

**UNDERSTANDING  
HOW THE RIVER IS  
USED AND VIEWED**

**TESTING BRAND  
AWARENESS AMONG  
RESIDENTS**

**WHAT IS THE  
STORY?**



**DETAILED RESULTS**

# **OTTAWA RIVER VALLEY RESIDENTS SURVEY**

**CONDUCTED FOR OTTAWA RIVERKEEPER**

**RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS FROM CANADA'S LEADING PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS AND MARKET RESEARCH EXPERTS**



# METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted with 800 residents of Ontario and Quebec who live within 30km of the Ottawa River (excluding Montreal). The survey was in field from July 2 to 6, 2020. A random sample of panelists were invited to complete the survey from a set of partner panels based on the Lucid exchange platform. These partners are typically double opt-in survey panels, blended to manage out potential skews in the data from a single source.

## In this report:

The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 3.45%, 19 times out of 20.

The data were weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Ontario and Quebec's populations in the Ottawa River Valley according to age, gender, educational attainment, and region. Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

# PART 1: THE OTTAWA RIVER



# THE OTTAWA RIVER

For those living the Ottawa area, the Ottawa River is felt as central to their quality of life. 82% identify its important to their quality of life when asked, half of whom say it is either extremely or very important. The Ottawa river is seen as important, culturally, economically, ecologically, and recreationally. All these dimensions are well appreciated by residents.

The importance of the Ottawa River is universally felt regardless how much one uses it – all residents agree on its importance. Appreciation is modestly higher among the 30+, but even most younger adults have a strong appreciation for it.

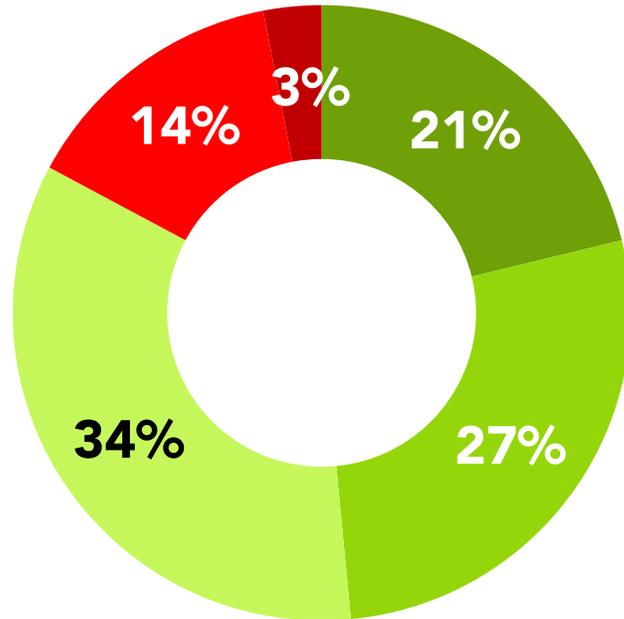
Most think of the Ottawa River as dirty. 59% would describe it as dirty or very dirty, while only 3% would identify it as very clean. Overall, 34% suggest it is clean. And according to residents, this is getting worse over time. Half of residents feel that the Ottawa River today is dirtier than it was 20 years ago.

Despite this trendline, the prevailing view is still that the Ottawa River is more safe than unsafe for adults to swim in.

Fewer believe it is safe to:

- Eat fish that live in the river
- For children to swim in
- To swallow water directly from the river

# IMPORTANCE TO QUALITY OF LIFE



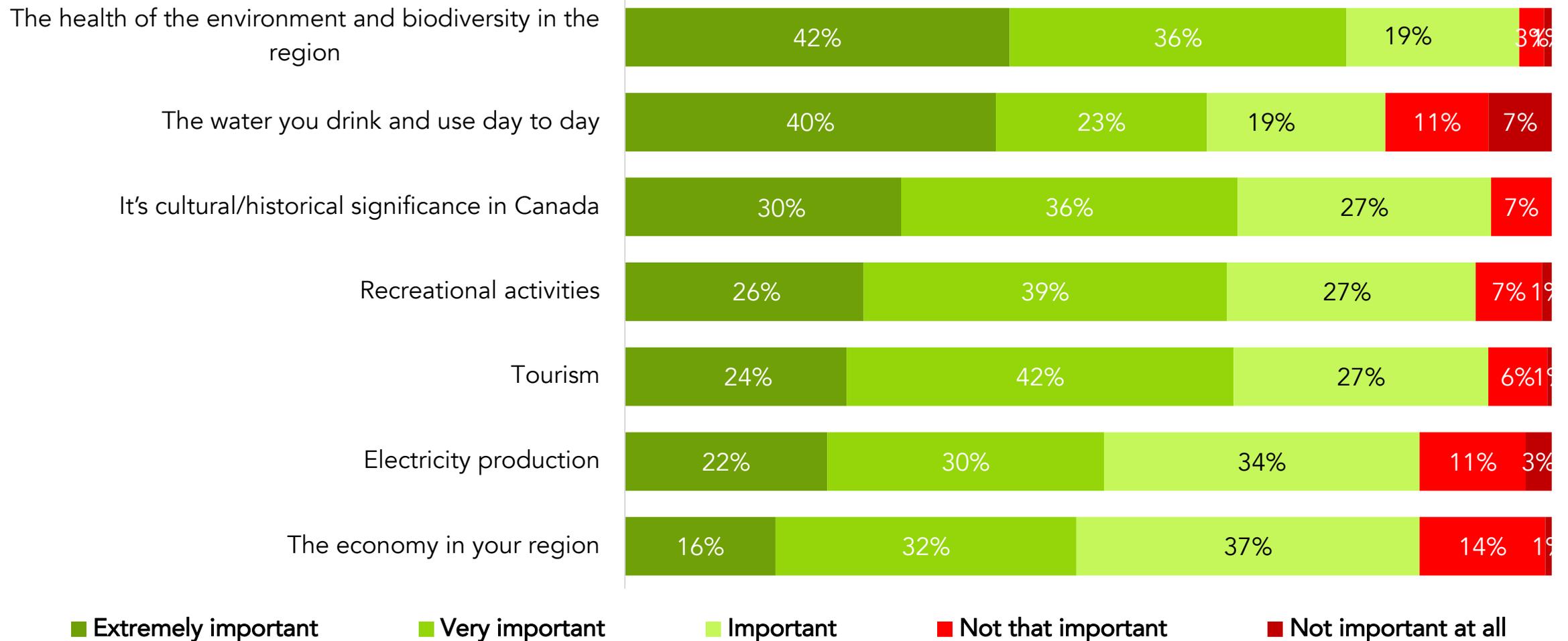
**82%** SAY THE OTTAWA RIVER IS IMPORTANT TO THEIR OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE.

**AMONG ALL QUÉBEC RESIDENTS 87% BELIEVE THE OTTAWA RIVER IS IMPORTANT TO THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.**

■ Extremely important   ■ Very important   ■ Important   ■ Not that important   ■ Not important at all

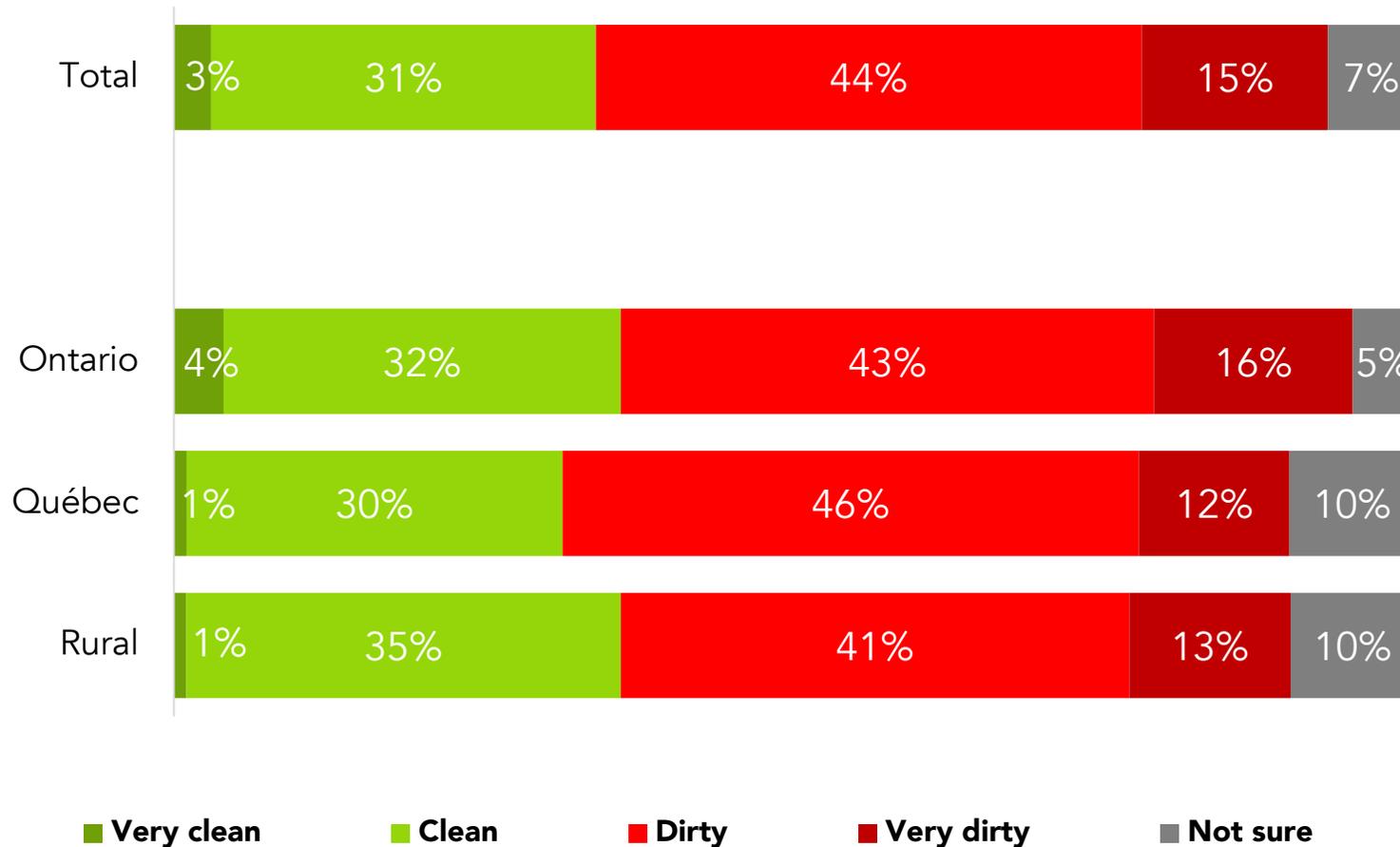
To what extent do you feel the Ottawa River is important to your overall quality of life?

# IMPORTANCE OF THE OTTAWA RIVER



How important, if at all, is the Ottawa River when it comes to...

