

Opinions about Trash ***Research in the Potomac River Watershed***

Conducted for
The Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative
Spring 2008

With thanks to the project's funders
Arlington County
District of Columbia
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
City of Rockville

Research conducted by:
OpinionWorks
Finding Insights That Bring Results
www.OpinionWorks.com

Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative Opinion Research (Spring 2008)

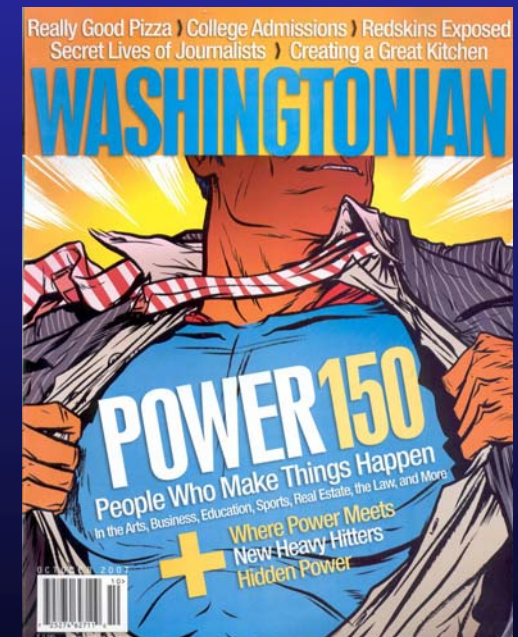
What We Wanted to Know from This Research

- 1. Why do people litter?**
- 2. How can we persuade them to stop?**
- 3. How widespread is this problem?**
- 4. What is the public willing to do to clean up?**

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OpinionWorks Credentials

- Full-service market research, founded 2001
- **Special mission to non-profits**
- **Selected Active Clients:**
 - *The (Baltimore) Sun*
 - Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
 - Local Watershed Associations
 - Syracuse, NY Recycling Authority
 - Transit Authorities in Chicago, New York, Washington
 - Cities of New York, St. Petersburg
 - National Trust for Historic Preservation
 - University of Maryland School of Medicine
 - Florida Supreme Court
 - The Wilderness Society
 - Lutheran World Relief
 - Open Society Institute
 - Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

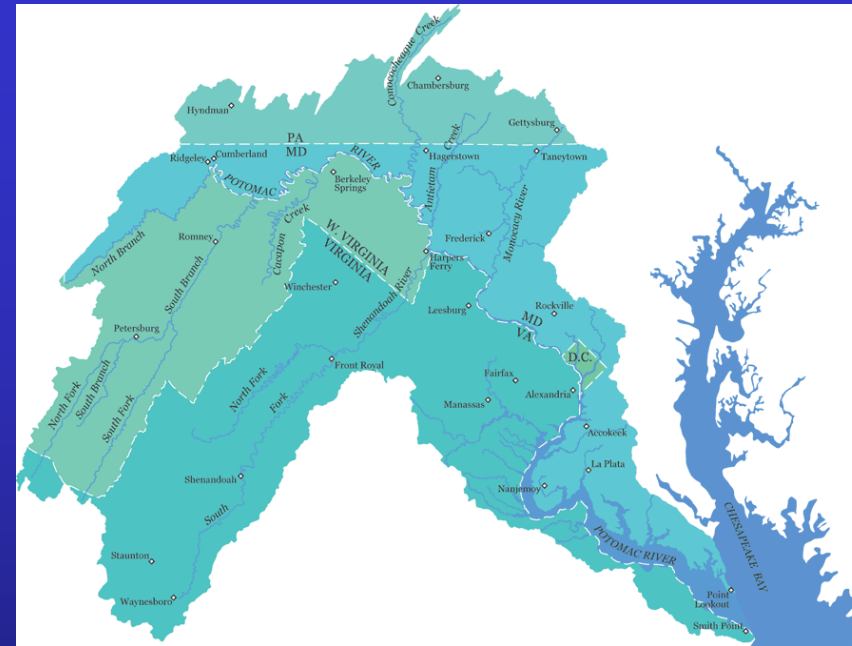


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Research Methodology

Regional Telephone Survey

- 1,004 interviews.
- Interviews conducted Jan 23 – Feb 2.
- Adults 17+ randomly sampled across the watershed.
- 13 minute interview on average.
- Cell phones, Spanish language, young males all actively sought.
- Final results weighted to reflect Census numbers.
- Can look at major jurisdictions with confidence.



