


# WATER & PUBLIC OPINION IN NEW MEXICO

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## ABSTRACT

The Institute for Public Policy has periodically surveyed public opinion on the most important issues facing New Mexico. In 2003, the public selected water as most important in comparison to education, jobs, economic development, and several other issues of traditionally high public concern. It was evident that public knowledge in the water area was less than is often inferred by experts and especially so in the areas of most controversy. The public was very supportive of increased funding for technologies that could have a positive impact on the water issues facing the State. The results of the recent survey will be presented along with some suggestions for the technical and policy community.



**Water in New Mexico**

Survey dates: May 8 – August 21, 2003

Methodology: Random-Digit Dialing (RDD)  
of non-institutionalized New Mexico citizens 18 years and older.

N: 1473

Margin of error: 2.8%

Cooperation rate: 62%

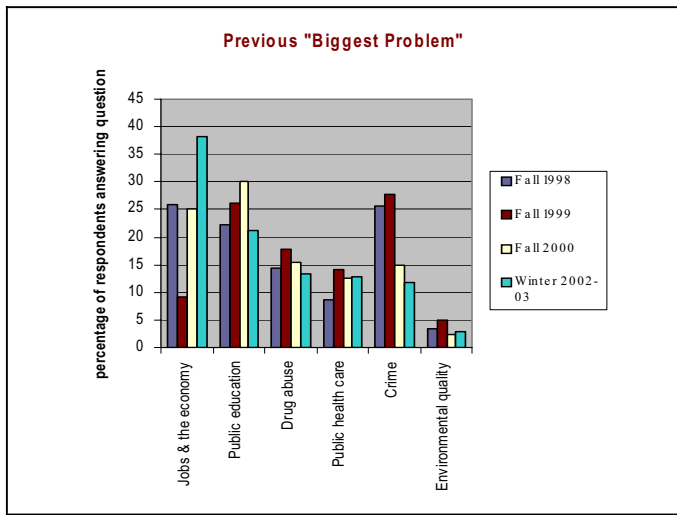
***“New Mexico’s Biggest Problem”***

*The Institute for Public Policy has been surveying the concerns of New Mexico citizens for years. Although it has conducted surveys on water in the past, water was never included as a response category for the “biggest problem.” Until now.*

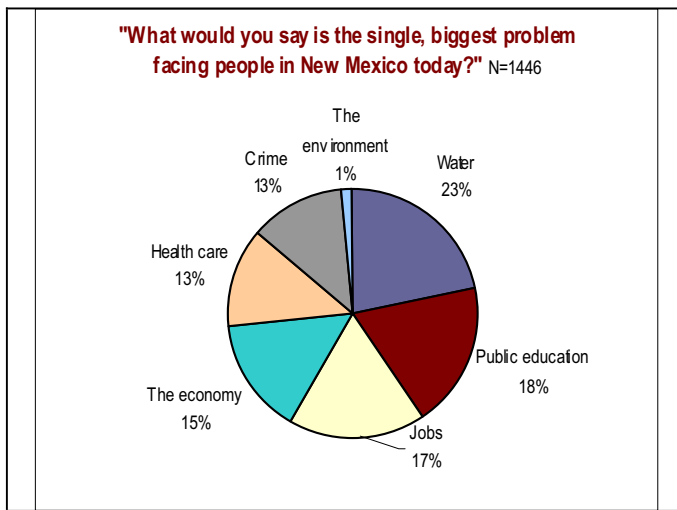
Jobs and the economy, as well as education, important

Environment not given priority – but do people think of water as a part of this category?

