



El Dorado County Voter Views of a Potential Transportation Finance Measure

*Key Findings from a Survey of El Dorado County Voters
Conducted November 23-December 2, 2019*



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

220-5525

20-0081 A 1 of 31

Methodology

- ✓ 483 interviews with El Dorado County voters likely to participate in the November 2020 election
- ✓ Conducted November 23-December 2, 2019, online and via landline and cell phones
- ✓ Margin of sampling error of +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence interval
- ✓ Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%

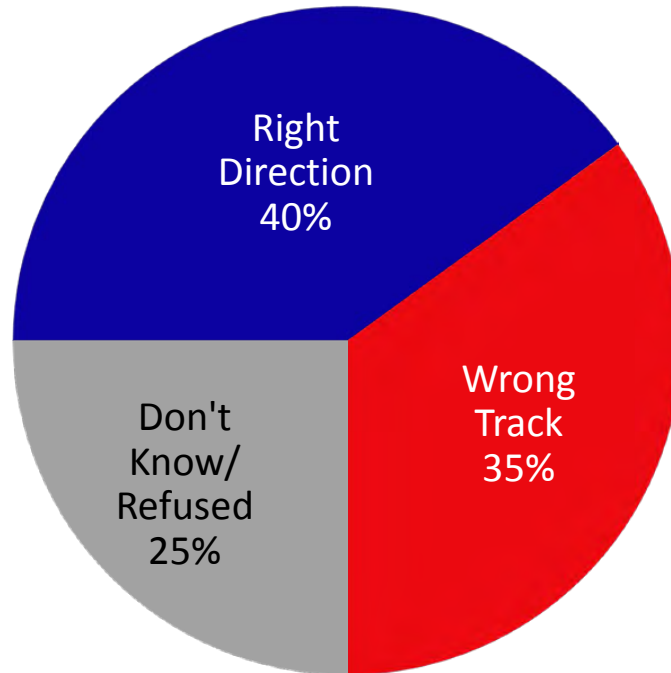




Issue Context

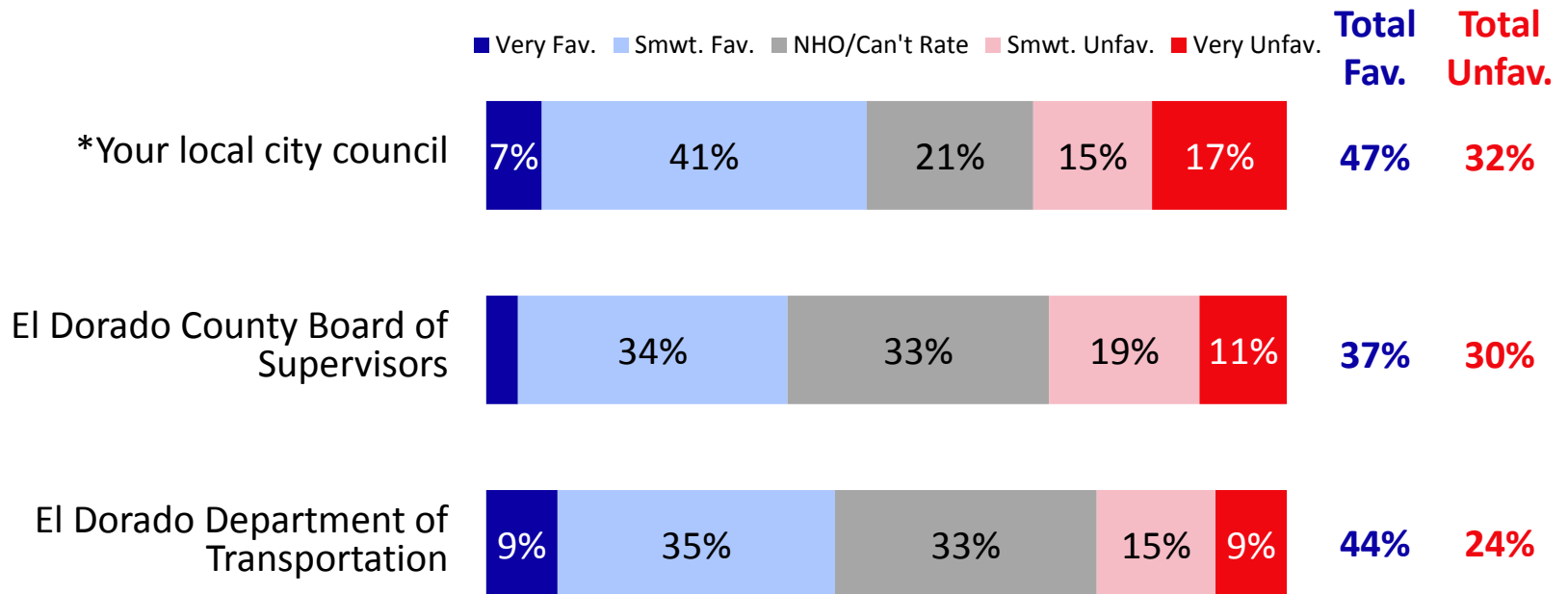
Voters are divided on the direction of the county generally.

