



Madera County Voter Attitudes Toward a Measure T Renewal

Key Findings of a Countywide Survey Conducted September 19-25, 2023



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

Survey Methodology

Dates	September 19-25, 2023
Survey Type	Dual-mode Voter Survey
Research Population	Likely November 2024 Madera County Voters
Total Interviews	648
Margin of Sampling Error	±4.0% at the 95% Confidence Level
Contact Methods	 Telephone Calls  Email Invitations  Text Invitations
Data Collection Modes	 Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews
Languages	English and Spanish

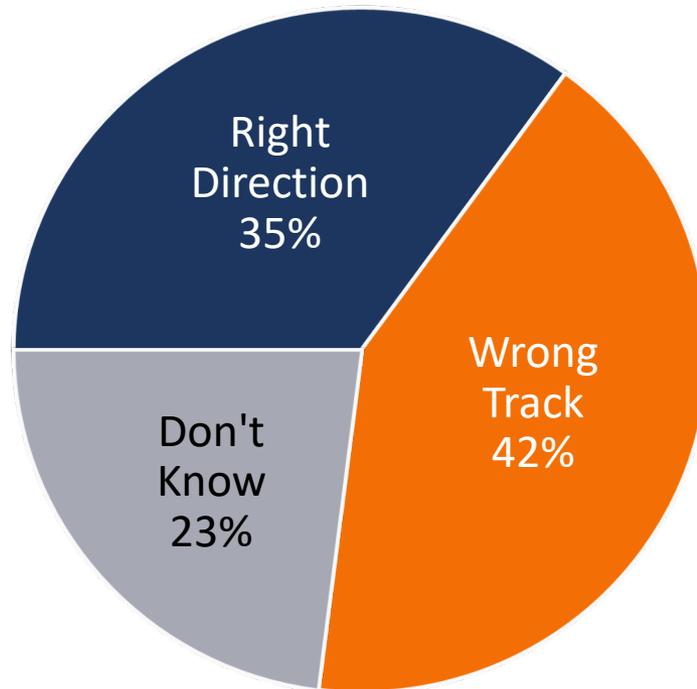
(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)



Issue Context

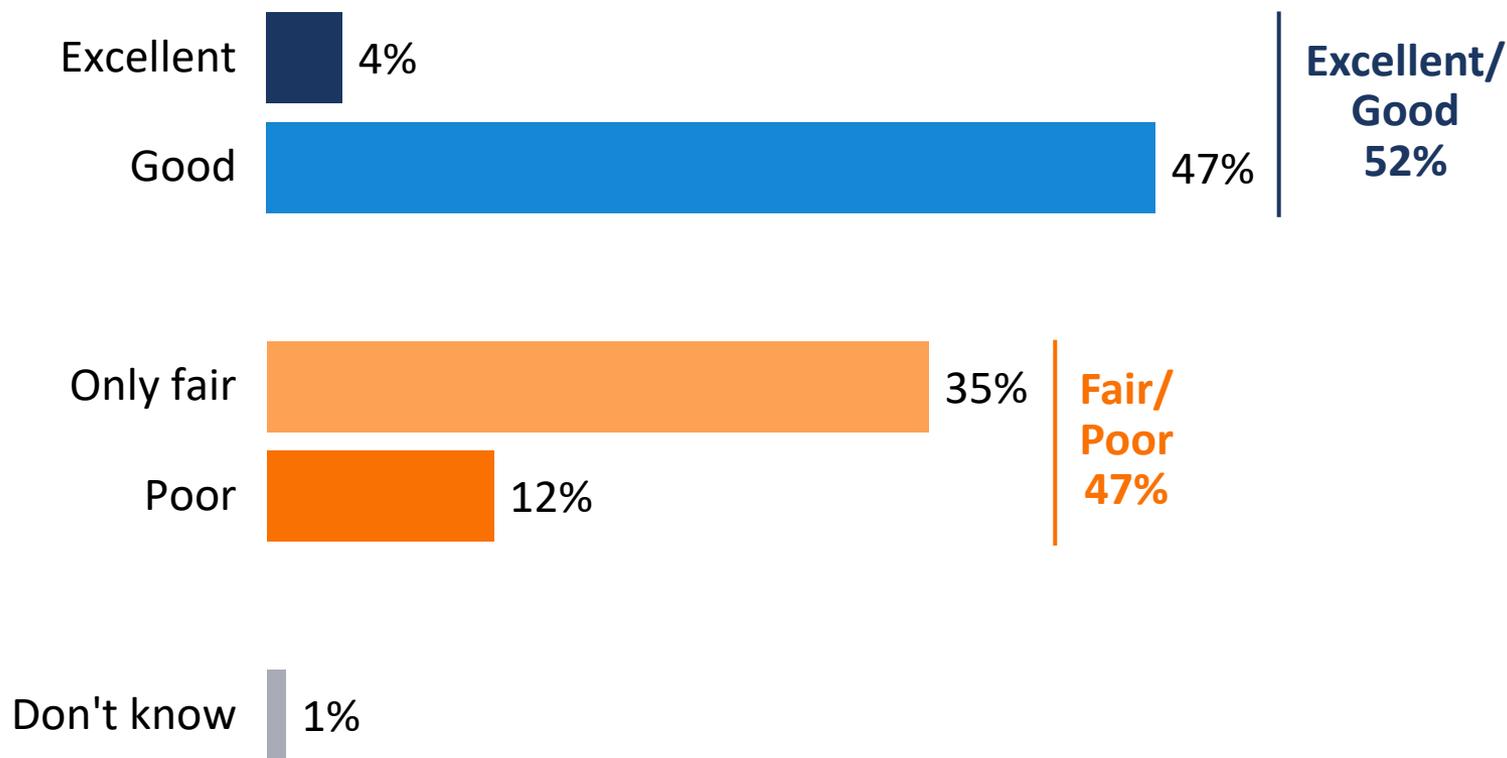
Madera County voters are split on the direction of the County.

Do you feel things in Madera County are generally going in the right direction or are they off on the wrong track?



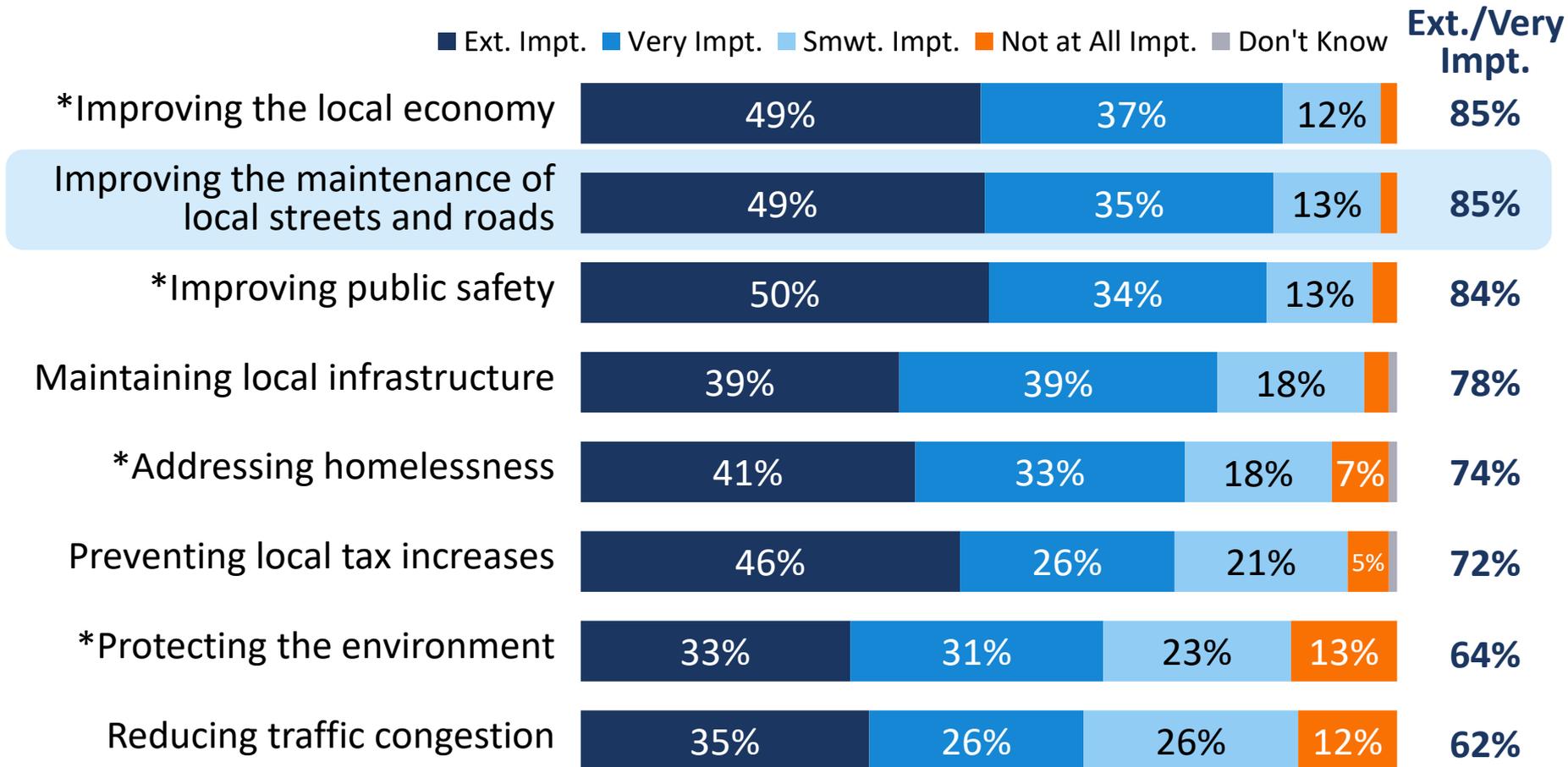
They are also divided on the quality of life, with few expressing strong feelings.

