

# 2024 Districtwide Perception Survey Report



This report represents data collected  
between April 29 – May 6, 2024

**Submitted by**

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## Table of Contents

<b><i>Executive Summary</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction &amp; Background</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Project Goals</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Methods of Data Collection and Analysis</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Survey Sample Description</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Findings: Awareness and Perceptions of the District</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Findings: Health of Natural Water Resources</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Key Findings: Sources of Information and Their Trustworthiness</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Key Findings: Irrigation System Use</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Key Findings: Fertilizer Use</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b><i>Awareness and Perceptions of the District</i></b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b><i>Health of Natural Water Resources</i></b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b><i>Sources of Information and Their Trustworthiness</i></b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b><i>Irrigation System Use</i></b> .....	<b>56</b>
<b><i>Fertilizer Use</i></b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b><i>Additional Comparisons</i></b> .....	<b>98</b>
<b><i>2024 Survey Sample Demographics</i></b> .....	<b>108</b>
<b><i>Appendix I: 2024 Districtwide Perceptions Survey</i></b> .....	<b>116</b>

# Executive Summary

## Introduction & Background

This report reviews the 2024 Districtwide Perception Survey conducted by The Taproot Agency with individuals residing in the Southwest Florida Water Management District (the District). Counties under the District’s jurisdiction were grouped into four regions for the purposes of analysis:

North	Tampa Bay	Heartland	South
Citrus	Hillsborough	Polk	Charlotte
Hernando	Pasco	Hardee	DeSoto
Lake	Pinellas	Highlands	Manatee
Levy			Sarasota
Marion			
Sumter			

## Project Goals

The goal of this 2024 survey was to help the District better understand public opinion, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors regarding water conservation, water quality protection and District perception. Added to the 2024 survey were question groups surrounding irrigation system use at home and fertilizer practices in landscapes.

The District has used and will continue to use this research to:

1. Design and refine messages and educational programs that are more likely to result in an educated public;
2. Design messages and educational programs that are likely to lead to the conservation and protection of regional water resources; and
3. Track the public’s perception of the District.

## Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

From April 29 – May 6, 2024, The Taproot Agency conducted an online panel survey of 1,536 adult residents of the study area in the North (n=384), Tampa Bay (n=384), Heartland (n=384) and South (n=384) regions. Each region’s sample resulted in a theoretical margin of error of +/-5% at the 95% confidence level. The overall margin of error for the entire sample is +/-3% at the 95% confidence level.

Throughout this report, Taproot references results from the 2021 Districtwide Perception Survey for comparison purposes. Where changes are noted (e.g. +X% from 2021) throughout the report, this is representing percentage point change, not percent change. In addition to all Districtwide total responses, this report also breaks down responses by region listed above. This allows for comparison across the whole area and future evaluation for more targeted messaging and outreach based on a region’s opinion or understanding of a particular measure.



The 2024 survey included standard questions that have carried over from previous surveys regarding perception of the District, water resources, and the trustworthiness of information outlets. In addition, this survey included questions centered around home irrigation systems and fertilizer use.

## Survey Sample Description

The typical person participating in this survey can be described as:

- Likely between the ages of 35 and 64
- Likely to be female
- Most likely living full-time in Florida for more than 10 years
- Likely to have some education beyond high school
- Most likely to be Caucasian or White

## Key Findings: Awareness and Perceptions of the District

In the 2021 survey, an increase in awareness of the District was recorded from the 2018 survey. There was no change in awareness in the 2024 survey (remained at 45%). Across the regions, increase in knowledge of the District was recorded only in Heartland (+2%). Decreases in knowledge were recorded in all other regions: North (-7%), Tampa Bay (-6%), and South (-2%). The Tampa Bay and South regions saw increases in “not sure,” +2% and + 4% respectively.

A new question was added 2024, measuring the tasks respondents believed were the District’s responsibility. The top three tasks identified under the District’s purview were: protecting water quality (85%), protecting the springs (71%), and providing programs that help conserve water (70%).

For those indicating “yes” they were aware of the District, we also asked them to rate it on a scale of “terrible” to “excellent” with a “don’t know” option available. While a slight decrease was recorded in the total sample for “excellent” (14%, -1% from 2021), an increase was recorded for “good” (43%, +4% from 2021). There was minor to no change in respondents selecting “OK,” “poor,” and “terrible.”

Respondents who indicated being aware of the District were also asked whether they felt the District was doing “too much,” “enough,” or “too little” to protect various water resources. In the 2021 report, an increase was recorded across all bodies of water in response to the District doing “too much” to protect these resources. In 2024, however, decreases from 1 – 3% points were recorded for “too much.” For each body of water, the number of respondents indicating “enough” was being done to protect these resources remained the same or increased up to a 3%-point change.

It is worth noting that all bodies of water except “wetlands or swamps” saw an increase in “don’t know” responses (from 1 – 4% points). This uncertainty was reflected and recorded across regions for most of the bodies of water. This indicates that these populations could be swayed to have an opinion in future surveys, but the direction in which they might move (favorable or unfavorable) will be driven by the messaging they receive.

## Key Findings: Health of Natural Water Resources

When all respondents were asked “how would you rate the health of natural water resources in your region,” a decrease in both “excellent” (11%, -2 from 2021) and “good” (40%, -2% from 2021) was recorded. Increases were recorded in “OK” responses (32%, +1% from 2021) and “poor” responses (10%, +2 from 2021). As in previous surveys, most responses were recorded in the “OK” or higher category across all regions.

Respondents were then asked to rate the health of various types of water resources on the same scale as the general question. While “excellent” ratings across the bodies of water mostly recorded between 1% and 3% decreases, Springs saw a 1% increase in “excellent” rating. Across each body of water, most responses were recorded in the “OK,” “good,” or “excellent” categories.

While the positive movement in Springs rating is good, the overall decrease in the positive ratings across the remaining bodies of water is worth noting for monitoring and for educational purposes in future campaigns.

## Key Findings: Sources of Information and Their Trustworthiness

Review of all news outlets selected in 2024, the top 3 overall remained the same from 2021: TV (64%, -3% from 2021), Internet search engines (41%, +1 from 2021), and Social media (36%, +2 from 2021).

Decreases were recorded in two traditional media channels: TV news (-3%) and Newspaper – print (-5%). Increases were recorded in digital resources as well as Friends/Family/Word of Mouth.

As in previous surveys, we asked respondents to tell us how often they use various social media platforms. As in previous surveys, Facebook (53%) was the top selection across the District for use “Daily, several times a day.” Similarly, YouTube (31%) and Instagram (19%) round out the top three overall. There were no increases in daily use across any of the channels measured. As has been noted in past reports, Facebook is still the best platform for the District to disseminate information to residents.

While the District remained the third-most trusted source of information about water resources in the 2024 survey, behind the US Geological Survey and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, it was the only one of those three to see any increase in trustworthiness (+1% from 2021).

As in the 2021 survey, social media was recorded in 2024 as the most untrustworthy source with 21% of respondents selecting “very untrustworthy.” While that is still significantly higher than the next highest “very untrustworthy” source of information, traditional media (10%), there was a 4%-point drop in the number of respondents who deemed social media as “very untrustworthy.”

Of note across all three of these sources of information is the continued upward trend in respondents indicating they “don’t know” how trustworthy they find the sources. Across all information sources included in this survey, “don’t know” responses increased in the 2024 survey.

## Key Findings: Irrigation System Use

Survey participants were asked a series of questions related to irrigation system use in their homes, water restrictions, water usage, and their opinions on statements related to these topics.

### ***Irrigation systems at home***

40% of participants indicated they have irrigation systems at their home and, of those, 73% reported they, or a member of their family, control their irrigation system. This majority of individuals controlling their systems at home was consistent across all regions.

When asked where water used to irrigate their landscape came from, 34% of respondents selected “reclaimed water from [their] utility provider” as the source. Respondents were also provided multiple options to select from regarding the type of grass growing in their landscape, with the ability to choose all that applied. St. Augustine grass was the more dominant choice (46%), while 29% were unsure what type grew in their landscape. 14% of respondents indicated having multiple types of grass growing in their landscape.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they had a working rain sensor, soil moisture sensor, or smart controller that turns off the irrigation when it is not needed: Yes (33%), No (32%). 18% reported turning off the irrigation system manually when it rains.

### ***Water restrictions***

Three questions related to local restrictions were included to gauge knowledge of both whether there were restrictions in their area, if they were mandatory or voluntary, and how many days a week they were permitted to water their landscapes. Following these questions, they were also asked where they would go for information regarding local water restrictions and how likely they were to follow applicable water restrictions when watering their landscape.

While 48% of respondents indicated awareness of current water restrictions for their landscapes, 42% selected they were not under restrictions. Of those who said they did currently have local water restrictions, 72% reported these as mandatory. Most respondents with knowledge of local water restrictions indicated they were permitted to water either one (31%) or two (43%) days per week.

The top three sources respondents indicated they would turn to for information regarding local water restrictions were: “my local water utility provider” (28%), “my HOA or neighborhood advisory committee” (21%), and “my water management district” (17%). An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they would follow applicable water restrictions when watering their landscapes: “very likely” (64%) and “likely” (26%).

Respondents were asked to provide their agreement or disagreement with several statements related to irrigation use in their landscapes. Most respondents (between 64% and 82%) agreed (either “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”) with the statements regarding use of their home irrigation systems.

Similarly, survey respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with statements related to water restrictions. For most statements in this grouping, a majority of respondents (between 64% and 83%) agreed with the statements (either “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”). One exception where there were more varied responses was regarding the impact of water restrictions if using well water to irrigate their landscapes (only 33% in agreement).

## ***Water usage***

When asked how much of their monthly water use respondents would estimate goes toward outdoor irrigation a majority indicated 0 – 20% (63%). Respondents were also asked to indicate how they operate their irrigation controller (allowed to select multiple options). Responses are provided below:

*Adjust the days of the week my irrigation system runs – 45%*

*Adjust how many minutes each of my irrigation zones run – 47%*

*Manually turn the controller on and off - 38%*

*Run each zone for 1-2 minutes to check for leaks – 22%*

*None of the above – 18%*

## **Key Findings: Fertilizer Use**

When asked if someone in their household or contractor fertilizes their landscape, 62% of respondents replied “no.” Of the 38% of respondents who do fertilize their landscape, 28% reported doing so twice a year. This group of respondents was also asked if there were any current restrictions on what time of year they were allowed to fertilize. 41% said “no,” while another 40% were unsure. This high number of “don’t know” responses could indicate a need for further education.

As with irrigation systems in the previous section, respondents who fertilize their landscapes were asked to respond with their level of agreement to several statements related to fertilizing. Unlike the statements associated with irrigation system use, the agreement or disagreement overall varied across statements. These are detailed later in the report. As with the first questions in this section of the survey, the varied responses likely indicate additional information is needed through education opportunities or messaging campaigns.

## **Recommendations**

In conclusion, Taproot recommends that the District incorporate the following insights into future messaging:

- Continue promoting the work of the District, as in years past, to regain positive momentum in recognition of the District as a whole. If they know who you are, then you can work to shape how they perceive you.
- Make messaging clear and specific about the tasks under the purview of the District and what you are continuing to protect various water resources throughout all four regions.
- While messaging surrounding irrigation system use in home landscapes may be hitting the mark thus far, similar focus on fertilizer use could provide more refined responses and opinions in future surveys.

The remainder of this report will present more detailed information and explanations of the overall and regional results recorded in the 2024 survey with changes from 2021 noted throughout.



# Awareness and Perceptions of the District

Respondents' levels of awareness and perceptions of the District were measured with the following questions:

- Have you ever heard of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, sometimes called Swiftmud?
- Select the tasks that you believe are the Southwest Florida Water Management District's responsibility.
  - Managing flood control structures
  - Issuing permits for large quantities of water
  - Managing public lands
  - Protecting water quality
  - Restoring the Everglades
  - Issuing permits for well construction
  - Providing programs that help conserve water
  - Issuing water restrictions
  - Issuing permits for stormwater systems
  - Protecting the springs
  - None of the above
- Based on what you may know or have heard, how would you rate Swiftmud or the Southwest Florida Water Management District?
- Is the Southwest Florida Water Management District (Swiftmud) doing too much, enough or too little to protect the following water resources:
  - Rivers
  - Lakes
  - Springs
  - Wetlands or swamps
  - Groundwater or water from the Aquifer
  - Bays and estuaries

As in all previous surveys, respondents were again asked if they had ever heard of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, sometimes referred to as Swiftmud, and 45% responded "yes" (no change from 2021). Across the regions, increases in knowledge of the District were recorded only in Heartland (+2%). Decreases in knowledge were recorded in all other regions: North (-7%), Tampa Bay (-6%), and South (-2%). The Tampa Bay and South regions saw increases in "not sure," +2% and + 4% respectively.

For those indicating "yes" they were aware of the District, we also asked follow-up questions related to tasks they assumed were the District's responsibility as well as asking them to rate the District overall and the District's overall efforts in protecting water resources.

When provided a list of tasks the District is responsible for, along with others they are not, the top five tasks selected were:

1. Protecting water quality (85%)
2. Protecting the springs (71%)
3. Providing programs that help conserve water (70%)
4. Issuing water restrictions (67%)

## 5. Managing flood control structures (57%)

Respondents were asked to rate the District overall on a scale of “terrible” to “excellent” with a “don’t know” option available. An increase in “good” responses was recorded for the total sample (43%, +4% from 2021). Decreases were recorded for “excellent” (14%, -1% from 2021), “OK” (29%, -1% from 2021), and “poor” (4%, -2% from 2021). Responses for “terrible” remained the same (2%), while “don’t know” responses increased (9%, +1 from 2021).

While the overall “excellent” rating for the District only dropped 1%-point, larger decreases were recorded in two regions: North (15%, -4% from 2021) and South (9%, -5% from 2021). Each of the regions saw between a 2%- and 7%-point increase in “good” ratings.

Respondents were also asked whether they felt the District was doing “too much,” “enough” or “too little” to protect various water resources. Unlike the 2021 report where an increase in those indicating “too much” was being done to protect these resources was recorded, the 2024 survey resulted in a decrease in “too much” across all bodies of water included in the question.

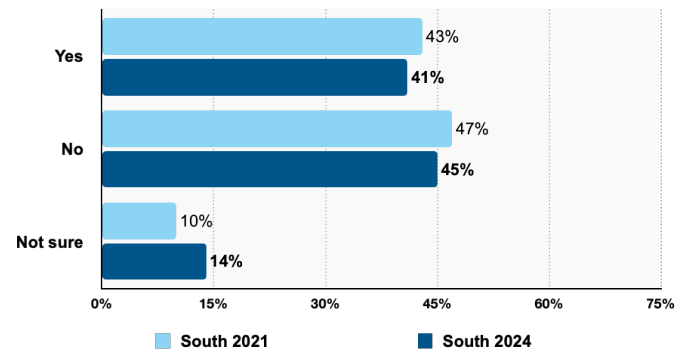
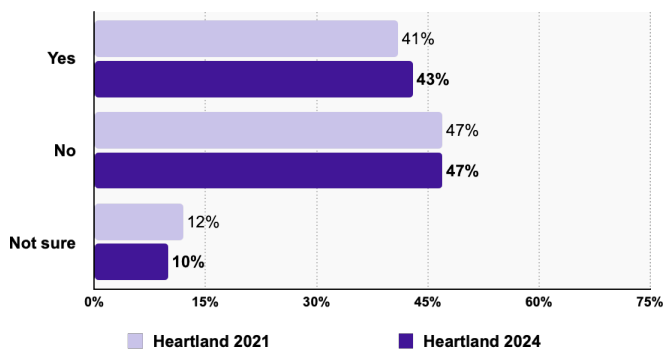
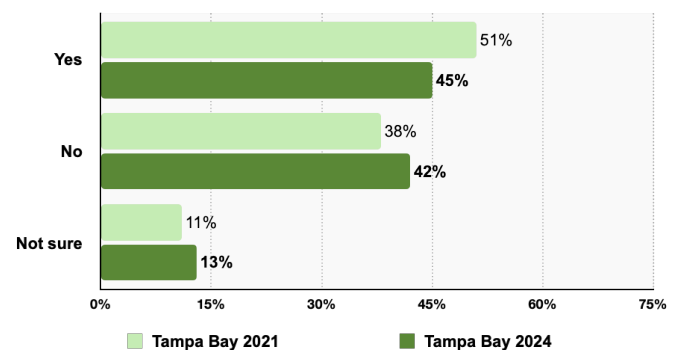
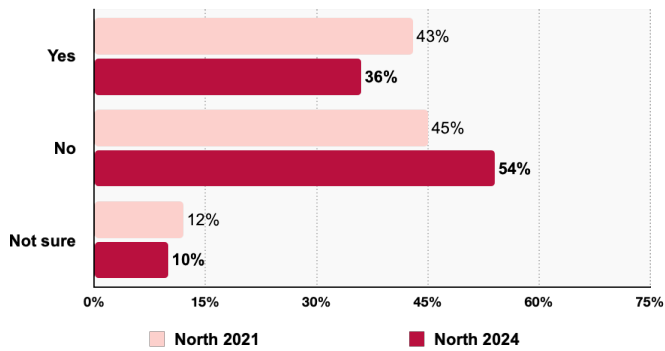
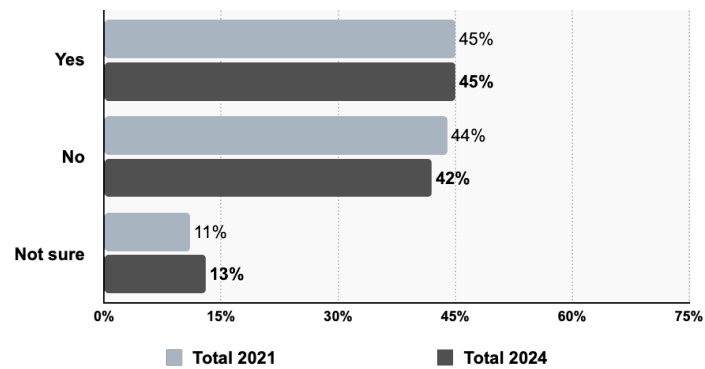
Percentages and changes from 2021 of residents who feel the District is doing “too little” to protect these water resources were as follows:

- Rivers: 29% (-1% from 2021)
- Lakes: 29% (-1% from 2021)
- Springs: 22% (-4% from 2021)
- Wetlands or swamps: 33% (+1% from 2021)
- Groundwater or water from the Aquifer: 32% (-3% from 2021)
- Bays and estuaries: 30% (-1% from 2021)

In general, these recorded decreases might suggest movement in a positive direction, though it must be noted that the “not sure” response for all bodies of water except “wetlands or swamp” increased between 1% and 4% points. Further education on the District’s efforts to protect these resources could result in respondents forming a more concrete opinion in the future. The “not sure” percentages and changes from 2021 are listed below:

- Rivers: 21% (+3% from 2021)
- Lakes: 21% (+3% from 2021)
- Springs: 23% (+2% from 2021)
- Wetlands or swamps: 20% (no change from 2021)
- Groundwater or water from the Aquifer: 21% (+1% from 2021)
- Bays and estuaries: 24% (+4% from 2021)

## Have you ever heard of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, sometimes called Swiftmud?



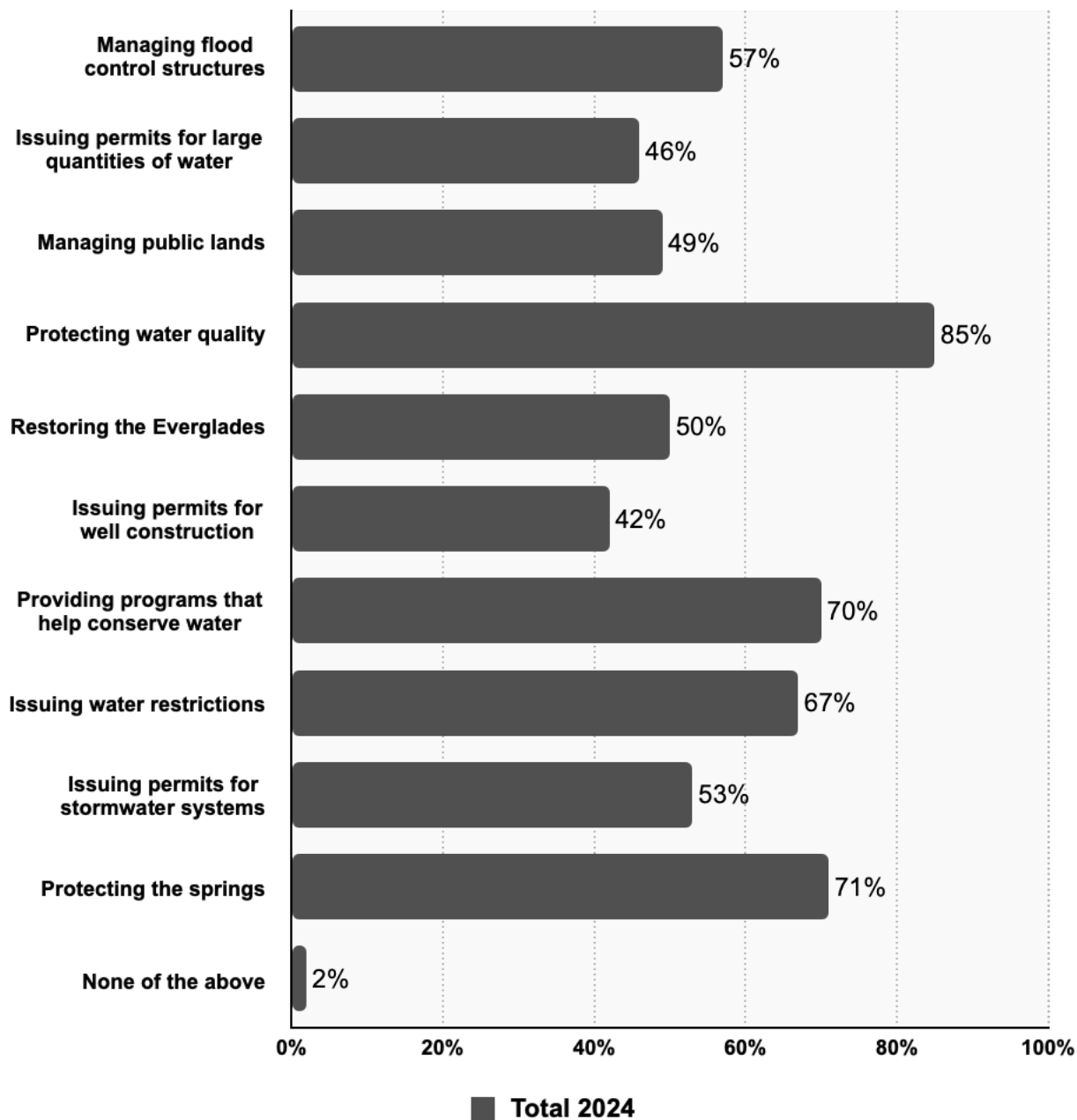
## District awareness and length of Florida residency

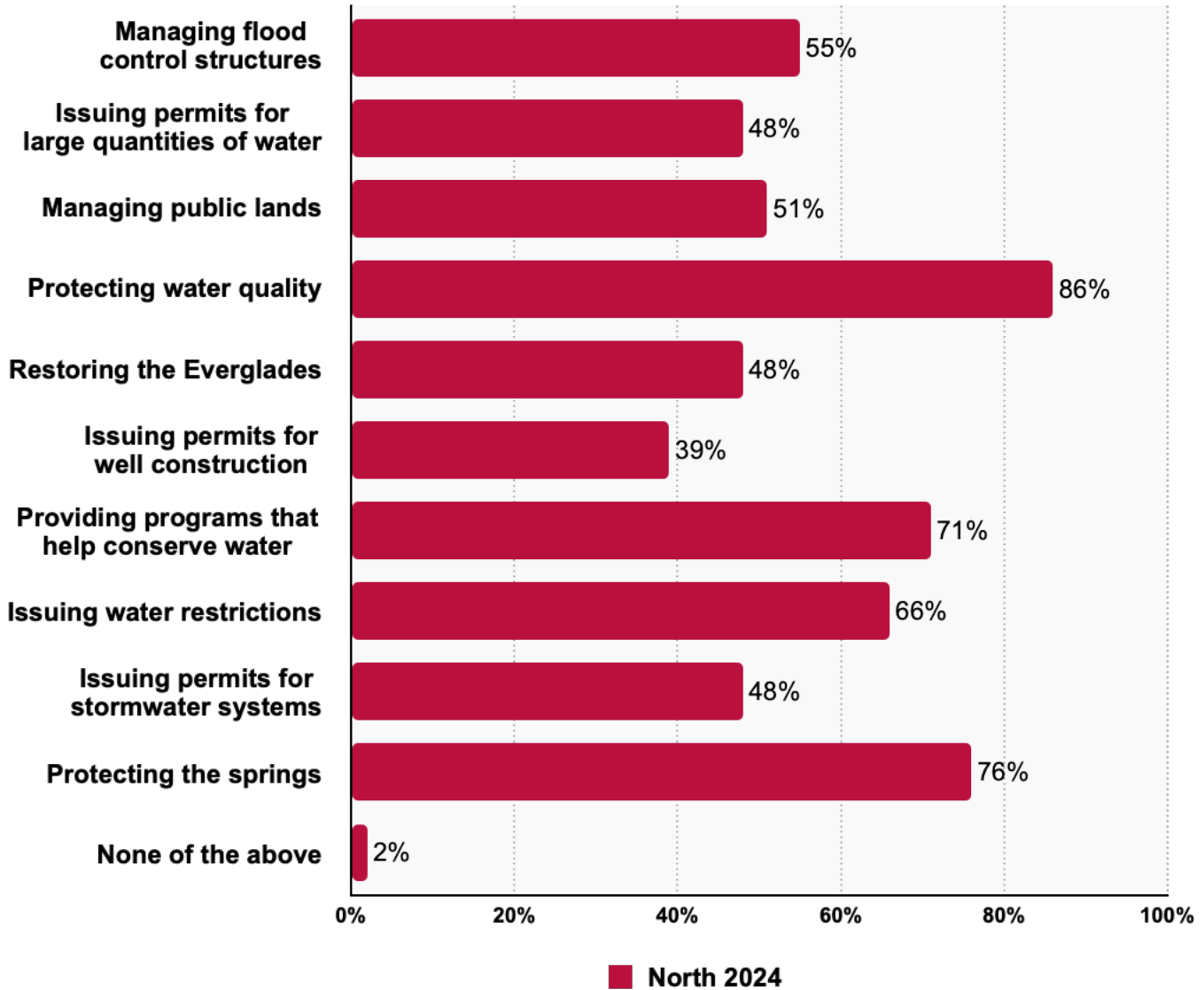
	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years
Yes	1%	8%	5%	86%
No	4%	21%	18%	57%
Not Sure	3%	16%	11%	70%

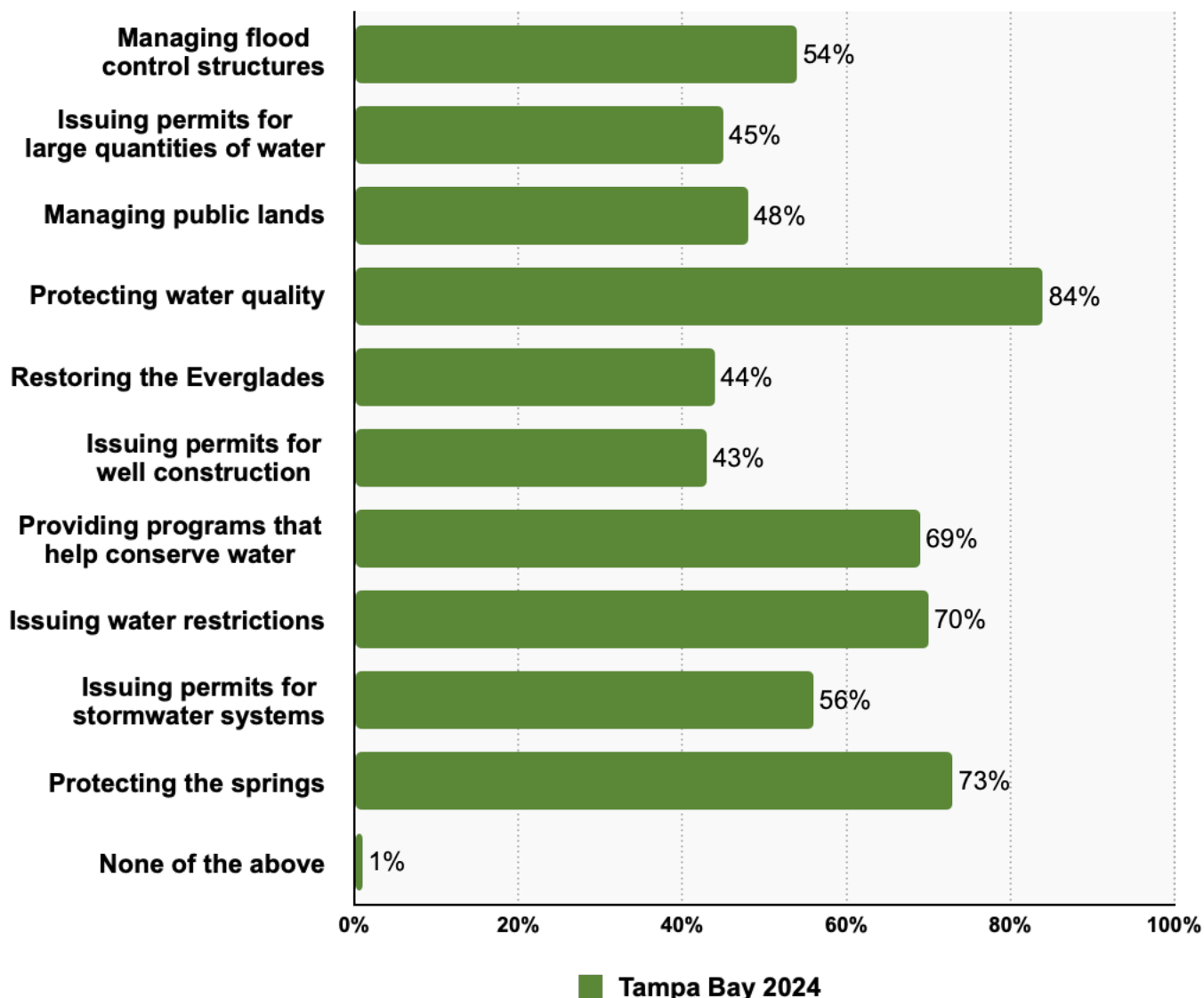


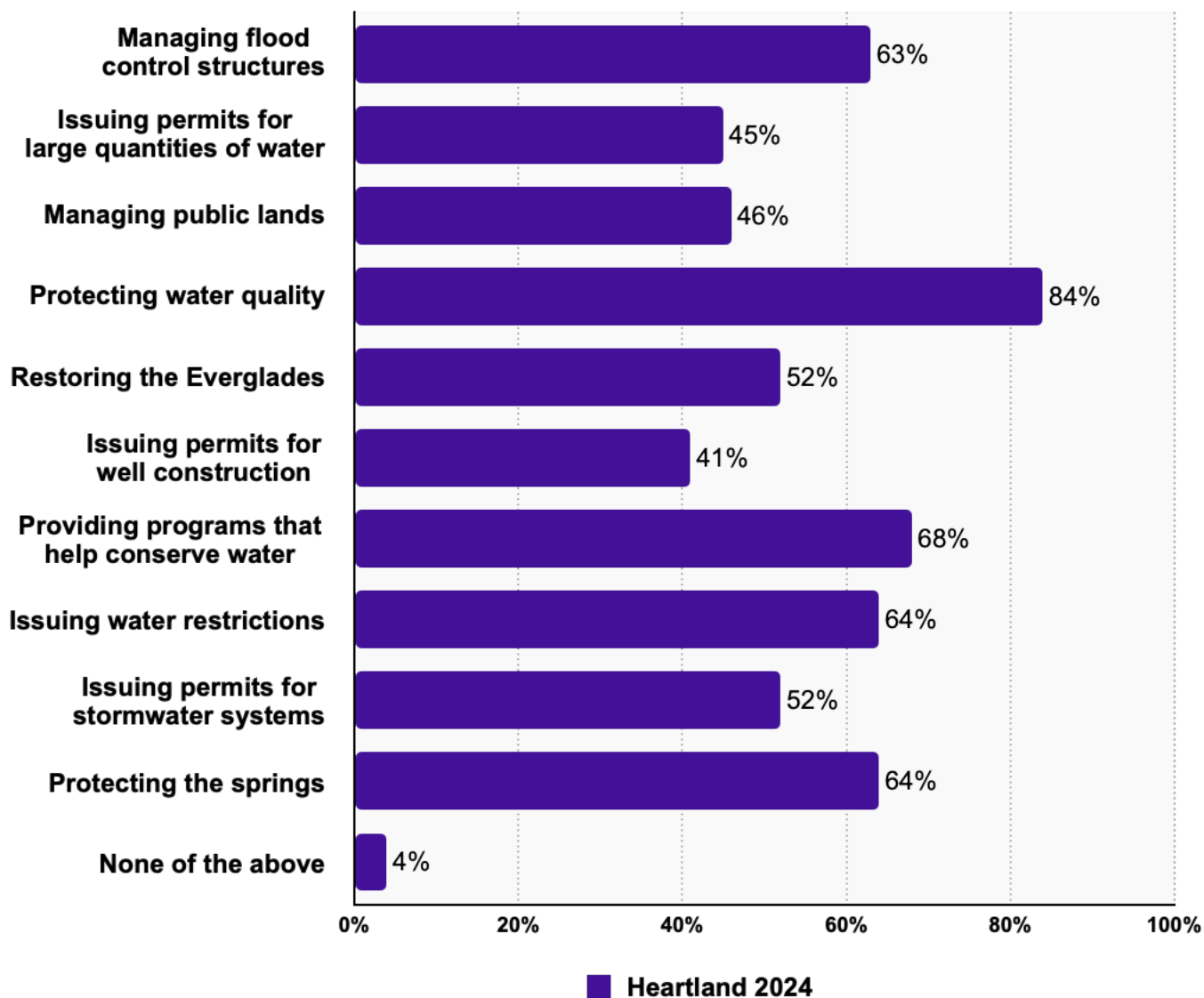
Select the tasks that you believe are the Southwest Florida Water Management District's responsibility.  
Select all that apply.

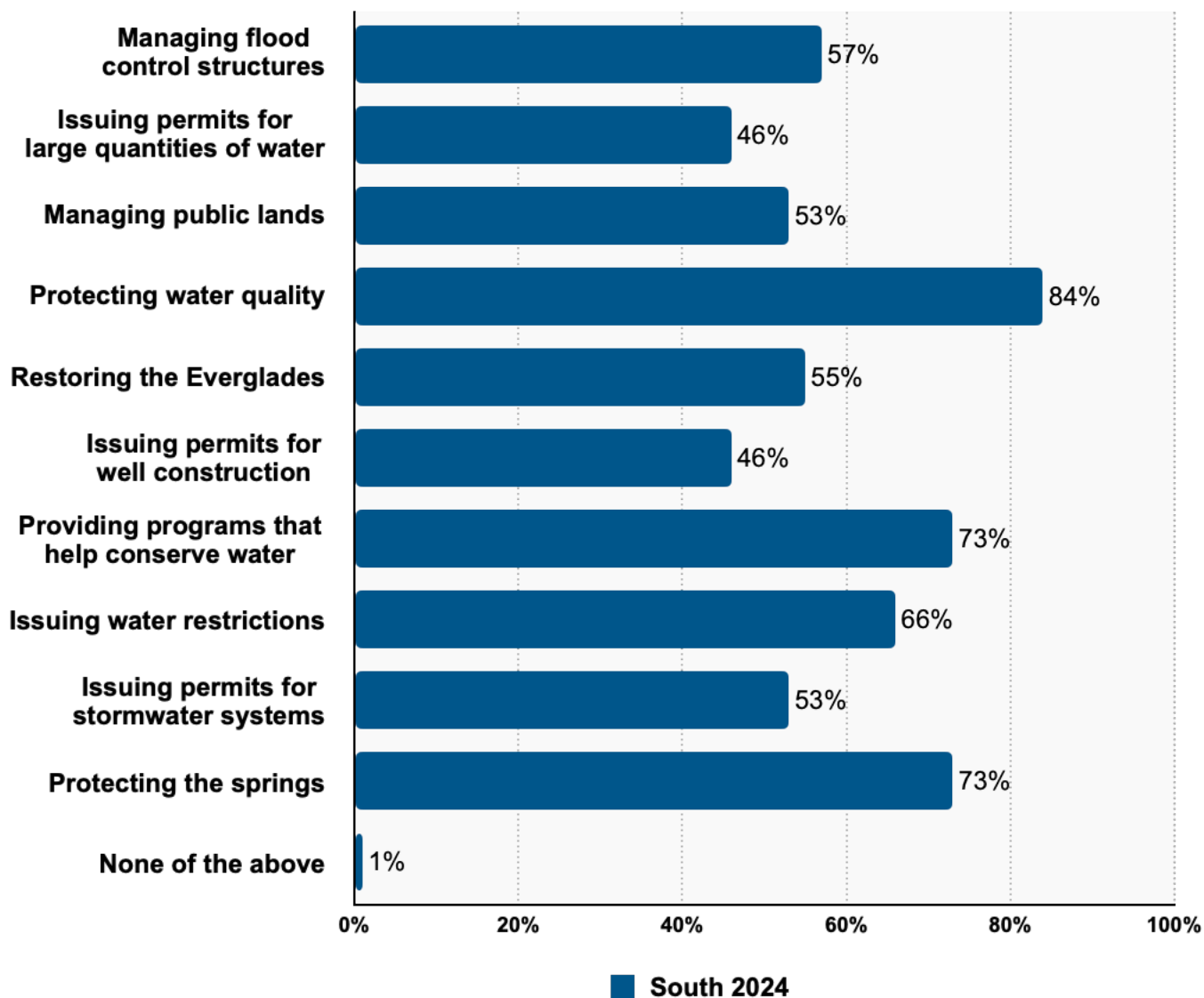
*Note: This question was added to the 2024 survey. This question only answered by those who indicated they had heard of the District.*





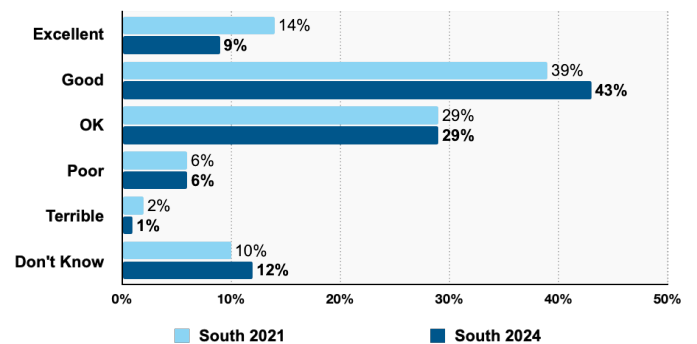
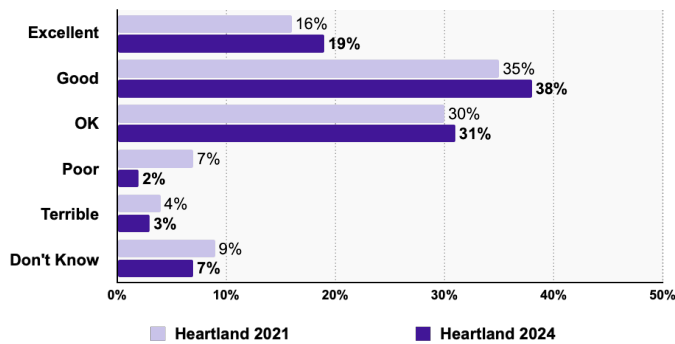
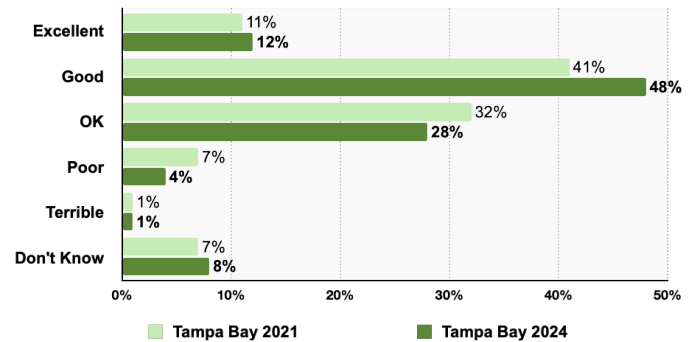
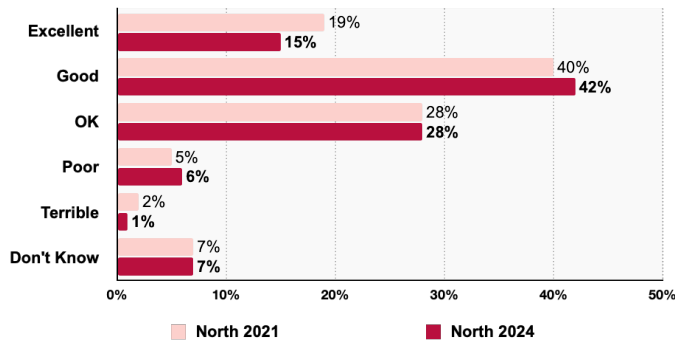
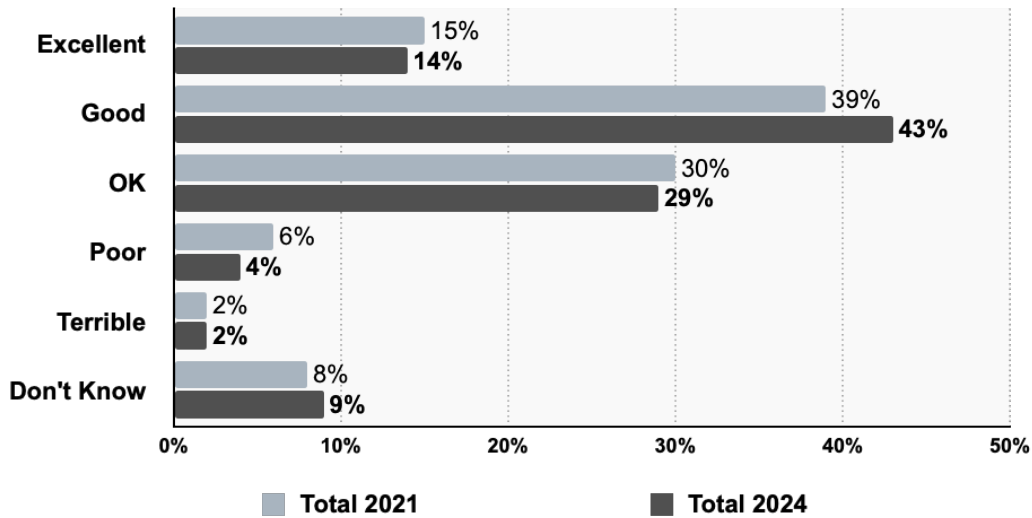






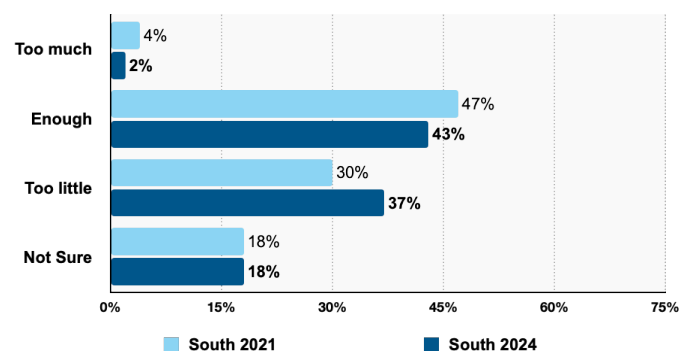
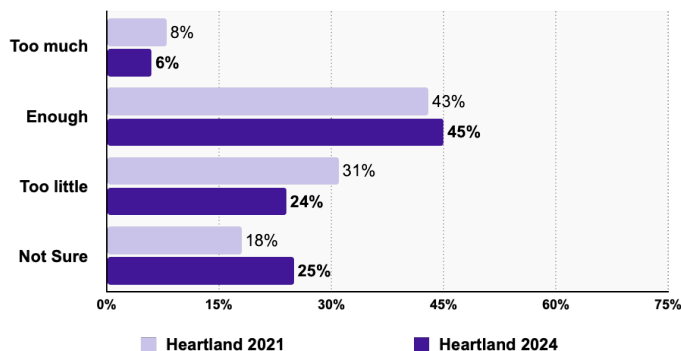
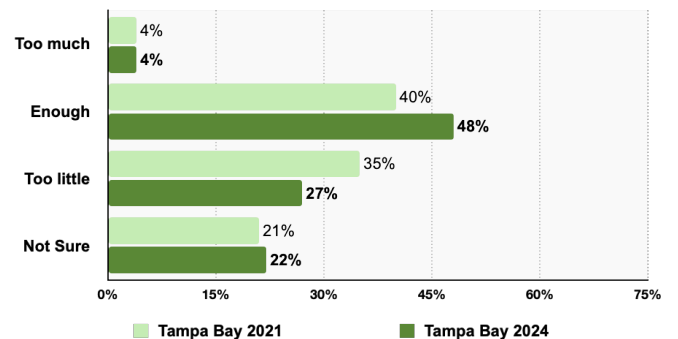
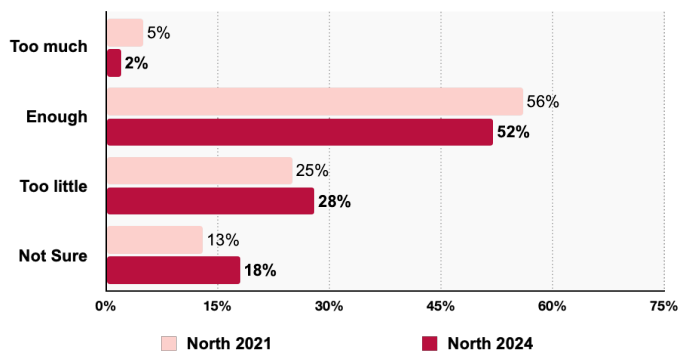
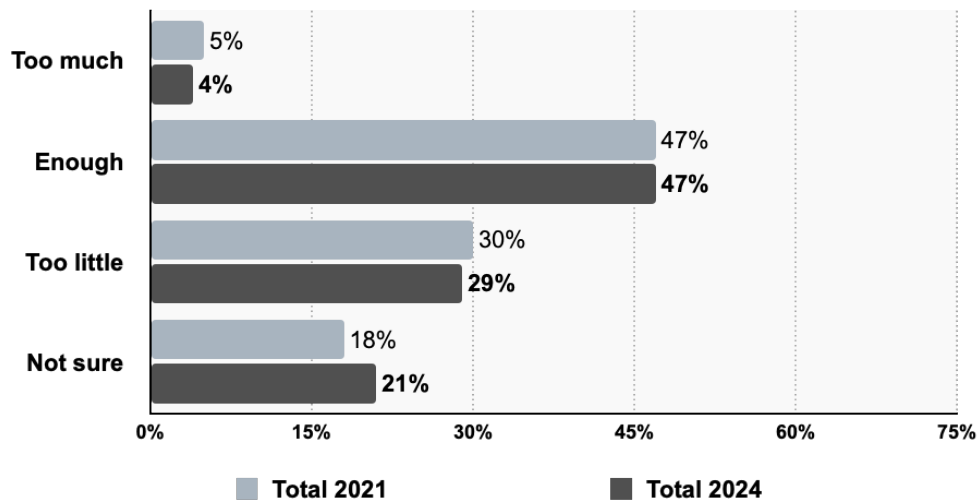
*Note: The next two questions were only answered by those who indicated they had heard of the District.*

**Based on what you may know or have heard, how would you rate Swiftmud or the Southwest Florida Water Management District?**

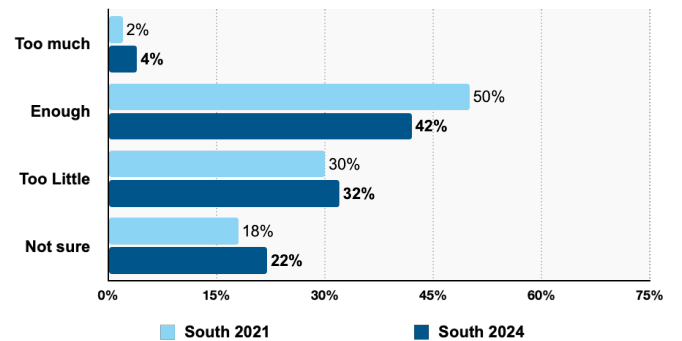
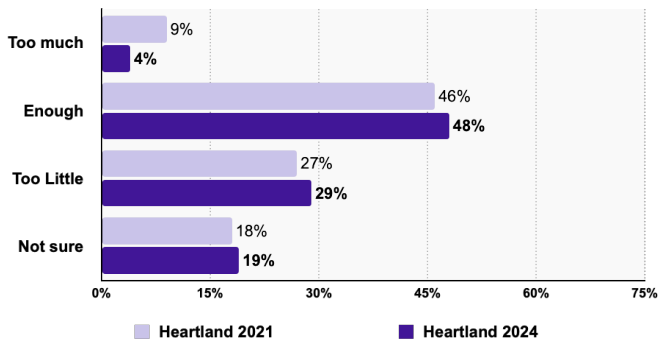
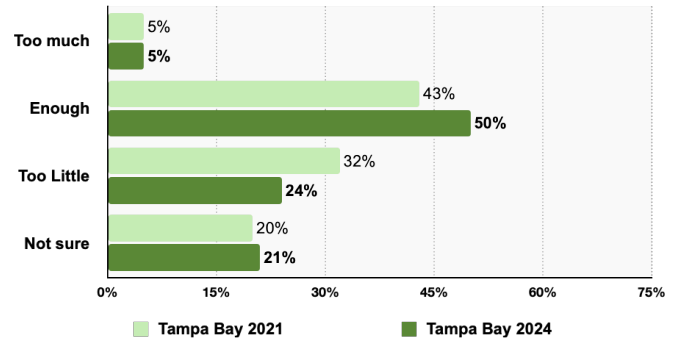
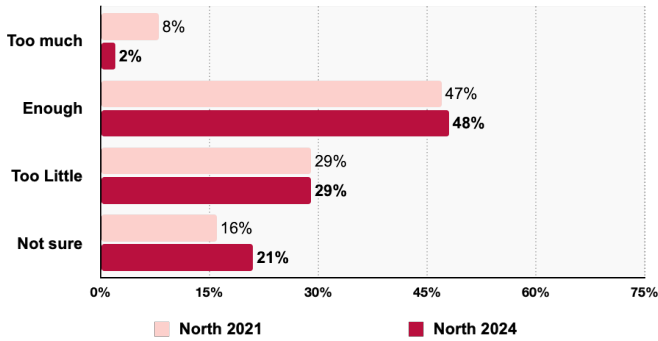
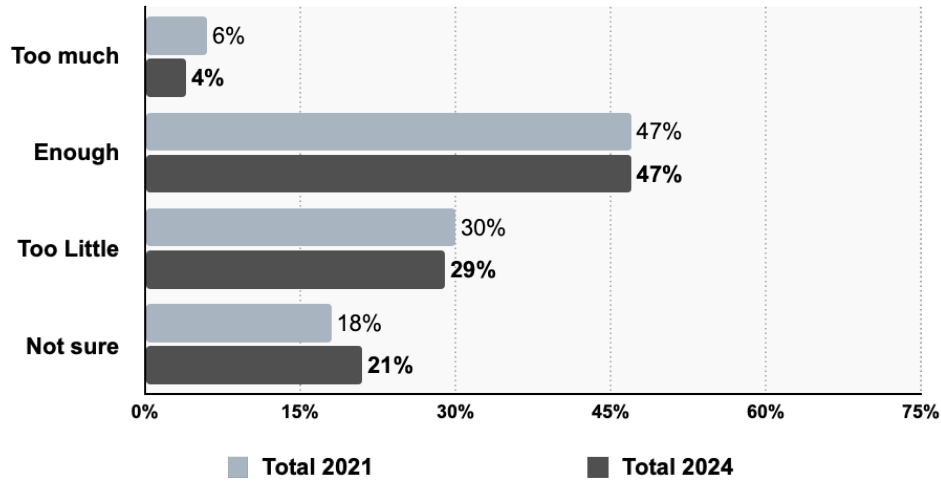


Is the Southwest Florida Water Management District (Swiftmud) doing too much, enough or too little to protect the following water resources: Rivers; lakes; springs; wetlands or swamps; groundwater or water from the Aquifer; bays and estuaries. (Only answered by those who indicated they had heard of the District.)