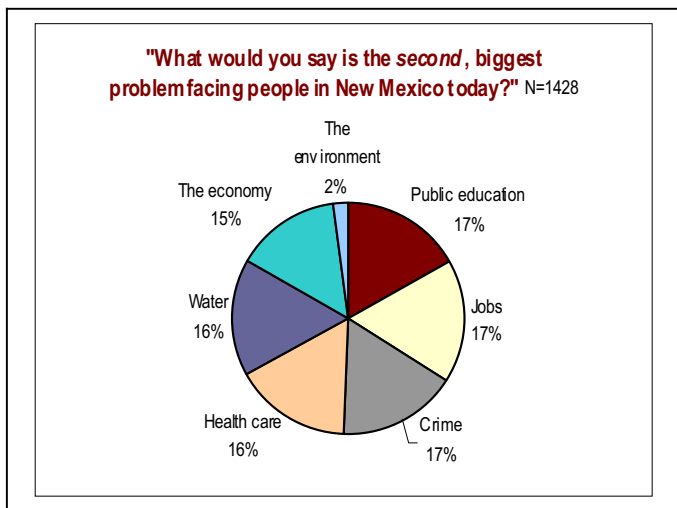
Importance of water revealed once given own category



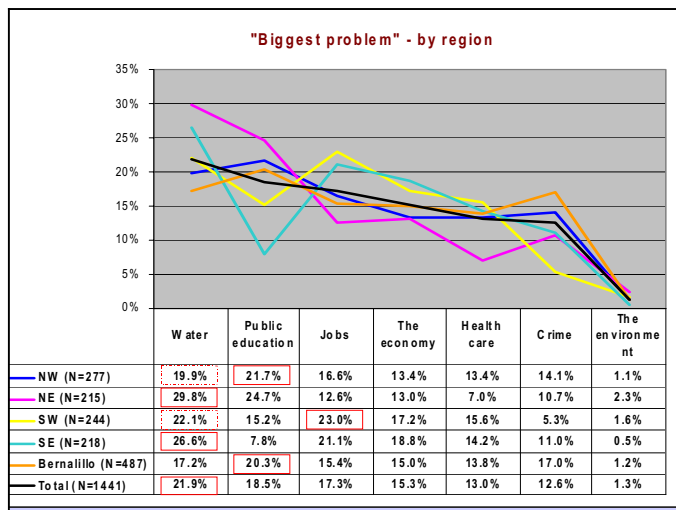
Question 7



Question 8

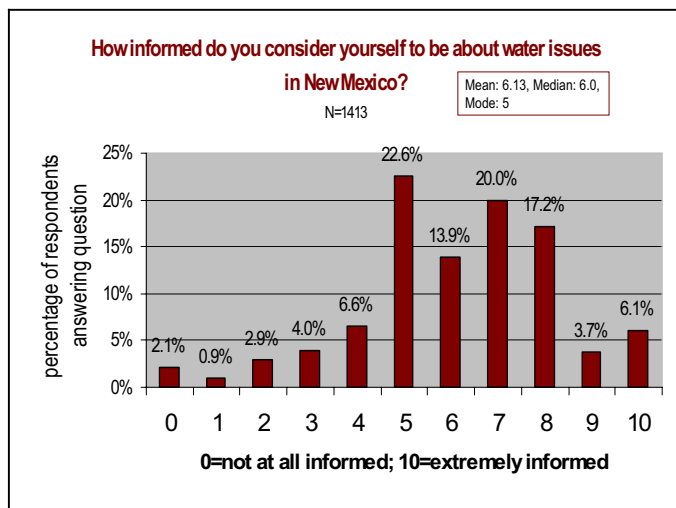


Question 7



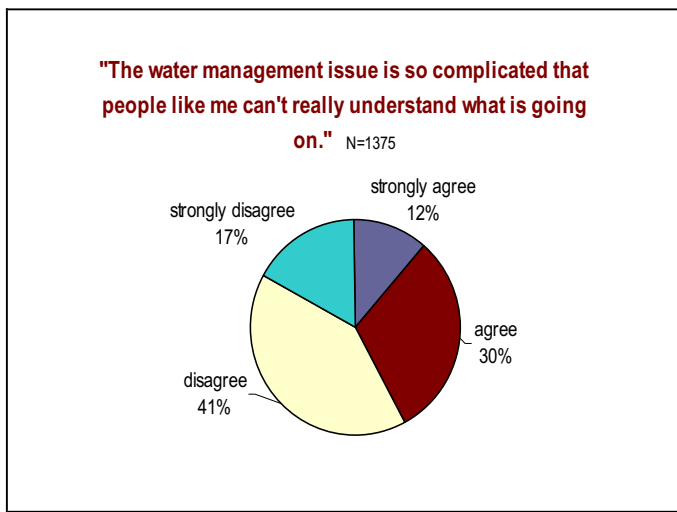
*Public knowledge of water  
in the state of New Mexico*

