

# INFORMING SEPTIC TO SEWER CONVERSION OUTREACH IN FLORIDA THROUGH COMMUNITY- BASED SOCIAL MARKETING

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February 23, 2022



Center for  
Public Issues Education

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

Janet Begley Special to TCPalm

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

View Comments



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



# Sandy Soil And Rising Seas Spell Septic Tank Disaster In Florida

By NPR News

July 17, 2019 Environment

# Not everyone accepts reasoning for septic conversions, cost

By ANDREA TRACITZET Assistant Editor Oct 8, 2016 Updated: Jun 23, 2020 7 min to read



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

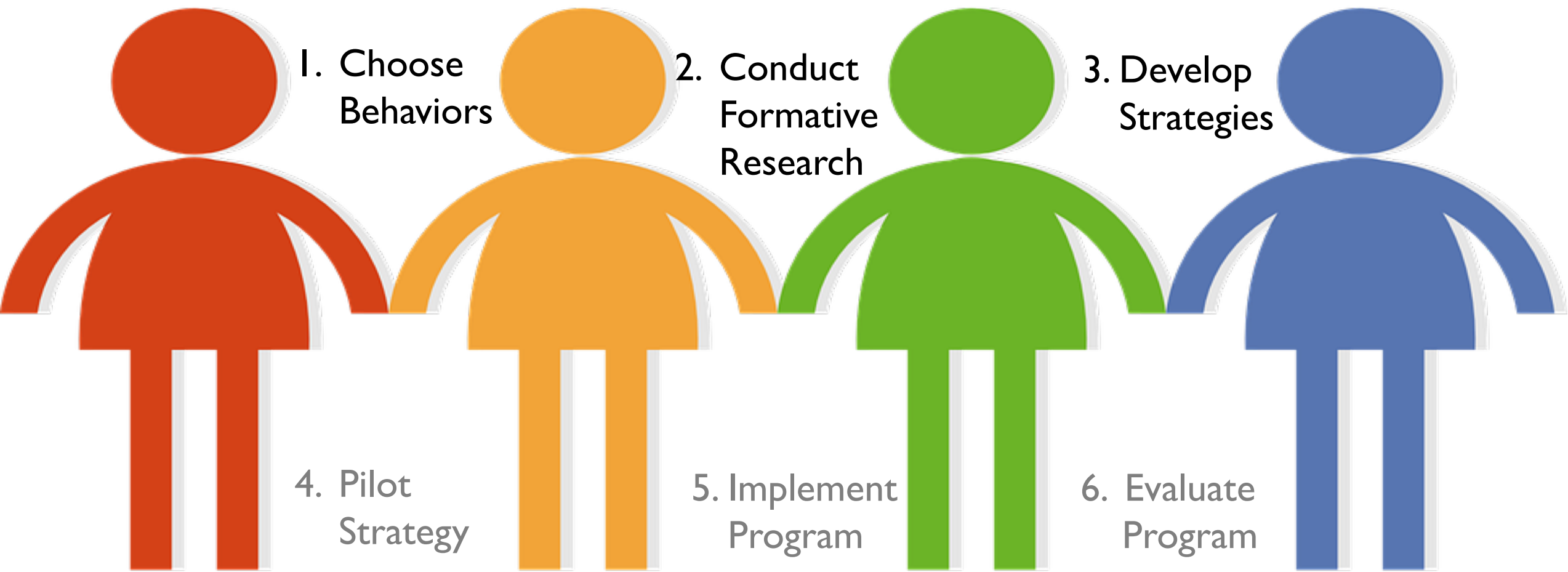
By STEPHEN HUDAK ORLANDO SENTINEL | NOV 01, 2019 AT 12:29 PM



