



Missouri Voter Support for a Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax Renewal

*Key Findings from a Statewide Likely Voter Survey
Conducted January 19-21, 2016*

DAVE METZ & LORI WEIGEL

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PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH & STRATEGY



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Methodology

- 603 telephone interviews with registered voters in Missouri weighted to reflect the November electorate
 - *298 with likely primary voters*
 - *305 with likely general election, non-primary voters*
- Conducted January 19-21, 2016 via landline and cell phones
- Margin of sampling error +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence interval for the general election sample, +/- 5.7% for the primary election sample
- Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%

Bipartisan Research Team



Dave Metz – FM3

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) – a national Democratic opinion research firm with offices in Oakland, Los Angeles and Madison, Wisconsin – has specialized in public policy oriented opinion research since 1981. The firm has assisted hundreds of political campaigns at every level of the ballot – from President to City Council – with opinion research and strategic guidance. FM3 also provides research and strategic consulting to public agencies, businesses and public interest organizations nationwide.



Lori Weigel - POS

Public Opinion Strategies (POS) is the largest Republican polling firm in the country. Since the firm's founding in 1991, they have completed more than 10,000 research projects, interviewing more than five million Americans across the United States. Media outlets, such as *The Wall Street Journal*, NBC News, CNBC, and National Public Radio, rely on Public Opinion Strategies to conduct their polling. The firm conducts polling on behalf of hundreds of political campaigns, as well as trade associations, not-for-profit organizations, government entities and industry coalitions throughout the nation.

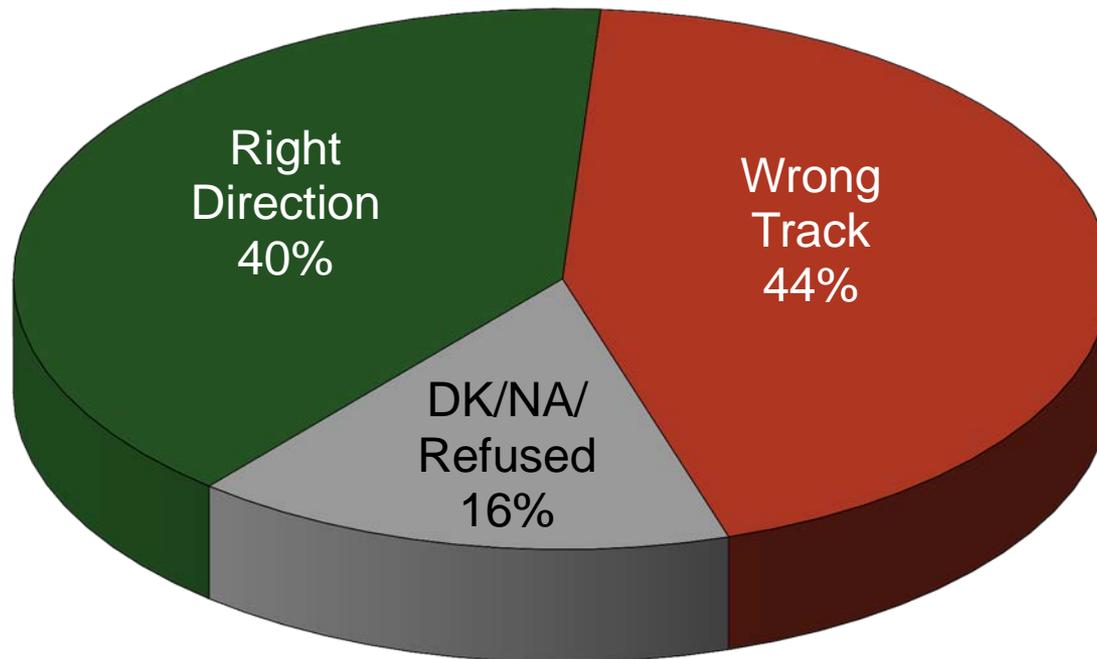
As a bipartisan team, FM3 and Public Opinion Strategies have researched a wide range of issues for nearly a decade, in particular on conservation-related initiatives and policies. Together, the two firms have jointly conducted research on behalf of political campaigns, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and public agencies in 44 states and nationally.



Mood of the Electorate

Missourians are divided on the state's direction.

Generally speaking, do you think things in Missouri are headed in the right direction, or do you feel things are off on the wrong track?



Views of elected officials are mildly favorable.

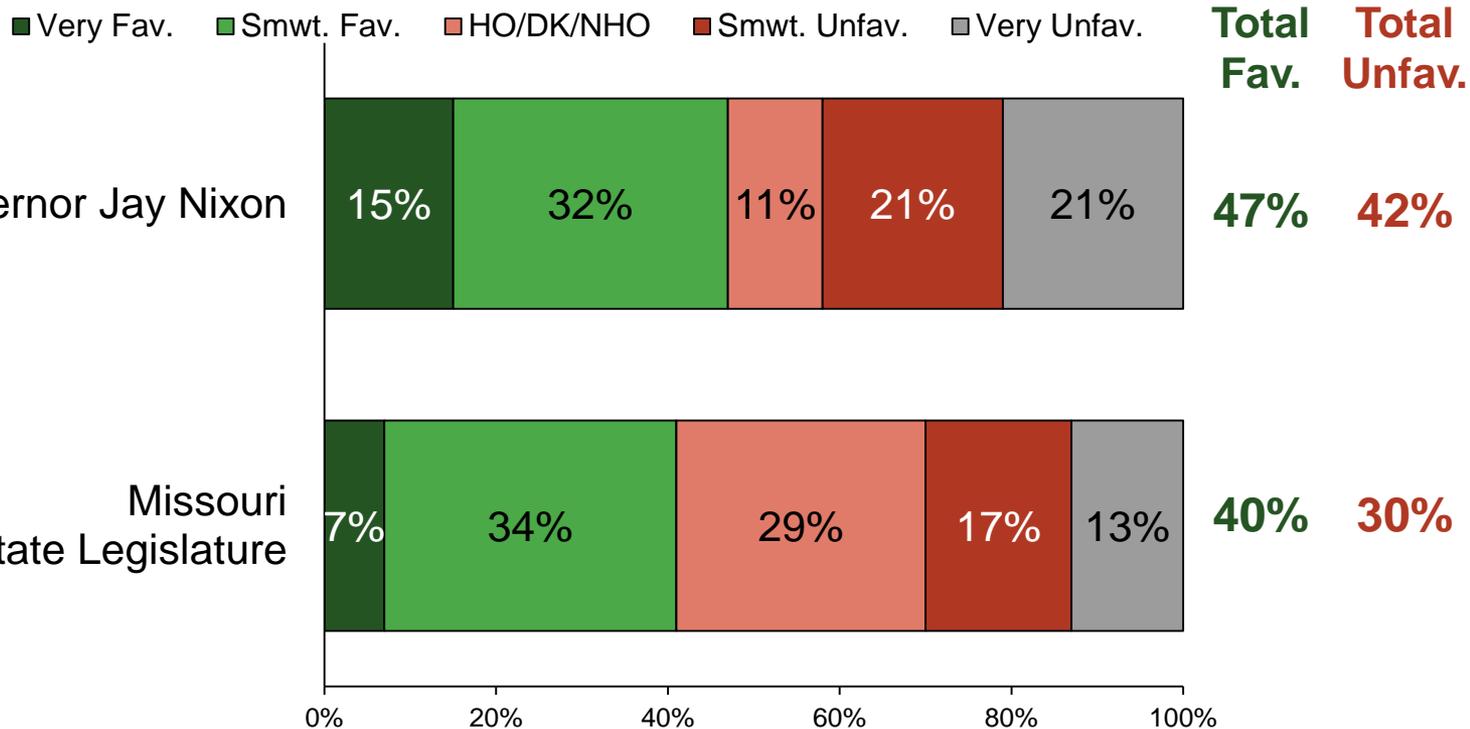
I'm going to read a couple of names of people and groups active in public life. Please tell me whether your impression is generally favorable or unfavorable. If you don't recognize a name, or if you have heard about them but do not have enough information to offer an opinion, please tell me so.



Governor Jay Nixon

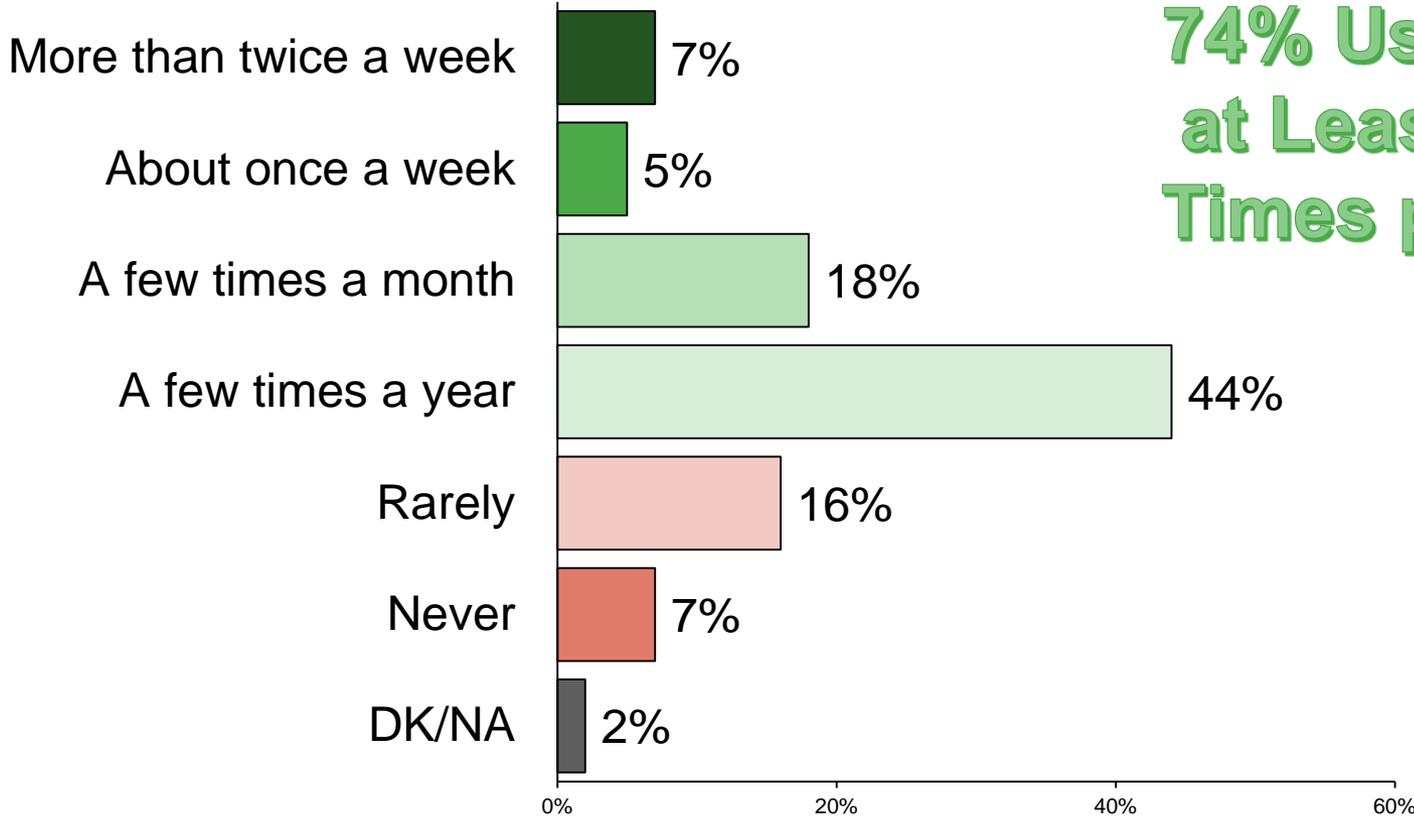


Missouri State Legislature



A majority visits state parks and open spaces at least once a year.

On average, how frequently do you use state public parks and open spaces?



