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Meeting Date: June 20, 2018  
Staff Contact: Frank Roth, Senior Policy Manager

**TITLE: OB-18-10 - 2018 Customer Opinion Survey**

**Background**

As a part of the Water Authority's strategic planning process, the utility conducts a biennial customer opinion survey in order to assess the Water Authority's performance from the customer's viewpoint. The Water Authority contracted with Research and Polling Inc. to conduct the survey, analyze the data and present the results to the Board. The purpose of the study was to measure customers' satisfaction with the services the utility provides and the importance of various services and programs.

**Survey Sample**

A random sample of 502 residential customers and 105 commercial customers was interviewed by telephone. Residential customers were selected through the use of randomly generated list of landline and cell phone numbers as well as a list of phone numbers provided by the Water Authority. Commercial customers were selected randomly from a list provided by the Water Authority. All interviews were conducted between January 23rd and February 13, 2018. A sample size of 502 at a 95% confidence level provides a maximum margin of error of approximately 4.4%.

**Results**

Similar to past studies, the vast majority of Water Authority residential (94%) and commercial (98%) customers are satisfied with the services they receive from the Water Authority overall. More specifically, over nine-in-ten residential and commercial customers are satisfied with the reliability of water to their homes and businesses and the reliability of wastewater drainage from their homes and businesses to the city sewer line.

**Reliability and Quality of Water and Sewer Services**

The vast majority of residential customers also express satisfaction with the condition of water (70%) and sewer (69%) lines; however, approximately one-fifth expresses dissatisfaction. Further, the vast majority (71%) of residential customers express satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Water Authority to respond to and repair leaks, as well as the effectiveness of the Water Authority to respond to overflows or backups and response time for restoration of service (66%). Few customers (less than 10%) are dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the utility to repair leaks or respond to overflows or backups.

Over three-quarters of residential customers (77%) say they are satisfied with the effectiveness of the Water Authority to control odors from sewer lines or treatment facilities, while 14% of residential customers are dissatisfied. When it comes to the

quality of drinking water, the majority (71%) of residential customers expresses satisfaction; however, 25% are dissatisfied with the quality of drinking water. It should be noted that since the 2016 study, there has been a decline in the percentage of residential customers who are satisfied with the quality of drinking water. The Water Authority does not know the reasons why customers appear to be dissatisfied with the quality of drinking water. These results are contrary to the actual water quality complaints received by the utility which have decreased by two-thirds since 2008. Compared to the U.S. median, the Water Authority's performance in the water quality complaint measure is significantly lower. Nonetheless, the Water Authority plans on exploring this matter in the Customer Conversation program this Fall.

Results are similar among commercial customers for each of the above mentioned reliability and quality attributes.

#### Water Education and Conservation Programs

The majority of residential (67%) and commercial (74%) customers express satisfaction with education on water issues. Similarly, 66% of residential and 72% of commercial customers express satisfaction with water conservation programs. Since the previous study, there has been a decline in the percentage of residents who are very or somewhat satisfied with education on water issues (67% currently compared to 73% in the 2016 study). When it comes to conservation, the vast majority of residential and commercial customers agree they follow the "Water by the Numbers" program, as well as agree that households would conserve more water if they had an easier way to monitor usage.

#### Water Rates

The vast majority of residential (77%) and commercial (87%) customers agree that water and sewer services are a good value for the amount of money they pay. Further, the vast majority of residential (75%) and commercial (75%) customers also agree that because water is a scarce resource, water rates should be designed to reflect the value of water in our daily lives. Customers are less likely to agree with statements that deal with increasing water rates to provide a reliable water supply for future generations and to cover the true costs to treat and deliver water to homes and businesses; however it should be noted that the majority of residential and commercial customers agree with these statements.

#### Importance of Water Related Programs And Services

Similar to previous studies, when asked to rate the importance of various water conservation and environmental issues, over nine-in-ten residential customers (93%) and commercial customers (96%) say providing a long-term water supply for future generations is important. Further, 89% of residential and commercial customers place a high priority on investing in the repair and replacement of old water and sewer lines.

Between approximately seven-in-ten and nine-in-ten residential customers also feel the following issues are important:

- The quality of the treated water returned back to the river (88%)
- Protecting and restoring upstream water sources or watersheds (87%)
- Balancing population and economic growth with our water availability (85%)
- Reusing treated wastewater to irrigate public spaces (83%)

- Balancing customer water demand with protection of habitat for wildlife and vegetation in the Rio Grande corridor (82%)
- Making water available to attract and keep high-tech industries that offer good paying jobs (72%)

Over seven-in-ten commercial customers also feel the following issues are important:

- Balancing population and economic growth with our water availability (84%)
- Protecting and restoring upstream water sources or watersheds (82%)
- The quality of the treated water returned back to the river (81%)
- Reusing treated wastewater to irrigate public spaces (81%)
- Balancing customer water demand with protection of habitat for wildlife and vegetation in the Rio Grande corridor (79%)
- Making water available to attract and keep high-tech industries that offer good paying jobs (72%)

### Billing Services

Consistent with previous studies, the vast majority of customers express satisfaction with bill payment options (89% residential, 93% commercial), understanding the bill format and water usage graph (87% residential, 90% commercial), and the accuracy of their water billing statements (87% residential, 87% commercial).

### Customer Service Representatives

Among the 16% of residential and 13% of commercial customers who have contacted the Water Authority, the vast majority say they have spoken with an employee on the phone or in person. Sixty-six percent of residential customers and 84% of commercial customers give a rating of good or excellent to the customer service representative they spoke to when contacting the Water Authority. Thirteen percent of the residential customers and none of the commercial customers rate the customer service representative poorly.

More specifically, when it comes to the courtesy of the customer service representative, 88% of residential customers express satisfaction, while 74% of residential customers express satisfaction with the knowledge and ability of the representative to answer their questions or resolve issues. Further, 74% of residential customers express satisfaction with the wait time to speak to a customer service representative.

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# **ALBUQUERQUE BERNALILLO COUNTY WATER UTILITY AUTHORITY**

## **JUNE 2018**

**PRESENTED BY:  
BRIAN SANDEROFF, PRESIDENT**



# METHODOLOGY

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE WATER AUTHORITY
- IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