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



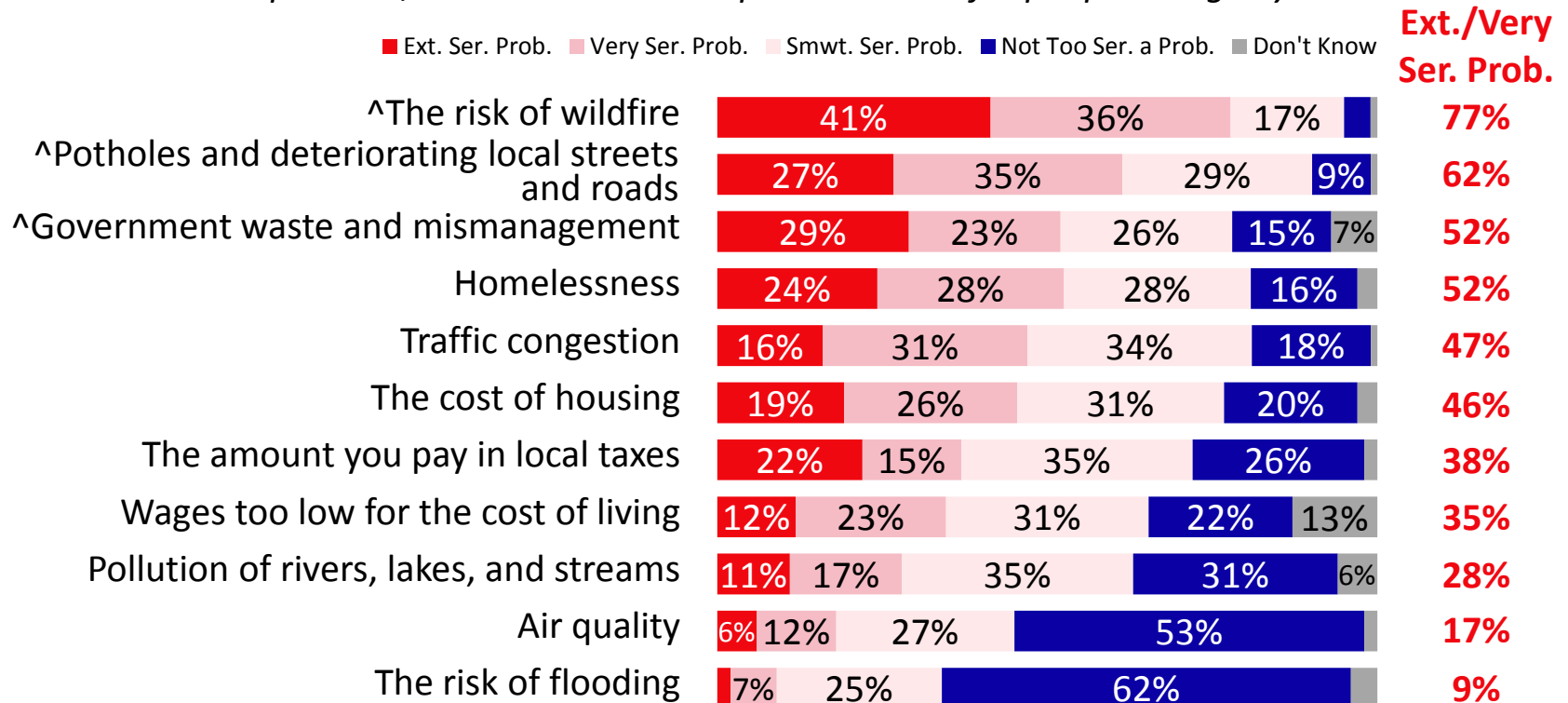
Those who know enough to rate the DOT have largely favorable views.

I'm going to mention a few people and organizations that are active in public life. Please tell me whether you have an overall favorable or unfavorable opinion of that person or organization.



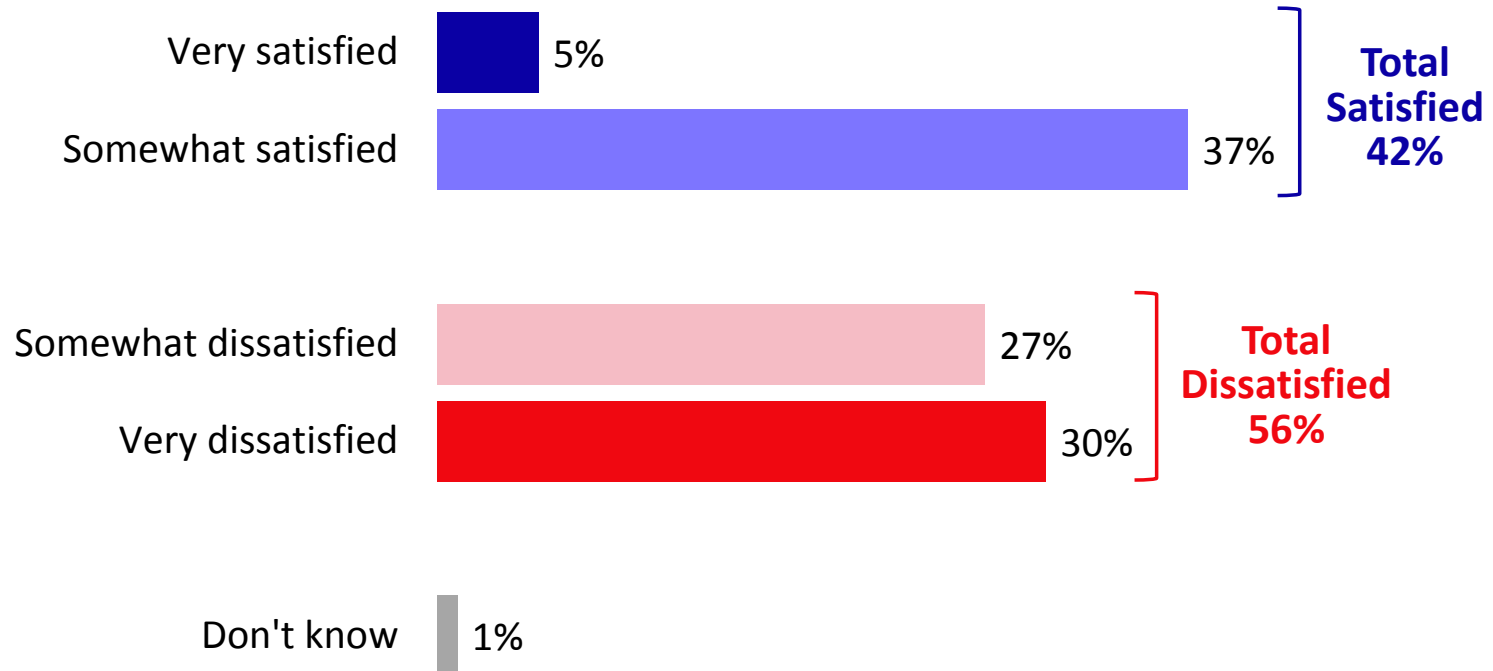
Wildfire risk is a top concern, followed by road conditions – but also government waste.

I'd like to read you a brief list of issues that could be problems for people living in El Dorado County. After you hear each one, please tell me whether you personally consider it to be an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem at all for people living in your area.



