Attitudes to Water Efficiency

Households' attitudes to water economy and water efficient appliances

- There is much greater potential to install water-saving features by meter fitting old homes than with building new ones
- Different age groups and social groups act differently to water saving and this needs to be understood in any marketing and promotion
- Some water saving features are seen as positive and more likely to encourage buyers or add value to property than others. Some water saving measures may actively deter purchasers and or devalue property.
- In principle, 44% of respondents said they were for a house with water saving features.
- 65% of households surveyed liked the idea of having an overall water saving package in their homes.

Market overview

Despite the current downturn in the economy and the housing market, the Government is committed to a sustainability agenda and one which encompasses the housing industry. The Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) has set minimum standards for water efficiency that must be achieved at entry level of the Code. This recognises the importance of water efficiency to the sustainability of any home. Water efficiency accounts for 9% of the score weighting for the Code and exceeds targets relating to materials, waste and pollution.

Minimum standards for water efficiency

Code Level	Max. portable water consumption in liters per person per day
1	120
2	120
3	105
4	105
5	80
6	80

Source: The Code for Sustainable Homes, CLG

This presents challenges for developers who are facing high demands on 'planning gain', increasing regulation, rising costs, falling volumes, and consequently falling margins, unimplementable planning permission and unavailable sites.

When it comes to environmental regulation and standards, it is important for developers, investors and policy makers to understand whether and why people are interested in eco features and whether they will pay more for them when buying a home or refurbishing their own homes. Their motivations (e.g. saving money or saving the planet), are also very important and must be considered when building new homes and marketing advertising campaigns to ensure that the right message is given to the appropriate target market.

The Survey

This briefing note provides a summary of the results of an on-line survey of households into the awareness and attitudes towards water economy and water efficient appliances in the home.

It was conducted on a representative sample of GB households and the findings were weighted to represent the GB average.

Savills Research

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Briefing notes

The on-line survey was designed by Savills in conjunction with Waterwise (a UK non-governmental organisation focused on decreasing water consumption in the UK by 2010) and was conducted by YouGov in late November 2008.

The survey consisted of 32 questions and was answered by 2,195 respondents. In many cases, the questions were asked before and after the respondents were told of the cost savings and environmental benefits involved. We can therefore see whether greater knowledge changed people's responses and what the implications of growing awareness/education on the subject might be.

Key Findings

Attitudes to water saving

	Agree that water saving helps the enviroment	Agree that it is important to save water to save money
Positive	48%	92%
Negative	16%	6%
Don't know	9%	2%

Many more people agree that water saving is important to save money (92%) than think that saving water helps the environment (48%). 16% actually disagree that it has environmental benefits. This is backed up by results of previous eco surveys.

Moves and refurbishments

Fifteen percent of all respondents are planning to buy a home in the next three years. This is a relatively low figure in relation to past rates of housing acquisition and reflects the current downturn in the housing market and difficulties they may have in raising the deposit necessary to buy or trade up. Not surprising if more people are going to 'stay put'; 21% think that they will refurbish their home. Sixty percent of those looking to move or refurbish their homes in the next three years are currently aged 18 to 34 years, but our research shows it is this age group that has the least interest in water efficiency.

Water efficiency awareness

	% of 'don't knows' for each water efficient feature				
Age	Water meter	Lavatory	Shower	Bath	Basin taps
18-24	26%	12%	35%	17%	25%
25-34	9%	6%	34%	17%	14%
35-44	3%	3%	23%	11%	11%
45-54	2%	3%	23%	11%	10%
55+	1%	2%	20%	12%	9%

There is a higher propensity at present to refurbish a home rather than move house. Only 2% of respondents have moved in the last six months compared with 5% of respondents that have refurbished. Another 21% plan to refurbish in the next few years. It would therefore appear that the retro-fitting of existing homes is more important than the fit-out of new homes when it comes to the potential for installing water-saving features. Education and targeted marketing will be more effectively aimed at education the larger proportion of people who are planning to refurbish.

