# 2025 UTILITY SURVEY REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Association of Idaho Cities (AIC) is pleased to share the 2025 Municipal Utility Survey. This report contains information on municipal services, billing, rates, system characteristics, asset management, fiscal capability assessments, and stormwater/drainage/floodway management.

The information is aggregated into summary tables that present averages, percentages, counts, and other data to capture survey question response. Results are categorized by city population:

- Less than 1,000;
- 1,000-4,999;
- 5,000-14,999;
- 15,000-49,999;
- 50,000 or more.

This is the fourth AIC utility survey. The first survey was conducted in 2010, the second in 2017, and the third in 2022. In the future, a similar survey and analysis is planned for once every five years. Accordingly, the next survey is scheduled for 2030.

Each city provides a different set of utilities to fit their residents' needs. There is no one-size-fits-all model for what utilities a city should provide or how they should go about providing them.

The following chapters provide a glimpse into the characteristics of the utilities provided by cities in Idaho.

All data reported is based on the total number of responding cities, not the total number of cities in Idaho.

Not all cities in Idaho have easy access to the information that this survey requires. Thus, some answers may be incomplete.

*AIC advises cities NOT to set rates based on what other cities charge.* By law, a city's utility rates must reflect the cost of operating their specific system, its unique needs, future expansion, and system upgrades. Setting rates based on what other cities charge can be a tragically costly decision.

The following provides a summary of the findings from the 2025 Municipal Utility Survey regarding drinking water and waste/reclaimed water utilities.

**Service Characteristics & Billing**[1]

- As of 2026, 162 Idaho cities provide drinking water services; 80% of these serve populations that are less than 5,000;
    - 87 Idaho cities directly provide waste/reclaimed water treatment services; 66% of these serve populations that are less than 5,000;
    - There is a total of 16 organizations (i.e. water companies such as Violia and Mid-Valley Sewer as well as 13 water and sewer districts) providing wastewater and/or drinking water services to Idaho communities across the state.
    - 39 cities and 2 sewer districts are currently using water re-use permits.
- 88% of the responding cities bill monthly;
- 16% of the responding cities contract out billing services, and over 89% of the responding cities rely upon propriety billing software;
- Most responding cities do not have automatic CPI/Income rate adjustments;
- It is more common for larger cities to have rate revenue to debt service requirements;
- The overall percentage of connections served outside of corporate boundaries are nominal for services such as wastewater, electricity, solid waste and irrigation. However, for drinking water services in cities of under 50,000, over 50% of the respondents are providing services outside of the city.

**Drinking Water**

- Since 2025, a little **over 50%** of the respondents have completed a drinking water utility rate survey. That number **increases to 70%** when looking back to as far as 2020.
- The trend of seeing the average drinking water rates decrease as the cities' populations increase continued in 2025. However, individual city policies in handling charging for water usage complicate this analysis.
- Over 92% of respondents increased their drinking water fees since the last Utility Survey in 2022.
    - 24 of the cities increased their drinking water rate by approximately 3-6%.
    - Average drinking water bills for residential customers were highest for smaller cities, at about $57, while bills were lower for cities with populations of 15,000 or more at about $26.
- In this survey, respondents were also asked to consider what factors impacted their decision to increase their drinking water fees. These were their responses:
    - **86%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **inflationary pressures**.

[1] Drinking Water, Wastewater and Reuse Water Information was provided by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). AIC thanks Tyler Fortunati, Jerri Henry and Cassandra Lemon for their efforts in gathering this information to share with AIC's members and its affiliate partners.

    - **81%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **treatment costs**.
    - **91%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **labor costs.**
    - **93%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **capital improvement projects**.
    - **70%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **state or federal mandates**.
- **73%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **state or federal mandates**.
    - Over 85% of the cities have conducted a lead and copper inventory to the customers' point of delivery.
- **Almost 83%** of respondents are reliant upon Ground Water for their main source of water.
    - 22% are reliant upon Surface Water for their main water source.
- **Nearly 20%** of respondents do not know what percent capacity their drinking water system is currently operating.
- **Nearly 25%** of respondents believe their drinking water systems will be at full capacity in the next 5 years.
- **39%** of the cities who responded to this survey have **joined regional efforts to recharge their aquifers**.
- A water conservation program has been established by 34% of the cities.
    - Nine of these cities have landscaping rules or policies in place to help achieve water conservation goals.
- **Approximately 75% of cities** have **completed a cybersecurity self-assessment** since 2018.
- There are many challenges that are currently affecting cities' abilities to provide for their communities' drinking water needs. While there are many challenges that a city could be facing for drinking water, AIC only gave 10 options to provide feedback on. These were some of the more notable responses:
    - **65%** of respondents shared that having a **small customer base** poses an issue for managing their drinking water system.
    - **Almost 80%** of respondents shared that both **inadequate funding** and **limited access to additional funding** were problematic for managing their drinking water system.
    - **Over 50%** of respondents shared that **inadequate water supply** has been challenging their city's ability to manage their drinking water system.
    - **88%** of cities responded that **inadequate or aging infrastructure** was impacting their management of their drinking water system.
    - **83%** of cities shared that **regulatory requirements** made it more difficult for cities to manage their drinking water systems.

- **Waste/Reclaimed Water**

- Since 2025, over **50%** of the respondents have completed a wastewater utility rate survey. That number **increases to 72%** when looking back to as far as 2020.
- Almost **62% of respondents increased** their **wastewater fees** since the last Utility Survey in 2022.
    - 19 of the cities (a little over 50%) increased their wastewater rate by approximately 3-6%.
    - Average wastewater bills for residential customers were highest for smaller cities, at about $56, while bills were lower for cities with populations of 15,000 or more at about $49.
- In this survey, respondents were also asked to consider what factors impacted their decision to increase their drinking water fees. These were their responses:
    - **89%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **inflationary pressures**.
    - **97%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **treatment costs**.
    - **97%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **labor costs.**
    - **100%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **capital improvement projects**.
    - **92%** of respondents increased their drinking water fees due to **state or federal mandates**.
- **A little less than 25%** of respondents believe their drinking water systems will be at full capacity in the next 5 years.
- Approximately 42% of cities are operating their wastewater treatment plants at or above 60% of their capacity level.
- As mentioned in the drinking water notes, approximately 75% of cities have completed a cybersecurity self-assessment since 2018.
- While there are many challenges that a city are facing for wastewater, AIC only gave 9 options to provide feedback on. These were some of the more notable responses:
    - **69%** of respondents shared that having a **small customer base** poses an issue for managing their wastewater system.
    - **Over 83%** of respondents shared that both **inadequate funding and limited access to additional funding** were problematic for managing their wastewater system.
    - **97%** of cities responded that **inadequate or aging infrastructure** were impacting their management of their wastewater system.
    - **86%** of respondents shared that **operations and/or maintenance staffing issues** have impacted their wastewater treatment plans.
    - **92%** of cities shared that **regulatory requirements** made it more difficult for cities to manage their wastewater system.

## Special Thanks & Acknowledgements

The Association of Idaho Cities would like to thank the following cities for their time and effort in filling out the 2025 Utility Survey. Without them we would not be able to produce such a robust and informative report.

Responding Cities

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aberdeen | Cottonwood | Garden City | Moscow | St. Anthony |
| Acequai | Craigmont | Greenleaf | Mountain Home | Star |
| Ammon | Culdesac | Hazelton | Murtaugh | Stites |
| Athol | Dalton Gardens | Homedale | Nampa | Sun Valley |
| Boise | Dayton | Idaho City | Newdale | Tetonia |
| Bonners Ferry | Donnelly | Idaho Falls | Nezperce | Ucon |
| Burley | Dover | Kellogg | Pocatello | Weiser |
| Cambridge | East Hope | Kuna | Post Falls | White Bird |
| Castleford | Eagle | Lewiston | Preston | Wilder |
| Chubbuck | Elk River | Meridian | Rexburg | |
| Coeur d'Alene | Fruitland | Middleton | Soda Springs | |

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2025, the Association of Idaho Cities (AIC) surveyed its member cities to obtain information about city services, utility rates and other system characteristics for city-provided services (e.g., water, wastewater, stormwater, irrigation, electricity, streetlights, and solid waste). Survey results can enable cities to compare their current policies and practices to other cities throughout the State. The survey results are also used by AIC to advocate for cities at the State level. AIC gives cities access to the aggregated results so they can use it as a reference and for comparison to other cities' rates and data.