## RIVERS

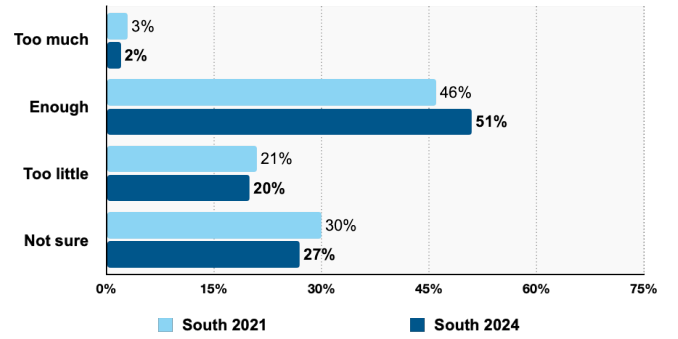
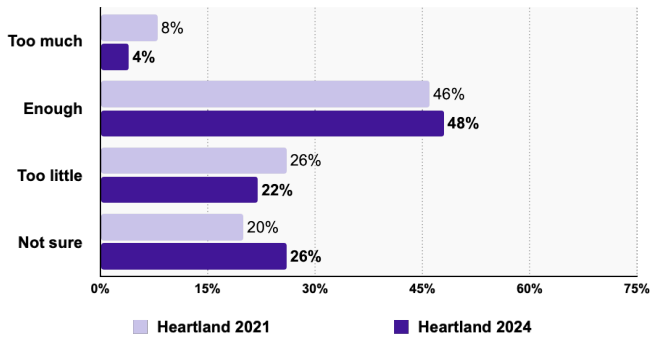
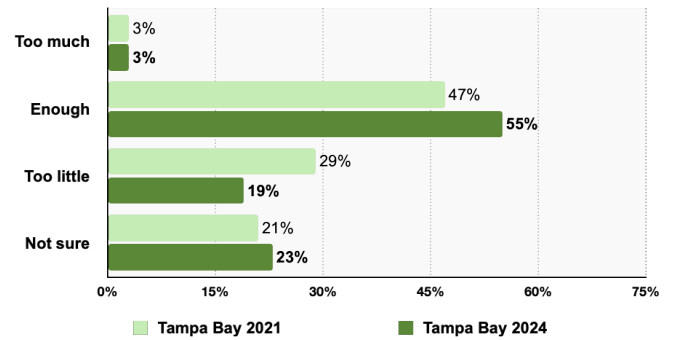
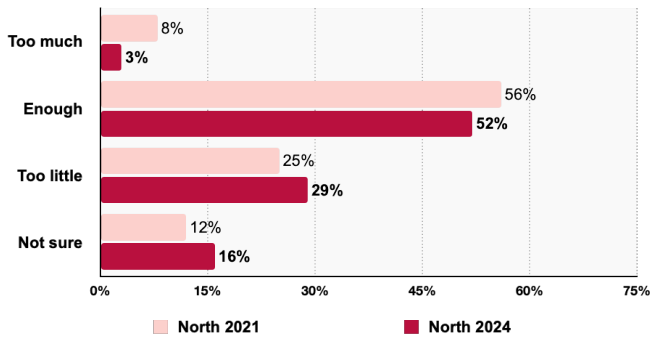
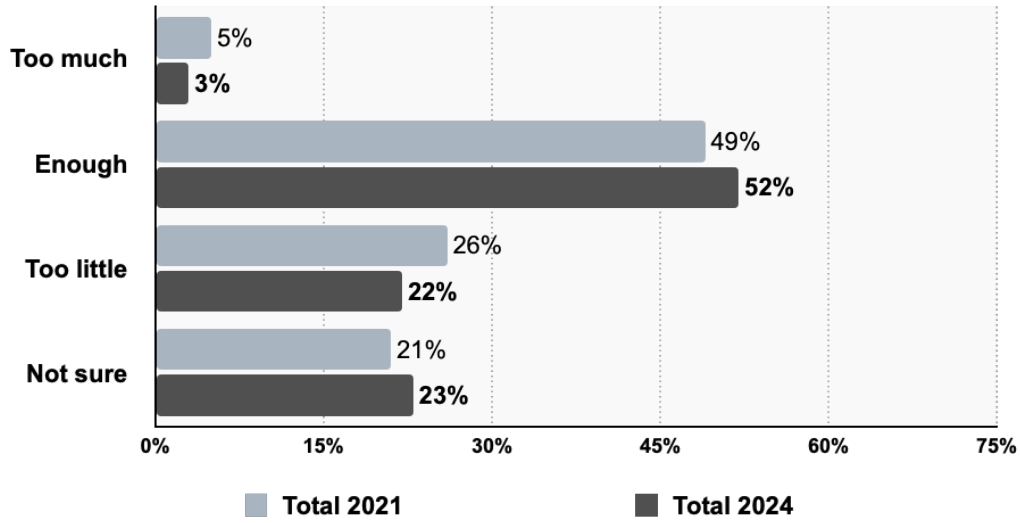


## LAKES

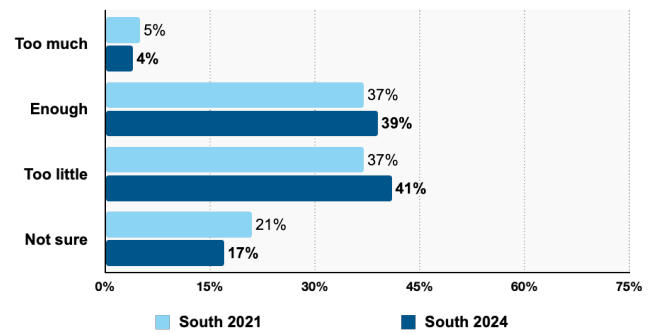
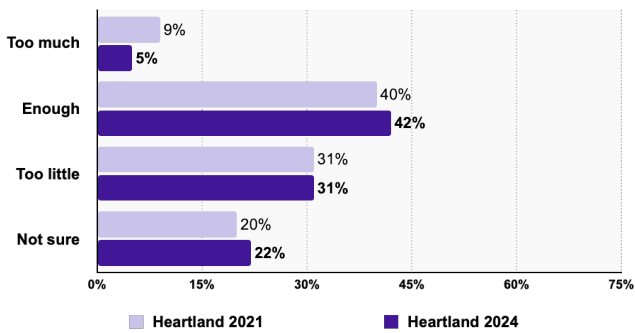
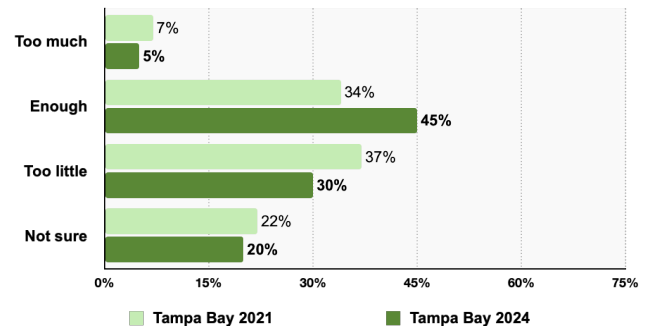
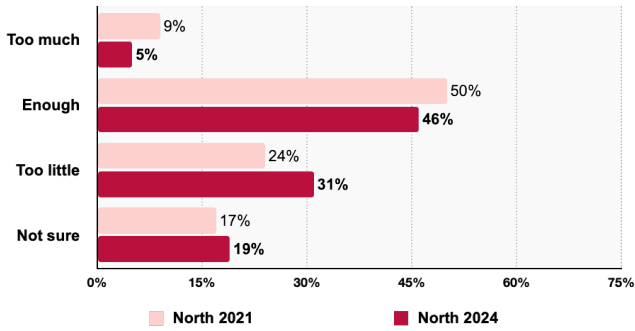
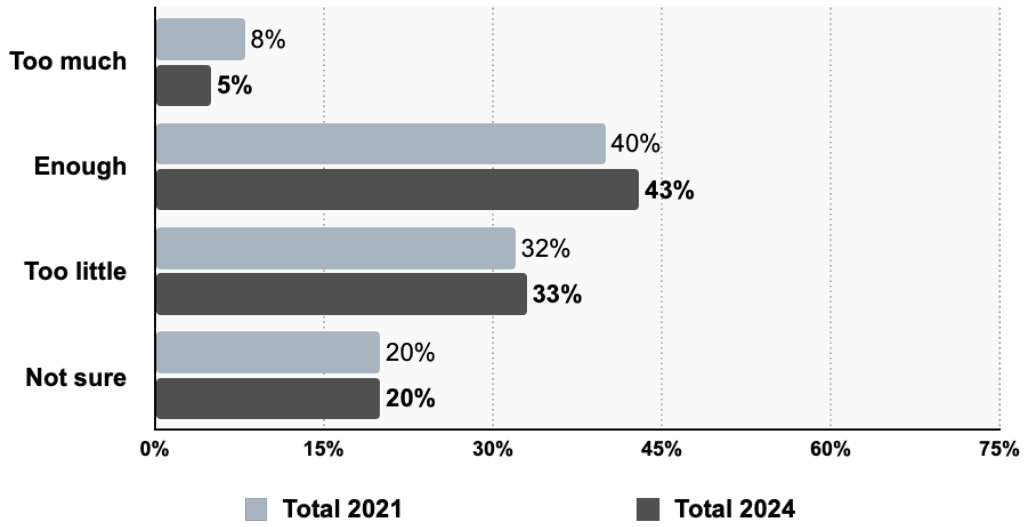




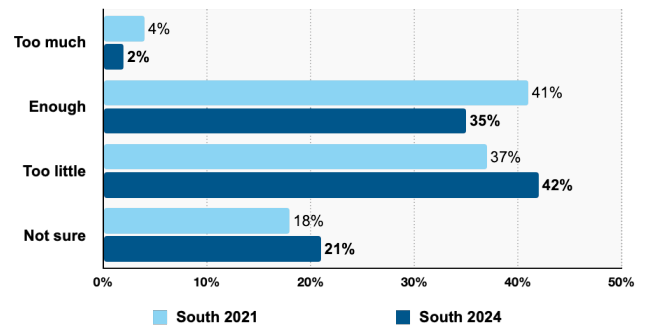
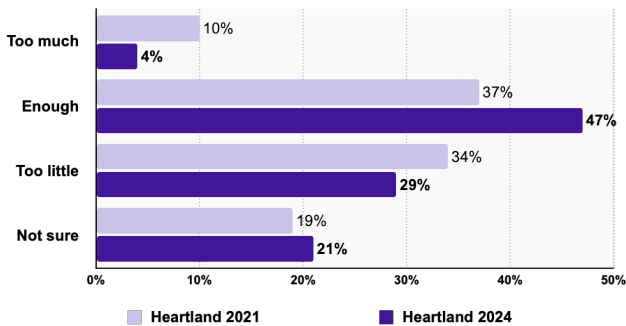
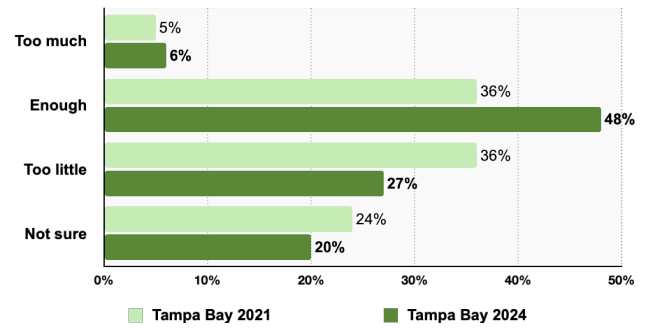
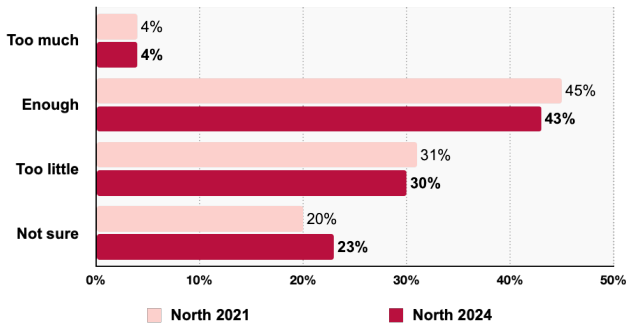
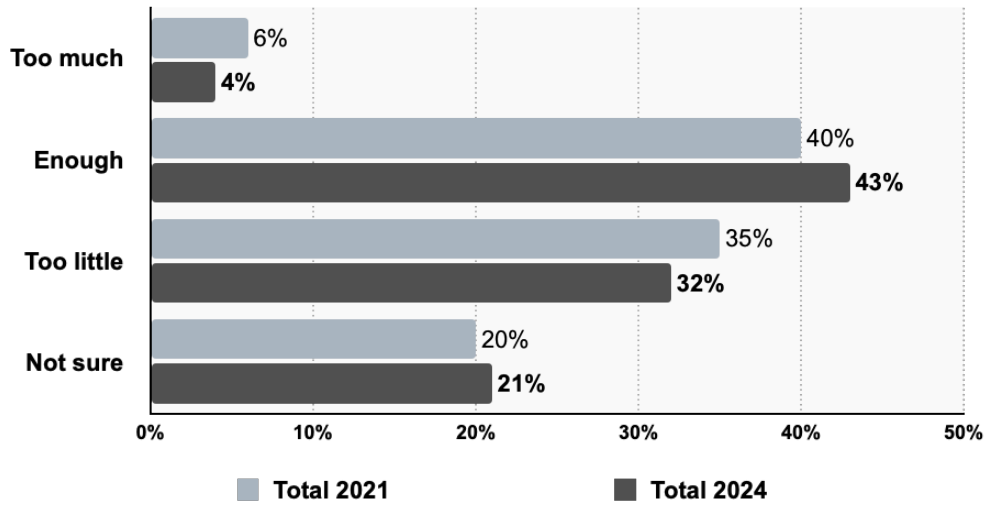
## SPRINGS



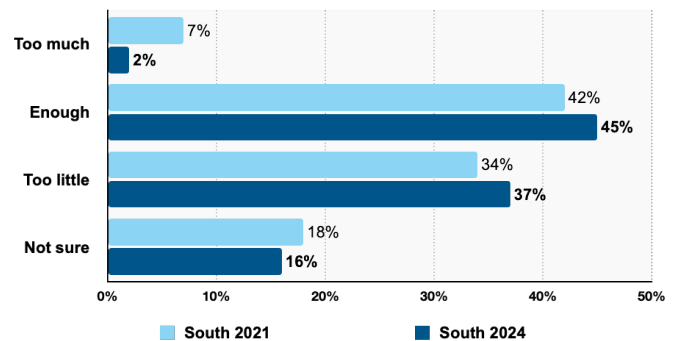
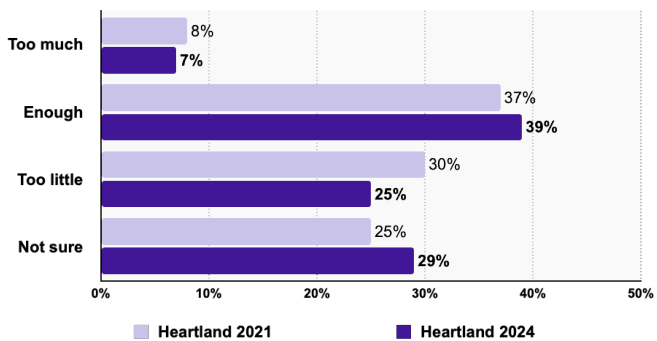
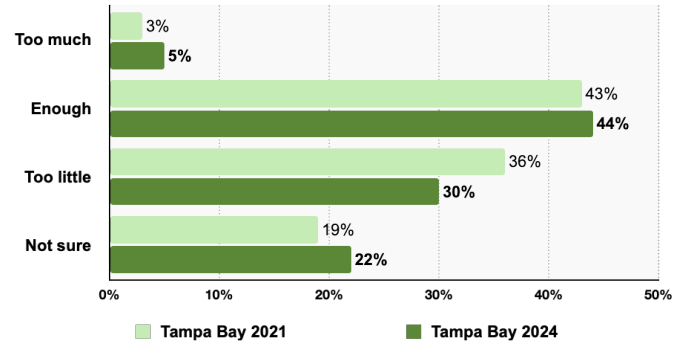
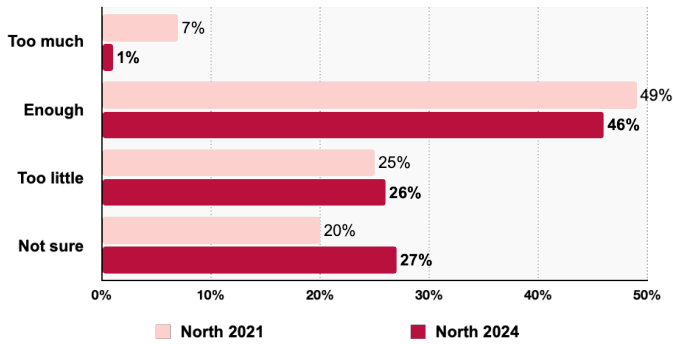
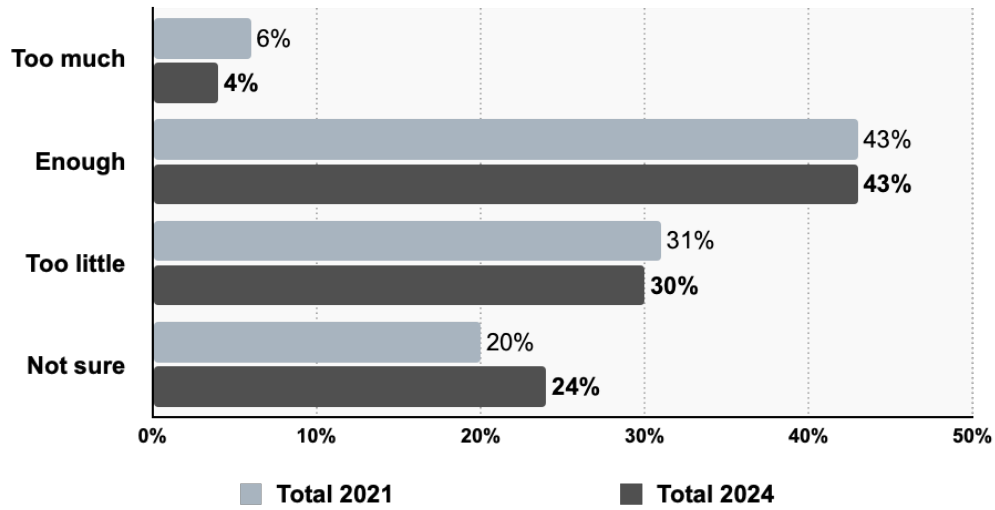
## WETLANDS OR SWAMPS



## GROUNDWATER OR WATER FROM THE AQUIFER



## BAYS AND ESTUARIES





# Health of Natural Water Resources

Respondents' opinions of the health of natural water resources were measured with the following questions:

- The term “natural water resources” refers to rivers, lakes, springs, wetlands, groundwater, bays and estuaries. How would you rate the health of natural water resources in your region?
- How would you rate the health of the following water resources in your region?
  - Rivers
  - Lakes
  - Springs
  - Wetlands or swamps
  - Groundwater or water from the Aquifer
  - Bays and estuaries

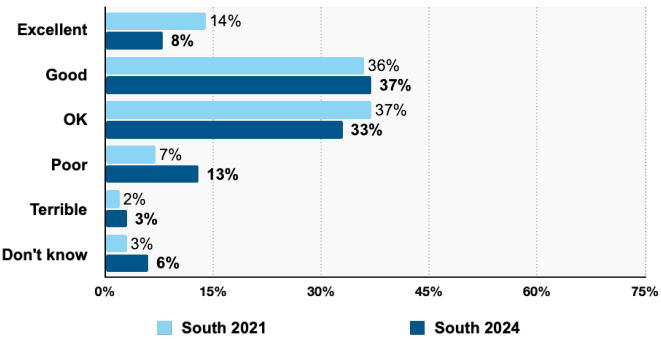
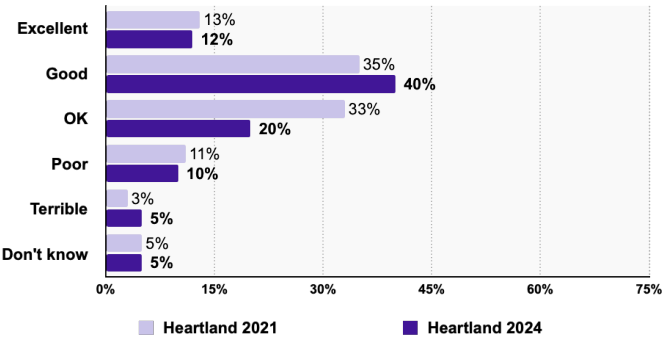
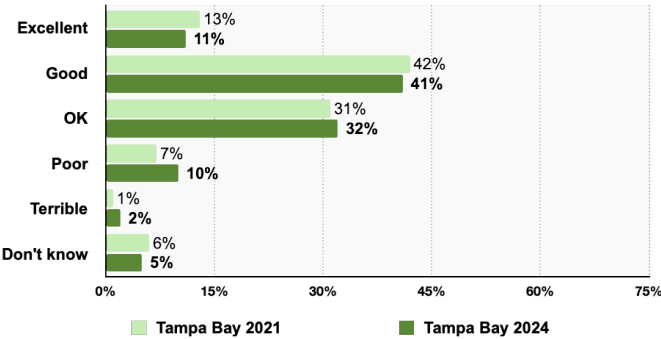
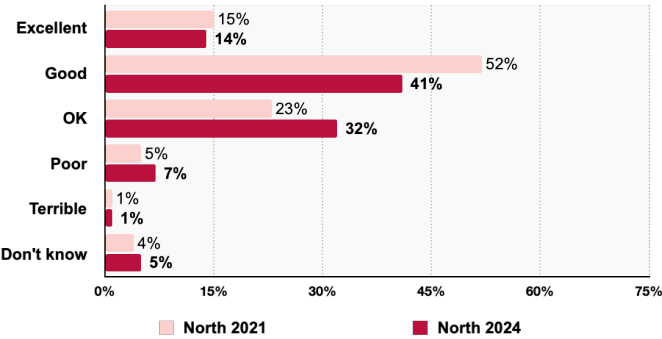
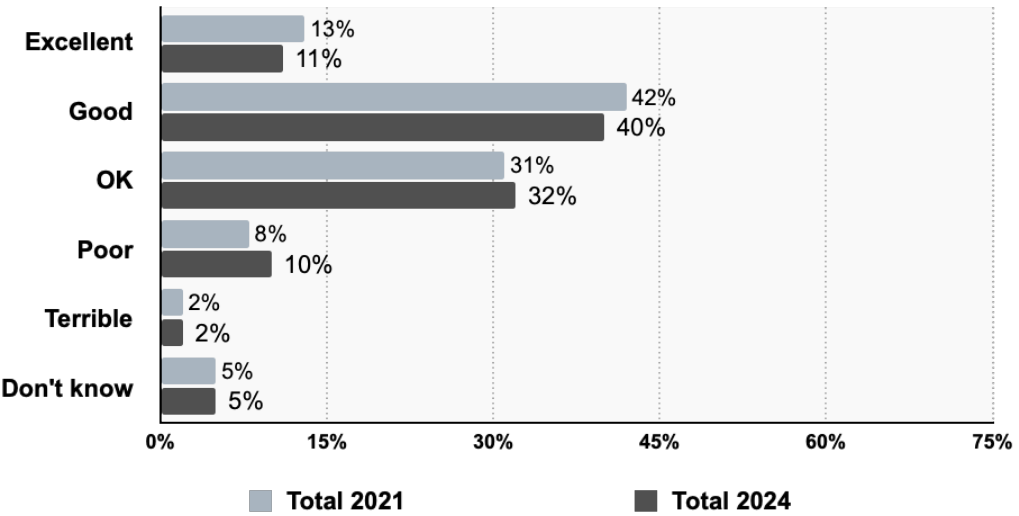
When all respondents were asked “how would you rate the health of natural water resources in your region,” a decrease in both “excellent” (11%, -2 from 2021) and “good” (40%, -2% from 2021) were recorded. Increases were recorded in “OK” responses (32%, +1% from 2021) and “poor” responses (10%, +2 from 2021). As in previous surveys, most responses were recorded in the “OK” or higher category across all regions.

Respondents were then asked to rate the health of various types of water resources on the same scale as the general question. While “excellent” ratings across the bodies of water mostly recorded between 1% and 3% decreases, Springs saw a 1% increase in “excellent” rating. Across each body of water, most responses were recorded in the “OK,” “good,” or “excellent” categories.

A combined 4%-point decrease was recorded for the “excellent” and “good” categories for Rivers, though the majority still rated it “OK” or higher. Similar combined decreases were seen in Lakes (-5%), Wetlands or Swamps (-4%), Groundwater or Water from the Aquifer (-5%), and Bays and Estuaries (-6%). Unlike the other bodies of water, Springs saw a combined increase of 2% points in “excellent” and “good” ratings.

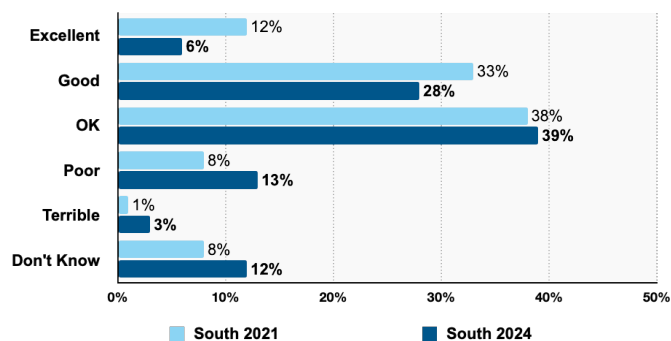
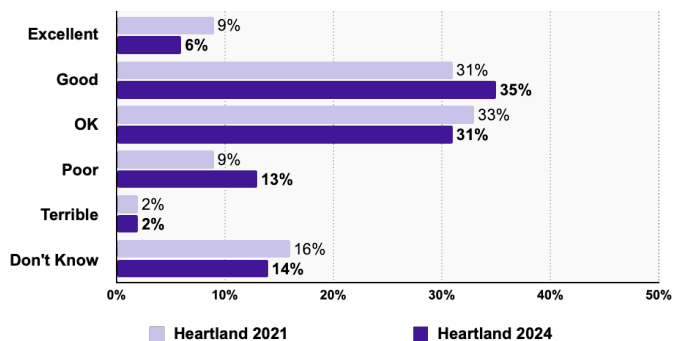
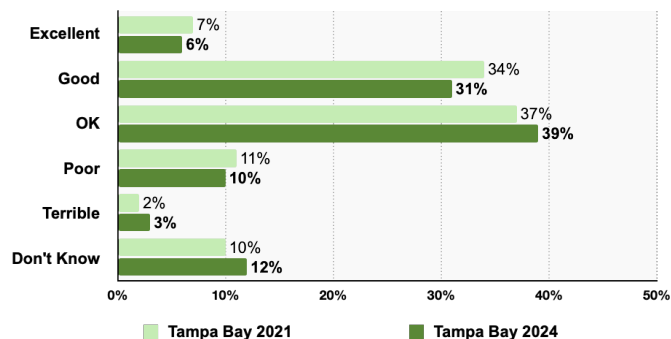
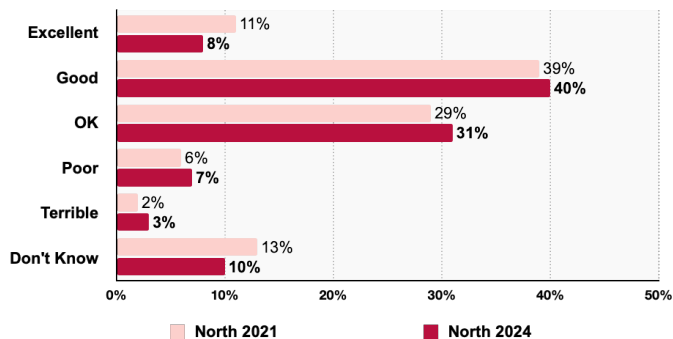
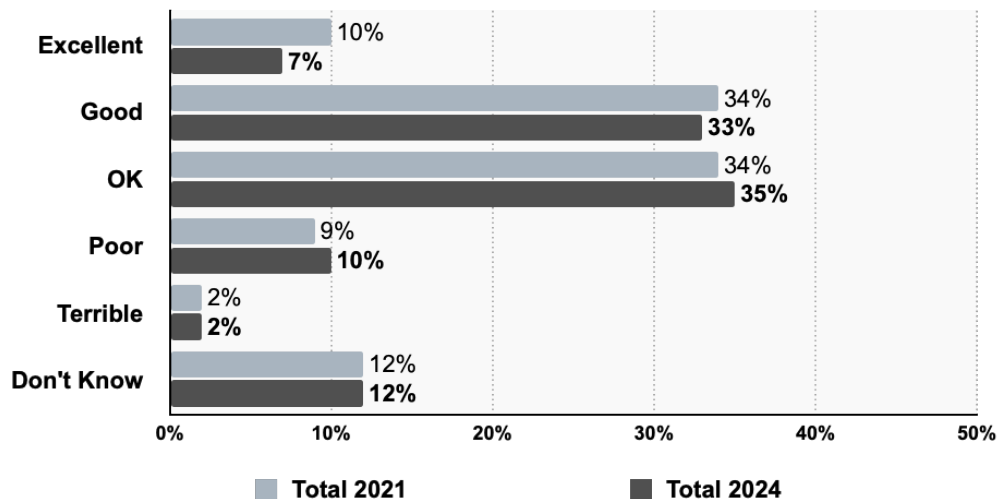
While the positive movement in Springs rating is encouraging, the overall decrease in the positive ratings across the remaining bodies of water is worth noting for educational purposes in future campaigns.

The term “natural water resources” refers to rivers, lakes, springs, wetlands, groundwater, bays and estuaries. How would you rate the health of natural water resources in your region?



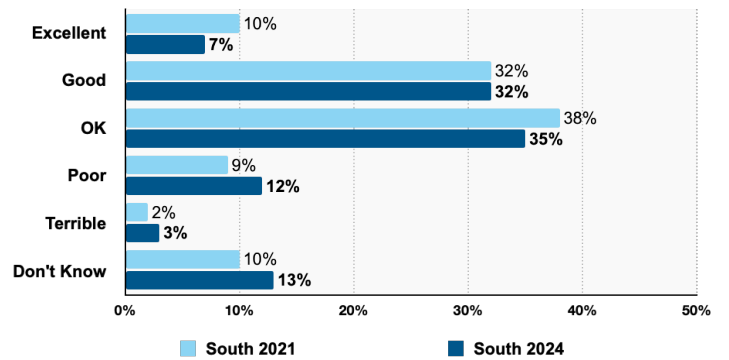
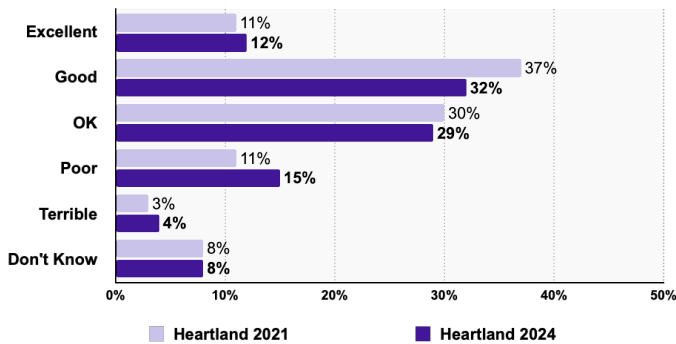
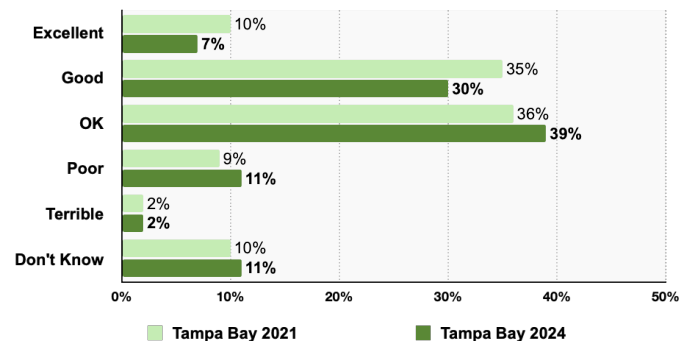
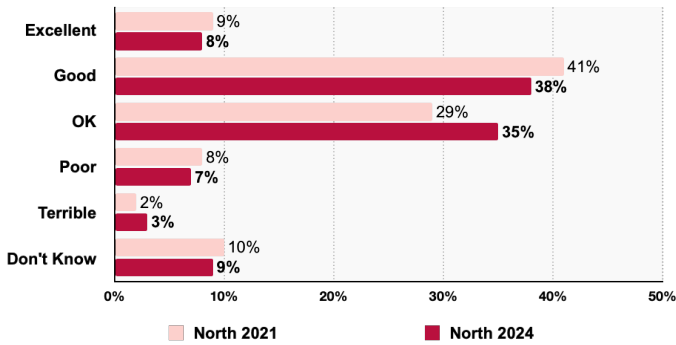
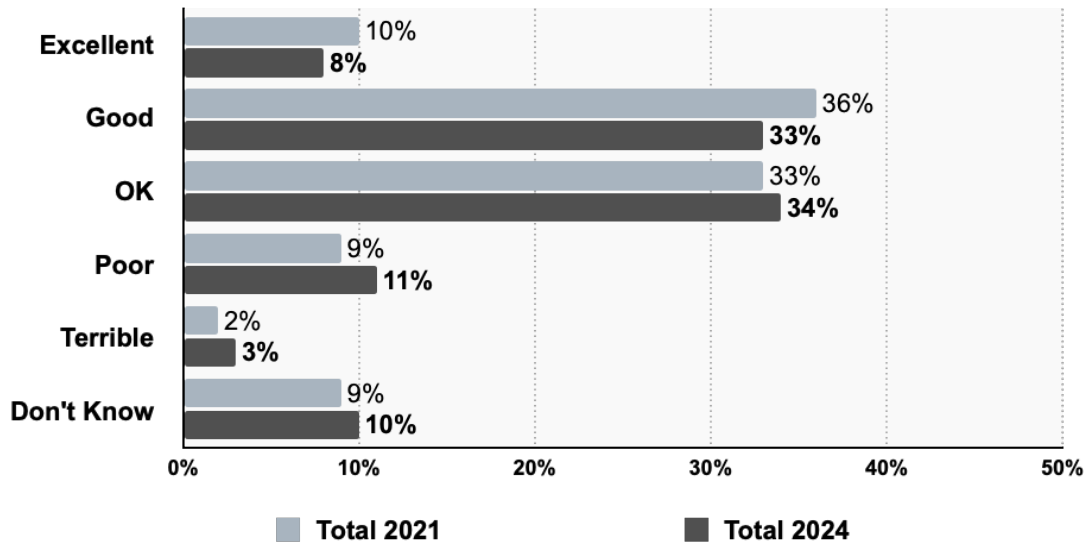
How would you rate the health of the following water resources in your region: Rivers; lakes; springs; wetlands or swamps; groundwater or water from the Aquifer; bays and estuaries.

## RIVERS

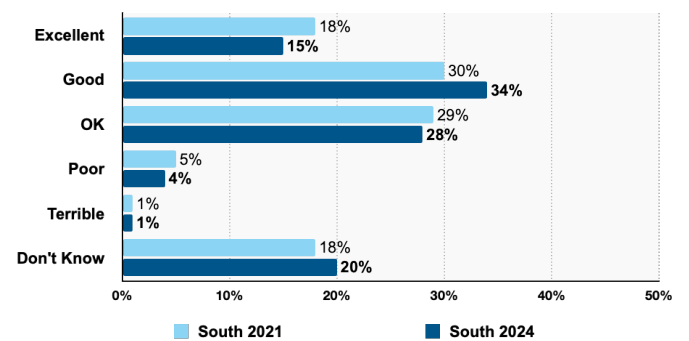
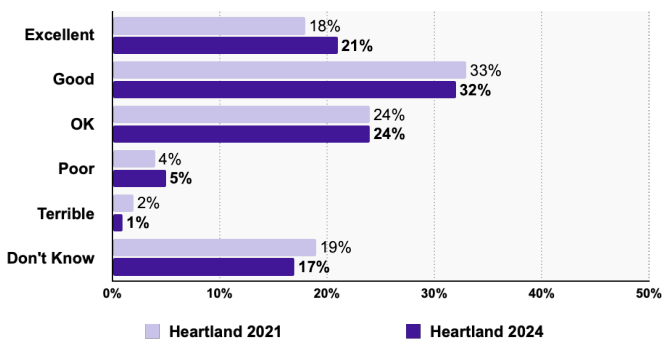
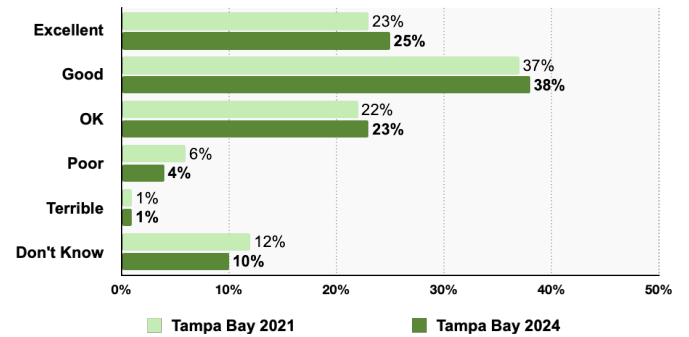
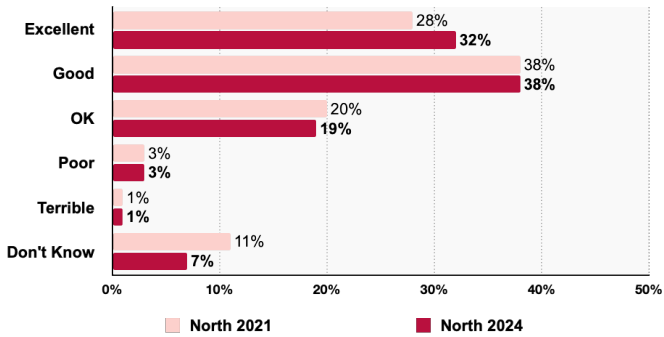
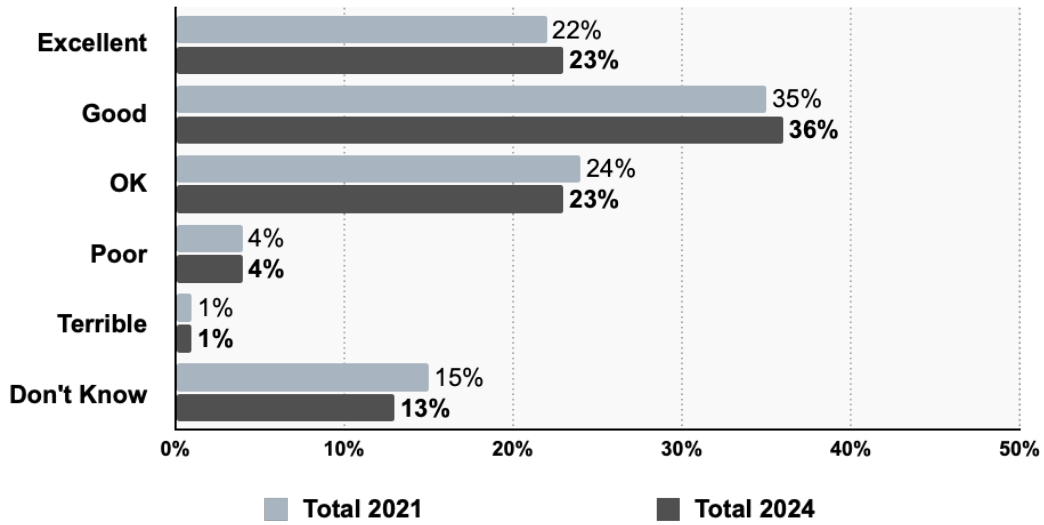




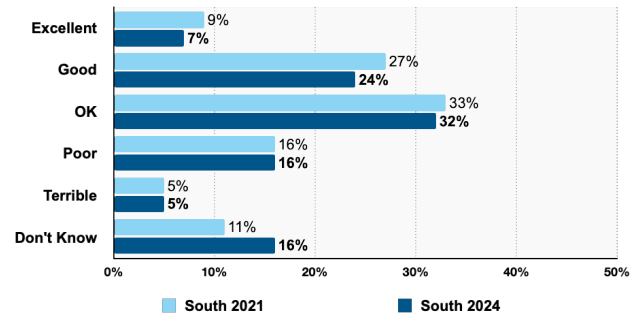
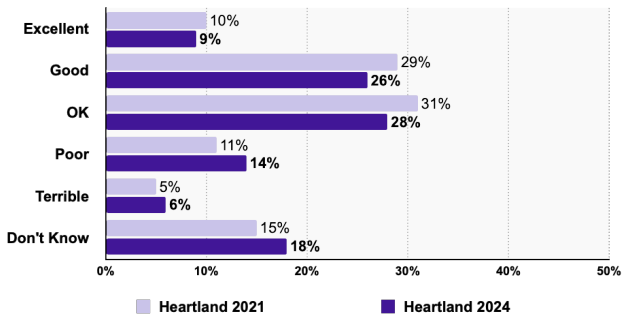
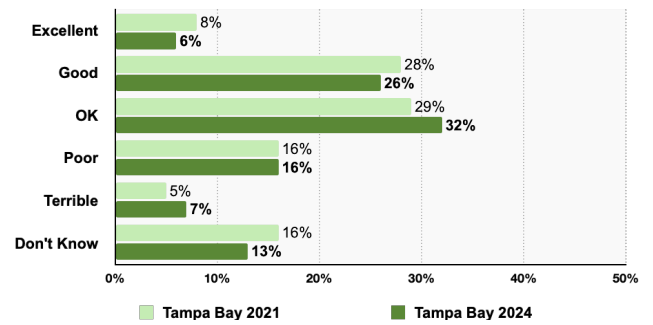
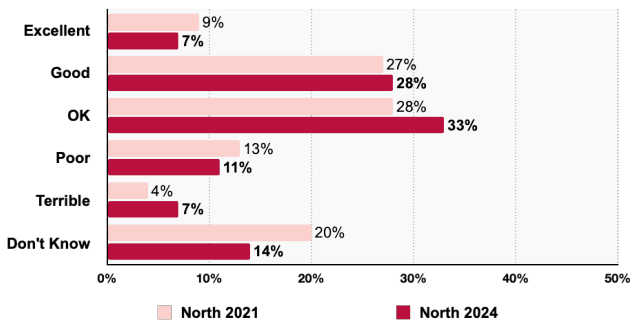
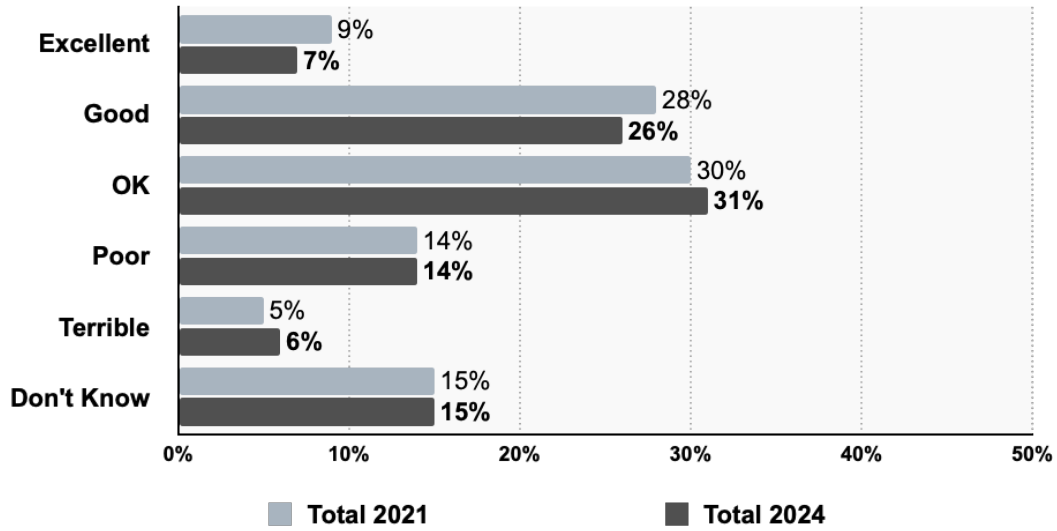
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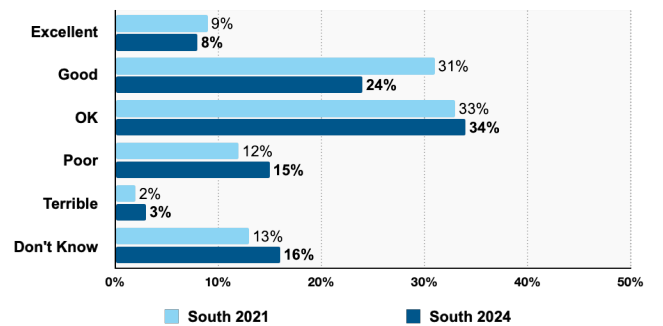
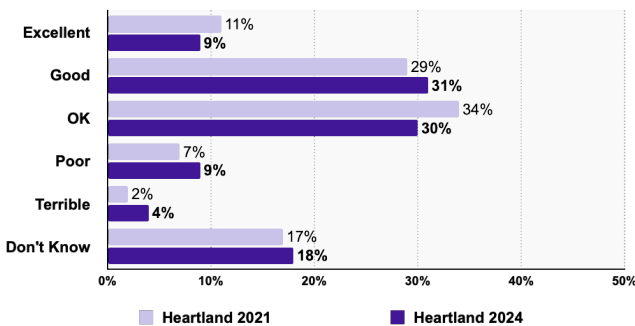
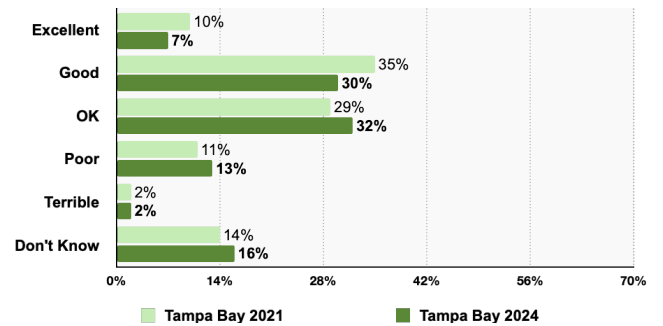
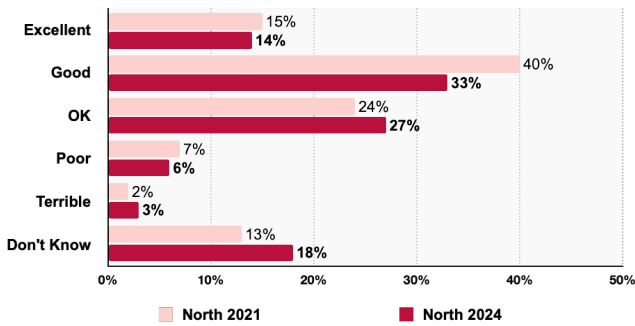
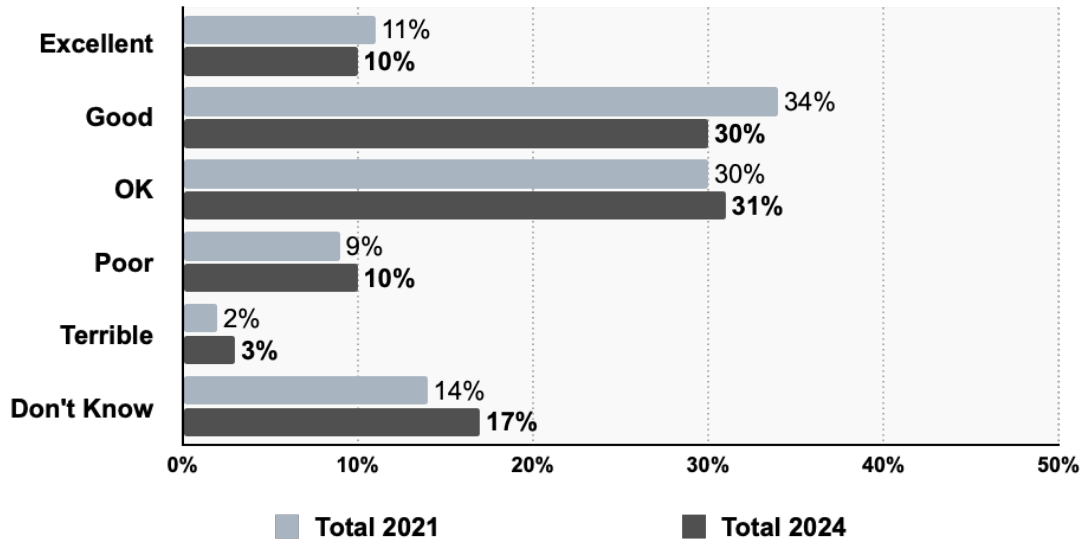
## SPRINGS



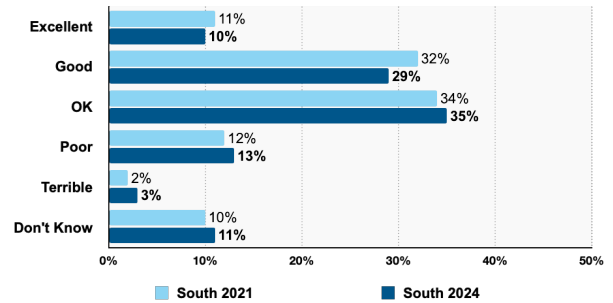
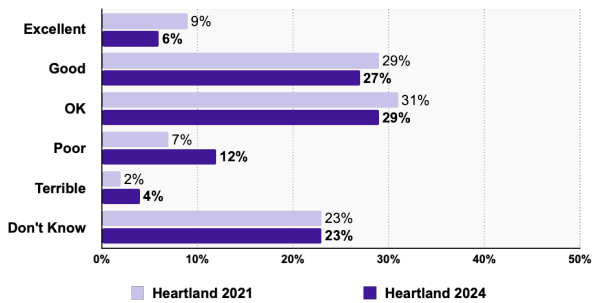
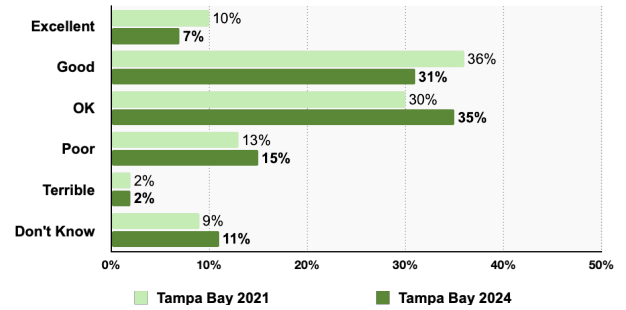
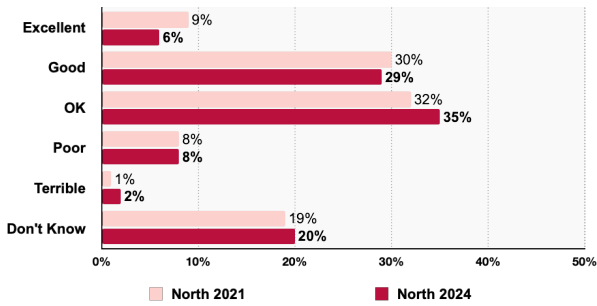
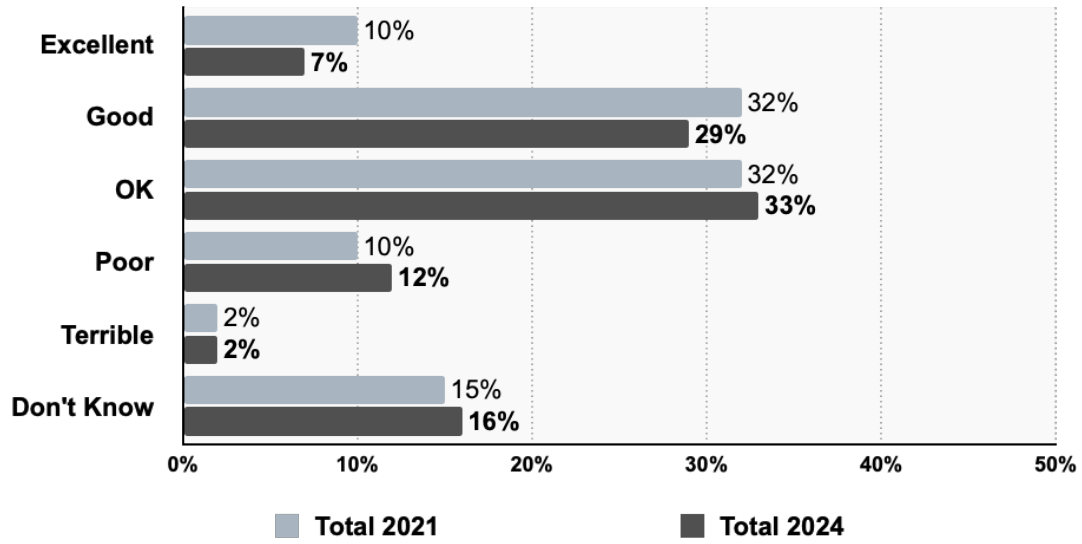
## WETLANDS OR SWAMPS



## GROUNDWATER OR WATER FROM THE AQUIFER



## BAYS AND ESTUARIES





# Sources of Information and Their Trustworthiness

Respondents were also asked to name their sources of news and rate the trustworthiness of several entities. Questions for these purposes included the following:

- Where do you get your news? Choose your top 3 sources.
  - TV news
  - Newspaper – print
  - Newspaper – online
  - Radio
  - Internet search engines (Google, Bing, etc.)
  - City/county/state government websites
  - Other websites, blogs, etc.
  - Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.)
  - Magazines
  - Friends/Family/Word of mouth
  - Neighborhood newsletters/blogs/forums
  - Other
- How often do you use the following social media?
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - YouTube
  - Pinterest
  - Snapchat
  - Tumblr
  - Instagram
  - LinkedIn
  - Nextdoor
- How trustworthy are the following sources of information about water resources?
  - Traditional media such as radio, TV, newspapers
  - Social media such as Facebook and Twitter
  - Southwest Florida Water Management District
  - Florida Department of Environmental Protection
  - Local environmental group
  - Local utility company
  - Universities
  - US Geological Survey

In reviewing all news outlets selected the top 3 overall remained the same from 2021: TV (64%, -3% from 2021), Internet search engines (41%, +1% from 2021), and Social media (36%, +2% from 2021).

