

Quarterly Community Survey

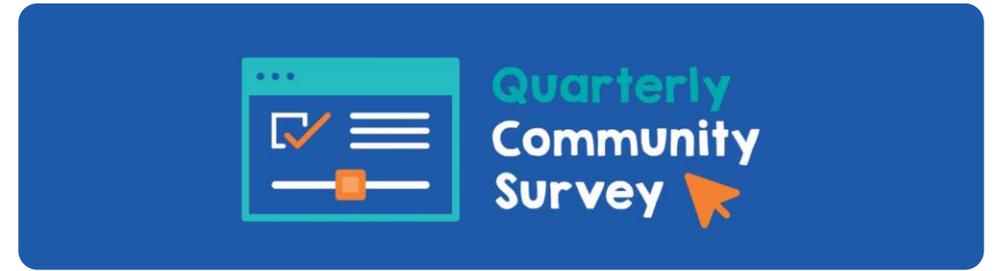
Hunter Water

Summary Report
May 2025

Response sampling

Since inception, responses for the Quarterly Community Survey are sourced from two channels. Traditionally, circa 160 responses per quarter are received from an independent panel of adults who reside within the Hunter Water service region. Remaining responses (generally 20 to 30 per quarter, though more if fieldwork coincides with distribution of 'The Stream') are received via Hunter Water's promotion of the survey on the corporation website and social media.

The demographic composition of responses received via each channel varies, largely by age group and the balance of homeowners versus renters. Each sample is reweighted to represent age proportions for the Lower Hunter region (ABS Census 2021), along with ensuring overall results are not skewed due to variations in the proportion of survey responses received via each channel.



What we're hearing about customer satisfaction

- Customer satisfaction with water quality has recorded 89% satisfaction in May 2025, marginally down (-1%) from February 2025. For the few respondents expressing dissatisfaction with water quality, "taste" is cited most often.
- Three in four respondents (77%) rated favourably the statement "I trust Hunter Water", recording an improvement of just 1% since February 2025, however 7% over the November 2024 result (70%).
- The proportion of respondents agreeing "Hunter Water incorporates community feedback in its decision making" increased by 7% since the last quarter, while agreement for "Hunter Water has a good reputation in the community" decreased by 7%. None of the changes were deemed statistically significant.

Satisfaction with the quality of the water supplied



Percentage of customers who agree or strongly agree with each statement

Statistically significant changes since the last survey - ■ Increase ■ No change ■ Decrease

Trust Hunter Water



Trust to provide water/wastewater services



Keeps customers informed



Has a good reputation in the community



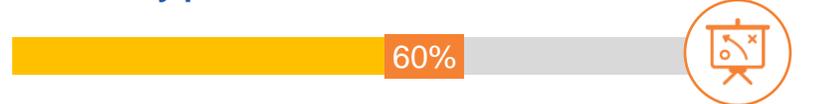
Is easy to deal with



Responds to customers' needs



Effectively plans for the future



Incorporates community feedback in its decision making



What we're hearing about community expectations

- On average, the community's expectations of what Hunter Water is expected to deliver have decreased by 8% since February 2025, and 9% lower than the same time last year (May 2024).
- The only expectation not to have decreased since February 2025 was for Hunter Water to “educate the community about water efficiency, what to flush and alternative sources of water” (+1%). The largest decrease since February 2025 was for Hunter Water to “improve local waterways/waterway health” (-14%).

Participants nominated a range of things they expect Hunter Water to deliver

Changes in favourable responses since the last survey - ■ 10%+ increase ■ Change within +/-10% ■ 10%- decrease

Help customers who struggle to pay their water bills



Provide public drinking fountains



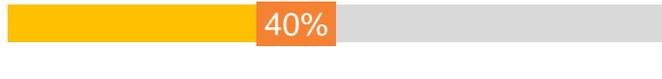
Play an active part in conversations about the impacts of climate change



Educate the community about water efficiency, what to flush and alternative sources of water



Provide additional support to communities impacted by extreme events



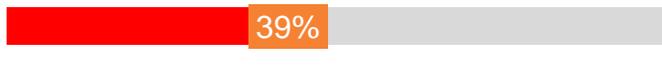
Support local community groups



Provide recycled water for public parks and community sporting grounds



Invest in research/innovation which might save water/money in the long term



Generate renewable energy



Improve local waterways/waterway health



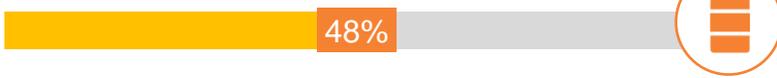
Provide rebates for water efficient appliances and tapware



Be carbon neutral



Make additional allowances for customers with special needs during a water outage



Work with local councils to provide greener and cooler public spaces for recreation



Community expectations vary by customer persona

Unsurprisingly, how a customer forms their opinions of Hunter Water is a good predictor of their expectations. The table below sets out the **main expectations** for each customer persona group in May 2025. There is some overlap in these expectations as some feature prominently in multiple personas. Some personas are **unique** in their expectations, as detailed in the bottom row of the table.

