



Humboldt County Community Survey Results

Survey Conducted June 16-19, 2014

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FM3

Methodology

- Telephone survey of 400 randomly-selected Humboldt County likely November 2014 voters
 - Interviews were conducted via landline and cell phones
 - Survey was conducted June 16-19, 2014
- The margin of sampling error is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level for the full sample
 - The margin or error for split samples is +/-6.9%
 - Margins of error for other population subgroups will be higher
 - Some percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding
- Select tracks from 2008 survey

Interviews by Supervisor District



District	Supervisor	% of Sample	# of Interviews
1	Rex Bohn	22%	88
2	Estelle Fennell	20%	80
3	Mark Lovelace	20%	80
4	Virginia Bass	17%	68
5	Ryan Sundberg	21%	84

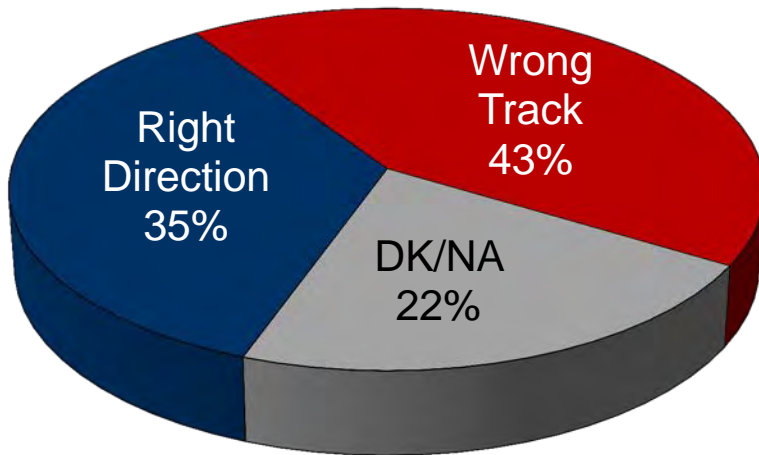


Perceptions of Humboldt County

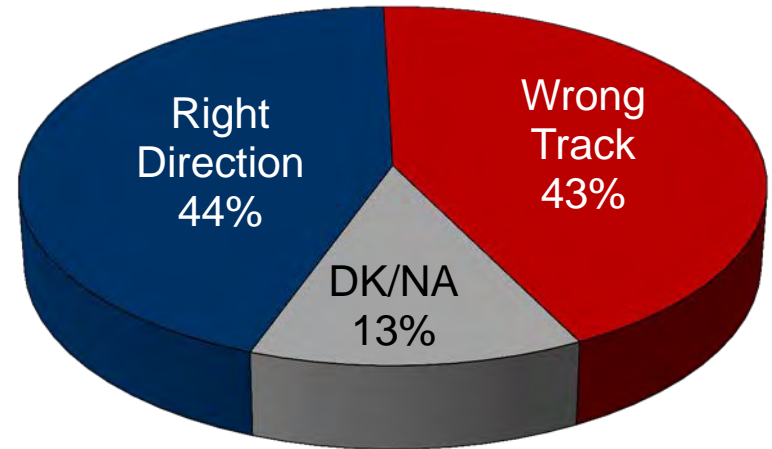
While general opinions of life in Humboldt County are mixed, they are slightly improved from 2008.

Would you say things in Humboldt County are going in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

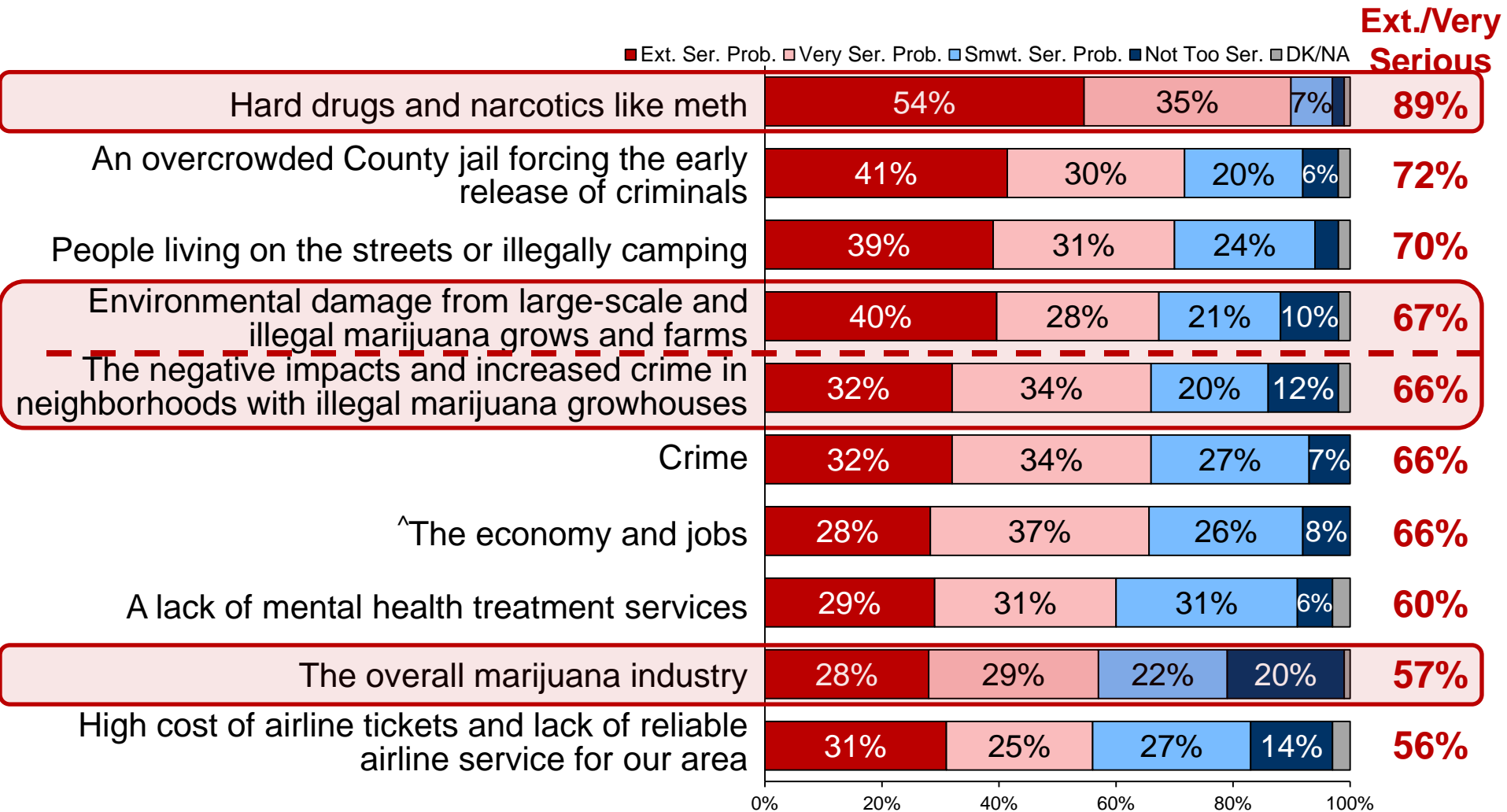
2008



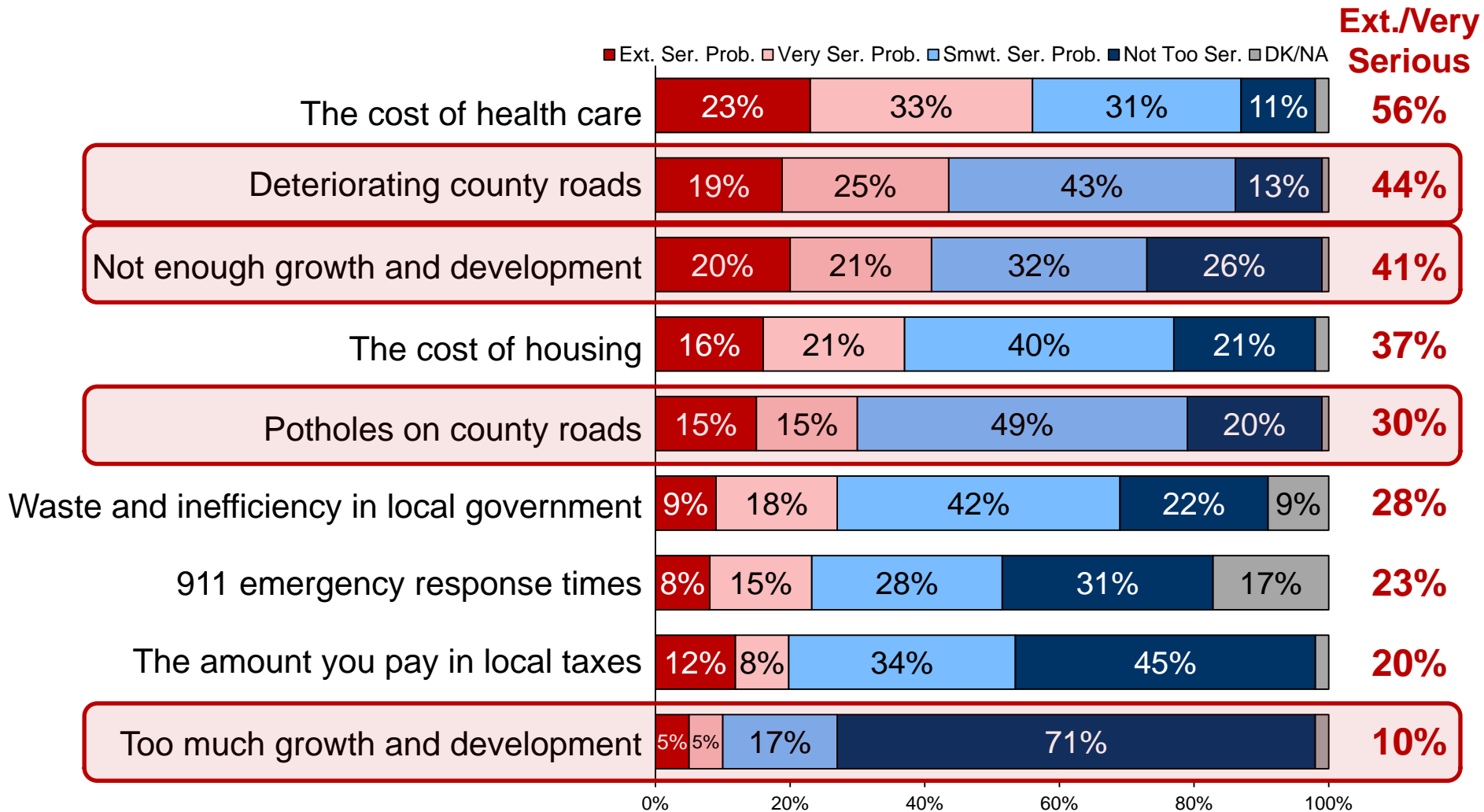
2014



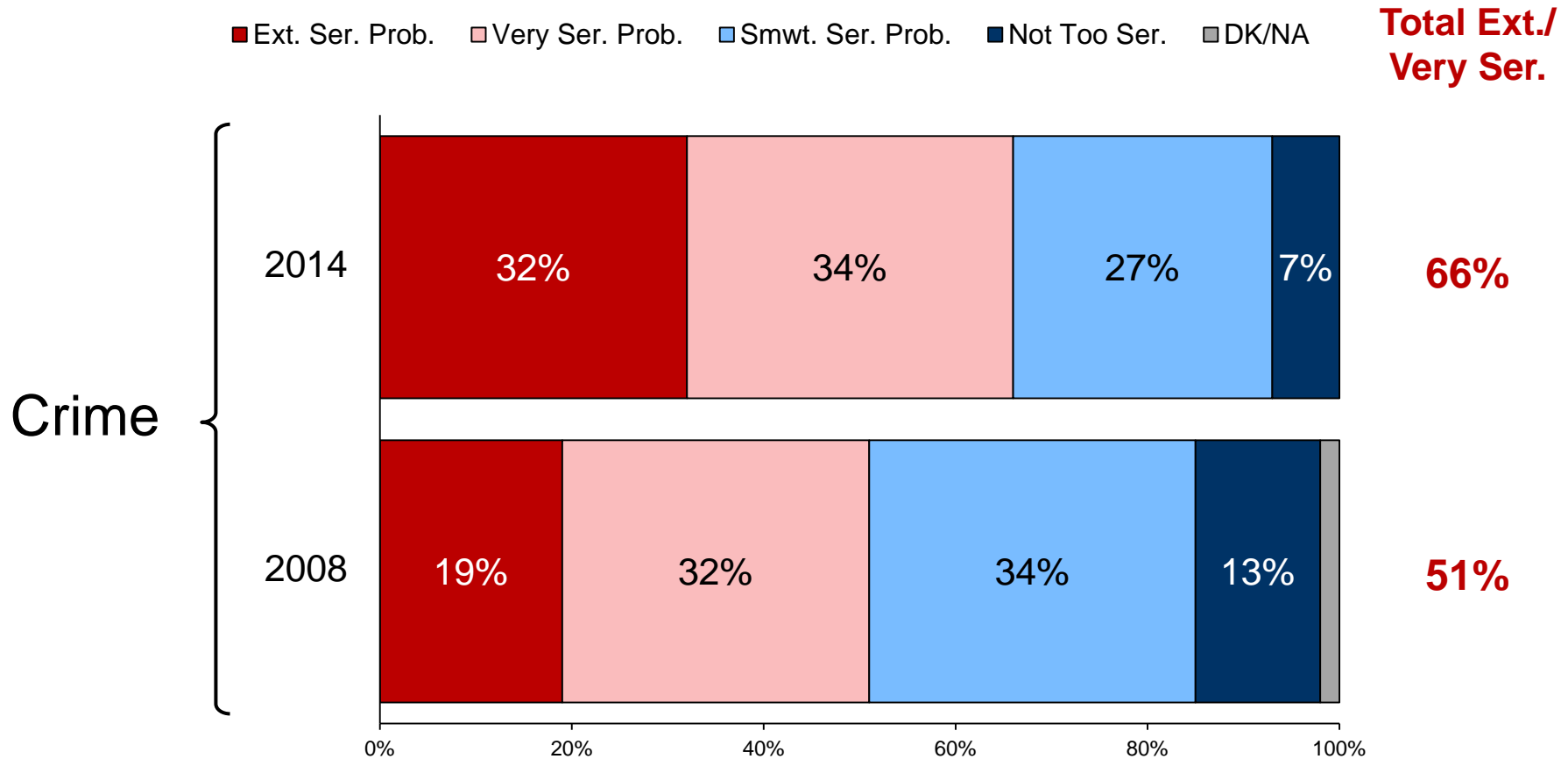
Crime related to drugs, an overcrowded jail and illegal camping are top concerns in the County.



