

# Local Government Trends in Citizen Engagement:

## Township Results from the Fall 2012 Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)

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Presentation by the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP)  
for the  
Michigan Townships Association Annual Educational Conference  
January 24, 2013

# Presentation Outline

- Overview of the Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)
- Summary of findings on citizen engagement among Michigan township governments
- Brief look at technology and citizen engagement

# What is CLOSUP?

- A small research center founded at the Ford School of Public Policy in 2001
- Primary mission to conduct and support applied academic research that informs local, state, and urban policy issues, both in Michigan and beyond

# What is the MPPS?

## ■ A Census Survey

- Targeted respondents are the chief elected and chief appointed official in every Michigan county, city, township, and village
- Conducted twice per year
- Administered online and via hardcopy questionnaire
- 72% of jurisdictions statewide responded in each of the past three waves
- Survey content developed in close partnership with MML, MTA, and MAC, and Advisory Committees of topic experts

# What does the MPPS aim to do?

- Provide information to local leaders about peers across the state, spread best practices and grass-roots innovative solutions.
- Help inform policy discussions among state and local policymakers with information about challenges at the local level that is not available from any other source.
- Build a longitudinal data archive to allow tracking of fundamental changes.
- Foster academic research and teaching on local government issues.

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# What did the Fall 2012 survey cover?

- What do local governments do to engage citizens? How effective are those actions?
- What are the outcomes?
- What do they plan to do in the future? Do they need help doing it?

# How many townships responded?

915 townships total (74% of all statewide)

## By population size:

334 townships <1500  
409 townships 1500-5000  
84 township 5001-10,000  
66 townships 10,001-30,000  
22 townships >30,000

## By region:

112 in the Upper Peninsula  
177 in the Northern LP  
176 in the Central West  
175 in the Central East  
149 in the Southwest  
126 in the Southeast

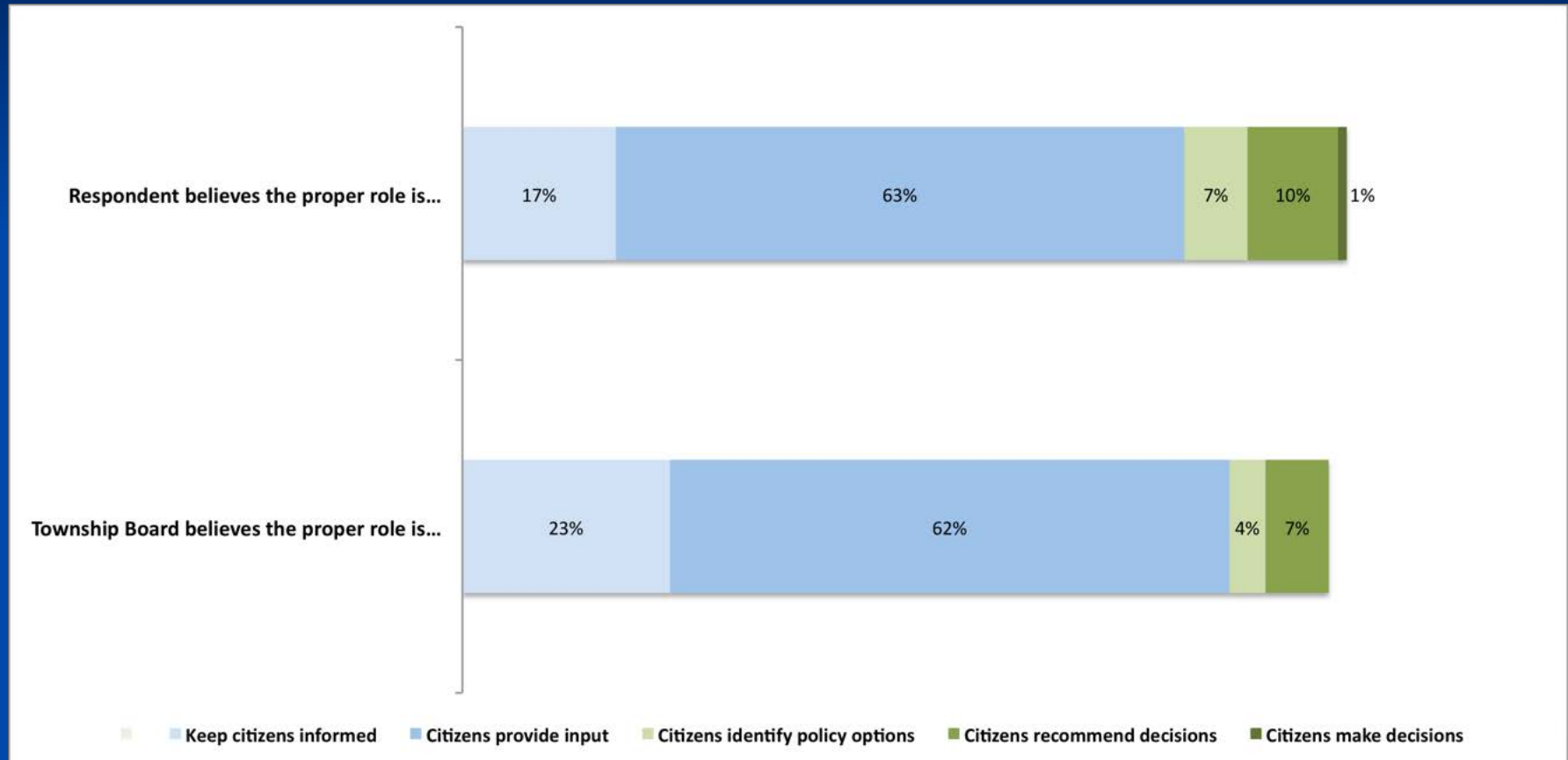
“We have a new supervisor coming in who ran on the idea of open government. He plans to try to get the citizens more involved in decision making.”

# What is citizen engagement?

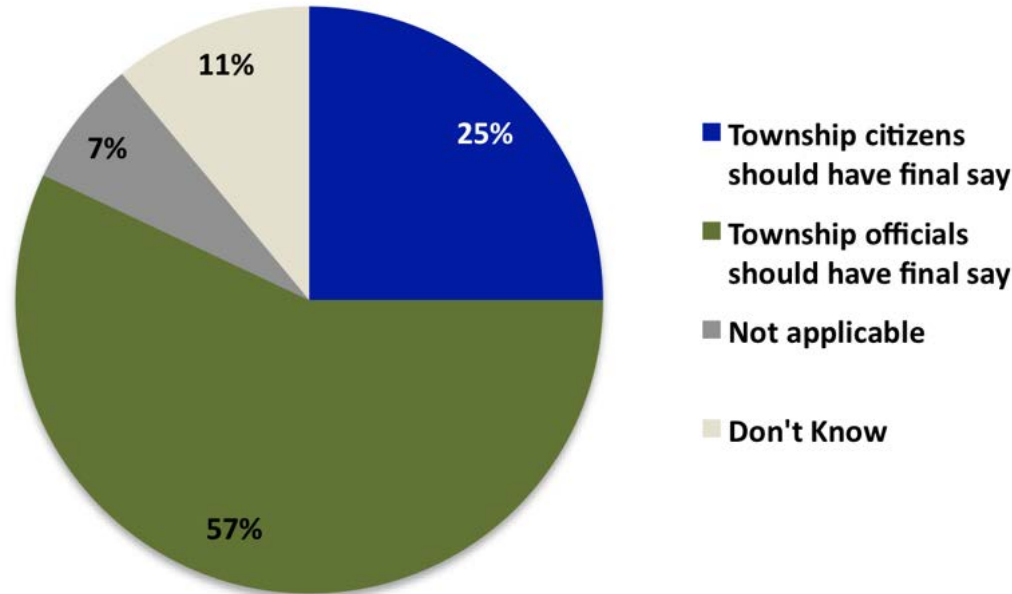
The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum:



# What is the proper role for citizen engagement in township policymaking?



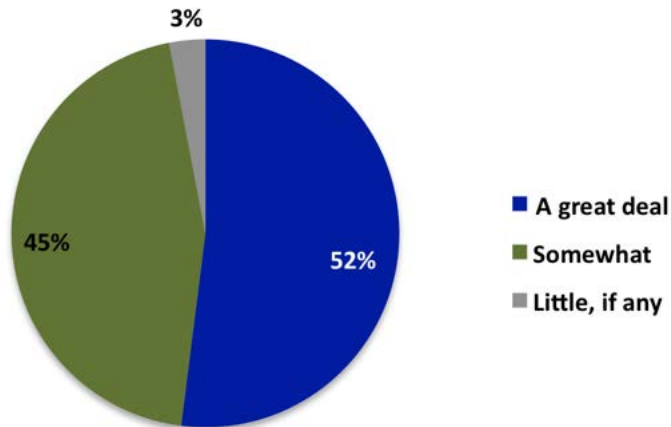
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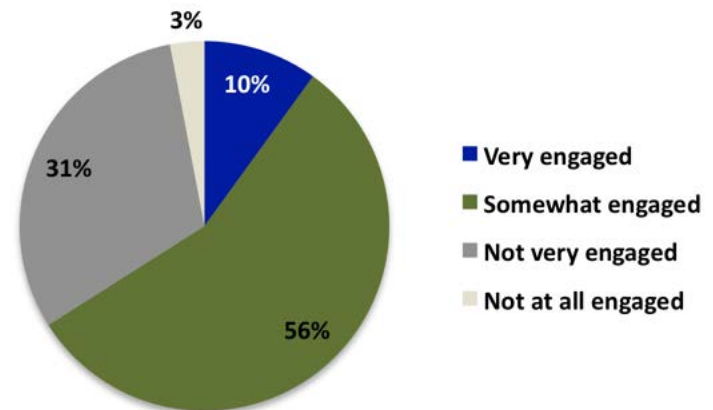
“When talking with people either one on one or by phone I always invite them to our monthly meetings. Ask if they would be interested in being put on a list of people interested in serving on committees. Only the same two or three people ever attend our township meetings unless it is something directly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