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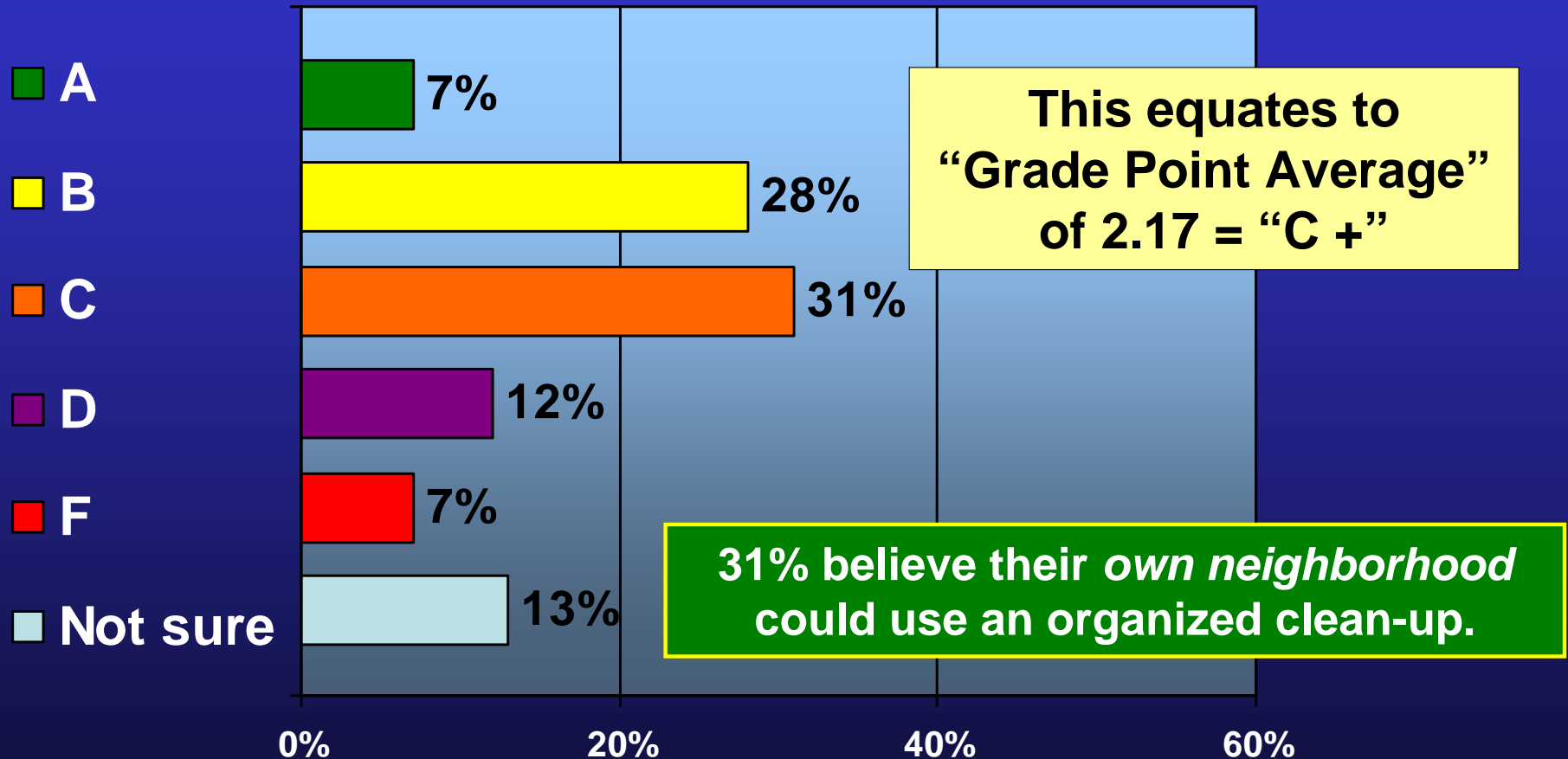
Step 2: Focus Groups

- Conducted among our target audience.
- April 2008.
- 8-12 admitted litterers with our facilitator in each group.
- 120-minute discussion allows in-depth probing of thoughts, feelings.
- Test media from other markets to learn what resonates here.
- Outcome is raw material for creative development.



