

# Sonoma County Water Agency

## *Presentation of Voter Survey Results*



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# Methodology

- Telephone survey
- April 23-29, 2009
- Random sample of 600 Sonoma County voters
- Trained, professional Interviewers
- Margin of error  $\pm 4.0\%$
- When applicable, results compared with two previous countywide voter surveys for SWCA:
  - April 2007, N=600, MoE  $\pm 4.0\%$ , EMC 07-3633
  - September 2003, N=612, MoE  $\pm 4.0\%$ , EMC 03-2851

*As with any opinion research, the release of selected figures from this report without the analysis that explains their meaning would be damaging to EMC. Therefore, EMC reserves the right to correct any misleading release of this data in any medium through the release of correct data or analysis.*

*Please note that due to rounding, percentages may not add up to exactly 100%*

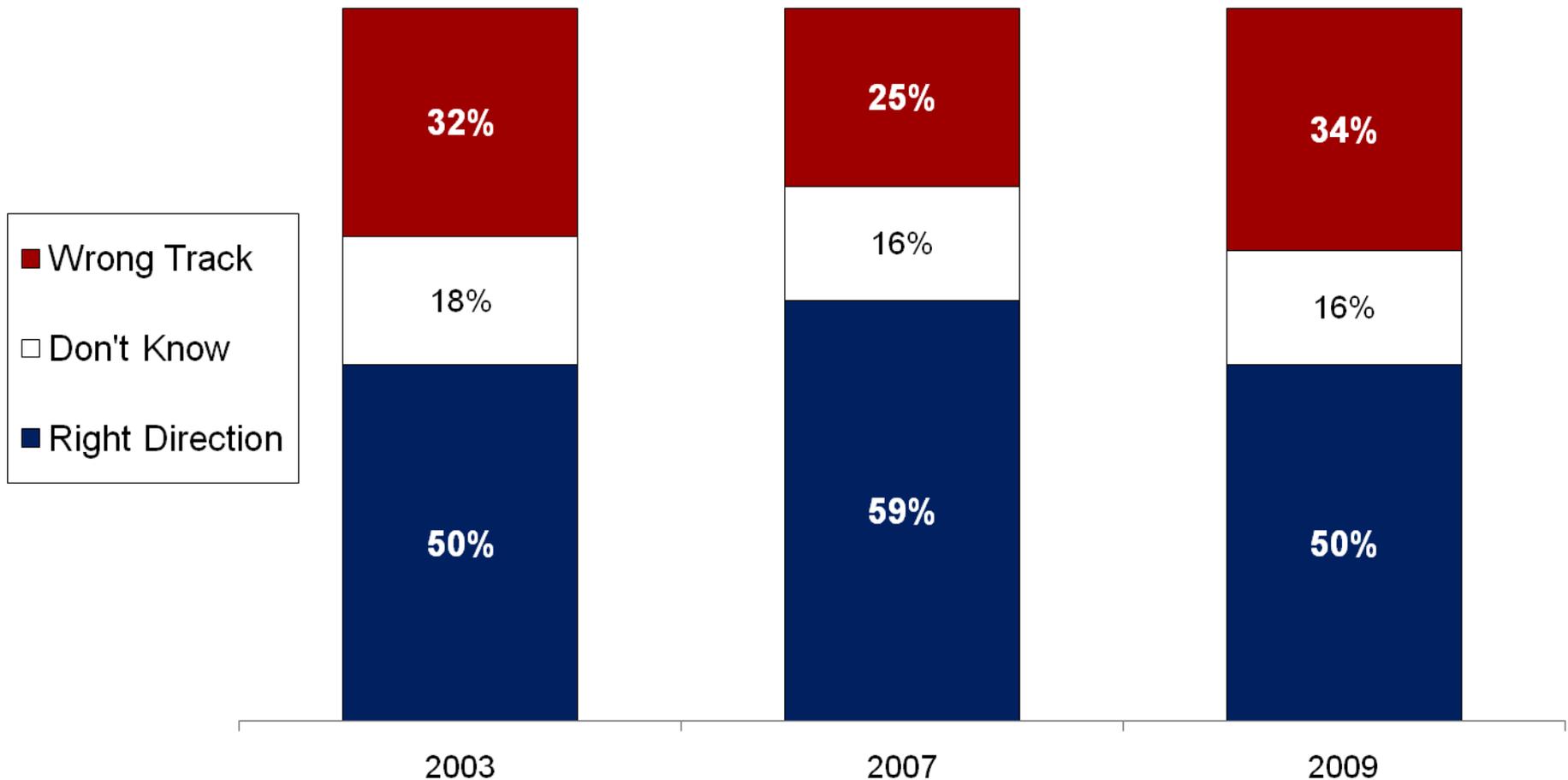
# Key Findings

- Worries about the economy, jobs and water supply have displaced traffic and growth as voters' top concerns.
- The Sonoma County Water Agency continues to receive a net positive job rating, but only 48% of respondents say the agency is doing an excellent or good job.
- The agency's job ratings for ensuring water quality, encouraging conservation, and educating youth have improved since 2007.
- Awareness of the water shortage is high. More than one-third say they are doing everything they can to conserve, but 44% know they could be doing more.
- Policy changes that restrict business and agricultural water use are more popular than prohibitions on residential watering or requiring the replacement of lawns.
- The current drought is a strong motivator to reduce water use, but messages about efficiency (reducing landscape watering without harm to plants) also have potential to be effective.
- Carbon-free water and recycled water use continue to draw majority support.

# *Voter attitudes*

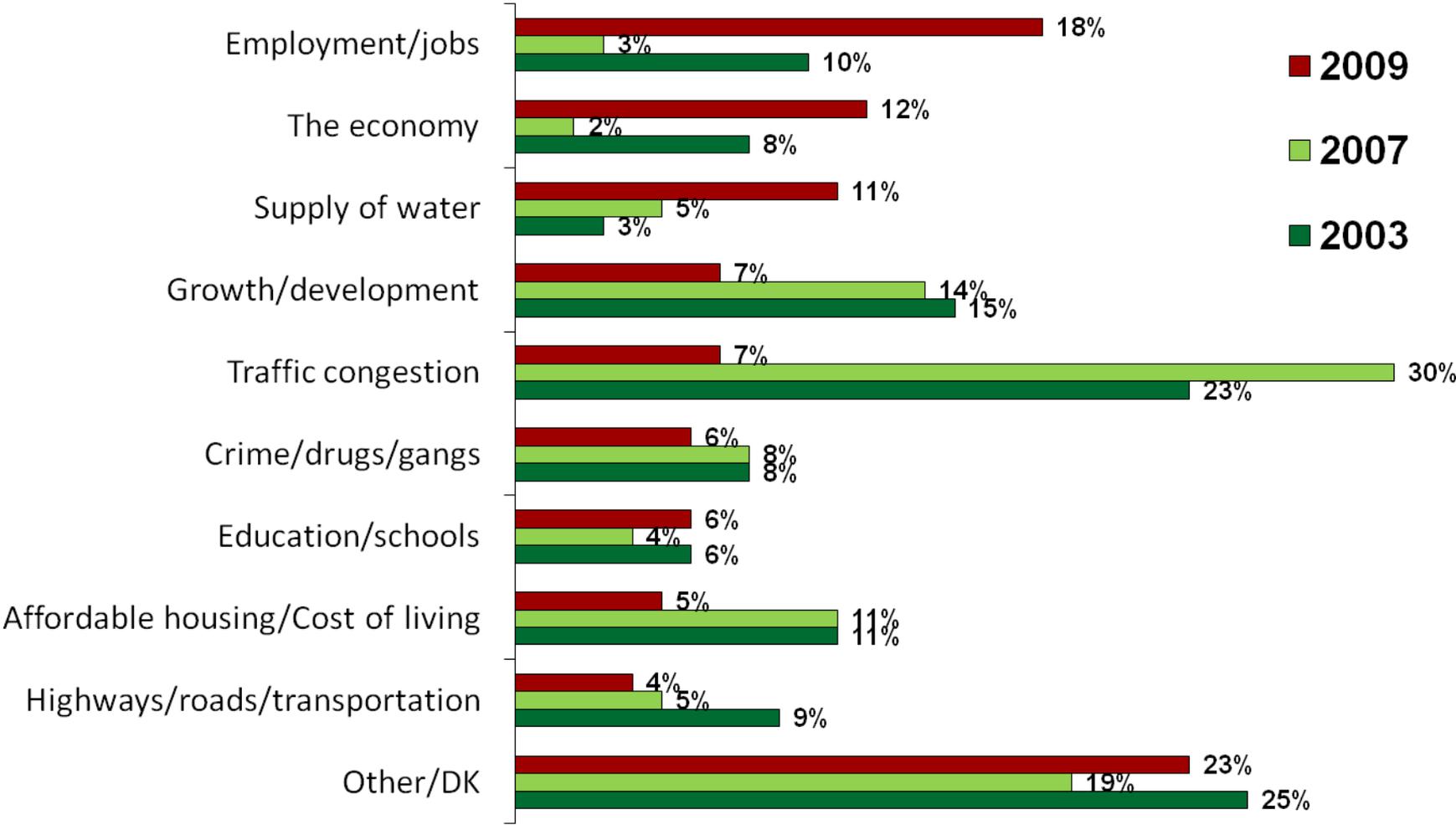
# Voters are more pessimistic than in 2007, but half feel the County is headed in the right direction.

*Do you think things in Sonoma County are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?*



# Voter concerns have shifted sharply from growth, traffic and housing costs to jobs and the economy.

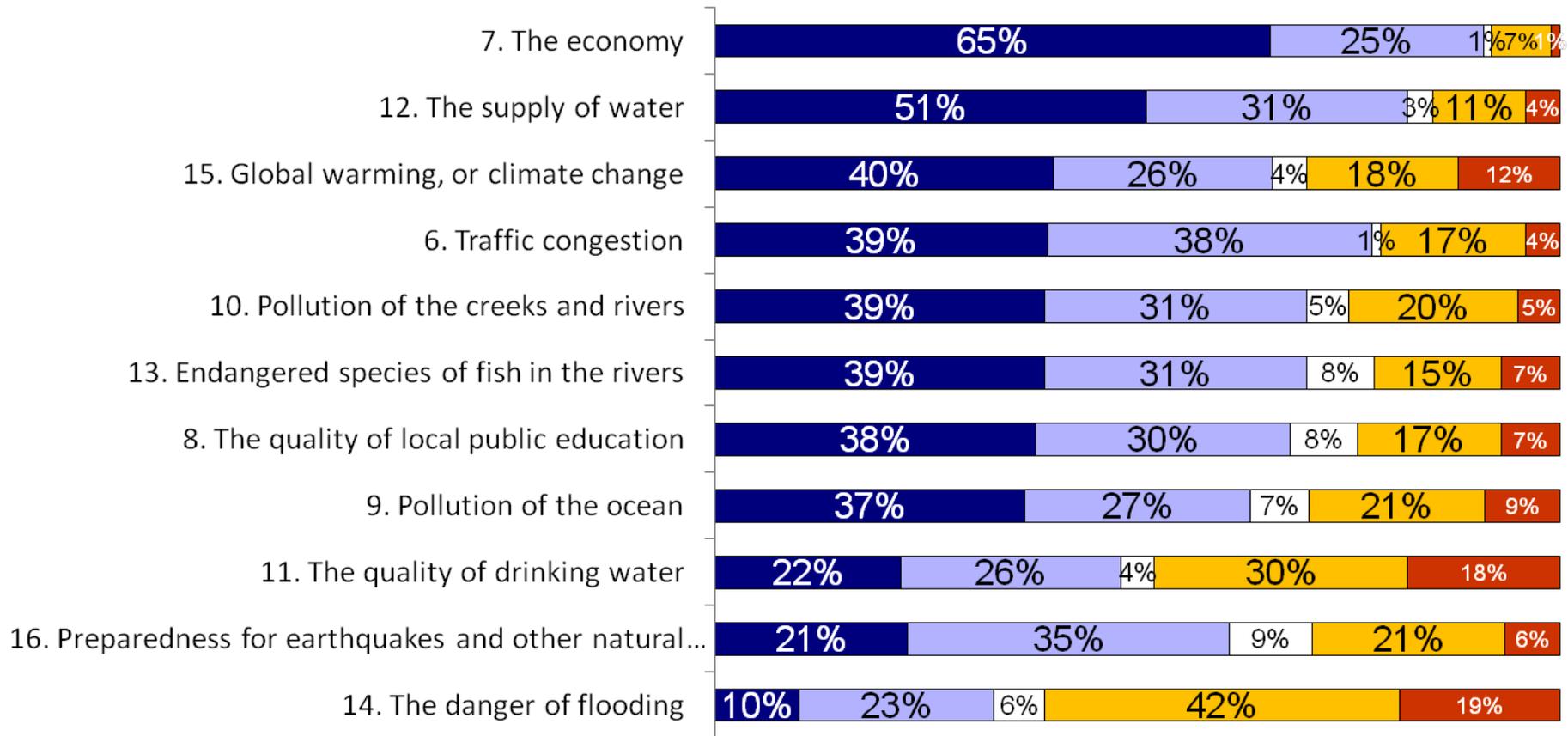
What is the most important problem facing Sonoma County today?



