Appendix 1: Results from public survey on seafront posters.

Bathing Water Quality Consultation

Research and Engagement, Corporate Services

April 2023

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Introduction

Background and methodology

Campaigners from Stop the Sewage Southsea have been raising concerns over the quality of bathing water in the area and whether Southern Water have made releases. Following conversations with Portsmouth City Council, the council's regulatory services have issued two posters, one that is updated when a release has been made and one to alert the public to what the council are doing. This consultation aimed to gather feedback from the public on what they think about the posters and whether the posters are being utilised.

A quantitative online survey launched on Thursday 9 March 2023 and closed on Sunday 26 March 2023.

Objectives

The main aims of the research are to:

- To identify whether the posters are raising awareness of water quality
- To understand how the posters are being used by the public
- To find out what the public think about the posters
- To identify any improvements that could be made to the work that the council is doing around informing people about bathing water quality and releases

Response rate

In total the survey received 418 responses. It is difficult to calculate the statistical robustness of this consultation because it is unclear how many individuals interact with the seafront. However, assuming a "total population" of 170,818 (the latest 2021 census data from the Office for National Statistics for people aged 16+ in Portsmouth) this volume of responses ensures a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of 5%, within acceptable parameters, although this does exclude the visitor population.

Management summary - perceptions and finding information

Perceptions on bathing water quality

- Respondents are concerned about bathing quality in the local area – 92% of respondents are 'very concerned'. They think that the storm water releases have the biggest impact on bathing water quality, followed by the poor condition of sewers.

- The vast majority of respondents think that water companies are responsible for cleaning up bathing waters (97%) however they also think that Central Government (71%) and the Environment Agency (69%) share the responsibility. Under half of respondents (44%) think that Portsmouth City Council are responsible for cleaning up bathing waters.

Finding information

- Almost two thirds of respondents regularly look for infomation about bathing water quality (63%). The Southern Water Beachbuoy website is the most popular place they look for information (59%) followed by the Safer Seas & Rivers Service app (38%). A fifth are using the storm overflow release posters provided by the council. Over a third of respondents (35%) look elsewhere for information for example social media groups and forums (i.e Surfers Against Sewers and Hayling Sewage Watch) and carrying out a visual inspection before bathing in the water.

- Finding out live information on a smart device is the preferred way of finding information about bathing water quality amongst respondents (87%), just under half would like a digital screen on the seafront linked to Beachbuoy and 30% would like to use the council's storm overflow map.

- The majority of respondents think it is positive that the council are informing people about sewage being released into the Solent however they wish they were doing more (57%) and a further 29% feel positive and are glad the council are doing something.

Management summary – Poster 1 awareness

Poster one - Storm overflow release poster information

- The majority of respondents have not seen the storm overflow releases posters (85%). Respondents like that the poster gives useful and concise information that is easy to digest. Some respondents particularly like that it features a swimmer which reflects the demographic of people who are affected. Furthermore, respondents think it is positive that the poster highlights the issue and demonstrates the councils commitment to publish information on sewage releases.

- Some respondents feel the poster could be improved through the use of clearer language (i.e. use 'sewage' in the terminology) and graphics, and be made more attractive by adding bolder, eye catching colours such as red with many saying 'it's too blue'. A key improvement was also to add a QR code that links to live updates of bathing water quality or to a website where swimmers can sign up to alerts of when sewage has been released.

- Over two-thirds of respondents who had already seen the poster think it is useful (67%), and 70% of those who were previously unaware of the poster think they are likely to make use of it moving forwards.

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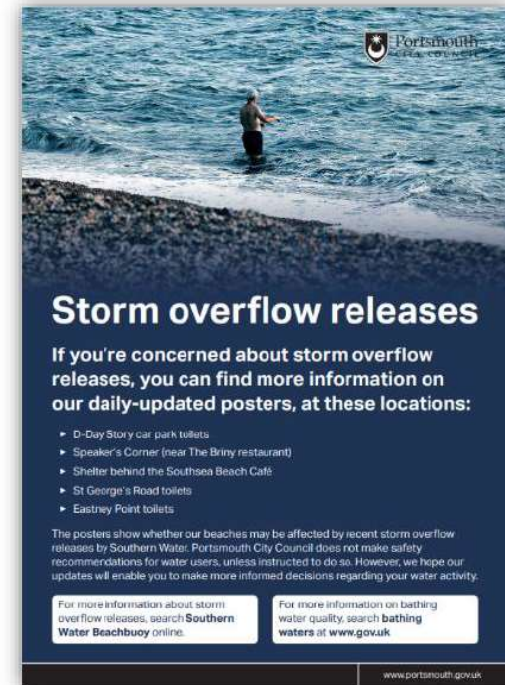
Management summary – Poster 2 awareness

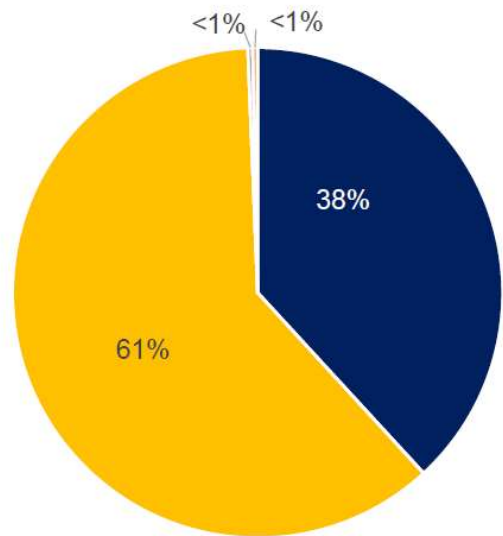## Poster two - Storm overflow release map

- Again, the majority of respondents were not aware of this poster (80%). Of those that have 83% find it useful and 72% of those who were previously unaware of the poster think they are likely to make use of it moving forwards.

- Respondents like that the poster is clear, easy to understand and informative. They like that it highlights areas that sewage is released and that it is updated daily and include a date to show this. The traffic light system makes it easy to understand when it is safe to swim.

- Suggested improvements for this poster are to improve the map itself (e.g. the area shown or including drift direction arrows), to make the information clearer and more eye catching, and to have more posters.

- Some respondents talked about online information being more up-to-date and suggested not having the posters overall, instead having this information on a digital platform with daily updates so that they can make an informed choice before leaving home.
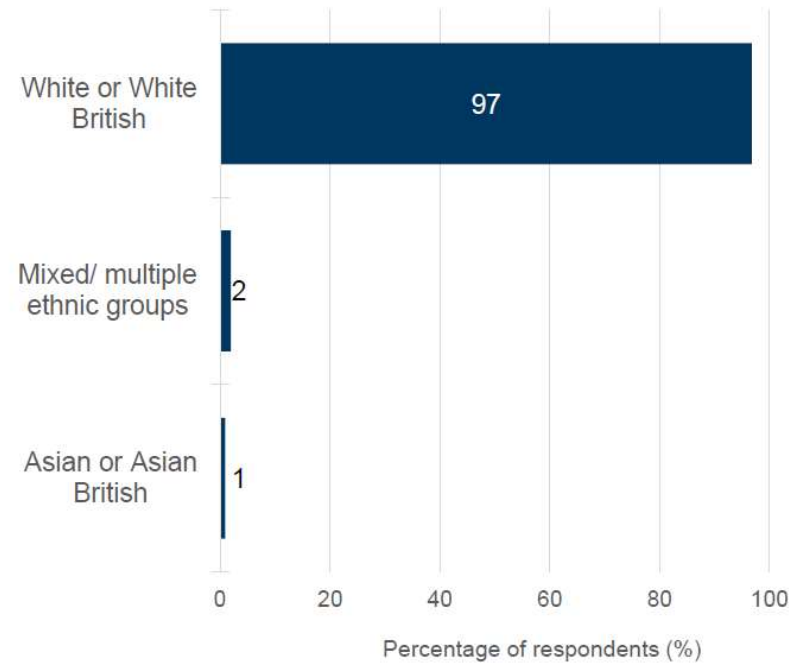
Sex and ethnicity

Q: **'What is your sex?'** | Base: Total sample (317)

Q: **'Which ethnic group do you belong to?'** | Base: Total sample (309)

Legend: ■ Male ■ Female ■ Intersex ■ Prefer to self-describe

<1% <1%

Male: 38%
Female: 61%

Ethnic group (Percentage of respondents (%)):
- White or White British: 97
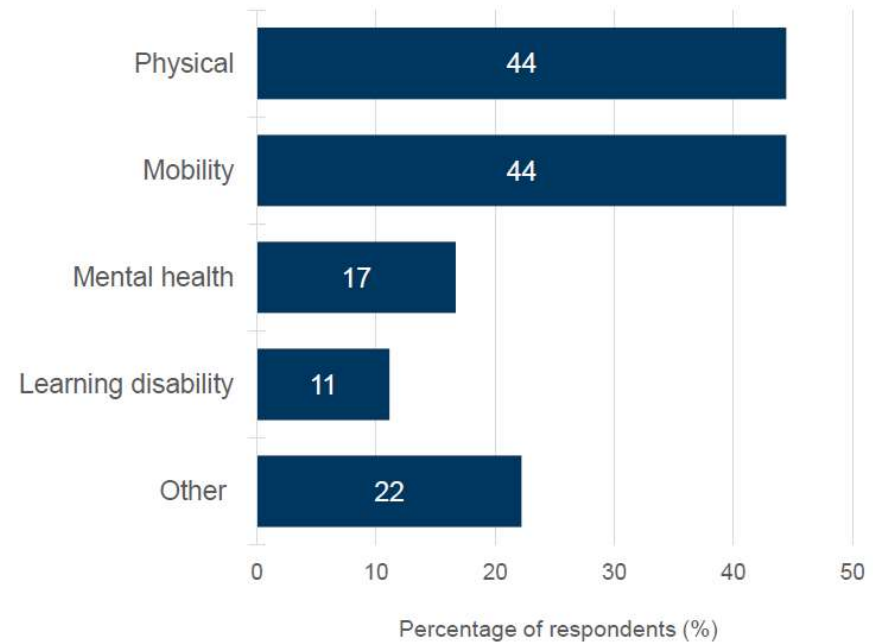- Mixed/ multiple ethnic groups: 2
- Asian or Asian British: 1

