

Citizen Engagement among Michigan Local Governments

Findings from the
Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)

Presentation for the
Winter 2013 MPP course on Public Management
April 3, 2013

Presentation Outline

- Overview of CLOSUP and the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)
- How local officials feel about citizen engagement
- How local jurisdictions practice citizen engagement
- An example of a recent top-down attempt at linking citizen engagement and performance management: the creation of performance “Dashboards”

Background:

An Overview of CLOSUP

- Founded at the Ford School of Public Policy in 2001
- Small research center with a core staff + additional research staff and faculty working on a wide variety of research projects, events, & courses
- Primary mission to conduct and support applied academic research that informs local, state, and urban policy issues, both in Michigan and beyond

Background:

Local Government in Michigan

- Michigan ranks 7th in the number of general purpose local governments (1,856):
 - 83 counties
 - 256 villages
 - 277 cities
 - 1,240 townships.
- These governments:
 - spend about \$26 billion per year
 - employ about 150,000 people
 - hold approximately \$45 billion in debt (and billions more in unfunded retiree obligations).



Background:

The Development of the MPPS

- Problem: information gap in the policymaking process
 - Great deal of data available on Michigan's citizens
 - Certain amount of data available on Michigan's businesses
 - Lack of data on Michigan's local governments and public officials
- Solution: new ongoing survey program focused on local government and local government leaders

Michigan Public Policy Survey: Overview

■ A Census Survey

- Targeted respondents are the chief elected and chief appointed official in every single Michigan county, city, township, and village
- Conducted twice per year (Spring and Fall)
- Administered online for $\sim 5/6$ of the sample, via hardcopy questionnaire for $\sim 1/6$ of the sample
- 72% response rate by jurisdiction in the past 3 waves (!!)
- Survey content developed in close partnership with MML, MTA, and MAC, and Advisory Committees of topic experts

Michigan Public Policy Survey: Overview

■ Goals for the Survey Program

- Fill the critical information gap about challenges and opportunities at the local level.
- Provide information to local leaders about peers across the state, spread best practices and grass-roots innovative solutions.
- Provide a voice for local-level concerns to policymakers in Lansing, foundations, community organizations, etc.
- Build a longitudinal data archive to allow tracking of fundamental changes.

MPPS Hard Copy Questionnaire

Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CLOSUP

MICHIGAN PUBLIC POLICY SURVEY (MPPS)
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
FISCAL TRACKING SURVEY
SPRING 2012

For more information, please contact: clousup-mpps@umich.edu / (734) 647-4091

To start, please confirm ...

Q1. What type of jurisdiction do you represent?

county What is the jurisdiction's name? _____
 township (If not a county) In what county is it located? _____
 city What position do you hold? _____
 village

Q2. Thinking about business conditions in your community, do you think that during the next twelve months your community will have good times financially, or bad times financially?

Good Times Bad Times Neither Don't Know

Q3. Thinking about the financial needs of your jurisdiction, would you say that your unit of government is less able or better able to meet its financial needs in ...

	Significantly Less Able	Somewhat Less Able	Neither Nor Better Able	Somewhat Better Able	Significantly Better Able	Don't Know
... this fiscal year compared to the last fiscal year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
... the next fiscal year compared to this fiscal year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Q4. Comparing your jurisdiction's current fiscal year to its previous fiscal year, please consider the ways the following items have changed. Indicate whether—in your opinion—there has been a decrease, an increase, or no change from the previous fiscal year.

	Greatly Decreased	Somewhat Decreased	No Change	Somewhat Increased	Greatly Increased	Not Applicable	Don't Know
Revenue from property taxes	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Revenue from fees for services, licenses, transfers, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Amount of debt	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Ability of your jurisdiction to repay its debt	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Amount of federal aid to your jurisdiction	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Amount of state aid to your jurisdiction	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Tax delinquencies	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Population of your jurisdiction	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Home foreclosures in your jurisdiction	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Public safety needs	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Infrastructure needs	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Human service needs	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Number of employees that work for your jurisdiction	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Pay rates for your jurisdiction's employee wages & salaries	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Cost of your government's employee pensions	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Cost of your government's current employee health benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Cost of your government's retired employee health benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Q5. Now, thinking about the next fiscal year, please indicate which actions your jurisdiction has taken or is likely to take.

	Greatly Decrease	Somewhat Decrease	No Change	Somewhat Increase	Greatly Increase	Not Applicable	Don't Know
Property tax rates	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Charges for fees, licenses, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Reliance on general fund balance	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Reliance on "rainy day" funds	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Amount of services provided	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Actual public safety spending	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Actual infrastructure spending	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Actual human services spending	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Funding for economic development programs	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Amount of debt	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Sale of public assets (i.e., parks, buildings, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Privatizing or contracting out of services	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Number and/or scope of interlocal agreements or other cost-sharing plans with other governments	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Your jurisdiction's workforce hiring	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Your jurisdiction's workforce layoffs	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Your jurisdiction not filling vacant positions	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Employee pay rates	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Employees' share of premiums, deductibles and/or co-pays on health insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Employees' share of contributions to retirement funds	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Retirees' share of premiums, deductibles and/or co-pays on health insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Now we have a few questions about your jurisdiction's budgeting processes.

Q26. Does your jurisdiction use multi-year financial projections when developing its budget?

Yes No Don't Know

Q27. Some local jurisdictions are moving to formal multi-year budgeting, rather than the traditional single-year budgeting. Others are not. Does your jurisdiction adopt single-year budgets or multi-year budgets?

Single-year Two-year Three-year Other (please specify) _____ Don't Know

Q28. (If you selected "single-year" in Q27) How likely is it that your jurisdiction will adopt formal multi-year budgeting in the next 12 months?

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely Nor Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q29. Different local jurisdictions manage their unreserved general fund balances in different ways depending on their specific circumstances. Despite these differences, we're interested in tracking overall changes in these balances over time. Approximately what was your jurisdiction's unreserved general fund balance as a percentage of general fund expenditures at the end of its last fiscal year?

0% or less 1-5% 6-10% 11-15% 16-20% 21-25% 26-30% over 30% Don't Know

Q30. Thinking about your jurisdiction's fiscal needs, overall, do you consider your jurisdiction's unreserved general fund balance to be too high, about right, or too low?

Too High About Right Too Low Don't Know

Q31. In your opinion, is your jurisdiction's cash flow and its ability to pay bills in a timely manner a significant fiscal problem, somewhat of a problem, not much of a problem, or not a problem at all?

A significant problem Somewhat of a problem Not much of a problem Not a problem at all Don't Know

Q32. Some jurisdictions have cut services recently, while others have not. We want to get an overall sense of the level of satisfaction with the package of services your jurisdiction offers today. In your view, how satisfied would you say the following people or groups are with your jurisdiction's current package of services provided?

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
The majority of your jurisdiction's citizens are ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The majority of your jurisdiction's council/board are ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The majority of business leaders in your community are ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You personally are ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q33. We are interested in views about the trade-off between services and taxes. Thinking about particular services your jurisdiction may currently offer, if your jurisdiction's citizens were facing significant service cuts, in your opinion, what would they choose? Would the majority of citizens be more likely to choose higher taxes to avoid those service cuts or would they choose cuts to public services to avoid higher taxes? Please respond for each of the following services. (If your jurisdiction does not provide a particular service below, please select "Not Applicable" for that service)

	Citizens would choose higher taxes to avoid service cuts	Citizens would choose service cuts to avoid higher taxes	Not Applicable	Don't Know
Police services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parks / recreation / libraries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public transportation / transit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economic development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Utilities (water / sewer / lighting, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now we have some questions about the system of funding local government in Michigan.

Q34. Michigan's local jurisdictions currently have constraints on certain kinds of revenue growth (for example, the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A). Thinking about the revenue caps facing your jurisdiction, if the economy improves over the coming years, do you agree or disagree that the current system of funding local government will provide adequate funding to ...

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
... maintain the current package of services your jurisdiction provides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... improve or add more services, if they are necessary or desired?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q35. Some people think the current system for funding local government in Michigan needs significant reform, while others disagree. What about you? Would you say you agree or disagree that the system for funding local governments in Michigan needs significant reform?

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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“Recognize that the outcomes you want come about when citizens and government work together to achieve them... when they are coproduced.”

- Mark Funkhouser

“We have a new supervisor coming in who ran on the idea of open government. He plans to try to get the citizens more involved in decision making.”

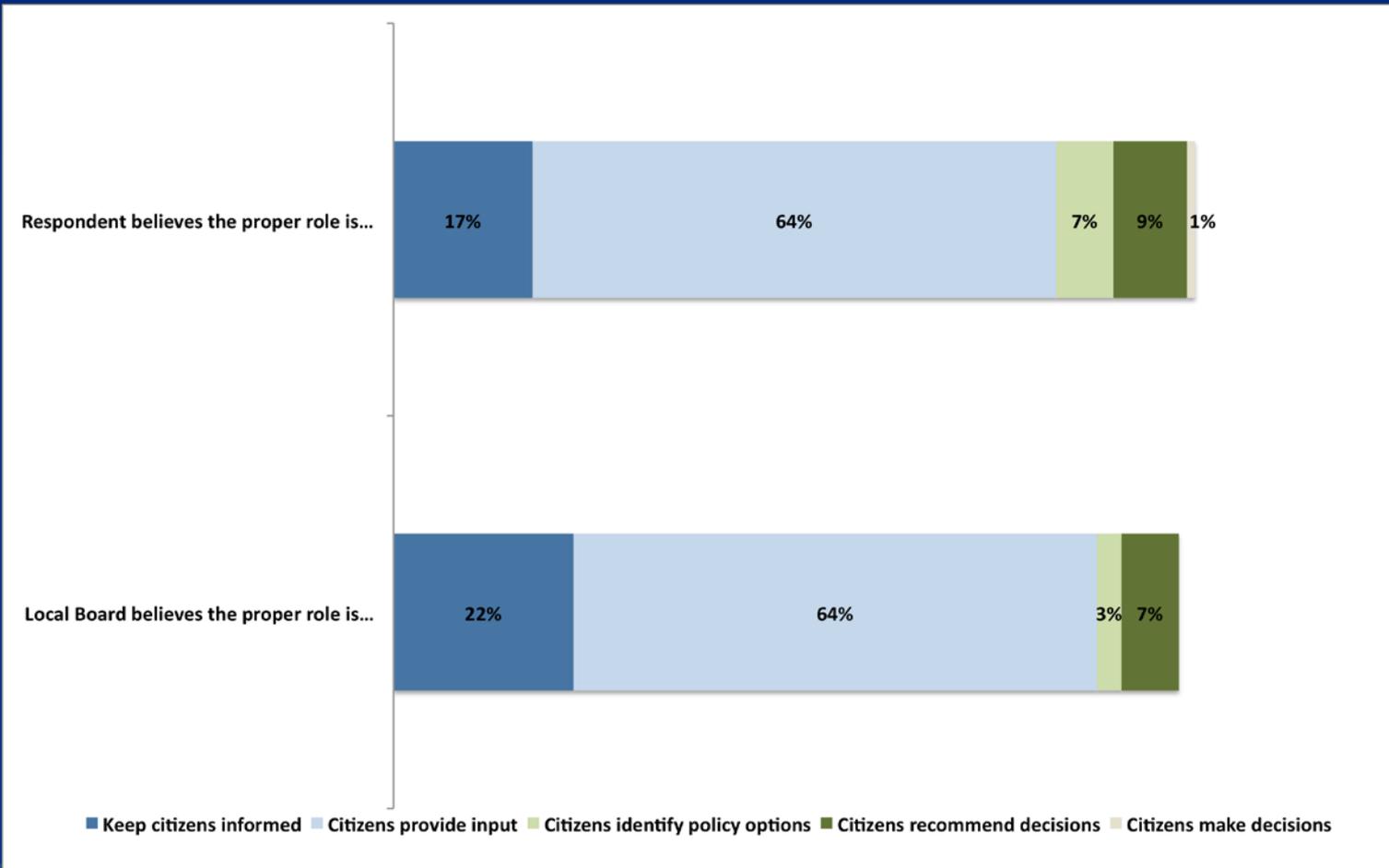
-Township clerk

What is citizen engagement?

