Water: Right or Commodity?

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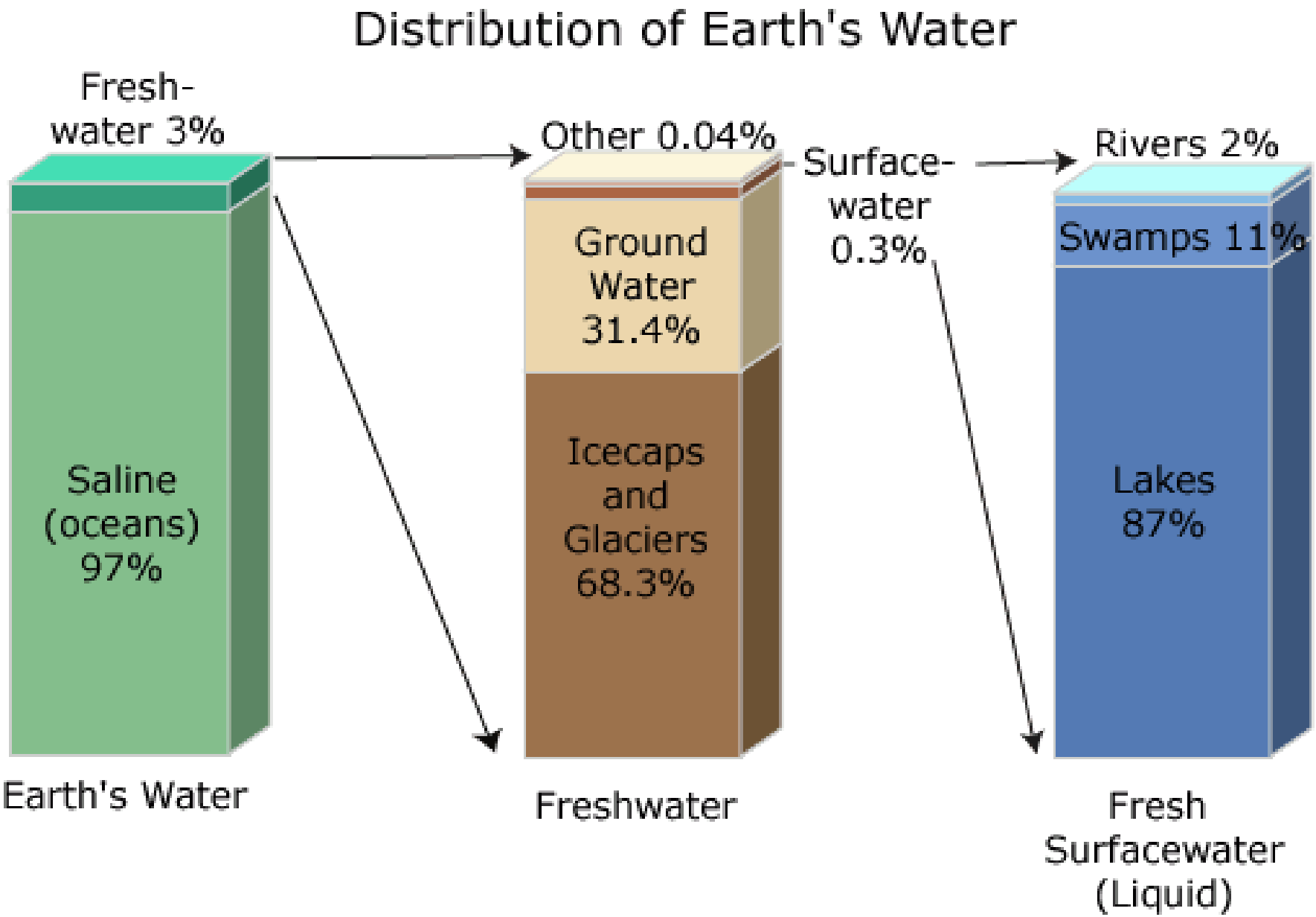
Necessities of Life

