

Telephone Survey of Unincorporated Madera County Likely November 2016 Voters

April 2016 - **DRAFT**

Methodology

- ▶ Live Telephone Survey of Likely November 2016 Voters in the Unincorporated Portion of Madera County, California
- ▶ Survey conducted March 21-27, 2016
- ▶ 279 total completes; overall margin of error ± 5.87 percentage points
- ▶ Surveys conducted by trained, professional interviewers in both English and Spanish
- ▶ Interviews conducted on both landlines and cell phones
- ▶ Survey used split sample methodology:
 - Sample A: 50% tested half-cent sales tax measure (*MoE= +/- 8.3 percentage points*)
 - Sample B: 50% tested one-cent sales tax measure (*MoE= +/- 8.3 percentage points*)

Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

Key Findings

- ▶ Awareness of a public safety sales tax measure is very low.
- ▶ Voters believe the need for funding exists and are not necessarily opposed to raising taxes to fund fire and emergency response services.
- ▶ Two-thirds support exists for a fire and emergency services measure in the unincorporated areas of the county; support is better for a half-cent measure compared to a one-cent measure.
- ▶ Voters strongly support oversight components and informational statements around oversight and improving response times.

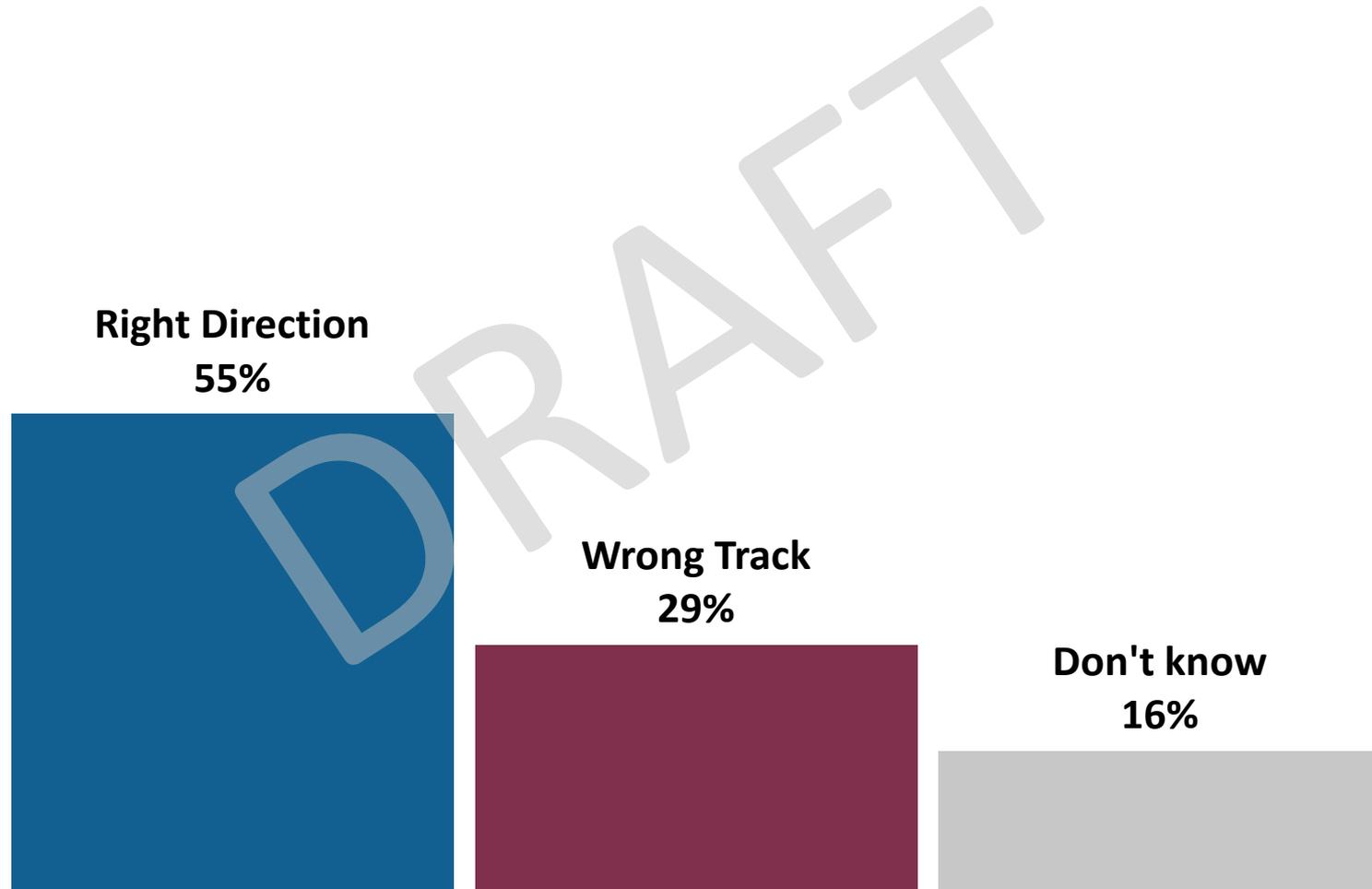
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Political Environment and Information Sources

Direction of Madera County

A majority think things in Madera County are headed in the right direction.



Q5. Do you feel that things in Madera County are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

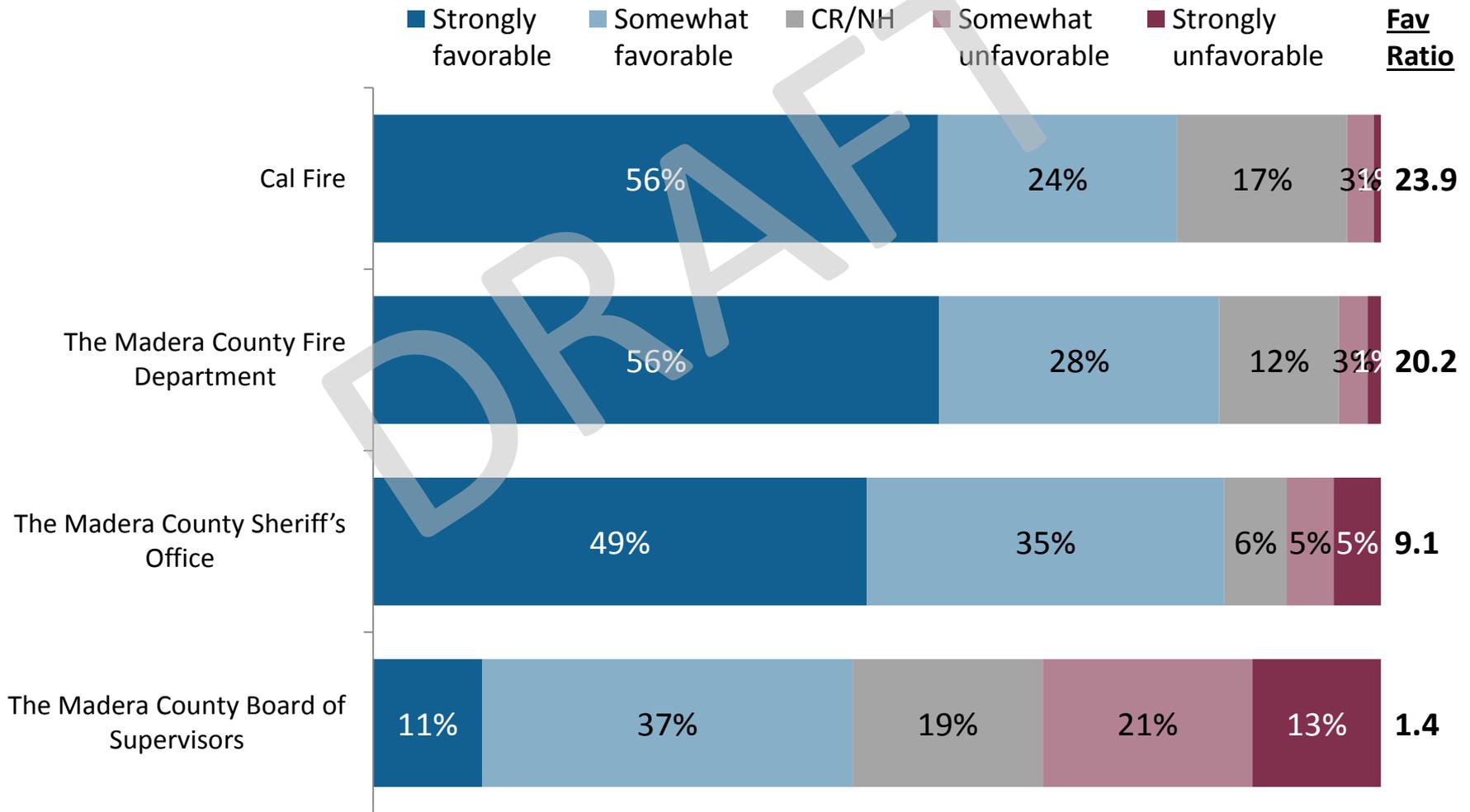
Most Important Problem

Respondents are most concerned with water issues, followed by crime.

