

FINDINGS REPORT

# 2023 Community Values Survey

Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

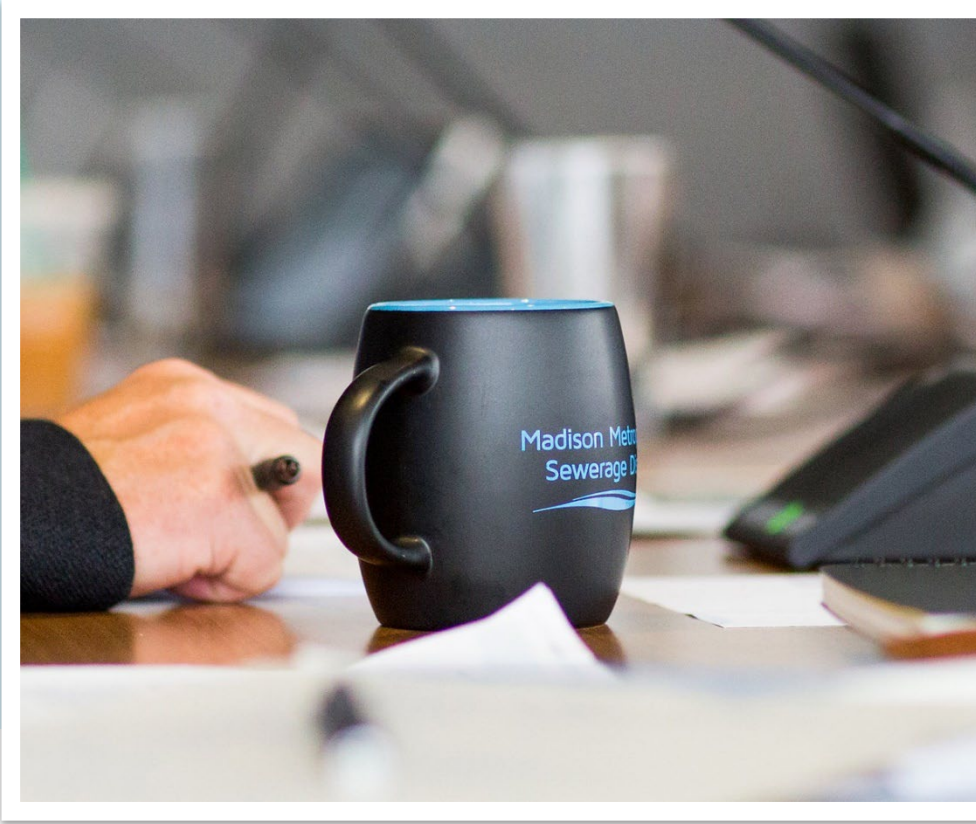


January 2024



HDR

# Survey Overview





# Survey Goals

The Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District 2023 Community Values Survey had the following goals:

- 💧 Gauge community awareness of the organization, its work, and its programs
- 💧 Measure public trust of the District
- 💧 Assess general attitudes of residents toward District services, programs, pollution prevention efforts and desired behaviors
- 💧 Determine residents' priorities, areas of concern, and views on issues related to water use and wastewater treatment



# Survey Approach

500 surveys with adults 18+ were completed by telephone interview using CATI software during October, November and December 2023. The overall survey maximum margin of error +/- 4.4%.

The survey questionnaire was ~12 minutes in length, and included 22 multiple choice, one multiple answer, one open-ended question, and two contingent valuation questions.

Survey weights were applied to align the sample with the Census American Community Survey data, resulting in a sample with the following characteristics.