Air

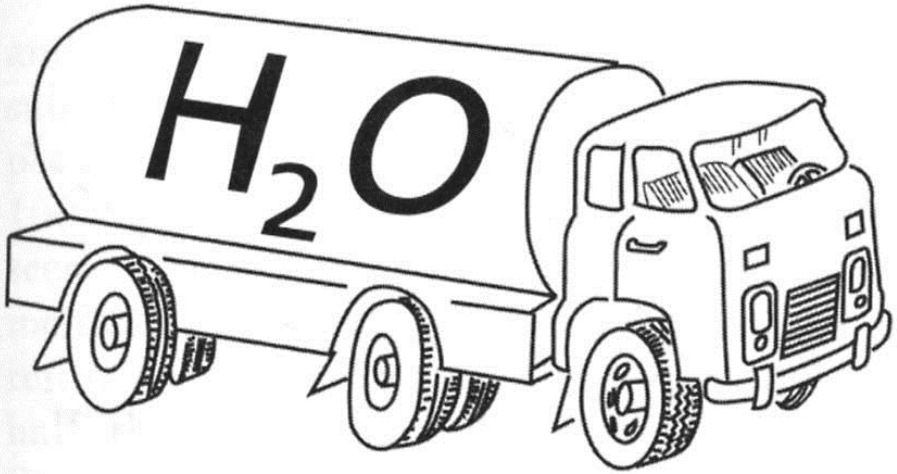
Water

Food

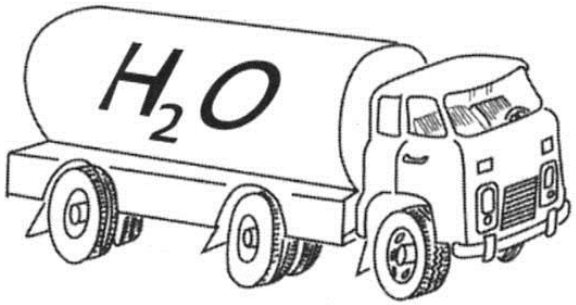
Shelter



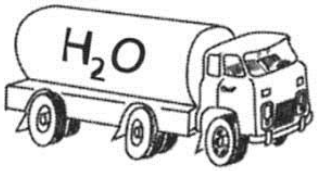
USGS website



USA	366 m^3 cap^{-1} yr^{-1}
Household:	100
Service:	140
Industry:	126



EUROPE	232 m^3 cap^{-1} yr^{-1}
Household:	57
Service:	35
Industry:	140



AFRICA	25 m^3 cap^{-1} yr^{-1}
Household:	10
Service:	8
Industry:	7

Source: Adapted from Schertenleib, personal communication

Figure 3.2 *Domestic water use for different regions of the world (m^3/person/year)*

