



BRISTOL  
WATER

Wessex Water

YTL GROUP



FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.



# About your bill

Your charges explained

# Contents

Introduction	1
Charges 2020-21	2
How you are charged	3
Metered customers	4
Unmetered customers	6
Where your money goes	8
Common questions	10
Do you qualify for the surface water rebate	12

# Introduction

Each year we set our charges according to price limits that are determined by Ofwat every five years. Prices were set for the period between 2020-2025 following reviews that started in 2019.

This leaflet explains more about Ofwat's price limits, how you are charged and where the money goes.

Charges for Bristol Water and Wessex Water are collected by Bristol Wessex Billing Services Limited (BWBSL).

Charges applicable from 1 April are published on company websites early in February. Visit [bristolwater.co.uk](http://bristolwater.co.uk) or [wessexwater.co.uk](http://wessexwater.co.uk) or call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm).

Further information about charges is also available from our regulator [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)



# Charges 2020-21

Our charges from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 are shown below.

Metered charges	Bristol Water	Wessex Water
Water supply		
Standing charge per annum	£40.50	-
Charge per cubic metre	£1.2669	-
Sewerage		
Standing charge per annum	-	£56
Abated standing charge per annum*	-	£35
Charge per cubic metre	-	£1.6836
WaterSure Plus		
Water supply charge per annum	£163	-
Sewerage charge per annum	-	£198

Unmetered charges	Bristol Water	Wessex Water
Water supply		
Standing charge per annum	£32.00	-
Poundage charge per £ of RV	£1.1090	-
Sewerage		
Standing charge per annum	-	£7
Poundage charge per £ of RV	-	-
Full	-	£1.5445
Abated poundage charge**	-	£1.4200
Surface water and highway drainage only charge per annum	-	£47

\* the abated standing charge is payable where no part of the property is connected for surface water drainage.

\*\* the abated poundage charge is payable where no part of the property is connected for surface water drainage.

# How you are charged

Charges for water and sewerage services are either based on how much water you use (metered charge) or the rateable value (RV) of your property (unmetered charge).

Since 1991, meters have been installed in all newly built properties, and Bristol Water's aim is that all properties will be metered on change of occupancy.

All household customers have the option to ask for a meter to be installed free of charge.

If you live on your own, have a small family, live in a house with a high rateable value, or you are a low water user, you could pay less on a meter.

## How the charges are set

Our customers are a very important part of our process for setting charges. We consult with them at length and take their views into account in our five-yearly business plan. There's more information on pages 8 and 9 about where we are investing.

Our economic regulator, Ofwat, then examines our plan and sets a price formula that enables us to put the plan into practice while limiting increases in our charges each year.

Within these limits, we may need to change individual charges by different amounts so that charges to customers are fair in reflecting the cost of the services. For example, this means that the change in unmetered charges could be less or more than charges for metered services.

## The difference between metered and unmetered charges

We make sure that the difference between metered and unmetered bills reflects the difference in the cost of providing these services. By using the average amount of water that an unmetered household would use, we calculate what an average household's bill would be if it was paying on a metered basis. This is then compared with the actual average unmetered bill to ensure it reflects the difference in costs.

A metered bill is higher than an unmetered bill because it costs us more to serve the customer with a meter. These extra costs include the maintenance, replacement and reading of the meter and the costs of sending two bills every year instead of one.

When comparing metered and unmetered bills, you must look at the overall bill and not just the separate elements. It is not appropriate to make direct comparisons between one element of a bill for unmetered and metered, as they do not cover the same services.

Few customers have an average bill as many factors determine individual households' bills.

# Metered customers

## Metered charges

If you have a meter your water charges are based on the amount of water you use.

Where a metered bill spans a period before and after 1 April 2020, we charge for water used before 1 April at 2019-20 rates and water used after that date at 2020-21 rates. We assume that use is consistent throughout the entire billing period. Sewerage charges, where applicable, are applied on the same basis.