Gender	Weighted Sample %
Female	51%
Male	49%

Tenure	Sample %
Own	52%
Rent	48%

Age	Weighted Sample %
18-24	17%
25-34	19%
35-44	17%
45-54	14%
55-64	14%
65 and older	19%

Household Income	Weighted Sample %
Less than \$50,000	13%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	21%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	16%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	22%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	13%
\$200,000 or more	15%

# Sample Overview

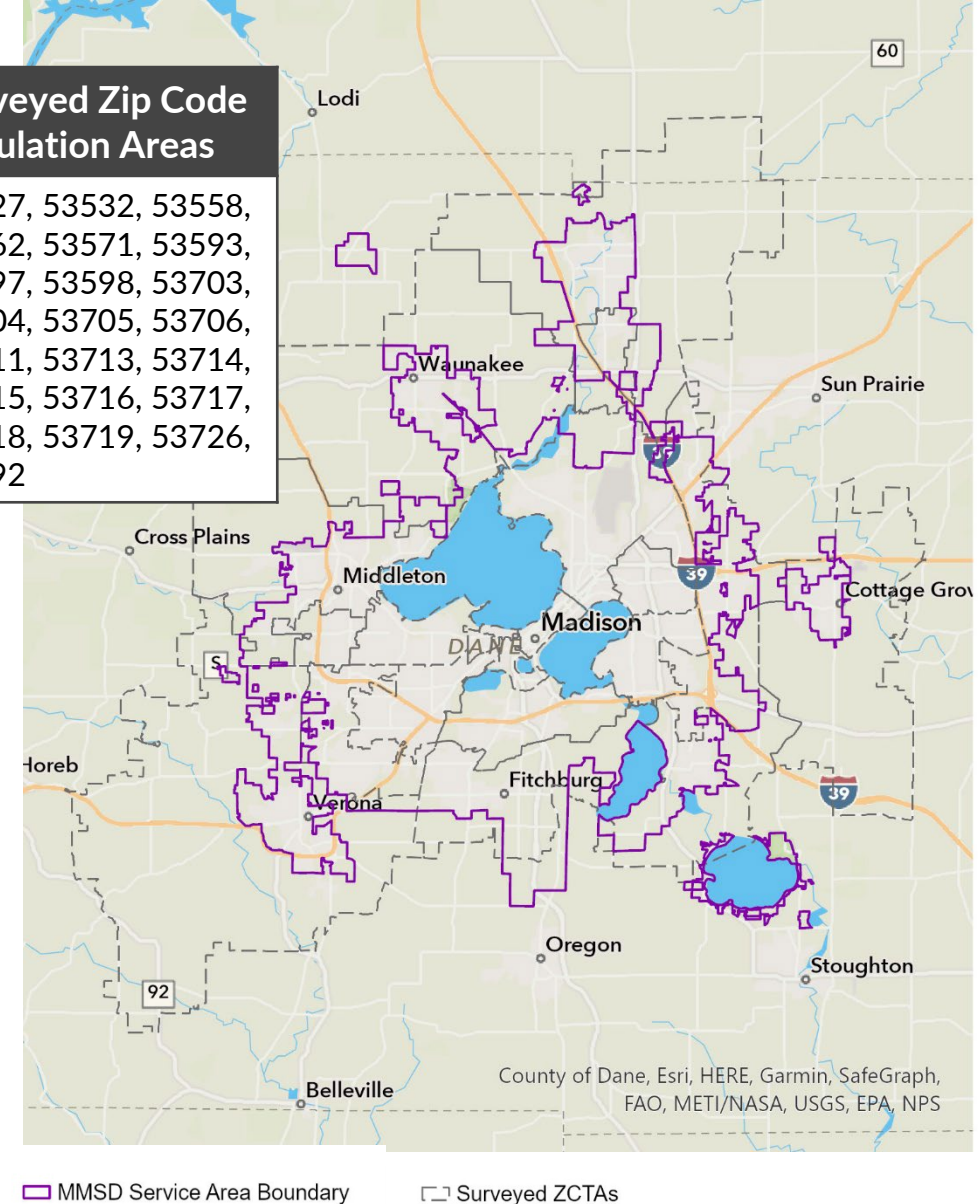
In addition to the population demographics used to weight the survey described on the preceding page, the sample had the following characteristics:

