

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

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

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

To start, please confirm ...

Q1. What type of jurisdiction do you represent?

☐ county
☐ township
☐ city
☐ village

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

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 ...

... this fiscal year compared to the last fiscal year?
... the next fiscal year compared to this fiscal year?

Significantly Less Able
Somewhat Less Able
Neither Less Nor Better Able
Somewhat Better Able
Significantly Better Able
Don't Know

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							
Revenue from fees for services, licenses, transfers, etc.							
Amount of debt							
Ability of your jurisdiction to repay its debt							
Amount of federal aid to your jurisdiction							
Amount of state aid to your jurisdiction							
Tax delinquencies							
Population of your jurisdiction							
Home foreclosures in your jurisdiction							
Public safety needs							
Infrastructure needs							
Human service needs							
Number of employees that work for your jurisdiction							
Pay rates for your jurisdiction's employee wages & salaries							
Cost of your government's employee pensions							
Cost of your government's current employee health benefits							
Cost of your government's retired employee health benefits							

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							
Charges for fees, licenses, etc.							
Reliance on general fund balance							
Reliance on "rainy day" funds							
Amount of services provided							
Actual public safety spending							
Actual infrastructure spending							
Actual human services spending							
Funding for economic development programs							
Amount of debt							
Sale of public assets (i.e., parks, buildings, etc.)							
Privatizing or contracting out of services							
Number and/or scope of interlocal agreements or other cost-sharing plans with other governments							
Your jurisdiction's workforce hiring							
Your jurisdiction's workforce layoffs							
Your jurisdiction not filling vacant positions							
Employee pay rates							
Employees' share of premiums, deductibles and/or co-pays on health insurance							
Employees' share of contributions to retirement funds							
Retirees' share of premiums, deductibles and/or co-pays on health insurance							

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

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 ...						
The majority of your jurisdiction's council/board are ...						
The majority of business leaders in your community are ...						
You personally are ...						

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				
Fire services				
Parks / recreation / libraries				
Roads				
Public transportation / transit				
Economic development				
Utilities (water / sewer / lighting, etc.)				
General operations				

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?						
... improve or add more services, if they are necessary or desired?						

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

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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.”

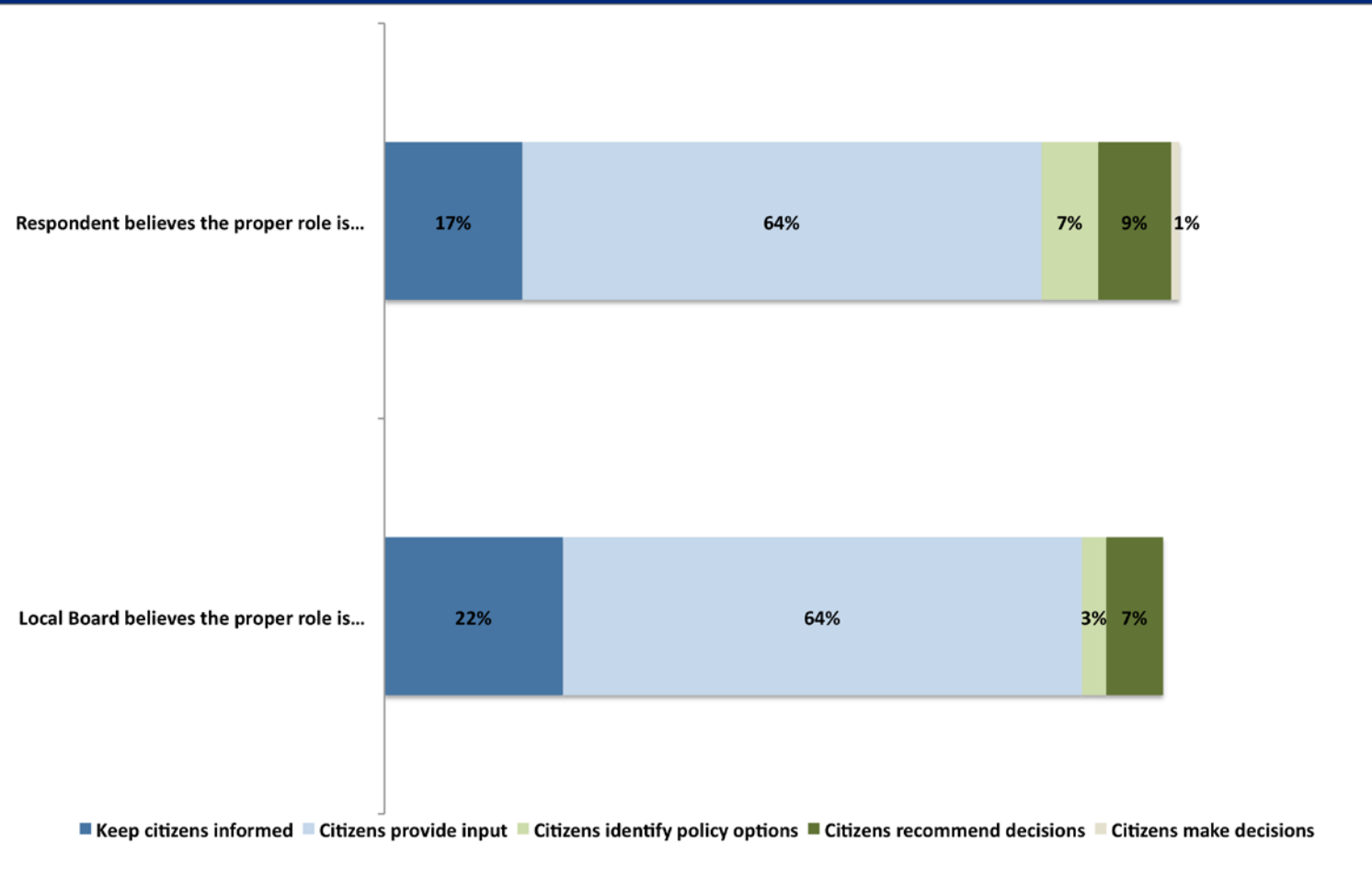
-Township clerk

What is citizen engagement?

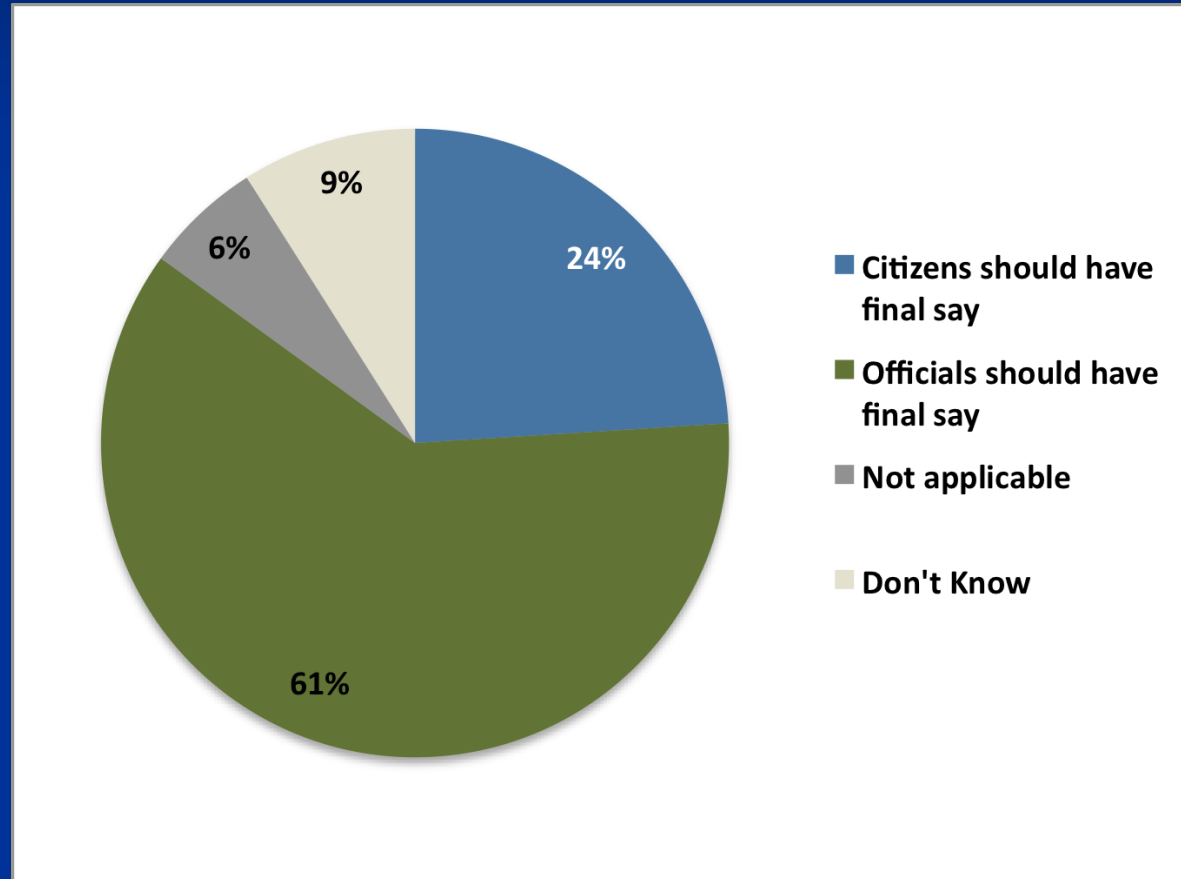
The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum:



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

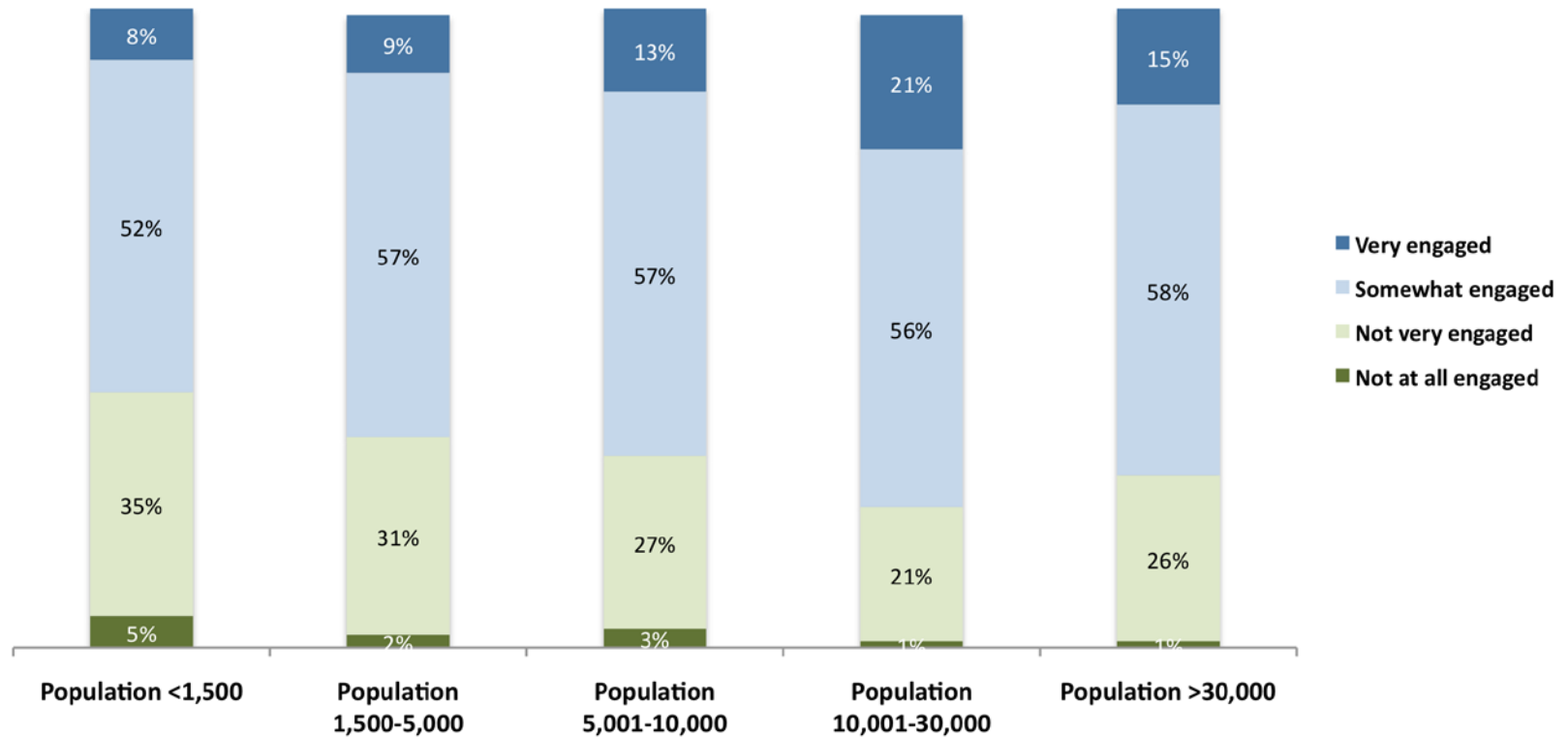


What is the proper role for citizen engagement in local policymaking?



