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# Rainfall Management: Householders (including Future Bill Payers) Qualitative Research

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**Alex McCluckie**, Research Director  
amcluckie@djsresearch.com

**Grace Middlehurst**, Research Manager  
gmiddlehurst@djsresearch.com

**Head office:** 3 Pavilion Lane, Strines,  
Stockport, Cheshire, SK6 7GH

**Leeds office:** 2 St. David's Court,  
David Street, Leeds, LS11 5QA

+44 (0)1663 767 857  
djsresearch.co.uk



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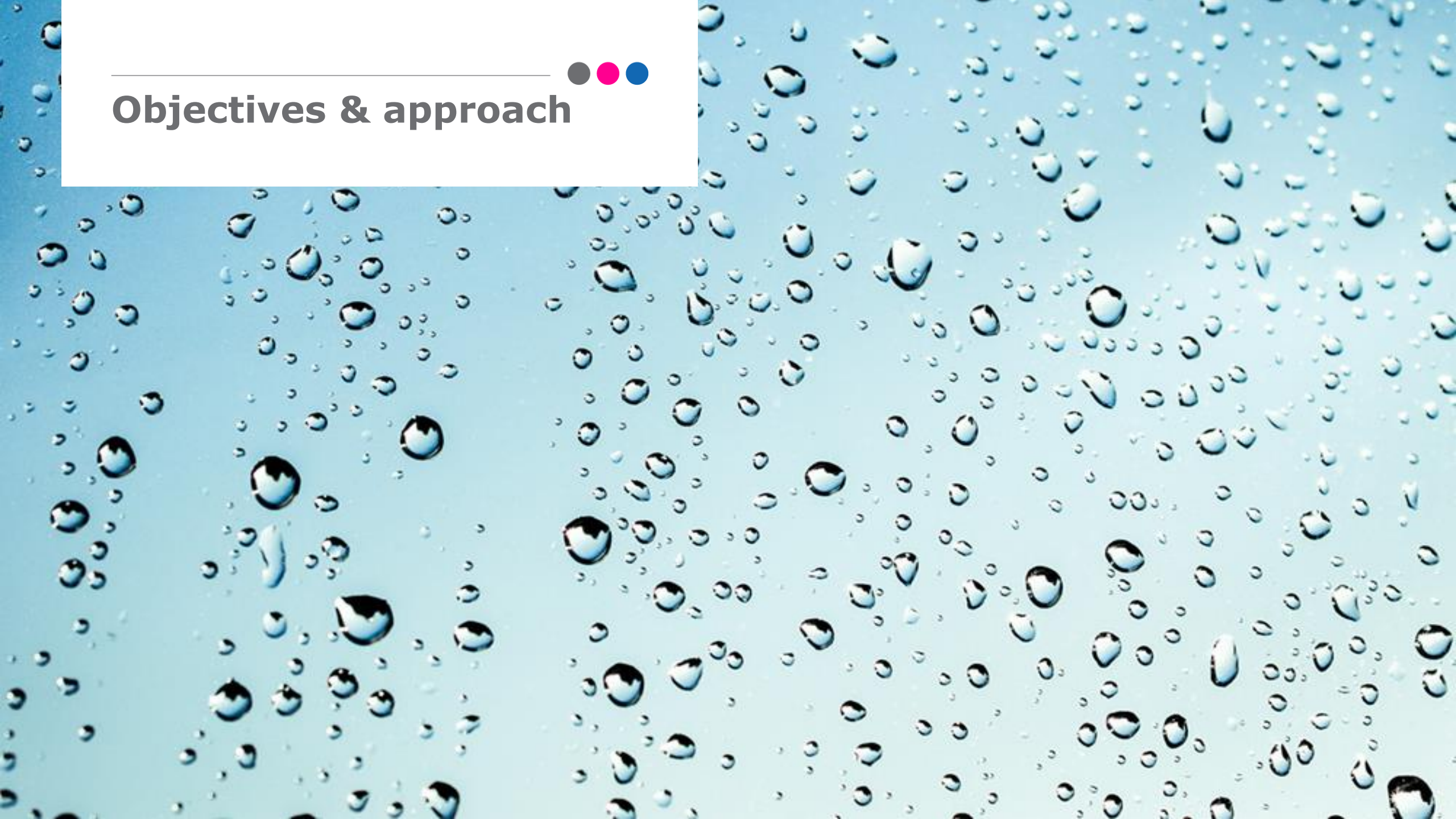
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# Objectives & approach





# Background & research context

Heavy rain has an impact on United Utilities' wastewater capacity and sewer network because many of the sewers in the north west are combined. Climate change, population growth and urbanisation mean the problem of excess rainfall is only going to get worse.

The **business aim** is to: "talk to customers about how United Utilities can manage rainfall better by using sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS) on both their own properties and beyond."

The **core research** objectives are to:

Gather household and non-household customer views on rainwater management

Understand how willing household customers and small businesses are to act personally

Understand what customers want United Utilities to do about rainwater management

Understand non-household customer views specifically on things such as awareness of how they can reduce their surface water charges, SuDS incentives, how businesses could be encouraged to take steps to install SuDs and whether customers would be interested in a retrofit SUDS service from UU



# Approach

On Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June to Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June a week long online community was conducted. 59 started the online community and 54 completed all tasks:

- **45 Household members** (with one additional household member taking part via an in-depth interview, **total 46**)
- **9 Future bill payers:** 18-24 year olds who are not yet paying the water bill

The household sample was mixed, as shown in the table adjacent.

Respondents were recruited via panel (Opex) and local recruiters.

This report is based on qualitative research to understand and explore the views of householders.

Further quantitative research, with a robust sample size, is required to validate the findings.

<b>Household profile</b>		<b>46</b>
Region	Greater Manchester	18
	Cheshire	9
	Merseyside	8
	Lancashire	7
	Cumbria	4
Age	25-40	21
	41-60	20
	60+	5
Property type	Semi-detached house	19
	Terrace/mews	14
	Detached	9
	Bungalow	3
	Flat	1
Ownership	Owned	38
	Rented	8
Bill position	Keeping up with bills but struggle (constantly or time to time)	22
	Keeping up without any difficulties	20
	In arrears (falling behind or real financial problems)	4
Disability/long term illness	No/None	32
	Yes	14
Gender	Female	26
	Male	20



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# Current awareness and knowledge: of United Utilities and the need rainfall management

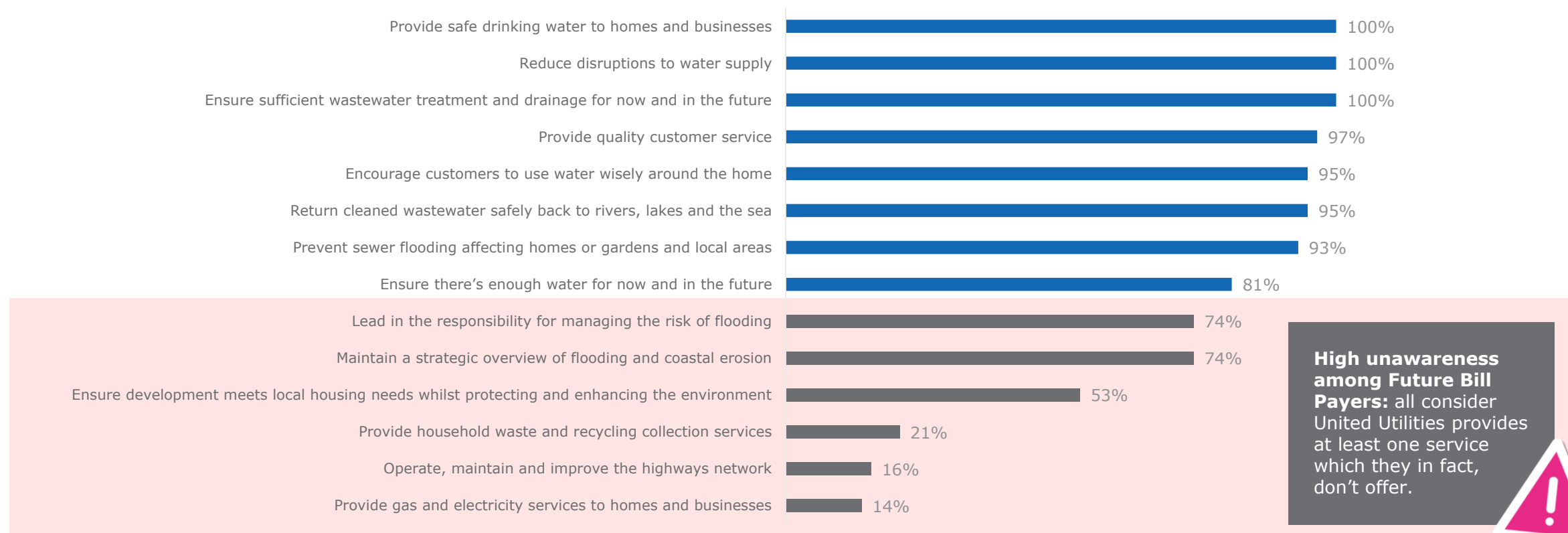




# All are aware of at least some aspects of UU's role

All respondents are aware of UU's role in providing safe drinking water. Although still high, awareness around UU's role in ensuring enough water for now and the future is lower (81%). There is some misunderstanding, including 21% who consider UU have a role in providing household waste and recycling collection.

## Services provided by United Utilities (considered)



**Source:** Day 1, Task 2: Please sort this list of services into those that you think United Utilities provide and those that you think they don't. **Base:** 58 (Qualitative research: small base size).

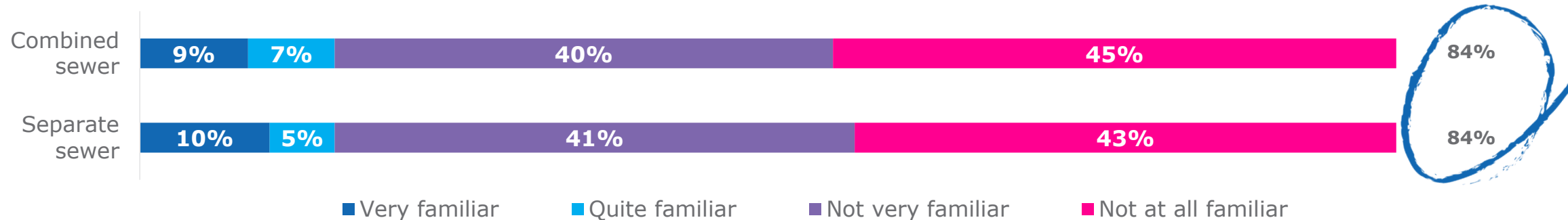
\*Bars highlighted in grey are services which respondents were shown but United Utilities does not provide



# Awareness of the sewage network is low

There is a need to educate: the majority (84%) are unfamiliar with different types of sewers, either entirely or with misunderstanding. With such a low level of awareness there is limited understanding of effectiveness (though a difference is presumed). The showcard material was effective in educating respondents and it was suggested United Utilities are well placed to raise awareness, and educate, through leaflets and social media.