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



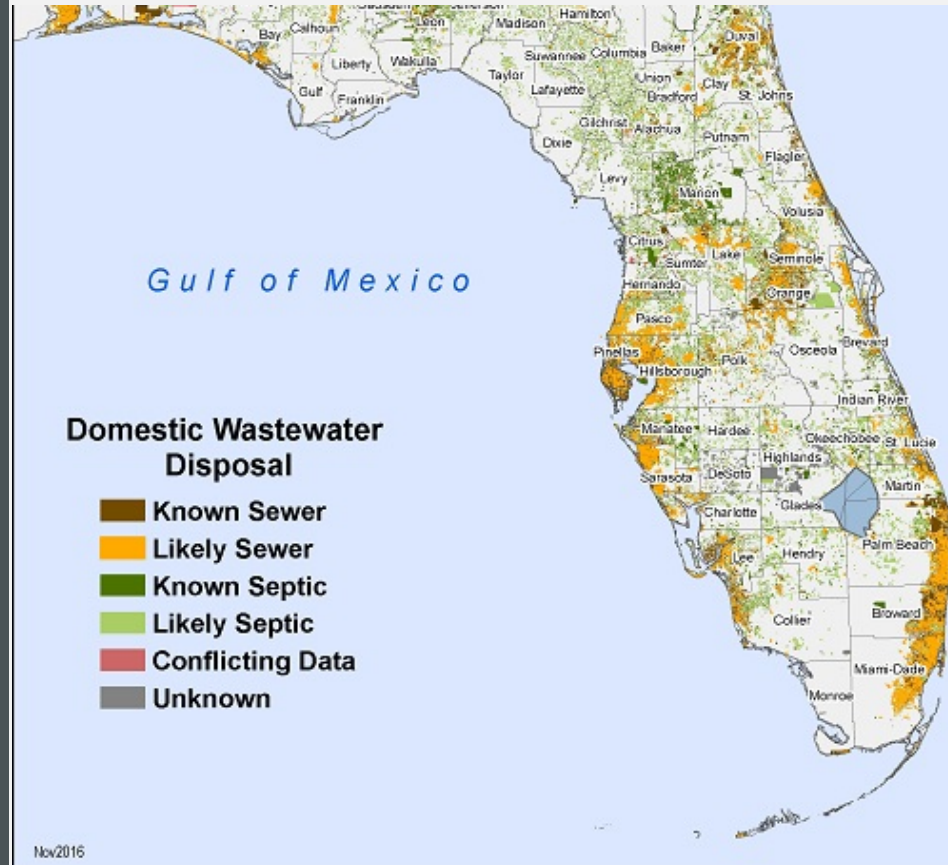
THE TYPICAL APPROACH



# COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL MARKETING

# METHODS

1. Select behavior  
Septic to sewer conversions
2. Identify audience  
State septic homeowners  
(known and likely)
3. Barrier & benefit  
research  
Interviews, focus groups,  
online survey



Source: FDOH Florida Water Management Inventory Project



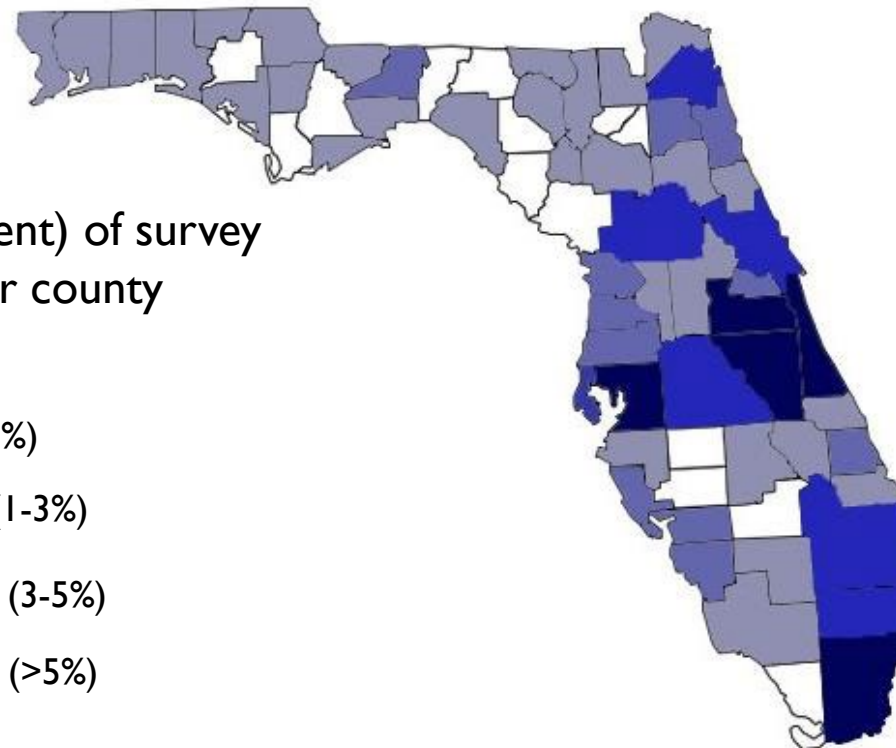
# WHO

(N = 517)

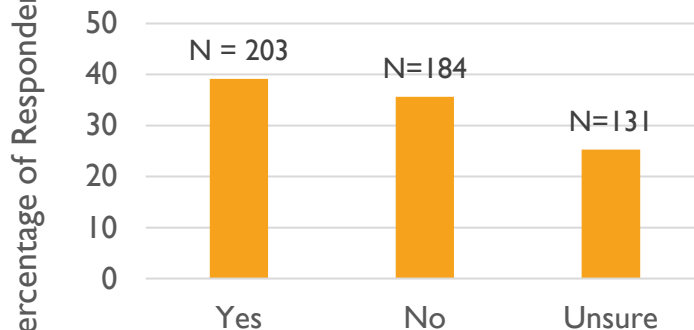
Gender			
Male	294	56.9	
Female	222	42.9	
Other/Non-binary	1	0.2	

Area of Residence			
A farm in a rural area	23	4.4	
Rural area, not a farm	72	13.9	
Urban or suburban area outside of city limits	280	54.2	
Subdivision in a town or city	98	19.0	
Downtown area in a town or city	44	8.5	

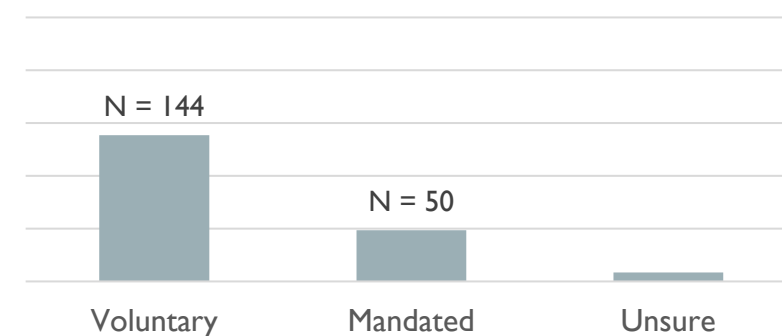
Previously Lived in Home on a Sewer System			
Yes	374	72.3	
No	123	23.8	



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



Was this conversion voluntary or mandated?



