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City of San Rafael

City Satisfaction Survey

March 2009

- Data Collection Telephone Interviewing
- Universe 26,409 registered voters in the City of San Rafael
- Fielding Dates February 5 to 10, 2009
- Interview Length 20 minutes
- Sample Size 500
- Margin of Error $\pm 4.3\%$



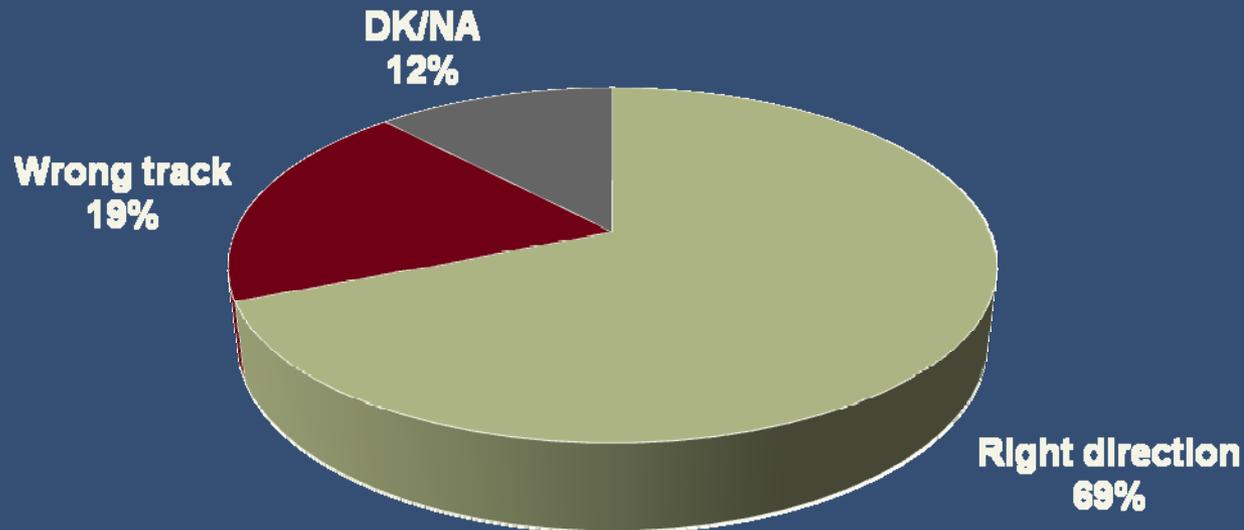
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Quality of Life in San Rafael

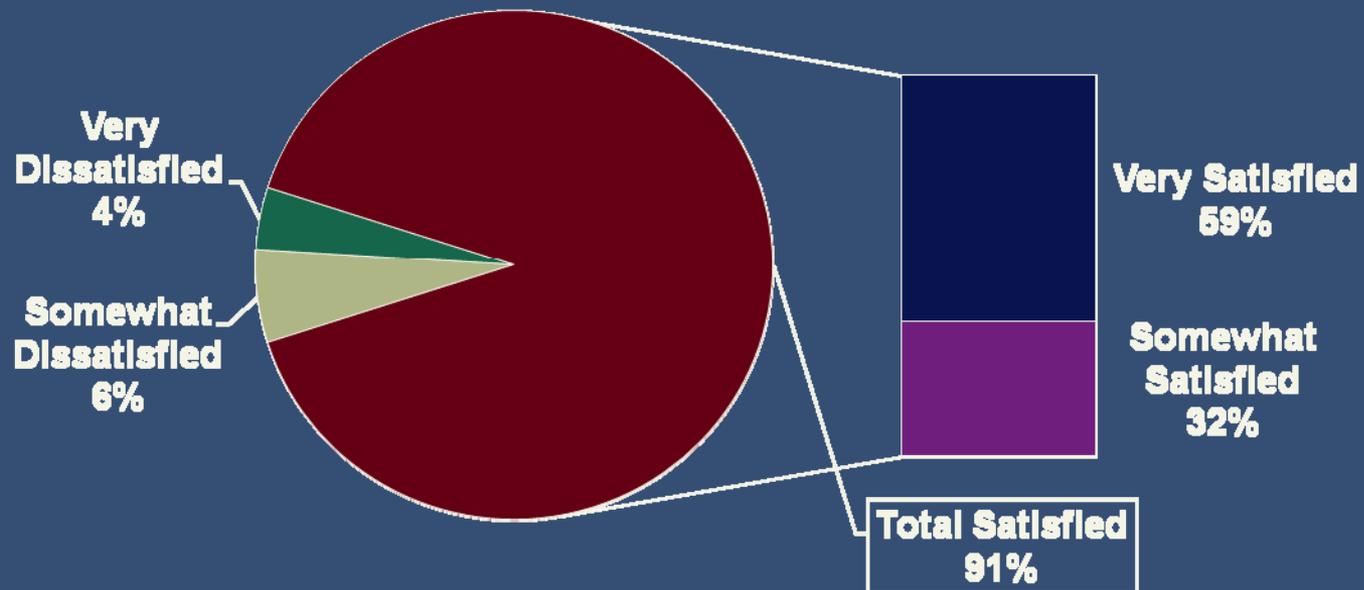
Ratings of San Rafael

The voters were largely positive about the direction things are going in San Rafael. As shown in the chart below, 69 percent of the voters reported that things are going in the “right direction,” whereas 19 percent reported that things are seriously off on the “wrong track.” The remaining 12 percent of the voters did not have an opinion or preferred not to answer the question (DK/NA).



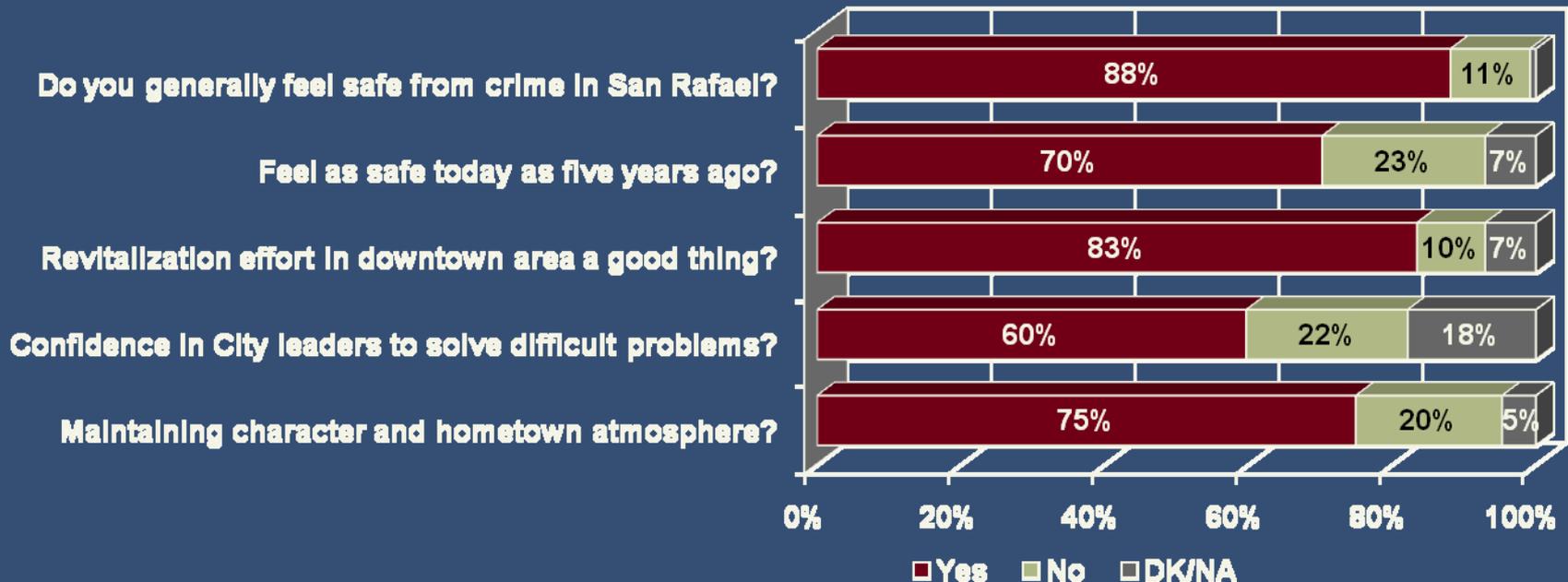
Satisfaction with Quality of Life

The results show that residents are highly satisfied with their overall quality of life in the City of San Rafael. Approximately 9 out of 10 voters reported that they are either “very satisfied” (59%) or “somewhat satisfied” (32%). In comparison, just 10 percent of the voters indicated dissatisfaction.