**74% Use Them
at Least a few
Times per Year**



A Potential Sales Tax Renewal

Ballot Measure Language Tested

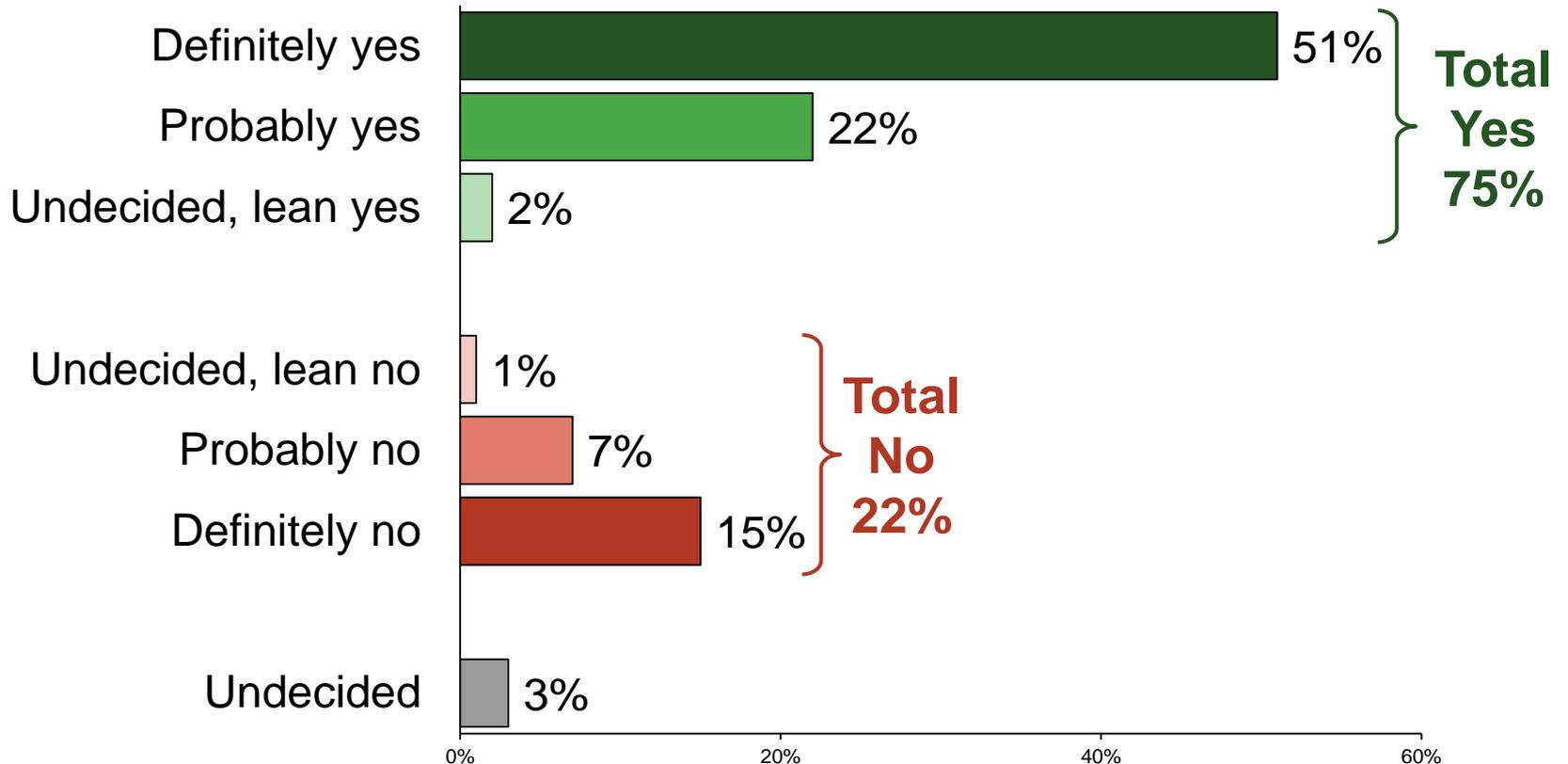
Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to:

- reauthorize for ten years the one-tenth percent sales/use tax for soil and water conservation; state parks, and historic sites; and
- resubmit this issue to a vote every ten years or at an earlier special election?

The proposed constitutional amendment continues until 2026, but does not increase, the existing sales and use tax of one-tenth of 1% that is set to terminate in 2016. The tax would generate approximately \$82 million annually for soil and water conservation efforts and operation of the state park system.

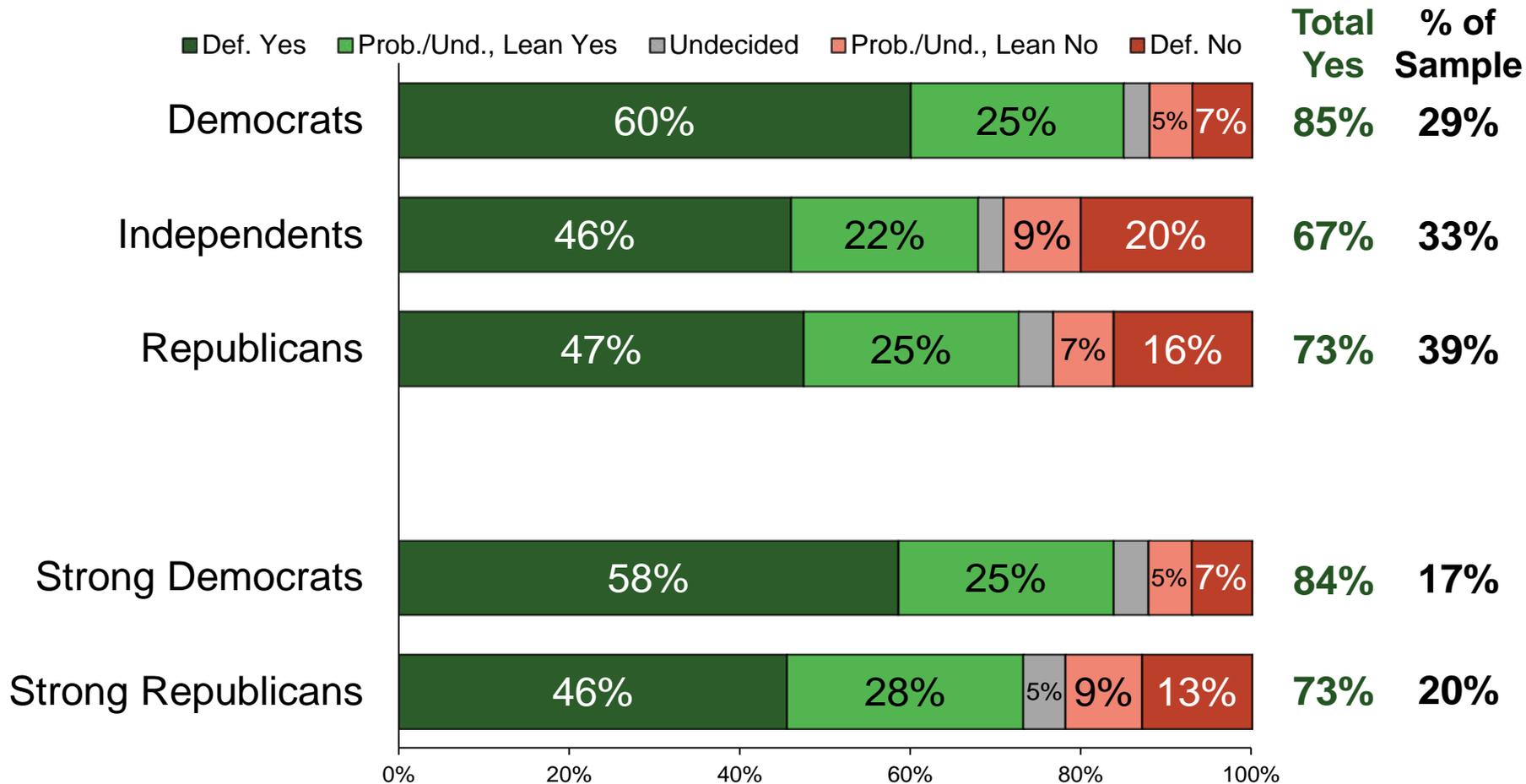
The sales tax renewal has broad and strong support.

If the election were today, would you vote yes in favor of this measure, or vote no to oppose it?



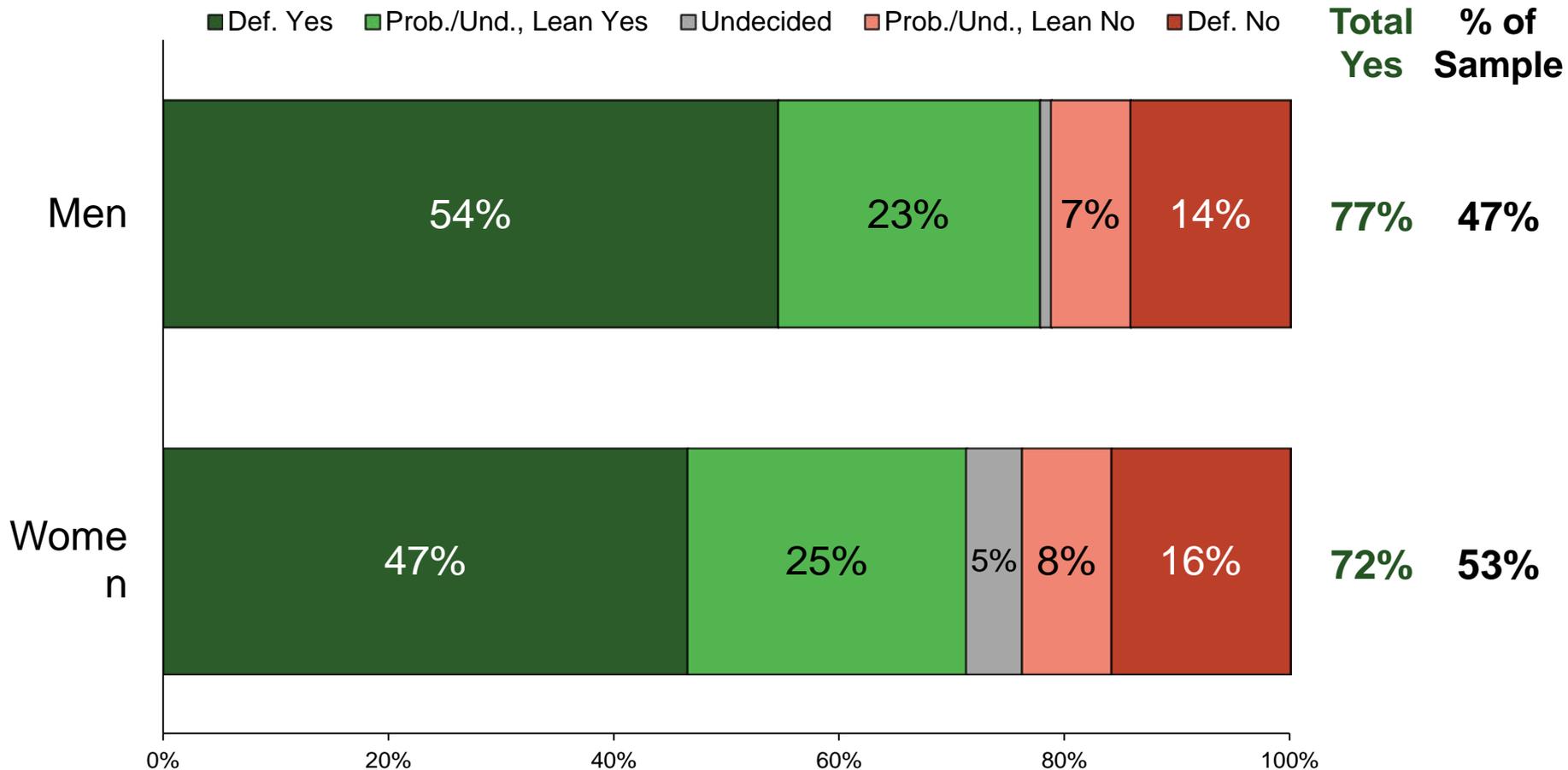
Nearly three-quarters of Republicans would vote yes, as would two-thirds of Independents.