## Familiarity with types of sewers



**62%** consider there is a difference by effectiveness: but only because they were prompted by the question. Before raising awareness, knowledge and understanding is very limited.



"I don't know too much about sewers I'm afraid."

After raising awareness during the online community, via a simple diagram of the two sewage system, respondents commented they now understand & found it interesting to learn about the different types and effectiveness.







# Majority acknowledge managing rainwater & the sewer network will become more of a challenge

When unprompted, respondents are more likely to comment on the increased demand on the network due to population growth & increased sewage. Fewer comment on the impact of managing rainwater in terms of less permeable surfaces, and the impact of climate change. Some struggle to comment beyond usage and blockages.

## Urbanisation & development:

Respondents are most likely to comment that increased populations mean greater demand on the sewage network (that wasn't built to deal with such demand). However, some also realise that the increased development also means less permeable surfaces.

"Building work and more houses must be putting a Victorian system under great pressure. More land which was grass (gardens) and able to absorb water is being turned into Astro turf or cement meaning the rain cannot naturally drain away."

## Climate change

It is acknowledged that climate change, in particular more extreme weather, will also increase demand on the sewer network.

"Increased extreme weather from climate change resulting in more rainwater."

**90%** anticipate that managing rainwater and the sewer network will become more of a challenge in the future.

Some respondents struggle, even when prompted, to comment on how anything would contribute to increased volumes of rainwater entering the system at speed. Instead, their understanding was more around:

- Water usage (and ideas to limit)
- Blockages

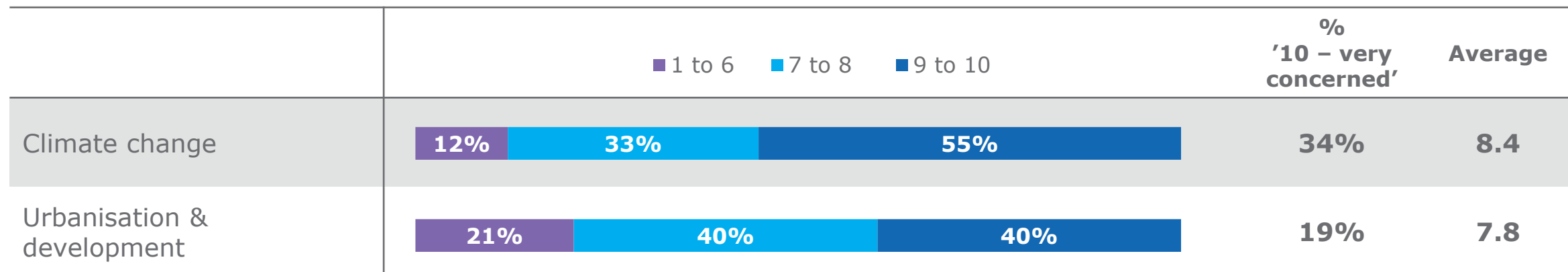
"Things that may impact ability, fat icebergs/build ups, heavy rain, blockages, high demand of users, high demand could be caused by when people are at home at nighttime maybe watching a soap and nipping to the toilet in between."



# There is concern: particularly about climate change

There is general acknowledgement that climate change and urbanisation/development are happening, and having impact on livelihoods and the environment. Those that aren't concerned, generally consider there is nothing that can be done, so no point worrying. Those that are concerned are more likely to consider that action should be taken, and people/organisations need to work collectively to mitigate risk and impact.

## Personally concerned



"I am **not really concerned** regards to these two questions; climate control and population growth is happening, and **there is not much we can do.**"

"Climate change and population growth is a **major concern. I do not see any pertinent efforts to deal with this situation** at the moment."



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# Rainwater management: is it required?

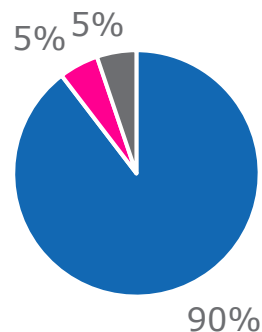




# Once aware, majority agree management is required

Once respondents have been informed on the sewage network, the vast majority (90%) agree there is a need to manage the amount of rainwater that goes into our sewers. The main reason for this is to decrease the risk of overflowing, flooding and pollution.

## Need to manage rainwater



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

**Only three** respondents considered there is not a need to manage rainwater, and their opinion could potentially change through education:

- Two due to concerns about water shortages: they consider we need rainwater to replenish reservoirs
- One: due to a lack of understanding of how rainwater management can work

## Why manage rainwater?

Preventing overflowing, flooding & pollution was the main reason mentioned as to why rainwater should be managed.

"To ensure it's not over filling the sewers."

"The more rainwater coming in helps to replenish reservoirs and also is natural water easier to treat than sludge water?"



## Other reasons to manage rainwater included:

- To future proof or compensate for more sewage

"As we get more populated there is a bigger amount of sewage, this along with the rainwater is a strain."

- For usage, to be able to use rainwater for gardening

"More rainwater should be collected to be used in things like the garden."

- To reduce costs to the household

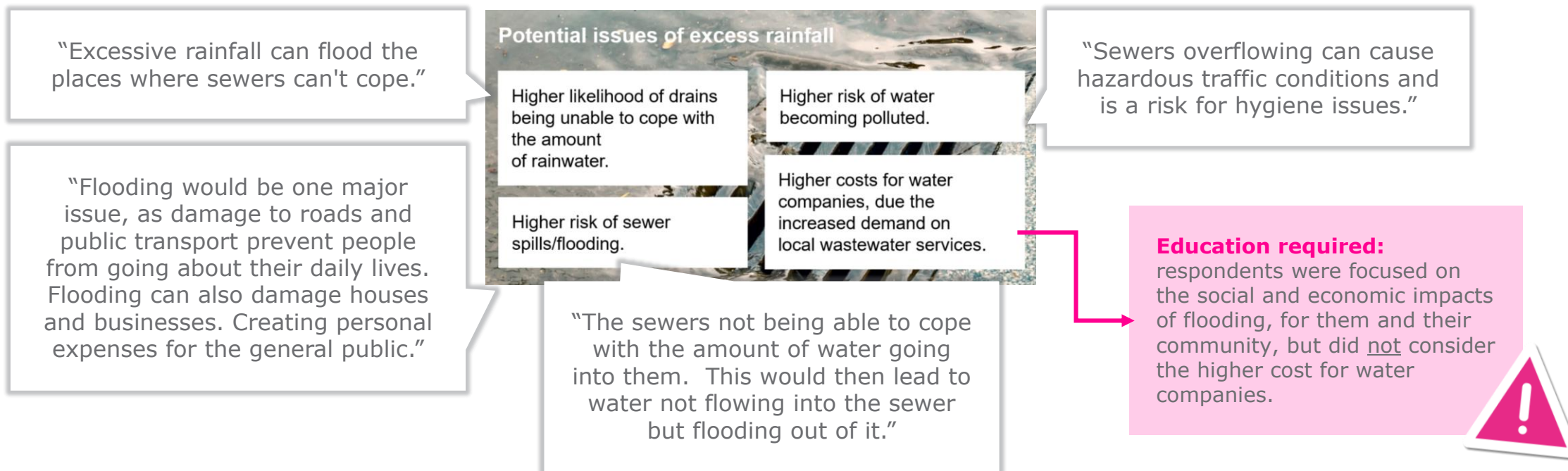
"Putting relatively clean rainwater in with dirty wastewater must dramatically increase the costs."



# Majority familiar with issues of excess rainfall

Respondents were asked what they perceived to be the issues with excess rainfall, and were then shown the showcard below to confirm their thoughts. Most commonly mentioned was the likelihood of sewers being unable to cope and risk of sewer spills/flooding, with particular focus on associated economic and social impacts.

## Perceived issues with excess rainfall (unprompted)



Unprompted, several also mentioned that they thought excess rainfall would contribute towards 'damage' to the network i.e. burst pipes.

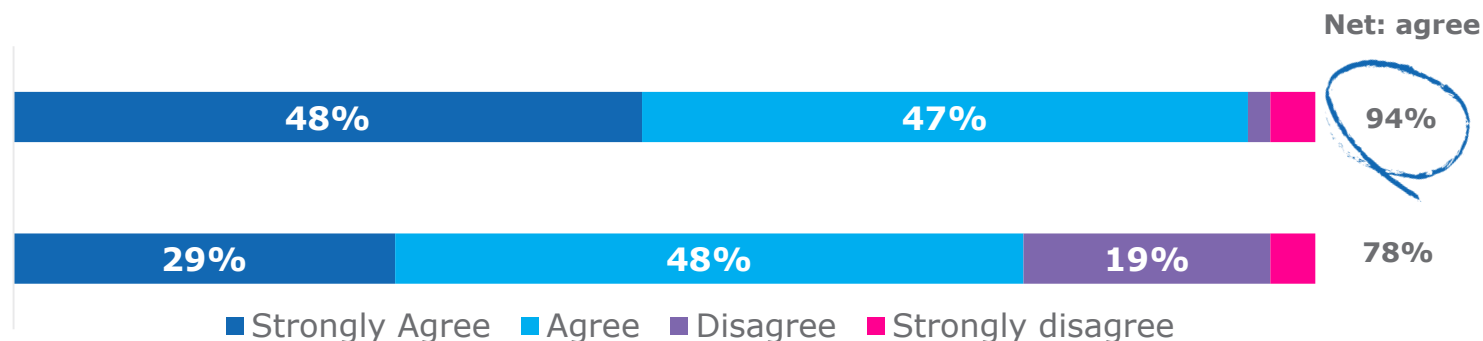


# Agree excess rainwater is an issue to be resolved

Having been informed on the potential issues of excess rainfall (as shown in the previous slide), the majority agree (94%) that too much rainwater is an important issue to resolve for their wider community and that collective action is required.