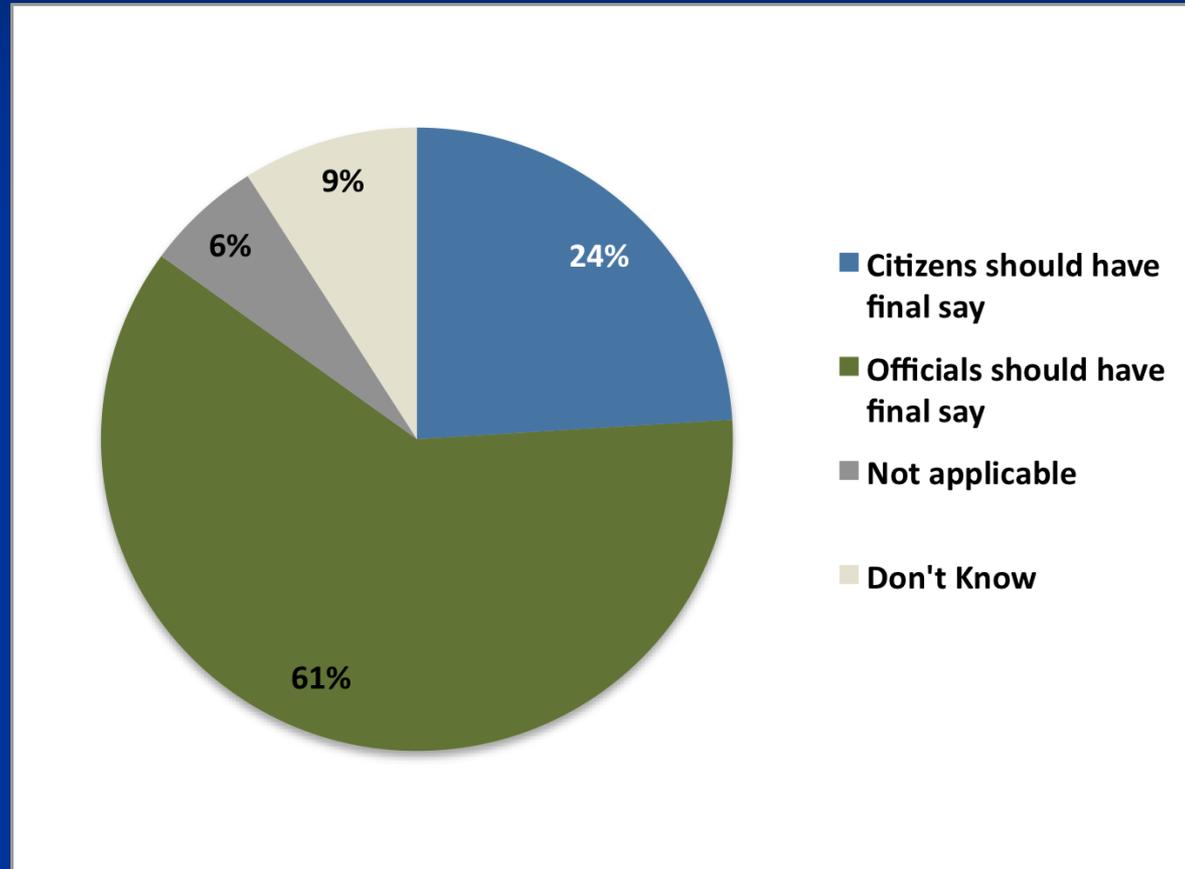
The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum:



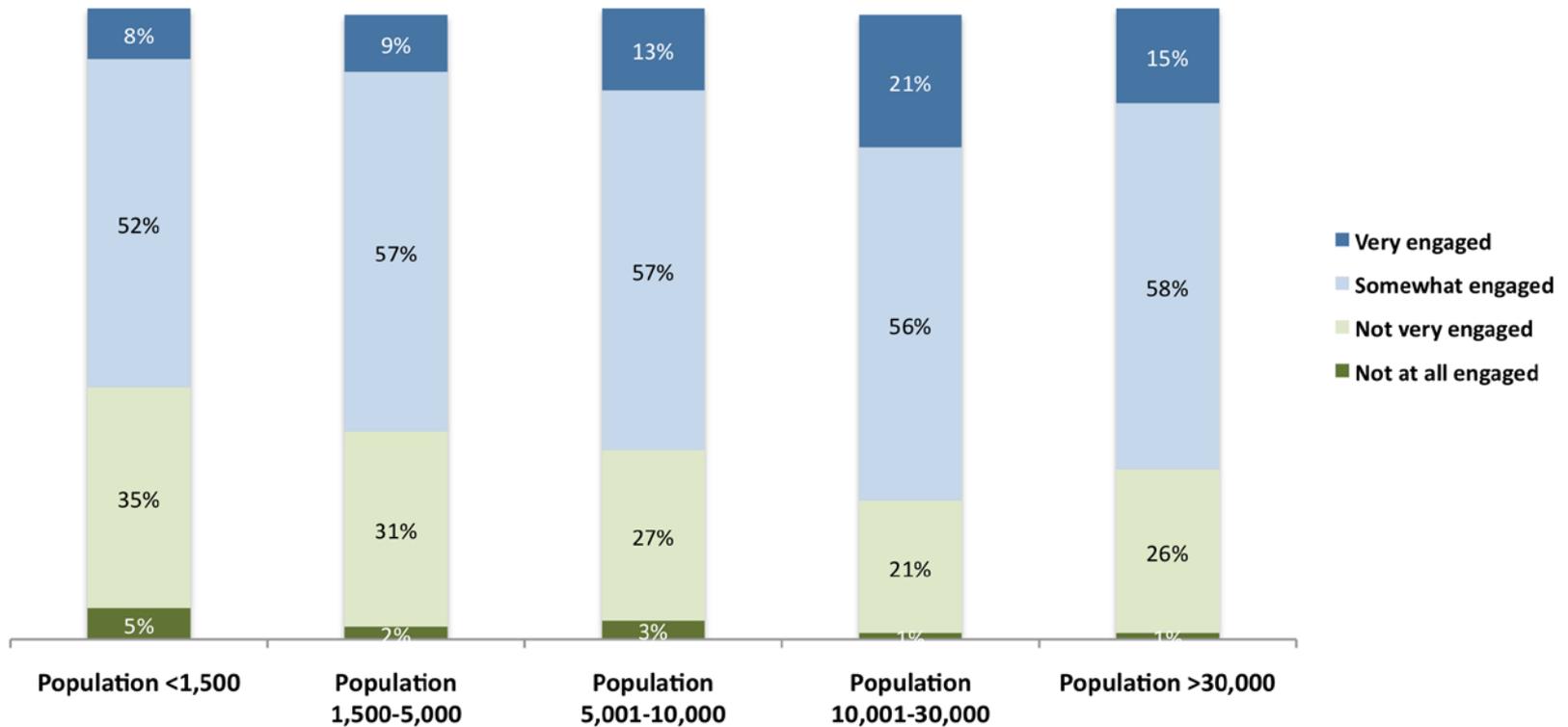
What is the proper role for citizen engagement in local policymaking?



What is the proper role for citizen engagement in local policymaking?

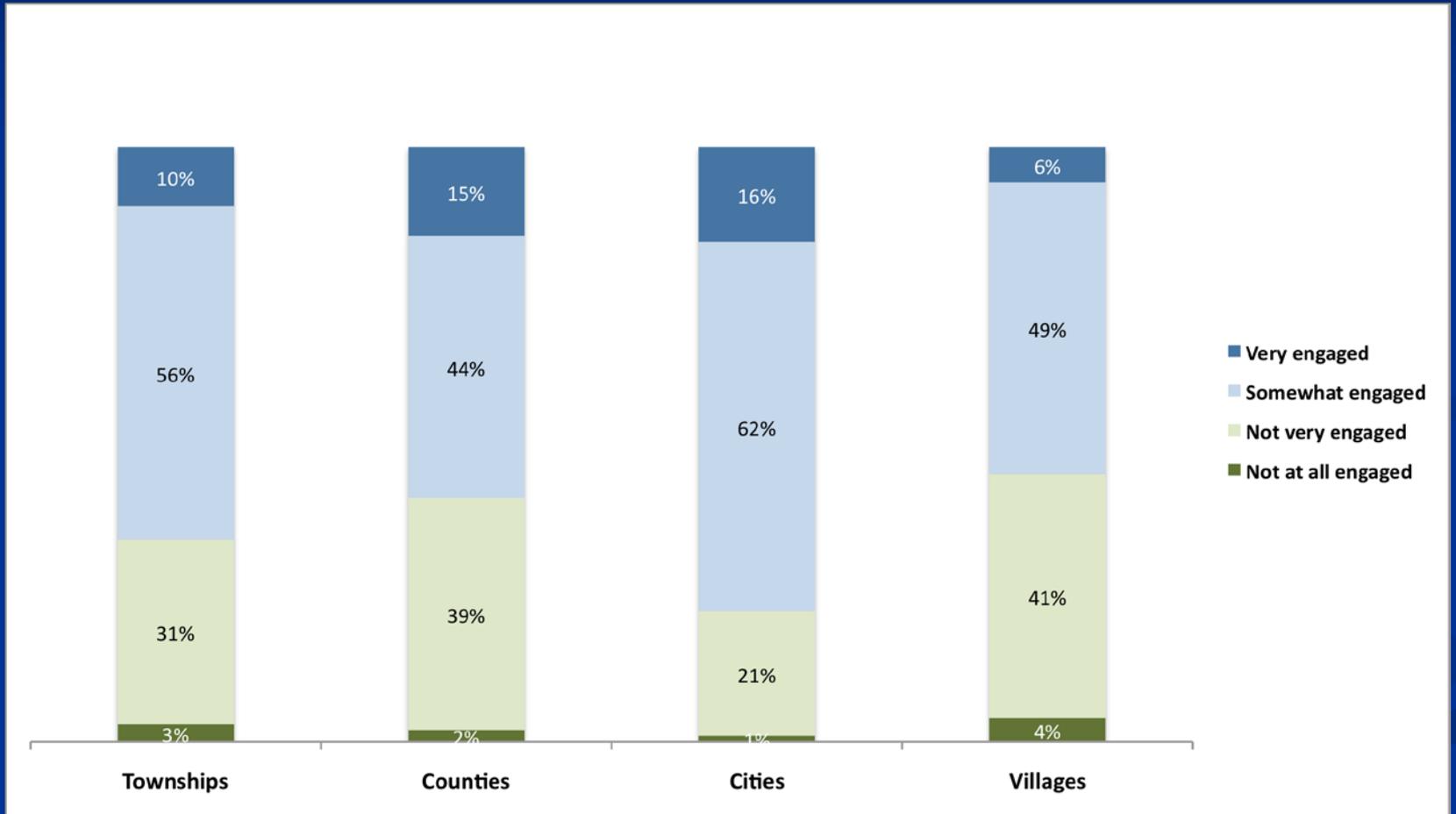


How engaged do officials think their citizens are? - by population size -



How engaged do officials think their citizens are?

- by jurisdiction type-



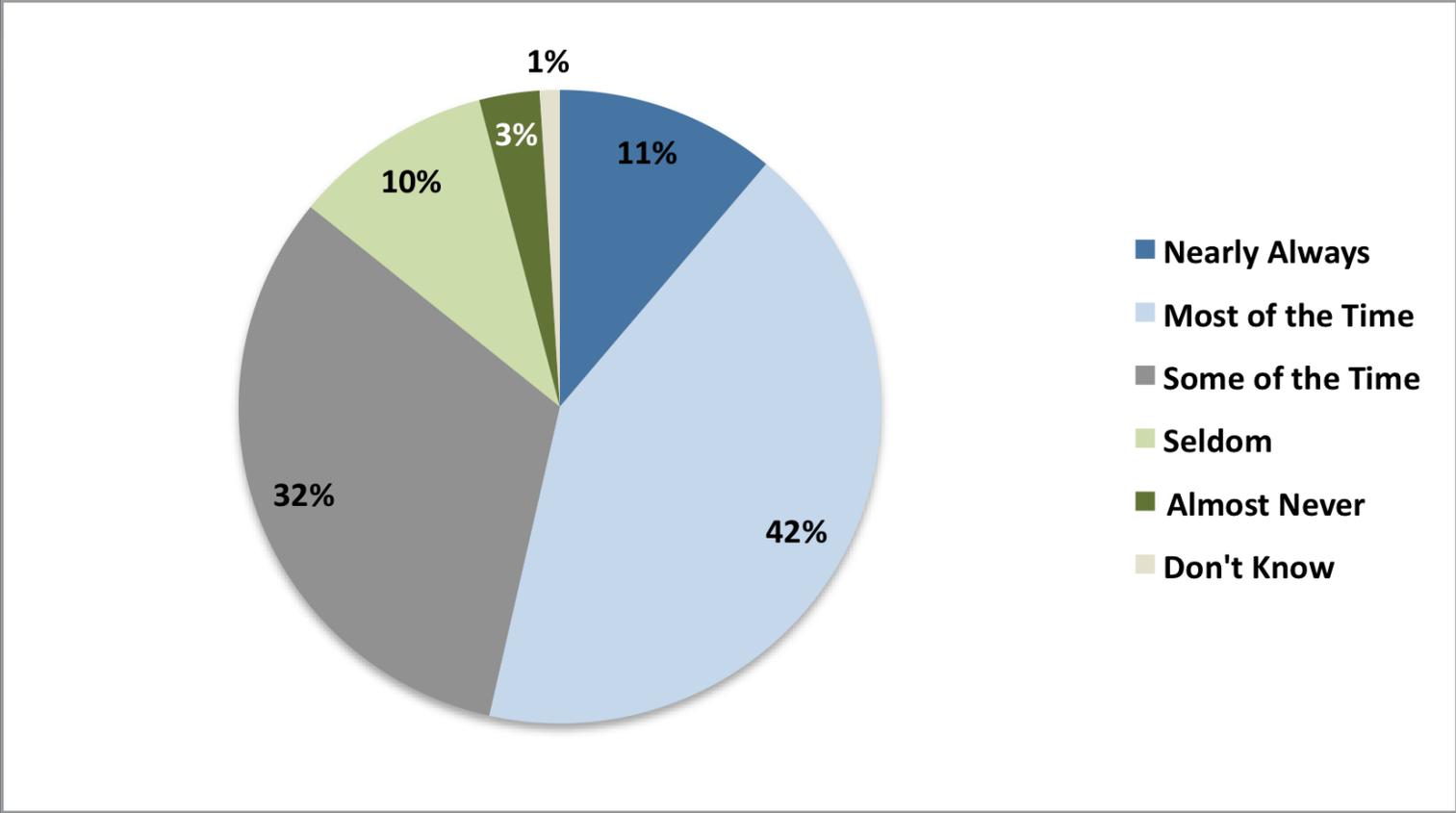
“The biggest problem is the disconnect between policymakers and the people.”

