

**Willamette Water Supply**  
*Our Reliable Water*



# Retool Your Communications Program Utilizing Public Opinion Research

May 3, 2019

# Welcome

Live polling!

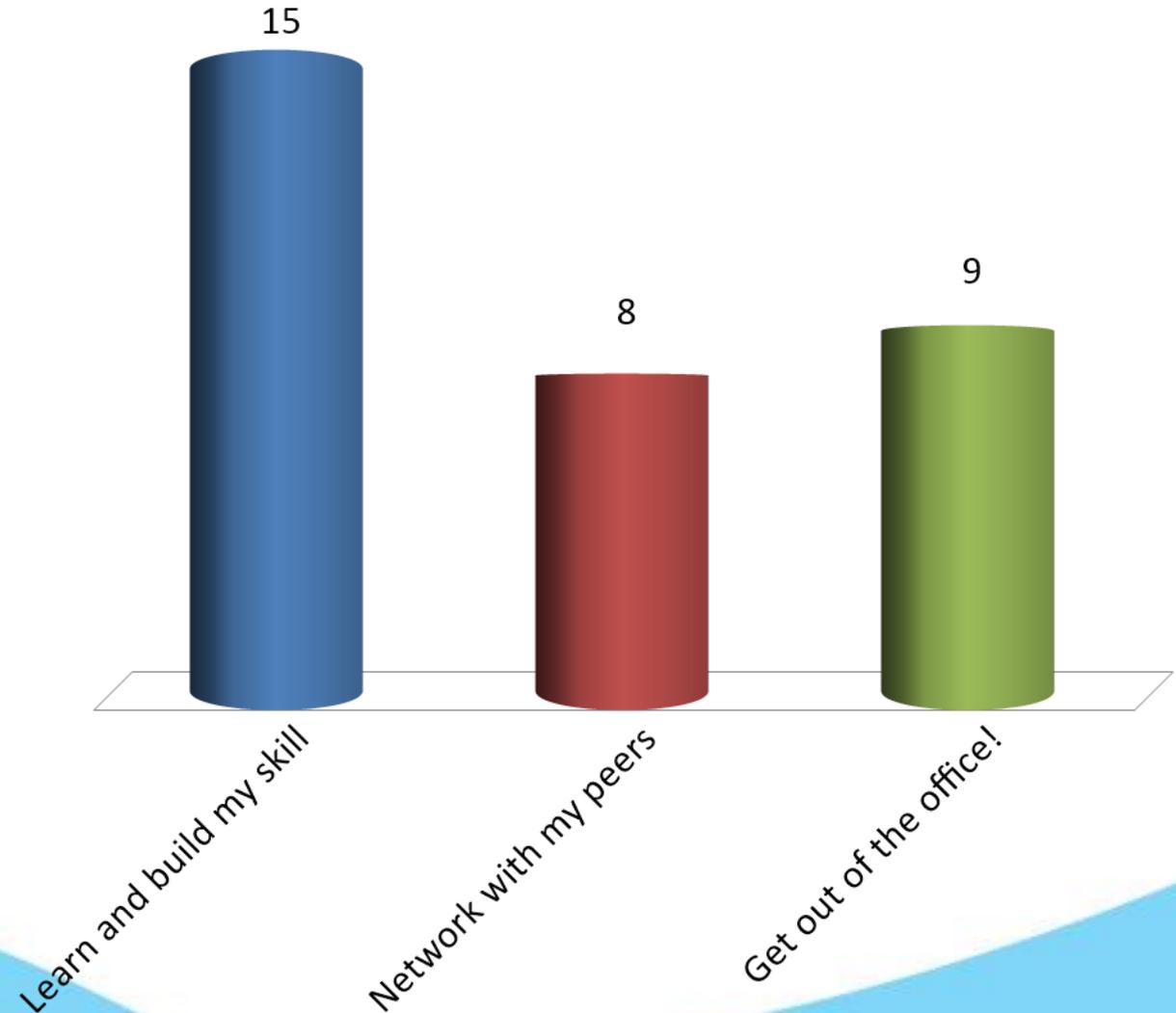
Who is in the room?

What are they thinking?



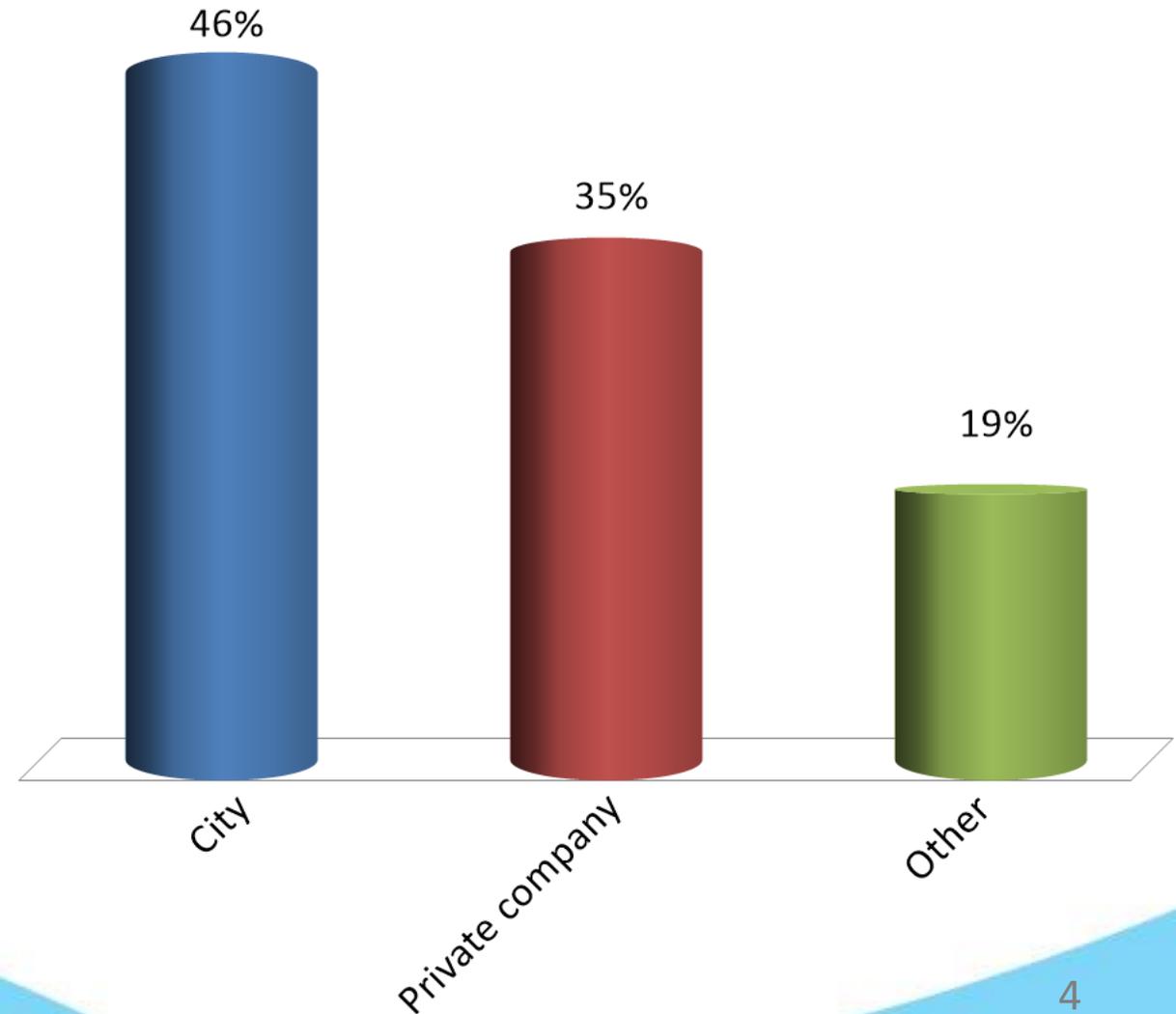
# I am here today to: (multiple answers allowed)

1. Learn and build my skill
2. Network with my peers
3. Get out of the office!



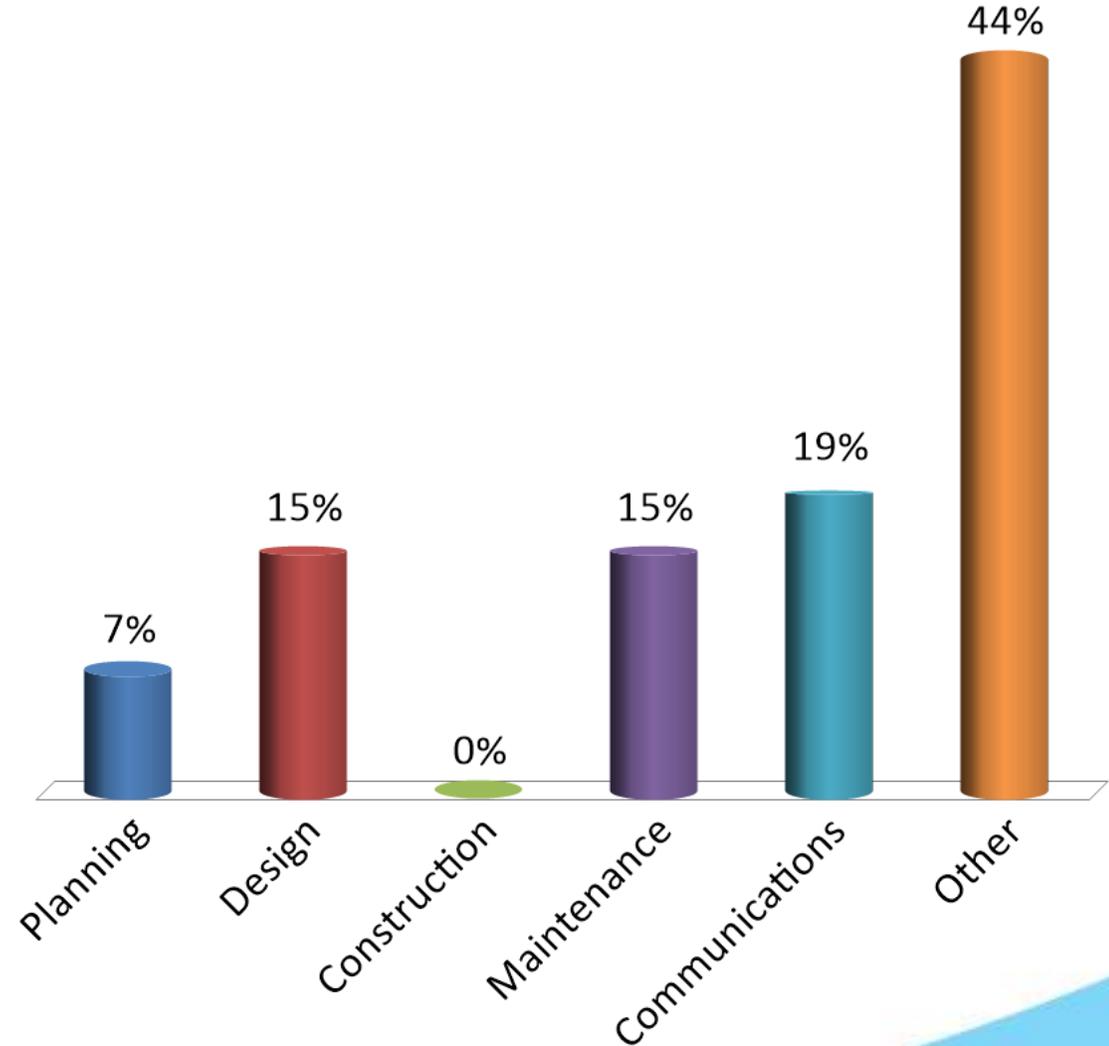
# I work for a:

