

# What Do Oregonians Think About Water?

Water Environment School

March 2017



# About DHM

**Non-partisan, independent**

**Quantitative and qualitative work**

**35+ years**

**Public policy and community impact**

# Our Recent Work On Water

**CITY OF HILLSBORO**

**TIGARD WATER DISTRICT**

**LAKE OSWEGO / TIGARD WATER SUPPLY ANALYSIS**

**CLEAN WATER SERVICES**

**EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD**

**SALEM PUBLIC WORKS**

**COALITION FOR CLEAN RIVERS AND STREAMS**

**ALASKA SALMON PROJECT**

**PORTLAND HARBOR**

**EARTHFIX**

**WILLAMETTE WATER SUPPLY PROGRAM**

**OAK LODGE WATER SERVICES**

**NORTHWEST RIVER PARTNERS**

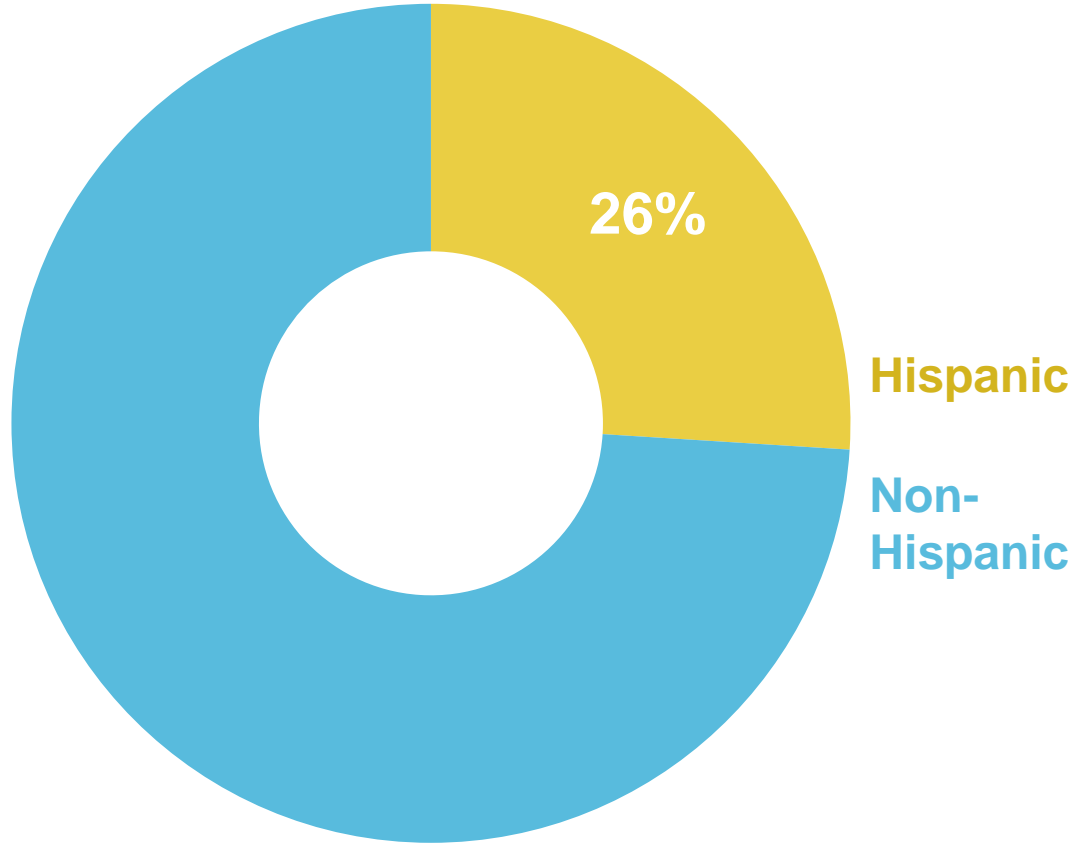
**MEYER MEMORIAL TRUST**

# What to expect...

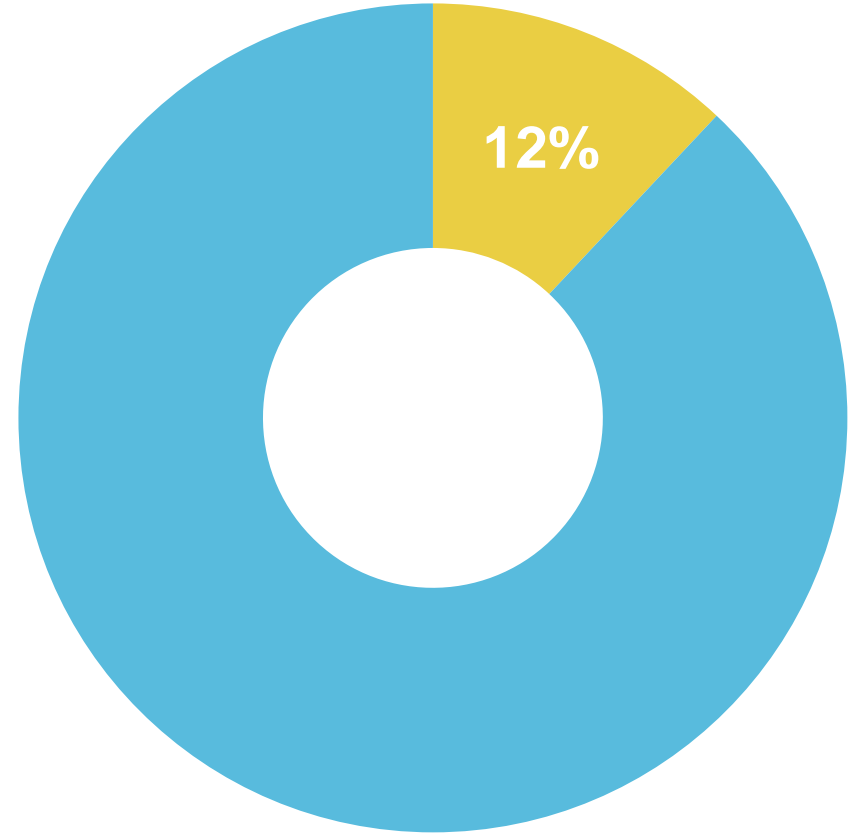
- 1. Who are Oregonians**
- 2. Opinion climate of the region and state**
- 3. Better understanding of public knowledge and awareness of water**
- 4. Communication recommendations**