KNOWLEDGE



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

Overall population (n = 517)

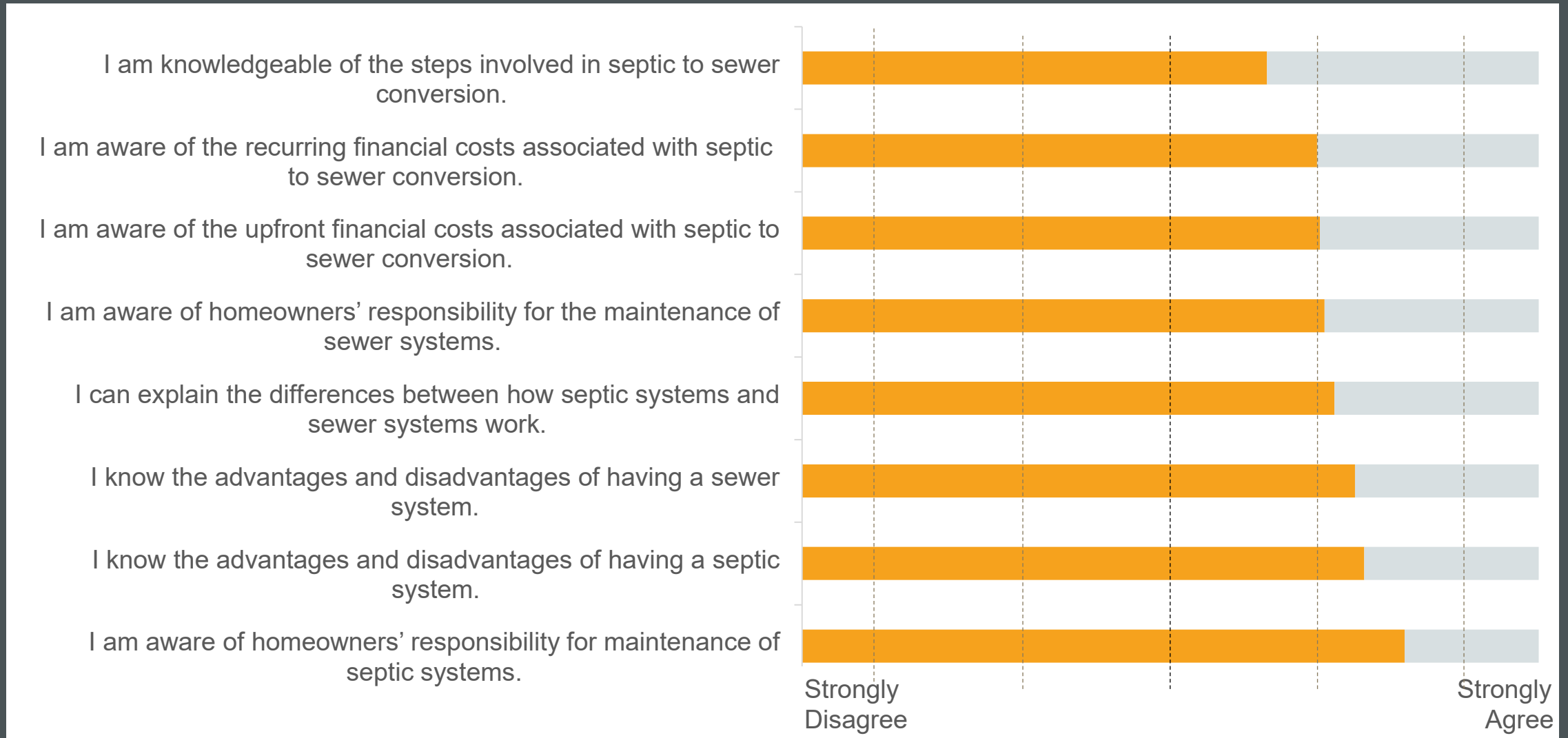
Voluntary conversion (n = 144)

Mandatory conversion (n = 50)

4.62

5.27\*\*

5.07\*\*





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

Overall population (n = 517)

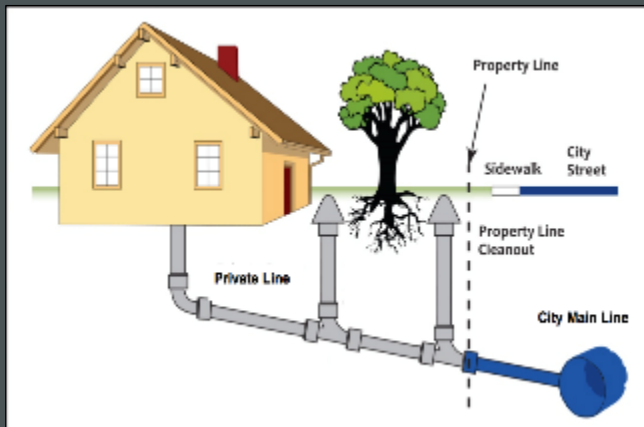
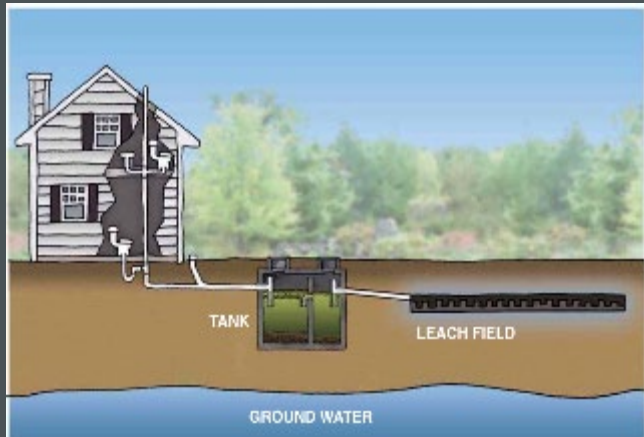
54.7%