When asked to choose the top 3 sources where respondents received their news, decreases were recorded in two traditional media channels: TV news (-3%) and Newspaper – print (-5%). Increases were recorded in digital resources as well as Friends/Family/Words of Mouth.

- Internet search engines (41%, +1% from 2021)
- Social media (36%, +2% from 2021)
- Friends/Family/Word of Mouth (27%, +2% from 2021)

As in previous surveys, we asked respondents to tell us how often they use various social media platforms. As in previous surveys, Facebook (53%) was the top selection across the District for use “Daily, several times a day.” Similarly, YouTube (31%) and Instagram (19%) round out the top three overall. There were no increases in daily use across any of the channels measured. As has been noted in the past, Facebook is still the best platform for the District to disseminate information to residents.

Note: Nextdoor was added to the 2024 survey. Usage can be tracked in future surveys for comparison, but in this initial instance 63% of respondents reported **never** using the app.

While the District remained the third-most trusted source of information about water resources in the 2024 survey, behind the US Geological Survey and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, it was the only one of those three to see any increase in trustworthiness. Below are the recorded responses and change for responses of “very trustworthy.”

US Geological Survey (28%, -3% from 2021)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (27%, unchanged from 2021)

Southwest Florida Water Management District (22%, +1 from 2021)

As in the 2021 survey, social media was recorded as the most untrustworthy source with 21% of respondents selecting “very untrustworthy.” While that is still significantly higher than the next highest “very untrustworthy” source of information, traditional media (10%), there was a 4%-point drop in the number of respondents who deemed social media as “very untrustworthy.”

Below is a more specific look at the lower responses for the top three trustworthy sources, starting with the District:

Southwest Florida Water Management District

“Somewhat trustworthy” (42%, -2% from 2021)

“Somewhat untrustworthy” (6%, -2% from 2021)

“Don’t know” (27%, +2% from 2021 – note that this continues to trend upward)

US Geological Survey

“Somewhat trustworthy” (39%, +1% from 2021)

“Somewhat untrustworthy” (6%, unchanged from 2021)

“Don’t know” (24%, +2% from 2021 – note that this continues to trend upward)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

“Somewhat trustworthy” (43%, -3% from 2021)

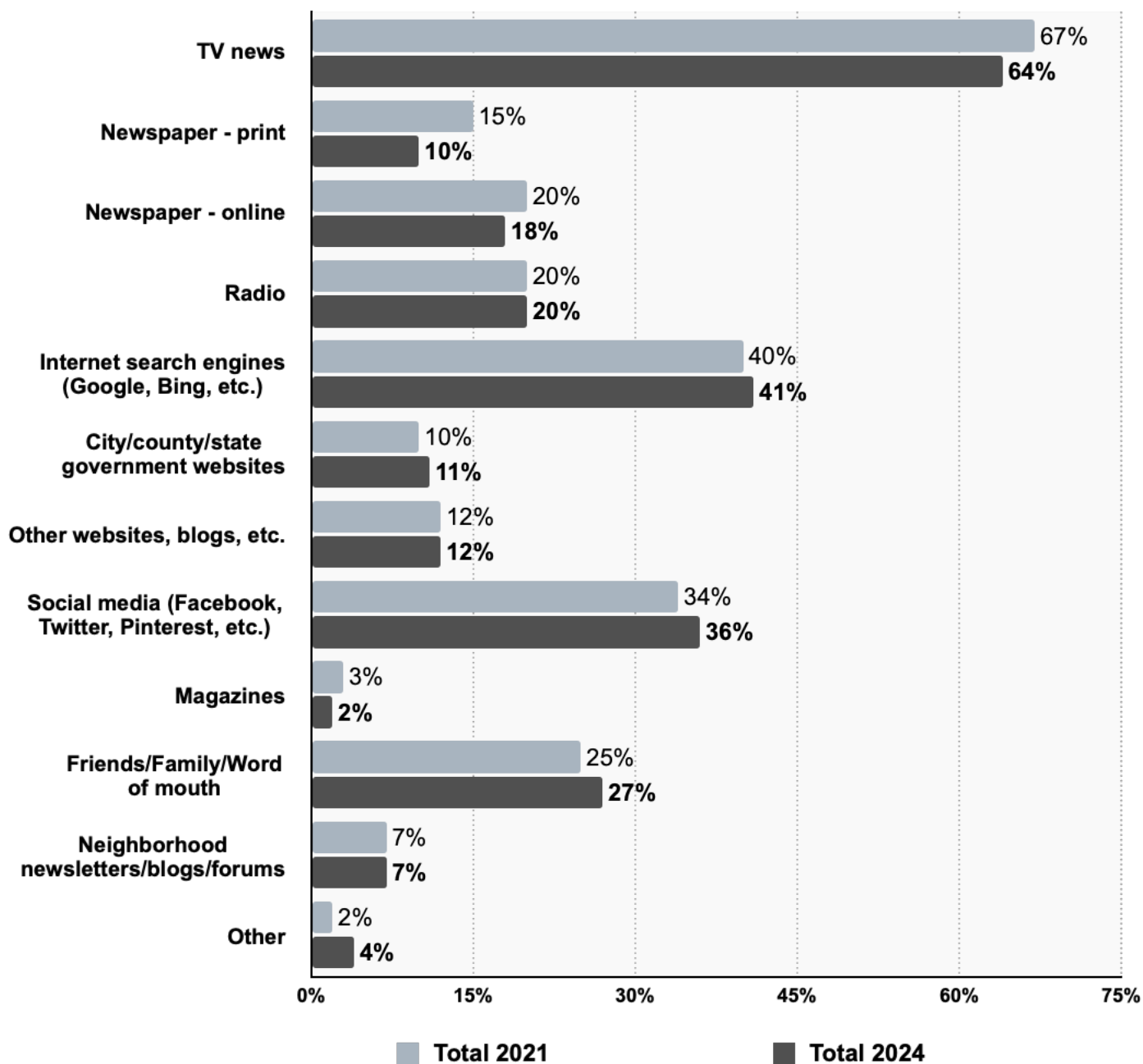
“Somewhat untrustworthy” (9%, +1% from 2021)

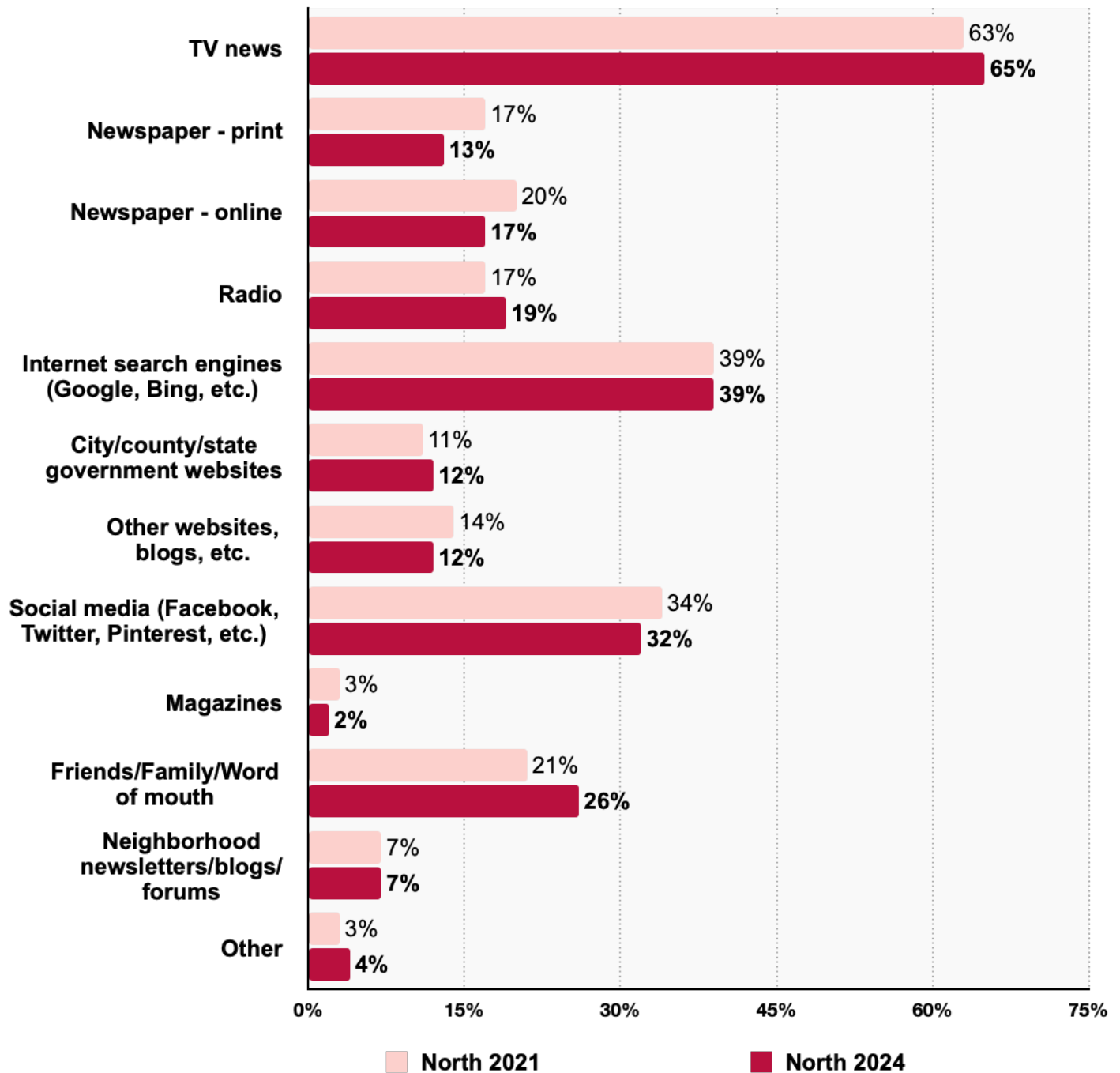
“Don’t know” (19%, +3% from 2021 – note that this continues to trend upward)

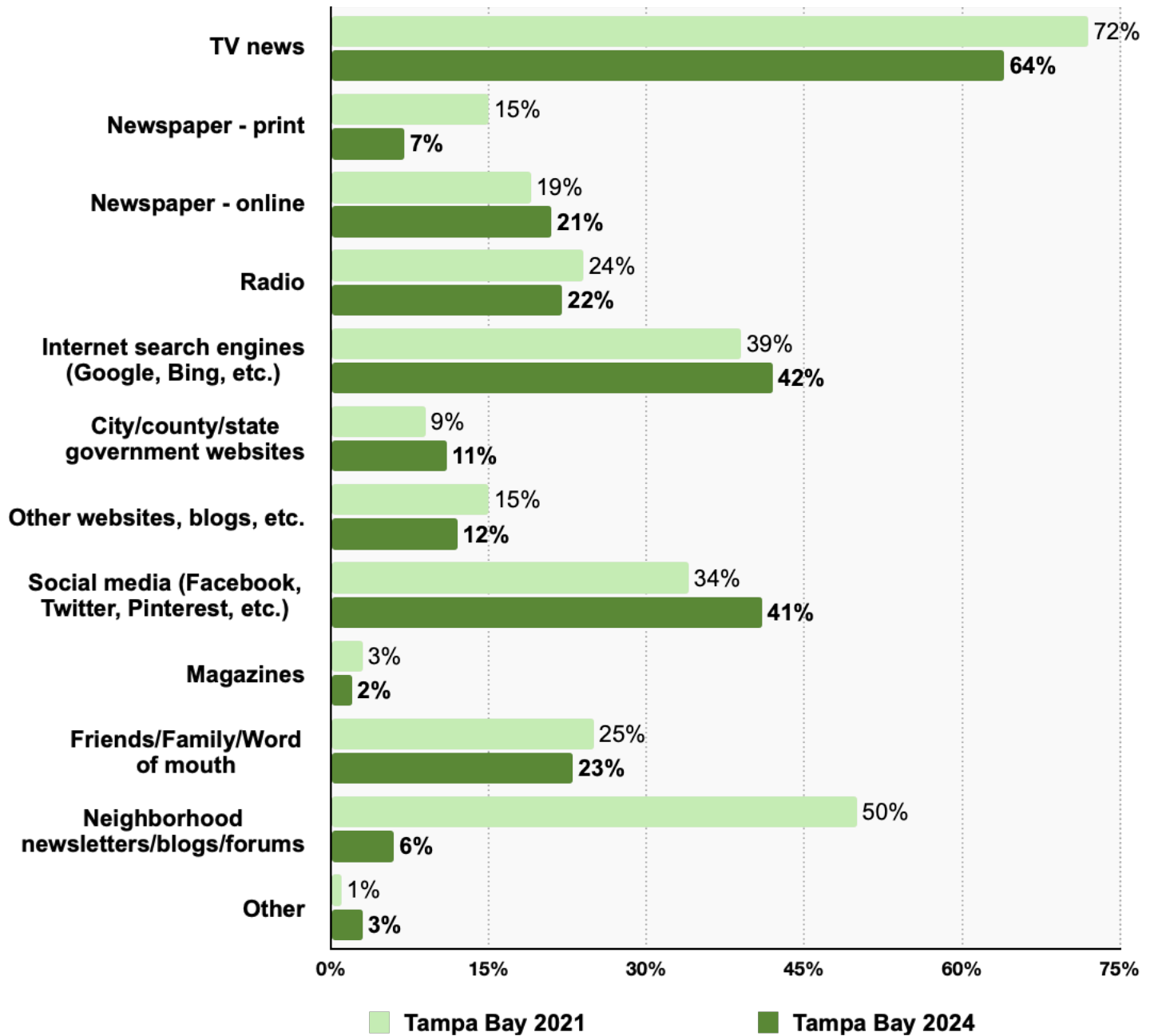


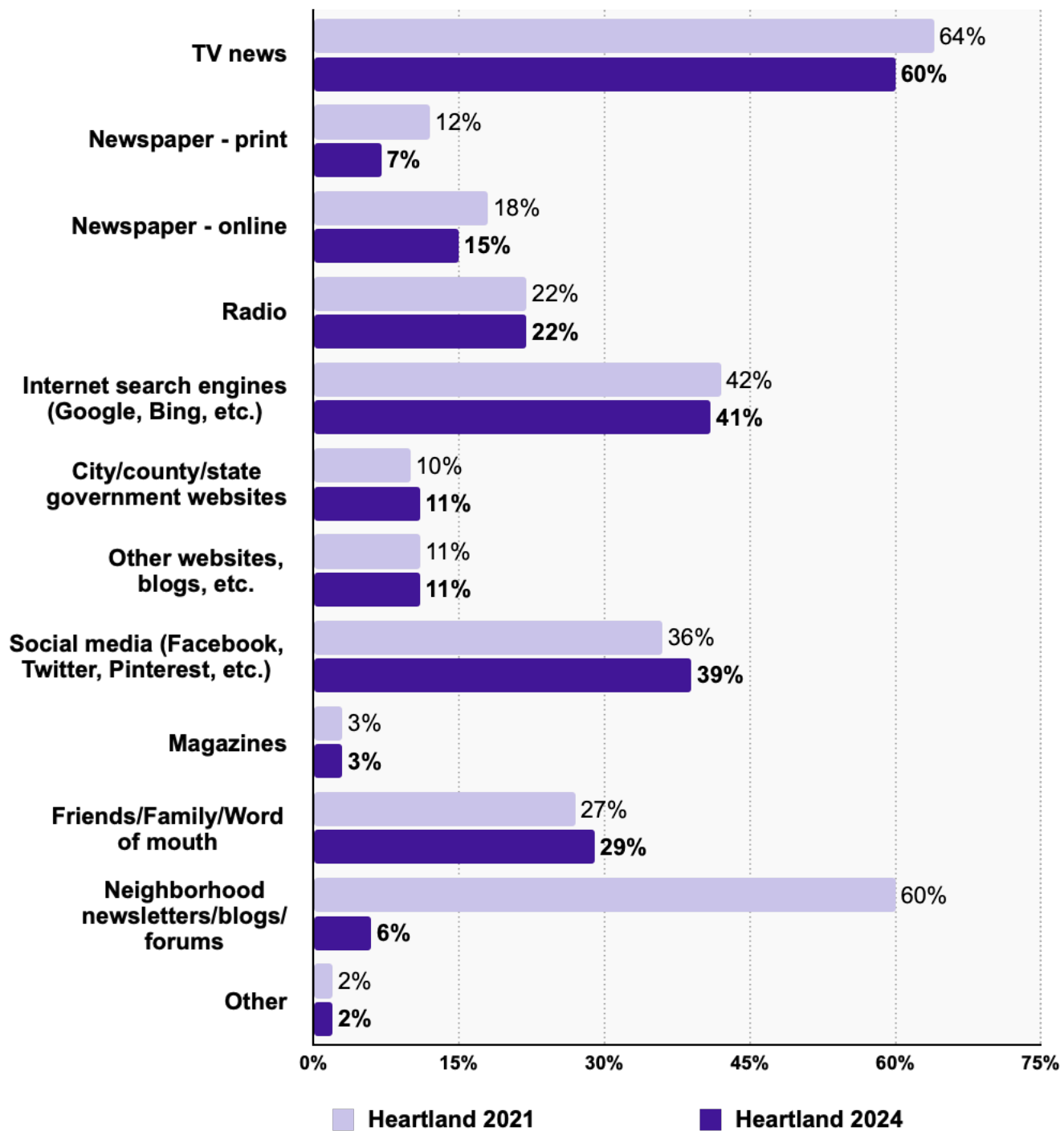
Of note across all three of these sources of information is the continued upward trend in respondents indicating they “don’t know” how trustworthy they find the sources. Across all information sources included in this survey, “don’t know” responses increased in the 2024 survey.

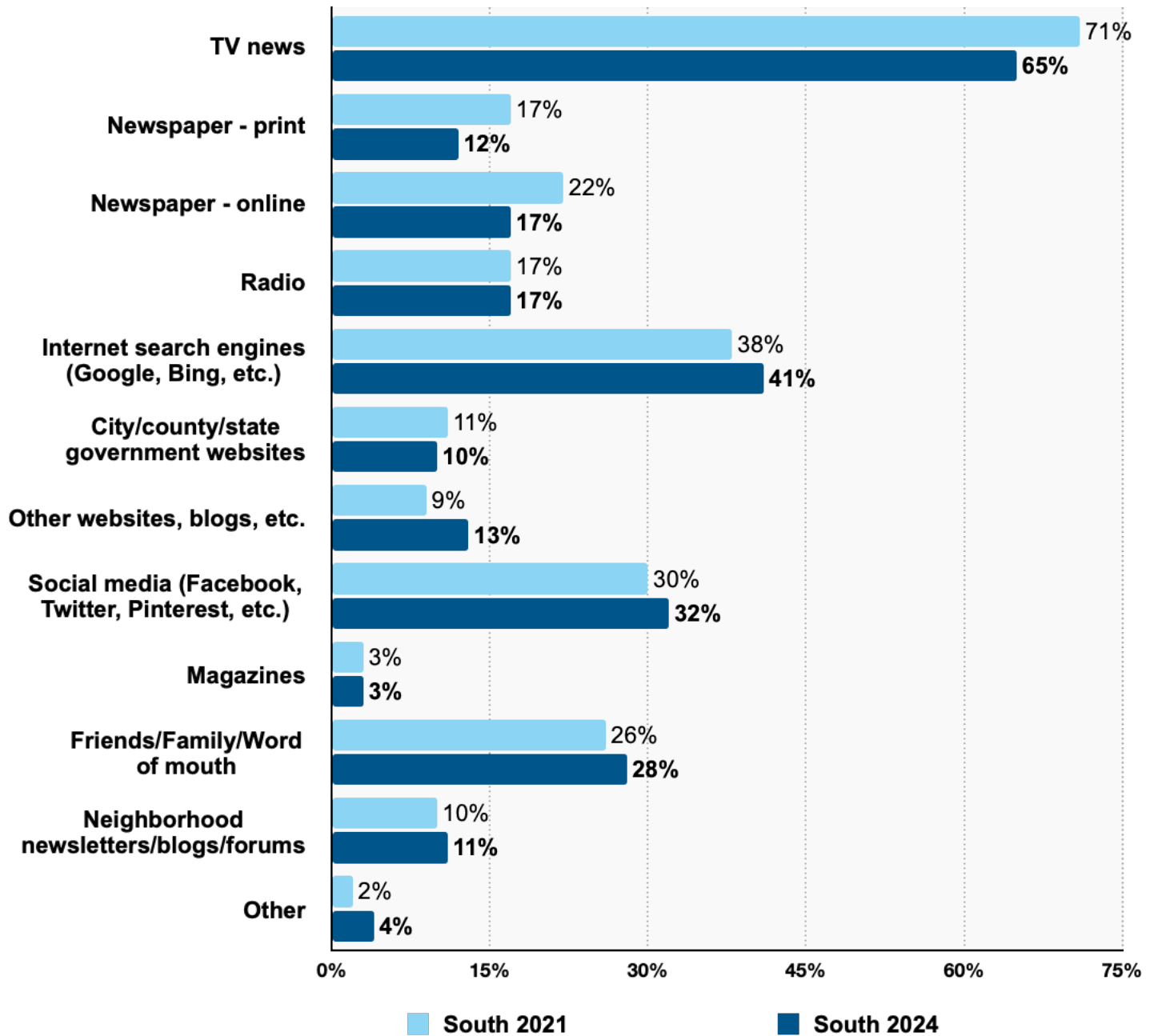
Where do you get your news? Choose your top 3 sources.







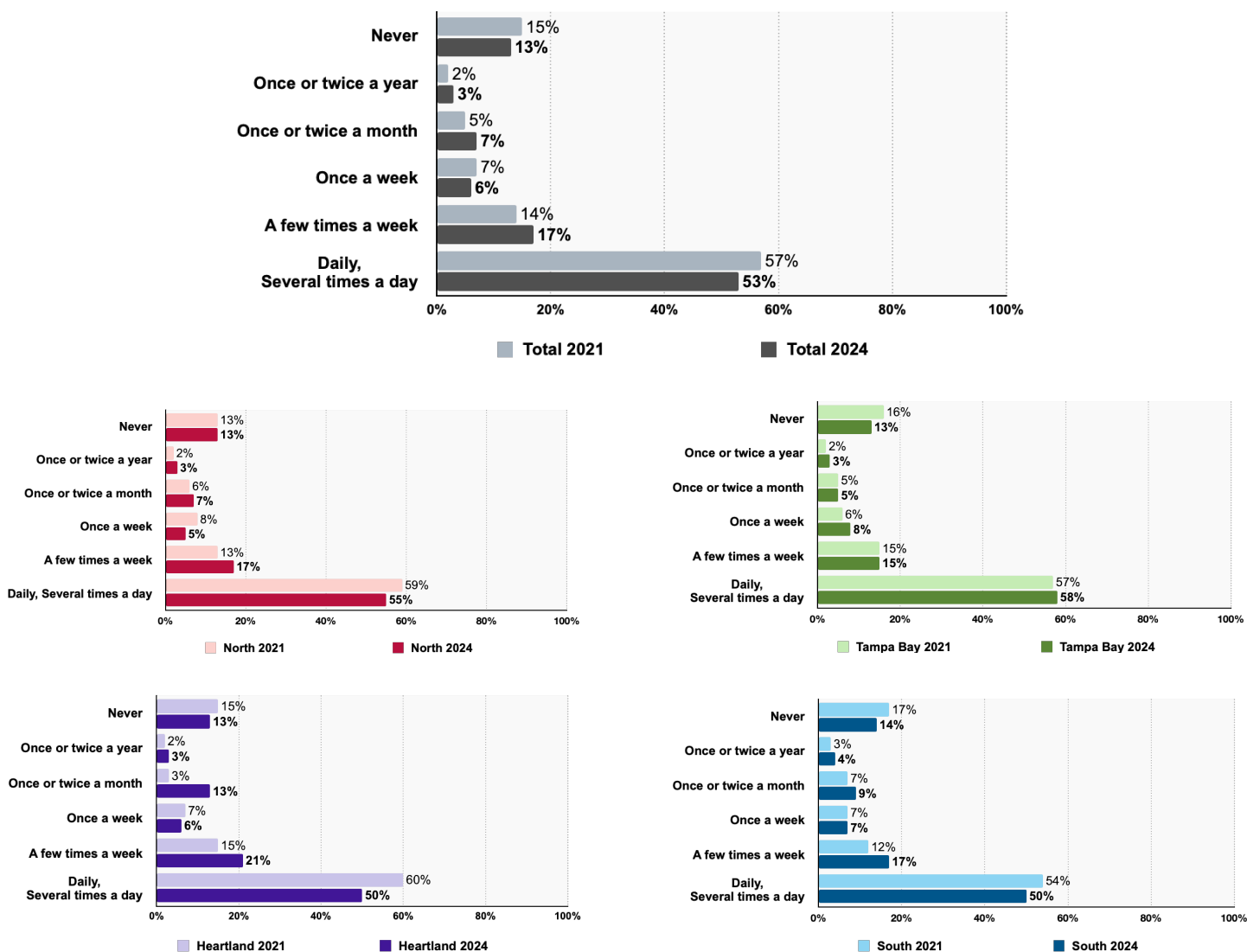




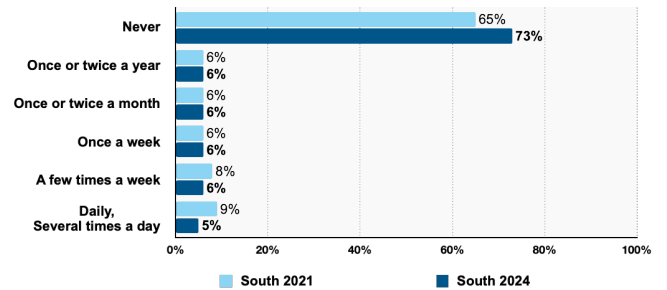
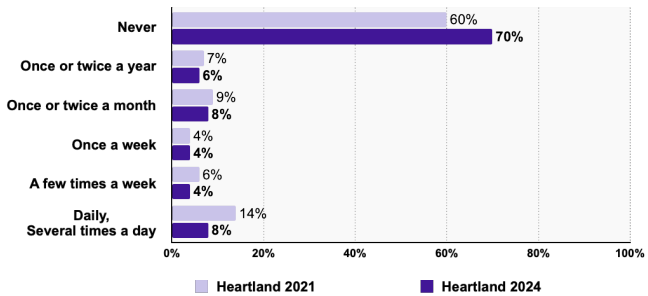
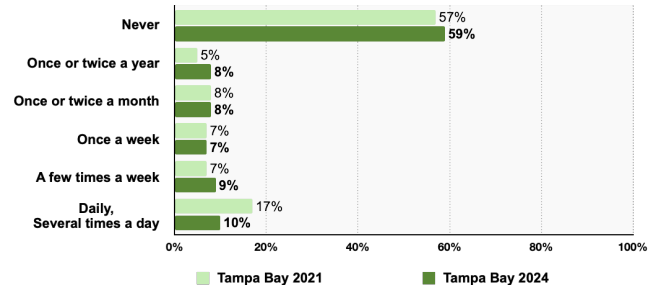
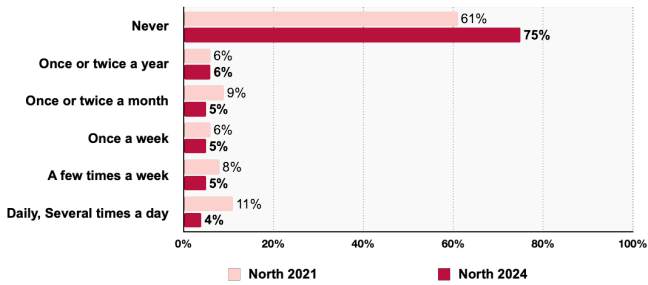
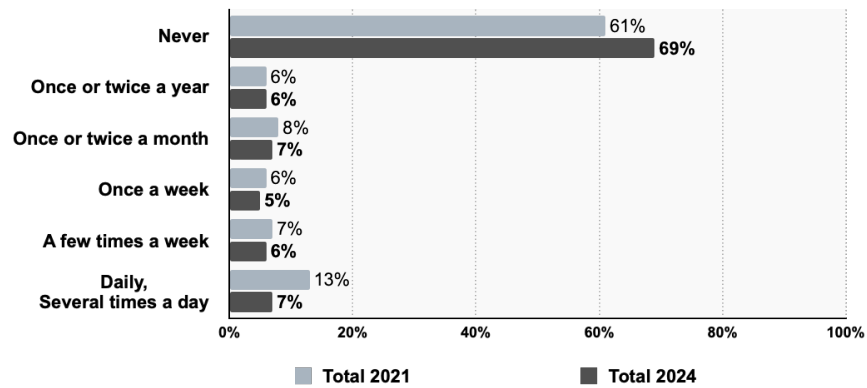
# How often do you use the following social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Snapchat, Tumblr, Instagram, LinkedIn and Nextdoor?

\*Note: NextDoor was added in 2024.

## FACEBOOK

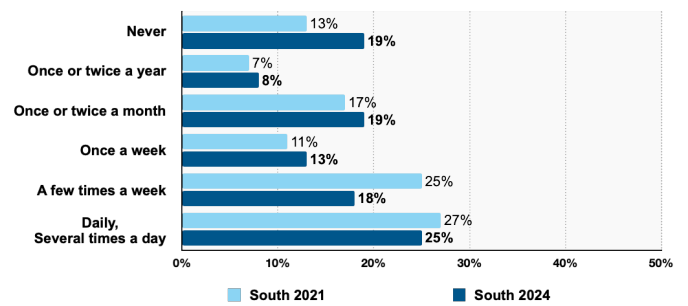
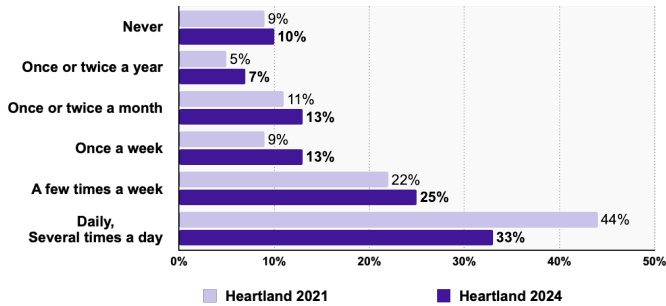
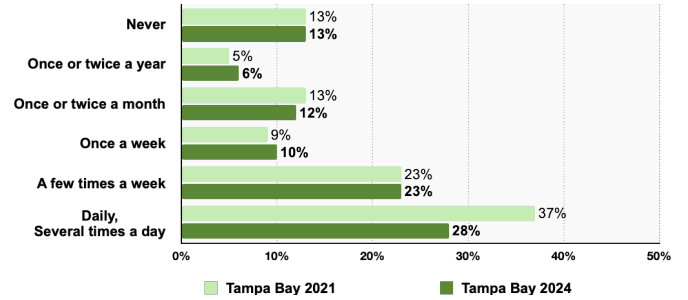
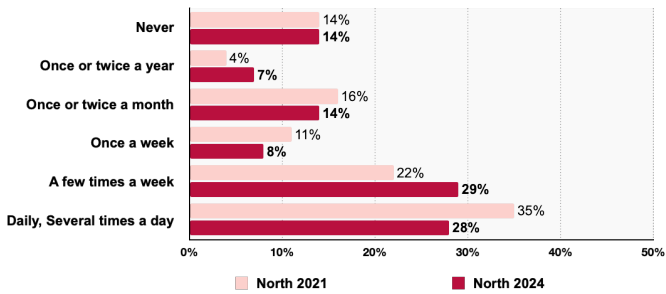
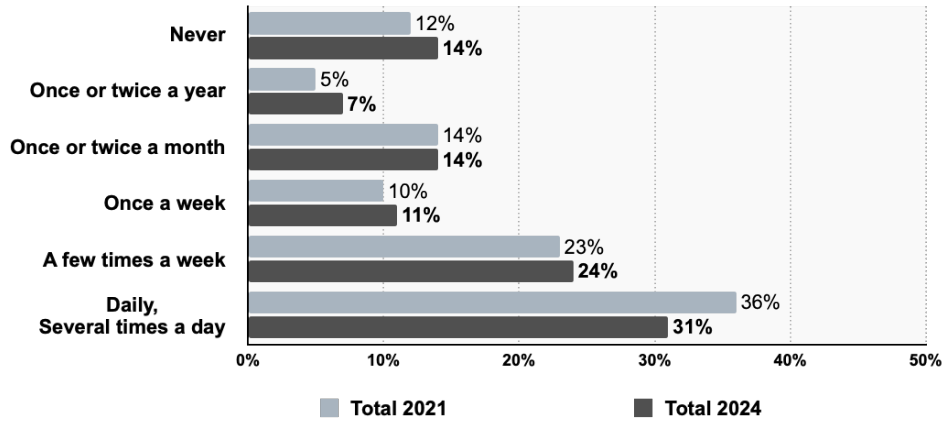


## X (formerly Twitter)

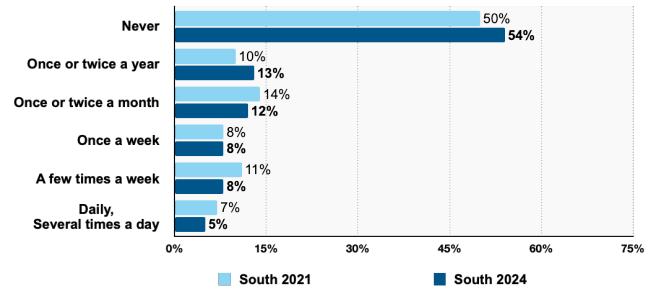
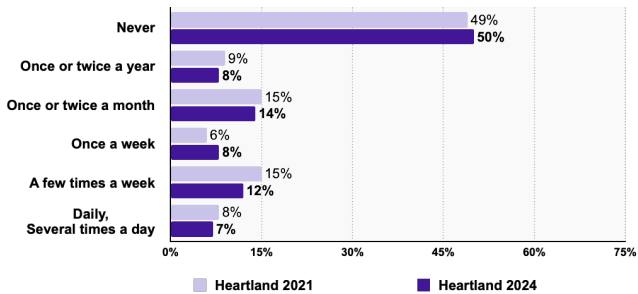
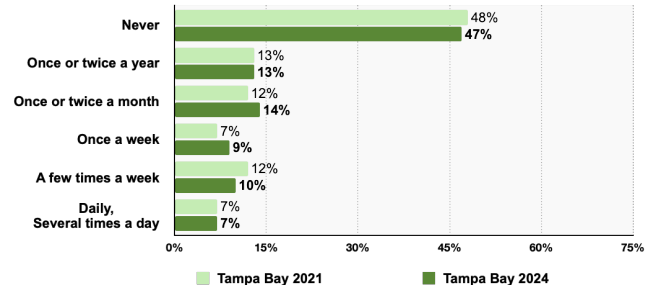
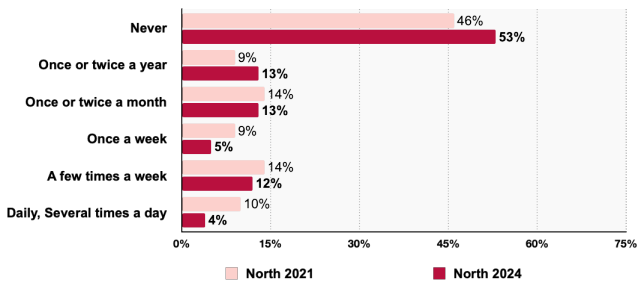
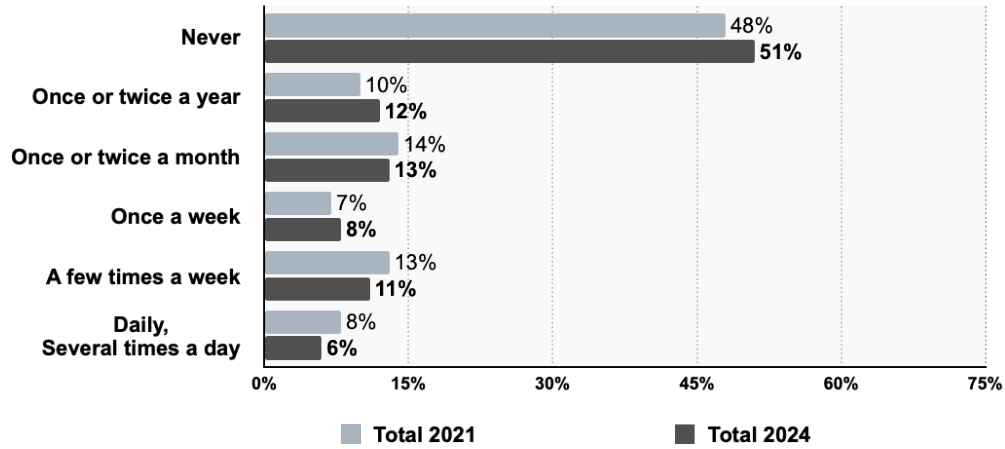




