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Orinda Voter Views of a Potential Finance Measure

Key Findings from a Survey of Voters
Conducted January 30-February 6, 2020

Methodology

- 436 interviews with Orinda voters likely to participate in the November 2020 election
- Conducted January 31-February 6, 2020, online and via landline and cell phones
- Margin of sampling error of $\pm 4.9\%$ at the 95% confidence level; $\pm 6.9\%$ for half-samples
- Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%
- Selected comparisons to prior research conducted in the city in 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018



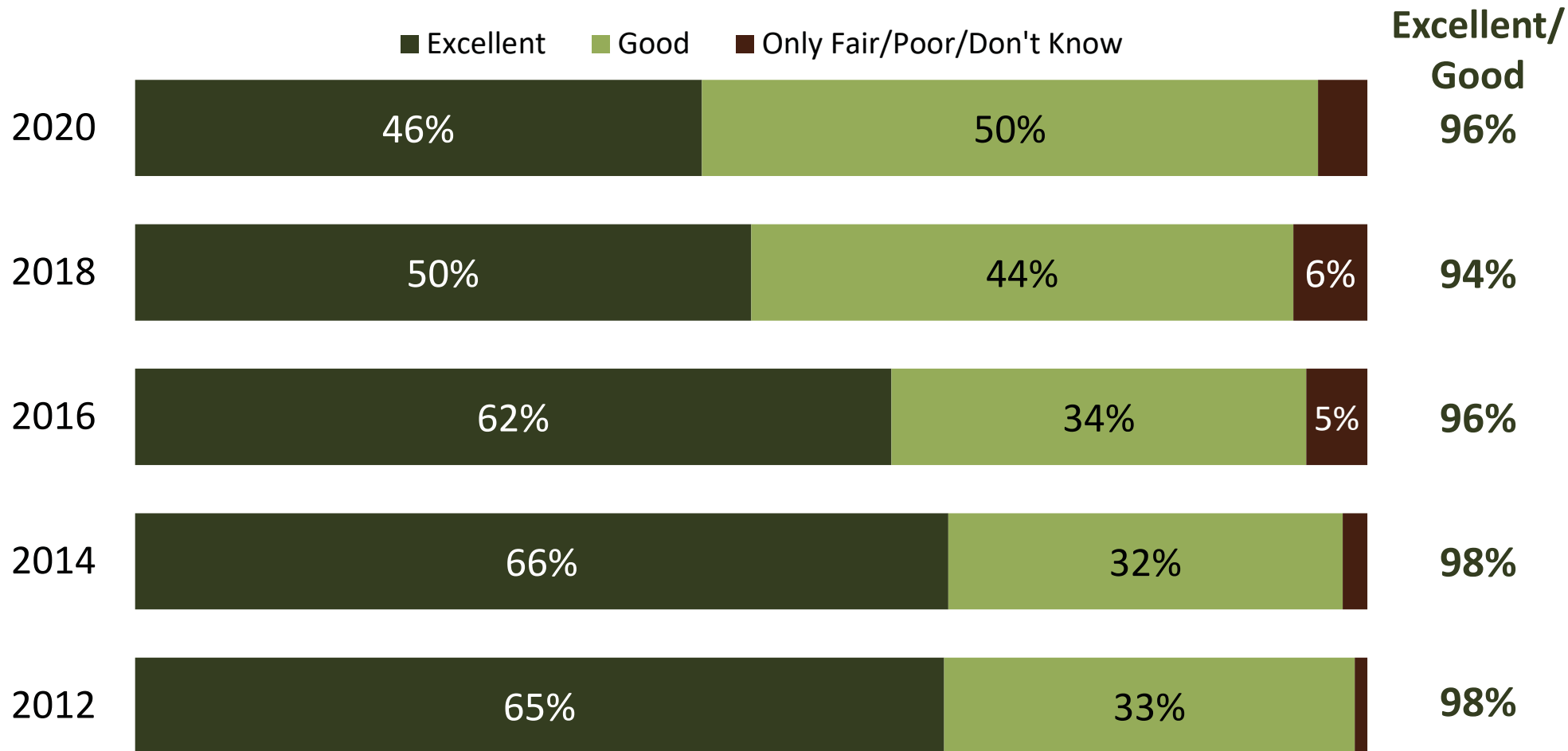


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Issue Context and Views of the City

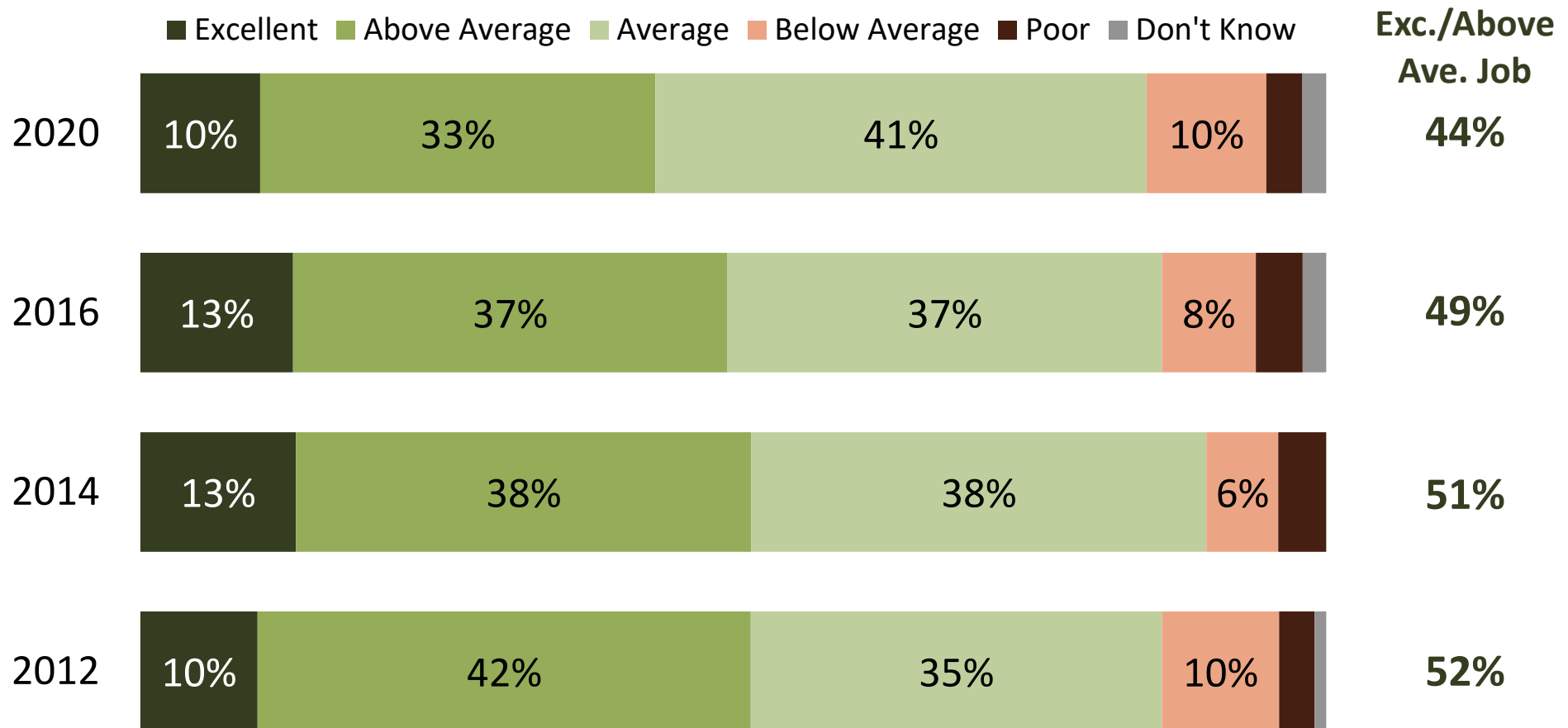
Perceptions of Orinda quality of life are very positive, though intensity has eroded over time.

Would you say that the overall quality of life in Orinda is excellent, good, only fair, or poor?



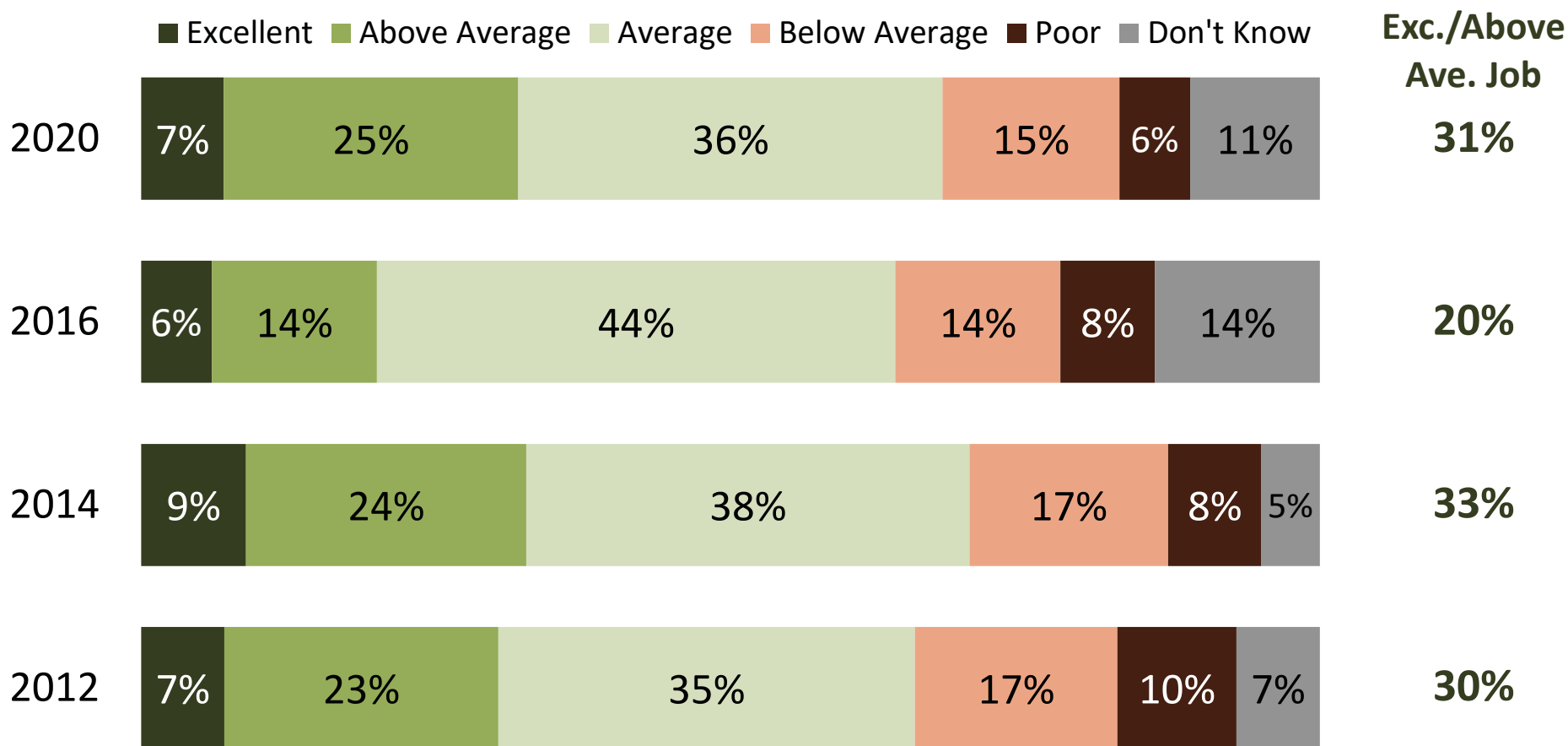
Voters continue to express satisfaction with the City's delivery of services.

Overall, how would you rate the job being done by the City of Orinda in providing basic services and taking care of the needs of Orinda residents? Would you say the City of Orinda is doing an excellent job, above average job, average job, below average job, or poor job?



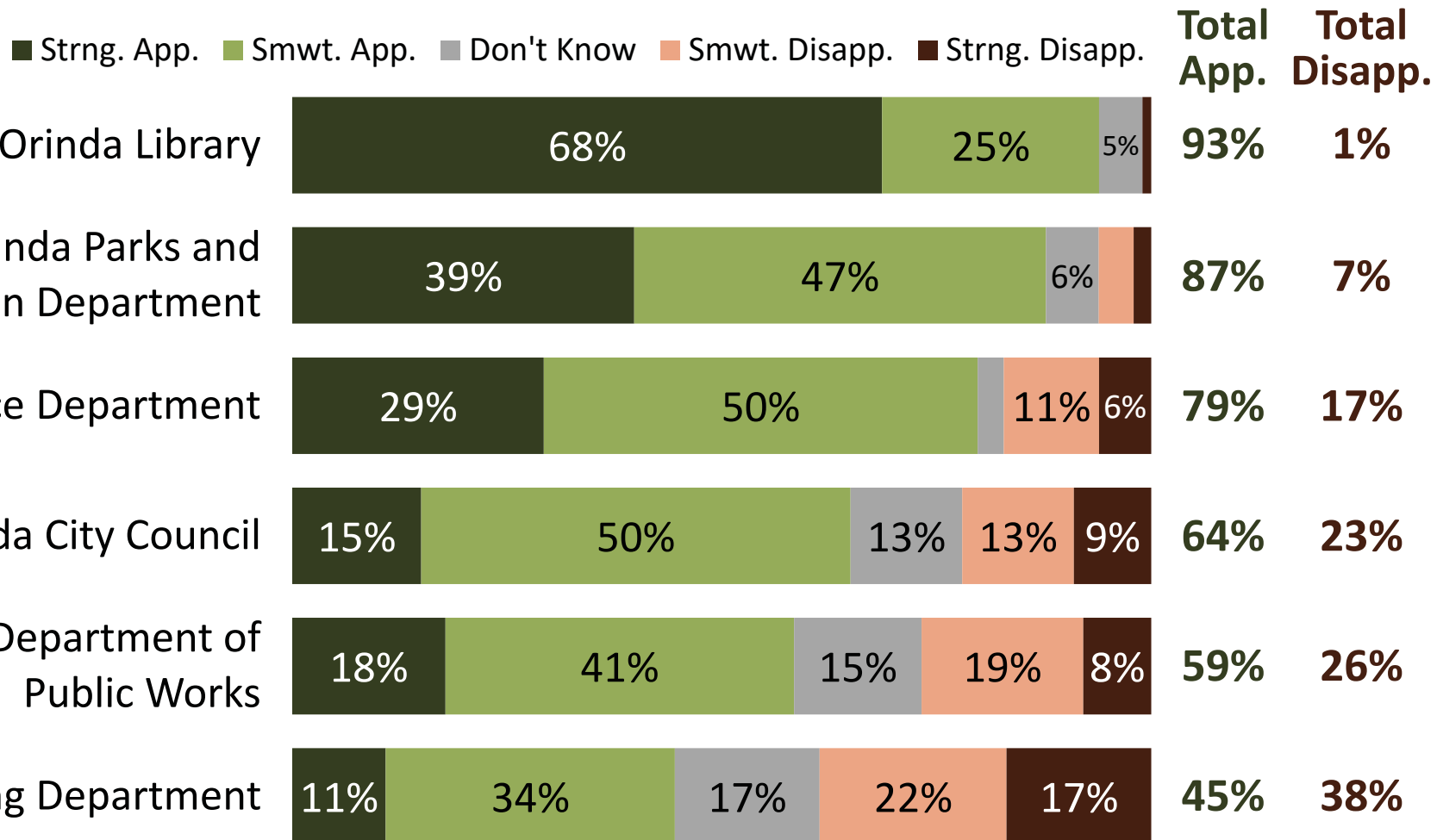
Three in ten now say the City is doing an “excellent” or “above average” job spending tax dollars wisely.

