Eagle County Conservation District Survey Key Findings

June 2024

Methodology

New Bridge Strategy conducted a survey among N=270 landowners who are also registered to vote in Eagle County Conservation District from June 3-10 2024. Please note that we utilized a list of voters provided by the District and therefore, did not have complete demographic information about this audience so we did not weight the data.

Interviews were conducted via live telephone interviews (both cell phones and landlines) and online via email invitation and text-to-web.

The margin of error is ±5.96% for the overall sample. The margin of error will vary for sub-groups.

Key Demographics

Gender

Male	55%
Female	45%

Length of Residence

Less than 5 years	16%
5 to 10 years	17%
11 to 15 years	9%
More than 15 years	47%
Native	11%

Ethnicity

White	88%
Voters of Color	10%

Age

18-34	6%
35-44	17%
45-54	25%
55-64	23%
65+	28%

Education

High School or Less	5%
Some college	16%
College grad	40%
Post grad	39%

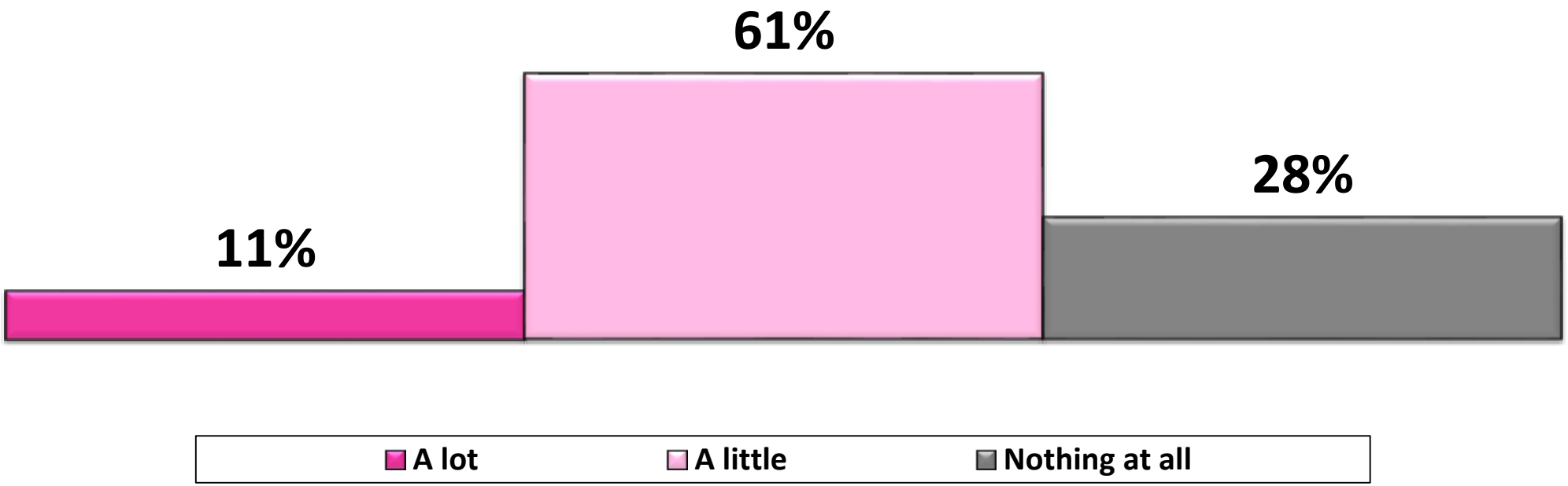
Party

Republican	20%
Independent	44%
Democrat	36%

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Core Perceptions of Eagle County Conservation District

Most know at least a little about ECCD. Only one-in-ten say they know a lot.



How much would you say you know about the Eagle County Conservation District?

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Long-time residents and Republicans are most familiar with ECCD.

