A SURVEY OF SAN MATEO COUNTY RESIDENTS

Prepared for THE SAN MATEO COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION

by SA|OPINION RESEARCH





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Introduction and Methodology

The purpose of this opinion research was to survey the attitudes of San Mateo County residents toward water pollution and actions that can be taken to reduce it.

Between May 17 and May 20, 2009 SA|Opinion Research conducted telephone interviews with 400 randomly selected residents of the county. A random-digit methodology was employed to ensure that every resident with a land-line telephone had an equal chance of being interviewed. Respondents were asked a total of 25 questions and the average interview lasted just over 10 minutes.

Respondents were offered the survey in both English and Spanish. Of the 400 respondents interviewed, 16 or four percent elected to take the survey in Spanish.

For purposes of classifying respondents by geographic area, five geographic areas were created including repondents from the following communities. 1) North Bayside: Brisbane, Colma, Millbrae, San Bruno and South San Francisco. 2) The City of San Mateo. 3) Central Bayside: Belmont, Burlingame, Foster City, Hillsborough and San Carlos. 4) South Bayside: Atherton, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks, Portola Valley, Redwood City, Redwood Shores, and Woodside. 5) Coastside: Daly City, El Granada, Half Moon Bay, Linda Mar, Miramar, Montara, Moss Beach, Pacifica and Pescadero.

Results from studies of this size have a margin of error (95 times out of 100) of plus or minus five percentage points for the sample as a whole. This is the margin of error for the results that would be obtained if literally every individual in the population were interviewed. This margin of error applies to aggregate results in the range of 40 percent to 60 percent. The margin of error is greater for responses from numbers of respondents smaller than the overall sample.

This report is divided into three parts. The first section is a presentation of key findings and conclusions, including selected charts and graphs and comparisons with an earlier survey conducted in 2001. The second part includes the questionnaire with the actual wording of all the questions and the results obtained from the sample as a whole. The third section contains crosstabulations, information on how various subgroups within the population surveyed answered each question. An introductory page in the crosstabulations explains how to read these tables.

We wish to thank the San Mateo County Environmental Health Services Division for commissioning this research with our firm. We appreciated the opportunity to work with you and we stand ready to assist in further interpretation of the results.

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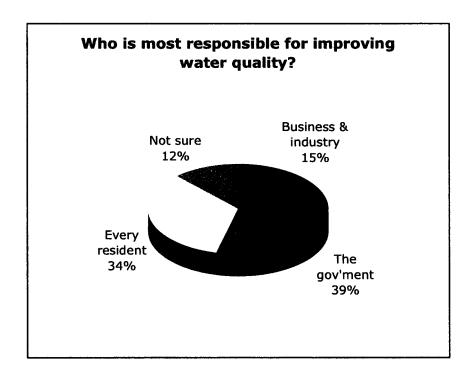
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Report of Findings

Water Quality

Respondents were initially asked who they felt was most responsible for improving water quality in San Mateo County, business and industry, the government, or every resident.



Respondents split evenly, with approximately 35 percent believing the government and every resident were each responsible. Business and industry was a distant third at 15 percent.

Those who believed the government was most responsible were most likely to include those who do not use less toxic pesticides, those with incomes of \$75,000 or more, those who recalled seeing signs in stores about less toxic products, those aged 45-to-54 and African Americans. Those who believed every resident is most responsible were most likely to include those with incomes between \$25,000 and \$75,000, Latinos, Coastside residents and those aged 65 or more.

