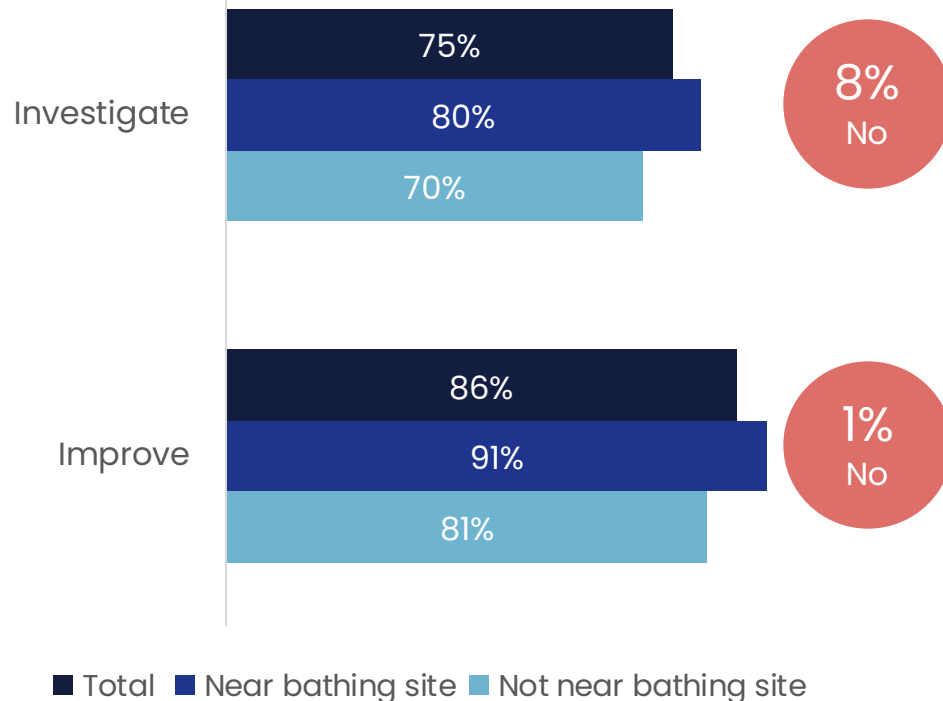
If it is a popular location then people will enter the water for fun/exercise/to cool off. As a minimum, there should be a notice showing the quality of the water so that visitors can decide for themselves. If tests show that the water needs improvement then the source should be identified, if possible, so that it can be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level.

”



Irrespective of whether it's a "designated" bathing site, it's considered essential someone ensures cleanliness

% agreement should investigate/improve non-designated bathing sites



Investigate
"Yes" Sig higher for Ages 55+
"No" Sig higher for ABC1

Why investigate?

- Safety is the priority over arbitrary designation.
- Important for support of wildlife and biodiversity.

Why improve?

- It's your responsibility.
- The highest possible standards should be maintained.
- Lead by example.

“Because it should be done...it's the moral thing to do. Not saying it should only be you....companies should be made to pay for the clean up.”

“Well who else is going to do it if you don't. You call yourself Yorkshire Water so surely that makes you responsible for all the water in Yorkshire.”

