

Will this slake your thirst?

Three recent surveys show Americans value water, but not in ways policymakers think. These surveys undertaken by The Nature Conservancy, the Walton Family Foundation and United for Water show a disconnect between what the public wants and what policymakers enact.

Presentation for Indiana Water Summit

Aug. 28, 2025



The Surveys

TNC

800 registered voters
in Indiana

Margin of error: 3 %

Nov. 11-17, 2024

40% Republican

22% Democrat

34% Independent

Bellwether Research

Walton Family Foundation

November 2023

Morning Consult

United for Water

1,000 registered
voters in U.S.

Feb. 24-28, 2025

Fairbanks, Maslin,
Maullin, Metz &
Associates

AND

Newbridge Strategies

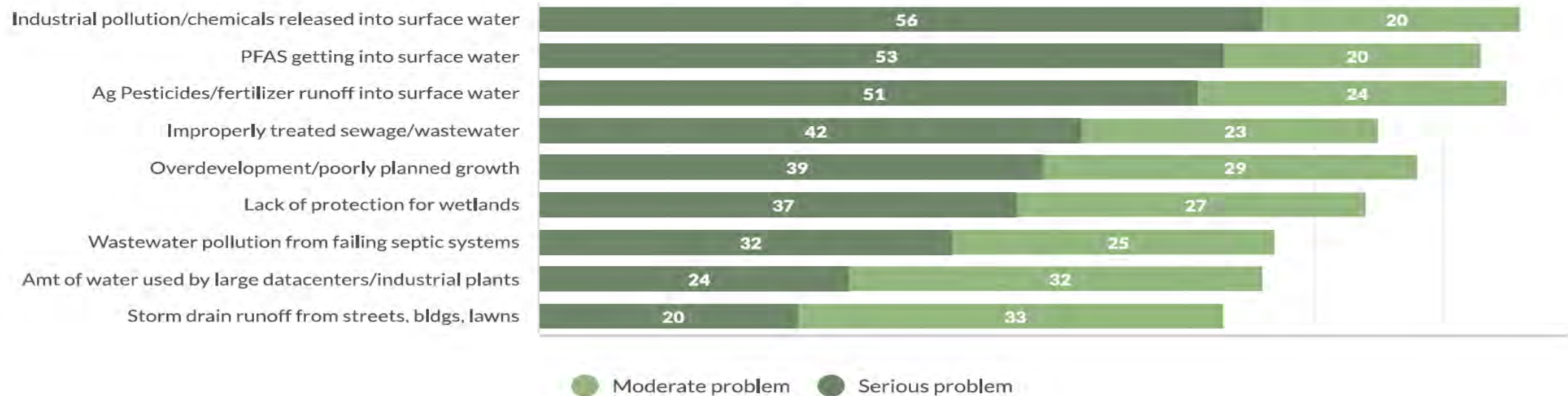
10th Annual Survey

Key Findings



When it comes to water in the state, how much of a problem is each of the following?

Percentages



How persuasive is each reason for a state water policy?

Highest ranking arguments	Extremely Persuasive	Very Persuasive	Moderately Persuasive	Slightly/ Not at all Persuasive
Indiana has one of the highest percentages of polluted rivers and streams in the country - mostly due to bacteria levels from human & animal waste run off. The state needs to create and enforce policies to clean up and protect waterways so that all can enjoy them.	48%	20%	19%	12%
The state has lost 90% of its original wetlands which play a vital role in filtering water, acting as sponges to protect against flooding and providing habitat for wildlife. The state needs a law that will protect and preserve existing wetlands and restore some that have been lost.	45%	19%	18%	16%
The state has an opportunity to offer incentives to farmers, developers, communities and private citizens who demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practices that conserve water and minimize polluting runoff.	34%	25%	24%	16%
With record heat and longer periods of drought, changing weather patterns mean that water is an increasingly precious asset for the state to preserve and equitably manage now and into the future.	33%	22%	25%	20%
We need a state policy that will ensure future growth and development decisions are connected to water capacity and affordable infrastructure	32%	22%	26%	20%