# How engaged are township residents overall?

## Opportunities for Engagement:

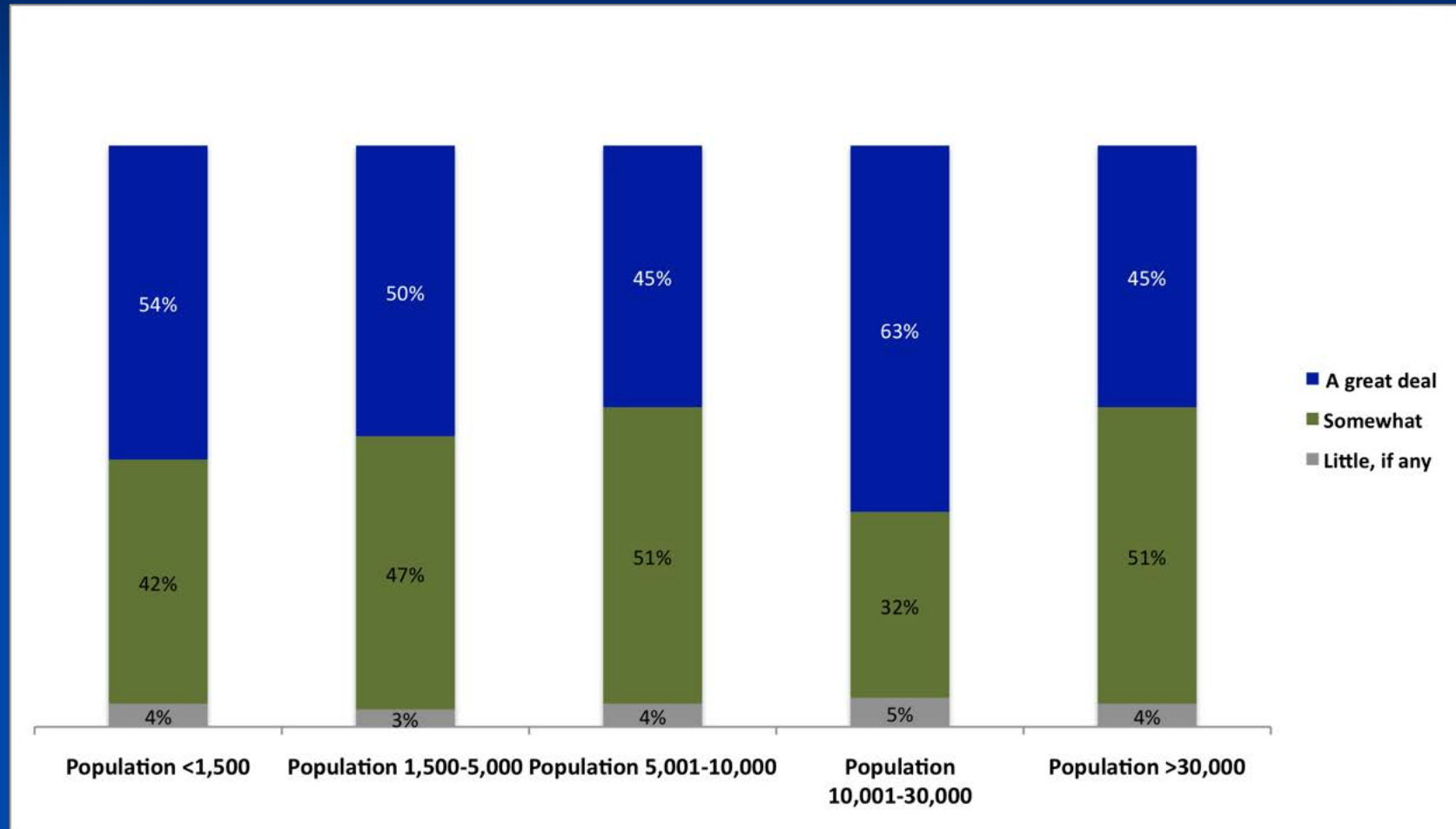


## Levels of Engagement:



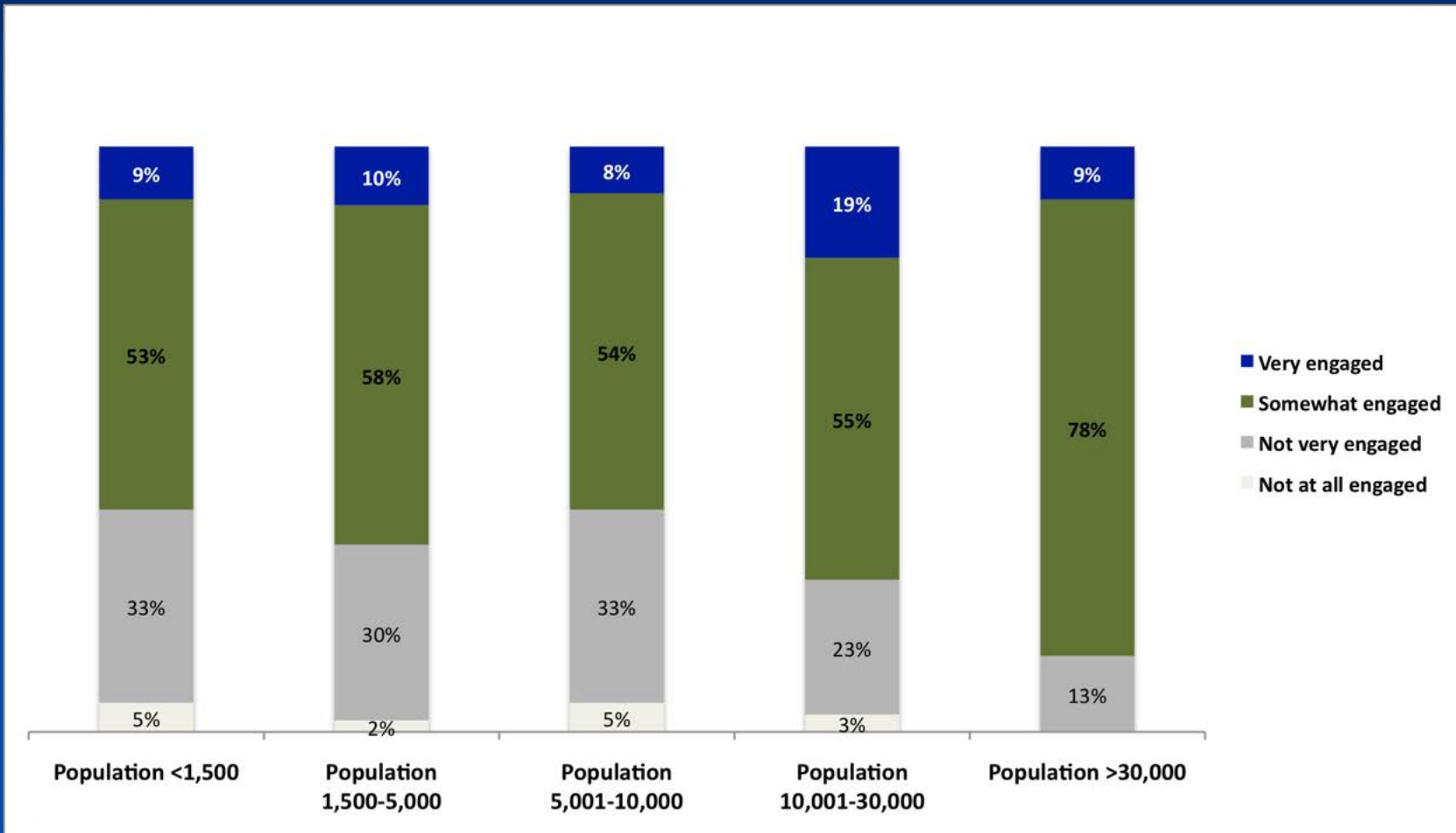
# Do townships offer opportunities for engagement?

- townships by population size-



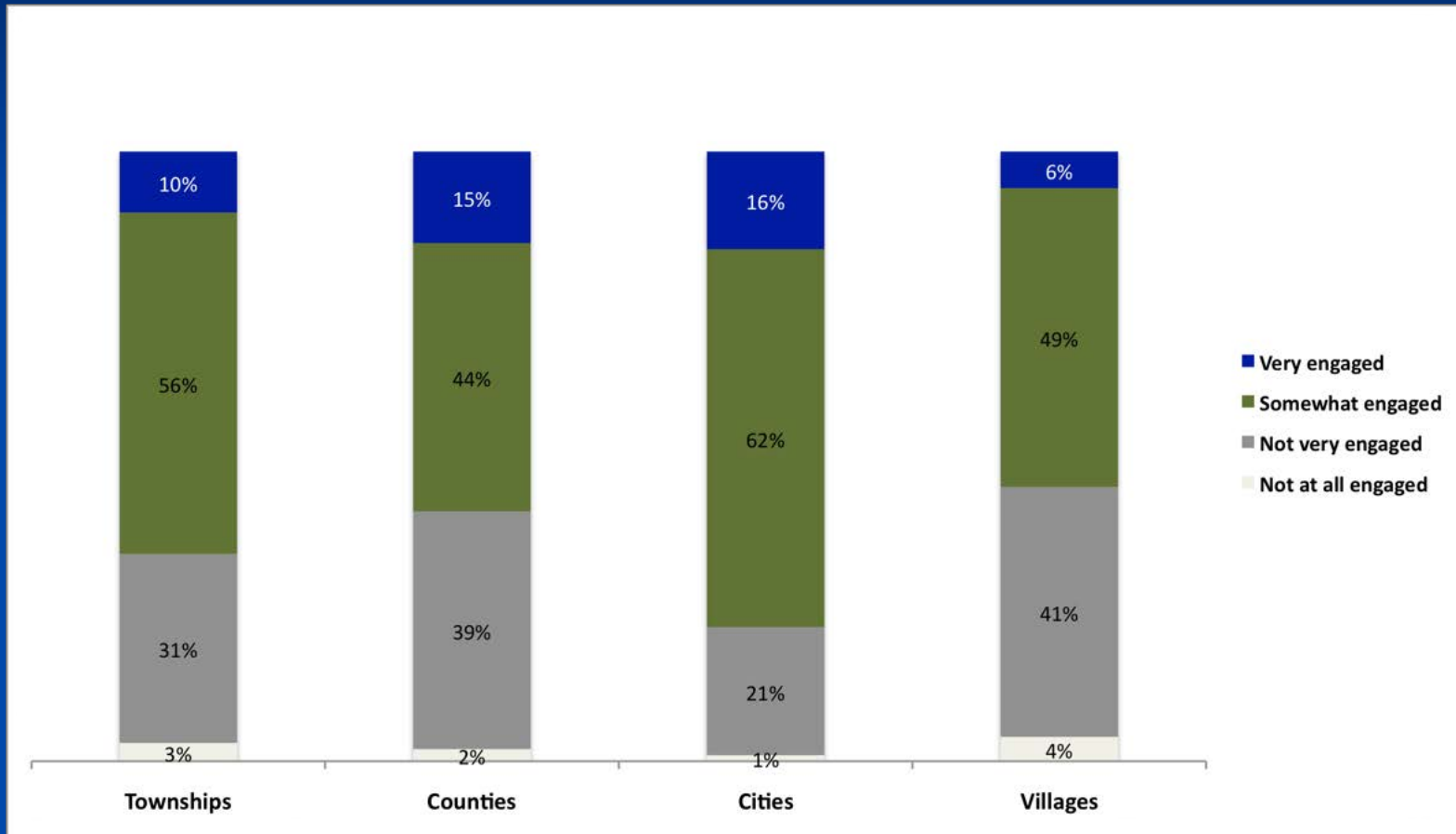
# How engaged are township residents?

