

Ofwat SIM Survey

2012/13 Annual Report



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J2400

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Introduction and Objectives

Ofwat uses the SIM survey to measure and track the quality of service delivery of all 21 water companies in the UK, based on every aspect of customers' direct experiences with them.

The overall objective of the research is to provide a robust, comparable measure of how satisfied consumers are with the end-to-end handling and resolution of an actual recent billing, water or sewerage issue by their water company.

A cross-section of customer experiences is required, including all major reasons for contact across all contact routes.

Robust data is needed on an annual basis to provide:

- Comparative performance between different water companies
- Trends of performance for individual water companies
- Comparative performance of the water sector as a whole versus energy, telecoms, broadband and council service providers.

Data for 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 will be used to support decisions on financial incentives in 2014.

Sample Design and Structure

The vast majority of water company enquiries are billing related. However, the survey sample is split evenly between Billing and respective Operational contacts, ensuring that all contact types are treated with equal importance.

For the purpose of comparing overall satisfaction between companies, water/sewerage company data is weighted to 50% billing/25% water operations/25% waste water operations. Water only company data is weighted 50% billing/50% water operations.

Direct comparisons can be made between companies with regard to billing and respective operational results.

Per Company	Per annum (800)	Per wave (200)
Water & Sewerage Companies (WASCs)		
Billing	267	66/67
Water Service Operations	267	66/67
Waste Water Service Operations	266	66/67
Water Only Companies (WOCs)		
Billing	400	100
Water Service Operations	400	100

Sampling Principles

The samples from each of the 21 water companies should be comparable:-

- Samples should be drawn from the same time period, to minimise any risk of any seasonal or short-term factors (fluctuating demand or weather)

Ideally, each wave's sample should be based on a single week's worth of contacts

Many of the smaller companies (and a few of the bigger companies) include up to 8 weeks' worth of contacts to provide sufficient volume in each category:

- Affinity East, Affinity Southeast, Bournemouth, Cambridge, Dee Valley, Portsmouth and South West Water provided insufficient water ops sample to achieve the full quotas on some waves.
- Nevertheless, sufficient sample information was provided to provide an annual sample size of at least 550 interviews (see page 8 for full details), which remains a robust sample, with results accurate to $\pm 4.2\%$.

Fieldwork is completed within a tight timescale following query resolution. A short timescale keeps the issue fresh in the consumer's mind.

All **resolved** customer contacts from the sampling period should be included (including contacts by telephone, online, in writing and by visit) to provide a representative view of the customer experience.

Sample Management

The minimum information requirement was telephone number, reason for contact and date of resolution, with contact name and domestic/commercial flag highly desirable. The following sample management process is followed:-

Data files merged

Companies can provide up to 10 separate data files

Sample files de-duplicated

De-duplicate on both telephone and account numbers. Other unusable records removed

1 in n sample procedure

Ensures a representative sample is extracted for the survey (in terms of commercial/domestic customers, contact channel etc.)

Missing data tele-numbered

Maximises representativeness of the sample

Sample files de-duplicated

Tele-matched telephone numbers may be duplicates of those already in sample

Fieldwork

Research was carried out using CATI, from McCallum Layton's Telephone Unit in Leeds.

Each water company's interviews were undertaken by multiple interviewers (an average of 62 per quarter) to reduce the possibility of interviewer bias.

The interview averages 12 minutes in length.

Industry comparison questions were asked in Q3 to contrast perceptions of the water industry to other, similar service providers.

Demographic and socio-economic questions were asked in Q4. While the sample was broadly representative of the UK as a whole, younger age-groups were slightly under-represented compared to older age groups.

The survey is conducted on a quarterly basis; key dates for each wave in 2012/13 are below:-

Wave	Sampling Week	Fieldwork Dates
Q1 2012/13	23rd - 29th April 2012	2nd - 28th May 2012
Q2 2012/13	2nd - 8th July 2012	11th July - 1st August 2012
Q3 2012/13	12th - 18th November 2012	21st November - 15th December 2012
Q4 2012/13	25th February - 3rd March 2013	6th - 28th March 2013

Companies with limited sample may have had a sampling period beginning up to 3 weeks earlier than the sampling week (ie 4 weeks before fieldwork commences) and, in some cases, running through the fieldwork period also.

Performance Indicator and Weighting

The survey produces a single comparable performance indicator (Q60) based on customers' overall satisfaction with their experience.

- A mean score is reported between 1 and 5, where 1 means 'very dissatisfied' and 5 means 'very satisfied'

To enable comparisons of results between companies, WASC data is weighted to 50% billing/25% water operations/25% waste water operations.

Additional weighting is required for Bristol Water and Wessex Water as both companies' billing enquiries are handled by the same call centre. In total, 167 billing interviews are obtained from customers contacting this call centre each quarter.

	800 interviews per company pa	
Per Company pa	Unweighted base	Weighted base
Water And Sewerage Companies		
Billing	267	400
Water service operational	267	200
Waste water service operational	266	200
Water Only Companies		
Billing	400	400
Water service operational	400	400

Total Interviews Completed 2012/13

Total Number of Interviews Completed in 2012/13	
Affinity Water Central	804
Affinity Water East	533
Affinity Water South East	674
Anglian Water	809
Bournemouth Water	742
Bristol Water	1,081*
Cambridge Water	679
Dee Valley Water	763
Northumbrian Water	809
Portsmouth Water	762
Severn Trent Water	818
South East Water	806
South Staffs Water	795
South West Water	751
Southern Water	809
Sutton & East Surrey Water	803
Thames Water	808
United Utilities Water	810
Welsh Water	804
Wessex Water	1,216*
Yorkshire Water	811
Total	16,213

At the 95% confidence level, these sample sizes provide overall levels of accuracy for individual percentages of at least:

16,800: ± 0.75%

800: ±3.5%

267: ±6.0%

200: ±6.9%

For significant differences between subgroups, the following thresholds apply at the 95% confidence level:

16,800 vs 16,800: ± 1.1%

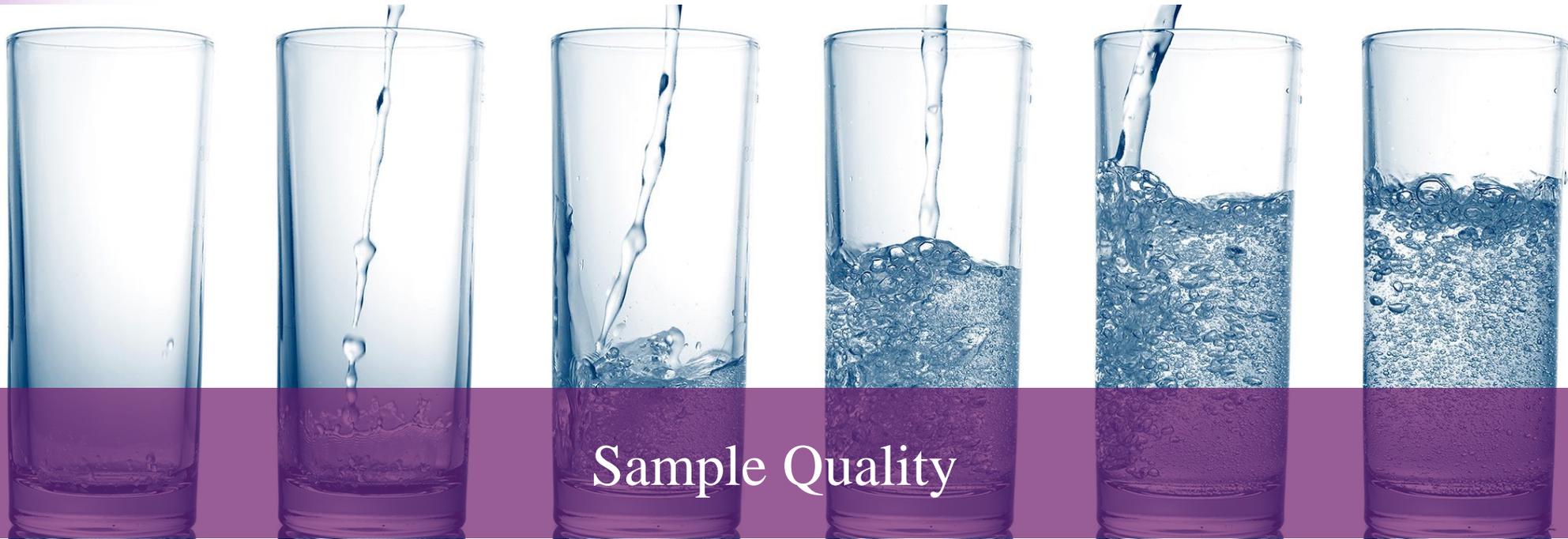
800 vs 800: ±4.9%

267 vs 267: ±8.5%

267 vs 200: ±9.2%

200 vs 200: ±9.8%

* NB The same Bristol/Wessex shared billing interviews appear next to both Bristol and Wessex in the table.



Sample Quality

Total Number of Individual Records Sent

The number of useable records provided by each water company varies markedly depending on their size. In general, WASCs are able to provide a higher volume of resolved contacts than WOCs as they have a larger customer base.

WASC Records Received	
Anglian	73,383
Northumbrian	109,523
Severn Trent	194,156
South West	75,149
Southern	66,955
Thames	228,180
United Utilities	111,734
Welsh	14,044
Wessex*	6,746
Yorkshire	155,171

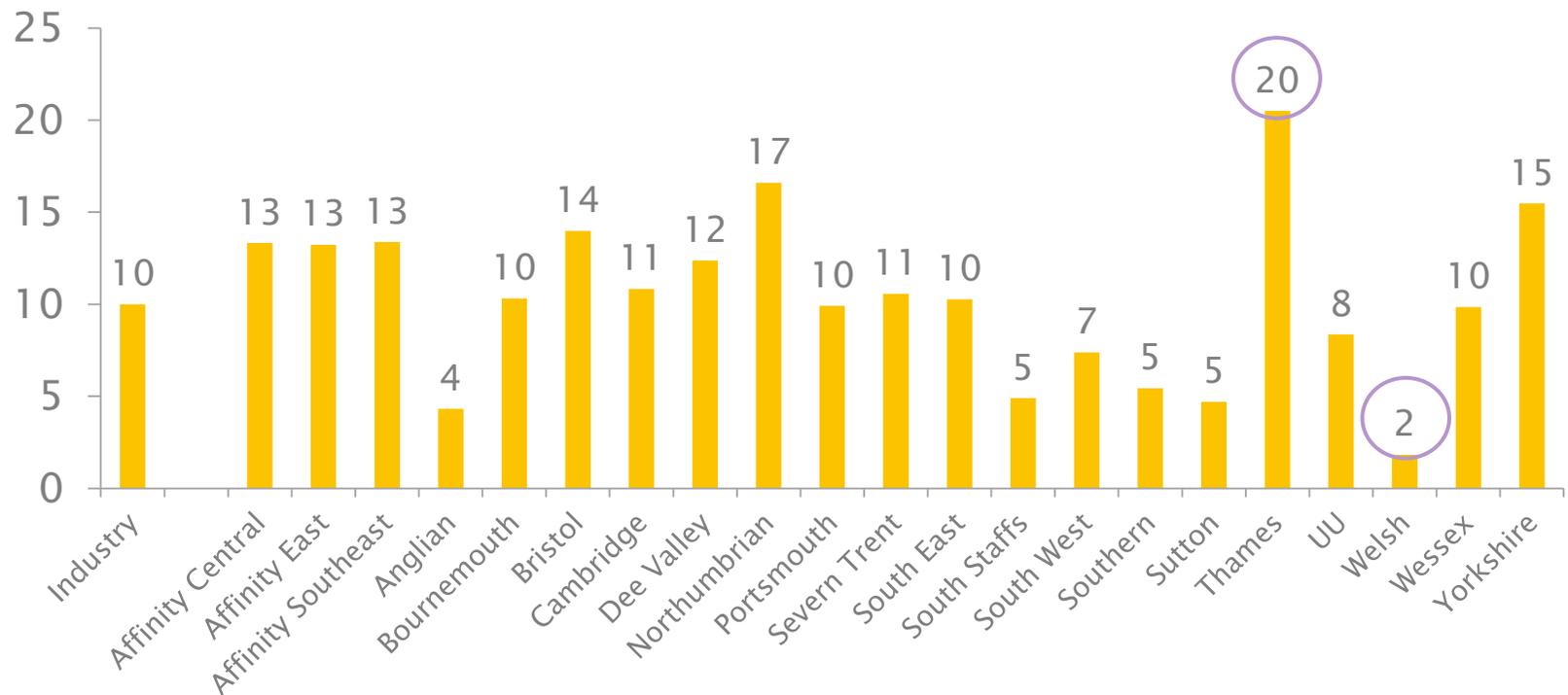
WOC Records Received	
Affinity Central	58,553
Affinity East	5,670
Affinity Southeast	5,483
Bournemouth	9,400
Bristol*	84,106
Cambridge	8,593
Dee Valley	11,293
Portsmouth	14,683
South East	39,055
South Staffs	29,478
Sutton and East Surrey	15,773

Total number of resolved contacts sent by each company. Duplicates removed.