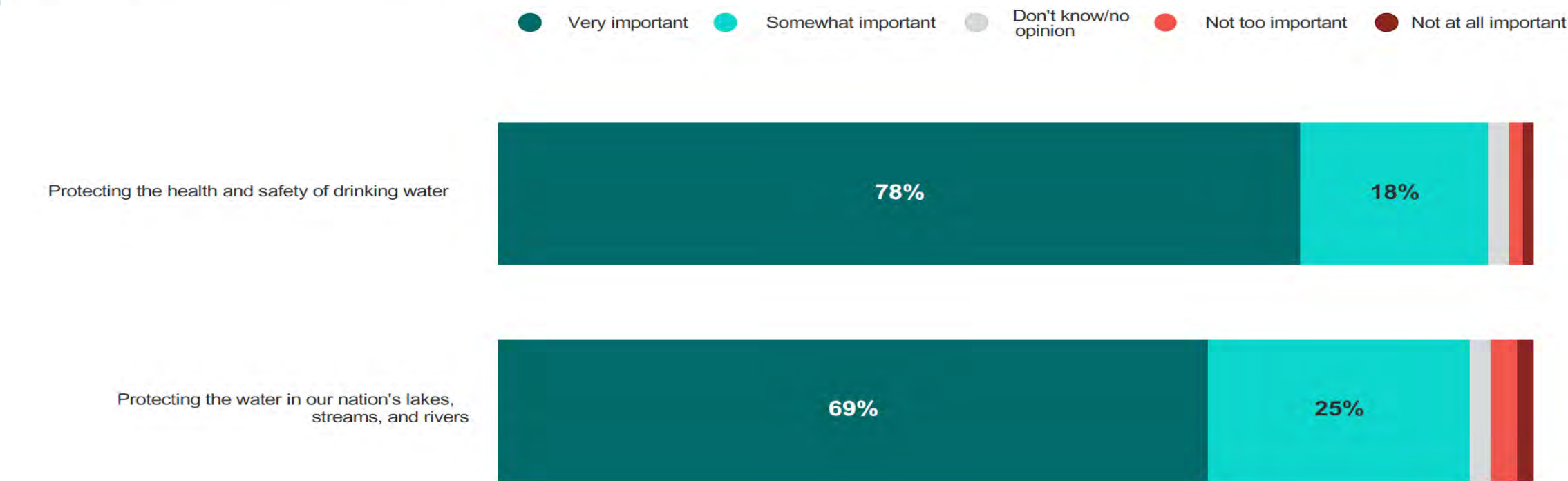
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LEAN WATER ACT

Early all voters say protecting the health and safety of drinking water (96%) and protecting the water in our nation’s lakes, streams, and rivers (94%) is important.

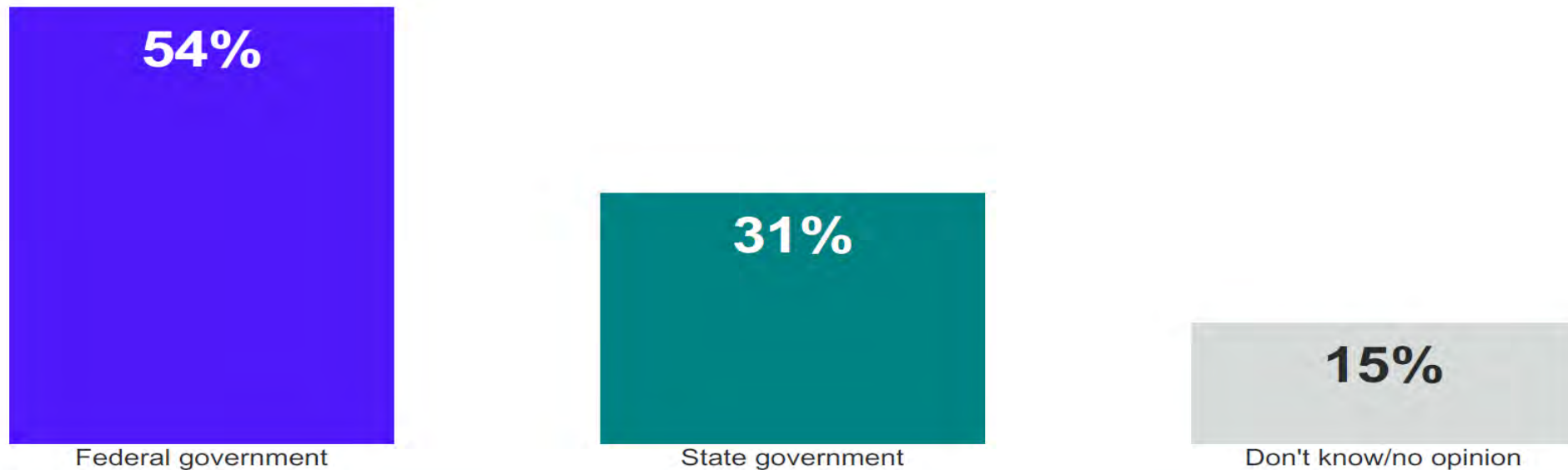
How important is each of the following?