Question 51



<b>Water Knowledge</b>				
<b>Survey Question (Correct answer in parentheses)</b>	<b>Correct</b>	<b>Incorrect</b>	<b>Don't know/ No answer</b>	<b>Total percent* (Number of Respondents)</b>
The amount of water in a river or lake has no affect on the quality of the water. (False)	72.2%	23.8%	4.1%	100.1% (1358)
Water loss from reservoirs due to evaporation is greater than the rate of use from all other sources in New Mexico combined. (False)	51.8%	36.3%	11.9%	100.0% (1247)
Domestic uses (such as in households) use more water than irrigated agriculture in New Mexico. (False)	50.9%	42.5%	6.6%	100.0% (1325)
Overall, businesses and industries in New Mexico use more water than cities and towns combined. (False)	45.6%	45.2%	9.2%	100.0% (1285)
Irrigated agriculture uses more water than businesses and industries in New Mexico. (True)	44.8%	47.1%	8.0%	99.9% (1305)

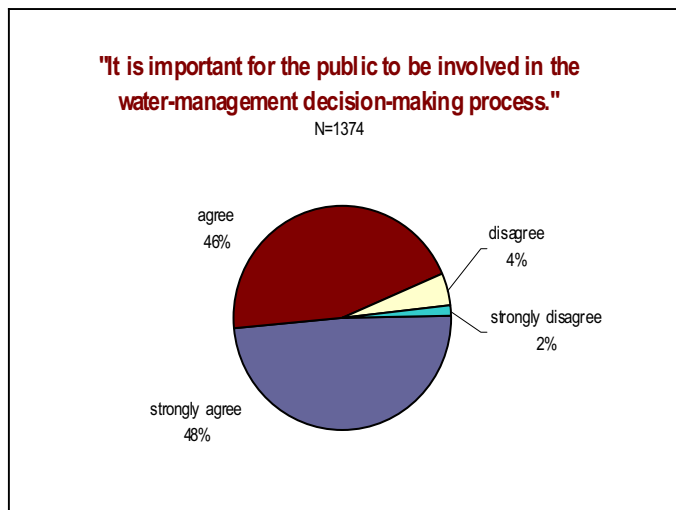
Questions 56, 58, 55, 57, 54.