- townships by population size -



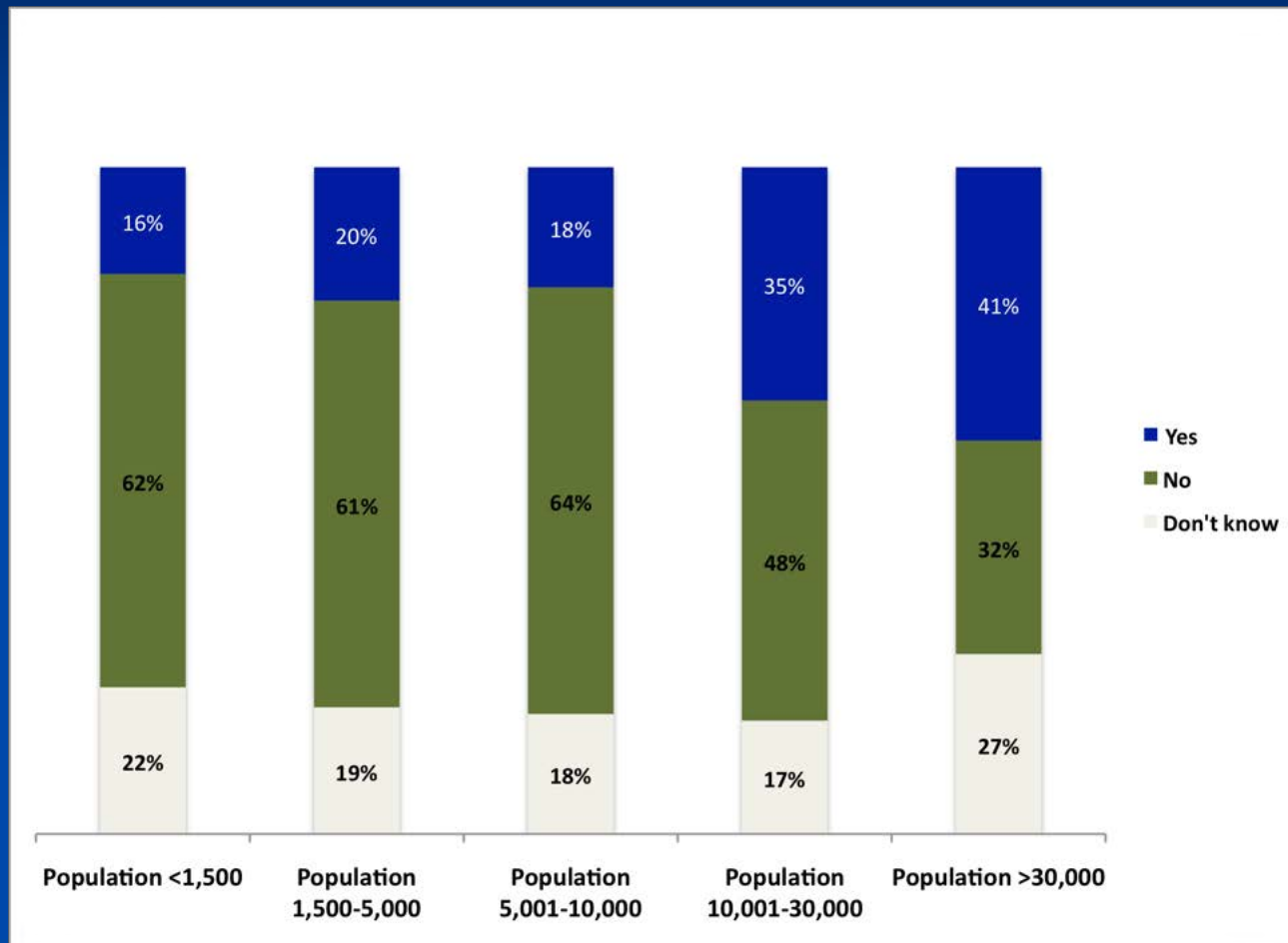
# How engaged are township residents?

- townships compared with other jurisdiction types-



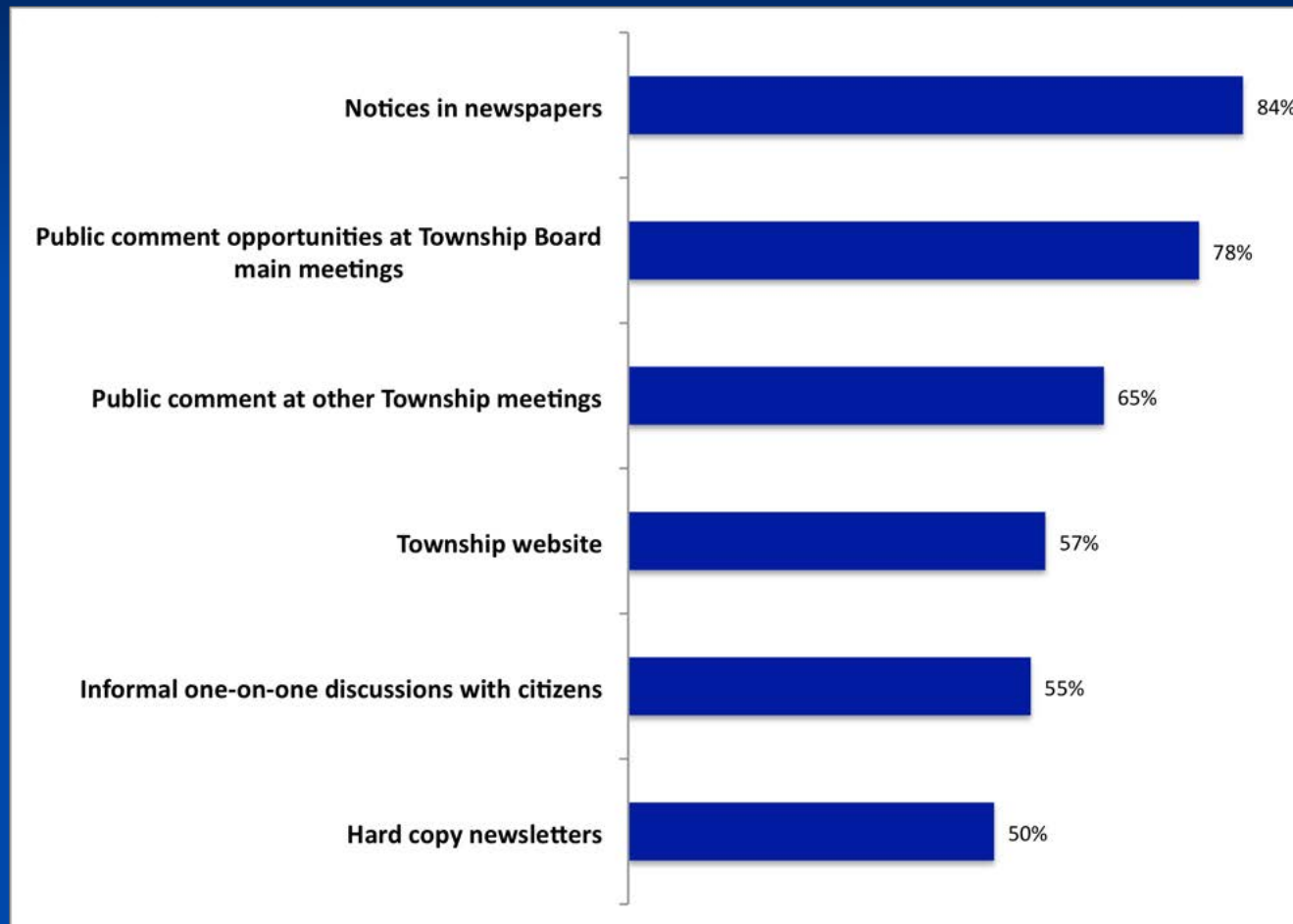
# Do townships specifically reach out to groups not typically engaged?