This is the fourth AIC utility survey. The first survey was conducted in 2010, the second survey was conducted in 2017, and the third one was conducted in 2022. In 2025, AIC worked together with other organizations such as Idaho Rural Water Association (IRWA), the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and several other affiliate partners to revamp the survey and the data that's being compiled. A similar survey is planned for implementation once every five years (i.e. 2030 and 2035).

Like the previous three surveys, AIC advises cities in the strongest possible terms NOT to set rates based solely on what another city charges. **A city's utility rates must reflect the cost of operating the specific system and needs for future expansion and system upgrades.** Setting rates based on what other cities charge can be a tragically costly decision.

Finally, in this survey, AIC adjusted the way it asked several questions such as the catalysts for why utility rates were increased as well as what the most challenging issues are with providing utility services. For instance, AIC revised the formats of these questions so cities could rate the influence of individual factors for rate increases or challenges their public system is facing. Respondents selected one of four options: (1) significant factor, (2) moderate factor, (3) minor factor, or (4) none. The following tables (Table 3.5, Table 3.11, Table 4.4, Table 4.10, Table 5.5, and Table 5.9) include the total percentage for all cities that responded that each applicable factor was either a minor, a moderate or a significant factor.

## Organization of this Report

Following Chapter 1, this report is organized into seven chapters and an appendix:

**Chapter 2 discusses Cities' Utility Billing in general**. It includes topics related to the frequency of billing, how payments are accepted, overall fee structure, how fees are enforced, rate revenue data, and information related to billing credits and adjustments.

**Chapter 3 contains Drinking Water Rates and System Characteristics.** Rate topics include how each utility's rate structure is set up; when rates have changed; why they have changed; and the average bill for a resident based on a representative service amount. System characteristics address drinking water sources, connections, and water conservation management, among other issues.

**Chapter 4 contains Waste/Reclaimed Water Rates and System Characteristics.** Rate topics include how each utility's rate structure is set up; when rates have changed; why they have changed; and the average bill for a resident based on a representative service amount. System characteristics address treatment technologies, connections, waste management, and other issues.

**Chapter 5 contains Solid Waste Collection Rates and System Characteristics.** Rate topics include how each utility's rate structure is set up; when rates have changed; why they have changed; and the average bill for a resident based on a representative service amount. System characteristics address collection programs, accounts, and other issues.

**Chapter 6 reviews survey responses regarding Asset Management and Financial Capabilities.** It summarizes how many cities have asset management plans for drinking water, waste/reclaimed water and solid waste collection. This chapter also includes a brief analysis of current financial impacts of water programs and financial capabilities for cities with populations greater than 5000.

**Chapter 7 reviews survey responses regarding Stormwater, Floodway, and Drainage Regulations and Policies.** It summarizes how many cities have adopted ordinances or policies and how these programs and currently funded.

The report also includes an appendix with the survey instrument and elaborates on the methodology, the survey design, and data editing and analysis.

### Survey Response Characteristics

AIC sent out the survey to all 197 member cities. The response rate was 28%. The cities that responded represent approximately 67% of all residents living in the State of Idaho.

Table 1.1: Response Rate of Both Preliminary and Full Surveys by City Size

| Population | # of City Responses | # of Idaho Cities | Response Rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 21 | 110 | 19% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 11 | 51 | 22% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 6 | 17 | 35% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 10 | 11 | 91% |
| >50,000 | 7 | 8 | 88% |
| Total | 55 | 197 | 28% |

### Overview: Idaho City Utility Services

The following data represents services that a city has established utility fees for, including those provided by third parties, private companies, and water sewer districts that work with the city to serve residents and businesses within the city limits.

Table 1.2: City Provided Services

| Services | <1,000 | 1,000-4,999 | 5,000-14,999 | 15,000-49,999 | >50,000 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Drinking Water | 18 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 45 |
| % Respondents | 90% | 100% | 100% | 88% | 83% | 90% |
| Wastewater | 15 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 43 |
| % Respondents | 75% | 90% | 100% | 75% | 100% | 86% |
| Electricity | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| % Respondents | 5% | 40% | 33% | 0% | 17% | 16% |
| Irrigation | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 15 |
| % Respondents | 15% | 20% | 17% | 50% | 83% | 30% |
| Solid Waste | 9 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 31 |
| % Respondents | 45% | 70% | 67% | 63% | 100% | 62% |
| Streetlights | 3 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| % Respondents | 15% | 40% | 0% | 13% | 17% | 18% |

The following data represents services which are provided solely by private entities and are not under a city contract. The category of irrigation was removed from this table because no city reported this service being provided by a private entity.

Table 1.3: Privately Provided Services Not Done Under a City Services Contract

| Services | <1,000 | 1,000-4,999 | 5,000-14,999 | 15,000-49,999 | >50,000 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Drinking Water | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| % Respondents | 0% | 10 | 0% | 13% | 17% | 6% |
| Wastewater | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| % Respondents | 2% | 10% | 0% | 13% | 0% | 2% |
| Electricity | 12 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 33 |
| % Respondents | 60% | 70% | 50% | 100% | 50% | 66 % |
| Irrigation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| % Respondents | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Solid Waste | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 18 |
| % Respondents | 15% | 30% | 50% | 25% | 33% | 36% |
| Street Lights | 10 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 12 |
| % Respondents | 15% | 0% | 0% | 25% | 0% | 24% |

A right-of-way use agreement, also called a “franchise agreement” is a legal arrangement between a city and another entity in compensation for the use of the city’s right-of-way. These agreements take the form of a contractual agreement negotiated individually by a city and a utility provider; codified by an ordinance approved by the city council. These agreements outline the fee charged, terms and conditions, as well as any special services provided by either party.

These agreements ensure that companies and their customers that receive special right-of-way use are paying fees to reimburse local governments for use of public property, and to prevent

general taxpayers from subsidizing extraordinary use. The revenue provided to a city from this type of agreement is based on a percentage of the customer sales revenue for customers located within the city's incorporated boundaries. Considering Idaho's restrictive property tax system, the assessment of fees with these agreements has a beneficial impact on a city government's fiscal capacity. Table 1.4 demonstrates how the presence of these agreements generally increases with population size.

Table 1.4 : Electricity and Telecommunication Services – Responding Cities

| Services | <1,000 | 1,000-4,999 | 5,000-14,999 | 15,000-49,999 | >50,000 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Electricity by City | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| Electricity by Other | 12 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 33 |
| Telecommunications by City | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Telecommunications by Other | 9 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 33 |
| Right-of-Way Use Agreement | 15 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 40 |
| % of Cities with Agreements | 75% | 70% | 100% | 75% | 100% | 80% |

# CHAPTER 2: UTILITY BILLING

The survey asked cities about the characteristics of how they bill their customers. Questions addressed the frequency of billing, how payments are accepted, overall rate structure, how fees are enforced, rate revenue data, and information related to billing credits and adjustments.

## Billing

Most cities bill customers monthly, while only a couple bill every other month.

Table 2.1: Number of Cities per Billing Frequency – Responding Cities

| Population | Monthly | Bi-Monthly |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 19 | 0 |
| 1,000-4,999 | 9 | 0 |
| 5,000-14,999 | 6 | 0 |
| 15,000-49,999 | 7 | 0 |
| >50,000 | 4 | 2 |
| **Total** | **45** | **2** |

All cities accept cash and check as a form of payment. Smaller cities predominately accept cash, check and money orders while larger cities are more likely to accept all forms of payment. The survey results show that as the population size increases, the payment methods accepted diversify. However, cities above 50,000 are less likely to accept Direct Deposit as a form of payment.

Table 2.2: Percentage of Cities that Accept Methods of Payment – Responding Cities

| Population | Cash | Check | Credit Card/Debit | Money Order | Direct Deposit | e-Check |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 100% | 100% | 85% | 65% | 20% | 30% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 80% | 50% | 30% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 83% | 50% | 67% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 71% | 71% | 86% |
| >50,000 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 50% | 83% |

A few cities are starting to offer their customers paperless billing as a convenient way for customers to receive, view and pay bills while also "going green."

In addition to paperless billing, the survey also asked cities if they contract out billing. Results show that while relatively few cities contract out billing, most of the cities that do are less than 15,000 in population. Most cities that do their own billing use proprietary software. The responses contained a wide variety of software identified. The most popular proprietary software includes Caselle, Black Mountain Software, QuickBooks, and Springbrook.