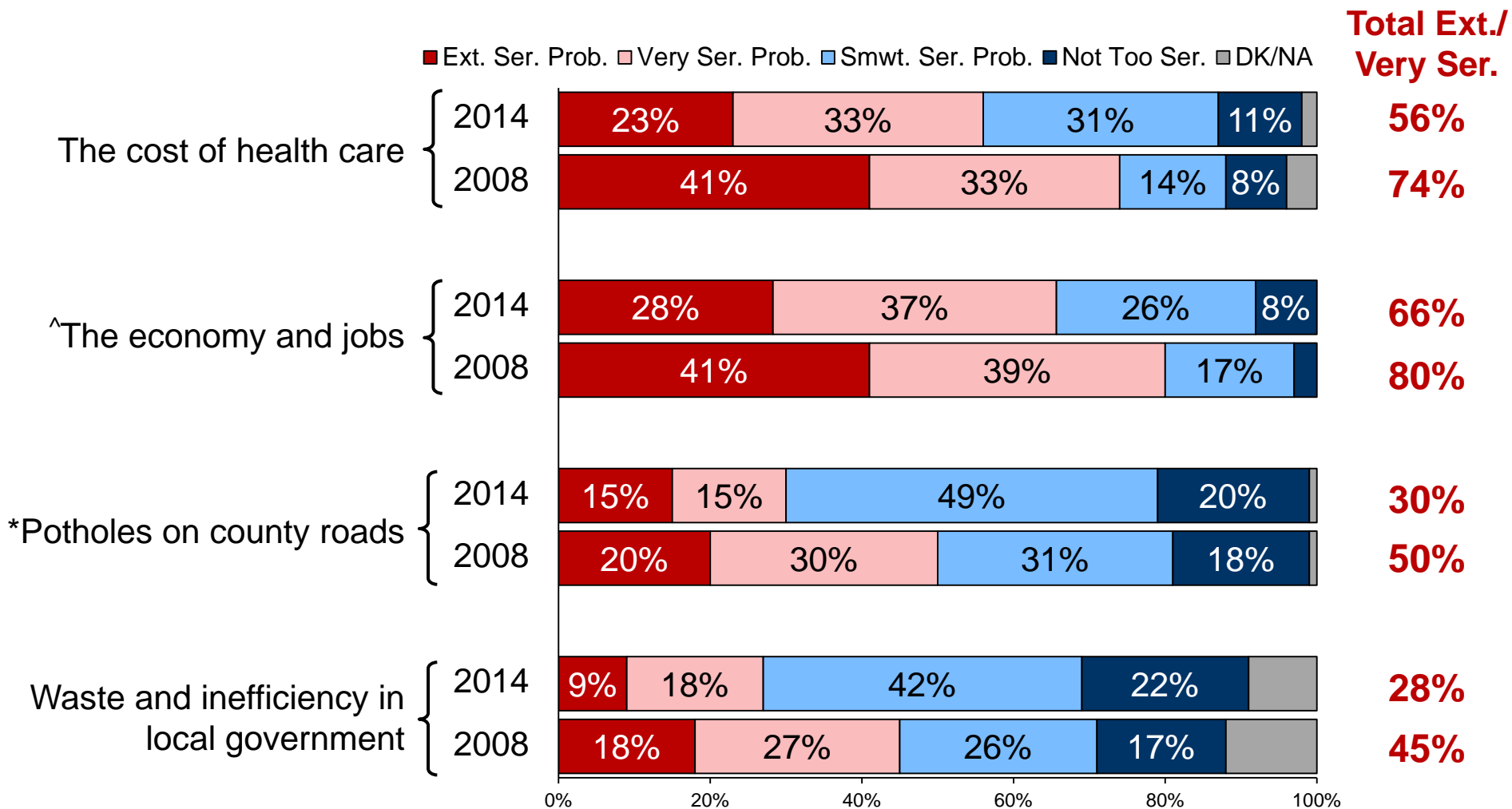
Other issues – including government waste and local taxes – are less concerning.



Since 2008, more are concerned about crime...

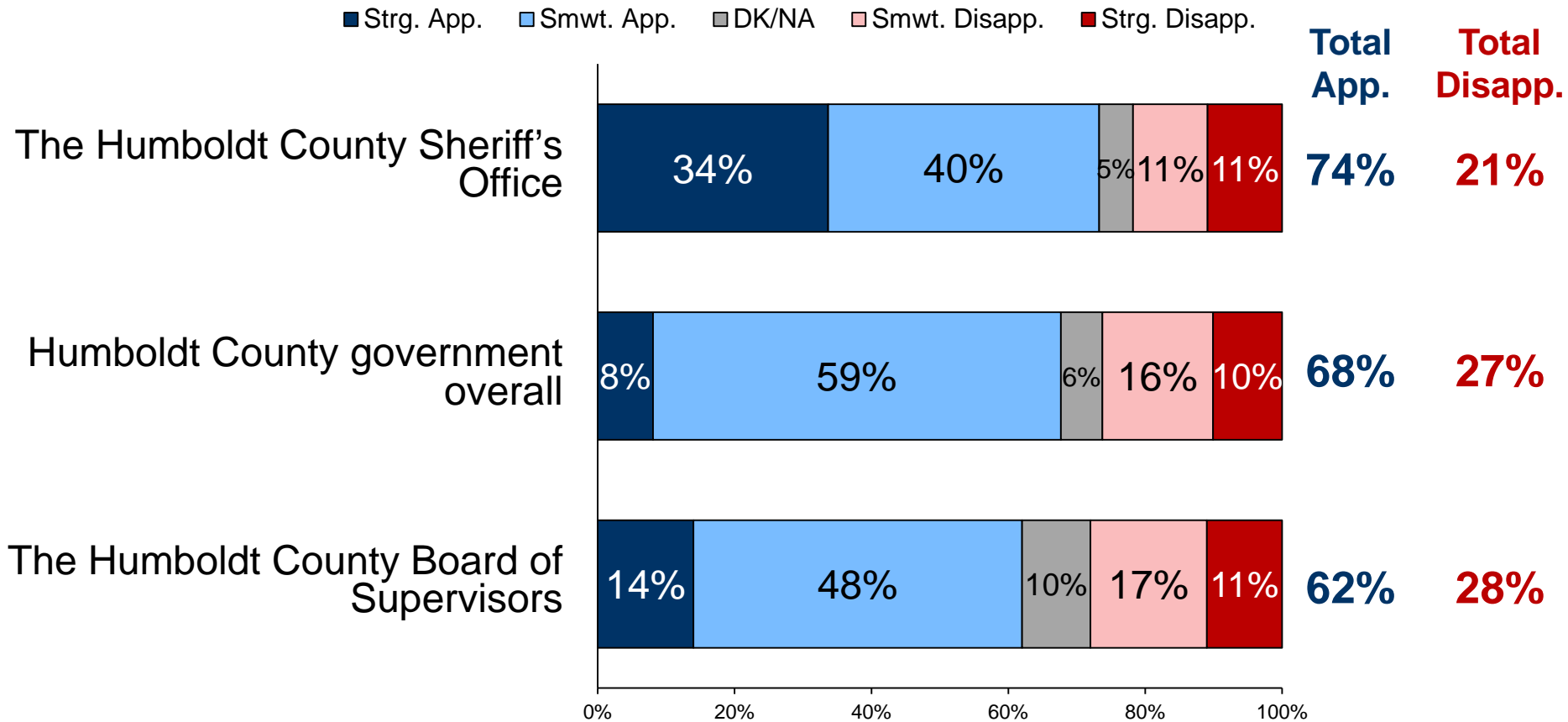


...but fewer about health care costs, the economy, potholes and government waste.



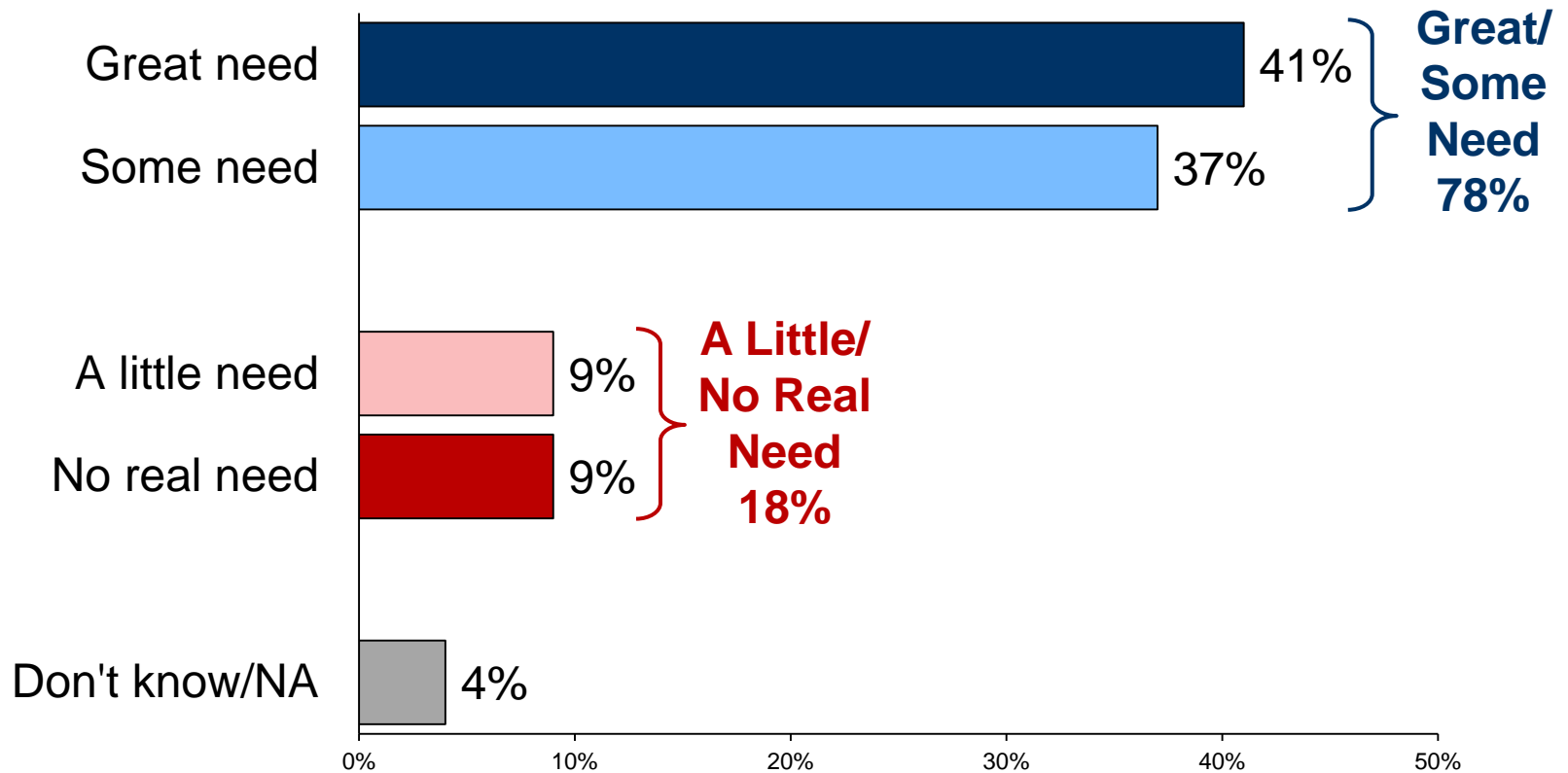
Solid majorities feel good about the performance of County government...

I am going to read you a list of a few organizations that active in public life in Humboldt County. Please tell me if approve or disapprove of the job they are doing.



...but recognize the need for additional County funding.

Would you say that to provide essential services, the County of Humboldt has a great need for additional funding, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding?





