



Arcata Voter Views of a Potential Parks Measure



*Key Findings from a Survey of Voters
Conducted January 13-20, 2020*



220-5500

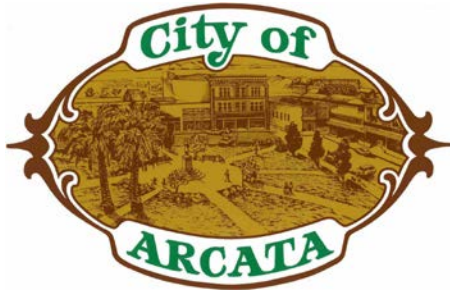


OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

Methodology

- ✓ 246 interviews with Arcata voters likely to participate in the November 2020 election
- ✓ Conducted January 13-20, 2020 online and via landline and cell phones
- ✓ Margin of sampling error of +/-6.3% at the 95% confidence level
- ✓ Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%

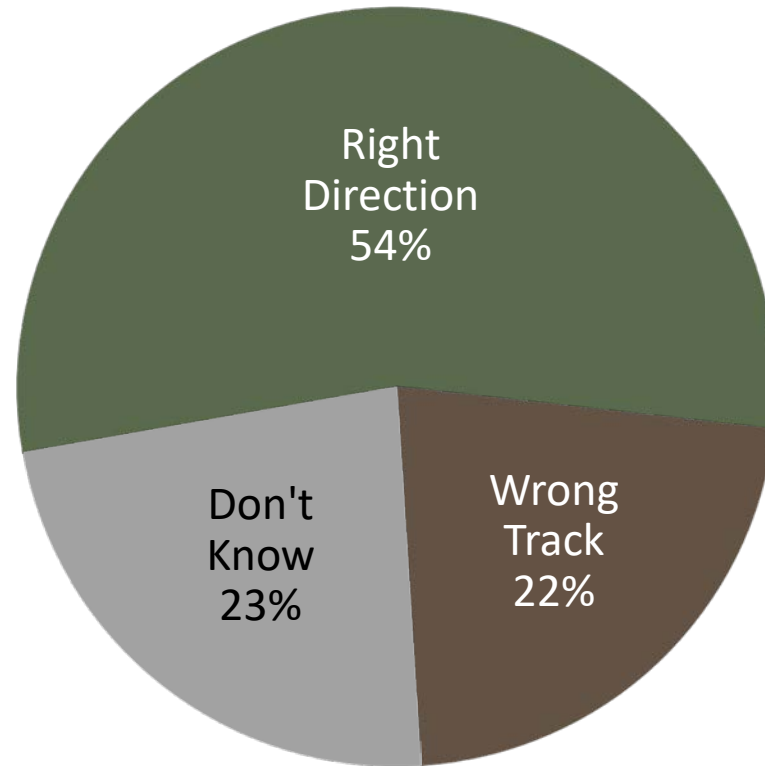




Issue Context

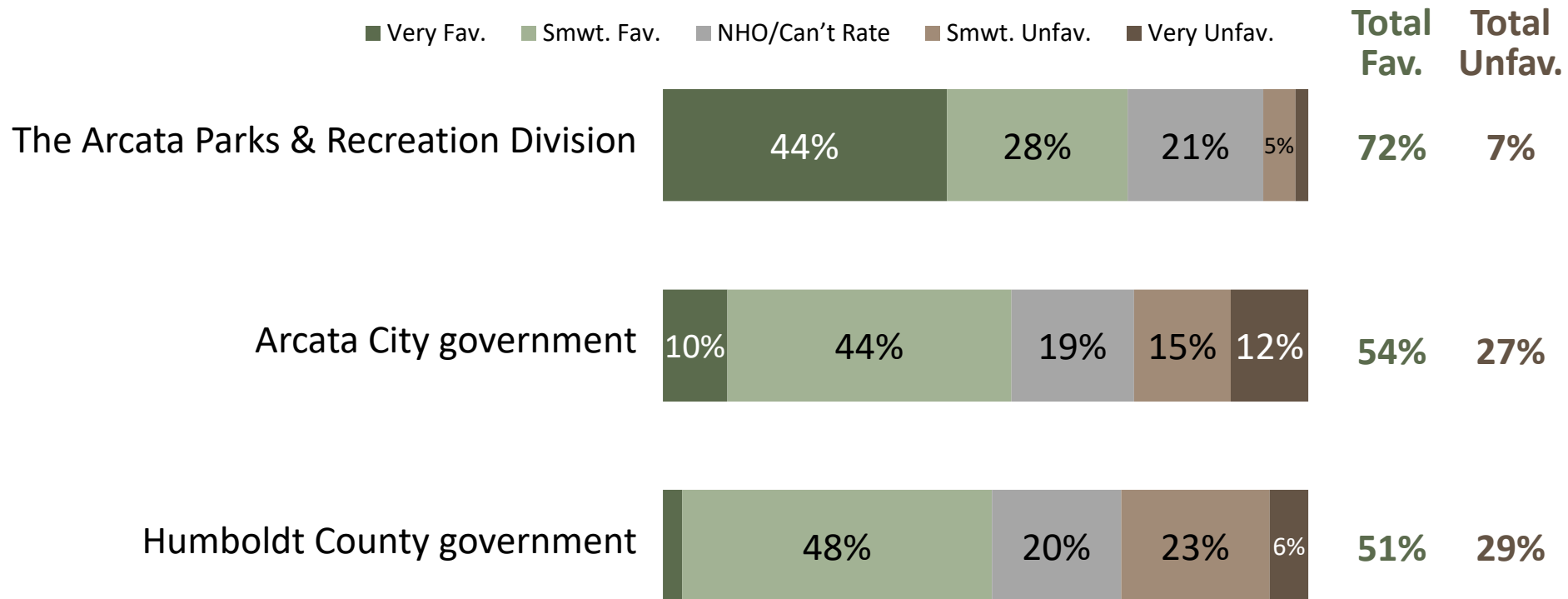
A majority of Arcata voters feel things in the city are headed in the right direction.

Do you think that things in Arcata are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel things are off on the wrong track?



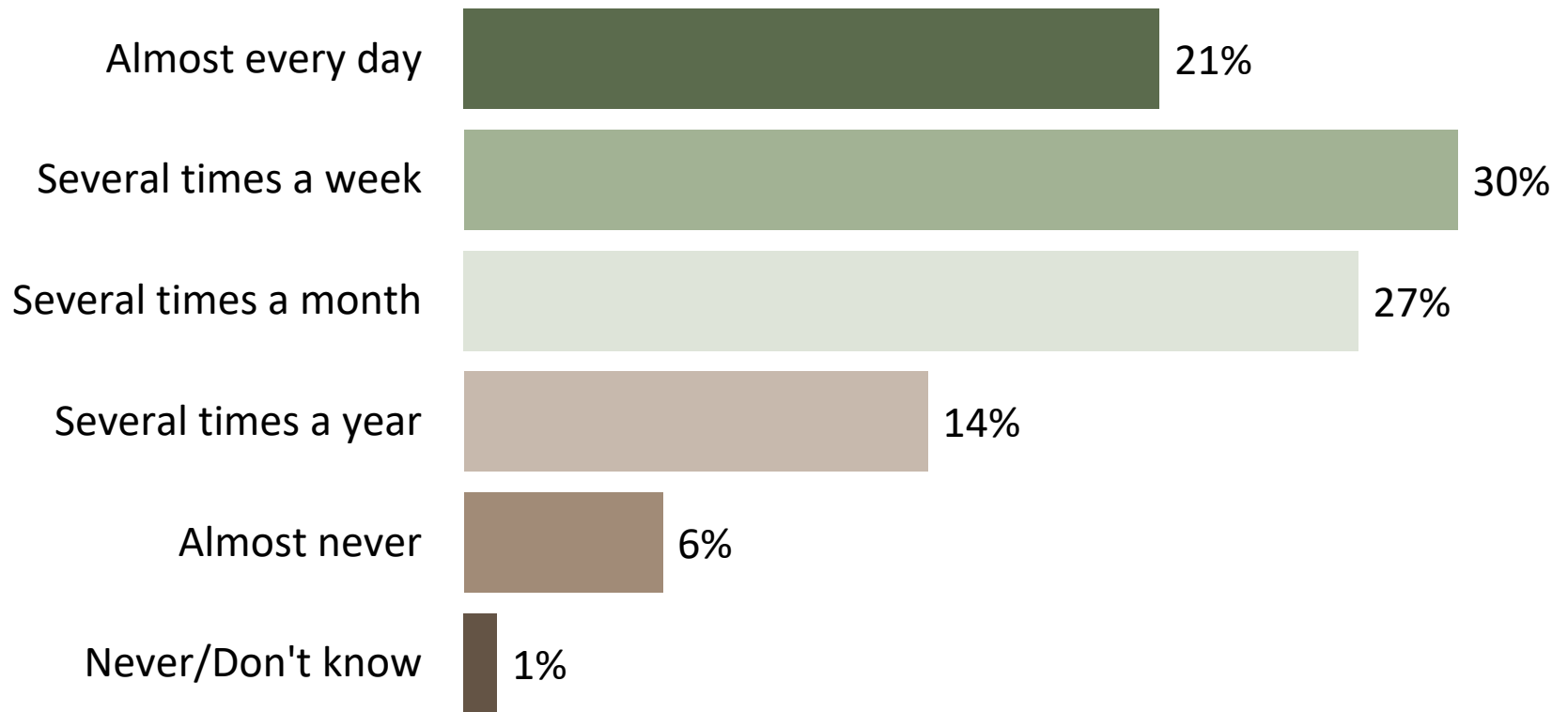
More than seven in ten have a positive impression of the parks division, even as their views of the city and county are more muted.