- Mark Funkhouser

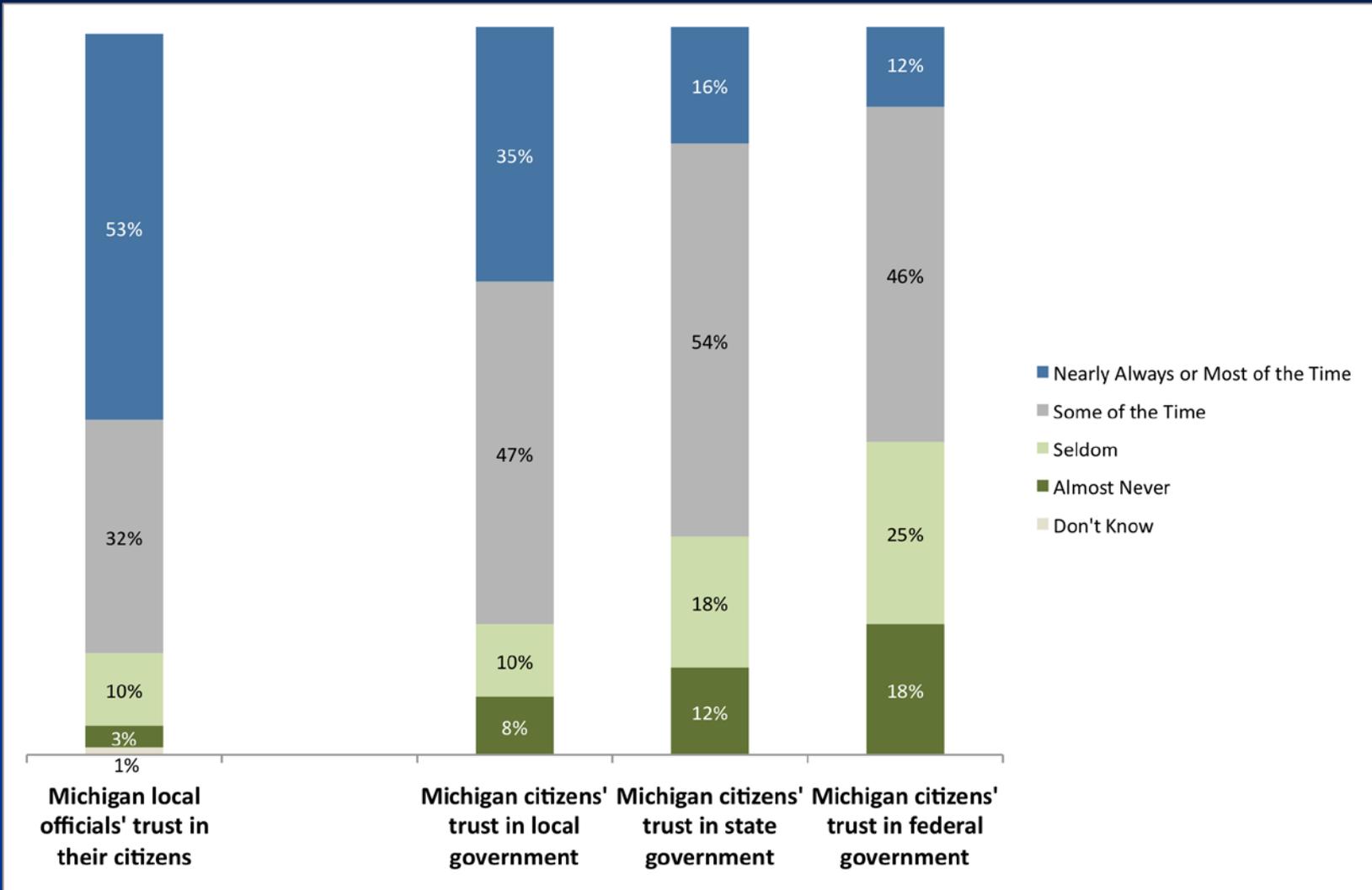
“When talking with people either one on one or by phone I always invite them to our monthly meetings. Ask if they would be interested in being put on a list of people interested in serving on committees. Only the same two or three people ever attend our township meetings unless it is something directly associated with them personally. Once their issue is discussed they leave.”

-Village manager

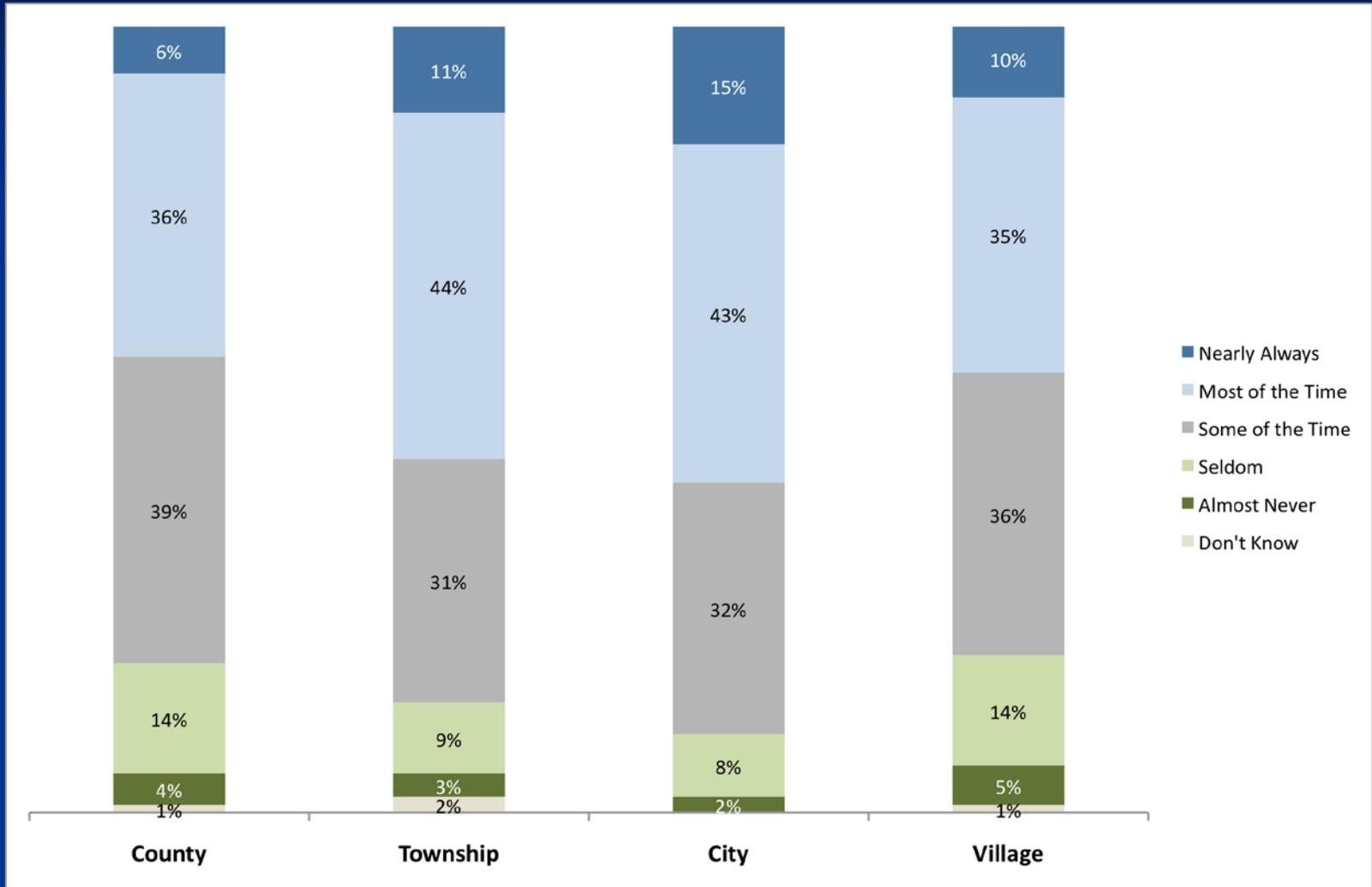
Do local officials trust their citizens?



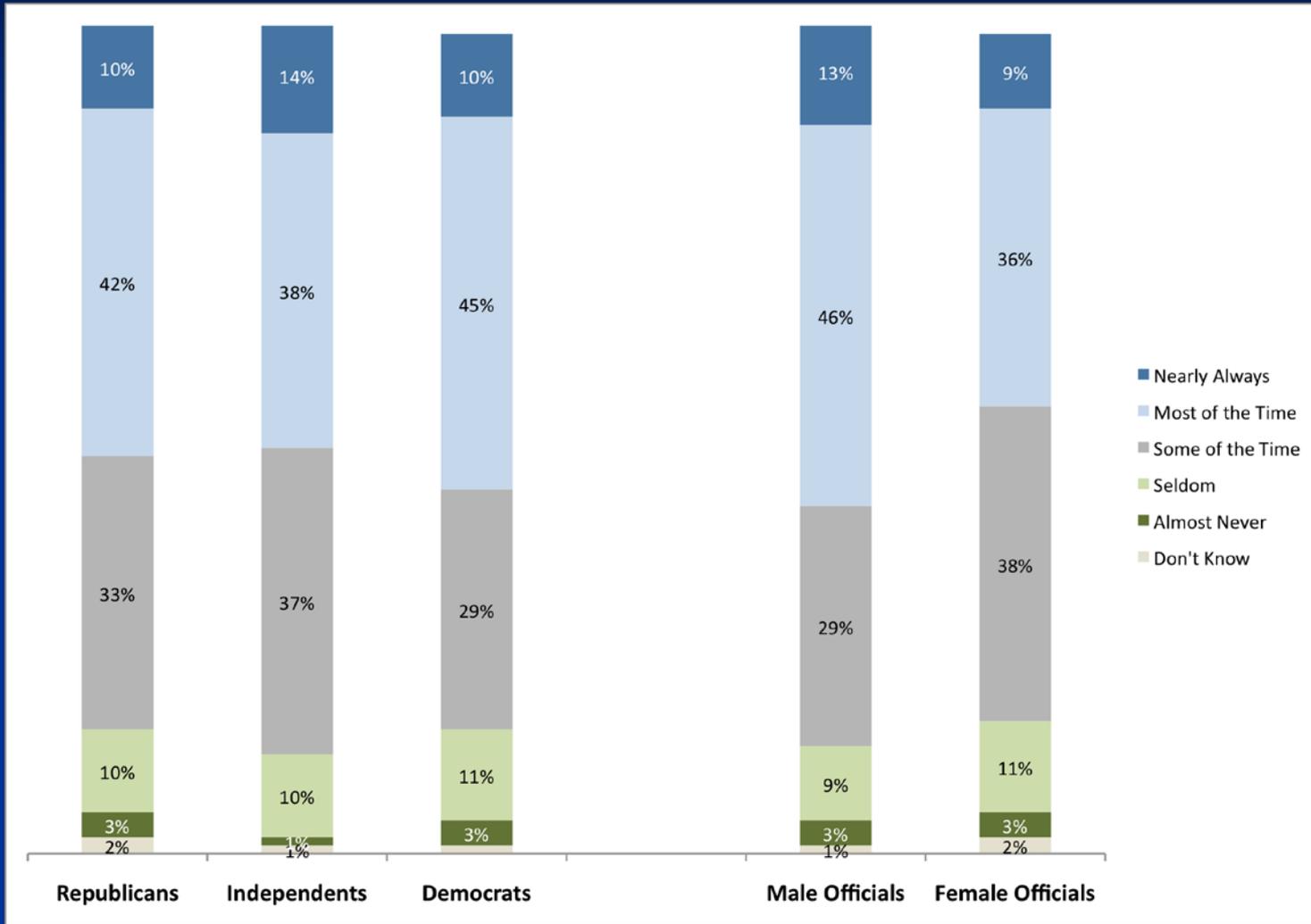
Do local officials trust their citizens?



