

# Developing Trusted Community Messages

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Communication is a vital  
part of your sustainable  
strategy

**The single biggest problem in  
communication is the illusion  
that it has taken place.**

George Bernard Shaw

- Effective Climate Change Communication for Water Utility stakeholders (project 4381)
- Rate Approval Process Communication Strategy and Toolkit (publication date 2015)
- Translating climate assessments into action
- Articulating Water utility regulatory challenges due to climate change

# Why difficult to communicate?

## *Wicked problem:*

- Complex scientific components
- No solution that is positive across values

## Wicked Problems

Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them

Laurence J. Peter



## Trusted Sources

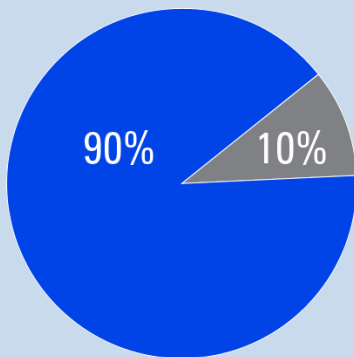


Wired to make safe decisions quickly

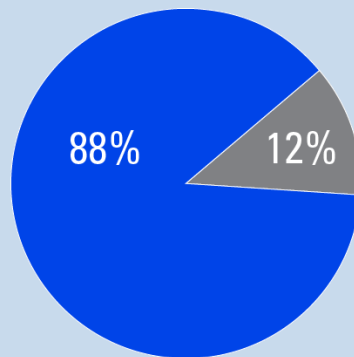


# How much do you trust your water utility:

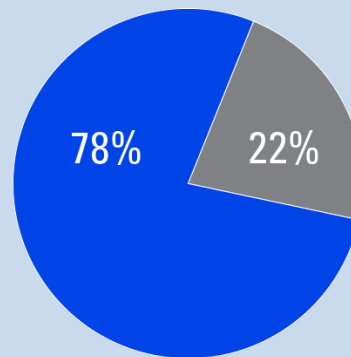
Ensure that my community has **enough water** at all times



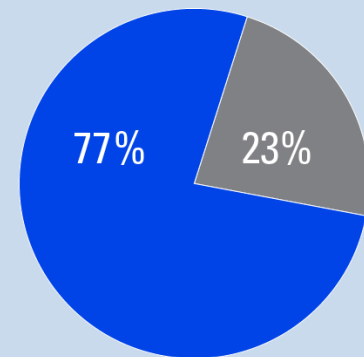
Provide me with **safe, healthy** water



Provide me with **timely information** about issues that affect my water supply



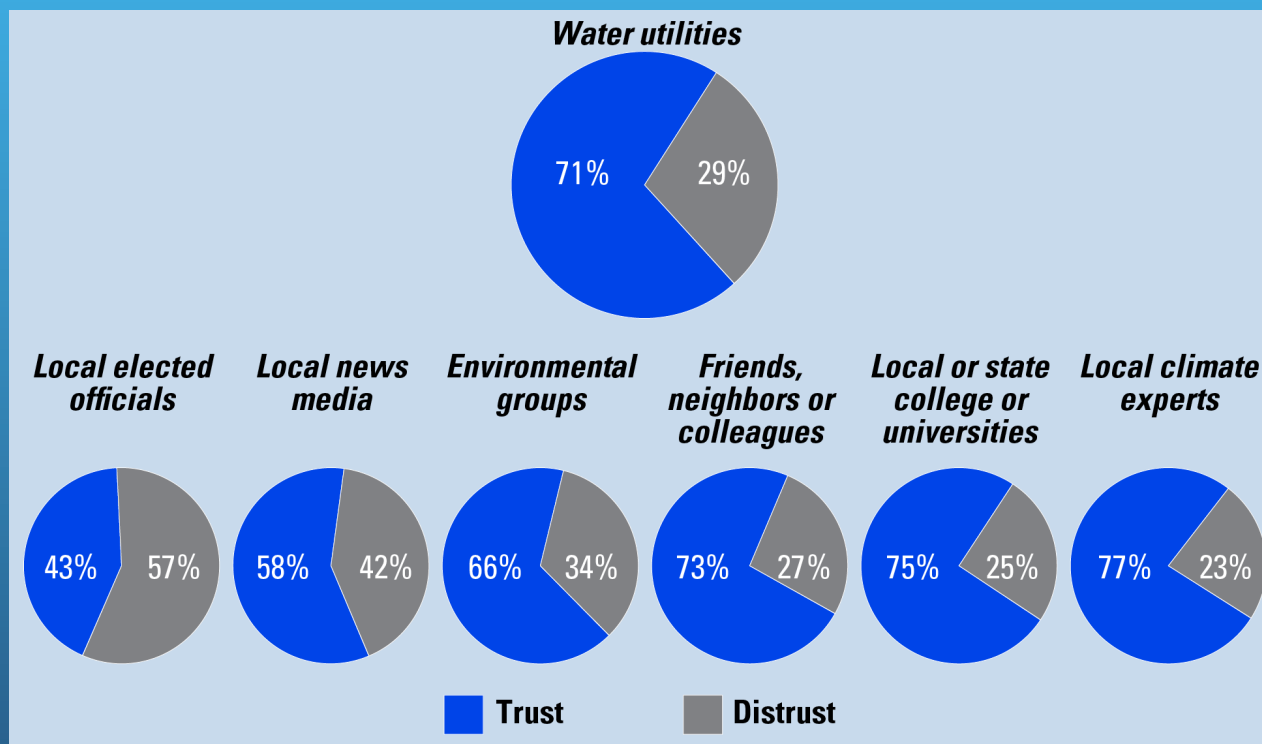
Provide me with water at a **reasonable cost**