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



Maintenance of streets and roads – along with the economy and public safety – ranks among voters’ top priorities.

I’m going to read a list of issues facing Madera County; for each one, please tell me how important you feel the issue is to you, using a scale of extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important.

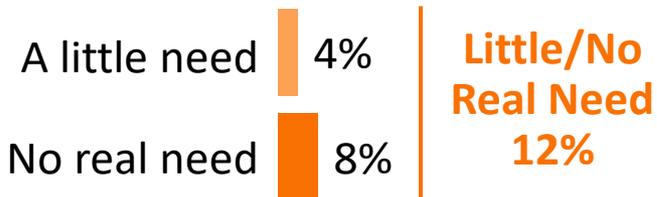
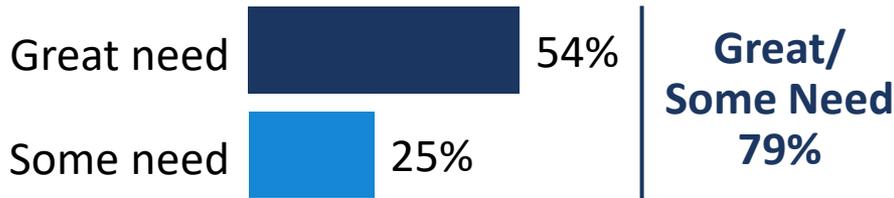


Priorities have not shifted significantly since 2022.

Issue (Extremely/Very Important)	2021	2022	2023	Difference (2022-2023)
*Improving public safety	82%	77%	84%	+7%
Preventing local tax increases	68%	68%	72%	+4%
*Protecting the environment	68%	62%	64%	+2%
*Improving the local economy	82%	83%	85%	+2%
Maintaining local infrastructure	83%	77%	78%	+1%
Reducing traffic congestion	60%	62%	62%	+0%
*Addressing homelessness	73%	75%	74%	-1%
Improving the maintenance of local streets and roads	88%	88%	85%	-3%

Nearly four in five say the County has a need for additional funding for streets, roads and transportation infrastructure.

In general, would you say Madera County has a great need for additional funding, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding for streets, roads and transportation infrastructure?



Demographic Groups Disproportionately Likely to Say There is a "Great Need"
Democratic Women
Conservative Independents
Ride the Bus 2-3 Times a Week
Lived Over 40 Years in Madera County
Democrats Ages 18-49
Supervisorial District 3
Ages 75+
Democrats
Non-College Educated Women
Latino Women
Independents Ages 18-49
Liberal Democrats
Supervisorial District 4



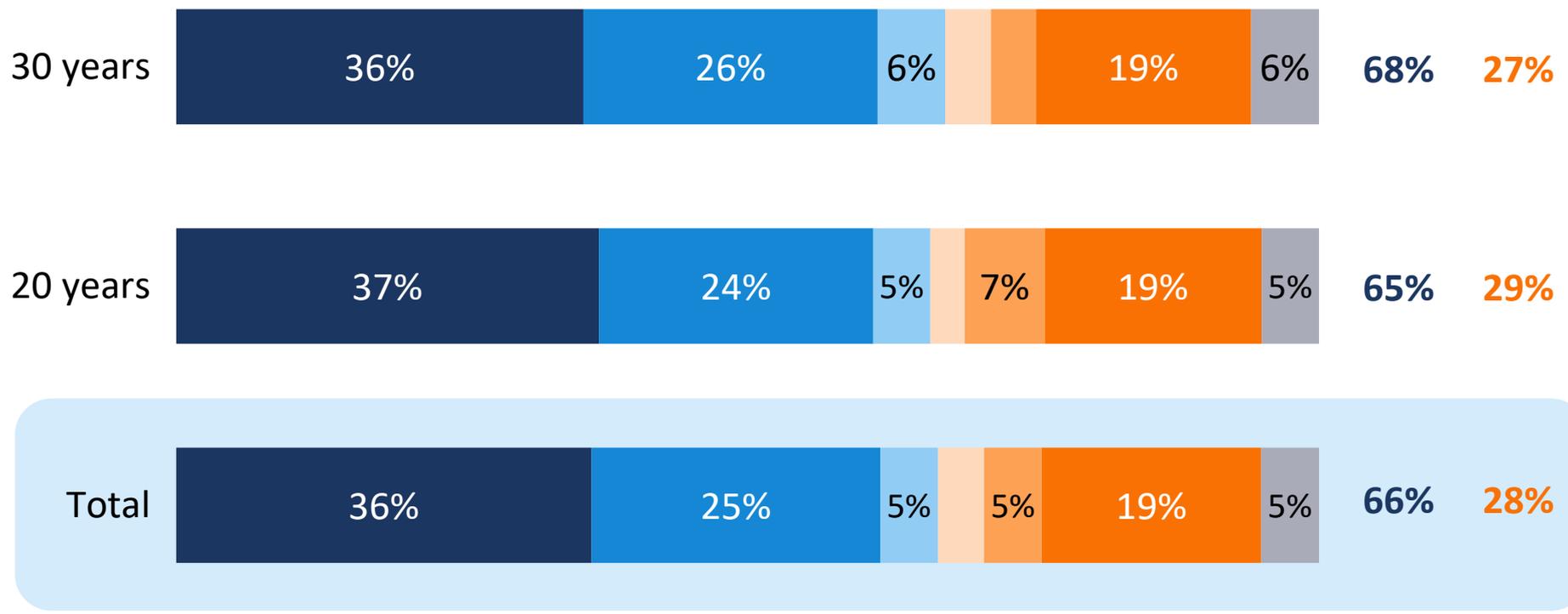
Introducing the Measure

Ballot Language Tested

To keep local streets, highways, and infrastructure in good repair; fix potholes, pave/maintain local streets; improve highway safety and 911 emergency vehicle access; retrofit older bridges/overpasses; complete other transportation projects; and qualify for \$600,000,000 in State/Federal matching funds, shall an ordinance be adopted continuing Madera County's voter-approved ½¢ sales tax without increasing the tax rate, renewing \$20,000,000 annually (**HALF SAMPLE ONLY: for 30 years**) (**HALF SAMPLE ONLY: for 20 years**), with citizen oversight/independent audits and all money staying local?

Two-thirds of those polled support the measure; statistically, there is no difference between a 20- and 30-year sunset.

■ Def. Yes
 ■ Prob. Yes
 ■ Und., Lean Yes
 ■ Und., Lean No
 ■ Prob. No
 ■ Def. No
 ■ Undecided
 Total Yes
Total No



Democrats and independents are more supportive than are Republicans.

Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Undecided
All Voters	66%	28%	5%
Gender			
Men	65%	32%	3%
Women	68%	25%	8%
Party			
Democrats	76%	18%	6%
Independents	67%	25%	8%
Republicans	59%	38%	3%
Ideology			
Liberal	79%	16%	5%
Moderate	68%	27%	5%
Conservative	61%	34%	5%
Race/Ethnicity			
White Voters	70%	24%	6%
Latino Voters	73%	24%	4%
<i>All Voters of Color</i>	70%	26%	4%

Voters under age 30 and 75 and over are among the strongest supporters.

Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Undecided
Age			
18-29	71%	22%	7%
30-39	68%	27%	5%
40-49	58%	40%	2%
50-64	64%	30%	6%
65-74	63%	29%	7%
75+	84%	14%	2%

Democrats who are female or age 50 and over are particularly supportive.

Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Undecided
Party by Age			
Democrats Ages 18-49	74%	19%	7%
Democrats Ages 50+	78%	17%	5%
Independents Ages 18-49	71%	24%	5%
Independents Ages 50+	60%	27%	13%
Republicans Ages 18-49	54%	44%	3%
Republicans Ages 50+	62%	34%	4%
Party by Gender			
Democratic Men	73%	26%	1%
Democratic Women	78%	13%	9%
Independent Men	67%	28%	5%
Independent Women	66%	23%	11%
Republican Men	58%	39%	3%
Republican Women	60%	36%	4%

Middle-income voters are strongly supportive.

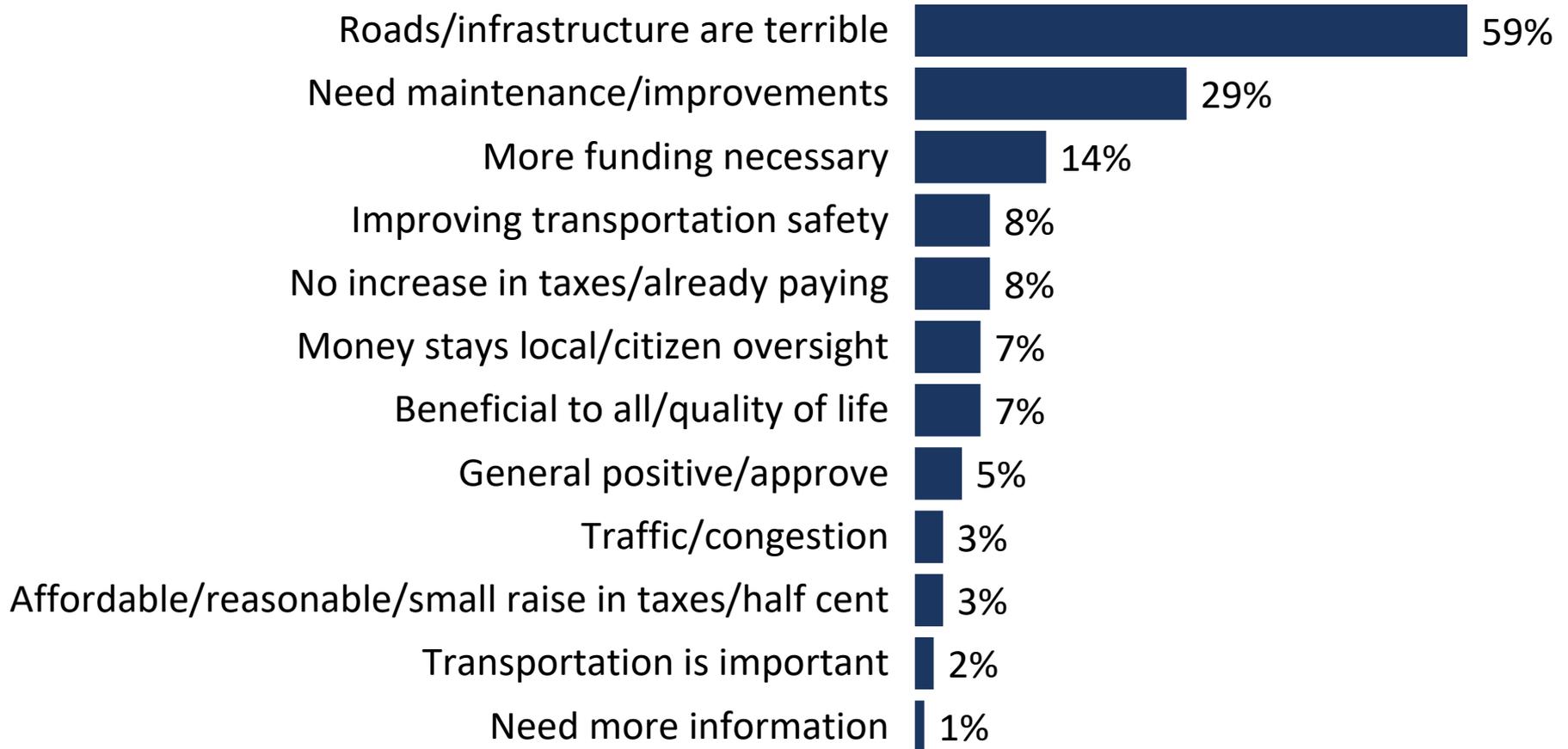
Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Undecided
Education			
Some College or Less	68%	27%	6%
Four-year College or More	65%	30%	5%
Household Income			
<\$60,000	67%	28%	4%
\$60,000-\$75,000	69%	27%	4%
\$75,000-\$100,000	79%	16%	5%
\$100,000-\$150,000	65%	31%	4%
\$150,000+	71%	25%	4%

Support is short of two-thirds in District 2.

Demographic Group	Total Yes	Total No	Undecided
Lived in Madera County			
<5 Years	64%	26%	10%
6-10 Years	69%	30%	1%
11-20 Years	71%	22%	7%
21-40 Years	71%	26%	3%
41+ Years	60%	34%	6%
Born & Raised	60%	33%	7%
Supervisorial District			
1	67%	28%	6%
2	61%	34%	6%
3	68%	27%	5%
4	71%	24%	5%
5	67%	27%	6%
Participation in the Last Six Statewide Elections			
2+/6	63%	31%	5%
3/6	62%	32%	6%
4+/6	62%	31%	6%
5+/6	63%	32%	6%
6/6	61%	34%	6%

Supporters of the measure see a need for investment in roads and infrastructure.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote YES on this measure?
(Open-ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, n=431)*



Verbatim Comments from Supporters

Our roads are terrible, however if there is an increase in sales tax it should be used for our roads and only our roads, not for what the state wants to use the extra funds for to fund one of their short falls.

Our roads are in disrepair from lack of maintenance. We need more oversight of the funds as well and community input. The road department is not doing a good job.

I live in Oakhurst and I see road repair is mostly throwing tar in potholes. I would like to see more streets adopted by Madera County to get resurfaced and plowed in the winter.

I'm already used to paying this tax and support further road improvements especially in eastern Madera County, which I feel is forgotten.

