

A young child with wet hair, wearing a blue sleeveless shirt, is playing with a blue water hose in a garden. The child is holding the hose and spraying water towards the left. The background is a lush green garden with trees and foliage.

Expectations of Service Research Report

Prepared for:
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Water for the North West



InSites Consulting

The need for this research

Various factors, including customer behaviour that causes blockages, prolonged dry spells and heavy rainfall/flooding, have contributed to a significant increase in wastewater incidents in the last 18-months – and impacting on incident response times.

In response to this, United Utilities are reviewing its wastewater incident response operating model, with customer research needed to support decision making.

United Utilities are also looking to understand customers' expectations around interruptions to water supply to inform longer-term business planning in this area.

The research needs to look at expectations for response/resolution times and communications for a number of scenarios across wastewater, interruptions to water supply, and other key service areas.

Insight will be used to:

- Inform new wastewater operating models, SLAs and comms strategies
- Help shape our strategy for water supply interruptions by better understanding expectations and comms preferences for all issues, and resolution vs. disruption trade-offs for loss of water incidents

How we tackled it



Online survey: 1,320 interviews

16x 1-hour 1-2-1 video interviews

Fieldwork took place: 28th September – 6th October 2021

Survey data has been weighted to match the known profile of United Utilities household customers
– see appendix for a full breakdown of who took part



Overall, we see some interesting themes emerging:

'Self-help' action plans

As well as the reassurance that incidents have been logged, there's an important role for advice from phone agents in terms of steps customers can take themselves to help a situation and mitigate damage while they wait for United Utilities teams to arrive.



The idea of 'containing' vs. 'resolving' a situation

While the time expectations captured are for 'fully resolving' a situation (often within 9 or 24 hours), it's important to note that customers can see this as 'containing' an emergency situation and ending the immediate threat to homes, rather than full clean-ups and any subsequent work to stop it happening again.



Emergency vs. non-emergency situations

Customers expectations are driven by how much of an emergency they perceive the situation to be and the likelihood of damage to their/neighbouring property. The more urgent the situation the higher their expectations.

As a general rule, sewage flooding incidents, large leaks and unplanned loss of water are considered an 'emergency' – other situations are more of an inconvenience



The first team to respond

For wastewater incidents, customers tend to prioritise someone arriving on site as soon as possible – even if this team doesn't have all the necessary equipment.

Particularly with a sewage flooding emergency, they'd much rather some form of help arrives to assess the situation and start taking remedial action ASAP.

With water supply, customers' priority is getting through to report an issue, with more emphasis on teams with the right equipment/expertise than a quick 'first response'.



In distress customers default to phoning

In emergency situations, particularly wastewater scenarios customers still have a tendency to phone.

Speaking to an agent brings immediate relief and reassurance that an issue has been logged and will be dealt with. Digital channels can struggle to offer this speed & certainty.



Trade-offs for planned works

Minimising the time customers are without water is the priority but unlike other scenarios, customers are more likely to want other aspects to be taken into consideration such as how environmentally friendly it is – even if this takes longer.



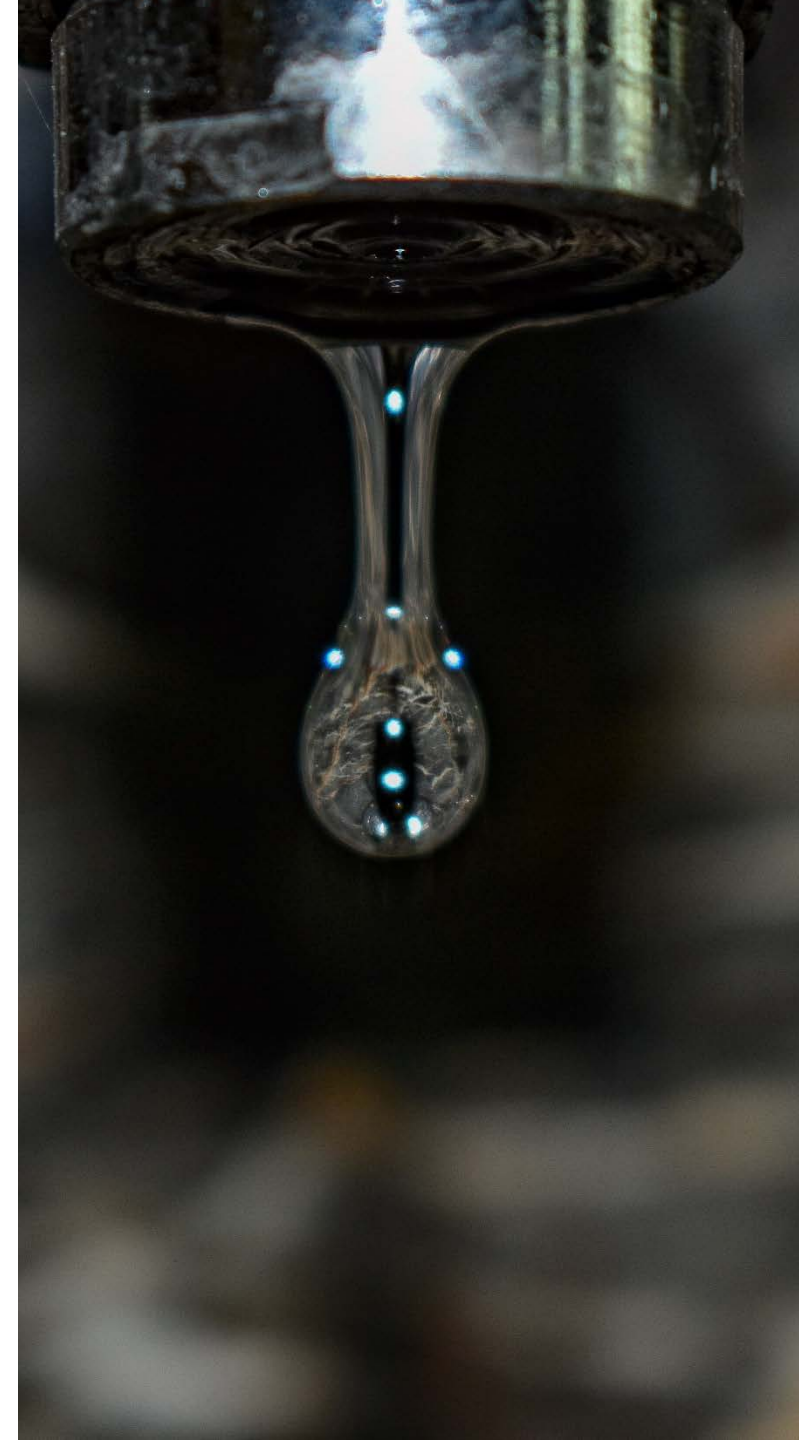
Key takeouts

In wastewater scenarios...

- The threat of damage leads to a heightened emotional state
- Customers turn to phone in emergency situation (depending on scenario between 66-83% prefer to phone)
- The phone gives them the reassurance they desire
- They expect to get through in 5 mins
- Sewer flooding is the highest priority scenario
- Customers expect a response in 1-3 hours in these scenarios
- Customers want someone on site asap and aren't willing to wait longer to have the right team arrive
- Customers expect the situation resolved in 12-24 hours (could be containing and ending immediate threat)

In water supply scenarios...

- Depending on the scenario between 47% to 63% of customers turn to the phone with more customers prepared to report on line for leaks and poor supplies
- Customers are prepared to wait 8-12 minutes to get through by phone
- The priority is getting through/reporting
- Customers expect someone on site 1-3 hours for no water 4-8 hours for leaks and poor supply
- Those less urgent scenarios 9-12 hours
- Customers expect a no water scenario to be resolved in 9-12 hours and other scenarios 1-2 days



The backdrop to service expectations

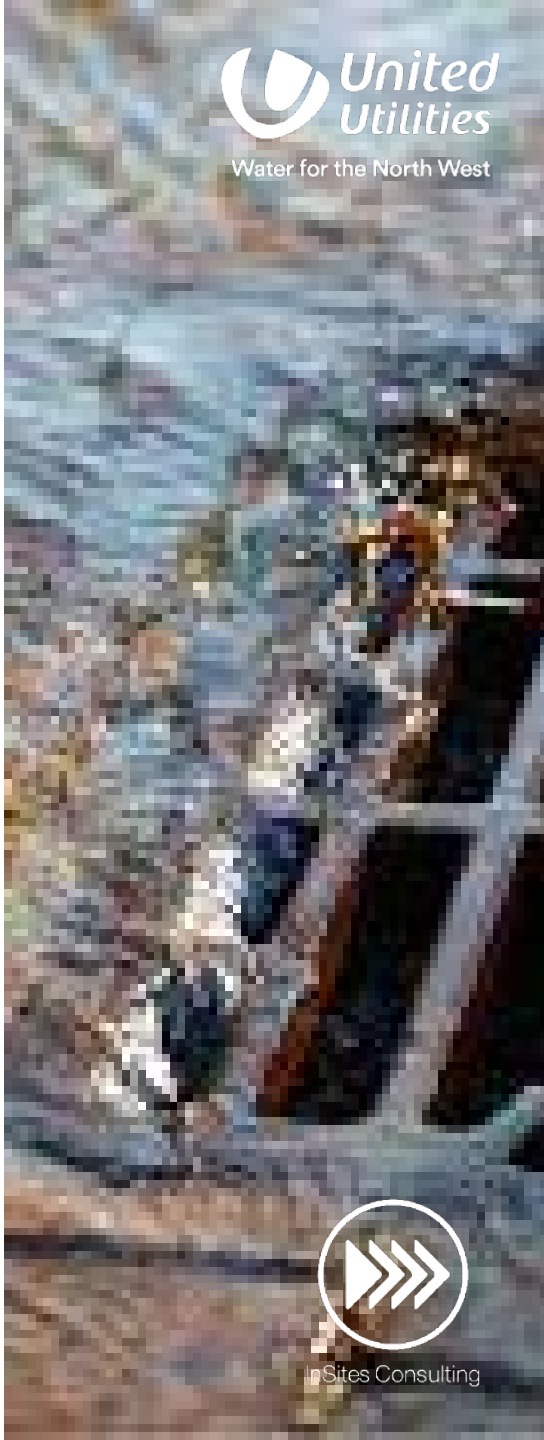
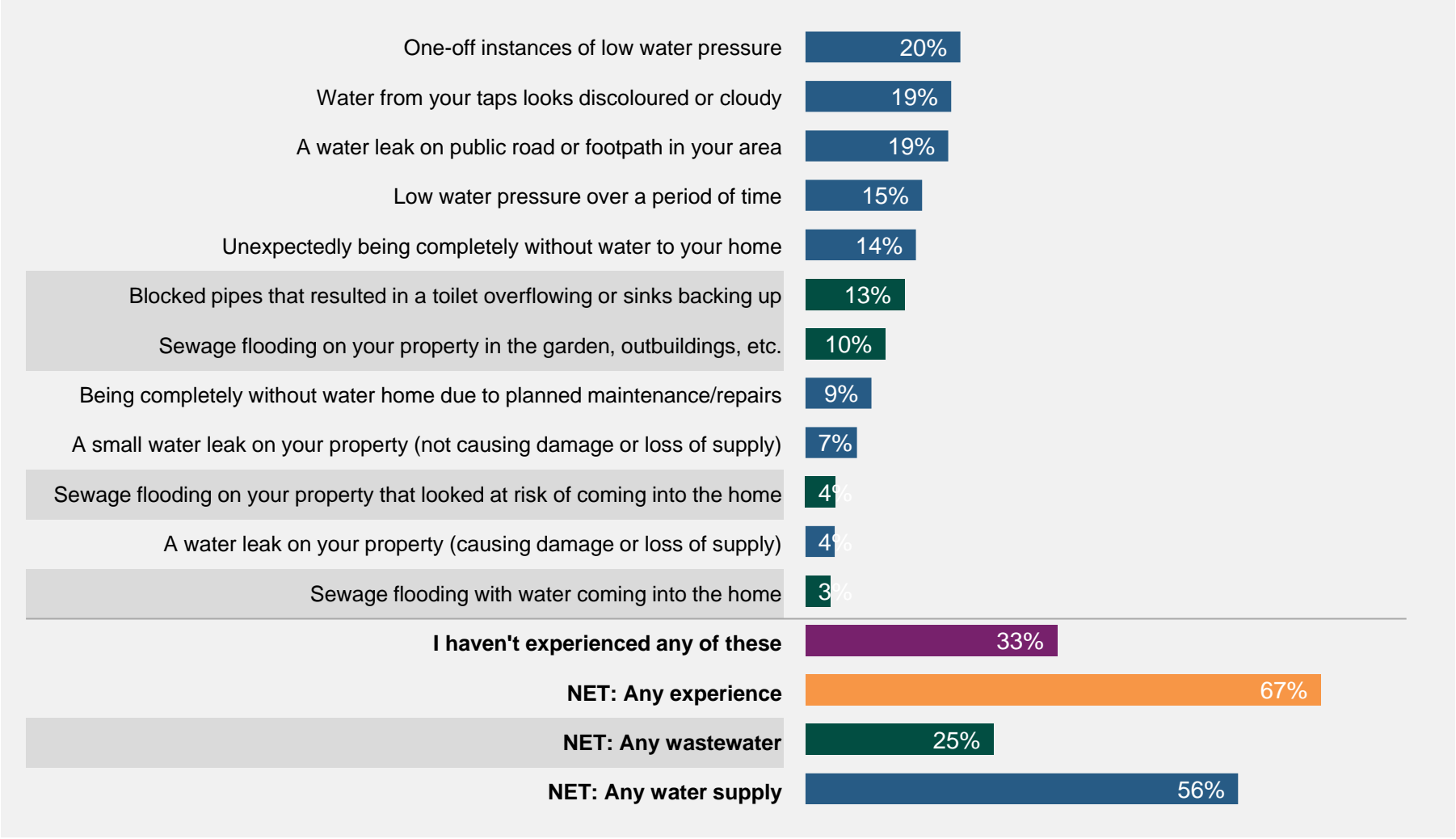


Water for the North West



InSites Consulting

We spoke to a mix of those with and without experiences of wastewater & water supply incidents (last 3 years)



“

Beyond bills, I've only had to deal with them once, when we had water pressure issues.

I got in touch with them and they were really good to be honest.

They said they'd send someone out to check – off they went and it was soon back to how it was.

Someone even called back to check it was all okay.

They did what they said they would, and the follow up call made it feel like someone cared about what they were doing.



There are clear signs of goodwill towards the United Utilities brand

Which gives a strong starting point and affords a certain amount of grace for contact situations

Direct experiences of contact or anything going wrong are limited, but people generally have a very good impression of the company.

Past dealings with United Utilities and experience of specific issues can affect people's POV, but most continue to believe it's a great company, delivering a great service.

People acknowledge climate pressures and demands on the network, with a sense that 'we are all in it together' and there is a need to be reasonable.

Matters need to be prioritised and customers accept their personal situation/issue may not be the most important at the time of reporting.

Customers are aware that they have no choice about which water company they use, but no one wishes to change United Utilities.

It is seen as a responsible, approachable and reliable company that does its best to deliver what it promises.



Contact for
water supply
& wastewater
incidents

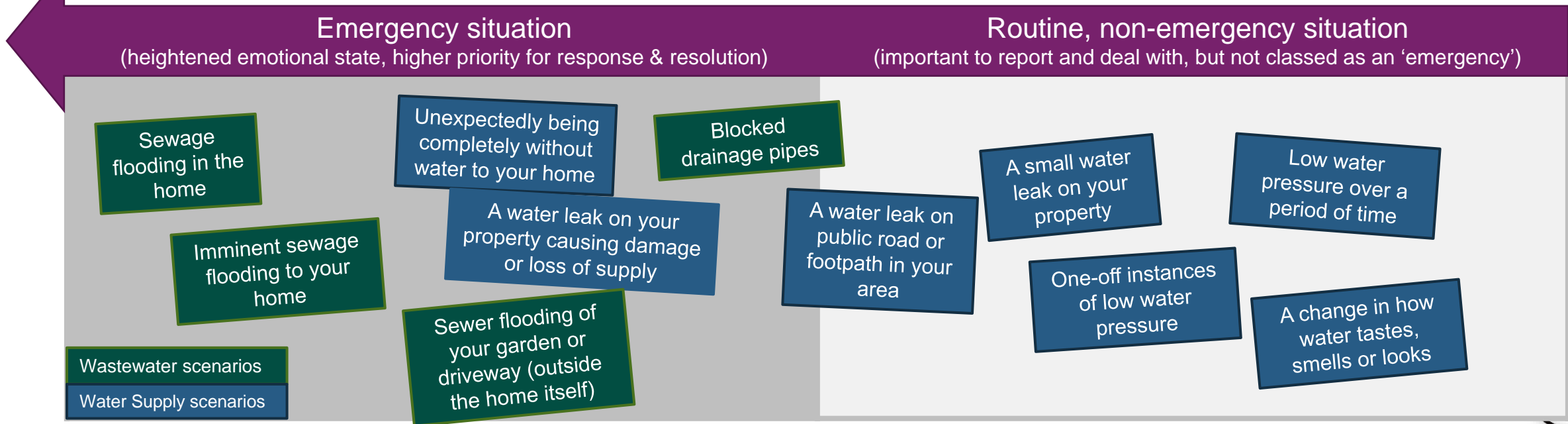


People's starting point and expectations hinge on the nature of issues, with wastewater scenarios generally deemed higher priority

'Emergency' situations demand a faster response and clearer course of action vs. more routine or non-emergency situations

In these situations, customers are in a heightened emotional state, fearing for their property & livelihood – so the immediate priority is getting through to someone quickly who can assuage those feelings and start putting plans in place.

General perceptions of the scenarios tested
(Indicative view from qualitative interviews)



“

I would be worried that the problem could get worse or that my wife would be concerned about any health issues.



Customers turn to the phone as they are looking for that reassurance and an action plan of next steps, including ‘self help’

As with general contact, call waiting and initial response times are just one part of the experience and how customers are left feeling

Customers are likely to search for a phone number online (google/website) as their first port of call – so there is scope to outline situations and nudge people to online channels for lower priority issues.

Most expect a dedicated emergency number (rather than an automated option for an emergency).

– a dedicated number helps alleviate worries about ‘sitting in a queue’ alongside routine calls and gives immediate reassurance for ‘out of hours’ contact.

Once through on the phone, there’s a lot of emphasis on immediate reassurance, with operators who are calm, knowledgeable and clearly outline what is going to happen and why.

Aside from ‘expensive callouts’ for emergency plumbers or drainage firms, customers have no real point of reference for response times. United Utilities are the experts and customers are prepared to be flexible and trust that the response is appropriate for the problem at hand.

Importantly, people place quite a lot of emphasis on ‘self-help’ advice and any steps they can take while waiting for someone to arrive on site (e.g. stemming water flow, moving furniture, turning off water, filling bottles, etc.) – this can help alleviate feelings of helplessness.

Being offered a choice of how they want to be kept updated is also important – in the first instance, for if there’s any hold up with teams arriving or difficulty finding the property. █



What frames expectations



Phone contact

Expectations are largely driven by the degree of perceived panic/emergency.