# **WHO ARE OREGONIANS: RACE**

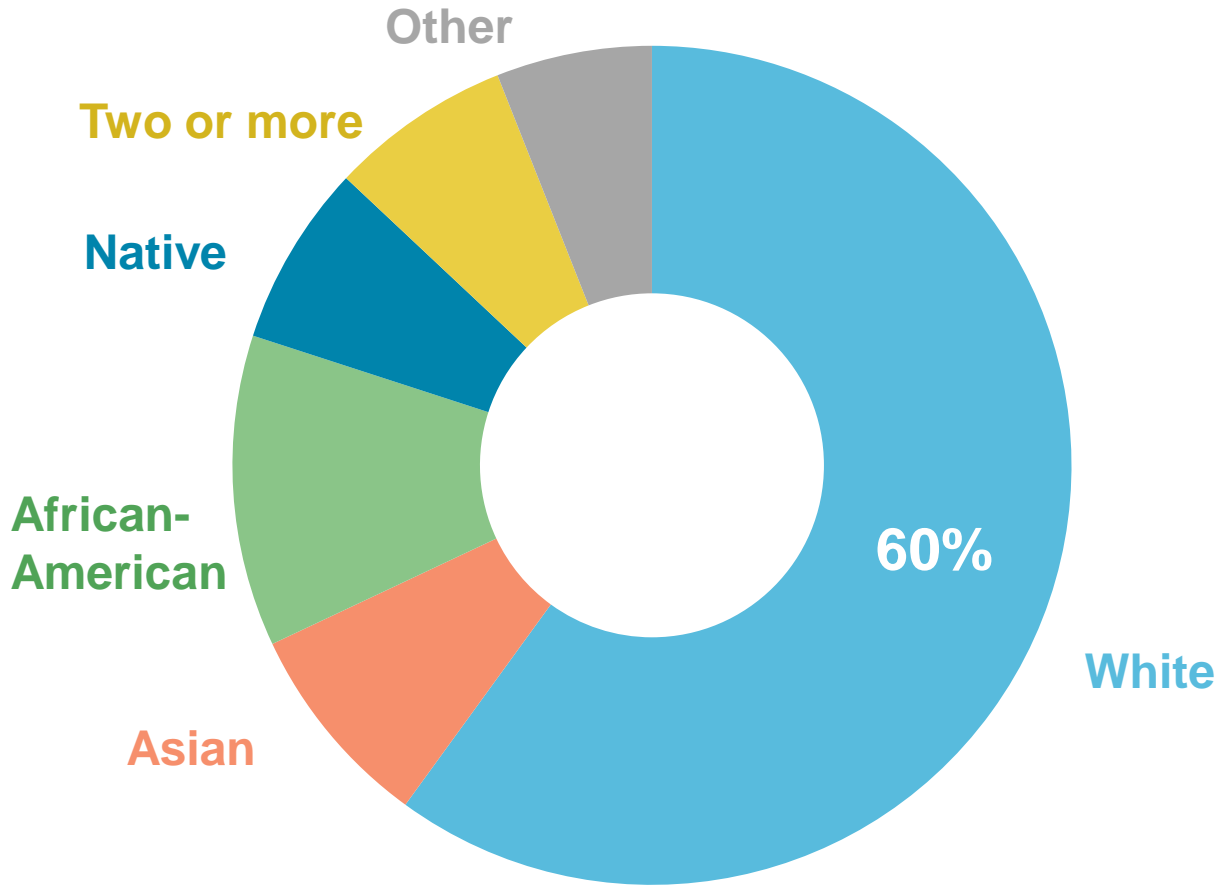
**Estimate**



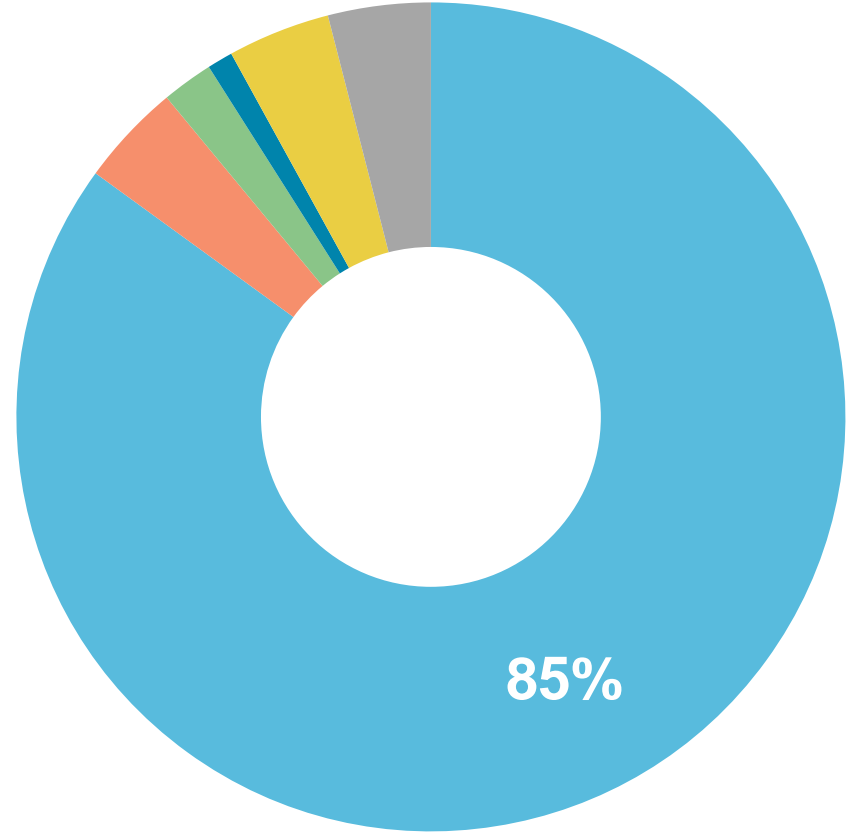
**Actual**



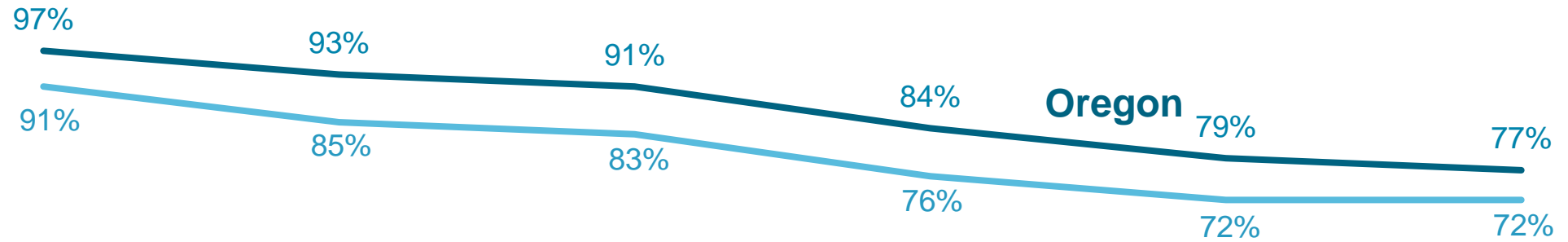
**Estimate**



**Actual**



# White Population: Oregon and Portland



Portland

1970

1980

1990

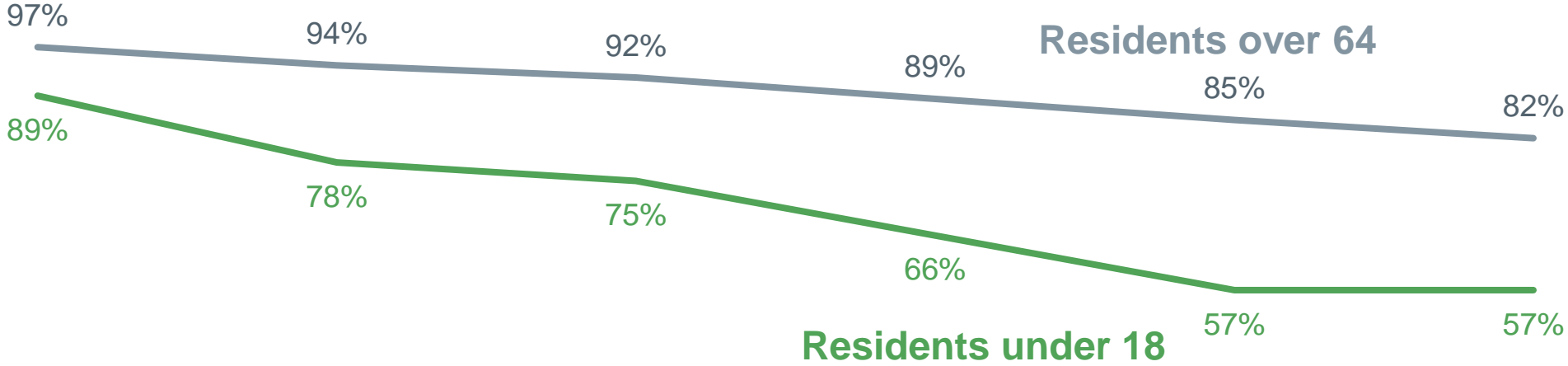
2000

2010

2015