	%
Water/Drought	37
Crime	10
Transportation/Roads	9
Jobs/Unemployment	8
Education	4
Over Development/Over Population	3
Government	3
Taxes	2
Budget/Finances	2
Environmental	2
Other	7
Nothing/No Issues	2
Don't Know	12

Favorability Ratings

Cal Fire, and the Madera County Fire and Sheriff's departments have very strong ratings.

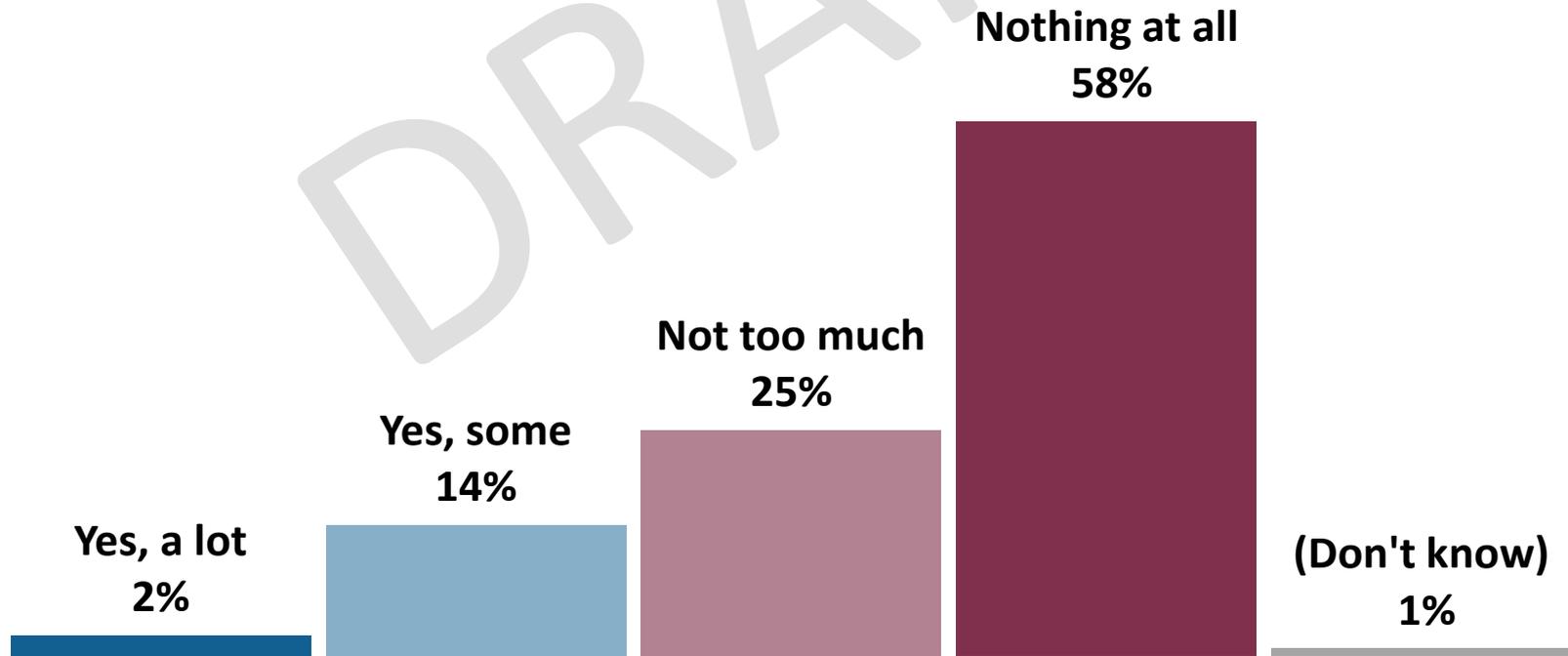


Q7-10. I'm going to read you a list of organizations. Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each one. If you have never heard of one, please just say so.



Sales Tax Measure Awareness

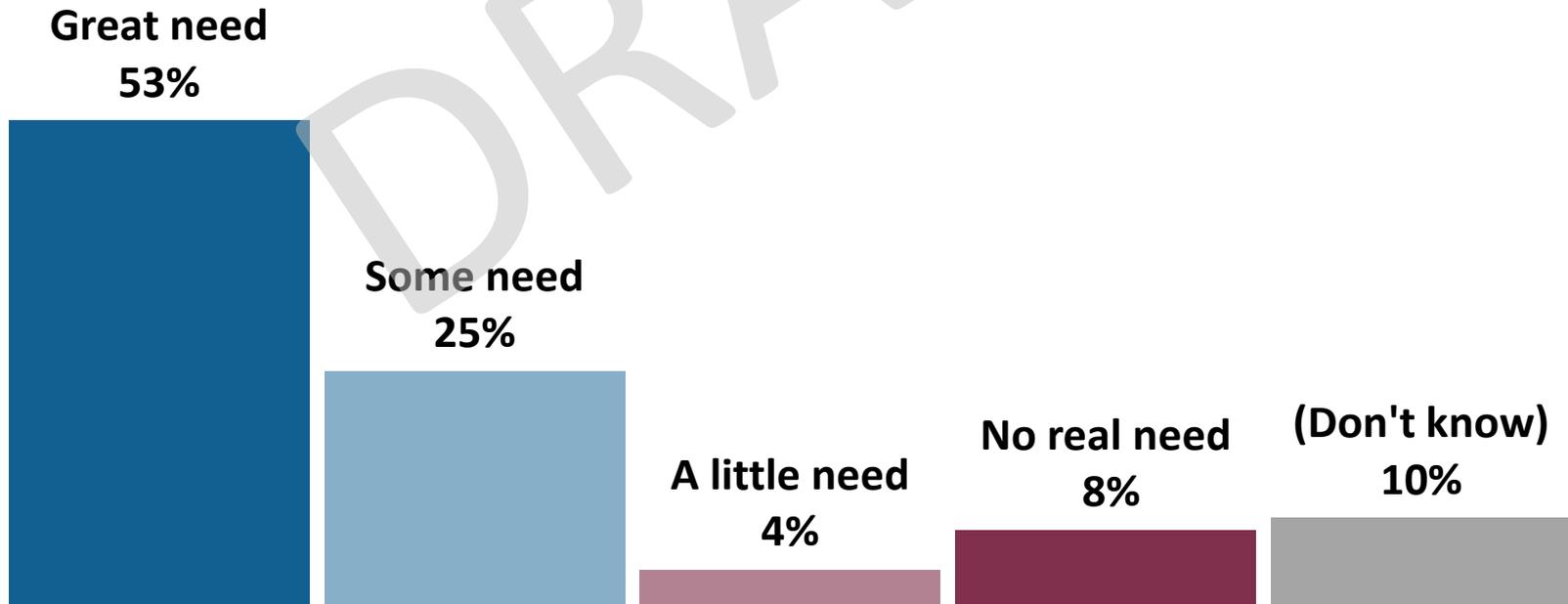
A majority of respondents have heard nothing at all about the public safety sales tax measure.



