



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.

I4

For the meeting of: July 10, 2018

Date: June 20, 2018

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Amy Nilsen, County Administrative Officer *for A. Nilsen*

Subject: Measure for Voter Consideration to Renew Measure Z on the Ballot for the November 6, 2018 Election

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive a report and presentation from Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) regarding polling results on a potential measure renewing Measure Z;
2. Direct staff to return to your Board on July 24 for introduction of an ordinance modifying Chapter 8, Division 1 of Title VII of the Humboldt County Code related to renewal of Measure Z's sales and use tax.

SOURCE OF FUNDING: General Fund

DISCUSSION:

On November 4, 2014 Humboldt County voters enacted Measure Z, a half-cent sales and use tax measure to maintain and enhance public safety and essential services. This measure, per ordinance, is set to expire in March 2020. On November 17, 2017, your Board allocated funding to conduct independent public research to assess voter interest in renewing Measure Z, and potentially place a renewal measure on the ballot.

Before discussing the opinion research, it is important to reflect on the work that has been done over the past 3-plus years. Through FY 2017-18, more than 70 new public safety projects have been funded and nearly

Prepared by Sean Quincey

CAO Approval *[Signature]*

REVIEW:

Auditor _____ County Counsel _____ Human Resources _____ Other _____

TYPE OF ITEM:

☐ Consent
☒ Departmental
☐ Public Hearing
☐ Other _____

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. I-1

Meeting of: 11/7/17

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Upon motion of Supervisor Wilson Seconded by Supervisor Bass

Ayes Bass, Fennell, Bohn, Wilson

Nays _____

Abstain _____

Absent Sundberg

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

Dated: 7/10/18

By: *[Signature]*

Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

\$34 million has been spent. More than \$12.5 million was allocated by your Board for FY 2018-19 to fund 24 more projects, including continuing funding for Sheriff's deputies and correctional officers, Child Welfare staff, District Attorney prosecutors and probation officers. Nearly 60 agencies around the county have received funding from Measure Z, 35 of which are volunteer fire districts. Each agency that receives Measure Z funding submits reports detailing the effects of their projects. Below are details for a few projects that have been funded each of the past 3 years:

Sheriff's Office

38 positions have been allocated and are currently filled. A purchase order has been issued and payment has been made for the Lenco Bearcat rescue recovery vehicle. It is likely this vehicle will be received in early FY 2018-19. Both the Community Services Officer (CSO) and Public Information Specialist positions funded in FY 2017-18 have been filled. This has allowed for better communications within the community. The new CSO is working in McKinleyville and the eastern Humboldt area working closely with the schools, participating in community events and following up on non-emergency reporting, allowing for deputies to focus on street patrols. A radio systems study has been completed. The county has allocated additional funding to now begin the radio infrastructure updates detailed in that study. All Measure Z staffing positions are currently filled and the Sheriff's Office continues to receive positive feedback on the impact those positions have made across the county.

Public Works

Road improvements continue in steady fashion and a large project to address a safety concern over the turn from Walnut Dr. and Northridge are underway. More than 50 miles of road have received maintenance, and 20 radar feedback signs were installed, especially in school zone areas. The parts for the gate at Clam Beach have been ordered and Public Works has begun assembly.

Fire Chiefs

More than 400 complete sets of Personal Protective Equipment, including self-contained breathing apparatuses, have been purchased and distributed to local volunteer fire departments. Eleven fire trucks have been purchased and delivered as well. Measure Z funding has allowed for continued planning efforts that support establishing sustainable revenue for fire services. The multistep process of erecting metal building kits has been problematic but with the help of the County Administrative Office, it is believed that there is a handle on the next steps. This funding has allowed for continued response to the service gap area along the 299 corridor.

District Attorney

11 positions have been allocated and are filled. The DA's office has in the works two vehicular manslaughter cases and child abuse/sexual assault cases. The ability to prosecute multiple homicides in one month along with serious violent felonies would not be possible without the adequate staffing, expert witness fees, staff development, and witness expenses that Measure Z provides. With the influx of homicide and violent crime cases being experienced in Humboldt, Measure Z has been imperative in allowing for timely prosecution of those cases, allowing for matters to be prosecuted in a manner that is in the best interest of the community.

Probation

6 positions have been allocated and are currently filled, five of which are in the Adult Unit and one in the Juvenile Intake Unit. The bulk of the community impact of Probation's Measure Z allocation is felt in the Adult Division. The addition of these five adult positions enabled Probation to lower the caseloads of its officers to a more manageable size and these five positions have in December 2017 alone, supervised 315 offenders, made 420 contacts or contact attempts, filed 24 violation petitions and had 6 arrests. In addition to these five positions, Measure Z also funds one juvenile position which performs many functions in Juvenile Division most notably, handling juvenile diversion cases.

Department of Health & Human Services

8 positions have been allocated and currently all but one of those positions are filled and a recruitment for that vacant position is underway. The prior years' funding has allowed for increased Mental Health services in the East and Southern portion of Humboldt County, with extra efforts having taken place to hire within the outlying communities. A small office has been established in Weitchpec, and a critical need has been identified for a space in the Hoopa/Willow Creek area.

There are many other projects your Board has funded through Measure Z that are worthy of mention. Staff has chosen to highlight these ones above for brevity. More details on each of the 70 projects that have been funded can be found on the county's website at Humboldtgov.org/MeasureZ.

Public Opinion Research

From April 3-5, the firm FM3 conducted a survey of approximately 500 likely voters, almost evenly split into fifths between the five supervisorial districts. The focus of the survey was to determine community priorities, including whether there is an interest in continued funding for public safety and essential services. FM3 conducted research in 2014 before the Board chose to place Measure Z on the ballot for voter consideration. Retaining the same firm allowed the county to compare results and see how the community's priorities have changed over the past four years.

Based on the results of the polling, staff recommends that your Board consider placing a renewal of Measure Z for voter consideration, at its current half-cent rate, on the November ballot. Further, staff recommends that the ballot measure states that the funding, if renewed by voters, continue until ended by voters.

Essentially, there are four options before your Board today:

- Move forward with placing a renewal of Measure Z before voters at the current rate with no increase in tax rate until ended by voters.
- Place a renewal measure before voters and change the current tax rate.
- Place a renewal measure before voters, keeping the current tax rate, and choosing a duration.
- Placing no renewal measure before voters for November 2018 and allow Measure Z to expire in 2020.

The opinion research firm tested each of these options. The results of the survey indicate that a ballot measure that continues Measure Z is potentially viable – with more than 50 percent indicating support for a renewal measure at the current half-cent rate until ended by voters.