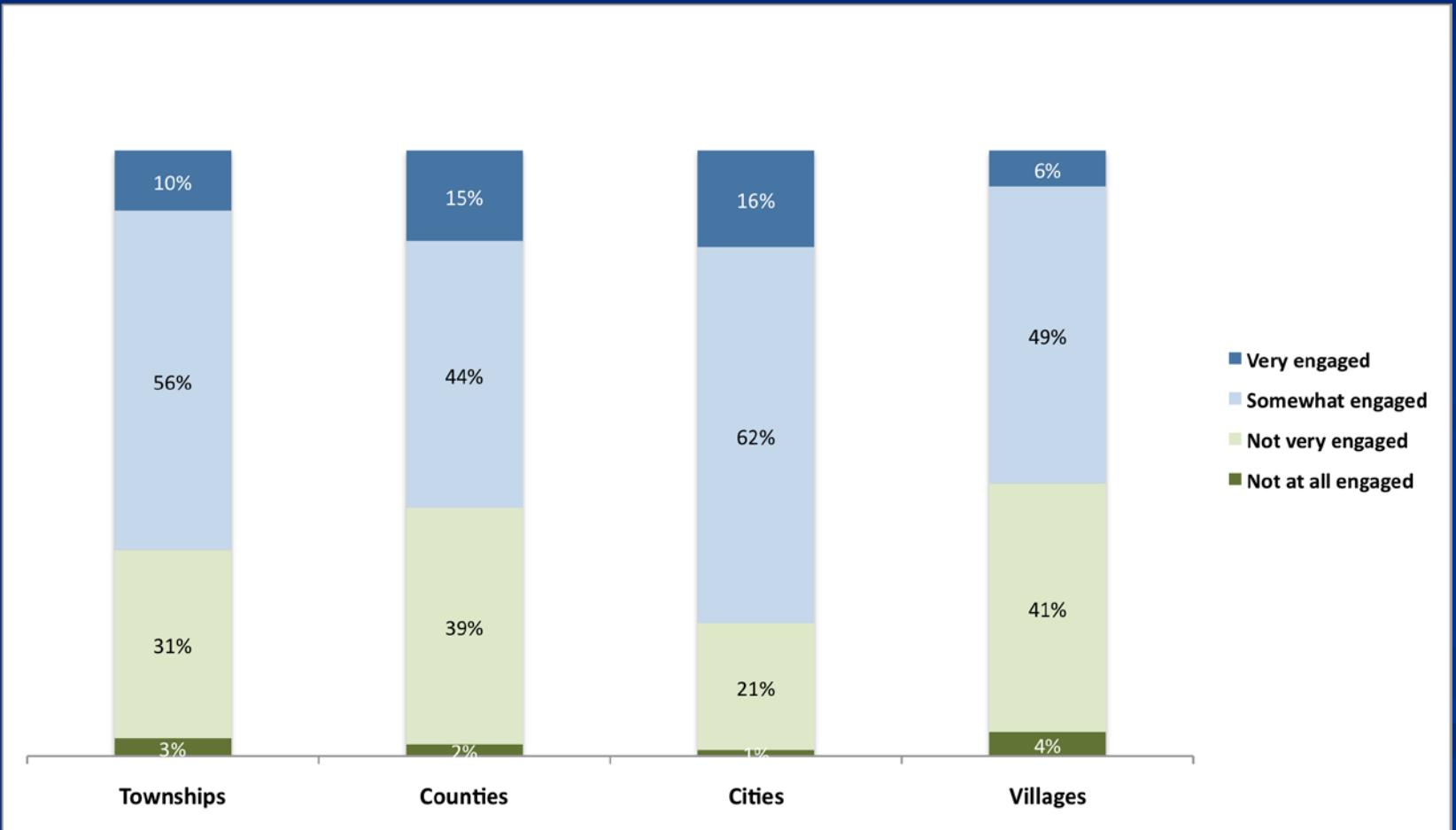
How engaged do officials think their citizens are?

- by population size -



How engaged do officials think their citizens are?

- by jurisdiction type-



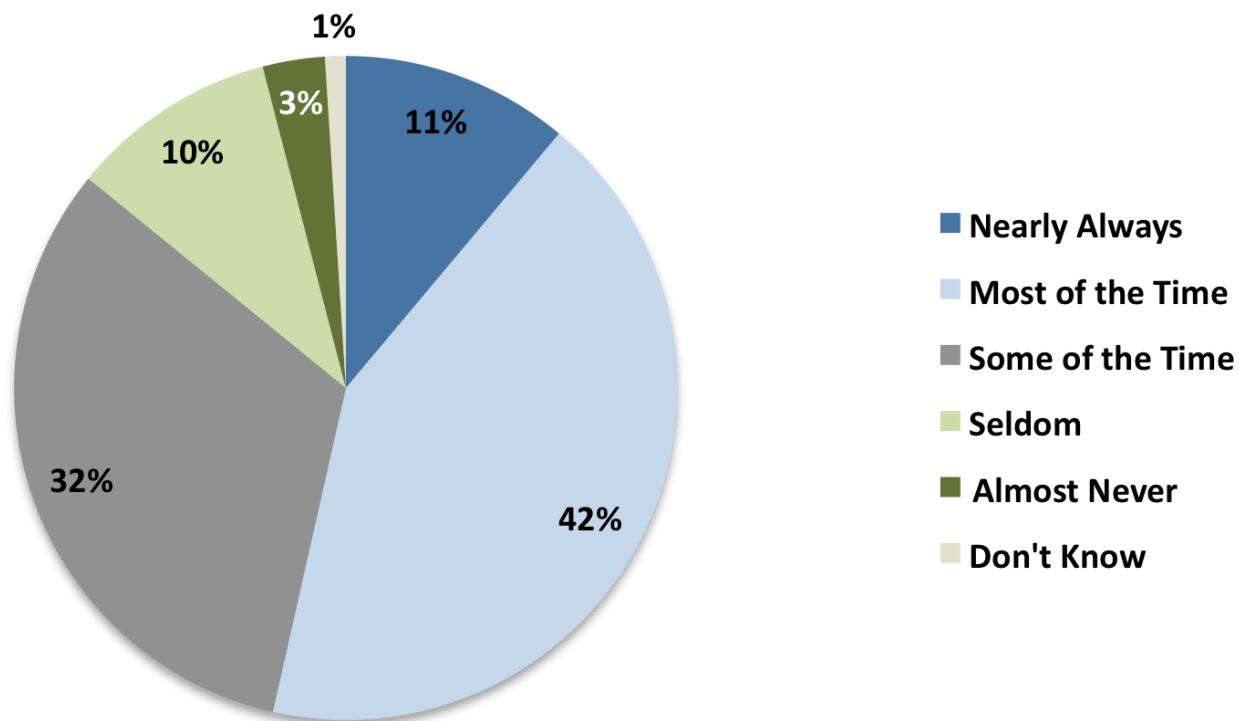
“The biggest problem is the disconnect between policymakers and the people.”

- Mark Funkhouser

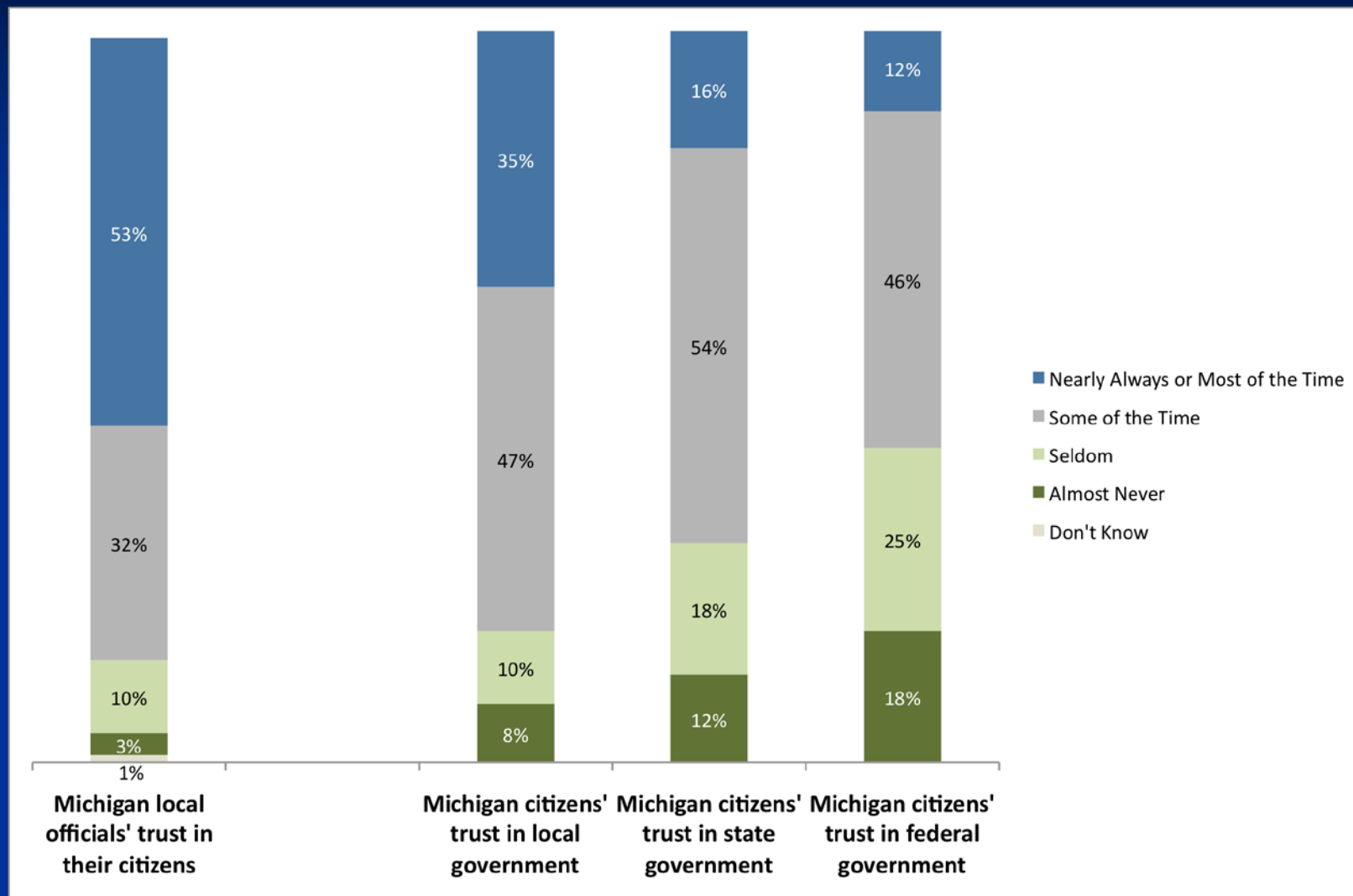
“When talking with people either one on one or by phone I always invite them to our monthly meetings. Ask if they would be interested in being put on a list of people interested in serving on committees. Only the same two or three people ever attend our township meetings unless it is something directly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