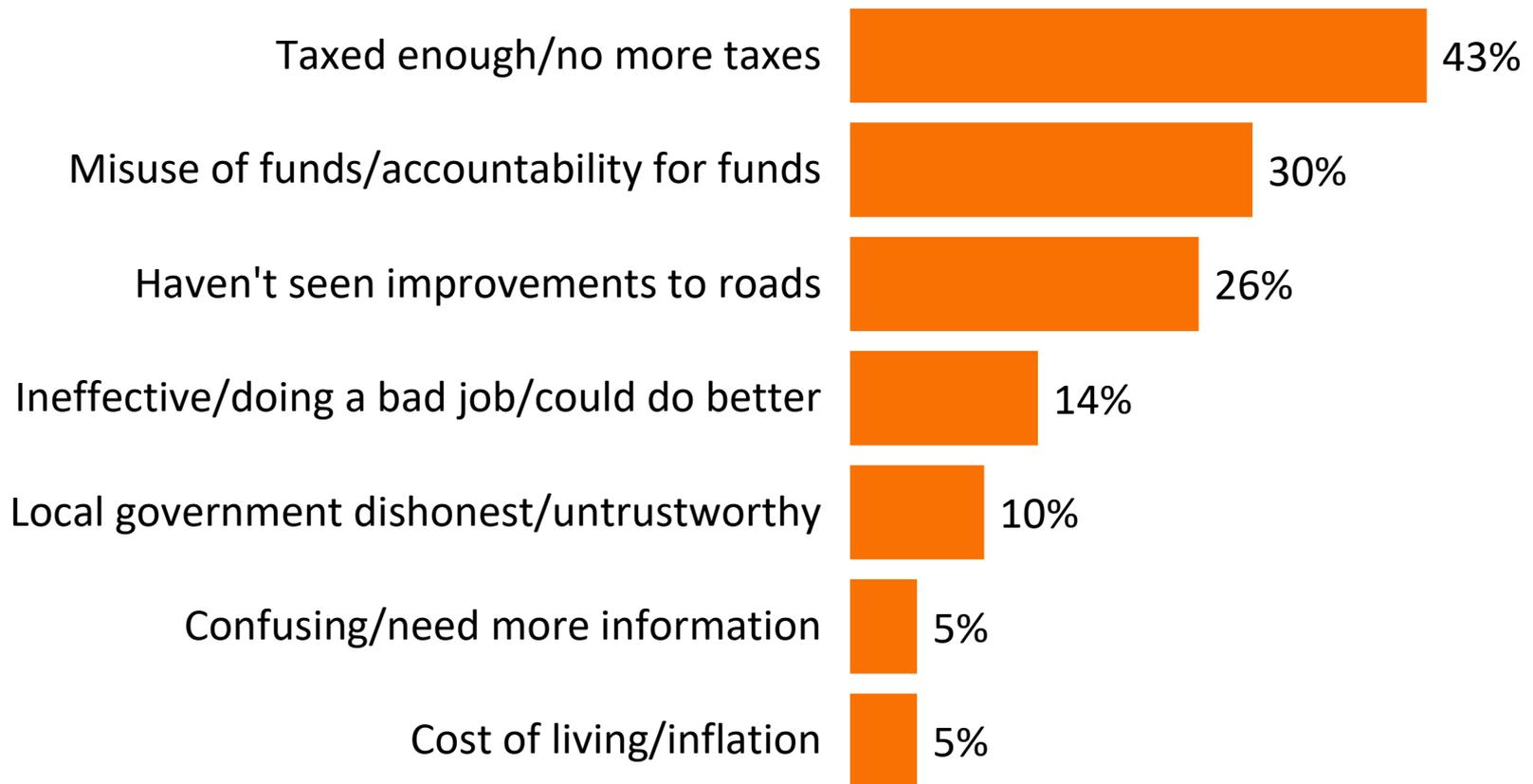
I've been on there roads and they have holes and everything and it just needs to be fixed so people don't get hurt.

The off-highway roads are in bad repair and need work. Not just a bumpy patch.

The traffic in southwest Madera County is getting worse by the day. I'm hoping some of the money will ease the burden.

Opponents worry about accountability and are opposed to taxes.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on this measure?
(Open-ended; Asked of No Voters Only, n=182)*



Verbatim Comments from Opponents

Our roads are terrible. Our economy is terrible and more taxes are not the answer. Allocate funds appropriately and stay within budget and our transportation and infrastructure would be great!

You are already taxing us enough , figure how to do it with the money you already collect, quite misappropriating the taxes you already have.

Stop paying the top officials insane amounts of money and make cuts where necessary, the taxpayers already pay stupid amounts of money in taxes and the roads are some of the worst in the country.

We have too many transportation taxes placed on our gasoline purchases already and minimal benefit.

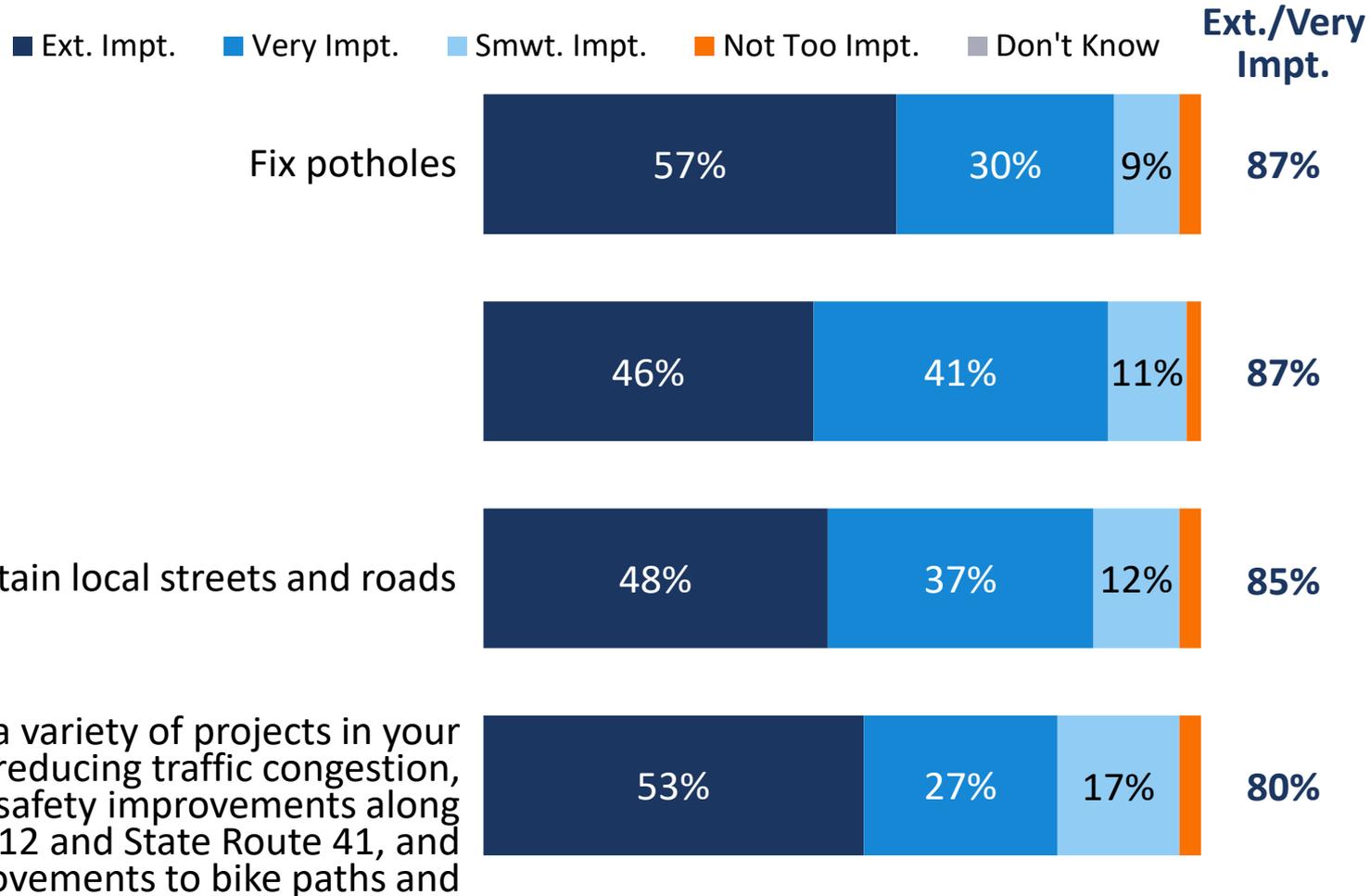
The money we pay for these repairs already is being mismanaged and I'm not interested in giving more.

Every time people approve a measure like that they [end up] using that money for something else.

This tax was in place and our roads have been absolutely terrible for years.

Voters say it is most important to fix potholes, complete District-specific projects and maintain local streets.

*Here is a list of more specific projects that could be funded by the measure.
Please tell me how important it is to you that each project be funded:
extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important?*



‡(Dist. 1) Complete a variety of projects in your area, including reducing traffic congestion, maintenance and safety improvements along Avenues 7, 9 and 12 and State Route 41, and improvements to bike paths and local transit services

Q7. †Asked in Supervisorial Districts 9 and 10 only, n=188; ‡Asked in Supervisorial District 1 Only, n=143

District 5 voters rank their local projects highly, as well.