# White Population: Portland Residents by Age



1970

1980

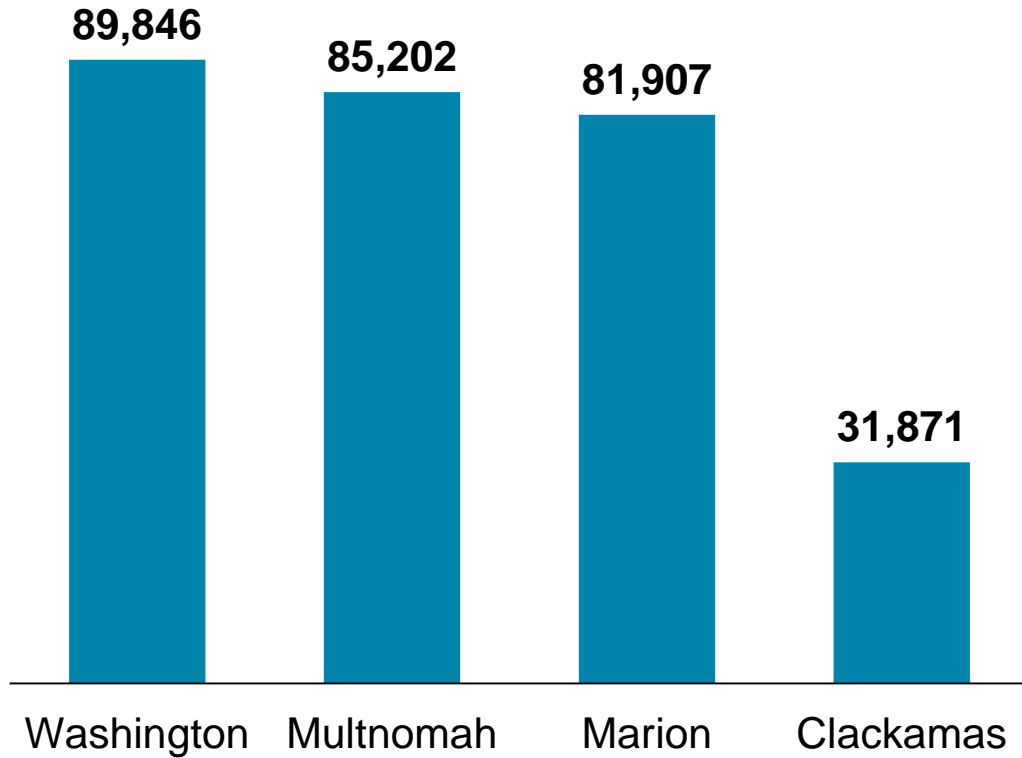
1990

2000

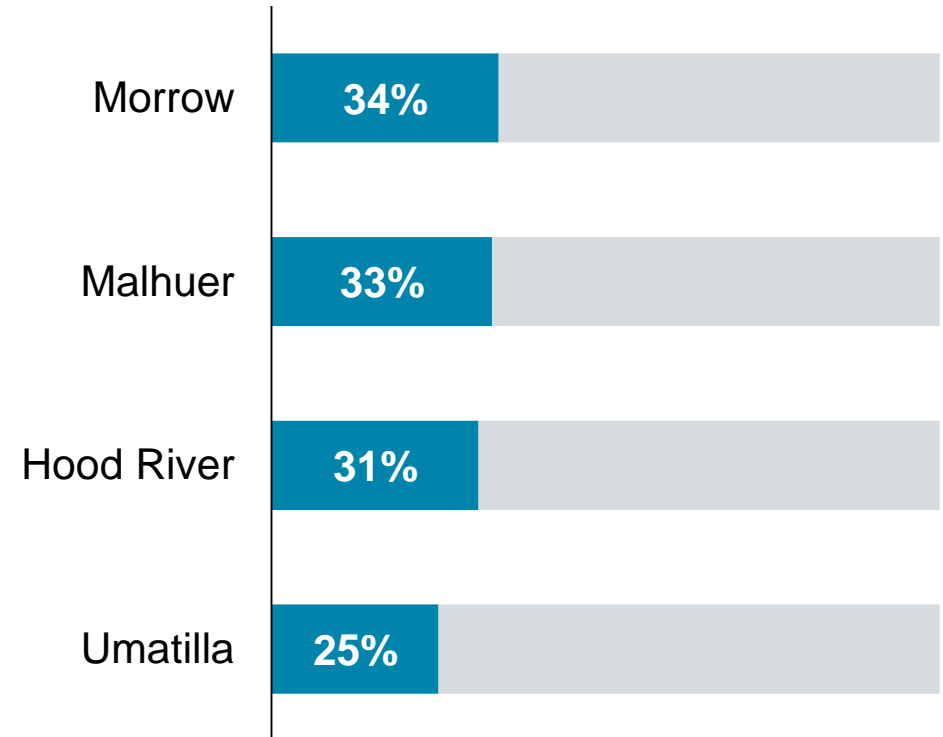
2010

2015

## Counties with Largest Hispanic Population

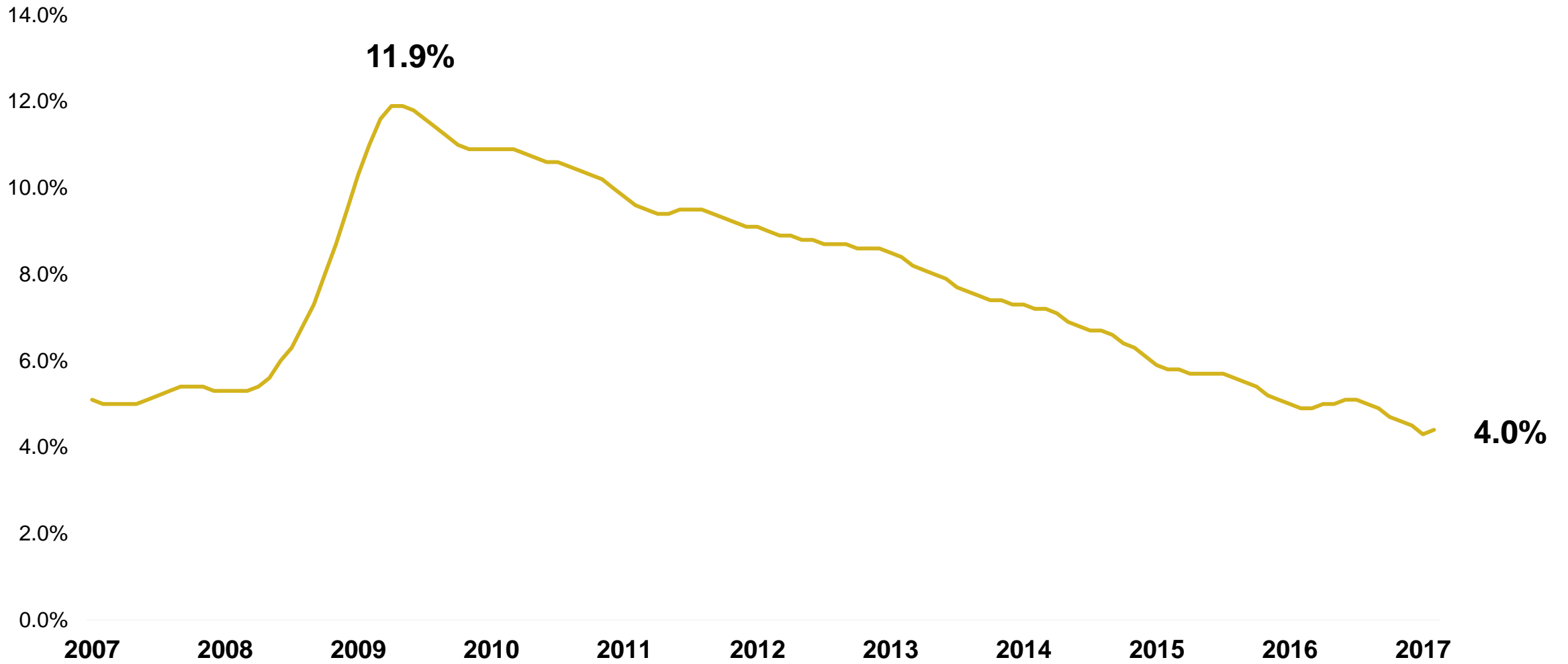


## Counties with Largest Hispanic Population Percentages

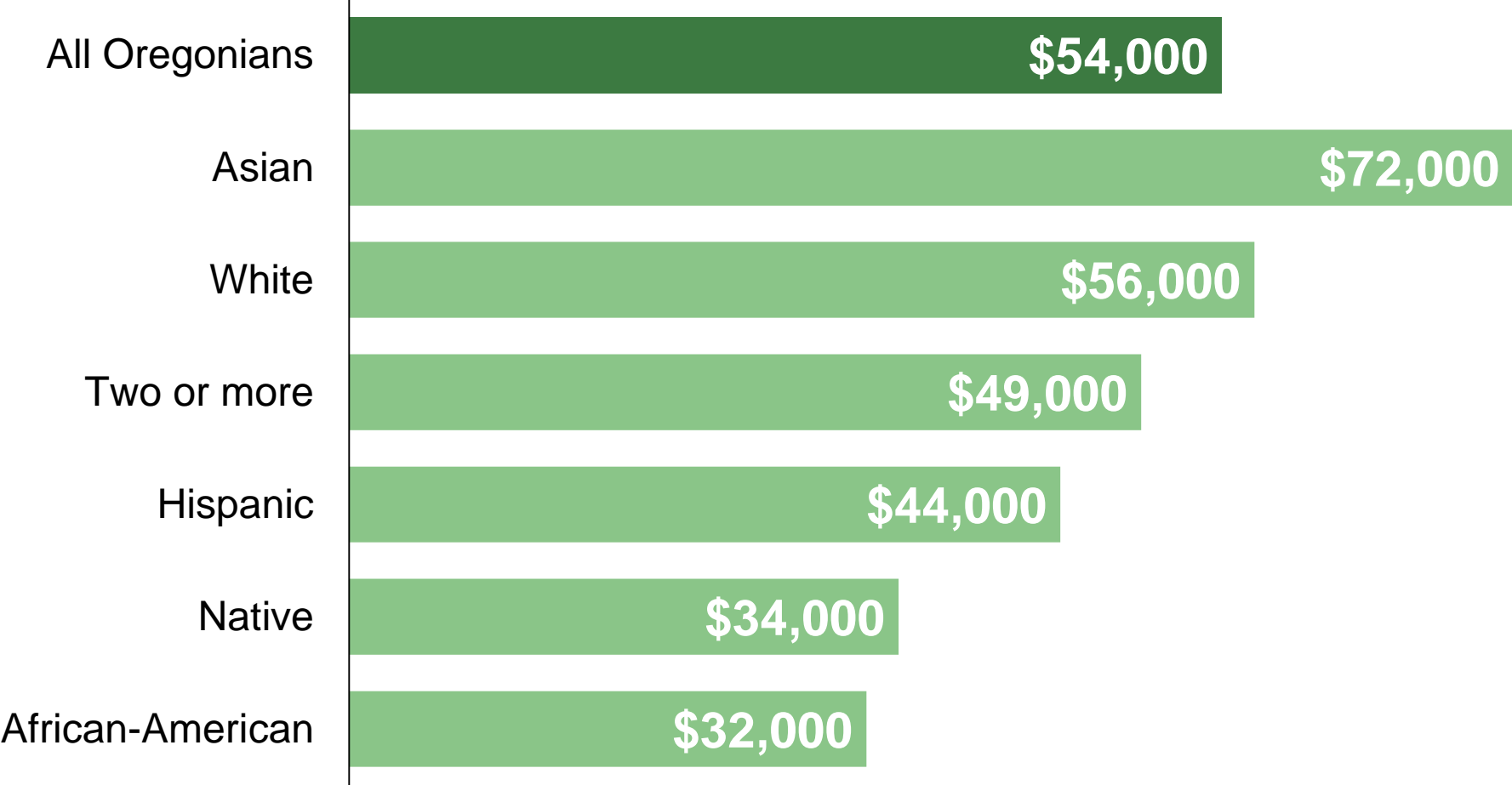