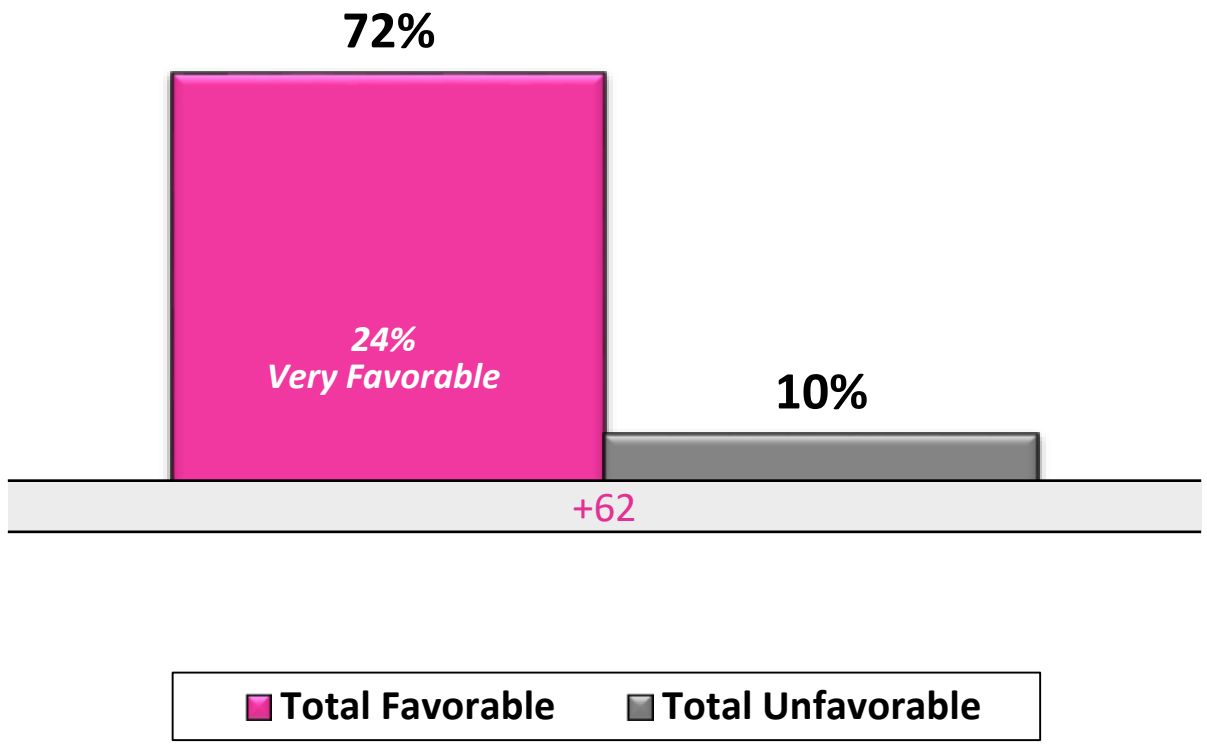
Total Know A Lot/Little about ECCD	
Men	70%
Women	75%
Age 18-44	56%
Age 45-54	75%
Age 55-64	89%
Age 65+	70%
Less than 15 years resident	65%
15+ years resident	78%
Republican	81%
Independent	70%
Democrat	70%

How much would you say you know about the Eagle County Conservation District?

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Of those who are at least a little familiar with the District, almost three-in-four have a favorable impression of the Conservation District.

EAGLE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT



And do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of the Conservation District?
Asked only of those who were familiar with the District, N=195.

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Potential Ballot Measure

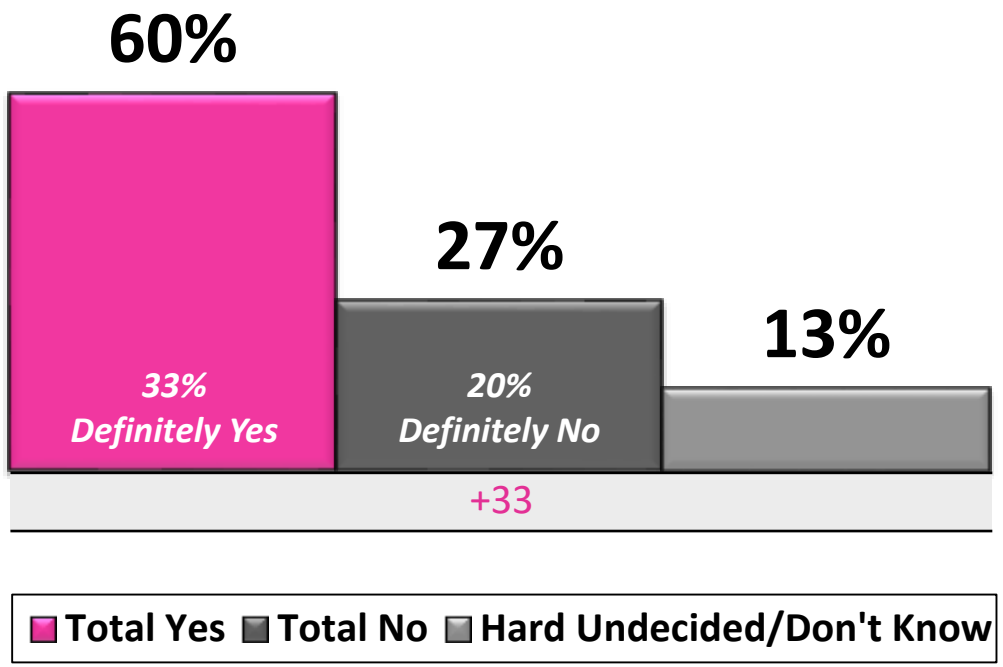
Three-in-five qualified voters in the District say they would vote yes on the potential measure if the election were being held today.

