RESULTS OF PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY ANNOUNCED BY NCWD AND CLWA

For Immediate Release

April 13, 2016 (Santa Clarita, Calif.) -- The Newhall County Water District and Castaic Lake Water Agency announced today the results of a public survey launched to gain the opinions and ideas about a potential merger of the two organizations. The scientific survey is part of a broader effort to engage the public and more fully understand local priorities for water service.

"We're getting feedback on the potential merger by a number of methods. That means public workshops, digital tools, one-on-one meetings, social media and other mechanisms," said Matt Stone, CLWA's general manager. "The customer survey is one spoke in that wheel. It gives us a scientific and objective understanding of how our customers view water issues."

The survey tested general thoughts and opinions on current water service and providers. It then introduced information about the potential merger and sought opinions on specific concepts, benefits or challenges. It concluded with questions about how the public preferred to receive their news and information.

"Good public policy means having a good grasp on what the public wants," said Steve Cole, NCWD's general manager. "With an issue as important as this potential merger, that meant getting a deeper, quantitative look at public opinion to help paint the full picture of whether or not our customers think this is a good idea."

The following outlines the more significant results of the public opinion survey:

- Water and drought is the top issue on the minds of local residents, followed by jobs/economy and public safety
- A plurality (49.3%) of residents preferred the idea of merger without any background information; a minority (15.7%) of residents did not prefer the idea of a merger without any background information; the balance (35%) was unsure
 - Top reasons given for those that prefer merger (49.3%): Efficiencies, directly elected representation, better customer service
 - Top reasons given for those that did not prefer merger (15.7%): Unaware or needed more information, monopoly, rates
- A majority (61.7%) of residents preferred a merger after being presented both challenges and opportunities
- Over three-quarters of residents (78%) would prefer that a new agency should reflect the best attributes of current water providers
- Over three-quarters of residents (76%) preferred a new agency if it meant all residents would elect their water representatives
- Customers are most concerned with fair rates, ratepayer protections and transparency

The polling results, methodology and list of questions have been sent to customers across the Valley and posted at www.YourSCVWater.com for broader access. Customers are also encouraged to visit the website to identify their priorities for water service. This interactive site allows you to tell NCWD and CLWA what you want as part of your water future.

The poll was conducted by Irvine, California-based Probolsky Research. NCWD and CLWA have ensured that Adam Probolsky, the firm's founder and CEO, will be available to the media or public for questions. The cost was \$12,750 for each agency.





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METHODOLOGY

Probolsky Research completed 300 surveys of a representative sample of Valencia Water Company, Santa Clarita Water Division and Newhall County Water District customers. A survey of this size yields a margin of error of +/-5.8% with a 95% degree of confidence. Interviews were conducted with residents on both landline and mobile phones (70% of completed interviews were made on mobile phones) and were offered in English and Spanish languages. The sample was developed from resident files originally compiled by the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Probolsky Research applies a stratified random sampling methodology to sample design. This ensured that the demographic proportions of survey respondents match the demographic composition of the universe being researched. Precisely 46 responses were gathered from within the boundaries of Newhall County Water District (15% of the total), 137 from within the boundaries of Santa Clarita Water Division (46% of the total) and 117 from within the boundaries of Valencia Water Company (39% of the total). This matches the general composition of customers in the Valley.





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From the desk of:

Adam D. Probolsky CEO

April 6, 2016

Steve Cole, General Manager Newhall County Water District

Matt Stone, General Manager Castaic Lake Water Agency

As part of your public engagement process on potential water governance changes, Probolsky Research surveyed customers within the service areas of Newhall County Water District, Valencia Water Company and Santa Clarita Water Division. This statistically valid survey of Santa Clarita Valley residents was designed to develop an objective understanding of how water customers view current water service and the potential for change.

The following outlines the topline results of this survey:

- <u>Water and drought</u> is the top issue on the minds of local residents, followed by jobs/economy and public safety
- A <u>plurality</u> (49.3%) of residents **support the idea of merger** without any background information; a minority (15.7%) of residents oppose the idea of a merger without any background information; the balance (35%) is unsure
- A <u>majority</u> (61.7%) of residents **support a merger** *after* being presented both challenges and opportunities; support for the current structure of water service is similarly strong (59%)
- <u>Over three-quarters</u> of residents (78%) would prefer that a new agency reflected the best attributes of existing water providers
- Customers are most concerned with fair rates, ratepayer protections and transparency
- Customers overwhelmingly preferred to get public information through The Signal newspaper and local television

Conclusion

The data revealed by this study is intended to inform your overall public engagement effort. Its results clarify public support for current water service, but that Santa Clarita Valley water customers are receptive to change if it means better governance, efficiencies and continued customer service. The broad trust and credibility that all districts enjoy with their customers demands that customers be well-informed and included in a robust public engagement effort to ensure they have a stake in any potential change. Your current public workshop, communications and outreach efforts directly reflect this requirement.

Methodology

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Sincerely,

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Adam D. Probolsky CEO



Regional Voter Survey – Report on Results –

March 23, 2016



Probolsky Research 3990 Westerly Place Suite 185 Newport Beach, CA 92660 USA (949) 855-6400 Newport Beach (415) 870-8150 San Francisco (202) 559-0270 Washington DC

www.probolskyresearch.com

Newhall County Water District – Regional Voter Survey Report on results

From Wednesday, March 16 through Monday, March 21, 2016 Probolsky Research conducted a telephone survey of voters within the boundaries of Newhall County Water District, Valencia Water Company and Santa Clarita Water Division .

A total of 300 surveys were collected. A survey of this size yields a margin of error of +/-5.8% with a 95% degree of confidence. Interviews were conducted with voters on both landline and cell phones (70% of completed interviews were made on cell phones) and were offered in English and Spanish languages. Our sample was developed from voter files originally compiled by the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. Probolsky Research applies a stratified random sampling methodology to our sample design. In other words, we ensure that the demographic proportions of survey respondents match the demographic composition of the universe being researched. 46 responses were gathered from within the boundaries of Newhall County Water District (15% of the total), 137 from within the boundaries of Santa Clarita Water Division (46% of the total) and 117 from within the boundaries of Valencia Water Company (39% of the total).

 $Probols ky \, Research \, specializes \, in \, opinion \, research \, on \, behalf \, of \, business, government, non-profit and special interest \, clients.$



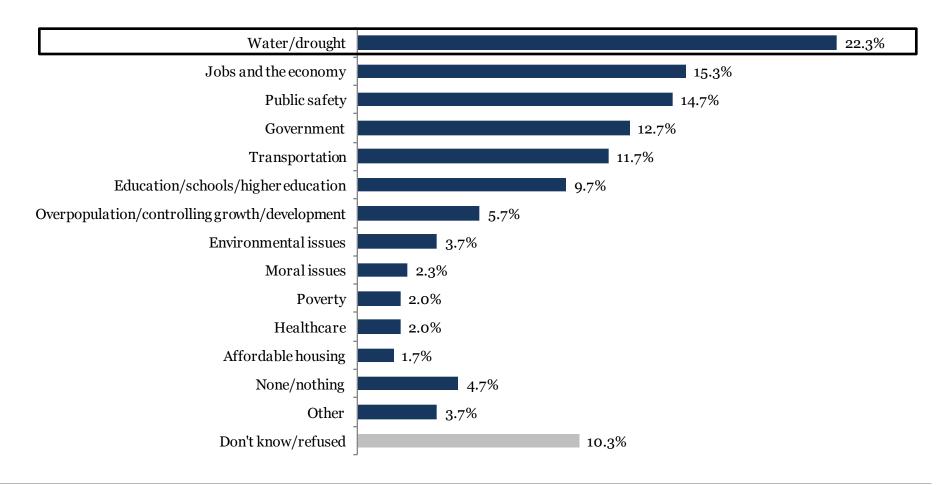
General Regional Themes



Water/drought

Is the <u>most important</u> issue in the community

Question: What is the most important issue facing your community today?





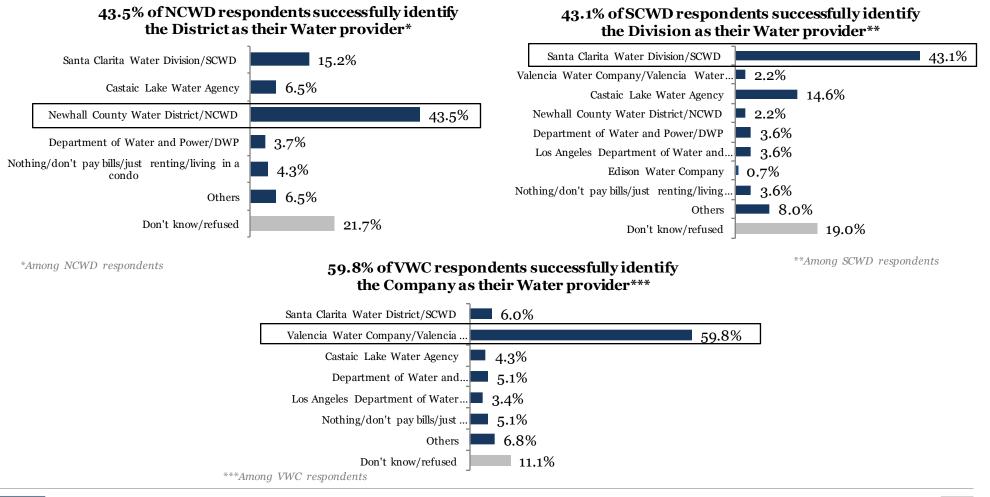
The Water Providers



Do respondents know who provides

Their homes' water service?