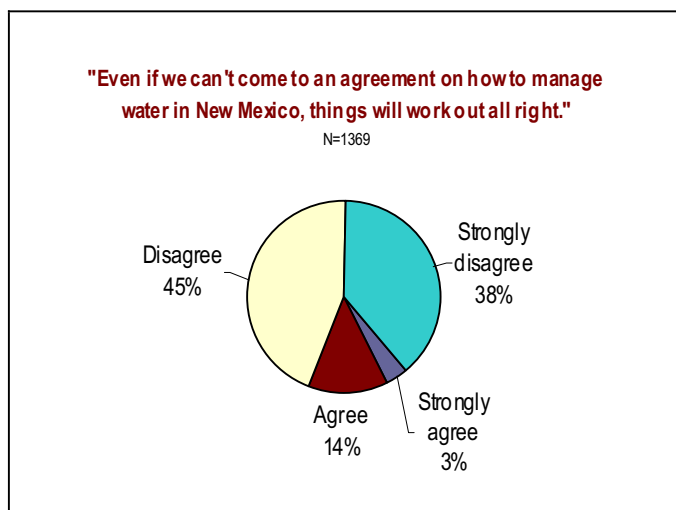
Question 65

**Creating a water-management plan**

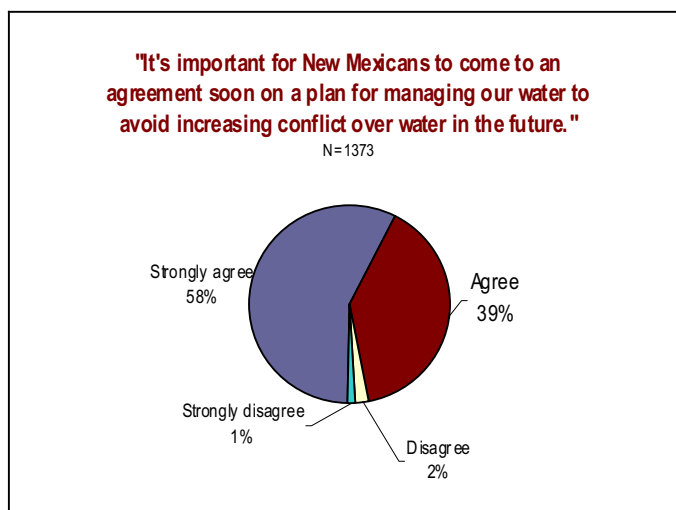
Question 66



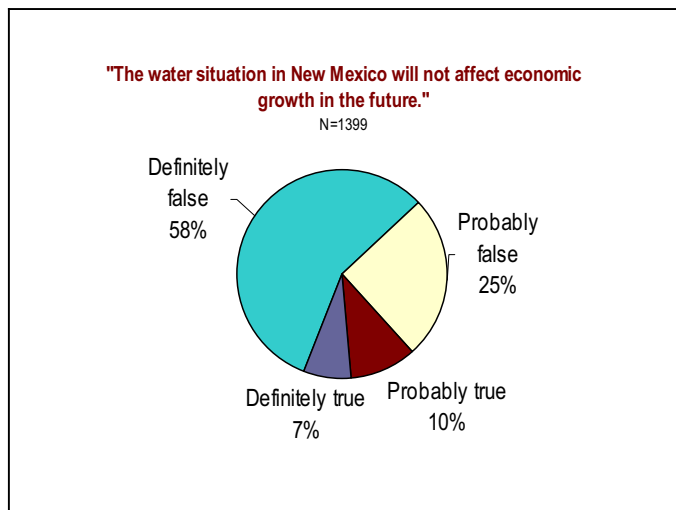
Question 64



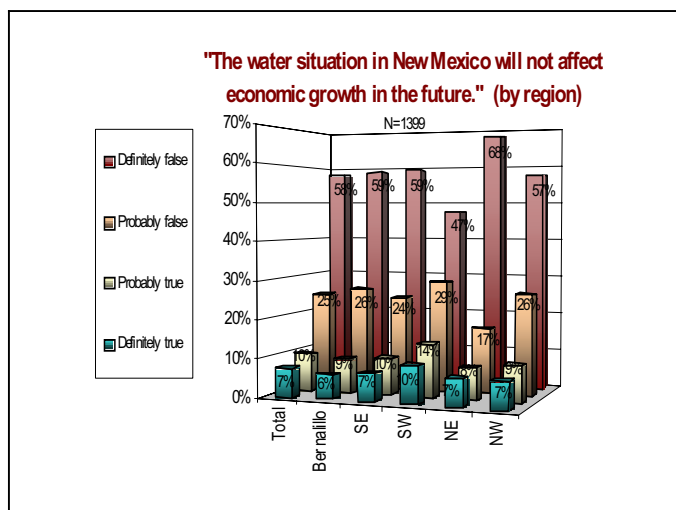
Question 63



Question 53



Question 53

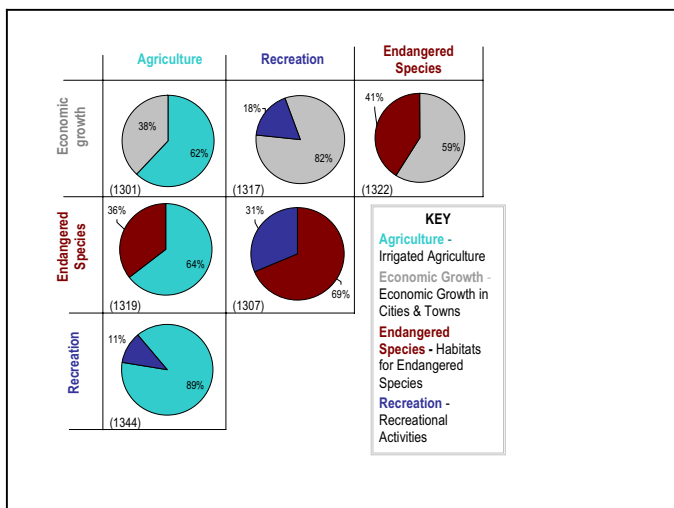
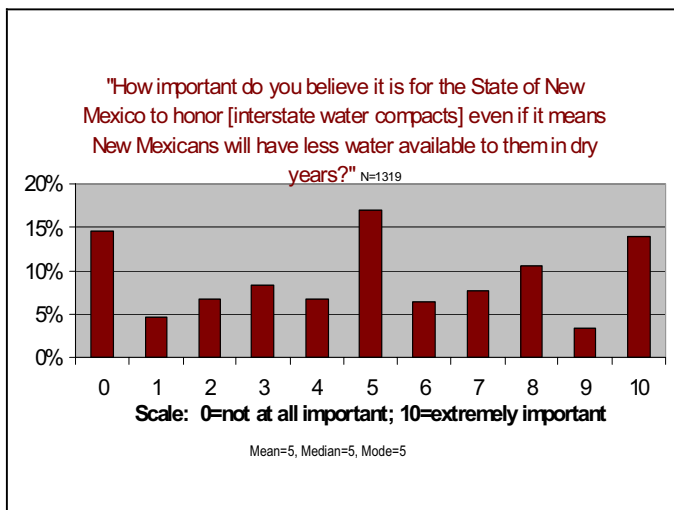


**"How confident are you that \_\_\_\_\_ will be able to lead the development of a water management plan in a time period that will really make a difference for New Mexico?"**  
Scale: 0 (not at all confident) to 10 (extremely confident)

	Mean	N
Scientists	5.36	272
State of New Mexico	5.16	278
Local government	4.90	247
Business & industry	4.44	282
Federal government	3.86	256

**Making Choices:  
Honoring agreements and priorities for water allocation**

Question 83



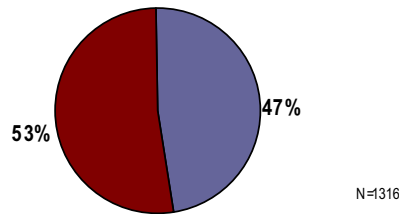
Questions 69-81. "Now I'm going to read you a series of opposing statements about water allocation in New Mexico. For each pair, please tell me which one you agree with the most even if you do not necessarily agree with either."