Whether or not your Board chooses to place a renewal measure before voters this November, some of the polling results are worth noting:

- Drugs and homelessness are considered the most urgent concerns. At least 87 percent of respondents viewed these issues as either extremely serious or very serious problems.
- The cost of health care (73 percent), crime (70 percent) and the lack of affordable housing (66 percent) are the next most urgent concerns.
- Citizens are not too concerned with the amount of money they pay in local taxes. However, citizens are increasingly concerned about waste and inefficiency in government.
- Top essential service priorities include maintaining 9-1-1 emergency response, rural ambulance and fire protection services, ensuring 24-hour Sheriff's patrols, providing children's mental health and victims of child abuse services, and emergency communications systems for natural disasters.

Here are some additional facts for your Board to consider with respect to placing a renewal measure on the ballot:

- A recent report released by the Grand Jury stated that Measure Z has been a valuable addition to Humboldt County, and losing this revenue would be "catastrophic" to local public safety. The Grand

Jury recommended that your Board find a funding mechanism to ensure current levels of public safety services can be maintained for the long-term.

- The same Grand Jury report stated that the vast majority of Measure Z funds have been allocated according to the measure's original intent.
- Reducing the rate of the tax had a negative effect on voter approval. Voters seem to have made the connection that a lower rate would generate less revenue and therefore fewer services. Your Board has allocated funding in such a way that it has touched many parts of the community, both in incorporated cities and the most remote, rural parts of the county. Survey respondents overwhelmingly approved of continuing these service levels, not reducing them.
- When Measure Z first went on the ballot in 2014 it was widely seen as voters placing their trust in your Board, and the Citizens Advisory Committee on Measure Z Expenditures, to use these revenues for their intended purpose. As reflected in the Grand Jury report, polling results indicate that voters' trust in the process of fund allocation has grown and they want to secure these services for the long-term.

Finally, if your Board chooses to place a renewal measure before voters, staff requests specific direction on the following:

- Direct staff to return to the Board on July 24 for introduction of an ordinance modifying Chapter 8, Division 1 of Title VII of the Humboldt County Code related to renewal of Measure Z. This is necessary in order to comply with the very tight timelines associated with the November election cycle.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Measure Z is expected to generate \$11.7 million in 2018-19. Roughly half of this funding directly supports county staff, and much of the remaining funding supports staff from cities and non-profits. In total, there are nearly 70 staff supported by Measure Z. If this measure is not renewed the county and each agency that relies on this funding will need to either find a significant new source of funding, or discontinue or modify their services. The county does not currently have another funding source that could replace the revenue generated by Measure Z.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: FM3, Cities of Trinidad, Blue Lake, Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, Ferndale, Rio Dell, Hoopa Tribe, Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association, various non-profits contracted through Measure Z

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Survey results
2. Memo from FM3

