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# Social Tariff Research: SES Water

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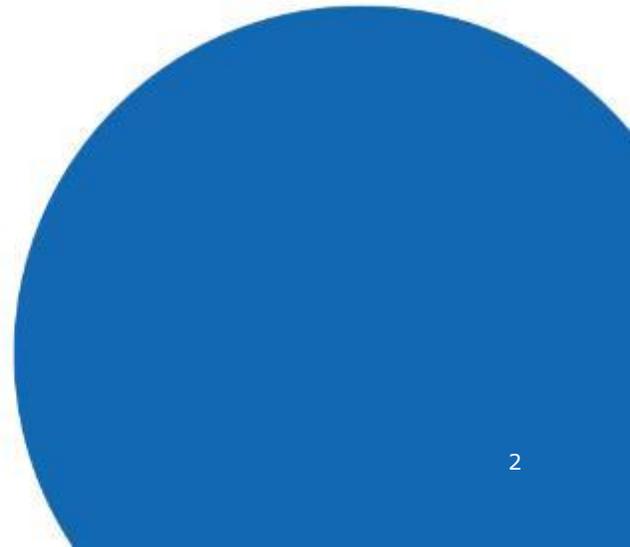
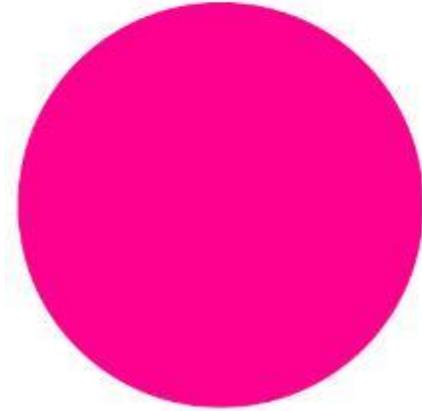
September 2023

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**Background, objectives  
and methodology**





# Background and objectives

As part of the business planning process for PR24, SES Water (SES) are consulting with their customers on a number of topics, including social tariffs. SES wishes to eradicate water poverty across their region, with the aim of no customer's bill being more than 5% of their disposable income.

To achieve this aim, it is likely to be necessary for SES to increase its social tariff charge to customers' bills.

To understand customers' willingness to contribute to an increased cross subsidy, DJS research were commissioned to undertake acceptability and willingness to contribute research with customers to explore and understand:

## **Financial confidence**

The extent to which customers are confident they will be able to afford their water and other household bills over the next 12 months.

## **Acceptability of the principle of social tariffs**

Measure the proportion of customers who find the principle of social tariffs acceptable/unacceptable and why.

## **Acceptability of proposed changes to the social tariff**

Inform customers about plans for the future of the scheme (partly) funded through social tariffs and understand how acceptable or unacceptable this is to customers.

## **Willingness to contribute**

Assess customers' willingness to contribute (WtC) to a social tariff through their water bill, and the amount that they would be willing to contribute each month as part of their bill to support this.

# Methodology



Quantitative and qualitative fieldwork was conducted during August and September 2023

Sample  
size:

869

## Quantitative: online:

Quantitative customer interviews were conducted from email contacts provided by SES Water. From a sample of 42,000, 869 interviews were achieved – a response rate of 2%.

Interviews lasted 11½ minutes on average, and respondents were shown a number of pieces of stimulus during the interview (as shown throughout the report and in the appendix) to provide information relating to the proposed social tariff and other elements of SES Water’s existing programmes and schemes to support customers.

## Qualitative: tele-depths:

Five qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted on Teams/telephone with respondents from the quantitative stage. The purpose of the in-depth interviews, was to explore customers’ reasons for their willingness or unwillingness to contribute more to SES Water’s social tariff. Interviews were split by the additional amount they were willing to contribute, ranging from £0 to more than £3 per month.

## Notes on this report:

To understand customers’ willingness to contribute (WtC) to the social tariff, a **contingent valuation** exercise was conducted. Contingent valuation is used to establish the amount customers are willing to pay (if anything) towards a scheme/service. Respondents were presented with a randomised starting price point and asked if they would or would not be willing to pay this amount each month to contribute towards the social tariff. If customers answered ‘no’ they were asked again at the next lowest price point – repeated up to three times. If customers answered ‘yes’ they were asked at the next highest price point - repeated up to three times. From this we established the maximum amount customers were willing to contribute based within the range established in the previous questions, providing us with a final amount they were willing to contribute.

# Sample breakdown: online



869

<p><b>Age</b></p>  <p><b>18-29:</b> 30  <b>30-44:</b> 244  <b>45-59:</b> 267  <b>60-74:</b> 207  <b>75+:</b> 109</p>	<p><b>Gender*</b></p>  <b>Male:</b> 374  <b>Female:</b> 476	<p><b>Social Grade</b></p>  <p><b>ABC1:</b> 494  <b>C2DE:</b> 258</p>	<p><b>Meter status*</b></p>  <p><b>Yes:</b> 181  <b>No:</b> 647</p>
<p><b>Illness and Disability*</b></p>  <p><b>Yes:</b> 309  <b>No:</b> 479</p> <p>Note: question asked about self and others in the household: Do you or anyone in your household have a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work you can do?</p>	<p><b>Ethnicity*</b></p> <p><b>White:</b> 698  <b>Mixed/multiple ethnicity:</b> 25  <b>Asian/Asian British:</b> 40  <b>Black/African/Caribbean / Black British:</b> 19  <b>Other ethnic group:</b> 12</p>	<p><b>Note:</b>          Desired quotas were provided for age, gender and SEG. As this information was not included within the sample file provided, we could not target specific groups of individuals.</p> <p>The total sample matches well with the local profile in terms of age, gender, SEG and Local Authority area. However, we see some deviation from the local profile which has been corrected through weighting.</p> <p>A weight has been applied to the respondent data to ensure profiles match within the region and therefore reflect the views of a representative sample.</p> <p>All data reported on in this report is weighted data.</p> <p>A further explanation of weighting and the weighting profiles can be found in Appendix 2 of this document.</p>	

\*remainder don't know/prefer not to say. Please note: weighted sample profile shown.

# Sample: In-depth interviews



n=5

## Age



18-29: 1  
30-44: 1  
45-59: 2  
60-74: 1

## Gender



Male: 3



Female: 2

## Social Grade



ABC1: 3

C2DE: 2

## Meter status



Yes: 3

No: 2

## Illness and Disability



No: 4

Prefer not say: 1

Note: question asked about self and others in the household: Do you or anyone in your household have a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work you can do?

## Water Bill Confidence



Very confident: 3

Quite confident: 1

Not at all confident: 1

## Willing to contribute



No more: 1

Less than £1: 1

Between £1-£2: 2

£3 or more: 1

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# Executive summary





# Executive summary

## Headline finding:

Over half are willing to contribute towards an additional cross-subsidy for social tariffs for the period 2025-30, however, customers do express concerns around the cost of living and bill affordability both now and in the future.

## Key findings:

1

One third of customers would be willing to contribute (WtC) at least an additional 50p per month towards an additional cross-subsidy for social tariffs each year from 2025-30. The mean WtC is 38p extra per month.

2

However, there are significant sub-group differences, with females, and those in lower SEG groups and with lower household incomes typically having a lower WtC threshold.

## Household bills and the cost of living:

Just over two-thirds of customers feel confident they will be able to afford their water bills over the next 12 months. This is broadly in-line with perceived affordability of mobile phone, council tax and internet/broadband. As might be expected, gas and electric bills are where customers are least confident they will be able to afford their bills – with one quarter (26%) not being confident they will be able to afford.

Mortgages aren't applicable to three-fifths of customers participating (62%).

## Awareness of support services:

Over two-thirds say they have heard of Priority Services. In addition, around one in ten (9%) say they are not aware but would like to know more.

Less than half (47%) are aware of financial support for customers who are struggling to pay, with one in seven either previously having support or currently receiving support (15%).

## Perceptions of social tariffs:

Over two fifths (44%) disagree with the principle of contributing to support customers who are struggling to pay, with three in ten (29%) agreeing. After being informed of plans for increasing the support on offer to customers from 2025-2030, 42% find the changes unacceptable, and 34% acceptable.

Among customers who find it unacceptable the main reasons focus on wanting the company to do more / cut profits to help fund, feeling that it is not a customer's responsibility and a feeling that funding should come from the government.

## Willingness to Contribute (WtC)

Customers are willing to contribute towards additional cross-subsidy for social tariffs. The mean WtC among customers is 38p extra per month – suggesting broad support for an enhanced social tariff from 2025-2030.

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## Priority services





# Over two-fifths (44%) are aware of priority services at a total level

## Awareness and usage of priority services

	Total
Yes – I have heard of them but do not need these services	26%
Yes – I have signed up to them	10%
Yes – I have heard of them, may need them, but haven't done anything	5%
Yes – I have signed up on behalf of someone else	3%
No – but I would like to know more	13%
No – but I do not need them	33%
Don't know	10%

## Sub-group differences:

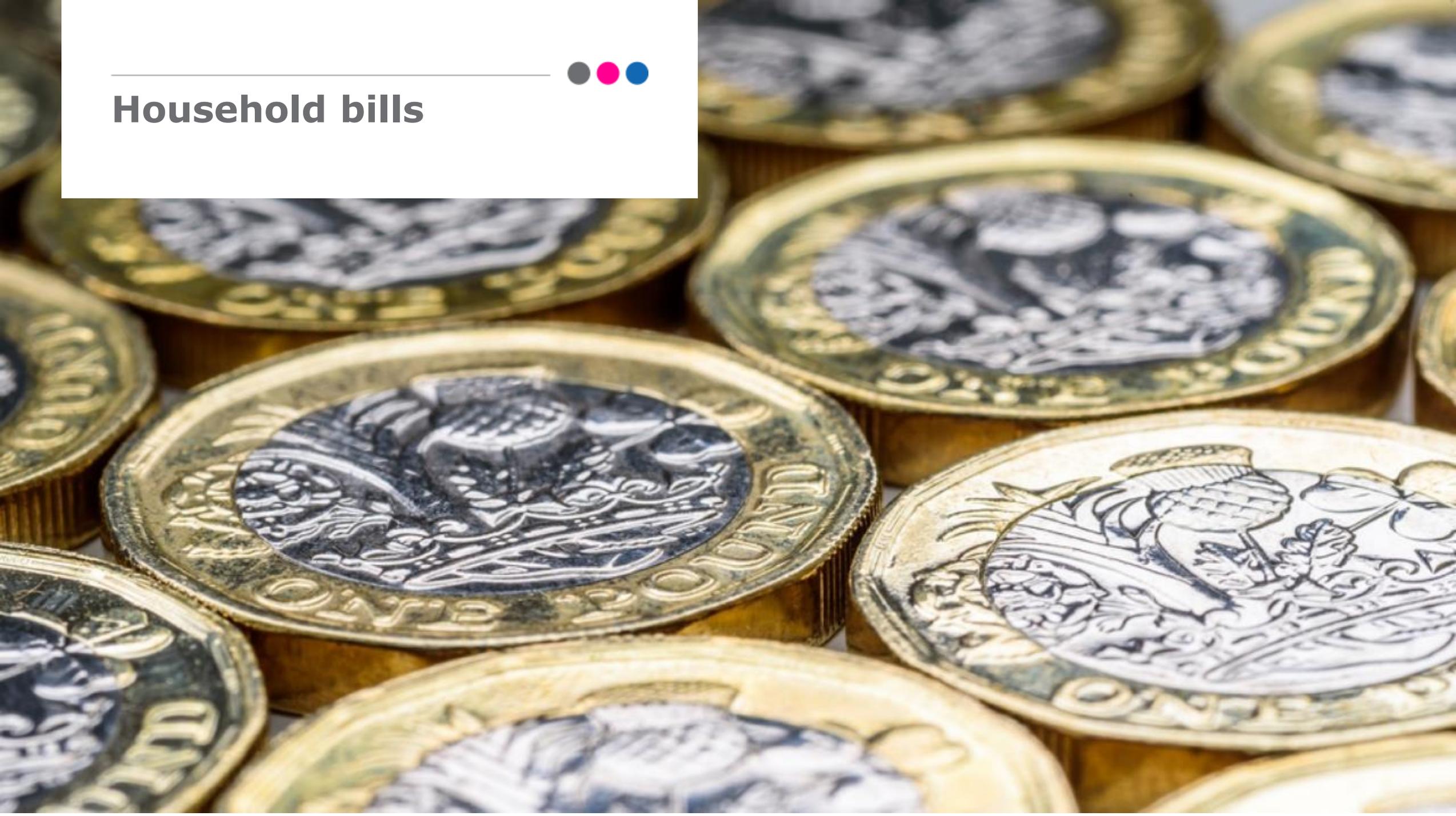
Customers who are **aware of financial support are significantly more likely to be aware** (at any level) than those who are not (59% cf. 31%)

