

Water and Wastewater Use Survey Responses

July 2019

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In May 2019, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) issued a digital survey on water and wastewater knowledge, attitudes, and behavior to residents of metropolitan Washington. Below is a summary of the results which will be used to inform how area utilities communicate with the region's residents and on which topics they focus that communication.

The survey was conducted on behalf of the 16 water and wastewater utilities and jurisdictions who oversee regional water communication and outreach as part of COG's [Community Engagement Campaign](#).

The 10-minute survey was distributed by COG and area utilities in May through local media and social media. There were nearly 500 local participants and three were chosen at random to receive a \$100 VISA gift card to incentivize responses. The utilities plan to repeat the survey annually to measure progress.

RESPONSES

1. When I want to drink some water, I will fill a glass or reusable bottle with tap water.

490 responses

Always 43%
Most of the time 28%
Sometimes 7%
Rarely 12%
Never 10%

2. If you chose rarely or never in the previous question, please indicate why.

145 responses

Taste, odor, or temperature 35%
Safety 35%
Convenience 8%
Other 22%

3. How often do you drink bottled water?

488 responses

Daily 14%
Weekly 15%
Monthly 31%
A few times a year or less 40%

How often do you do the following?

4. I use flushable wipes, and I flush them down the toilet when I am done.

489 responses

Always 2%
Most of the time 2%
Sometimes 7%
Rarely 10%
Never 72%
N/A 7%

5. When it's time to discard unwanted medications I flush them down the toilet.

490 responses

Sometimes 2%
Rarely 5%
Never 90%
N/A 3%

6. When it's time to discard fats, oils, or grease from cooking, I pour them down the kitchen sink.

490 responses

Always 2%
Most of the time 6%
Sometimes 10%
Rarely 26%
Never 55%
N/A 1%

7. Area water and wastewater utilities have launched a regional advertising campaign to help remind consumers how to protect their pipes from fats, oils, grease, wipes and medications. Can you recall what the advertising campaign looked like?

490 responses

Did not recall seeing the campaign 93%
Said it featured grease, wipes, meds cartoon criminals 6%
Other 1%

8. In the warmer months, you water your lawn:

490 responses

Daily or more 4%
Once or twice per week 8%
Never water it 29%
Don't have a lawn 32%
Other 27%

9. If you indicated that you water your lawn at least once a week, do you use an automated system?
408 responses

Yes 14%
No 8%
N/A 78%

10. If you use an automated watering system, do you turn it off when it rains, or rain is in the forecast?
420 responses

Yes 6%
No 4%
N/A 90%

11. When it snows or is icy, which of the following do you do at your home to remove snow and ice?
488 responses

Shovel and apply chemicals 39%
Shovel only 33%
Someone else manages property 22%
Do nothing 2%
Other 4%

12. The original source of water from my kitchen faucet (where it came from before it was treated) is:
489 responses

Potomac River 39%
Reservoir 24%
Don't know 35%
Other 2%

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following phrases:

13. Actions on my property that I take, such as fertilizing, oil changes, and disposal of pet waste, can impact the health of the Chesapeake Bay.
487 responses

Strongly Agree 70%
Agree 24%
Neutral 7%
Disagree 1%

14. Actions on my property that I take, such as fertilizing, oil changes, and disposal of pet waste, can impact the quality of my drinking water.
488 responses

Strongly Agree 43%
Agree 28%
Neutral 17%
Disagree 12%

15. Thinking about how much you pay for water service at home, if you had to guess how much your water costs per gallon, would you say it's likely:

486 responses

Penny per gallon 39%
Quarter per gallon 18%
Dollar per gallon 3%
I don't know 36%
Other (I don't pay for water service, varies, etc.) 4%

16. If you buy bottled water on a regular basis, how much do you think you spend on it?

485 responses

I don't buy bottled water on a regular basis 69%
Less than five dollars per week 15%
Five to ten dollars per week 10%
More than ten dollars per week 3%
I don't know 3%

17. The price you pay for water is:

489 responses

Excellent value 41%
Good value 19%
Fair value 19%
Poor value 6%
I don't know 15%

18. Thinking about how much water you use daily...you probably use:

487 responses

5 gallons per day 7%
10 gallons 21%
25 gallons 32%
100 gallons 18%
I don't know 22%

19. When you think about your family's water use, you use the largest amount of water for:

490 responses

Bathing/showering 72%
Flushing toilets 17%
Drinking/cooking 4%
My lawn 1%
I don't know 5%
Other (laundry, etc.) 1%

20. Based on what I have seen, read, or heard, the water and wastewater system in my community is old and in need of repair:

489 responses

Strongly agree 24%
Agree 33%
Neutral 34%
Disagree 8%
Strongly disagree 1%

21. I trust my local water utility to make smart decisions about infrastructure investments:

488 responses

Strongly agree 21%
Agree 47%
Neutral 25%
Disagree 6%
Strongly disagree 1%

When I have a question about my water service,

22. I am able to get my question answered on the water utility's website.

487 responses

Strongly agree 4%
Agree 24%
Neutral 30%
Disagree 6%
Strongly disagree 3%
N/A 33%

23. I am able to get my question answered by contacting customer service.

487 responses

Strongly agree 8%
Agree 26%
Neutral 25%
Disagree 4%
Strongly disagree 3%
N/A 34%

24. I am able to get my question answered by sending a direct email to my utility.

483 responses

Strongly agree 3%
Agree 10%
Neutral 29%
Disagree 6%
Strongly disagree 4%
N/A 48%

25. I am able to get my question answered on my utility's social media channel.
474 responses

Strongly agree 3%
Agree 12%
Neutral 69%
Disagree 6%
Strongly disagree 10%

26. When I want to know something about my water or wastewater service, or billing and payment information, I:
471 responses

Look it up on the website 55%
Call the utility's number 30%
Ask friends/family 3%
Other (misc. written responses) 12%

27. When I have contacted customer service of my water or wastewater provider, I have been satisfied with the result:
481 responses

Strongly agree 8%
Agree 20%
Neutral 16%
Disagree 5%
Strongly disagree 3%
N/A 48%

28. I am concerned about the safety of tap water in my home.
487 responses

Strongly agree 18%
Agree 27%
Neutral 15%
Disagree 27%
Strongly disagree 13%

29. When my water utility proposes higher rates, I understand their reasoning.
483 responses

Strongly agree 9%
Agree 33%
Neutral 37%
Disagree 16%
Strongly disagree 5%

30. When my water utility proposes higher rates, I understand their methods.

482 responses

Strongly agree 4%
Agree 16%
Neutral 35%
Disagree 35%
Strongly disagree 10%

31. The person or people I trust most for information about my tap water or wastewater service is:

475 responses

Agency that delivers that service 49%
My local government/elected official 21%
Local news 19%
Friends/family 3%
Other answers 8%

32. The single best way for my water utility to reach me with non-emergency information is:

484 responses

Local news 6%
Email 65%
Social media 5%
Flyer 21%
Text 3%

33. The single best way for my water utility to reach me with emergency information is:

484 responses

Local news 12%
Email 47%
Robo call to cell phone 21%
Social media 3%
Flyer 10%
Text 7%

ABOUT COG

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.