

Value of Water CAMPAIGN

American Support for Investments in Water Infrastructure

Key Findings from a National Voter Survey

Conducted March 15-21, 2021



Bipartisan Research Team



Dave Metz – FM3

[Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates](#) (FM3) – a national Democratic opinion research firm with offices in Oakland, Los Angeles and Madison, Wisconsin – has specialized in public policy oriented opinion research since 1981. The firm has assisted hundreds of political campaigns at every level of the ballot – from President to City Council – with opinion research and strategic guidance. FM3 also provides research and strategic consulting to public agencies, businesses and public interest organizations nationwide.







Lori Weigel - NBS

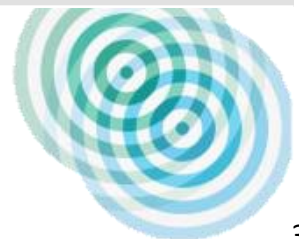
[New Bridge Strategy](#) (NBS) – an opinion research firm that listens and creates connections on behalf of public policy efforts and campaigns. The firm's roots are in Republican politics, having conducted research on behalf of dozens of GOP candidates from City Council to the presidential level, and also assist coalitions from across the political spectrum in crafting winning ballot measure campaigns, public education initiatives, and legislative policy efforts. NBS helps our clients bridge divides to create winning majorities.

As a bipartisan team, Dave and Lori have researched a wide range of issues over the past 15 years, in particular on conservation-related initiatives and policies. Together, they have jointly conducted research on behalf of political campaigns, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and public agencies in 47 states and nationally.

Survey Specifics and Methodology

Dates	March 15-21, 2021	
Survey Type	Dual-mode voter survey	
Research Population	Voters nationwide	
Total Interviews	1,007	
Margin of Sampling Error	±3.1% at the 95% Confidence Level	
Contact Methods	 Telephone Calls	 Email Invitations
Data Collection Modes	 Telephone Interviews	 Online Survey

(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)

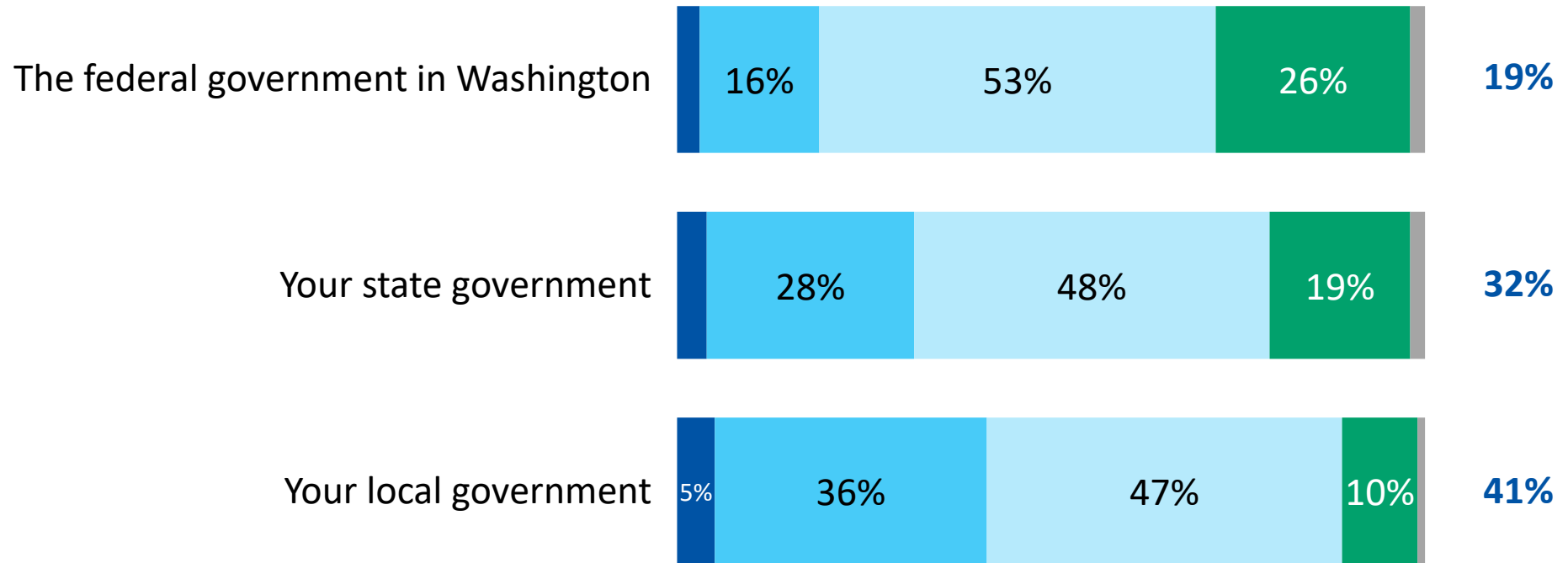


Issue Context

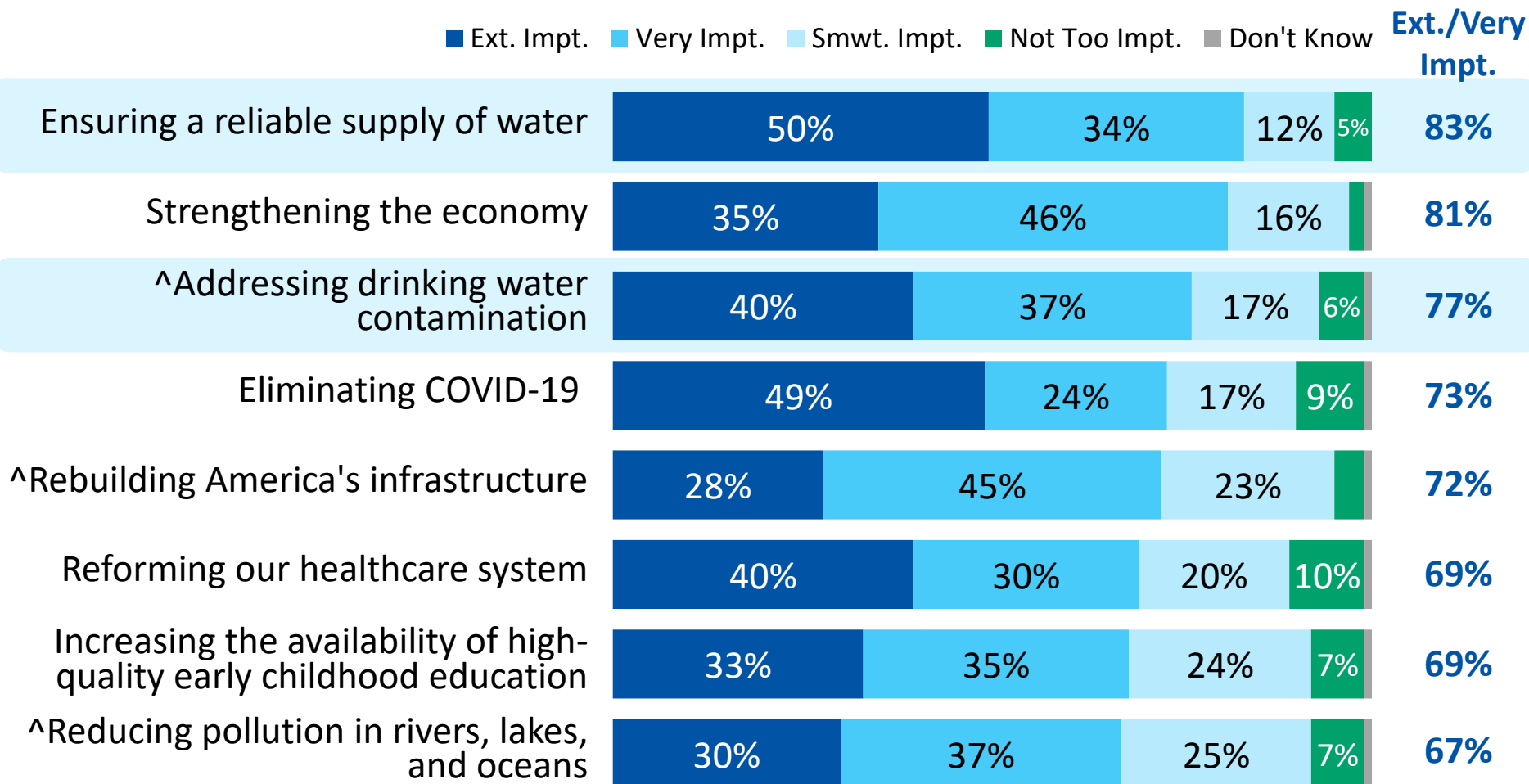
Voters place a greater degree of trust in local government than in state or federal government.

How much of the time do you trust _____ to do the right thing:
just about always, most the time, only some of the time, or never?

■ Always ■ Most of the Time ■ Some of the Time ■ Never ■ Don't Know **Always/
Most of
the Time**