Falkenmark and Rockström 2004

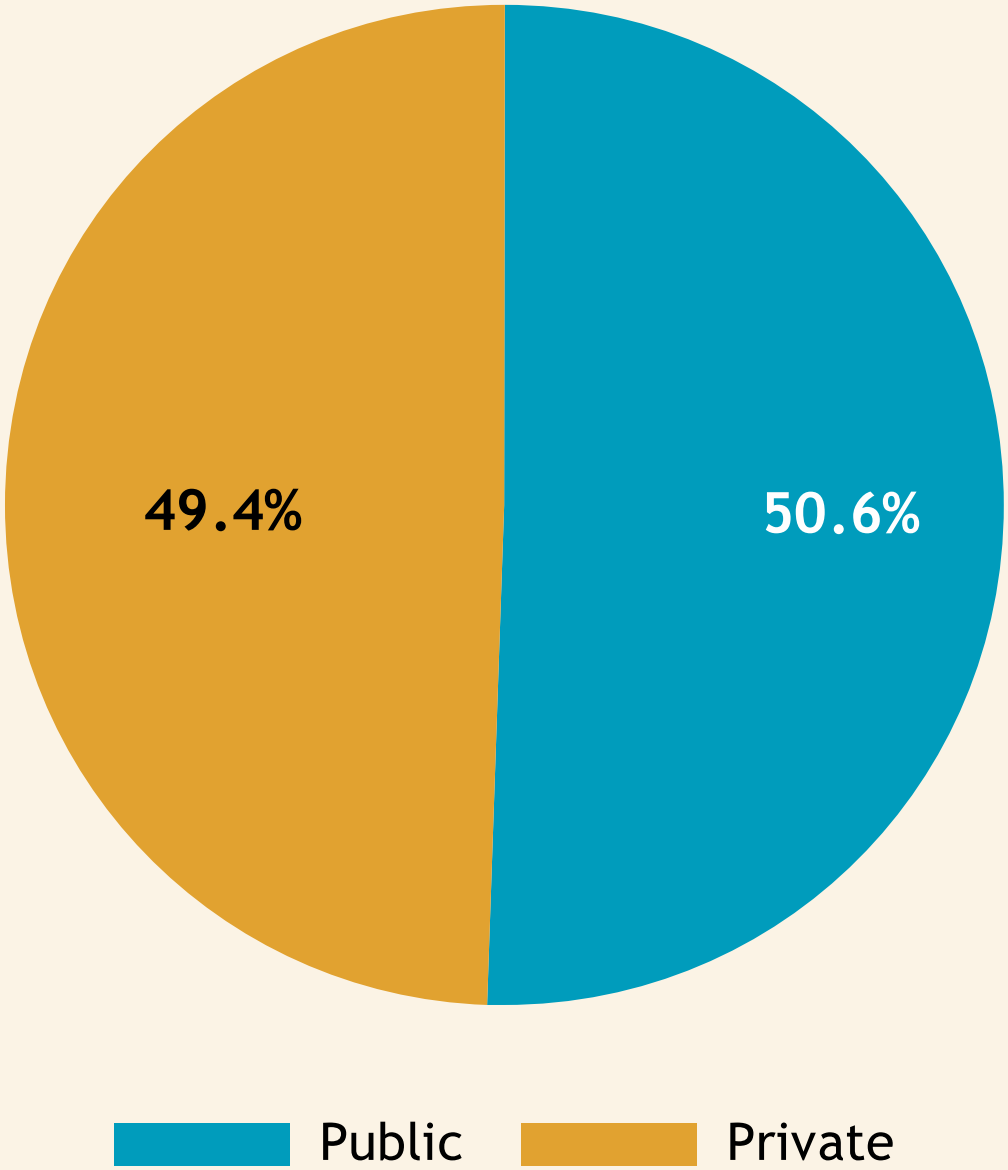
US Water Laws

- Eastern US
  - Riparian rights – maintain flow
- Western US
  - First in line, first in right – overuse
- Great Lakes Water Compact
  - Quite different – no export from watershed