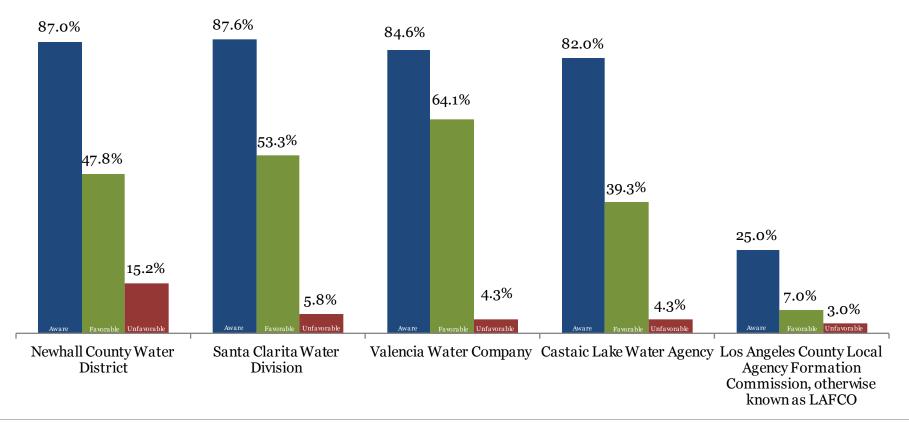
Question: Can you tell me who provides the water service for your home?*





All local water agencies Enjoy favorable ratings from customers

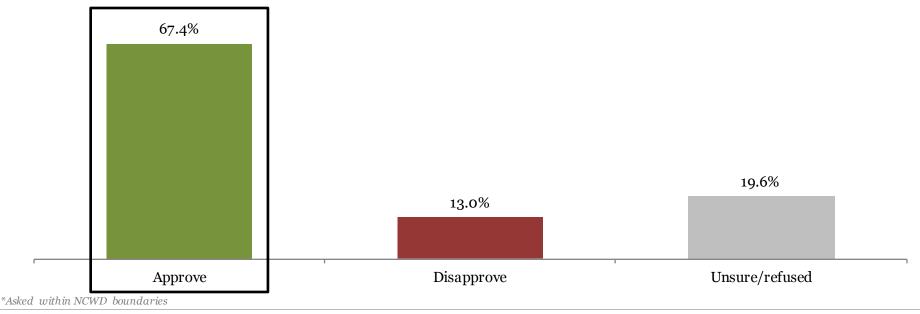
Now I have a list of names of several organizations that I am going to read. For each name, please tell me if Question: you have heard of them and if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of them. If you have no opinion or have never heard of them, just say so. The first name is NAME. Have you heard of NAME? Would you say that you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of NAME?





67.4% of NCWD customers approve of the job That the District is doing

Question: Newhall County Water District, or NCWD, is responsible for providing water and irrigation services for homes, businesses and institutional users in your community. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job that the Newhall County Water District is doing?*

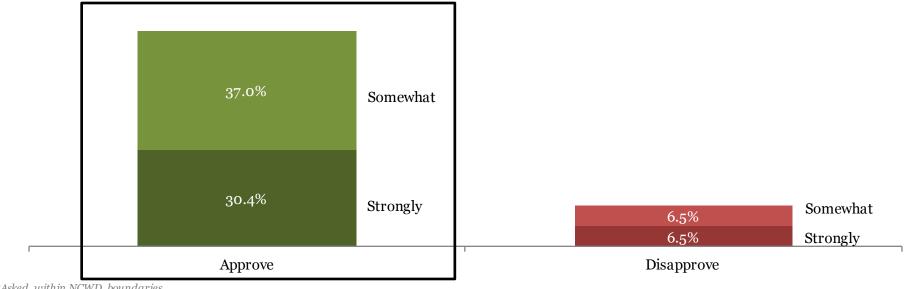




The intensity of job approval for NCWD

Is significant (30.4% say they *strongly* approve)

Question: And would you say that you strongly or somewhat (approve/disapprove)?*

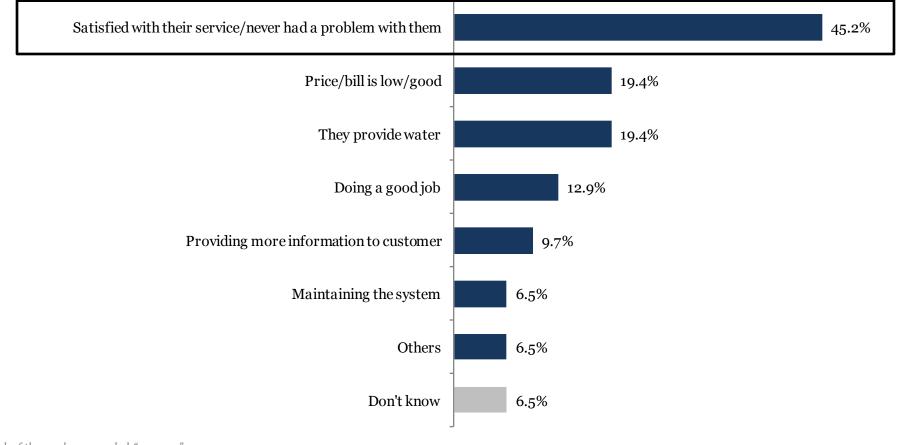


*Asked within NCWD boundaries



Reasons why 67.4% of NCWD customers approve Of the job the District is doing

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you approve of the job that Newhall County Water District is doing?*

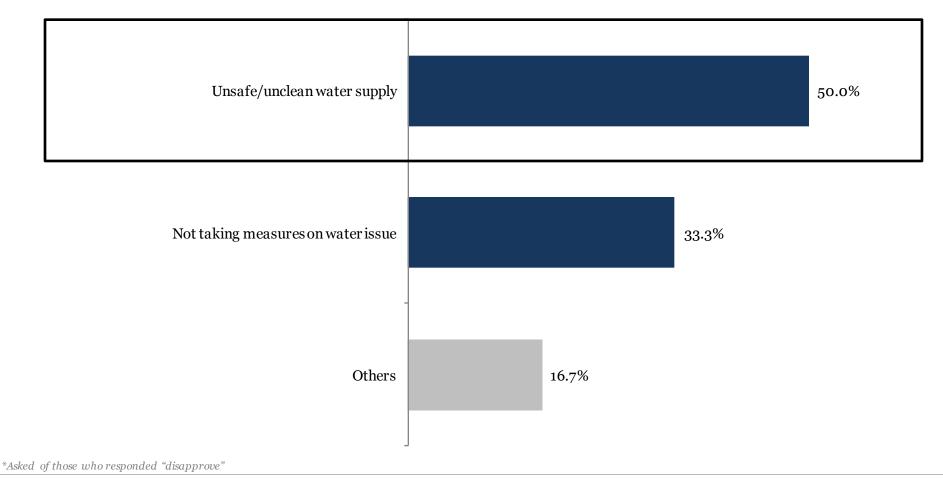






Reasons why 13% (6 respondents) of NCWD customers Don't approve of the job the District is doing

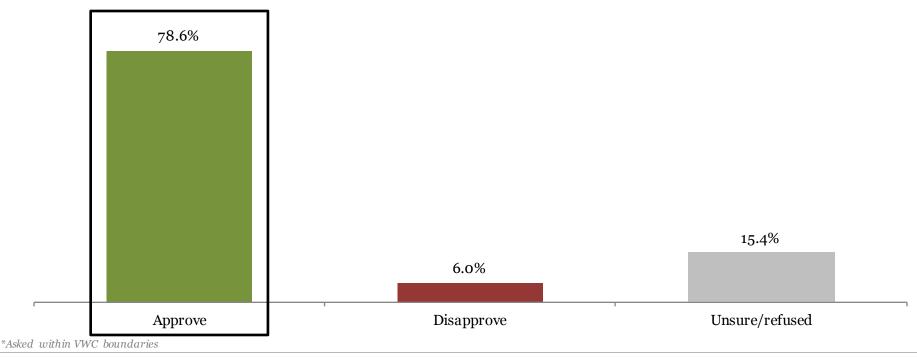
Question: Thinking specifically, why do you disapprove of the job that Newhall County Water District is doing?





78.6% of VWC customers approve of the job That the Water Company is doing

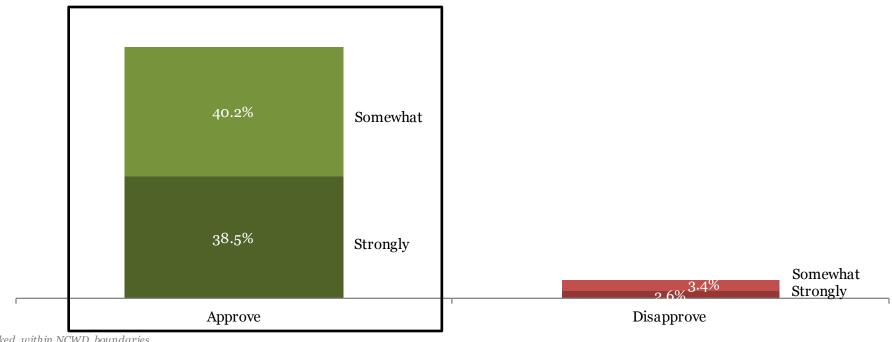
Question: Valencia Water Company, or VWC, is responsible for providing water and irrigation services for homes, businesses and institutional users in your community. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job that the Valencia Water Company is doing?*





The intensity of job approval for the Water Company Is significant (38.5% say they *strongly* approve)

Question: And would you say that you strongly or somewhat (approve/disapprove)?*



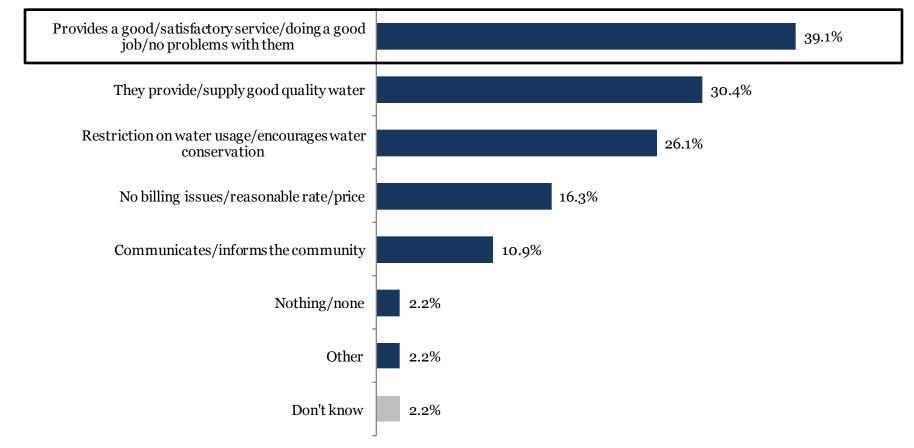
*Asked within NCWD boundaries



Reasons why 78.6% of VWC customers

Approve of the job the Water Company is doing

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you approve of the job that Valencia Water Company is doing?*