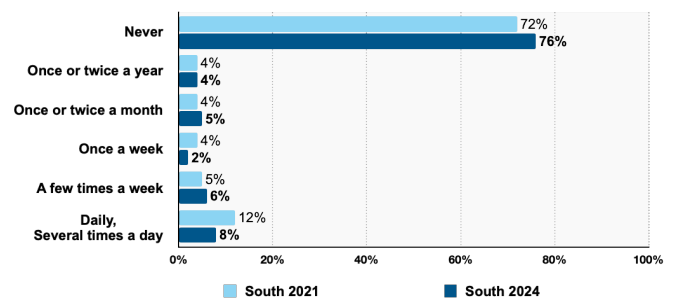
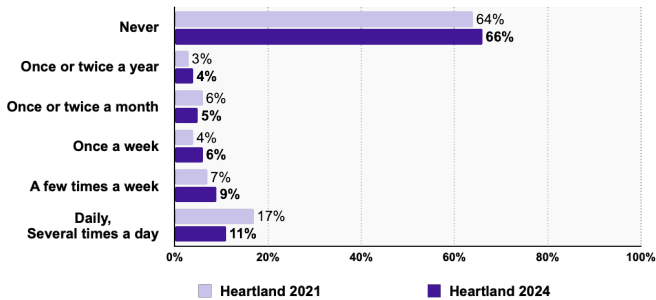
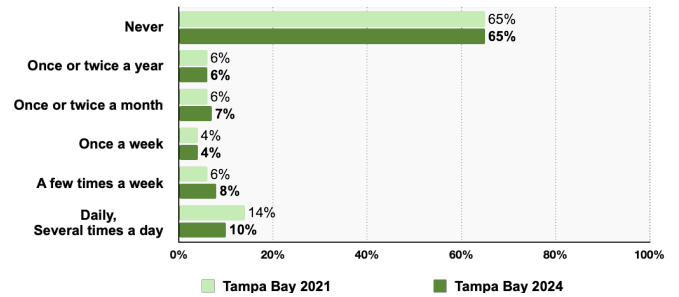
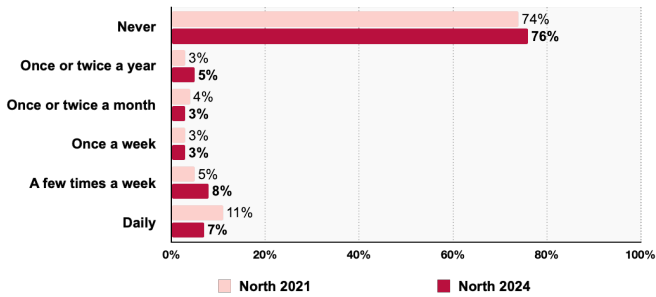
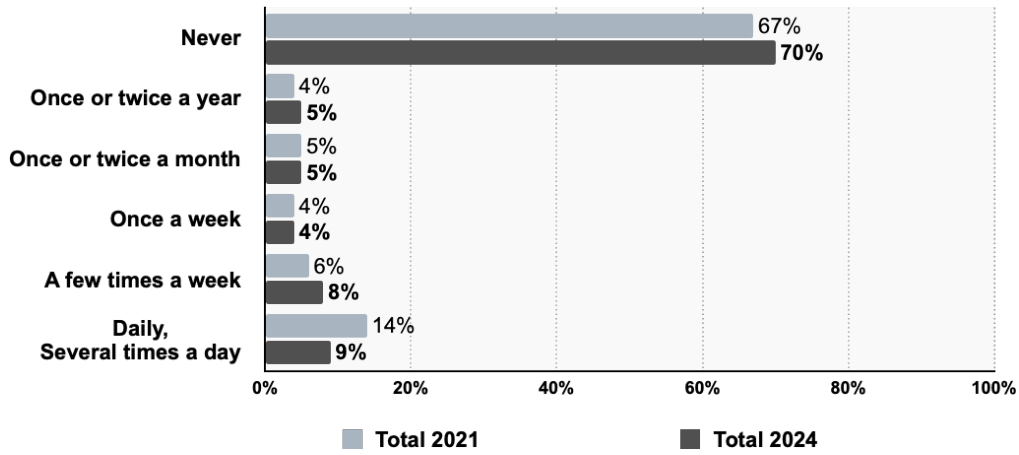
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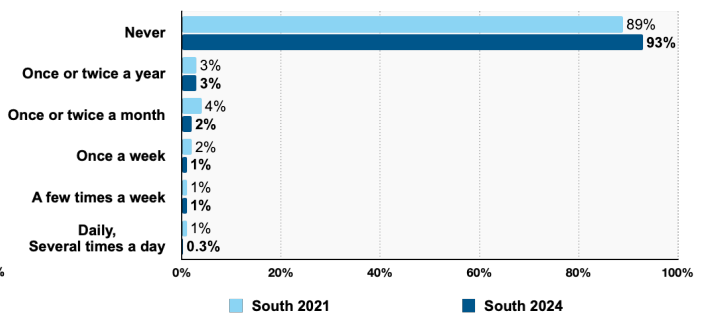
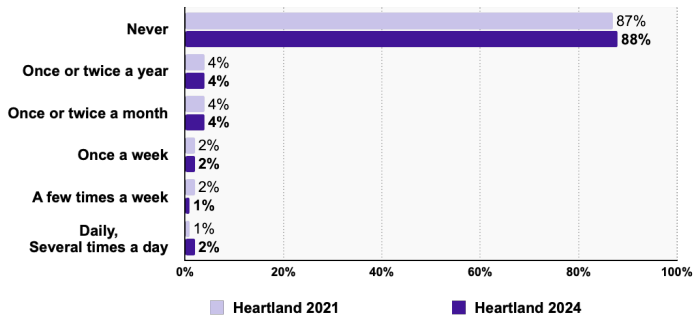
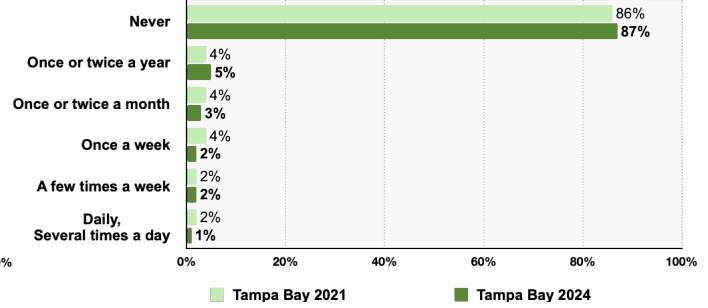
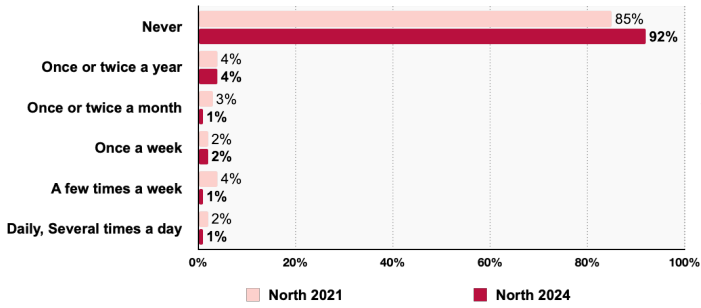
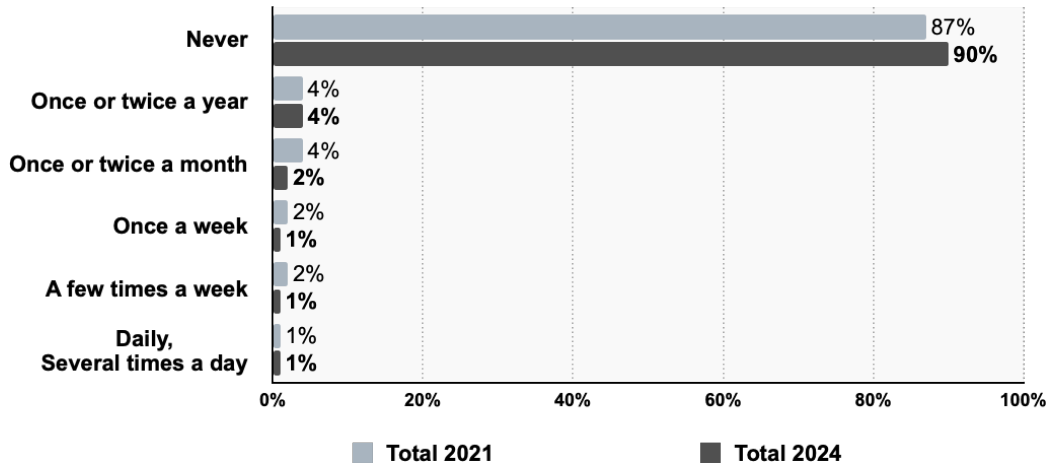
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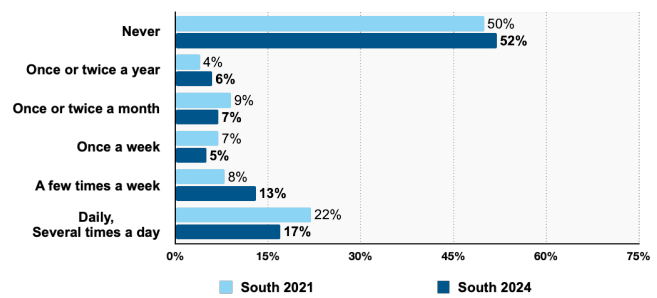
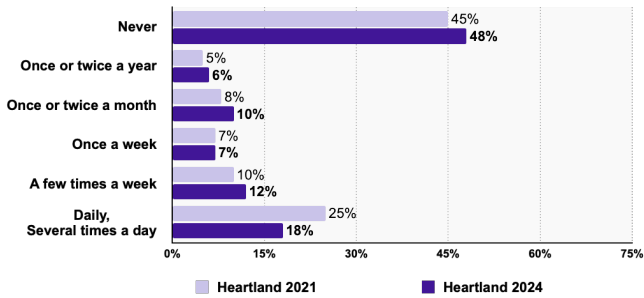
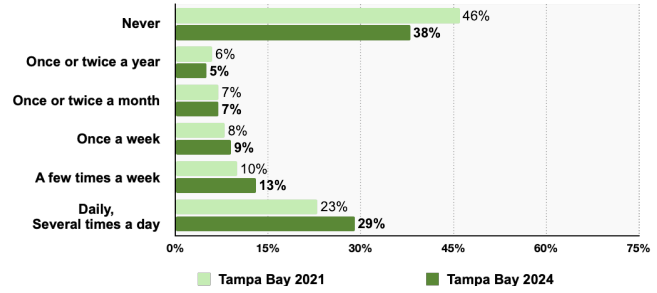
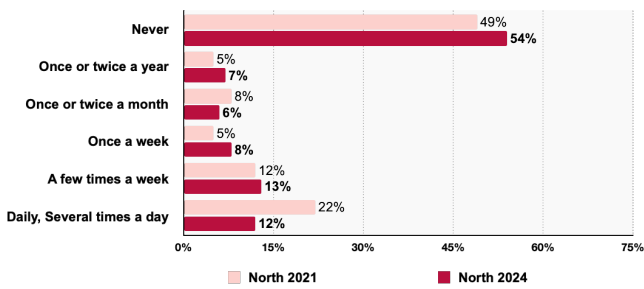
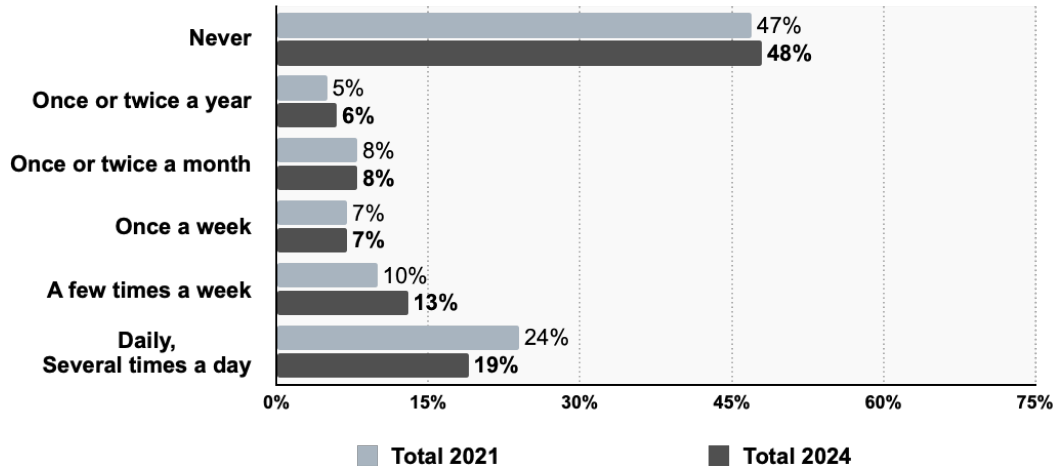
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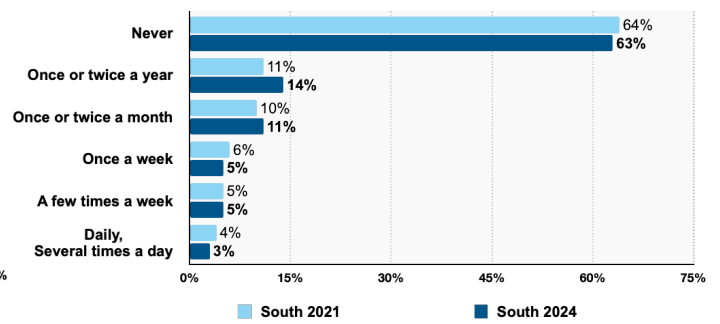
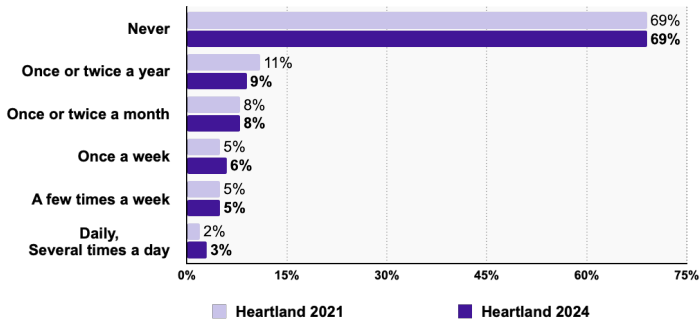
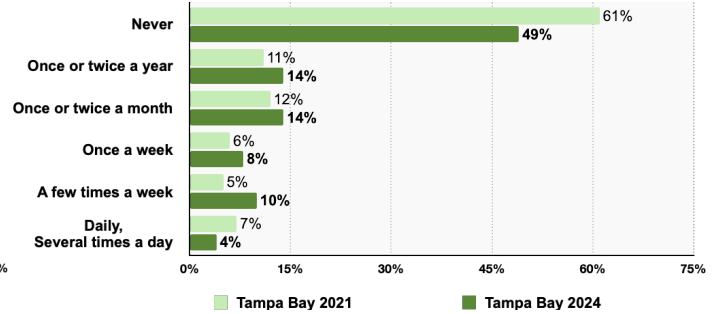
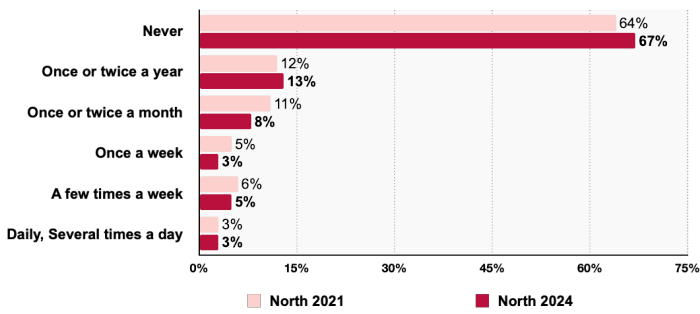
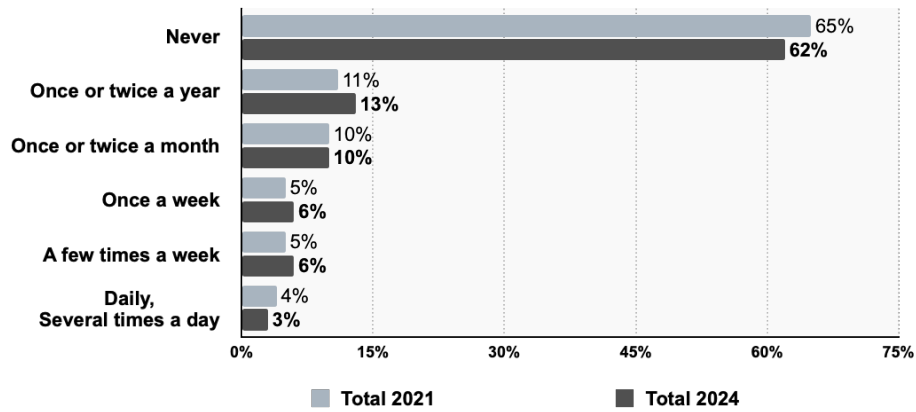
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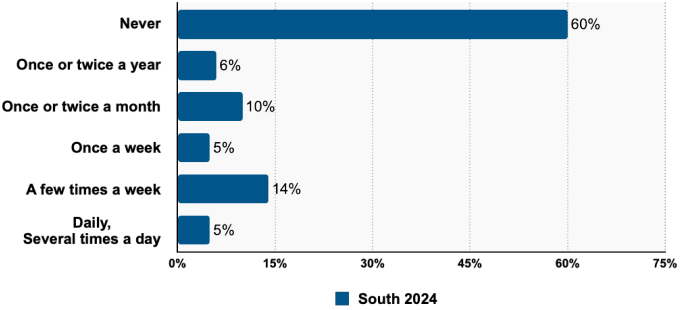
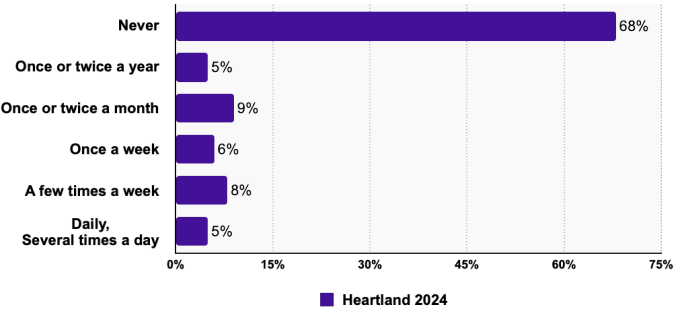
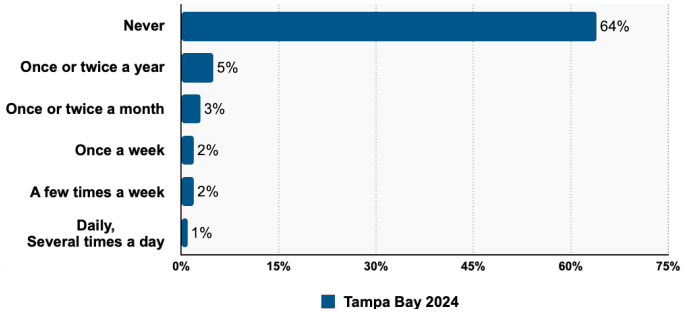
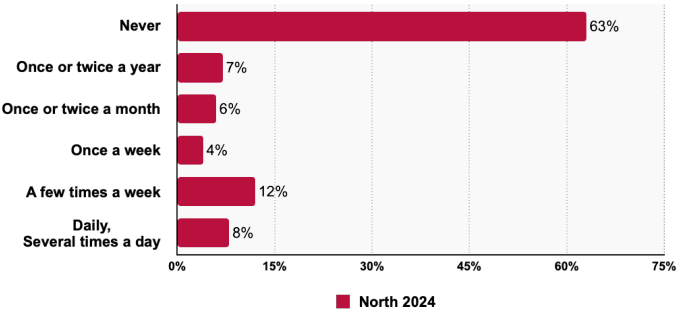
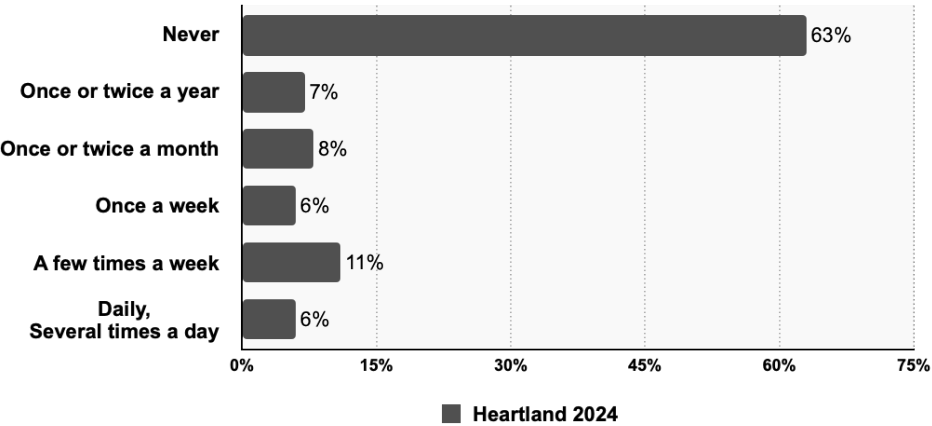
## INSTAGRAM



# LINKEDIN

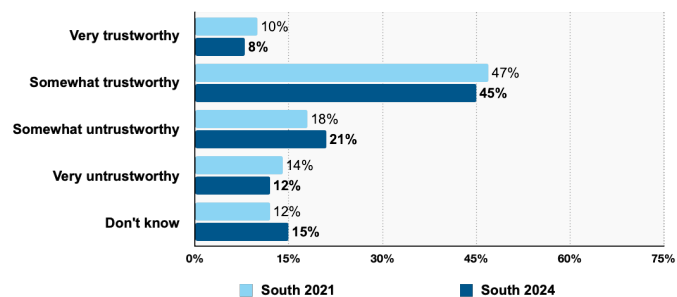
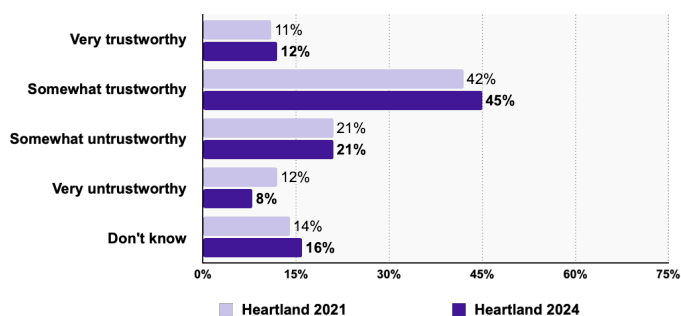
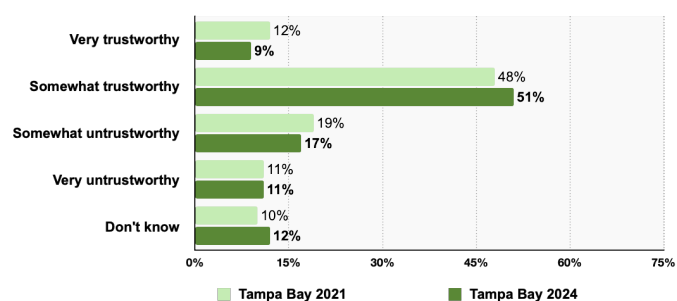
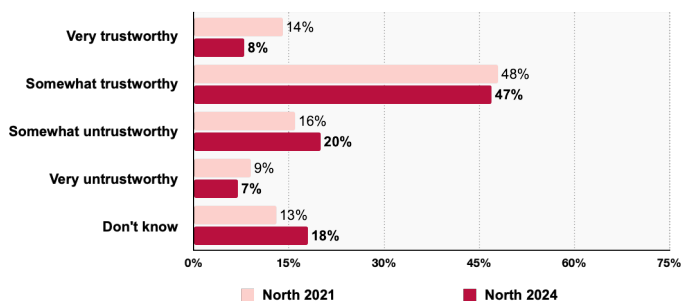
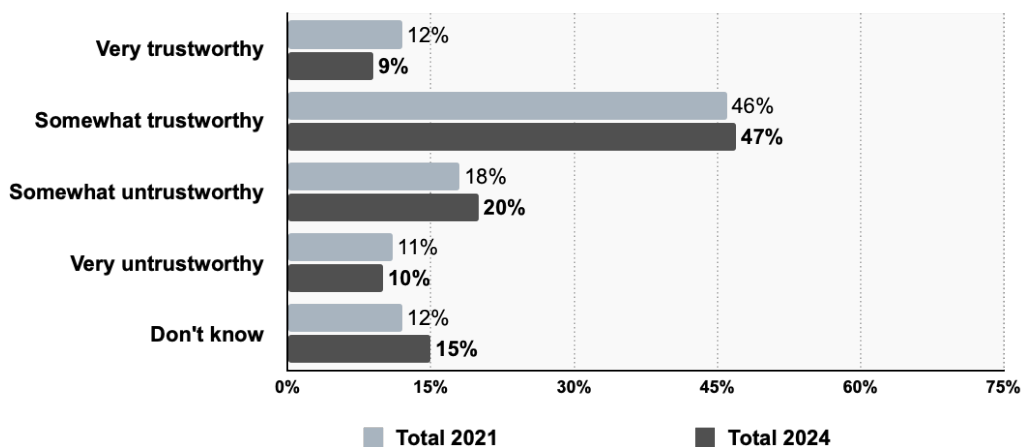


NEXTDOOR  
(added in 2024)



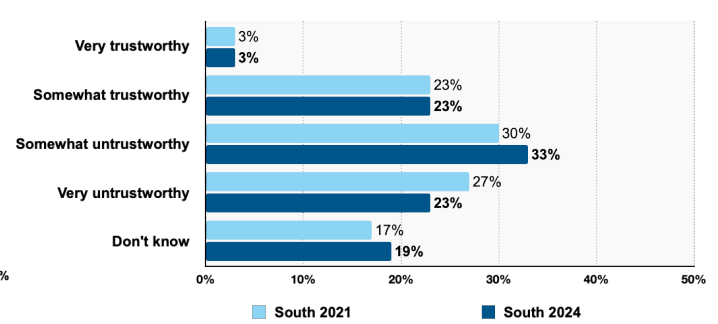
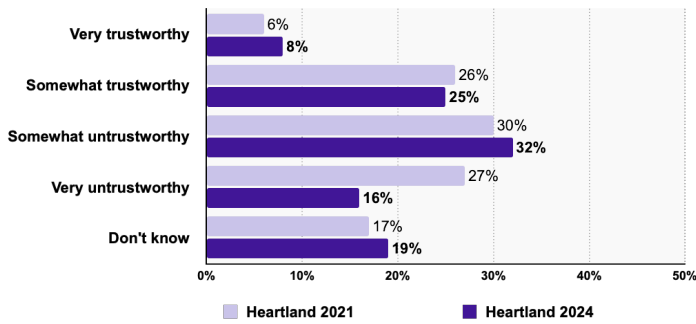
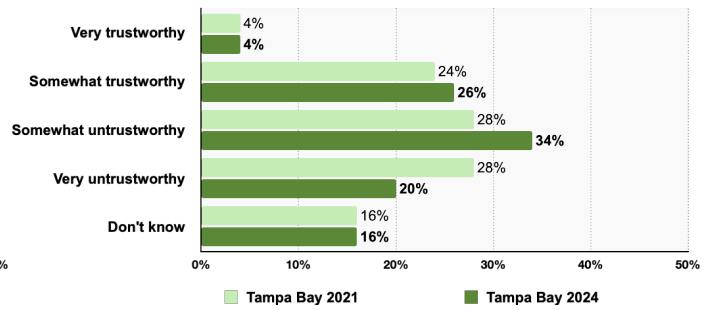
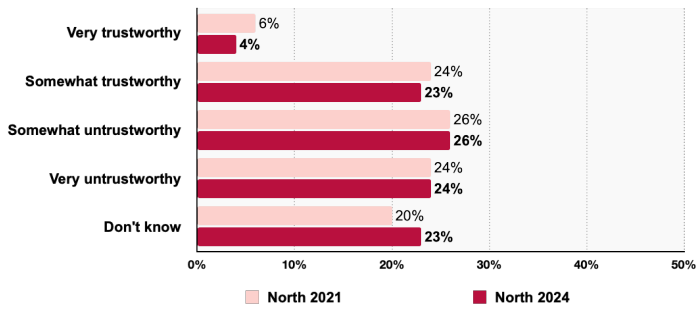
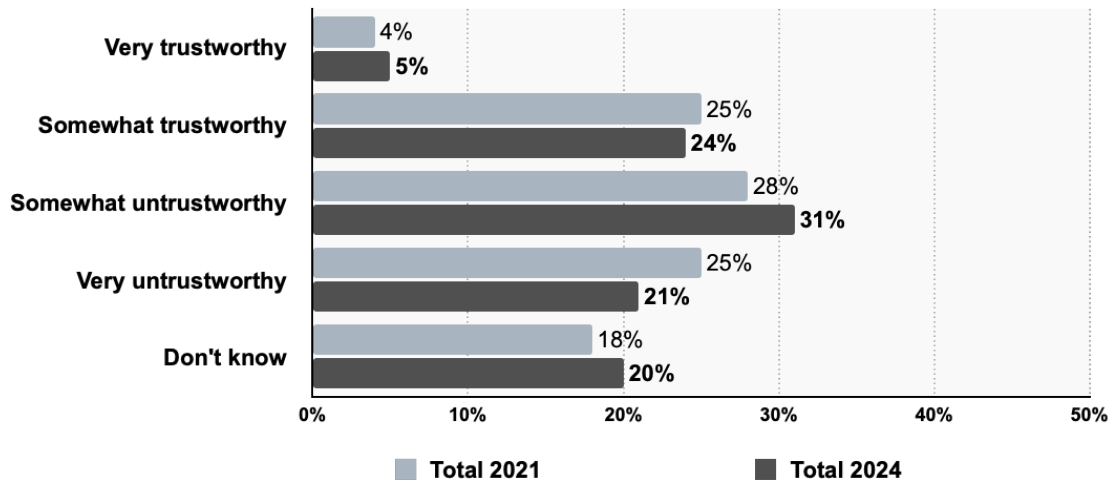
**How trustworthy are the following sources of information about water resources: Traditional media such as radio, TV, newspapers; Social media such as Facebook and Twitter; Southwest Florida Water Management District; Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Local environmental group; Local utility company; Universities; US Geological Survey?**

### TRADITIONAL MEDIA SUCH AS RADIO, TV, NEWSPAPERS

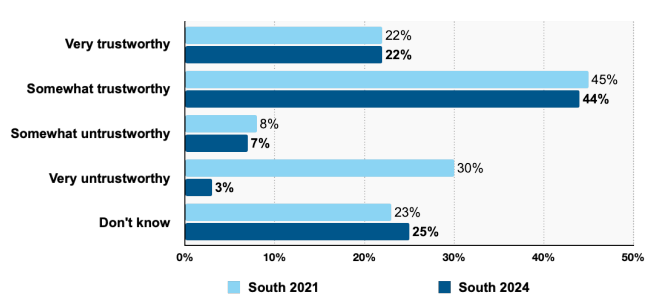
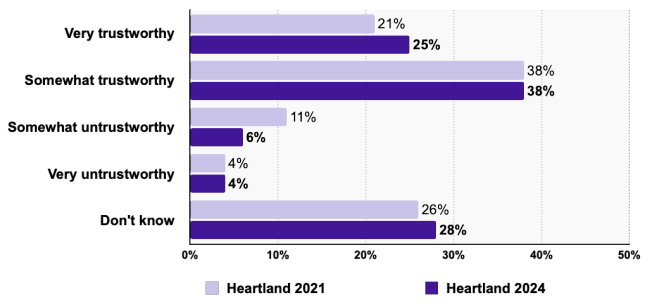
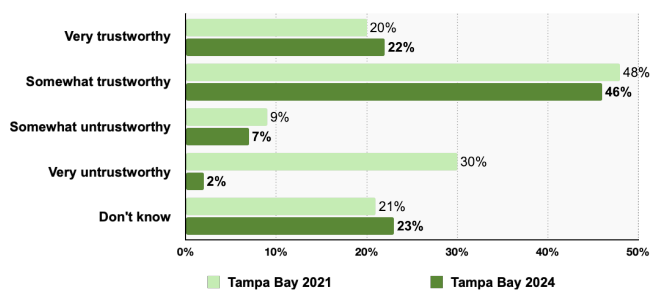
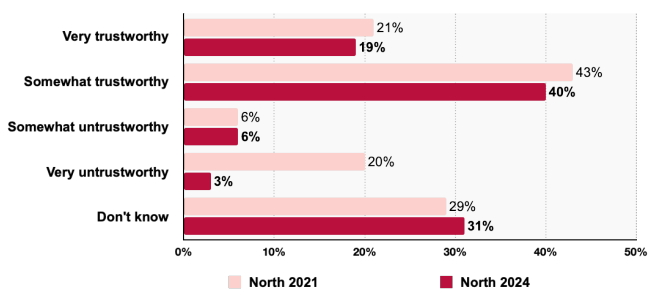
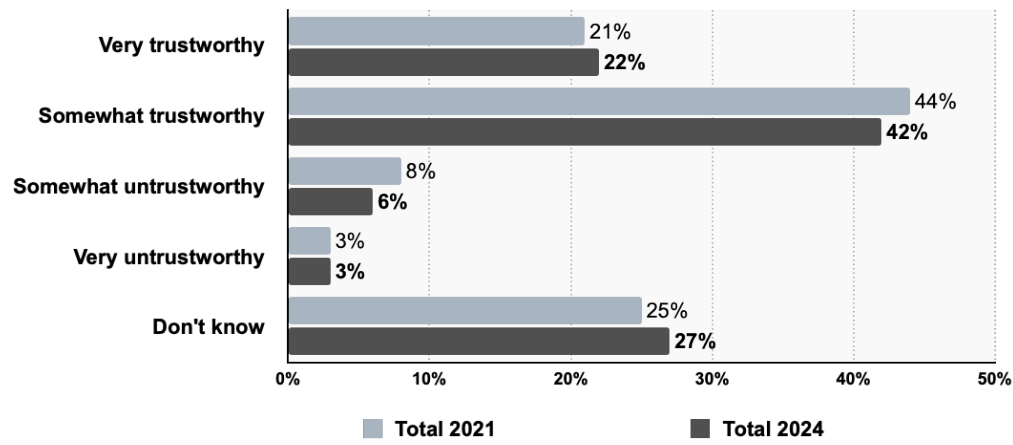




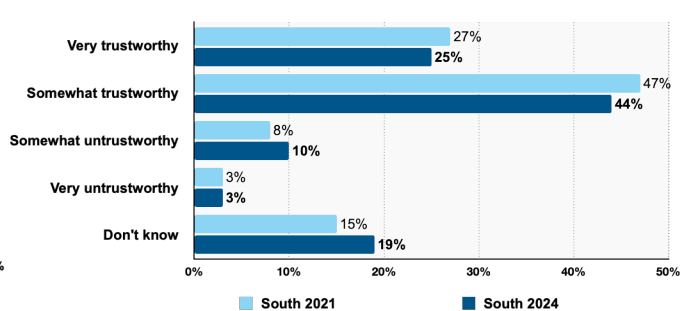
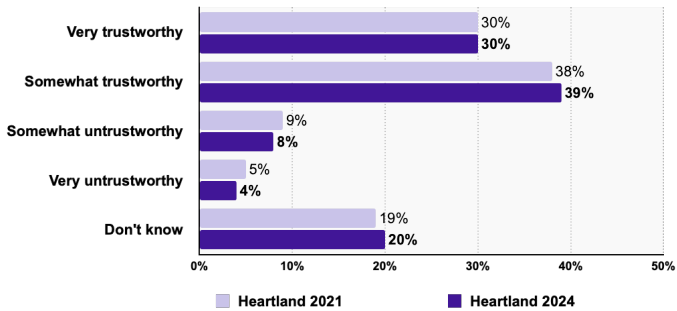
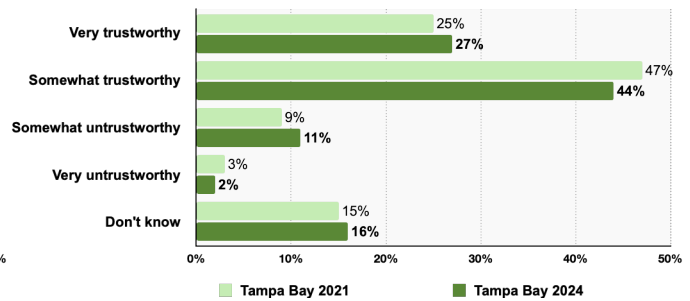
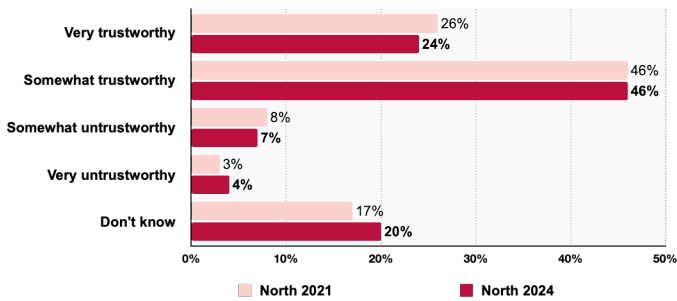
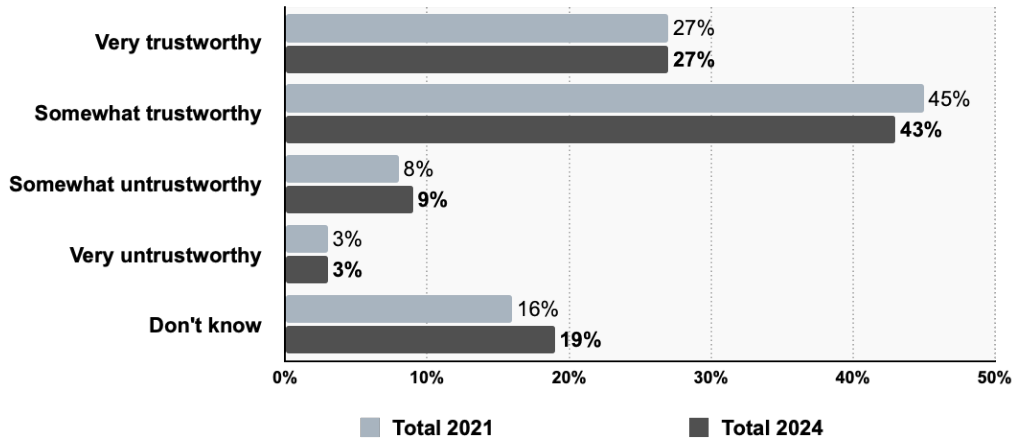
## SOCIAL MEDIA SUCH AS FACEBOOK AND TWITTER



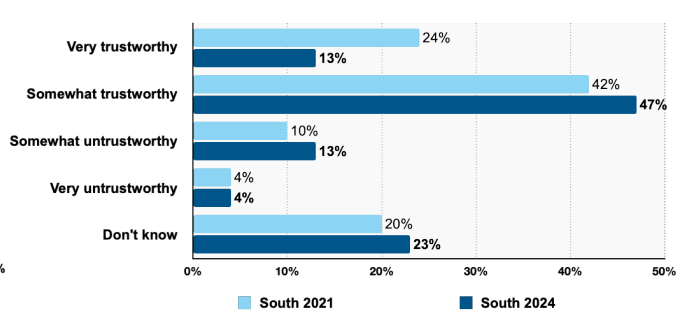
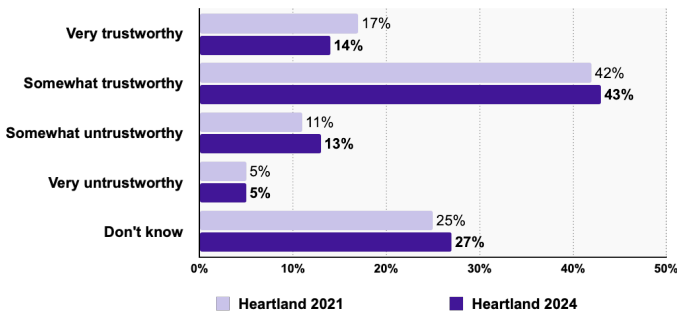
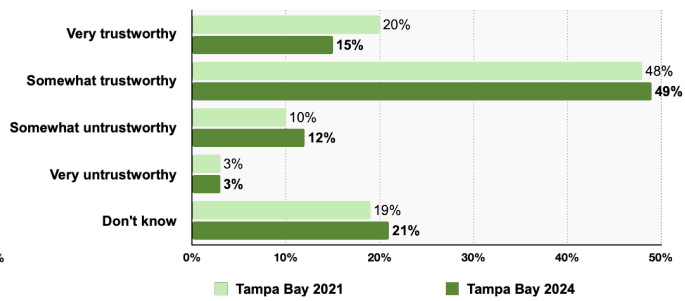
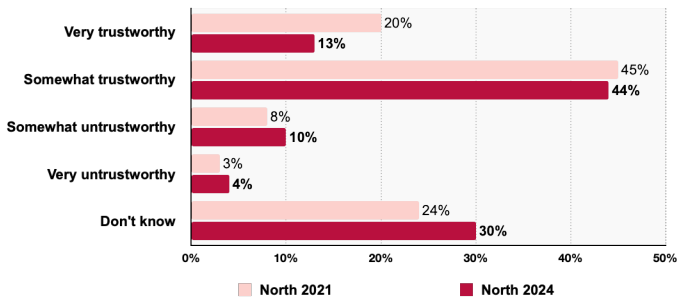
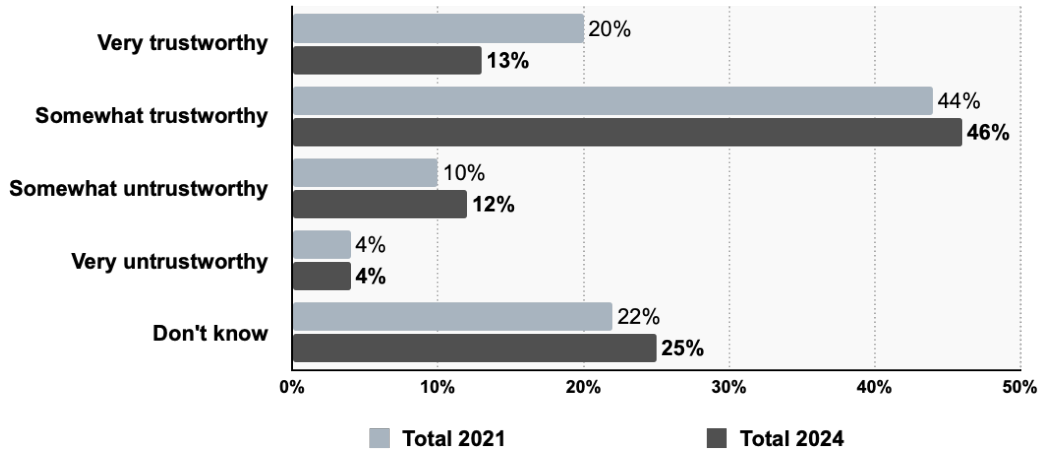
SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT



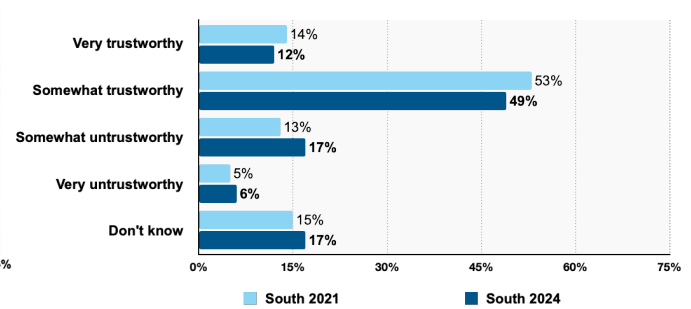
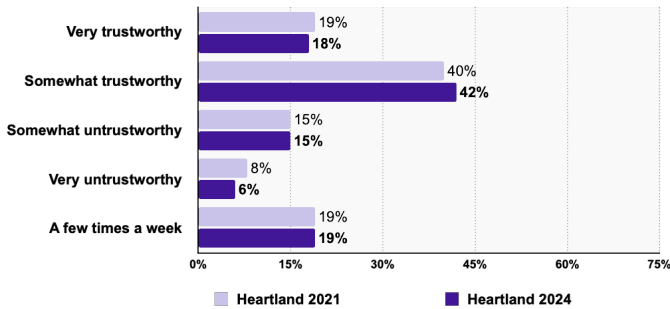
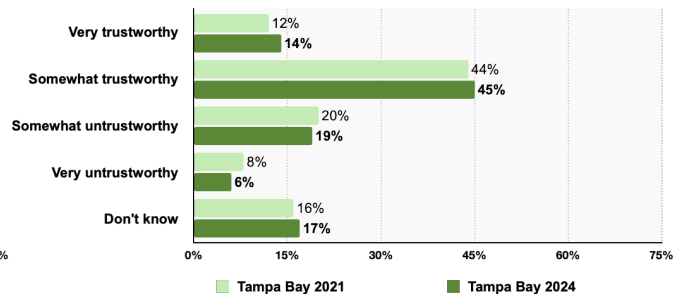
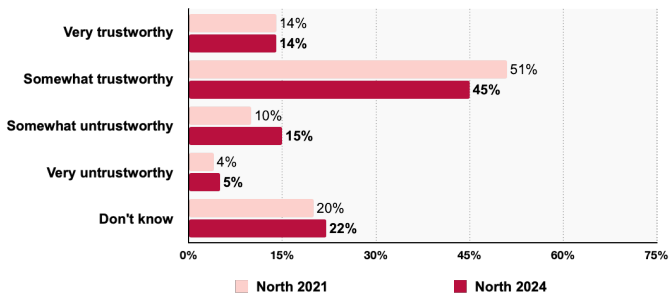
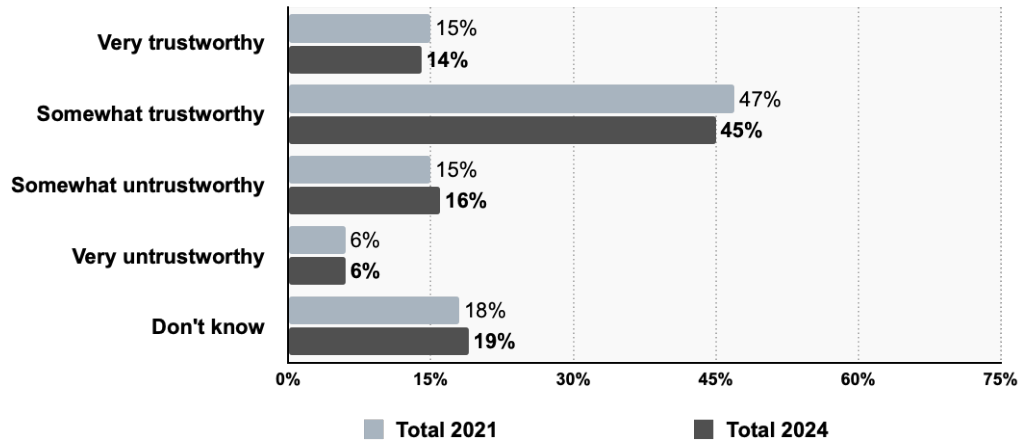
## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



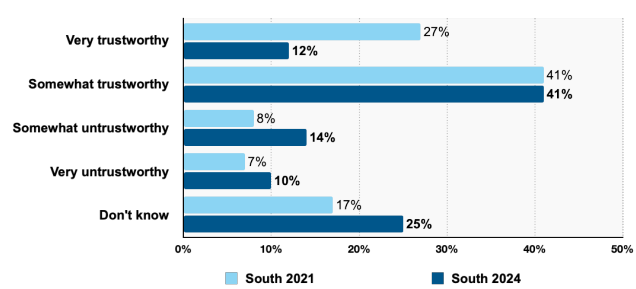
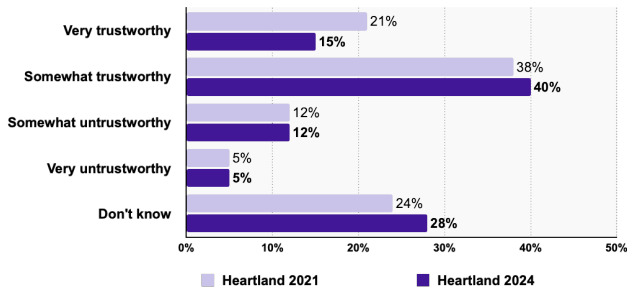
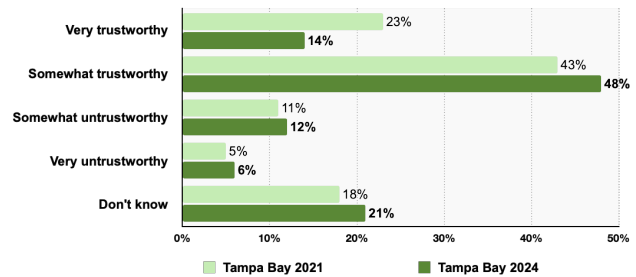
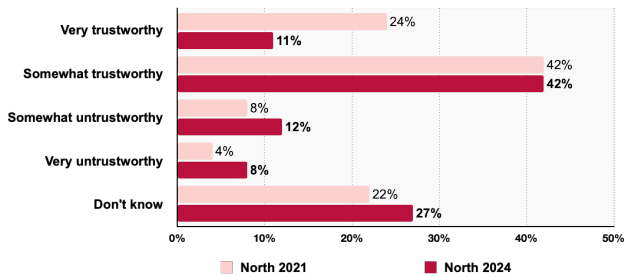
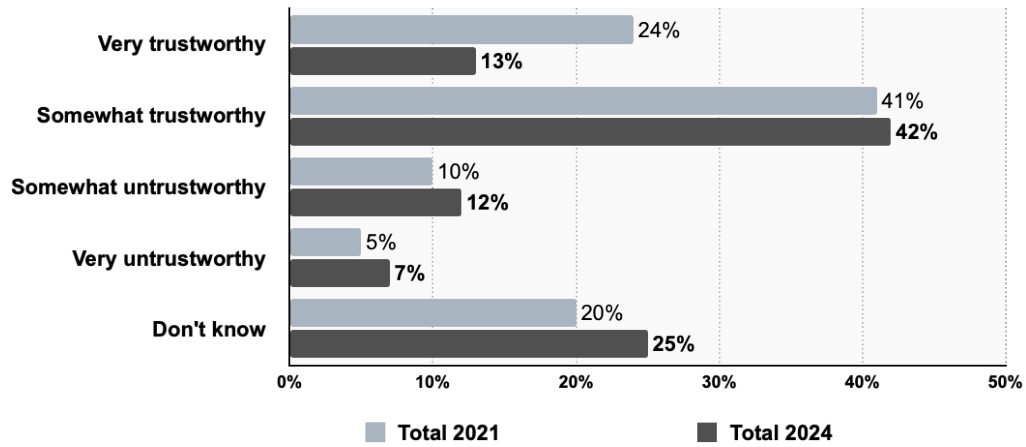
# LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP



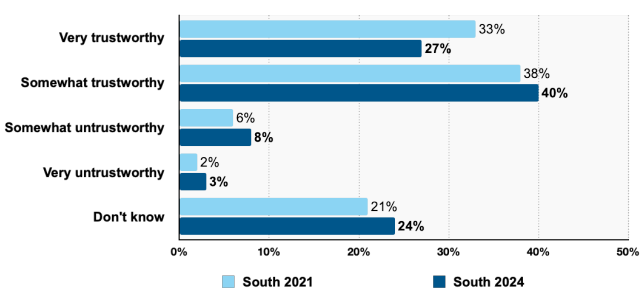
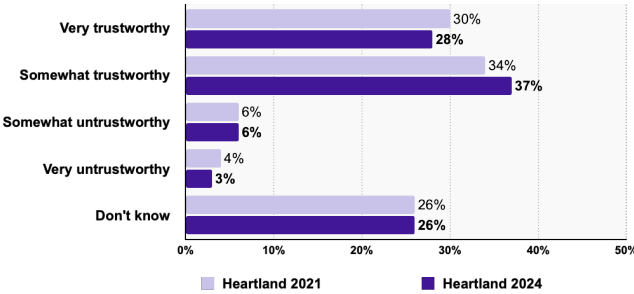
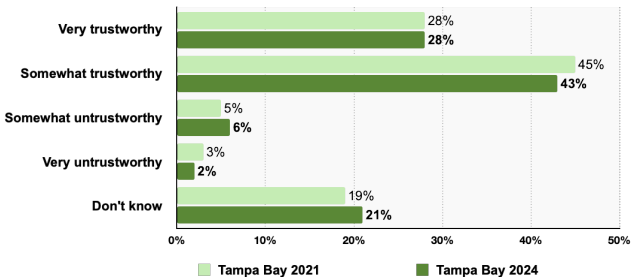
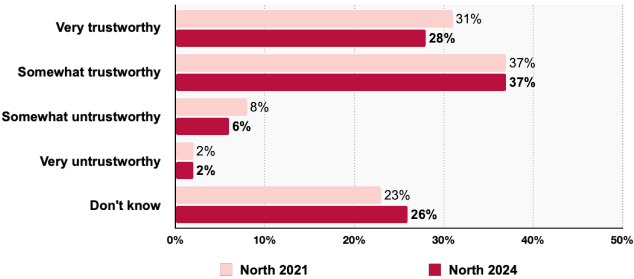
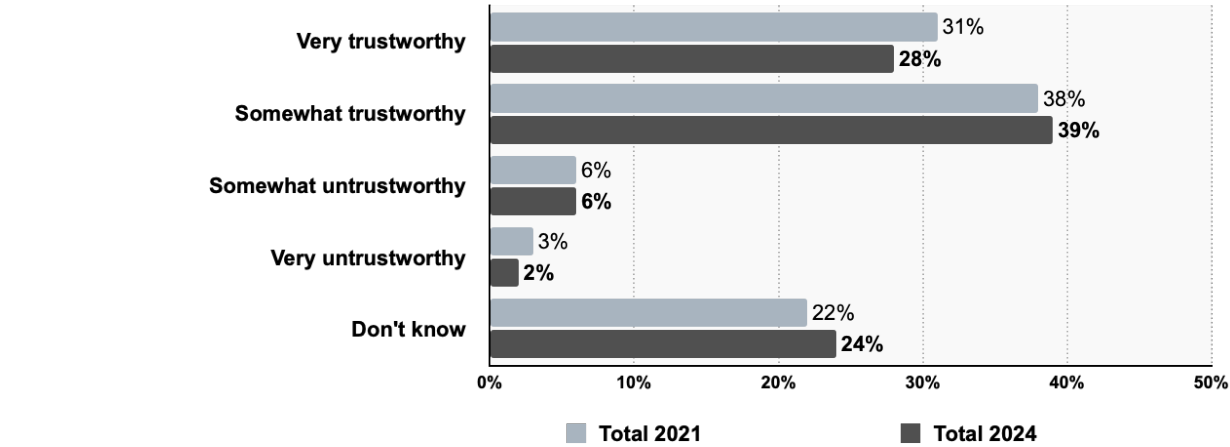
## LOCAL UTILITY COMPANY



## UNIVERSITIES



# US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY







# Irrigation System Use

Respondents' opinion and practices as they relate to the use of an at-home irrigation system were measured with the following questions, broken up into four categories:

## *Irrigation systems at home*

- Do you have an automatic sprinkler or irrigation system at your home?<sup>1</sup>
- Who controls how often your landscape's irrigation system runs?
- Where does the water used to irrigate your landscape come from?
- What type of grass is growing in your landscape?
- Do you have a working rain sensor, soil moisture sensor or smart controller that turns off the irrigation when it is not needed?

## *Water restrictions*

- Are there current water restrictions that impact when you water your landscape?
- Are the local water restrictions mandatory or voluntary?
- How many days per week are you permitted to water your landscape?
- Who would you go to for information about local water restrictions?
- How likely are you to follow applicable water restrictions when watering your landscape?

## *Agreement/disagreement statements*

- Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.
  - I control my irrigation system based on my landscape water needs.
  - I consider my community's landscape expectations and requirements when determining whether I should irrigate.
  - I control my irrigation system to account for recent local rainfall.
  - I would participate in a free irrigation evaluation to learn about how to water my landscape in a way that helps to conserve water.
- Please indicated your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.
  - I support local water restrictions.
  - Water restrictions do not apply when using well water to irrigate.
  - Water restrictions help to save water.
  - I am concerned about the long-term availability of freshwater in my county.

## *Water usage*

- If you were to provide your best estimate, what percent of your monthly water use goes toward outdoor irrigation?
- I operate my irrigation controller as follows:
  - Adjust the days of the week my irrigation system runs
  - Adjust how many minutes each of my irrigation zones run
  - Manually turn the controller on and off

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Only respondents indicating they had an irrigation system at their home answered the remaining questions in this section. Others were taken to the next group of questions related to fertilizer use in their landscapes.

- Run each zone for 1-2 minutes to check for leaks
- None of the above

### ***Irrigation systems at home***

40% of respondents in 2024 indicated they have an irrigation system at their home, with 43% reporting they do not have a system. Of the 40% who have systems at their home, 73% reported they, or a member of their family, control their irrigation system. This majority of individuals controlling their systems at home was consistent across all regions.

When asked where water used to irrigate their landscape came from, 34% of respondents selected “reclaimed water from [their] utility provider” as the source. 28% reported their landscape water source as well or surface water, while 27% indicated it was from “drinking/potable water from [their] water utility provider.”