I am going to mention several organizations and individuals active in public life. Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of that organization or individual. If you have never heard of them, or don't have enough information to have an opinion, you can tell me that too.



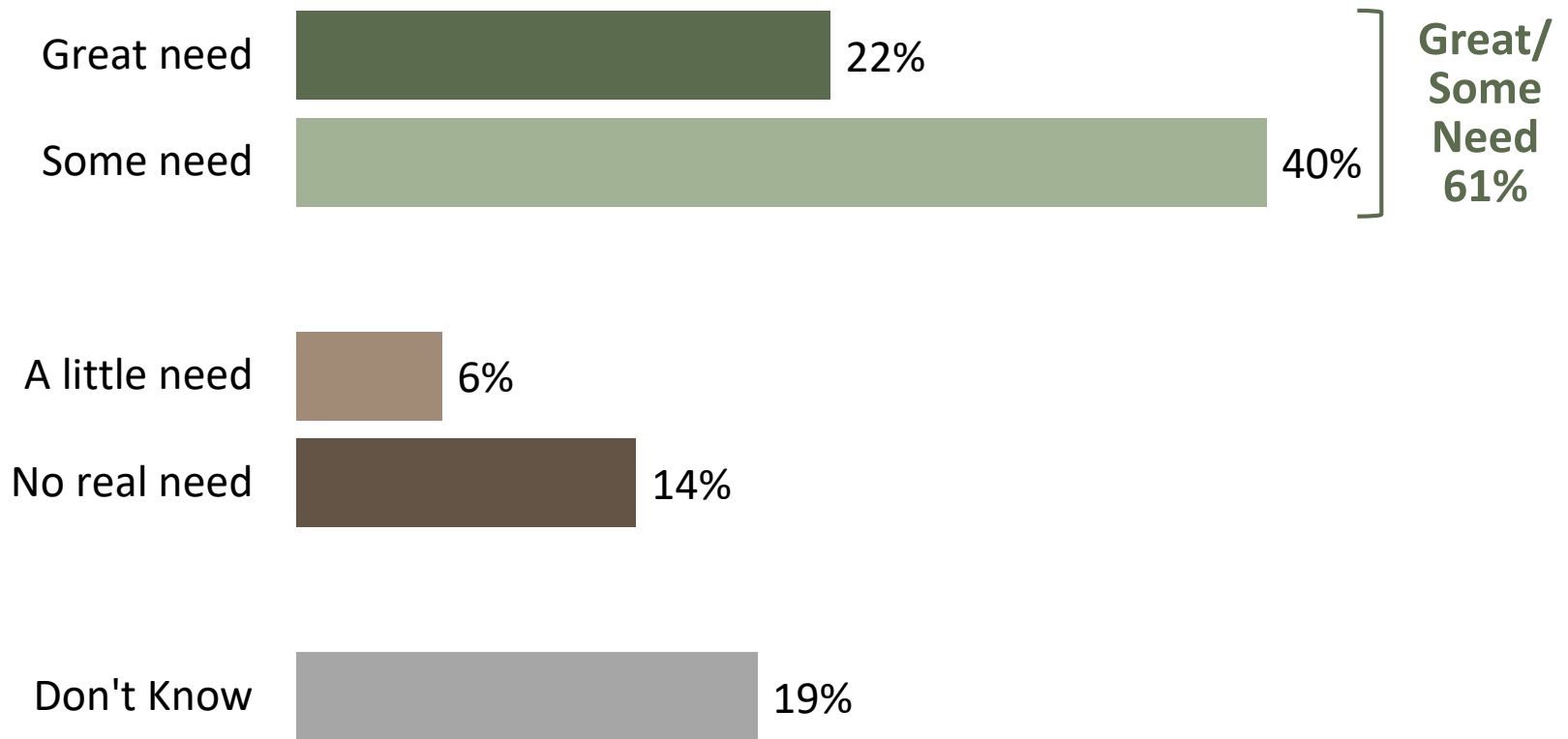
Half of voters use a park, recreation area or trail in the city at least several times a week.

How often do you visit or use a park, recreation area or trail in the City of Arcata?



Three in five believe the city has at least “some need” for additional funding for parks and natural areas.

Would you say that Arcata has a great need for additional funding, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding for parks and natural areas?





Voter Reactions to a Ballot Measure

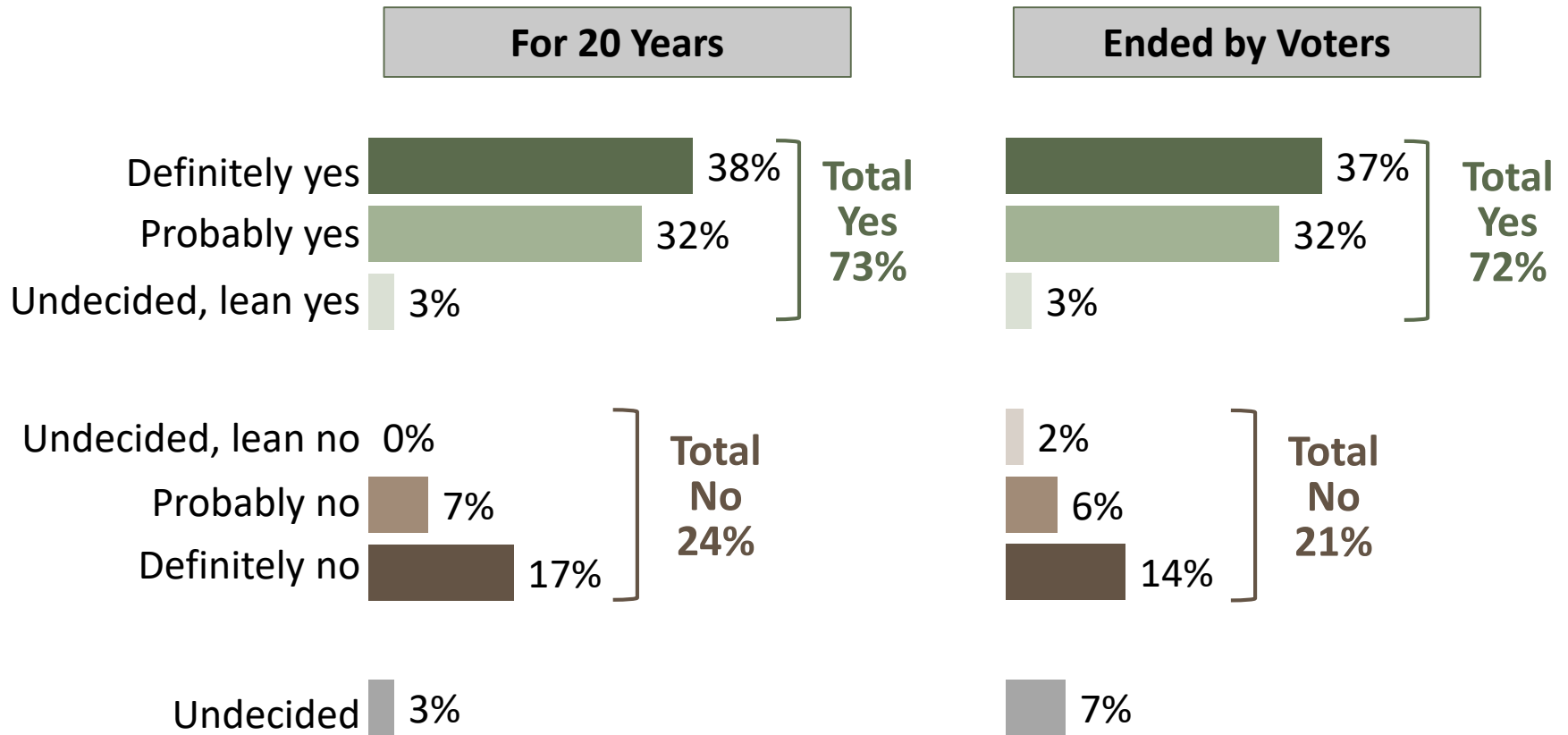
Ballot Measure Language Tested

Arcata Parks/ Natural Areas Measure. To protect natural areas for future generations by:

- improving parks, open spaces, trails;
- protecting land around creeks, rivers and streams to prevent pollution, improve water quality;
- preserving redwood forests, wildlife habitat, scenic hillsides, agricultural land;
- expanding public access, trail systems;

shall the City of Arcata levy a special tax of \$40 annually per parcel **(HALF SAMPLE: for 20 years) (HALF SAMPLE: until ended by voters)**, raising approximately \$200,000 annually, with citizen oversight, all funds benefitting local open space?

