

West Basin Water Reliability 2020 and Ocean Water Desalination Survey

VCR08106

August 10th-18th, 2008

N=600 In West Basin service area

N=300 LA Basin outside service area



Objectives

- Assess support for development of local water supplies
 - Both in service area and in larger region
 - Specific focus on reliability, local control and desalination
 - Water Reliability 2020 terms
- Assess image of agencies involved
- Assess support for alternative water supply strategies
- Assess willingness to pay for local water resources

Background

- Survey preceded by focus groups to assist in design of questionnaire
- Interviews conducted by telephone both in service area and in larger LA region outside the service area (Ventura, LA and Orange Counties)
- Differences between the two regions were minimal and for the most part traceable to slightly more liberal views of voters in the service area.
 - For this PowerPoint we display data from service area only

Water as an issue

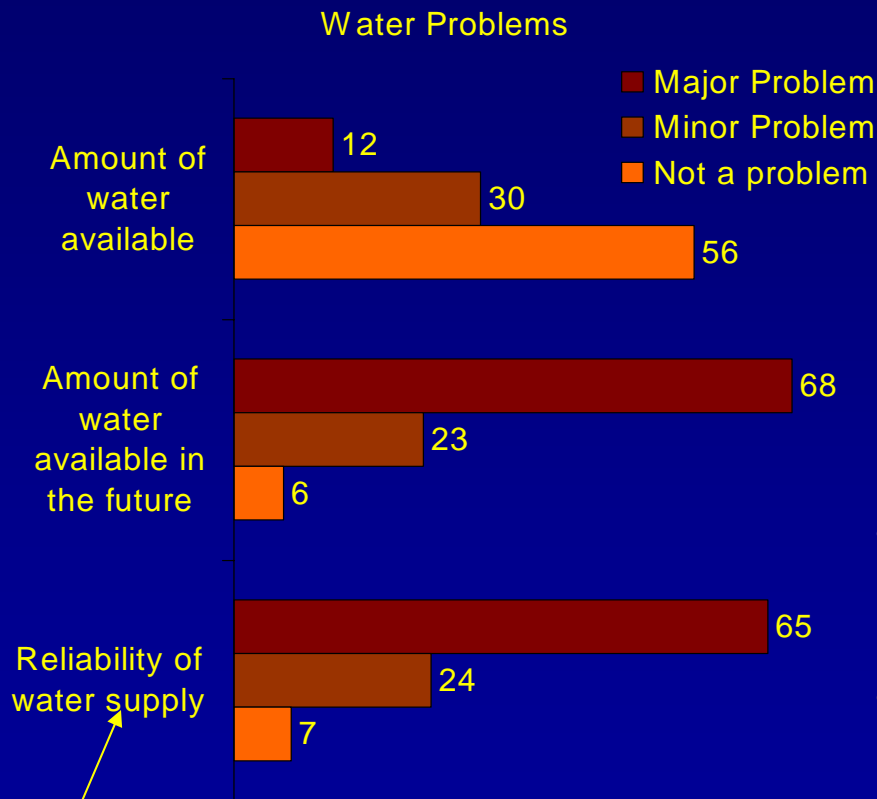
- Few people worry or think about it
- People generally don't know where there water comes from
- Most people are happy with cost
- Current supplies are not a concern, future supplies are
- When informed of threats to interruptions of water supplies, people react by saying it is a major problem

Compared to other issues water ranks as a very low priority



- When ranked with other issues very few people mention water as a top concern
- Cost of living, gas prices and education are more important priorities
- Water is not top of mind issue

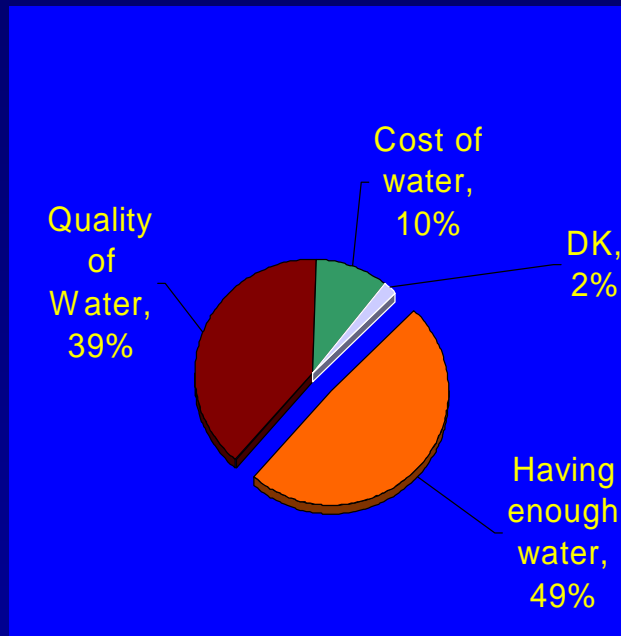
When NOT ranked against other issues water is a higher priority, but only in the context of future water supplies



The risk that the supply of water imported from other parts of the state might be interrupted through a levy failure or other events like that.

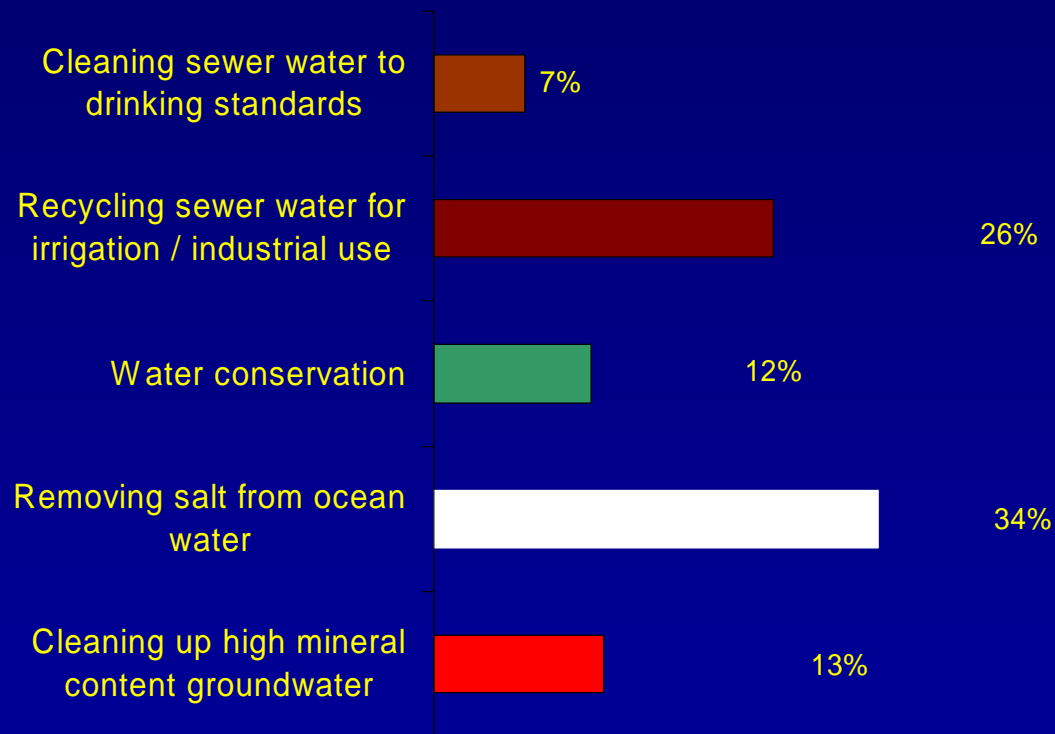
- **Voters have a tendency to say things are a problem. Fewer than 1 in 3 say 'major problem' is a very weak result. Therefore:**
 - Amount of water available today is NOT seen as a problem.
 - **Only 43% is aware supplies from Northern California have been cut by 30%**
 - **Only Future water supplies are seen as a SIGNIFICANT problem.**
- **56 & 50% said it is not a problem at all – means the water crisis information is not getting out**
- **Reliability of the water supply system is seen as a significant problem, because we fed people the information. In the focus groups no one raised the issue of supply interruptions.**
- **Have to explain the problem, before we provide solution**

