



**PINAL COUNTY**  
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# Pinal County Voter Views of Open Space and Trails

*Key Findings of a Survey of Pinal County Voters  
Conducted March 24-27, 2018*



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY

# Methodology

- ✓ 300 interviews with likely November 2018 voters in Pinal County
- ✓ Conducted March 24-27, 2018, via landline and cell phones
- ✓ Margin of sampling error of  $\pm 5.7\%$  at the 95% confidence interval
- ✓ Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100
- ✓ Selected comparisons to a 2014 voter survey





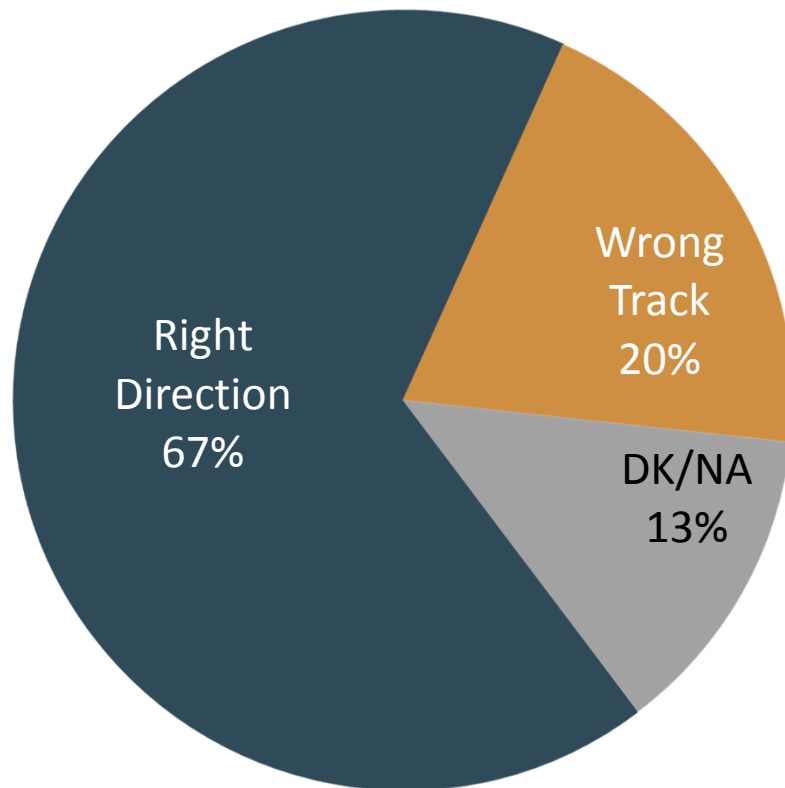
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# Community Context

# Two-thirds feel the County is headed in the right direction.

*Would you say that things in Pinal County are generally headed in the right direction or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?*



Direction	Dems.	Ind.	Rep.
Right	63%	68%	69%
Wrong	15%	24%	21%
DK/NA	23%	8%	10%



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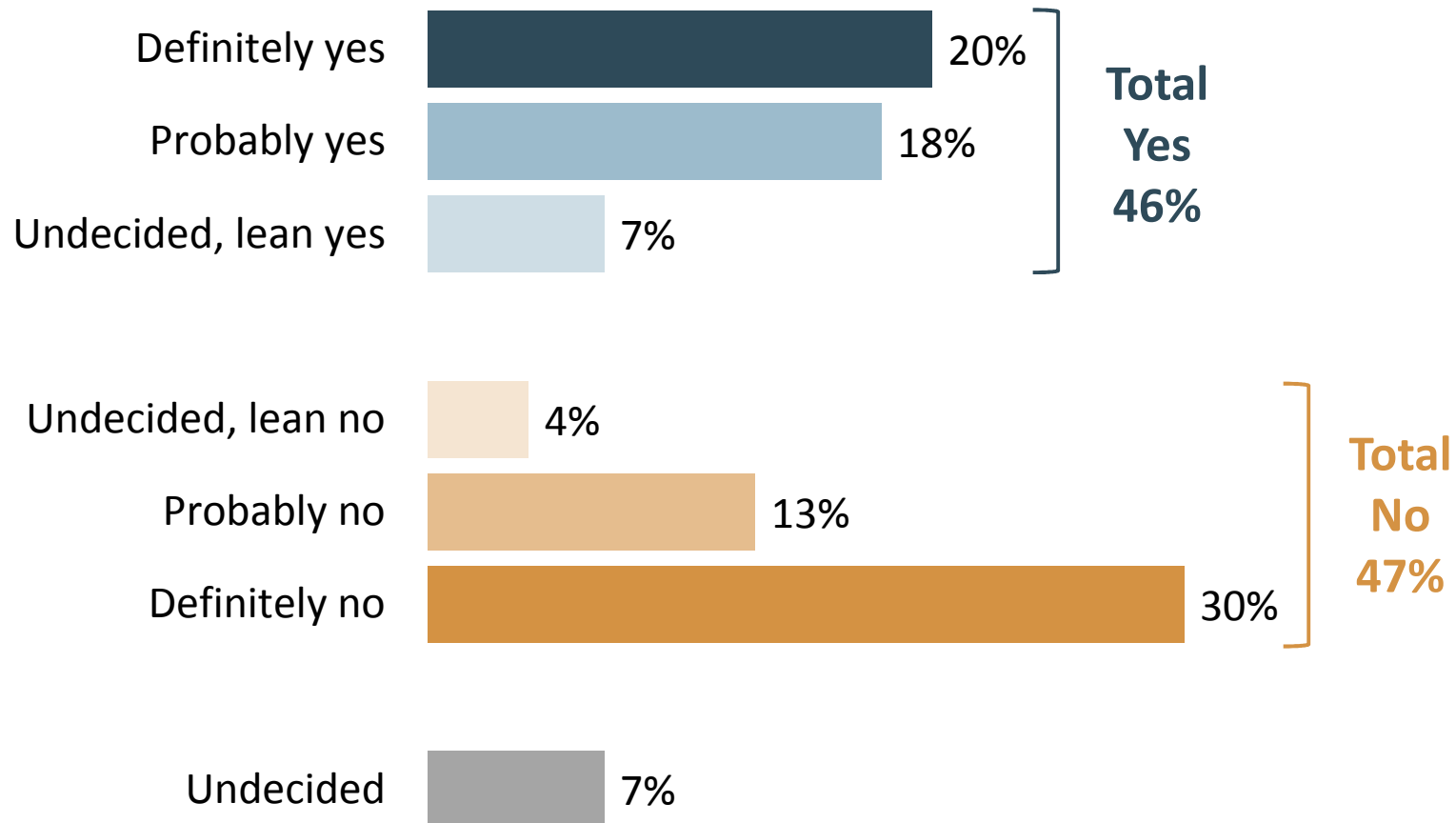
# Voter Support for a Bond Measure