Water efficient features, moves and refurbishment

The importance of targeting those people who are intending to refurbish their homes is again highlighted by the proportion of respondents who already have water efficient features. They are more likely to be installed in households who have recently refurbished their homes.

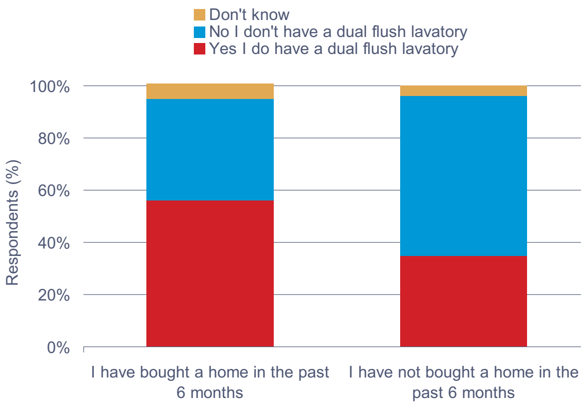
	All households	Recently refurbished
Dual flush lavatory	35%	56%
Water efficient shower	36%	46%
Water efficient bath	13%	17%
Water efficient baisn taps	12%	22%
Water efficient kitchen taps	18%	30%

Briefing notes

Ownership of features amongst:

Recent movers are also more likely to have water-saving features. Of those households that have recently moved house (within the last six months), 56% have a dual flush lavatory compared to 35% of households who have not recently moved. (A dual flush lavatory allows the user to choose between two different flush amounts by pressing down one of two buttons and therefore saving water).

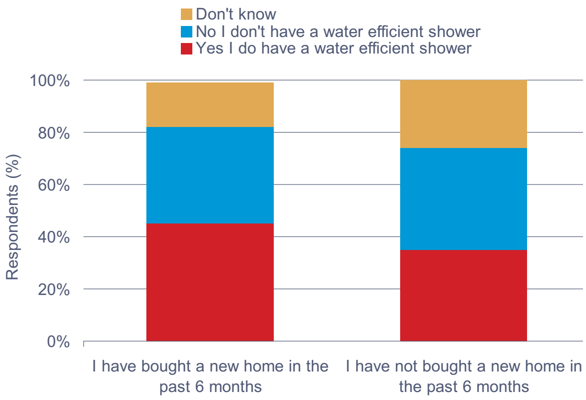
Dual flush lavatories and moving status



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

This trend is reflected to a lesser extent in water efficient showers, with 45% of households who have recently moved having such an appliance compared to 35% of households who have not recently moved. There are probably two factors at work here. One is that buyers of new homes (usually about 10% of movers) will have those features, the second is that movers very often refurbish kitchens and bathrooms at the time of move.

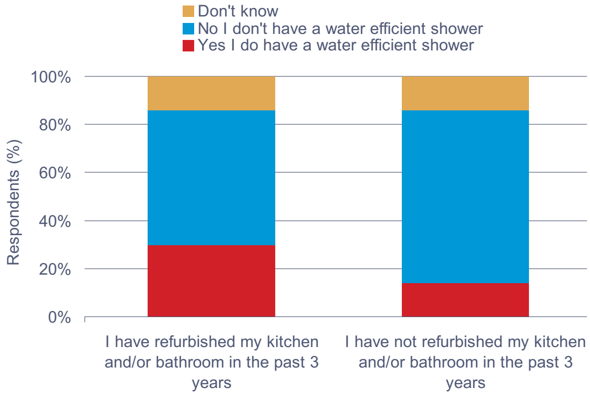
Water efficient showers and moving status



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Almost a third (30%) of households who have recently refurbished their kitchens or bathrooms have installed water efficient kitchen taps compared to 14% of households who have not recently done. A relatively low level of awareness of water efficiency measures is revealed by the fact that approximately, 14% of both groups do not know if they have water efficient taps or not.