Respondents were provided multiple options to select from regarding the type of grass growing in their landscape, with the ability to choose all that applied. 46% selected St. Augustine grass, while 29% were unsure what type grew in their landscape. The next highest types selected were Bahia (16%) and Bermuda (14%). 14% of respondents indicated having multiple types of grass growing in their landscape.

Responses were similar when asked whether they had a working rain sensor, soil moisture sensor, or smart controller that turns off the irrigation when it is not needed: Yes (33%), No (32%). 18% reported turning off the irrigation system manually when it rains.

### ***Water restrictions***

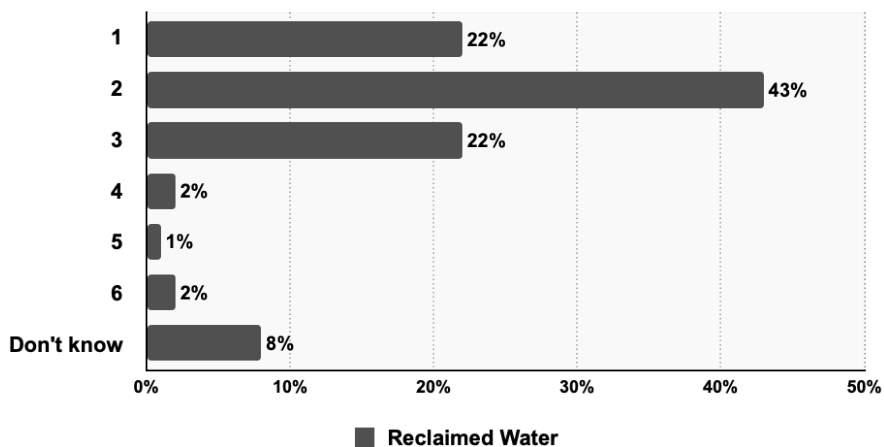
Three questions related to local restrictions were included to gauge knowledge of both whether there were restrictions in their area, if they were mandatory or voluntary, and how many days a week they were permitted to water their landscapes. Following these questions, they were also asked where they would go for information regarding local water restrictions and how likely they were to follow applicable water restrictions when watering their landscape.

While 48% of respondents indicated awareness of current water restrictions for their landscapes, 42% selected they were not under restrictions. Of those who said they did currently have local water restrictions, 72% reported these as mandatory. Most respondents with knowledge of local water restrictions indicated they were permitted to water either one (31%) or two (43%) days per week.

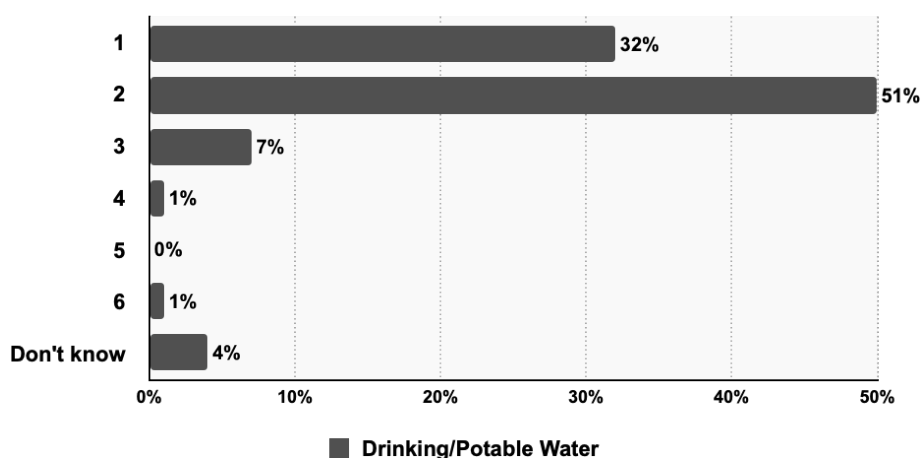
A comparison of the number of days respondents indicated being permitted to water by county is presented below with the highest percentage responses per county in bold.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Don't know
Charlotte	10%	<b>70%</b>	10%	10%	0	0	0
Citrus	<b>50%</b>	38%	0	0	0	0	13%
Hernando	<b>75%</b>	20%	0	0	0	5%	0
Highlands	0	<b>43%</b>	14%	29%	14%	0	0
Hillsborough	<b>49%</b>	22%	16%	8%	0	3%	3%
Lake	4%	<b>83%</b>	9%	0	0	0	4%
Levy	<b>100%</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manatee	<b>31%</b>	28%	21%	0	3%	0	17%
Marion	6%	<b>88%</b>	6%	0	0	0	0
Pasco	<b>63%</b>	25%	0	0	0	0	13%
Pinellas	<b>48%</b>	19%	26%	0	0	0	7%
Polk	12%	<b>63%</b>	13%	2%	2%	3%	5%
Sarasota	<b>44%</b>	24%	20%	0	0	0	12%
Sumter	0	<b>70%</b>	20%	0	0	0	10%

The chart below shows the selected number of days permitted to water for respondents who indicated their irrigation system's source was **reclaimed water**.



The chart below shows the selected number of days permitted to water for respondents who indicated their irrigation system’s source was **drinking/potable water**.



The top three sources respondents indicated they would turn to for information regarding local water restrictions were: “my local water utility provider” (28%), “my HOA or neighborhood advisory committee” (21%), and “my water management district” (17%). An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated they would follow applicable water restrictions when watering their landscapes: “very likely” (64%) and “likely” (26%).

### ***Agreement/disagreement statements***

Respondents were asked to provide their agreement or disagree with several statements related to irrigation use in their landscapes. Most respondents agreed with the following statements regarding use of their home irrigation systems:

*I control my irrigation system based on my landscape water needs.*

“Strongly agree” – 53%

“Somewhat agree” – 29%

*I consider my community’s landscape expectations and requirements when determining whether I should irrigate.*

“Strongly agree” – 37%

“Somewhat agree” – 33%

*I control my irrigation system to account for recent local rainfall.*

“Strongly agree” – 43%

“Somewhat agree” – 32%

*I would participate in a free irrigation evaluation to learn about how to water my landscape in a way that helps to conserve water.*

“Strongly agree” – 32%

“Somewhat agree” – 32%

Similarly, survey respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with statements related to water restrictions. For most statements in this grouping, a majority of respondents agreed with the statements. One exception where there was more varied responses was regarding the impact of water restrictions if using well water to irrigate their landscapes.

*I support local water restrictions.*

“Strongly agree” – 49%  
 “Somewhat agree” – 32%

*Water restrictions do not apply when using well water to irrigate.*

“Strongly agree” – 14%  
 “Somewhat agree” – 19%  
 “Neither agree nor disagree” – 28%  
 “Somewhat disagree” – 21%  
 “Strongly disagree” – 18%

*Water restrictions help to save water.*

“Strongly agree” – 47%  
 “Somewhat agree” – 36%

*I am concerned about the long-term availability of freshwater in my county.*

“Strongly agree” – 33%  
 “Somewhat agree” – 31%

## ***Water usage***

When asked how much of their monthly water use respondents would estimate goes toward outdoor irrigation a majority indicated 0 – 20% (63%). A comparison of the percentage cost of water use per month to the type of turf respondents selected in their landscape is presented below.

	0-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81% or above
<b>St. Augustine</b>	63%	24%	10%	3%	<1%
<b>Bahia</b>	72%	16%	12%	1%	0
<b>Centipede</b>	53%	16%	16%	16%	0
<b>Bermuda</b>	59%	28%	10%	2%	1%
<b>Zoysia</b>	61%	24%	8%	8%	0
<b>Other</b>	84%	9%	6%	0%	0
<b>Don't know</b>	63%	24%	10%	2%	2%

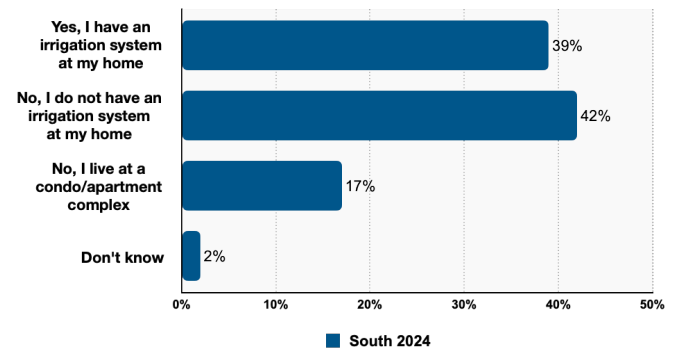
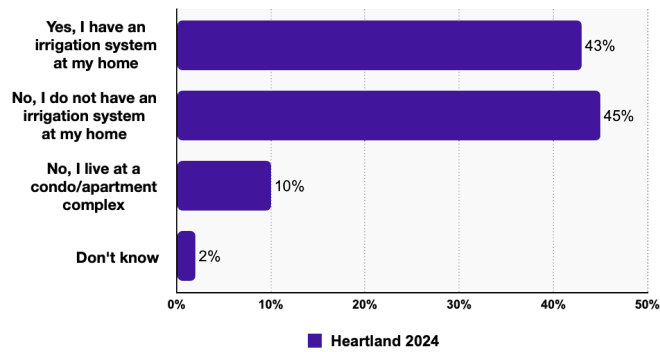
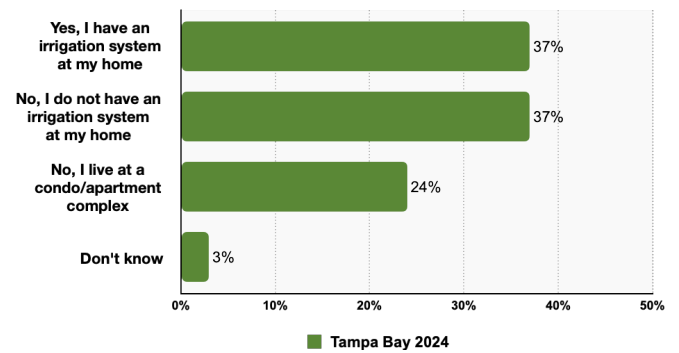
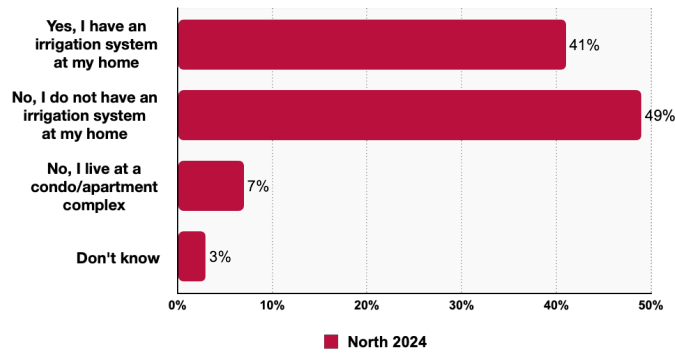
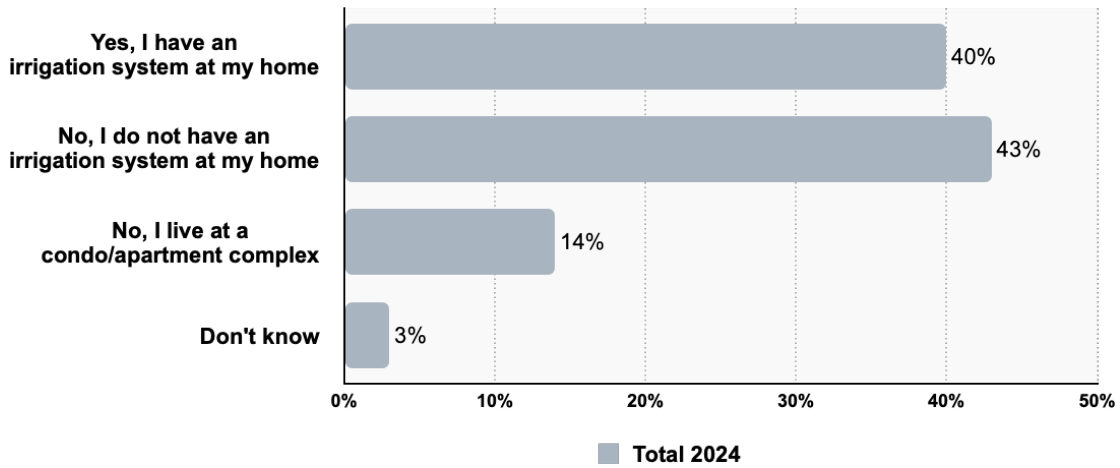
A similar comparison was made between how many days respondents were allowed to water under their local restrictions and the percentage monthly cost they identified as going toward outdoor irrigation.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Don't know
<b>0 - 20%</b>	67%	66%	50%	14%	0	25%	74%
<b>21 - 40%</b>	24%	19%	28%	29%	33%	0	16%
<b>41 - 60%</b>	9%	13%	15%	57%	33%	25%	11%
<b>61 - 80%</b>	1%	2%	5%	0	33%	50%	0
<b>81% or above</b>	0	0	3%	0	0	0	0

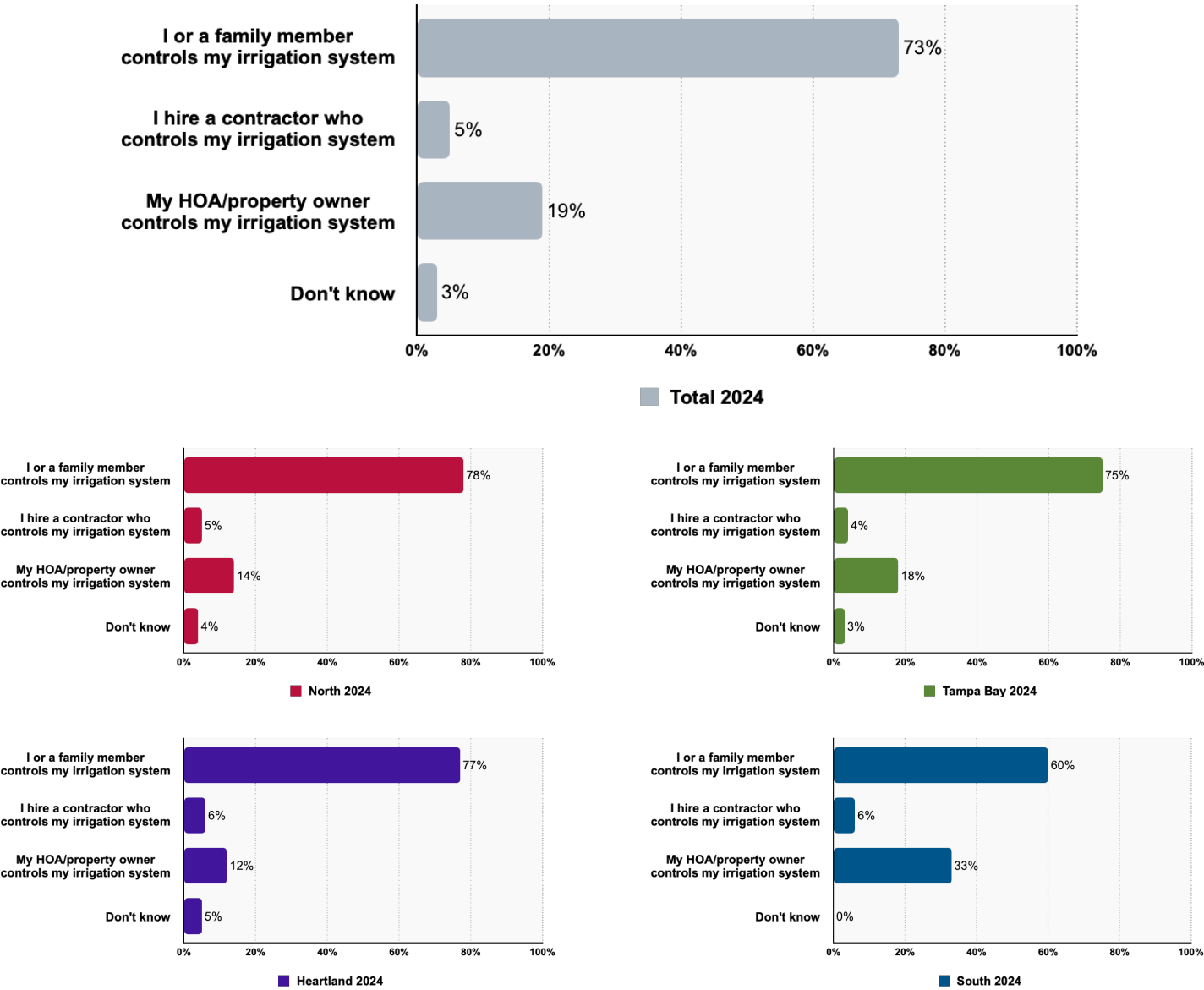
Finally, respondents were asked to indicate how they operate their irrigation controller (allowed to select multiple options). Responses recorded below:

*Adjust the days of the week my irrigation system runs – 45%*  
*Adjust how many minutes each of my irrigation zones run – 47%*  
*Manually turn the controller on and off - 38%*  
*Run each zone for 1-2 minutes to check for leaks – 22%*  
*None of the above – 18%*

## Do you have an automatic sprinkler or irrigation system at your home?

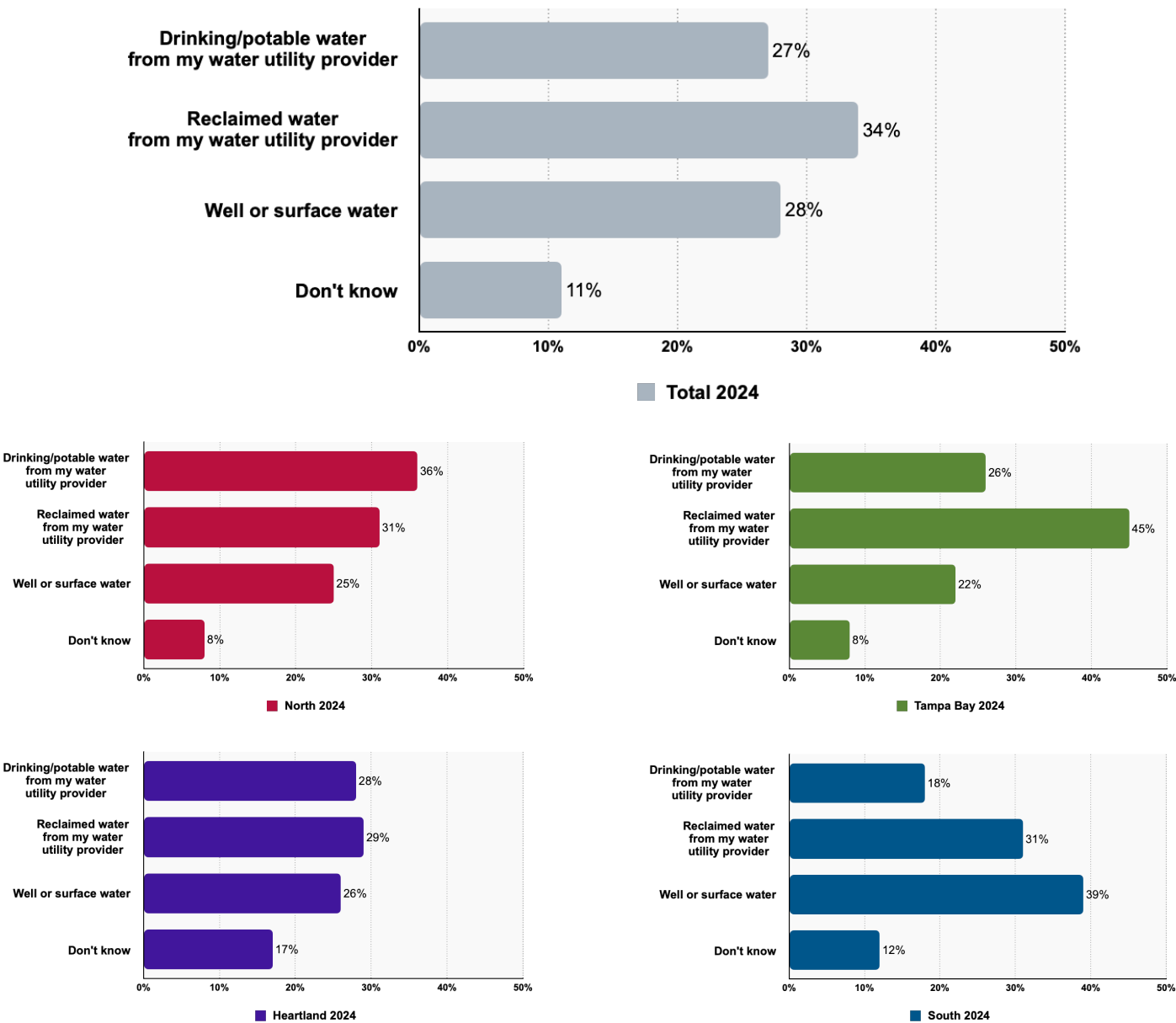


Who controls how often your landscape’s irrigation system runs?

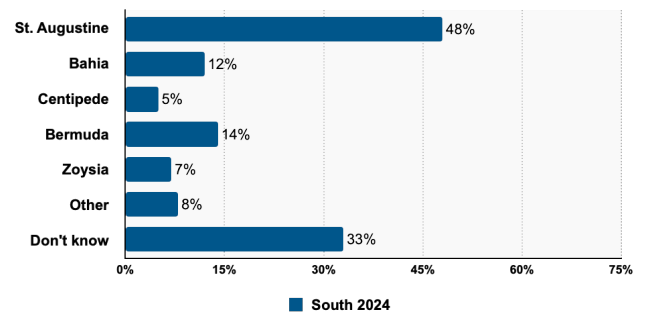
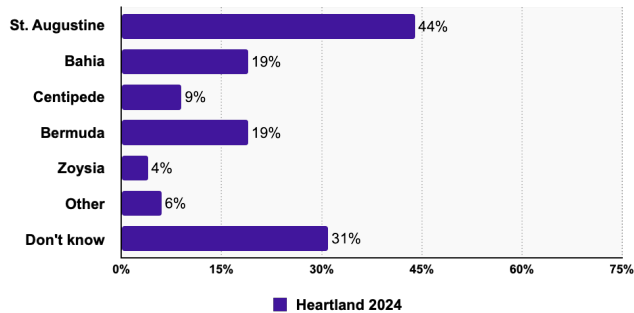
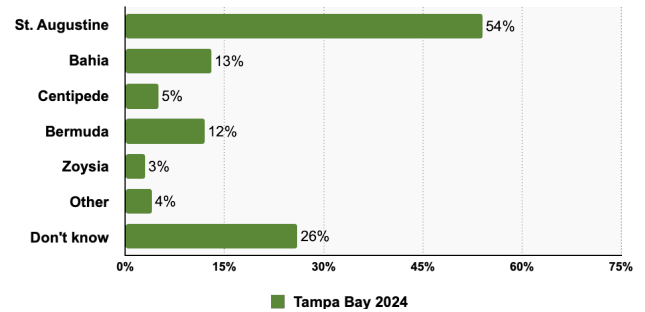
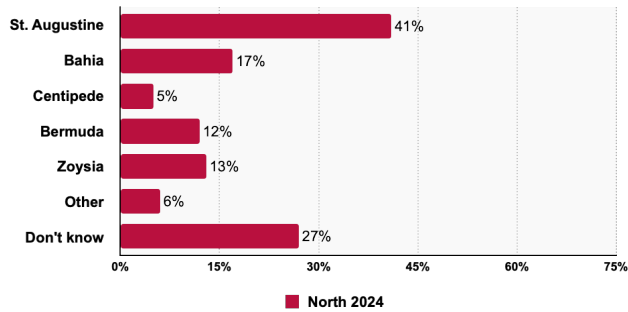
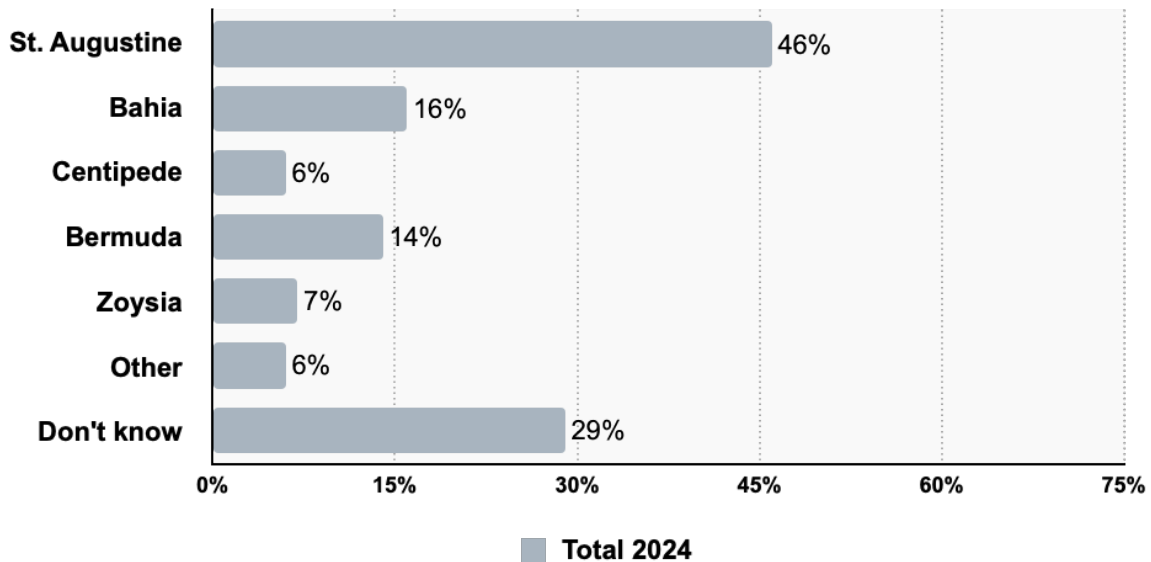




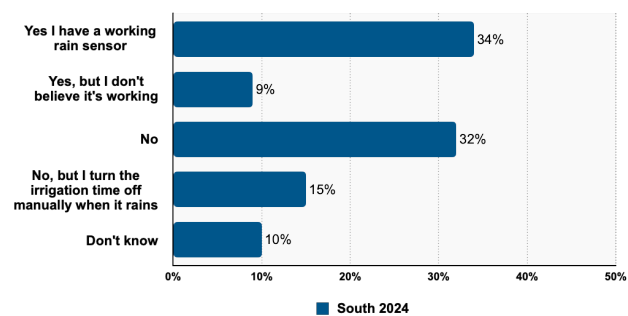
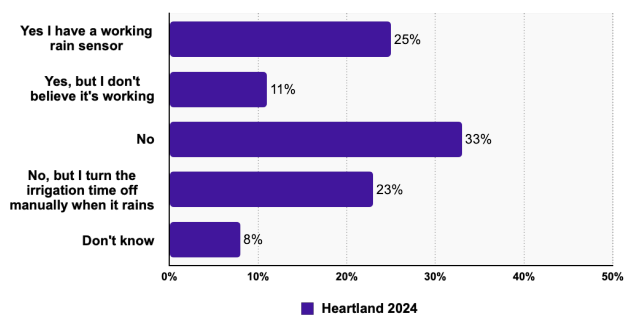
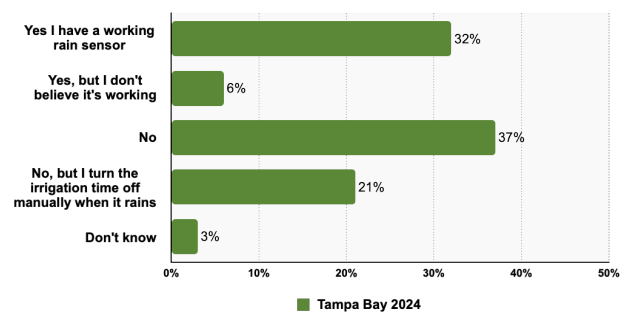
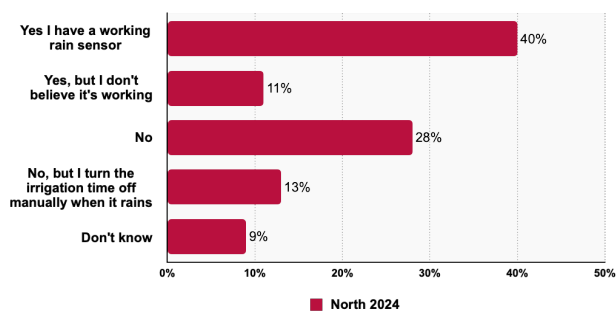
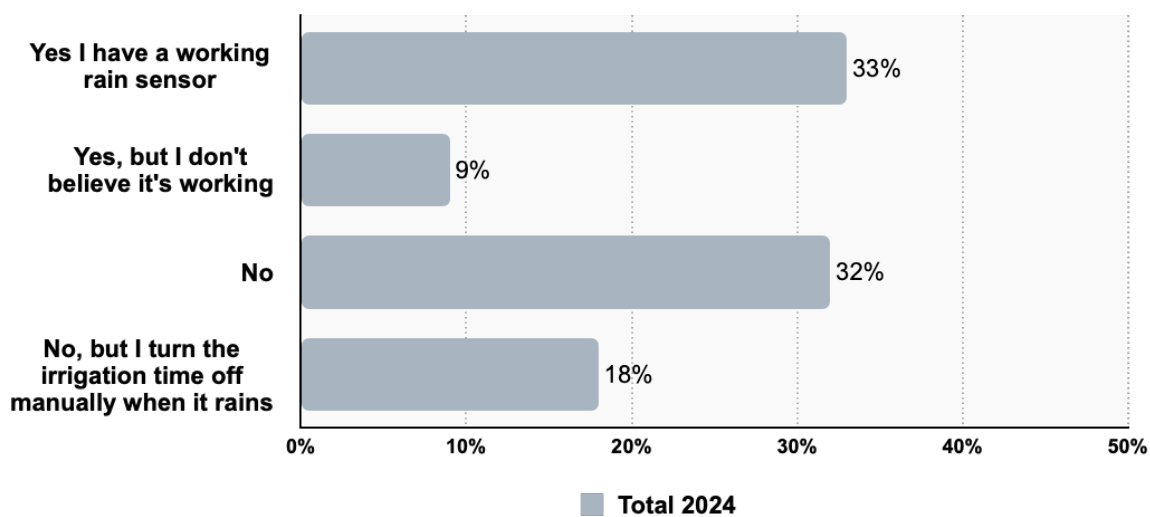
Where does the water used to irrigate your landscape come from?



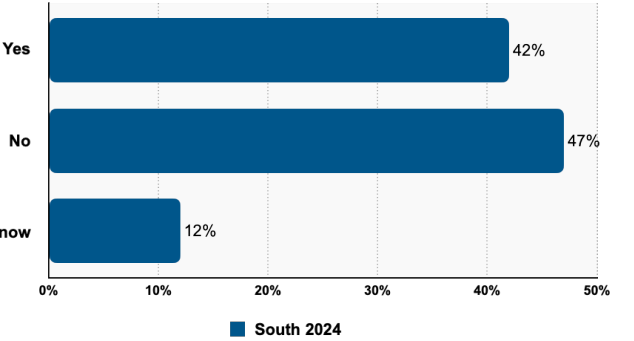
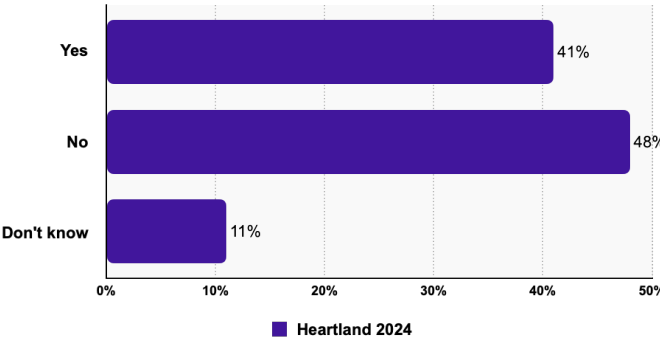
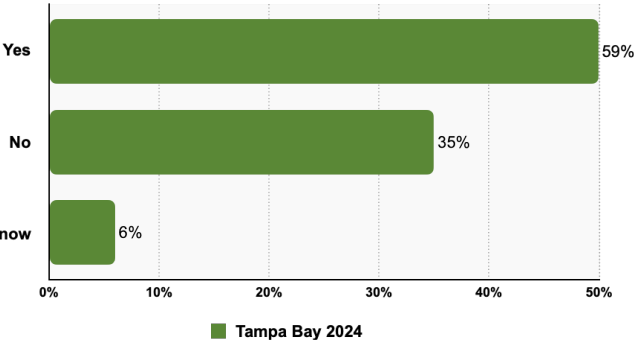
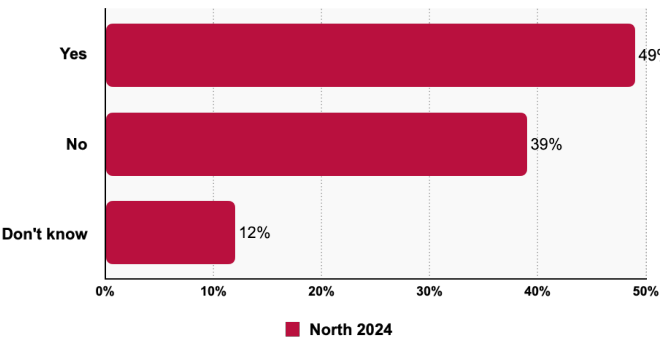
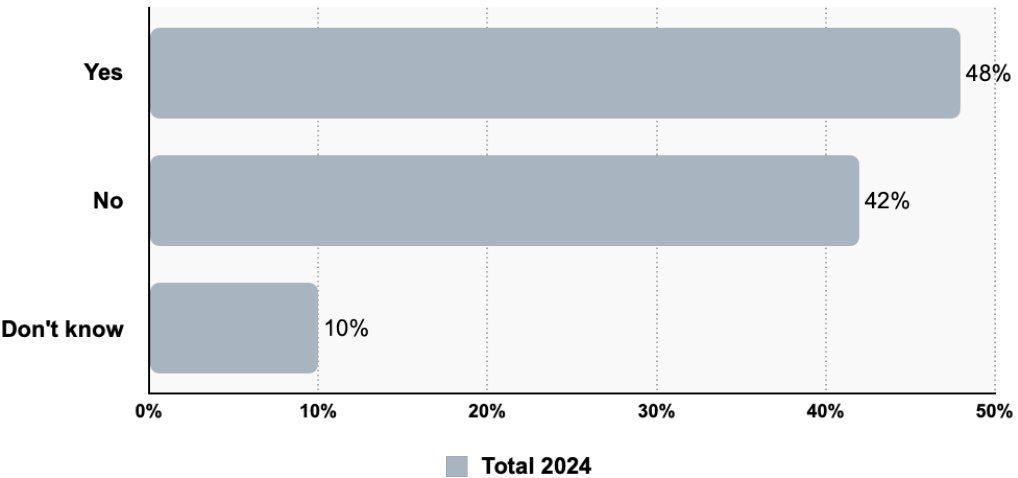
What type of grass is growing in your landscape? Select all that apply.



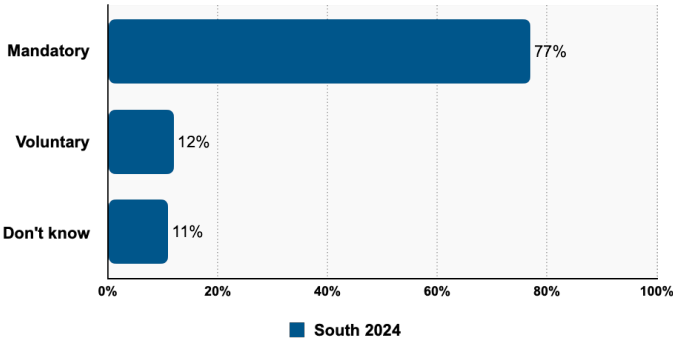
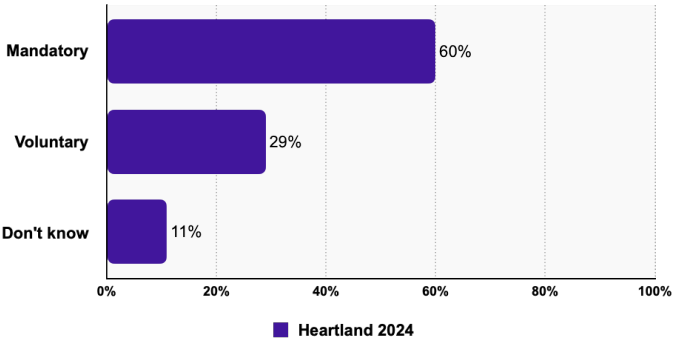
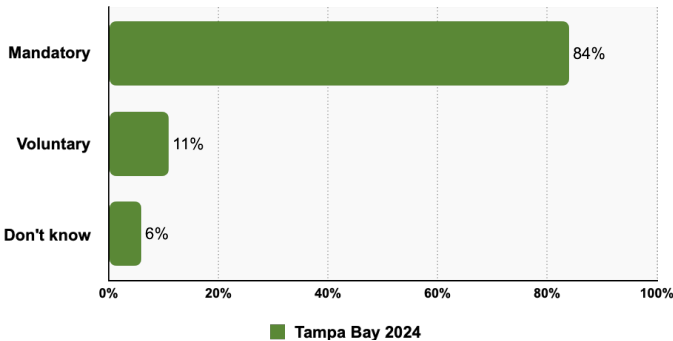
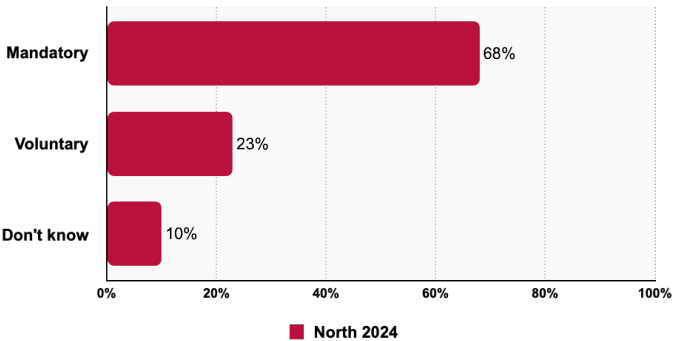
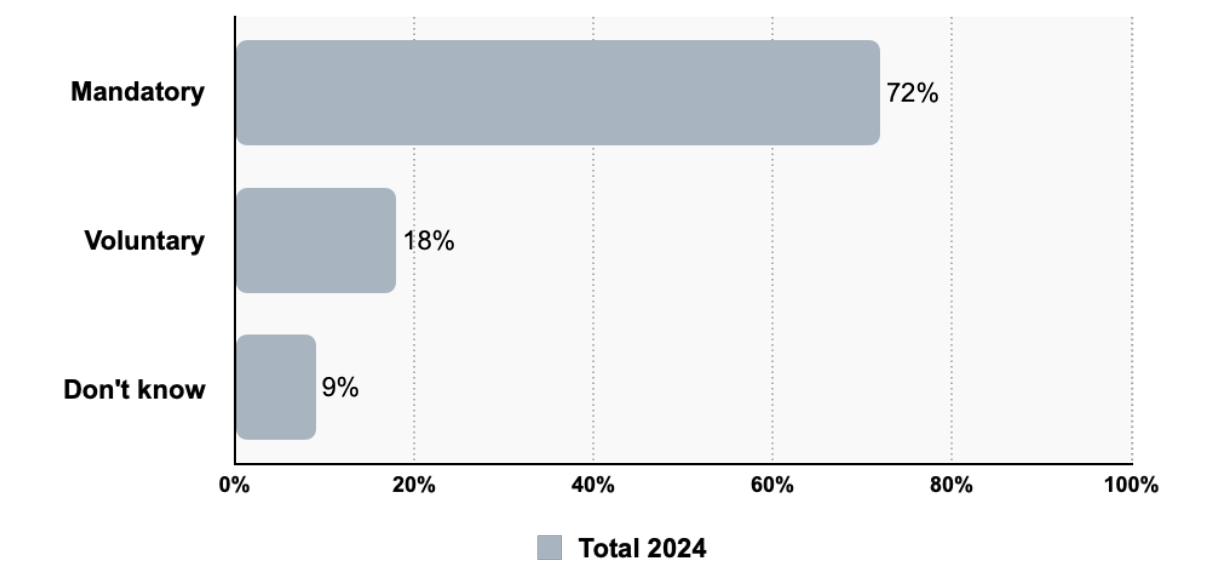
## Do you have a working rain sensor, soil moisture sensor or smart controller that turns off the irrigation when it is not needed?



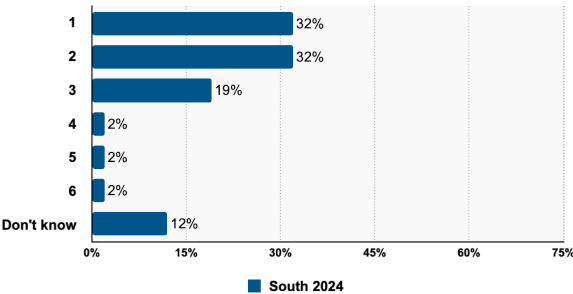
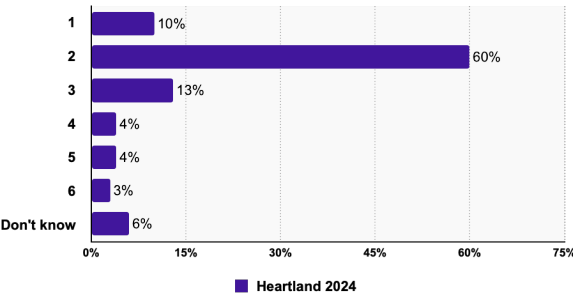
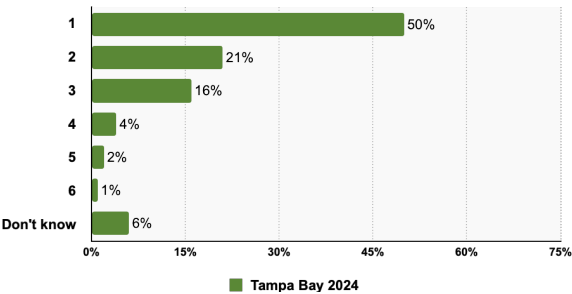
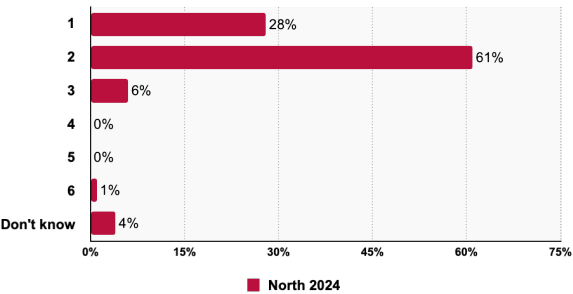
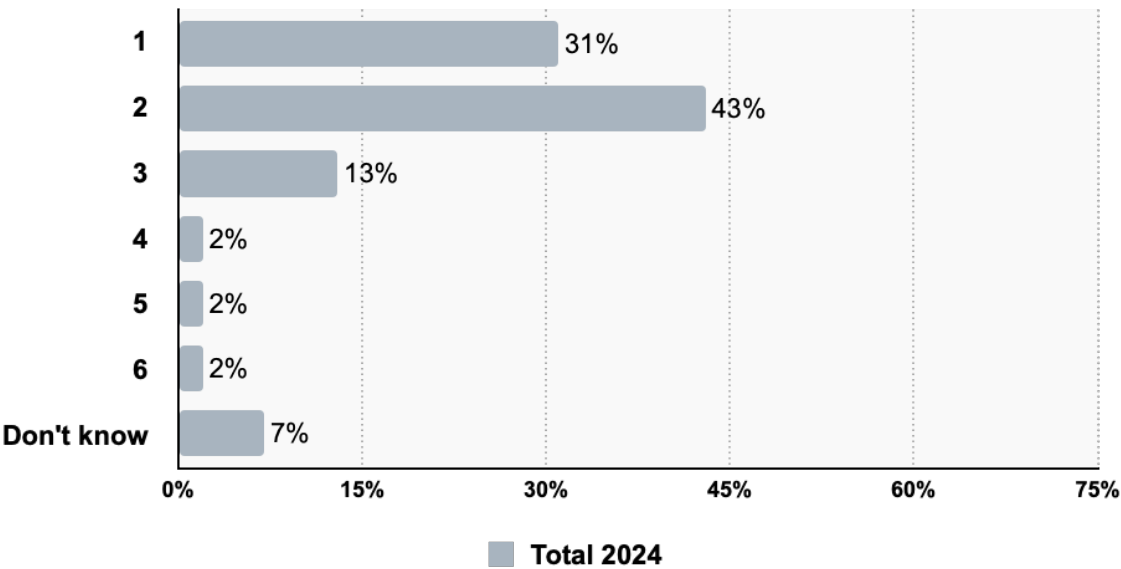
Are there current water restrictions that impact when you water your landscape?



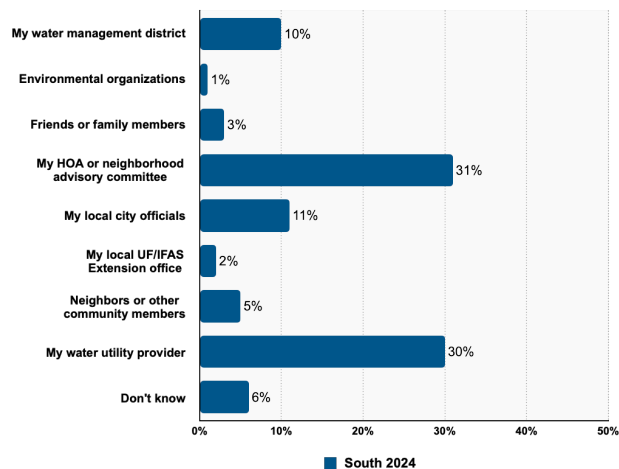
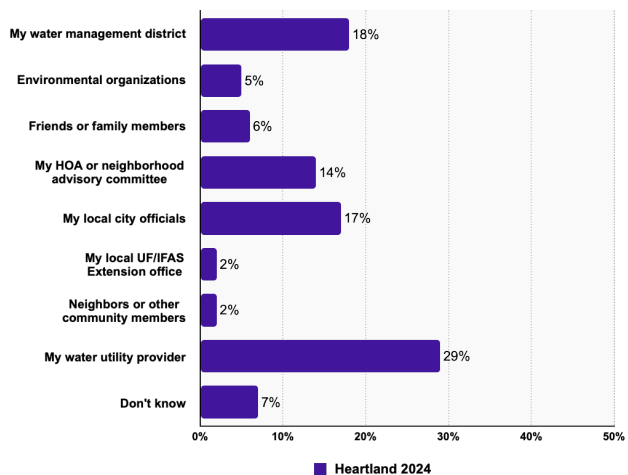
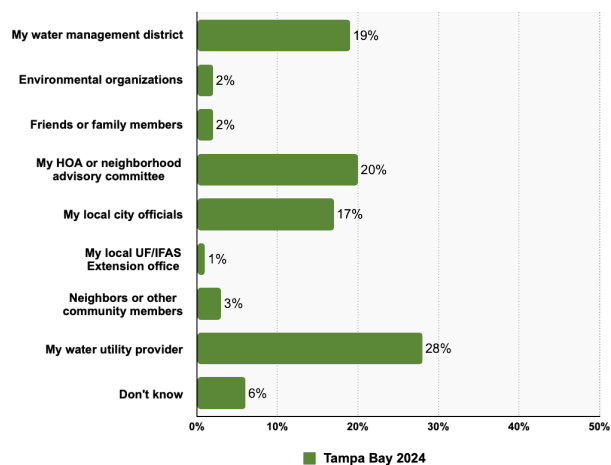
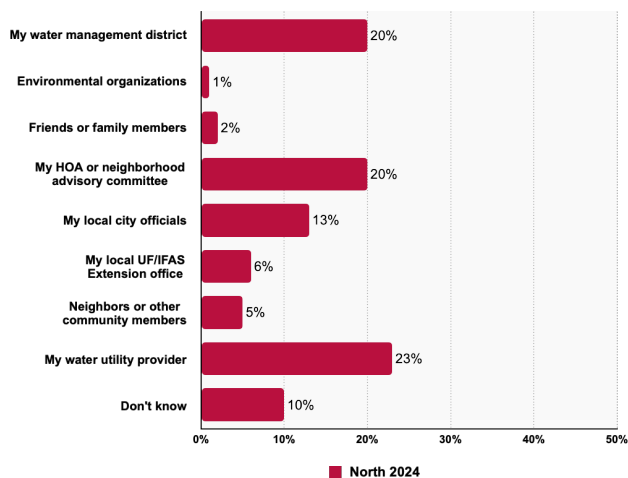
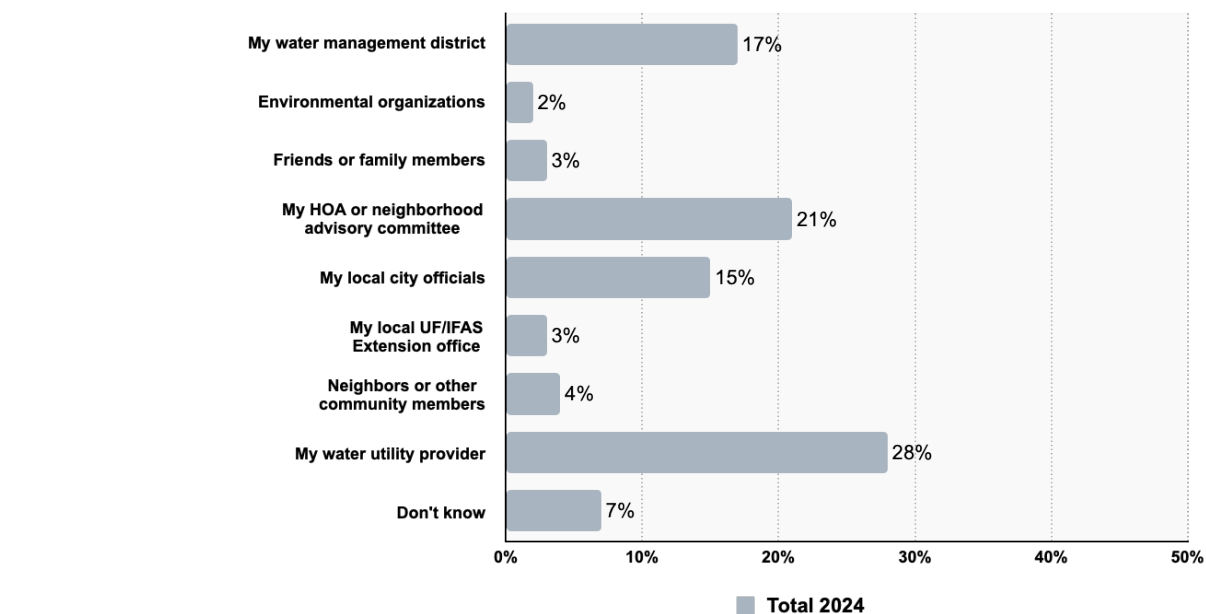
Are the local water restrictions mandatory or voluntary?