- The majority of respondents in the sample were female (61%) whilst 38% were male
- The vast majority of respondents in the sample were White or White British (97%) whilst 2% were mixed or multiple ethnic groups and 1% were Asian or Asian British

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Disability

Q: *'Do you consider yourself to have a disability under the Equality Act 2010?'* | Base: Total sample (314)
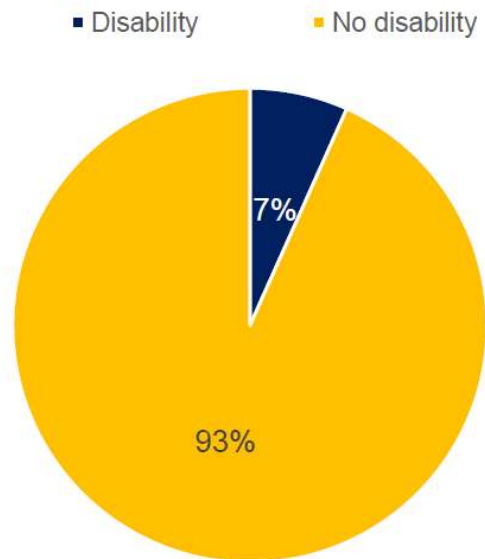
Q: *'What type of disability do you have?'* | Base: Those with a disability (18*) | Caution small base

- Disability
- No disability

7%
93%

Type	Percentage
Physical	44
Mobility	44
Mental health	17
Learning disability	11
Other	22

Percentage of respondents (%)

- The majority of respondents in the sample do not have a disability (93%) whilst 7% do
- Of those respondents with a disability, the most common types are physical and mobility disabilities (44%)

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Age and smartphone access

Q: **'What is your age group?'** | Base: Total sample (319)
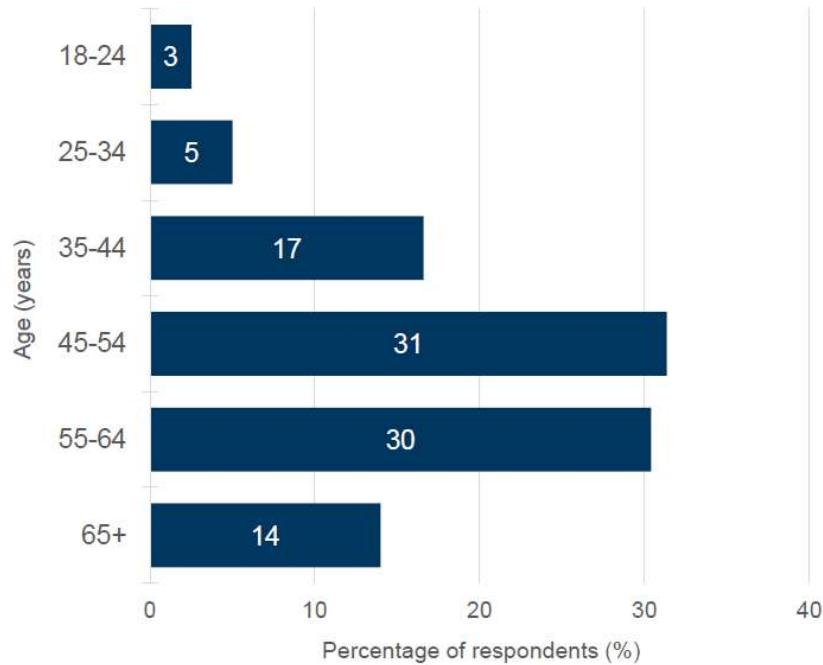
Q: **'Do you have a smartphone with access to the internet?'** | Base: Total sample (344)
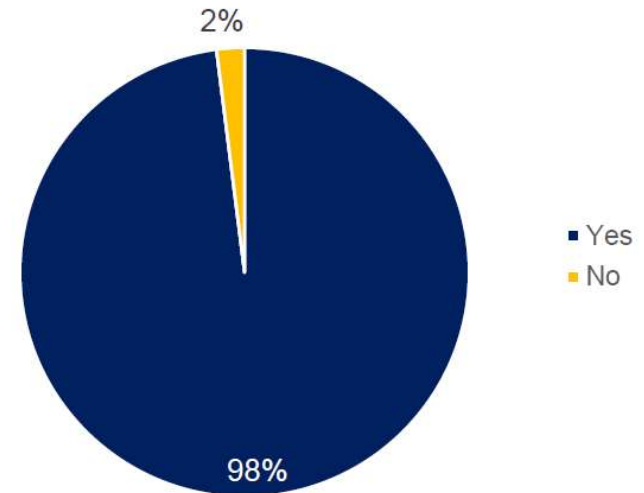
Age (years)

Age group	Percentage of respondents (%)
18-24	3
25-34	5
35-44	17
45-54	31
55-64	30
65+	14

Percentage of respondents (%)

- Yes: 98%
- No: 2%

- There is good representation in the sample across all age groups however the majority of respondents are aged between 45 and 64 (61%)
- Almost all respondents in the sample have a smartphone with access to the internet (98%)

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Residential status & beach use

Q: *'Are you...?'* | Base: Total sample (418)
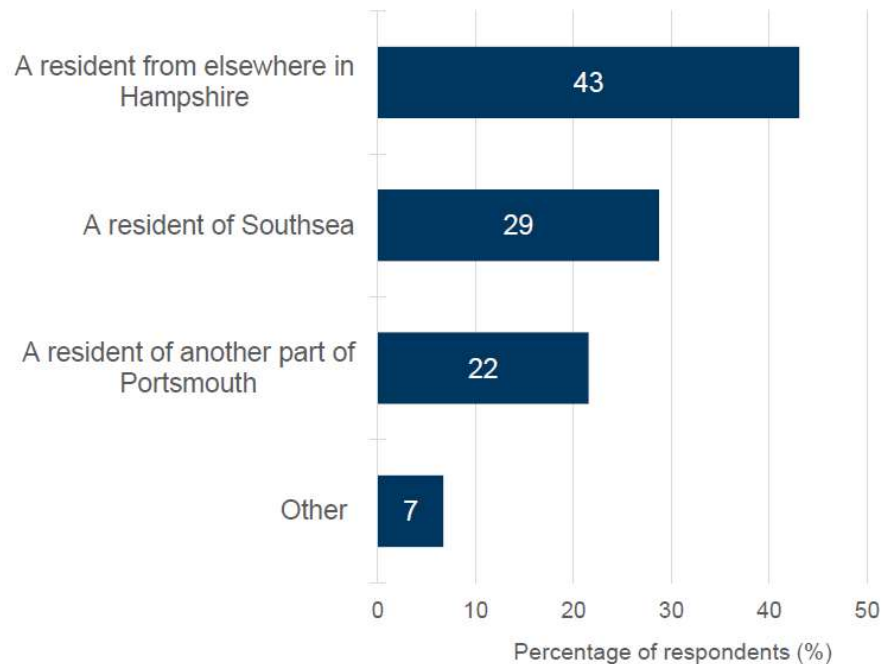
Q: *'Which of the following describes you?'* | Base: Total sample (410)

- The largest proportion of respondents in the sample are not residents of Portsmouth but live else where in Hampshire (43%)
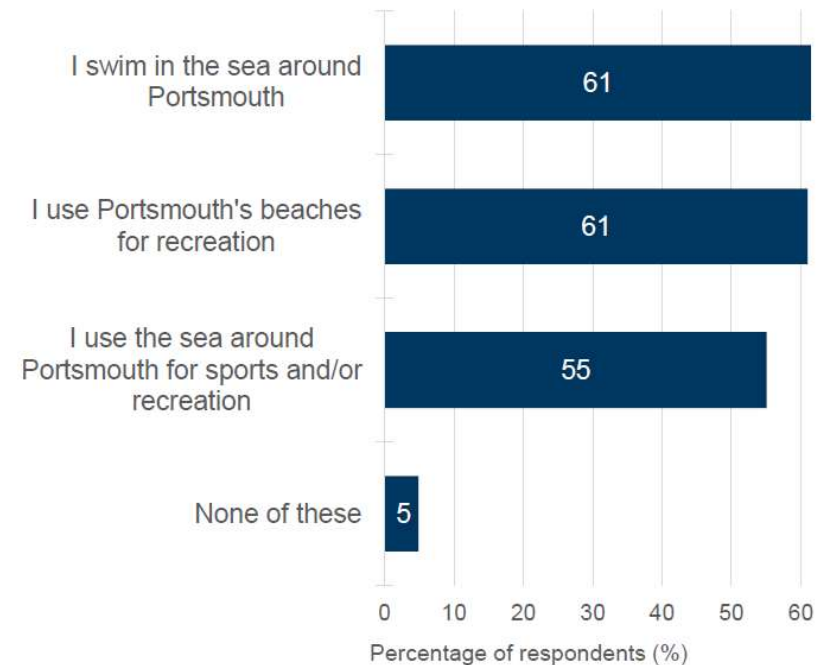- Just under a third of respondents are residents of Southsea (29%) and just under a quarter are a resident of another part of Portsmouth (22%). Other respondents include residents of Chichester in West Sussex
- A majority of respondents swim in the sea around Portsmouth (61%) and use Portsmouth's beaches for recreation (61%), and just over half use the sea for both sports and/or recreation (55%)