HumboldtCounty California's Redwood Coast

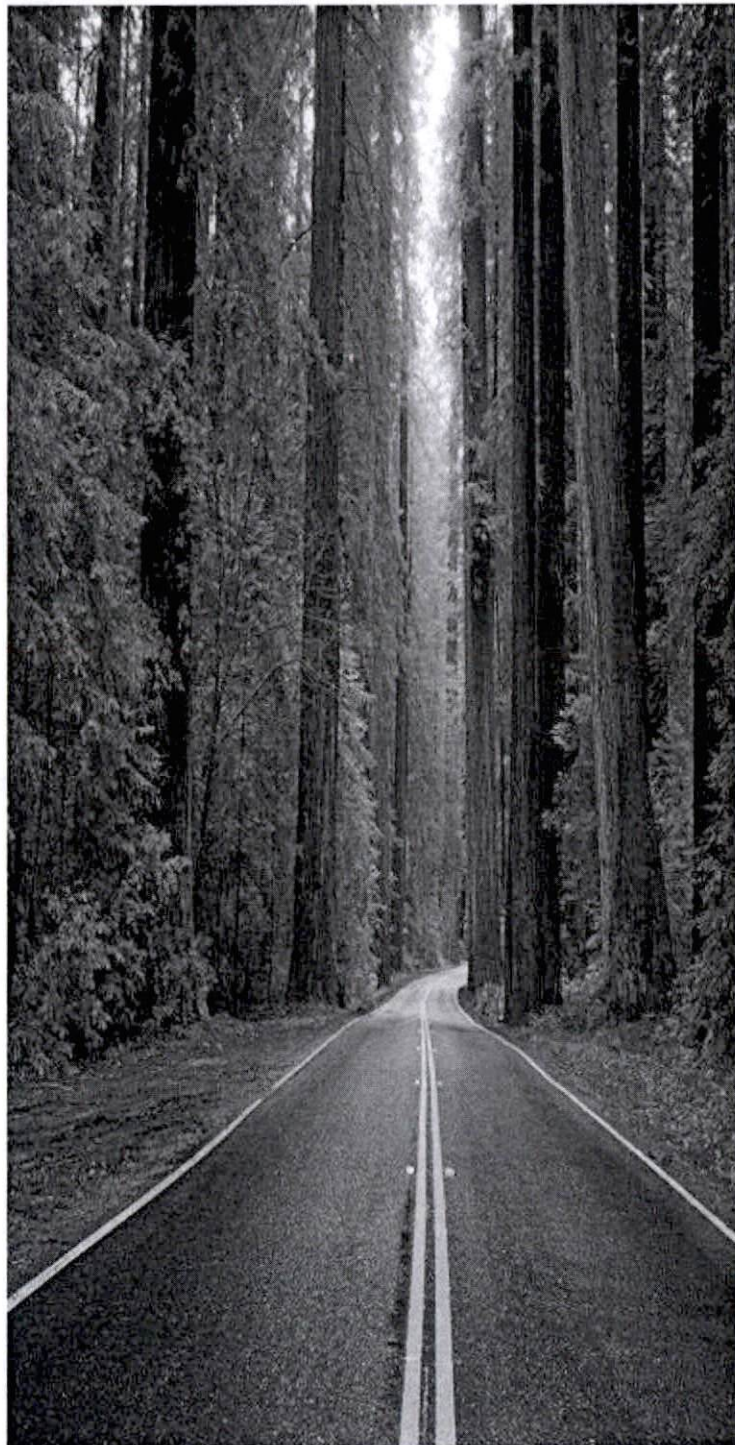


Humboldt County Issues Survey

*Key Highlights of a Survey of Humboldt County Voters
Conducted April 3-5, 2018*



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

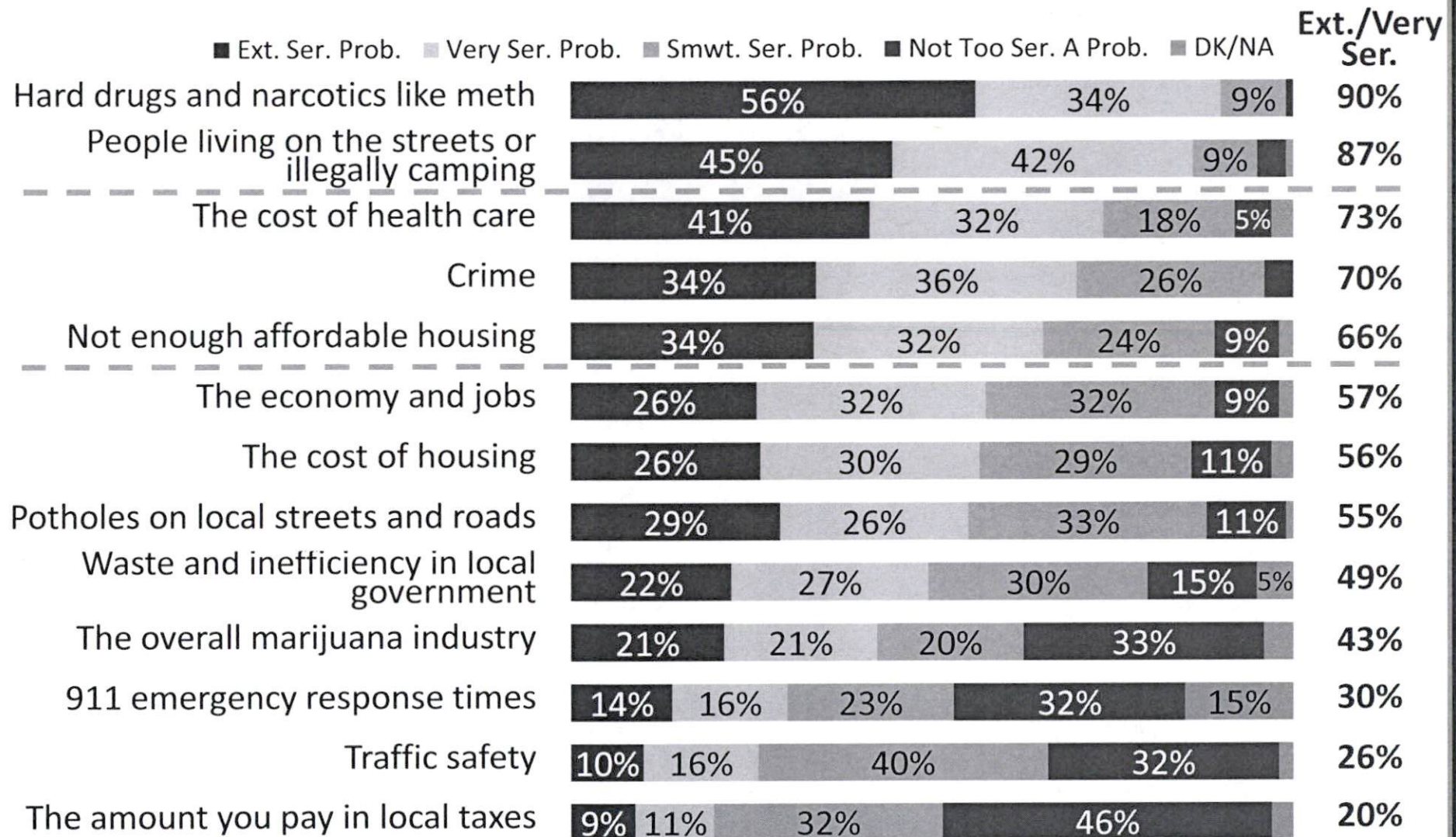


Methodology

- 500 interviews with likely November 2018 voters in Humboldt County
- Conducted April 3-5, 2018, via landline and cell phones
- Margin of sampling error of $\pm 4.4\%$ at the 95% confidence interval
- Due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to 100

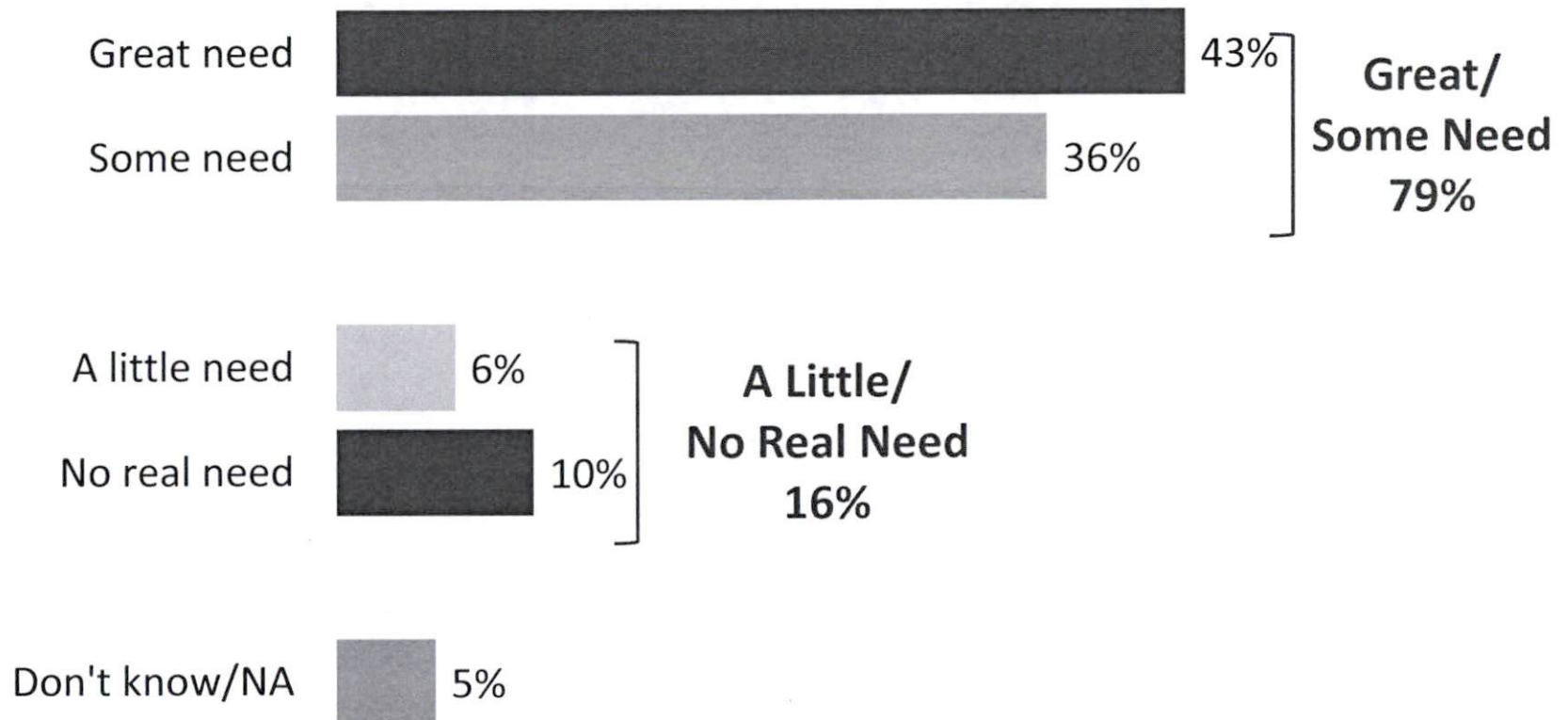
Community Context

Drugs and homelessness are the most urgent concerns.