Now, there could be a question on the ballot in the future, so please indicate if the election were being held today and the following proposal is on the ballot, would you vote Yes or No on it. It would read as follows…

Shall Eagle County Conservation District taxes be increased $650,000 annually commencing in tax payment year 2025, and by such amounts as may be collected thereafter, from a property tax of 0.15 mills (estimated to cost $10.00 per year for every $1 million in home value) for the following purposes:

- *Restoring and protecting forest and grassland health to reduce the risk of wildfires to communities and wildlife;*
- *Maintaining drinking water quality and the health of rivers and streams by working with local residents to improve water conservation and help them use more native and drought tolerant plants and grasses;*
- *Ensuring local food production by working with local ranchers and landowners to improve soil health, support more efficient water use and ensure adequate water supplies;*

With all expenditures subject to applicable legal requirements regarding an annual independent audit, as required by law; and shall such tax revenues and the earnings from the investment of such tax revenues be collected, retained, and spent as a voter-approved revenue change under Article X, section 20 of the Colorado constitution or any other law?



NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Water, land conservation and wildfire risk mitigation are the top reasons why voters say they would vote yes. Many also said the minimal tax increase makes it a good investment.

	# of mentions
Water conservation/quality	48
Preserve land/forests/nature	36
Wildfire mitigation	27
Minimal tax increase/good investment	26
Concern for environment/support for environmental protection	24
Purposes listed are important/necessary	17
Benefits community/public good	11
Preserve wildlife habitat	6
Important for future generations	5
Supports agriculture	5

What are the one or two main reasons why you would vote Yes in favor of this proposal?

"Because the increase is minimal in taxes and because the money is going toward issues I feel strongly about."
Female, Age 45-54, Republican

"It's good for the environment, and it's a good investment."
Male, Age 65+, Democrat

"I'm interested in maintaining the environment. Water rights and maintaining the supply is vital to the area."
Female, Age 55-64, Else/Independent

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Opposition to increasing taxes was the top reason residents said they would vote no.

	# of mentions
Opposed to more taxes	47
Additional funds for District not necessary	11
Government/county misuse of tax funds	9
Proposal is vague/need more information	5
Concerns about inflation/cost of living	4

What are the one or two main reasons why you would vote No against this proposal?