Wastewater Management	Weighted Sample %
Public sewer	67%
Septic or holding tank	18%
Don't Know/No Response	15%

Housing Type	Weighted Sample %
A single-family house, duplex or triplex	52%
Building with 4 or more apartments/condos	39%
Group housing (like a dorm, retirement home, or other institution)	2.4%
Something else (an RV, van, mobile home, etc.)	1.3%
Prefer not to answer	5.3%

## Surveyed Zip Code Tabulation Areas

53527, 53532, 53558, 53562, 53571, 53593, 53597, 53598, 53703, 53704, 53705, 53706, 53711, 53713, 53714, 53715, 53716, 53717, 53718, 53719, 53726, 53792





# Perceptions of the District



# Awareness of the District

**77%** of respondents indicated that they had heard of the District.

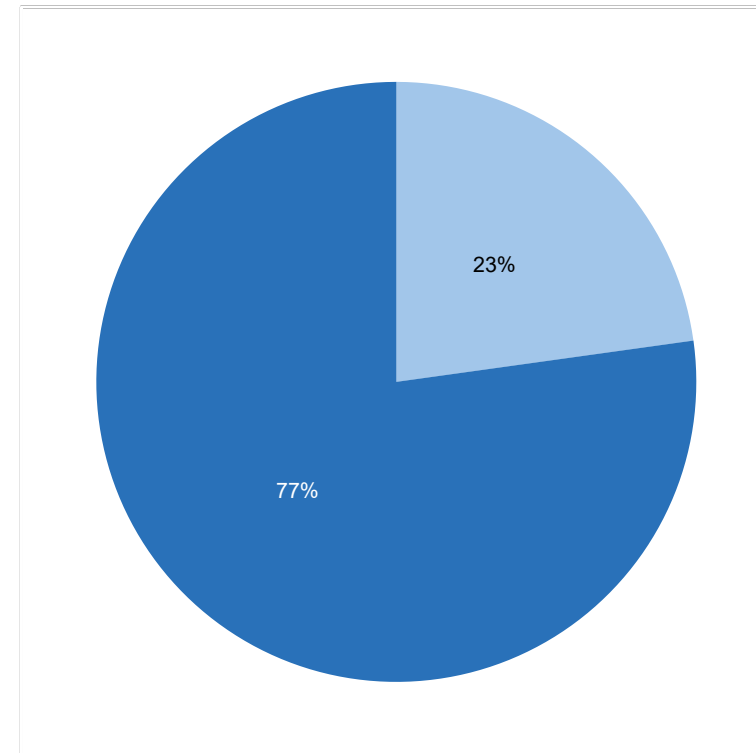
**Fewer respondents** indicated they had not heard of the District in comparison to the 2019 survey, though awareness and brand impressions were assessed indirectly in the earlier survey.

In contrast to the 2019 survey results, there is no difference among **age groups** or **owners vs. renters** in terms of awareness of the District, suggesting more growth in awareness among renters and younger residents.

There is **no statistical difference** in awareness between respondents reporting that their residence was connected to public sewer versus a septic or holding tank.

*Before today, had you heard of the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District?*

