

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR SEPTIC TO SEWER CONVERSION PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA: A COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL MARKETING APPROACH

Alachua · Hernando · Leon · Marion · Orange ·
Seminole · Wakulla

Lisa Krinsky

March 3, 2021



**Center for
Public Issues Education**

NEWS

Everyone wants to clean up the lagoon, so why are sewer-conversion grants going unused?

Janet Begley Special to TCPalm

Published 4:07 p.m. ET Jan. 28, 2021

[View Comments](#)



SEBASTIAN—The city's septic-to-sewer conversion program, which provides grants to homeowners and businesses in the community redevelopment area east of U.S. 1 to hook up to the county sewer system, has had few takers.



Sandy Soil And Rising Seas Spell Septic Tank Disaster In Florida

By NPR News

July 17, 2019 Environment

Not everyone accepts reasoning for septic conversions, cost

By ANDREA TRACITZER Assistant Editor Oct 8, 2018 Updated: Jun 23, 2020 7 min to read



Wekiva septic conversion stinks for homeowners but it may save the springs

By STEPHEN HUDAK
ORLANDO SENTINEL | NOV 01, 2019 AT 12:29 PM



Ormond Beach suspends septic-to-sewer conversion in unanimous vote

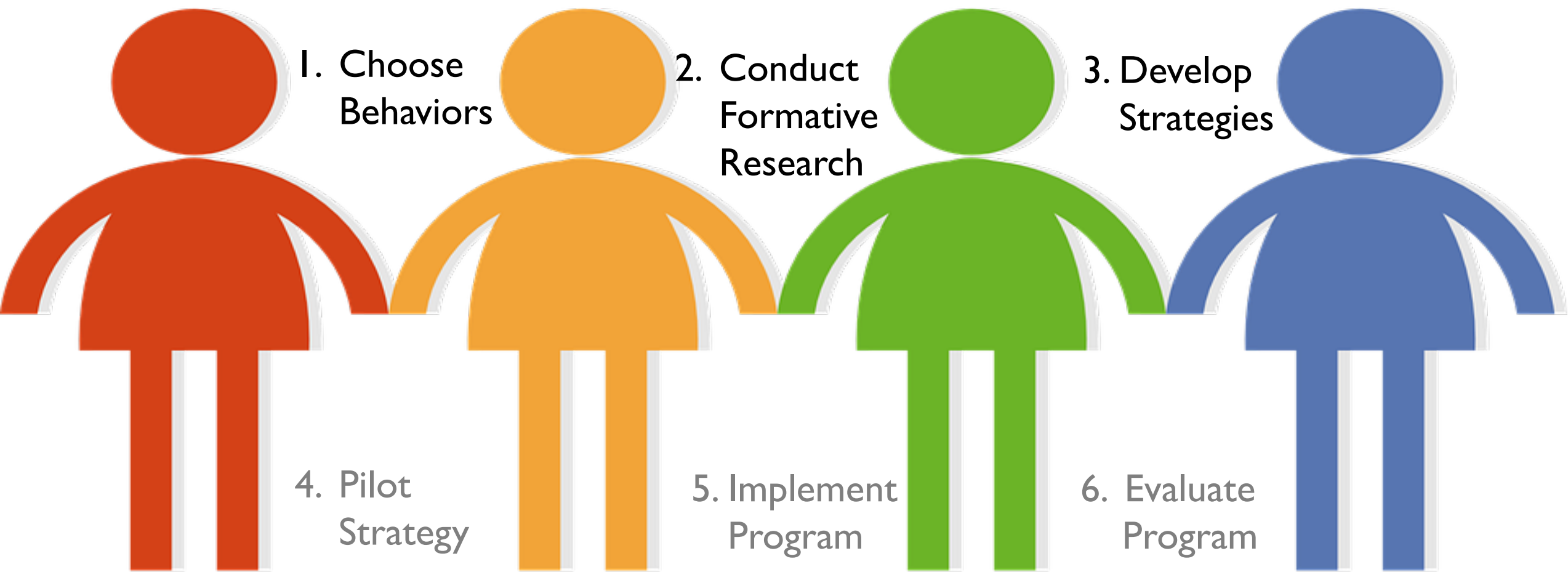


THE TYPICAL APPROACH



PURPOSE

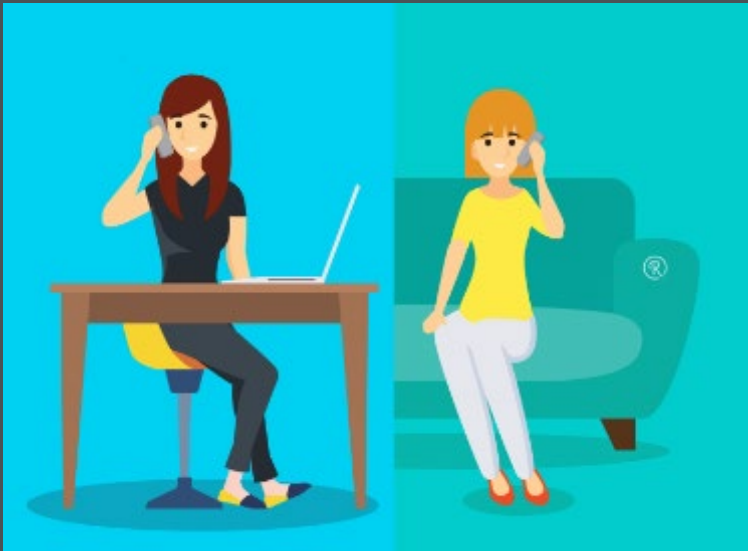
Use formative methods to develop a statewide education plan through the lens of community-based social marketing to inform septic to sewer (S2S) conversion program marketing efforts



COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL MARKETING

METHODS

Interviews



Focus Groups



Online survey



2. Formative barrier & benefit research



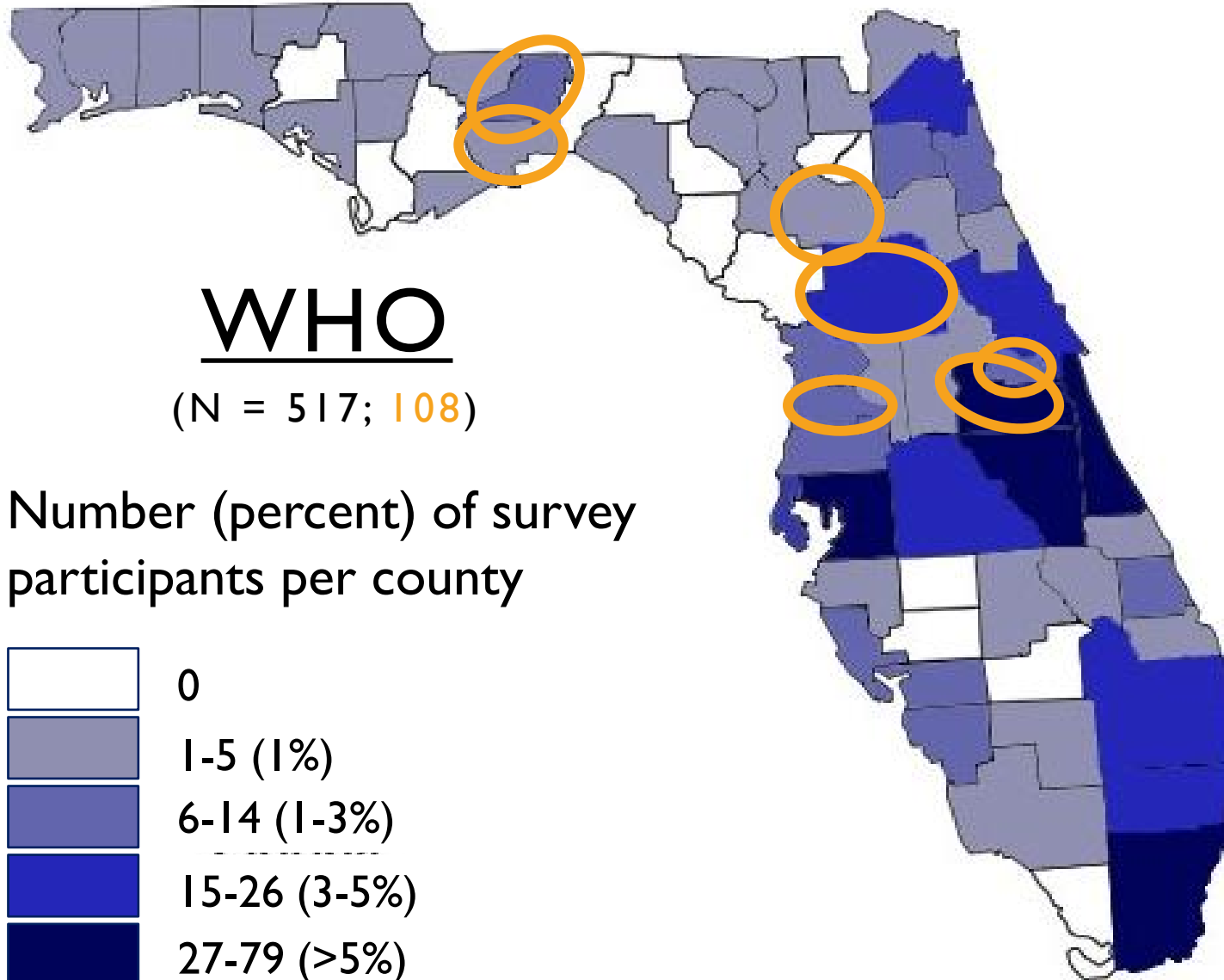
3. DEVELOP STRATEGIES

Tools include:

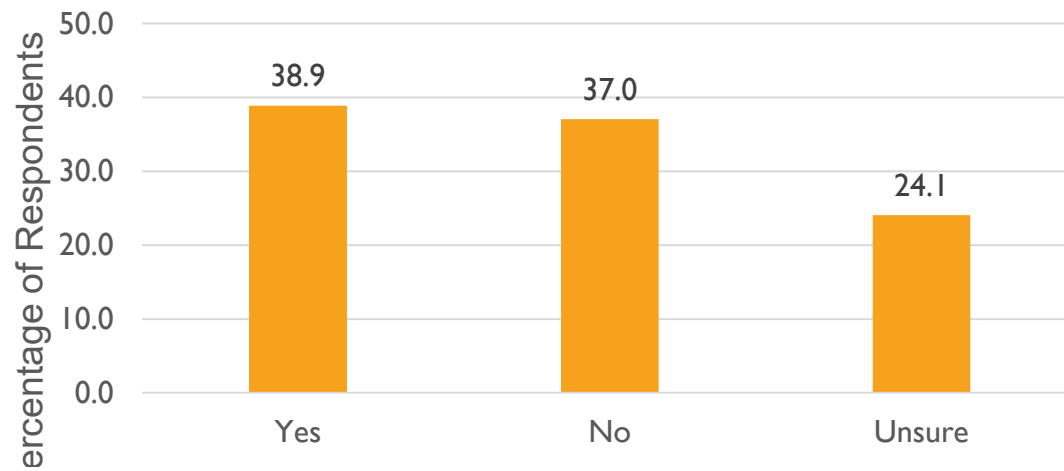
- Removal of barriers
- Social norms
- Prompts
- Asking for commitment
- Incentives
- Messages
- Diffusion

- Use barriers and benefits to design interventions based also on audience needs and characteristics.
- **Tools are selected** based on your research

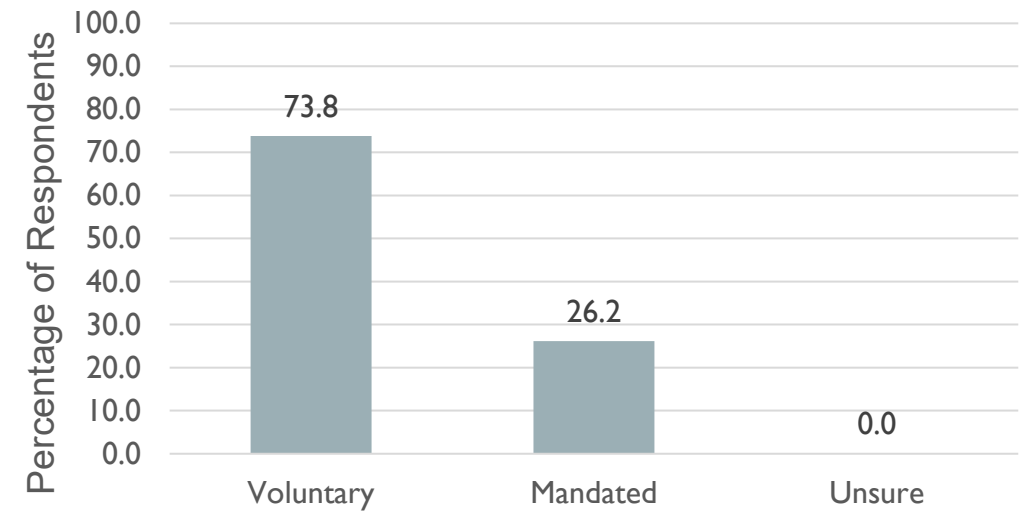
Behavior	Barriers	Benefits
Target	↓	↑
Competing	↑	↓



Are there current, future, or completed plans for sewer conversion in your community?