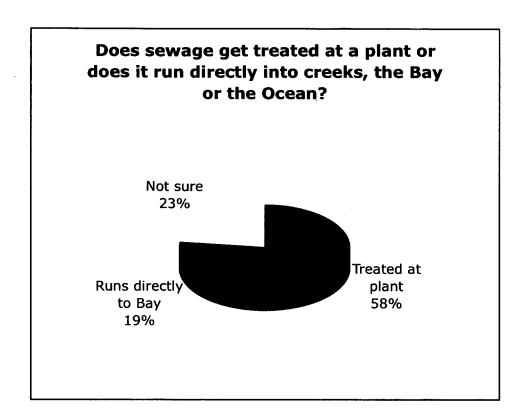
A very similar question was asked in the 2001 survey. At that time, 43 percent believed the government was most responsible, 21 percent believed every resident was most responsible and 16 percent believed business and industry was most responsible. In addition, another 15





percent believed all three were responsible. The significant change between 2001 and 2009 is that more respondents are now willing to accept that every resident is most responsible with less prime responsibility assigned to the government.

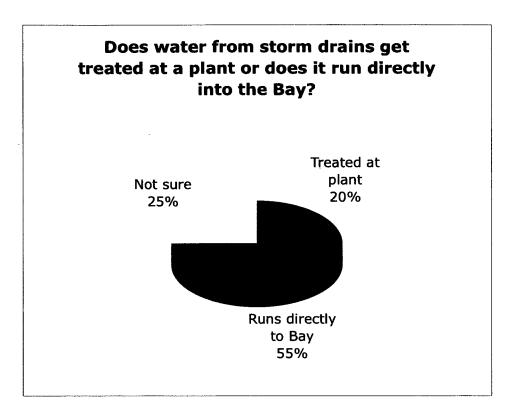
Respondents were asked whether water from peoples' kitchens and bathrooms is treated at a sewage treatment plant or whether it runs directly into creeks, the Bay or the Ocean.



By better than three-to-one, the respondents believed water from bathrooms and kitchens is treated at a sewage treatment plant. Nevertheless, one in five believed it runs directly into a creek, the Bay or the Ocean and 23 percent were not sure. Those who believed this water is treated at a plant were most likely to include respondents with incomes of \$75,000 or more, those who use less toxic pesticides and other forms of pest control, those who know water from washing cars runs into creeks, the Bay or the Ocean and residents of the Central Bayside area. Those who believed that this water runs directly into creeks, the Bay or the Ocean were most likely to include those who responded to the survey questions in Spanish, Asians and Asian language speakers and those earning less than \$75,000.

Somewhat fewer respondents believed water from bathrooms and kitchens is treated than respondents to the 2001 survey. At that time, 66 percent believed the water was treated and only 12 percent believed it ran directly into other bodies of water.

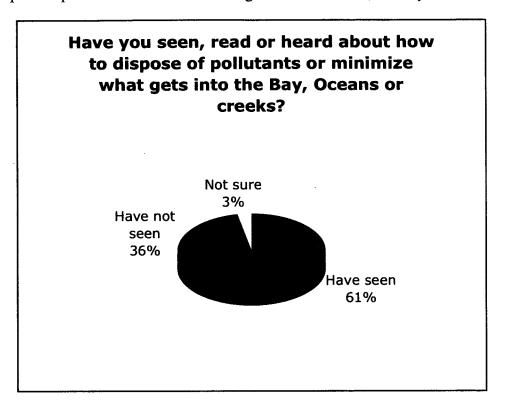
This question was followed by asking respondents whether they thought water that runs into storm drains is treated at a sewage treatment plant or whether it runs directly into creeks, the Bay or the Ocean.



More than half the respondents (55 percent) believed water from storm drains runs directly into creeks, the Bay or the Ocean. Only 20 percent believed it gets treated at a sewage treatment plant and 25 percent were not sure. Those who believed storm water is treated were most likely to include Latinos, those aged 18-to-34, Coastside residents, those who speak Asian languages and men. Those who believed storm water runs directly into the Bay were most likely to include those who had seen signs in stores for less toxic pesticides, those who had not used other methods to control pests and those with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

Results from this question were very similar to an identical question asked in 2001. At that time, 19 percent believed water from storm drains was treated at a plant while 51 percent believed it runs directly into creeks, the Bay and the Ocean. Twenty-nine percent were not sure.