## Ballot Measure Language Tested

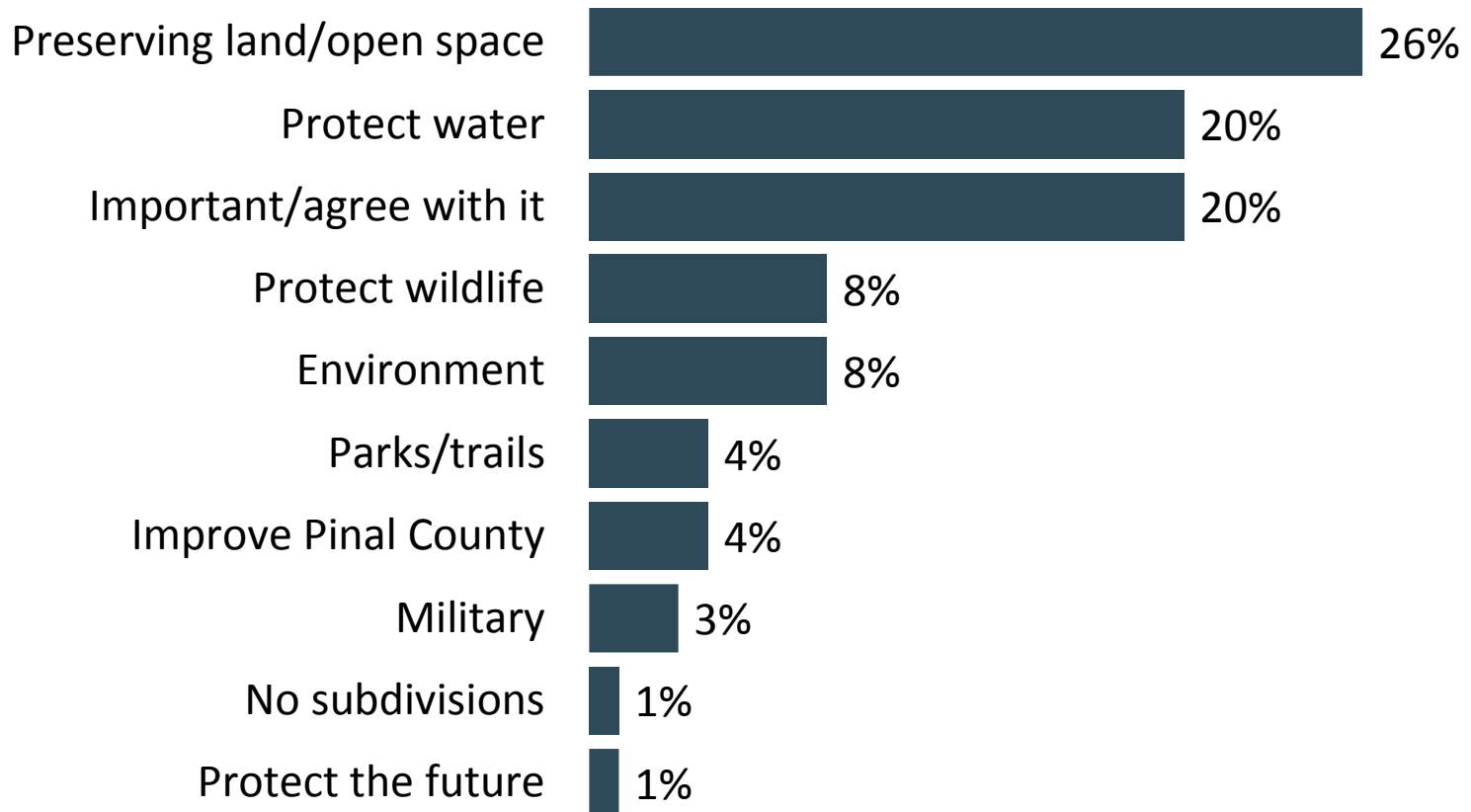
For the purpose of protecting open space, including Sonoran Desert lands; protecting land around rivers and washes to ensure high water quality and quantity; protecting wildlife habitat; creating buffers to protect Army National Guard bases in Pinal County from urban encroachment; and improving and connecting regional parks and trails; shall Pinal County be authorized to issue and sell general obligation bonds solely for the above purposes in an aggregate principal amount not exceeding \$30 million, where the issuance of these bonds will result in a property tax increase sufficient to pay the annual debt service on bonds, and subject to annual audits and citizen oversight?

# The measure starts split, with less than majority support.



# Supporters want to preserve open space and protect water.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **YES** on this measure?  
(Open-Ended: Asked of Yes Voters Only, N=137)*





# Verbatim Responses from Supporters

We need good water.  
The land is getting developed and we are not saving land for people so people can enjoy nature.

Open spaces are important for the public in general, it's important for mental health. It has an overall positive effect on people in general.

I have grandchildren and some of these programs would benefit them.

I think we need areas to be left open. I don't want everything built up. So I would want it to be limited.

Well, you know these things need to be done. Nobody wants to pay for it, but they need to be done.

Simple: the military areas, and the recreation areas.

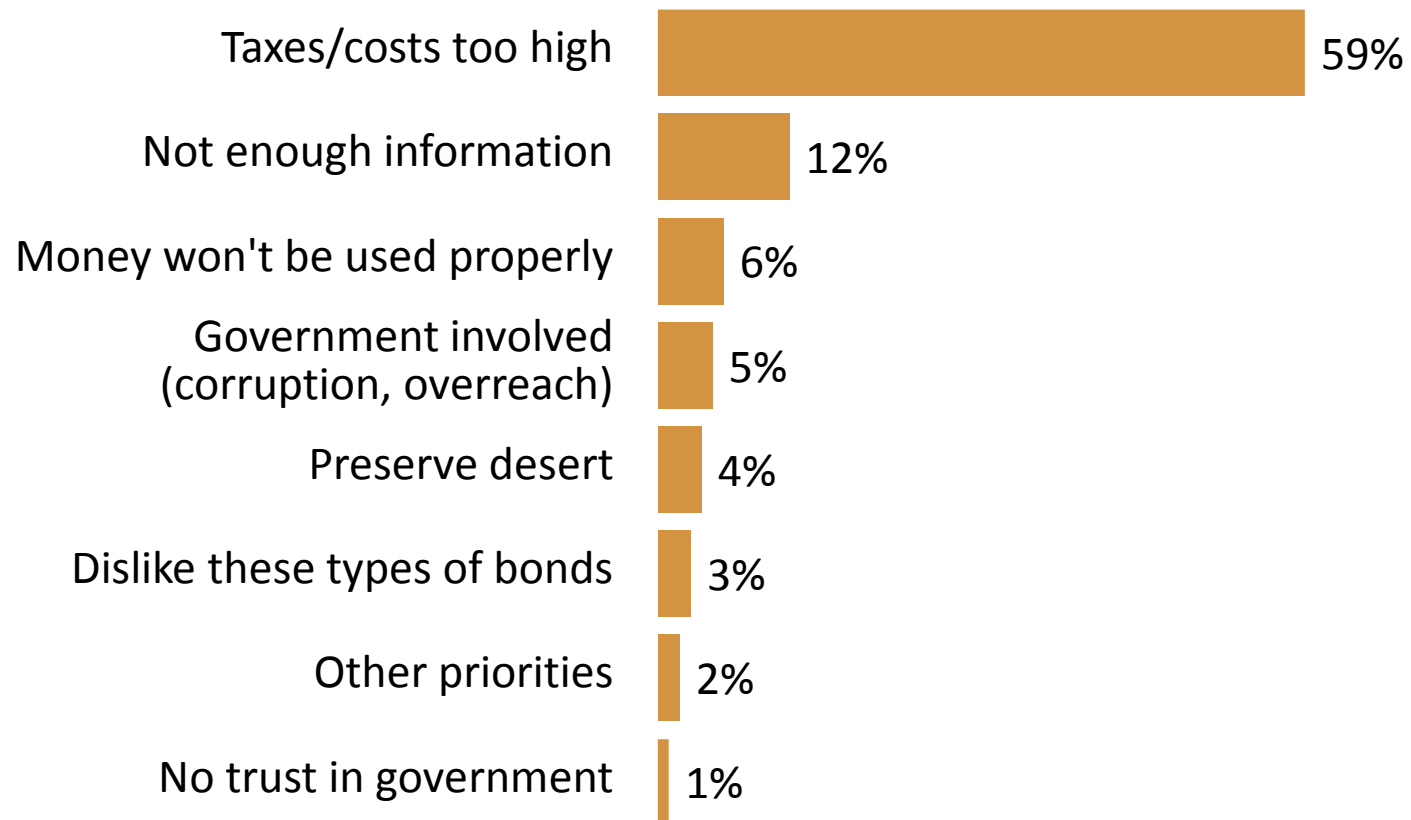
Well because water is very important. It's a scarce commodity around here. Whatever we can do to protect it.

To protect our native lands.

The things listed are good. Saving the land, and the animals.

# Opponents are largely concerned about taxes.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on this measure?  
(Open-Ended: Asked of Yes Voters Only, N=142)*



# Verbatim Responses from Opponents

Anything that increases taxes, I want to know that they are well spent and not being wasted.

We have a tremendous amount of open space. We don't need a bond to do more of that.

If it's going to raise my taxes then it's a "no."