1. City
2. Private company
3. Other



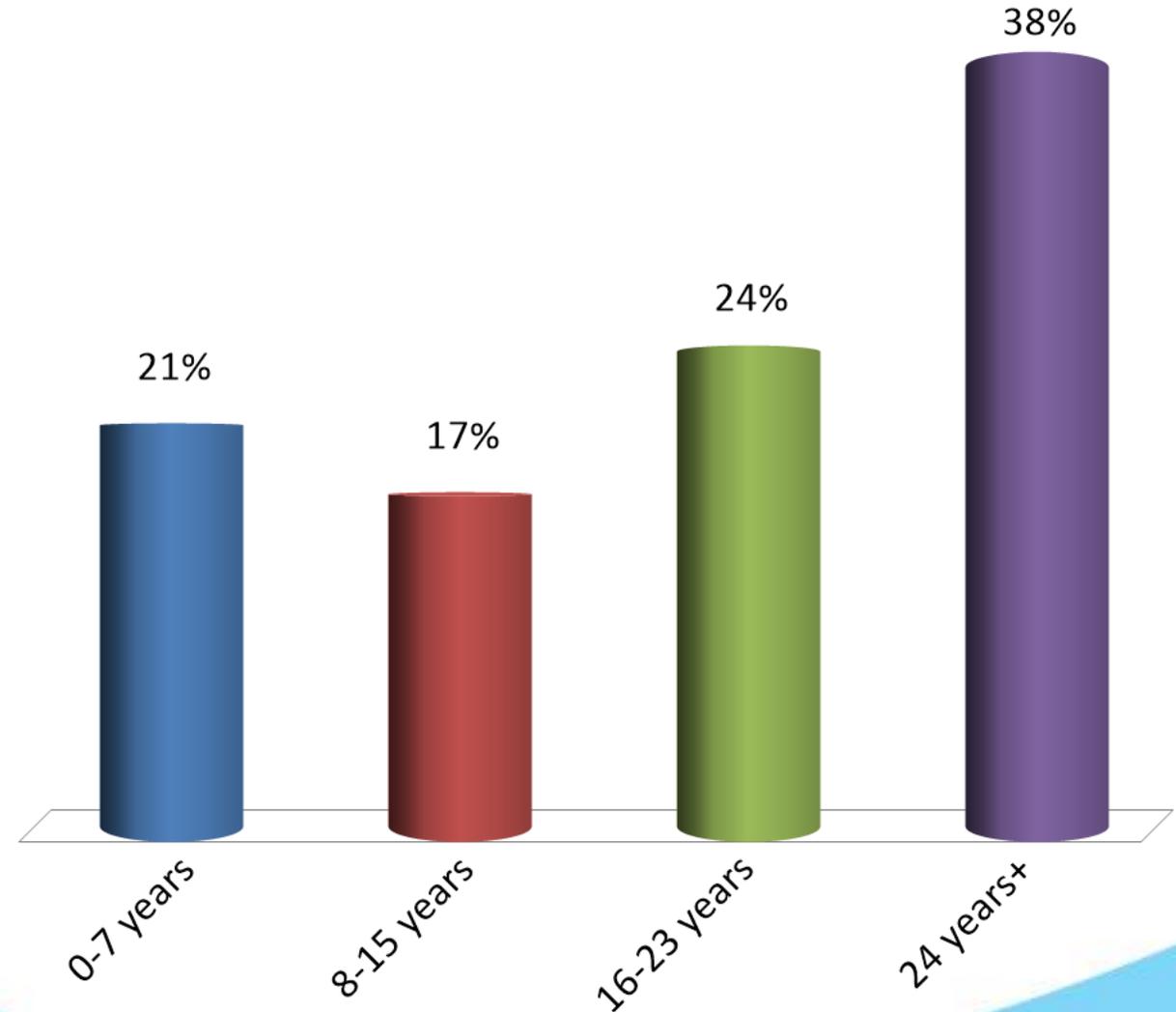
# My work focuses on:

1. Planning
2. Design
3. Construction
4. Maintenance
5. Communications
6. Other



# I have been in my field for:

1. 0-7 years
2. 8-15 years
3. 16-23 years
4. 24 years+



# How familiar are you with public opinion research on a scale of 1 (not familiar) to 7 (very familiar)

20% 1. Not familiar

10% 2. ...

10% 3. ...

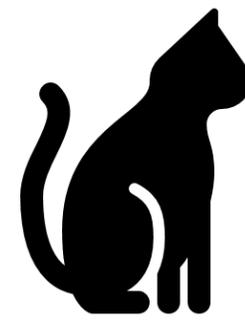
7% 4. ...

33% 5. ...

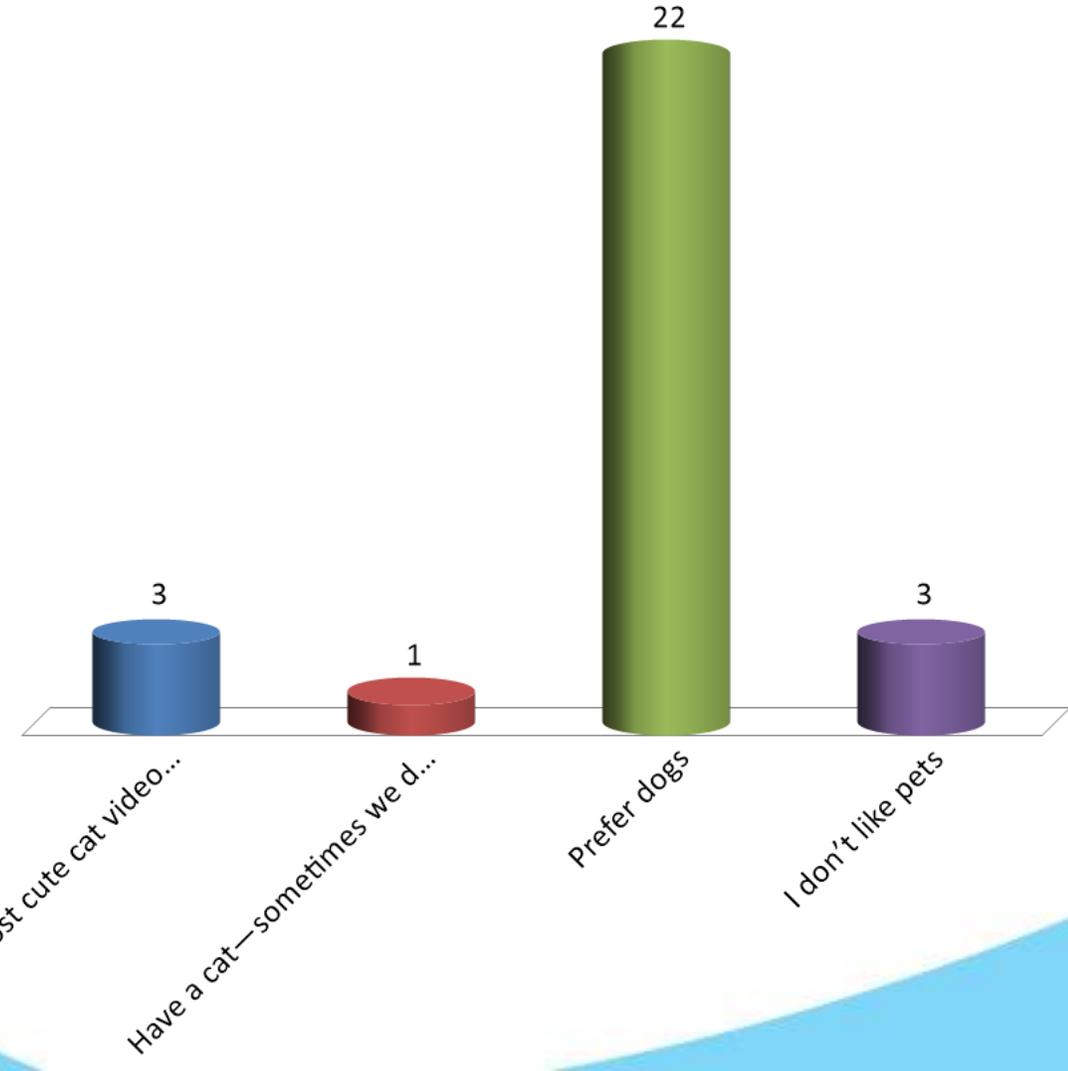
13% 6. ...

7% 7. Very familiar

# What best describes your feelings about cats?



1. Love cats! Post cute cat videos on Facebook all the time!
2. Have a cat—sometimes we don't get along
3. Prefer dogs
4. I don't like pets



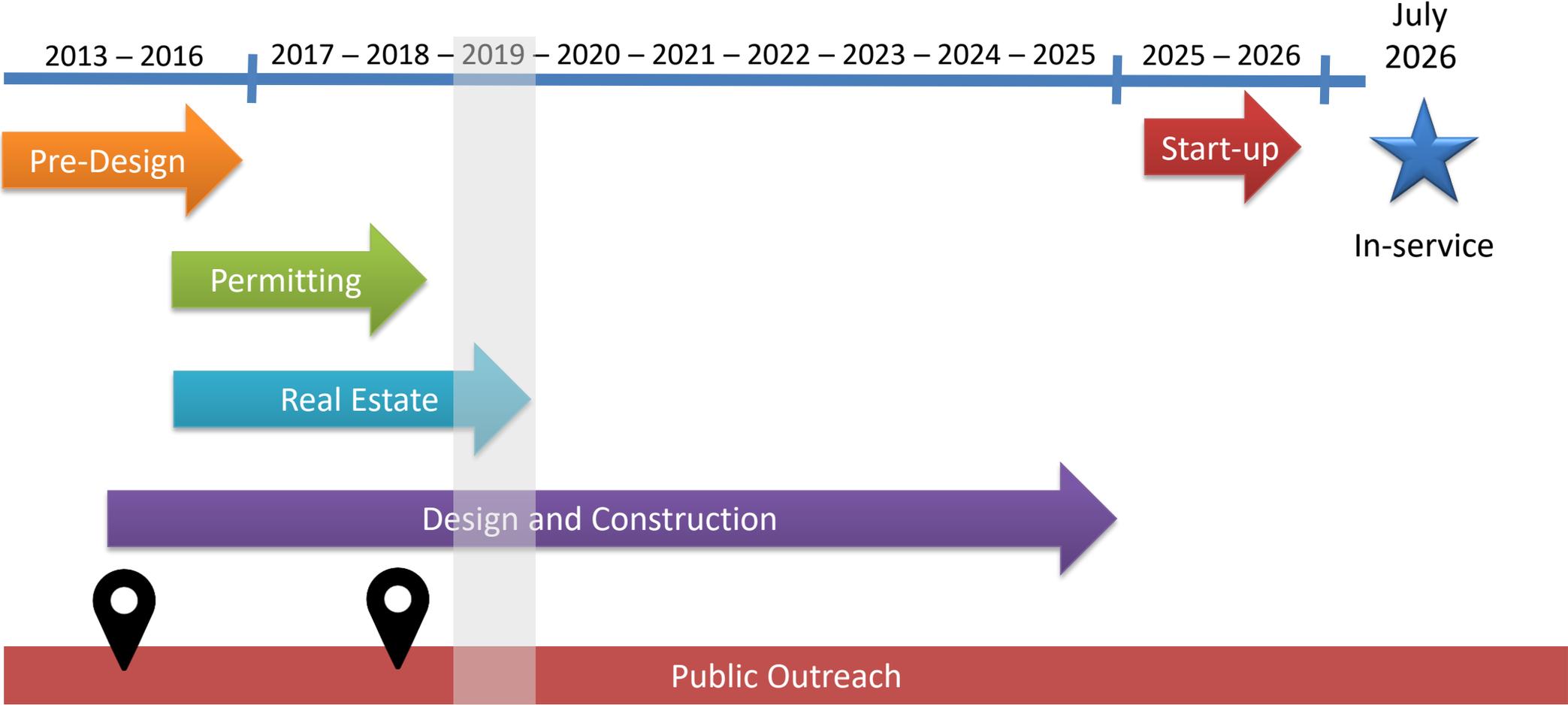


# Water Supply Program

- Modified water intake
- New water filtration plant
- Water reservoirs
- 30+ miles of large diameter pipeline
- Tualatin Valley Water District: 60% City of Hillsboro: 40%
- Scheduled completion: 2026



# Public outreach and option research is integrated into the project schedule



Public opinion research helps us create materials that resonate with customers and neighbors.

# Materials & tools designed to communicate



One-on-one Meetings

Lots of Conversations!