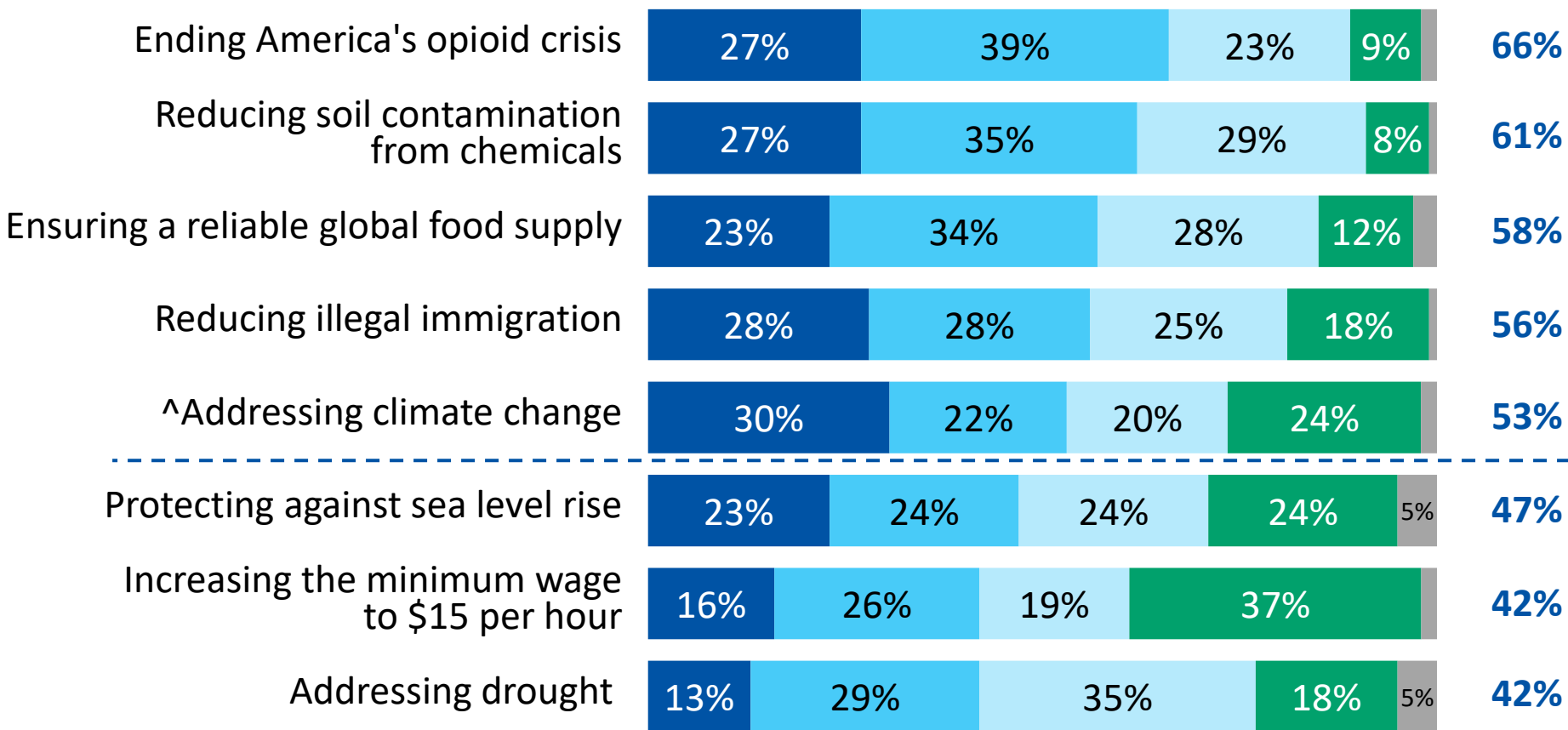


Water supply and water quality are on par with strengthening the economy and eliminating COVID-19 as national priorities.



Fewer than half view protecting against sea level rise or addressing drought as "very important."

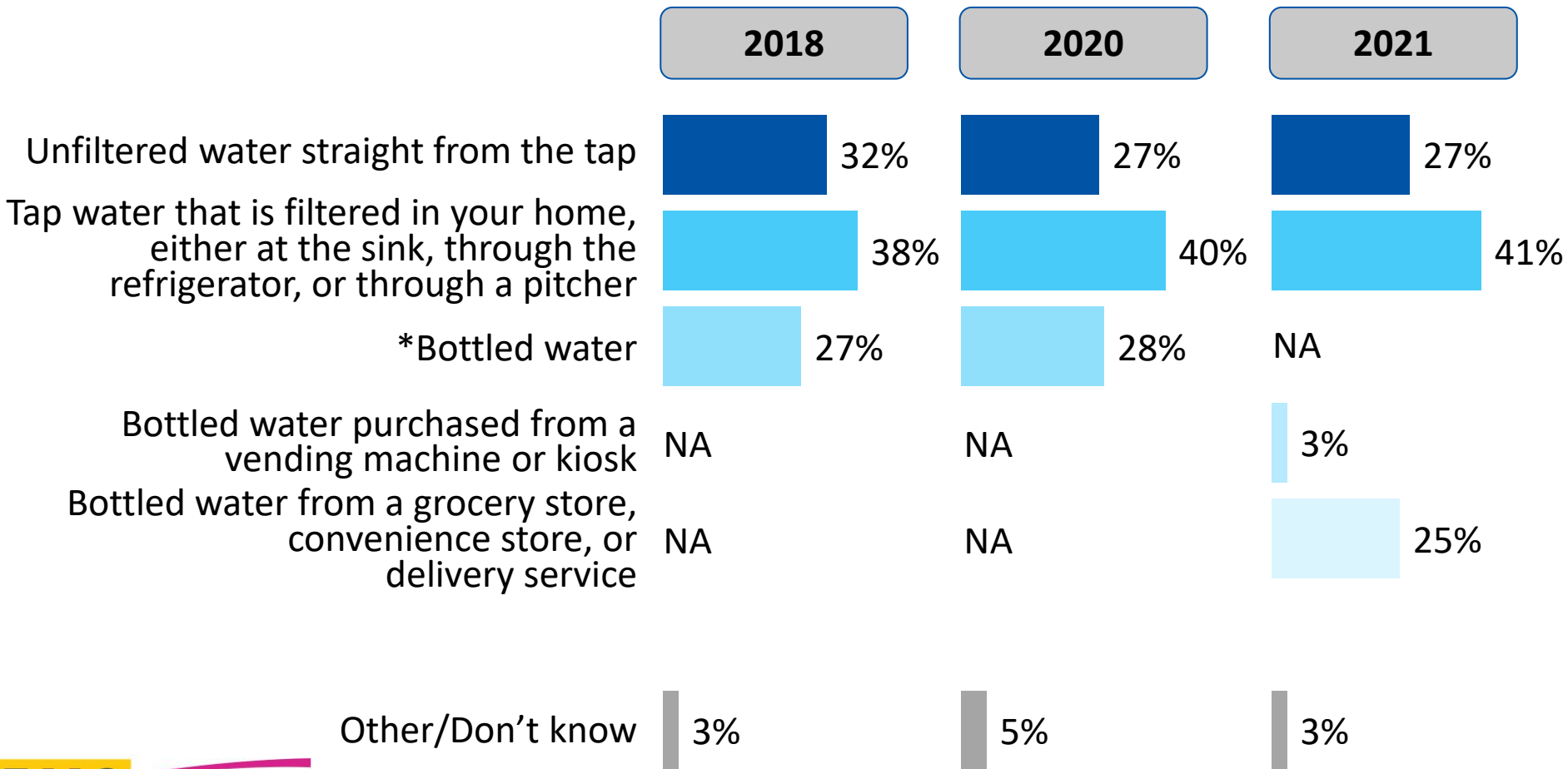
■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not Too Impt. ■ Don't Know **Ext./Very Impt.**



Views on Drinking Water Quality and Infrastructure

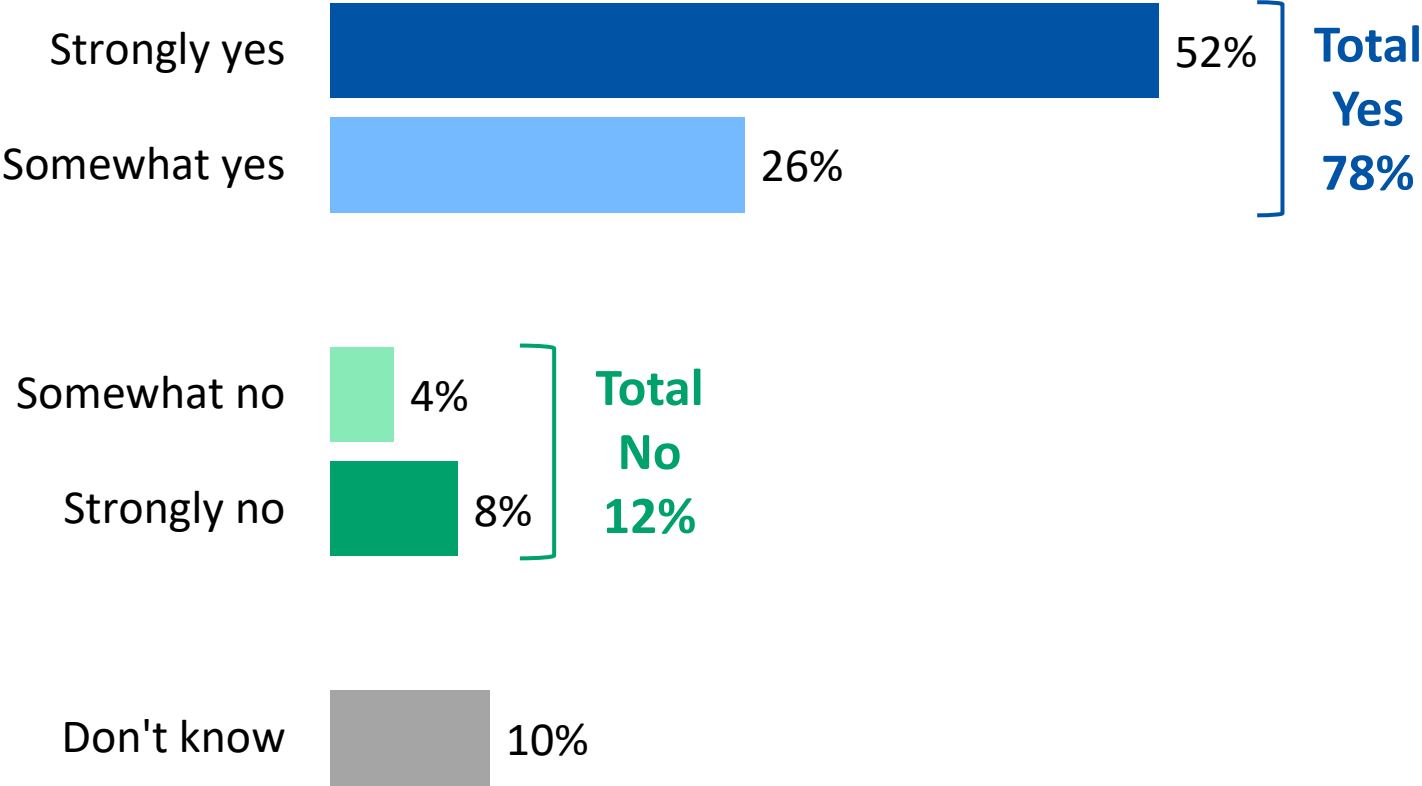
Drinking water sources have not changed greatly since 2018.

Thinking about the water that you drink at home, do you most often drink _____?



Nearly four in five say the water delivered to their home is safe.

Overall, do you trust that the drinking water being delivered to your home is safe?



The consensus around drinking water safety cuts across party and regional lines.