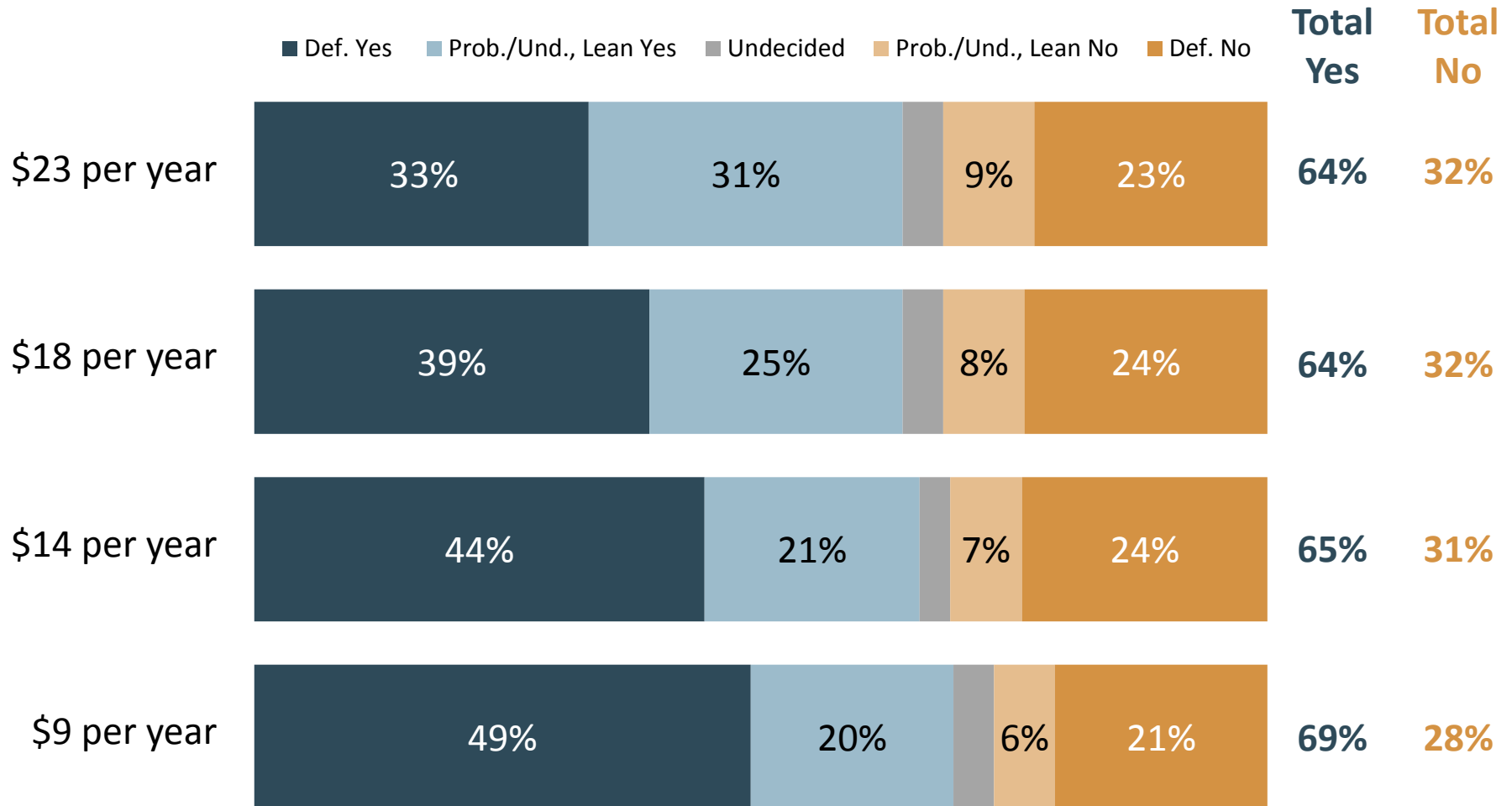
They have basically taxed us to death. There's the last one they railroaded through for the roads ... but it's just one tax after another. They could use taxes better if they consolidate projects together.

Most of our waterways and washes have been encroached on by the government. I'm an avid outdoorsman and I'm tired of being shut out by the government.

Well they have so many other things to deal with right now. They might as well deal with those first and not raise the taxes again.

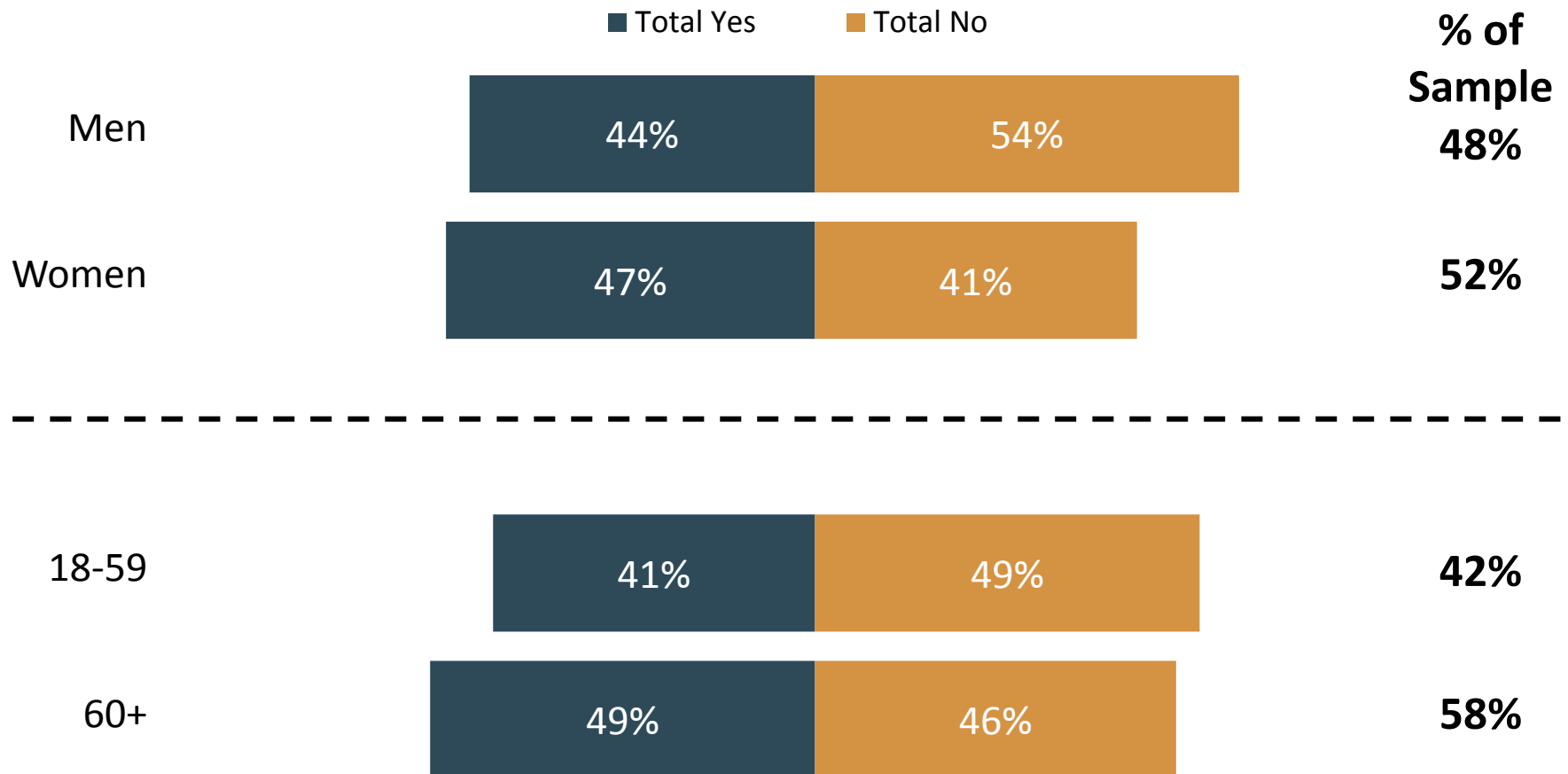
Because I don't know anything about and if don't know anything about I won't vote it.

# Voters are not particularly sensitive at the household level, with more than three in five supporting up to \$23 per year.