*Bristol and Wessex Billing contacts are all shown as Bristol sample records for the purpose of this analysis.

Proportion of Duplicates in Sample

Thames Water have the highest proportion of duplicate records in the sample they provide. South East and UU have greatly reduced the number of duplicates provided this year. Duplicate records are not necessarily a sign of poor quality data, they may simply be a by-product of the way in which some systems are configured.

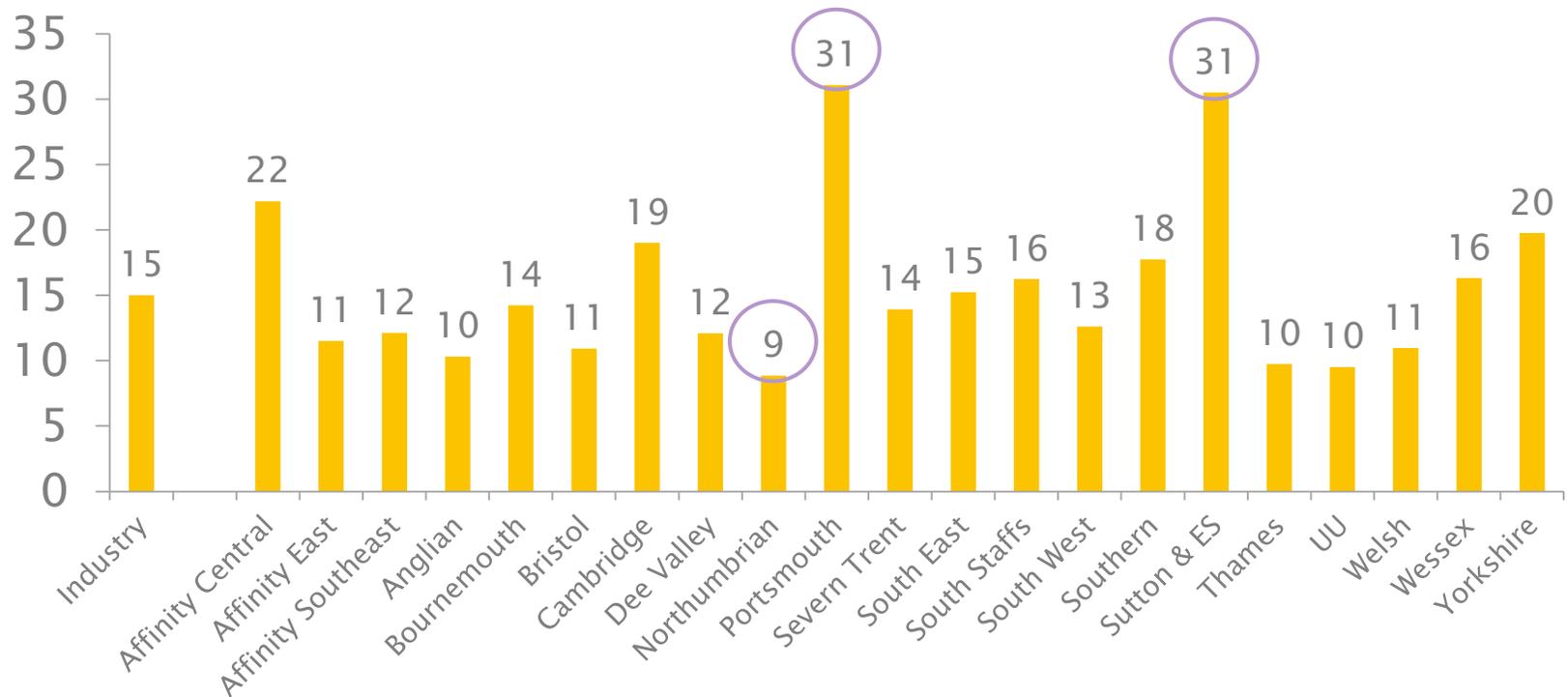


Proportion Sent for Number Matching

The proportion of records without a useable telephone number indicates the quality of sample and how up-to-date company records are.

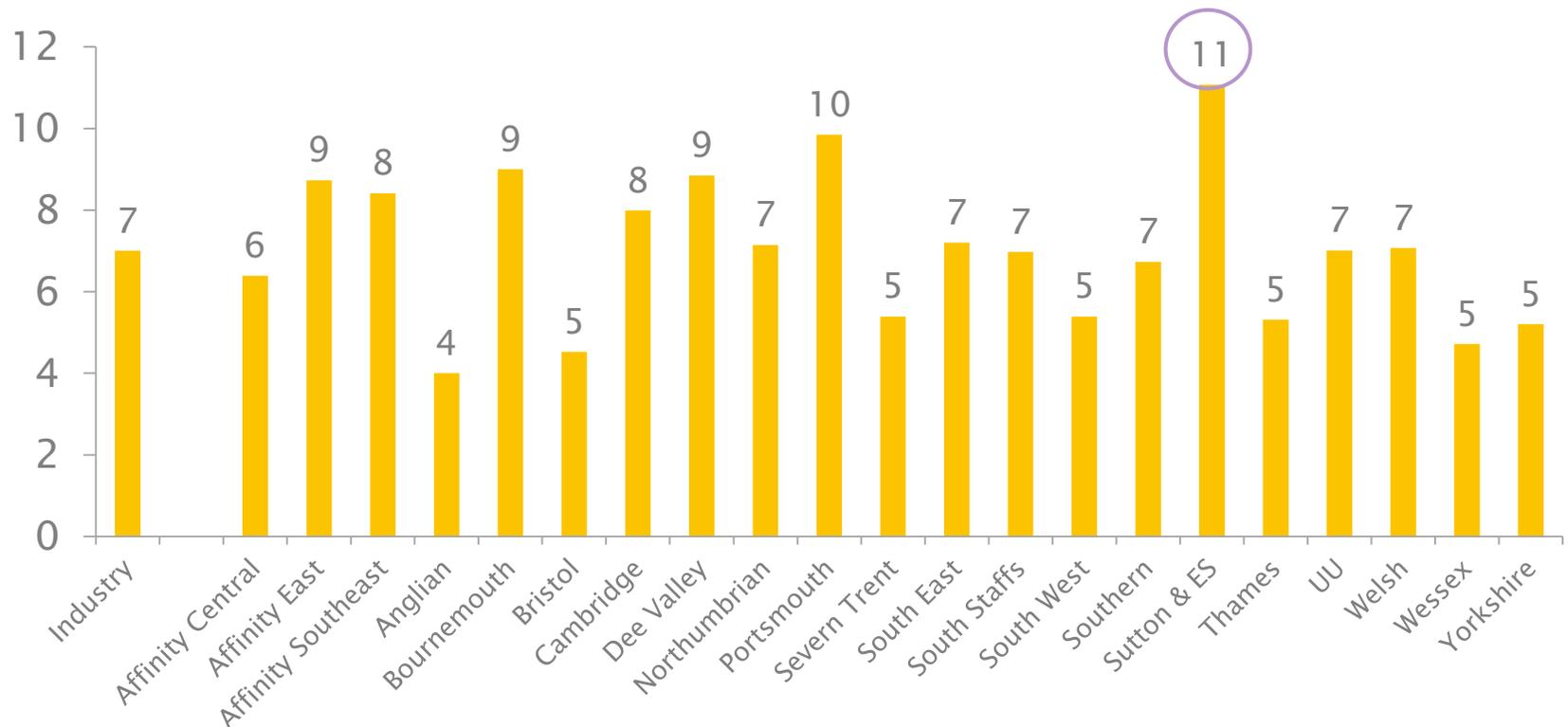
Around one-third of Portsmouth and Sutton and East Surrey sample has to be sent for number matching as telephone numbers were not present or incomplete.

Northumbrian Water's sample contained the highest proportion of telephone numbers.



Proportion of Unobtainable Numbers

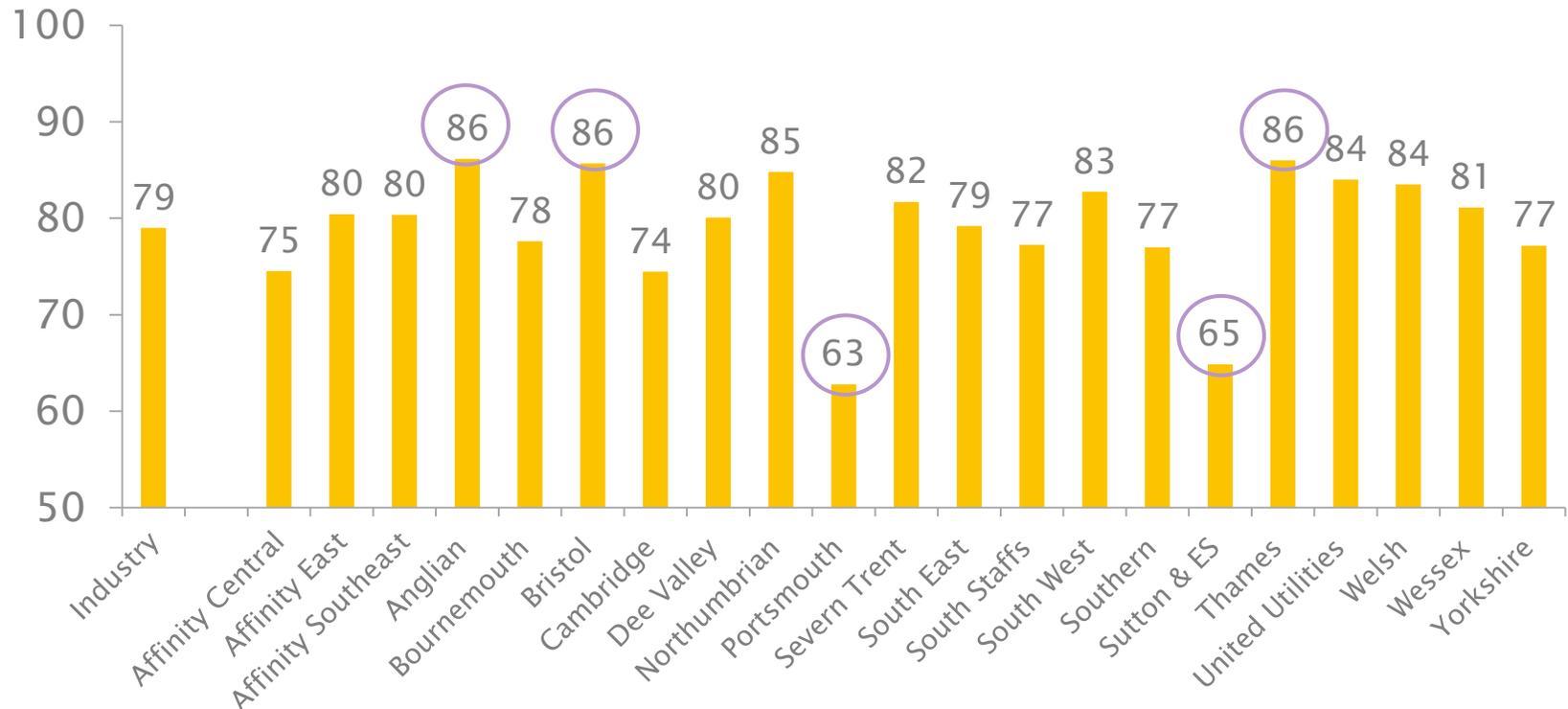
Sutton and East Surrey's sample has the highest proportion of unobtainable numbers.



Figures indicate % of unobtainable records in loaded sample; those records that visually appear correct but are not in service when dialled. This indicates how up-to-date and accurate customer records are.

Total Proportion of Useable Records

The proportion of useable records across the industry in 2012/13 was the same as 2011/12. Anglian, Bristol and Thames had the highest proportion of useable records in the sample.



Figures indicate % of useable records after removing duplicates, those records without telephone numbers which cannot be tele-matched and unobtainable numbers. The higher the figure, the more representative the sample is.