To help increase the use of meters, Bristol Water aims to fit meters to all properties on change of occupancy.

## Sewerage charges

Sewerage is normally charged on the assumption that 95% of the water used returns to the sewer.

The 5% allowance covers virtually all household situations, eg, evaporation, car washing, drinking, cooking and all garden related use (including normal use of hosepipes, sprinklers, paddling pools and hot tub top ups). It also takes into account wet and dry years.

The average UK household uses 130 m<sup>3</sup> of water per year. The 5% allowance amounts to about 6,500 litres or 1,430 gallons.

If considerably less than 95% of your water use is returned to the sewer, please let us know and we'll find out if you qualify for a reduction in charges.

Water supplies to new homes will be metered as no rateable value exists for these properties.

If we can't fit a meter because of space or other technical constraints we can offer you an assessed charge based on the number of bedrooms in your property.

## Metered standing charges

The standing charges are annual fixed charges and each metered bill includes a proportion of the standing charge based on the number of days since the last meter reading.

The metered water supply standing charge covers some of the cost of reading the meter, its repair or replacement and billing costs.

Meter sizes vary and your meter connection may determine the level of your sewerage standing charge. The metered sewerage standing charge includes billing costs and the costs associated with the collection and treatment of surface water and highway drainage.

## Your bill

If you have a water meter you will be billed in arrears, normally twice a year, for the water you have used. Payment is due immediately unless you have a payment arrangement with us. If you have recently had a water meter fitted, your first bill will normally arrive within six months of your meter being fitted.

### WaterSure Plus

If you have a water meter and need to use a large amount of water for reasons you can't control, WaterSure Plus may be able to help. WaterSure Plus puts a limit on the amount you have to pay.

To qualify for WaterSure Plus, you must receive one of the means-tested benefits or tax credits, such as income support, income-related employment and support

allowance, working tax credit, housing benefit or universal credit.

In addition, you must either:

- receive child benefit for three or more children under 19 living in your household, or
- have someone in the household with a medical condition that causes them to use significantly more water.

See our website for more information: [bristolwater.co.uk/struggling-to-pay](http://bristolwater.co.uk/struggling-to-pay) or [wessexwater.co.uk/watersureplus](http://wessexwater.co.uk/watersureplus) or call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm).

## Pension Credit discount

If you receive Pension Credit or state pension is your only income, we may be able to offer you a discount of on average 20% off your bill. For an application form, call 0345 600 6 600 (24 hour automated service) or visit [wessexwater.co.uk/pensioncredit](http://wessexwater.co.uk/pensioncredit) or [bristolwater.co.uk/struggling-to-pay](http://bristolwater.co.uk/struggling-to-pay)



## Saving water

Applying some simple water saving measures around the home may help you save money, energy and water – to find out more and to order a FREE water saving pack go to our website: [bristolwater.co.uk/savewater](http://bristolwater.co.uk/savewater)

Apply a few of these tips to save water and the environment:

- repair dripping taps or leaks
- turn the tap off when cleaning your teeth
- take a short shower instead of a bath
- always fully load your washing machine or dishwasher
- collect rainwater in a water butt to water plants.

# Unmetered customers

## Unmetered charges – charging on the basis of your rateable value

If you pay for your water on an unmetered basis, the rateable value of your property is used to calculate your bill. Rateable value was used up to 1990 as the basis of the general rate bill paid to your local council. Values were assessed and changed by the Valuation Office of the Inland Revenue and based loosely on the rental value of a property.

A number of factors were taken into account when assessing the rental value, including the size of the property, general condition and availability of local services. We don't know exactly how individual values were calculated because it was never our responsibility.

In 1990 the government introduced the community charge (poll tax) and the Valuation Office stopped assessing or changing rateable values. The community charge was replaced by the council tax and the Valuation Office started assessing council tax bands.