Initial Vote by Party



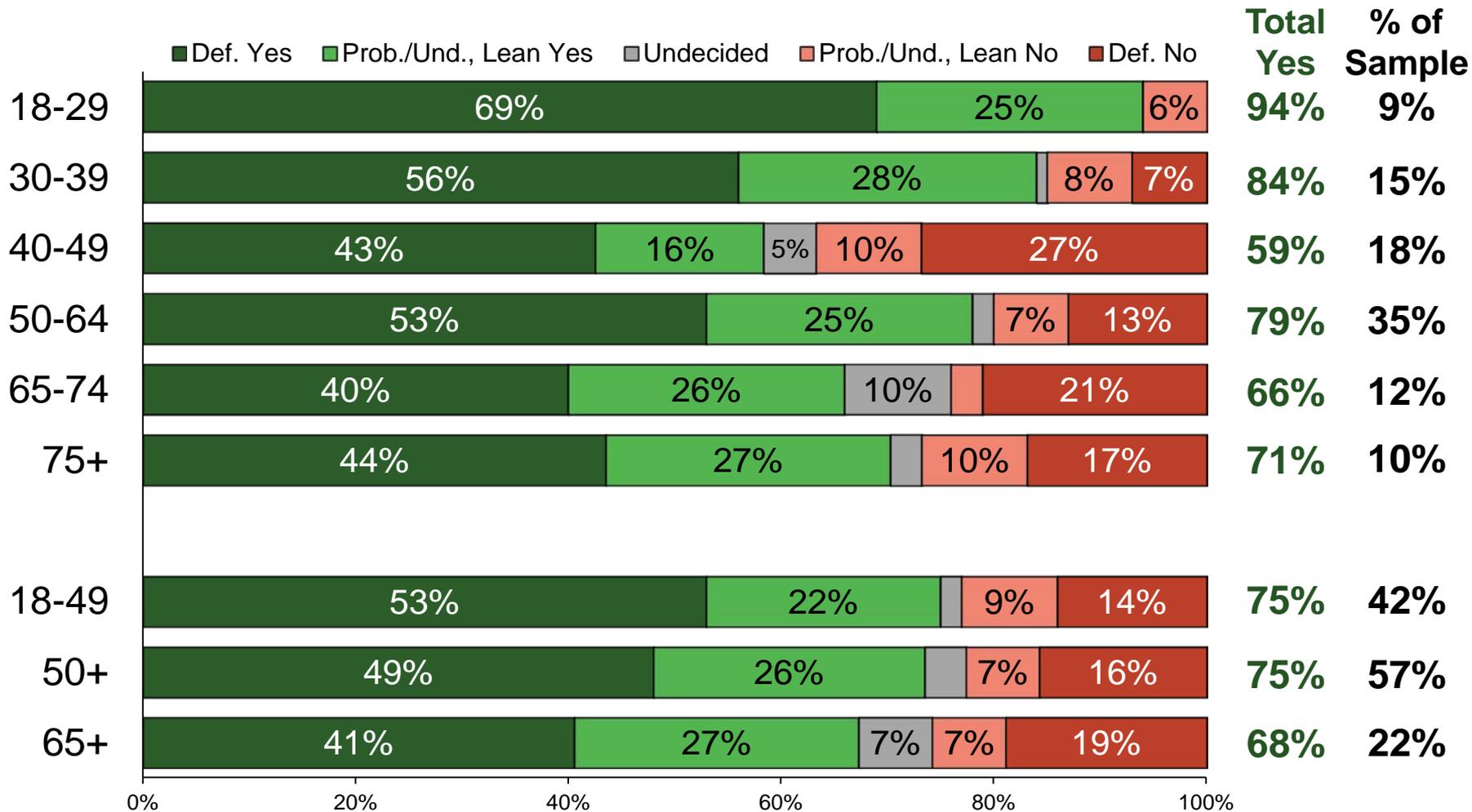
Men are a bit more supportive than are women.

Initial Vote by Gender



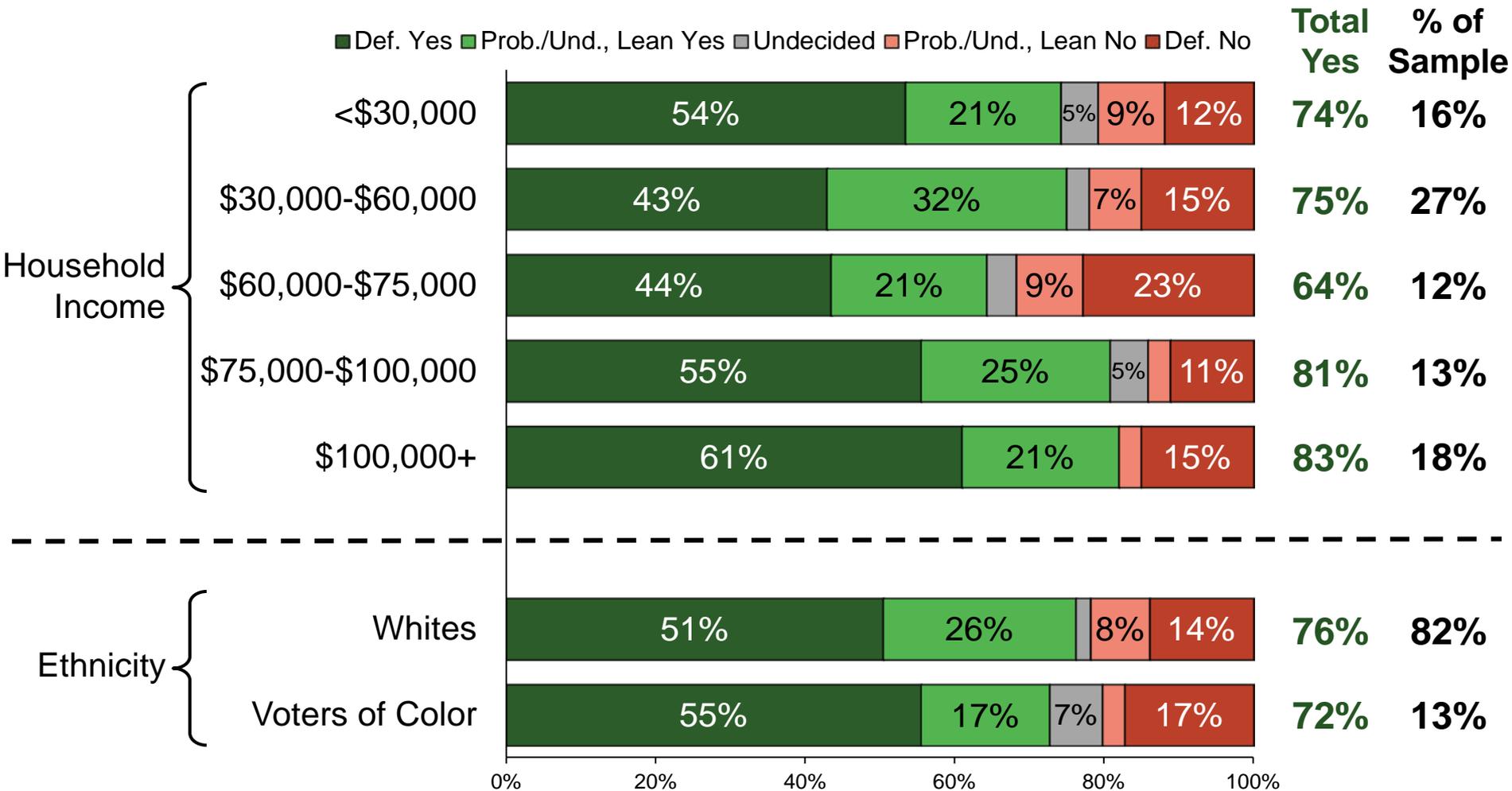
Support is much stronger among voters under age 40.

Initial Vote by Age



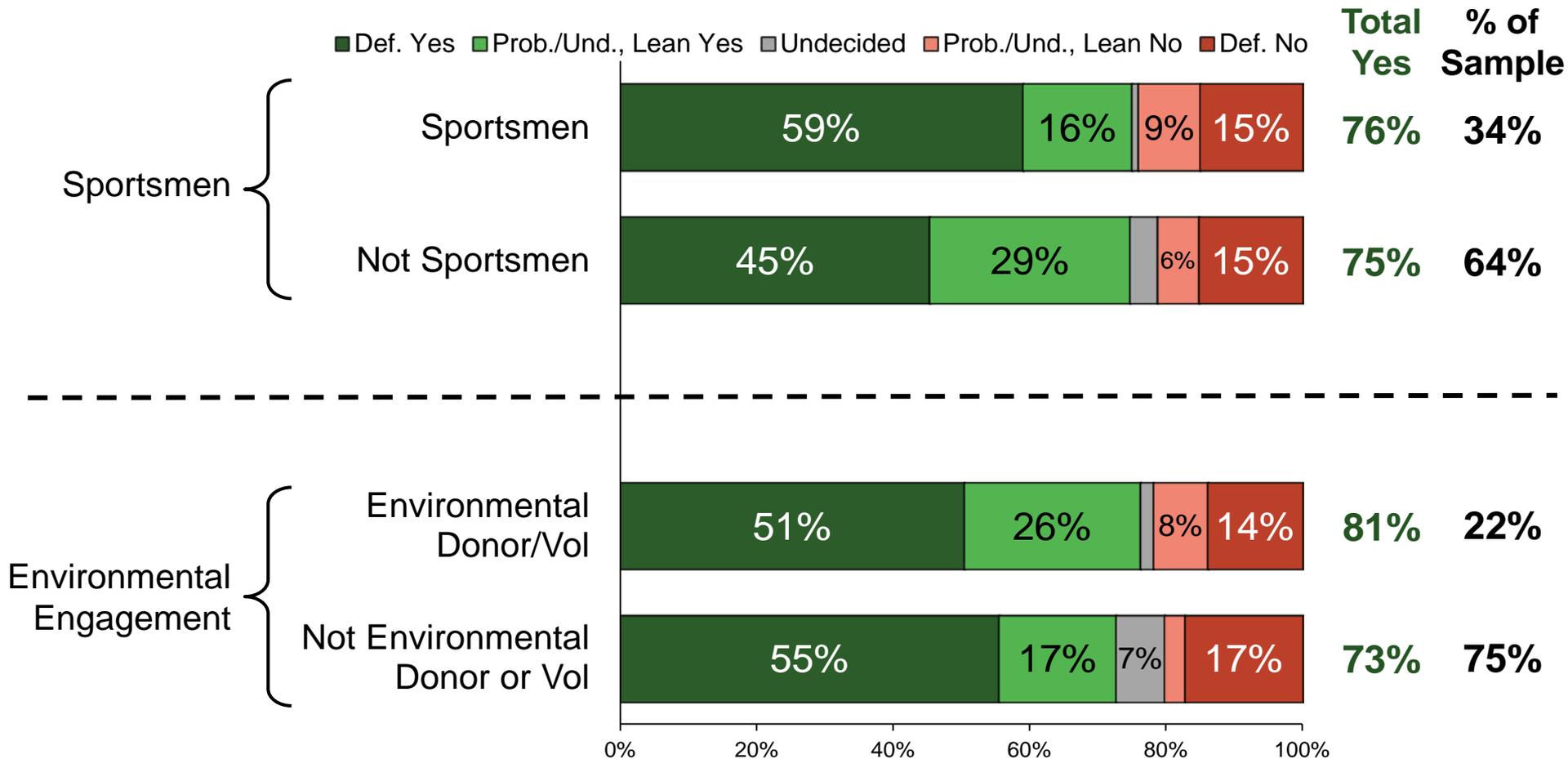
More affluent voters are stronger supporters of the measure; ethnicity makes little difference.