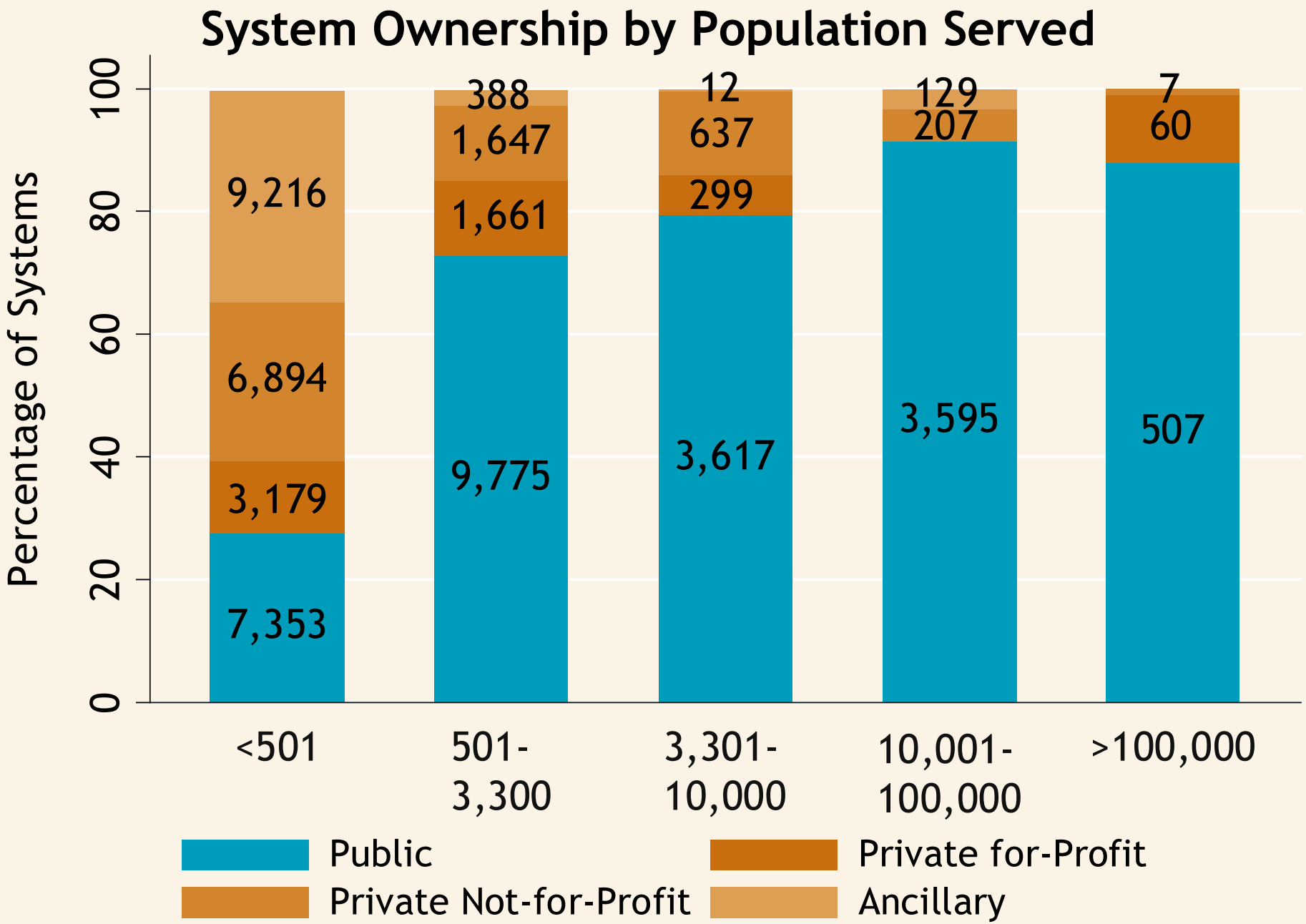
Safe Drinking Water Act

- Regulates quality of water supplies not private wells
- Chemicals and pathogens
- MCL – based on risk, but can include economics
- Enforcement
  - Administrative orders
  - Fines
  - Legal actions
- UCMR list