Water efficient kitchen taps and recent refurbishment status



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Water Meters

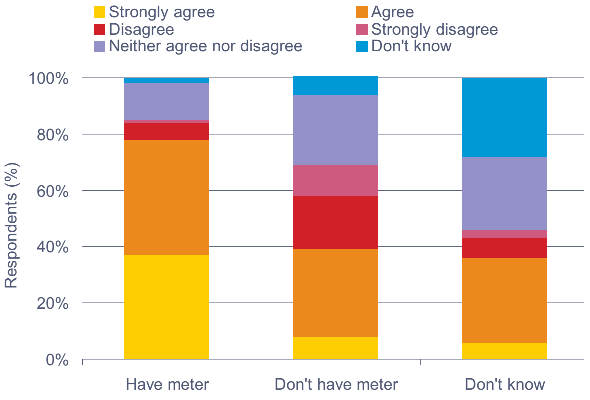
Just under a third (30%) of respondents have a water meter fitted in their home and are therefore charged for the water they use rather than a fixed rate. Unsurprisingly, the presence of a water meter in the home increases households awareness about water saving and thus the propensity to own water-efficient appliances in order to save money.

The results show that a large proportion of respondents both with (84%) and without (72%) water meters agree that water meters encourage careful usage of water. There is a clear difference of opinion between those that have a water meter and those that don't as to whether they are a fair way to pay. Only thirty-nine percent of people without meters think they are a fair way to pay. 78% of those with meters think they are fair.

This is strongly linked to respondents opinion on whether water meters save money, 59% of respondents with a water meter believe that they do compared with 77% of respondents without a water meter who believe they don't. It appears that households most likely to save money have water meters installed.

Briefing notes

Is having a water meter a fair way to pay for your water?



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Awareness of water efficiency in their own homes and strength of opinion on the topic of water economy and efficiency was highest amongst households of older (55 years+) age groups. This contrasts with findings in other areas of environmental concern where younger generations appear to be more educated on topics related to the environment. The findings suggest that the higher awareness amongst the 55 years+ is more likely to be from a result of measures to save money, rather than concerns on the environment.

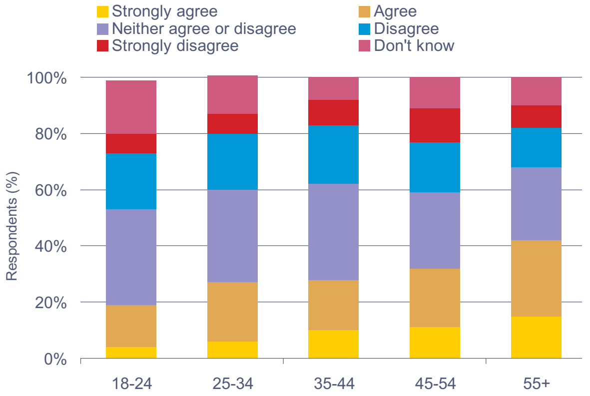
This survey shows that younger respondents are possibly more cynical, do not care so much about the topic of water saving or do not think that it is a key factor that effects the environment. The findings show that generally people seem to understand that the topic of water efficiency is an issue related to cost rather than one that is related to the environment.

Motivation to install water meters

Those people who have a water meter may choose to have one installed because they use less water than the average and therefore believe that having a meter saves them money, thus making it the fairest way to pay. Some people may move in to a property that already has a meter and therefore have no choice. If these people have a large family and use a lot of water they are likely to believe that the water meter does not save them money and therefore is not the fairest way for them to pay for their water. If people, for example those with large famalies do not believe that they will save costs by having a water meter it is unlikely that they will opt to have one voluntarily.

Water meters in GB households are more likely to be found in older age groups and those in age groups less likely to have young famalies. The highest levels being amongst the 35-44 and 55+ age groups.