Initial Vote by Household Income and Ethnicity



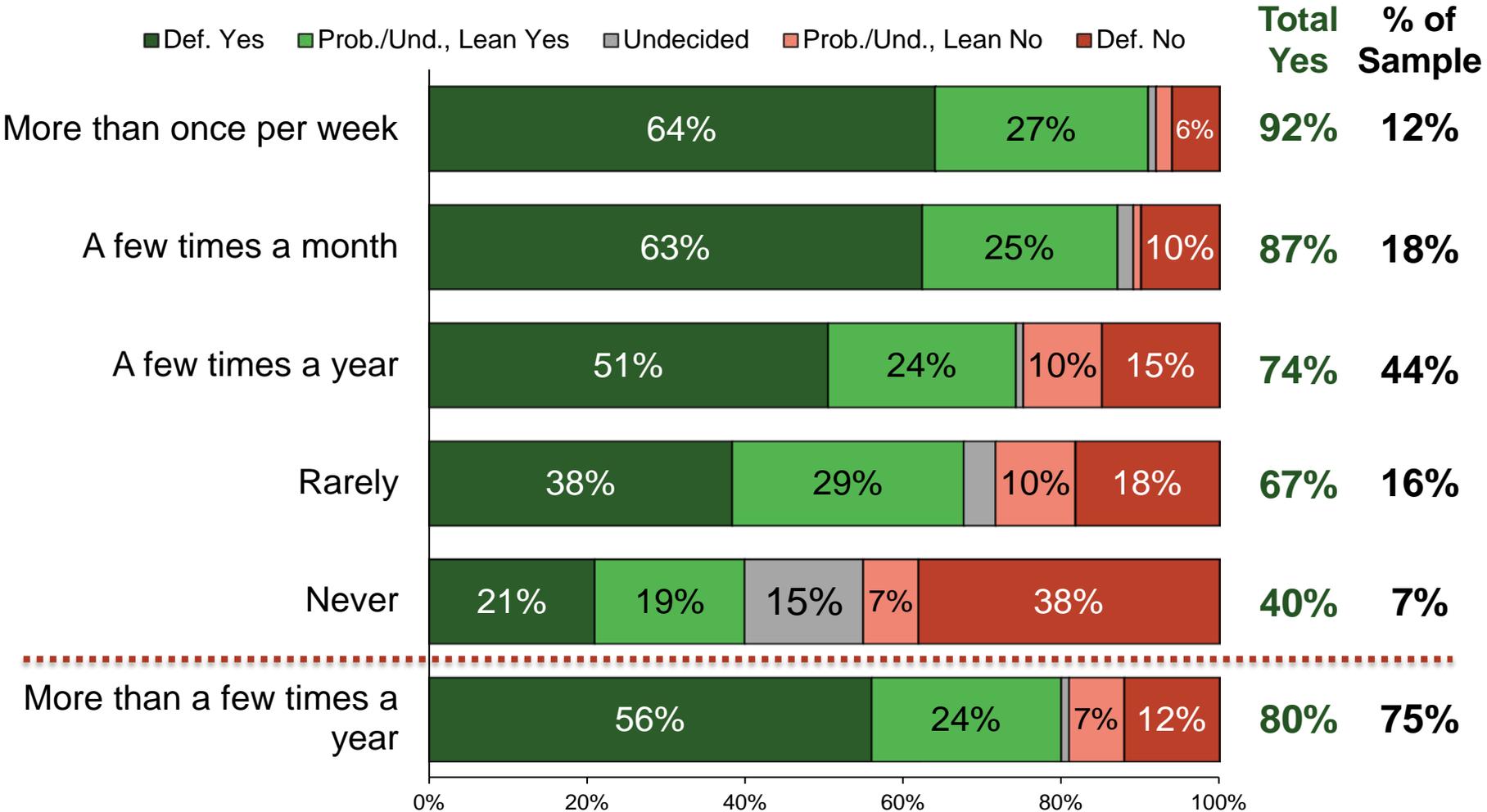
Sportsmen are especially strong supporters; more than four in five environmentalists would vote "yes."

Initial Vote by Sportsmen and Environmental Engagement



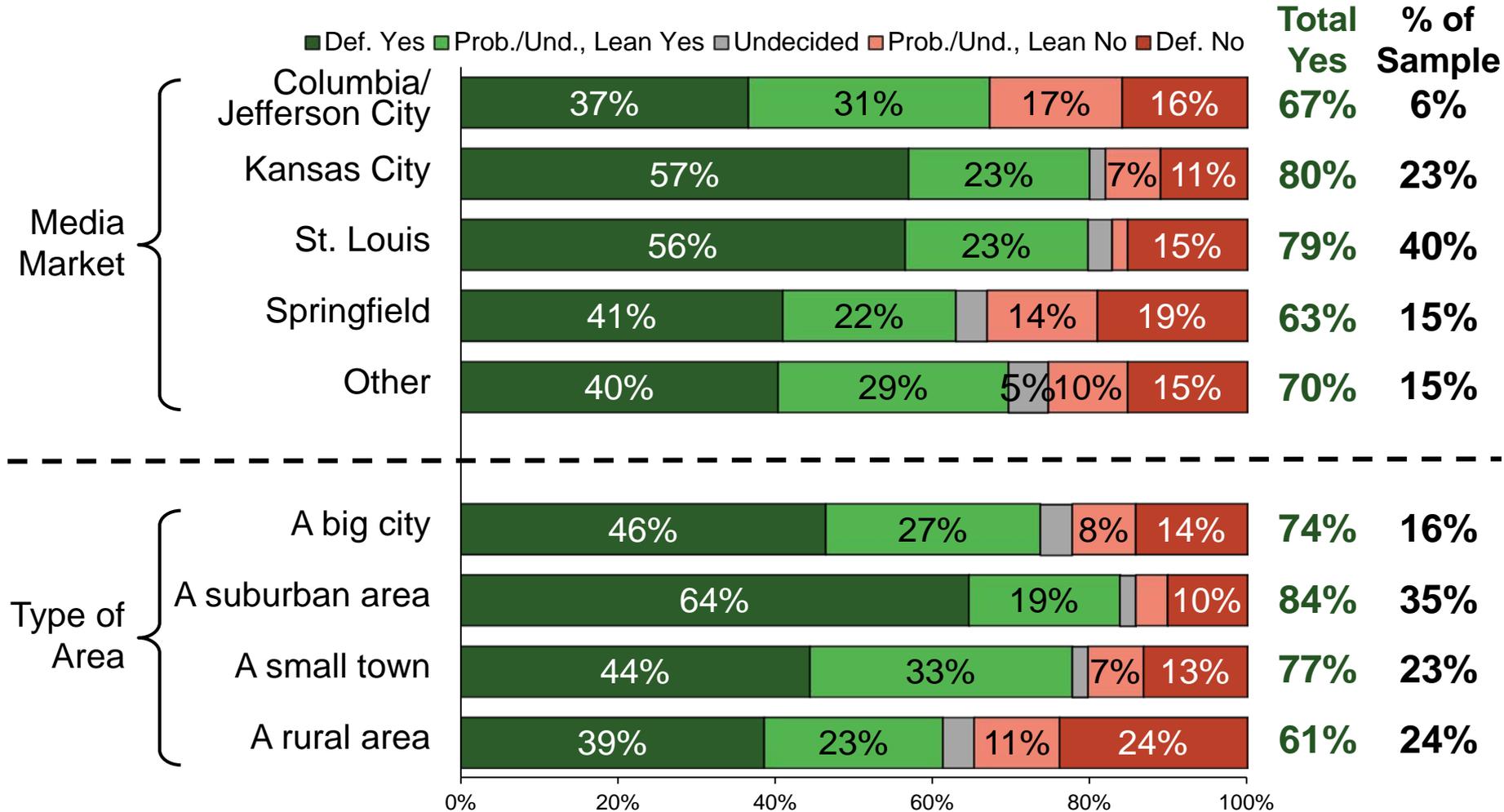
Frequency of park visits is strongly related to intensity of measure support.

Initial Vote by Park Visit Frequency



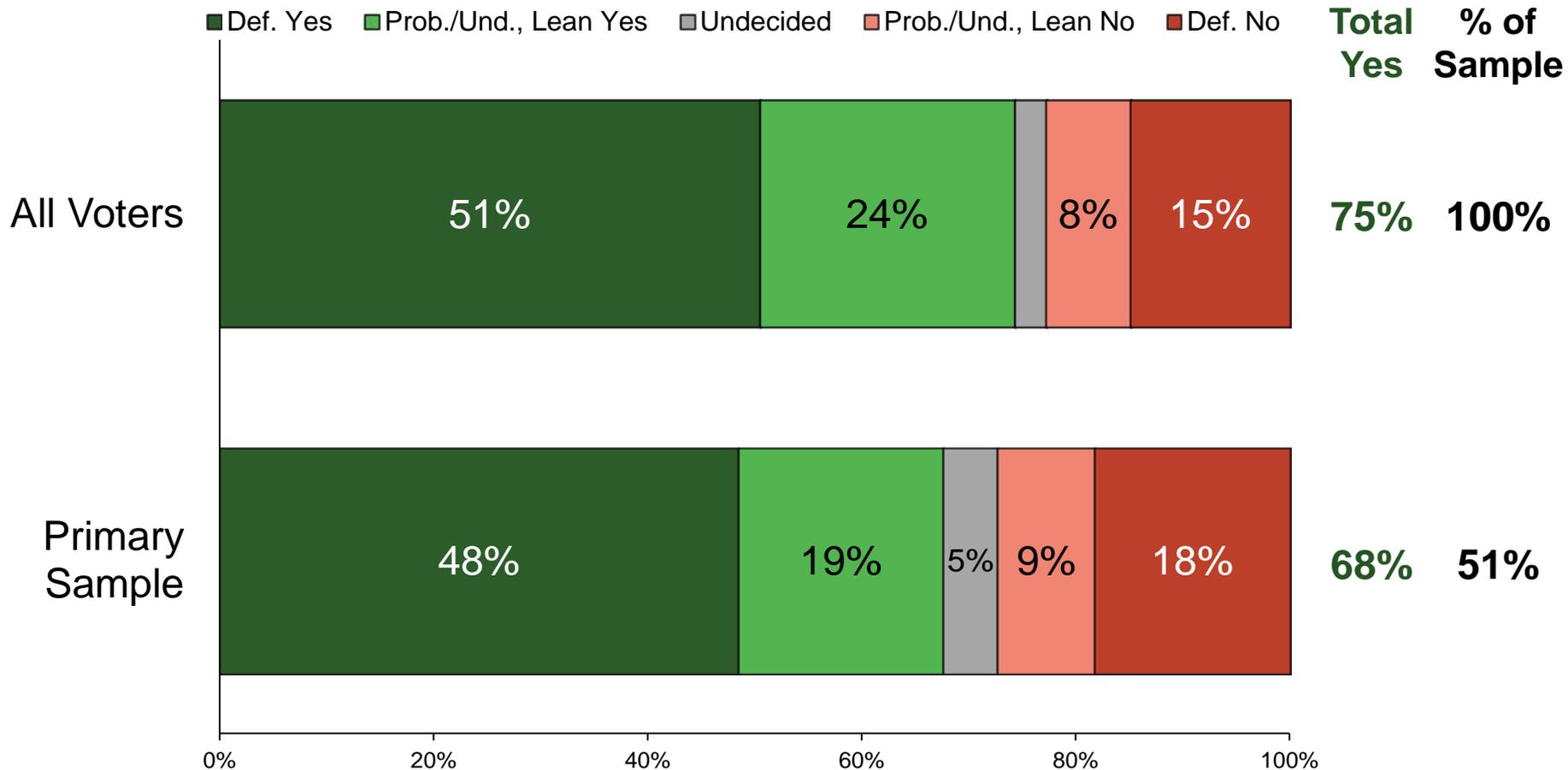
Majorities in every geographic area support the measure, with special intensity in suburban areas.