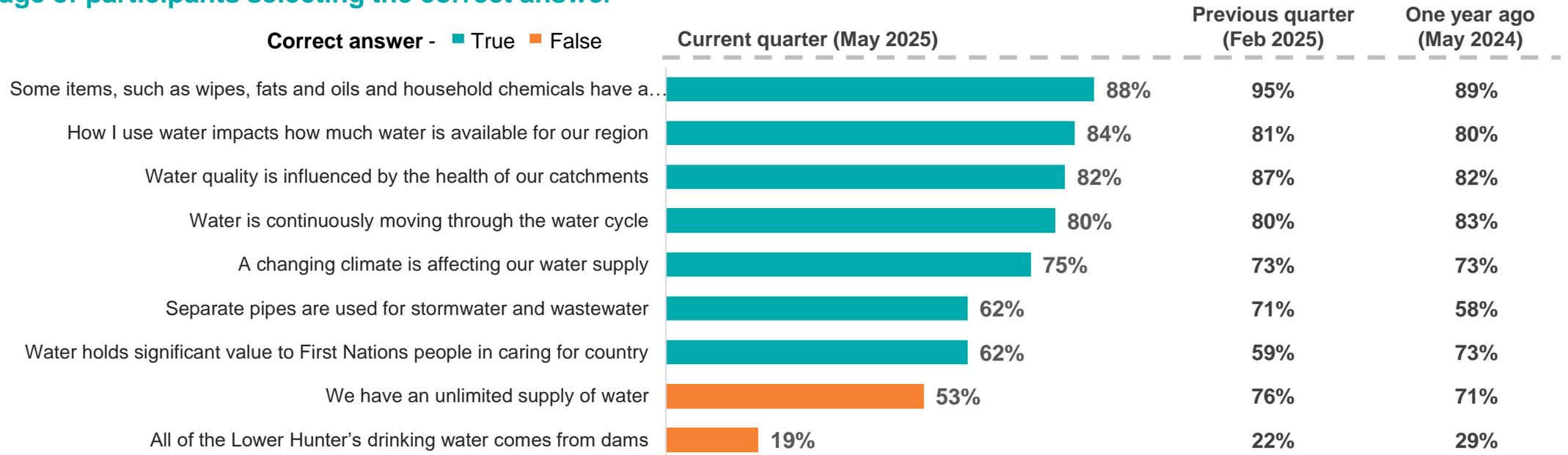
Persona	Community focused	Environment	Customer experience	Affordability	Reliability	Don't know/don't care
n	35	13	32	53	53	13
Main expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community education Recycled water for public parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make allowances for special needs customers Community education Recycled water for public parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community education Improve local waterways/waterway health Recycled water for public parks Help customers who struggle to pay their water bills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help customers who struggle to pay their water bills Make allowances for special needs customers Recycled water for public parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community education Recycled water for public parks Improve local waterways/waterway health Provide public drinking fountains Help customers who struggle to pay their water bills Provide additional support to communities impacted by extreme events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help customers who struggle to pay their water bills
Relatively high expectations <i>unique</i> to the specific persona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate renewable energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make allowances for special needs customers 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve local waterways/waterway health Provide public drinking fountains Provide additional support to communities impacted by extreme events 	

What we're hearing about water literacy

The survey has questions which test respondents' knowledge about water. This is called "water literacy".

- The highest correct response rate was for the statement "some items, such as wipes, fats, oils, and household chemicals have a costly impact on the wastewater network" with 88% of participants correctly answering "true". The equivalent proportion last quarter (February 2025) was significantly higher (95%).
- In contrast, the lowest correct response rate was for the statement, "all of the Lower Hunter's drinking water comes from dams" with only 19% of participants answering correctly with "false", the lowest result in the history of this study. Hunter Water also sources drinking water from underground and river catchments.
- The proportion of respondents correctly nominating "false" for "we have an unlimited supply of water" has significantly decreased by 23% since the last quarter, marking the lowest result in the history of the study.
- The proportion of respondents correctly nominating "true" for "separate pipes are used for stormwater and wastewater" has significantly decreased by 9% since February 2024, with an increase of 11% indicating they "don't know".

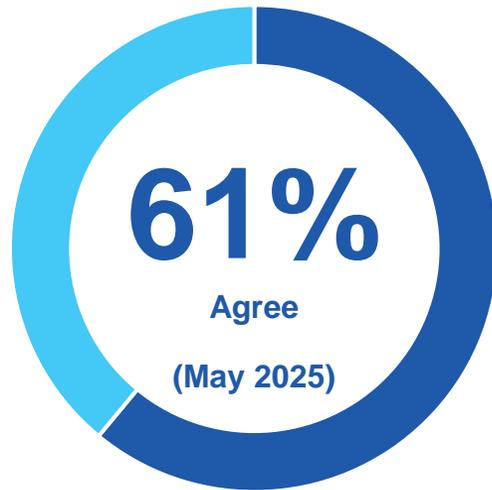
Percentage of participants selecting the correct answer



What we're hearing about water literacy *continued*

- 61% of the participants in May 2025 indicated that they have implemented changes in the past three months to decrease their household water consumption. Although not statistically significant, this represents a 5% increase on the score of recorded in February 2025.
- 51% of participants in May 2025 confidently claim they know what happens to water after it goes down the drain or is flushed, a marginal increase of 2% since February 2025.
- 41% of participants in May 2025 indicated they know what happens to water before it reaches the tap. This is the highest result since February 2023.