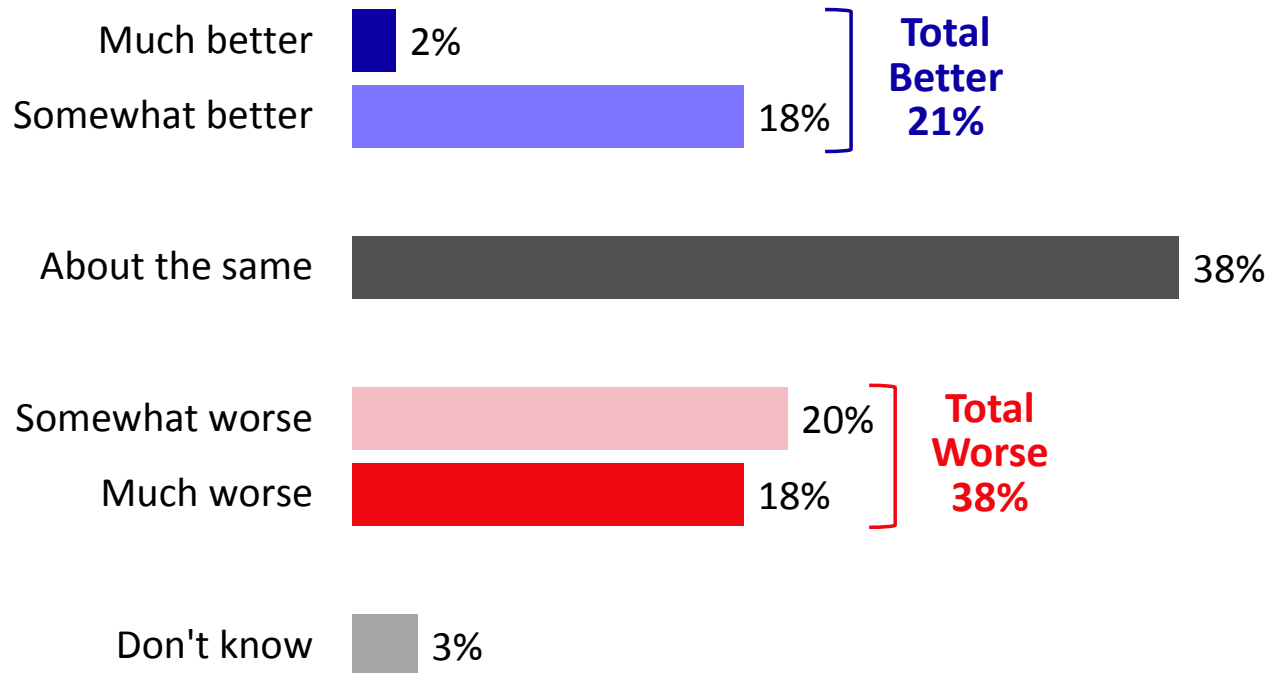
A majority of voters is dissatisfied with County road conditions – with three in ten “very dissatisfied.”

In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the condition of County roads?



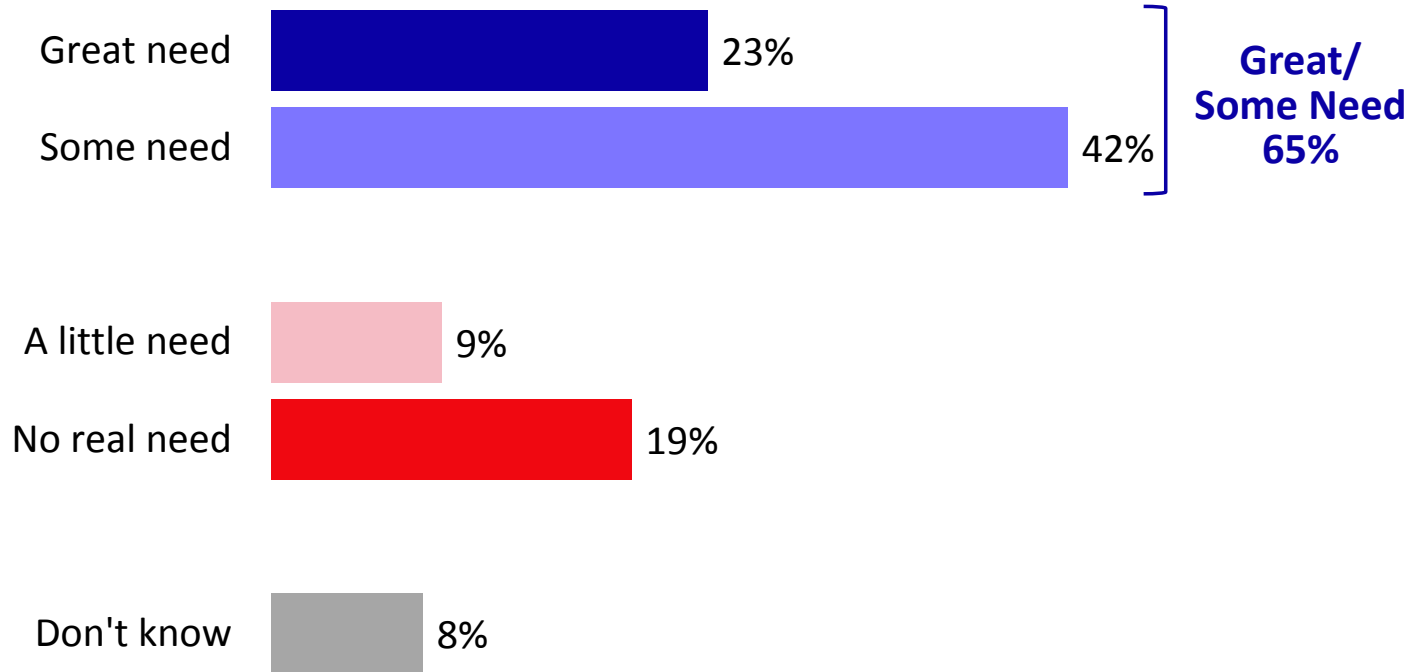
Nearly two in five believe roads have gotten worse, though the same share believe they are about the same as a few years ago.

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



Almost two-thirds see at least “some need” for additional funding for road maintenance.

Generally speaking, would you say that El Dorado County has a great need for additional funding for street and road maintenance, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding?