Comparisons with other companies isn't something people have considered.

That said, there's a sense that people see the setup being more akin to commercial companies than public sector organisations.

The impression people have is a well-established, well-run operation with a fairly well-staffed contact centre.



Incident response

Again, there's a general expectation that United Utilities is 'suitably setup and resourced' to respond to incidents that threaten homes or leave people without supply.

There's some recognition that resources are finite, and incidents may need to be prioritised.

But people generally assume the capacity is there to respond to 'emergency' situations quickly.

The only direct comparison/point of reference we see is emergency plumber & drainage callouts (local firms or franchise networks with a response within 1-3 hours).

And there are some signs of sub-conscious factors that fuel perceptions, namely:

- The visible branded fleet – suggests a sizeable footprint and resources with teams able to respond quickly.
- United Utilities' regional scope – response teams stationed at bases throughout the NW, distances not-too-great





How the landscape is changing

Lasting impact of the pandemic

Most appreciate the pandemic had a big impact on call centre operations.

Anecdotally, some say they're more patient with call answering times than they were in the past.

But the time that's lapsed means Covid can't be used as an 'excuse' – companies are expected to have worked through the challenges of 2020 and adapted to new ways of working with 'normal service resumed'.

Not necessarily linked to the pandemic, there is a general view that contact centres are often understaffed and calls will involve some waiting on hold.

Customers' own situation

Many are still working from home (or have the option to), meaning...

- Better availability for home visits – generally less inconvenient, no longer need to take time off work.
- A bit more flex for calling companies and waiting on hold (multi-tasking).

The 'new normal' is likely to involve hybrid working patterns, so this is likely to continue.

Things customers haven't considered or don't ascribe to...

Any real change in their own behaviour since spending more time at home that would increase the likelihood of a wastewater or water supply issue, or when incidents are reported.

Any lasting impact/change for the United Utilities teams who respond to incidents, or change in response time expectations (vs. pre-pandemic).



How the landscape is changing (continued)

Compared to research conducted in 2017*:

While results aren't directly comparable, the picture that emerges suggests...

No real change in:

Views on wastewater & water supply incidents themselves (levels of urgency/severity).

The propensity to phone in each situation.

A general preference for text & email updates.

How long an issue will take to resolve being the #1 priority for updates.

Expectations for resolving unplanned loss of water and low pressure.

Customers' underlying needs when they contact United Utilities (empathy, reassurance and a clear plan of action).

But potentially some shift in expectations for:

Wastewater incident resolution: a slightly lower % expecting sewage flooding incidents to be resolved within 12-hours.

Water supply incident resolution: a slightly lower % expecting water leaks in a property, leaks in public spaces, and a change in how water looks/tastes/smells to be resolved within 12-hours.

While it wasn't quantified, we also see clear signs of ever-increasing environmental consciousness and openness to more sustainable solutions (that mirrors wider attitudes).




Customers value being treated fairly, supported, kept informed – and companies following through


While people struggle to draw comparisons between United Utilities and other companies, it is clear that:

- The choices available and ease of switching brands/providers means people's tolerance for 'bad' service is low.
- Each 'good' experience tends to raise the bar higher and they're more likely to notice other companies' shortcomings.


Examples of positive recent experiences include:




Faulty TV collected & replaced with an upgraded version.
Seamless service, requiring very little effort.
Left feeling **impressed** and **valued**.



Helpful, friendly support with a new laptop, taking them through setup.
Clearly explained in layman's terms, left them feeling comfortable and supported.



Sceptical of online-only contact, but very impressed with ease of using the online form following a claim – received a call back with in 30 minutes with clear answers and an action plan.
Left feeling **very pleasantly surprised**.



Never over-promise and always deliver what they say they will.
Good communication – **always kept in informed**.



Customers are looking for fairly comprehensive updates outlining the cause of issues and how long they will take to resolve

With wastewater incidents affecting customers' property, there's slightly more emphasis on avoiding it happening again

Types of update once issue has been reported (% selecting)	Waste water scenarios	Water supply scenarios
How long it is likely to take to resolve	74%	73%
The cause of the issue	64%	61%
When any work will take place	64%	64%
Regular updates on work	63%	60%
What can be done to avoid happening again	60%	51%
What the issue is and any action you need to take	60%	56%
What work is needed and any disruption involved	59%	56%
Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun	55%	54%
Whose responsibility the issue is	50%	47%
How likely the issue is to happen again	50%	44%

There's a heightened desire for info and updates if anything changes in all 'emergency' situations.

More routine issues are more of an inconvenience – fewer updates are needed, but customers still want to be kept posted of progress or any changes.

Within wastewater...

Action the customer needs to take is more paramount with any sewage flooding.

There's slightly less emphasis on the cause of the issue and it happening again for blocked pipes.

For water supply...

The time it takes to resolve and updates on work taking place rises in importance for unplanned loss of supply.

Less info is needed for water leaks on in public spaces. The main priority here is when the situation will be resolved.





Emails and phone calls to keep me updated about the situation.

Frequency depends on the urgency of the situation.

I'd also want reassurance that no further damage is being done.



Those asking for regular updates suggest every 1-2 days

But this is essentially for an update that tells them if things are on track, or if there’s any hold-ups/complications for any situation involving sewage flooding, leaks, or water supply to the home

Frequency of regular updates	Waste water scenarios	Water supply scenarios
At least daily	60%	51%
Every 1-2 days	23%	29%
Every 3-4 days	7%	9%
Less often	8%	9%
Not sure	3%	2%

“ Simple text updates confirming the problem, the start and completion of the work would be useful.”

It’s worth noting this comes in against a backdrop of expectations that most issues will be resolved (or ‘contained’) within 1-2 days (particularly wastewater).

Some even suggest hourly updates where there’s an ongoing flood situation.

For water supply, at least daily updates is largely driven by unplanned loss of water and wanting to know when supply will be restored.

– updates aren’t needed as frequently for other issues where work is ongoing elsewhere (e.g. at a mains or treatment works to fully restore pressure or water quality).

Ultimately, the frequency of updates needs to be framed by the time estimate given to customers for resolving issues, potentially with ‘work has started’ and ‘work is complete’ notifications.



Text (SMS) and email are instant and unintrusive, and the preferred channel for most updates in all scenarios

Phone and in-person contact are only necessary where a conversation is needed about what the issue is, whose responsibility it is, and action required

Wastewater updates

There's a general assumption that United Utilities will be on site/in the area dealing with the issue, situations will be contained, and the cause established within the day – so conversations will happen in real-time.

Any subsequent updates can be handled remotely by email or text message.

Water supply updates

Phone call (or in-person) updates are most likely to be expected for:

- Whose responsibility the issue is
- What the issue is and any action you need to take
- When any work will take place
- Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun

Text and email are preferred for upfront info on the cause and work/disruption needed, and ongoing updates.

Customers are open to live online incident tracking tools – but given the option, they prefer to have expectations set and receive updates when there's something to report, rather than having to proactively find out information.



Overview of wastewater scenarios



Wastewater scenarios – key takeouts

- The threat of damage to property/possessions puts **customers in a heightened emotional state**. Importantly, customers see a distinction between **'containing'** an emergency (the immediate priority) and fully resolving the situation.
- Customers turn to the **phone in emergency situations**. They want **reassurance** they are 'in the system', concerns are logged, and they have an action plan (including what they can do themselves) to get that **feeling of relief**.
- Around 2 in 3 expect to get through to someone who can deal with the incident within 5 minutes (especially in emergency situations). The nature of incidents can leave customers feeling **anxious** about **transfers** and **waits on hold**.
- Most would expect sewage flooding situations to be high priority with a swift response from the nearest team (someone on site in **1-3 hours**). Customers imagine incidents will involve impending or ongoing damage to property.
- Most want to get straight through and **someone to arrive on site on site as soon as possible** – even if this team don't have all the necessary equipment. With a sewage flooding emergency, they'd much rather some form of help arrives to assess the situation and start taking remedial action ASAP.
- Most expect a situation to be resolved within **12-24 hours** – although many see this as **'containing'** flooding and ending the immediate threat to homes, rather than full clean-ups and any subsequent work to stop it happening again.



Wastewater: Scenarios Tested

Sewage flooding in your home



The issue customers might experience:

Sewer flooding caused by one of the following comes into the home:

- Main sewers on your street overflowing
- Rainwater overwhelming the drainage system around your property and flooding diluted sewage out of manholes and waste gullies and entering your property
- Toilets or sinks overflowing due to a blockage on the drainage system i.e. Toilet bowl overflowing

Potentially resulting in...

Flood damage to carpets/flooring, furniture and other items in the home

Bad odours

A professional clean-up and disinfecting the affected areas.

An investigation into the cause of the flooding.

A claim on your house insurance

Imminent sewage flooding to your home



The issue customers might experience:

Sewer flooding caused by one of the following has entered the property boundary and is at risk of coming into the home (i.e. up to your doorstep):

- Rainwater overwhelming the drainage system around your property and flooding diluted sewage out of manholes and waste gullies and entering your property
- Sewers on your street overflowing

Potentially resulting in...

Flood damage to the garden, outbuildings and other areas or possessions kept outside the home or near to your property entrance

Bad odours

A professional clean-up and disinfecting the affected areas

An investigation into the cause of the flooding

Sewer flooding of your garden or driveway (outside the home itself)



The issue customers might experience:

Sewer flooding caused by one of the following has entered the property boundary affecting the garden, garage and outbuildings:

- Main sewers on your street overflowing
- Rainwater overwhelming the drainage system around your property and flooding diluted sewage out of manholes and waste gullies

Potentially resulting in...

Flood damage to vehicles, garden furniture, and other items stored outside or in garages/outbuildings.

A professional clean-up and disinfecting the affected areas.

An investigation into the cause of the flooding.

A claim on your house insurance

Blocked drainage pipes



The issue customers might experience:

Blocked pipes which stop wastewater draining away, resulting in a full manhole/odour or slow draining of toilets and sinks.

Potentially resulting in...

An inspection to determine who is responsible for the pipework where the blockage is (private drains on the property or public drains outside the property)

Finding the source of the blockage and clearing it

Restricted use of facilities

Bad odours



Getting through to the right person and getting a team with the right equipment out to the scene are the top priorities in all WW scenarios

The threat of damage to property/possessions puts customers in a heightened emotional state, and desperate for the situation to be contained – fully resolving the issue is not an immediate priority.

When faced with a choice, customers generally prefer to have some form of help on site at the earliest opportunity, even if it means having to wait longer for a team with the right equipment

General priorities for wastewater scenarios
(% ranking in top 3)

	Flooding in the home	Imminent flooding to your home	Flooding to garden, etc.	Blocked pipes
How quickly a team with the right equipment/expertise to fix the problem can attend the scene	69%	65%	66%	66%
How soon you can speak to someone who can correctly diagnose the situation	66%	59%	64%	54%
How quickly you can first get through	58%	59%	65%	54%
How quickly someone from United Utilities can first attend the scene	41%	40%	42%	42%
Overall amount of time it takes to resolve the issue	30%	35%	29%	31%
Resolving the issue with the least amount of disruption	22%	22%	17%	30%
Resolving the issue in an environmentally friendly way	14%	21%	18%	25%



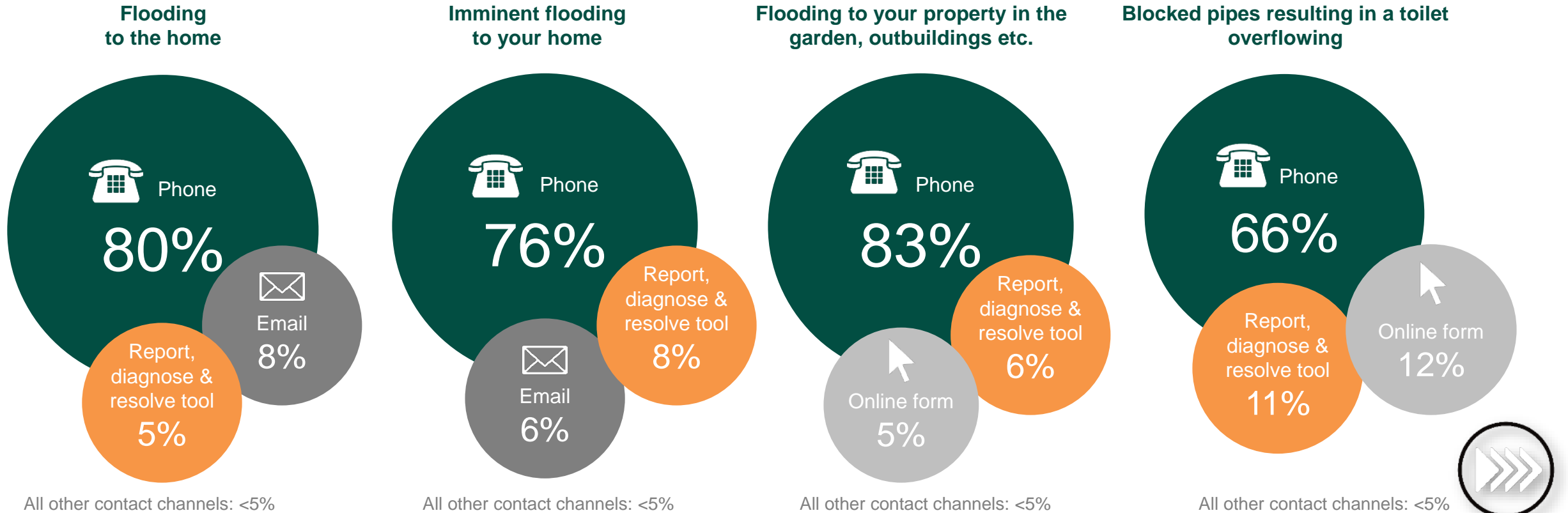
Customers are likely to phone for any wastewater issue – situations demand an instant response and clear course of action

This propensity to phone is universal across sub-groups of customers for all scenarios – and it increases further for older customers.

Customers prioritise the phone to ensure that they get that initial feeling of relief that they are in the system and that their concerns are being listened to. They want to know what the action plan is and also any steps they can take themselves in the meantime.

But United Utilities isn't necessarily top-of-mind for blockages inside properties. Many would assume its an issue they need to resolve themselves (or via insurance or home emergency cover) with a plumber or drainage firm.

Wastewater scenarios initial contact channel



There's fast call answering time expectations for wastewater flooding – slightly more so for imminent flooding where damage could be averted

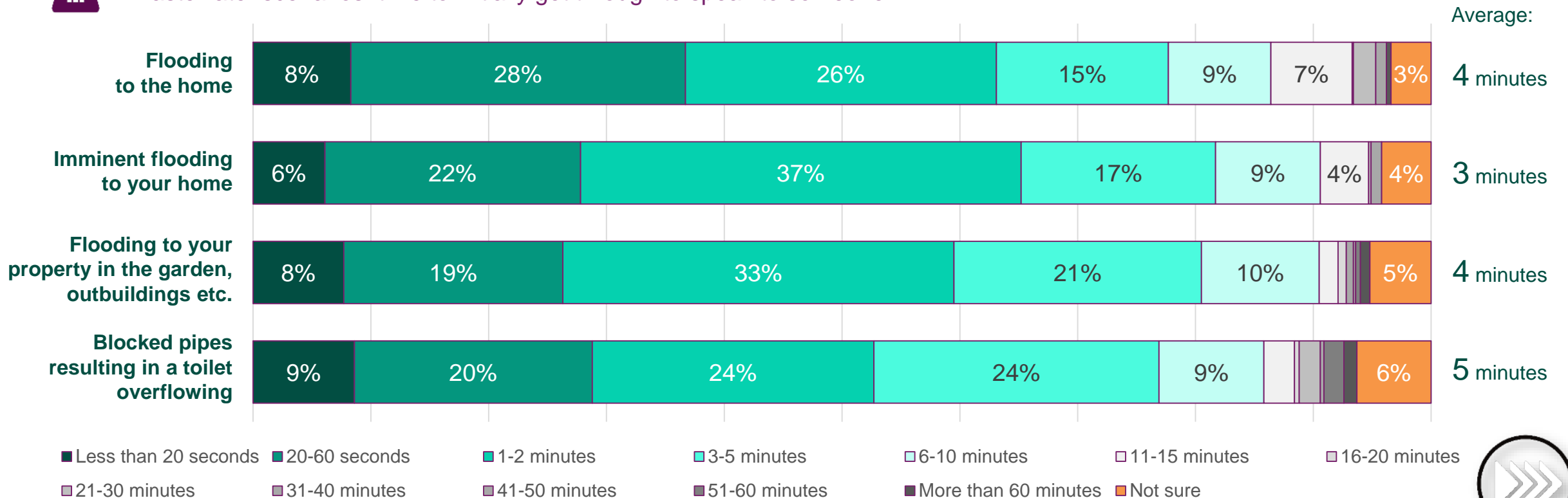
Customers feel helpless and want incidents logged, immediate advice and expert help on site ASAP.

Around 8 in 10 expect to be through to someone within 5 minutes in all scenarios.

Every minute waiting on hold compounds the stress of the situation.



Wastewater scenarios: time to initially get through to speak to someone



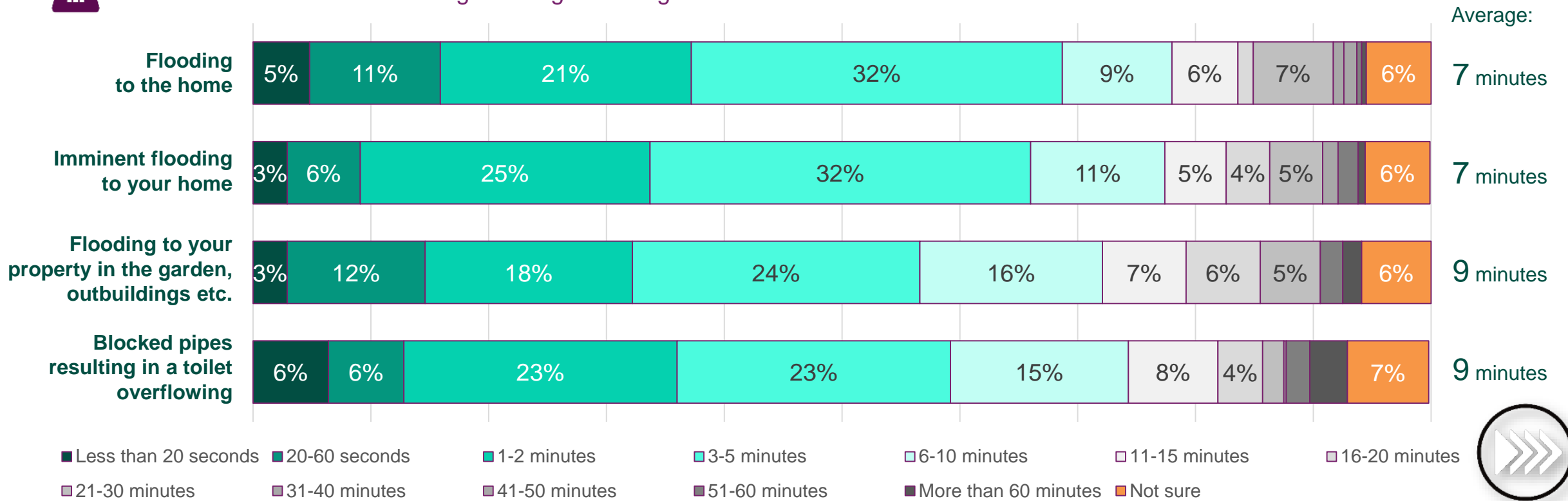
There's some acknowledgement it may take slightly longer to reach an agent who can deal with incidents – but the sense of urgency is still high

Around 2 in 3 expect to get through to someone who can deal with the incident within 5 minutes in flooding situations threatening the property itself. There's slightly less urgency for flooding outside and blocked pipes.