And how would you rate the job the City of Orinda has done spending tax dollars wisely? Would you say the City is doing an excellent job, above average job, average job, below average job, or poor job?



Orinda voters overwhelmingly approve of their library, parks and recreation department, and police department.

I'm going to read you a brief list of City departments. Please tell me whether you generally approve or disapprove of the job each is doing.



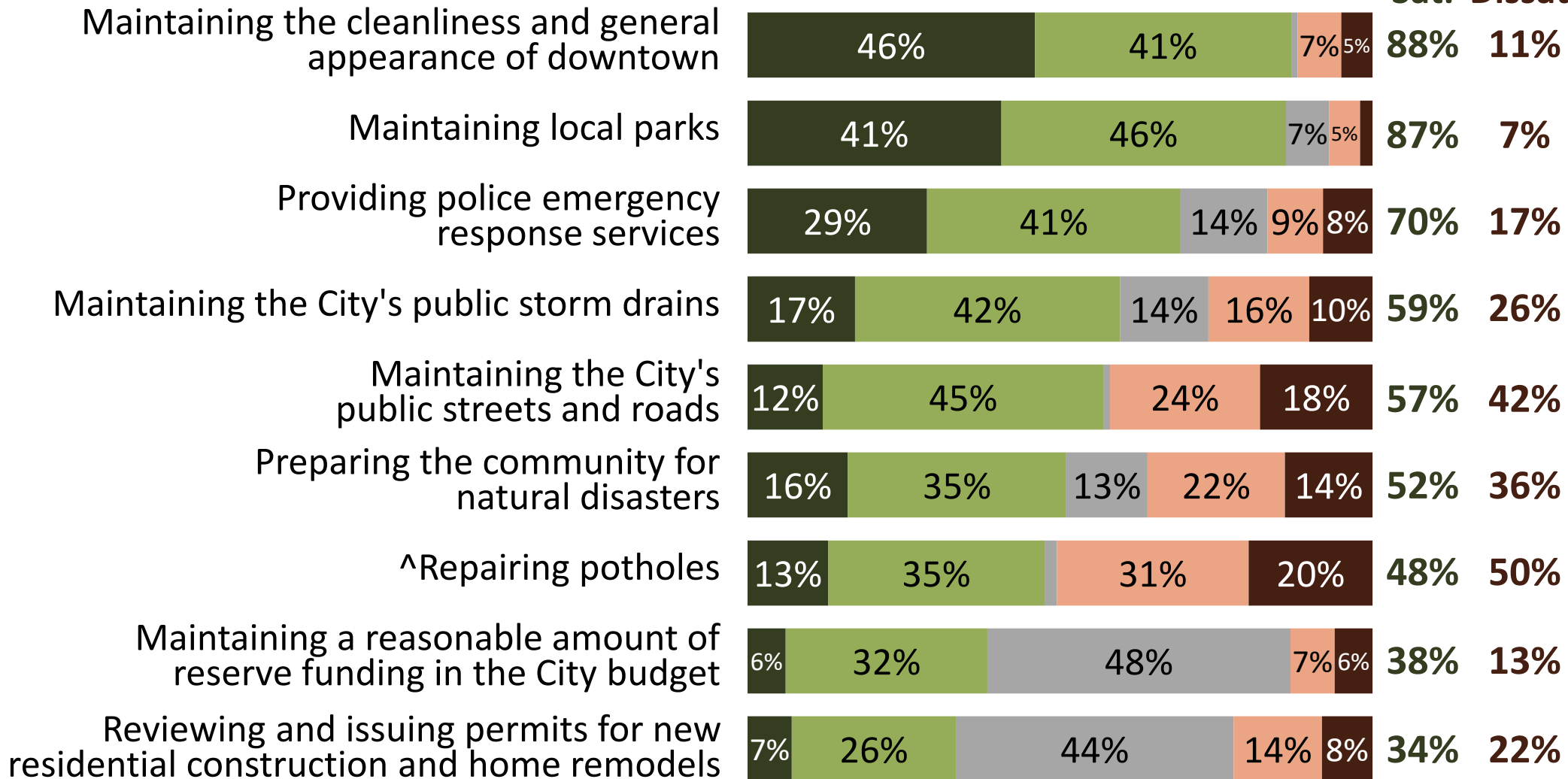
Approval of the police department has declined in the last two years, though nearly four in five still approve.

(Total Approve)

Public Institutions	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	Difference (2020-2018)
The Orinda City Council	64%	62%	55%	53%	64%	+11%
The Orinda Parks and Recreation Department	83%	89%	87%	82%	87%	+5%
The Orinda Library	92%	95%	91%	91%	93%	+2%
The Orinda Police Department	90%	89%	88%	91%	79%	-12%
The Orinda Department of Public Works	60%	66%	57%	--	59%	--
The Orinda Planning Department	51%	51%	47%	--	45%	--

Voters are largely satisfied with the general appearance of downtown and parks; a majority is dissatisfied with pothole repairs.

■ Very Sat. ■ Smwt. Sat. ■ Don't Know ■ Smwt. Dissat. ■ Very Dissat. **Total Sat. Total Dissat.**



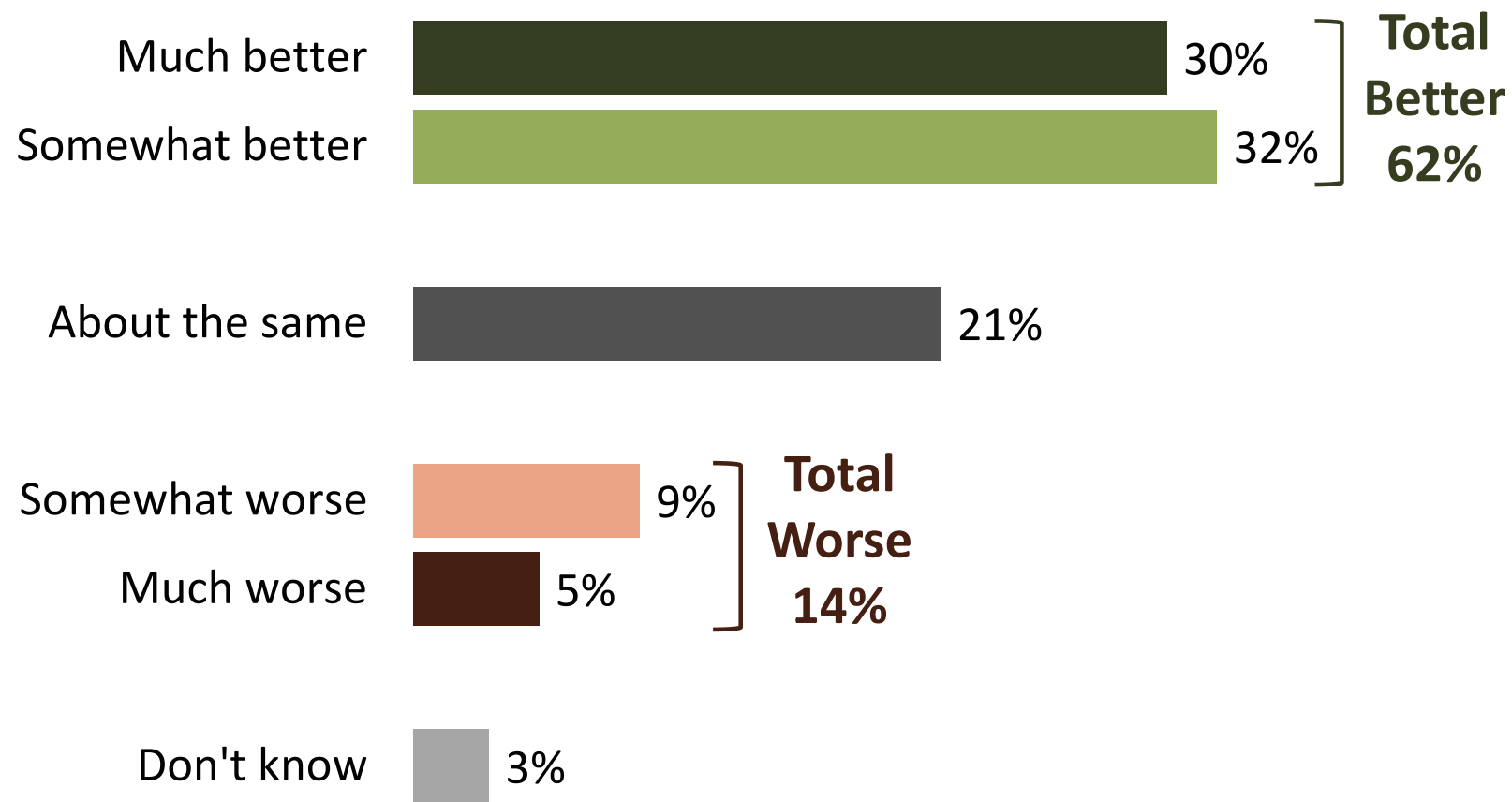
Satisfaction with police emergency response services is down, though a strong majority is still satisfied.

(Total Satisfied)

Service	2016	2020	Difference
*Maintaining the City's public streets and roads	38%	57%	+19%
^Repairing potholes	33%	48%	+15%
Maintaining a reasonable amount of reserve funding in the City budget	31%	38%	+7%
Preparing the community for natural disasters	48%	52%	+4%
Maintaining the cleanliness and general appearance of downtown	90%	88%	-2%
Maintaining local parks	89%	87%	-2%
Reviewing and issuing permits for new residential construction and home remodels	43%	34%	-9%
Providing police emergency response services	83%	70%	-13%

Three in five believe streets and roads have gotten better over the last few years.

In the last few years would you say that the overall quality of public streets and roads in the City of Orinda has gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?





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The Ballot Measure

Ballot Measure Language Tested

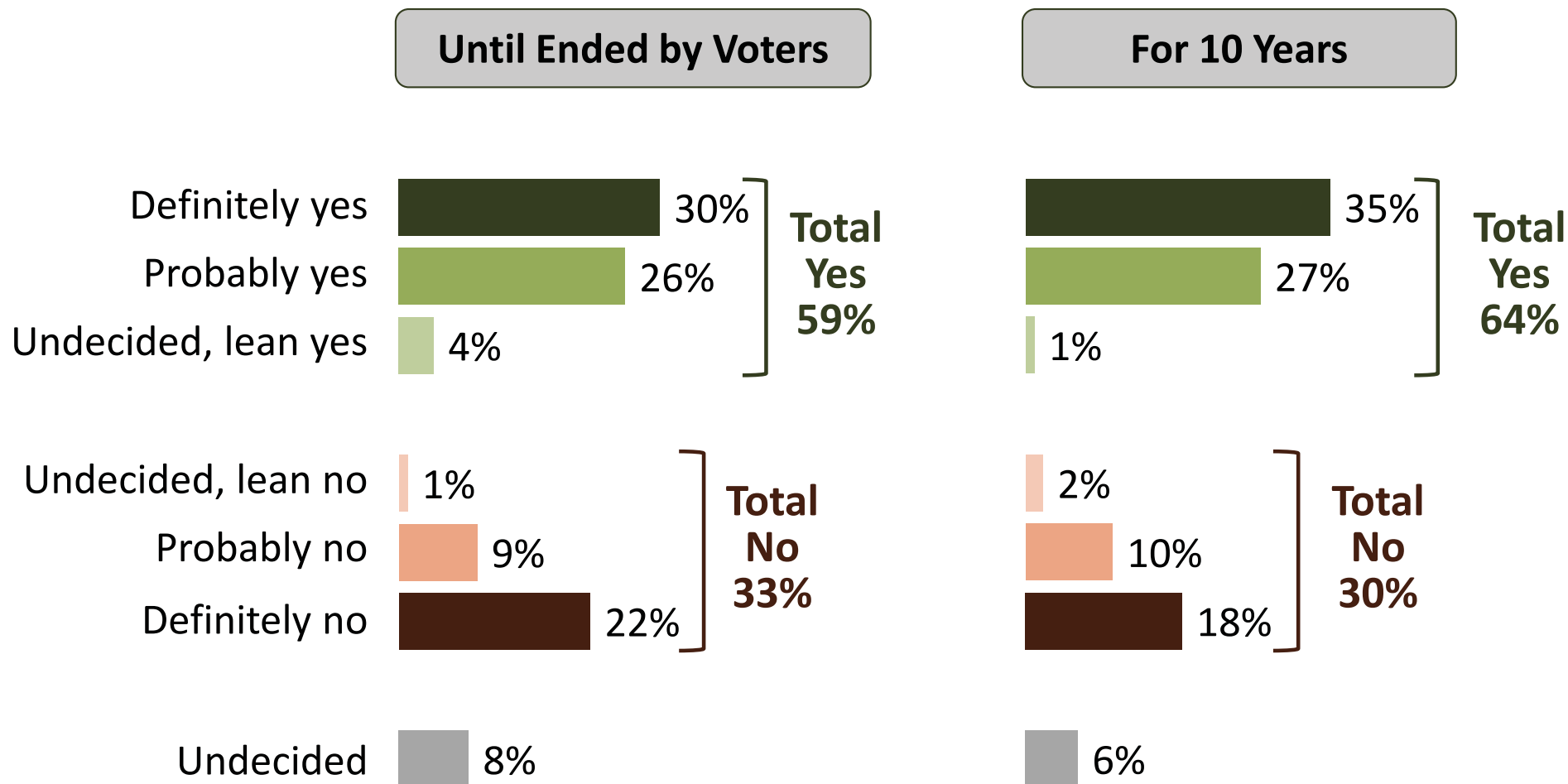
Simple Majority Vote Threshold

Orinda Essential City Services Measure. To help maintain essential City services, including:

- ongoing repairs/ maintenance to public roads and storm drains;
- restoring wildlife habitat and recreation along San Pablo Creek;
- emergency/ natural disaster preparedness, including wildfire prevention/ evacuation planning;

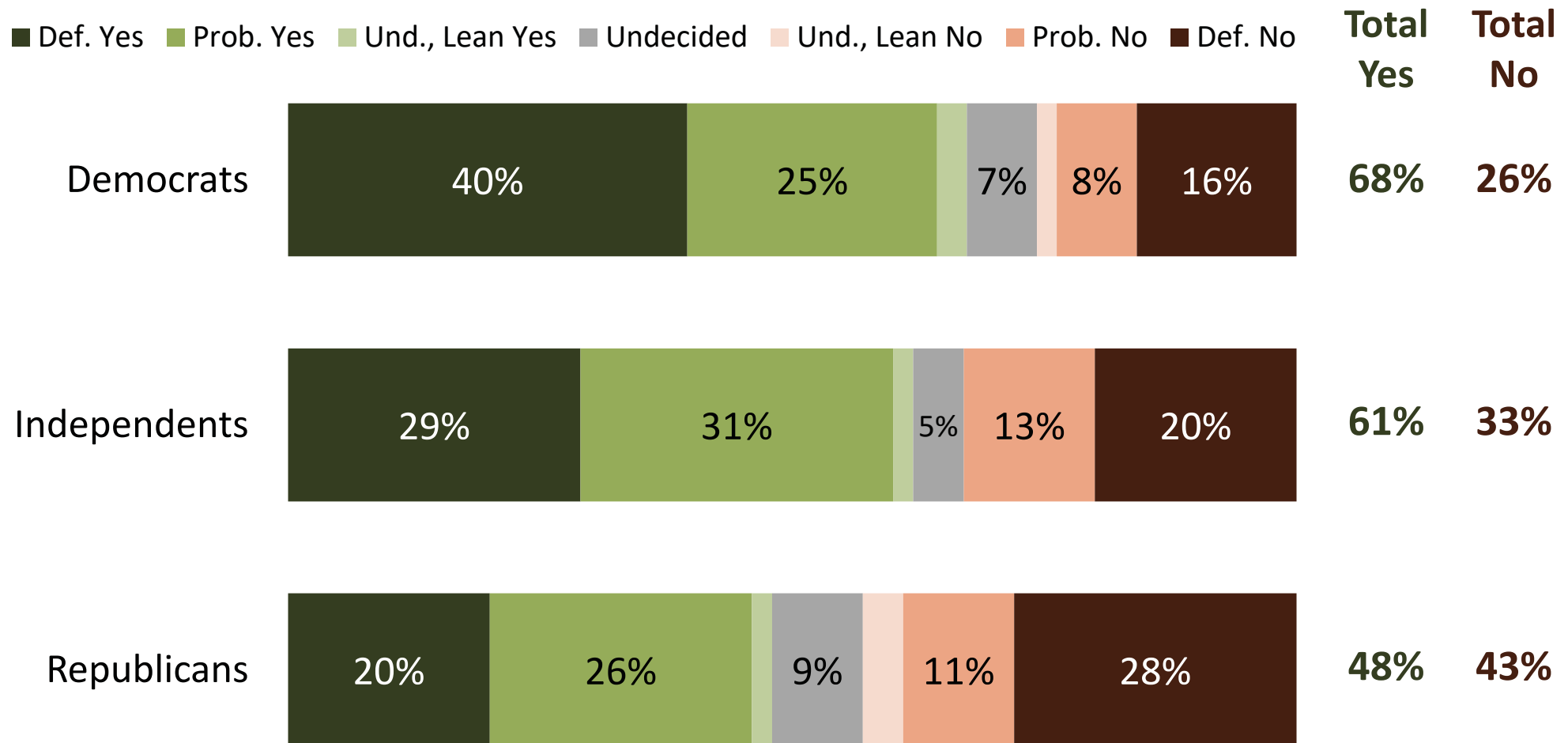
Shall the City of Orinda renew the existing half-cent sales tax and increase it by half-cent, providing \$2.4 million annually (**HALF SAMPLE:** until ended by voters) (**HALF SAMPLE:** for 10 years), with financial audits and a citizens oversight committee?

