



Madison Water Utility

Know Your H₂O Survey Report

2016



Contents

Introduction	5
Survey results	6
Highlights	6
Know Your H ₂ O	7
Conservation	10
Water quality and safety	14
Cost	18
Water mains and infrastructure	19
Communication and Outreach	19
Appendix	20

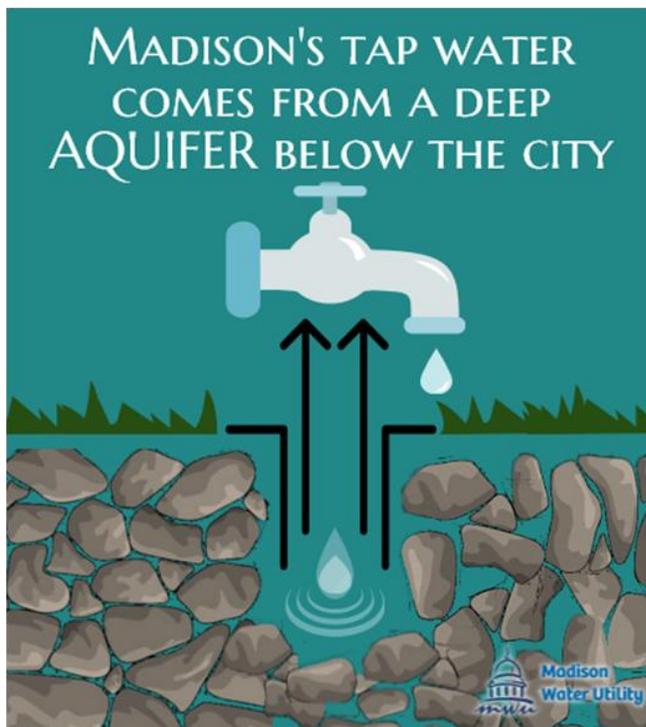
Introduction

In the summer of 2016, Madison Water Utility launched its “Know Your H₂O” survey campaign. Over a thousand people took the 14-question survey aimed at gathering feedback on critical water issues like infrastructure, safety, sustainability and cost.

Madison uses 22 high-capacity wells across the city to pump water from underground aquifers, and Madison Water Utility has recently stepped-up public outreach efforts around protecting our groundwater from pollutants like road salt and other chemicals.

The goal of the survey was two-fold: to gather feedback while simultaneously raising awareness and educating consumers. To further these education goals, a few infographics were placed as a follow-up to relevant questions in the survey.

Survey infographics:



The Know Your H₂O survey represents the first time Madison Water Utility attempted to gather feedback from everyone who uses Madison water, not just bill-paying customers. It is also Madison Water Utility’s most comprehensive survey to date.

Survey distribution and response

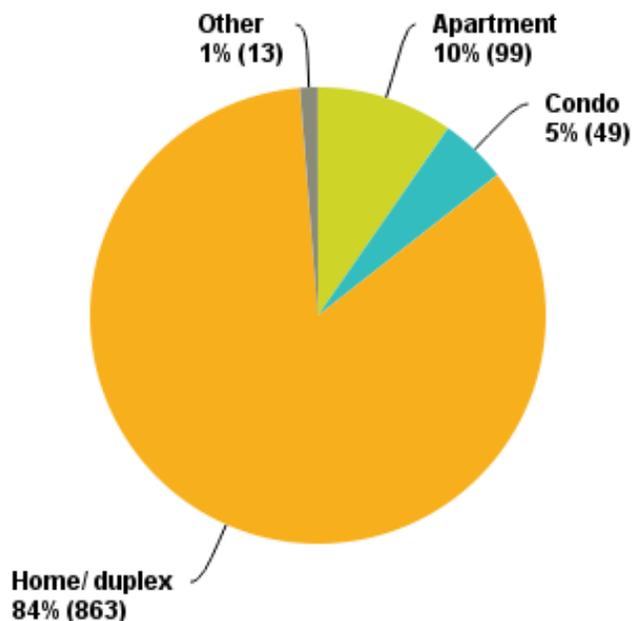
The survey could be taken in both English and Spanish. It launched on July 13, 2016 and closed on September 6, 2016. The survey was promoted on Madison Water Utility’s website, social media, and

links were sent to email list subscribers, alders, and neighborhood associations leaders and listservs. The survey could also be taken in person at Water Wagon events that took place throughout the city.

A total of 1,041 people responded to the survey.

