

# Portland Voter Support for Parks & Recreation Funding Measures

*Key Findings from a Survey of Portland  
Voters Conducted May 27-June 2, 2020*



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY



  
**PORTLAND PARKS  
& RECREATION**  
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland





## Methodology

- ✓ 701 interviews with Portland voters likely to participate in the November 2020 election
- ✓ Conducted May 27-June 2, 2020, online and via landline and cell phones
- ✓ Margin of sampling error of +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence interval; +/-5.7% for half-samples
- ✓ Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%

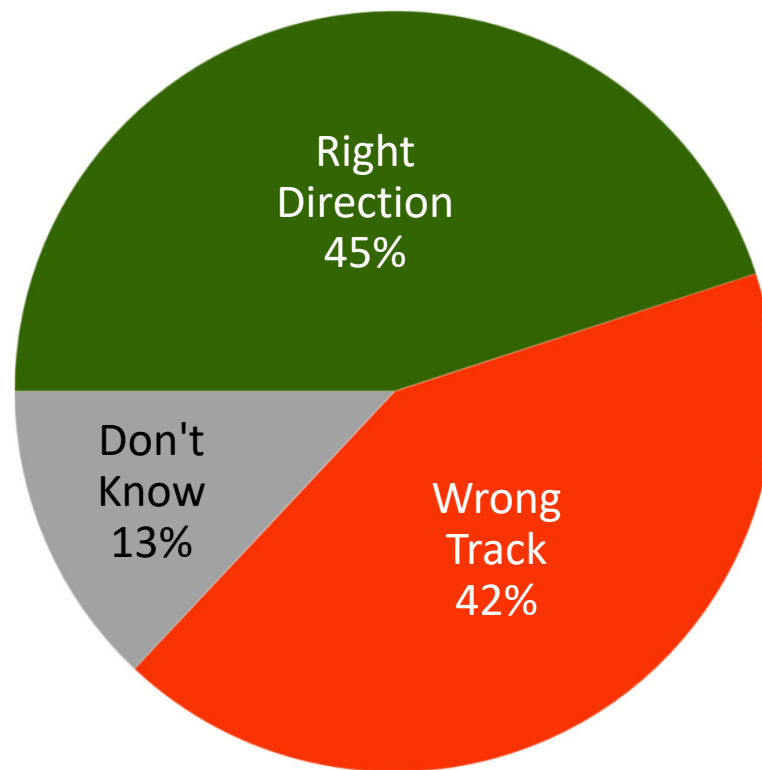


# Issue Context and Views of Portland Parks & Recreation



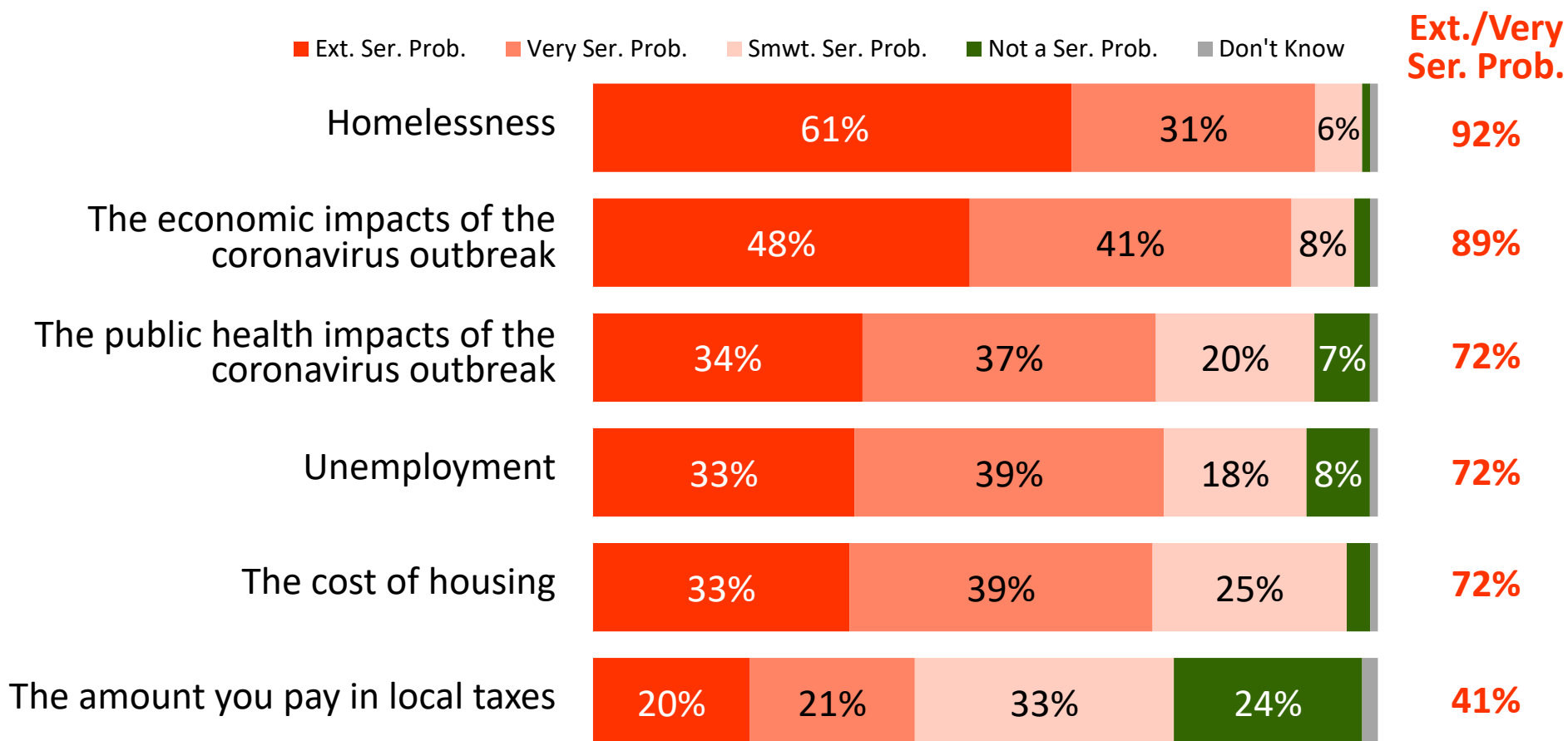
# Portland voters are divided on the direction of the city.

*Would you say things in Portland are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that they are pretty seriously on the wrong track?*



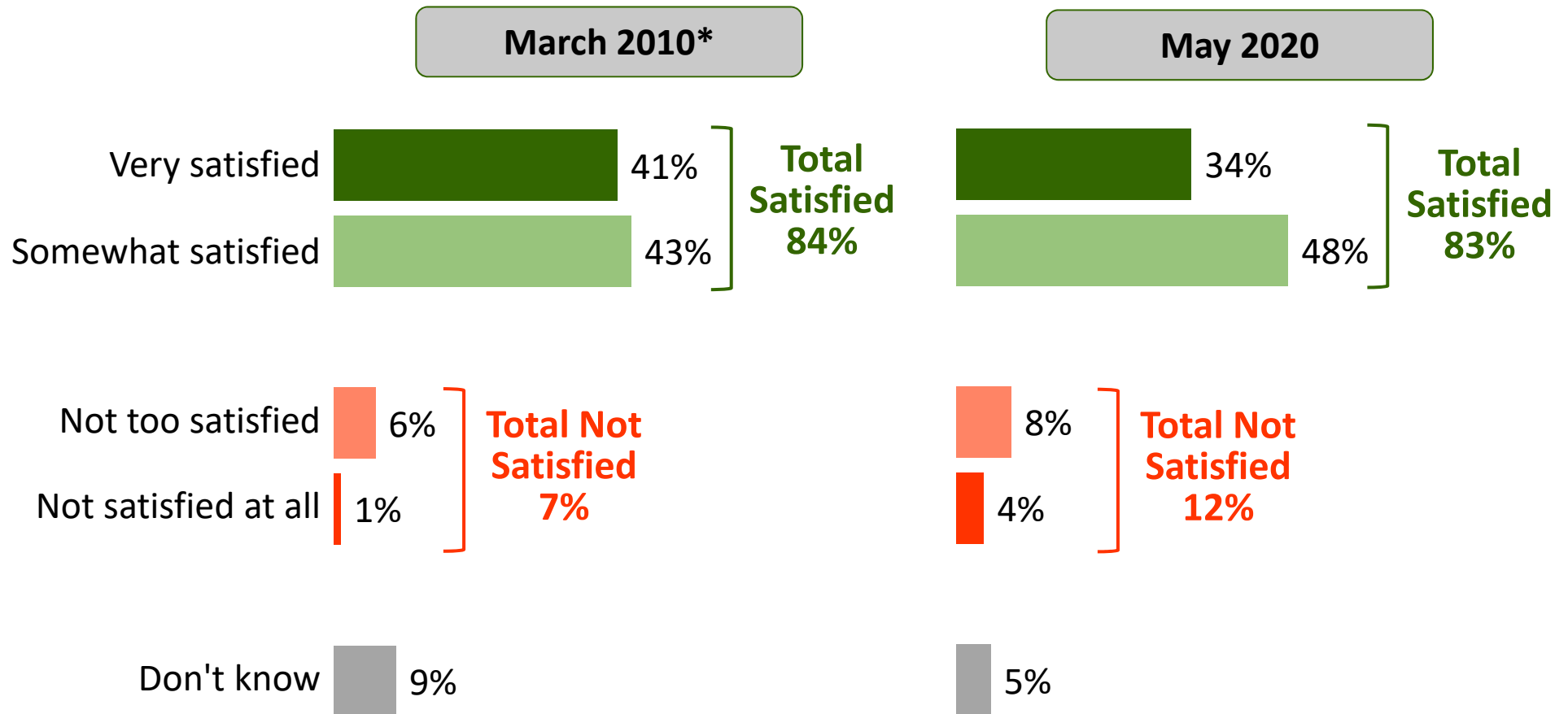
# Homelessness tops the list of concerns, followed closely by the economic impacts of the coronavirus outbreak.