Water Issues



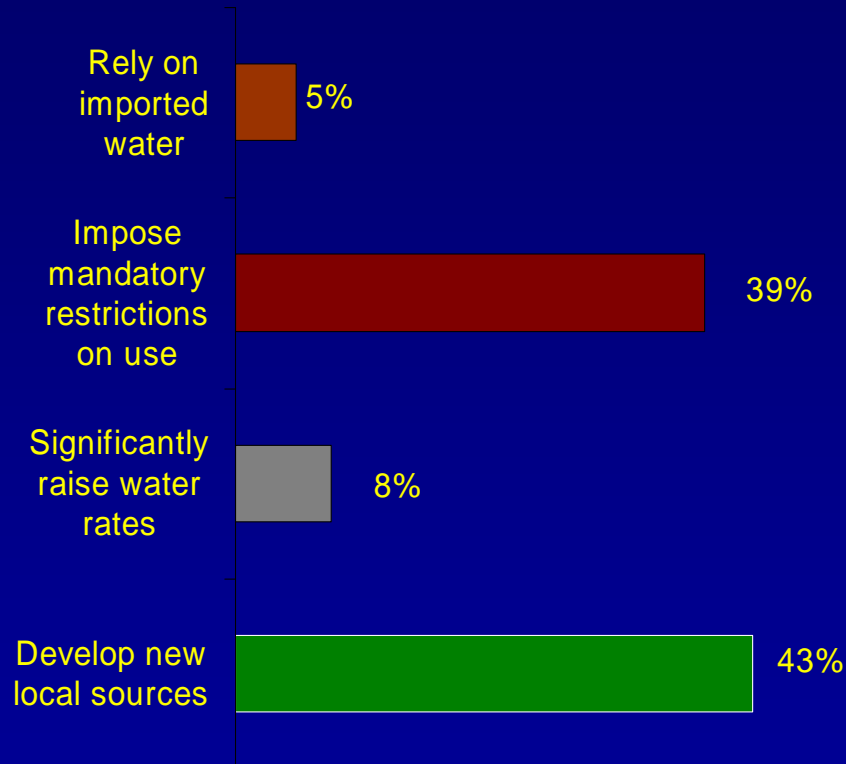
- Of the water related issues, supply is the more important concern
 - Quality close second, cost not an issue
- Since water supplies are a relatively low priority compared to other issues, it is safe to conclude that most people are happy with the cost of their water

To expand water supply, clear preference for desalination and recycling for irrigation and industrial use



- Relatively few people mention relying on conservation alone.
- Matching the focus groups desalination and recycling are popular options.
- Few people mention recycling of sewer water and storing for future use or cleaning up groundwater

Responding to less reliable supplies of imported water – New Sources OK



- **43% of service area residents claimed to be aware that imported water supplies were reduced by court order. Since there is always an amount of false positive response attached to this measure, this should be considered a low level of awareness. People do not want to appear uninformed.**
- **When informed that supply of imported water may not be reliable, by a narrow margin people prefer relying on developing new local water sources.**
 - **Surprisingly high support for mandatory restrictions (later question on same issue split 50/50 for and against)**
 - **Very little support for significantly higher rates to encourage efficient use.**

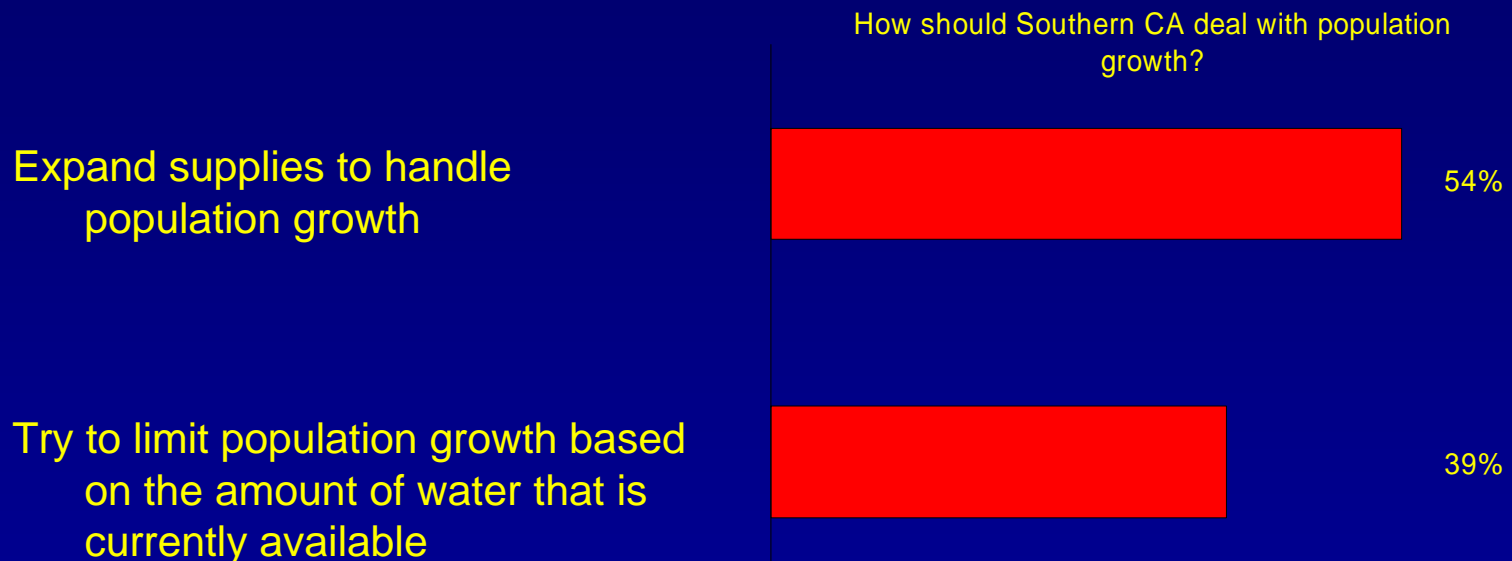
Local Sources Question

- If it came down to a choice between continuing to rely on for the most part imported water, or developing new locally controlled sources of water...
- 85% said new sources
- Only 10% said rely on imported
- That is a strong endorsement

Reliability of Imported water #2

- Awareness of reliability issue correlates with news consumption: much higher among males > 45.
 - Also higher among Republicans and contributors to environmental causes.
- Demographic differences are small:
 - Republicans slightly more likely to support expanding supplies
 - Democrats, environmental donors slightly more likely to support conservation measures.
- Awareness does not change preference: people who are aware of reliability issue support conservation vs. expansion by roughly the same proportions as people who are not aware.