Demographics

There was one demographic question on the survey about type of dwelling:



Survey results

Highlights

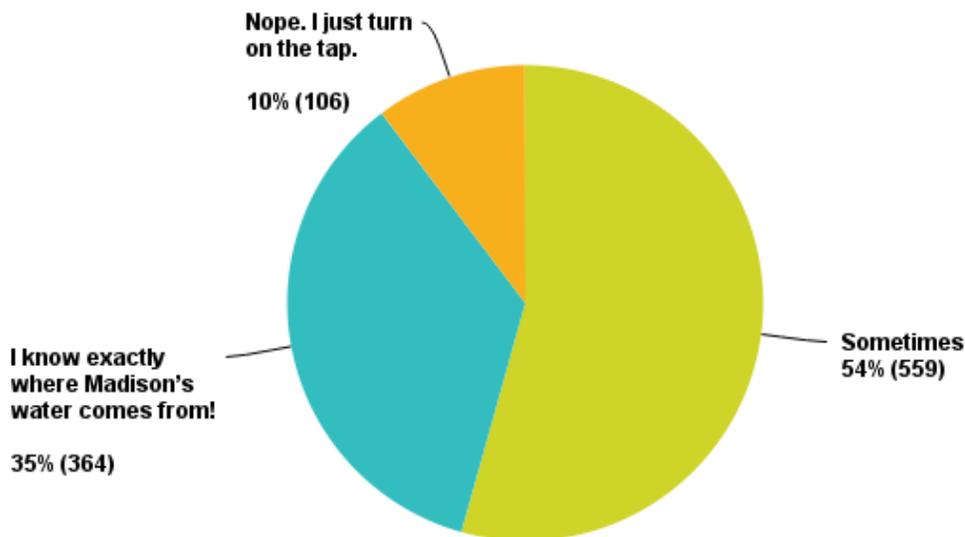
- More than 70 percent of Madisonians are actively working to conserve water,
- Only 35 percent of Madisonians know exactly where their water comes from. Ten percent admit they turn on the tap without ever stopping to think about the source of their water.
- Respondents who know exactly where their water comes from are twice as likely to conserve as those who don't really think about the source of their water.
- 83 percent of survey respondents listed quality and safety as their top concern when it comes to their water.
- While nearly 90 percent say they believe Madison's water is safe to drink, fewer than half actually drink water straight from the tap. About 43 percent drink filtered, and 9 percent say they buy bottled water or fill plastic jugs at the grocery store.

Know Your H₂O

Knowing our water source is a critical first step toward protecting it. Only 35 percent of respondents knew exactly where their water comes from, and 10 percent admit they turn on the tap without thinking about the source of their water.

Over 80 percent of respondents chose “Water quality and safety” as their number one issue. Though fewer than 10 percent of respondents listed “Conservation” or “Water mains & infrastructure” as their first choice, they were popular second choices (35 percent and 30 percent respectively).

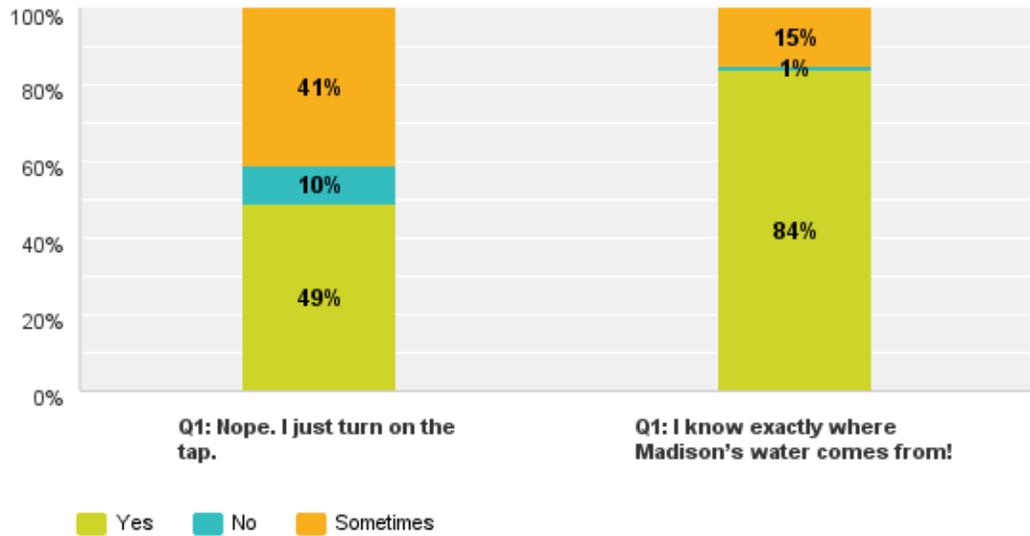
Question: Do you ever think about where Madison's tap water comes from?