Strong majorities of voters support such a measure, with slightly more intensity behind one that sunsets after 10 years.



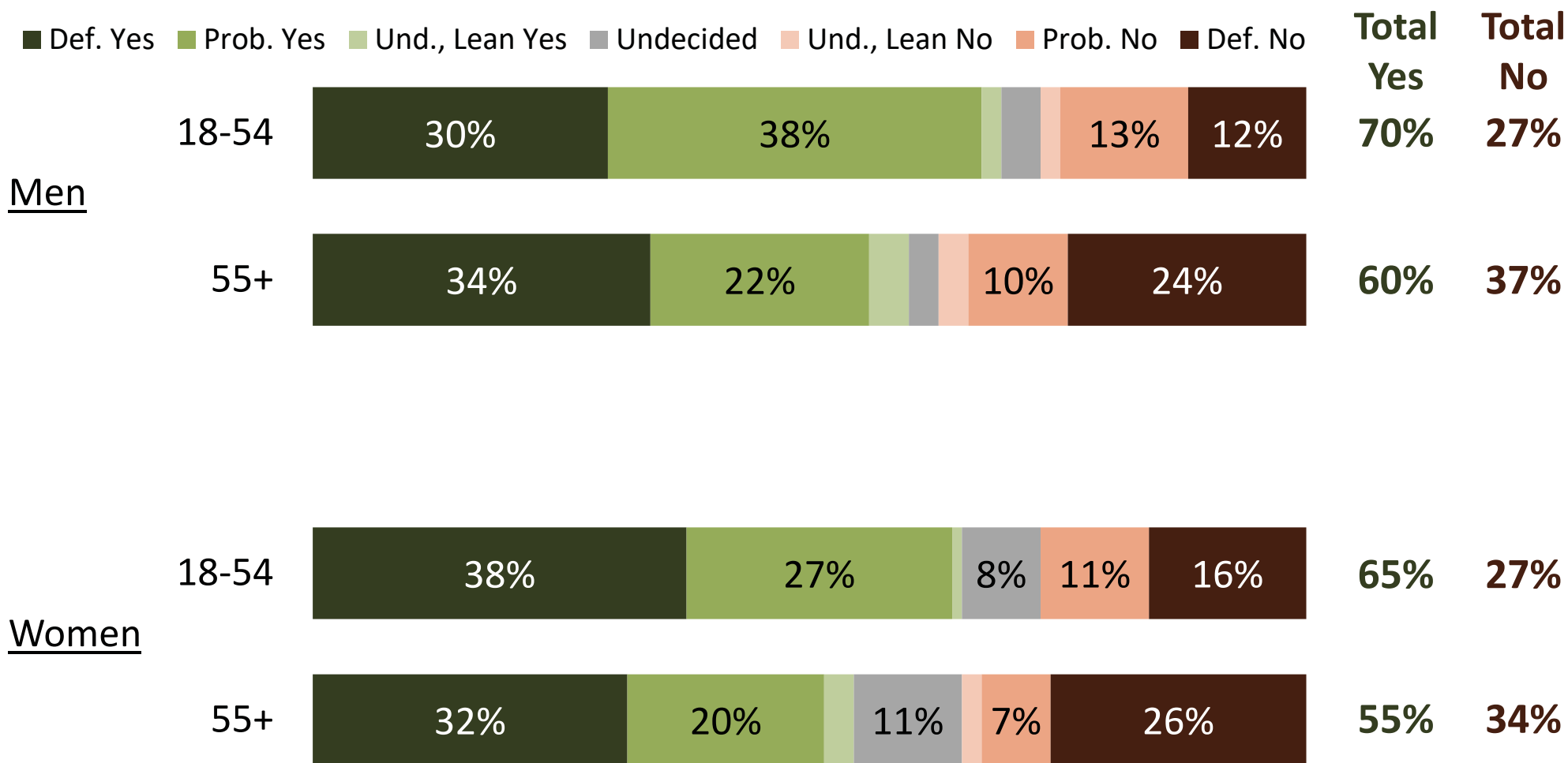
Nearly seven in ten Democrats back the measure, as do three in five independents.

Combined Initial Vote by Party



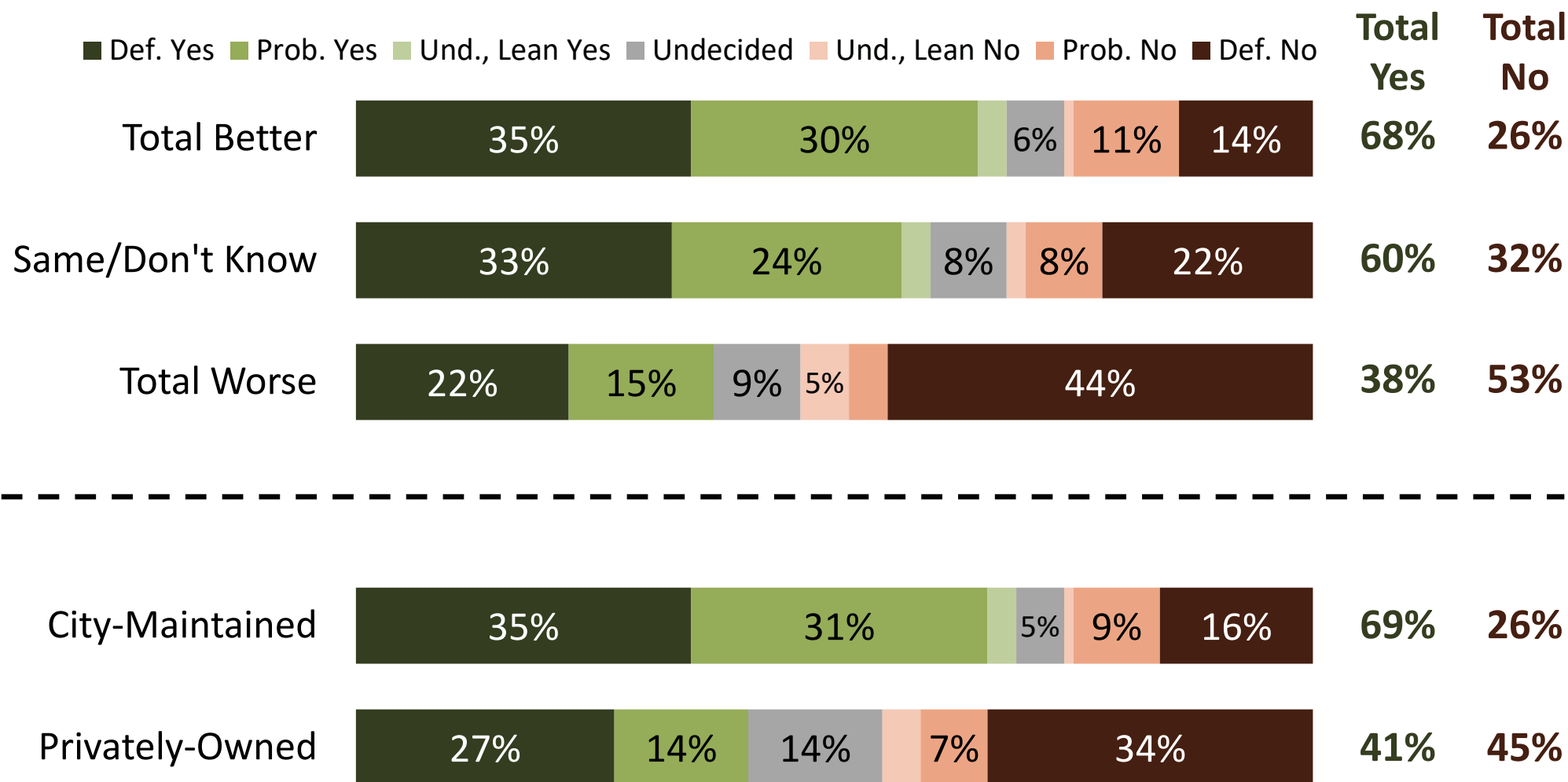
Younger voters are more likely to support a measure.

Combined Initial Vote by Gender by Age



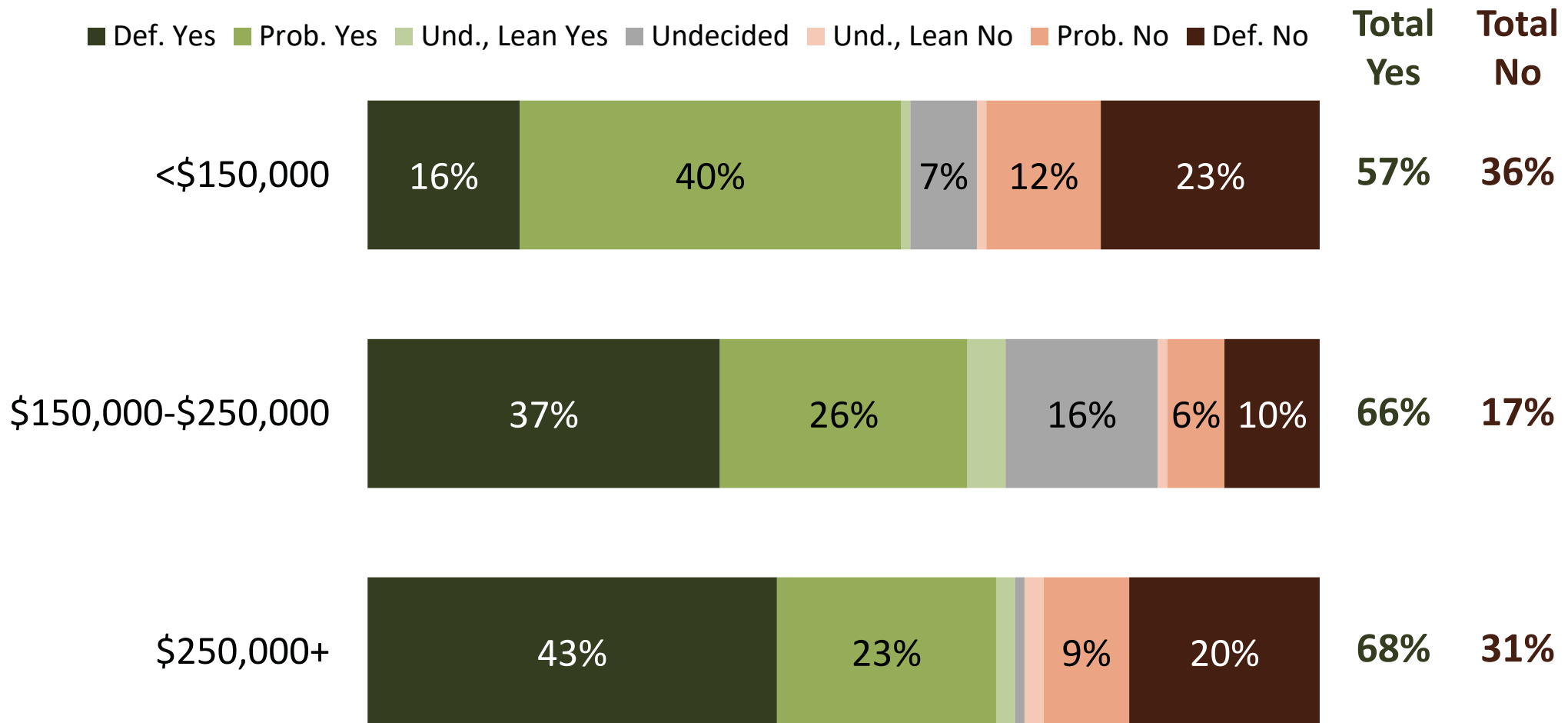
Those on City-maintained roads are more likely to favor a measure.