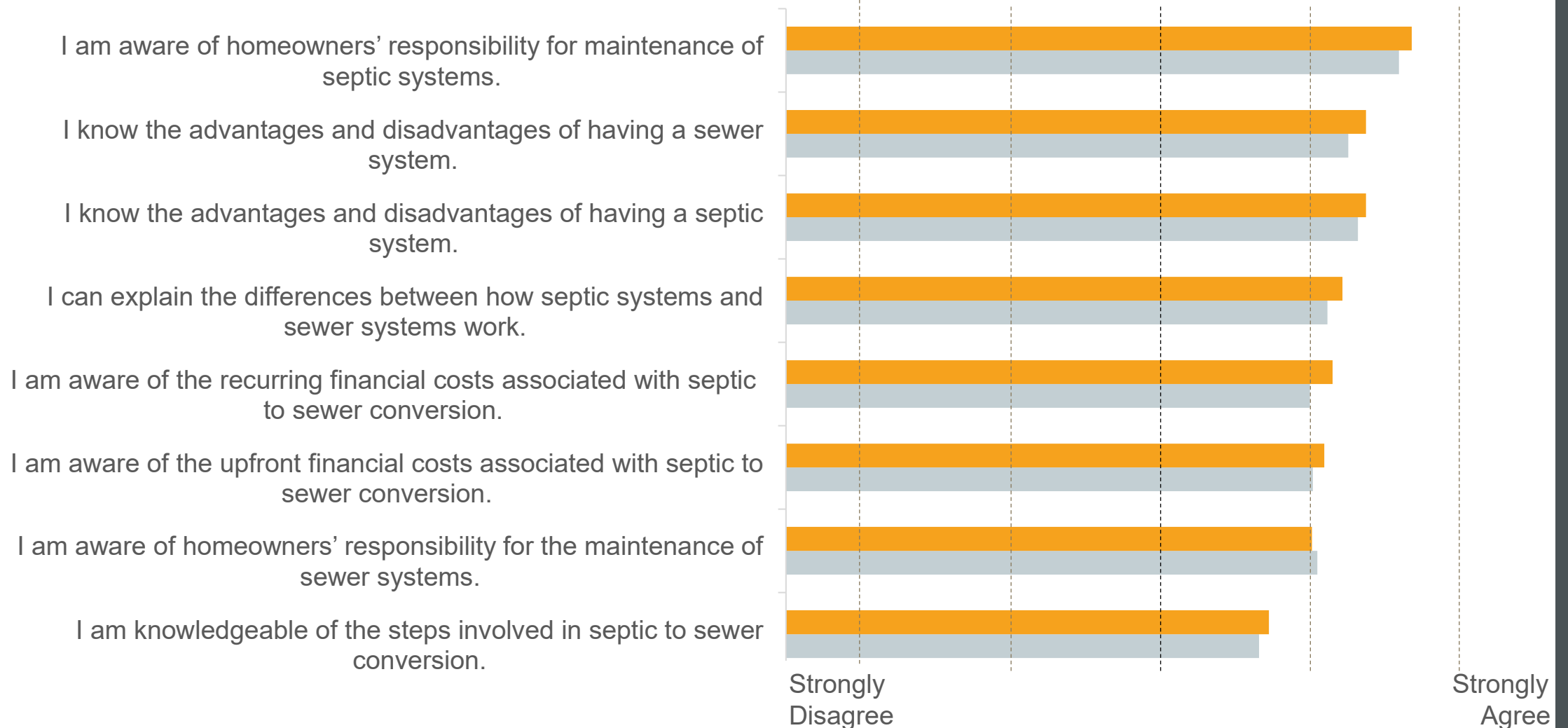


Was this conversion voluntary or mandated?

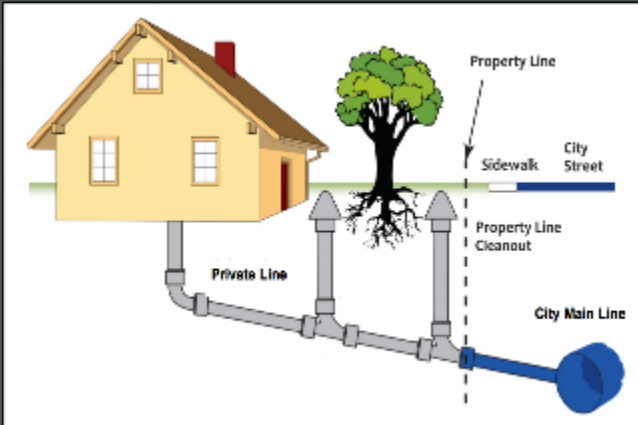
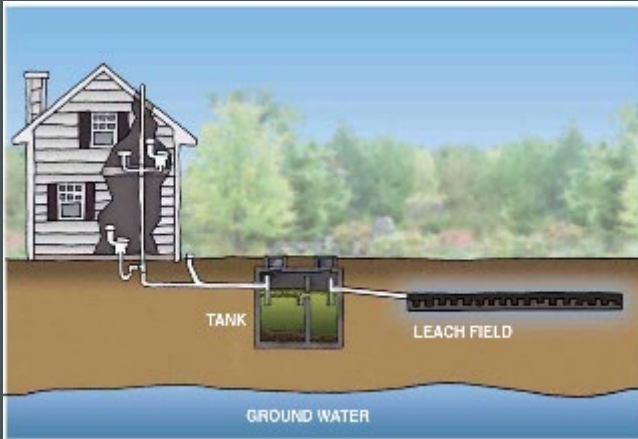


KNOWLEDGE

Respondents' **self-perceived** knowledge of septic to sewer conversion topics



Percent correct for respondents' **objective** knowledge assessment



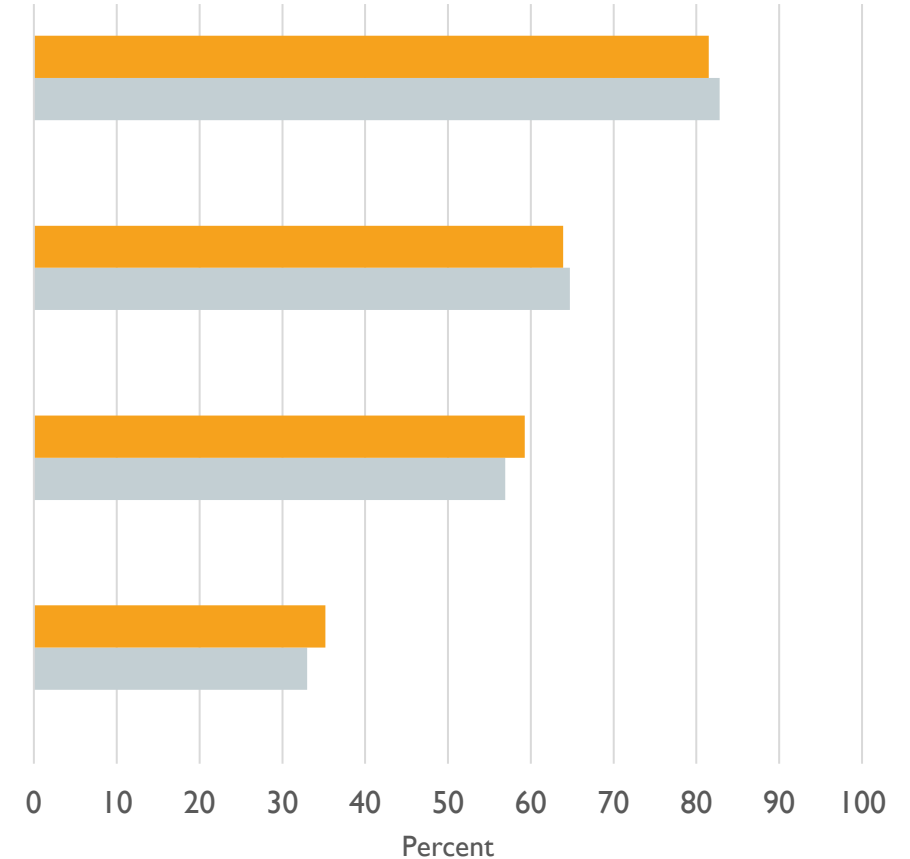
Who is primarily responsible for the maintenance of residential septic systems?

Which type of waste treatment system is depicted in this diagram?

Which type of waste treatment system is depicted in this diagram?

How often does a household septic system typically need to be pumped out?

A. Every 6 months	35	32.4
B. Every 1-2 years	27	25
C. Every 3-5 years	38	35.2
D. Every 10 years	8	7.4





REVIEW

Knowledge can be a barrier to adoption.

People are more knowledgeable than one might expect, but there are gaps in the details.