Respondents who **agree with the general principle of social tariffs are significantly more likely to be aware** than those who disagree (53% cf. 36%)

Customers who say **the level of support provided is acceptable are significantly more likely to be aware** than those who say it's unacceptable (56% cf. 36%)

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# Household bills

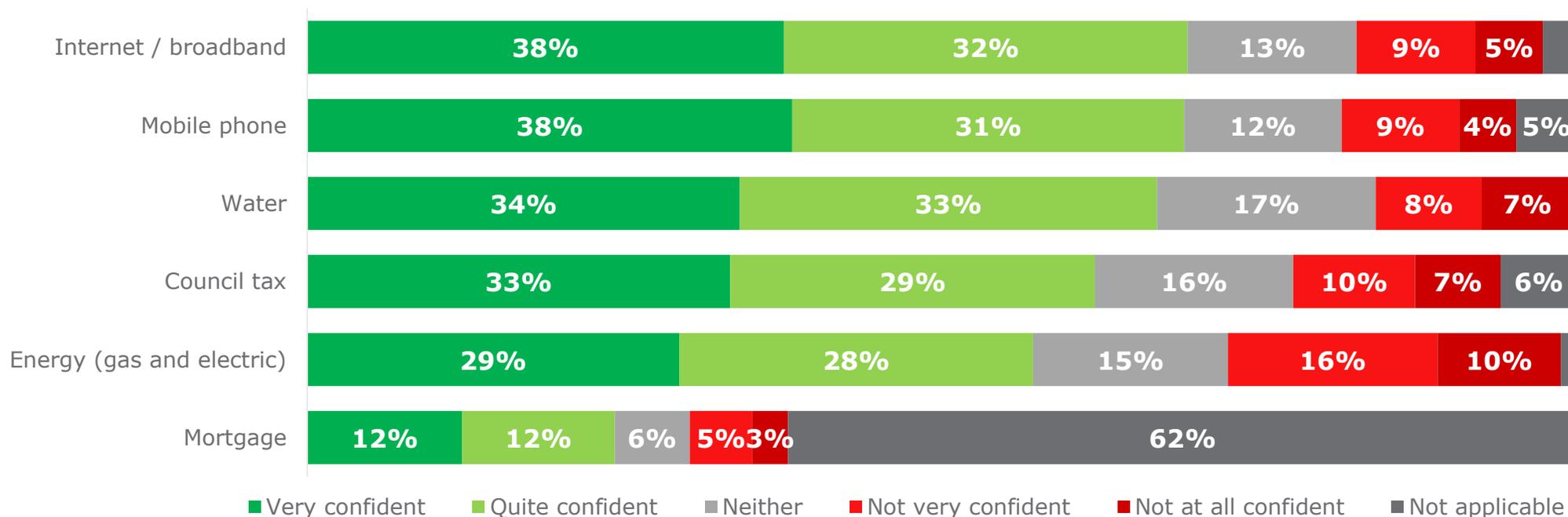




# Just over two-thirds are confident in being able to afford their water bill over the next 12 months

A quarter of customers are not very / not at all confident they will be able to afford their energy bills over the next 12 months (26%)

## Confidence in being able to afford household bills over the next 12 months



Note: data labels <4% not shown

**Base:** all respondents (869). Data is weighted to facilitate comparison. **Q02.** Which of the following best describes how confident you feel in being able to afford the following bills over the next 12 months; please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all confident and 5 is very confident? Please note that totals may not add up due to rounding.



# The general increase in the cost of living is the key factor for lack of confidence in being able to afford water bills over the next 12 months

## Cost of living increases

"I am on a very low income. A son with disabilities. The cost of living is making our life unbearable. We don't live we just exist."

**Female, aged 45-59**

**42%**

## Wages aren't going up/low income/no income security

"Because everything is so expensive, and it is impossible to survive on our wages anymore. Companies like yours and all other utilities are still happy to give out huge bonuses whilst we struggle."

**Prefer not to say, aged 45-59**

**38%**

Other codes include:

- SES have the highest bills in the country/too expensive (13%)
- Retired/relying on pension (7%)
- Other/something else (25%)



# Cost of living

In the context of rising costs across the board, participants are concerned about their ability to cope with the accumulation of their household bills.

Some key themes:

**Increases felt in all aspects of life** – various bills are increasing, along with day-to-day expenses such as fuel making the overall cost of living much less manageable.

**Concern for loved ones** – with the rise in cost of living, people are worried about their elderly family who live off single incomes / pension, as well as parents worrying for their adult children who are living independently with some having to help their child/children afford to live, particularly in London.

**Adjustments made** – people are making changes to the way they live and how they spend their money in order to make life more affordable.

## Everything is going up

“The cost of living is going up massively. Everything's going up in price and then the people around you are doing everything they can just to get by.”

**Male, aged 45-59, not on a water meter, willing to pay £3+**

## Many aspects of life getting more expensive

“Even petrol has gone up. It's just another thing you're having to put on your credit card, so then your credit card bills are going up and then the interest rates are going up and it just got to a point where it is a worry and I worry about my friends and family managing.”

**Female, aged 30-44, not on a water meter, willing to pay £1-£2**

## Being more careful with income

“We're in a good position in the sense of pension coming in. But as everyone in the country knows, even with a pension coming in and being sensible in your life, you've just got to watch the spending a little bit more carefully.”

**Male, aged 60-74, on a water meter, willing to pay less than £1**

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**Helping those who are  
struggling to pay**





# Under half (47%) are aware of support for customers who are struggling to pay

Respondents aware of priority services are significantly more likely to be aware of financial support.

## Awareness and usage of financial support

	Total
Yes – I have had support with my bill in the past	6%
Yes – I am currently receiving support with my bill	9%
Yes – I am aware, may need this, but haven't done anything	7%
Yes – I have organised this on behalf of someone else	1%
Yes – but I do not need it	25%
No – but I think I might need it	7%
No – but I would like to know more	12%
No – but I do not need it	28%
Don't know	6%

**Base:** all respondents (869). Data is weighted to facilitate comparison.

**Q04.** And, were you aware that SES Water offers support for customers who are struggling to pay their water bills?



# Of those previously or currently in receipt of support, reduced bills through Water Support / WaterSure is the most common service received

## Support services in receipt of/previously in receipt of

	Total
Reduced bill by 50% - Water Support / WaterSure	73%
Flexible payment plan	5%
Water Direct (using benefit payments)	5%
Payment match scheme for customers in debt to help them get out of it. – Clear Start	4%
Breathing space – temporary pause on payments (maximum of 90 days)	1%
Water Sure – Allows customers to cap their bills in certain circumstances	0%
Other (please specify)	4%
Don't know	14%

**Base:** all respondents previously or currently in receipt of support (98). Data is weighted to facilitate comparison.  
**Q05.** Which of the following support services were you using/in receipt of?



# Information for participants

## Respondent information

Before being asked about social tariffs, including their general support or opposition and then their willingness to contribute, respondents were shown the following information screen:

**“All water companies in England and Wales have schemes to give lower bills to some customers who might otherwise struggle to pay. These are called social tariff schemes. In line with Government rules these schemes are mostly funded by charging other households a bit more on their bills.**

**This is what’s also known as a cross-subsidy. There are a number of examples of cross subsidies in day-to-day life. For example, concessionary tickets for children or pensioners to attractions (e.g. the cinema, theme parks etc.). Another example is the price of a stamp which is the same within the UK whatever distance the letter or parcel travels. At different points in our lives, we are all likely to have helped fund cross-subsidies, and to have received help from them.**

**The image below gives you some more information about social tariffs and cross-subsidies in the water sector, please review this image before continuing.”**

## STIMULUS 1

**EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL TARIFFS FOR WATER BILLS**

We offer a suite of schemes and discounts to support our customers who are struggling financially. Currently we have 20,100 households on one of these schemes and by the end of 2024 we will increase this to over 25,000. These schemes include:

<p><b>Water Support</b></p> <p>Water Support is a 50% bill reduction scheme funded by adding £6 to non-eligible customers’ annual bills and underwritten by our shareholders who cover the remaining balance in excess of our customer contributions. Customers’ eligibility for the scheme is based on their yearly gross household income. Less than £17,005 before any deductions, if they don’t live in a London borough (£21,749 if they do live in a London borough).</p>	<p><b>Breathing Space</b></p> <p>A way to pause payments for customers who need help getting back on their feet if they have experienced a change in certain personal circumstances that has had an unexpected negative impact on income; such as illness, redundancy or bereavement. We will pause payments for up to 3 months.</p>	<p><b>Direct Water Payments (third-party deductions)</b></p> <p>Customers in receipt of certain benefits and have over £50.00 of debit on their account can combine their yearly bill with any other bill arrears into one weekly payment. This payment goes straight from their benefits. Water Direct has been designed with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).</p>	<p><b>Water Sure</b></p> <p>A capped tariff for metered customers so they pay whichever bill is lower – the one based on their actual usage, or an average household bill. To qualify for this tariff customers need to be in receipt of certain benefits and have 3 children under 19 living with them or be suffering from or receiving treatment for a qualifying medical condition which means they need to use more water.</p>
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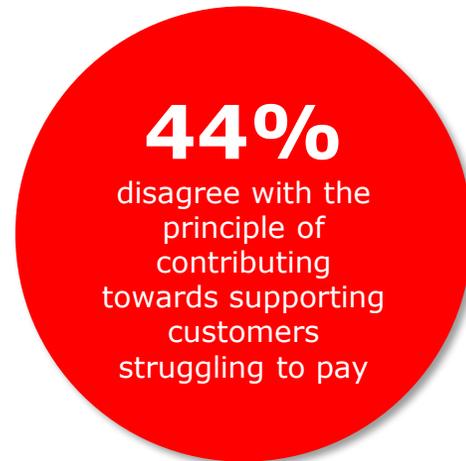
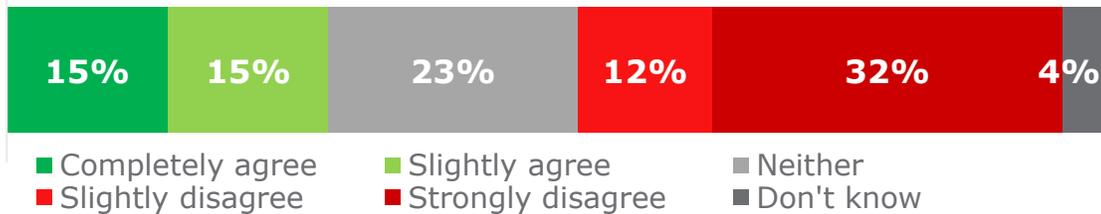
For those customers who do not meet the qualifying criteria for our financial support schemes we offer flexible repayment plans. We are always willing to look at repayment of debt on an individual basis, depending on our customers financial situation.

**Please note:** customers who are not in receipt of support from a social tariff already pay more for their water services to fund the cross subsidies. At the moment, SES Water support around 19,000 customers on social tariffs in this area, which means out of a customer’s yearly bill for their water supply and waste water, £6 goes towards the cross-subsidy for social tariffs.

**Note:** full page stimulus shown in appendix

# One in three agree with the principle of contributing towards supporting customers struggling to pay

## Agreement with the principle of contributing towards supporting customers struggling to pay...



a/b: denotes significantly higher (at 95% confidence level) than comparator on % acceptable. \*Only sub-groups where significant differences occur are shown

**Base:** all respondents (869). Data is weighted to facilitate comparison. **Q06.** As an SES Water customer, to what extent do you agree or disagree with paying a contribution towards supporting customers who are struggling to pay their bill? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree?