- townships by population size -



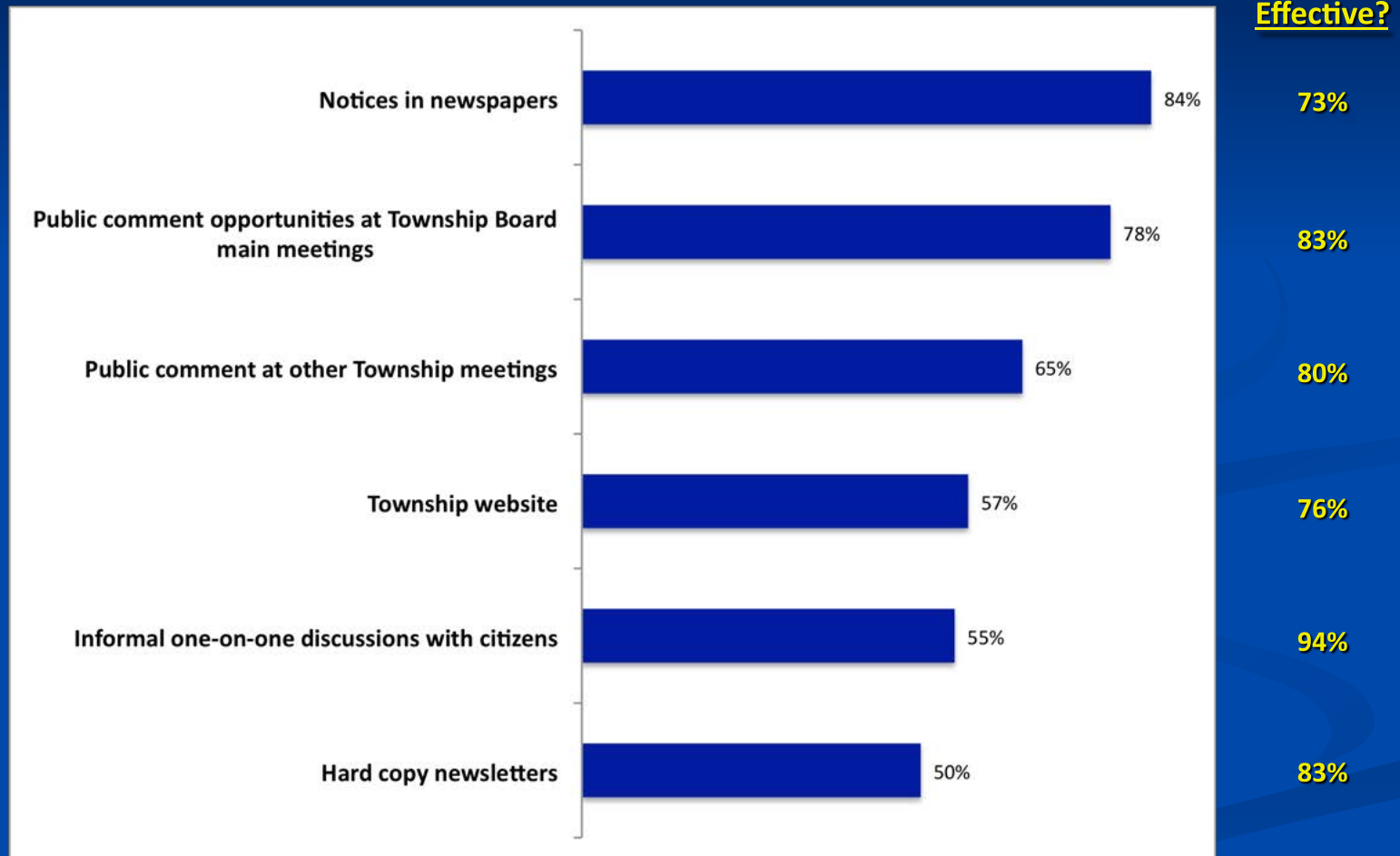
# What approaches do townships use to engage citizens?

- most frequent responses -



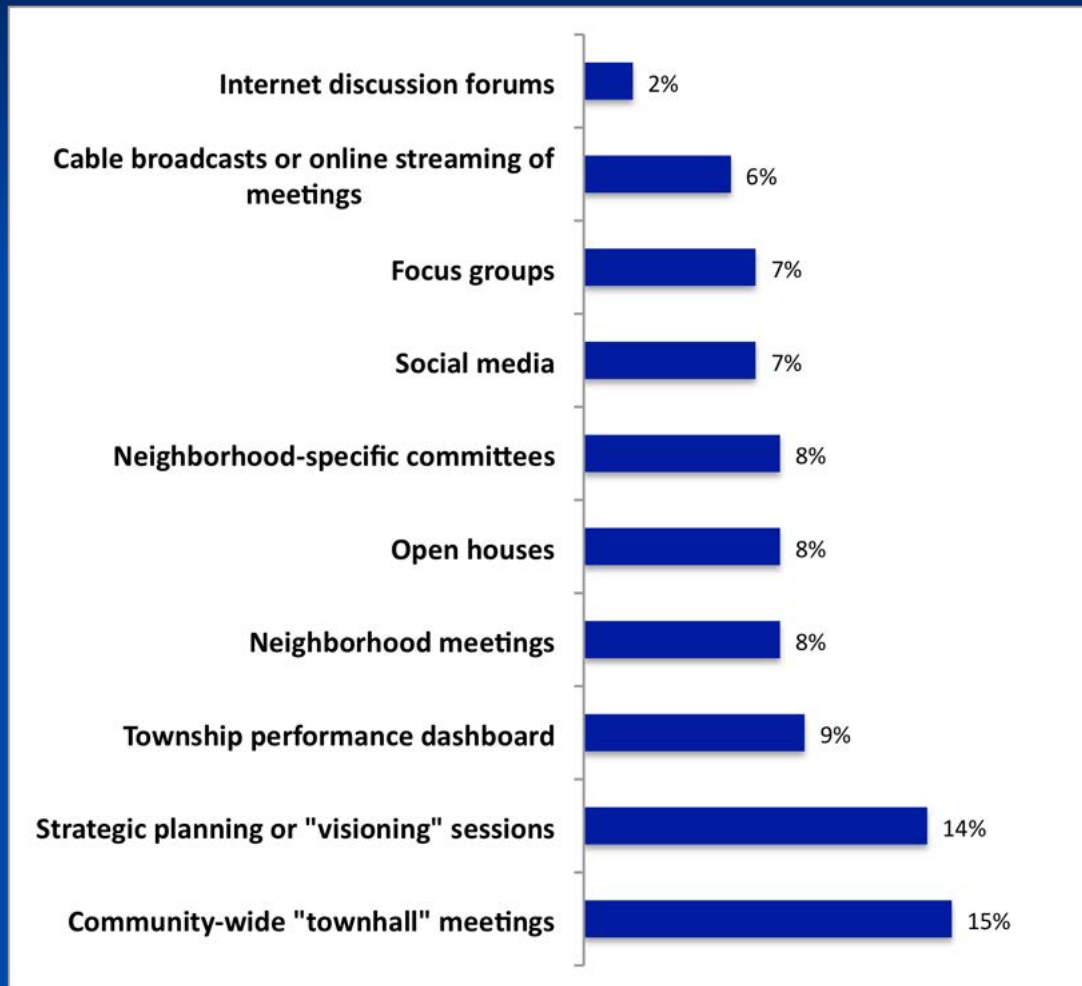
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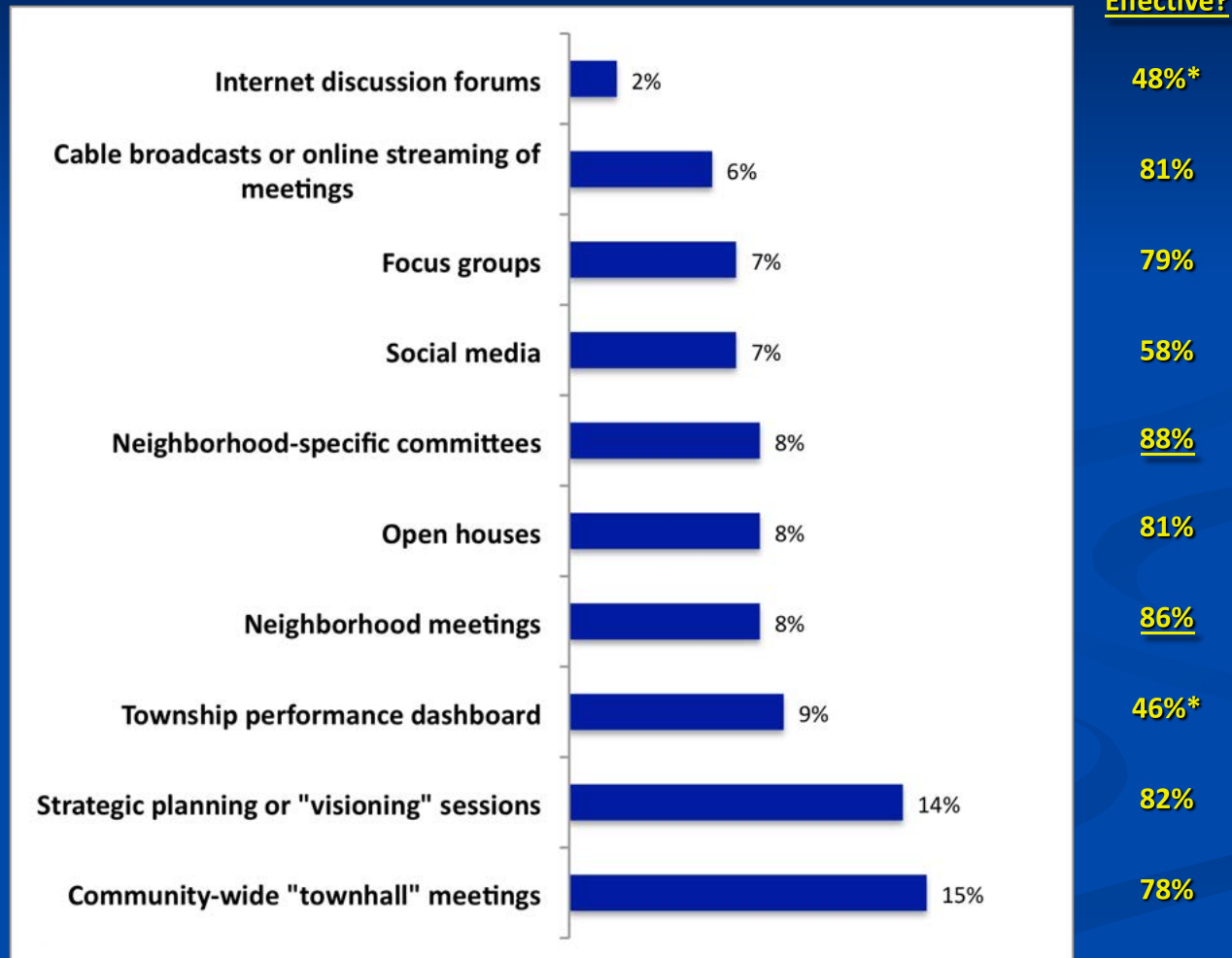
# What approaches do townships use to engage citizens?