## Importance of managing rainfall

Too much rainwater is an important issue to resolve for my wider local community



### Although still high, agreement is slightly lower at a personal level vs. wider community:

- It is considered that 'personal' involvement won't make an impact: collective action is required
- There is a lack of knowledge and/or awareness of what can be achieved at a personal level
- Having not been personally impacted, it's not something that has been considered until prompted here

However, **we see from the community that a little education and awareness on the impacts can change views.** Plus, even those that 'strongly disagree' do so because they lack awareness about how or who should manage rainfall, not because they disagree with the principal of it.

"The rainwater issue for me personally doesn't affect me...and I didn't really think about it until now."

"After reading up on what issues rainwater has going into the sewers, my view on the issues have now changed. I (now) strongly agree."





# Rainwater management: whose role is it?





# Rainwater management requires collective action

Respondents were asked to enter as few or as many people or organisations as they considered would be involved in managing rainwater effectively...

Unprompted, respondents mentioned a range of organisations they considered to be responsible for rainwater management.

It is clear **the majority don't know**, but simply assume the following organisations would be involved:

- United Utilities
- Local council / authorities
- Government
- Environment agency

Those that are aware, tend to be aware due to seeing the relevant organisations 'in action' at an incident.

The key theme is that **collective action is required**: we all have a different part to play, but consider an organisation (or organisations) should be responsible for leading the way.

Only a limited number mentioned there was something they personally felt they could do. This is the key reason why it needs to be an organisation(s) that leads the way: to raise awareness and educate on what can be done at the personal level.

"The water companies have the greatest responsibility for rainfall management, although I believe we all have a responsibility to reduce the amount of rainwater that is sent to the sewer system."

"We all need to contribute to changes by voluntarily making small changes to make a big impact. United Utilities and Highways/Authorities need to provide the infrastructure/permission to implement this, and Government need to enforce this to make it law."

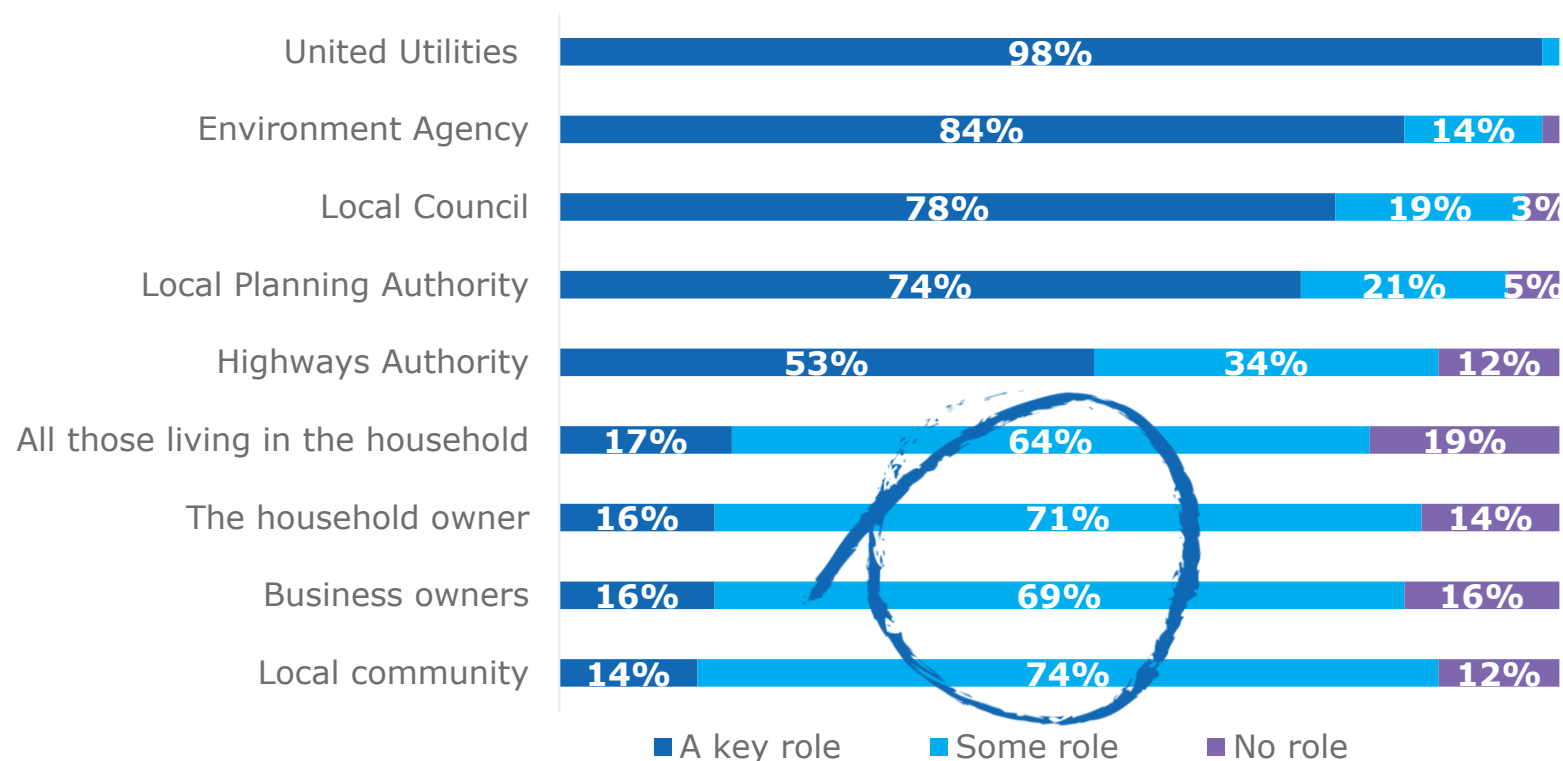




# Organisations have a key role, particularly UU

When prompted, individuals were most likely to consider that organisations, particularly United Utilities, have a key role in managing rainwater. This is due to an awareness that United Utilities are ultimately responsible for water and wastewater services. Individuals were far more likely to be considered as having 'some' role.

Role in managing rainwater (prompted)



Role of United Utilities

Having been educated on roles and responsibilities, respondents see that United Utilities has a key role to play:

- "Ultimately, they are responsible for water and wastewater services in the North West."

However, respondents mention (unprompted) they are not sure exactly what it is United Utilities should be doing. There is an assumption that United Utilities would need to work collectively, with other agencies/bodies.

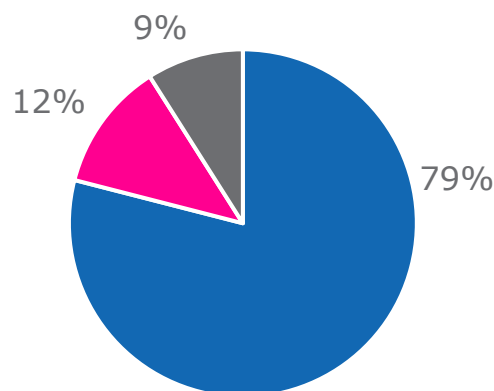
- "Difficult to say exactly what they'd be doing. I just naturally assume that they're going to be big players in this space. I think I'd expect them to take the lead in organising and implementing whatever options are available here."



# Asked directly, the majority consider they can act

79% of respondents considered they could personally help manage rainwater at their property. They are most likely to consider that they could install a water butt, but then often also start to talk about being more conscious of water usage and wastage, rather than rainfall water management.

## Anything you could do personally to manage rainwater at property?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

**Of those answering "no":** the issue is a **lack of awareness** of what to do (either completely or believing they are doing as much as possible). Not a lack of willingness to act.

"I don't have the knowledge to manage rainwater however would be willing to help where instructed, if the information was supplied in a clear manner."

## What can be done to manage rainwater?

### Most likely to mention to install water storage to re-use water:

install water butts to store water to water plants / wash the car

"The only thing I could really do is install a water butt to help store rainwater for future use."

**Or, to be side-tracked and instead focus on how they can be more water conscious):** limit shower time, flushing toilet or ensuring the maintenance of drains.

This lack of focus illustrates that respondents are more informed and comfortable talking on this topic rather than **rainfall management, where they lack general understanding.**

**A limited number consider the installing permeable surfaces and planting vegetation as potential options.**

"We have a large area of grass and gravel so rainwater can be absorbed into the ground easier rather than into the sewers."



# The key barriers to acting are knowledge and cost

The key barrier to individuals acting is a lack of awareness/knowledge, or believing they have done everything they can possibly do. The other key barrier is cost: either in terms of not having the money to spend or not realising the cost/benefit of managing rainwater at the property.

## Barriers to acting personally (unprompted)

**Lack of awareness/knowledge:** a complete lack of knowledge about how to act personally to help manage rainwater. Household members are more aware of how to limit their consumption, than how to help manage rainwater.

It's also a common theme that those that have installed a water butt, consider they have no barriers, and are doing everything they can do possibly.

There is a need to educate on options, and benefits of installing options, beyond water butts.

"I don't think you would be able to help as people can't stop rainwater from appearing and flooding."

**Cost:** not having the money or not being sufficiently impacted by the problem / sufficiently understanding the benefit of implementing the solution, to spend the money.

Highlighted as a particular problem at present, with the cost of living crisis.

"Cost (installing drainage, purchasing permeable drive surfaces, purchase/maintaining garden/plants)."

## Other reasons, mentioned by a few include:

- A lack of time and potentially also inclination to investigate options
- Considering they don't have space to install any system
- Physically unable to install a solution
- Considering they have a need for having a permeable surface e.g. a driveway, and unaware of alternatives
- Being in rented accommodation and considering it to be a landlord's responsibility
- Considering it is 'not their role' to act (and if it was, then they would have been made aware of it by an organisation such as United Utilities, or the Government)

**Source:** Day 4, Task 7: Is there anything you personally could do to help manage rainwater at your property?

**Base:** 58 (*Qualitative research: small base size*).



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# Rainwater management: how should it be managed?