Customers feel some immediate relief at getting through to someone, but are likely to be anxious about any subsequent transfers/waiting hold, so a lot hinges on how those initial conversations are handled where that's the case.



Wastewater scenarios: time to get through to an agent who can deal with the incident



In sewage flooding situations, most would expect someone on site in 1-3 hours – slightly longer lead times are expected for blocked pipes

Much depends on the severity of the situation, but all scenarios are thought to involve impending or ongoing damage to property (and a potential health hazard), that will only get worse if left unchecked.

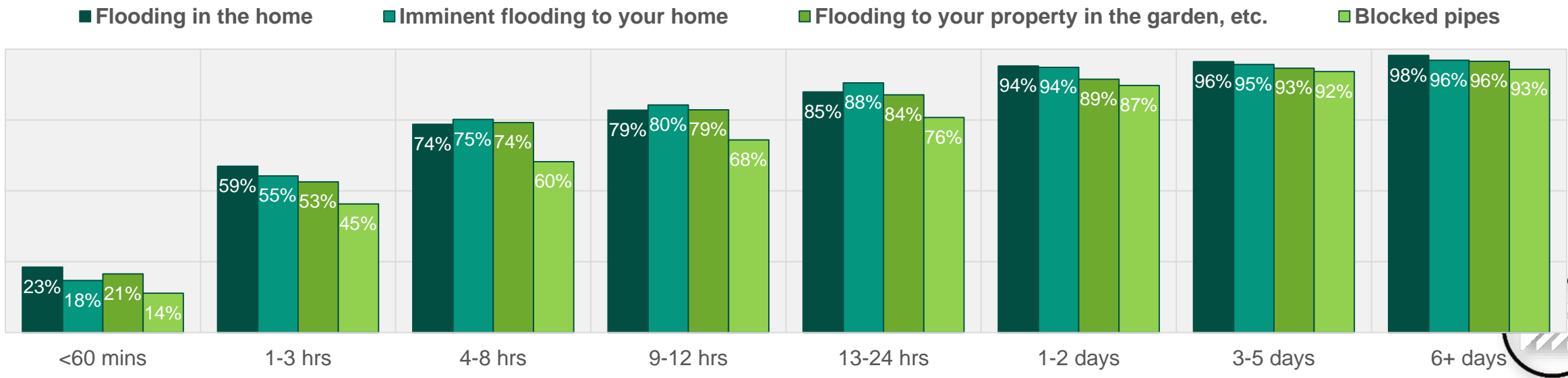
Customers assume sewage flooding incidents will be a high priority, with a swift response from the nearest team available.

People are prepared to be flexible and accommodating if they are provided with details of what will happen and any steps they can take in the interim.

Expectations don't tend to differ across sub-groups – in all cases, property & possessions are at risk. But there is a sense that those with children and pets have a heightened level of concern about managing situations with raw sewage.

Slightly quicker response times are expected in Cheshire & Greater Manchester.

First response expectations – time to arrive at the location to initially assess the situation (cumulative %)





I'm not sure I could correctly
diagnose the issue.

An initial examination by a
professional would hopefully get
the right team there quickly”



Most want to get straight through and have a ‘first responder’ on site as soon as possible in sewage flooding situations

Customers’ main aim is to get the situation under control as quickly and effectively as possible.

But this has to be balanced with their emotional state and wanting to speak to someone, avoiding anxious waits on hold or for a call back.

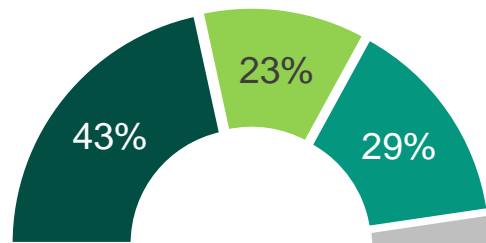
While they would do their best to help, people are sceptical of their ability to think rationally and diagnose a problem through questions over the phone. With a flooding emergency they’d much rather an expert arrive and assess the situation ASAP.

If the first response team can’t deal with the situation and another team needs to be called, so be it – customers accept this.

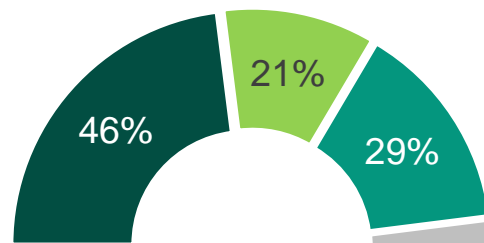
Though with a flooding emergency some hope that the first response team may be to stop it from causing further damage.

Initial handling of wastewater situations

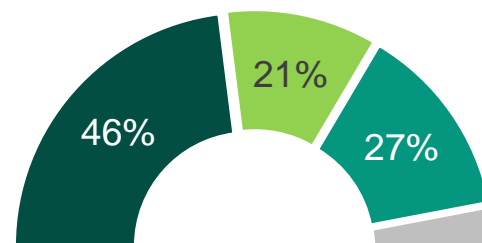
- Get through on the phone quickly, ‘first response’ team sent out ASAP, even if have to subsequently call out another team
- Wait to be transferred to a technician, longer initial call to diagnose, first team to attend have the equipment/expertise needed (but may take longer)
- Get through on the phone quickly, callback from a technician to diagnose (within 2 hours), team with the correct equipment/expertise needed sent out
- Not sure



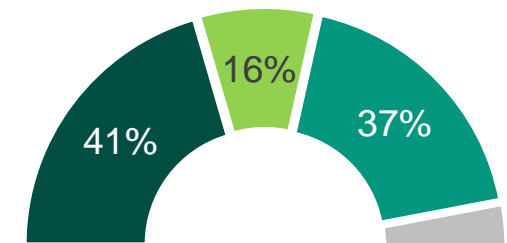
Flooding to the home



Imminent flooding to your home



Flooding to your property in the garden, outbuildings etc.



Blocked pipes resulting in a toilet overflowing



Customers aren't willing to wait much longer for a response team to have the right equipment/expertise to resolve the issue

This is underpinned by customers not wanting to be left with a deteriorating situation – any help on site will provide some relief and give a sense that the situation is improving

Time willing to wait for the right team (with right equipment/expertise to fully resolve the issue)

Original amount of time willing to wait for initial response team

	Total	Less than 30 minutes	30-60 minutes	1-3 hours	4-8 hours	9-12 hours	13-24 hours	1-2 days	3-5 days	6-10 days
I wouldn't be willing to wait any longer for someone to attend the scene	20%	20%	15%	14%	19%	24%	17%	37%	50%	35%
Less than 30 minutes	0%	17%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
30-60 minutes	5%	63%	28%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1-3 hours	16%	0%	49%	30%	-	-	-	-	-	-
4-8 hours	20%	0%	6%	44%	18%	-	-	-	-	-
9-12 hours	10%	0%	2%	5%	30%	8%	-	-	-	-
13-24 hours	12%	0%	0%	3%	25%	28%	39%	-	-	-
1-2 days	9%	0%	0%	2%	7%	20%	35%	29%	-	-
3-5 days	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	33%	23%	-
6-10 days	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	65%
Not sure	3%	0%	1%	2%	1%	19%	2%	2%	3%	0%

“ Hopefully the right people will be sent first time to fix the problem with all the correct equipment, so not causing unnecessary delays to repair and fix the problem efficiently & quickly.”



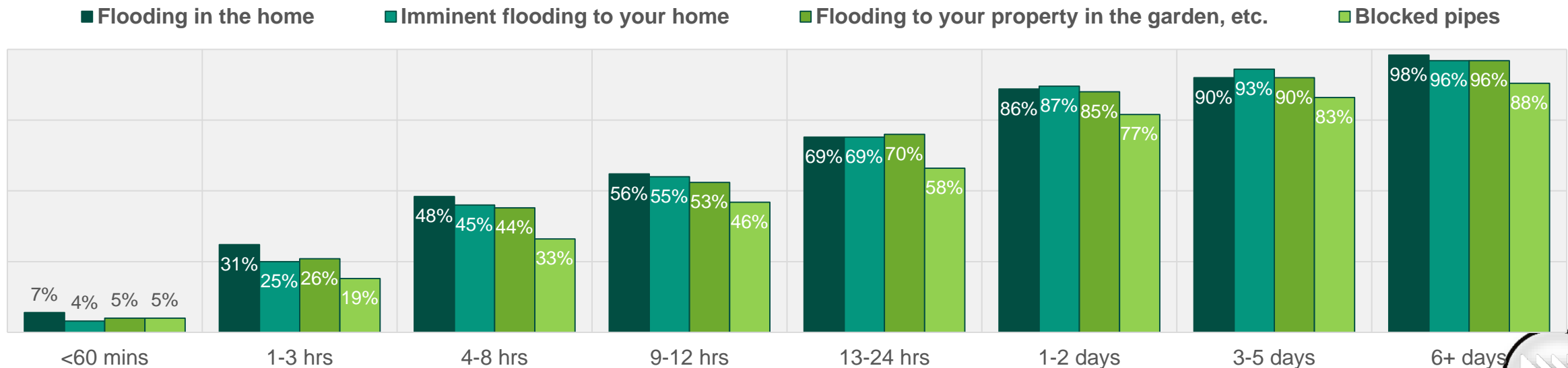
When asked how long they would expect it to take to fully resolve wastewater issues, most say within 12-24-hours

But in the depth interviews, many actually see ‘resolving the situation’ as containing flooding and ending the immediate threat to homes, rather than full clean-ups and any subsequent work to stop it happening again

Customers concede the time it takes to resolve issues will depend on identifying the source of the problem and bringing in the team/ equipment needed – but generally assume it will involve clearing blockages (which will be a relatively quick process).

Ultimately, customers feel they have to trust United Utilities will deliver swift, effective help and the best solution to the problem at hand.

Resolution expectations – time for United Utilities to fully resolve the situation (cumulative %)



Base: All allocated to each wastewater scenario: Flooding to the home (338), Imminent flooding to the home (325), Flooding to your property in the garden, etc. (309), Blocked pipes (347)





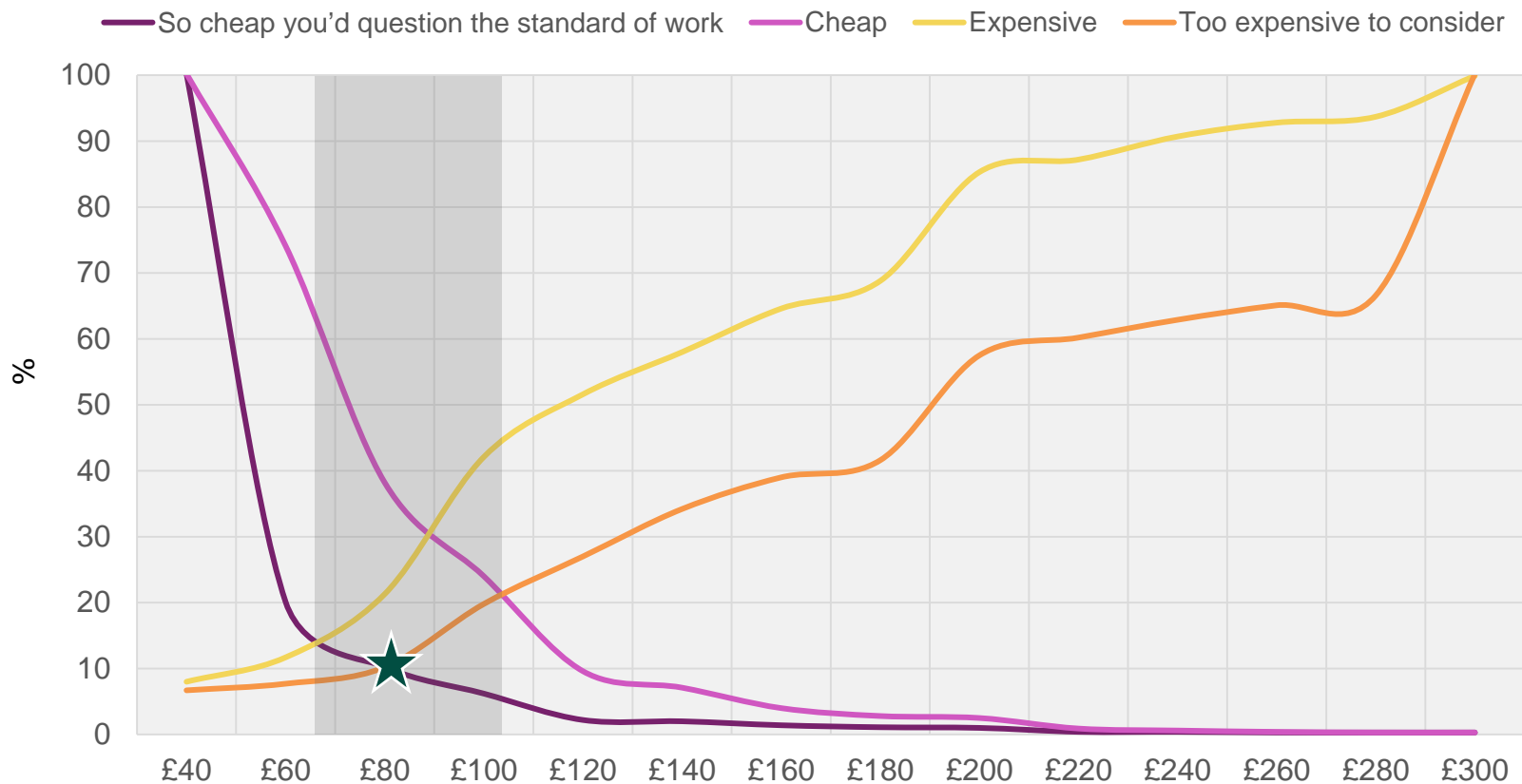
I'd expect the person who came out to look at it to tell me the cause of the problem, what was going to be done to sort it and how long it would take.

If it turns out to be something that wasn't the responsibility of UU I'd like advice about what I could do to get it dealt with as quickly as possible”



£70-£100 is an acceptable range for United Utilities to fix wastewater issues that are the homeowner's responsibility

Price expectations for option for United Utilities to fix wastewater issues (1-hour of labour)



Customers' point of reference here is hourly rates for tradespeople (knowing they would pay a premium for emergency callouts).

Some are aware that fixing issues might be their responsibility – this group seem more open to the service.

But it will come as a shock to others and some would want 'proof'. This group are more likely to feel 'backed into a corner', with no real alternative once teams are on site.

Raising the issue of responsibility early will be key (ideally on initial calls).

Overall, United Utilities is expected to do a good job and fix the problem properly.



Overview of water supply scenarios



Water supply scenarios – key takeouts

1. Phone is most customers' first port of call and whilst these situations may not be seen to be as urgent as the wastewater scenarios, they are **still felt to be inconvenienced and perhaps a little upset** and so are going to want to be reassured. But there's openness to real-time updates & digital channels for 'non-emergency' situations.
2. There's high expectations for answering initial calls for loss of water, but customers accept longer times for more routine issues with the **average wait time being between 8-12 minutes** to get through to someone who can help.
3. Most would **expect someone on site in 1-3 hours for loss of water and 4-8 hours for water leaks/low pressure**. Most assume unplanned loss of water would affect multiple households and be a priority for establishing what the issue is. **For less urgent situations, most expect a first response team to be on site within 9-12 hours**.
4. Most customers who are unexpectedly without water expect it to be **resolved with in 9-12 hours** (i.e. water is back on). For everything else, **most expect the situation to be fully resolved in 1-2 days** (i.e. leaks stopped, normal pressure, normal water quality, etc.)
5. With water supply, customers' priority is **getting through to report an issue**, with more emphasis on **teams with the right equipment/expertise** than a **quick 'first response'**.



Water supply: Scenarios Tested (1)



One-off instances of low water pressure

The issue customers might experience:

A customer notices water has just started coming out of taps with less force than usual.

Which could be a result of one the following:

- An airlock in your pipes
- Frozen pipes
- A burst pipe or emergency repairs going on in your area that affect your water supply

Potentially resulting in...

Temporary disruption your water supply, limiting what you can do (e.g. not enough pressure to easily fill a glass or kettle, run a bath or shower, use appliances, wash up, etc.).



Unexpectedly being completely without water to your home

The issue customers might experience:

A customer finds no water comes out of taps when they're turned on and their toilet doesn't flush.

Which could be the result of:

- A burst pipe or emergency repairs going on in your area that affect your water supply
- An airlock in your pipes
- Frozen pipes

Potentially resulting in...

Being completely without water in the home for a period of time.



Low water pressure over a period of time

The issue customers might experience:

Water comes out of taps with less force than usual as a result of one the following, with the problem persisting for more than 3 days.

- Water pipes deteriorating over time
- Reduced capacity due to water network development/maintenance
- Demand on the water supply at peak times or during different seasons
- A burst pipe or emergency repairs going on in your area that affect your water supply

Potentially resulting in...

Disruption to your water supply over a period of time, limiting what you can do (e.g. not enough pressure to easily fill a glass or kettle, run a bath or shower, use appliances, wash up, etc.).



A change in how water tastes, smells or looks

The issue customers might experience:

A customer notices water from their taps tastes or smells differently or looks discoloured or cloudy.

Which could be a result of one the following:

- A disturbance of naturally occurring metal or mineral deposits
- Corrosion of pipes
- Internal plumbing issues
- Air in the system
- An issue at water treatment works

Potentially resulting in...

Customers needing to boil water for drinking, food preparation and brushing teeth.

Water being okay to use for general domestic purposes such as bathing but not for washing clothes.



Water supply: Scenarios Tested (2)*

**We did test two scenarios for water leak on private property though in most circumstances, private side leakage is the customer's responsibility to fix. However, in some instances, United Utilities may step in to fix a leak on a customer's property. Data for these scenarios can be found in the appendix.*

A water leak on public road or footpath in your area



The issue customers might experience:

A customer spots a water leak on a public road or footpath in their local area with water coming out of a pipe in the ground.

Which could be the result of:

- Building works causing problems
- An old or corroded pipe
- Frozen pipes cracking
- Tree roots damaging a pipe

Potentially resulting in...

Low pressure affecting the water supply to homes in the area.

The road or path flooding and local traffic disruption / pedestrians prevented from passing through.