Sample Information

We ask companies to provide a lower level reason for contact for each sample record. Interviewers can use the lower level reason for contact to guide respondents on to the correct call issue.

However, the usefulness of this data varies by company. Some reasons for contact are clear and act as good prompts. Others are poor, contain company specific codes or jargon, and are of little help to interviewers.

We are keen to encourage water companies to improve the quality of the sample they provide us with to help interviewers prompt respondents more effectively.

Interviewers are asked if the reason for contact given by the respondent matches that provided by the water company. When the information provided by water companies is unclear, interviewers code it as “Impossible to tell”.

Examples of poor quality lower level reasons for contact, include:

- Unable to identify
- Supply status info/request
- General
- Private Issue

Proportion of completed interviews where lower level reason was unclear

Affinity Water Central	8%
Affinity Water East	14%
Affinity Water South East	11%
Anglian Water	15%
Bournemouth Water	8%
Bristol Water	9%
Cambridge Water	8%
Dee Valley Water	7%
Northumbrian Water	2%
Portsmouth Water	9%
Severn Trent Water	9%
South East Water	3%
South Staffs Water	3%
South West Water	7%
Southern Water	4%
Sutton & East Surrey Water	5%
Thames Water	7%
United Utilities Water	11%
Welsh Water	13%
Wessex Water	9%
Yorkshire Water	6%



Industry Key Annual Results

Notes To Charts

In the following charts, **significant differences** in results are indicated by a letter next to the higher of the figures being compared corresponding to the letter in the column description.

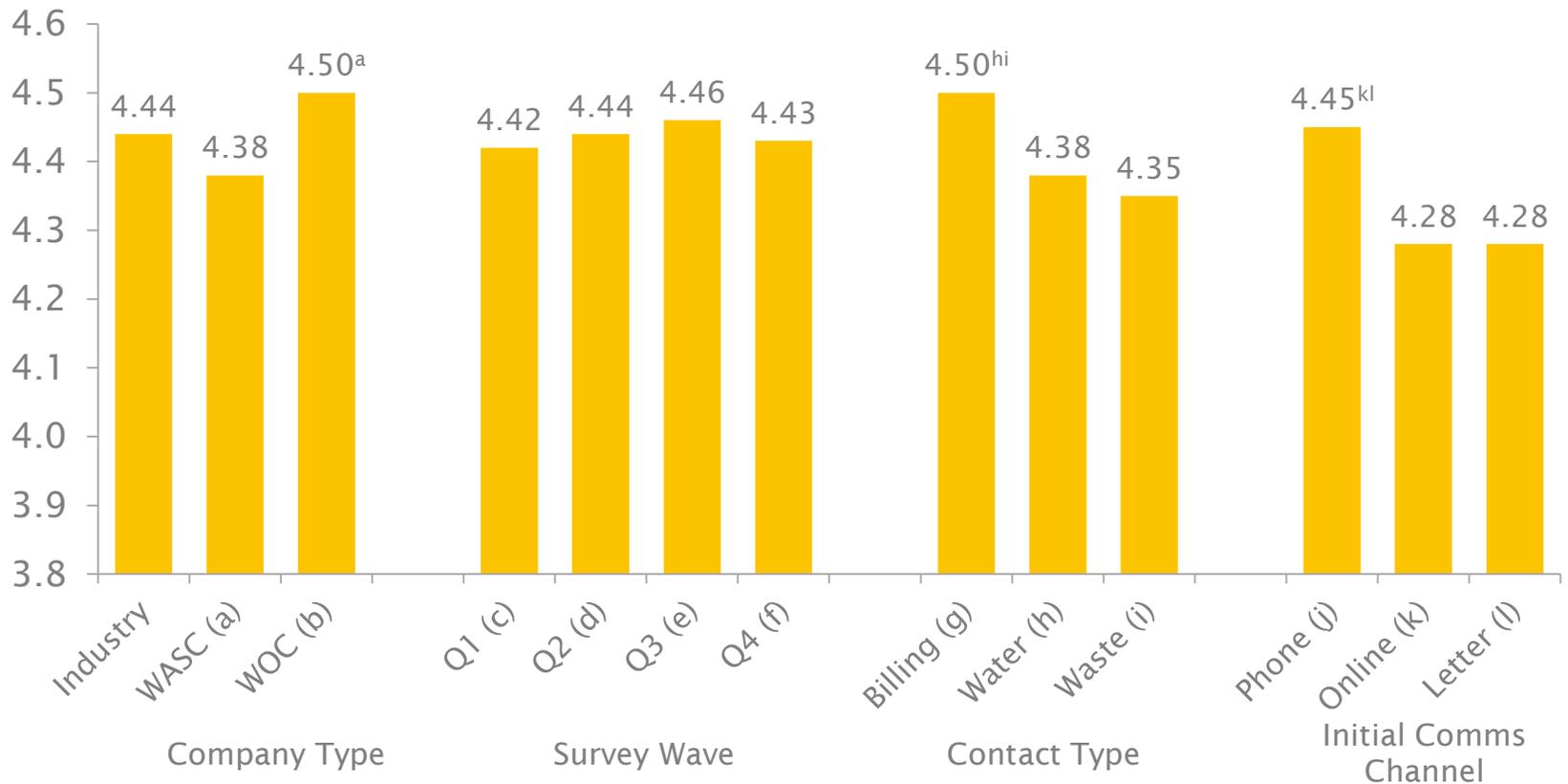
For example, on Page 18, the letter 'a' next to the result for WOCs signifies that WOC customers are on average significantly more satisfied with query handling than WASC customers (column labelled 'a').

The first three charts indicate weighted overall satisfaction scores (to allow a direct comparison between WOCs and WASCs). The remaining results are unweighted.



Overall Satisfaction with Query Handling (Q60 - Weighted)

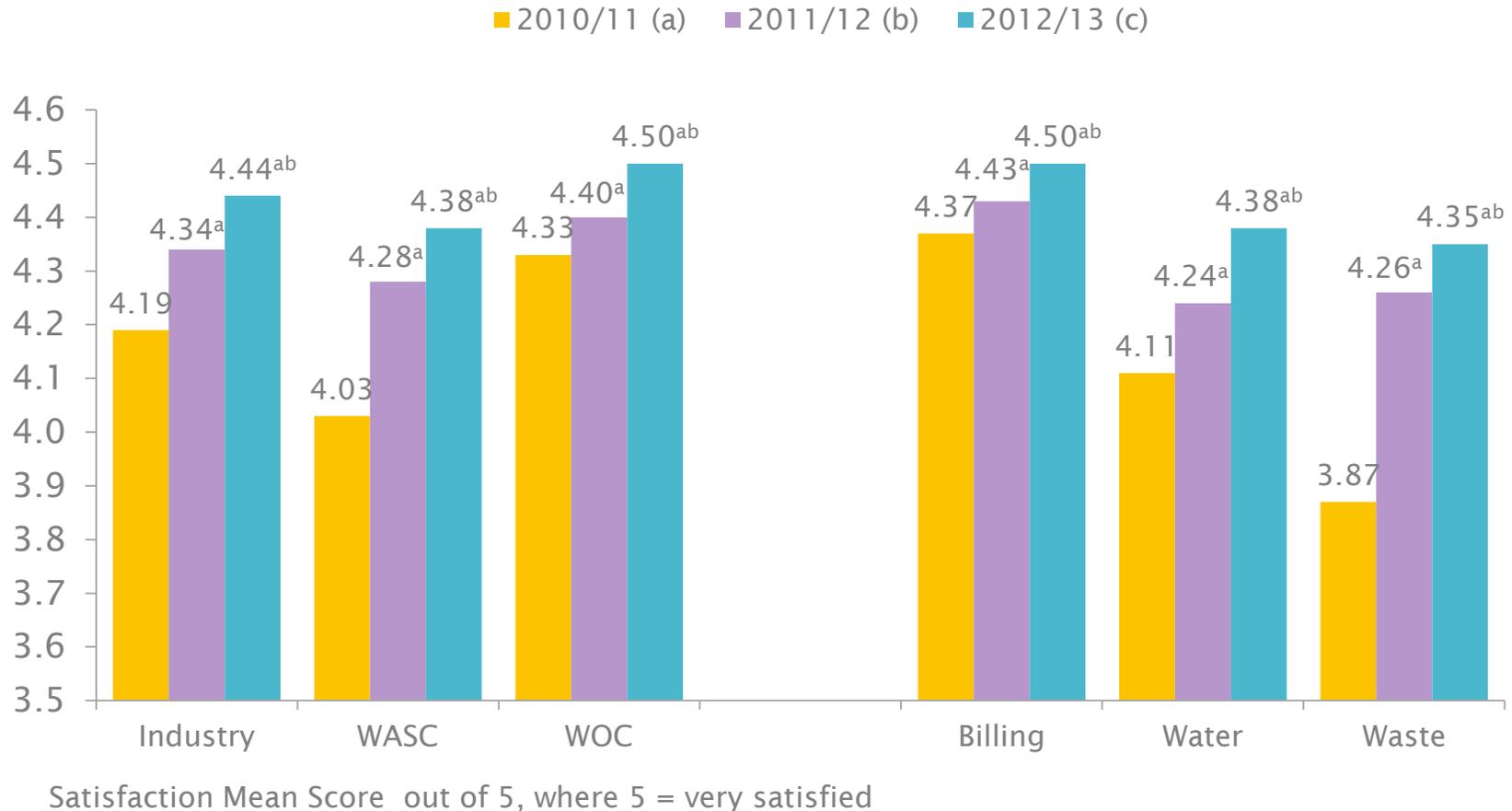
WOCs continue to perform significantly better than WASCs overall. Customers tend to be more satisfied with handling of Billing enquiries than Water or Waste ones.



Satisfaction Mean Score out of 5, where 5 = very satisfied

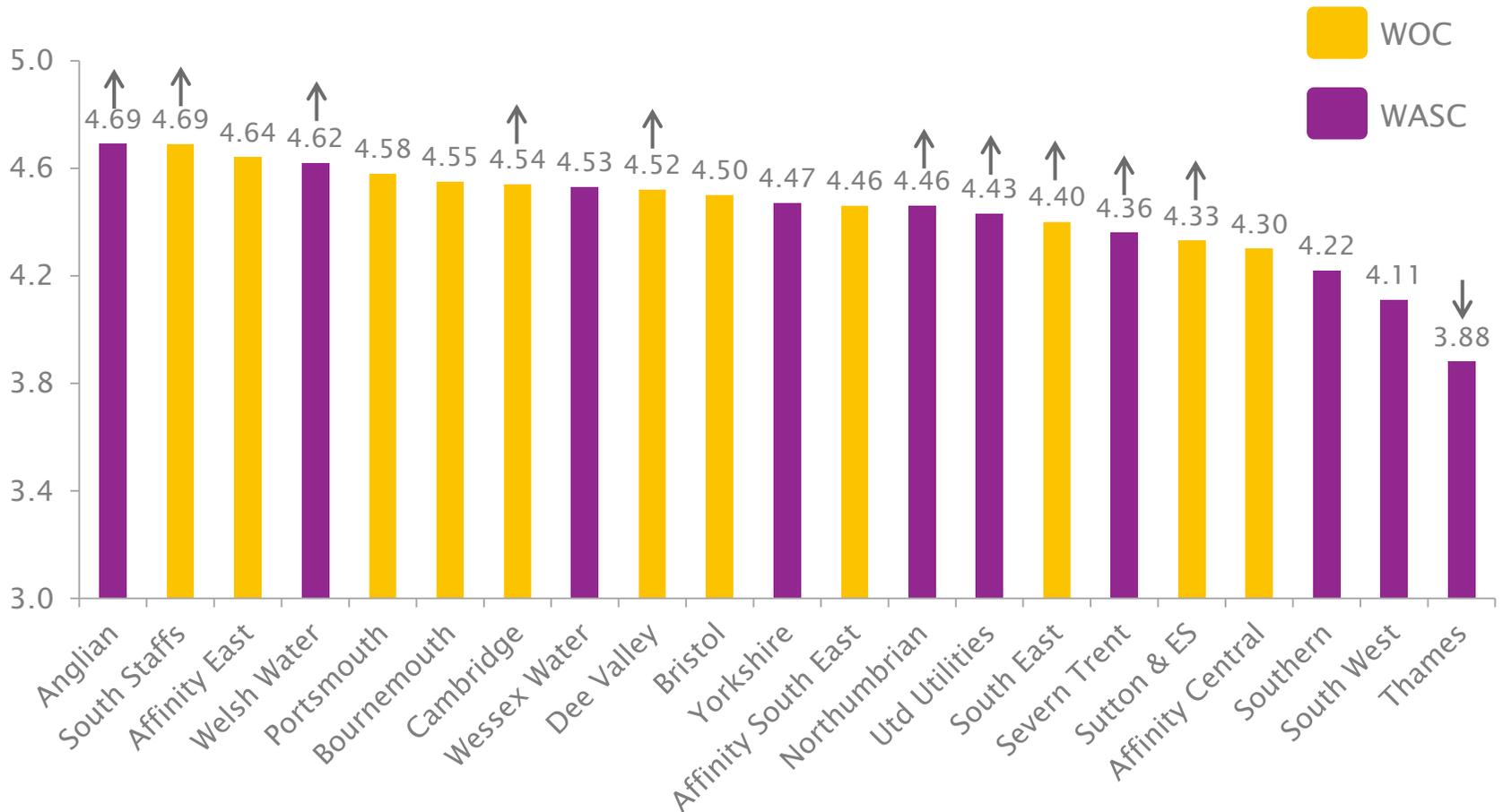
Overall Satisfaction with Query Handling (Q60 - Weighted)

There has been a significant improvement in satisfaction across the industry as a whole since 2010/11. The improvement has been consistent across all company and contact types.