Q12. How much have you read, seen or heard about a public safety sales tax measure that Madera County is considering, to help raise funds for the Madera County Fire Department and Sheriff's Department? Have you heard a lot, some, not too much, or nothing at all??

Need for Funding

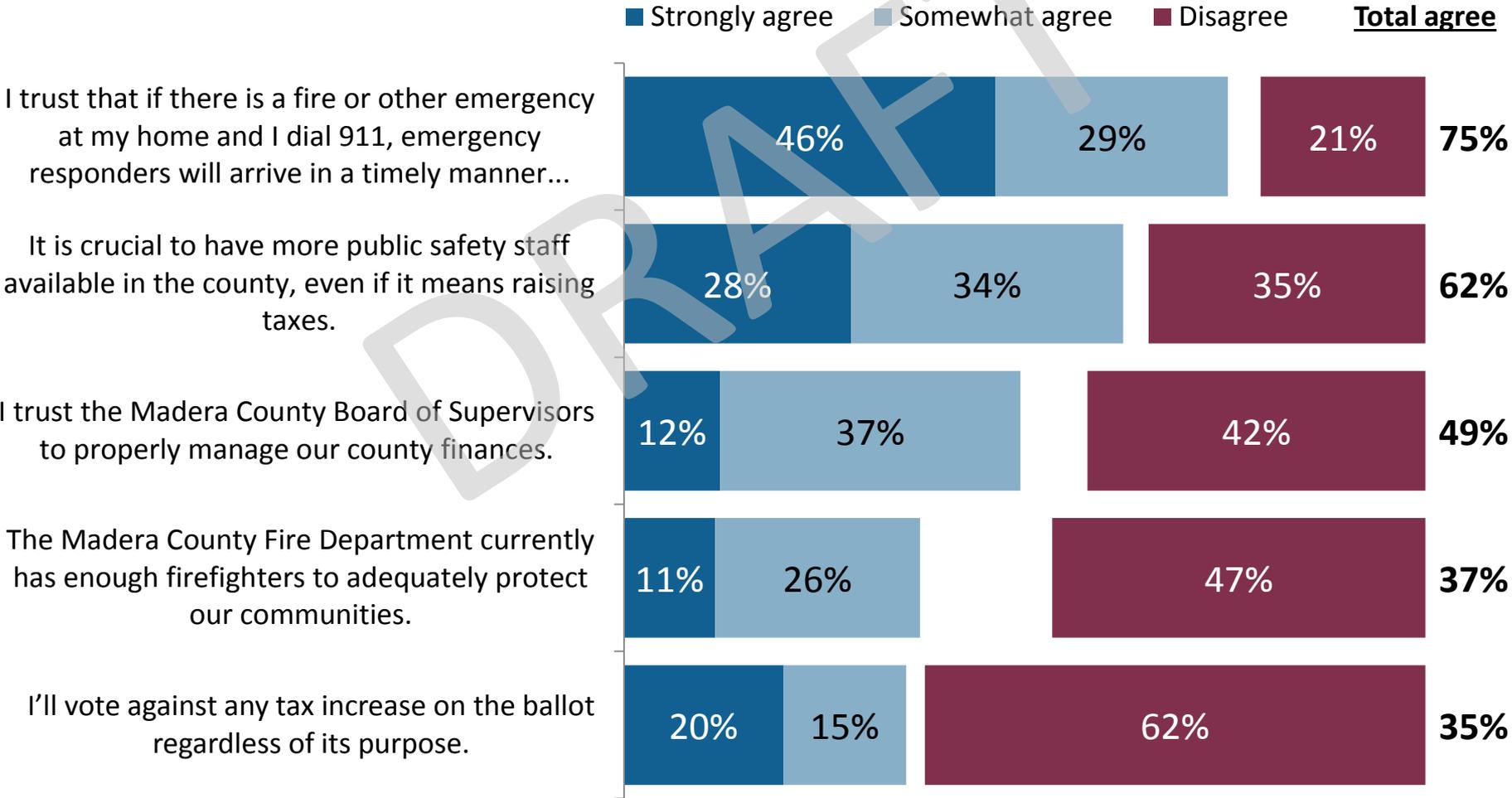
Less than two-thirds feel the county has a “great need” for more funding for fire and emergency response services.



Q11. Generally speaking, would you say Madera County has a great need for additional funding, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding to maintain fire and emergency response services?

Sales Tax Opinions

A strong majority of voters trust emergency responders will arrive in a timely manner and believe it is crucial to have more public safety staff. Overall, respondents are not against raising taxes to improve public safety services.



Q14-18. For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

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Sales Tax Measure

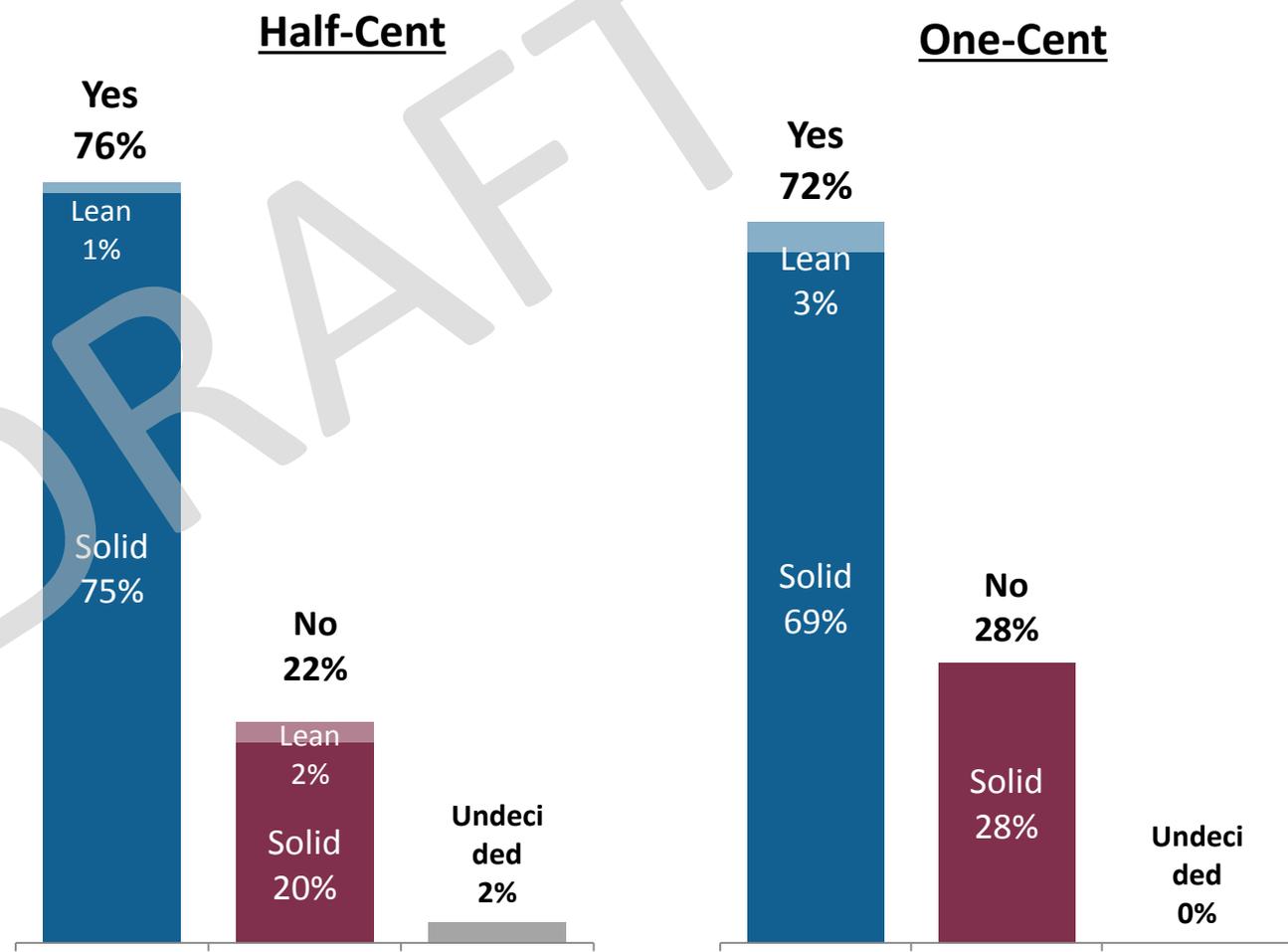


Initial Support: Half-Cent vs. One-Cent

The half-cent measure has a slight advantage over the one-cent measure; solid support for the one-cent measure is only slightly above two-thirds threshold.