*I'm going to read you a list of things some people say may be problems facing Portland. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a serious problem for Portland residents.*



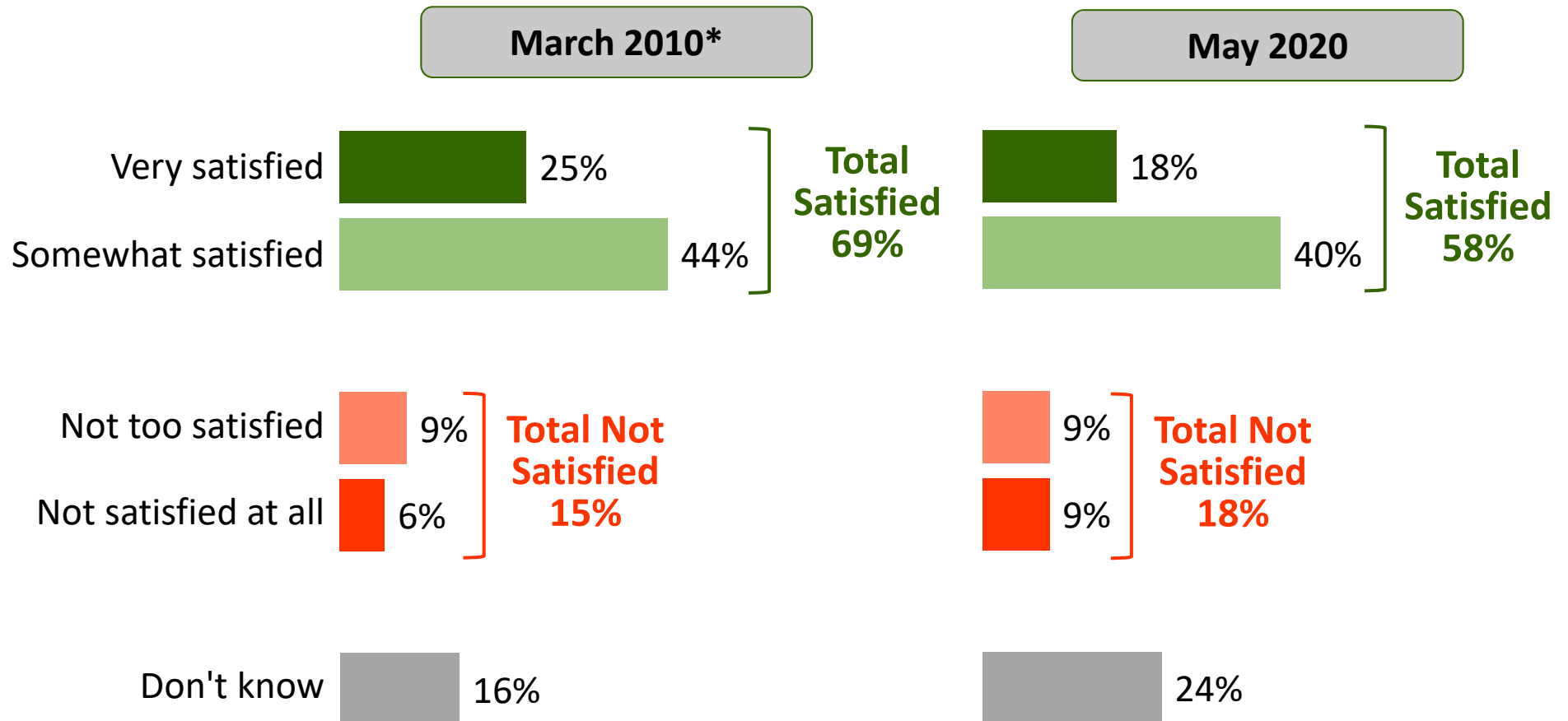
# More than four in five are satisfied with services provided by Portland Parks & Recreation, with one-third “very satisfied.”

*How satisfied are you with the quality of services provided by Portland Parks & Recreation?*



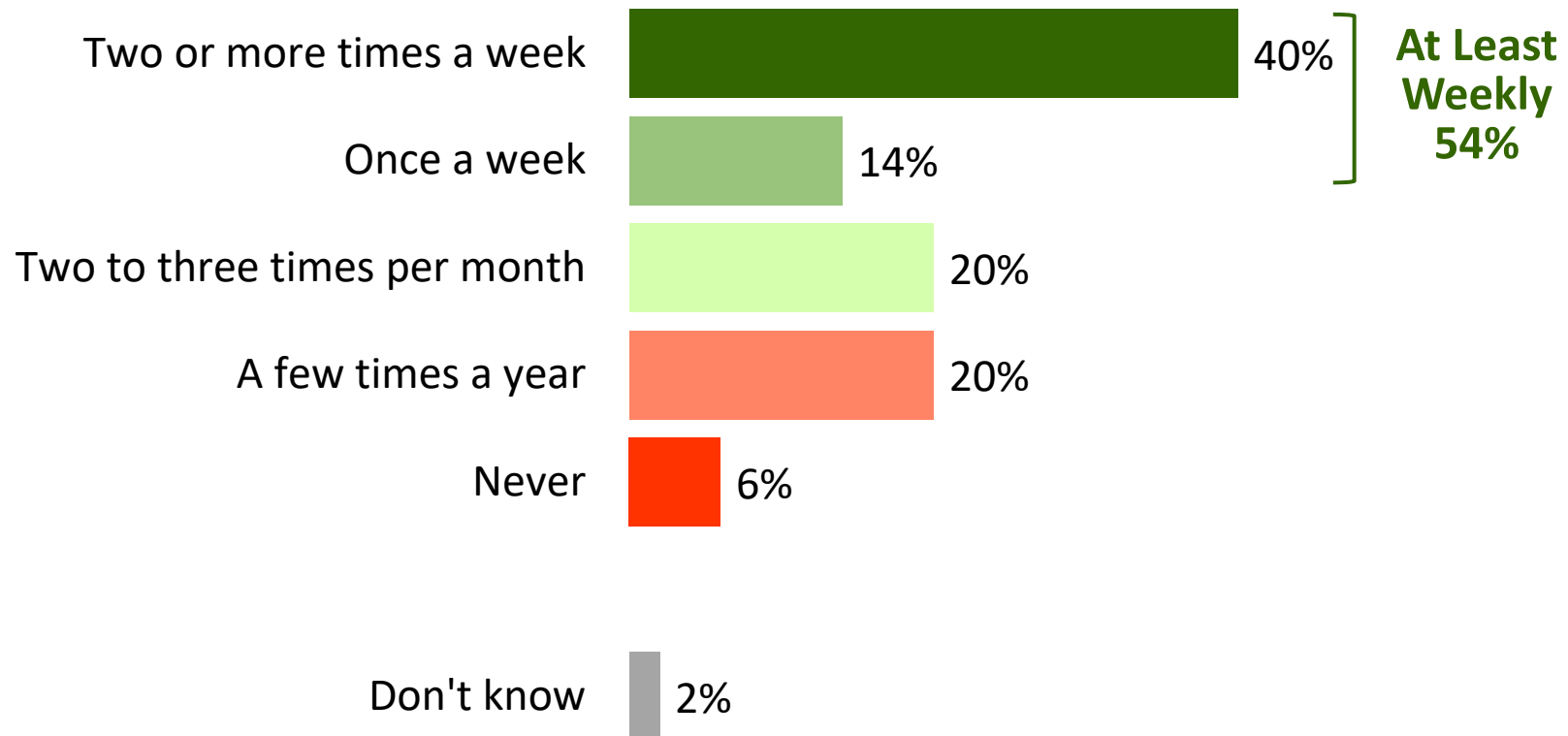
# Majorities are satisfied with how PPR spends tax dollars, though one-quarter don't know.

*How satisfied are you with how Portland Parks & Recreation spends tax dollars?*



# More than half visit a Portland park or natural area at least weekly, and two in five say they do this at least twice a week.