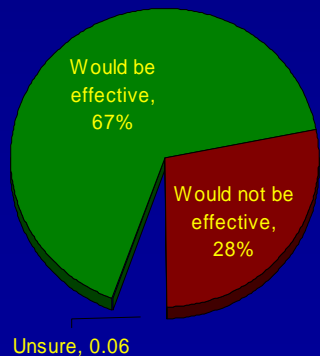
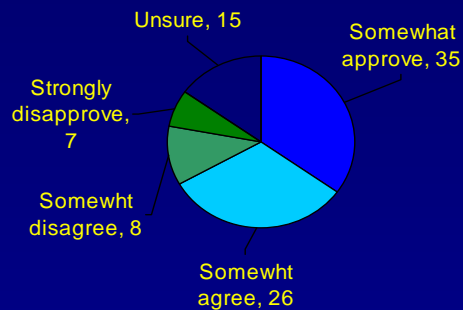
Same finding when put in the context of growth: substantial numbers support limiting population to available supplies, although narrow majority prefers expanding supplies... Could be problem...but



- Correlation with demographics is weak, including environmentalism
- Very weak correlation with earlier question relating expanded supply / conservation to reliability of imported water
- This data does not match focus groups in which most participants, on reflection supported expanding supplies
- **Our conclusion: these attitudes malleable, not strongly held, subject to wording and framing differences.**

Support for water conservation

Approval current conservation programs



Focus groups suggested people were unhappy about being pushed into further conservation efforts; rationale: "We're doing our share, but most aren't and my efforts are going to waste"

Survey does not confirm this; we did find people were upset that others did not make the effort, but this did not affect willingness to conserve

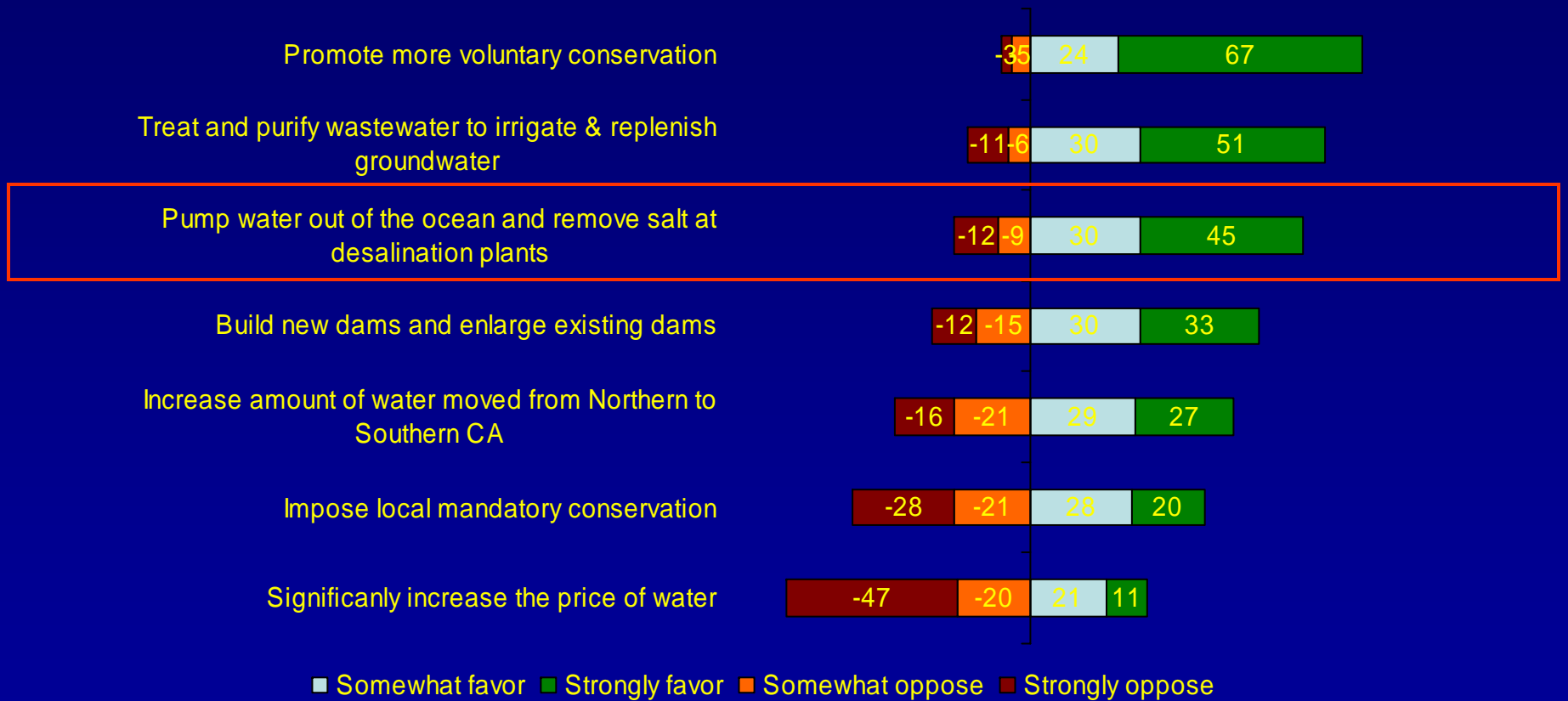
- People approve of current conservation efforts (67%)
- People are willing to conserve more (65%)
- People have substantial faith in the efficacy of further conservation efforts (67%)

In order to substantially reduce the amount of water imported from other parts of the state, do you think additional efforts to conserve water would be effective or not effective?