Combined Initial Vote by Change in Quality Public Roads & Type of Road



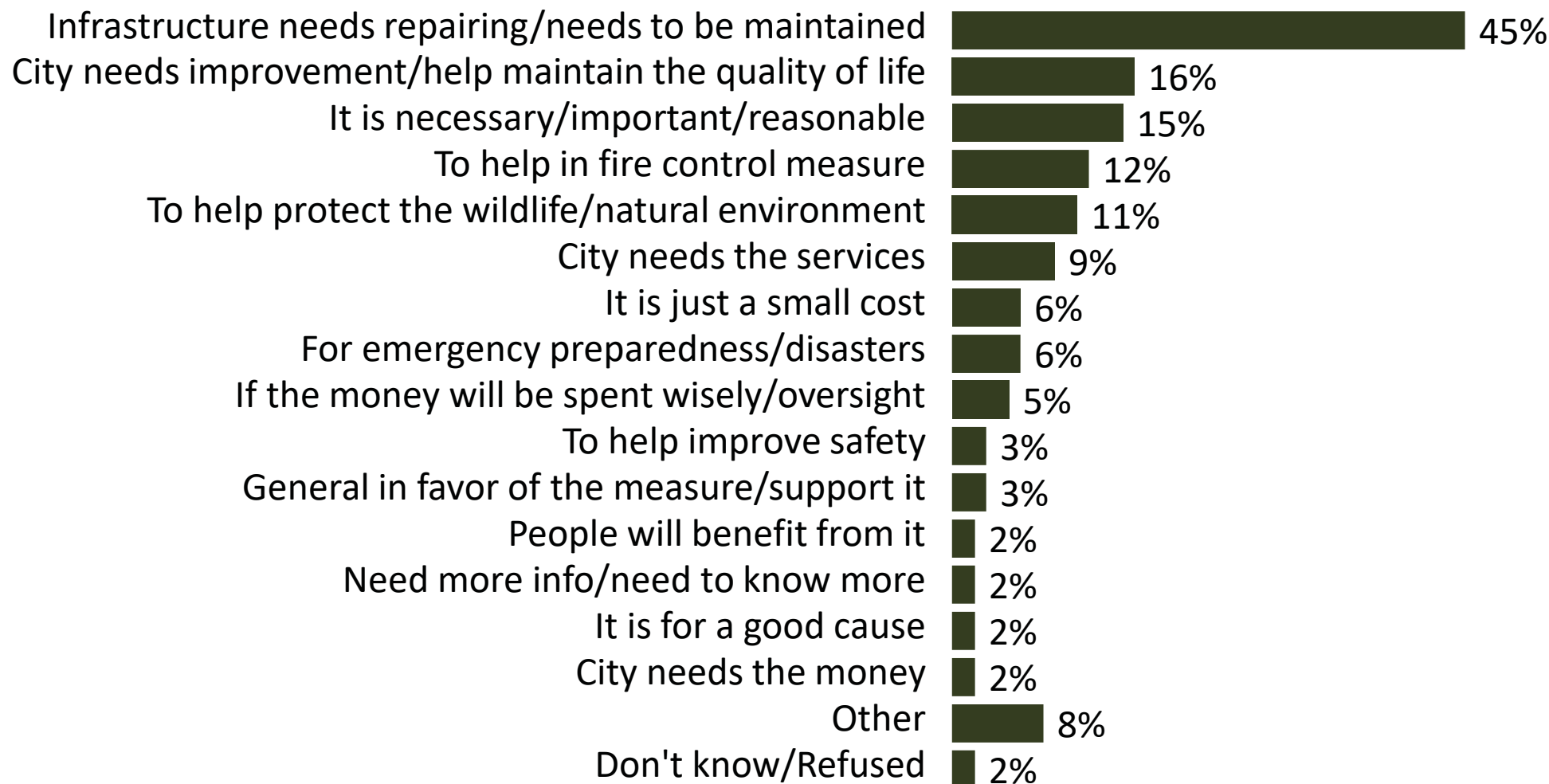
Higher-income households are more likely to say they would “definitely” back a measure.

Combined Initial Vote by Household Income



Voters who support a measure broadly recognize the need to invest in infrastructure.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **YES** on this ballot measure?
(Open-ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, N=269)*



Verbatim Responses from Supporters

We need to do something about the wildfire problems.

We have roads that need repairs. We have problems with wildfire prevention.

There are few if any other options to finance the projects listed and maintain or improve Orinda's quality of life.

We maintain the value of our homes by keeping the infrastructure in excellent shape.

You list some problems and issues that even once fixed, won't go away. They are items whose permanent funding should have been assured years ago. Orinda is worth it!

We have to maintain our creeks to have safe drains to avoid floods when it is storming.

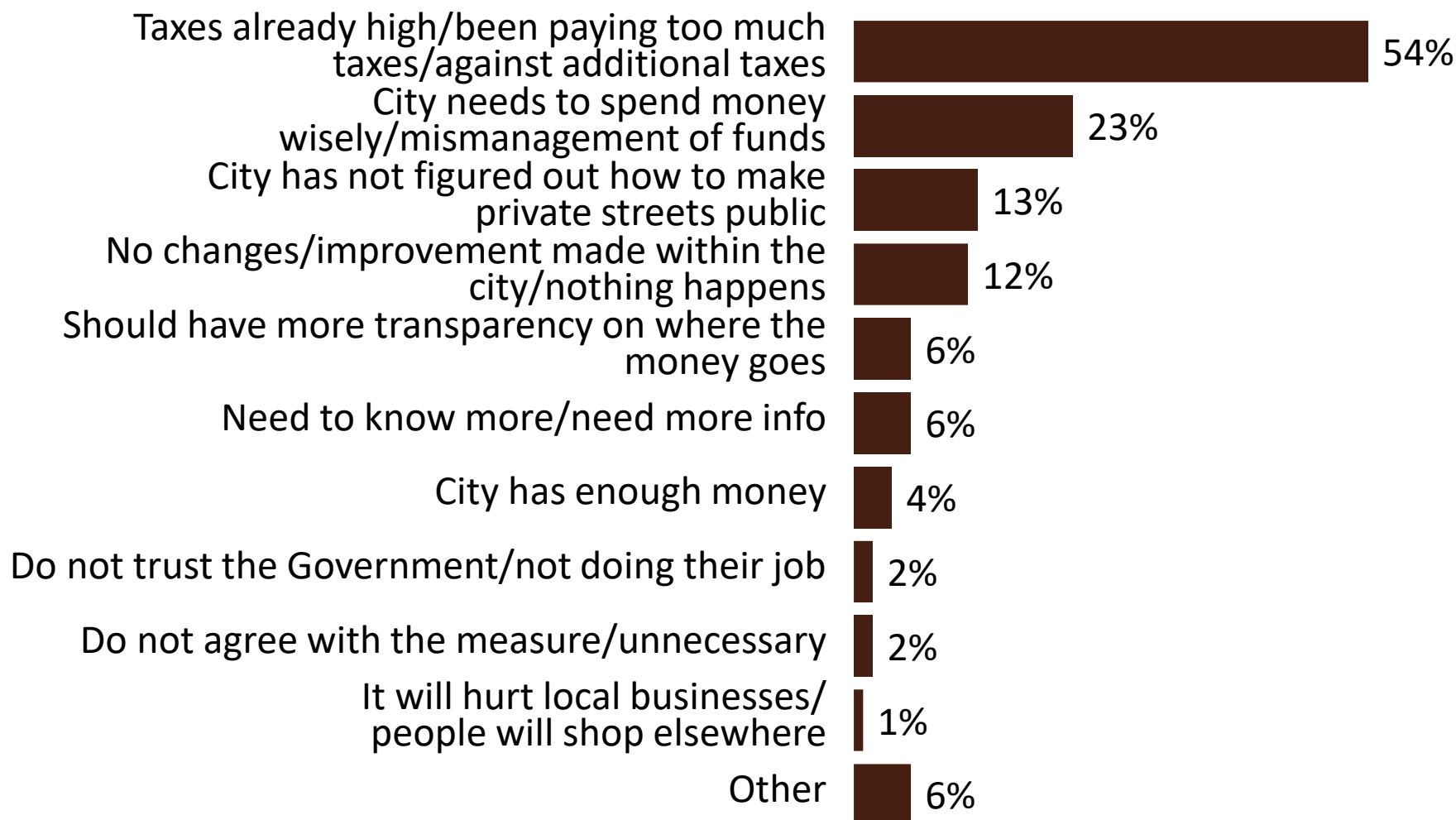
Repairing roads is a high priority.

It supports the things that caused me to settle in Orinda.

With the work we started with the 2012 tax measure and the '14 and '16 bond measures, we would be foolish to backslide on maintaining the roads that have been repaved with those funds. Plus we still have a lot of work to do on drains and similar infrastructure.

Opponents of a measure largely object to taxes in general.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on this ballot measure?
(Open-ended; Asked of No Voters Only; N=137)*



Verbatim Responses from Opponents

We have way too many taxes. We need to remove some of them and not add anything.

We pay more than enough taxes. Taxes are too high right now.

There have been too many tax increases. They must stop.

My property tax bill has gone from \$32K to \$40k over the last couple years. Assessed value has been rising.

I have not been convinced of the need for an increase rather than sustaining the tax.

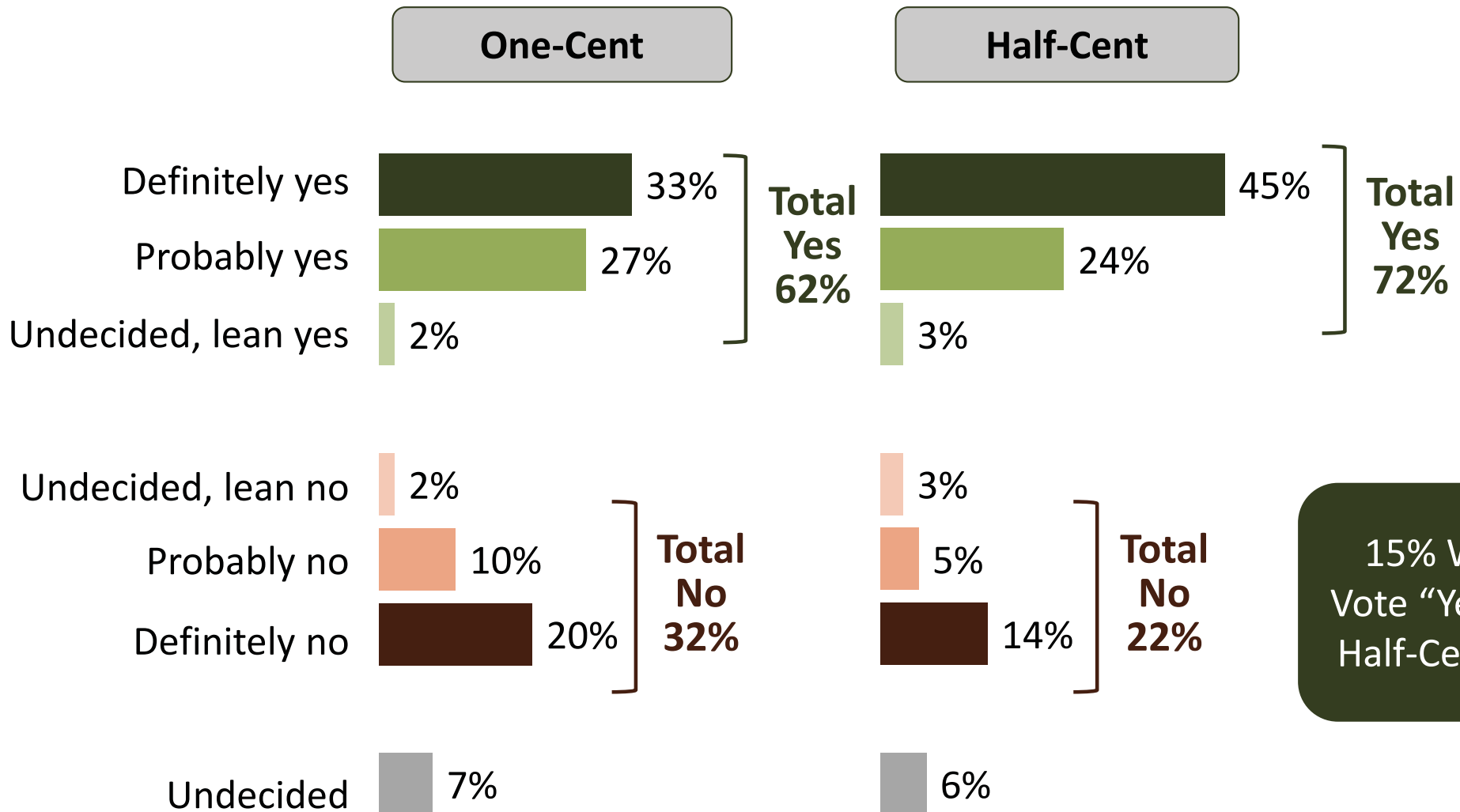
I would vote yes on renewing the ½-cent tax but decline to increase it.

I live on a private road which is funded by myself and my neighbors. I therefore wouldn't receive as much benefit from this tax as someone who lives on a public road and doesn't need to fund the maintenance themselves.

Unless the money could **ONLY** be used for the purposes indicated and all prior ballot measures for the schools and roads be directed only towards those expenses. Why do we vote bond measure after bond measure and the roads and schools never get fixed????

Q3b. In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on this ballot measure?

A half-cent sales tax has stronger and broader support compared with a full cent.



Q2 Total. If the election were held today, do you think you would vote "Yes" in favor of this measure, or "No" to oppose it?

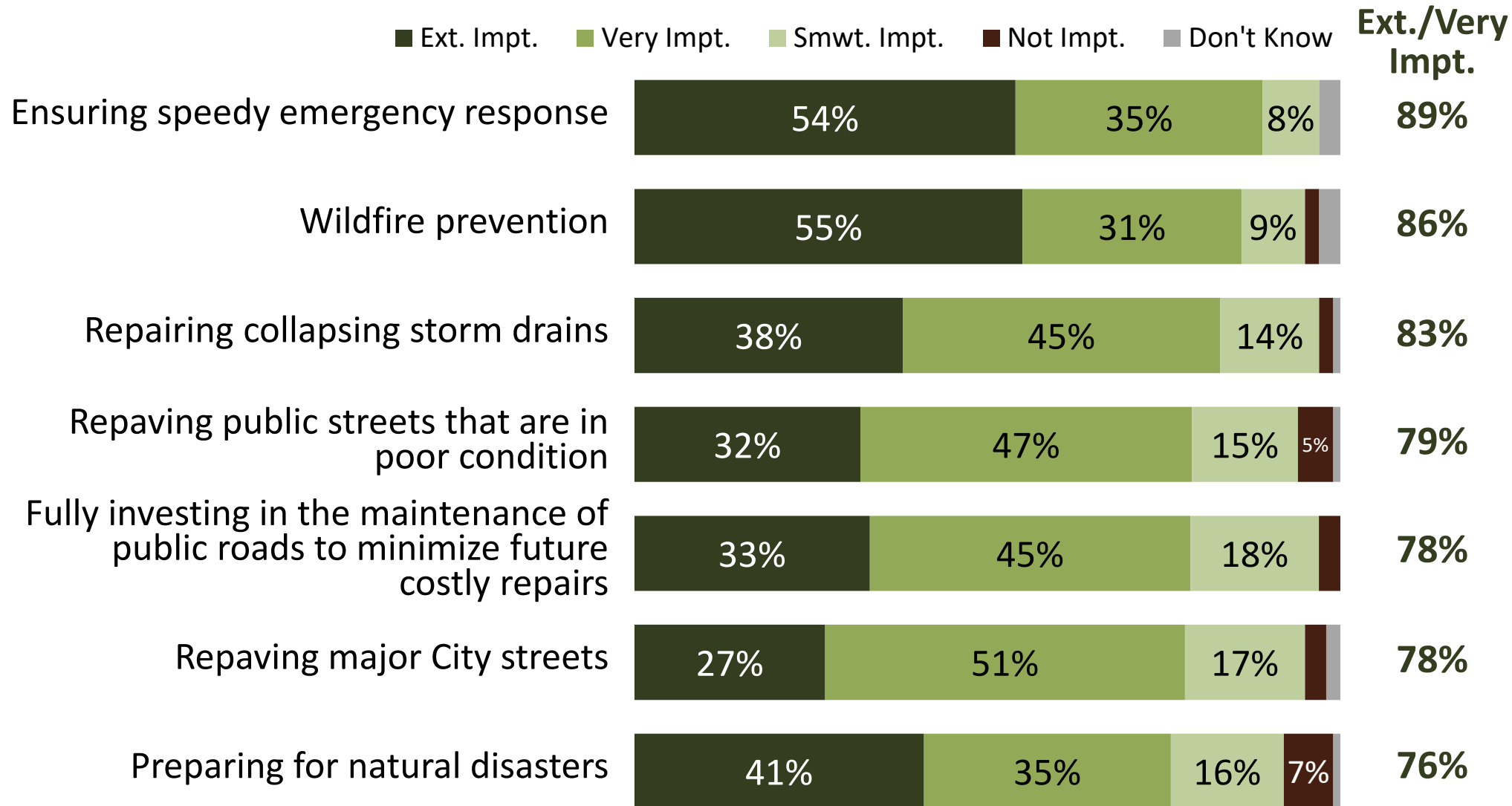
Q4. The structure of this measure has not been finalized. Instead of establishing a one-cent sales tax, it could continue the existing half-cent sales tax with no increase in taxes. If that were the case, do you think you would vote "Yes" in favor of this measure, or "No" to oppose it?