*In the past 12 months, how many times have you or someone in your household visited a Portland park or natural area, like nature trails, forests, woods, wetlands, or streams?*



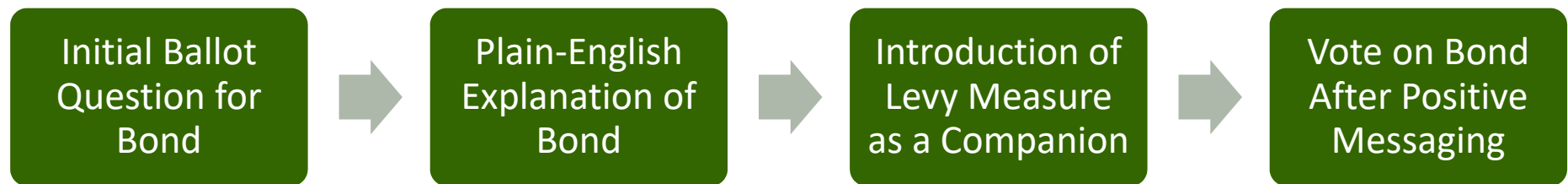


# Voter Views of Potential Ballot Measures



# Survey Structure

## *Half-Sample: Bond Focus*

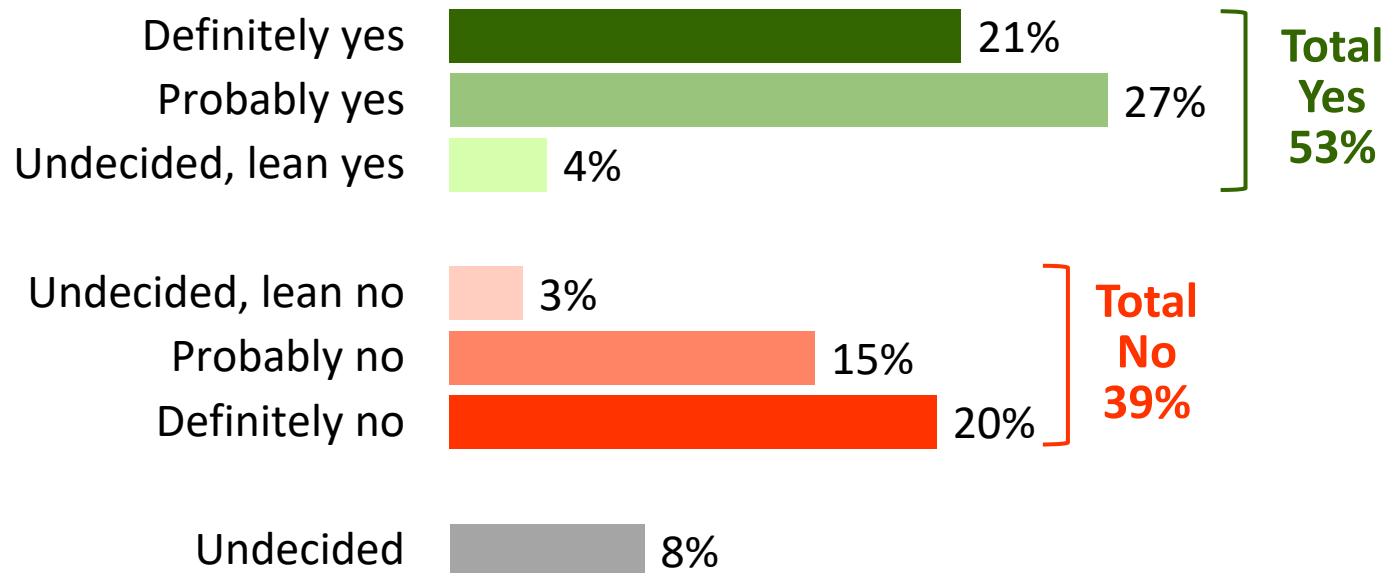


## *Half-Sample: Levy Focus*

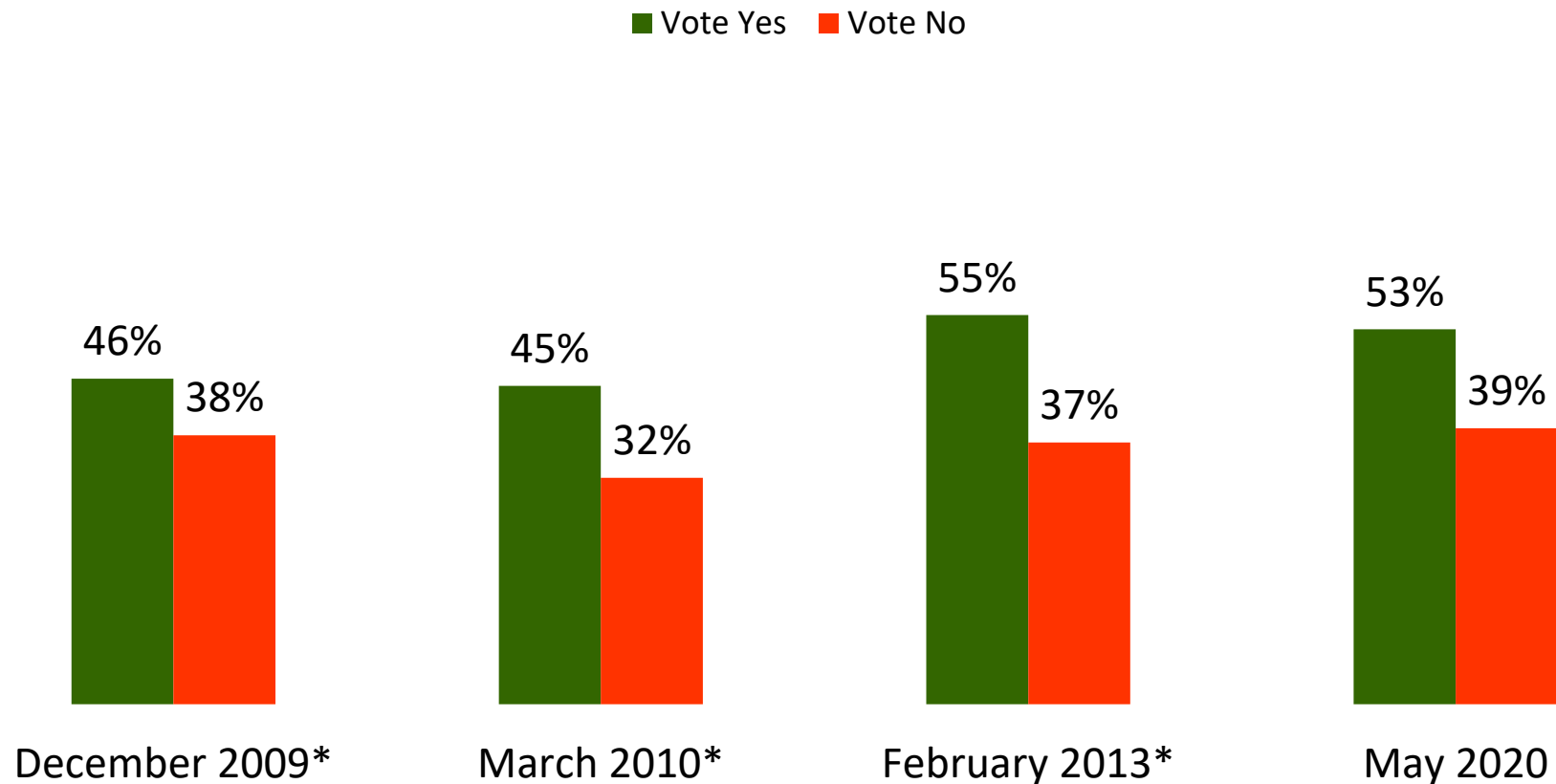


# Upon hearing initial ballot language, a majority of voters favors the bond.

**Bonds to fix parks, trails, recreation facilities, natural areas, safety.**  
Shall Portland fix, improve park facilities by issuing \$700 million in general obligation bonds; require audits, public oversight? If the bonds are approved, they will be payable from taxes on property or property ownership that are not subject to the limits of sections 11 and 11-b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.



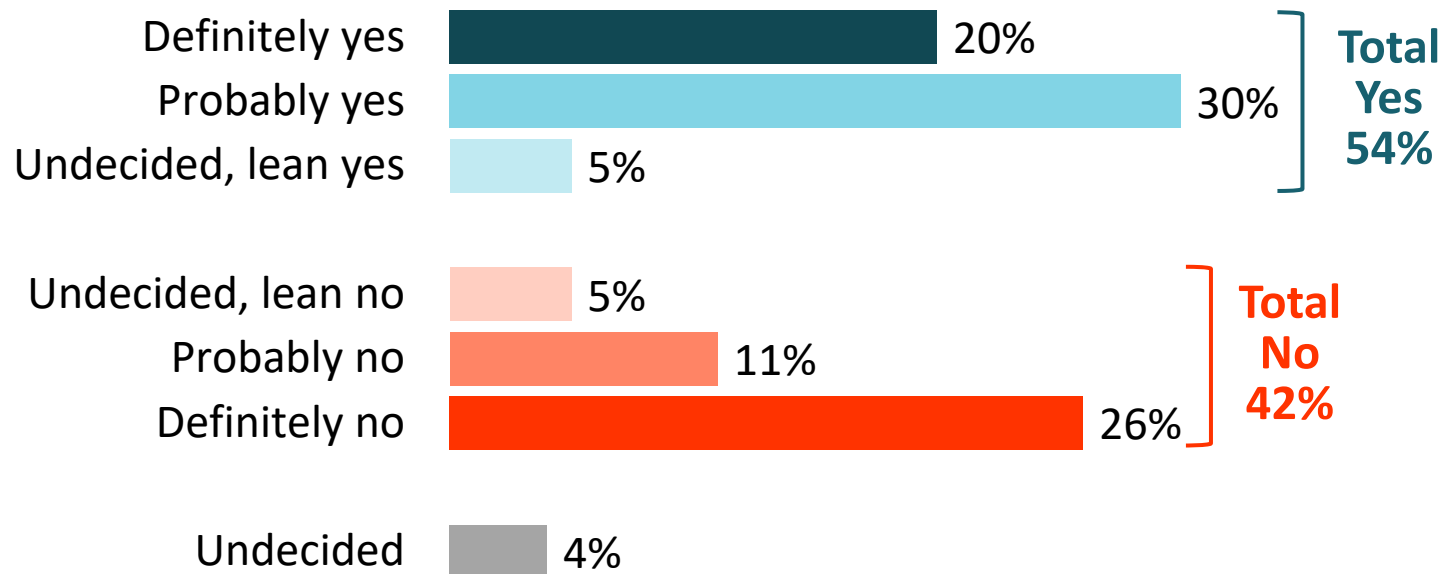
# Support for a bond measure is close to that observed in 2013 polling.