LEAN WATER ACT

majority of voters think the federal government, rather than the state government could establish standards to protect certain waters and wetlands from pollution and development.

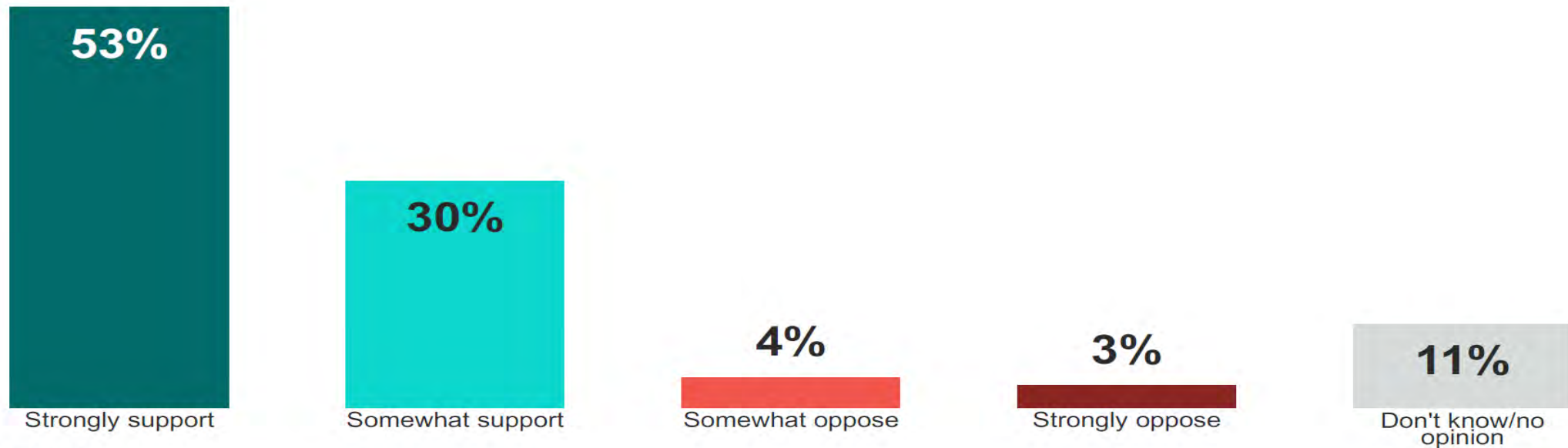
oving forward, who should establish standards to protect certain waters and wetlands from pollution and development?



LEAN WATER ACT

A majority of voters (83%) would want their state legislature to support a law to restore protections to their state's wetlands and waterways. A bipartisan majority of voters would support this law as well (Democrats 87%, independents 81%, Republicans 77%).