 Trust

 Distrust

# You are a Trusted Source for Climate Change Information

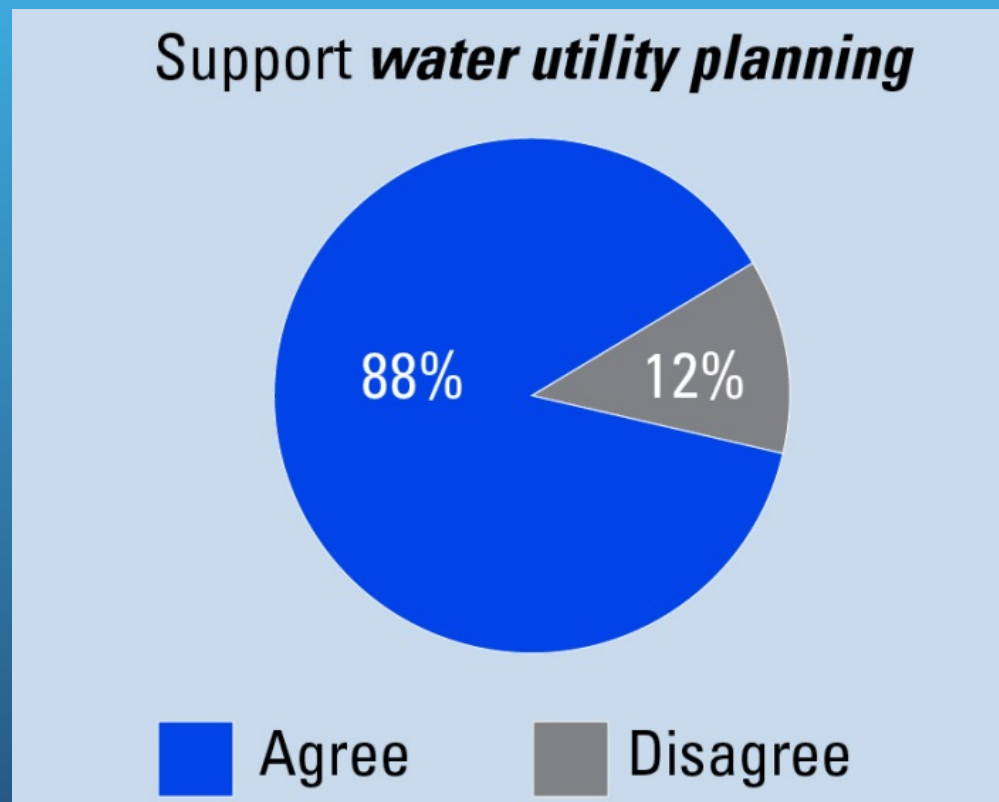


# The National Survey

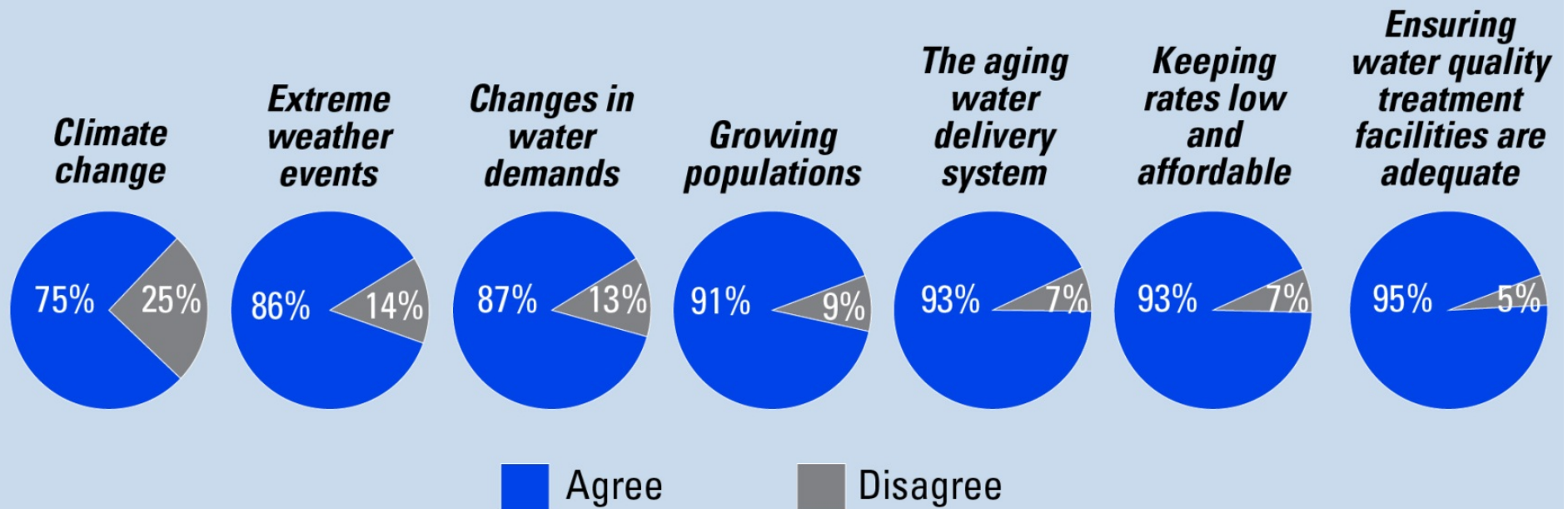
## Three types of questions

- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Actions
- Three subject areas