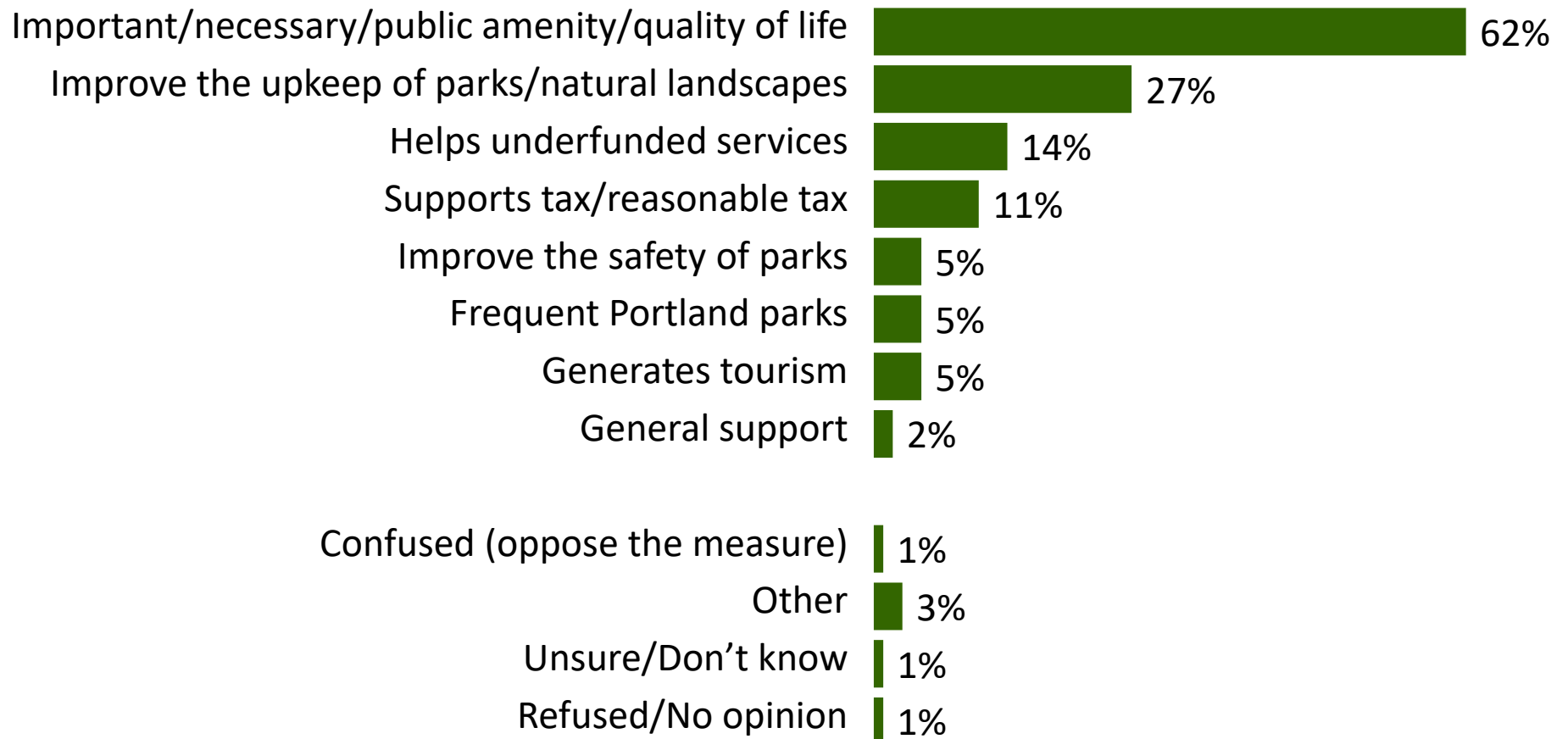
# The levy also has support from a majority.

**Five-year levy to restore park services, recreation programs, safety.**  
Shall Portland restore park services by levying \$0.80 per \$1,000 of assessed value for 5 years beginning 2021-2022? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than 3%.



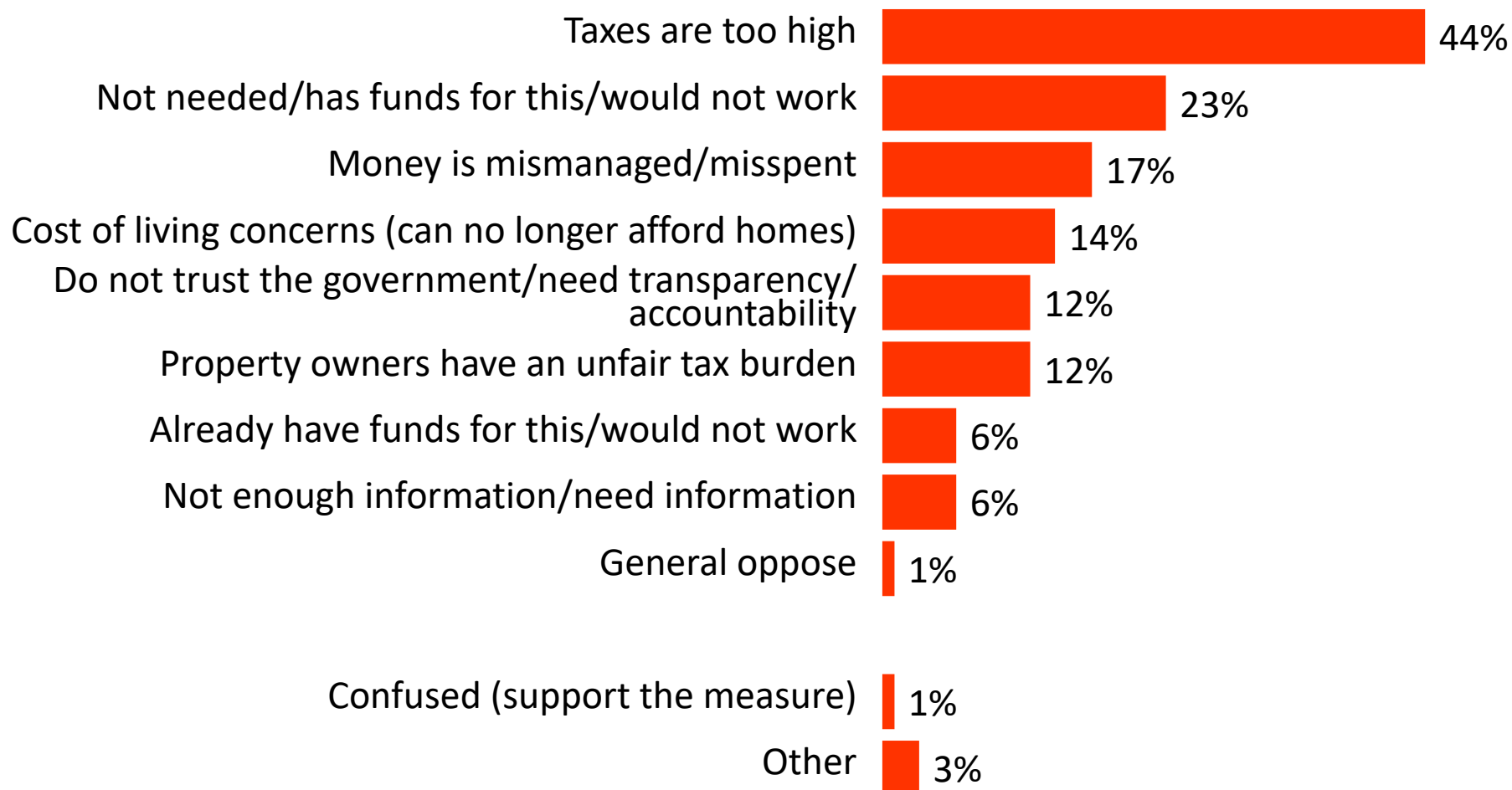
# Taken together, voters' support for the measures is driven by the value they place on parks and natural landscapes.

*In a few words of your own, why you would vote YES on this measure?  
(Open-ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, N=374)*



# Opponents broadly object to more taxes.

*In a few words of your own, why you would vote **NO** on this measure?  
(Open-ended; Asked of No Voters Only, N=284)*