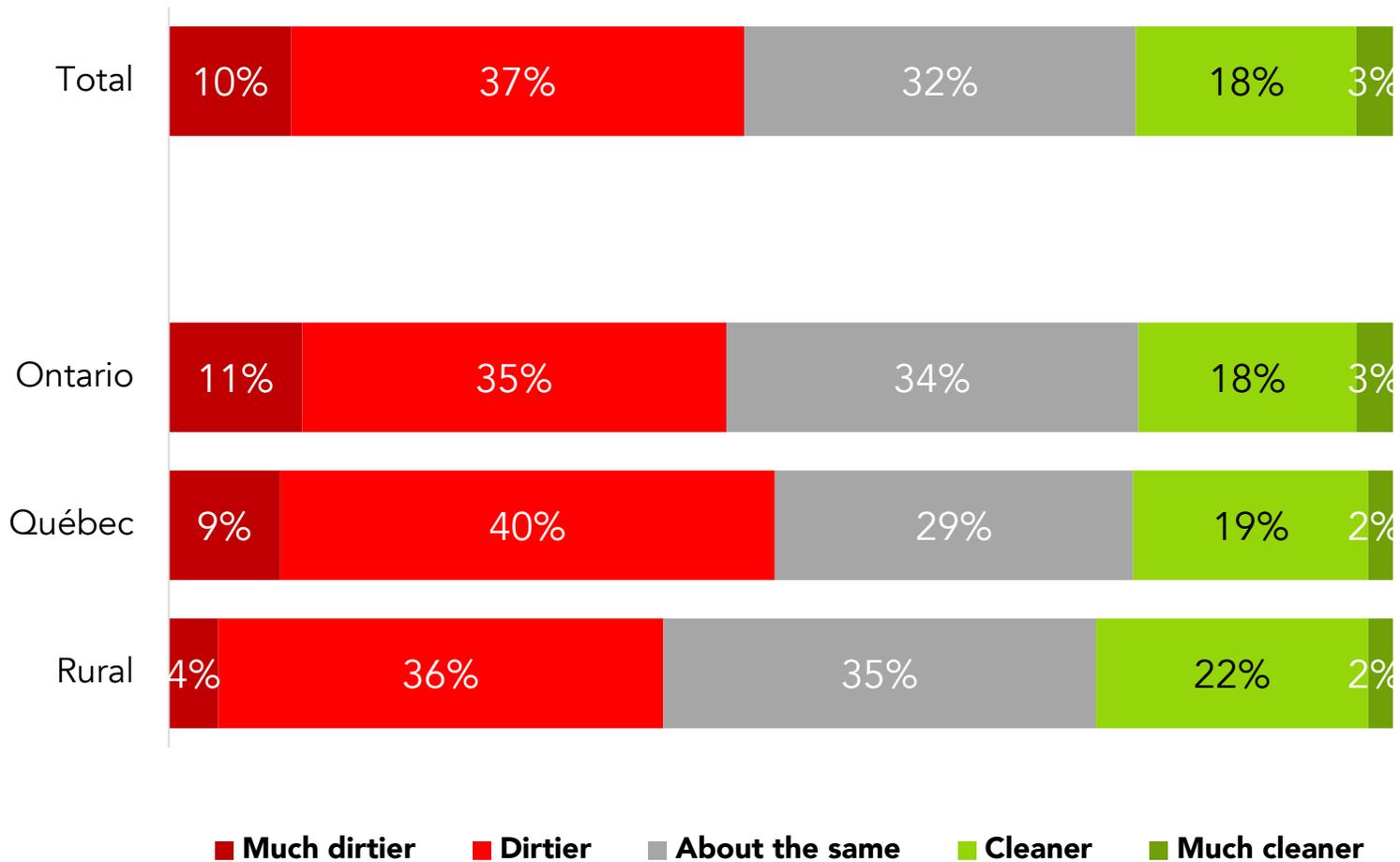
# DO YOU CONSIDER THE OTTAWA RIVER TO BE...



**A majority of all residents (59%) view the water in the Ottawa River as dirty or very dirty.**

Do you think the Ottawa River is clean or dirty?

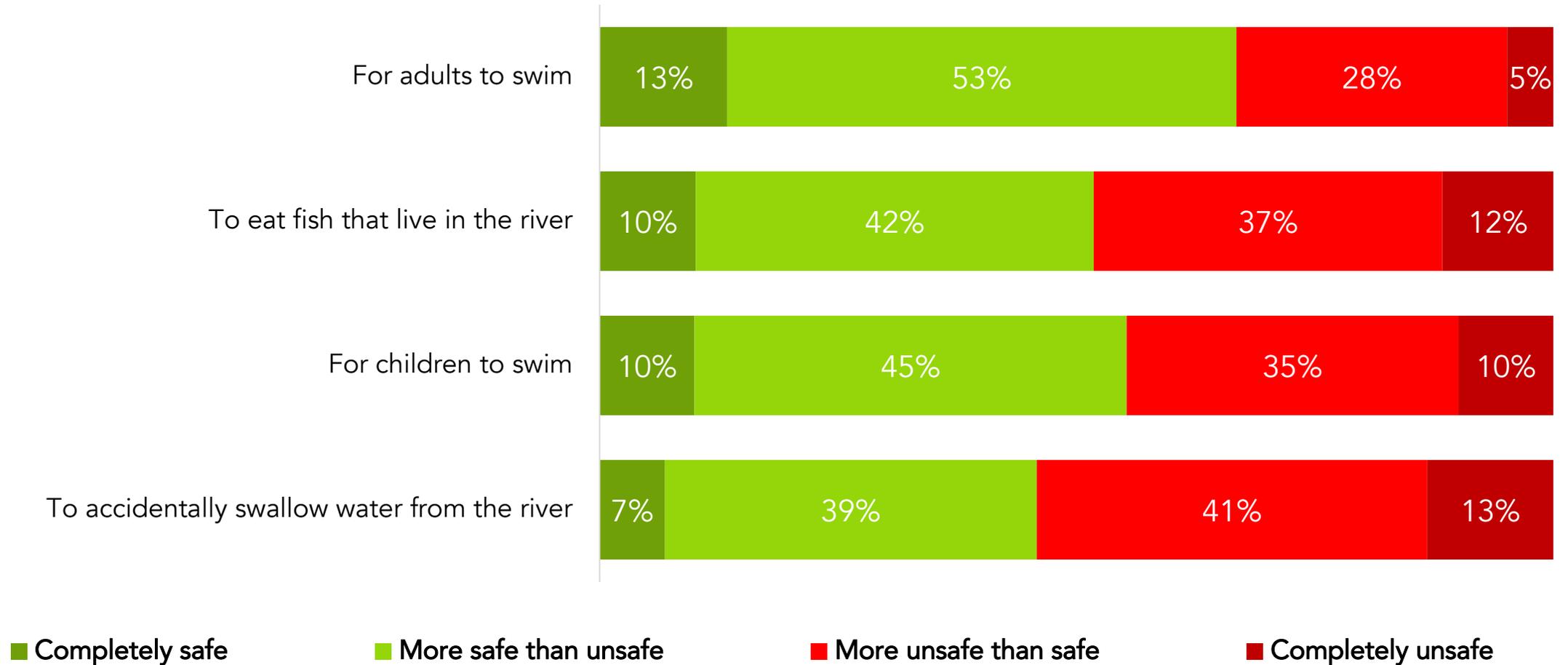
# COMPARED TO 20 YEARS AGO, IS THE OTTAWA RIVER...



**About half feel that the Ottawa River is dirtier compared to 20 years ago**

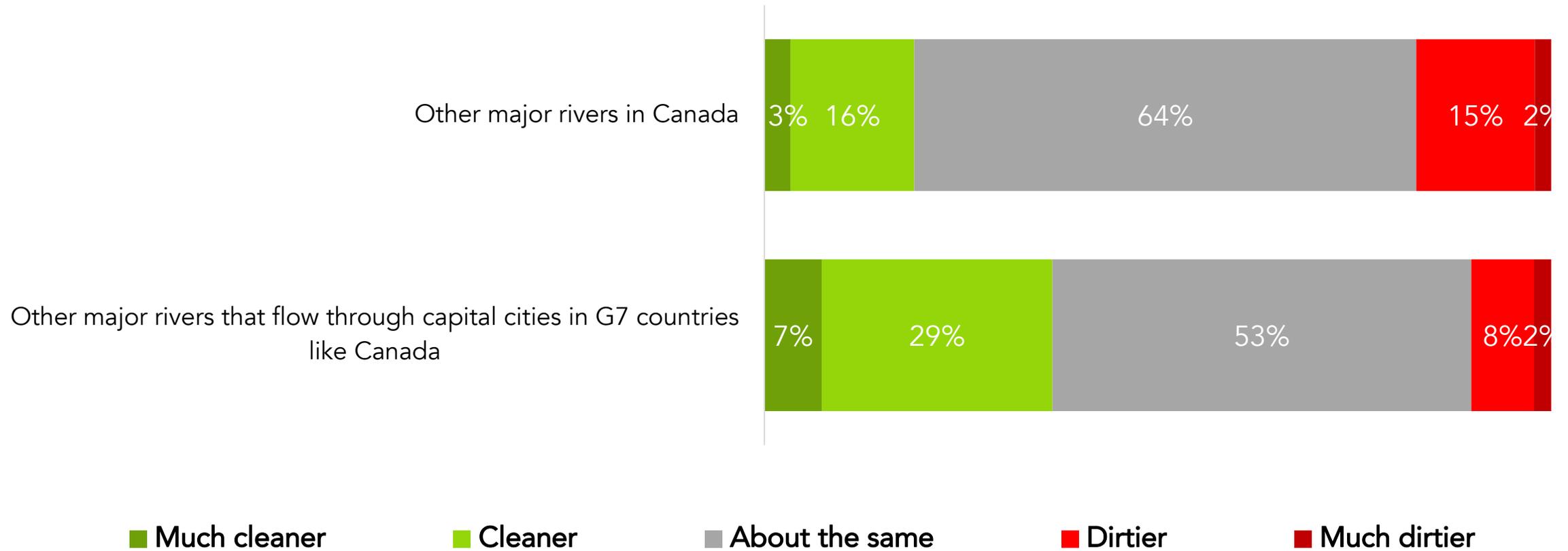
Compared with twenty years ago, would you say the Ottawa River is cleaner, dirtier, or about the same as it was?

# DO YOU CONSIDER THE OTTAWA RIVER TO BE SAFE...



Do you think the water in the Ottawa River is usually safe or unsafe to do the following?

# CANADA'S RIVERS VS. OTHER G7 COUNTRIES



Would you say the Ottawa River is much cleaner, cleaner, about the same, dirtier, or much dirtier than...

# THE OTTAWA RIVER

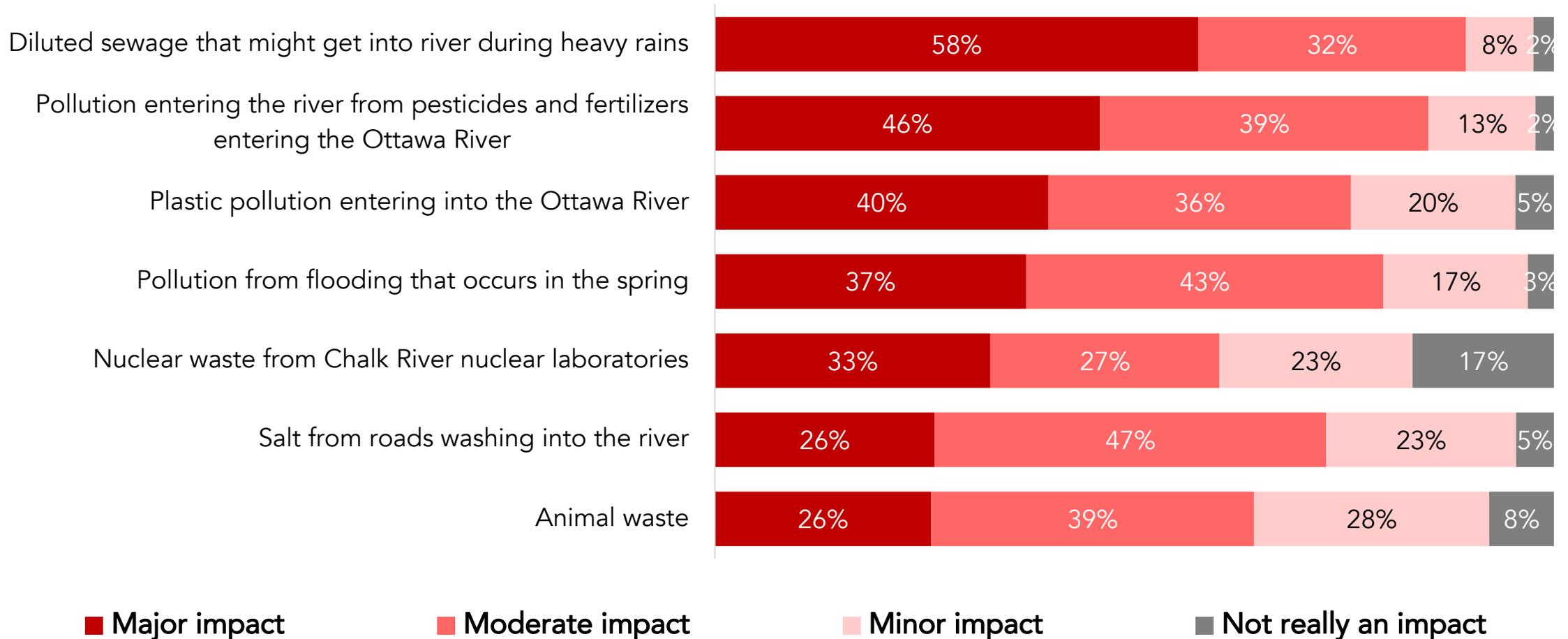
Most believe the river's uncleanliness is due to diluted sewage, pollution from pesticides/fertilizers, and to a lesser degree plastic pollution and pollution from spring flooding. Few believe the main driver of pollution is nuclear waste, road salts, or animal waste.