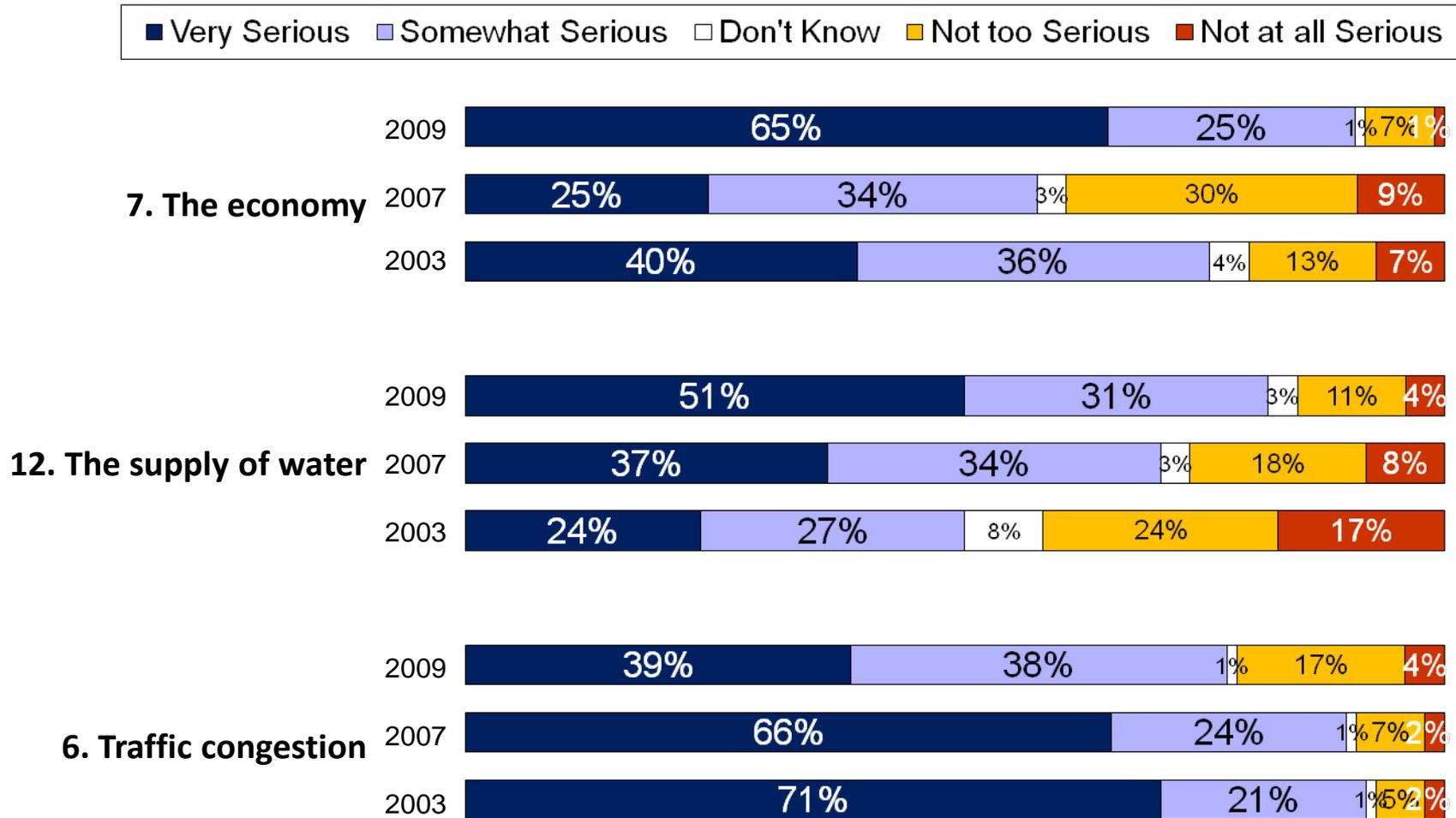
# The economy tops voter concerns, but 8 in 10 feel the supply of water is a serious problem.

Please tell me if you feel each of the following is a very serious problem facing Sonoma County, a somewhat serious problem, a not too serious problem or not a very serious problem at all in this area.

■ Very Serious 
 ■ Somewhat Serious 
 ■ Don't Know 
 ■ Not too Serious 
 ■ Not at all Serious



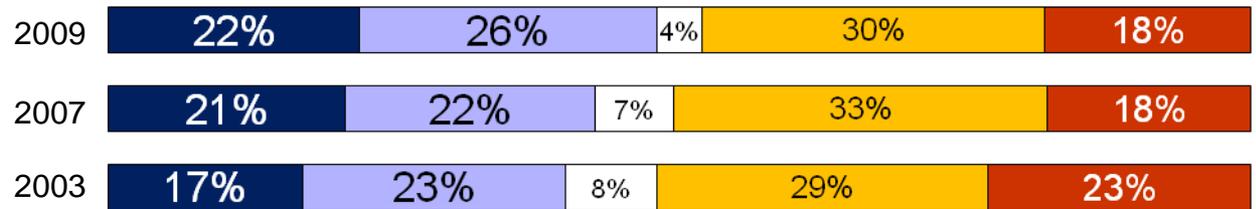
# Worries about the economy and the supply of water have increased significantly since 2007, while concerns about traffic have declined.



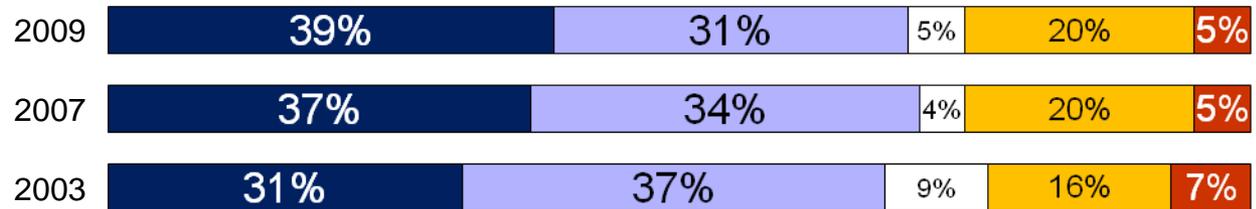
# Concerns about drinking water quality and endangered fish have increased slightly.

■ Very Serious  
 ■ Somewhat Serious  
 □ Don't Know  
 ■ Not too Serious  
 ■ Not at all Serious

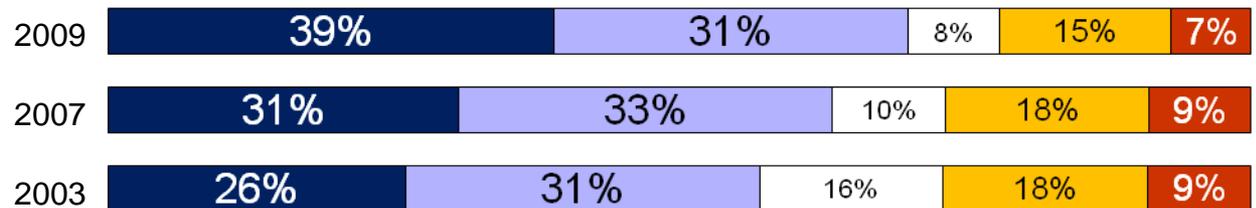
## 11. The quality of drinking water



## 10. Pollution of the creeks and rivers



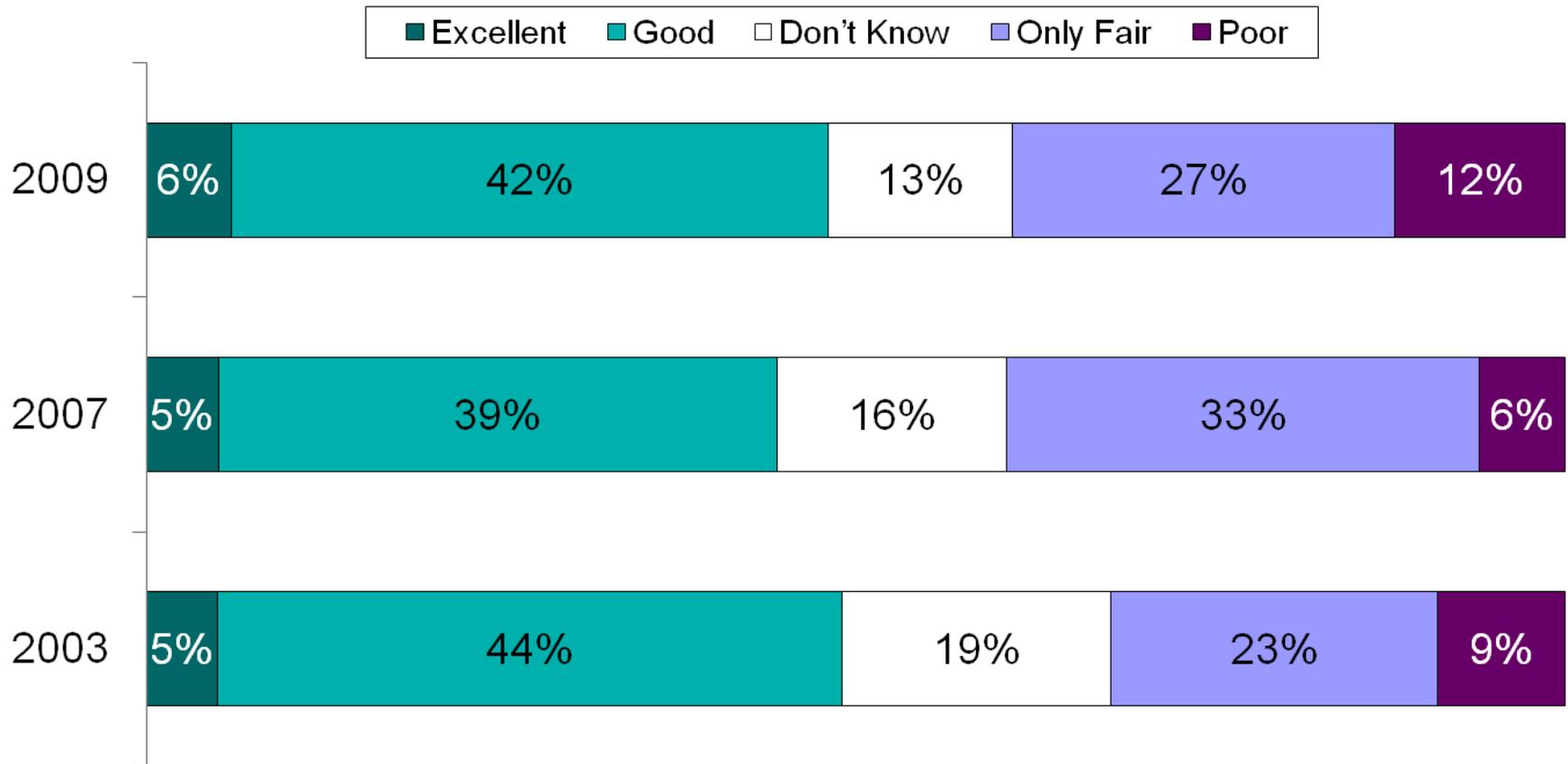
## 13. Endangered species of fish in the rivers



*Opinions of the Sonoma County Water Agency  
and water services*

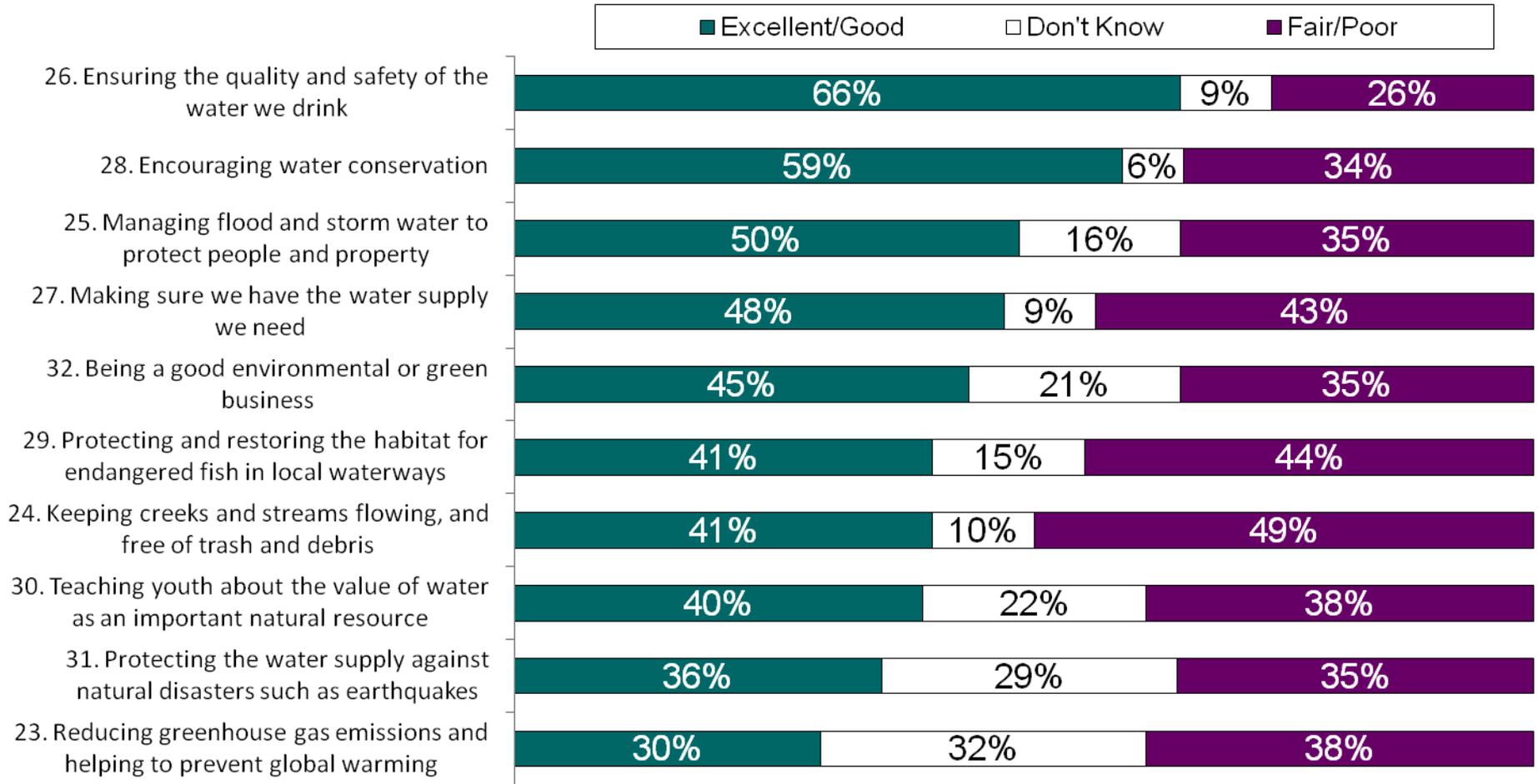
# The agency's overall job rating has improved by a very small margin since 2007.