Household's belief that water meters will save money



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Regional and Social Variations

Those of lower social grade (i.e., C2DE) have the least awareness and opinion about whether they would consider having water efficient features/appliances in their home.

The lack of awareness amongst these groups may be due to the fact that they are more likely to live in rented accommodation and therefore not directly responsible for installing or maintaining the appliances in their home. Another trend arising from the findings is that females tend to be more positive and show a greater interest about matters concerning water efficiency.

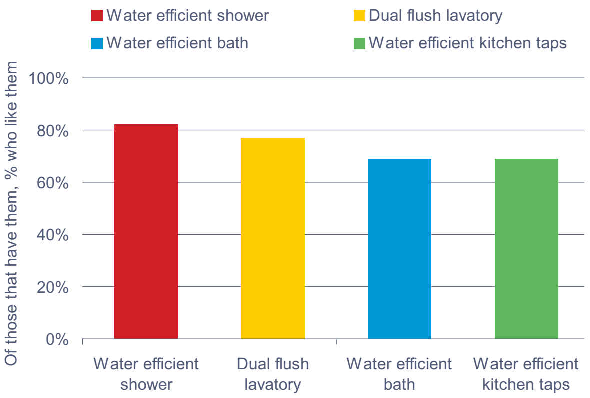
Regionally there is little variation in the responses. The one exception is households in Scotland who show the least interest in water efficiency. In Scotland just 1% of households have a metered water supply. In contrast, the region with the highest proportion of households with a metered supply is the South (excluding London) at 44%. This may be influenced by the wetter climate and only very localised pressures experienced as a result of increased population in this region. As such, households in Scotland have had relatively little exposure to obvious pressures on water resources that have been increasingly common in the southern regions of England (e.g., water restrictions such as hose pipe bans). It is also a possibility that water supply is cheaper in Scotland, than for example, London. 74% of those people in London thought that money saving was a very or fairly important reason to be water efficient compared with 64% in Scotland.

Briefing notes

Water-saving popular amongst the converted

Water-efficient features and appliances are popular amongst households who already have them or would like to have them. It is also apparent that some features and appliances are more favoured than others-especially by households who already have them.

Popularity of water efficient appliances amongst those who have them



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Acceptability of each feature

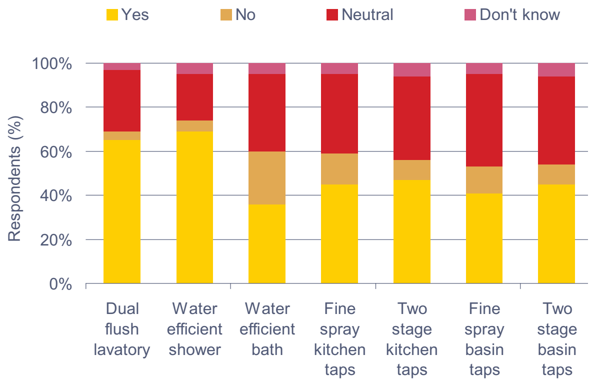
The least popular feature, relative to all the others covered in the survey, were water efficient baths. Only 13% of households have one in their home and only two thirds of these people actually like them.

Once presented with information on the product and the environmental and economic benefits of it, only a quarter of households would definitely not consider installing or buying a home with a water efficient bath. Although a further 35% were merely neutral on the subject.

There are two main types of water efficient taps currently for sale in the UK. The first has the greatest water savings and has a fine spray pattern. The second has the option of two flow stages, including a higher rate flow option for filling. Only 18% of respondents currently have a water efficient kitchen tap. Based on the information provided (which did not include potential cost savings, as this is very dependent on behaviour and thus can be very wide ranging), the respondents preferred taps with the higher flow option.

The following chart shows the approval ratings of a variety of appliances. It suggests that water efficient showers and dual-flush lavatories have wider acceptability than the bath and taps options.