Reactions to Potential Finance Measures

Approach to Testing Potential Measures

- Two potential finance measures were tested
- Half of the sample was asked about a general purpose sales tax measure
 - Under current law, this would apply countywide (e.g., in incorporated and unincorporated portions of the County)
 - Respondents were also asked about the potential of applying the sales tax only in the County's unincorporated areas
- Half of the sample was asked about a general purpose Utility Users Tax (UUT), including an excessive electricity usage tax
 - This would apply only to the unincorporated portions of the County
- Both measures would have majority vote thresholds this November
- Neither measure included a sunset, though respondents were asked about the impact of including a five-year sunset
- Lower tax rates were also tested for both measures

Hypothetical Ballot Language Tested

Humboldt County Public Safety and Essential Services Measure.

To maintain and improve essential services, such as:

- Sheriff's patrols;
- 911 emergency response;
- Crime investigation and prosecution;
- Drug enforcement and prevention;
- Services for abused children and the mentally ill;
- Road improvements and pothole repair; and
- Other County services,

Shall the County of Humboldt enact **3/4 cent sales tax** with all revenue for the County, none for the State of California, with annual audits and public review?

Humboldt County Public Safety and Essential Services Measure.

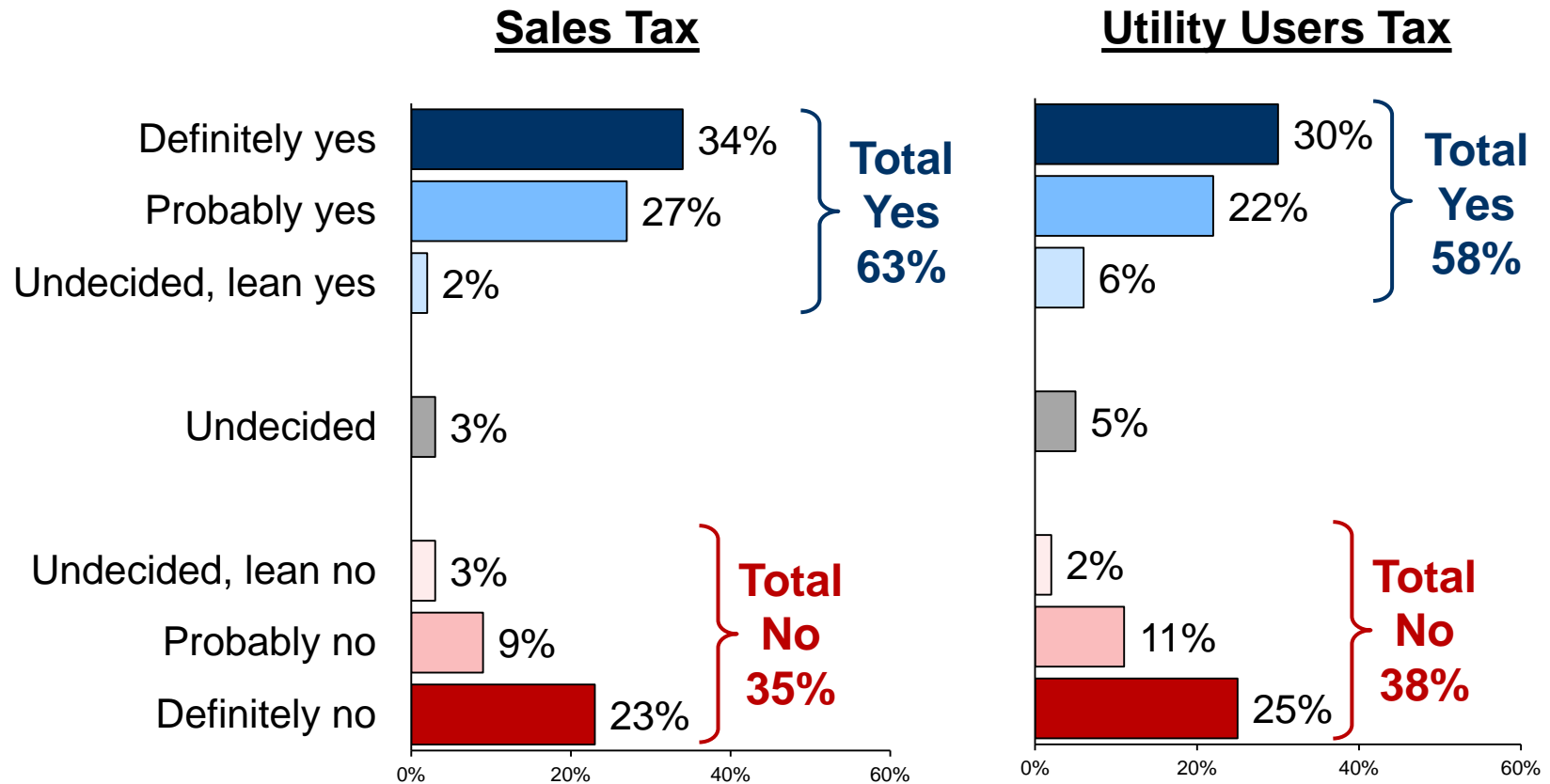
To maintain and improve services such as:

- Sheriff's patrols;
- 911 emergency response;
- Crime investigation and prosecution;
- Drug enforcement and prevention;
- Services for abused children and the mentally ill;
- Pothole repair; and
- Other County services,

Shall Humboldt County establish a **3% utility users tax** in its unincorporated areas, including a 45% tax on those whose electricity usage exceeds 600% of an established baseline with all revenue for the County, with annual audits and public review?

Both measures initially generated majority support above their vote thresholds.

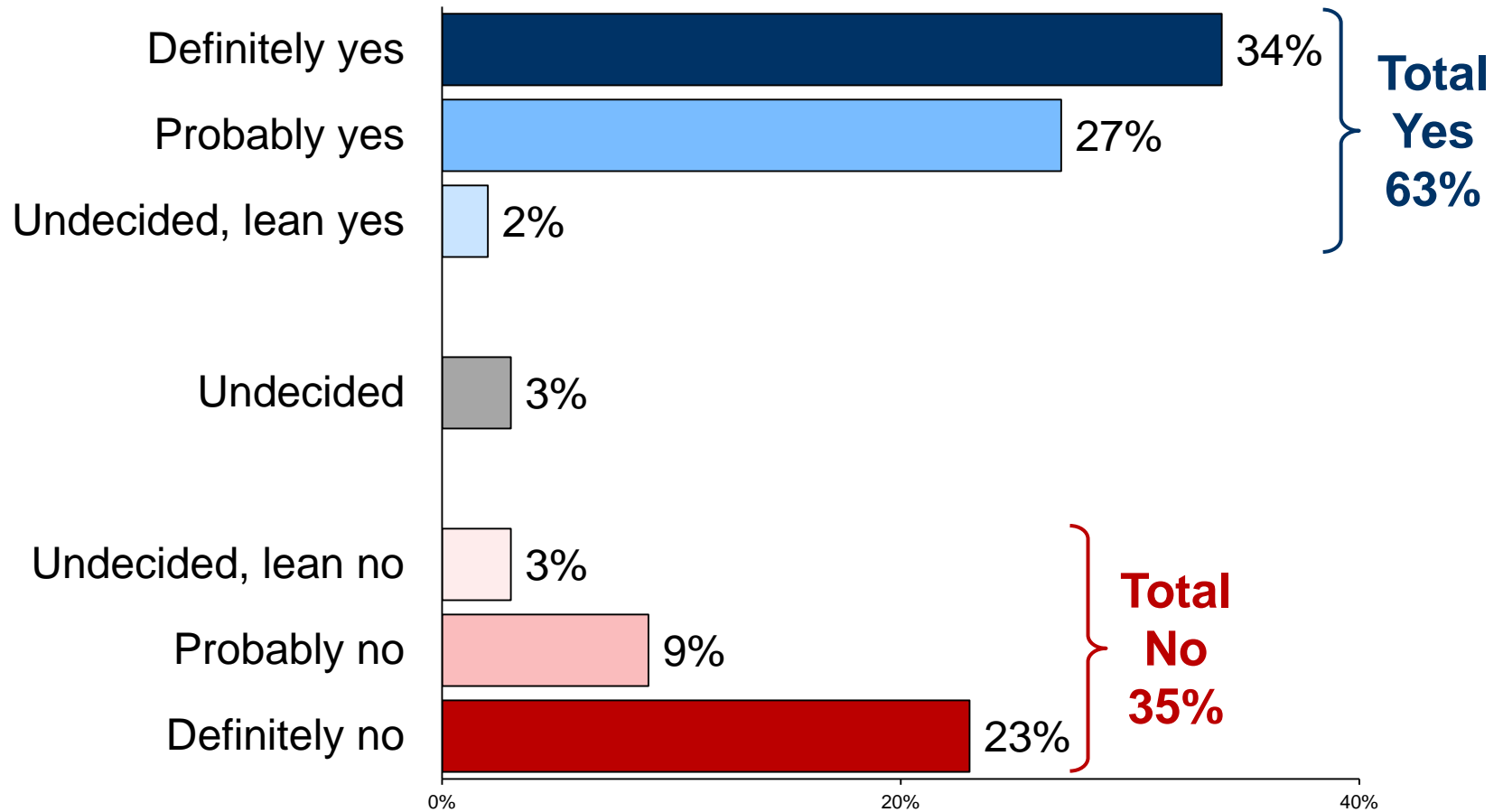
If there were an election today, do you think you would vote “yes” in favor of this measure or “no” to oppose it?





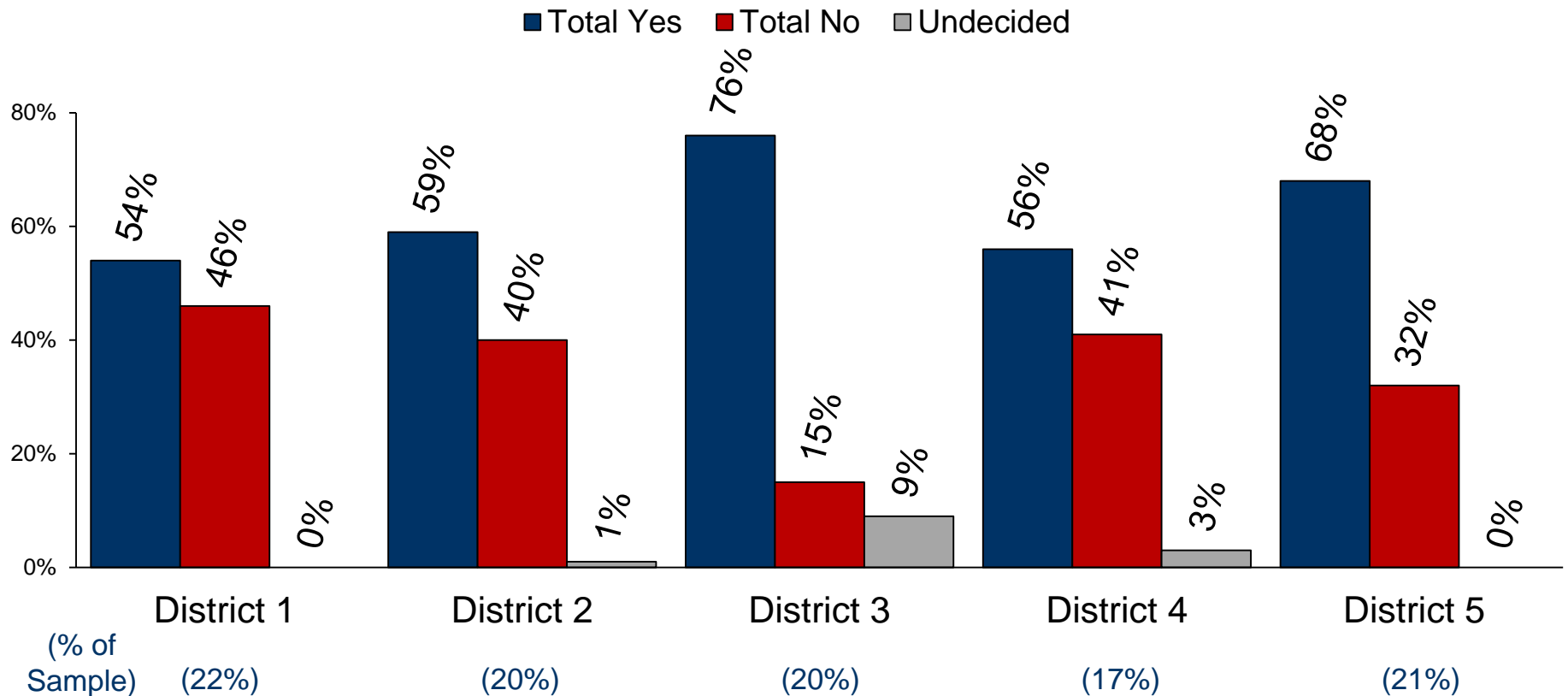
Looking More Closely at a Potential General Purpose Sales Tax

More than three in five would support a three-quarter cent, general purpose sales tax.