Using a scale of excellent, good, only fair or poor, please rate the overall job the Sonoma County Water Agency is doing.



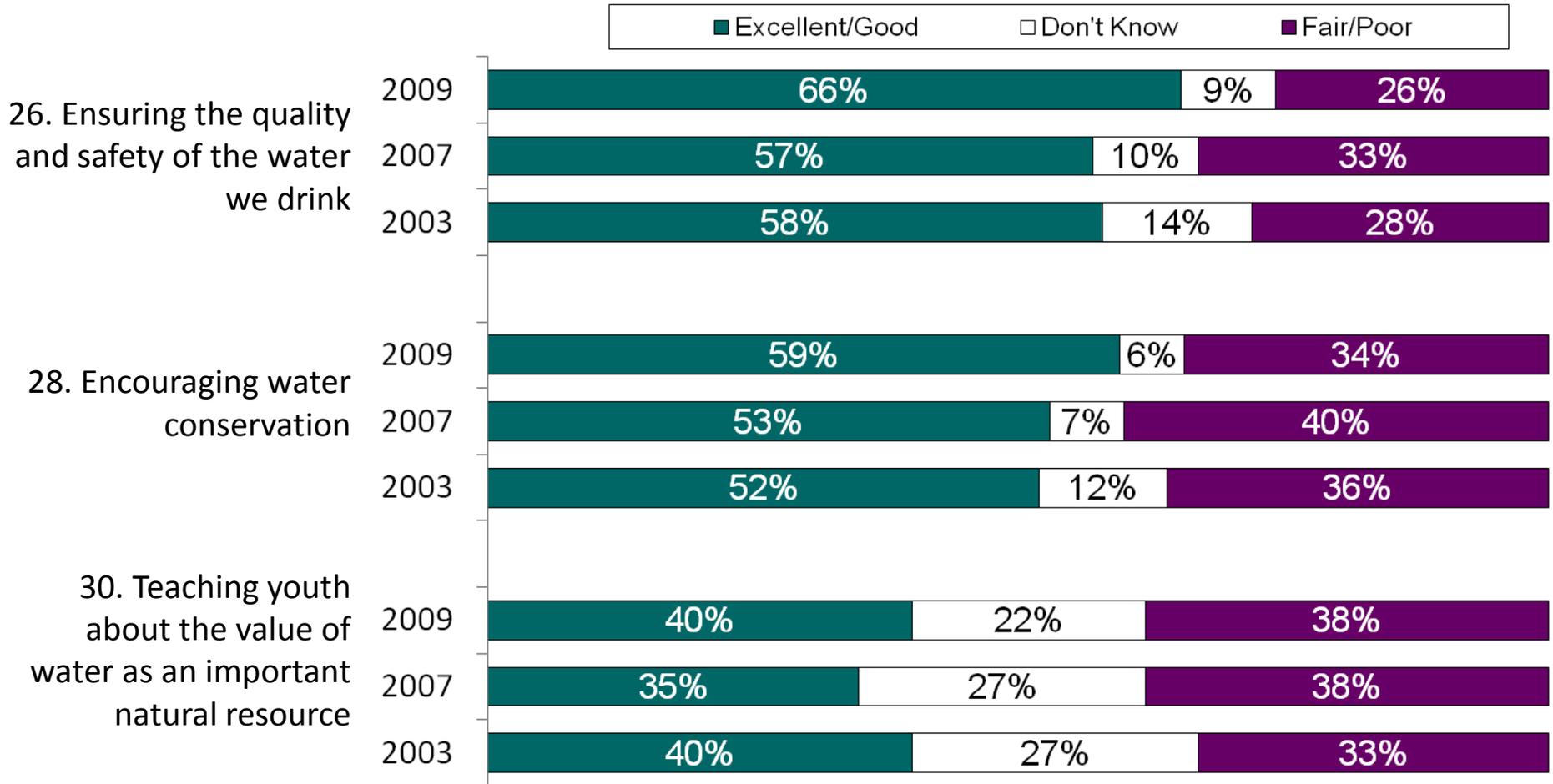
# Voters give SCWA strong job ratings for ensuring water quality and encouraging conservation.

*Using a scale of excellent, good, only fair or poor, please rate the overall job the Sonoma County Water Agency is doing on each of the following responsibilities.*



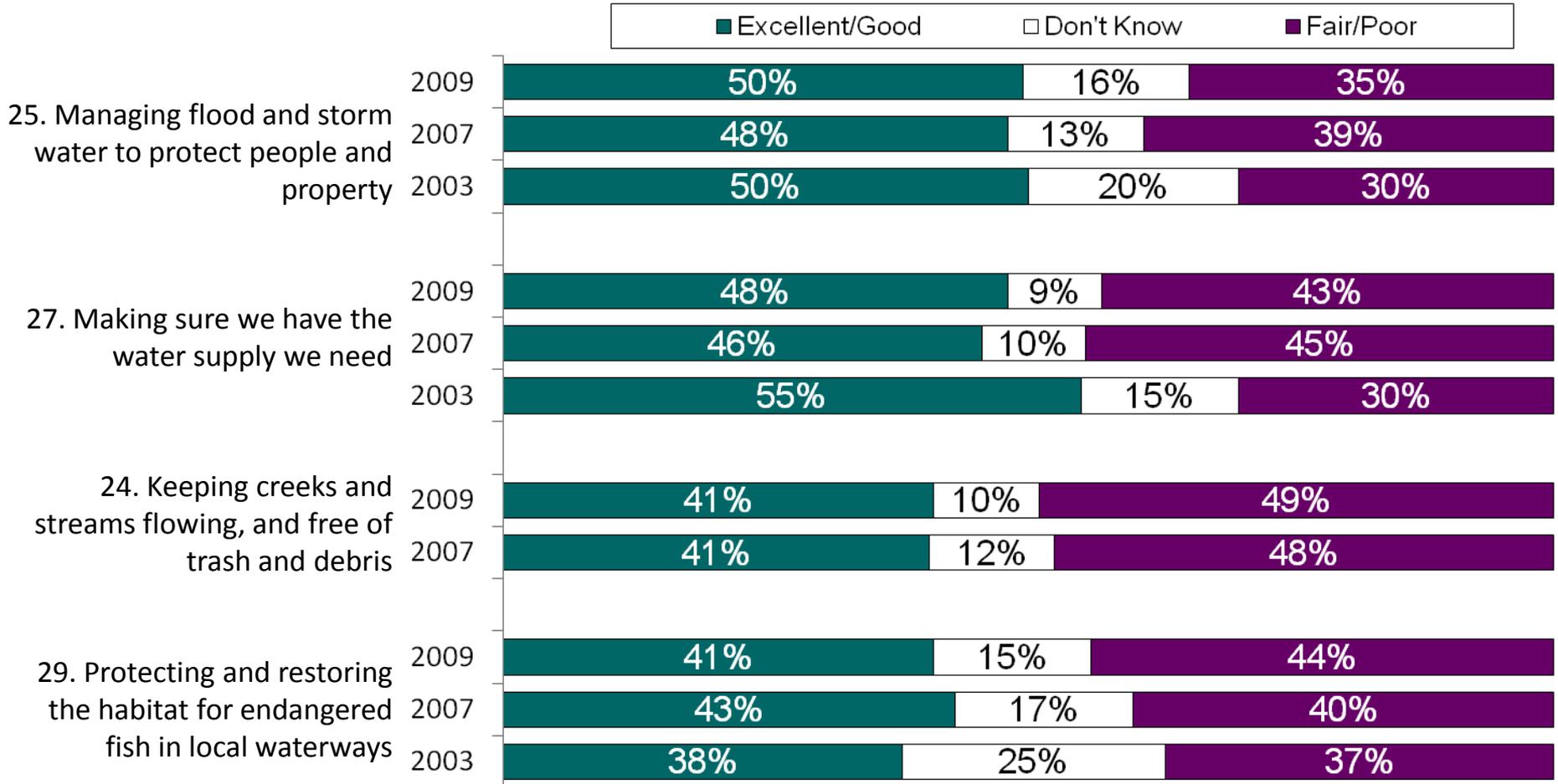
# Ratings for ensuring water quality, encouraging conservation, and educating youth have improved since 2007.

Using a scale of excellent, good, only fair or poor, please rate the overall job the Sonoma County Water Agency is doing on each of the following responsibilities.



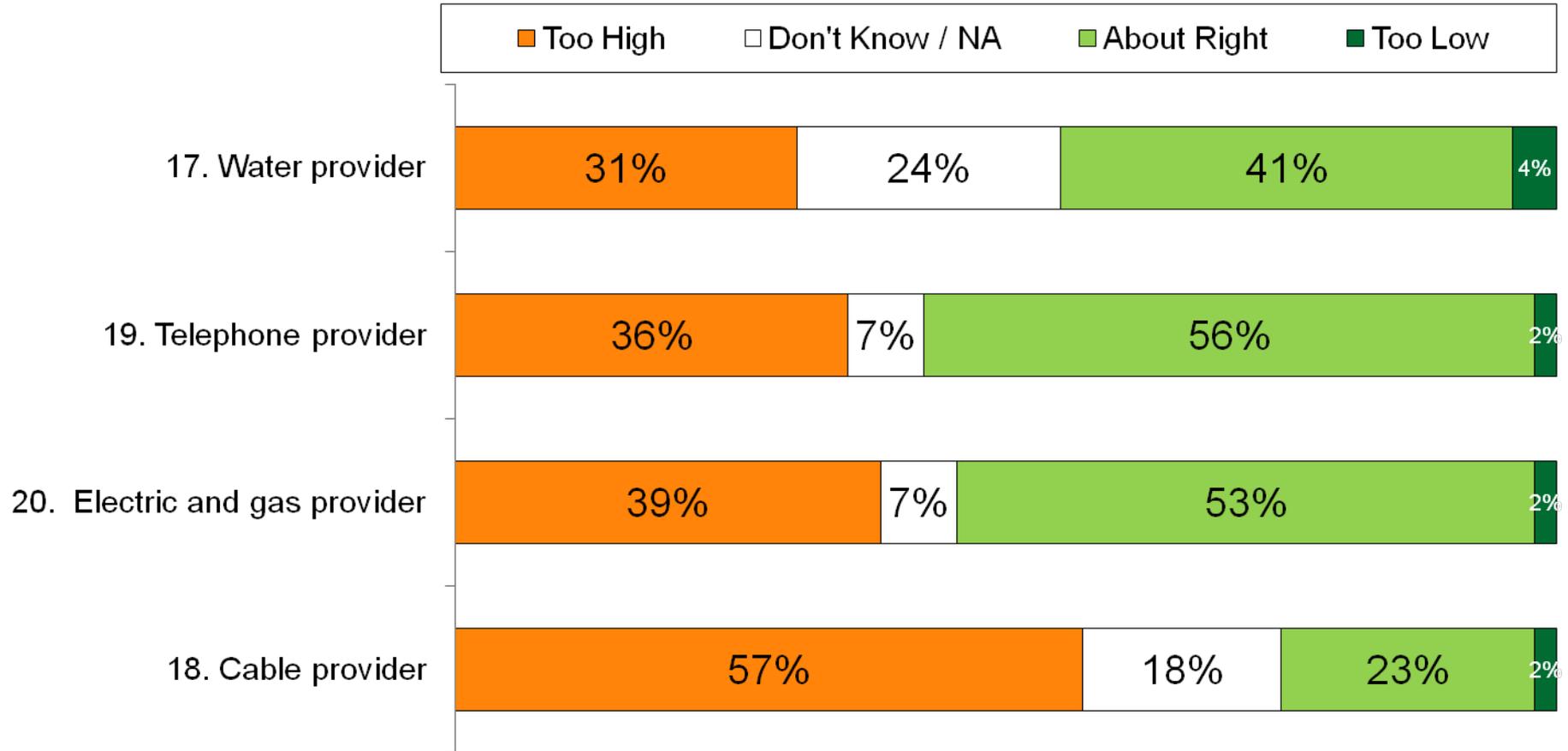
# Other ratings have remained steady since 2007.