## RANDOM SAMPLE:

502 RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS

105 COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS

## INTERVIEWS:

TELEPHONE SURVEYS USING LANDLINES AND CELLPHONES

## FIELD DATES:

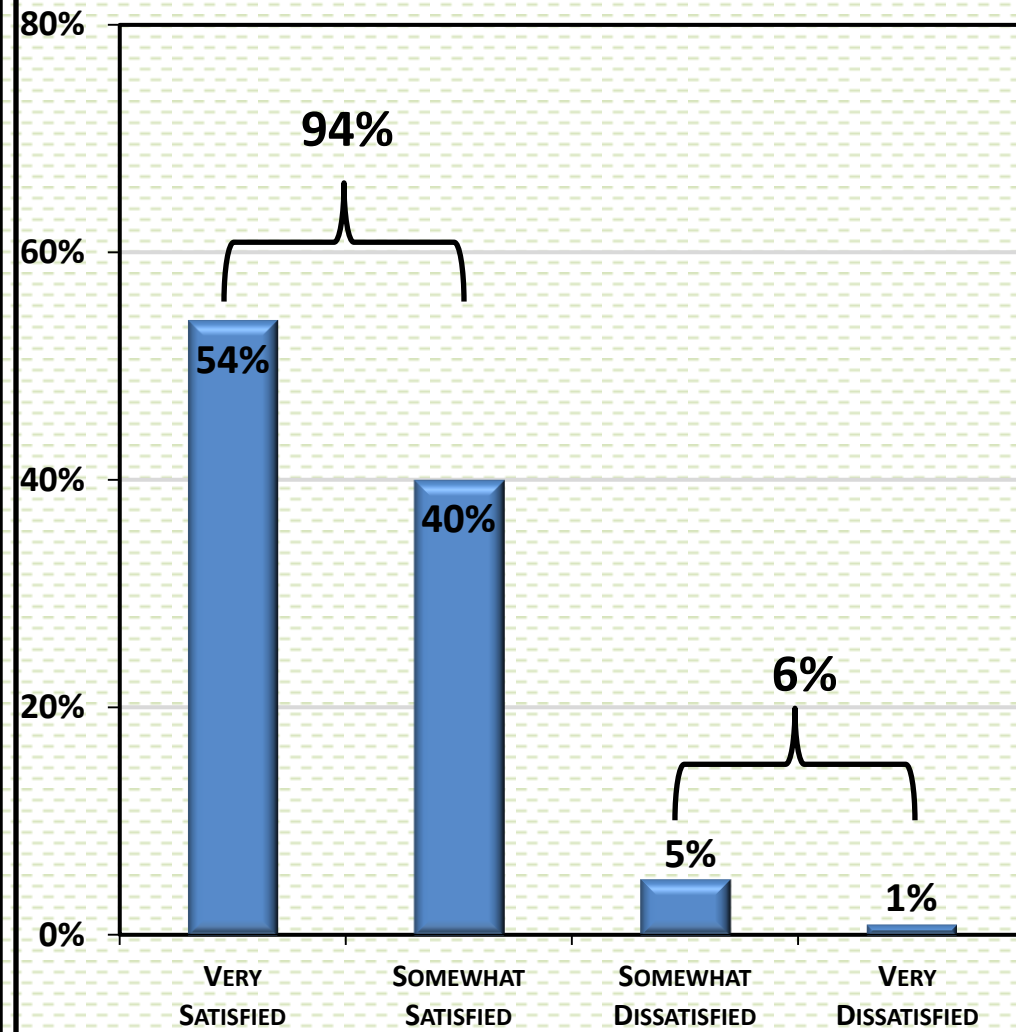
JANUARY 23, 2018 - FEBRUARY 13, 2018

## MARGIN OF ERROR:

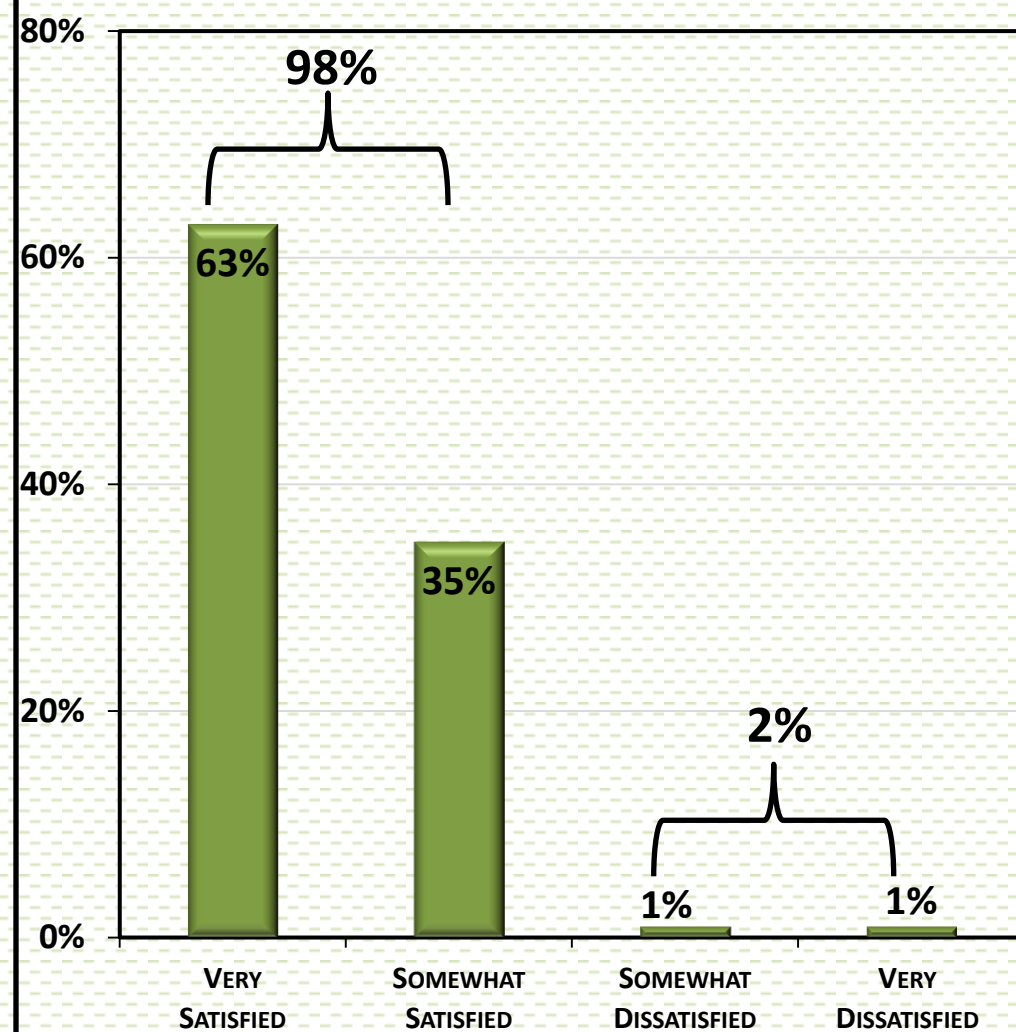
4.4% AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL  
(RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS)

# OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE WATER AUTHORITY

## RESIDENTIAL

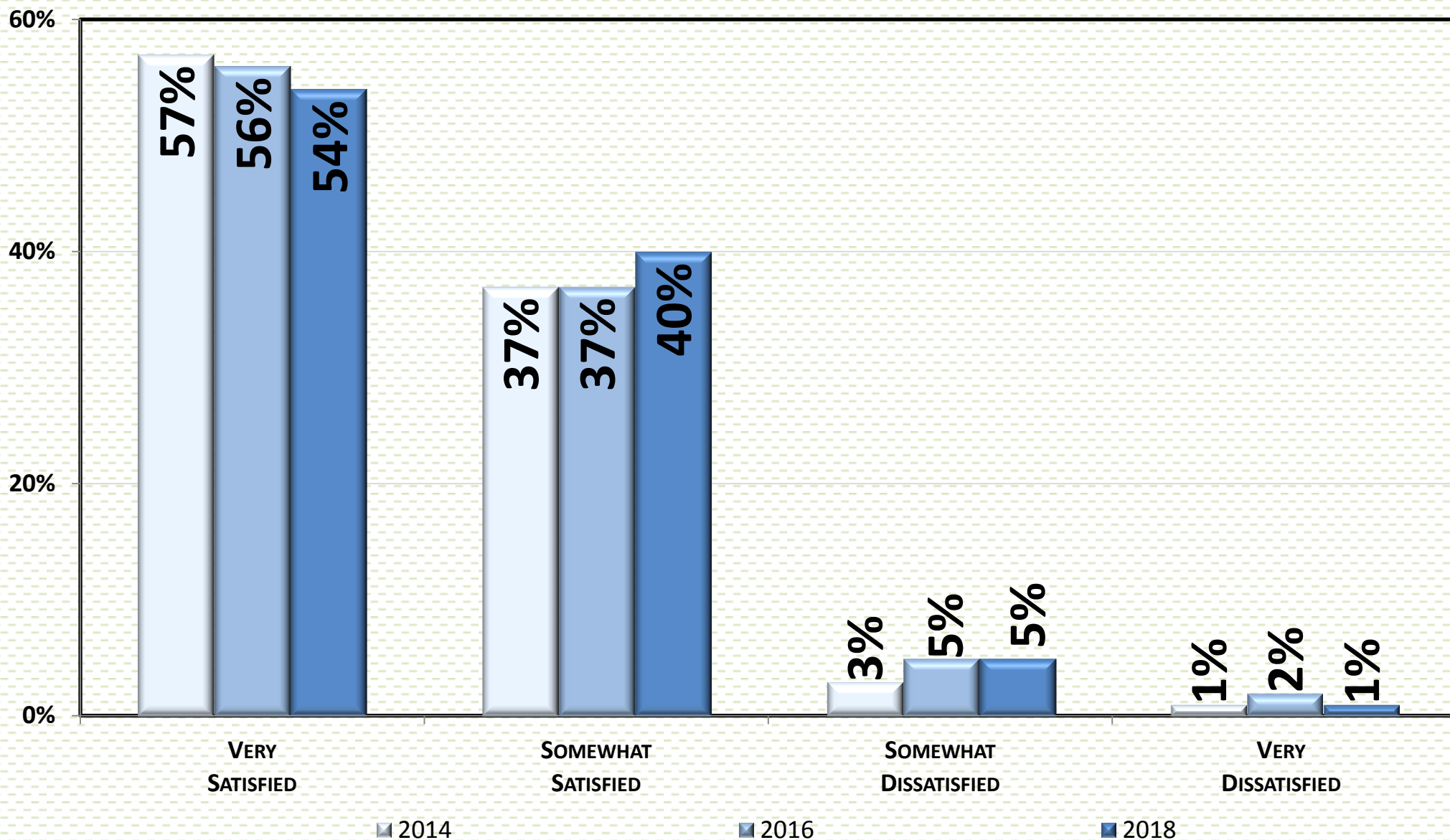


## COMMERCIAL



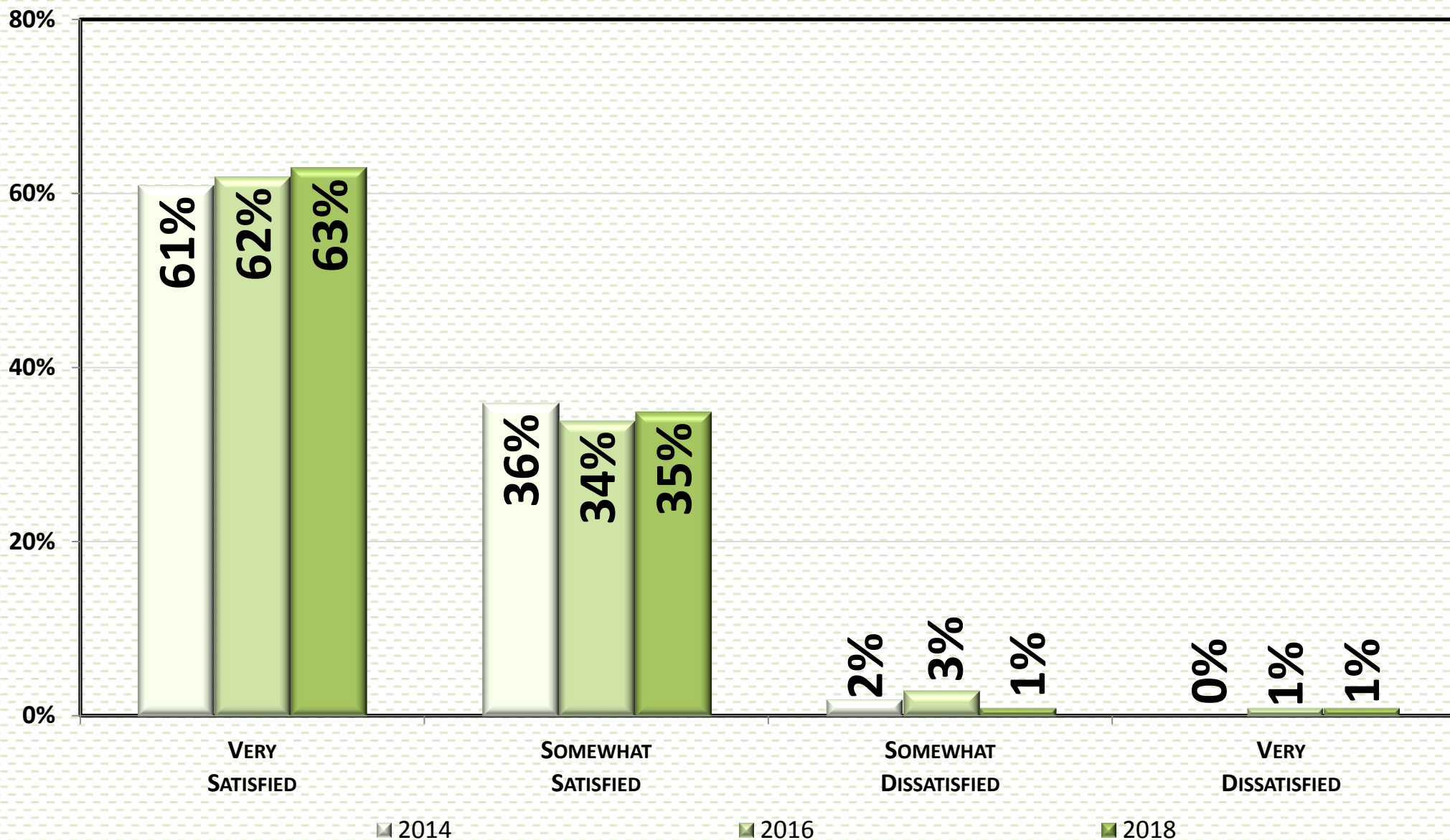
# OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE WATER AUTHORITY

## RESIDENTIAL TRACKING



# OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE WATER AUTHORITY

## COMMERCIAL TRACKING





# RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION WITH RELIABILITY OF SERVICES AND CONDITION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

## RELIABILITY

RELIABILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF WATER  
TO YOUR HOME

SATISFIED

80%

17%

97%

DISSATISFIED

3%

RELIABILITY OF WASTEWATER DRAINAGE FROM  
YOUR HOME TO THE CITY SEWER LINE

SATISFIED

73%

21%

94%

DISSATISFIED

5%

NOTE: RESULTS ARE SIMILAR AMONG COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

CONDITION OF THE SEWER LINES THROUGHOUT  
THE CITY SUCH AS THE NUMBER OF  
OVERFLOWS/BACKUPS YOU OBSERVE  
AT THE CITY SEWER LINES OR MANHOLES

SATISFIED

33%

36%

69% ↑ 4 pts

DISSATISFIED

17%

CONDITION OF THE WATER LINES THROUGHOUT  
THE CITY SUCH AS THE NUMBER OF LEAKS  
YOU OBSERVE

SATISFIED

28%

42%

70% ↑ 10 pts

DISSATISFIED

22%

0%

20%

40%

60%

80%

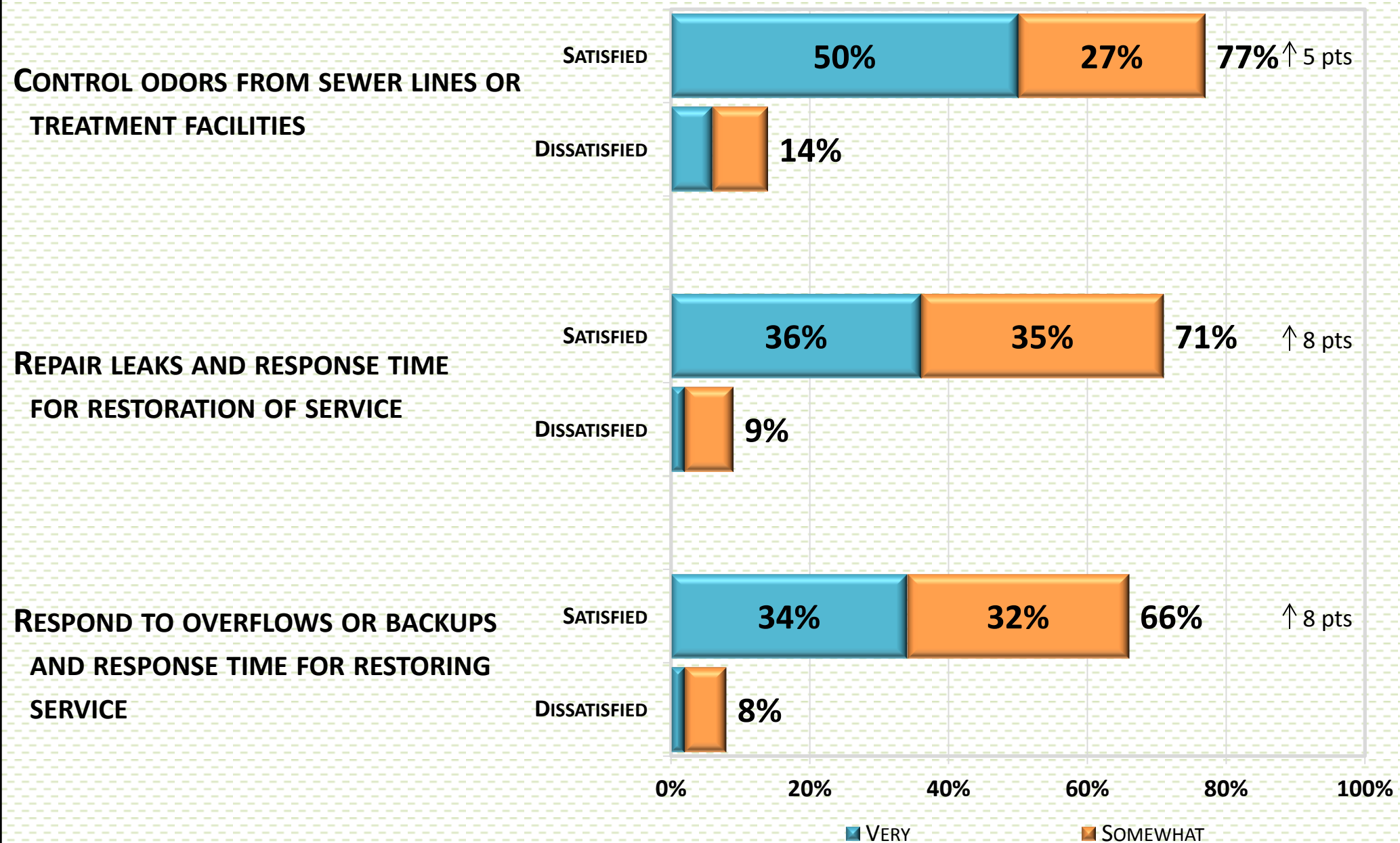
100%

■ VERY

■ SOMEWHAT

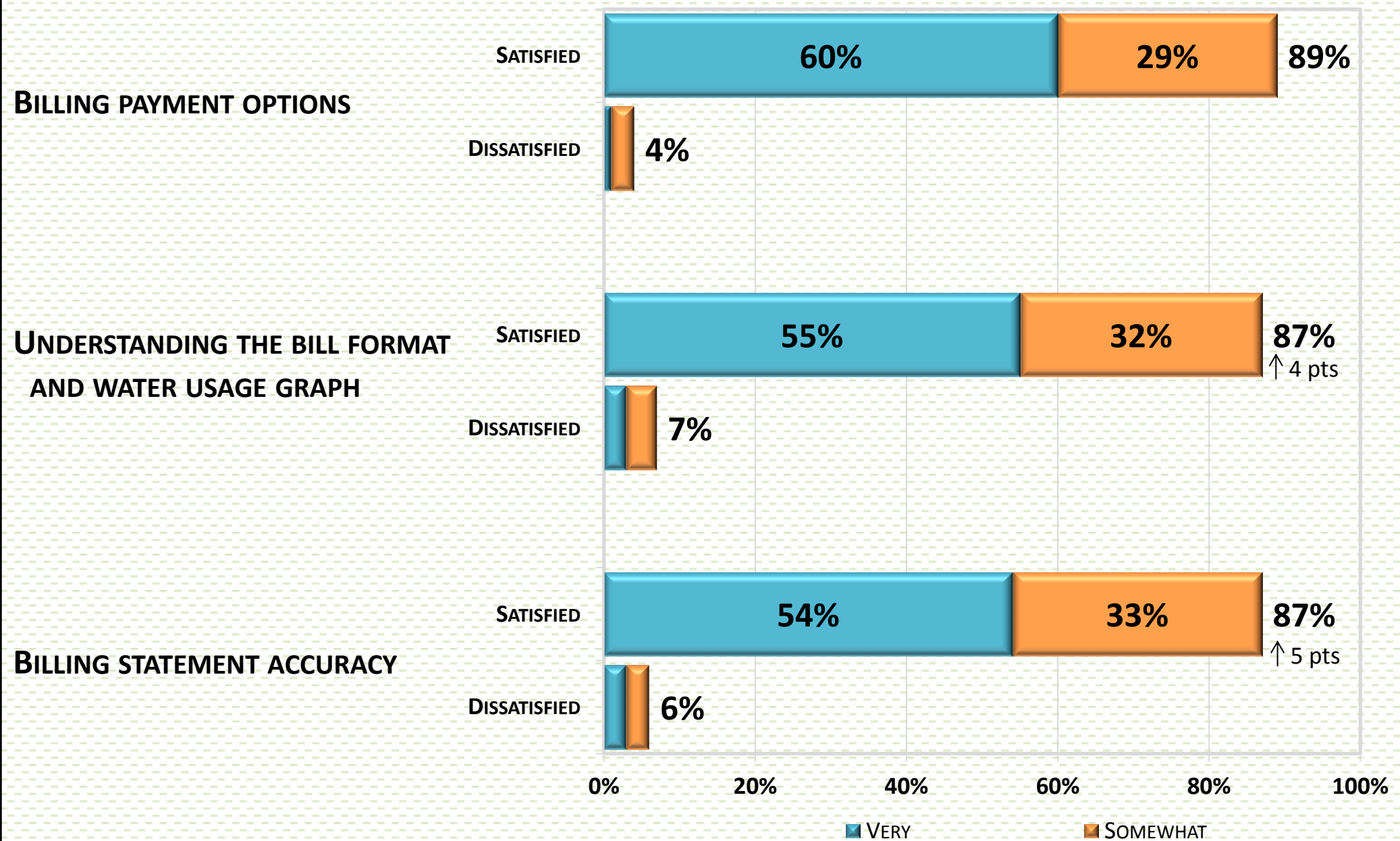
COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SLIGHTLY MORE SATISFIED.

# RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION WITH EFFECTIVENESS OF REPAIRS AND ODOR CONTROL



COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SLIGHTLY MORE SATISFIED.

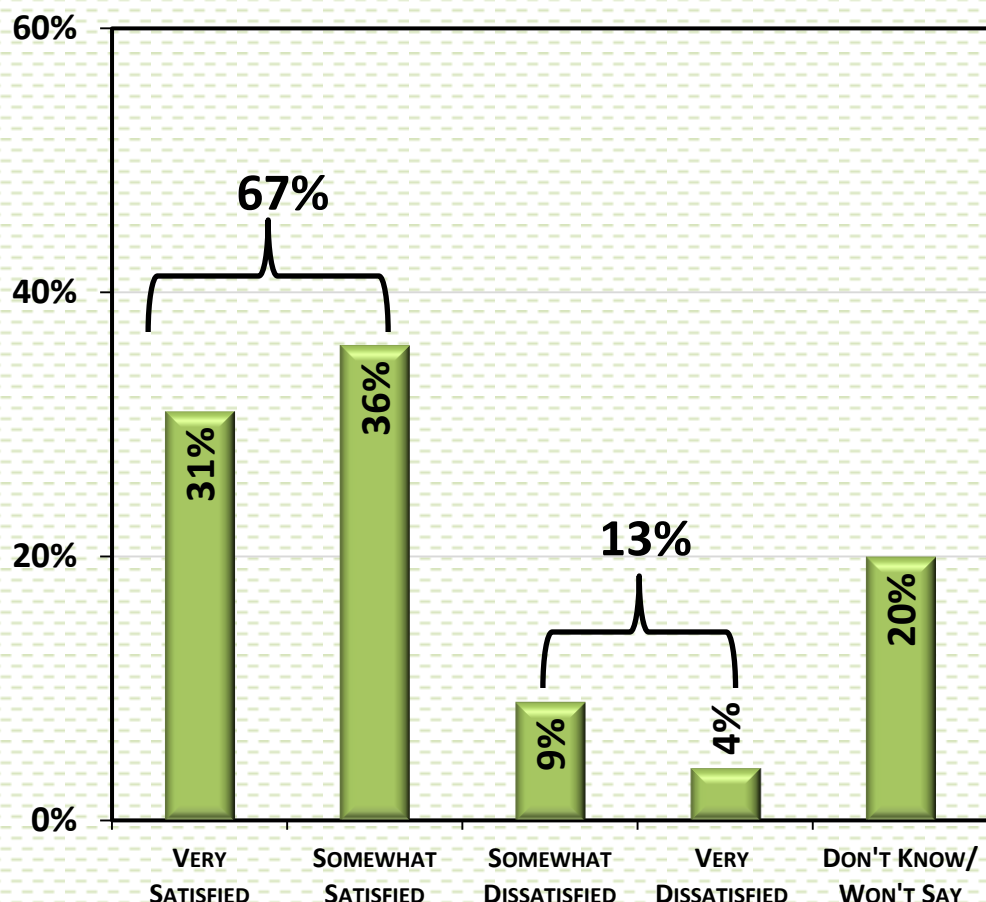
# RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION WITH BILLING



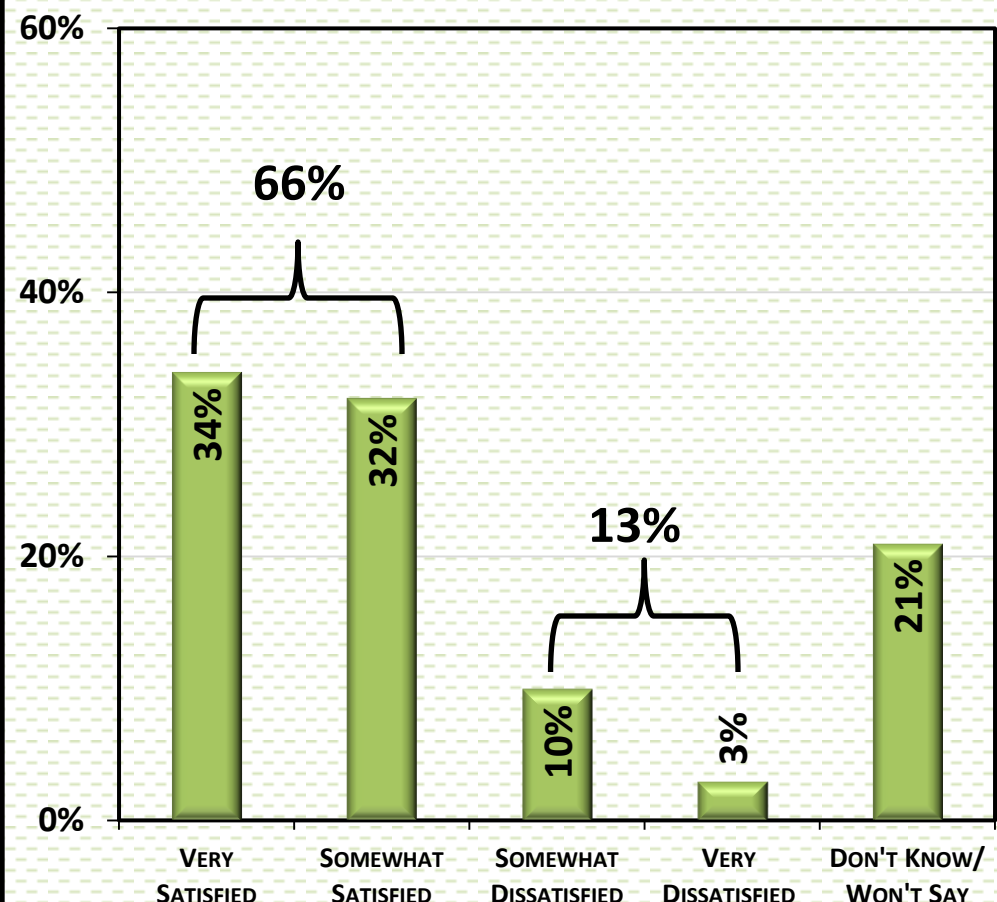
COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SLIGHTLY MORE SATISFIED.

# RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION WITH EDUCATION ON WATER ISSUES AND WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

## EDUCATION ON WATER ISSUES




## WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAMS



NOTE: COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SLIGHTLY MORE SATISFIED.