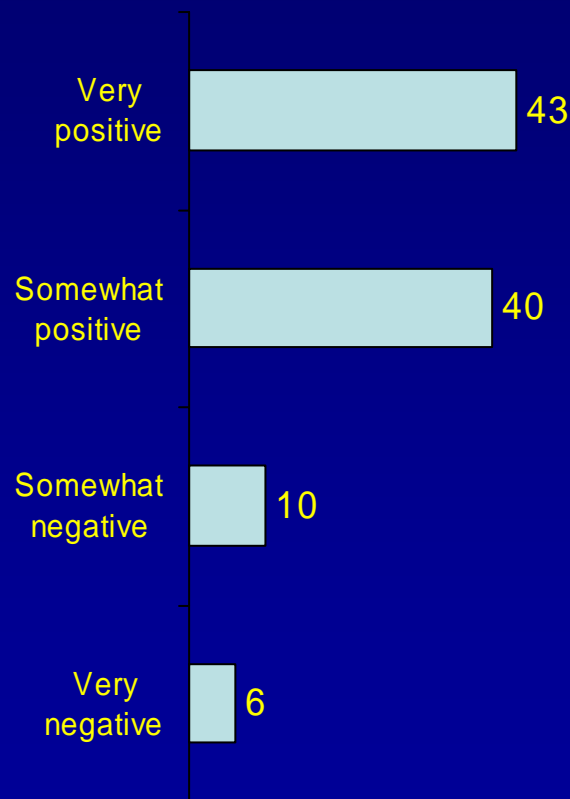
Conservation Summary:

- On the one hand in focus groups people said they were upset at other's efforts to conserve, which led them to question whether further conservation efforts would be effective and suggested they were getting tired of hearing about the need to conserve. Focus groups are not representative and should not be considered.
- On the other hand the survey indicates that while people deplore other's lack of effort to conserve, people who said they were upset at other's lack of effort on conservation were more likely to say they were willing to conserve more
- Data reported below provides one clue:
 - Voluntary conservation_ is strongly supported
 - Mandatory conservation (rationing) gets a very mixed response
- Between 40% and 50% of public in service area is strongly committed to conservation efforts; this leads us to conclude that conservation should always be embraced and part of the rhetoric: *Desalination as part of a comprehensive plan that includes conservation, etc. etc.*

Desalination is very attractive. Most options are supported



Very positive reaction to more elaborate description of desalination



Here is some more information on ocean water desalination. After you hear it please tell me whether your overall reaction is positive or negative. It involves pumping water out of the ocean, to a filtration plant. At the filtration plant salt is removed and water quality is brought up to drinking water standards. Salt water is pumped back into the ocean, while clean water is pumped into the local water supply.

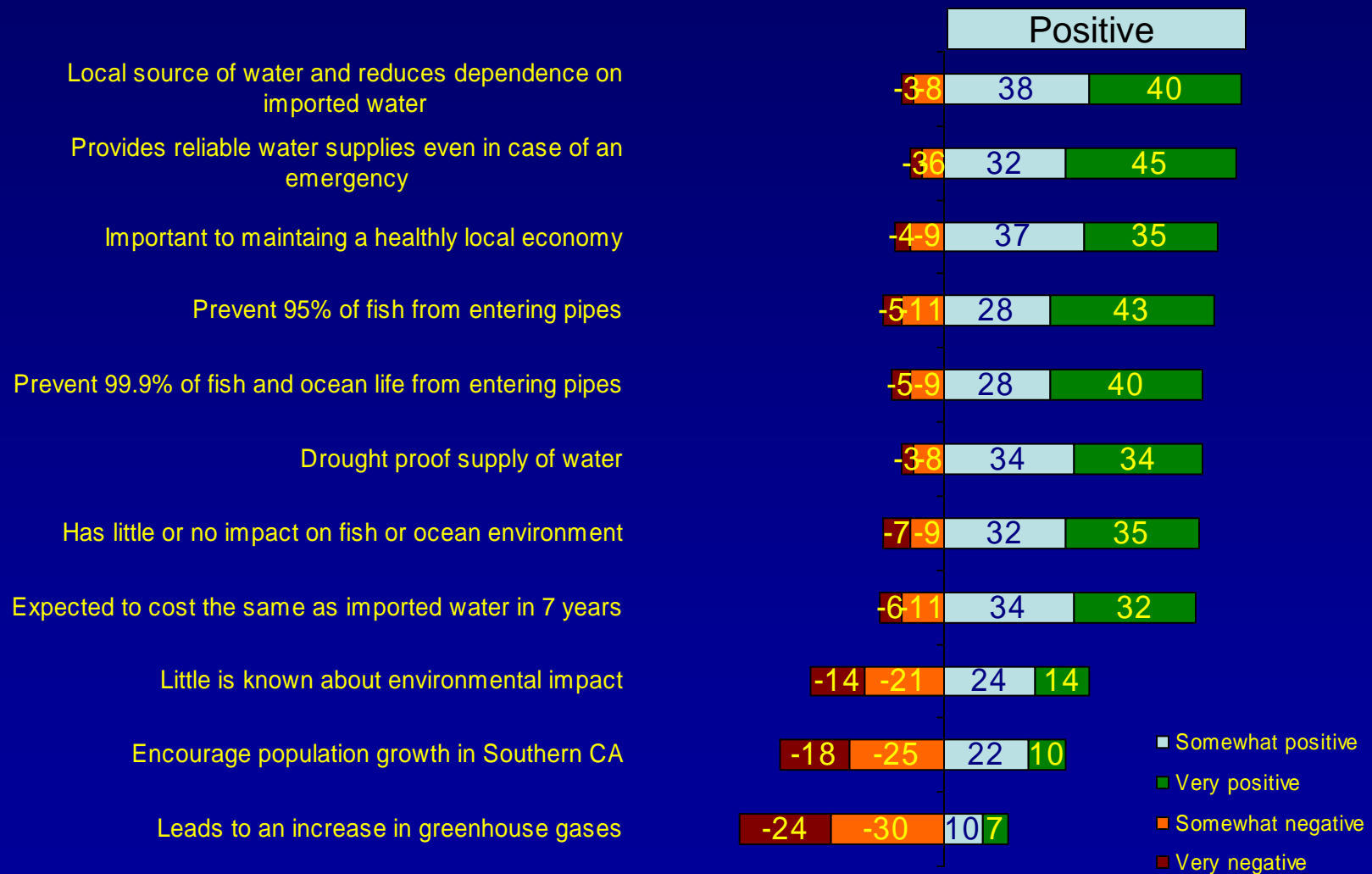
Stronger support from:

- Republicans
- Men > 45
- **Coastal portion of service area**

Weaker support from:

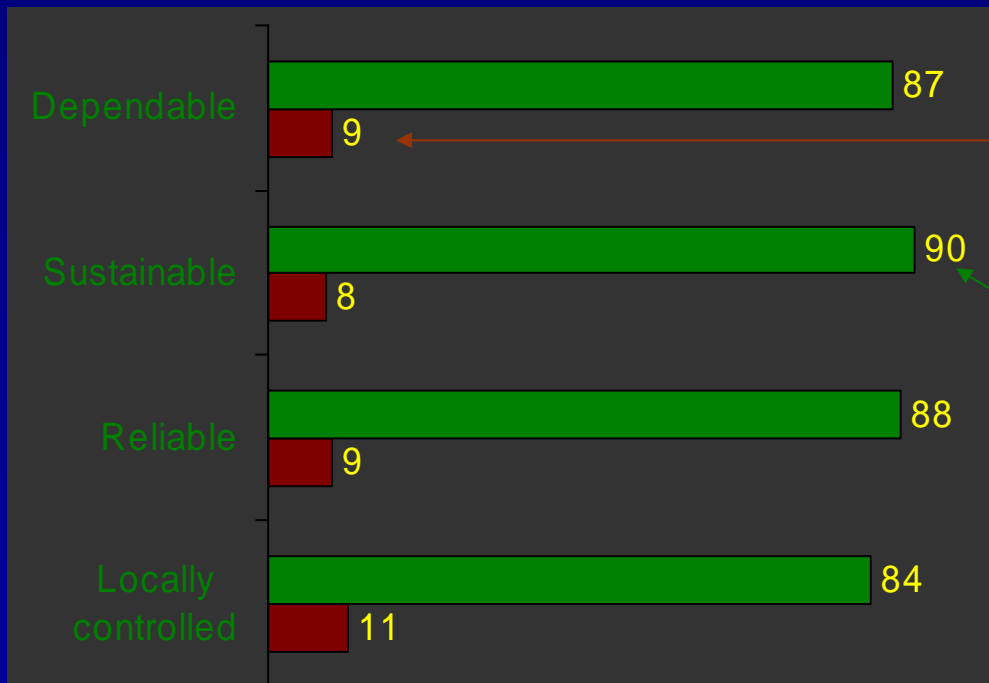
- Inland portions
- Younger (<45)
- Democrats and Independents