Given the information, respondents would or do like:



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Water recycling and harvesting systems

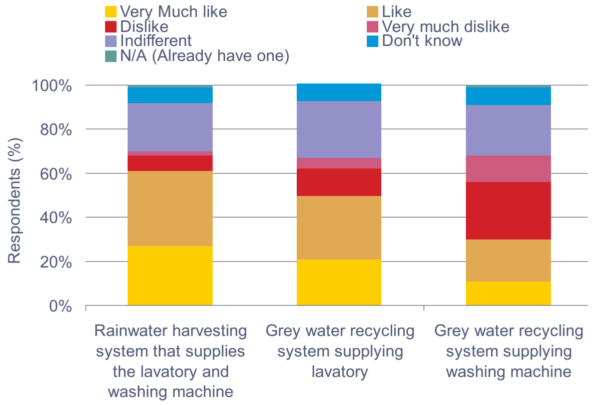
There are two main types of water harvesting/recycling systems that are currently for sale in the UK. Firstly, there are rainwater harvesting systems which collect rain from the roof and store it in a tank prior to using it in the home for garden watering (water butts), lavatory flushing and clothes washing. This water is then filtered and is used to supply the lavatory and washing machine. Secondly, grey water recycling systems collect water that has been used in the shower, bath or bathroom taps and use it for bathroom irrigation, lavatory flushing or clothes washing. Grey water that is used for lavatory flushing and clothes washing is treated to remove some of the contaminants.

The most popular type of water harvesting/recycling system was the rainwater harvesting system, with more than 60% expressing approval, over a third of respondents said they would like this product and a further 27% stated that they would very much like to have such a product. Grey water recycling systems are less popular than rainwater recycling.

Even so it meets with 50% approval, 21% of respondents very much liked the idea of grey water recycling for use in the lavatory, with a further 29% stating that they also the idea.

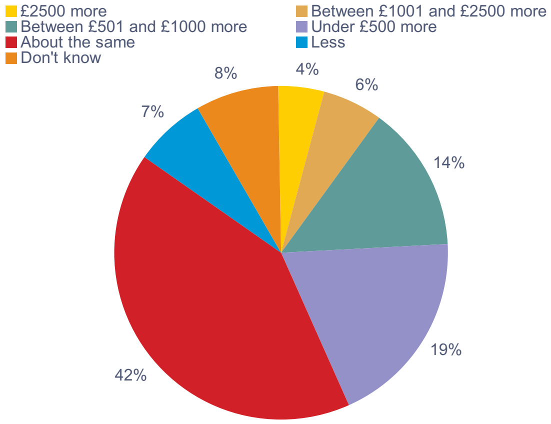
Briefing notes

Attitudes towards water harvesting and recycling systems



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Premium respondents expecting to move would pay for a water efficient home



Source: Savills/YouGov

Overall, the findings of the survey showed a positive response by households towards water economy and water efficient appliances although this was not uniform across age groups and social grades. There was a clear increase in the level of enthusiasm towards water efficiency across all household types when presented with the appropriate water and cost savings suggesting that there is a strong need for educating the public on these matters

The majority (85%) of households with water meters agree that they encourage careful water usage. Of households with water meters, 58% agree or strongly agree that water meters save them money. Generally a higher proportion of households with water meters have water efficient appliances compared to households whose water was not metered.

It will be of some comfort to developers striving to meet sustainability targets as set out in the Code that despite the current downturn, a higher than perhaps expected, (48%) of households planning to buy a home within the next three years would (at least theoretically) be willing to pay more for water-efficient features.

The following pie chart sets out what additional cost households would be willing to pay for such features. While we think this is highly unlikely to translate directly in to premium prices, there may be marketing and sales-rate advantages to be gained by installing some of the features. Care should be taken however to make sure they are the right features. Generally, it appears that most of the population are unsure as to what some of the features, items and gadgets actually are. More detailed explanation made them better disposed towards some but less well disposed towards others.