Unlike rateable values, these bands are based on the actual value of a property rather than the rental value. The two assessments can't be compared and a change to the council tax banding does not change a rateable value.

By law water companies have the right to continue using rateable values as the basis of charge. The

Valuation Office no longer deals with rateable values and there is no mechanism in place to change them.

It's important to remember that if your water bill is based on the rateable value of your property, it isn't directly related to your use of water and/or sewerage services. So if you feel your unmetered charge is higher than your water use you can normally have a water meter fitted free of charge.

The single occupier discounts associated with the council tax don't apply to water or sewerage charges, but if you are a low water user a water meter could help you lower your bill.

You may find that your neighbour lives in a similar house but the rateable value for each property is different, which means your water and sewerage bills will be different too.

If you use a sprinkler or have a swimming pool you must have a metered supply (or pay a sprinkler tariff). For details about how to apply for a meter, see opposite page.

## Unmetered standing charges

The unmetered standing charges are applied for both water supply and sewerage. Part of this covers the cost of billing as well as an element that reflects some of the fixed costs of providing you with water and/or sewerage services.

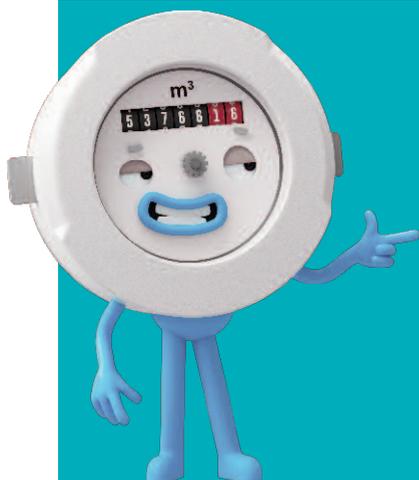
Each water company decides what proportion of fixed costs to include in its standing charges so standing charges can vary considerably between different companies, as they do for Bristol Water and Wessex Water.

## Your bill

Unmetered customers normally receive one bill each year and the charges are payable in advance because we know the full year's charge right from the start.

Most of our customers spread the cost of their bill with an instalment arrangement. For customers who prefer standard options, payment can be made in full by 1 April or in two half-yearly amounts due on 1 April and 1 October.

If you don't pay the first half in April, the total bill has to be paid immediately.



## Switch to a meter

If you live on your own, have a small family, live in a house with a high rateable value, or you are a low water user, having a water meter could help you lower your bill. We can normally fit a meter for free and if we're unable to fit one we may be able to offer an alternative charge. We'll let you try it out with the option to go back to paying on an unmetered basis\*.

Apply online at [bristolwater.co.uk/meterrequest](http://bristolwater.co.uk/meterrequest) or request a leaflet and application form by calling 0345 600 6 600 (24 hour automated service).

\*This option lapses after you have been billed for two years on the metered charge. You can only make this change once. It does not apply if you've had a meter fitted through our change of occupancy policy.

# What we do

**Bristol Water** carefully manages water sources so you have enough water when you need it, but at the same time we ensure we don't take any more than we need to from the environment. Saving water in your home helps protect the environment.

**Wessex Water** provides your sewerage service and every day we safely take away your sewage and wastewater and treat it so it can be returned to the environment.

## About your bill

The services provided by Bristol Water and Wessex Water are combined in one bill that you receive.

Between 2020 and 2025 we are cutting bills for customers. On average this will be by around 5.2%, depending on the services you receive. While bills are being cut, Bristol Water and Wessex Water are investing hundreds of millions of pounds to maintain and improve water and sewerage services. This includes:

- Renewing pipes and fixing visible leaks the same day to save water. In your area we take care of 4,200 miles of water mains and use modern techniques to identify and fix leaks. If you spot a leak call our Leakline 0800 801 011.
- Taking daily water samples and testing it to make sure it is safe for everyone to use. Every day your water gets treated to the highest standard before being pumped to your home.
- Improving water quality in 480 miles of local rivers.
- Reducing our carbon footprint.
- Investing in the reliability of your sewerage services including in severe weather.
- Helping customers on low income get a reduced bill.
- Continuously improving our levels of customer service. If there's a problem we're on hand 24 hours a day to deal with emergencies and help.