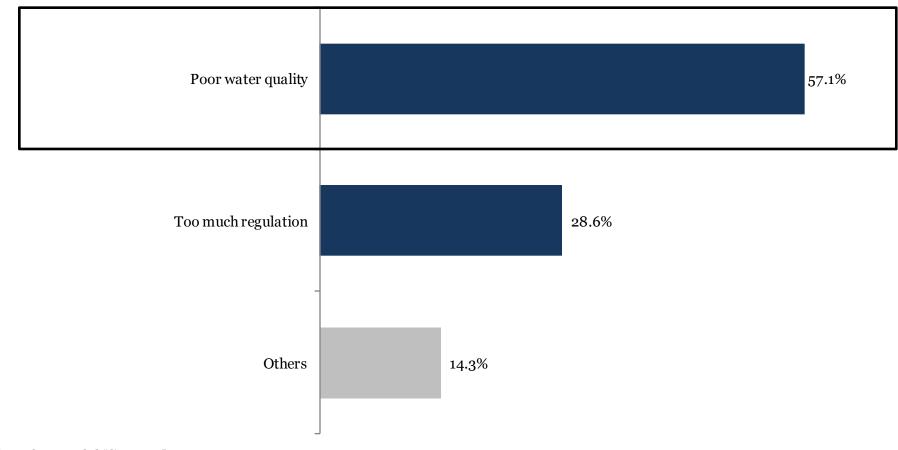
*Asked of those who responded "approve"



Reasons why 6.0% (7 respondents) of VWC customers

Disapprove of the job the Water Company is doing

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you disapprove of the job that Valencia Water Company is doing?*

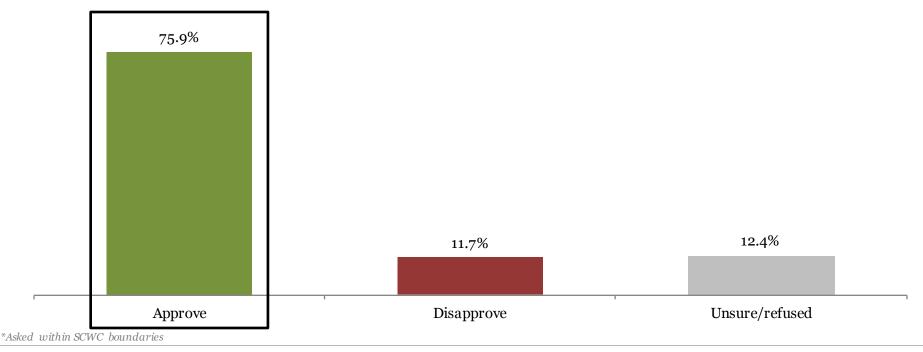


*Asked of those who responded "disapprove"



75.9% of SCWC customers approve of the job That the Division is doing

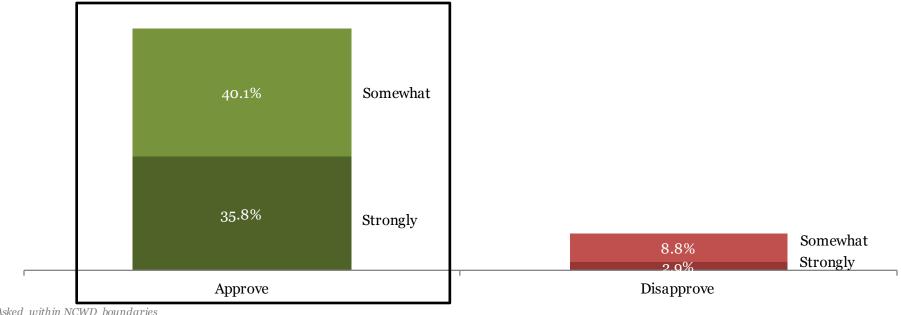
Question: Santa Clarita Water Division, or SCWD, is responsible for providing water and irrigation services for homes, businesses and institutional users in your community. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job that the Santa Clarita Water Division is doing?*





The intensity of job approval for the Division Is significant (35.8% say they *strongly* approve)

Question: And would you say that you strongly or somewhat (approve/disapprove)?*

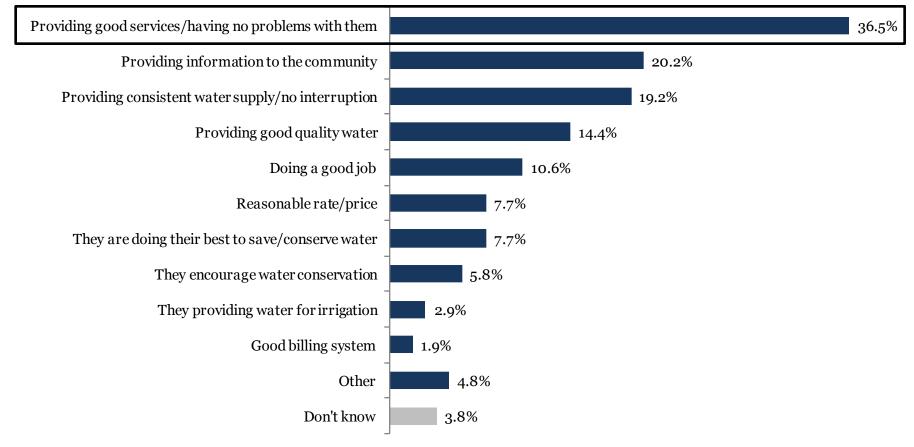


*Asked within NCWD boundaries



Reasons why 75.9% of SCWD customers Approve of the job the Division is doing

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you approve of the job that Santa Clarita Water Division is doing?*

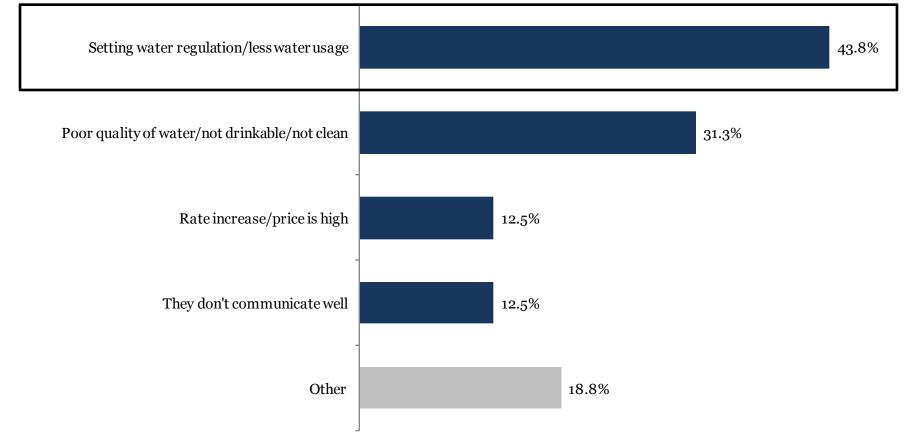


*Asked of those who responded "approve"



Reasons why 11.7% (16 respondents) of SCWD customers Disapprove of the job the Division is doing

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you disapprove of the job that Santa Clarita Water Division is doing?*

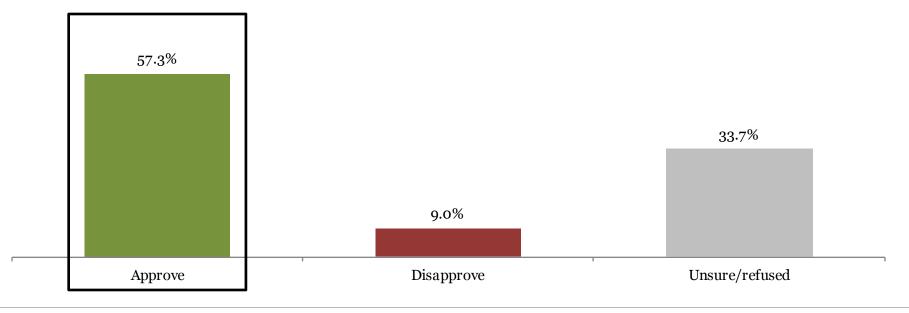


*Asked of those who responded "disapprove"



57.3% approve of the job That the Castaic Lake Water Agency is doing

Question: Castaic Lake Water Agency is a regional water wholesaler, primarily responsible for purchasing water from the state and providing it to your local water district. It also oversees regional conservation and planning efforts. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job that the Castaic Lake Water Agency is doing?

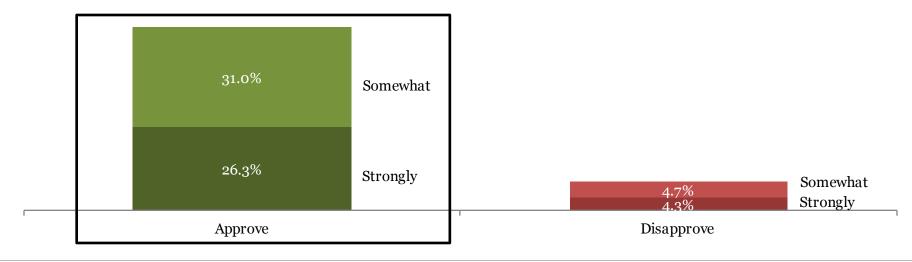




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The intensity of job approval for the Agency Is significant (26.3% say they *strongly* approve)

Question: And would you say that you strongly or somewhat (approve/disapprove)?





