



Meyers/South Shore Area Voter Views of a Snow Removal Special Tax Measure

*Key Findings of a Survey of CSA No. 3 Voters
Conducted August 22-28, 2019*



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

220-5524



Methodology

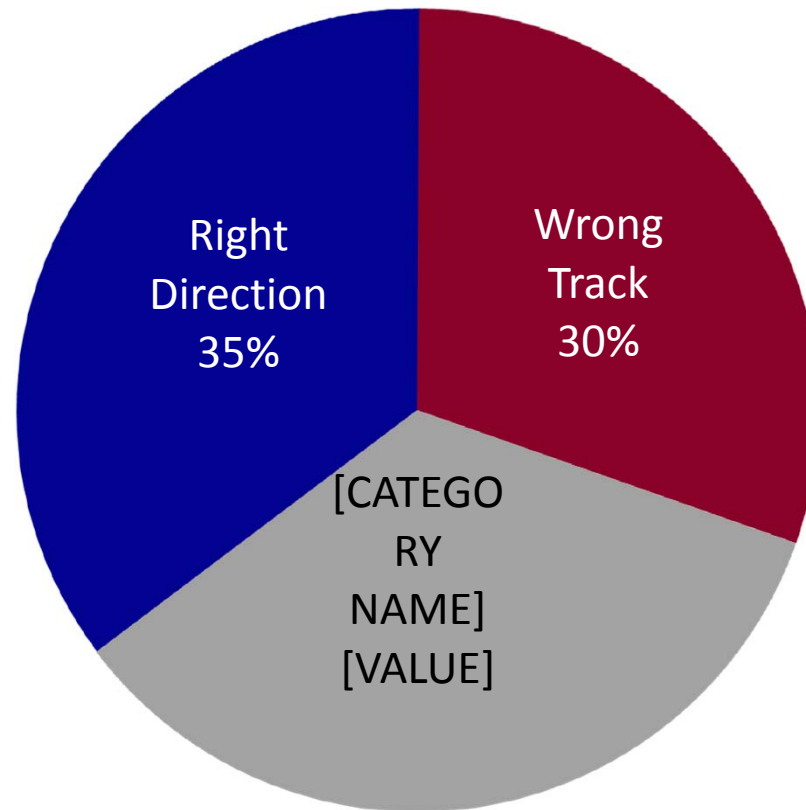
- 229 interviews with El Dorado County Community Service Area No. 3 likely voters
- Conducted August 22-28, 2019, online and via landline and cell phones
- Margin of sampling error of $\pm 6.5\%$ at the 95% confidence interval
- Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%



Issue Context

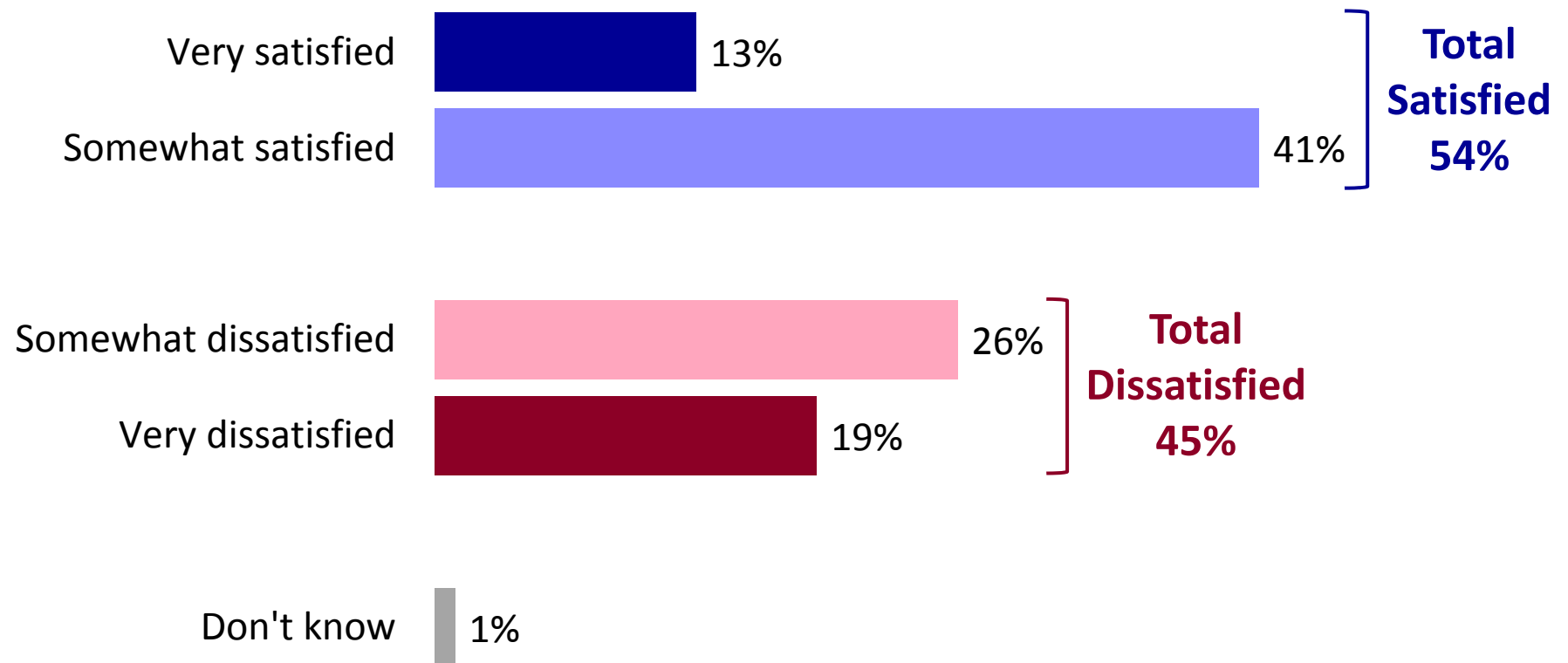
Voters in the area are divided on the direction of the county overall.

When you think about El Dorado County, would you say things are heading in the right direction, or off on the wrong track?



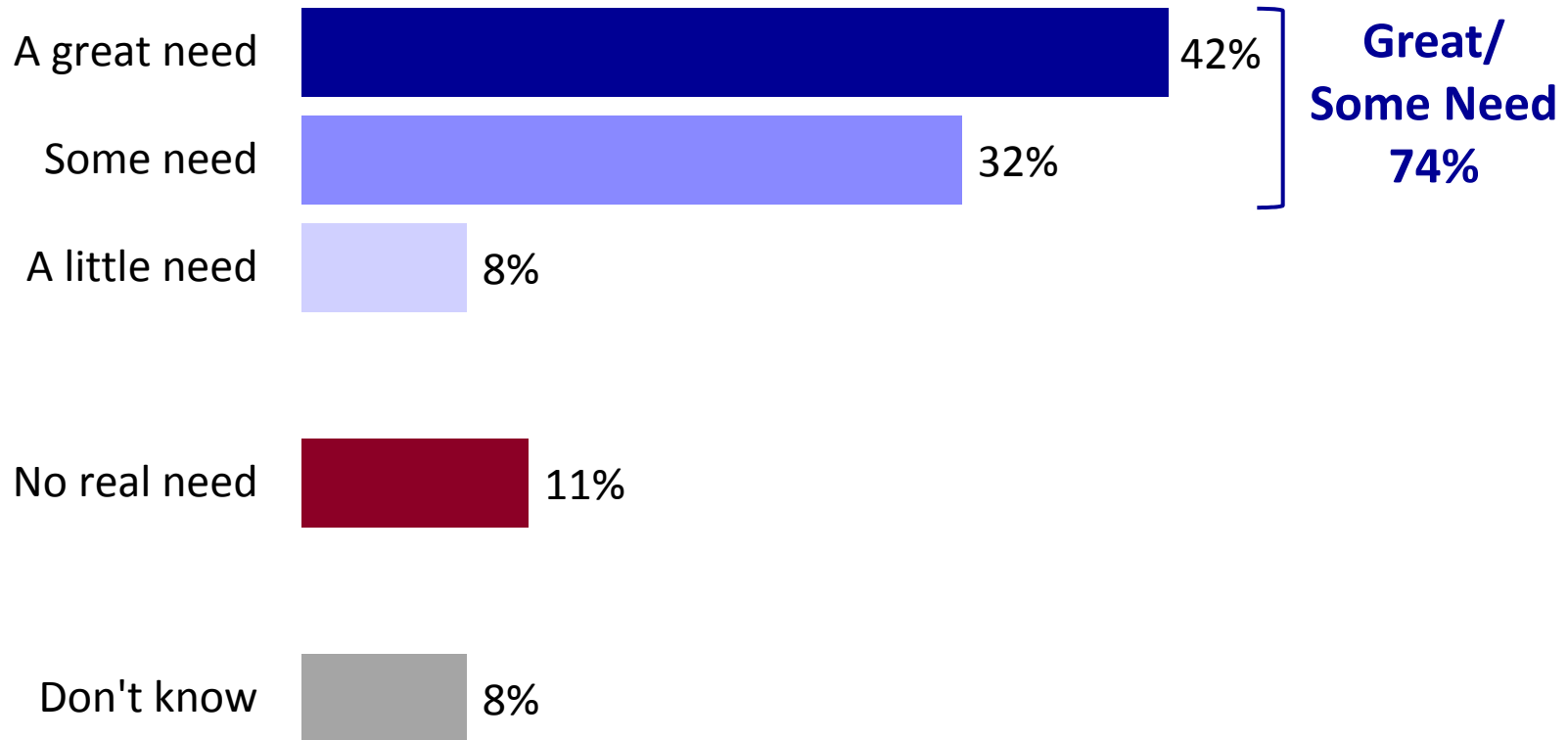
A slim majority is satisfied with County snow removal, but most of those only "somewhat."