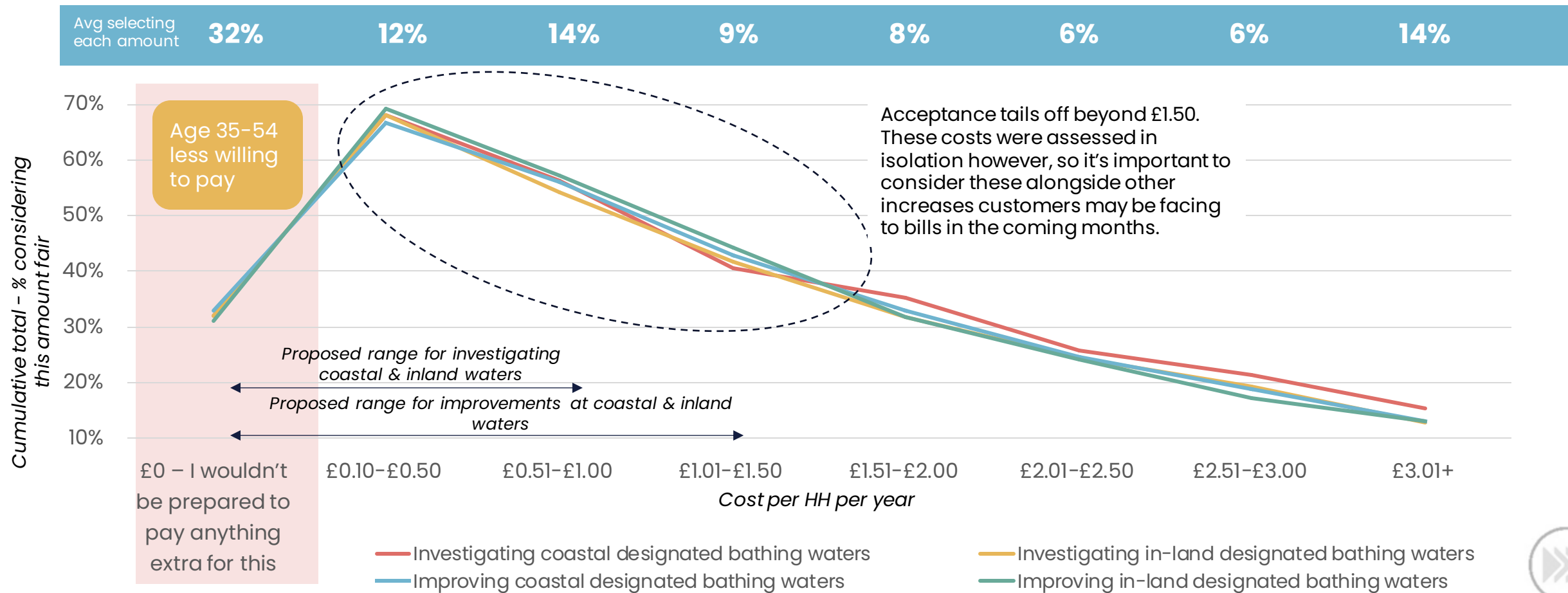
Key insight

Customers are of the opinion that investigation should not be carried out for investigations sake, particularly at the expense of the customer. Once identified, they believe there is a moral imperative that improvements of issues are then actioned. In uncovering a safety hazard, Yorkshire Water in the eyes of their customers become responsible for it, and its resolution. So if proceeding with investigation, YW also need to be prepared for implementation at all sites.

7 in 10 are accepting of their annual charge rising to cover the cost of work at designated sites