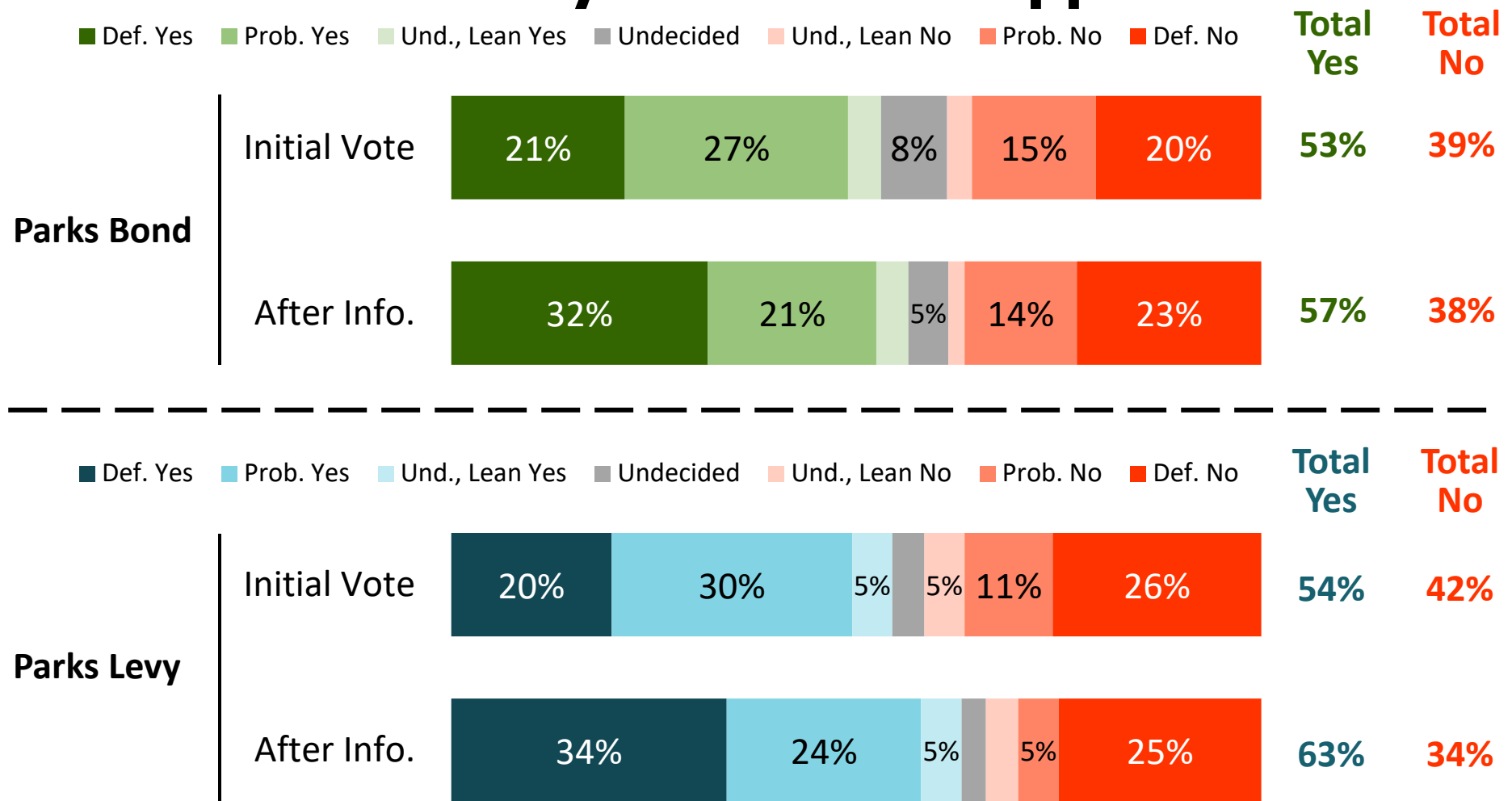
## **Voters next heard a plain-language explanation of either the bond or the levy.**

Let me tell you more about this measure. It is a \$700 million general obligation bond to fix Portland's playgrounds, trails; and improve park and recreation facilities, including safety and accessibility improvements. Portland Parks & Recreation will require audits and public oversight, and issue bonds payable from taxes on property, estimated to cost the average residential property owner \$104 per year, or \$8.70 per month

Let me tell you more about this measure. It is a \$44 million-per-year, five-year temporary operating levy to prevent ongoing reductions to Portland Parks & Recreation services and programs; including keeping neighborhood parks clean and green; and providing life-saving swim lessons, fitness, arts, senior programs, environmental education, and a summer playground program serving free lunches to children in need. This initiative would cost the average residential property owner \$130 per year or just under \$11 per month.