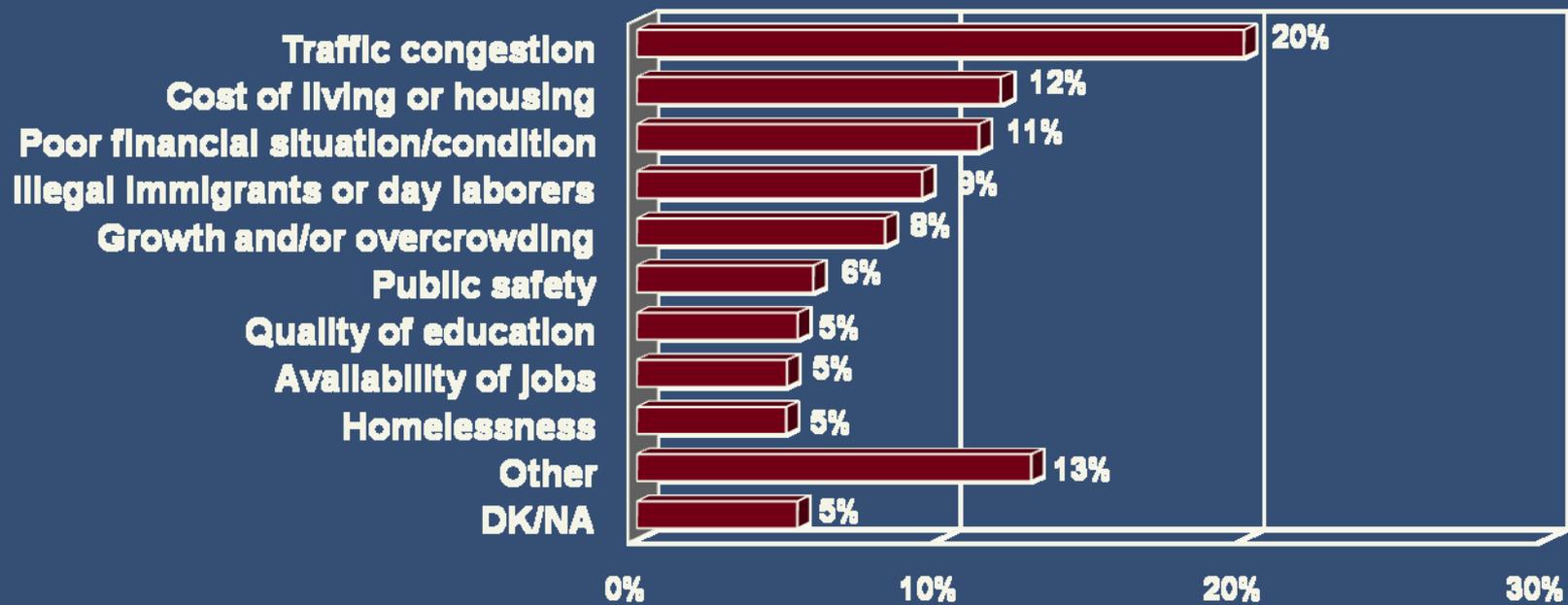
Perceptions of the City

The results on voters' perceptions of the city further reinforce the results on overall satisfaction with quality of life and City services. Specifically, a majority of the voters feel safe from crime in San Rafael (88%) and feel as safe today as they did five years ago when they walk city streets (70%). The voters also largely agreed that the revitalization effort in the downtown area has been a good thing for the city (83%), and that San Rafael is successfully maintaining its unique character and hometown atmosphere (75%). Finally, 60 percent of the voters have confidence in City leaders to solve the difficult problems as they arise.



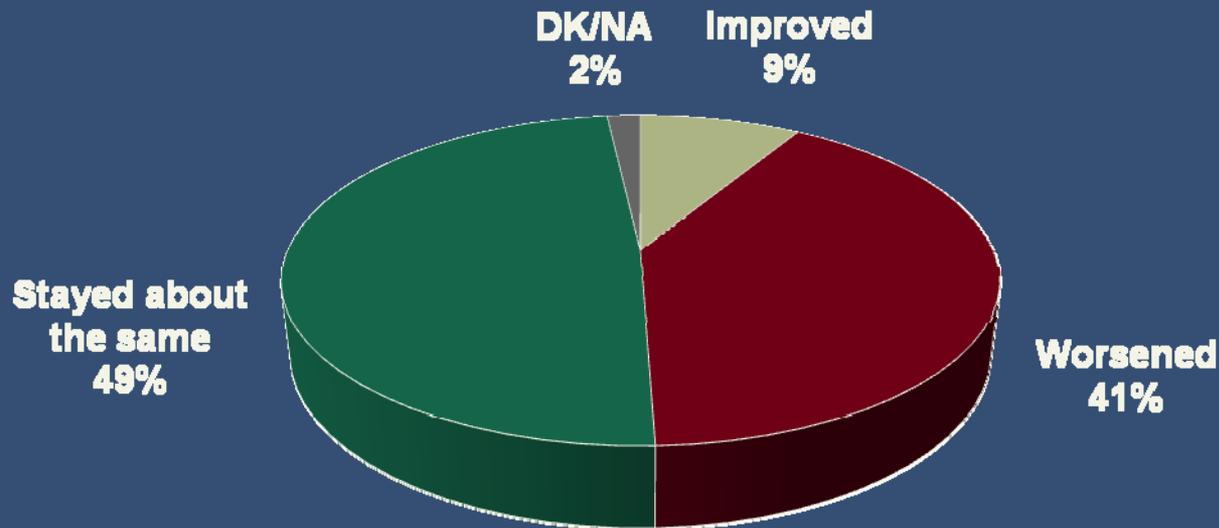
Problems Facing San Rafael

To better understand residents' concerns, the voters were asked to name the single, largest problem facing the City of San Rafael. The voters were free to mention any issue that came to mind, and they were not prompted with any categories or responses. The voters most frequently reported that traffic congestion (20%) is the largest problem currently facing San Rafael. The next-most frequently mentioned problems included issues related to the cost of living or housing (12%) and the poor financial situation or condition of the City (11%).



Change in Local Neighborhood Traffic

For approximately half of the voters, traffic in their local neighborhood has “stayed about the same” over the past two years. Otherwise, 9 percent of the voters indicated that traffic has “improved” and 41 percent indicated that it has “worsened.”





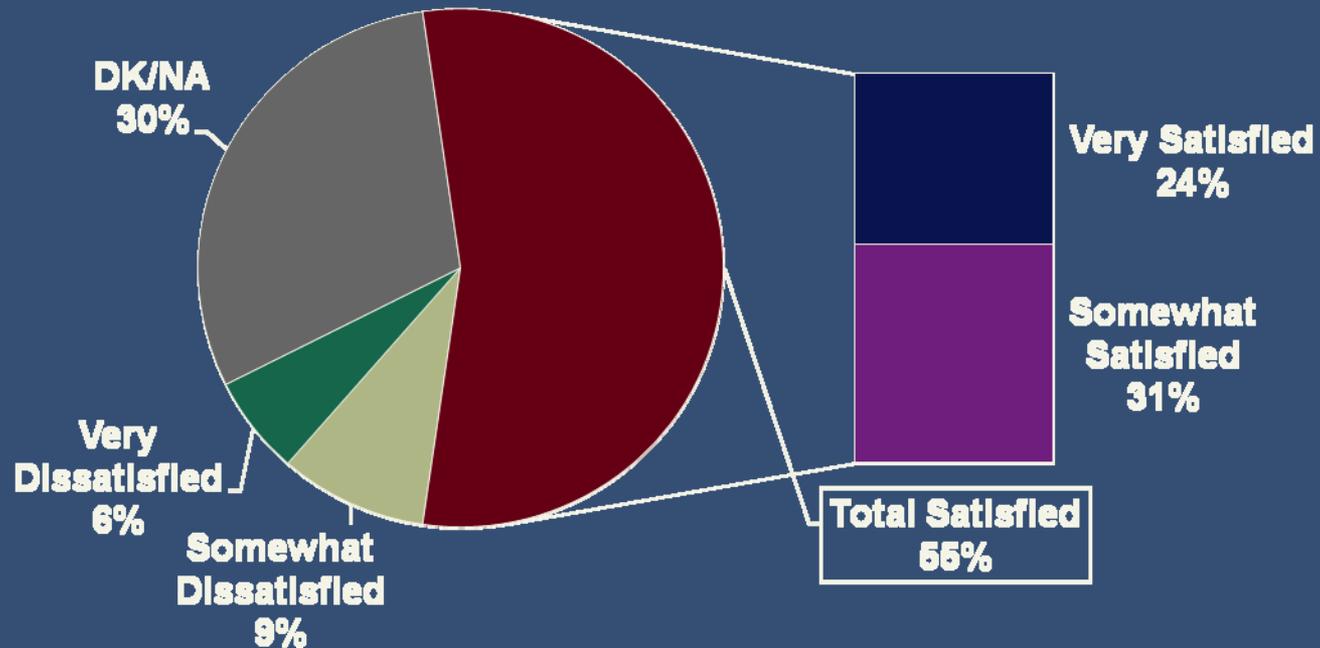
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Ratings of the City of San Rafael

Satisfaction with City Council

The voters were also asked to rate their satisfaction with how the San Rafael City Council are performing their job. Close to one-third of the voters did not have an opinion of the Council's performance (DK/NA). Otherwise, 55 percent of the voters indicated that they are satisfied and 15 percent reported dissatisfaction. Although these results suggest that residents would benefit from additional information on the priorities and work of the Council, it is important to note that among the voters who indicated an opinion, close to 4 out of 5 were satisfied with the performance of the Council.