## Significant sub-group differences

	% agree	% disagree
<b>Aware of priority services</b>		
Yes (a)	37% <sup>b</sup>	34%
No (b)	24%	51% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Aware of financial support</b>		
Yes (a)	37% <sup>b</sup>	38%
No (b)	23%	49% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Acceptable on level of help provided</b>		
Acceptable (a)	62% <sup>b</sup>	22%
Unacceptable (b)	20%	55% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Supporting customers in financial need</b>		
Acceptable (a)	61% <sup>b</sup>	19%
Unacceptable (b)	10%	75% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Receiving benefits</b>		
Yes, at least one (a)	35%	31%
None (b)	27%	51% <sup>a</sup>

# Conflicting feelings about contributing

A range of customers were consulted in terms of their willingness to contribute to social tariffs.

Most customers are willing to contribute in principle, however, a reoccurring concern is wanting to know how SES Water are contributing before they opt to pay more.

Some key themes:

**Concern about profits** – some were concerned about the amount of profit being made by SES Water and the amount being paid to shareholders / people higher up at SES.

**More information needed** – customers want to know exactly how the money is used and who is being helped. Many are unaware that they're contributing and want more information for both contributors and possible applicants.

**Unfair to ask the customer** – many feel it is unfair to ask customers to pay when SES seemingly haven't taken a hit in profits. People would be more inclined to help if SES matched its customers' contribution or demonstrated how much SES contribute before asking its customers.

## Concern about profits being made

"I don't expect the water company to personally subsidise people who can't pay for the product that they're provided. But I do expect companies to stop making such massive profits and start bringing the bills down."

**Male, aged 45-59, not on a water meter, willing to pay £3+**

## Want to see more transparency

"I worry about the transparency of water companies as a private company making it really clear this is how many people we think need support for what reasons and this is how much money is required. This is the impact of it on your bill and how much is that people in the borough or in the area that are paying for that and how much is it coming out of dividends."

**Female, aged 18-29, on a water meter, willing to pay £1 - £2**

## Want more input from SESW

"I'm totally against it. I don't see why the customer has to pay when the water companies are making millions and paying their shareholders millions."

**Male, aged 45-59, on a water meter, willing to pay no more**

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**Willingness to contribute**





# Information for participants

## Respondent information

Before being asked about social tariffs, including their general support or opposition and then their willingness to contribute to their water company's proposed social tariff, respondents were shown various pieces of information and stimulus as shown over the next 2 pages

## STIMULUS 2 & 3: INFORMATION

**“SES Water want to eradicate water poverty in the region. Water poverty is defined as when a household spends more than 3% of their disposable income, after housing costs i.e., mortgage / rent, on their water and sewerage bills.**

**SES Water anticipate that more customers may find themselves in financial difficulty as the cost-of-living increases and would like to respond by providing help for more customers, now and into the future.”**

**Note:** full page stimulus shown in appendix

## ADDITIONAL HELP AVAILABLE

### Priority Services Register (PSR)

The PSR is free to join and helps utility companies like us look after customers who have health, access or specific communication needs to tailor our services to support household who need extra help. The PSR includes a range of additional services to make managing your account as easy as possible. We also offer extra support in the event of a water supply emergency.

#### This includes:

- Individual notification in emergencies
- Braille, large print and audio/CD services
- Text Relay Service
- Priority support for home dialysis users and patients convalescing at home
- Password scheme to protect from bogus callers
- Nominated correspondent to speak on your behalf
- Financial assistance depending on different eligibility criteria
- Currently we have 20,500 customers on the PSR scheme and anticipate that by the end of 2024 this will have grown to 25,000.

### Recite me Accessibility and Language toolbar

This tool allows customers to change the accessibility settings to help you get the most out of our website. It includes options to adjust the ruler, screen mask, magnifier, margins and a dictionary. The toolbar also quickly and easily translates all our web content into over 100 languages, including 35 text to speech voices.

Over 600 customers a month use this tool to help them navigate our website.

### Bereavement life ledger

We have partnered with LifeLedger a free service that allows customers to close, freeze, switch or transfer billing and service related accounts following a bereavement quickly and easily and from one place.



## SUPPORT+ SERVICES PROVIDED BY WATER COMPANIES

SES remains committed to delivering excellent customer service that is able to meet the needs of all of our customers. So what are we doing currently? We carry out regular surveys with customers to understand how helpful our range of extra services are (both financial and non-financial). Last year 81% of customers who were on one of our extra services felt that they were helpful. We also ask customers who aren't on them if they are aware of the support on offer. Currently, less than 40% of our customer base is aware of what is on offer, so we have more work to do. So what will we do?

### Community engagement

Our trained customer care team work in the community promoting the schemes and services on offer. This can be at community events, food banks, over 65 forums, family and children's centres as well as working with stakeholders and partners attending team briefings and open days.

We are also running research and have regular stakeholder sessions to ensure that the schemes design and access to it are suitable.

### Trusted partnerships

We have recently signed up our first trusted partner who will accept applications for our schemes on our behalf. Our new approach is intended to make the process of registering for our service and financial support schemes far simpler for our customers and this will also help increase awareness.

We'll work with the industry to share data about customers who require priority services with electricity and gas providers so that those that need extra help are identified and registered automatically with all their suppliers.

### Promotion

We will increase the communications we send out to our customers relating to the extra services on offer.





# Information for participants

## STIMULUS 4: INFORMATION

“When answering the next set of questions, please be aware that over the next few years many household costs may increase due to inflation. These household costs include energy, food and fuel prices. It is currently expected that the rate of increase in prices will slow from the middle of this year.

Your water bill may also be affected by how much other costs increase each year such as the company’s running costs e.g., energy, wages etc, money invested to improve day to day water services and long-term investments.”

### THE EXISTING SOCIAL TARIFF SCHEME...

#### The current position

**19,000** customers supported  
**£6** (£0.50 per month) bill contribution

**Please note:** customer bills currently include a contribution towards supporting customers through social tariffs.

This information details the current level of contribution to social tariffs by each customer per year.

## STIMULUS 5: INFORMATION

“In order to support more customers who are struggling to pay through social tariffs in future, SES Water would need to increase the contributions made by other customers to pay for this. Customers already pay an amount on their bills as a cross-subsidy to support those on a social tariff.

We’d now like to ask you about the additional amount you would be willing to contribute – if anything - in order to make the proposed changes to expand the number of customers on social tariff schemes.

Please also note that if SES Water want to help more customers, or increase this discount in the future, they would have to consult with customers again.”

### HOW THE SOCIAL TARIFF SCHEME WOULD WORK...

Here are some examples of how the expanded social tariff scheme would work in future.

The information relates to the number of additional customers that would be supported through customer contributions through social tariffs. At each level of additional support outlined, an additional yearly contribution amount is stated, alongside a per month figure.

#### Example 1

**6,333** additional customers supported  
**Extra £2** (£0.17p per month) bill contribution

#### Example 3

**22,169** additional customers supported  
**Extra £7** (£0.58p per month) bill contribution

#### Example 2

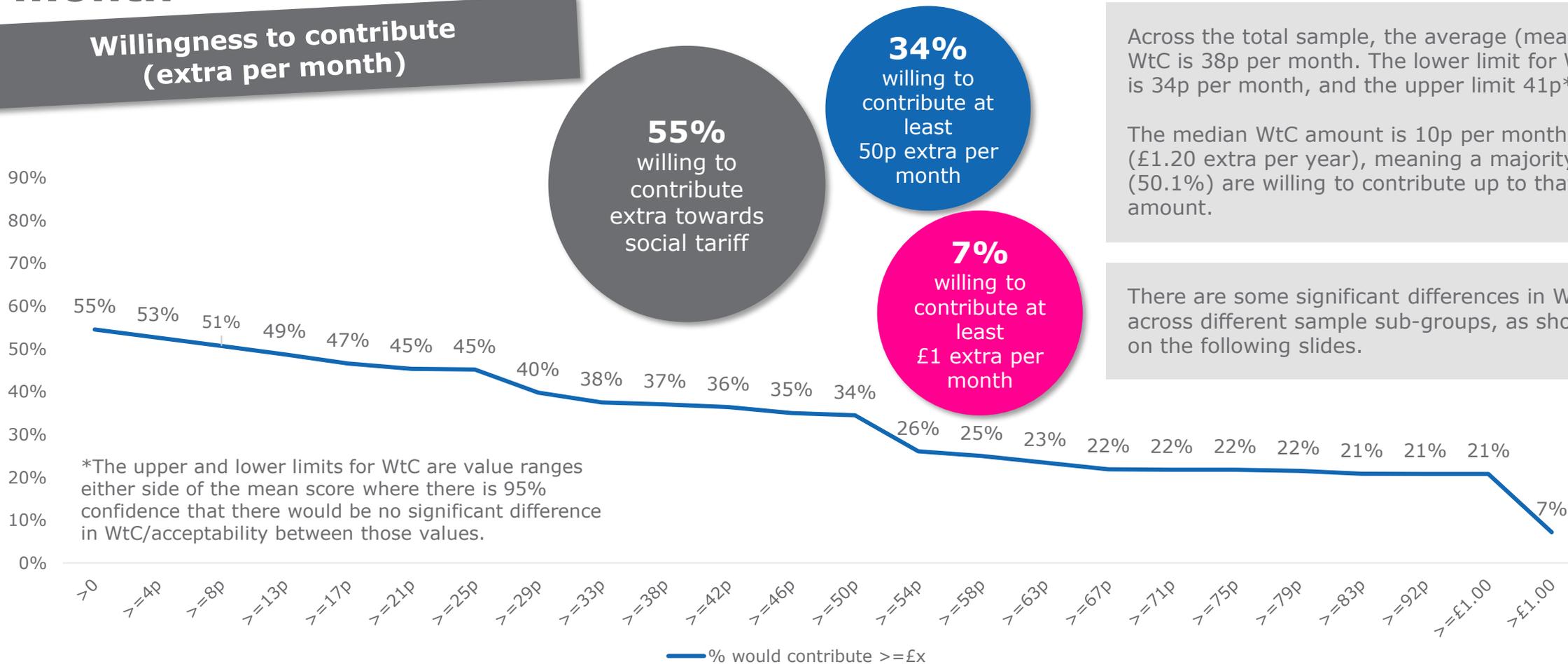
**12,667** additional customers supported  
**Extra £4** (£0.33p per month) bill contribution





# Overall, over half are willing to contribute at all (55%), and one third (34%) are willing to contribute 50p extra a month

**Willingness to contribute (extra per month)**



Across the total sample, the average (mean) WtC is 38p per month. The lower limit for WtC is 34p per month, and the upper limit 41p\*

The median WtC amount is 10p per month (£1.20 extra per year), meaning a majority (50.1%) are willing to contribute up to that amount.

There are some significant differences in WtC across different sample sub-groups, as shown on the following slides.



## Reason(s) for willingness to contribute figure: £0

Affordability is the main issue for customers who aren't willing to contribute to the proposed changes, followed by them feeling that the government or their water company should be responsible for this

### Because I can't afford it

"I can barely afford to live with the inflation let alone add more onto my bill!!! Everything is too expensive!! And just getting worse how can I contribute when every penny goes to trying to survive myself and yes survive!! Not live!"

**Female, aged 30-44**

**36%**

### Profit / shareholder dividends need be reduced first

I completely support the principle of the social tariff, I simply believe the cost should be met by the company, just as I believe costs for new infrastructure should be covered by the not inconsiderable profits the company already makes from its customers who have no choice in which supplier to choose. What about reducing the money the shareholders make?"

**Female, aged 45-59**

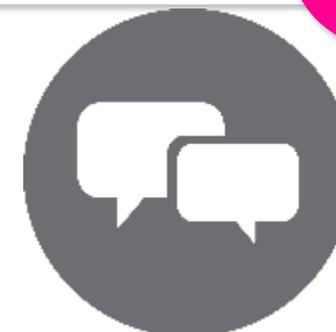
**10%**

### Not our responsibility – water company/government

"The tax-payer is already subsidising those in need via the benefit system. This is the governments job, it is not the job of the water companies to allocate customers money to subsidise others. You could use the water company's already considerable profits to subsidise others rather than pay dividends to the shareholders or better still reduce the cost for everyone which would reduce the need for a social tariff. Every customer should pay the same for this essential service. Let the elected government decide how to allocate funds to those in need. It is not the water company's business."