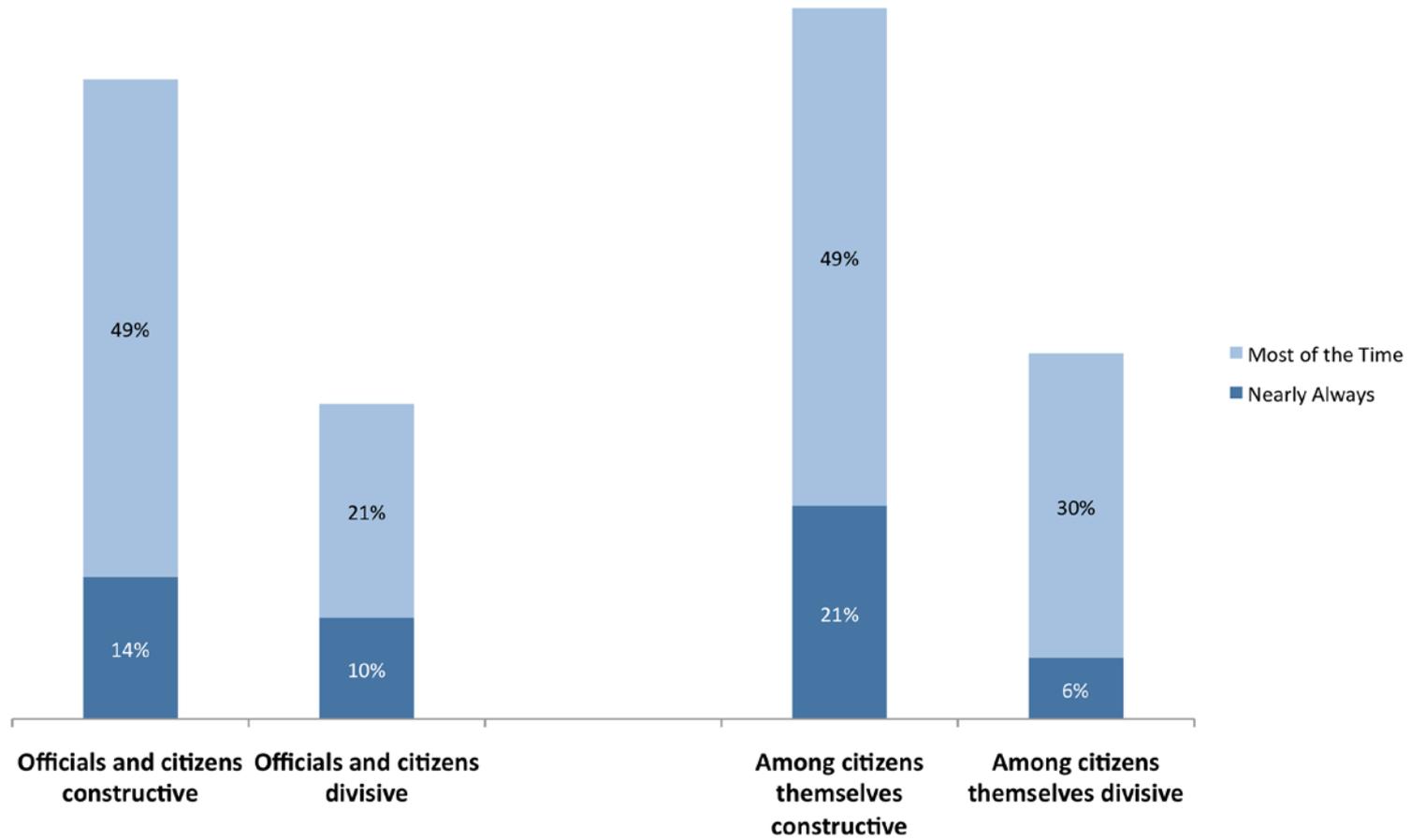
Do local officials trust their citizens?



Do local officials trust their citizens?



Trust and the tone of discourse



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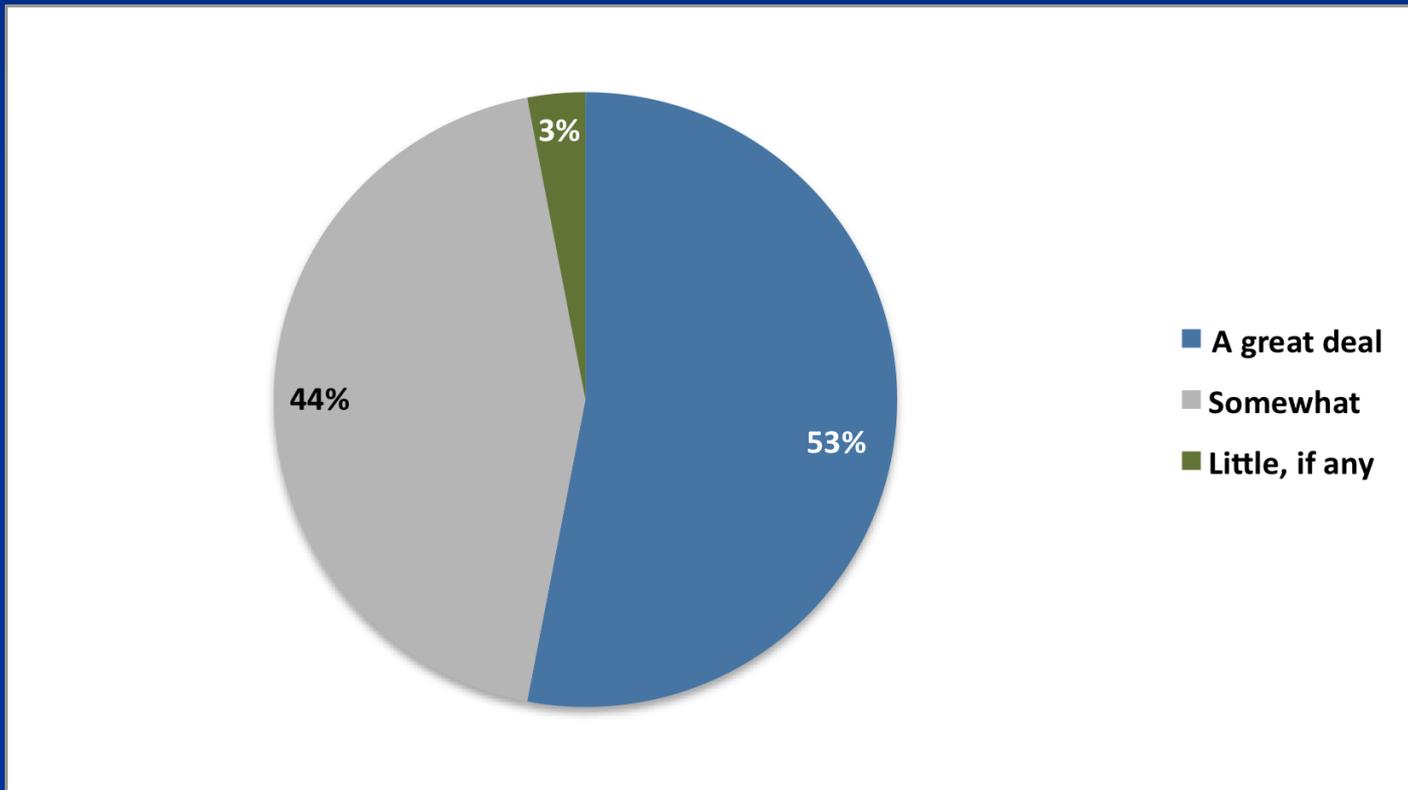
“Town Hall meetings are worthless. Who shows up? Who speaks up? It’s not representative.”

- Mark Funkhouser

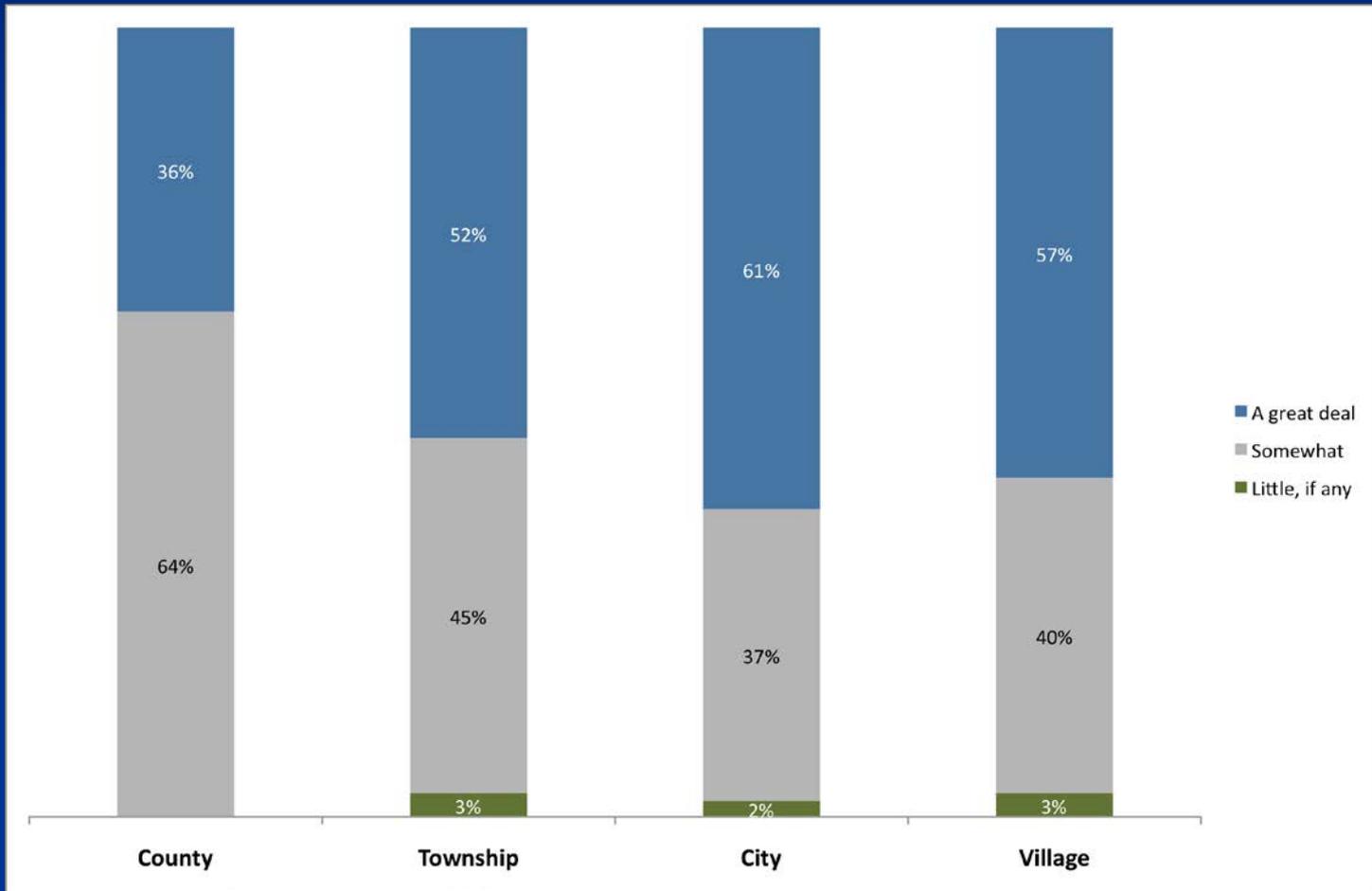
“All commissioners attend city, village, township and special meetings. we have input and also listen to the citizens and this is very effective. I attend about 325 meetings a year.”

-County Board Chair

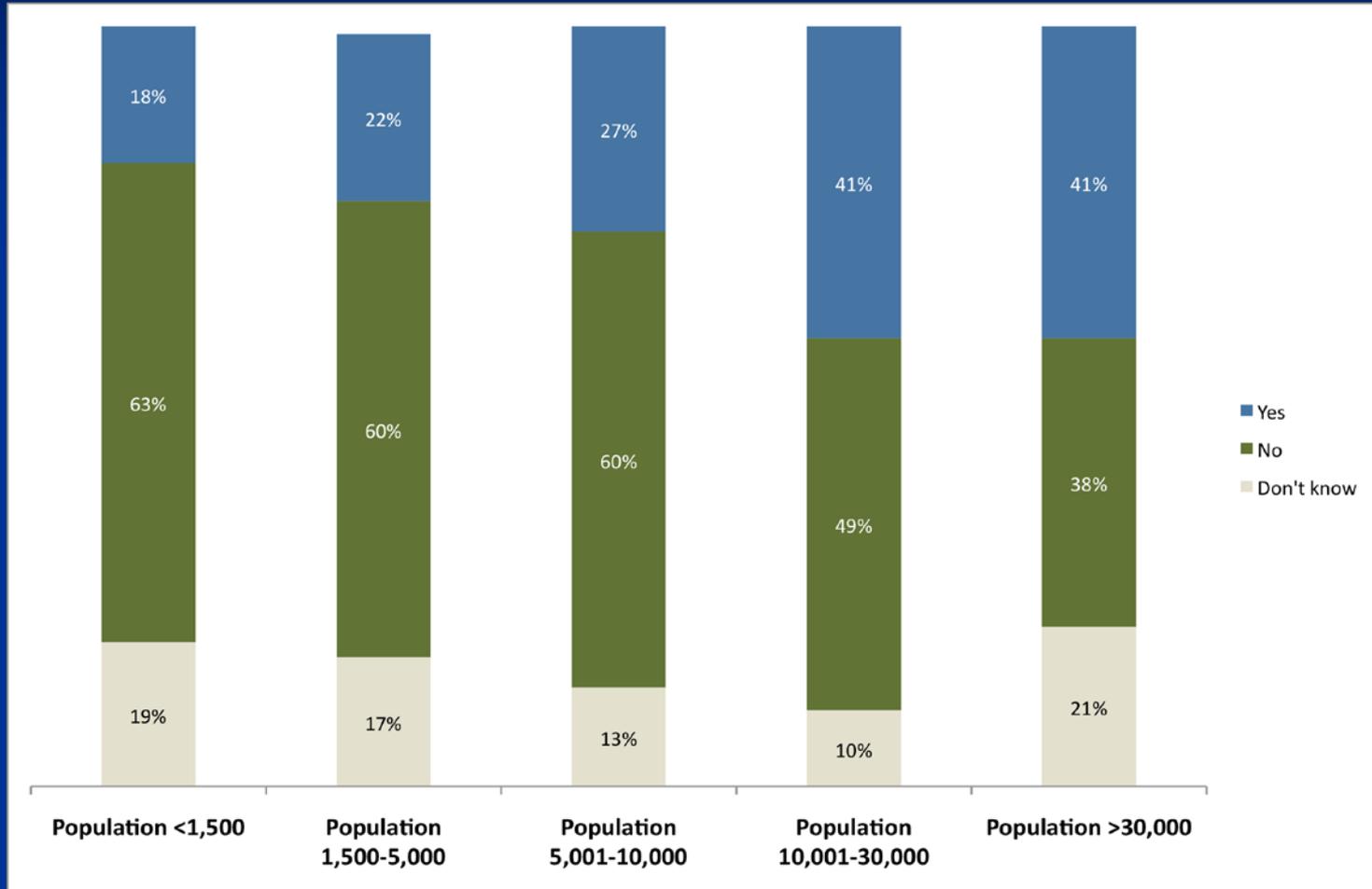
Do local officials say they offer opportunities for engagement?