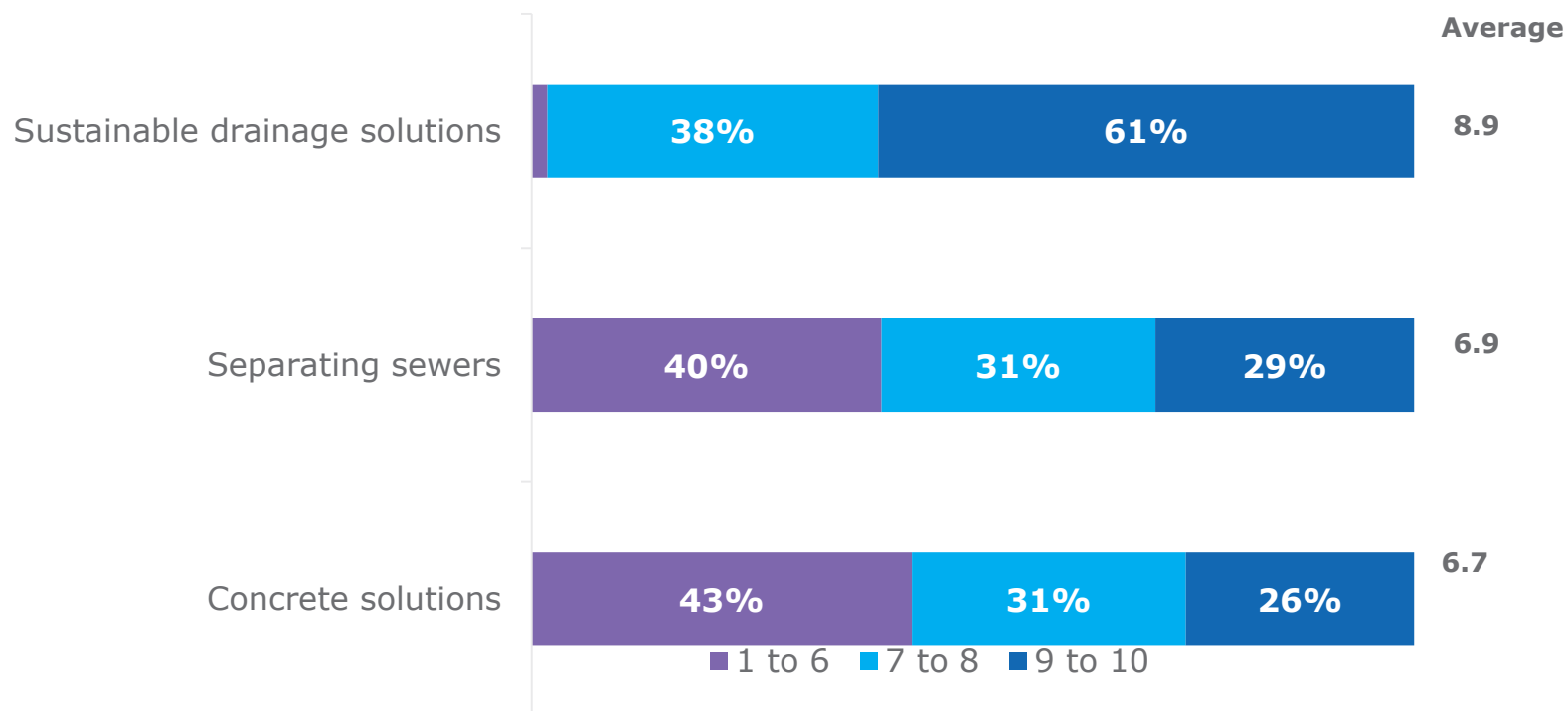




# Greatest support for SuDS

Respondents are far more likely to be in support of sustainable drainage solutions, than separating sewers and concrete solutions. There is little difference between separating sewers and concrete solutions and although some are very supportive (26-29%), a large proportion (40-43%) are less so.

## Support for the three main solutions



**Some suggest a combination is needed:** for example, separating sewers to be incorporated into new developments whereas the other solutions could be implemented in already built up areas.

Those that have experienced an issue with wastewater are more likely to be supportive of concrete solutions (7.6) and separating sewers (7.4), than those that haven't.

Why choose separating sewers over concrete solutions: more disruptive method short term, but it's worth it for the long term gains.

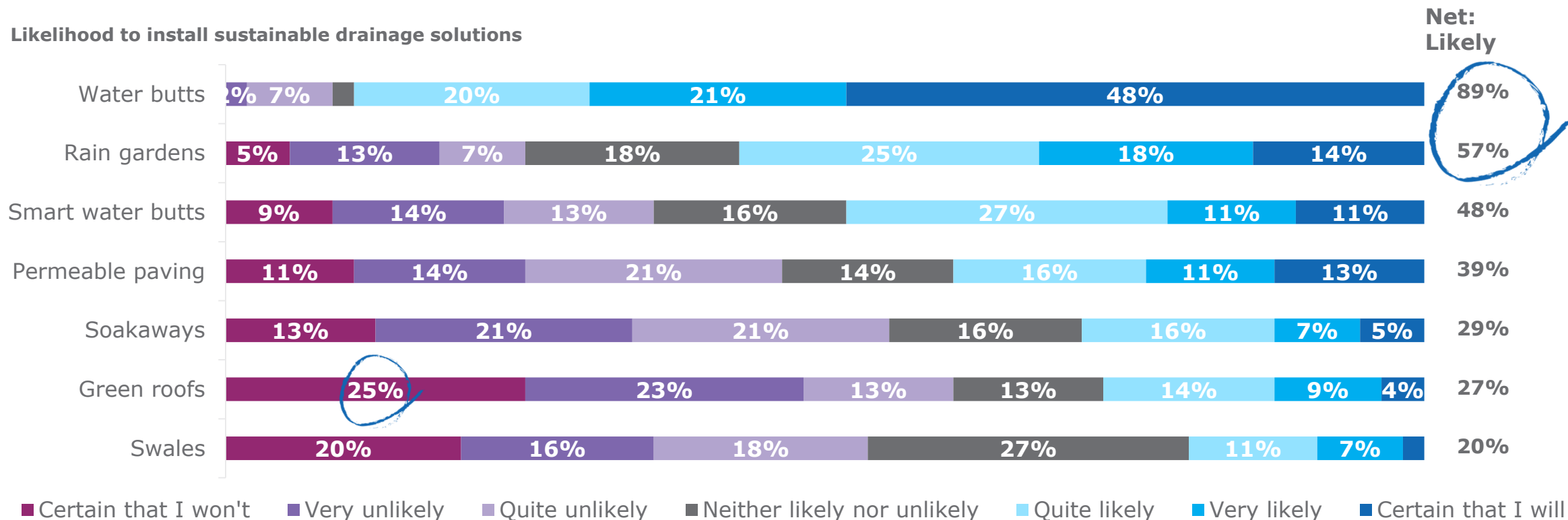
Why choose concrete solutions over separating sewers: push factors - separating sewers is too disruptive and costly. Concrete solutions are 'an eyesore' and considered less effective longer term, due to capacity limits.



# Majority likely to install only two solutions

During the community, respondents were presented with the costs, effectiveness, benefits and maintenance levels and asked to indicate their likelihood to install each solution. Nearly half were "certain" to install water butts, and the majority (89%) are likely. Respondents were least likely to install swales and green roofs.

## Likelihood to install sustainable drainage solutions



■ Certain that I won't ■ Very unlikely ■ Quite unlikely ■ Neither likely nor unlikely ■ Quite likely ■ Very likely ■ Certain that I will

Respondents said they were least likely to consider installing swales and most certain that they wouldn't install green roofs.





# Expense is a key barrier to installation

Across all the solutions, expense is a barrier to installation – especially for permeable paving and least so for water butts. Concerns about outdoor space are a barrier for swales, soakaways and rain gardens whilst there is a genuine concern around the structural safety of green roofs.

## Barriers to install SuDS solutions (unprompted)

Swales	Green roofs	Soakaways	Permeable paving	Smart water butts	Rain gardens	Water butts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too expensive to install</li> <li>• Consider landscape/size of garden wouldn't be suitable: needs community scale</li> <li>• Not near an appropriate water course</li> <li>• No need: consider drainage is not an issue</li> <li>• Concern it would use up garden / parking areas</li> <li>• Concern it could flood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too expensive to install &amp; maintain</li> <li>• Concern about damp / impact on roof and building structure / ongoing maintenance</li> <li>• Those living in rural areas with windy conditions, particularly concerned</li> <li>• Considered a "woke" fad</li> <li>• Consider they don't have an appropriate roof (no flat roofs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too expensive to install</li> <li>• Consider ineffective in a clay landscape</li> <li>• Would need someone to install it / looks technical to install</li> <li>• Disruptive to install and resolve if issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too expensive to install (especially with current cost of materials)</li> <li>• Would need to hire a contractor</li> <li>• Too disruptive to install</li> <li>• Aesthetics</li> <li>• <b>Some already have this:</b> but only a few instances where they have actively opted to install it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A general lack of awareness in why a smart water butt over a water butt (especially where many already have a water butt / a water butt is a cheaper option / a water butt is easier to install)</li> <li>• A lack of understanding of the overall concept and cost vs. benefit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider garden isn't suitable (size, landscape, contour)</li> <li>• Disruptive to existing garden</li> <li>• Concerned wouldn't be able to manage upkeep</li> <li>• Lack knowledge to ensure installed correctly</li> <li>• Lack expertise in selecting appropriate plants</li> <li>• Wouldn't want to maintain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Most likely to already have</b></li> <li>• More likely to be affordable: even more so if discount/grant available</li> <li>• Relatively fewer barriers</li> <li>• If no need to store and re-use water i.e. no garden to water</li> <li>• A few mention cost and unattractiveness</li> </ul>

Least likely to install

Most likely to install



# Rainwater management: how to motivate?







# Cost and assistance is most likely to encourage

To encourage households to install these options, respondents consider they need to be made available at as lower cost as possible – be it freely available or subsidised / incentivised (particularly water butts). It is also evident that not all have the confidence to install the solutions and would need assistance, potentially from United Utilities.

## What would encourage installation (unprompted)?

Across all methods the most likely thing to encourage installation (unprompted) is:

- Lower costs / offer grants / discounts off bill / materials available for free: particularly water butts
- United Utilities providing the materials / doing the installation

It is also evident that respondents lack the knowledge to install these options, as they say they would be encouraged by:

- United Utilities doing the installation
- Assistance and 'expert' advice on how to install
- Expert advice to be tailored to individual property

There is a genuine concern about the installation and maintenance of green roofs: the community would need reassurance that this wouldn't structurally damage their property & cause issues.

They are more likely to install if there is assistance with general maintenance.