Attitudes in principal and after reading information provided about water and cost savings

The attitudes towards different water efficient appliances (i.e., dual flush lavatories, water efficient baths, showers, kitchen and wash basin taps) were assessed in principle and then based on information provided about the specific water and cost savings that the appliance would deliver.

The greatest positive attitude-change in favour of the water efficient option, for the appliances featured in the survey, was for dual flush lavatories. After reading the information provided, 6% more of the respondents said they would like or would like to have a dual flush lavatory in their home taking the total to 66%.

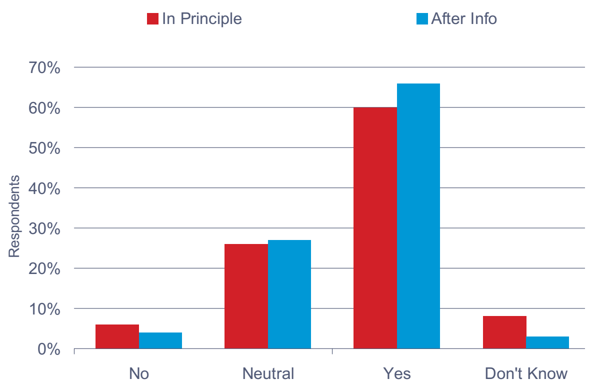
The proportion of respondents who did not mind either way rose slightly by 1%. The proportion of respondents who do not like or would not like to have a dual flush lavatory declined by 2%. In this instance, the provision of the information lead to a subsequent decline of 5% of respondents who answered the question 'don't know'.

This finding suggests that a little education in marketing and promotional material could go a long way in achieving sales and realising any positive premium.

This is not true of all water-saving features however. Information about water-efficient taps decreased the likelihood of people buying them. The perceived inconvenience appears to have outweighed any benefits. Both manufacturers and housebuilders will need to bear this in mind and understand that increased consumer knowledge in this area is unlikely to increase sales.

Briefing notes

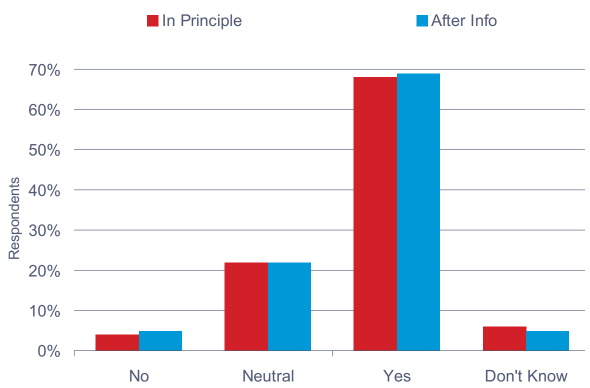
Dual flush lavatories



Source: Savills/YouGov

Water efficient showers were the most popular water saving device amongst the water saving appliances detailed in the survey with 68% of respondents liking the idea in principle. There was little variation, however, in the responses before and after the information provide. This proportion of those respondents favouring the water efficient shower only increased by 1% after the information was given. The proportion who stated ‘no’ in principle to this appliance rose slightly but those who had no opinion or didn’t know fell slightly.

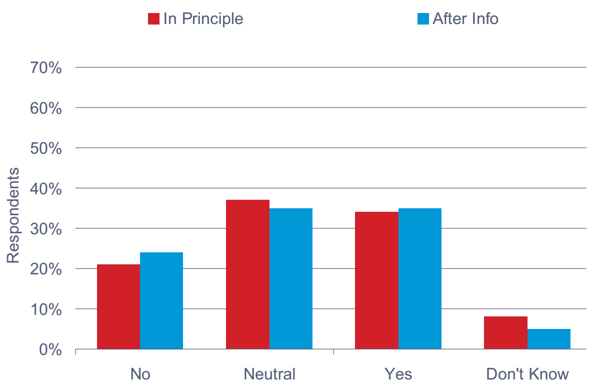
Water efficient showers



Source: Savills/YouGov

Water efficient baths were the least popular water efficient appliance, with just over a third (34%) agreeing in principle, a higher proportion (37%) not having an opinion either way and 21% disliking the concept. After the information was provided the proportion disliking the idea rose by 4% and those liking it rose to 38%. The proportion of neutral answers declined by 2% and those who didn’t know by 3%.

