



The Value of Water in the Twin Cities Region:

A Community –Centered Framework



John Clark and Jen Kostrzewski

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Reflecting the Region's Water Values

Residents are:

Water drinkers, swimmers, boaters, rate payers, etc.

- Water protection has many social, cultural, and economic benefits

Customers of local water service providers

- Many communities provide water supply and local wastewater services
- Domestic water use is highest state priority. MN statute 103G.261

Directly impacted by water benefits and burdens

- Resident voices have often been unheard when forming policy and plans or making management decisions
- Benefits and burdens are experienced differently by different communities
- Perspectives and understanding can differ from technical experts



Motivations



Adding Value

- Inform policies
- Develop metrics to support successful outcomes
- Help prioritize actions and investments
- Align regional and state water planning
- Inform outreach, engagement, and other actions
- Enhance trust in water services
- Partner with community members to co-identify challenges and co-develop solutions
- Make equitable and sustainable water decisions

Partners and Collaborators

University of Minnesota

Principle Investigators:

- Mae Davenport
- Bonnie Keeler

Project Team:

- Emily Kreiter
- Gio Gonzalez
- Olivia Tuisl
- Sarah Roth
- Maggie Rogers
- Meredith Keller
- Erin Niehoff

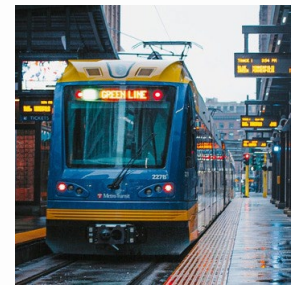
Met Council

Community Development:

- Angela Torres and Lisa Barajas

Water Resources:

- Judy Sventek



Contacts

John Clark

Principle Environmental Scientist, Water Policy & Planning
JohnD.Clark@metc.state.mn.us
(651) 602-1452

Jen Kostrzewski

Assistant Manager, Water Policy & Planning
Jennifer.Kostrzewski@metc.state.mn.us
(651) 602-1078



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Mae Davenport, Bonnie Keeler, Sarah Roth, Amelia Kreiter, Meredith Keller, Maggie Rogers, Erin Niehoff, Giovanni Delgado-Ortiz, Olivia Tuisl



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Water Resources Center

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Project Background

What is a Community-Centered Framework?

Representation Justice:

People should reasonably expect that the diversity of water relationships and values of community members are fairly deliberated and equitably represented among those in power. (Davenport et al. 2023)



We commit to...

Using rigorous and inclusive social science research methodologies to gather and share different narratives of water with communities and community leaders.



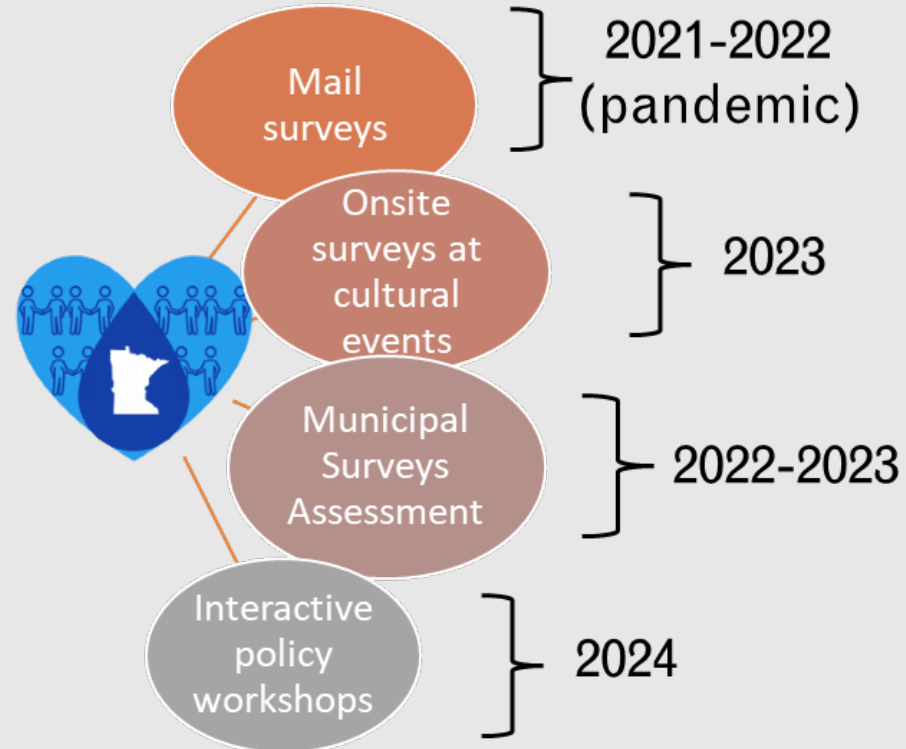
With the goal of...