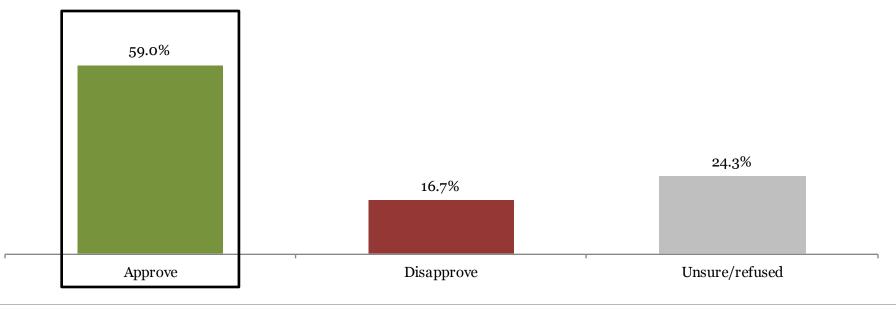
Introduction of Information on Current Water Provider Model



59.0% approve of service model that uses

Four different local water providers to serve the Valley's water needs

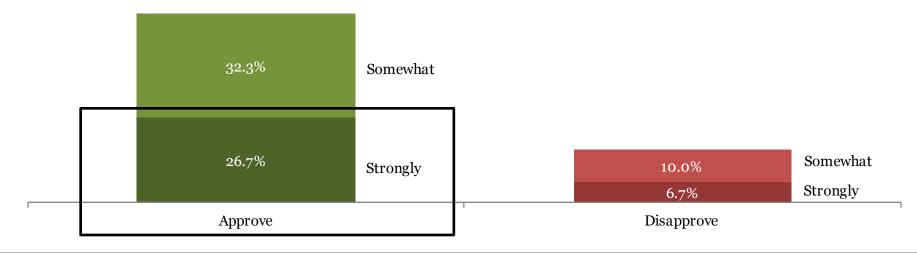
Question: Santa Clarita Valley residents and businesses are served by four local water providers. Newhall County Water District, Valencia Water Company, Santa Clarita Water Division and LA County Public Works serve specific areas throughout the Valley region. In general, do you approve or disapprove of this service model, which uses four different local water providers to serve the Santa Clarita Valley's water needs?





The intensity of approval for this service model Is significant (26.7% say they *strongly* approve)

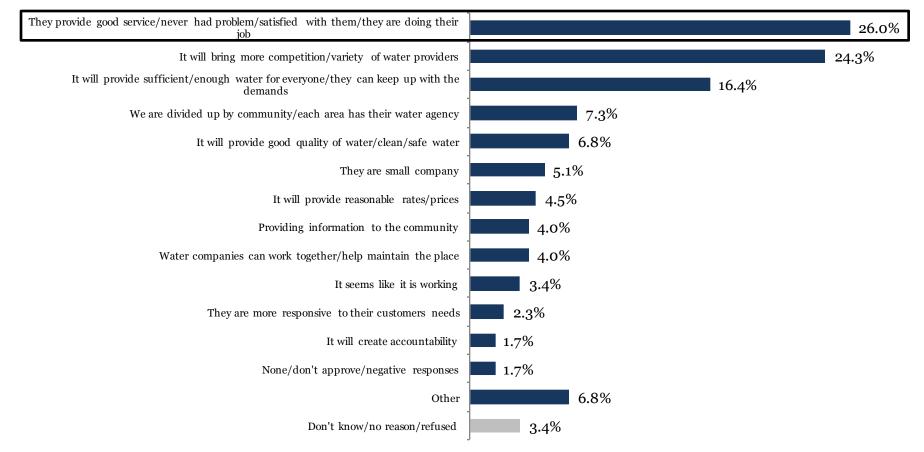
Question: And would you say that you strongly or somewhat (approve/disapprove)?





Reasons why 59.0% of respondents approve Of the model of four different water providers

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you approve?*



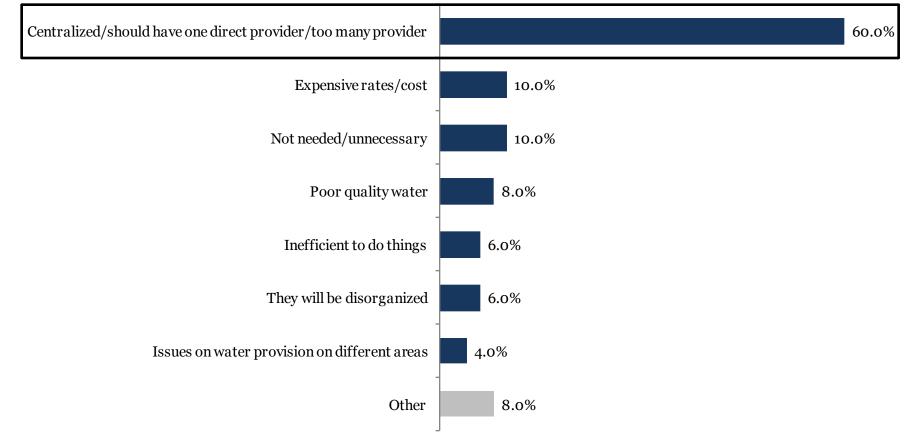
*Asked of those who responded "approve"



Reasons why 16.7% (50 respondents) disapprove

Of the model of four different water providers

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you disapprove?*



*Asked of those who responded "disapprove"

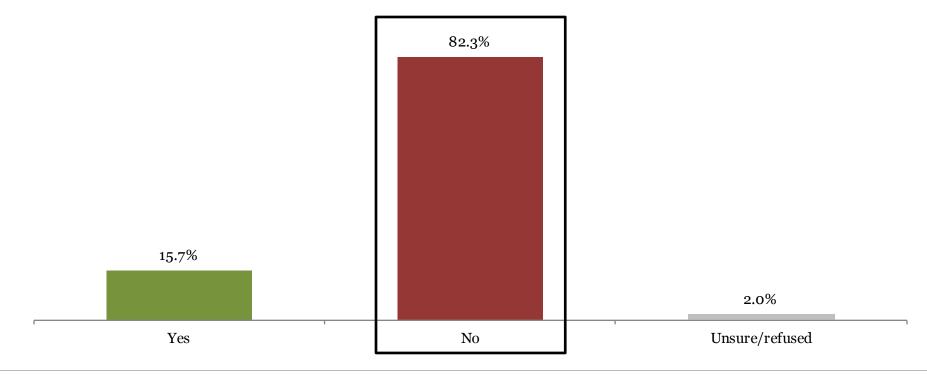


Introducing the Potential to Merge CLWA and NCWD



82.3% of respondents have NOT Heard of the potential to merge CLWA with NCWD

Question: Have you heard of the proposal to merge Santa Clarita Valley water importer and wholesaler Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District, one of the three main water retailers in Santa Clarita Valley, to form a new water agency?

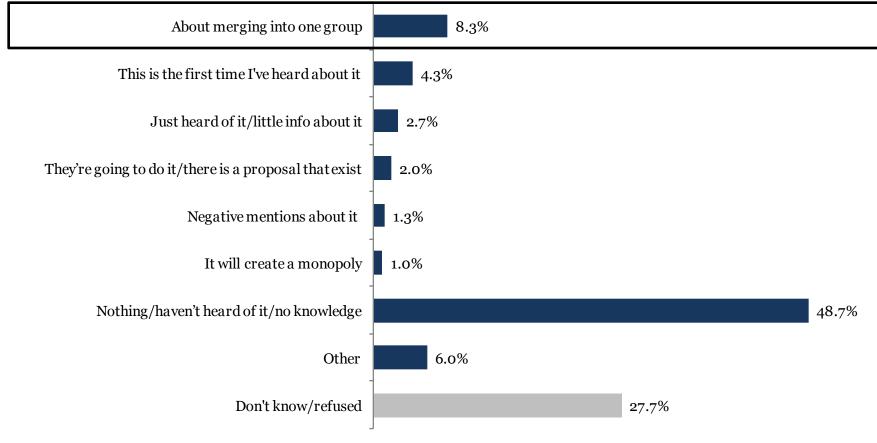




What does the 15.7% of respondents who have heard

Of the potential to merge CLWA with NCWD know of the proposal

Question: In your own words, please tell me what you know about the proposal to merge Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District?

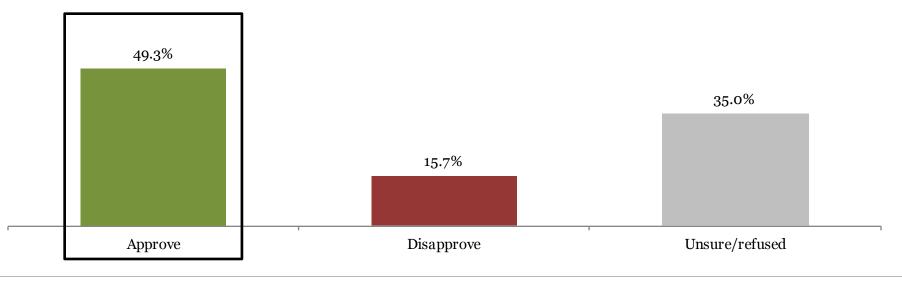


*Asked of those who have heard of the proposal



Nearly one-half (49.3%) approve proposal To merge CLWA with NCWD while a little under 16% disapprove

Question: Castaic Lake Water Agency owns and operates Santa Clarita Water Division and owns the Valencia Water Company. Newhall County Water District is an independent water district. Newhall County Water District and Castaic Lake Water Agency have begun preliminary discussions that could lead to the merger of the water agencies to create a new, valley-wide water district governed by a locally elected board, providing water service and integrating water resource management. In general, do you approve or disapprove of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to create a new water district?

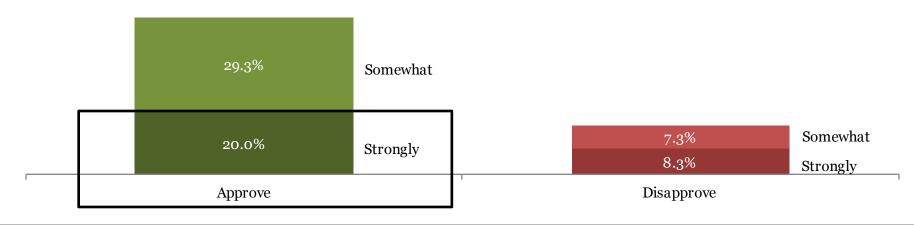




The intensity approval of the merger

Is significant (20.0% say they *strongly* approve)

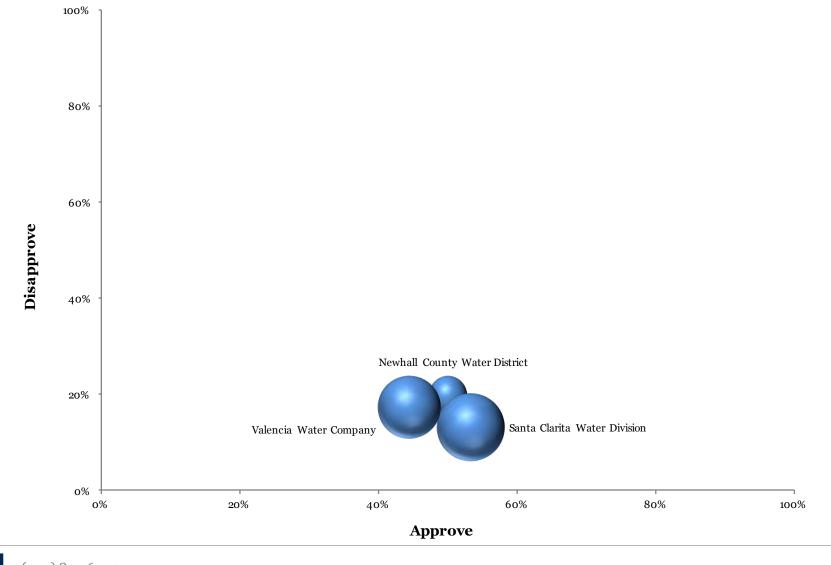
Question: And would you say that you strongly or somewhat (approve/disapprove)?