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Time of year

Q: *'Generally, what time of year do you use the sea around Portsmouth?'* | *Base: Respondents who swim or use the sea for sports/recreation around Portsmouth: Total sample (333) | Southsea resident (100) Portsmouth resident (64) Hampshire resident (153) Other (24*) *Caution small base*
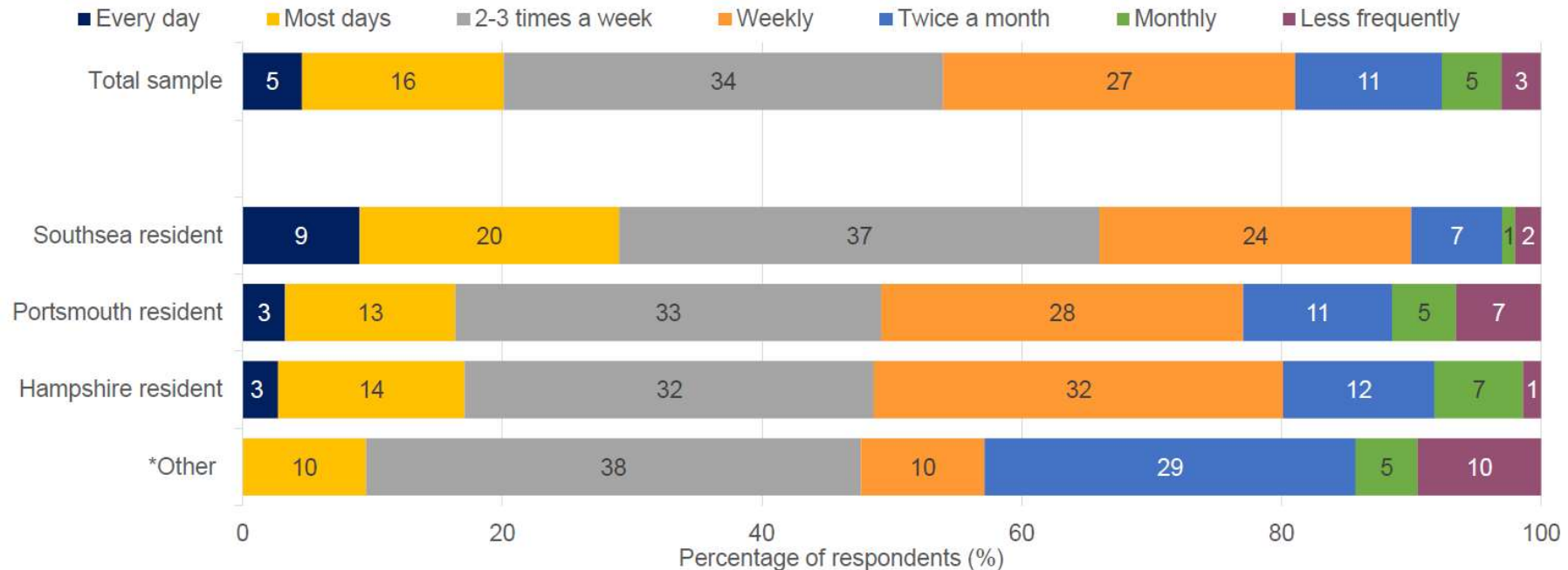
Legend: ■ All year round ■ Only during bathing season ■ At another time of year

Total sample
- All year round: 63
- Only during bathing season: 35
- At another time of year: 3

Southsea resident
- All year round: 65
- Only during bathing season: 32
- At another time of year: 3

Portsmouth resident
- All year round: 65
- Only during bathing season: 37
- At another time of year: 2

Hampshire resident
- All year round: 64
- Only during bathing season: 36
- At another time of year: 3

*Other
- All year round: 45
- Only during bathing season: 55
- At another time of year: 9

Percentage of respondents (%)

- Nearly two thirds of respondents are using the sea all year round (63%) whilst just over a third use it during the bathing season only (35%)
- Swimmers who live outside of Hampshire are more likely to use the sea around Portsmouth during bathing season only, whilst there is little difference between respondents who live within the Hampshire area and the time of year they use the sea

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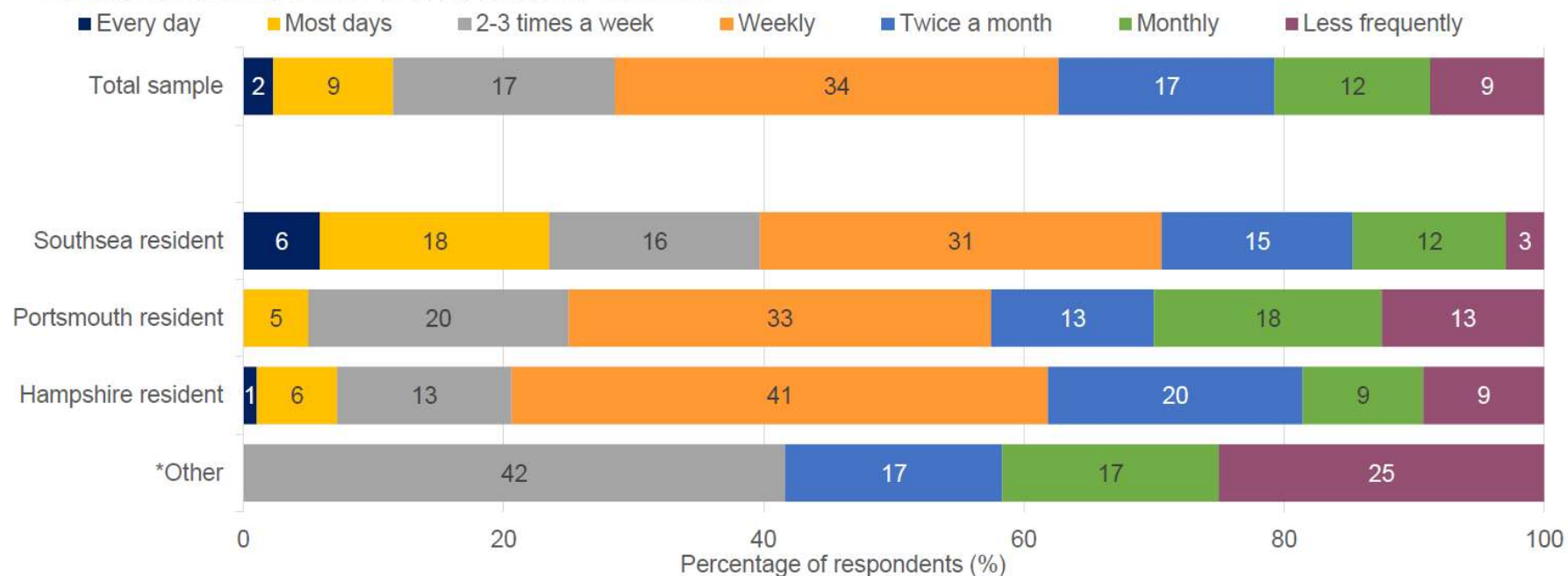
Using the sea during bathing season

Q: *'How frequently do you use the sea during the bathing season (May to Sept)?'* | Base: Respondents who use the sea all year round or during bathing season – Total sample (328) from top to bottom (100) | (61) | (146) | (21*) *Caution small base

Legend: ■ Every day ■ Most days ■ 2-3 times a week ■ Weekly ■ Twice a month ■ Monthly ■ Less frequently

Category	Every day	Most days	2-3 times a week	Weekly	Twice a month	Monthly	Less frequently
Total sample	5	16	34	27	11	5	3
Southsea resident	9	20	37	24	7	1	2
Portsmouth resident	3	13	33	28	11	5	7
Hampshire resident	3	14	32	32	12	7	1
*Other		10	38	10	29	5	10

Percentage of respondents (%)

- The majority of respondents who use the sea during bathing season do so at least weekly (82%) with over a fifth of respondents swimming daily or most days (21%)
- Local residents swim more frequently compared to those from outside of Southsea – 29% of Southsea residents swim 'most days' or 'every day' compared to just 16% of those from Portsmouth and 17% of those from Hampshire

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# Using the sea <u>outside of</u> bathing season

Q: **'How frequently do you use the sea at <u>other times of year</u> (Oct to April)?'** | Base: Respondents who use the sea all year round or outside of bathing season – Total sample (217) from top to bottom (68) | (40) | (97) | (12*) *Caution small base

■ Every day ■ Most days ■ 2-3 times a week ■ Weekly ■ Twice a month ■ Monthly ■ Less frequently

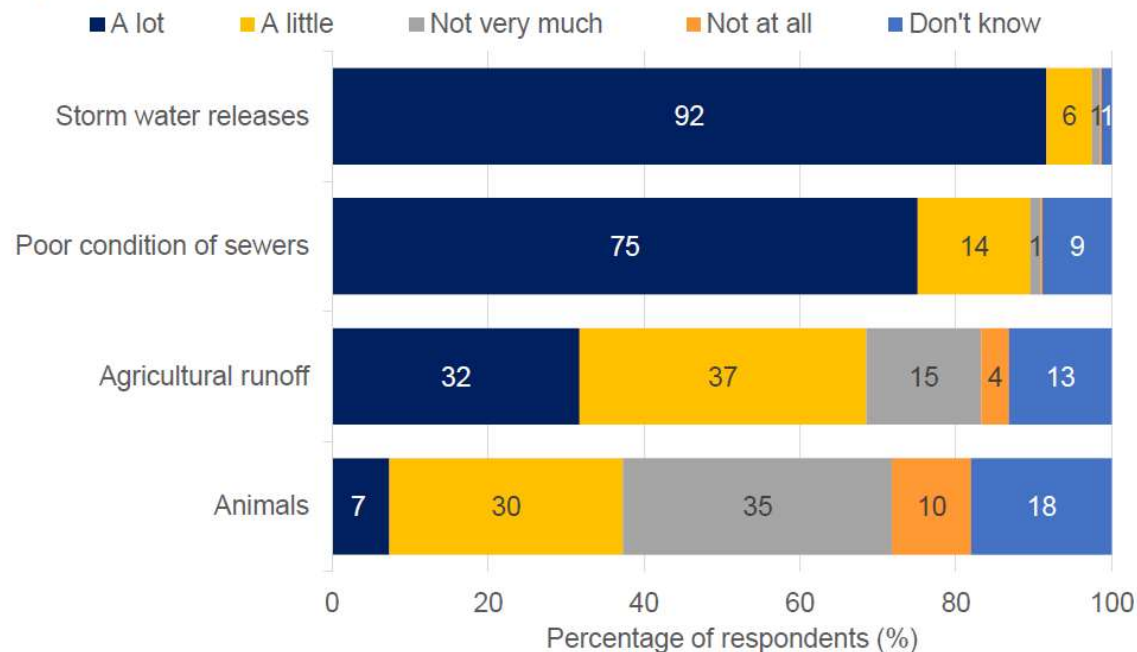|	Every day	Most days	2-3 times a week	Weekly	Twice a month	Monthly	Less frequently
Total sample	2	9	17	34	17	12	9
Southsea resident	6	18	16	31	15	12	3
Portsmouth resident		5	20	33	13	18	13
Hampshire resident	1	6	13	41	20	9	9
*Other			42		17	17	25