Water efficient bath



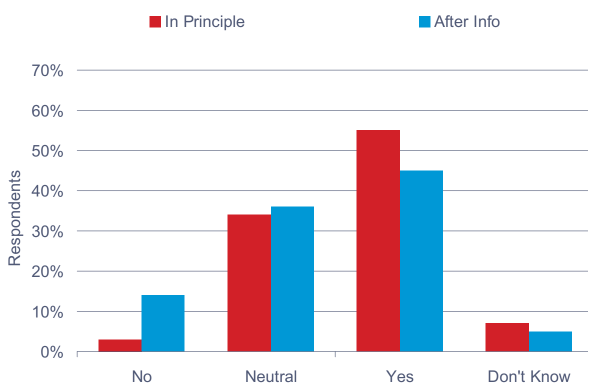
Source: Savills/YouGov

The survey asked if people liked having or would like to have water efficient kitchen taps in general. It did not, at this stage, drill down into the different options available (i.e., fine spray and two stage). Information was then provided for both the fine spray and two stage kitchen taps and the respondents were asked for their opinions on both of these types.

Water efficient taps were more popular before the information was provided in both cases. In principle, 55% of respondents liked having or would like to have a water efficient kitchen tap, 3% did not, 34% did not mind either way and 7% didn’t know.

After the information on them was provided, the proportion who stated that the would like or liked having a fine spray kitchen tap declined to 45%. The proportion who did not like or would not like to have this appliance rose by almost an equal amount (11%) to 14%. The proportion of neutral respondents rose slightly and the don’t knows declined slightly.

Fine spray kitchen tap

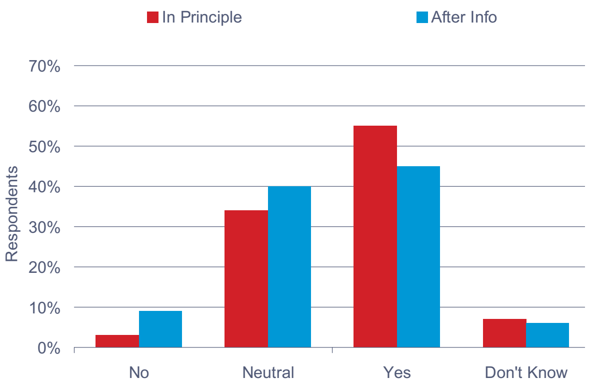


Source: Savills/YouGov

Briefing notes

The proportion of respondents who liked having or would like to have a two stage kitchen tap also fell by 10%. The proportion who did not like or would not like to have this appliance rose by 6%. Those who did not mind either way rose by 6% and those who did not know fell by 1%.

Two stage kitchen tap

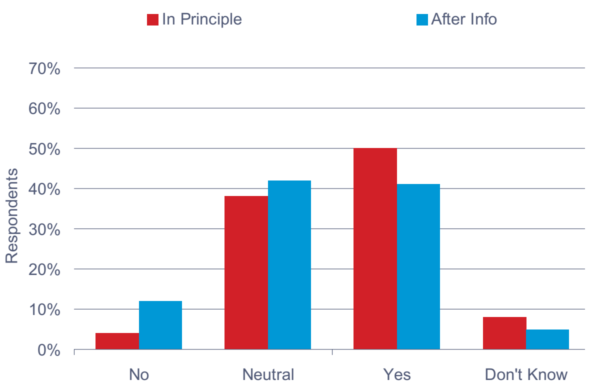


Source: Savills/YouGov

The same questions were asked for wash basin taps. In principle, half of the respondents liked the idea of a water efficient wash basin tap. Just 4% of respondents disliked the idea, 38% did not have an opinion either way and 8% didn't know.