Customers' priority is getting through to report an issue, with more emphasis on teams who can fix the issue than a quick 'first response'

General priorities for water supply scenarios
(% ranking in top 3)

	Low water pressure over a period of time	One-off instances of low water pressure	Unexpectedly being without water to your home	A change in how water tastes, smells or looks	Water leak on a public road or footpath in your area
How quickly you can first get through	54%	60%	68%	63%	64%
How quickly a team with the right equipment/expertise to fix the problem can attend the scene	66%	62%	67%	62%	60%
How soon you can speak to someone who can correctly diagnose the situation	54%	57%	55%	52%	55%
How quickly someone from United Utilities can first attend the scene	42%	49%	39%	47%	46%
Overall amount of time it takes to resolve the issue	31%	33%	38%	24%	36%
Resolving the issue with the least amount of disruption	30%	21%	19%	27%	24%
Resolving the issue in an environmentally friendly way	25%	18%	15%	26%	16%

Phone is most customers' first port of call, but there's openness to real-time updates & digital channels for 'non-emergency' situations

With the exception of unplanned water loss, there's a clear generational divide, with younger customers, renters and those with young children more likely to use online reporting tools than phone.

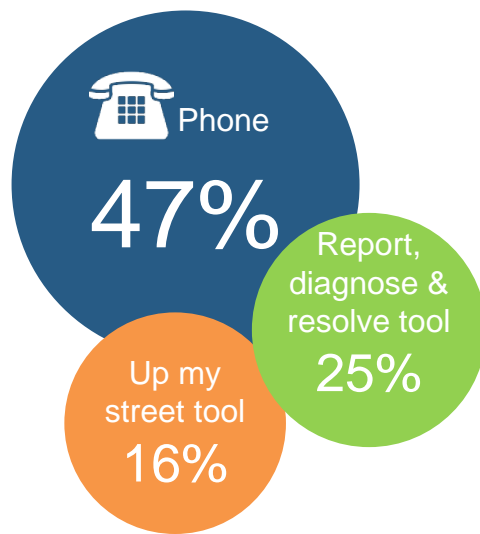
Water supply scenarios initial contact channel (1)

Low water pressure over a period of time



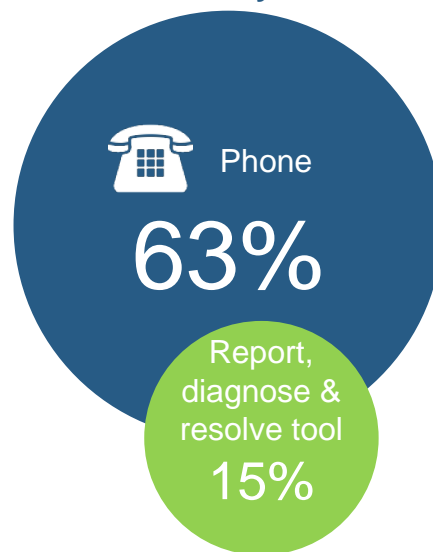
All other contact channels: <10%

One-off instances of low water pressure



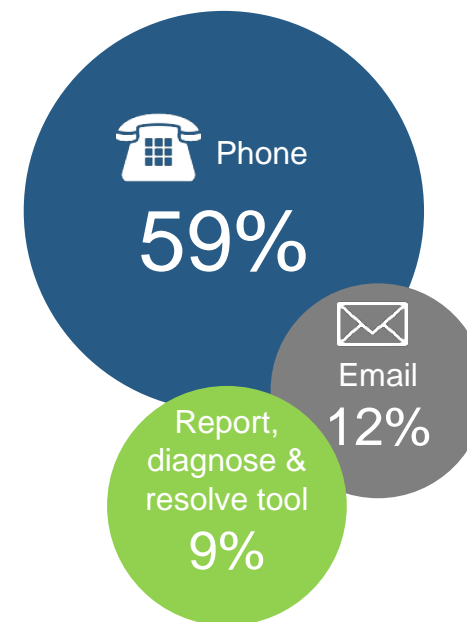
All other contact channels: <10%

Unexpectedly being without water to your home



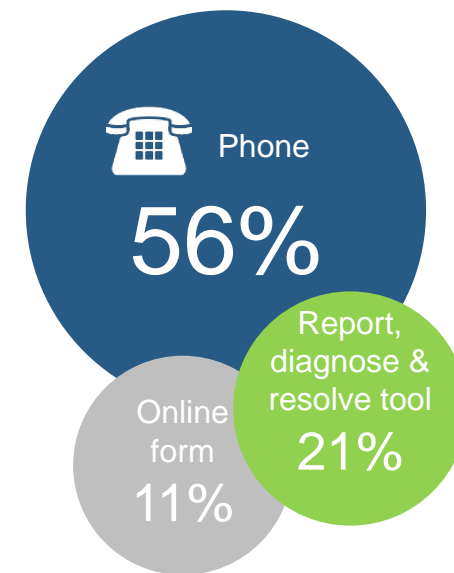
All other contact channels: <10%

A change in how water tastes, smells or looks



All other contact channels: <9%

Water leak on a public road or footpath in your area



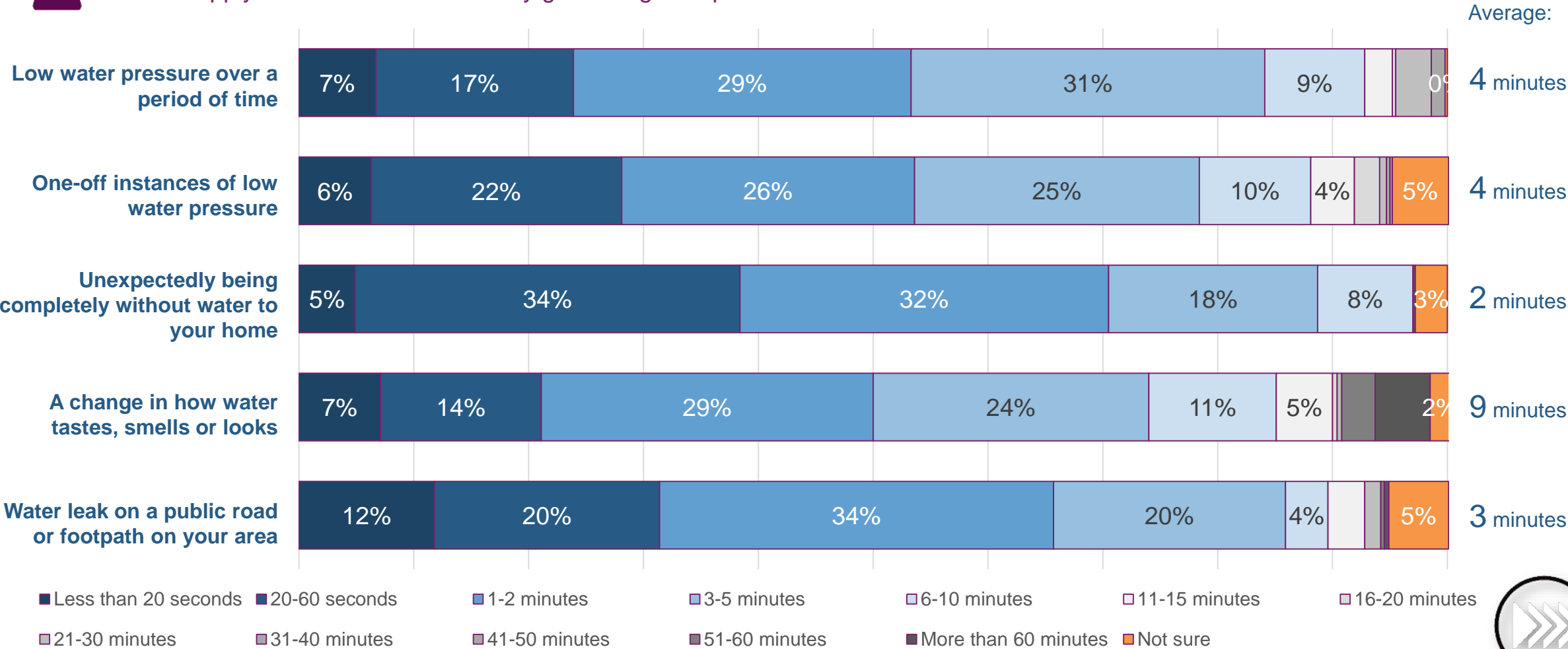
All other contact channels: <10%



There's high expectations for answering initial calls for loss of water – customers accept longer times for more routine issues



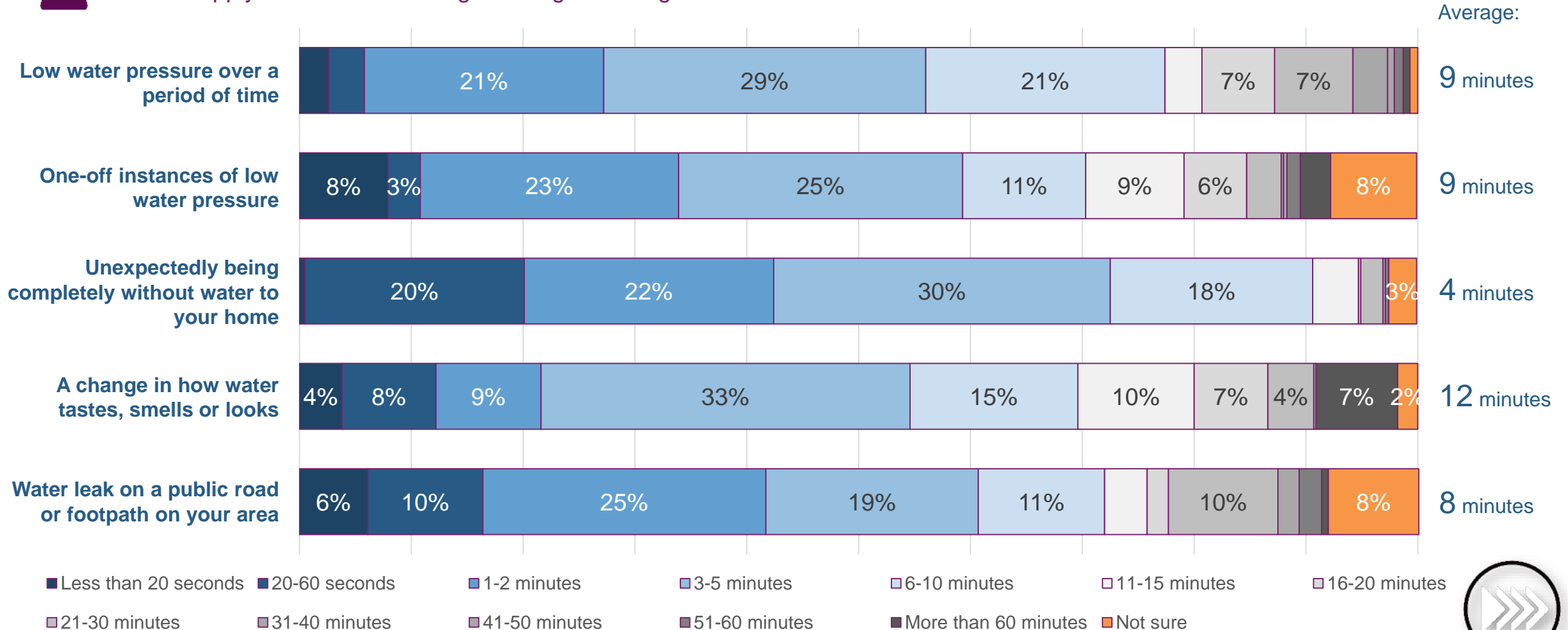
Water supply scenarios: time to initially get through to speak to someone



In all cases however, customers expect a waiting period to reach an agent who can deal with the situation once they're through



Water supply scenarios: time to get through to an agent who can deal with the incident



Most would expect someone on site in 1-3 hours for loss of water

The next quickest response is expected for public space water leaks, within 4-8 hours

Most assume unplanned loss of water would affect multiple households and be a priority for establishing what the issue is.

Expectations are universally high for unplanned loss of water, and don't vary greatly by customer type for less urgent situations with most expecting the first response team to be on site with in 9-12 hours.

Resolution expectations – time for United Utilities arrive to initially assess the situation

	Point at which 50%+ would expect United Utilities to first arrive	Point at which 75%+ would expect United Utilities to first arrive
Low water pressure over a period of time	Within 12 hours	Within 2 days
One-off instances of low water pressure	Within 8 hours	Within 2 days
Unexpectedly being without water to your home	Within 3 hours	With in 8 hours
A change in how water tastes, smells or looks	Within 12 hours	With in 2 days
A water leak on a public road or footpath	Within 8 hours	With in 24 hours



People also have high expectations for restoring unplanned loss of water, typically 4-8 hours

Most would expect leaks in the home to be resolved in 9-12 hours, with a typical timeframe of 24 hours for all other incidents

There's a similar pattern with resolution times to initial response times – customers tend to have similar expectations for restoring water supplies and less urgent situations.

Resolution expectations – time for United Utilities to fully resolve the situation

	Point at which 50%+ would expect United Utilities to fully resolve the situation	Point at which 75%+ would expect United Utilities to fully resolve the situation
Low water pressure over a period of time	Within 24 hours	Within 5 days
One-off instances of low water pressure	Within 24 hours	Within 2 days
Unexpectedly being without water to your home	Within 8 hours	With in 12 hours
A change in how water tastes, smells or looks	Within 2 days	With in 5 days
A water leak on a public road or footpath	Within 24 hours	With in 2 days



Planned loss
of water



Water for the North West



*United
Utilities*

**APOLOGISE FOR ANY
INCONVENIENCE**

Contact: 0345 6723700



InSites Consulting

Planned Loss of Water: Scenario Tested



Being completely without water to your home due to planned works

Imagine you receive a letter from United Utilities giving you 48 hours' notice of planned maintenance/repairs to a water mains near your home.

The letter states that:

- The water supply to your home will be turned off between a particular time on a particular date
- The work will involve temporary traffic lights and a coned off area for roadworks
- An Alternative Water Supply Vehicle (that makes a similar amount of noise to an HGV or generator) could be used to reduce the length of the interruption

A reference number and contact details for further help/information are provided at the bottom of the letter.



Around 1 in 10 say they've experienced planned loss of water in the last 3 years

But customers can relate to the situation and generally take a pragmatic view of planned works

“

It might be slightly inconvenient, but work has to be done to keep water coming out the taps.

It's very easy to take it for granted.

It depends how many people it affects, but if its routine maintenance and people know about it, then I'm all for taking a bit more time to do it with less disruption in a way that's better for the environment”

Customers understand that network maintenance is required, old Victorian pipes need replacing, and upgrades are ongoing.

Water is a valuable and important resource – maintaining a reliable, efficient supply and minimising wastage from leaks, etc is something people support.

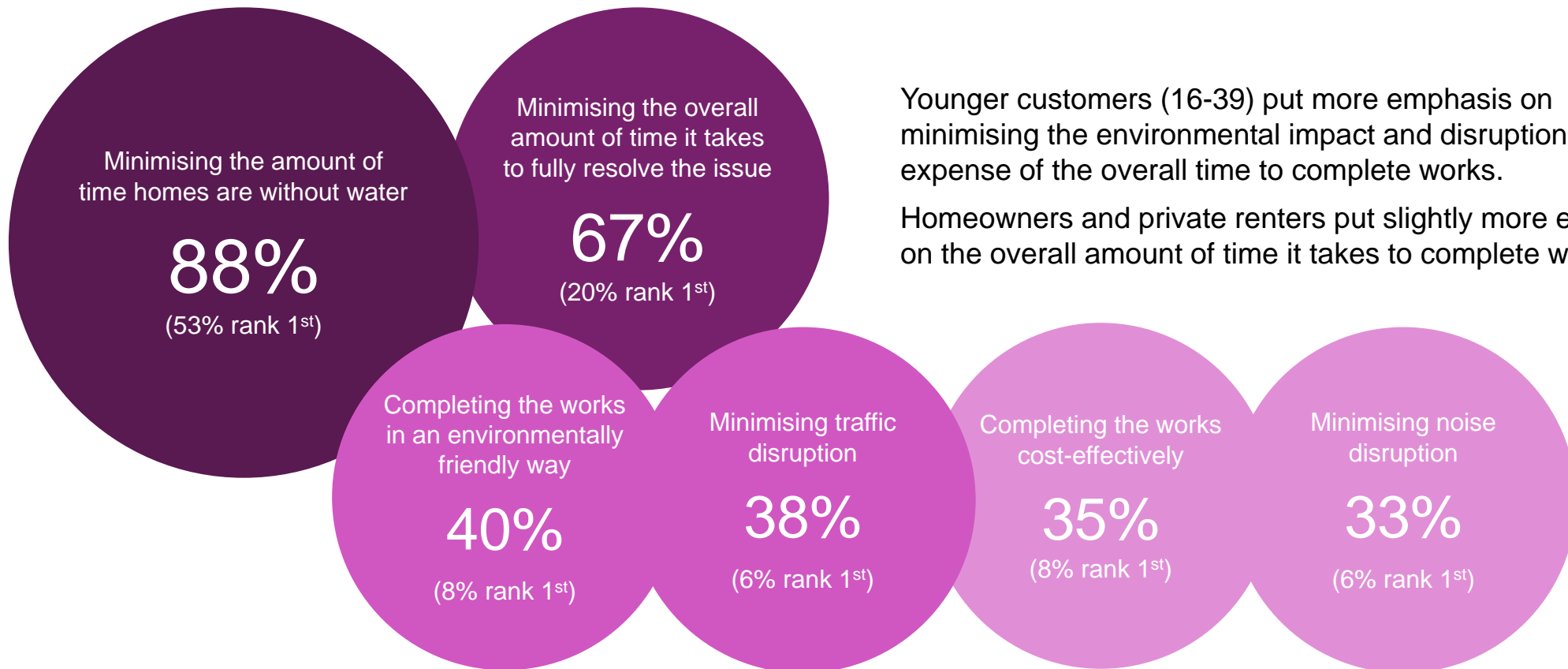
Importantly, customers generally have a respectful degree of patience and understanding for the disruption that can be caused by these necessary works.



Minimising the time homes are without water is undoubtedly the overarching priority

But customers want decisions to be made in the round with other aspects taken into consideration

General priorities for planned loss of water
(% ranking in top 3)



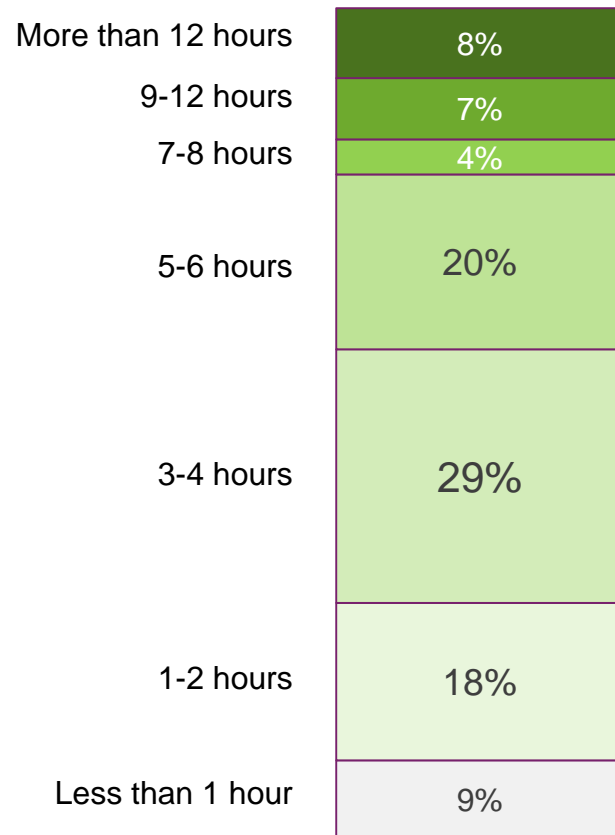
Younger customers (16-39) put more emphasis on minimising the environmental impact and disruption, at the expense of the overall time to complete works.