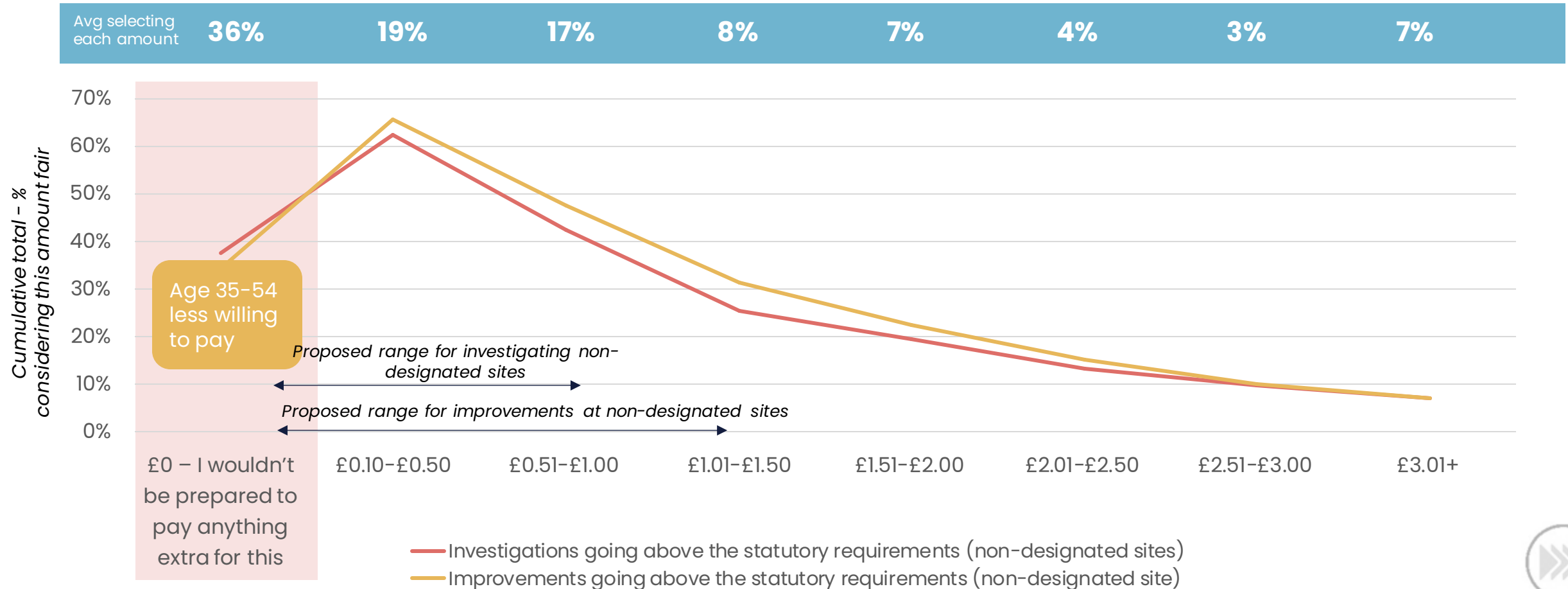


Amount considered fair (to increase customer bills by)



...But there's slightly more reluctance when it comes to paying for non-designated bathing sites

Amount considered fair (to increase customer bills by)



Ultimately Yorkshire Water need to exercise restraint when it comes to extra charges



Watch out!

Those asked are generally accepting of the works, but some are cynical. There are concerns among some that the extra charges could fund Shareholder profits, while others believe the cost of the works should be deducted from profits as opposed to being financed by the customer.

With the rising cost of living, particularly in regard to utilities, when push comes to shove some may also be forced to prioritise cost above all else.

If additional initiatives are under consideration, further research may be of value to build a hierarchy of importance – to identify which, and how many initiatives customers are willing to fund and where the breaking point is when it comes to a total price increase.

“

This is something I would be prepare to pay extra for, so long as that payment is ring-fenced from shareholder pay-outs.”

It is up to the Water Companies to use their profits to go over and above the statutory requirements to improve overall water quality in the country.”

Enough profit is being made by water companies to ensure that the water quality exceeds the minimum. It should be a duty to do this.”

Doing just enough whilst making huge profits is not acceptable for a utilities company where we don't have a choice of supplier.”

You are hiding behind government policy, and using our money to pay out to your shareholders instead of investing in cleaner water.”

Designated bathing in Ilkley

Both Ilkley residents and outsiders support improvements

As with designated bathing sites more generally – people agree health and safety is of the utmost importance.

Residents have seen the popularity of the site for themselves and some reference knowing of people and animals who became unwell from the site.

And as there are so few public bathing spots, maintaining those available becomes all the more important.

However, some feel the needs of the few should not be financed by the wider public.

Some suspect it's impossible to make the area clean as a whole, believing instead that a sign warning against swimming in certain areas would be the safer (more feasible) option.

“

If the water is used for bathing at point B, then I am strongly in favour of more testing/treatment being undertaken. Also there should be a means of letting potential bathers know the most recent outcome of those tests, and how to interpret them. The additional charge is not unreasonable.

Ilkley Resident

”



UV treatment is the preference, though people need reassurance it's a safe method

UV treatment

14 residents and 34 non-residents prioritise this

- UV is the overwhelming favourite.
- It prioritises safety of bathers and preventing illness.
- Seems most feasible and efficient.
- Assume this is the quickest to implement.
- Would provide year-round treatment and benefit.
- Most understand UV better than how storm overflows would work.
- Where there are concerns about UV this is around chemicals being put in the water.

Storm overflows

5 residents and 19 non-residents prioritise this*

- There's broad support for storm overflows as well, with many saying both should be prioritised.
- Those who prefer storm overflows say it's something that needs to be addressed to improve water quality.
- Compared to UV treatment, however, many residents and non-residents said they didn't understand how reducing overflows would work – where would the water go instead?