Do local officials say they offer opportunities for engagement?

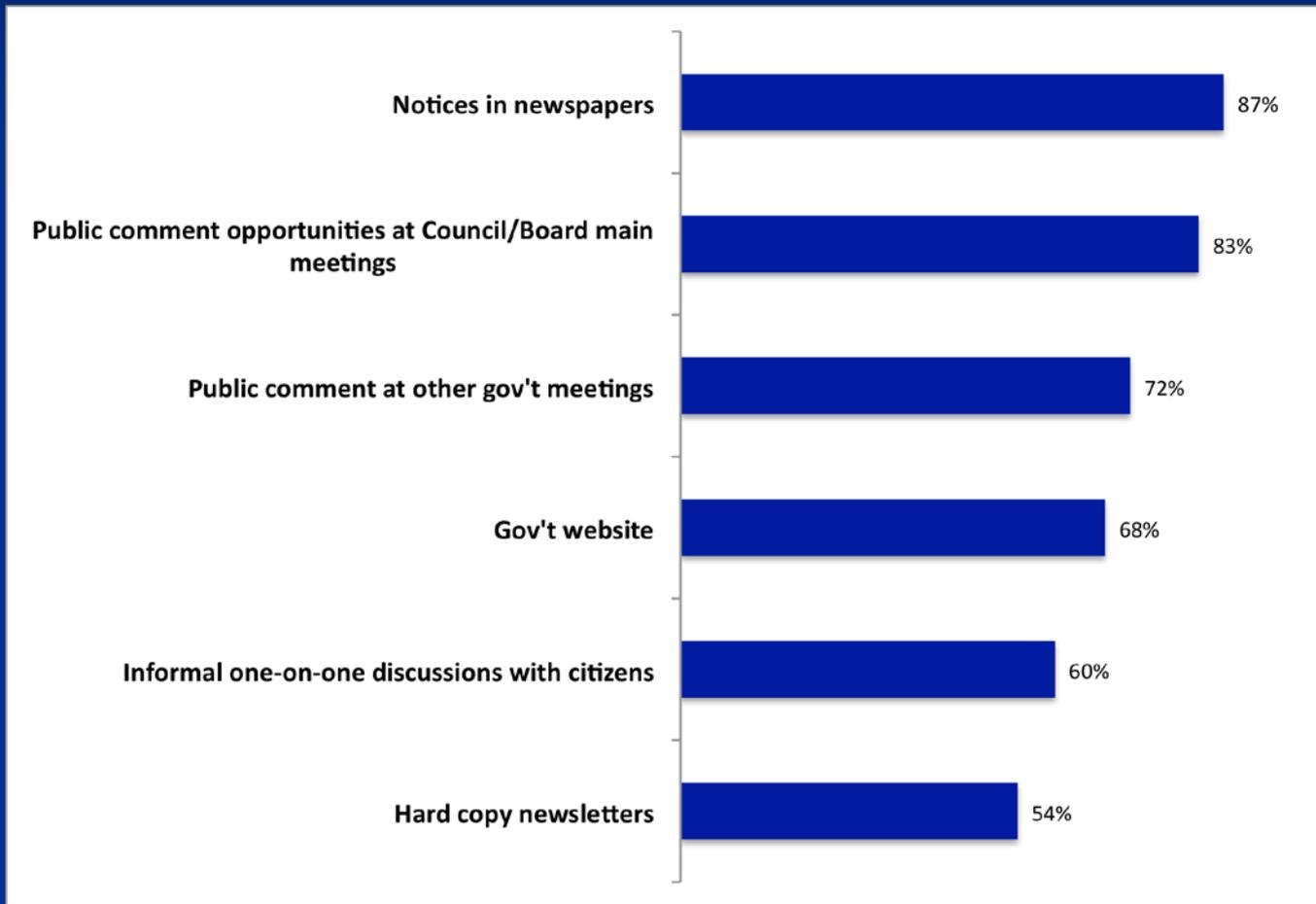


Do local governments specifically reach out to groups not typically engaged?



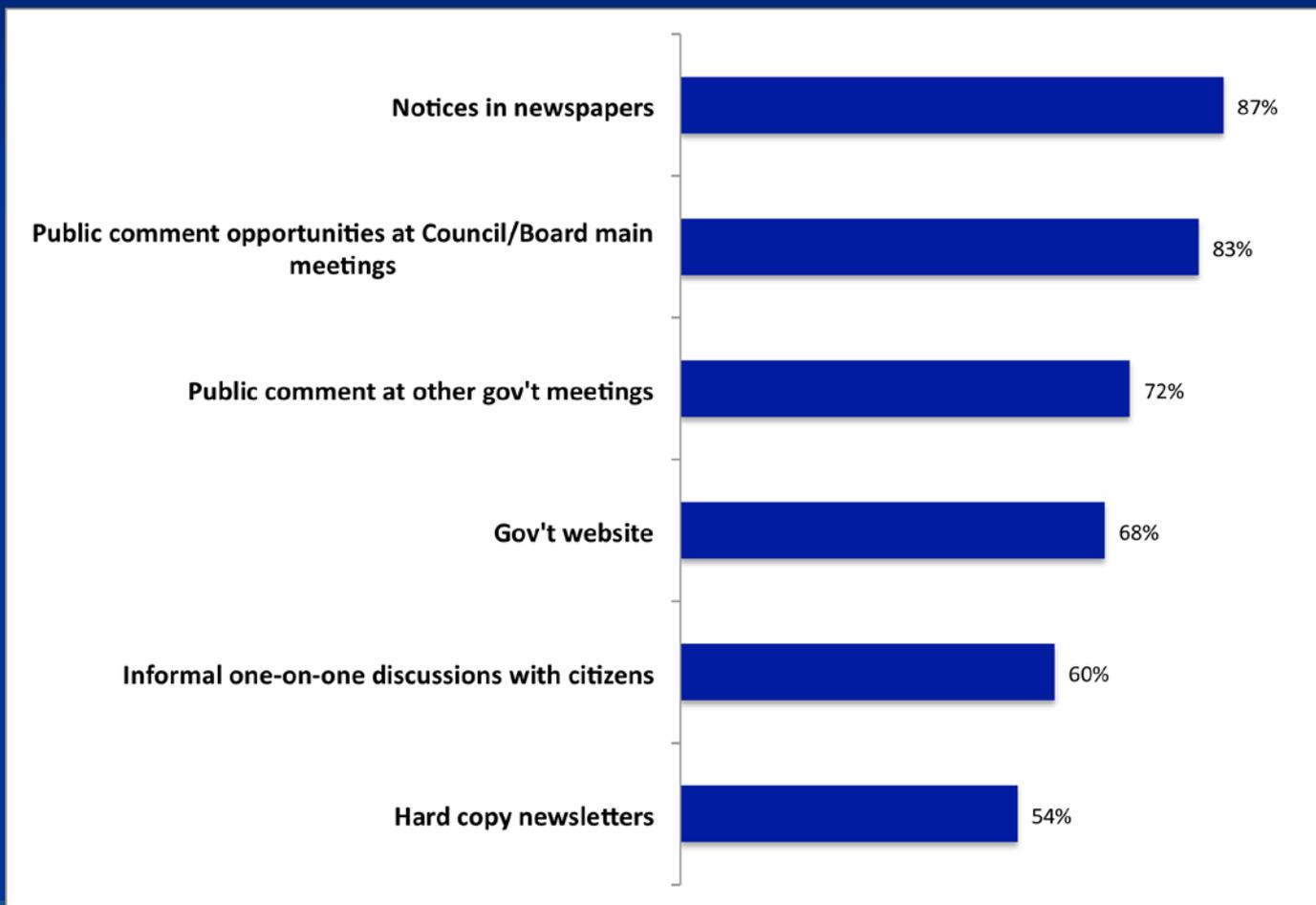
What approaches do Michigan governments use to engage citizens?

- most frequent responses -



What approaches do Michigan governments use to engage citizens?

- most frequent responses -



Effective?