■ Yes ■ No



# Impression of the District

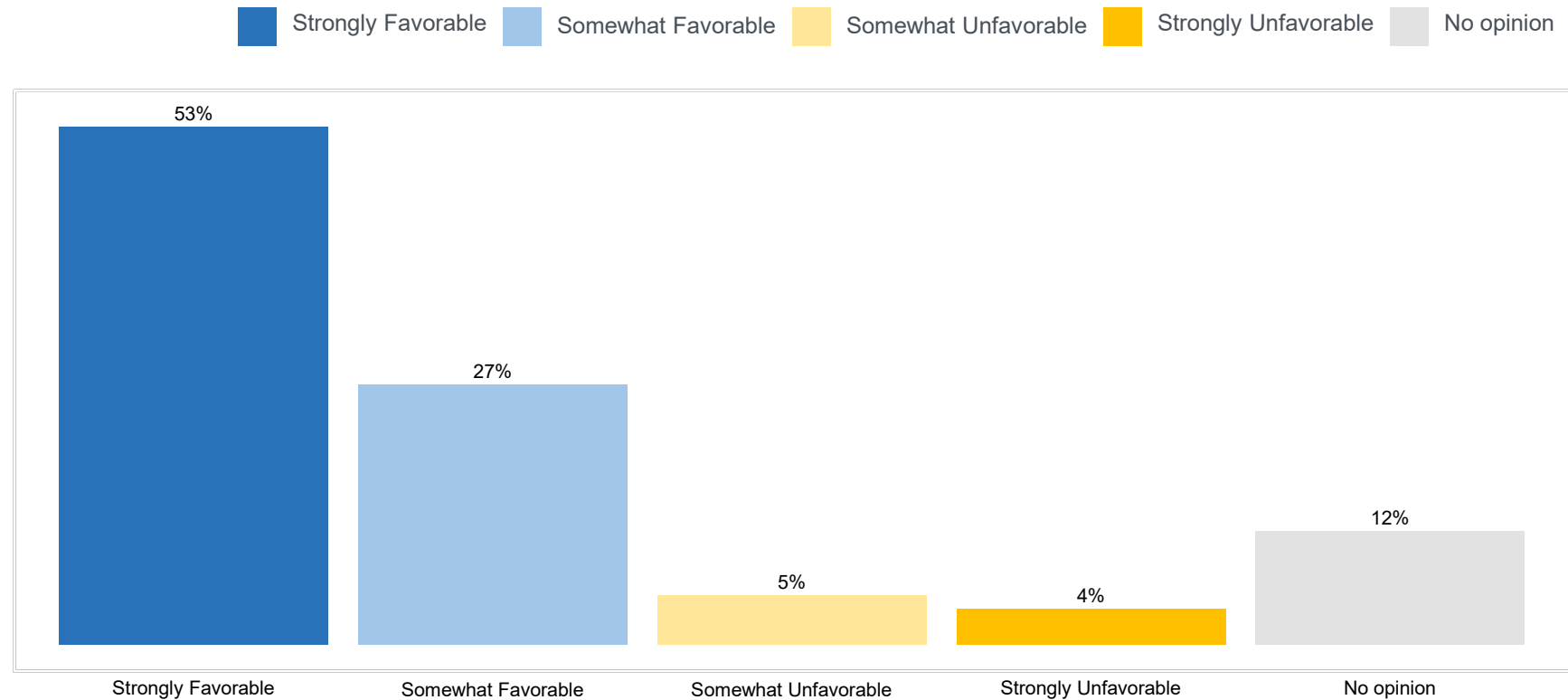
Overall, **80%** of respondents indicated that they had a favorable impression of the District.

**10%** of respondents indicated that they had an unfavorable impression of the District.

The corresponding favorable and unfavorable proportions from 2019 were **57% and 6%, respectively**.

There is **no indication** that favorability systematically differs among demographic groups and no statistical difference between public sewer and septic or holding tank respondents.

Among the 77% of respondents who indicated they had heard of the District...  
*How favorable or unfavorable is your impression of the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District?*