Table 2.3: Characteristics of Billing Services (# of Cities Using)

| Population | Paperless | Contract Out |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 6 | 2 |
| 1,000-4,999 | 6 | 2 |
| 5,000-14,999 | 6 | 4 |
| 15,000-49,999 | 7 | 1 |
| >50,000 | 6 | 0 |
| Total | 39 | 8 |

## Account Features & Fees

Roughly half of responding cities require the account to be in the property owner's name. Approximately a fourth of cities will still charge either a base rate or a vacancy rate when a property is unoccupied.

Table 2.4: Characteristics of Account Features – Responding Cities

| Population | Must be in Owner's Name | Close Account Upon Vacancy | Vacancy/Base Rate | Allows Owner to Decide How They Want to Proceed | Does Not Handle or Unknown |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 5 |
| 1,000-4,999 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 5,000-14,999 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 15,000-49,999 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| >50,000 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| **Total** | **26** | **77** | **13** | **8** | **7** |

When an account holder has a late payment or nonpayment, cities use several methods of enforcement. Table 2.5 indicates the most popular method of enforcement is to administer a late fee, followed by disconnecting or stopping the utility service. Although not as prevalent, liens on property, penalties, and collections are other common methods.

While disconnecting the utility service is a common method of enforcement, most cities wait two to three weeks before charging a late fee. Some cities charge a flat dollar amount for late fees while others charge a percentage of the amount due. Some cities have both options and charge whichever is greater.

Table 2.5: Percent of Responding Cities that Use Methods of Enforcement for Late or Nonpayment – Responding Cities

| Population | Late Fee | Disconnections | Collections | County-Enforced Lien | Penalties & Interest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 85% | 70% | 15% | 25% | 10% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 80% | 70% | 0% | 20% | 0% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 67% | 67% | 0% | 0% | 17% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 88% | 63% | 25% | 25% | 13% |
| >50,000 | 67% | 67% | 33% | 17% | 17% |

Table 2.6: Average Number of Days Prior to Late Fee – Responding Cities

| Population | # Days | n |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 14 | 20 |
| 1,000-4,999 | 23 | 10 |
| 5,000-14,999 | 9 | 6 |
| 15,000-49,999 | 17 | 8 |
| >50,000 | 42 | 6 |
| Statewide Average | 18 | 50 |

Table 2.7: Average Late Fee – Responding Cities

| Population | Late Fee ($) | Late Fee (%) |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $9.40 | 6% |
| 1,000-4,999 | $14.65 | 5% |
| 5,000-14,999 | $10 | N/A |
| 15,000-49,999 | $10 | 3% |
| >50,000 | $N/A | 9% |
| Statewide Average | $ 10.36 | 6% |

## General Rate Characteristics

The survey results show that most responding cities (77% percent for drinking water, 86% percent for wastewater, and 85% percent for solid waste) do not have an automatic CPI/Income adjustment (see Table 2.8). Cities with a population range of less than 1,000 and 1,000-4,999 represent the highest percentage of cities that automatically adjust rates for inflation.

Cities sometimes require a percentage of their rate revenue to be used for debt service to cover the payment of interest and principal on existing debt for water infrastructure projects. It is more common for larger cities to have higher rate revenue to debt service requirements. As Table 2.8 reveals, close to 30% of cities, regardless of size, are choosing to put into place rate revenue to debt service requirements.

Table 2.8: Percentage of Cities with Rate Revenue to Debt Service Requirements – Responding Cities

| Population | % of Respondents |
|---|---|
| <1,000 | 40% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 10% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 29% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 25% |
| >50,000 | 33% |
| **Total** | **30%** |

The following chapters highlight survey responses for the drinking water, waste/reclaimed water, and solid waste rates and system characteristics. Survey responses are presented in two main subsections for each system. The first sections, "Rates and Rate Changes," summarizes average rates, when cities have updated rates, how rates have changed, why they have changed, and pricing structures. The second sections, "System Characteristics," describes facilities, age, operational capacity, and types of programs.

# CHAPTER 3: DRINKING WATER SYSTEM RATES AND CHARACTERISTICS

## Drinking Water Rates and Rate Changes

The survey asked cities what a residential customer would be charged for using 5,000 gallons of water as measured by a ¾″ meter. Even though cities may offer different pricing structures that do not fit this scenario, this amount was chosen to provide the best possible comparison among cities. If cities did not have a pricing structure that would allow them to bill for exactly 5,000 gallons, they listed the lowest billing amount that would include the 5,000 gallons.

It's important to note that the values reported below are just values. Assumptions cannot be made that a utility is in the black or red. In other words, a lower value does not necessarily suggest a utility is meeting its maintenance and operating costs and generating enough revenue to fund capital investments. Similarly, a higher value does not necessarily suggest a city is generating more revenue than it needs.

The average water bills for residential customers were higher for smaller cities of 1,000 or less in population, at about $68, while bills were lower for cities with populations of 15,000 or more at about $32. However, some of the responses from cities were skewed due to outstanding bonds for public infrastructure improvements for cities such as Boise, Lewiston, Nampa, Preston, Star, and Twin Falls.

Table 3.1: Average Drinking Water Rates

| Population | Rate | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $68.47 | $39.59 |
| 1,000-4,999 | $37.29 | $16.17 |
| 5,000-14,999 | $35.76 | $6.86 |
| 15,000-49,999 | $32.06 | $13.51 |
| >50,000 | $26.14 | $9.87 |
| **Statewide Average** | **$44.60** | **$30.44** |

When adjusted for inflation, the average 2025 water bill for all city sizes is mostly lower or higher than the 2022 average depending on city size. Overall, the average change from 2022 to 2025 is $9.30, but for varying city sizes, the change ranges from -$0.56 to $32.50. As mentioned in the previous section, the financial numbers for cities of a population of 1,000 or less are skewed because cities that have just recently begun work on expensive infrastructure projects

have increased their drinking water rates and thereby increased the overall average drinking water rate. Table 3.2 also shows the lowest and highest bill in 2022 and 2025 for each city size.

Table 3.2: Drinking Water Rate Comparisons[2] - Responding Cities

| Population | 2022 | 2022 Low | 2022 High | 2025 | 2025 Low | 2025 High | Average Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $ 35.97 | $ 3.00 | $70.75 | $ 68.47 | $ 45.00 | $ 174.22 | $32.50 |
| 1,000-4,999 | $ 37.85 | $28.10 | $ 71.47 | $ 37.29 | $ 16.20 | $65.09 | -$0.56 |
| 5,000-14,999 | $ 30.36 | $ 12.5 | $ 37.37 | $ 35.76 | $ 27.75 | $ 46.50 | $5.40 |
| 15,000-49,999 | $ 29.12 | $ 18.47 | $ 52.71 | $ 33.39 | $ 20.54 | $ 39.80 | $4.78 |
| >50,000 | $ 21.78 | $ 14.99 | $ 36.15 | $ 26.14 | $ 15.32 | $42.29 | $4.36 |
| **Total Average** | **$ 31.02** | | | **$ 40.21** | | | **$9.30** |

When it comes to credits and adjustments for drinking water billing errors and leaks, a majority of the responding cities provide adjustments for both. Generally, as city size increases, so does the percentage of cities that offer waivers. One significant change in this year's survey results regarding waivers compared to the 2022 results is that there was a dramatic decrease in the number of cities not providing waivers to their residents. In 2022, AIC's Utility Survey determined that 29% of respondents provided no waivers to their residents. In 2025, that number has been reduced to 7%!

Table 3.3: Percentage of Responding Cities That Provide Credits and Adjustments – Drinking Water

| Population | Only Billing Errors | Only Leaks | Both Billing Errors and Leaks | None |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 33% | 0% | 58% | 8% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 56% | 11% | 11% | 22% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 33% | 0% | 67% | 0% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 33% | 0% | 67% | 0% |
| >50,000 | 17% | 0% | 83% | 0% |
| **Average** | **34%** | **2%** | **49%** | **7%** |

[2] Previously, AIC used PERSI "cost of living adjustments" (COLA) numbers for calculating inflation related increases, the AIC policy team switched its source from where it was pulling this data from. For the 2025 Utility Survey, AIC has switched to using inflation numbers produced by the Federal Reserve. The estimated percentage change between January 2022 and December 2025 is 20.4%. In other words, approximately 20% of the wastewater rate increase from 2022 to 2025 should be attributable to inflation; increases over 20% are likely due to other factors. The additional remaining costs, while unconfirmed in this survey, could be attributable to the dramatic shift in population increases as well as ongoing public project improvements.
https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUSR0000SEHG

Most cities have recently changed their rates. 2025 was the most common year for rate changes for all city sizes. Most cities have increased their rates since their last adjustment. The results illustrate that customers can continue to expect water rates to increase over time. Communities with smaller population sizes can expect their drinking water rates to go up more each time compared to large cities due to having a small customer base among other factors.