-Village manager

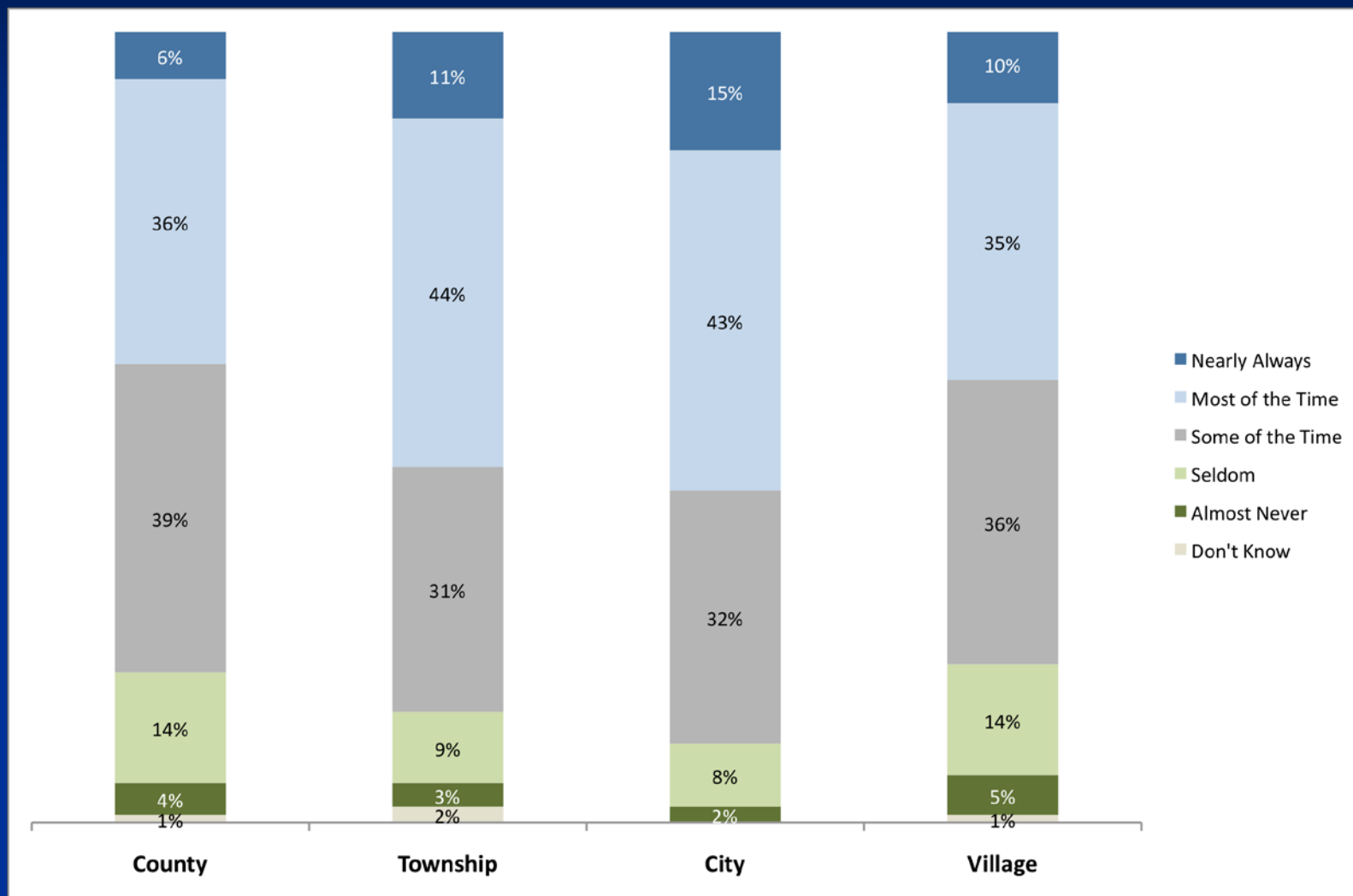
Do local officials trust their citizens?



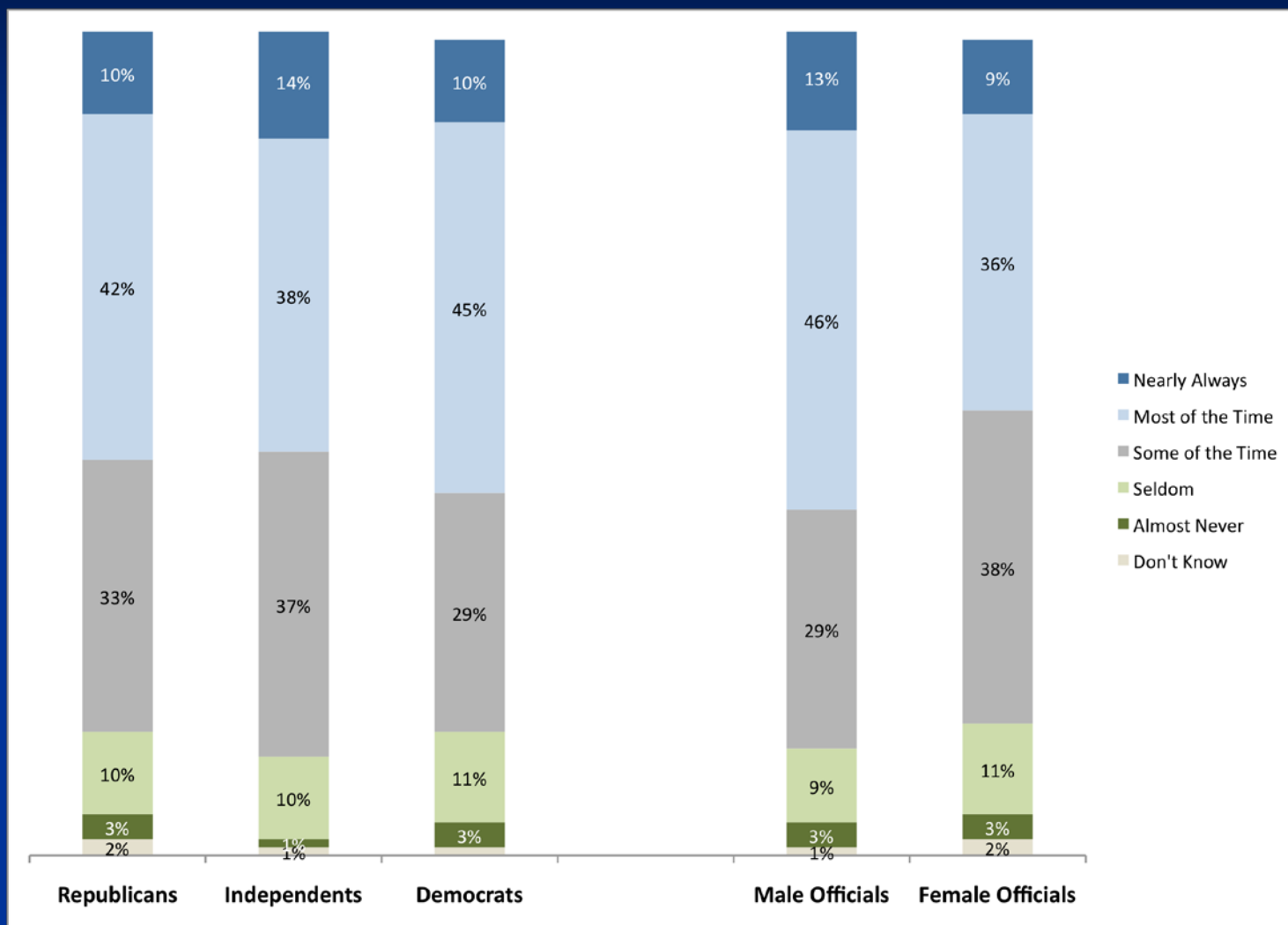
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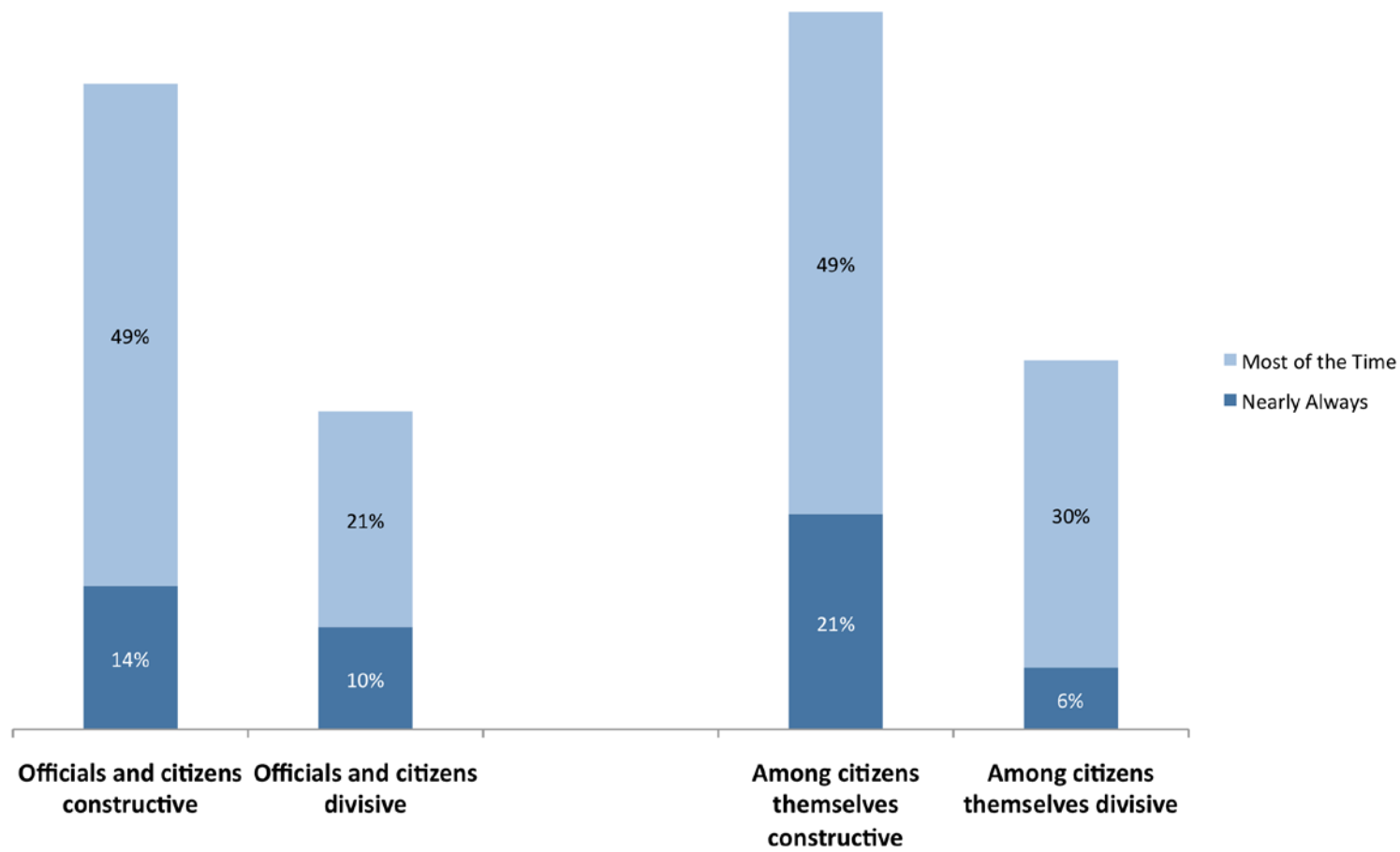
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Do local officials trust their citizens?