In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with snow removal services on County roads?



Three-quarters see at least “some need” for more funding for snow removal equipment.

Generally speaking, would you say that El Dorado County has a great need for additional funding for snow removal equipment, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding for snow removal?



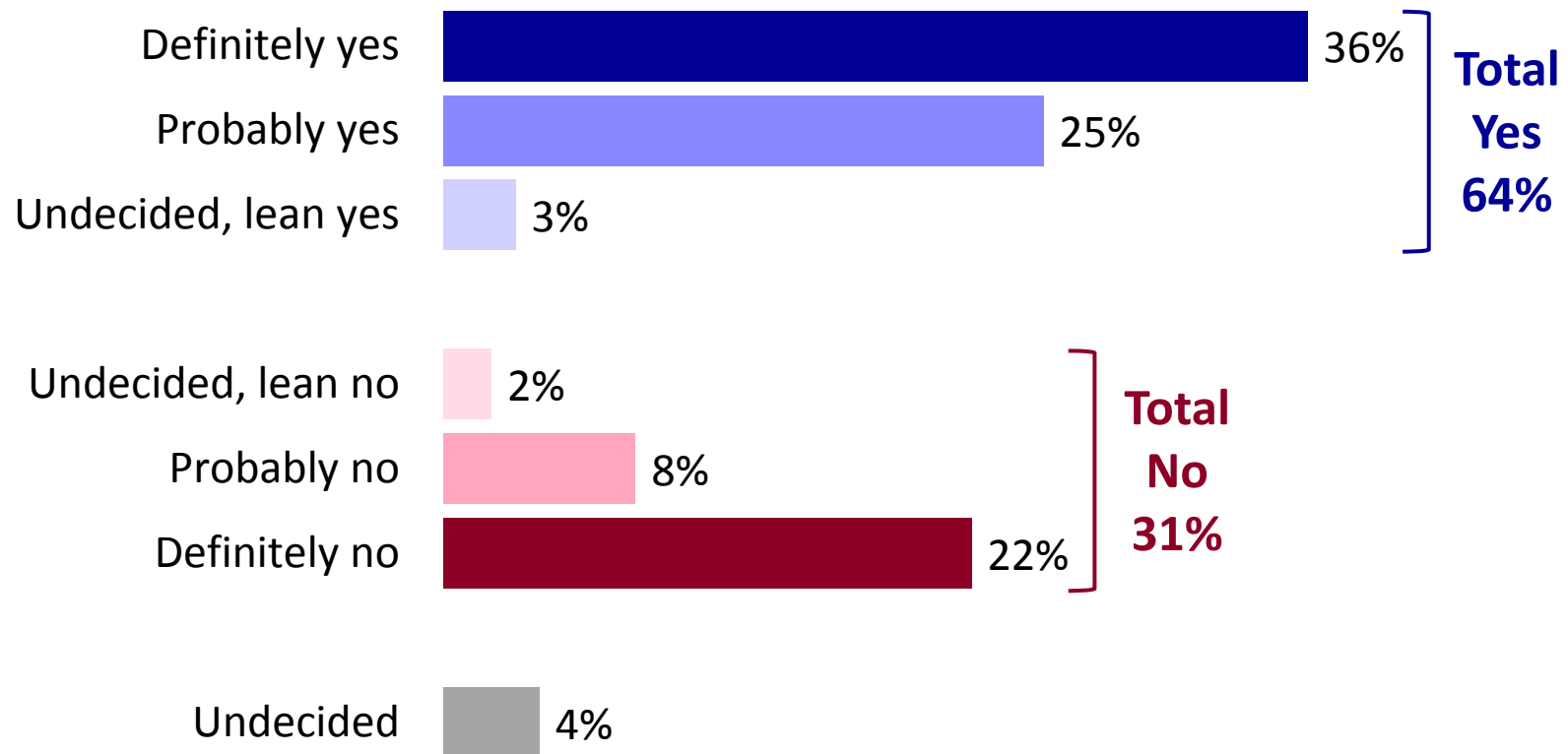


Voter Views of a Snow Removal Special Tax Measure

Potential Ballot Language Tested

Snow Removal Services Measure. To improve public safety and emergency response times by replacing outdated snow removal equipment, including snowplows and snowblowers, shall Community Service Area No. 3 adopt a measure increasing to \$80 the special tax on improved parcels valued at \$10,000 or more, providing approximately \$544,000 annually, with citizens' oversight, and all funds used in the Meyers/South Shore area, outside the city limits?

The measure initially has support from just under two-thirds of voters.



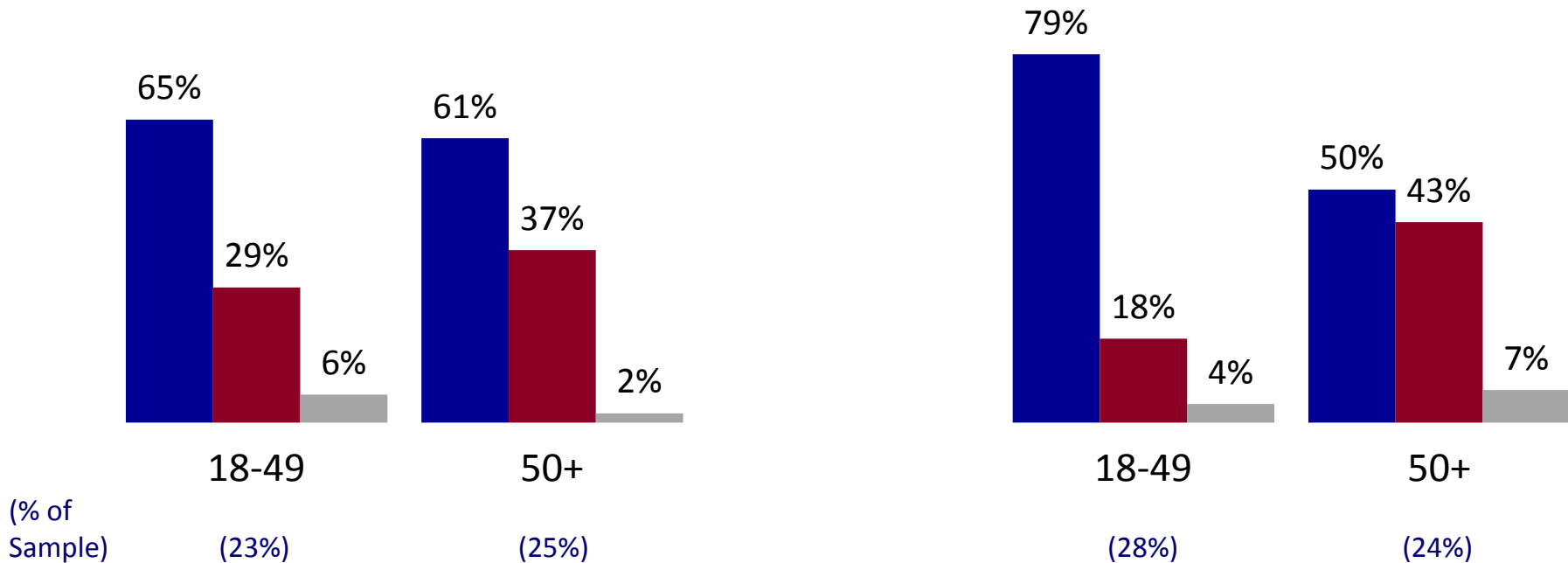
Support for the measure is slightly higher among women under 50 than other groups.