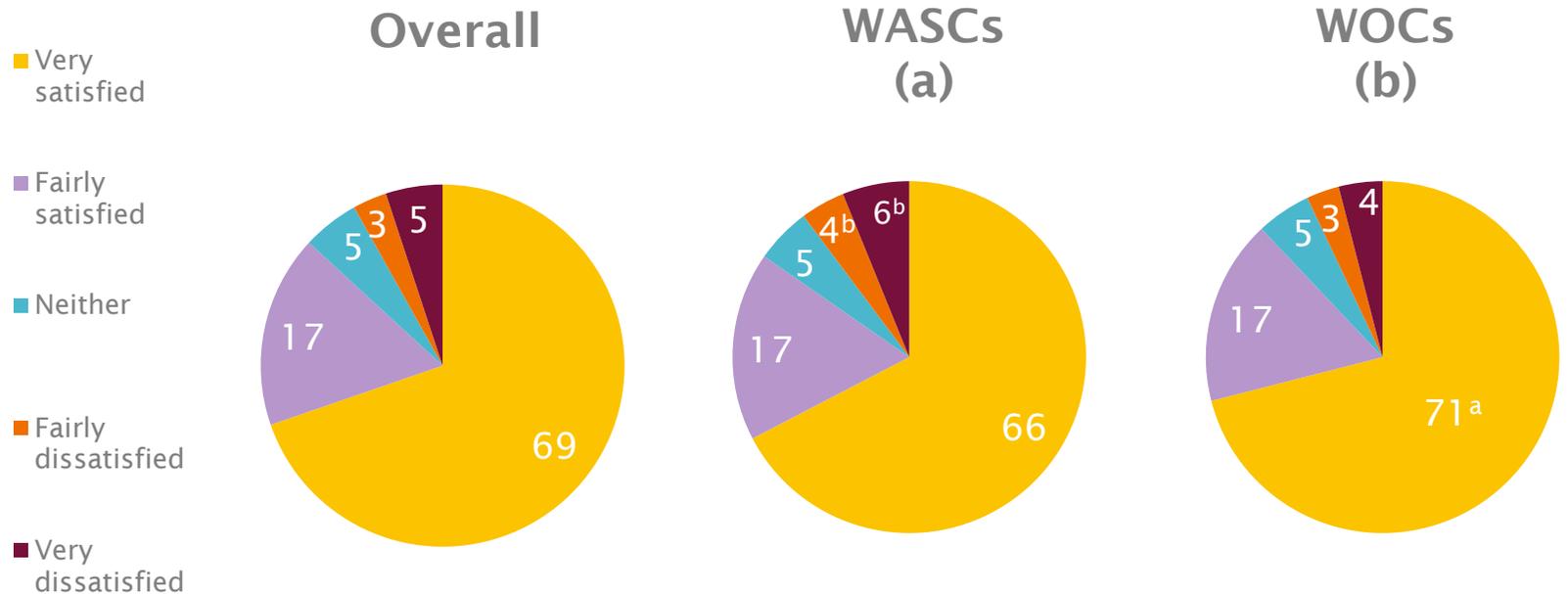
Satisfaction by Company (Q60 - Weighted Data)

WOCs tend to outperform WASCs with Welsh Water and Anglian the major exceptions.



Satisfaction with Query Handling (Q60 Unweighted Data)

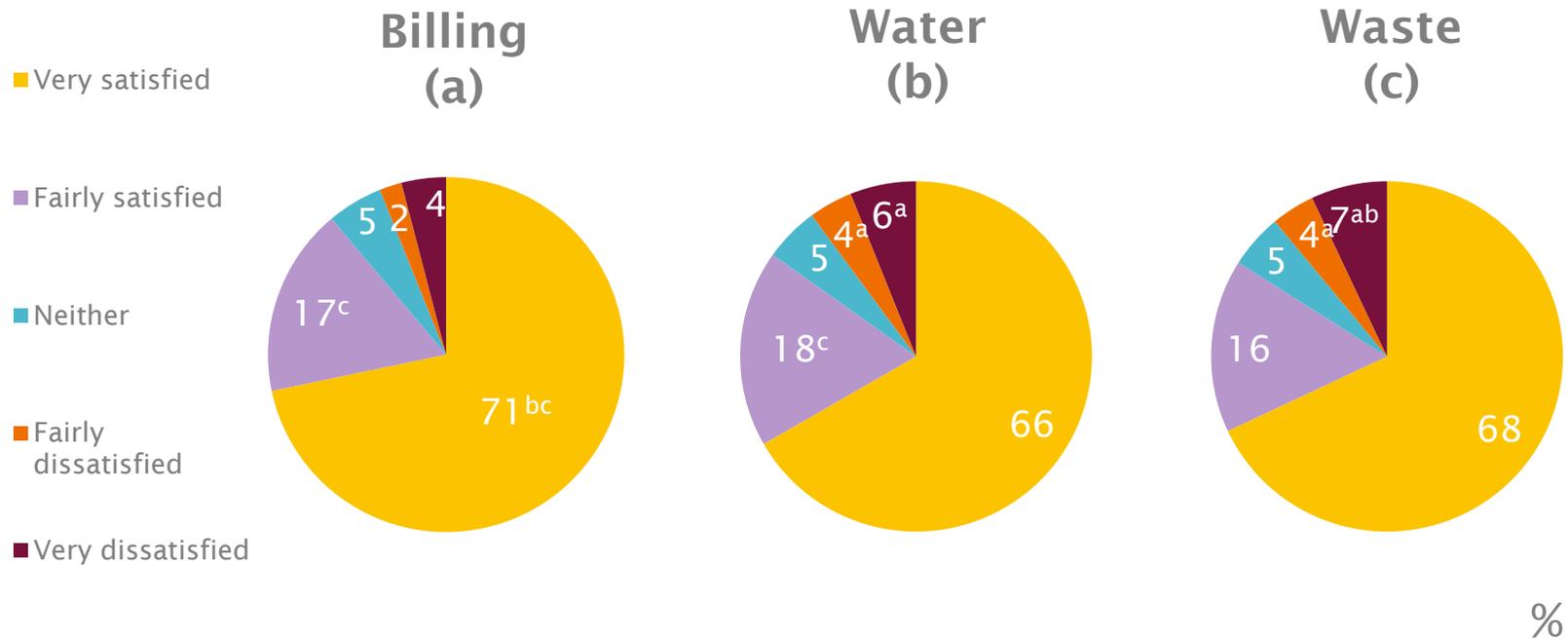
Overall, WOC customers tend to be significantly more satisfied than WASC customers.



%

Satisfaction with Query Handling (Q60 Unweighted Data)

Billing queries tend to have the highest level of satisfaction.



Reason for Contact

The top ten most common reasons for contact are as follows:

	Number of Respondents	Proportion of Respondents	Proportion Satisfied
About a blockage in the sewer/drains	1,561	10%	89%
Due to a recent move, or planning to move	1,510	8%	95%
Payment plan/direct debit set-up/query	1,388	8%	93%
To make a payment	1,294	7%	92%
No supply/water gone off	999	6%	88%
A query about a water bill	918	5%	84%
Because of a water leak/burst on the road	757	5%	79%
Because of a water leak/burst on my property	756	5%	81%
About defective/dangerous water equipment [†]	680	4%	88%
Regarding the low pressure of tap water	677	4%	86%

Initial Contact

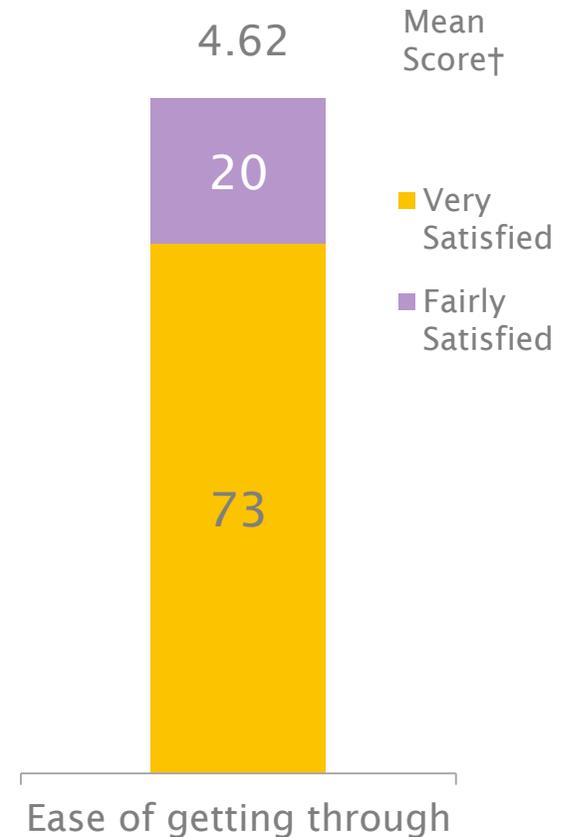
13% of contacts were perceived to be a complaint, a significant decrease from 17% in 2010/11 and a slight decrease from 14% in 2011/12.

93% of first contact was via telephone, 5% email/online and 1% letter.

First contact resolution was achieved for more than two out of three telephone contacts (72%), 70% of email/online contacts and 80% of letter contacts.

The vast majority of customers were satisfied with the ease of getting through to their water company (see chart).

- Customers who were dissatisfied with the ease of getting through most commonly cited being waiting a long time for the call to be answered (21%), being kept on hold for a long time (17%) or having to go through an automated system (13%).

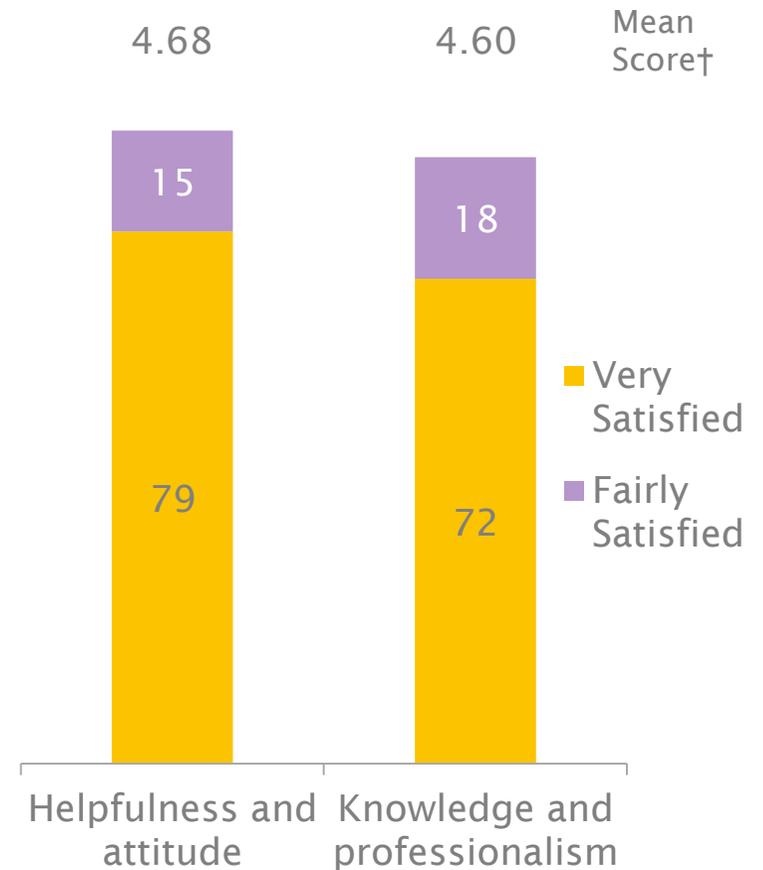


† Where 5=very satisfied

Call Centre Staff

Call centre staff were positively perceived in terms of their knowledge & professionalism and helpfulness & attitude. Both of these measures are key drivers of overall satisfaction.

