

LV TAP

DRINK FROM THE SINK



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Introduction

In April of 2019, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD) conducted a survey to ascertain how many of our customers regularly drink tap water versus bottled water. Of nearly 16,000 customers invited to take the survey, we received over 2,000 responses. The results of the survey provided us with a tremendous amount of insight as to what our customers prefer, but also the underlying reasons why they drink tap water or bottled water. From the survey results, we have identified three primary areas to focus our branding and marketing efforts to help better educate customers on the benefits of drinking tap water. Not only is our tap water of a high quality that can be trusted for daily consumption; it is significantly lower in cost and is a better choice to protect the environment.

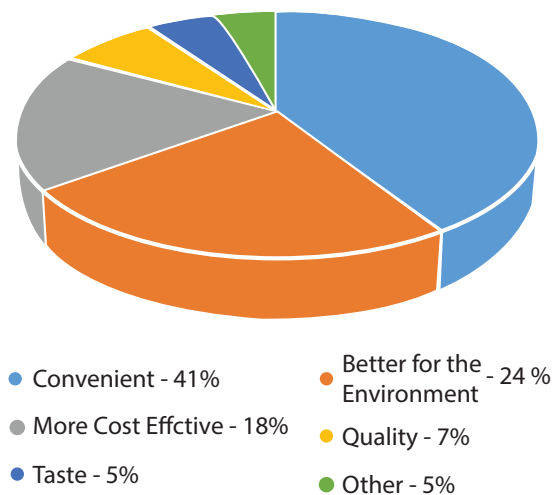
Survey Results

According to the survey, 68 percent of our customers routinely drink tap water. These customers primarily drink tap water because it was convenient (41%), was better for the environment (24%), or was more cost effective (18%), than bottled water. Believe it or not, other factors such as a preference for the taste (5%), and the quality (7%), were reasons for their preference of tap water over bottled water. (5%), primarily drink tap water for other reasons such as the addition of fluoride, or they did not prefer tap water or bottled water one way or another.

According to the same survey, (32%) of LVMWD customer's preferred drinking bottled water. Many of these customers prefer bottled water because they trusted the quality more than tap water (39%), or liked the taste more (38%). Other customers preferred bottled water simply because it is more convenient to "grab and go" (11%). Other factors for their preference of bottled water included such things as the need or desire to consume higher alkaline/pH water (10%), for health reasons.

Of the customers that routinely drink tap water, about (60%) filter the tap water in their homes before they drink it - at least most of the time. Most of these customers filter it for taste or due to concerns they have about the quality of the tap water. Taste concerns are typically due to the chlorination of drinking water (the addition of chlorine and ammonia) for disinfection, which is required to destroy any microorganisms that may find their way into the system to ensure the safety of the water. However, in blind taste tests that LVMWD has conducted over the years, the majority of customers actually preferred the tap water, even unfiltered tap water, versus bottled water.

Why Customers Prefer Tap Water



April 2019

Water Quality

Every year, LVMWD diligently executes extensive state-mandated testing for water quality constituents by collecting over 1,200 water samples, taken from the drinking water system, and conducts over 11,000 laboratory analysis, in a state-certified water quality lab, to ensure high-quality drinking water and public health. These tests are conducted by highly-trained and skilled professionals. This continuous and important routine ensures that our water is not only safe to drink but also is consistently the best it can be. Yet, (39%) of customers that prefer bottled water drink it because they believe it is of higher quality than tap water. While bottled water companies are also required to conduct testing for water quality through the Food and Drug Administration, water utilities in California are required by the State Division of Drinking Water to undergo, arguably, the most stringent

and comprehensive water quality testing in the United States, if not the world. LVMWD continues to meet or exceed all the standards for safe and high-quality drinking water as established by state mandates.

Cost

Tap water is extremely affordable. Cost savings was the primary reason why (18%) of our valued customers routinely drink tap water instead of bottled water. One gallon of LVMWD tap water costs less than a penny and is delivered to homes and businesses from the Sierra Nevada Mountains, over 400 miles away. In comparison, the same amount of bottled water can easily exceed \$1 (at least 100 times the cost) for larger containers or even \$9 (nearly 2,000 times the cost) for a gallons-worth of single-use 16.9 ounce bottled water. Customers can save a lot of money by foregoing bottled water.