Video

Fact Sheets

Talking Points

Tabling Events  
Banners

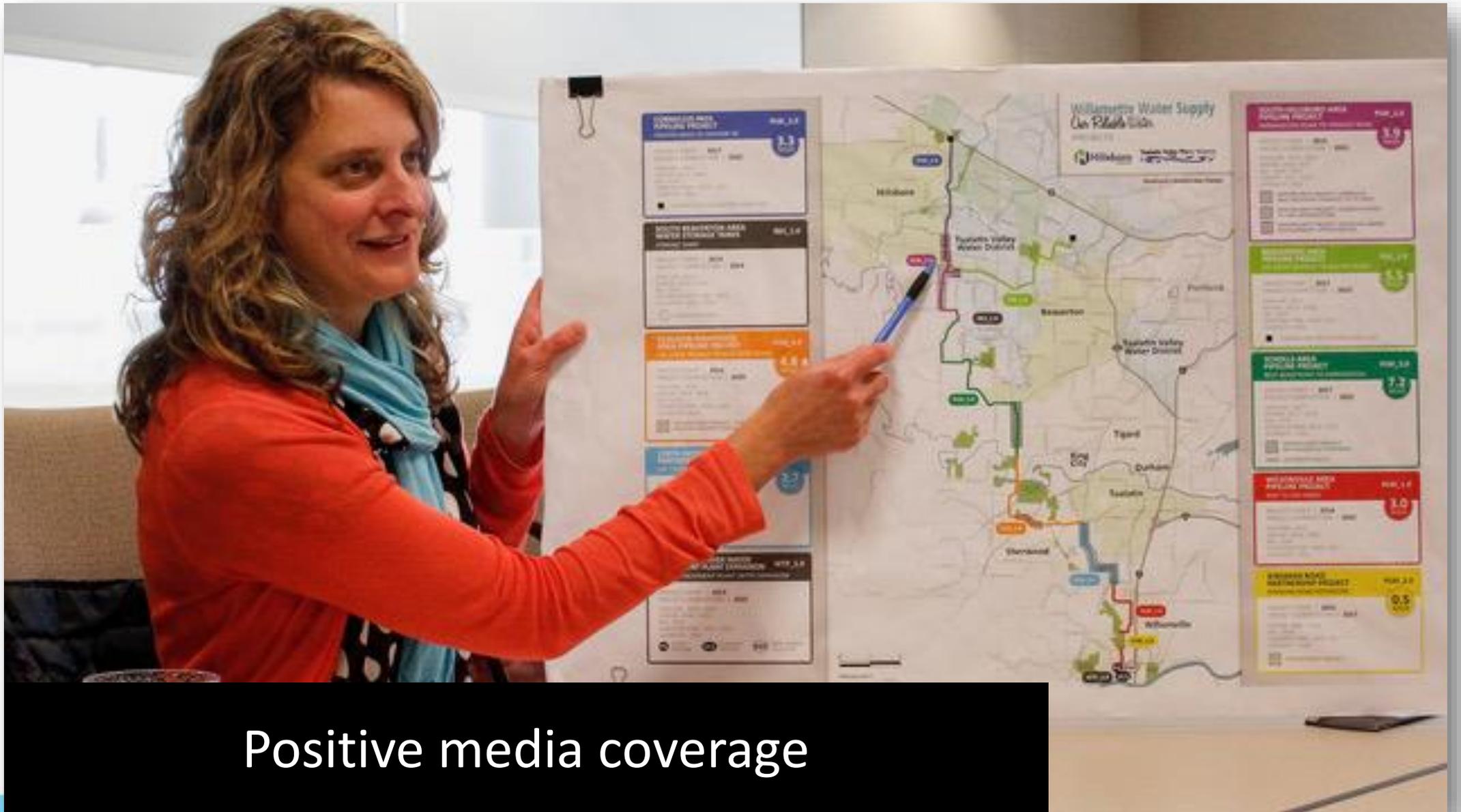
Media

City Council /  
Community  
Presentations

Monthly Email  
Newsletter

Website

# Results?





## Property Owner Visits Along the Alignment



**Everyone Cares About Water**  
Aloha Farmers Market



## Partnerships with Other Agencies South Hillsboro Open House



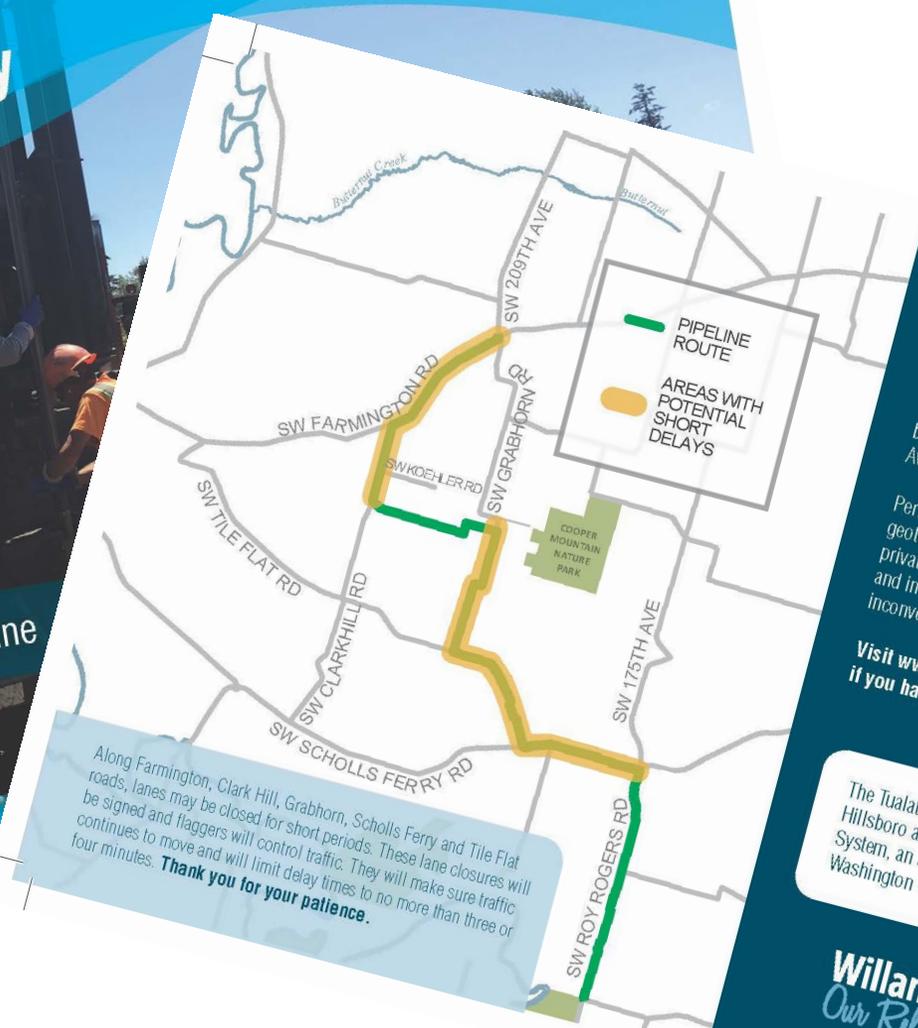
## Special Events

### Westside Economic Alliance

**Willamette Water Supply**  
*Our Reliable Water*

Surveying for a  
**New Drinking Water Pipeline**

[www.OurReliableWater.org](http://www.OurReliableWater.org)



**Surveying Underway Near You**

The Willamette Water Supply Program is building a new drinking water pipeline from Wilsonville – through the Scholls Area – to Hillsboro and Beaverton. Pipeline design is underway for the section between Roy Rogers Road at Scholls Ferry Road and SW 209th Avenue at SW Farmington Road.

Periodically this fall, you may see workers in the area performing geotechnical and other site work. This work is occurring on both private property, for which owners have already been notified, and in the public right-of-way. Engineers are working to minimize inconveniences by using flaggers to direct traffic.

Visit [www.OurReliableWater.org](http://www.OurReliableWater.org) or call us at 503-941-4570 if you have any questions.

The Tualatin Valley Water District (TVWD) and the City of Hillsboro are partnering to build the Willamette Water Supply System, an additional, resilient and redundant water supply for Washington County. The new system will be complete in 2026.