Shall Madera County enact a (A: half-cent/B: one-cent) countywide public safety sales tax to:

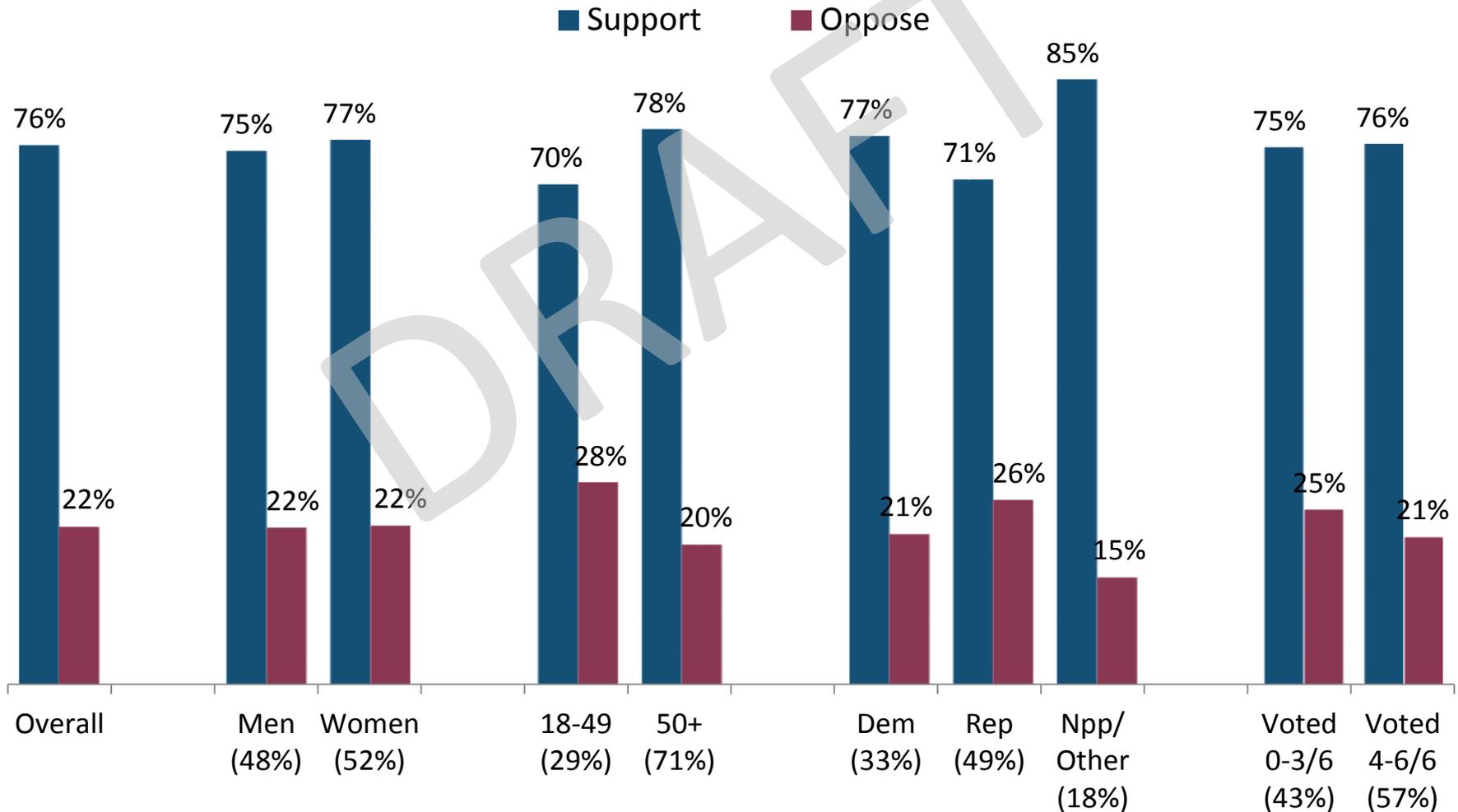
- Improve firefighting services throughout the county;
 - Increase the number of paid and volunteer firefighters in the county;
 - Improve instructional and training services for volunteer firefighters; and,
 - Increase the number of sheriff’s deputies in the county;
- with annual public audits and citizen’s oversight?



Q13. I'd like to read you a measure that could be on the ballot this November in Madera County. If the election were held today, would you vote "yes" to approve or "no" to reject a measure that reads:

Initial Vote – Half-Cent by Subgroup

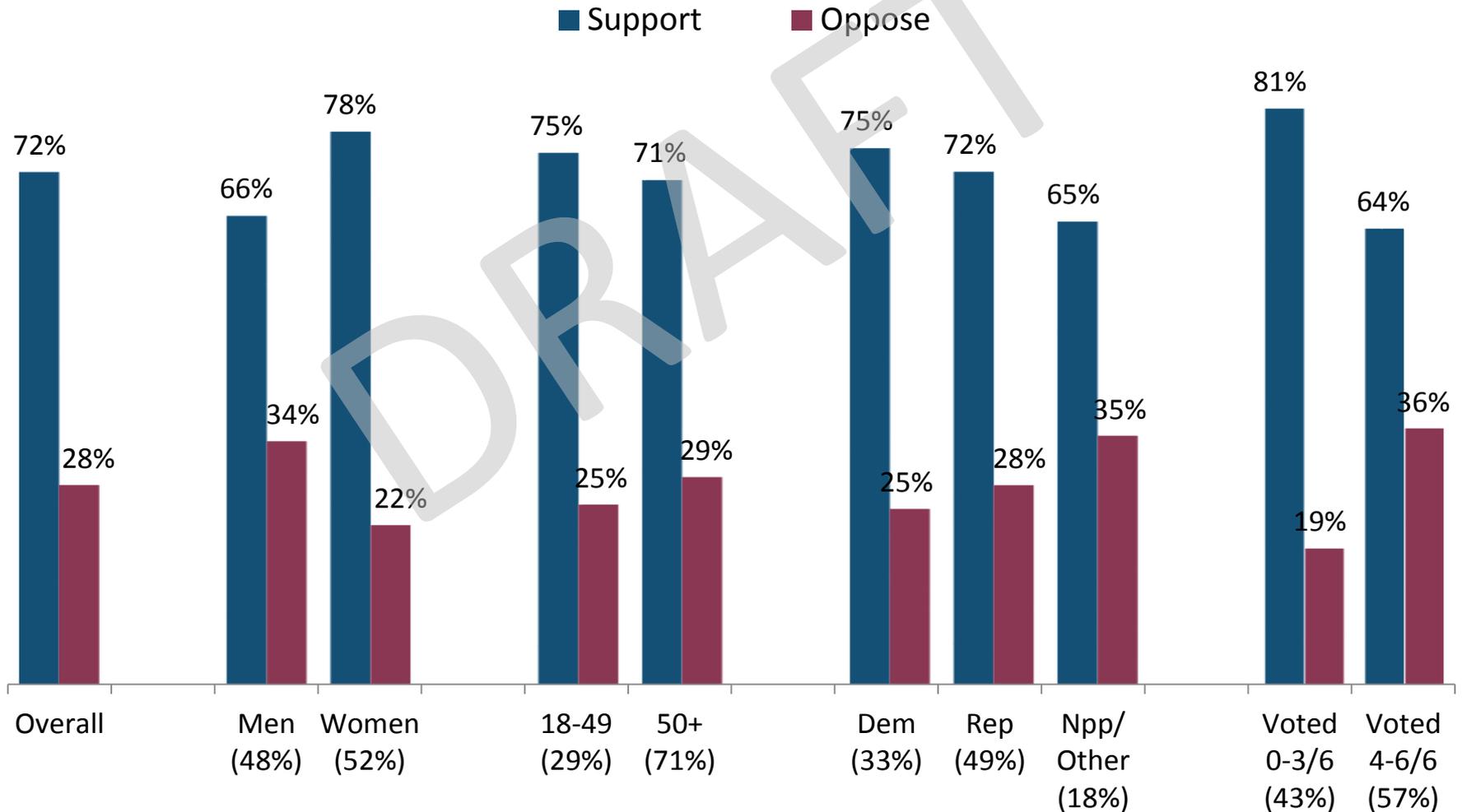
Older and NPP/Other voters show the highest level of support for the half-cent measure. Younger voters show the most resistance.