Respondents were then asked if they had seen, heard or read anything about how people can properly dispose of pollutants or minimize what gets into the creeks, the Bay or the Ocean.



Sixty-two percent said they had and 36 percent said they had not seen anything, with the remaining two percent unsure. Again, these responses were similar to those in the 2001 study where 64 percent had, 35 percent had not and one percent was unsure.

Respondents who had seen, read or heard about how to minimize pollutants were most likely to include those who also had seen signs in stores, those who used less toxic pesticides and those with incomes of more than \$150,000. Those who had not seen, read or heard about this were most likely to include African-Americans, those with incomes under \$25,000, those aged 18-to-34, renters and Asians.

Respondents were asked a similar question about seeing the "No Dumping, Flows to Bay or Ocean" message printed above storm drains. Seventy percent of the respondents reported seeing these messages while 28 percent said they had not seen them. Two percent were unsure. These results were identical to those in 2001 when 70 percent had seen them and 29 percent had not.

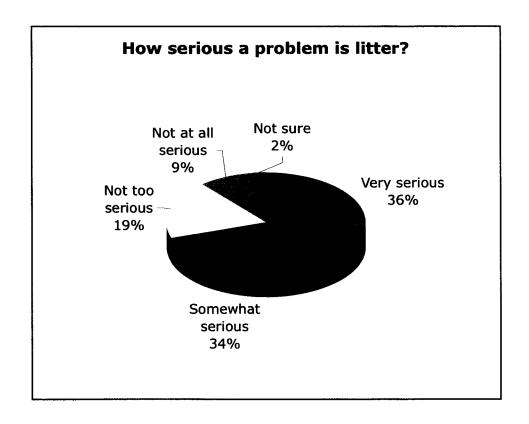
Respondents who had seen these messages were most likely to include those with incomes above \$75,000 and those who used methods other than pesticides. Those who had not seen these messages were most likely to include respondents aged 65 and over, those with incomes under \$75,000 and African Americans.

Next, respondents were asked what they were doing to prevent water pollution based on what they may have learned recently. First and second responses were recorded but 70 percent gave only a single response and 17 percent of those or 67 respondents said they were doing nothing to prevent water pollution. Here are the combined first and second responses from the 400 survey respondents:

82 responses
80
61
56
44
25
24
24
5
4
3
3

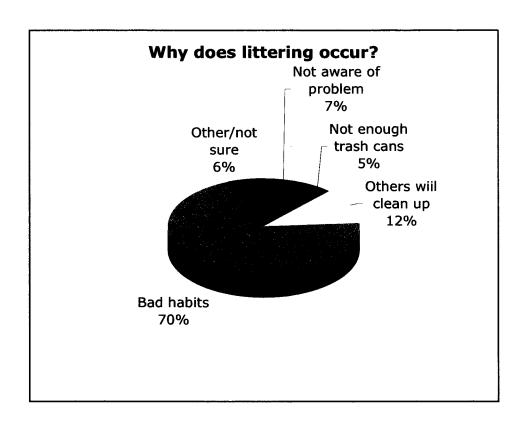
Litter

Respondents then were asked three questions about litter. The first was how serious a problem is litter.



Seventy percent of the respondents said litter was either a very serious or somewhat serious problem. Only 28 percent said it was either not too serious or not at all serious. Those who felt the problem was serious were most likely to include those who had recalled seeing signs about less toxic pesticides and those who use less toxic ones, those aged 18-to-34, those who had not used other methods of treating pests, Coastside residents and those in the \$75,000 to \$150,000 income range. Those who said litter was not a serious problem were most likely to include those who do not use less toxic pesticides, those with incomes higher than \$150,000, Asians, North Bayside residents, those who had not seen signs about less toxic pesticides and those aged 65 or more.