  - Community water
  - Climate change [Yale Project on climate change communication (Leiserowitz)]
  - Nexus of climate change and community water

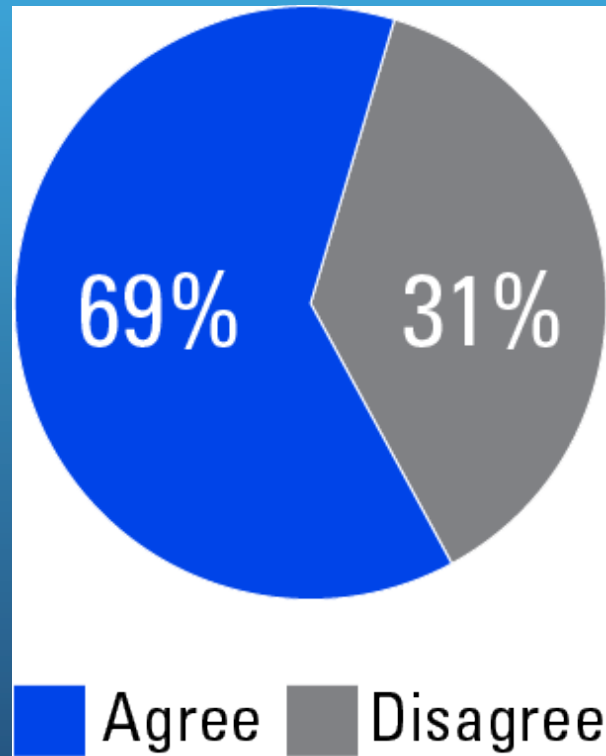
A large majority of Americans support their water provider planning for the future (10-40 years)