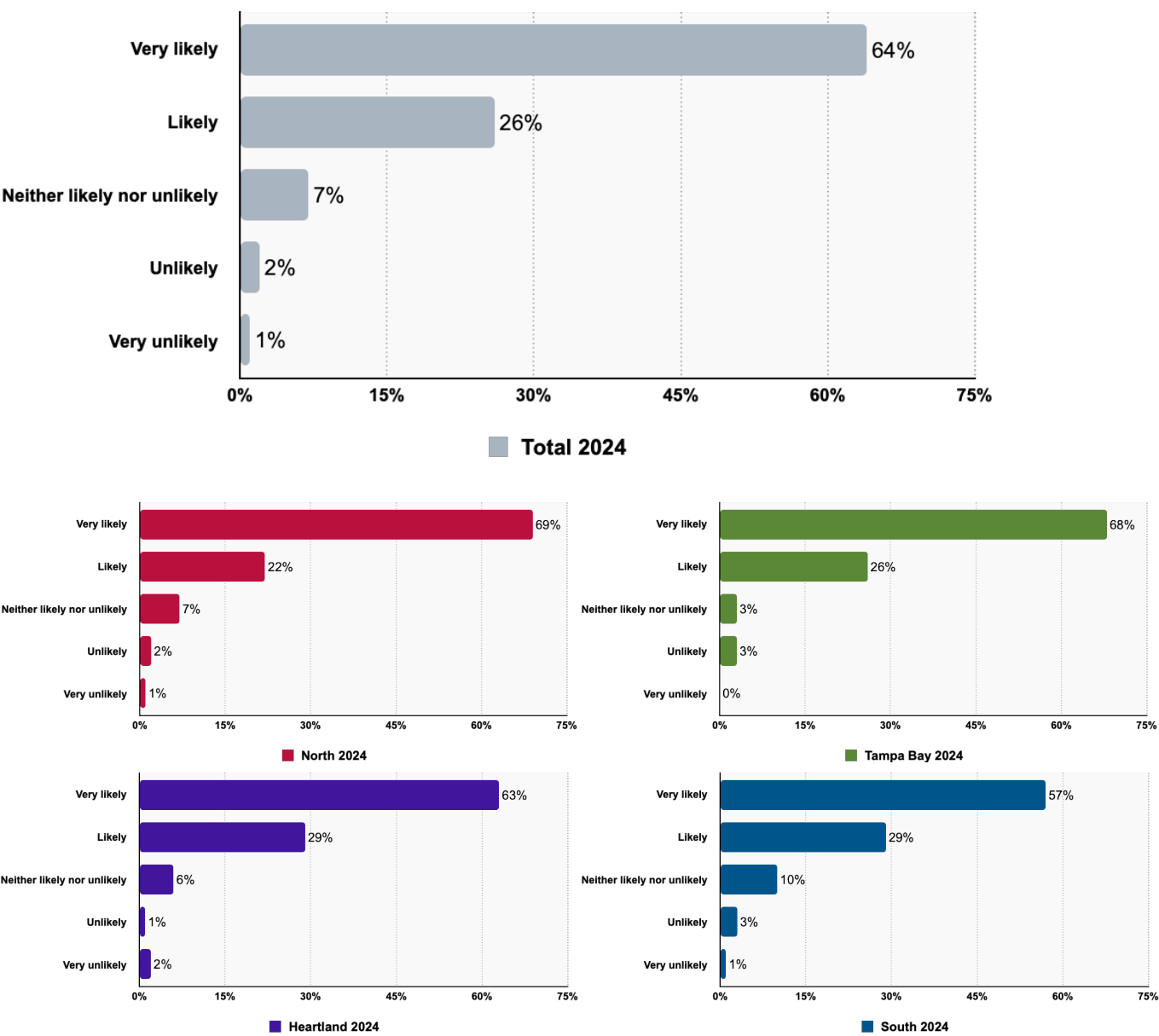
You responded that your community or water management district imposes water restrictions. How many days per week are you permitted to water your landscape?



## Who would you go to for information about local water restrictions?



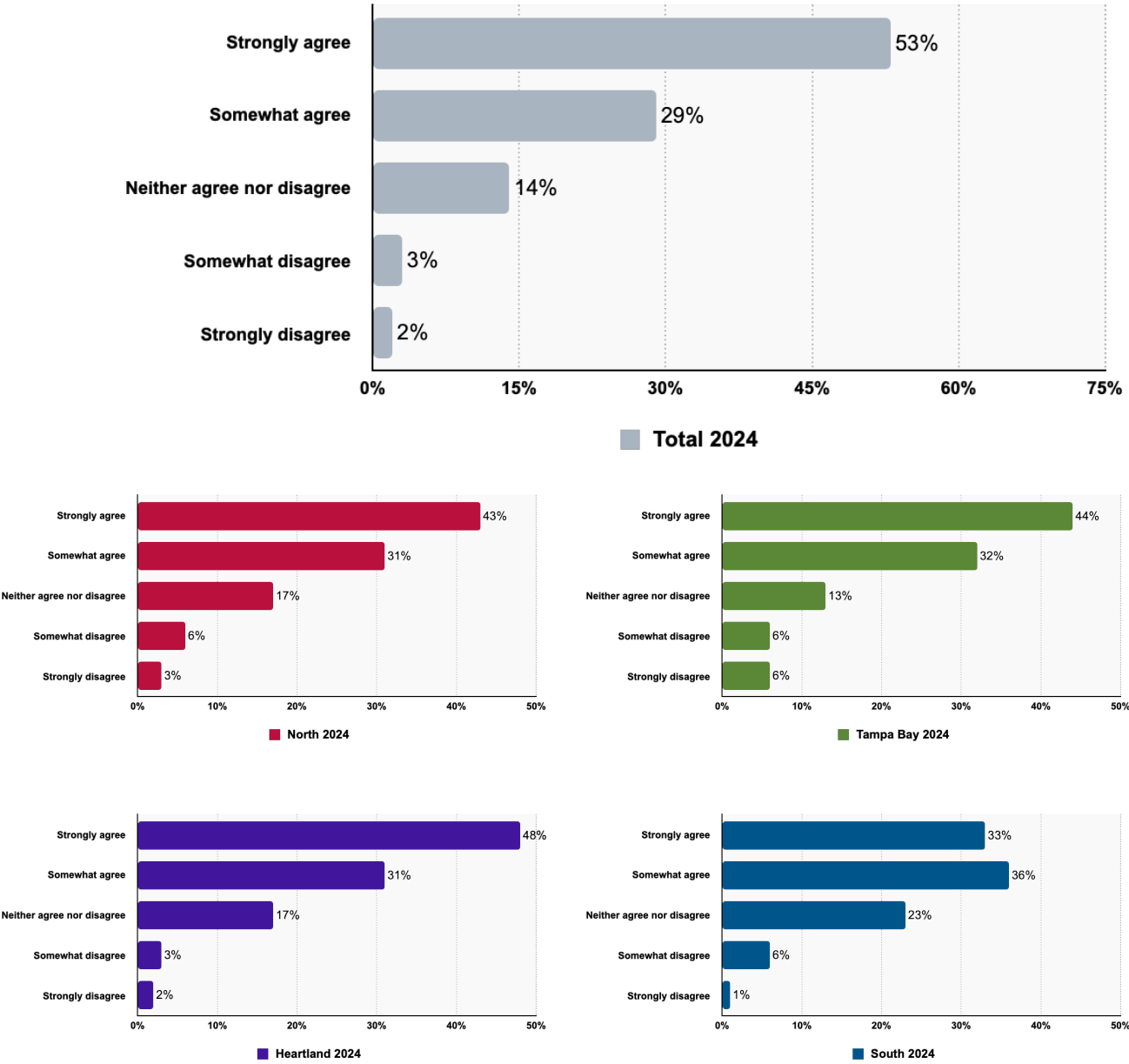
How likely are you to follow applicable water restrictions when watering your landscape?



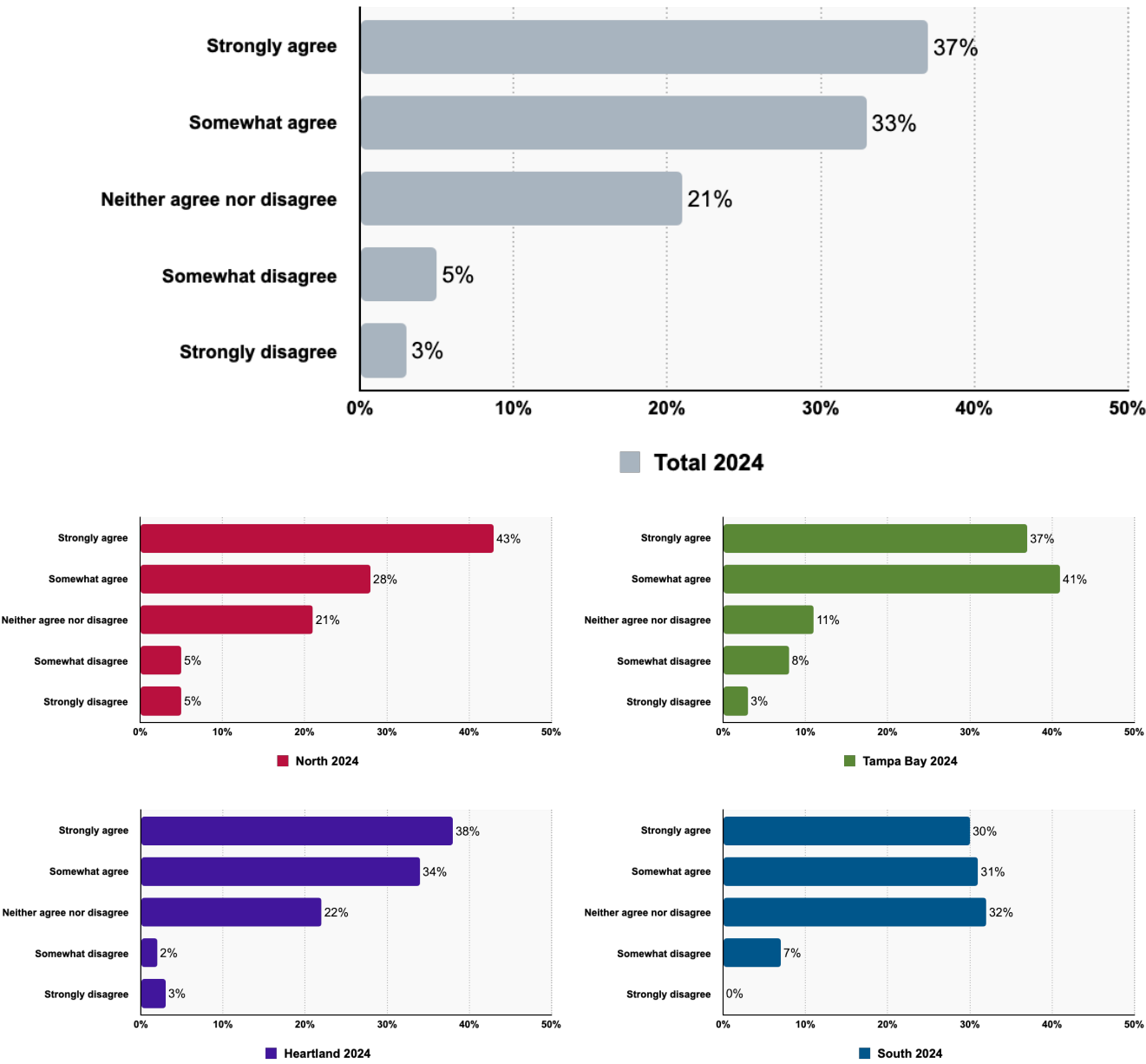


Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

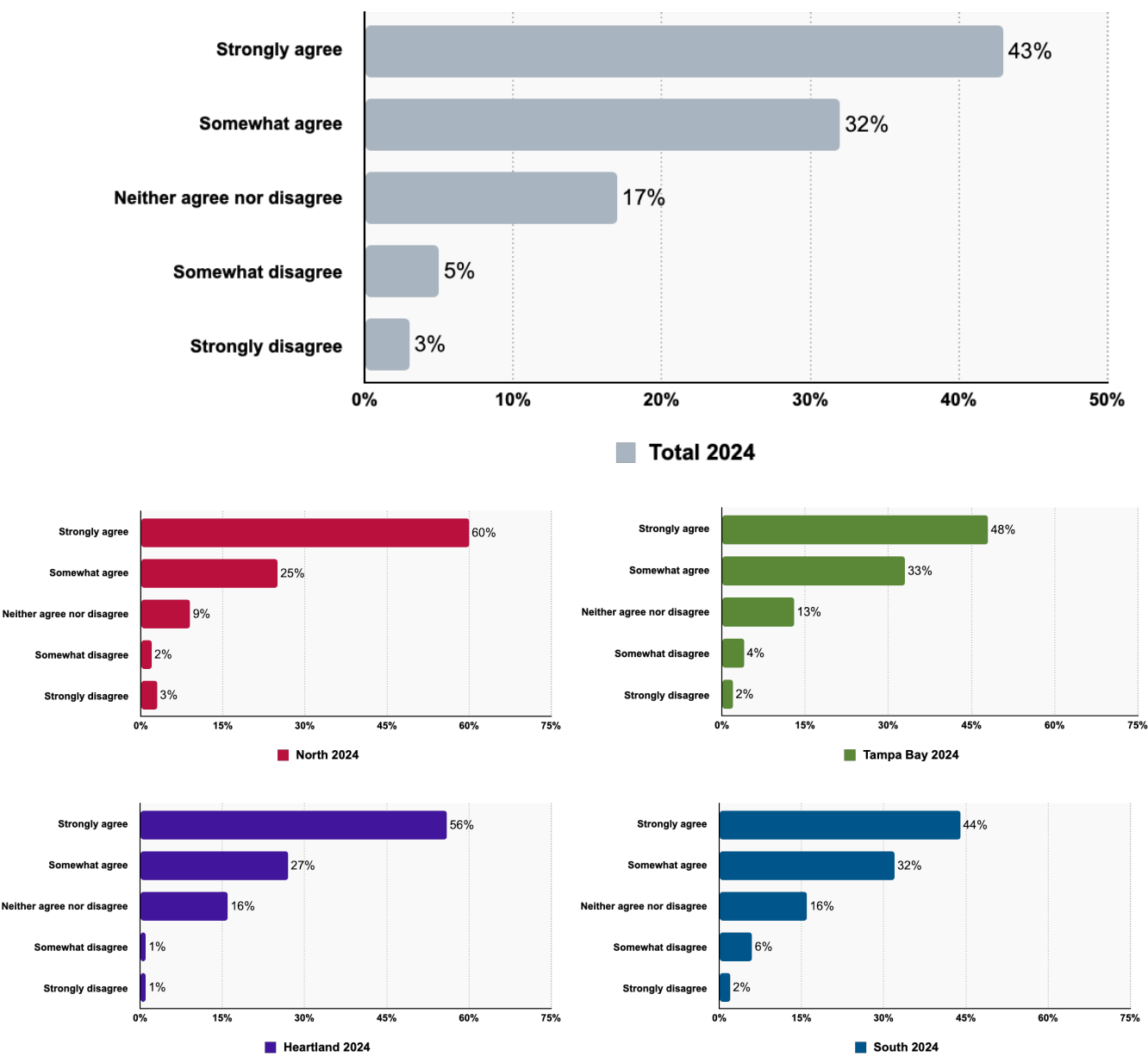
I control my irrigation system based on my landscape water needs.



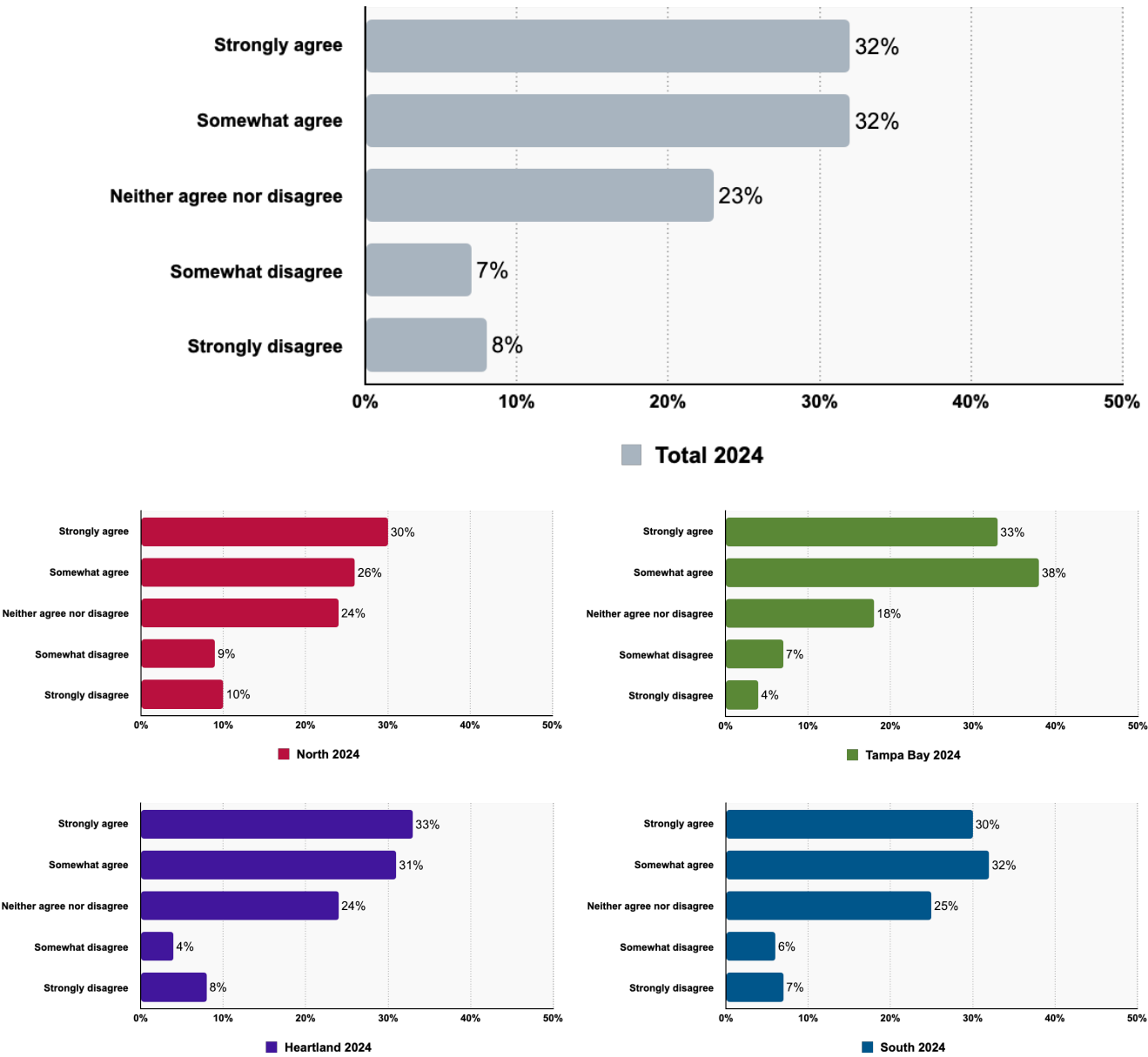
I consider my community’s landscape expectations and requirements when determining whether I should irrigate.



I control my irrigation system to account for recent local rainfall.

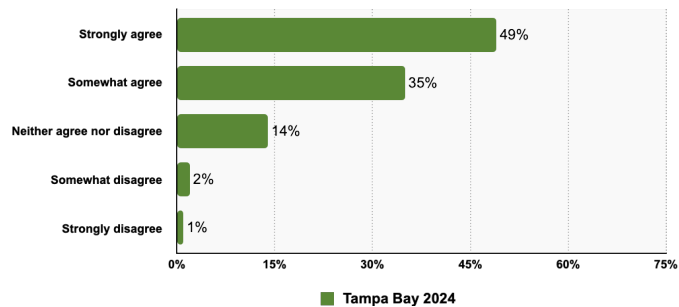
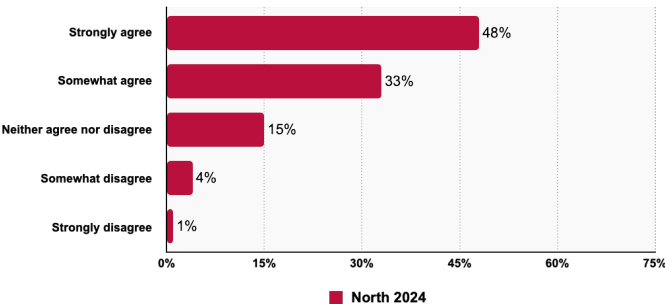
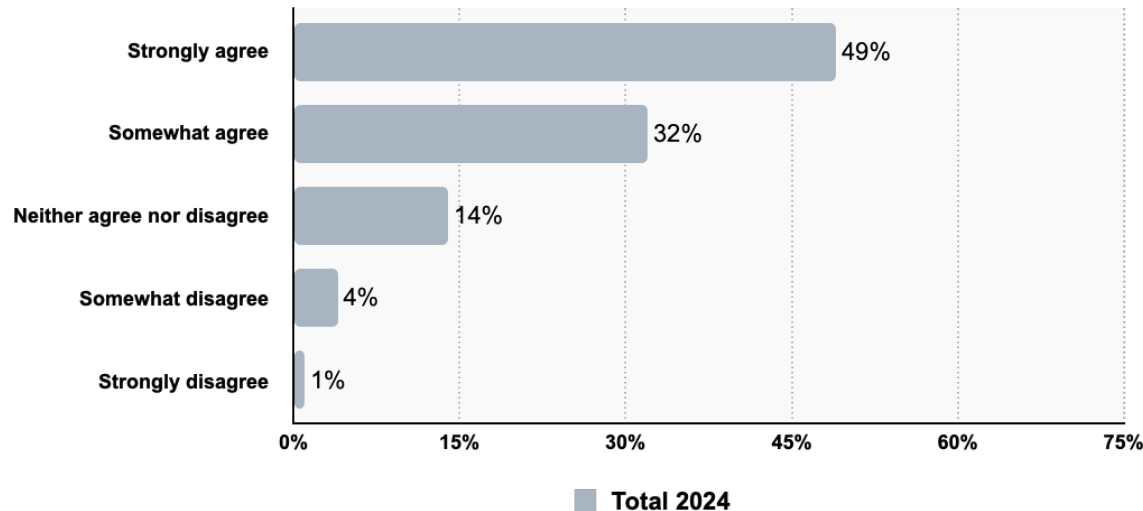


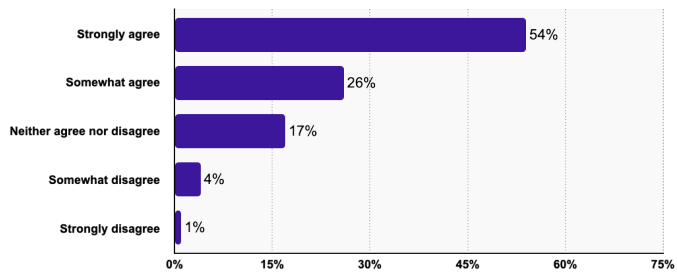
I would participate in a free irrigation evaluation to learn about how to water my landscape in a way that helps to conserve water.



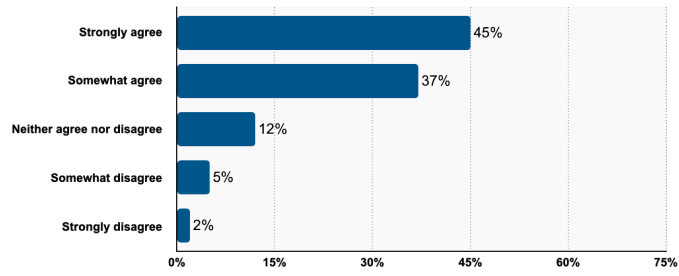
Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

I support local water restrictions.



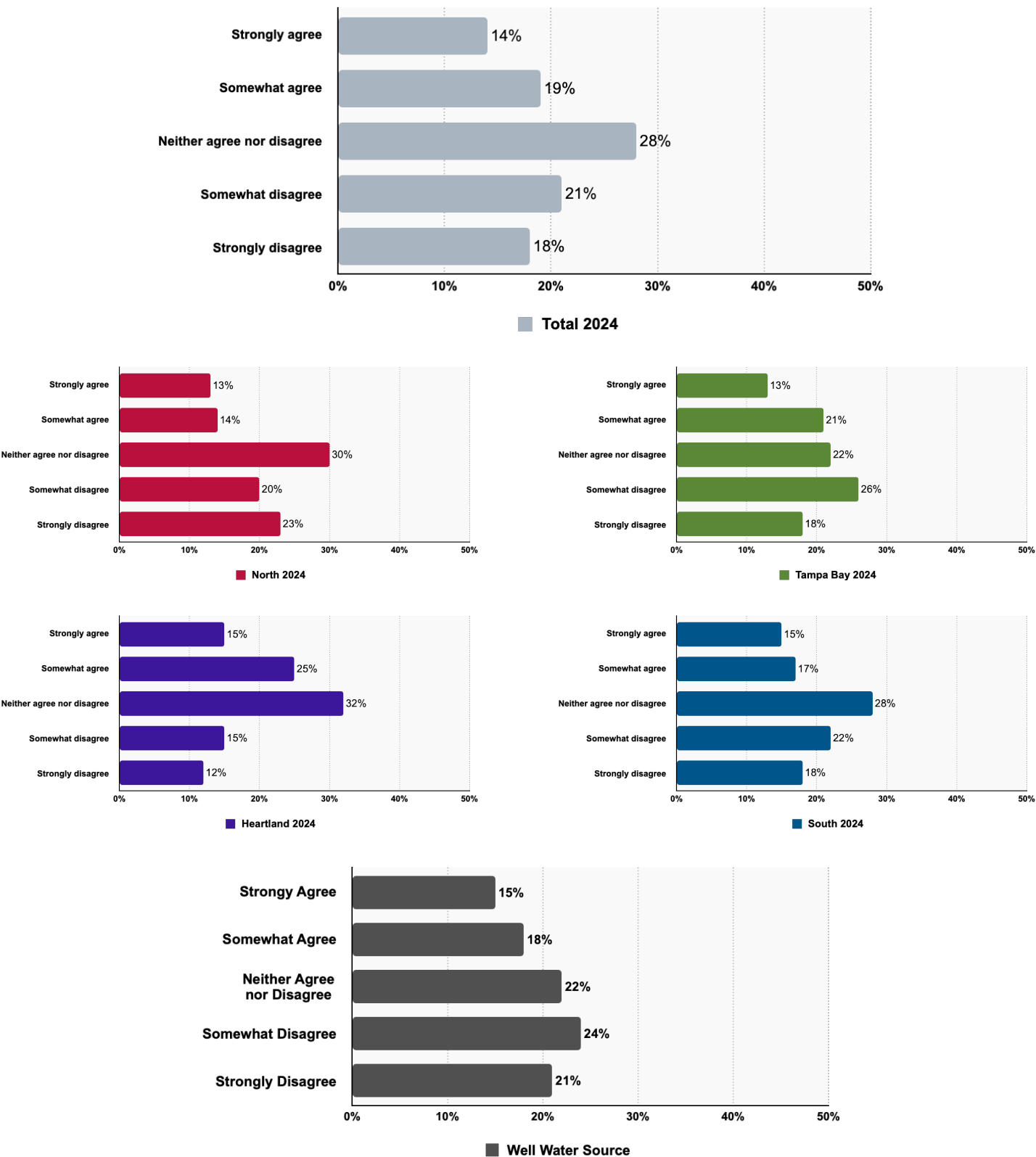


■ Heartland 2024

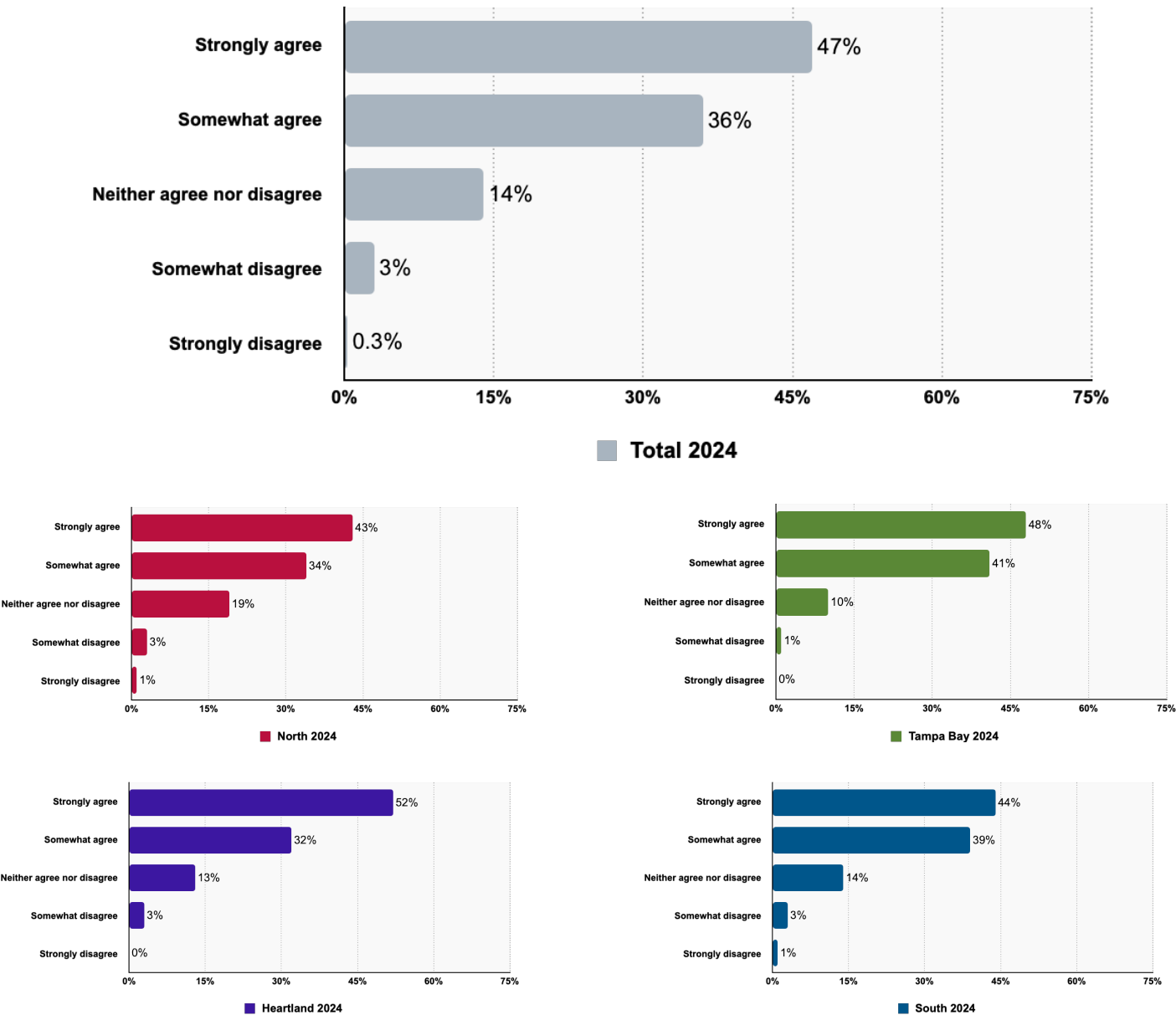


■ South 2024

Water restrictions do not apply when using well water to irrigate.

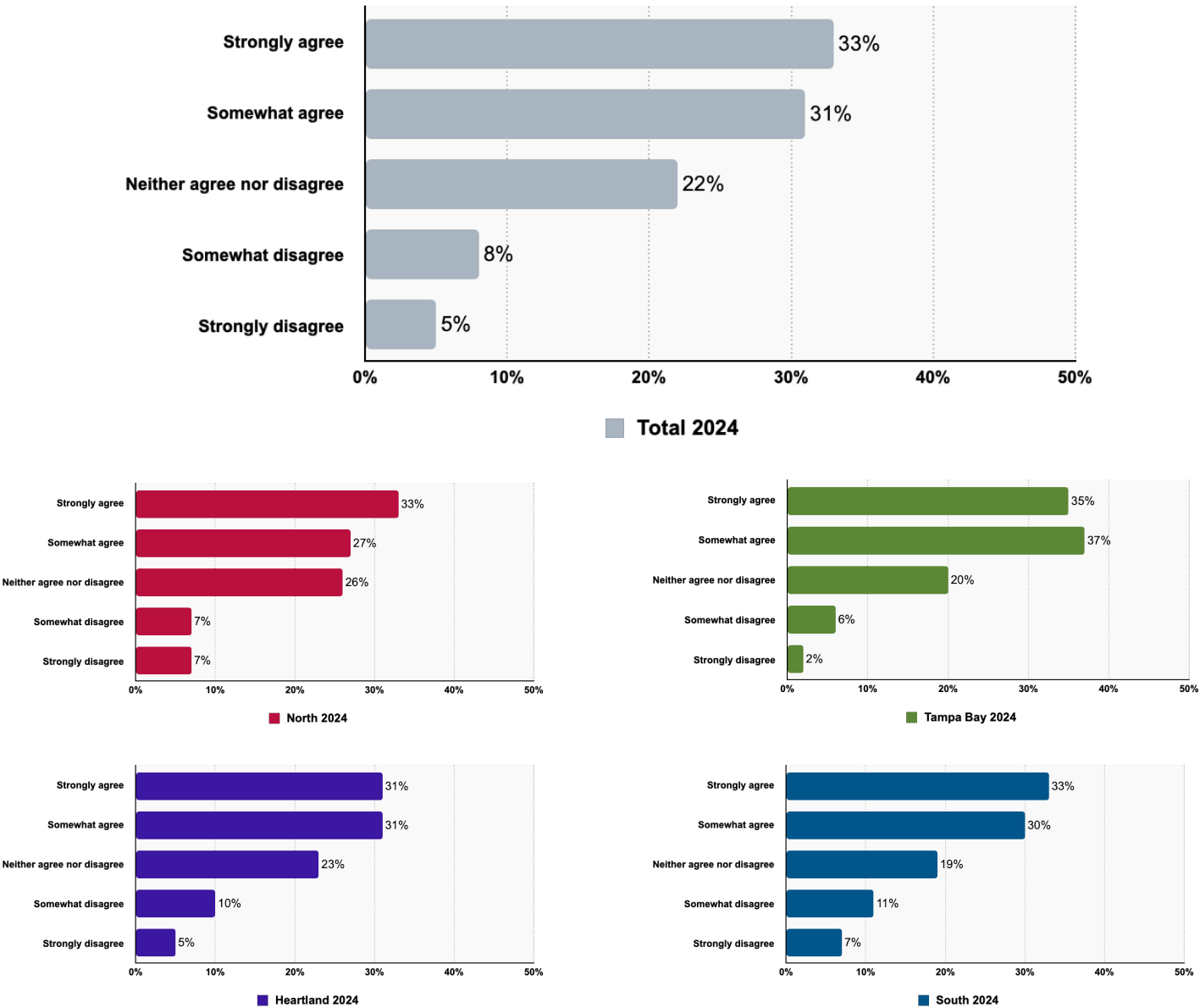


Water restrictions help to save water.

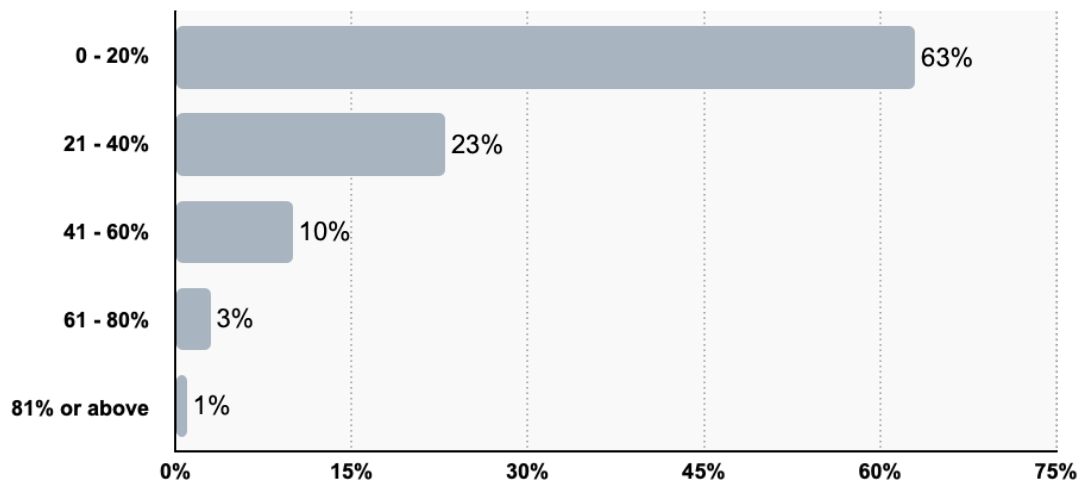




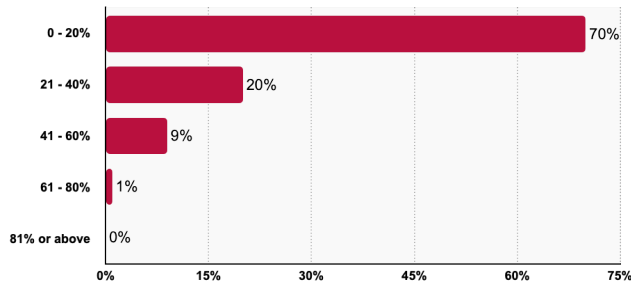
I am concerned about the long-term availability of freshwater in my county.



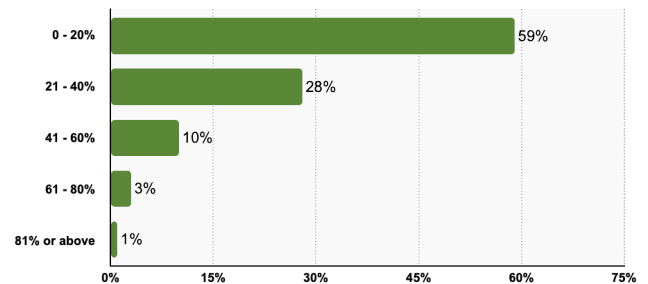
**If you were to provide your best estimate, what percent of your monthly water use goes toward outdoor irrigation?**



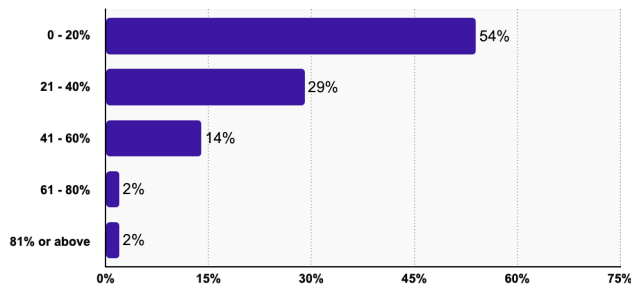
■ Total 2024



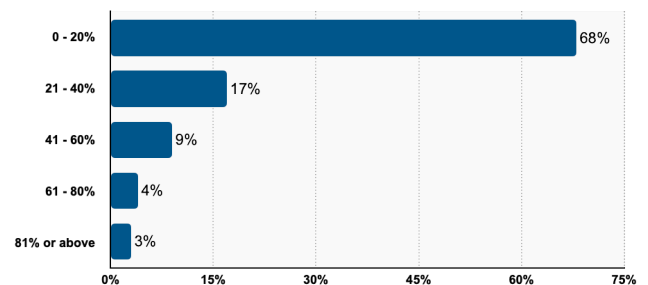
■ North 2024



■ Tampa Bay 2024

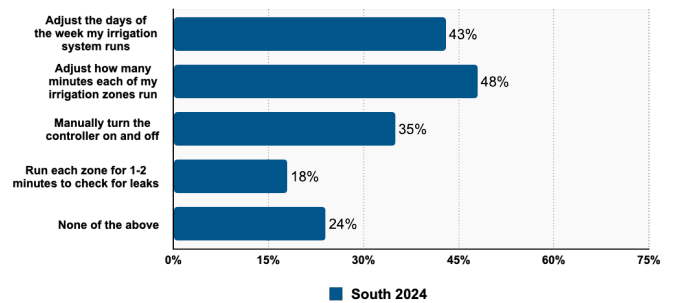
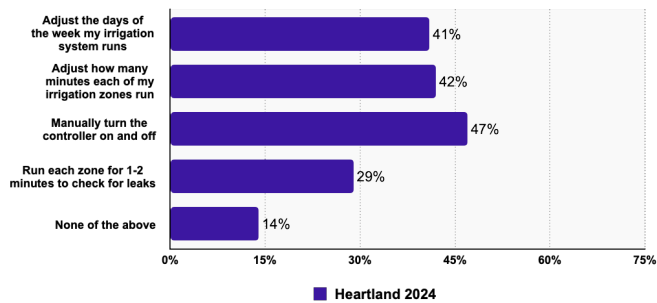
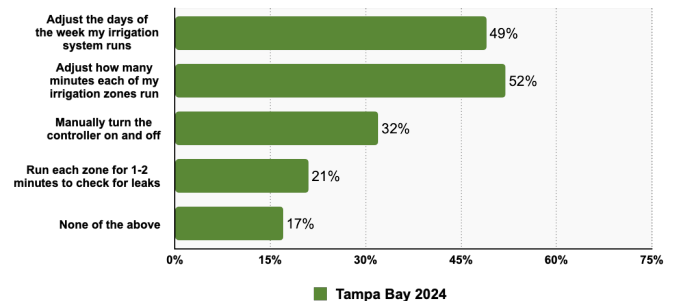
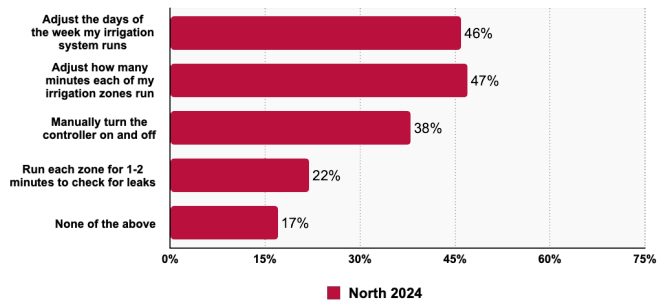
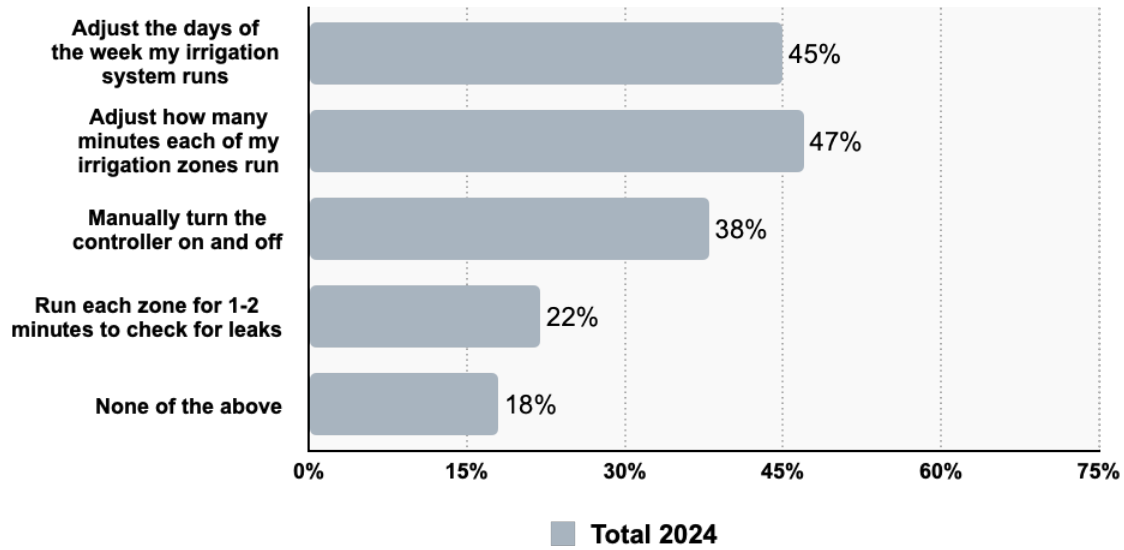


■ Heartland 2024



■ South 2024

**I operate my irrigation controller as follows (select all that apply):**





# Fertilizer Use

Respondents' opinion and practices as they relate to the use of fertilizer in their landscape were measured with the following questions:

- Does someone in your household or a contractor fertilize your landscape?
- How often is your landscape fertilized?
- Are there current restrictions on what time of year you're allowed to fertilize?
- Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.
  - It's important to know the amount of fertilizer appropriate for my landscape.
  - The more I fertilize, the more likely I am to have a greener landscape with less weeds.
  - It's best to fertilize before a heavy rain.
  - I follow package instructions when determining how often to fertilize.
  - I follow package instructions when determining how much fertilizer to use.
  - Restrictions on what time of year landscape fertilizing is allowed helps protect water quality.
  - The way I fertilize can affect the health of natural and manmade ponds in my community.
  - It is important to me to use the right amount of fertilizer that's appropriate for my landscape.
  - It is better for the environment to use a slow-release fertilizer.
  - I would change my fertilizer use if I learned that it was harmful to the environment.

When asked if someone in their household or a hired contractor fertilizes their landscape, 62% of respondents replied "no." Of the 38% of respondents who do fertilize their landscape, 28% reported doing so twice a year. This group of respondents was also asked if there were any current restrictions on what time of year they were allowed to fertilize. 41% said "no," while another 40% were unsure. This high number of "don't know" responses could indicate a need for further education.

As with irrigation systems in the previous section, respondents who fertilize their landscapes were asked to respond with their level of agreement to several statements related to fertilizing. Unlike the statements associated with irrigation system use, the agreement or disagreement overall varied across statements.

Below are statements where a majority of respondents agreed with the statements.

*It's important to know the amount of fertilizer appropriate for my landscape.*

"Strongly agree" – 57%

"Somewhat agree" – 25%

*I follow package instructions when determining how often to fertilize.*

"Strongly agree" – 42%

"Somewhat agree" – 29%

*I follow package instructions when determining how much fertilizer to use.*

"Strongly agree" – 50%

"Somewhat agree" – 23%

Note: 23% of respondents also selected "neither agree nor disagree" for this statement.

*Restrictions on what time of year landscape fertilizing is allowed helps protect water quality.*

“Strongly agree” – 35%

“Somewhat agree” – 32%

Note: 27% of respondents selected “neither agree nor disagree” for this statement.

*It is important to me to use the right amount of fertilizer that’s appropriate for my landscape.*

“Strongly agree” – 56%

“Strongly disagree” – 17%

Note: 15% of respondents selected “neither agree nor disagree” for this statement.

*I would change my fertilizer use if I learned that it was harmful to the environment.*

“Strongly agree” – 55%

“Somewhat agree” – 24%

Note: 17% of respondents selected “neither agree nor disagree” for this statement.

Responses to other statements in this question were more neutral, thus could indicate a need for more information to refine their opinion. These statements are below.

*The more I fertilize, the more likely I am to have a greener landscape with less weeds.*

“Neither agree nor disagree” – 36%

Note: 42% of respondents selected either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree.”

*It’s best to fertilize before a heavy rain.*

“Neither agree nor disagree” – 34%

Note: 40% of respondents selected either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree.”

*The way I fertilize can affect the health of natural and manmade ponds in my community.*

“Neither agree nor disagree” – 37%

Note: 52% of respondents selected either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree.”