**Willamette Water Supply**  
*Our Reliable Water*

**Communications to Those Impacted  
Mailer to neighbors**

**10**  
Classroom  
Presentations

**600+**  
Property  
Owner  
Contacts

**30,000**  
mailings

**65+**  
Community  
Meetings

**40**  
Agency  
Liaisons

**1,000s**  
Conversations  
at Farmer  
Market &  
Events

**5**  
Business  
Outreach  
Events

**127,000+**  
Website  
Visits

**50+**  
Conferences  
& Staff  
Updates

**25+**  
Open  
Houses

**2,800**  
Video  
Views

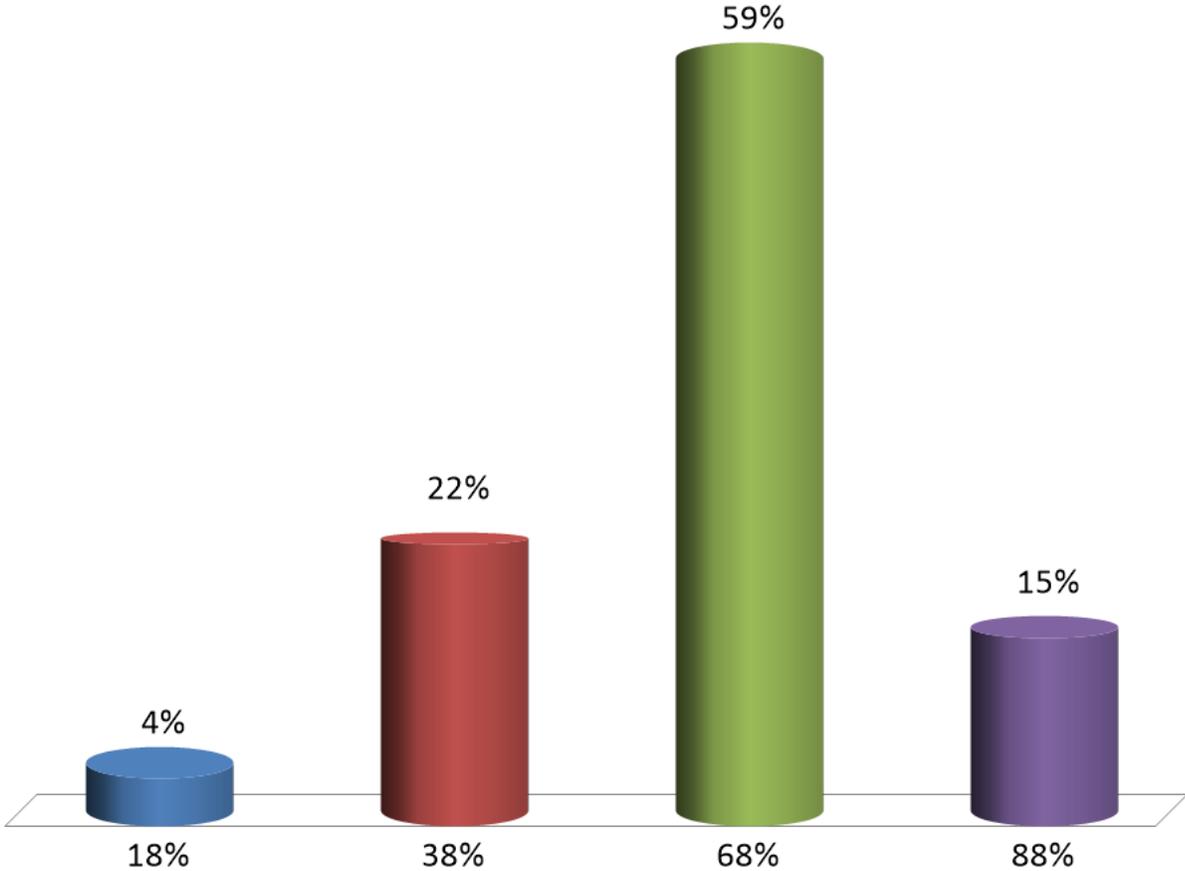
**45**  
Positive  
Newspaper  
Stories

**100+**  
Elected and  
Legislative  
Officials  
Briefings

**875**  
Willamette  
Monthly  
Recipients

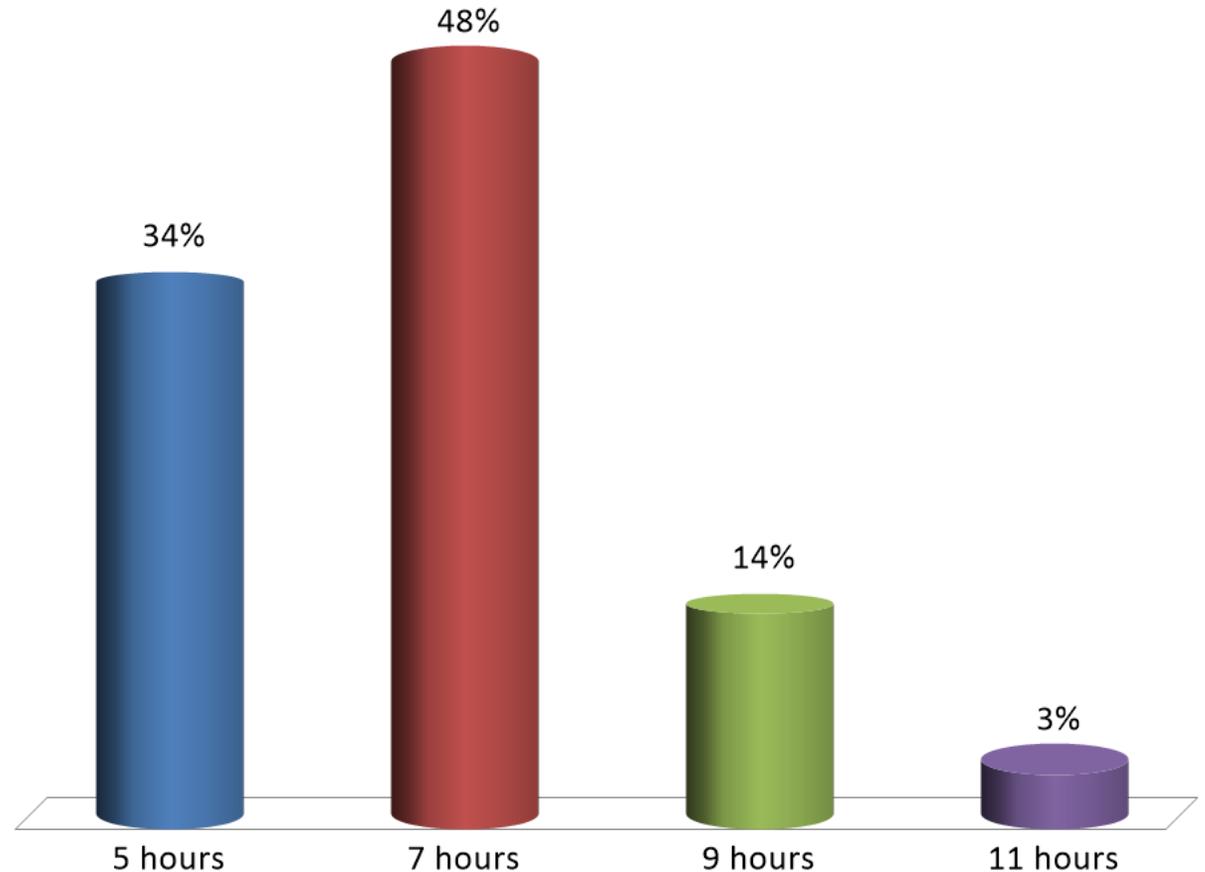
# What percent of Americans get news on social media?

- 1. 18%
- 2. 38%
- ✓ 3. 68%
- 4. 88%



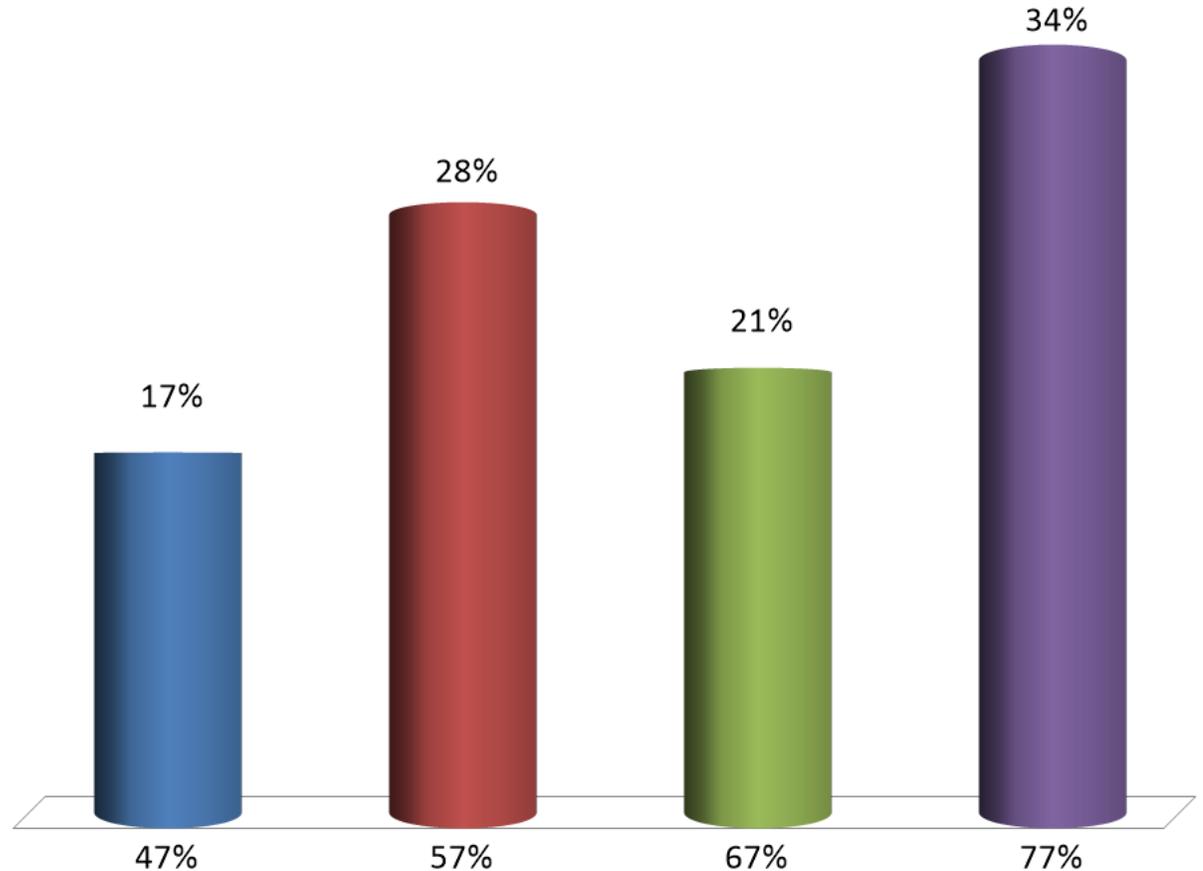
# How many hours per day do Americans spend consuming media?

- 1. 5 hours
- 2. 7 hours
- 3. 9 hours
- ✓ 4. 11 hours



# What percent of social media news consumers expect news there to be inaccurate?

- 1. 47%
- ✓ 2. 57%
- 3. 67%
- 4. 77%



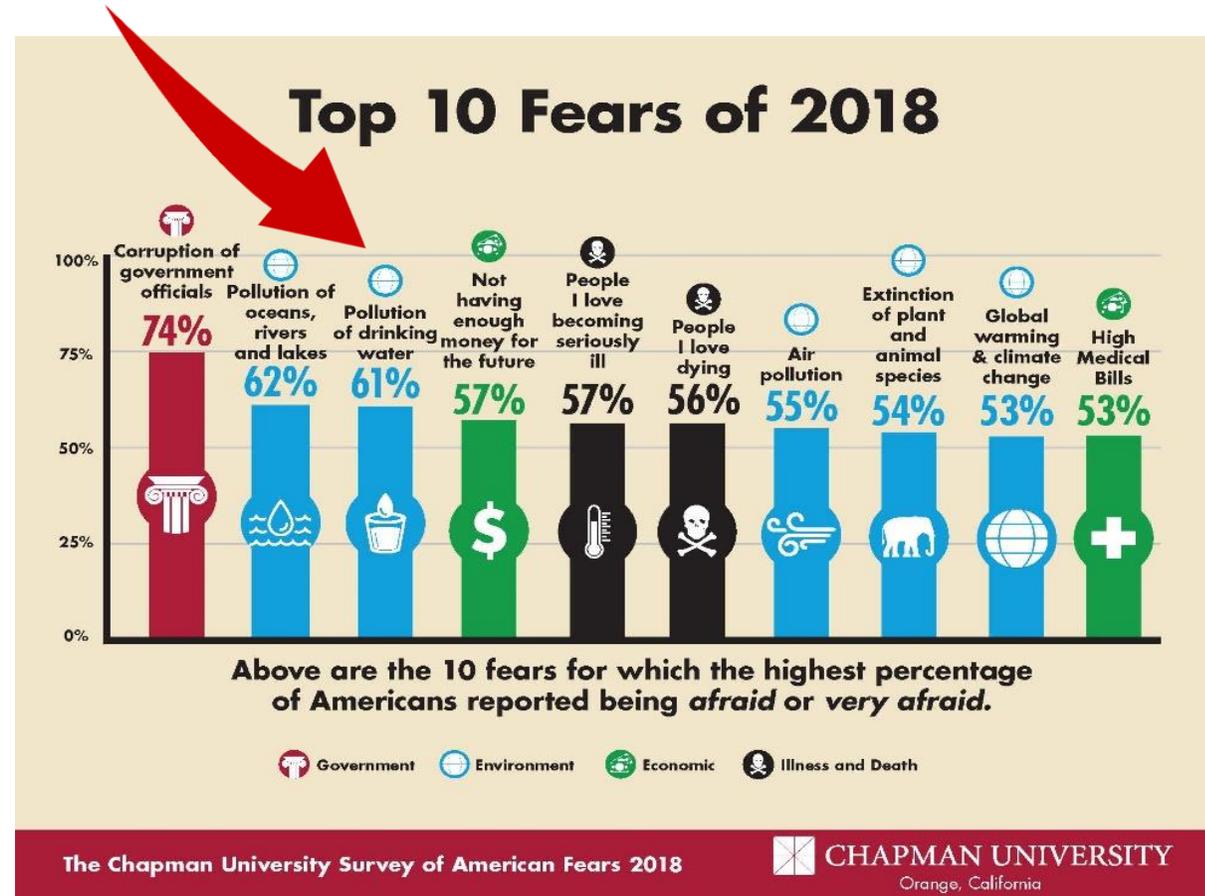
# Potential results of all this media watching.

## 5 things

### 5 things to know

November 2018

1. Russia investigation
2. Economy
3. Murder confessions
4. Life expectancy
5. Drinking water



*Today, 64 percent say that “pollution of rivers, lakes and streams” is an extremely or very serious problem, up from 41 percent in 2012.*

# Public Opinion Research 2018 Refresh

- Four years into the program
- Goal: better understand attitudes and perceptions of ratepayers and key stakeholders
- Update messaging and materials
- Ensure we are focusing on key issues
- Make sure we're not confusing our constituents with the wrong words!

Stakeholder  
interviews

Telephone  
survey

Focus  
groups

# Research tools—what do they do?

## Stakeholder interviews

- One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders—so you don't have to rely on assumptions
- Uses discussion guide / results summarized in a report
- Sheds light on unique perspectives, questions and concerns, and challenges
- Provides context for what success looks like
- Builds collaboration and trust

# Research tools—what do they do?

## Telephone survey

- Scientific, nonbiased public opinion telephone survey of registered voters
- Measure the public's views regarding a particular topic(s)
- Random sample—everyone has an equal chance of participating (non-biased)
- Helps regular people be heard
- Provides information on what proportion of a population has a specific viewpoint
- Does not explain why respondents believe what they do

# Research tools—what do they do?

## Focus groups

- Two groups; 8-12 people each (provide a stipend)
- 2 hour sessions
- Selected from a pool of registered voters who vote
- Recruited to match TVWD's & Hillsboro's demographics
- Conducted with a professional facilitator--stimulate discussion following a topic guide
- Provides more in-depth, qualitative insights

# Stakeholder interviews

Interviews with 20-25 individuals conducted by telephone and in-person meetings.



## Who did we interview?

- Staff and civic leaders from communities along the pipeline route
- TVWD / Hillsboro staff
- Non-governmental organizations
- Neighborhood organizations

# Stakeholder interview highlights

- Communications are going well.
- Best methods to provide information: Willamette Monthly e-mail newsletter, direct updates from staff and website.
- Construction impacts were seen as the biggest communication challenge.
- Ratepayers knew much less about the Program.

***“You got Marlys.  
That’s all you  
need.”***

***“As CPO Chair, I’m very  
happy with the support I’m  
getting from the Willamette  
Water Supply Program”.***

# Focus groups

Held with customers to get feedback on messaging related to project costs, resilience and reliability, and water quality.

Provided a stipend to participate.

## Who participated?

- Hillsboro residential customers
- TVWD residential customers



# Focus group highlights

- Few customers are aware of the Willamette Water Supply Program.
- Willamette concerns—cost and the impact on water quality.
- Meeting future needs is considered the most important reason for investment
- Receptive to the benefits of seismic resiliency—but it is not “top of mind”.