**16 non-residents said 'both' /didn't feel qualified to judge/ or said whichever is cheapest*

Key insight

If progressing with UV treatment, reassure the public that this is a tried and tested method, and a safe means of addressing the issue. Further information may be necessary to convince people that less reliance on storm overflows is a viable option. Specifically, people need to be informed of the alternative i.e. what happens to the excess storm water?

Sewage hits dozens of beaches in England and Wales after heavy rain

By Claire Marshall
BBC Environment & Rural Affairs Correspondent

5 days ago · Comments



Pollution warnings are in place for dozens of beaches in England and Wales after untreated sewage was discharged into the sea around the coast.

CULTURE + TRENDS

Join the dots

As a consequence of climate change, and increasing media coverage of storm overflow pollution, this is an issue which will garner increasing attention.

Pressure will only continue to build, with the public expecting water companies to modernise what is now considered an outdated and unsanitary solution to adverse weather conditions.

...But both are considered viable solutions

UV treatment

“Absolutely - although I have not read any research as to any detrimental effects of UV treatment - are there any? E.g. on microscopic bio- culture?”

I would support this as it is a tried and tested method of improving water quality in areas that people already use for bathing and the cost is relatively small.”

Initially yes but I would prefer additional information from Yorkshire water regarding the harmful effects of this disinfection on wildlife/marine animals, a statement from the environment agency would be beneficial to the public too.”

I would support this as it seems to be the long term solution and not just parking the problem further down stream.”

Storm overflows

“Yes. Storm overflows are a relic from when councils ran the water and waste water and left it massively underfunded.”

Yes, the health of our rivers is very important. storm water release is very detrimental to the health of the rivers so it is important that as little as possible is released this way.”

Storm overflow is a very contentious issue currently. Anything that can be done to mitigate this is welcome in any area. I expect YW to do all they possibly can to reduce such overflows.”

Would there be a downside to reducing the operation of the storm overflow?”

I do support reducing the storm overflow, but would like to have an impact study with regards to whether this would cause flooding, further down the line.”

“

I am supportive of the bathing site and Yorkshire Water improving the water discharge quality and reducing storm overflow, the cost to YW customers is low, but the benefits to the river and local communities would be significant.

”



Most believe 38p is a small price to pay for the benefits but some feel it's not their responsibility

"If 38p could get me clean safe water to play in and watch and admire and enjoy then it's 38p well spent. I honestly do not know anybody who would complain about an extra 38p."

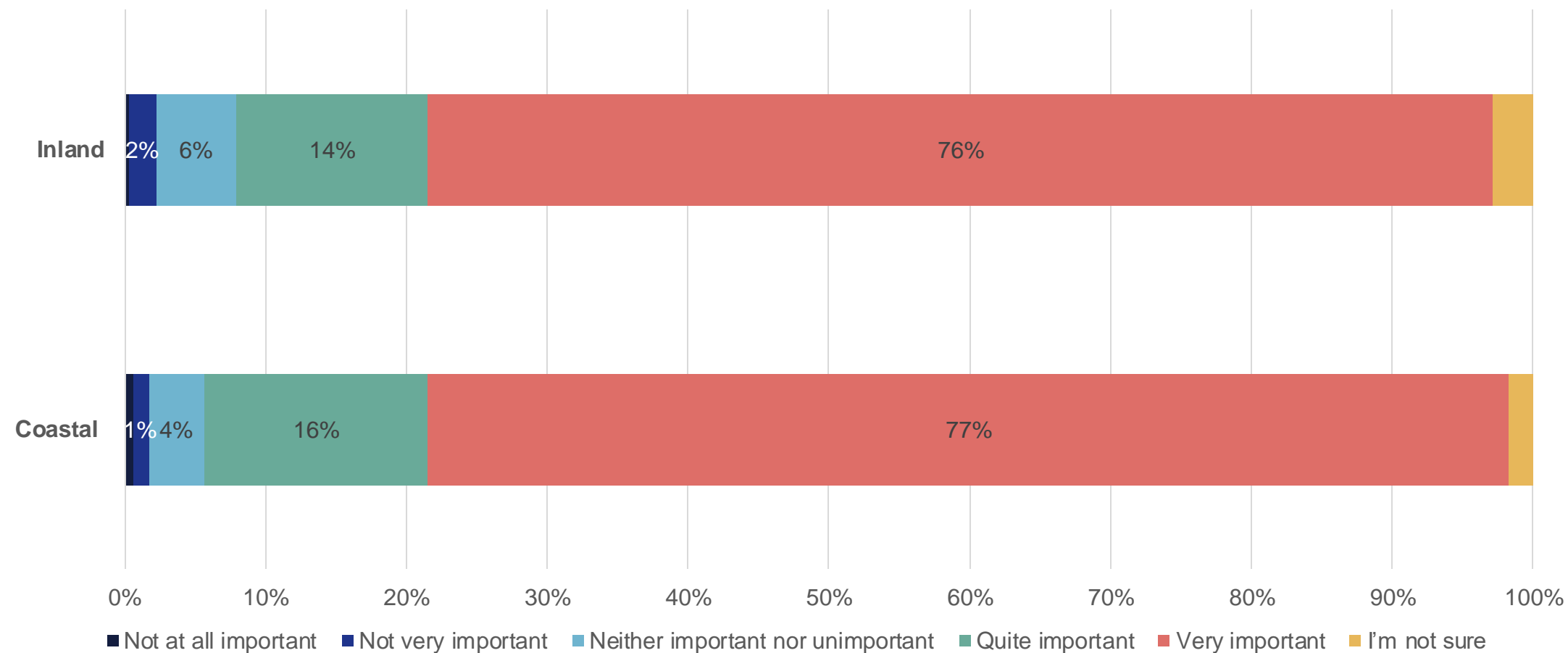
- The benefits outweigh the cost
- 38p is negligible and won't be noticed
- It's a necessity and something that should already be in place