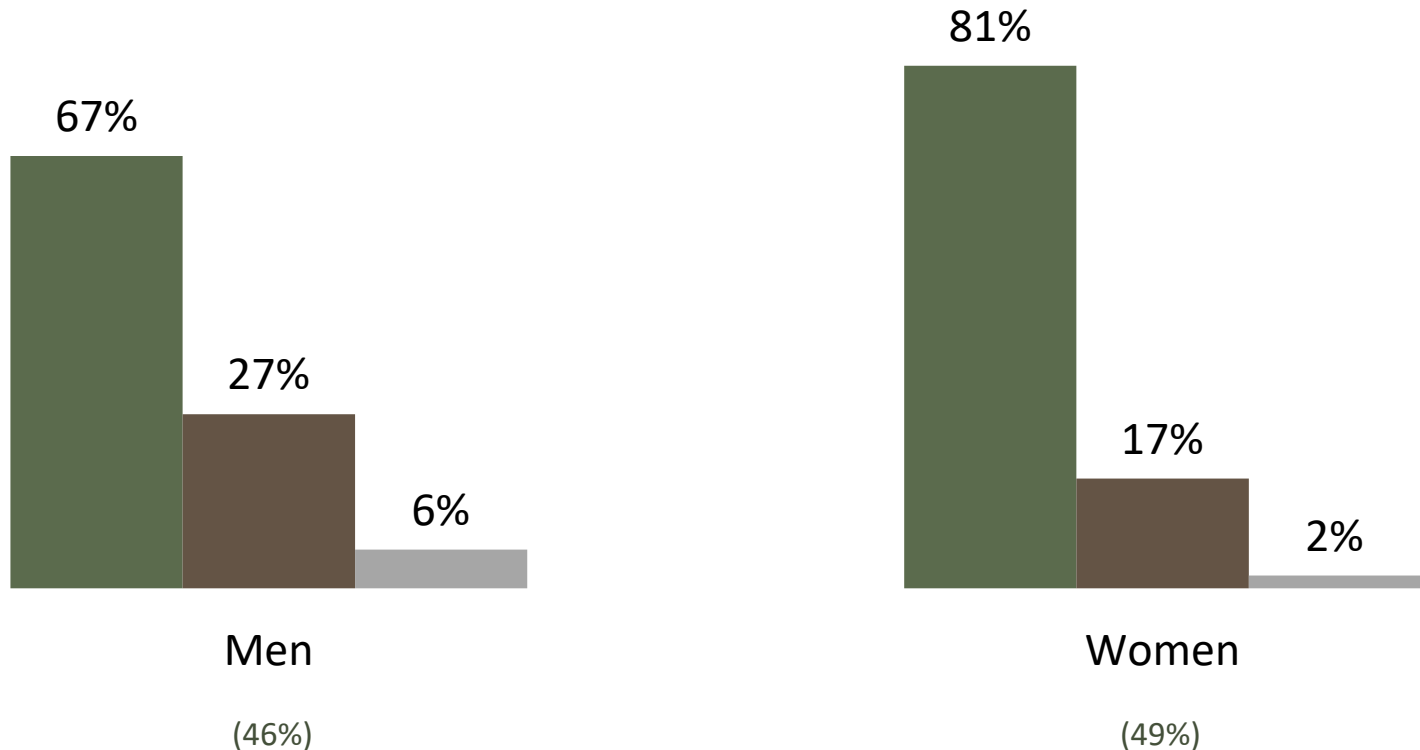
Seven in ten voters initially support the measure, with no real difference in reactions based on the tax's duration.



Four in five women support the parks measure, as do two-thirds of men.

Support for a Parks Measure by Gender

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided

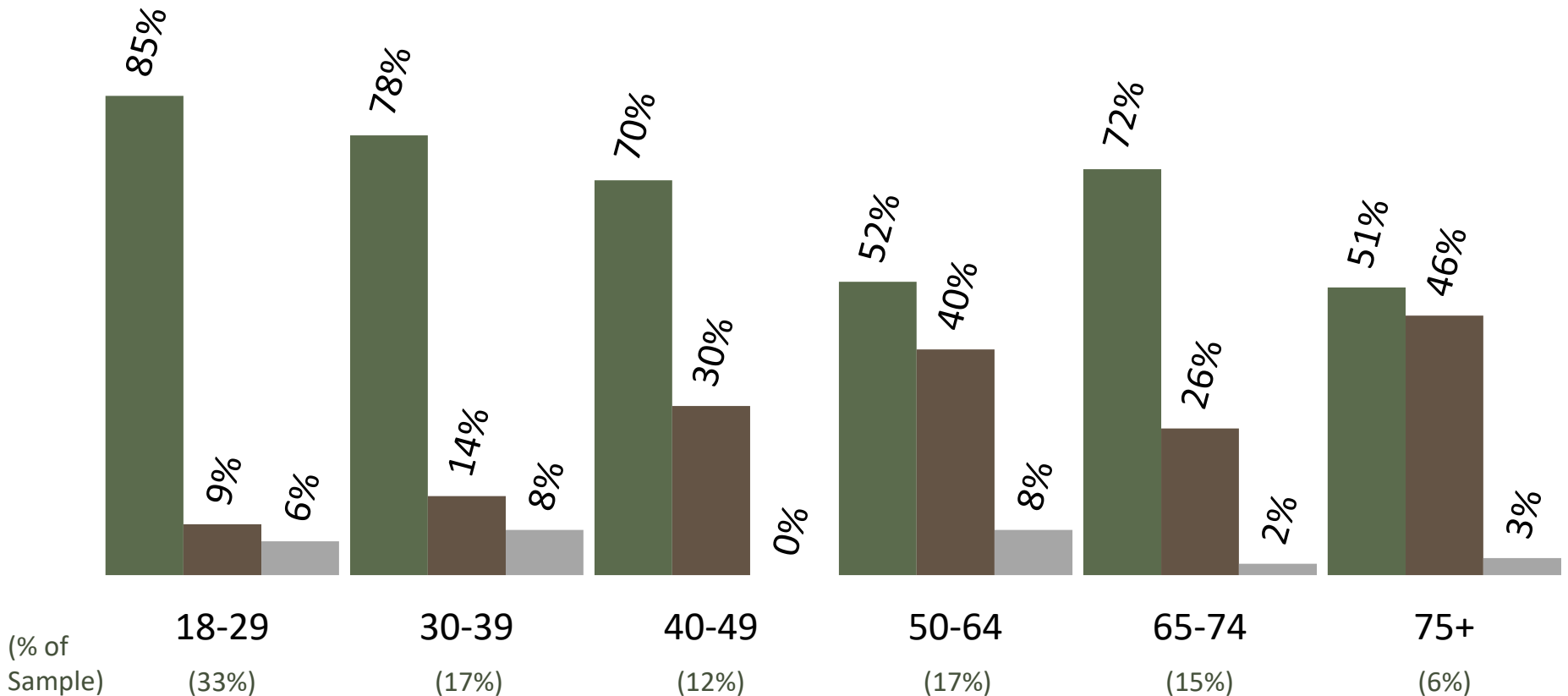


(% of Sample)

There is more than two-thirds support among voters under 50 and between 65 and 74.