*“I’m satisfied with the water.”*

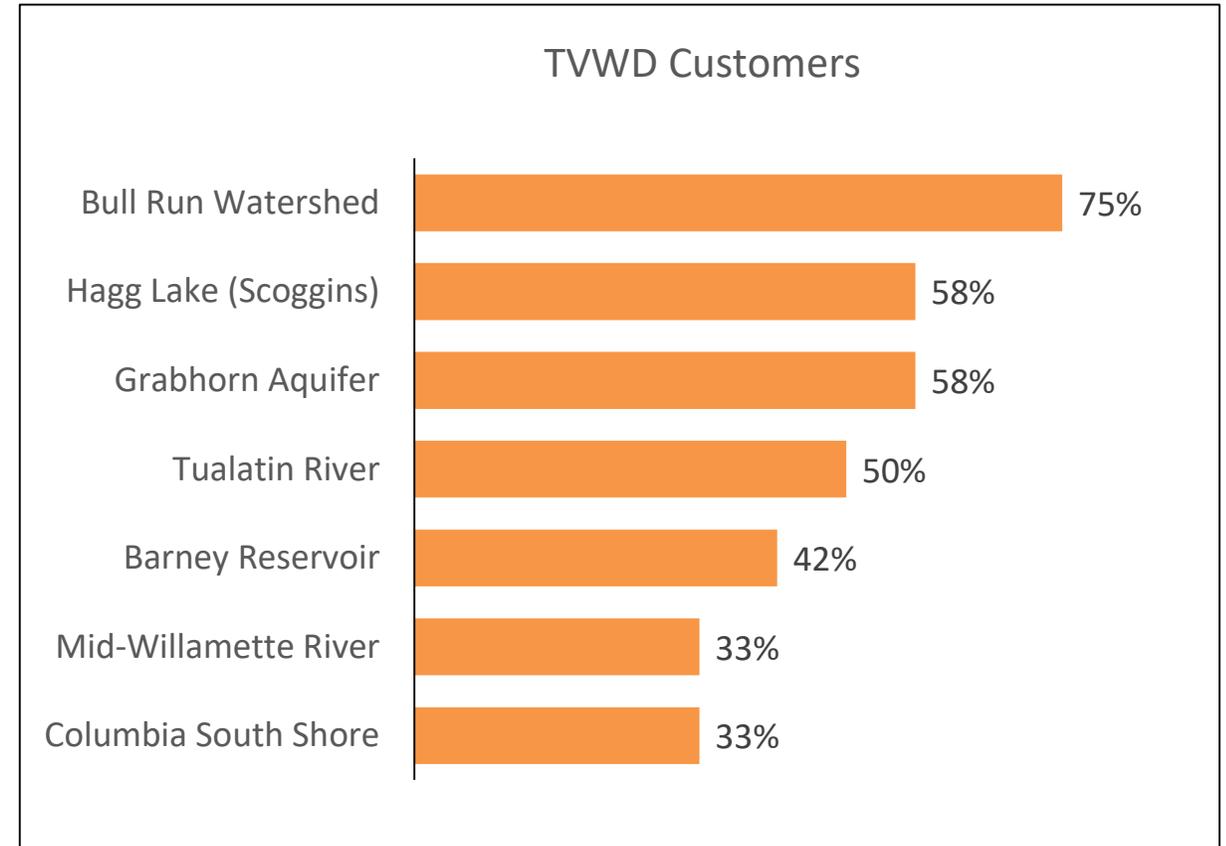
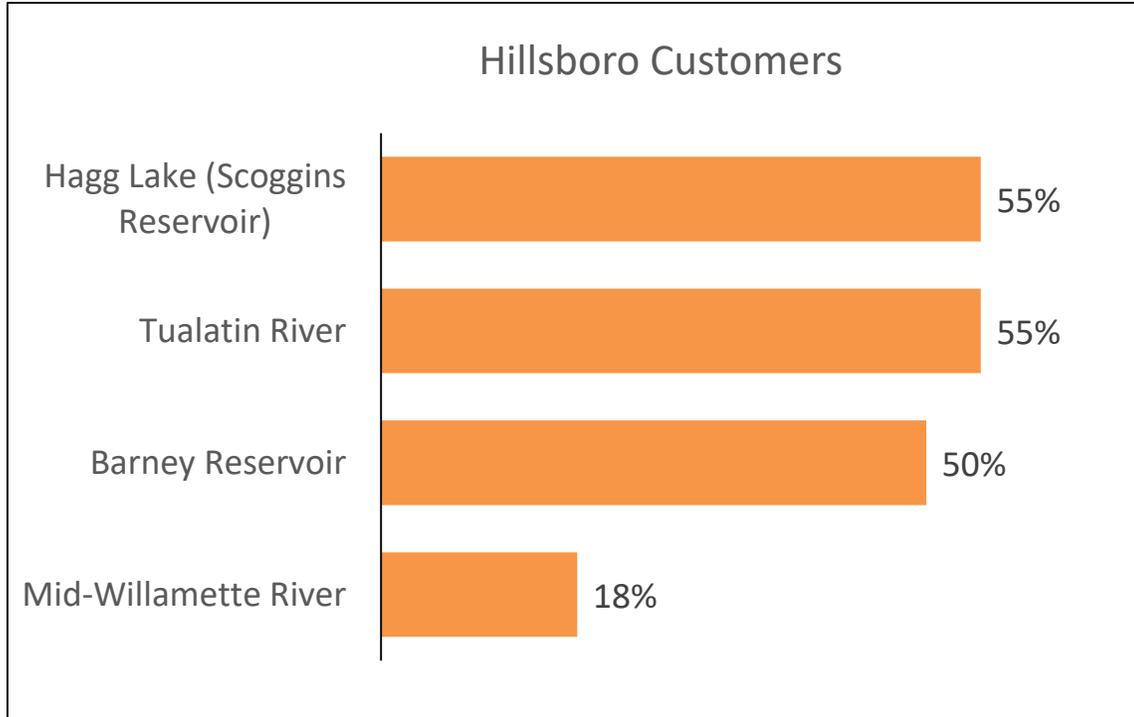
*“I get good service. The water works.”*

**83%**

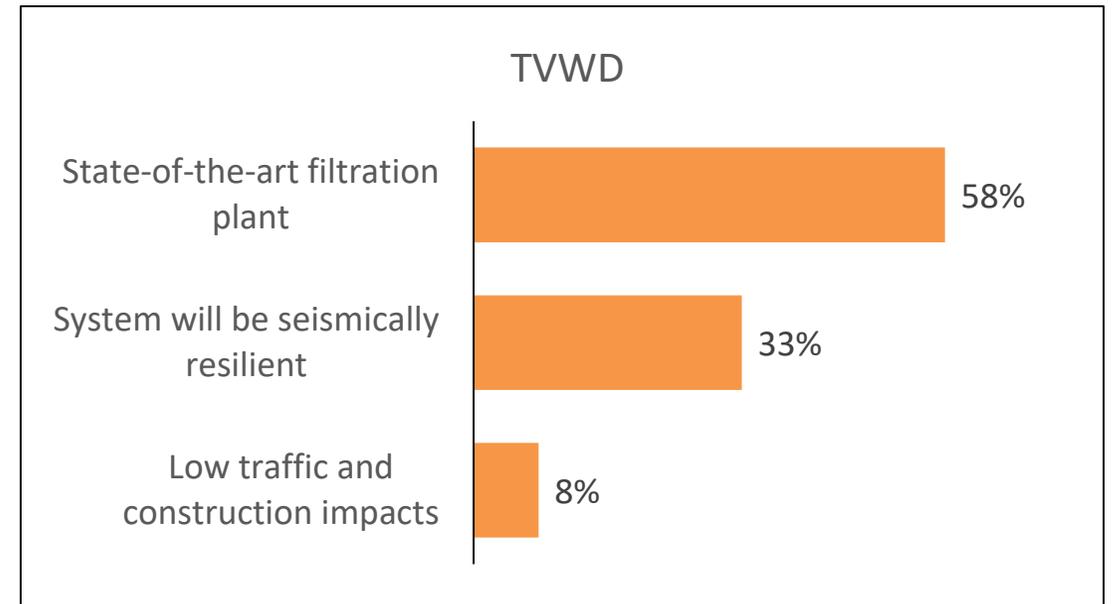
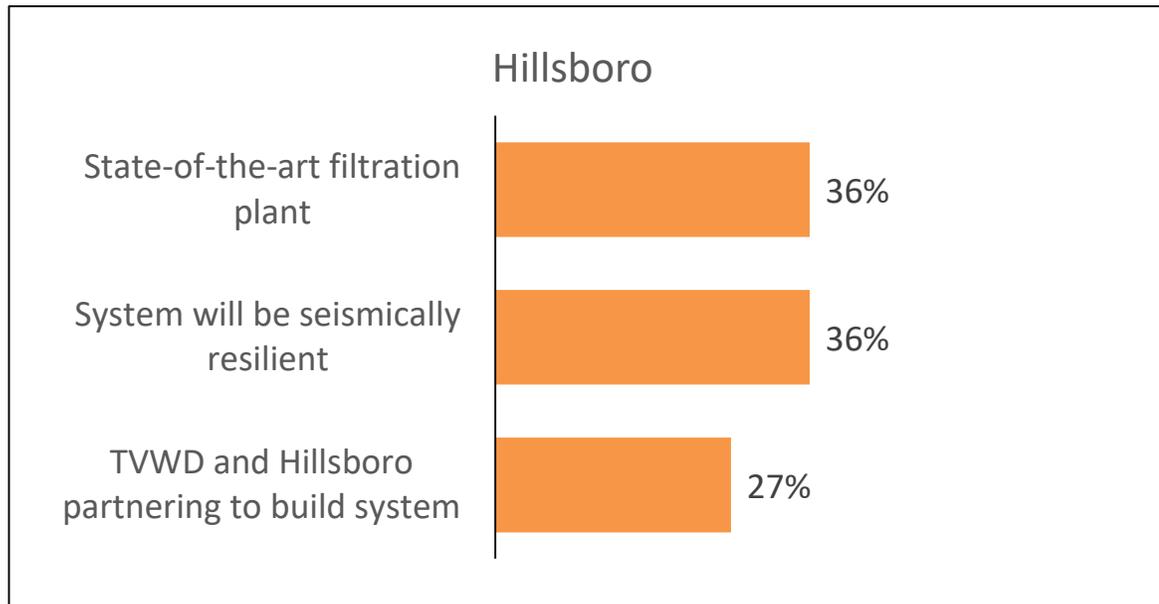
*know who provides their drinking water*