# **WHO ARE OREGONIANS: EMPLOYMENT, INCOME, EDUCATION**

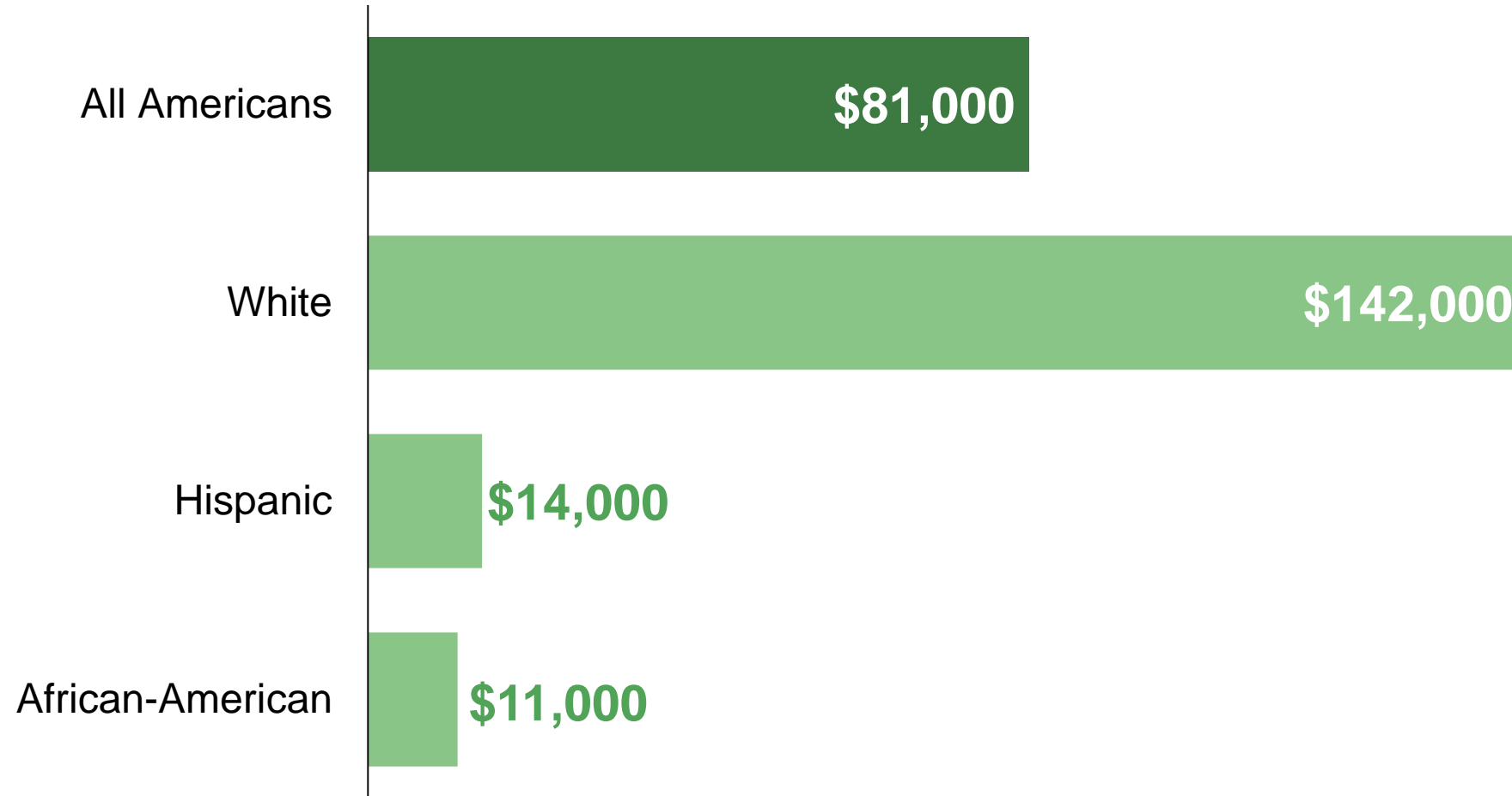
# Oregon Unemployment Rate: 2007-2017



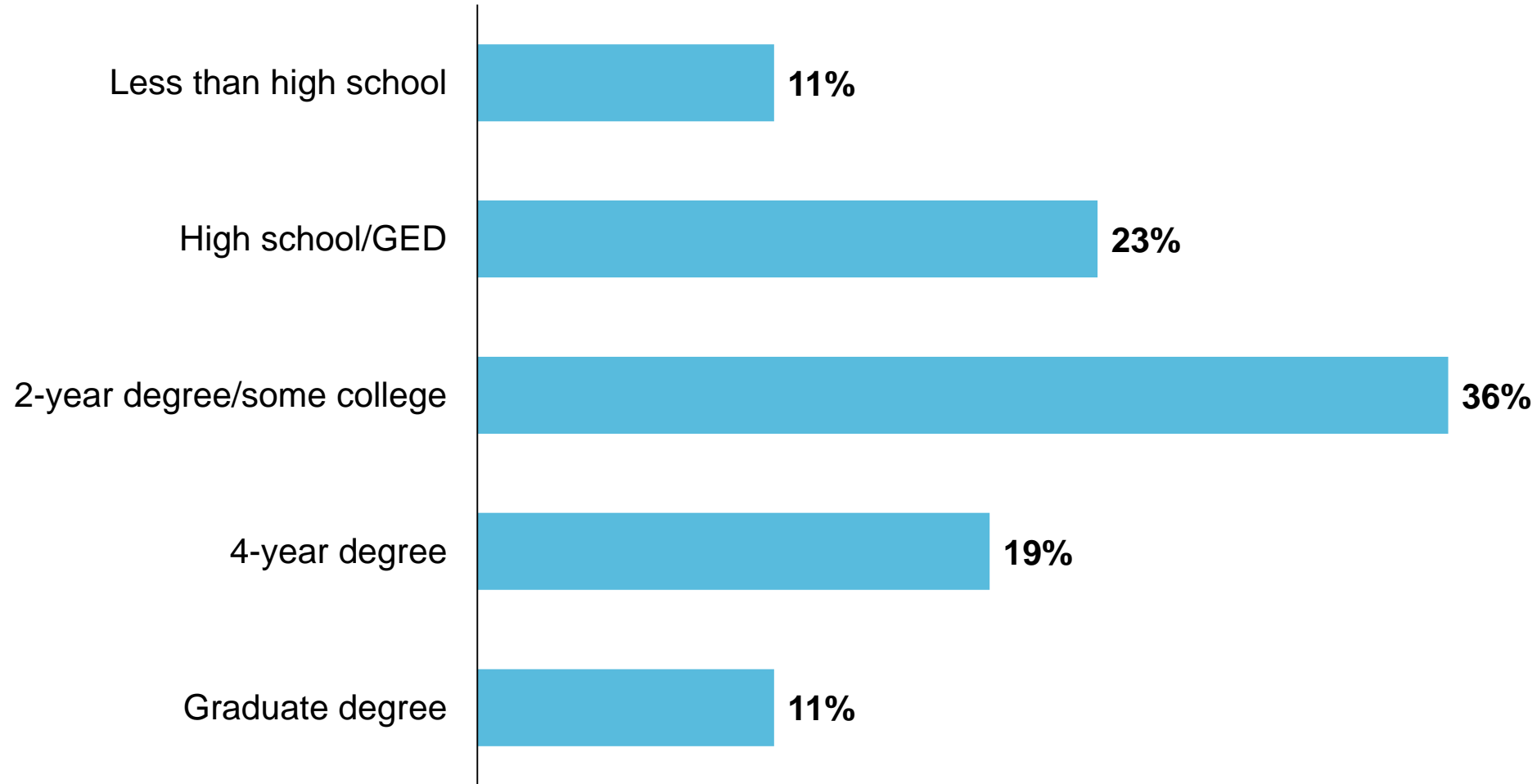
# Median Household Income by Race in Oregon (2015)



## Median Household Wealth: United States (2014)



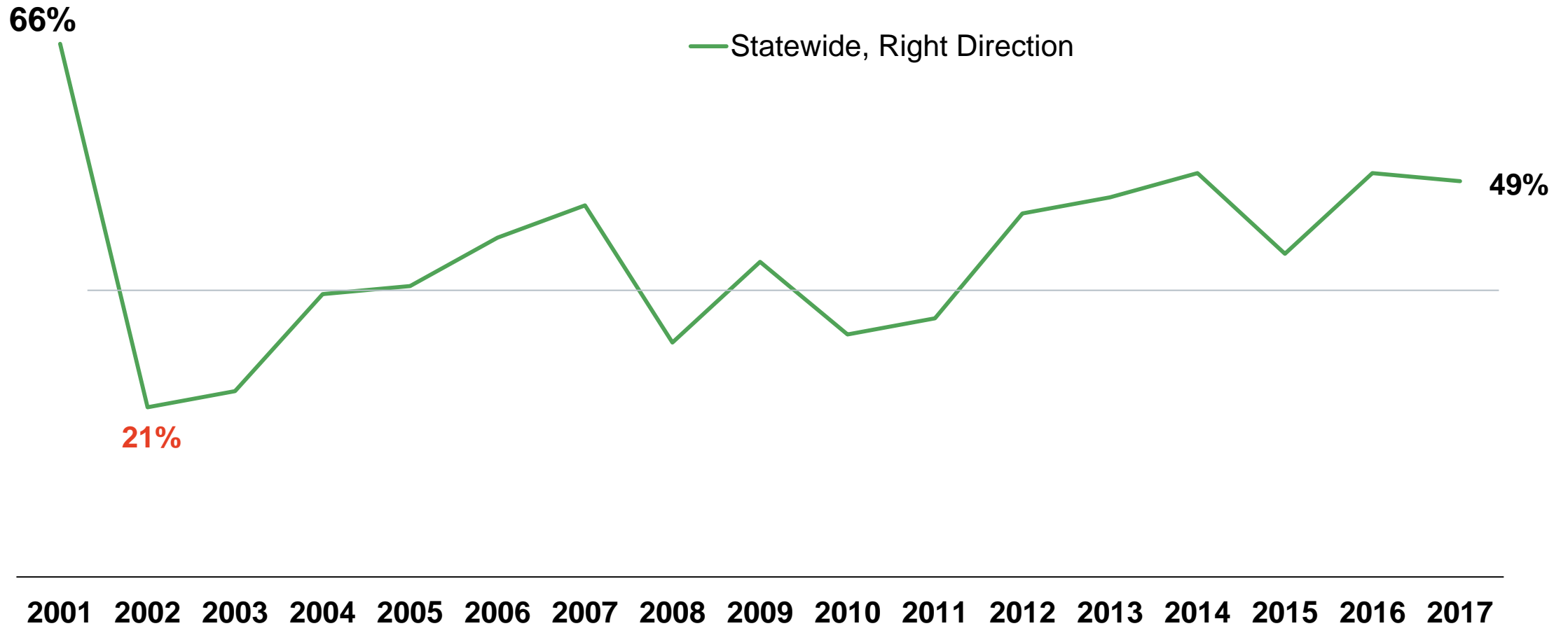
## Oregon Educational Attainment (ages 18+)