Initial Vote by Media Market and Type of Area



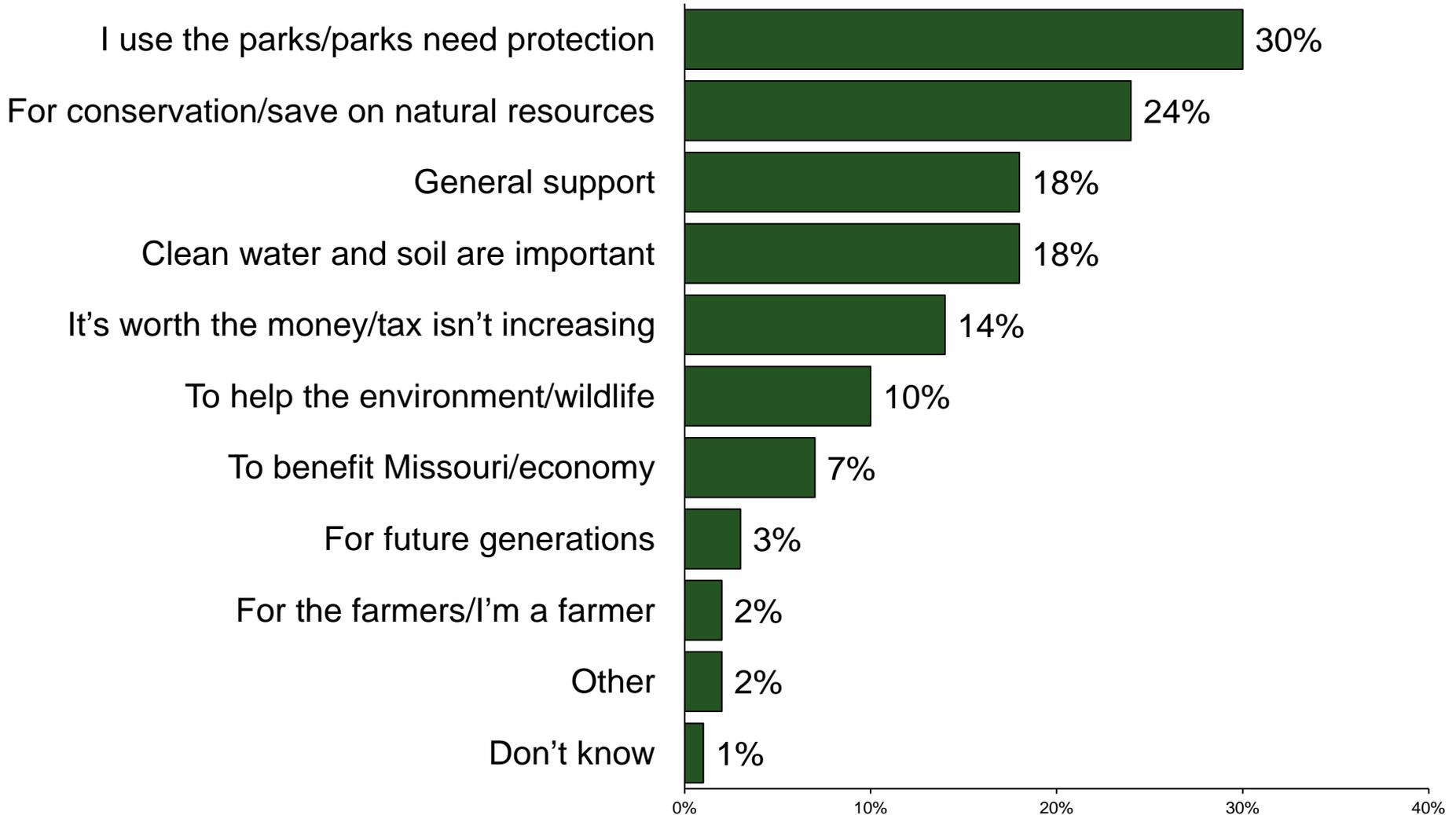
Support is somewhat less overwhelming, but still broad, among primary voters.

Initial Vote by Sample



“Yes” voters focus on support for parks and conservation.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **YES** on this ballot measure?*



Verbatim Responses from Supporters

There's a whole lot of people that depend on the state park for there summer vacation and I think it's necessary to keep them open.

We need to save all the land we can, not run it over with humans and machines. We need the free space.

We need it because of all the flooding we have had. It did a lot of damage and it needs to be fixed. Most people would go for it and it's not costing any more. It's just a continuation of a tax that is about to expire.

I was an avid hunter. I believe in taking care of the land; only take from nature what you need.

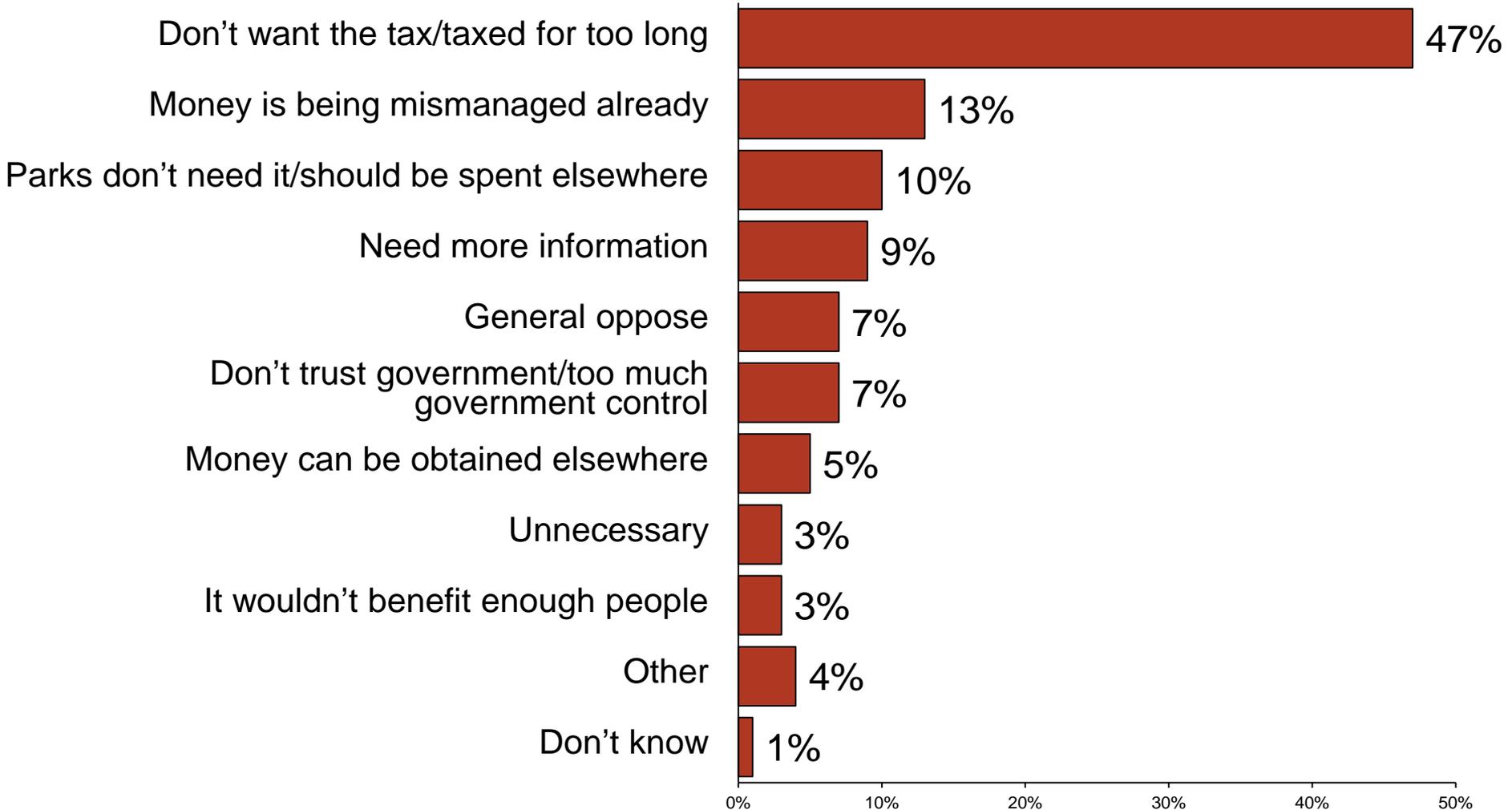
These issues have been so neglected for so long and pushed aside. We have been concerned about this problem for a long time.

We need the soil to be taken care of if we are to have crops, and the parks need to be taken care of. The future generation needs clean parks that are taken care of.

It doesn't sound like it is changing anything, and I like our parks.

Opponents are generally anti-tax.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on this ballot measure?*



Verbatim Responses from Opponents

We got much more important things we can do then worry about our soil and parks.

It has to do with taxes; we have too many taxes.

We pay enough taxes; they need to find other way to protect our soil. We already pay enough in taxes. Missouri is one of the lowest paying states; families already have a hard time to feed their families.

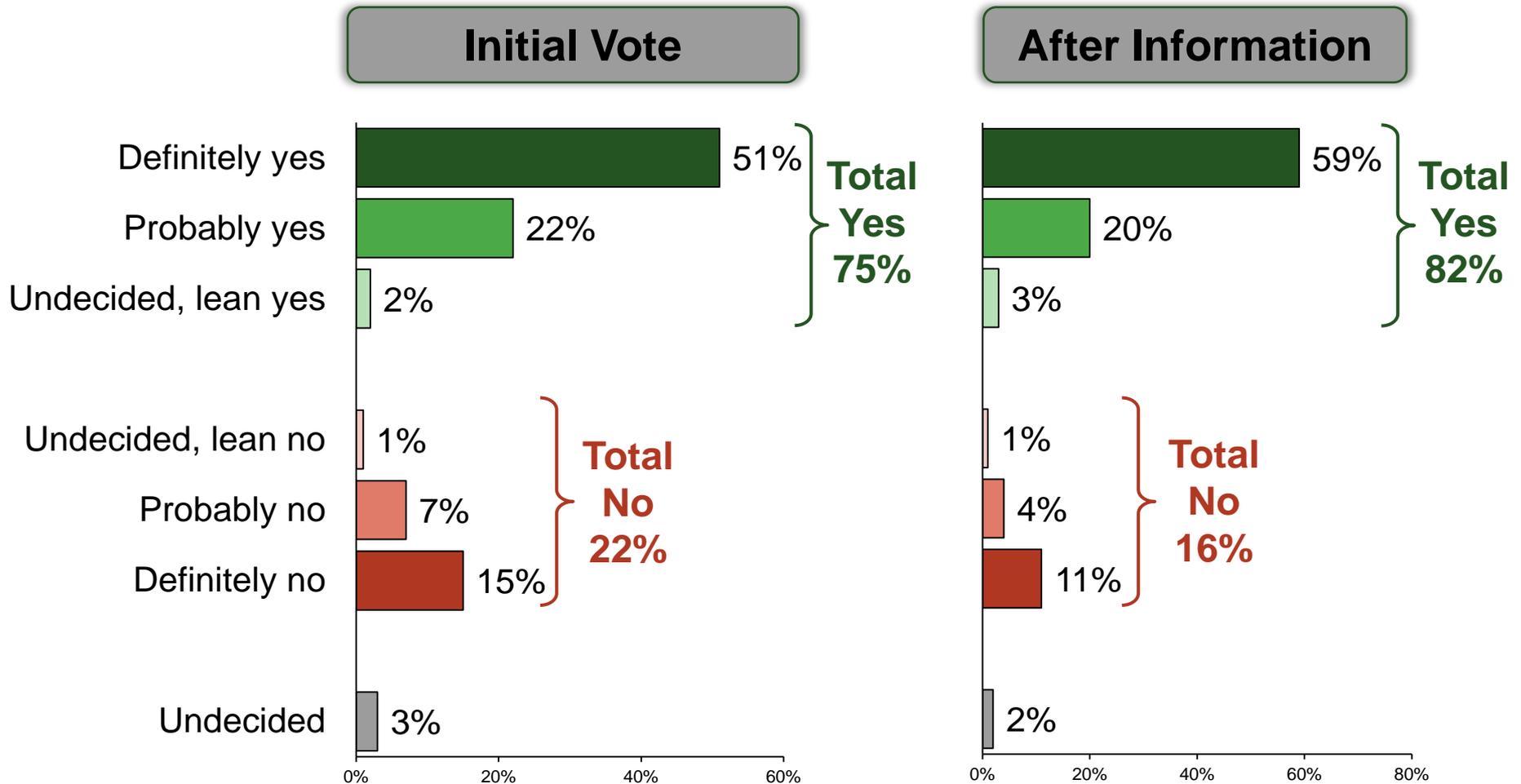
I'm hesitant to amend the Constitution. Would like to do more research first.

The government takes too much of our taxes and puts it to different things that they are supposed to be used for.

“Plain English” Explanation Tested

- This tax was first approved by the Legislature in 1984, and has been renewed by voters three times since then.
- Funds are split equally between state parks, and soil and water conservation programs. By law, these funds cannot be used for any other purpose.
- These programs depend on the state-parks-and-soil tax, and do not receive other state funding.
- State parks serve at least 18 million visitors each year, generating \$800 million in economic activity for the state.
- This measure would renew the tax for an additional ten years, with no increase in taxes.

This explanation boosted support to more than four in five, and increased the “definite yes.”