Support for a Snow Removal Special Tax by Gender by Age

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided

Men

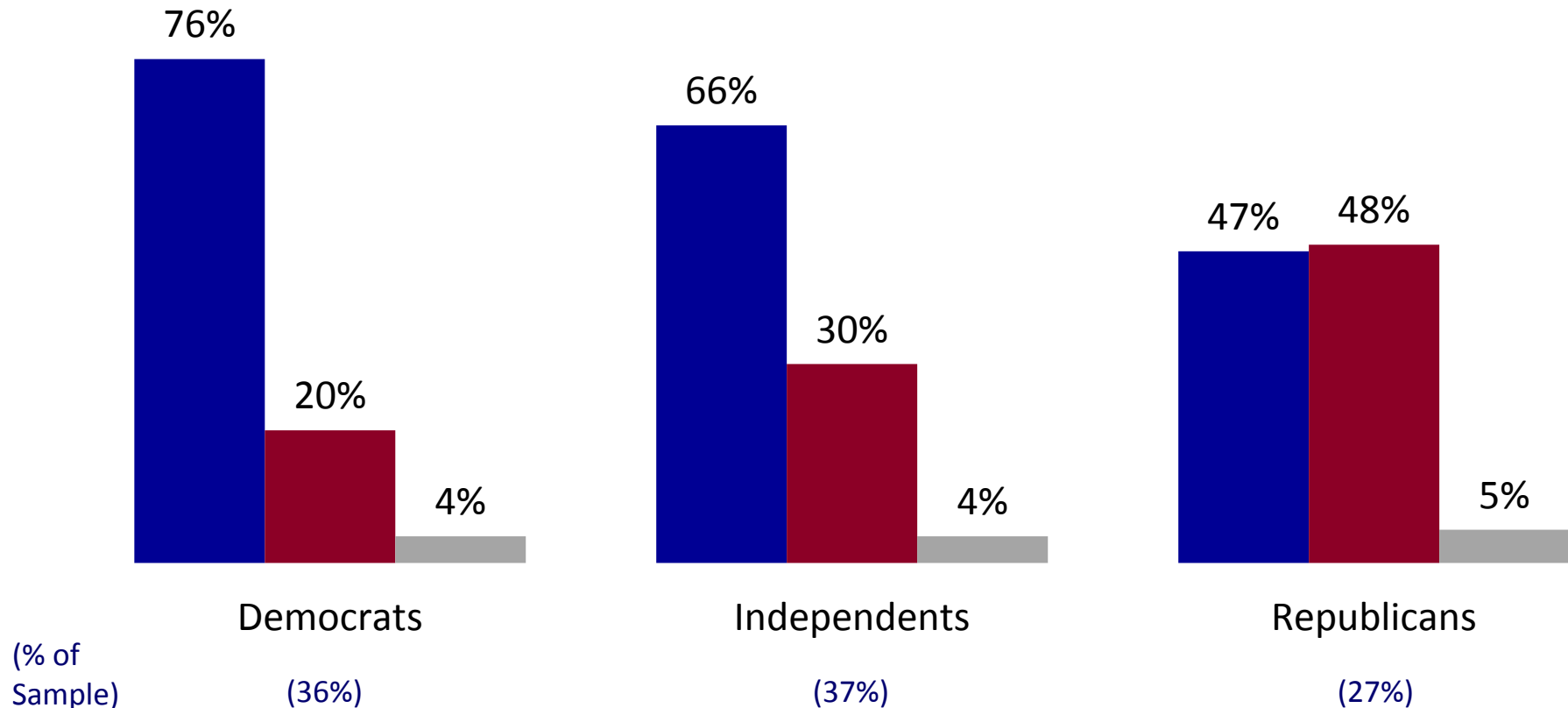
Women



Three-quarters of Democrats and two-thirds of independents support the measure; Republicans are split.

Support for a Snow Removal Special Tax by Party

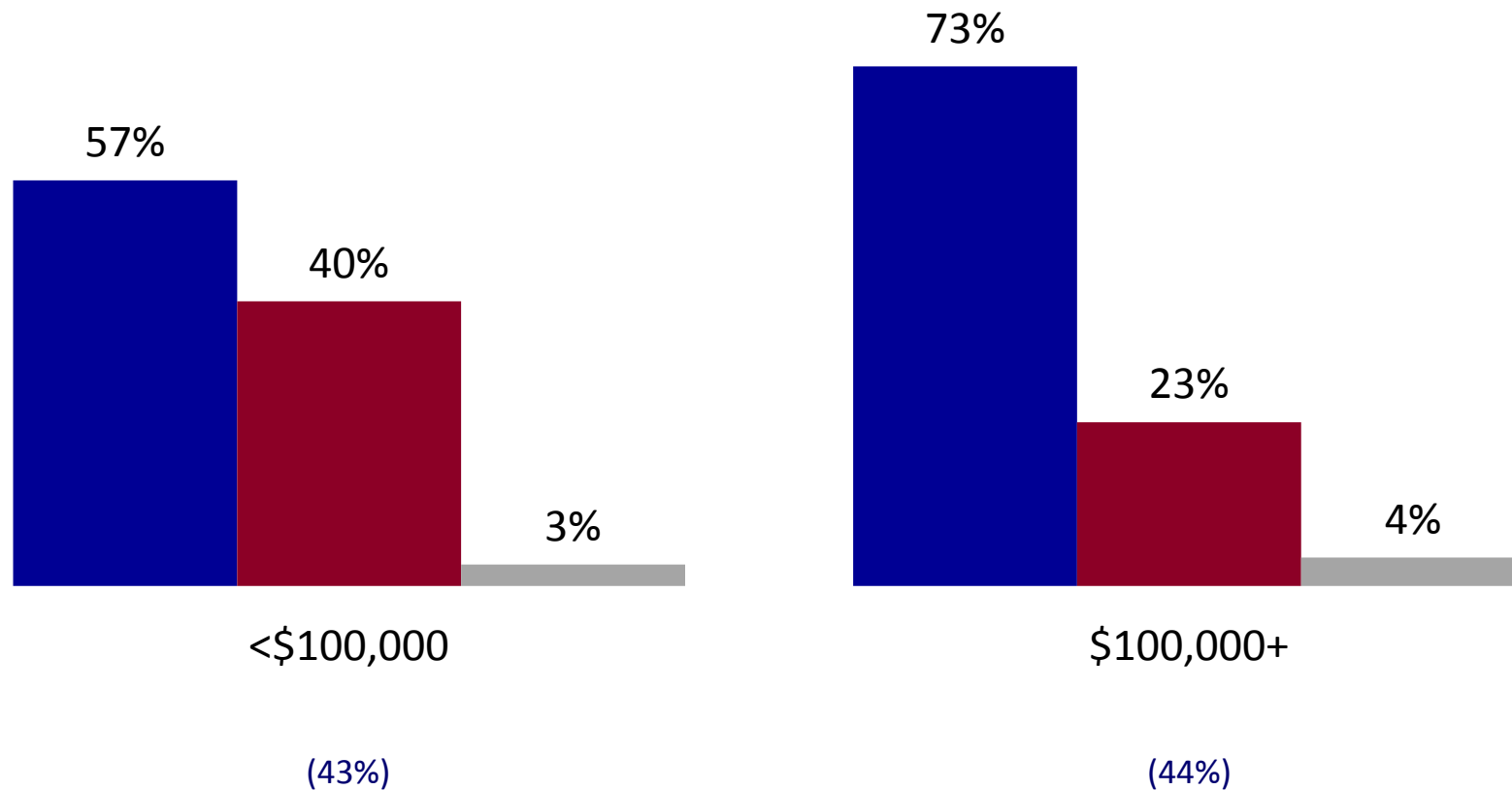
■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided



Higher-income households are more likely to support the measure.

Support for a Snow Removal Special Tax by Income

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided



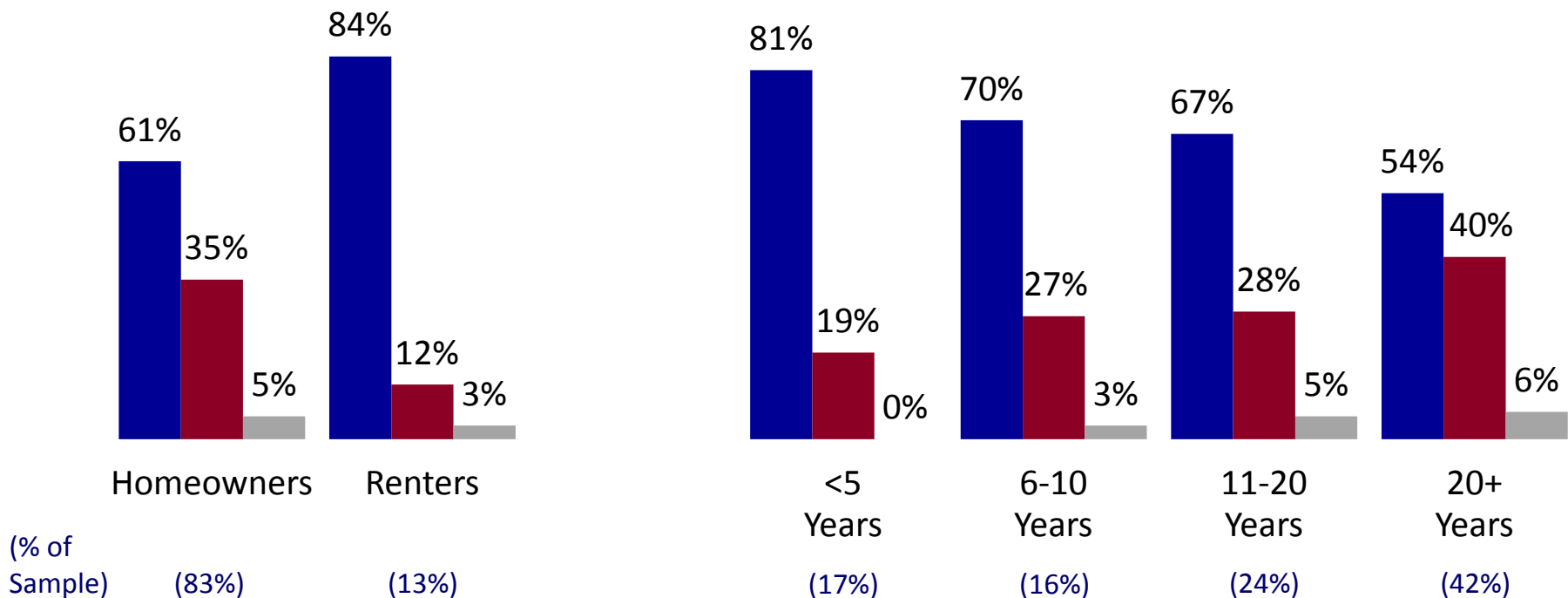
Renters are much more supportive than homeowners; relative newcomers to the area are also somewhat more supportive.