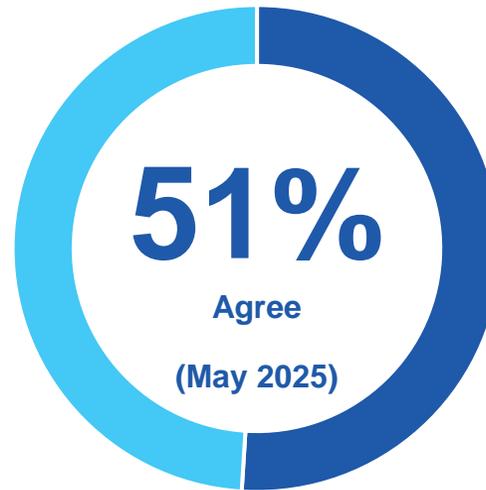
In the last 3 months I have made changes to reduce the amount of water I use in my home



Previous quarter (Feb 2025): 56%

One year ago (May 2024): 54%

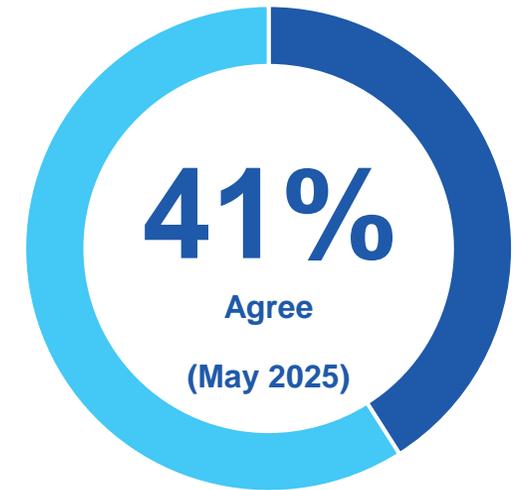
I know what happens to water after it goes down the drain or is flushed down the toilet



Previous quarter (Feb 2025): 49%

One year ago (May 2024): 48%

I know what happens to water before it reaches our taps



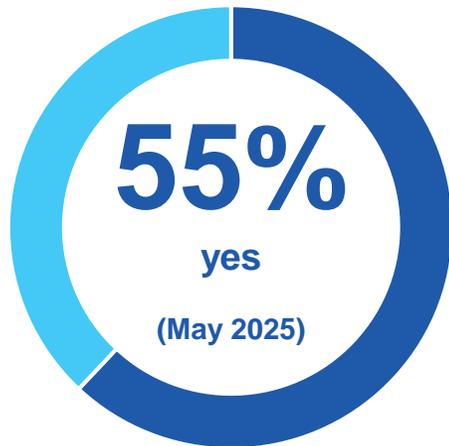
Previous quarter (Feb 2025): 35%

One year ago (May 2024): 36%

What we're hearing about water conservation

- Compared to February 2025, there was a 7% decrease in participants recalling Hunter Water's communication on water conservation. The 55% result in May 2025 is similar to the 53% result recorded a year ago (May 2024).
- The proportion of participants reporting any recent advertising or events by Hunter Water increased marginally (+3%) since February 2025. The 24% result in May 2025 is the highest since the peak of 29% recorded in November 2022.
- Participants have again suggested that the most effective ways for Hunter Water to communicate water conservation and other campaign messages are through social media, along with mailouts and tv advertisements (each selected by more than one in four respondents).
- Furthermore, participants recommended that Hunter Water should release more/targeted communications via mailouts, media and community education.

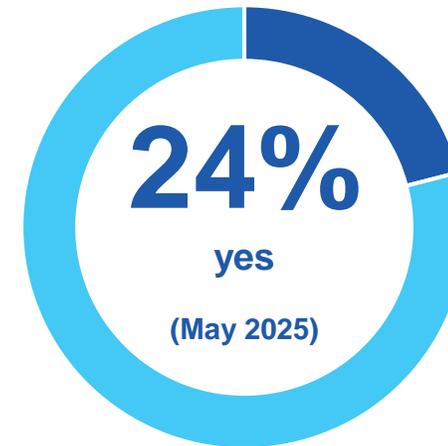
Do you recall ever seeing or hearing communications from Hunter Water about reducing water consumption?



Previous quarter (Feb 2025): 62%

One year ago (May 2024): 53%

Have you seen or heard any advertising, marketing, communications or events on any topic from Hunter Water in the last few weeks?



Previous quarter (Feb 2025): 21%

One year ago (May 2024): 18%

What we're hearing about water conservation *continued*

- Of the respondents who recalled seeing or hearing communications from Hunter Water about reducing water consumption, 94% in May 2025 fieldwork indicated they had made efforts to reduce household water consumption. This represents a 13% increase from February 2025, and a new peak in the history of the study.
- At 73% in May 2025, customer emphasis on water conservation is has decreased (-7%) since last quarter (February 2025). Respondents disagreeing on the importance of water conservation were asked to elaborate on their response. Over the last four quarters (August 2024 to May 2025), the most common reasons relate to 'water storages being high' and 'other concerns being a higher priority'.
- The proportion of respondents taking a shower of between 3 to 4 minutes significantly decreased by 12% since the last quarter, while showers of length 7 to 8 minutes significantly increased (+6%), as did showers of 9 minutes or longer (+8%).