- It's the responsibility of Yorkshire Water
- Only locals should pay for works in their area
- There's enough profits to cover these costs

"Well, I can afford that, but I might resent paying it if I were to think that it could have been paid for by reducing dividends for shareholders."

Appendix

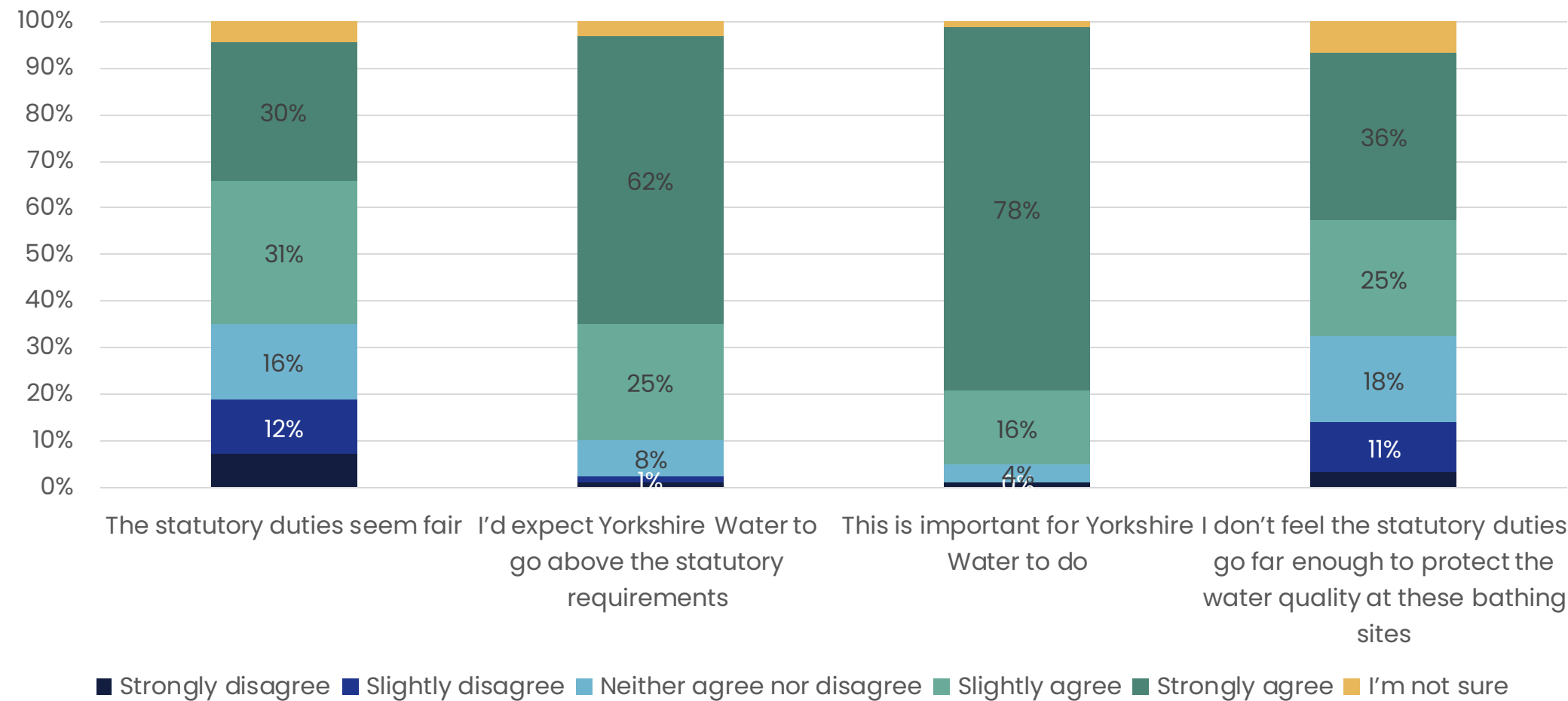
Importance of cleanliness of bathing waters in following areas...