In general, nearly four in five see at least "some 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 a Potential Measure Z Renewal

Hypothetical Measure Language Tested

(Reviewed by Legal Counsel)

Humboldt County Public Safety and Essential Services Renewal Measure.

To maintain essential services, including:

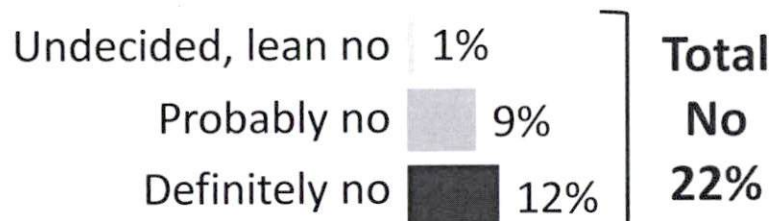
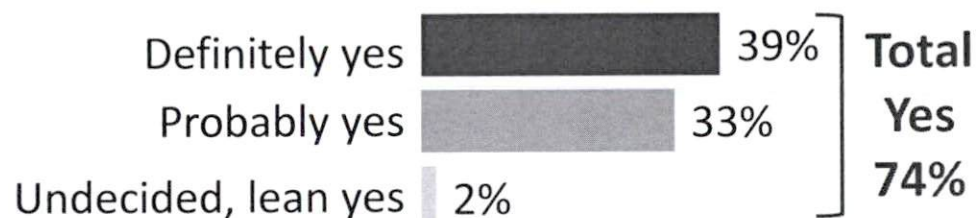
- 24-hour sheriff's patrols;
- 911 emergency response;
- Rural fire protection/ambulance service;
- Veteran support services;
- Mental health services;
- Crime investigation/prosecution;
- Services for abused children; and
- Emergency communications systems for natural disasters,

Shall a measure to renew the existing half-cent sales tax, generating approximately \$12 million annually (**HALF SAMPLE**: until ended by voters) (**HALF SAMPLE**: for 6 years) for unrestricted general revenue purposes, with annual audits/citizen oversight, be adopted?

Three-quarters said they would support a hypothetical renewal until ended by voters.

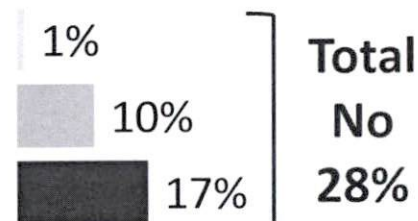
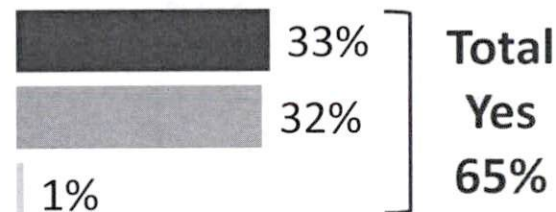
If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