■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not Too Impt. ■ Don't Know

Ext./Very Impt.

~(Dist. 5) Complete a variety of projects in your area, including improving emergency vehicle access, maintenance and road safety improvements along State Routes 41 and 49 and other local roads, maintenance, reducing congestion, and improving local transit services



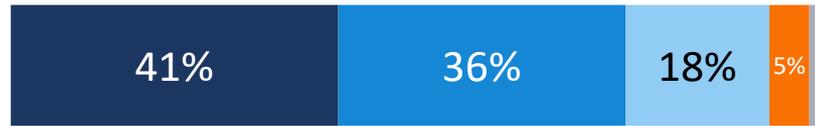
78%

Improve traffic flow and safety on highways including the 99, 41, and 152



78%

Retrofit or replace older bridges and overpasses that have structural problems



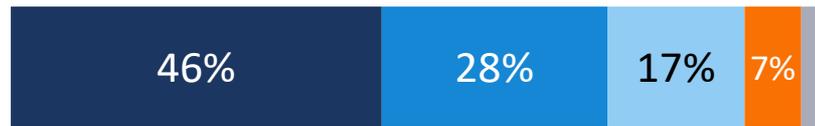
77%

Add passing lanes and improve highway interchanges to improve safety and reduce head-on collisions



75%

Provide students with safe routes to walk and bike to school



74%

Q7. Here is a list of more specific projects that could be funded by the measure. Please tell me how important it is to you that each project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important? ~ Asked in Supervisorial District 5 Only, n=201

Seven in ten say it is important to keep transit fares affordable.

■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwvt. Impt. ■ Not Too Impt. ■ Don't Know **Ext./Very Impt.**

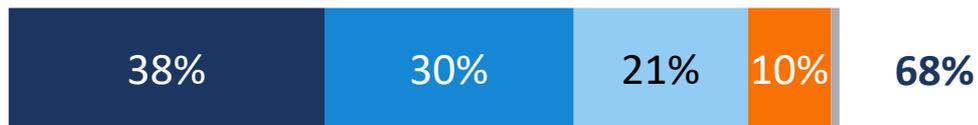
Keep transit fares affordable for students, seniors, veterans, and the disabled



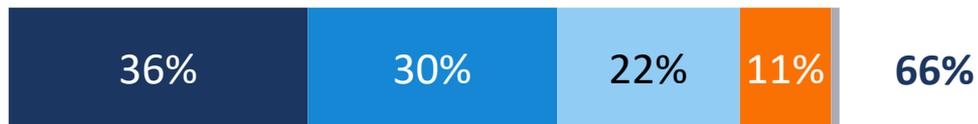
^Δ(Dist. 2) Complete a variety of projects in your area, including improving interchanges on State Routes 99, 152 and 233, maintaining 13th, Humboldt, Monterey, Robertson Boulevard, Road 16, and Avenue 24½, and improving local transit services and bike lanes



Add lanes to widen congested roadways and highways, where possible



Synchronize traffic signals on major roadways

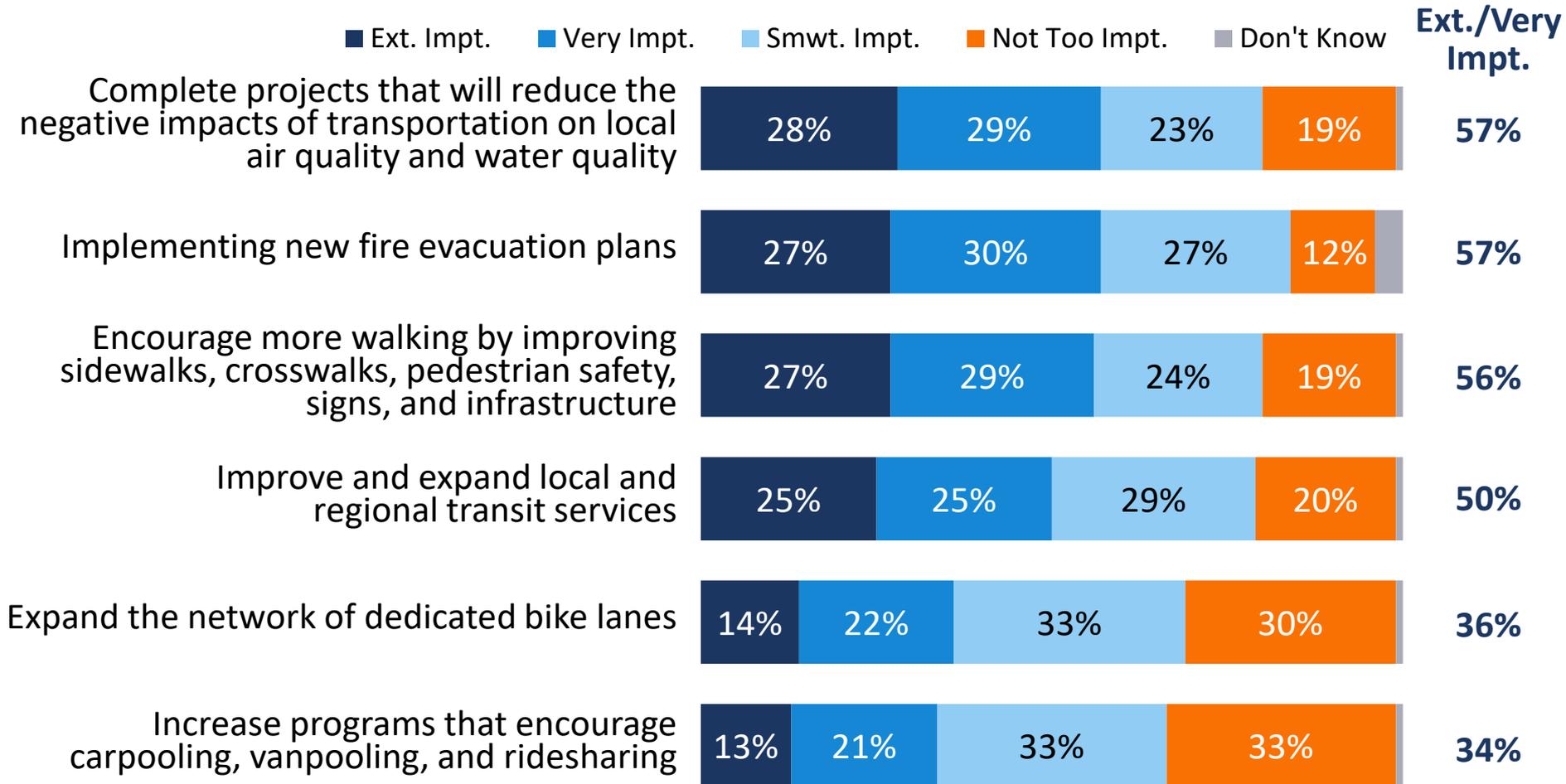


Reduce traffic congestion



Q7. Here is a list of more specific projects that could be funded by the measure. Please tell me how important it is to you that each project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important? ^ΔAsked in Supervisorial District 2, n=117 Only

Bike lanes and carpooling programs are least important to voters.