Desal Messaging: some reaction to environmental concerns, but in general the reasons to go forward pack more of a punch.



Word choice

Using split sampling (asking different portions of the sample slightly different versions of the same question), we tried to determine which word had the strongest positive reaction. The results show very small differences between dependable, sustainable, reliable or locally controlled. Conclusion: any of these phrases would be effective. Focus groups could not define sustainable, did not know what it meant.

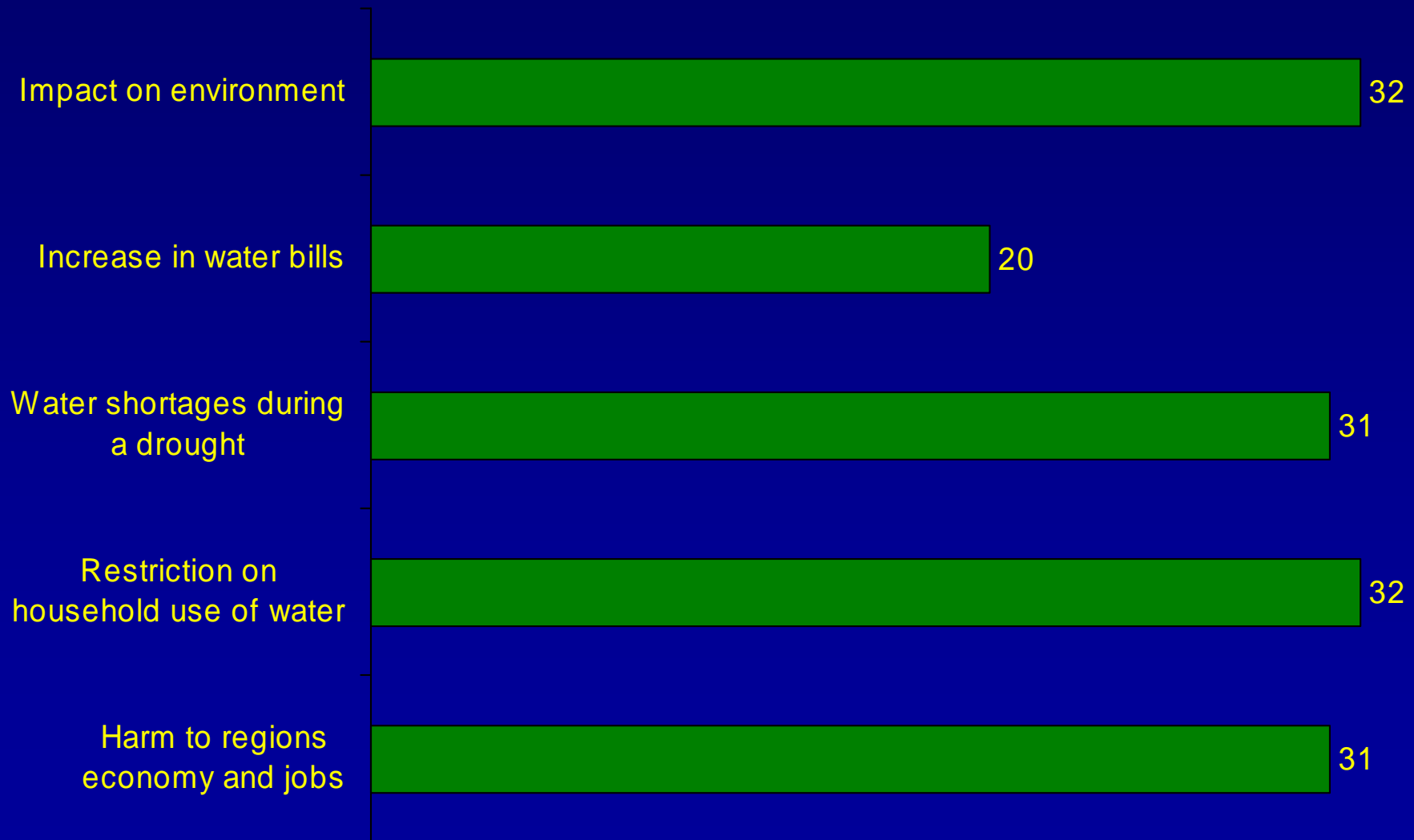


Continue to rely for the most part on imported water

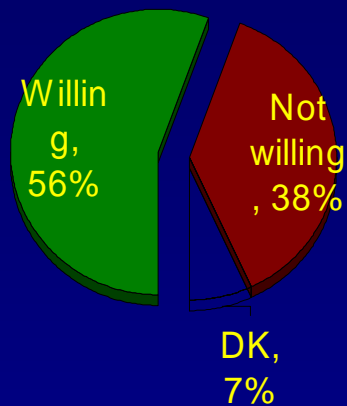
vs.

Develop new (sustainable / reliable / dependable / locally controlled) sources of water

If there were a water shortage, which would concern you most?



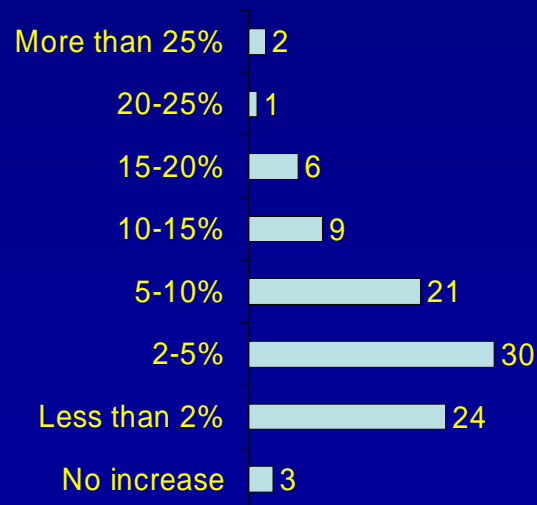
Funding: Higher rates



56% is willing to pay more. This is a relatively high result. Survey matches focus groups in this regard.

Wording:

To have reliable water supplies that would be sufficient to get the area through a 3 year drought, would you be willing to pay higher water rates or not?