Trust and the tone of discourse



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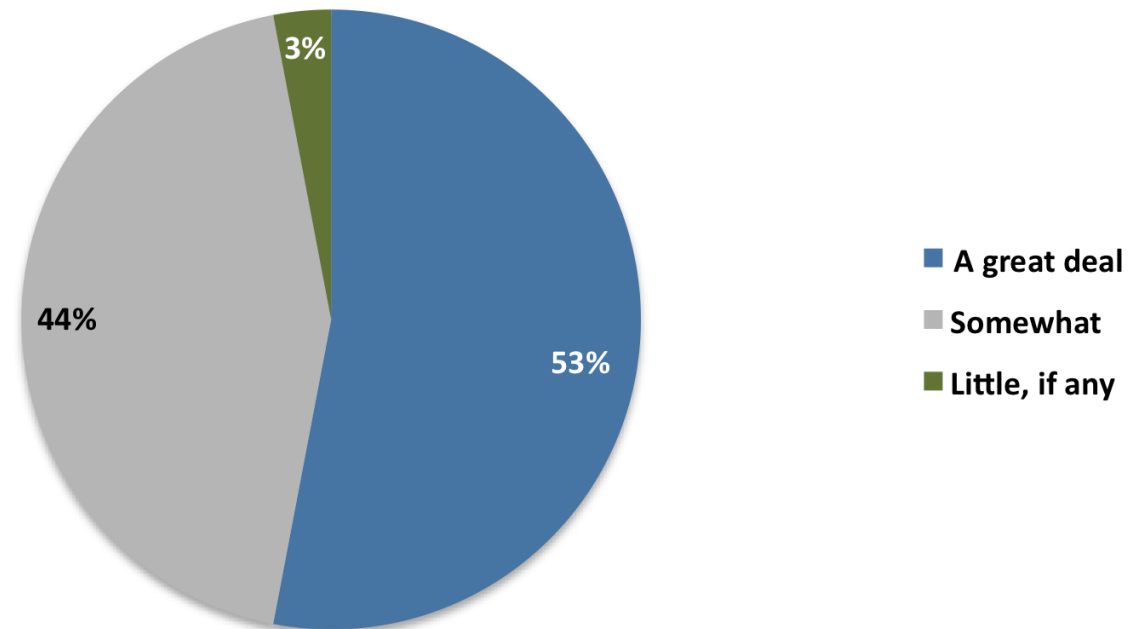
“Town Hall meetings are worthless. Who shows up? Who speaks up? It’s not representative.”

- Mark Funkhouser

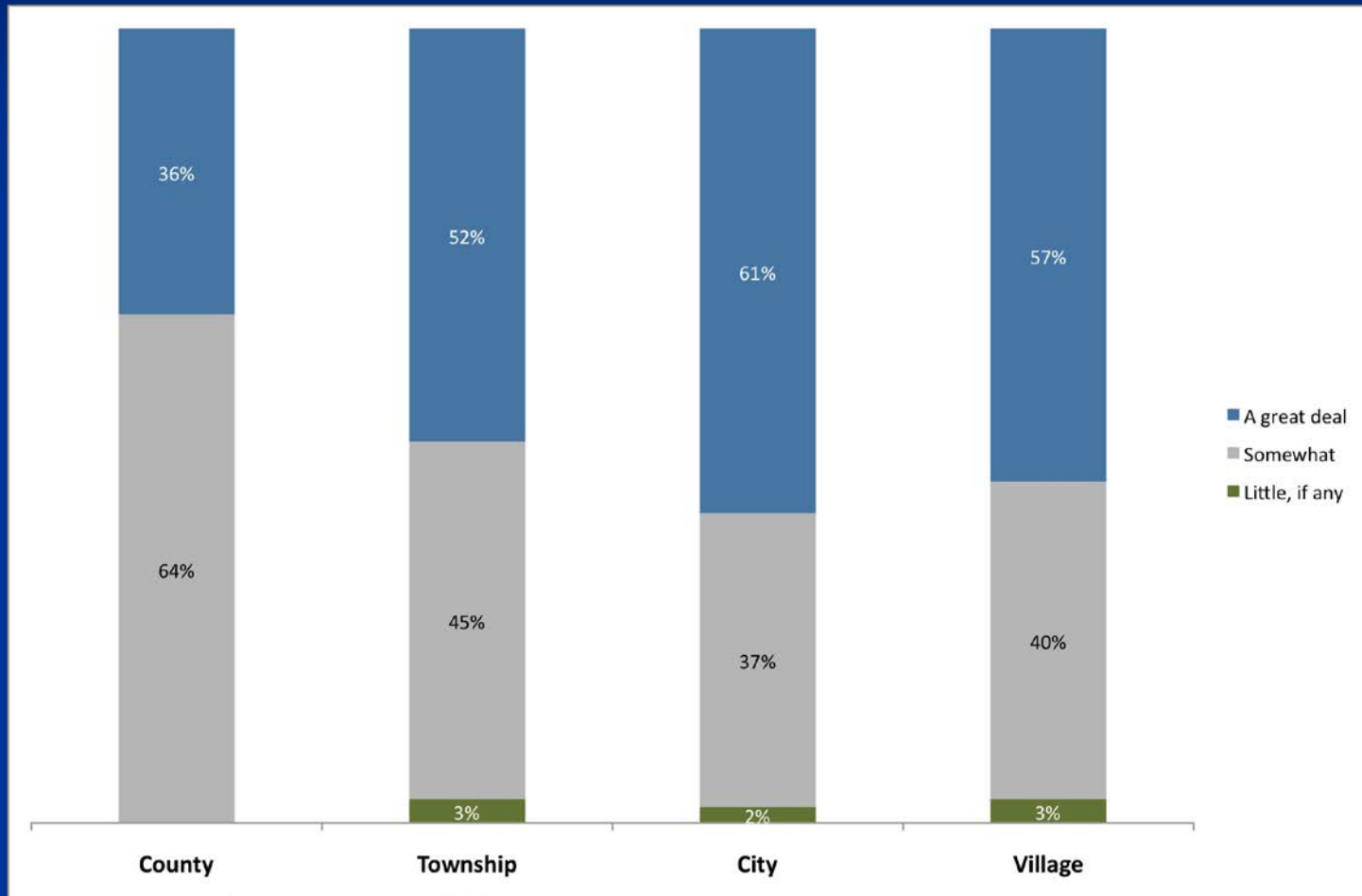
“All commissioners attend city, village, township and special meetings. we have input and also listen to the citizens and this is very effective. I attend about 325 meetings a year.”

-County Board Chair

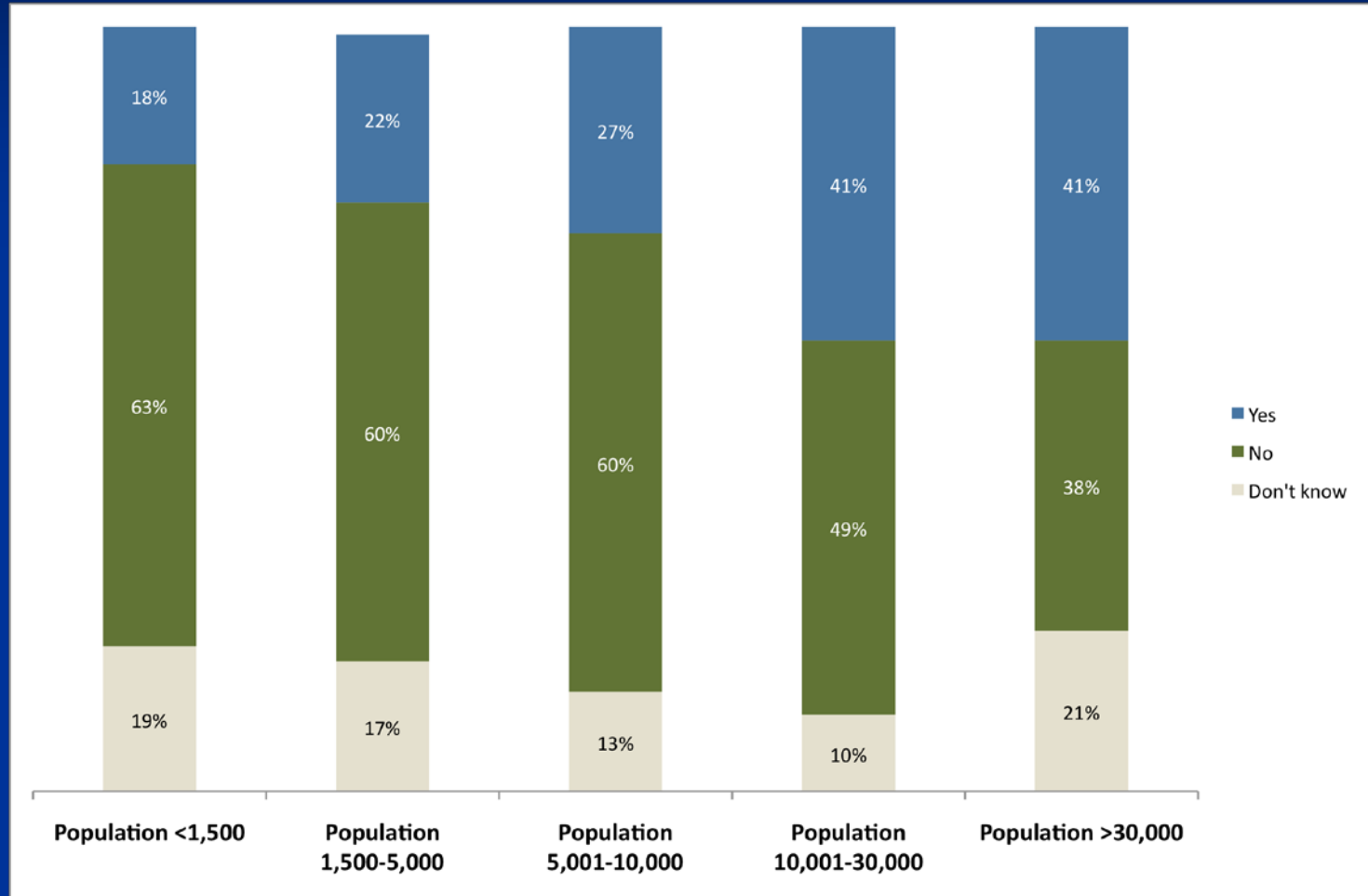
Do local officials say they offer opportunities for engagement?



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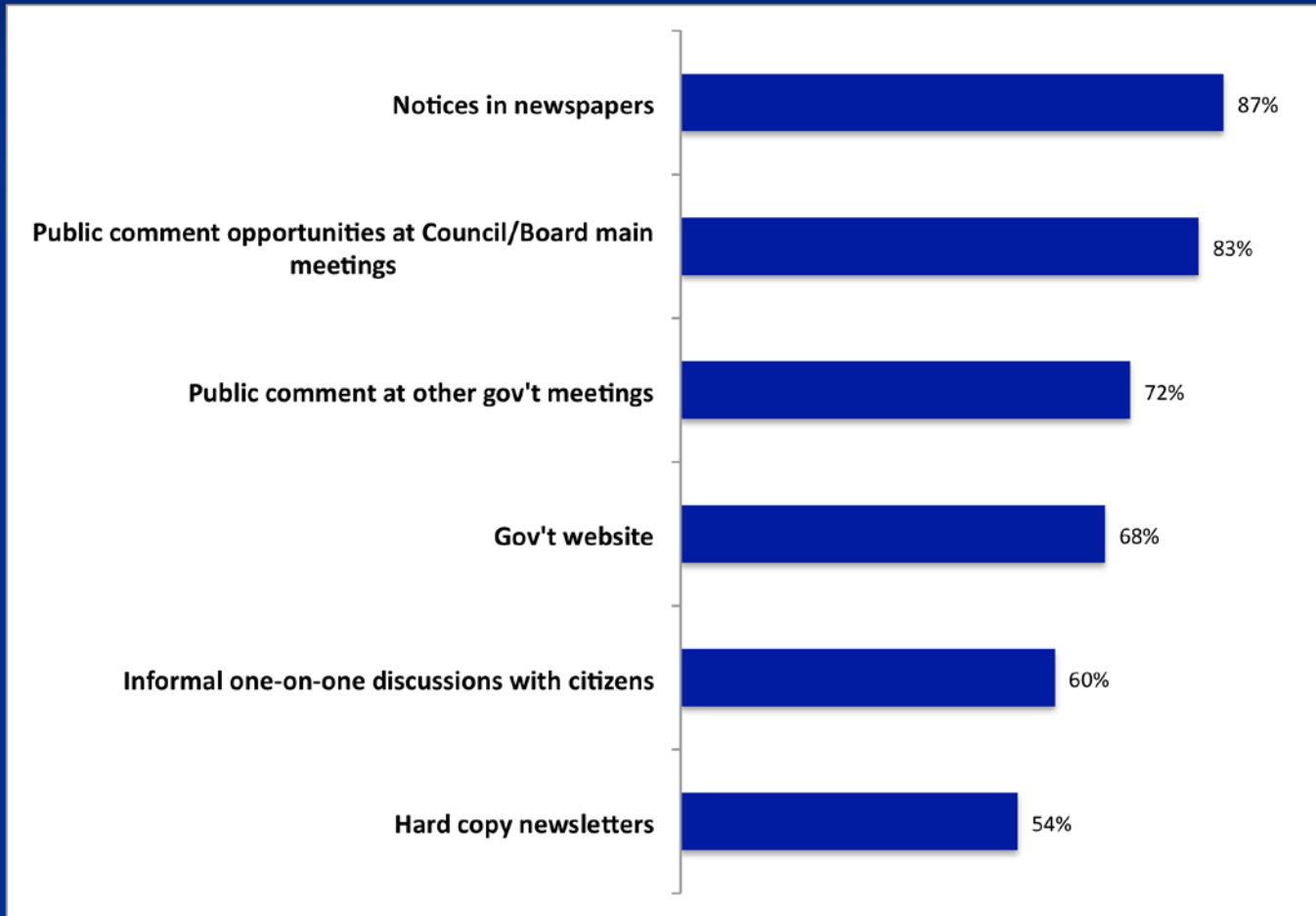


Do local governments specifically reach out to groups not typically engaged?