Table 3.4: Average Rate Update and Percent Change for Responding Cities – Drinking Water

| Population | Average Year | Mode | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 2023 | 2022 | 7.3% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 2025 | 2025 | 15.37% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 2025 | 2023 | 4.17% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 2025 | 2025 | 5% |
| >50,000 | 2025 | 2024 | 2.7% |
| **Average** | **2025** | **2024** | **4.84%** |

As shown in Table 3.5, factors such as inflation, capital improvements, and labor costs were the top reasons for rate changes for drinking water. However, State or Federal Mandates had a dramatic increase in the effect they had on water rates. Approximately 70% of our respondents shared that mandates affected their water rates, which is much higher than the 12% that was reported in our 2022 survey. Consequently, those operational costs are being passed down to residents.

Table 3.5: Catalysts for Drinking Water Rate Changes – Responding Cities

| Population | Inflation | Treatment Costs | Labor Costs | Capital Improvements | State or Federal Mandates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 98% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 67% (4%) |
| 1,000-4,999 | 100% | 89% | 100% | 100% | 78% (13%) |
| 5,000-14,999 | 100% | 67% | 100% | 100% | 100% (20%) |
| 15,000-49,999 | 100% | 78% | 100% | 89% | 56% (60) |
| >50,000 | 83% | 67% | 67% | 83% | 67% (25%) |
| **Average** | **86%** | **81%** | **91%** | **93%** | **70% (12%)** |

Drilling down into these numbers a little deeper, most of these factors played a moderate to significant role in the decision of cities to increase their fees. Well over 50% of the respondents in each sub-population group shared that most issues are directly impacting their decision-making for choosing to increase water rates. The two factors of Labor Costs and Capital Improvements tied at 72% among all respondents for being the greatest factor in causing drinking water rates to be increased.

Table 3.6 Factors That Played Either a Moderate or Significant Role in Why Drinking Water Rate Changes Occurred – Responding Cities

| Population | Inflation | Treatment Costs | Labor Costs | Capital Improvement | State or Federal Mandates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| < 1,000 | 50% | 75% | 75% | 76% | 33% |
| 1,000 – 4,999 | 56% | 78% | 78% | 78% | 67% |
| 5,000 – 14,999 | 67% | 50% | 67% | 67% | 50% |
| 15,000 – 49,999 | 100% | 44% | 78% | 67% | 56% |
| > 50,000 | 83% | 50% | 67% | 83% | 50% |
| **Average** | **65%** | **53%** | **72%** | **72%** | **49%** |

The pricing structure a city uses to bill its customers can influence how customers use water. For example, a flat rate provides no incentive to conserve water while an inclining block rate is going to be more expensive for a customer as the amount of water usage increases. While the margin is tight, more cities are choosing to use an inclining block rate. Only one city offers a declining block rate. Based on this information, with the high incidence of cities using inclining block rates, many cities charge customers more as their water usage increases.

Table 3.7: Drinking Water Rate Structures – Responding Cities

| Population | Flat Rate | Inclining Block Rate(s) | Declining Block Rate(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 50% | 50% | 0% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 67% | 33% | 0% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 50% | 33% | 0% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 30% | 50% | 0% |
| >50,000 | 33% | 33% | 17% |
| **Average** | **40%** | **44%** | **2%** |

## Drinking Water System Characteristics

Ground water is the predominant source of drinking water within Idaho. Over 80% of Idaho cities that responded to this survey use ground water as their main source of water. The second most common source of water is surface water at 21%. The third source of water comes from artesian or springs with approximately 17% of respondents for their water needs. A point of clarity on Table 3.7, some respondents use multiple sources of water to meet their community needs. Therefore, that affects the overall numbers that are provided in this table.

Table 3.8 Drinking Water Source – Responding Cities

| Population | Ground Water | Surface Water | Artesian or Spring |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 100% | 15% | 23% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 78% | 20% | 10% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 50% | 33% | 17% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 90% | 10% | 20% |
| >50,000 | 100% | 0% | 0% |
| **Average** | **81%** | **21%** | **16%** |

Cities were asked if they offer services outside of their city corporate boundary. There was no clear trend between city size and whether they offer services outside of their corporate boundary. However, more than 50% of cities under 50,000 in population are currently offering utility services to some individuals in the city's area of impact.

Table 3.9: Drinking Water Service Connections – Responding Cities

| Population | Offer Outside |
|---|---|
| <1,000 | 50% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 50% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 67% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 57% |
| >50,000 | 17% |
| **Average** | **50%** |

The percentage of cities that have water conservation and source water protection programs does not appear to be dependent upon population size. This suggests that Idaho cities are responding to regional or local drinking water resource issues as they consider the implementation of these types of programs.

Table 3.10: Cities Implementing Conservation Efforts

| Population | Has a Water Conservation Program | Has Landscaping Rules or Policies | Joined Regional Efforts to Implement Water Supply Aquifer Recharge |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 8% | 8% | 17% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 33% | 22% | 44% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 0% | 0% | 17% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 60% | 40% | 60% |
| >50,000 | 83% | 50% | 67% |
| **Average** | **35%** | **24%** | **40%** |

Cities were also asked about the most challenging issues they faced as they provided drinking water services. Challenges relating to a small customer base impacted more of the smaller cities, while the effects of inadequate or aging infrastructure impacted most cities statewide. Responding cities with large populations (i.e., >50,000) indicated that they are facing challenges pertaining to challenging regulatory requirements.

Table 3.11: Drinking Water – Most Challenging Issues for Responding Cities

| Population | Small Customer Base | Inadequate Funding | Limited Access to Additional Funding | Inadequate Water Supply | System Records | Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure | Lack of Inventory or Asset Management | Regulatory Requirements | Small Pool of Governing Officials | Water Curtailment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 100% | 100% | 92% | 67% | 92% | 92% | 75% | 83% | 75% | 58% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 89% | 89% | 78% | 67% | 56% | 100% | 67% | 89% | 67% | 56% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 50% | 67% | 67% | 67% | 33% | 100% | 67% | 100% | 50% | 50% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 40% | 70% | 70% | 40% | 60% | 70% | 40% | 70% | 20% | 30% |
| >50,000 | 17% | 83% | 67% | 50% | 67% | 83% | 50% | 83% | 17% | 83% |
| **Average** | **65%** | **81%** | **76%** | **53%** | **65%** | **88%** | **60%** | **84%** | **44%** | **49%** |

In Table 3.12, we removed the responses from cities that responded that the applicable issue was a minor factor. As shown below, 72% of all respondents shared that Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure remains far and away the biggest issue that cities are attempting to plan and prepare for. Besides Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure, other factors such as Small Customer Base, Inadequate Funding and Limited Access to Additional Funding also garnered a response rate of over 50% for posing an issue to the drinking water services that cities are providing.

Table 3.12 Challenging Issues That Played Either a Moderate or Significant Role in Cities' Ability to Provide Drinking Water Services – Responding Cities

| Population | Small Customer Base | Inadequate Funding | Limited Access to Additional Funding | Inadequate Water Supply | System Records | Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure | Lack of Inventory or Asset Management | Regulatory Requirements | Small Pool of Governing Officials | Water Curtailment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 92% | 83% | 83% | 25% | 33% | 75% | 33% | 33% | 50% | 25% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 66% | 56% | 56% | 11% | 0% | 89% | 22% | 44% | 11% | 67% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 17% | 50% | 67% | 33% | 0% | 100% | 17% | 67% | 0% | 0% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 30% | 30% | 20% | 10% | 20% | 50% | 10% | 30% | 0% | 20% |
| >50,000 | 17% | 33% | 33% | 17% | 17% | 83% | 0% | 50% | 17% | 17% |
| **Average** | **53%** | **56%** | **51%** | **16%** | **16%** | **72%** | **19%** | **40%** | **19%** | **21%** |

# CHAPTER 4: WASTE/RECLAIMED WATER SYSTEM RATES AND CHARACTERISTICS

## Waste/Reclaimed Water Rates and Rate Changes

As with drinking water service, the survey asked cities to report what a residential customer would be charged for a comparable volume of wastewater service. Cities providing wastewater/reclaimed water service were asked to provide their average monthly residential wastewater charge for a customer using an average of 5,000 gallons of drinking water per month during the winter months. Although some rate structures do not align perfectly with this scenario, the 5,000-gallon benchmark was used to enable consistent comparisons across cities. If a city could not bill for exactly 5,000 gallons, it reported the lowest bill amount that includes at least 5,000 gallons.