Follow up suggests the amount people are willing to pay more is relatively small, 10% or less

Specific proposal: recycling, conservation, desalination, 20% rate hike.



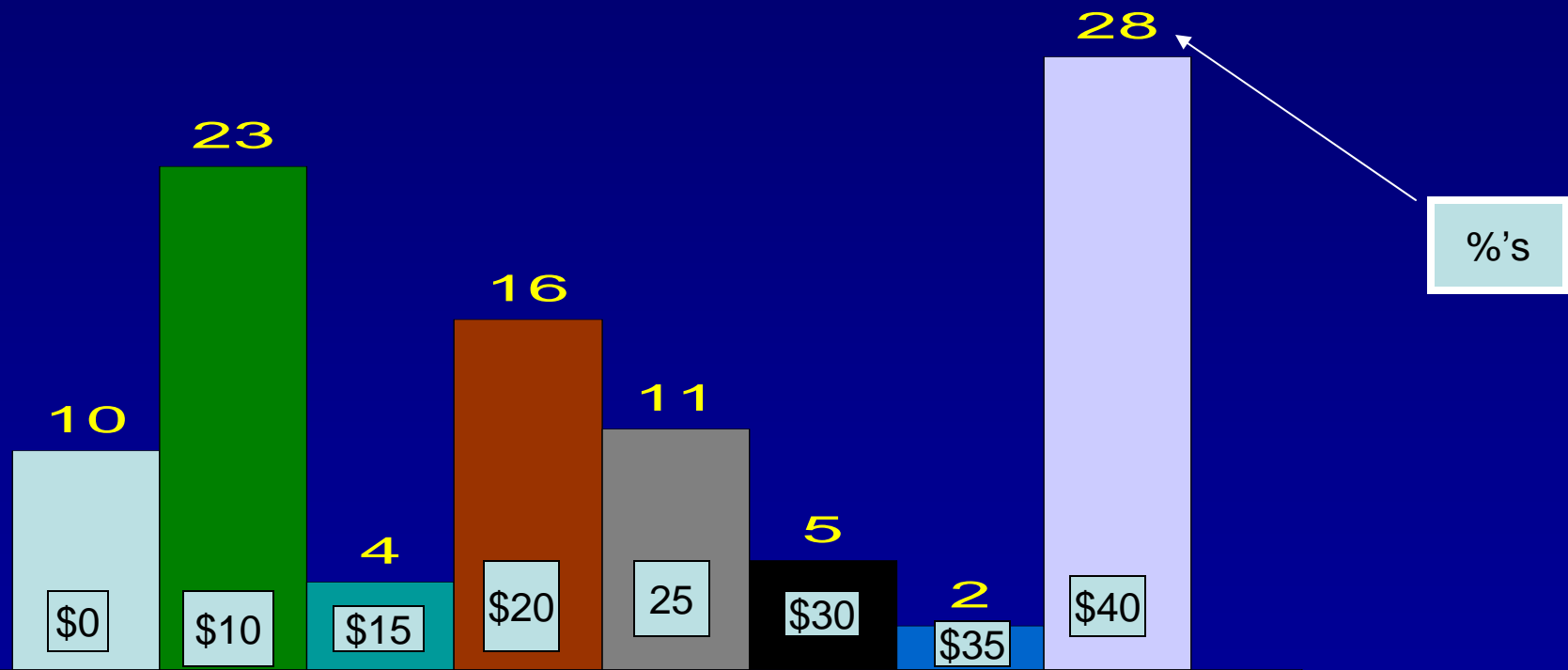
Currently Southern California relies on imported water for 65% of total water use. Some people are proposing to cut this from 65% to 35% because the supply of imported water is becoming less reliable. This would be done through more recycling, more conservation and ocean water desalination, and would increase water rates by 20%. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?

54% favor, weak positive response.

Good news it won't cost 20% more, it will be about equal to buying more imported water

Per parcel tax alternative

Here are some possible increases in property taxes that residential property owners might be asked to pay in order to make local water supplies more reliable. Please tell me how much you'd be willing to pay...just stop me when I get to the right amount.



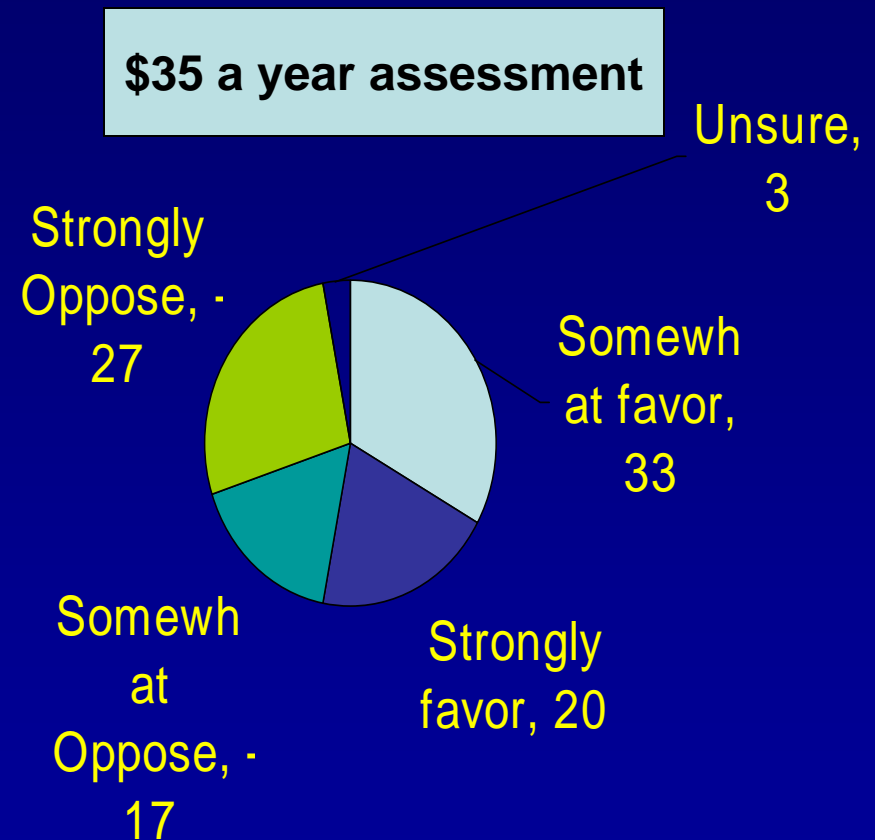
- No increase
- 15 dollars a year
- 25 dollars a year
- 35 dollars a year