Q13. I'd like to read you a measure that could be on the ballot this November in Madera County. If the election were held today, would you vote "yes" to approve or "no" to reject a measure that reads:

Initial Vote – One-Cent by Subgroup

The demographic support for a one-cent measure raises more potential red flags, particularly regarding support among high propensity voters, which is currently under two-thirds.



Q13. I'd like to read you a measure that could be on the ballot this November in Madera County. If the election were held today, would you vote "yes" to approve or "no" to reject a measure that reads:

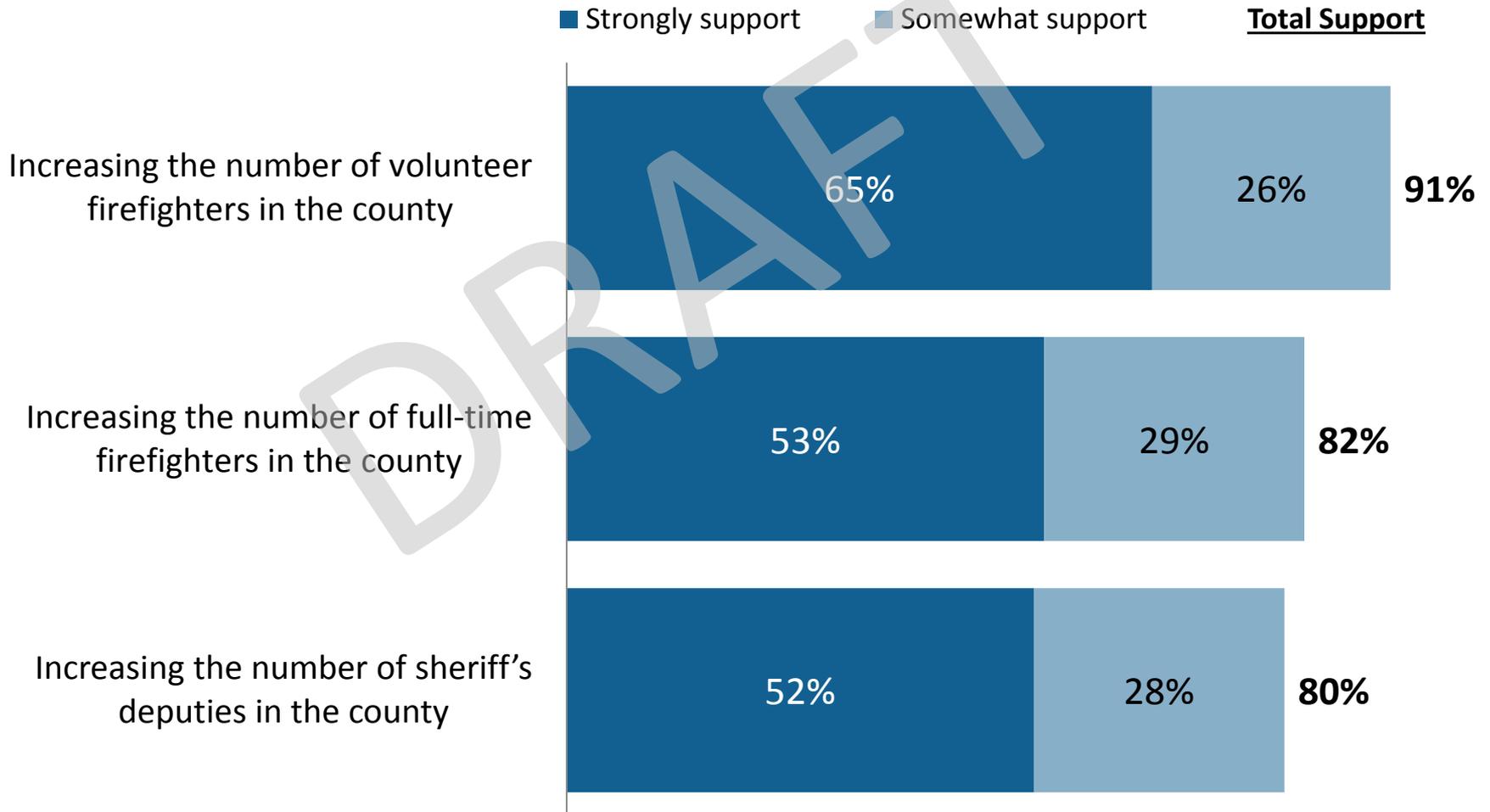
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Measure Components & Messaging



Sales Tax Components – Staff Increases

All staff increases are strongly supported, but voters support increasing the number of volunteer firefighters over full-time fire fighters and sheriff's deputies.



Q19-30. Now I'm going to read you some of the specific elements of the Madera County public safety sales tax measure. After each please tell me if you support or oppose that particular element.

Sales Tax Components – Addtn’l Improvements

Voters support all proposed improvements to the existing fleets and equipment. They especially support additional protective equipment and training services for volunteer firefighters.

■ Strongly support ■ Somewhat support **Total Support**

Providing necessary personal protective equipment for new firefighters



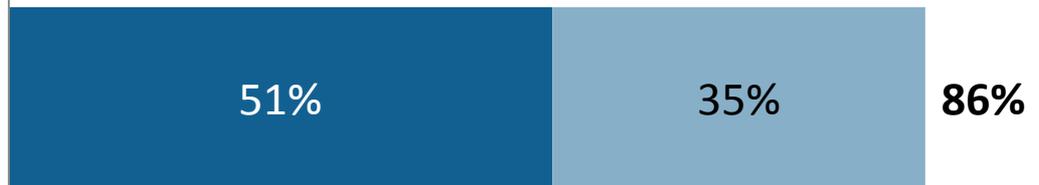
Providing instructional and training services for volunteer firefighters as a recruiting incentive



Adding to and upgrading the existing fleet of fire engines and other emergency vehicles, some of which are more than twenty years old