**Female, aged 60-74**

**23%**



**Base:** all with a willingness to contribute of £0 (395).

**Q10.** You said that you aren't willing to contribute anything towards the proposed changes to the social tariff. In as much detail as possible, please tell us why you say that?

# Case Study 1: Willing to contribute £0

Simon is strongly opposed to the social tariffs. Although he is happy to help and is able to help, he is against SES Water asking customers to subsidise money without first explaining what SES are doing to help before asking customers to help.

**He feels SES Water should be subsidising the money.**

**He wants to see more communication from SES describing how they're helping.**

**He is concerned about how well SES seem to be doing despite the cost-of-living crisis and feels it is unfair asking customers to pay whilst SES make profits and are able to give stakeholders so much money.**

## About Simon:

- Simon is 45-59 and lives with his wife. He has 2 children who no longer live at home.
- He works part time and he and his wife share responsibility for paying the bills.
- He has felt the impact of the rise in cost of living; however, he is in a good position financially.
- He is confident about being able to afford his bills.
- He has been helping his children financially as they have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

"I disagree with any customer paying extra money when the profits are sky-high. There's mention of how much is helping with water bills, but no 'why?'. There's nothing about the money they're putting in. Where's their money coming into this? I personally wouldn't mind paying, but I'm strongly against it while they're not."

"So, my stance is we shouldn't pay if they're not paying. Yeah, I've got no problem paying extra, but we've all got a chip in and if they're not putting anything in, then I'm not. I didn't even know I was doing this."



## Reason(s) for willingness to contribute figure: £0.01-£0.49

Not feeling able to afford more is the key reason provided by those with a WtC between £0.01 and £0.49.

### Lack of affordability/can't afford more

"I would not be willing to pay more than ten pence on my water bill per month because I'm now disabled and live on state benefits and PIP I am probably therefore eligible for the social tariff benefit, myself let alone contribute financially towards other people's water bills. While I can see the benefit of such a scheme. I'm one of the least financially able to help support others as I would place myself in the category who probably needs to be on the scheme myself due to personal injury and my poor medical health with several chronic illnesses which are with me for the rest of my life now and preventing me from working in my profession or any other field. So to pay towards, someone else's water bill sadly, simply isn't an option for me to do personally."

**Male, aged 60-74**

23%

### I can afford it

"Because it feels negligible and won't affect me."

**Female, aged 45-59**

9%

### Important to help others

"£1 a year, I think is reasonable and would make a difference if all customers were involved. An opt-in higher amount could be offered for those with higher incomes."

**Female, aged 30-44**

9%

**Base:** all with a willingness to contribute of £0.01-£0.49 (156).

**Q10.** You said that you are willing to contribute [£xx.xx] towards the proposed changes to the social tariff. In as much detail as possible, please tell us why you say that?



## Reason(s) for willingness to contribute figure: £0.50-£0.99

It is important to help others is the key reason provided by those with a WtC between £0.50 and £0.99, followed by not feeling able to afford more.

### Important to help others

"I am fortunate to have adequate money to live comfortably. It is only fair that those who can afford it support those who cannot."

**Female, aged 60-74**

**19%**

### Lack of affordability/can't afford more

"Because I assume you included that figure as a viable sum. There are very many people better off than me. Therefore, you could make the contribution incremental on financial income etc. That would be fairer, otherwise people near the limit might be pushed below it."

**Male, aged 60-74**

**15%**

### Because I can afford it

"Because at this time, and hopefully, going forward, I should be able to afford this amount and, as I have been helped in the past by others' contributions to various things it would be my way of returning the favour."

**Female, aged 60-74**

**11%**



**Base:** all with a willingness to contribute of £0.50-£0.99 (120).

**Q10.** You said that you are willing to contribute [£xx.xx] towards the proposed changes to the social tariff. In as much detail as possible, please tell us why you say that?

## Case Study 2: Willing to contribute £1-£2

Connie is supportive of the social tariffs. She understands that some people struggle more than others, and anyone could need help with their bills if they have a change of circumstance. She is happy to pay extra, however she believes there should be the option to choose how much you can pay.

**She likes the social tariffs and how comprehensive they are as she agrees it covers a good amount of people.**

**She had concerns about the scheme being taken advantage of by people who may claim certain benefits but don't necessarily need help.**

**She agrees the contribution amount is reasonable and she's happy to pay extra.**

### About Connie:

- Connie is 30-44 and lives alone.
- She works full time and owns her home. She recently moved into a smaller home to make finances more manageable.
- She is quite confident about being able to afford her bills, however, she is worried about her friends and family being able to pay for their bills.
- She has felt the effects of the cost of living crisis as all aspects of billing paying and day to day expenses have become much more expensive.

"£7.00 a year to help that many people, personally it's a no brainer. But I know several people that would say it isn't my responsibility SES Water must make enough money to handle that themselves."

"I think a lot of people will say it's not my problem; 'people can't pay their bills, it's not my problem.' But I always think, well, what if I did lose my job? Or what if something happened? Or what if I was struggling, you know?"

"The tariffs all look sensible; you can tell someone has sat and really thought about how best to cover all different people."



## Reason(s) for willingness to contribute figure: £1.00-£2.00

Customers felt it is important to help others and this is the key reason provided by those with a WtC between £1.00 and £2.00, others say it's an amount they can afford to pay.

### Important to help others

"Those of us who can should all be willing to help our less well off neighbours (in widest sense). I only put £2 as a figure significantly above your present suggestions but could possibly go higher. But SES should contribute as well by not polluting our waterways even if our ridiculous Government allows that pollution."

**Male, aged 75+**

**34%**

### Because I can afford it

"It's a random figure. However, as someone who (at the moment) is relatively secure financially, I feel responsibility to help others in a difficult situation. With this kind of support, at least I know the money is going somewhere it will do good. It would be even better if water companies could set up some kind of charitable body to administer funds to support the social tariff, so voluntary donations could attract Gift Aid and thus have greater value."

**Female, aged 60-74**

**25%**

### Lack of affordability/can't afford more

"I'm already on a social tariff and have no extra money to give. If I were financially better off, I would pay more."

**Female, aged 45-59**

**15%**

**Base:** all with a willingness to contribute of £1.01-£2.00 (158).

**Q10.** You said that you are willing to contribute [£xx.xx] towards the proposed changes to the social tariff. In as much detail as possible, please tell us why you say that?

## Case Study 3: Willing to contribute £3+

Gregg is supportive of the social tariff scheme and doesn't think it should be the water companies' responsibility to subsidise the costs. However, he is concerned about SES Water asking for people to pay whilst it is making profits, he expects SES to match his contribution.

**Gregg is concerned about people claiming benefits who do not necessarily need them gaining access to the social tariff and taking advantage.**

**He is happy to help, however he believes that if people can't afford their water bill, they need help with the deeper issue to aid them long term.**

### About Gregg:

- Gregg is 45-59 and lives at home with his wife.
- He is self-employed and has 3 grown up children who have all moved out.
- He has noticed an impact from the cost-of-living crisis; however, he is very confident about being able to pay his water bills.
- He feels OK about his finances in the short term due to freezing his mortgage. He is hoping that the cost of living will have settled down in the next couple of years.
- He is mainly concerned about his energy bills which have spiked massively.

"I think if it comes down to it, then it should be a case of, well, if we're asking our customers to spend another £6 a year, then what we will do is we will match it to make it fair."

"There needs to be a time period where they turn around and say 'these guys have had issues paying for 12 months. We can't keep doing this.' And get them real help."

"You've got billions of pounds in the bank that you're just giving to all your rich shareholders, but you want us to subsidise people that need help? No. You come away from that and we will help. But you match us on that help."



## Reason(s) for willingness to contribute figure: £2.01+

Being able to afford it is the key reason provided by those with a WtC over £2.00, followed by it being important to help others. However, some customers think that it's not their responsibility – but that of SES Water / the government

### Because I can afford it

"I am fortunate in that I can afford to pay my bills with money to spare. I would like to help others avoid the stress of not being able to pay their bills."

**Female, 60-74**

**42%**

### Important to help others

"Being in a relatively secure financial position, and also aware that many are not, I feel that a modest contribution to help those others is in order. I wish I did not live in a country where the state allows people to get into such difficulties through no fault of their own. But, as I do not, such non-state schemes must be supported by those able to do so."

**Male, aged 60-74**

**36%**

### Not our responsibility – water company/government

"We're in a position where we could afford to pay a bit extra each month if that means helping others who can't then great. I think this is a great idea/scheme, but I also think that the government should be working to make household bills more affordable for everyone and to provide support for those who are struggling. Whilst a great initiative it shouldn't be down to private companies to make that change."

**Female, aged 30-44**

**27%**



**Base:** all with a willingness to contribute of £2.01+ (31).

**Q10.** You said that you are willing to contribute [£xx.xx] towards the proposed changes to the social tariff. In as much detail as possible, please tell us why you say that?

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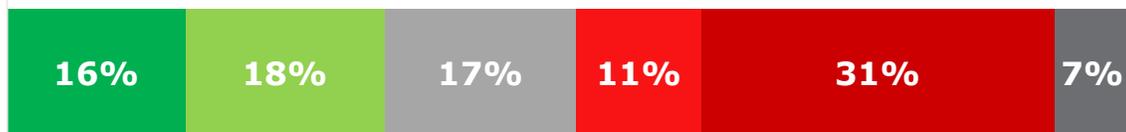
# Acceptability of proposed changes



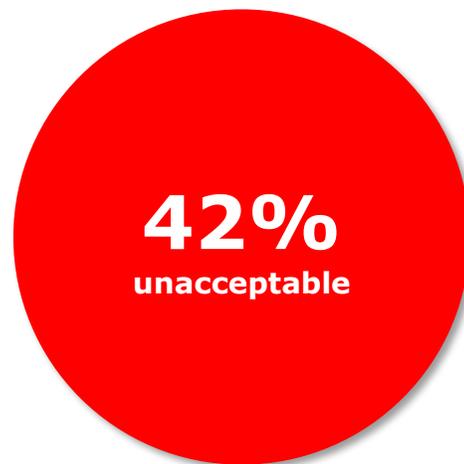


# One third (34%) find the proposed increase to the social tariff using customer funding acceptable

## Overall acceptability of using customer funding to increase support for customers



■ Completely acceptable   
 ■ Slightly acceptable   
 ■ Neither  
■ Slightly unacceptable   
 ■ Completely unacceptable   
 ■ Don't know



a/b: denotes significantly higher (at 95% confidence level) than comparator on % acceptable

\*Only sub-groups where significant differences occur are shown

**Base:** all respondents (869). Data is weighted to facilitate comparison. **Q11.** Overall, based on all the information you have seen about the changes to the social tariff, how acceptable do you think it is for SES Water to use customer funding to increase the support to customers?

## Significant sub-group differences (total sample)\*

	% acceptable	% unacceptable
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White (a)	38% <sup>b</sup>	40%
Non-white (b)	18%	49%
<b>SEG</b>		
ABC1 (a)	34%	48%
C2DE (b)	36%	35% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Aware of priority services</b>		
Yes (a)	44% <sup>b</sup>	36%
No (b)	28%	48% <sup>a</sup>
<b>General principle</b>		
Agree (a)	70% <sup>b</sup>	15%
Disagree (b)	14%	72% <sup>a</sup>
<b>Aware of financial support</b>		
Yes (a)	38%	36%
No (b)	32%	47% <sup>a</sup>



# Reasons for finding the use of customer funding to increase support to customers acceptable

## We should help the vulnerable and those struggling

"If there is only a small amount added to customers direct debit that can afford this small donation then it is helping those that struggle. Also, if it was to go to a charity account within SES then the gift aid could be added and help even more people in need."

**Female, aged 60-74**

**17%**

## Scheme is a good idea

"From a personal perspective, if I had to ask for financial assistance from SES, I would be grateful knowing that their customers were able to help support me and others in their time of need. I for one would be very grateful for their support."