- 10 dollars a year
- 20 dollars a year
- 30 dollars a year
- 40 dollars a year

Specific \$35 per parcel tax alternative

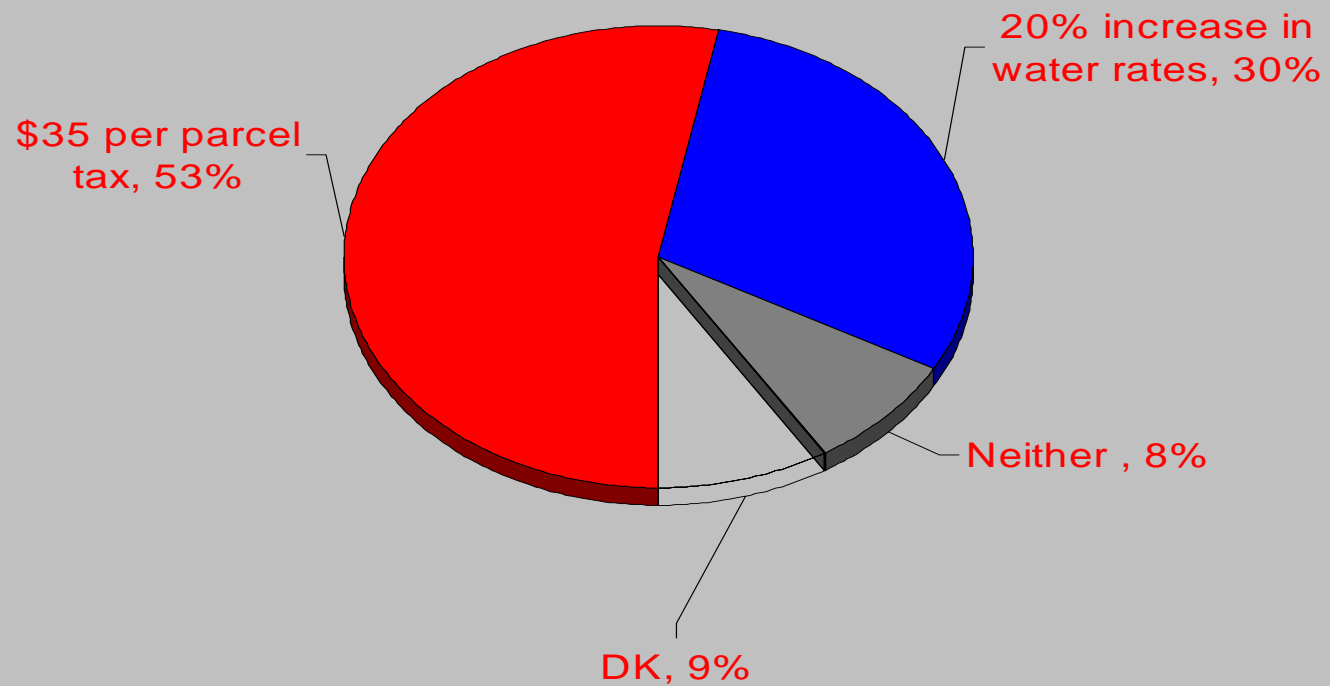
Similar level of support for per parcel property tax funding. No agreement on appropriate amount. Narrow majority (53%) supports \$35 / annum per parcel tax.

Correlated with willingness to pay for expanded water supplies. No correlation with party: similar levels of support from Republicans and Democrats.



Given a choice, per parcel tax is preferred

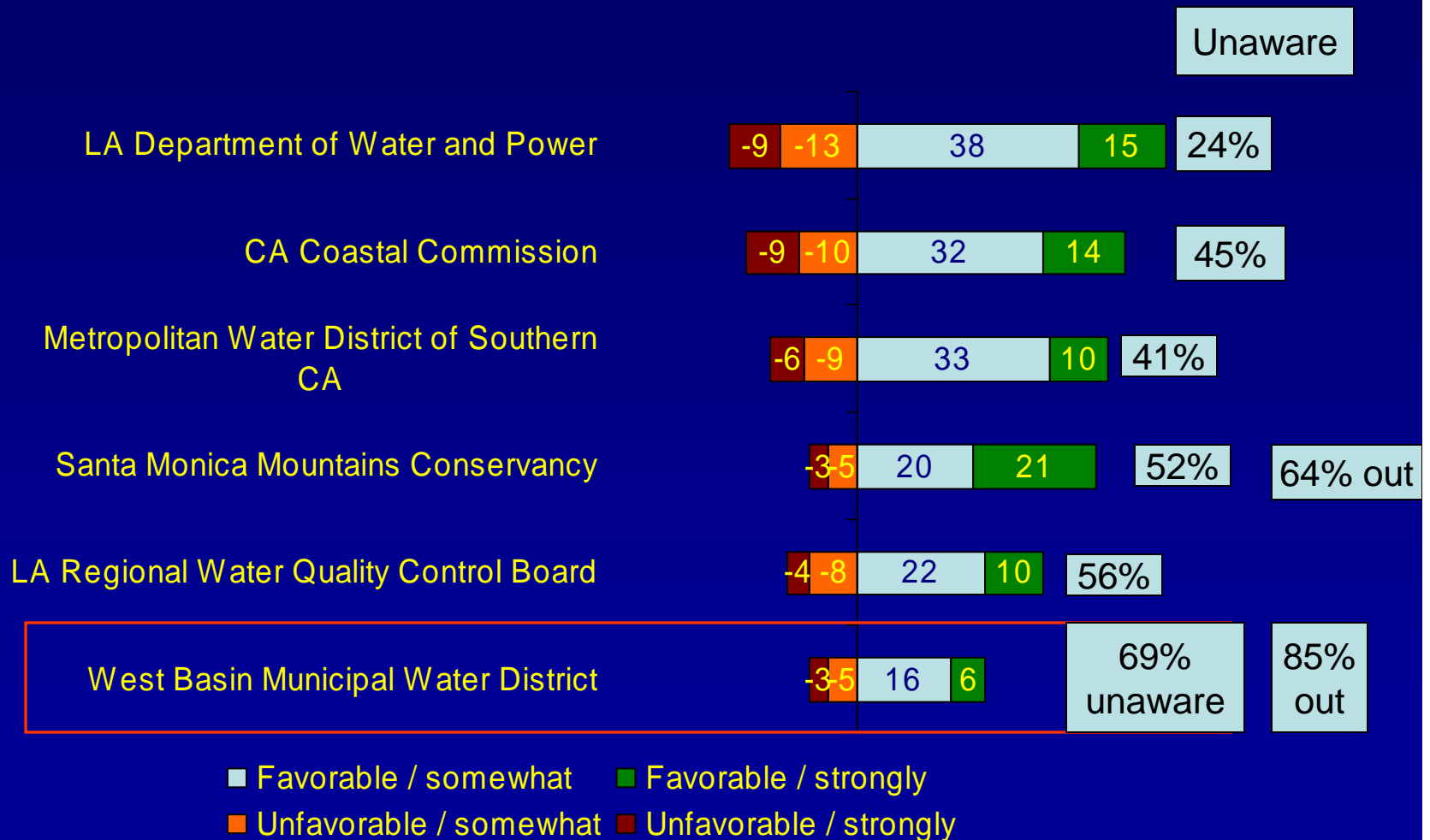
which would be the best funding mechanism