Most residents think the river is about as clean as other major rivers in Canada, but a significant minority believe it is cleaner than other major rivers flowing through capital cities in G7 countries.

Many see the river as at least a partial source of the region's drinking water, and many appreciate it as an important source of power for the provinces as well.

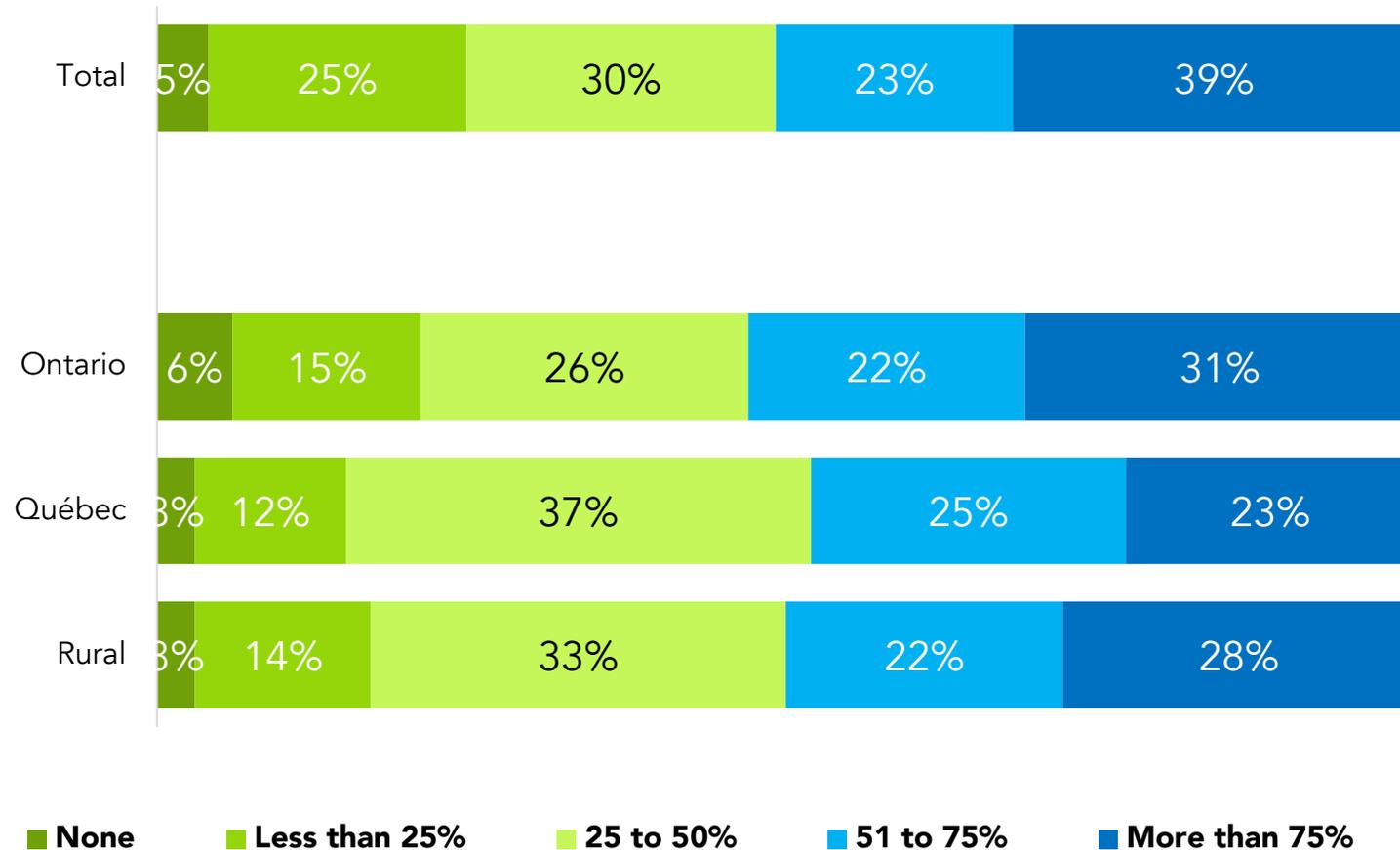
Given that 92% of residents agree the Ottawa river makes living in their area much better, most tend to worry about its health and wellbeing.

# IMPACT OF POLLUTANTS ON WATER QUALITY



Below are reasons why some people might feel the water in the Ottawa River is not clean. For each one, please tell us whether you think this has a major impact, moderate impact, minor impact, or not really an impact on water quality in the river.

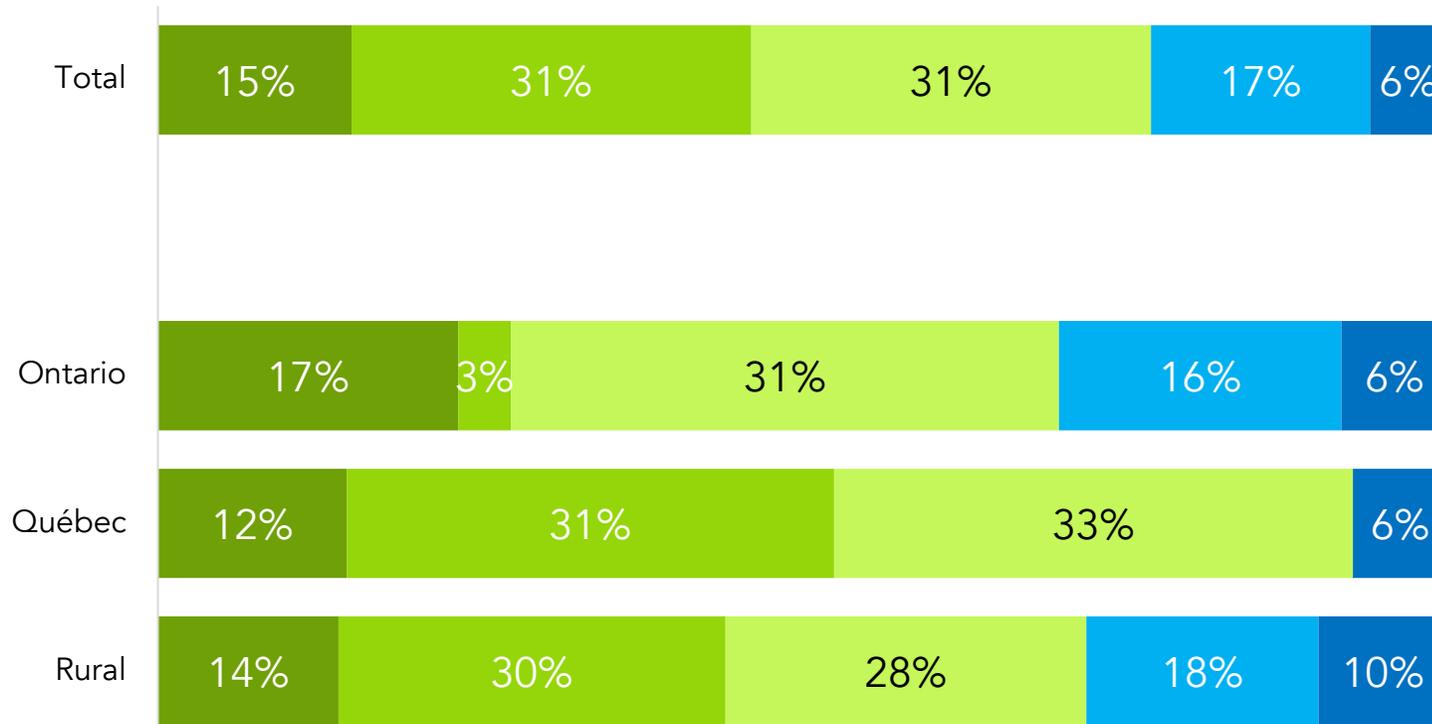
# PERCEIVED DRINKING WATER SOURCE



**Most believe that the Ottawa River provides over 75% of the drinking water for the Ottawa/Gatineau area.**

What percentage of Ottawa/Gatineau's drinking water comes from the Ottawa River?

# PERCEIVED POWER GENERATION ALONG RIVER

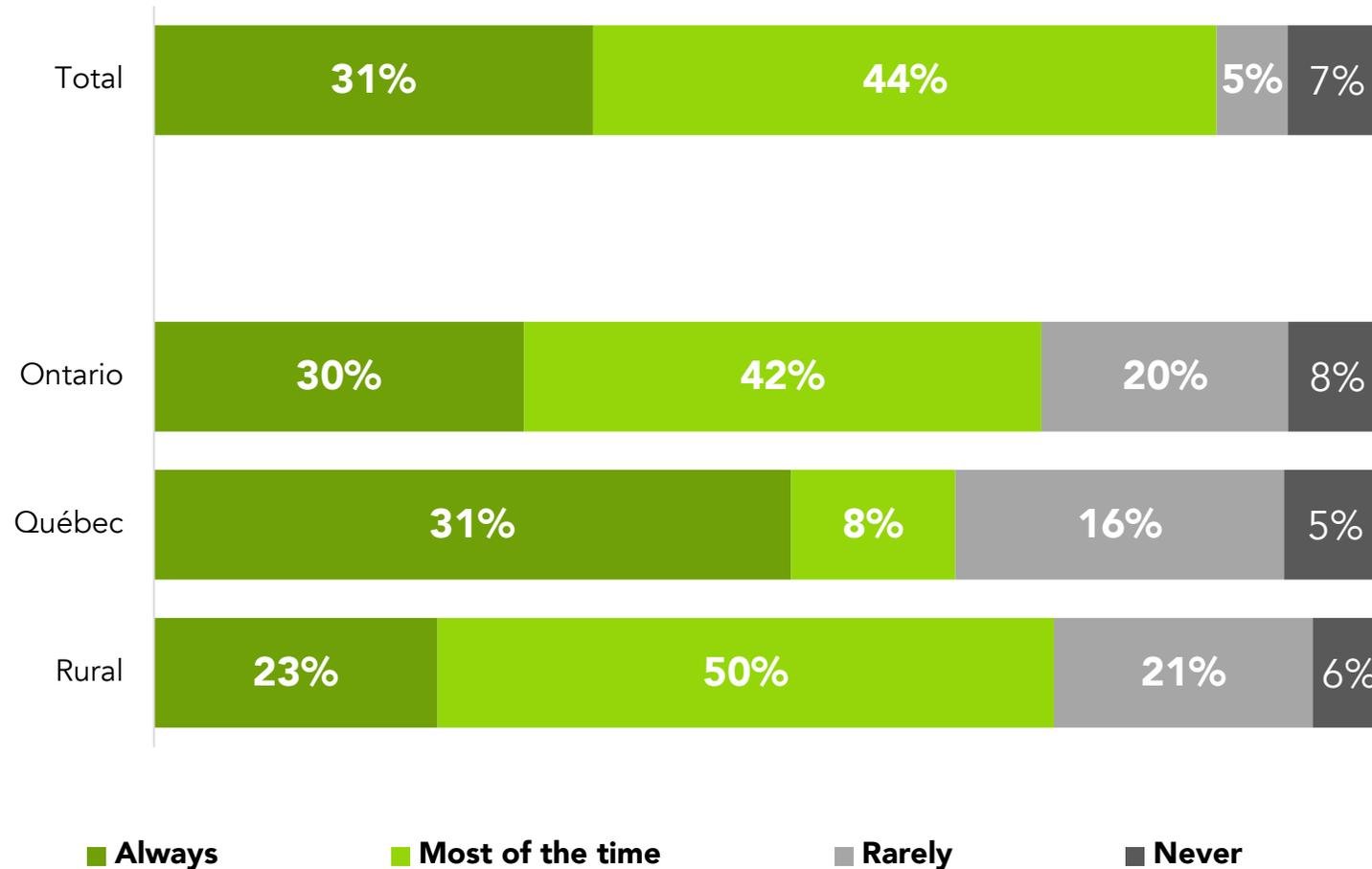


- Less than 100 megawatts, enough to power 120,000 homes
- 500 megawatts, enough to power 600,000 homes
- 1,000 megawatts, enough to power 1 2 million homes
- 4,000 megawatts, enough to power 4 8 million homes
- 9,000 megawatts, enough to power 10 8 million homes

**Most believe that the hydro-electric dams along the Ottawa River produces between 500 and 1,000 megawatts of electricity daily**

How much electricity do you think is produced daily from hydro-electric dams along the Ottawa River?