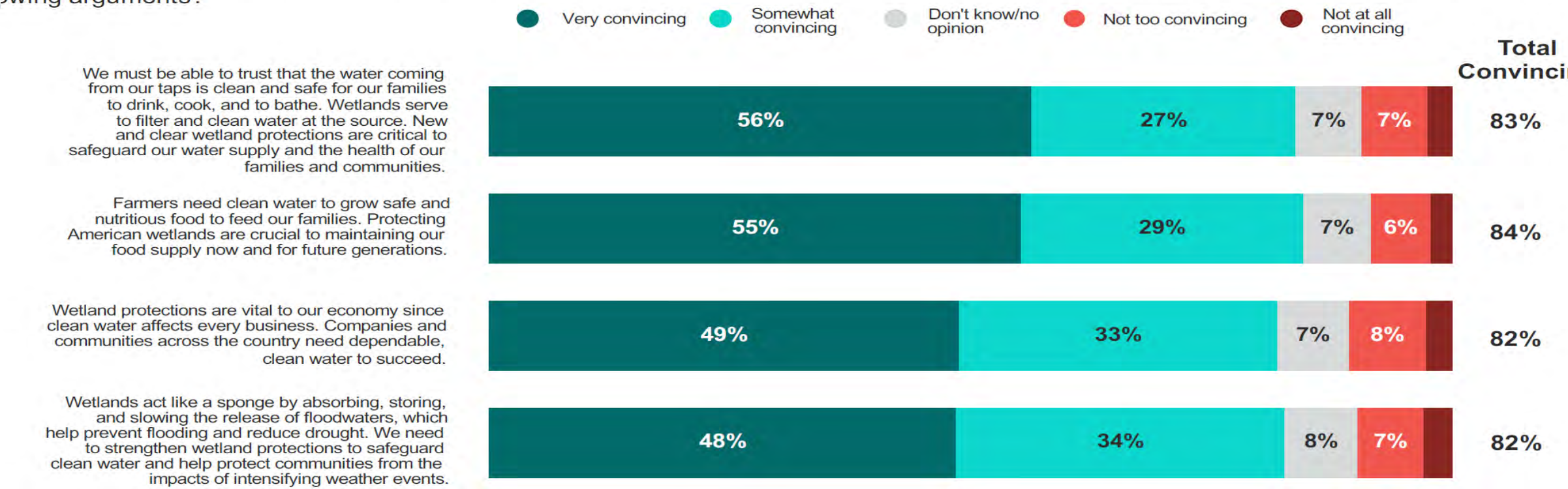
If this issue was raised in your state legislature, would you support or oppose a law to restore protections to your state's wetlands and waterways?



LEAN WATER ACT

Most people find the messaging focused on farmers needing clean water to grow food (84% - 55% *very convincing*) and needing to trust the water we drink (83% - 56% *very convincing*) most convincing of the tested messages about protecting American wetlands.

Next, you will read arguments that are in support of new actions to protect American wetlands. How convincing, if at all, are each of the following arguments?



Whither Wetlands?

Whether it's Senate Bill 389 or the U.S. Supreme Court's roll-back of Clean Water Act protections, Americans overwhelmingly understand the important role of wetlands and support protecting them.