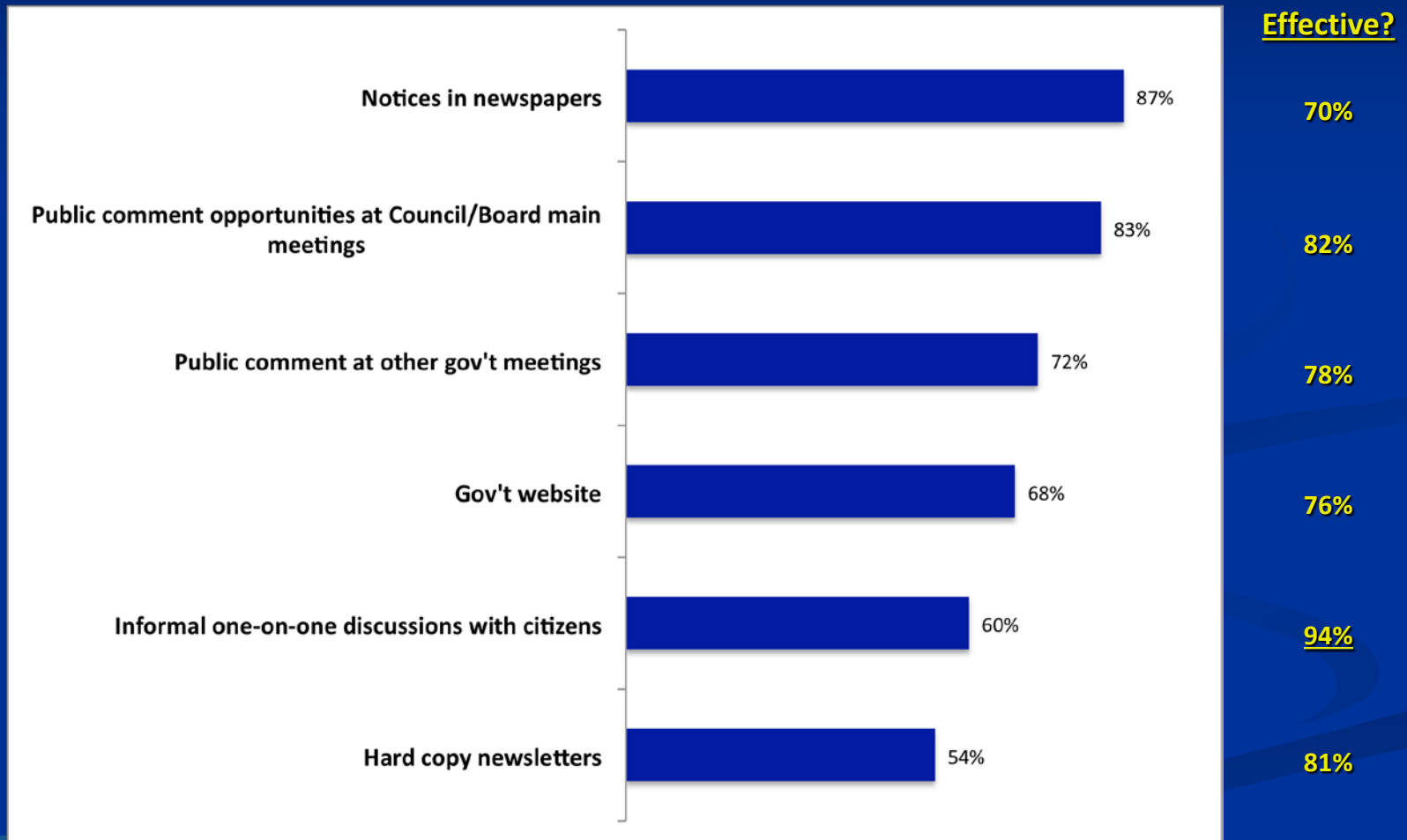
What approaches do Michigan governments use to engage citizens?

- most frequent responses -



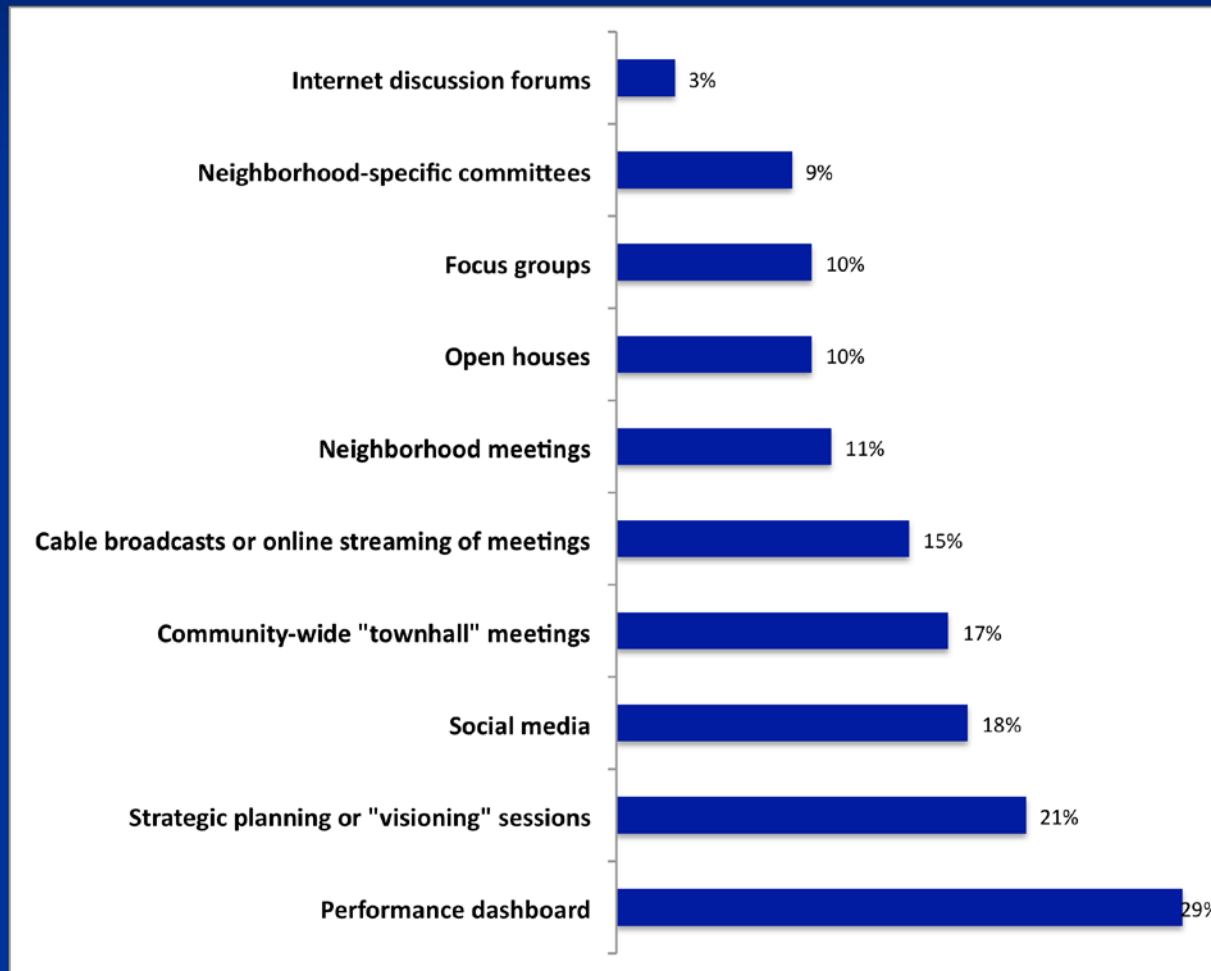
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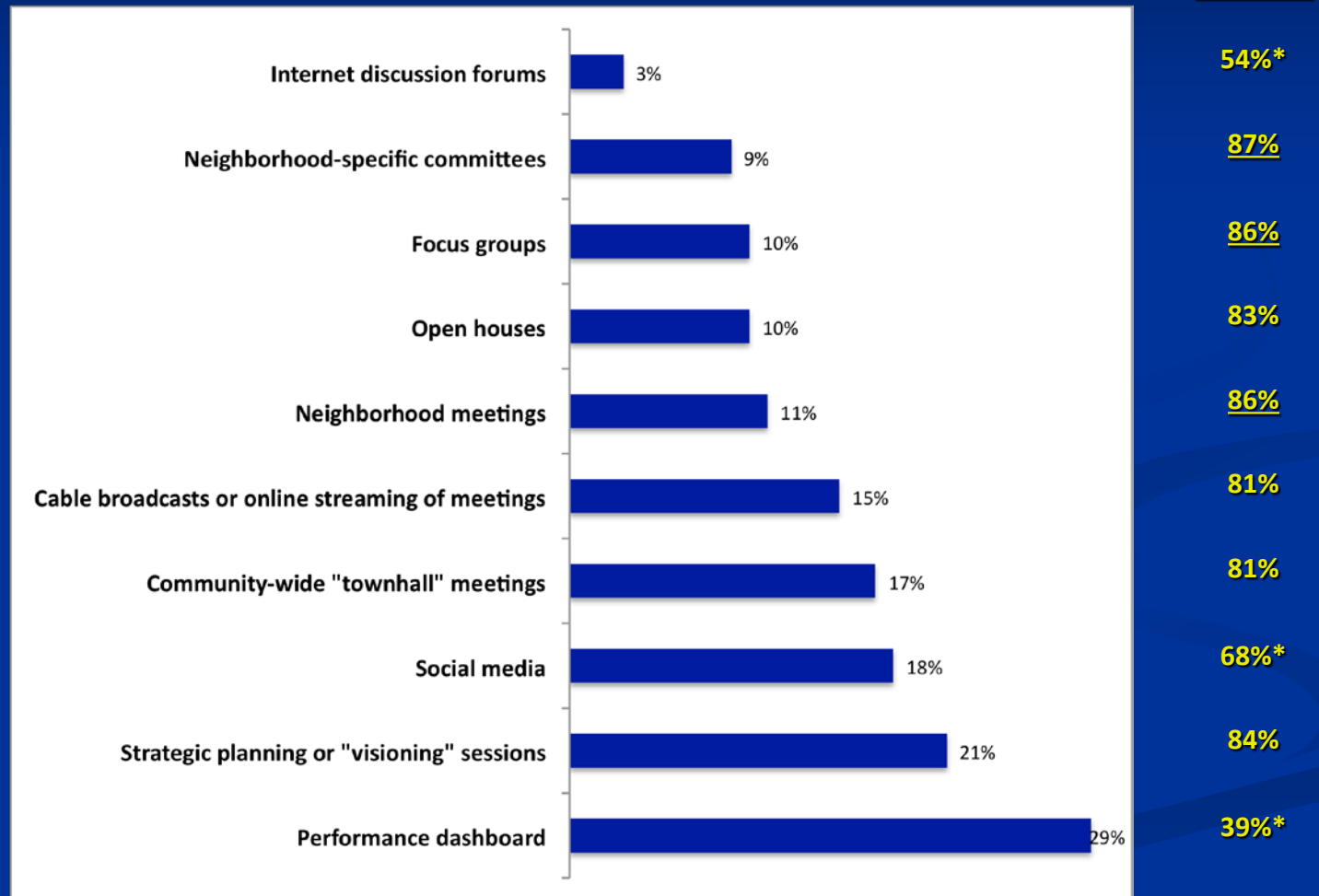
What approaches do Michigan governments use to engage citizens?

