

YouGov / River Action Survey Results

Sample Size: 2142 Adults in the UK
Fieldwork: 9th - 10th July 2026

	Vote in 2024 GE						EU Ref 2016		Gender		Age				Socio-economic classification (NSSEC)		
	Total	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Reform UK	Green	Remain	Leave	Male	Female	18-24	25-49	50-64	65+	Higher	Intermediate	Routine
Weighted Sample	2142	373	531	193	225	120	758	763	1035	1107	225	880	531	506	724	480	640
Unweighted Sample	2142	330	579	195	248	141	845	761	932	1210	176	752	626	588	849	485	496
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Who do you think water companies should be most accountable to?

Customers	47	63	42	41	57	40	43	58	50	45	28	40	54	62	44	52	54
Local communities	11	7	13	11	13	12	12	10	13	10	18	12	9	11	13	11	9
Environmental regulators	15	14	17	19	12	21	18	11	12	17	17	16	16	10	18	15	11
The Government	15	9	19	19	11	15	17	13	18	13	20	18	13	11	16	14	15
Investors / shareholders	1	1	2	1	2	0	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	1	0
Don't know	10	6	7	10	6	13	9	8	6	14	14	14	7	5	8	8	11

Which of the following, if any, best describes what you think water companies should spend their profits on? Please choose one.

Investing in water infrastructure	44	55	42	59	47	36	50	49	50	38	26	36	51	59	49	45	42
Reducing customers' bills	28	25	29	12	33	16	23	30	26	30	24	35	25	21	24	29	32
Improving environmental performance	17	11	19	19	8	39	19	10	14	19	34	15	16	13	18	14	15
Building financial reserves for the future	2	2	2	4	4	1	2	3	2	2	0	3	2	3	2	4	2
Returning profits to investors	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	0	1
Rewarding their staff	1	0	1	0	0	4	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	1	1
Something else	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1
Don't know	6	5	5	4	5	3	4	5	4	8	9	9	5	2	5	5	7

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	Country				Region in England				
	Total	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	North	Midlands	London	South
Weighted Sample	2142	1793	111	178	60	493	341	246	713
Unweighted Sample	2142	1778	138	180	46	505	342	182	749
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Who do you think water companies should be most accountable to?

Customers	47	48	44	43	42	46	55	45	48
Local communities	11	11	15	13	17	13	6	12	11
Environmental regulators	15	15	13	14	10	16	15	16	14
The Government	15	15	18	16	14	13	14	16	16
Investors / shareholders	1	1	1	1	4	1	0	2	1
Don't know	10	10	9	13	13	10	11	9	9

Which of the following, if any, best describes what you think water companies should spend their profits on? Please choose one.

Investing in water infrastructure	44	44	37	49	40	41	40	45	47
Reducing customers' bills	28	28	32	25	19	32	31	28	24
Improving environmental performance	17	16	23	15	24	17	16	16	16
Building financial reserves for the future	2	2	0	3	4	1	2	2	3
Returning profits to investors	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Rewarding their staff	1	1	0	1	0	1	3	0	1
Something else	1	1	1	0	2	2	1	0	1
Don't know	6	6	6	6	11	5	6	7	6

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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Generally speaking, do you think water companies should act more in the public interest, more in the private interest, or should it be a balance of both?

Should act entirely in the public interest, with no concern for private interests	43	32	51	45	42	60	48	42	48	39	35	41	47	46	48	41	40
Should act largely in the public interest, with some concern for private interests	34	41	32	34	35	28	34	36	31	37	39	33	32	36	34	36	33
TOTAL SHOULD ACT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST	77	73	83	79	77	88	82	78	79	76	74	74	79	82	82	77	73
Should be a balance of both public and private interests	17	22	13	17	16	6	14	16	16	17	17	18	16	15	13	18	21
Should act largely in their private interests, with some concern for public interests	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Should act entirely in their private interests, with no concern for public interests	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL SHOULD ACT IN THEIR PRIVATE INTERESTS	1	1	1	2	2	0	2	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Don't know	5	3	3	3	5	6	3	5	4	6	8	6	5	3	4	4	5

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Generally speaking, do you think water companies should act more in the public interest, more in the private interest, or should it be a balance of both?

Should act entirely in the public interest, with no concern for private interests	43	44	42	36	37	45	44	46	44
Should act largely in the public interest, with some concern for private interests	34	34	40	29	33	36	33	28	36
TOTAL SHOULD ACT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST	77	78	82	65	70	81	77	74	80
Should be a balance of both public and private interests	17	16	13	28	19	16	15	20	15
Should act largely in their private interests, with some concern for public interests	1	0	2	1	2	1	0	0	1
Should act entirely in their private interests, with no concern for public interests	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL SHOULD ACT IN THEIR PRIVATE INTERESTS	1	0	3	2	2	1	1	0	1
Don't know	5	5	4	6	9	3	7	6	5

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	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

You previously said that water companies should act entirely, or largely, in the public interest. Which of the following, if any, do you think would be most effective in ensuring water companies work in the public interest rather than private interests? Please select up to three.

[Asked only to those who said that water companies should act entirely or largely in the public interest; n=1707]

Legally requiring profits to be reinvested	55	56	59	53	54	65	57	57	56	53	53	53	59	55	58	57	52
Banning bonuses for senior leaders	39	44	39	26	50	32	36	48	34	43	21	38	38	49	36	41	44
Greater transparency over spending and performance	37	40	35	39	39	35	37	36	34	41	50	35	36	37	37	36	37
Independent regulation	33	43	29	41	30	36	37	32	33	33	31	33	34	33	35	29	34
More local control and accountability	27	25	24	33	32	23	26	28	26	29	32	27	25	30	26	24	31
Government oversight	24	20	32	34	11	27	28	17	27	21	32	30	21	14	31	21	15
Stronger customer representation in decision-making	18	19	16	14	20	17	17	19	17	18	19	17	17	20	17	17	20
Other	4	0	5	6	3	10	6	2	6	2	2	4	5	4	6	3	2
Don't know	5	3	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	8	6	3	3	3	4	6

*Any percentages calculated on bases fewer than 100 respondents do not represent a wide enough cross-section of the target population to be considered statistically reliable. These figures should not be used.

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Legally requiring profits to be reinvested	55	55	56	54	39	53	58	55	56
Banning bonuses for senior leaders	39	40	41	29	29	43	40	36	39
Greater transparency over spending and performance	37	38	45	33	22	36	40	36	38
Independent regulation	33	33	35	35	17	30	29	32	38
More local control and accountability	27	27	33	31	22	28	26	23	28
Government oversight	24	25	17	22	8	23	23	29	26
Stronger customer representation in decision-making	18	17	21	20	19	20	16	16	17
Other	4	4	2	5	3	4	3	5	3
Don't know	5	4	6	5	11	3	6	7	3

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