

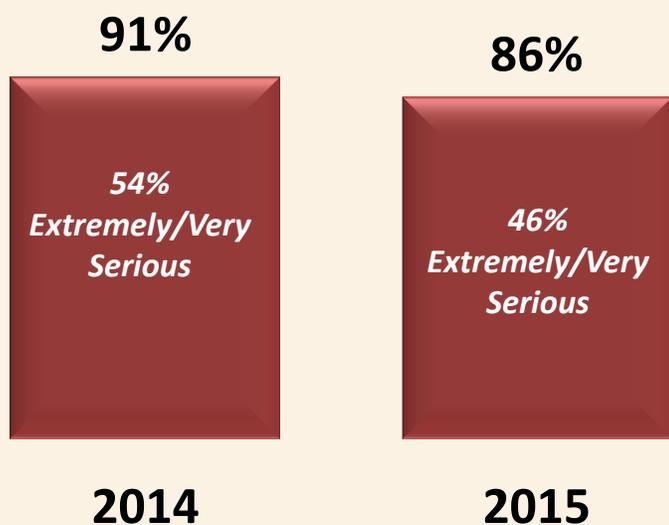
Water

To paraphrase Norman MacLean in one of the most famous Western-set novels, the people of this region do appear to be haunted by waters. They say that clean water drew them to the West, worry about not having enough and want to ensure there is plenty flowing in Western rivers.

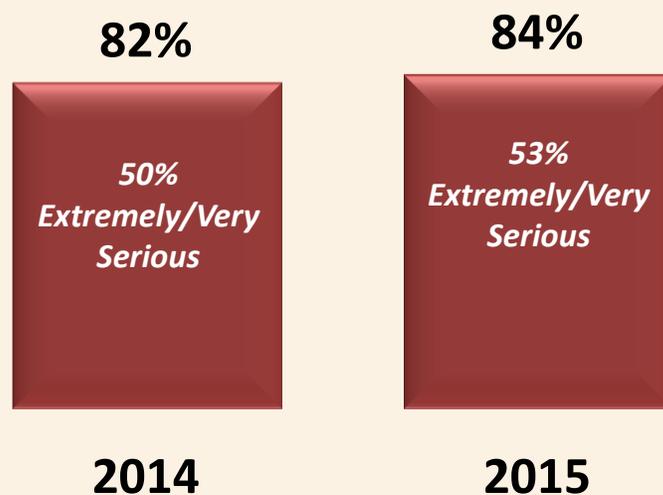
Water worries tie economic ones in the West.

In a significant shift from past years, water is now more likely to be viewed by Western voters as an extremely or very serious problem than unemployment. In the past year, perceptions of unemployment, typically the most concerning economic issue, have declined. Conversely, the intensity of concern about low level of water in rivers has increased slightly. Clearly, overall both are viewed as at least somewhat serious problems, but economic concerns have faded in intensity, so that this water issue now eclipses the economic problem.

Unemployment



Low Level of Water in Rivers



■ Total Serious



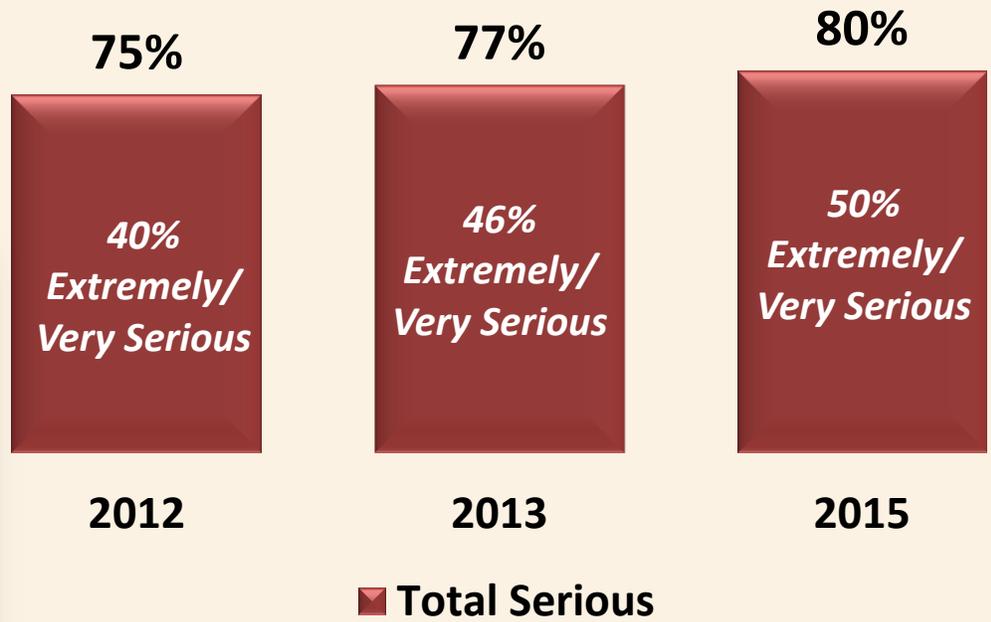
Voters in Arizona and New Mexico are most apt to say that “low level of water in rivers” is an extremely or very serious problem (61% and 68% respectively), as do Hispanic voters (66%).