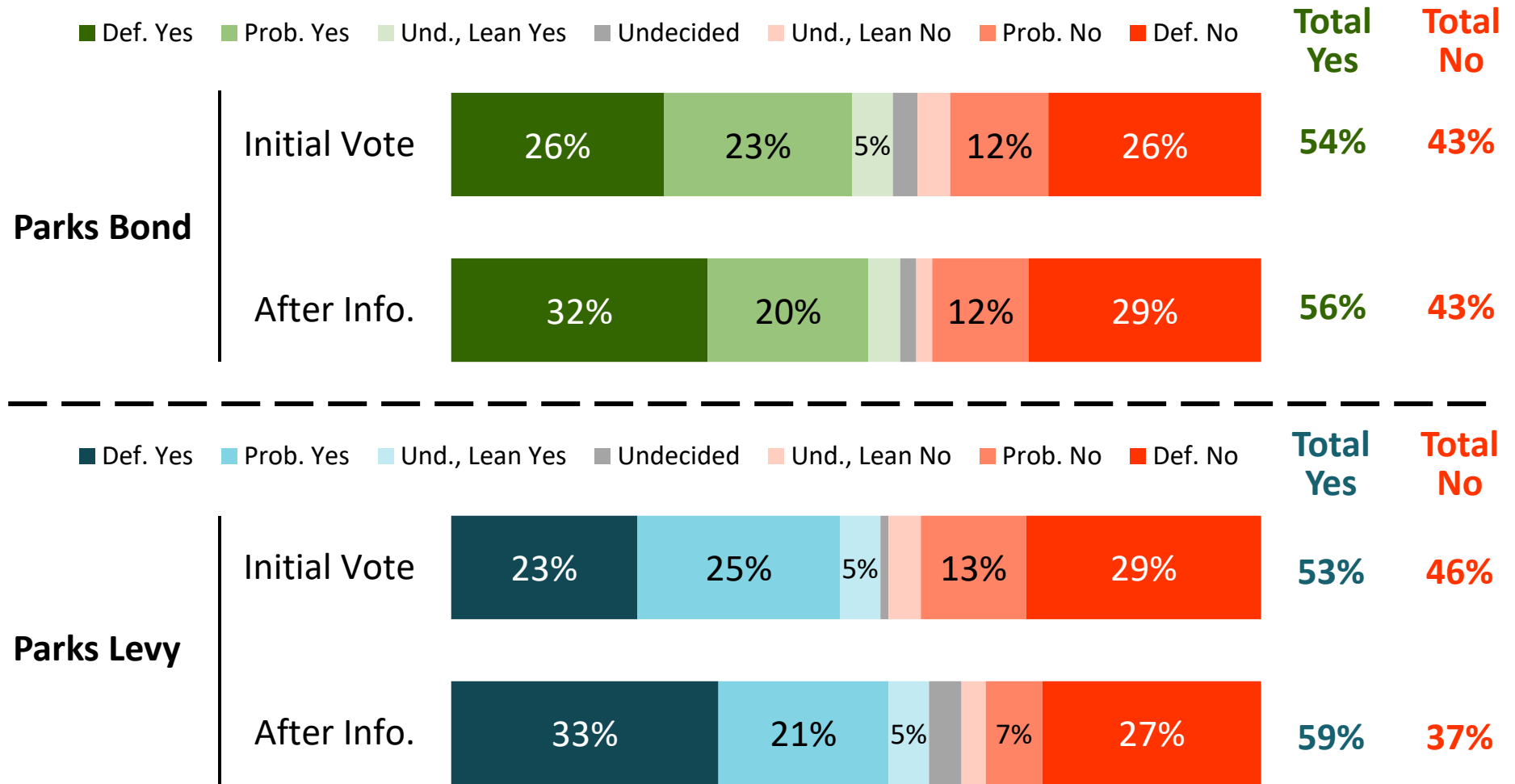


# Support for each measure increases after voters learn more; the levy has nearly two-thirds support.



# Looking at a May 2021 turnout universe yields very similar numbers.

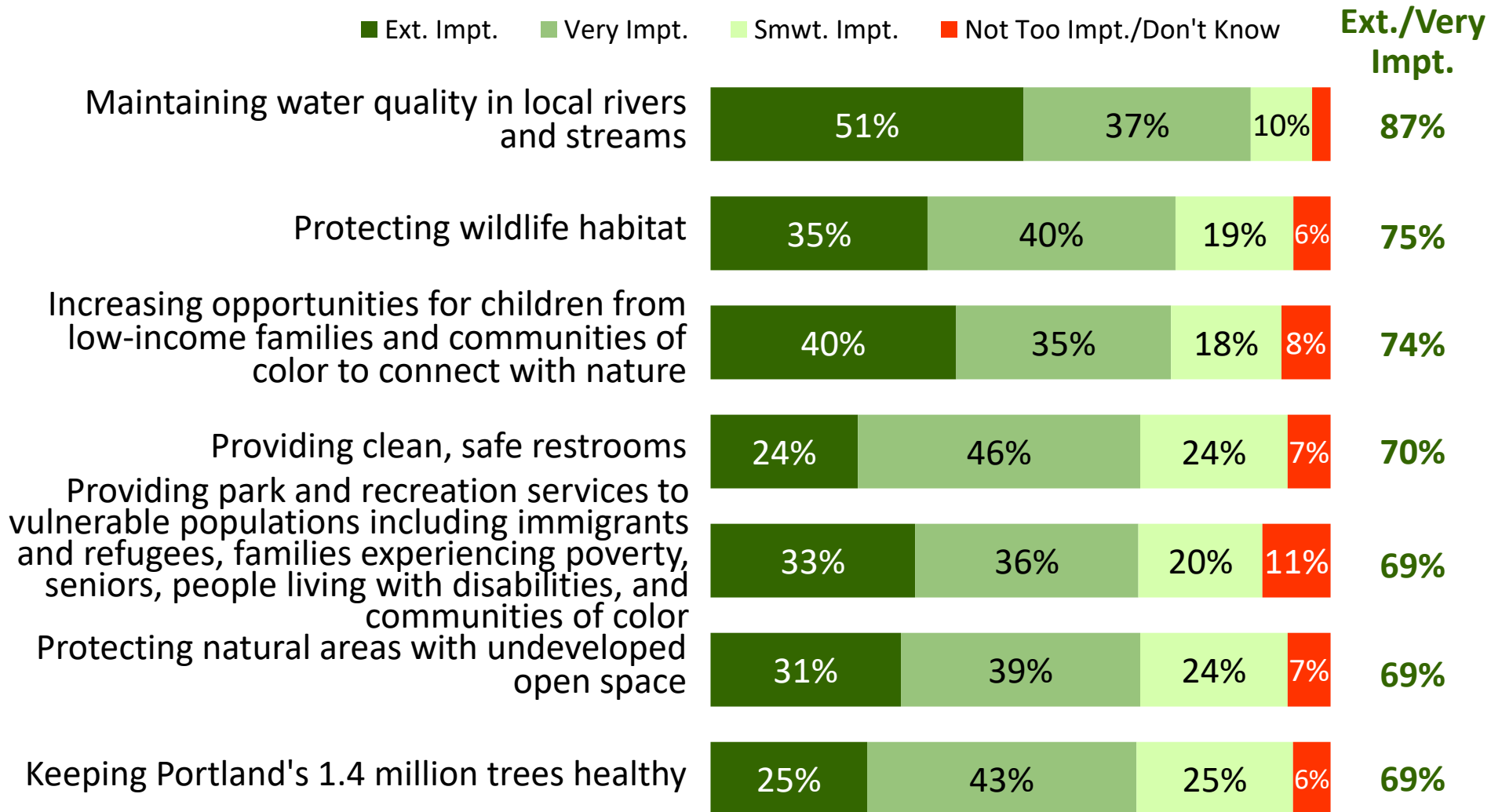
*(Likely May 2021 Voters)*



# Voter Priorities and Willingness to Pay

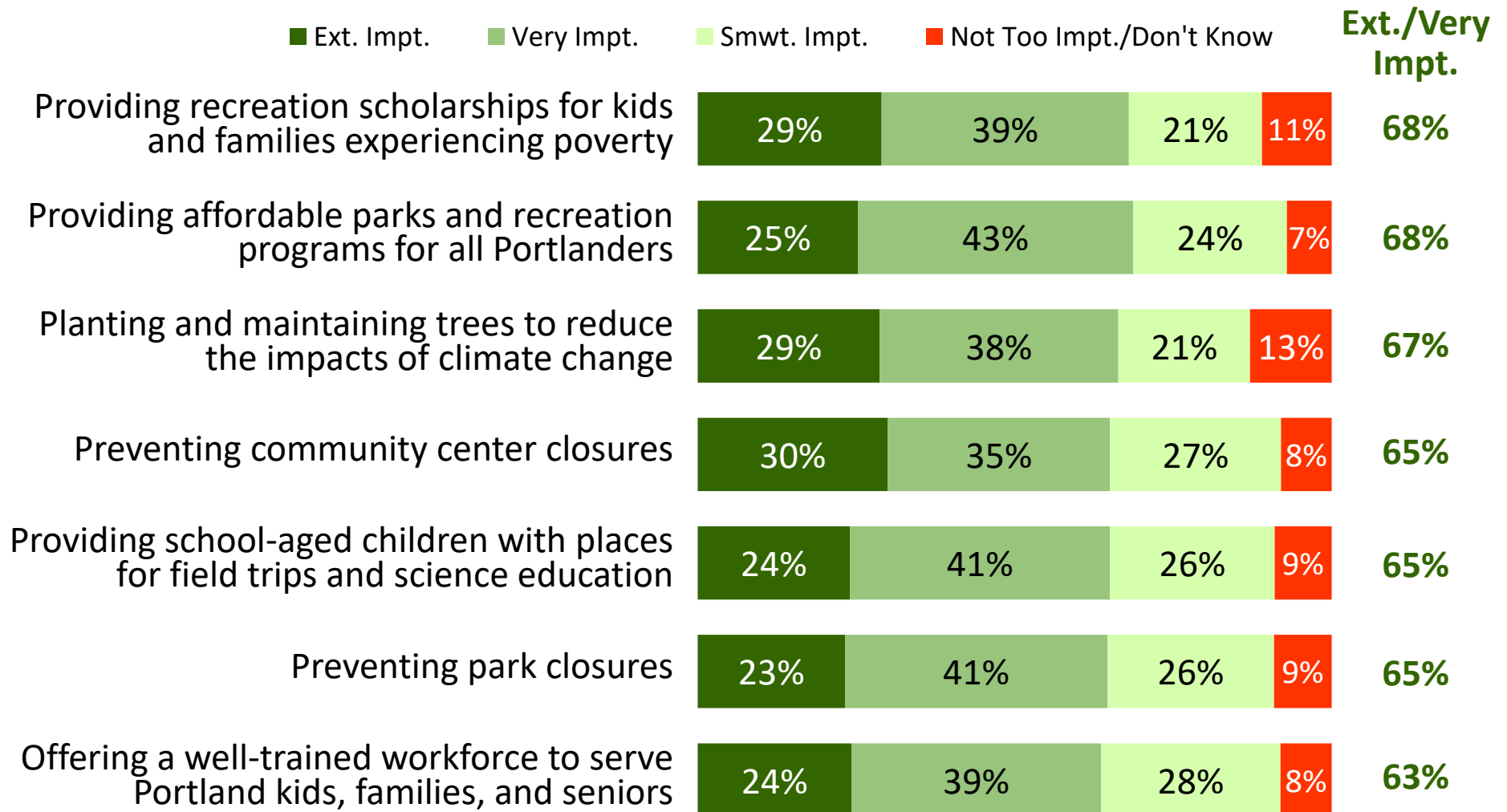