Support for a Parks Measure by Age

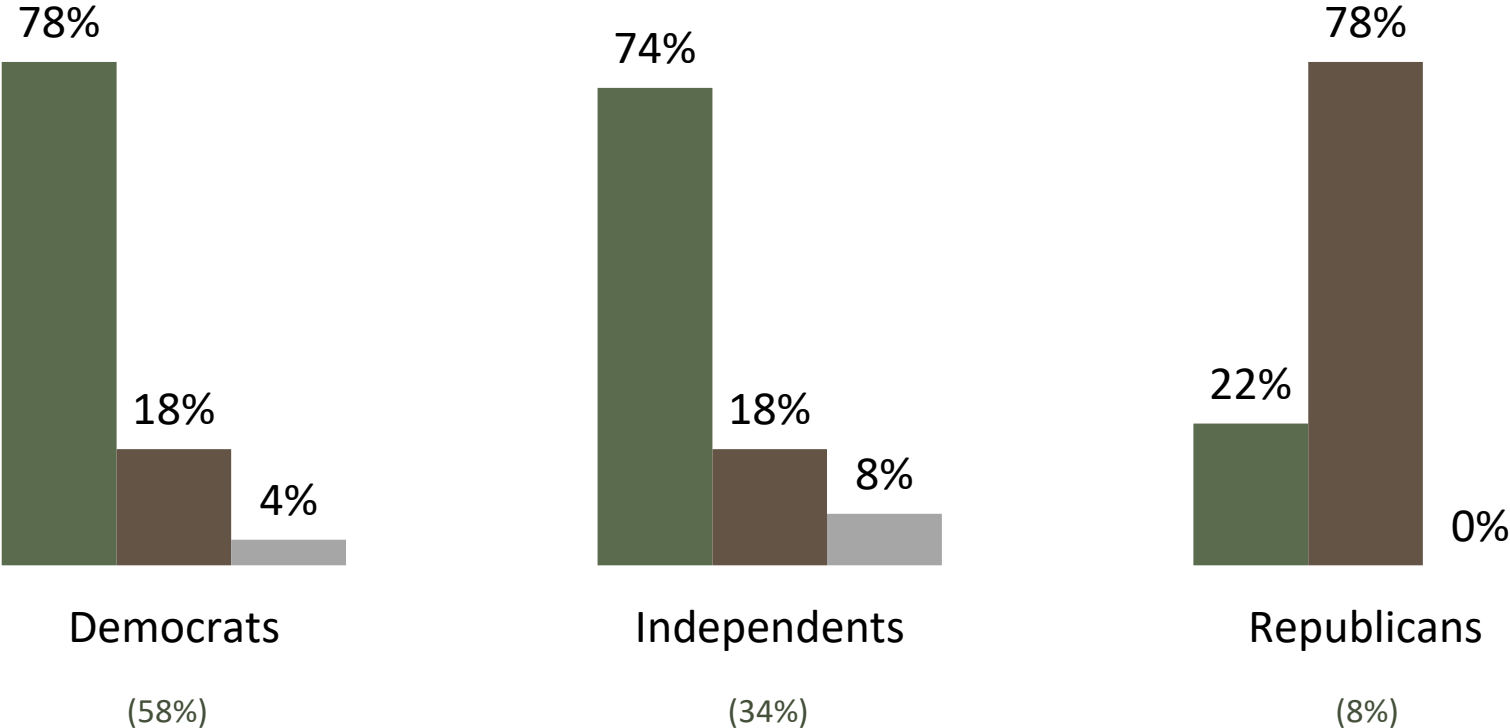
■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided



More than seven in ten Democrats and independents support the measure.

Support for a Parks Measure by Party

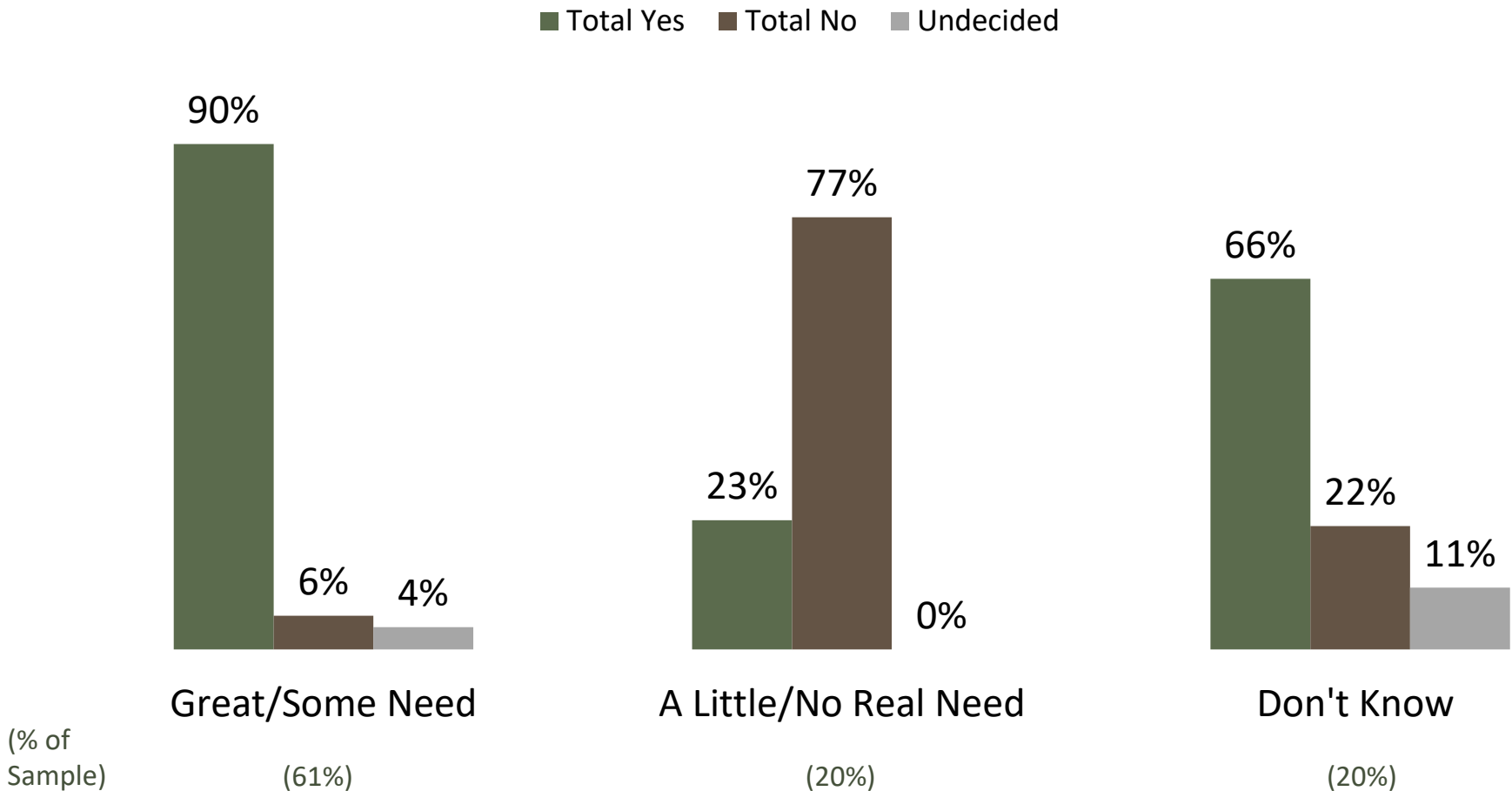
■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided



(% of Sample)

Voters who see at least some need for funding are overwhelmingly supportive; two-thirds of those who don't know also support it.

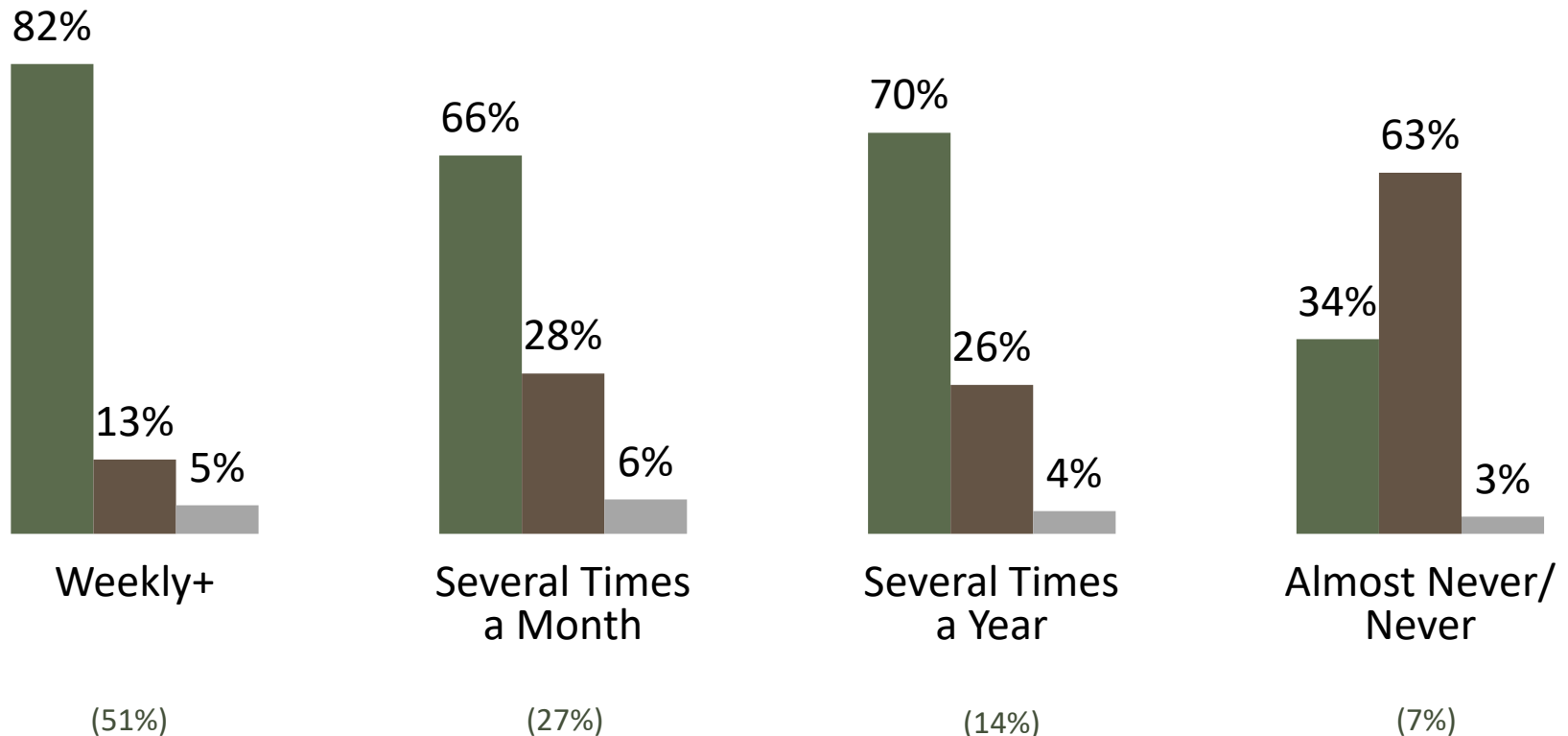
Support for a Parks Measure by Funding Need