Homeowners and private renters put slightly more emphasis on the overall amount of time it takes to complete works.



With advance notice, customers would typically be prepared to be without water to their home for up to 5 hours at a time

Time willing to be without water (planned loss of water)



Average:
5 hours

While the disruption might be inconvenient, customers generally show a willingness to 'work with United Utilities', even those with young children.

People talk about simple workarounds:

- Buying bottled water/filling bottles & kettles
- Changing routines
- Takeaways or eating out
- Staying with parents/family or friends if necessary

A spell without water in a single day is deemed manageable.

– but people would hope to be re-connected for part of the day and avoid being cut off in mornings & evenings where possible.

Watch out!

Some suggest 48 hours' notice (the timeframe given in the scenario) is too short and should be slightly longer to give people a bit more time to plan and factor in letters getting held up in the post.

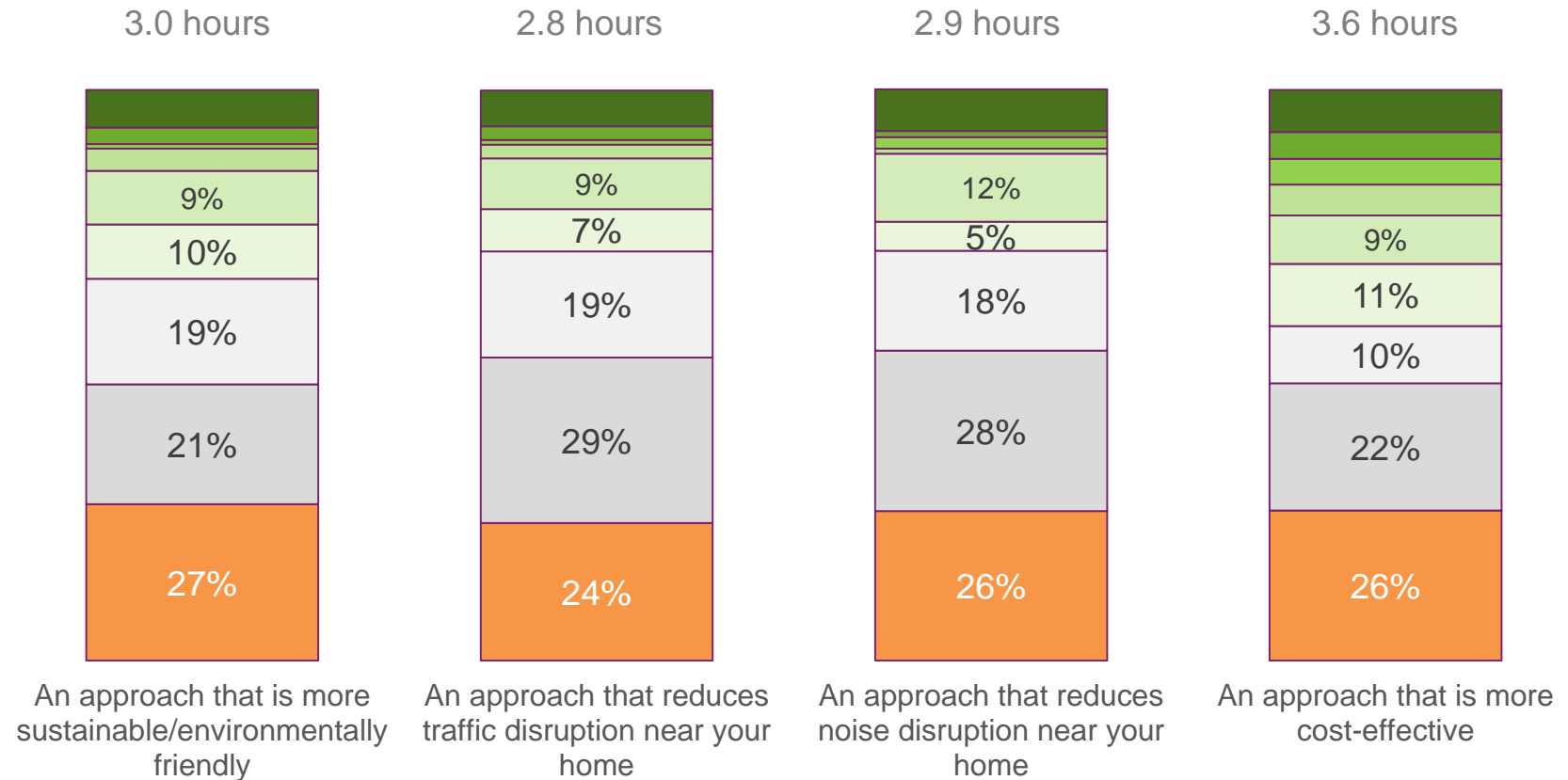


Most customers are open to a longer resolution times (typically 3 more hours) to reduce the disruption involved or for a more innovative solution

Additional time willing to be without water for more innovative solutions (planned loss of water)

Average additional time willing to be without water:

- More than 12 hours longer
- Up to 9-12 hours longer
- Up to 7-8 hours longer
- Up to 5-6 hours longer
- Up to 4 hours longer
- Up to 3 hours longer
- Up to 2 hours longer
- Up to 1 hour longer
- Wouldn't be willing to wait any longer for this



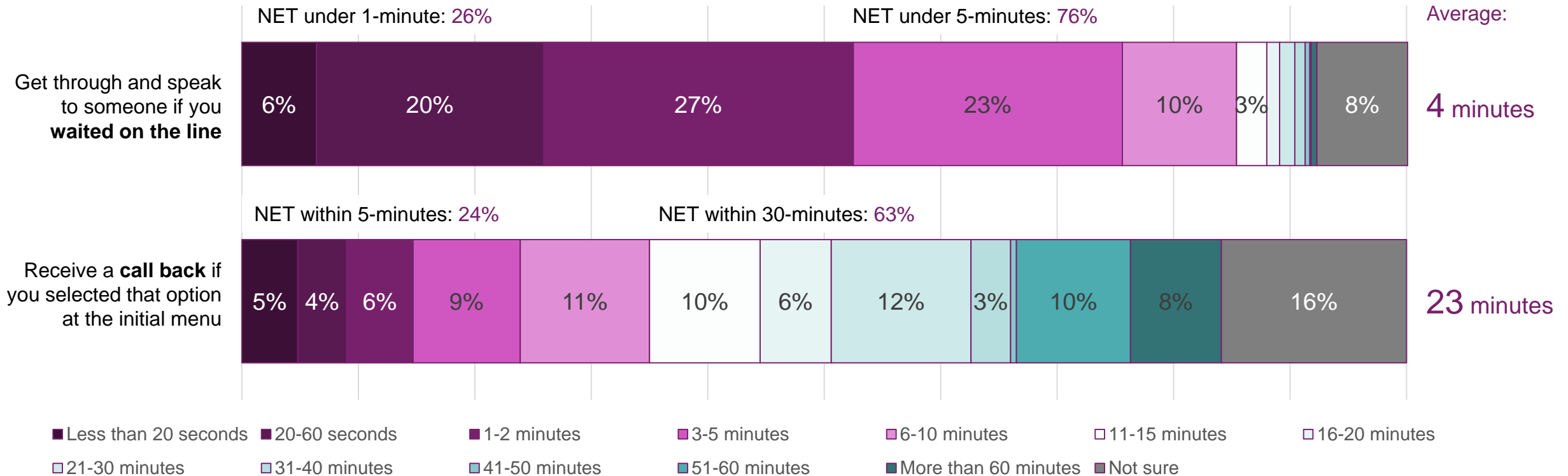
General expectations of service



For general phone inquiries, customers would typically expect to get through within 4-minutes and receive callbacks within 20-25-minutes



General call waiting expectations (phoning United Utilities customer services for help with your bill or water account)



Expectations increase with age, with average waiting times falling from 5-7-minutes for 16–39-year-olds to just 3-minutes for those aged 60+. Linked to this, home-owners generally expect to get through quicker (average 3.3-minutes vs. 4.8 for Private Renters and 8.1 for Social Renters). Similar patterns are seen for call back times.



But the speed of getting through on the phone is just one aspect of the contact experience and lasting impressions

What most crave is a simple menu system and indication of how long the wait is

Customers acknowledge there's finite contact centre capacity and are fairly pragmatic about call waiting times.

– there's also some acknowledgement companies are still grappling with remote and flexible working.

There's a sense that United Utilities have got customers 'on board' mentally – and the propensity to get frustrated or hysterical is lower than with other organisations (BT, HMRC, other mobile/broadband & utility companies).

People are familiar with automated systems that tell them where they are in a queue – essentially, they just want an indication so they can make a choice depending on how they feel about the urgency of their situation.

Anecdotally, other aspects that easily frustrate include:

- Long-winded menu systems – especially when they do get through and its the 'wrong' person
- Repeat contact to resolve issues
- 'Annoying' hold music
- Getting through to someone who doesn't have the knowledge or authority to deal with the query
- Language barriers

Customers expect 'routine' inquiries to be dealt with easily and quickly by polite, efficient call handlers.

If queries aren't easily solved, customers simply expect the person at the other end of the phone to do what they can – its important for lasting impressions of the brand that they feel listened to and helped.

“

You get some companies like BT that annoy me before I've even dialled.

I don't think I'd feel like that if I had to phone United Utilities”

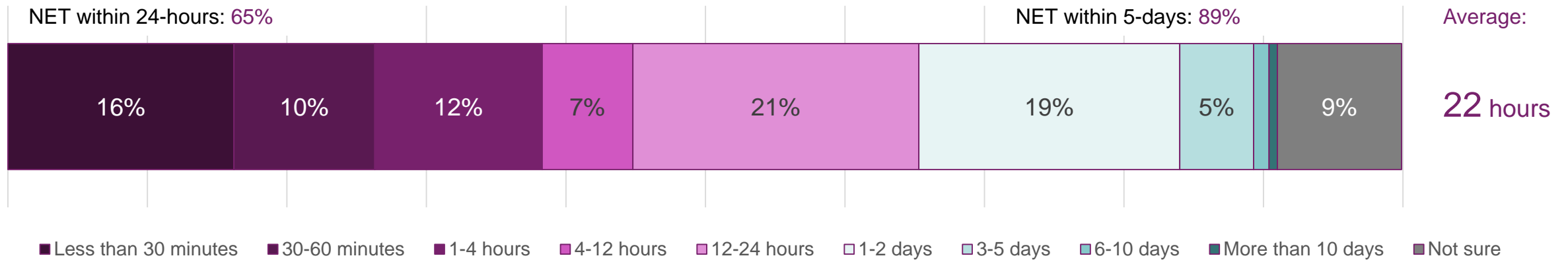


2 in 3 would expect a reply to contact via digital channels within 24-hours



Digital contact response expectations

(contacting United Utilities via a digital channel (e.g. email or online contact form) with a question about your bill or water account)



Digital channels offer a convenient, 'hands-off' way to submit and deal with queries around other things.

Expectations tend to be based on general experiences of dealing with commercial service providers rather than public bodies.

While phone systems give a real-time indication of call waiting times, the main frustrations customers have with digital are:

- 'Stock' automated replies that sound non-committal with vague timeframes for a response
- Having no sense of contact volumes and what this means for response times (i.e. "the email could be one of thousands")
- By virtue of emailing, people assume queries will be deemed non-urgent and given less priority than phone contact

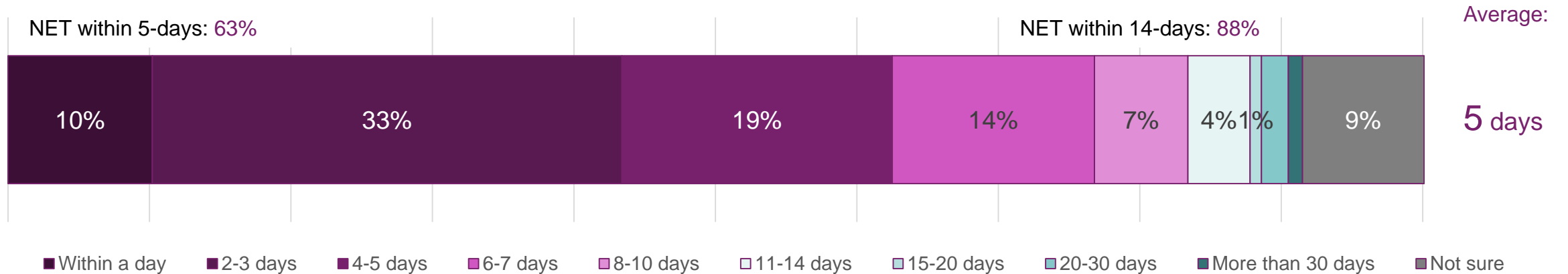
Ultimately it doesn't give them that immediate reassurance that queries are being taken seriously and 'something is being done'.



3 in 4 would expect a refund to be paid within 7-days



Water bill refund expectations (from being notified of the refund/amount and it being paid into your bank account)



Customers have '7-10 days' as a standard point of reference from general dealings with other organisations

– but feel 5 days is ample to make a payment.

People are increasingly aware that the transaction itself is near-instant (from experience with personal banking), so blame for any hold-ups is placed squarely with the company issuing the refund.

It's common to hear accusations of companies being 'quick to take your money but very slow to give it back'.

It's a situation where customers feel they have little recourse to complain – but nor do they have a great desire to make a fuss, particularly if its an unexpected rebate.

Ultimately, if the refund is delivered within the time period stated customers will be happy enough.



Appendix



**United
Utilities**

Water for the North West



InSites Consulting

Sample Profile

Note on unweighted vs. weighted samples:

Data has been weighted to match the profile of United Utilities' customer base on gender, age, county, water meter use, CACI segment & IMD.

The unweighted sample over-indexes on older customers vs. the wider United Utilities customer base (and by virtue of this other, other variables such as home ownership). Data has been weighted to account for this.

Age	Weighted	Unweighted
16-24	5%	1%
25-39	33%	10%
40-49	15%	12%
50-59	17%	21%
60+	30%	56%
NET: 16-39	38%	11%
NET: 40-59	32%	33%
NET: 60+	30%	56%

Gender	Weighted	Unweighted
Male	49%	62%
Female	51%	37%
Non-binary	0%	0%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%

Metered	Weighted	Unweighted
Metered Customer	46%	62%
Unmetered Customer	54%	38%

County	Weighted	Unweighted
Cheshire	15%	32%
Cumbria	7%	8%
Greater Manchester	37%	21%
Lancashire	22%	20%
Merseyside	19%	19%

Home ownership	Weighted	Unweighted
Own outright	31%	54%
Own with a mortgage or loan	30%	22%
Part own and part rent (Shared ownership)	1%	1%
Rent from private landlord / letting agent	22%	12%
Rent from council, housing association, housing co-operative, charitable trust etc.	15%	11%
Occupy in another way	1%	1%
NET: Home owners	63%	77%

Household Composition	Weighted	Unweighted
Just me, I live by myself	23%	28%
My partner	60%	61%
Older child / children (over 16)	16%	16%
Younger child / children (under 16)	29%	15%
Friends	2%	1%
Extended family members	3%	2%
Someone else	1%	1%



Sample Profile (Continued)

Note on unweighted vs. weighted samples:

Being linked to age, we also over-index on Financially Secure Empty Nesters.

Again, weighting corrects this for survey results.

CACI Segment	Weighted	Unweighted
Budget conscious elderly	16%	19%
Comfortable mid-life established families	16%	19%
Families getting by	9%	7%
Financially secure empty nesters	8%	17%
Hard-pressed families	12%	8%
Indebted singles	5%	4%
Struggling single pensioners	8%	6%
Technology dependent young families	16%	13%
Not recorded	9%	6%

Vulnerable Customer	Weighted	Unweighted
Yes	51%	49%
No	49%	51%

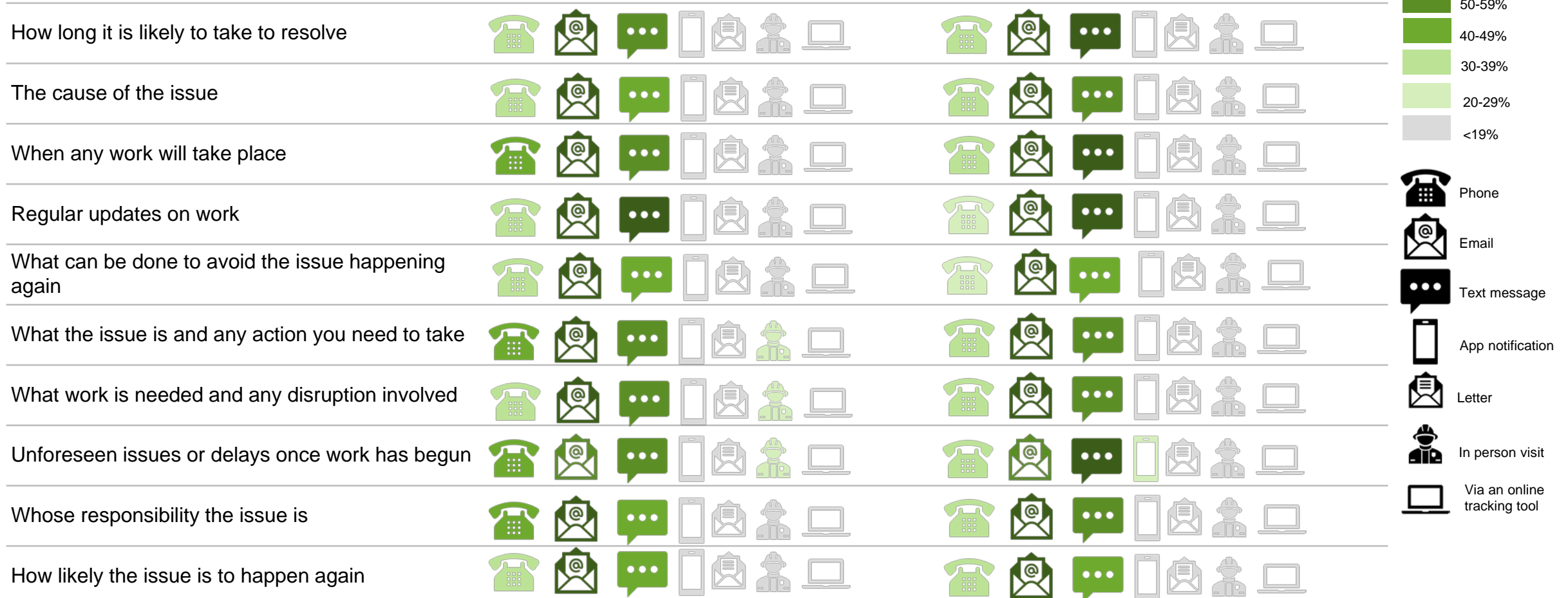
IMD	Weighted	Unweighted
1	23%	15%
2	13%	9%
3	10%	8%
4	9%	8%
5	8%	8%
6	7%	8%
7	8%	9%
8	9%	12%
9	7%	12%
10	6%	10%
Not recorded	1%	1%