Call centre staff made promises or commitments to customers in around half (47%) of cases. 79% of commitments were met in full while 7% were not met at all.



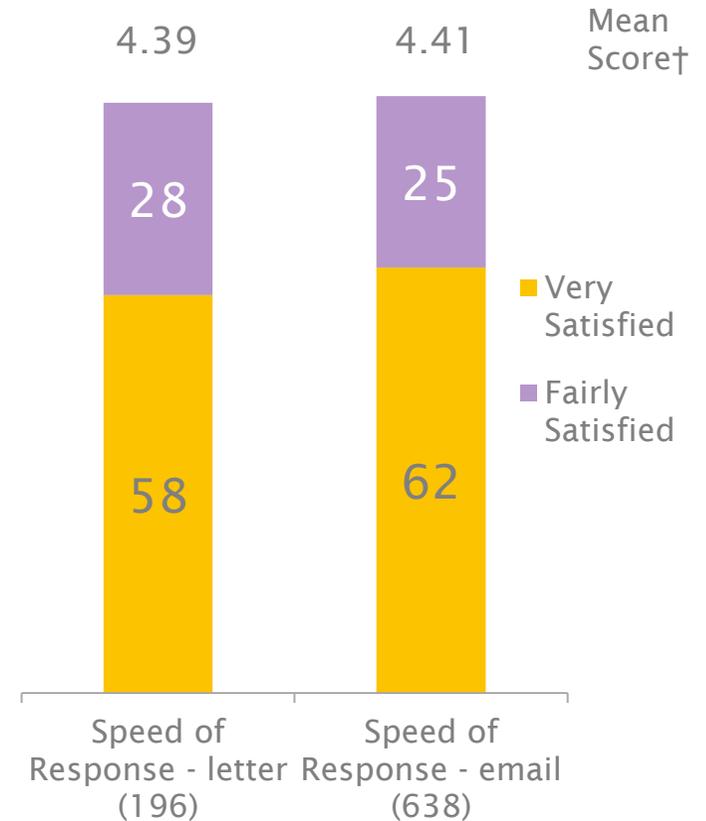
† Where 5=very satisfied

Written Contact

Initial contact was made by letter in 1% of cases.

The most common reasons for contacting a water company by letter were:

- Moving home/change of personal details (14%)
- Payment plan/direct debit set-up/query (11%)
- Hosepipe ban (10%)



Visits

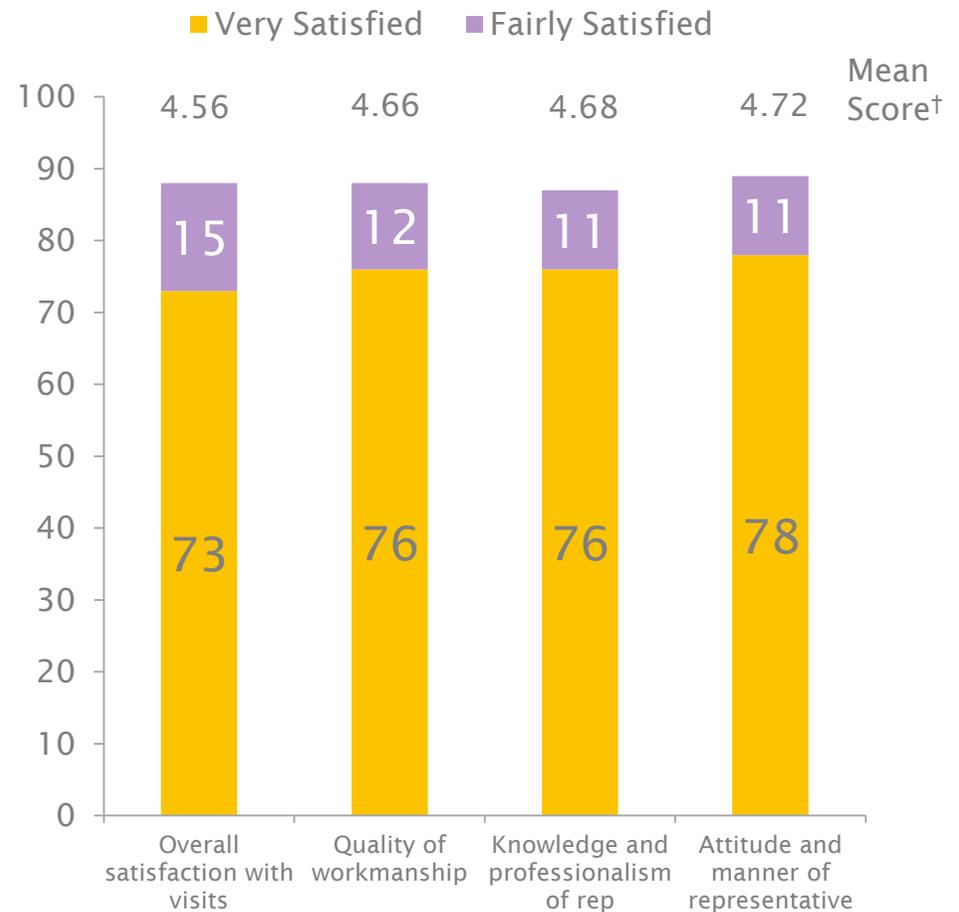
Satisfaction with visits is a key driver of overall satisfaction

The most common reasons for receiving a visit were:

- About a blockage in the sewer/drains (23%)
- Because of a water leak/burst on my property (10%)
- Because of a water leak/burst on the road (7%)
- About flooding with sewage or foul water (7%)

Customers tended to be satisfied with the way in which their visit was handled.

Overall visit satisfaction was significantly higher in 2012/13 than 2011/12 (88% vs 86%).



† Where 5=very satisfied

Issue Resolution

Across the industry, nearly one in seven customers (16%) said that their issue had not been resolved, including 11% who are awaiting further contact from their water company; this figure was significantly lower than in 2011/12.

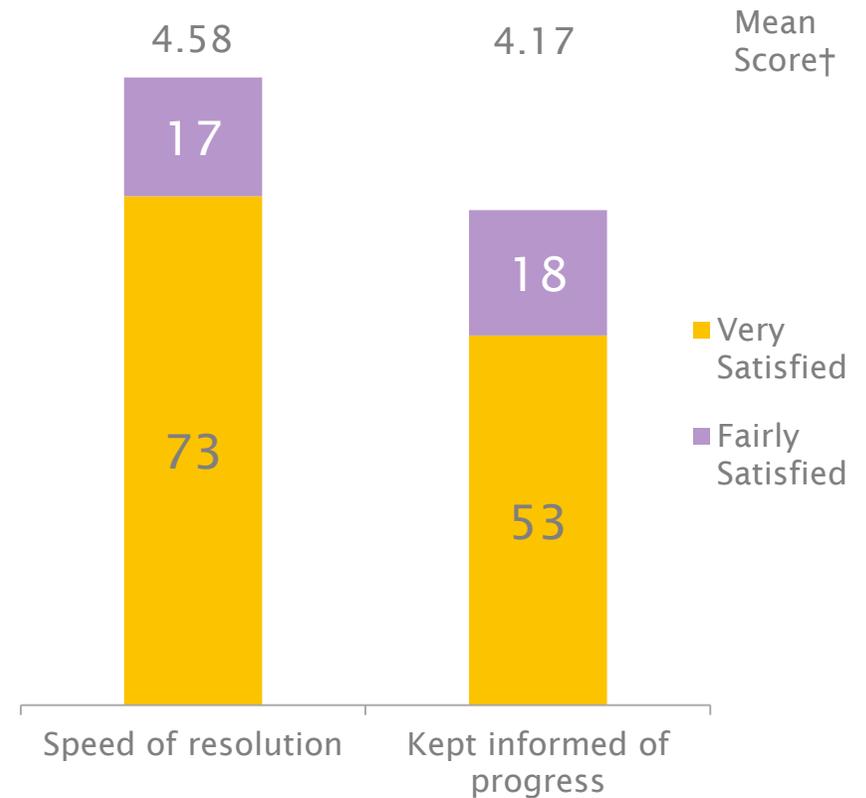
- Issue is resolved - no further contact
- Issue resolved - awaiting further contact
- Issue not resolved - do not expect further contact
- Issue not resolved - expect further contact



Overall Measures

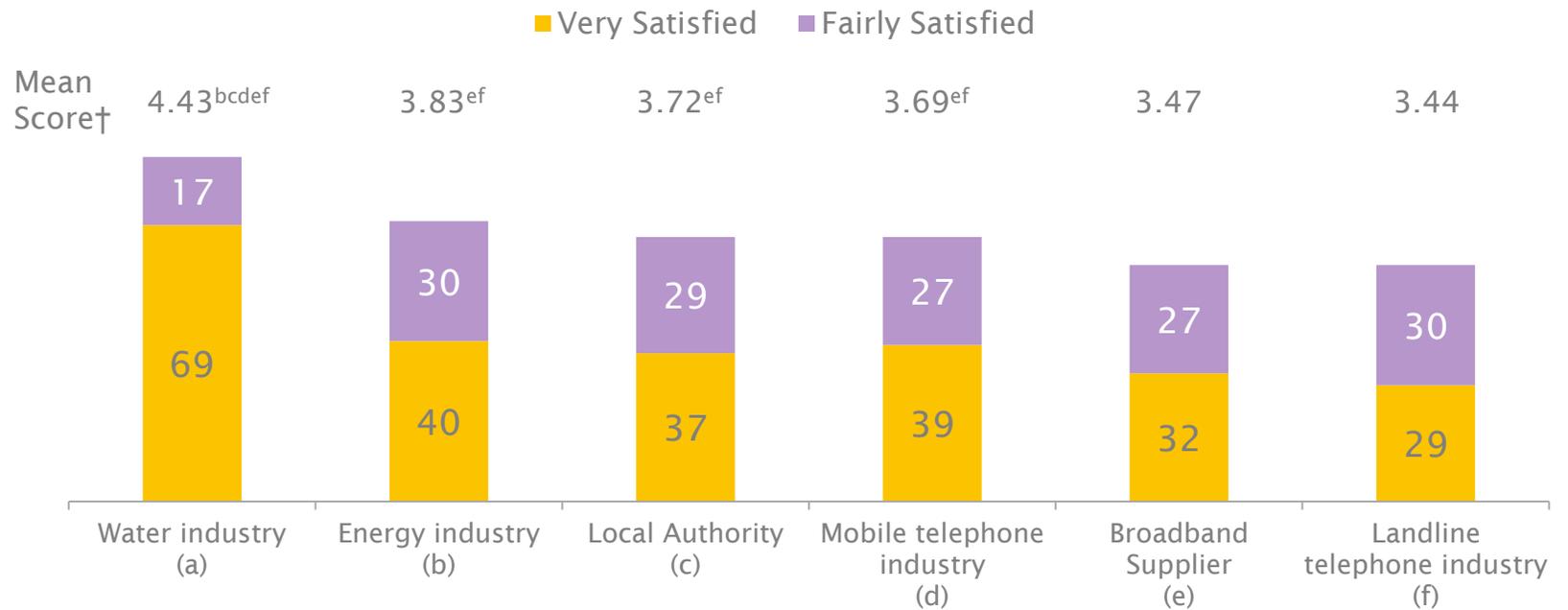
Keeping customers informed and the speed of resolution are two of the main drivers of overall satisfaction

Customer satisfaction on each measure has improved significantly since the surveys in 2010/11 and 2011/12.



Industry Comparison

Overall, satisfaction with the water industry is significantly higher than with other, similar service providers that customers have been in contact with over the previous three months



† Where 5=very satisfied



Key Driver Analysis

Key Drivers

We undertook Non-Parametric Correlation Analysis to identify the individual aspects of service behind the Overall Satisfaction (Q60) results. Our analysis found seven primary driving factors behind the Q60 score, with being kept informed the most important.