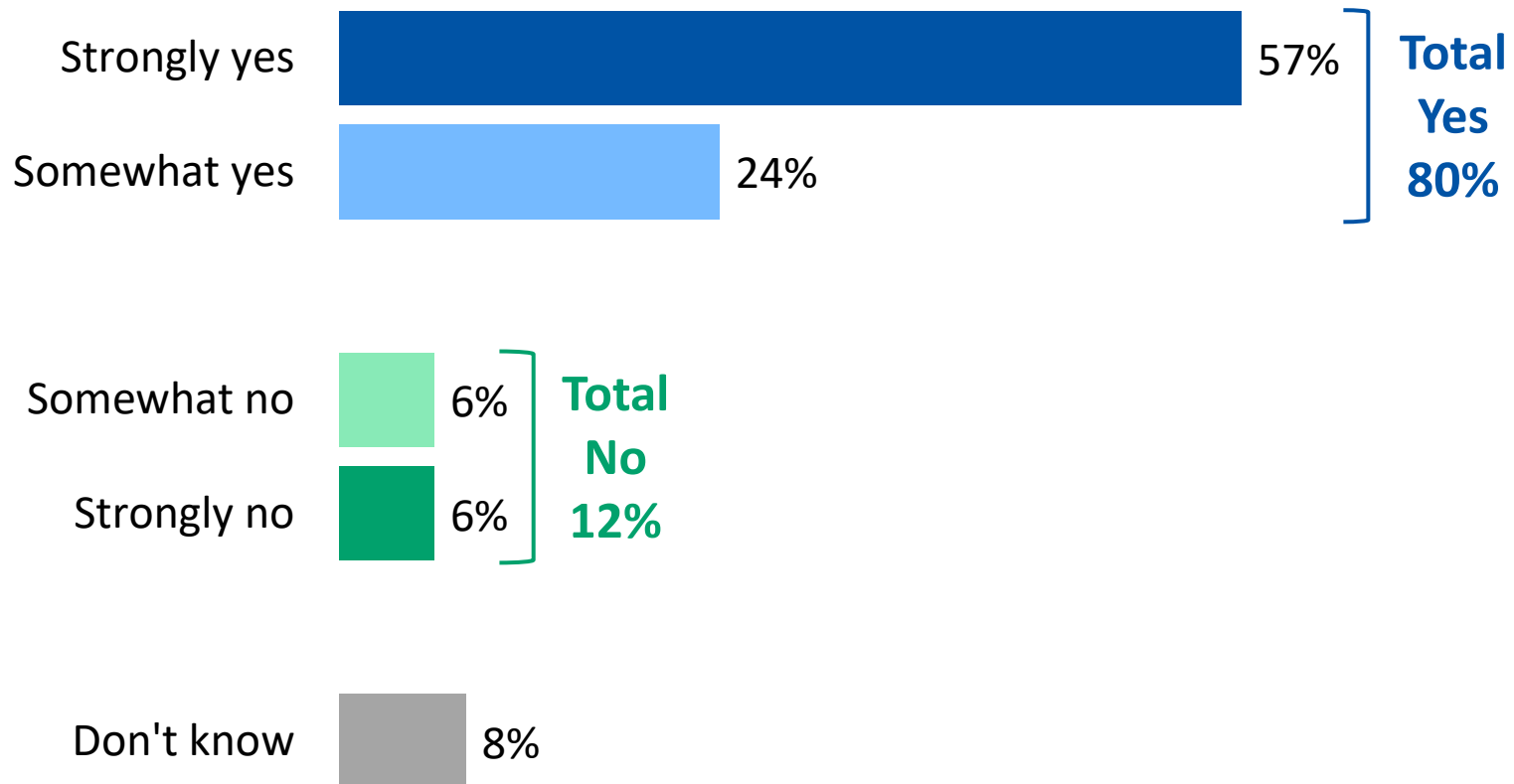
Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Don't Know
All Voters	78%	12%	10%
Party			
Democrats	78%	11%	11%
Independents	75%	19%	6%
Republicans	79%	11%	10%
Region			
Northeast	75%	16%	8%
Midwest	78%	6%	16%
South	82%	13%	5%
South Central	76%	5%	19%
Central Plains	76%	9%	15%
Mountain	83%	13%	4%
West	80%	14%	7%

White respondents tend to be more confident in the safety of their water.

Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Don't Know
Race/Ethnicity			
Whites	82%	10%	8%
Latinos	79%	16%	4%
African Americans	73%	6%	21%
<i>All Voters of Color</i>	74%	14%	13%
Gender			
Men	83%	12%	6%
Women	75%	12%	13%
Age			
18-29	87%	8%	4%
30-39	81%	9%	10%
40-49	77%	14%	9%
50-64	73%	16%	11%
65-74	74%	12%	14%
75+	81%	8%	11%

Four in five trust that the water pipes in their home are safe.

Overall, do you trust that the water pipes in your home are safe?



Residents of the South Central U.S. are not as confident in their home's pipe safety as are others.

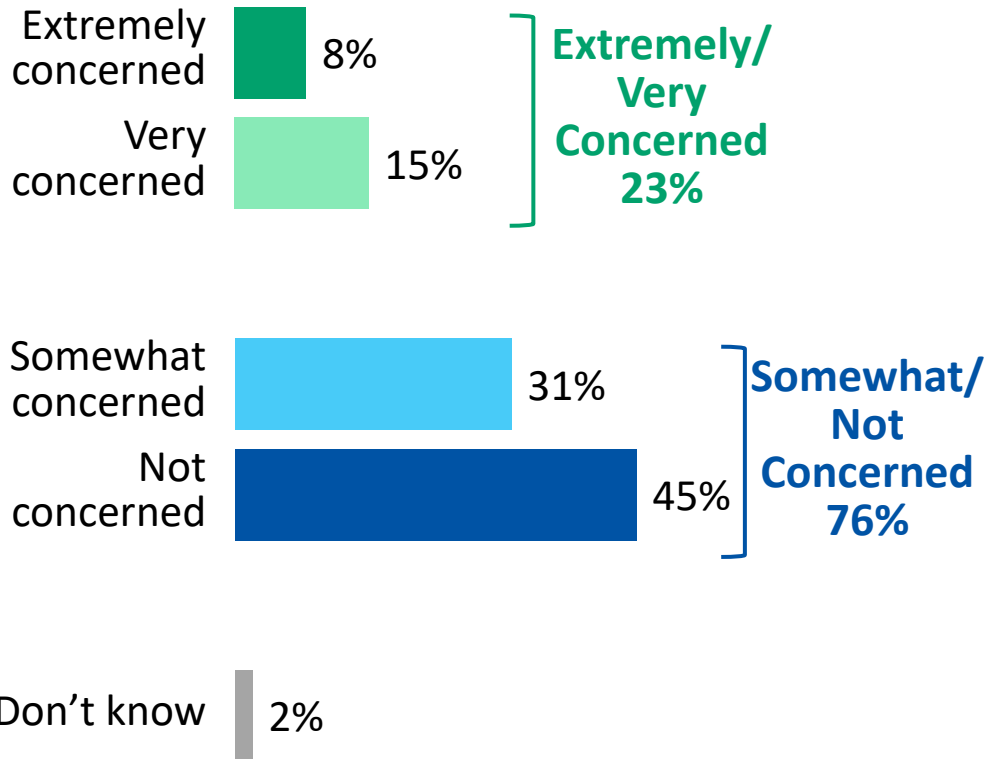
Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Don't Know
All Voters	80%	12%	8%
Party			
Democrats	76%	15%	10%
Independents	78%	16%	6%
Republicans	86%	7%	7%
Region			
Northeast	80%	15%	5%
Midwest	83%	6%	11%
South	85%	9%	6%
South Central	69%	15%	16%
Central Plains	91%	4%	5%
Mountain	80%	13%	7%
West	71%	19%	10%

White respondents are more likely to say their water pipes are safe than are others.

Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Don't Know
Race/Ethnicity			
Whites	84%	10%	6%
Latinos	76%	22%	3%
African Americans	71%	11%	18%
<i>All Voters of Color</i>	73%	17%	10%
Gender			
Men	83%	12%	6%
Women	78%	12%	10%
Age			
18-29	84%	13%	3%
30-39	81%	11%	8%
40-49	85%	8%	7%
50-64	75%	17%	8%
65-74	74%	12%	14%
75+	82%	8%	10%

Approximately one-quarter are concerned about drinking water in their community.

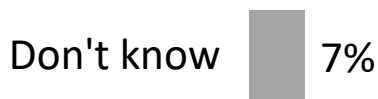
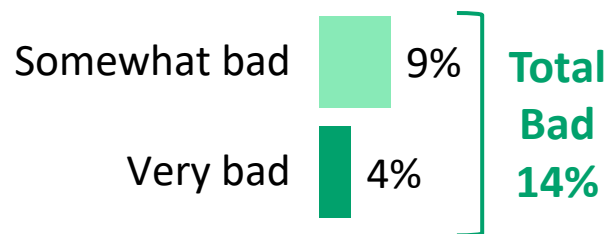
How concerned are you about the drinking water quality in your local community?



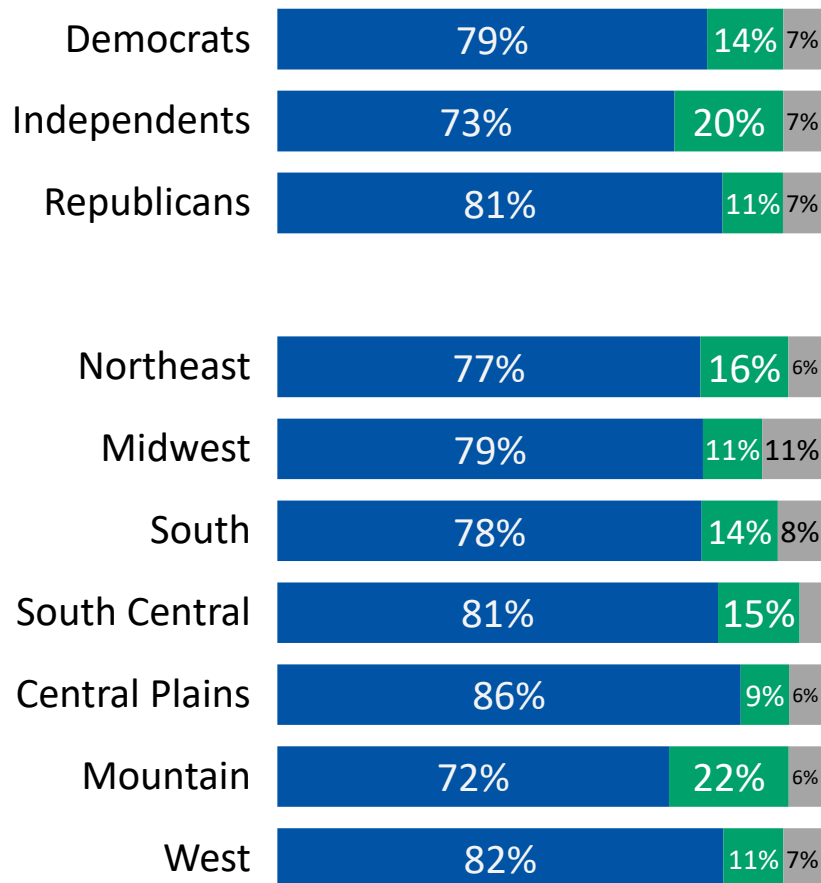
Demographic Groups Most Likely to be "Very Concerned"	Extremely/ Very Concerned
All Voters	23%
Liberal Independents	44%
African Americans	42%
HH Income <\$30,000	36%
Moderate/Conservative Democrats	36%
Democrats Ages 50+	34%
Independent Women	34%
Big City Residents	33%
Ages 75+	33%
All Voters of Color	32%
Independents Ages 50+	32%
East South Central Census Division	32%
South Central Region	31%

Voters feel very positively about their local water infrastructure.