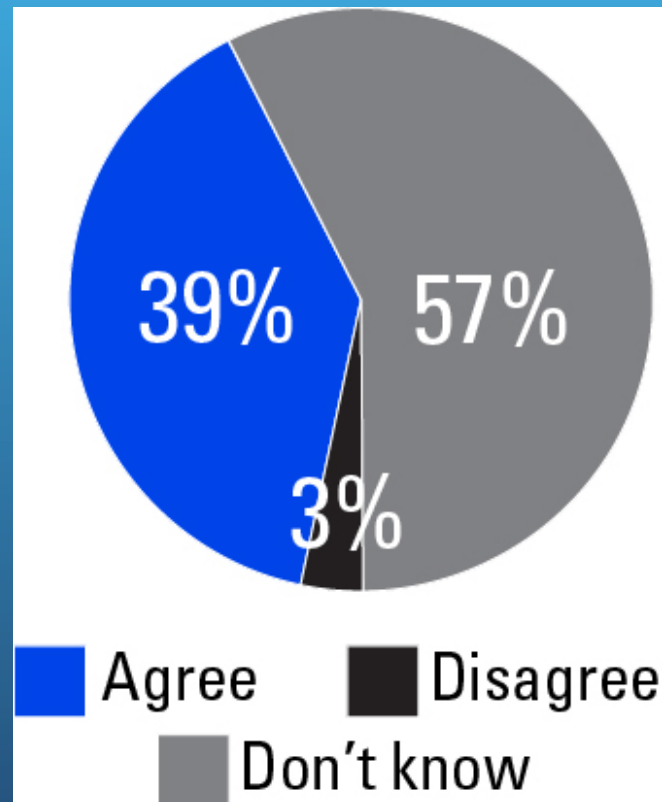
# When planning for the future, how much attention do you think your water utility should give to the following issues?



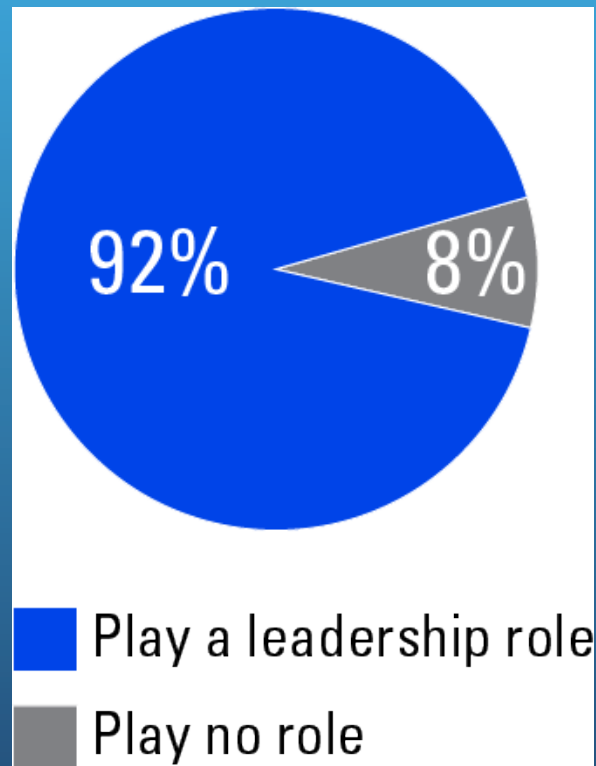
Assuming the money is needed, and would be spent wisely and efficiently, would you be willing to pay extra each month to ensure that your community has *access to abundant, safe water for the next 10-40 years?*



My water utility has a plan, has taken the necessary actions, and is adequately prepared for extreme weather.