Initial Reactions to a Potential Transportation Finance Measure

Sales-Tax Measure Language Tested

Two-Thirds Vote Threshold

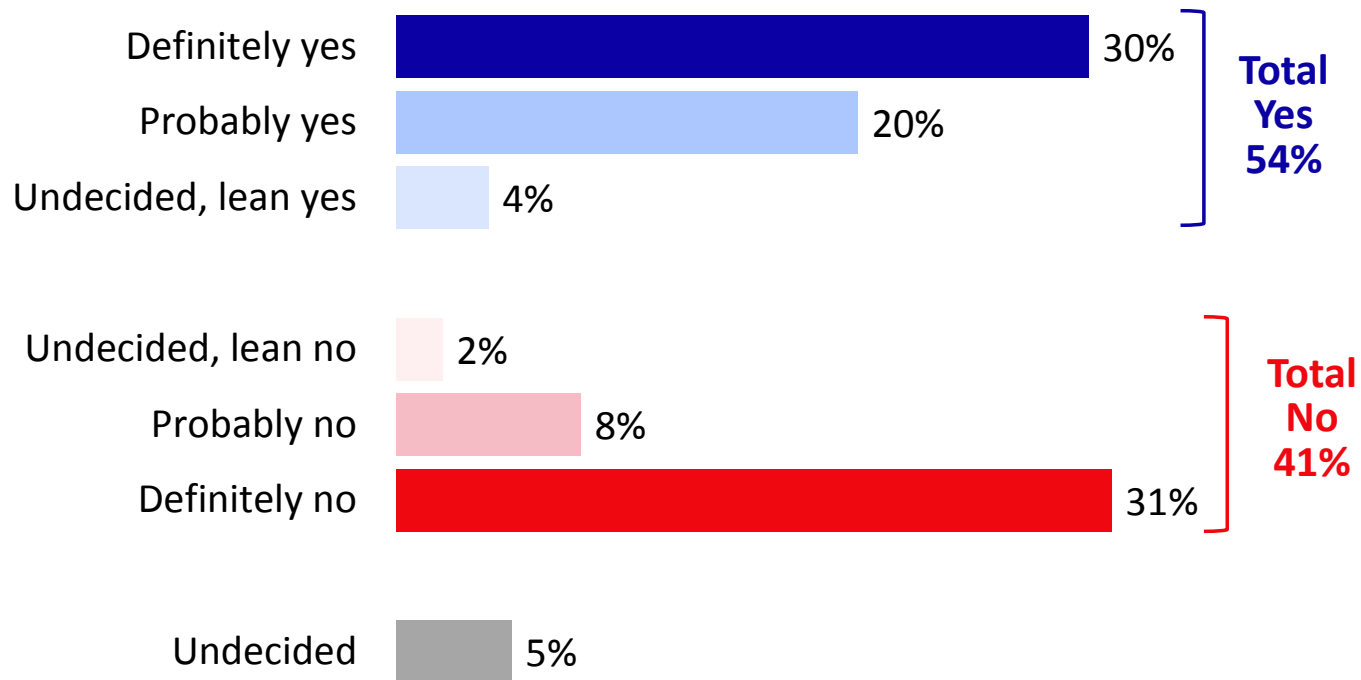
EL DORADO COUNTY ROAD REPAIR, SAFETY AND IMPROVEMENT MEASURE.

In order to:

- repair/maintain County roads;
- fix potholes;
- repair/maintain drainage to prevent flooding/erosion;
- remove/trim overgrown roadside vegetation to prevent wildfire;
- improve driver safety; and
- make the County eligible for additional state transportation funds;

shall the Board of Supervisors enact a one-half cent sales tax for 30 years, providing about \$7 million annually, requiring independent audits, oversight by a citizens' committee, public review of spending, all revenues controlled locally?

It has majority support, but falls short of the two-thirds needed for passage; support and opposition intensity are evenly matched.

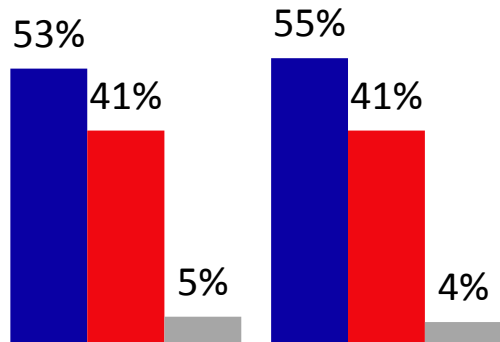


Satisfaction with road quality makes no difference in voters' support.

Initial Vote by Satisfaction with County Roads & Condition of Roads in the Last Few Years

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided

Satisfaction with County Roads



Total Satisfied

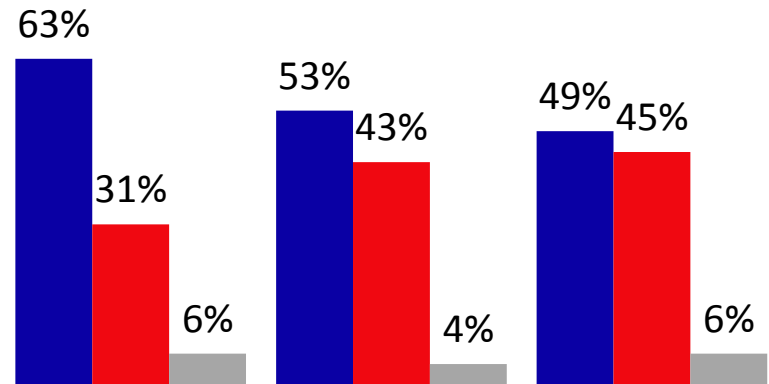
Total Dissatisfied

(% of Sample)

(42%)

(56%)

Condition of Roads in the Last Few Years



Total Better

About the Same/
Don't Know

Total Worse

(21%)

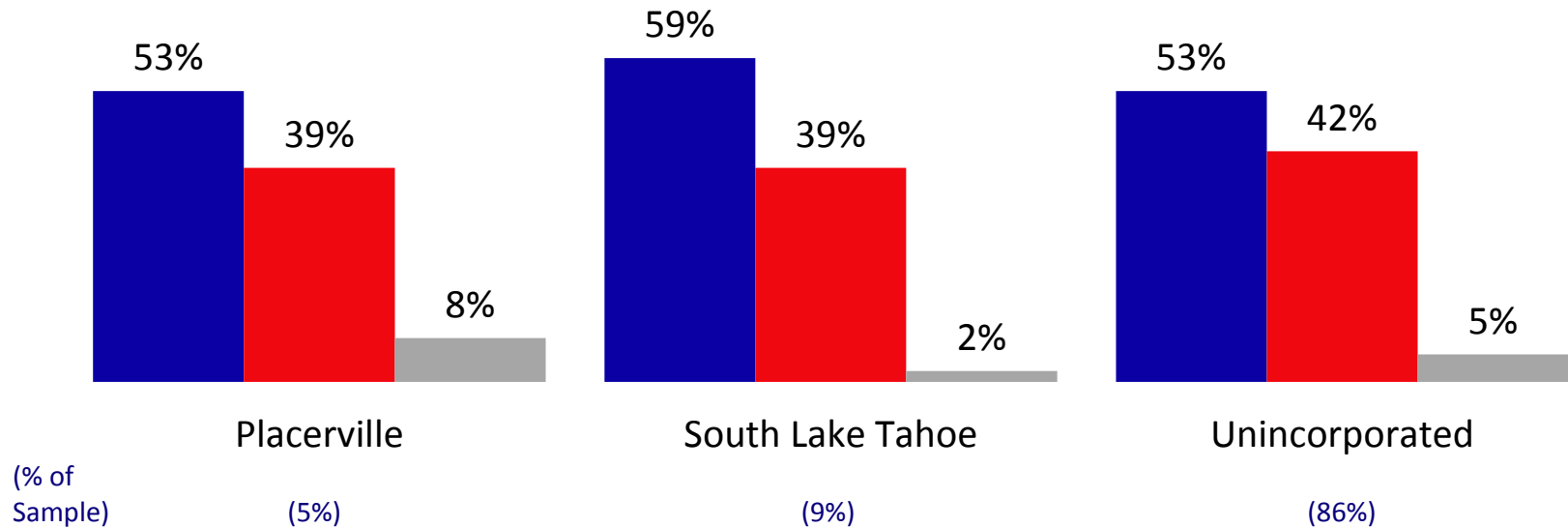
(41%)

(38%)

Support for the measure differs little between residents of cities and unincorporated areas.