Email and text are the preferred contact method for all types of updates

Best way to share this type of updates...
(only shown if they would want to receive it)

Waste water scenarios

Water supply scenarios



Individual wastewater scenarios



Sewage flooding with water coming into the home

First contacting United Utilities

 **80%**

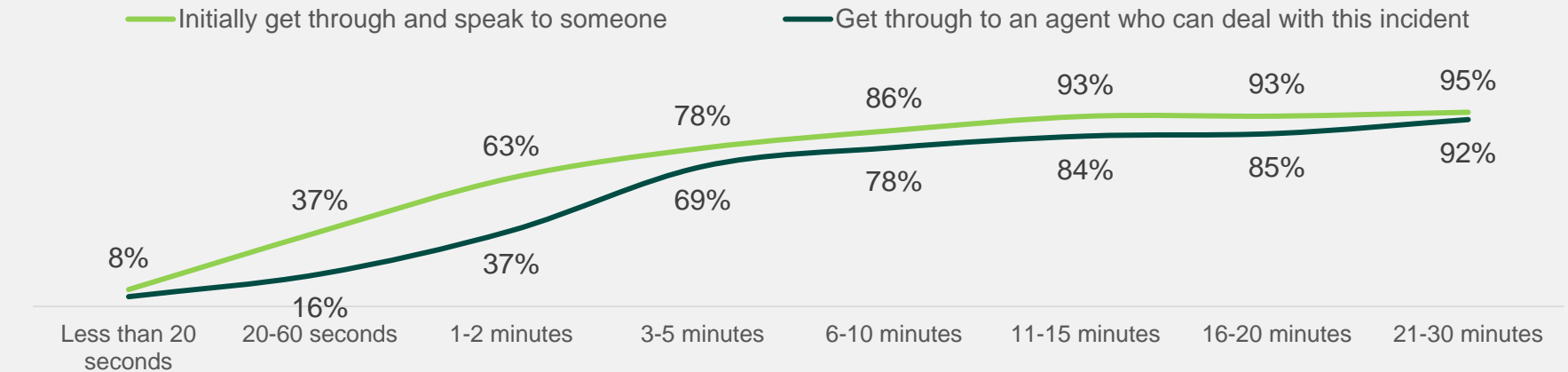
Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
60-69%	The cause of the issue
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
	Regular updates on work
	When any work will take place
50-59%	What work is needed & disruption involved
	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
<50%	Whose responsibility the issue is
	How likely the issue is to happen again

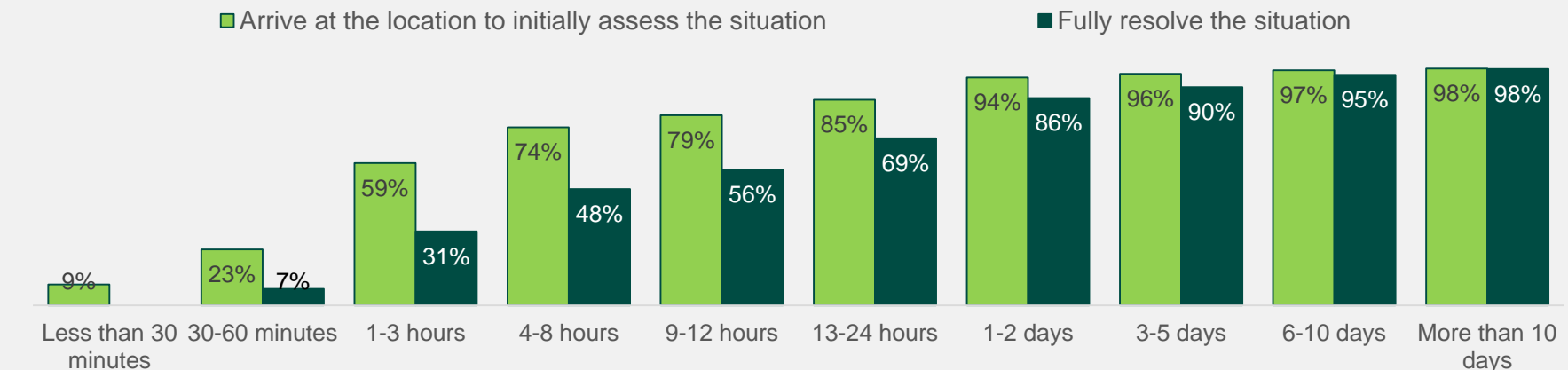
Channels for updates



Call waiting expectations (cumulative %)



First response & resolution expectations (cumulative %)



Imminent sewage flooding to your home

First contacting United Utilities

76%

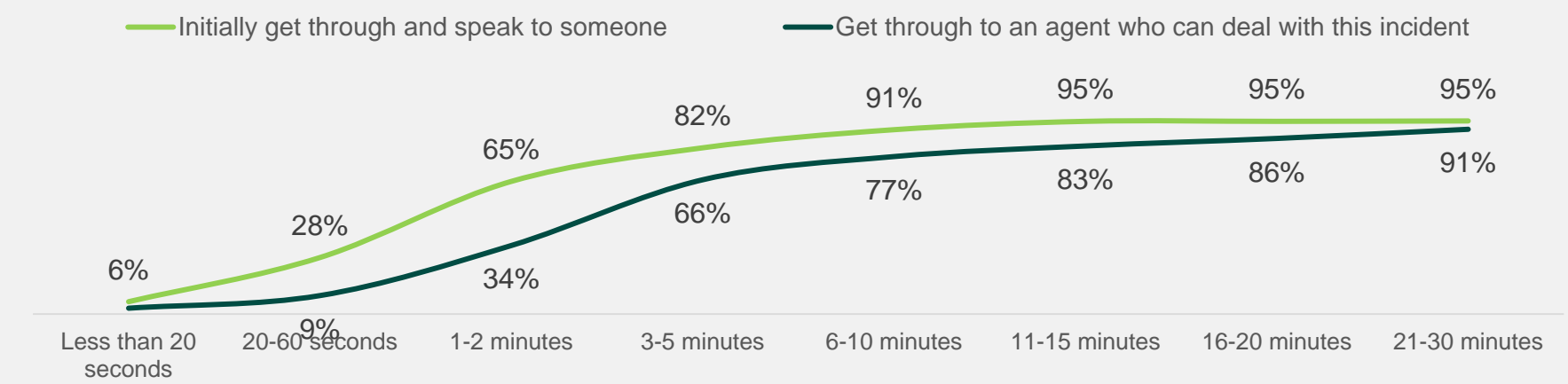
Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
60-69%	The cause of the issue
	When any work will take place
	Regular updates on work
	What the issue is and any action you need to take
50-59%	What work is needed & disruption involved
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
<50%	How likely the issue is to happen again
	Whose responsibility the issue is

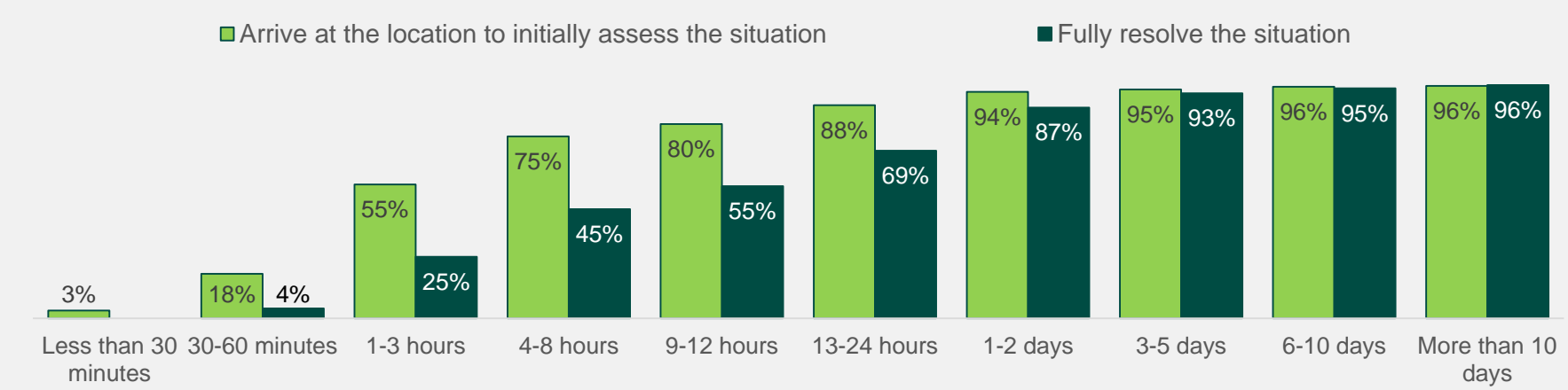
Channels for updates



Call waiting expectations (cumulative %)



First response & resolution expectations (cumulative %)



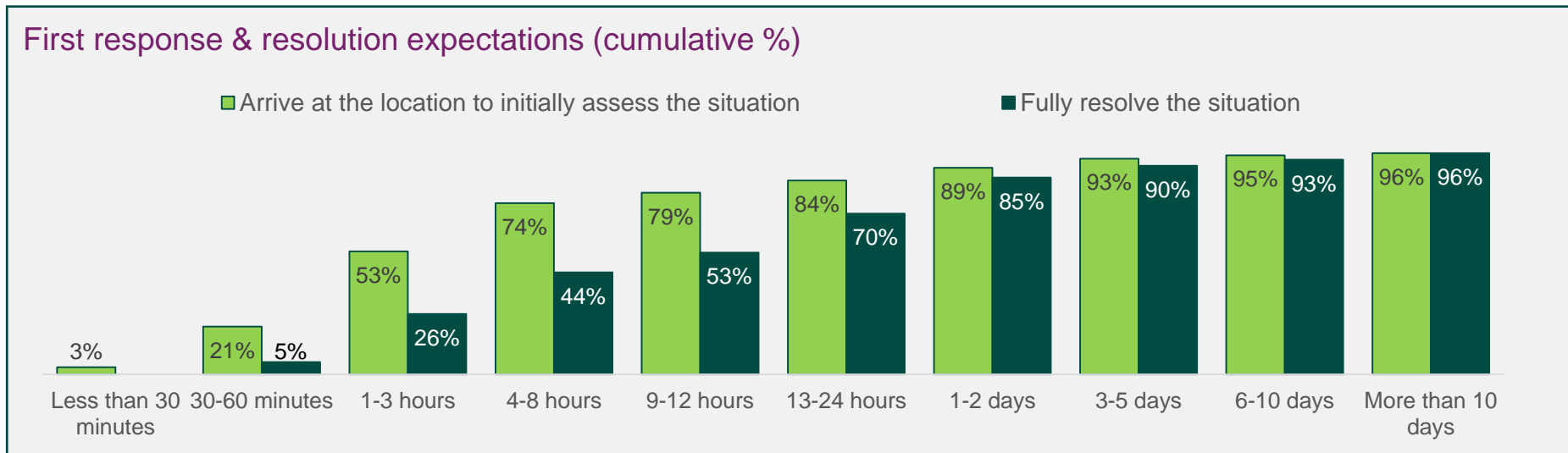
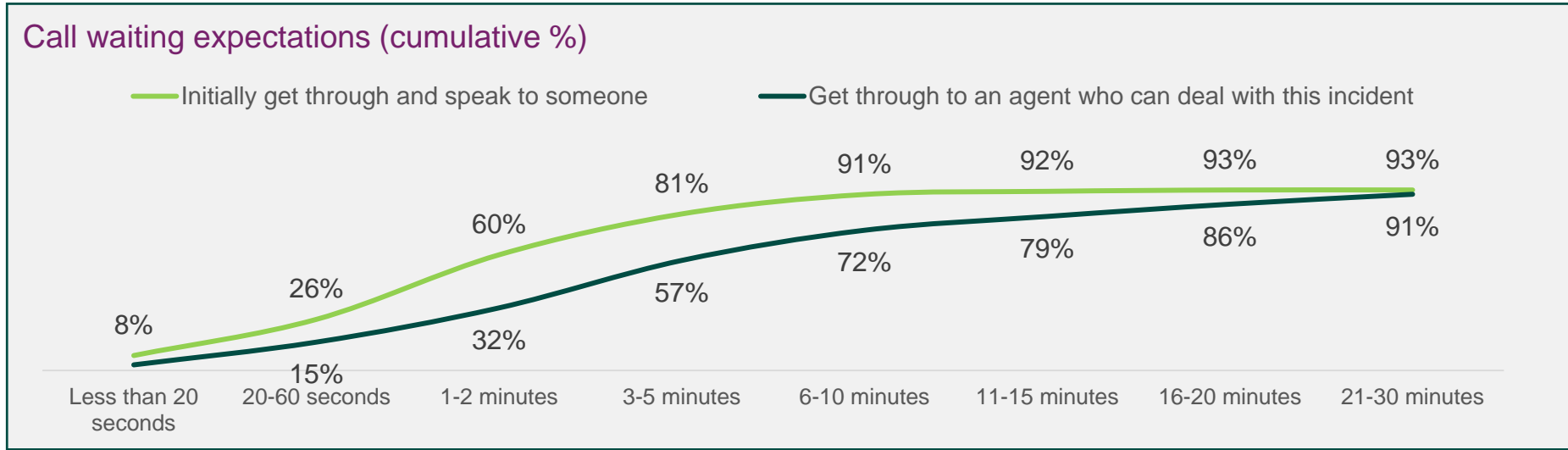
Sewage flooding on your property in the garden, outbuildings etc (but outside the home itself)

First contacting United Utilities
83%

Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
60-69%	When any work will take place
	The cause of the issue
	Regular updates on work
	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	What work is needed & disruption involved
50-59%	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	How likely the issue is to happen again
	Whose responsibility the issue is

Channels for updates



Blocked pipes resulting in a toilet overflowing

First contacting United Utilities

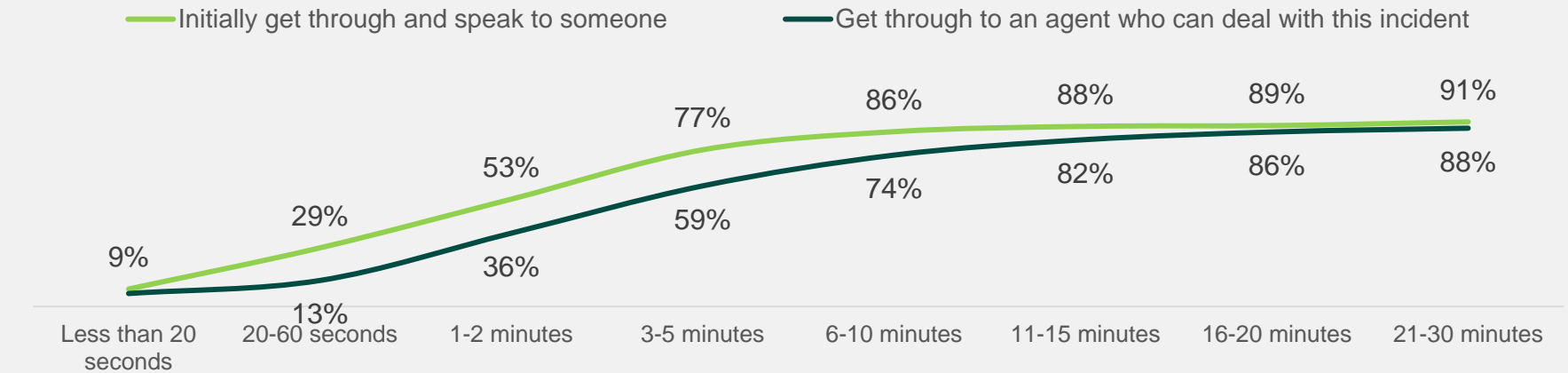
 **66%**

Priority for updates

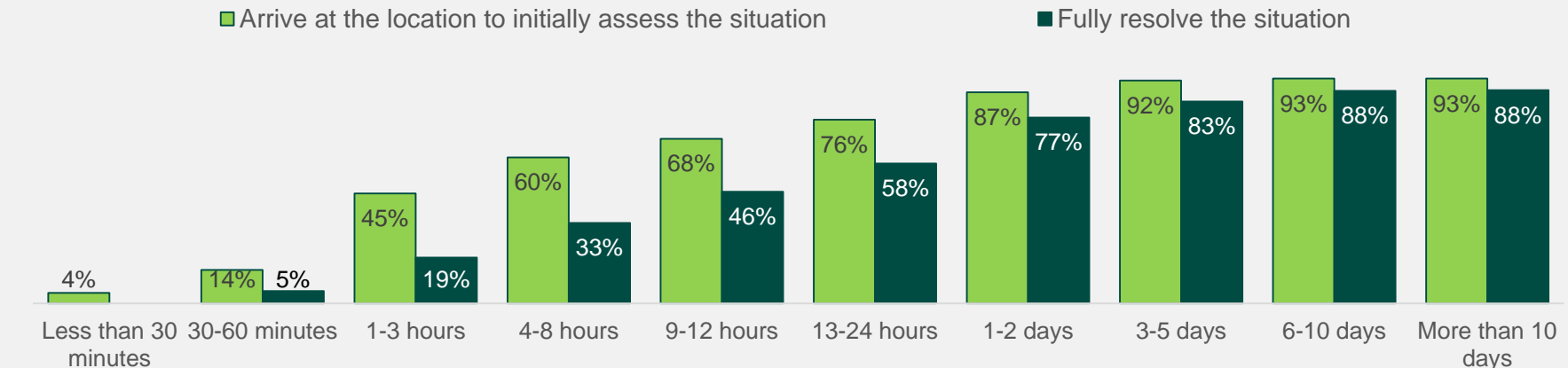
70%+	How long its likely to take
60-69%	Regular updates on work
50-59%	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	When any work will take place
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
	The cause of the issue
	What work is needed & disruption involved
<50%	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	Whose responsibility the issue is
	How likely the issue is to happen again



Call waiting expectations (cumulative %)



First response & resolution expectations (cumulative %)