Representing communities and influencing water policy, programming, and investments for water justice.

Study Objectives

To engage culturally diverse Twin Cities community members, **especially Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC)** residents to assess their water-related values, beliefs, and behaviors, including drinking water, stormwater, and surface water resources.

To organize interactive policy development workshops for local community leaders and water resource professionals to design and prioritize policy actions.





Onsite Survey Design and Methods

Phase II Onsite Survey Goals & Event Selection Process

- Amplify diverse voices around water in the seven-county Metro area by oversampling BIPOC residents
- Obtain ~1,000 survey responses across varying event formats & Twin Cities locations
- Check-in with Met Council partners at monthly meetings to gauge progress & change event schedule as needed

Photo by Meredith Keller 2023



Toward Meaningful Collaboration: Understanding and Empowering Communities

- Recruited & trained research assistants fluent in: French, Mandarin Chinese, Somali, & Spanish
- Partnered with local leaders and organizations to create, support, & continue community engagement
- Translated the survey for participants
- Responded to participant needs in the field

Photos by Phil Deering 2023



"Clean water should be for everyone"



Administerin

Surveying Protocol:

1. Simple but enga
2. Signage in multi
"Take a survey a
3. Screening quest
meet study para
4. Water Resource
perceptions and



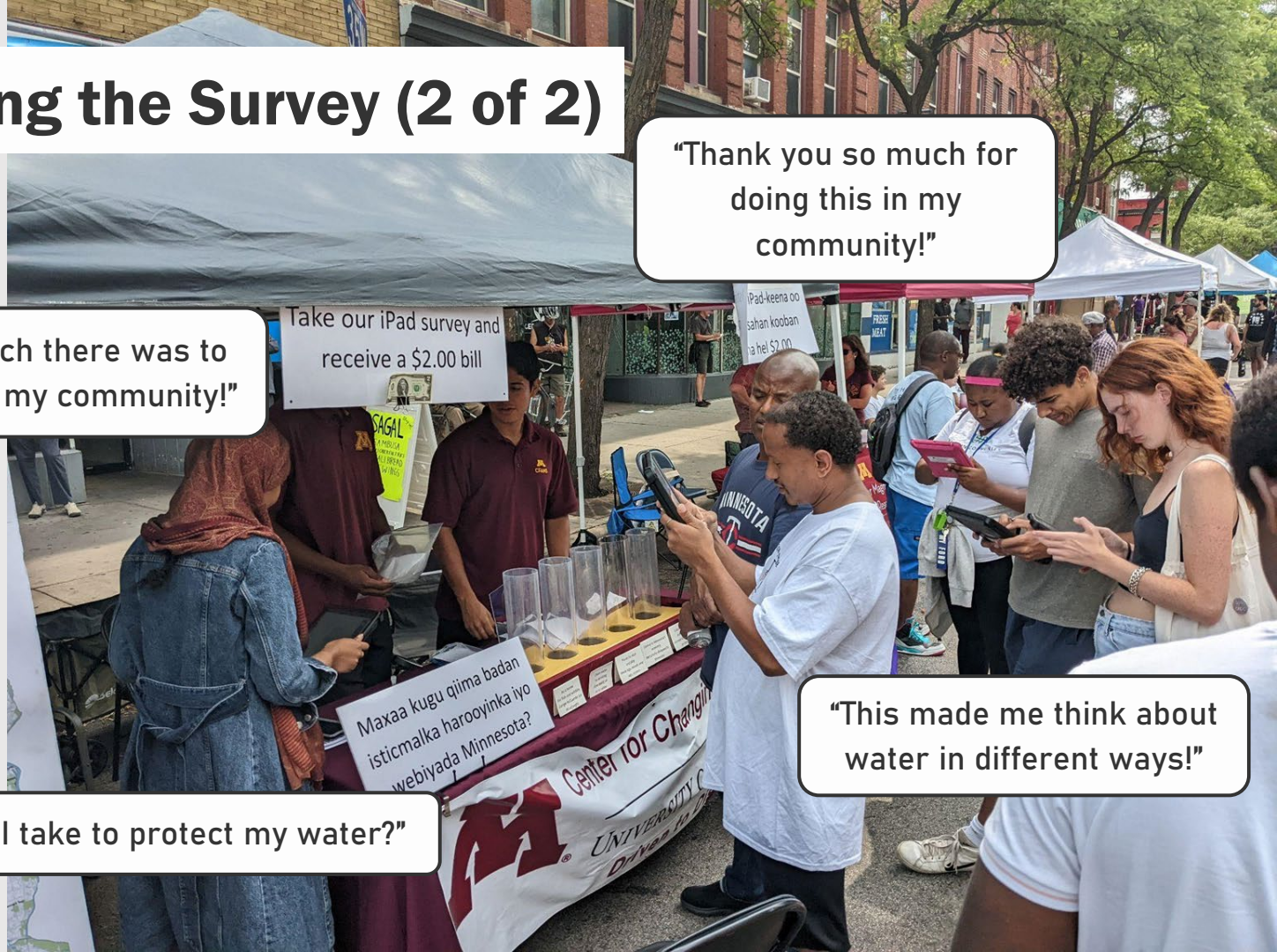
Administering the Survey (2 of 2)