**Female, 45-59**

**15%**

Other codes include:

- Company should cut profits to fund this/water companies make too much profit (8%)
- Everyone needs help/is already struggling (7%)
- Not customers responsibility to help people (4%)
- Funding should come from the Government (4%)
- Should be a choice - Not everyone would be willing to contribute (3%)
- Unsure about my future financial situation/may need this in the future (3%)
- People cannot afford bill increases/bills already high (3%)

Note: only codes 3%+ shown.



**Base:** all respondents who consider it acceptable for SES Water to use customer funding to increase the support to customers (281). Data is weighted to facilitate comparison.  
**Q12.** Why do you find it...?



# Reasons for finding the use of customer funding to increase support to customers unacceptable

## Company should cut profits to fund this/water companies make too much profit

"They can help from their profit. Why shift the bill to the customers. People are already paying a lot for other things. All bills are going up."

**Male, aged 60-74**

**25%**

## Funding should come from Government

"Why do customers have to support other customers? Isn't this the role of government? What is the water company doing about leaks and sewage discharges?"

**Female, aged 45-59**

**13%**

## It's not customers' responsibility to help people

"As said before, this should be funded from company profits. It's your business, from which you make money. I don't see why customers should pay extra to meet a cost that should be part of your business considerations. You should make it your social contribution to address, not pass the buck and cost to your other customers."

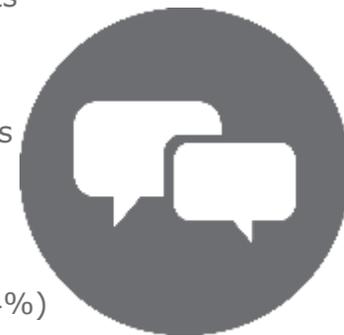
**Male, aged 60-74**

**15%**

Other codes include:

- I pay enough already / don't want to add any more costs (9%)
- Everyone needs help / is already struggling (8%)
- Shareholders need to contribute more/ match customers contributions (6%)
- The water company needs to improve the system (e.g., sort out leaks/wastage etc.) (5%)
- People cannot afford bill increases / bills already high (4%)
- Against the scheme (4%)

Note: only codes 4%+ shown.





# Feelings on social tariffs

A quarter feel the social tariffs they were provided with information about are a good or fair idea. However, there is some concern whether help is properly directed towards those who really need it

## Feelings towards social tariffs

	Total
Good / fair / helpful idea	24%
Needs to go to the right people	8%
Negative opinion of scheme	5%
Everyone is struggling, not just low-income families/should be available to more people	4%
Water company profits should cover this	4%
Wary of scroungers	3%
Not only the customers responsibility to help people	3%
Government should cover cost	3%

Note: only codes 3%+ shown

"Fine if they are properly targeted. But often those most in need will not apply, especially the elderly. Will it all be done online, which excludes many eligible people? And how can you justify subsidising those who choose to spend their income on Sky subscriptions, cigarettes etc. rather than paying their water bill?"

**Female, aged 60-74**

"They seem to be well targeted and to have different types of support tailored to different circumstances. I had not been aware of the range of actions SES was taking and am very impressed. If it works as it seems to intend to do, this is a great service."

**Female, aged 60-74**

"I would be prepared to pay £5 a month extra if the water companies matched that amount and put it in a fund to help people struggling with their bills."

**Male, aged 45-59**

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## Conclusions and recommendations





# Conclusions

**Although the majority (67%) of customers are confident they will be able to afford their water bills over the next 12 months, confidence in being able to afford other bills is significantly lower, with one quarter (26%) not being confident they will be able to afford their energy bills.**

As might be expected, the cost of living is a significant factor in uncertainty around bill affordability, with almost two-fifths of those who are not confident they will be able to afford their water bill citing the cost of living as a factor when asked why.

**Over two-fifths (44%) are aware of priority services, and less than half (47%) are aware of financial support for water bills.** In addition, 12% are unaware of priority services but would like to know more, and 6% are unaware of financial support but feel they might need it. This points towards a customer base that is largely aware of their water company's activity, and mindful of support services that might be available to them.

**Three in ten (29%) agree with the principle of contributing towards customers who are struggling to pay.** And after having viewed all the information, one third (34%) think it's acceptable to use customer funding to increase support to customers.

**When customers are asked to consider how much they would be willing to contribute to the social tariff in future (if anything), around two thirds would be willing to contribute in some form.** However, significant differences between customer groups are evident, with female customers having a lower WtC threshold and C1C2 SEGs compared to AB. Additionally, those from higher income households tend to have a higher WtC.



# Qualitative conclusions

- Generally, people support the tariffs. People want to help others and are aware of other's needs.
- A recurring theme is people's concern for the lack of input, or lack of awareness of input, from SES Water. Some people are not happy about paying for the subsidies whilst SES seemingly are making a lot of profit and are able to pay shareholders a lot of money.
- Customers want to see more from SES. Suggestions include matching customers' contributions and increasing awareness around how SES supports its customers.
- Customers want to have more information about the tariffs – there needs to be clear communication about how much is being taken for the social tariff, and exactly how the money is split and shared to help others.
- Most are happy to help as they agree everyone who is capable should contribute towards helping those who are struggling. However, of those who are happy to help, some are not willing to contribute until they see more input from SES Water.
- Suggested improvements include looking more at 'why' people are struggling – one respondent queried whether the tariffs are really benevolent as they may serve as a 'band-aid' rather than helping solve the long-term issue at heart.
- There was also concern surrounding the criteria for social tariffs and whether there was the potential for the scheme to be taken advantage of. Concern was expressed towards the minority that may claim certain benefits, granting them access to social tariffs when they may not really *need* them. Are some customers benefiting from the scheme when they don't really need it.
- Most are in agreement that the amount being taken currently to help towards the tariff is very manageable and they would be able to pay more, however, they are not happy about paying any more until they feel SES Water is matching their contribution – much more evidence needs to be made public as to how SES are helping and why they also need their customers help.



# Recommendations and considerations

**Despite the significant pressures many are feeling on their household finances, there is adequate support to indicate that a majority of customers are willing to contribute towards additional cross-subsidy for social tariffs for the period 2025-30. The mean average WtC is 38p extra per month.**

**Nevertheless, although more individuals are willing to participate than not, apprehension regarding the future financial stability of households and the ability to manage bills is evident.** This concern is prevalent even among those who generally enjoy more favourable economic conditions. In light of this, SES Water should be aware that customers are becoming more focussed on their monthly expenses and may resist substantial bill hikes that could impact their ability to allocate funds for other necessities like food, rent, or mortgages.

**In addition, even among those who are supportive of the principle of social tariffs there remains some scepticism about how it is operated and who is eligible.** Therefore, it is crucial for SES Water to maintain transparent communication about its social tariff eligibility criteria and to demonstrate that assistance is being extended to those genuinely in need. Equally important is the need to communicate the contributions made by the water company and its shareholders.

**Those who are aware of Priority Services and/or financial support are more likely to find the proposals acceptable than those who are unaware.** Continuing to promote these services to as many customers as possible could help understanding and acceptance of social tariffs.

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## Appendix 1: Customer classification





# Customer classification

Do you pay directly for your water and wastewater?	Total
Yes	96%
No, it is covered by my rent	0%
I pay in another way	2%
Don't know	2%

Household Income	Total
Up to £539 per month/Up to £6,499 per year	4%
£540-£789 per month/£6,500-£9,499 per year	3%
£790-£1,289 per month/£9,500-£15,499 per year	11%
£1,290-£2,079 per month/£15,500-£24,999 per year	13%
£2,080-£3,329 per month/£25,000-£39,999 per year	12%
£3,330-£4,999 per month/£40,000-£59,999 per year	11%
£5,000-£7,499 per month/£60,000-£89,999 per year	7%
£7,500+ per month/£90,000+ per year	6%
Don't know	6%
Prefer not to say	27%

Ethnicity	Total
White	80%
Non-white	11%
Prefer not to say	9%

Working status	Total
Employed full time (30 hours or more per week)	33%
Retired	27%
Employed part time (under 30 hours per week)	12%
Self-employed	8%
Unable to work due to sickness or disability	9%
Looking after home/children full time	3%
Unemployed – seeking work	2%
Unemployed – other	1%
Student	0%
Other	2%
Prefer not to say	3%



# Customer classification

Bill amount	Total
<£13 per month (<£150 per year)	2%
£13-£16 per month (£151-£200 per year)	3%
£17-£20 per month (£201-£250 per year)	3%
£21-£24 per month (£251-£300 per year)	5%
£25-£28 per month (£301-£350 per year)	6%
£29-£32 per month (£351-£400 per year)	7%
£33-£37 per month (£401-£450 per year)	8%
£38-£41 per month (£451-£500 per year)	9%
£42-£45 per month (£501-£550 per year)	6%
£46-£50 per month (£551-£600 per year)	8%
£51-£54 per month (£601-£650 per year)	4%
£55-£58 per month (£651-£700 per year)	4%
£59-£63 per month (£701-£750 per year)	4%
£64-£67 per month (£751-£800 per year)	1%
£68-£71 per month (£801-£850 per year)	2%
£72-£75 per month (£851-£900 per year)	1%
£76-£79 per month (£901-£950 per year)	1%
£80-£83 per month (£951-£1,000 per year)	2%
>£83 per month (>£1,000 per year)	4%
Don't know	15%
Prefer not to say	4%

Long-term illness, health problem or disability	Total
Yes (self or others)	36%
No	55%
Prefer not to say	9%

Illness, health problem or disability require the use of extra water (only asked to those who say they or someone in their household has a long-term illness, health problem or disability)	Total
Yes	32%
No	60%
Prefer not to say	8%



# Customer classification

In receipt of benefits	Total
Universal Credit	16%
Disability living allowance/Personal Independence Payments	15%
Housing benefit	11%
Child tax credits	5%
Carers allowance	5%
Employment and Support Allowance/Incapacity benefit	4%
Working tax credits	3%
Pension Credit	2%
Attendance allowance	2%
Income support	1%
Jobseekers allowance	<1%
Don't know	1%
Prefer not to say	5%
None of these	61%
<b>NET: at least one</b>	<b>34%</b>

No of adults in household	Total
1	31%
2	47%
3	10%
4	6%
5+	<1%

Number of children in household	Total
Yes – dependent children (under 18)	30%
No dependent children	67%
Prefer not to say	3%

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## Appendix 2: Explanation of weighting





# Explanation of 'weighting'

When we conduct research we speak to a sample of customers and we use their responses as an **estimate** of the views of all customers. We interview a wide range of customers, from different regions, different ages and different socio-economic groups. As far as possible, we aim to interview a **representative sample** of customers so that the profile of the sample matches the profile of all customers but sometimes these profiles may have differences.

In order to mitigate the effects of any sample imbalances, we use **survey weighting**. This makes sure that we don't over or under-represent the views of certain groups of customer.



## How does weighting work?

Suppose we spoke to 200 customers and found that 45% of this sample were 'very satisfied' – could we be sure that 45% of all customers were very satisfied?

Suppose 150 of our sample were women (50% of whom were very satisfied) and 50 were men (30% very satisfied) making 45% very satisfied overall . BUT if we want a **representative** sample with half men and half women then we need to weight the sample so we have the equivalent views of 100 men and 100 women. We **up-weight** the views of the men (by doubling their responses) and **down-weight** the views of women. The weighted sample of 100 men and 100 women has 40% very satisfied which reflects the views of all customers.

The **advantages** of using weighted data are that the results more accurately represent the views of the typical customer and we ensure the views of hard-to-reach customers are still considered at an equal proportion within the total sample.



# Explanation of 'weighting'

A sample of customers' email addresses was provided by SES Water. There was no demographic information included, although Local Authority was included.

The total sample matches well with the local profile in terms of age, gender, SEG and Local Authority.

However, we see some deviation from the local profiles which are corrected through weighting.

A RIM weight is applied to the respondent data to ensure profiles match in terms of age, gender and SEG within the region and therefore reflect the views of a representative sample.

The weights applied to the data collected are checked through our best practice criteria.

The overall weighting efficiency of the Social Tariff data is **71.3%** - (efficiency runs from 0 to 100% - with 100% meaning that the sample matched the population completely in all measures - values **above 70%** mean that the weighting is fit for purpose). The efficiency here is above our cut off for fit for purpose.