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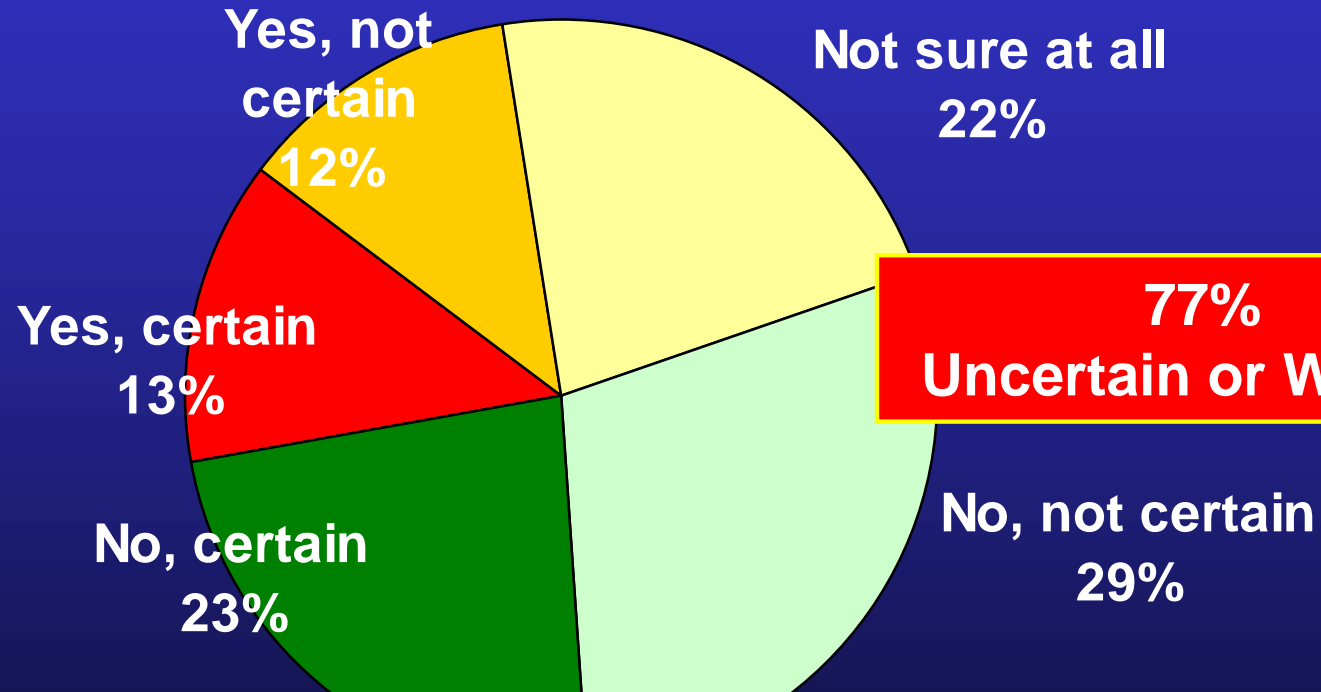
Grading Local Creeks/Rivers as Free of Litter



“How would you grade how clean and free of litter the local creeks or rivers are on that scale?”

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Is Litter Filtered Out of Stormwater?



**Only 58% can picture a storm drain near where they live.
24% admit they do not know storm drains return water to area rivers.**

“As far as you know, is litter that is washed down the storm drain or catch basin filtered out before it reaches area waterways?”

(If yes or no): “Are you certain or not so certain about that?”

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Do you live in the Potomac River Watershed?