"I never realized how much there was to consider around water in my community!"

"Thank you so much for doing this in my community!"

"What steps can I take to protect my water?"

"This made me think about water in different ways!"

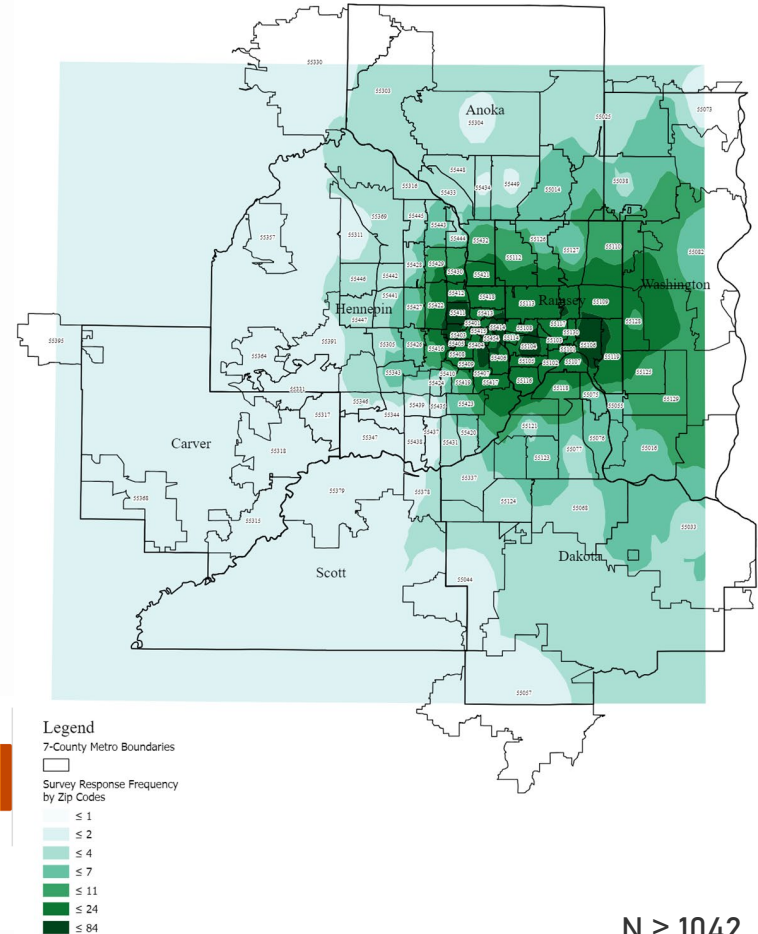
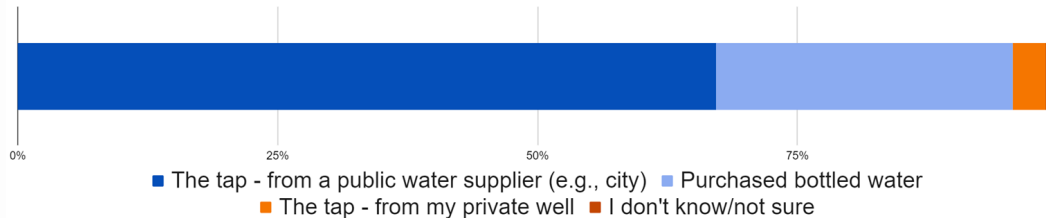