- less frequent responses -

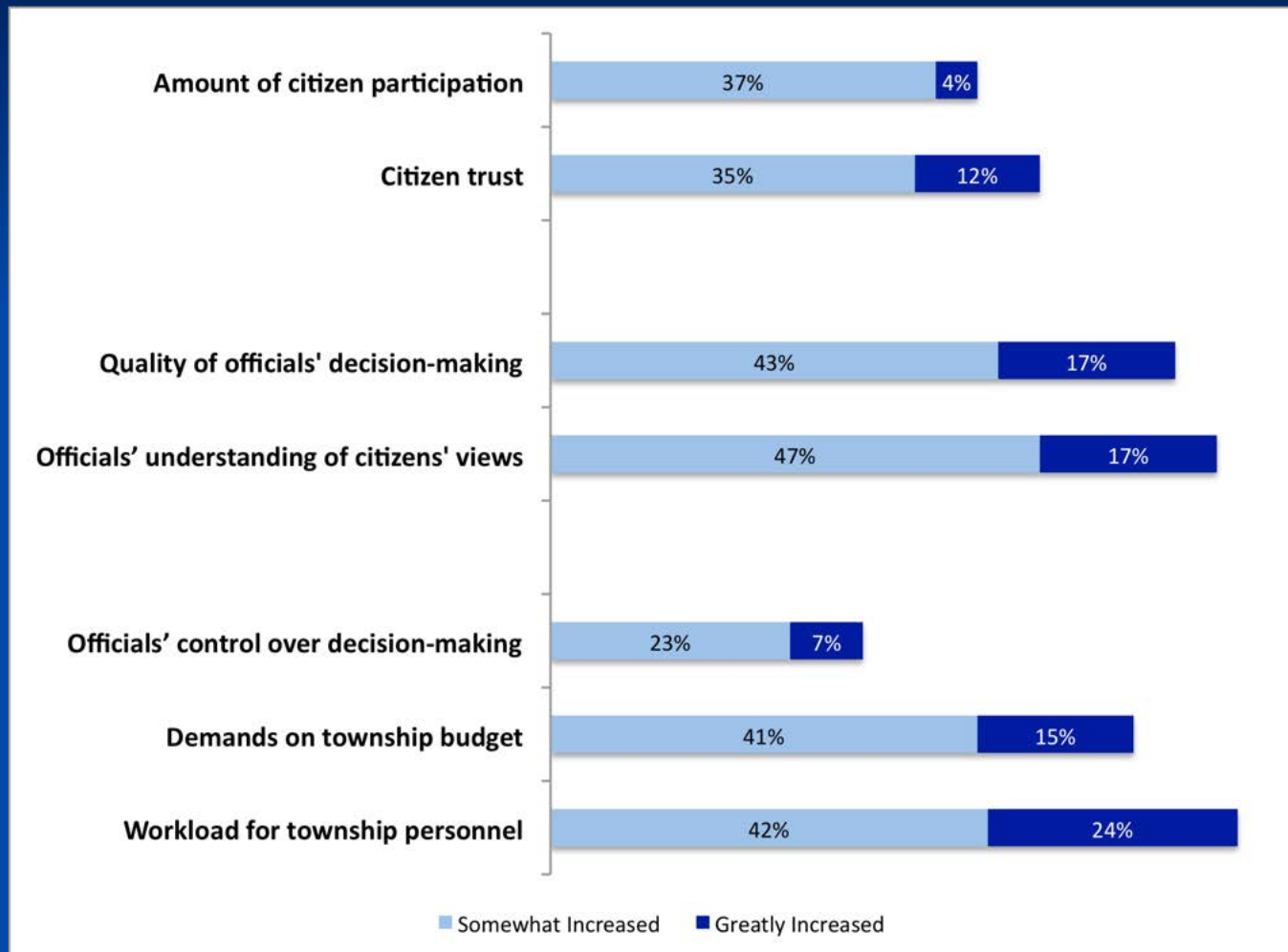


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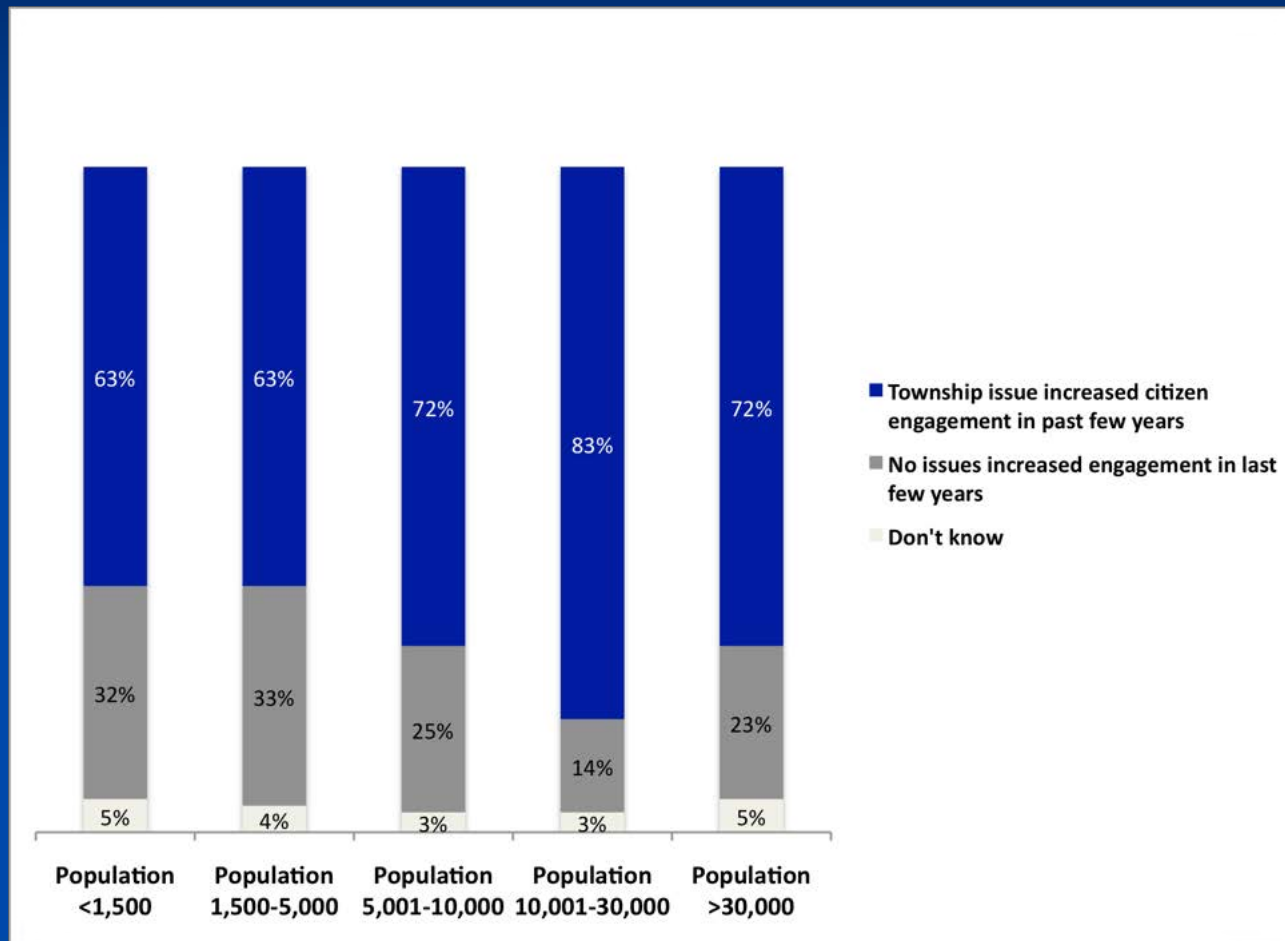
# What has changed due to engagement efforts?



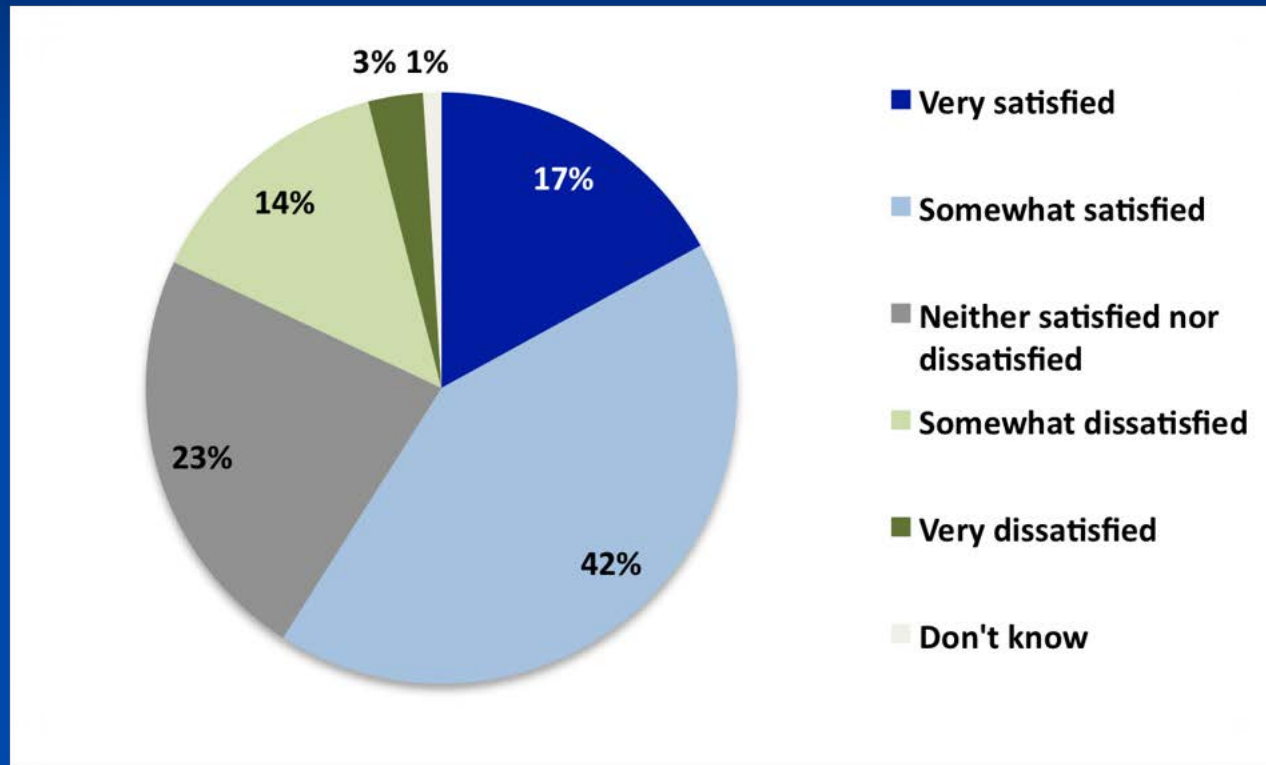
“The township has a new wind farm being built at this time. It has been the planning stages for at least two years... There were a small group of residents who did not want the farm to be built so they were very verbal about the project and tried to put a stop to it. It resulted in very contentious meetings both at the Board of Trustees’ meetings and the Planning Commission meetings. This group tried to get the project stopped legally but when that failed, they have stopped being so involved in the meetings.”