Subjective knowledge assessments indicate educational opportunities in:

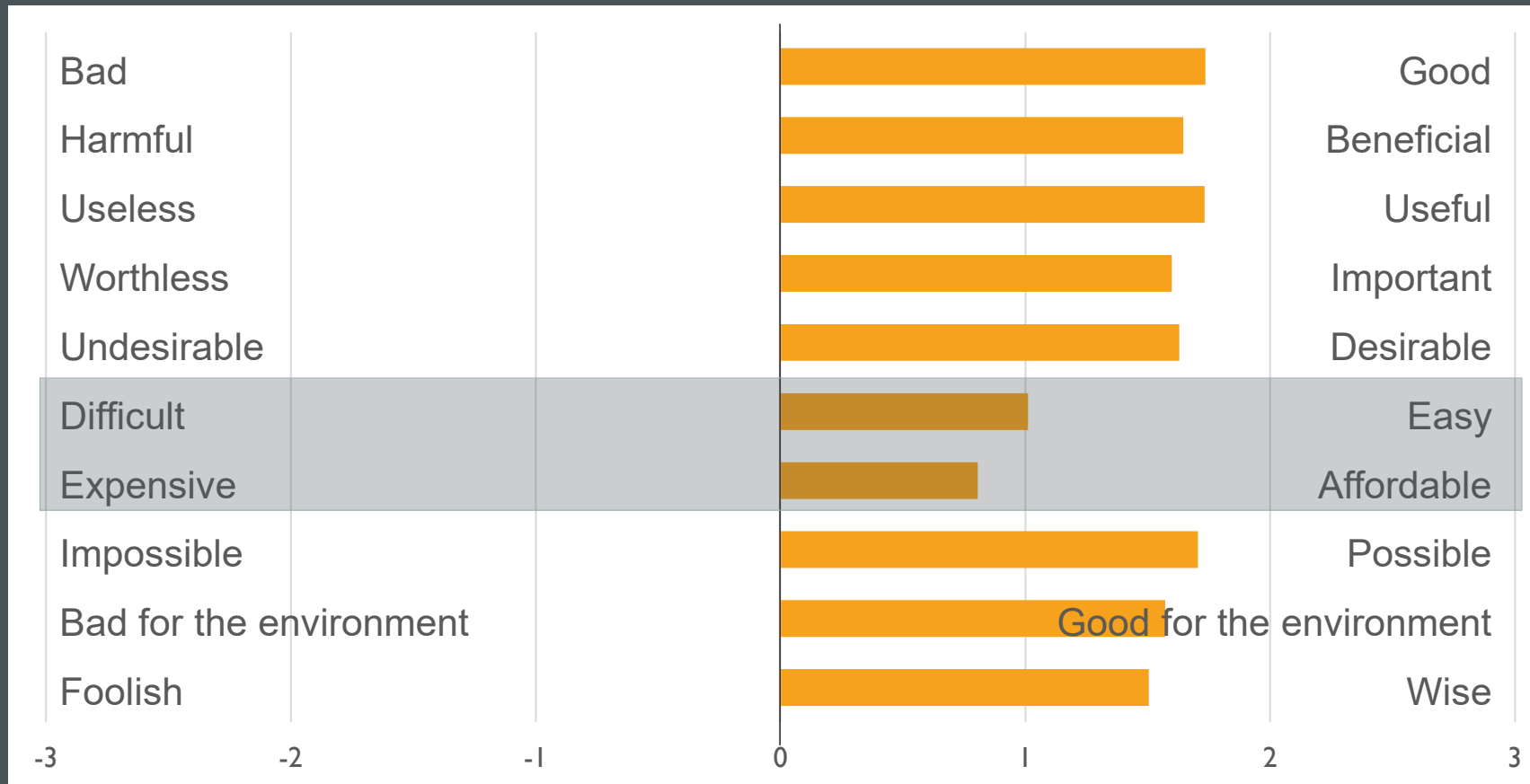
- Steps involved in S2S conversion
- Homeowners' responsibilities in sewer system maintenance

Objective knowledge assessments suggest individuals have a better understanding of septic systems than central sewer.

ATTITUDES

Respondents' **attitude** towards septic to sewer conversion topics

$M = 1.5$





REVIEW

Overall, respondents had a **positive** attitude towards converting S2S.

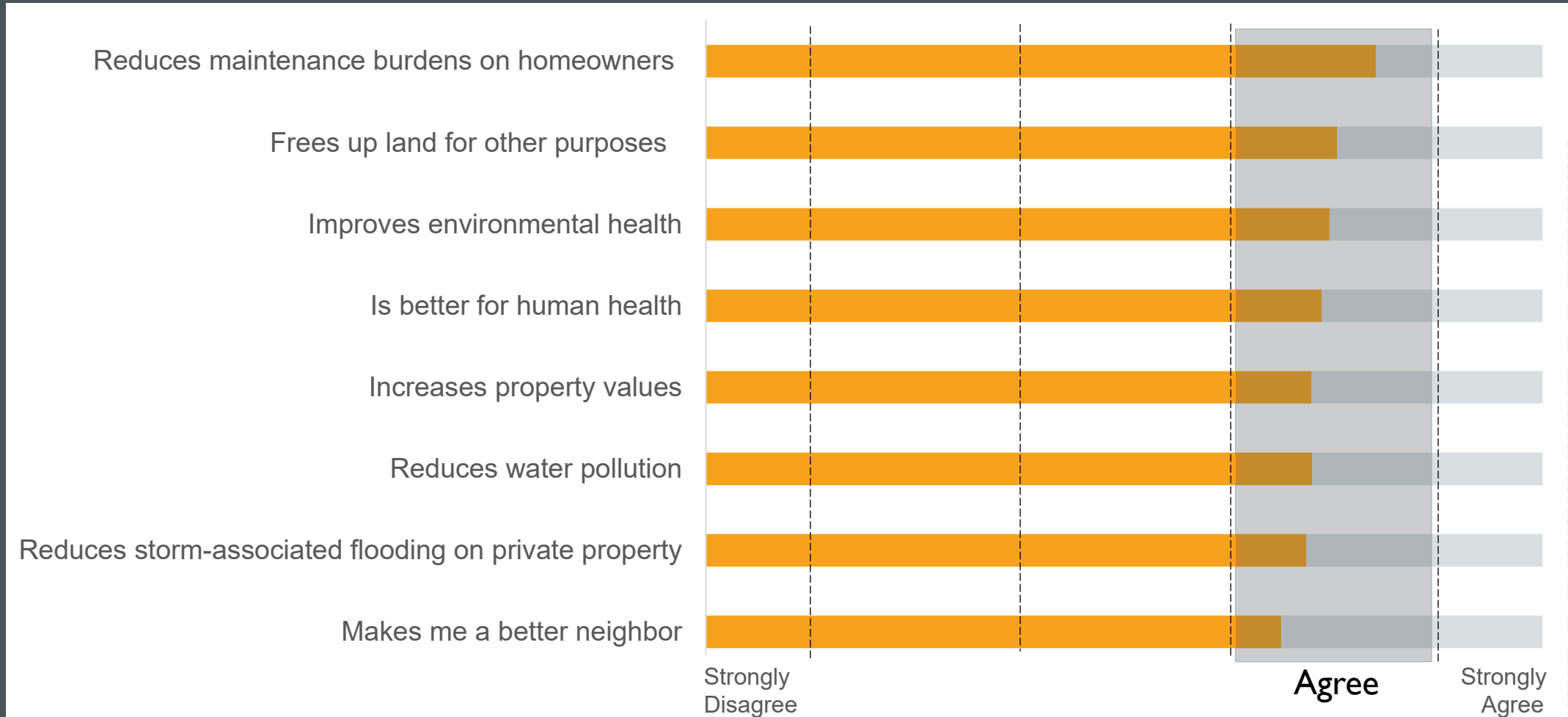
Respondents were more neutral in their perceptions of whether conversion is **difficult or easy** and **affordable or expensive**.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS & BARRIERS

Level of agreement - Benefits

Converting from a septic system to a sewer system...

$M = 3.95$



Level of agreement - Benefits

Converting from a septic system to a sewer system...