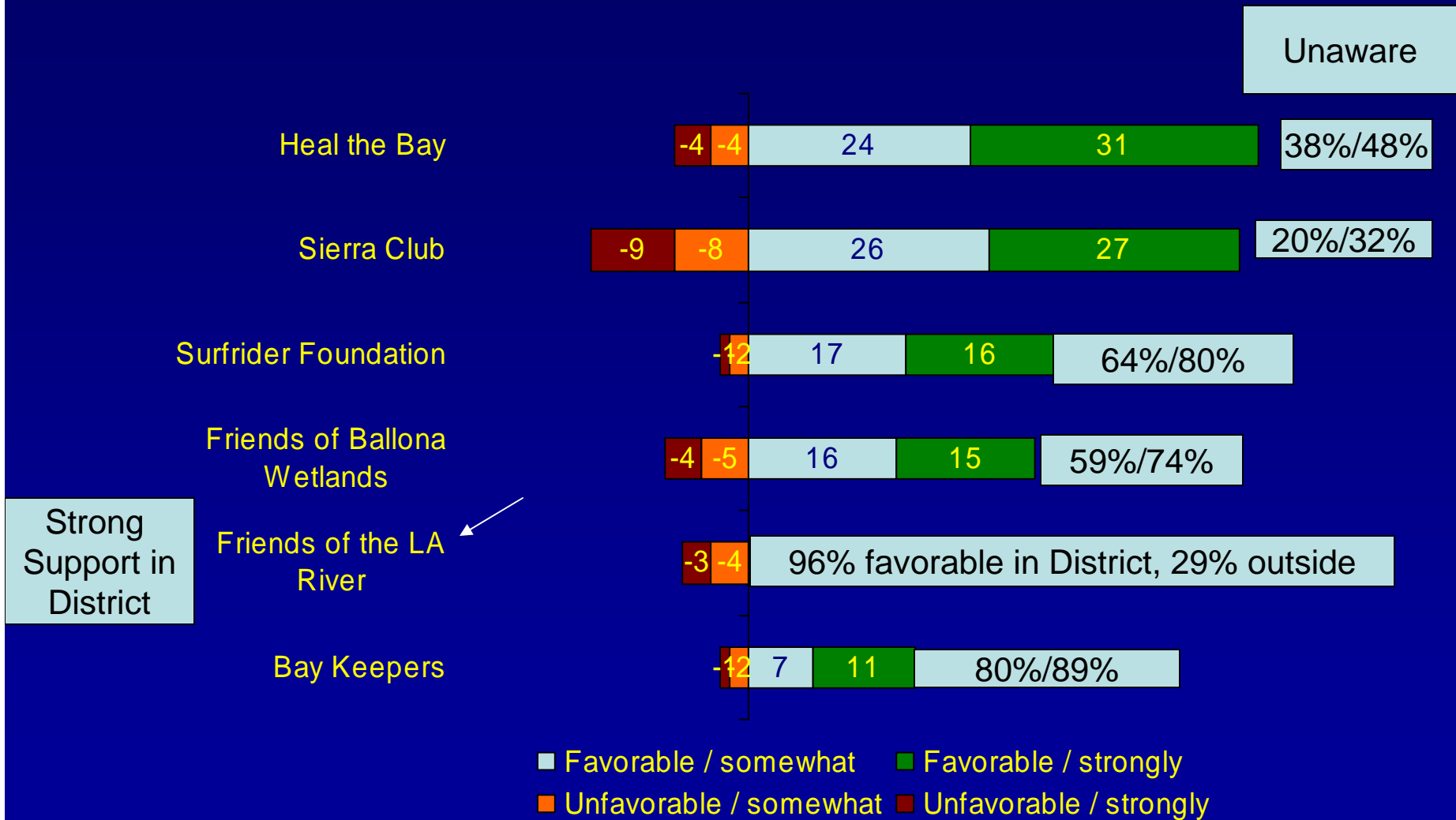
Summary: Willingness to pay

- Moderate willingness to pay
- Preference for a \$35 per parcel tax over 20% rate increase.
- Few significant demographic differences

West Basin mostly unknown

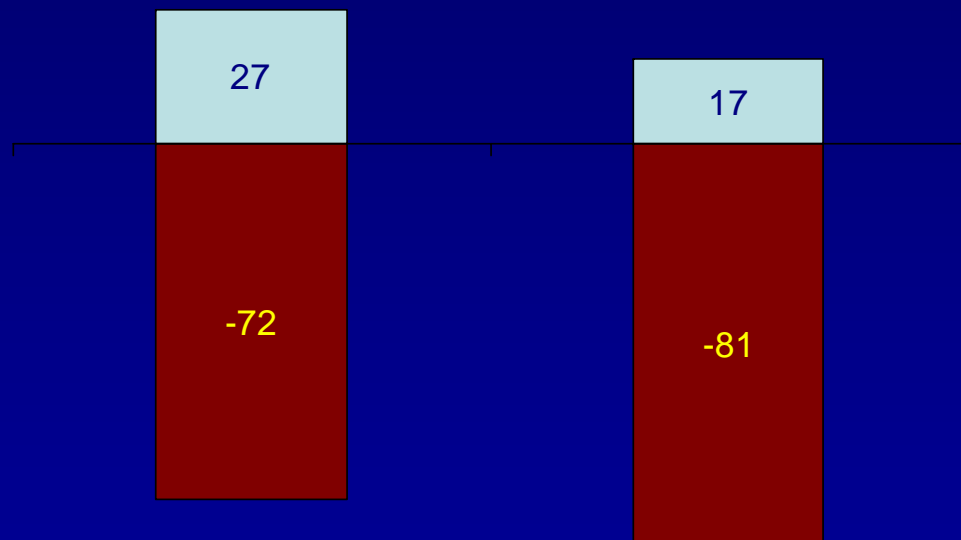


Environmental groups



Low awareness of West Basin programs, positive reaction to direct potable reuse

Awareness

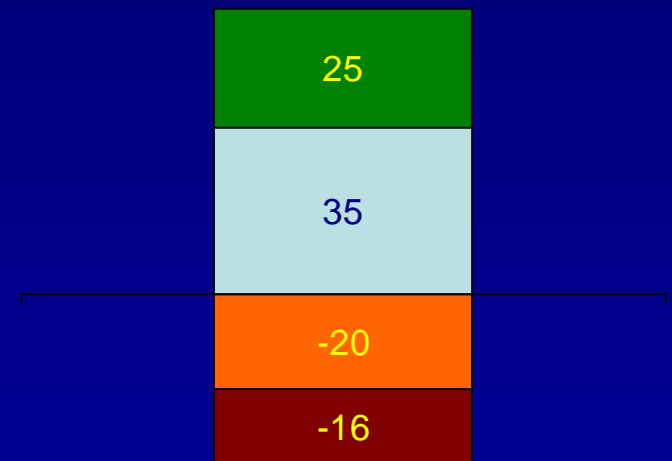


Provides imported and recycled water to the coastal party of LA

Developed 5 types of water from irrigation to ultra-pure for industrial use

■ Aware ■ Not Aware

Take sewer water and purify so its more pure than bottled water and deliver to people's homes



■ Very negative
 ■ Somewhat negative
 ■ Very positive
 ■ Somewhat positive

Water desalination is a safer option than mandatory conservation for local elected officials