Until Ended by Voters



Undecided 5%

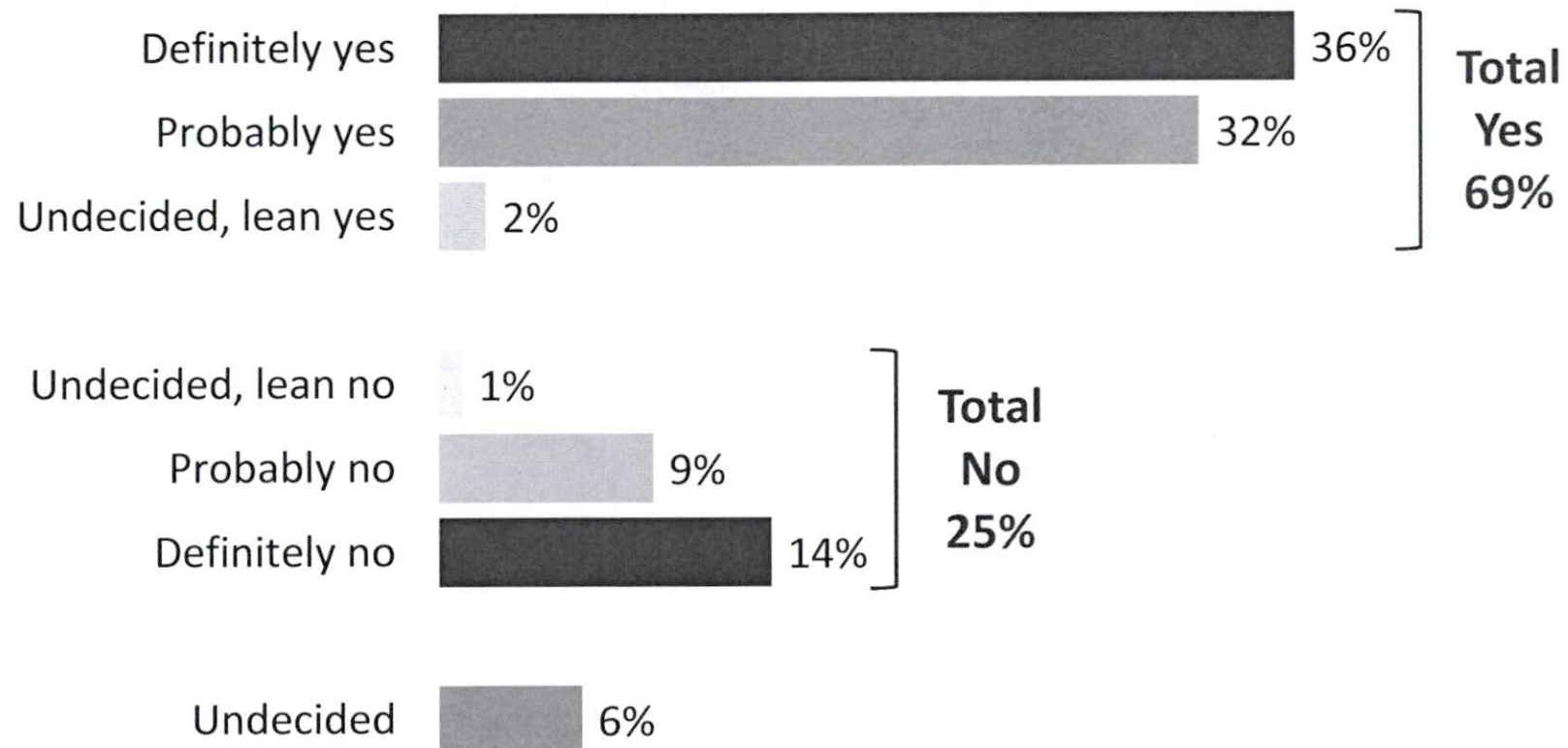
Six-Year Sunset



Undecided 7%

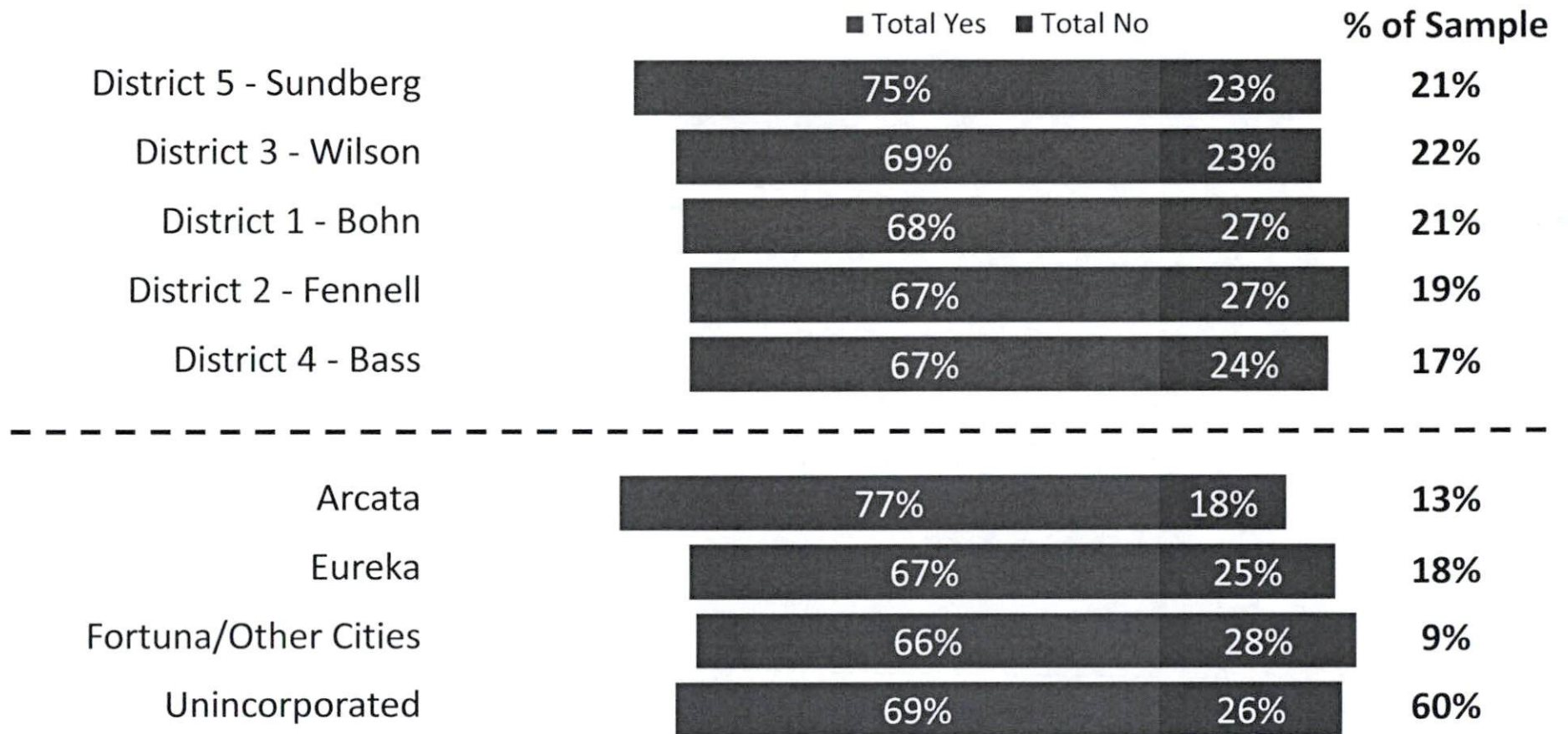
Taken together, seven in ten supported a hypothetical local funding measure.

Combined Measure Vote



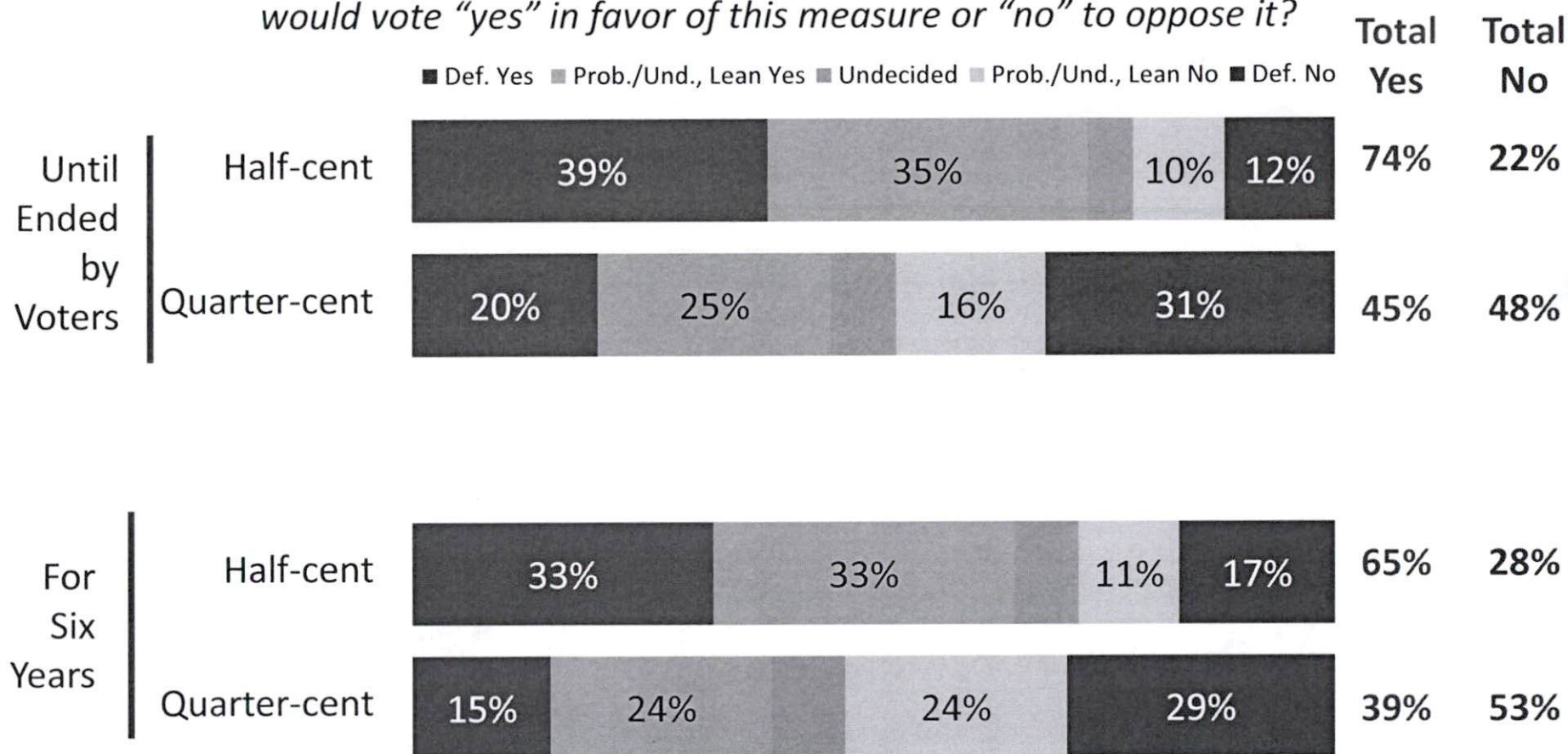
The measure carries in every Supervisor District.