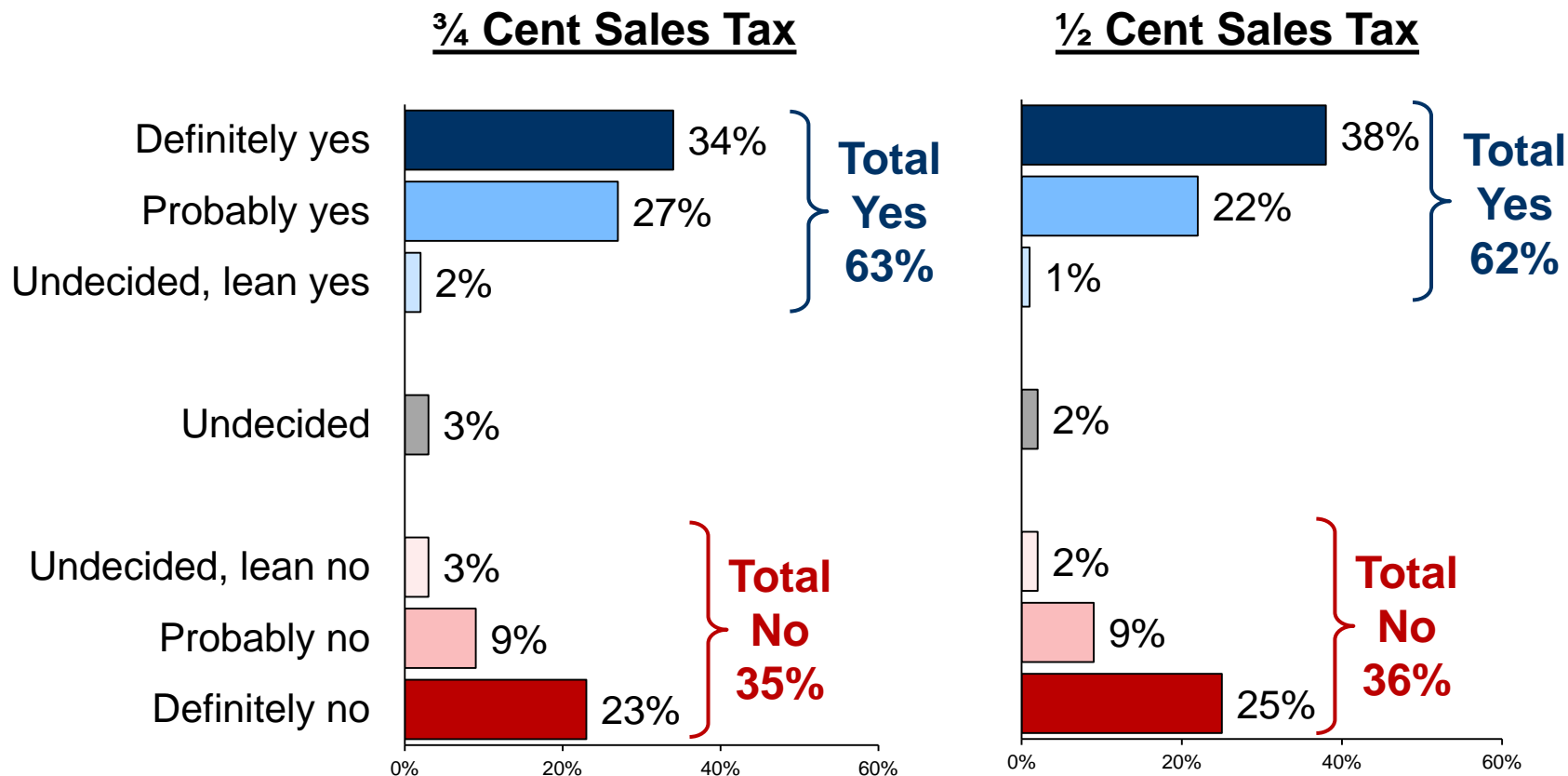


Support is greatest in District 3, but exceeds 50% in all districts.

Sales Tax Initial Vote by Supervisorial District

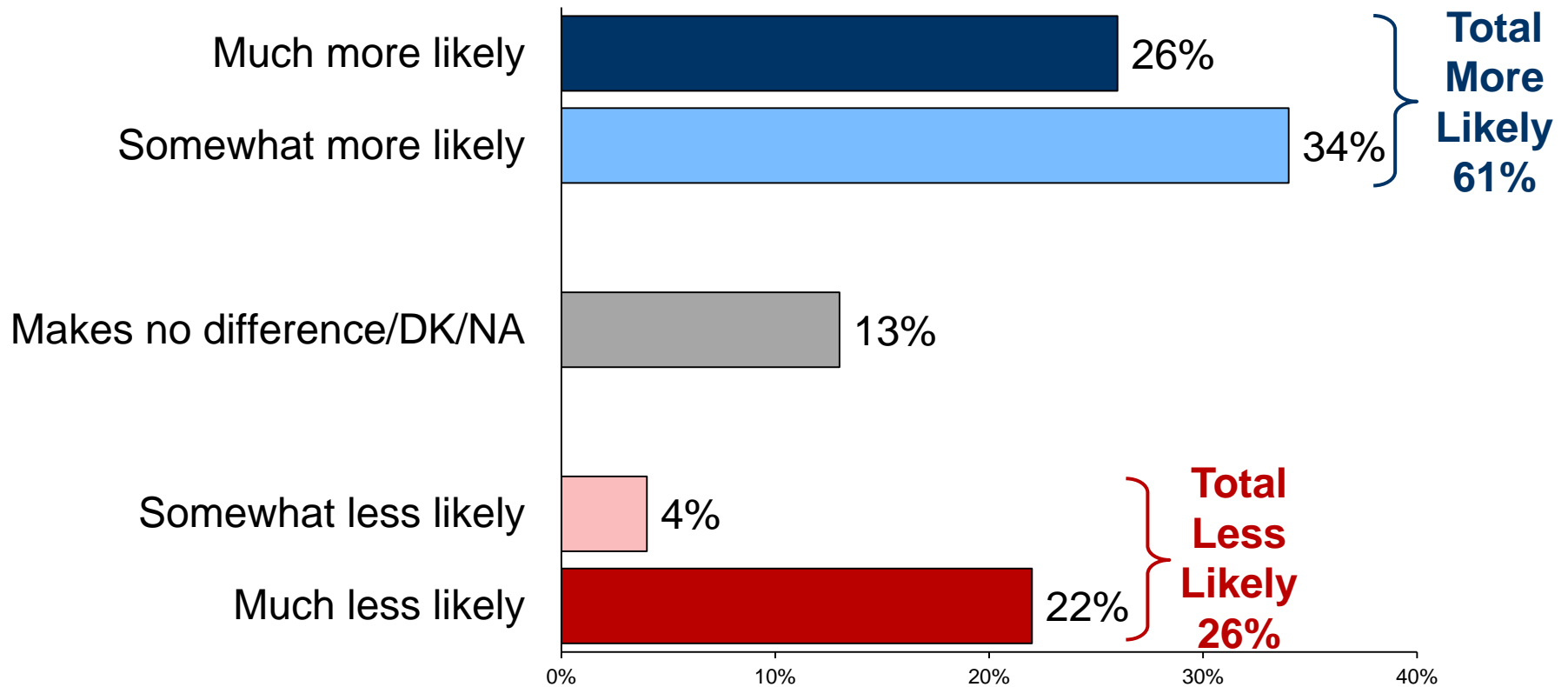


Support for a one-half cent sales tax isn't materially different.



Three in five would be more likely to support a sales tax if it were limited to five years.

Would you be more likely or less likely to support this measure if the sales tax it enacted were limited to no more than 5 years?



Approach to Testing a Sales Tax Enacted only in the County's Unincorporated Areas.

- Under current law, a sales tax can only be applied countywide (e.g., in incorporated and unincorporated portions of the County).
- The State Legislature is currently considering a bill to allow counties to extend sales taxes to only the unincorporated portions of a county.
- Respondents were asked in two different questions about the potential of applying the sales tax only in the County's unincorporated areas:
 - One question explained the legislative proposal and asked if respondents would be more or less likely to support a sales limited to unincorporated county areas.
 - One question did not provide the legislative background, but instead directly asked respondents how they would vote on a measure if it were limited to unincorporated county areas, providing specific examples.

Question Language

With Legislative Background*

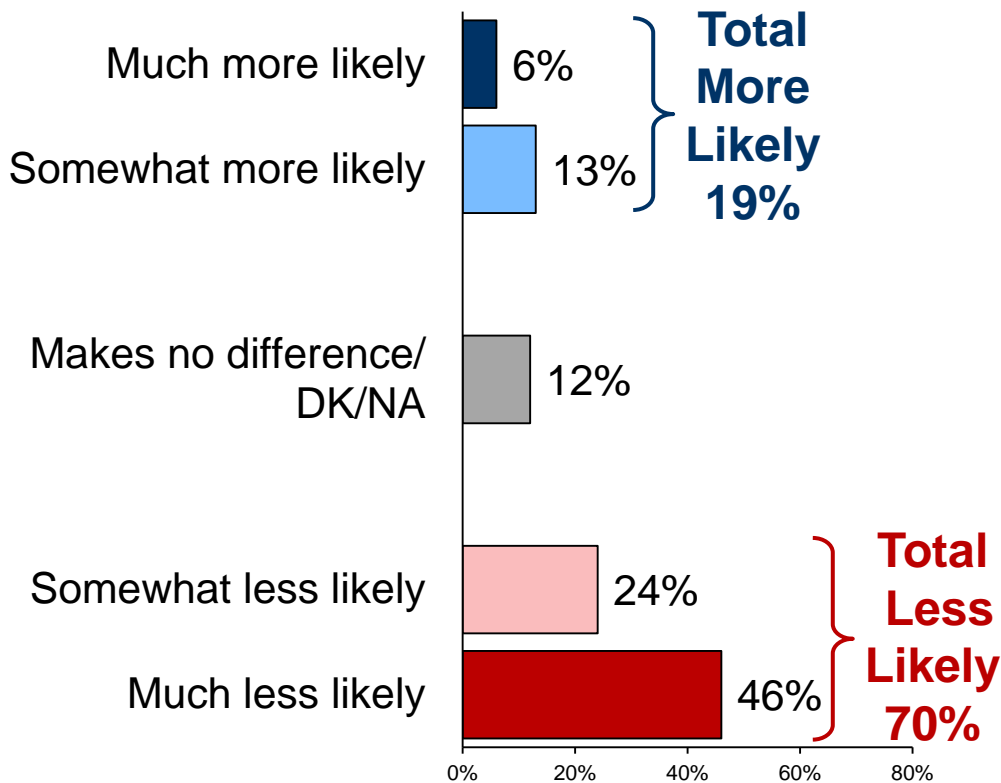
As currently worded, this measure would raise the sales tax in all portions of the County, including incorporated cities. However, the State Legislature is currently considering legislation that would allow counties to enact sales taxes in only their unincorporated areas. Would you be more likely or less likely to support this measure if this legislation were to pass and this measure increased the sales tax only in the unincorporated portions of the County?

Without Legislative Background**

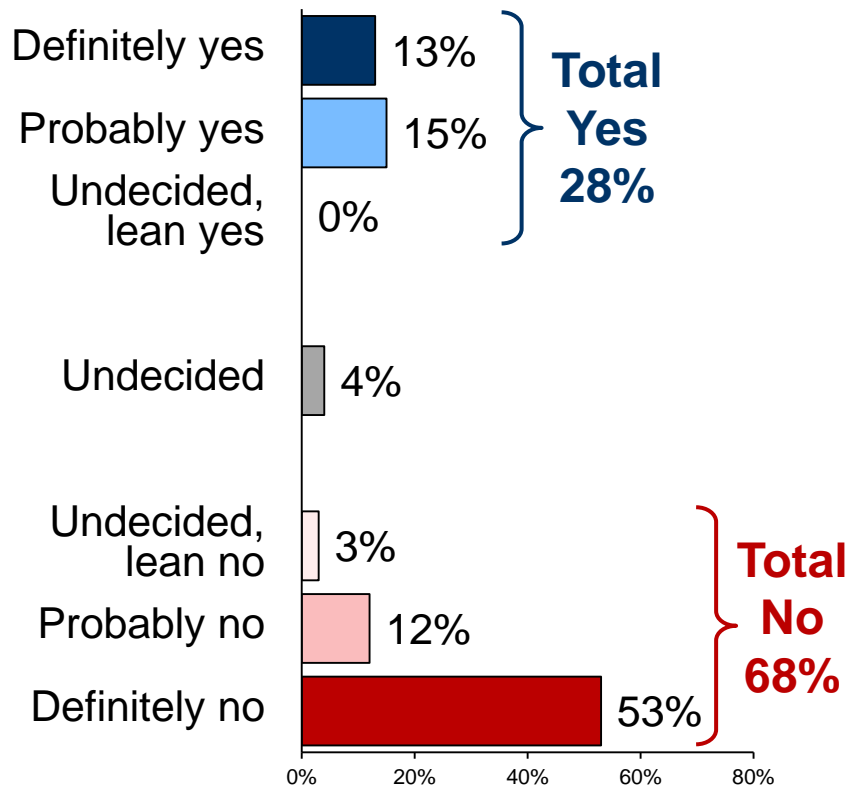
What if instead of raising the sales tax in every area of the County, this measure were structured to raise the sales tax ONLY in unincorporated areas such as Garberville, McKinleyville, and Myrtle town, and NOT in incorporated cities and towns such as Arcata, Eureka and Trinidad. In that case, do you think you would vote “yes” in favor of this measure or “no” to oppose it?

However framed, respondents were less likely to support a sales tax restricted to only the unincorporated areas of the County.

