

## CONSUMER

# Pensioners cut back on bathing to ease water bills

By Emma Morgan

Pensioners living in water poverty are cutting back on showers and baths and even flushing their toilets less often to keep their bills down, research by the charity Independent Age has shown.

Almost half (46 per cent) of adults over 65 in England and Wales living on a low incomes are cutting back their water usage either by a "great deal" or a "fair amount", polling carried out by the charity through YouGov found.

The survey suggested that 46 per cent of older people on low incomes had reduced the number of times they flushed the toilet to reduce their bills in the first half of this year, while 41 per cent had cut down on their washing machine use and 31 per cent had restricted the frequency of bathing.

Forty-three per cent of respondents said they were worried about meeting the cost of their water bills over the next six months.

Judith Howard, 78, from London, told *The i Paper* she moved to a water meter to reduce her bills from £40 a month to about £12 at the start of this year, but she was then told that

the bill would rise to £29 from April. Howard (*inset*), a former organ builder, said: "If council tax and everything else goes up, even by 5 per cent, I will soon find that my annuity, which pays for bills, will not cover them, which is really worrying."

Her annuity provides an income of around £4,000 a year on top of her state pension, which has gradually pushed her further and further over the income tax threshold because of the triple lock increases.

This means that the amount she gets from her annuity has reduced from £350 a month to £280, which "barely covers" her bills.

A spokesman for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: "The number of customers that receive help with their bills through social tariffs has grown - from 4 to 9 per cent."



**i** Independent Age is calling for a **national social tariff for water** ensuring that people of all ages on a low income would qualify for consistent financial support to lower their water bills.