# Water quality, wildlife habitat, and equity in children's access to nature are key priorities.

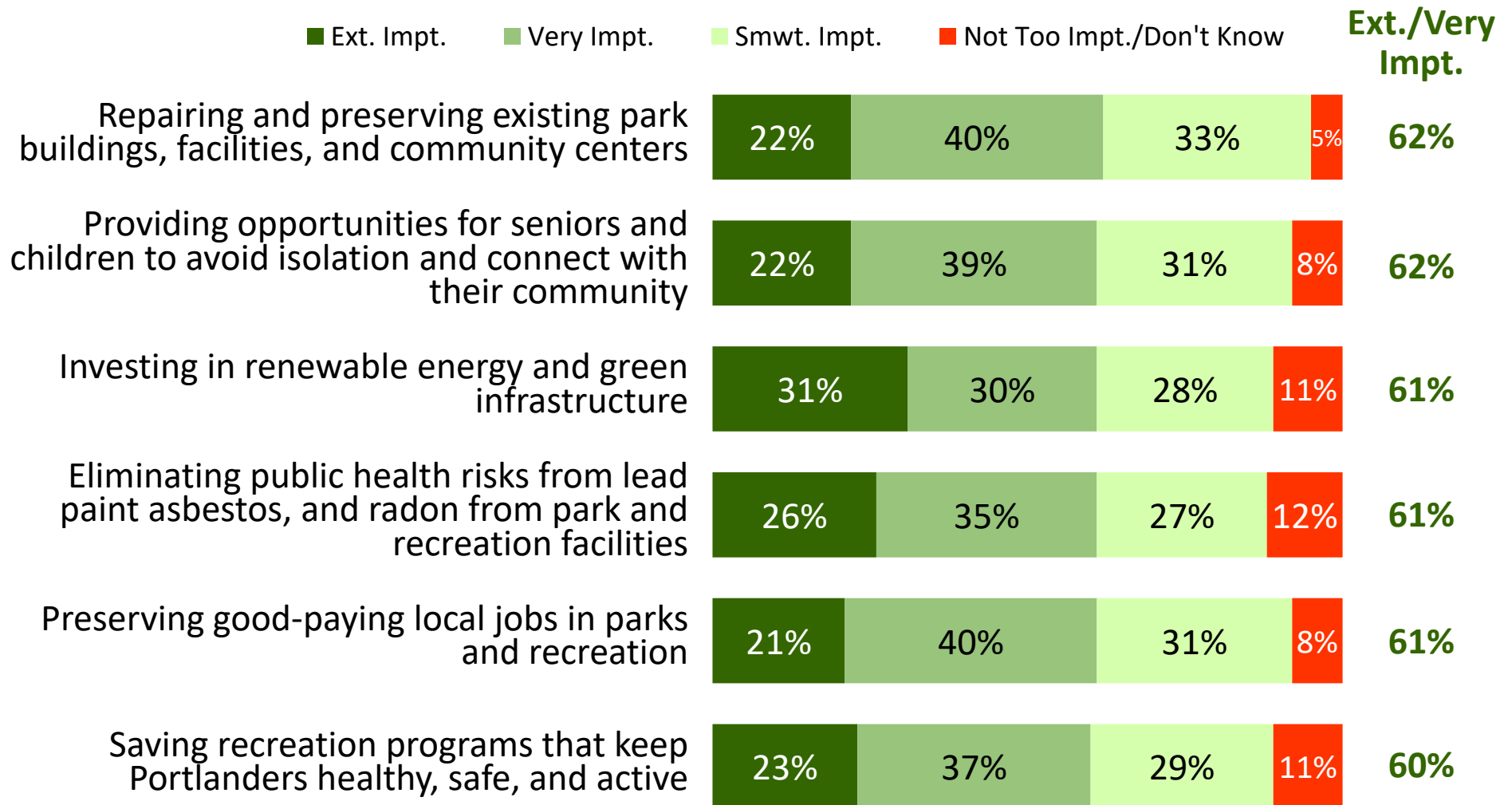




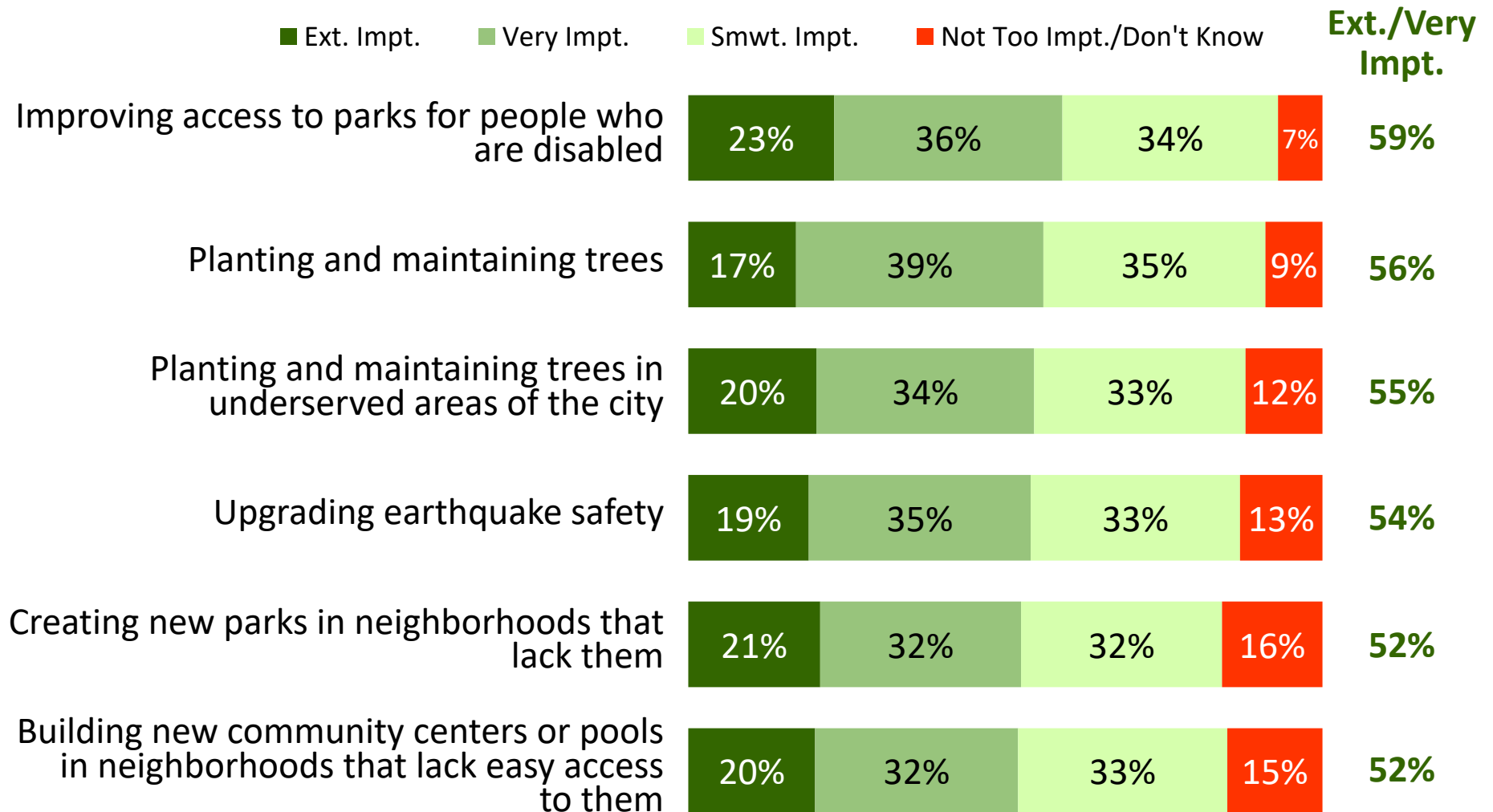
# Three in five or more also value recreation programs and preventing closures.



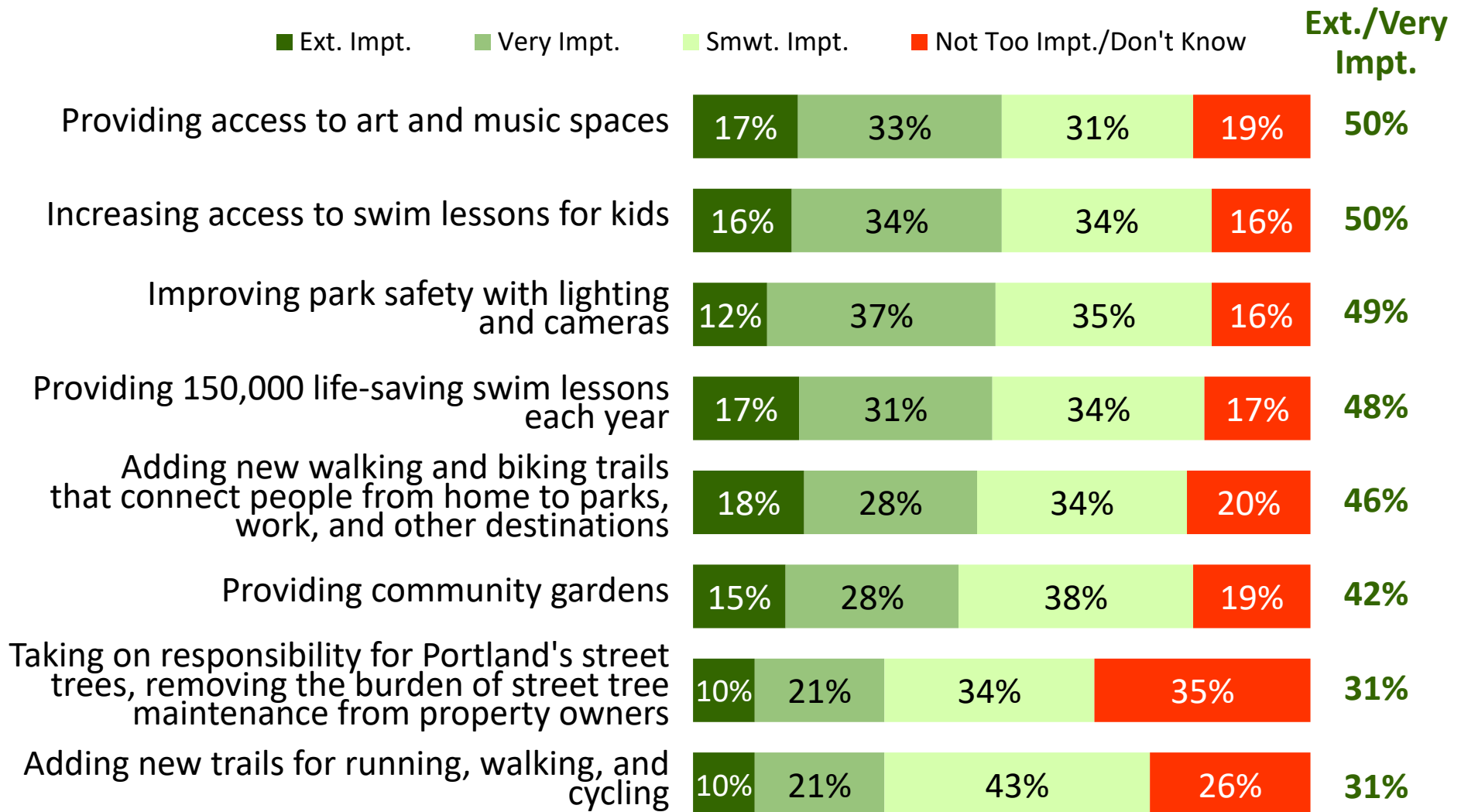
# Repairing park buildings and community centers is important to more than three in five.