**92% of Americans want their community water provider to play a leadership role in preparing their community for climate change.**





# An Opportunity and... A Responsibility



## An Informational Series

### **Broadening the Discourse: Water Utilities & Climate**

#### **Presentations that Will Increase Your Ability to Engage in and Understand the Climate Discussion**

Thanks for joining us in this important discussion. Attached you will find a link to Google Drive where you can download the following six short presentations:

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Part 1 – Weird Weather-Climate Variability-Climate Change
- ◆ Part 2 – Changes to the Water Cycle
- ◆ Part 3 – Impacts on Water Utilities
- ◆ Part 4 – Extreme Weather Events
- ◆ Part 5 – What Can I Do?

<http://www.brainshark.com/waterrf/vu?pi=zH0z17IBZszK6Ecz0>



# Message Mapping: A 12-step Program

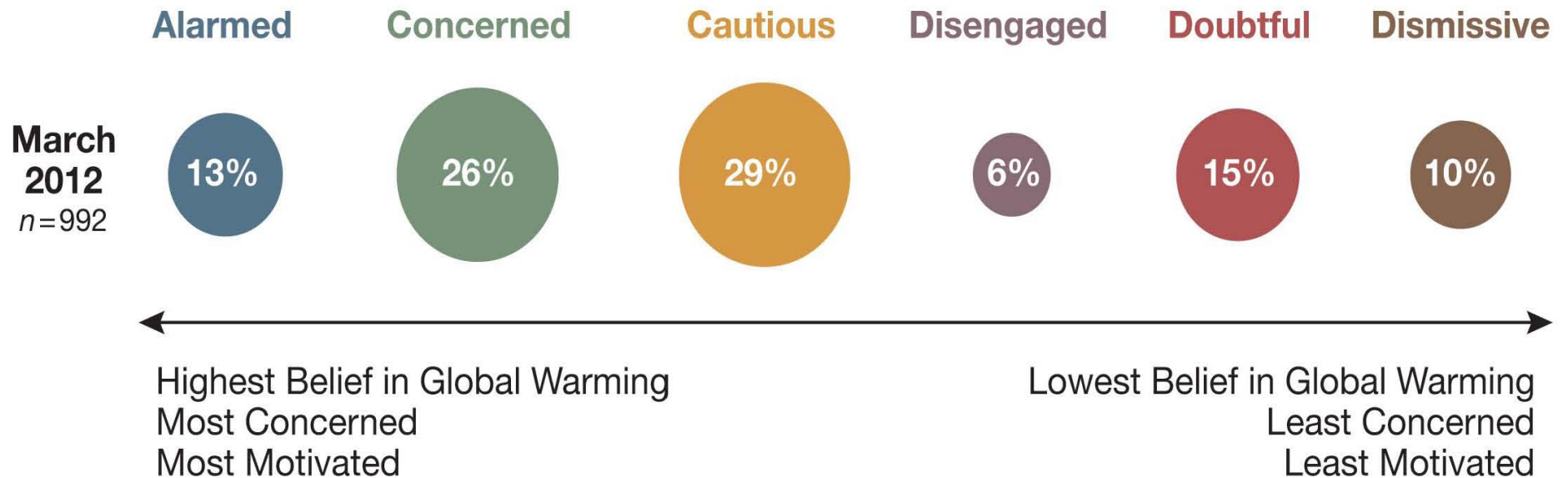
- 27/9/3 Banner Headline
- 3 supporting facts for each of the 3 key points
- Lays it out - don't assume anything

When planning for a highly uncertain future...

*Not enough to share findings -  
need to bring your audiences  
along for the whole ride*