1

Reduces maintenance burdens on homeowners

2

Frees up land for other purposes

3

Improves environmental health

4

Is better for human health

5

Increases property values

1

Reduces maintenance burdens on homeowners

2

Frees up land for other purposes

3

Increases property values

4

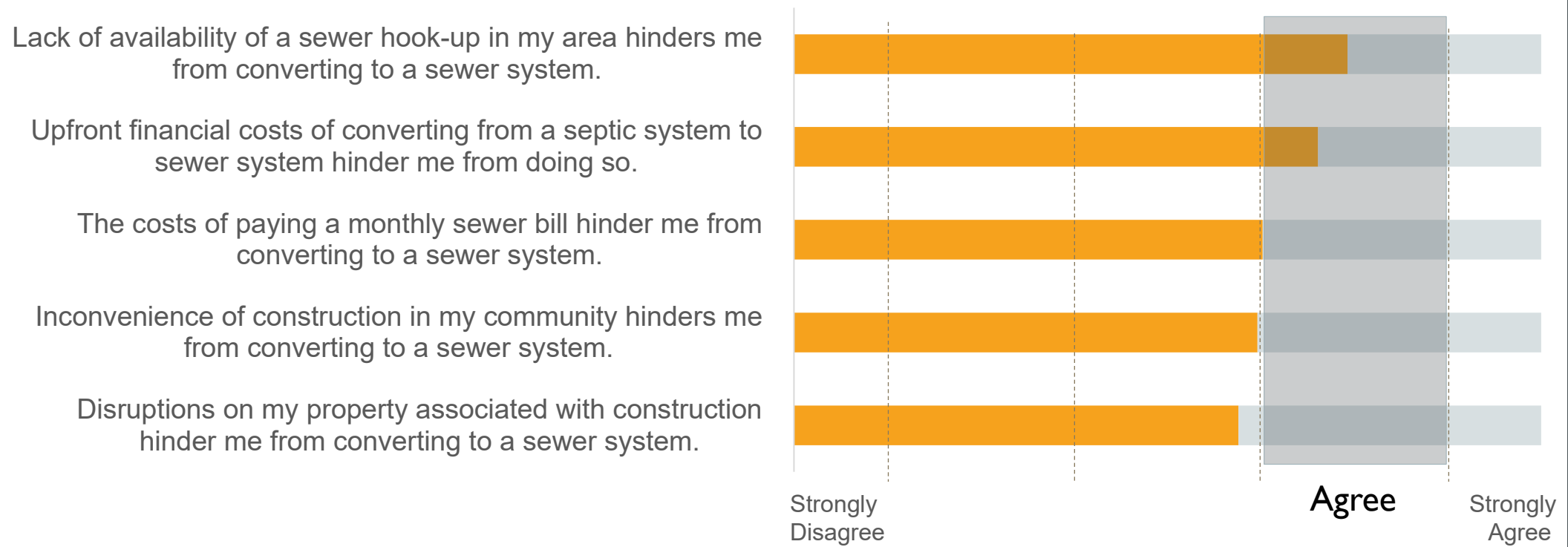
Is better for human health

5

Improves environmental health

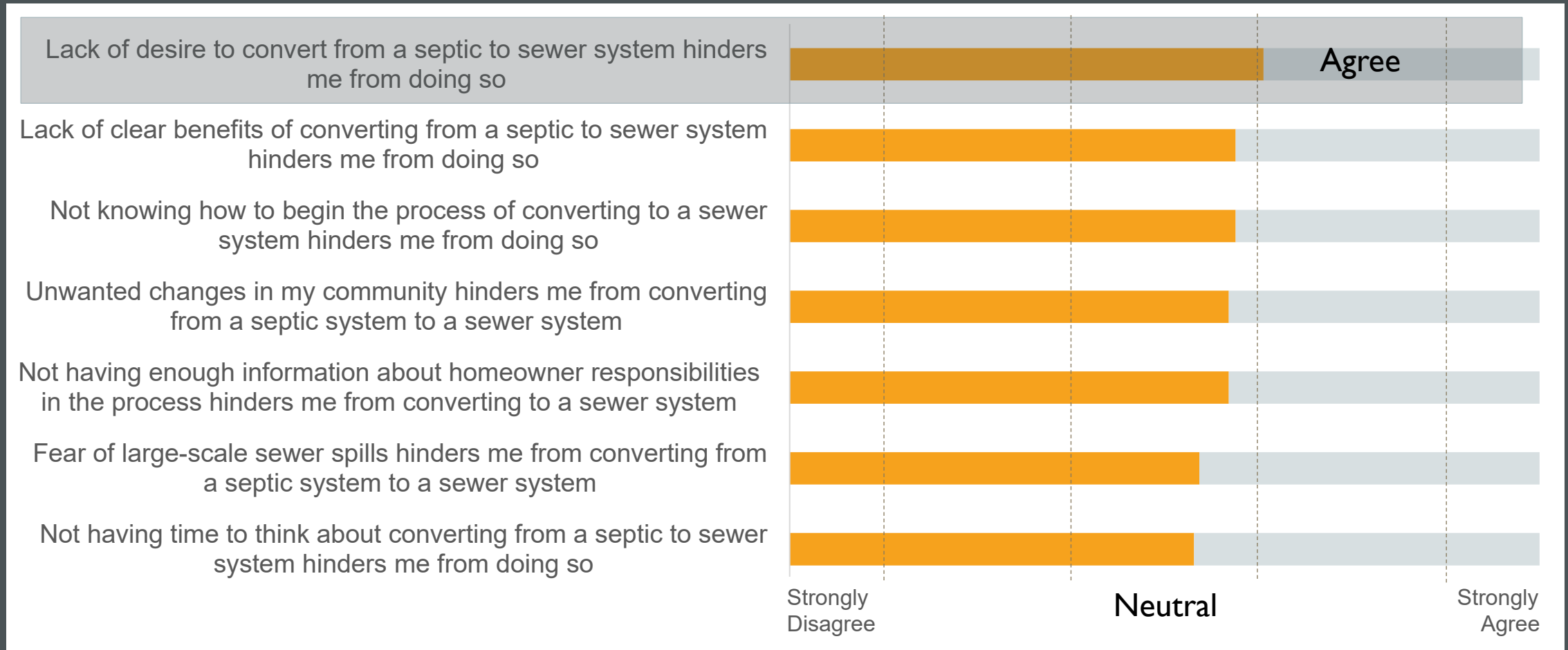
Level of agreement – External Barriers

$M = 3.63$



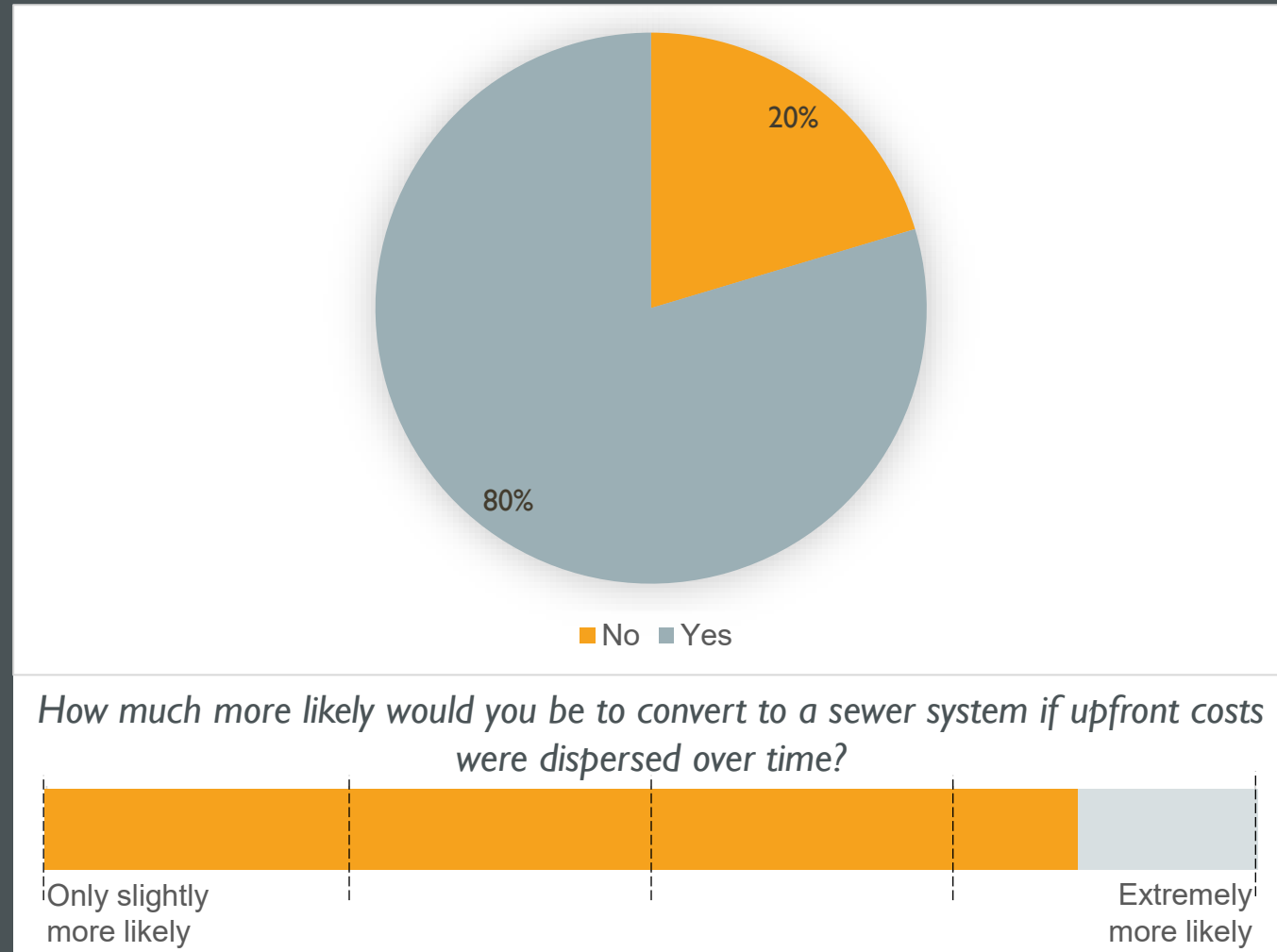
Level of agreement – Internal Barriers

M = 3.33



Level of agreement – Cost