The average monthly bill for a residential customer in most cities is generally between $44 and $56. For cities above 50,000, the average price of wastewater rates remained at $37. Much like the drinking water rates, the rates for waste and reclaimed water for several cities have been impacted by ongoing water infrastructure projects.

Table 4.1: Average Waste/Reclaimed Water Rates – Responding Cities

| Population | Rates | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $ 56.47 | $ 10.31 |
| 1,000-4,999 | $ 48.39 | $ 13.69 |
| 5,000-14,999 | $ 44.83 | $ 33.34 |
| 15,000-49,999 | $ 55.61 | $ 9.94 |
| >50,000 | $ 37.30 | $ 13.79 |
| **Statewide Average** | **$ 43.96** | **$ 23.61** |

When adjusted for inflation, the average wastewater rate for 2025 is higher for most cities compared to 2022. Overall, the average increase from 2022 to 2025 is $5.13; but for varying city sizes the change ranges from an increase of $5.03 to $14.53.

Table 4.2: Waste/Reclaimed [3]

| Population | 2022 | 2022 Low | 2022 High | 2025 | 2025 Low | 2025 High | Average Increase |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $ 42.01 | $ 11.67 | $ 75 | $ 56.47 | $ 37.43 | $ 70.00 | $ 14.53 |
| 1,000-4,999 | $ 43.36 | $ 22.22 | $ 60.35 | $ 48.39 | $ 28.80 | $ 76.51 | $ 5.03 |
| 5,000-14,999 | $ 45.00 | $ 26.25 | $ 77.11 | $ 44.83 | $ 37.80 | $ 96.14 | $ -0.17 |
| 15,000-49,999 | $ 49.26 | $ 18.72 | $ 65.16 | $ 55.61 | $ 42.59 | $ 70.18 | $ 6.35 |
| >50,000 | $ 37.32 | $ 24.15 | $ 48.82 | $ 37.30 | $ 29.24 | $ 127.90 | $ -0.02 |
| **Average** | **$ 43.39** | | | **$ 48.52** | | | **$ 5.13** |

[3] Previously, AIC used PERSI "cost of living adjustments" (COLA) numbers for calculating inflation related increases. For the 2025 Utility Survey, AIC has switched to using inflation numbers produced by the Federal Reserve. The estimated percentage change between January 2022 and December 2025 is 20.4%. In other words, approximately 20% of the wastewater rate increase from 2022 to 2025 should be attributable to inflation, increases over 20% are likely due to other factors. The additional remaining costs, while unconfirmed in this survey, could be attributable to the dramatic shift in population increases as well as ongoing public project improvements. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUSR0000SEHG

Unlike the drinking water rates, most wastewater rates have not been updated in the past two years. Instead, most cities have last updated their wastewater/reclaimed water rates in 2023 or 2022. Only six cities have not adjusted their rates since or prior to 2020. For cities that did adjust their wastewater rates, all of them increased their rates. The results illustrate that customers can continue to expect waste/reclaimed water rates to increase over time. One additional note, the average rate change for the cities between the sizes of 5,000 and 14,999 is drastically impacted due to a wastewater project that the city of Preston recently approved.

Table 4.3: Average Rate Update and Percent Change for Responding Cities – Waste/Reclaimed Water

| Population | Average Year | Mode | % Average Rate Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 2022 | 2022 | 16% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 2021 | 2021 | 10.1% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 2022 | 2022 | 69% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 2024 | 2024 | 11.6% |
| >50,000 | 2023 | 2023 | 4% |
| **Average** | **2023** | **2022** | **9%** |

Respondents were asked to elaborate on why their waste/reclaimed water rates increased and were able to select multiple reasons. The top reasons for waste/reclaimed water rate changes were treatment costs, labor costs, and capital improvements. State or federal mandates, and inflation or CPI caused increased rates for cities with larger populations.

Table 4.4: Catalysts for Waste/Reclaimed Water Rate Changes – Responding Cities

| Population | Inflation | Treatment Costs | Labor Costs | Capital Improvements | State or Federal Mandates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 75% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 88% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 89% | 89% | 89% | 100% | 89% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 86% |
| >50,000 | 86% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 86% |
| **Average** | **89%** | **97%** | **97%** | **100%** | **92%** |

Drilling down into these numbers a little deeper, most of these factors played a moderate to significant role in the decision of cities to increase their fees. For example, for almost every factor well over 60% of the respondents shared that these issues are directly impacting their

decision-making for choosing to increase water rates. For this section, Treatment Costs, Labor Costs and Capital Improvements were the highest rated answers for why cities increased their wastewater rates.

Table 4.5 Factors That Played Either a Moderate or Significant Role in Why Wastewater Rate Changes Occurred – Responding Cities

| Population | Inflation | Treatment Costs | Labor Costs | Capital Improvement | State or Federal Mandates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| < 1,000 | 63% | 88% | 88% | 88% | 75% |
| 1,000 – 4,999 | 67% | 78% | 44% | 78% | 78% |
| 5,000 – 14,999 | 60% | 100% | 80% | 100% | 80% |
| 15,000 – 49,999 | 100% | 86% | 86% | 86% | 43% |
| > 50,000 | 58% | 71% | 71% | 86% | 43% |
| **Average** | **69%** | **86%** | **83%** | **86%** | **69%** |

Pricing structures for direct consumption of water can more easily influence customers' use of drinking water. However, waste/reclaimed water treatment costs do not easily translate to conservation incentives. Even so, the installation of more efficient potable water fixtures such as toilets and shower heads in newer housing stock has led to significant reductions in domestic water discharges to waste/reclaimed water systems. These reductions in treated water volumes have led to significant utility savings. The most common type of pricing structure for small cities is a non-metered flat rate. The most common type for medium to large cities is metered winter average consumption. Based on this information, many of the largest cities charge customers more as their waste/reclaimed water treatment demands increase.

Table 4.6: Waste/Reclaimed Water Rate Structures – Responding Cities

| Population | Non-Metered | Metered Winter Average Consumption |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 88% | 13% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 67% | 33% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 40% | 60% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 43% | 43% |
| >50,000 | 42% | 43% |
| **Total** | **58%** | **33%** |

### Waste/Reclaimed System Characteristics

EPA has established minimum, technology-based requirements for publicly owned treatment works (POTWs). These minimum requirements are called "secondary" treatment standards and include five-day biochemical oxygen demand (BOD5), total suspended solids (TSS) removal, and pH. In addition, secondary treatment standards provide alternative standards established on a case-by-case basis for treatment facilities considered equivalent to secondary treatment (trickling filters and waste stabilization ponds).

Idaho cities with waste/reclaimed water treatment plants must comply with these minimum requirements when seeking authorization to discharge to surface water bodies. Other methods to dispose of municipal waste include evaporation ponds, land application for agricultural crops, and re-use of treated wastewater for irrigation or other non-potable uses. As city size increases, cities provide more advanced solutions.

For cities above 50,000, 29% of respondents are utilizing Ultraviolet Disinfection technology and 43% are utilizing Tertiary procedures to their wastewater treatment.

Table 4.7: Waste/Reclaimed Water Treatment Technology – Responding Cities

| Population | Primary | Secondary | Land Application/ Re-Use | Nitrogen Removal | Phosphorus Removal | Lagoon |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| >1,000 | 38% | 0% | 50% | 13% | 0% | 75% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 38% | 13% | 38% | 13% | 13% | 50% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 0% | 40% | 60% | 20% | 40% | 20% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 57% | 71% | 43% | 43% | 29% | 14% |
| >50,000 | 100% | 100% | 29% | 88% | 100% | 0% |
| **Average** | **44%** | **44%** | **31%** | **36%** | **39%** | **42%** |

Cities were asked if they provide wastewater/reclaimed water connections outside of their city boundary. Results of the responding cities demonstrate that as a city's population increases, the percentage of those served with waste/reclaimed water service outside of the corporate boundaries increase.