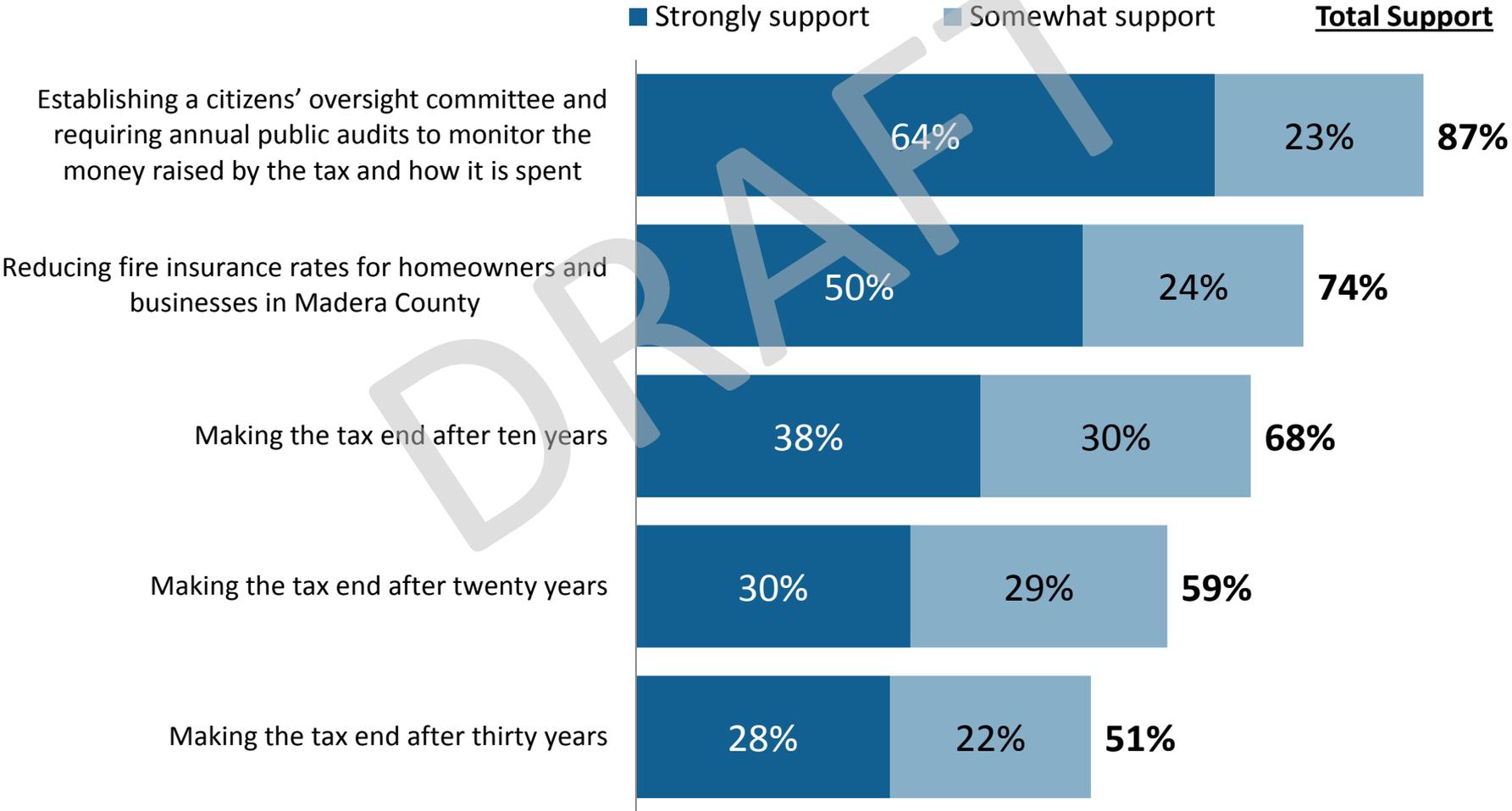
Building additional fire stations and updating existing stations that are over eighty years old or in temporary buildings



Q19-30. Now I'm going to read you some of the specific elements of the Madera County public safety sales tax measure. After each please tell me if you support or oppose that particular element.

Sales Tax Components – Fiscal and Logistics

Voters strongly support developing a citizens' oversight committee to monitor spending of the money earned from the tax. Voters are more inclined to support a tax that lasts a shorter period of time.



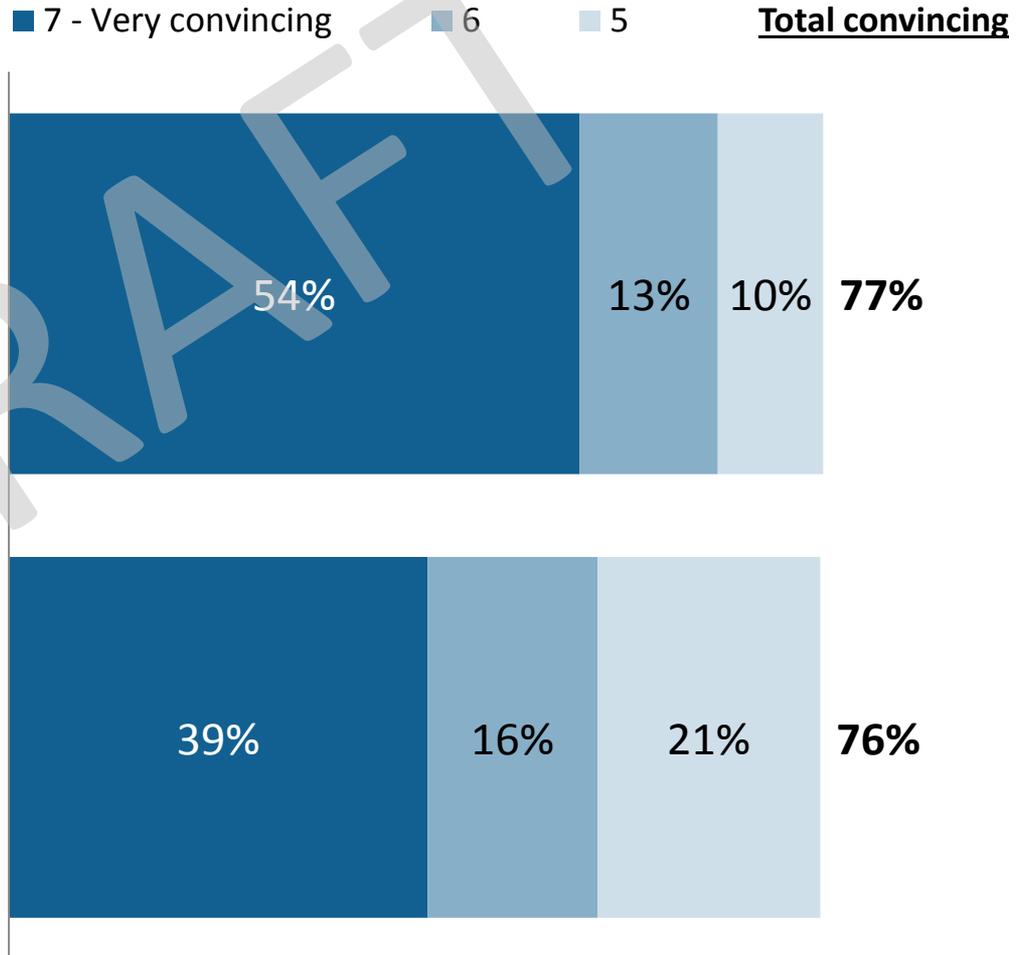
Q19-30. Now I'm going to read you some of the specific elements of the Madera County public safety sales tax measure. After each please tell me if you support or oppose that particular element.

Support Messaging

Voters are most convinced by the creation of a citizens' oversight committee and the promise that the money will only be spent on local public safety services.

All money raised by this measure will be spent locally to provide fire protection, sheriff, and emergency response services in Madera County. The money cannot be taken by the state or used for any other purpose, and there will be strict accountability with a Citizen's Oversight Committee and annual public audits to ensure all money is spent properly.

Madera County has the same number of full-time firefighters today as we did in the 1920s. This measure will raise funds to increase staffing of fire engines and stations, which will reduce response times, increase the effectiveness of firefighting, and improve firefighter and resident safety.



Q31-35. Now I'd like to read you some things people might say about the proposed measure, starting with what supporters might say. After each statement, please tell me how convincing it is as a reason to vote yes. Please use a scale from one to seven, where one means not at all convincing and seven means a very convincing reason to vote yes on the measure.