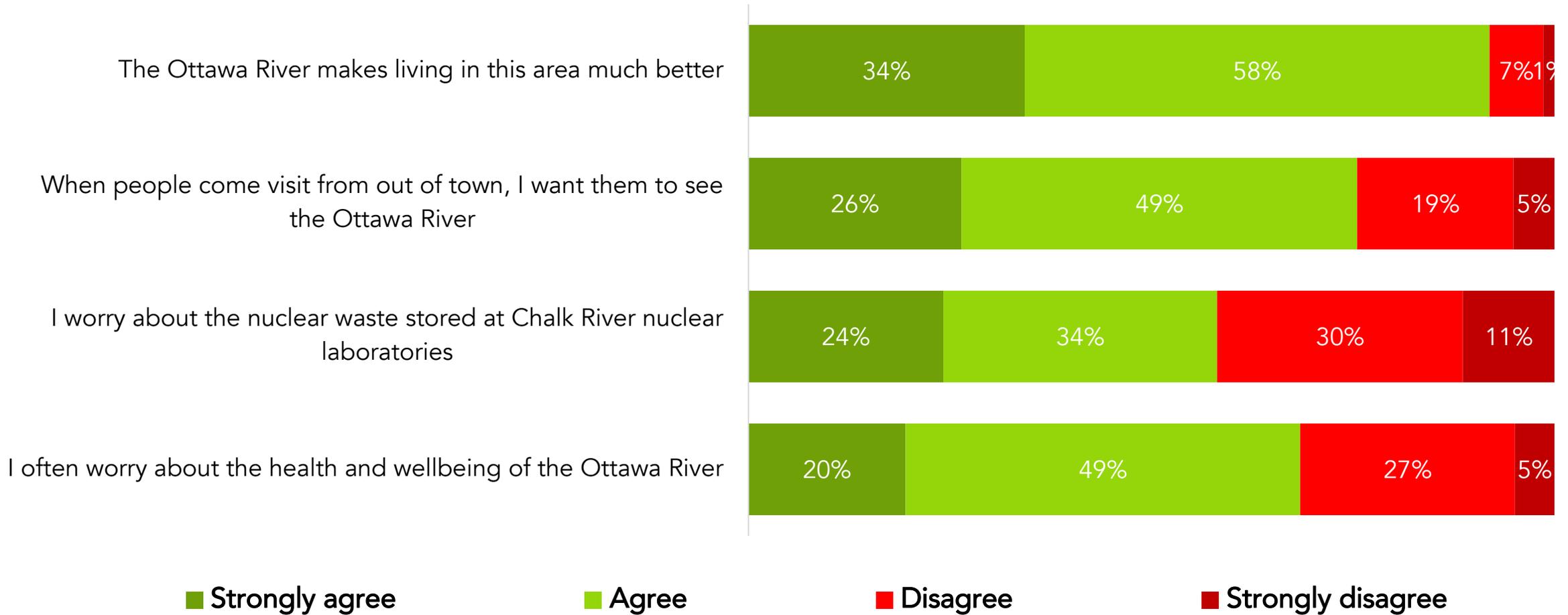
# INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION ALONG THE OTTAWA RIVER



**3 in 4 Canadians (75%) feel that at least most of the time the place names of key rivers and tributary features should carry names that reflect the truth.**

The Ottawa River watershed is located on the traditional unceded Algonquin Anishinaabe territory. Do you feel that the place names of key river and tributary features such as bays and inlets should carry names that reflect this truth?

# DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

# PART 2: RECREATION



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# RIVER RECREATION

Residents' most prolific use of the Ottawa River centres on visiting parks alongside it or running/walking (50%+ occasionally engage in these activities). Significant minorities occasionally bike or visit beaches along the Ottawa river.

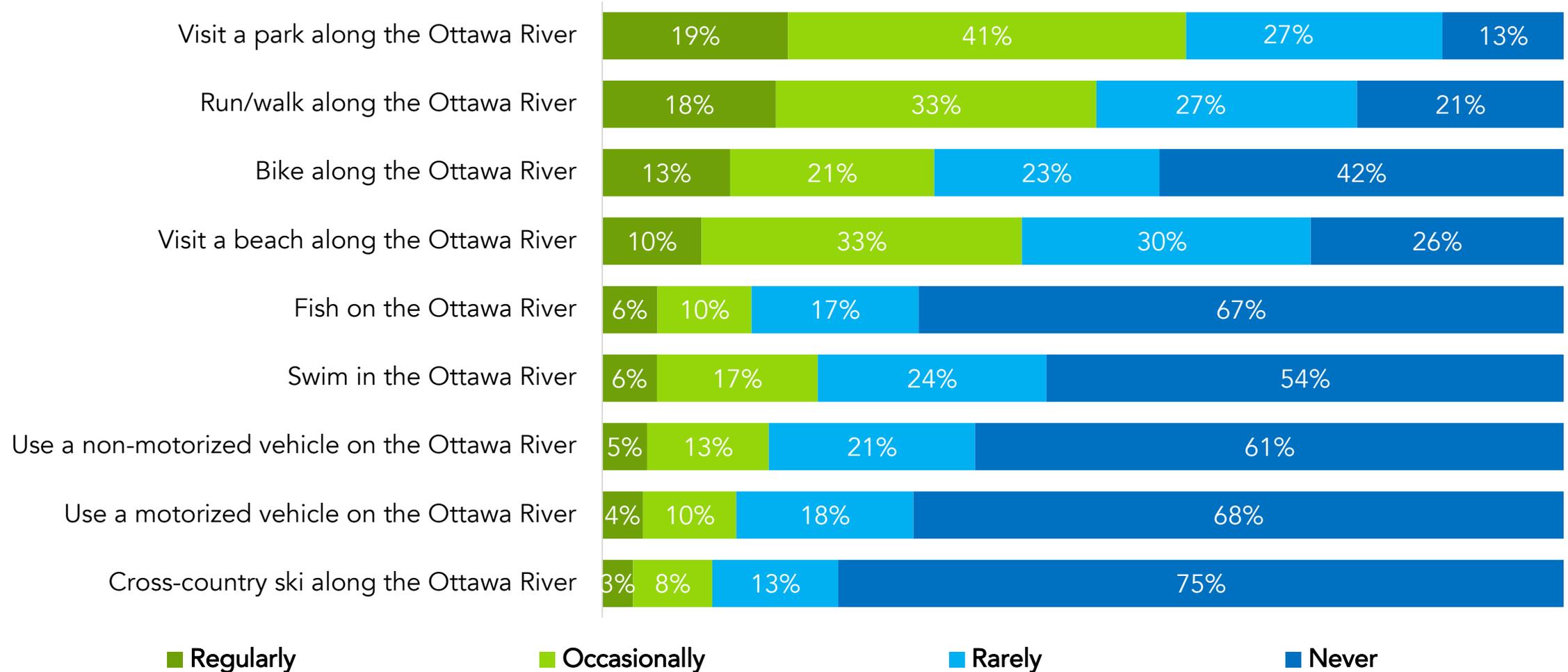
River use is particularly high among residents under 30, though in some cases use is often matched by the 30-44 demographic. Swimming and boating (non-motorized) are led by under 30s, while running/walking are done in high proportion by both groups.

Those who are not comfortable swimming in the Ottawa River mostly refrain due to the belief it is not clean enough. Most who do swim check water quality information beforehand.

Typically swimming residents will go to their municipal website, check signage, look at media, or ask someone to verify water quality. Few use a dedicated resource like the swim guide website or app. Most who do not use watercraft don't have the right equipment or would not enjoy it. It's not really about access or how far the river is from their homes, though about 1 in 10 report this as being a problem.

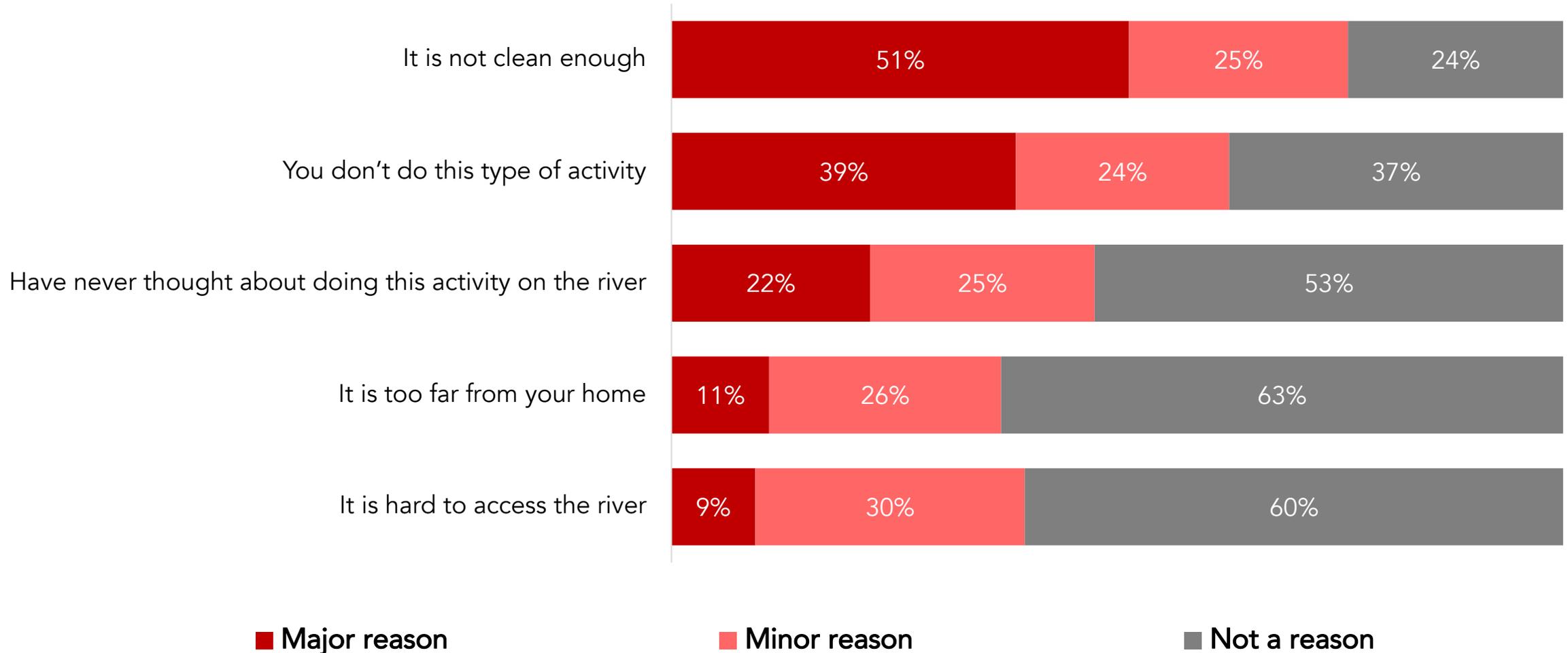
Residents suggest that if there were a place on the Ottawa River where they could rent or learn to use a watercraft, they would be likely to use it. This proposition is particularly popular to younger residents who presumably have less equipment of their own.

# HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE OTTAWA RIVER TO...



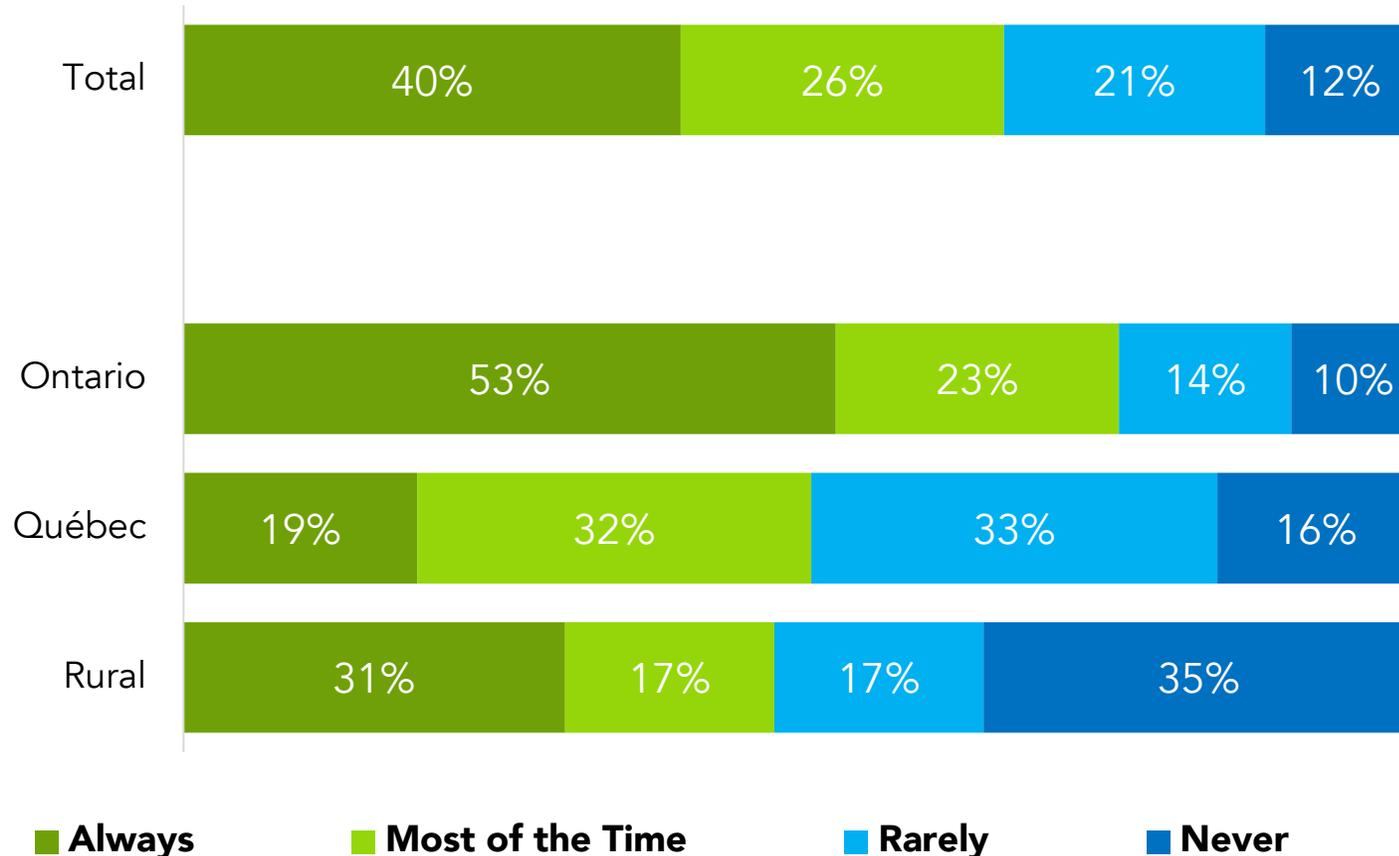
How often, if at all, do you do the following when in season?

# REASONS WHY CNDS DON'T SWIM IN OTTAWA RIVER



[if rarely/never swim] To what extent, if at all, are the following reasons why you rarely or never swim in the Ottawa River?

# WATER QUALITY INFORMATION PRIOR TO SWIMMING

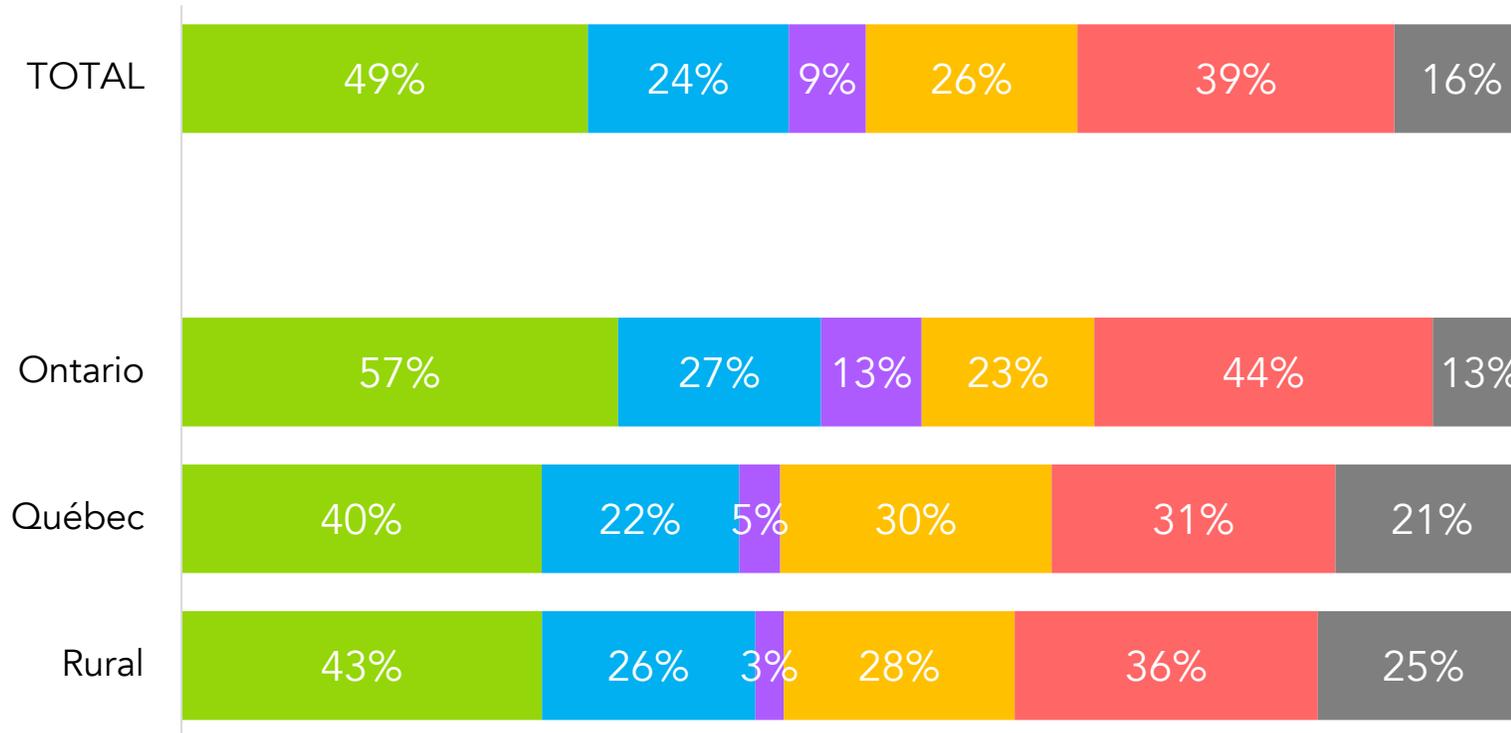


**53% of residents living in Ontario always check the water quality of the area before going swimming.**

**35% of those living in rural areas do not check the water quality of the area before going swimming.**

[if swim regularly/occasionally] Before swimming in the river, how often do you look for information about the water quality at the beach or swimming location you intend to visit?

# RESOURCES TO DETERMINE WATER QUALITY



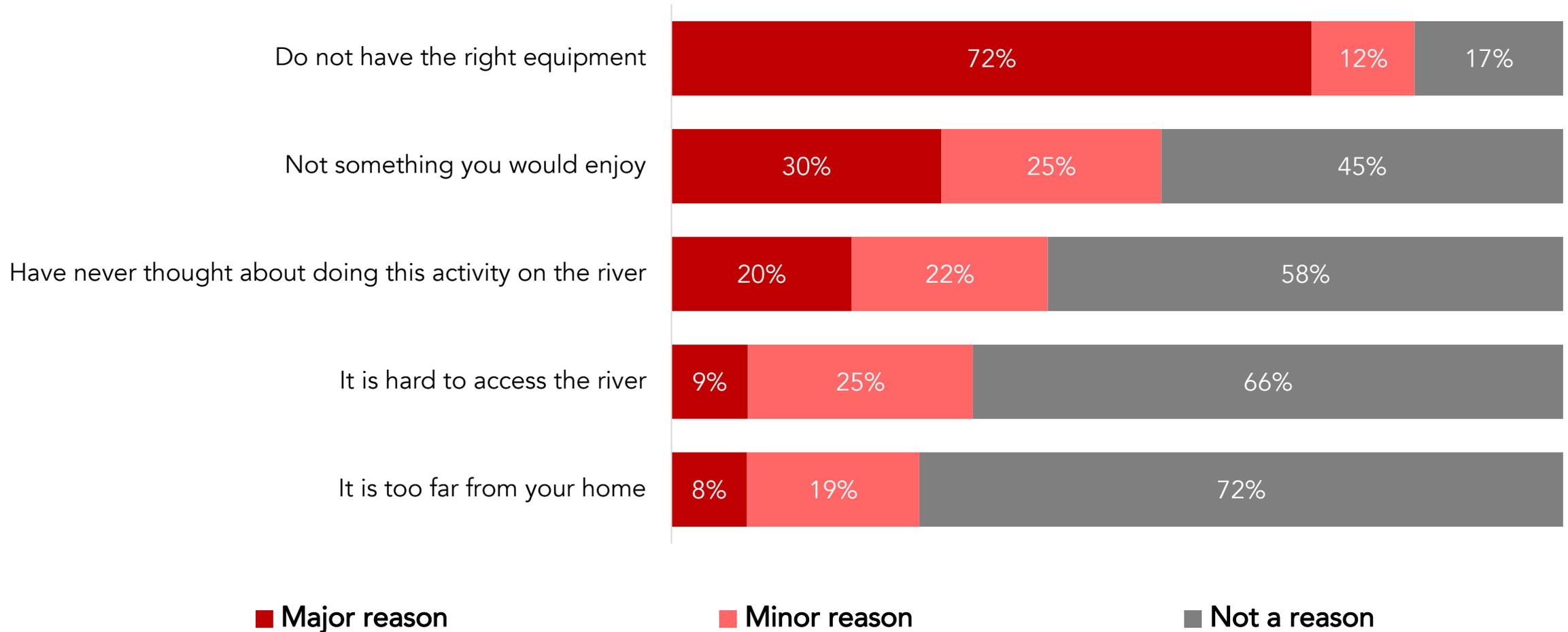
**Nearly half of all residents use a municipalities website for information on water quality before swimming.**

**Few residents use the Swim Guide website or app for information on water quality before swimming.**

- Municipal website
- Newspapers, radio or TV
- The Swim Guide website or App
- Word of mouth
- Signage on the beach
- None of these