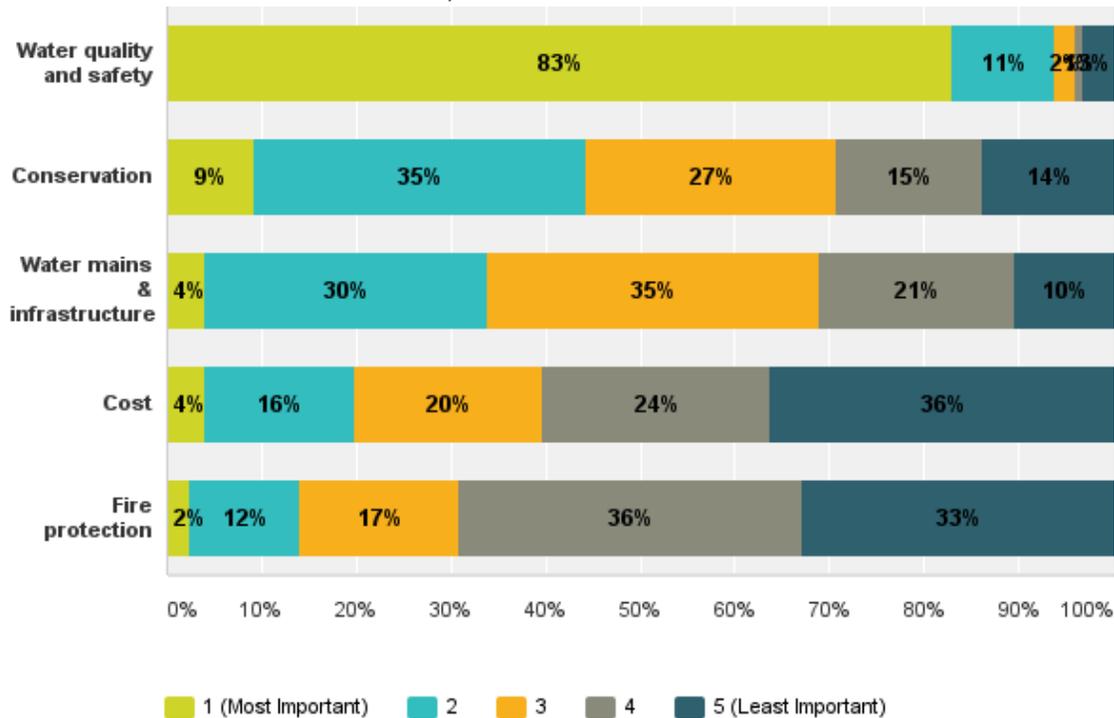
Survey results also demonstrated a positive correlation between knowing where Madison's tap water comes from and active conservation:

Q5 Do you try to conserve water?

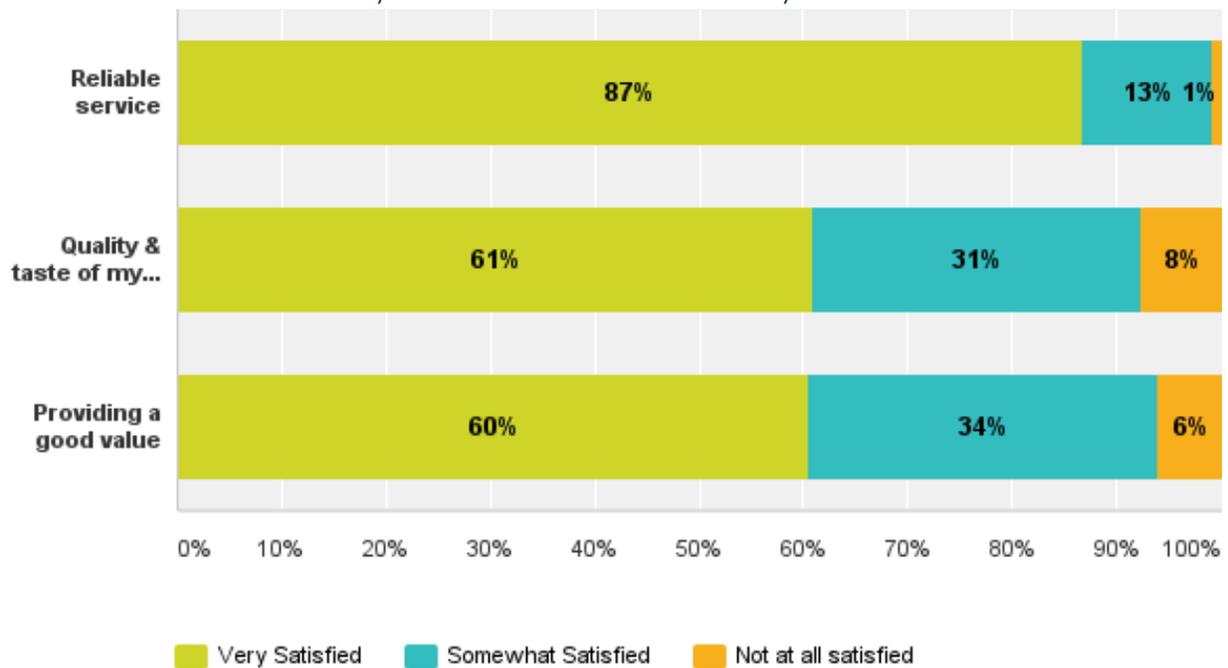
Answered: 459 Skipped: 11



Question: Which water issues do you care about the most?