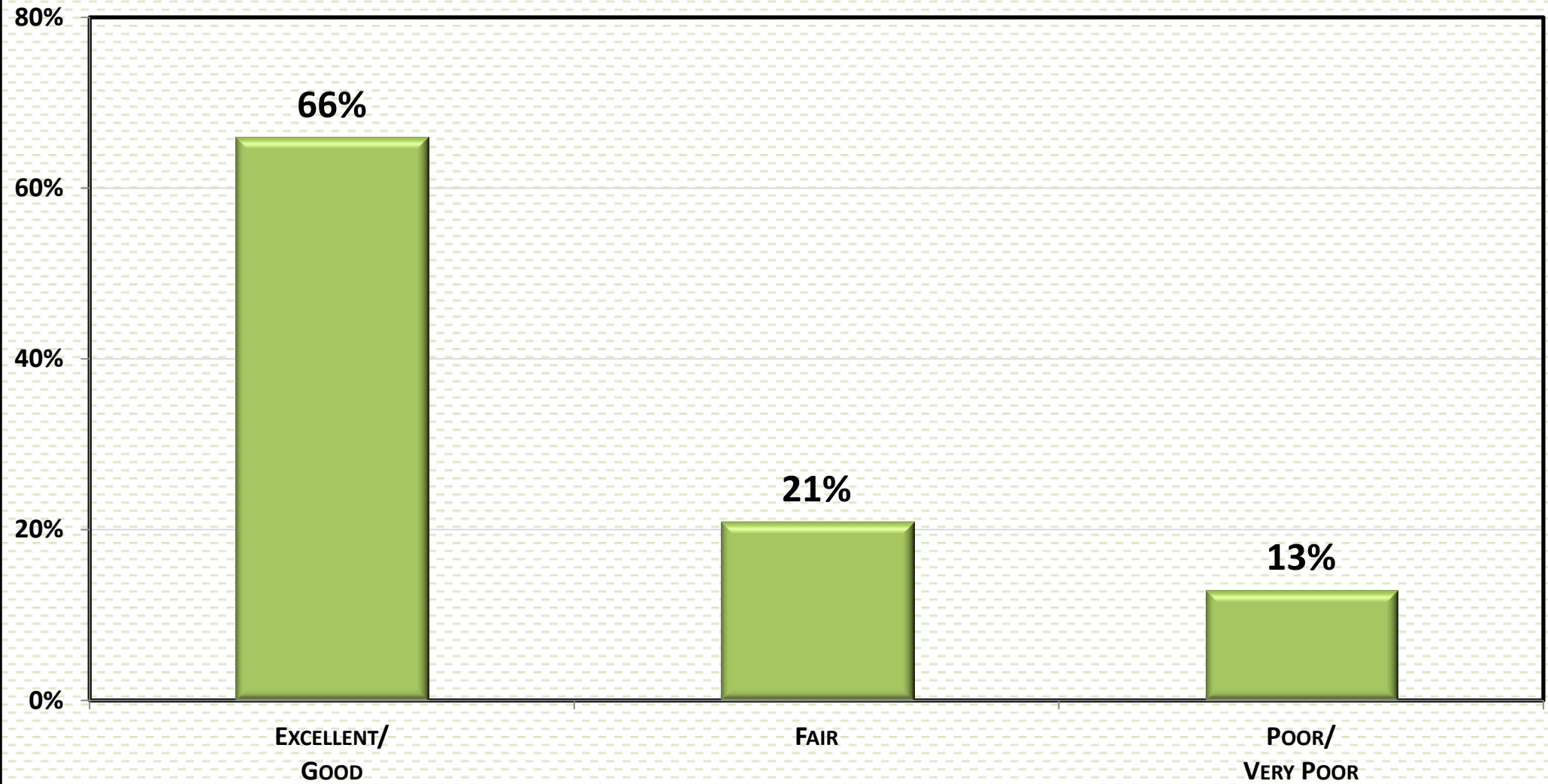
# CONTACTED THE WATER AUTHORITY

AMONG RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS WHO CONTACTED THE WATER AUTHORITY

CONTACTED THE WATER AUTHORITY ABOUT PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS WITH A BILL IN THE PAST 2 YEARS		WAYS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE WATER AUTHORITY	
<div>16%</div> <div></div>		TELEPHONE	73%
		IN-PERSON	27%
		E-MAIL	2%

# OVERALL RATING OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE WHEN CONTACTING THE WATER AUTHORITY

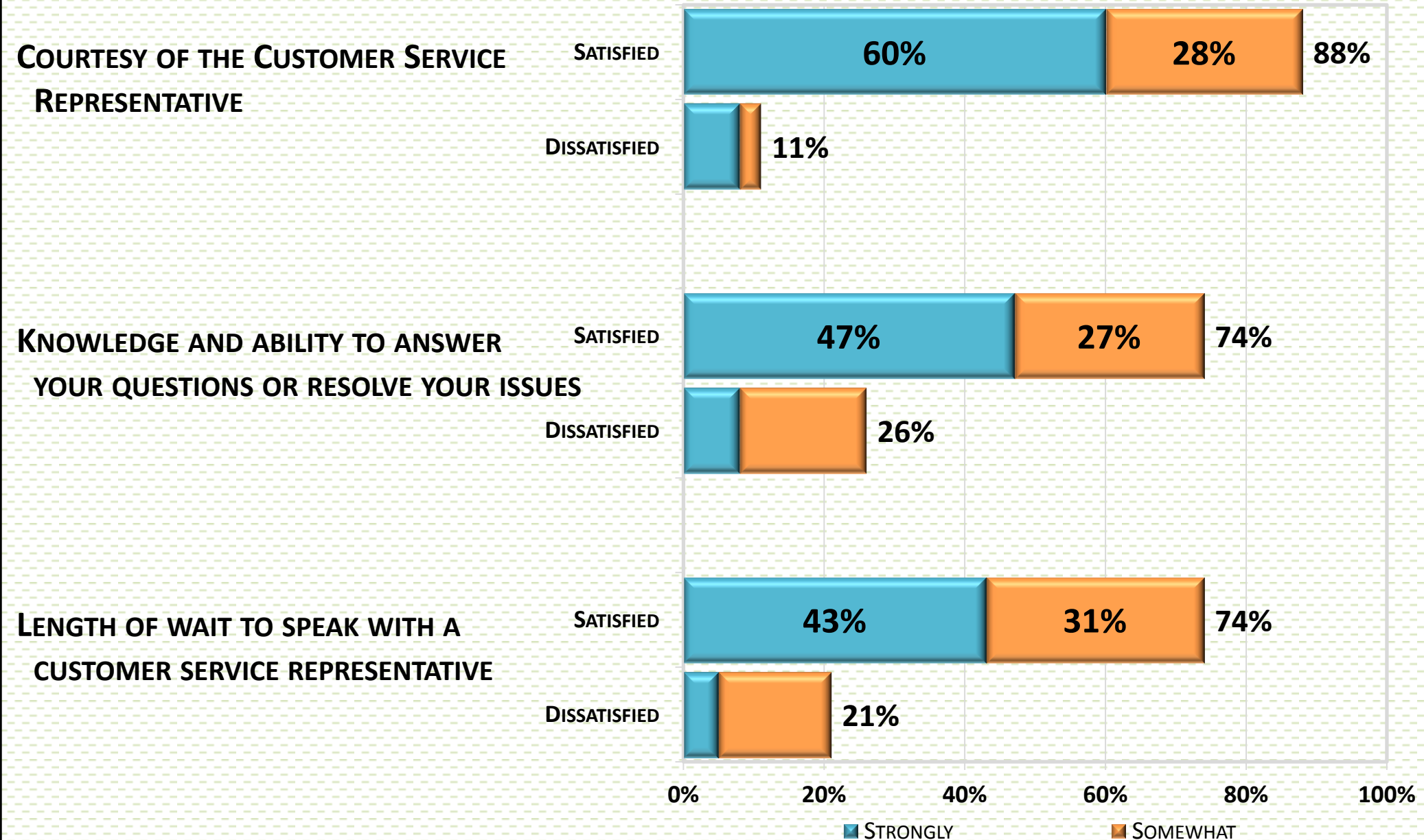
AMONG THOSE WHO CONTACTED THE WATER AUTHORITY  
RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS (N=64)



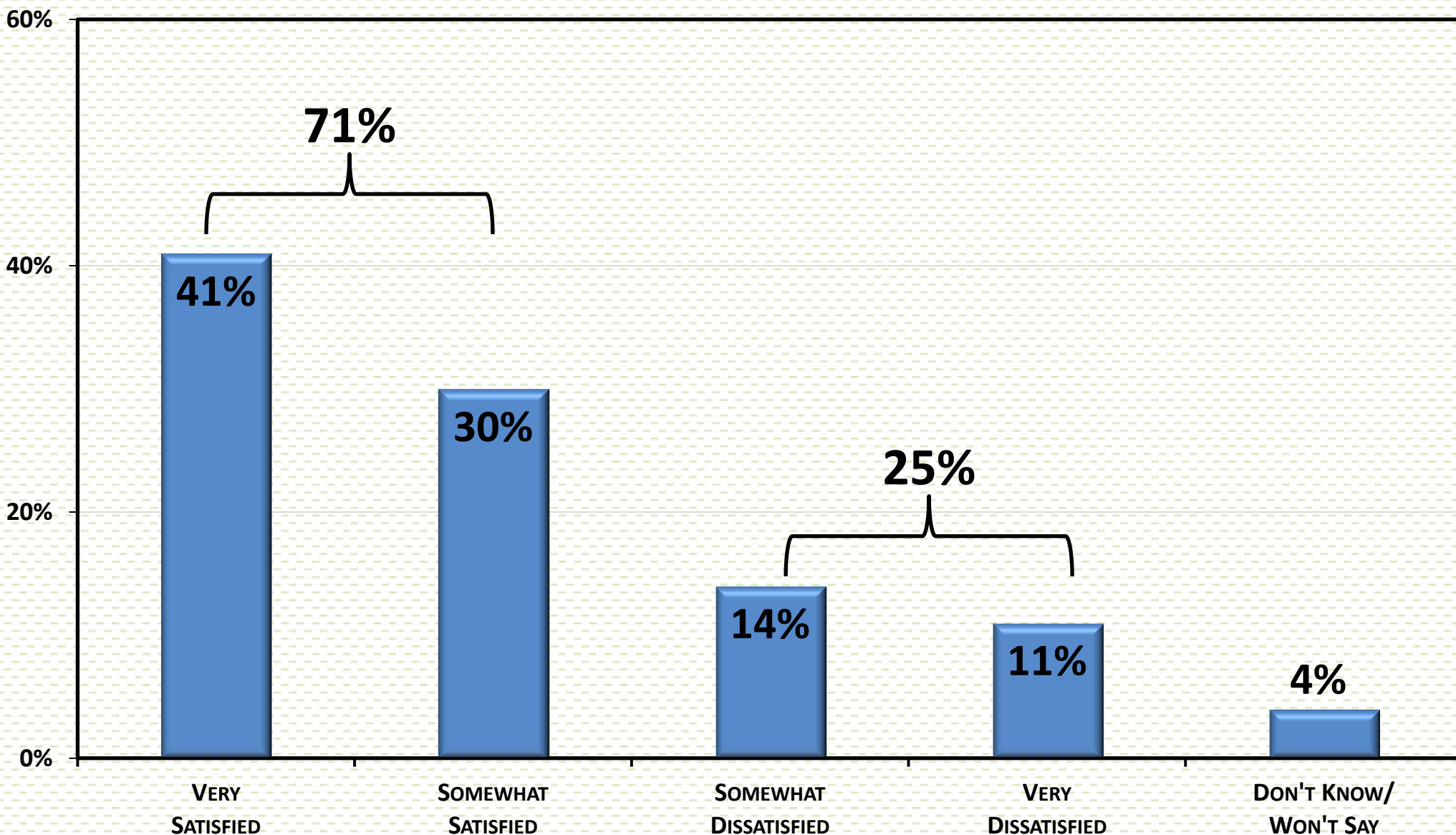
COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS WERE MORE SATISFIED (84% EXCELLENT/GOOD).