If the upfront costs of converting from a septic system to a sewer system were dispersed over time, would you be more likely to convert to a sewer system?





REVIEW

Benefits – Respondents agreed that all attributes were benefits to S2S conversion.

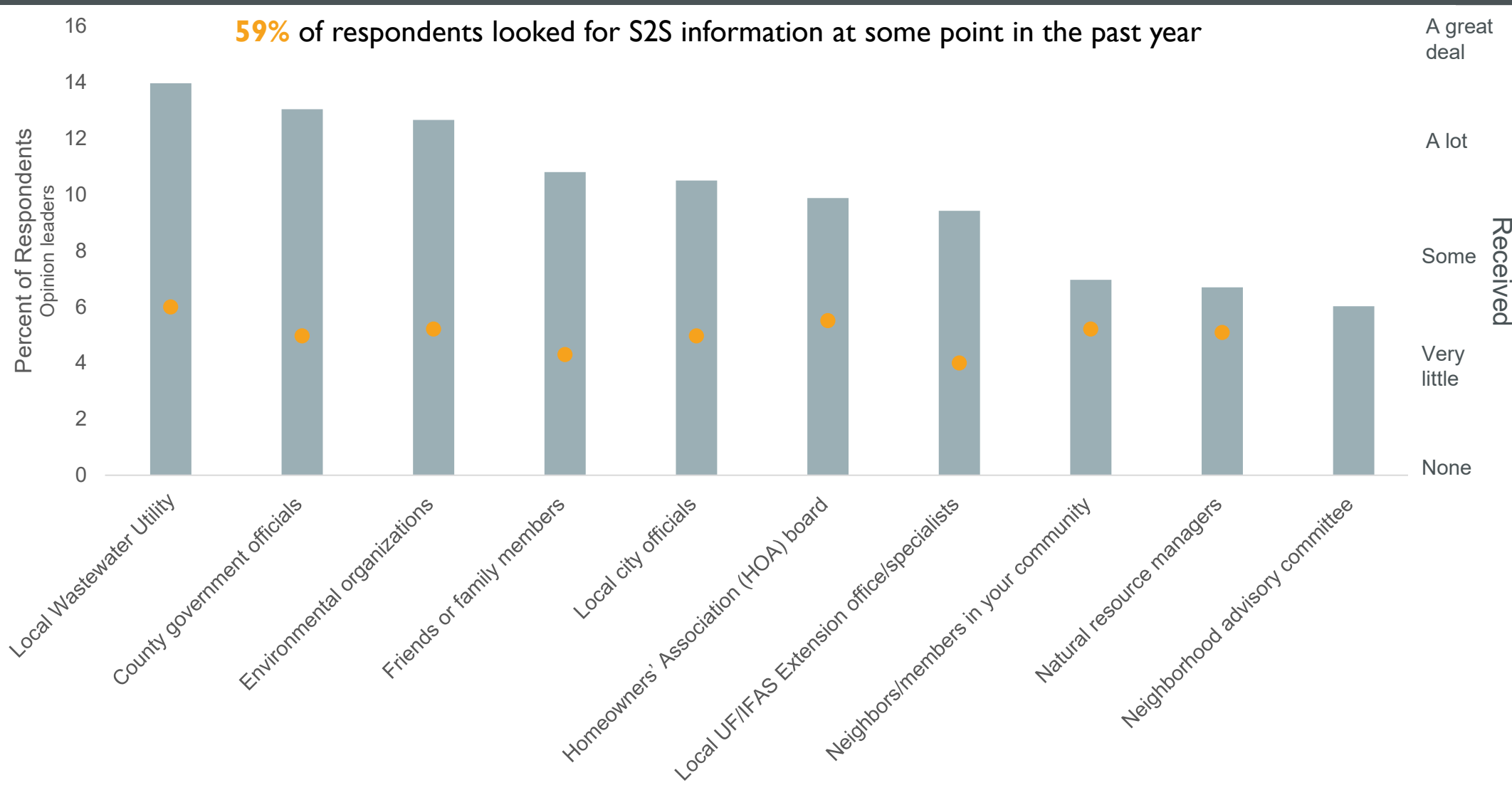
Respondents agreed most that converting **reduces maintenance burdens** and **frees up land**.

Barriers – External attributes were the greatest barrier to conversion including **lack of availability** to hook-up and **upfront costs**. Internal attributes were **lack of desire** to convert. Respondents were neutral to all other external and internal attributes.