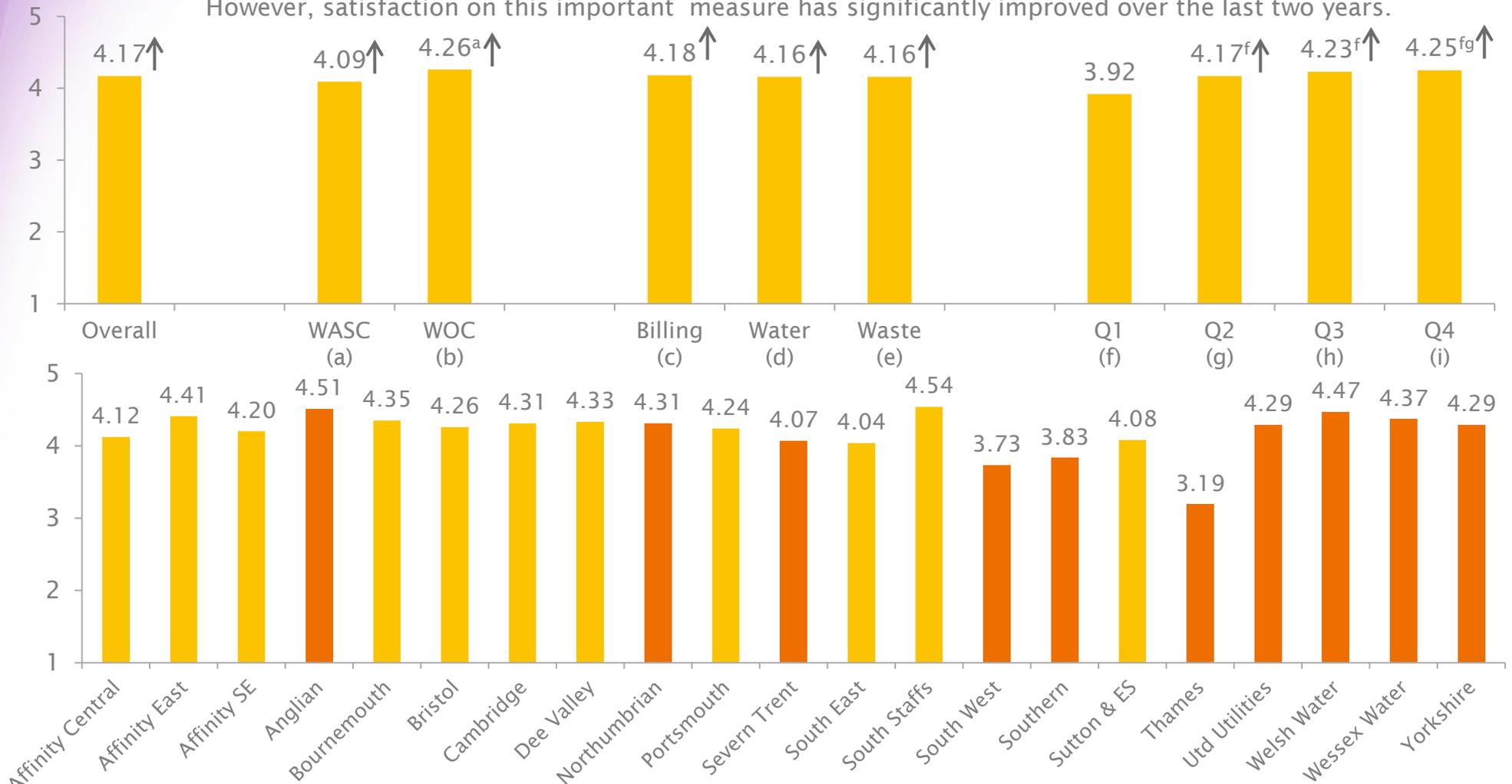
	Response Rate	Correlation Coefficient	Importance Index
Q54. Satisfaction with being kept informed	48%	0.772	131
Q58. Satisfaction with time taken to resolve	80%	0.709	120
Q53. Satisfaction with overall visits	24%	0.694	117
Q6d. Satisfaction with knowledge and professionalism of person you spoke to	84%	0.623	105
Q6c. Satisfaction with helpfulness and attitude of person you spoke to	85%	0.611	103
Q6a. Satisfaction with ease of getting through to someone	85%	0.554	94
Q7. Taking responsibility for the issue	83%	0.424	72
Q4b Number of phone calls made	93%	0.341	58

The Response Rate is the percentage of the sample who experienced the attribute and were able to provide an answer (the higher the response rate, the greater the number of customers who experience this attribute).

The Importance Index is the correlation coefficient rebased to an index where 100 = average strength in driving overall satisfaction.

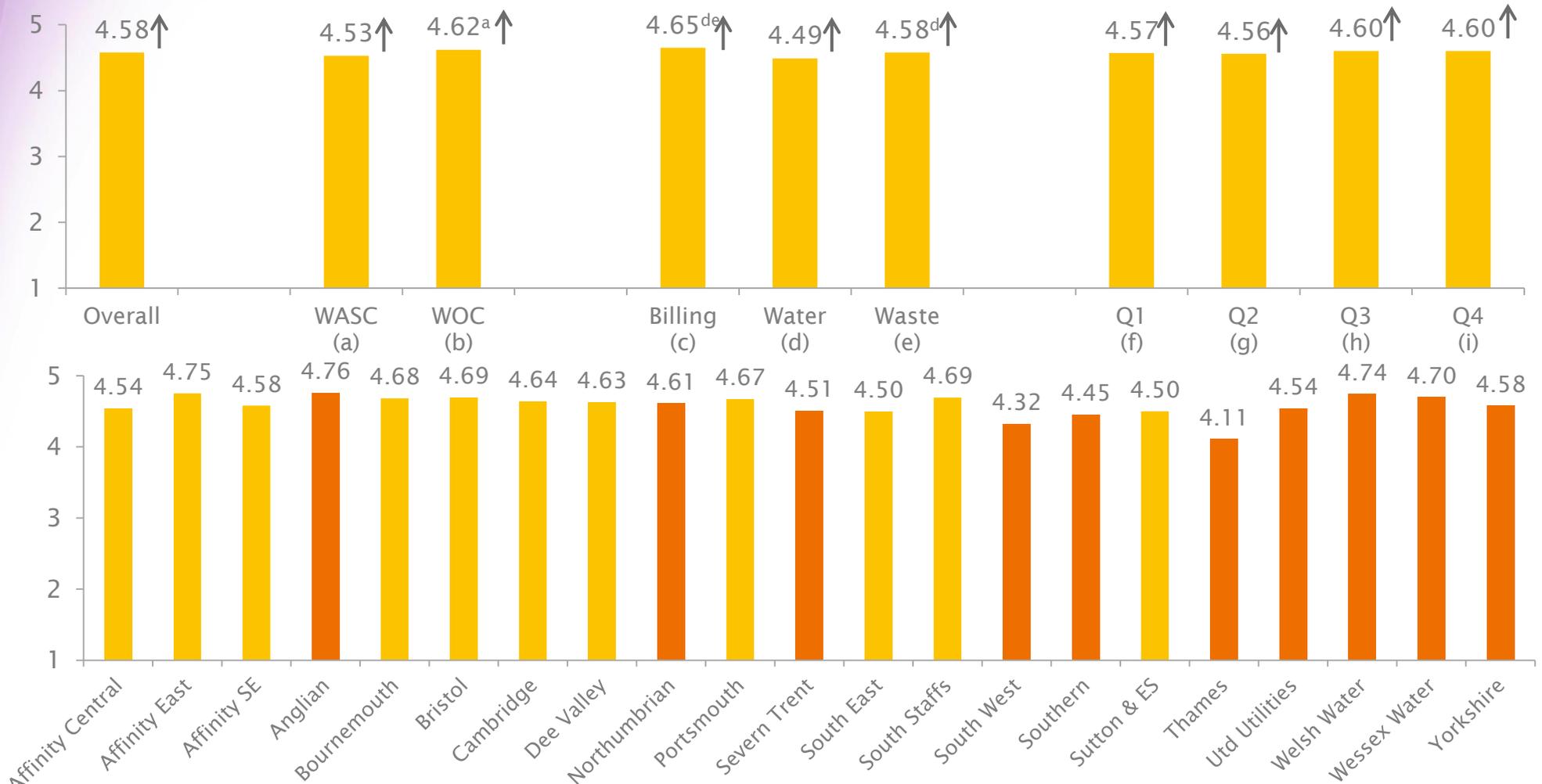
Being Kept Informed

Satisfaction with being kept informed with what was happening has generally been a low scoring measure. However, satisfaction on this important measure has significantly improved over the last two years.



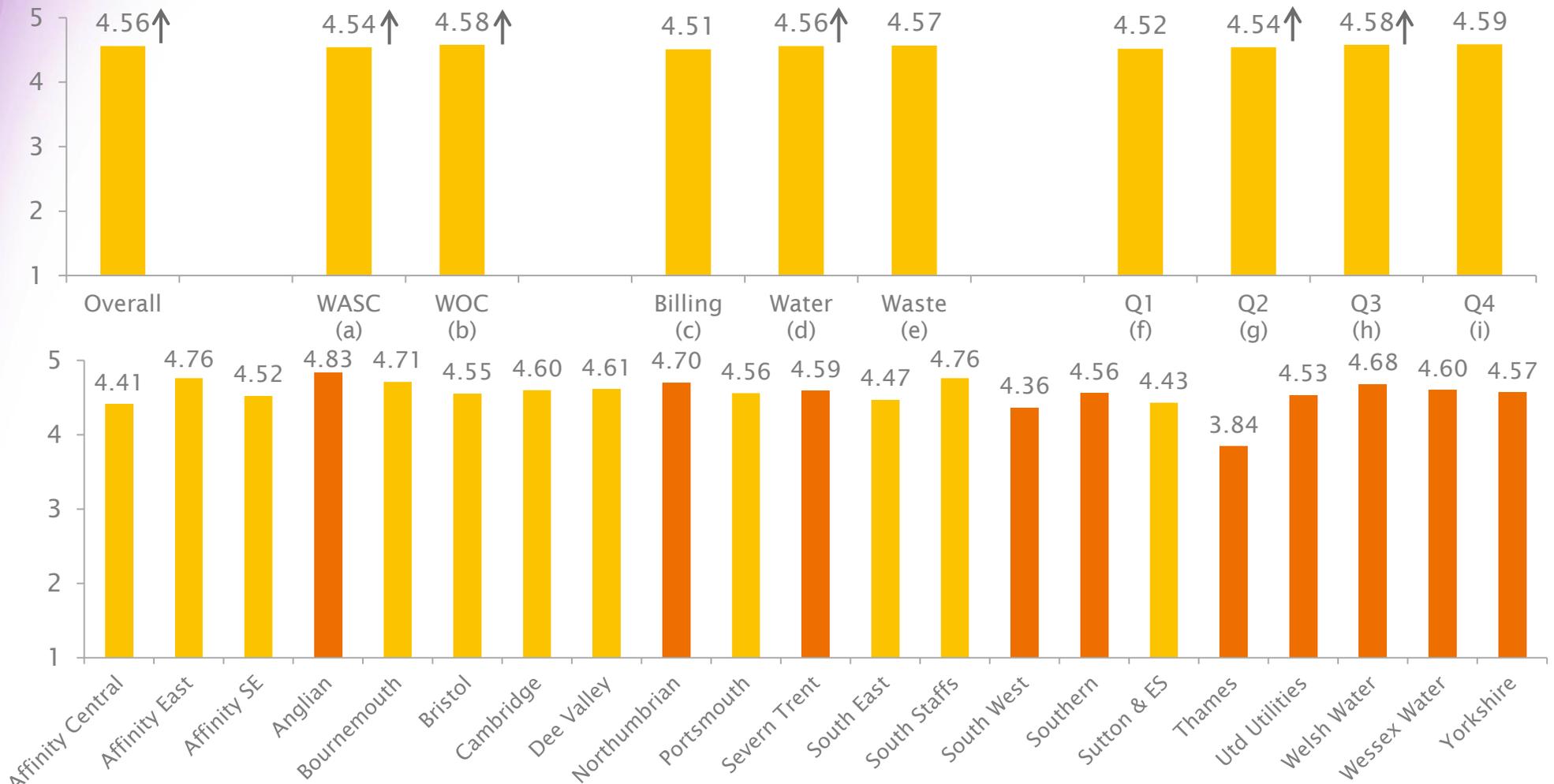
Time Taken to Resolve

Companies tended to be positively rated for speed of resolution; water queries scored least highly.