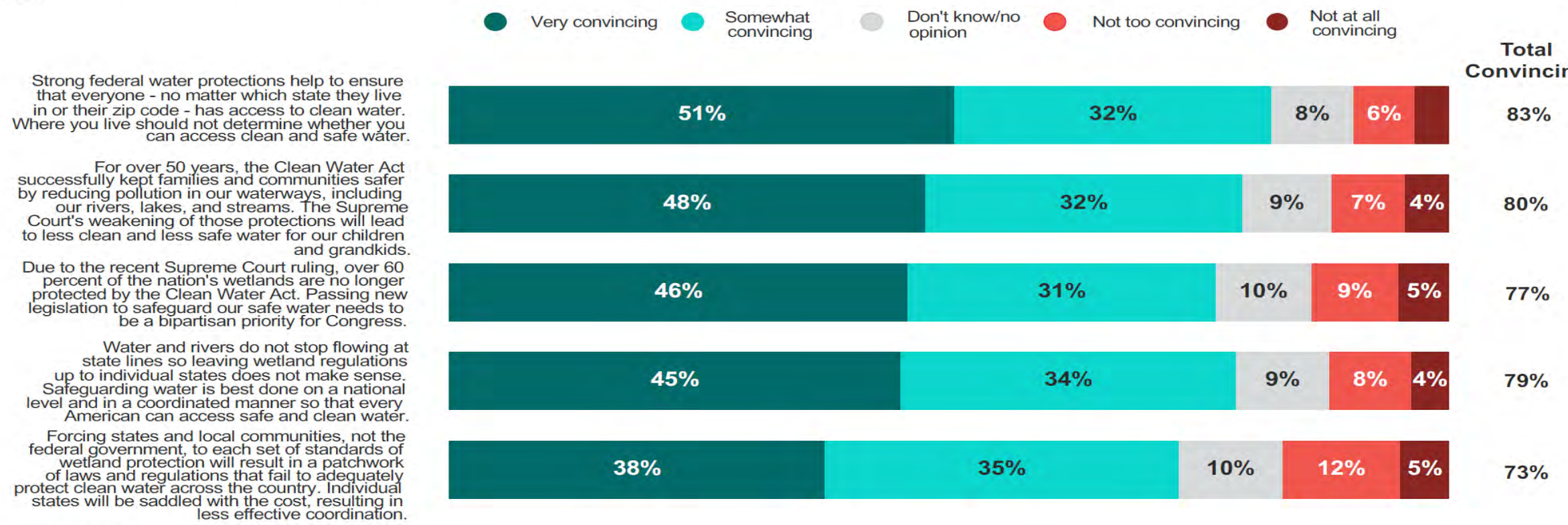
Photo: John Shuey



CLEAN WATER ACT

When it comes to messaging about federal legislation to protect American wetlands, voters find statements about how the legislation ensures that everyone has access to clean water (83%) and keeping families and communities safe (80%) most convincing.

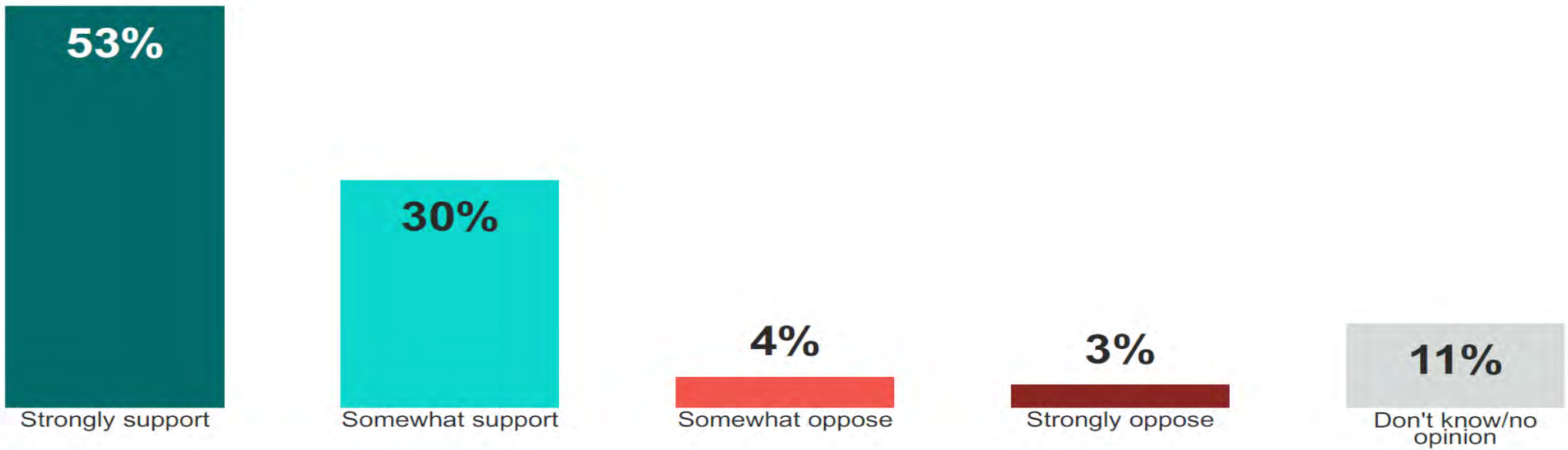
If you will read arguments that are in support of federal legislation to protect American wetlands. How convincing, if at all, are each of the following arguments?