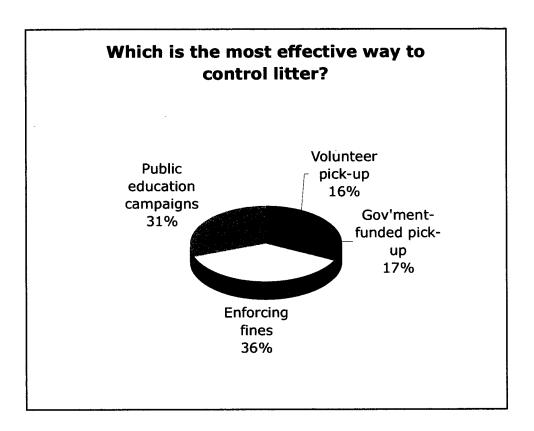
Next, respondents were asked why they think littering occurs. They were asked to choose between four options.



Seventy percent thought that bad habits were responsible and the other reasons offered drew relatively few responses. The belief that other people will clean up drew 11.5 percent of the responses, lack of awareness of a litter problem drew seven percent and lack of enough trash cans received only five percent.

Those most likely to think bad habits was the reason littering occurs where most likely to include those who answered the survey questions in Spanish, Central and North Bayside residents, those aged 65 or more and those who had seen, heard or read about proper disposal of pollutants.

When asked which is the most effective way to control litter, enforcement of fines and public education programs were seen as preferable to either volunteer or government-funded pick up programs.



Enforcing fines was the choice of 36 percent of the respondents followed closely by public education campaigns at 31 percent. Government-sponsored pick-up programs were supported by 17 percent of the respondents while 16 percent preferred volunteer pick-up programs.

Fines were most likely to be supported by respondents with incomes of \$50,000 or more, those not using less toxic pesticides, Asians and those in the 18-to-34 and 45-to-54 age groups. Public education was most likely to be supported by respondents who recalled seeing signs for less toxic pesticides, those aged 65 or more, African Americans and Spanish speakers. Those who preferred pick-up programs tended to include San Mateo City residents, those aged 35-to-44 and those with incomes of less than \$50,000.

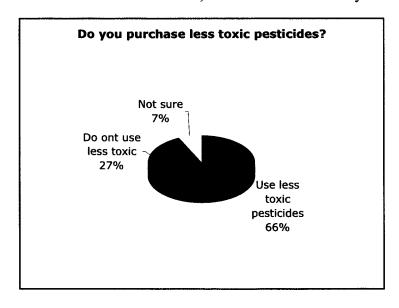
Pesticides

Turning to the subject of pesticides, respondents were asked if they use them in their home or garden.



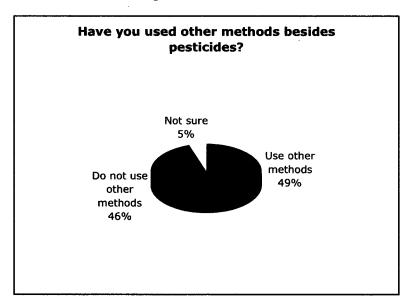
Only 15 percent of the respondents reported using pesticides. Seventeen percent of homeowners sampled reporting pesticide use but only six percent of renters reported using pesticides. Those using pesticides were most likely to include those who both use and do not use less toxic pesticides, those who both used and did not use other methods of pest control and those who both had and had not seen signs about less toxic pesticides. Those who reported not using pesticides were most likely to include Latinos, Coastside residents, those with incomes under \$25,000, Asian language speakers, those aged 18-to-34 and renters.

When those respondents who said they used pesticides were asked if they purchased pest control products that are labeled as less toxic, two-thirds said that they did.



Respondents who said they purchase less toxic products were most likely to include those who speak Asian languages, those with incomes under \$25,000 and above \$50,000, those who reported seeing signs in stores about less toxic products, those who thought business and industry should be most responsible for water quality and those aged 55-to-64. Respondents who said they do not purchase less toxic products were most likely to include renters, those in the \$75,000 to \$150 income range, those aged 18-to 34, Latinos and African Americans.

Half the respondents who reported using pesticides said they used other methods besides pesticides to control insects or other pests.