After being provided with the information, the proportion who liked or would like to have fine spray wash basin taps declined by 9%. This is of a similar magnitude to the falls seen for fine spray kitchen taps. The proportion who did not like having or would not like to have this appliance after reviewing the information provided increased by 8% to 12%. Those who did not express an opinion either way rose by 4% and those who did not know fell by 2%.

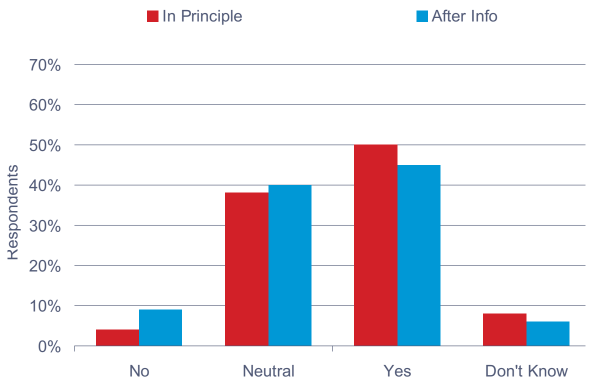
Wash basin fine spray



Source: Savills/YouGov

The proportion of respondents who liked having or would like to have a two stage wash basin tap fell by 5%. This fall is of a smaller magnitude than for the fine spray option and mirrors the trend seen for kitchen taps. The proportion of respondents who did not like having or would not like to have a two stage wash basin tap rose by 4%. Neutral responses also rose by 2% and those who did not know fell by 2%.

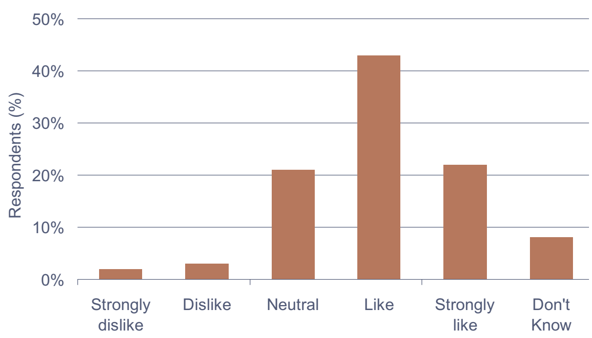
Wash basin two stage tap



Source: Savills/YouGov

After having digested the information provided, people's attitudes towards an overall water efficient home technology package was determined. A total of 22% of respondents strongly liked the idea, with a further 43% liking the idea. 21% of respondents did not have an opinion either way. Just 5% disliked the idea (2% of whom strongly disliked the idea).

Attitude towards overall water-efficient home technology package based on information



Source: Savills Research/YouGov

Briefing notes

Savills Research team is based in London and provides advice and analysis to clients on the rural, residential, commercial and leisure property sectors in the UK and Europe. Savills also provides similar property research services throughout South East Asia and Australia. In the UK, Savills has had a dedicated residential research team for the past 18 years. Over this time, the department has built up a strong reputation for producing accurate, well informed and, above all else, independent analysis and commentary on the UK's housing market. As a result, the team are a leading national commentator on market trends.

The success of the department has been built on its market insight, provided by the Savills network, in conjunction with a significant external consultancy business. This market-led approach to our research is vital to our clients. It enables us to provide you with analysis, commentary and forecasting that adds value to both your assets and your businesses. The department has been involved in a wide range of consultancy projects for a variety of public and private sector organisations across the UK. This has involved research into housing of all tenures and across all price ranges and rental levels.

Typical consultancy projects include:

- local area supply and demand analysis
- development feasibility studies
- investment strategy and advice
- place making site studies
- forecasting rents and capital values
- research to inform policy making and best practice statements
- research for property finance and business planning purposes
- research to inform housing-led regeneration initiatives

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