Support for a Snow Removal Special Tax by Residence & Years Lived in South Lake Tahoe

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided

Residence

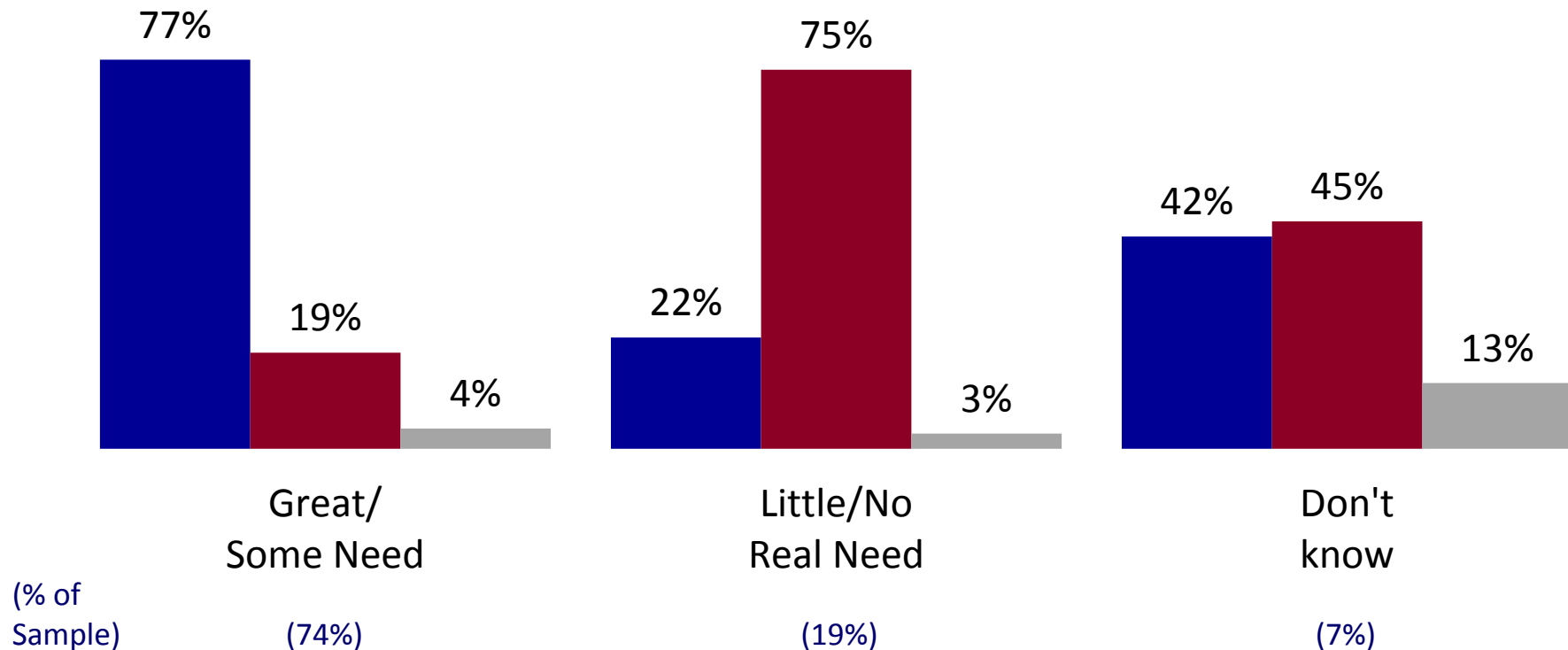
Years Lived in South Lake Tahoe



Those who believe there is at least “some need” for equipment funding are overwhelmingly supportive of the measure.

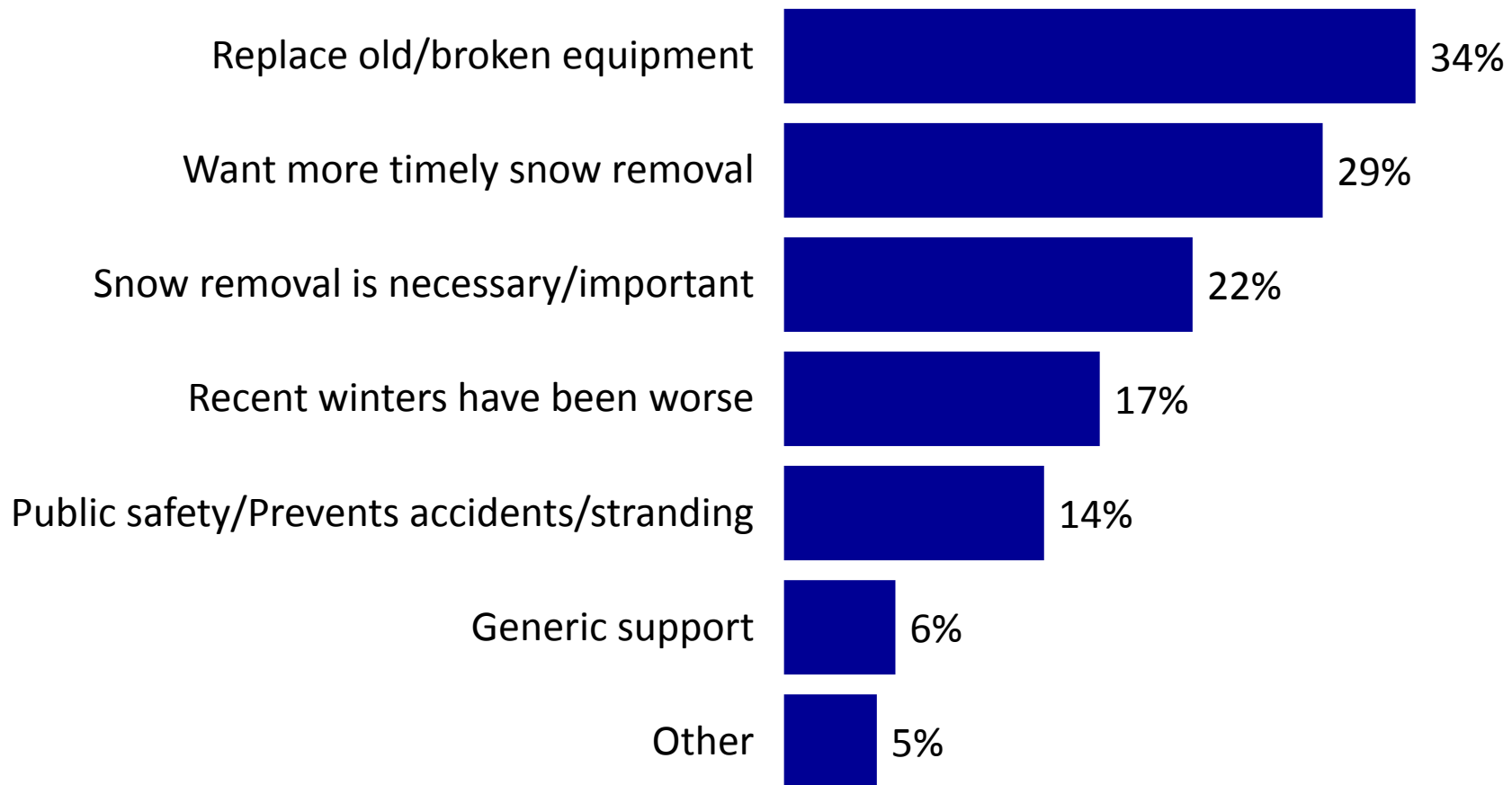
Support for a Snow Removal Special Tax by Need for Funding

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided



Supporters largely recognize the condition of current equipment and want quicker removal.