Those from SCWD and NCWD are more supportive

Of the potential merger than those from VWC

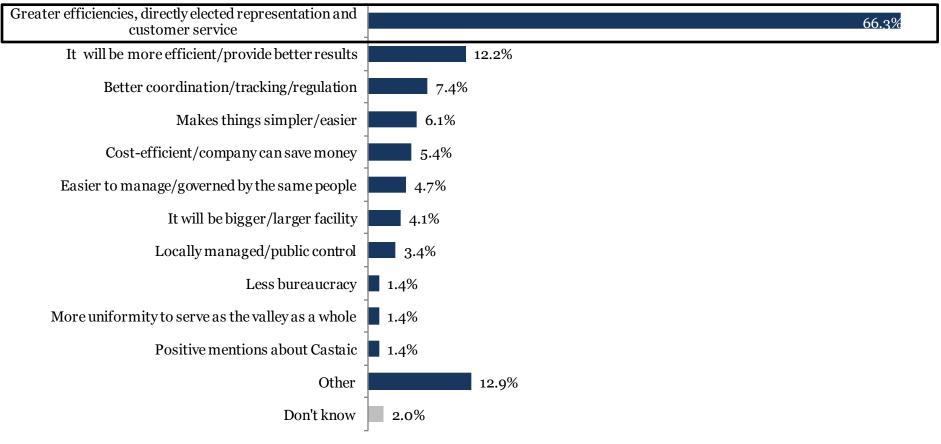




Reasons why a plurality (49.3%)

Approves of the merger

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you approve?*

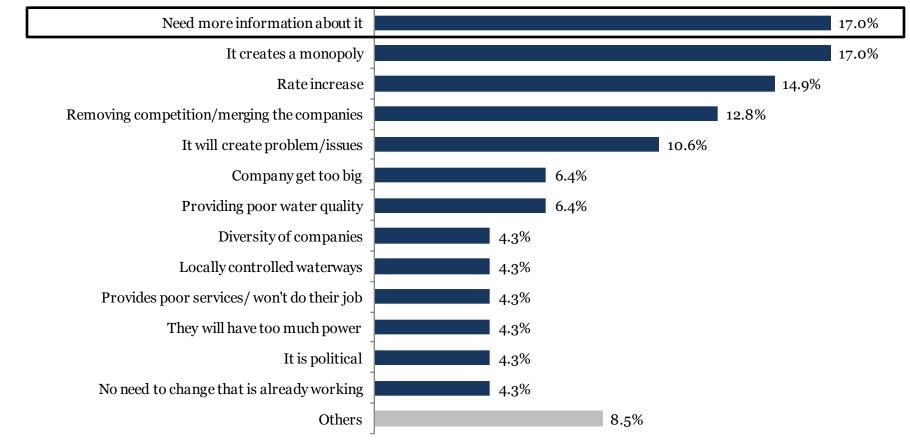


*Asked of those who responded "approve"



Reasons why 15.7% (47 respondents) Oppose the merger

Question: Thinking specifically, why do you disapprove?*



*Asked of those who responded "disapprove"



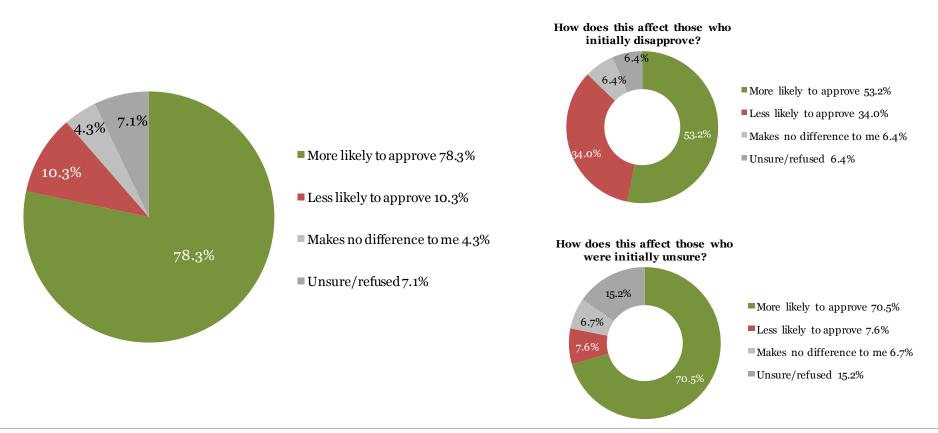
Introduction of Information on Potential Merger Benefits and Challenges

Preamble: "Now I am going to read to you some background information about the proposal to merge Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to create a new water agency. Please listen to each item and then tell me if it makes you more likely or less likely to approve of the proposal. If it makes no difference to you, just say so."



78.3% become more likely to approve the merger Knowing it would combine the best parts of the region's water providers

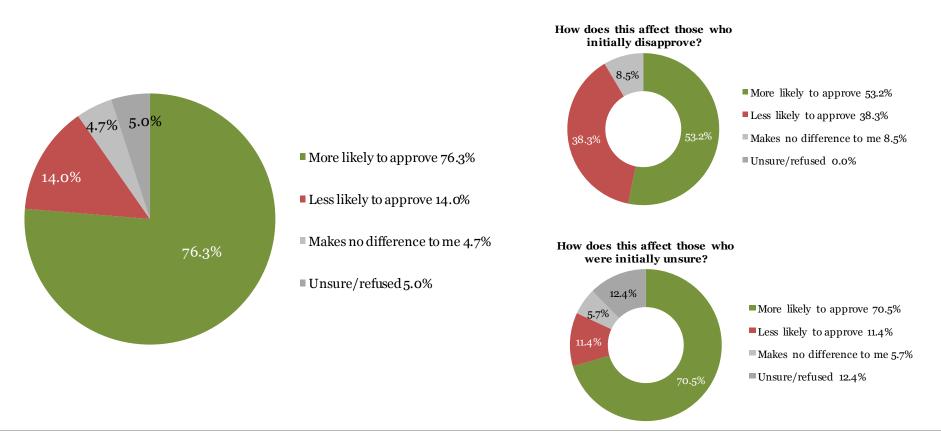
Question: If you knew that the new, valley-wide water agency would combine the best parts of the region's water providers while eliminating inefficiencies and redundancies, would you be more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District?





76.3% become more likely to approve the merger Knowing that the governing board would be directly elected

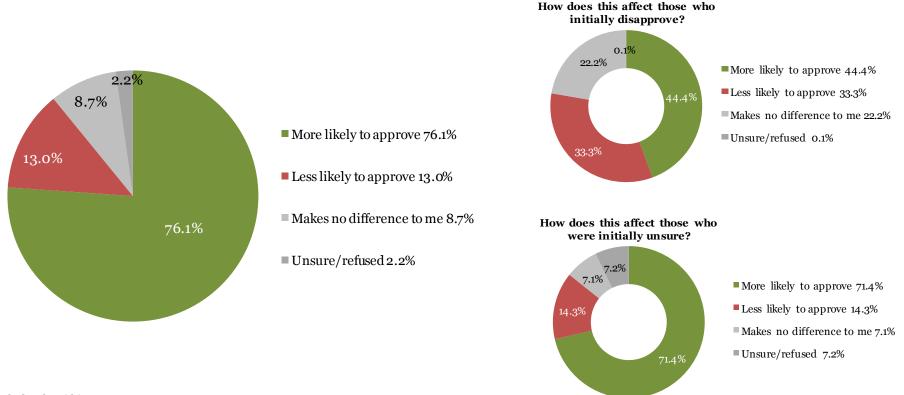
Question: Today, not all Santa Clarita Valley residents are able to vote for representatives on the boards of directors at their local water agencies. Would you be more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency if you knew that the governing board of the new, valley-wide water agency would be directly elected by all registered voters within the new District's boundaries in the Santa Clarita Valley?





76.1% within NCWD become more likely to approve Knowing it would ensure NCWD customers do not have to pay for debt of others

Question: Newhall County Water District has extremely low debt. A new, valley-wide water agency would ensure that NCWD customers would not have to pay for the debt of other agencies after the merger, to protect the low and fair rates for NCWD customers. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency?*

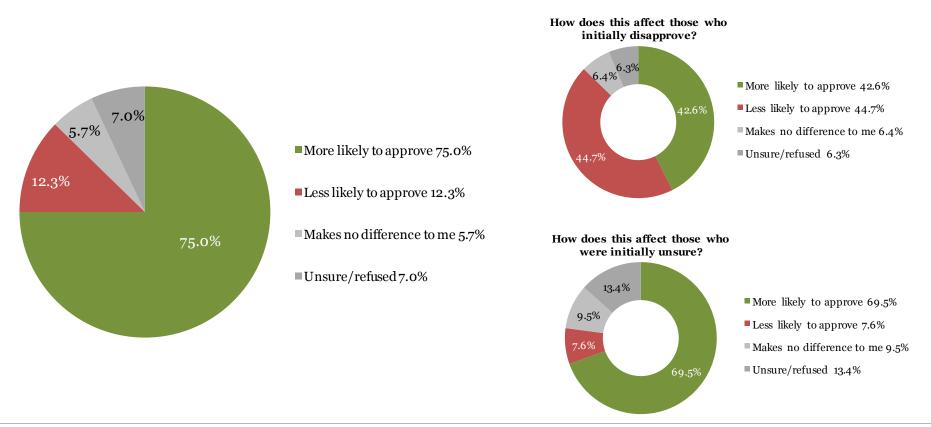


*Asked only within NCWD



75.0% become more likely to approve the merger Knowing it would end years of costly litigation