With Legislative Background



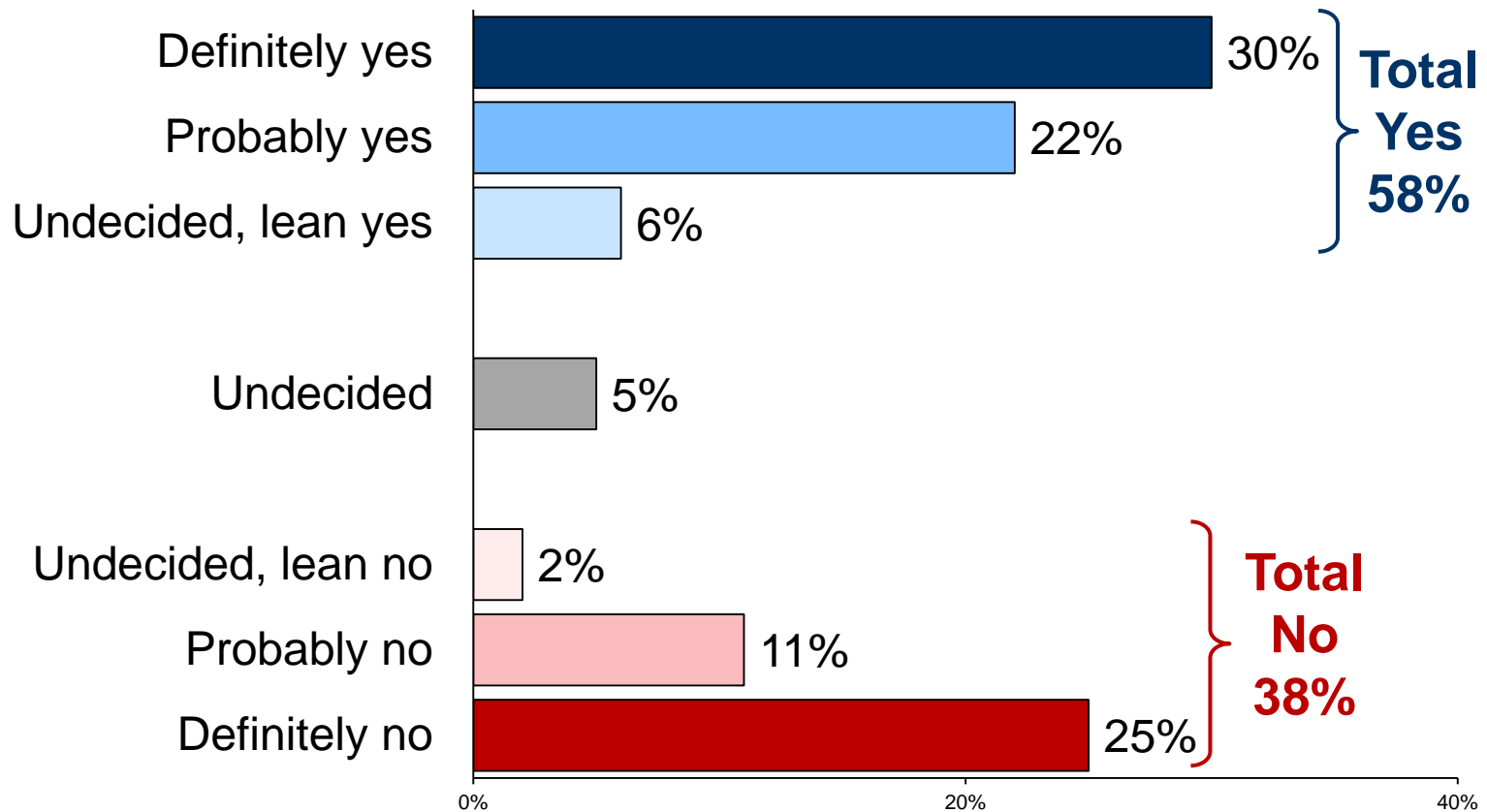
Without Legislative Background





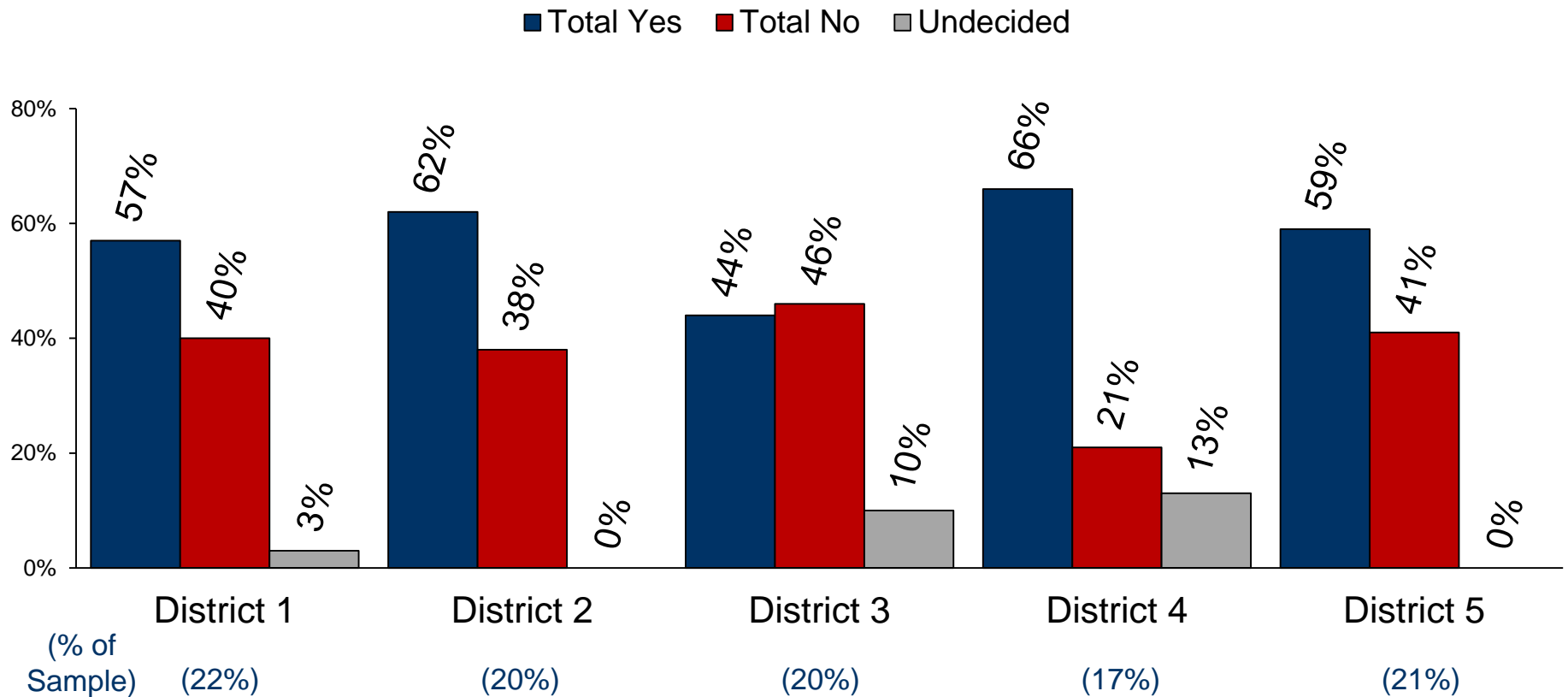
Looking More Closely at a Potential General UUT

A little less than three in five would support a 3% general purpose UUT with a 45% excessive electricity tax.

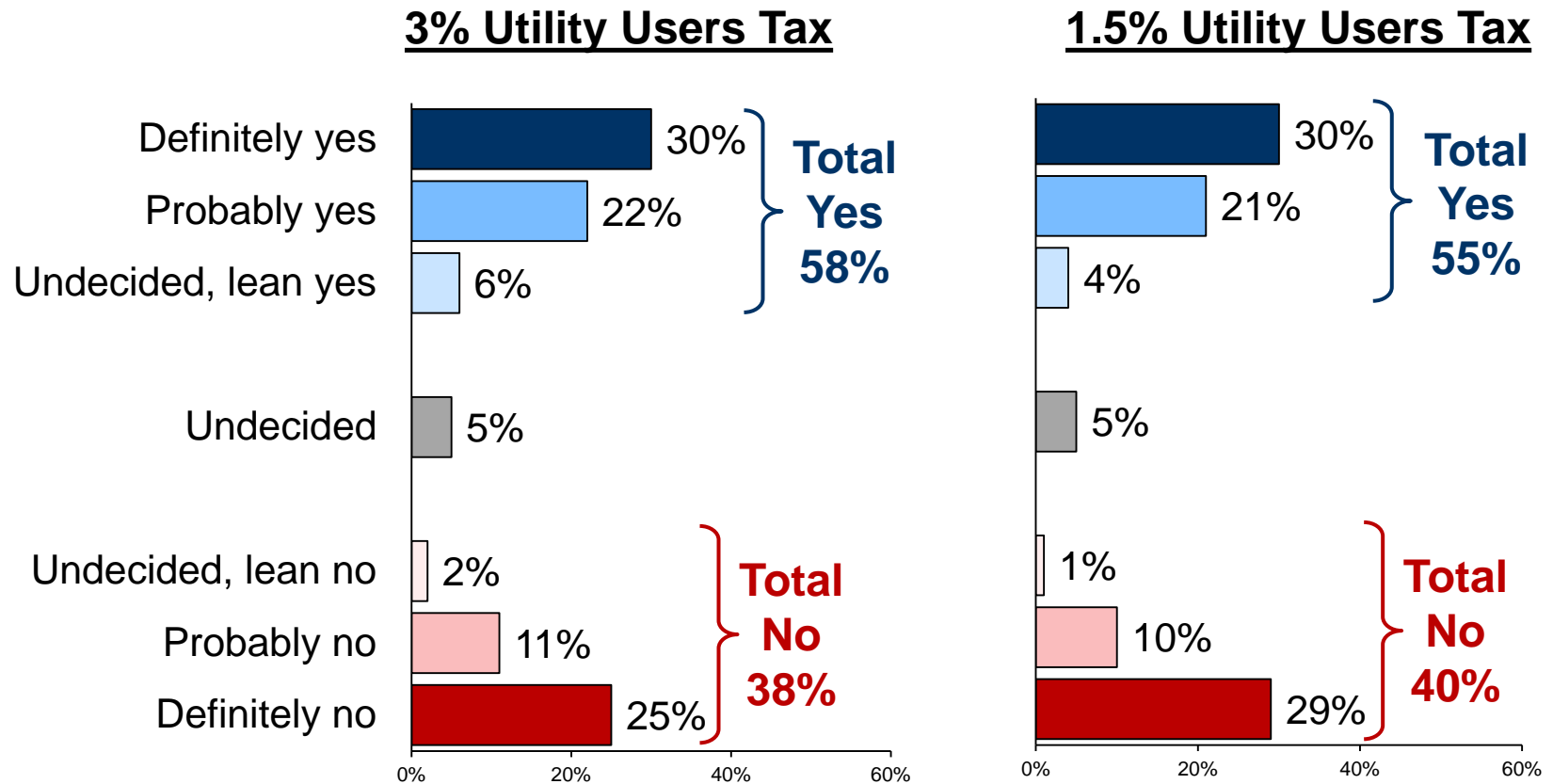


Consistent majorities in all Districts – except District 3 – are supportive.

UUT Initial Vote by Supervisorial District

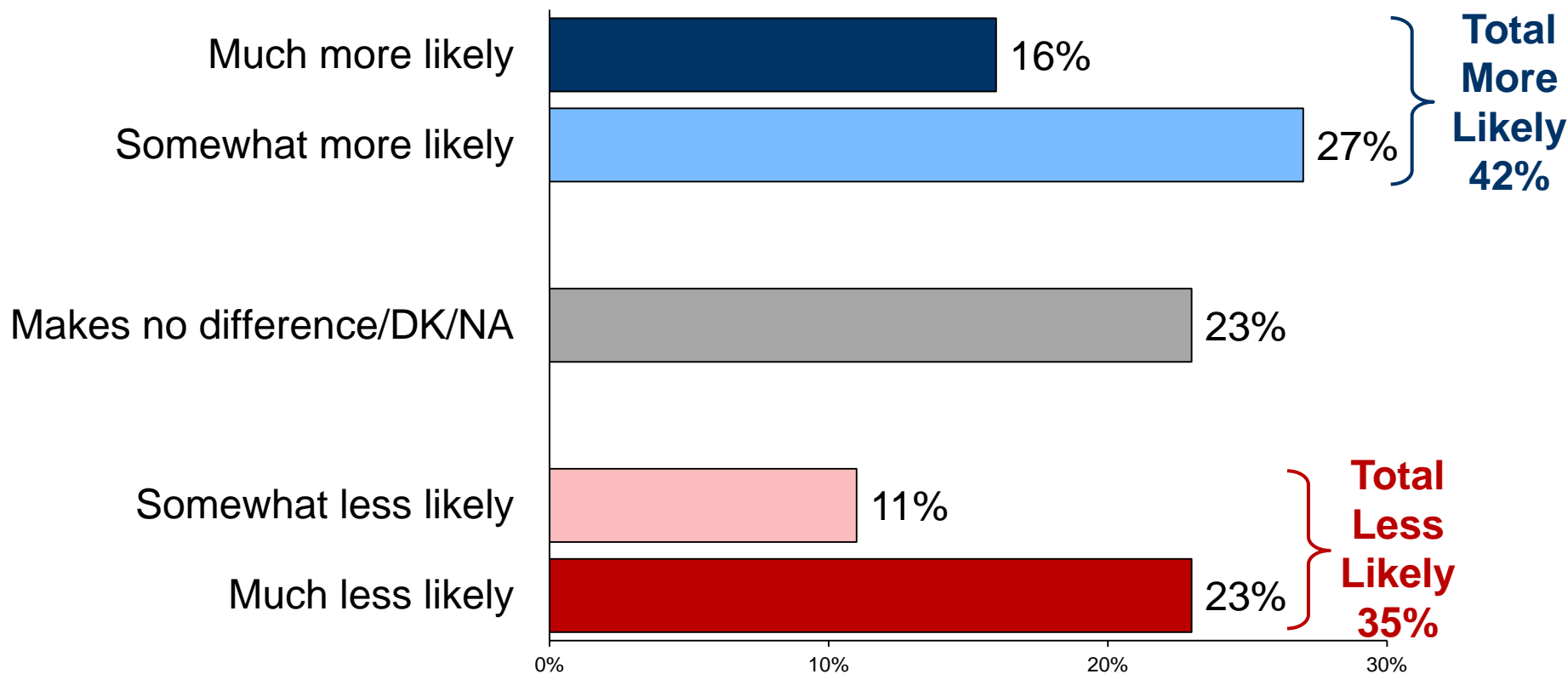


Again, support for a lower tax rate isn't materially different.