- less frequent responses -

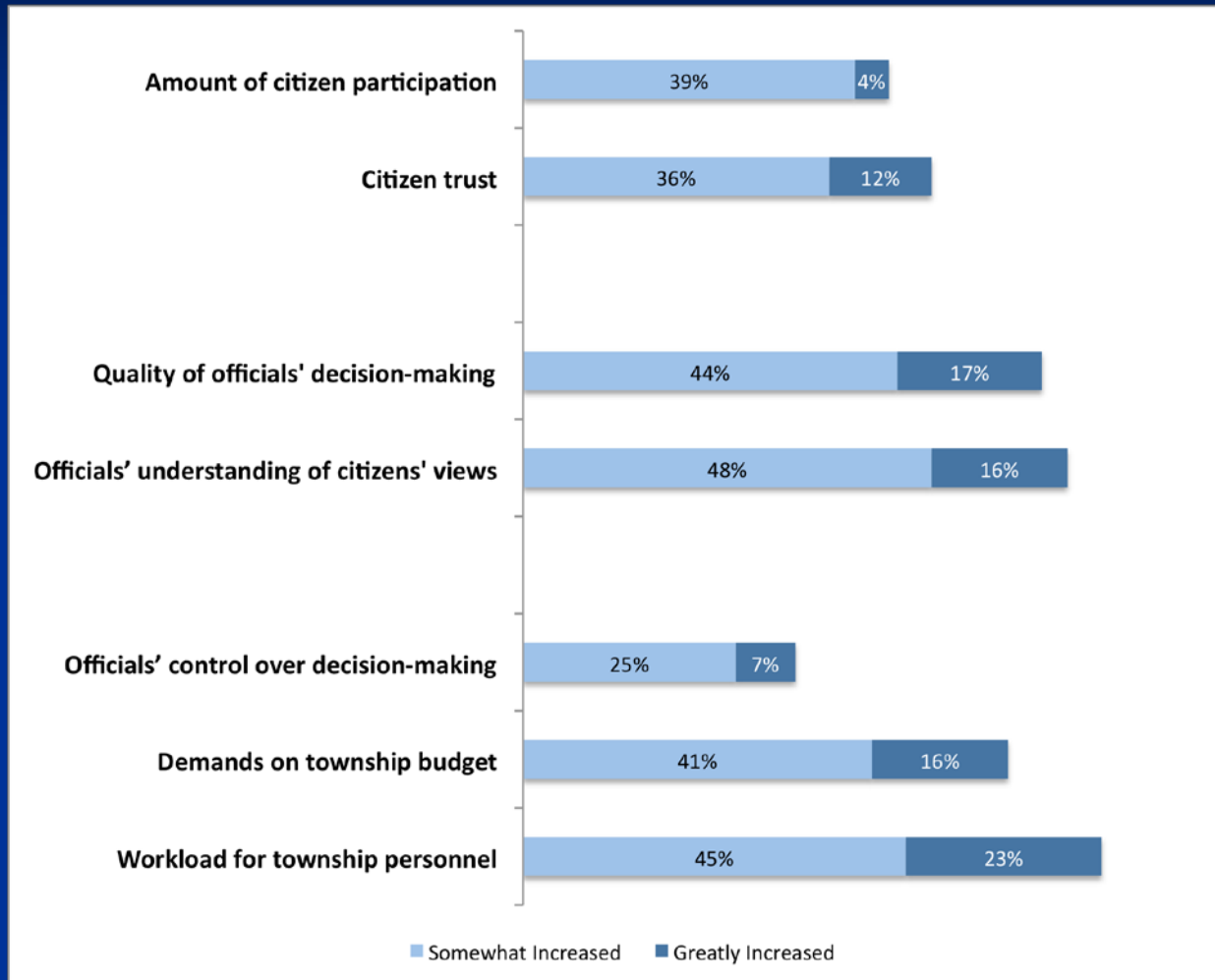


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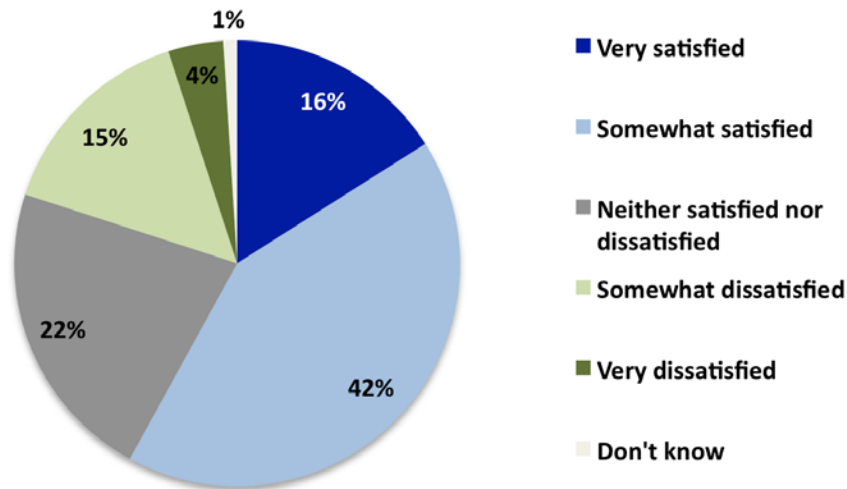


What has changed due to engagement efforts?

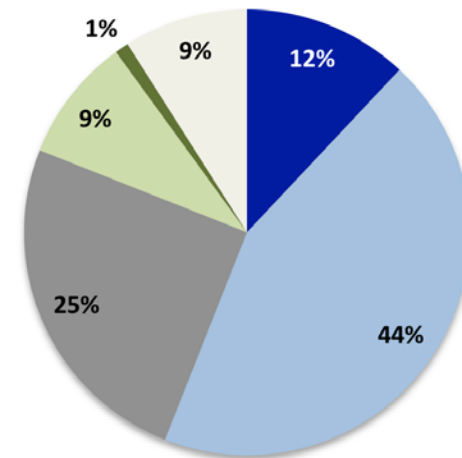


Satisfaction with citizen engagement

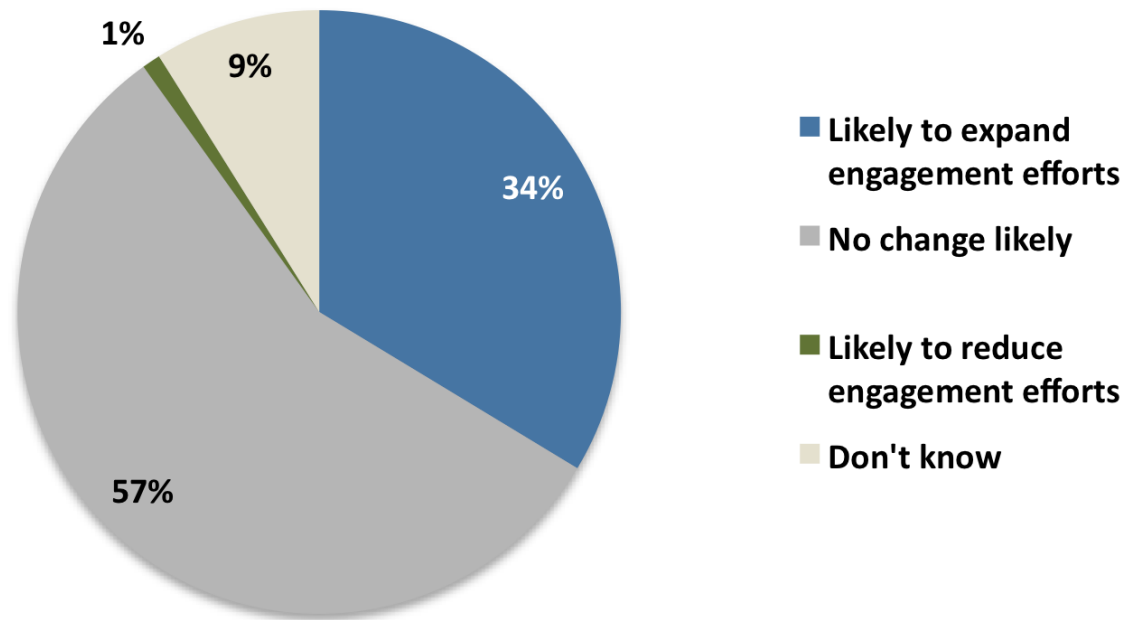
Officials' satisfaction:



Officials' assessments of citizens' satisfaction:

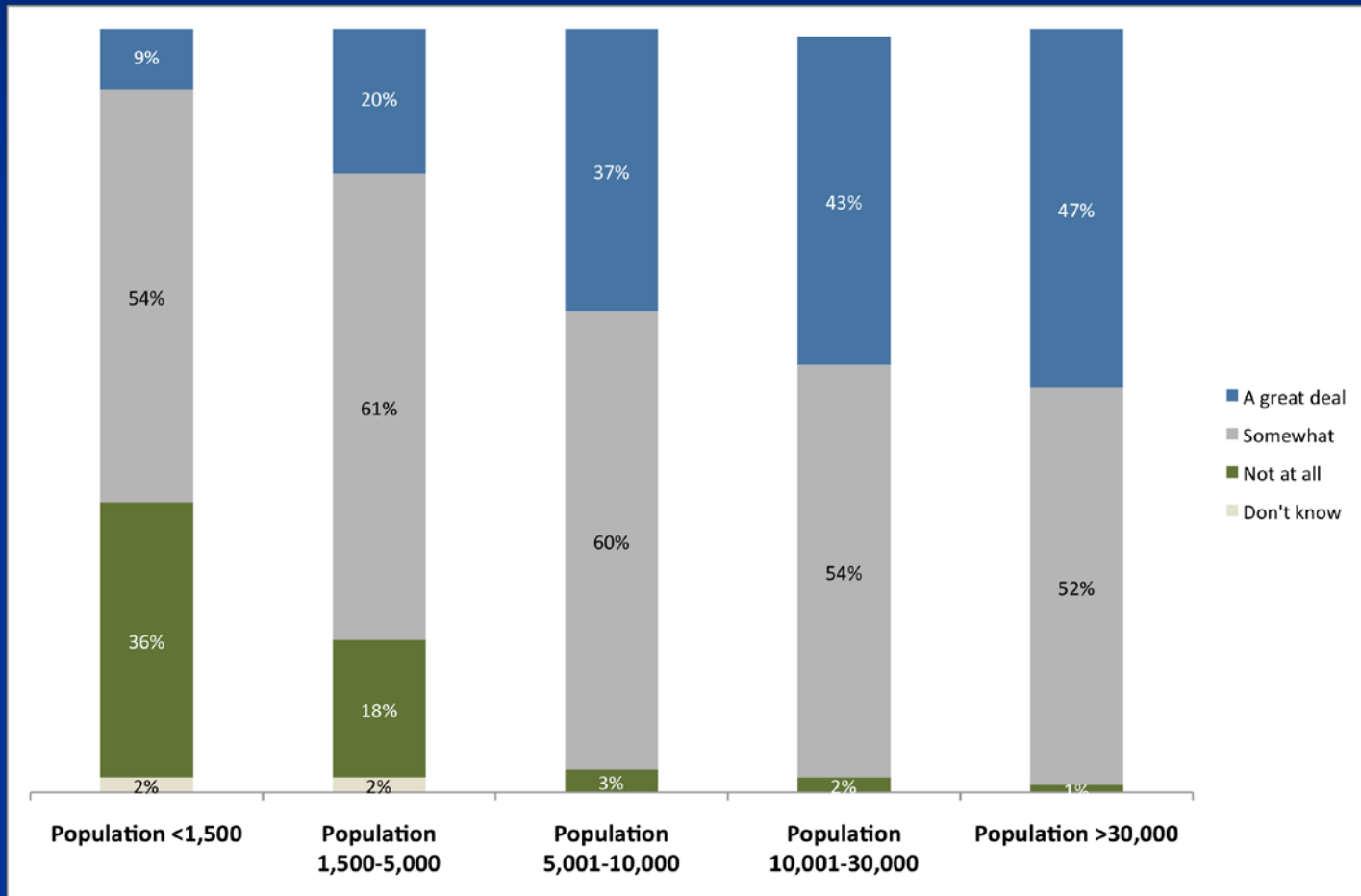


What are plans for the next 12 months?