Table 4.8: Waste/Reclaimed Water Service Connections – Responding Cities

| Population | Offer Outside |
|---|---|
| <1,000 | 15% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 0% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 33% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 14% |
| >50,000 | 50% |
| **Average** | **18%** |

With increases in population, the percentage of cities that have industrial wastewater pretreatment program increases. All significant industrial users are required to comply with pretreatment requirements so as to protect POTWs (Publicly Owned Treatment Works). And, POTWs are required to conduct an inventory once every permit cycle if no significant industrial users or processes have been previously identified, and annually if their presence is already documented. As of 2026, there continue to be twelve EPA-approved Pretreatment Programs in Idaho including: Boise, Caldwell, Nampa, Coeur d'Alene, Sandpoint, Burley, Twin Falls, Pocatello, Lewiston, Blackfoot, Idaho Falls and Rexburg.

Requirements to the treatment and disposal of biosolids apply to all POTWs. However, many smaller systems are not faced with the need to actively manage biosolids. In general, as city size increases the percentage of cities that actively apply biosolids also increases.

Table 4.9: Waste/Reclaimed Water Service Programs – Responding Cities

| Population | Pretreatment | BioSolids |
|---|---|---|
| >1,000 | 0% | 13% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 38% | 25% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 60% | 0% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 86% | 17% |
| >50,000 | 100% | 71% |
| **Total** | **53%** | **25%** |

Cities were asked about the most challenging issues they faced as they provided waste/reclaimed water services. Similar to drinking water services, challenges relating to a small customer base impacted more of the smaller cities, while responding cities with medium

and large populations (i.e., >15,000) indicated that they are facing challenges pertaining to regulatory requirements. In general, the impacts of inadequate or aging infrastructure impacted the majority of cities statewide.

Table 4.10: Waste/Reclaimed Water – Most Challenging Issues for Responding Cities

| Population | Small Customer Base | Inadequate Funding | Limited Access to Additional Funding | Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure | Limited Access to Operations and/or Maintenance Staff | Limited Access to Certified Laboratory Services | Lack of Inventory or Asset Management | Regulatory Requirements | Small Pool of Governing Officials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 63% | 75% | 100% | 63% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 100% | 100% | 88% | 100% | 75% | 75% | 50% | 88% | 63% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 100% | 100% | 80% | 100% | 60% | 60% | 80% | 100% | 60% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 43% | 86% | 86% | 100% | 100% | 43% | 86% | 86% | 29% |
| >50,000 | 14% | 86% | 71% | 100% | 100% | 57% | 71% | 100% | 14% |
| **Average** | **69%** | **92%** | **83%** | **97%** | **86%** | **58%** | **69%** | **92%** | **44%** |

In Table 4.11, we removed the responses from cities that responded that the applicable issue was a minor factor. As shown below, two factors – Inadequate Funding and Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure - garnered well over 80% of cities' responses that they are posing a serious threat to their ability to provide wastewater services. The next highest response was Regulatory Requirements at 58%, which is 18% higher than the response rate for the drinking water section of this survey.

Table 4.11 Challenging Issues That Played Either a Moderate or Significant Role in Cities' Ability to Provide Wastewater Services – Responding Cities

| Population | Small Customer Base | Inadequate Funding | Limited Access to Additional Funding | Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure | Limited Access to Operations and/or Maintenance Staff | Limited Access to Certified Laboratory Services | Lack of Inventory or Asset Management | Regulatory Requirements | Small Pool of Governing Officials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **<1,000** | 63% | 88% | 88% | 100% | 38% | 25% | 25% | 50% | 63% |
| **1,000-4,999** | 75% | 75% | 63% | 88% | 38% | 13% | 0% | 63% | 38% |
| **5,000-14,999** | 40% | 80% | 20% | 80% | 40% | 20% | 0% | 80% | 0% |
| **15,000-49,999** | 43% | 86% | 86% | 100% | 100% | 43% | 86% | 86% | 29% |
| **>50,000** | 0% | 29% | 14% | 71% | 71% | 29% | 29% | 86% | 14% |
| **Average** | **36%** | **86%** | **44%** | **83%** | **42%** | **19%** | **17%** | **58%** | **19%** |

# CHAPTER 5: SOLID WASTE COLLECTION RATES AND CHARACTERISTICS

## Solid Waste Rates and Rate Changes

The survey asked cities what a residential solid waste customer would be charged for a 65-gallon trash bin to provide a comparison among cities. The relative rates across the State, and among various city sizes, were quite similar.

Table 5.1: Average Solid Waste Collection Rates – Responding Cities

| Population | Monthly Rate | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $ 17.64 | $ 5.93 |
| 1,000-4,999 | $ 14.98 | $ 1.72 |
| 5,000-14,999 | $ 15.80 | $ 5.31 |
| 15,000-49,999 | $ 18.82 | $ 6.01 |
| >50,000 | $ 19.12 | $ 4.04 |
| **Statewide Average** | **$ 16.82** | **$ 4.55** |

When adjusted for a cost of living increase the average 2017 rate is generally higher than the 2022 average. Overall, the average increase from 2022 to 2025 is $1.98.

Table 5.2: Solid Waste Collection Rate Comparisons for Responding Cities

| 2022 | 2022 Low | 2022 High | 2025 | 2025 Low | 2025 High | Average Increase |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| $ 16.82 | $ 7.50 | $ 27.10 | $ 18.60 | $ 8.00 | $ 28.03 | $1.98 |

Also like water services, most cities have increased their solid waste collection rates within the last three years. The most common year for rate changes for all city sizes was 2024. Only three cities that responded have not adjusted their rates within the last 3 years. The results illustrate that customers can continue to expect solid waste collection rates to increase over time.

Table 5.3: Average Rate Update and Percent Change for Responding Cities – Solid Waste Collections

| Year | Mode | % Change |
|---|---|---|
| 2024 | 2024 | 5.19% |

The survey asked respondents to elaborate on why their solid waste collection rates increased and were provided with the option to select multiple reasons. For solid waste collection, the top reasons among all respondents for rate changes included Inflation at 81%, Fuel Prices at 77% and both Labor Costs and County Solid Waste Tipping Fees which each garnered 69% of total responses.

Table 5.4: Catalysts for Solid Waste Rate Changes – Responding Cities

| Population | Inflation | County Solid Waste Tipping Fees, Per Contract | Fuel Prices | Contract Renewal Negotiations | Labor Costs | Capital Improvements | State or Federal Mandates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 71% | 57% | 86% | 86% | 57% | 43% | 14% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 60% | 60% | 60% | 40% | 60% | 40% | 40% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 67% | 67% | 67% | 0% | 67% | 100% | 33% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 100% | 67% | 83% | 33% | 50% | 67% | 0% |
| >50,000 | 83% | 83% | 67% | 50% | 100% | 33% | 17% |
| **Total** | **81%** | **69%** | **77%** | **50%** | **69%** | **54%** | **19%** |

In Table 5.5, when removing the choice of minor factor, three available options still garnered over 50% of total responses for either posing a moderate or significant factor for solid waste rate changes. These include County Solid Waste Tipping Fees at 58%, Inflation at 56% and Fuel Prices at 54%.

Table 5.5: Factors That Played Either a Moderate or Significant Role in Why Solid Waste Rate Changes Occurred – Responding Cities

| Population | Inflation | County Solid Waste Tipping Fees, Per Contract | Fuel Prices | Contract Renewal Negotiations | Labor Costs | Capital Improvements | State or Federal Mandates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 43% | 43% | 57% | 57% | 43% | 14% | 14% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 40% | 60% | 60% | 40% | 40% | 20% | 20% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 67% | 33% | 33% | 0% | 33% | 0% | 0% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 67% | 50% | 83% | 33% | 50% | 67% | 0% |
| >50,000 | 67% | 50% | 17% | 17% | 50% | 17% | 17% |
| **Total** | **56%** | **58%** | **54%** | **35%** | **46%** | **27%** | **12%** |

Cities were asked about solid waste collection rate structures. Most cities responded that they charge a flat rate per trash bin as opposed to using alternative collection rate methods

Table 5.6: Solid Waste Collection Rate Structures – Responding Cities

| Flat Rate Per Trash Bin | Flat Rate – Volume Limit |
|---|---|
| 69% | 15% |

## Solid Waste System Characteristics

Solid waste collection within Idaho is characterized by municipal collection, either under contract or with a city-owned fleet, with waste delivery to county-owned and operated landfills. Supplemental services that divert waste into other programs (i.e., recycling, hazardous waste collections, and compost) are provided to residents within 25% of the responding cities. Large object collection services are provided by only one city that responded to the survey.