# Have townships recently faced specific issues that increased citizen engagement?

- townships by population size -

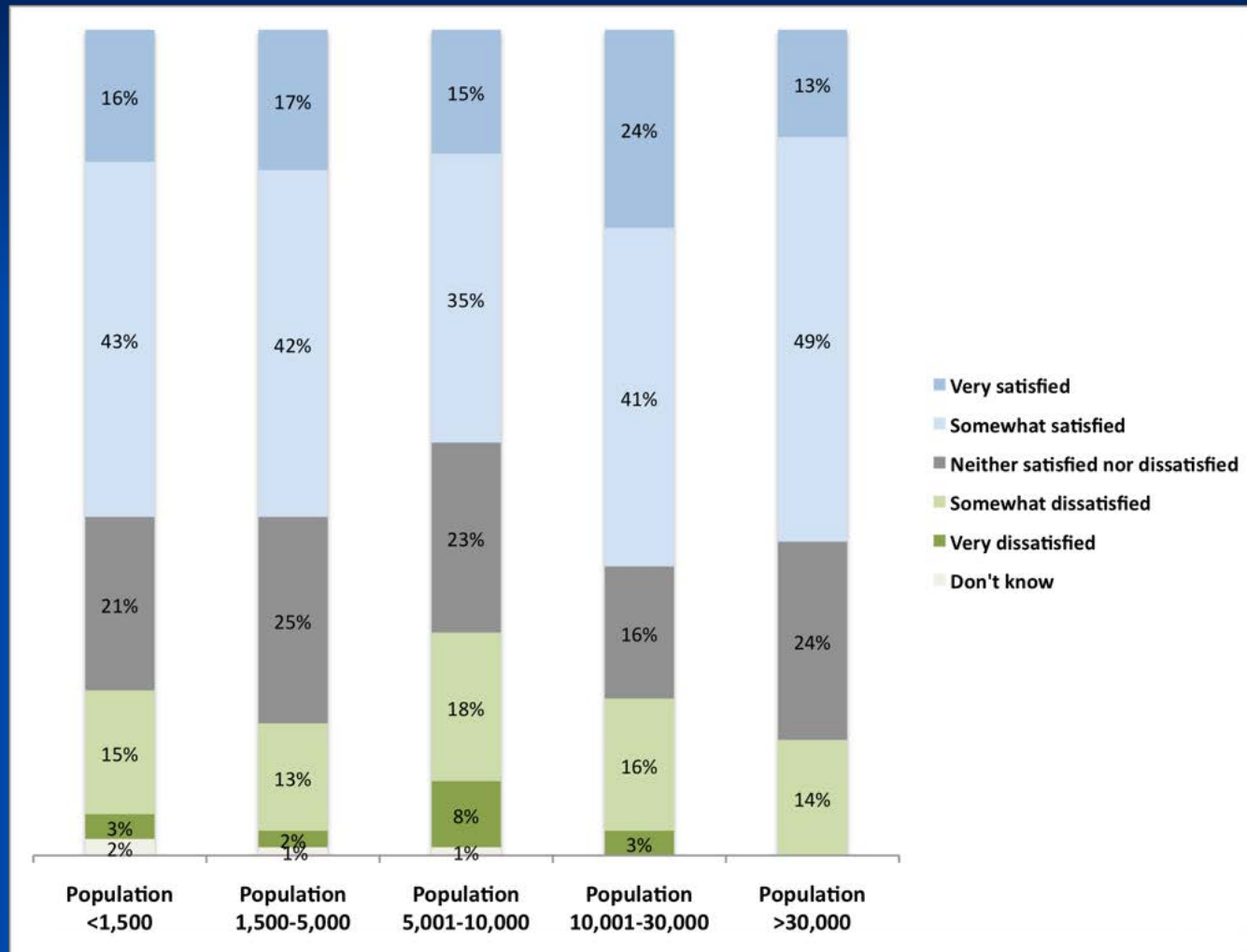


# Are officials satisfied with citizens' engagement?



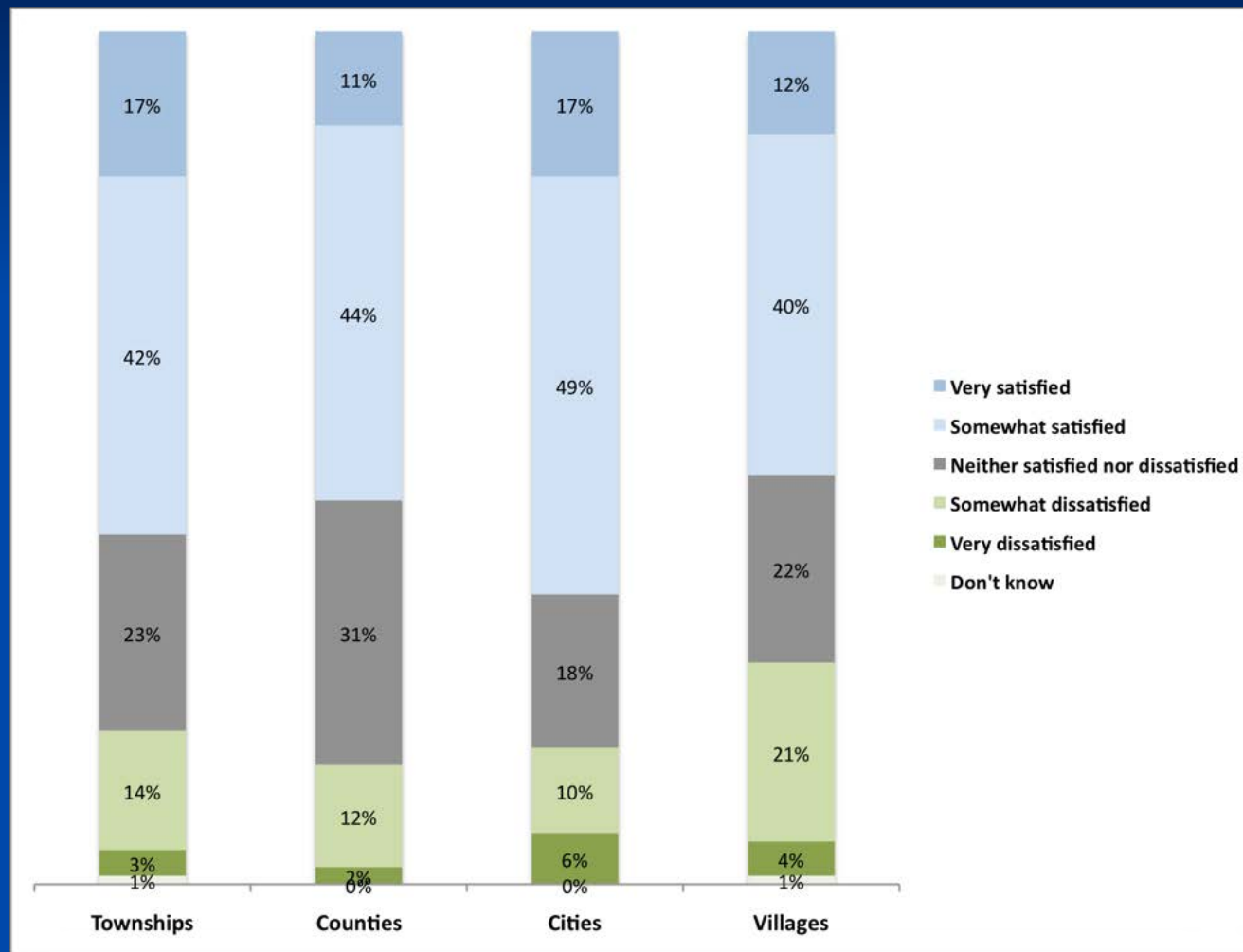
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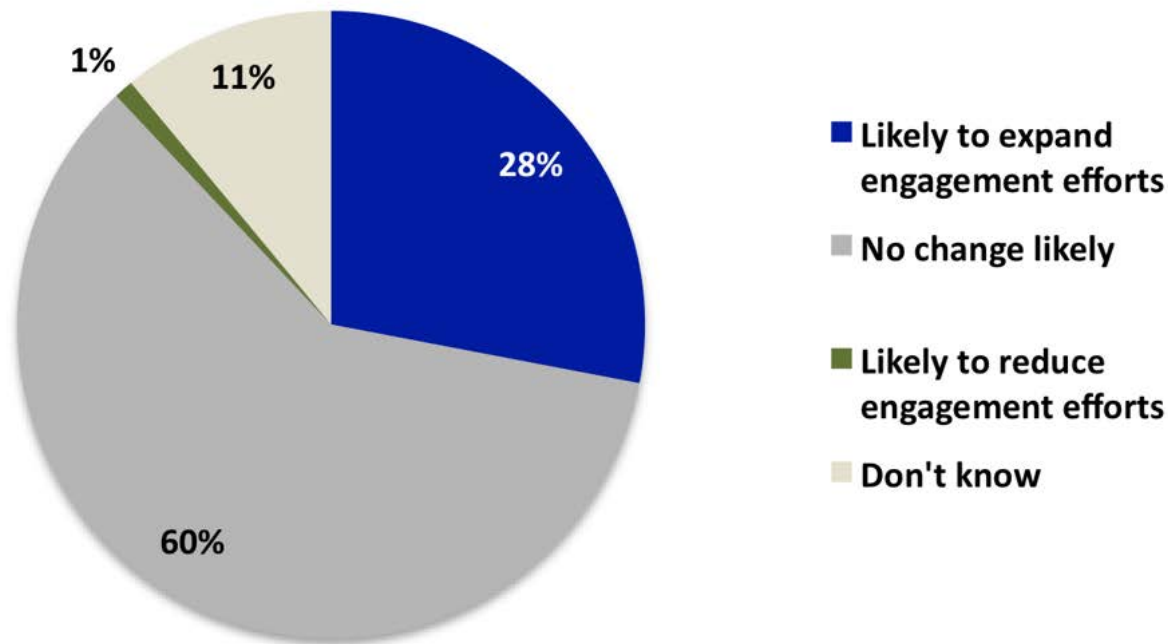