70%

82%

78%

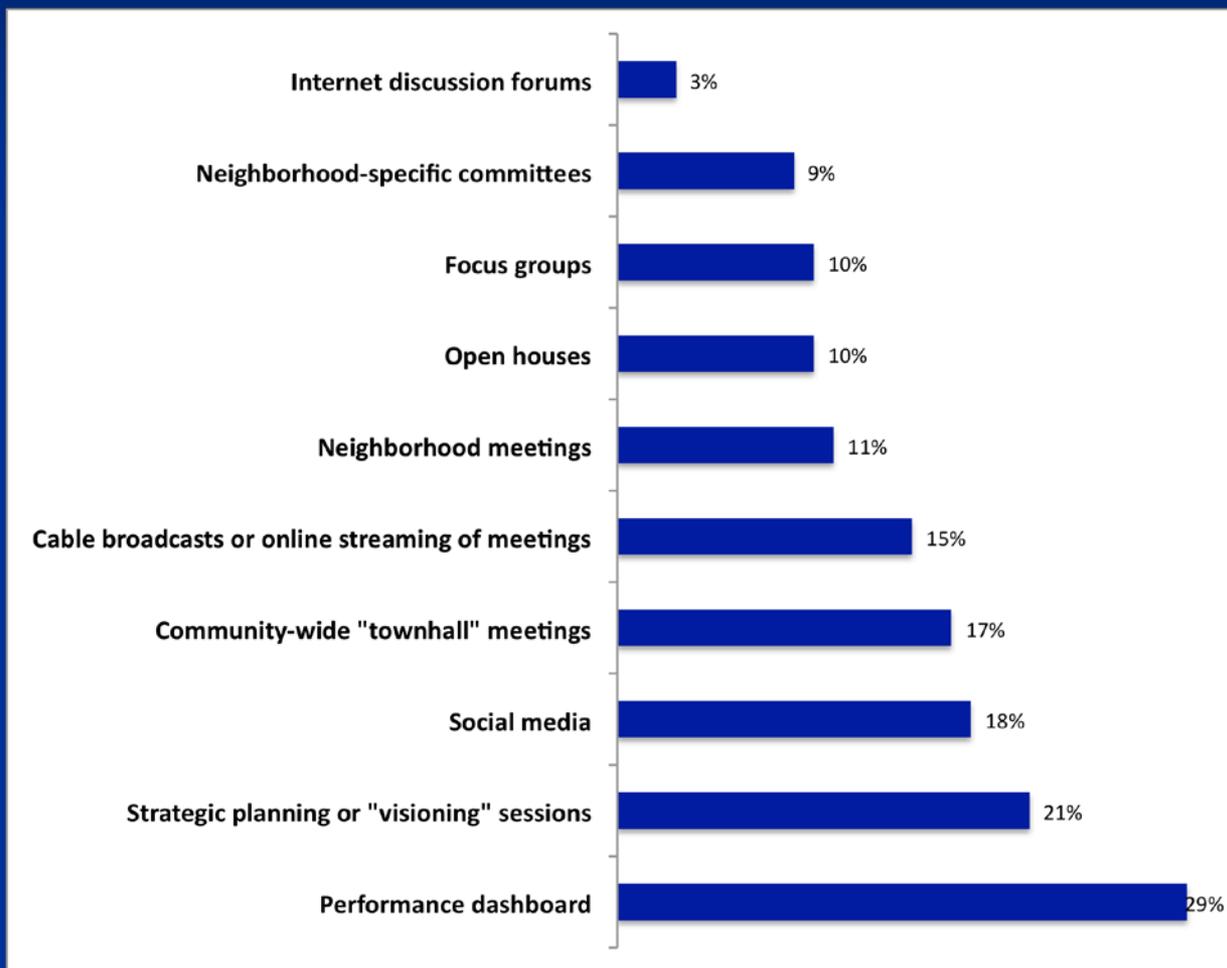
76%

94%

81%

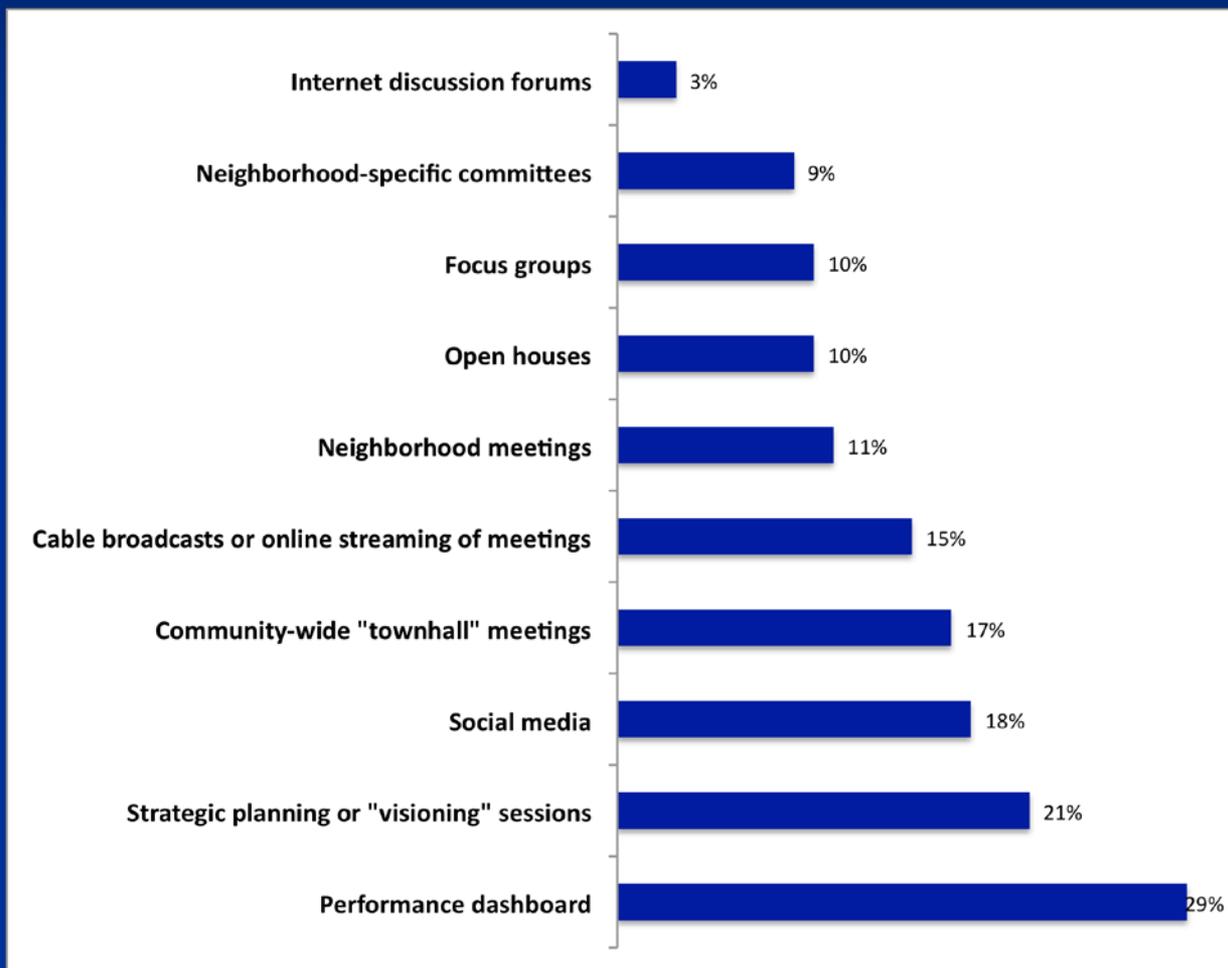
What approaches do Michigan governments use to engage citizens?

- less frequent responses -



What approaches do Michigan governments use to engage citizens?

- less frequent responses -



Effective?

54%*

87%

86%

83%

86%

81%

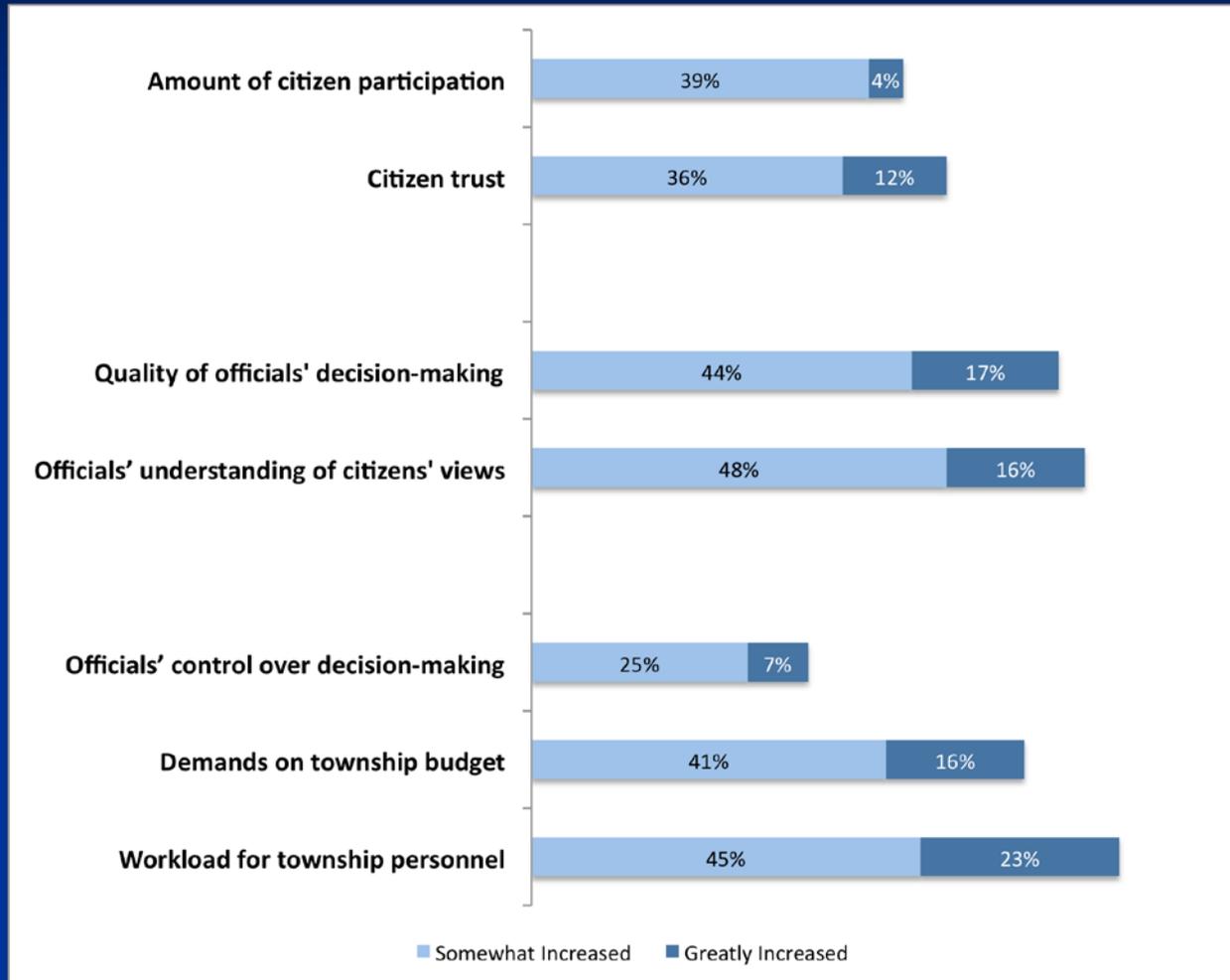
81%

68%*

84%

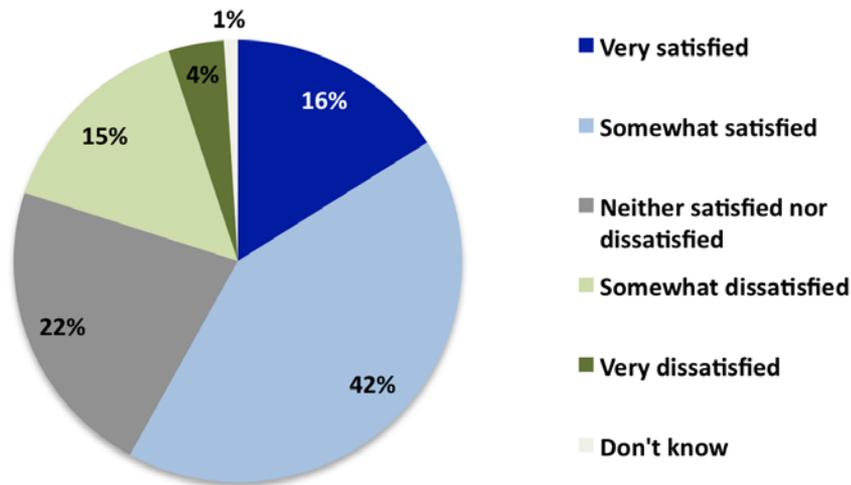
39%*

What has changed due to engagement efforts?

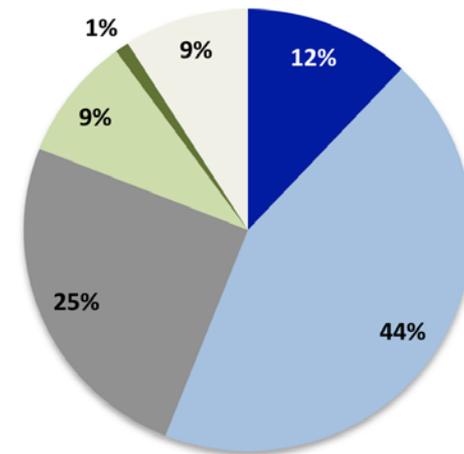


Satisfaction with citizen engagement

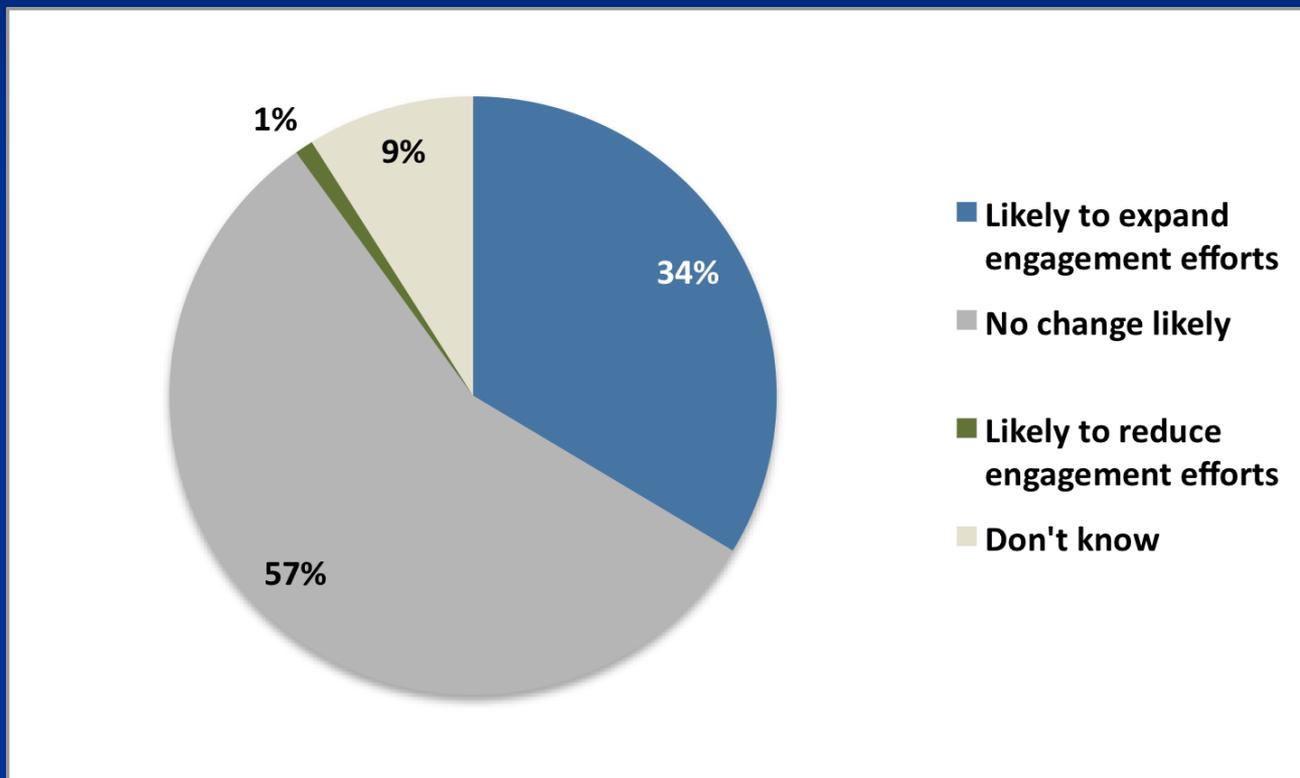
Officials' satisfaction:



Officials' assessments of citizens' satisfaction:

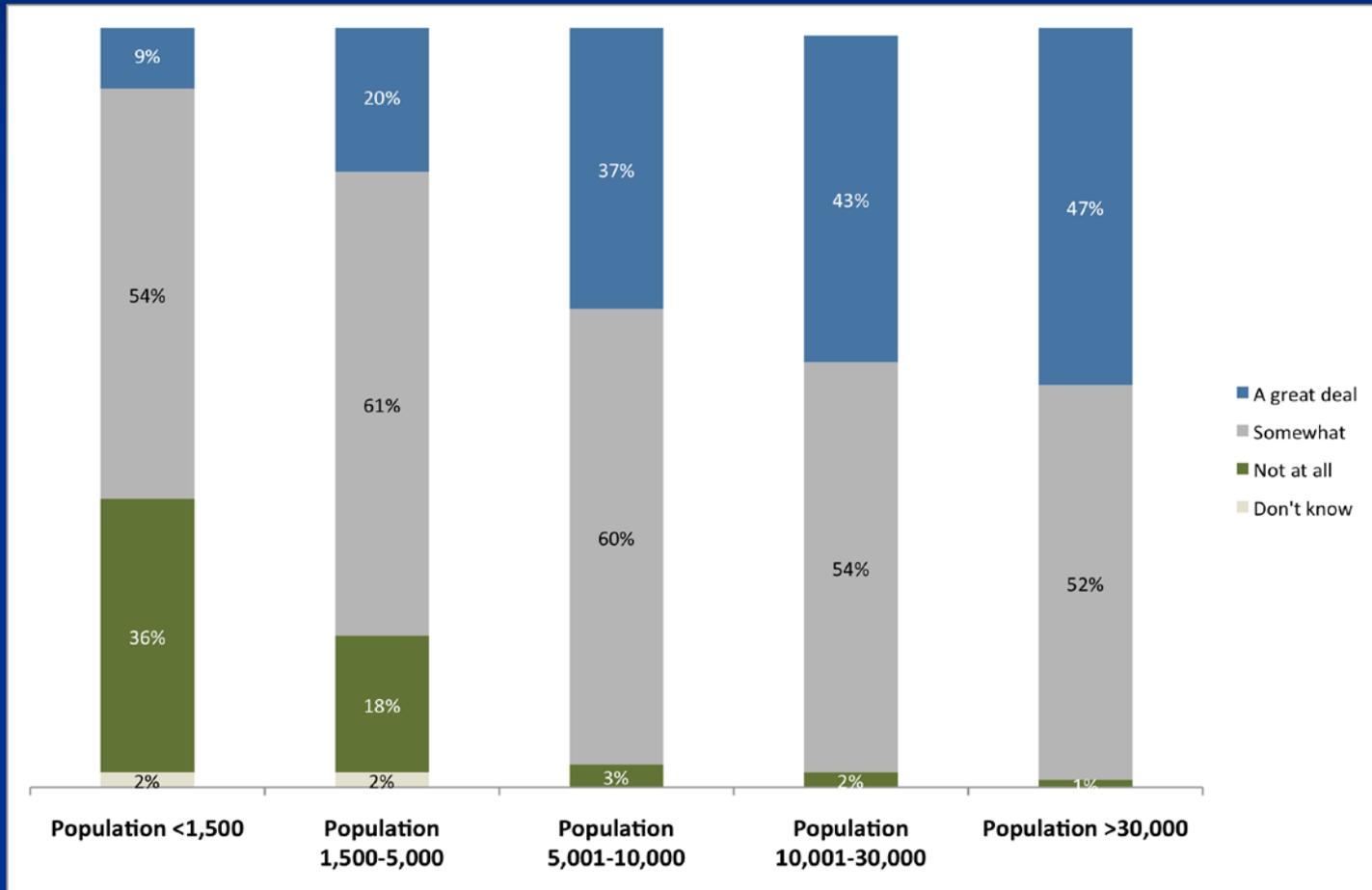


What are plans for the next 12 months?



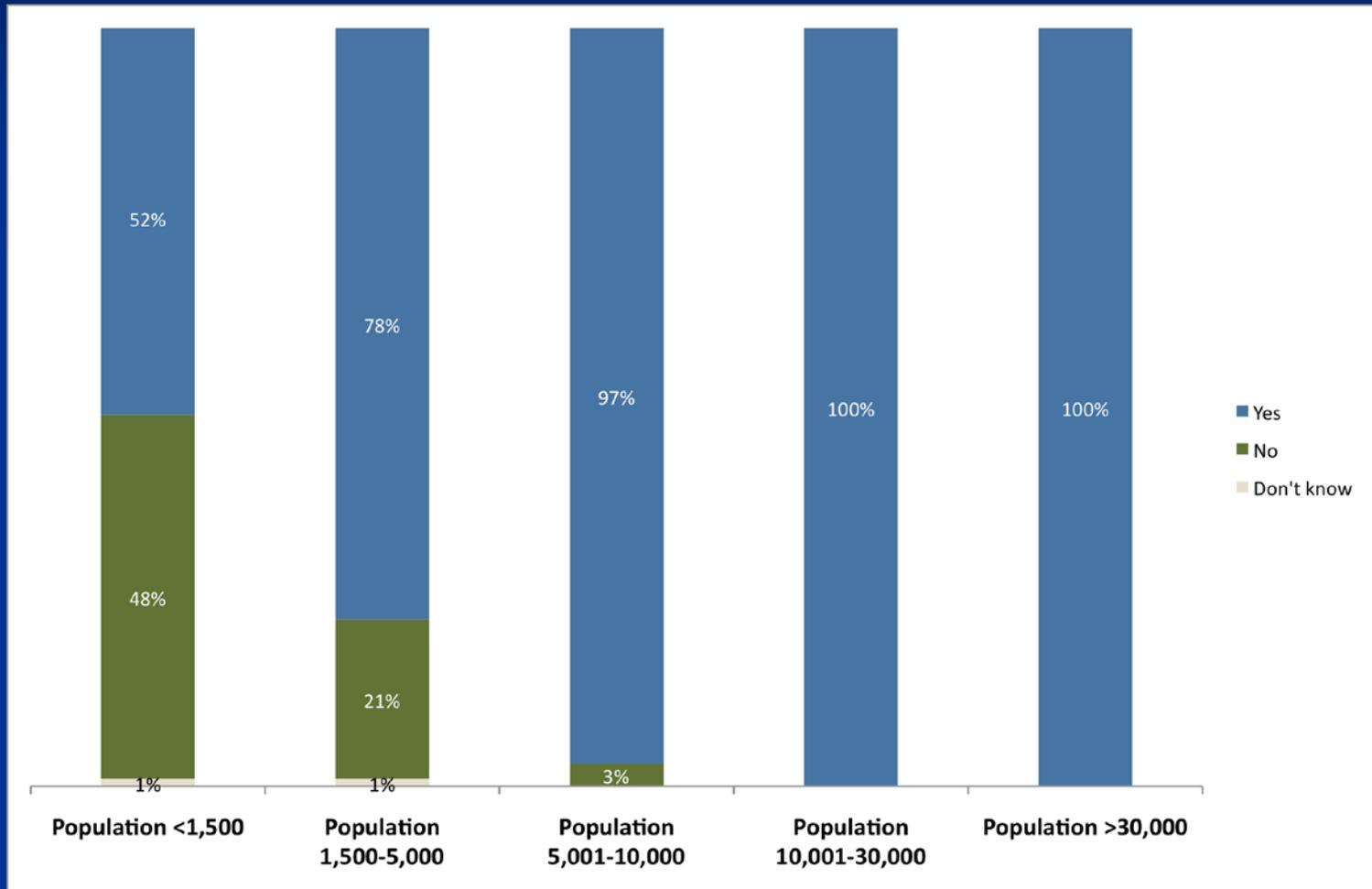
Do local governments try to engage citizens through technology?

- by population size -

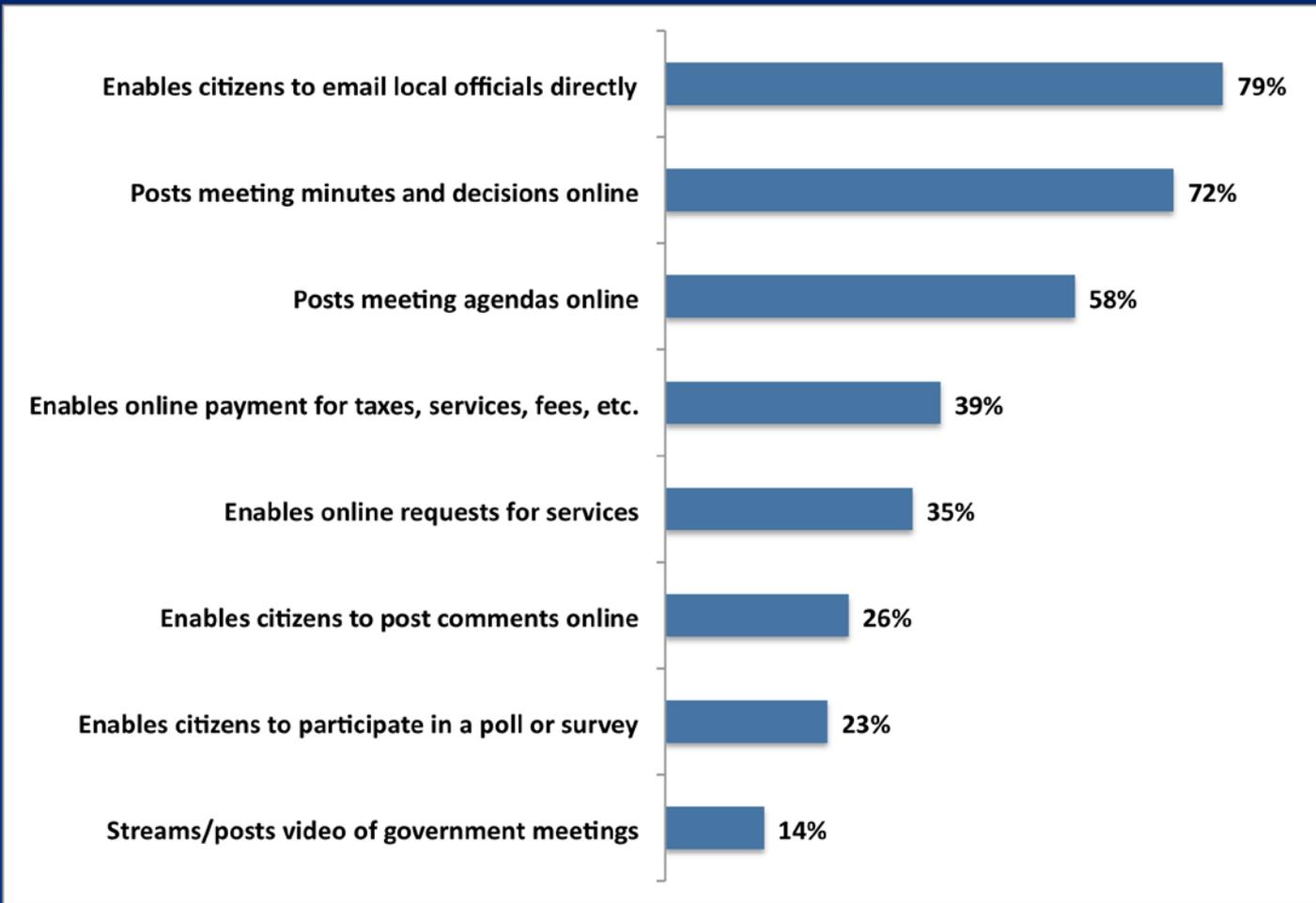


Do most local governments have websites?

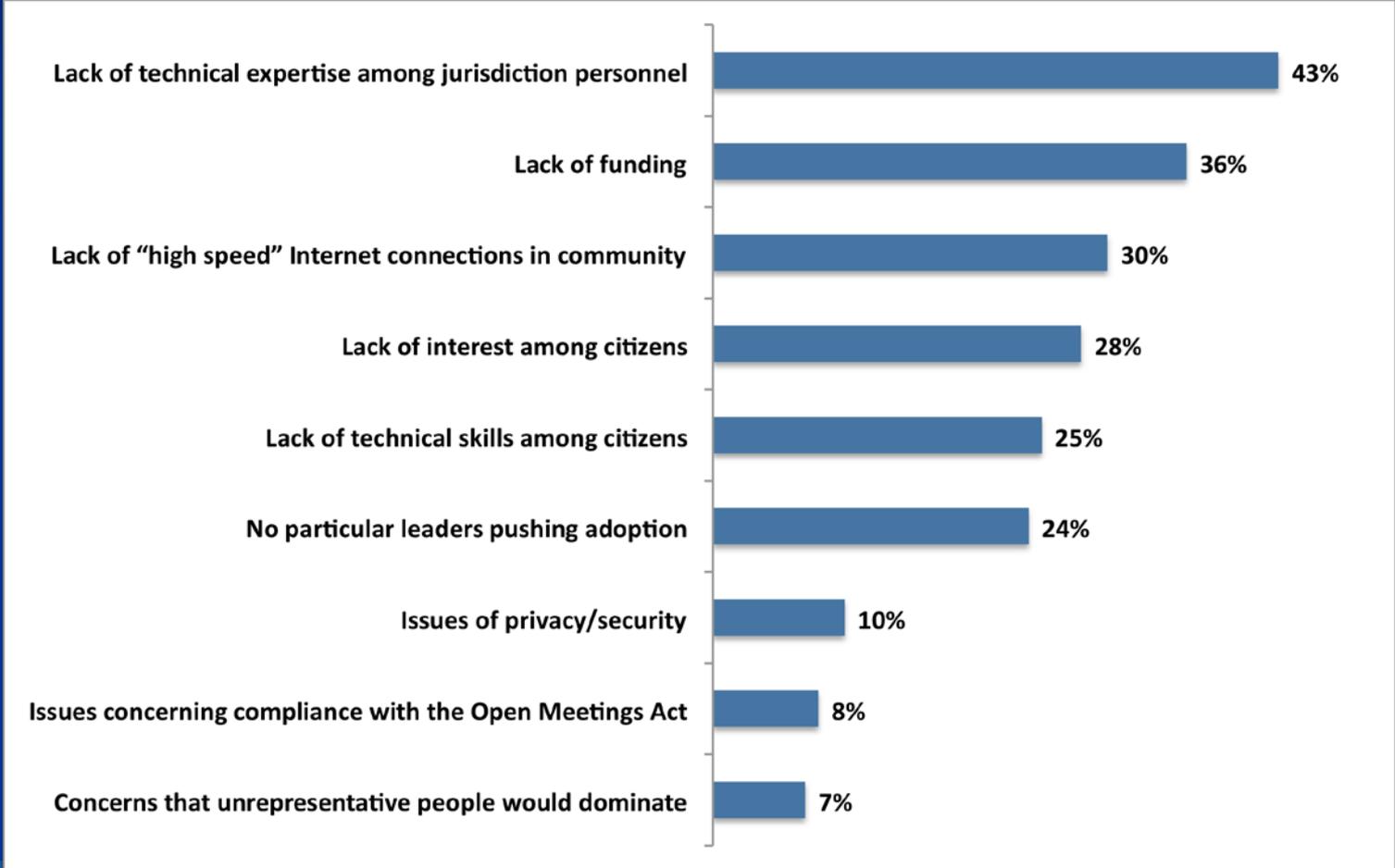
- by population size -



What do local governments offer electronically?