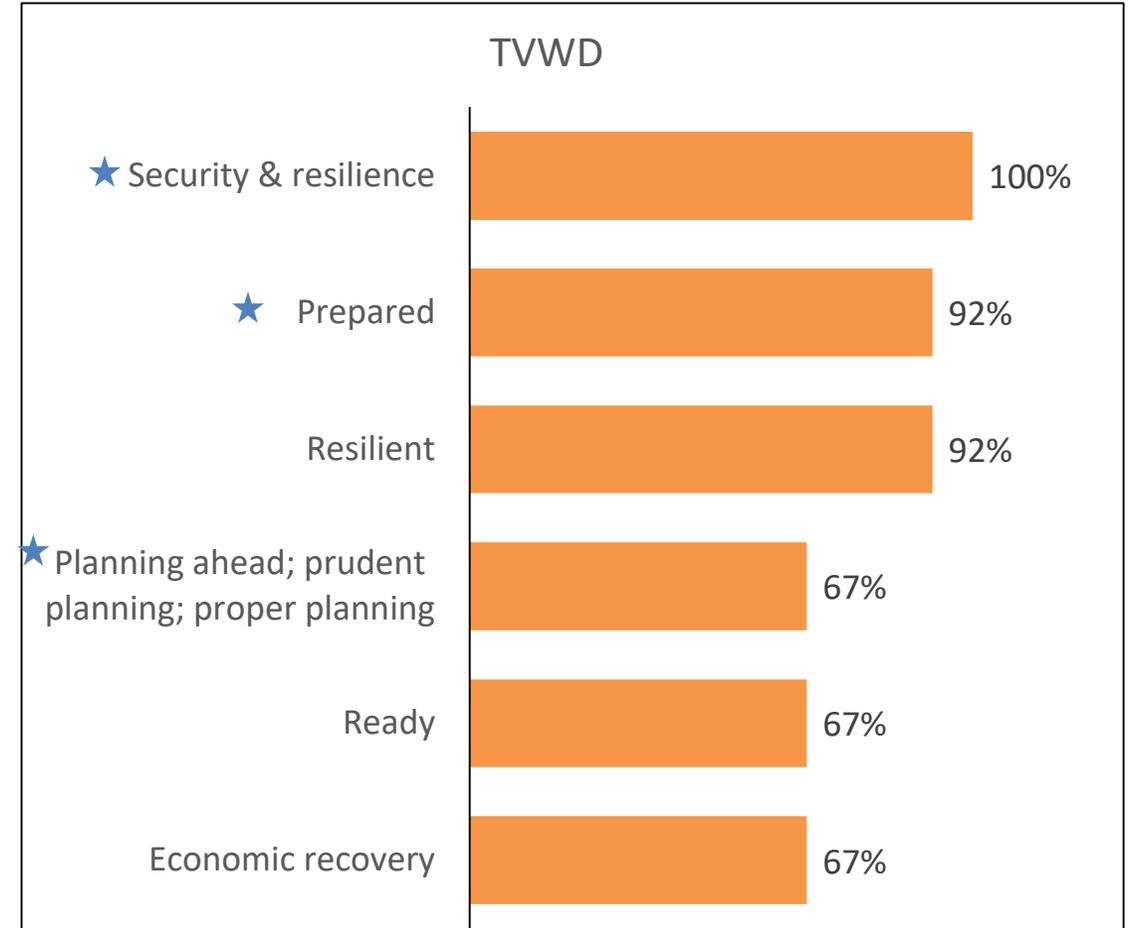
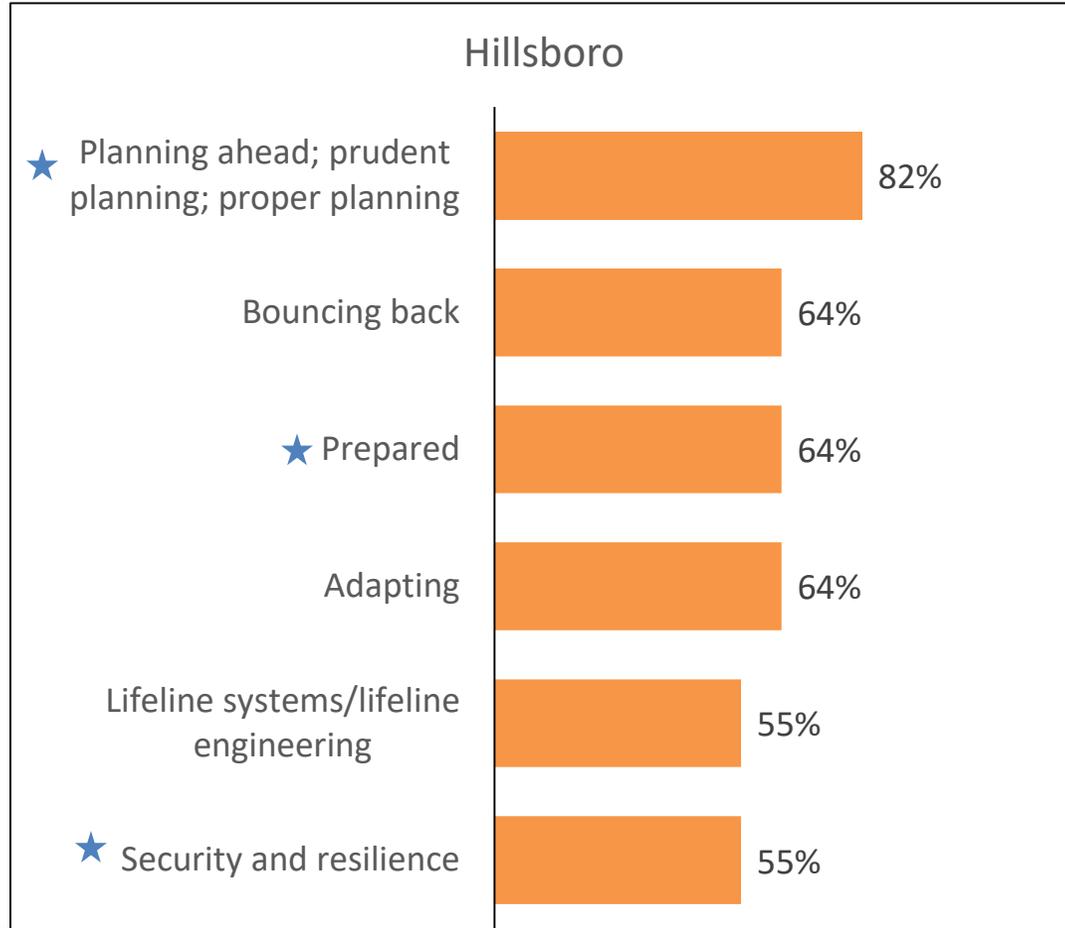
# % of good or very good ratings:



# Most helpful messages



# Preferred resiliency terms



# Telephone survey

City of Hillsboro ratepayer customer survey used to inform the development of a strategic communications plan.

- Conducted by DHM Research
- 302 customers; approximately
- 12 minutes complete time

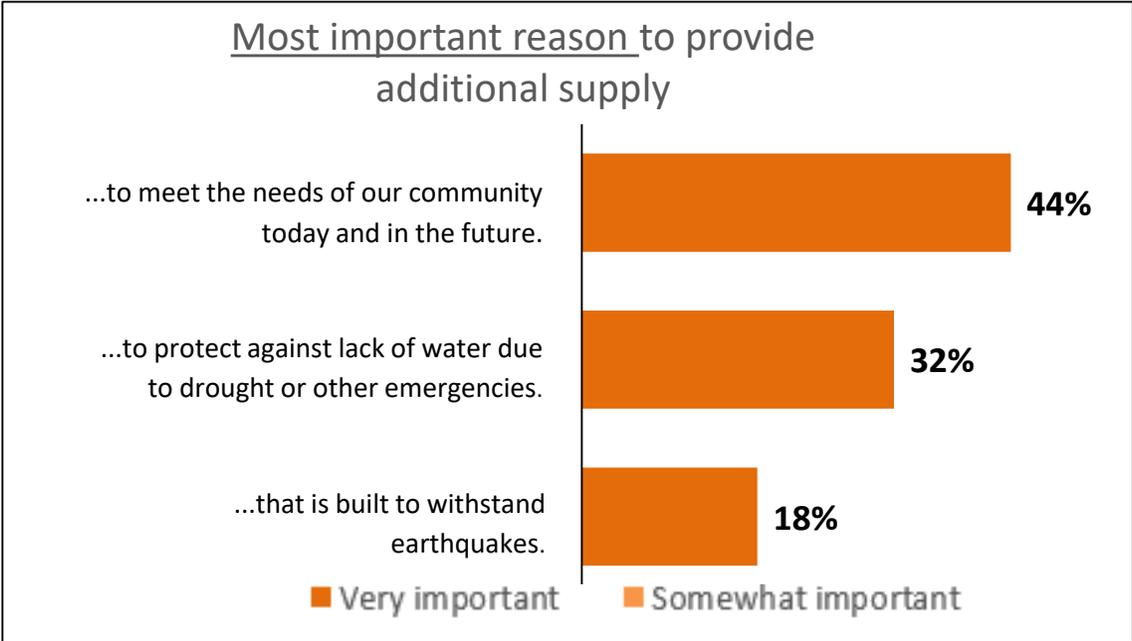
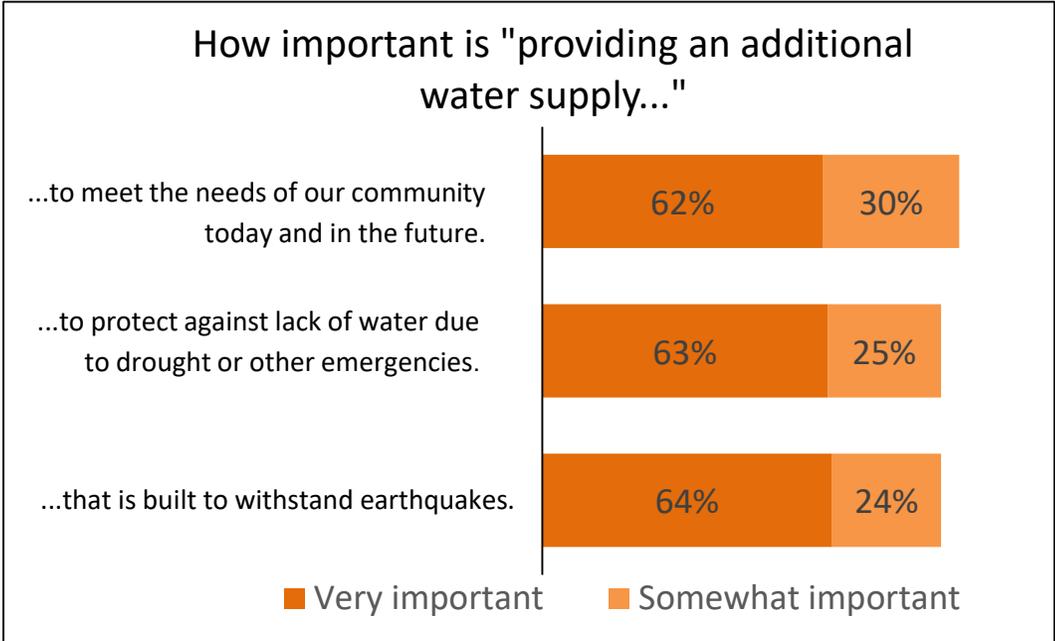
# Telephone survey highlights

- Top rated services: *Safe water / protecting public health*
- Most effective communications channels: *Water Quality Report, bill inserts, City newsletter*
- Customers who report hearing something (past few months): *1 in 3*
- Satisfied with information: *7 in 10*
- *Meeting future needs* is considered the most important reason for investment.
- Little pushback on rate increases. (Hillsboro)