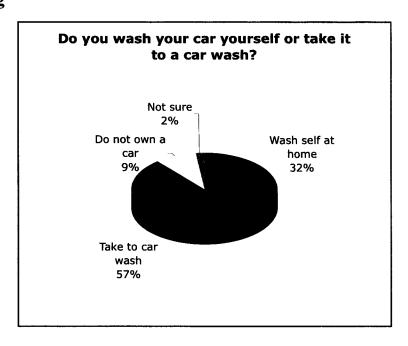
Respondents who used other methods were most likely to include African Americans, Spanish speakers, those with incomes between \$50,000 and \$75,000, people who use social networking websites and North Bayside residents. Those who did not use other methods besides pesticides were most likely to include Latinos, Asians, those with incomes under \$50,000 and those who thought residents should be most responsible for water quality.

Respondents who used pesticides were evenly split between those who had seen signs that identify less toxic products or other methods of pest control and those who had not seen them.



Those who stated that they had seen signs were most likely to include Spanish speakers, those who purchased less toxic products, those in the \$25,000-to-\$75,000 income range and San Mateo City residents. Those who had not seen signs were most likely to include African Americans, those with incomes under \$25,000 those who had not seen anything about proper disposal of pollutants and those who did not use less toxic products or other means of pest control.

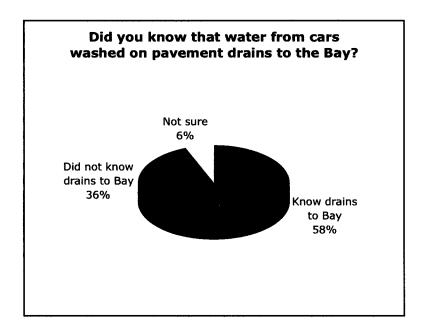
Car Washing



Turning to car washing, respondents were first asked if they washed their cars themselves or whether they took them to a car wash.

More than half the respondents took their cars to car wash places, a third wash them themselves at home and nine percent of the respondents said they did not have a car. Those who took their cars to a car wash were most likely to include African Americans, those in the \$75,000-to-\$150,000 income range, those who did not know water from washing cars on pavement drains directly into the Bay, those in the 35-to-44 age group, South Bayside residents and Latinos. Those who washed their cars at home were most likely to include those who recalled seeing signs about less toxic pesticides, North Bayside residents, those who both used and did not use less toxic pesticides, those who used other forms of pest control and those aged 55-to-64.

All respondents, except those who do not have cars, were then asked if they knew that water from washing cars on pavement goes directly into storm drains and goes directly into the Bay, the Ocean or creeks rather than being treated first.



Fifty-seven percent of respondents said they know this, 36 percent said they did not while six percent were unsure. Those who wash their cars themselves at home knew this to a somewhat greater extent than others. Of this subgroup, 59 percent said they knew this and 33 percent did not. Respondents who knew that this water drains directly to the Bay were more likely to include those with incomes of \$75,000 or more, those who do not use either less toxic pesticides or other means of controlling pests and those who use social networking websites. Those who did not know that this water drained directly were most likely to include Asians, those who had not seen anything about proper disposal of pesticides, renters, those with incomes of less than \$25,000 and African Americans.

General and Demographic Questions

The final section of the survey asked more general informational and demographic questions. When asked where they go to get information about good environmental practices, respondents said the following:

Television	39%
Newspaper	25
Internet	22
Radio	7
Friends	5

Fifteen percent said they got this information elsewhere and five percent were unsure.

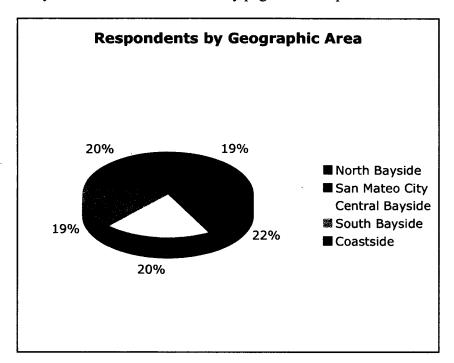
When asked if they used social networking websites like Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn, 28 percent said that they did while 71 percent said that they did not. Those that did were most likely to include those aged 18-to-34, those who used other methods besides pesticides, those that did not use less toxic products, those with incomes of \$75,000 or more and African Americans.

