

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health

Refer: PPB-42
July 1972

CURRENT OPINIONS ON FLUORIDATION

Over a period of years a number of opinion surveys have been conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.* The results of these surveys show:

. . . although the majority of people indicate they have heard or read about fluoridating public water supplies, about one-third are uninformed:

<u>1959</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>
73%	82%	78%	72%	70%

In 1972 when asked what the purpose of fluoridation is, only one-half of all the U.S. adults were aware that fluoridation prevents tooth decay or was good for teeth.

Among Those Who Have Heard about Fluoridation

. . . over two-thirds still favor fluoridation:

	<u>1959</u>	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>
Very Desirable/Desirable	65%	72%	71%	77%	70%
Very Undesirable/Undesirable	12%	14%	13%	11%	13%
Unconcerned/Don't Know	23%	15%	15%	12%	17%

Additional Information Was Collected in the More Recent Surveys

. . . the largest number of people still believe the decision to fluoridate the water supply should be made by health authority/department or elected officials:

	<u>1966</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>
Elected Officials	15%	2%	3%
Health Authority/Department (not incl. in 1966 survey)		56%	48%
Special Vote	77%	40%	46%
Other/Don't Know	8%	2%	3%

*NOTE. -- All surveys are national area probability random samples. The 1972 survey consisted of 1,613 U.S. adults.

. . . While there was a small increase in the percentage of people in favor of the decision being made by special vote, one-third of the people continued to believe the decision to fluoridate should be made at either the Federal or State level:

	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>
Federal (not incl. in 1968 survey)	--	17%
State	34%	16%
Local	62%	62%
Don't Know	4%	4%

Nationwide understanding of fluoridation is limited. If more people are to know the advantage fluoridation offers for better oral health, more extensive public education on the benefits of fluoridation is essential. Greater interest of health authorities will be required in support of this health measure.

Division of Dental Health
Preventive Practices Branch
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20014