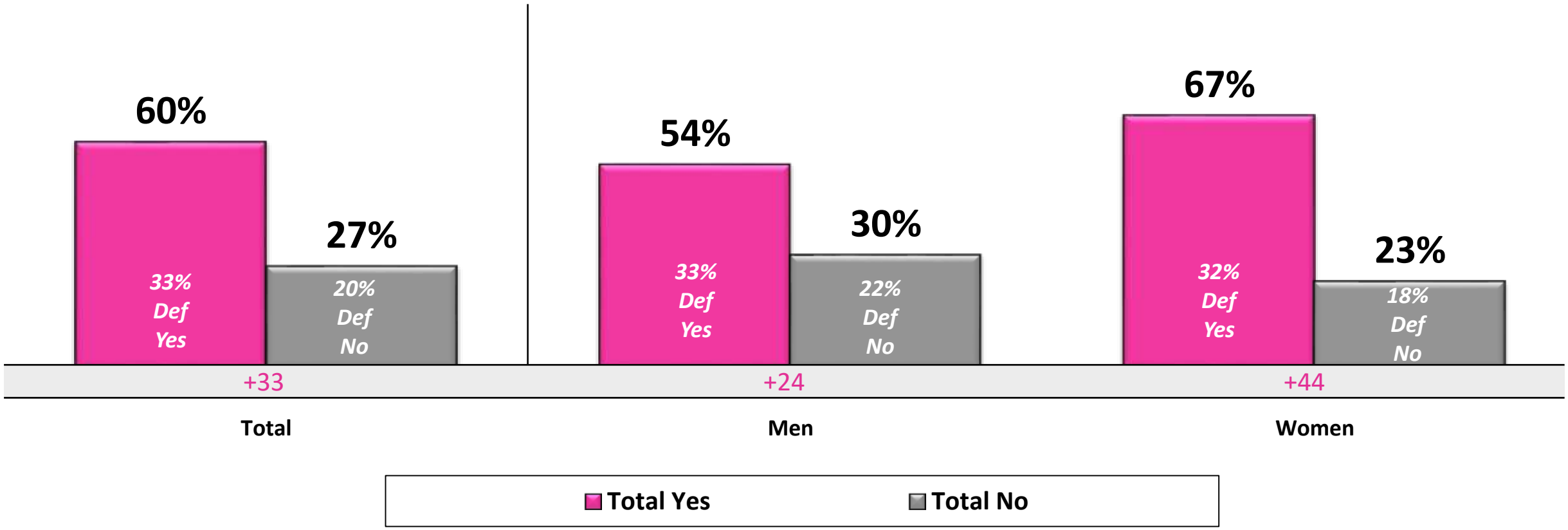
"It's a big tax increase with no confirmation that it will be used properly."
Male, Age 45-54, Else/Independent

"I would need to know exactly how these funds are being used. There is a lot of ambiguity there."
Female, Age 45-54, Democrat

"The amount of taxes on my property value has gone up. Not sure where the money is going."
Male, Age 35-44, Democrat

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

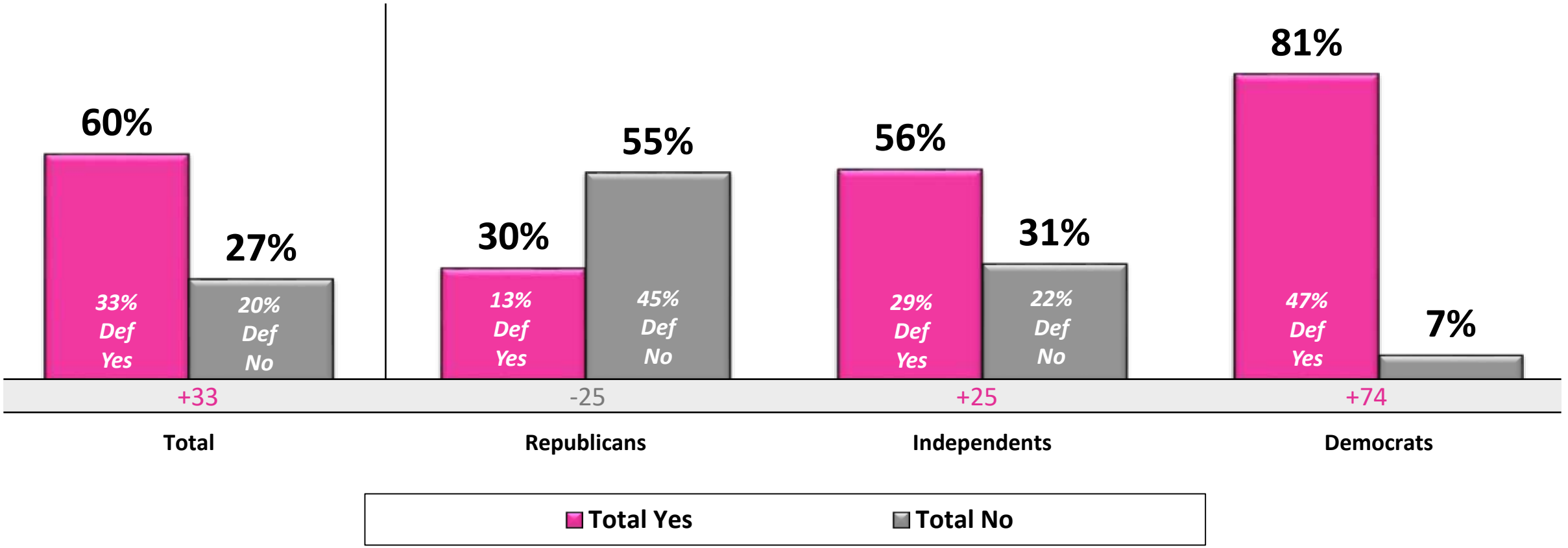
Female voters tend to be more supportive of the proposed measure.