# SATISFACTION WITH THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE ON KEY ATTRIBUTES

AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH A CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE  
RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS (N=64)



# RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF DRINKING WATER

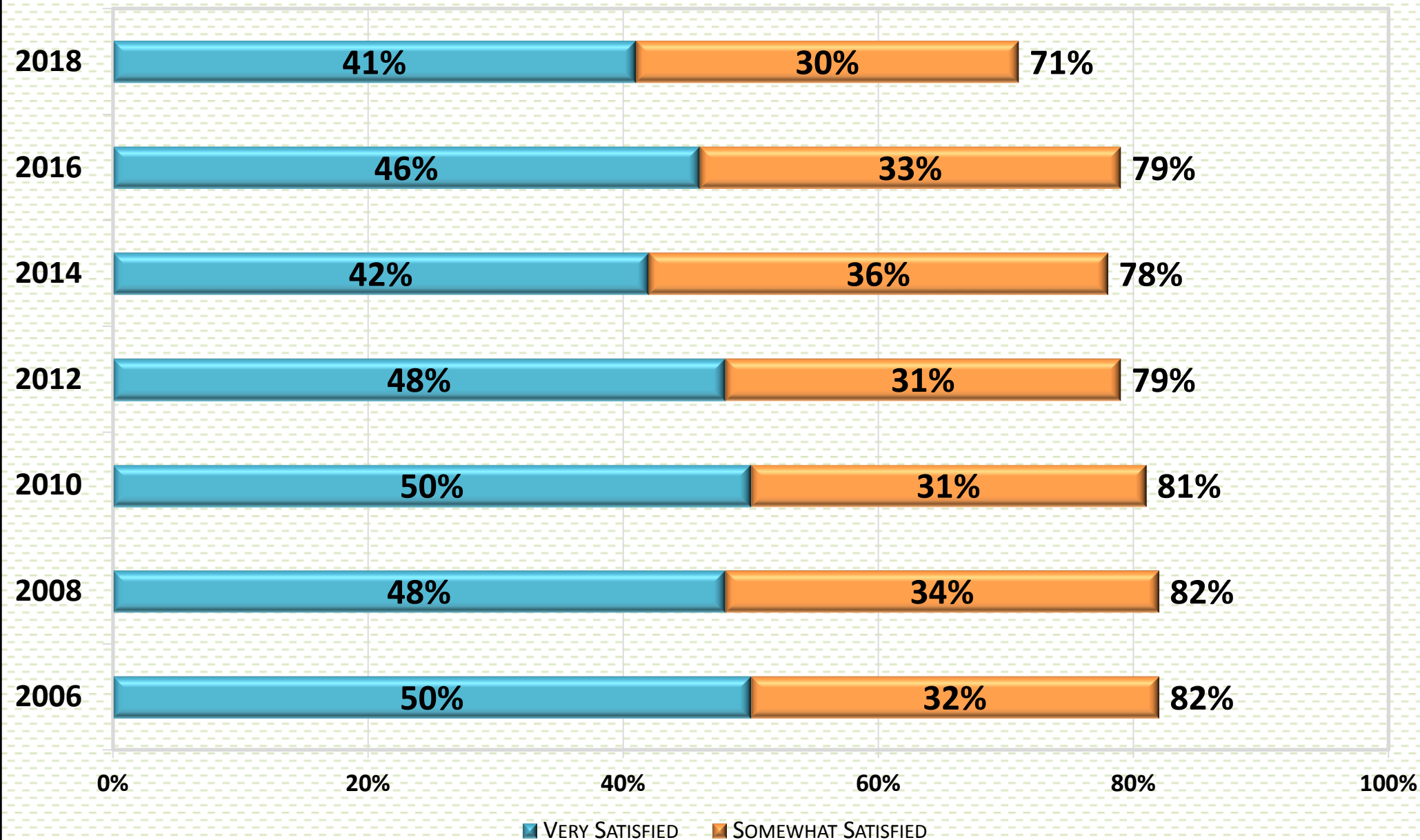


NOTE: RESULTS ARE SIMILAR AMONG COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS.