## Our promises

Bristol Water and Wessex Water have customer promises that apply to water services, such as water quality and supply, and sewerage services, such as sewer flooding. The customer promise also details what you can expect from us when it comes to customer service and billing, and what compensation we will pay if we don't meet these targets.

To find out more visit [bristolwater.co.uk/promise](http://bristolwater.co.uk/promise) or [wessexwater.co.uk/promises](http://wessexwater.co.uk/promises)  
Alternatively call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm).

## Your comments

If you have any comments or complaints about the services we provide, our core customer information for enquiries and complaints shows how you can get in touch.

If you are unhappy with the response you receive, you can then contact the Consumer Council for Water (CCW), the independent customer watchdog or, in some cases, the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat).

For more information visit: [bristolwater.co.uk](http://bristolwater.co.uk) or [wessexwater.co.uk/policy](http://wessexwater.co.uk/policy) ([www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk) and [www.ofwat.gov.uk](http://www.ofwat.gov.uk)) or call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm) for a leaflet.

## Your view matters

We value your opinion so please join our online customer research panels.

[bristolwater.co.uk/learning-from-you](http://bristolwater.co.uk/learning-from-you)

[wessexwater.co.uk/haveyoursay](http://wessexwater.co.uk/haveyoursay)



# Common questions

## *Why are the charges for Bristol Water and Wessex Water different?*

Bristol Water provides you with your water supply service and Wessex Water provides your sewerage service. The costs of providing these services are different and this is reflected in the approved charges of both companies.

## *Why are unmetered charges billed in advance?*

Originally charges were collected by local authorities who provided sewerage and/or water services. They charged in advance in the same way that the council tax is now billed. While we continue to bill in advance, customers can choose to take advantage of different payment options to spread the cost of the bill over the year.

## *Why do I have to pay standing charges?*

Standing charges for metered customers contribute towards the cost of reading the meter, its repair or replacement and billing costs. Some of these costs are recovered through the water supply standing charge and the rest through the sewerage standing charge.

We recover the costs of dealing with surface water and highway drainage with a fixed charge because these costs bear no relation to the volume of water used.

The unmetered standing charges are the same for water supply and sewerage and part covers the cost of billing and the fixed costs of providing you with water and/or sewerage services.

## *I'm struggling to pay my bill, what can I do?*

Money can be a worry for all of us and sometimes we struggle to pay our bills.

If you are in financial difficulty talk to us today and we may be able to help you:

- spread the cost of your bills
- pay us directly from your benefits
- lower your water bill
- repay debt and get back on track.

**Visit:** [bristolwater.co.uk/struggling-to-pay](http://bristolwater.co.uk/struggling-to-pay) or [wessexwater.co.uk/tap](http://wessexwater.co.uk/tap) or call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm).

Organisations such as Citizens Advice, StepChange and National Debtline, offer free, independent and confidential debt advice.

## *I switched to a water meter. Can I go back to how I was paying before it was fitted?*

Household customers who have chosen to have a water meter fitted sometimes wish to return to paying on an unmetered basis. You may only make this change once and this option lapses after you have been billed for two years on the metered charge. You will have to pay for the metered water and sewerage services used to date. If you do decide not to be charged on a metered basis, we will not normally physically remove the meter.

It does not apply if you've had a meter fitted through our change of occupancy policy.

## *I am moving home. What should I do?*

If you are moving please call us on 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm) or complete our online form at **[bristolwater.co.uk/moving](http://bristolwater.co.uk/moving)** or **[wessexwater.co.uk/moving](http://wessexwater.co.uk/moving)** so that we can amend your bill.

If you have difficulty reading your meter, please give us five working days' notice and we will take your final meter reading for you.