"Which statement most closely reflects your view when allocating water in New Mexico: Priority should be given to irrigated agriculture, even at the risk of restricting economic growth in cities and towns. –OR– Priority should be given to economic growth in cities and towns, even if it means restricting irrigated agriculture."

## WATER AND TECHNOLOGY<sup>4</sup>

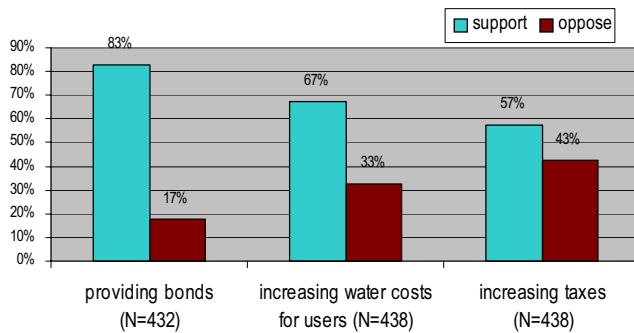
*“Some people think that technology offers important solutions to water problems in New Mexico. Please tell me which of the following two options you believe provides the greatest potential for guaranteeing that New Mexico has an adequate supply of water to meet its needs now and in the future.”*

- Focusing on technologies to increase efficiency when using water (like lining ditches or drip irrigation systems).
- Focusing on technologies that increase the amount of water available (like desalination to remove the salts that make much of New Mexico's water undrinkable).