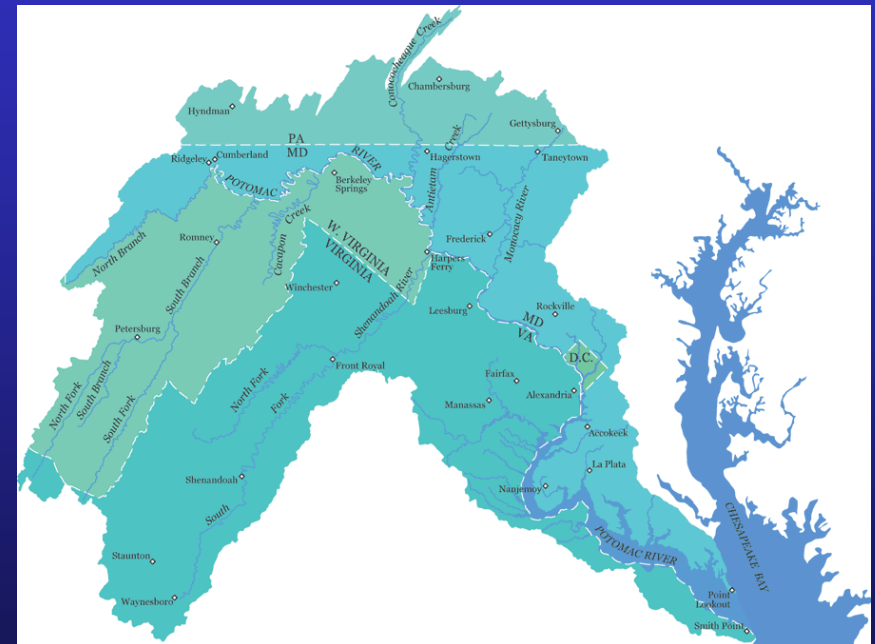
Real answer: 100%

Respondents:

42% Yes

22% No, Live outside it

35% I Don't Know

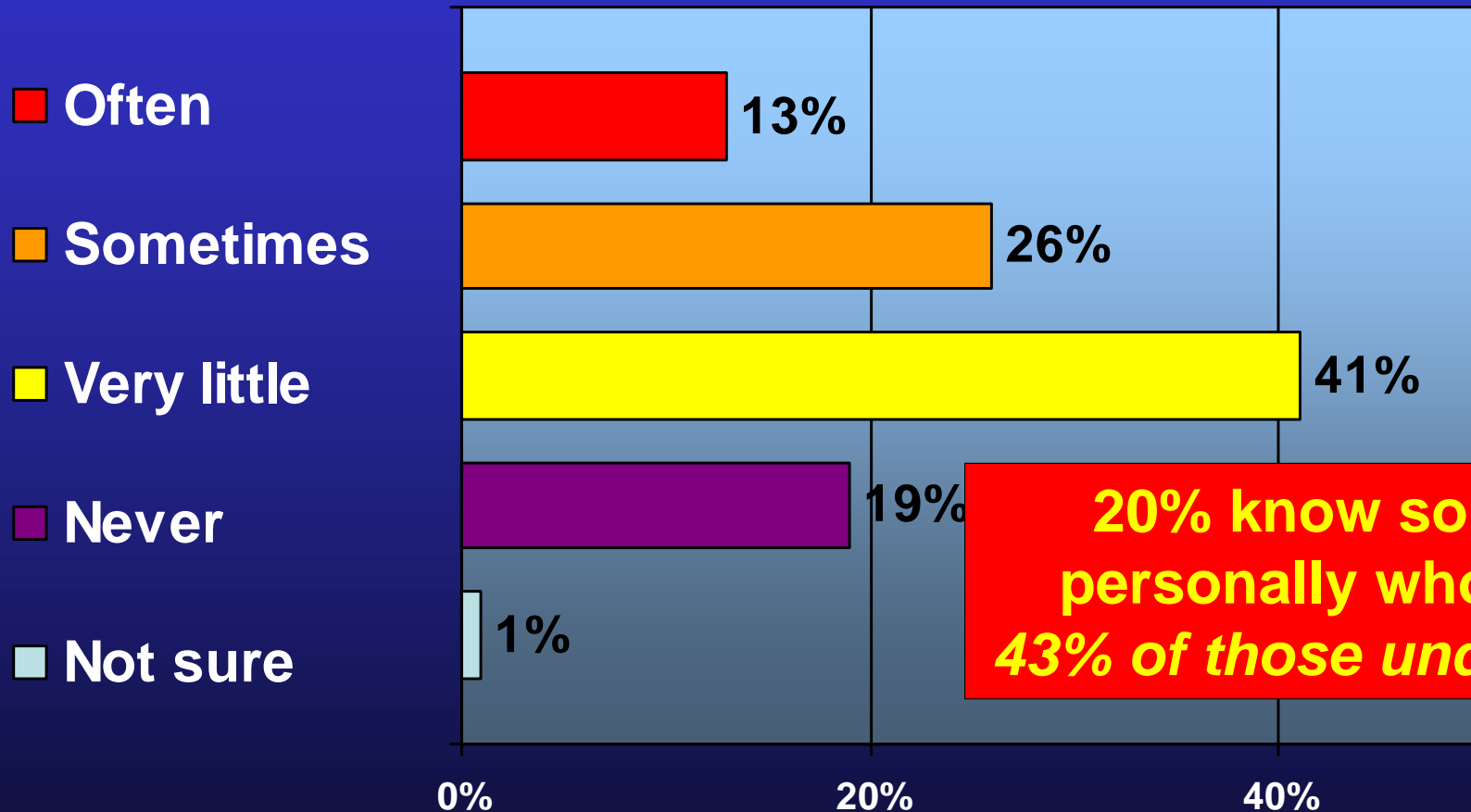


58% Uncertain or Wrong.

“Do you live in the Potomac River watershed, live outside of it, or don't you know for sure?”

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Actually See Someone Litter

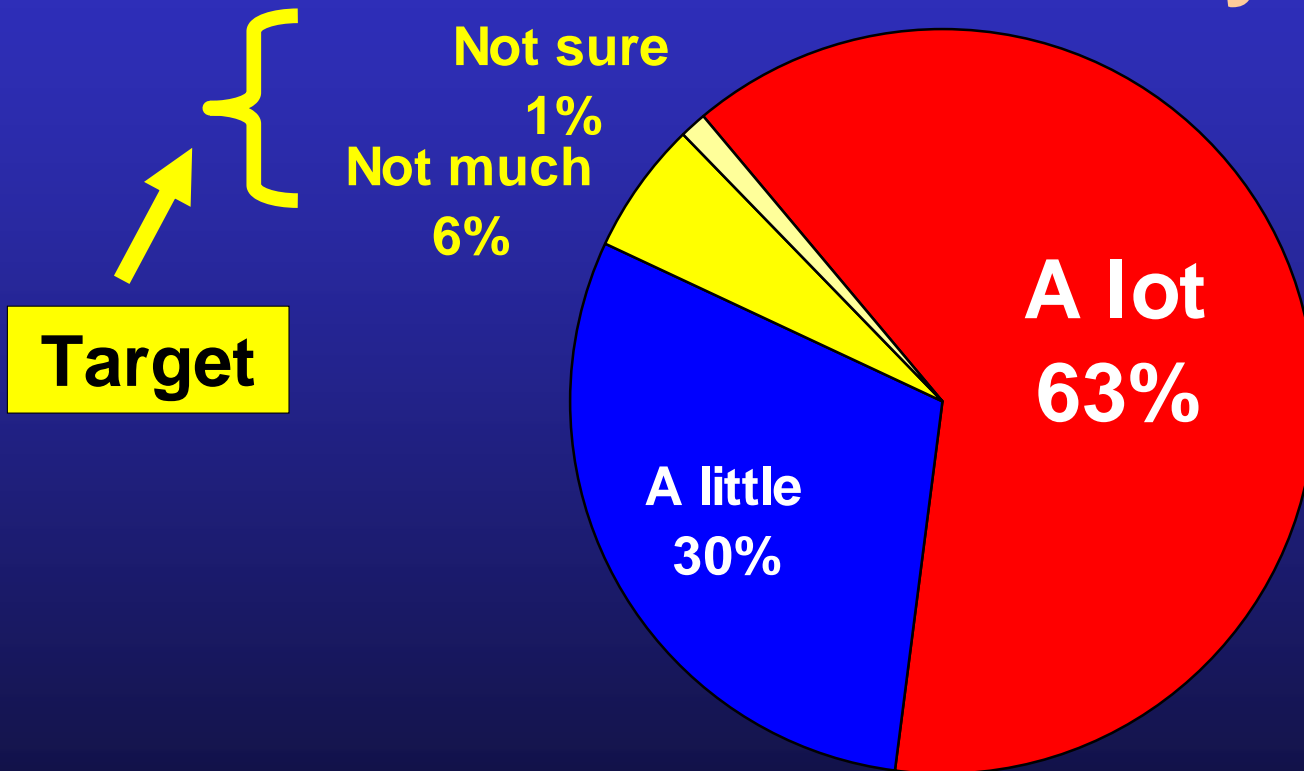


20% know someone personally who litters; 43% of those under age 25.

“Would you say you actually see people tossing litter on the ground or in the water often, sometimes, rarely, or never?”