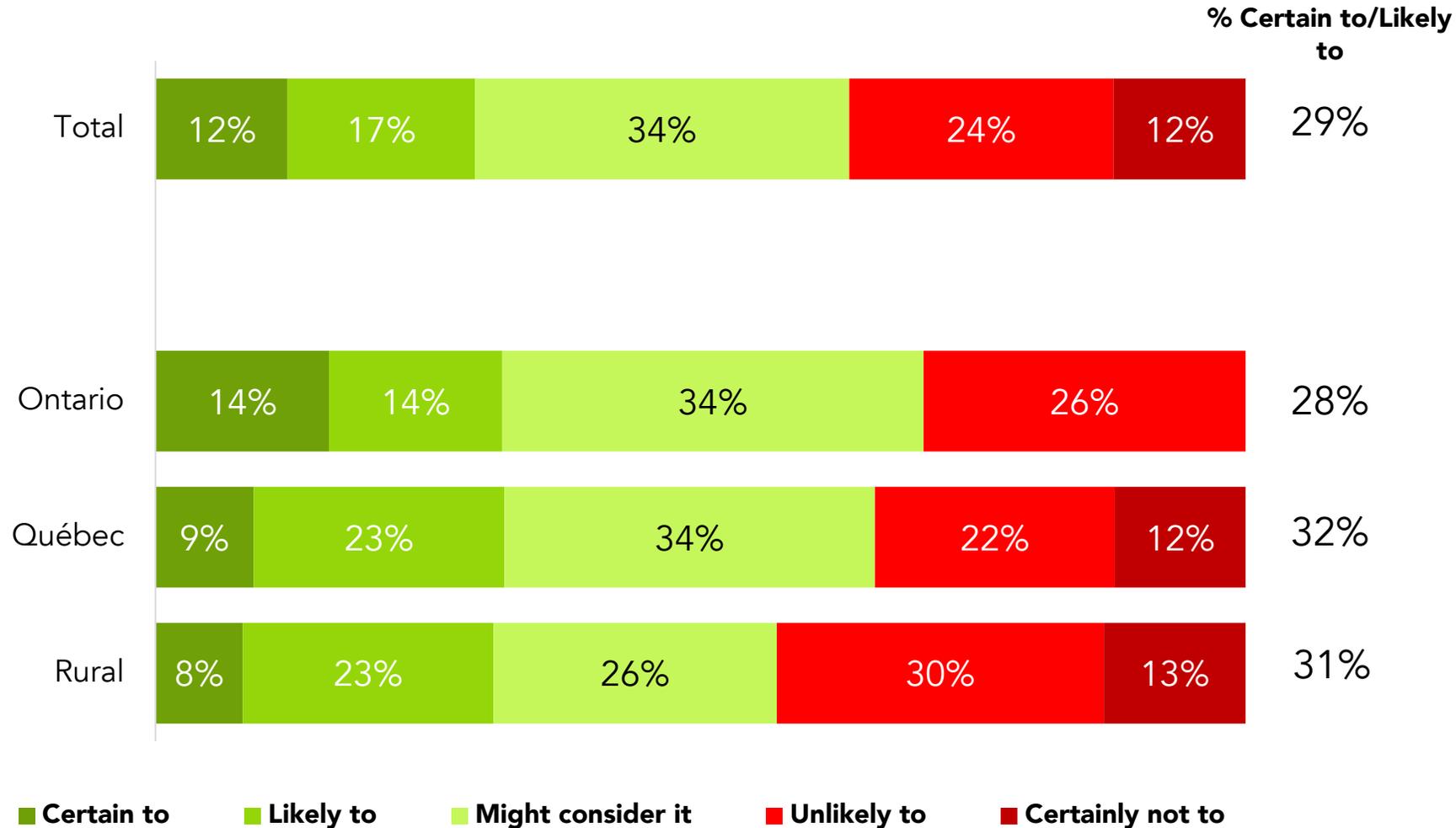
What resource do you usually use to determine the water quality at the beach or location? Select all that apply

# WATERCRAFT VEHICLES ON THE OTTAWA RIVER



[If rarely/never to non-motorized vehicle] To what extent, if at all, are the following reasons why you rarely or never use a watercraft on the Ottawa River?

# RENT/LEARNING TO USE A WATERCRAFT



**Most would at least consider renting/learning to use a watercraft if there was a place on the Ottawa River to do so.**

If there was a place on the Ottawa River where you could rent and/or learn to use a watercraft, how likely are you to use it?

# PART 3: ROLE OF GOVERNMENT



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# ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

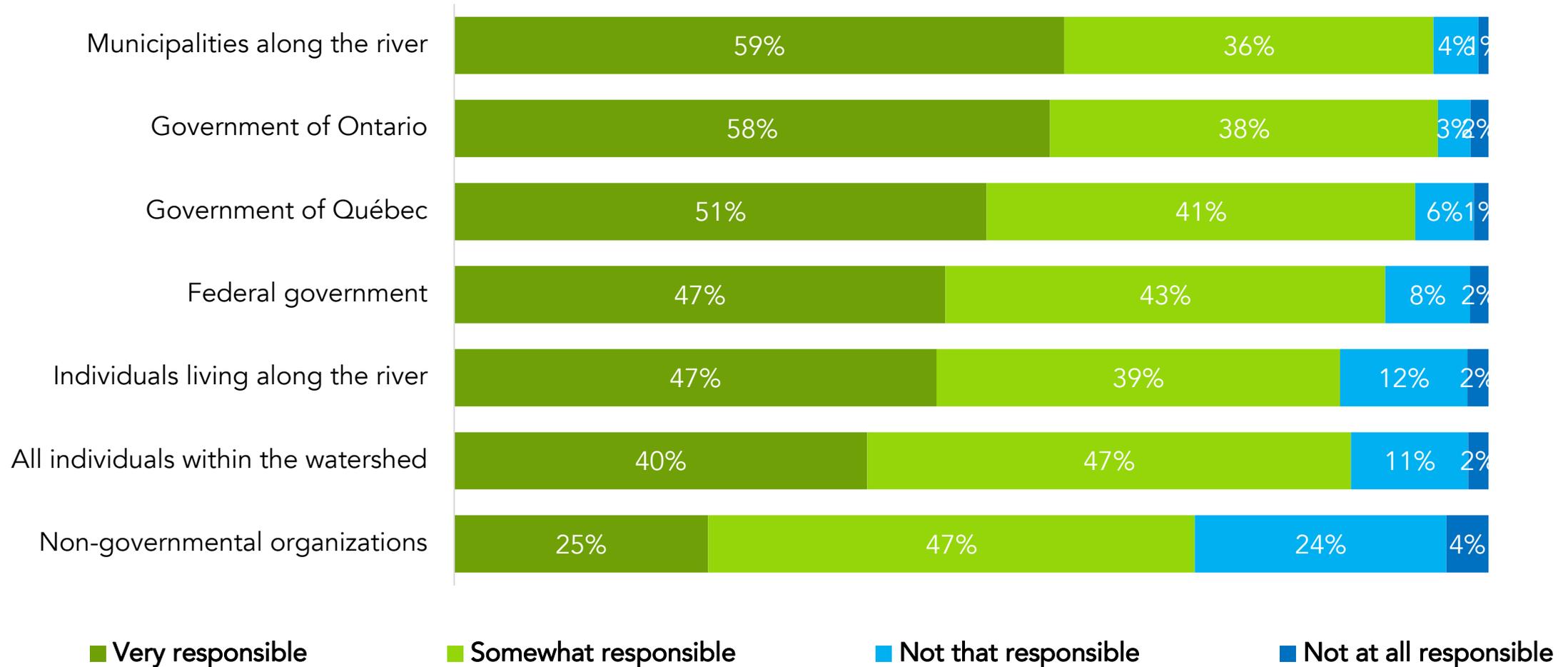
Most residents believe governments of all levels need to be responsible for keeping the river clean, while individuals/NGOs are seen as responsible but to a more muted degree.

Virtually all residents support the federal and provincial government working together to mitigate flooding along the Ottawa River, while opposing homes being rebuilt in the floodplains.

Most rate their municipality's efforts to protect the rivers and lakes within their boundaries as at least good. Fewer rate these efforts poorly, though in total about half of residents assess efforts as either poor or communicate they aren't sure.

When asked if governments should invest more money to help protect and restore the Ottawa river, almost all residents in the area are on board. This overwhelming support for action really crosses party lines, though conservative voters are a bit more muted on the matter than their progressive neighbours.

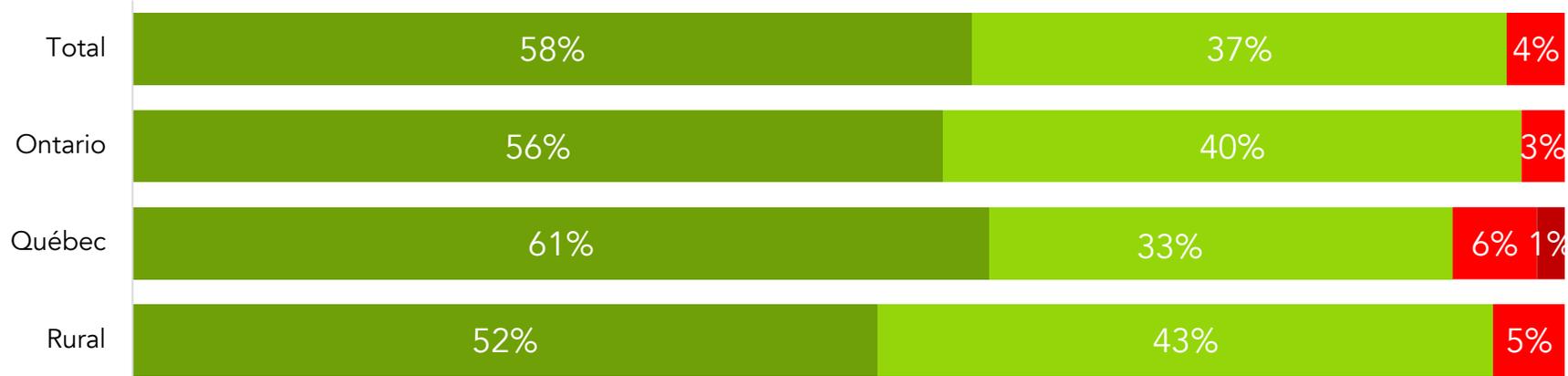
# RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEEPING THE RIVER CLEAN



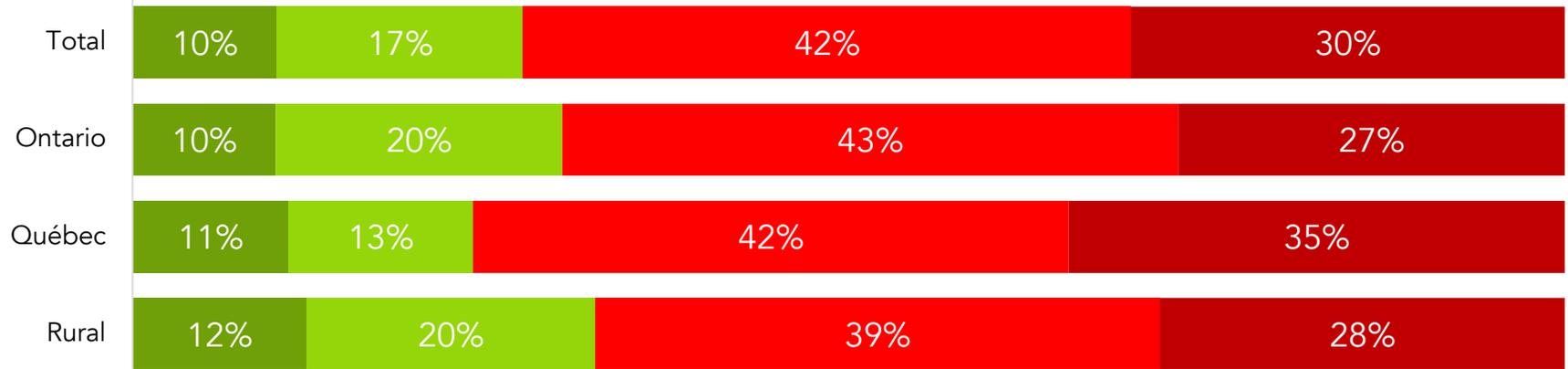
Please rate the following on the degree to which you believe they are responsible for keeping the river clean.