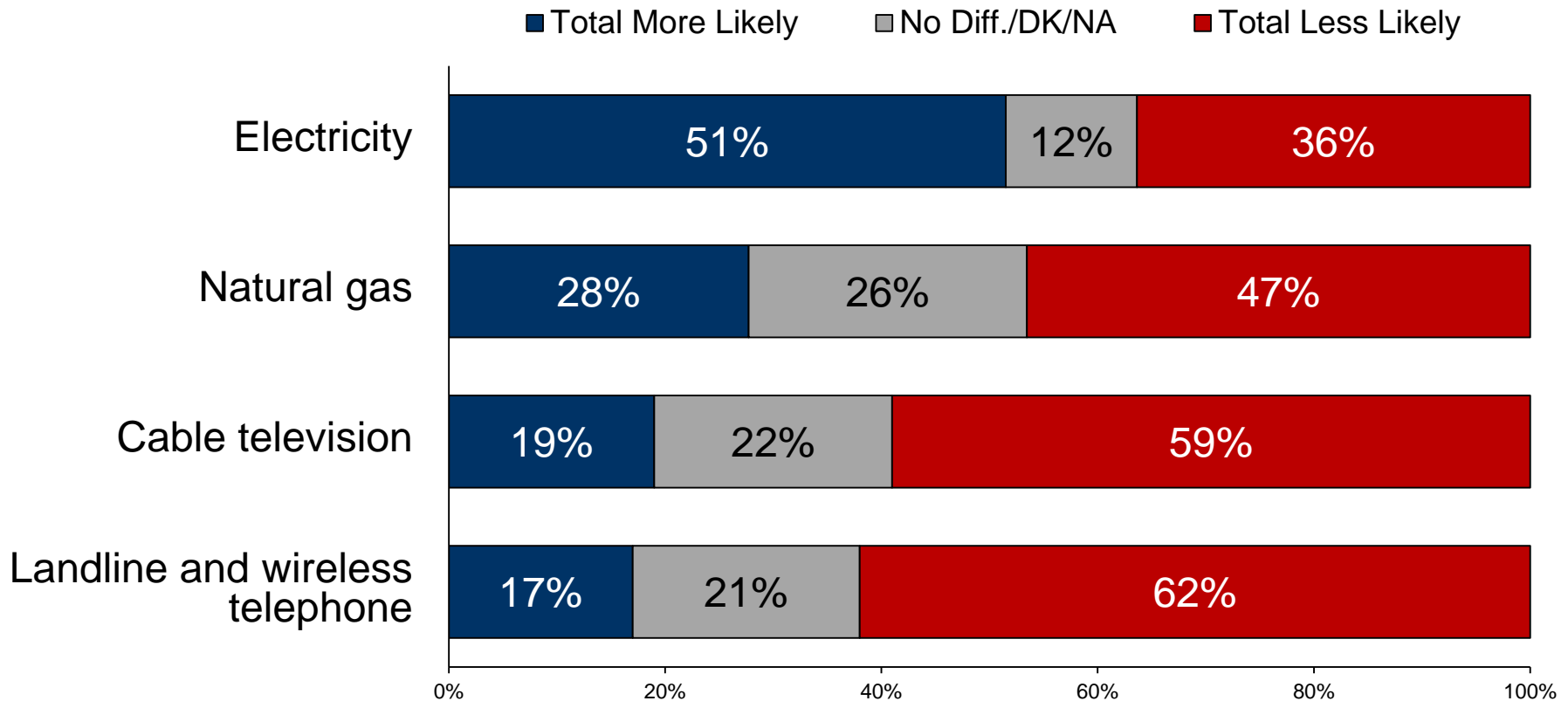
Respondents were less interested in limiting the tax to five years.

Would you be more likely or less likely to support this measure if the utility user and excessive electricity usage taxes it established were limited to no more than 5 years?



Respondents were most comfortable including electricity in the utility users tax.

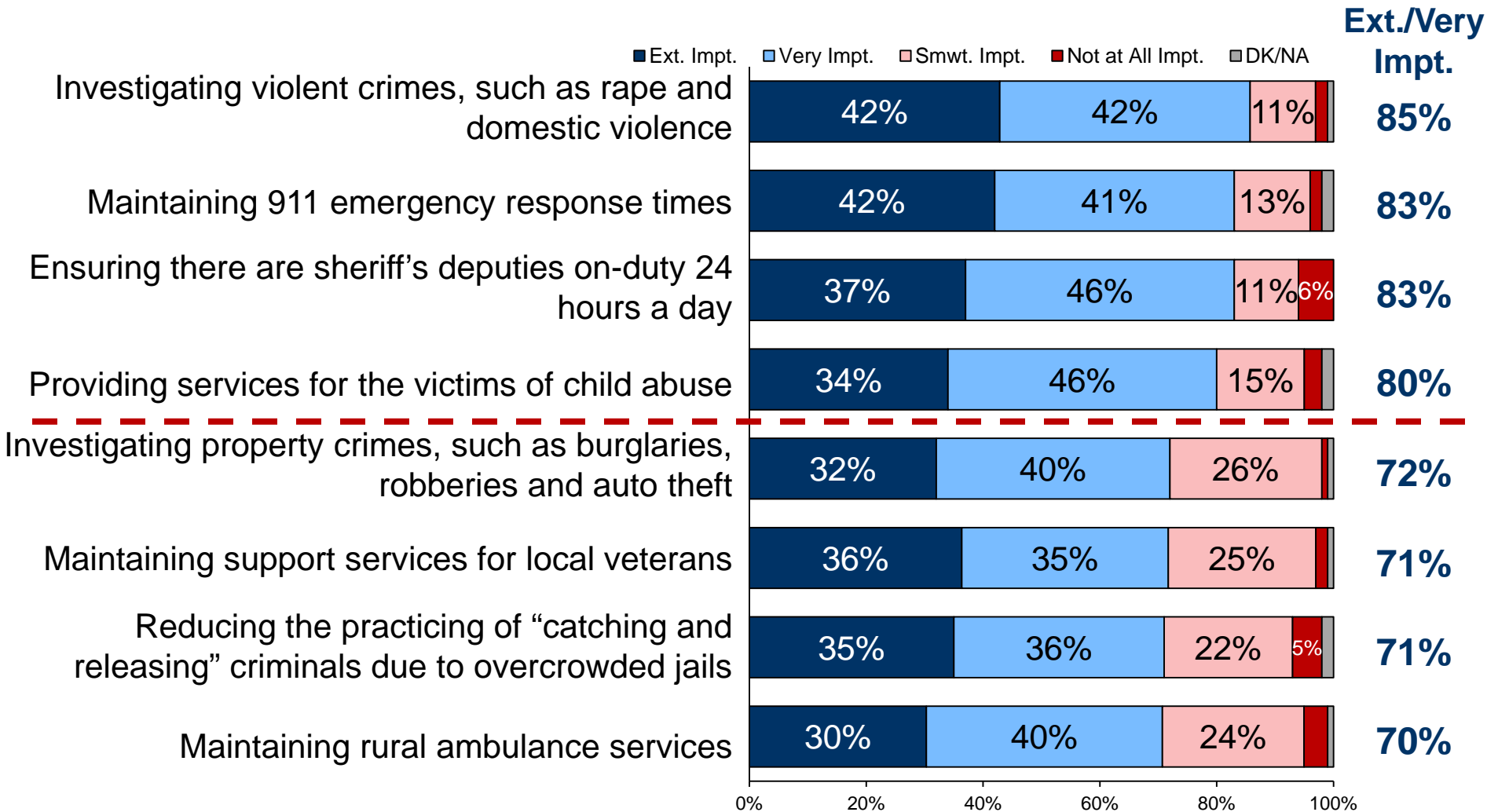
The structure of this potential measure is not yet finalized. I am going to read you a list of several different utilities that could be included in the measure and subject to the utility users tax. Please tell me if including that utility would make you more likely or less likely to support the measure.





Spending Priorities

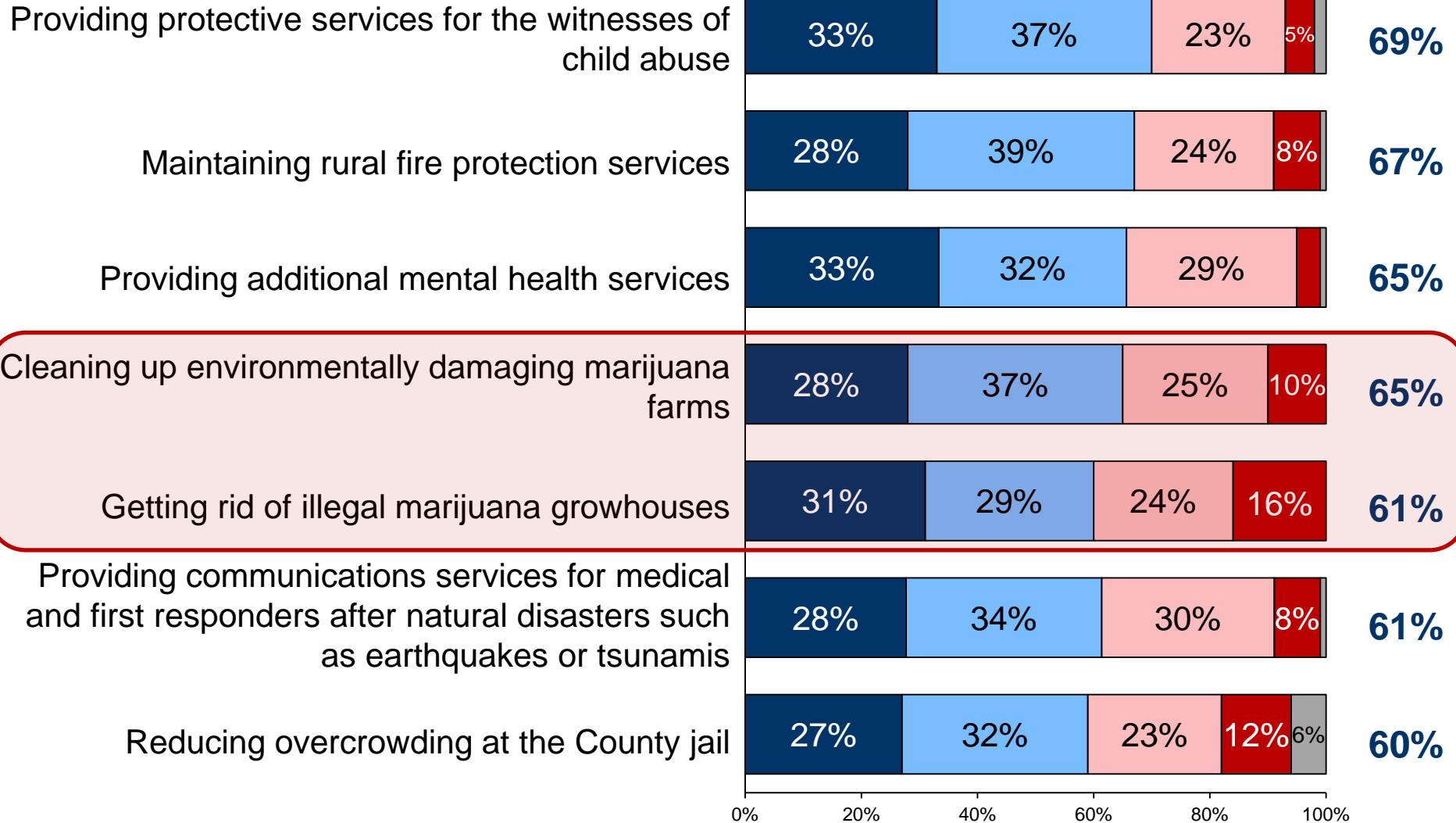
The top spending priorities are all related to public safety.