For some, they consider nothing can be done to encourage them as they don't have the space. Or, they consider there is no need for them to do anything as they don't have an issue.





# A United Utilities service would motivate installation

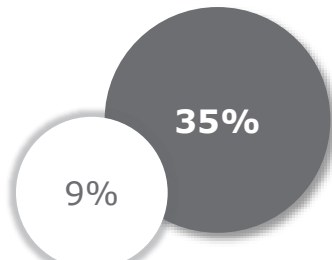
After their unprompted response, respondents were shown each of the five following incentives, in turn (from 1 to 5). They were then asked to rate how likely they would be to install SuDS with the incentive shown. A United Utilities service is most likely to motivate installation, with no need to add a discount (given the little difference between 4 and 5).

## Likelihood to install SuDS: Overview of incentives

**1. Prize Draw**

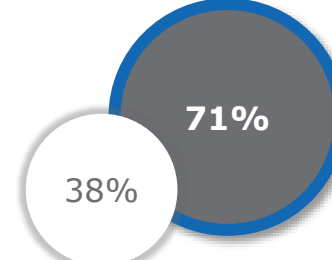
Customers that have installed sustainable drainage solutions and water re-use systems would be entered into a lottery prize draw.

On undertaking a one-off action (such as installing a sustainable drainage solution or water efficient device), customers will be entered into a prize draw which offers a large bill discount (up to 100%) for up to one year.

**4. United Utilities service**

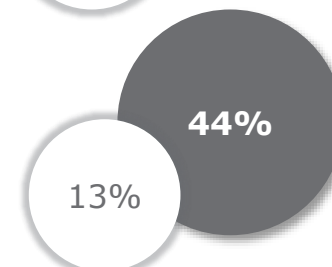
United Utilities could provide a service where a partner will install sustainable solutions at your premises e.g. a permeable driveway so you don't have to worry about installation. The installation costs would be covered by United Utilities.

**2. Small discount applied for a few years**


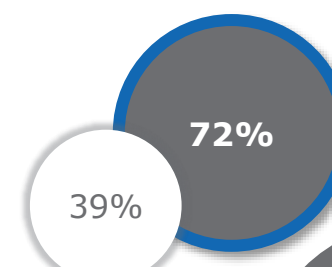
Customers that have installed sustainable drainage solutions and water re-use systems would be eligible for a small discount on their bill for multiple years.

When customers install a sustainable drainage solution, water efficiency device or water re-use system they will be placed on a discounted tariff. The more sustainable drainage solutions or water efficient systems you install, the greater the discount on your bill.

**5. United Utilities service with discount**

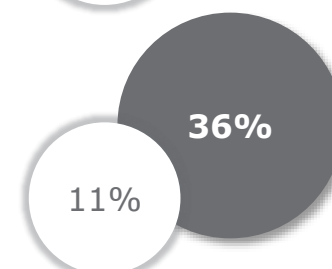
United Utilities could provide a service where a partner will install sustainable solutions at your premises e.g. a permeable driveway so, you don't have to worry about installation. The installation costs would be covered by United Utilities, and you would receive a small discount on your bill.

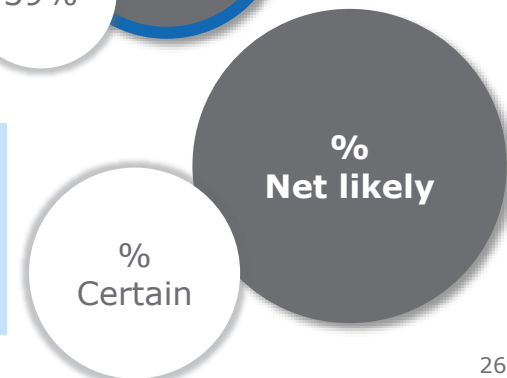
**3. Community reward**

Communities that have achieved a reduction in the amount of rainwater that is drained by the installation of sustainable drainage solutions would be eligible for a discount on their bills.

If the community as a whole reduces its amount of surface water drainage, a reward is given to all members of the community.

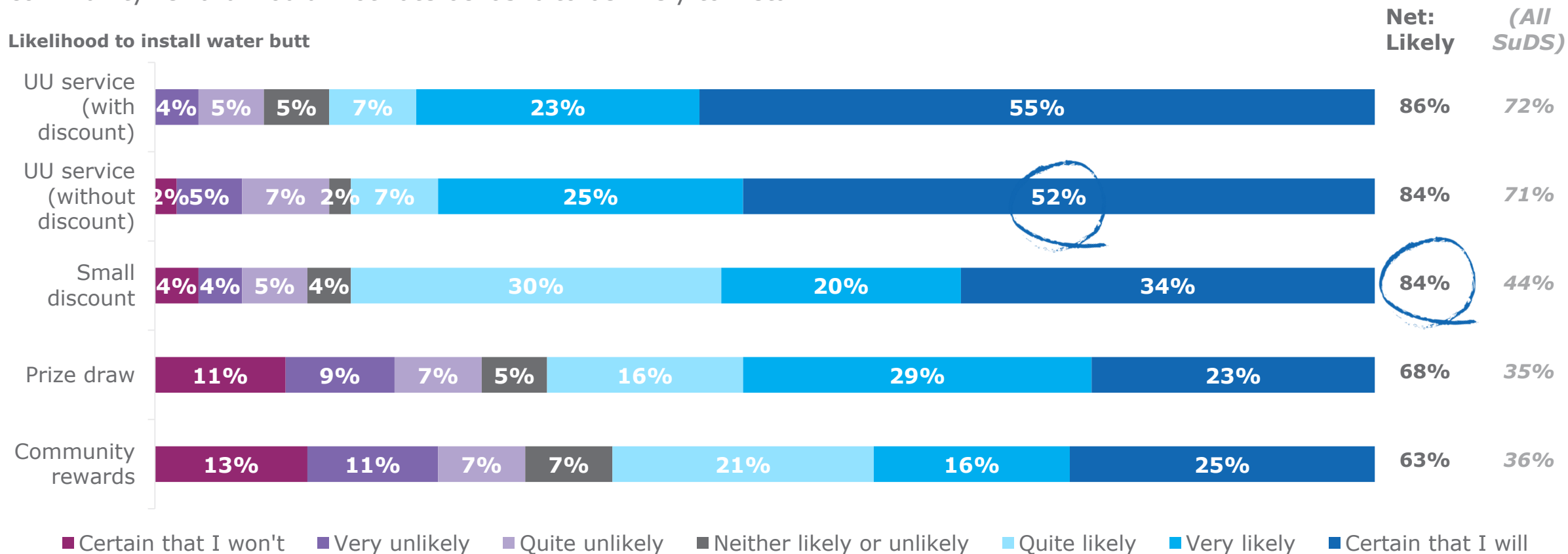
**The United Utilities service** is the greatest motivator. With little difference in including vs. excluding the discount (option 4 & 5), there is no need to also offer a discount.





# Water butt: all incentives likely to motivate majority

All of the incentive options are likely to encourage the majority to install water butts. Although the majority are certain they will install a water butt with a UU service, it is worth noting that a very high proportion, and a much higher than average (84% vs. 44%) are also likely to install with a small discount. Even a prize draw or community reward would motivate 68-63% to be likely to install.

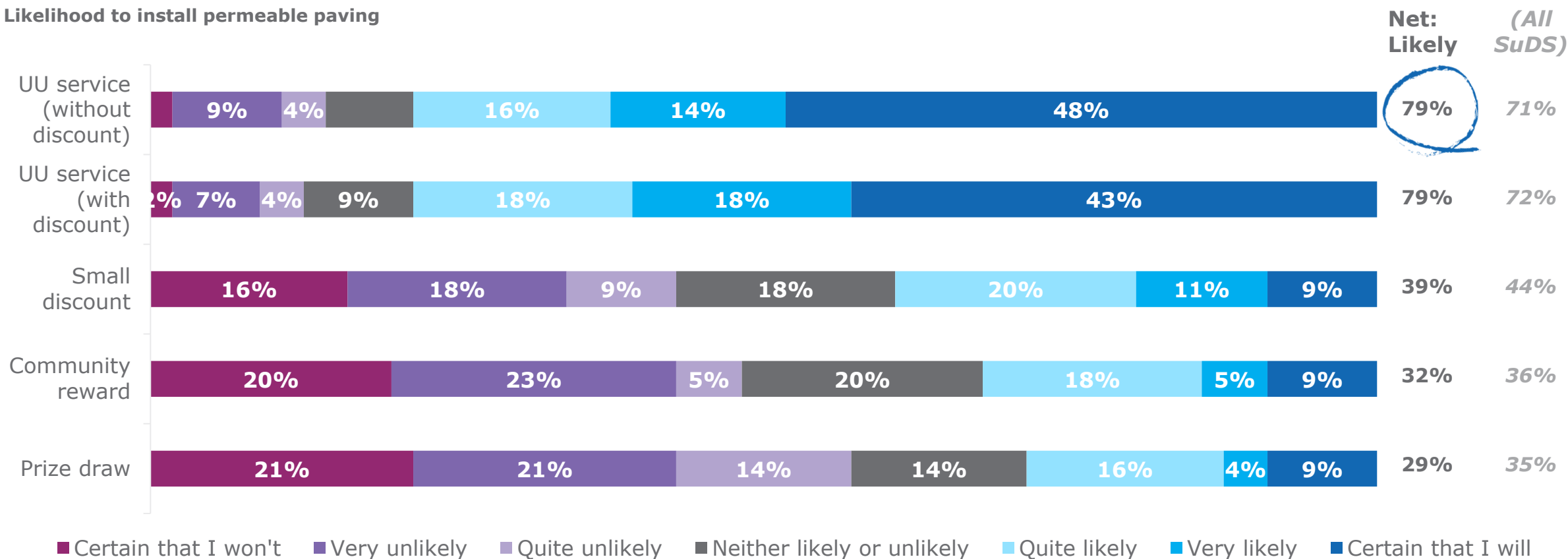




# Permeable paving: motivate by United Utilities Service

Although slightly lower than water butts, the United Utilities service appears to be a good motivator to install permeable paving. Particularly more so than the other incentive options, reflecting the perceived high cost and expected disruption of installing this SuDS option and therefore, greater need for assistance.