Survey Findings

Who participated?

| | Phase I (mail) | Phase 2 (onsite) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| White identifying | 93.6% | 32.7% |
| Female identifying | 38.7% | 55.3% |
| Median age | 57 | 36 |
| Median household income | \$100,000 - \$149,000 | \$50,000 - \$74,999 |
| Home ownership | 88.1% | 46.1% |

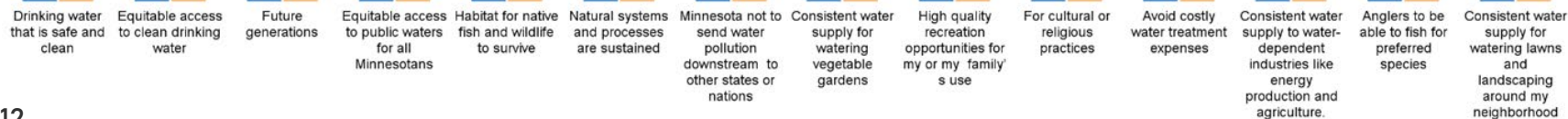


Water Values (1 of 2)

How *important* to you is it to protect lakes and rivers for the following water values or uses?

% very or extremely important

■ White ■ BIPOC



N ≥ 1012

Water Values (2 of 2)

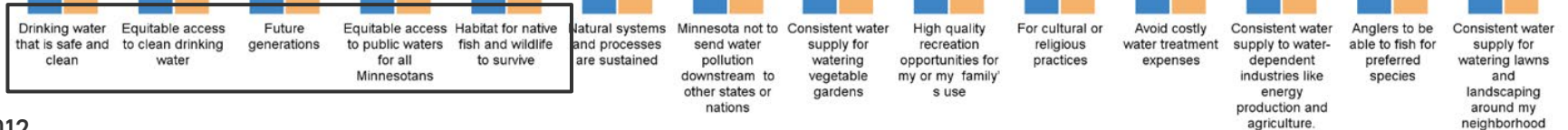
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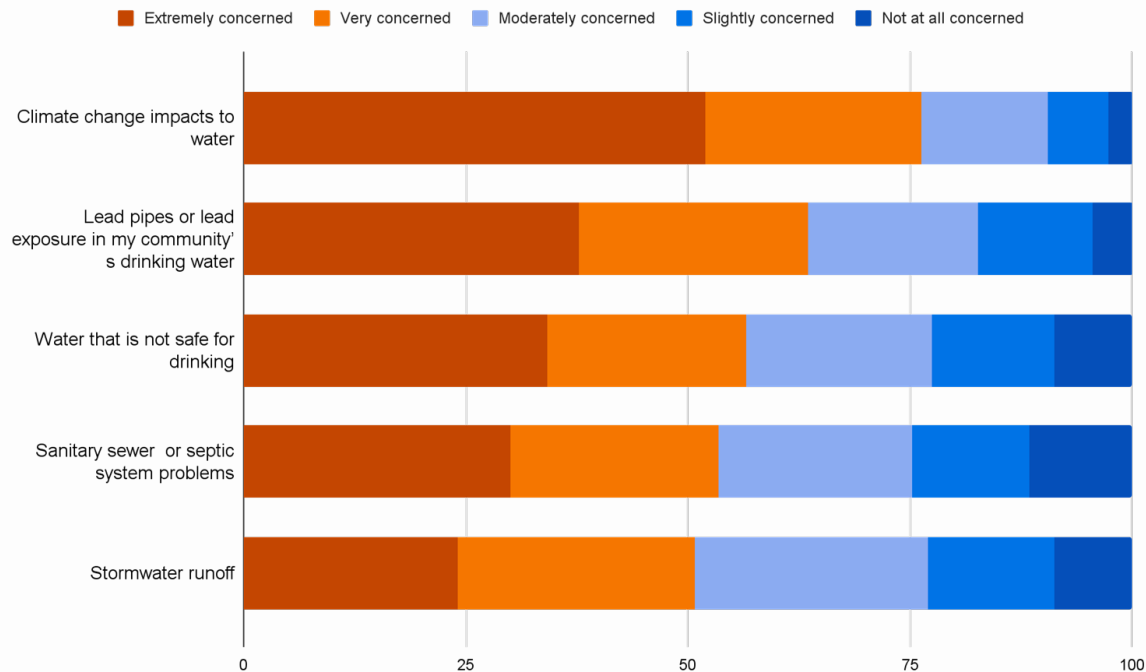
Priorities for protecting urban water