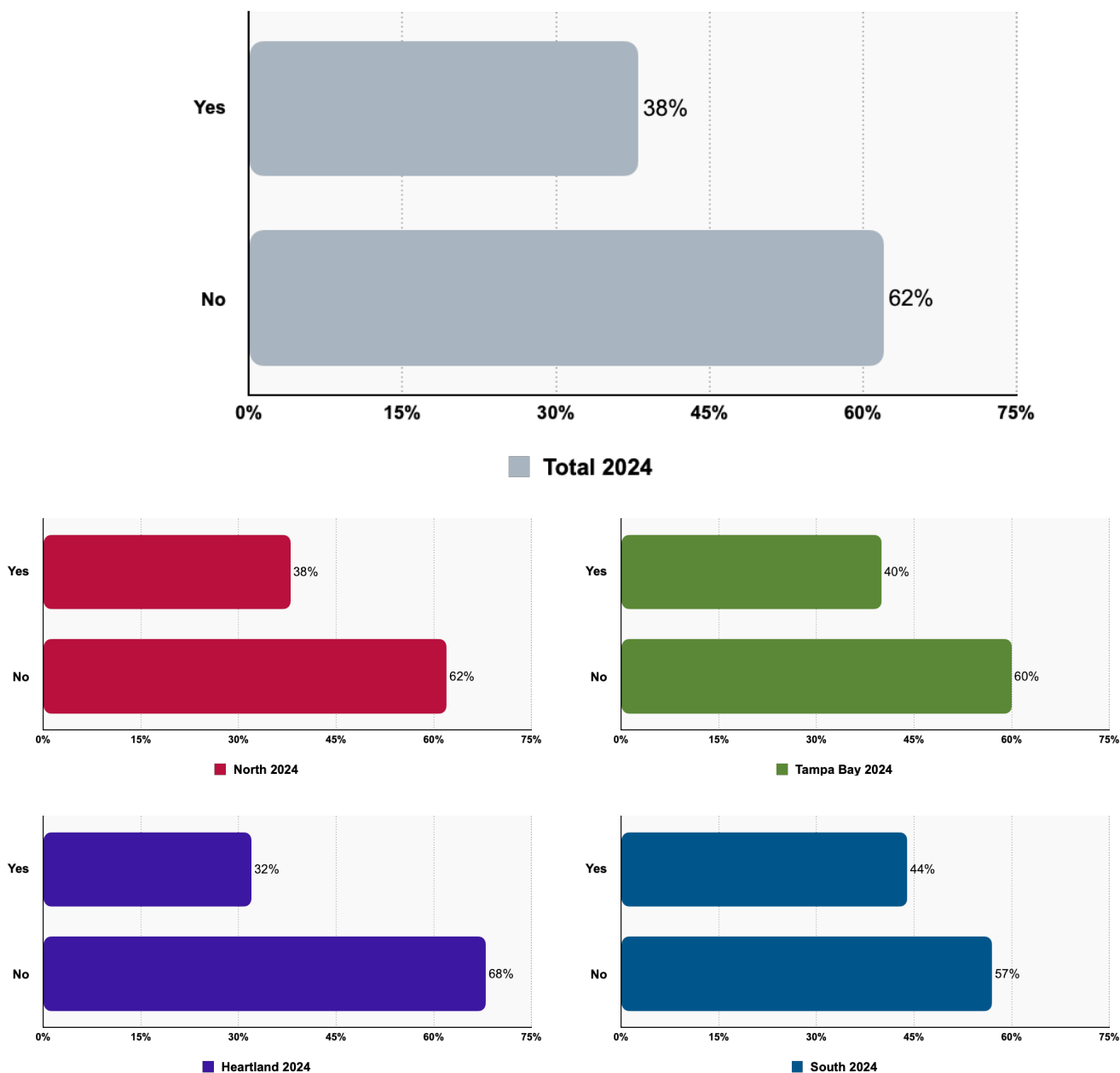
*It is better for the environment to use slow-release fertilizer.*

“Strongly agree” – 24%

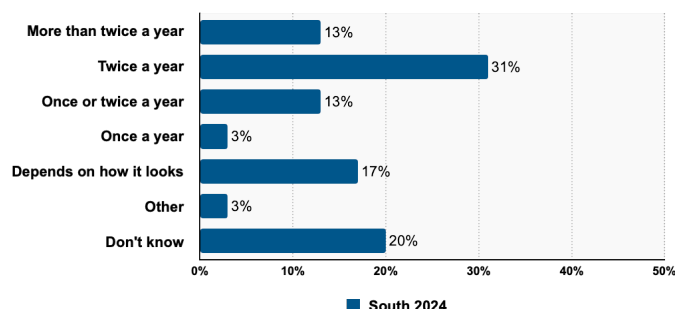
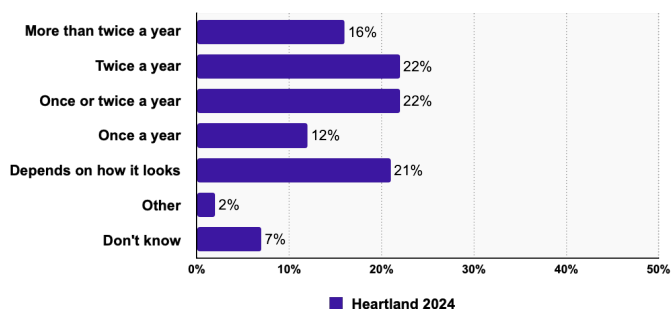
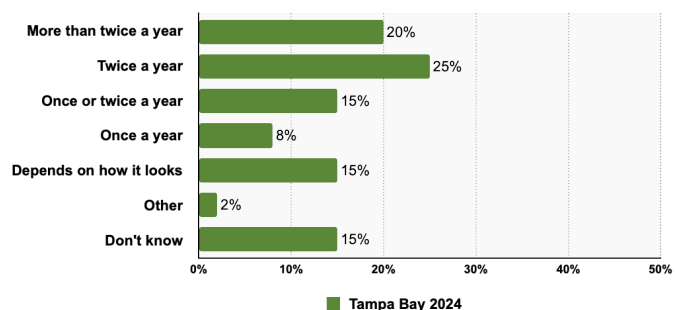
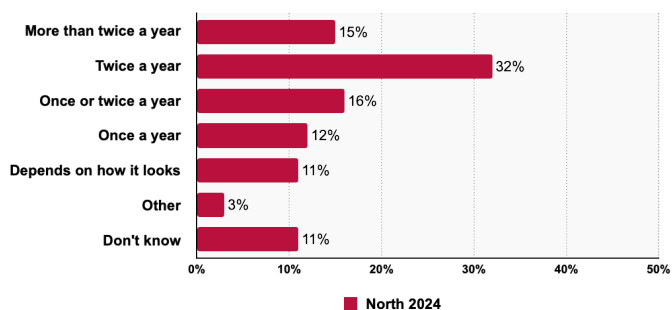
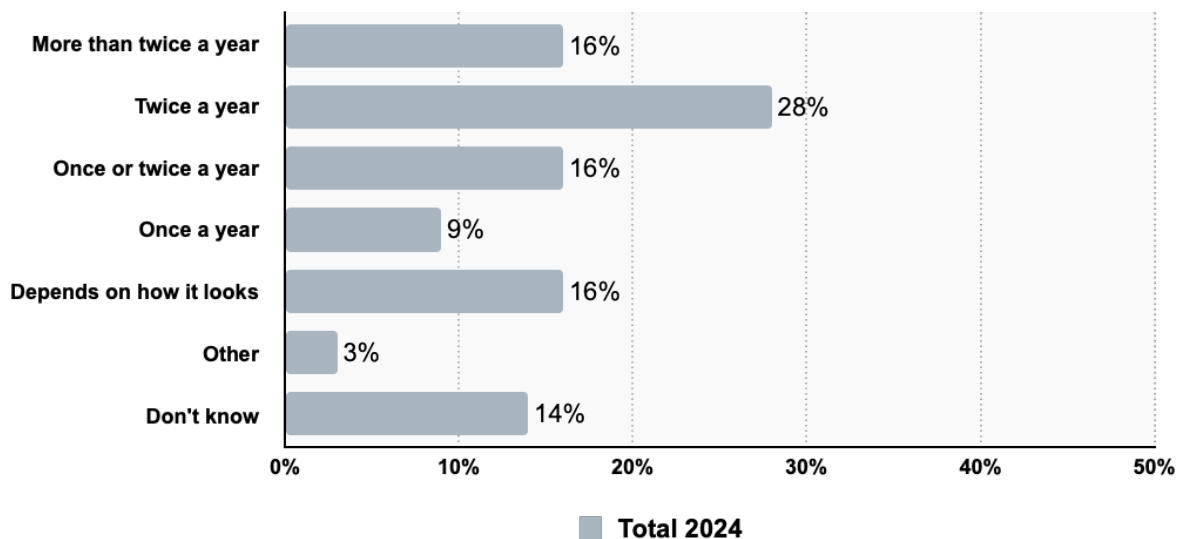
“Somewhat agree” – 31%

Note: 42% of respondents selected “neither agree nor disagree” for this statement.

Does someone in your household or a contractor fertilize your landscape?

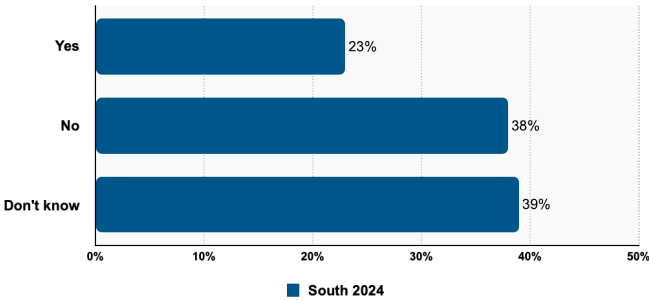
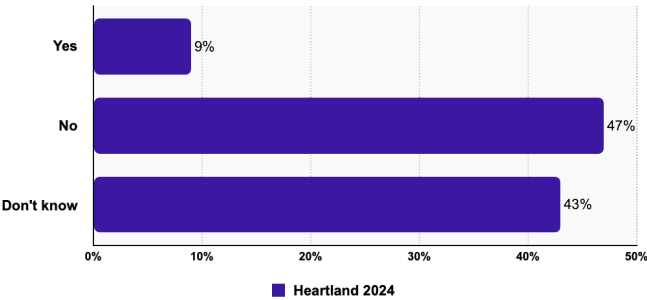
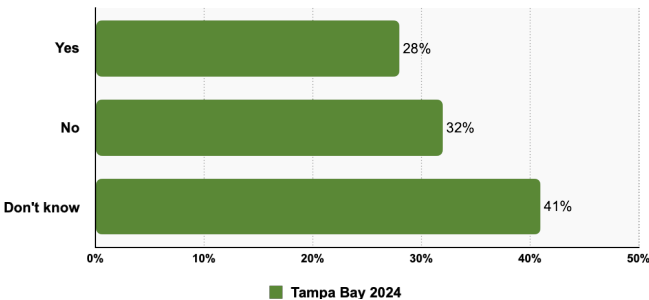
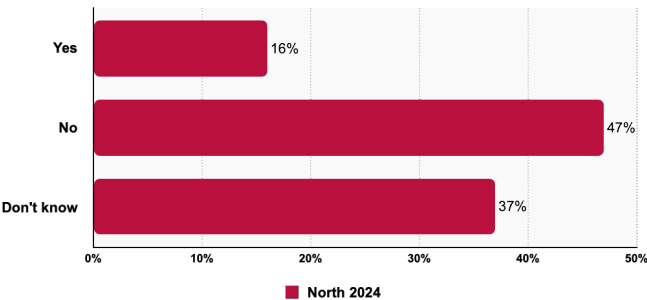
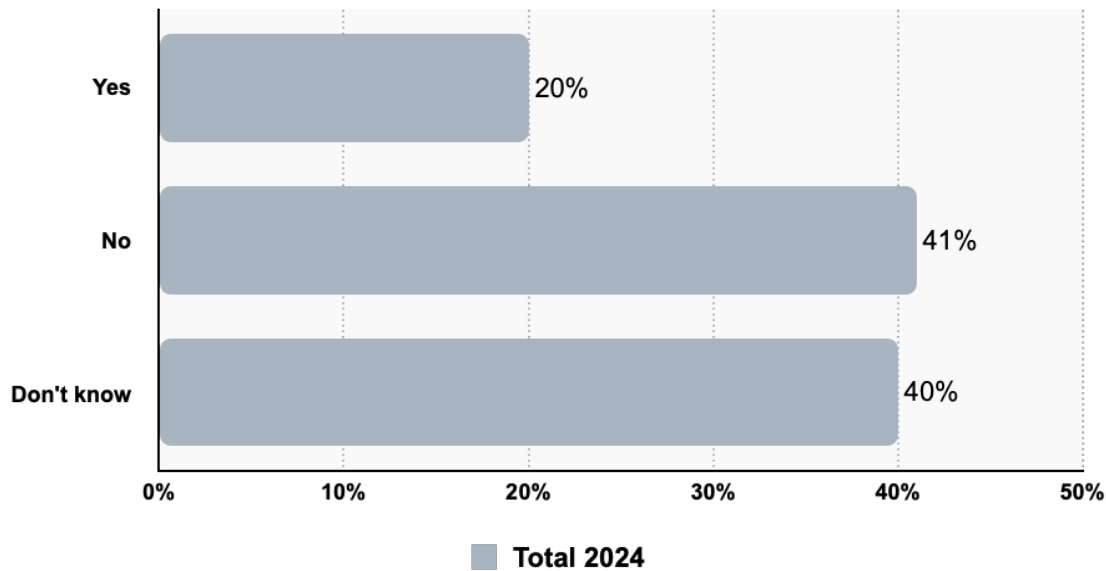


## How often is your landscape fertilized?



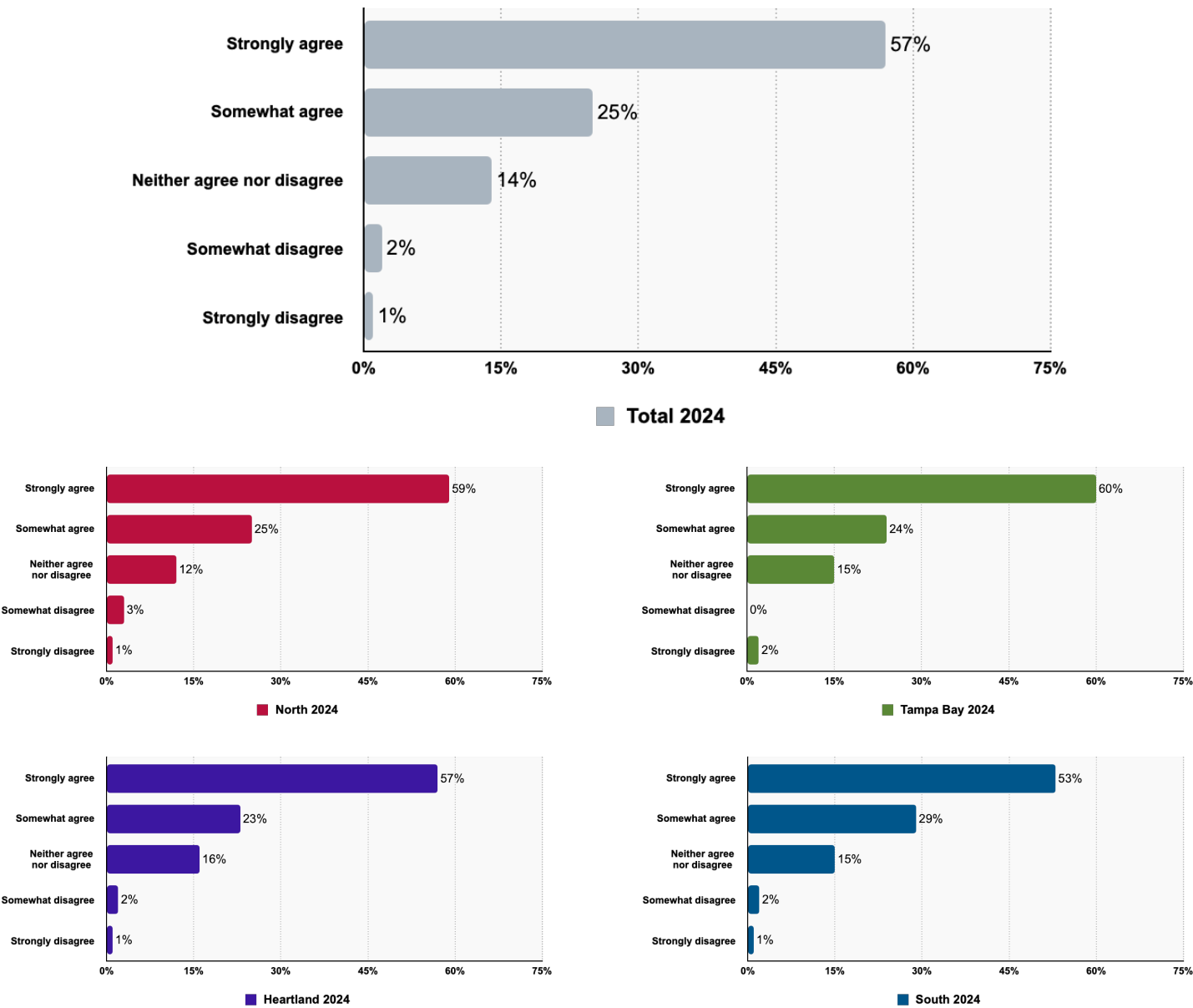


Are there current restrictions on what time of year you’re allowed to fertilize?

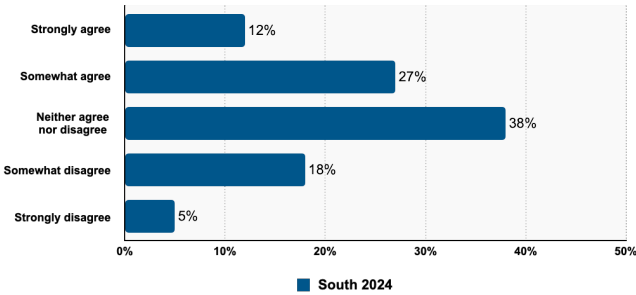
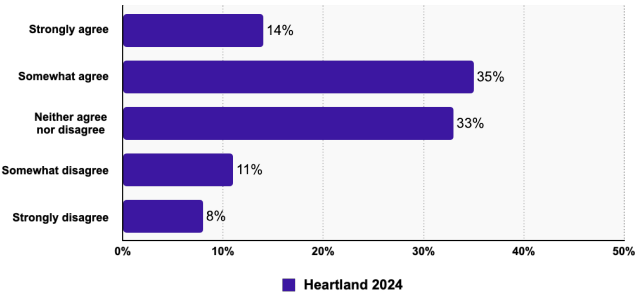
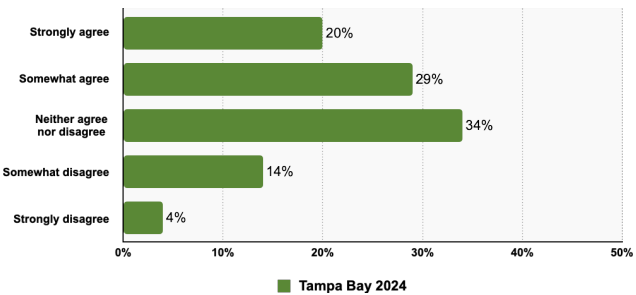
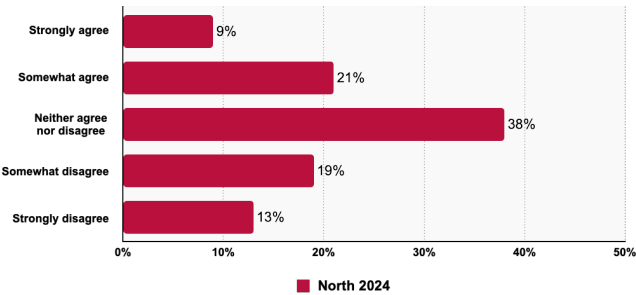
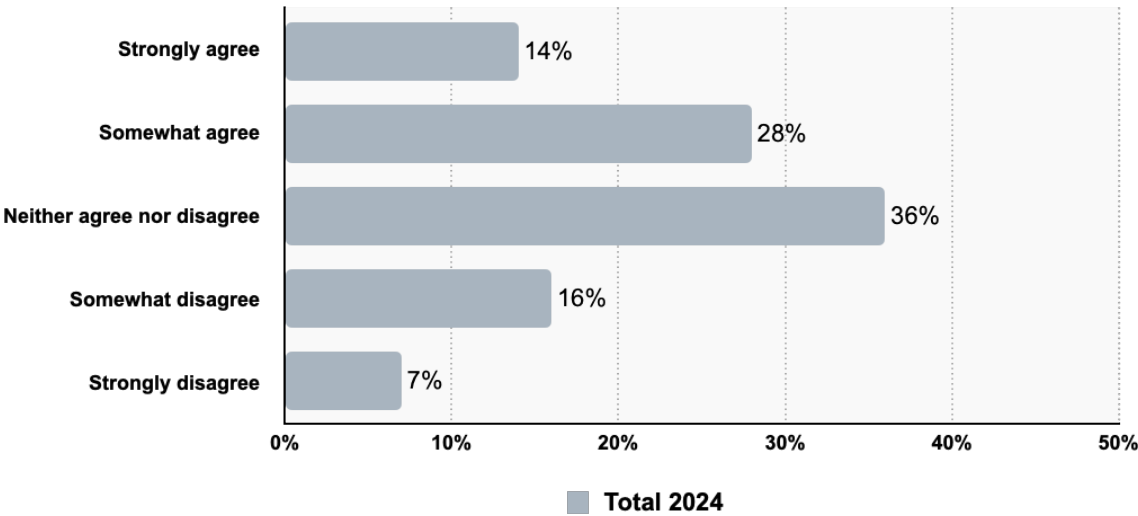


Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

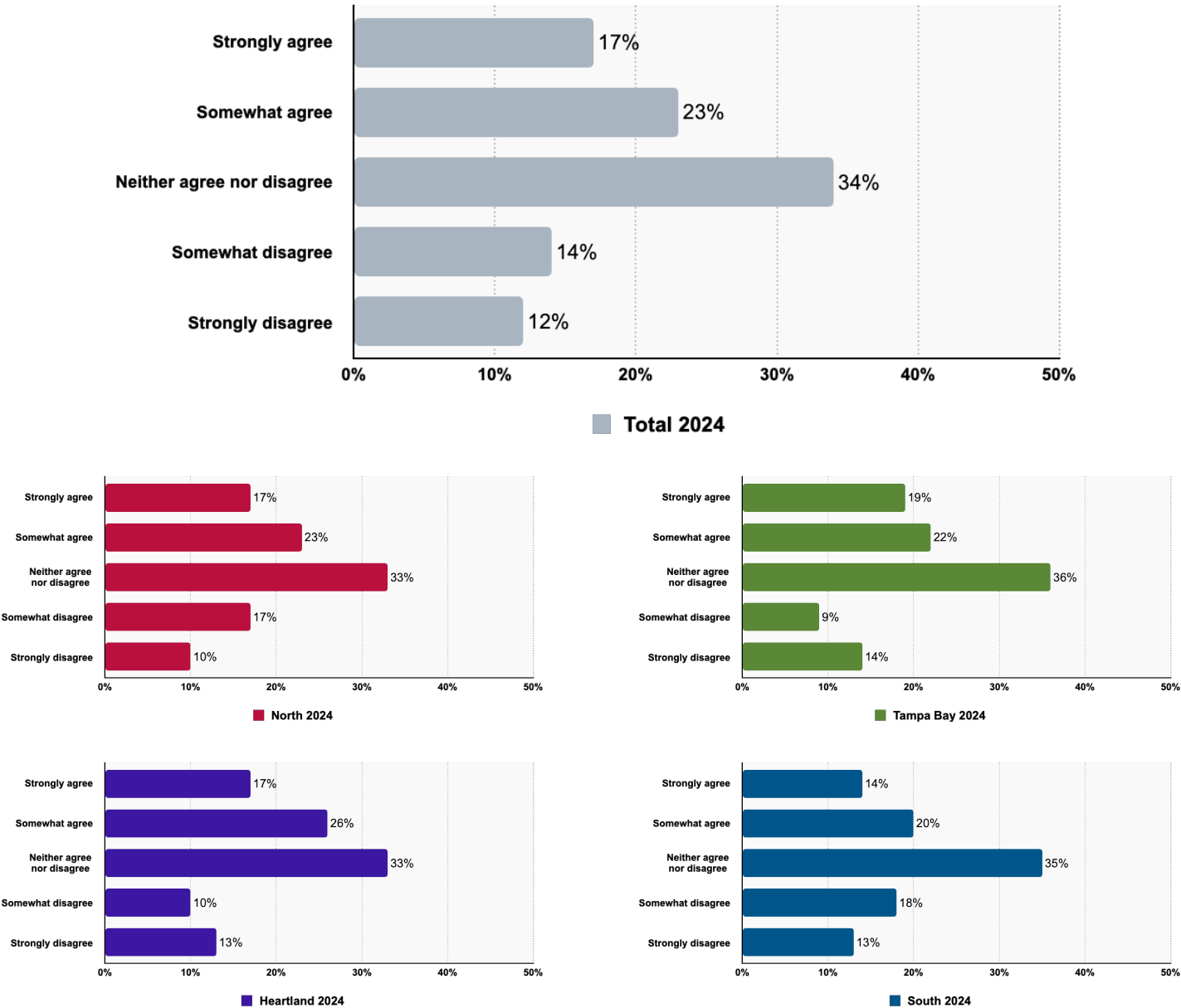
It’s important to know the amount of fertilizer appropriate for my landscape.



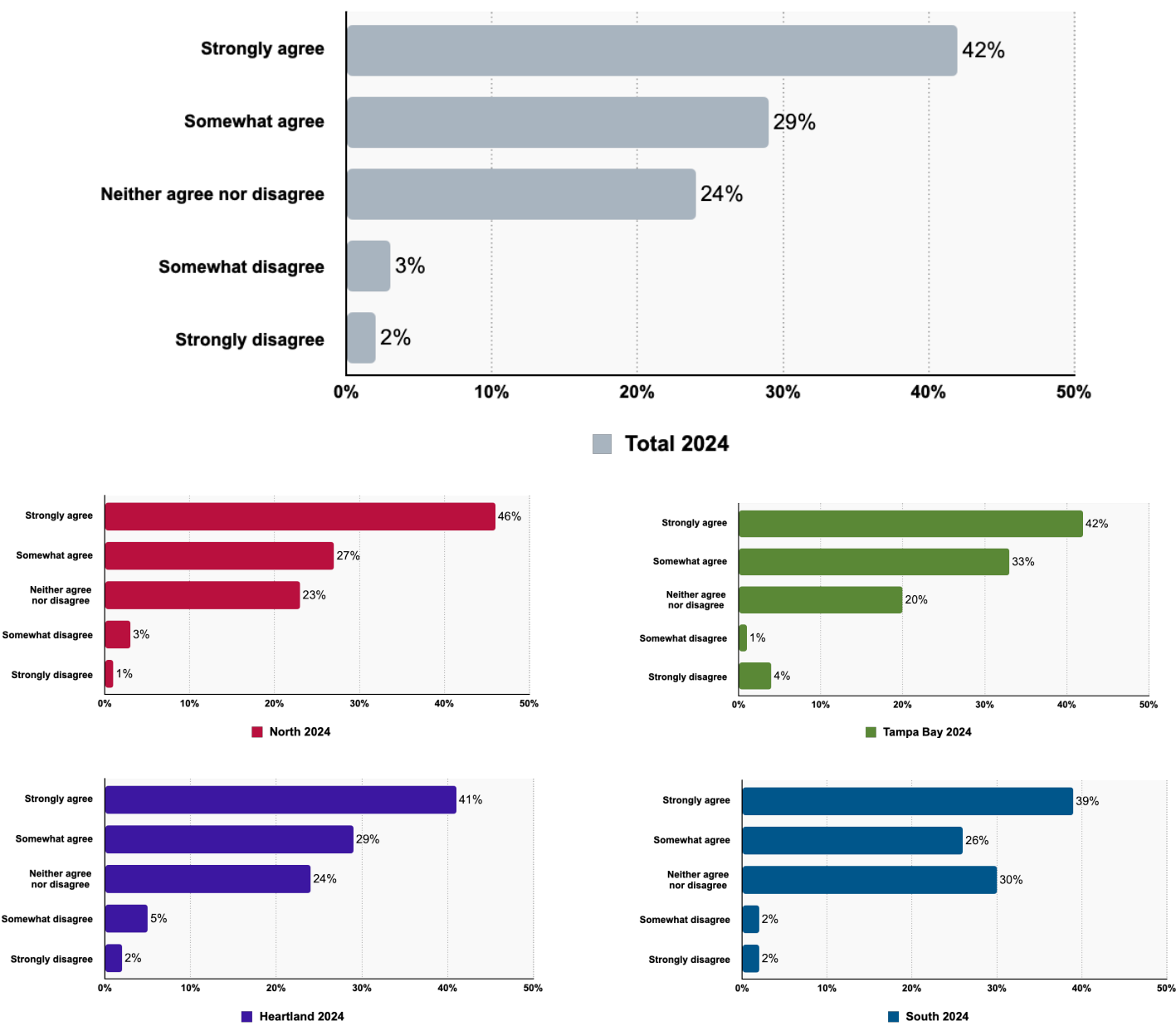
The more I fertilize, the more likely I am to have a greener landscape with less weeds.



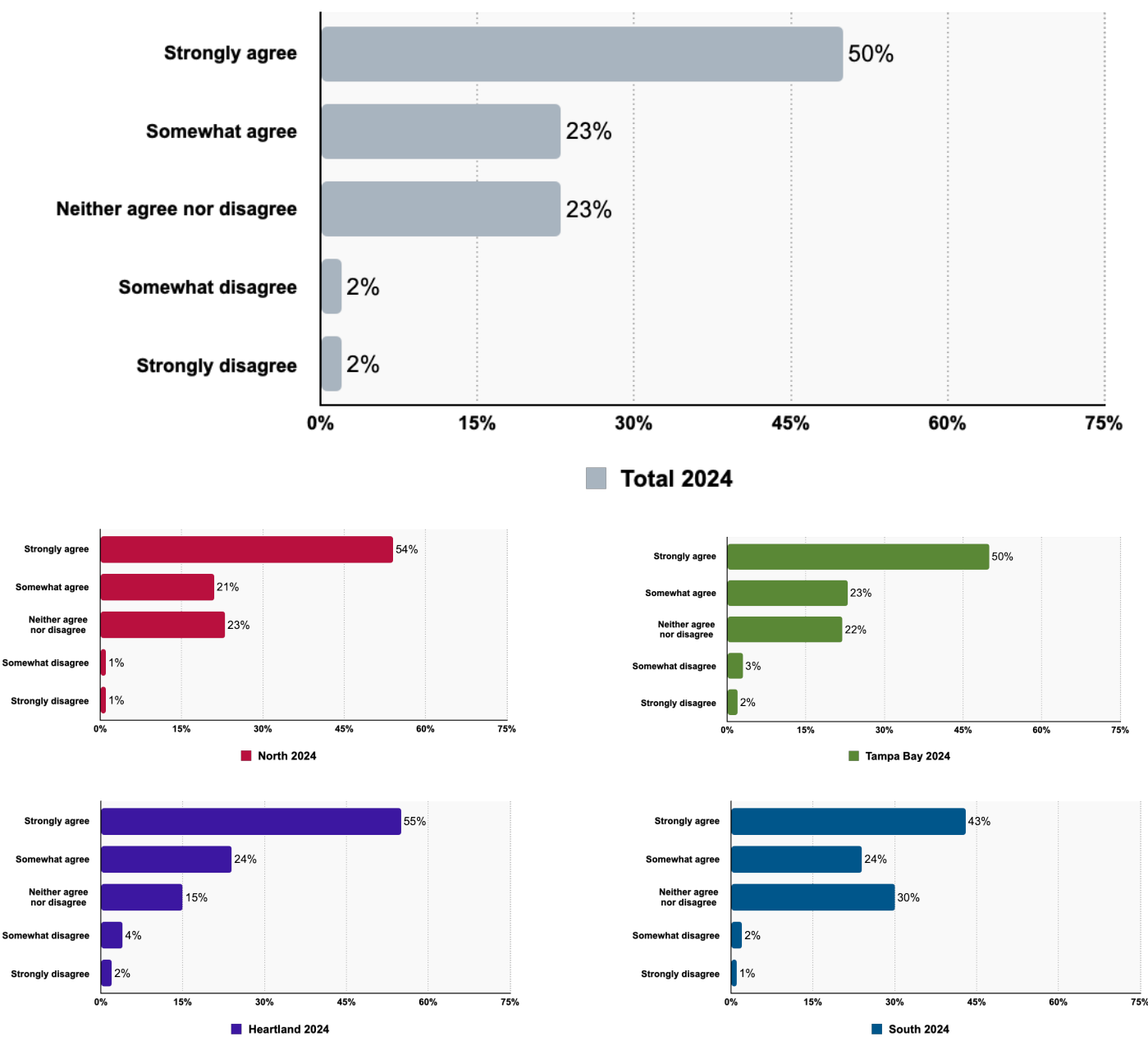
It’s best to fertilize before a heavy rain.



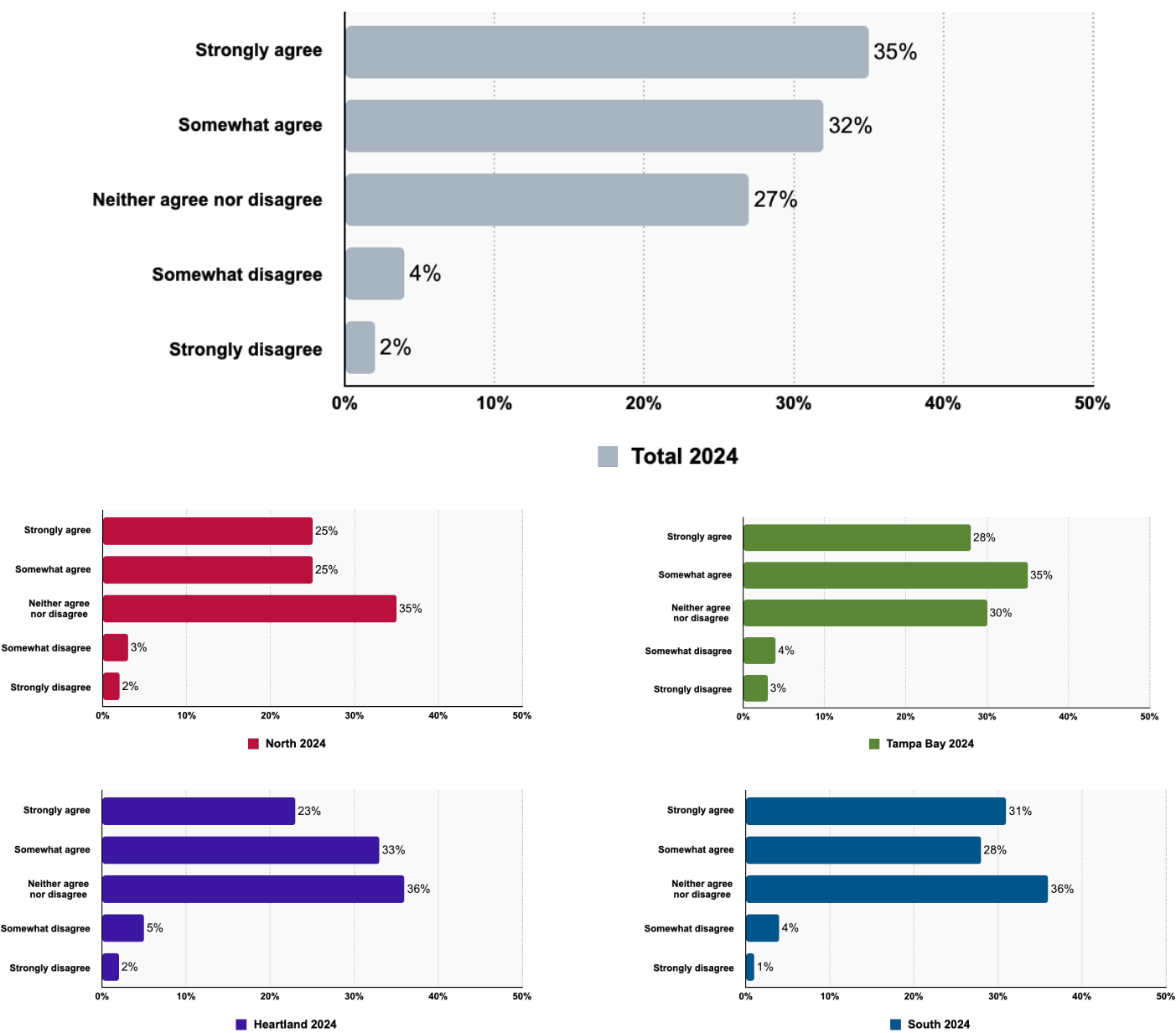
I follow package instructions when determining how often to fertilize.



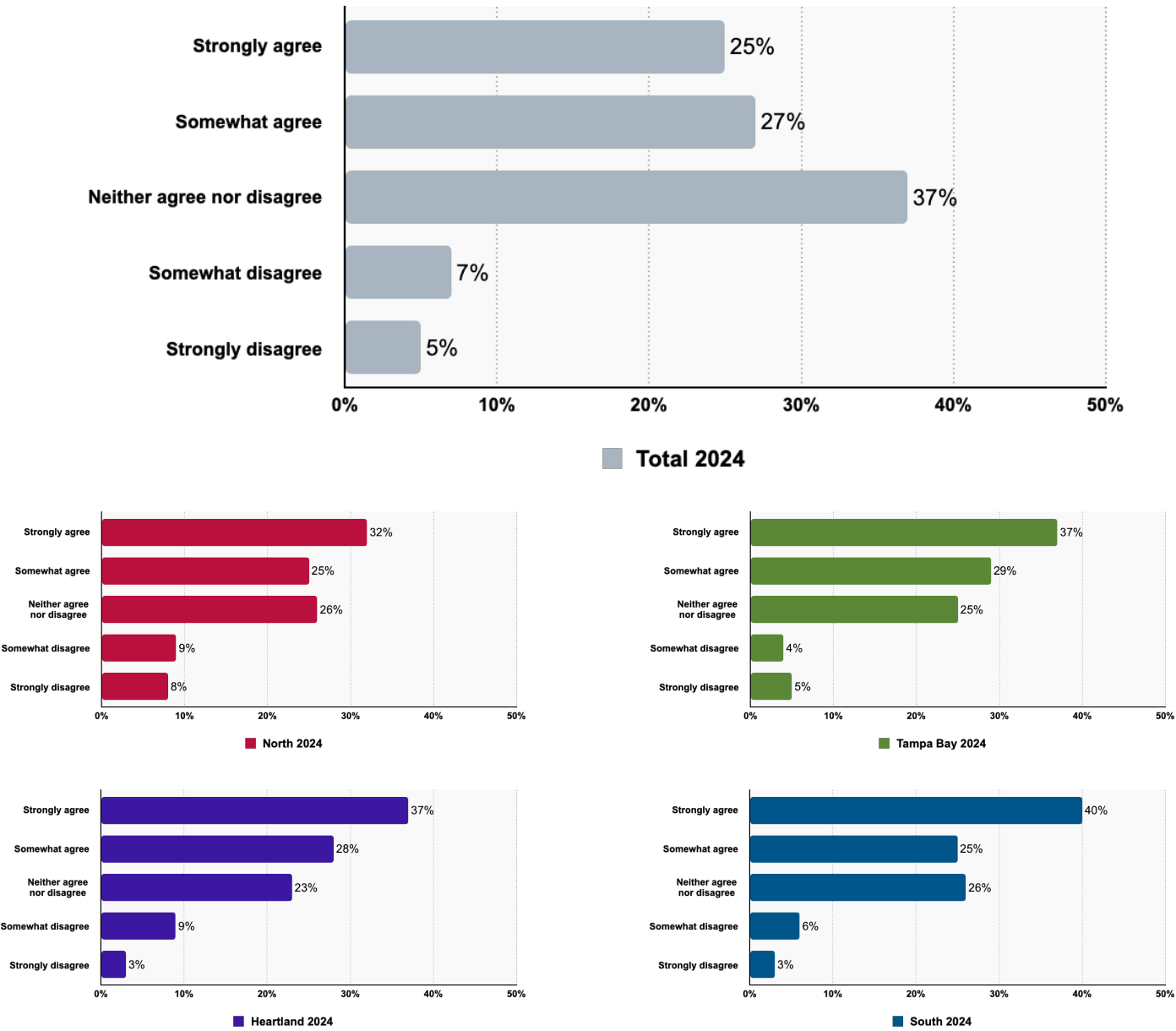
I follow package instructions when determining how much fertilizer to use.



Restrictions on what time of year landscape fertilizing is allowed helps protect water quality.

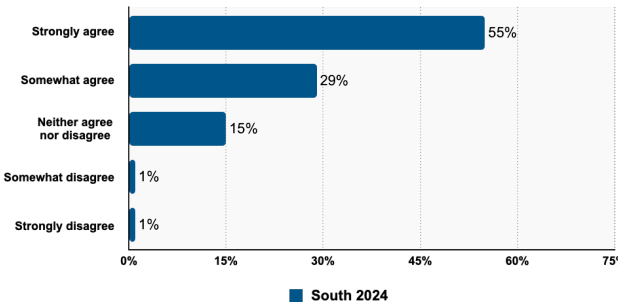
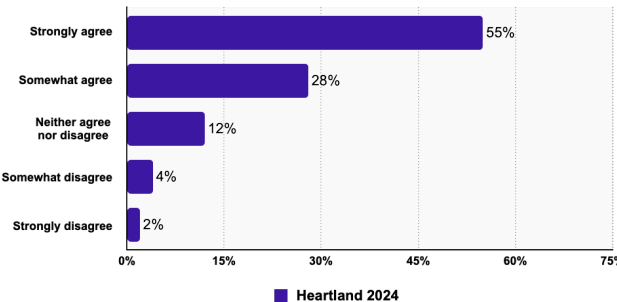
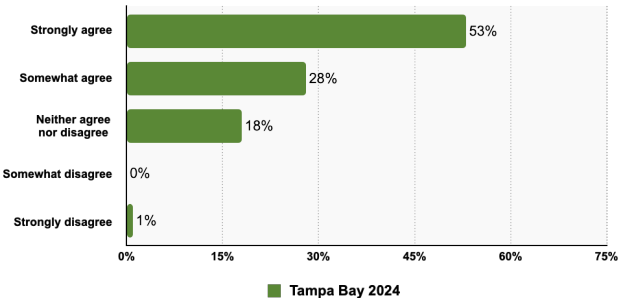
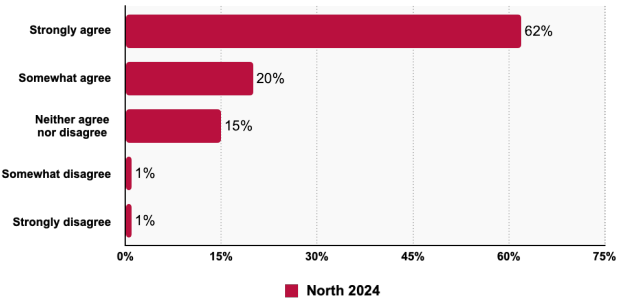
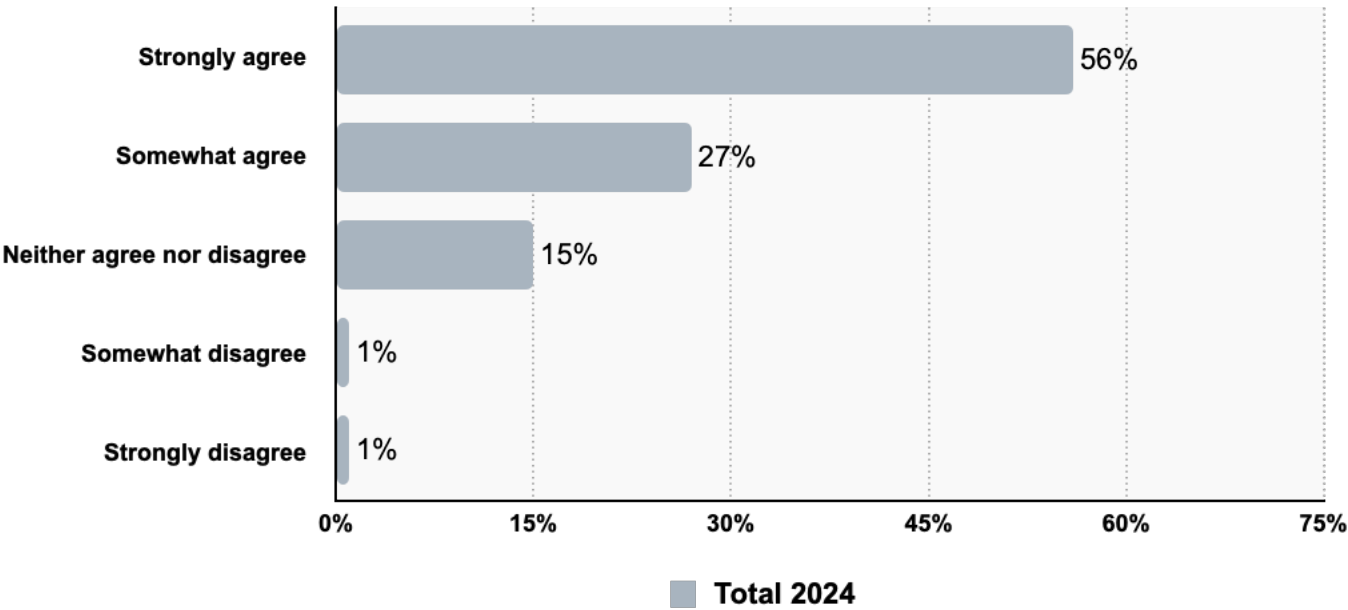


The way I fertilize can affect the health of natural and manmade ponds in my community.

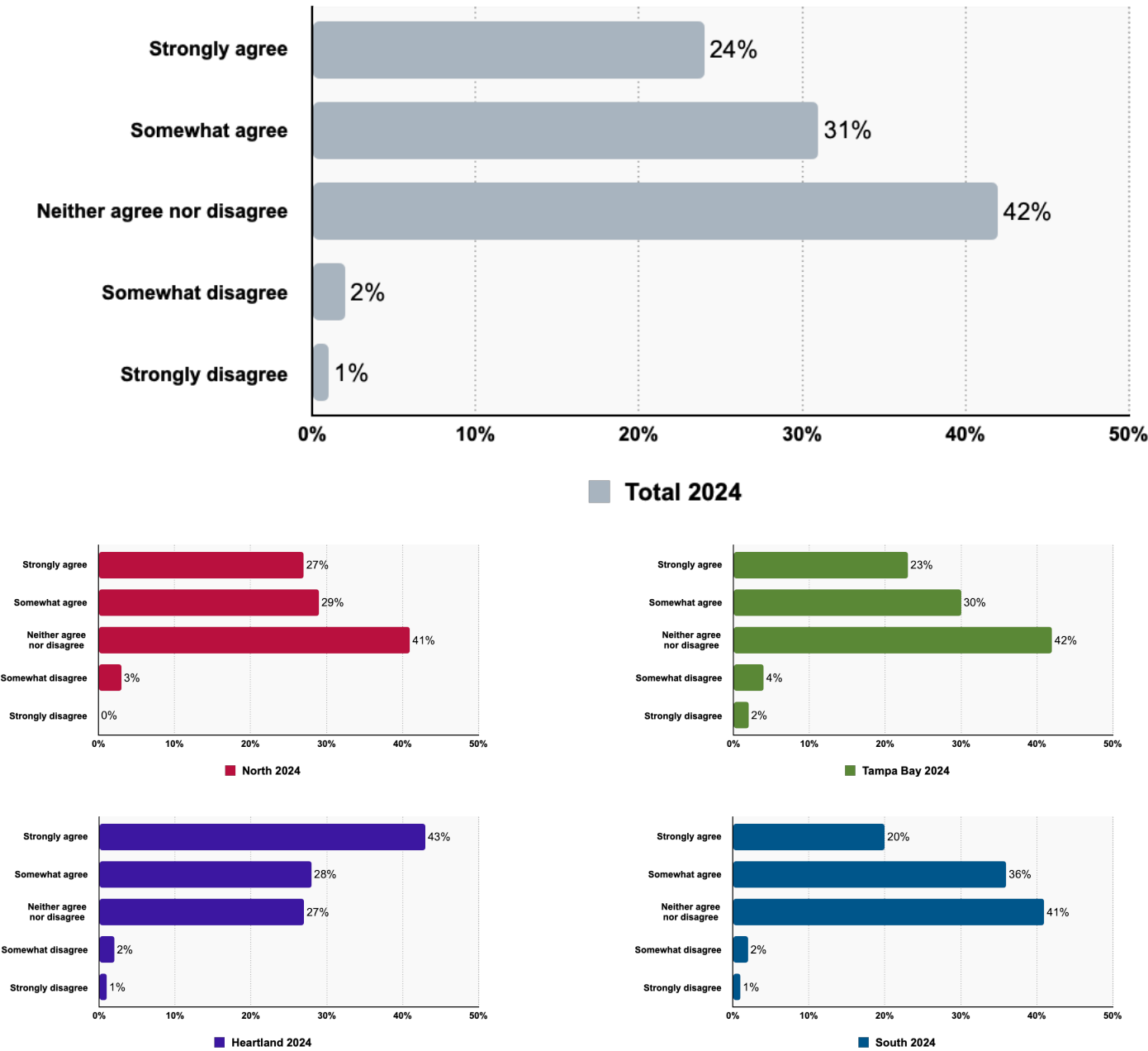




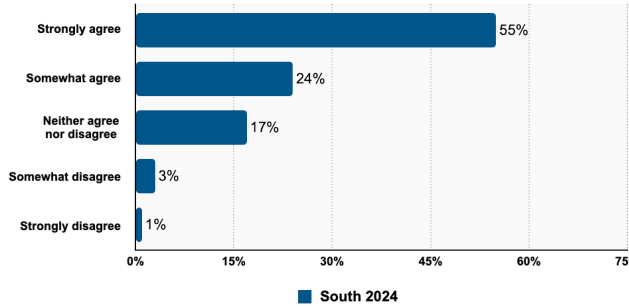
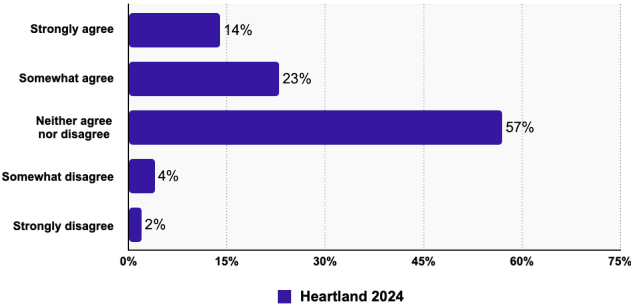
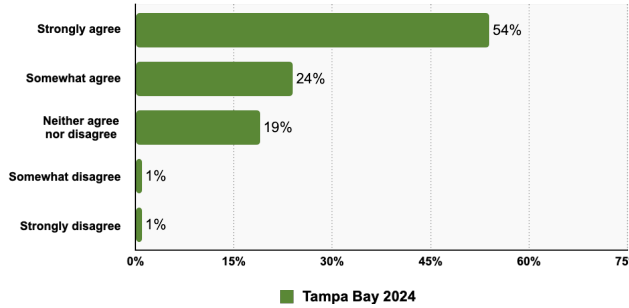
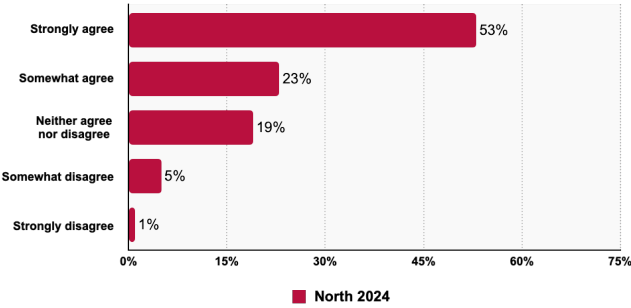
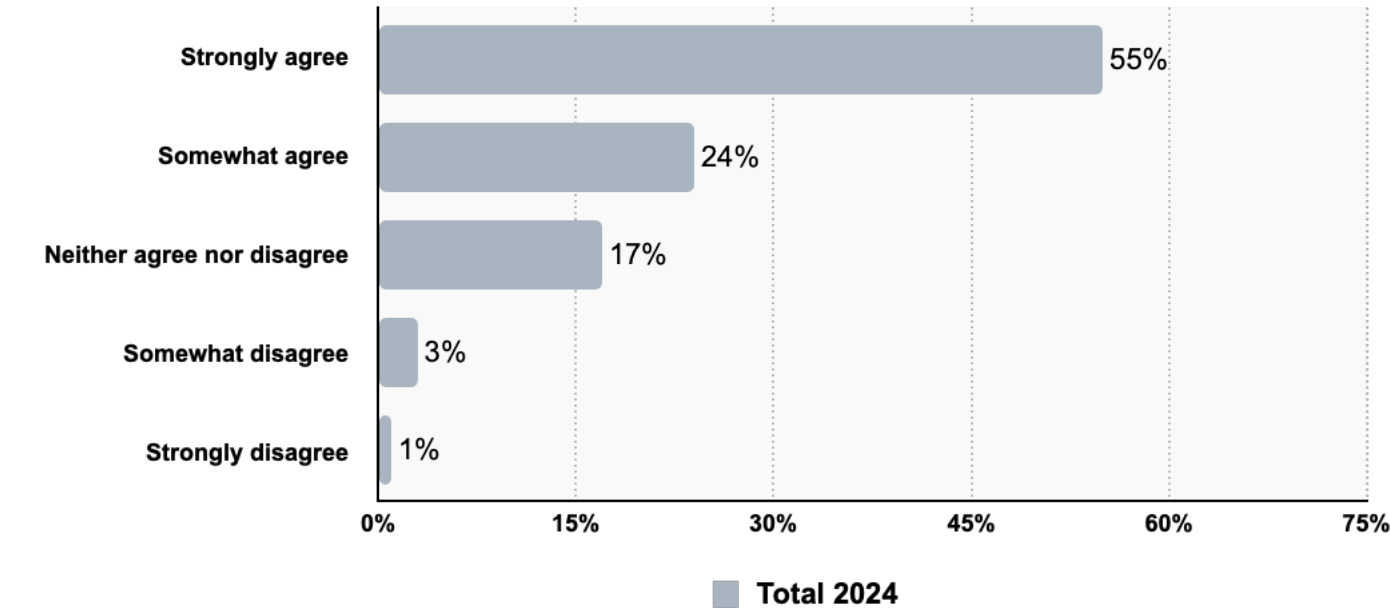
It is important to me to use the right amount of fertilizer that’s appropriate for my landscape.