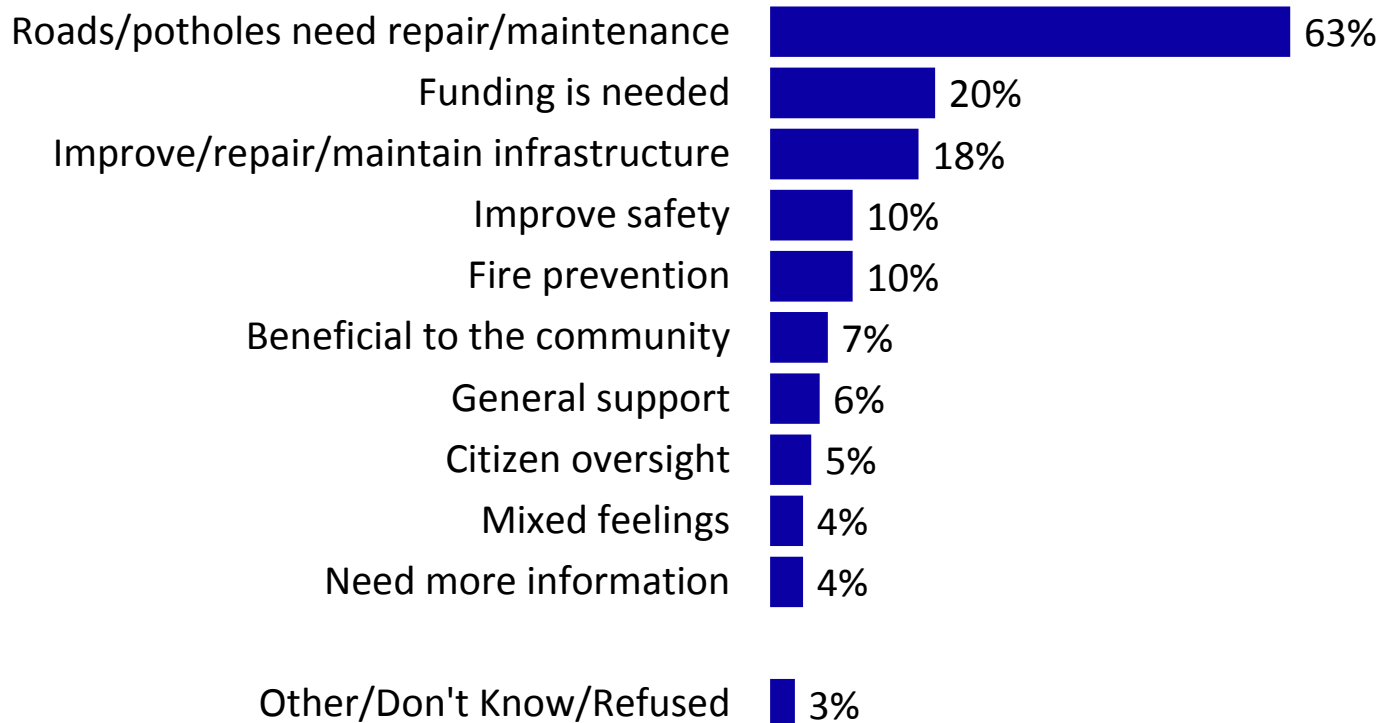
Initial Vote by City

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided



Supporters of the measure recognize the need for repairs and maintenance.

*In a few words of your own, why do you think you would vote YES on this measure?
(Open-Ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, N=259)*



Verbatim Responses from Supporters

Our roads are in bad shape and we need to do something about the vegetation on the side of the road.

I live on a street where fire prevention is very important. We have a cousin that lost their home last year and neighbors are getting dropped by insurance.

You can't really have commerce without roads and if the roads are broken so is everything else.

It's a sales tax and not a property tax.

The roads are terrible. You can't drive down a road without getting stuck in a pothole.

We need to maintain our roadways and keep them clear. The increase in population has caused an impact on our road ways.

It is important to maintain safety of roads and trimming vegetation and grasses to help prevent wildfires, it helps residents maintain their cars and adds safety.

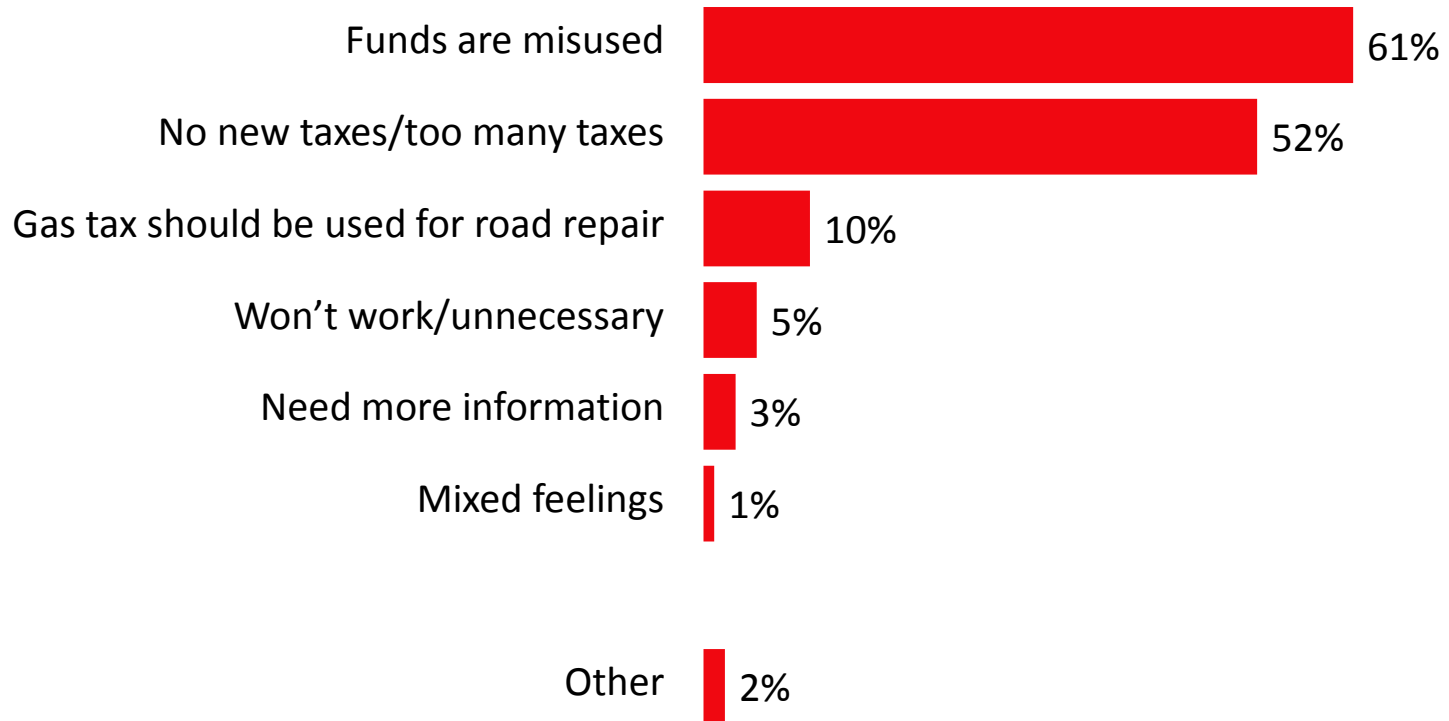
It's just really hard living in Tahoe when you hit the potholes.