**Data** is the key to identifying where your audience is currently engaged in the conversation

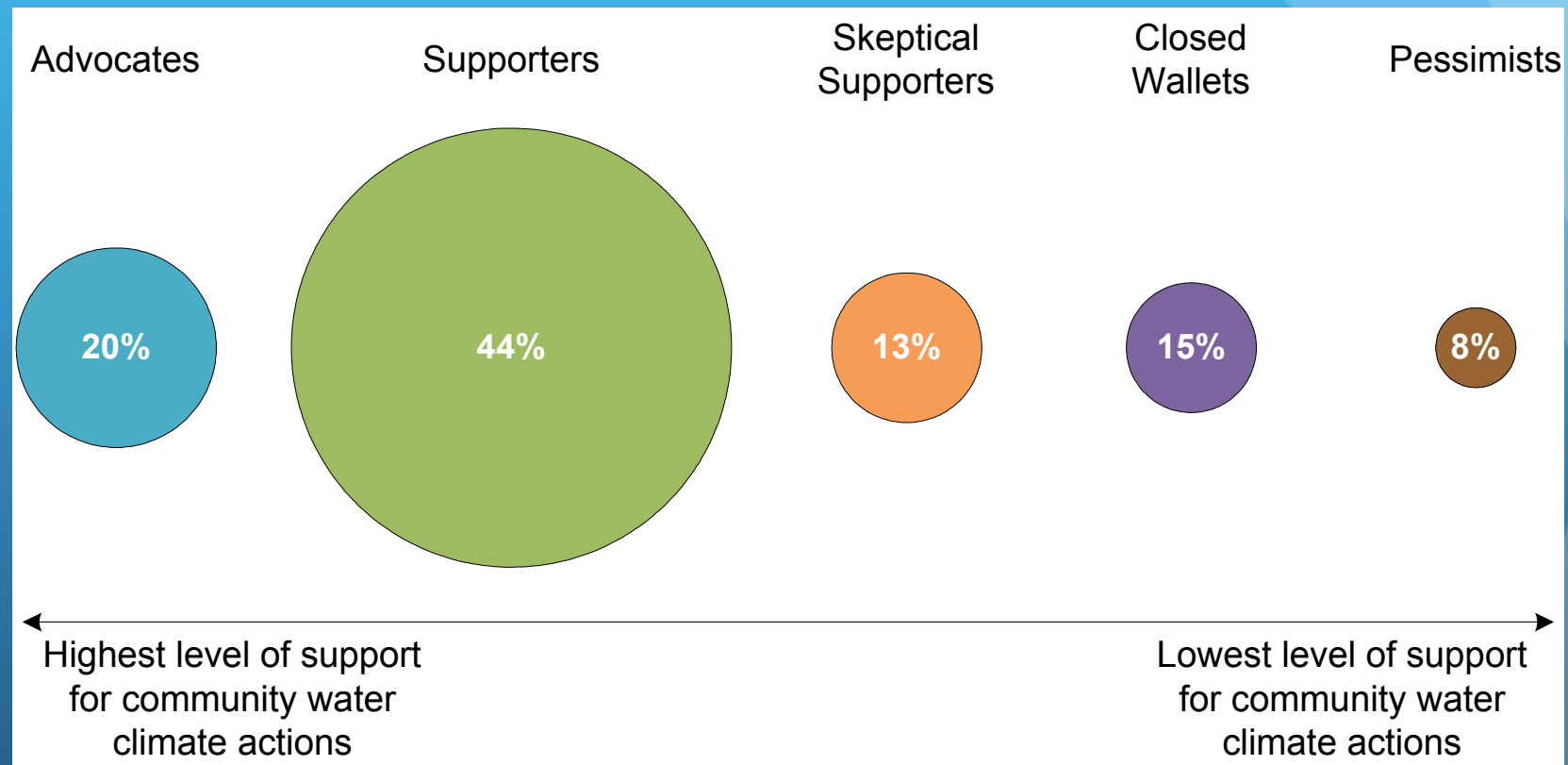
# Global Warming's "Six Americas"