Using a scale of excellent, good, only fair or poor, please rate the overall job the Sonoma County Water Agency is doing on each of the following responsibilities.



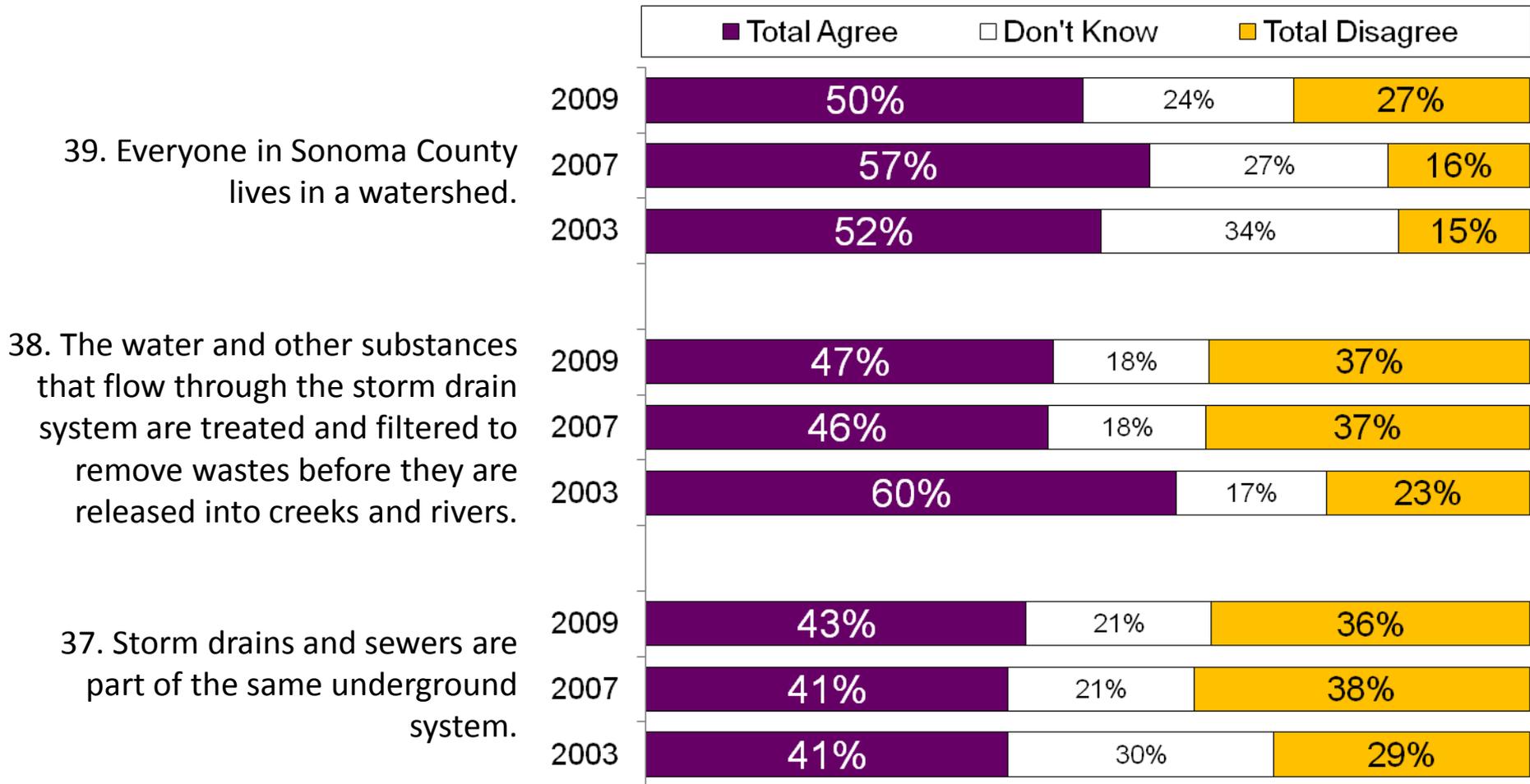
# Fewer than 1 in 3 voters feel water rates are too high.

Would you say the rates that \_\_\_\_\_ charges for service are too low, about right, or too high?



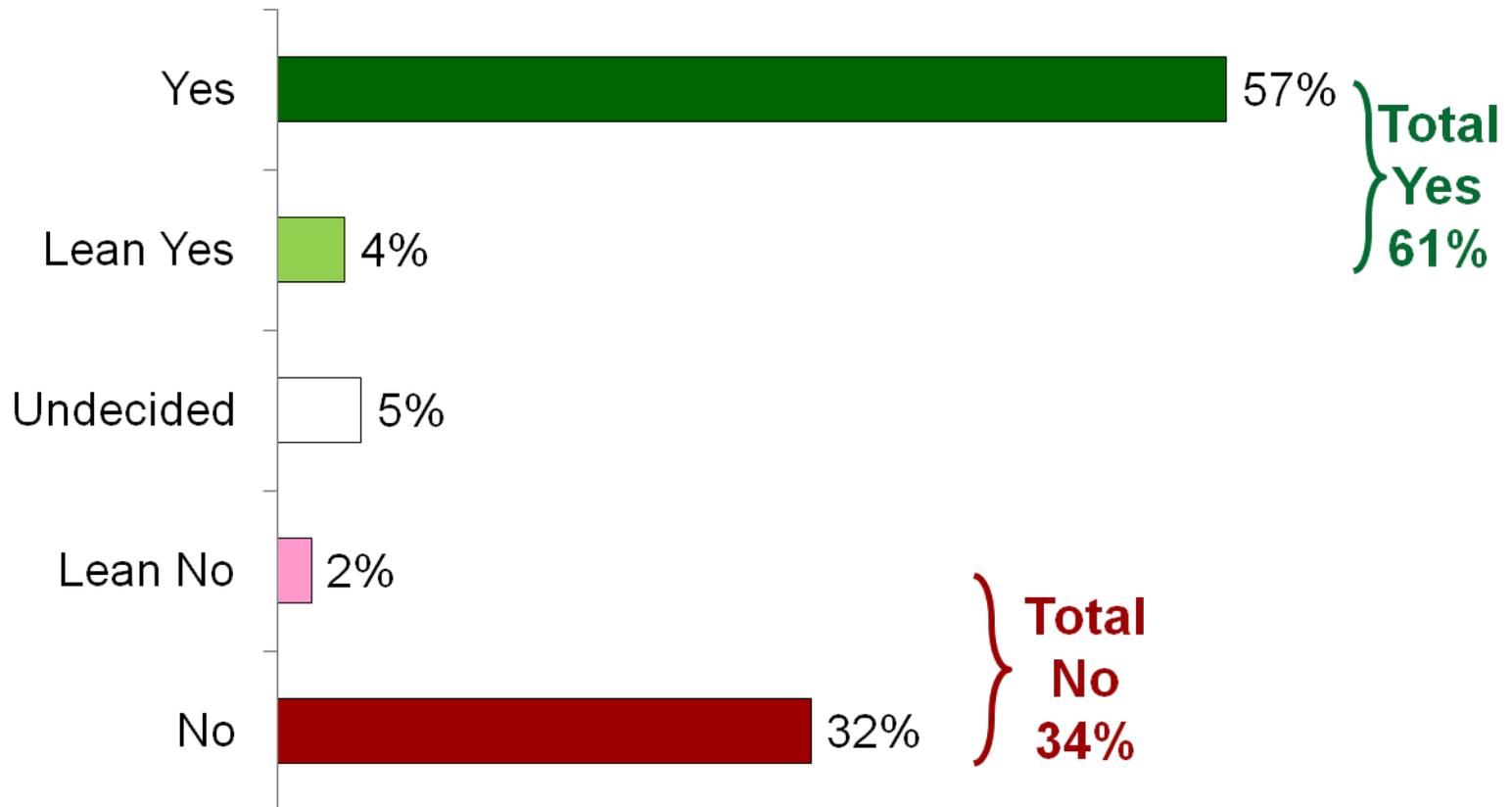
# Confusion relating to storm drains and sewers persists in the minds of voters.

Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

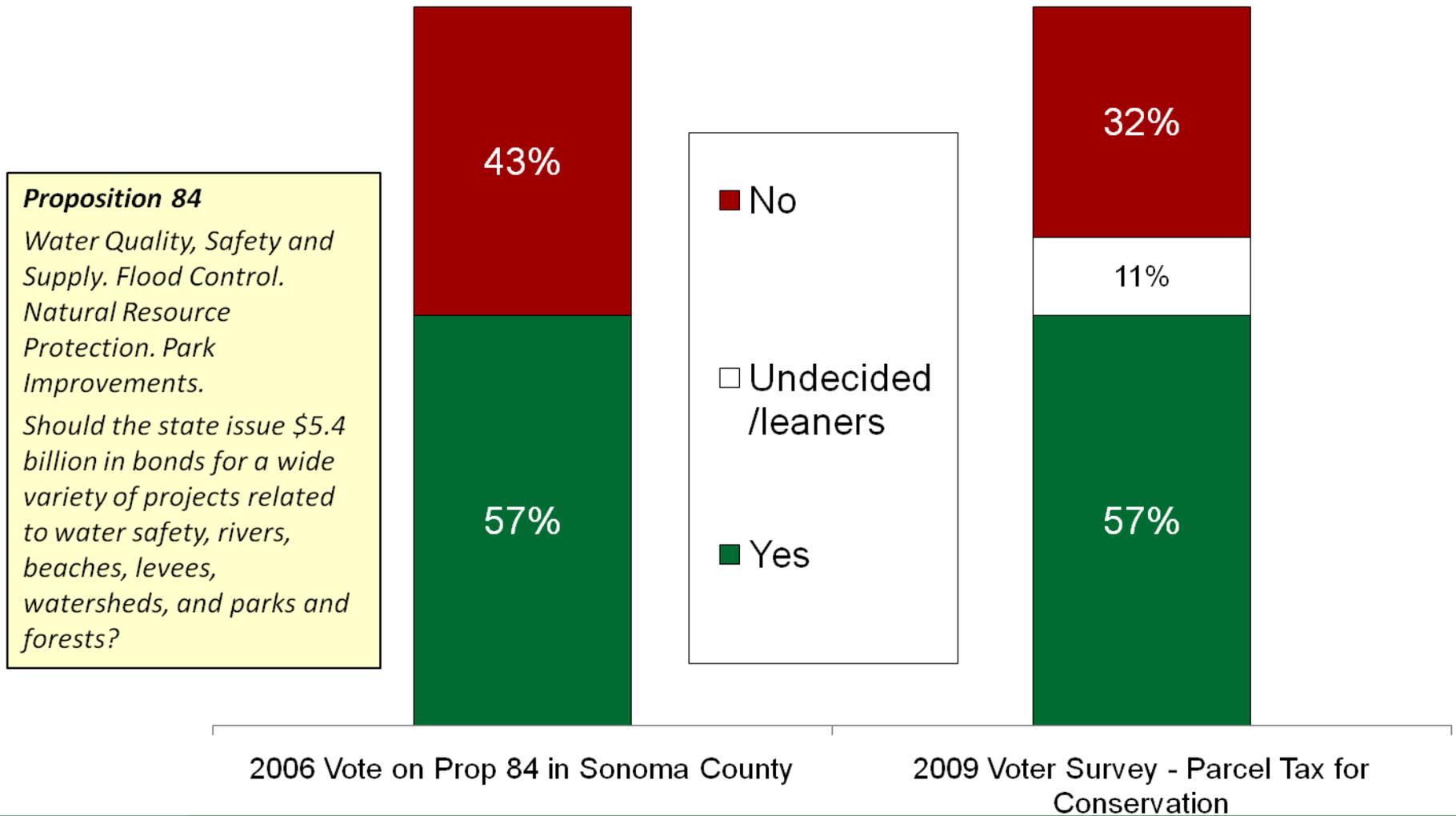


# A parcel tax draws majority support, but falls short of the 2/3 required for a special tax.

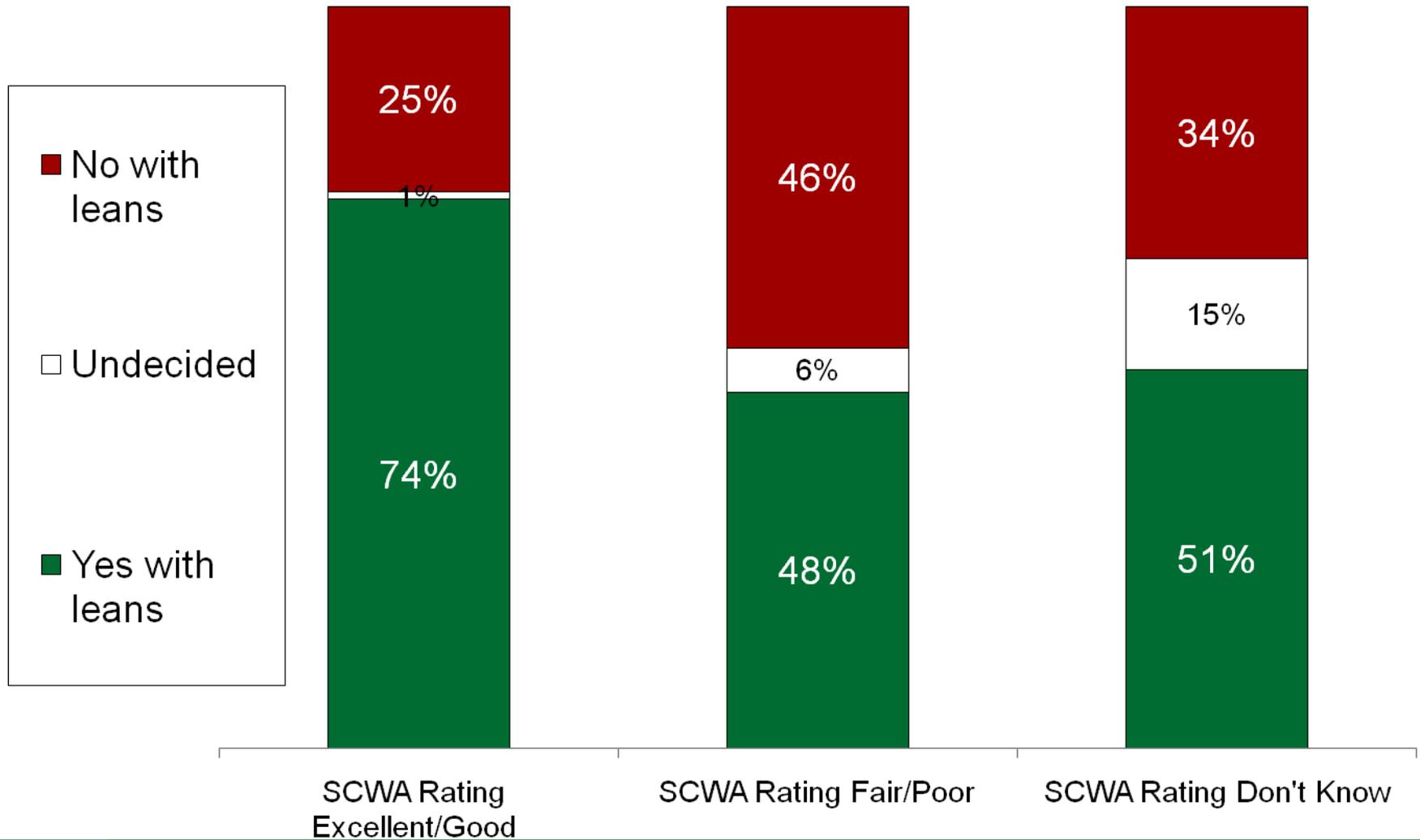
*The Sonoma County Water Agency may seek to implement a parcel tax of up to 20 dollars per year to continue appropriate flood protection projects and services, environmental restoration of local creeks and the Russian River, and maintain wildlife habitat in local rivers, lakes, and streams. If an election were held today, would you vote yes to approve or no to reject such a measure?*



# Support for a parcel tax is consistent with Sonoma County support for Prop 84 in 2006.



# Improving the agency's job rating among voters will be crucial to passage of any future funding measure.



*Attitudes toward the current water shortage*

# Most Sonoma County residents understand the seriousness of the water shortage.

Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.



41. There is a very serious water shortage in our area.

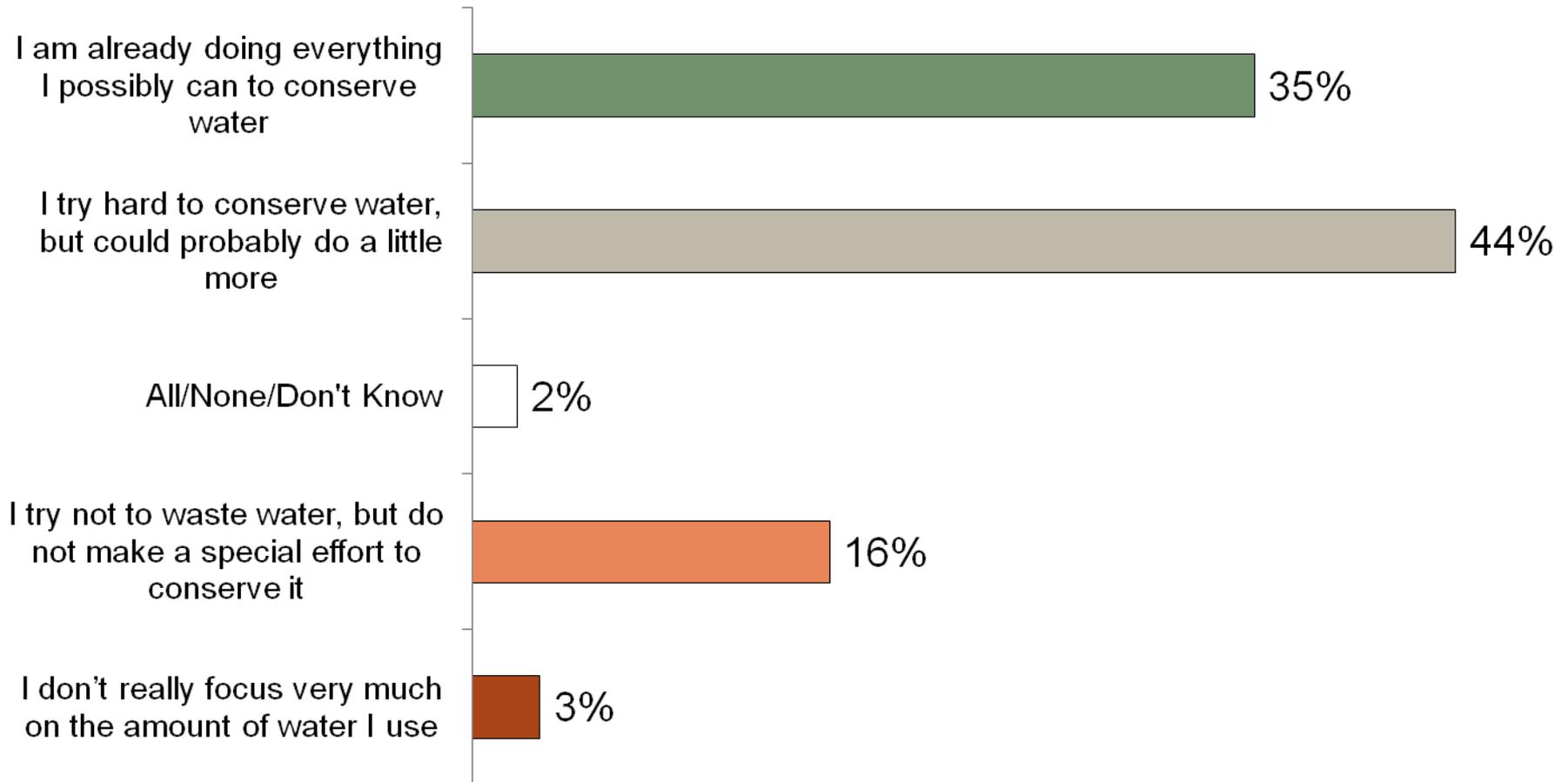


40. There is already plenty of water; the water agencies just need to do a better job of managing it.



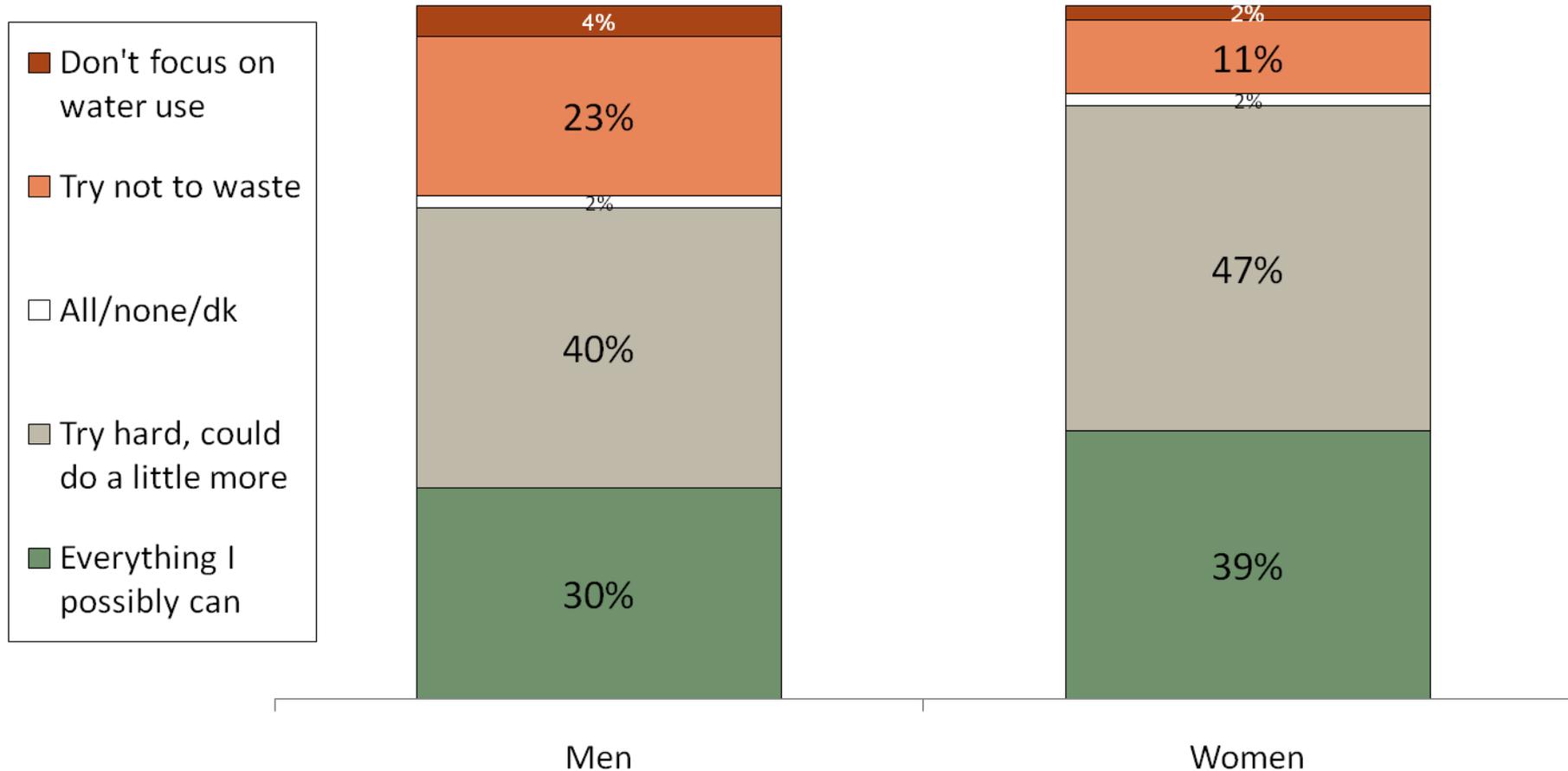
# Only 1 in 3 voters feel they are doing everything they can to save water.