Voluntary conversion (n = 144)

31.9%\*\*

Mandatory conversion (n = 50)

32%\*\*



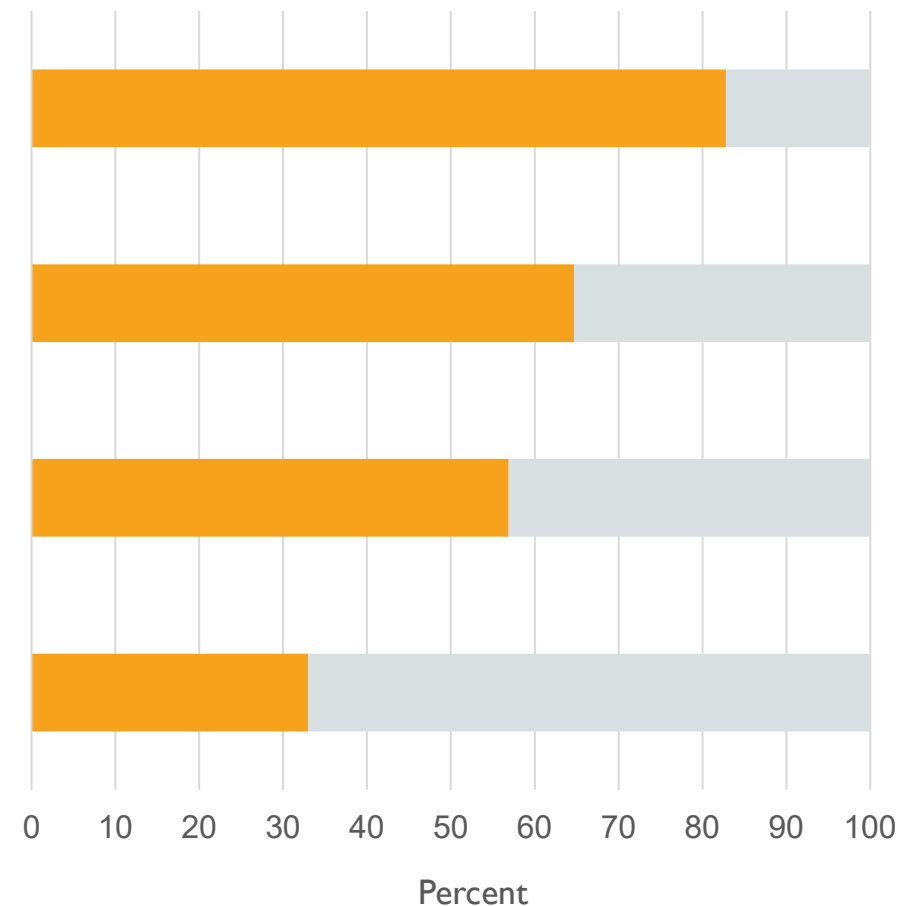
Who is primarily responsible for the maintenance of residential septic systems?

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

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

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

A. Every 6 months	127	24.6
B. Every 1-2 years	163	31.5
<b>C. Every 3-5 years</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>33.1</b>
D. Every 10 years	56	10.8



# ATTITUDES

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

Overall population (n = 517)