Combined Measure Vote by Supervisorial District & City



Respondents were much less likely to support a measure that would lower the ~~tax~~ rate.

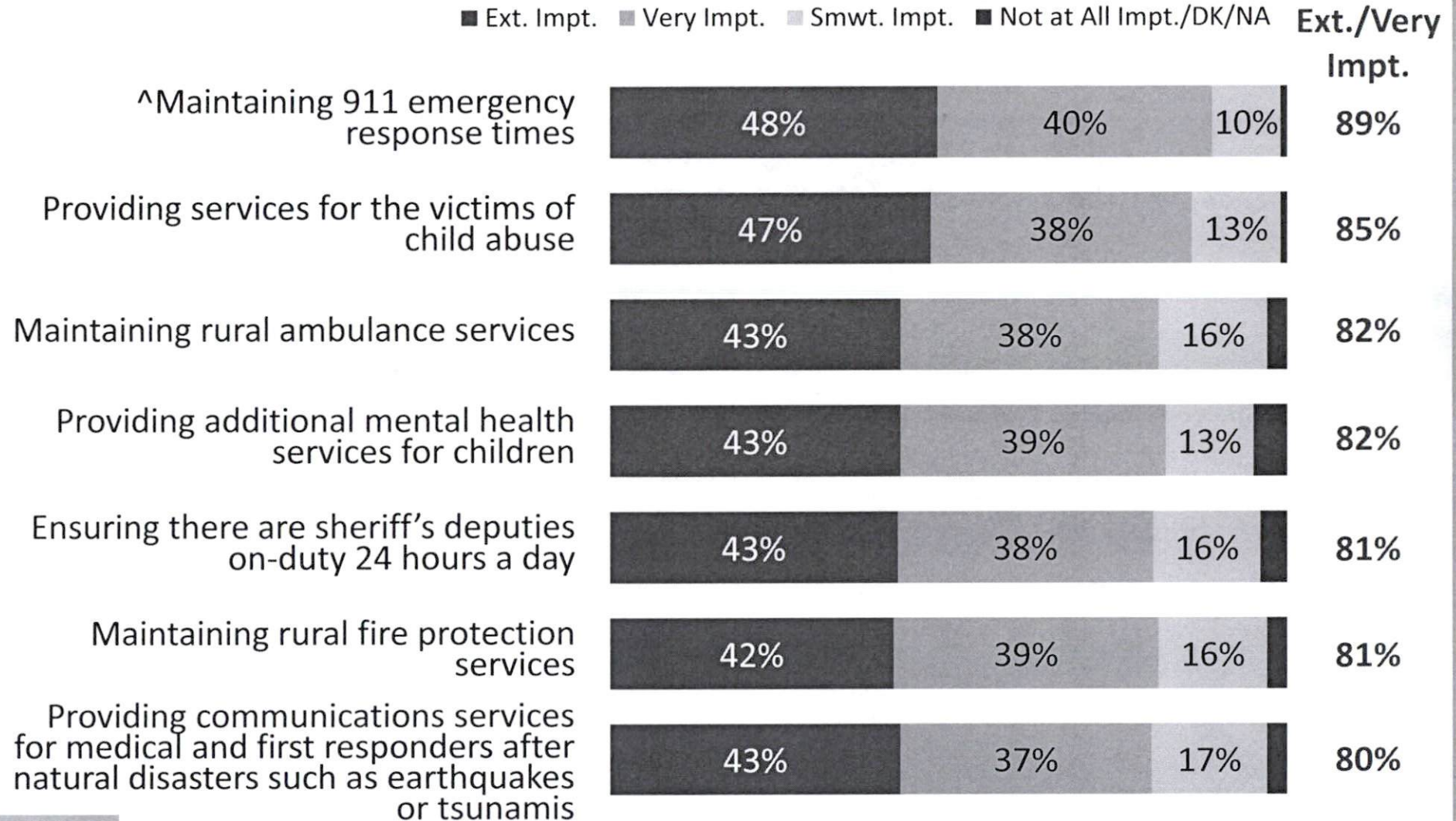
What if instead of continuing the existing half-cent sales tax, this measure extended but lowered the sales tax to one-quarter cent, which would raise half as much money for essential County services? In that case, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?