1. Future generations
2. Equitable access to clean drinking water
3. Drinking water that is safe and clean
4. Equitable access to public waters for all Minnesotans
5. Habitat for native fish and wildlife to survive

% very or extremely important

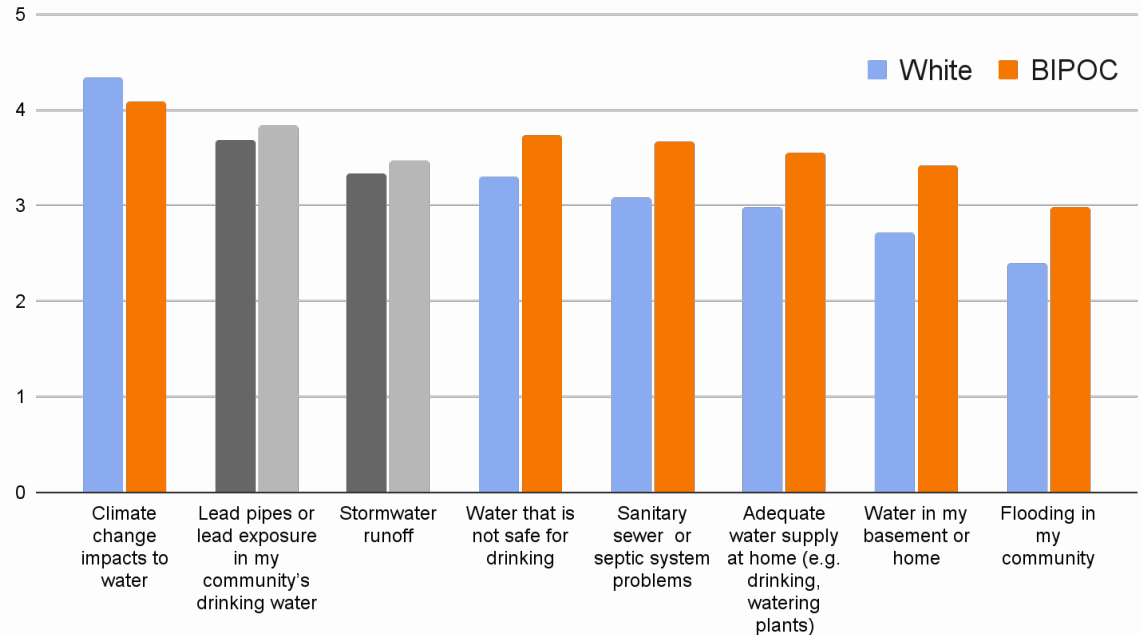


How *concerned* are you about the following water issues in your community? (1 of 2)