Voters who use parks, recreation areas, or trails in the city at least several times a year offer support of two-thirds or more.

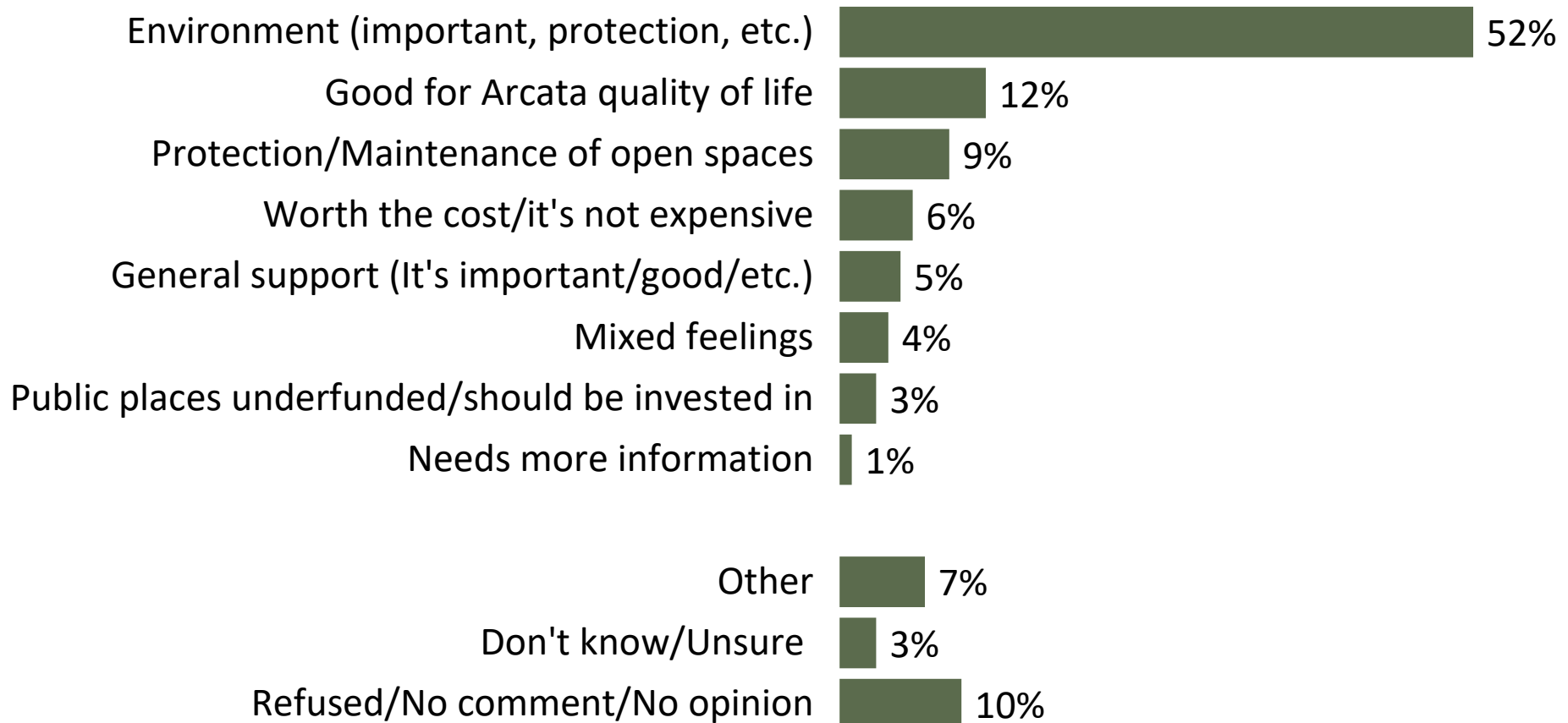
Support for a Parks Measure by Use of Park, Recreation Area, or Trail

■ Total Yes ■ Total No ■ Undecided



Voters who support the measure overwhelmingly cite valuing the environment.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **YES** on this ballot measure?
(Open-ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, N=178)*



Verbatim Responses from Supporters

I am an Arcata homeowner, and I am happy to pay for parks, trails, the marsh: these enhance the quality of life for everyone.

Parks and open space one of the most important features of the city.

I am a big advocate for conservation and preserving our parks for future generations.

It is important. And I can afford that financially, and I guess most home most people in the community can. Even if it means not buying a cup of coffee at Starbucks. Sometimes we need to make sacrifices for a greater good.

The environment is important to the people and is what is going to be left behind. \$40 tax is not much to preserve our city and its natural forests.

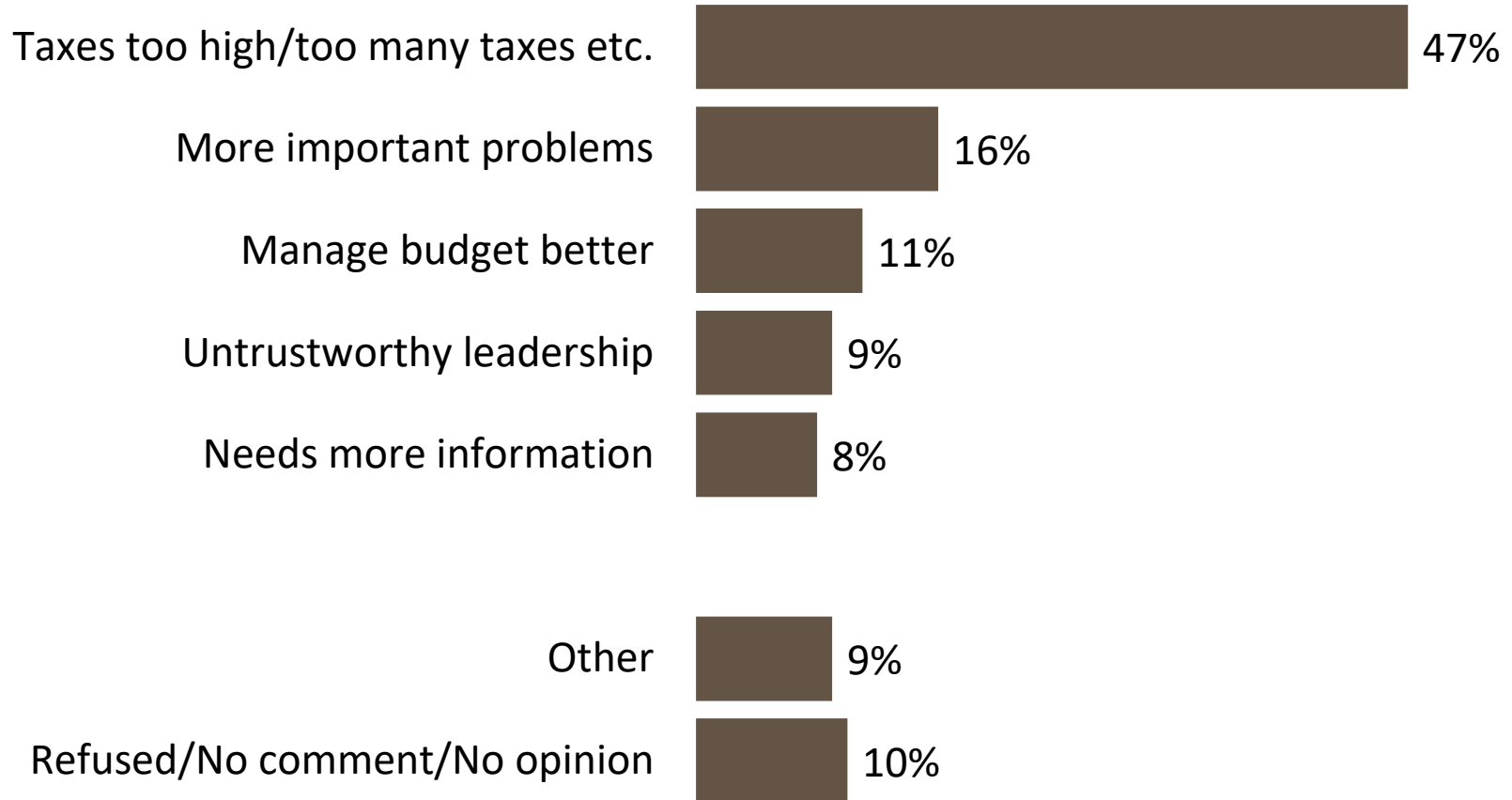
Nature out here is big it makes sense to allocate money for it.