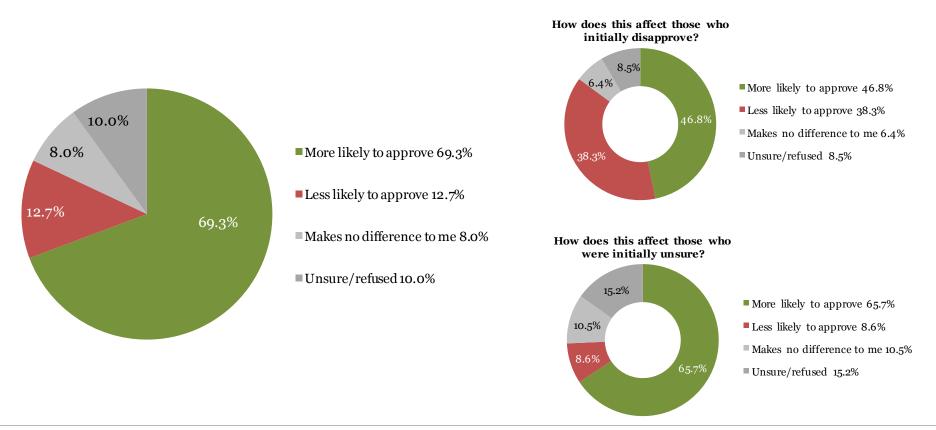
Question: Would you be more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency if you knew that it would end years of costly litigation between Castaic Lake Water Agency and Newhall County Water District?





69.3% become more likely to approve the merger Knowing the new agency would include an independent ratepayer advocate

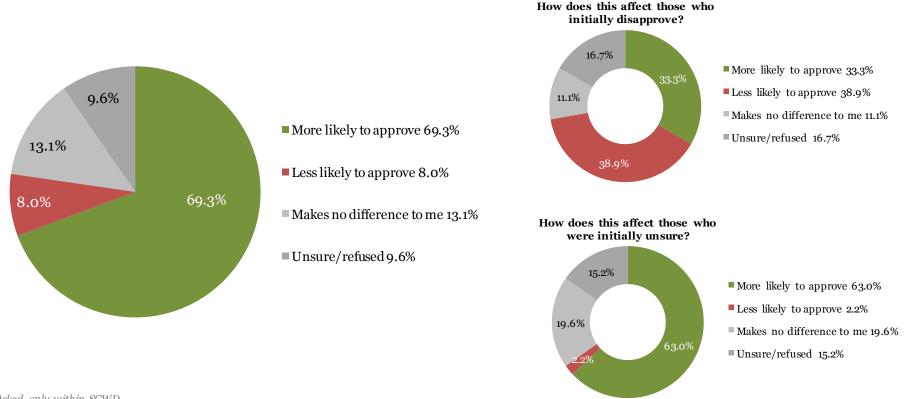
Question: Would you be more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency if you knew that the new water agency would include an independent ratepayer advocate to monitor budget and financial decisions?





69.3% within SCWD become more likely to approve Knowing they would have directly elected representation

Question: Santa Clarita Water Division was once a private water company before it was purchased by Castaic Lake Water Agency about fifteen years ago. It is operated as a subsidiary of CLWA. The Castaic Lake Water Agency is a public agency, and the Board of Directors of Castaic Lake Water Agency oversees operations for Santa Clarita Water Division. A new, valley-wide water agency would ensure customers of Santa Clarita Water Division would have directly elected representation on the new agency's board of directors. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency?*

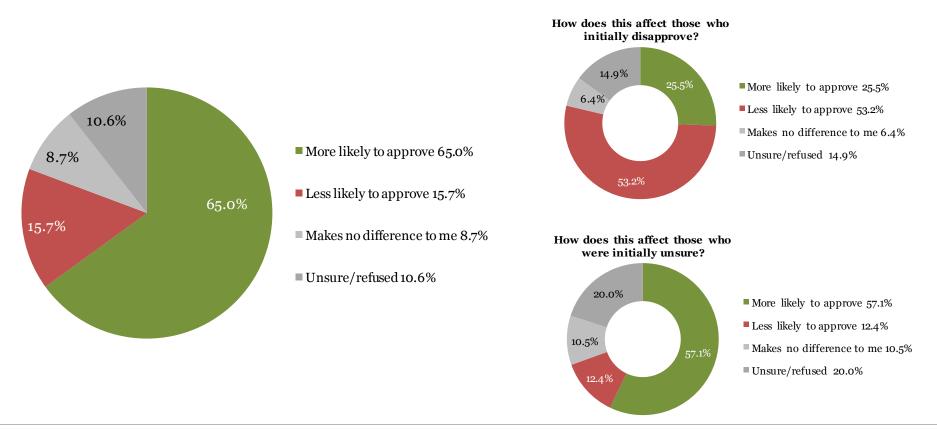


*Asked only within SCWD



65.0% become more likely to approve the merger The new agency would oversee all regional water resources

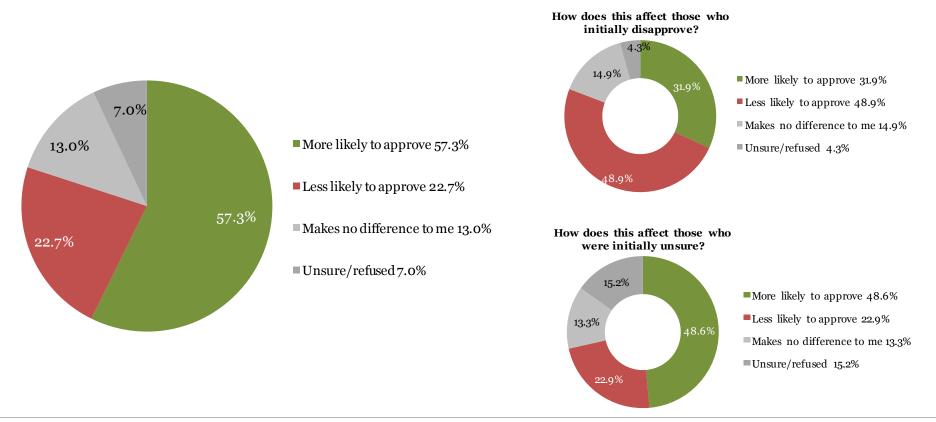
Question: Would you be more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency if you knew the new agency would oversee all regional water resources, including imported water, groundwater and recycled water supplies?





57.3% become more likely to approve the merger Knowing it would be conducted by LAFCO

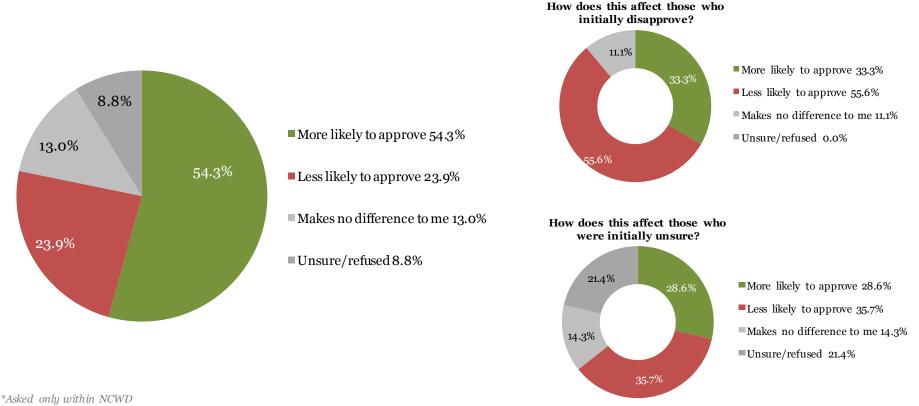
Question: The merger to create a new agency would be conducted by an independent government agency called the Los Angeles County Local Agency Formation Commission, otherwise known as LAFCO. The purpose of this commission is to form and refine local governments. The process would include multiple public workshops, public hearings, public noticing, public outreach as well as the potential for Santa Clarita Valley residents to vote in favor or opposition to the merger to create a new water agency. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency?





54.3% within NCWD become more likely to approve Knowing NCWD's governance model would serve as the new agency's foundation

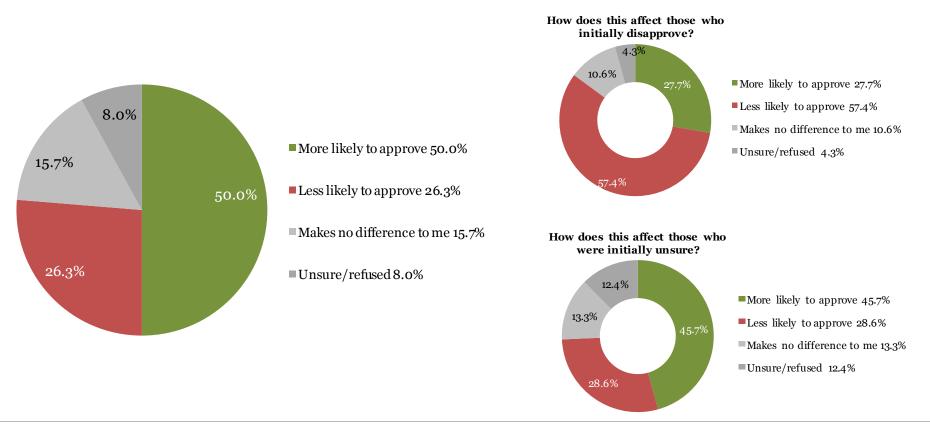
Newhall County Water District runs much like a business. It will soon operate on a "pay-as-you-go" basis for operations and **Ouestion:** infrastructure development. It keeps costs low through fiscally conservative budget management and retirement benefits. It engages its customers on key decisions, like budgets. If NCWD and CLWA do in fact merge, the new agency may reflect many of the concepts developed by NCWD's directly elected Board of Directors. Knowing that NCWD's model of governance may serve as the foundation of the new agency, would you be more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District?*





50.0% become more likely to approve the merger Knowing customers would benefit from greater efficiencies, etc.