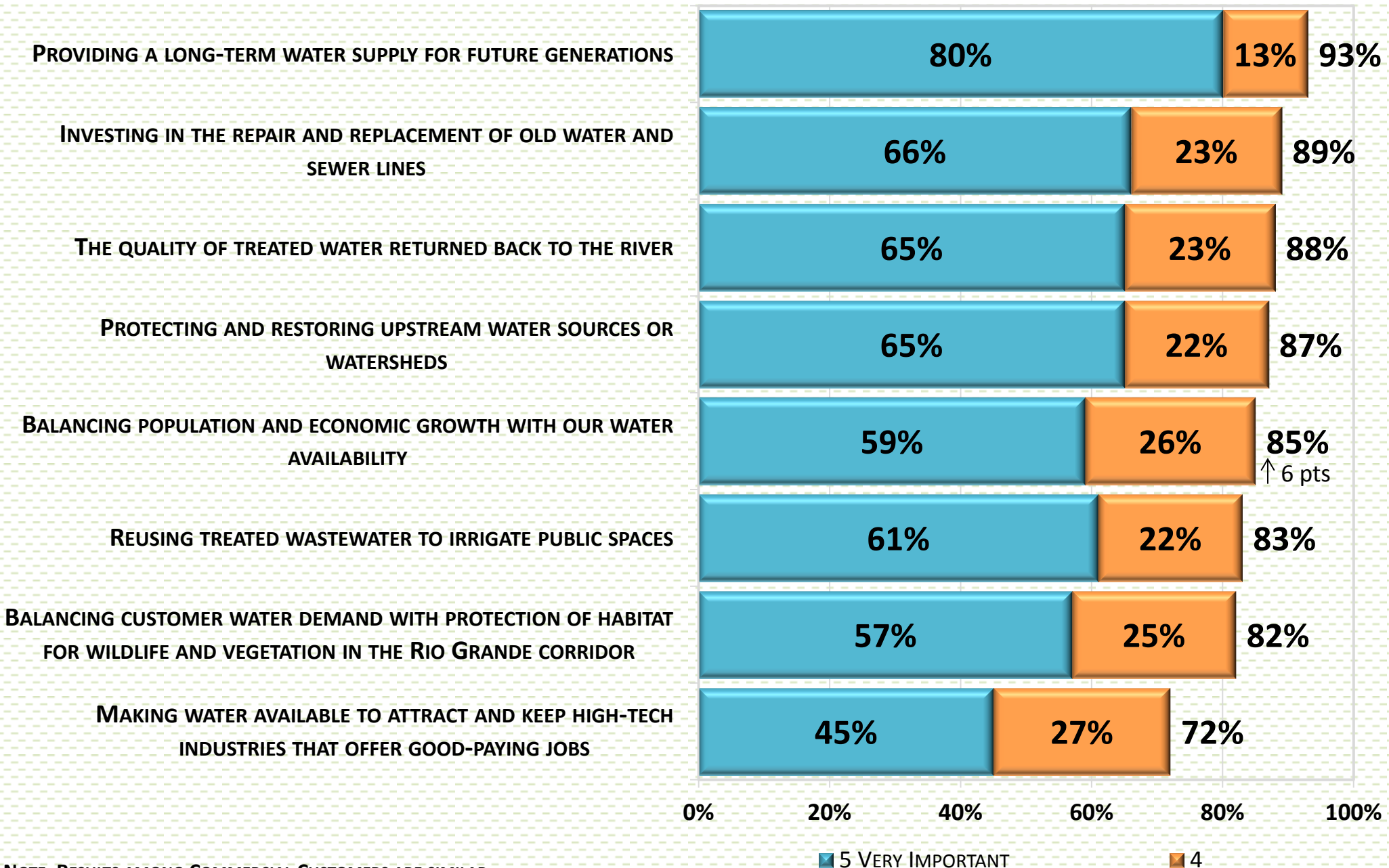


# RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF DRINKING WATER

RESIDENTIAL — TRACKING



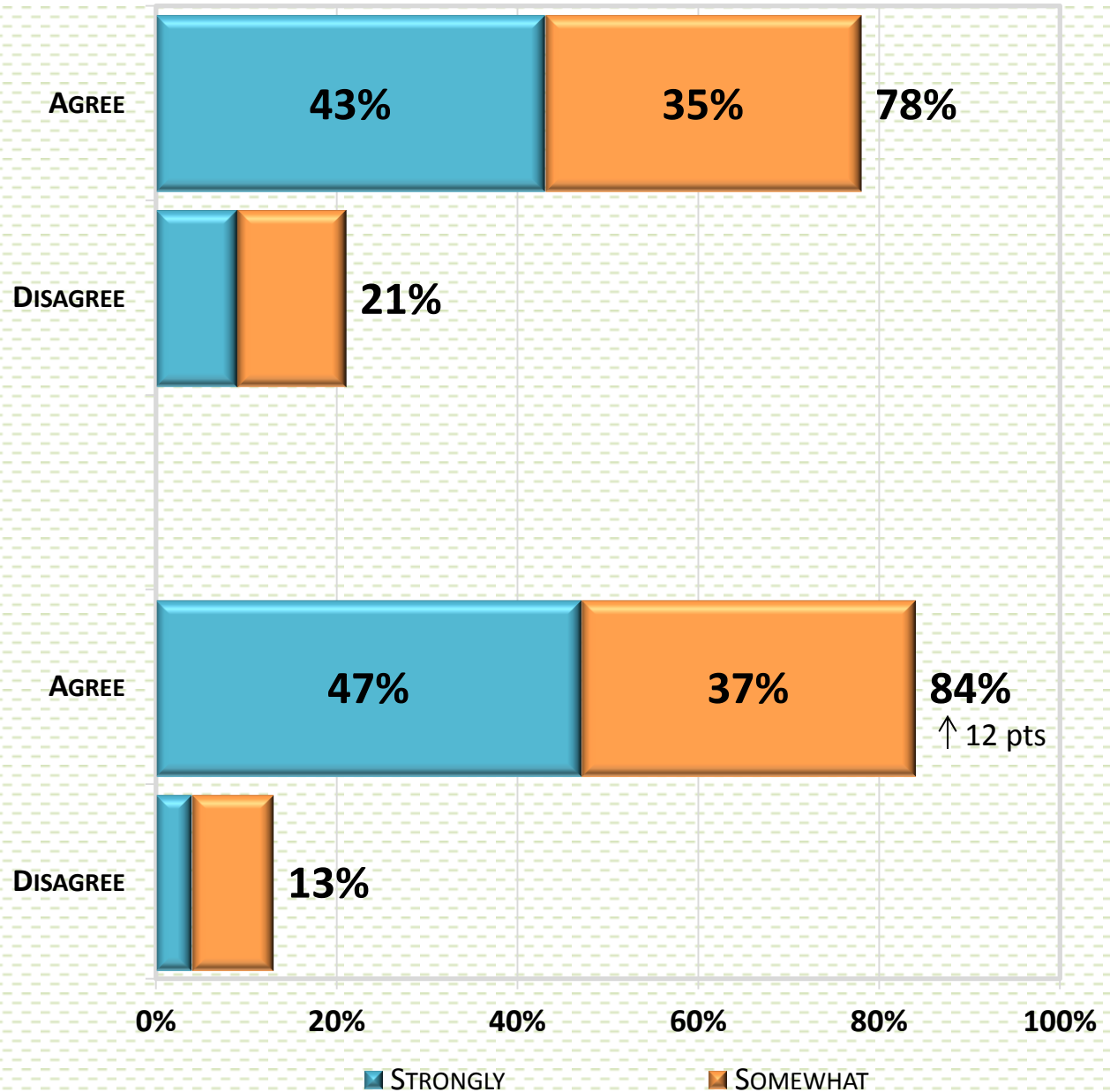
# PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF WATER CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES



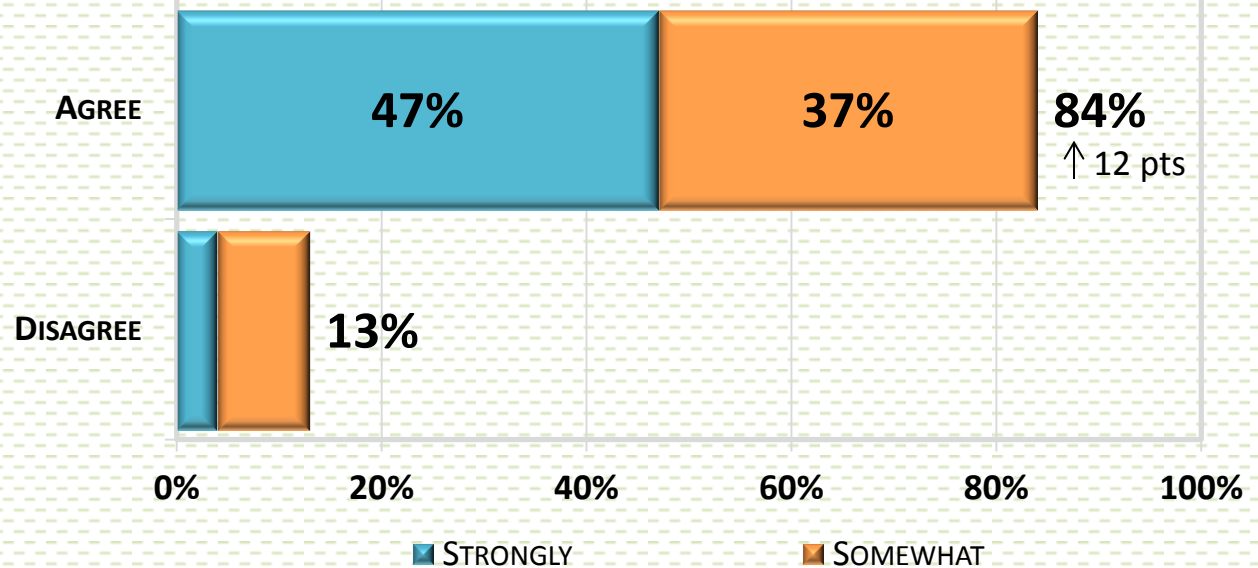
NOTE: RESULTS AMONG COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SIMILAR.

# WATER CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

**THE COST OF WATER IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR ME WHEN DECIDING HOW MUCH WATER TO USE.**

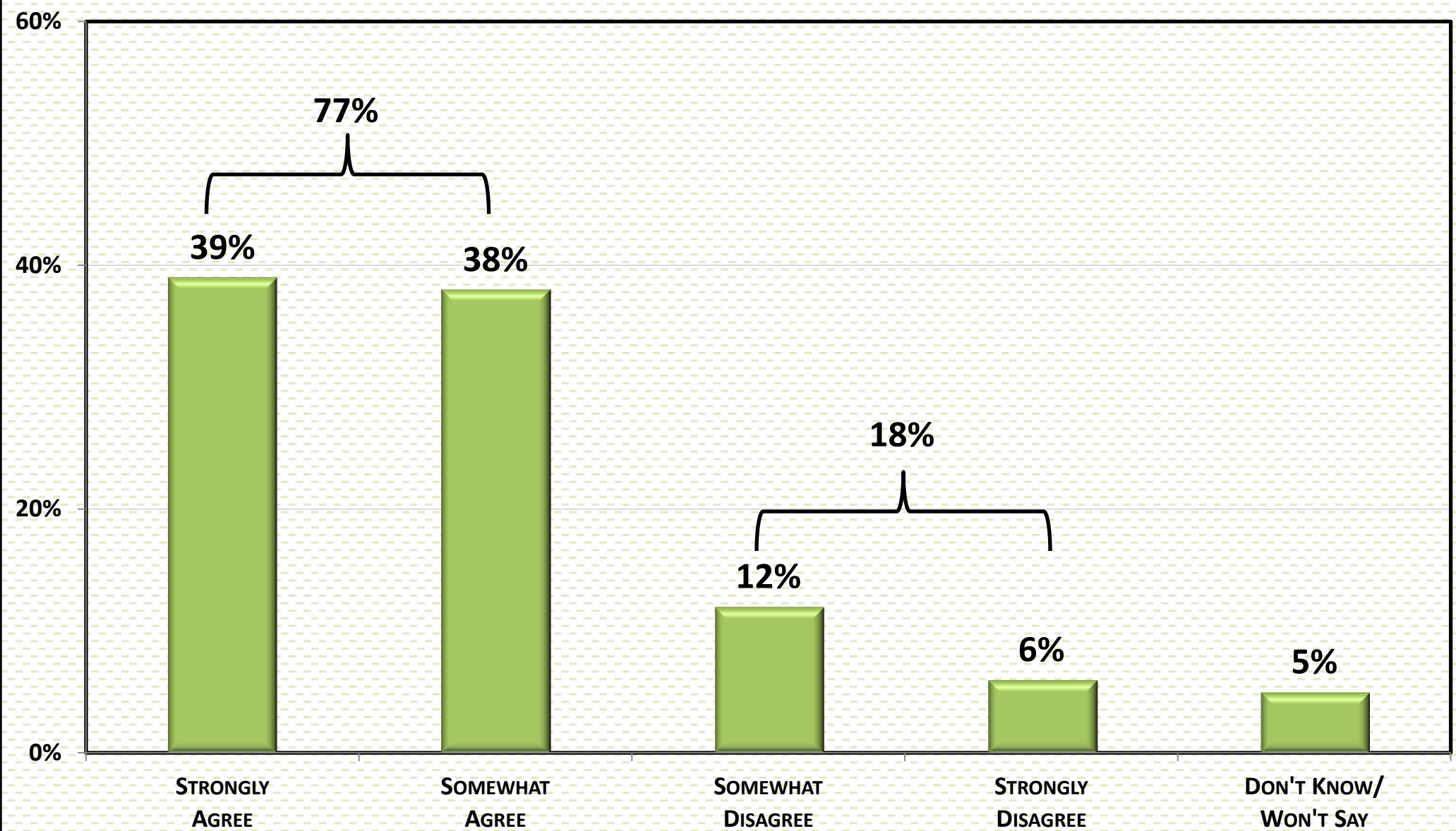


**HOUSEHOLDS WOULD CONSERVE MORE WATER IF THEY HAD AN EASIER WAY TO MONITOR THEIR WATER USE.**



NOTE: RESULTS AMONG COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SIMILAR.