I believe in green spaces.

I believe measures like this only improve our surroundings into the future and are worth the cost. I mean forty dollars is just me sacrificing an expensive dinner for myself and if it means funding environmental conservation projects I am totally willing to do so.

Opponents say taxes are too high already.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on this ballot measure?
(Open-ended; Asked of No Voters Only, N=56)*



Verbatim Responses from Opponents

I already pay enough money in taxes and utility charges. Manage the money you already get better.

I think \$40 per year is a bit much.

No more taxes! Most funds used for planning or administration and not for what it is intended.

I don't own property and I don't think it is my place to impose taxes on homeowners.

Property taxes are already too high. We are constantly adding more taxes for special measures. The money should be raised differently.

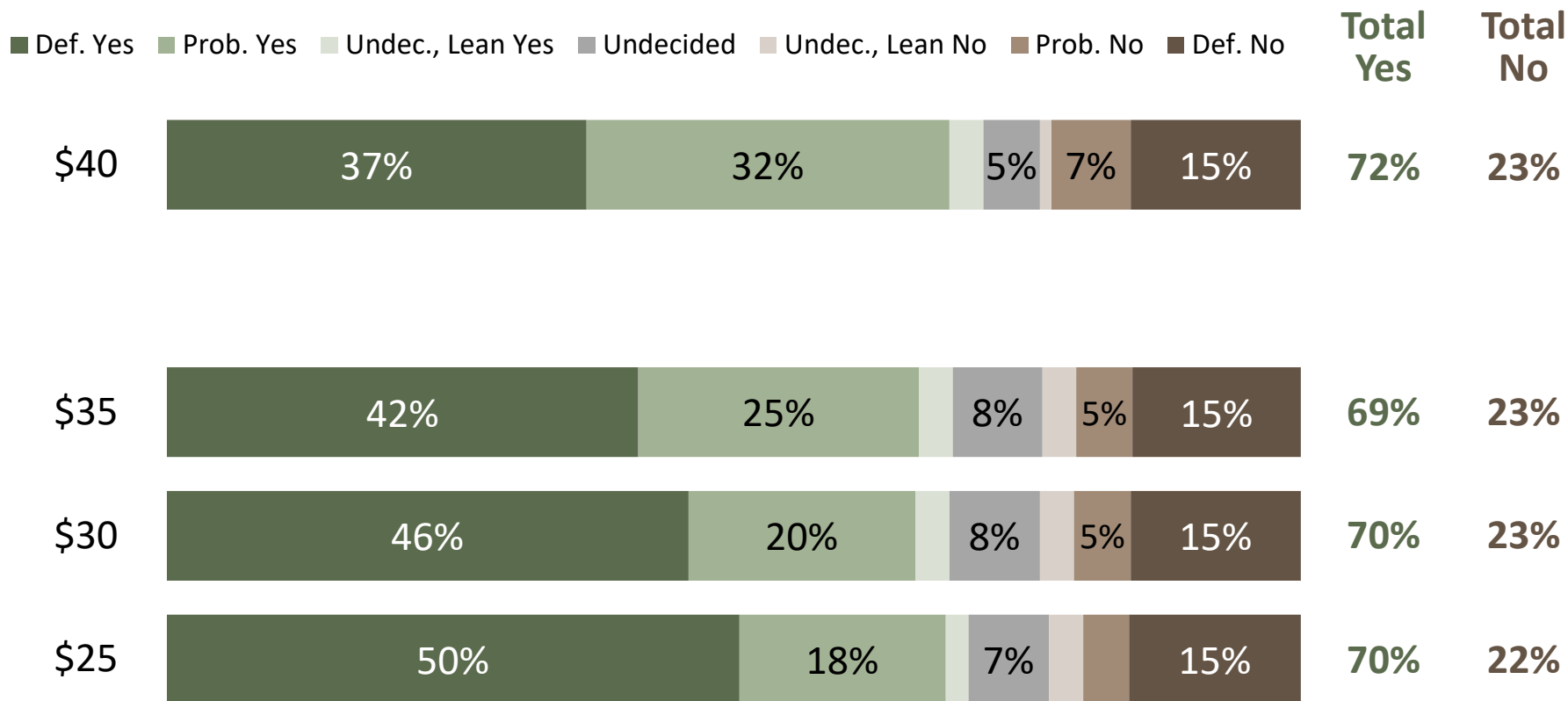
No trust in current leadership to really put money toward this.

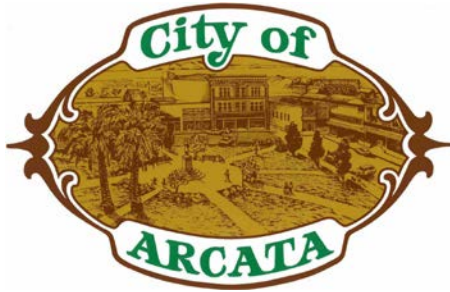
They already have enough money to protect open space, they don't need any more.

They tax us for anything they can tax us for. The city water is extremely high.

You don't need more money. You need to manage what you have. Cut salaries on top management to make ends meet.

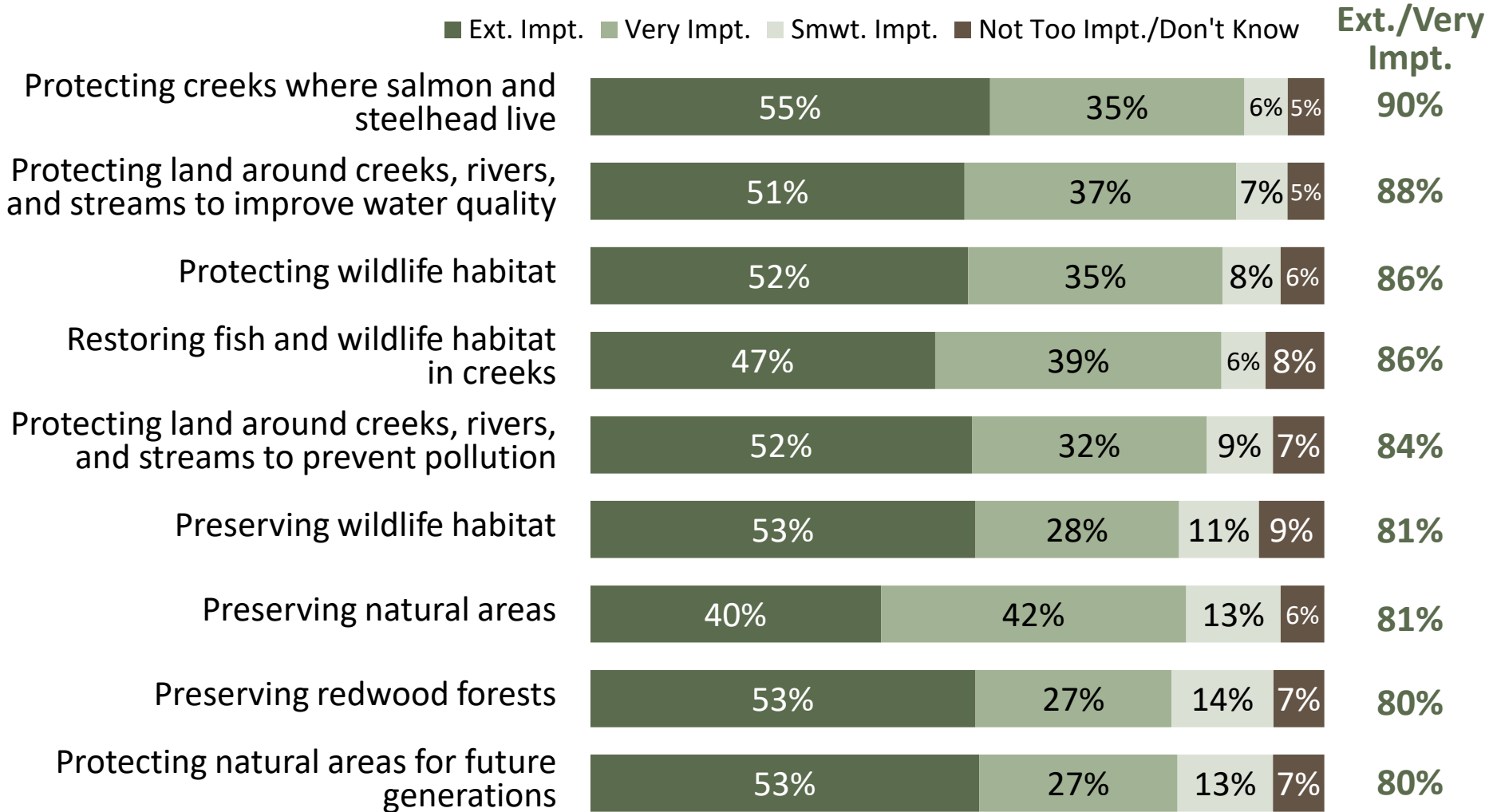
Intensity of support increases for lower parcel tax rates, though the overall “yes” vote share is seven in ten at any figure tested.