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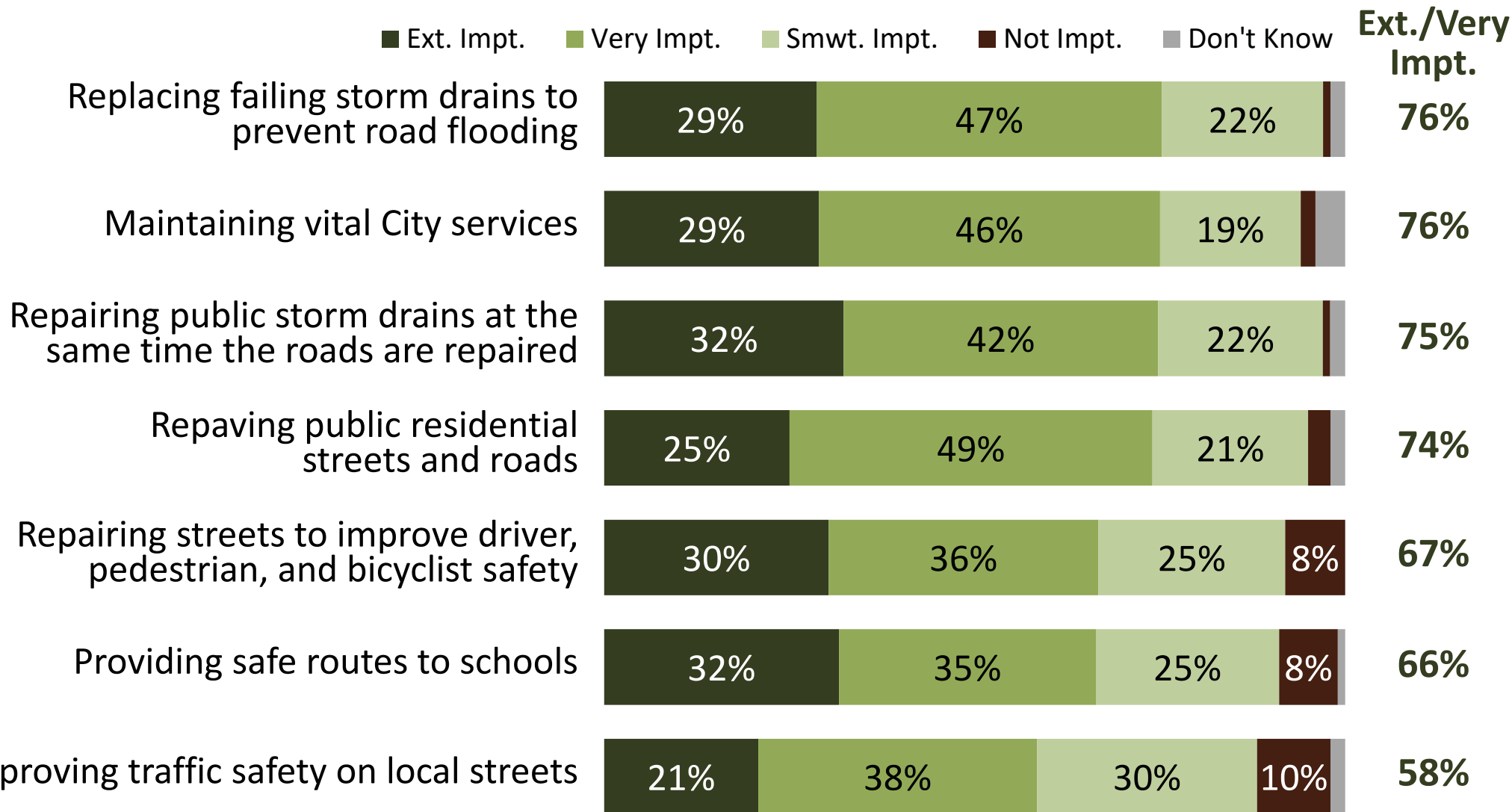
Investment Priorities

Speedy emergency response and wildfire prevention are “extremely important” priorities for majorities of Orinda voters.



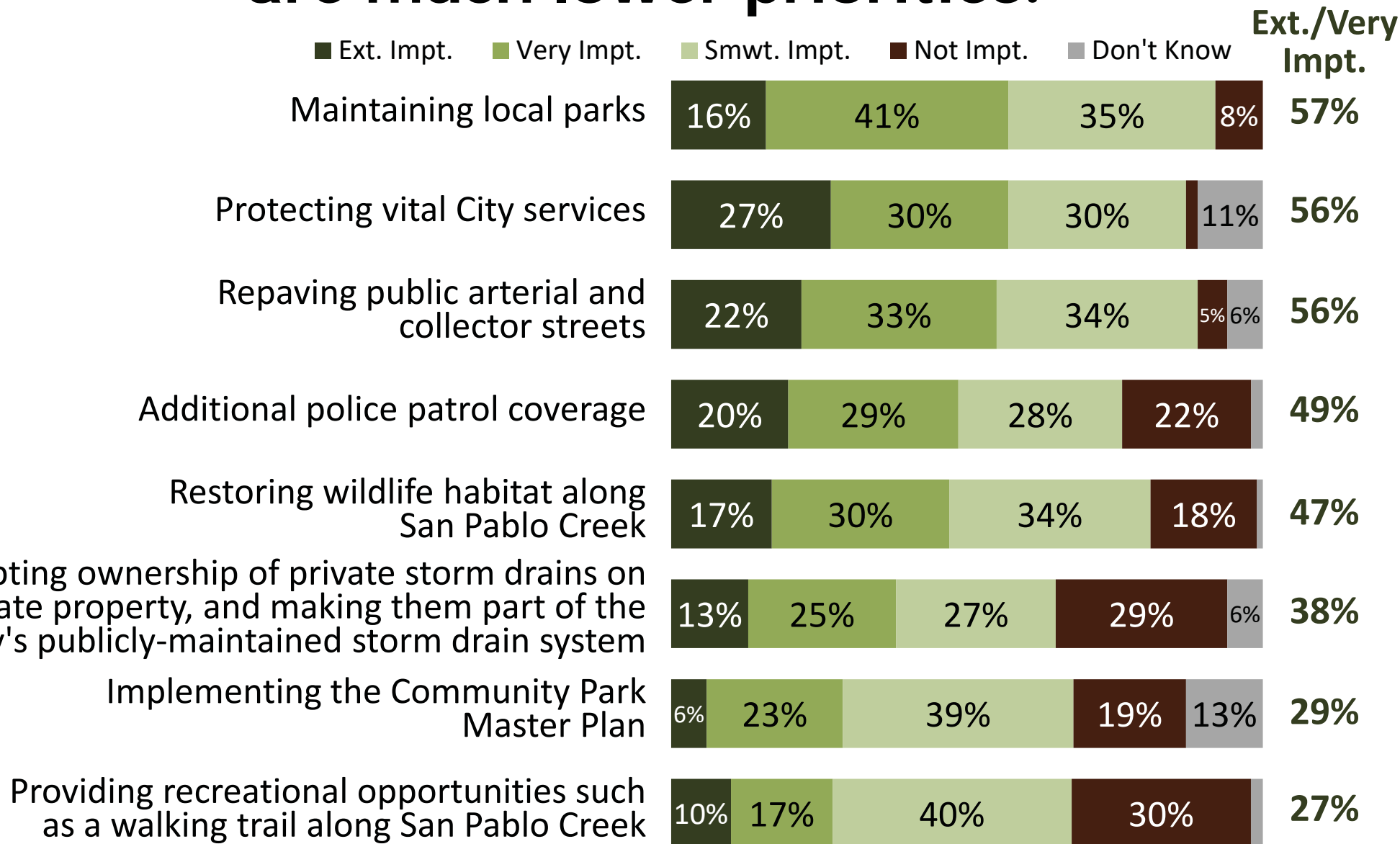
Q10. I am going to read you a list of specific City projects and services that could be funded by the measure. Recognizing that there will not be enough funding to complete all of these projects, please tell me how important each one is to you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important. Split Sample

Repairing storm drains, repaving roads, and improving safety are also key priorities.



Q10. I am going to read you a list of specific City projects and services that could be funded by the measure. Recognizing that there will not be enough funding to complete all of these projects, please tell me how important each one is to you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important. Split Sample

Parks and private storm drains are much lower priorities.



Q10. I am going to read you a list of specific City projects and services that could be funded by the measure. Recognizing that there will not be enough funding to complete all of these projects, please tell me how important each one is to you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important. ^Not Part of Split Sample

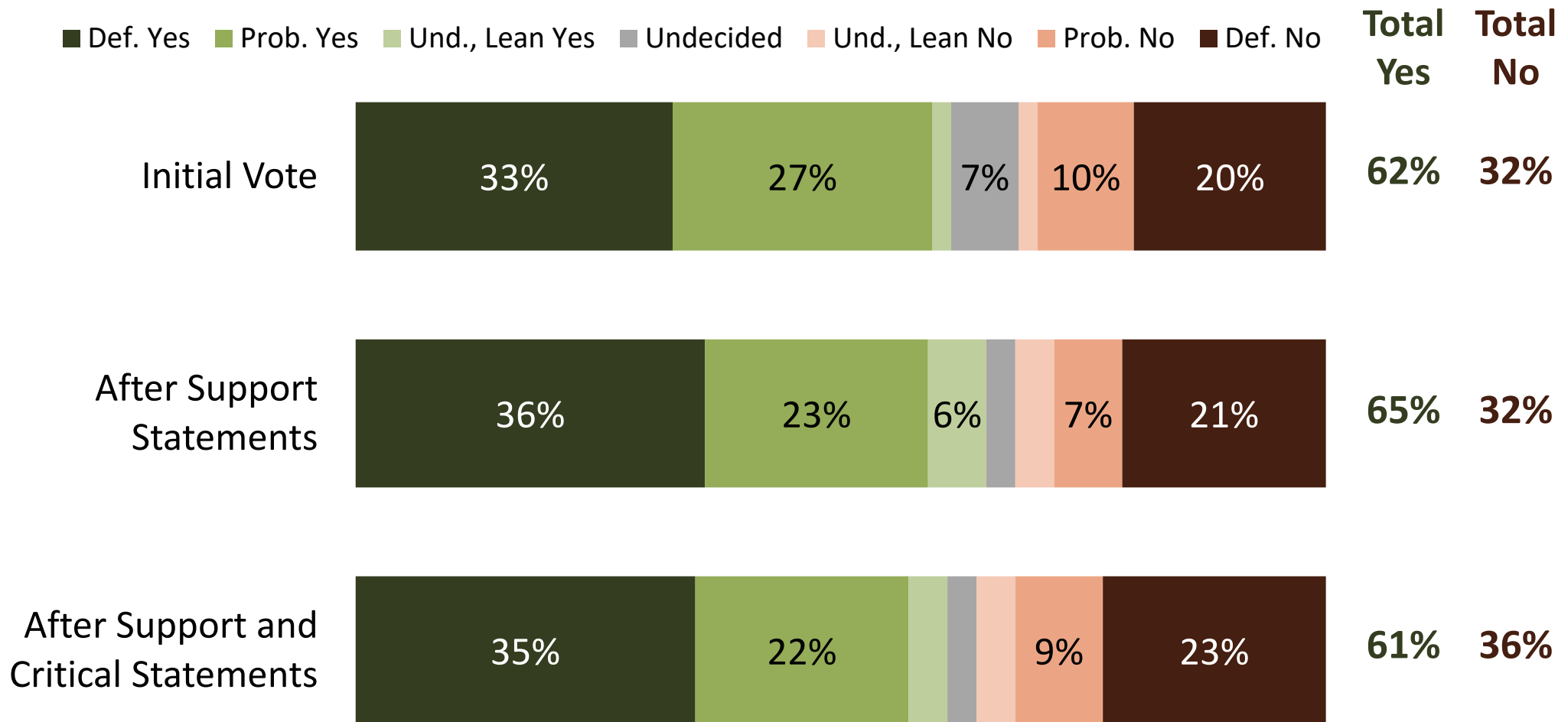


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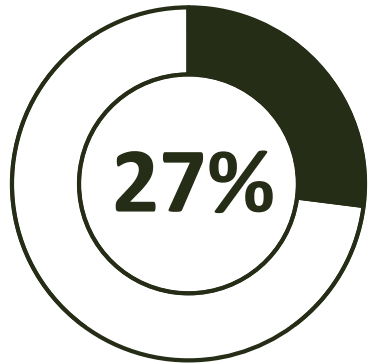
Messaging and Movement

Support for a measure shifts very little as voters learn more from supporters and opponents.

Simple Majority Vote Threshold

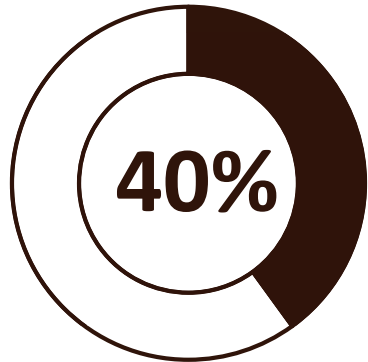


Segmenting the Electorate by Intensity of Support



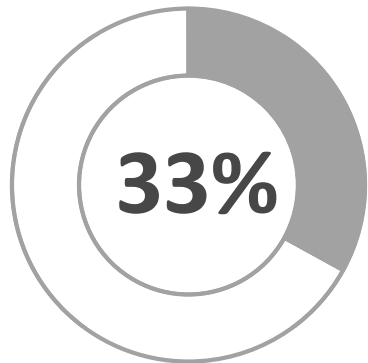
**Consistent
Definitely
Yes**

Voters who consistently indicated they would definitely vote “yes” on the measure: disproportionately higher-income households, mothers, and older and female Democrats.



Ever No

Voters who at any point in the survey indicated that they would vote “no” on the measure: disproportionately Republicans, those on private roads, and lower-income voters.



Swing

Voters who do not fall into any of the other categories – remaining consistently undecided or switching positions: disproportionately voters under 30, and those without a college degree.

Statements Supporting a Measure

(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

(FUTURE COSTS) Delaying maintenance and repairs to Orinda's public roads and drains only increase costs in the long run. This measure will help repair roads and drains while construction costs are still relatively affordable.

(SAFETY) This measure will improve the safety of Orinda's main public roads. By fixing deteriorating roads and preventing potholes, it will reduce damage to vehicles and help to prevent accidents that threaten the safety of drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

(EXPIRING) This measure extends an existing tax the City has been using to pay for vital services. Without this measure, the City will have to find a way to raise more than \$1 million a year just to prevent cuts to essential services.

(TRACK RECORD) Since local voters first authorized this local sales tax to fund road improvements, it has finished all scheduled repairs on budget and ahead of schedule. This track record of success has been documented by the citizens' committee overseeing spending from the measure.