Satisfaction with City Council

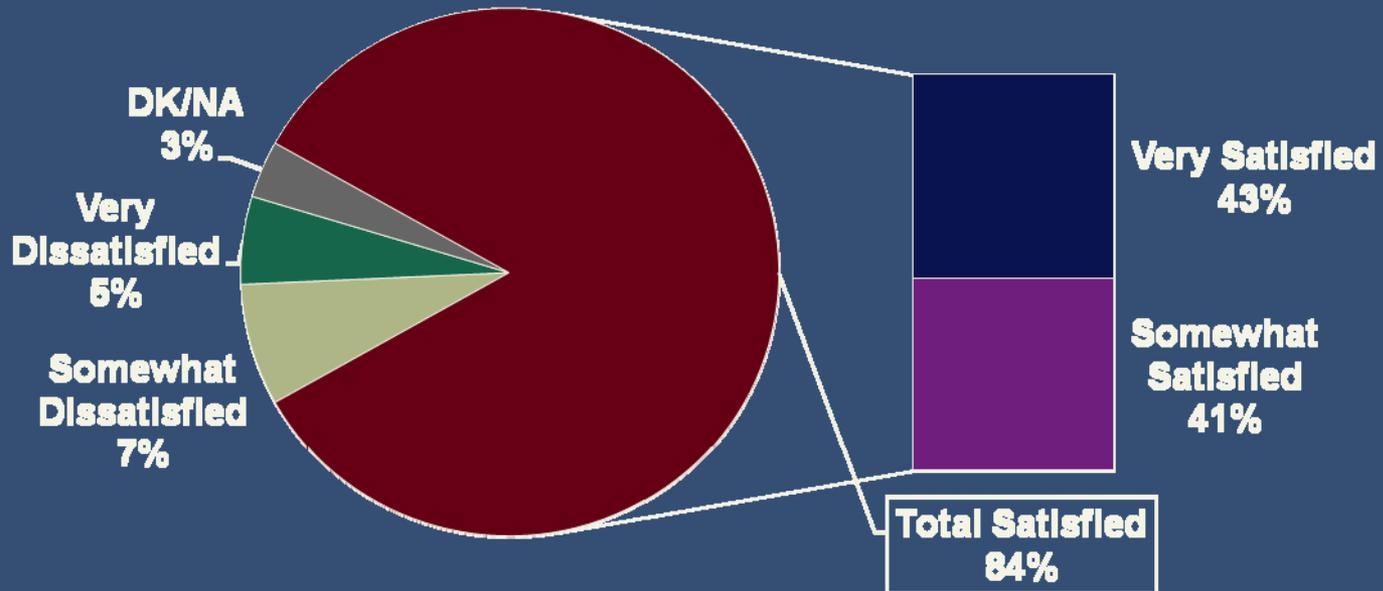
Trended Results

The results suggest that residents currently may be less informed of the performance of the City Council than they were in 2001. Specifically, a higher percentage of the 2009 respondents reported that they did not have an opinion (DK/NA) than the 2001 respondents. Conversely, a lower percentage of the 2009 respondents than the 2001 respondents indicated satisfaction.

	2009	2007	2005	2003	2001
Very satisfied	<u>24%</u>	61%	59%	59%	<u>63%</u>
Somewhat satisfied	<u>31%</u>				
Somewhat dissatisfied	9%	16%	16%	19%	17%
Very dissatisfied	6%				
DK/NA	<u>30%</u>	23%	25%	22%	<u>20%</u>

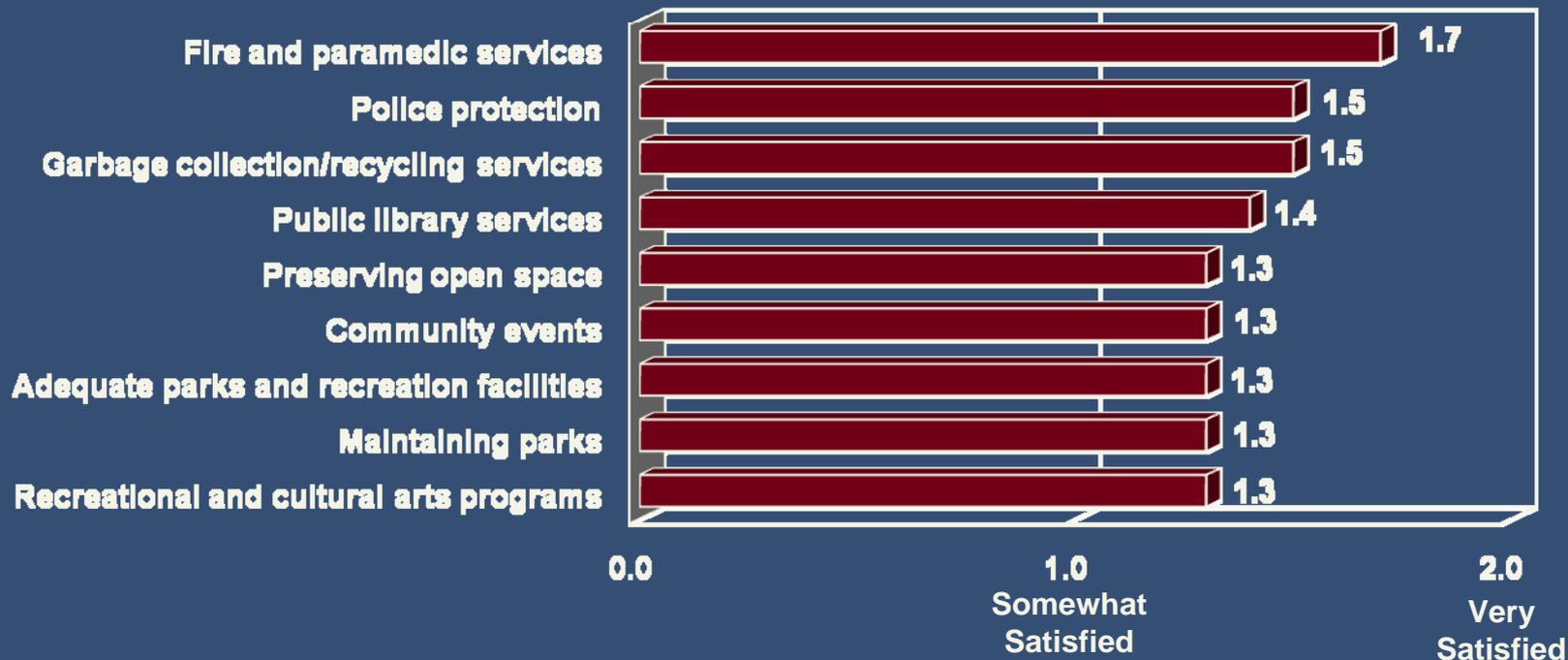
Satisfaction with Overall City Services

More than 4 out of 5 residents reported satisfaction with the job the City of San Rafael is doing to provide City services. The level of satisfaction was roughly split, with 43 percent of the voters reporting “very satisfied” and 41 percent “somewhat satisfied.” In contrast, 12 percent of the voters reported that they are dissatisfied, and the remaining 3 percent did not render an opinion (DK/NA).