How would you rate the current condition of the water infrastructure in your local community?



■ Total Good ■ Total Bad ■ Don't Know

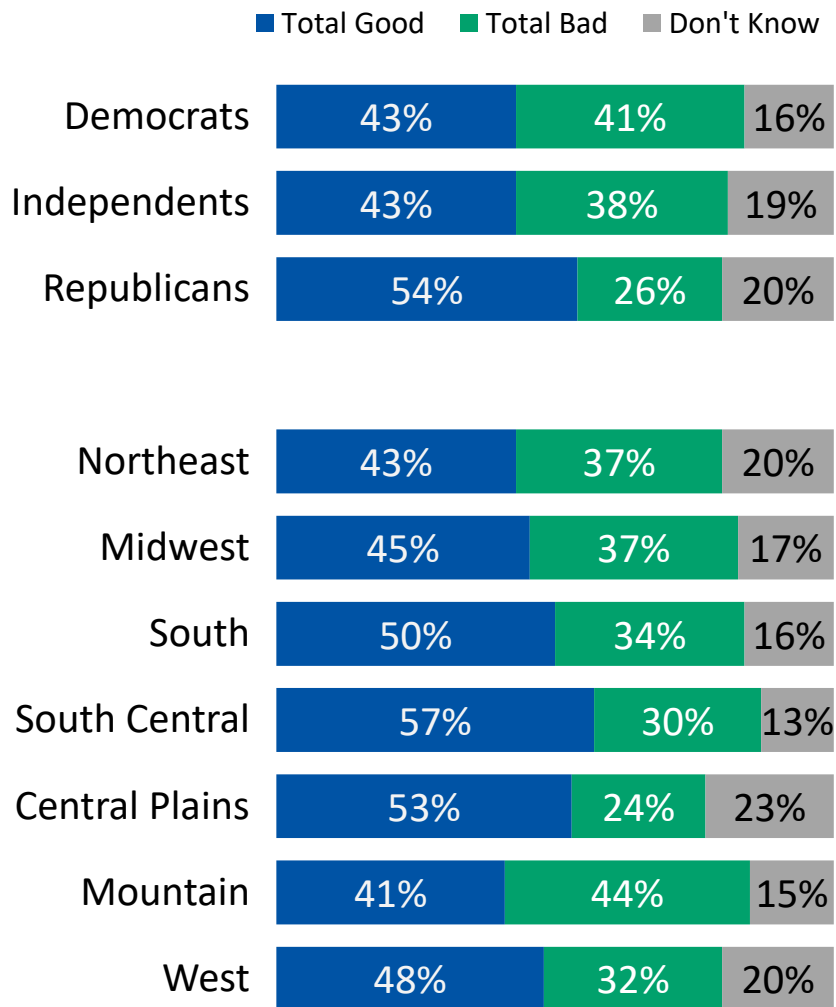
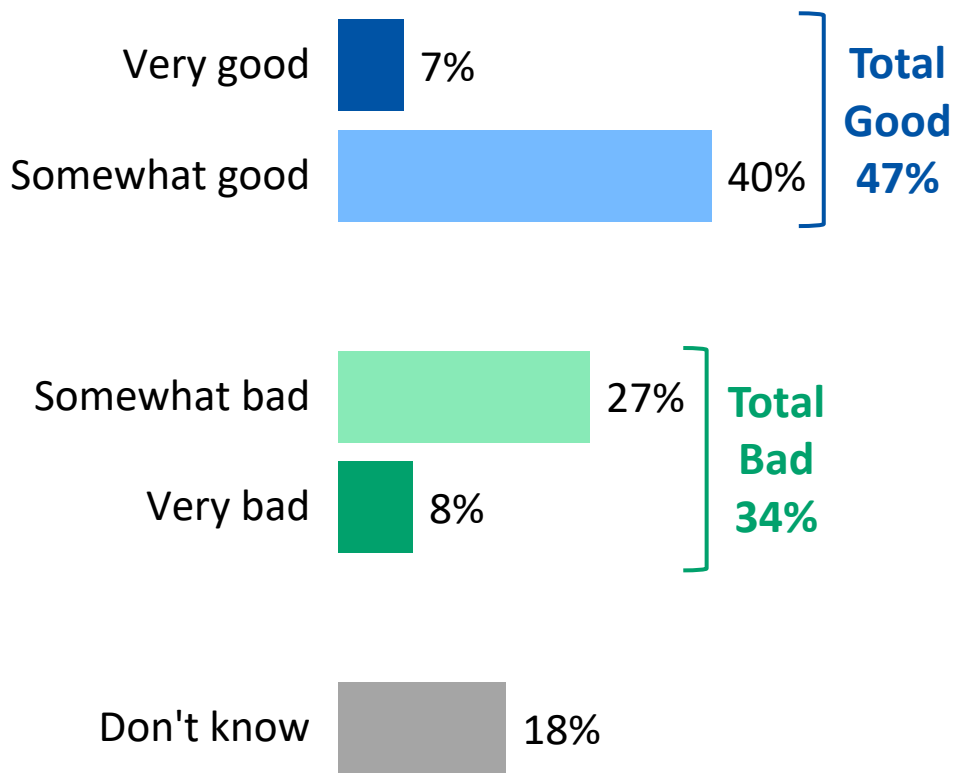


Perceptions of local water infrastructure have remained positive over time.

Evaluation of Local Water Infrastructure	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Very good	42%	44%	47%	42%	35%	33%
Somewhat good	44%	40%	37%	40%	43%	46%
Total Good	86%	84%	84%	83%	78%	79%
Somewhat bad	3%	8%	9%	9%	11%	9%
Very bad	10%	3%	4%	4%	3%	4%
Total Bad	13%	11%	13%	13%	15%	14%
Don't know	1%	4%	3%	5%	7%	7%

Respondents are more divided when it came to the nation's water infrastructure.

How would you rate the current condition of the nation's water infrastructure?



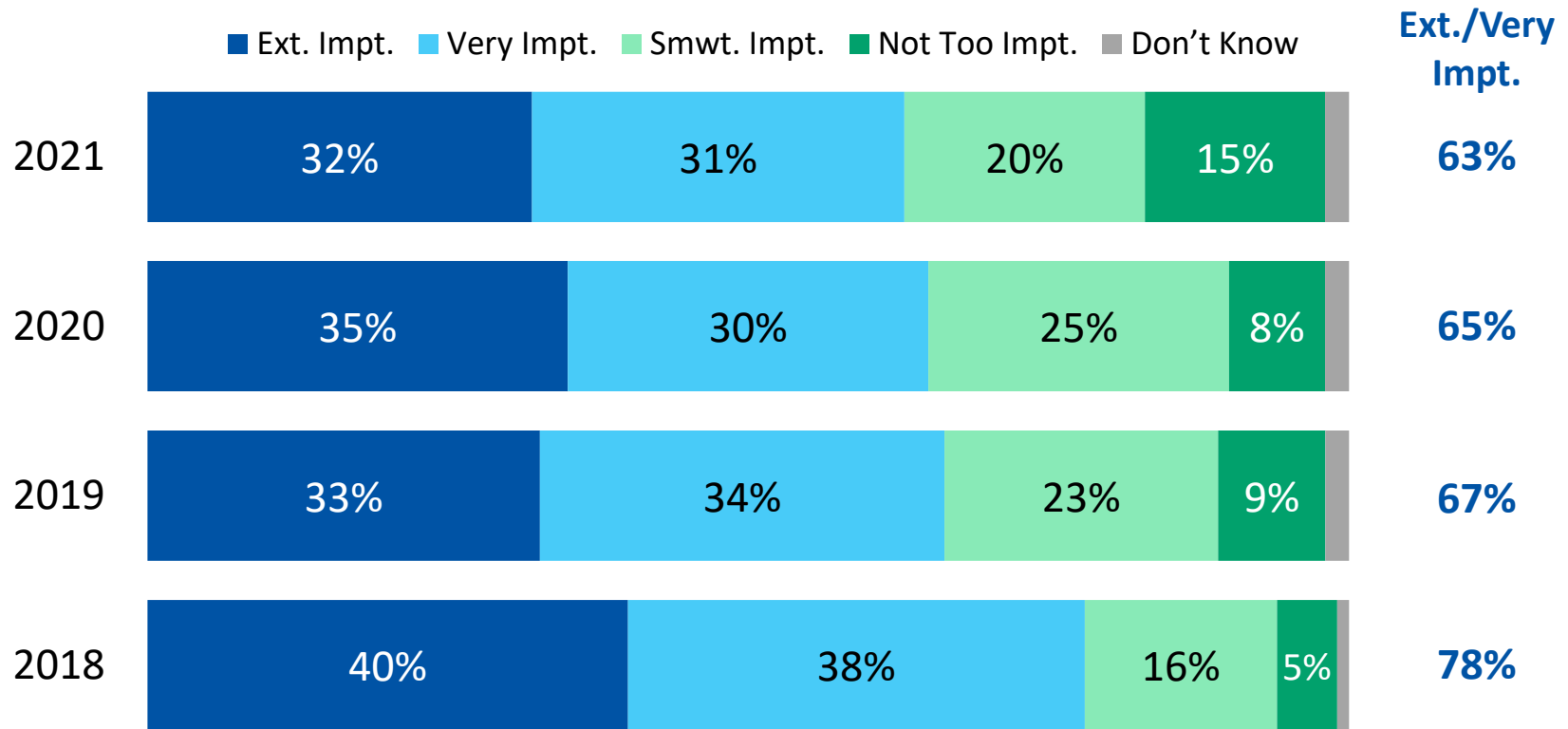
Over time, positive perceptions of national water infrastructure have declined while uncertainty has grown.