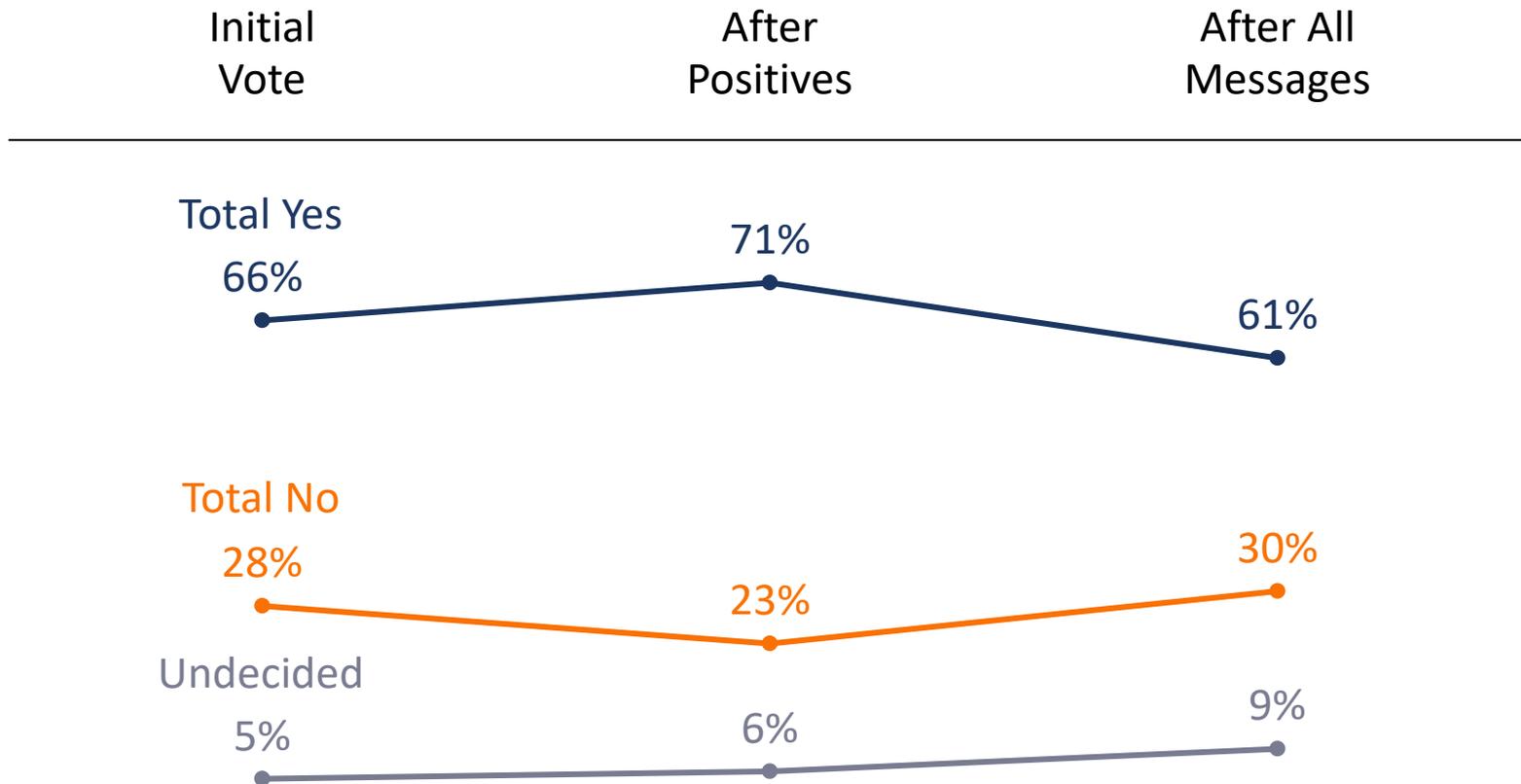


Q7. Here is a list of more specific projects that could be funded by the measure. Please tell me how important it is to you that each project be funded: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important?



Segmenting the Electorate

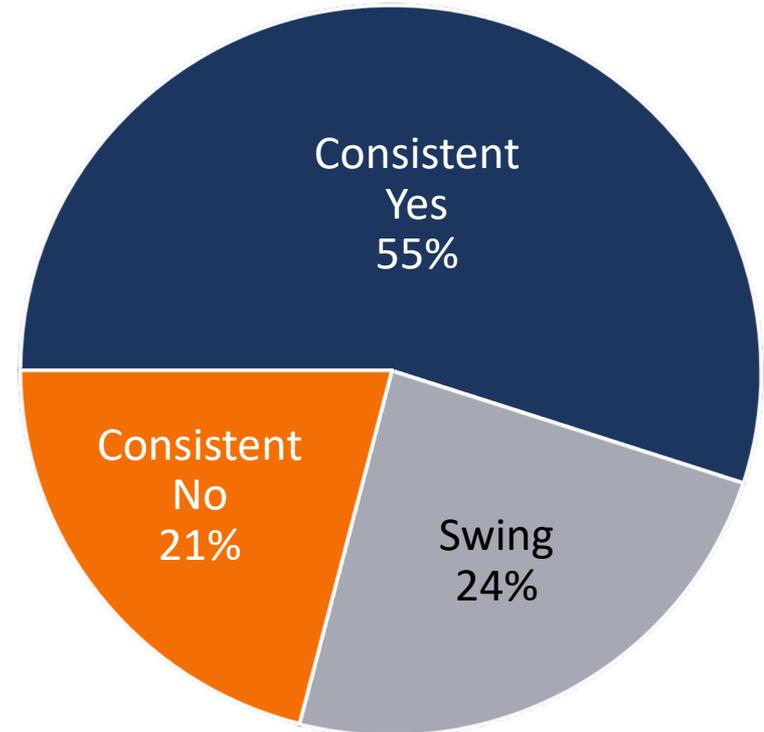
Support for the measure fluctuates with messaging.



Segmenting the Electorate by Consistency of Support

- ❖ **Consistent Yes:** Voters who consistently indicated they would vote “yes” on the measure
- ❖ **Consistent No:** Voters who consistently indicated they would vote “no” on the measure
- ❖ **Swing:** Voters who do not fall into any of the other categories – remaining consistently undecided or switching positions

The following slide shows demographic groups that *disproportionately* fall into one category or the other.

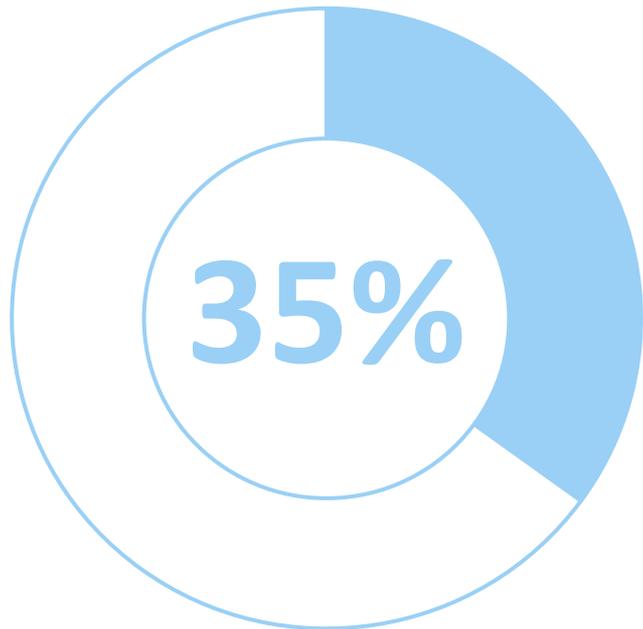


Demographic Profile of the Segments

Consistent Yes	Swing	Consistent No
55% of the Electorate	24% of the Electorate	21% of the Electorate
Liberal Democrats	Supervisory District 4	2+ Republican Households
Liberals	Ride the Bus 2-3 Times a Week	Republicans Ages 18-49
Ages 75+	Latinos Ages 50+	Ages 40-49
2+ Democrat Households	Born and Raised in Madera Co	Chowchilla
Democratic Women	Latino Men	Republicans
Democrats Ages 50+	Voters of Color	Republican Men
Interviewed in Spanish	Latinos	Conservative Republicans
Democrats	Ages 50-64	Republican Women
Single-Democrat Households	1+ Independent Households	Use Rideshare 2-3 Times a Week
Democrats Ages 18-49	Single Republican Households	Supervisory District 2
Whites Ages 50+	Independents Ages 50+	Republicans Ages 50+
Carpool 2-3 Times a Week	Non-College Educated Women	Post-Graduate Educated
Ages 18-29	City of Madera	Conservatives

One-third of voters are soft supporters of the measure.

Soft Supporters



Demographic Groups Disproportionately Likely to be Soft Supporters

Ages 18-29
Conservative Independents
Born and Raised in Madera County
Independents Ages 18-49
Supervisorial District 3
HH Income \$75,000-\$100,000
Independent Men
High School Educated
Latinos Ages 18-49
Independents
White Women



Messaging

Messages in Favor of the Measure

(Ranked by Very Convincing)

51%

*(**MATCHING FUNDS**) If voters approve this renewal measure, we will qualify for about \$600 million in additional state and federal matching funds to make priority repairs and transportation improvements in Madera County. Without a local measure, we will not get our fair share of State and Federal funding.