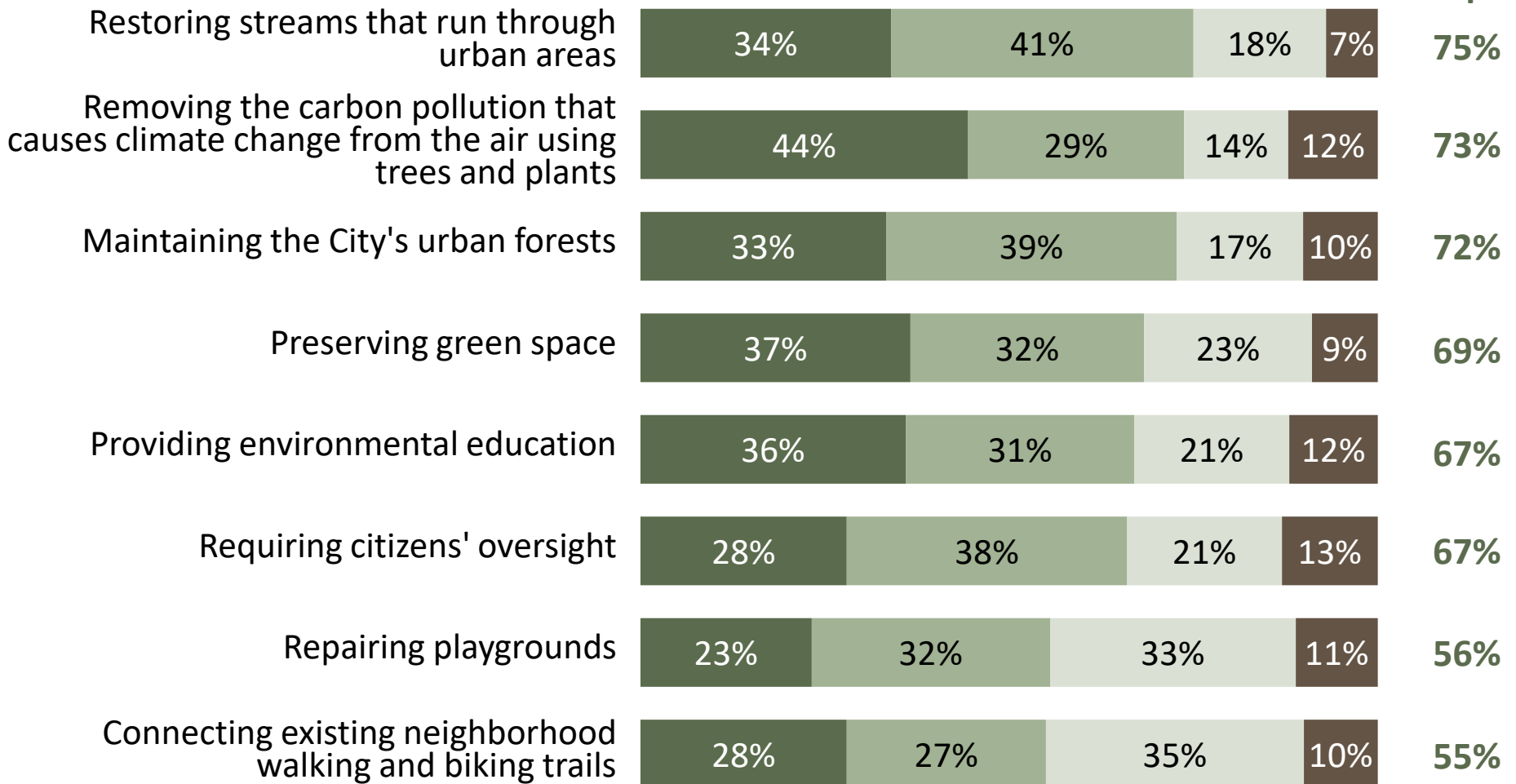
Voter Priorities

Voters' top-ranking priorities have to do with water, wildlife habitat, and natural areas.

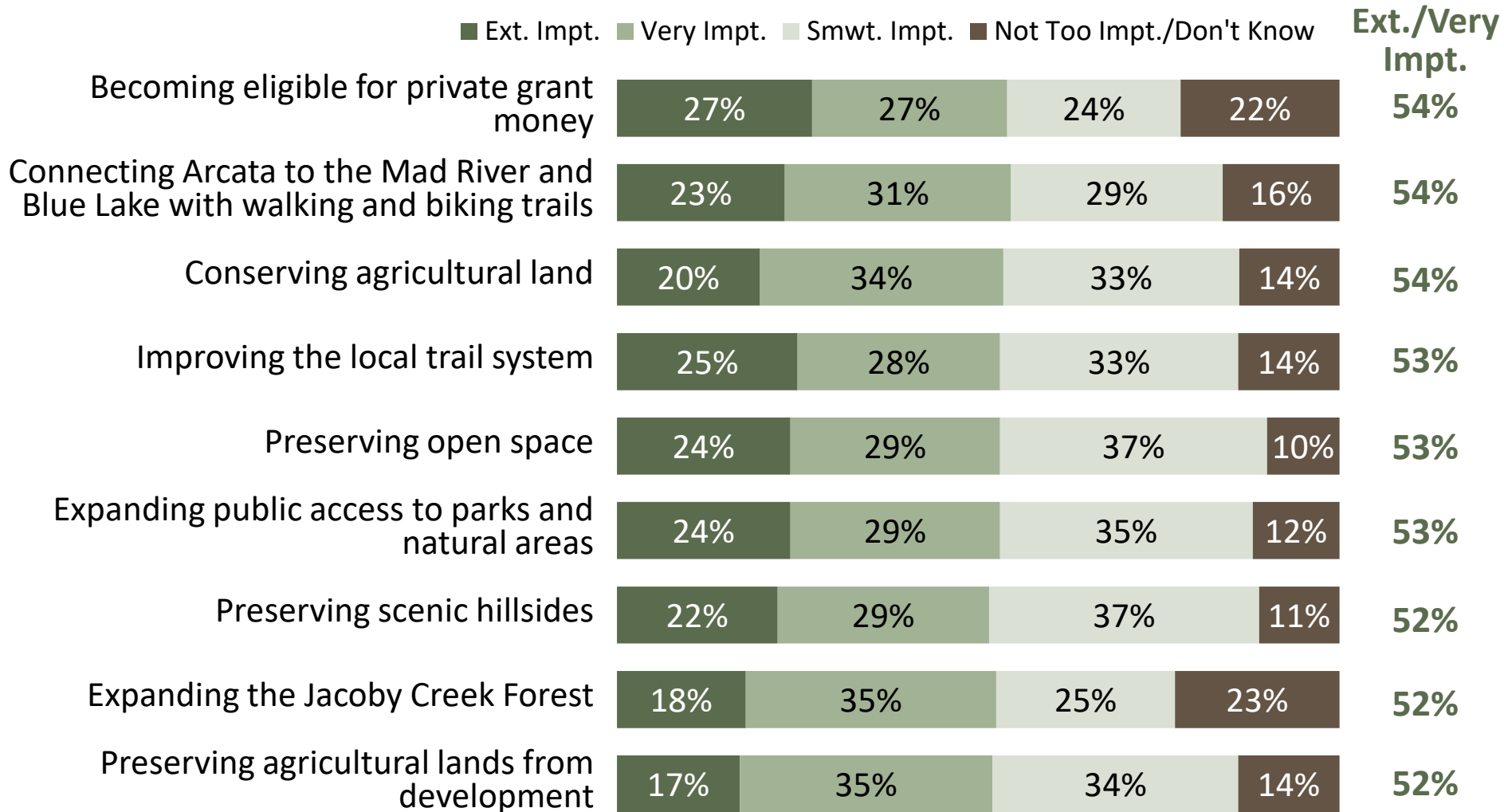


Strong majorities also value urban forests, natural climate solutions, and education.