*Which of the following statements best describes your current efforts to reduce your water use:*



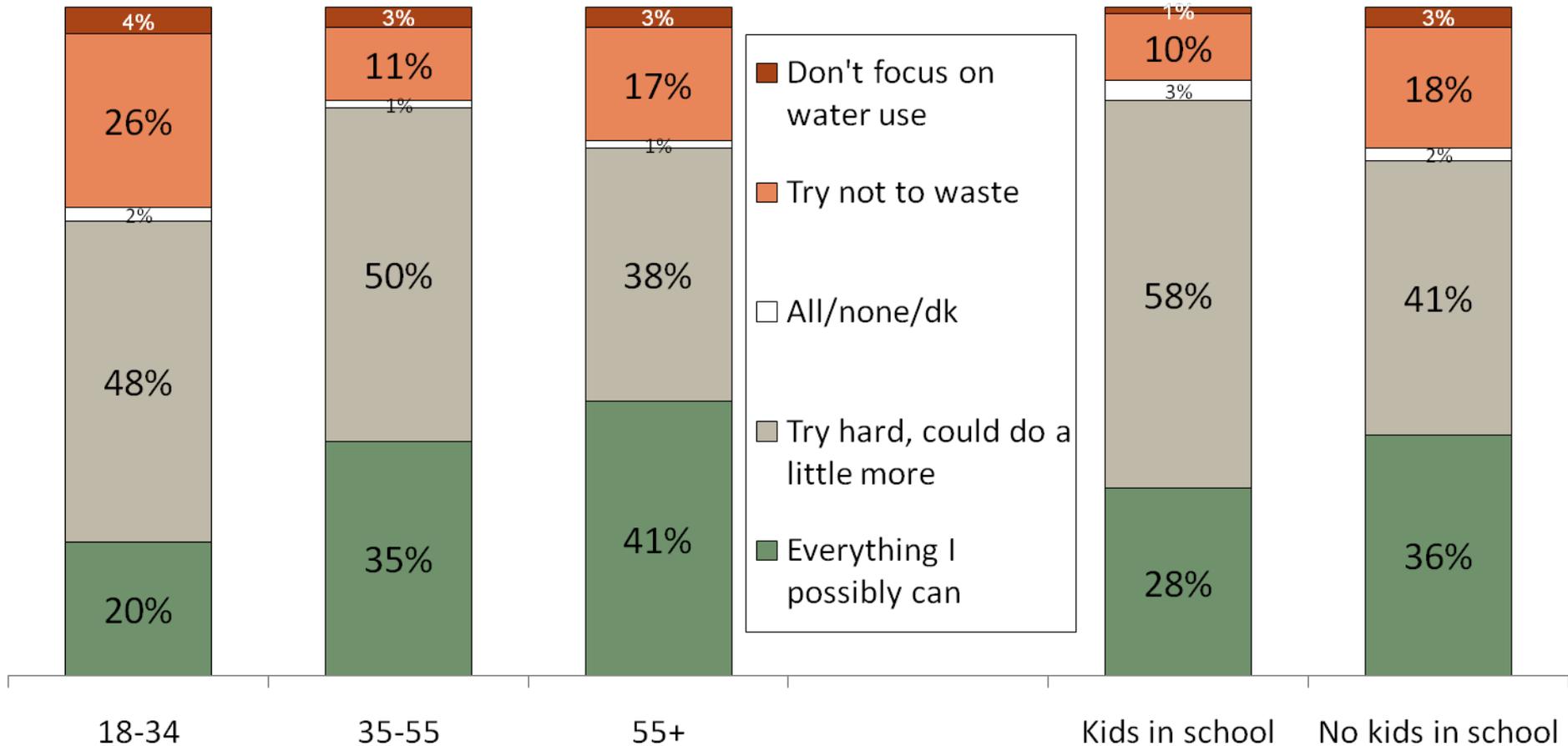
# Women report conserving more overall than men.

Which of the following statements best describes your current efforts to reduce your water use:



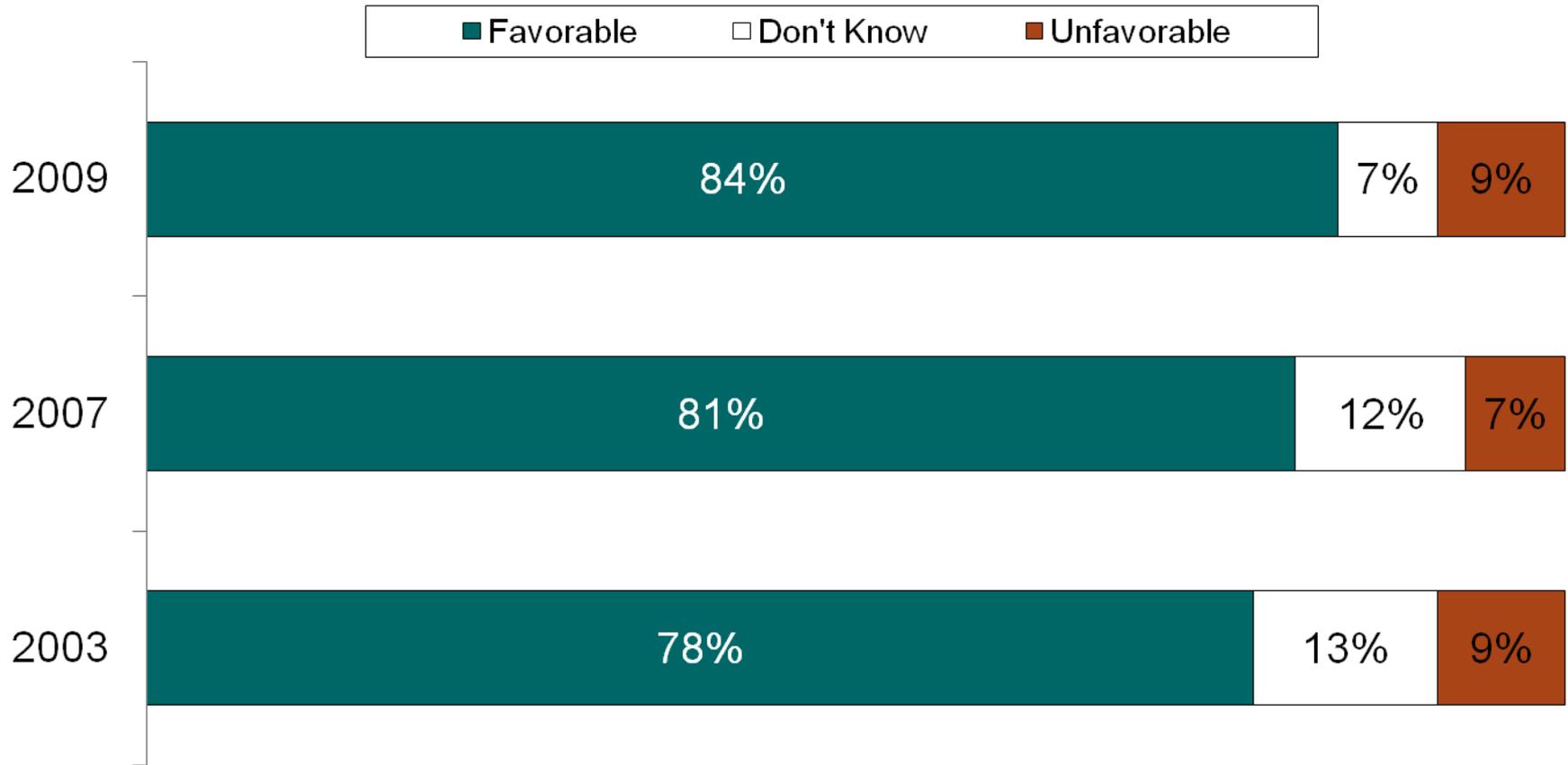
# Age correlates strongly to perceptions of own efforts. Respondents age 35-55 and parents of schoolchildren are more likely to acknowledge they could do more to conserve.

Which of the following statements best describes your current efforts to reduce your water use:



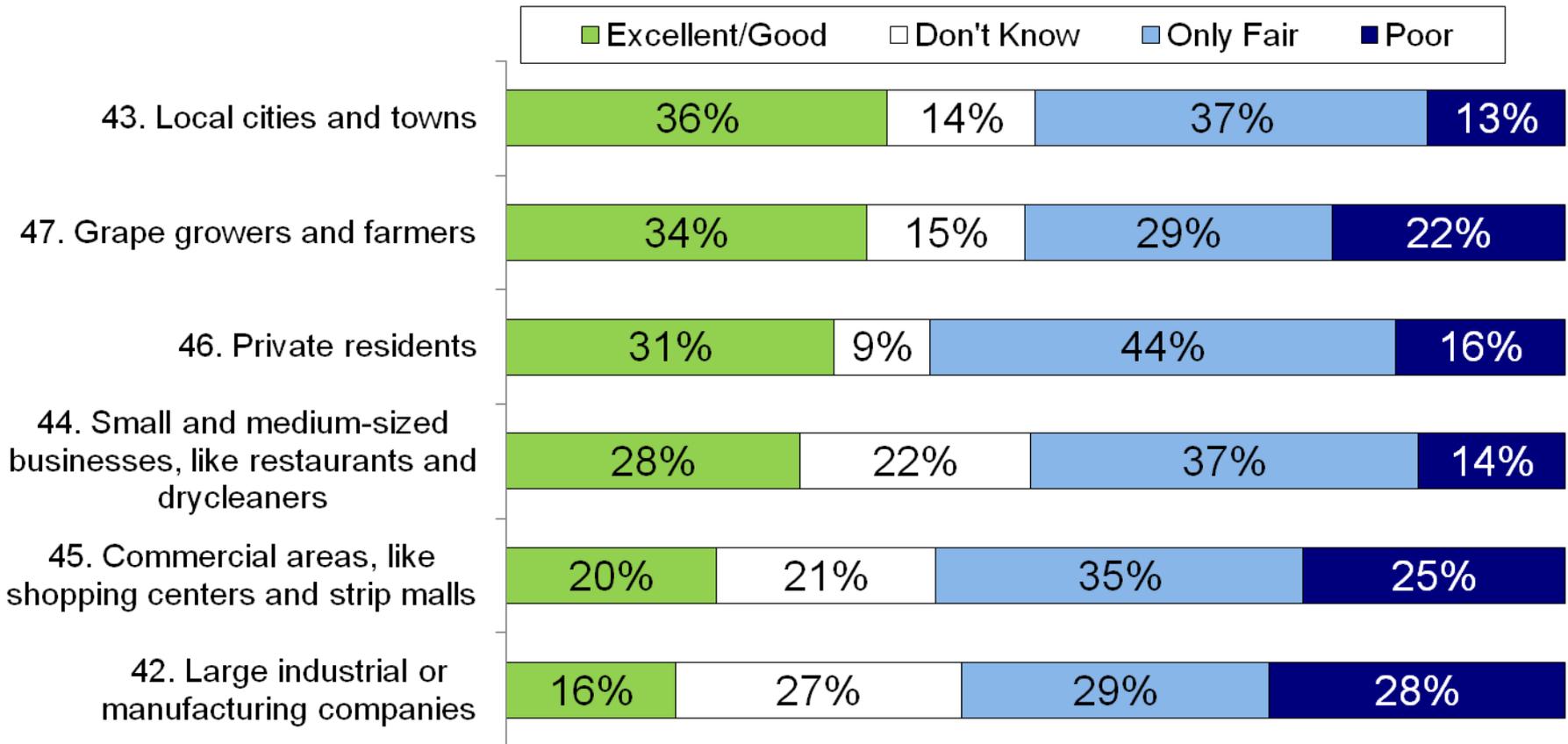
# Opinions of recycled water use have improved slightly.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of recycled water use?



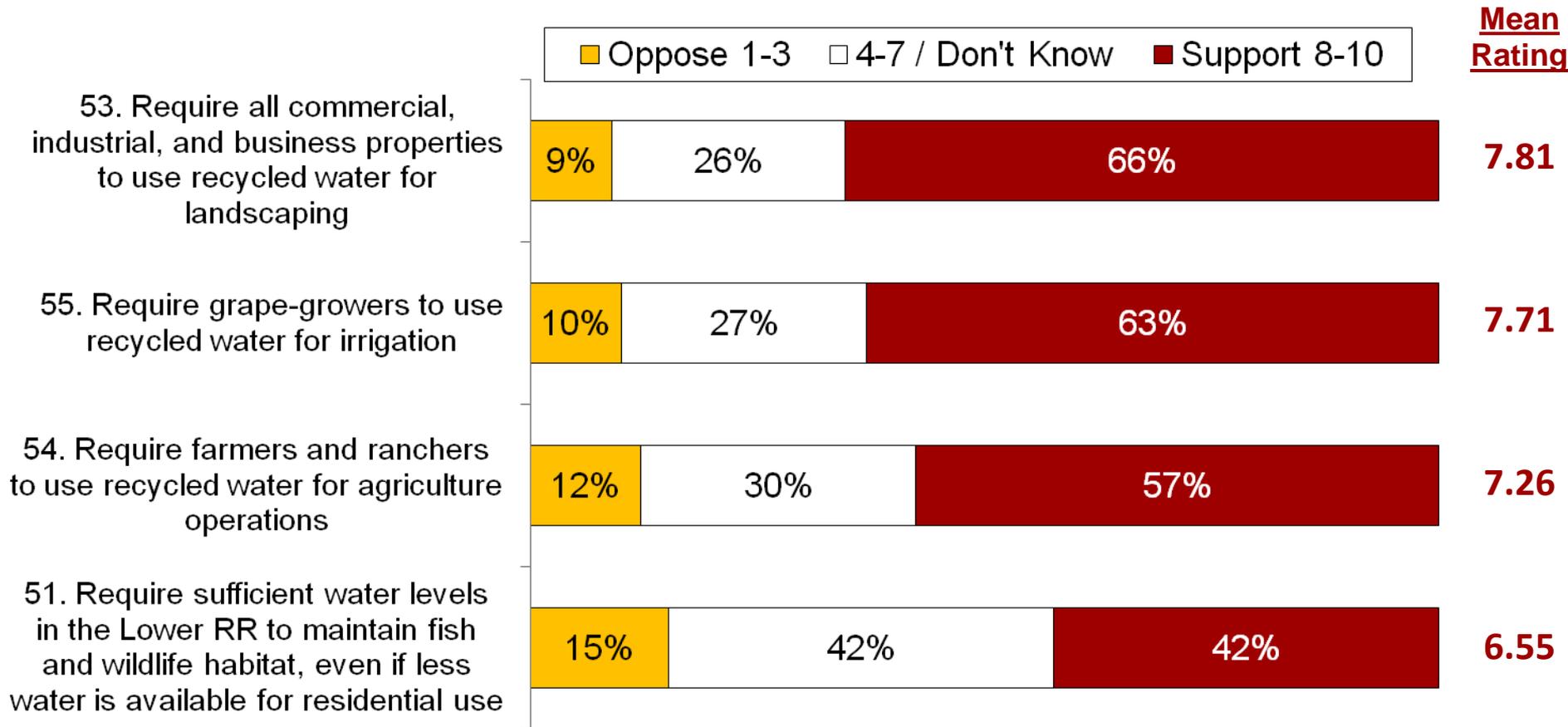
# Across the board, respondents give weak ratings to the conservation efforts of governments, businesses, and residents.