50%

*(**ACCOUNTABILITY**) By law, all of the money raised by this measure must stay in Madera County to maintain and improve our transportation system. It can't be taken away by the State or used for other purposes.

48%

*(**PUBLIC SAFETY**) This measure is essential for our public safety. By keeping our roads and highways in good condition and reducing traffic congestion, it allows police, firefighters, and ambulances to respond quickly to emergencies. In emergencies like the Creek Fire, we can't afford to have first responders stuck in traffic or slowed-down by failing infrastructure.

45%

*(**GROWTH**) Madera County's population has nearly doubled during the past 30 years, and experts forecast that it will continue to grow at a fast rate. We need to continue improving our local highways, interchanges, and major streets to keep up with this growth, avoid traffic gridlock, and protect our quality of life.

41%

(**FIRE**) It's become all too common to see entire towns destroyed by wildfire in California — making rural roads a lifeline — and Madera County is at high risk of wildfires. That's why it's essential to prepare before it's too late: this measure will ensure that fire evacuation routes throughout the county are in good repair, with plenty of room for emergency vehicles.

40%

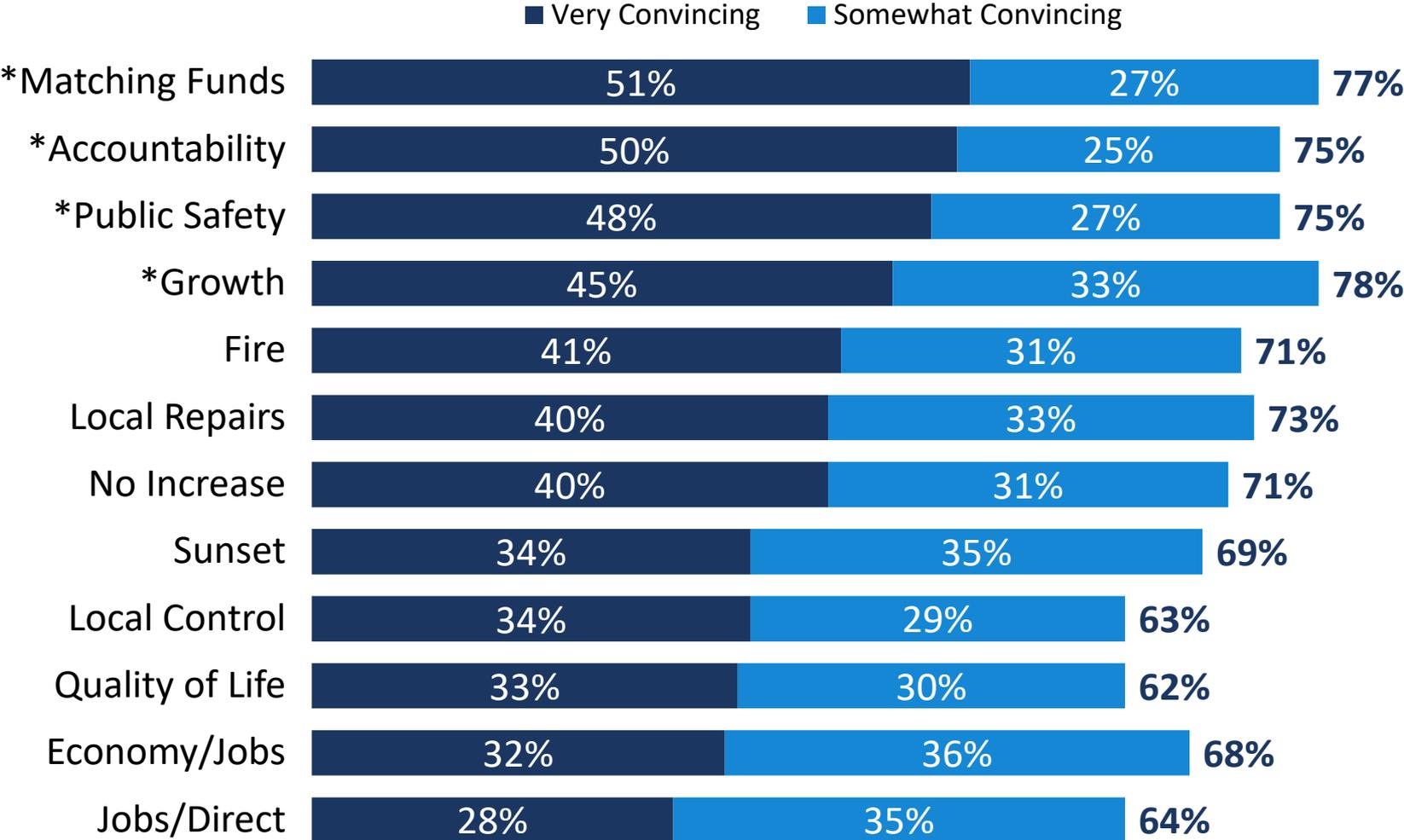
(**LOCAL REPAIRS**) This measure will support fixes to major potholes and other local road repairs and safety improvements in every part of the County. Continuing this funding would allow repairs like repaving; repairing curbs and sidewalks; and maintaining medians, lighting, and signage for local streets and roads.

Messages in Favor of the Measure (Continued)

(Ranked by Very Convincing)

40%	(NO INCREASE) This measure will NOT increase the sales tax you pay. It simply extends the sales tax voters approved in 1990 and again in 2006 to fund transportation repairs and improvements.
34%	(SUNSET) This measure does not increase taxes, and includes a strict (HALF SAMPLE: 30-year) (HALF SAMPLE: 20-year) time-limit on the existing tax. This ensures that voters will continue to be able to make their voices heard on whether this local transportation funding should continue
34%	(LOCAL CONTROL) Sacramento and Washington, DC are constantly placing new restrictions on how we can use our transportation funding. Most of these restrictions require more and more funds to be spent on public transportation and other programs that may be right for LA and the Bay Area, but aren't the top priority for Madera County. Waiting to renew our local funding just means that we lose local control of our transportation dollars as more and more restrictions are placed on how these funds can be spent.
33%	(QUALITY OF LIFE) Sitting in traffic is stressful and frustrating for all of us, and those wasted minutes and hours add up. As Madera County continues to grow, traffic congestion is going to start seriously impacting our quality of life, if it hasn't already. We need this measure to protect our quality of life and ensure that we can spend time on things far more important than sitting in our cars.
32%	(ECONOMY/JOB) A properly functioning and well-maintained transportation system is a key component of a strong economy. This measure will invest in our roads and transportation infrastructure to support existing businesses and encourage new ones to locate here.
28%	(JOBS/DIRECT) This measure will support hundreds of jobs in many local industries, including good-paying construction jobs.

Messaging on matching funds, accountability, and public safety resonates strongly.



Q8. I am going to read you some statements made by supporters of the measure. Please tell me if you find it very convincing, or somewhat convincing as a reason to support this measure. *Split Sample

Democrats find the message on matching funds highly compelling.

Statement (Very Convincing)	All Voters	Party		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans
*Matching Funds	51%	69%	51%	36%
*Accountability	50%	58%	47%	44%
*Public Safety	48%	51%	56%	42%
*Growth	45%	50%	46%	39%
Fire	41%	45%	47%	33%
Local Repairs	40%	47%	50%	29%
No Increase	40%	45%	41%	35%
Sunset	34%	41%	35%	28%
Local Control	34%	26%	42%	36%
Quality of Life	33%	39%	36%	25%
Economy/Jobs	32%	35%	37%	26%
Jobs/Direct	28%	33%	35%	21%

Q8. I am going to read you some statements made by supporters of the measure. Please tell me if you find it very convincing, or somewhat convincing as a reason to support this measure. *Split Sample

The top messages resonate strongly across all five districts.

Statement (Very Convincing)	All Voters	Supervisorial District				
		1	2	3	4	5
*Matching Funds	51%	48%	43%	52%	57%	55%
*Accountability	50%	52%	48%	50%	56%	47%
*Public Safety	48%	47%	43%	58%	71%	39%
*Growth	45%	49%	44%	45%	63%	35%
Fire	41%	32%	27%	45%	56%	47%
Local Repairs	40%	36%	37%	45%	63%	35%
No Increase	40%	46%	35%	35%	34%	43%
Sunset	34%	35%	26%	35%	38%	37%
Local Control	34%	35%	32%	40%	37%	31%
Quality of Life	33%	37%	33%	39%	42%	22%
Economy/Jobs	32%	28%	29%	34%	57%	26%
Jobs/Direct	28%	28%	26%	36%	38%	22%

The matching funds argument stands out among the measure's soft supporters.