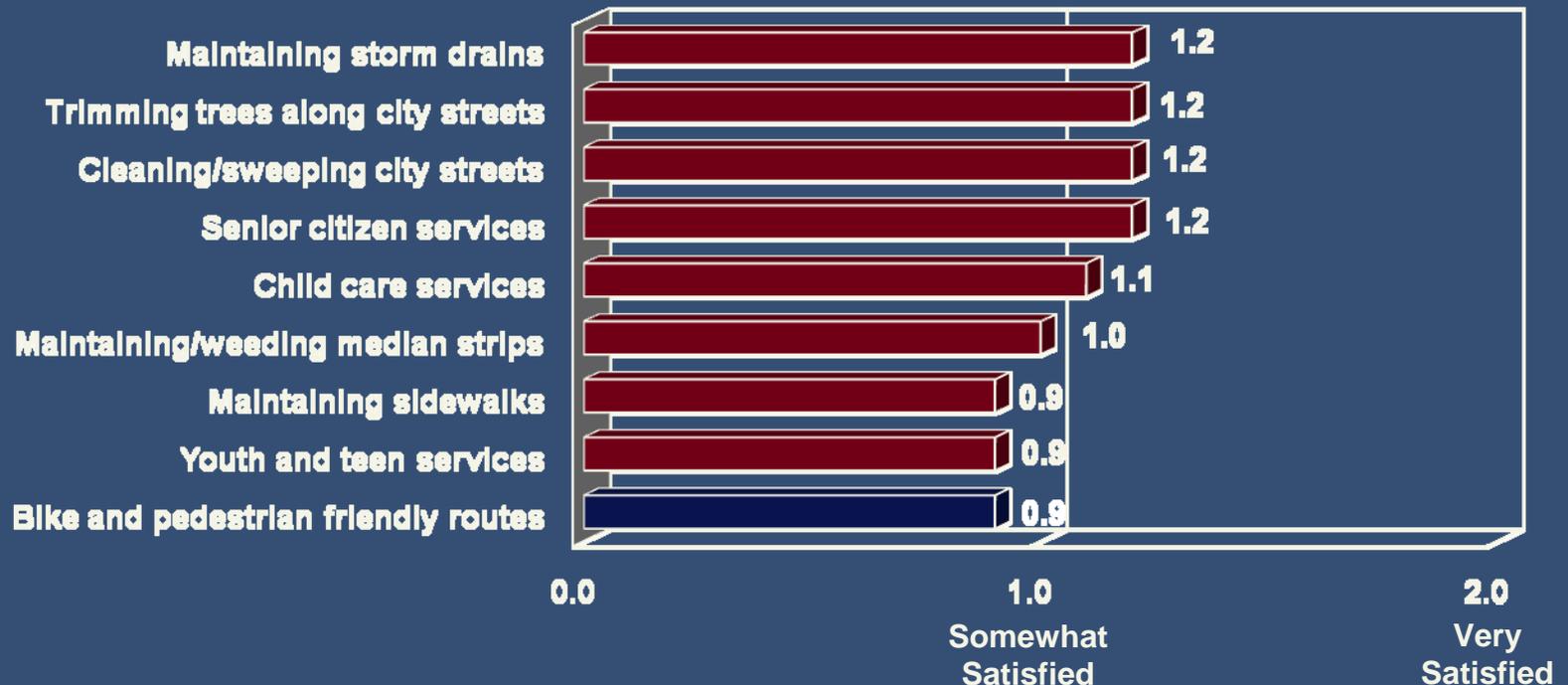
Satisfaction with City Services I

The voters were asked to rate their satisfaction with 26 specific City services. In line with the high satisfaction with City services as a whole, the voters, on average, were at least “somewhat satisfied” with 15 of the 26 services tested in the survey, as indicated by mean scores of 1.0 or more. This chart shows the nine services that earned the relatively highest satisfactions scores. Approximately 9 out of 10 residents were satisfied with the job the City of San Rafael is doing to provide fire and paramedic services, police protection, and garbage collection and recycling services.



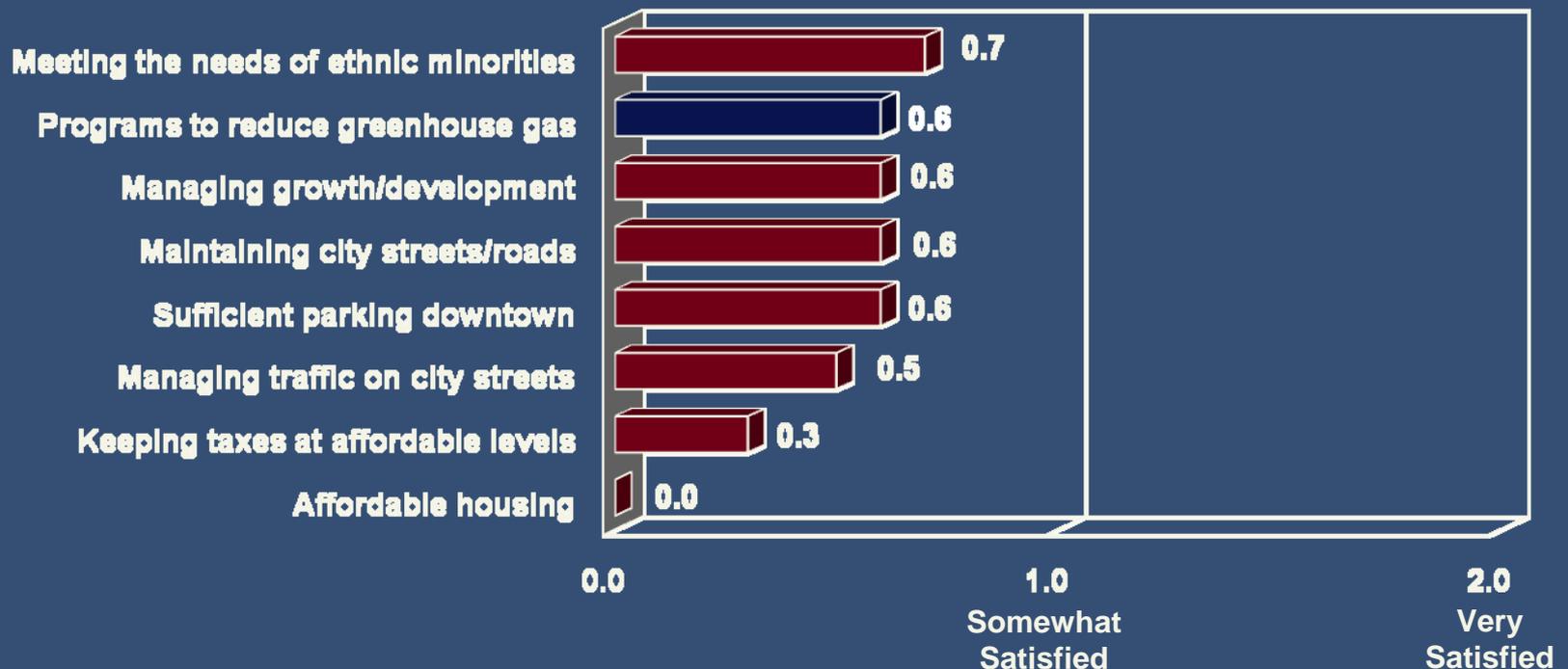
Satisfaction with City Services II

Shown in the following chart are the nine services that placed in a second tier of satisfaction among the voters surveyed. To put these scores in perspective, 77 percent of the voters were satisfied with the job the City is doing to provide storm drain maintenance and 70 percent were satisfied with the City's efforts to provide bike and pedestrian friendly routes.



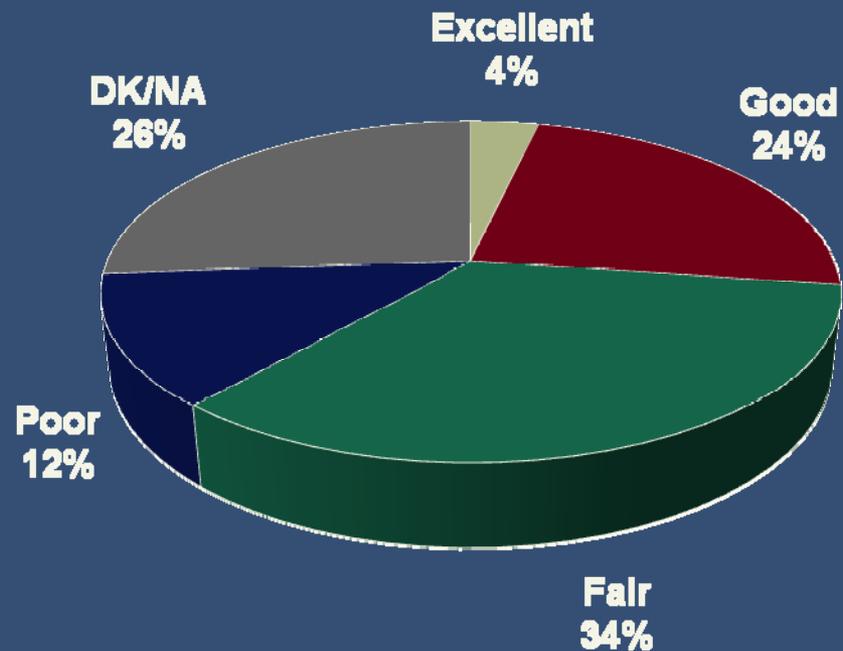
Satisfaction with City Services III

These eight services placed in a third tier of satisfaction among the voters surveyed. However, for 7 of these 8 services, the percentage of satisfied residents outnumbered the percentage of dissatisfied residents, as indicated by positive mean scores. Even for the service that earned the relatively lowest satisfaction score, affordable housing (0.0), the residents were evenly split – 38 percent were satisfied, 33 percent were dissatisfied, and 30 percent did not have an opinion.