N ≥ 1004

How *concerned* are you about the following water issues in your community? (2 of 2)



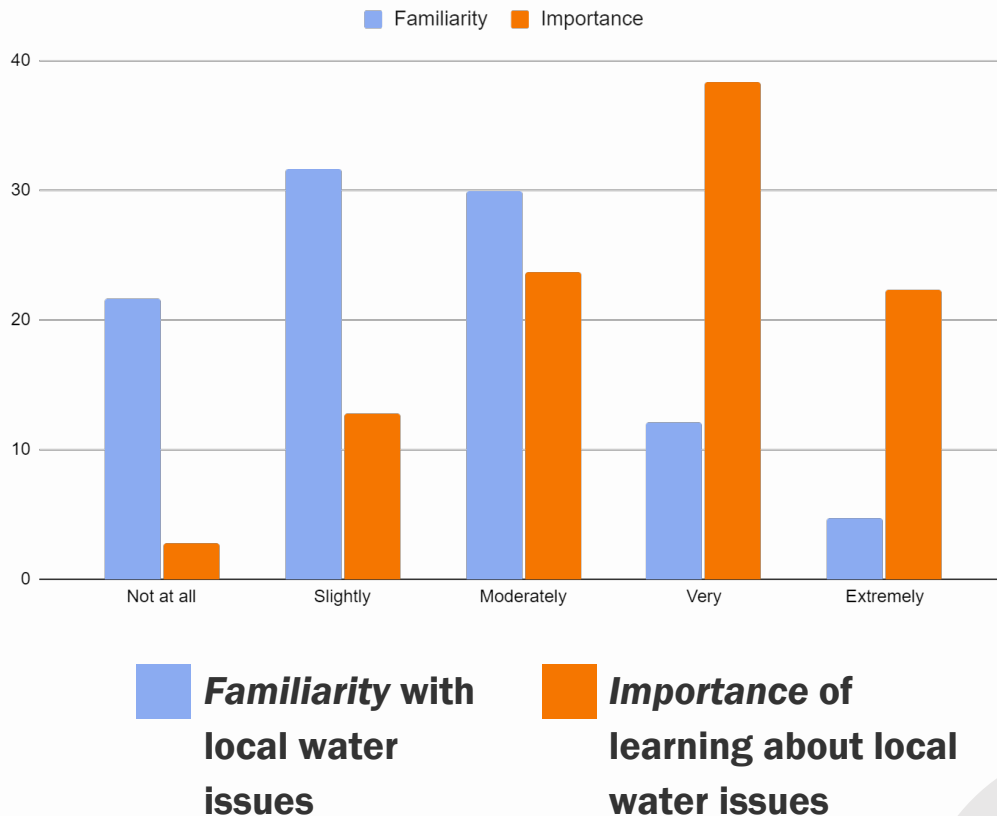
N ≥ 1004

Information about local water issues

When it comes to water, to what extent do you trust or distrust the following sources of information?