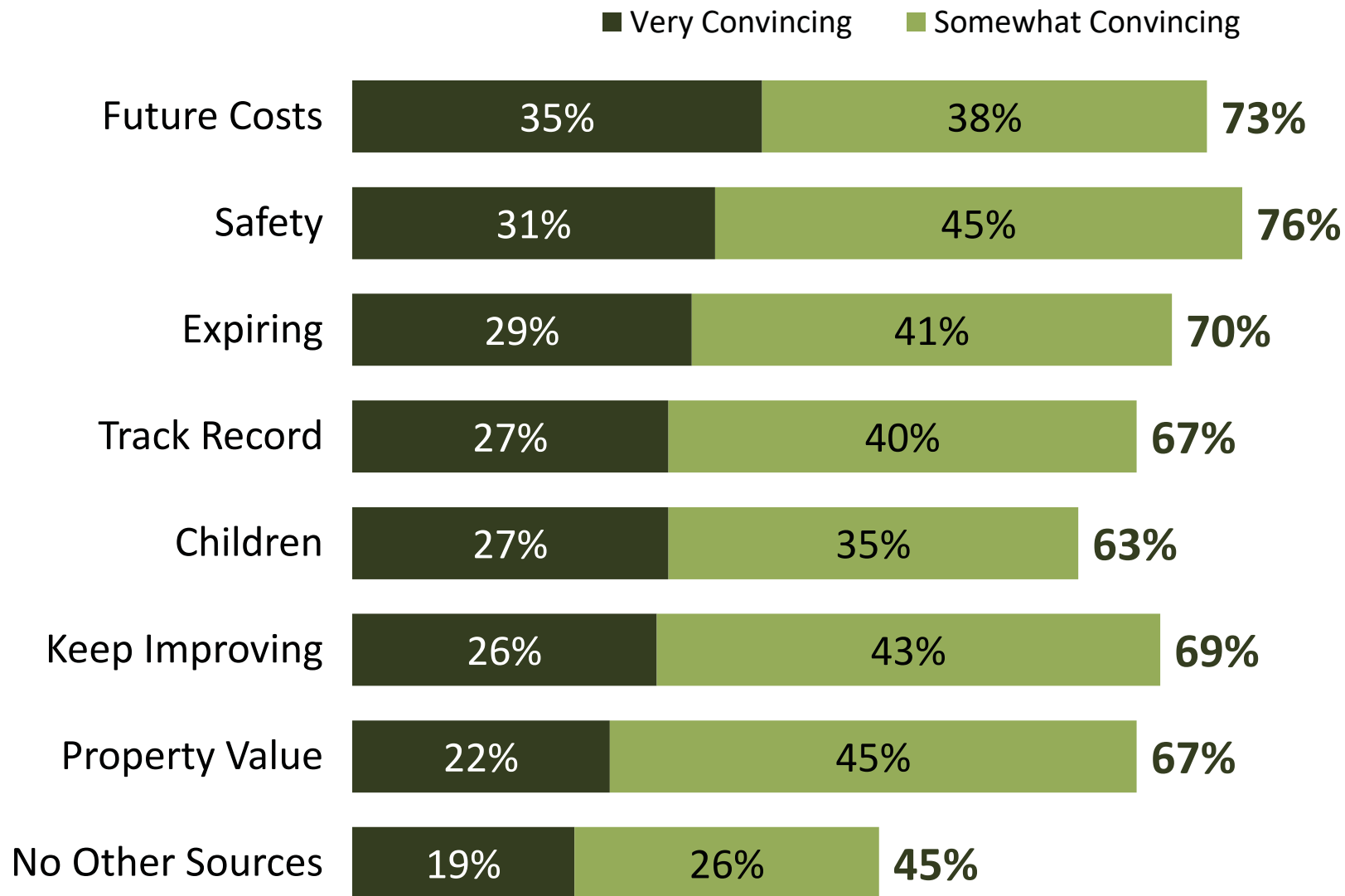
(CHILDREN) Safer roads mean safer conditions for everyone in our neighborhoods. In particular, this measure will invest in ensuring that children can walk and bike to school safely.

(KEEP IMPROVING) Orinda's overall pavement condition has improved greatly over the last few years as the City has invested in road maintenance and improvements. Without this tax our roads will deteriorate again.

(PROPERTY VALUE) By maintaining and improving public street and road conditions, this measure will help to protect property values for Orinda homeowners.

(NO OTHER SOURCES) Unlike many cities in the Bay Area, Orinda does not have a utility users tax or business license tax, and has not increased its real property transfer tax on homeowners.

Highlighting the future cost of delaying action on repairs is persuasive.



Swing voters rank future costs, safety, and replacement of the expiring tax as the most-compelling rationales for support.

(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Alternate Targets			Type of Road	
		Consistent Def. Yes	Swing	Ever No	City-Maintained	Privately-Owned
Future Costs	35%	55%	37%	19%	36%	32%
Safety	31%	45%	37%	16%	30%	35%
Expiring	29%	49%	38%	9%	31%	28%
Track Record	27%	49%	26%	14%	27%	29%
Children	27%	46%	33%	10%	29%	21%
Keep Improving	26%	42%	33%	11%	27%	25%
Property Value	22%	40%	24%	10%	22%	23%
No Other Sources	19%	24%	25%	11%	16%	28%

Statements Opposing a Measure

(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

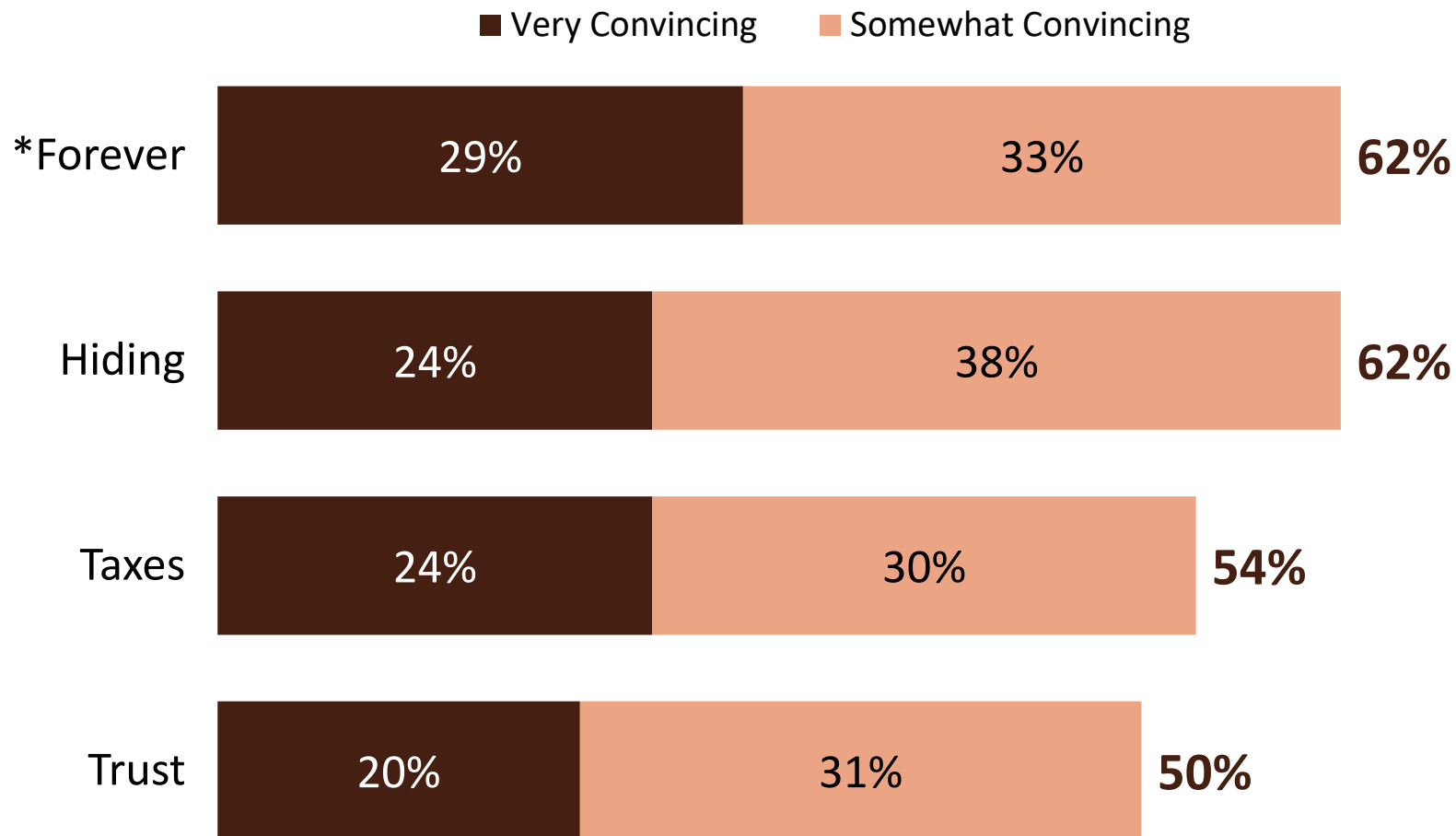
*(**FOREVER**) This measure will create a "forever tax." Local residents will be paying a one-cent sales tax from now on, whether or not the money is being used effectively or as promised.

(**HIDING**) We have already been asked three times in the last decade to fund street improvements, and they are likely to ask again in a few years. This piecemeal approach is designed to hide the true costs from voters.

(**TAXES**) The cost of living in the Bay Area is too high already, and there may be numerous other tax increases on next year's ballot, including other measures to fund transportation. We have hit our limit on taxes, and should vote no.

(**TRUST**) The City should find money in its existing budget, rather than raising taxes. And we simply can't trust City government to spend this money effectively and efficiently.

Highlighting that the tax does not have a sunset provision is somewhat compelling for opponents, as is asserting a piecemeal approach to funding is hiding the true cost.



These messages hold the most sway with those already consistently opposed.

(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Alternate Targets			Type of Road	
		Consistent Def. Yes	Swing	Ever No	City-Maintained	Privately-Owned
*Forever	29%	9%	28%	42%	27%	32%
Hiding	24%	5%	22%	39%	23%	28%
Taxes	24%	4%	18%	42%	20%	32%
Trust	20%	1%	16%	35%	14%	31%

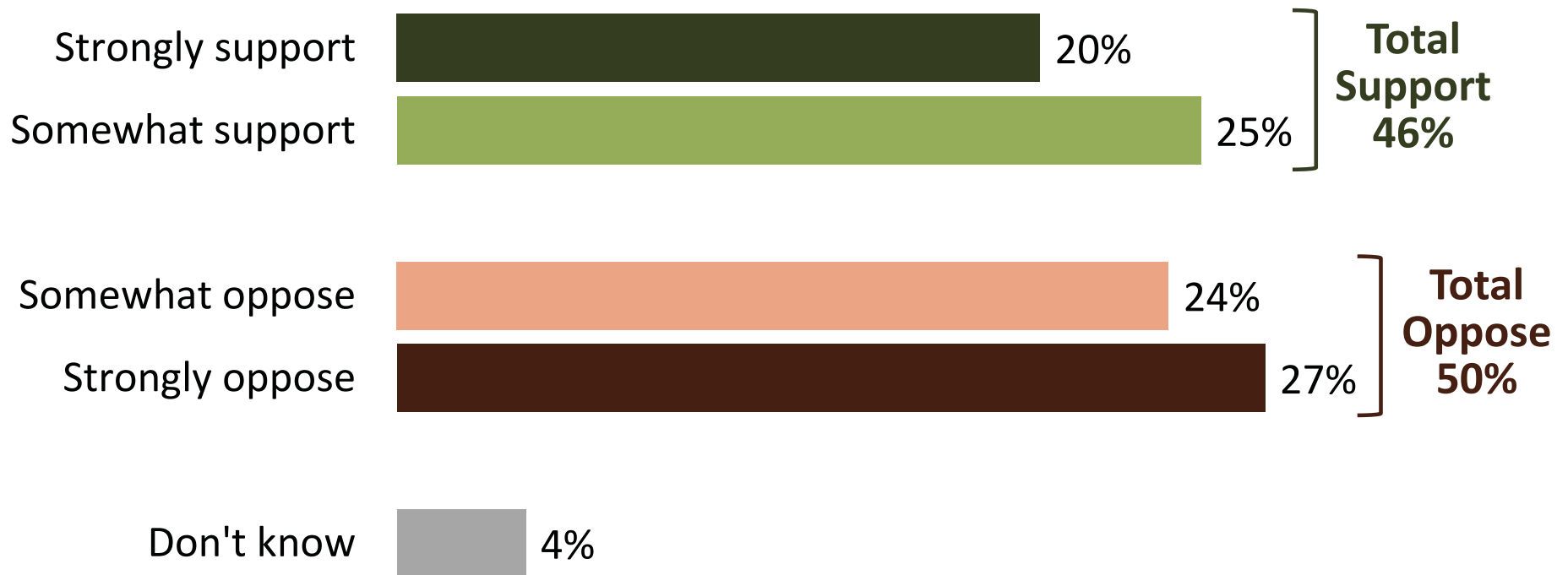


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Views of Private Roads and Storm Drains

Voters are divided on the concept of a measure to repair and accept ownership of private roads.

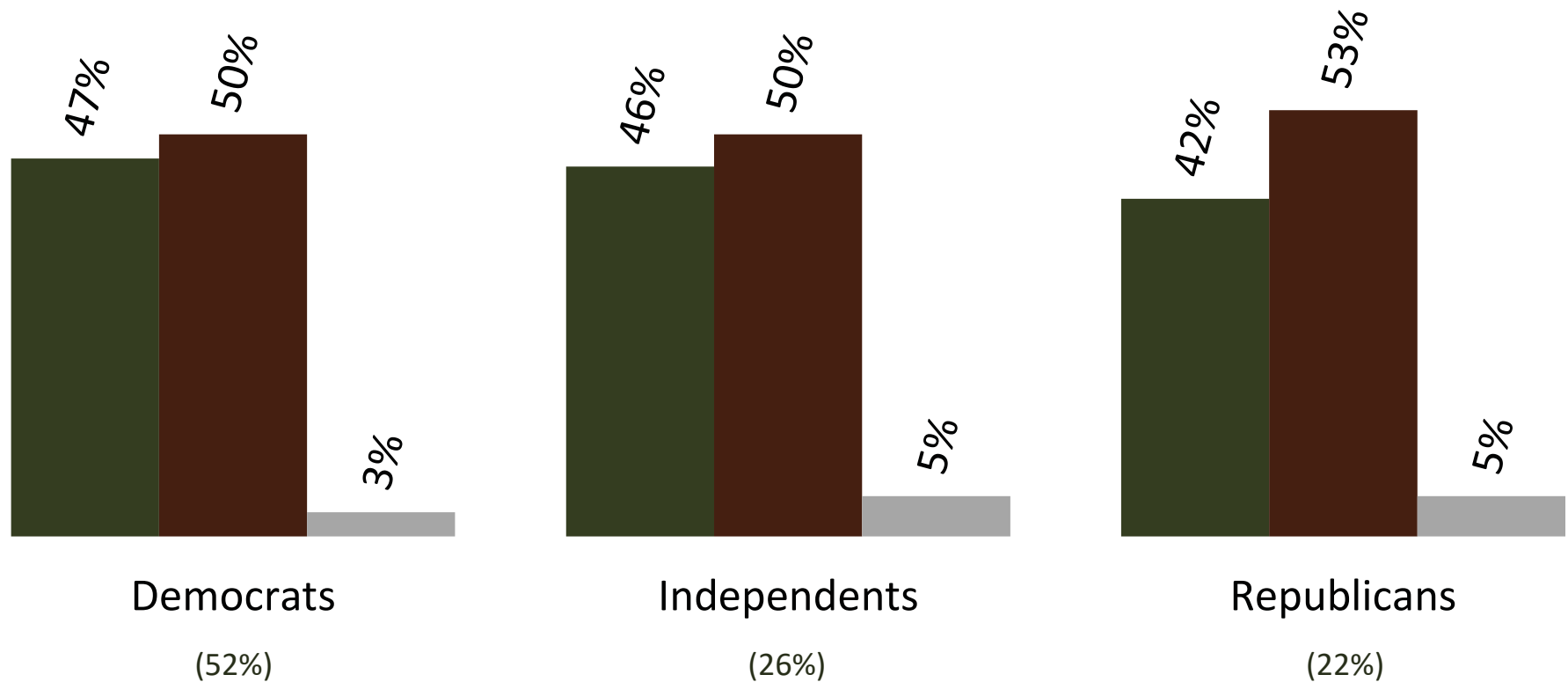
As you may know, about 30 miles of Orinda roads are privately-owned. These roads are not maintained by the City. Most of these roads do not have gates that physically restrict access to the general public. All local residents, including those living on these privately-owned roads, pay existing City taxes that fund repairs to public roads. The City is considering a ballot measure that would generate funding to repair and accept ownership of private roads into the City's publicly-maintained road system. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?