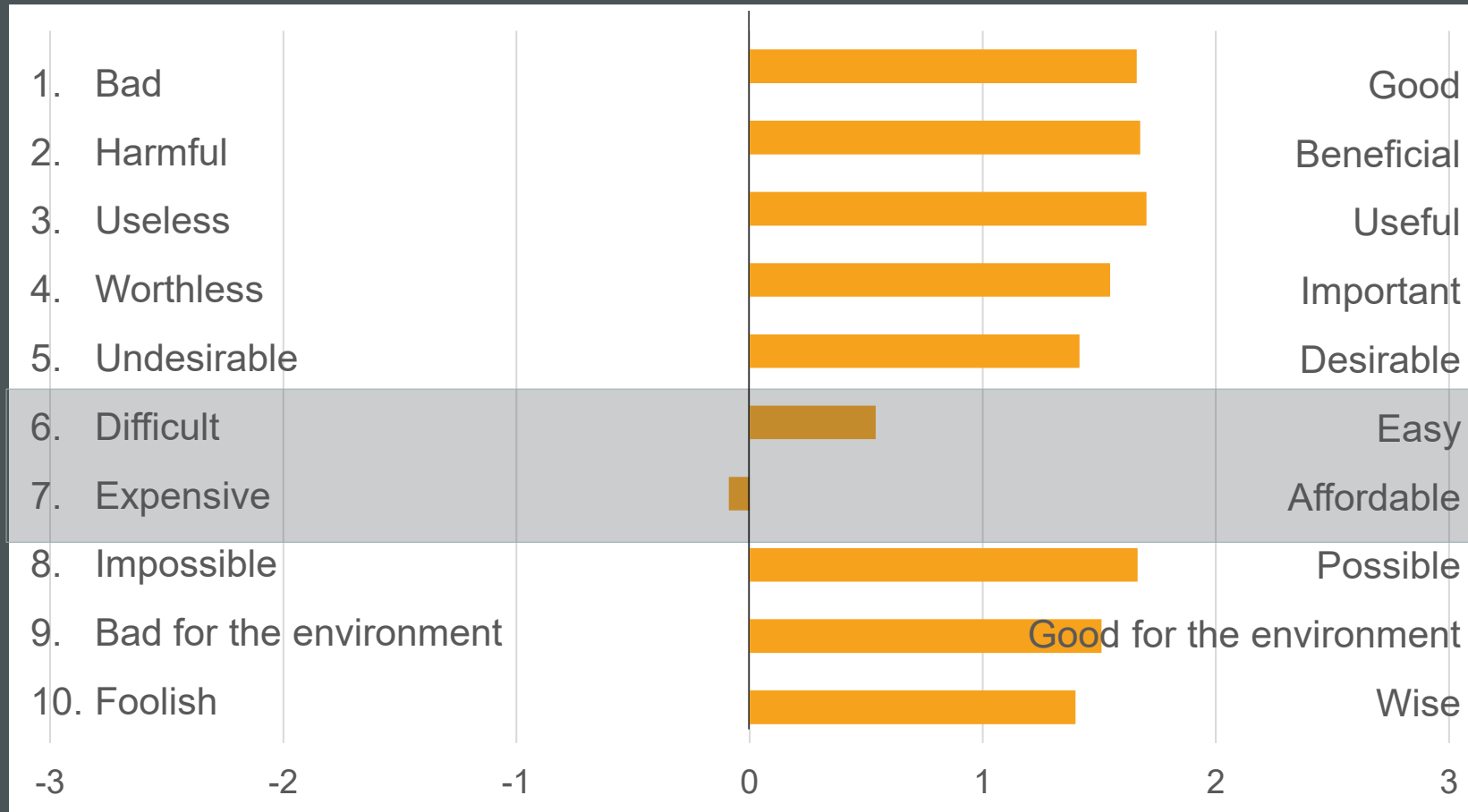
Voluntary conversion (n = 144)

Mandatory conversion (n = 50)

1.30

2.14\*\*

2.13\*\*



# PERCEIVED BENEFITS & BARRIERS

# Level of agreement - Benefits

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

Overall population (n = 517)

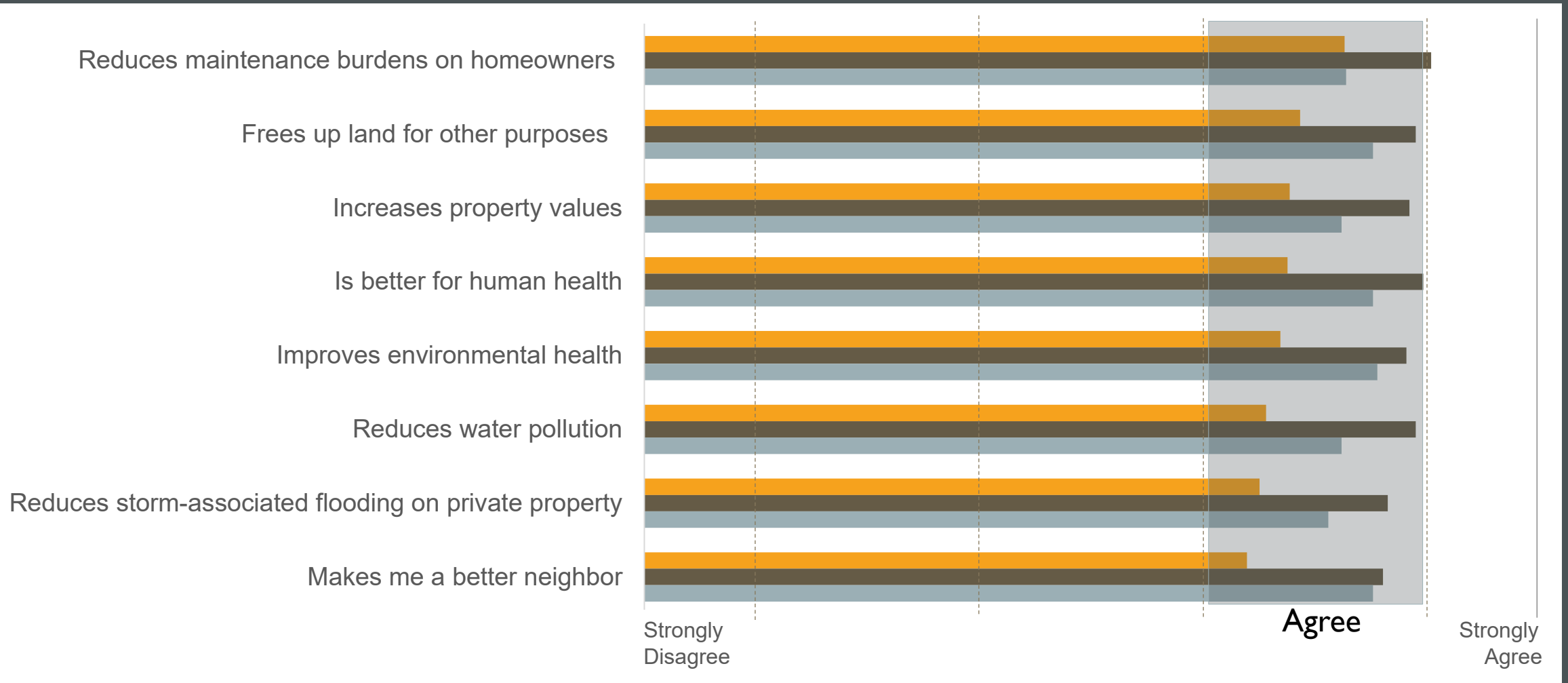
Voluntary conversion (n = 144)