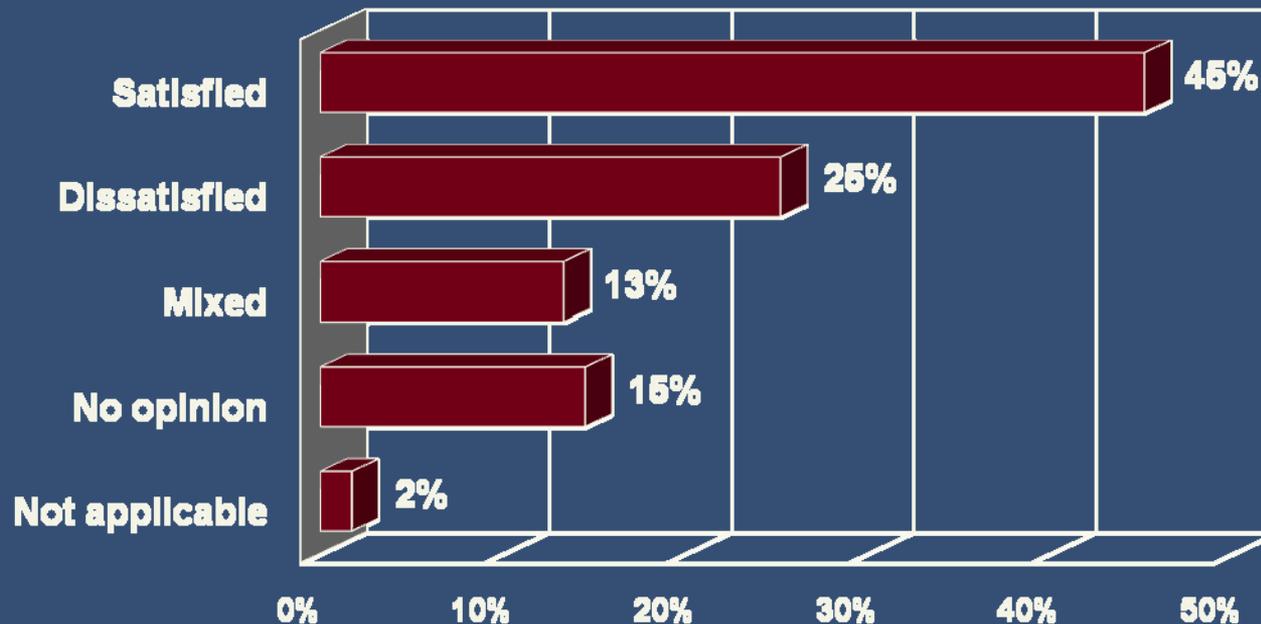
City's Financial Situation

Approximately 28 percent of the voters rated the City's financial situation as "excellent" (4%) or "good" (24%). In comparison, 34 percent of the voters indicated a rating of "fair" and 12 percent "poor." It is also important to note that roughly 1 out of 4 voters did not know the condition of the City's financial situation (DK/NA).



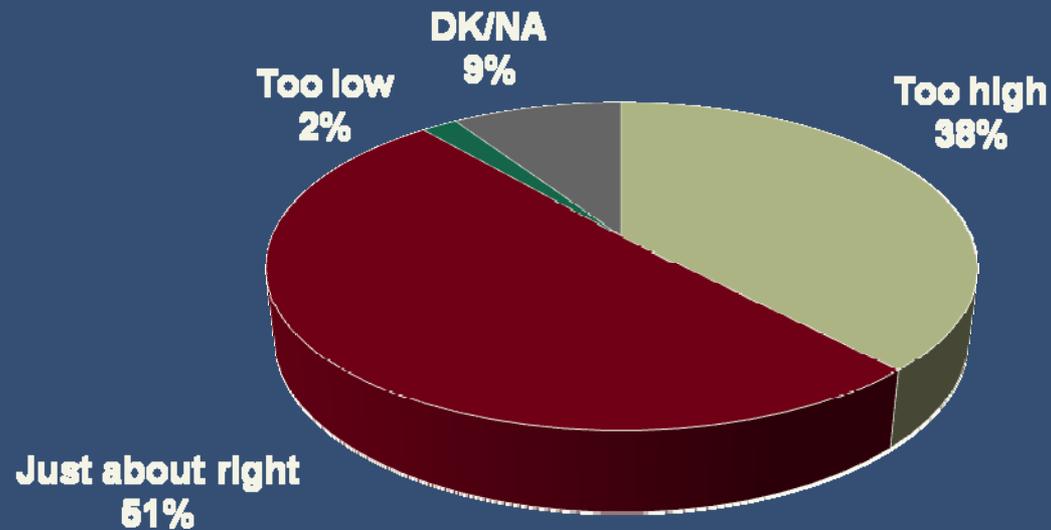
Spending Taxpayers' Money

Ratings of City services revealed that 57 percent of the voters were satisfied with the job the City is doing to keep taxes at affordable levels. As shown in the following chart, 45 percent of the voters were also satisfied with the job the City of San Rafael is doing in spending taxpayers' money. In contrast, 25 percent of the voters reported dissatisfaction, 13 percent had mixed opinions, and 15 percent did not render an opinion. Additionally, there were no regional differences in the responses to this question.



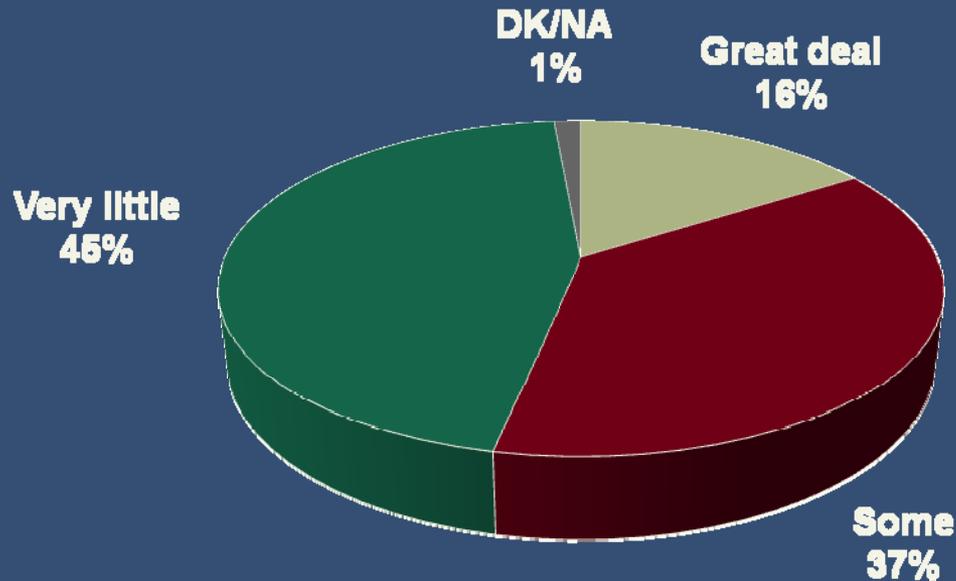
Local Taxes

Approximately half of the voters felt local taxes in San Rafael are “just about right.” Just 2 percent felt local taxes are “too low” and 38 percent indicated that they are “too high.” The remaining 9 percent of the voters did not have an opinion of local tax rates.



Attention to Government Business

Not surprising given the percentage of “don’t know” responses to earlier questions in the survey, 45 percent of the voters reported that they pay “very little” attention to San Rafael City government business. In comparison, 16 percent of the voters indicated that they pay a “great deal” of attention and 37 percent reported that they pay “some” attention. These results speak to the challenges the City may have in informing voters of current events and issues.



- The survey found that residents of San Rafael are highly satisfied with the overall quality of life in the City.
- Problems related to traffic congestion, the cost of living or housing, and the financial situation of the City were of greatest concern to residents.
- Residents are also satisfied with the job the City of San Rafael is doing to provide services, and the performance of the City Council.
- In addition to the above ratings, the satisfied residents outnumbered the dissatisfied residents for 25 of the 26 specific City services assessed in the survey. Further indicating high satisfaction with City services, the voters, on average, were “somewhat satisfied” or more with 15 of these services.
- Positive ratings of the City’s financial situation have declined from previous years; however, ratings of local tax rates remain consistent.
- A substantial percentage of voters may be uninformed of City government business.



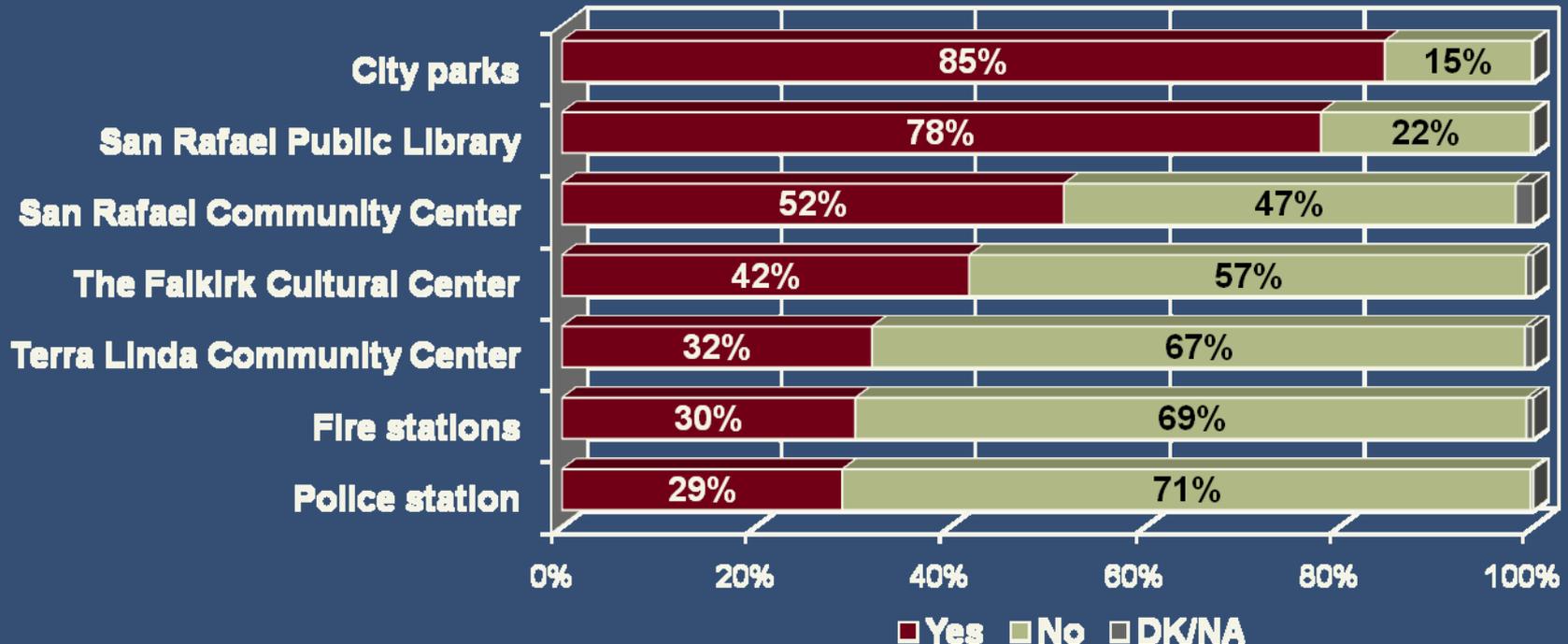
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Use and Ratings of City Facilities