Table 5.7: Solid Waste Collection Services – Responding Cities

| Additional Trash/Large Object | Waste Diversion |
|---|---|
| 8% | 43% |

Cities were asked if they provide solid waste collection services outside of their city corporate boundary. Much like with the other sections about providing services outside of a city, there appears to be no clear correlation between size of a city and the likelihood of offering solid waste collection services outside of city boundaries.

Table 5.8: Solid Waste Collection Accounts – Responding Cities

| Population | Offer Outside |
|---|---|
| >1,000 | 20% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 30% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 12% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 43% |
| >50,000 | 0% |
| **Average** | **24%** |

Cities were asked about the most challenging issues they faced as they provided solid waste collection services. Unlike the drinking water or wastewater utility services, the most significant issues that cities are facing must deal with for solid waste are: 1) Inflation at 78% of all respondents, 2) Labor Costs at 74% and 3) Fuel Prices at 70%.

Table 5.9 Solid Waste Collection – Most Challenging Issues for Responding Cities

| Population | Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure | Capital Improvements | Challenging Regulatory Requirements | Contract Renewal Negotiations | Fuel Prices | Inflation | Inadequate Land Fill Facilities | Labor Costs | Small Customer Base | State or Federal Mandates |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 29% | 14% | 29% | 71% | 71% | 71% | 14% | 57% | 14% | 14% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 20% | 40% | 40% | 40% | 60% | 60% | 40% | 80% | 60% | 60% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 67% | 67% | 0% | 33% | 67% | 100% | 0% | 67% | 0% | 0% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 30% | 19% | 19% | 15% | 19% | 19% | 19% | 19% | 7% | 15% |
| >50,000 | 11% | 11% | 74% | 15% | 15% | 19% | 74% | 22% | 0% | 7% |
| **Total** | **48%** | **48%** | **37%** | **59%** | **70%** | **78%** | **33%** | **74%** | **22%** | **37%** |

# CHAPTER 6: ASSET MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY

## Asset Management

Many cities are starting to use asset management with the objective of managing infrastructure capital assets to minimize the total cost of owning and operating the assets, while delivering the desired services. This survey examines how many Idaho cities utilize asset management for drinking water, waste/reclaimed water, irrigation, and solid waste.

In general, as the city size increases, the percentage of cities with asset management plans also increases.

Table 6.1: Cities with Asset Management Programs – Responding Cities

| Population | Drinking Water | Waste/ Reclaimed Water | Irrigation | Solid Waste |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 25% | 38%% | 0% | 0% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 78% | 78% | 50% | 0% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 83% | 100% | 50% | 0% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 100% | 85% | 100% | 50% |
| >50,000 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 33% |
| **Total** | **72%** | **78%** | **73%** | **12%** |

Cities were asked about their operational capacities at this time for drinking and waste/reclaimed water facilities. A review of system's operational capacity, considering population or growth in services, is an important facility planning tool for Idaho cities. The max value in column 3 of Tables 6.2 and 6.3 is meant to represent the highest value reported in each population subgroup.

Table 6.2: 2025 Operational System Capacities for Drinking Water – Responding Cities

| Population | Average Capacity Being Used | Max | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 70% | 100% | 44%% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 72% | 95% | 24% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 61% | 95% | 22% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 53%% | 89% | 18% |
| >50,000 | 68% | 100% | 18% |
| **Total** | **65%** | | **26%** |

Table 6.3: 2025 Operational System Capacities for Waste/Reclaimed Water – Responding Cities

| Population | Average Capacity Being Used | Max | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 66% | 80% | 10% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 57% | 70% | 17% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 57% | 90% | 21% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 69% | 89% | 18% |
| >50,000 | 61% | 76% | 18% |
| **Total** | **62%** | | **16.5%** |

Table 6.4: Average Year System will be at Full Capacity – Responding Cities

| Population | Drinking | Waste/Reclaimed |
|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | 2032 | 2030 |
| 1,000-4,999 | 2036 | 2045 |
| 5,000-14,999 | 2032 | 2028 |
| 15,000-49,999 | 2043 | 2031 |
| >50,000 | 2040 | 2044 |
| **Total** | **2037** | **2039** |

As shown in Table 6.5, 77% of all responding cities expect to reach their maximum capacity for drinking water services by 2040. That number drops to 61% when looking out to 2035. Interestingly, cities between the 1,000 and 14,999 population threshold seem to be feeling the most strain when it comes to drinking water capacity. While AIC's survey does not reveal why that is the case, the data could be correlated with the significant growth that the entire state is facing and therefore placing a greater strain on small, but growing cities such as Burley and Shelley.

Transitioning over to wastewater, 67% of all responding cities shared that they expect to reach full capacity for their wastewater utilities by 2040. That number drops by more than half (33%) when looking only 10 years down the road to 2035. Cities between the population size of 5,000 and 14,999 are particularly feeling the strain of needing to replace their wastewater infrastructure. Two examples of communities that are struggling to meet the needs of their small but growing communities are Fruitland and Middleton. However, even cities bigger than Middleton such as Star and Chubbuck are also feeling the strain of continuing to support the needs of their communities as their population increases in size.

### Table 6.5: Time Until Responding Cities Will Reach Maximum Capacity for Drinking Water and Wastewater

**Years Until Responding Cities Will Reach Maximum Capacity for Water Utility Services**

| Population | Drinking Water | | | Wastewater | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5 years or less | 10 years or less | 15 years or less | 5 years or less | 10 years or less | 15 years or less |
| <1,000 | 31% | 31% | 38% | 13% | 13% | 13% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 40% | 50% | 50% | 13% | 13% | 75% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 50% | 67% | 83% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 10% | 10% | 20% | 50% | 50% | 100% |
| >50,000 | 0% | 17% | 33% | 0% | 0% | 60% |
| **Total** | **35%** | **61%** | **77%** | **22%** | **33%** | **67%** |

### Financial Capability

87% of Idaho cities provide waste/reclaimed water treatment facilities, and 83% provide drinking water. Further, over 99% of all Idaho cities are faced with drainage and stormwater management for their impervious surfaces, including streets, parking lots, and buildings. These varied responsibilities require Idaho cities to play important roles as the primary implementers of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Most, if not all, Idaho cities are facing complex water quantity and quality issues that may be heightened by the need to address population growth or decline, source water supply quantity

or quality, challenging regulations, and aging infrastructure. To address these complex issues, Idaho cities make investments in waste/reclaimed water, drinking water, and drainage infrastructure through capital projects that may rehabilitate existing systems, improve operation and maintenance, or be implemented to address emerging regulatory requirements. However, Idaho cities and their utility customers frequently find themselves facing difficult economic challenges with limited financial capabilities.

As part of the survey, cities were asked about their annual revenue and total debt for drinking water services. With these figures, AIC was able to calculate the ratio of debt to annual revenue for each of the responding cities. The aggregated results of this review are presented in Table 6.6. Results of these simple comparisons show how, in general, cities with smaller populations carry more debt (i.e., as described by the "debt to revenue" ratio)

Table 6.5: Debt to Revenue Ratio for Responding Cities – Drinking Water

| Population | Average Annual Revenue | Average Total Debt | Debt to Revenue Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $225,772 | $577,877 | 2.56 |
| 1,000-4,999 | $724,567 | $132,708 | 0.18 |
| 5,000-14,999 | $2,210,866 | $1,698,255 | 0.77 |
| 15,000-49,999 | $4,420,424 | $6,543,723 | 1.48 |
| >50,000 | $14,400,895 | $4,138,743 | 0.29 |
| **Statewide Average** | **$3,337,888** | **$2,627,838** | **0.78** |

Cities were asked about their annual revenue and total debt for waste/reclaimed water services. The ratio of debt to annual revenue for responding cities is presented in Table 6.7. Similar to drinking water services, results of these simple comparisons suggest that cities with smaller populations are shouldering more debt.