Individual water supply scenarios



Low water pressure over a period of time

First contacting United Utilities



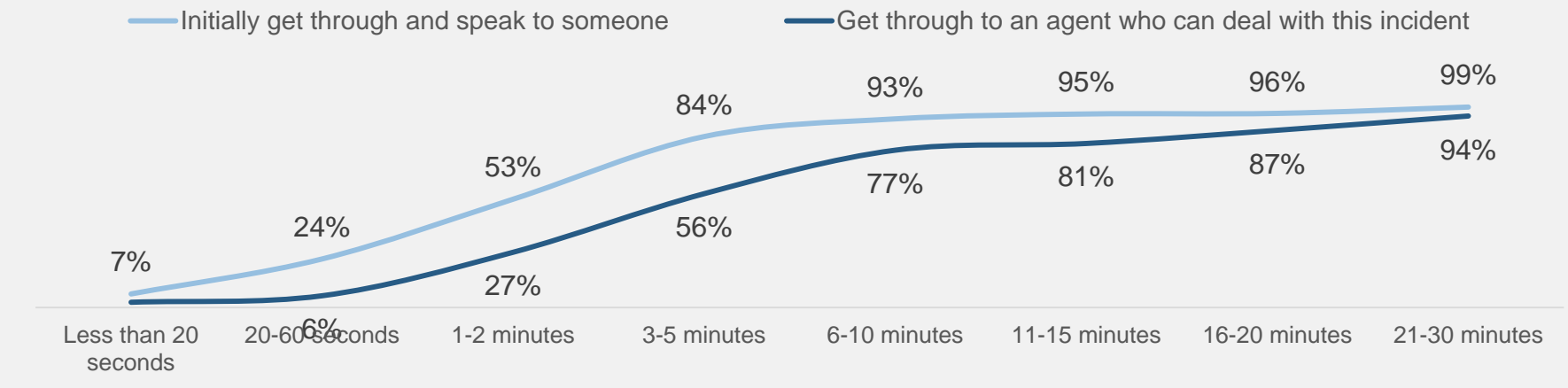
Priority for updates

60-69%	How long its likely to take
	The cause of the issue
	What work is needed & disruption involved
	When any work will take place
	Regular updates on work
50-59%	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	How likely the issue is to happen again
	Whose responsibility the issue is

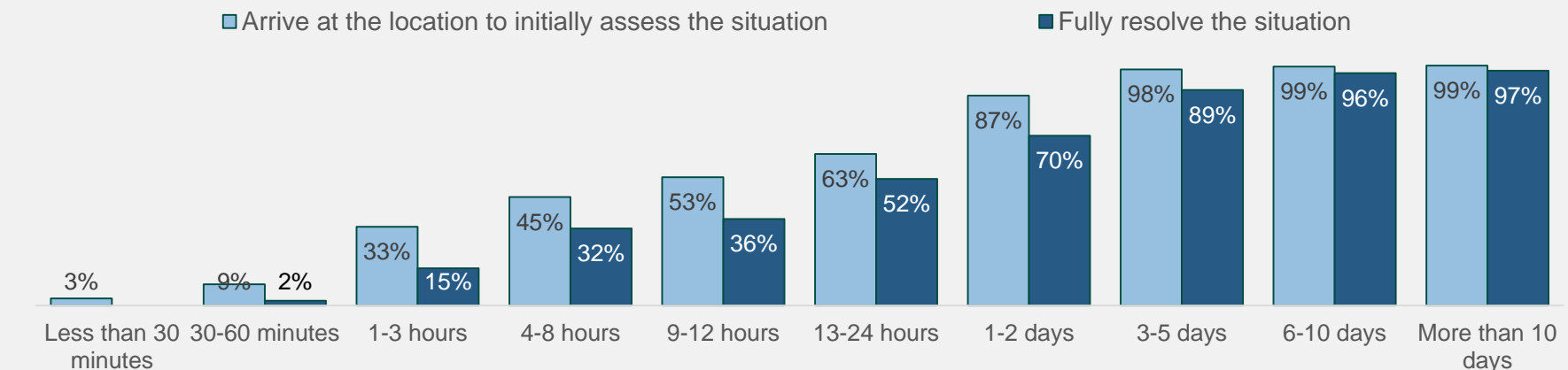
Channels for updates



Call waiting expectations (cumulative %)



First response & resolution expectations (cumulative %)



One-off instances of low water pressure

First contacting United Utilities

46%

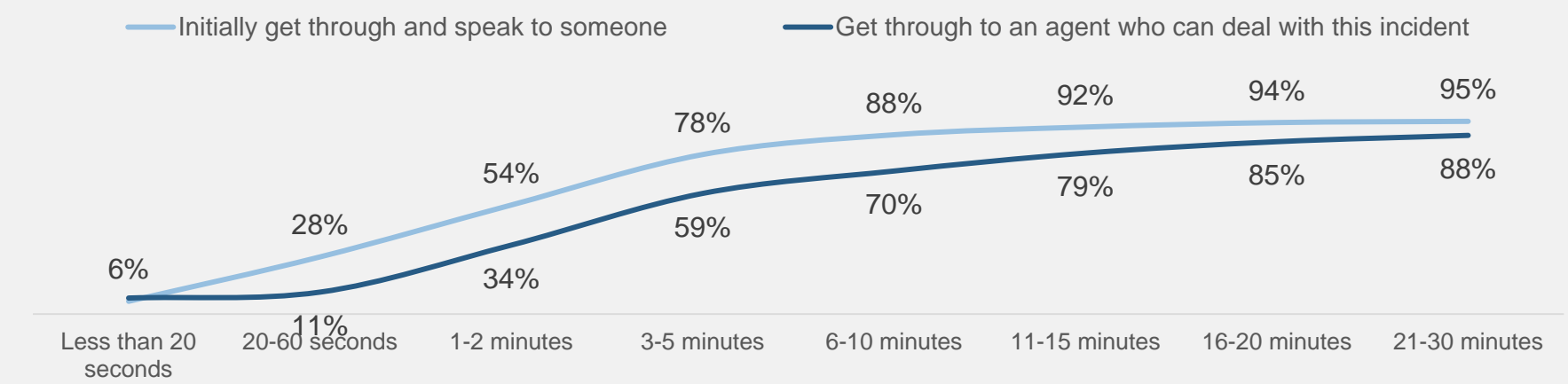
Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
60-69%	When any work will take place
	Regular updates on work
50-59%	The cause of the issue
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	What work is needed & disruption involved
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
<50%	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	Whose responsibility the issue is
	How likely the issue is to happen again

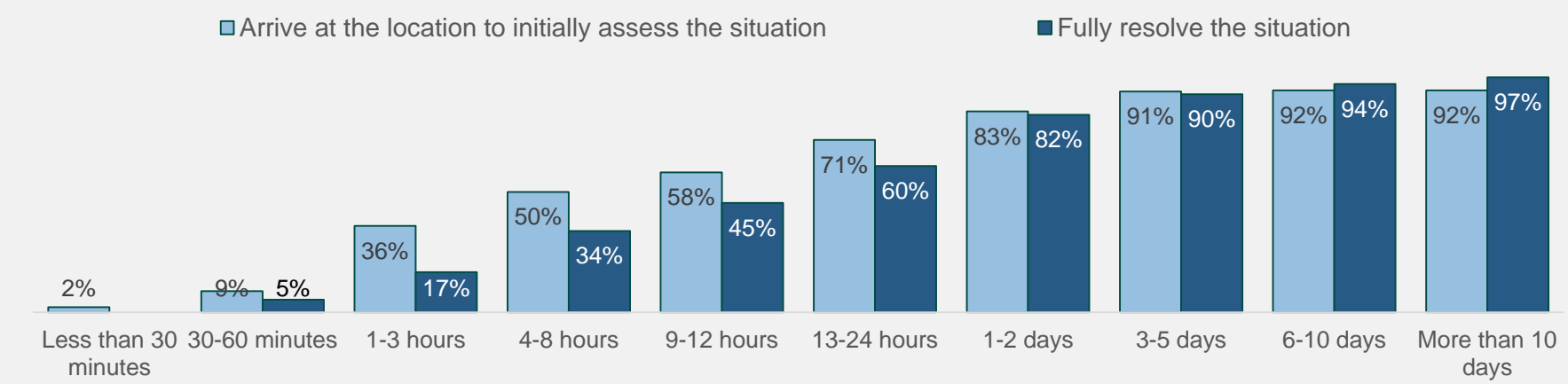
Channels for updates



Call waiting expectations (cumulative %)



First response & resolution expectations (cumulative %)



Unexpectedly being without water to your home

First contacting United Utilities

 **63%**

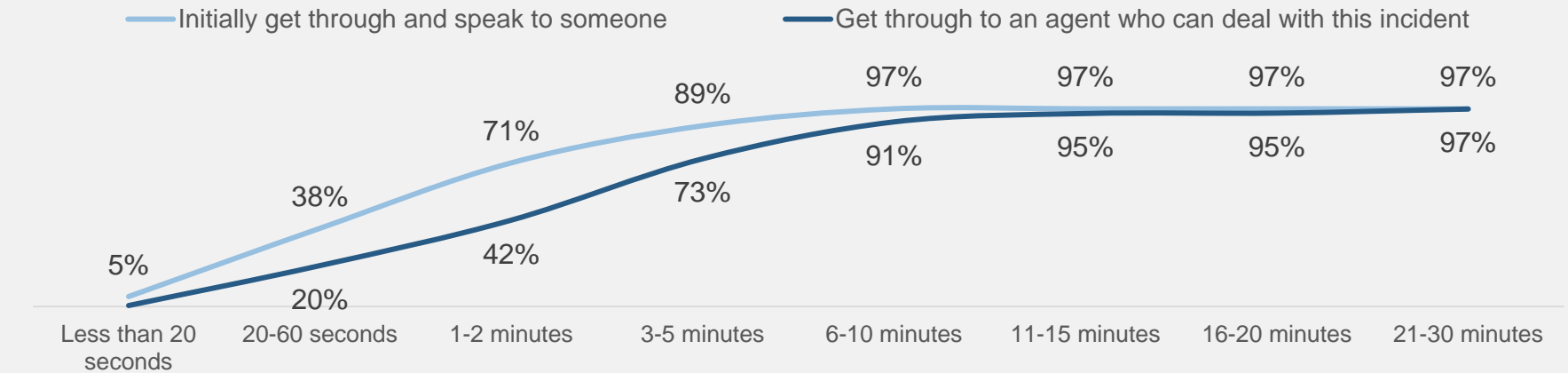
Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
	Regular updates on work
	When any work will take place
60-69%	The cause of the issue
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
50-59%	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	What work is needed & disruption involved
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
<50%	Whose responsibility the issue is
	How likely the issue is to happen again

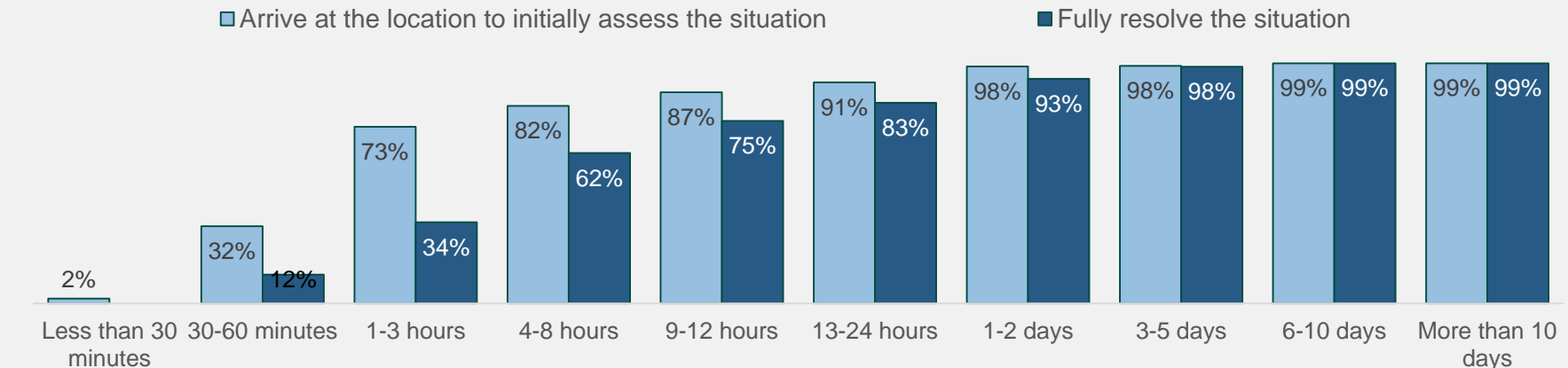
Channels for updates



Call waiting expectations (cumulative %)



First response & resolution expectations (cumulative %)



A change in how water tastes, smells or looks

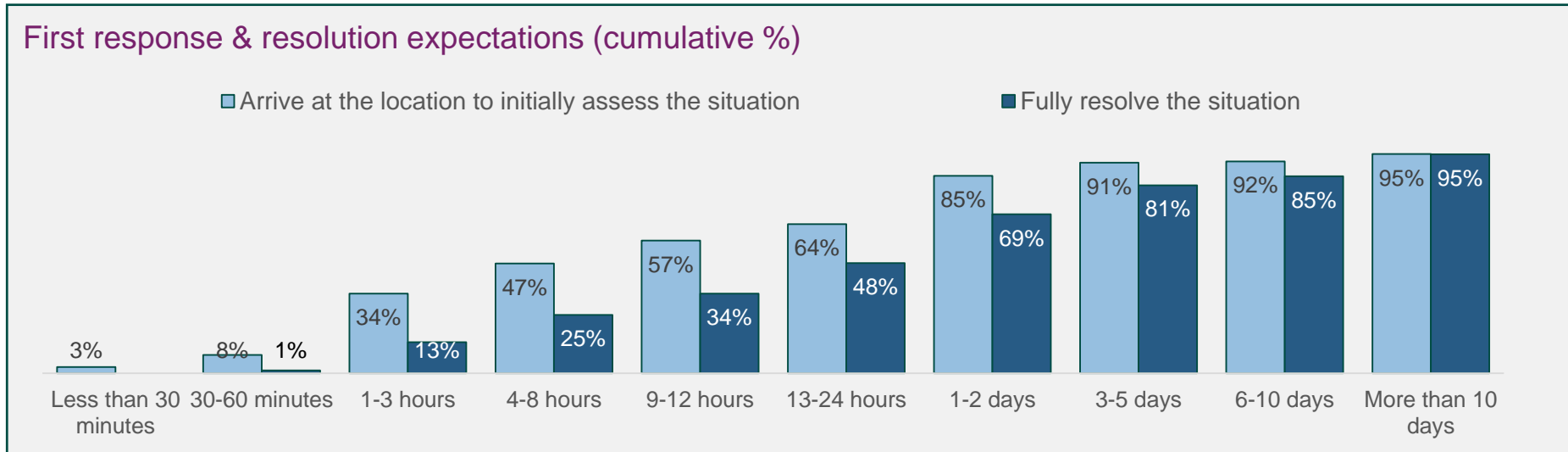
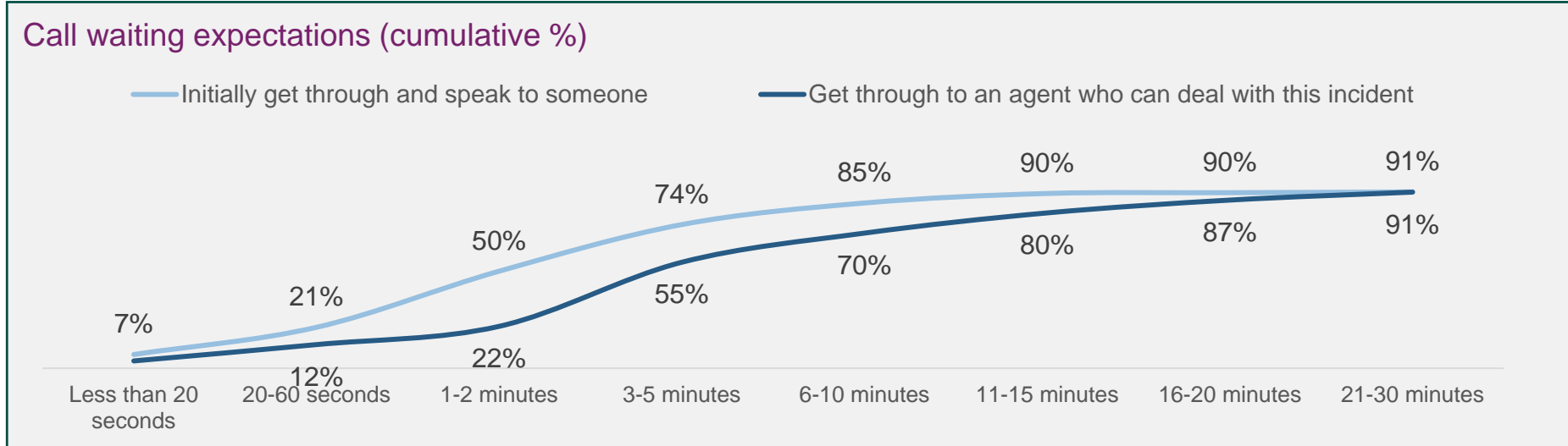
First contacting United Utilities

59%

Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
	Regular updates on work
60-69%	When any work will take place
	The cause of the issue
50-59%	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	What work is needed & disruption involved
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
<50%	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
	Whose responsibility the issue is
	How likely the issue is to happen again


Channels for updates



A water leak on your property causing damage or loss of supply*

*In most circumstances, private side leakage is the customer's responsibility to fix. However, in some instances, United Utilities may step in to fix a leak on a customer's property.