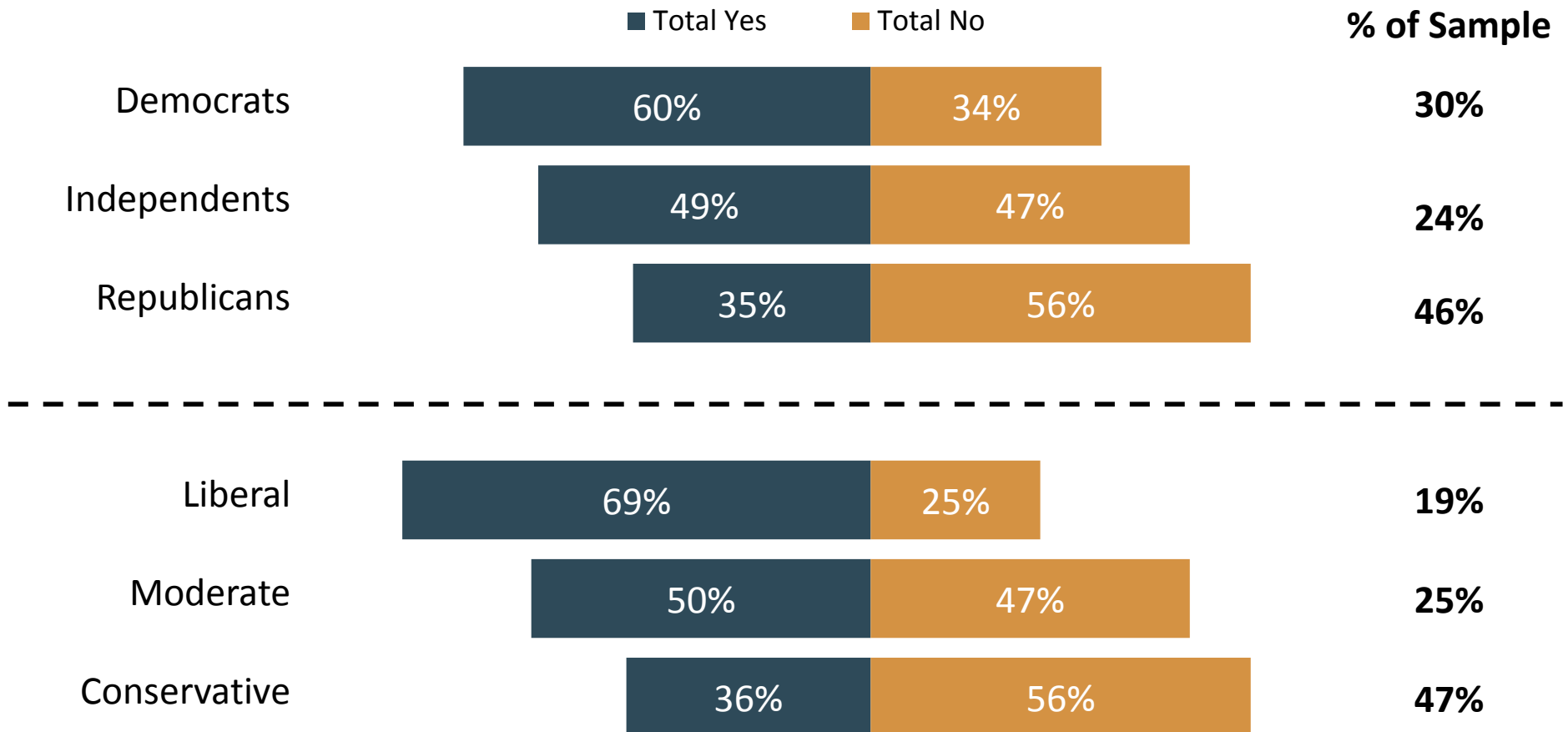
# Before any messaging, voters 60 and older are a bit more supportive than younger ones.