Water Systems by Ownership

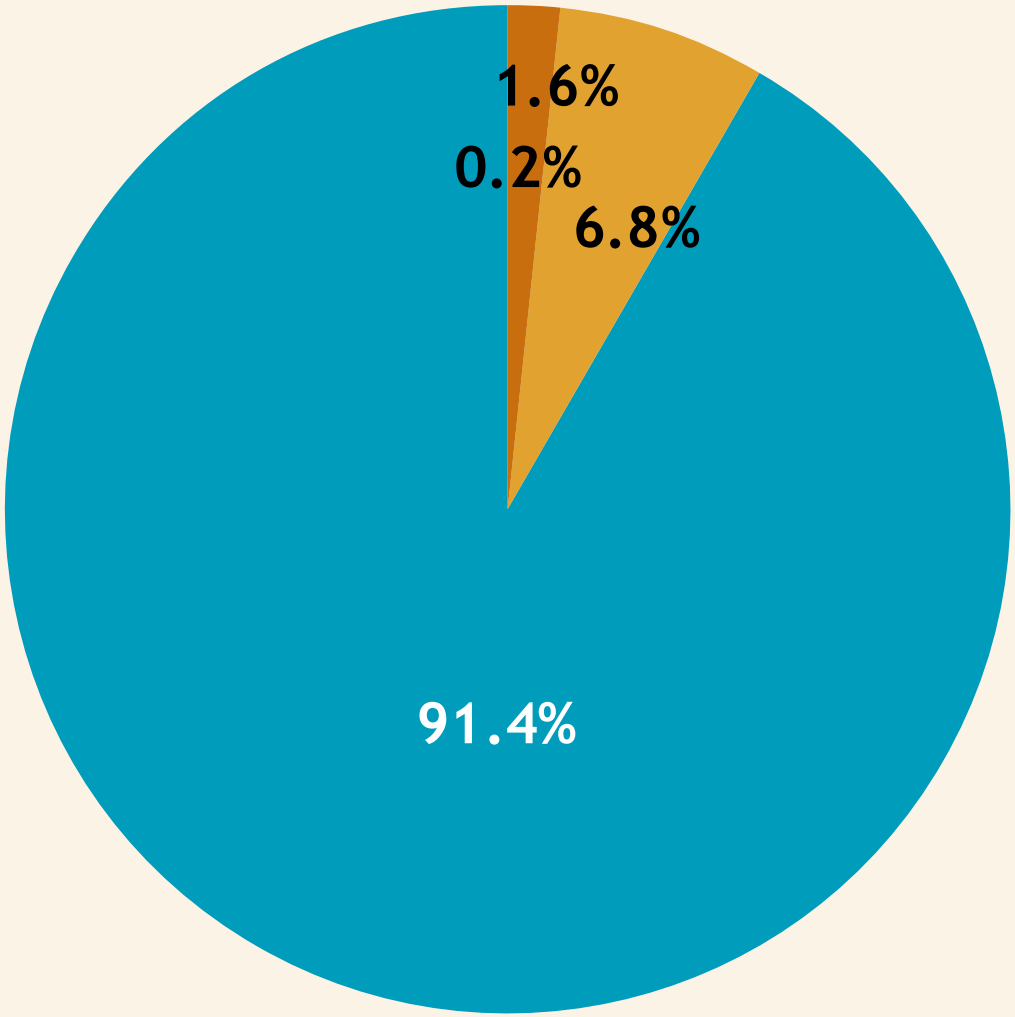


USEPA, 2006 Community Water System Survey Report



USEPA, 2006 Community Water System Survey Report

Total Water Delivered by Ownership

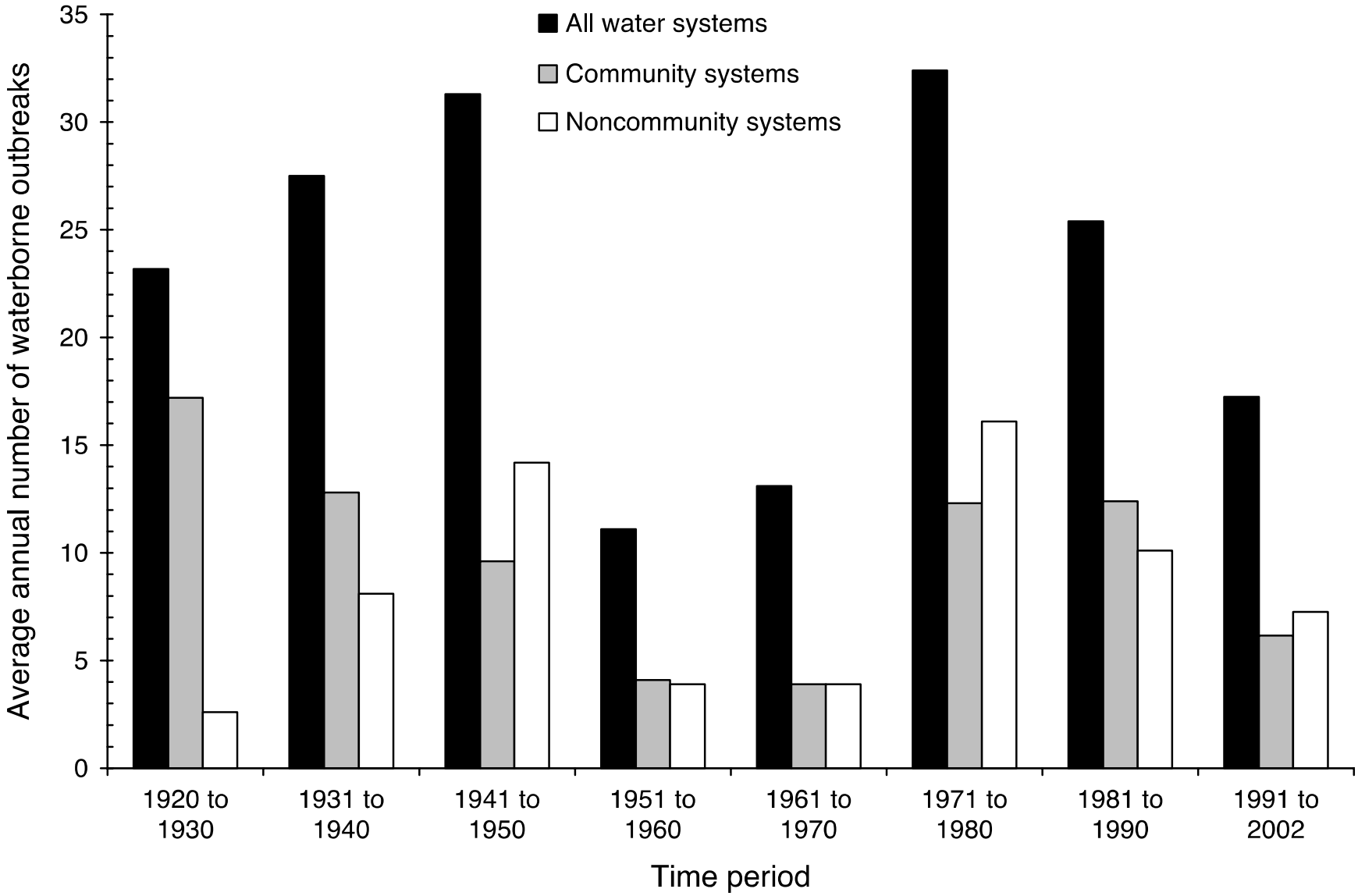


Public
Private for-Profit
Private Not-for-Profit
Ancillary

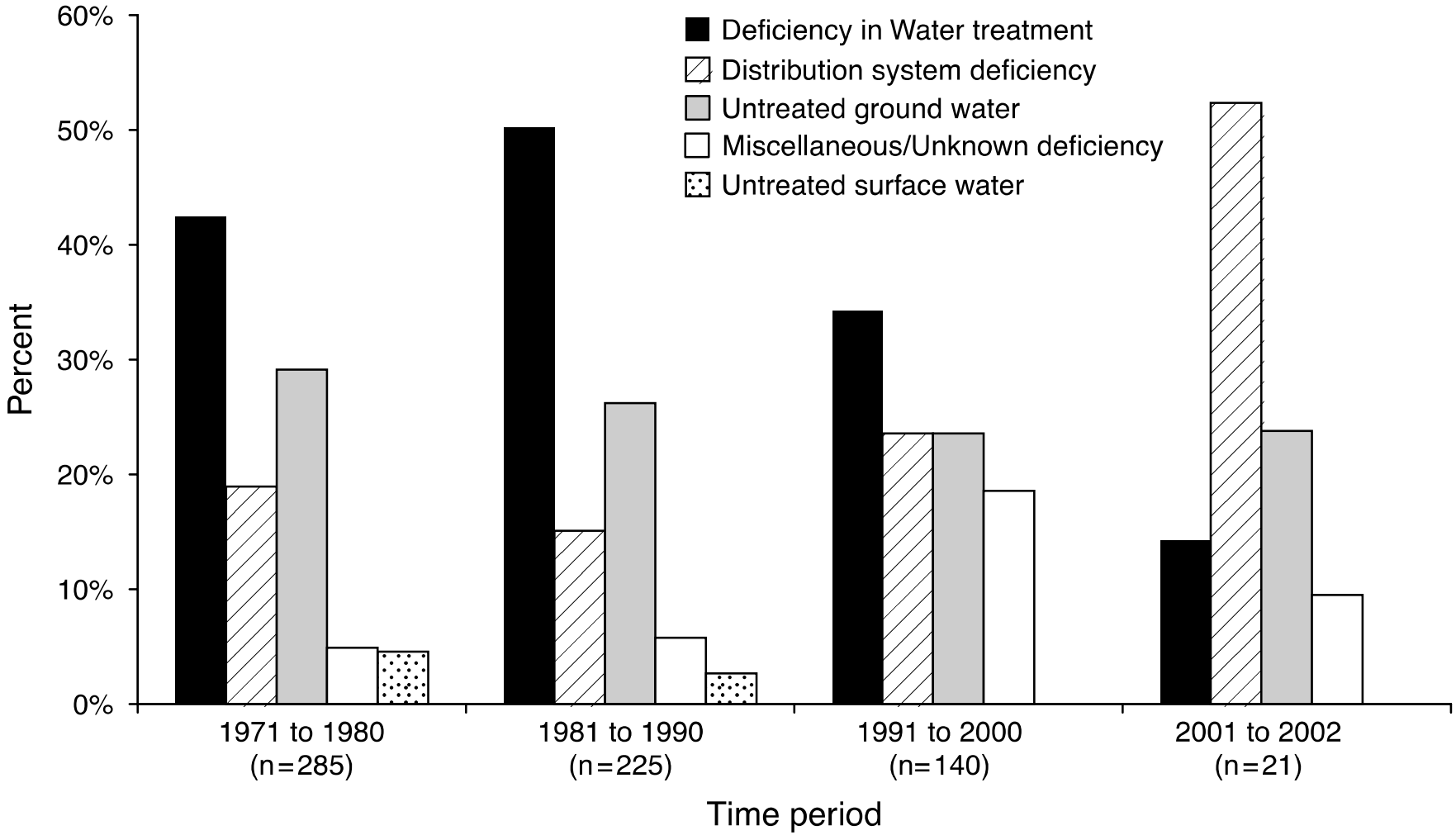
USEPA, 2006 Community Water System Survey Report

What is the purpose of a private water company?

- Flint
- Pittsburgh
- Milwaukee



Craun *et al.* 2006



Craun *et al.* 2006

Questions… …for you

- Is water a right or a commodity?
- Can it be both?
- If water is a right, but must be provided at cost, who pays?
- Does economic incentive put customers at risk?
- What about private wells?