Have you ever made efforts to reduce water consumption in your household based on communications from Hunter Water? *



Previous quarter (Feb 2025): 81%

One year ago (May 2024): 84%

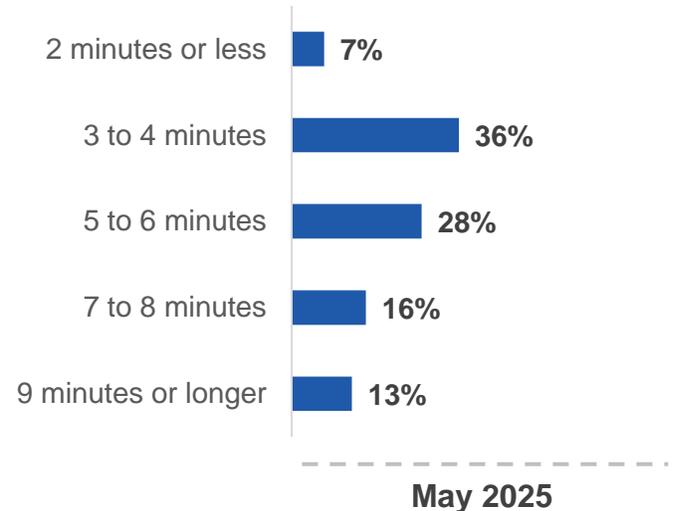
Water conservation is important to me right now



Previous quarter (Feb 2025): 80%

One year ago (May 2024): 76%

On average, how long do you typically spend in the shower?

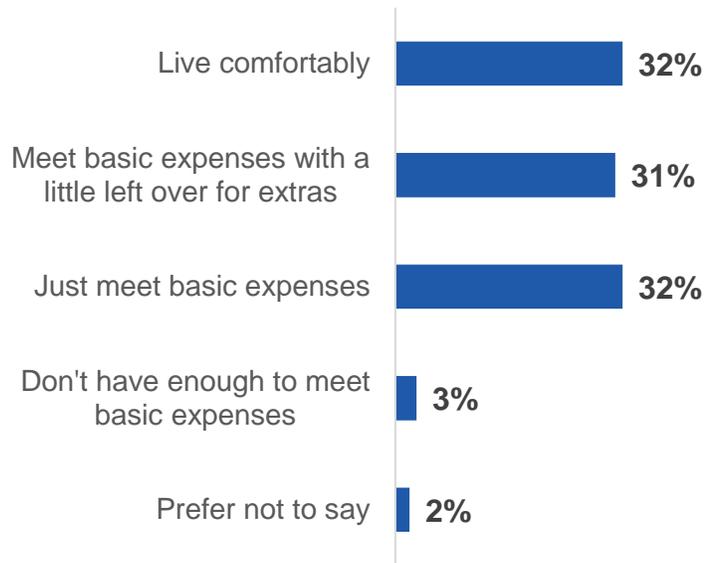


* Only answered by respondents who indicated 'Yes' to item 'Do you recall ever seeing or hearing communications from Hunter Water about reducing water consumption?'

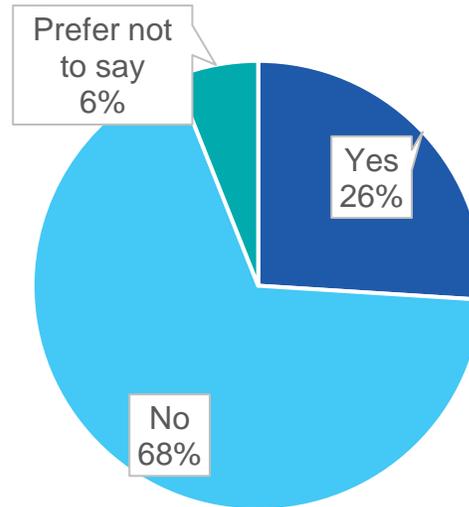
What we're hearing about affordability

- The proportion of respondents indicating they “*live comfortably*” increased significantly (+10%) since last quarter, while the proportion of respondents saying they “*meet basic expenses with a little left over for extras*” decreased significantly (-13%) in May 2025.
- Following a 10% significant decline in May 2024, and holding steady in August, the proportion of respondents indicating they have “*struggled to pay their water bill or another bill in the past year*” declined by a further 5% in November 2024. In February 2025 the result increased by 3% and fell by the same amount in May 2025.
- 42% of participants in May 2025 indicated they are “*aware of customer support programs Hunter Water offers*”, representing an increase of 8% since February 2025, and the highest proportion over the history of the study.
- 59% of participants in May 2025 agreed or strongly agreed that Hunter Water delivers value for money, representing a marginal 1% increase since February 2025, and the highest result over the history of the study.

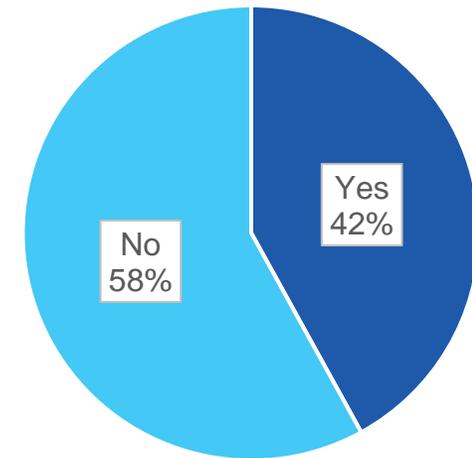
Which of the following best describes your financial situation?



Did you struggle to pay either your water bill or another bill (electricity, gas, phone/internet, mortgage or rent) on time over the past year?