Question: How satisfied are you with Madison Water Utility when it comes to...



Relevant comments:

-It's hard to rank the water issues. Lack of maintenance really concerns me. So does all the other things!

-Overall I am pleased with the quality and delivery of fresh water but believe with the challenges of a growing population Madison can increase efforts to add more water pollution controls...

-Although I'm computer savvy, and have lived in Madison for over 20 years. I didn't know about your water programs until today. Maybe you should run short ads like MG&E to inform the public about them. Thanks.

-Please keep up the good works and DO NOT PRIVATIZE!!!

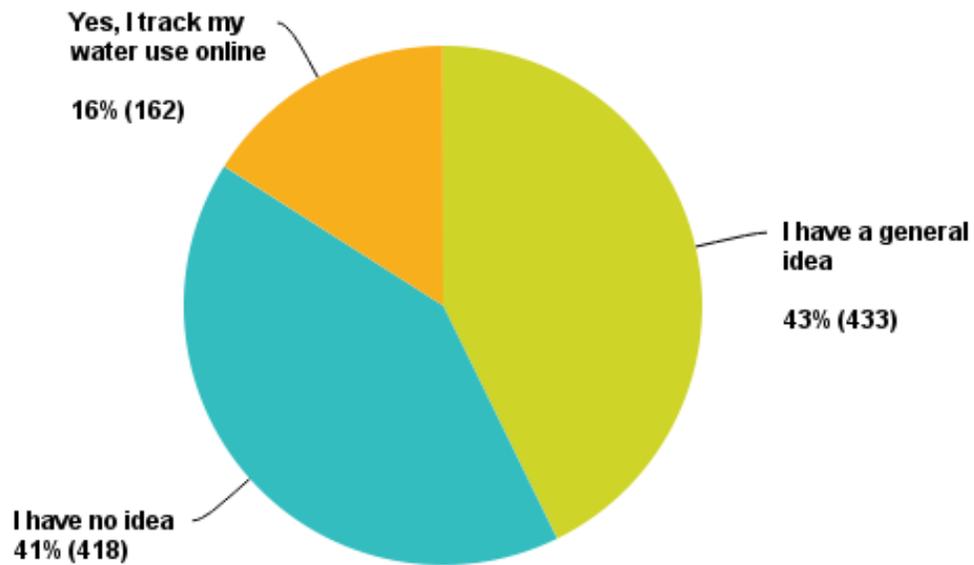
-Thanks for doing a great job, and keeping us informed. I like learning about technical aspects of infrastructure on your blog...

- ... I have to confess that I don't know much about my water, I kind of just take it for granted. Thanks for raising awareness.

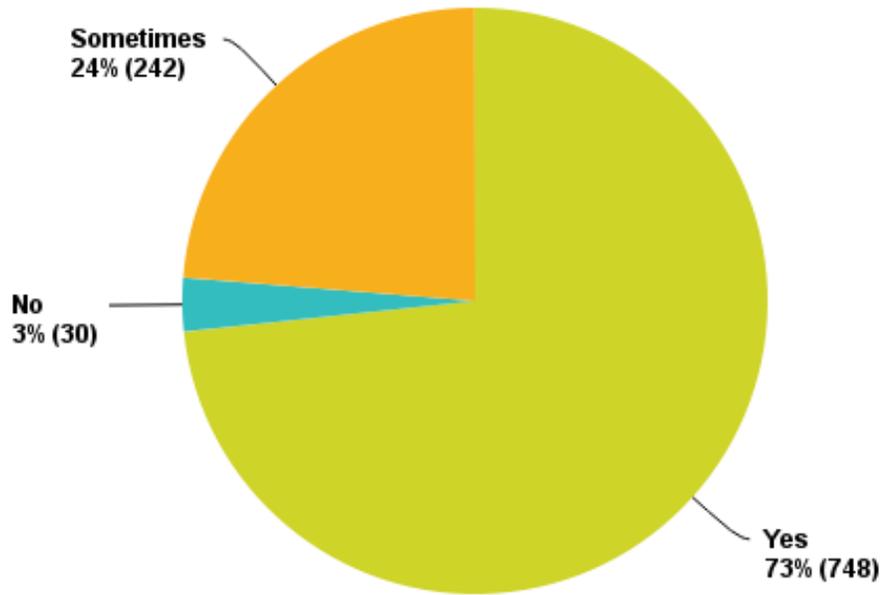
Conservation

More than 70 percent of respondents are actively working to conserve water, and 73 percent of those conserving have invested in low-flow toilets or showerheads. Respondents also identified a wide variety of conservation measures they're taking, including not watering their lawns at all or different methods for water re-use (capturing water that would normally go down the drain so it can be used again).

Question: Do you know how many gallons of water you use per day?