Evaluation of National Water Infrastructure	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Very good	10%	8%	16%	10%	9%	7%
Somewhat good	49%	49%	40%	38%	40%	40%
Total Good	59%	57%	55%	49%	49%	47%
Somewhat bad	26%	21%	25%	27%	26%	27%
Very bad	8%	10%	11%	9%	11%	8%
Total Bad	34%	31%	36%	36%	37%	34%
Don't know	7%	12%	9%	16%	14%	18%

Support for Water Infrastructure Investments

The perceived importance of a water infrastructure plan has remained consistent since 2019.

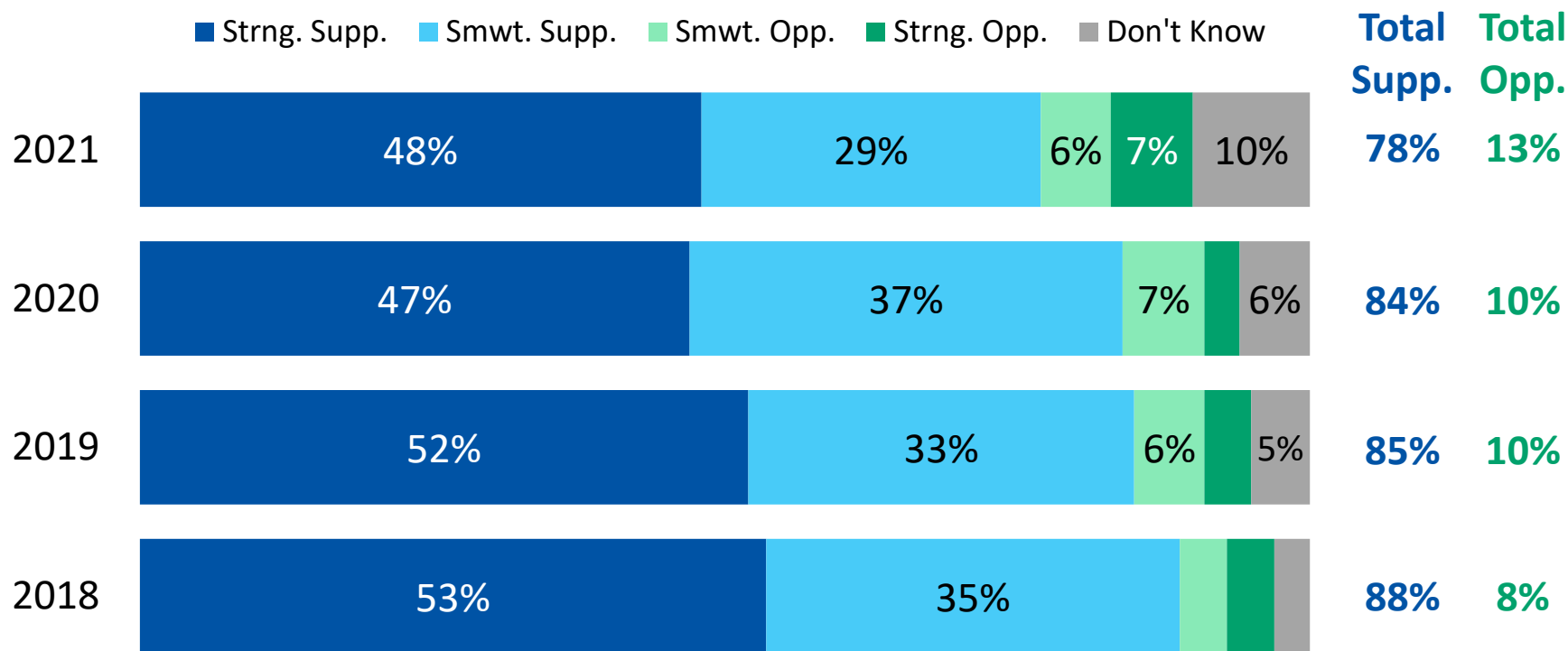
How important do you think it is for the President and Congress to develop a plan (Half Sample: this year) to rebuild our water infrastructure that brings clean drinking water to your home and removes and treats wastewater before safely returning it to the environment?



Only 56% see it as very important for a plan to be developed “this year,” likely reflecting the competing priorities voters currently hold.

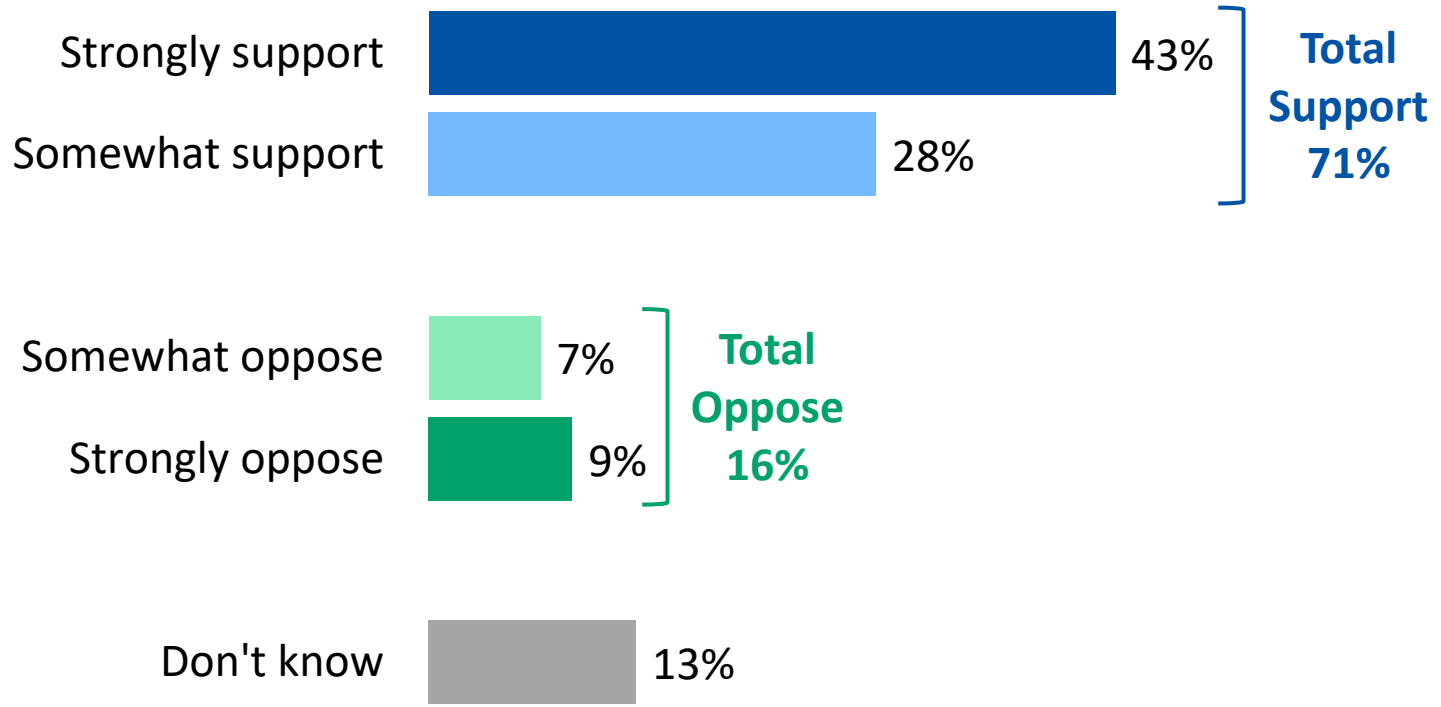
Overall support for increasing federal investments remains high, but has decreased slightly in the past year.

Some people have proposed increasing the federal investment in rebuilding our water infrastructure - including pipes, pumps, reservoirs, treatment plants, and other facilities - to ensure safe, reliable water service for all communities. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?



Seven out of ten support ensuring water and wastewater agencies receive relief in proportion to that of other infrastructure agencies.

Would you support or oppose ensuring that agencies that operate and maintain drinking water and wastewater systems receive the same proportion of federal COVID-19 relief as agencies that maintain other forms of infrastructure, like roads, airports, and other transportation systems?



Support for parity in infrastructure funding cuts across gender and age groups.

Demographic Groups	Total Support	Total Oppose	Don't Know
All Voters	71%	16%	13%
Gender			
Men	69%	20%	11%
Women	74%	12%	14%
Age			
18-29	82%	11%	8%
30-39	75%	14%	11%
40-49	66%	18%	16%
50-64	69%	15%	15%
65-74	67%	21%	11%
75+	74%	16%	10%

Democrats are most supportive of ensuring parity, although a majority of independents and Republicans also support it.