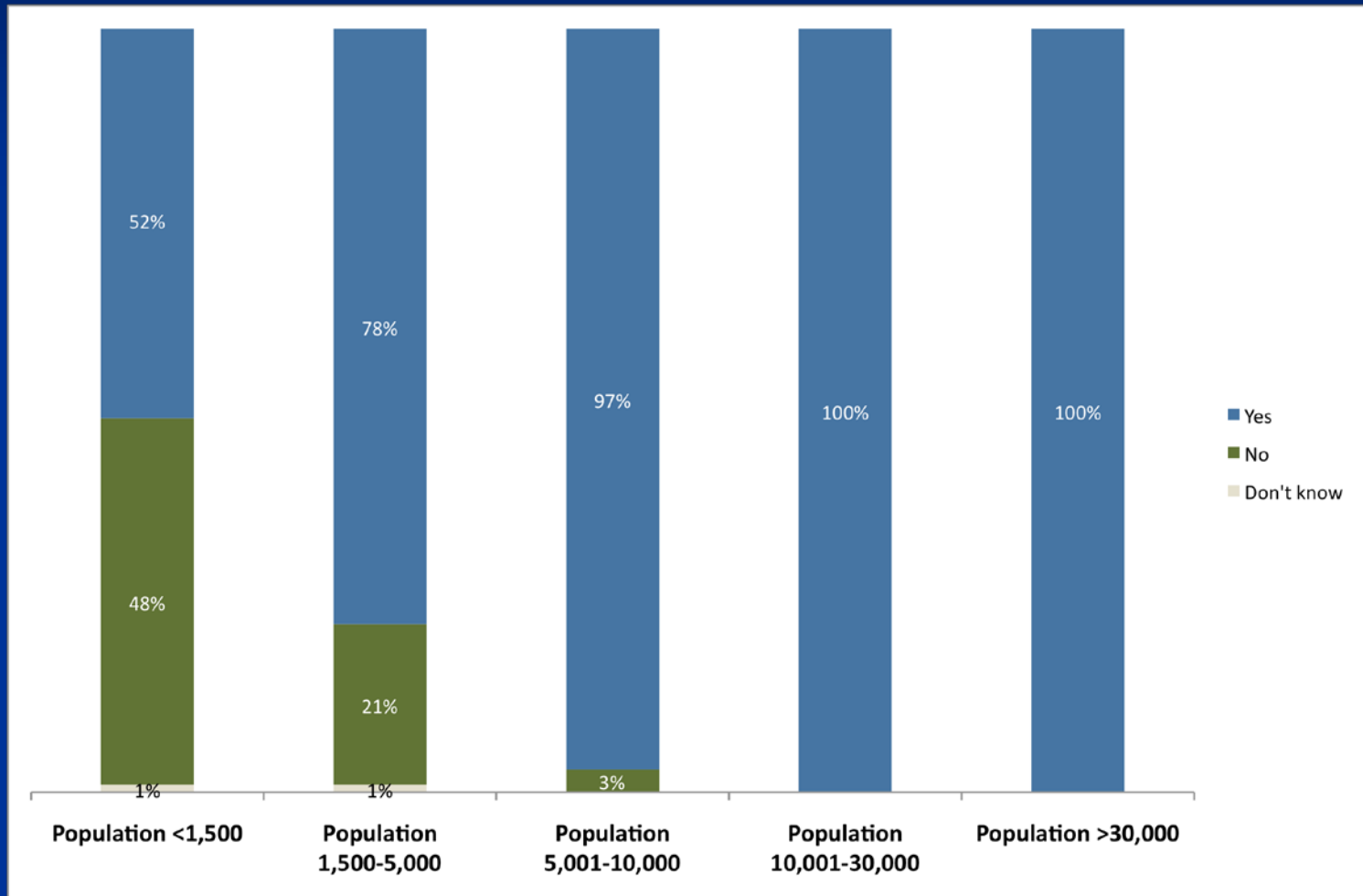
Do local governments try to engage citizens through technology?

- by population size -

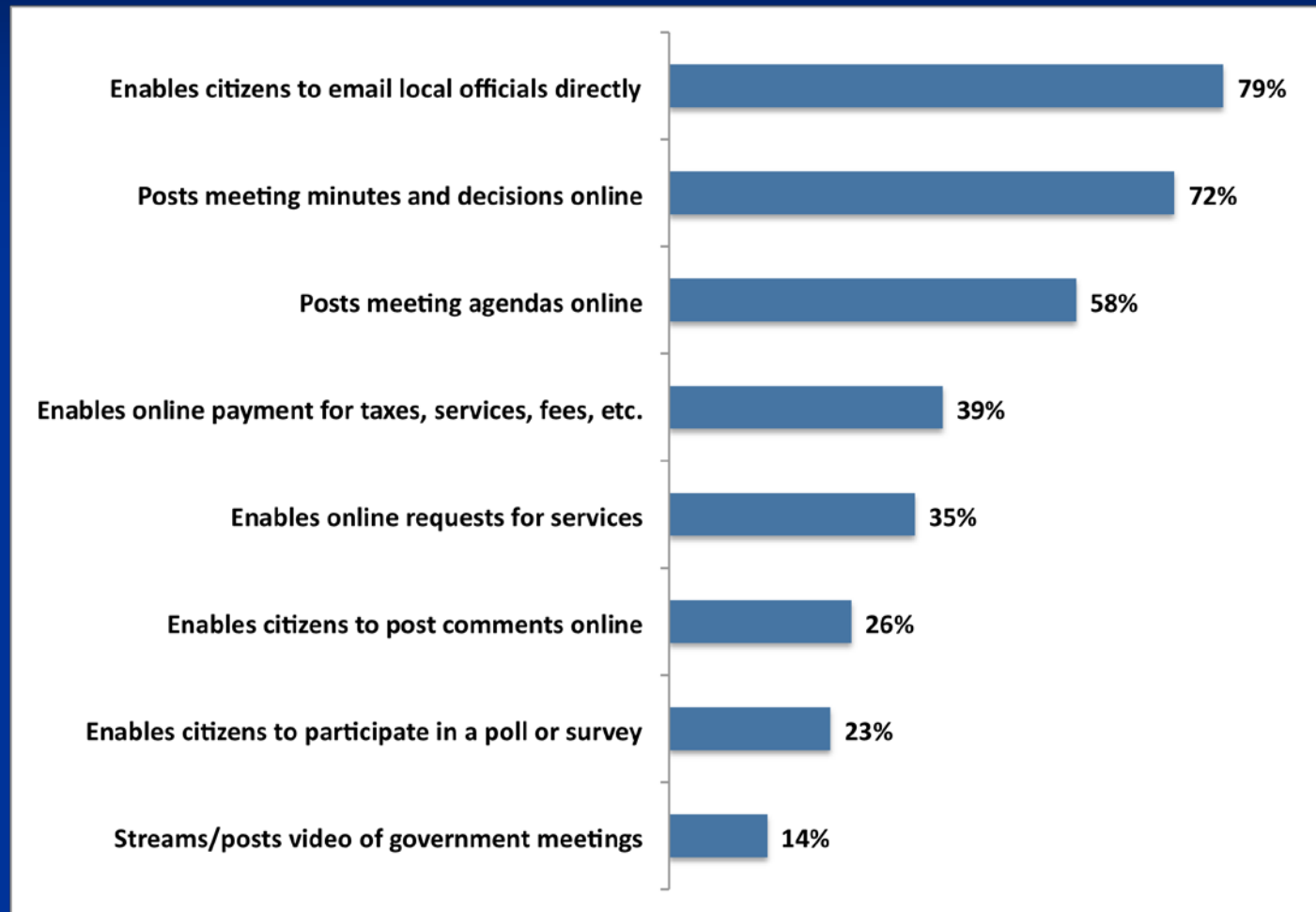


Do most local governments have websites?