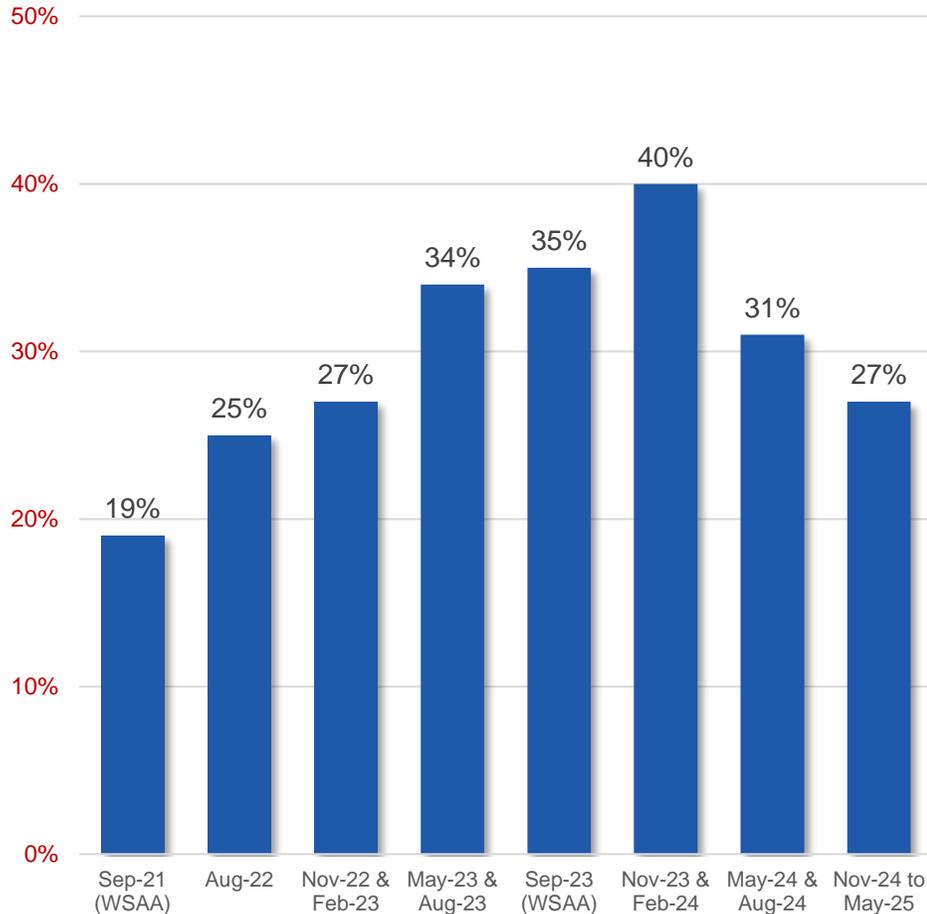


Are you aware of any customer support programs Hunter Water offers for customers who are struggling to pay their bill?



Between a quarter and a third of customers have struggled to pay a bill

Percentage of respondents who had struggled to pay a utility bill in the last year

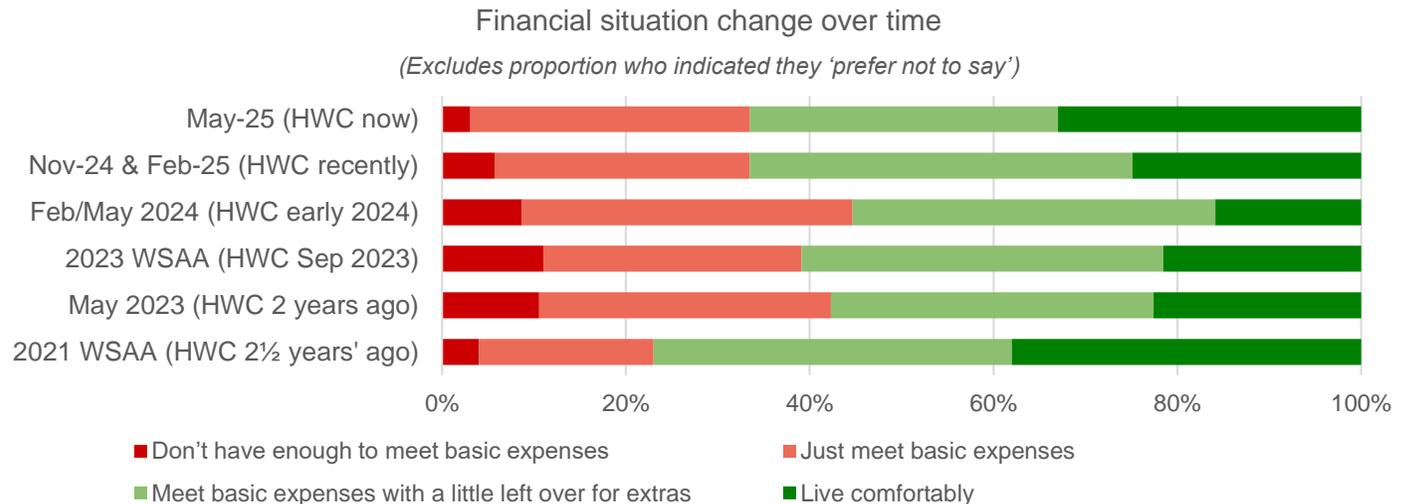


Industry association Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) conduct a national customer perceptions survey every two years, Hunter Water customers form part of that survey sample.