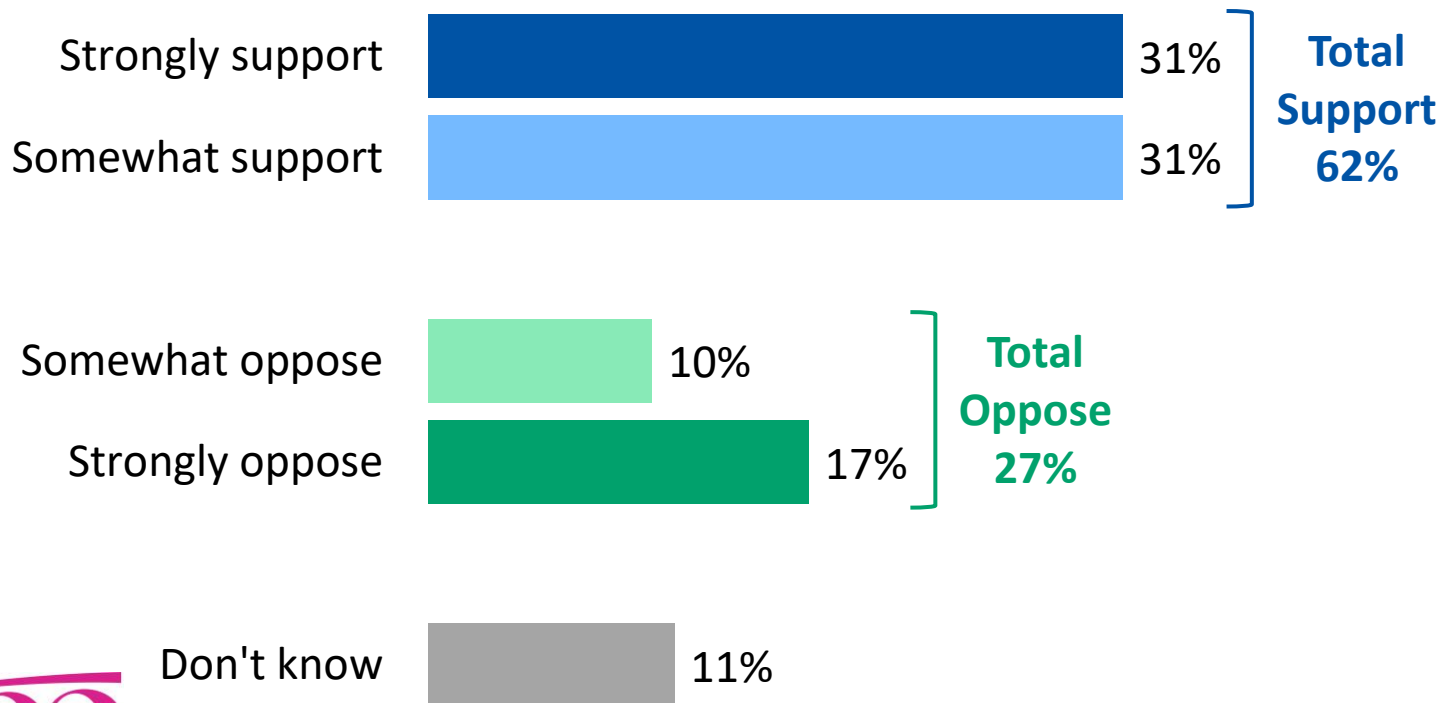
Demographic Groups	Total Support	Total Oppose	Don't Know
Party			
Democrats	85%	6%	9%
Independents	68%	17%	16%
Republicans	58%	26%	16%
Region			
Northeast	73%	14%	13%
Midwest	72%	16%	12%
South	77%	12%	11%
South Central	78%	13%	9%
Central Plains	57%	22%	21%
Mountain	73%	21%	5%
West	63%	21%	16%

Support for parity in infrastructure spending is greater among voters of color than among white voters.

Demographic Groups	Total Support	Total Oppose	Don't Know
Race/Ethnicity			
Whites	68%	18%	14%
Latinos	86%	8%	6%
African Americans	84%	7%	9%
<i>All Voters of Color</i>	83%	9%	8%
Household Income			
<\$30,000	71%	17%	13%
\$30,000-\$60,000	83%	10%	7%
\$60,000-\$75,000	72%	12%	16%
\$75,000-\$100,000	64%	19%	18%
\$100,000+	73%	16%	11%

More specifically, three in five support a \$1.2 trillion upgrade to water and wastewater systems.

Some people have proposed we begin a decades-long project to update our nation's drinking water and wastewater systems. The cost would be approximately \$1.2 trillion over 25 years. Funding would come from a mix of private or public sources, including federal, state, and local sources – some of which could ultimately be paid by ratepayers. Would you support or oppose such a proposal?



Support for the plan is greatest among voters under age 30.

Demographic Groups	Total Support	Total Oppose	Don't Know
All Voters	62%	27%	11%
Gender			
Men	59%	32%	9%
Women	65%	22%	13%
Age			
18-29	78%	17%	5%
30-39	68%	24%	8%
40-49	54%	30%	15%
50-64	62%	26%	12%
65-74	58%	31%	11%
75+	58%	27%	15%

Democrats are strongly supportive while Republicans are evenly divided.

Demographic Groups	Total Support	Total Oppose	Don't Know
Party			
Democrats	83%	9%	8%
Independents	56%	28%	16%
Republicans	43%	45%	12%
Region			
Northeast	64%	23%	14%
Midwest	64%	30%	6%
South	63%	22%	15%
South Central	68%	20%	12%
Central Plains	43%	42%	15%
Mountain	70%	23%	7%
West	61%	35%	5%

Voters of color and middle-income voters are also very supportive.

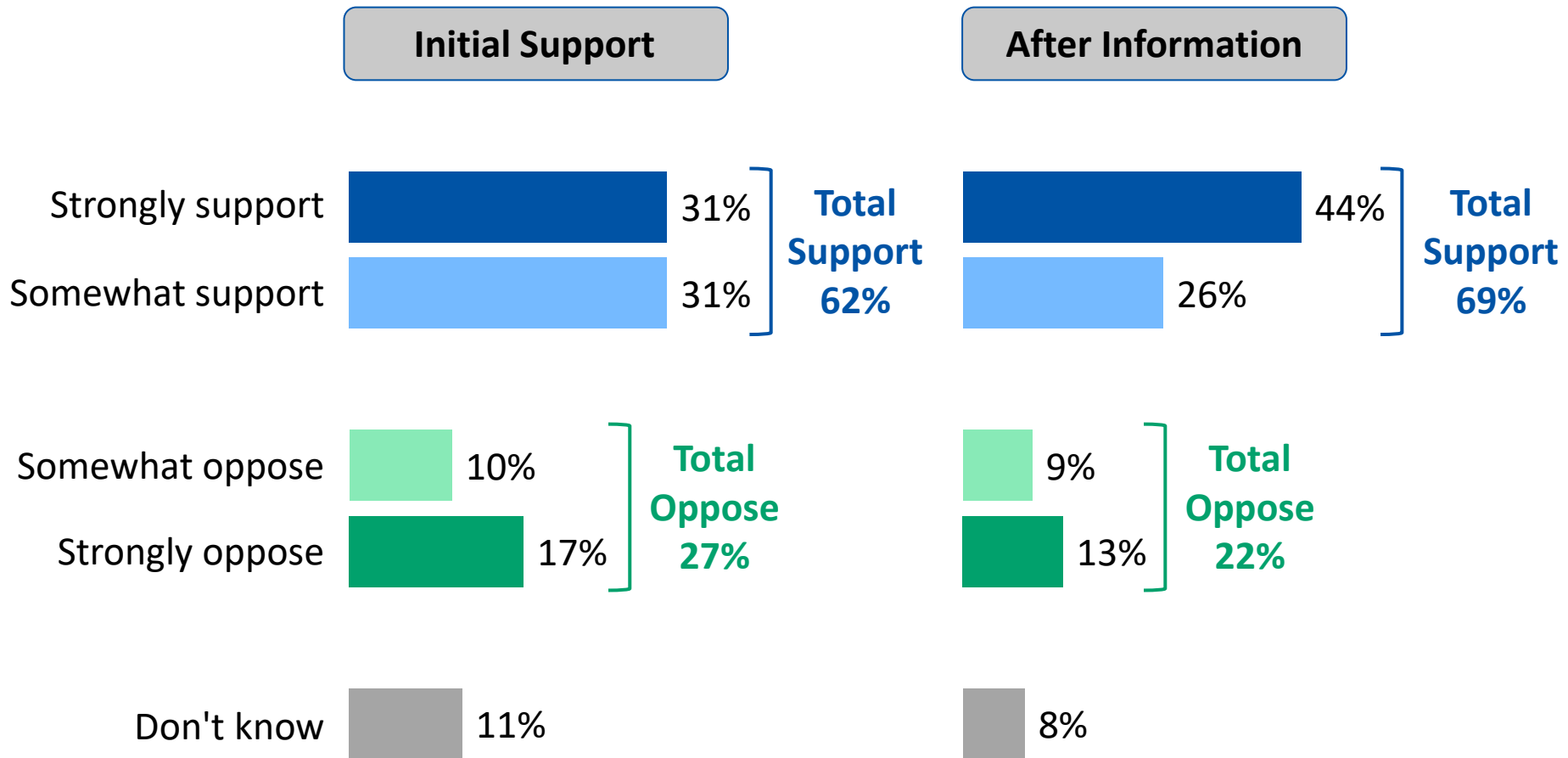
Demographic Groups	Total Support	Total Oppose	Don't Know
Race/Ethnicity			
Whites	60%	28%	12%
Latinos	70%	17%	12%
African Americans	75%	18%	6%
<i>All Voters of Color</i>	71%	21%	8%
Household Income			
<\$30,000	58%	30%	12%
\$30,000-\$60,000	71%	19%	10%
\$60,000-\$75,000	72%	20%	8%
\$75,000-\$100,000	56%	31%	13%
\$100,000+	65%	26%	9%

Additional Background Provided

Water systems in many communities across the United States are aging and in need of repair. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives our water and wastewater infrastructure a “D” grade. Our current infrastructure cannot withstand storms, wildfires, and more extreme and unpredictable weather caused by climate change. By investing in updates to this infrastructure, we can prepare water and wastewater systems for future flooding and changing weather before they occur, and prevent damage to communities.



Support intensifies as voters learn more about the plan.

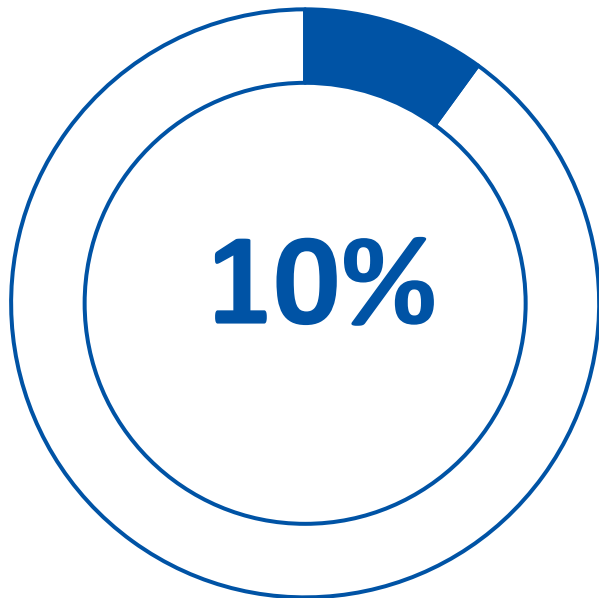


Q12. Some people have proposed we begin a decades-long project to update our nation's drinking water and wastewater systems. The cost would be approximately \$1.2 trillion over 25 years. Funding would come from a mix of private or public sources, including federal, state, and local sources – some of which could ultimately be paid by ratepayers. Would you support or oppose such a proposal?

Q13. Having heard this, let me ask you again: do you think you would support or oppose \$1.2 trillion investment to update our nation's water and wastewater systems?

Those most likely to move to support the proposal after learning more skew older, female, and more conservative.