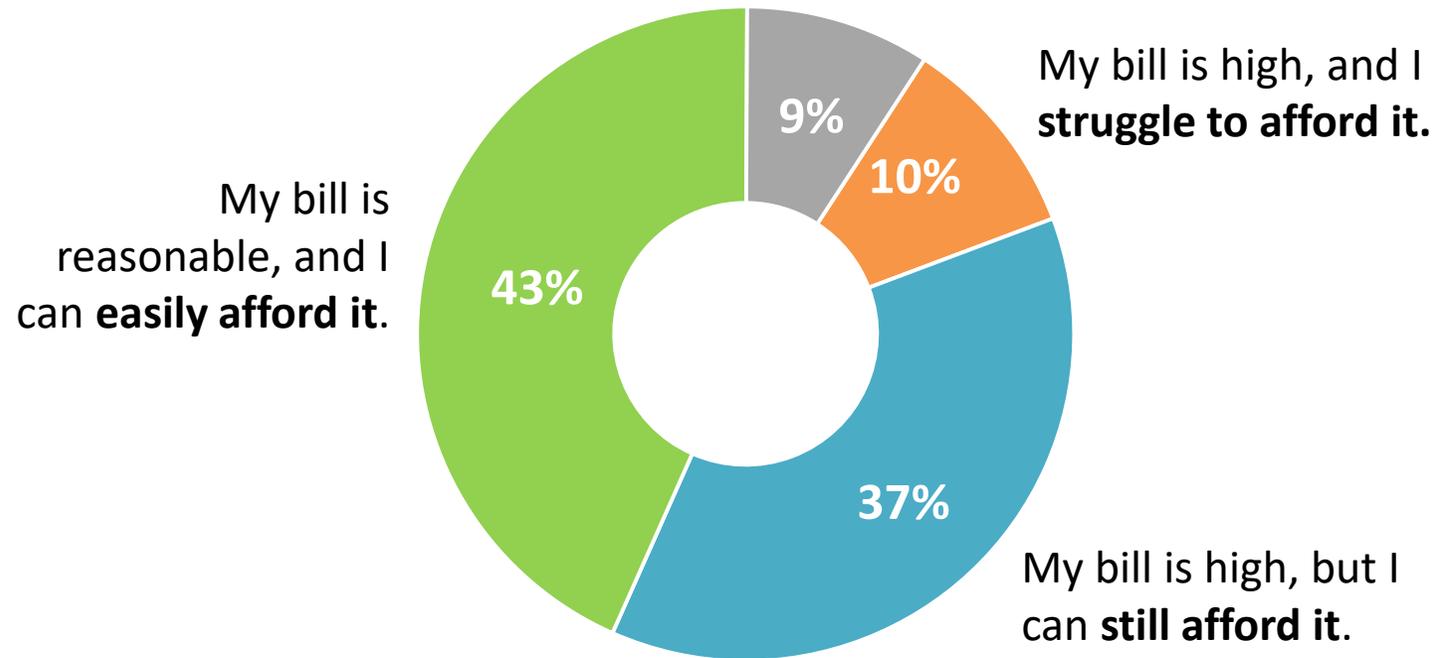
**80% report it is affordable.**

*Only 5 respondents (of 302) complain about cost.*

# Most important reason to provide additional supply—planning for the future.



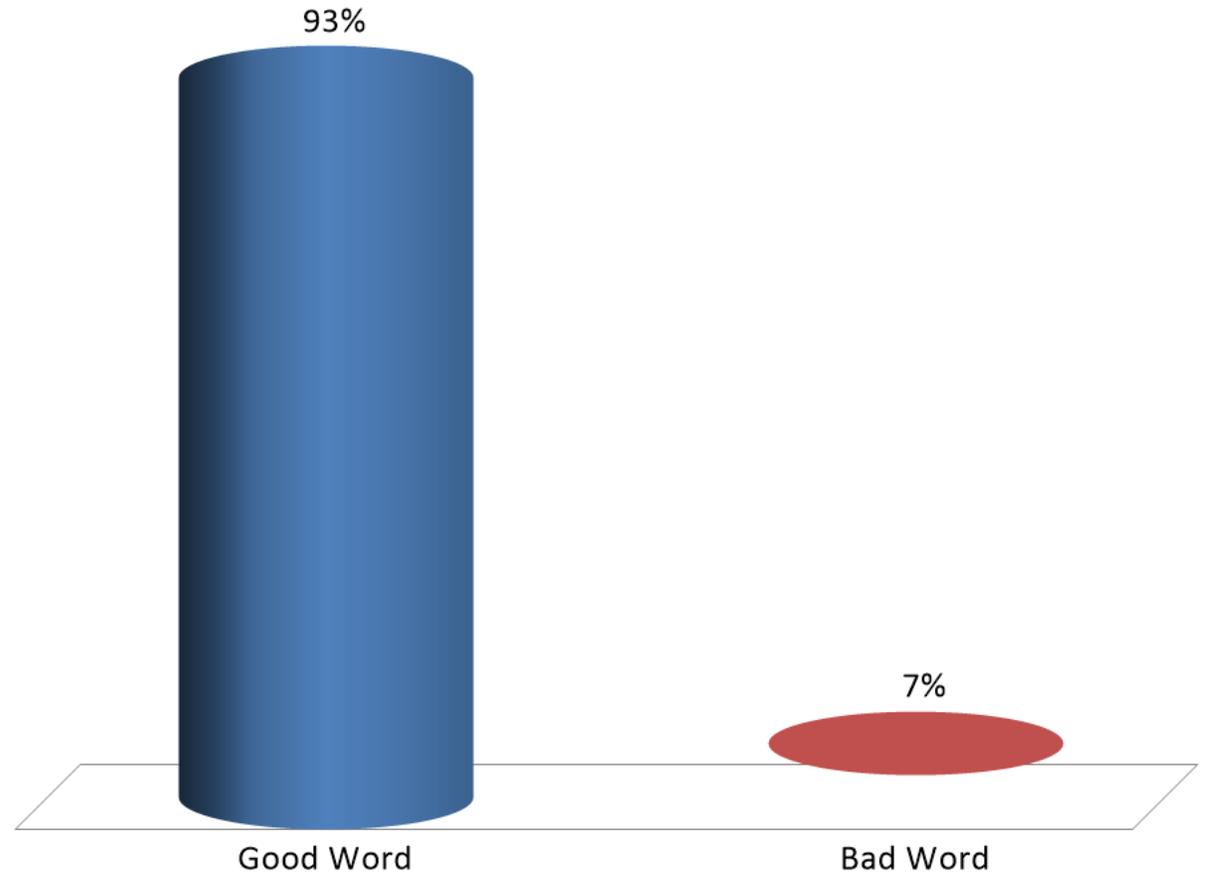
# Perception of water bill (Hillsboro)