*Initial Vote by Gender & Age*



# Initially, three in five Democrats back the bond measure, while independents are split.

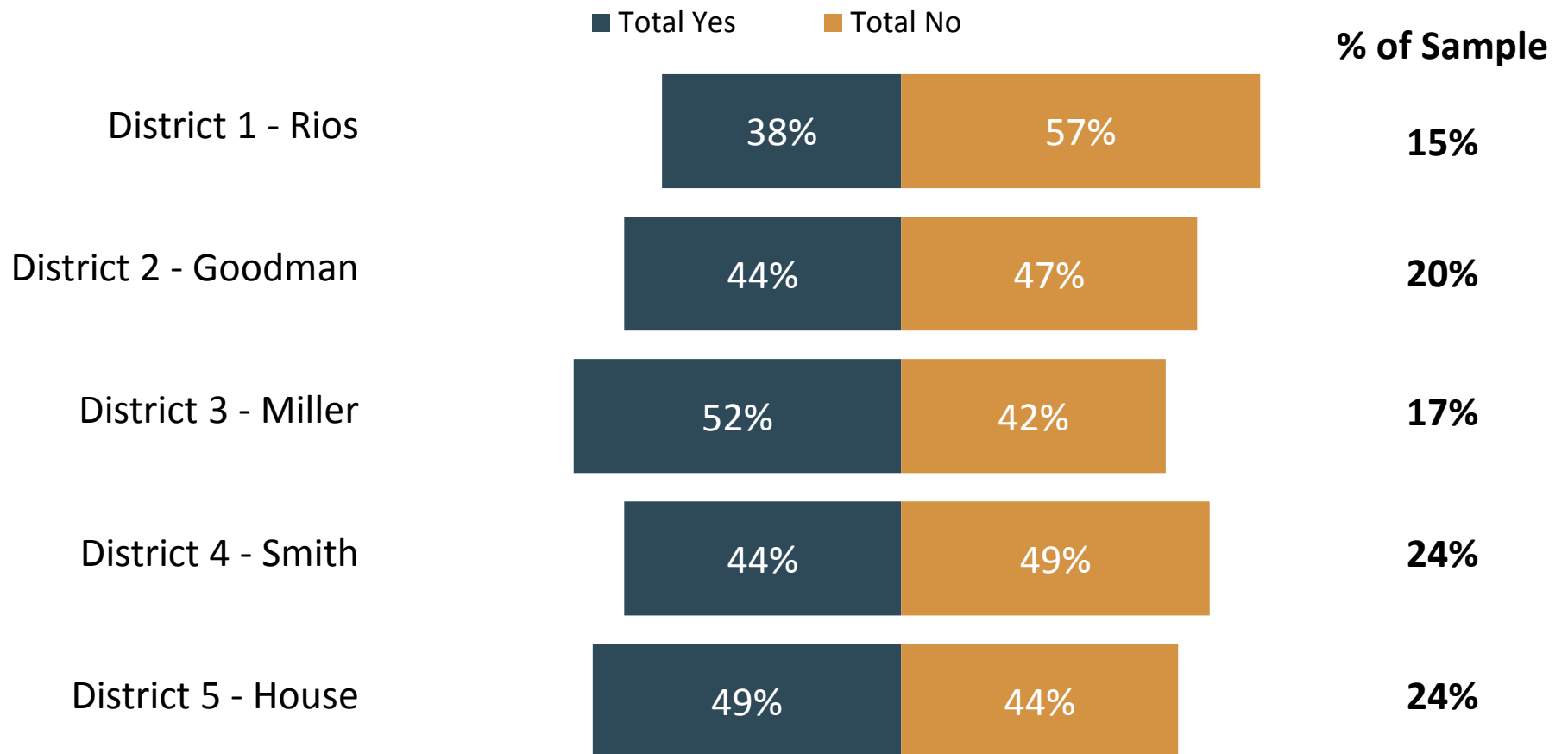
*Initial Vote by Party & Ideology*





# A majority of District 3 voters support the measure, voters in 2, 4 and 5 are split at first.

*Initial Vote by Supervisor District*



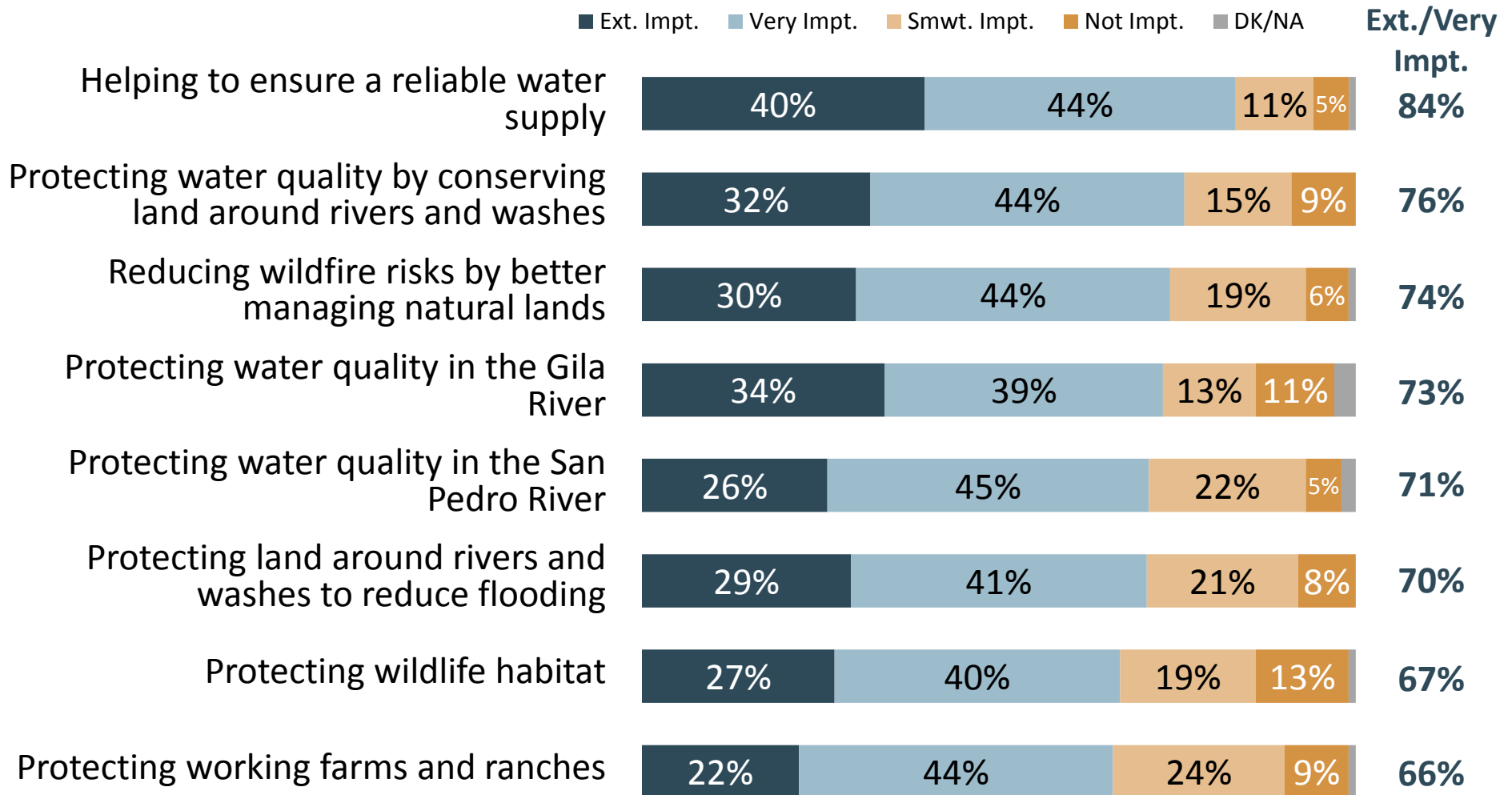


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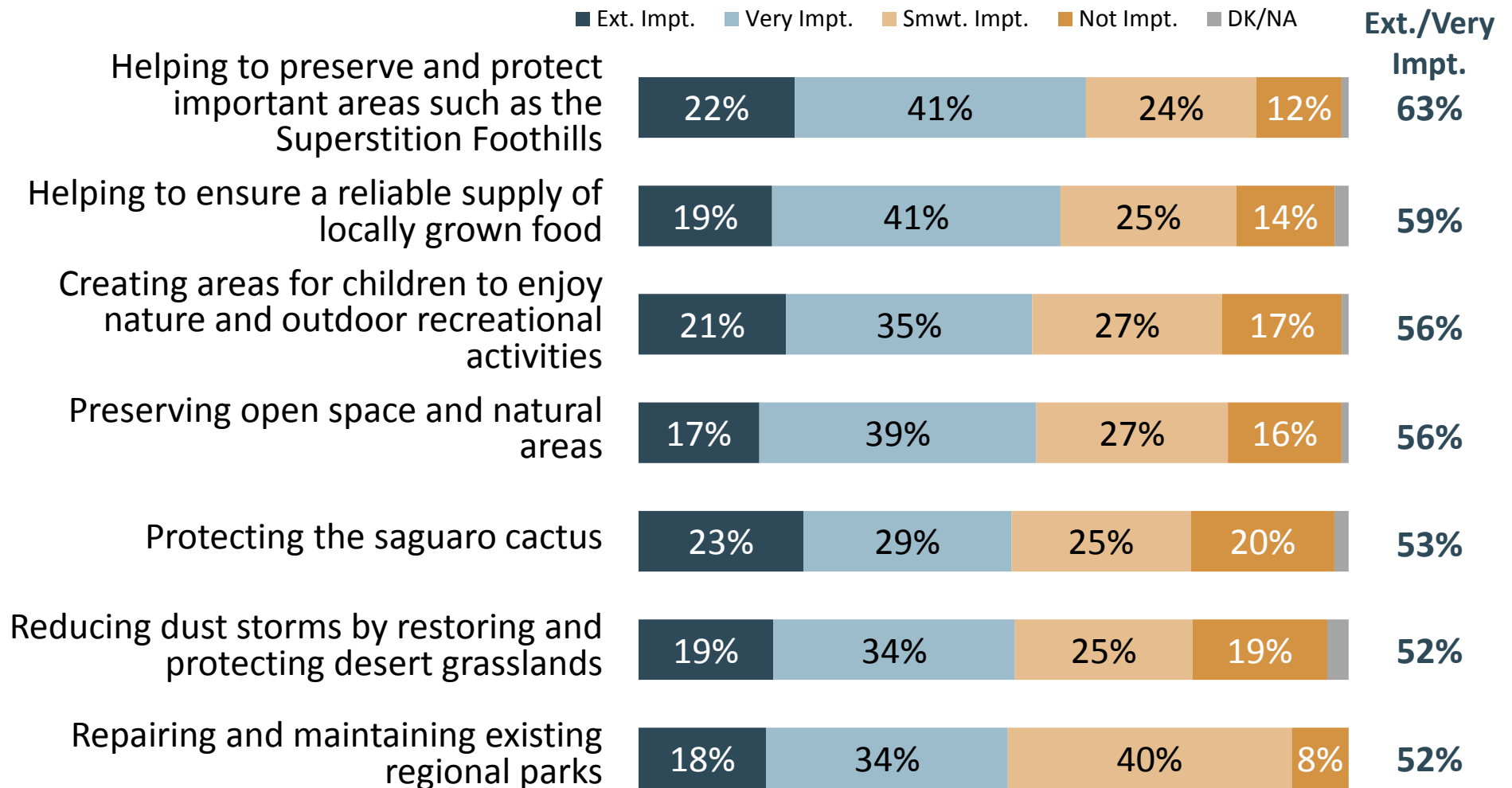


# Priorities for Open Space and Trails Funding

# Water quality is a top priority, along with reducing wildfire risks.



# Majorities also prioritize the Superstition Foothills and saguaro cactus.



# Water protection and wildfire management has become more important since 2014.

*(Extremely/Very Important)*

Projects	2014	2018	Difference
Protecting water quality in the San Pedro River	49%	71%	<b>+22%</b>
Protecting water quality by conserving land around rivers and washes	60%	76%	<b>+16%</b>
Reducing wildfire risks by better managing natural lands	59%	74%	<b>+15%</b>
Repairing and maintaining existing regional parks	39%	52%	<b>+13%</b>
Protecting working farms and ranches	56%	66%	<b>+10%</b>
Improving and enhancing Tortolita Mountain Regional Park	15%	24%	<b>+9%</b>
Protecting water quality in the Gila River	67%	73%	<b>+6%</b>
Protecting wildlife habitat	62%	67%	<b>+5%</b>
Helping to ensure a reliable supply of locally grown food	55%	59%	<b>+4%</b>
Preserving open space and natural areas	54%	56%	<b>+2%</b>
Creating areas for children to enjoy nature and outdoor recreational activities	58%	56%	<b>-2%</b>
Helping to ensure a reliable water supply	86%	84%	<b>-2%</b>
Protecting the saguaro cactus	59%	53%	<b>-6%</b>



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# Messaging and Movement



# Support Messages

*(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)*

## Messages

**(WATER QUALITY)** Nothing is more important than clean, healthy water. This measure provides vitally-needed funding to help prevent pollution of rivers and washes in Pinal County – and to keep them from becoming polluted in the future.

**^(FUTURE)** This measure will preserve Pinal County’s legacy of natural beauty by protecting rivers, washes, natural areas and wildlife habitat. This will ensure that our children, grandchildren and all future generations will enjoy the same quality of life we do.

**(ARMY)** Our local Army National Guard bases are an essential part of our community and a major employer in Pinal County. By preventing urban encroachment on the lands around the bases, this measure will ensure that they can remain open and continue playing an important role in our local economy.

**(RECREATION)** Pinal County’s spectacular natural areas provide a beautiful and affordable place for recreation close to home. In this economy, it is more important than ever to invest in keeping them available.