Statement (Very Convincing)	All Voters	Swing	Soft Supporters
*Matching Funds	51%	47%	63%
*Accountability	50%	44%	59%
*Public Safety	48%	40%	51%
*Growth	45%	36%	47%
Fire	41%	42%	47%
Local Repairs	40%	36%	47%
No Increase	40%	34%	43%
Sunset	34%	25%	36%
Local Control	34%	38%	39%
Quality of Life	33%	28%	38%
Economy/Jobs	32%	27%	32%
Jobs/Direct	28%	24%	26%

Messages in Opposition to the Measure

(Ranked by Very Convincing)

49%

(TAXES) Local businesses and residents have been hit hard by the pandemic, inflation, and high gas prices. Many are struggling to stay afloat. Now is not the time to be raising taxes.

44%

(GOVERNMENT WASTE) We shouldn't reward government for being wasteful by voting to increase our taxes. They already have all of the money they need, they just need to be more efficient in how they spend it.

41%

(ALREADY VOTED) We just voted on this tax in the last election, and local voters overwhelmingly rejected it. Enough is enough. Madera County Supervisors need to listen to voters when we say no to more taxes.

39%

(GAS TAX) California just raised the gas tax and the Federal Government passed a trillion dollar infrastructure bill, which will make billions available for transportation projects in California. We don't need to have a local tax too.

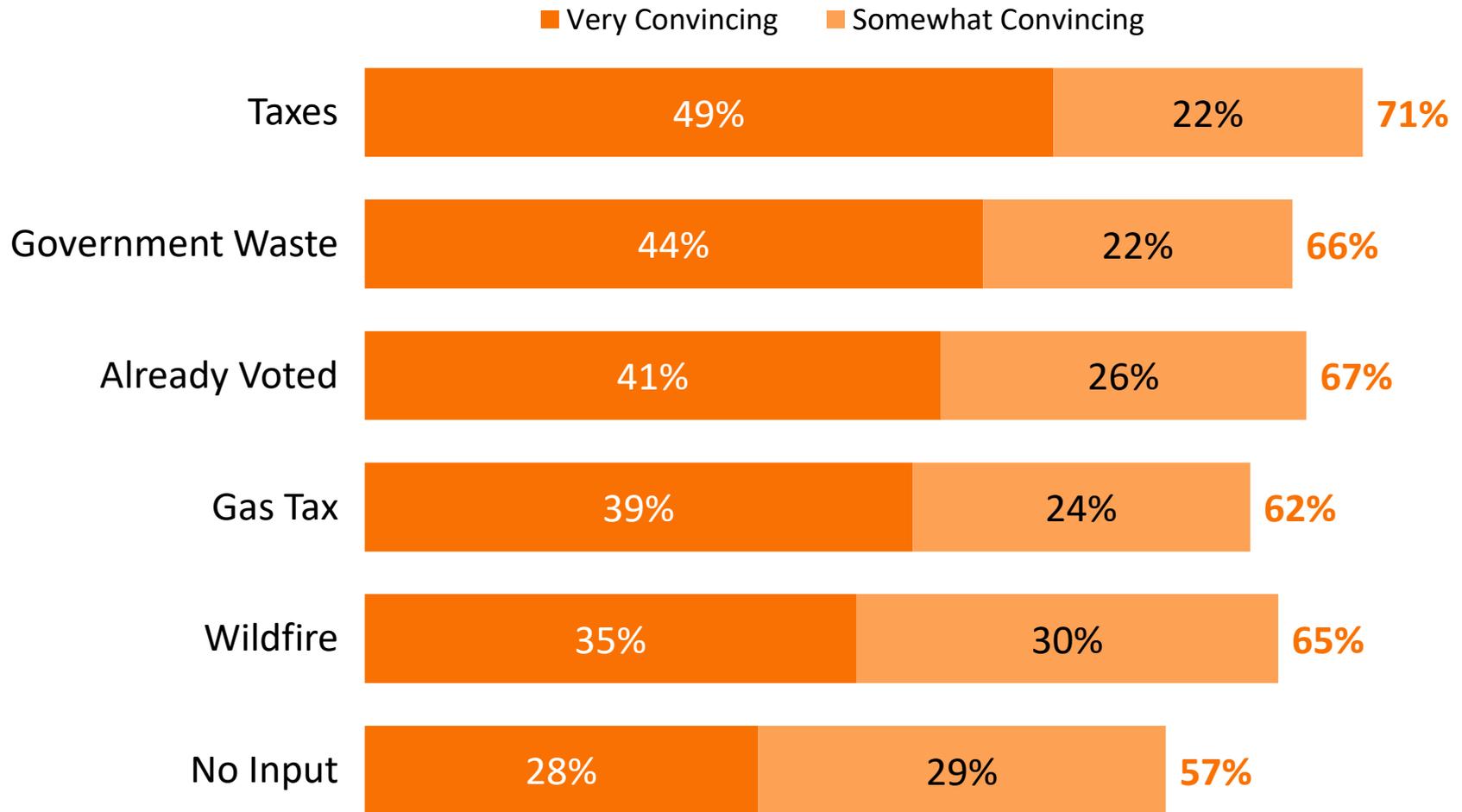
35%

(WILDFIRE) Madera County's 2008 Community Wildfire Protection Plan listed all the top high-priority communities for wildfire protection, all of which have been ignored for the last decade despite being subject to multiple evacuations. Local elected officials should do what they know they have needed to do to protect our communities, without asking us for more taxes.

28%

(NO INPUT) Local politicians brag about citizen input to this measure, but there has been essentially none. They have not sought meaningful resident input through the 17-year duration of the current measure.

Criticisms centered on anti-tax sentiment, government waste, and the prior measure's failure all resonate strongly.



Negative arguments are highly convincing to independents and Republicans.

Statement (Very Convincing)	All Voters	Party		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Taxes	49%	37%	56%	53%
Government Waste	44%	29%	53%	50%
Already Voted	41%	28%	48%	46%
Gas Tax	39%	24%	45%	46%
Wildfire	35%	21%	40%	44%
No Input	28%	18%	29%	36%

The anti-tax statement stands out in Districts 2, 3 and 4.

Statement (Very Convincing)	All Voters	Supervisorial District				
		1	2	3	4	5
Taxes	49%	48%	53%	57%	61%	37%
Government Waste	44%	46%	48%	45%	49%	38%
Already Voted	41%	36%	47%	47%	47%	35%
Gas Tax	39%	40%	44%	38%	46%	32%
Wildfire	35%	36%	35%	30%	35%	38%
No Input	28%	27%	25%	28%	32%	29%

Critical statements resonate among swing voters.

Statement (Very Convincing)	All Voters	Swing	Soft Supporters
Taxes	49%	64%	45%
Government Waste	44%	53%	37%
Already Voted	41%	51%	31%
Gas Tax	39%	50%	32%
Wildfire	35%	44%	28%
No Input	28%	35%	21%



Conclusions

Conclusions

- The survey findings indicate that a sales tax renewal is viable for November 2024, but with a very slim margin.
- Two-thirds of voters support the measure initially, with no statistical difference in support between a 20-year and 30-year sunset.
- There is a widely-shared recognition of need for funding for roads and transportation.
- Voters prioritize fixing potholes, maintaining local streets and roads and improving the flow of traffic.
- Support is somewhat fluid; it increases to 71% with positive messaging and decreases to 61% after criticisms.
 - The most compelling positive statements highlight matching funds, accountability, and public safety.
 - Criticisms focused on taxes and waste are most convincing.
- Given the strong anti-tax feeling in the electorate, the measure's success will require a strong public outreach effort and a broad and diverse coalition of supporters.

**For more information,
contact:**



**OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY**

1999 Harrison St., Suite 2020
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone (510) 451-9521
Fax (510) 451-0384

Dave Metz

Dave@FM3research.com

Lucia Del Puppo

Lucia@FM3research.com