Percentage of respondents (%)

- Outside of bathing season, whilst respondents swim less frequently than during bathing season, a majority are swimming at least weekly (62%)
- Southsea residents are swimming outside of bathing season most frequently; just under a quarter still use the sea 'most days' or 'every day' compared to 5% of Portsmouth residents and 7% of Hampshire residents doing so
- Respondents of areas outside of Hampshire use the sea least frequently outside of bathing season

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Concern and impact on bathing water quality

Q: *'How concerned are you about bathing water quality in the local area?'* | Base: Total sample (403)
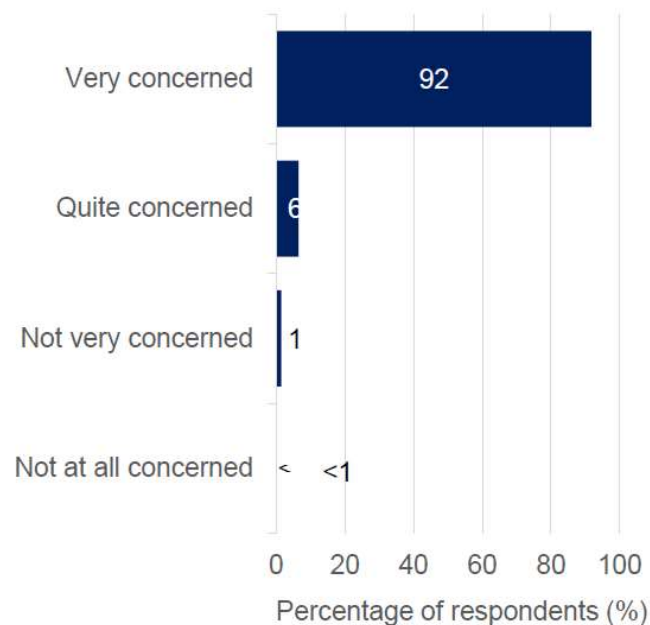
Q: *'In your opinion, how much do you think the following impacts our bathing water quality?'* | Base: Total sample (394)

Legend: ■ A lot ■ A little ■ Not very much ■ Not at all ■ Don't know

Left chart — Percentage of respondents (%):

Category	Value
Very concerned	92
Quite concerned	6
Not very concerned	1
Not at all concerned	<1

Right chart — Percentage of respondents (%):

	A lot	A little	Not very much	Not at all	Don't know
Storm water releases	92	6		1	1
Poor condition of sewers	75	14	1		9
Agricultural runoff	32	37	15	4	13
Animals	7	30	35	10	18

- Respondents are concerned about bathing quality in the local area – 92% of respondents say they are 'very concerned'
- The majority of respondents think storm water releases (92%) and poor condition of sewers (75%) impact bathing water quality 'a lot'
- Agricultural runoff is seen as having less of an impact – a higher proportion of respondents feel it has 'a little' impact (37%)
- Animals are seen as having the least impact – just under half of respondents think animals affect water quality 'not very much' or 'not at all' (45%)

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Responsibility for cleaning

Q: *'Who do you think is responsible for cleaning up our bathing waters?'* | Base: Total sample (346)
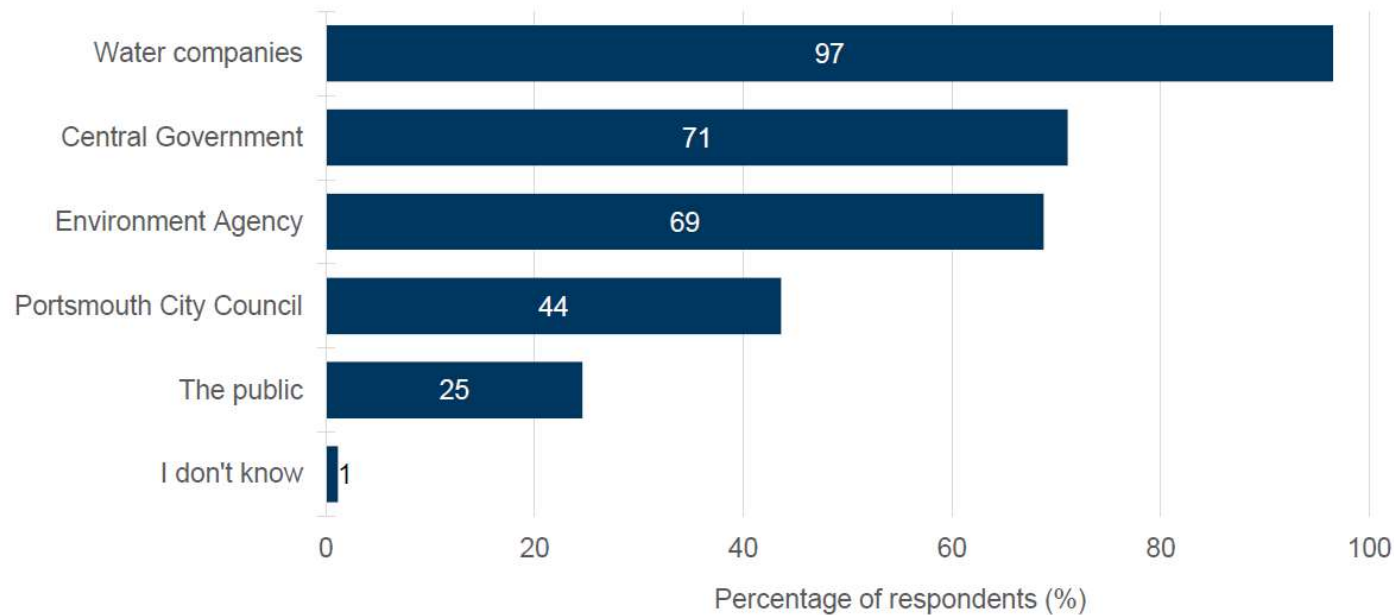
- Almost all respondents feel that water companies are responsible for cleaning up our bathing waters (97%) however they also feel others are responsible too:
- Over two thirds of respondents feel that Central Government (71%) and the Environment Agency (69%) are responsible for cleaning up bathing waters
- Just under half of respondents (44%) feel responsibility lies with Portsmouth City Council for cleaning up bathing waters
- A quarter of respondents think the public are responsible for cleaning up bathing waters

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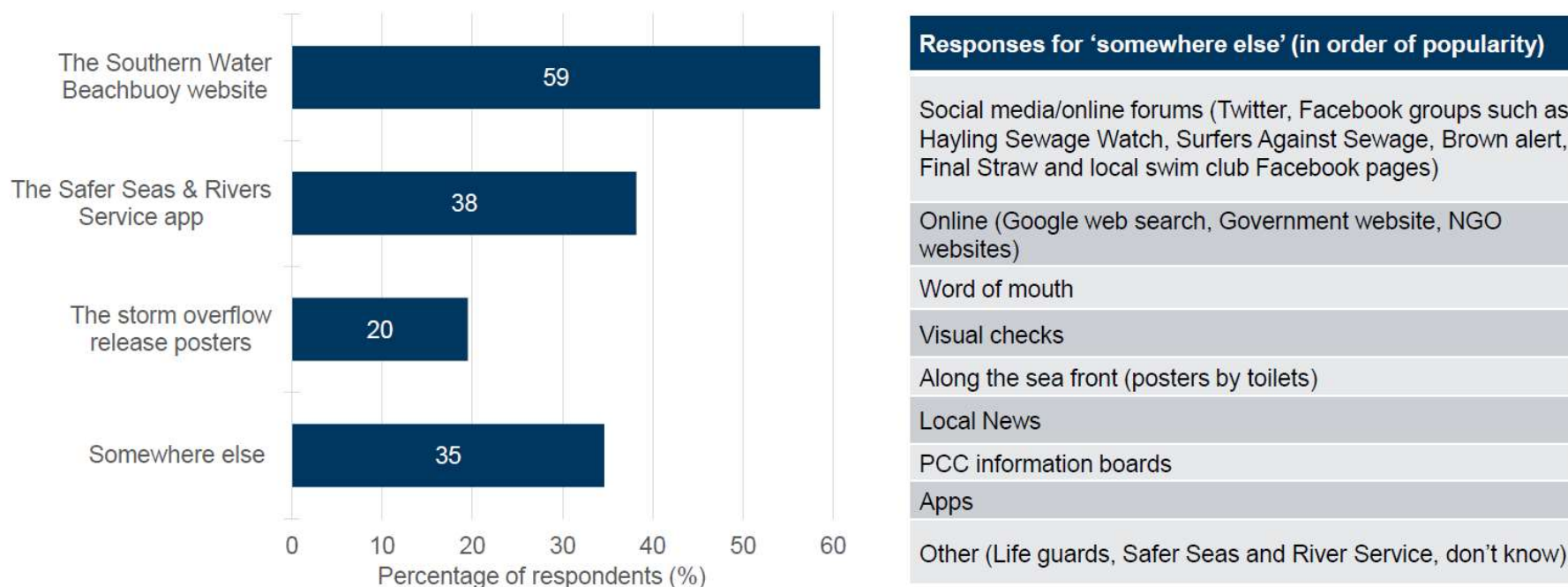
Looking for information

