

COG'S CEC ANNUAL WATER SURVEY FINDINGS

Community Engagement Campaign

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COG's Community Engagement Campaign (CEC)

- The CEC is comprised of 13 water and wastewater utilities and jurisdictions who share regionwide water communication and outreach.
- The CEC began messaging about drought, but its role has expanded.
- It manages the Protect Your Pipes public education campaign about keeping unwanted items from being flushed down toilets and poured down drains.
- The CEC also raises awareness on social media about the importance of being Winter Salt Smart and the impact salt has on drinking water safety.

Survey Overview

- The CEC issues the survey annually.
- This year's survey was taken by 824 residents of the COG region.
- It represented a balanced mix of renters and homeowners, and genders.
- Ethnic breakout:
 - 60% Caucasian
 - 22% African-American
 - 8% Asian
 - 6% Hispanic (down from the prior two years)

Survey Findings: Utility trust

- Residents trust utilities for water and wastewater information.

Respondents trusted their utilities more than other sources for information about their water. Utilities were ranked higher than local news, local governments, friends and family, and social media.

- Survey measured perceptions about:
 - Condition of water and wastewater infrastructure
 - Knowledge of source of water
 - Drinking tap water
 - Items that are “safe to flush”

Survey Findings: Infrastructure

- Water and wastewater infrastructure was seen as being in increasing need of repair.
- Compared to the two prior years, there was an increase in percentage of those answering, “Needs Minor Improvements” and a drop in those answering “Excellent.”
- These findings are consistent with Value of Water’s national survey.
- Value of Water found that across the board, U.S. residents favor water infrastructure investments.



- CEC survey found those who had the most positive regard for utilities and tap water also have the most concern for water infrastructure.

Survey Findings: Source water

- 56% respondents replied that they “didn’t know” the source of their drinking water.

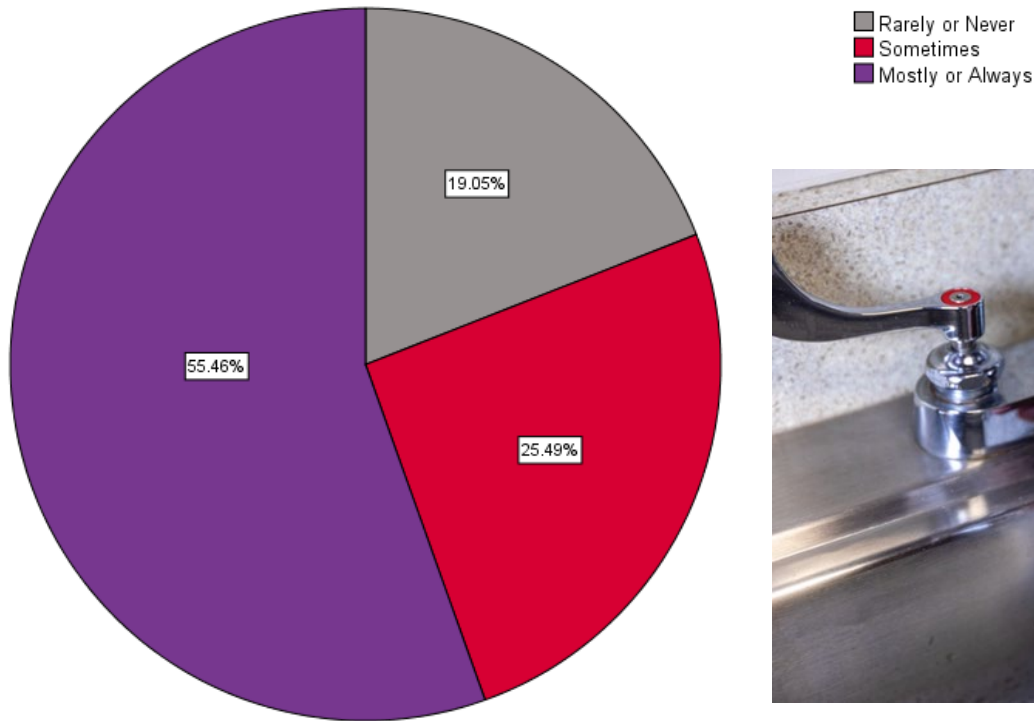
Source of Drinking Water	2022 Responses
I Don't Know	458 (56%)
Potomac River	179 (22%)
Occoquan Reservoir	97 (12%)
Area Lakes and Streams	82 (10%)
Patuxent River and Reservoirs	77 (9%)
Chesapeake Bay	74 (9%)



- Need to communicate that the Potomac River is the major source of drinking water for metropolitan Washington residents.

Survey Findings: Drinking tap water

- 55% of respondents drink tap all or most of the time.
- Those that “rarely or never” drink tap cited taste and safety concerns.



Survey Findings: Perceived safe to flush

- Flushable wipes, followed by facial tissues and dental floss were perceived by respondents as being the most “safe to flush.”
- Older respondents and female respondents had more environmentally friendly practices.

Perceived “flush-ability”	Rank
Toilet Paper	2.31
Flushable Wipes	1.57
Facial Tissues	1.50
Dental Floss	0.87
Regular Wipes	0.85
Paper Towels	0.79
Medications	0.71
Cooking Grease	0.60

Next Steps

- Survey responses help the CEC know which messages and audiences are most significant.
- CEC plans to conduct DEI focus groups to better understand skepticism towards the safety of tap water and greater reliance on bottled water and how best to share information.

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