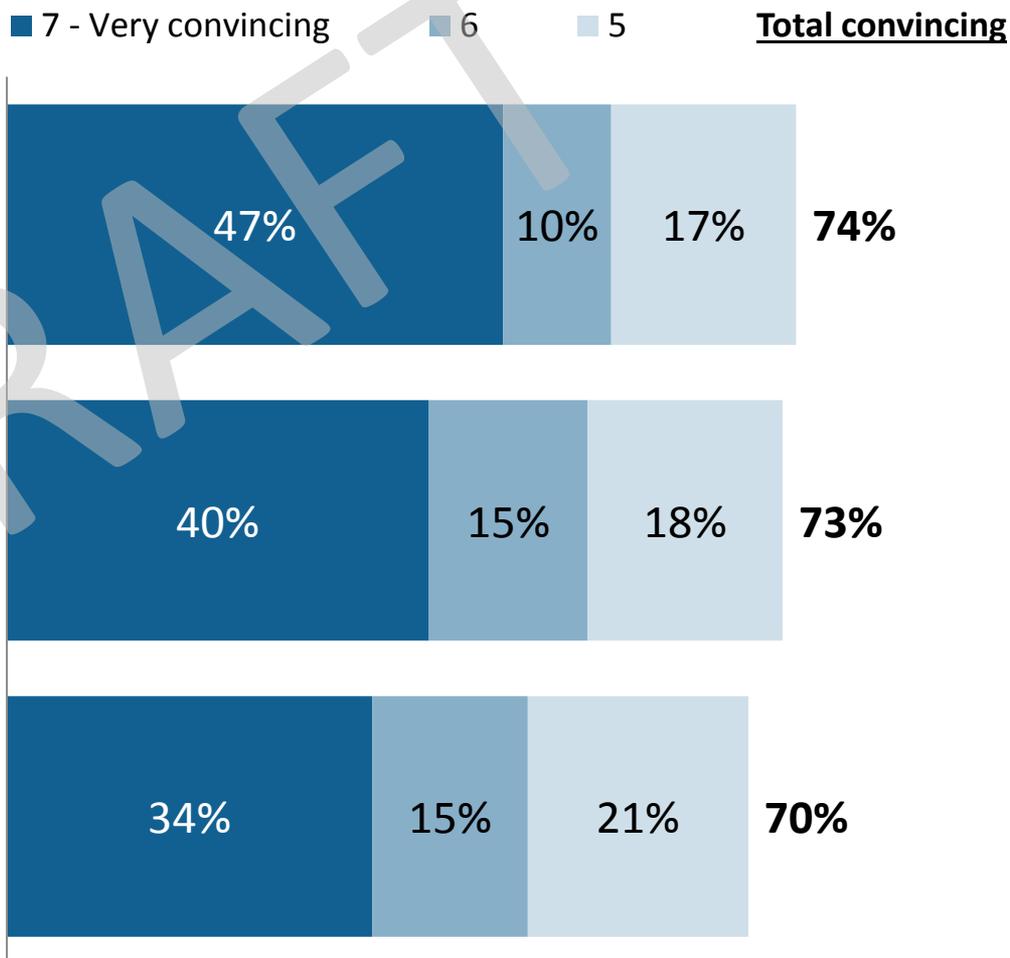
Support Messaging

Messages on improving response times and safety throughout the county are also well received.

In medical emergencies, every second counts. Permanent brain damage can occur in as little as four minutes and brain death in as little as eight minutes. This measure will improve emergency response times and save lives.

This measure will make our county safer by putting more staff in the Sheriff's Office and putting more deputies on the street, patrolling our county and helping keep our communities safe.

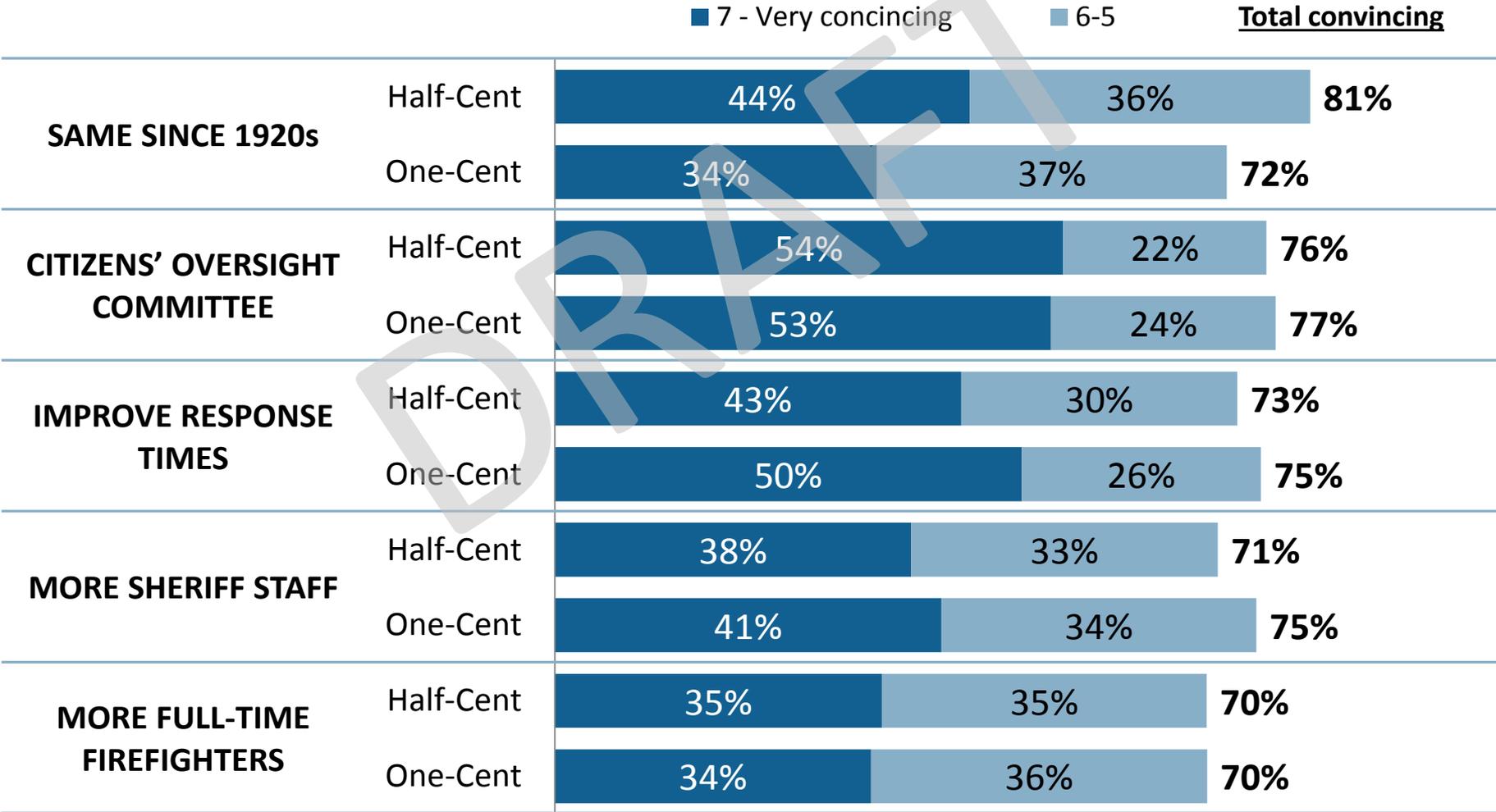
Response times are slower for all volunteer firefighting forces compared to full-time firefighters. This measure will make our communities safer by building and staffing new fire stations with full-time firefighters in communities that currently have to rely only on volunteer firefighters.



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Support Messaging by Sample

Voters who heard the half-cent measure are more convinced by messages to update the fleet, while those who heard the one-cent measure are most convinced by oversight annual audits.