# Support Messages; Continued

*(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)*

## Messages

**(LOW COST)** This measure will cost the average resident less than \$2 per month. That's not much to pay to help ensure clean water, open space and trails, and our quality of life.

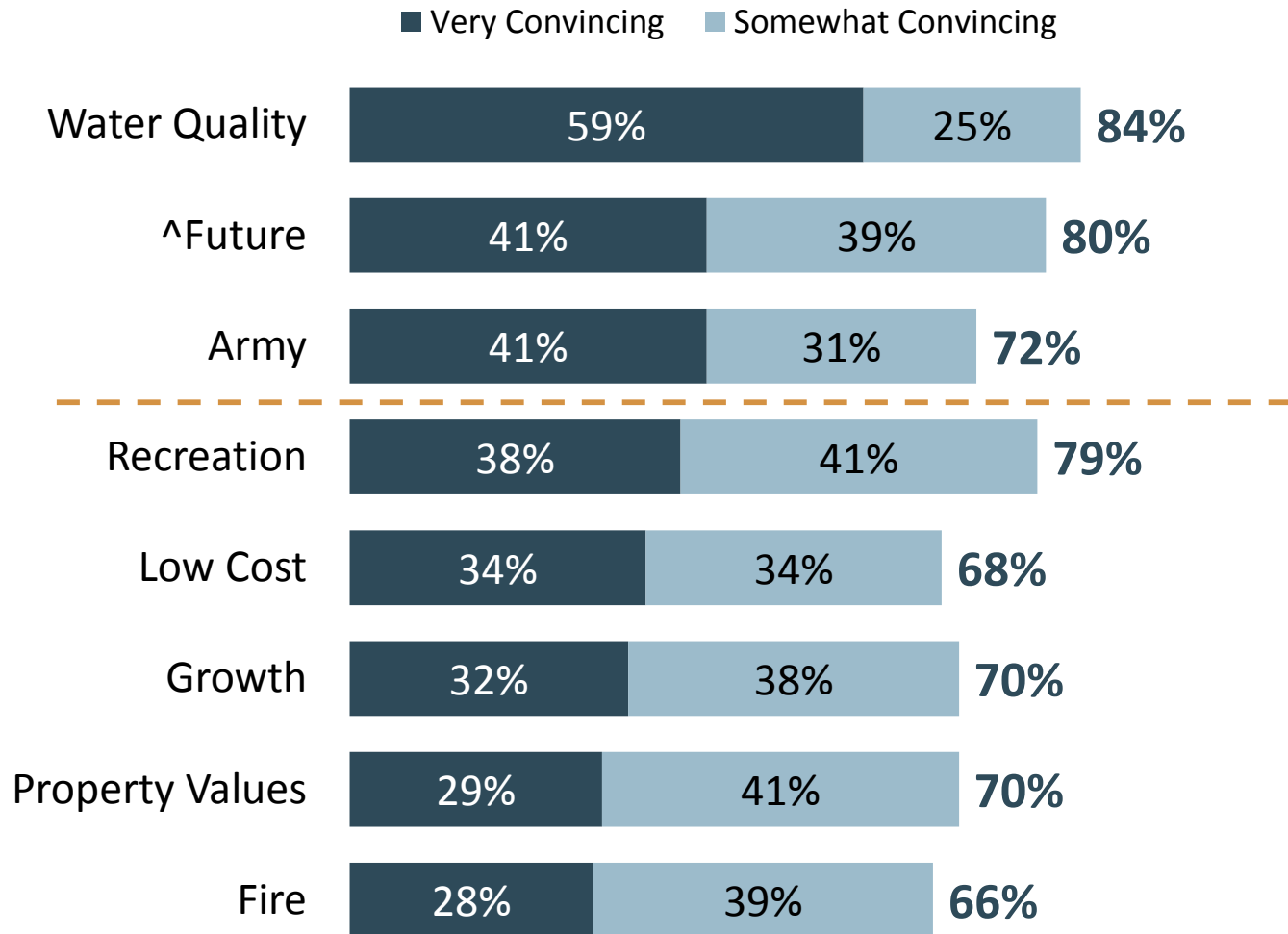
**(GROWTH)** Pinal County is one of the fastest-growing in the country, and its population is projected to grow by another 100,000 people over the next decade. This measure will help us to plan for this growth and reduce its negative impacts by preserving clean air, clean water, and open space.

**(PROPERTY VALUES)** Studies show that Pinal County's open space and trails have increased local property values by \$190 million. Investing in large regional parks and open lands is critical to our quality of life, and will help property values.

**(FIRE)** This measure will help to protect against the risk of major wildfires in Pinal County, by improving management of natural lands and providing vital buffers between our communities and fire-prone areas.

# Water quality is by far the most persuasive rationale for support.

*(Top-Testing Messages)*



# Opposition Messages

*(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)*

## Messages

**(ECONOMY)** The cost of living is high and rising. With Pinal County among the lowest-income counties in the state, we simply cannot afford to raise taxes on families that are having a hard time making ends meet.

**(GOLDWATER)** Pinal County has been sued for a confusing, poorly written transportation tax measure. We should vote “no” on new tax measures like this one until the County gets its house in order.

**(OTHER PRIORITIES)** We cannot afford to spend more of our tax dollars on the environment when there are so many other issues – such as jobs, schools, public safety and roads – that are much higher priorities.

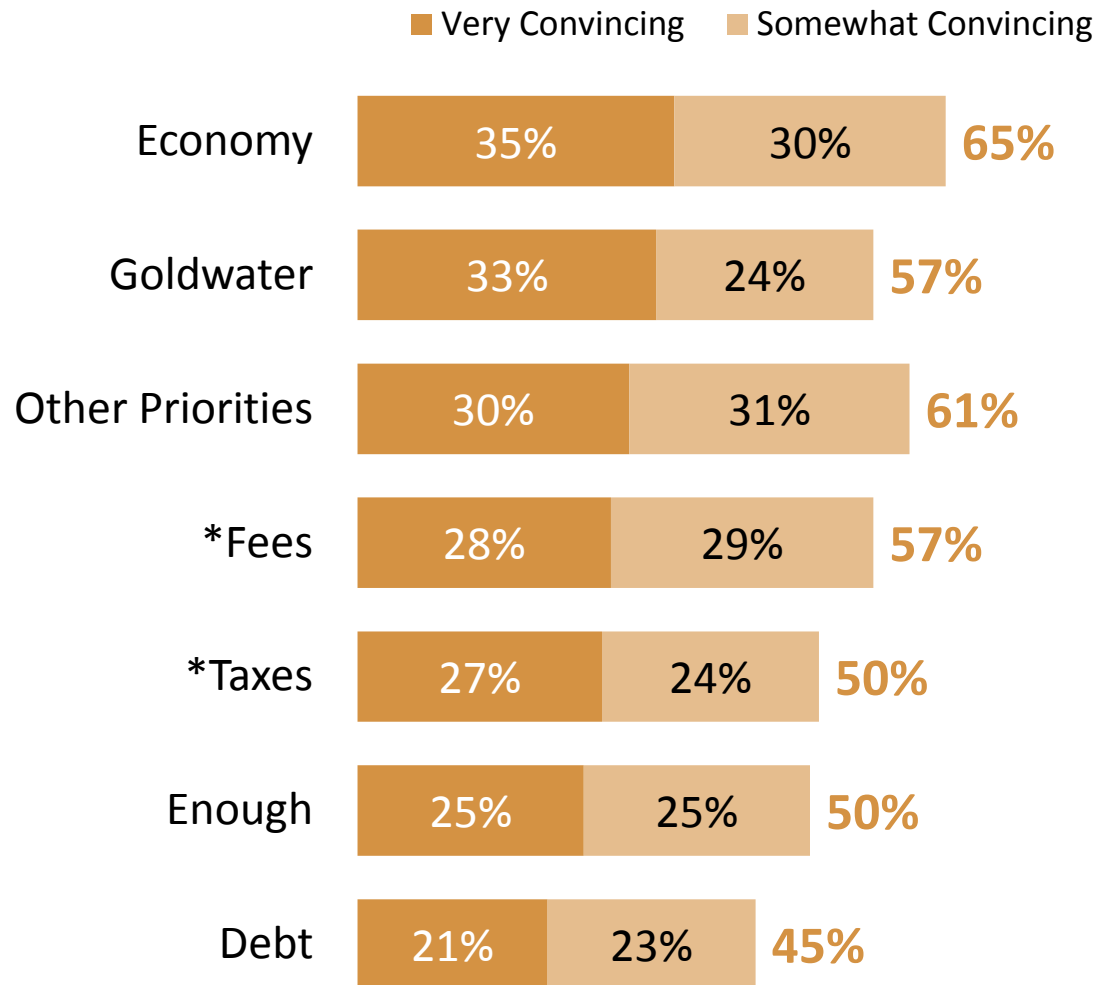
**\*(FEES)** Pinal County has been growing rapidly over the last few decades. If we need new parks and trails, we should simply make the developers pay for them through new fees on real estate development.