Initial Ballot

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Support for the proposal falls along party lines, with a majority of Republicans saying they would vote no.



Initial Ballot

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

Communicating about the Ballot Measure

Maintaining water quality and the health of rivers and streams rise to the top as the most important projects to fund.

Funding Proposals Ranked by Total Extremely/Very Important	Extremely Important	Ext/Very Important
Maintaining drinking water quality	53%	86%
Maintaining the health of rivers and streams, such as the Eagle and Colorado rivers**	51%	83%
Maintaining the health of rivers and streams*	45%	81%
Ensuring adequate water supplies	44%	80%
Restoring and protecting forest and grassland health to reduce the risk of wildfires to communities and wildlife	43%	78%
Conserving populations of native birds, fish and wildlife such as bald eagles, elk, moose, and trout	44%	76%
Working with local ranchers and landowners to support more efficient water use**	30%	70%
Restoring habitat for pollinators such as bees and butterflies	36%	66%

Below is a list of benefits and projects that could be funded if voters approve this proposal. Please indicate how important it is to you personally that each project be funded: Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you that funding is dedicated to that purpose?

**Sample A, N=126 **Sample B, N=144*

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

These projects are also viewed as important to fund, though intensity is much lower than the items on the previous slide.

Funding Proposals Ranked by Extremely/Very Important	Extremely Important	Ext/Very Important
Working with local residents to improve water conservation	26%	59%
Helping local residents reduce water use and costs through rebates to replace turf with native and drought tolerant plants and invest in more efficient irrigation**	29%	59%
Supporting sustainable farming and ranching in Eagle County	22%	53%
Working with local residents to help them use more native and drought tolerant plants and grasses*	21%	52%
Providing financial incentives and working with local farmers and ranchers to modernize irrigation equipment to support more efficient water use.*	20%	51%
Working with local ranchers and landowners to improve soil health	21%	50%
Ensuring local food production	17%	43%

Below is a list of benefits and projects that could be funded if voters approve this proposal. Please indicate how important it is to you personally that each project be funded: Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you that funding is dedicated to that purpose?

**Sample A, N=126 **Sample B, N=144*

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

The statements about water are all very convincing to voters as reasons to vote yes for the potential proposal. The wildfire statement is still convincing, but intensity is not as high.

		% Total Convincing
The amount of water flowing through the Colorado River has declined 20% since 2000 and scientists believe this trend will only get worse due to a changing climate. We need to act now to invest in more efficient irrigation systems and help local residents reduce their water use.	% Very Convincing 37%	75%
Northing is more important than having clean water to drink. By protecting the amount of water flowing in our rivers and creeks, we can ensure the quality of the water flowing into our water supplies.	35%	72%
Cities are aggressively buying up water rights and drying up valuable, productive farmland. Some of these farms have been in families for generations. The District works closely with local farmers and ranchers, and with these funds can help them modernize irrigation to help keep these farms and ranches producing food in our local area.	30%	69%
Our water supplies are like a bank account, and we are withdrawing more than is deposited. This proposal will allow the District to continue to help our residents, small businesses and farmers be good stewards of this vital resource so future generations can have enough water and enjoy our rivers and creeks like we do today.	30%	69%
By working closely with local landowners, the District provides information and financial incentives so that they can restore the health of beautiful forests and grasslands. That in turn can help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and protect our communities.	25%	66%

The following are some statements that people have made IN FAVOR OF this funding measure. After each one, please indicate whether that statement is very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not at all convincing as a reason to vote YES, IN FAVOR OF this proposal.

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

An opposition statement about property taxes is very convincing to voters. The other statements aren't as intensely compelling.