*In a few words of your own, why do you think you would vote **YES** this measure?
(Open-Ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, N=147)*



Verbatim Responses from Supporters

We've needed machines that work, not sit in the shop.

A lot of car accidents happen.

Because we absolutely need to improve our outdated fleet. I've seen snow removal equipment repeatedly break down outside my home.

I would vote yes if the funds were specifically allocated to the replacement of outdated snow removal equipment for the Meyers area, as well as proper staffing for upkeep of snow removal, and that these funds could not be used for anything else.

In the last two years snow removal service has gone downhill significantly. If constant repairs to older equipment is an issue, then this should help.

Basic service and equipment is necessary. You don't get something for nothing.

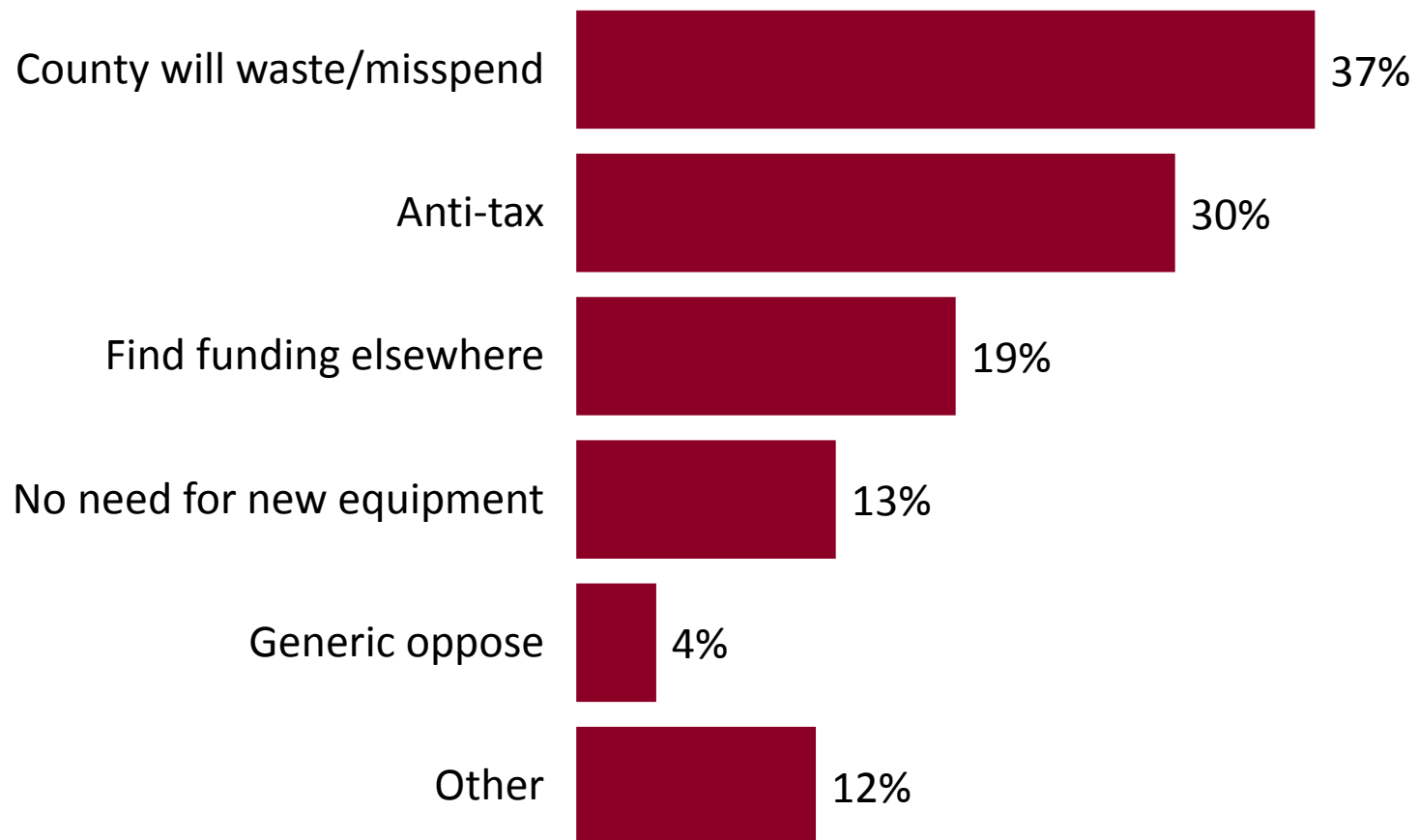
It's fair that property owners pitch in to pay for snow removal equipment.

The equipment is obviously old and \$80 a year is reasonable if it is used correctly!

This area is a neglected part of the county.

Those who oppose a measure are more generally anti-tax or don't trust government.

*In a few words of your own, why do you think you would vote **NO** this measure?
(Open-Ended; Asked of No Voters Only, N=72)*



Verbatim Responses from Opponents

Tired of paying more for less. How is the pay scale and salaries/bonuses of high-level county officials? Most locals are barely scraping by. Tax the second homeowners and short-term vacation rentals. They have extra. I don't.

El Dorado's budget is almost a billion dollars a year and you want to raise our property taxes? Hell no!

County needs to better utilize funding that it already has - just like ordinary citizens have to live within their means.

Services have been fine. This type of heavy equipment can be fixed with maintenance.

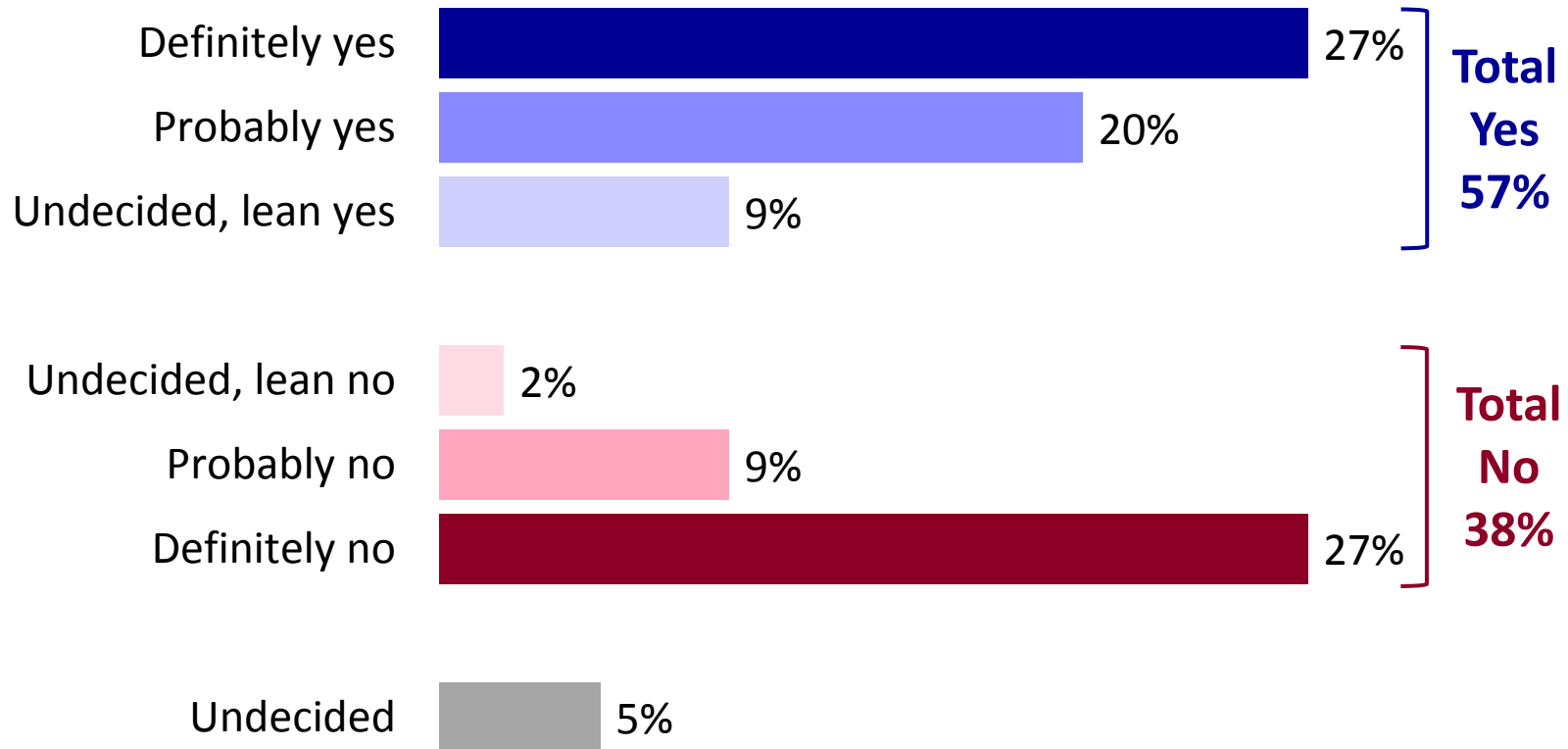
I am tired of residents having to cover all the costs to take care of tourists. I think adding a toll cost to all tourists coming through Meyers would help. They tear up the roads with their chains and leave nothing behind except potholes and trash.