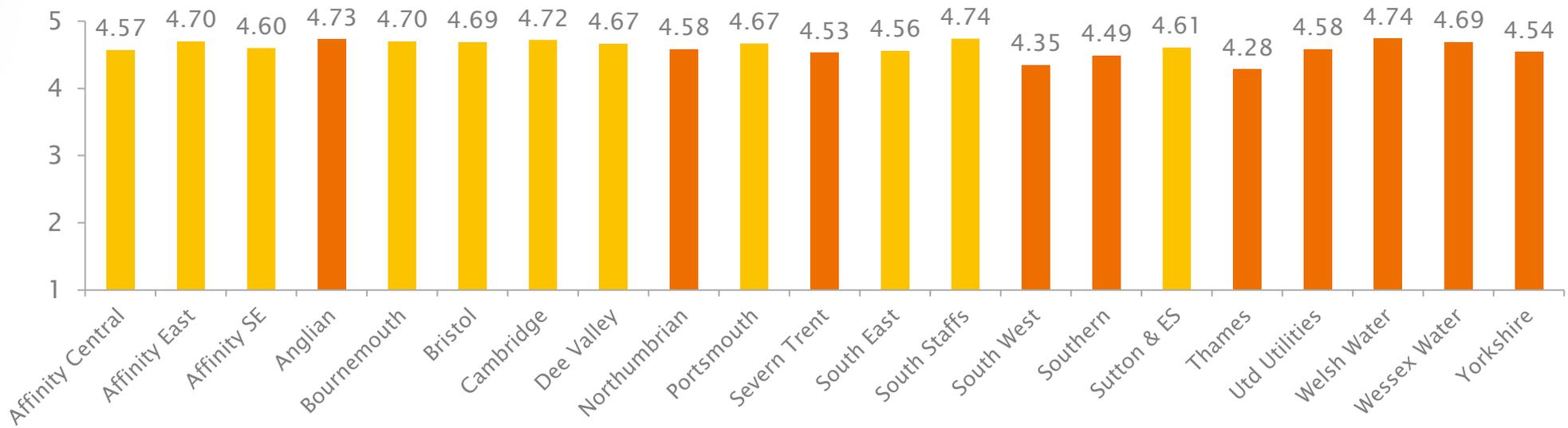
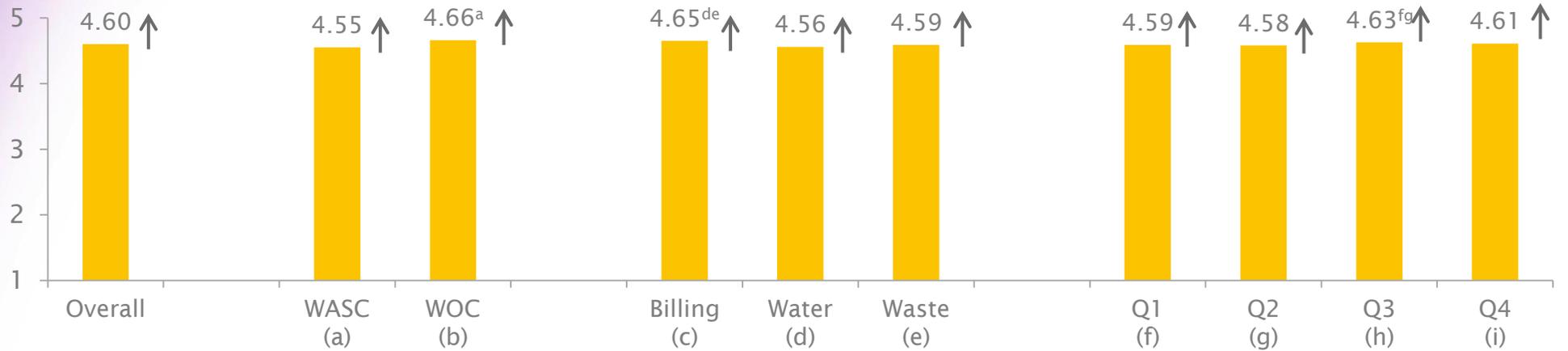
Satisfaction with Visits

Water company visits were, generally, highly regarded by customers.



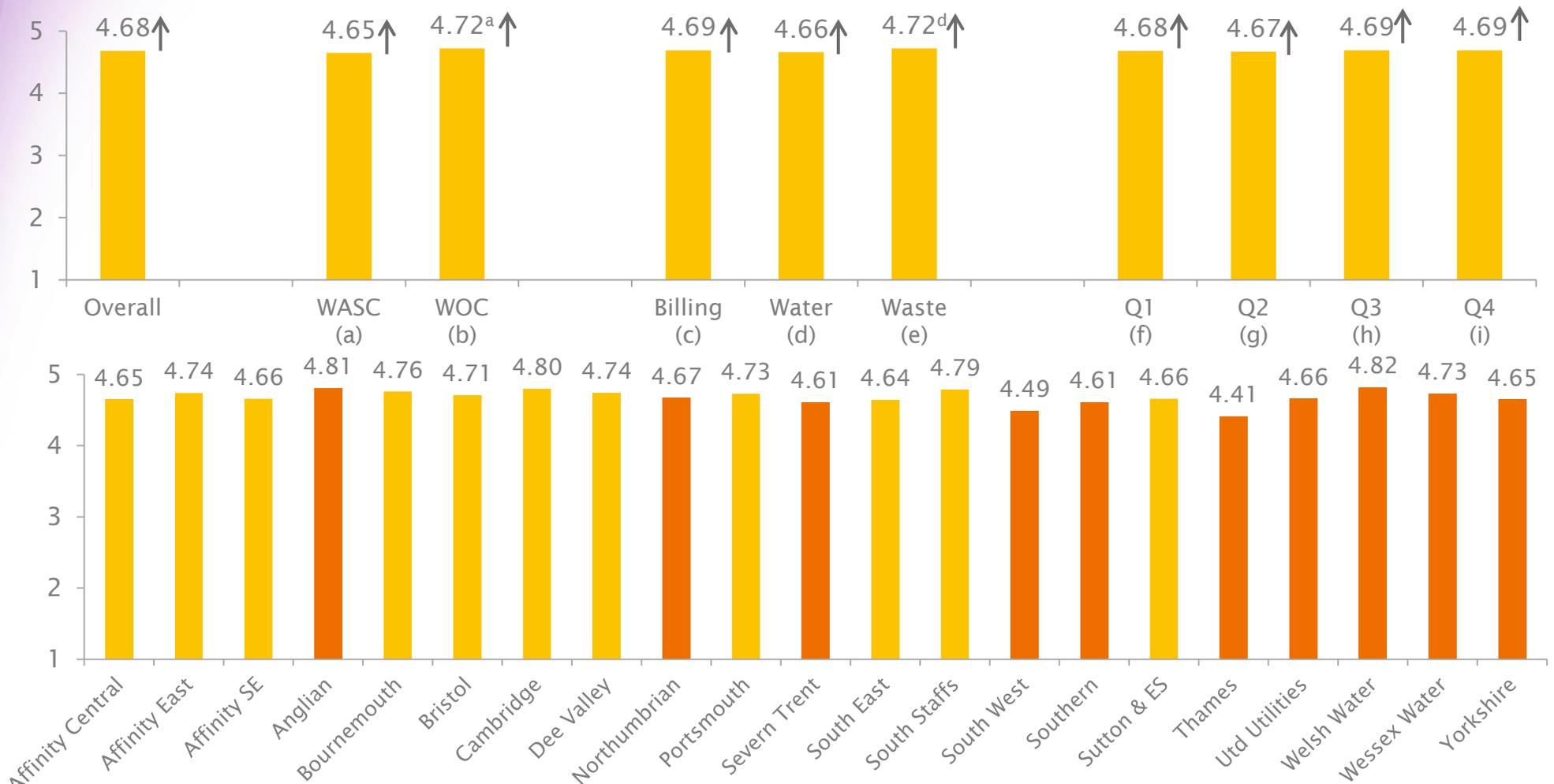
Staff Knowledge and Professionalism

Call centre staff were generally perceived to be very knowledgeable and professional in their dealings with customer queries.



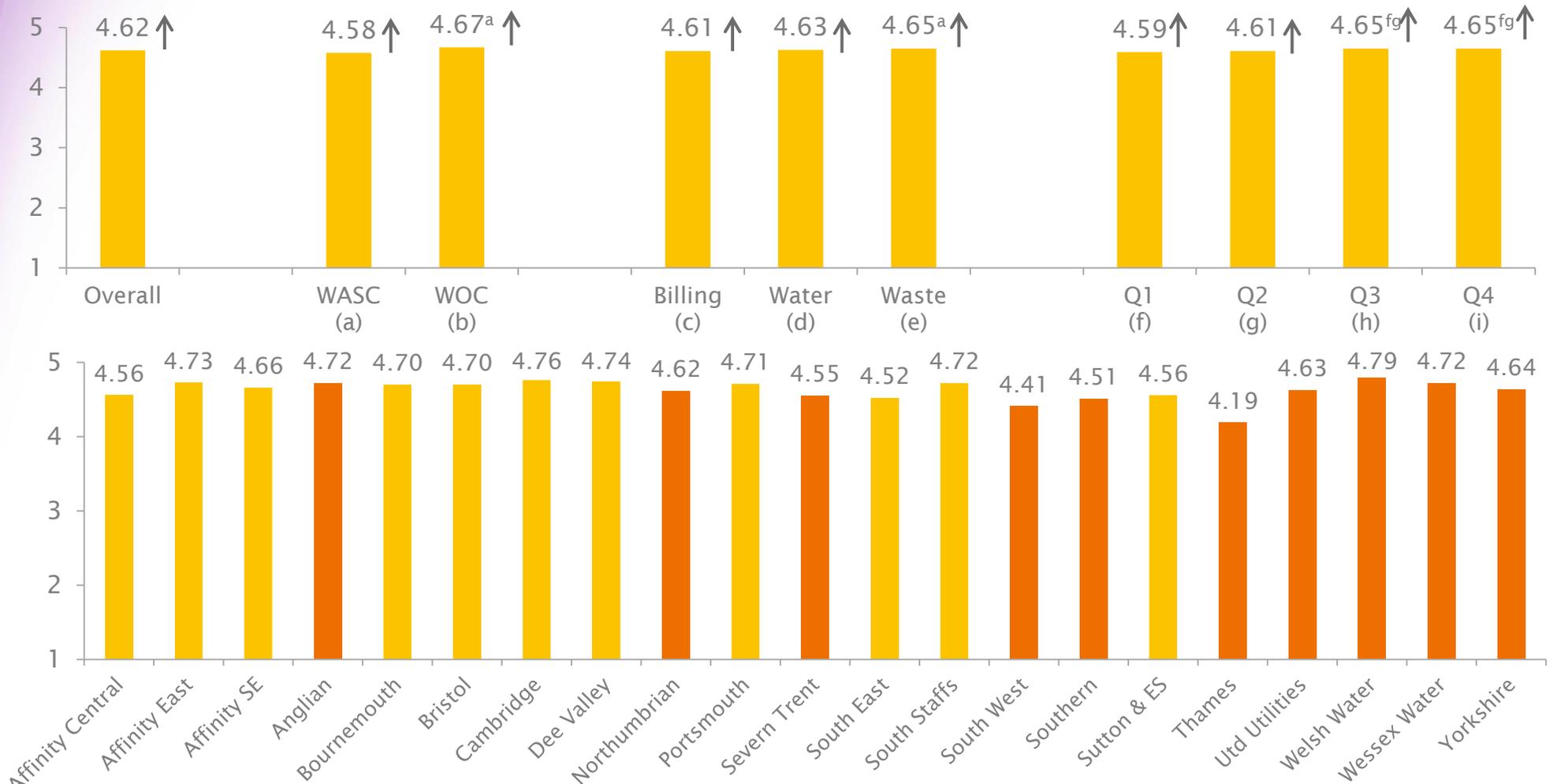
Staff Helpfulness and Attitude

Satisfaction with the helpfulness and attitude of water company call centre staff was high across the industry.