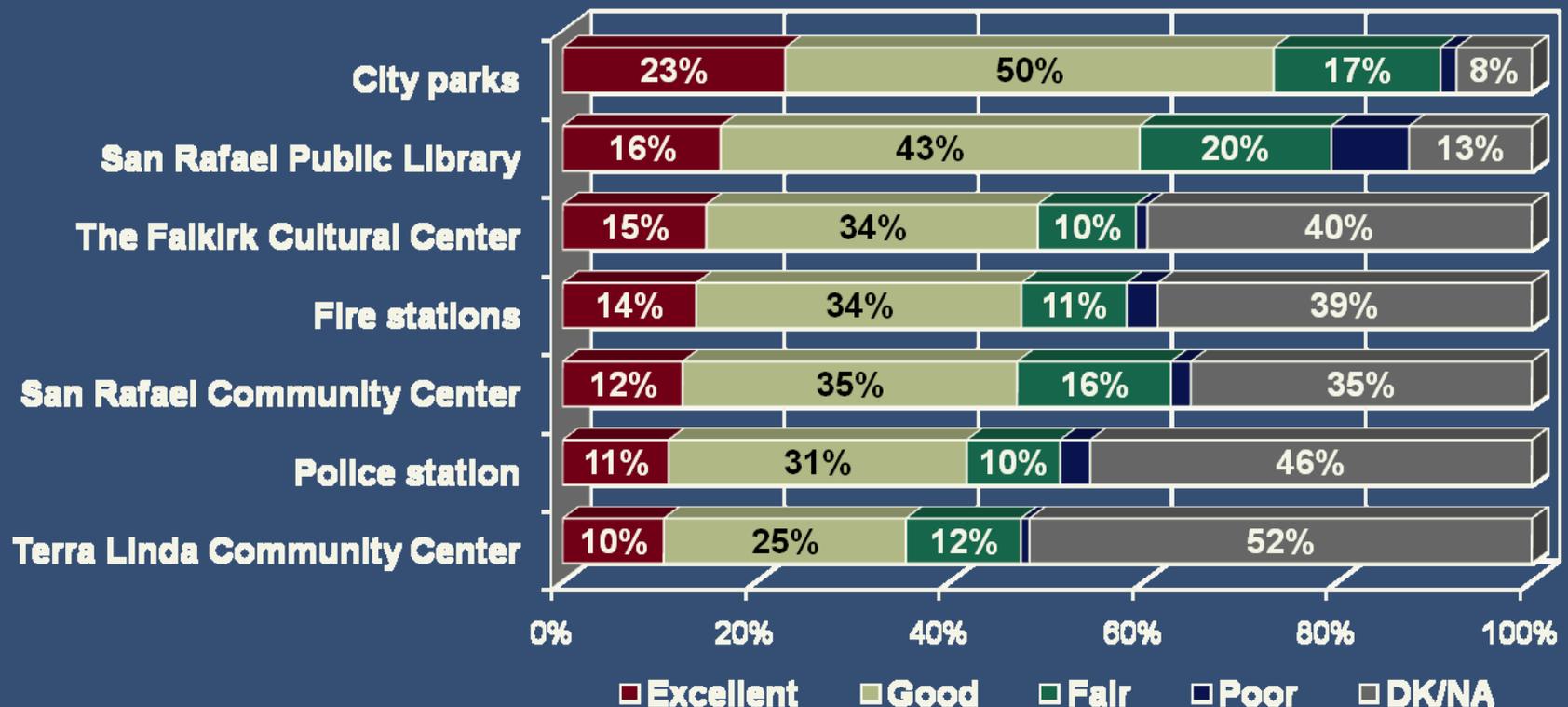
Use of City Facilities

The voters were read a list of seven city buildings and facilities, and they were asked whether they had visited or used each within the past two years. As might be expected, the facilities with the relatively highest percentage of use included city parks (85%), the public library (78%), and the San Rafael Community Center (52%). Less than half of the voters surveyed reported that they had used or visited the Falkirk Cultural Center (42%), the Terra Linda Community Center (32%), fire stations (30%), and the police station (29%). These results emphasize the need to communicate the condition of facilities to voters, as a minority of voters have had direct exposure to the condition of facilities that would be central features of a future revenue measure.



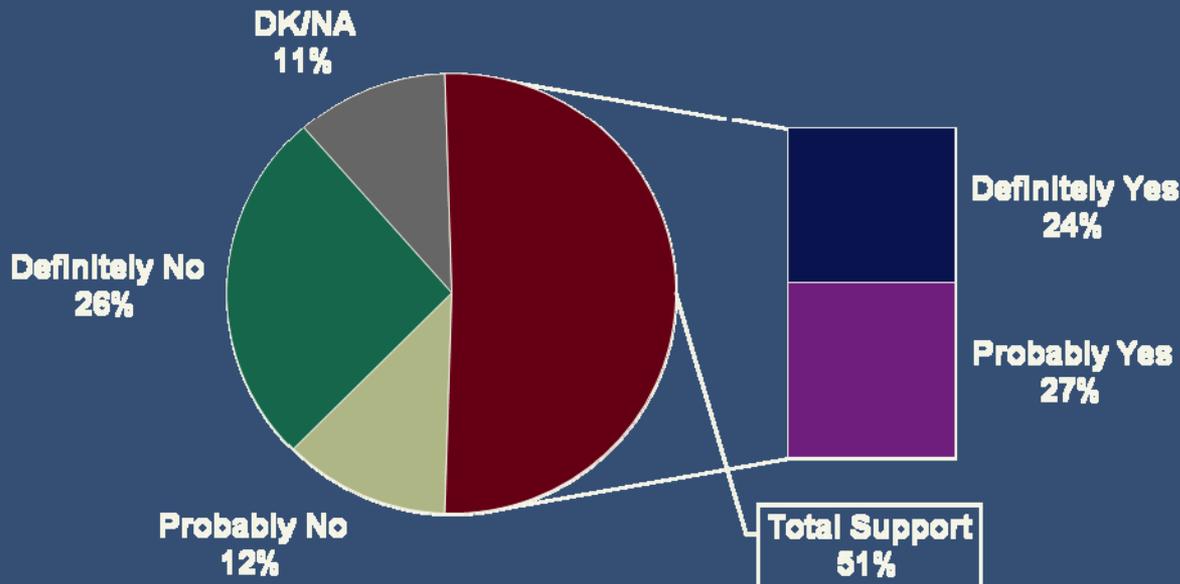
Ratings of City Facilities

The results of the survey indicate that voters have a largely positive opinion of the condition of city buildings and facilities. Close to two-thirds of the voters or more rated the condition of city parks and the public library as either “excellent” or “good.” Otherwise, for 5 of the 7 facilities, more than one-third of the voters reported that they did not know the condition (DK/NA). Even for the facilities with a high percentage of DK/NA responses, the “excellent” and “good” ratings outnumbered the “fair” and “poor” ratings by a ratio of more than 2 to 1.



Potential Voter Support

The likely November 2009 voters (n = 350) were read a brief summary of the bond measure to repair or replace city facilities. In response, approximately half of the voters expressed support for the measure, with 24 percent saying “definitely yes” and 27 percent saying “probably yes.” In comparison, 38 percent of the voters expressed opposition to the measure, and the remaining 11 percent were undecided (DK/NA).