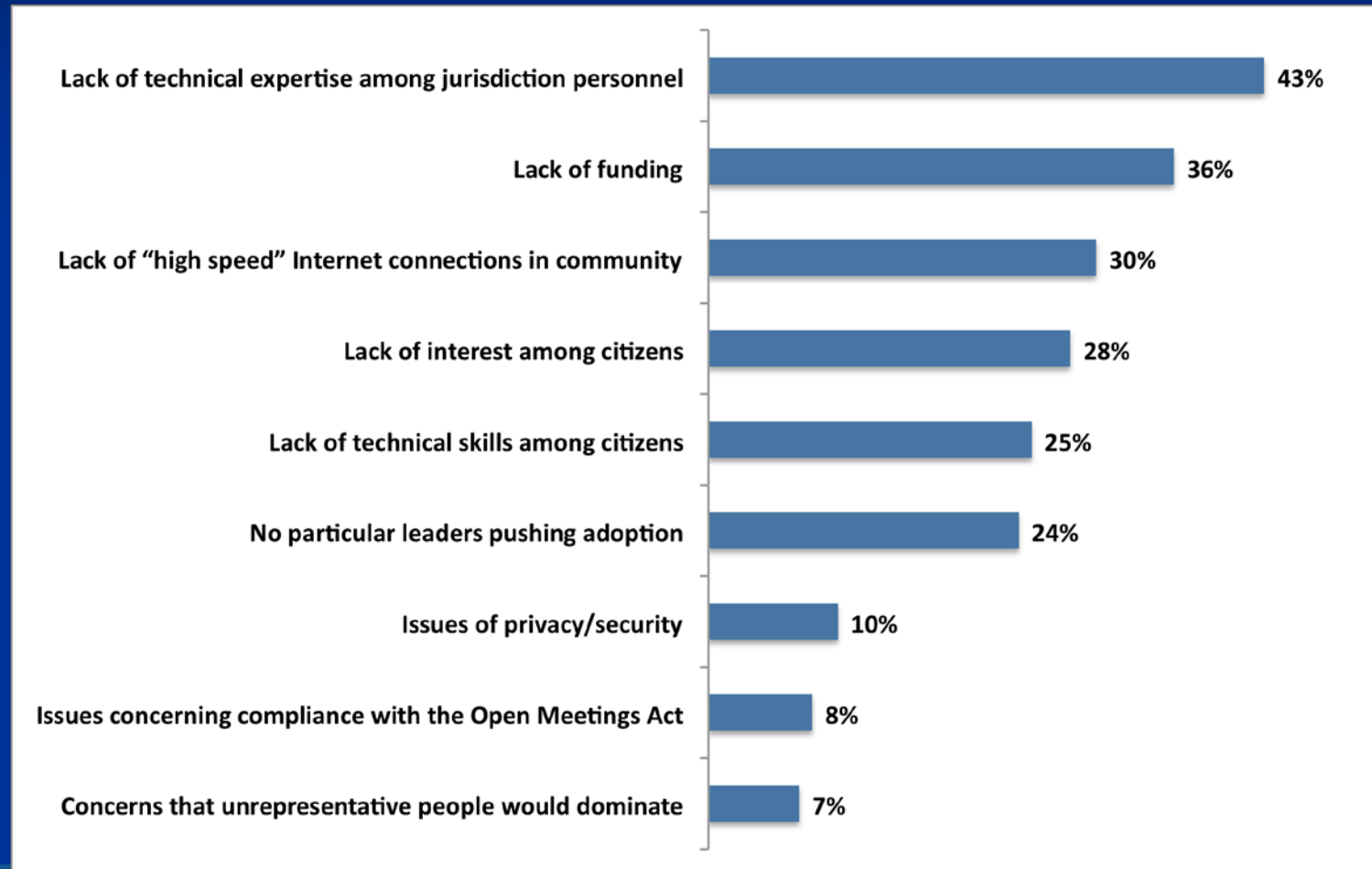
- by population size -



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

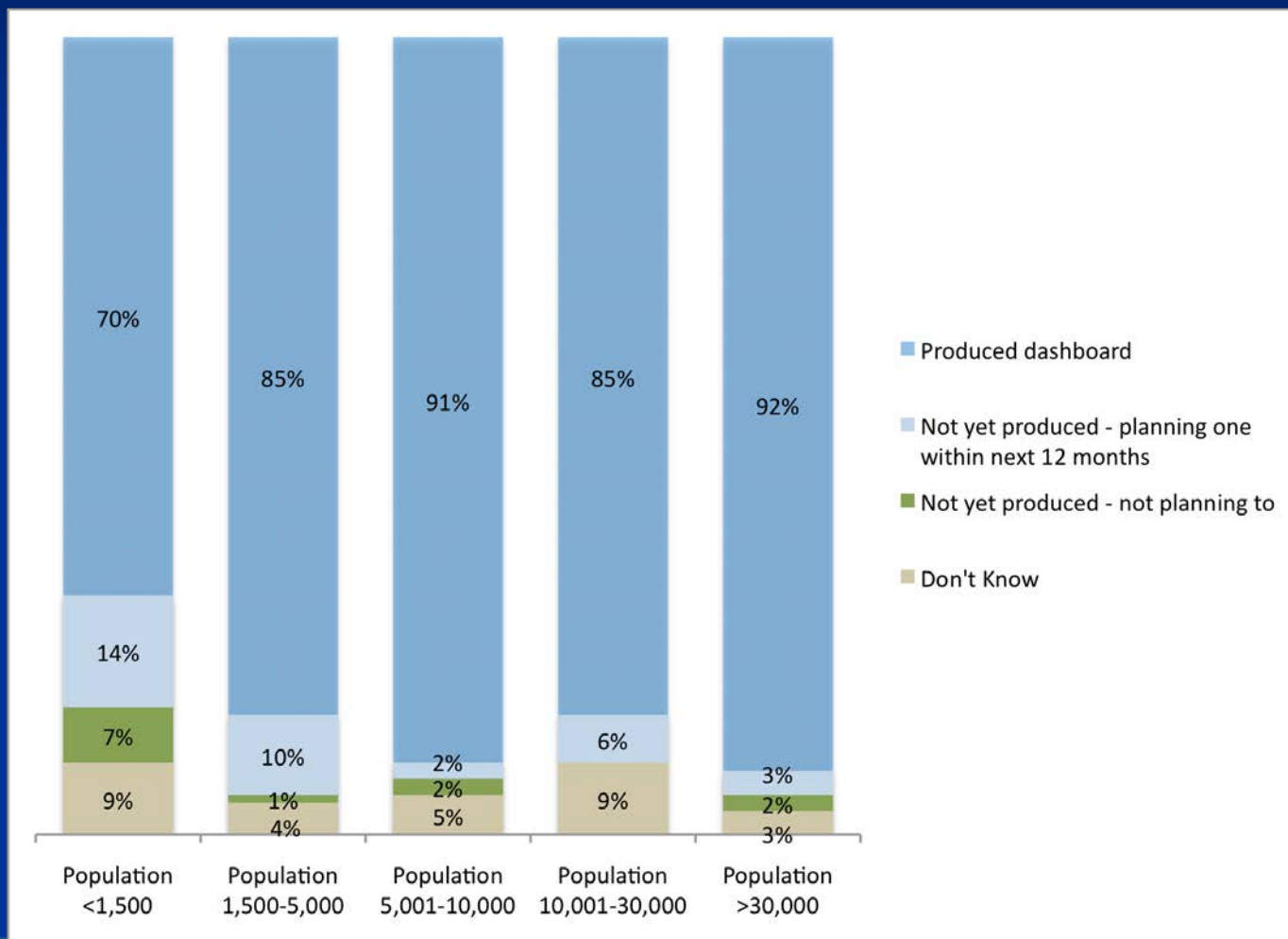
“We have 2 churches in our Township. Once a year, Labor Day Weekend, we have a community service with lunch at our Senior Center. This is highly attended and the people interact and have a good time. Once a year we have a open house at our Nature Center and have snacks and a hay ride. We put up a suggestion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

-Township supervisor

How the state started incentivizing local “performance dashboards”

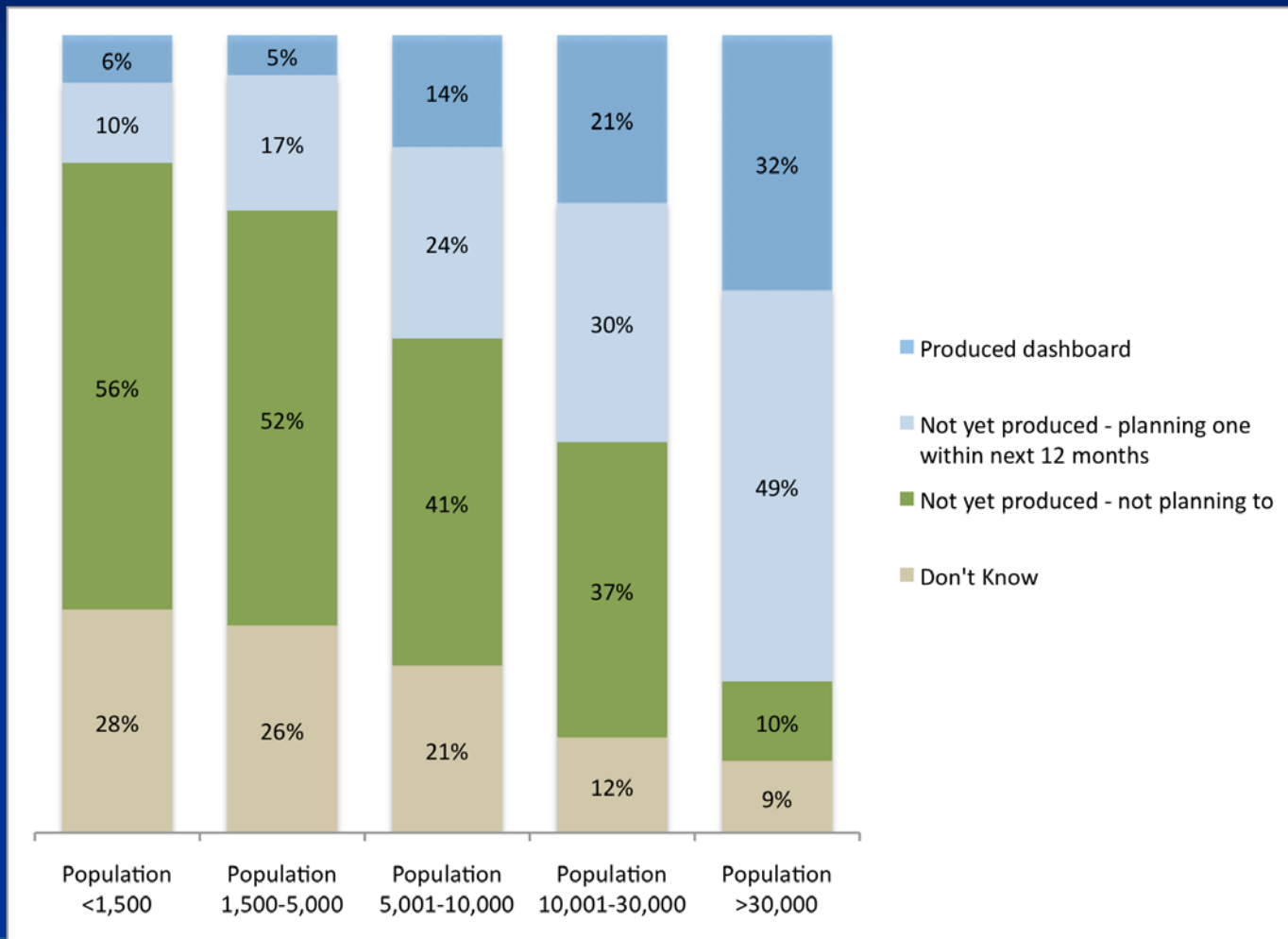


Most EVIP-eligible jurisdictions have created dashboards



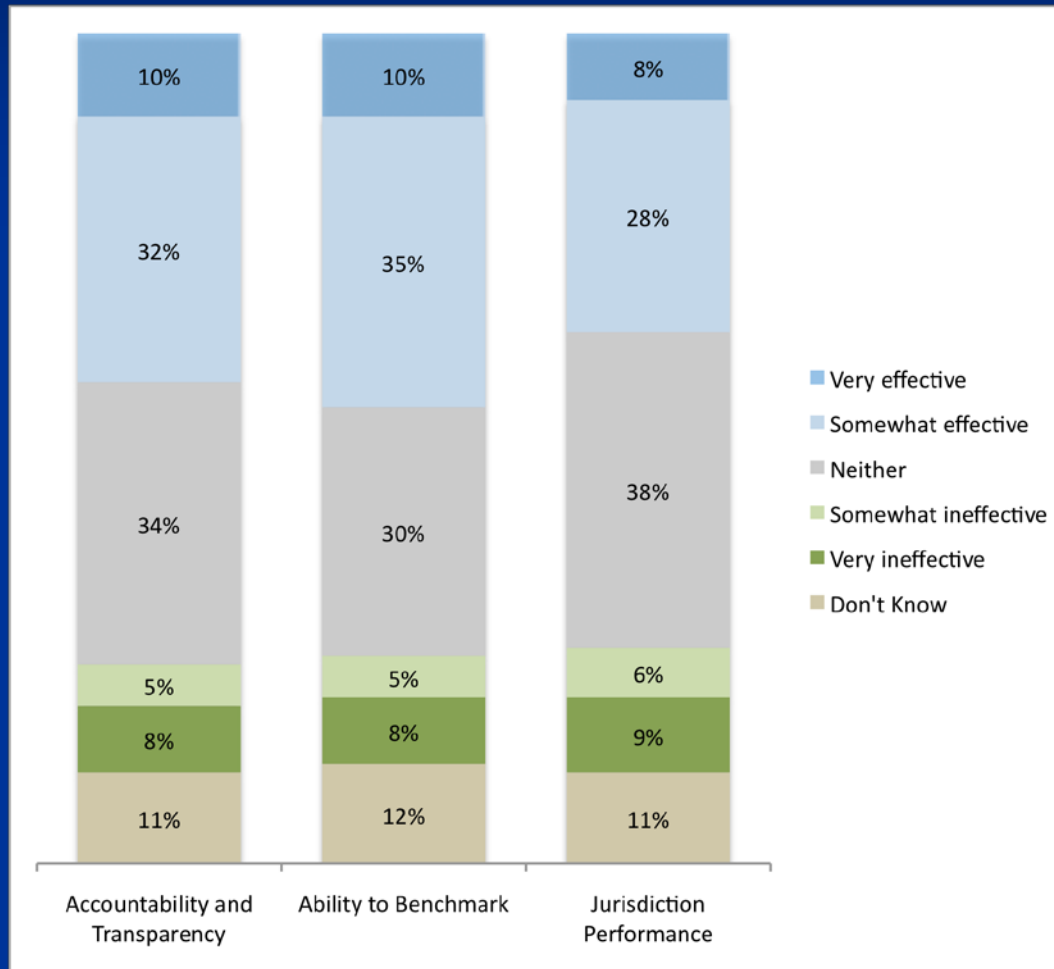
(among eligible jurisdictions)

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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