# Credibility of the District as Source of Information

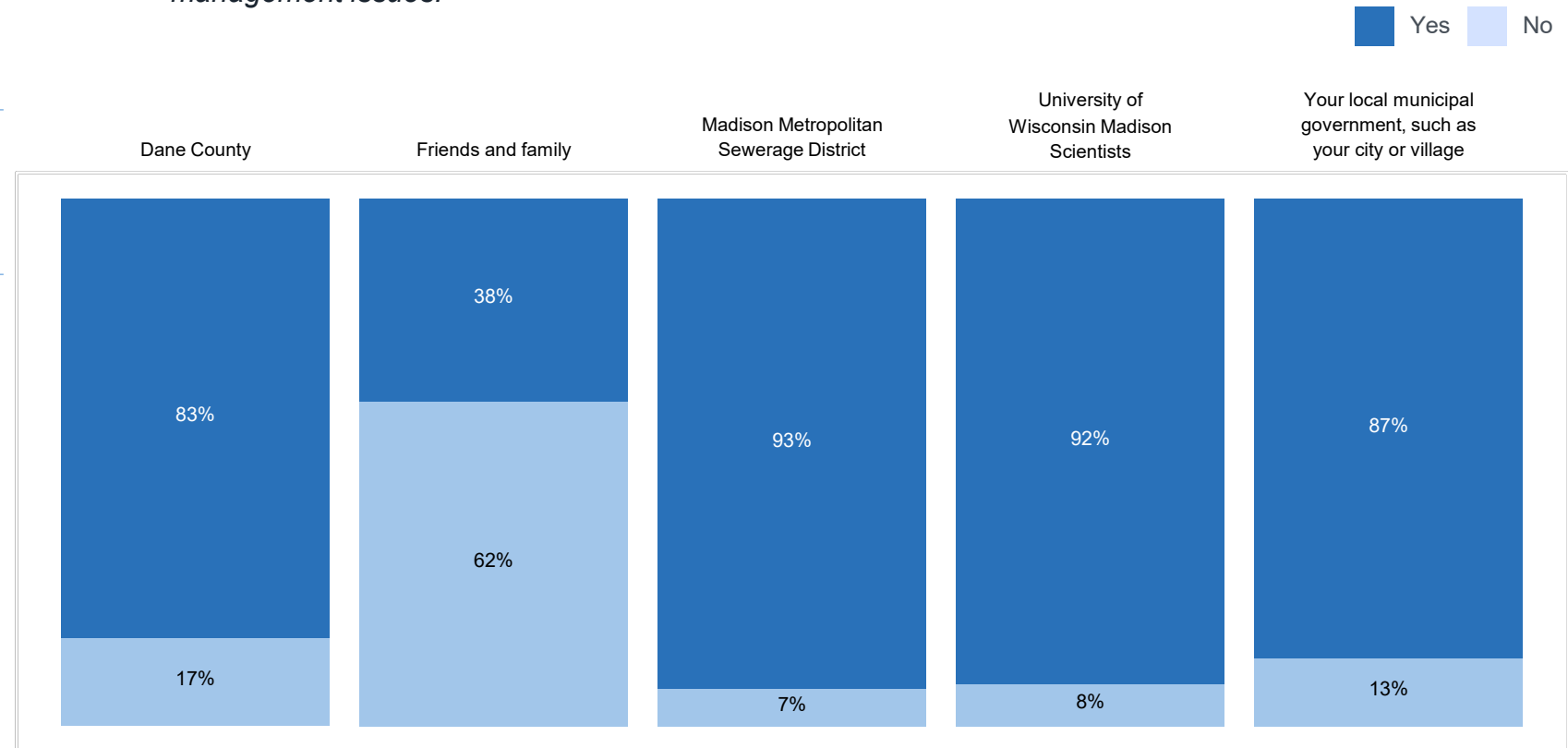
93% of respondents viewed the District as a credible source of information on wastewater management.

Residents regard the District as a **credible source** at equal rates to university scientists.

Local and county government is viewed as **slightly less credible** on wastewater issues.

Among the 77% of respondents who indicated they had heard of the District...