- We also check that there are no extreme weights >5 (the largest weight=3.02 so we don't have any extreme weights >5).
- We also require that the system has less than 5% of weights>3 and here we also have 0% of weights >3.
- Finally, we require that the average weight value for any outlier weight (over 2) is less than 3. And here, there are no outlier weights.

So, the weighting system meets all of our requirements and is fit for purpose.



# Explanation of 'weighting'

## Weighting by Local Authority area

LA	SES Customers	Sample
Sutton	28%	27%
Reigate & Banstead	21%	22%
Tandridge	12%	12%
Mole Valley	12%	12%
Croydon	12%	14%
Epsom & Ewell	5%	5%
Other	10%	7%

Sample matches well in terms of LA – a very slight corrective weight is applied

## Weighting by gender

Gender	SES Customers	Local profile
Male	46%	51%
Female	54%	47%

Sample matches well in terms of gender – slight corrective weight applied

## Weighting by age

Age	SES Customers	Sample
30-44	37%	13%
45-59	29%	30%
60-74	22%	44%
75+	12%	13%

Sample is older than the SES profile – a corrective weight is applied

## Weighting by SEG

SEG	SES Customers	Local profile
AB	36%	52%
C1C2	48%	25%
DE	16%	10%

Sample is broadly in line with the SES profile – a corrective weight is applied

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## Appendix 3: Research guidance information





# Research guidance (I)

Ofwat have set out requirements for High Quality Research in their Customer Engagement Policy. All water company research and engagement should follow best practice and lead to a meaningful understanding of what is important to customers and wider stakeholders.

## Useful and contextualised

This research was conducted to consult customers to ascertain how much extra, if anything, they are prepared to pay on their water bill to help pay the bills of struggling customers during the next 5-year period.

## Fit for purpose

Pilot interviews were carried out prior to the full launch of fieldwork and pilot interviews included additional questions to check customer understanding of the materials and questions.

## Ethical

This research was conducted by DJS Research who are a member of the Market Research Society. Customers were reminded that they could be open and honest in their views due to anonymity and DJS and SES Water were subject to strict data protection protocols.

## Continual

Customer views will be directly fed into the plans for AMP8 which covers the next five-year period (2025-2030).

## Neutrally designed within the confines of the guidance

Every effort has been made to ensure that the research is neutral and free from bias. Where there is the potential for bias, this has been acknowledged in the report. Participants were encouraged to give their open and honest views and reassurances were given that SES Water were open to hearing their honest opinions and experiences.

## Independently assured

All research was conducted by DJS, an independent market research agency. SES Water reviewed all research materials ahead of fieldwork and prior to the survey being scripted and provided a check and challenge approach on the method and findings.

## Shared in full with others

The full final report and research materials will be shared internally with SES Water colleagues along with CCW.

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## Appendix 4: Stimulus



# EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL TARIFFS FOR WATER BILLS

We offer a suite of schemes and discounts to support our customers who are struggling financially. Currently we have 20,100 households on one of these schemes and by the end of 2024 we will increase this to over 25,000. These schemes include:

## Water Support

Water Support is a 50% bill reduction scheme funded by adding £6 to non-eligible customers' annual bills and underwritten by our shareholders who cover the remaining balance in excess of our customer contributions. Customers' eligibility for the scheme is based on their yearly gross household income. Less than £17,005 before any deductions, if they don't live in a London borough (£21,749 if they do live in a London borough).

## Breathing Space

A way to pause payments for customers who need help getting back on their feet if they have experienced a change in certain personal circumstances that has had an unexpected negative impact on income; such as illness, redundancy or bereavement. We will pause payments for up to 3 months.

## Direct Water Payments (third-party deductions)

Customers in receipt of certain benefits and have over £50.00 of debit on their account can combine their yearly bill with any other bill arrears into one weekly payment. This payment goes straight from their benefits. Water Direct has been designed with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

## Water Sure

A capped tariff for metered customers so they pay whichever bill is lower – the one based on their actual usage, or an average household bill. To qualify for this tariff customers need to be in receipt of certain benefits and have 3 children under 19 living with them or be suffering from or receiving treatment for a qualifying medical condition which means they need to use more water.

**For those customers who do not meet the qualifying criteria for our financial support schemes we offer flexible repayment plans. We are always willing to look at repayment of debt on an individual basis, depending on our customers financial situation.**

**Please note:** customers who are not in receipt of support from a social tariff already pay more for their water services to fund the cross subsidies. At the moment, SES Water support around **19,000** customers on social tariffs in this area, which means out of a customer's yearly bill for their water supply and waste water, £6 goes towards the cross-subsidy for social tariffs.



# SUPPORT+ SERVICES PROVIDED BY WATER COMPANIES

SES remains committed to delivering excellent customer service that is able to meet the needs of all of our customers. So what are we doing currently? We carry out regular surveys with customers to understand how helpful our range of extra services are (both financial and non-financial). Last year 81% of customers who were on one of our extra services felt that they were helpful. We also ask customers who aren't on them if they are aware of the support on offer. Currently, less than 40% of our customer base is aware of what is on offer, so we have more work to do. So what will we do?

## Community engagement

Our trained customer care team work in the community promoting the schemes and services on offer. This can be at community events, food banks, over 65 forums, family and children's centres as well as working with stakeholders and partners attending team briefings and open days.

We are also running research and have regular stakeholder sessions to ensure that the schemes design and access to it are suitable.

## Trusted partnerships

We have recently signed up our first trusted partner who will accept applications for our schemes on our behalf. Our new approach is intended to make the process of registering for our service and financial support schemes far simpler for our customers and this will also help increase awareness.

We'll work with the industry to share data about customers who require priority services with electricity and gas providers so that those that need extra help are identified and registered automatically with all their suppliers.

## Promotion

We will increase the communications we send out to our customers relating to the extra services on offer.



# ADDITIONAL HELP AVAILABLE

## Priority Services Register (PSR)

The PSR is free to join and helps utility companies like us look after customers who have health, access or specific communication needs to tailor our services to support household who need extra help. The PSR includes a range of additional services to make managing your account as easy as possible. We also offer extra support in the event of a water supply emergency.

### This includes:

- Individual notification in emergencies
- Braille, large print and audio/CD services
- Text Relay Service
- Priority support for home dialysis users and patients convalescing at home
- Password scheme to protect from bogus callers
- Nominated correspondent to speak on your behalf
- Financial assistance depending on different eligibility criteria
- Currently we have 20,500 customers on the PSR scheme and anticipate that by the end of 2024 this will have grown to 25,000.

## Recite me Accessibility and Language toolbar

This tool allows customers to change the accessibility settings to help you get the most out of our website. It includes options to adjust the ruler, screen mask, magnifier, margins and a dictionary. The toolbar also quickly and easily translates all our web content into over 100 languages, including 35 text to speech voices.

Over 600 customers a month use this tool to help them navigate our website.

## Bereavement life ledger

We have partnered with LifeLedger a free service that allows customers to close, freeze, switch or transfer billing and service related accounts following a bereavement quickly and easily and from one place.



# THE EXISTING SOCIAL TARIFF SCHEME...

## The current position

**19,000** customers supported

**£6** (£0.50 per month)  
bill contribution

**Please note:** customer bills currently include a contribution towards supporting customers through social tariffs.

This information details the current level of contribution to social tariffs by each customer per year.

# HOW THE SOCIAL TARIFF SCHEME WOULD WORK...

Here are some examples of how the expanded social tariff scheme would work in future.

The information relates to the number of additional customers that would be supported through customer contributions through social tariffs. At each level of additional support outlined, an additional yearly contribution amount is stated, alongside a per month figure.

## Example 1

**6,333**

additional customers supported

**Extra £2** (£0.17p per month)  
bill contribution

## Example 3

**22,169**

additional customers supported

**Extra £7** (£0.58p per month)  
bill contribution

## Example 2

**12,667**

additional customers supported

**Extra £4** (£0.33p per month)  
bill contribution



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**Appendix 5: Questionnaire**



## Questionnaire:



<b>Client name:</b>	SES Water
<b>Project name:</b>	Social Tariffs Research
<b>Job number:</b>	9263
<b>Methodology:</b>	Online (email invite survey)
<b>Version</b>	3

### Notes on this document

- Instructions in **CAPS** are for computer programming
- Instructions in *italics* are for interviewers
- **Bold** or underlined words are for emphasis within a question
- Different question types have different numbers:
  - Screener questions are labelled S01, S02, S03 etc.
  - Main survey questions are labelled Q01, Q02, Q03 etc.
  - Further demographic / classification questions are labelled C01, C02, C03 etc.
  - Number codes are included on each question for data processing purposes

### QUOTAS

Male	235	S03/1
Female	265	S03/2
AB	230	S04/1,2
C1	125	S04/3
C2	90	S04/4
DE	55	S04/5,6
18-29	45	S02/2
30-44	140	S02/3
45-59	145	S02/4
60+	170	S02/5,6

## Introduction

This survey is being conducted on behalf of SES Water. They are looking to consult a range of customers in order to understand their views about schemes to help people who are struggling to afford their water and wastewater bills; otherwise known as social tariffs.

This survey is being conducted by DJS Research, an independent market research company that follows the Market Research Society rules. Your responses are confidential and won't be attributed to you. Any personal information we ask for is only for statistical purposes and will not be passed back to our client or third parties for research, marketing or sales purposes, unless you give your express permission.

The survey will take around 10 minutes to complete.

DJS Research is a member of the Market Research Society and complies fully with the Data Protection Act and the Market Research Society's code of conduct. This ensures that your contact details are never passed on to any third parties without your permission. All data is aggregated and treated as private and confidential.

Would you be willing to take part?

**SCREENER QUESTIONS****INFO1.**

Thank you for taking part in this survey. First of all, we just need to check that you fit the criteria for the study.

Please click 'Next' to continue with the survey.

[INFO PAGE](#)

**S01. HIDE**

**Base: All respondents**

Who is your water services provider?

*Please choose one answer only.*

*SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Affinity Water		SCREEN OUT
2	Anglian Water		SCREEN OUT
3	Bristol Water		SCREEN OUT
4	Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water		SCREEN OUT
5	Essex & Suffolk Water (part of Northumbrian Water)		SCREEN OUT
6	Northumbrian Water		SCREEN OUT
7	Portsmouth Water		SCREEN OUT
8	Bournemouth Water (part of South West Water)		SCREEN OUT
9	SES Water		S02
10	South Staffs/Cambridge Water		SCREEN OUT
11	<a href="#">South East</a> Water		SCREEN OUT
12	Southern Water		SCREEN OUT
13	<a href="#">South West</a> Water		SCREEN OUT
14	Thames Water		SCREEN OUT
15	Wessex Water		SCREEN OUT
16	United Utilities		SCREEN OUT
17	Yorkshire Water		SCREEN OUT
18	Not connected to mains water		SCREEN OUT
85	Don't know		SCREEN OUT

**S02.**

**Base: All respondents**

Are you responsible, either jointly or solely, for paying your household water and wastewater bill?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Yes		
2	No		CLOSE
85	Don't know		CLOSE

**S03.**

**Base: All respondents**

Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Under 18		CLOSE
2	18-29		
3	30-44		
4	45-59		
5	60-74		
6	75+		
86	Prefer not to say		

**S04.**

**Base: All respondents**

Please select your gender.

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Male		
2	Female		
3	Other		
86	Prefer not to say		

**S05.**

**Base: All respondents**

Which of the following best describes the main income earner's occupation in your household? (If the main income earner is now retired, please select the category that best reflects their occupation **before** they retired.).

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE RESPONSE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Higher managerial, administrative or professional		
2	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional		
3	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional		
4	Skilled manual worker		
5	Semi or unskilled manual worker		
6	Casual worker, or dependant on state welfare		
86	Prefer not to say		

**S06.****Base: All respondents**

Do you have a water meter?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Yes		
2	No		
85	Don't know		

**Priority Services****Q01.****Base: All respondents**

Are you aware of the Priority Services Register (PSR) offered by SES Water which assists customers with specific and/or priority needs. The PSR is free to [join](#), and helps utility companies like us look after customers who have health, access or specific communication needs to tailor our services to support households who need extra help.