Mandatory conversion (n = 50)

3.86

4.42\*\*

4.12\*\*



# Level of agreement – External Barriers

Overall population (n = 517)

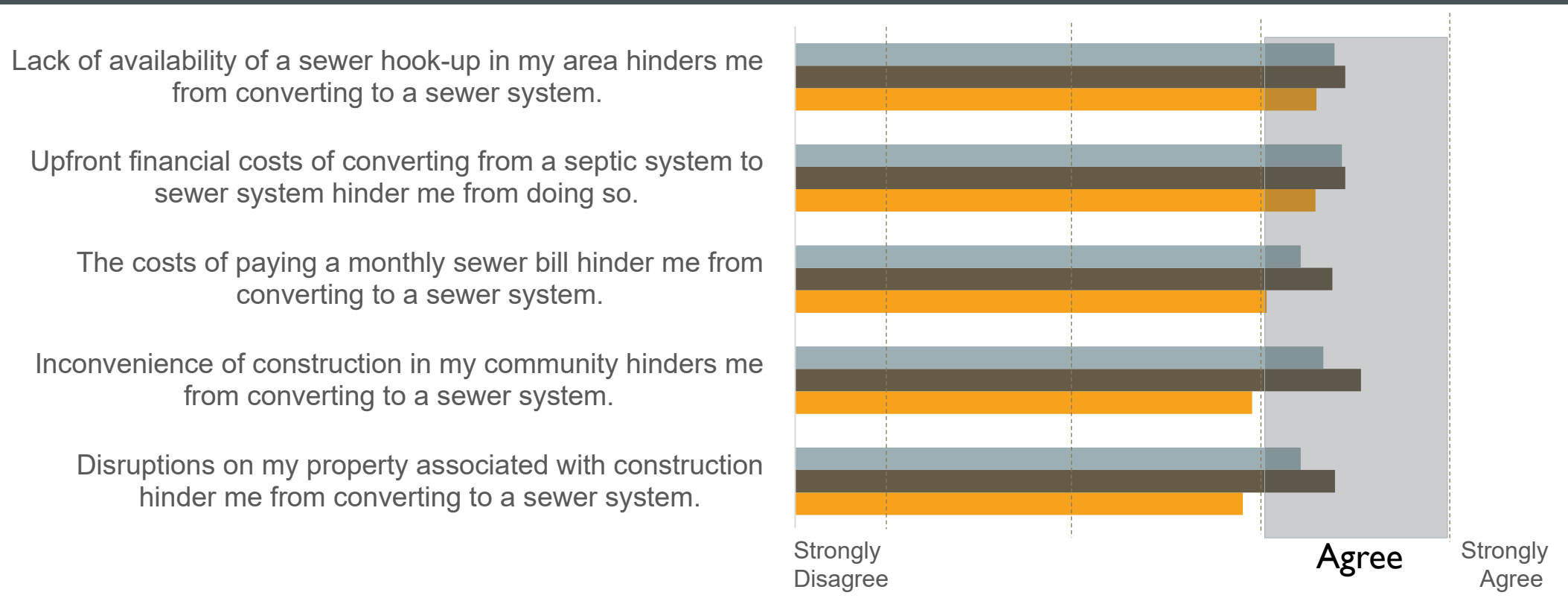
3.58

Voluntary conversion (n = 144)

3.92\*\*

Mandatory conversion (n = 50)

3.80\*\*



# Level of agreement – Internal Barriers

Overall population (n = 517)