Question 84. “Some people think that technology offers important solutions to water problems in New Mexico. Please tell me which of the following two options you believe provides the greatest potential for guaranteeing that New Mexico has an adequate supply of water to meet its needs now and in the future. The options are:...”

### Covering the costs of developing technologies to help New Mexico better manage its water problems



Question 86. “Developing new technologies can be expensive, especially those that could help New Mexico overcome its water problems now and in the future. Using a scale of strongly support, support, oppose, or strongly oppose, how do you feel about \_\_\_\_\_ to cover the costs of developing technologies to help New Mexico better manage its water problems?”

**Covering the costs of developing technologies to help  
New Mexico better manage its water problems**

<b>Northwest New Mexico (N=254)</b>			
	<i>Increasing Taxes</i>	<i>Providing Bonds</i>	<i>Increasing water costs for users</i>
Strongly support	8.4%	23.3%	9.3%
Support	45.8%	63.3%	56.8%
Oppose	28.9%	10.0%	24.7%
Strongly oppose	16.9%	3.3%	8.8%

<b>Northeast New Mexico (N=192)</b>			
	<i>Increasing Taxes</i>	<i>Providing Bonds</i>	<i>Increasing water costs for users</i>
Strongly support	12.1%	30.4%	23.5%
Support	53.4%	58.0%	47.7%
Oppose	25.9%	5.8%	18.5%
Strongly oppose	8.6%	5.8%	12.3%

<b>Southwest New Mexico (N=216)</b>			
	<i>Increasing Taxes</i>	<i>Providing Bonds</i>	<i>Increasing water costs for users</i>
Strongly support	13.4%	22.2%	16.3%
Support	44.8%	50.8%	57.0%
Oppose	26.9%	19.0%	19.8%
Strongly oppose	14.9%	7.9%	7.0%

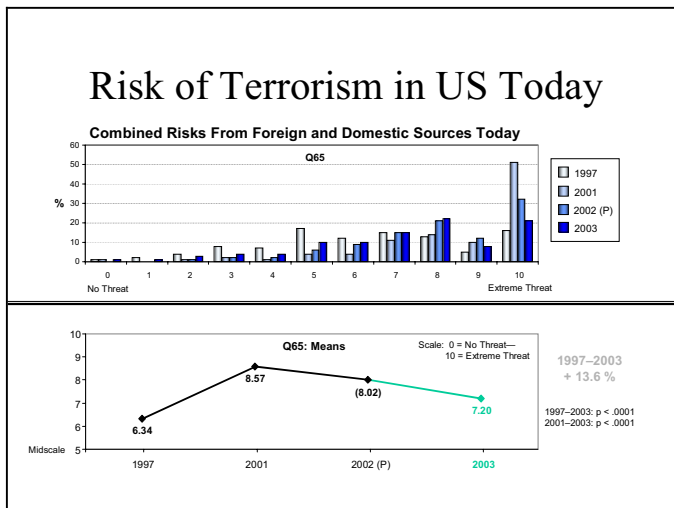
  

<b>Northwest New Mexico (N=196)</b>			
	<i>Increasing Taxes</i>	<i>Providing Bonds</i>	<i>Increasing water costs for users</i>
Strongly support	9.5%	23.2%	20.3%
Support	42.8%	56.5%	42.2%
Oppose	38.1%	11.6%	28.1%
Strongly oppose	9.5%	8.7%	9.4%