Become More Supportive After Information



Positive Movers

10% of Electorate

Central Plains Region

West North Central Census Division

Independent Women

Ages 75+

HH Income <\$30,000

Independents Ages 50+

New England Census Division

Women Ages 50+

Republican Women

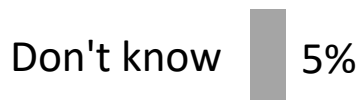
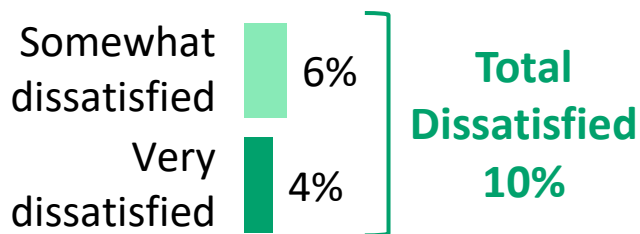
Latinos

Conservative

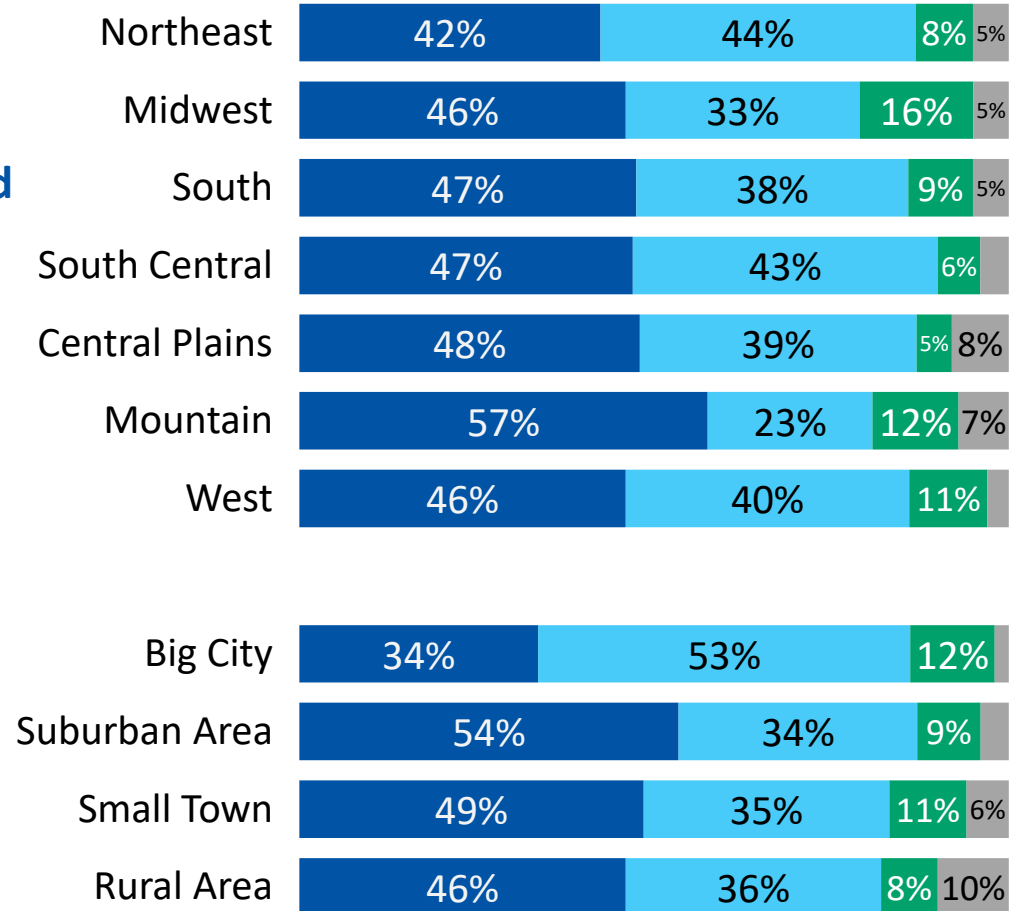
Attitudes Towards Local Water and Wastewater Service

Voters are highly satisfied with their water and wastewater service.

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your water and wastewater and stormwater service?

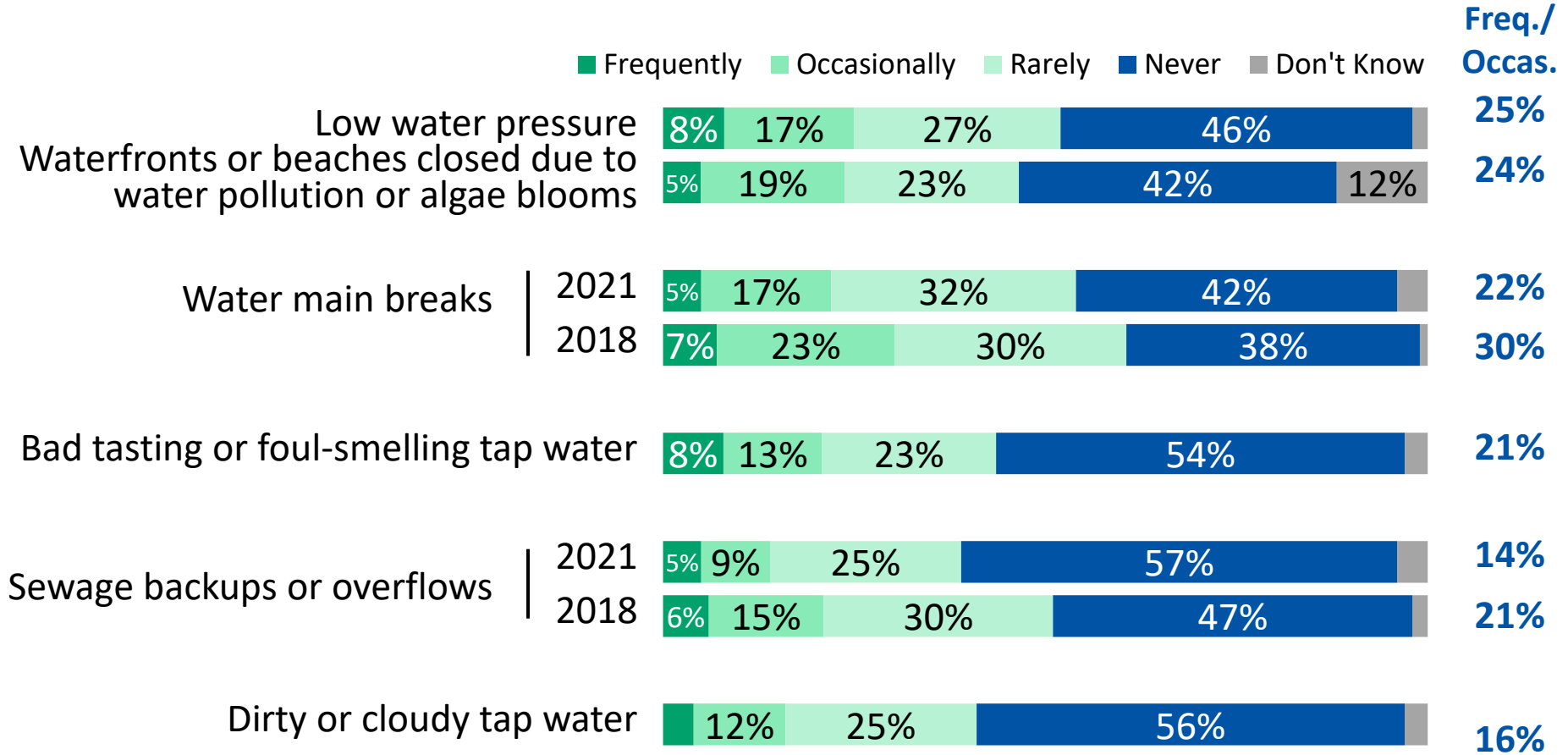


■ Very Sat. ■ Smwt. Sat. ■ Total Dissat. ■ Don't Know



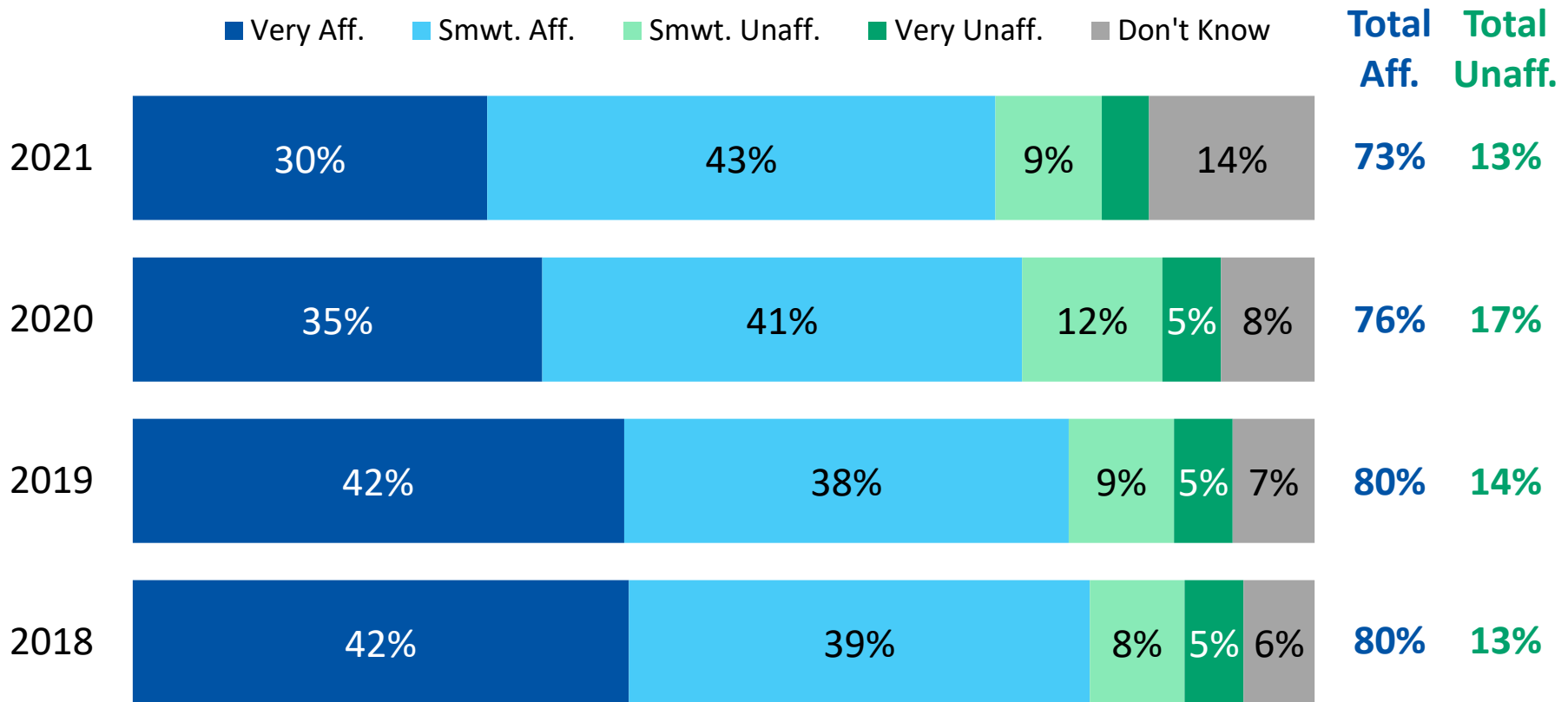
Low water pressure, closed waterfronts and water main breaks are the most common problems encountered, but are infrequent.