## Likelihood to install permeable paving

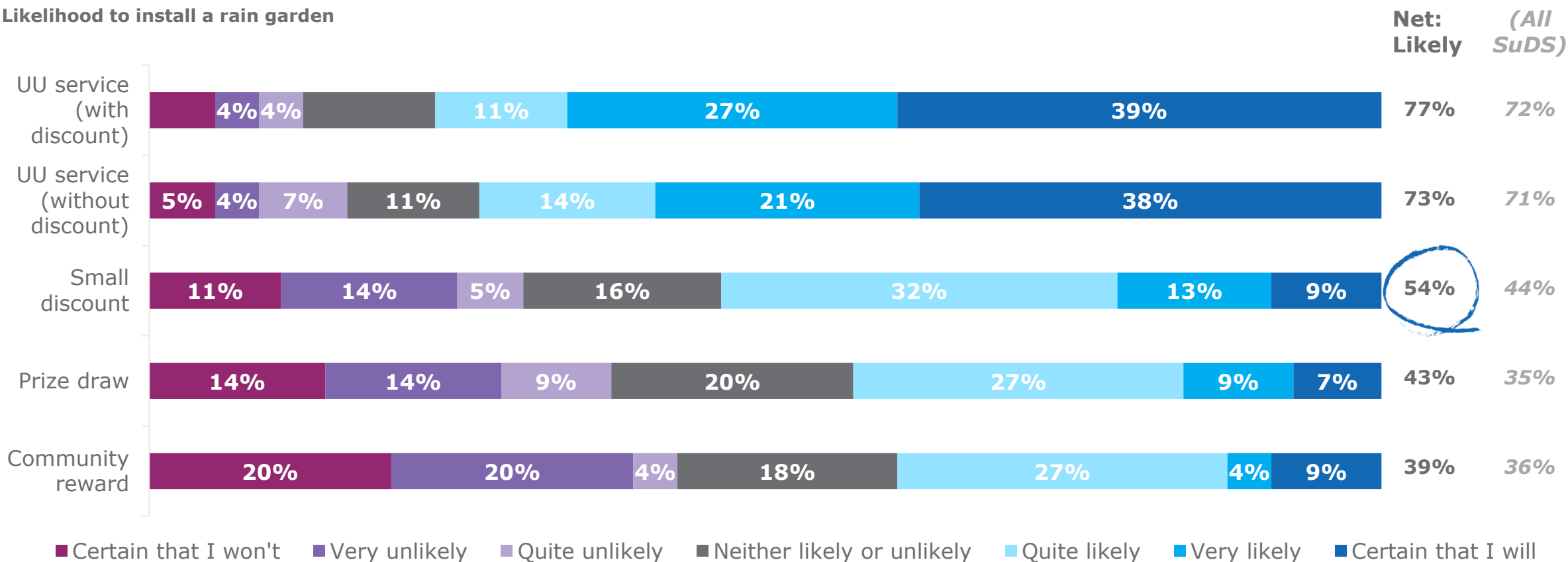




# Rain garden: motivated by United Utilities Service/Discount

Although a United Utilities service is most likely to encourage installation, the majority (54%) would still be likely to install a rain garden if offered a small discount for several years, and a prize draw would also be fairly effective (43% likely to install).

## Likelihood to install a rain garden

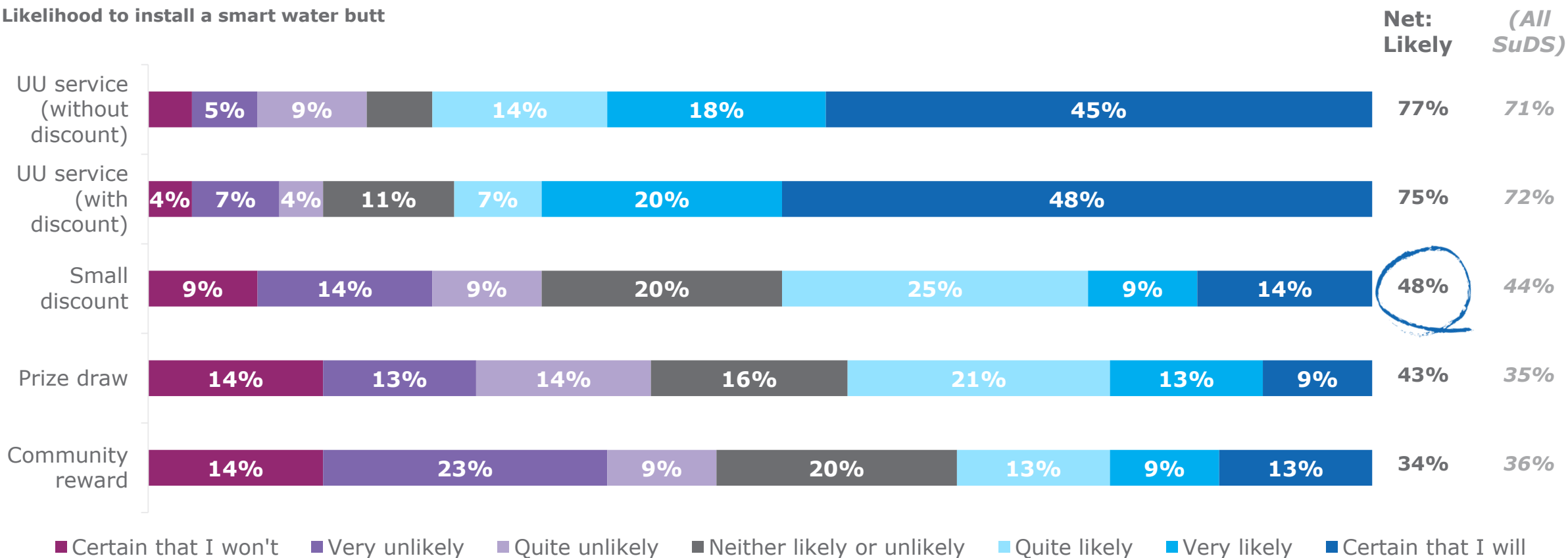




# Smart water butt: United Utilities Service / Discount

Likelihood to install a smart water butt is lower than for a standard water butt, particularly with the small discount incentive (48% vs. 84%). This likely reflects the perceived adding complexity of installing this method over the standard water butt, and lack of understanding of the comparative benefits of this solution.

## Likelihood to install a smart water butt

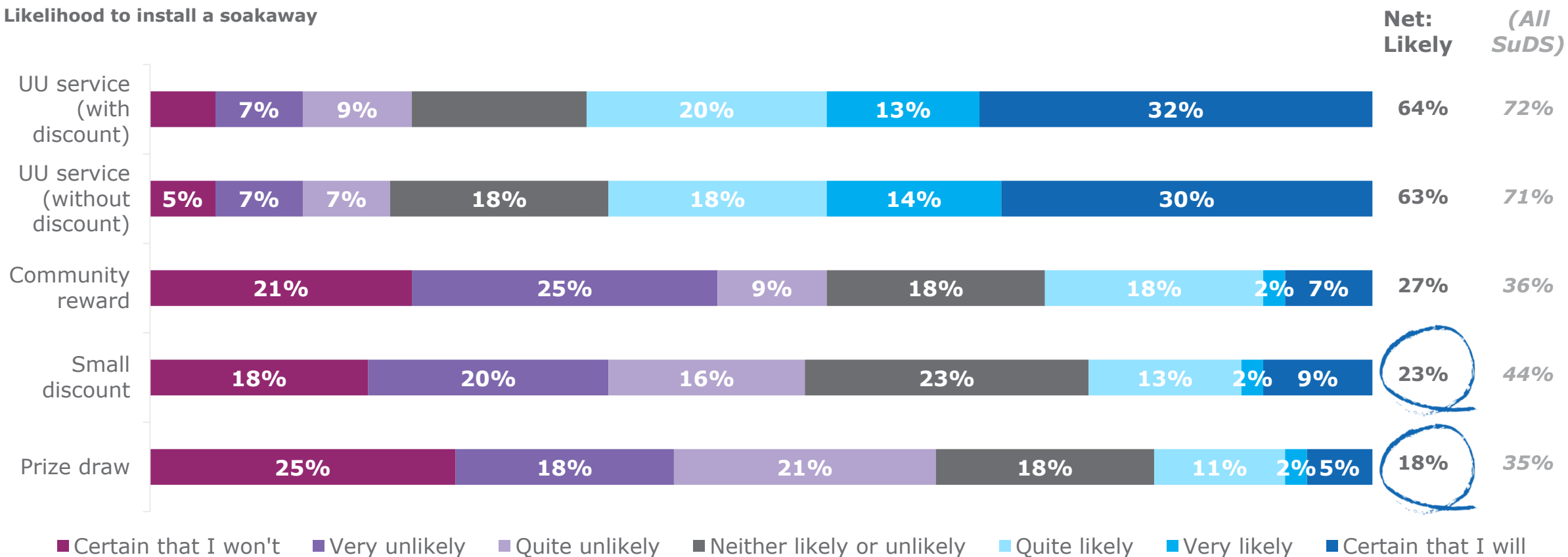




# Soakaway: United Utilities Service

The incentive options, particularly the small discount and prize draw, are less likely to motivate to install a soakaway than the SuDS previously shown, potentially due to additional barriers such as perceived lack of space. However, a United Utilities service could still encourage the majority (63%) to install this option.