Not confident the money would go only to replacing equipment.

Since 1984 we have been paying an additional \$20 a year. Where is that money gone? First be accountable for previous taxes paid for snow removal money collected.

A measure that raises the tax to \$60 is not more popular, given it would fund only some of the needed improvements.

Suppose that the measure increased the tax to \$60 instead of \$80, but only provided enough funding for a portion of needed repairs and replacement of snow removal equipment. In that case, do you think you would vote “yes” or “no” on this measure?

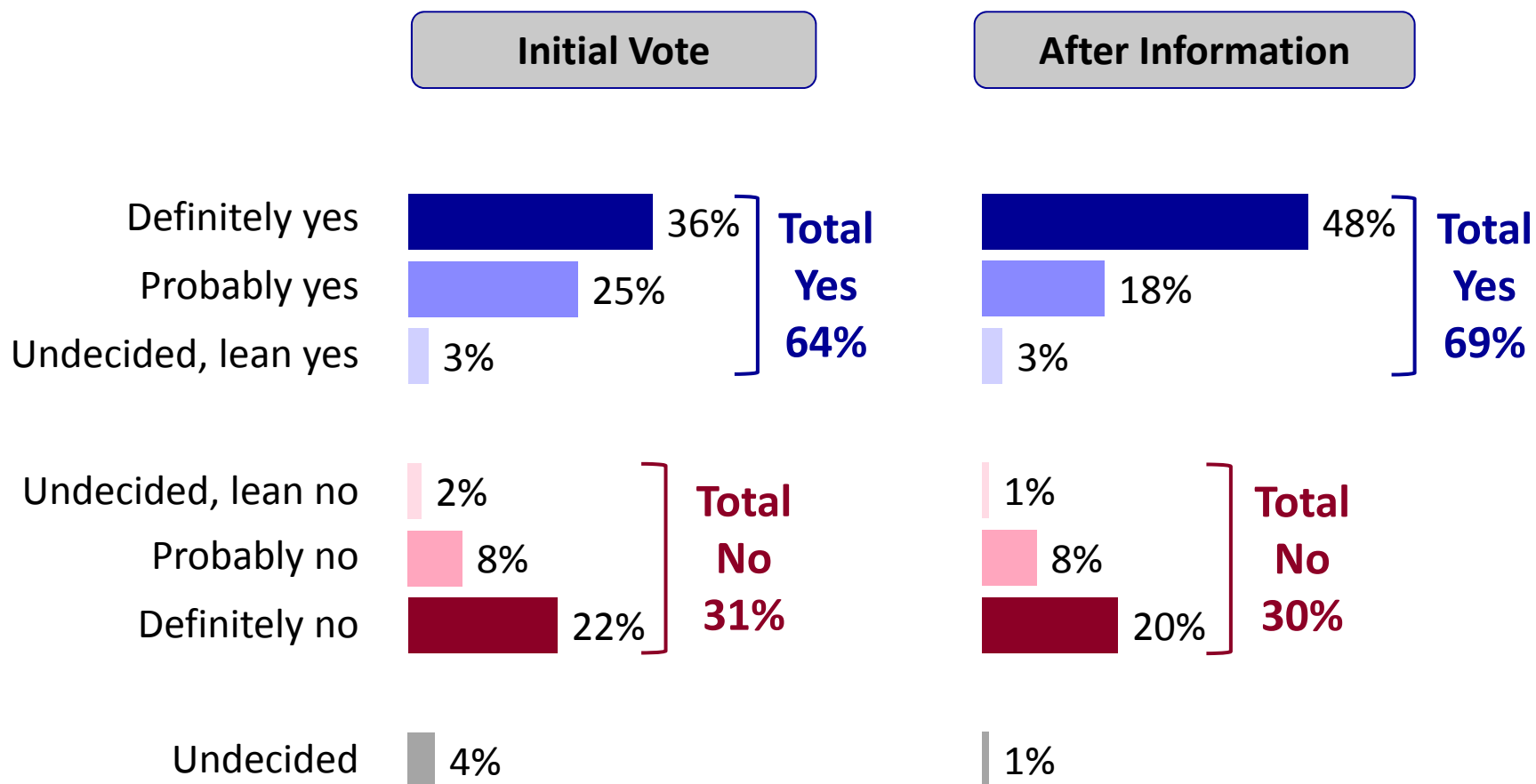


Voters were then provided with some background information.

Let me tell you a bit more about what this measure would do if passed. Currently, residents within the Meyers/South Shore area outside the South Lake Tahoe city limits pay \$20 per year per parcel specifically for snow removal equipment. This fee has not been adjusted since it was established in 1983, although the cost of snow removal equipment has increased by more than 400%. As a result, equipment replacements have not been affordable, and the County has been forced to put off road maintenance in order to pay for repairs on aging snow removal equipment.

This measure would increase the snow removal fee to \$80 per year, which would make it possible to replace old and unreliable equipment with more efficient new equipment with modern systems that reduce pollution. Without this new funding, the County will have to continue deferring routine road maintenance in order to fund snow removal. Money from this measure would only be used for snow removal equipment, and would NOT fund salaries, benefits, or pensions.

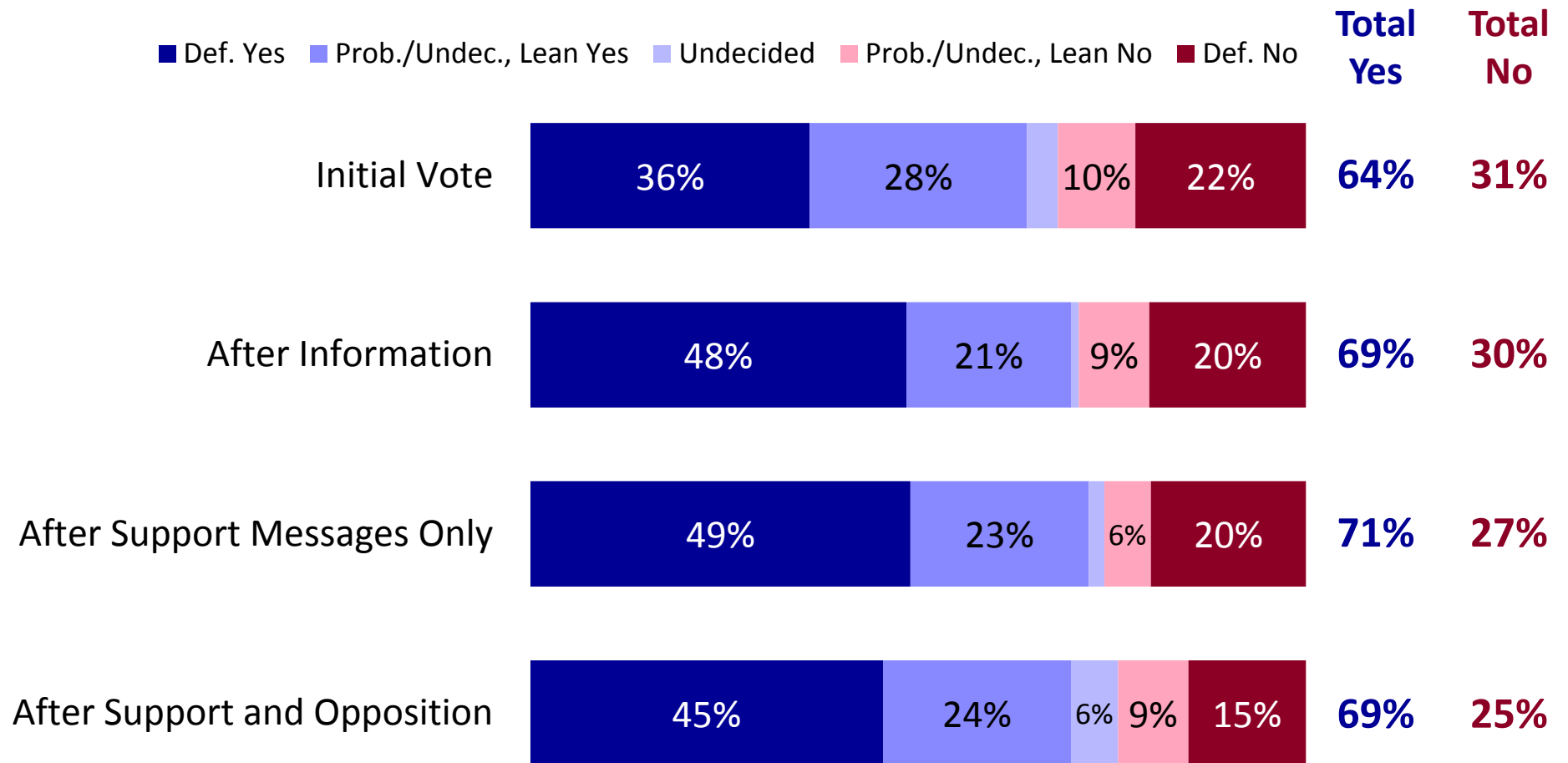
This context increases support to nearly seven in ten, and “strong” support to nearly half.