The concept is divisive across party lines, with slightly more opposition among Republicans.

Support for a Measure to Repair Private Roads by Party

■ Total Support ■ Total Oppose ■ Don't Know



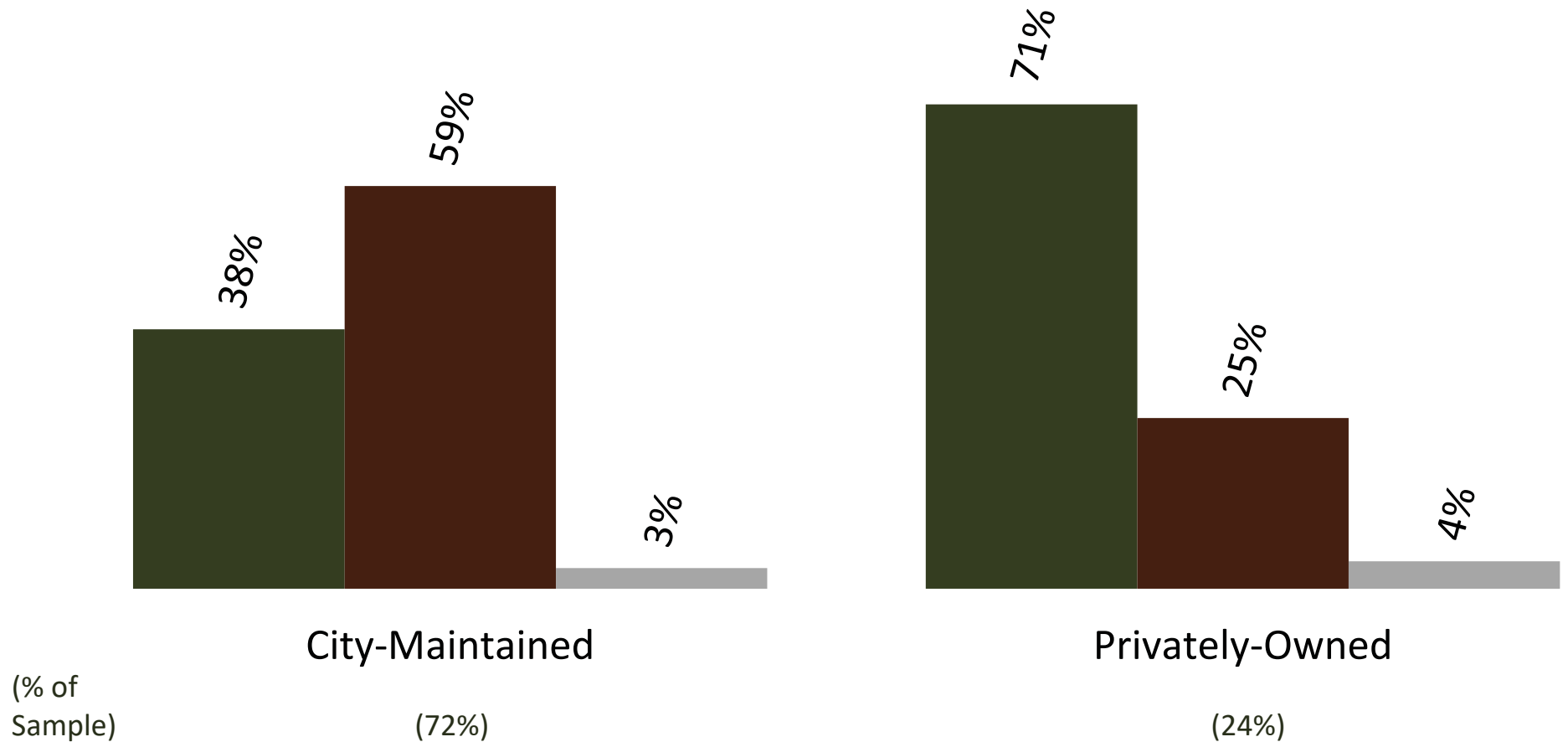
(% of
Sample)

Q15. The City is considering a ballot measure that would generate funding to repair and accept ownership of private roads into the City's publicly-maintained road system. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?

Seven in ten privately-owned road residents support the measure to repair those roads.

Support for a Measure to Repair Private Roads by Type of Road

■ Total Support ■ Total Oppose ■ Don't Know



Q15. The City is considering a ballot measure that would generate funding to repair and accept ownership of private roads into the City's publicly-maintained road system. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?

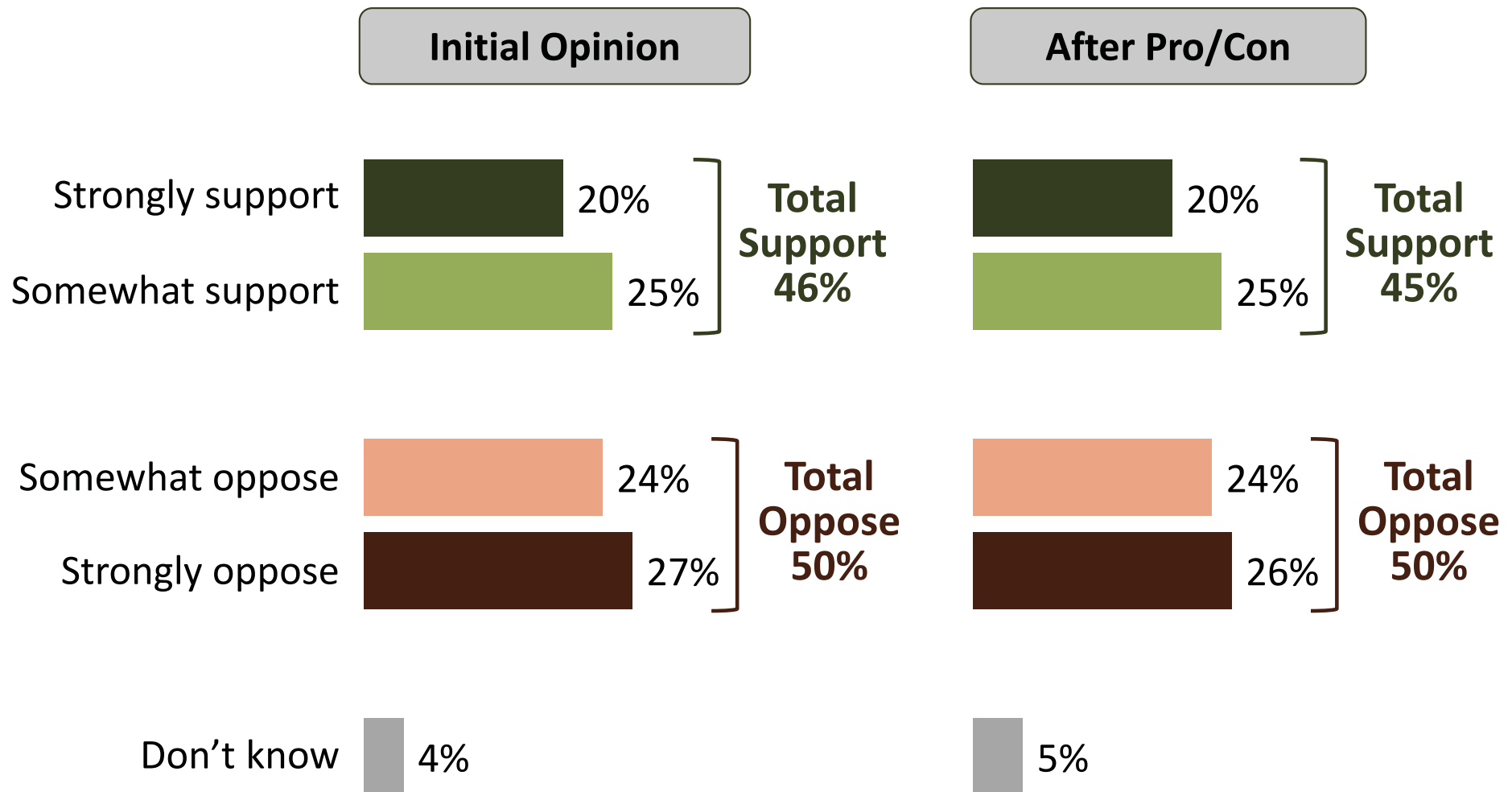
Voters next heard a brief exchange of pros and cons on the concept.

Here are statements from supporters and opponents of a ballot measure that would generate funding to repair and accept ownership of private roads into the City's publicly-maintained road system.

Supporters say that people living on privately-owned roads pay the same taxes as their neighbors who live on City-maintained roads, but they do not get the same benefits. Their roads are open to public use. Supporters would like the benefit of regular maintenance and major repairs to their roads, especially in the event of a major disaster.

Opponents say that people who choose to live in homes on private roads knew what they were agreeing to when they bought their homes. They should continue to pay their own maintenance costs instead of the City having to take over responsibility and liability for their private roads.

Hearing this context does little to shift support patterns overall.



Q15. The City is considering a ballot measure that would generate funding to repair and accept ownership of private roads into the City's publicly-maintained road system. Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?
Q16. Having heard this, would you support or oppose this ballot measure?

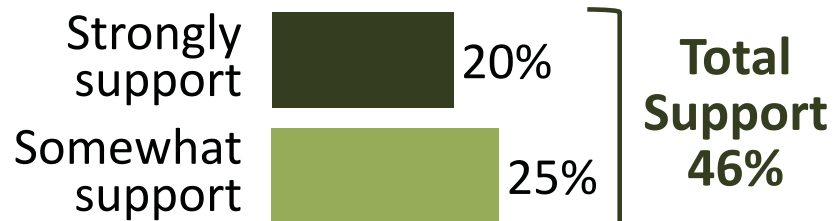
Voters then received additional context about the potential cost of this concept.

At this time, the potential cost of such a ballot measure is not known, because the City does not know the condition of the 30 miles of privately-owned roads. However, current estimates range from \$5 million to \$25 million. These costs would be funded through additional taxes to local residents.

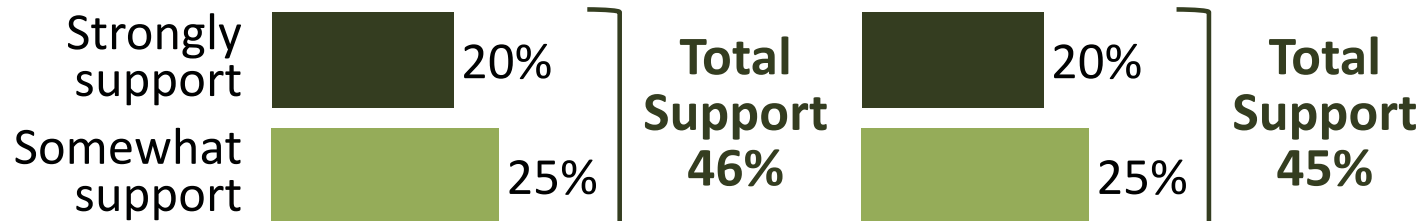
Having heard this, let me ask you again: would you support or oppose a ballot measure to generate funding to repair and accept ownership of private roads into the City's publicly-maintained road system? Does this sound like something you would support or oppose?

These details increased opposition to nearly three in five.

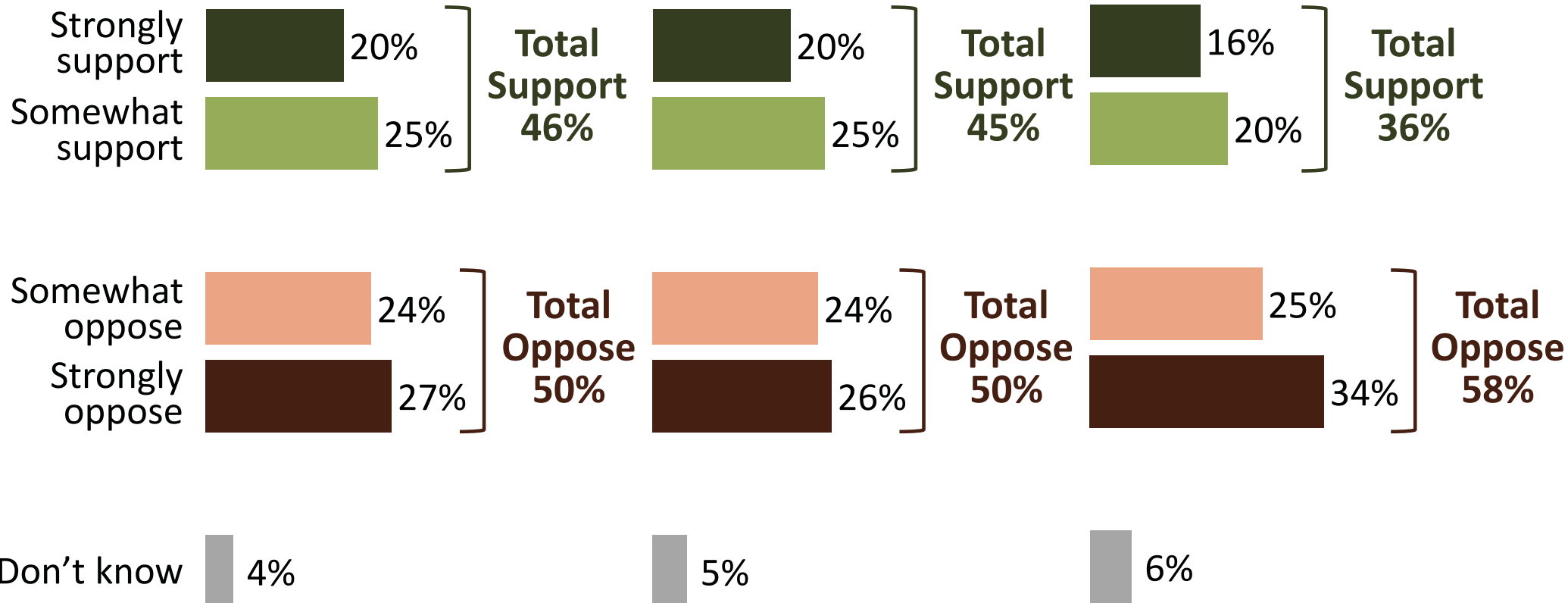
Initial Opinion



After Pro/Con



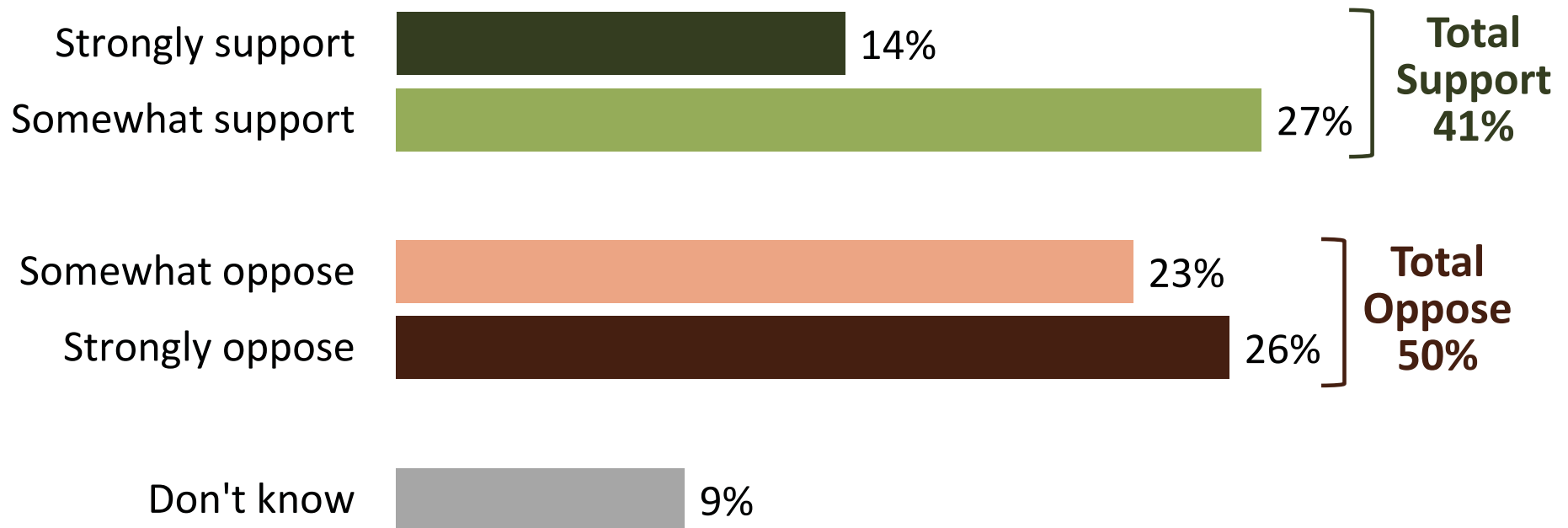
With Cost Estimate



A concept taking in private storm drains is also opposed by half of those polled.