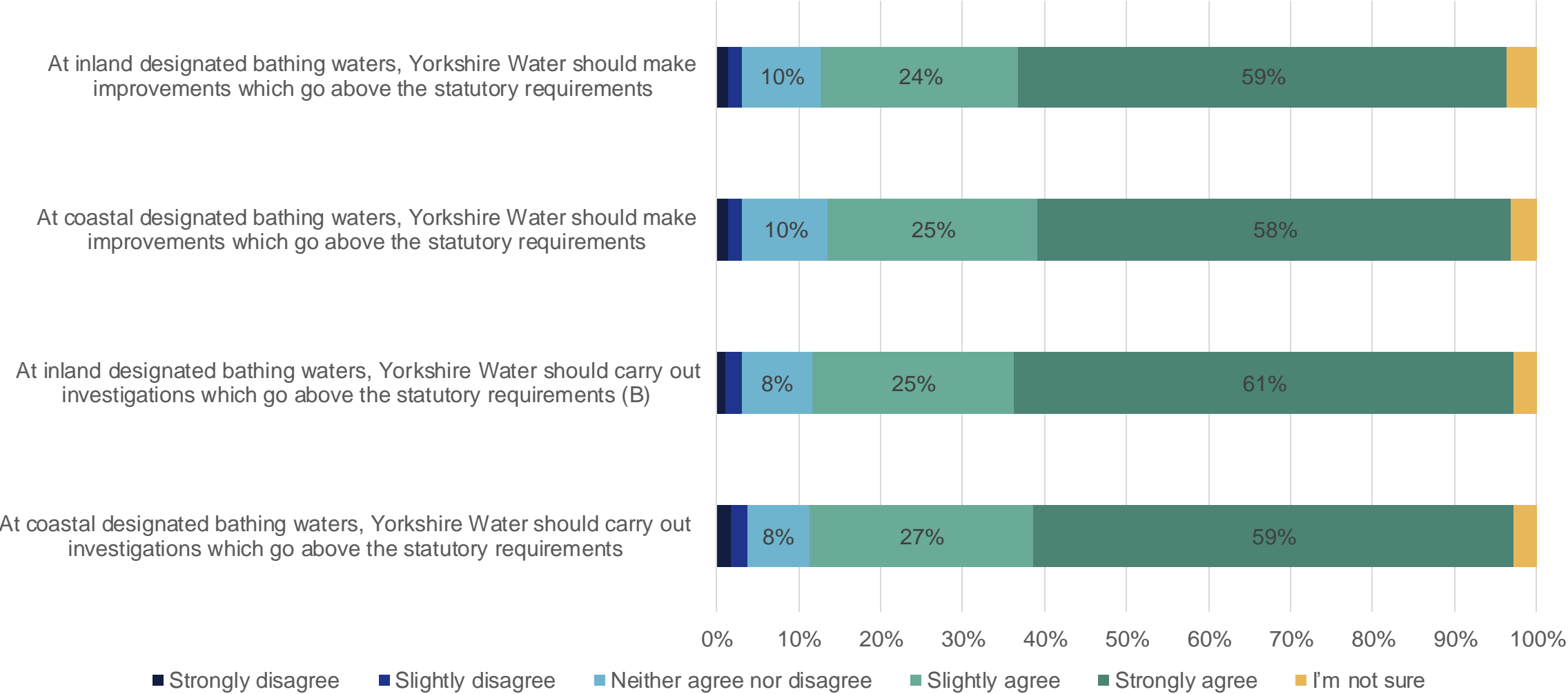
Source: Q2. Bathing sites can be coastal or inland (such as a river or lake).How important is the cleanliness of bathing w aters in the follow ing areas to you? (n=353)