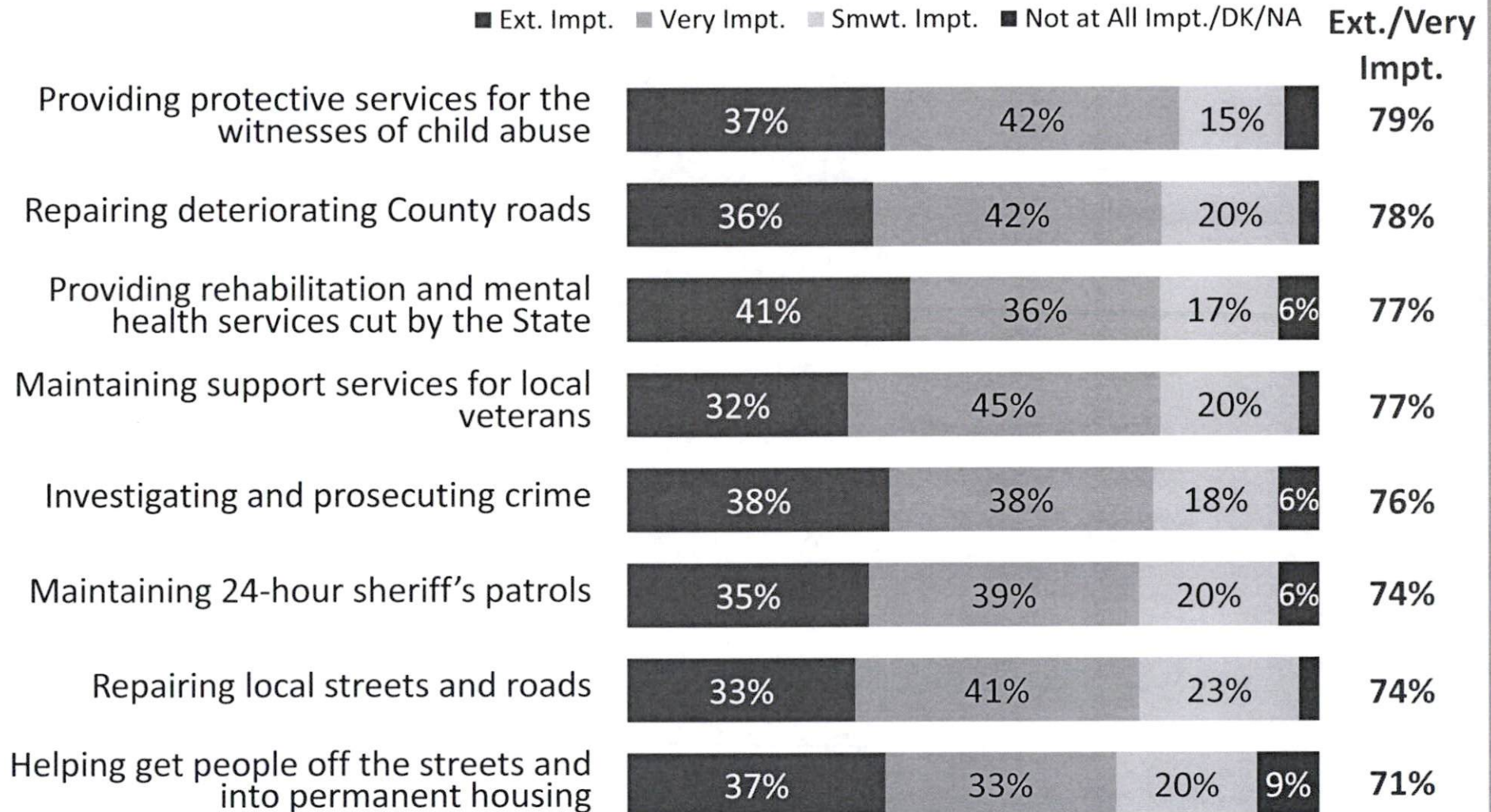
Respondent Priorities for Renewed Funding

Top priorities include public safety and children's services.

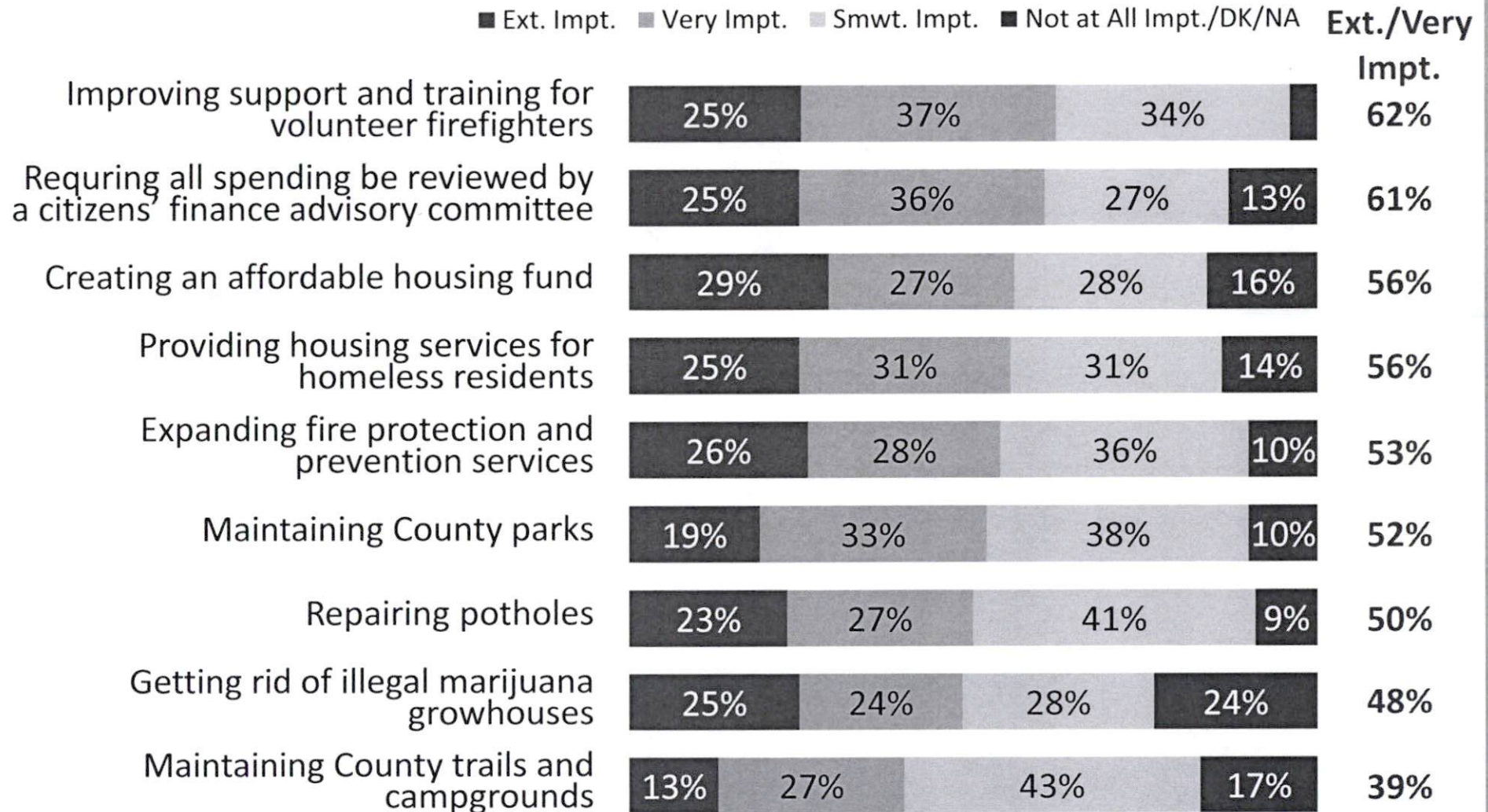
■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not at All Impt./DK/NA



Seven in ten or more also said road repairs and social services are important.