*Please indicate whether you think that they are a credible source of information on wastewater management issues.*



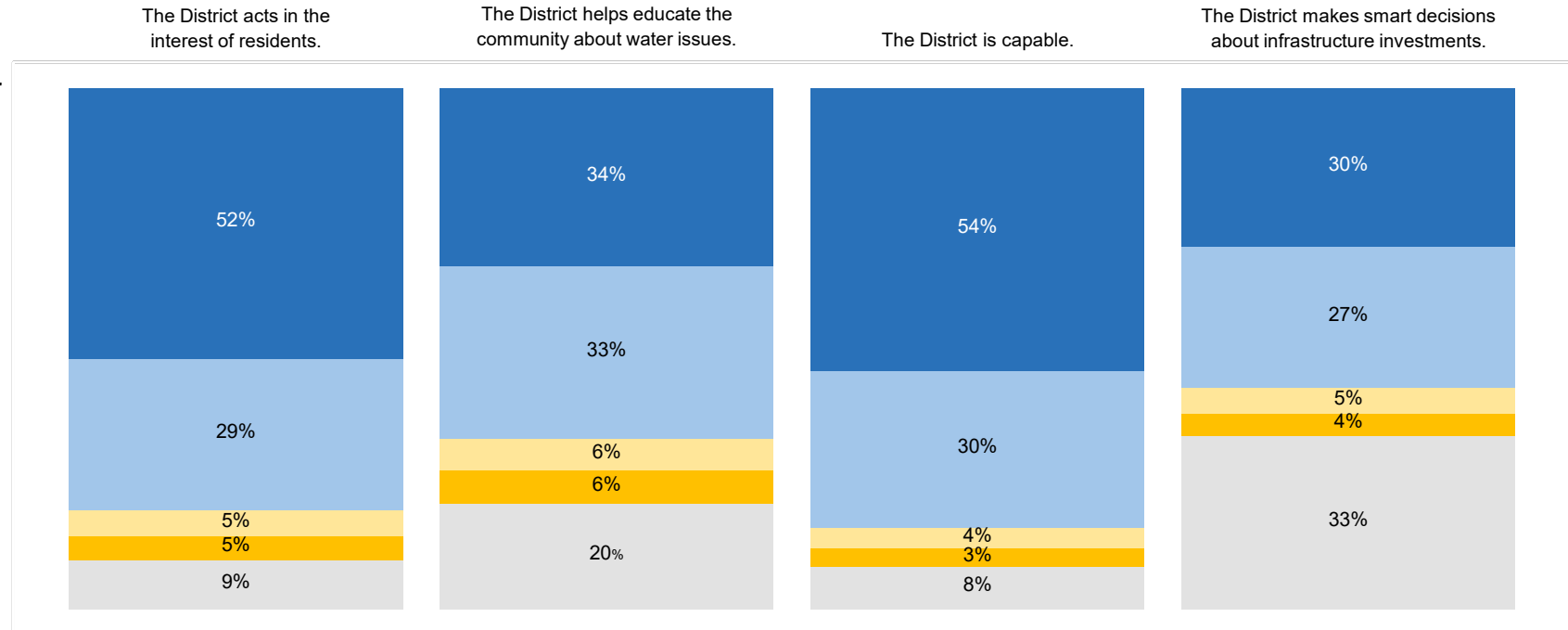
# Community Evaluation of the District

Among the 77% of respondents who indicated they Had Heard of the District ...  
*When it concerns wastewater management ...*

**46%** either disagreed or didn't know whether the District makes smart decisions about infrastructure, and **no specific demographic groups** hold this view at greater rates than any other.

**32%** either disagreed or didn't know whether the District helped educate the community about water issues, with **no significant differences** across demographic groups.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know



# Community Values



# Assessing Community Values

- To assess how the community valued wastewater management improvements framed as **(a) knowledgeable staff and infrastructure modernization** and **(b) sustainability projects**, a survey-based contingent valuation approach was taken.
- Rather than asking residents directly how much they valued wastewater management modernization and sustainability projects, survey participants were asked:
  - Would it be worth [\$Value 1] per month/year to you?
  - Would it be worth [\$Value 2 ] per month/year to you?
- A statistical model was fitted to the contingent valuation responses to provide a summary measure of residents' willingness to invest over a range of costs. The proportion of residents willing to invest different amounts is shown in graphical form on subsequent pages.