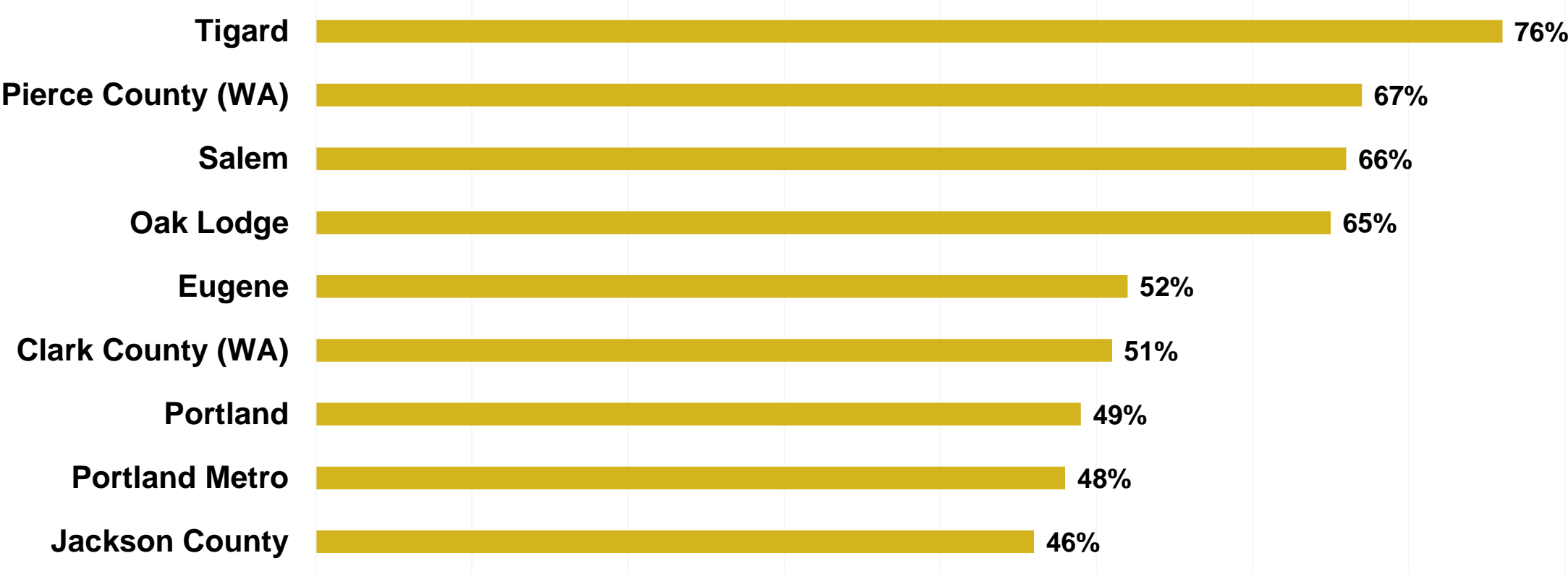
**HOW ARE WE FEELING?**



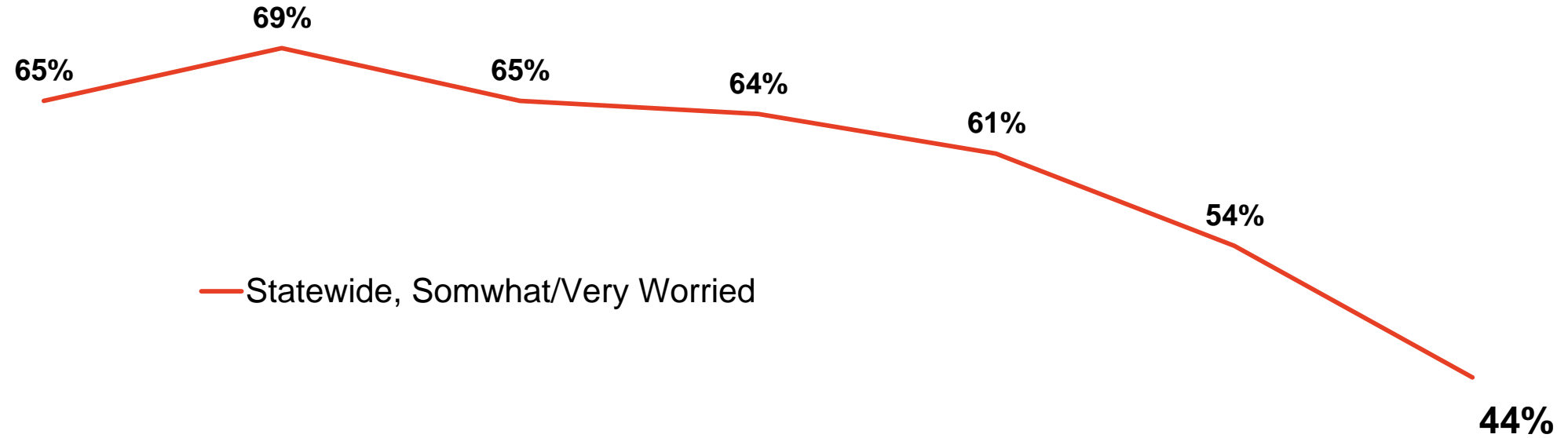
# Is Oregon headed in the right direction, or are things off on the wrong track?



# Is your community headed in the right direction, or are things off on the wrong track?



# How worried are you about your personal financial situation?



2011

2012

2013

2014

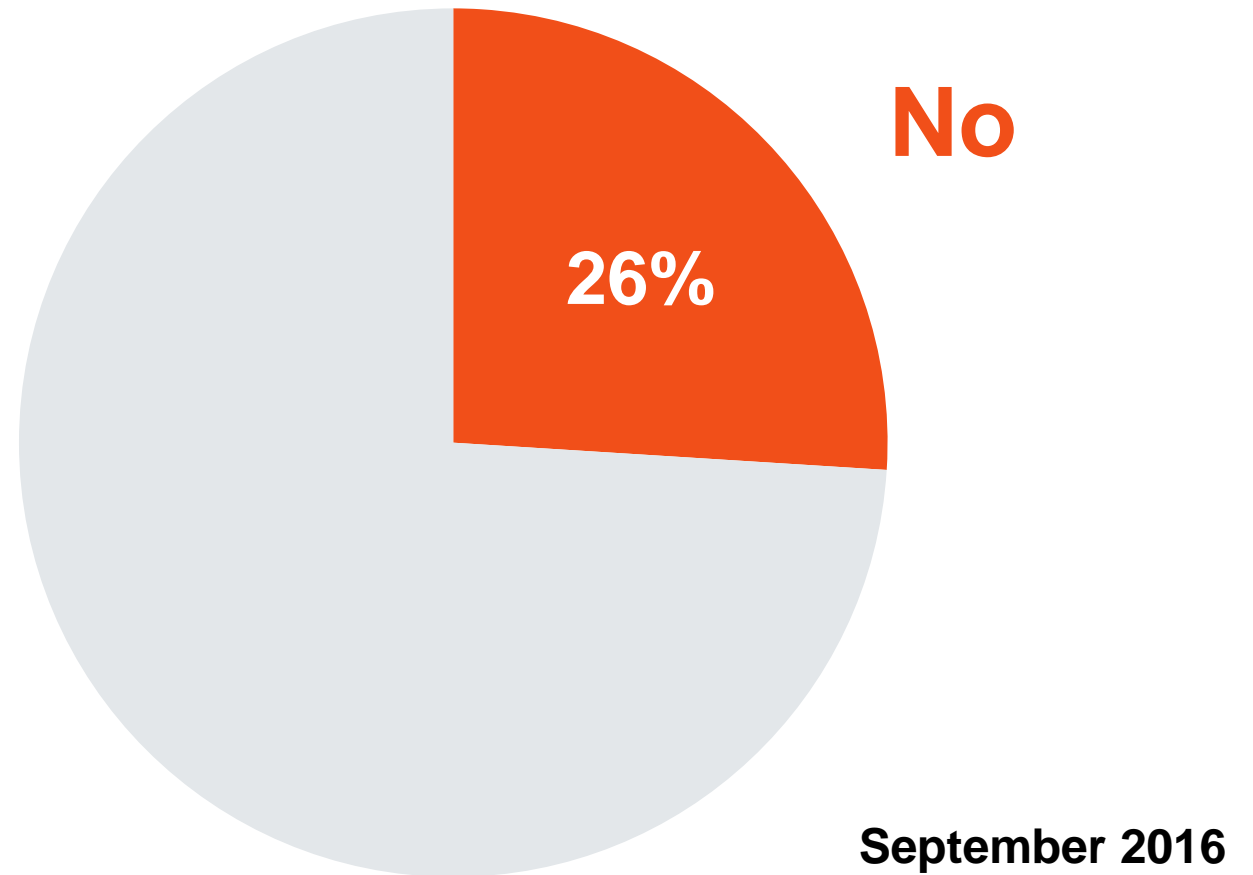
2015

Feb-16

Feb-17

# Is your housing situation affordable?

*According to HUD, “affordable housing” accounts for no more than 30% of a household’s income*