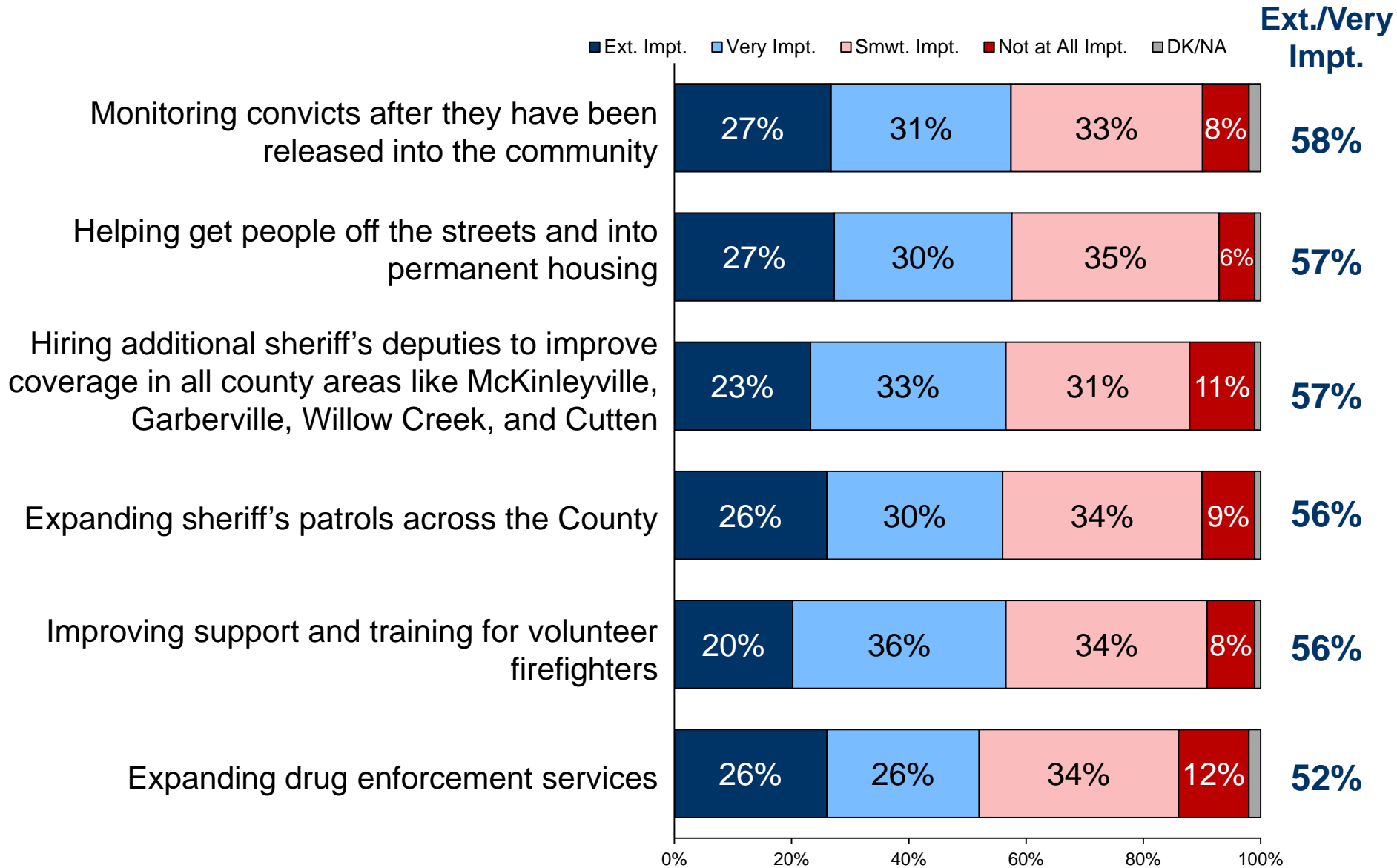
Addressing the negative impacts of marijuana is also seen as important.

Ext./Very Impt.

■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not at All Impt. ■ DK/NA



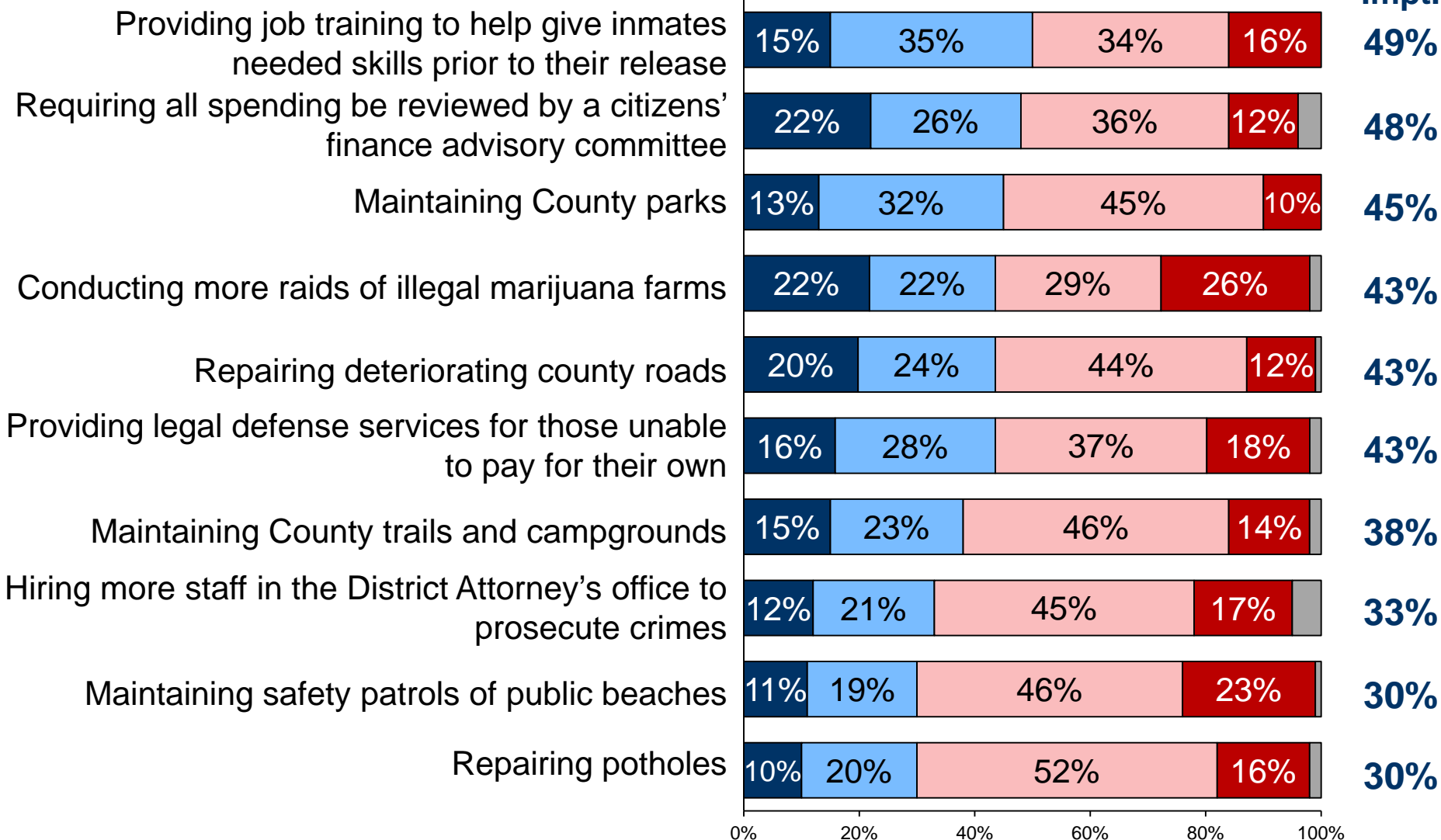
Other spending categories are middle tier.



Beach patrols and pothole repair are seen as some of the least important priorities.

Ext./Very Impt.