The PSR includes a range of additional services to make managing your account as easy as possible. We also offer extra support in the event of a water supply emergency. This includes:

- Individual notification in emergencies
- Braille, large print and audio/CD services
- Text Relay Service
- Priority support for home dialysis users and patients convalescing at [home](#)
- Password scheme to protect from bogus [callers](#)
- Nominated correspondent to speak on your [behalf](#)
- Financial assistance depending on different eligibility [criteria](#)

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE RESPONSE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1	Yes – I have heard of them but do not need these services		
2	Yes – I have signed up to them		
6	Yes – I have signed up on behalf of someone else (e.g. in the role of carer)		
3	Yes – I have heard of them, may need them, but haven't done anything		
4	No – but I would like to know more		
5	No – but I do not need them		
85	Don't know		

**Household bills****INFO2****Base: All respondents**

The next set of questions are about household bills.

**INFO PAGE****Q02.****Base: All respondents**

Which of the following best describes how confident you feel in being able to afford the following bills over the next 12 months; please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is not at all confident and 5 is very confident?

*Please choose one answer only per statement.***SINGLE CODE PER STATEMENT. ROTATE STATEMENT LIST**

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	1 - Not at all confident		
2	2 - Not very confident		
3	3 - Neither/nor		
4	4 - Quite confident		
5	5 - Very confident		
87	Not applicable		

Code	Statement list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Water bill		
2	Energy bill (gas and electric)		
3	Mobile phone bill		
4	Council tax		
5	Internet / broadband bill		
6	Mortgage		

**Q03.****Base: all not confident for water bill (Q02\_1/1,2)**

You said you are not confident that you will be able to afford your water bill over the next 12 months. Why do you say that?

*Please provide as much detail as possible. OPEN RESPONSE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
85	Don't know		

### Helping those struggling to pay water and wastewater bills

**Q04.**

**Base: All respondents**

And were you aware that SES Water offer support for customers who are struggling to pay their water bills?

Please choose one answer only. **SINGLE CODE**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1	Yes – I have had support with my bill in the past		
2	Yes – I am currently receiving support with my bill		
8	Yes – I have organised this on behalf of someone else (e.g. in the role of carer)		
3	Yes – I am aware, may need this, but haven't done anything		
4	Yes – but I do not need it		
5	No – but I think I might need it		
6	No – but I would like to know more		
7	No – but I do not need it		
85	Don't know		

**Q05.**

**Base: All code 1 or 2 at Q04**

Which of the following support services [IF CODE 1 AT Q04: were you using / in receipt of?] / [IF CODE 2 AT Q04: are you using / in receipt of?]

Please select all that apply. **MULTI CODE**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1	Reduced bill by 50%– <b>Water Support</b> (Applies to both Thames and SES bills) Thames version is called Water sure		
2	Payment match scheme for customers in debt to help them get out of it. – <b>Clear Start</b>		
3	<b>Breathing space</b> – temporary pause on payments (maximum of 90 days)		
4	Flexible payment plan		
5	<b>Water Direct</b> (using benefit payments)		
6	<b>Water Sure</b> – Allows customers to cap their bills in certain circumstances		
80	Other (please specify)	<b>OPEN</b>	
85	Don't know		
86	Prefer not to say		

**INFO3**

**Base: All respondents**

All water companies in England and Wales have schemes to give lower bills to some customers who might otherwise struggle to pay. These are called social tariff schemes. In line with Government rules these schemes are mostly funded by charging other households a bit more on their bills.

This is what's also known as a cross-subsidy. There are a number of examples of cross subsidies in day-to-day life. For example, concessionary tickets for children or pensioners to attractions (e.g. the cinema, theme parks etc.). Another example is the price of a stamp which is the same within the UK whatever distance the letter or parcel travels. At different points in our lives, we are all likely to have helped fund cross-subsidies, and to have received help from them. The image below gives you some more information about social tariffs and cross-subsidies in the water sector, please review this image before continuing.

**INFO PAGE**

**INSERT STIMULUS 1**

**Q06.**

**Base: All respondents**

As an SES Water customer, to what extent do you agree or disagree with paying a contribution towards supporting customers who are struggling to pay their bill? Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is completely disagree and 5 is completely agree.

Please choose one answer only. **SINGLE CODE**

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	1 - Completely disagree		
2	2 - Slightly disagree		
3	3 - Neither agree/nor disagree		
4	4 - Slightly agree		
5	5 - Completely agree		
85	Don't know		

### Proposed support

**INFO4**

SES Water want to eradicate water poverty in the region. Water poverty is defined as when a household spends more than 3% of their disposable income, after housing costs **is** mortgage/rent, on their water and sewerage bills.

SES Water anticipate that more customers may find themselves in financial difficulty as the cost-of-living increases and would like to respond by providing help for more customers, now and into the future.

**INSERT STIMULUS 2 and 3**

#### INFO5

##### Base: All respondents

When answering the next set of questions, please be aware that over the next few years many household costs may increase due to inflation. These household costs include energy, food and fuel prices. It is currently expected that the rate of increase in prices will slow from the middle of this year.

Your water bill may also be affected by how much other costs increase each year such as the company's running costs e.g., energy, wages etc, money invested to improve day to day water services and long-term investments.

[INFO PAGE](#)

#### HOW THE SCHEME WOULD WORK

#### INFO6

##### Base: All respondents

In order to support more customers who are struggling to pay through social tariffs in future, SES Water would need to increase the contributions made by other customers to pay for this. Customers already pay an amount on their bills as a cross-subsidy to support those on a social tariff.

[INFO PAGE](#)

#### INSERT STIMULUS 4&5 – Current and future contributions

We'd now like to ask you about the additional amount you would be willing to contribute – if anything – in order to make the proposed changes to expand the number of customers on social tariff schemes.

Please also note that if SES Water want to help more customers, or increase this discount in the future, they would have to consult with customers again.

##### Base: Online respondents:

[Please click 'Next' to continue with the survey.](#)

#### Q07.

##### Base: All respondents

Would you be willing to contribute **[INSERT RANDOM FIGURE HERE... FROM STARTING POINTS TABLE BELOW]** extra per month moving forward, in order to increase the number of customers helped on social tariff schemes?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Yes		
2	No		

**DP NOTE:** IF 'YES' RESPONSE TO Q07, REPEAT QUESTION USING CONTINGENT VALUATION SPREADSHEET UNTIL RESPONDENT [FITTER ANSWERS](#) NO OR YES 3 TIMES.

IF 'NO' RESPONSE TO Q07, REPEAT QUESTION AND DECREASE IN ~~xxx~~ INCREMENTS UNTIL RESPONDENT ANSWERS YES OR NO 3 TIMES.

#### RANDOMISE STARTING POINT EVERY INTERVIEW

IF RESPONDENT SELECTS YES 3 TIMES, ASK THEM WHAT THE MAXIMUM THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE PER YEAR IS: SEE Q08

IF RESPONDENT SAYS NO 3 TIMES OR SAYS NO TO (LOWEST AMOUNT), ASK THEM WHAT WOULD THE MAXIMUM YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE PER MONTH BE, IF ANYTHING: SEE Q09

#### Q08.

##### Base: All respondents who reach a maximum or minimum in bidding process at Q07

We understand that you **would not be willing/would be willing** to contribute **[pull through last amount from Q07] per month** towards the proposed changes to the social tariff. What is the maximum additional amount **per month** you would be willing to contribute?

*Please enter the additional amount you would be willing to pay in the box below.*

**OPEN TEXT RESPONSE WITH LOGIC FUNCIONS FOR MONETARY AMOUNTS.**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
85	Don't know ( <i>do not read out</i> )	-	

#### Q09.

##### Base: All respondents who have not reached a maximum or minimum amount

We understand that you would be willing to contribute **[pull through last amount from Q07] per month** towards the proposed changes to the social tariff but not as much as **[pull through last amount said 'no' to]**. What is the maximum additional amount **per month** you would be willing to contribute?

*Please enter the additional amount you would be willing to pay in the box below.*

**OPEN TEXT RESPONSE WITH LOGIC FUNCIONS FOR MONETARY AMOUNTS.**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
85	Don't know ( <i>do not read out</i> )	-	

#### Q010.

##### Base: All respondents who give valid numeric answer at Q08 or Q09 (Q08\_1>=0 OR Q09\_1>=0).

**If zero:** You said that you aren't willing to contribute anything towards the proposed changes to the social tariff. In as much detail as possible, please tell us why you say that.

**If an amount is stated:** You've said that you would be willing to contribute **[insert stated amount] extra** per month. In as much detail as possible, please tell us why you say that.

*Please include as much detail as possible. OPEN TEXT RESPONSE.*

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
85	Don't know ( <i>do not read out</i> )		

**Q011.**

Overall, based on all the information you have seen about the changes to the social tariff, how acceptable do you think it is for SES Water to use customer funding to increase the support to customers?  
Please answer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is completely unacceptable and 5 is completely acceptable.

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	1 - Completely unacceptable		
2	2 - Slightly unacceptable		
3	3 - Neither acceptable/nor unacceptable		
4	4 - Slightly acceptable		
5	5 - Completely acceptable		
85	Don't know		

**Q012.**

**Base: All respondents who coded 1-5 at Q011**

Why do you find it **INSERT ANSWER FROM Q011?**

*Please include as much detail as possible. OPEN RESPONSE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
85	Don't know		

**Q013.**

**Base: All respondents**

Based on what you have seen about the social tariffs in place today. What are your feelings towards them in terms of the help they offer and to whom?

*Please provide as much detail as possible. OPEN RESPONSE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
85	Don't know		

**AND FINALLY...**

**INFO7**

**Base: All respondents**

We'd now like to find out a little more about you.

The following questions *help* SES Water to understand how views vary between people in different circumstances.

**Base: Online only**

**Please click 'Next' to continue with the survey.**

**INFO PAGE**

**C01.**

**Base: All respondents**

Do you pay SES Water directly for your water?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Yes		C02
2	No, it is covered by my rent		C03
80	I pay in another way ( <i>specify</i> )	OPEN	C03
85	Don't know		C03

**C02.**

**Base: ASK IF C01=1**

What is the total amount your household pays for both water and sewerage services?

Please ensure you pick the band that reflects your household bill only. Please do not include any water costs relating to a commercial business. Water and sewerage bills are typically £300-£800 a year. Please note your answer is only used to check that we have spoken to a range of customers with different bill amounts.

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Less than £13 per month	Less than £150 per year	
2	£13 - £16 per month	£151 - £200 per year	
3	£17 - £20 per month	£201 - £250 per year	
4	£21 - £24 per month	£251 - £300 per year	
5	£25 - £28 per month	£301 - £350 per year	
6	£29 - £32 per month	£351 - £400 per year	
7	£33 - £37 per month	£401 - £450 per year	
8	£38 - £41 per month	£451 - £500 per year	
9	£42 - £45 per month	£501 - £550 per year	
10	£46 - £50 per month	£551 - £600 per year	
11	£51 - £54 per month	£601 - £650 per year	
12	£55 - £58 per month	£651 - £700 per year	
13	£59 - £63 per month	£701 - £750 per year	
14	£64 - £67 per month	£751 - £800 per year	
15	£68 - £71 per month	£801 - £850 per year	
16	£72 - £75 per month	£851 - £900 per year	
17	£76 - £79 per month	£901 - £950 per year	
18	£80 - £83 per month	£951 - £1,000 per year	
19	More than £83 per month	More than £1,000 per year	
85	Don't know		
86	Prefer not to say		

**C03.****Base: All respondents**

Which of the following best describes your current working status?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE ONLY*

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1	Self-employed		
2	Employed full time (30 hours or more per week)		
3	Employed part time (under 30 hours per week)		
4	Student		
5	Unemployed – seeking work		
6	Unemployed – other		
7	Looking after home/children full time		
8	Retired		
9	Unable to work due to sickness or disability		
80	Other ( <i>please write in</i> )	OPEN	
86	Prefer not to say		

**C04.****Base: All respondents**

Does anyone in your household currently receive any of the following benefits?