**\*(TAXES)** Taxes are too high already – in fact, Pinal County taxpayers pay among the highest rates in the state. We simply should not vote for anything that will increase property taxes.

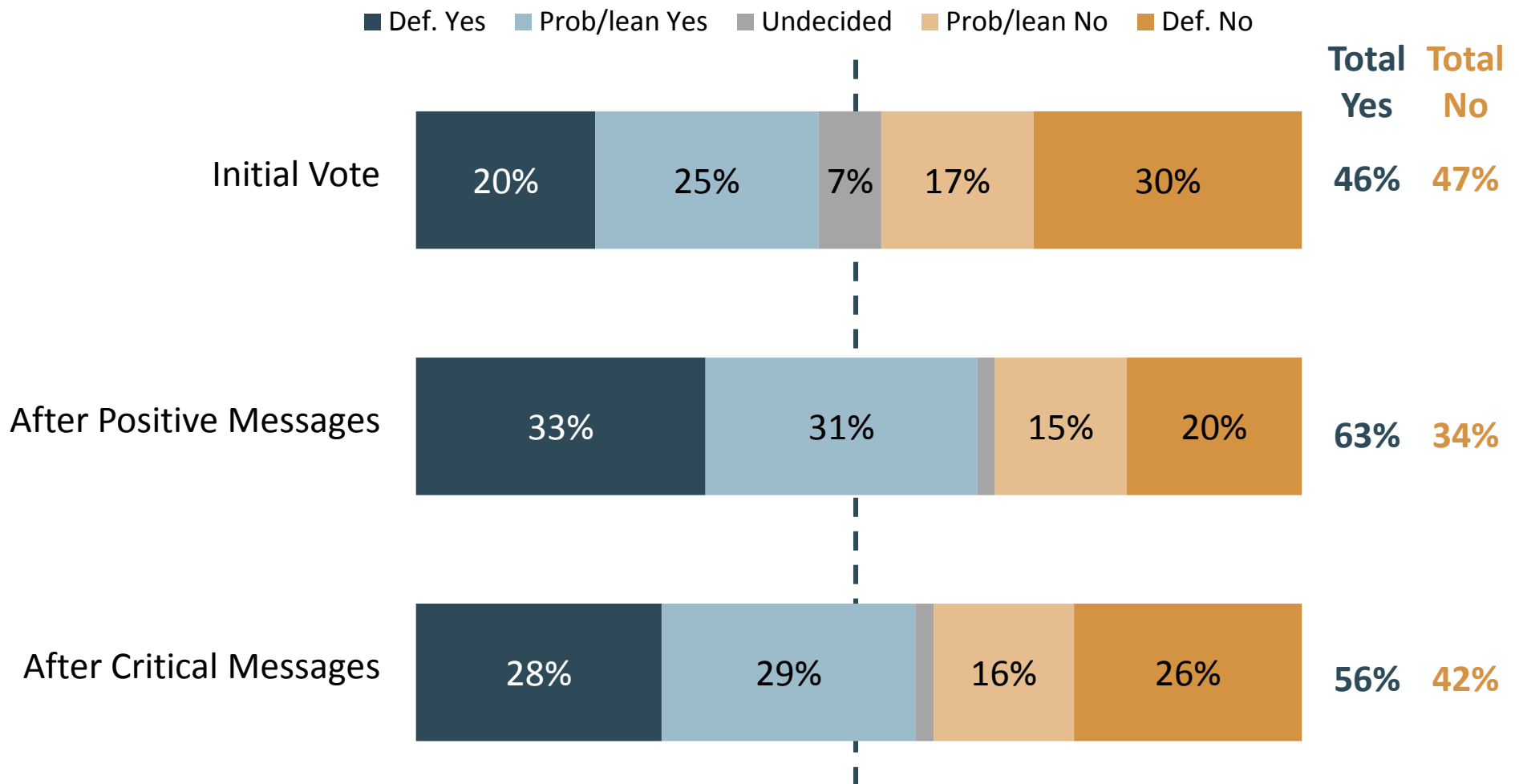
**(ENOUGH)** We already have plenty of open space in Pinal County. We have regional parks, state trust lands, and federal lands that provide more than we need.

**(DEBT)** This measure will put Pinal County into debt by selling bonds; it has never before borrowed money for these kinds of programs.

# Cost of living and litigation-focused criticisms are relatively persuasive.



# Positive messaging increases support to more than three in five, and the measure remains above the margin needed after criticisms.