# AGREE/DISAGREE: “WATER AND SEWER SERVICES ARE A GOOD VALUE FOR THE AMOUNT OF MONEY I PAY”



COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SLIGHTLY MORE LIKELY TO AGREE.

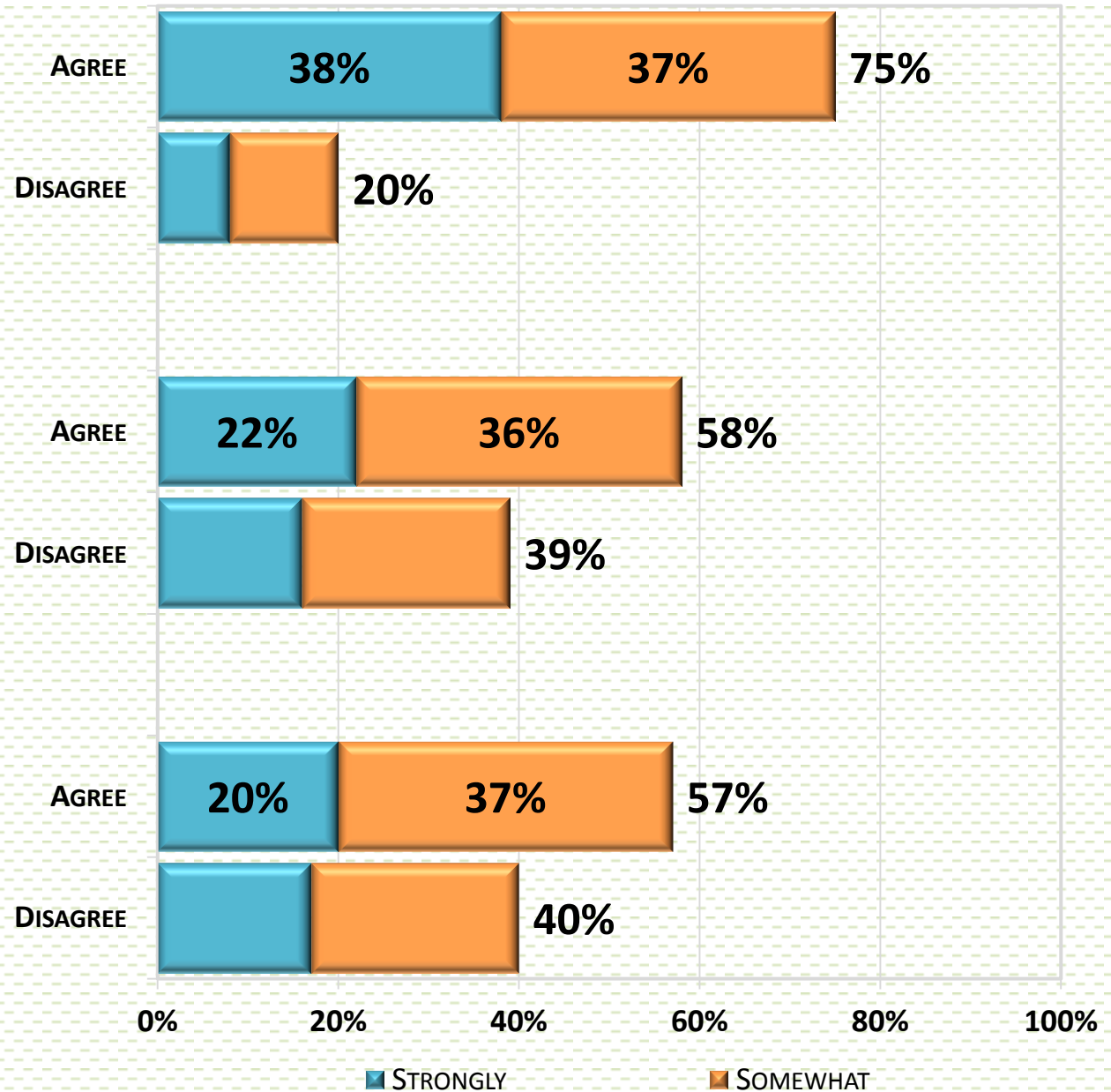
# ATTITUDES TOWARD WATER RATE INCREASES

**BECAUSE WATER IS A SCARCE RESOURCE, WATER RATES SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO REFLECT THE VALUE OF WATER IN OUR DAILY LIVES.**

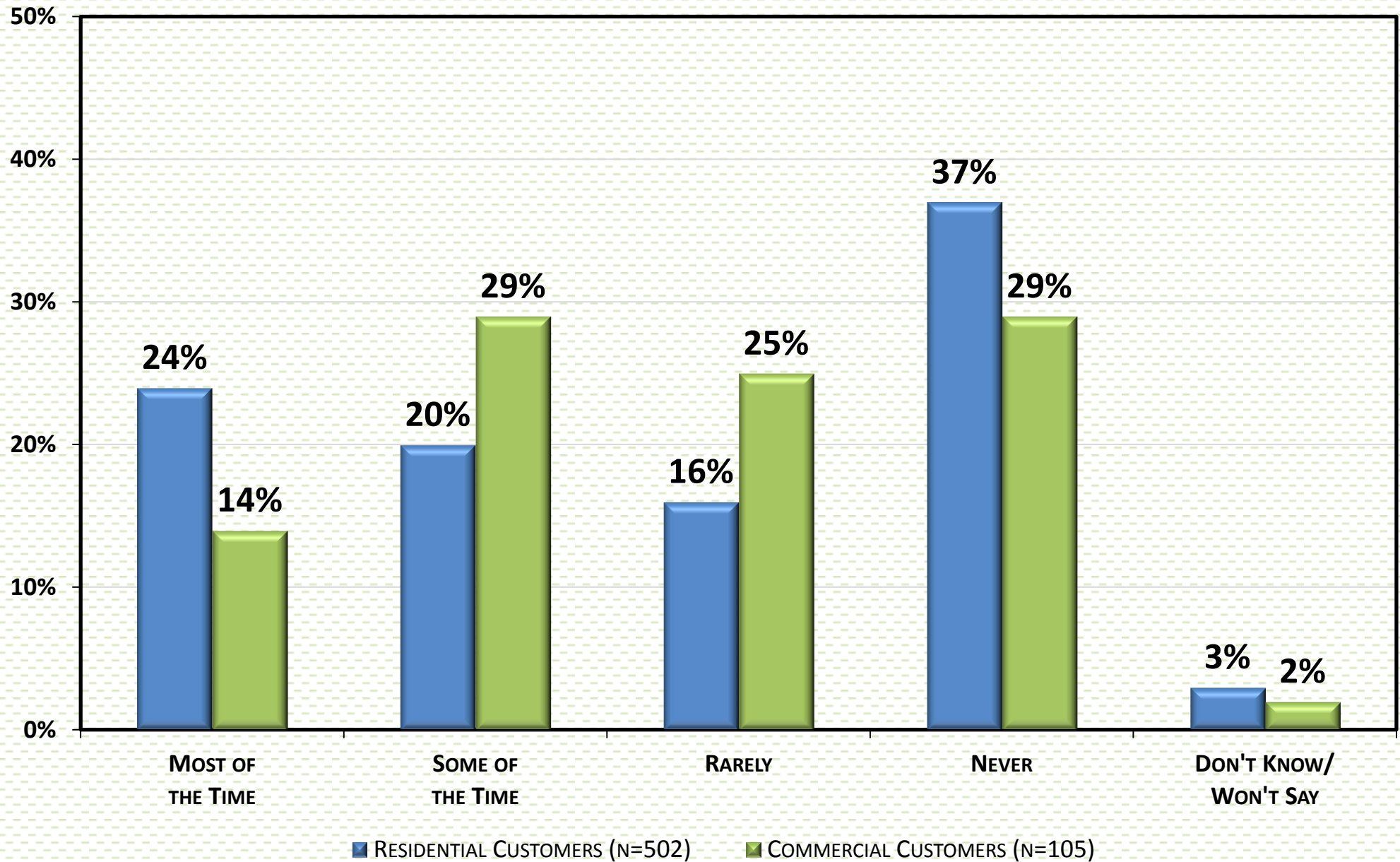
**WATER RATES SHOULD BE INCREASED TO COVER THE COST OF PROVIDING A RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

**WATER RATES SHOULD BE INCREASED TO COVER THE TRUE COSTS TO TREAT AND DELIVER WATER TO OUR HOMES AND BUSINESSES.**

COMMERCIAL CUSTOMERS ARE SLIGHTLY MORE LIKELY TO AGREE.



# FREQUENCY OF READING THE ANNUAL WATER QUALITY REPORT MAILED EVERY SPRING



# LIKELIHOOD OF READING THE WATER QUALITY REPORT IF IT WAS AVAILABLE ONLINE INSTEAD OF BEING MAILED