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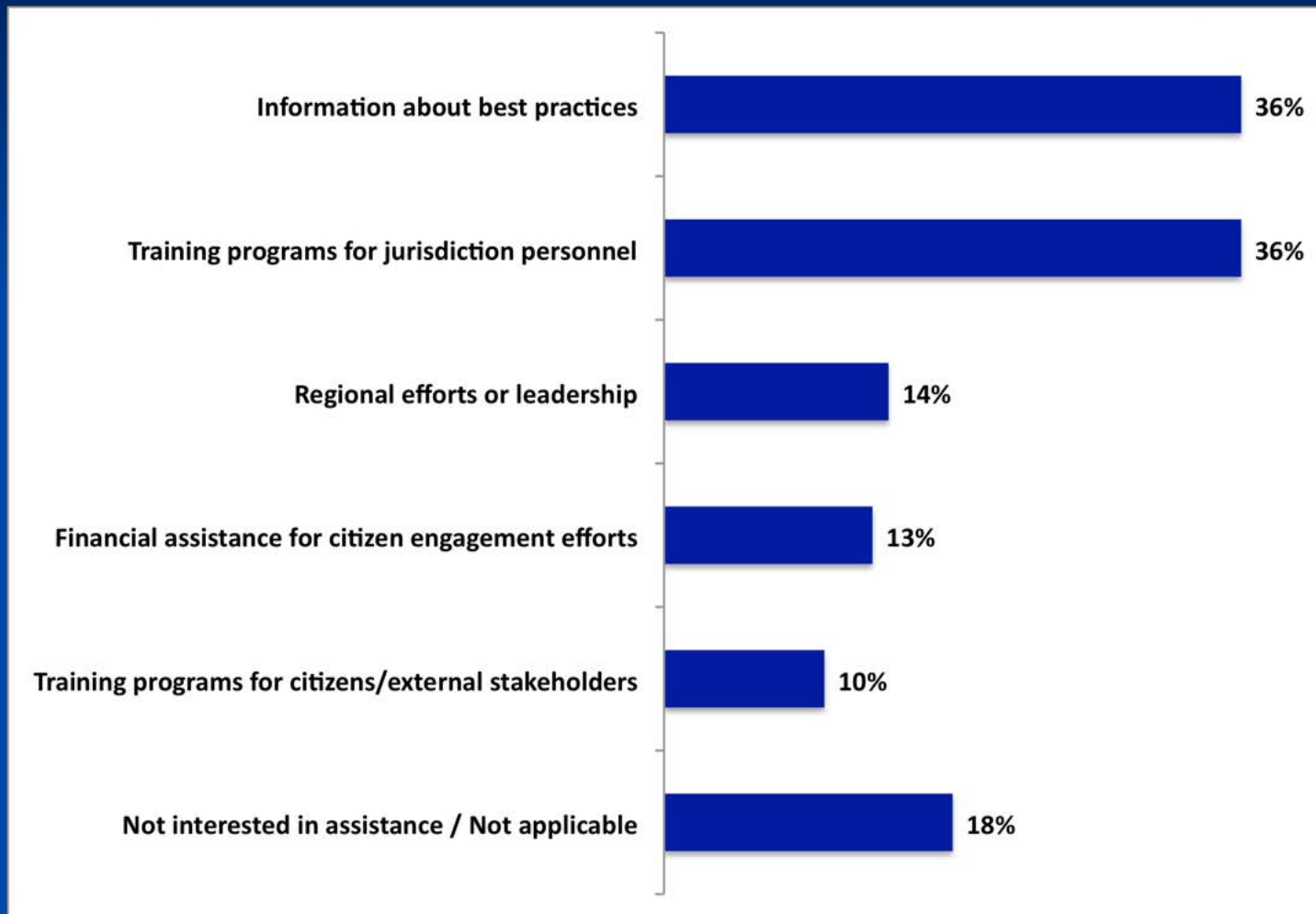
- townships compared to other jurisdiction types-



# What are townships' plans for the next 12 months?



# What external assistance would be valuable?

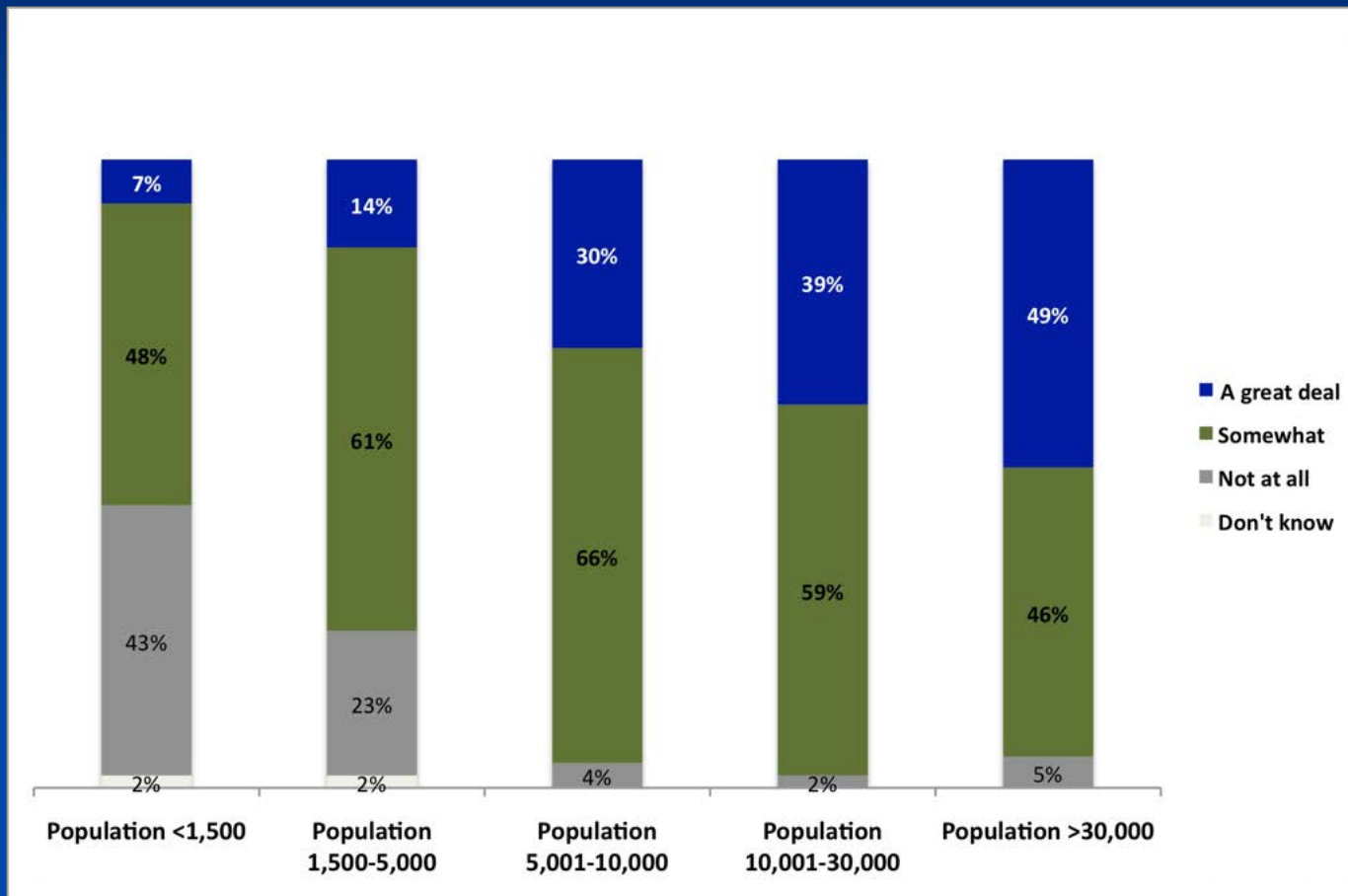


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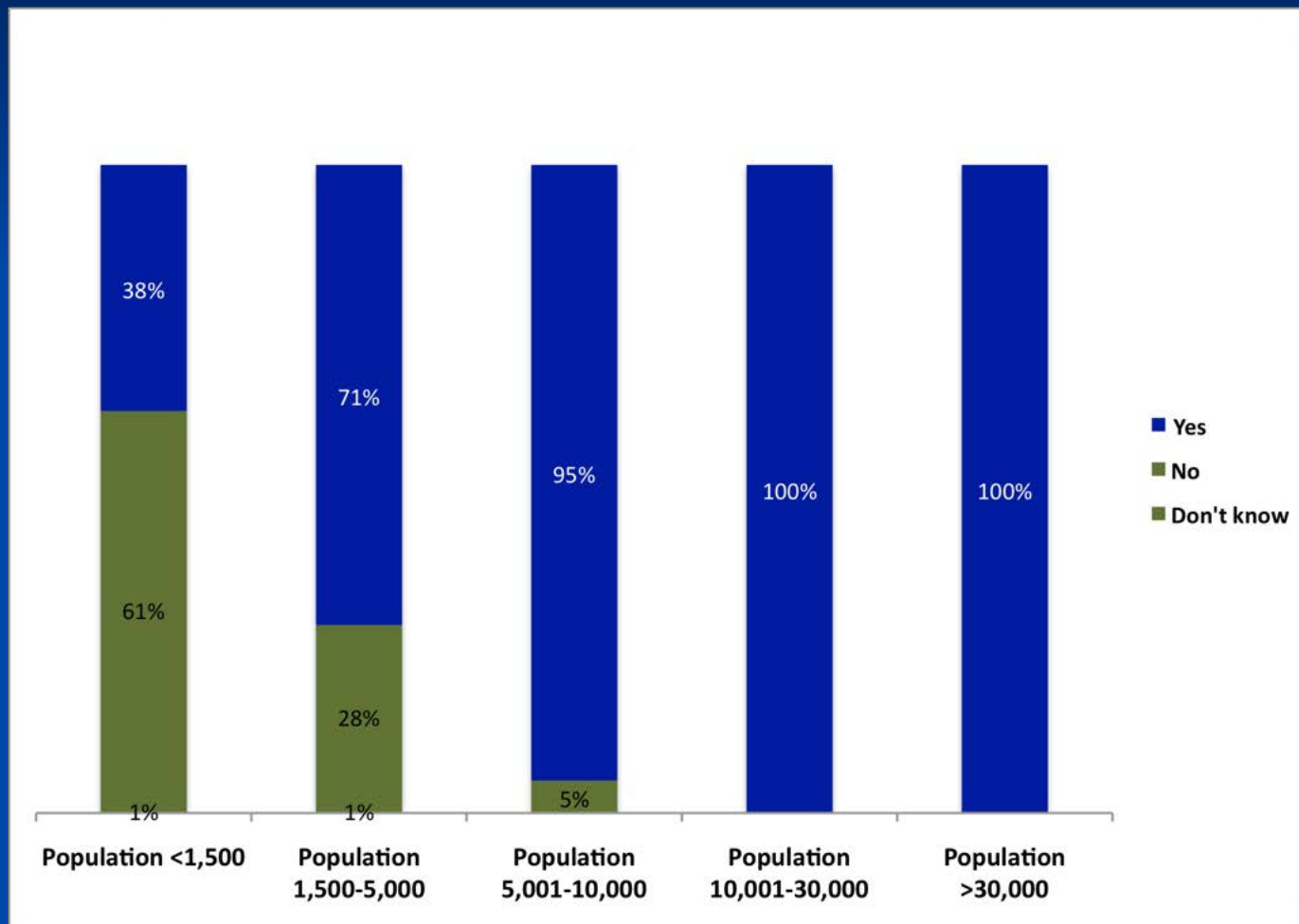
# Do townships try to engage citizens through technology?