# CANADIANS' SUPPORT FOR...

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD WORK TOGETHER MORE TO MITIGATE FLOODING ALONG THE OTTAWA RIVER



HOMES BEING REBUILT IN THE FLOODPLAINS



■ Strongly Support

■ Support

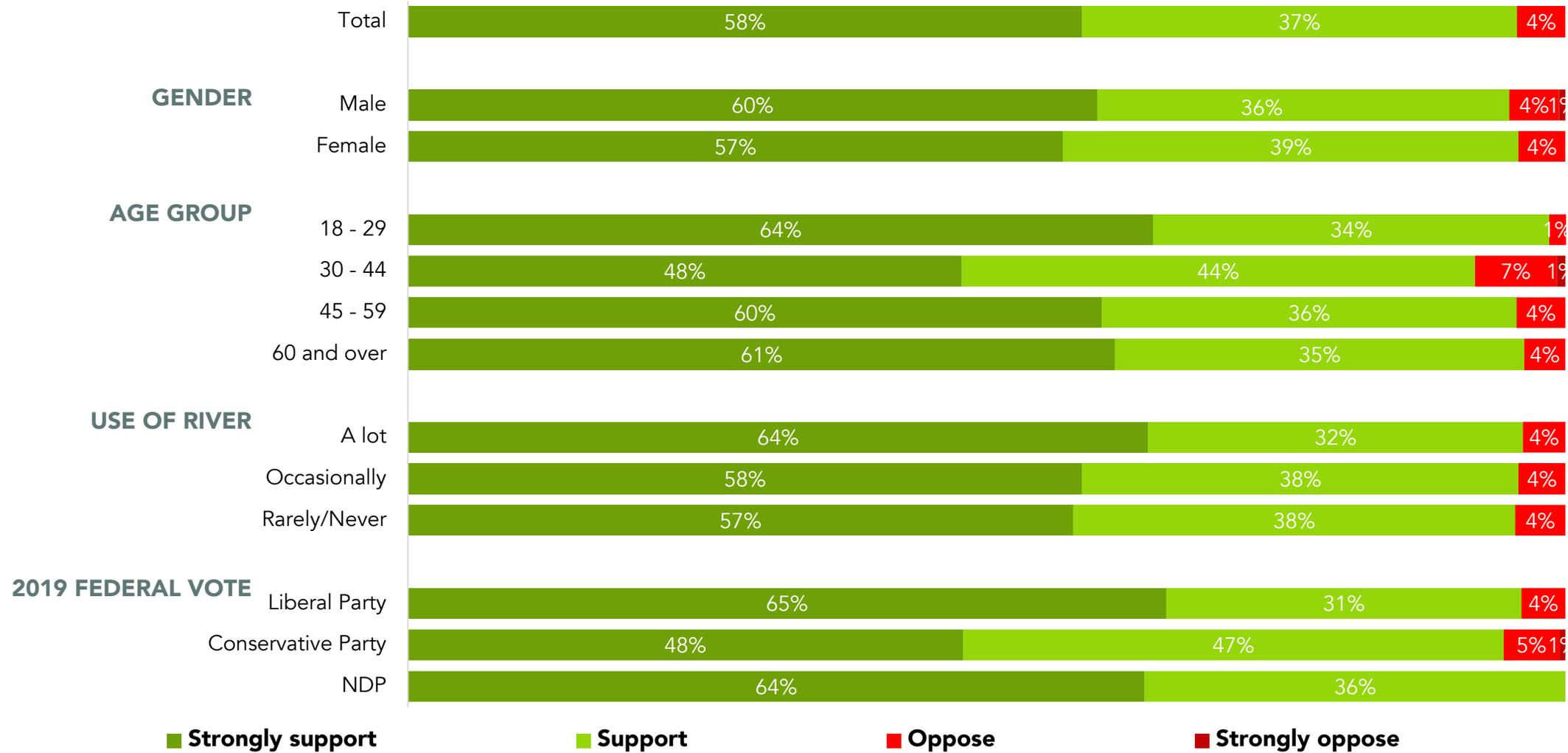
■ Oppose

■ Strongly Oppose

Would you support or oppose the federal government and provincial governments working together more to mitigate flooding along the Ottawa River? | Would you support or oppose homes being rebuilt in the floodplains?

# CANADIANS' SUPPORT FOR...

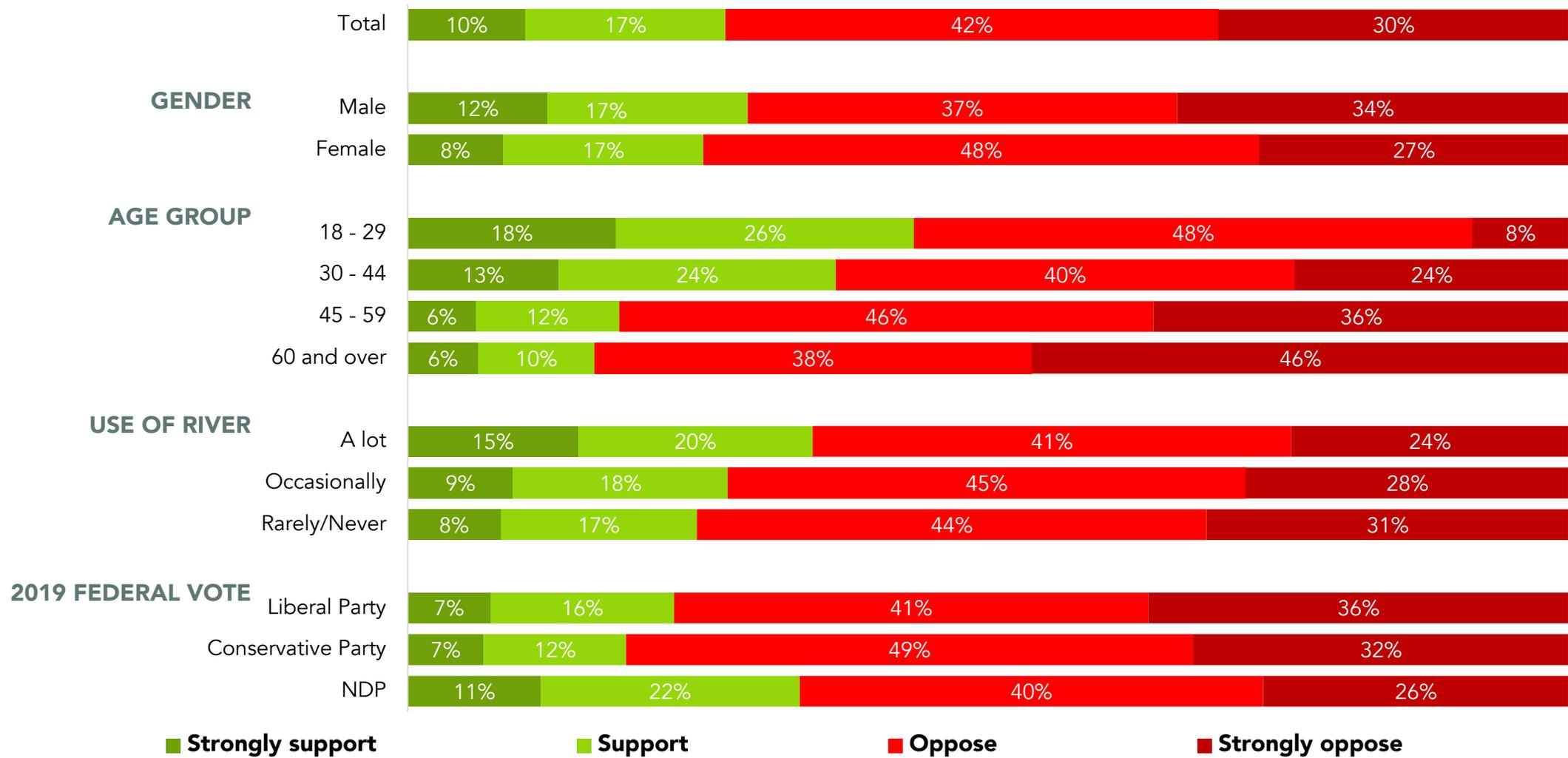
## FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVS WORKING TOGETHER TO MITIGATE FLOODING ALONG OTTAWA RIVER



Would you support or oppose the federal government and provincial governments working together more to mitigate flooding along the Ottawa River?

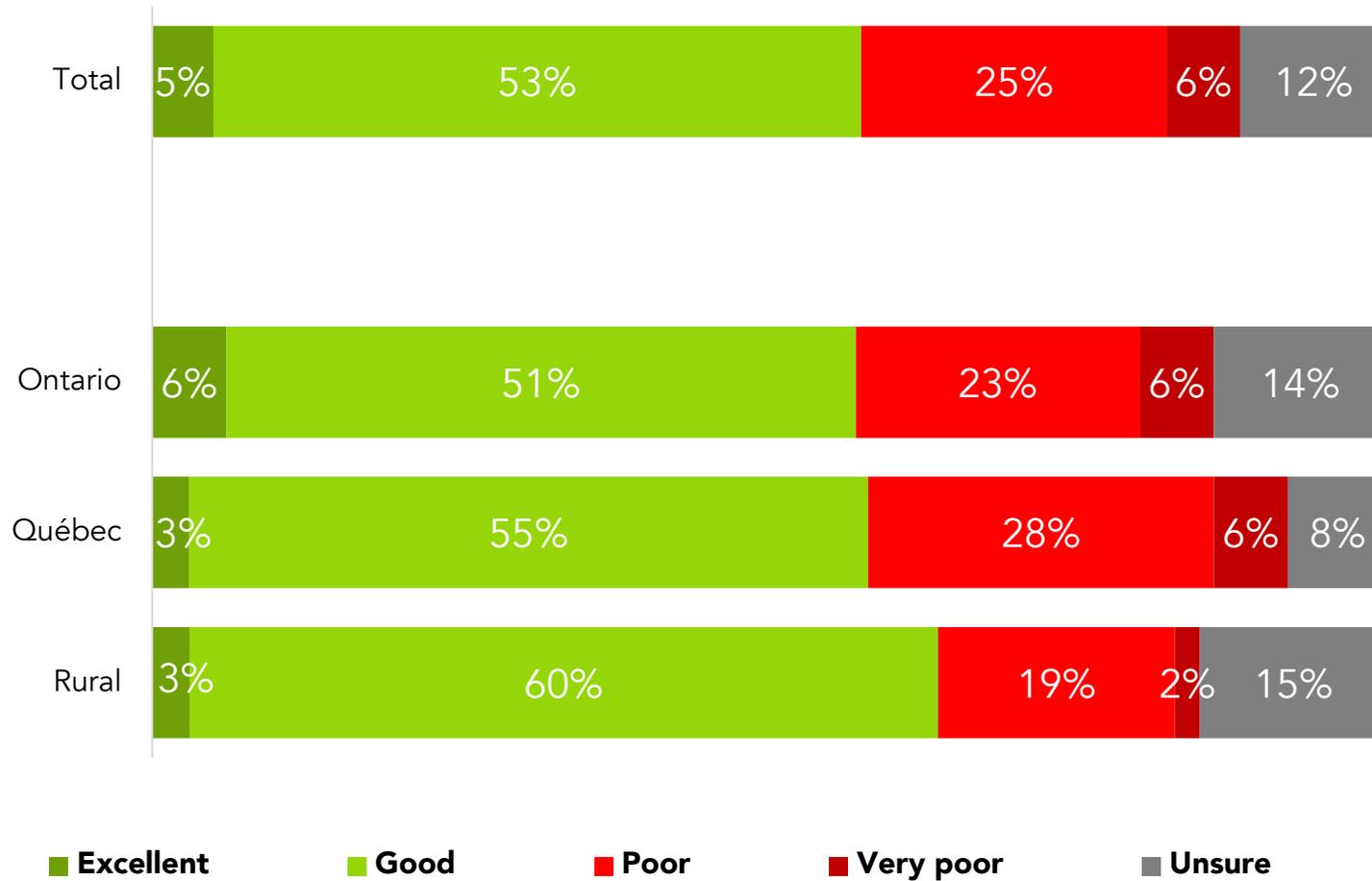
# CANADIANS' SUPPORT FOR...

## HOMES BEING REBUILT IN THE FLOODPLAINS



Would you support or oppose homes being rebuilt in the floodplains?