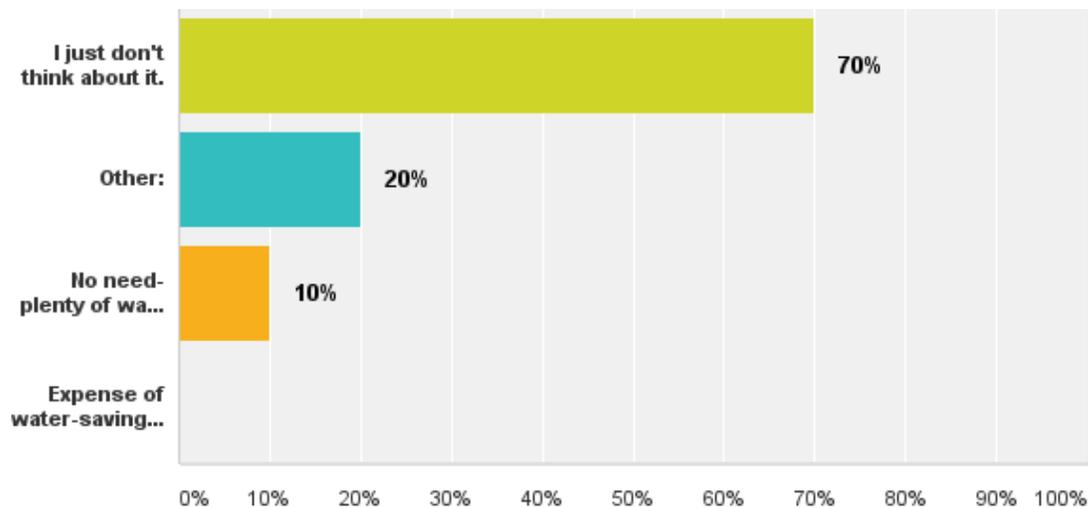


Question: Do you try to conserve water?



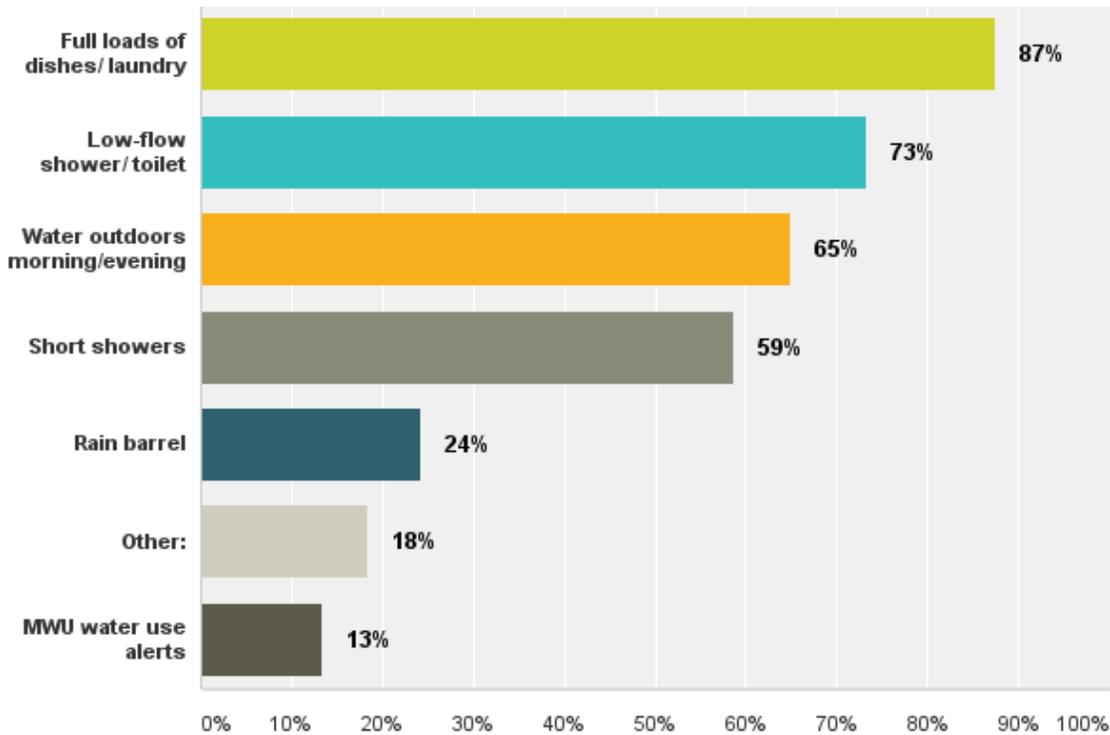
Follow-up question: Why not?

This question was only presented to the 30 respondents who answered "Yes" or "Sometimes" to the question "Do you try to conserve water?".



Follow-up question: How do you conserve water?