Public infrastructure is important for everyday people.

The roads need fixed.

Opponents broadly believe taxes are too high and funds are misused.

*In a few words of your own, why do you think you would vote NO on this measure?
(Open-Ended; Asked of No Voters Only, N=199)*



Verbatim Responses from Opponents

We are paying higher gas taxes that are for fixing the roads.

We have the highest gas tax in the nation and the gas tax should do what this measure does.

They're doing too much with the money. Either work on roads or work on wildfires. Wildfires are a bigger issue to me because homeowners are getting their insurance revoked because there isn't proper forest maintenance.

They don't use the money property; with the growth here they should have money to fix the roads.

The state gas tax is supposed to be taking care of that. That's why they raised the gas tax.

There is enough for the roads and the governor needs to start using it for the roads.

We have plenty of revenue. It's mismanaged.

We have a \$12 billion surplus; we don't need to have any more taxes.

I'm tired of paying taxes and having my money used for something else.

Understanding SB1

- ✓ As in many communities across the state, opponents frequently mention their belief that SB1 should be funding road repairs as a motivation for a “no” vote on this local measure.
- ✓ Voters are largely unfamiliar with restrictions on SB1 funding and provisions that make locally controlled funding necessary.

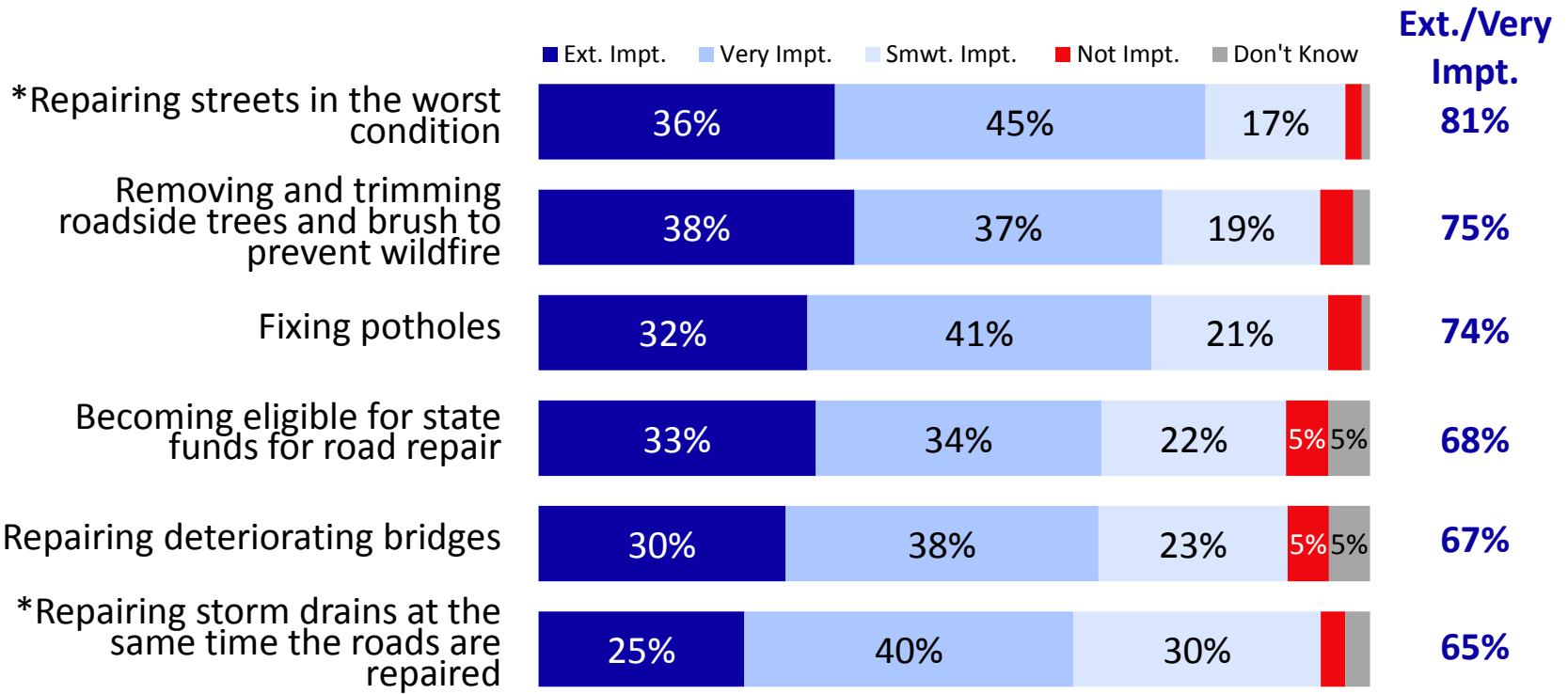




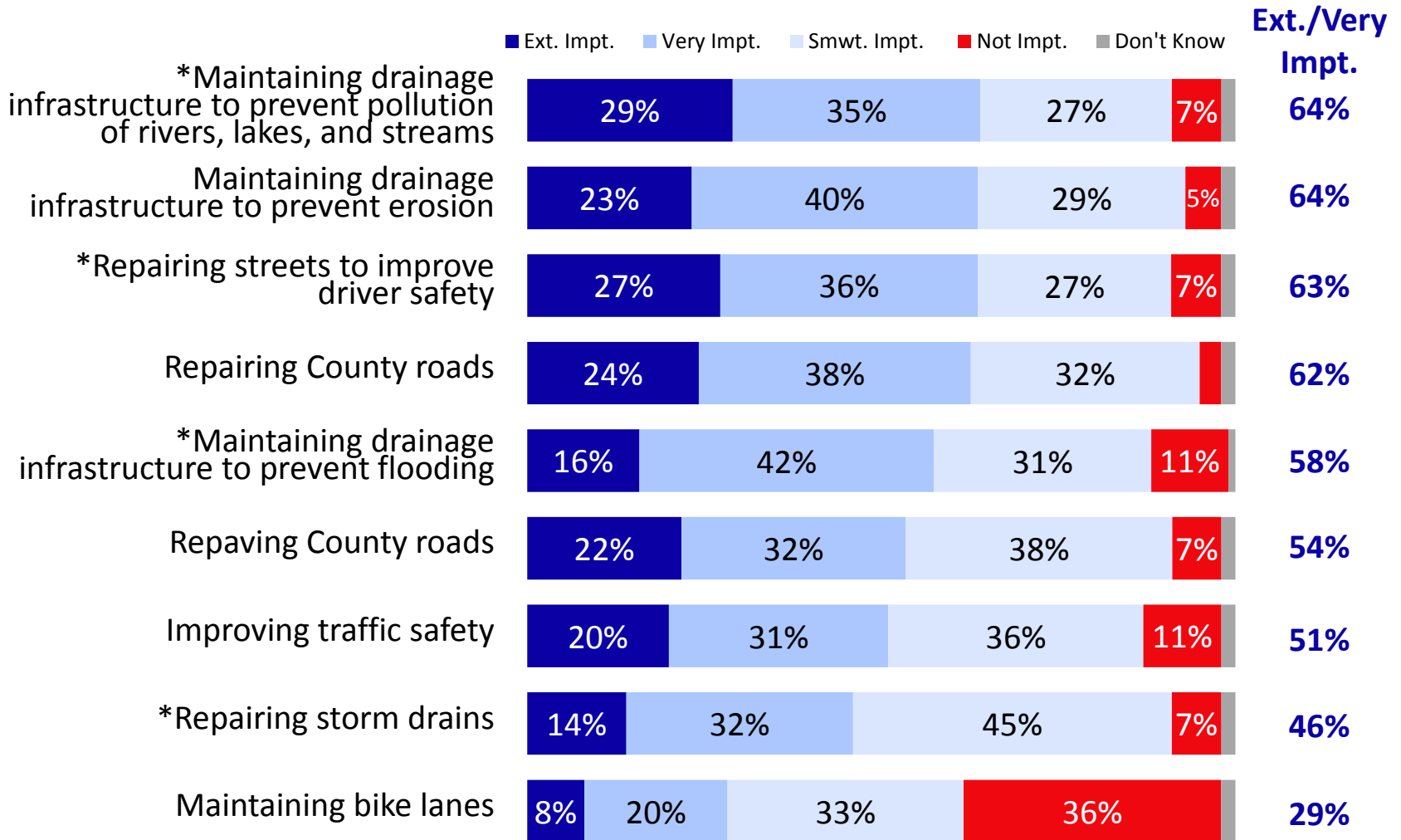
Voter Priorities and Measure Structure

Voters' top priorities include repairing streets in the worst shape and removing brush.

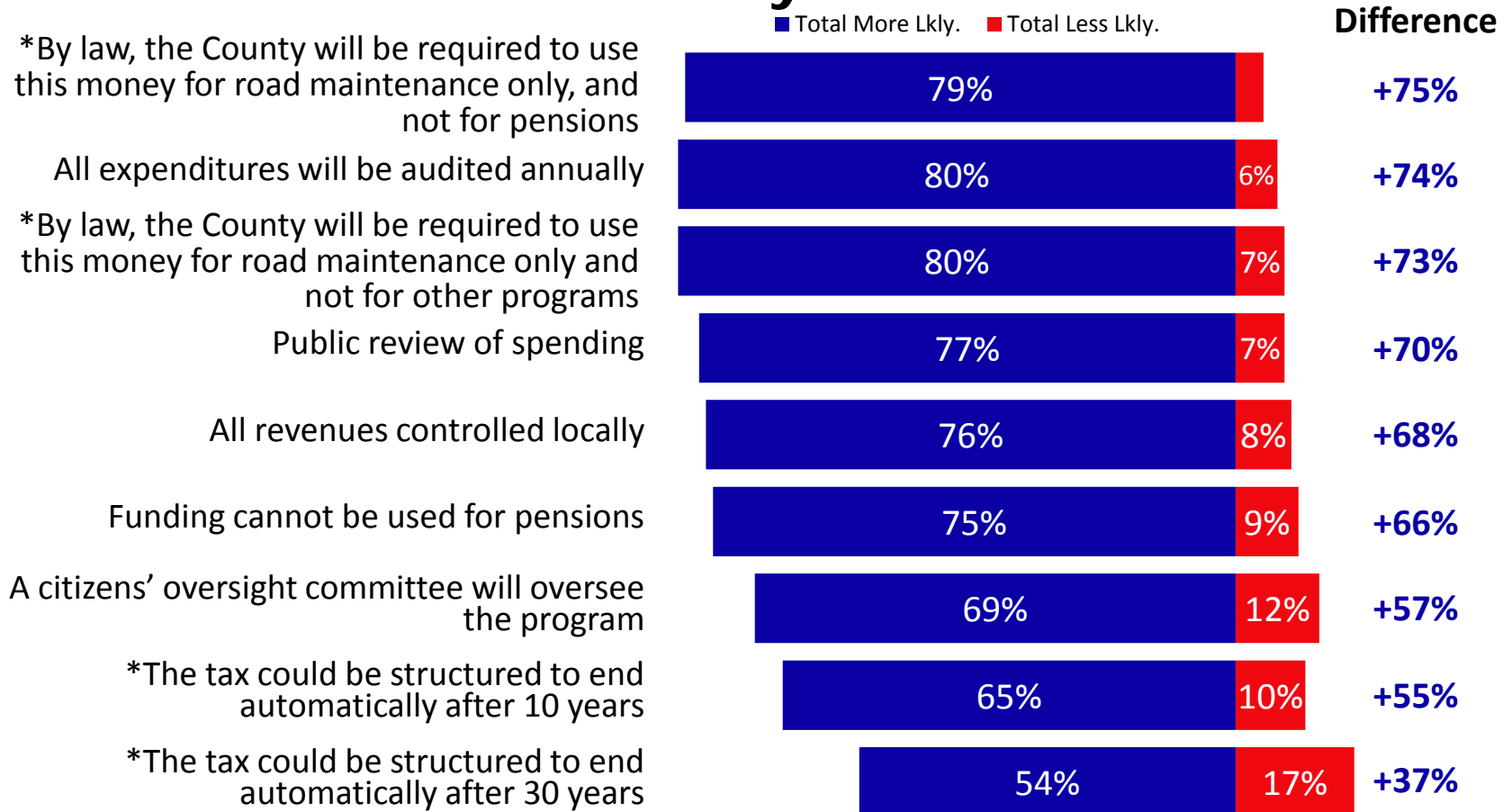
I am going to read you a list of specific projects and services that could be funded by the measure. Recognizing that there will not be enough funding to complete all projects, please tell me how important each one is to you: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important.



They rank bike lanes a very low priority.