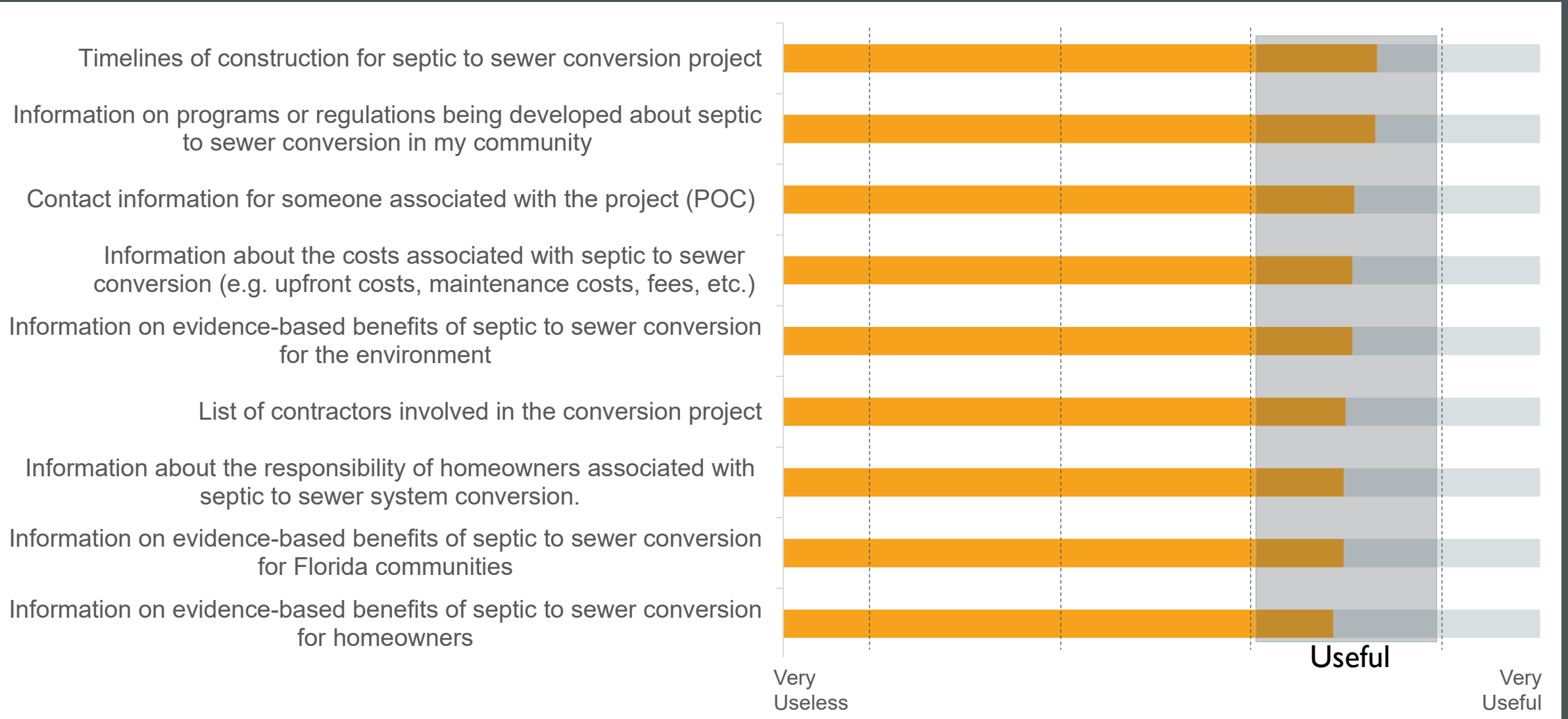
Barriers to upfront cost could be reduced if costs could be disbursed over time.

COMMUNICATION

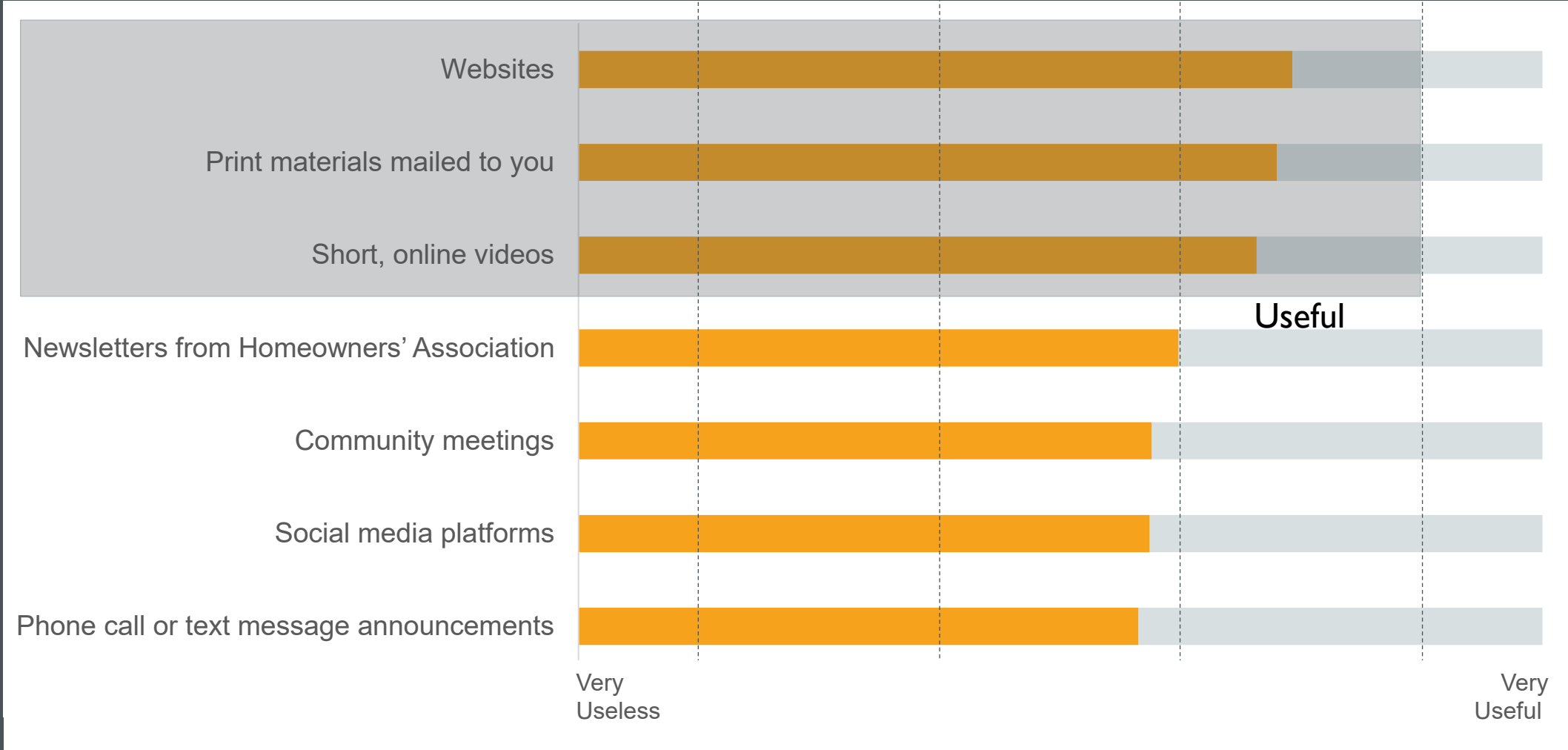
Sources of information



Perceived usefulness of information



Preferred methods for receiving information





REVIEW

Overall, respondents were most likely to consult **county governments** and **local wastewater utilities** about S2S conversion.

Respondents perceived all topics as useful. The most useful was information about **construction timelines** and **information about** S2S conversion programs and regulations.

Respondents identified **websites, mailed print materials**, and **short, online videos** as the most useful sources of informational delivery methods

S2S STRATEGY

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of architectural blueprints. A black pen is positioned diagonally across the upper right portion of the image. The blueprints show various lines, grids, and some handwritten numbers like '350' and '150'.

3. DEVELOP STRATEGIES

Audience:

Segmented audiences do not appear to differ from the statewide sample.

No single approach will appeal to all.

A single campaign should include several aligned messages and formats

Tools:

Removal of barriers

If costs can be dispersed overtime, the barrier of upfront financial costs can be eliminated.

COMMUNICATION

Informational materials should emphasize homeowner priorities and be branded with county government or local utility logos.

Reduce
maintenance
burdens



Free up land for
other purposes



Environmental
benefits



Human health





Host the holidays without the added stress

Convert to sewer and leave the maintenance to us



SPRINGHILL COUNTY SEPTIC TO SEWER PROGRAM

For more information visit: www.springhillsewer.gov
555-555-5555

FINALLY BUILD THE SHESHD OF YOUR DREAMS

Convert to sewer and reclaim
your land and your time



SPRINGHILL COUNTY SEPTIC TO SEWER PROGRAM

For more information visit:
www.springhillsewer.gov
555-555-5555





INVEST IN YOUR HEALTH

SPRINGHILL COUNTY SEPTIC TO SEWER PROGRAM

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

WWW.SPRINGHILLSEWER.GOV
555-555-5555



Your property qualifies for the
Springhill County septic to
sewer conversion project.

