

## PRESS RELEASE

***Water Forum survey finds strong support for water conservation but more awareness is needed to help people understand where their water comes from, how it is treated, what to do if they encounter a problem, how much they use and what they can do to use less water.***

The Water Forum commissioned a national survey of water consumers (public and private) to determine their (1) knowledge of water supply, quality and security; (2) satisfaction with supplier communications; and (3) water conservation awareness. The survey was hosted online by Interactions Research Ltd. The national sample consisted of 1,518 adults, recruited as a demographically representative sample of the population in terms of gender, age, region and social background and the survey was completed in August 2023.

From the survey, 81% of the sample were connected to a public water supply provided by Uisce Éireann, 12% were connected to Group Water Schemes and 4% sourced their water supply from private wells. The main findings were:

- 54% of public water consumers lack knowledge of where their water comes from or how it is treated while consumers from private Group Water Schemes showed much greater awareness.
- Uisce Éireann consumers were less likely to be satisfied with the quality and supply of their drinking water relative to those receiving their water from Group Water Schemes, despite public water supplies being a very high standard.
- Over a quarter of consumers do not know who to contact in the event of a problem. Where consumers contacted their supplier, public water consumers reported less satisfaction with the response received than customers of Private Group Schemes.

These findings point to the need for public information campaigns and better overall public engagement. Uisce Éireann should work to build consumers knowledge of their local water supply, treatment and quality. They need to raise awareness of how consumers can report problems and support consumers until issues are resolved.

In Ireland, 10% of our population get their drinking water from a private well and one of the most important findings from the survey is that 74% of private well holders do not test their well annually, as recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency. 27% of the 70 well holders surveyed test their water quality every 2-5 years, while 21% never test.

Civic Offices, Limerick Road  
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

e: [info@nationalwaterforum.ie](mailto:info@nationalwaterforum.ie)

w: [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie)



A recent study found that *E. coli*, which can cause serious illness, is present in almost a third (29%) of Irish private wells, indicating the importance of testing private wells. The Water Forum is therefore calling for a significant intervention by the State to educate private well holders on well maintenance and testing to help protect public health.

The survey findings indicate that water conservation is considered important by consumers with 74% of those surveyed agreeing that we need to improve water conservation, but they do not know how much water they use or how to conserve water in their homes. The provision of information on how to increase water efficiency in the home is necessary to take advantage of the strong support for water conservation.

Dr Matt Crowe, Chairperson of the Water Forum stated *'These findings are really significant and point to low levels of awareness and knowledge about drinking water, particularly by those that get their water from Uisce Éireann. Uisce Éireann needs to do more to actively engage with its customers to build trust in its supplies and to make sure people know who to contact if there is an issue'*.

If we wish to develop a water smart society that truly values Ireland's water resources we need:

- *Public information campaigns* to build knowledge on water treatment and supply processes, how wastewater is treated and the potential threats to drinking water security and supply.
- *Uisce Éireann customer engagement and communications* should be strengthened to improve public trust in drinking water supplies and to make sure people know who to contact if there is an issue and ideally to let people know how much water they are using.
- The survey shows that there is very strong support for water conservation measures so all effort must be taken to *provide support and education on how to increase water efficiency in the home* as this has benefits for nature, water and energy cost savings and can also help us adapt to climate change.

[Water Services Consumer Survey Report](#)  
[Private-wells-protection-leaflet \(epa.ie\)](#).

END

21/3/24

*Note to the Editor*



Civic Offices, Limerick Road  
Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

e: [info@nationalwaterforum.ie](mailto:info@nationalwaterforum.ie)

w: [www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie)



The Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) was established in 2018 to provide a platform for public engagement on all matters relating to water management in Ireland and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. It consists of 26 members from a wide range of organisations and sectors with an interest in water issues, including agriculture, angling, business, community and voluntary sector, domestic water consumers, education, environment, forestry, recreation, rivers trusts, rural water, social housing, tourism, trade unions and youth.

In accordance with the Water Services Act, 2017, the Forum has advisory roles in relation to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), Uisce Éireann(UÉ), the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and the Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC). The Forum is chaired by Dr Matt Crowe.

Contact: [gretta@nationalwaterforum.ie](mailto:gretta@nationalwaterforum.ie)

[www.thewaterforum.ie](http://www.thewaterforum.ie)

Twitter: @anforamuisce