Reducing the amount of single use plastic waste is critical in protecting environmentally sensitive areas such as the Malibu Creek and Malibu Creek Watershed in the LVMWD service area.

Environmental

Single-use bottled water is having a tremendous impact on the environment. Nearly (24%) of our customers that regularly drink from the tap do so primarily because they view bottled water as a detriment to the environment. Plastic bottles take both resources and energy to produce and transport, which also results in the generation of greenhouse gases. A large amount of plastic waste is also produced from the manufacture and sale of single-use bottled water. According to research on the subject, humans collectively purchase one million single use plastic bottles every minute, (91%) of which do not get recycled (Trevor Nace, "We're Now At a Million Plastic Bottles Per Minute – 91% of which are not Recycled", www.forbes.com, 26 July, 2017, 5/28/19). Most of these bottles end up either in a landfill or in the environment. In the United States alone, 1,500 single-use plastic bottles are used every second of every day. "Americans send more than 38 billion water bottles to landfills every year, the equivalent of 912 million gallons of oil. If laid end to end, that's enough bottles to travel to the moon and back 10 times." (www.green-sheepwater.com, 5/28/19). For those single-use plastic bottles that are neither recycled nor placed in landfills, they end up in the environment where they are a visual blight and can potentially break down into microplastics that then enter the food chain.



Other Insights on Bottled Water

Not all bottled water is natural spring water straight from a glacier in the mountains – about half of the brands are simply tap water that bottled water companies have filtered or distilled. Routinely drinking distilled water can be problematic due to its lack of minerals that the human body requires to sustain strong bones and healthy teeth. Customers should only drink distilled water (that has not had minerals added back into it) on a regular basis if recommended by your doctor for health reasons.

Additionally, chemicals in some plastic water bottles, such as BPA or bisphenol, can be absorbed by the water – particularly if left in the sun or stored in warmer locations.

In another recent study, researchers concluded that drinking exclusively from plastic water bottles could double the amount of microplastics ingested by humans (Susan Scutti, “If You Drink Bottled Water, You Could Double How Many Microplastic Particles You Ingest”, www.cnn.com, June 5, 2019, 6/10/19). The

researchers estimated annual microplastic particle-count intake to be approximately 127,000 micro-particles for men and 93,000 microparticles for women if bottled water is the only source of drinking water.

Conclusions

There are many benefits to drinking tap water versus bottled water. LVMWD’s tap water is of high quality and is a reliable source of drinking water. Taking greater advantage of this readily available source of water can save our customers money and have less impact on the environment. If customers are stuck on taste issues, they might consider challenging themselves and drinking only from the tap (filtered or unfiltered) for 30-days using the tips suggested above. At the end of the day, we want more of our customers to trust their tap water and to arm themselves with more knowledge so that they can make better-informed choices that meet their personal needs.

Tips For Drinking Tap Water

Fill up reusable water bottles with tap water and store them in the refrigerator for convenient, chilled tap water with no waste.

If you’ve been away from your home for a few days run your faucet for a few minutes before drinking or using the water for cooking.

To reduce or eliminate chlorine odor/taste, fill a pitcher from the tap and place it into the refrigerator for about an hour before drinking.

If a customer still has issues or concerns with taste/odor or if there is simply a personal preference, they may consider using a home filter system (e.g. Brita™, Pur™, ZeroWater™, AquaGear™, et al) built-in refrigerator filter, or a reputable brand reverse osmosis system before reverting to bottled water. Use of such systems can be beneficial in homes with older plumbing. However, these systems need to be properly maintained in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendation, otherwise, they can actually degrade the quality of tap water.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter @lvmwd and Instagram @LasVirgenes_MWD.

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District provides potable water, wastewater treatment, recycled water and biosolids composting to more than 70,000 residents in the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Westlake Village, and unincorporated areas of western Los Angeles County.