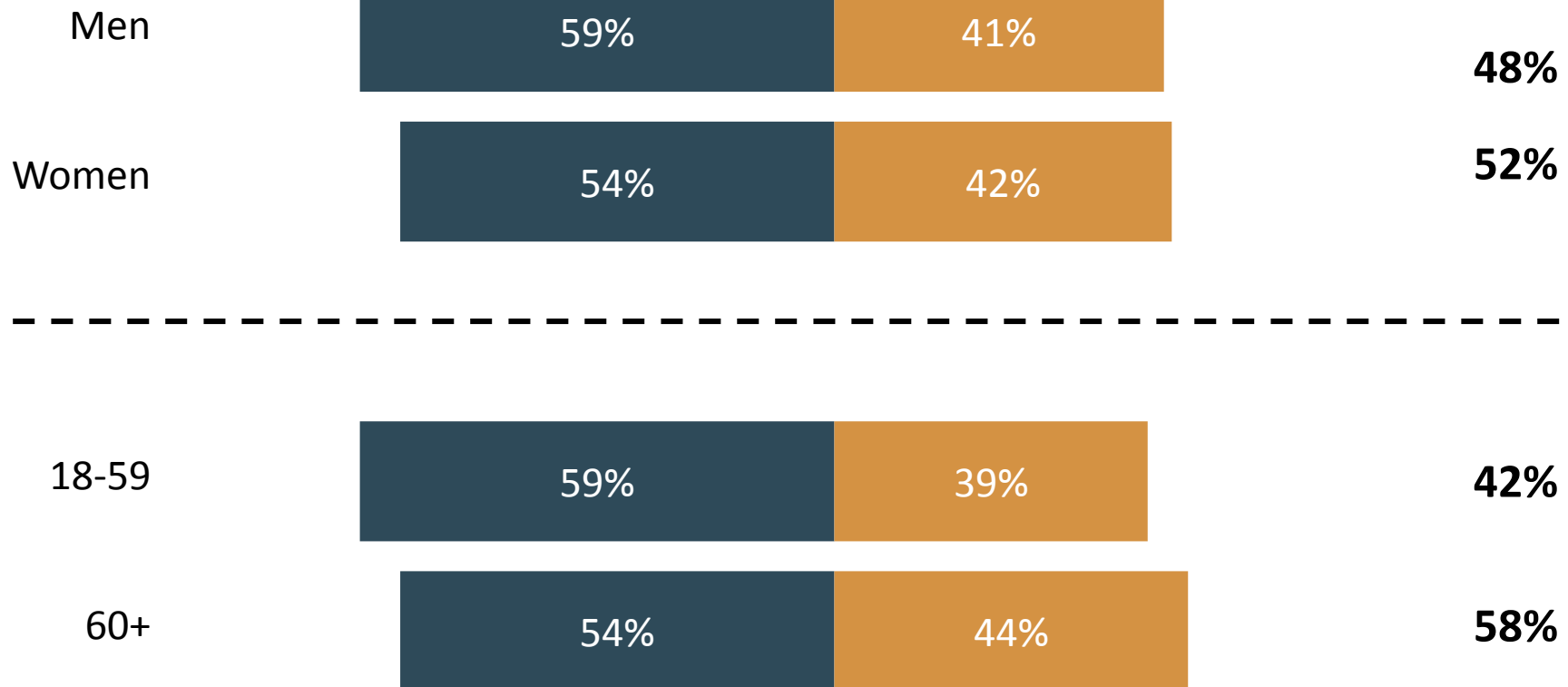


# Nearly three in five men and younger voters support the measure after messaging.

*Final Vote by Gender & Age*

■ Total Yes ■ Total No

% of Sample



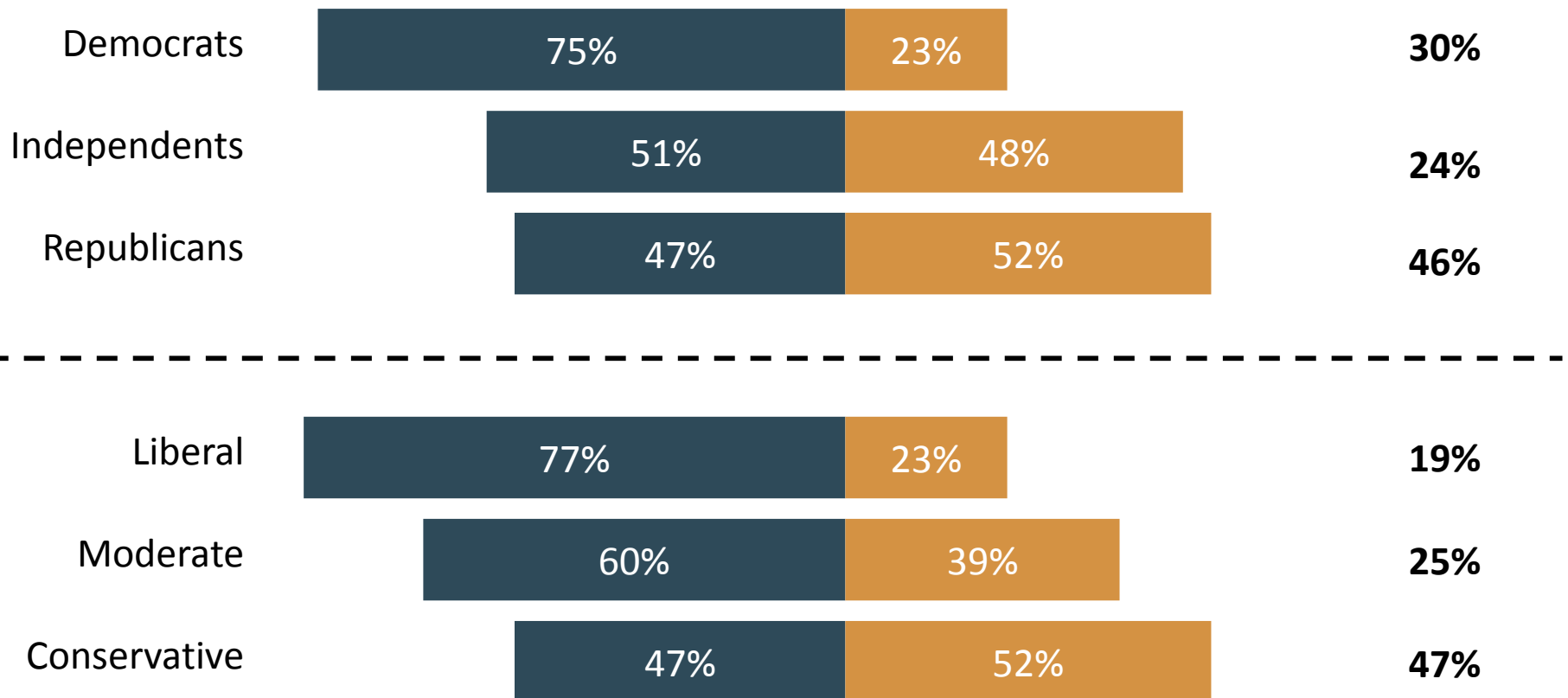
# Three in four Democrats back the bond measure, while independents are split.

## Final Vote by Party & Ideology

■ Total Yes

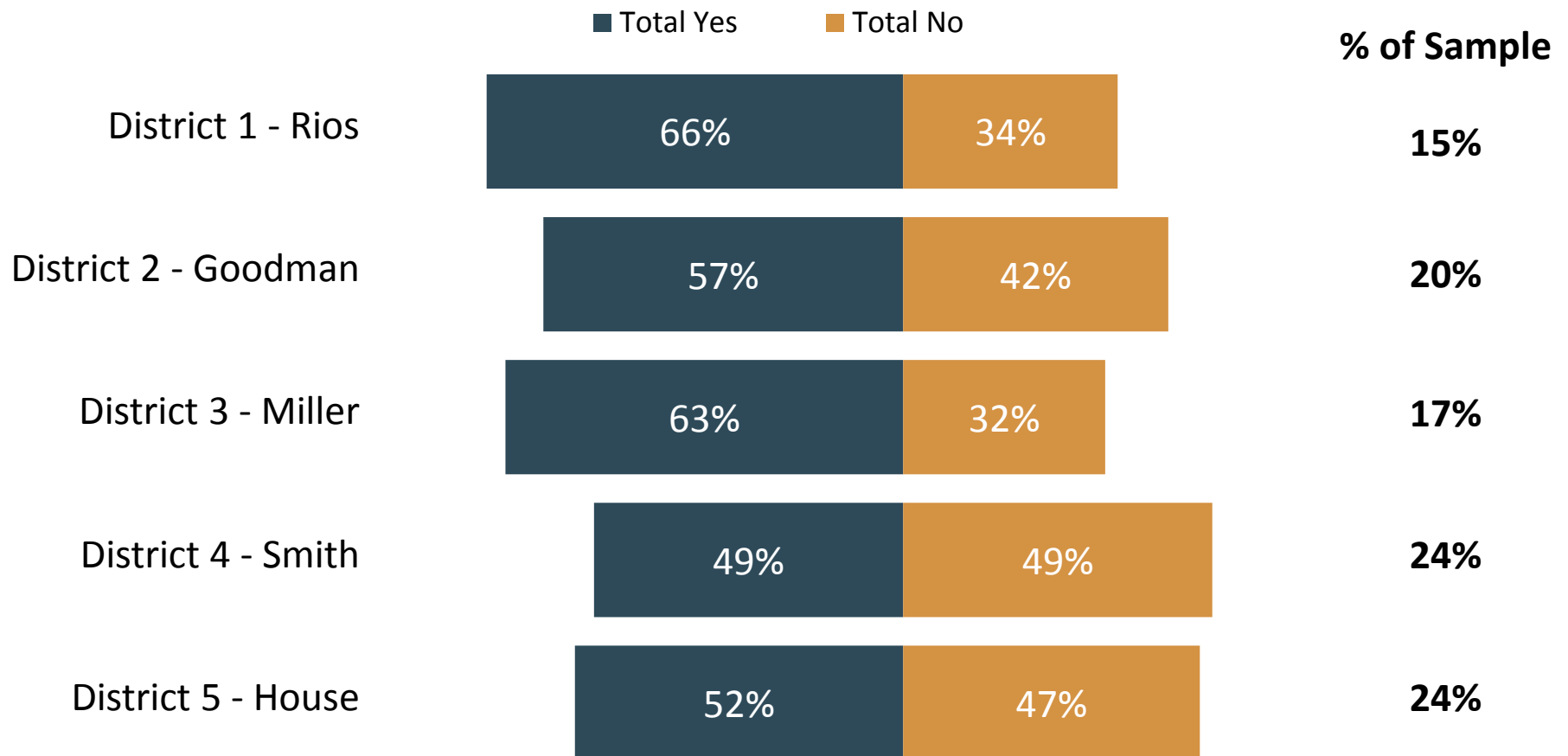
■ Total No

% of Sample



# Majorities in four of five supervisor districts support the measure.

*Final Vote by Supervisor District*





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# Conclusions

# Conclusions

- ✓ A Pinal County open space and trails bond measure could be viable in the November 2018 election.
  - Though it begins with support below a majority, positive messaging is effective at shifting the “yes” vote to more than three in five, and inoculates it against criticisms.
  - Voters who have heard of the Open Space and Trails Department view it favorably.
  - They are not particularly sensitive to household tax amounts.
- ✓ However, the poll shows a number of reasons for caution.
  - Support for the proposed bond measure starts below a majority, and more are “definitely” against than for the proposal.
  - The “yes” vote after messaging remains soft, and after critical messaging, it is just within the vote threshold plus margin of error.
  - Though they are not as compelling as arguments in favor of the measure, many find opposition arguments highly persuasive.
- ✓ A well-organized private “yes” campaign would likely be critical to a measure’s success.

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