## Likelihood to install a soakaway

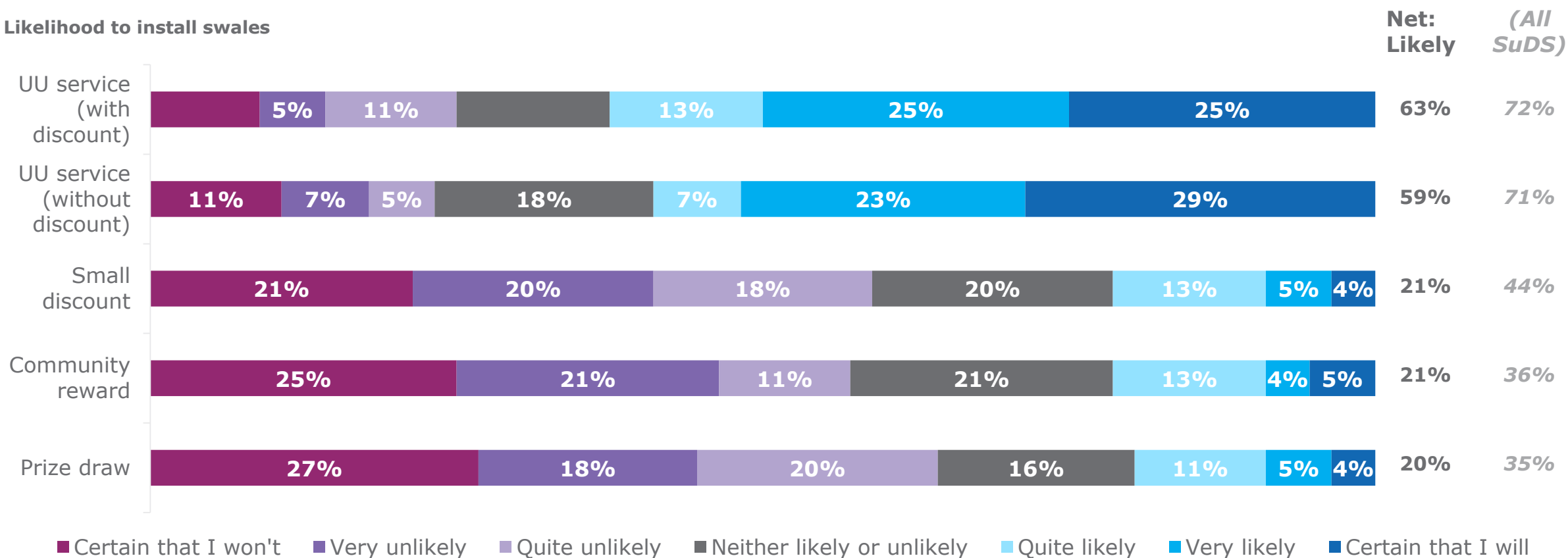




# Swales: United Utilities Service

Likelihood to install a swale, across the different incentive options is similar to a soakaway. This is with the exception of community reward which is likely to have even less of an impact for a swale (27% vs 21% likely), and therefore, potentially greater need to offer a United Utilities service to motivate customers.

## Likelihood to install swales



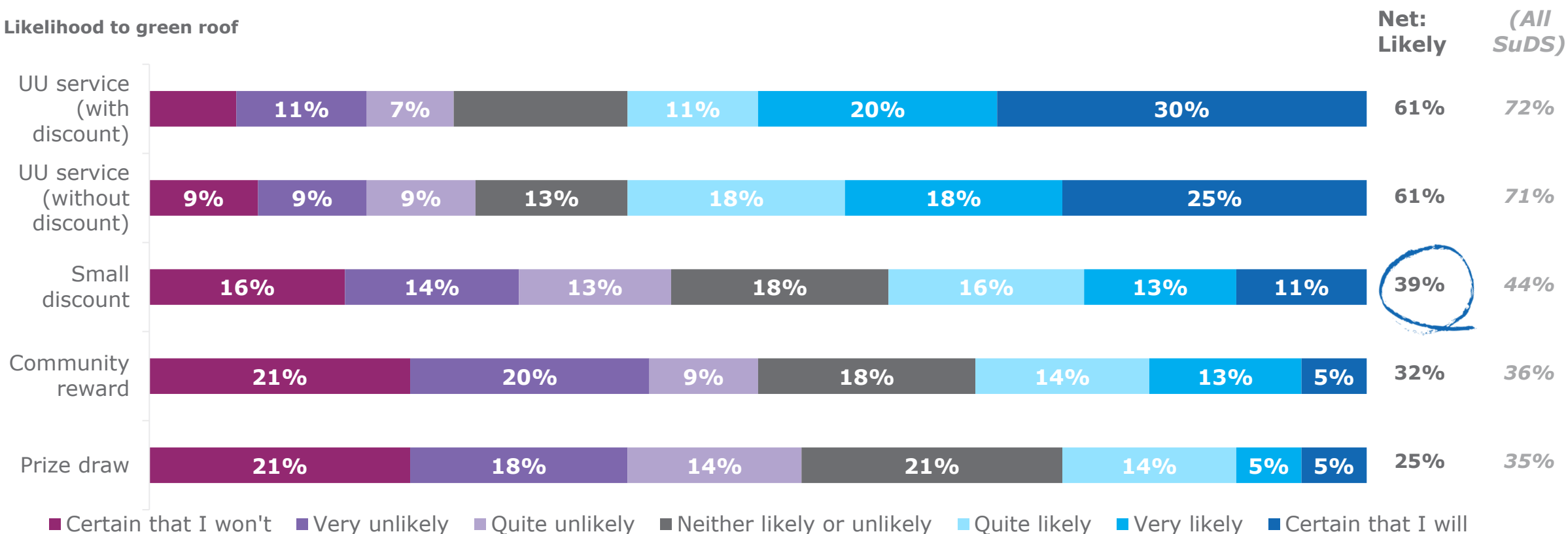




# Green roofs: United Utilities Service/Discount

To motivate the majority to install a green roof, United Utilities will need to offer a United Utilities service. However, the small discount and community reward are also moderately effective in encouraging installation (in comparison to installing a soakaway or swale).

## Likelihood to green roof





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# Rainwater management: how much assistance would be needed?

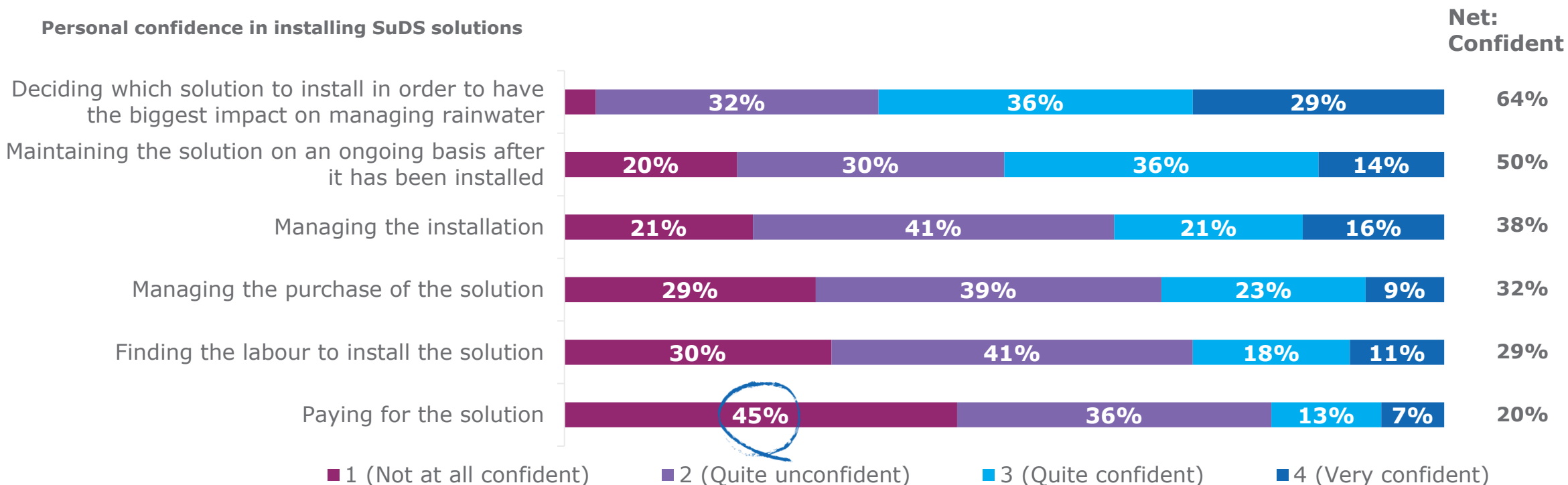




# Concern over paying and installing the solution

Although the majority consider they are confident in deciding *which* solution to install, the vast majority are unconfident about the other aspects of the process of installing solutions – particularly in paying for the solution (45%, not at all confident) and finding labour to install the solution (30%, not at all confident).

## Personal confidence in installing SuDS solutions



The lack of confidence in paying for the solution is due to the belief SuDS should be made freely available, available at discount, or through grant.





# The vast majority consider they require support

Across all solutions except water butts, the vast majority consider they require assistance. In particular, in paying for and installing permeable paving and then across most aspects of swales and soakaways.

## Require assistance in installing each SuDs solution

Label	Paying for the solution	Finding the labour to install the solution	Managing the purchase of the solution	Managing the installation	Maintaining the solution on an ongoing basis after it has been installed	Deciding which solution to install in order to have the biggest impact on managing rainwater	Happy to install without assistance
Water butts	5%	14%	12%	12%	10%	17%	74%
Smart water butts	45%	50%	38%	31%	29%	38%	24%
Green roofs	59%	48%	48%	52%	47%	57%	22%
Rain gardens	50%	55%	41%	47%	38%	52%	17%
Permeable paving	81%	71%	66%	48%	36%	47%	10%
Swales	69%	69%	62%	66%	45%	60%	9%
Soakaways	67%	71%	67%	64%	52%	55%	9%

Source: Day 6, Task 12: Where you think you may need further assistance for each SuD, please tick the grid [multicode – responses add to more than 100%]... Base: 56 (Qualitative research: small base size).