- townships by population size -

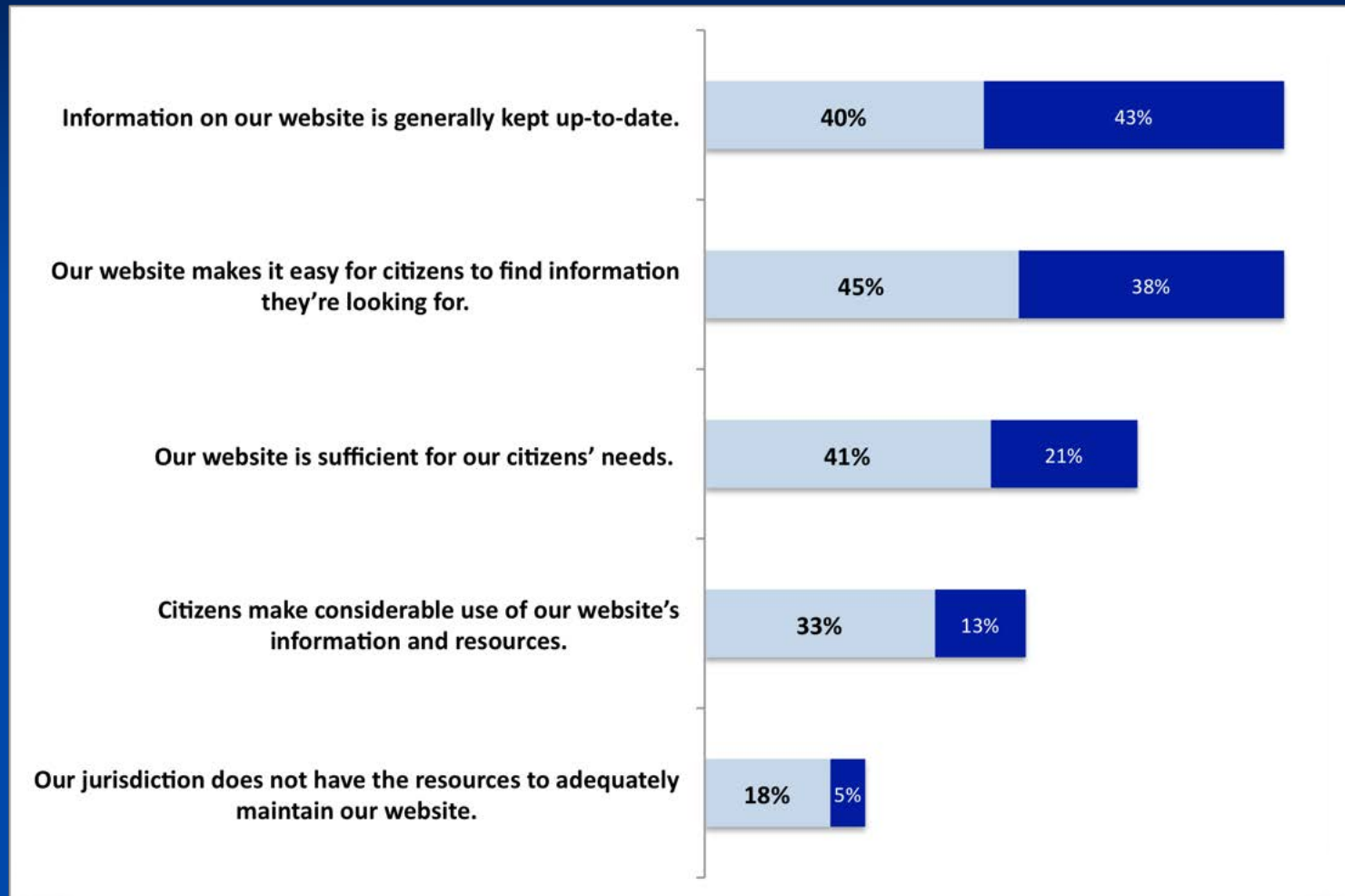


# Do most townships have websites?

- townships by population size -



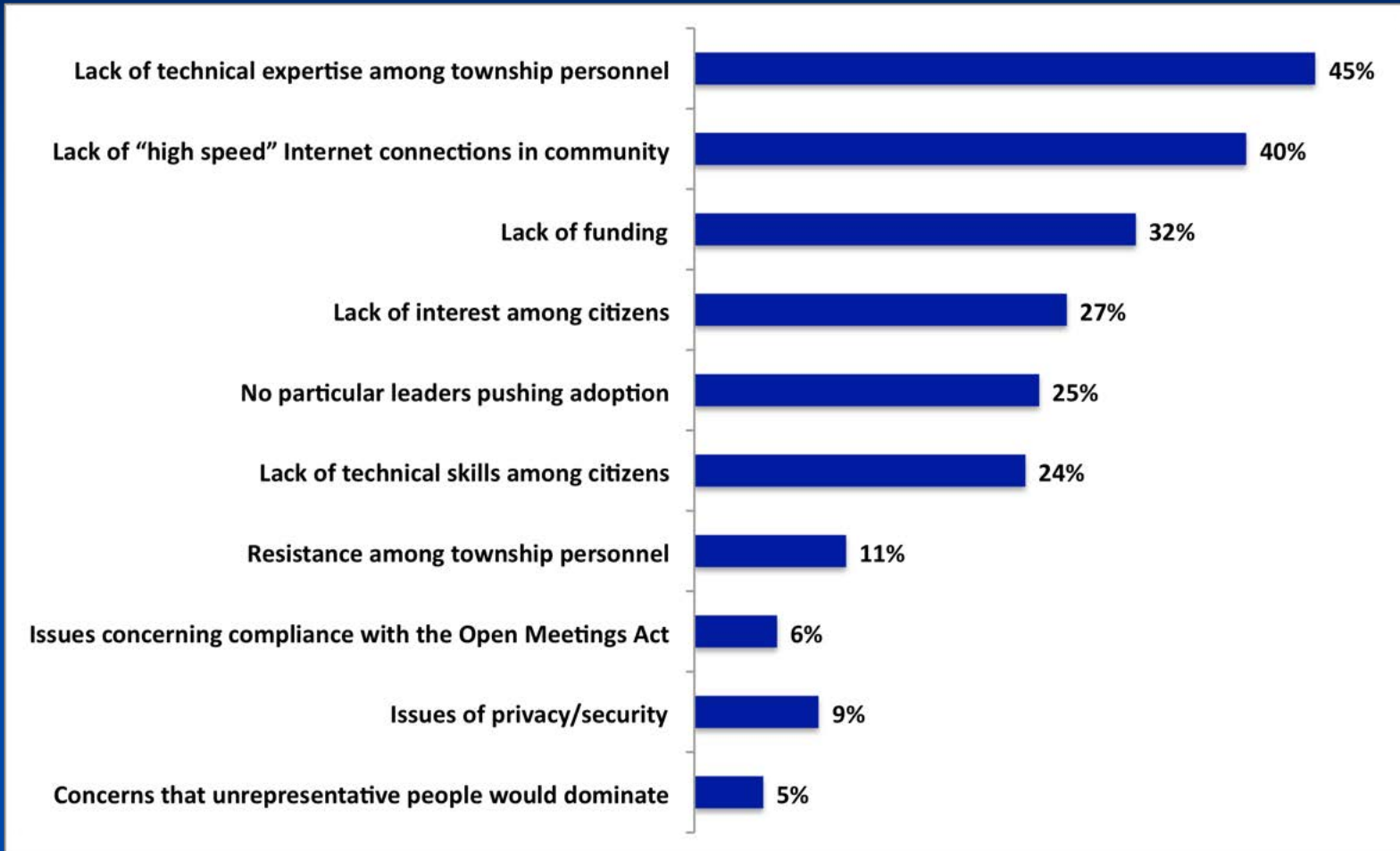
# How do officials rate their township websites?



# What do townships offer electronically?



# What do officials think discourages townships from using technology to engage citizens?



# Key Findings from MPPS Fall 2012

## Citizen Engagement data for Townships

- 10% of townships say their citizens are very engaged, while 31% say their citizens aren't very engaged.
- 52% of township officials believe they offer a great deal of engagement opportunities to citizens, 45% somewhat.
- Nearly half of all townships faced a particular issue this year that spurred greater citizen engagement.
- 70% of townships try to engage citizens through technology; 63% have jurisdiction websites, including all of those with over 10,000 residents.
- 59% of officials are satisfied with their townships' citizen engagement.

# Future MPPS survey content

- Types of questionnaire items? Other survey topics?
- Targeted analysis by subgroup or region?
- How should MPPS data and reports be distributed to reach the widest audience?

**Contact us at: [closup-mpps@umich.edu](mailto:closup-mpps@umich.edu)**

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