Please tell me whether you personally believe that group is doing an excellent, good, only fair, or poor job of conserving or cutting back their water use in Sonoma County.



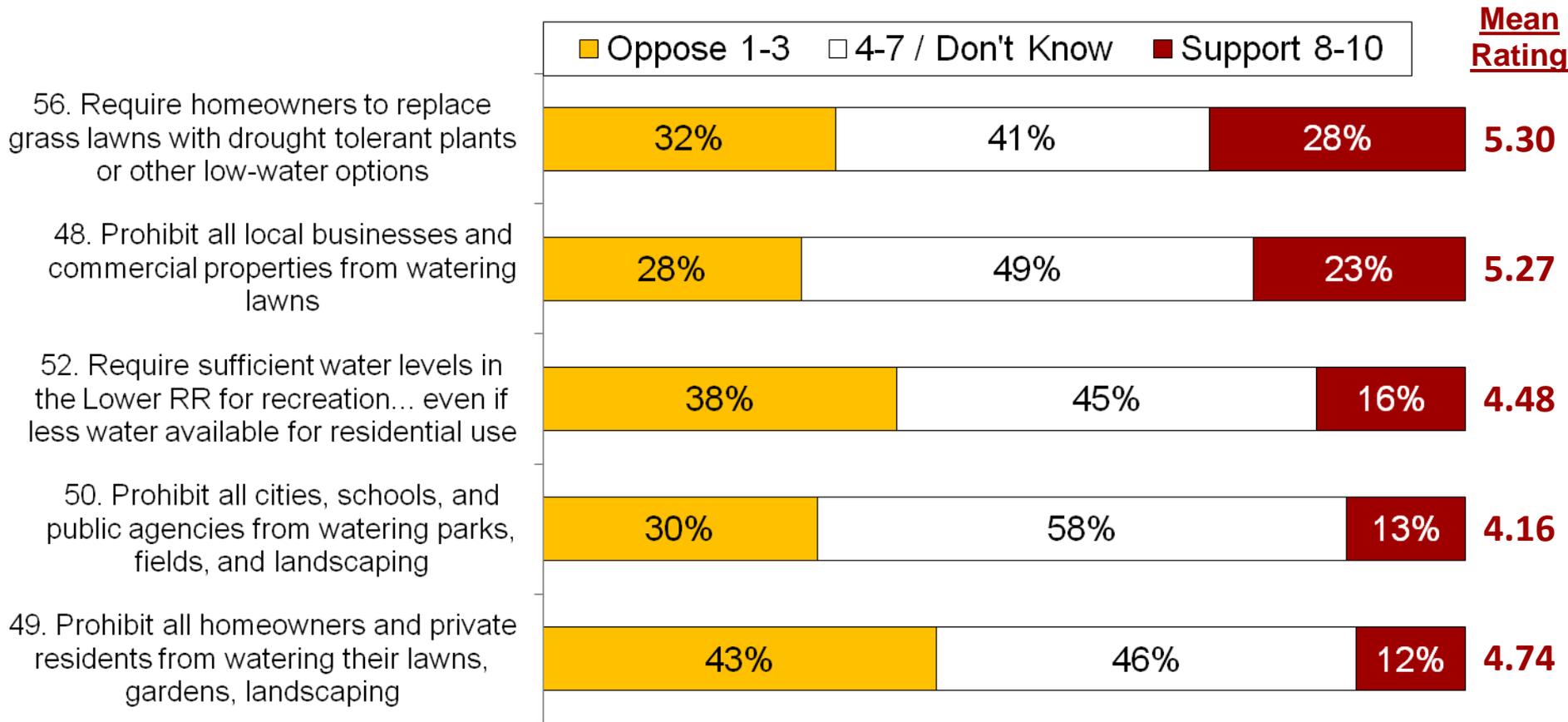
# Water restrictions on businesses and agriculture are popular.

I'm going to read you a list of actions that could be taken to cut local water use during periods of drought. Using a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 means you Strongly Oppose and 10 means you Strongly Support the idea, please rate each one.



# Directing water from residential use to recreation and prohibiting home landscape watering draw the strongest opposition.

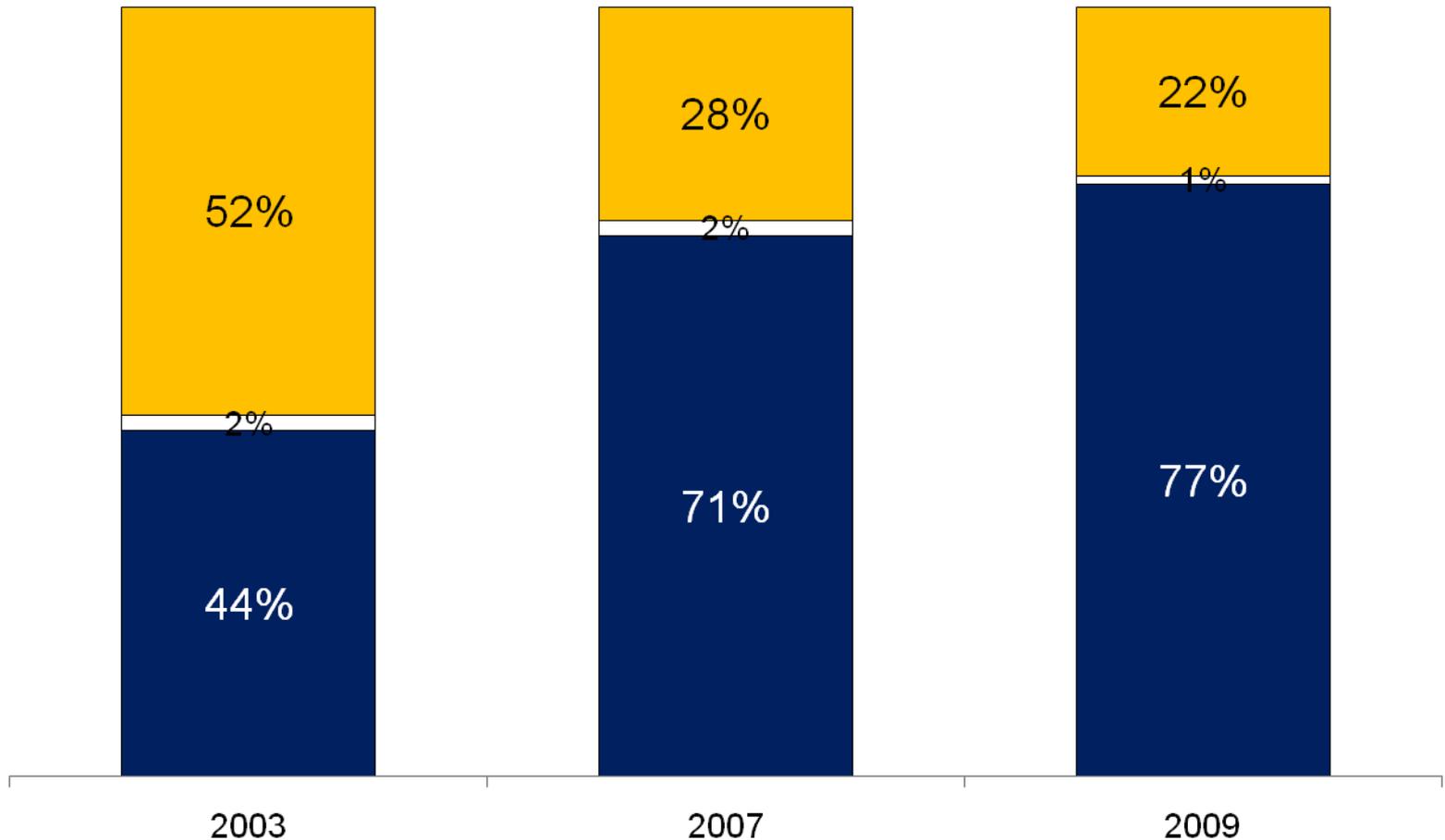
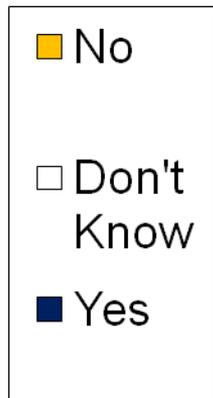
*I'm going to read you a list of actions that could be taken to cut local water use during periods of drought. Using a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 means you Strongly Oppose and 10 means you Strongly Support the idea, please rate each one.*



# *Communicating about water conservation*

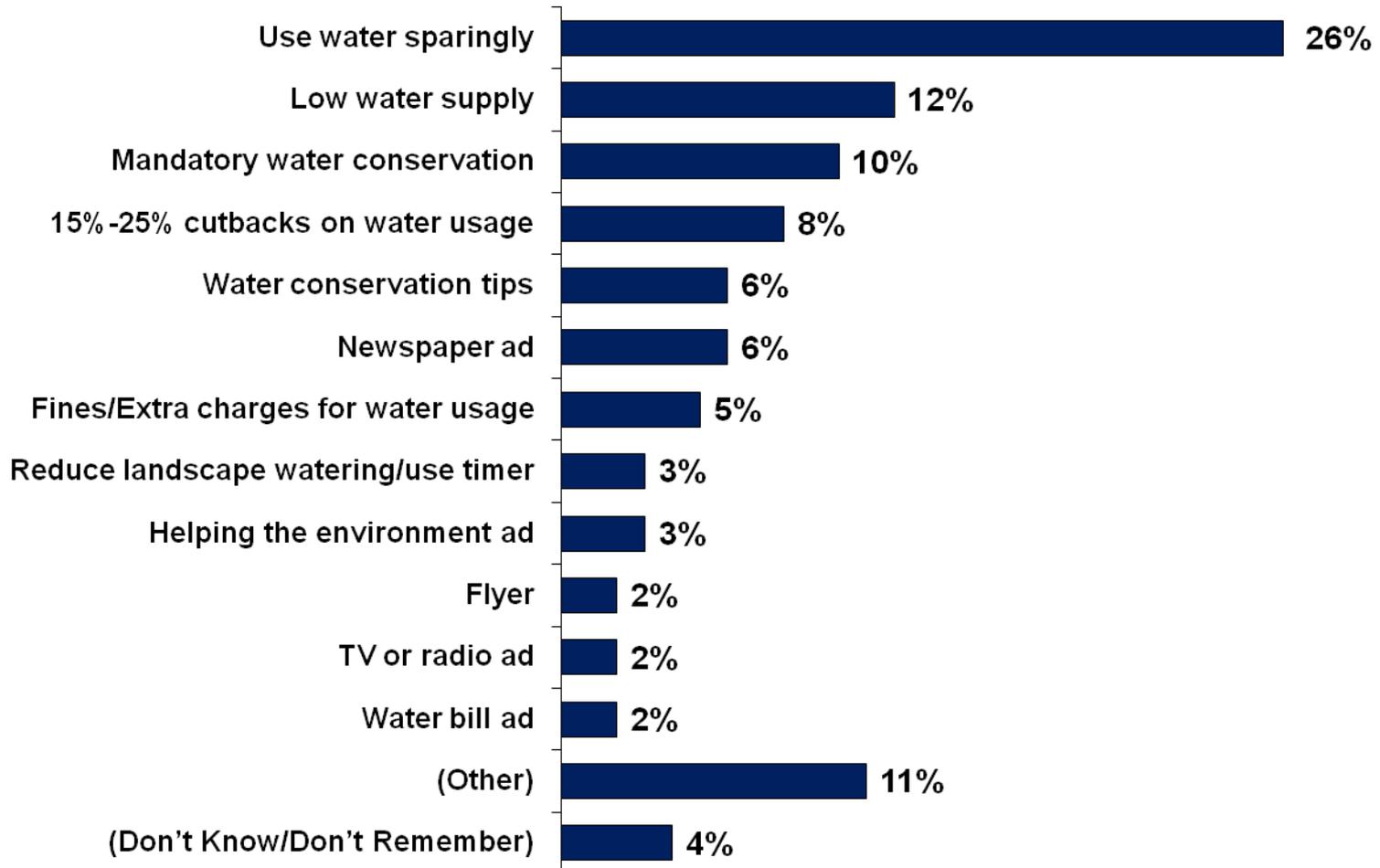
# Awareness of water conservation messages continues to increase.

Do you recall seeing or hearing anything recently about water conservation?