Lower priority items included maintaining trails and campgrounds.



Conclusions

Conclusions

- Nearly four in five believe there is at least “some need” for additional County funding.
- A measure renewing the County’s existing voter-approved local revenue measure with no rate increase is potentially viable for November 2018.
- Top funding priorities for a no-increase renewal measure continue to center on public safety, including 911 response times, rural ambulances, 24-hour sheriff’s deputies on duty, and youth mental health and victim services.
- Top concerns include hard drugs and illegal camping, followed by pocketbook concerns like healthcare and housing costs.

For more information, contact:



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OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

TO Interested Parties

FROM Curtis Below and Miranda Everitt
FM3 Research

RE: Humboldt County Community Survey Results

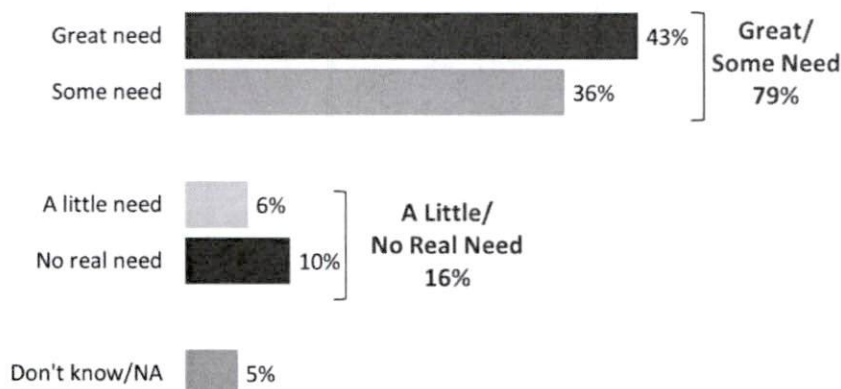
DATE June 26, 2018

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of 500 voters in Humboldt County to assess community priorities and potential interest in renewing existing, voter-approved local funding.ⁱ Voters broadly perceive a need for continued funding for essential services, especially public safety and children's services. This principle extends to support for a half-cent sales tax renewal, with nearly seven in ten in favor.

- **Four in five believe the County has a need for new funding.** Figure 1 shows that fully 79 percent see at least "some need" for additional funding for essential services in the County, and more than two in five (43%) say the need is great. Just one in ten (10%) believe the County has no real need for new funding.

Figure 1: Need for 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?

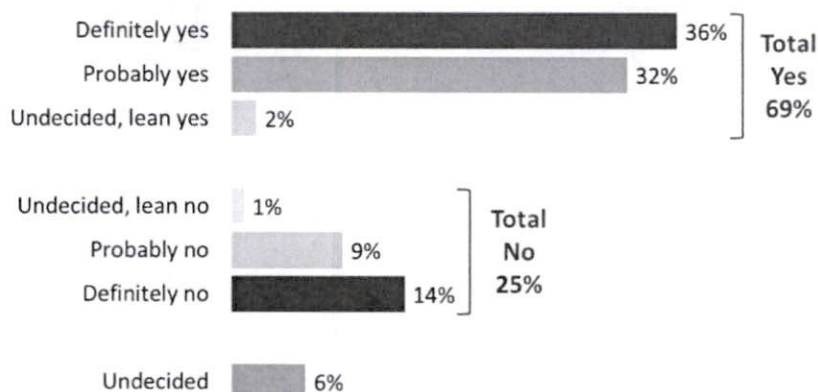


- **Seven in ten support renewing Measure Z.** As shown in Figure 2, 69 percent of Humboldt County voters say they would vote "yes" on extending the existing half-cent sales tax funding essential services, while just one-quarter (25%) oppose it. Notably, the share who say they would "definitely" vote yes is more than 22 points higher than their counterparts most committed to a no vote. This support crosses geographic boundaries,

with 77% in favor in Aracta, 67% in Eureka, 66% in smaller cities, and 69% in the unincorporated areas of the county.

Figure 2: Support for A Potential Finance Measure

Humboldt County Public Safety and Essential Services Renewal Measure. To maintain essential services, including 24-hour sheriff's patrols; 911 emergency response; rural fire protection/ambulance service; veteran support services; mental health services; crime investigation/prosecution; services for abused children; and emergency communications systems for natural disasters, shall a measure to renew the existing half-cent sales tax, generating approximately \$12 million annually (HALF SAMPLE: until ended by voters) (HALF SAMPLE: for 6 years) for unrestricted general revenue purposes, with annual audits/citizen oversight, be adopted?



- **Overall, residents' top priorities for renewed funding have to do with public safety and children's services.** Figure 4 shows the funding priorities that three-quarters or more said are "extremely" or "very important." These are largely focused on maintaining public safety: 911 emergency response times (89%), rural ambulance services (82%), deputies on duty 24 hours a day (81%), and rural fire protection (81%). Services for victims of child abuse and mental health services for children are also important priorities, as is preparing for natural disaster and repairing roads.

Figure 4: Priorities for Measure Funding

I am going to read you a list of ways in which the funds generated by this measure could be spent in Humboldt County. Please tell me how important it is to you personally: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not at all important.

Priority	Ext/Very Important
Maintaining 911 emergency response times	89%
Providing services for the victims of child abuse	85%
Maintaining rural ambulance services	82%
Providing additional mental health services for children	82%
Ensuring there are sheriff's deputies on duty 24 hours a day	81%
Maintaining rural fire protection services	81%
Providing communications services for medical and first responders after natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis	80%
Providing protective services for the witnesses of child abuse	79%
Repairing deteriorating county roads	78%
Providing rehabilitation and mental health services cut by the State	77%
Maintaining support services for local veterans	77%
Investigating and prosecuting crime	76%

In sum, Humboldt County voters clearly see a need for continued funding for essential county services: chief among them, public safety, services for children, disaster preparedness, and road repairs. Strong majorities say they would vote to renew the current half-cent sales tax.

¹ **Methodology:** From April 3-5, 2018, FM3 completed 500 telephone interviews (on both landlines and cell phones) with randomly selected likely November 2018 voters in Humboldt County. The margin of sampling error for the study is $\pm 4.4\%$ at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher (e.g., $\pm 6.2\%$ for half the sample). Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.