We will be hosting a community
meeting to discuss project
details:

FEBRUARY 25TH, 2021
6 -8 PM
SPRINGHILL COMMUNITY HALL
111 Main Street
Springhill, FL 33333

We hope to see you there.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

WWW.SPRINGHILLSEWER.GOV
555-555-5555



CONVENIENCE

Enhance mailings and update websites to include timely, accurate, and community-specific information:

Project specific
details

Upfront costs

Average, low and
high ranges for
water and sewer bills
(recurring)

Rebates or incentive
information

Construction
timelines

List of approved
contractors

Contact information
for a person

Central sewer
education

DIFFUSION & NORMS

Create a visible campaign of simple, consistent signs that can be displayed in communities and online videos.

Work with community ambassadors to create dialogue and encourage adoption (for voluntary programs)

**THIS HOUSE JUST
INCREASED IT'S
PROPERTY VALUE BY
8%**

Ask us how



SPRINGHILL COUNTY SEPTIC TO SEWER PROGRAM
For more information visit: www.springhillsewer.gov
555-555-5555

Data: Mt. Pleasant Township Municipal Authority. 2019.
Market Study: Impact of Sewer Availability on Property Values

**Together, we protected
the health of our
community by preventing
more than 1 ton of
nitrogen from entering our
waterways.**



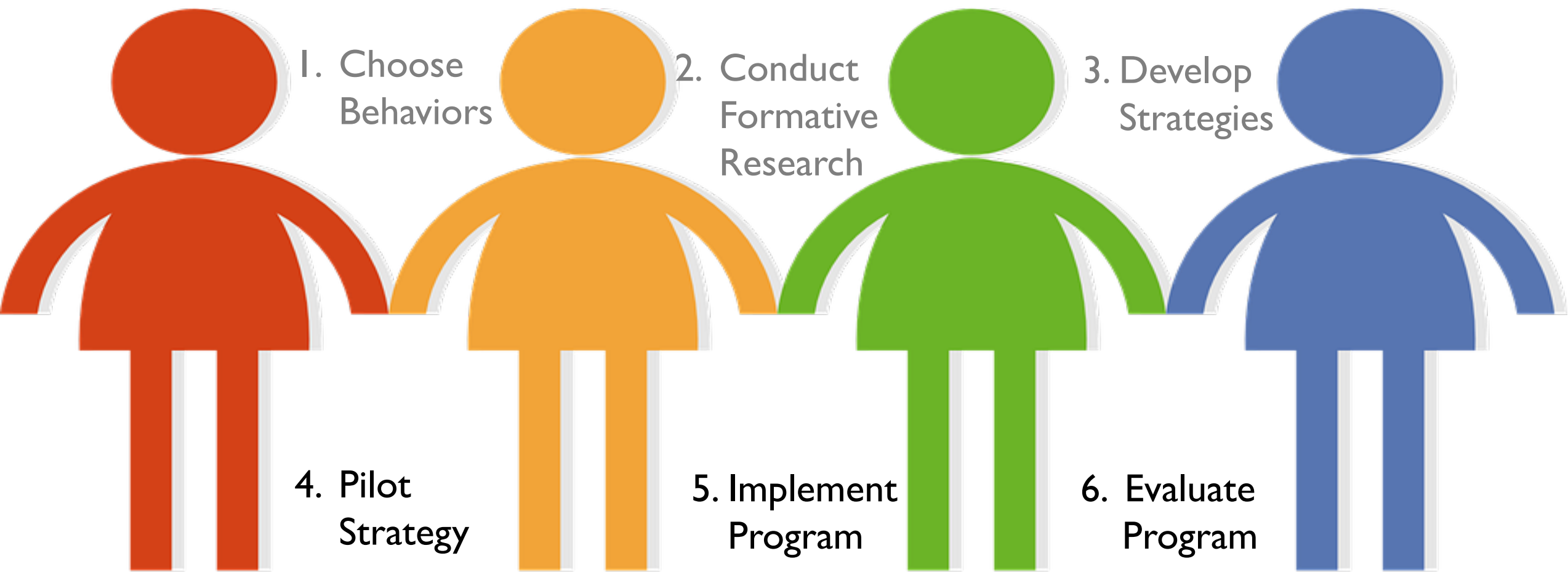
LOGO NAME
SLOGAN HERE

Ask us how

SPRINGHILL COUNTY SEPTIC TO SEWER PROGRAM

For more information visit:
www.springhillsewer.gov; 555-555-5555

Data: Toor et al. 2011
Estimated 100 homes, 4 people per home, 7.8 g N/person/day



COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL MARKETING

RESOURCES

<https://water.ifas.ufl.edu/septic-systems/local-governments/>

- Social Marketing Quarterly (<https://journals.sagepubl.com/home/smq>)
- Journal of Extension (joe.org)
- Social Marketing Association of North America (smana.org)
- Doug McKenzie-Mohr's Fostering Sustainable Behavior (www.cbsm.com)
- UF's EDIS library (edis.ufl.edu)

SEPTIC to SEWER

Informational Needs and Perceptions of Florida Residents



The purpose of this study was to examine the Florida public's perceptions, informational needs and informational delivery preferences regarding septic to sewer conversion. This information will assist local governments in facilitating homeowners' conversion from an onsite wastewater treatment system to a centralized sewer system. This study was conducted in October 2020 with 517 Florida homeowners who currently use a septic system as their wastewater treatment system.

PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO CONVERSION

Respondents were asked about their perceived external and internal barriers to converting from a septic system to a sewer system. The external barriers reported most were lack of availability of a sewer hook-up in their area, up-front financial costs and costs of monthly sewer bills.

The internal barriers reported most were a lack of desire to convert, a lack of clear benefits to conversion and not having enough information about homeowner responsibilities in the conversion process.

In reference to the perceived barrier of up-front costs, 79.1% of respondents indicated they were more likely to convert to a sewer system if up-front costs were dispersed over time.

WOULD YOU CONVERT TO A SEWER SYSTEM IF THE UP-FRONT COSTS WERE DISPERSED OVER TIME?



■ YES — 79.1%
■ NO — 20.9%

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF CONVERSION

When asked about their perceived benefits of converting from a septic to sewer system, respondents agreed most that converting from a septic system to sewer system reduces maintenance burdens on homeowners, frees up land for other purposes, increases property values and is better for human health.

When asked how useful various informational topics about septic to sewer conversion would be to them, respondents identified the most useful topics as: timelines of construction for conversion projects, community programs or regulations, costs associated with conversion, evidence-based benefits for the environment and evidence-based benefits for homeowners.

MOST USEFUL SEPTIC TO SEWER TOPICS

- 1 Timelines of construction for septic to sewer conversion projects
- 2 Programs and regulations for community septic to sewer projects
- 3 Costs associated with septic to sewer conversion projects
- 4 Evidence-based benefits for the environment
- 5 Evidence-based benefits for homeowners

Respondents found mailed print materials, websites and short online videos to be the most useful methods of delivery for receiving information about septic to sewer conversion.

PREFERRED FORMATS OF SEPTIC TO SEWER INFORMATION DELIVERY



Rampold, S. D., Krinsky, L., Telg, R. W., & Warner, L. (2021). Florida homeowners' knowledge, perceptions, and informational needs regarding septic to sewer conversion. PIE2020/21-05. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education.

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UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



Center for
Public Issues Education

www.piecenter.com

QUESTIONS?

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UF/IFAS Extension, Florida Sea Grant

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Center for Landscape Conservation and
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Center for
Public Issues Education



Center for
LANDSCAPE
Conservation & Ecology