Audits, spending requirements, local control and public review are very important accountability elements.





Messaging and Movement

Additional Information Provided

(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

^(NO PENSIONS) The funds raised by this measure will only be used for road maintenance. No money from the measure will be used for pensions.

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

(STATE FUNDS) There are large amounts of state funding available to California counties for much-needed road maintenance improvements if the County provides local funds. This measure will make it possible for El Dorado County to receive its fair share of funds which would otherwise go elsewhere.

(FUTURE COSTS) Delaying maintenance and repairs to El Dorado County roads only increases costs in the long run. This measure will help make these investments while construction costs are still relatively affordable.

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

Additional Information Provided; Continued

(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

(FIRE – CLEARING) This measure will fund vegetation management, and removing and trimming roadside trees and brush that increase our risk of wildfire. By voting for this measure, we can help ensure we are doing what we can to prevent wildfire.

(FIRE – EQUIPMENT) Equipment and truck traffic as a result of past fires like the King Fire caused damage to roads throughout the County. This measure will help repair our streets and roads, while better-preparing them for future natural disaster.

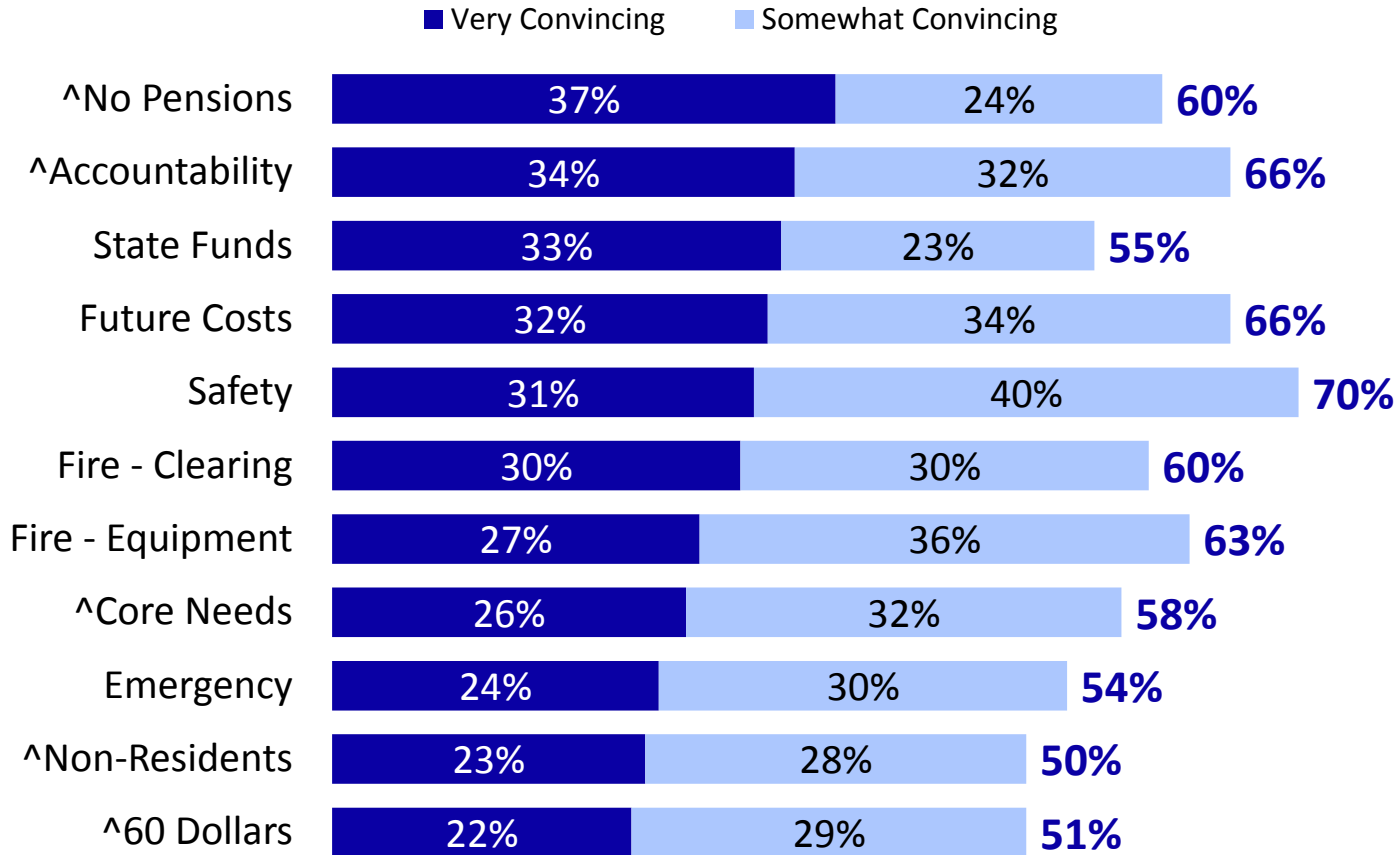
^(CORE NEEDS) Every penny of funding from this measure would be going to our core transportation needs – repairing and maintaining our road systems. All money would be spent on existing roads, and no funding goes toward things like buses or new bike lanes.

(EMERGENCY) In an emergency, seconds count – and police cars and fire engines can't move quickly on broken and potholed roads. That's why this measure is vital for police, fire, and emergency responders.

^(NON-RESIDENTS) Because our area generates so much of its revenue from tourism, a significant percentage of this sales tax will be paid for by outside visitors, not residents.

^(60 DOLLARS) This measure would cost the average El Dorado County household just \$60 annually – \$5 a month.

Accountability and safety are among the more-compelling informational themes.





Conclusions

Conclusions

- ✓ A plurality of voters believe the county is headed in the right direction.
- ✓ As tested in this survey, a special-purpose transportation sales tax presents an extremely difficult path to approval in November 2020. Voters offer slim majority support upon hearing ballot language alone.
- ✓ However, the data do indicate places where voters need more information about the County's needs and planning and ways to refocus the measure to increase support.
 - This survey did not test a 10-year sunset as a base case scenario, which could improve overall support for a measure.
 - This survey also did not examine support in unincorporated alone.

Opportunities

- ✓ Concern about government waste and mismanagement is broadly shared in El Dorado County – but voters respond well to accountability provisions such as annual audits and public review of expenditures.
- ✓ Those familiar with the County Department of Transportation have positive impressions, though there is room for improvement in intensity of that view with additional context.
- ✓ Fixing potholes and repairing streets in the worst condition are high priorities for a potential measure.
- ✓ Upon hearing the details about what SB1 funds -- and more importantly what it does NOT fund -- voters may be more likely to support a locally-controlled measure.
- ✓ The risk of wildfire is voters' highest-priority concern broadly – and a high-ranking priority for such a measure specifically.



Questions