

Objectives

To gain qualitative insight from customers to understand their views on river water quality, how these views have been affected by recent media coverage and whether customers' views on future investment have been affected by media messages. This research builds on previous research into environmental investment and ambition to allow SWW to track customer sentiment in the context of recent media coverage.

Format	Focus groups
Households (number)	30
Non households (number)	
Vulnerable customers	✓
Future customers	
Retailers	
Stakeholders	
South West Water	✓
Bournemouth Water	
Bristol Water	

Impact on our plan and ways of working

There is a growing political, stakeholder and media interest in this area.

This work builds on previous research and looks to see if these external influences are changing customers views. The conclusion is there seems no long lasting impacts of media messages but that customers do want to see investment in their local rivers and it is a priority area for them.

Date	June 2022
Supplier	ICS

Key messages – what matters most

What we did

- 30 participants were involved in the in-depth discussions across four focus groups in Feb 2022. Groups involved a cross section of SWW customers (including a range of ages, socio-economic groups and location). All customers were responsible for their water and sewerage bill
- The research was implemented online using the Visions Live platform. The online groups support polls and interactive on-screen exercises, to increase engagement and promote discussion. Each focus group was approximately 90 minutes
- Six high-level topic areas were covered; views on river water quality and its priority within wider issues, view on the impacts of SWW's activities, understanding how customers are gaining or seeking information on river quality, understanding views on combined storm overflows, communications and general feedback.

What matters most

- Customers value the environment in the South West highly and feel it is under pressure - environmental issues are recognised as a high priority and overall, customers are positive about river water quality, with many basing their views on their direct experience of rivers in the region
- Most feel river quality has improved or stayed the same in the last five years. Half of customers are content with the current state of rivers in the region and the majority of participants actively experience rivers
- The majority of customers had received information on river water quality within the two weeks prior to the research and want to hear more about SWW's environmental activities
- Most customers want more investment on combined storm overflows without removing/eliminating them, there seems a growing appetite for investment and designated inland bathing waters were welcomed by some, but not at the expense of other rivers.

Are there differing views?

None highlighted.

Next steps

This research feeds into work being conducted by the Environment team for DWMP, as well as being important for the long-term delivery strategy.