



# Public Attitudes to Water Use in Wales

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## Summary

### 1. Research aims and methodology

- 1.1 The aim of this research was to collect data regarding public attitudes to water use in Wales. There was a particular focus on attitudes towards water metering and water recycling, perceived barriers and motivations to reducing water use and current behaviours to reduce water use.
- 1.2 The research may be used to inform further, more in-depth research. It may also be used to direct the development of policy relating to water efficiency in the future.
- 1.3 The data collection was completed by the Beaufort Omnibus Survey team. The Omnibus sample is designed to be representative of the adult population resident in Wales aged 16 and over. Interviews are conducted face to face in the homes of respondents utilising CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) technology. Fieldwork took place between 16 September and 15 October 2019. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed and analysed. The survey primarily consisted of multiple choice questions with a small number of open-ended questions.

### 2. Key findings

- 2.1 Forty two percent of survey respondents reported that they were taking some action to reduce their water use. Over three quarters of respondents stated that they agreed to the statement 'Everyone needs to do what they can to reduce the waste of water' (85%). Over half agreed to the statement 'I save water even if it requires additional effort' (55%).
- 2.2 Over half (56%) of respondents stated that they had made a conscious decision to use less water. When asked why they had made this decision the most common response was 'it seemed like the right thing to do', with 62% agreeing with this statement.
- 2.3 Respondents were asked what would encourage them to use less water. The most common response was 'Nothing' with 44% selecting this response. When respondents were asked what would prevent them from saving more water, the most common response was 'Do all I can already to save water' (43%). Other common responses were 'Don't know what more I can do to save water' (21%), 'Not enough information about water scarcity' (20%), 'Don't have enough information about my personal water usage' (19%) and 'Not enough support and advice on how to make changes' (19%).

- 2.4 Respondents were asked how often they engaged in a series of behaviours to reduce their water consumption. The behaviour which had the greatest number of 'always' or 'sometimes' responses was turning off the tap while doing the dishes (84%), followed by turning off the tap while brushing teeth (82%).
- 2.5 The majority of respondents stated that if products which use water, such as washing machines, dishwashers or kettles displayed information on their water efficiency, this would encourage them to use more water efficient products (73%). However, only 22% stated they would pay more for more water efficient products.
- 2.6 Thirty percent of respondents stated they had a water meter. Those respondents who reported having a water meter in their home were asked whether this encouraged them to use water more carefully, 82% of respondents agreed with this statement. Respondents who had a water meter were then asked whether they thought all households should be required to have a water meter. The majority of respondents agreed with this statement (79%).

### **3. Conclusions**

- 3.1 Overall, most respondents agreed with statements relating to the importance of saving water. Many respondents had made a conscious decision to use less water, and the majority were engaging in behaviours to reduce their water consumption. This implies that saving water is something that is seen as valuable and worthwhile.
- 3.2 In a number of the questions relating to whether water meters lead to a reduction in water use, or a greater awareness of the amount of water used, the majority of respondents felt they did. This indicates that water meters could potentially be an effective way of encouraging people to use less water.
- 3.3 The second most common response to a question on what prevents respondents from saving water, was not knowing what more they could do to reduce their water use. The third and fourth most common responses also related to a lack of information about the importance of saving water, or an individual's water use. This suggests that providing additional information both about the importance of saving water, and about how to do this, may be beneficial in encouraging a reduction in water use.
- 3.4 The cost of water appears to play a key role in many people's decision-making about reducing their water use. The second most commonly referenced factor that would cause respondents to use less water was if the cost of bills went down if they were to do so, or if there were financial incentives to use less water. When asked about whether they would purchase more water efficient products, the majority of respondents stated that they would only do so if this saved them money.
- 3.5 Sixty-two per cent of respondents reported that they felt reducing water use was the 'right thing to do'. However, when asked what would encourage them to use less water, many respondents cited financial savings. This disparity highlights a potential disconnect between the respondents attitudes to saving water and their behaviours around reducing water use.
- 3.6 Finally, there appears to be some regional variation in responses to questions relating to the reasons for and barriers to reducing water use. This information could be used to target communication strategies around water use and what individuals can do to save water to the relevant regions.

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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