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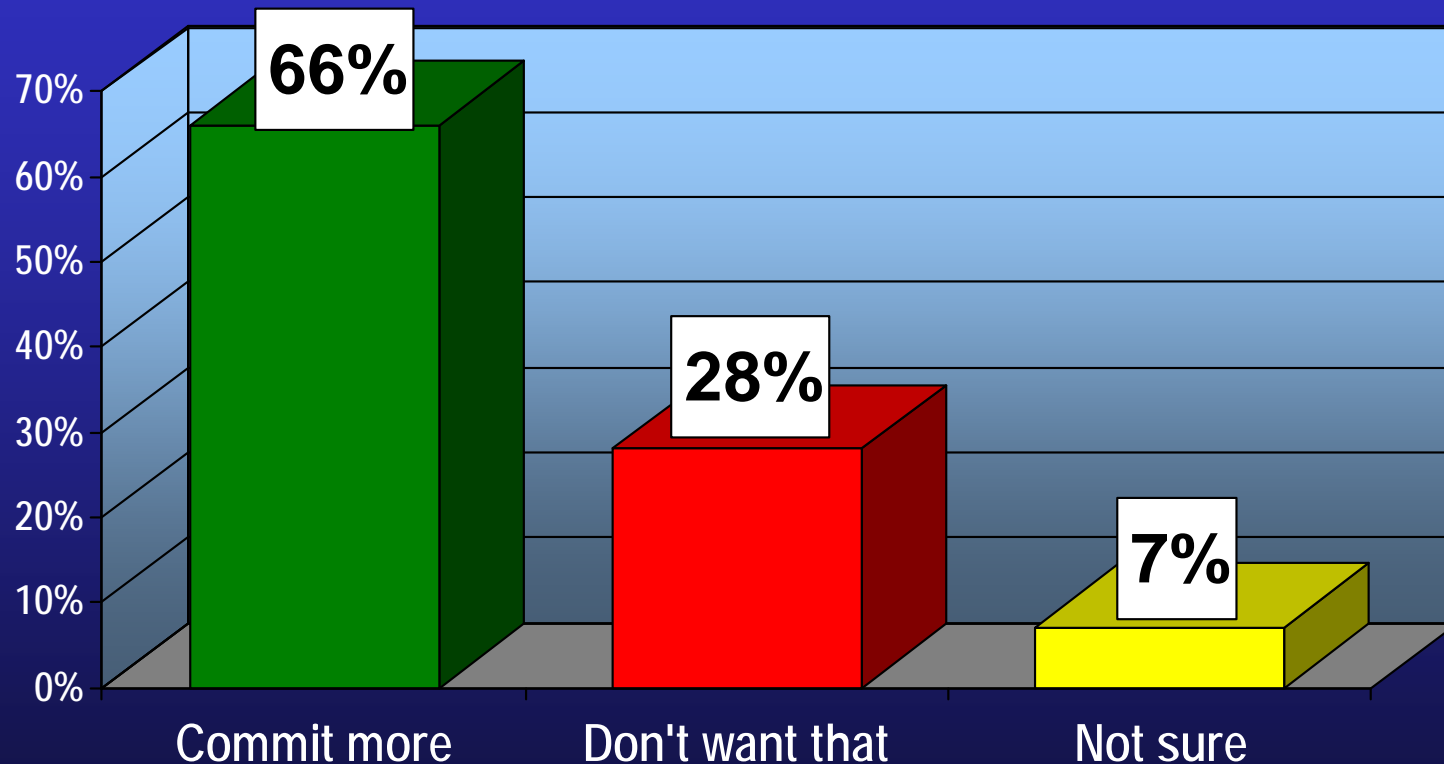
Are You Bothered by Litter?



“When you see litter on the ground or in the water does it bother you a lot, a little, or not that much?”

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Should the Public Sector Commit More Resources?



“Is the litter problem big enough that you would like to see the state and local government commit more resources to doing something about it, or don't you want them to do that?”

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Admitted Littering Behavior

Liquid like coffee or soda	37%
Piece of food like apple core or banana peel	33%
Cigarette butt	12%
Fast food/package product wrapper	7%
Bottle or can	6%
Box or bag of trash	3%
Tires, appliances, or other large items	1%

“Probably everybody drops things on the ground or tosses them from a car window from time to time because they are not near a trash can. I’d like to ask you whether you have ever dropped, tossed, or dumped any of these things over the past couple of years or so.”