*Proportion represented by area*

Leiserowitz et al. (2012) Yale Project on Climate Change Communication

# Five Americas for “Community Water and Climate Change”



Raucher et. al. (2014) Water Research Foundation Report 4381

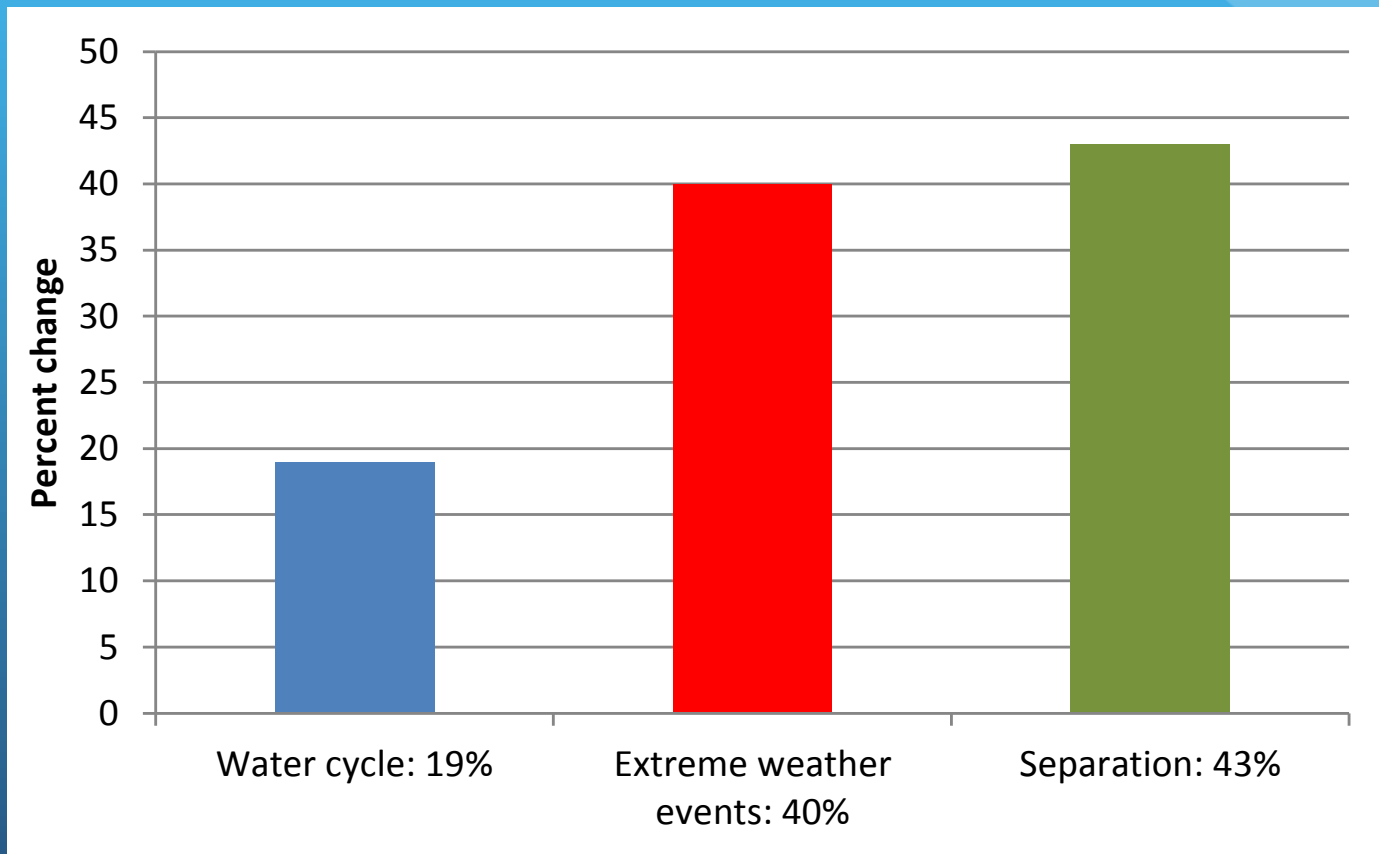
## Pessimist (8%)

- 31% do not think there is much a water provider can do to protect the local water supply from extreme weather
- 41% are willing to pay up to \$3 more per month to ensure there is abundant, safe water in the future
- **Most likely to show up at a utility meeting**