Q: *'Do you look for information about bathing water quality?'* | Base: Total sample (391)
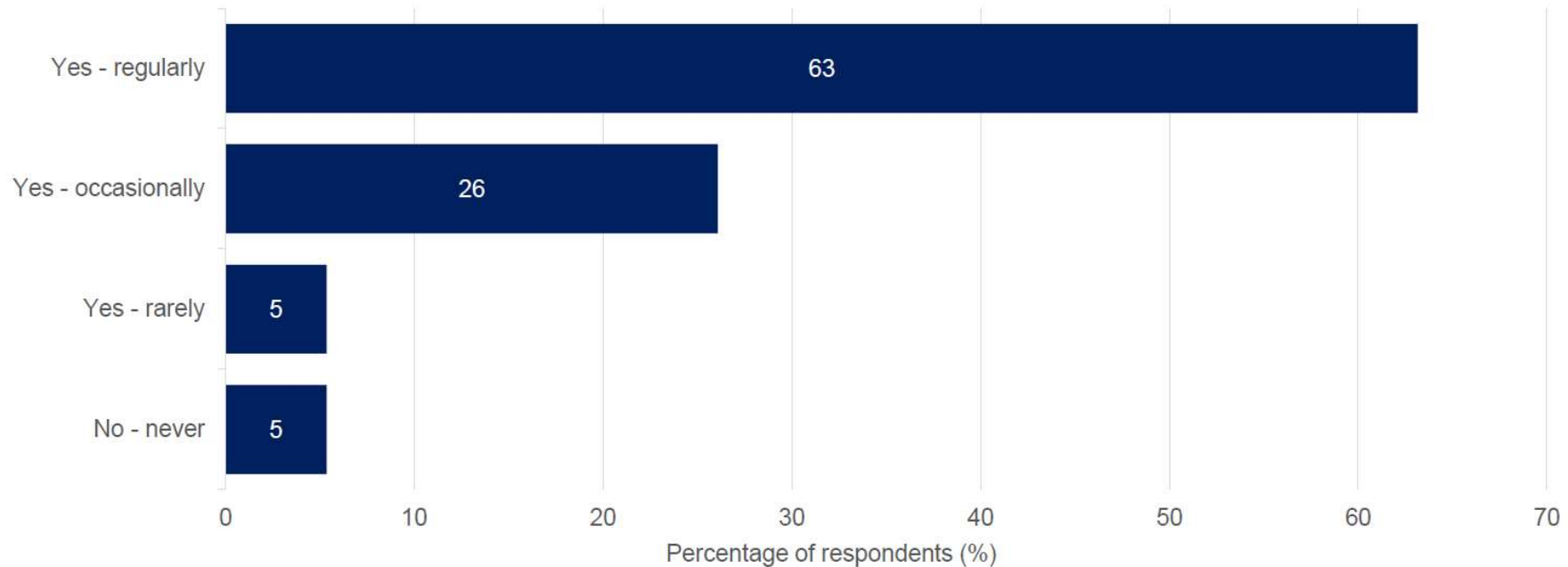
- The vast majority of respondents look for information about bathing water quality; 63% do so regularly and 26% do so occasionally
- Only 5% of respondents rarely look for information and 5% never look

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Finding information

Q: **'Please tell us where you look for information about bathing water quality.'** | *Base: Respondents who look for information about bathing water quality (364)*

Source	Percentage of respondents (%)
The Southern Water Beachbuoy website	59
The Safer Seas & Rivers Service app	38
The storm overflow release posters	20
Somewhere else	35

Percentage of respondents (%)

Responses for 'somewhere else' (in order of popularity)

Social media/online forums (Twitter, Facebook groups such as Hayling Sewage Watch, Surfers Against Sewage, Brown alert, Final Straw and local swim club Facebook pages)

Online (Google web search, Government website, NGO websites)

Word of mouth

Visual checks

Along the sea front (posters by toilets)

Local News

PCC information boards

Apps

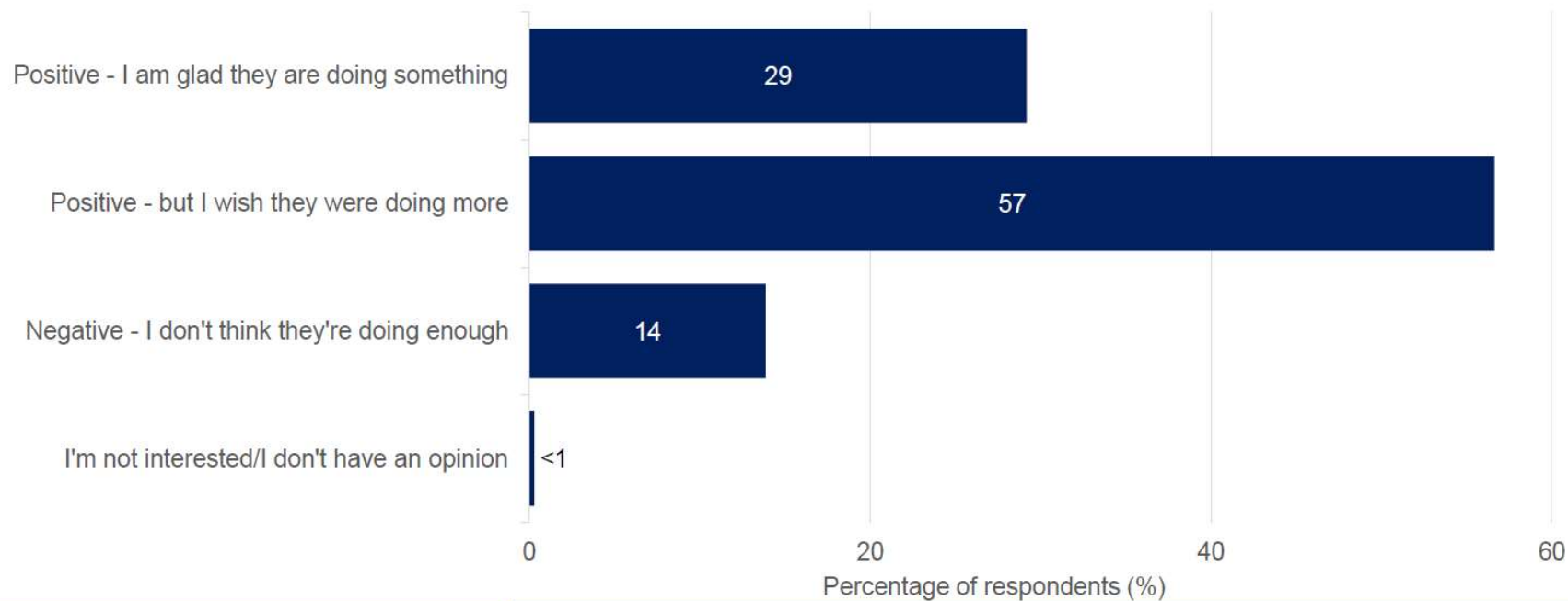Other (Life guards, Safer Seas and River Service, don't know)

- The Southern Water Beachbuoy website is the most popular place respondents look for information about bathing water quality (59%)
- Over a third of respondents use the Safer Seas & Rivers Service app (38%) and a fifth of respondents use the storm overflow release posters (20%)
- 35% of respondents look elsewhere for bathing water quality information; Social media pages such as Surfers Against Sewers and Hayling Sewage Watch are most popular, playing an important role for many. Some respondents also do a general web search, find out via word of mouth or do a visual check on the day before swimming

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Council providing information

Q: *'What do you think about the council providing information informing people about whether sewage has been released into the Solent? '*
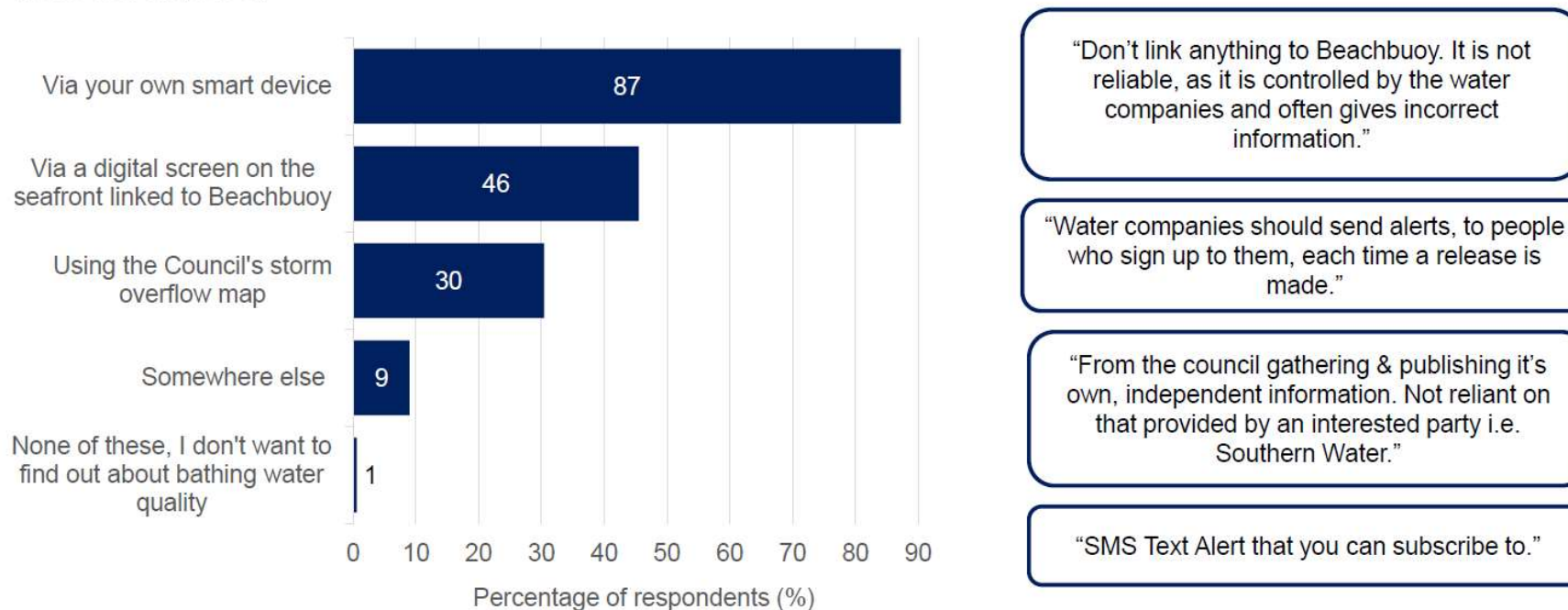| Base: Total sample (346)