This question was only presented to respondents who answered “Yes” or “Sometimes” to the question “Do you try to conserve water?”.



Relevant comments:

Some additional ways respondents conserve:

-Don't run water while brushing teeth, etc.

-Water pitcher in the fridge so I don't have to run tap to get cold drinking water; don't rinse dishes before putting in dishwasher, shortest effective dishwasher cycles

-If it's yellow let it mellow

-We don't water the lawn.

-All water-saving appliance

-I plant perennials in my yard and don't water them—if they can't take our weather, they don't belong in my yard.



-I use cooking water (such as for pasta, cooled) to water decorative plants outside.

-Harping on my kids!

-Reuse dehumidifier water.

-Advocating for water conservation via apartment management.

-We love the water use alerts and checking water use online...

-Fix leaks ASAP, reuse water when possible.

-Low GPM aerators on faucets

-Save water from when the shower is warming up to flush toilet.

Other comments on conservation:

- I would like to see more public service info about conserving water. How low the aquifer is and what we can all do to make sure we continue to have water.

-City buildings and private buildings should have cisterns to collect the rain water for flushing toilets and watering landscapes, it's a shame we use drinkable water to flush toilets.

-I don't feel that my cutting back on water use will make a difference unless other people in the area, including the industrial and farming community, conserve water.

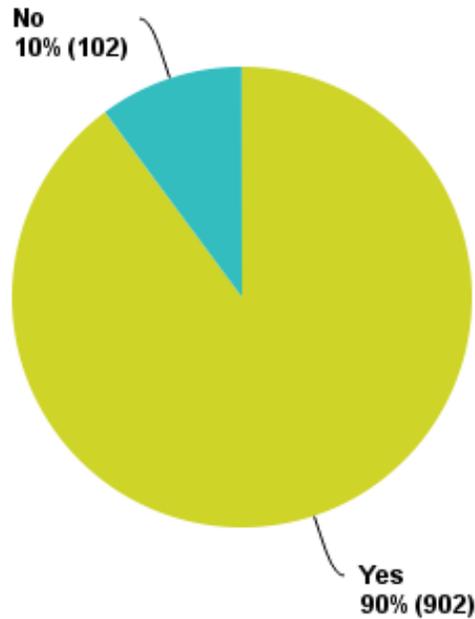
- I feel more can be done to conserve water with renters.

Water quality and safety

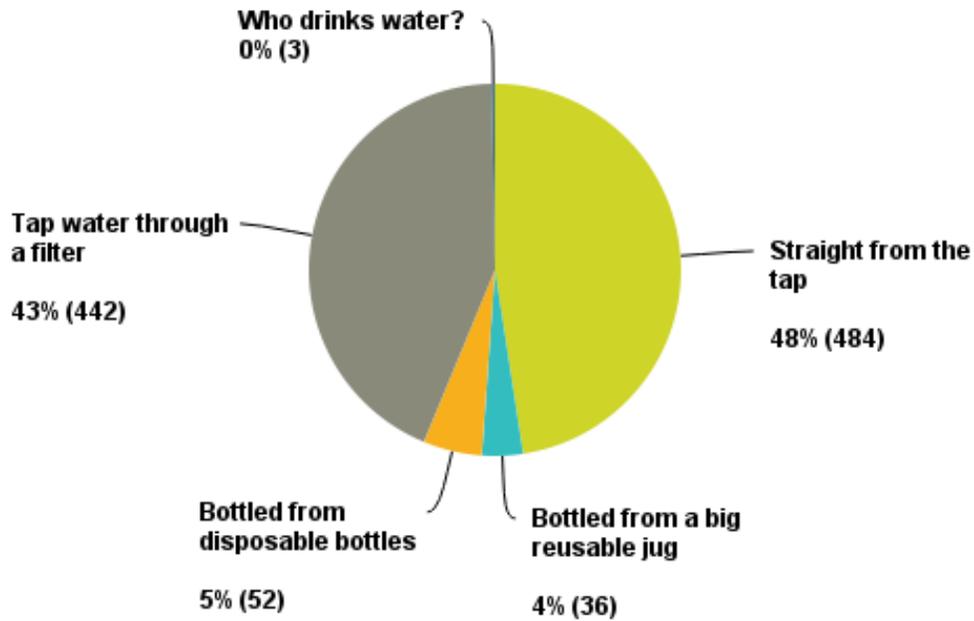
While nearly 90 percent say they believe Madison’s water is safe to drink, fewer than half actually drink water straight from the tap. About 43 percent drink filtered water, and 9 percent say they buy bottled water or fill plastic jugs at the grocery store.

Madison Water Utility’s [use of chlorine](#) to disinfect the city’s water drew criticism from some respondents, as did its use of fluoride, which has been [added to Madison’s water](#) since 1948. Others took issue with the overall hardness of the water, which can cause mineral buildup on fixtures, coffee makers and other appliances.