*How many cents out of every dollar the state spends do you feel **benefits your daily life?***



*How many cents out of every dollar the state spends do you feel is **wasted?***





**Cannot name three  
branches of government**



**50%**

**Cannot name Oregon's  
primary source of  
revenue**



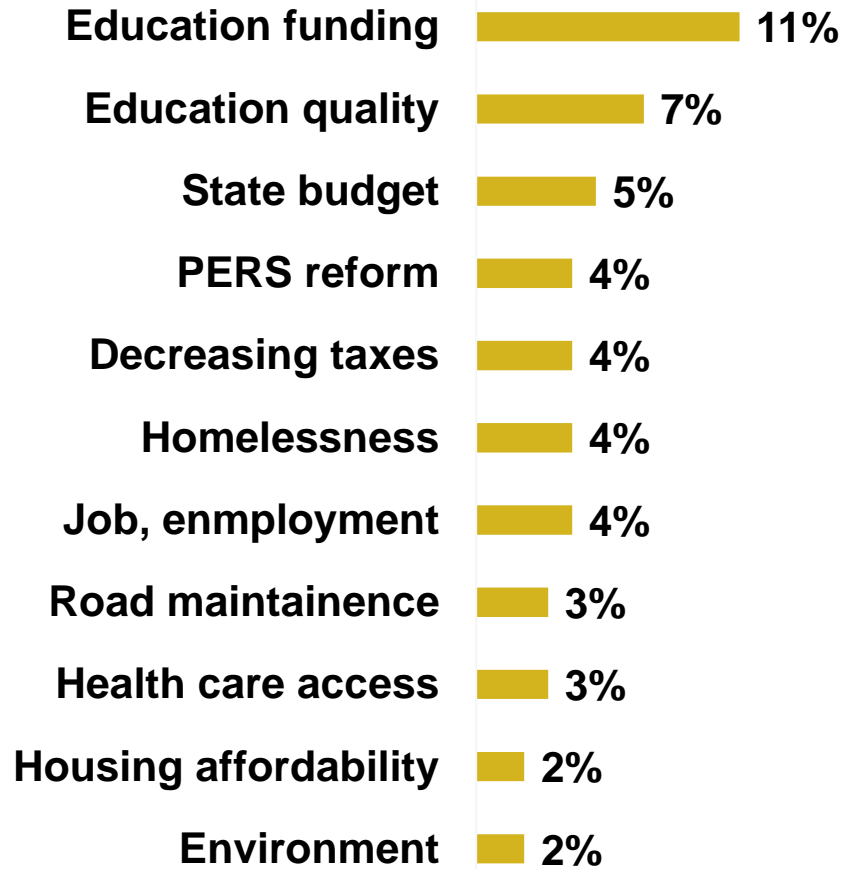
**65%**

**Cannot name drinking  
water source**

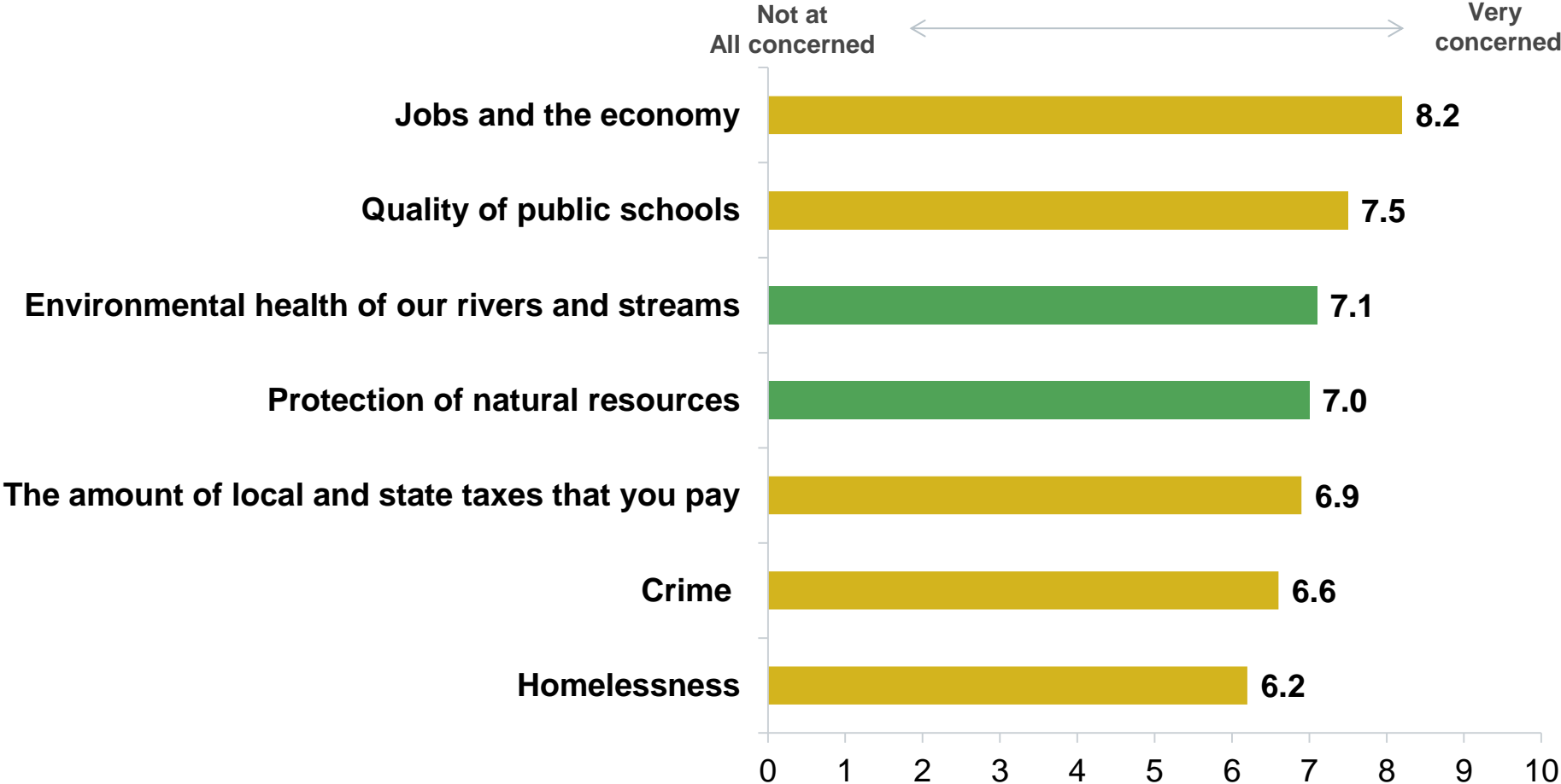


**30%-[VALUE]**

# Most Important Issue for the Legislature to Address

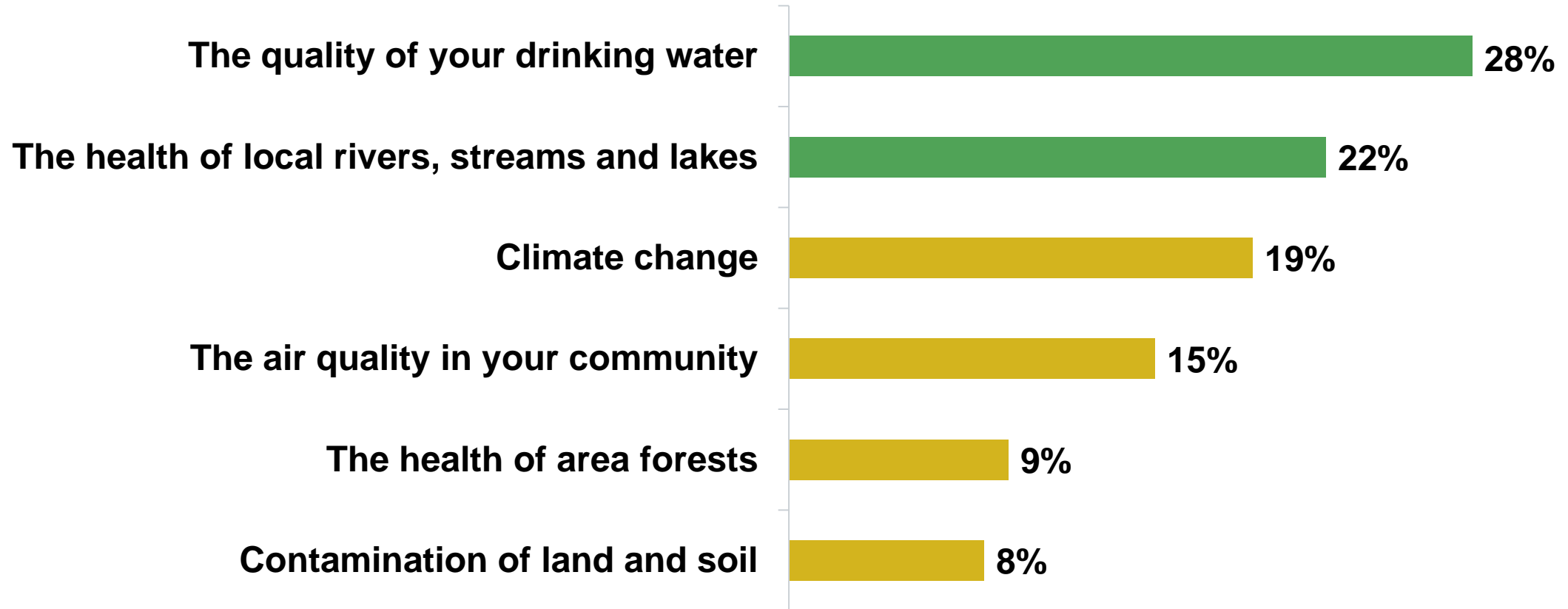


# Economy is top of mind concern, water quality is second tier concern





# Most concerning local environmental issue

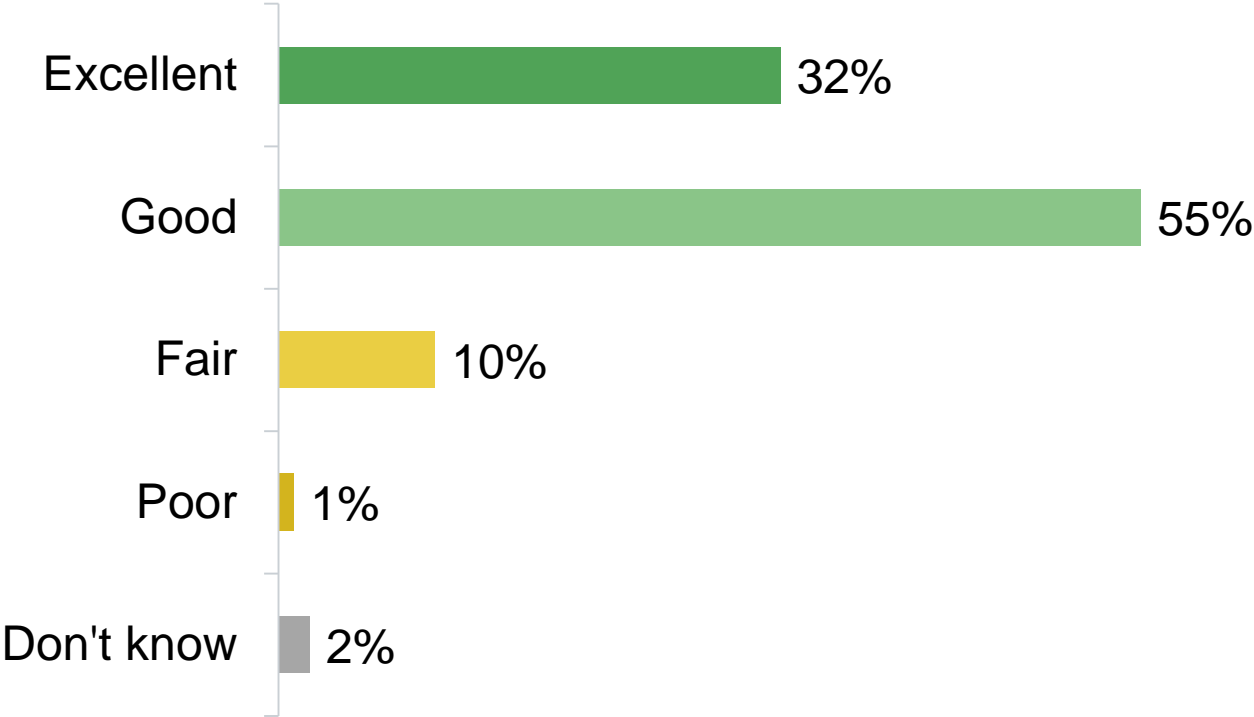


# What Oregonians value most about living in the state

- **Outdoor recreation opportunities –proximity and variety**