*Please choose all that apply. MULTI CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Housing benefit		
2	Jobseekers allowance		
3	Working tax credits		
4	Child tax credits		
5	Employment and Support Allowance/Incapacity benefit		
6	Pension Credit		
7	Universal Credit		
8	Disability living allowance/ Personal Independence Payments		
9	Income support		
10	Attendance allowance		
11	Carers allowance		
87	None of these	EXCLUSIVE	
85	Don't know	EXCLUSIVE	
86	Prefer not to say	EXCLUSIVE	

**C05.****Base: All respondents**

Including yourself, how many adults aged 18 and over are there in your household?

*Insert the number of people aged over 18 in your household in the box below.***SINGLE RESPONSE.**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1		NUMERIC. MAX 10.	
86	Prefer not to say		

**C06.****Base: All respondents**And, do you have any dependent children (under 18) living at home with you?*Please choose one answer only***SINGLE RESPONSE.**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1	Yes – dependent children (under 18 in the household)		C07
2	No – dependent children under 18 in the household		C08
86	Prefer not to say		C08

**C07.****Base: Code 1 (yes) at C06**

How many children do you have living at home with you in the following age ranges?

*Please include the number of dependent children in each of the age ranges below. For any that are not applicable, please enter '0'.***MULTI RESPONSE - NUMERIC.**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1	Pre-school age (not yet started primary school)	NUMERIC	
2	Primary school age	NUMERIC	
3	Secondary school age	NUMERIC	
4	Post secondary school age (post GCSEs)	NUMERIC	

**C08.****Base: All respondents**

Could you tell me which of the following ANNUAL income bands your household falls into? Please take account of the income of all those in the household (before tax and national insurance) and include any pensions, benefits, or extra earnings.

*Please choose one answer only*

**SINGLE CODE**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
	Per month	Per year	
1	Up to £539	Up to £6,499	
2	£540 - £789	£6,500 - £9,499	
3	£790 - £1289	£9,500 - £15,499	
4	£1290 - £2079	£15,500 - £24,999	
5	£2080 - £3329	£25,000 - £39,999	
6	£3330 - £4999	£40,000 - £59,999	
7	£5000 - £7499	£60,000 - £89,999	
8	£7500 and over	£90,000 and over	
85	Don't know ( <i>do not read out</i> )		
86	Prefer not to say ( <i>do not read out</i> )		

**INFO8**

The following questions help SES Water to ensure that their research is accessible and inclusive for all their customers.

**INFO PAGE**

**C09.****Base: All respondents**

How would you describe your ethnicity?

*Please choose one answer only*

**SINGLE CODE**

Code	Answer list	Scripting notes	Routing
1	White (this includes English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, Irish and any other White background)		
2	Mixed/Multiple (this includes White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian and any other mixed/multiple ethnic background)		
3	Asian/Asian British (this includes Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and any other Asian background)		
4	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (this includes African, Caribbean and any other Black/African/Caribbean background)		
80	Other ethnic group		
86	Prefer not to say		

**C010.****Base: All respondents**

Does anyone in your household have a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities or the work they can do?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Yes		
2	No		
86	Prefer not to say		

**C011.****Base: ASK IF CODE 1 AT C010**

And does this require them to use extra water?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Yes		
2	No		
86	Prefer not to say		

**C012.****Base: All respondents**

Depending on the results of this survey we may want to recontact some customers to conduct a telephone interview lasting 20 minutes about some of their answers. We'd pay respondents £35. Would you be happy to be contacted?

*Please choose one answer only. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Yes		
2	No		

**C014. If yes at C012 (C12/1)**

Thank you for agreeing to be recontacted. Depending on the level of interest we cannot guarantee that everyone who expresses an interest will be contacted. In the space below, please provide your preferred contact details

*Please enter your name, email address and telephone number in the boxes below. SINGLE CODE*

Code	Answer list	Scripting Notes	Routing
1	Name	OPEN	
2	Email address	OPEN	
3	Telephone number	OPEN	

**C015.****Base: All respondents**

Thank you for taking part in this survey. If you would like more information about the support available to customers please visit <https://seswater.co.uk/your-account/paying-your-bill/help-paying-your-bill>

You've now reached the end of the survey - thank you very much for your time.

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## Appendix 6: Discussion guide



9263\_ SES Water  
Follow up Depth Discussion Guide (30 mins)  
Version 1

(I) Introduction		7 mins
<b>Brief explanation of the purpose of the research</b>	<p><i>Moderator to explain the nature of the research.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I work for a company called DJS Research, we are an independent market research company and today we are working on behalf of [SES Water]</li> <li>Following on from your participation in an online survey about SES Water's plans for social tariffs for customers in the period 2025-2030, we would like to conduct some follow up research with customers to understand more about your current circumstances, and your associated opinions and attitudes towards social tariffs for water customers.</li> <li><i>Moderator to reassure respondents about confidentiality / GDPR compliance.</i></li> <li>Feedback will be summarised into a report along with other research, we won't pass names/specific details of who we have spoken to back to our client.</li> <li>There are no right and wrong answers; we are just interested in your views, <u>opinions</u> and ideas.</li> <li>Brief explanation about audio/video recording information – we may use anonymised quotes &amp;/or video clips in our report to illustrate the research findings for our client, but these will not be attributed to you personally.</li> </ul>	
<b>Introductions</b>	<p><i>Moderator to invite respondent(s) to introduce themselves.</i></p> <p><i>I'd first of all like to spend some time understanding more about you...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell me a bit about yourself; who you live with; working status; hobbies</li> <li>What are your main concerns in life <u>at the moment?</u></li> <li>How are you feeling about your household finances currently and what's coming in versus what's now going out? [MODERATOR: refer to response from quant in relation to affordability of water bills, <u>e.g.</u> in the survey you took part in you mentioned that you are <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span> in being able to afford your water bills over the next 12 months. Is that still the case?]             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How has your outlook of your finances changed over the past 6 to 12 months or so? Better? Worse? How so?</li> <li>[IF CUSTOMER HAS CONCERNS] Which bills or expenses are of most concern/have impacted you most?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

(II) Re-cap on social tariffs		8 mins
<b>Re-cap on social tariffs</b>	<p>Thank you for your responses so far. I'd now like to move on to talk about social tariffs and cross-subsidies. In your own words, could you briefly tell me a bit about your understanding of what social tariffs and cross-subsidies are? (MODERATOR: If necessary, stress that there are no right or wrong answers)</p> <p><b>MODERATOR, IF REQUIRED, READ OUT:</b></p> <p>All major water companies in England and Wales have schemes to give lower bills to some customers who might otherwise struggle to pay. These are called social tariff schemes. In line with Government rules these schemes are mostly funded by charging other households a bit more on their bills.</p> <p>This is what's also known as a cross-subsidy. There are <u>a number of</u> examples of cross subsidies in day-to-day life. For example, concessionary tickets for children or pensioners to attractions (<u>e.g.</u> the cinema, theme parks etc.). Another example is the price of a stamp which is the same within the UK whatever distance the letter or parcel travels. At different points in our lives, we are all likely to have helped fund cross-subsidies, and to have received help from them.</p> <p>Before you took part in the survey on behalf of SES Water, were you aware of the support available to customers who are struggling to pay their bills? IF SO: what were you aware of? How did you become aware of it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>Generally speaking,</del> to what extent do you support the principle of social tariffs and cross-subsidies? Are there any areas / aspects of life where you think social tariffs are not appropriate? (PROBE ON WHAT ANY WHY). <u>And</u>, any areas where you think social tariffs and cross-subsidies are particularly beneficial? (PROBE ON WHAT AND WHY)</li> </ul> <p>I'd now like to spend a minute or so going over some of the information you were presented with in the online survey you completed.</p> <p><b>MODERATOR: If conducting over Zoom/Teams show slide. If conducting over the phone read out info on slide.</b></p> <p>MODERATOR: Show or read out from slide:</p> <div style="background-color: black; height: 20px; width: 100%; margin: 5px 0;"></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having reviewed this information again, how do you feel about the social tariff that is currently in place for SES Water? PROBE ON:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of customers supported (is it too many, not enough or <u>about</u> right?). Why?</li> <li>Eligibility criteria (does it include the right people? Are there any groups that are included but shouldn't be? Any groups that aren't included but should be?)</li> <li>Amount paid by customers (is it too much, not enough or <u>about</u> right?). Why?</li> <li>Level of support for customers in receipt of social tariffs (is it too much, not enough or <u>about</u> right?)</li> </ul> </li> <li>To what extent do you support or oppose SES Water including a charge in bills to contribute towards supporting customers through social tariffs?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why do you say that? (PROBE FULLY)</li> <li>IF DON'T FULLY SUPPORT: what, if anything, would make you more supportive of a social tariff on your water bill? (PROBE ON: communication / information / detail on who is supported / safeguards in place to avoid abuse of the scheme(s) etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

(III) Social tariffs 2025-2030	12 mins
<b>Social tariffs 2025-2030</b>	<p>Still thinking about social tariffs, I'd like to spend some time now thinking about SES Water's future plans for supporting customers who are struggling to afford their water bills through a social tariff</p> <p><b>MODERATOR: If conducting over Zoom/Teams show slide. If conducting over the phone read out info on slide.</b></p> <p>MODERATOR: Show or read out from slide:</p> <p style="background-color: #00FF00; text-align: center;">[REDACTED]</p> <p><b>MODERATOR: For next section refer to WTP figure from sample</b></p> <p>When responding to the survey, you said [IF WTP is £0: you would not be willing to contribute to the social tariff] / [IF WTP =&gt; £0.01: you would be willing to contribute [WTP amount from sample per month to the social tariff]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IF WTP is £0:</b> why wouldn't you be willing to contribute anything extra to the social tariff? PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o To what extent do your own financial circumstances affect your response?</li> <li>o Are there any circumstances in which you would be willing to contribute more? IF SO; What/when?</li> <li>o What, if anything could [SES Water] do to make you more likely to be willing to contribute something to a social tariff in future? PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need to improve other areas of service first (e.g. water quality, customer service etc)</li> <li>▪ Lack of trust in [SES Water] generally... anything they could do to build / develop trust?</li> <li>▪ Lack of knowledge on what bills contribute to</li> <li>▪ More investment / money should come from [SES Water] before they ask customers to contribute</li> <li>▪ The groups / people that the social tariffs are targeting / supporting aren't right. Help should be focused elsewhere / on other groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>IF WTP is =&gt; £0.01:</b> why would you be willing to contribute up to WTP amount from sample extra per month to the social tariff? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Do you support the principle of social tariffs generally? IF SO; why do you support social tariffs in principle? Any circumstances which haven't been mentioned previously when you wouldn't be willing to contribute? (MODERATOR PROBE FULLY)</li> <li>o To what extent do your own financial circumstances affect your response?</li> <li>o What, if anything could [SES Water] do to make you more likely to be willing to contribute more to a social tariff in future? PROBE ON: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need to improve other areas of service first (e.g. water quality, customer service etc)</li> <li>▪ More information/knowledge of what bills contribute to</li> <li>▪ More investment / money should come from [SES Water] before they ask customers to contribute</li> <li>▪ The groups / people that the social tariffs are targeting / supporting aren't right. Help should be focused elsewhere / on other groups</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>As a customer, how important is it for you to know / be aware of the amount you are contributing to social tariffs in your water bills? Please answer on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important at all and 5 is extremely important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Why do you say that?</li> </ul> <p>What else, if anything, would you like to hear / know from [SES Water] in relation to social tariffs? Where / how should they deliver this information?</p>

(IV) Experience and perceptions of water supplier.	5 mins
<b>Experience and perceptions of water supplier</b>	<p>For the final section, I'd like to spend a bit of time talking about your experience and perception of [SES Water]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your main expectations of [SES Water] as your water provider? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o IF NEEDED: e.g., Service, reliability, value for money, environment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What experience do you have of them?</li> <li>• Is there anything about the service [SES Water] provides that you would like to see them improve?</li> <li>• How would you describe your relationship with SES Water?</li> <li>• Do you feel like a valued customer of SES Water? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Why/why not?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What words would you use to describe how you feel about [SES Water]?</li> <li>• And how would you rate the value for money you receive for your water services provided by SES Water? Please do this on a scale from 1-10 with 1 being the lowest value for money and 10 the highest. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Why did you give this rating?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### Any final questions

**Thank & Close. Remind participant they will receive their 'thank you' for taking part within 1 working week (£35 gift voucher to be sent via email)**