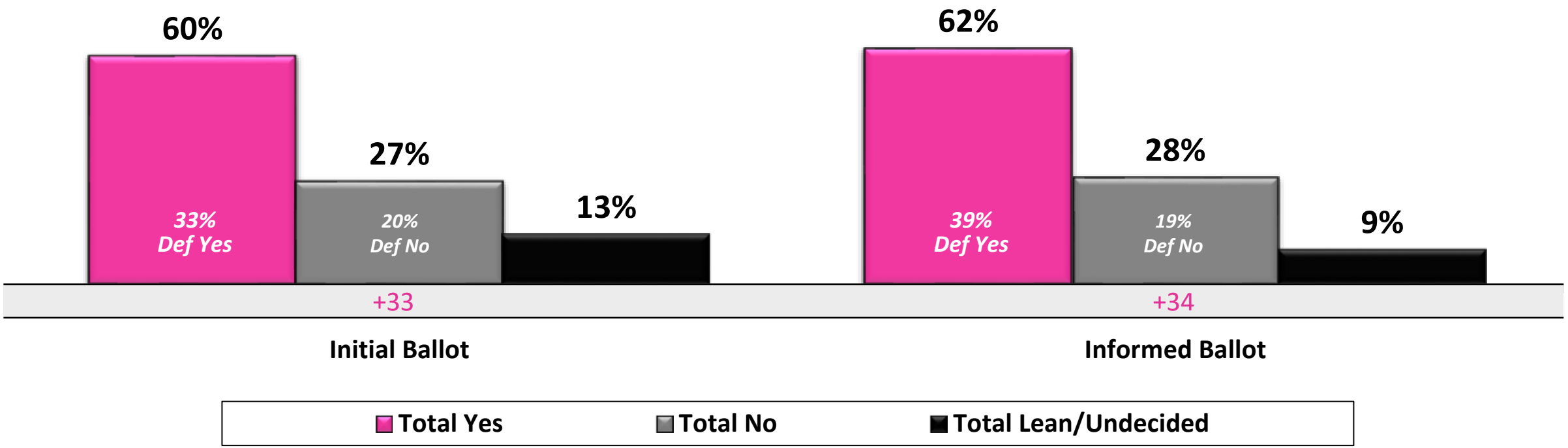
	% Very Convincing	% Total Convincing
Property taxes just went up dramatically. Now is not the time to ask for a tax increase, especially with increasing cost of living and higher prices on everything from groceries to gas to rent.*	40%	71%
This measure creates a forever tax that will never expire. We should not vote to tax our children and grandchildren decades into the future.**	26%	46%
We cannot trust the District to spend this money wisely. Government needs to tighten its belt and live within its means like most families.**	23%	51%
The District is already doing this work without any tax dollars. They should go out and get more grants to do this work – not increase taxes.*	17%	57%
We cannot afford to spend more of our tax dollars on open space and wildlife habitat when our community faces other higher priority problems, such as a lack of affordable housing.*	15%	45%

The following are some statements that people have made AGAINST this proposal. After each one, please indicate whether that statement is very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not at all convincing as a reason to vote NO, AGAINST this proposal.

**Sample A (N=126) **Sample B (N=144)*

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

After learning more, there is not much change in the number who say they would vote yes, however, there is a slight bump up outside of the margin of error of those who say they would definitely vote yes.



Having read all of this, please indicate if the election were being held today and this proposal was on the ballot, would you vote Yes or No on the following question…

NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

The Bottom Line

The Bottom Line

- Most of these qualified voters know at least a little about the District. Very few say they know “a lot.” Of those who are familiar, almost three-in-four say they have a favorable impression of Conservation District.
- The potential measure starts off in a strong position with sixty percent of qualified voters in the District saying they would vote yes, with over half of those saying they would definitely vote yes. There are a myriad of reasons voters say they would vote yes, but water conservation/quality, preserving nature, wildlife mitigation, and the fact that the tax is not a large increase are the top reasons. Given that, it makes sense that funding items emphasizing water quality, conservation and reducing wildfire risk rise to the top as some of the most important items voters believe should be funded.
- When it comes to support statements, all of the statements tested are compelling to voters as reasons to support the measure. The statement about wildfire risk isn’t quite as convincing, but a majority still say it is compelling.
- Statements in opposition to the measure for the most part don’t land with these voters. One statement about property taxes increasing is compelling as a reason to oppose, but we have seen this statement resonate on various issues across the state so this sentiment is certainly not unique to just ECCD.
- After learning more, voter support remains solid for the potential measure and hovers in the low 60’s.

Suggested Ballot Language

Shall Eagle County Conservation District taxes be increased $650,000 annually commencing in tax payment year 2025, and by such amounts as may be collected thereafter, from a property tax of 0.15 mills (estimated to cost $10.00 per year for every $1 million in home value) for the following purposes:

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NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY

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