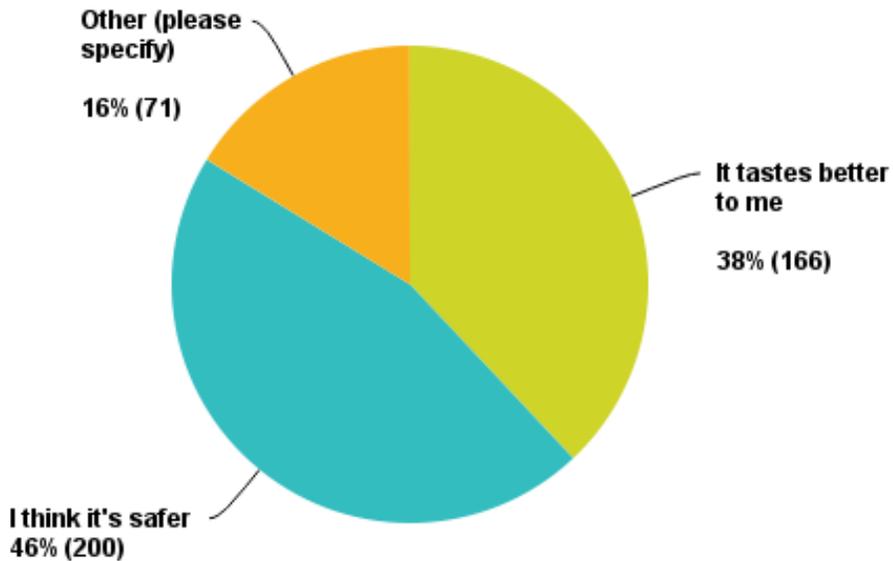
Question: Do you think your tap water is safe to drink?



Question: What kind of water do you drink the most?



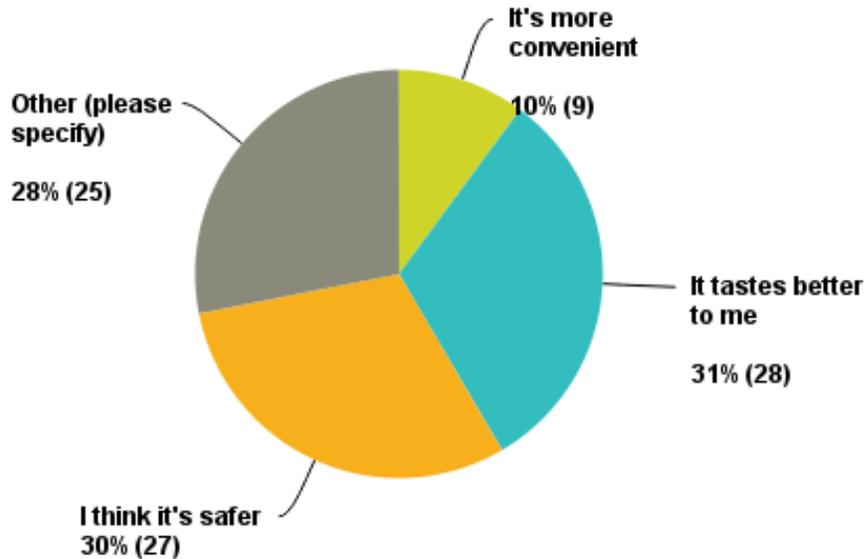
Follow-up Question: What's the main reason you filter your water?
 This question was only presented to respondents who said they drink tap water through a filter.



The other reasons identified included water quality concerns, fluoride, or that filters were part of a refrigerator water dispenser.

Follow-up Question: What's the main reason you drink bottled water?

This question was only presented to respondents who said they drink bottled water (both reusable jugs and disposable bottles).



Most of the other reasons specified by respondents were related to quality/safety, though a handful said they preferred carbonated and/or flavored water over tap water.

Selected water quality comments:

-Chlorine is so strong I cannot take a shower in it and so filter ALL my house water...

-Please stop fluoridating our water!

-I think we have some of the best tasting water in the country. Thanks.

- Please work on the quality of the water. There is so much lime in it and it tastes like minerals.

-When we first moved here, we couldn't even tolerate running a bath because it smelled like a pool...



-Wish we could do more to stop people from use of bottled water.... Our water tastes good!

-It isn't just Madison water that I do not trust to be safe; it is the water from ALL municipalities...

-Thank You for keeping the tap water safe to drink \RockOn/

-I've lived in many places and never experienced terrible drinking water until moving to this house eleven years ago!

-When you ask me if our water is safe, it's all relative as I'd prefer that our water wasn't fluoridated. Thanks for asking and for the survey!

-Thanks for the great water we have. We are lucky to live here where water is of great quality and not expensive compared to many places in the country.

Cost

Just 4 percent of respondents listed the cost of Madison's water as their number one issue, and 94 percent say they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the value that Madison Water Utility provides.