“Did you struggle to pay either your water bill or another bill (electricity, gas, phone/internet, mortgage, rent) on time over the last year?” is a question also asked in the WSAA survey. At 19% in winter of 2021, Hunter Water had the 13th lowest proportion of “yes” answers out of the 37 utilities in the study. Compared to the other large utilities, Hunter Water was mid pack (financial hardship tends to be more prevalent in regional areas). In the 2023 WSAA survey (September 2023 fieldwork), the proportion of Hunter Water customers that struggled to pay a bill within the most recent 12 months had climbed to 35%, corroborating the increase observed in the Community Survey.

The below chart shows the proportion of respondents in Feb/May2024 who “*just meet basic expenses*” or “*don’t have enough*” is double that from 2021, while the proportion who “*live comfortably*” has halved.

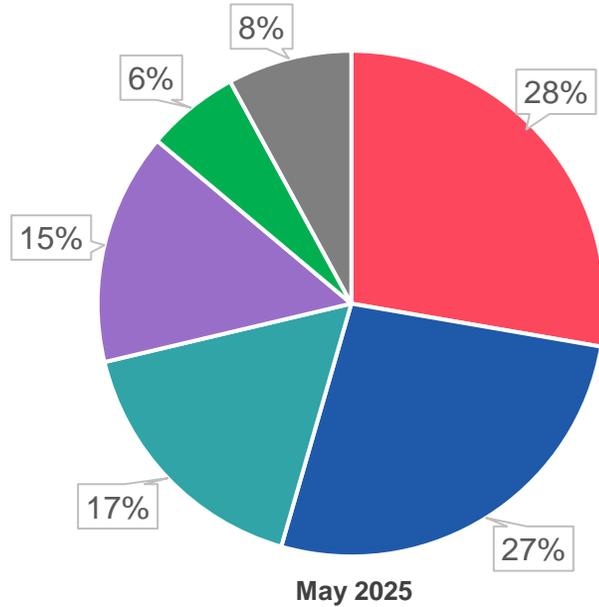
The key observation remains that cost-of-living pressures have almost certainly mounted over 2022 through to early 2024. Data collected since November 2024 suggests cost-of-living pressures may now be easing.



Customer segmentation (personas)

Personas, or customer and community archetypes, are a popular approach to segmenting the customer base. They have a range of applications in customer journey mapping, understanding demographic change, and in designing services to meet evolving customer and community needs. The underlying hypothesis is that Hunter Water can be viewed through different lenses, and that the lens a person uses to judge their water provider is a good predictor of their perceptions.

On which of the following do you mostly base your opinions of Hunter Water?



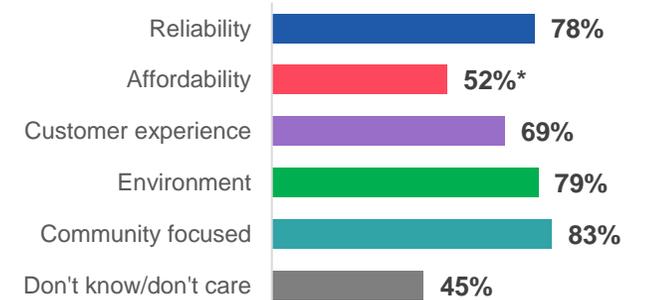
Customers who are *affordability focused*, along with those who *'don't know (and don't really want to know) about Hunter Water'*, are generally more critical on most measures, including trust and community reputation.

Those who judge Hunter Water on *'its track record on providing safe drinking water and reliable services'* represent about two in five customers, and the results show that they are significantly more positive than most of the other groups when assessing Hunter Water.

Trust Hunter water



Hunter Water has a good reputation in the community



* indicates that the difference between these responses and all other responses in the selected filter is statistically significant

- Its track record on providing safe drinking water and reliable services
- Its environmental performance
- On whether it keeps my bills affordable
- Its contribution to the community (local employment, sponsorships, support of community events, education)
- My experience of dealing with them, or what others have told me about their experience
- I don't know (and don't really want to know) about Hunter Water

Hunter Water's Operating Licence and Customer Contract

After reading the following information on Hunter Water's Operating Licence and Customer Contract, respondents in May 2025 were asked for their preferred level of engagement:

Operating Licence

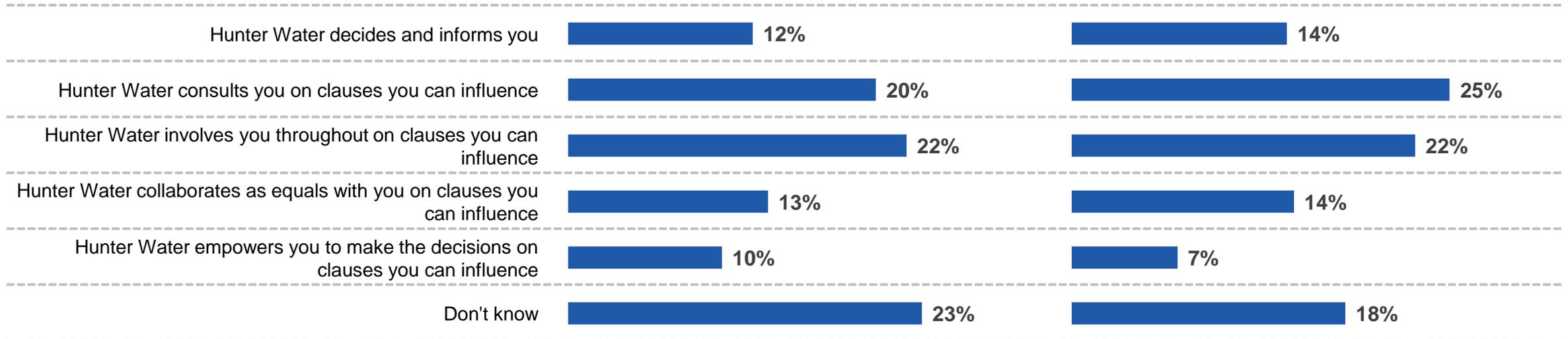
Hunter Water's Operating Licence is set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The Operating Licence covers things like system service standards, customer rights, and how we manage water quality and the environment. Some parts of the licence (like health and safety requirements) are set by law and can't be changed. However, some areas can be shaped by customer feedback.