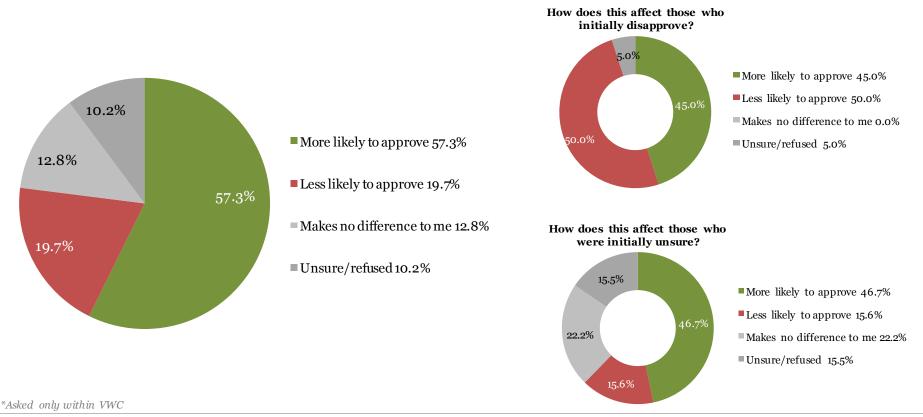
Question: If Castaic Lake Water Agency is merged with Newhall County Water District to create a new, valley-wide water district, customers could benefit from greater efficiencies, reduced overhead, increased water reliability and more clout in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. But at this point, it's unknown whether or not actual water bills would be reduced. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency?





57.3% within VWC become more likely to approve Knowing they would have directly elected representation

Question: Valencia Water Company was once a private water company before it was purchased by Castaic Lake Water Agency in 2012. It has not yet been converted to a public agency. A new, valley-wide water agency would ensure customers of Valencia Water Company would be served by a public agency and have directly elected representation on the new agency's board of directors. Does knowing this make you more likely or less likely to approve of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency?*





Neighbor to Neighbor Conversations

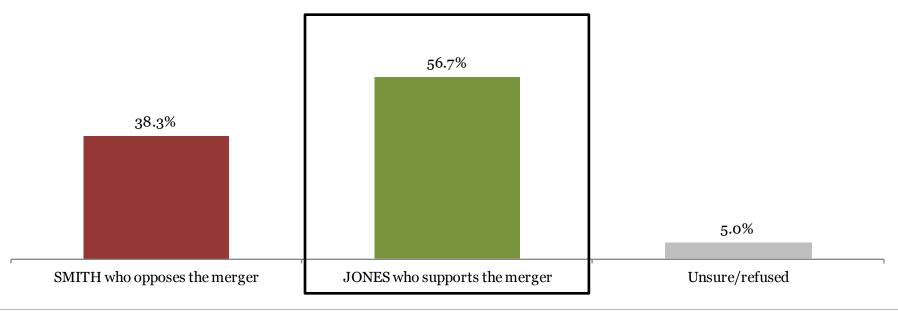
Preamble: "Now I am going to read to you some statements of local residents in your community. Please listen to each statement and tell me with whom you agree more."



57.6% agree with Jones Who supports the merger

Question: SMITH says: "There's no way I support merging Newhall County Water District with Castaic Lake Water Agency to form a new water agency. I'd rather have several small, local water providers than one regional water authority, which would monopolize our water resources while becoming a large, inefficient government agency."

JONES says: "I support merging Newhall County Water District with Castaic Lake Water Agency to form a new water agency. The new, valley-wide water agency would combine the best parts of the region's water providers while eliminating inefficiencies, layers of government and redundancies." With whom do you agree more, SMITH or JONES?

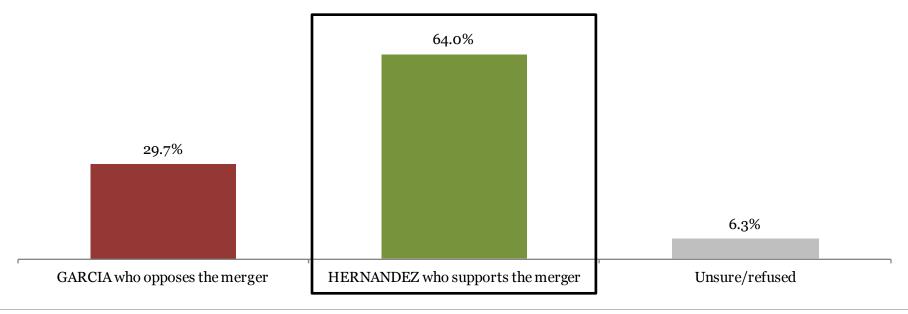




64.0% agree with Hernandez Who supports the merger

Question: GARCIA says: There's no way I support merging Newhall County Water District with Castaic Lake Water Agency to form a new water agency. It would mean one regional board of directors that would not represent the people. Our individual communities will lose our power and voice."

HERNANDEZ says: "I support merging Newhall County Water District with Castaic Lake Water Agency to form a new water agency. All of Santa Clarita Valley's communities will finally have directly elected representation on the board of the new water agency that provides their water and manages scarce water resources and handles critical infrastructure." With whom do you agree more, GARCIA or HERNANDEZ?



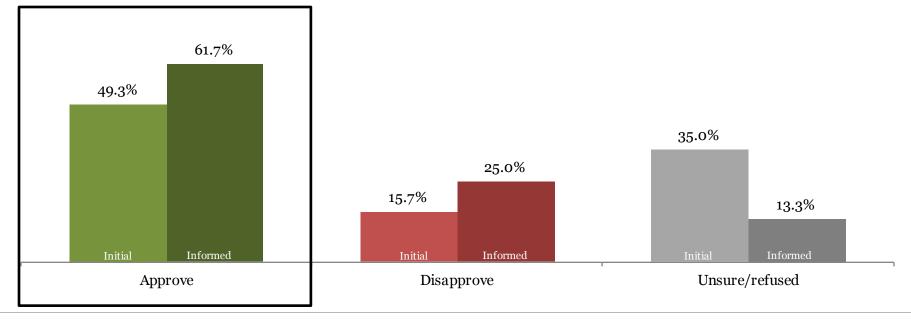


Customer Opinion Following Introduction of Information on Potential Merger



Approval for the merger rises to 61.7% Versus opposition at 25.0%

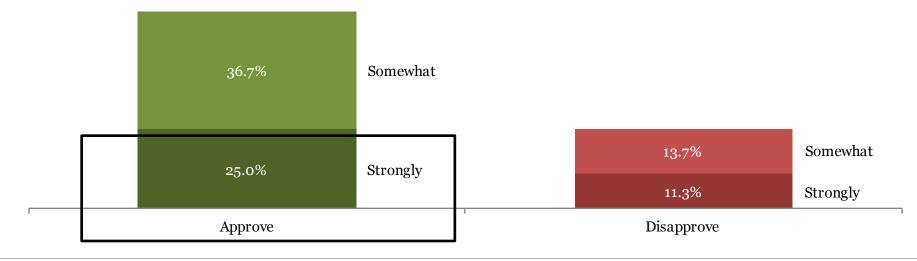
Question: Knowing what you do now, do you approve or disapprove of merging Castaic Lake Water Agency with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency?





The intensity of approval for the merger Is significant (25.0% say they *strongly* approve)

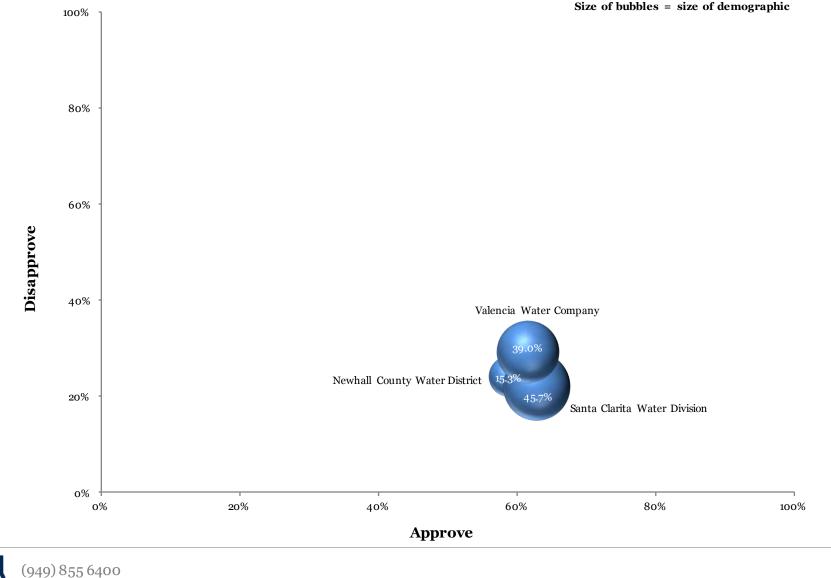
Question: And would you say that you strongly or somewhat (approve/disapprove)?

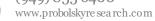




Approval of the potential merger is similar

Within the three retail water agency boundaries



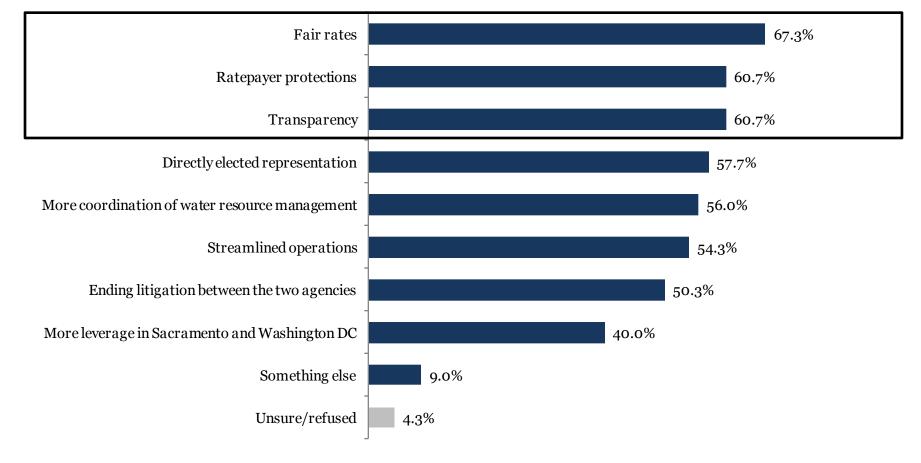


ROBOLSK

RESEARCH

What is most important to customers If CLWA is merged with NCWD?