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# Retrofitting SuDS and prioritisation

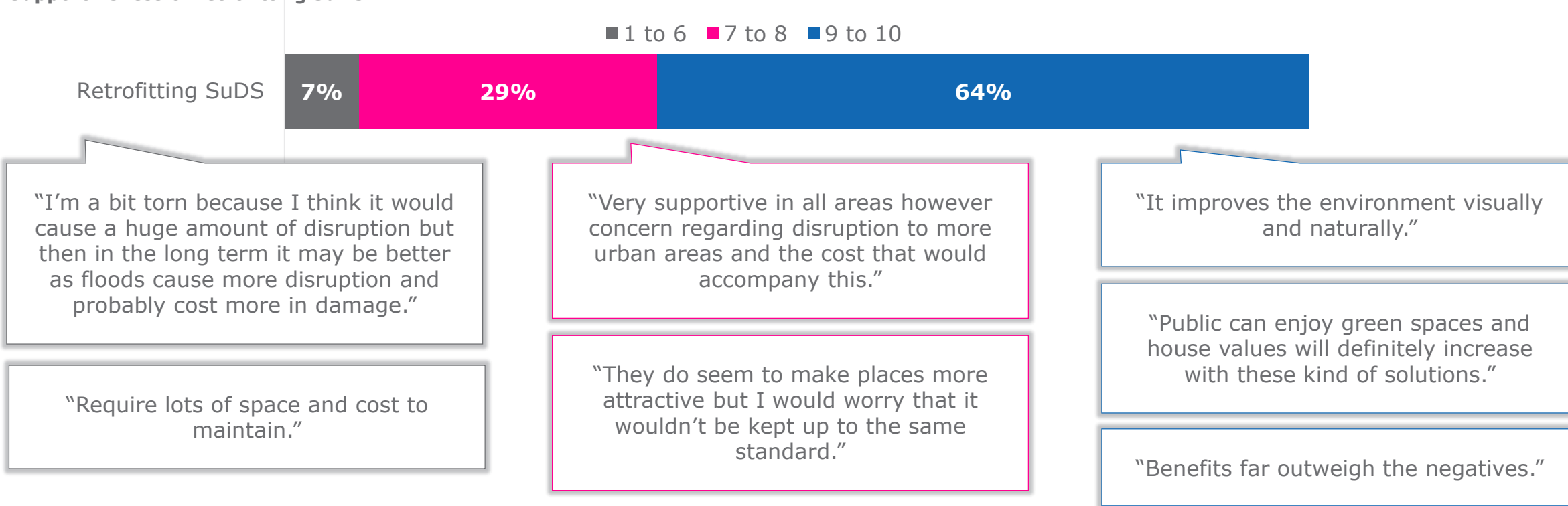




# Majority very supportive of retrofitting SuDS

The majority of respondents (64%) are very supportive of retrofitting SuDS, nearly half (47%) score 10 (out of 10). Respondents are largely supportive due to the attractiveness of the solution, and potential opportunity to be an asset to the community. Among those who are less supportive, concern is for the maintenance and upkeep.

## Supportiveness of retrofitting SuDS

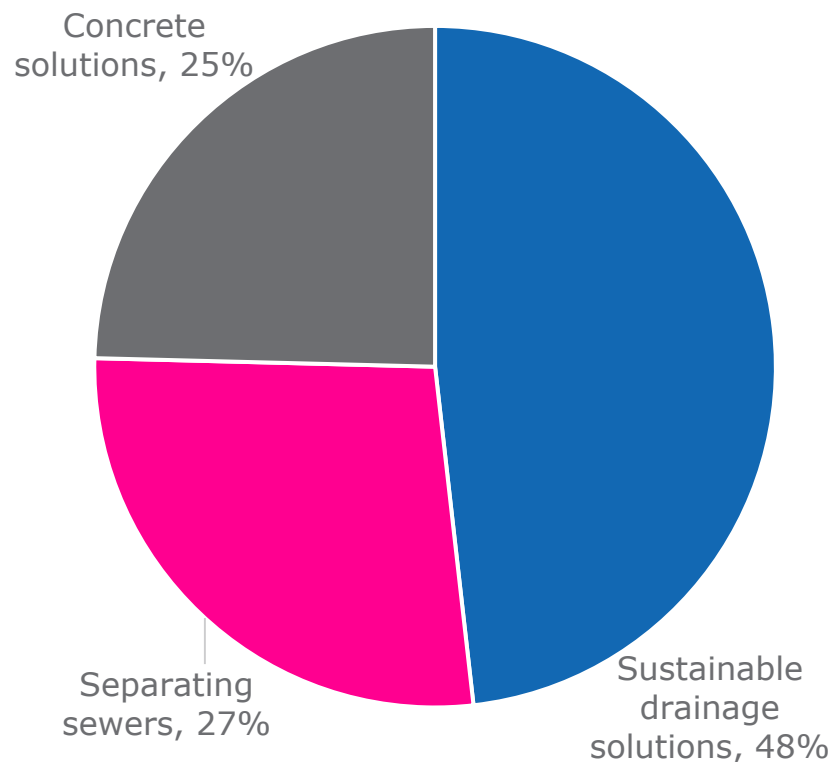




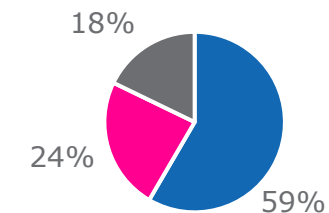
# Going forwards, UU to prioritise resource on SuDS

It is considered that United Utilities should spend 48% of their time and resources on sustainable drainage solutions, with the remaining time and resources split fairly evenly between separating sewers and concrete solutions. Even where respondents favour one option, there is support for spending time and resources on all options.

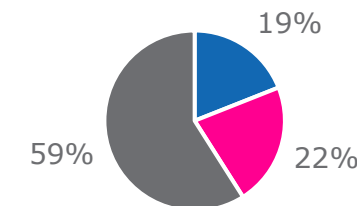
**% of time and resources United Utilities should spend on each solution:**



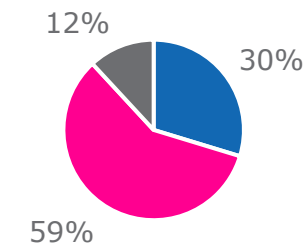
**71% of respondents** are in support of United Utilities spending the biggest share of their time and resources on sustainable drainage solutions. These 71% consider, 59% of UU time should be spend on SuDS.



**16% of respondents** are in support of United Utilities spending the biggest share of their time and resources on sustainable drainage solutions. These 16% consider, 59% of UU time should be spent on concrete solutions and 19% on SuDS.



**11% of respondents** are in support of United Utilities spending the biggest share of their time and resources on sustainable drainage solutions. These 11% consider, 59% of UU time should be spend on separating sewers and 30% on SuDS.





# Focus on SuDS but use a combination of methods

Due to sustainability and environment, the majority of support is for installing SuDS. However, respondents recognise that one size does not fit all and consider in certain circumstances, such as high flood risk areas, there may be a need to install concrete solutions or separate sewers. It is also considered that there is a need to be more proactive and forward thinking in planning in these solutions (particularly SuDS), into new developments.

## Why support SuDS?

**Sustainability, “a better option for the environment”, aesthetically pleasing and least disruption** are the main

reasons driving the support for prioritising SuDS. Some respondents also mention the benefit on the community.

Respondents view SuDS as a positive, long term solution.

However, even those in support of SuDS consider there is a need to use more than one method.

Only 2 respondents allocate more than 90% of time to SuDS. This is because:

- It is considered there isn't always space for SuDS, so other options may have to be used.
- Some areas have a real flooding issue, and in these instances more effective action may need to be taken i.e. concrete solutions or separating sewers, despite the preference for SuDS.
- Long term, some consider that although it would be disruptive, there is a need to upgrade the sewage network and this could be done in parallel.

“I am all for the green approach and would ideally like to forget the other two approaches. However, you can't ignore the higher chance of success with the first two approaches.”



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# Conclusions





# Conclusions

## 1) Rainfall management is not a topic that has been given much consideration: respondents lack awareness.

- Awareness of United Utilities providing safe drinking water is high. Beyond this, awareness is lower with some clear misconceptions.
- Awareness of the sewage network is very low, with a lack of understanding in how it works, and difference in effectiveness.
- Although able to make assumptions (United Utilities, Local Council, Government and Environment Agency), accurate knowledge of which organisations are involved in rainfall management is low.

## 2) Due to the lack of awareness, there is a need for education. Where education takes place (i.e. the online community), household members are interested and engaged.

- Throughout the community, basic showcards (e.g. on the sewage network) were effective in informing and raising awareness.
- Once informed, the majority acknowledged that rainfall needs to be managed, and will become more of an issue in the future.

## 3) The majority agree there is a need to manage rainwater in order to prevent overflowing, flooding and pollution.

- Those disagreeing to management were concerned about water shortages and unsure how rainwater management works; with education, they could potentially be converted.
- Justification for rainwater management is limited to social and economic impacts of flooding for individuals and companies; there is a lack of consideration to impact on water companies.

## 4) It is considered that rainfall management requires collective action with an organisation(s) responsible for leading the way.

- There is a willingness to act however, action is not taken due to a lack of understanding. An organisation, potentially United Utilities, is needed to take the lead on raising awareness and education.
- Involvement at a personal level is fairly limited to installing a water butt. Respondents are more confident in talking about how they can be more water conscious e.g. turn tap off while brushing teeth suggesting that whatever education raising has been done in this space, should be mirrored re. rainwater management.
- In addition to knowledge, cost is a further barrier with households not having the money, not being sufficiently impacted by the problem, or not sufficiently understanding the benefit, to prompt them to act.

## 5) More support for SuDS than separating sewers and concrete solutions although participants consider a combination of methods is required

- At a personal level, individuals are most likely to install a water butt or rain garden, with the greatest resistance to swales, green roofs and soakaways.
- Although there is a willingness to help, awareness and cost are a barrier to installation. **Individuals need to be motivated to act.**

## 6) A United Utilities service would be most effective in motivating installation across the SuDS solutions

- There is no need to offer a discount alongside an installation service
- Not all SuDS will require a full UU service, most respondents would be motivated to install a water butt through any of the proposed incentive options.

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# Appendix





# Ofwat standards for high-quality research

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 in order to gather views on rainfall management (household and non-household views). In order to further understand willingness to act, where assistance may be required, and expectations of United Utilities. Findings are expected to inform key strategies.

## Fit for purpose

This research was designed with accessibility and engagement front of mind. For all audiences videos and visual stimulus was carefully designed to ensure complex information was displayed in a way customers could understand, and found engaging. For householders this information was introduced gradually, enabling consumers to build their knowledge steadily, over the course of an online community. For business owners, this information was conveyed via one-to-one in-depth interviews, where there was an opportunity to discuss understanding. Prior to research commencing, design and stimulus was checked for engagement and understanding via colleagues and in-house future bill payers.

## Ethnical

This research was conducted by DJS Research who are a member of the Market Research Society.

## Neutrally designed

Every effort has been made to ensure that the research is neutral and free from bias.

## Inclusive

Research was inclusive by engaging with household members, business owners and future bill payers. Research among household members was via an online community but tele/zoom depth interviews were offered to ensure that all could take part, including those digitally vulnerable. Non-householder research took place via tele/zoom depths. The discussion and stimulus were designed to be accessible as possible.

Quotas on the household sample ensured a mix from across the UU region, diverse age, gender, SEG, geography, age of property, urban/rural/coastal, metered/unmetered, personal views and values concerning the environment/issues with excess water. With quotas set to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable customers (physical impairment and/or in areas) and future customers (18- to 24-year-olds who are not yet paying the bill).

Quotas on the non-household sample ensured a mix by business size, and sector.