In order to repair or replace deteriorated facilities that are critical to City services, such as:

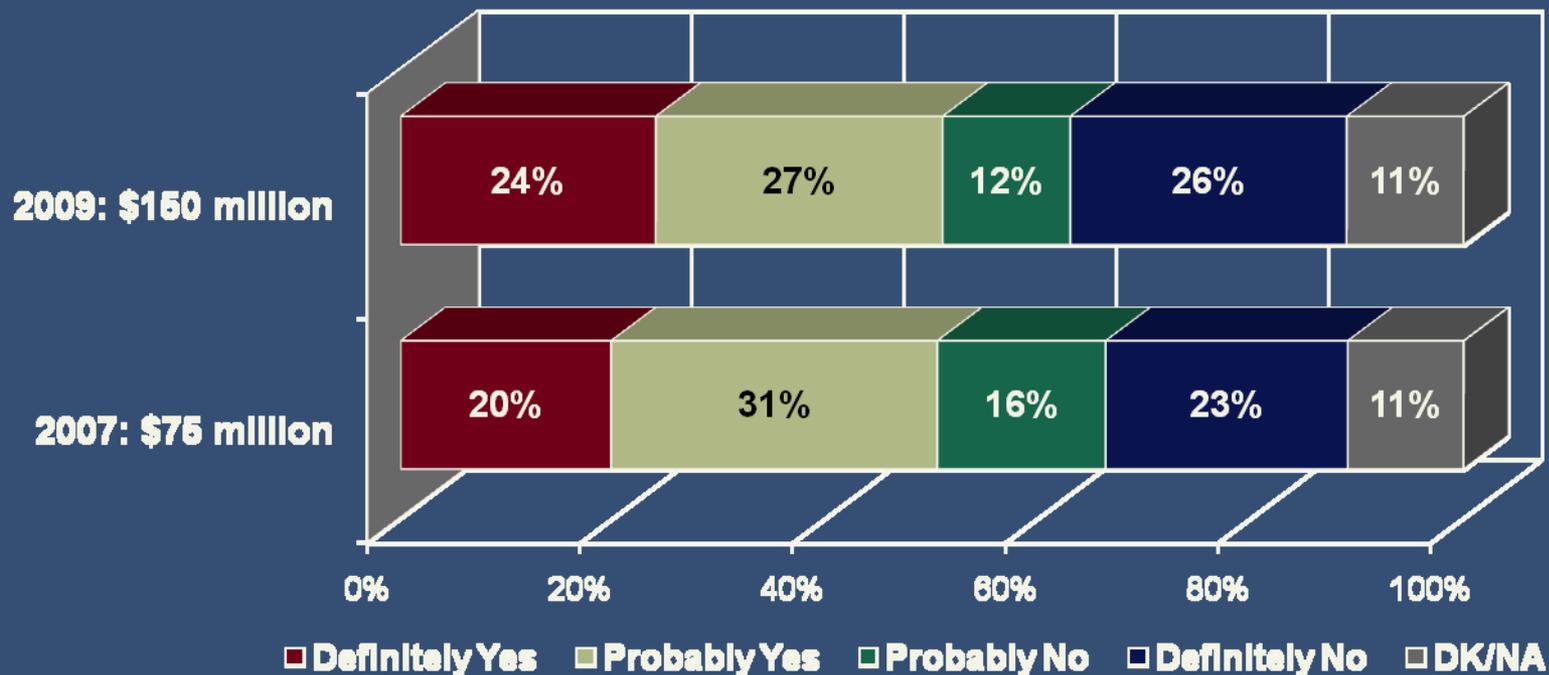
- Repair or replace outdated police and fire stations to remain operational in an earthquake and maintain rapid emergency response times;
- Expand or replace the library to provide space for larger collections, children’s programs, full access for disabled persons, and upgrade library technology; and
- Modernize community centers to offer emergency shelters

Shall the City of San Rafael be authorized to issue \$150 million dollars in general obligation bonds with citizen’s oversight?

Potential Voter Support

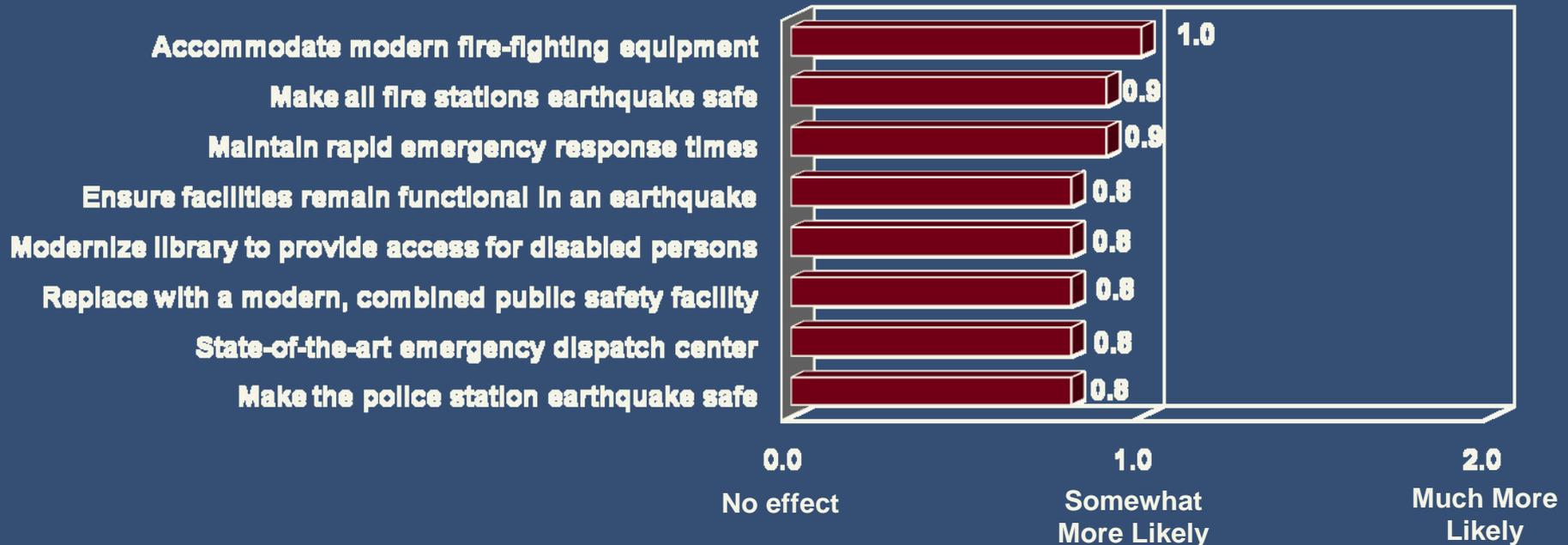
Trended Results

The 2007 survey assessed potential voter support for a \$75 million dollar bond measure to repair or replace city facilities. As shown in the following chart, current support for a \$150 million dollar bond measure (51%) is comparable to the level of support observed for the smaller measure tested in 2007 (51%).



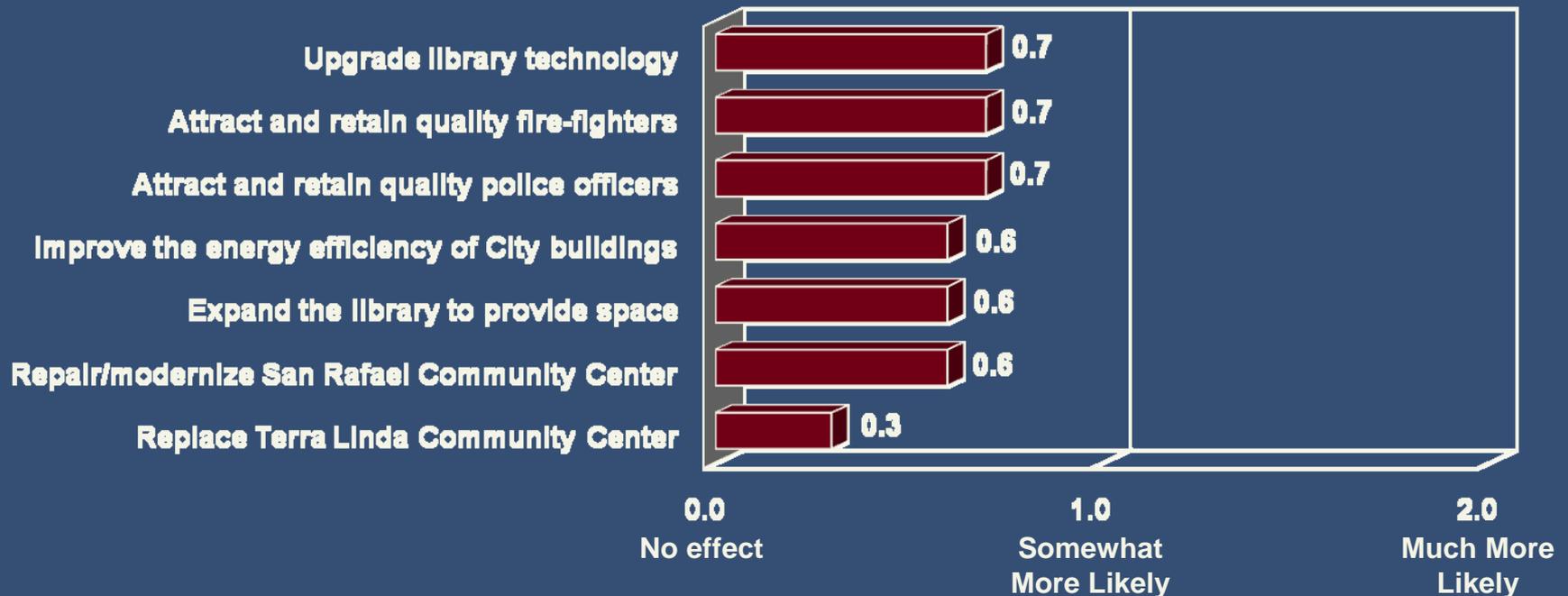
Influence of Measure Features I

The likely November 2009 voters (n = 350) next were asked whether they would be more or less likely to support a measure if specific projects were funded. For 8 of the 15 projects, close to two-thirds of the voters or more reported that they would be at least somewhat more likely to support the measure. Shown in the chart below are these eight projects that were most influential on potential voter support. Using the funds to replace or upgrade the fire stations and police station resonated the most strongly with voters. The voters had a similarly positive response to modernizing the library to provide full access for disabled persons.