# Resident Willingness to Invest for Staff and Infrastructure

**50%** of respondents are willing to invest \$5 a month (\$60/year) to support continued quality wastewater infrastructure and services.

Willingness to invest is **different across income groups**, with higher-income respondents indicating a higher willingness to invest.

Willingness also differs between owners and renters, with **50%** of owners willing to invest ~\$7.80 a month and only **17%** of renters supporting a similar investment.

*The District needs to have knowledgeable staff and a modern infrastructure system to efficiently transport and process wastewater from the community. If investing a few extra cents or dollars each month would support continued quality wastewater infrastructure and services for your community, would you invest that amount?*



# Resident Willingness to Invest for Sustainability Projects

50% of respondents are willing to invest \$78 per year for sustainability.

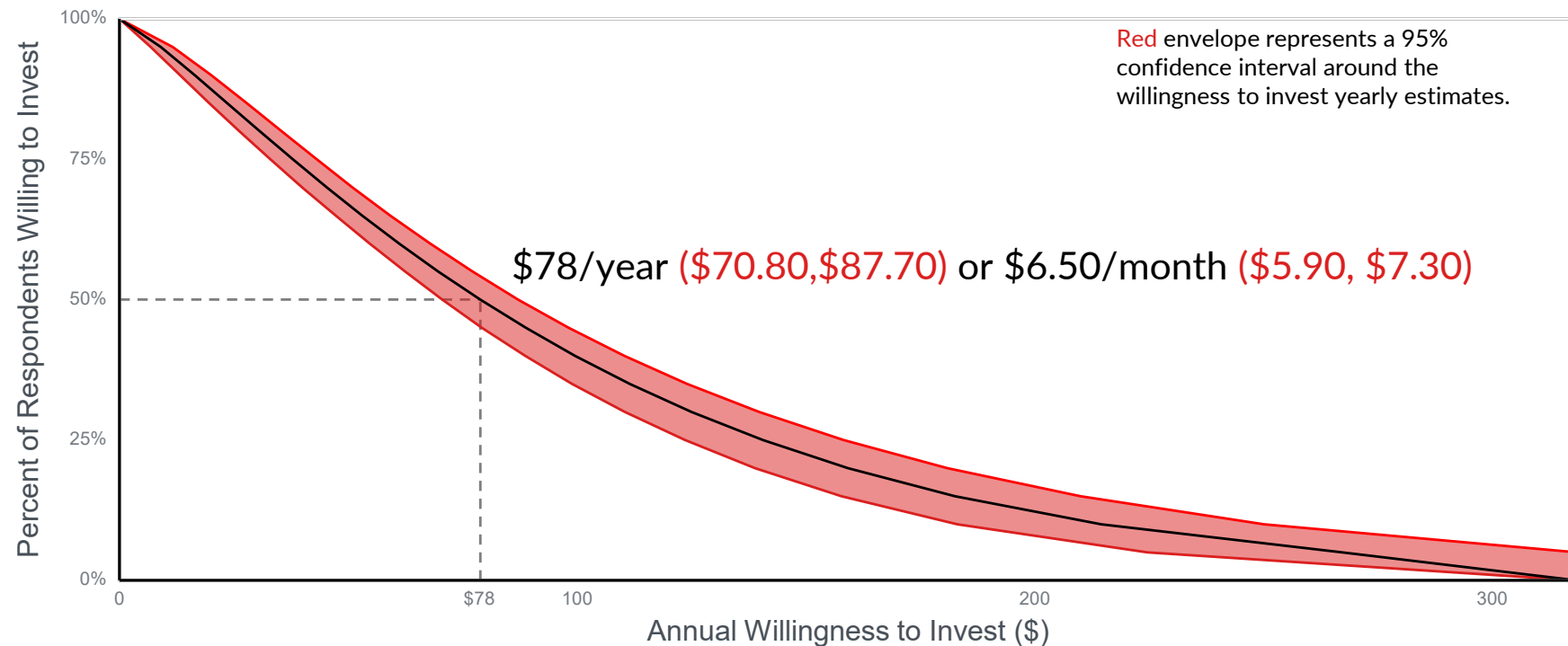
Willingness to invest is **not correlated with attitudes** toward government and regulation, knowledge of wastewater management, or perceptions of the District.