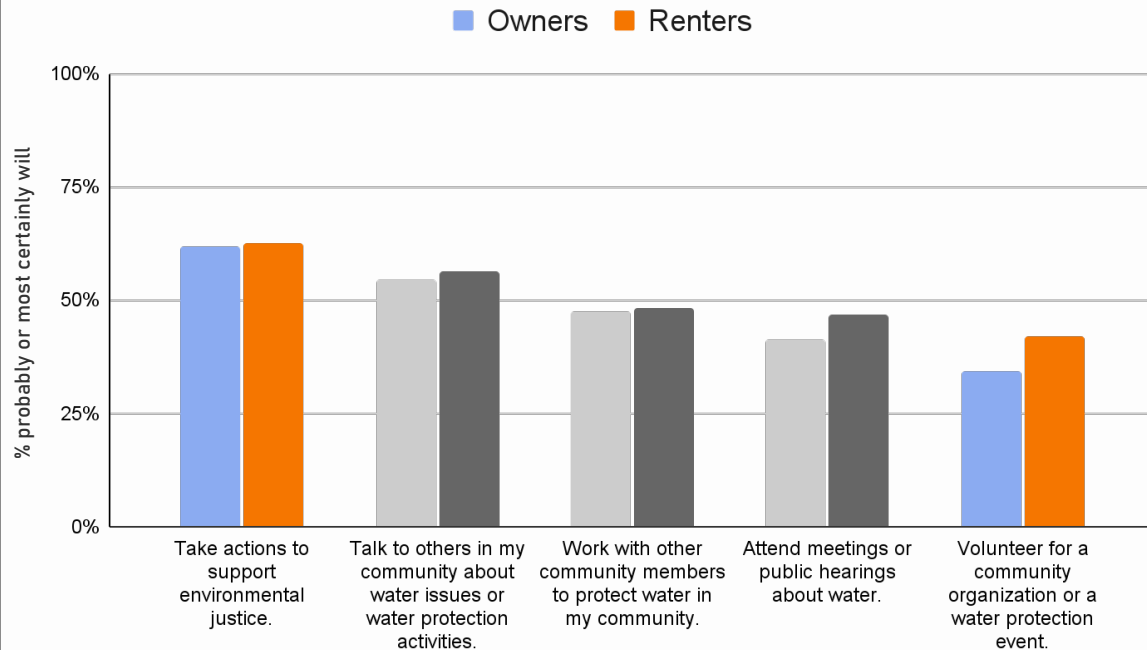
Top 5 most *trusted sources*:

- Environmental organizations
- Universities and other academic institutions
- My local environmental agencies (e.g., conservation districts or watershed management organizations)
- My family
- People in my community



N ≥ 1012

How likely are you to take the following water protection actions in the next 12 months?



N ≥ 1013

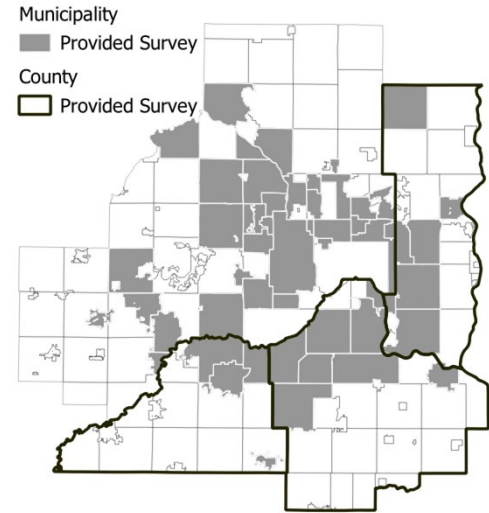
Survey of Community Surveys

Contacted over 200 metro area cities, counties, and watershed organizations asking for past survey data.

Received data from 58 of 182 communities and 3 of 7 counties.

Surveys included questions about quality of life, issues facing communities, and the evaluation of govt services as part of the MN Local Performance Measurement Program.

Water-related questions assessed the quality and dependability of water services, quality of local water resources, concerns about water supply or quality, and the importance of water to the community.



Findings

77% Respondents rated the quality and dependability of their city water supply as excellent or good (min 41% max 100%, n = 43)

74% Respondents rated the quality of the communities water resources as excellent or good (min 48% max 93%, n = 15)

Compared to **65%** of US adults surveyed by the AWWA who rated their public water supply as excellent or good (2023).

Additional Findings

Parks and lakes rated among the “most liked attributes” of living in metro area counties.

Most residents rated the quality of drinking water high, with some exceptions.

National surveys show that minority and low income households are more likely to perceive their water supply as unsafe and more likely to purchase and consume bottled water.

Receiving regular communication from water management authorities increased perceived quality of water supply and satisfaction with water services.



Discussion

Lessons and next steps.....



We engaged culturally diverse Twin Cities community members and gathered water stories.



- Diverse water values & relationships exist
- Relationships to water matter!
- Water justice→ water action
- Informs & aligns with other planning (EQB, Met Council Policy Plan)
- Value in TC-wide assessment over time



Next we will organize interactive policy development workshops for decision makers that include and represent those stories.



1. *What* observations or questions do you have about study findings?
2. *Who* needs to engage in policy workshops?
3. *How* else do we apply what we've learned?
4. *What* outcomes/outputs from this study would be valuable to your work?