# Good Word / Bad Word Quiz!

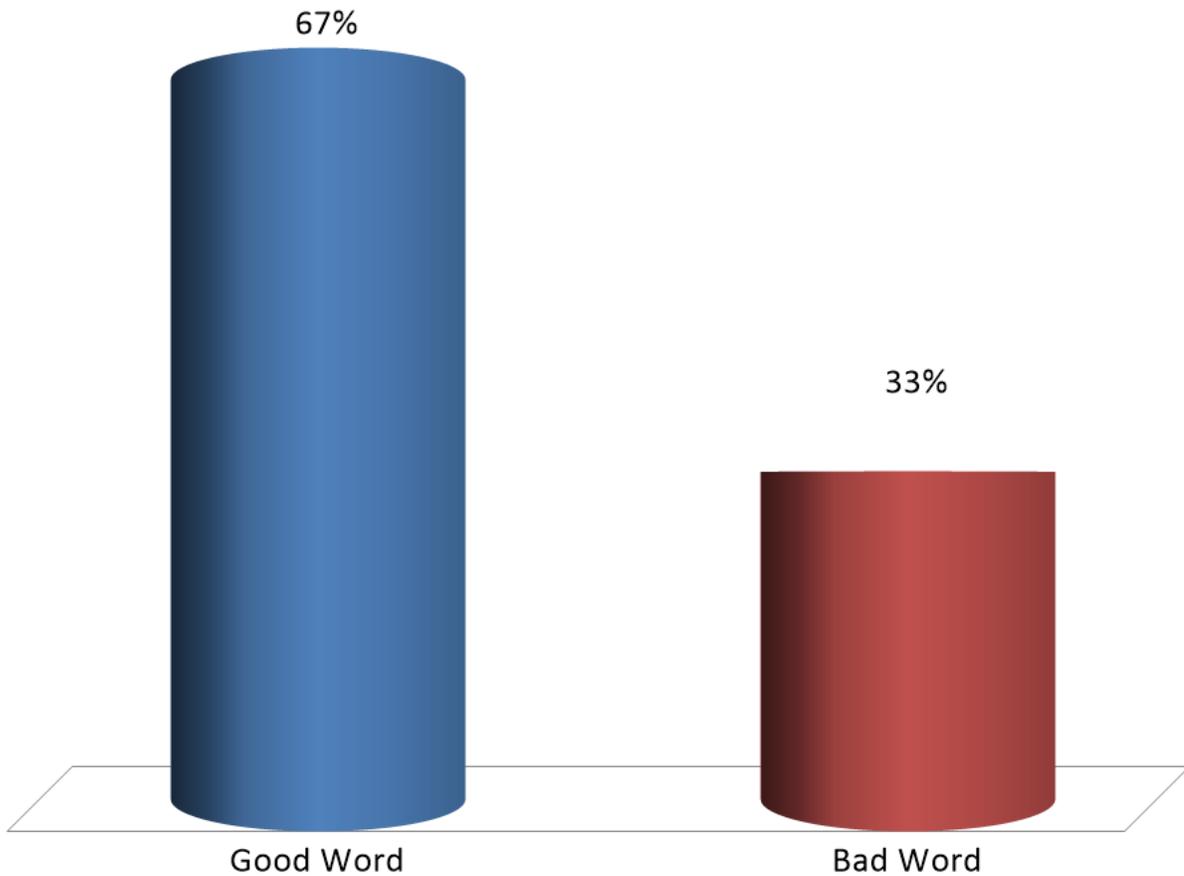
# Environment

- 1. Good Word
- ✓ 2. Bad Word



# Natural areas

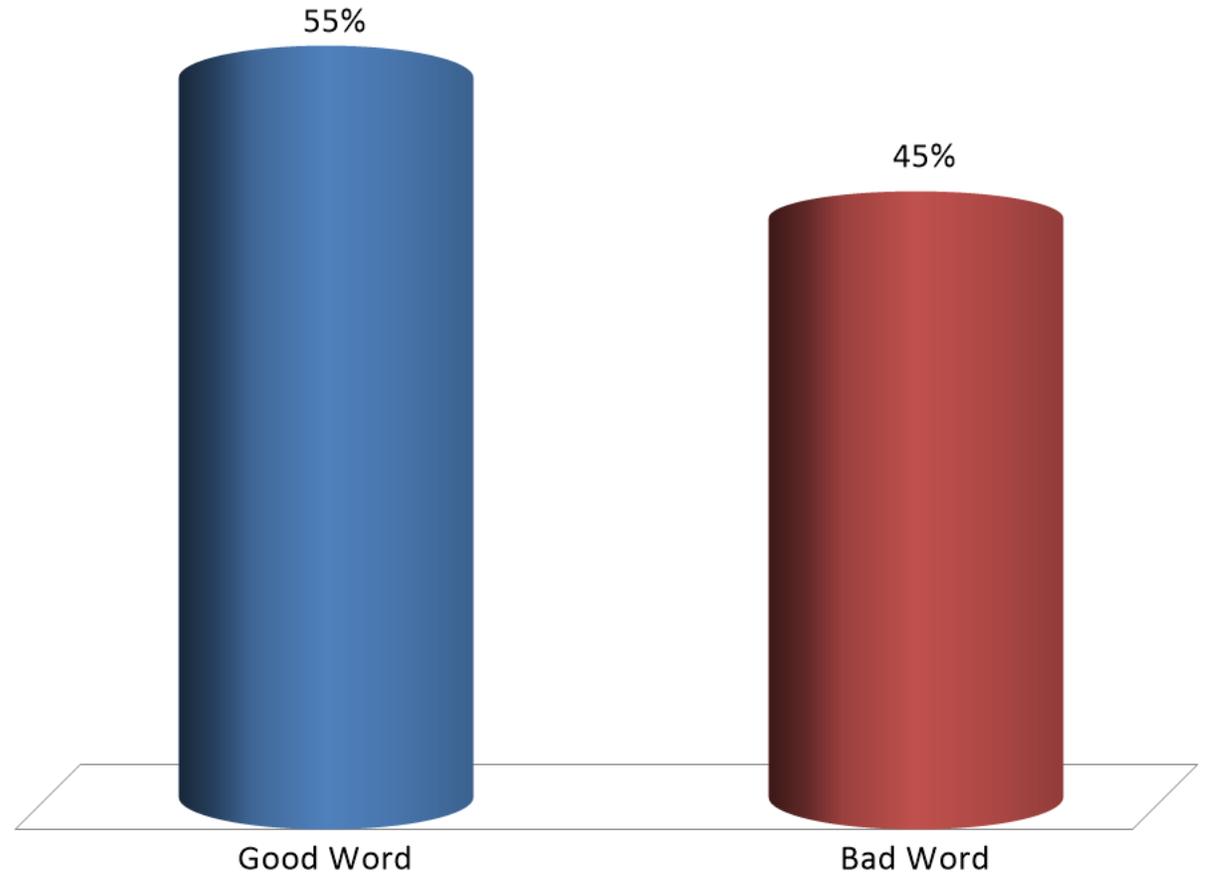
- ✓ 1. Good Word
- 2. Bad Word



# Watershed

1. Good Word

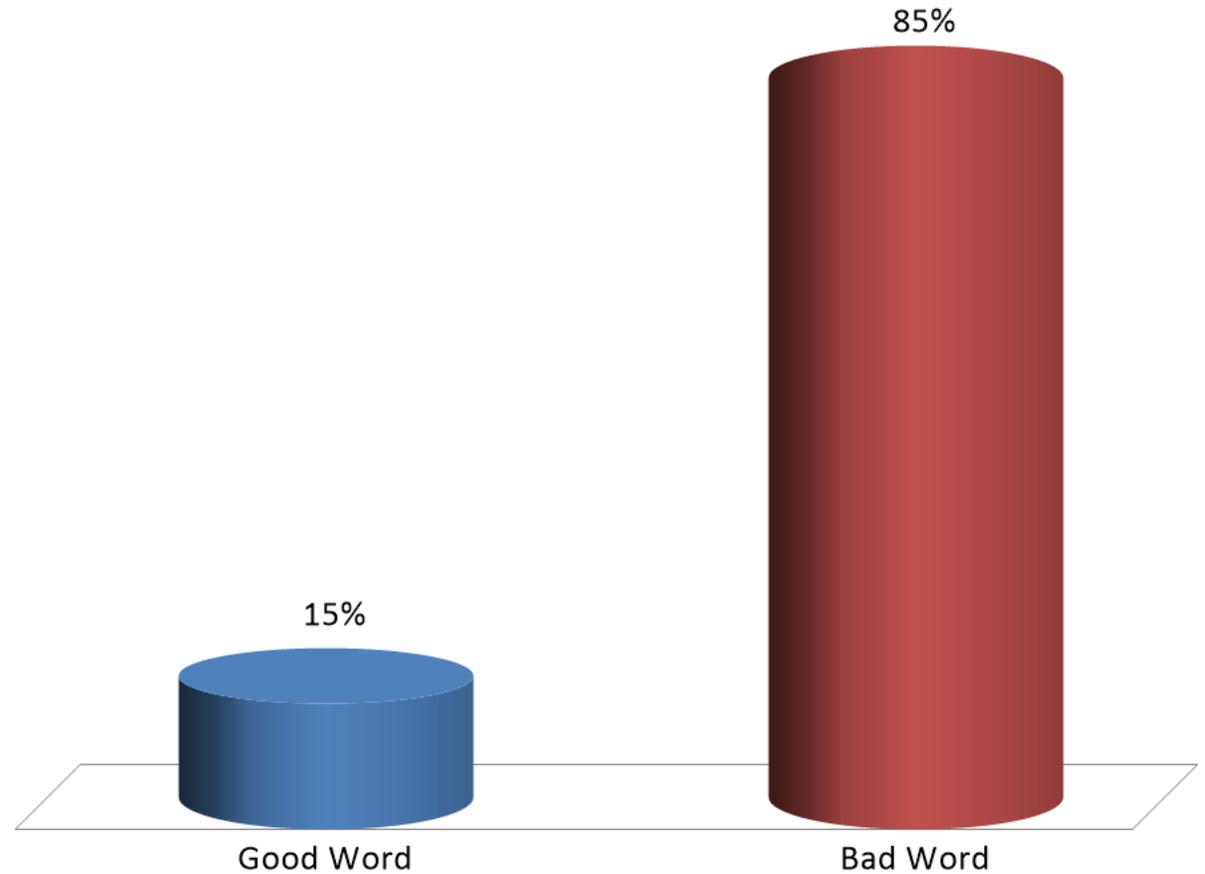
✓ 2. Bad Word



# Resilience

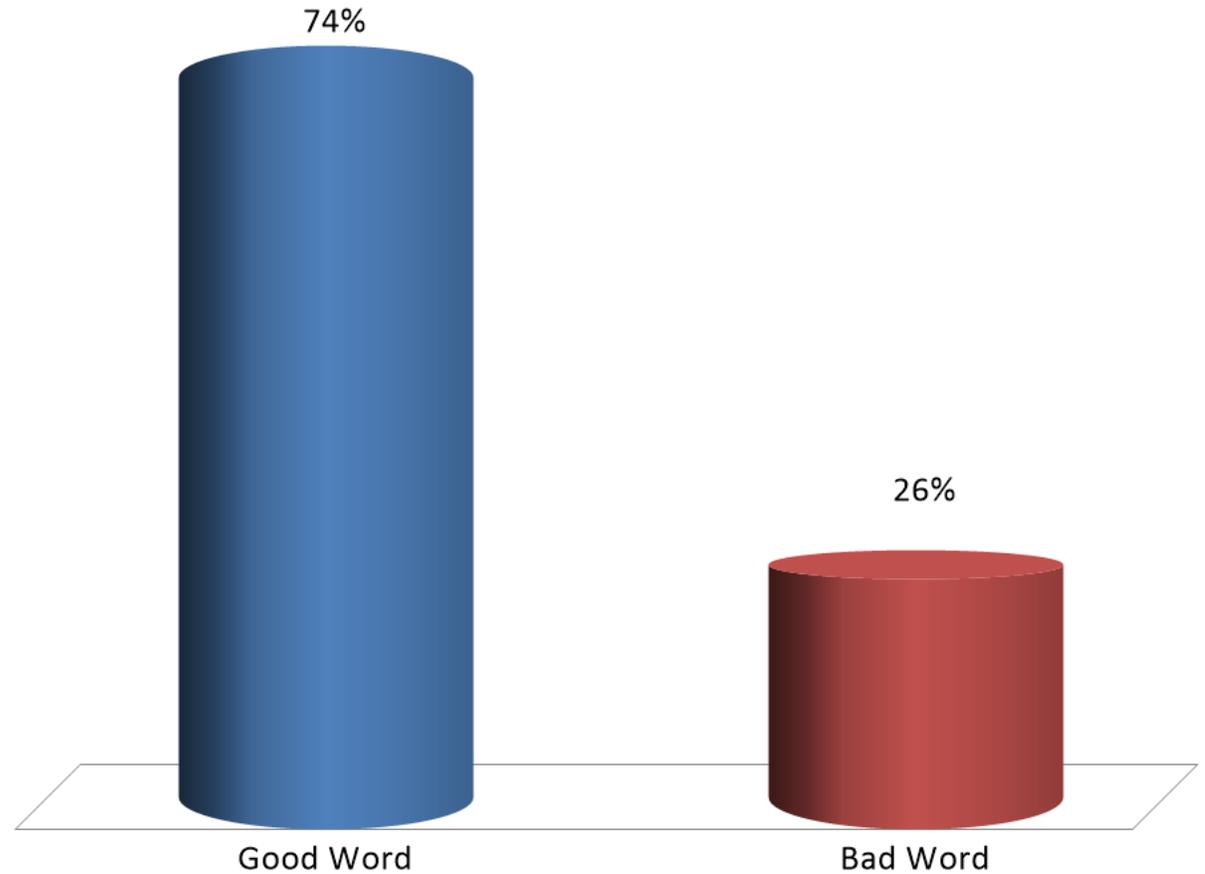
1. Good Word

✓ 2. Bad Word



# Jobs protecting water quality

- ✓ 1. Good Word
- 2. Bad Word



# What did we learn?

# Words!

## Bad Word

Redundant

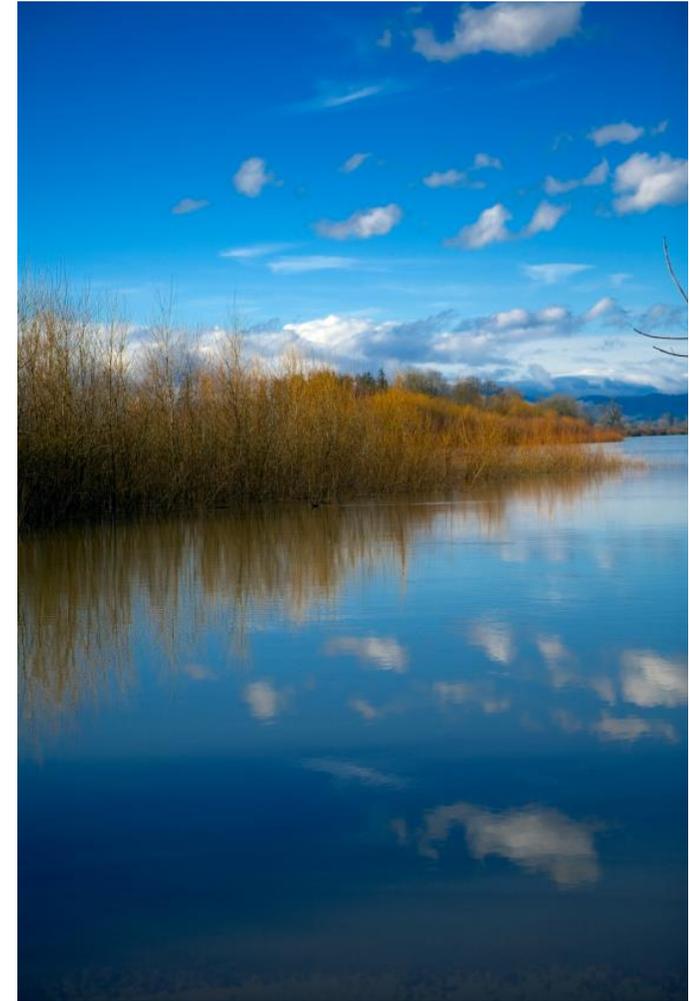
About/nearly (when talking about \$)

## Good Word

State-of-art water treatment

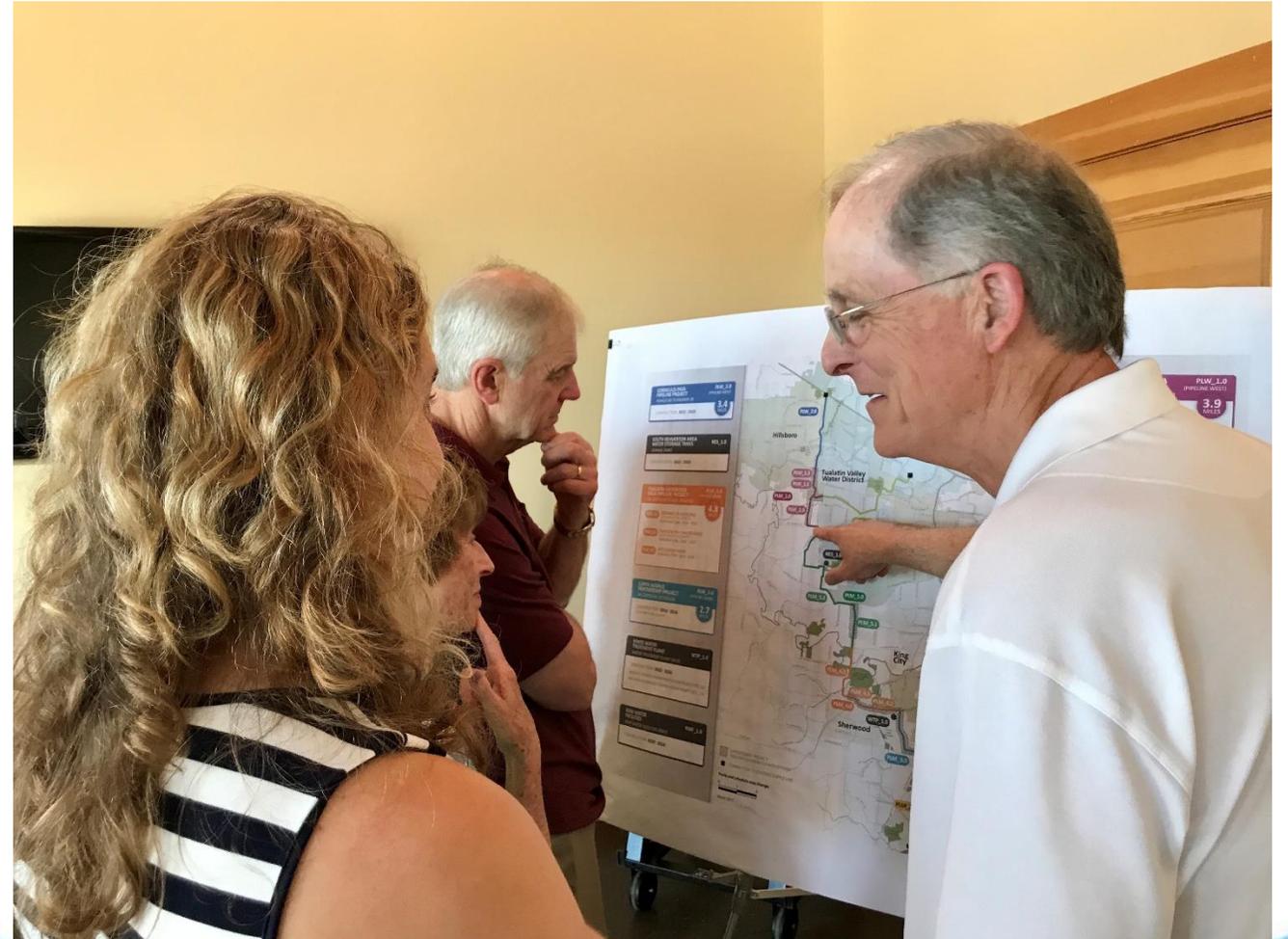
# Takeaways

- ✓ We had done a good job reaching all the stakeholder—**except ratepayers.**
- ✓ **Worries about water quality** of the Willamette River were growing—even though overall quality is improving in the basin.
- ✓ Increasing rates were a worry for some—but **many say water is still affordable.**



# Final Thoughts

- Polling helps us fine tune our messaging...
- But nothing can replace human interaction, time to process decisions.
- You don't have to wait until you have it all figured out to start developing relationships.



# Thank you!

Insert: Name, Contact Info

**Marlys Mock**

**Media & Community Relations Coordinator**

**Willamette Water Supply Program**

503-941-4570

[info@ourreliablewater.org](mailto:info@ourreliablewater.org)

[www.ourreliablewater.org](http://www.ourreliablewater.org)