First contacting United Utilities

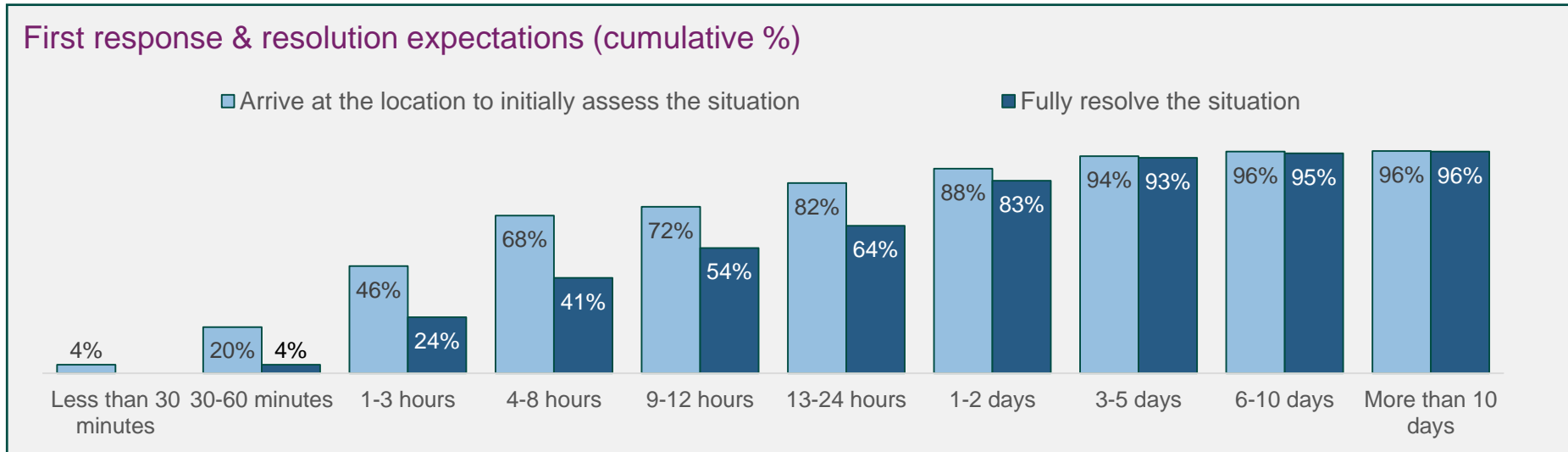
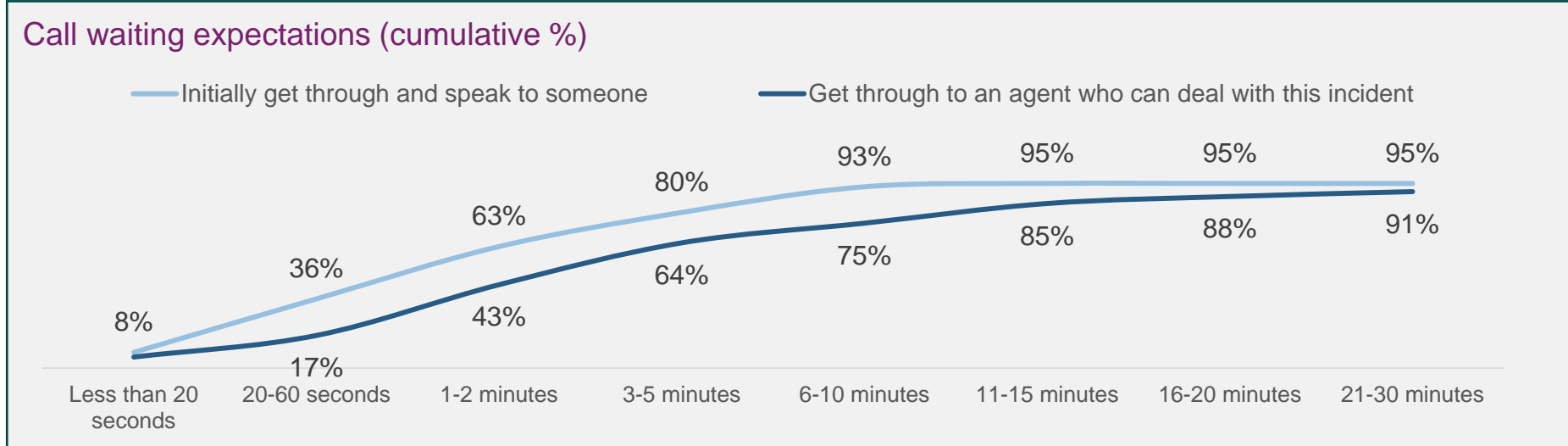


72%

Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
60-69%	The cause of the issue
	When any work will take place
	Regular updates on work
50-59%	What work is needed & disruption involved
	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
<50%	Whose responsibility the issue is
	How likely the issue is to happen again


Channels for updates



A small water leak on your property*

*In most circumstances, private side leakage is the customer's responsibility to fix. However, in some instances, United Utilities may step in to fix a leak on a customer's property.

First contacting United Utilities

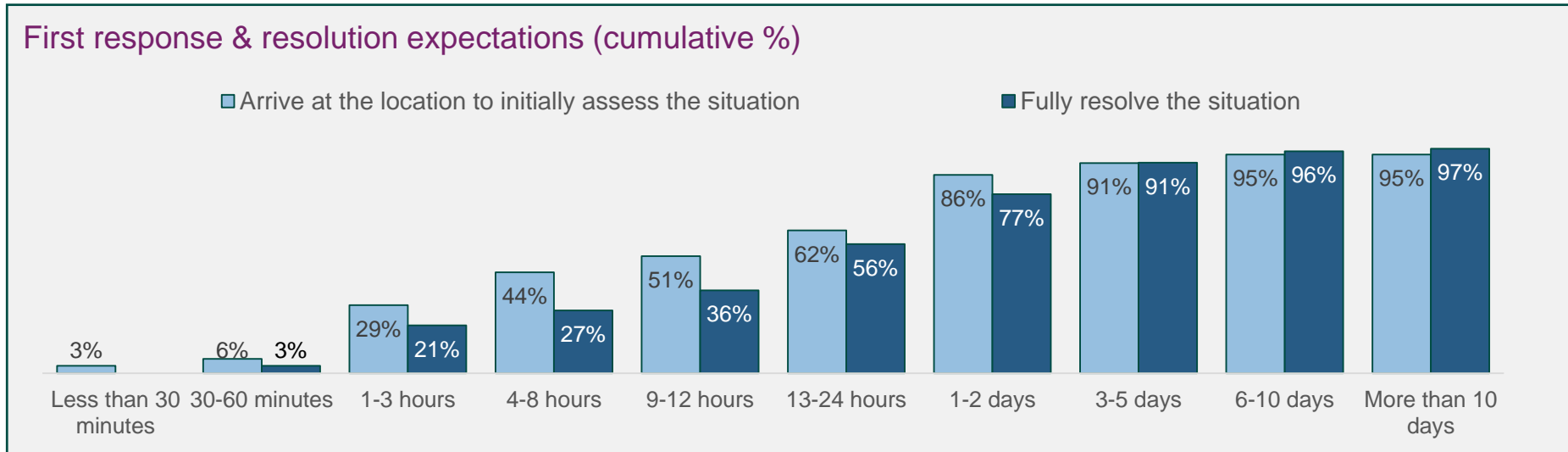
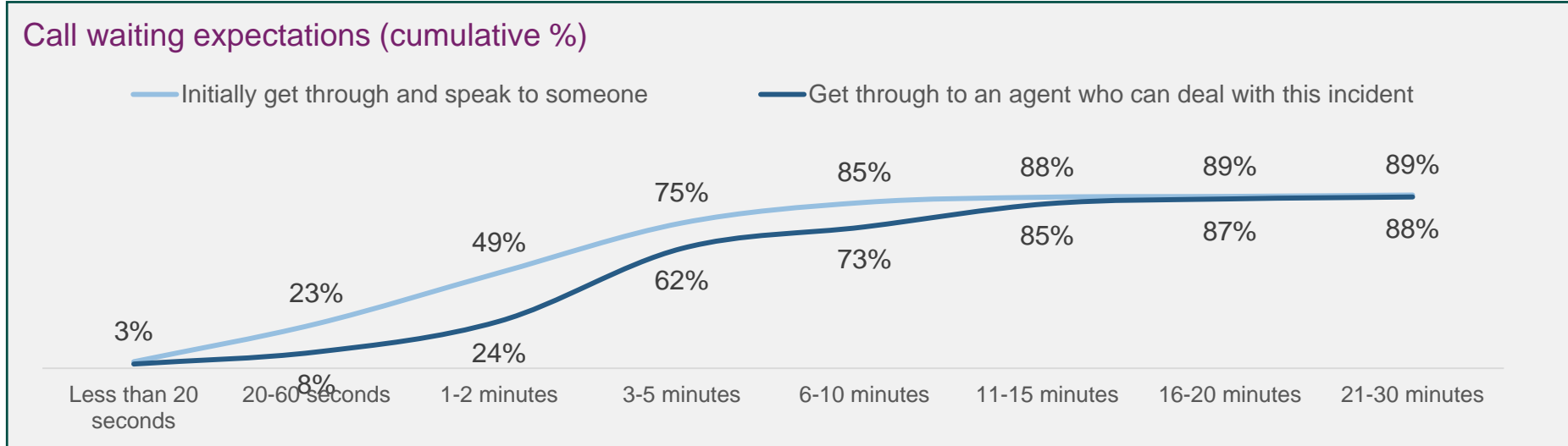


59%

Priority for updates

70%+	How long its likely to take
60-69%	When any work will take place
	The cause of the issue
50-59%	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	What work is needed & disruption involved
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
<50%	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	How likely the issue is to happen again
	Whose responsibility the issue is
	Regular updates on work

Channels for updates



A water leak on a public road or footpath on your area

First contacting United Utilities

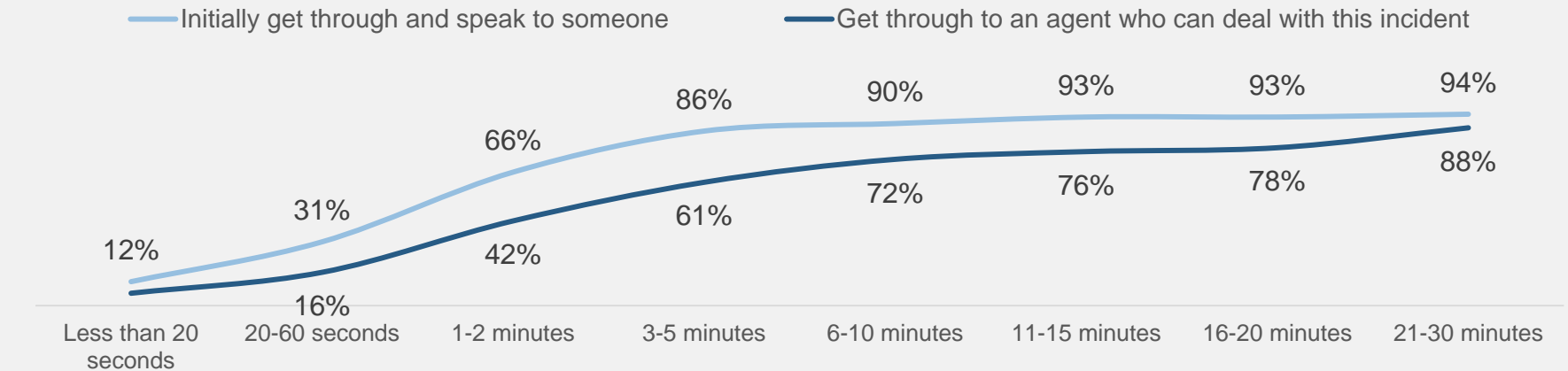
 **56%**

Priority for updates

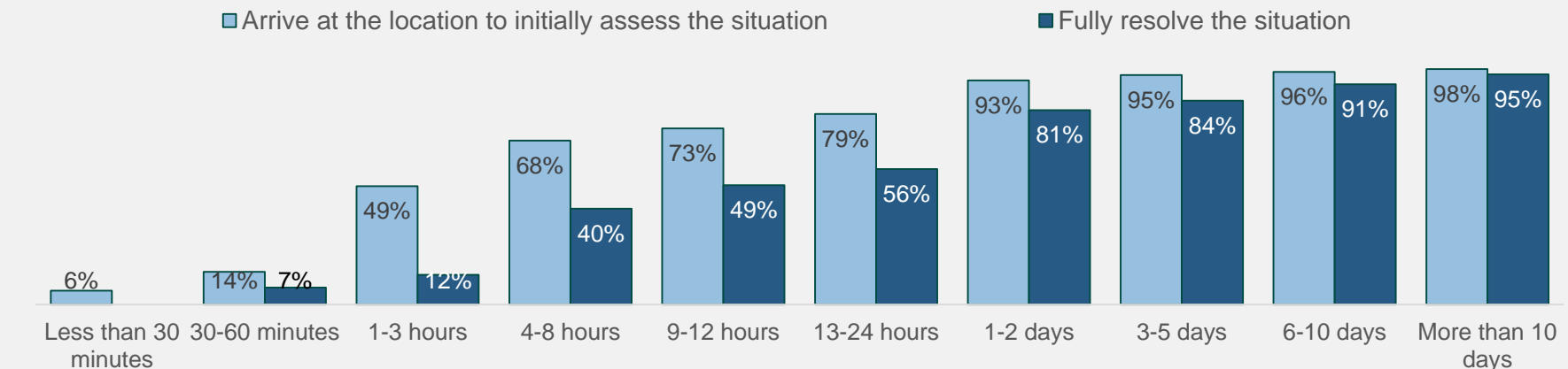
60-69%	How long its likely to take
50-59%	When any work will take place
<50%	The cause of the issue
	Regular updates on work
	Unforeseen issues or delays once work has begun
	What the issue is and any action you need to take
	What work is needed & disruption involved
	Whose responsibility the issue is
	What can be done to avoid the issue happening again
	How likely the issue is to happen again



Call waiting expectations (cumulative %)



First response & resolution expectations (cumulative %)



Sewage flooding in your home

The issue customers might experience:

Sewer flooding caused by one of the following comes into the home:

- Main sewers on your street overflowing
- Rainwater overwhelming the drainage system around your property and flooding diluted sewage out of manholes and waste gullies and entering your property
- Toilets or sinks overflowing due to a blockage on the drainage system i.e. Toilet bowl overflowing

Potentially resulting in...

Flood damage to carpets/flooring, furniture and other items in the home

Bad odours

A professional clean-up and disinfecting the affected areas.

An investigation into the cause of the flooding.

A claim on your house insurance

Imminent sewage flooding to your home

The issue customers might experience:

Sewer flooding caused by one of the following has entered the property boundary and is at risk of coming into the home (i.e. up to your doorstep):

- Rainwater overwhelming the drainage system around your property and flooding diluted sewage out of manholes and waste gullies and entering your property
- Sewers on your street overflowing

Potentially resulting in...

Flood damage to the garden, outbuildings and other areas or possessions kept outside the home or near to your property entrance

Bad odours

A professional clean-up and disinfecting the affected areas

An investigation into the cause of the flooding

Sewer flooding of your garden or driveway (outside the home itself)

The issue customers might experience:

Sewer flooding caused by one of the following has entered the property boundary affecting the garden, garage and outbuildings:

- Main sewers on your street overflowing
- Rainwater overwhelming the drainage system around your property and flooding diluted sewage out of manholes and waste gullies

Potentially resulting in...

Flood damage to vehicles, garden furniture, and other items stored outside or in garages/outbuildings.

A professional clean-up and disinfecting the affected areas.

An investigation into the cause of the flooding.

A claim on your house insurance

Blocked drainage pipes

The issue customers might experience:

Blocked pipes which stop wastewater draining away, resulting in a full manhole/odour or slow draining of toilets and sinks.

Potentially resulting in...

An inspection to determine who is responsible for the pipework where the blockage is (private drains on the property or public drains outside the property)

Finding the source of the blockage and clearing it

Restricted use of facilities

Bad odours

Wastewater Drain Services (where the issue is the homeowner's responsibility)

In instances where responsibility for fixing the issue is the homeowners (e.g. if the cause of the issue is within the property boundary), United Utilities offer a service for locating and clearing the blockage.

This would involve a **one-off payment** for an **hour of labour** carried out by United Utilities technicians while they're onsite. Depending on the nature of the issue, this could include:

- High pressure jetting to clear any blockage
- Cutting back tree/plant roots encroaching on pipes
- Desilting (cleaning pipes)
- A CCTV drainage survey using camera technology to look at the condition pipes and any structural defects, cracks, or potential problems with tree roots (NB. any subsequent repair work needed would not be included)
- Cleaning up the area once inspections and any work is completed

Low water pressure over a period of time

The issue customers might experience:

Water comes out of taps with less force than usual as a result of one the following, with the problem persisting for more than 3 days.

- Water pipes deteriorating over time
- Reduced capacity due to water network development/maintenance
- Demand on the water supply at peak times or during different seasons
- A burst pipe or emergency repairs going on in your area that affect your water supply

Potentially resulting in...

Disruption to your water supply over a period of time, limiting what you can do (e.g. not enough pressure to easily fill a glass or kettle, run a bath or shower, use appliances, wash up, etc.).

One-off instances of low water pressure

The issue customers might experience:

A customer notices water has just started coming out of taps with less force than usual.

Which could be a result of one the following:

- An airlock in your pipes
- Frozen pipes
- A burst pipe or emergency repairs going on in your area that affect your water supply

Potentially resulting in...

Temporary disruption your water supply, limiting what you can do (e.g. not enough pressure to easily fill a glass or kettle, run a bath or shower, use appliances, wash up, etc.).

A change in how water tastes, smells or looks

The issue customers might experience:

A customer notices water from their taps tastes or smells differently or looks discoloured or cloudy.

Which could be a result of one the following:

- A disturbance of naturally occurring metal or mineral deposits
- Corrosion of pipes
- Internal plumbing issues
- Air in the system
- An issue at water treatment works

Potentially resulting in...

Customers needing to boil water for drinking, food preparation and brushing teeth.

Water being okay to use for general domestic purposes such as bathing but not for washing clothes.

Unexpectedly being completely without water to your home

The issue customers might experience:

A customer finds no water comes out of taps when they're turned on and their toilet doesn't flush.

Which could be the result of:

- A burst pipe or emergency repairs going on in your area that affect your water supply
- An airlock in your pipes
- Frozen pipes

Potentially resulting in...

Being completely without water in the home for a period of time.

Being completely without water to your home due to planned works

Imagine you receive a letter from United Utilities giving you 48 hours' notice of planned maintenance/repairs to a water mains near your home.

The letter states that:

- The water supply to your home will be turned off between a **particular time** on a **particular date**
- The work will involve temporary traffic lights and a coned off area for roadworks
- An Alternative Water Supply Vehicle (that makes a similar amount of noise to an HGV or generator) could be used to reduce the length of the interruption

A reference number and contact details for further help/information are provided at the bottom of the letter.

A water leak on your property causing damage or loss of supply

The issue customers might experience:

A customer spots a leak on their property with water gushing out of a pipe in the ground.

Which could be the result of:

- Building works causing problems
- An old or corroded pipe
- Frozen pipes cracking
- Tree roots damaging a pipe

Potentially resulting in...

Water damage to vehicles, the property exterior, garden areas, outbuildings, and other items stored outside.

Low or no pressure affecting the water supply to the home. |

A small water leak on your property

The issue customers might experience:

A customer spots a small leak on their property with water trickling out of a pipe in the ground.

Which could be the result of:

- Building works causing problems
- An old or corroded pipe
- Frozen pipes cracking
- Tree roots damaging a pipe

Potentially resulting in...

Low pressure affecting the water supply to the home.

Risk of water damage to vehicles, the property exterior, garden areas, etc. if the leak gets worse.



A water leak on public road or footpath in your area

The issue customers might experience:

A customer spots a water leak on a public road or footpath in their local area with water coming out of a pipe in the ground.

Which could be the result of:

- Building works causing problems
- An old or corroded pipe
- Frozen pipes cracking
- Tree roots damaging a pipe



Potentially resulting in...

Low pressure affecting the water supply to homes in the area.

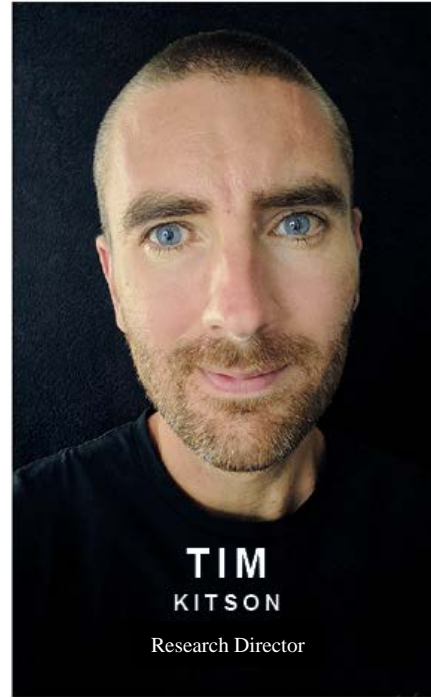
The road or path flooding and local traffic disruption / pedestrians prevented from passing through.



Water for the North West

thank you!

Your Project Team



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InSites Consulting