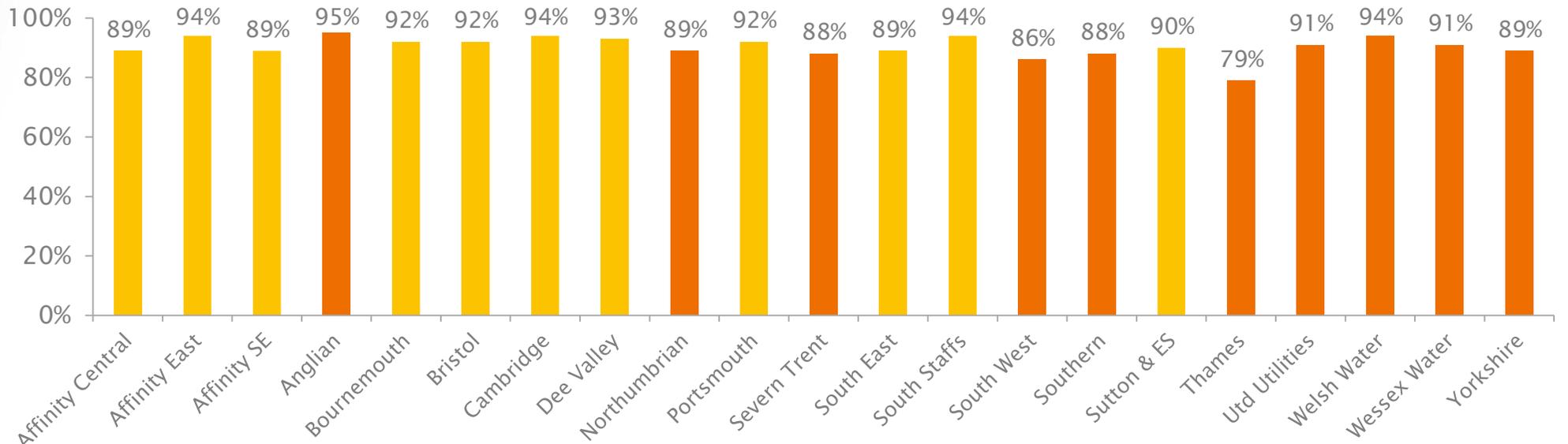
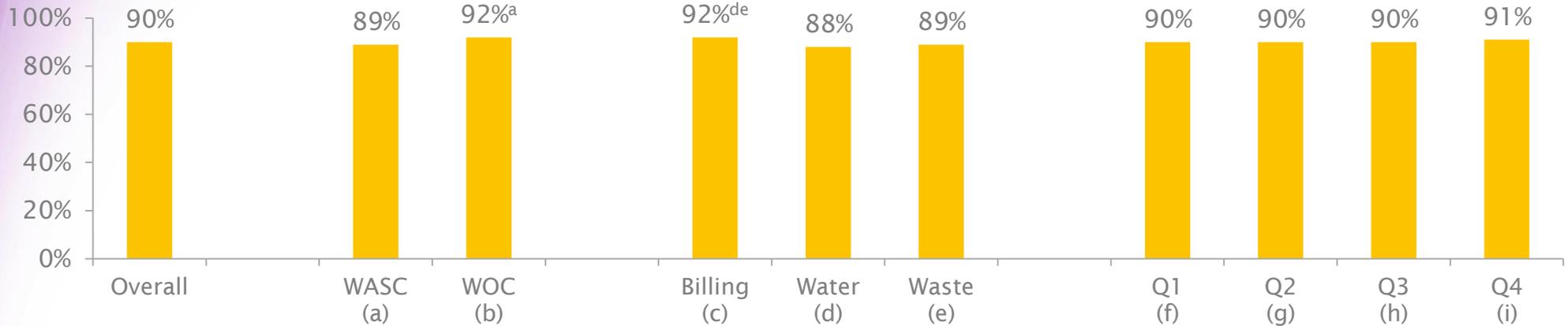
Ease of Contacting Call Centre

Satisfaction with the ease of contacting water companies was generally high. Around 90% of customers were satisfied across the industry as a whole.



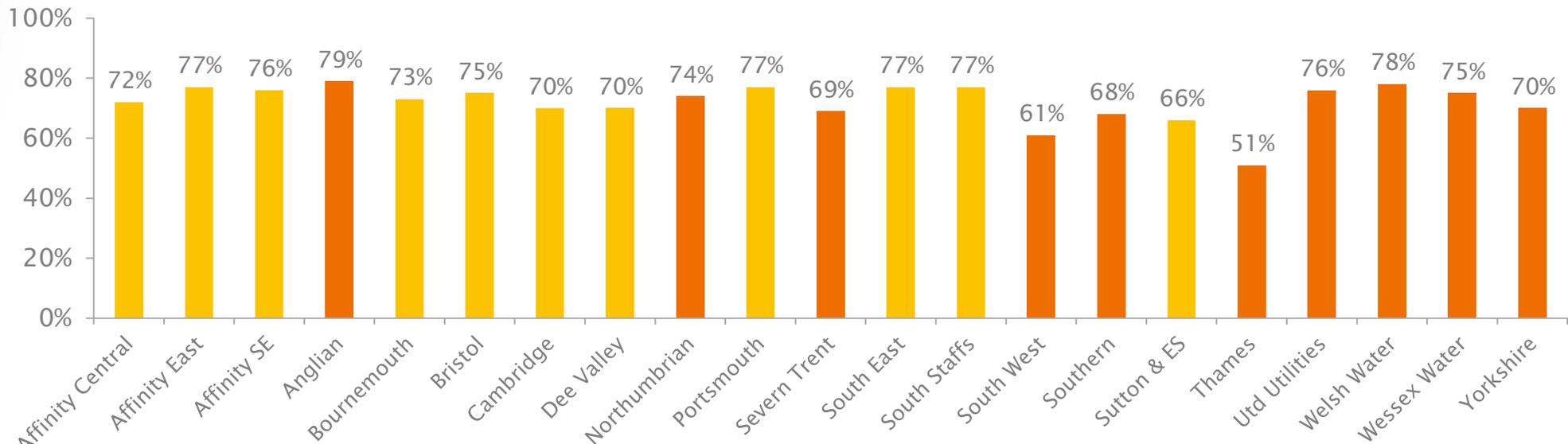
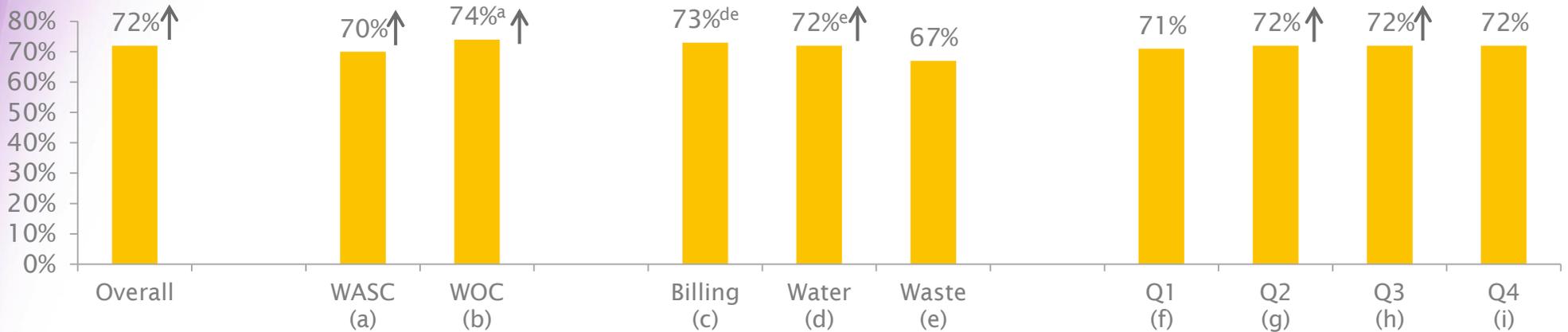
Phone Contact: Taking Responsibility For The Matter

This question was introduced at the start of 2012/13 and has received consistently high scores of around 90%. Customers are confident that the person they speak to has taken responsibility for the matter.



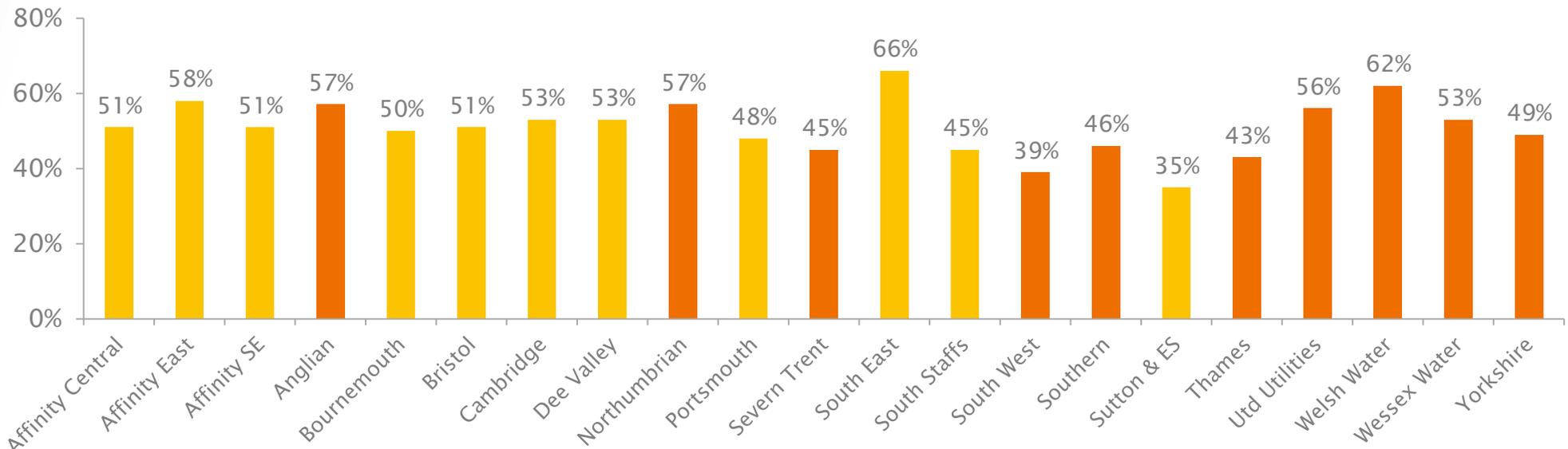
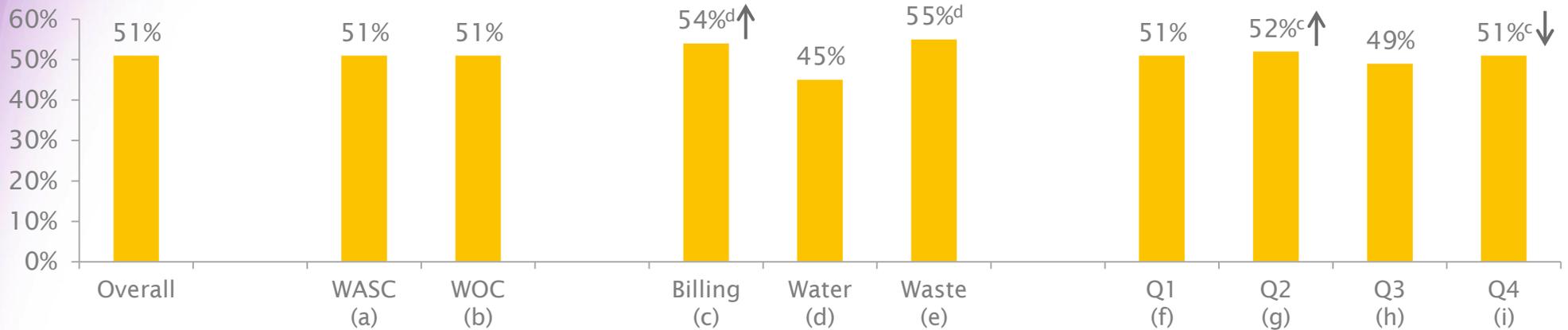
Phone Contact: First Call Resolution

More than 70% of telephone queries were resolved during the first phone call.



Same Day Query Resolution

Of those queries that had been resolved, billing and waste queries were most likely to be resolved on the same day they were reported.





CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

The results of the SIM customer experience survey in 2012/13 show a further, significant improvement on those achieved in 2011/12 – customers are increasingly satisfied with the manner in which their water company resolves their queries.

Overall satisfaction improved in 2012/13 for each contact type (billing, clean water and waste water) and for both WASCs and WOCs. Indeed, 10 companies saw their score significantly improve over the past 12 months and 10 stayed around the same, although one fell significantly.

In conjunction with the improvements in overall satisfaction, results for each of the top three key drivers have also improved significantly over the last year. Customers now feel more informed on the progress of their issue, are more satisfied with the time taken to resolve the matter, and are more satisfied with the visits they receive from their water company than they were last year.

In fact, customer experience of query handling in the water industry is far more positive than in other, comparable industries – 86% of water company contactors were satisfied with their experience compared to a maximum of 70% contacting other organisations.

These results indicate that SIM has been hugely influential in improving the customer service experience of water company contactors across the industry.



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