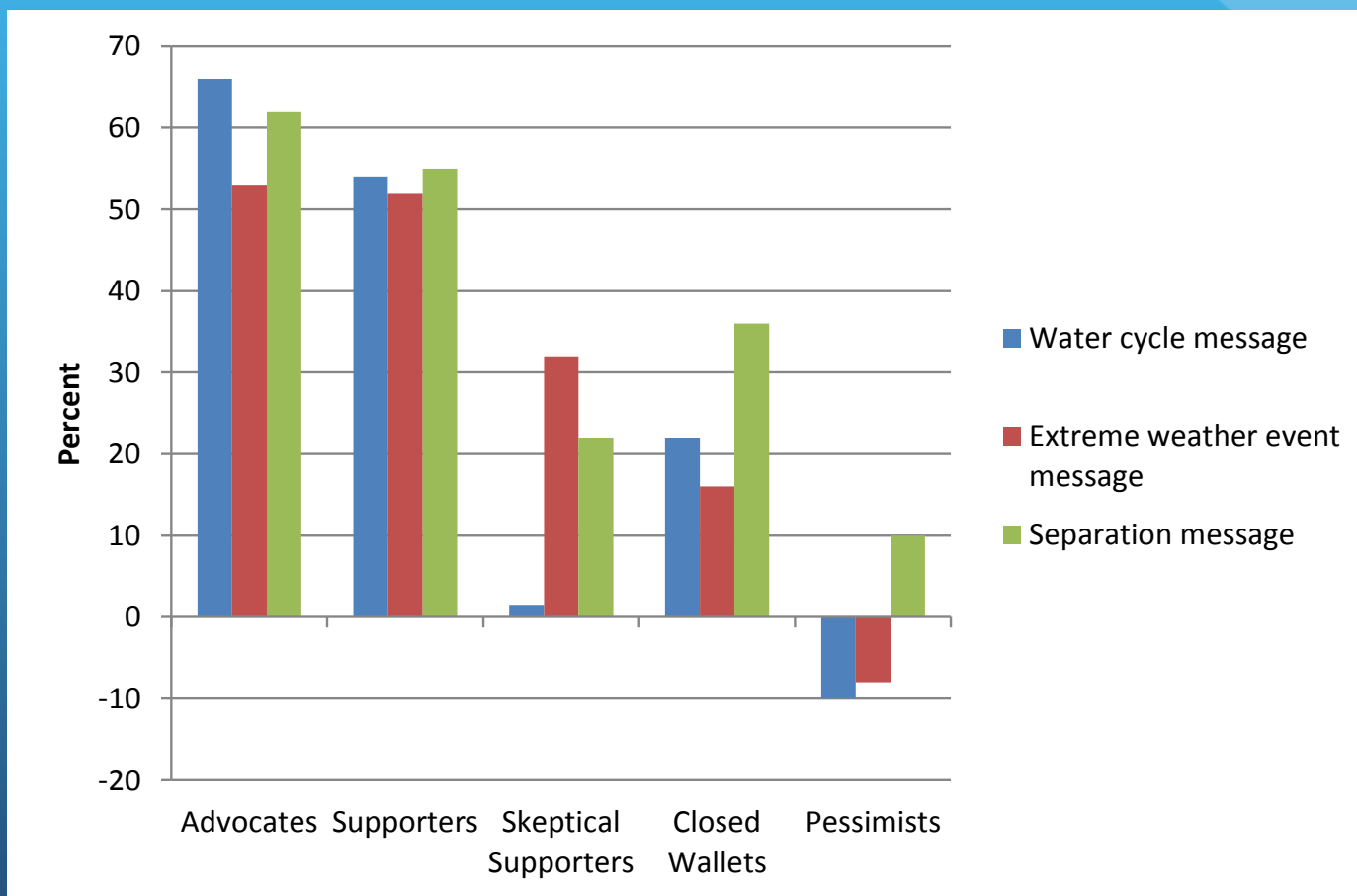
# Message Test

- Water cycle
- Extreme events
- Separation

# Net Change in Support



# Net Change in Support by Audience Segment



# Why now?

If you wait to talk about it  
until you need it before you  
ask...

**it is too late!**



**Rate Hikes**

# Why now?

Complex issues require 'set-up' time

*I don't really want to pay for this,  
but I understand why this is valuable  
for my community so I'll support it*

# **Why now?**

**It is easier to fill a communication void  
- than to change preconceived notions**

**Are water utility leaders interested in being climate change communication leaders?**

**What do you think are the local - regional - national opportunities?**

**What are the pros and cons of being a communication leader?**

## Successful communication is:

- Ongoing
- Based on data that establishes where the audience currently is in this conversation
- Based on a strategy (or several!) with both short- and long-term goals and objectives
- Evaluated and updated regularly
- Essential for sustainability

92% of Americans want their community water supplier to play a leadership role in preparing their community for climate change.

Thank You!

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