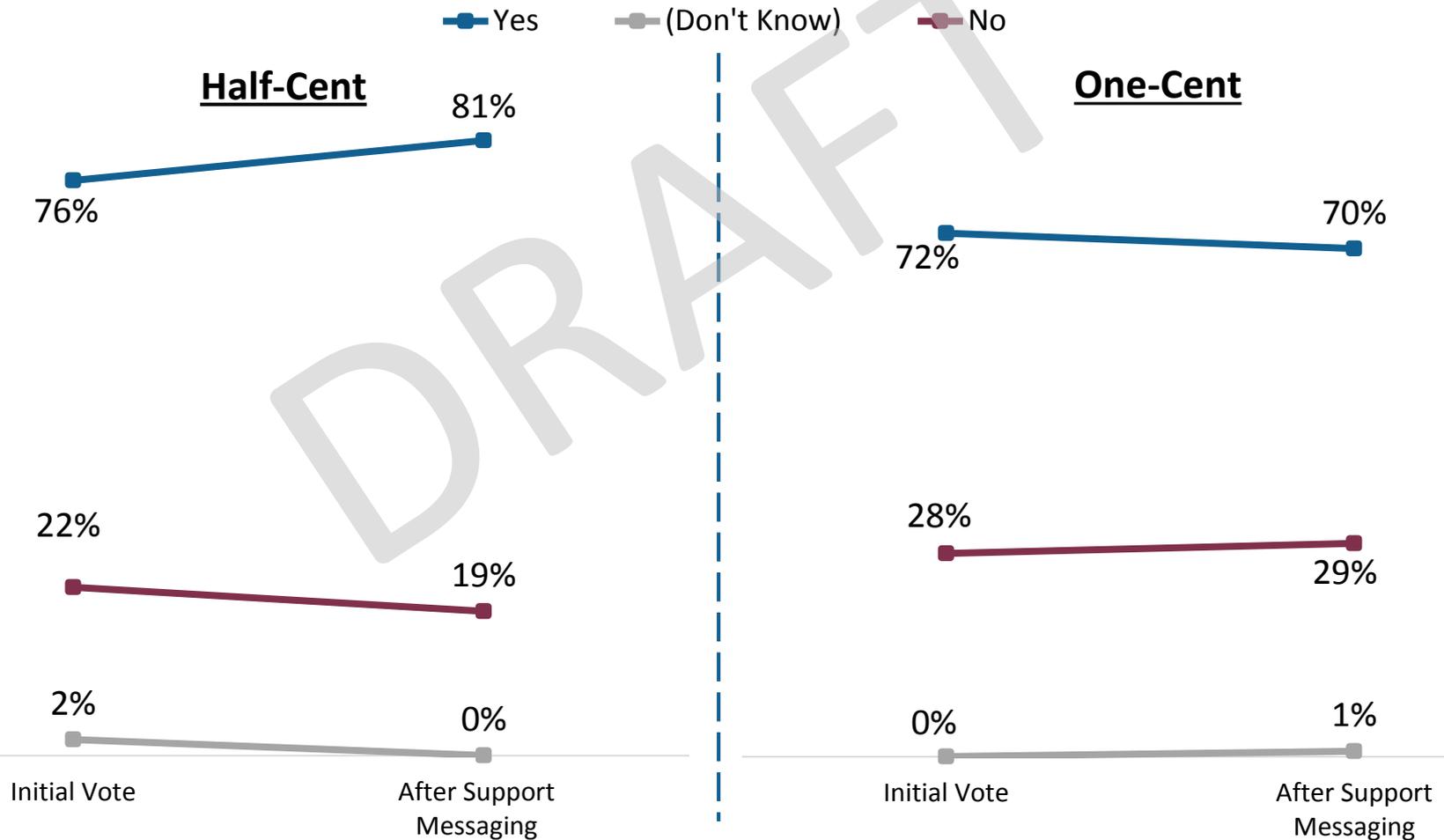


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After Support Messaging Vote

Positive messaging boosts support for the half-cent measure; support for the one-cent measure remains the same.



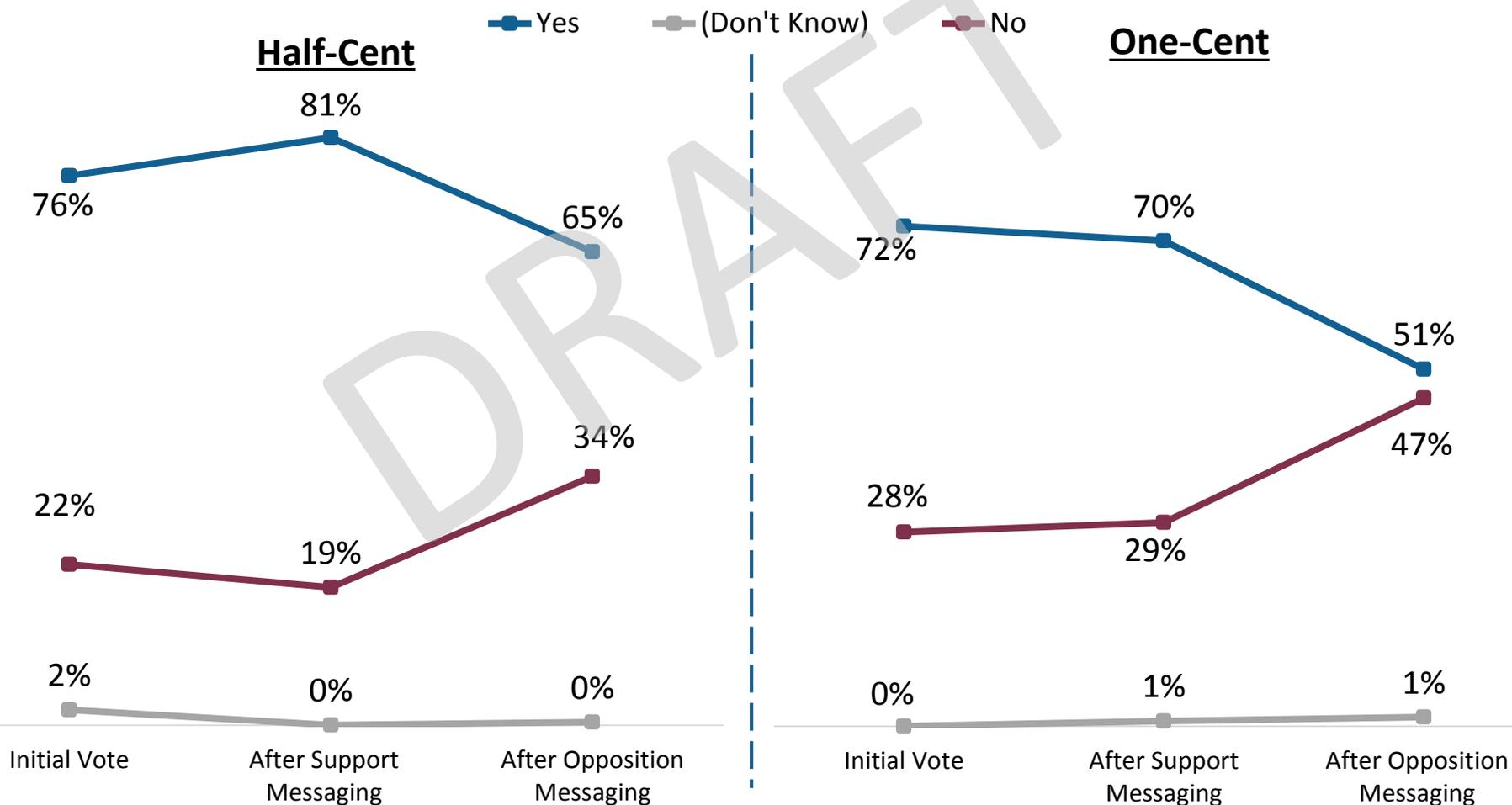
Q36. Sometimes people change their minds in a survey like this. Given everything you've heard, if the election were held today, would you vote "yes" to approve or "no" to reject a measure that reads:

Opposition Messaging

- ▶ Some people say we should not be increasing our sales tax when the cost of living continues to rise and working families in Madera County are struggling to make ends meet. The county already has enough money, and we simply cannot trust that this money will be used as promised. It could be wasted on huge pensions or other benefits for public employees.

After Opposition Messaging Vote

Negative messaging causes a large decline in support for both proposed measures, with the one-cent measure ending up with just over a majority support.



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Conclusions

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- ▶ While the situation may look different among the countywide electorate, passing a two-thirds measure among voters in the unincorporated areas of Madera County is possible, though challenging. A half-cent measure would have a higher likelihood of success compared to a one-cent measure.
- ▶ At either amount, it would take a very well organized effort to inform voters of the need for this measure and help them understand how they would personally benefit from it.

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