Category	Percentage
Positive - I am glad they are doing something	29
Positive - but I wish they were doing more	57
Negative - I don't think they're doing enough	14
I'm not interested/I don't have an opinion	<1

Percentage of respondents (%)

- The majority of respondents think it is positive that the council are informing people about sewage being released into the Solent however they wish they were doing more (57%)
- Around a third of respondents are happy with the council and are glad they are doing something to inform people about sewage release (29%)

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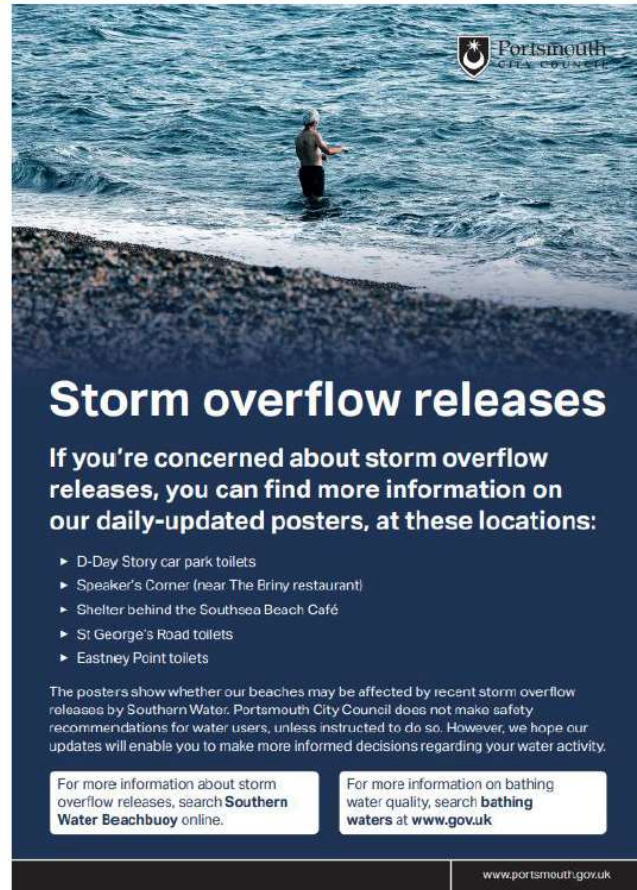**www.portsmouth.gov.uk**

Finding information in the future

Q: *'If all of the following options were available to you, which would you prefer to use to find out information about bathing water quality? '*
| Base: Total sample (345)

Via your own smart device — 87

Via a digital screen on the seafront linked to Beachbuoy — 46

Using the Council's storm overflow map — 30

Somewhere else — 9

None of these, I don't want to find out about bathing water quality — 1

Percentage of respondents (%)

"Don't link anything to Beachbuoy. It is not reliable, as it is controlled by the water companies and often gives incorrect information."

"Water companies should send alerts, to people who sign up to them, each time a release is made."

"From the council gathering & publishing it's own, independent information. Not reliant on that provided by an interested party i.e. Southern Water."

"SMS Text Alert that you can subscribe to."

- Respondents would most prefer to find out about bathing water quality via their own smart device (87%)
- Just under half of respondents would like to see bathing water quality information on a digital screen on the seafront linked to Beachbuoy (46%)
- Less than a third of respondents would prefer to use the Council's storm overflow map (30%)
- Other suggestions for places to find out information include alerts via PCC or SMS that you subscribe to, social media pages, flags on the beach or a screen at the sea front but that is not linked to Southern Water because of concerns over the trustworthiness of information

Storm overflow releases poster

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Awareness of poster

Q: *'Have you seen this poster anywhere?'*
| Base: Total sample (383)

- Yes
- No

15%

85%
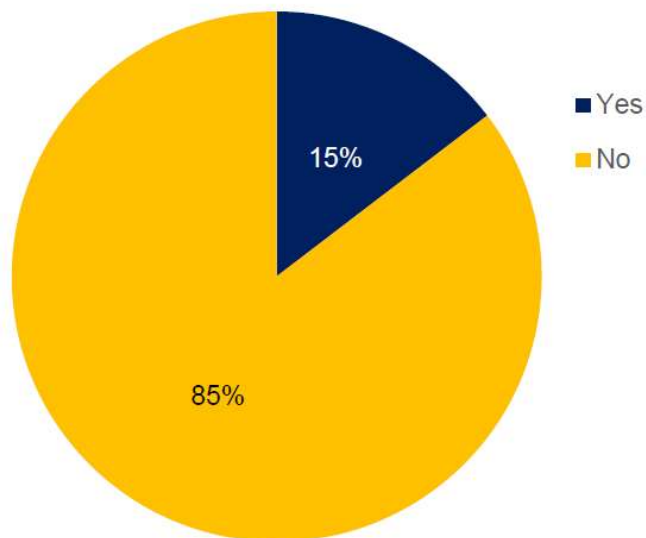
Q: *'Where have you seen this poster?'* | Base: Respondents who have seen the 'Storm Overflow Releases' poster (56)

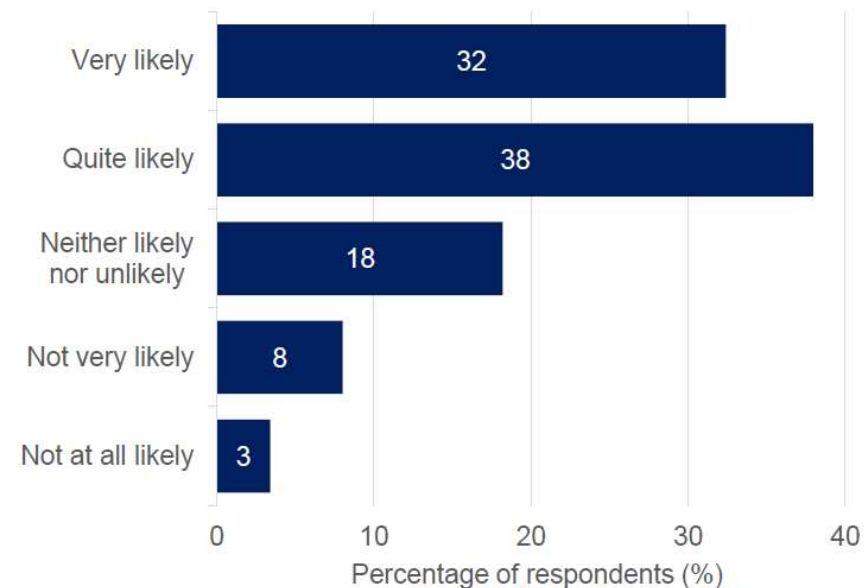| Location	Percentage
Speaker's Corner West	39
Seafront promenade opposite the Royal Beach Hotel	32
Seafront promenade opposite the golf course	29
Avenue de Caen	11
Entrance to Lumps Fort carpark	11
Somewhere else	11

Percentage of respondents (%)
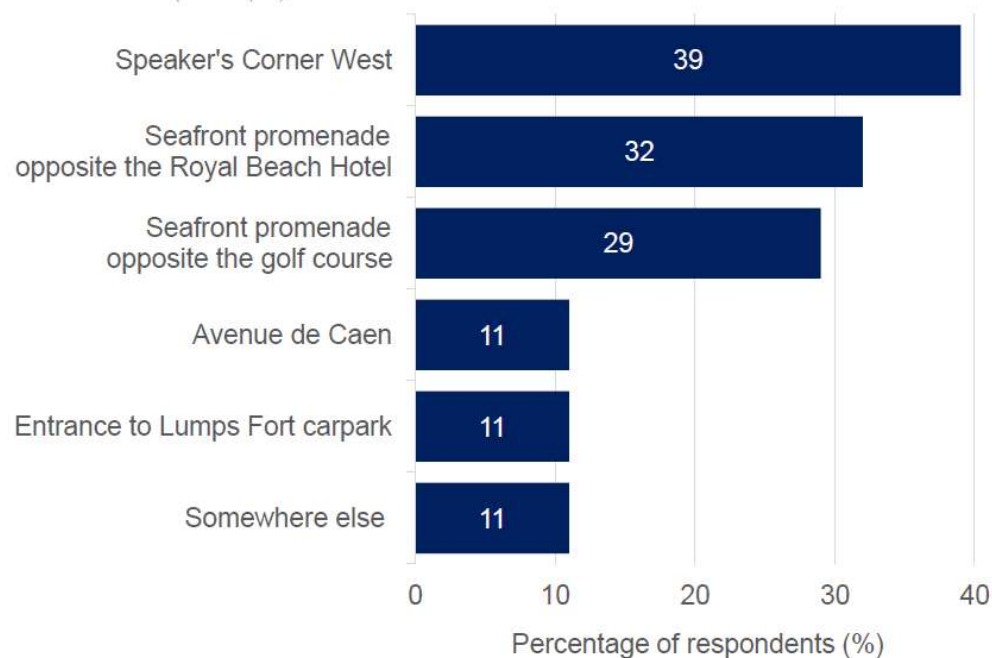
- Most respondents have not seen the storm overflow releases poster before (85%) - awareness is highest amongst Southsea residents (24%)
- The highest proportion of respondents have seen this poster at Speakers Corner West (39%) followed by on the seafront promenade opposite the Royal Beach Hotel (32%) and just over a quarter have seen it at the seafront promenade opposite the golf course (29%)
- Other places respondents have seen the poster are at the D Day story car park and some respondents could not recall exactly where they had seen it