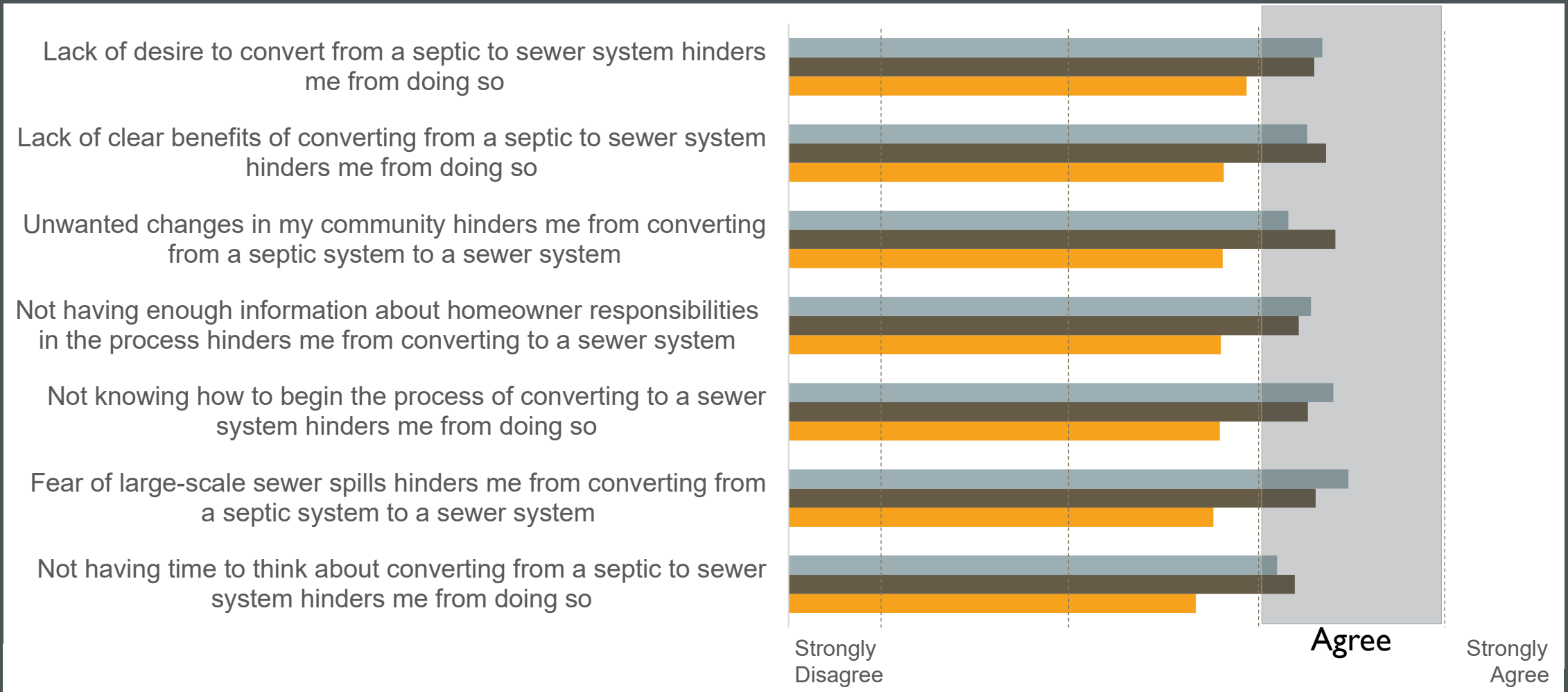
Voluntary conversion (n = 144)

Mandatory conversion (n = 50)