Agreement statements...



Attitudes to investigations/improvements above statutory requirements





About your community

With over 2,000 members, Your Water is an online research resource giving you easy access to consumers

The community offers a wide range of conventional and innovative research techniques and approaches.

Our aim is to approach every project with fresh thinking and apply methodologies that we truly believe will get you tangible, actionable results.

Any questions?

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Head of Insight

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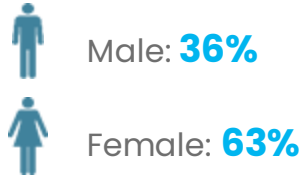
Naveed Majid

Customer Insight Analyst

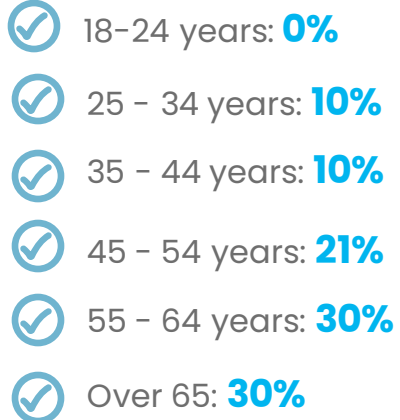
Naveed.Majid@yorkshirewater.co.uk

Sample Profile (n=353)

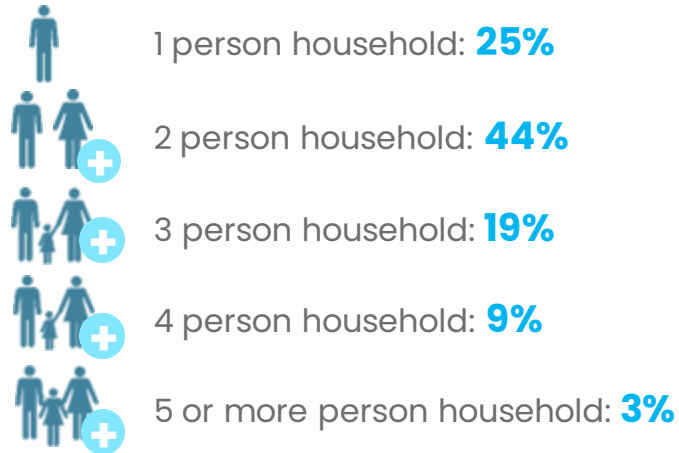
GENDER



AGE



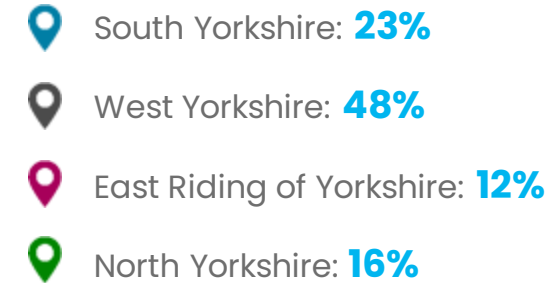
HOUSEHOLD SIZE



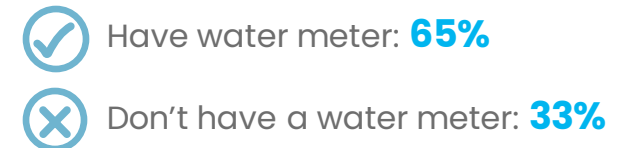
SEG



AREA OF YORKSHIRE



WATER METER



VULNERABILITY