Customer Contract

Hunter Water's Customer Contract sets out the services we provide (like water, sewerage and stormwater) and your rights and responsibilities as a customer. Some parts of the contract are required by law. Other parts can reflect your preferences as a customer.

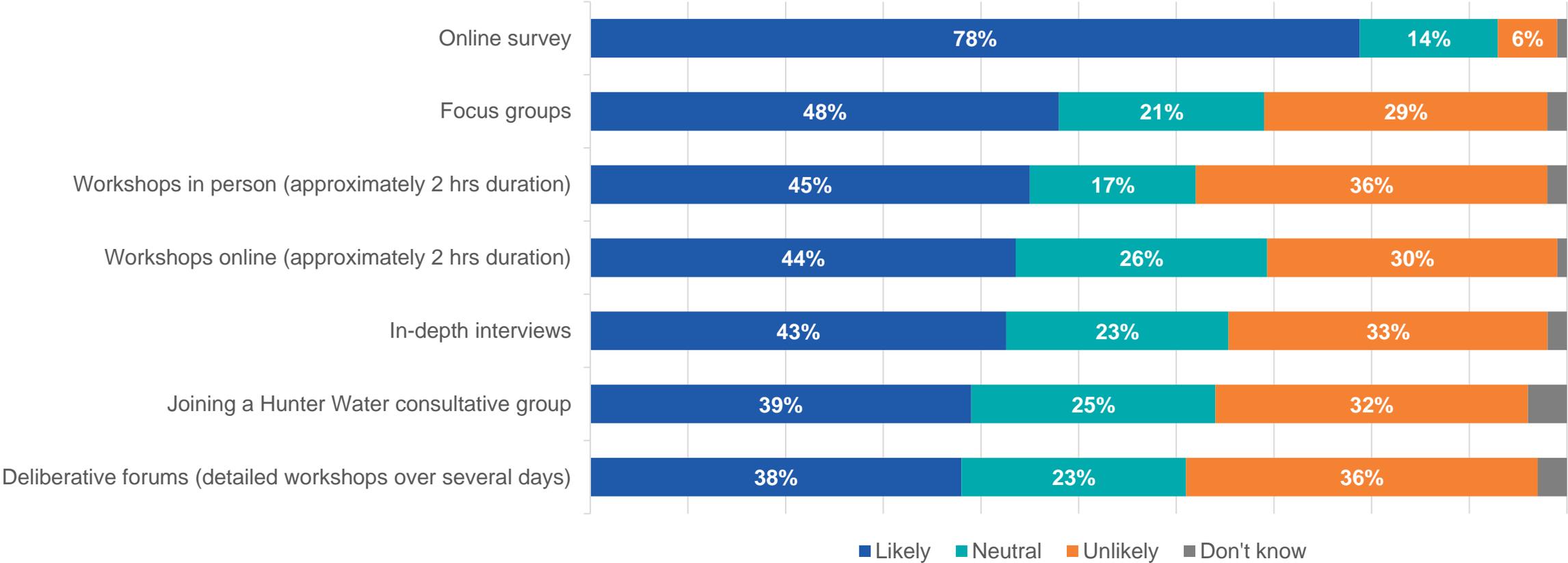
In general, what level of engagement would you prefer to have on our Operating Licence?

In general, what level of engagement would you prefer to have on our Customer Contract?