3.29

3.79\*\*

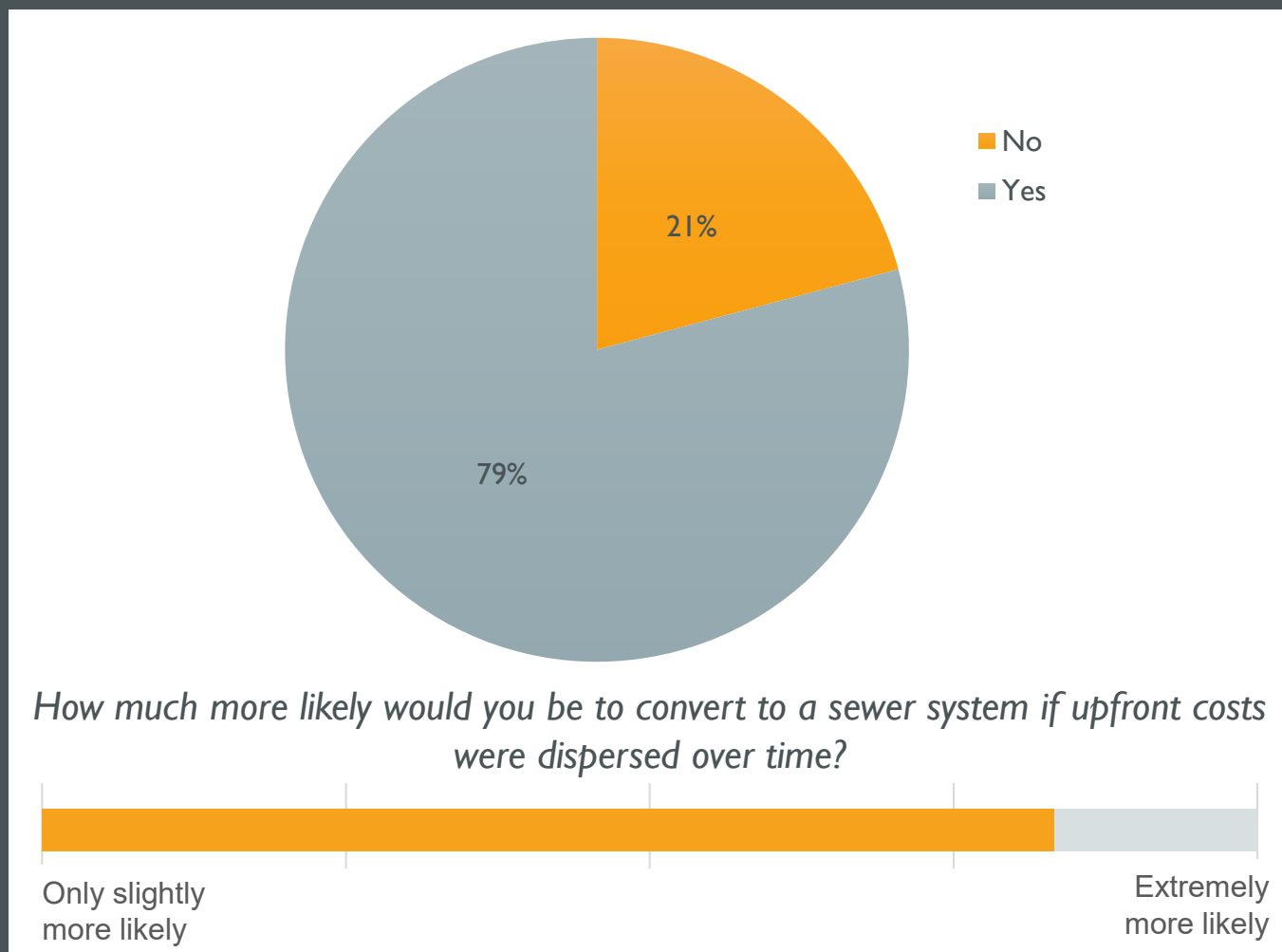
3.79\*\*





## Level of agreement – Cost

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



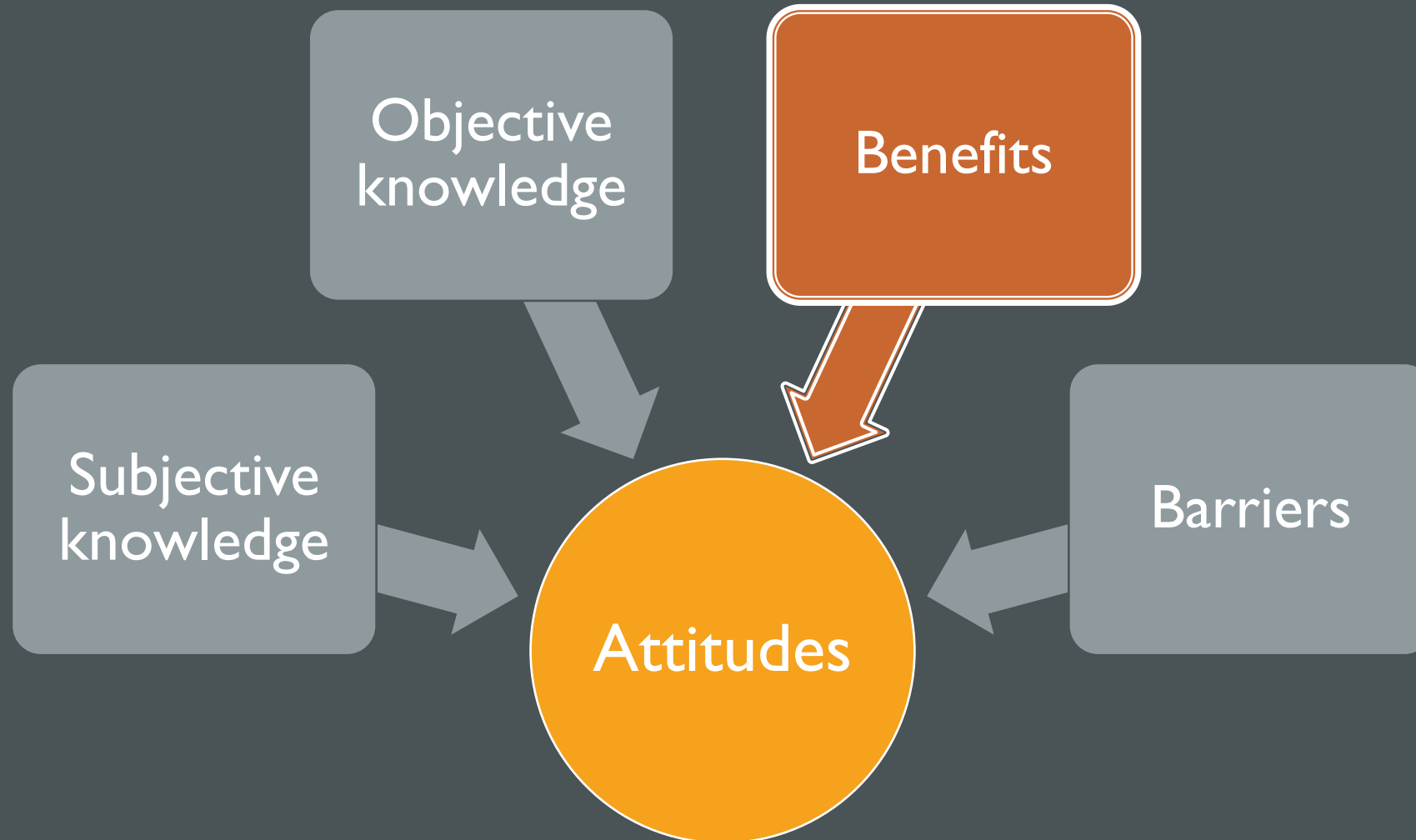
# Explanatory model for attitudes

Voluntary conversion (n = 144)

$R^2 = 0.36$

Mandatory conversion (n = 50)

$R^2 = 0.55$



# SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGY

## Audience

- A single campaign should include several aligned messages and formats
- Knowledge is not a barrier to acceptance

## Removal of Barriers

- If costs can be dispersed overtime, the barrier of upfront financial costs can be eliminated
- Additional barriers need to be recognized once a project is identified

## Communication

- Informational materials should emphasize homeowner priorities

## Convenience

- Include timely, accurate, and community-specific information

## Diffusion and Social Norms

Increase in property values



Free up land for other purposes



Reduce maintenance burdens



Human health



# THANK YOU

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[https://water.ifas.ufl.edu/septic-  
systems/local-governments/](https://water.ifas.ufl.edu/septic-systems/local-governments/)

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