Table 6.6: Debt to Revenue Ratio for Responding Cities – Waste/Reclaimed Water

| Population | Average Annual Revenue | Average Total Debt | Debt to Revenue Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| <1,000 | $ 192,909 | $ 295,924 | 1.53 |
| 1,000-4,999 | $ 826,303 | $ 901,982 | 1.09 |
| 5,000-14,999 | $ 2,701,722 | $ 10,591,036 | 3.92 |
| 15,000-49,999 | $ 11,351,747 | $ 10,208,246 | 0.90 |
| >50,000 | $ 34,801,139 | $ 45,901,990 | 1.32 |
| **Statewide Average** | **$ 9,598,856** | **$ 13,008,860** | **1.36** |

# CHAPTER 7: STORMWATER, FLOODWAY, DRAINAGE

Most Idaho cities are faced with drainage and stormwater management for their impervious surfaces, including streets, parking lots, and buildings. Additionally, all Idaho cities are required to comply with federal stormwater permitting requirements for construction sites greater than 1 acre and for city owned or operated industrial facilities regulated under the Multi-Sector General Permit for Industrial Stormwater Discharges.

Idaho cities were asked a few questions in the 2025 survey to help AIC assess how our member cities are grappling with these and other emerging drainage or floodway management and compliance issues. Questions included whether policies or ordinances have been adopted to guide city staff, officials, or residents regarding management practices for stormwater/drainage, floodways/floodplains, construction site erosion, and new development or redevelopment (i.e., permanent drainage controls) (Table 7.1). The survey also asked whether the city had been designated as a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4). Other questions focused on funding sources for city-owned facilities (Table 7.2) and city-regulated drainage management programs (Table 7.3). AIC also requested a list of the most challenging issues facing Idaho cities with regards to stormwater or drainage management (Table 7.4).

Survey results show that:

- Cities with populations over 5,000 consistently adopted these policies or ordinances, while cities under 5,000 generally did not.
- Funding sources for most Idaho cities for both city-owned and city-regulated drainage management rely heavily on general funds and utility fees paid for waste/reclaimed water unless they're able to receive a special grant.
- As city population increases, more Idaho cities recover city-regulated costs through permit fees.
- The three 'most challenging' issues facing Idaho cities for stormwater/drainage management include insufficient funding, aging or inadequate infrastructure, and challenging regulatory requirements.

Table 7.1: Policies or Ordinances Adopted by City Size – Responding Cities

| Population | MS4 | Stormwater/Drainage | Floodway/Floodplain | Construction Site Erosion Control | New Development /Redevelopment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| >1,000 | 0% | 0% | 100% | 50% | 50% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 0% | 50% | 50% | 50% | 100% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 100% | 100% | 50% | 50% | 100% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 80% | 100% | 80% | 100% | 100% |
| >50,000 | 83% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| **Total** | **62%** | **81%** | **76%** | **76%** | **90%** |

Table 7.2: City-Owned Facility Operation, Maintenance, and Drainage Management Funding Sources – Responding Cities

| Population | General Fund | Utility Fees | Special Grants | Unknown | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| >1,000 | 50% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 2 |
| 1,000-4,999 | 25% | 25% | 50% | 25% | 4 |
| 5,000-14,999 | 100% | 25% | 25% | 0% | 4 |
| 15,000-49,999 | 60% | 20% | 0% | 0% | 5 |
| >50,000 | 67% | 33% | 50% | 0% | 6 |
| **Total** | **62%** | **10%** | **14%** | **10%** | **21** |

Table 7.3: City-Regulated Drainage Management Funding Sources – Responding Cities

| Population | General Fund | Permitting Fees | Street Department | Special Grants | Special Assessments | Utility Fees | Unknown | n |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| >1,000 | 50% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 2 |
| 1,000-4,999 | 25% | 0% | 0% | 50% | 0% | 0% | 25% | 4 |
| 5,000-14,999 | 100% | 0% | 0% | 25% | 0% | 25% | 0% | 4 |
| 15,000-49,999 | 60% | 20% | 0% | 20% | 0% | 20% | 0% | 5 |
| >50,000 | 67% | 33% | 0% | 17% | 0% | 50% | 17% | 6 |
| **Total** | **67%** | **29%** | **0%** | **19%** | **0%** | **29%** | **14%** | **21** |

Table 7.4: Most Challenging Issues Facing Idaho Cities with Stormwater or Drainage Management Responsibilities – Responding Cities

| Population | Aging or Inadequate Infrastructure | Challenging Regulatory Requirements | Inadequate Water Supply | Junior Water Rights | Lack of Funding | Lack of Inventory and Asset Management Program | Small Pool of Governing Officials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| >1,000 | 50% | 50% | 50% | 50% | 50% | 50% | 50% |
| 1,000-4,999 | 100% | 100% | 50% | 50% | 100% | 75% | 50% |
| 5,000-14,999 | 75% | 100% | 25% | 25% | 75% | 75% | 25% |
| 15,000-49,999 | 100% | 100% | 20% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 20% |
| >50,000 | 100% | 83% | 0% | 0% | 83% | 83% | 33% |
| **Total** | **90%** | **90%** | **24%** | **19%** | **86%** | **81%** | **33%** |

## Appendix A: Survey Design and Administration

In 2017, the Association of Idaho Cities (AIC) worked with a focus group to in preparation for the 2027 survey. Through the survey design process, AIC spoke with each focus group member and shared a draft version of the 2017 survey. With help from the focus group members, AIC developed new questions, reviewed and revised questions from the previous survey, and discussed survey administration strategies. Google Forms was used to develop the 2017 and 2022 Utility Surveys.

In the 2025 survey, AIC approached several collaborative partners including Idaho Rural Water Association (IRWA), Keller Associates, Stantec, HDR Engineering, and many others. We appreciate these groups' contributions to help simplify and streamline the survey process. One substantial change that was made to the 2025 survey is that it was broken out into a six-part survey including: 1) **Part I – General Questions**[4], 2) **Part II – Drinking Water**[5], 3) **Part III – Wastewater**[6], 4) **Part IV – Irrigation**[7], 5) **Part V – Solid Waste**[8], and 6) **Part VI – Stormwater**[9]. The survey was also transferred from Google Survey and put into a Microsoft Forms Survey.

AIC maintains a list of city clerks or appropriate counterparts for all Idaho cities. AIC used these contacts to send the survey link to 200 Idaho cities. The survey invitation described the survey, its significance, and how to complete it. The city clerks or counterparts were asked to complete the survey. As communicated in the 2010 survey, limitations exist due to the informational and voluntary nature of the survey. The responses are not representative of a statistically significant or scientifically valid data set. Because the responses are voluntary, one cannot draw conclusions about similar cities that chose not to or were not able to participate in this survey. Even for the cities that did respond, it is not accurate to make comparisons for similarly sized systems due to differences in population served, physical design, economic climate, rates and charges, among other unique characteristics.

### Data Editing and Analysis

Data editing involved review and adjustment of the data collected from survey respondents. The purpose of the editing was to control the quality of the data and foster accurate city representation. This included converting values into appropriate units or rates and interpreting vague data. Editing was a two-step process. The first step involved unit conversions for all values that were not submitted in the desired unit. Sometimes, assumptions were necessary to convert the data into the desired format. The second step involved flagging all data that was unclear or anomalistic. If a city had flagged values, AIC staff conducted additional research to confirm the value. If this was not possible, the specific response to the specific question was

[4] 2025 Utility Survey Part I: General Utility Questions
[5] 2025 Utility Survey Part II: Drinking Water Questions
[6] 2025 Utility Survey Part III: Wastewater Treatment Questions
[7] 2025 Utility Survey Part IV: Irrigation Services Questions
[8] 2025 Utility Survey Part V: Solid Waste Disposal Questions
[9] 2025 Utility Survey Part VI: Stormwater Questions

removed prior to analysis. As noted in the report, some information was available and easily obtained for Idaho cities. AIC drew upon these sources and included this information where possible.

Data analysis involved calculating averages, percentages, and counts among other methods for various survey questions. Results were categorized into five city populations:

- Less than 1,000;
- 1,000-4,999;
- 5,000-14,999;
- 15,000-49,999;
- 50,000 or more.