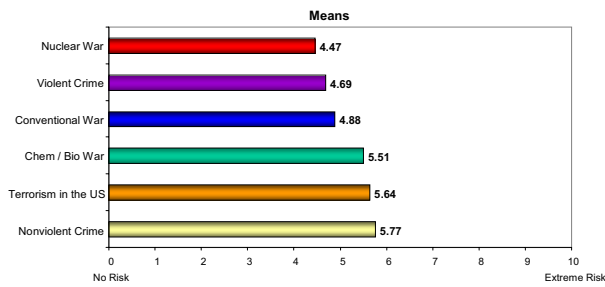
<b>Bernalillo (N= 448)</b>			
	<i>Increasing Taxes</i>	<i>Providing Bonds</i>	<i>Increasing water costs for users</i>
Strongly support	12.0%	29.3%	22.0%
Support	45.5%	53.8%	43.3%
Oppose	25.7%	10.7%	22.0%
Strongly oppose	16.8%	6.4%	12.8%

*Contamination of our water supply:  
(accidents or terrorism)*



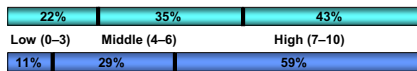
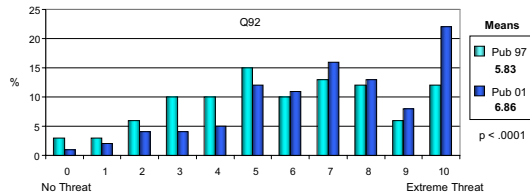
## Relative Risk

Considering both the likelihood of an event occurring, and its potential consequences, how do you rate each of the following risks to you and your family:



## Threats to Water Supplies

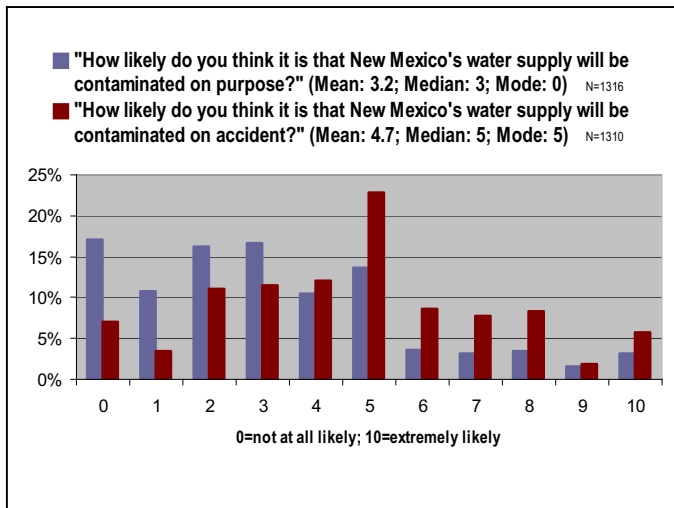
Watersheds, Aquifers, Water Treatment and Distribution



## Summarizing Critical Infrastructures

Mean Threats Ordered From High to Low in 2001

US Infrastructure	1997	2001	% Change
1. Gas and Oil Supplies and Services	6.14	7.01	+ 14.2
2. Transportation Systems	5.73	6.96	+ 21.5
3. Water Supply Systems	5.83	6.86	+ 17.7
4. Electrical Power Systems	5.83	6.56	+ 12.5
5. Telecommunications	6.12	6.42	+ 4.9
6. Banking and Finance	5.61	6.39	+ 13.9
7. Continuity of Government	5.06	5.72	+ 13.0
8. Emergency Services	4.80	5.60	+ 16.7



**Water, Terrorism, and Technology:**  
*An opportunity and obligation for Leadership*

- National public concern about terrorism continues to be quite high, although substantially down from the period immediately after 9/11.
- Water supply was a strong national worry especially after the scenarios raised in the fall of 2001.
- Perhaps because of the framing of questions in the survey in NM, concern over water terrorism is not as high as at the national level.
- There is a realistic public sense of a higher risk from accidental contamination.
- **Protection initiatives will need to be led not driven by a priori public pressure**