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Admitted Littering Behavior

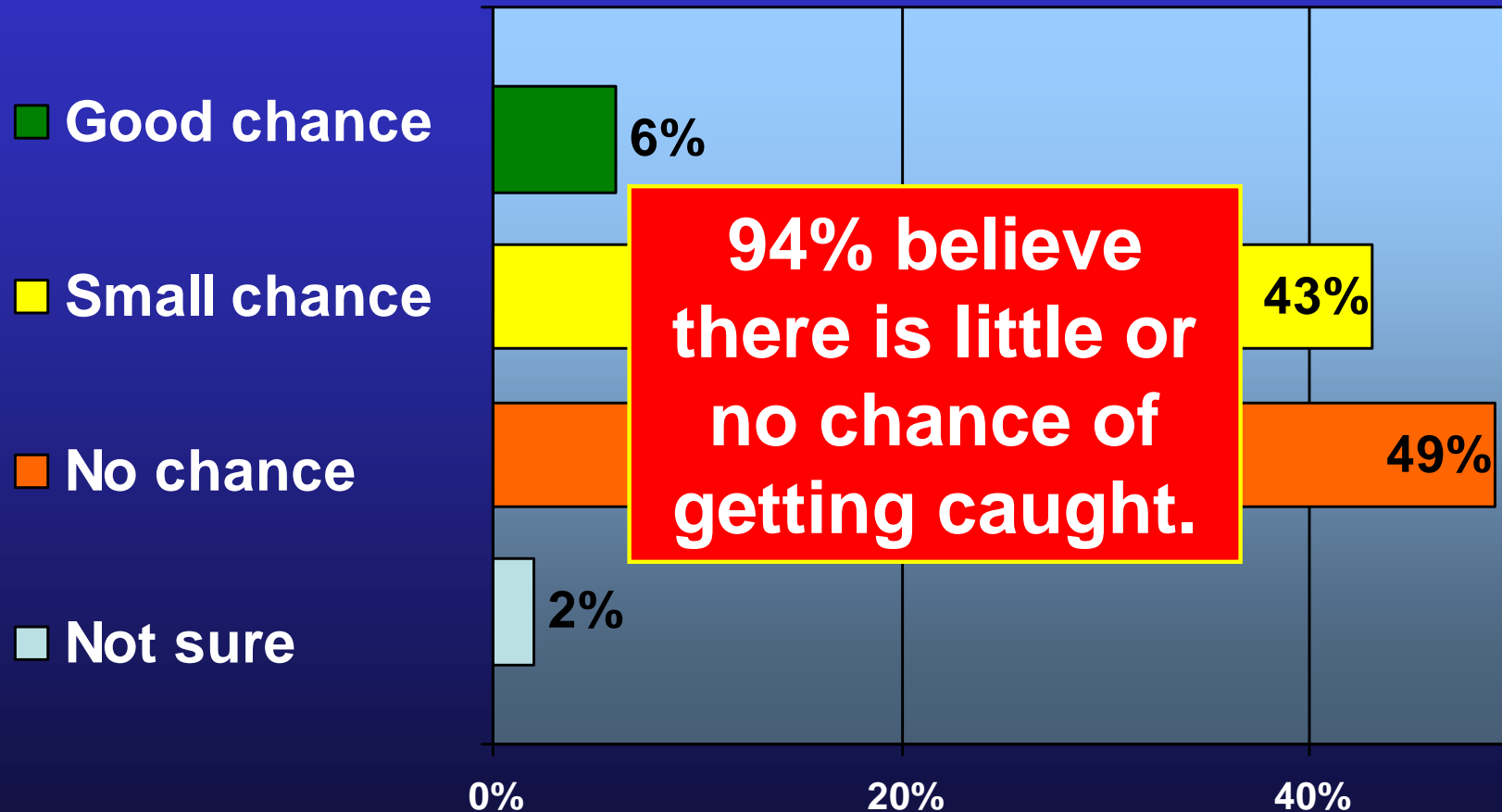
Admits to littering a food wrapper or packaging	7%
<i>If under age 25</i>	<i>29%</i>
Admits to littering box or bag of trash	3%
<i>If male and under age 25</i>	<i>11%</i>