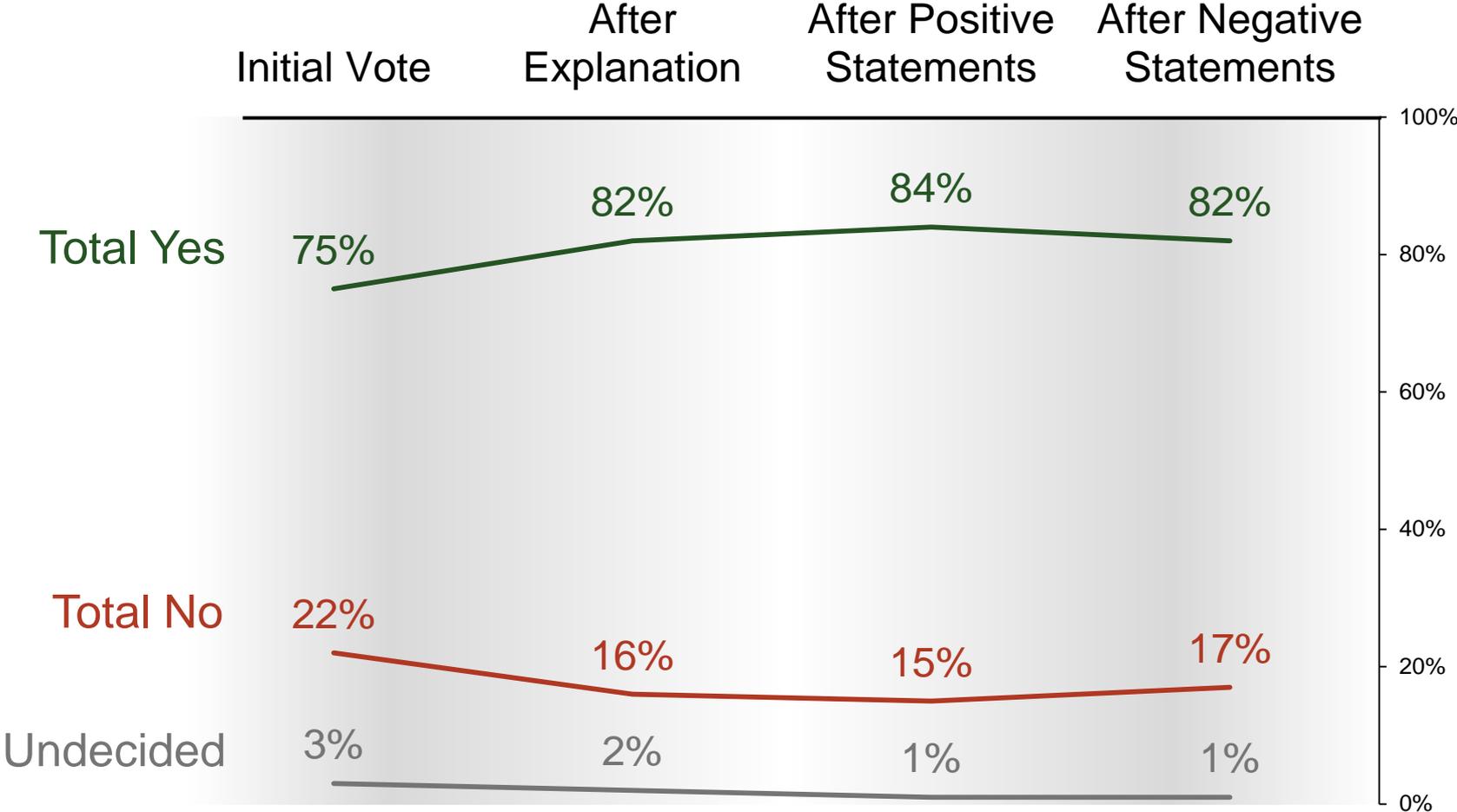




Identifying Persuadable Voters

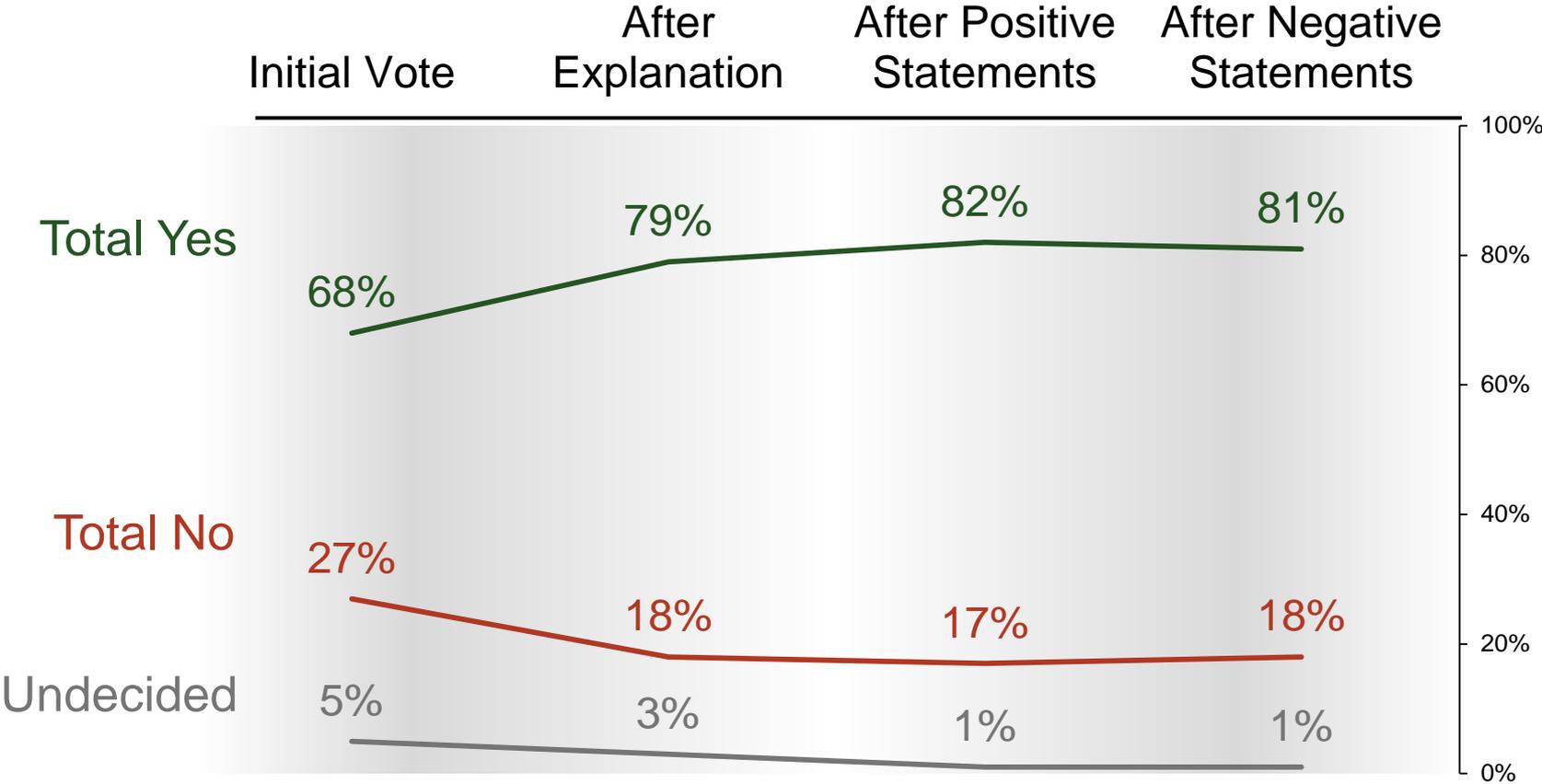
Support remains very broad after messaging.

All Voters



With more information, primary voters offer support similar to general election voters.

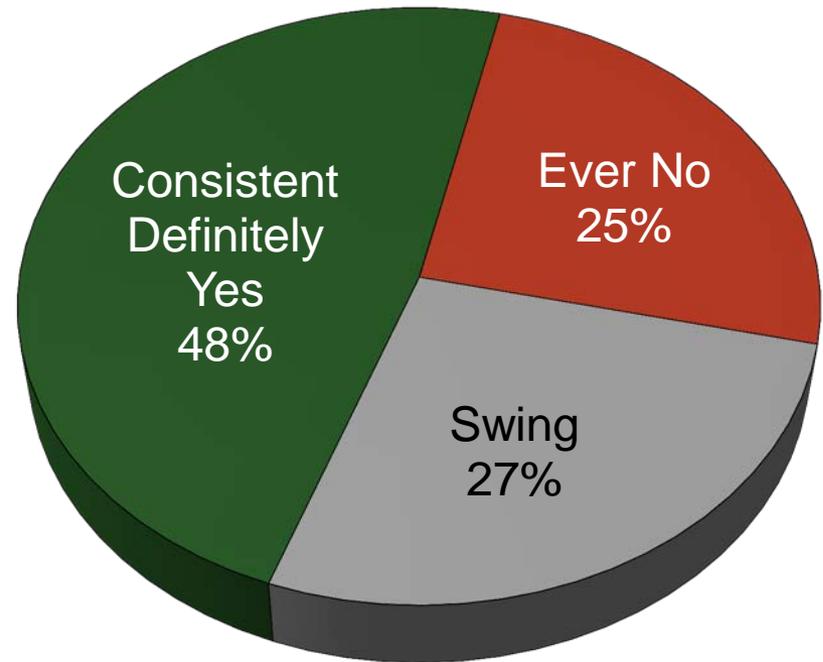
Primary Voters



Segmenting the Electorate Based on Consistency of Support

- ❖ **Consistent Definitely Yes:** Voters who consistently indicated they would “definitely” vote “yes” on the measure
- ❖ **Ever No:** Voters who at any point indicated they would vote “no” on the measure
- ❖ **Swing:** Voters who do not fall into any of the other categories – remaining consistently undecided or switching positions

The following slide shows demographic groups that *disproportionately* fall into one category or the other.