Poster usefulness and likelihood to use

Q: *'How useful do you find this poster?'* | Base: Respondents who have seen the 'Storm Overflow Releases' poster (55)
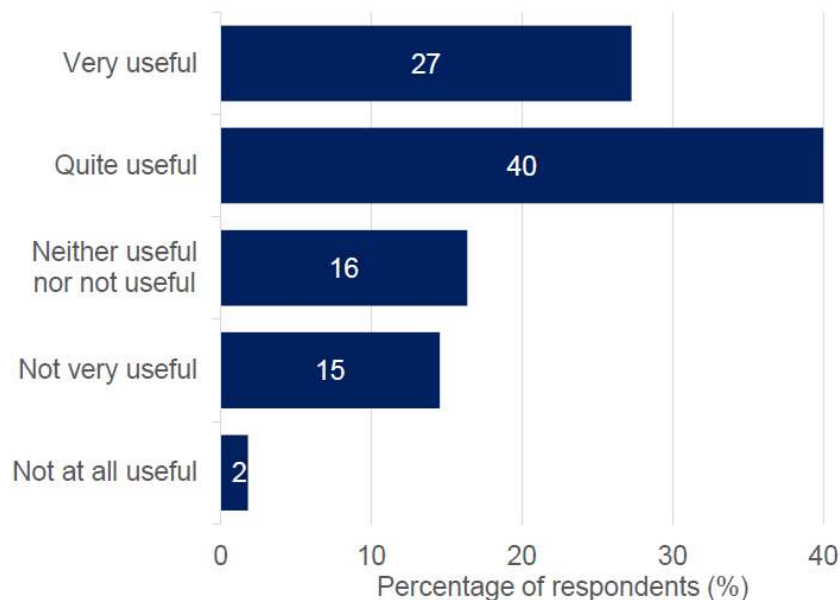
Q: *'These posters are placed at locations around the beachfront, how likely do you think you'll be to use this poster now you know about it?'* | Base: Respondents who *have not* seen the 'Storm Overflow Releases' poster (324)

How useful	%
Very useful	27
Quite useful	40
Neither useful nor not useful	16
Not very useful	15
Not at all useful	2

Percentage of respondents (%)

How likely	%
Very likely	32
Quite likely	38
Neither likely nor unlikely	18
Not very likely	8
Not at all likely	3

Percentage of respondents (%)

- Respondents find this poster useful - over two thirds of respondents who have seen this poster said it was quite useful (40%) or very useful (27%)
- The majority of respondents who had not seen the poster before are quite likely or very likely to use this poster now they are aware of it (70%)
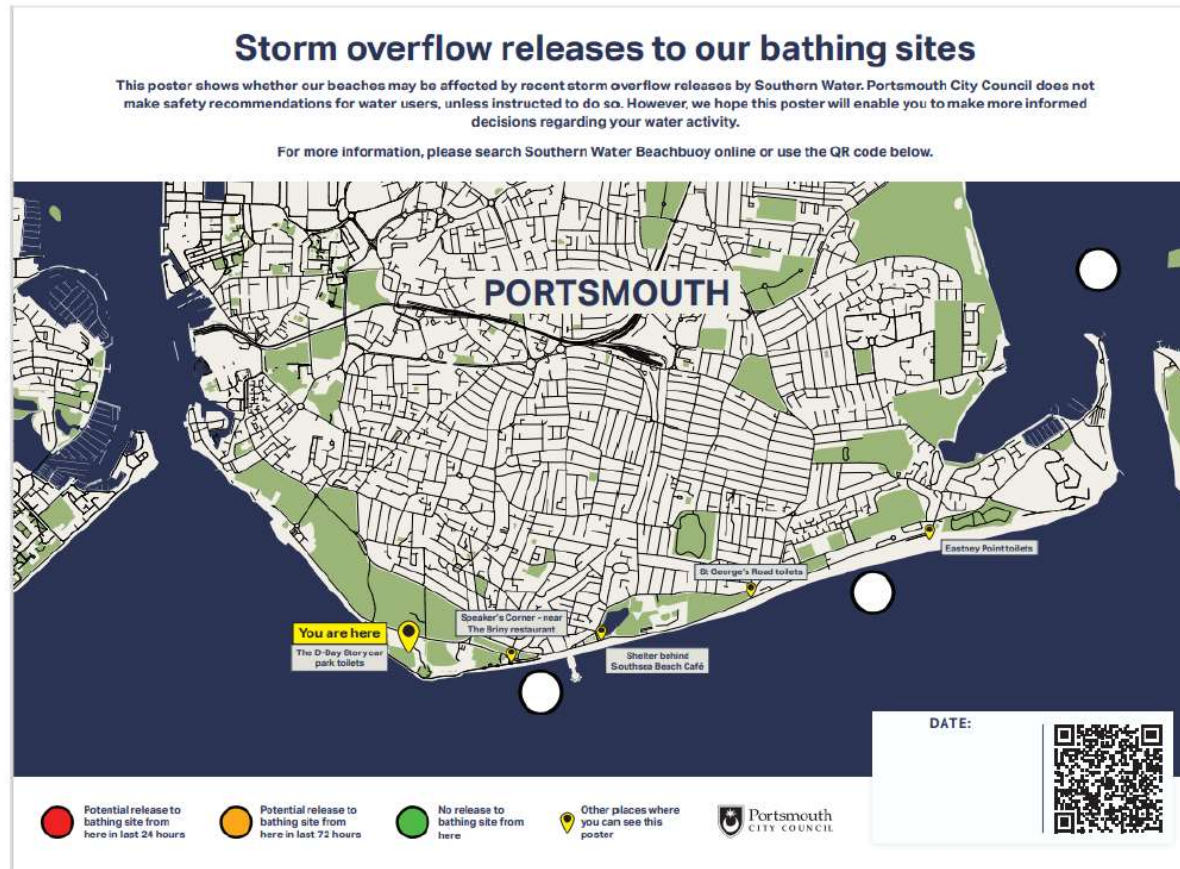
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Opinions on the poster

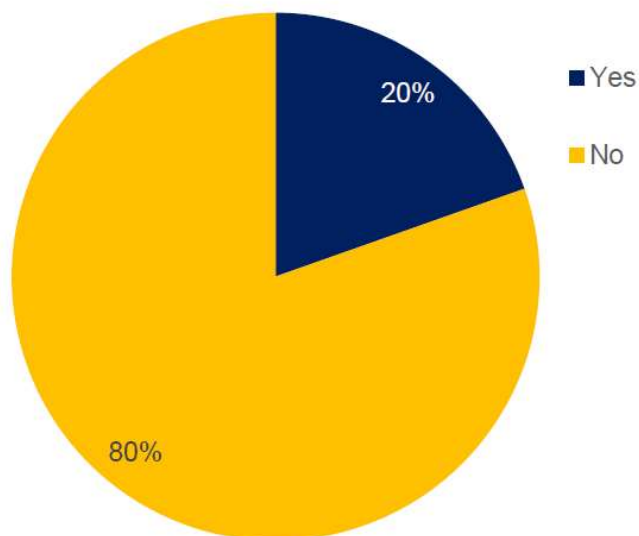| Key themes	%
Useful/ informative (e.g. points to important information)	23
Clear and concise (e.g. easy to read)	20
It highlights the issue/ better than nothing	15
Nicely designed (features a swimmer, good picture, not too busy, eye catching, shows how the waters should be)	10
Demonstrates council's engagement and commitment to publish information	5
Other	1
Negative comment / improvements offered (Don't like the poster, it only highlights another poster, sewage dumping should not happen then there would be no need of a poster)	31

Key themes	%
Use clearer language and graphics (Use 'sewage' in terminology, add more graphic pictures of sea, highlight dangers)	24
General negative comments (Needs to be digital not online, does not like poster, stop sewage releases into sea, posters are pointless)	22
Make it more eye catching (e.g. using bold eye catching colours such as red, making bigger (putting on bill boards), more attractive headings, make more of a warning notice/traffic light system)	20
Add a QR code (linking to Beachbuoy website, websites with daily update, how to complain)	10
More locations (e.g. post to households, in Havant, put by parking meters)	6
Condense text / bigger font / more or larger graphics	5
Add a map or postcode information of sewage release locations, add a 'What 3 Words' location	4
Subscription link	3
Information to online resources (e.g. what to do if you become ill, complaints)	2
N/A / no comment	10

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Storm overflow releases map poster