# Many recall hearing about the need to cut water use generally and information about the current drought.

## 34. What do you remember hearing or seeing?



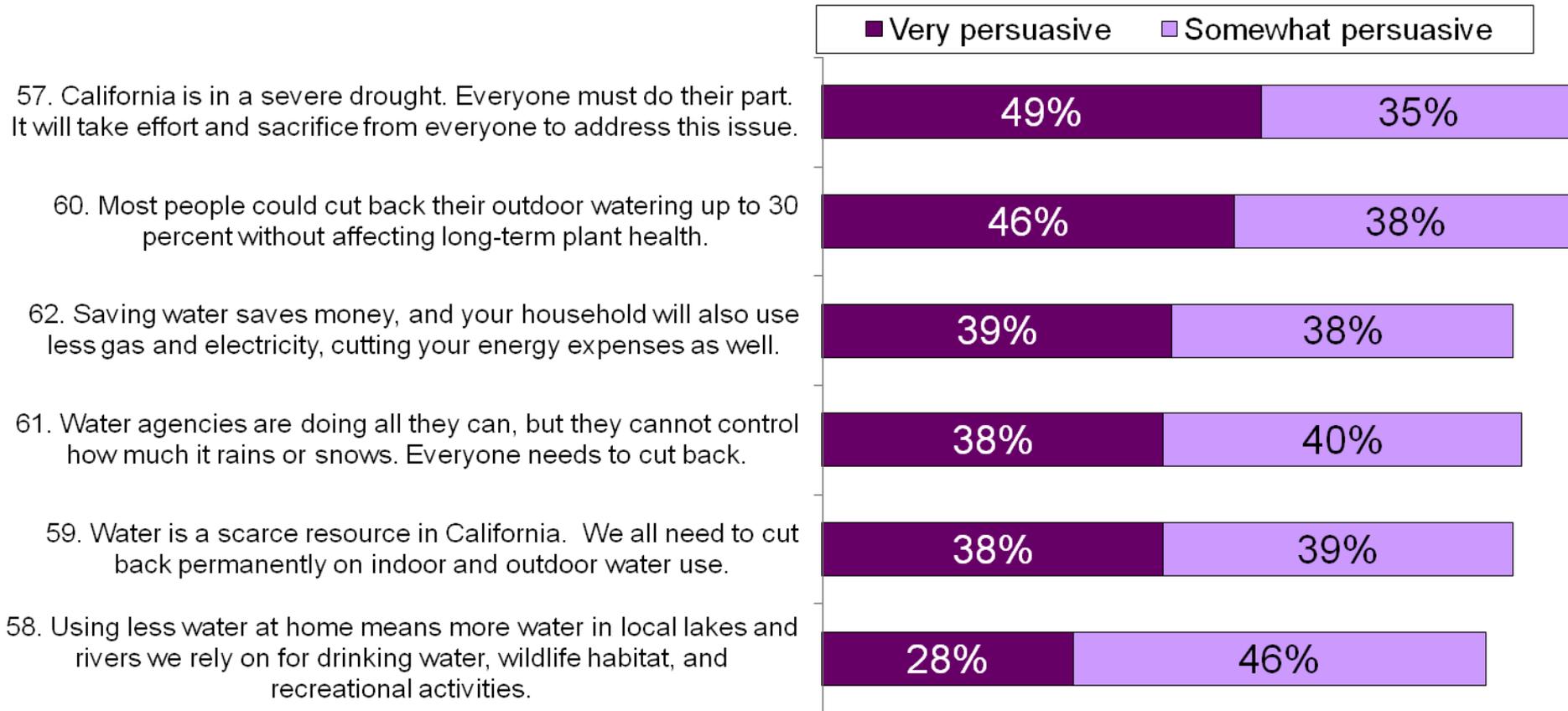
## More people are receiving conservation information on television, and fewer from the newspaper.

### 34. Where did you see or hear the information?

	2003	2007	2009
Newspaper	42%	54%	<b>47%</b>
Television	13%	14%	<b>20%</b>
Radio	7%	10%	<b>11%</b>
Mailing	16%	8%	<b>11%</b>
Friends/family	0%	0%	<b>4%</b>
Billboard	19%	6%	<b>3%</b>
Brochure/Pamphlet	14%	3%	<b>3%</b>
School	1%	1%	<b>2%</b>
Water bill	0%	0%	<b>2%</b>
Town meeting	0%	0%	<b>2%</b>
(Other)	3%	2%	<b>3%</b>
(Don't Know)	4%	3%	<b>2%</b>

# Messages emphasizing shared sacrifice on one hand and more efficient water usage can be effective.

*Please tell me if you think that information is a very persuasive, somewhat persuasive, not very persuasive, or a not at all persuasive reason for people to reduce their water usage.*

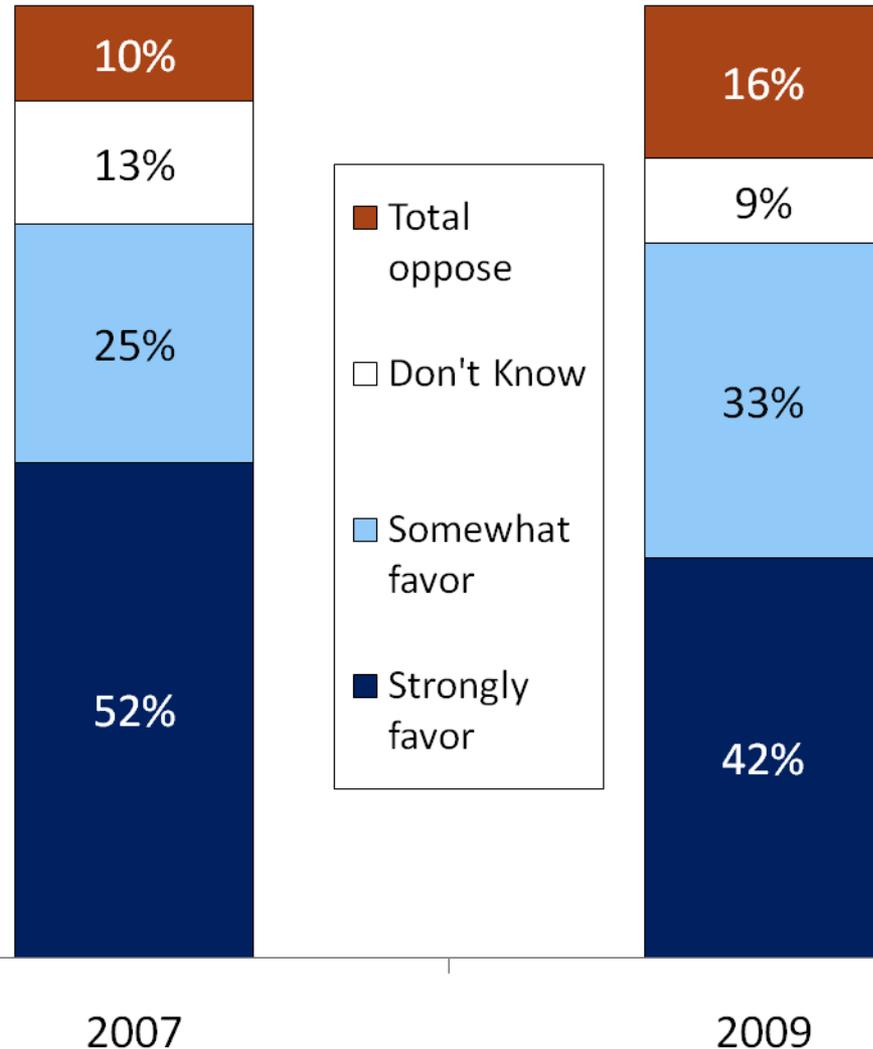


*Carbon-free water*

# Support for carbon free water has weakened slightly.

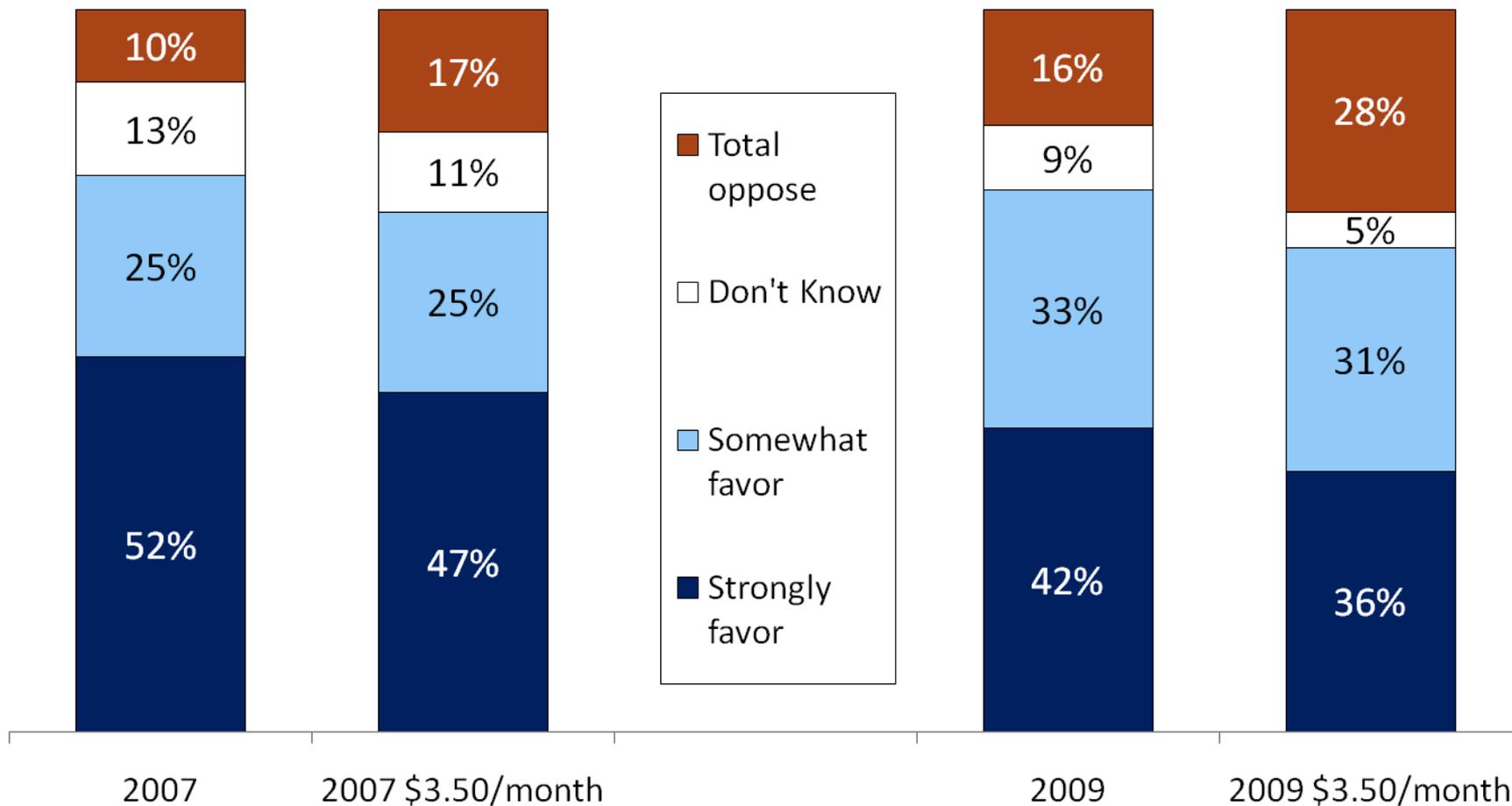
63. The carbon emissions released from conventional electric power facilities have been identified as contributing to climate change. As a water supplier, the Sonoma County Water Agency uses a great deal of electric power treating and transporting water, and is implementing a program to get its electric power from renewable sources. This will result in water produced with no carbon emissions, known as carbon free water.

Given what you've heard, do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the Agency providing carbon free water in Sonoma County?



# Support for carbon-free water declines when residents are presented with the cost.

*The cost of providing carbon free water is estimated to be an additional \$3.50 a month for the average homeowner. Given what you've heard, do you favor or oppose the Agency providing carbon free water in Sonoma County?*



# Conclusions and Recommendations

- Ratings for SCWA's work ensuring water quality, encouraging conservation, and educating youth have improved since 2007.
- However, the agency's overall job rating remains weak, with only 48% saying SCWA is doing an excellent or good job.
- A majority of voters, but not a 2/3 super majority, support the idea of a parcel tax to fund flood protection and habitat restoration.
- Voters are more likely to support sustaining water levels in the Lower Russian River for wildlife habitat than for recreational purposes.
- Support for prohibitions and requirements placed on landscape watering is weak; recasting these proposals in more positive terms (credits, incentives) may be worth exploring.
- Voters continue to support recycled water use and carbon-free water.

# Conclusions and Recommendations: Conservation

- Conservation outreach efforts should continue to take advantage of the current water shortage and high awareness of water issues.
- 44% of survey respondents know they could be doing more to save water. This group is disproportionately made up of women, voters age 35-55, and parents with kids in school.
- The most effective message for encouraging conservation is twofold:
  - 1) California is in a severe water shortage and everyone must do their part to conserve
  - 2) Most households can significantly cut back outdoor watering without harming plants