Similarly, four-in-five voters (80%) point to “inadequate water supplies” as a serious problem in their state, with one-half (50%) saying it is an extremely or very serious problem.

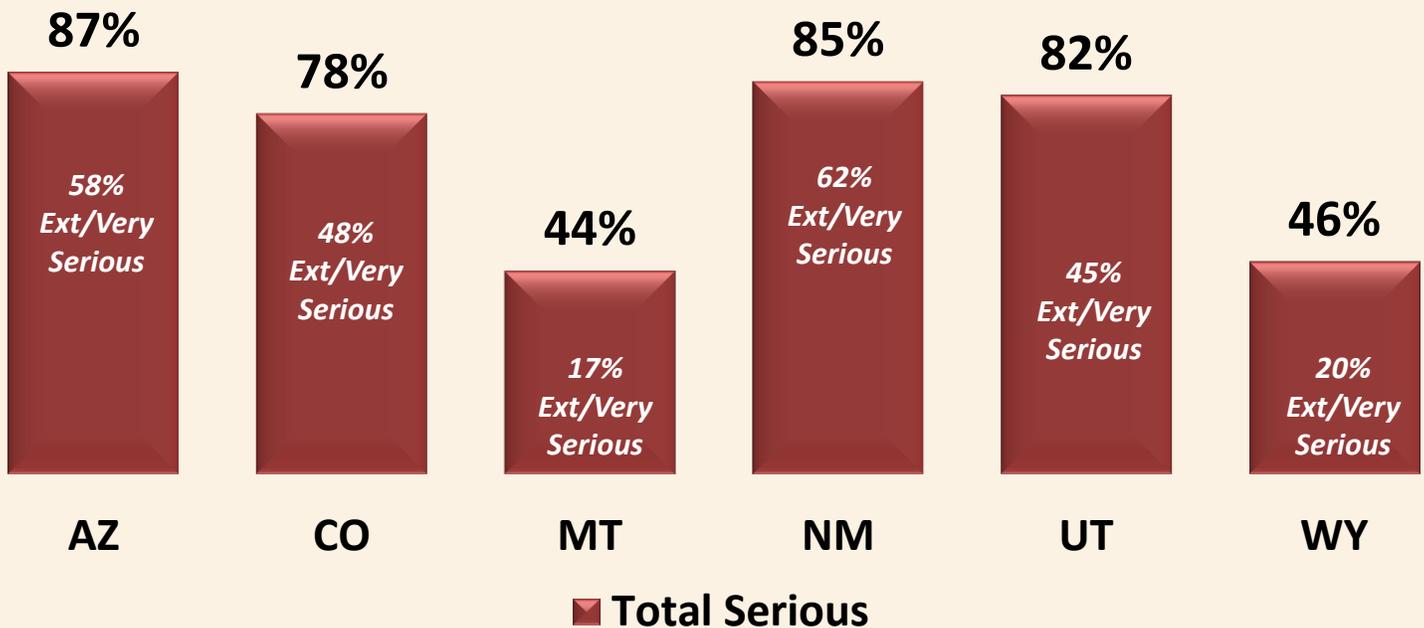
Perceptions of water supplies as a problem has increased every single year the survey has probed voters’ views of this issue.



Inadequate Water Supplies Trend



This is one issue where there are major geographic distinctions from north to south, as seen here:



Voters vastly prefer using the current water supply more wisely, rather than diverting more water from rivers in less populated areas of their state.

In Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, we also probed views of potential solutions to these water woes. Three-quarters or more in each of these states say that in order to deal with future water shortages, they would prefer the state encourage more water conservation, recycling of water, and reducing use of water. This sentiment cuts across partisan, ethnic, and gender lines. Moreover, it is just as strong a view as what we saw last year.

“Many experts say that (STATE) will likely face water shortage situations in the future. They say that we face a choice in how we address that shortage. So, which one of the following would you prefer state water officials invest more time and resources in pursuing?”

Using our current water supply more wisely, by encouraging more water conservation, reducing use, and increasing recycling of water



Diverting more water from rivers in less populated areas of the state to communities where more people live



Water clearly matters to Western voters. A majority say that clean water is one of the primary factors, along with clean air and the environment, in deciding to live and stay in the West.

More than half (57%) of voters cite the clean air, clean water, and environment as a significant factor for living in the West, more than any other reason. This is one of the top reasons voters across the political spectrum, and in every state provide as a significant factor in their decision to live in the West.



It is clear that voters in the West are concerned that water will not always be clean in their home state.

Voters in the west are worried about the pollution of rivers, lakes, and stream, with 79% saying it is a serious problem. Forty-three percent (43%) say it is an extremely or very serious problem. Two critical voter sub-groups that tend to decide elections in these states, Hispanics and suburban women, are especially concerned about water pollution.