Willingness to invest is **different across income groups**, with higher-income respondents have a higher willingness to pay.

50% of homeowners are willing to invest \$144 annually, while 50% of renters are willing to invest \$46 annually.

50% of residents on public sewer are willing to invest \$90 annually, while only 30% of residents who have a septic tank indicated they were willing to invest a similar amount.

*The District's sustainability work includes recycling biosolids from wastewater into agricultural fertilizer, using the treatment plant's own production of renewable natural gas to power its operations, and identifying infrastructure projects that provide many community benefits. What would having the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District continue to invest in sustainability projects be worth to you on a yearly basis?*



# Conclusions and Recommendations



# Conclusions



## Community Perceptions of the District

- Overall, most residents have heard of and have favorable views of the District.
- The District is viewed as capable and working in the interest of residents. This finding is in line with national poll results where 2/3 of Americans trust local government to handle local problems.
- The District is viewed as a credible source of information on wastewater issues.
- There are opportunities for the District to take a more active role in educating on wastewater issues and communicating wastewater management decision-making.

## Responsibility for Water Quality Impacts

- Residents generally view businesses, both large and small, as having the greatest impact on water quality.
- Residents also reported little support for personally bearing additional costs for improved water quality.



# Conclusions



## Community Values

- Despite respondents reporting that they should not have to pay more for improved water quality, a majority of residents showed a willingness to invest in both the modernization of wastewater infrastructure (\$60 per year) and wastewater sustainability projects (\$78 per year).
- The willingness to invest is different across income groups and renters vs. owners, with higher-income respondents and homeowners having a higher willingness to pay for both types of investment.



# Recommendations



This survey was designed to assess community awareness, knowledge, and values with respect to wastewater management, the District, its work, and its programs, building on the 2019 survey effort. *It is recommended to:*

- **Continue periodic surveying** (2-3 year increments) of the community to monitor community change in these areas, as this knowledge is valuable to inform communication, infrastructure, and service pricing decisions.
- Future survey efforts can also **assess specific programmatic efforts** to generate knowledge about program impacts on awareness, knowledge, and values.
- **Define comparator organizations** and surveys with comparable measures and establish an **acceptable range of awareness** and impression statistics for sound benchmarking.

# Recommendations



The time and cognitive burden on community respondents is an important consideration for survey research. *It is recommended to:*

- **Adopt shorter, more topically focused surveys** in future studies to allow for innovative research design and a variety of elicitation and measurement approaches without impacts on overall response. (The 2023 survey was ultimately shortened to be ~12 minutes in length, but under 10 minutes is recommended as a maximum.)

The community indicated that they were willing to make modest investments in modernization of infrastructure and sustainability projects. *It is recommended that:*

- Future efforts to explore community value would benefit from **focusing on specific planned or proposed programs, projects, or fee increases.**

# Opportunities



- **Take a more active role** in educating on wastewater resource sustainability issues and communicate the rationale for wastewater management decision-making.
- **Develop a sustainable wastewater infrastructure communication and education campaign** to be implemented before the next survey to help the community make the connection between water resource sustainability and infrastructure investment.
- **Design community educational events**, including community tours of the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- Given this survey's promising “willingness-to-pay” findings, **communicate water sustainability goals and progress in conjunction with needed price increases**. In future survey efforts, use this experimental approach to test specific cost ranges for planned and potential infrastructure and/or program expenditures.