Only seven percent of the respondents said that they had ever visited the County's water pollution prevention website, flowstobay.org. Respondents who had were most likely to include those who used less toxic pesticides, those who had seen signs about them and those who used other methods of pest control.

Seventy-four percent of the respondents were homeowners, 33 percent were college graduates and the ages of respondents broke down as follows:

18-to-24	5%
25-to-34	9
35-to-44	18
45-to-54	22
55-to-64	26
65 and over	16
Reused	4

By geographic area, respondents were divided as follows. The definitions of these areas by city and community are noted on the introductory page of this report.



By racial or ethnic identification, 64 percent of the respondents said they were white, 14 percent said they were Latino or Hispanic, 10 percent said they were Asian or Pacific islander excluding Filipino, three percent said they were African American and two percent said they were Filipino. The remaining 10 percent were from other backgrounds or declined to provide this information.

When asked what languages they speak at home, 91 percent said they spoke English, 13 percent Spanish, three percent Chinese, two percent Tagalog and one percent each said they spoke Korean or Japanese. Seven percent said they spoke other languages. Respondents were able to provide multiple answers to this question.

The final question asked what about income levels. Respondents were asked to stop the interviewer when he or she reached the category that included their total 2008 gross household income.

\$25,000 and under	13%
25,001 to \$50,000	15
50,001 to \$75,000	16
\$75,001 to \$100,000	8
\$100,001 to \$150,000	7
\$150,001 or more	8

Finally, 49 percent of respondents were male and 51 percent were female and 96 percent of the interviews were conduced in English and four percent were in Spanish.

Conclusions

- 39% of respondents believe the government is most responsible for improving water quality while 34% believe every resident is most responsible. Business and industry is a distant third at 15%.
- This is a significant shift from results of the 2001 survey where 46% believed government was most responsible and only 21 percent believed every resident was most responsible. Like this year's survey, 15% believed business and industry was most responsible. The 2001 survey gave respondents the ability to assign joint responsibility and 15% said all three were most responsible.
- While 58% believe bathroom and kitchen wastewater is treated, this is down from the 2001 results when 66% believed it was treated. Today, 19% believe this water flows directly to the Bay, Ocean or creeks.
- Just over half the respondents know water from storm drains flows directly to the Bay, Ocean or creeks. 20% believe this water is treated first. Results were very similar to the 2001 responses.
- 60% of the respondents reported seeing information on the proper disposal of pollutants. Again, these results were very similar to those from 2001.
- 70% reported seeing no dumping messages on storm drains. This was identical to the 2001 result.
- 82% of the respondents said they are using fewer hazardous products. 80 percent said they were not dumping them into storm drains and 61 percent said they were recycling more. (It should be noted that respondents volunteered these answers in response to a question about what they were doing to prevent water pollution and this question closely followed ones about pollutants and storm drains.)
- 70% of the respondents said litter is a serious problem.
- 70% also said litter is due to people's bad habits as opposed to lack of awareness, a belief that others will clean up or lack of sufficient trashcans.
- Enforcing fines and public education programs were considered more effective than litter pick up programs.
- Only 15% of respondents reported using pesticides and two-thirds of that group said they are using less toxic ones.
- Half the pesticide users also said they are using other methods of controlling pests.

- Pesticide users split evenly between those who had seen signs about less toxic products and other means of controlling pests and those who had not seen signs.
- 57% of respondents reported using commercial car washes while 32 percent said they wash their car themselves at home.
- 58% of car owners know water from washing cars on pavement drains directly to the Bay, the Ocean or creeks while 36% said they did not know this.