Question: If Castaic Lake Water Agency is merged with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency, which of the following are most important to you? You can choose as many as you like, or none at all. If there is something important to you that you do not hear, please tell me what it is.

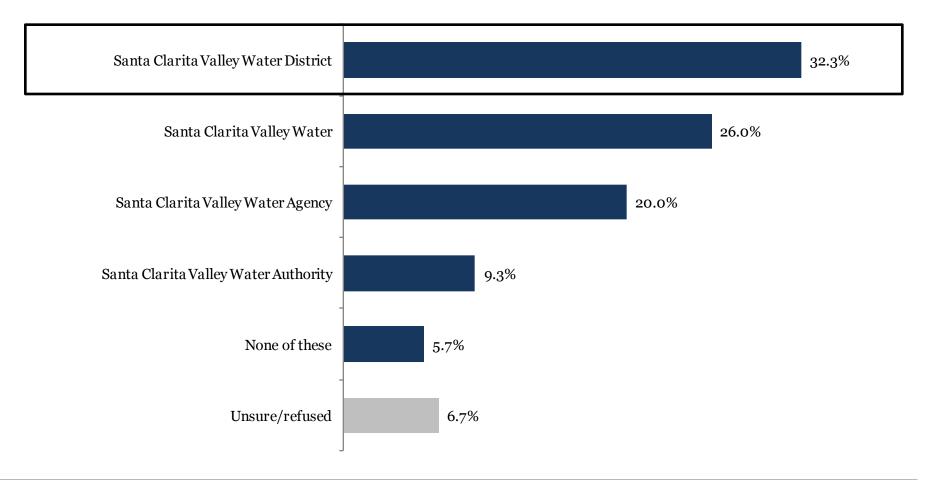




Customers preferred "Santa Clarita Valley Water District"

As a generic name over other alternatives

Question: If Castaic Lake Water Agency is merged with Newhall County Water District to form a new water agency, which of the following would you prefer the new regional water agency to be called? Please choose ONE.

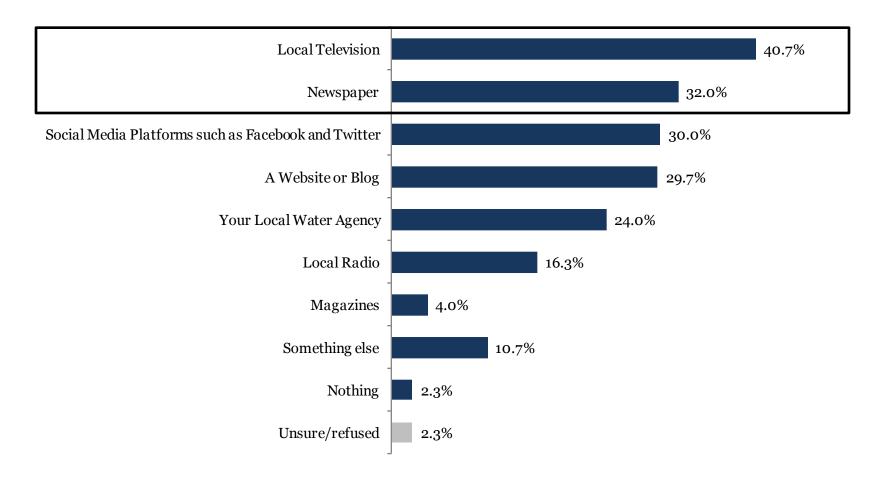




Sources of Information About Water and Water-Related Issues



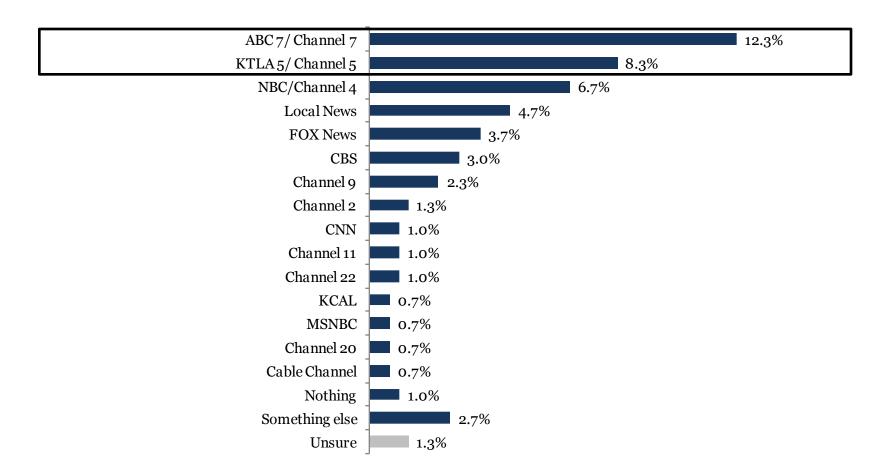
Most respondents get their water-related news and information From local television and newspaper





What are the top <u>local television</u>

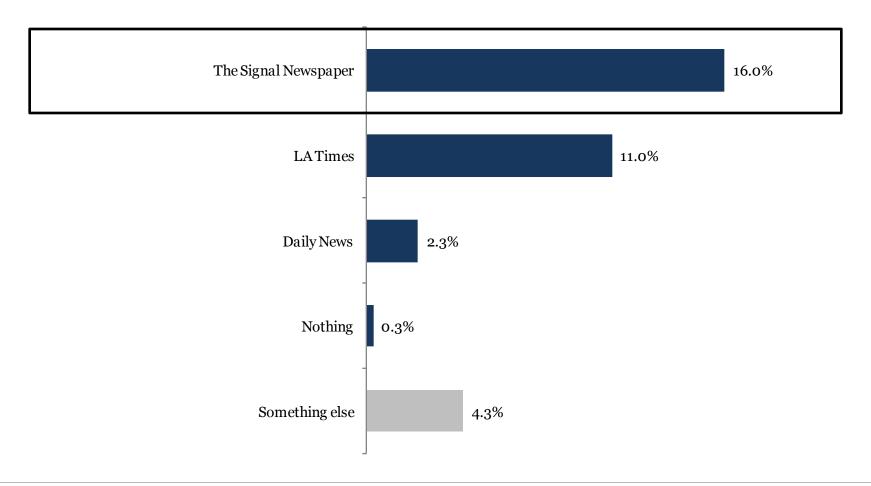
News sources?





What are the top <u>newspaper</u>

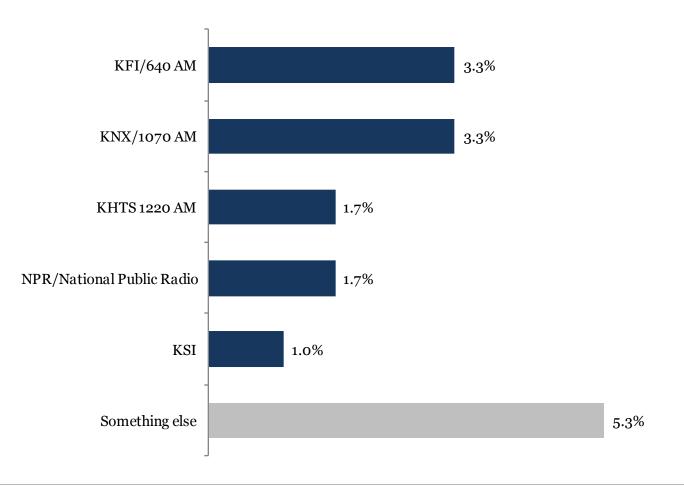
News sources?





What are the top <u>local radio</u>

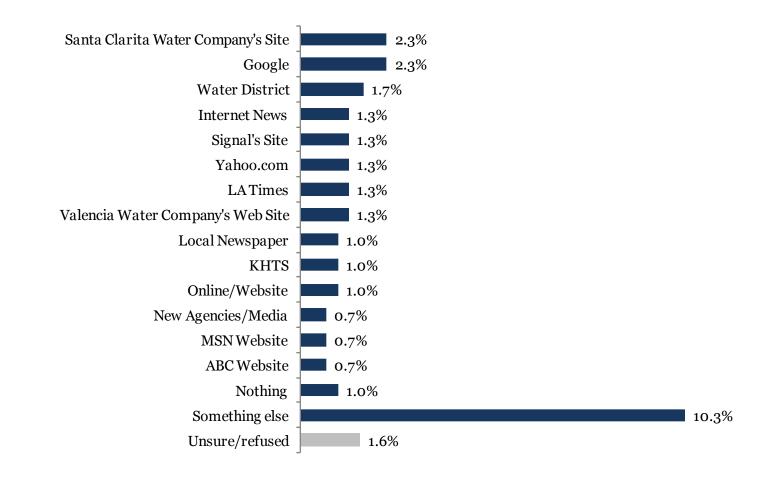
News sources?





What are the top website or blog

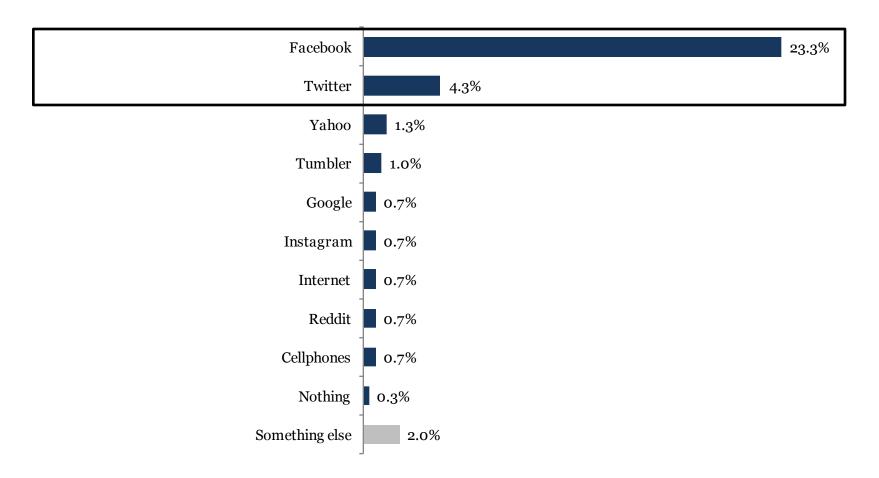
News sources?





What are the top social media

News sources?





Thank you



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