Here is a list of problems people have experienced related to water, wastewater and stormwater service. Please tell me how often you or your community have experienced it: frequently, occasionally, rarely, or never.



Most voters view their water and wastewater service as affordable.

Do you think what you pay currently for water and wastewater service is affordable or unaffordable?



Those living in rural areas are less likely than others to say their service is affordable.

Demographic Groups	Total Affordable	Total Unaffordable	Don't Know
All Voters	73%	13%	14%
Area			
Big City	71%	15%	14%
Suburban Area	75%	12%	13%
Small Town	80%	11%	9%
Rural Area	61%	15%	25%
Party			
Democrats	72%	12%	17%
Independents	71%	17%	11%
Republicans	75%	13%	12%

Lower-income voters are less likely to view service as affordable than are higher-income ones.

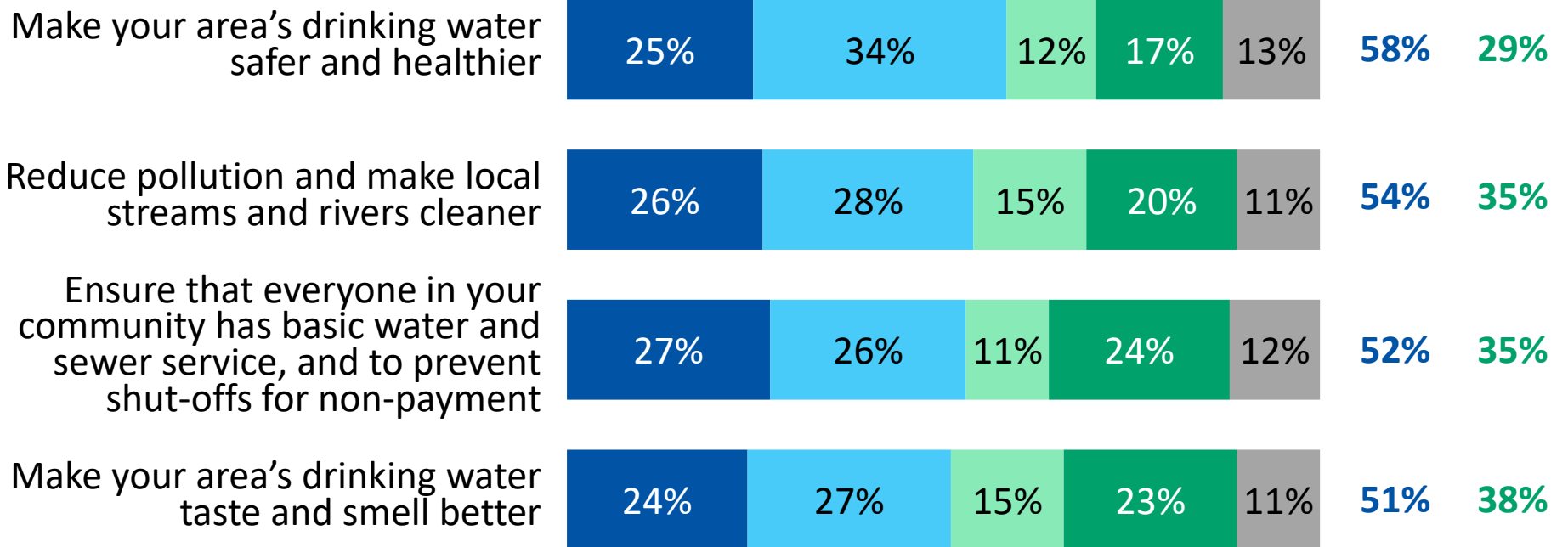
Demographic Groups	Total Affordable	Total Unaffordable	Don't Know
Household Income			
<\$30,000	62%	19%	20%
\$30,000-\$60,000	65%	18%	17%
\$60,000-\$75,000	76%	10%	15%
\$75,000-\$100,000	79%	8%	13%
\$100,000+	82%	10%	9%
Gender			
Men	73%	15%	12%
Women	72%	11%	16%
Region			
Northeast	72%	11%	17%
Midwest	66%	16%	18%
South	78%	12%	10%
South Central	77%	7%	16%
Central Plains	67%	18%	15%
Mountain	82%	13%	6%
West	72%	15%	13%

Slim majorities of voters are open to rate increases for a wide variety of purposes.

Suppose your water, wastewater, and stormwater service provider increased rates by a modest amount to pay for infrastructure that would _____.
 Would you be willing or unwilling to pay this rate increase?

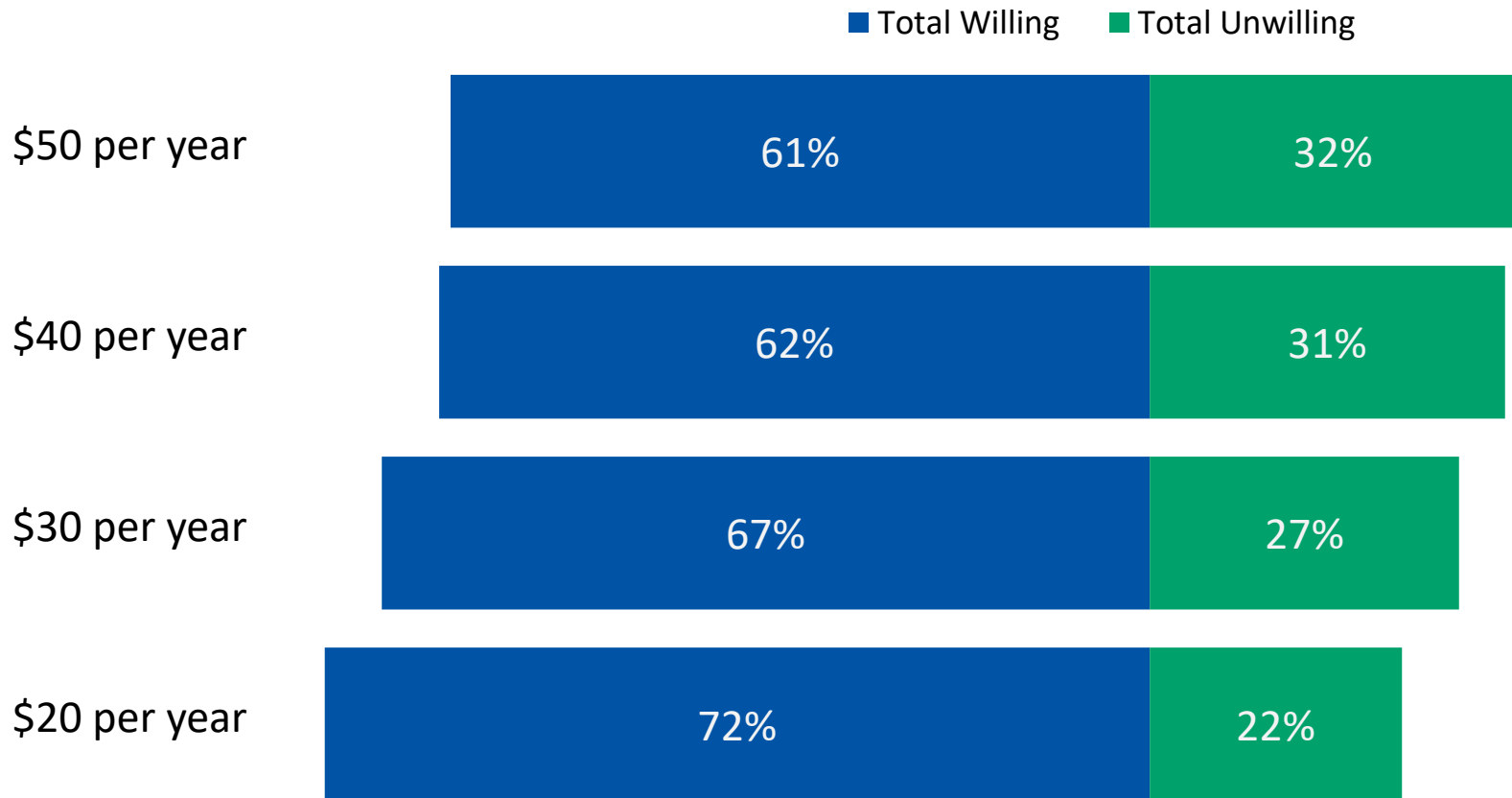
■ Very Will.
 ■ Smwt. Will.
 ■ Smwt. Unwill.
 ■ Very Unwill.
 ■ Don't Know

Total Will. **Total Unwill.**



Scale matters; more than three in five are willing to pay as much as \$50 more per year.

Would you be willing to pay an additional _____ on your water bills if it were dedicated to fund the projects I just described?



Conclusions

Conclusions

- ✓ Relative to other issues facing the federal government, voters place very high priority on ensuring a reliable water supply and on addressing drinking water contamination.
- ✓ Only about half of voters are confident in the condition of the nation's water infrastructure, though they feel more positive about the condition of water infrastructure at the local level.
- ✓ Seven in ten think water agencies should receive the same proportion of federal COVID relief that other infrastructure agencies do.
- ✓ More specifically, over three-quarters back a national water infrastructure investment proposal, and three in five support it when the \$1.2 trillion price tag is included.
- ✓ As voters learn more about the proposal, support grows to two-thirds, with persuadable voters tending to be from the Central U.S. and over age 75.
- ✓ As in the past, voters are highly satisfied with their water, wastewater and stormwater service, view it as affordable, and trust that the water delivered to their home is safe.
- ✓ Majorities are willing to pay rate increases to fund four different types of service improvements, with the greatest support for improving the quality of drinking water.
- ✓ More than three in five are willing to pay as much as \$50 more per year to support these improvements.

Questions?

Email: Katie Henderson, khenderson@uswateralliance.org

Value of Water Campaign, Senior Program Manager