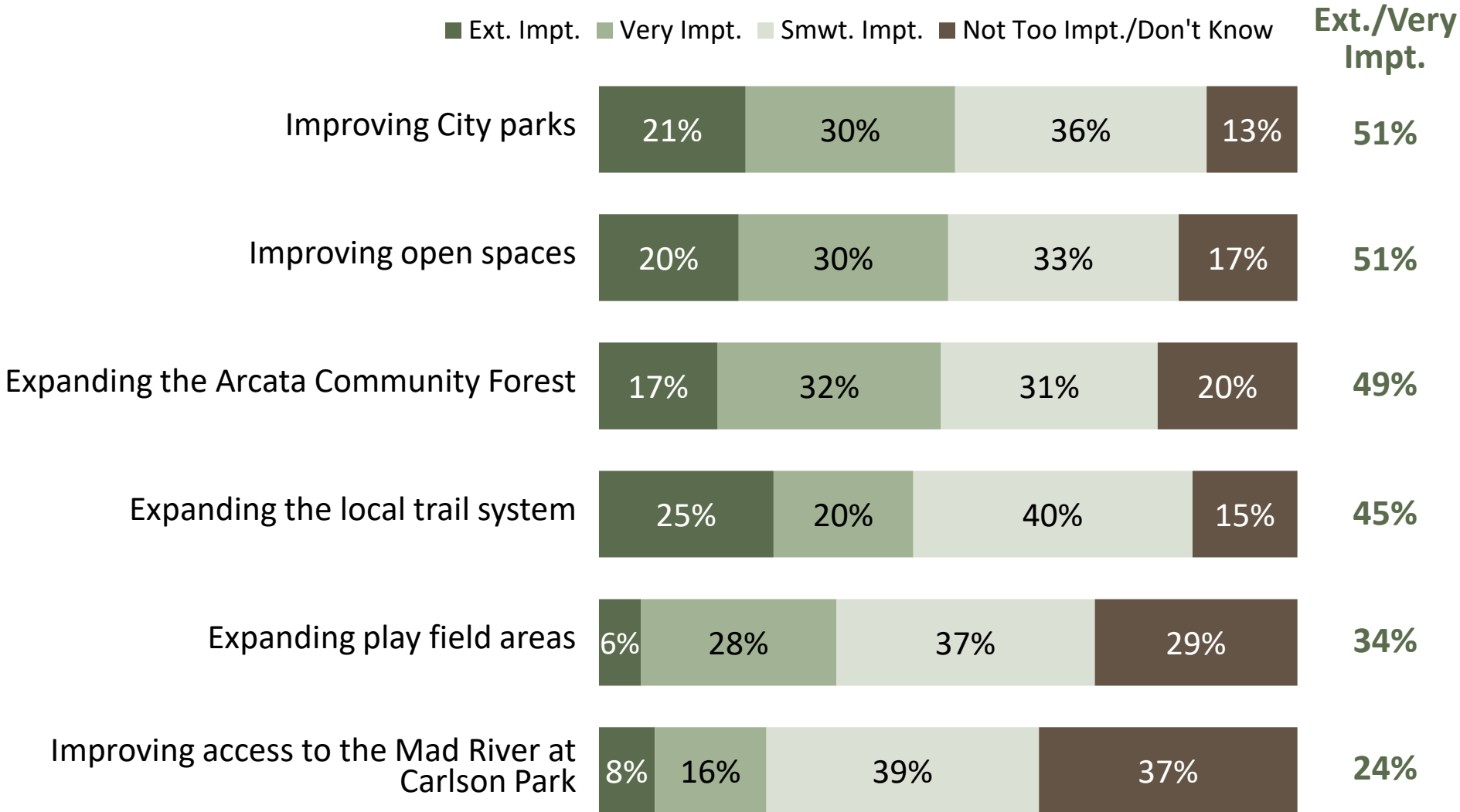
■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not Too Impt./Don't Know **Ext./Very Impt.**



Relatively less-urgent priorities include trail connections and agricultural land.



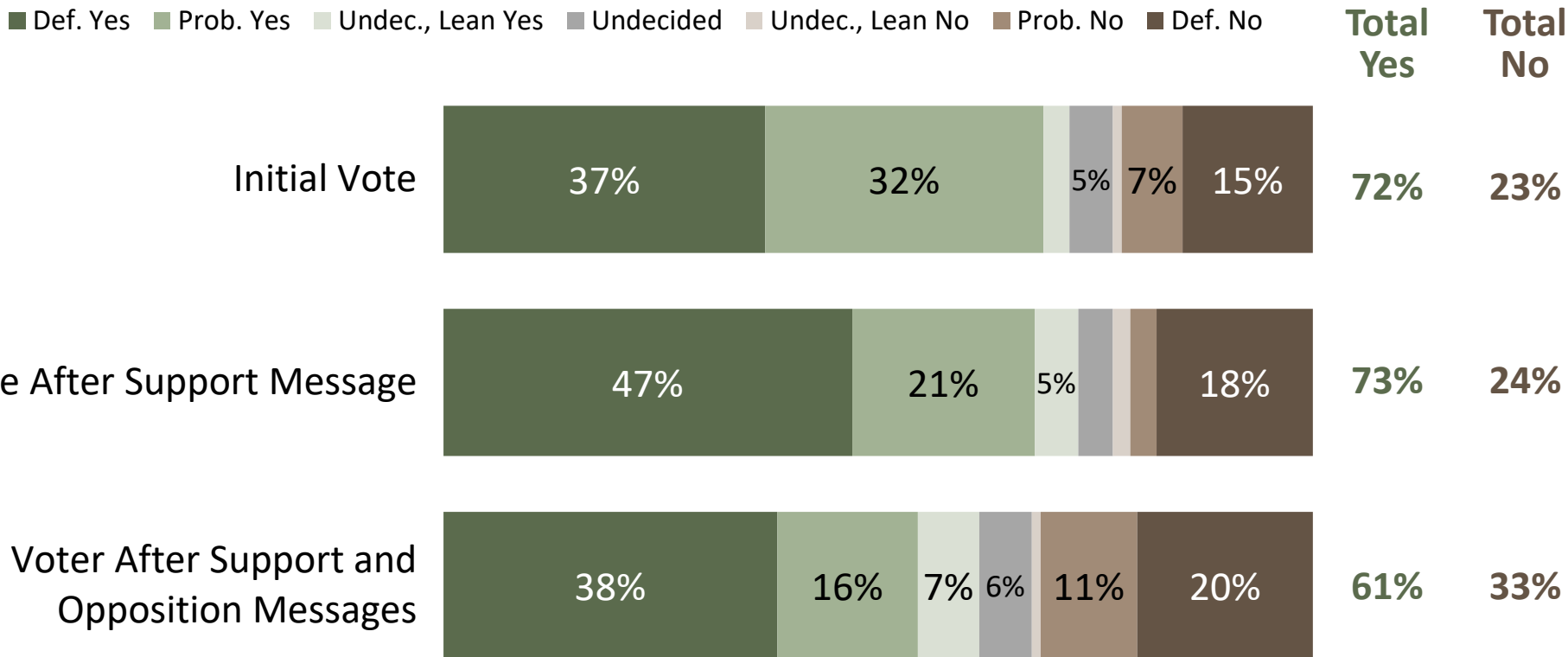
Expansions of the Community Forest, trail system and play field areas are lower priorities.



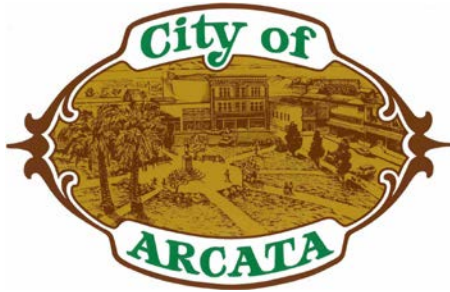


Messaging and Movement

Messaging in favor of the proposal increases the intensity of support; a critique pushes backing for the measure below two-thirds.



There is no difference in overall “yes” and “no” vote for the half-sample hearing opposition characterize it as a “forever” tax, though the “definitely yes” share is slightly lower.



Conclusions

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- ✓ A measure funding parks and natural areas in Arcata could be viable for the November 2020 ballot, provided there is a very strong, positive campaign and very limited formal opposition.
 - The measure begins with support from more than seven in ten (within the margin of error of the two-thirds needed). That support is relatively soft.
 - Lower parcel tax amounts increase the intensity of support, though make no difference in overall “yes” vote shares.
 - After a brief message in support, nearly three-quarters back the measure, and nearly half say they would “definitely” vote yes. However, a critique pushes support below the two-thirds needed for passage.
- ✓ Three in five see at least “some need” for funding for parks and natural areas in the city – and that group is much more likely to support a measure. Increasing awareness of the need will be key to solidifying support.
- ✓ Voters intensely value protecting water quality, preserving wildlife habitat and redwood forests, and protecting natural areas for future generations. They are less likely to rank trails, agricultural lands, or expansions as high priorities.

For more information, contact:



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