It is better for the environment to use slow-release fertilizer.



I would change my fertilizer use if I learned that it was harmful to the environment.



## Additional Comparisons

In addition to some comparisons provided earlier in this report, several others are provided below. The common component across all is the length of residency in Florida.

### Where their irrigation water comes from

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
Drinking/potable water from my water utility provider	22%	23%	<b>33%</b>	27%	0
Reclaimed water from my water utility provider	<b>44%</b>	<b>40%</b>	31%	<b>33%</b>	25%
Well or surface water	22%	26%	24%	29%	<b>50%</b>
Don't know	11%	11%	12%	11%	25%

### Knowledge of current local water restrictions

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
Yes	33%	<b>47%</b>	37%	<b>51%</b>	0
No	<b>44%</b>	43%	<b>45%</b>	42%	<b>75%</b>
Don't know	22%	10%	18%	8%	25%

### Mandatory vs voluntary restrictions

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
Mandatory	<b>67%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>72%</b>	0
Voluntary	17%	26%	10%	17%	0
Don't know	17%	4%	3%	11%	0

## Number of days per week allowed for watering

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>1</b>	17%	34%	14%	34%	0
<b>2</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>42%</b>	0
<b>3</b>	17%	8%	17%	15%	0
<b>4</b>	0	4%	7%	2%	0
<b>5</b>	0	2%	0	1%	0
<b>6</b>	17%	0	3%	1%	0
<b>Don't know</b>	0	6%	14%	6%	0

## Trusted information sources on water

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>My water management district</b>	17%	16%	14%	18%	25%
<b>Environmental organizations</b>	0	2%	3%	1%	0
<b>Friends or family members</b>	6%	3%	0	3%	25%
<b>My homeowners' association or neighborhood advisory committee</b>	28%	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	17%	0
<b>My local city officials</b>	<b>33%</b>	13%	22%	13%	0
<b>My local UF/IFAS Extension office</b>	0	3%	0	4%	0
<b>Neighbors or other community members</b>	0	5%	4%	4%	0
<b>My water utility provider</b>	11%	24%	19%	<b>32%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Don't know</b>	6%	5%	8%	8%	0

## Likelihood to follow water restrictions

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Very likely</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>67%</b>	25%
<b>Likely</b>	33%	30%	24%	25%	<b>75%</b>
<b>Neither likely nor unlikely</b>	6%	11%	6%	5%	0
<b>Unlikely</b>	0	3%	5%	1%	0
<b>Very unlikely</b>	0	1%	0	1%	0

## Agreement Statements regarding irrigation system use & length of Florida residency

I control my irrigation system based on my landscape water needs.

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	30%	<b>45%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>42%</b>	33%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>70%</b>	33%	35%	31%	<b>67%</b>
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	0	11%	16%	20%	0
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	11%	2%	5%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	0	0	6%	3%	0

I consider my community's landscape expectations and requirements when determining whether I should irrigate.

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	30%	<b>43%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>36%</b>	33%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>60%</b>	30%	35%	33%	<b>67%</b>
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	10%	19%	22%	22%	0
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	7%	4%	6%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	0	1%	2%	3%	0

**I control my irrigation system to account for recent local rainfall.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	40%	58%	55%	51%	67%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	50%	22%	33%	29%	33%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	0	16%	11%	14%	0
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	4%	2%	3%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	10%	0	0	3%	0

**I would participate in a free irrigation evaluation to learn about how to water my landscape in a way that helps to conserve water.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	40%	32%	33%	31%	0
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	20%	33%	38%	31%	67%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	20%	22%	18%	24%	33%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	10%	6%	2%	8%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	10%	8%	9%	7%	0

**I support local water restrictions.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	44%	46%	49%	50%	50%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	39%	32%	33%	33%	0
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	11%	17%	12%	14%	50%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	6%	4%	5%	3%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	0	1%	1%	1%	0

**Water restrictions do not apply when using well water to irrigate.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	6%	15%	15%	14%	0
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	39%	25%	22%	17%	25%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	11%	27%	27%	29%	50%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	22%	21%	14%	22%	25%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	22%	13%	22%	19%	0

**Water restrictions help to save water.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	28%	49%	45%	47%	25%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	61%	34%	41%	35%	50%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	11%	13%	10%	15%	25%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	4%	4%	2%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	0	1%	0	<1%	0

**I am concerned about the long-term availability of freshwater in my county.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	33%	32%	33%	33%	25%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	39%	27%	35%	32%	25%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	6%	23%	17%	23%	25%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	11%	9%	8%	8%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	11%	9%	8%	3%	25%



## Percentage of monthly water costs for watering landscapes

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>0-20%</b>	61%	56%	60%	66%	50%
<b>21-40%</b>	28%	38%	23%	19%	50%
<b>41-60%</b>	6%	6%	9%	11%	0
<b>61-80%</b>	6%	0	8%	2%	0
<b>81% or above</b>	0	0	0	2%	0

## How they operate their irrigation controller

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Adjust the days of the week my irrigation system runs</b>	22%	40%	51%	46%	25%
<b>Adjust how many minutes each of my irrigation zones run</b>	39%	47%	46%	48%	50%
<b>Manually turn the controller on and off</b>	33%	30%	23%	43%	50%
<b>Run each zone for 1-2 minutes to check for leaks</b>	6%	21%	17%	23%	25%
<b>None of the above</b>	28%	19%	19%	17%	0

## Knowledge of current restrictions on when to fertilize

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
Yes	24%	17%	19%	21%	6%
No	47%	34%	41%	41%	44%
Don't know	29%	49%	40%	38%	50%

## Agreement statements regarding fertilizing & length of Florida residency

It's important to know the amount of fertilizer appropriate for my landscape.

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
Strongly agree	53%	52%	52%	61%	38%
Somewhat agree	29%	32%	28%	23%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	12%	12%	19%	14%	25%
Somewhat disagree	0	2%	1%	2%	6%
Strongly disagree	6%	2%	0	1%	0

The more I fertilize, the more likely I am to have a greener landscape with less weeds.

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
Strongly agree	12%	12%	17%	13%	6%
Somewhat agree	35%	26%	29%	27%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	29%	41%	33%	35%	50%
Somewhat disagree	18%	18%	15%	16%	6%
Strongly disagree	6%	4%	5%	9%	6%

**It's best to fertilize before a heavy rain.**

	<b>Less than one year</b>	<b>1 – 5 years</b>	<b>6 – 10 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	6%	18%	15%	17%	25%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	29%	23%	28%	22%	25%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	35%	32%	35%	34%	38%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	24%	17%	9%	14%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	11%	13%	14%	13%

**I follow package instructions when determining how often to fertilize.**

	<b>Less than one year</b>	<b>1 – 5 years</b>	<b>6 – 10 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	36%	46%	33%	43%	38%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	35%	26%	35%	28%	38%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	18%	23%	29%	23%	25%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	4%	3%	3%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	12%	1%	0	3%	0

**I follow package instructions when determining how much fertilizer to use.**

	<b>Less than one year</b>	<b>1 – 5 years</b>	<b>6 – 10 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	41%	53%	44%	52%	31%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	24%	25%	17%	23%	38%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	24%	20%	36%	21%	31%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	6%	2%	3%	2%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	0	0	2%	0

**Restrictions on what time of year landscape fertilizing is allowed helps protect water quality.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	24%	29%	24%	29%	0
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>35%</b>	28%	29%	<b>35%</b>	31%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	29%	<b>37%</b>	<b>37%</b>	31%	<b>69%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	6%	3%	7%	4%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	4%	3%	1%	0

**The way I fertilize can affect the health of natural and manmade ponds in my community.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	29%	<b>40%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>38%</b>	13%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>41%</b>	28%	29%	26%	25%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	18%	23%	21%	26%	<b>31%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	5%	7%	6%	<b>31%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	12%	4%	7%	5%	0

**It is important to me to use the right amount of fertilizer that's appropriate for my landscape.**

	Less than one year	1 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	Prefer not to answer
<b>Strongly agree</b>	29%	<b>51%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>61%</b>	38%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>47%</b>	35%	28%	23%	19%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	18%	14%	20%	13%	<b>44%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	1%	0	1%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	0	0	2%	0

**It is better for the environment to use slow-release fertilizer.**

	<b>Less than one year</b>	<b>1 – 5 years</b>	<b>6 – 10 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	18%	23%	20%	25%	19%
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	18%	31%	23%	35%	19%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	6%	3%	4%	2%	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	2%	0	1%	0

**I would change my fertilizer use if I learned that it was harmful to the environment.**

	<b>Less than one year</b>	<b>1 – 5 years</b>	<b>6 – 10 years</b>	<b>More than 10 years</b>	<b>Prefer not to answer</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	35%	25%	17%	24%	25%
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	18%	14%	28%	16%	13%
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	3%	1%	4%	6%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	6%	0	1%	<1%	6%

## 2024 Survey Sample Demographics

Demographic questions included the following:

- What category best fits your age?
- To which gender identity do you most identify?
- How would you describe your Florida residency?
- How long have you lived in Florida?
- Which of the following best represents your formal education?
- Which ethnic or race category best fits you?

Nearly half of the sample (48%) reported being between the ages of 35 and 64 and was mostly female (65%). This is in line with previous surveys.

93% of respondents reported being full-time Florida residents, with a majority (69%) living in the state for more than 10 years.

When asked what best represented their formal education, the top three responses across the District were:

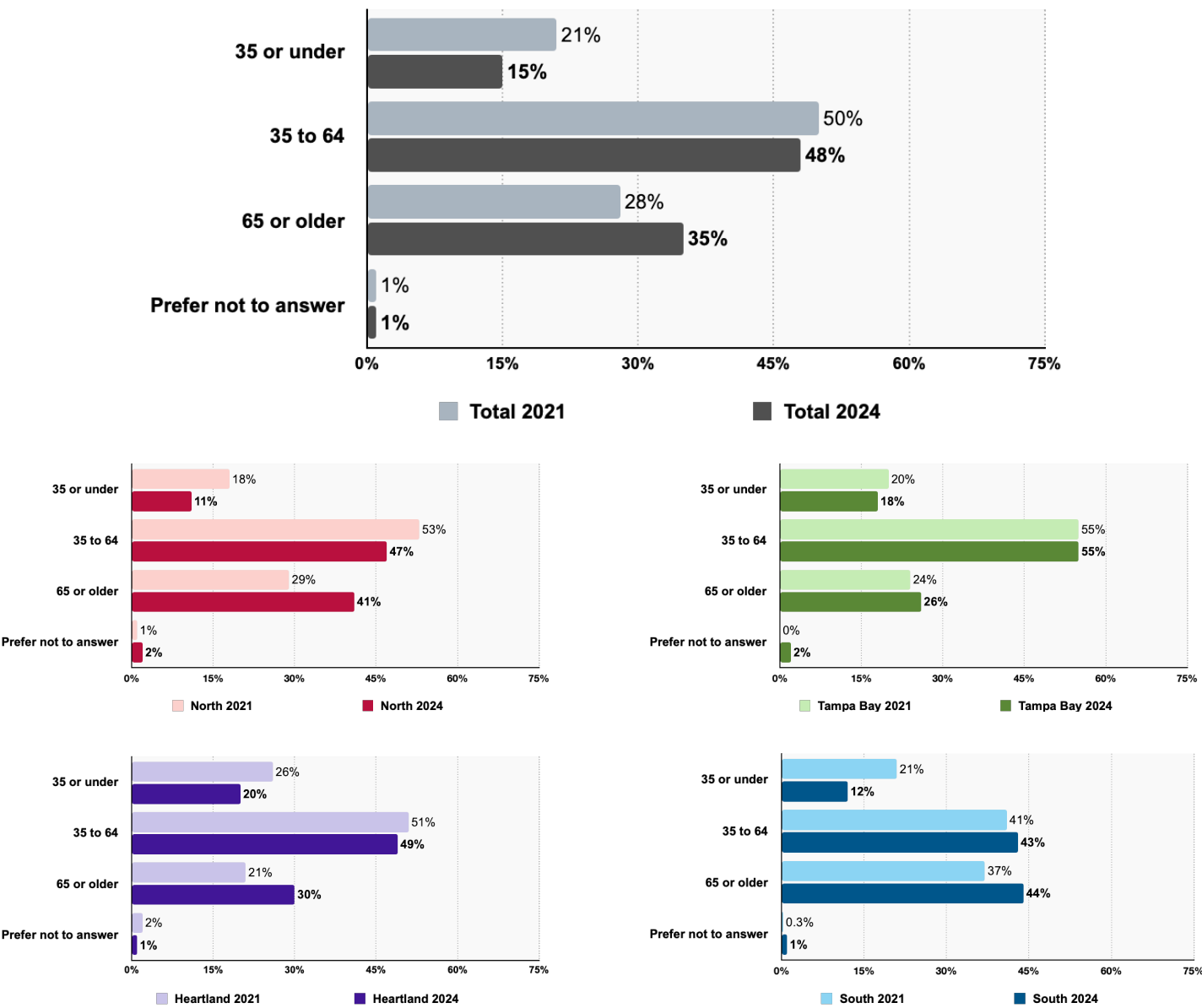
Some college (31%)

High school graduate (26%)

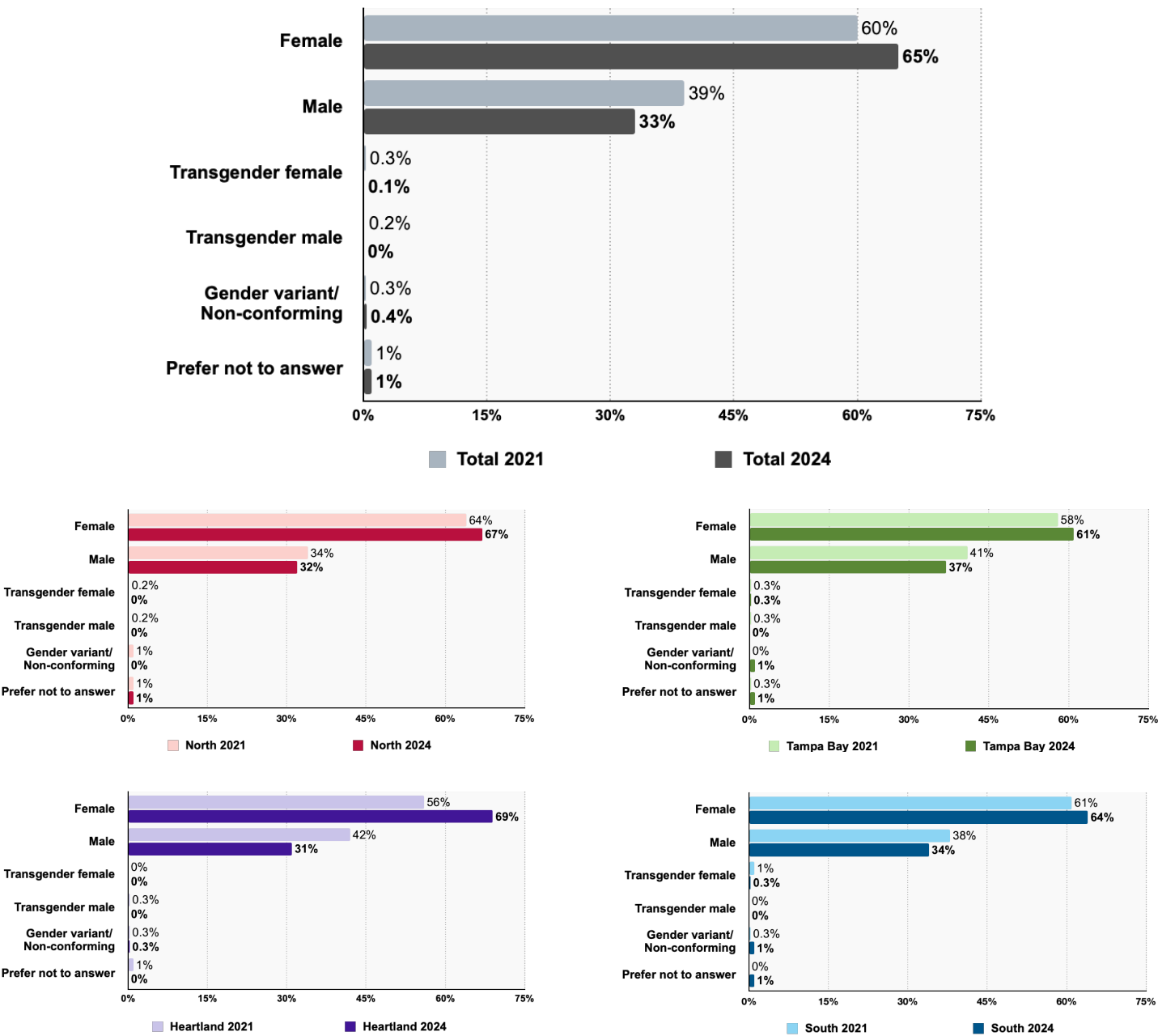
College graduate – 4 years (19%)

The sample was recorded as majority “Anglo/White” (76%), consistent with previous surveys.

Which category best fits your age?

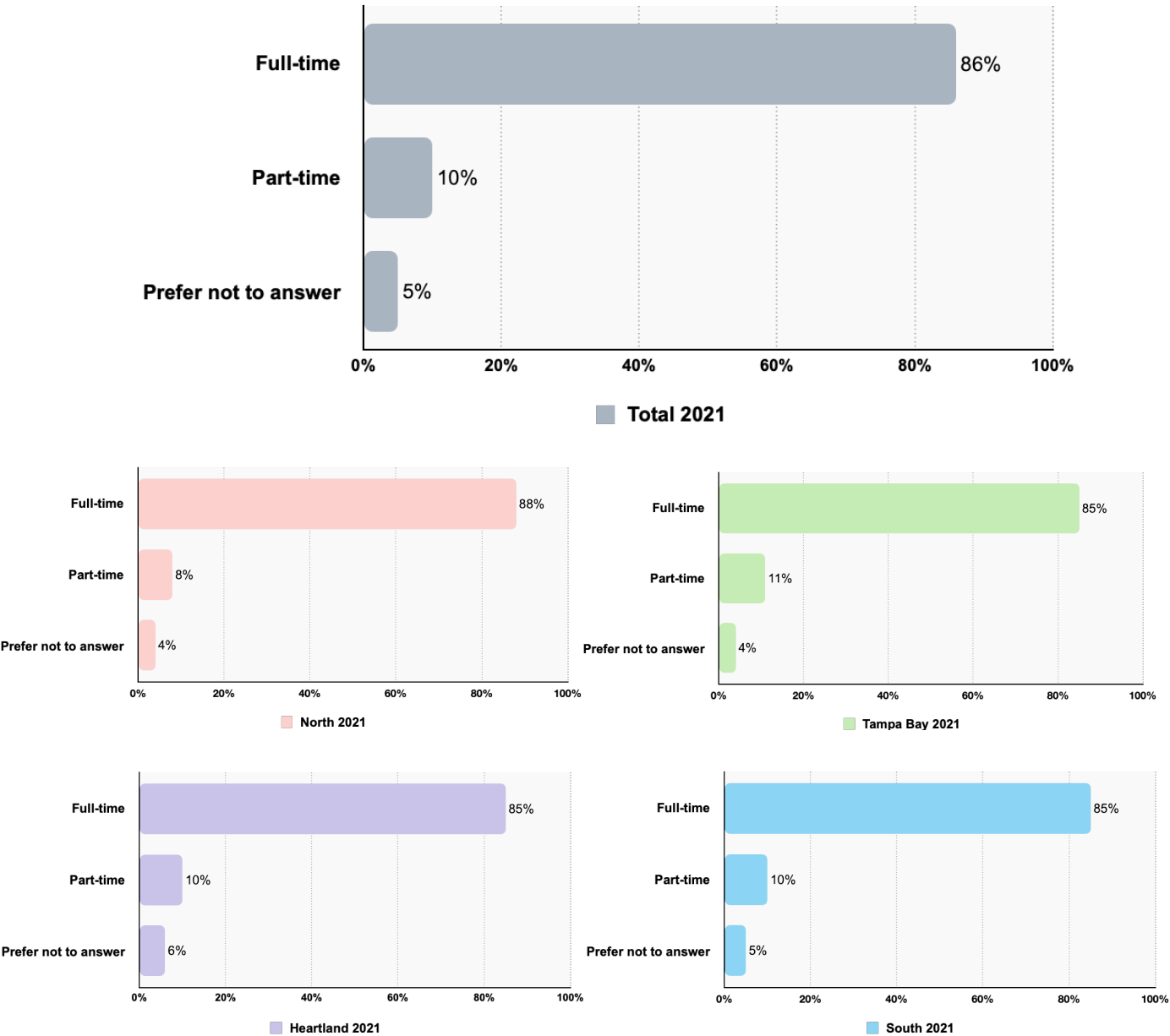


To which gender identity do you most identify?

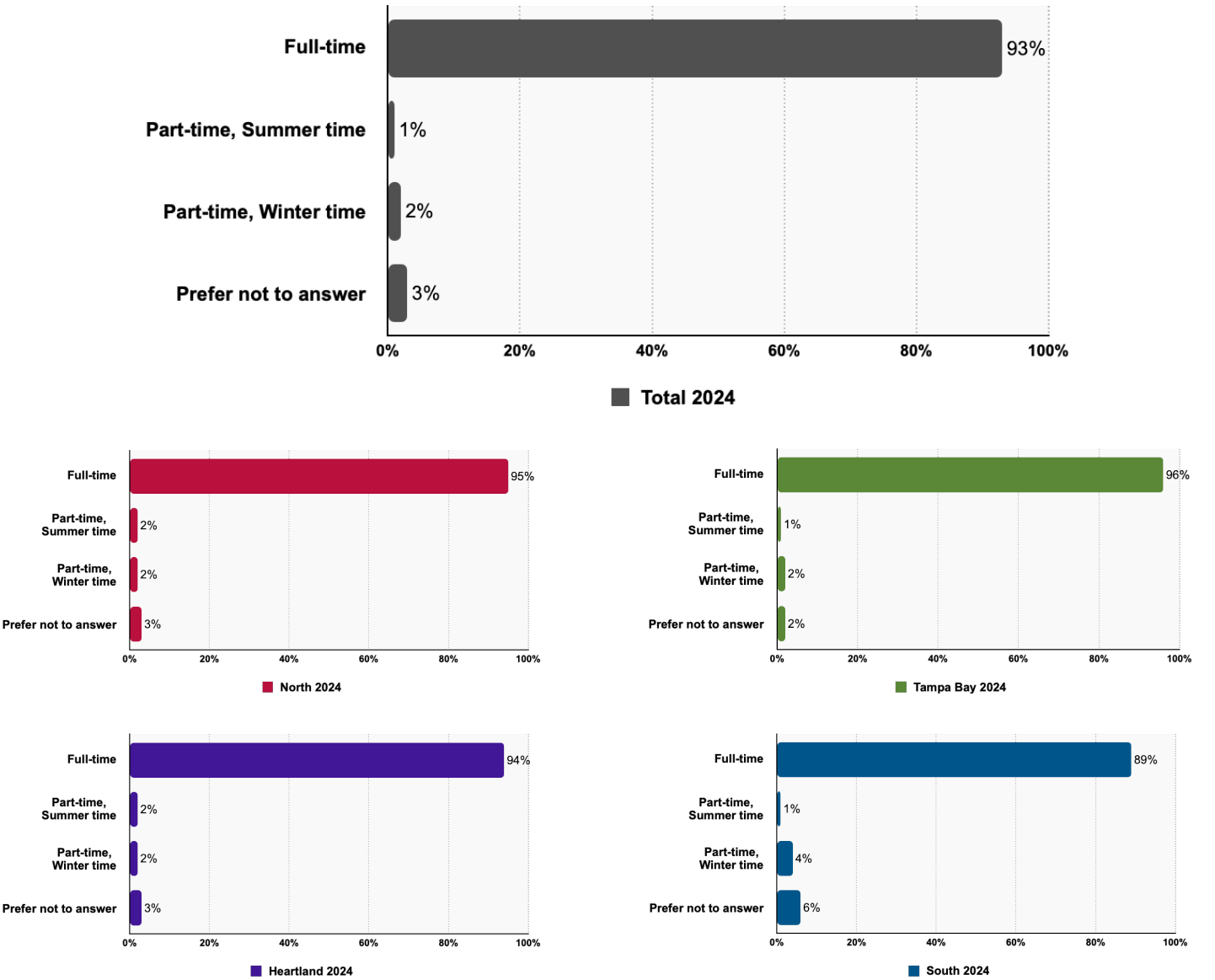




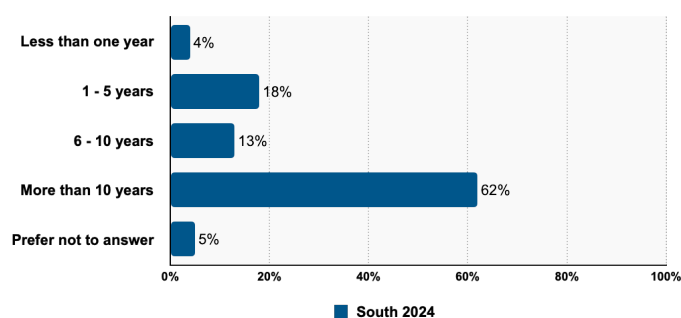
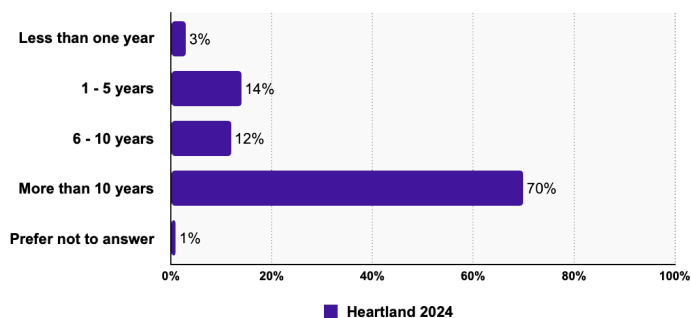
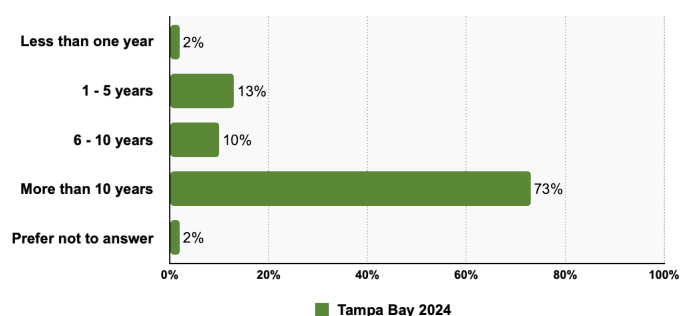
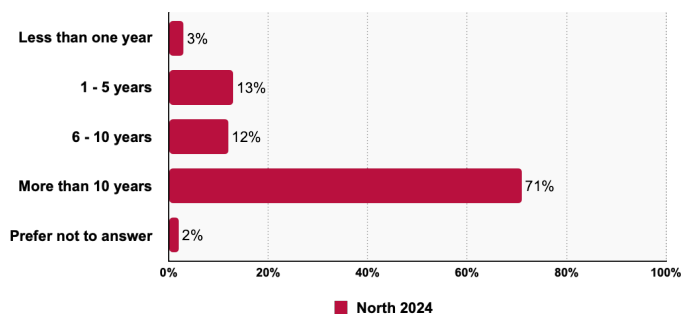
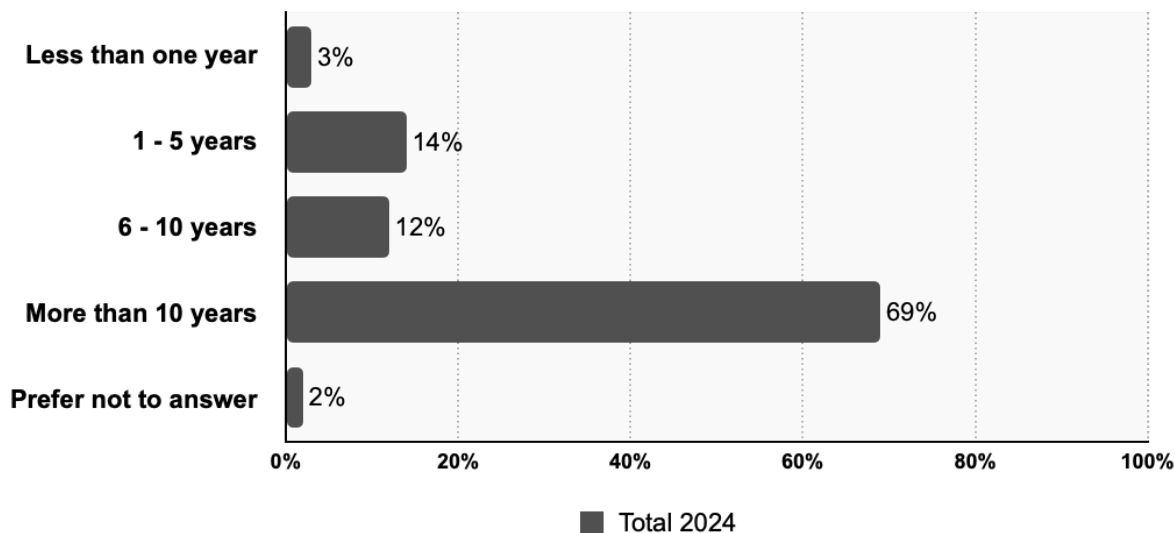
Do you live full-time or part-time in Florida?



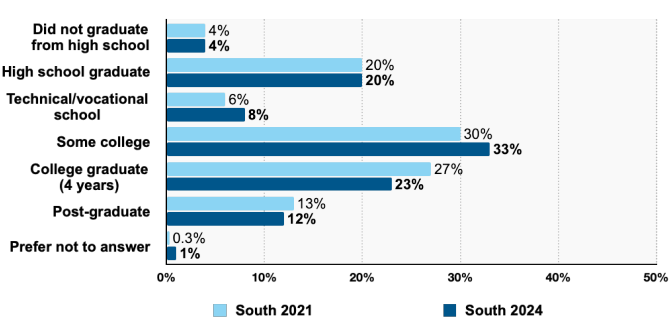
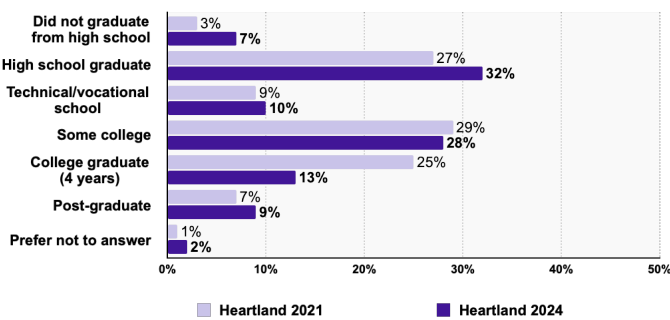
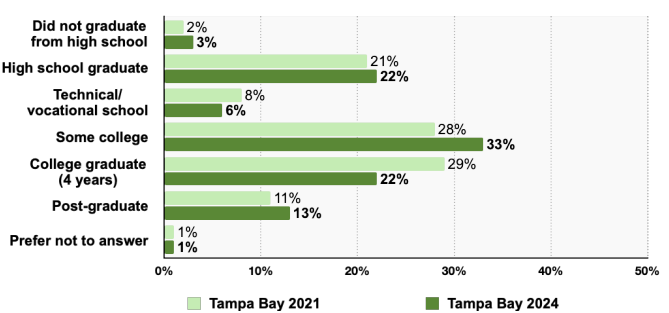
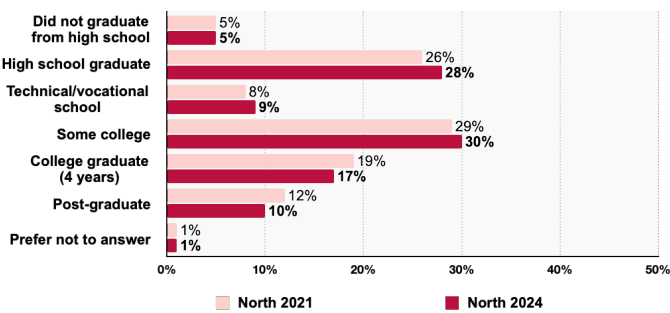
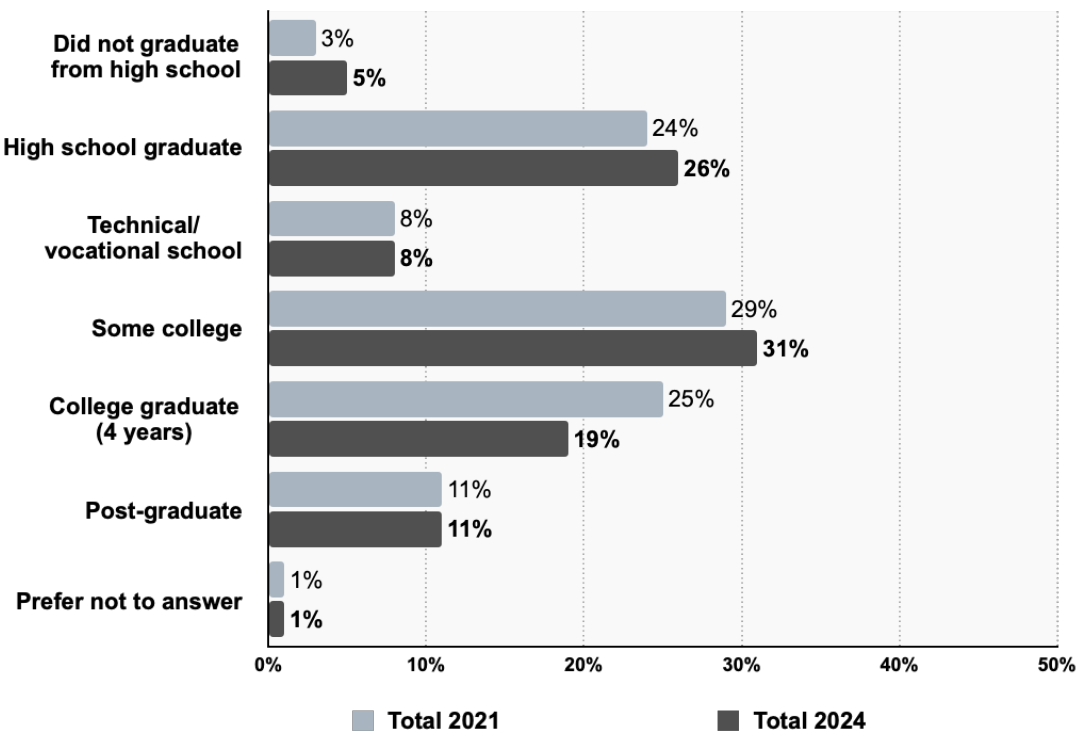
Do you live full-time or part-time in Florida? (*Accounts for slight variation for part-time specificity in 2024 survey*)



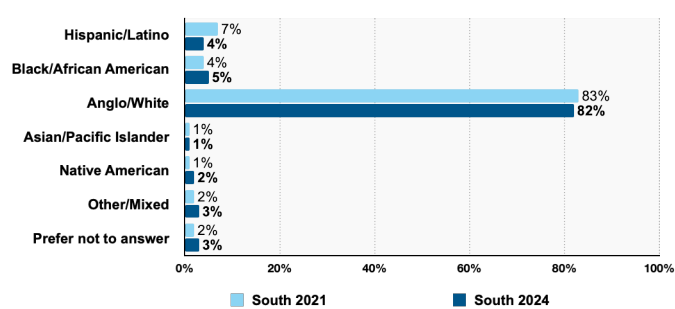
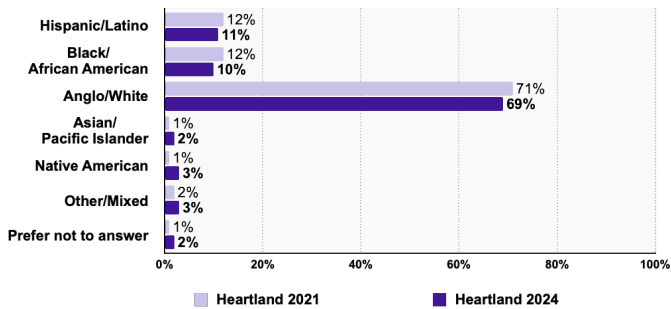
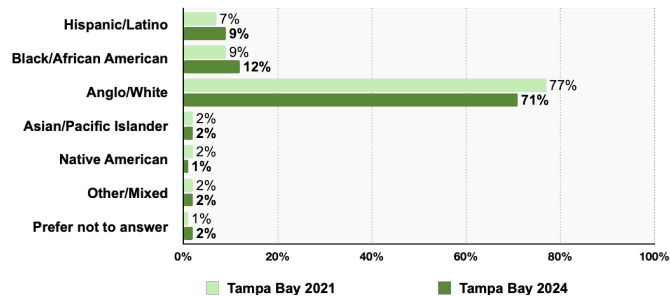
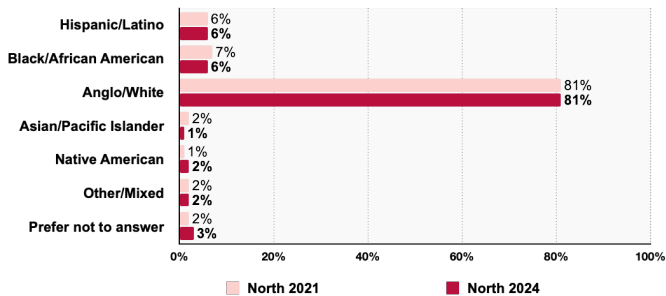
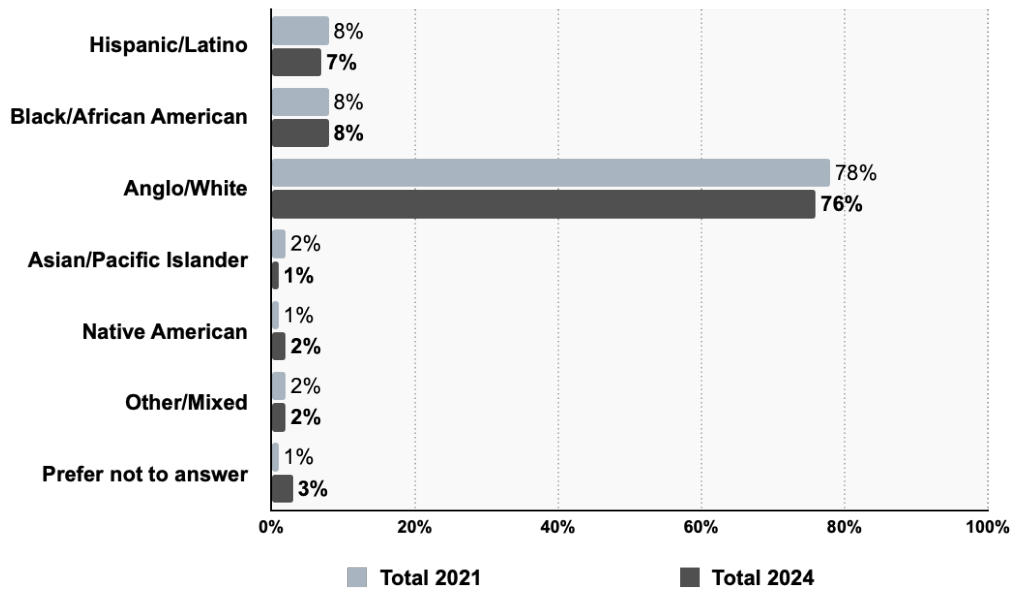
## How long have you lived in Florida? (only 2024)



Which of the following best represents your formal education?



Which ethnic or race category best fits you?



# Appendix I: 2024 Districtwide Perceptions Survey

1. In which county do you live?
  - a. Charlotte
  - b. Citrus
  - c. DeSoto
  - d. Hardee
  - e. Hernando
  - f. Highlands
  - g. Hillsborough
  - h. Lake
  - i. Levy
  - j. Manatee
  - k. Marion
  - l. Pasco
  - m. Pinellas
  - n. Polk
  - o. Sarasota
  - p. Sumter
  - q. Other [TERMINATE]
2. The term “natural water resources” refers to rivers, lakes, springs, wetlands, groundwater, bays and estuaries. How would you rate the health of natural water resources in your region?
  - a. Excellent
  - b. Good
  - c. OK
  - d. Poor
  - e. Terrible
  - f. Don’t know
3. How would you rate the health of the following water resources in your region?
  - a. Rivers
  - b. Lakes
  - c. Springs
  - d. Wetlands and swamps
  - e. Groundwater from the aquifer
  - f. Bays and estuaries
4. Have you ever heard of the Southwest Florida Water Management District, sometimes called Swiftmud?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No [Skip to Q8]
  - c. Not sure [Skip to Q8]
5. Select the tasks that you believe are the Southwest Florida Water Management District’s responsibility. Select all that apply.
  - a. Managing flood control structures
  - b. Issuing permits for large quantities of water
  - c. Managing public lands
  - d. Protecting water quality
  - e. Restoring the Everglades
  - f. Issuing permits for well construction
  - g. Providing programs that help conserve water
  - h. Issuing water restrictions
  - i. Issuing permits for stormwater systems

- j. Protecting the springs
  - k. None of the above
6. Based on what you may know or have heard, how would you rate Swiftmud or the Southwest Florida Water Management District?
- a. Excellent
  - b. Good
  - c. OK
  - d. Poor
  - e. Terrible
  - f. Don't know
7. Is the Southwest Florida Water Management District (Swiftmud) doing too much, enough or too little to protect the following water resources:
- a. Rivers
  - b. Lakes
  - c. Springs
  - d. Wetlands and swamps
  - e. Groundwater from the aquifer
  - f. Bays and estuaries
8. Where do you get your news? Choose your top 3 sources.
- a. TV news
  - b. Newspaper – print
  - c. Newspaper - online
  - d. Radio
  - e. Internet search engines (Google, Bing, etc.)
  - f. City/county/state government websites
  - g. Other websites, blogs, etc.
  - h. Social media (Facebook, X, Instagram, etc.)
  - i. Magazines
  - j. Friends/family/word of mouth
  - k. Neighborhood newsletters/blogs/forums
  - l. Other [TEXT BOX]
9. How often do you use the following social media?
- a. Facebook
  - b. X (formerly Twitter)
  - c. YouTube
  - d. Pinterest
  - e. Snapchat
  - f. Tumblr
  - g. Instagram
  - h. LinkedIn
  - i. Nextdoor

10. How trustworthy are the following sources of information about water resources?
- a. Traditional media such as radio, TV, newspapers
  - b. Social media such as Facebook and Instagram
  - c. Southwest Florida Water Management District
  - d. Florida Department of Environmental Protection
  - e. Local environmental group
  - f. Local utility company
  - g. Universities
  - h. US Geological Survey

**These next questions are to learn more about your landscape irrigation opinions and practices.**

11. Do you have an automatic sprinkler or irrigation system at your home?
- a. Yes, I have an irrigation system at my home
  - b. No, I do not have an irrigation system at my home [SKIP TO Q25]
  - c. No, I live at a condo/apartment complex [SKIP TO Q25]
  - d. Don't know [SKIP TO Q25]
12. Who controls how often your landscape's irrigation system runs?
- a. I or a family member controls my irrigation system
  - b. I hire a contractor who controls my irrigation system
  - c. My HOA/property owner controls my irrigation system
  - d. Don't know
13. Where does the water used to irrigate your landscape come from?
- a. Drinking/potable water from my water utility provider
  - b. Reclaimed water from my water utility provider
  - c. Well or surface water
  - d. Don't know
14. What type of grass is growing in your landscape? Select all that apply.
- a. St. Augustine
  - b. Bahia
  - c. Centipede
  - d. Bermuda
  - e. Zoysia
  - f. Other [TEXT BOX]
  - g. Don't know
15. Do you have a working rain sensor, soil moisture sensor or smart controller that turns off the irrigation when it is not needed?
- a. Yes I have a working rain sensor
  - b. Yes, but I don't believe it's working
  - c. No
  - d. No, but I turn the irrigation timer off manually when it rains
  - e. Don't know



16. Are there current water restrictions that impact when you water your landscape?
- Yes
  - No [SKIP TO Q19]
  - Don't know [SKIP TO Q19]
17. Are the local water restrictions mandatory or voluntary?
- Mandatory
  - Voluntary
  - Don't know
18. You responded that your community or water management district imposes water restrictions. How many days per week are you permitted to water your landscape?
- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - 6
  - Don't know
19. Who would you go to for information about local water restrictions?
- My water management district
  - Environmental organizations
  - Friends or family members
  - My homeowners' association (HOA) or neighborhood advisory committee
  - My local city officials
  - My local UF/IFAS Extension office
  - Neighbors or other community members
  - My water utility provider
  - Don't know
20. How likely are you to follow applicable water restrictions when watering your landscape?
- Very likely
  - Likely
  - Neither likely nor unlikely
  - Unlikely
  - Very unlikely
21. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.
- I control my irrigation system based on my landscape water needs.
  - I consider my community's landscape expectations and requirements when determining whether I should irrigate.
  - I control my irrigation system to account for recent local rainfall.
  - I would participate in a free irrigation evaluation to learn about how to water my landscape in a way that helps to conserve water.

22. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.
- a. I support local water restrictions.
  - b. Water restrictions do not apply when using well water to irrigate.
  - c. Water restrictions help to save water.
  - d. I am concerned about the long-term availability of freshwater in my county.
23. If you were to provide your best estimate, what percent of your monthly water use goes toward outdoor irrigation?
- a. 0-20%
  - b. 21-40%
  - c. 41-60%
  - d. 61-80%
  - e. 81% or above
24. I operate my irrigation controller as follows (select all that apply):
- a. Adjust the days of the week my irrigation system runs
  - b. Adjust how many minutes each of my irrigation zones run
  - c. Manually turn the controller on and off
  - d. Run each zone for 1-2 minutes to check for leaks
  - e. None of the above

**These following few questions are to learn about your fertilizer use.**

25. Does someone in your household or a contractor fertilize your landscape?
- a. Yes
  - b. No [SKIP TO Q29]
26. How often is your landscape fertilized?
- a. More than twice a year
  - b. Twice a year
  - c. Once or twice a year
  - d. Once a year
  - e. Depends on how it looks
  - f. Other [TEXT BOX]
  - g. Don't know
27. Are there current restrictions on what time of year you're allowed to fertilize?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Don't know
28. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.
- a. It's important to know the amount of fertilizer appropriate for my landscape.
  - b. The more I fertilize, the more likely I am to have a greener landscape with less weeds.
  - c. It's best to fertilize before a heavy rain.

- d. I follow package instructions when determining how often to fertilize.
- e. I follow package instructions when determining how much fertilizer to use.
- f. Restrictions on what time of year landscape fertilizing is allowed helps protect water quality.
- g. The way I fertilize can affect the health of natural and manmade ponds in my community.
- h. It is important to me to use the right amount of fertilizer that's appropriate for my landscape.
- i. It is better for the environment to use slow-release fertilizer.
- j. I would change my fertilizer use if I learned that it was harmful to the environment.

**These final questions are to ensure that we are talking to a wide range of people. Your answers will remain anonymous.**

29. Which category best fits your age?

- a. 35 or under
- b. 36 to 64
- c. 65 or older
- d. Prefer not to answer

30. To which gender identity do you most identify?

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Transgender female
- d. Transgender male
- e. Gender variant/Non-conforming
- f. Prefer not to answer

31. How would you describe your Florida residency?

- a. Full-time
- b. I reside in Florida mostly in summer months (March – September)
- c. I reside in Florida mostly in winter months (October – February)
- d. Prefer not to answer

32. How long have you lived in Florida?

- a. Less than one year
- b. 1 – 5 years
- c. 6 – 10 years
- d. More than 10 years
- e. Prefer not to answer

33. Which of the following best represents your formal education?

- a. Did not graduate from high school
- b. High school graduate
- c. Technical/Vocational school
- d. Some college
- e. College graduate (4 years)
- f. Post-graduate
- g. Prefer not to answer

34. Which ethnic or race category best fits you?

- a. Hispanic/Latino
- b. Black/African American
- c. Anglo/White
- d. Asian/Pacific Islander
- e. Native American
- f. Other/Mixed
- g. Prefer not to answer