Barriers to using technology for engaging citizens



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(There would be a quote here about successful processes for engagement being organic and authentic, if only I took better notes.)

- Mark Funkhouser

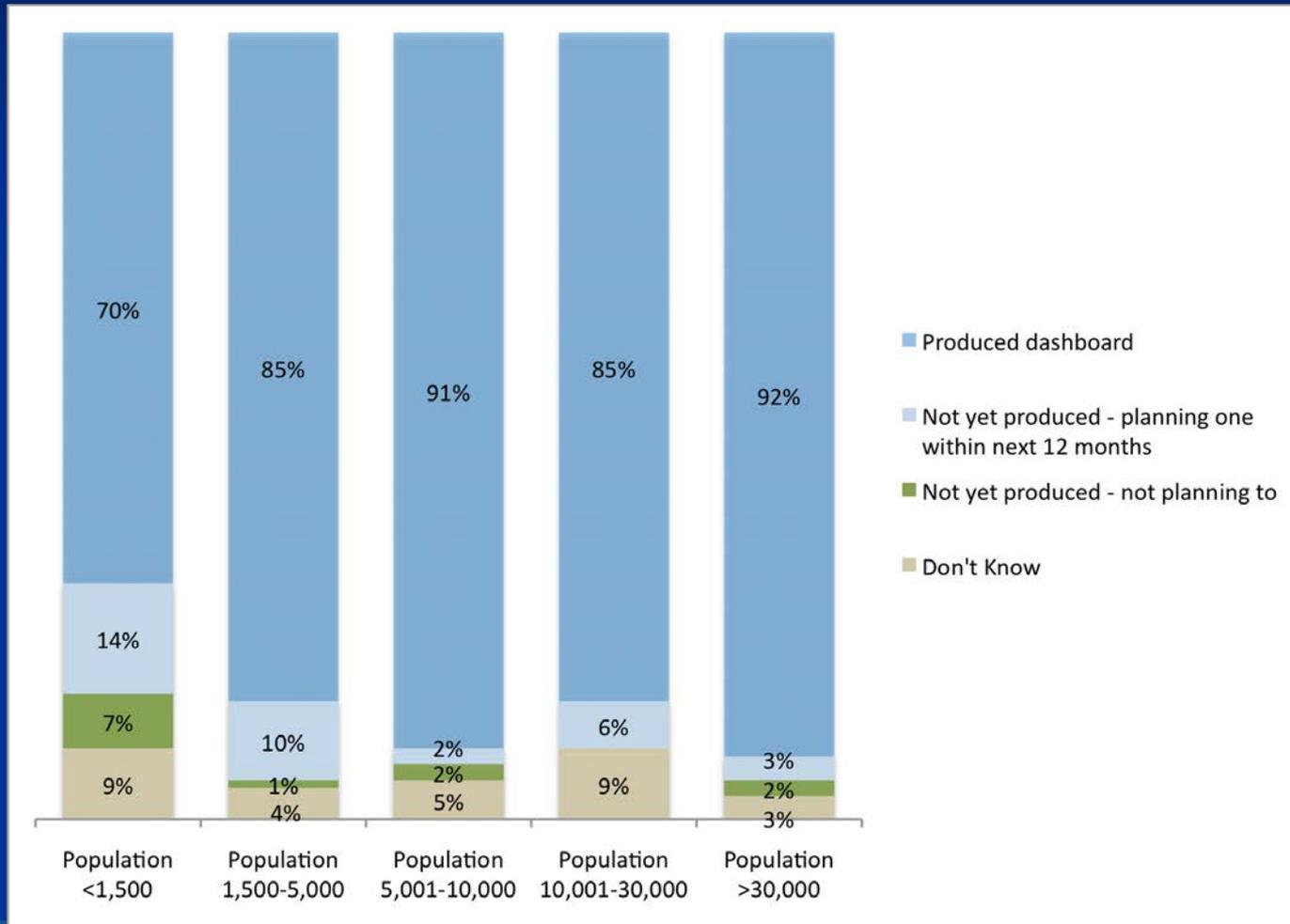
“We have 2 churches in our Township. Once a year, Labor Day Weekend, we have a community service with lunch at our Senior Center. This is highly attended and the people interact and have a good time. Once a year we have a open house at our Nature Center and have snacks and a hay ride. We put up a suggestion box at that time. We get some very interesting ideas.”

-Township supervisor

How the state started incentivizing local “performance dashboards”

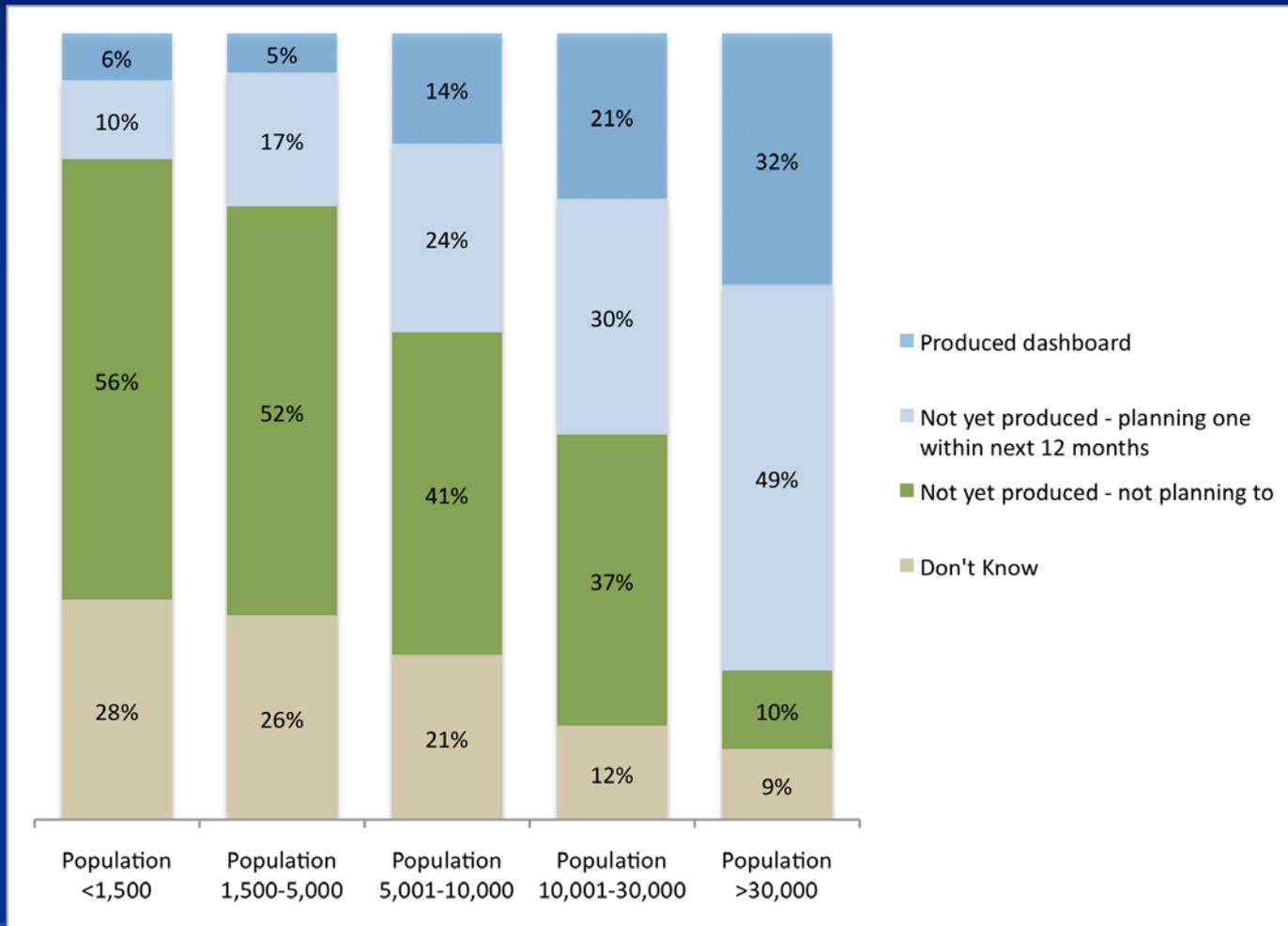


Most EVIP-eligible jurisdictions have created dashboards



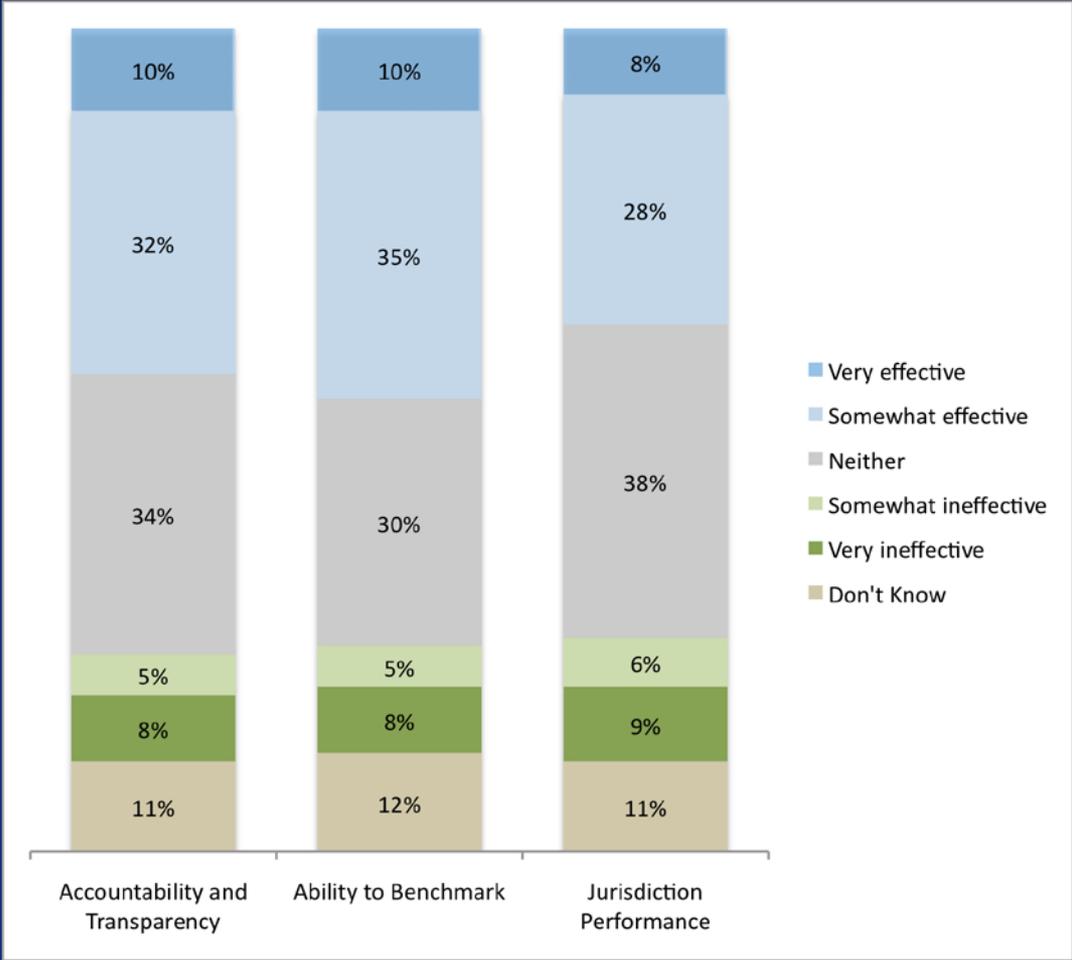
(among eligible jurisdictions)

Few jurisdictions ineligible for EVIP have or plan to create dashboards



(among ineligible jurisdictions)

A core of local officials believe strongly in dashboards, but most have doubts about efficacy



(among all jurisdictions)

Takeaways

- Local officials have conflicting feelings about citizen engagement.
- They are more likely to rate as effective engagement strategies that involve dialogue.
- They're testing the waters with technological engagement efforts, particularly in larger jurisdictions.
- Survey research can help understand differences across key groups.

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