Properties with a larger than average plot size are already subject to compulsory metering on change of occupancy. We now aim to install a meter on all properties that are currently unmetered when there is a change of occupier due to the property being sold or a new tenancy agreed.

## *Do I have to pay charges if I am renovating my property?*

Yes. If you are using water full charges are payable. If you have an unmetered supply you can choose to have a meter and be billed for what you use.

# Do you qualify for the surface water rebate?

The cost of removing and treating rainfall that falls on your property is included in your sewerage bill.



If you can prove that the majority of the rainwater from your property doesn't drain to a public sewer you could be entitled to a reduction in your sewerage bill. To claim, you must prove that:

- the majority of rainfall from your roof or shared roof drains into a soakaway at the front and rear of your property
- the majority of rainfall from your garden, drive, patio or yard runs off into the ground.

Your claim will be unsuccessful if:

- you use a water butt but have no soakaways
- rainwater from your roof runs indirectly to a sewer, eg, across a pavement, driveway or hard-paved areas.

A soakaway is where water from your roof, etc, is piped to some type of underground concrete or plastic chamber, tank or simple pit filled with stone or gravel, inside or outside the boundary of the property, or shared with adjacent properties and normally at least three to four metres (10 to 15 feet) away from the house foundations.

Most properties are connected to a public sewer and are not entitled to the allowance.

It's free to make a claim.

Visit [wessexwater.co.uk/surfacewaterdrainage](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/surfacewaterdrainage) or to request a leaflet and application form call 0345 600 6 600 (24 hour automated service).

# Extra support when you need it

We want to give all our customers the best service at all times. We know that everyone's needs are different and we can help through Priority Services.

When you sign up for Priority Services you can:

- ensure you always have easy access to water
- choose how you receive your bill and information
- ask for help with reading your meter
- set up a password for when we visit.

Priority Services is a free service and anyone living in the region can sign up for it.

**Spread the word** – tell your family and friends about our service if you think it will help them.

Apply online today – visit:

**[bristolwater.co.uk/priorityservices](https://bristolwater.co.uk/priorityservices)**

or call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday 8am to 2pm).

Energy providers offer a similar service – don't forget to register with them too.

This leaflet is available in braille, large print and other formats.

# Contact us

## General billing enquiries

- Questions about your bill • Payment arrangements • Metering • Moving house
- Problems paying • High water use • Priority Services

**0345 600 3 600** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm)

## Automated billing telephone services

**0345 600 6 600** when connected PRESS:

- 1** Meter option leaflet
- 2** Surface water drainage leaflet
- 3** Charges explained leaflet
- 4** Submit meter reading after an estimated bill
- 5** Information on rateable value charging
- 6** Pension Credit discount leaflet

Submit an online enquiry via our websites:

**bristolwater.co.uk/contact-us** or **wessexwater.co.uk/contactus**

**Write to:** BWBSL, 1 Clevedon Walk, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 1WA

## General water supply enquiries

- Loss of supply • Leak • Water quality problem

**0345 702 3 797** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, emergencies only at other times)

Submit an online enquiry via our website: **bristolwater.co.uk/contact-us**

## General sewerage enquiries

- Sewage flooding • Blocked sewer

**0345 600 4 600** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, emergencies only at other times)

Submit an online enquiry via our website: **wessexwater.co.uk/contactus**

We welcome calls via the Next Generation Text service.

Calls to 0345 numbers from UK landlines cost no more than calls to standard UK landline numbers. If you're calling from a mobile please check with your service provider as sometimes calls can cost more.

We may record telephone calls into our contact centres for quality, security and training purposes.

This leaflet forms part of our core customer information, covering key aspects of our work including charges, enquiries and complaints. All these leaflets can be found at **bristolwater.co.uk/policy** or **wessexwater.co.uk/policy**

*Bristol Water and Wessex Water are not responsible for the content of external websites.*