**Littering most common among middle-income.
Race and ethnicity are not strong predictors of littering behavior.**

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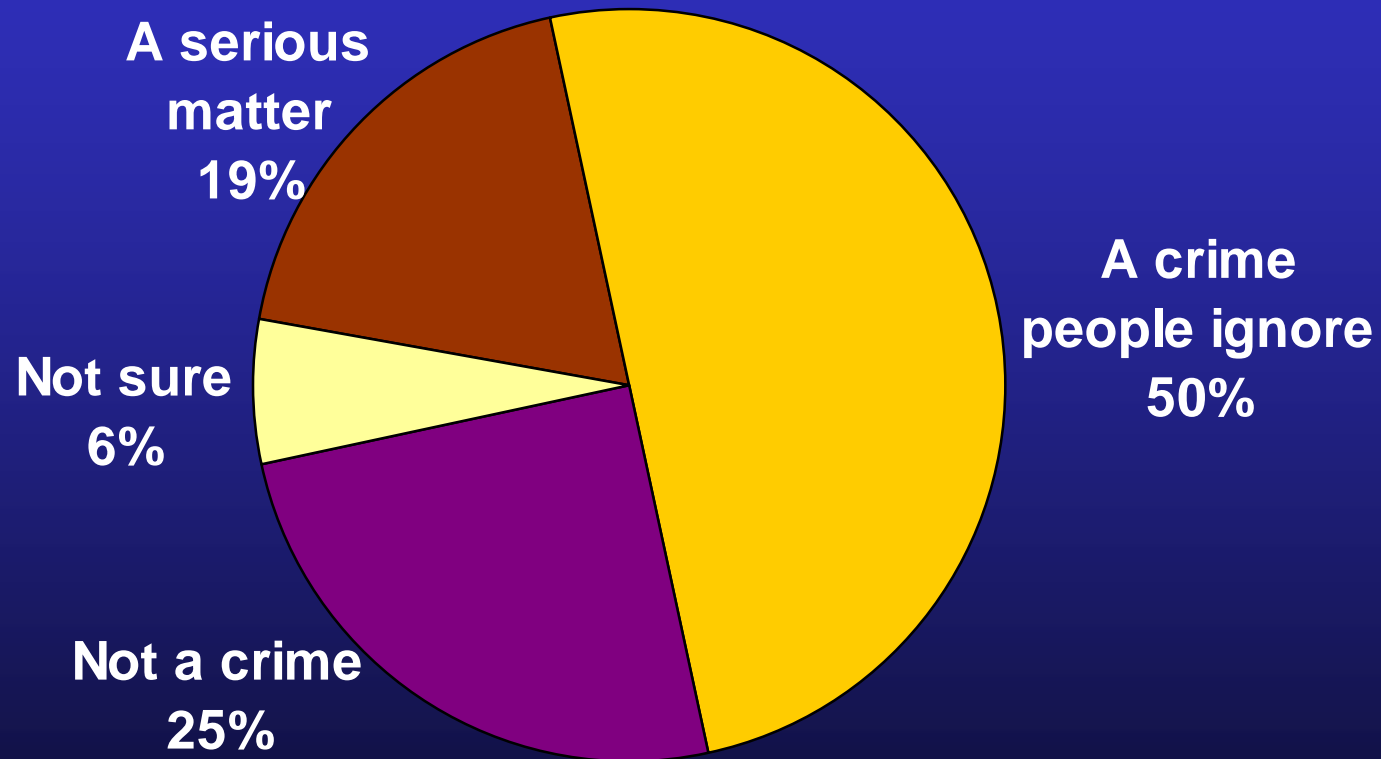
Chance a Litterer Will Get Caught



“When someone litters, do you think there is a good chance, a small chance, or no chance that they will get caught and have to pay a fine?”

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Is Littering a Crime?



“Do you think of littering as a crime, or not a crime?” *(If a crime):* “Would you consider it a crime like speeding that lots of people ignore, or is it a more serious matter?”

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Why People Litter



- Self-described “laziness,” or “convenience.”
- “It’s over.”
- My own litter is small and benign.
- Not in front of my house.
- Keep my car clean.
- People want to clean up after me!

“...those community clean-up days...are fun, so I shouldn’t really care about littering because somebody is going to feel good about spending their Saturday cleaning it up...”

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Changing Impressions

How to reach them?

- **Come to the Public Education Roundtable!**

**The Roundtable
Presentation is
available Under
Roundtable
Presentations**