- **Natural beauty including open space, farmland, and forests**
- **Climate**
- **Water and air quality**
- **Sense of community/neighborliness**

# PERCEPTIONS OF WATER

# How would you rate the water quality in Oregon



# Water Values

## TOP TIER

**Public health and safety** – top priority

**Purity** – treat water as little as possible. Concern about long-term environmental and personal health consequences of water treatment

**Reliability** – having an adequate supply to meet the needs of today and the future

## SECOND TIER

**Wildlife habitat** – provide for fish, animals, and natural areas

**Economic growth** – clean, reliable water necessary for business. Both the supply and the waterways

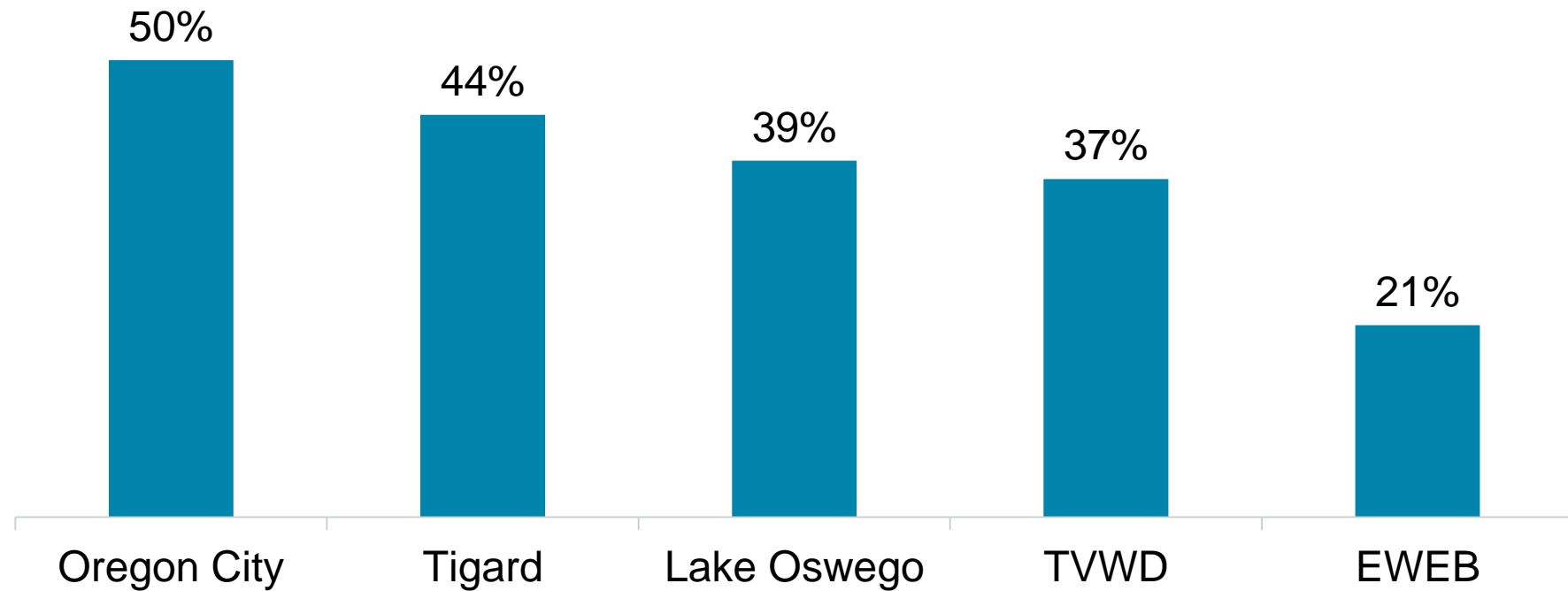
**Recreation** – waterways safe for swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities

## LOWER TIER

**Cost and value** – affordable to all

**...Even though many don't know where it comes from**

**Percent who don't know the source of their community's drinking water**



## Awareness Of Drinking Water Source



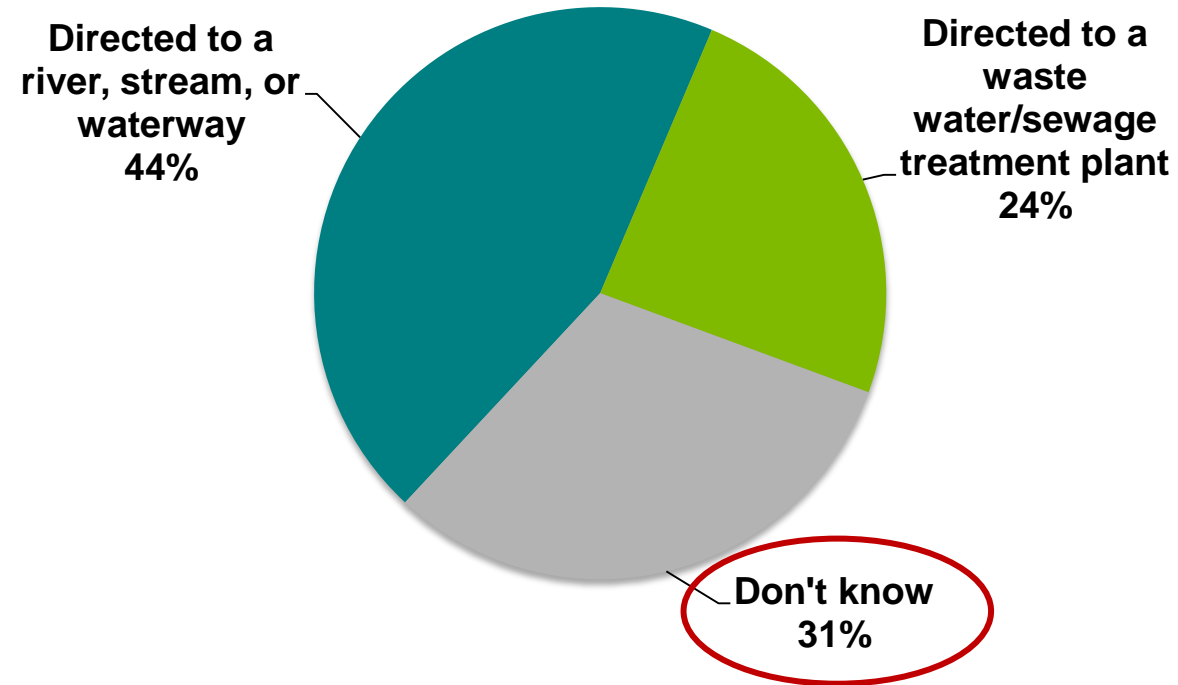
***“I am not aware of any information about the water source. I am a super-focused, single mother and business owner.”***



***“It’s one of those things that I don’t think about. I mean, I go and turn the faucet on, it’s there. I go to my refrigerator, get water out of it. I never really think about it. That makes me feel good.”***

# Limited understanding of stormwater

What happens to the water that enters your neighborhood or local public storm drains or drainage ditches?



Portland metro



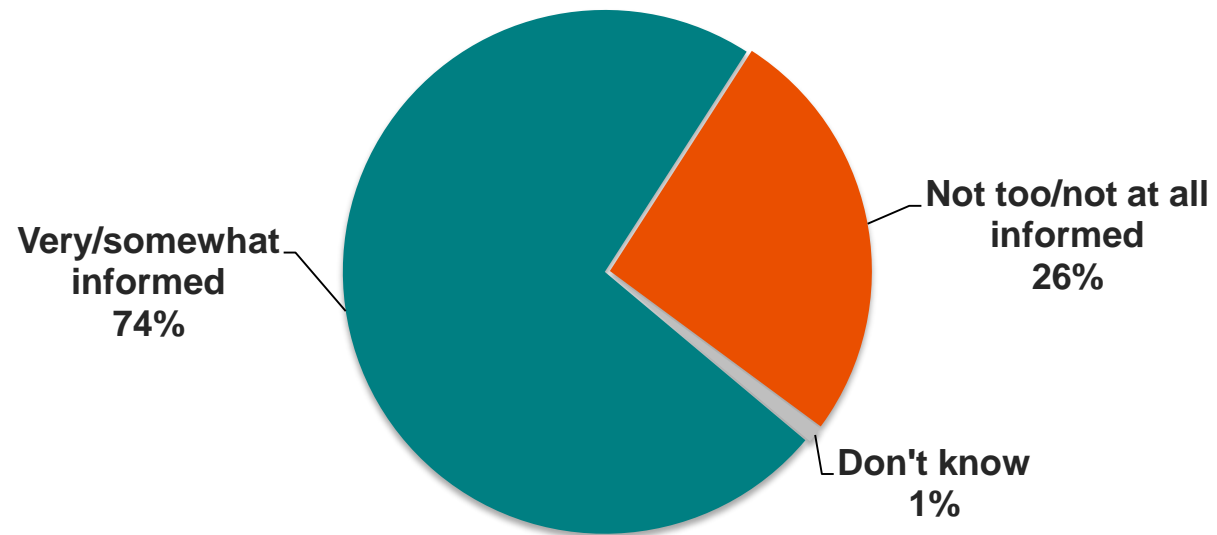
# Low Awareness Of Stormwater Service



***“How does it relate to water use? Why is that on the same bill as my water? You know, it seems like a different service even though they are both water. But I’m not using rain water.”***

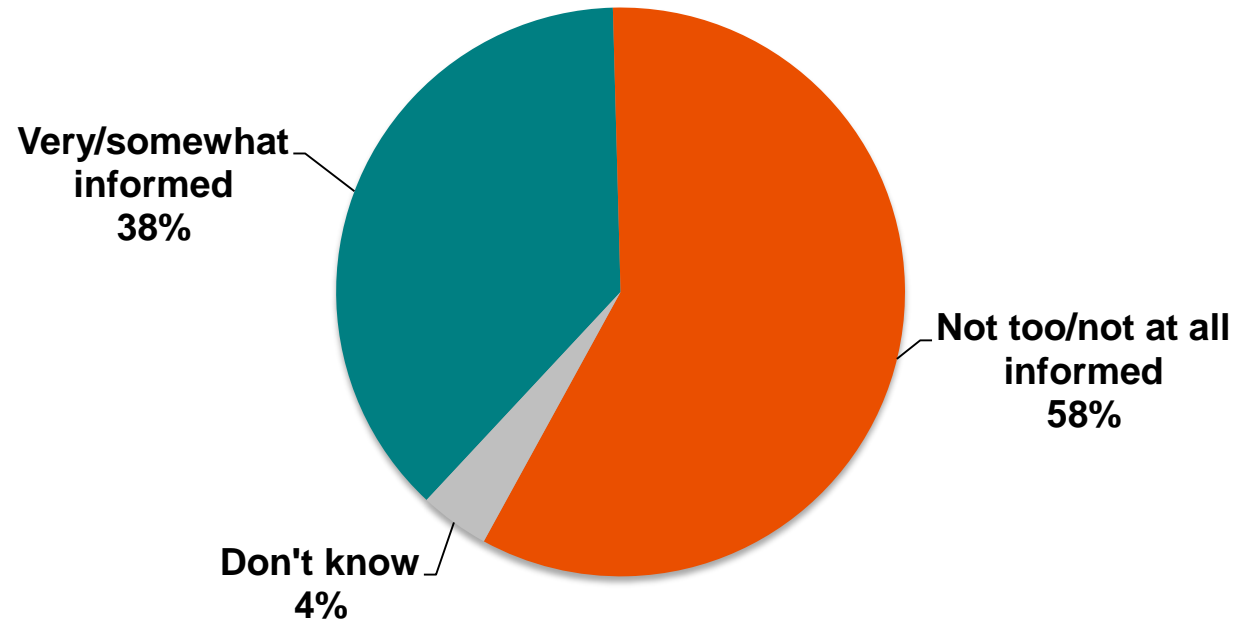
# People feel informed about what they can do to maintain water quality...

In general, how informed do you feel about what you can do to maintain the health and quality of local rivers and streams?



# ...but they are less confident about what they can do on their own property

In general, how informed do you feel about what you can do on your property to help manage stormwater?



# Stakeholder opinions: biggest challenges to water resource management

- **Managing population and industry growth and the strains they will place on water resources**
- **Sustainable and equitable funding**
- **Maintaining and replacing aging infrastructure**
- **Managing complicated federal and state regulations**
- **Balancing competing demands from residential, business and agricultural users**
- **Planning for crises, including persistent drought and earthquakes**

# **COMMUNICATION RECOMENDATIONS**

# Communicating About Water

- Connect to **Oregonians' values**
  - Specifically to preserving the natural beauty of our state, the outdoors, water, trees, and nature. Water evokes strong emotions in people; this is an opportunity to engage Oregonians on something they care about.
- Use a **positive tone** and **focus on outcomes**
  - Keep a focus on maintaining our quality of life, and specifically to improve our rivers and streams for future generations.
  - Communicate that there is a plan for the future. Failed policies or consequences of bad behaviors are weak reasons for behavior change.

# Communicating About Water

- Make links to **drinking water**. Protection of drinking water is one of the best motivations for changing behaviors.
- Mention and include **specific rivers and streams** to make a stronger “local” connection to a drinking water source.
- Protecting the **health of children and pets** is a powerful motivator.

# Communicating About Water

- Suggest **simple steps** to behavior change.
- **Partner** with community organizations, small businesses, retailers, and university experts as spokespeople.
- **Be persistent.** Water systems are taken for granted, and people are overwhelmed by other issues.



# Communication Don'ts

**DO NOT** lead with saving money as the key motivation for behavior change. Instead, lead with other values and include saving money as an added benefit.

**DO NOT** get bogged down in too many details and instructions. Keep it simple and easy.

**DO NOT** talk about water in general terms. Link to local rivers and streams. Name them.

# Communication Don'ts

**DO NOT** persuade residents that alternative products are just as effective as chemical ones. Let them come to that conclusion. Instead, move people with other values like the safety of children and pets.

**DO NOT** use words like infrastructure, sustainable, herbicides, pesticides, etc. Use words that express benefits for the individual.

**DO NOT** assume that people know, remember, or don't need to be told again.

**Q&A**

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