Awareness of poster

Pie chart:
- Yes: 20%
- No: 80%

Bar chart — Percentage of respondents (%):
- Eastney Point toilets: 34
- Shelter behind the Southsea Beach Café: 29
- Speaker's Corner: 26
- St George's Road toilets: 18
- D-Day Story car park toilets: 12
- Somewhere else: 18
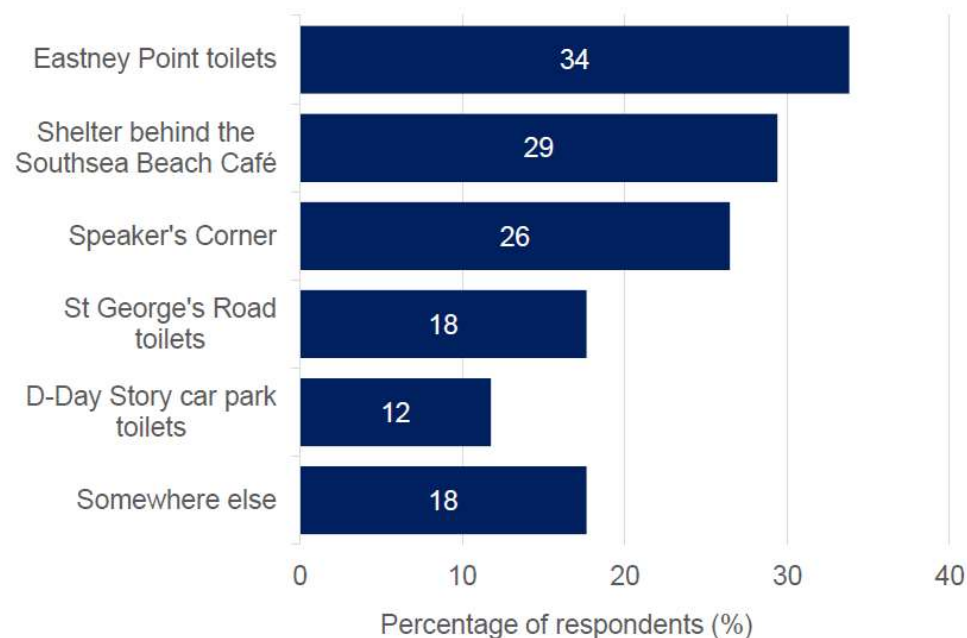
- The majority of respondents are not aware of this poster (80%) whereas a fifth are (20%)
- Around a third of respondents have seen the poster at Eastney Point toilets (34%), and at the Shelter behind the Southsea Beach Café (29%)
- 26% of respondents have seen the poster at the Speakers Corner and just under a fifth have seen it at the St Georges Road toilets (18%)
- Other places respondents have seen the poster include online or on social media
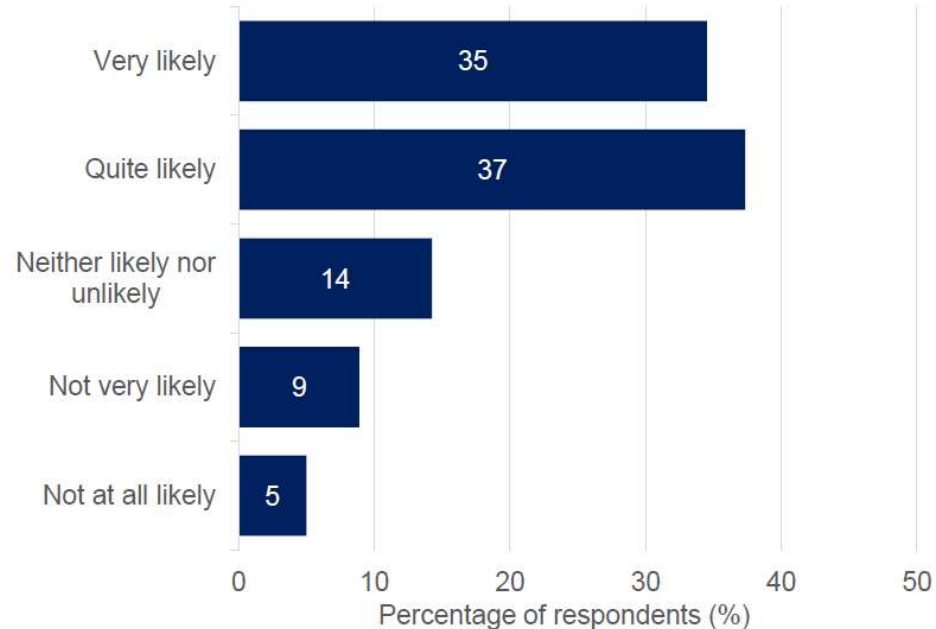
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Poster usefulness and likelihood to use

Q: **'How useful do you find this poster?'** | *Base: Respondents who have seen the 'Storm Overflow Releases map' (66)*
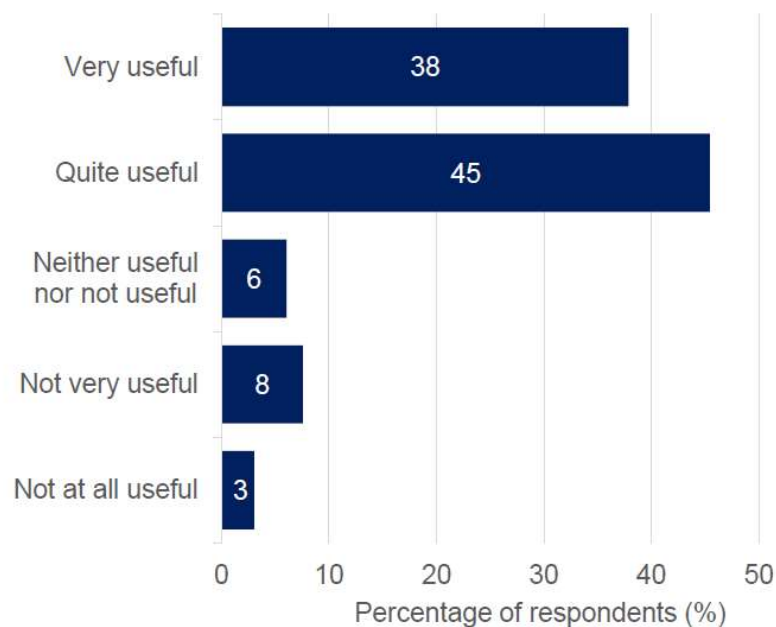
Q: **'These posters are placed at locations around the beachfront, how likely do you think you'll be to use this poster now you know about it?'** | *Base: Respondents who have not seen the 'Storm Overflow Releases' poster (281)*

How useful	%	Likelihood	%
Very useful	38	Very likely	35
Quite useful	45	Quite likely	37
Neither useful nor not useful	6	Neither likely nor unlikely	14
Not very useful	8	Not very likely	9
Not at all useful	3	Not at all likely	5

Percentage of respondents (%)

- Respondents find this poster useful – 38% say it is very useful and just under half (45%) say it is quite useful
- Nearly three quarters of respondents say they are 'likely' or 'very likely' to use this poster now that they know about it (72%)

25

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Opinions on the poster

Q: *'What, if anything, do you like about this poster?'* | Base: Respondents leaving a comment (206)

Key themes	%
Clear and easy to understand (e.g. Traffic light system easy to relate to, clear map, easy to glance at)	47
Useful/informative (e.g. shows release points, gives key information to help people make informed decisions)	19
Updated regularly (e.g. like that it is updated and dated)	6
Generally like the poster	6
QR codes to further information	5
Helps to highlight the issue / upfront about sewage releases	3
N/A or no comment	*1*
Negative comment/ improvements (e.g. digital format needed, not up to date, like to know before they get to seafront, not seen poster)	*24*

Q: *'How could this poster be improved?'* | Base: Respondents leaving a comment (172)

Key themes	%
Improvements to the map (e.g. Zoom in to show just coastline/ show less land, adding drift direction arrows, cover a wider area such as Paulsgrove lake the watersports area near Eastern Road and Hayling Island)	15
Make information clearer and more eye catching (e.g. mark where sewage outlets are, make poster bigger and more obvious, have a catching title such as 'are you going into sea today', add key stakeholder logos)	15
Post at more locations (e.g. a poster located every 100m along sea front, near slipways, letters in the post)	14
Needs to be online with live information (information on an app updated daily, automatic updates live updates as posters become out of date quickly)	13
Ensure it is updated daily	8
More information (include information on the impact of the bathing quality RAG rating, list how many releases a month	8
Use clearer language (explain storm over flow/mention sewage release instead so the public understand)	5
Other (e.g. use data not from Southern Water/Beachbuoy, link to safer sites that can be trusted)	6
NA/No comment/no improvements	*25*

Further comments

Q: *'Do you have any other comments to make about the work the Council is doing to inform the public about bathing water quality? '* |
Base: Total sample (345)

Key themes	%
General positive comment (e.g. thank you, sets example, great to see council doing something about bathing water quality, good to be informed)	22
Council not doing enough to put pressure on water companies (e.g. fining water companies, lobbying against them, demanding water quality reports)	14
Water should be safe all the time/stop sewage pollution (e.g. tackle the source, Southern Water to make improvement to their systems)	13
Help surrounding councils and bathing areas (Hayling Island/Havant)	3
Environmental concerns	2
Make the posters/information boards more prominent / introduce flag system warning	1
Concerns on reliability of Southern Water figures	1
Digital posters/online updates	1
Health concerns	1
Council to run report into health risk of swimming in sewage water	1
Use the intranet and PCC comms to communicate info. Weekly emails	1
Test the bathing water regularly (could recruit help of Portsmouth University)	1
More posters and in more locations especially for non locals (Milton lock/common)	1
NA / No comment	51

"Brilliant initiative!"

"Just telling people about release is not the answer. Work needs to be done to reduce if not stop the releases."

"Thank you Portsmouth CC well done."

"I think this Council initiative re. bathing waters is very positive. However I am concerned that Southern Water's Beachbuoy app gives inaccurate & incorrect information."

"Do the council ever take water samples to test? This would give a definitive answer about bathing water quality rather than asking the source of the pollution when it last polluted."

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