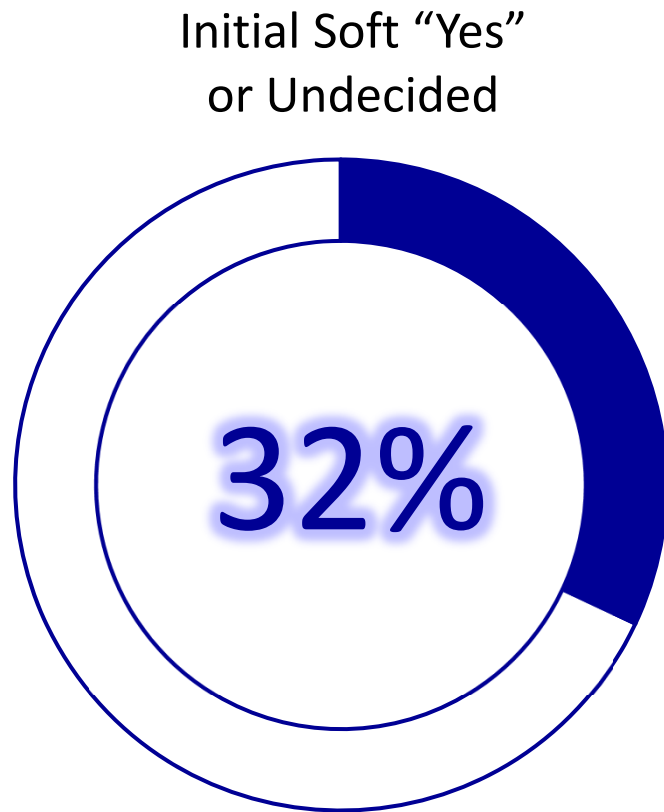


Messaging and Movement

As voters learn more about the measure, intensity of support increases, though the overall “yes” vote share is fairly stable.



One-third of voters are undecided or softly supportive of the measure initially.



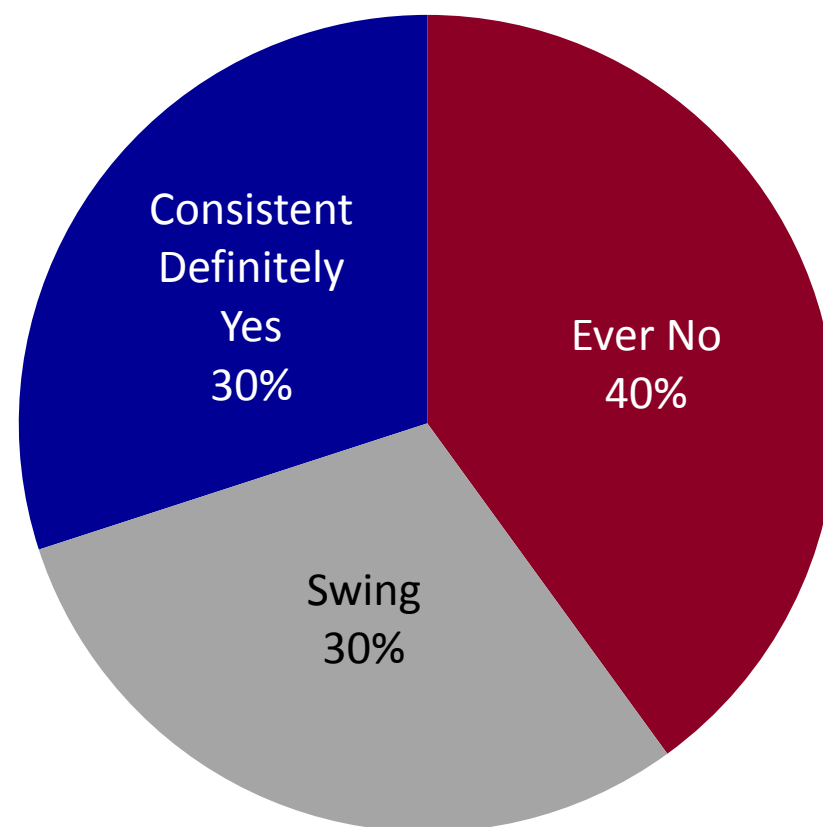
These voters are disproportionately:

- Voters under age 40
- Renters
- Republicans, independents and men under age 50
- High school educated voters
- Independent men

Segmenting the Electorate by Intensity of Support

- **Consistent Definitely Yes:** Voters who consistently indicated they would definitely vote for the measure.
- **Ever No:** Voters who at any point in the survey indicated that they would vote no on the measure.
- **Swing:** Voters who do not fall into any of the other categories – remaining consistently undecided, consistently softly supportive, or switching positions.

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



Profile of the Segments

Consistent Definitely Yes	Swing	Ever No
<i>30% of the Electorate</i>	<i>30% of the Electorate</i>	<i>40% of the Electorate</i>
Lived in South Lake Tahoe <5 Years	Renters	Republicans Ages 50+
Democrats Ages 18-49	Ages 30-39	Republican Women
Independent Women	Lived in South Lake Tahoe 6-10 Years	Republicans
Democratic Men	Men Ages 18-49	Republican Men
Democrats	Independents Ages 18-49	Ages 75+
Independents Ages 50+	Democratic Men	Republicans Ages 18-49
Post-Graduate Educated	Independent Men	Ages 65+
Lived in South Lake Tahoe 11-20 Years	Ages 18-49	Lived in South Lake Tahoe 20+ Years
Non-College Educated Women	Non-College Educated Men	Ages 65-74
Democratic Women		HH Income <\$100,000
Ages 40-49		Some College Education
HH Income \$100,000+		Women Ages 50+
Democrats Ages 50+		Non-College Educated Women

Messages in Support of a Measure (Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

(EMERGENCY) In an emergency, seconds count - and police cars and fire engines can't get through an unplowed road. That's why timely snow removal is vital for police, fire, and emergency responders.

(MAINTAIN) The snow removal fleet is outdated and in disrepair - and getting more and more expensive to maintain. The average piece of equipment is 25 years old, while some pieces of equipment are up to 50 years old, and at least one snow blower cannot be repaired because the parts needed are no longer manufactured. The longer we wait, the more expensive these constant repairs will be.

(48 HOURS) Currently, the goal is to plow roads every 24 hours, and every 48 in more remote areas - but with equipment frequently broken or out of service, that just isn't possible. Passing this measure would ensure that roads are plowed every day, so that after a big storm, residents are not attempting to drive in deep snow, leading to accidents and property damage.

(SINCE 1983) We haven't increased our parcel tax for snow removal since 1983 - and the condition of our equipment shows it. Just like the roof of your home or the tires on your car, basic maintenance and repairs can make your investments last longer. It's time now to invest in keeping our streets and roads safe and clear of snow.

Messages in Support of a Measure (Ranked in Order of Effectiveness, Continued)

(EMISSIONS) With most equipment built in the 1970s, our snow removal fleet is not up to current emissions standards. This measure would replace outdated equipment with newer, more energy efficient models that use half as much fuel and produce almost no smoke.