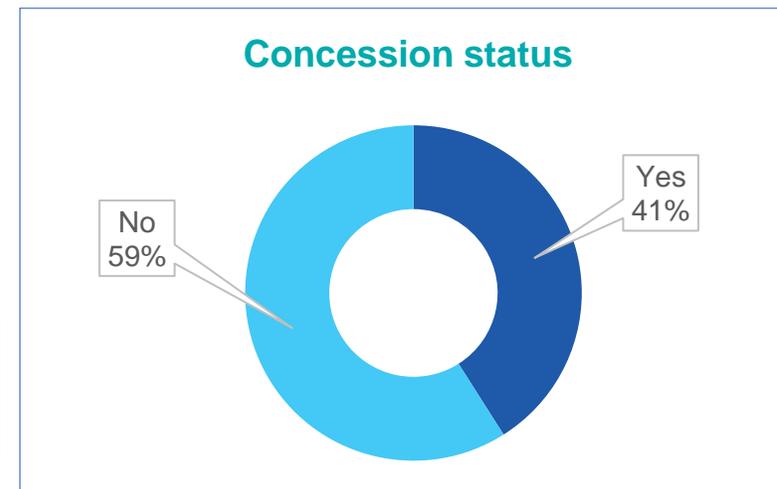
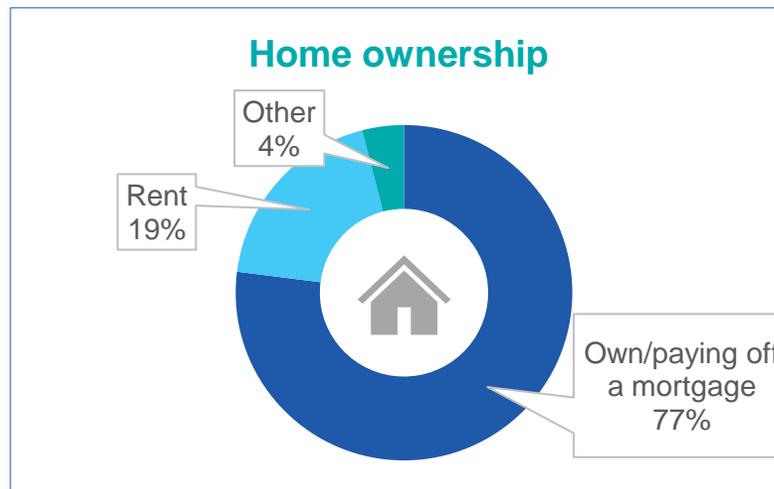
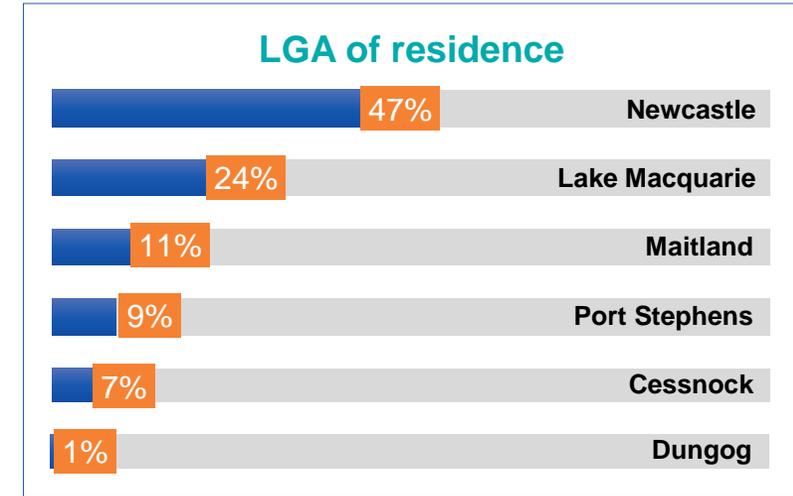
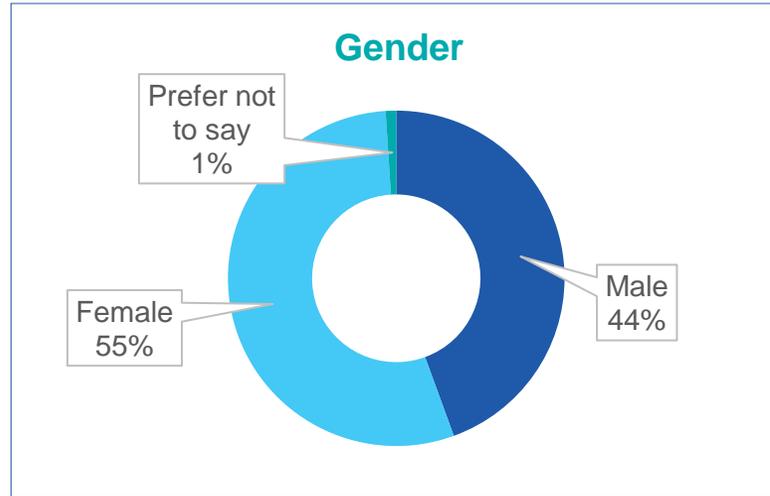
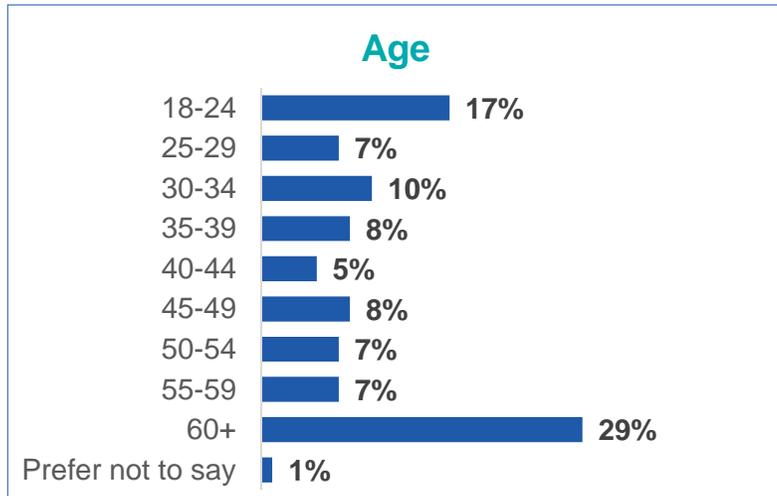
Hunter Water's Operating Licence and Customer Contract

If Hunter Water were to invite you to take part in conversations about the Operating Licence or Customer Contract, how likely would you be to participate in the following ways?



Who we heard from in May 2025

Note: All response percentages have been weighted to adjust for sample bias.





Thank you.