On a different, but related subject: typically, storm water runoff from residences is directed to ditches or catch basins within public road rights of way that are maintained by the City. The collected street runoff is usually sent through a storm drainpipe on private property into the nearest creek or water channel. It is the responsibility of the private property owner to maintain the storm drainpipe across their property, unless the City has accepted a drainage easement to maintain that specific storm drainpipe.

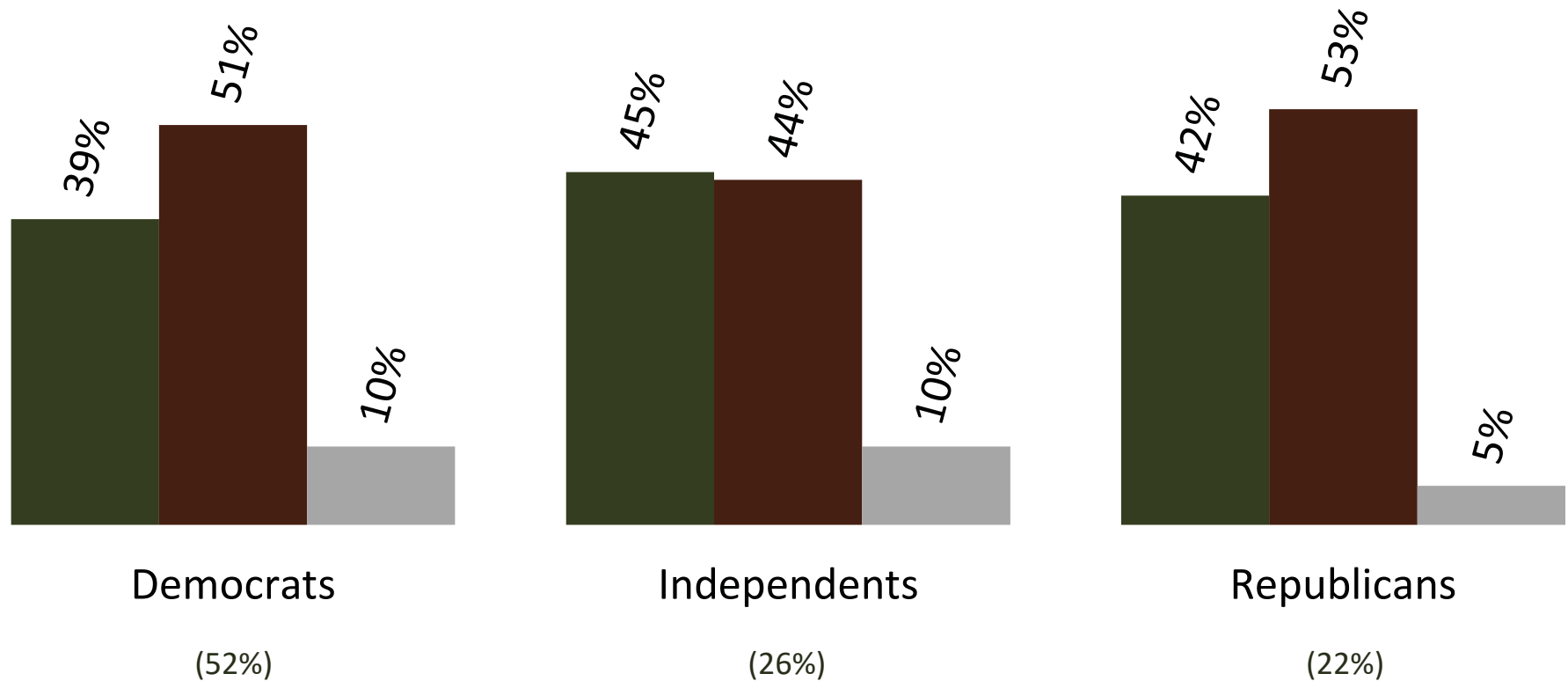
The City is considering a bond measure to take over ownership and maintenance of private storm drains. Such a bond measure would likely cost at least \$30 million, which equates to approximately \$260 annually for the next 20 years for a property assessed at \$1 million. Does this bond measure sound like something you would support or oppose?



Majorities of Democrats and Republicans oppose this concept; independents are split.

Support for a Measure to Repair Private Storm Drains by Party

■ Total Support ■ Total Oppose ■ Don't Know

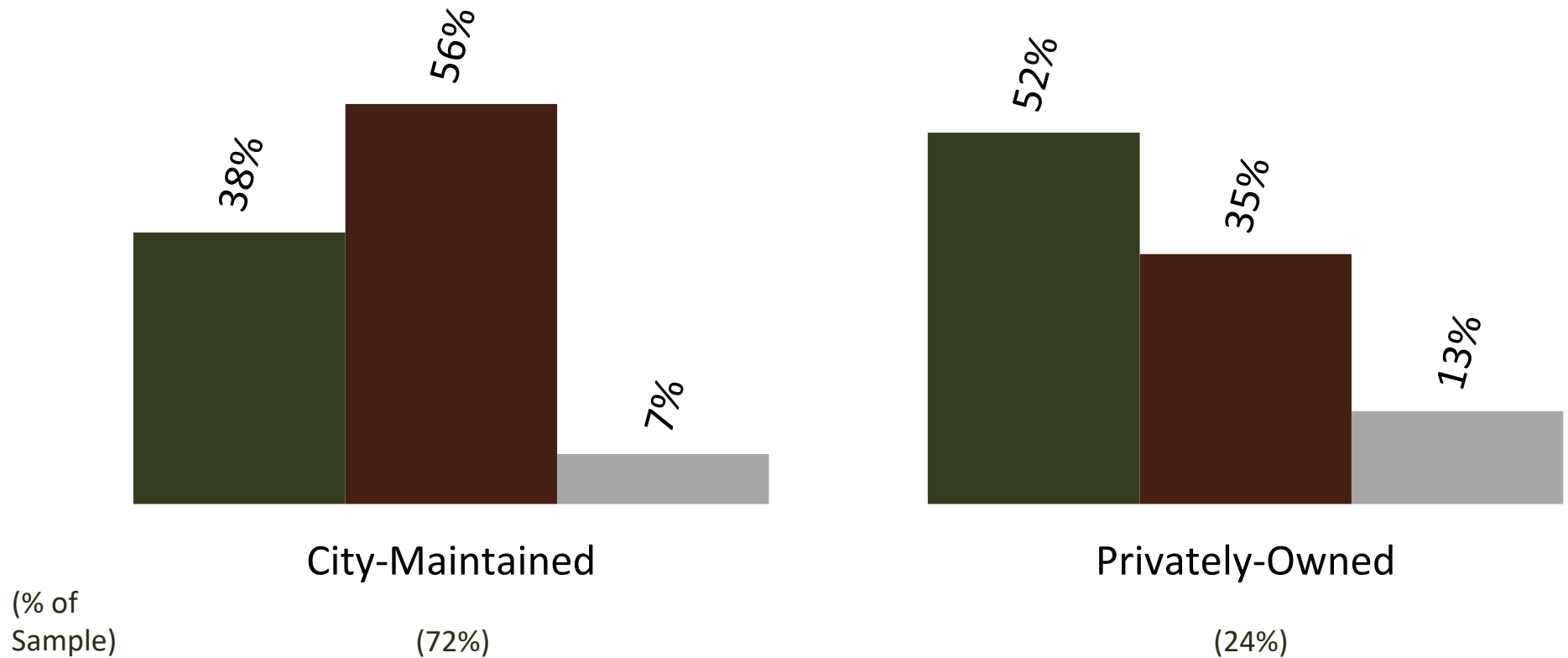


Q18. The City is considering a bond measure to take over ownership and maintenance of private storm drains. Such a bond measure would likely cost at least \$30 million, which equates to approximately \$260 annually for the next 20 years for a property assessed at \$1 million. Does this bond measure sound like something you would support or oppose?

A slim majority of those who live on private roads support the private storm drain measure concept.

Support for a Measure to Repair Private Storm Drains by Type of Road

■ Total Support ■ Total Oppose ■ Don't Know



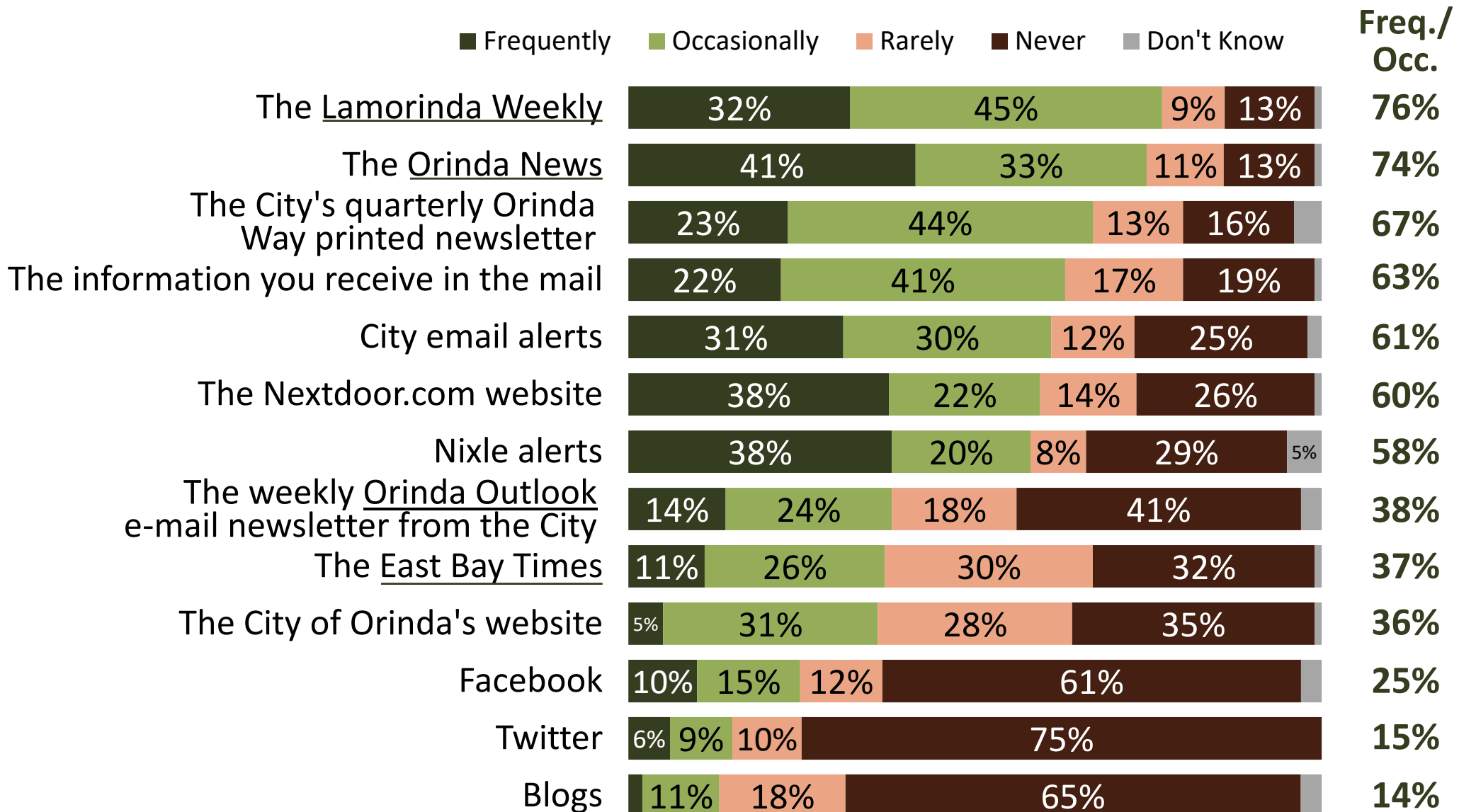
Q18. The City is considering a bond measure to take over ownership and maintenance of private storm drains. Such a bond measure would likely cost at least \$30 million, which equates to approximately \$260 annually for the next 20 years for a property assessed at \$1 million. Does this bond measure sound like something you would support or oppose?



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Communications

Voters most frequently look to local newspapers and newsletters for Orinda news.



Q19. I'm going to read you a list of sources from which people get information about local City of Orinda news. I'd like you to tell me how often you use it to get information about local City of Orinda news: frequently, occasionally, rarely, or never. Split Sample

Nixle, Nextdoor, and City email alerts are increasingly important information sources.

(Frequently/Occasionally)

Information Source	2012	2014	2016	2020	Difference (2020-2016)
Nixle alerts	--	--	20%	58%	+38%
City email alerts	35%	42%	38%	61%	+23%
The Nextdoor.com website	--	--	43%	60%	+17%
The <u>Lamorinda Weekly</u>	81%	80%	65%	76%	+11%
The City's quarterly <u>Orinda Way</u> printed newsletter	60%	63%	59%	67%	+8%
Twitter	3%	4%	7%	15%	+8%
The City of Orinda's website	31%	37%	28%	36%	+8%
Facebook	6%	5%	26%	25%	-1%
The weekly <u>Orinda Outlook</u> e-mail newsletter from the City	--	40%	46%	38%	-8%
The information you receive in the mail	81%	79%	72%	63%	-9%
Blogs	9%	10%	25%	14%	-11%
The <u>Orinda News</u>	85%	89%	86%	74%	-12%



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Conclusions

Conclusions

- ✓ A one-cent general-purpose sales tax measure for the City of Orinda appears viable, with broad majority support throughout an exchange of messaging.
- ✓ Orinda continues to be widely regarded as an excellent place to live, and voters express satisfaction with the delivery of City services.
- ✓ Satisfaction with the City's streets and roads has grown substantially since 2016, though mostly in the "somewhat satisfied" category. Investments in local streets and roads are visible, but voters feel there's more to be done.
- ✓ Wildfire prevention and emergency response times are a high-ranking priority for investment, followed by the condition of streets and roads.
- ✓ The public/private roads issue is divisive, with 50% opposing a measure to repair and accept ownership of private roads. Given a pro/con, these attitudes don't shift; assigning an estimated price tag yields opposition from nearly three in five.
- ✓ The dynamic is similar for private storm drains.

For more information, contact:



OPINION
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