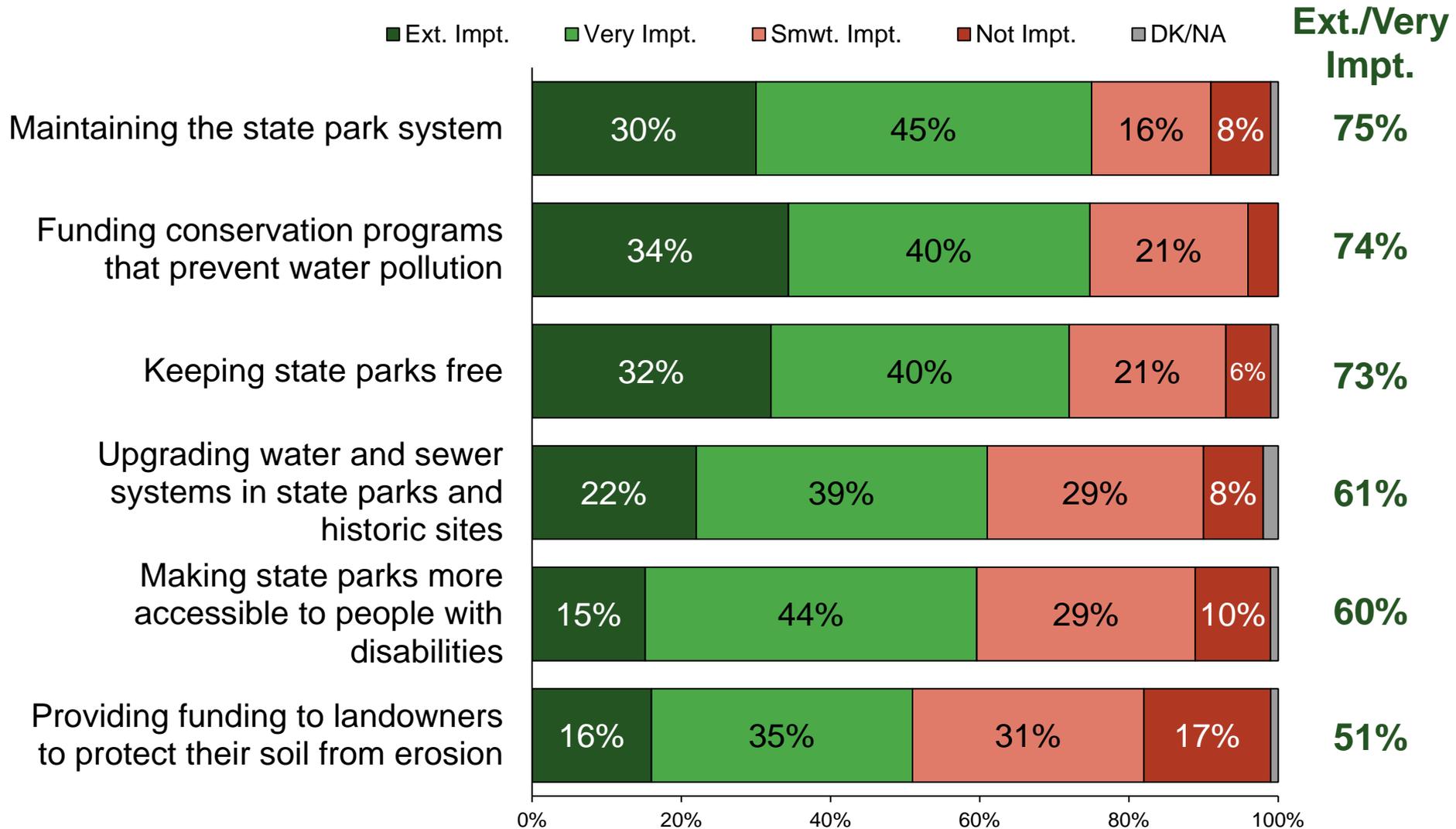
Demographic Profiles of the Segments

Consistent Definitely Yes	Swing	Ever No
48% of the Electorate	27% of the Electorate	25% of the Electorate
Ages 18-29	Ages 65-74	Never Visit Parks
Live in Suburban Area	Ages 65+	Live in Rural Area
Visit Park a Few Times Per Month	Women Ages 50+	Ages 40-49
Democratic Women	Democratic Men	Independent Men
Visit Park More Than Weekly	HH Income \$30,000-\$60,000	Independents Ages 18-49
Jackson County	Ages 75+	Republican Women
HH Income \$100,000+	Other Media Market	HH Income \$60,000-\$75,000
Democrats Ages 18-49	Congressional District 7	Columbia/Jefferson City Media Market
Republican Men	Live in Small Town	Independents
Hunters	Independent Women	Springfield Media Market
Congressional District 6	Live in Big City	Visit Parks Rarely
Congressional District 5	Congressional District 4	Congressional District 4
Sportsmen	Not Sportsmen	Congressional District 8
Democrats	Republicans Ages 50+	Voters of Color
Women Ages 18-49	Strong Republicans	Women Ages 50+

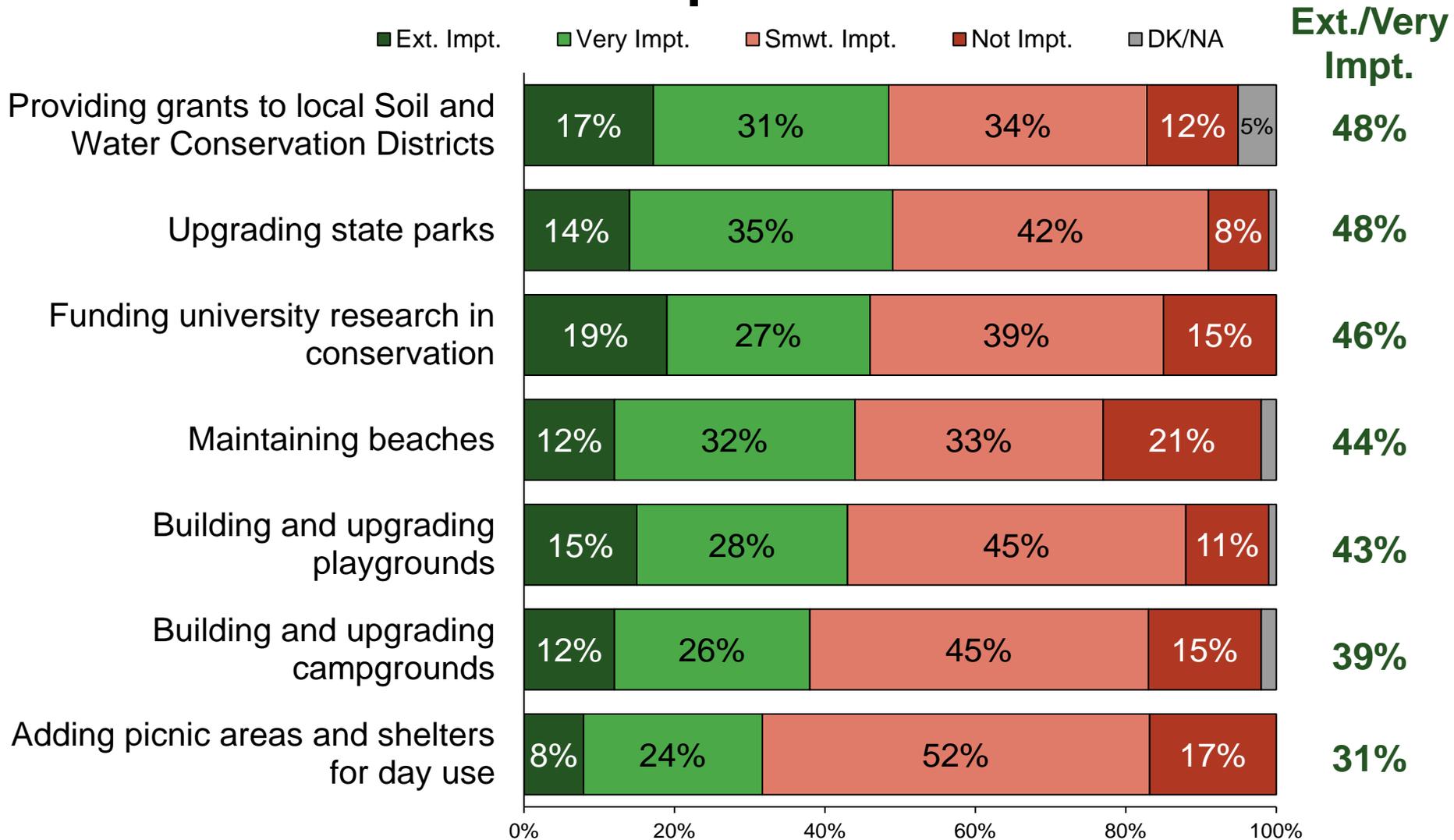


Priorities for Funding

Maintaining parks and preventing water pollution are voters' top priorities.



Facilities for recreation are rated as lower priorities.



This ranking is more or less consistent across persuadable subgroups of the electorate.

(% Extremely/Very Important)

Statement	All Voters	Initial Soft Yes	Swing	Positive Intensity Movers
Maintaining the state park system	75%	75%	81%	62%
Funding conservation programs that prevent water pollution	74%	78%	81%	57%
Keeping state parks free	73%	69%	70%	71%
Upgrading water and sewer systems in state parks and historic sites	61%	61%	65%	51%
Making state parks more accessible to people with disabilities	60%	58%	61%	64%
Providing funding to landowners to protect their soil from erosion	51%	46%	51%	43%
Providing grants to local Soil and Water Conservation Districts	48%	32%	36%	35%
Upgrading state parks	48%	50%	51%	19%
Funding university research in conservation	46%	37%	41%	17%
Maintaining beaches	44%	38%	43%	26%
Building and upgrading playgrounds	43%	40%	43%	36%
Building and upgrading campgrounds	39%	40%	42%	39%
Adding picnic areas and shelters for day use	31%	33%	30%	12%



Impact of Messaging

Support Messages Tested

Messages

(FUTURE GENERATIONS) We owe it to our children and grandchildren to protect Missouri's open spaces, clean water, and family farms, so that future generations can continue to enjoy them the same way we do.

(KIDS) In today's digital age, it is more important than ever to preserve places where children can safely run, play, and experience nature. This measure will maintain Missouri's system of parks, trails, and natural areas, giving more kids access to outdoor activities that will improve their overall physical health and well-being.

(NO TAX INCREASE) This measure does not increase taxes. It will simply continue the existing tax rate.

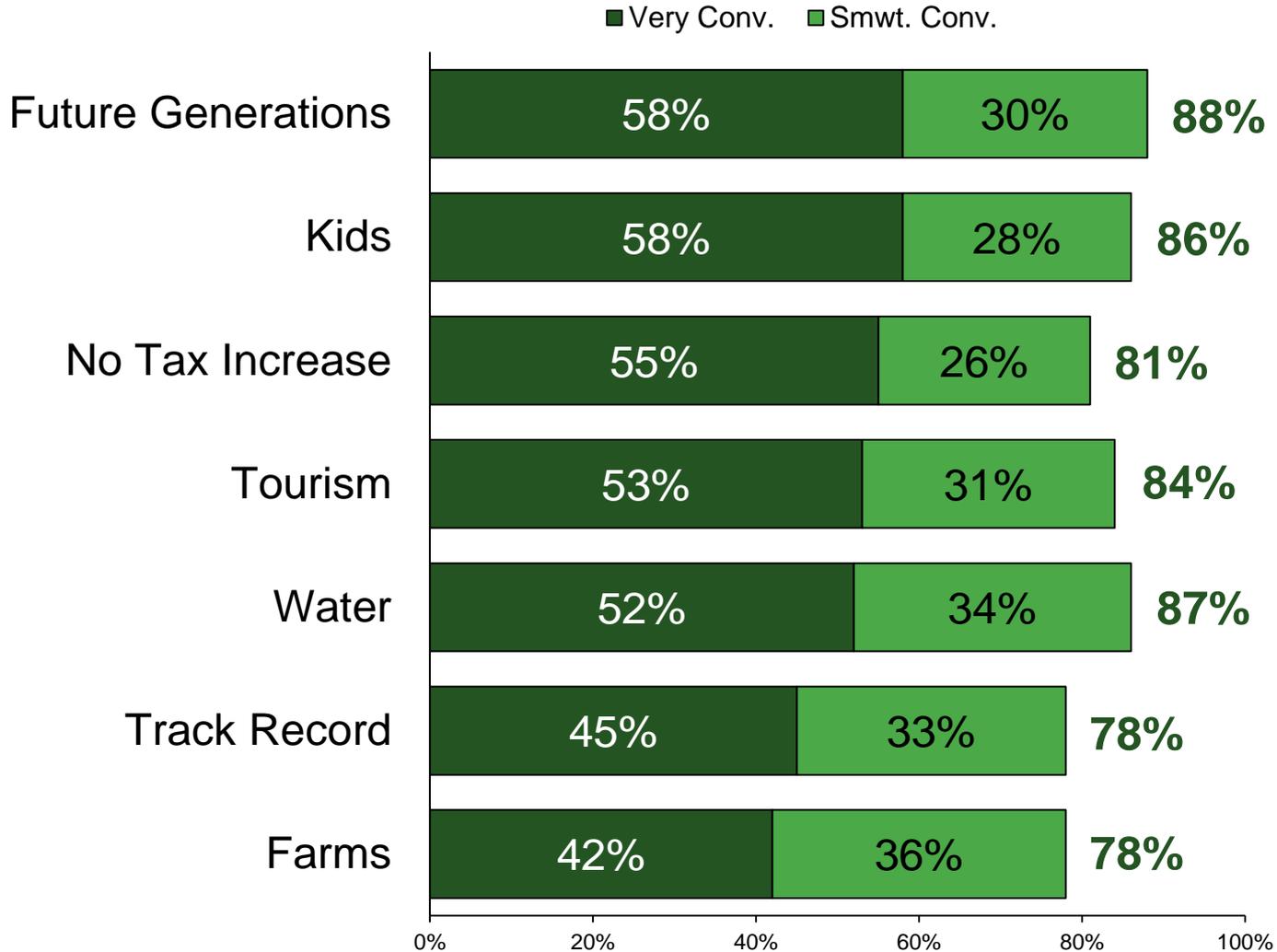
(TOURISM) The parks and soil sales tax is a proven investment in Missouri's economy. Each year, more than 18 million people visit our state parks and historic sites, contributing \$800 million to the economy and supporting fourteen thousand jobs.

(WATER) This program helps protect Missouri's rivers and streams from runoff, animal waste, and other pollutants. It's a small price to pay to keep the water we drink, fish, swim, and boat in safe and clean.

(TRACK RECORD) For more than 30 years, parks and soil tax funding has been spent as promised, with visible results in every state park and throughout our farmland. This measure has passed with overwhelming voter support three times in the past.

(FARMS) This measure preserves Missouri's rich, agricultural land. In the 30 years the tax has been in place, soil erosion has been reduced by half, helping Missouri family farmers, and ensuring that we have the safest, most abundant and most reliable food source in the world.

An appeal to future generations was near-universally persuasive.



Three in five swing voters found this message very convincing.

(% Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Initial Soft Yes	Swing	Positive Intensity Movers
Future Generations	58%	60%	60%	54%
Kids	58%	50%	53%	48%
No Tax Increase	55%	50%	53%	43%
Tourism	53%	51%	53%	40%
Water	52%	48%	52%	46%
Track Record	45%	40%	42%	34%
Farms	42%	39%	43%	47%

Voters of all partisan subgroups rank the messages similarly.

(% Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Dems.	Inds.	Reps.
Future Generations	58%	61%	51%	61%
Kids	58%	62%	56%	57%
No Tax Increase	55%	60%	52%	55%
Tourism	53%	63%	49%	50%
Water	52%	63%	45%	50%
Track Record	45%	50%	39%	45%
Farms	42%	47%	38%	41%

Opposition Messages Tested

Messages

(WASTE) We just cannot trust state politicians to spend this money as promised. It will inevitably be wasted and spent on pet projects.

(HURTS POOR) A sales tax hurts the poor more than it does the rich. We should find a fairer way to raise the money we need for parks and soil conservation.

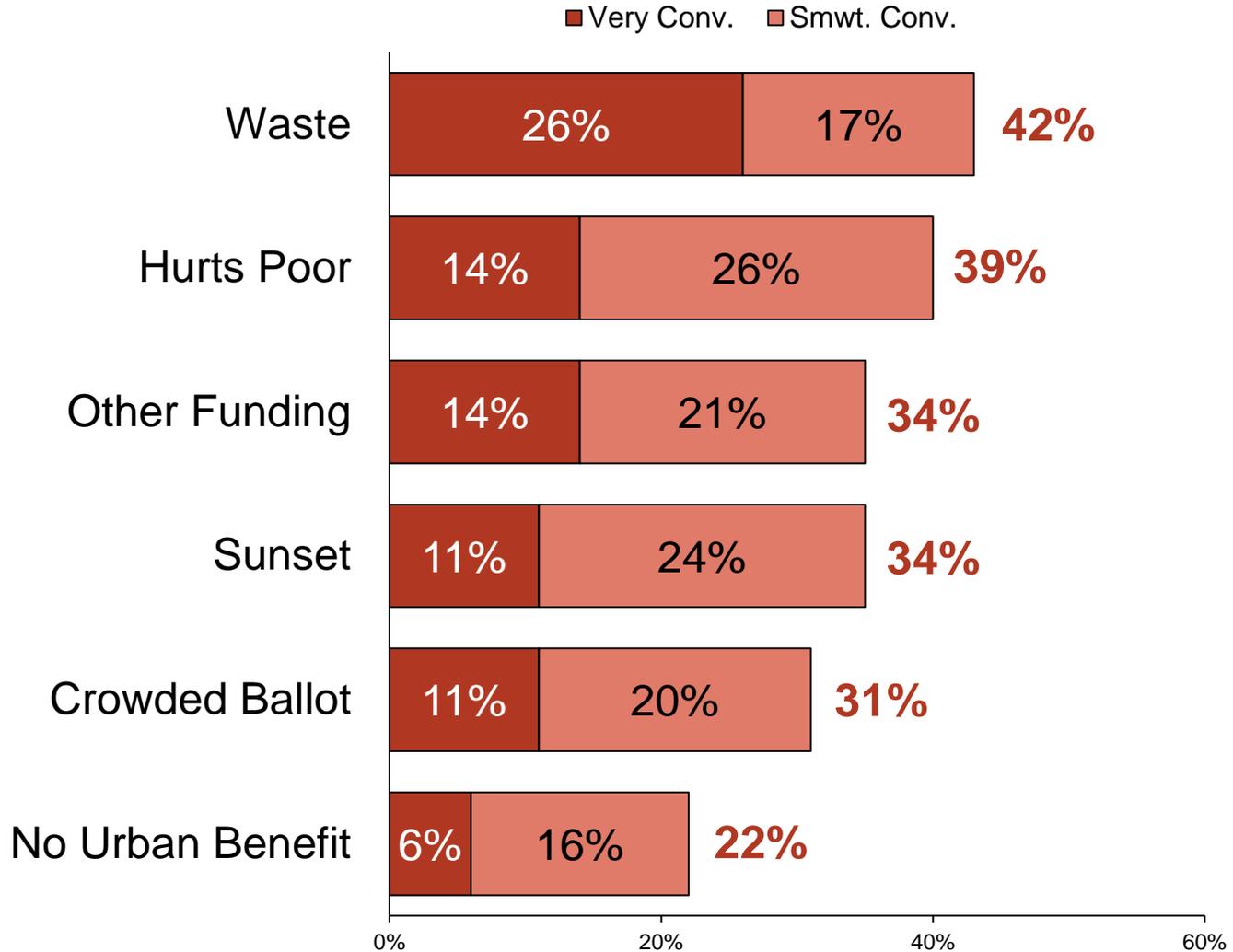
(OTHER FUNDING) There are better ways to fund programs to protect our parks and soil. Federal programs already provide most of the money for soil conservation, our state parks do not charge entrance fees, and campers pay just a few dollars per night.

(SUNSET) Supporters say this measure is not a tax increase, but by continuing this tax, we are adding pennies to every purchase we make – from shoes to school supplies. It is time to take a hard look at this tax and allow voters to end it, as was intended originally.

(CROWDED BALLOT) In the next election we will be asked to raise taxes on cigarettes, to fund local schools, and raise the minimum wage. It's just too much.

(NO URBAN BENEFIT) Many of our state parks and agricultural lands are far from the cities where most Missourians live. It's simply unfair to ask those of us who live in cities and suburbs to subsidize these remote areas.

One-quarter found an attack on waste “very convincing,” but none of the messages are highly effective.



“Waste” is the most significant challenge for swing and soft positive voters.

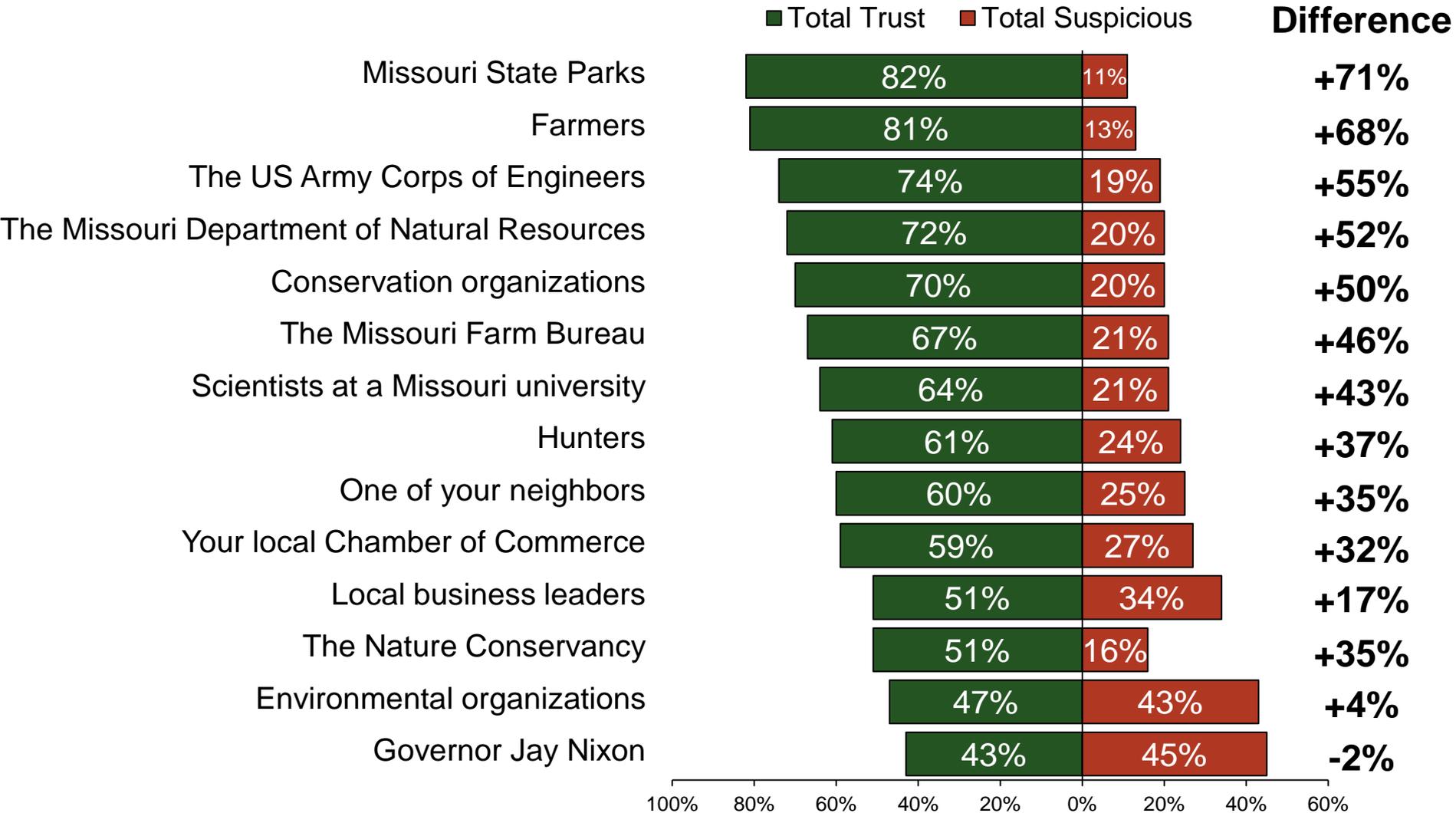
(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Initial Soft Yes	Swing	Negative Intensity Movers
Waste	26%	27%	24%	5%
Hurts Poor	14%	13%	10%	20%
Other Funding	14%	5%	7%	24%
Sunset	11%	7%	6%	1%
Crowded Ballot	11%	9%	12%	10%
No Urban Benefit	6%	5%	6%	3%



Messengers

Farmers and Missouri State Parks are trusted by four in five.



Swing and soft yes voters near-universally trust Missouri State Parks on this issue.

(Total Trust)

Statement	All Voters	Initial Soft Yes	Swing	Positive Intensity Movers
Missouri State Parks	82%	89%	90%	68%
Farmers	81%	76%	77%	76%
The US Army Corps of Engineers	74%	69%	76%	76%
The Missouri Department of Natural Resources	72%	71%	74%	70%
Conservation organizations	70%	76%	78%	75%
The Missouri Farm Bureau	67%	65%	65%	64%
Scientists at a Missouri university	64%	59%	65%	55%
Hunters	61%	68%	69%	72%
One of your neighbors	60%	62%	62%	74%
Your local Chamber of Commerce	59%	57%	63%	69%
Local business leaders	51%	54%	55%	46%
The Nature Conservancy	51%	50%	47%	42%
Environmental organizations	47%	44%	49%	46%
Governor Jay Nixon	43%	45%	49%	32%

Democrats trust public agencies and conservation groups; Republicans trust farmers and hunters.

(Total % Trust)

Statement	All Voters	Dems.	Inds.	Reps.
Missouri State Parks	82%	80%	85%	81%
Farmers	81%	69%	87%	86%
The US Army Corps of Engineers	74%	75%	73%	74%
The Missouri Department of Natural Resources	72%	86%	61%	73%
Conservation organizations	70%	84%	63%	64%
The Missouri Farm Bureau	67%	59%	71%	70%
Scientists at a Missouri university	64%	83%	59%	57%
Hunters	61%	49%	67%	67%
One of your neighbors	60%	64%	50%	66%
Your local Chamber of Commerce	59%	57%	52%	66%
Local business leaders	51%	44%	44%	60%
The Nature Conservancy	51%	64%	52%	38%
Environmental organizations	47%	75%	42%	34%
Governor Jay Nixon	43%	78%	37%	29%



Conclusions

Conclusion

- A sales-tax renewal measure funding parks, water and soil conservation has an excellent chance at passage, with strong and consistent support across a wide variety of demographic subgroups.
- Prospects for success are very good on either the primary or general election ballots, though the demographic patterns of support make the general election ballot optimal.
- Voters' highest priorities are maintaining parks (and keeping them free), as well as preventing water pollution.
- Messaging about future generations is likely to be effective across voter segments.
- Clarifying that the measure does not increase taxes is also helpful in consolidating support.
- The State Parks system is a trusted messenger on this issue. Among Democrats, the DNR and conservation groups are most trusted, while Republicans disproportionately trust hunters and farmers.

For more information, contact:

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