Madison Water Utility raised water rates in 2015 and also moved to a tiered rate structure for residential customers to encourage conservation. The average homeowner in Madison currently pays about \$19.09 a month for water as part of their Madison Municipal Services bill. That bill also includes charges outside of Madison Water Utility's control, including sewer and stormwater (rates for both services increased in 2016), landfill (rates decreased in 2016), and urban forestry (added to bills in 2015). About two years ago, residents began receiving the bill every month instead of twice a year.

Selected comments pertaining to cost:

-Do notice since you went to monthly billing, the water & sewer costs have increased dramatically. We are retired on fixed income.

-Why have water rates risen so rapidly recently?

-Costs too much!

-Madison water is the best value available of any service whatsoever!!

-I dislike how additional taxes and fees are added to water bills. I would prefer that the water bill be for water (or water/sewer) only. All other city-related assessments and fees should be billed some other way.

-I don't like the monthly billing. I'd prefer every two or three months.

-Make a bigger move towards conservation rates.

-... I am okay with higher water prices if it helps people reduce their use and helps provide cleaner water.

-The water utility provides the highest and best value of anything we purchase.

-For the charge I pay every month, Madison Water Utility is criminal. 35.00 month to flush the toilet and take a shower.



Water mains and infrastructure

Although just 4 percent of people who took the survey listed water mains and infrastructure as their top water issue, several respondents focused on a key infrastructure upgrade that Madison Water Utility completed in 2012 – the replacement of the city’s lead water service pipes:

-I'd like to extend my thanks to the people who made that happen, it must have been like pulling teeth, and the city will benefit from it for generations.

-I am so glad that Madison is a national example for replacing all lead water mains and lines. very impressed when I learned that Madison replaced lead pipes years ago.

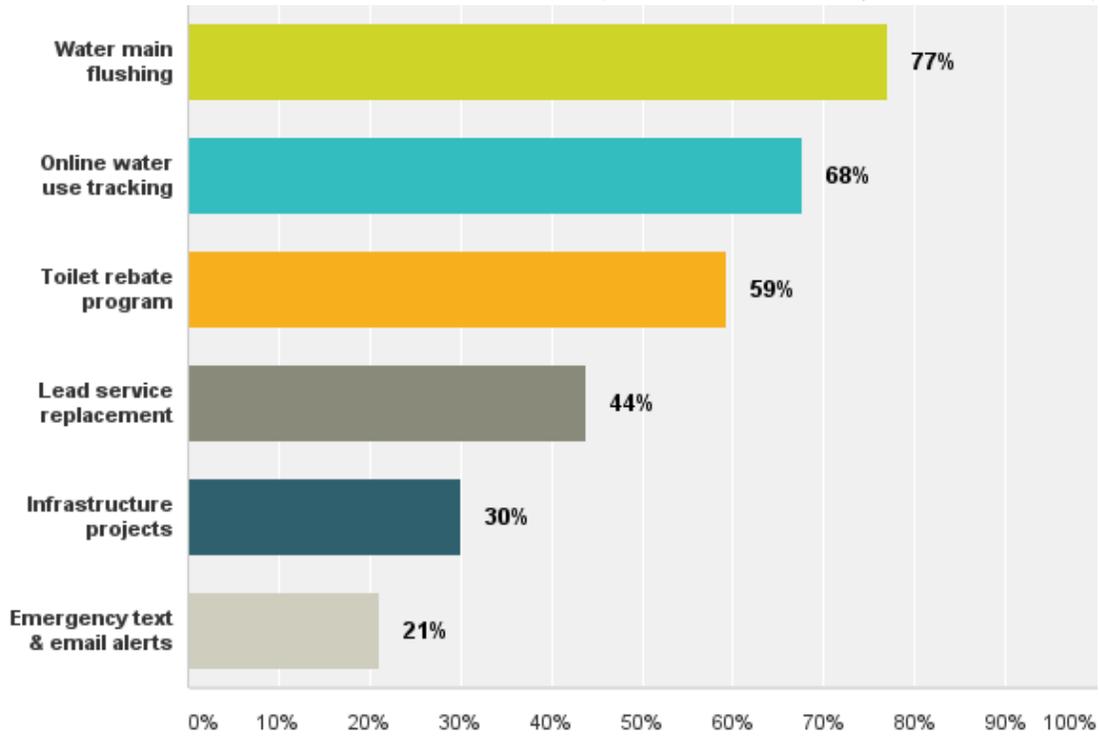
-I'm glad the infrastructure is lead-free.

-I'm so impressed with our city having no lead pipe infrastructure.

Communication and Outreach

Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents were familiar with the water main flushing program. 68 percent of respondents knew about the online water use tracking tool, though only 16 percent of respondents actually track their water use online.

Question: Which of these MWU initiatives do you know about? (check all that apply)



Appendix

[Know Your H2O Survey](#)