LEAN WATER ACT

A majority of voters (83%) would want their state legislature to support a law to restore protections to their state's wetlands and waterways. A bipartisan majority of voters would support this law as well (Democrats 87%, independents 81%, Republicans 77%).

If this issue was raised in your state legislature, would you support or oppose a law to restore protections to your state's wetlands and waterways?



Key Findings

- **Voters in Indiana absolutely care about wetlands - particularly when they hear more about the important role they play.**

A message explaining the role of wetlands and the extent of their loss was a very persuasive reason for the state to develop a water policy.

Giving incentives to developers who protect wetlands has overwhelming support.

Nearly three-fourths favor restoring the wetland protections that the state legislature repealed in 2021.

2025 Value of Water Index

The Value of Water Campaign is pleased to share the results of its tenth annual Water Index Poll. Since 2016, the Campaign has conducted bipartisan polling of 1,000 voters nationwide to test opinions on water infrastructure, services, affordability, and funding. The resulting insights have informed a decade of water leaders, policymakers, and elected officials on how Americans view the state of our nation's water systems.

The poll was conducted between February 24 and February 28, 2025, by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz, and Associates (D) and New Bridge Strategy (R). While many of the polling questions have remained consistent for tracking over time, voters also had an opportunity to share opinions on timely issues, including the possibility of water funding cuts and the impacts of extreme weather on water services.

Bipartisan voter support for prioritizing reliable water access reached a new high.

92%
of voters
identify reliable
water access
as a very or
extremely
important
issue.

For the fifth year in a row, the number of voters who identified reliable water access as a very or extremely important issue has grown, reaching 92 percent in 2025. Reducing inflation and strengthening the economy round out the top three voter priorities this year, with 86 and 85 percent of voters ranking them as very or extremely important, respectively.

Voters across the country strongly support continued water infrastructure funding at the federal level.

When informed about the possibility of federal funding cuts to water infrastructure projects, 80 percent of voters supported continued funding.

Consistent with that support, 76 percent of voters would view an elected official who supports additional investment in water infrastructure more favorably. Similarly, 66 percent of voters would view an elected official opposed to additional investment less favorably, with 44 percent of that group viewing the elected official much less favorably.

80%
of voters
support
continued
federal
funding
for water
infrastructure.

Nearly 20 percent of Americans experienced water service impacts due to extreme weather in the last five years.

46 percent of voters reported water-related impacts from droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, freezes, or flooding in the past five years. Of that group, 21 percent lost access to water service, 19 percent experienced severe contamination to their water supply, and 22 percent experienced shortages due to water availability.*

74 percent of voters reported concern about weather-related water impacts in the future, and over 70 percent believe that it is very or extremely important for the federal government to help reduce the likelihood of water challenges resulting from future natural disasters.

*respondents were able to select multiple impact options, though 40 percent of respondents selected at least one of the three options.

Voters believe continued investments in drinking water and wastewater services are critical to support life as we know it.

A whopping 96 percent of voters believe these investments are critical for good public health, 95 percent believe they're critical for the overall well-being of their communities, and 85 percent believe they're critical for a strong economy. High voter levels of support for funding water at all levels reflect these beliefs.

To voice your support for water infrastructure, please visit unitedforwater.com.

 United for Water

Conclusions:

- People don't think about water often
- When they do think about water, they want it to be available and clean
- Americans favor government regulation, especially at the state level, despite regulatory and executive order setbacks
- Wetlands are understood by Americans, and they want more protection
- Advocates need to do a better job of communicating with elected officials