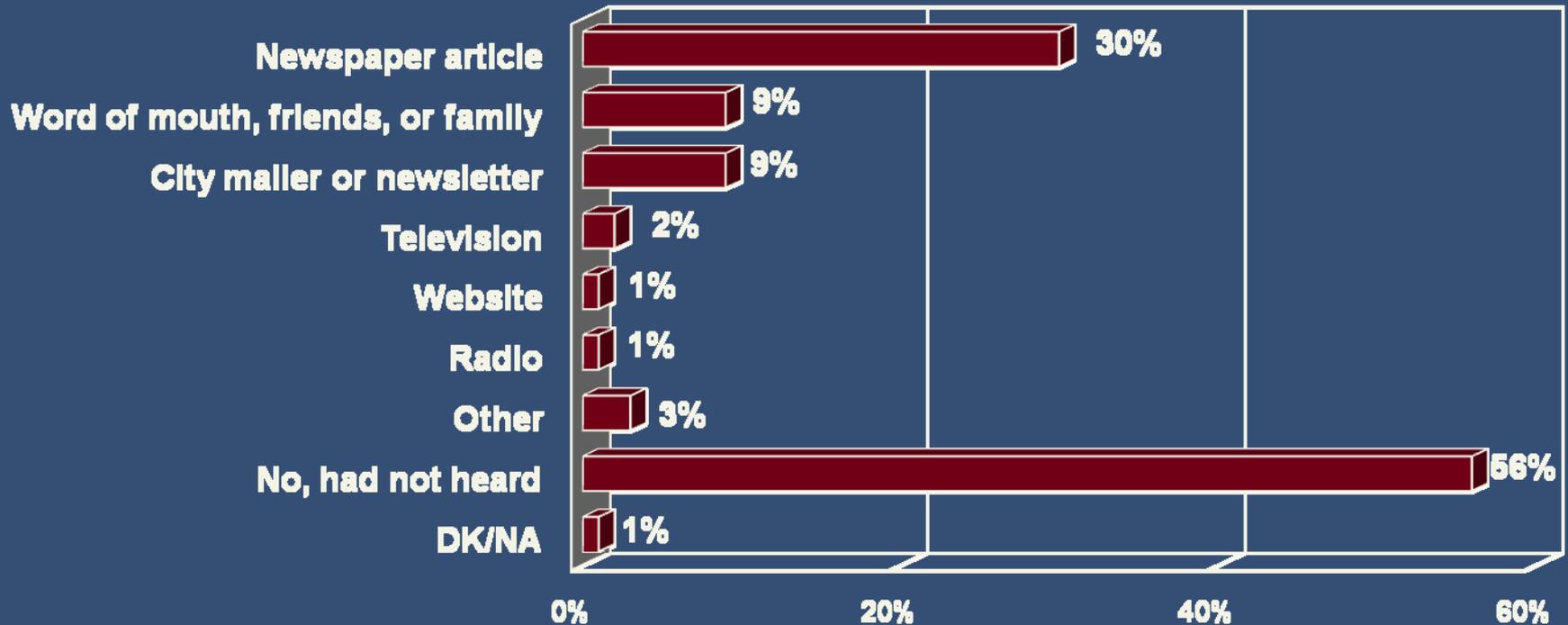
Influence of Measure Features II

Here is a continuation of the responses to the potential measure features. Shown in the current chart are the seven projects that were relatively less influential on voter support. Although all of these projects earned positive mean scores, the projects shown in the previous chart had a stronger influence on potential voter support for a measure and, therefore, should be emphasized in an education campaign.

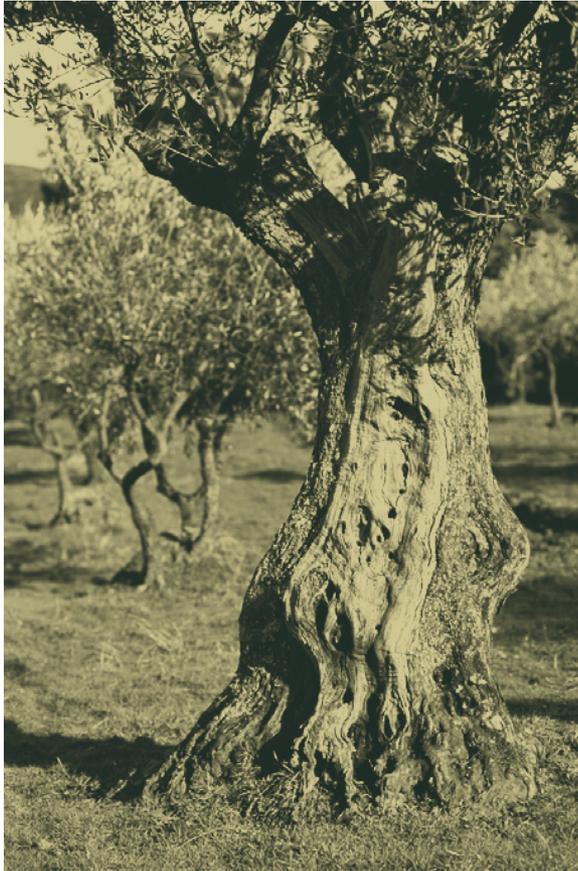


Information on the Condition of Facilities

Close to half of the likely November 2009 voters (n = 350) reported that they had seen, heard, or read information on the condition of city facilities, such as the police or fire stations, the library, or community centers. The most frequently mentioned sources included newspaper articles (30%), word of mouth (9%), and city mailer or newsletter (9%).



- Potential voter support for a measure to repair or replace City facilities was consistent with the 2007 survey results.
 - The survey results indicate that voters are largely unaware of the condition of facilities that may be included in a measure – between 35 percent and 52 percent of the voters did not have an opinion of the condition of the police station, the fire stations, or the Community Centers.
 - Among the voters who had an opinion of the condition of facilities, positive ratings outnumber negative ratings by more than 2 to 1.
 - Despite the recent economic downturn, support for a revenue measure was comparable to the previous survey. Among likely November 2009 voters, 51 percent expressed support for the measure, 38 percent expressed opposition, and 11 percent were undecided.
 - Several of the potential measure features resonated strongly with voters, and Godbe Research recommends that the results be used to prioritize the projects that are selected to include in a measure.
 - Communicating the need for these projects will be essential to building support for a measure, as 56 percent of the voters had not encountered any information on the condition of City facilities prior to taking the survey.



City of San Rafael Critical Facilities Plan

Political Analysis and Recommendations

March 16, 2009

TRAMUTOLA
THE DISCIPLINE OF WINNING

Interpretation of Key Findings from Survey

- The entire critical facilities plan and the \$150 million price tag are too much for voters right now.
- Several of the projects in the master plan are viewed by voters as “nice to have” but not essential. In this economy, voters only support essentials.
- Currently, voters do not have a sufficient understanding of the need for upgrading critical facilities or the urgency.
- We will not be successful at the polls if we try to do this all at once. We need to break the master plan down into more “digestible” pieces.

Recommendations: A Phased Approach

- Take the constituent parts of the critical facilities plan to the ballot in a series of ballot measures over several years.
- Each phase will ask voters to approve a different piece of the plan. Each phase must be built as a package of projects with a logical connection, compelling theme and an acceptable cost/tax rate.
- In sequencing the phases we must consider both the politics and the construction logistics.
- Over time, we may be able to fund the entire critical facilities plan.

Recommendations: The First Phase

- The first package of projects should focus on police and fire facilities.
- The total bond amount for these projects must be substantially less than the \$150 million tested in the survey.
- Don't commit to an election date now. Plan as though you are going to the ballot in November and fall back to a later election based on an analysis of the political landscape at the point when a final decision to go to the ballot must be made.

Recommendations: Outreach Plan

Strategy: *Communicate the need for improved police and fire facilities and how the state of the facilities impacts services.*

The ballot measure is a solution to a problem. Voters will not support the solution until they have a thorough understanding of the problem. The survey shows that not enough voters understand the problem.

Audience: Registered voters.

Communication Vehicles: Direct communication from public safety workers, direct mail, city website, earned media, opinion pages.

Recommendations: Process and Next Steps

- Articulate the facility needs more aggressively than we have already
- Engage public safety workers in conducting outreach
- Assess the political landscape
- Test voter support
- Refine the plan
- Move forward based on the evidence

Recommendations: Timeline

November Election Scenario