■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not at All Impt. ■ DK/NA

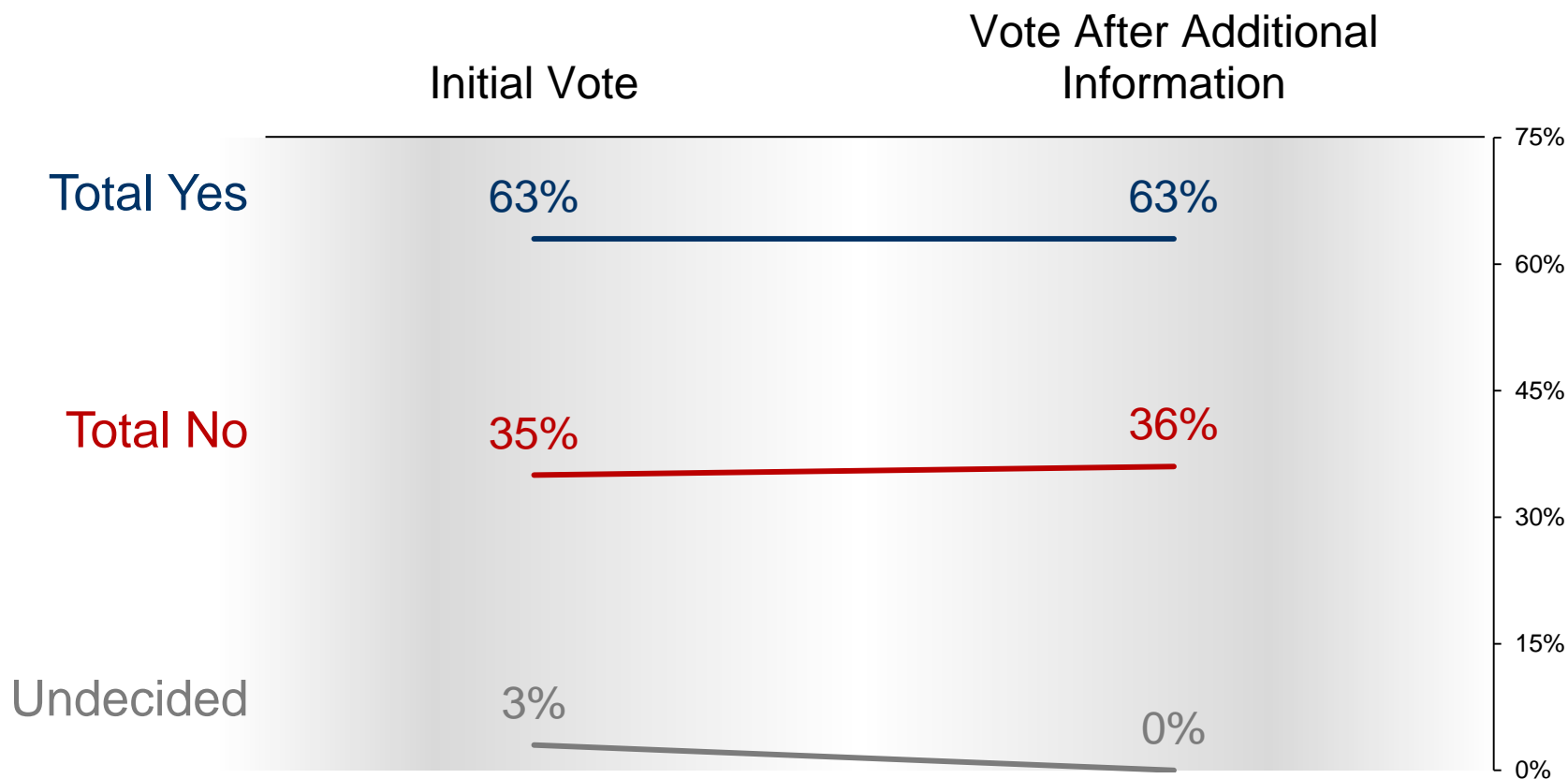




The Impact of Providing Additional Information

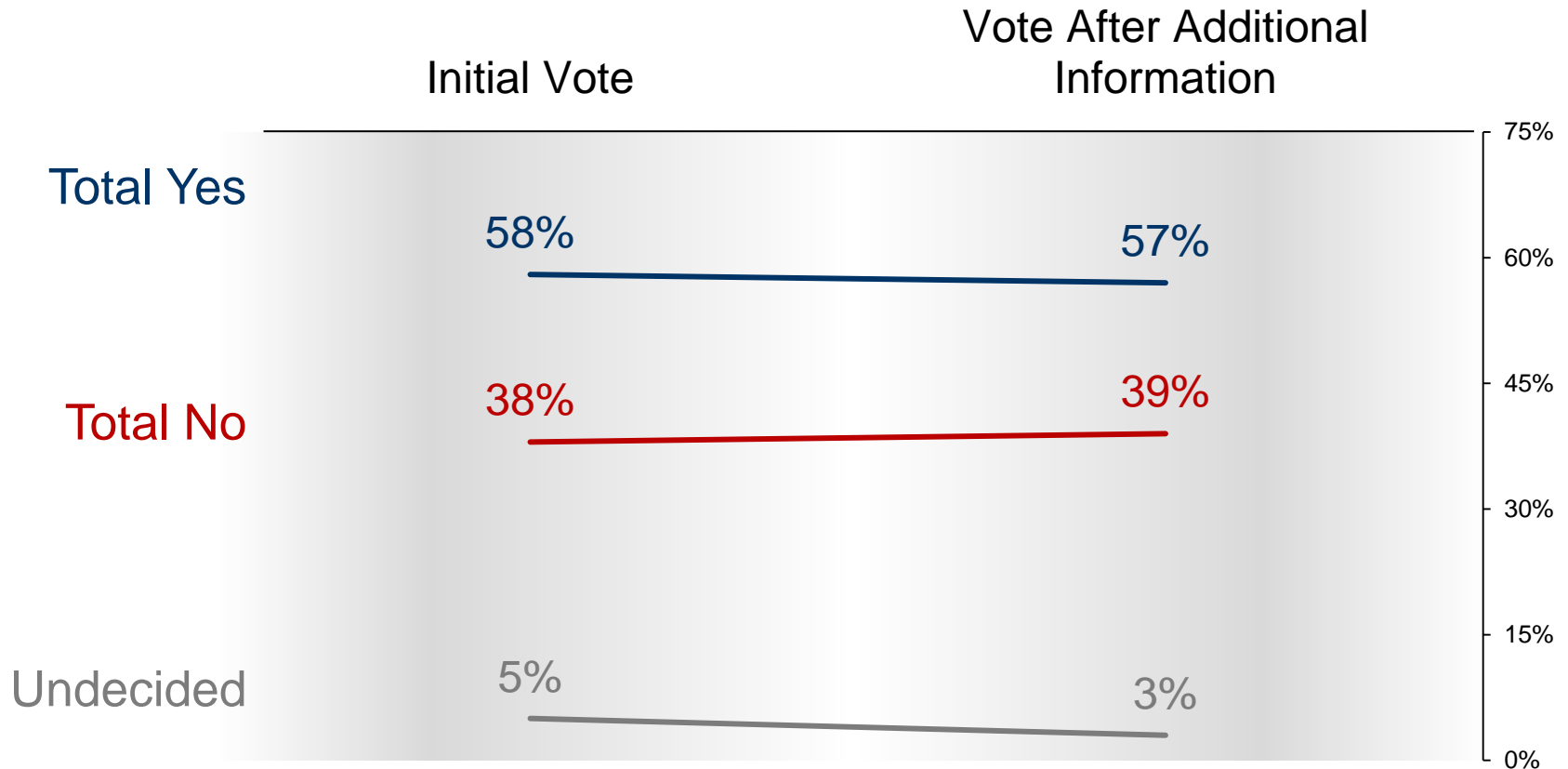
Sales tax support was remarkably stable from the beginning to the end of the survey...

Enacting a three-quarter cent sales tax.



...as was support for the UUT, though it remained much closer to the vote threshold, particularly considering the margin of error.

Establishing a 3% utility users tax, including a 45% tax on those whose electricity usage exceeds 600% an established baseline.



Respondents found information regarding taxing growhouses, improving sheriff's deputies response times, and fighting meth very compelling.

(Asked of UUT Split Only)

(EXCESSIVE ELECTRICITY - GROWHOUSES)

This measure will charge residents who use huge amounts of electricity a 45% tax on their electricity bills. This measure is targeted at illegal marijuana growhouses that contribute to increased crime, neighborhood deterioration, and global warming. A similar measure was effective in reducing the amount of neighborhood growhouses by 85% one month after it was implemented in Arcata.

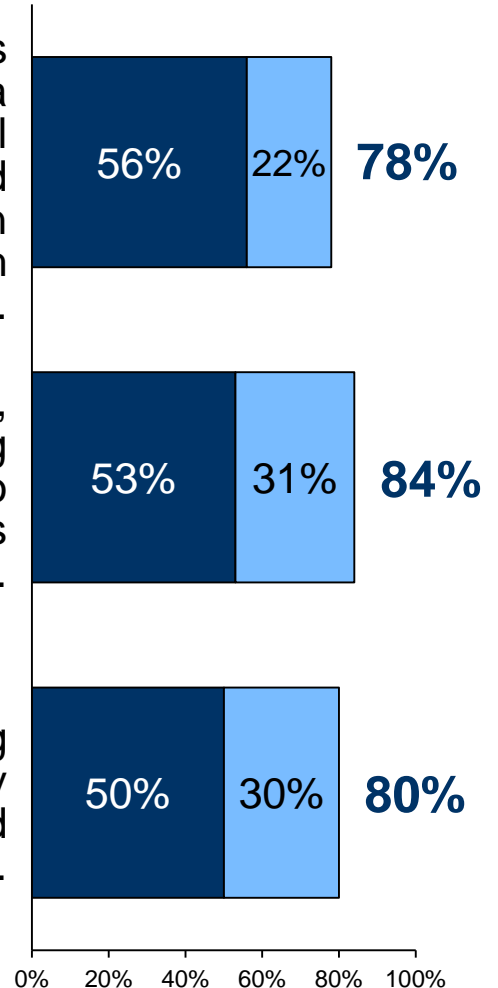
(RESPONSE TIMES - INVESTIGATIONS)

Due to budget constraints, sheriff's patrols have been greatly reduced across the County, meaning it can sometimes take several hours for a sheriff's deputy to respond to a call. This measure is needed to expand patrols and make sure calls about violent or property crimes are responded to promptly.

(DRUGS - METH)

Hard drugs and narcotics like meth are growing problems in our County. We need the additional funds generated by this measure to fight drug-related crimes, eliminate meth labs, and provide drug prevention and rehabilitation services.

Very Conv. Smwt. Conv.



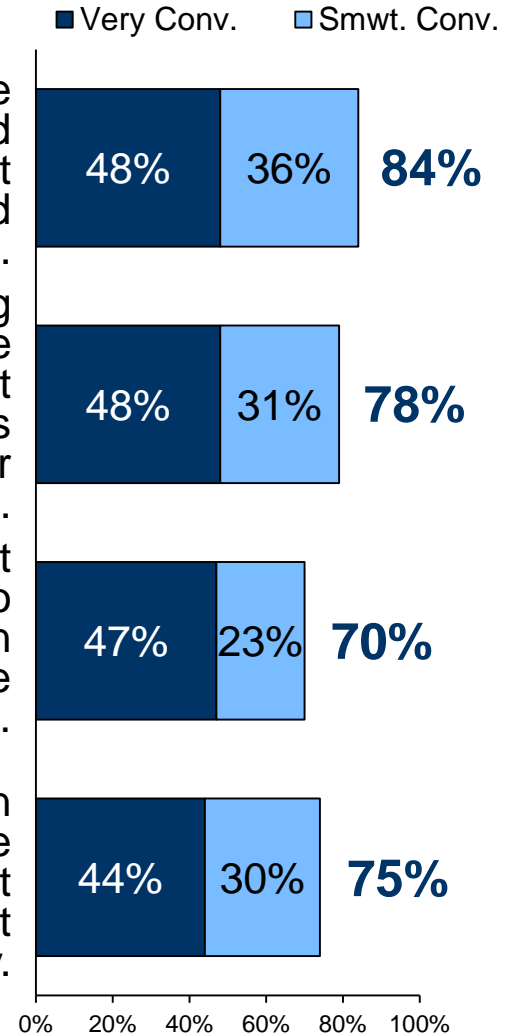
Many also saw supporting volunteer firefighters and addressing the environmental impacts of marijuana farms as compelling.

(VOLUNTEER FIRE) Despite limited funding, volunteer fire departments and firefighters play critical roles in protecting life and property here in Humboldt County. This measure will help support these volunteers and provide them with additional resources and training to better – and more safely – protect County residents.

(MARIJUANA ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS) By diverting and drying up sensitive creeks and streams, and using toxic pesticides, large-scale – and illegal – marijuana farms are destroying our local environment and risking our health. We need the additional funds generated by this measure to fight these industrial marijuana farms and protect our county’s natural resources.

(CATCH-AND-RELEASE) Due to jail overcrowding and insufficient resources to investigate and prosecute crimes, the County has had to “catch-and-release” many criminals. We need this measure to put an end to this practice and make sure that people breaking the law are held accountable and kept behind bars.

(LOCAL CONTROL) Over the past 22 years, Sacramento has taken \$286 million in revenue from Humboldt County’s budget. This measure provides our area with a guaranteed source of local funding that cannot be taken by Sacramento and requires that our tax dollars are spent locally.

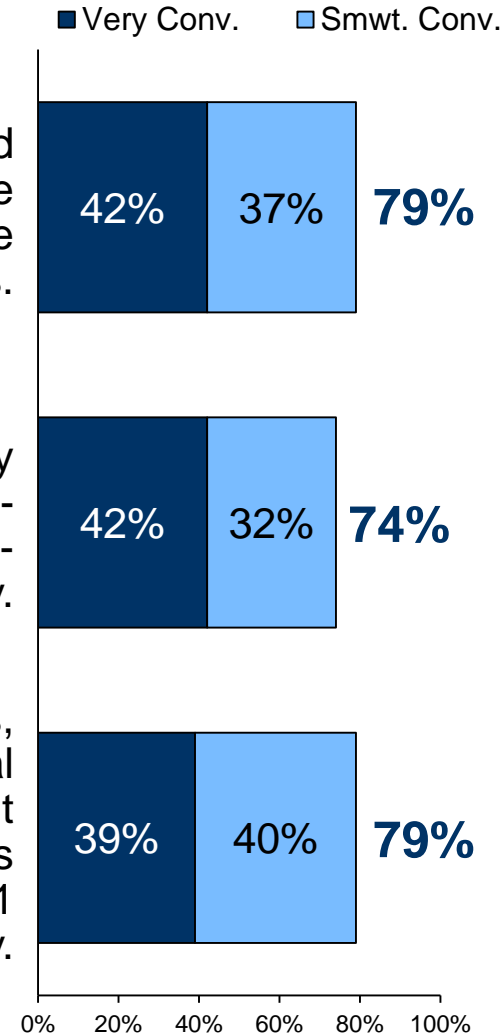


Other arguments are broadly compelling, but we start to see the intensity of reactions decline slightly.

(CHILD ABUSE) Protective and counseling services for the victims and witnesses of child abuse have been severely reduced in recent years. We need this measure to restore those services and protect children that have been victims of these horrible crimes.

(RURAL AMBULANCES) Rural ambulance service has been significantly reduced in Humboldt County, putting the lives of many local residents at-risk. This measure is needed to restore those services and provide life-saving care and transportation to residents throughout the County.

(RESPONSE TIMES - 24-HOUR PATROLS) Due to budget constraints, many areas of Humboldt County – including neighborhoods and rural areas – are not patrolled by sheriff's deputies at night. Consequently, it can take as long as 40 minutes to reach the more remote areas. This measure is needed to bring back 24-hour patrols and reduce 911 response times throughout the County.



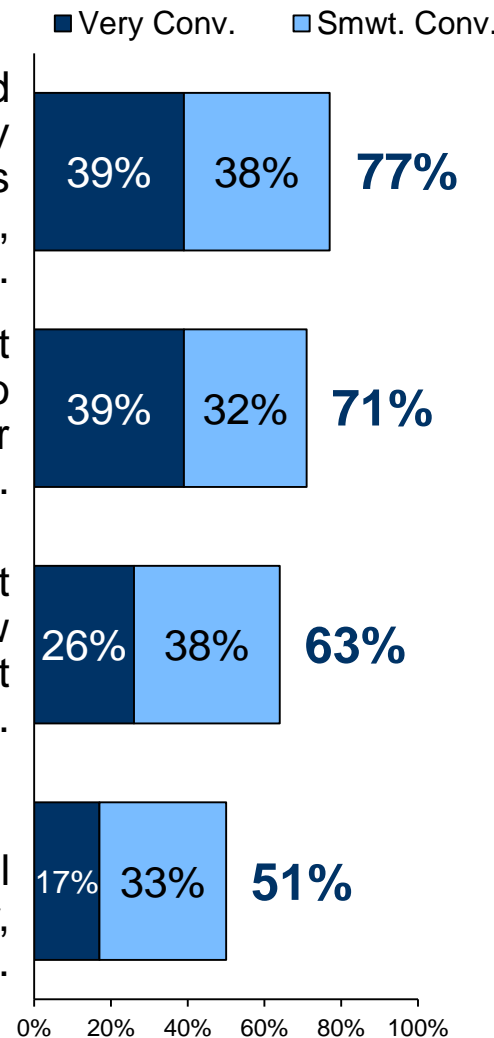
Only establishing a UUT in the unincorporated areas is not compelling.

(ROADS) Humboldt County has a \$150 million backlog of road maintenance projects and over a third of the County’s roads are currently classified as “poor” or “very poor.” Without additional funding, our roads will continue to deteriorate, become increasingly dangerous to drive on, and become more expensive to repair in the future.

(PARKS AND TRAILS) Part of what makes Humboldt County a great place to live is our system of parks and trails. We need this measure to maintain our parks and trails, and to ensure we can all safely enjoy our local forests, wildlife and natural areas.

(ACCOUNTABILITY) Funds from this measure will be subject to strict accountability provisions, including annual independent audits and a review of all expenditures by a citizens’ oversight committee. This will ensure that funding is spent efficiently and as promised to the voters.

(Asked of UUT Split Only) **(UNINCORPORATED ONLY – UUT)** This measure will establish a utility users tax only in the unincorporated areas of the County, and will not add-on to any other local city utility users taxes.





Conclusions

Conclusions

- Both a $\frac{3}{4}$ cent sales tax and 3% UUT (with 45% excessive electricity tax) appear viable for the November 2014 election.
- However, considering the margin of error, support for a UUT is much closer to the vote threshold, suggesting that its prospects are more uncertain.
- Given the excessive electricity tax's extreme popularity, it may be driving support for the UUT and could conceivably stand on it's own (though this was not directly tested in the survey).
- There appears to be little interest in extending a sales tax or UUT only to the unincorporated areas of the County.
- Including a sunset clause on the sales tax is also advisable.

Questions & Discussion