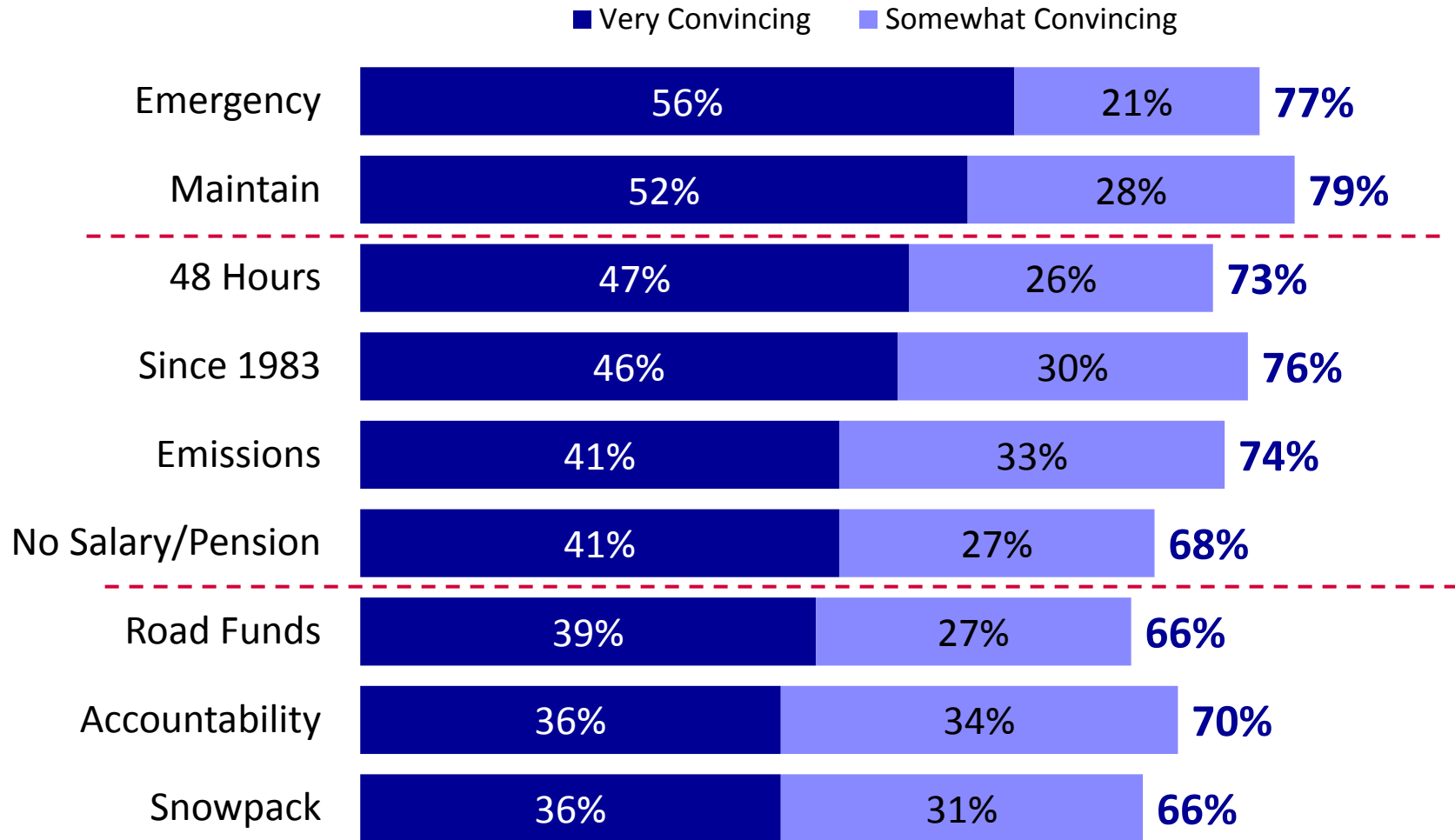
(NO SALARY/PENSION) The funds raised by this measure will only be used for snow removal equipment. No money from the measure will be used for salaries or pensions.

(ROAD FUNDS) Without this dedicated source of funding, the County will continue to have to use hundreds of thousands of dollars from the road maintenance budget just to remove snow. That means delays in fixing potholes and repaving our streets and roads.

(ACCOUNTABILITY) This measure includes tough fiscal accountability requirements, like annual independent financial audits, public disclosure of expenditures, and requirements that all funds remain in the South Shore area. These safeguards will ensure funds will be used as efficiently and effectively as promised.

(SNOWPACK) 2017 broke records for snowpack in the Sierras, and 2019 did so again. It is crucial to invest now in repairing and upgrading snow removal equipment to prepare for the next record-breaking winter.

Among a set of broadly-effective messages, those stressing emergency response and the condition of the fleet are most convincing.



Key persuadable voter groups respond especially well to the emergency and maintenance themes.

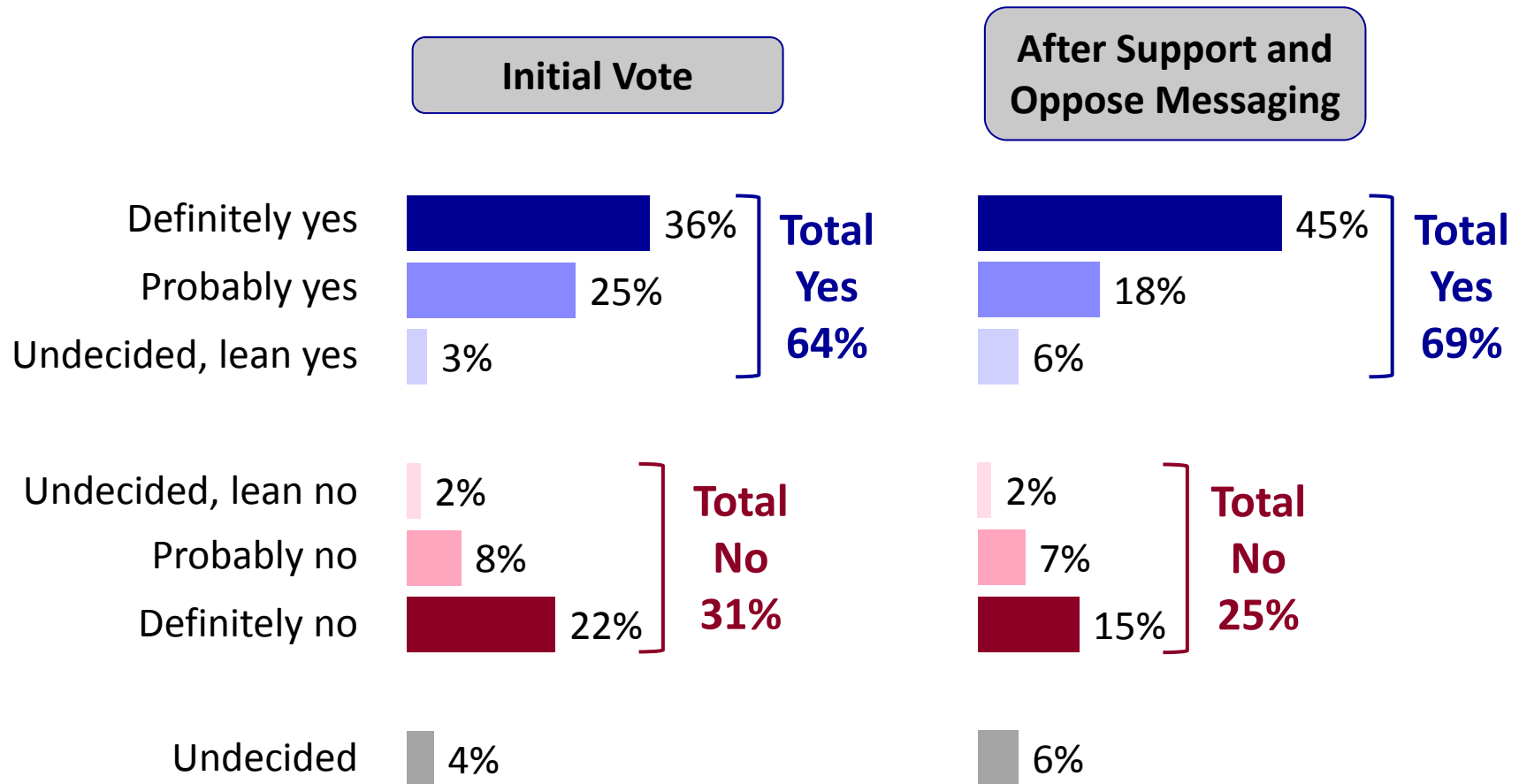
(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Initial Soft Yes/Und.	Swing
Emergency	56%	58%	57%
Maintain	52%	57%	57%
48 Hours	47%	50%	48%
Since 1983	46%	45%	51%
Emissions	41%	41%	41%
No Salary/Pension	41%	40%	45%
Road Funds	39%	48%	48%
Accountability	36%	29%	24%
Snowpack	36%	34%	41%

Opposition Statement Tested

Opponents of this measure say that with the cost of living out of control in our area, we simply can't afford yet another tax. Some years will have a lot of snow, and others will have less – it will balance out in the end if the County manages its money properly from year to year. The County could find the money in its budget if it were truly needed. And anyway, we have more urgent needs for our tax dollars, like public safety, road repairs, education, and healthcare.

After pro and con messaging, the measure has support from nearly seven in ten, with nearly half “strongly” supportive as well.





Conclusions

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- ✓ A special tax in Community Service Area No. 3 is potentially viable, though challenging, for March 2020.
- ✓ It begins with support just below the needed two-thirds, though a plain-language explanation and some additional supportive information increases the overall “yes” vote and its intensity.
- ✓ Notably, three-quarters see at least “some need” for new funding for snow removal equipment – the need for upgrades is especially clear to those who say they will vote “yes.”
- ✓ Just over half say they are satisfied with snow removal on County roads, and most of those are only “somewhat satisfied.”
- ✓ The best arguments for a measure include a straightforward description of deteriorating equipment conditions and the importance of efficient snow removal to emergency response.
- ✓ Lowering the amount to \$60 does not increase support.

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

Miranda Everitt

Miranda@FM3research.com