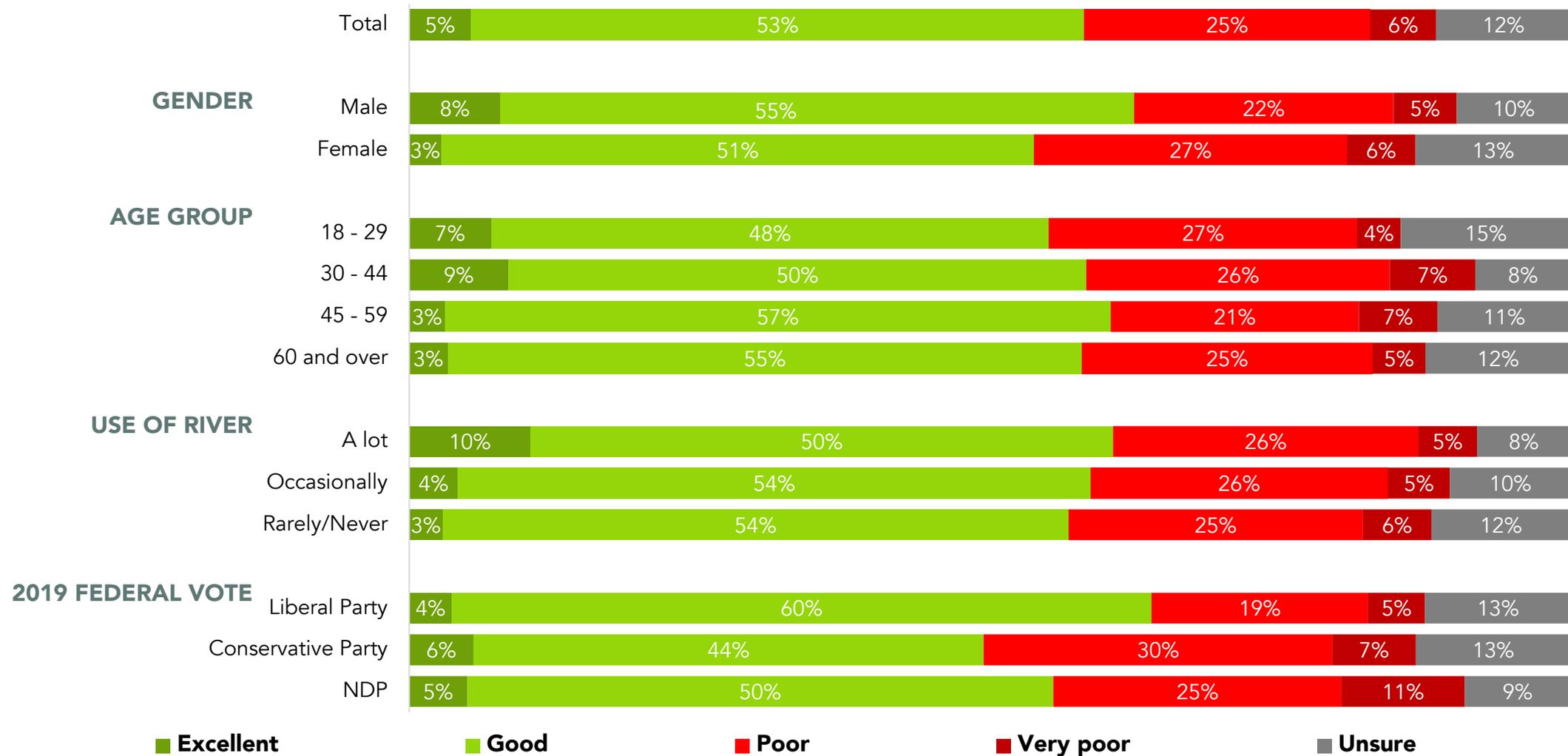
# MUNICIPALITIES' EFFORTS TO PROTECT RIVERS AND LAKES



**Over half of Canadians rate their municipality's efforts to protect the rivers and lakes in their boundaries as excellent/good.**

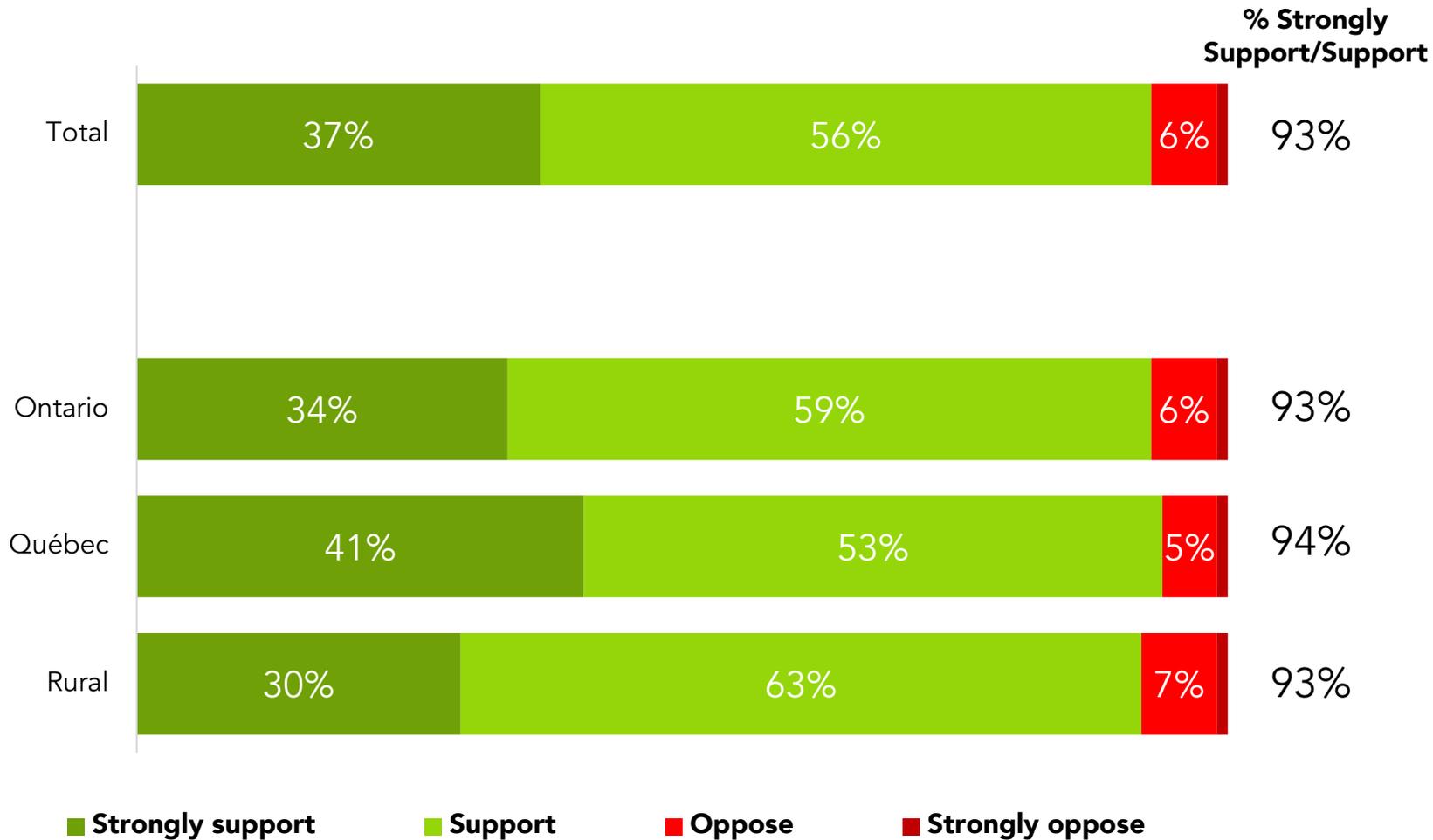
How would you rate your municipality's effort to protect the rivers and lakes in their boundaries?

# MUNICIPALITIES' EFFORTS TO PROTECT RIVERS AND LAKES



How would you rate your municipality's effort to protect the rivers and lakes in their boundaries?

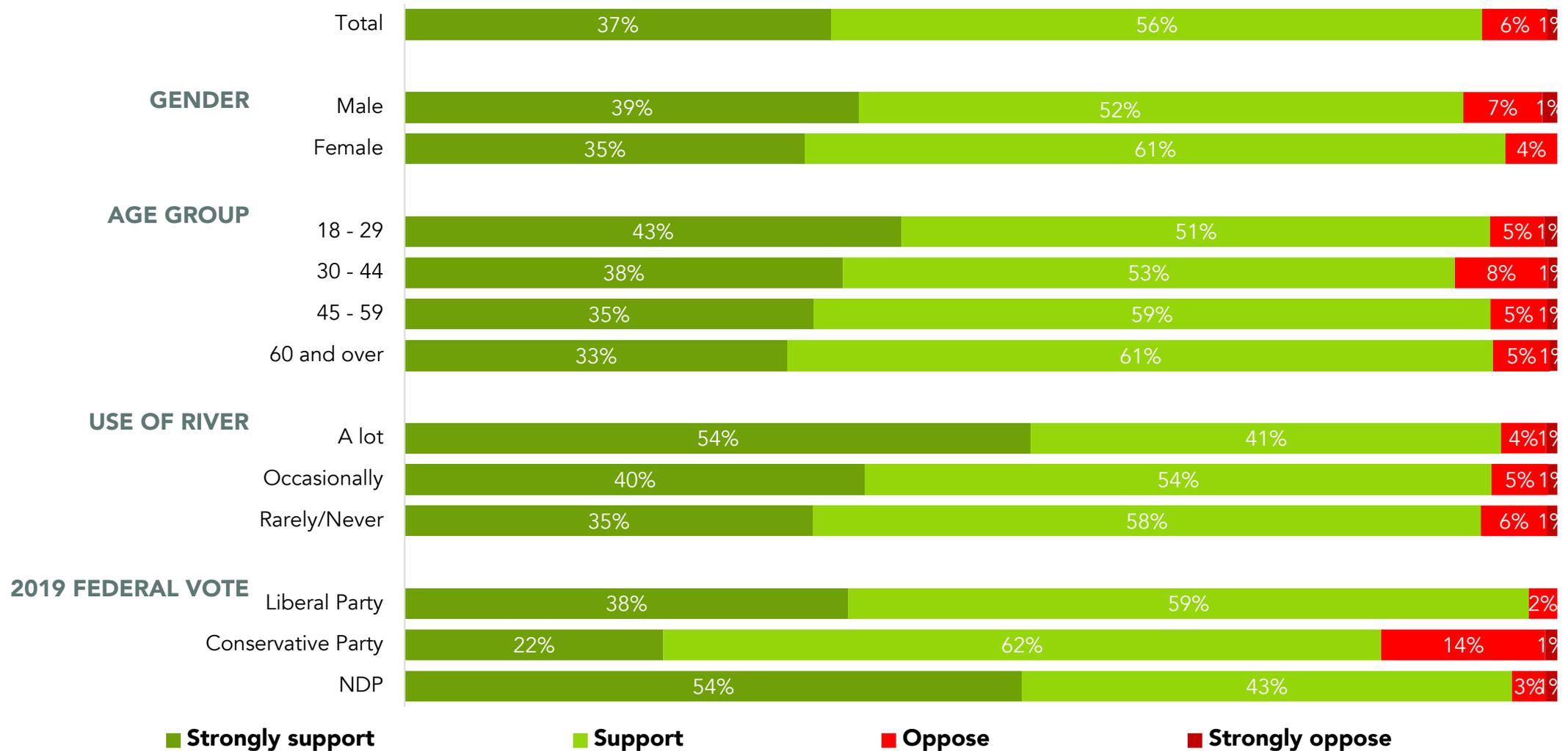
# SHOULD GOVERNMENTS INVEST MORE INTO PROTECTING AND RESTORING THE OTTAWA RIVER?



**A large majority of individuals believe that the governments should invest more into the Ottawa River to further protect and restore it.**

Would you support or oppose: Governments should invest more money to help protect and to restore the Ottawa River?

# SHOULD GOVERNMENTS INVEST MORE INTO PROTECTING AND RESTORING THE OTTAWA RIVER?



Would you support or oppose: Governments should invest more money to help protect and to restore the Ottawa River?