# Majorities also value improving access for people who are disabled and caring for trees.

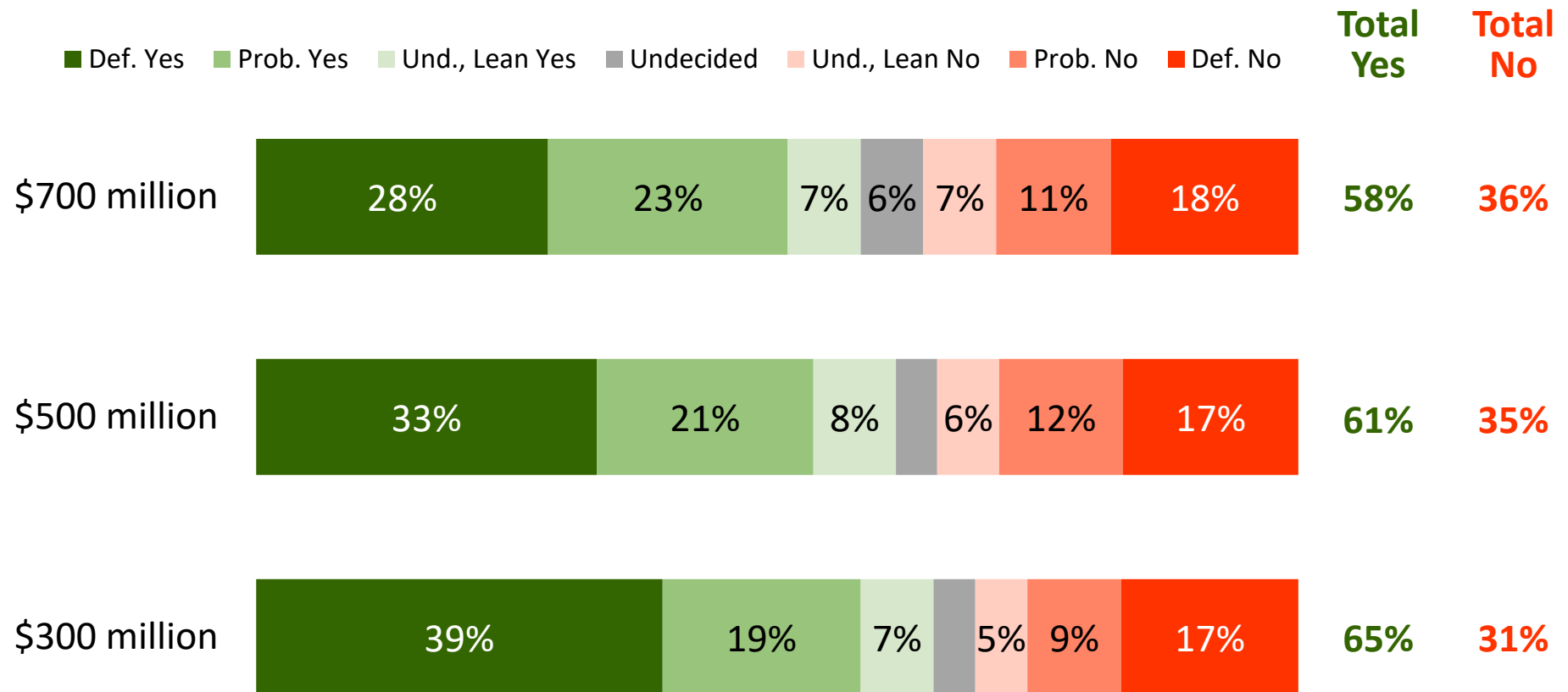


# Less-urgent priorities include taking on street tree maintenance and adding new trails.



# Nearly two-thirds support a bond measure of \$300M; nearly three in five support \$700M.

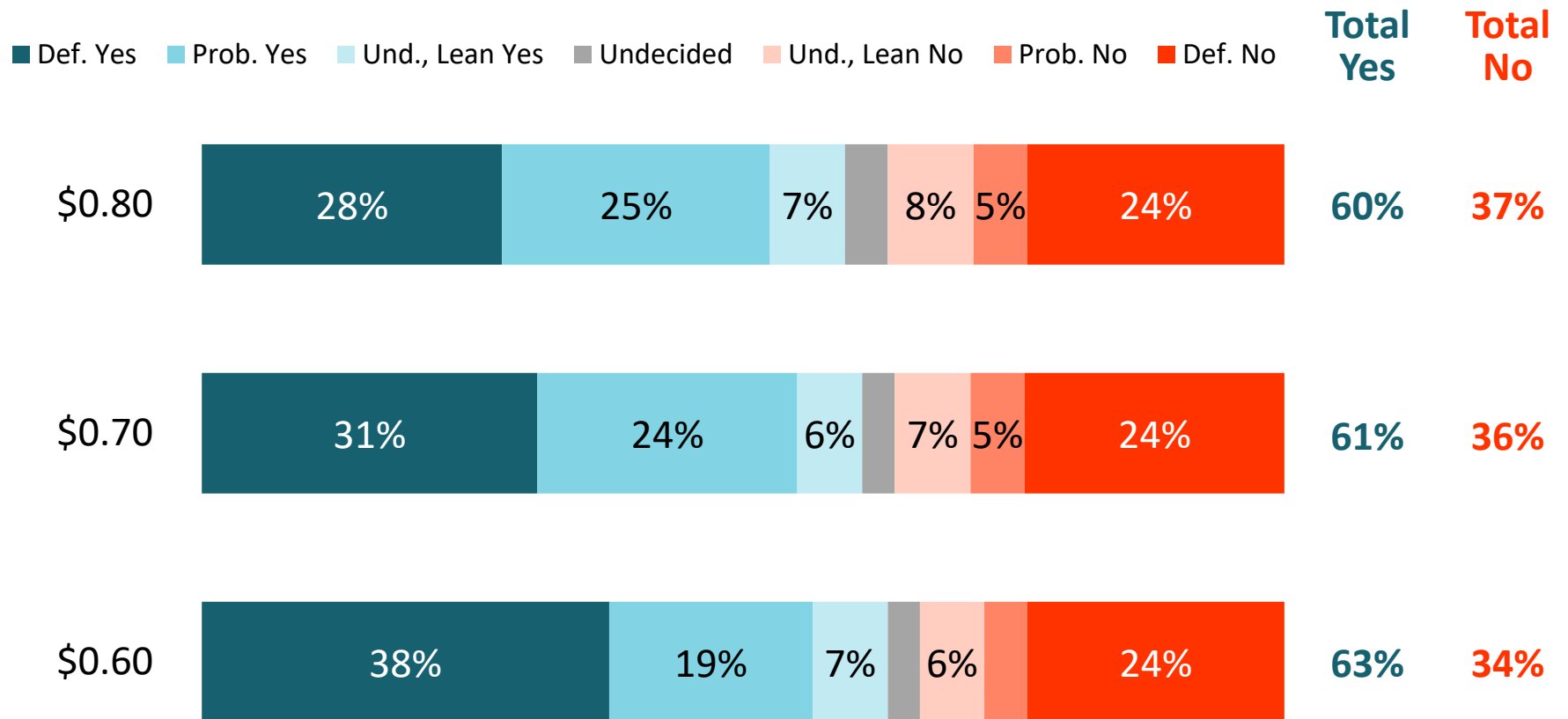
*Suppose that the bond measure would authorize issuing \_\_\_\_\_ in bonds to improve Portland parks. In that case, would you vote yes in support of it or no to oppose it?*





# Willingness to support a levy changes relatively little as the per-\$1,000 amount lowers.

*Suppose that the measure would levy \_\_\_\_ per \$1,000 of assessed value to allow Portland Parks & Recreation to save programs and services. In that case, would you vote yes in support of it or no to oppose it?*

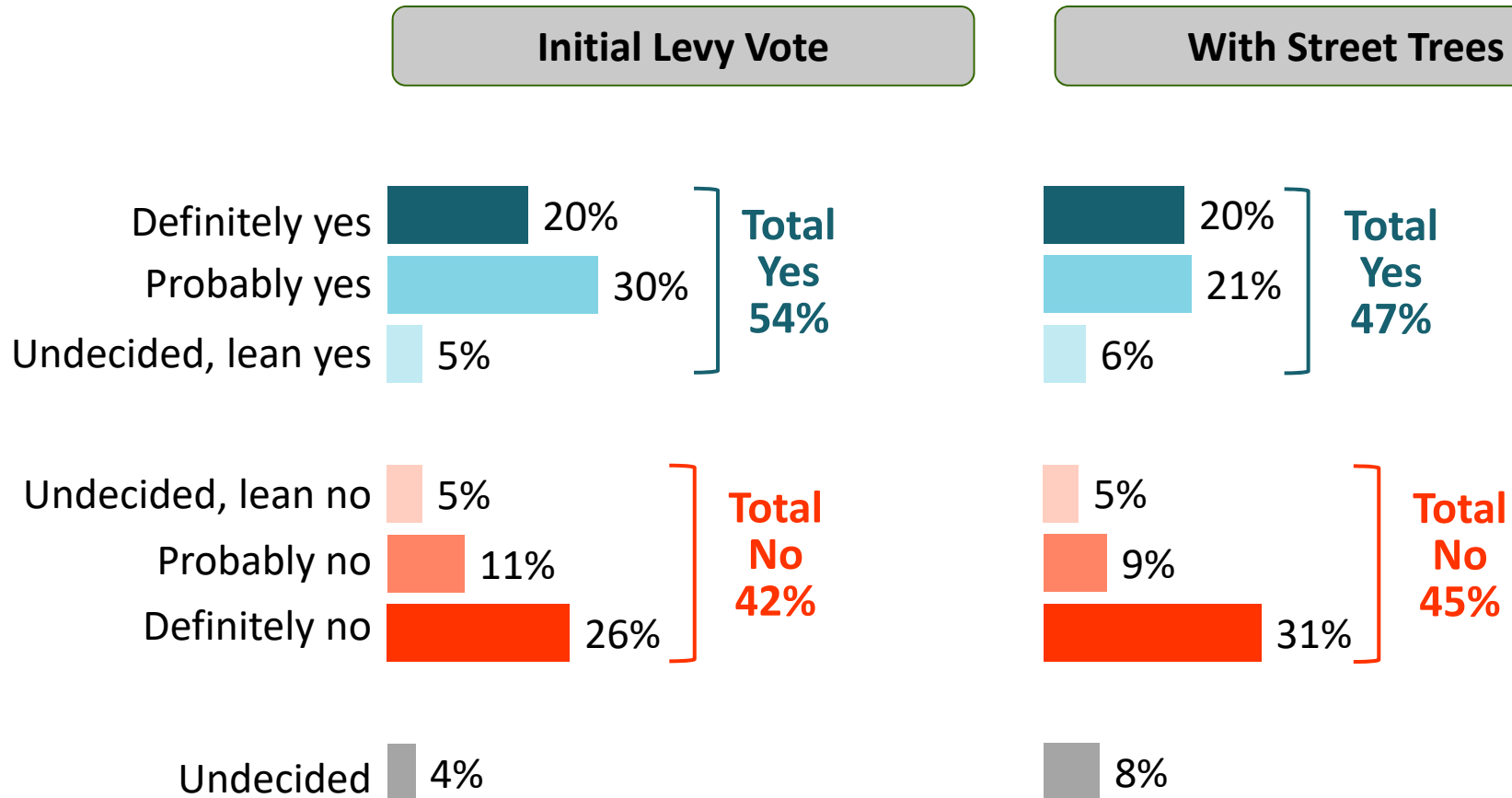




## Those who heard the levy first also heard about a proposal to include street trees.

“Currently, individual property owners are responsible for the maintenance of street trees adjacent to their property, including obtaining required permits, and the cost of removal – which can range from \$500 to \$20,000 per tree. Some people have proposed that Portland Parks & Recreation should take over that responsibility, maintaining trees throughout all neighborhoods of the city. Funding for this proposal could come from this levy, in which case it would cost an additional \$0.22 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, adding a cost of about \$36 per year, or just under \$3 per month for a median income, single-family property owner.”

# This proposal reduces support for the levy by seven points.



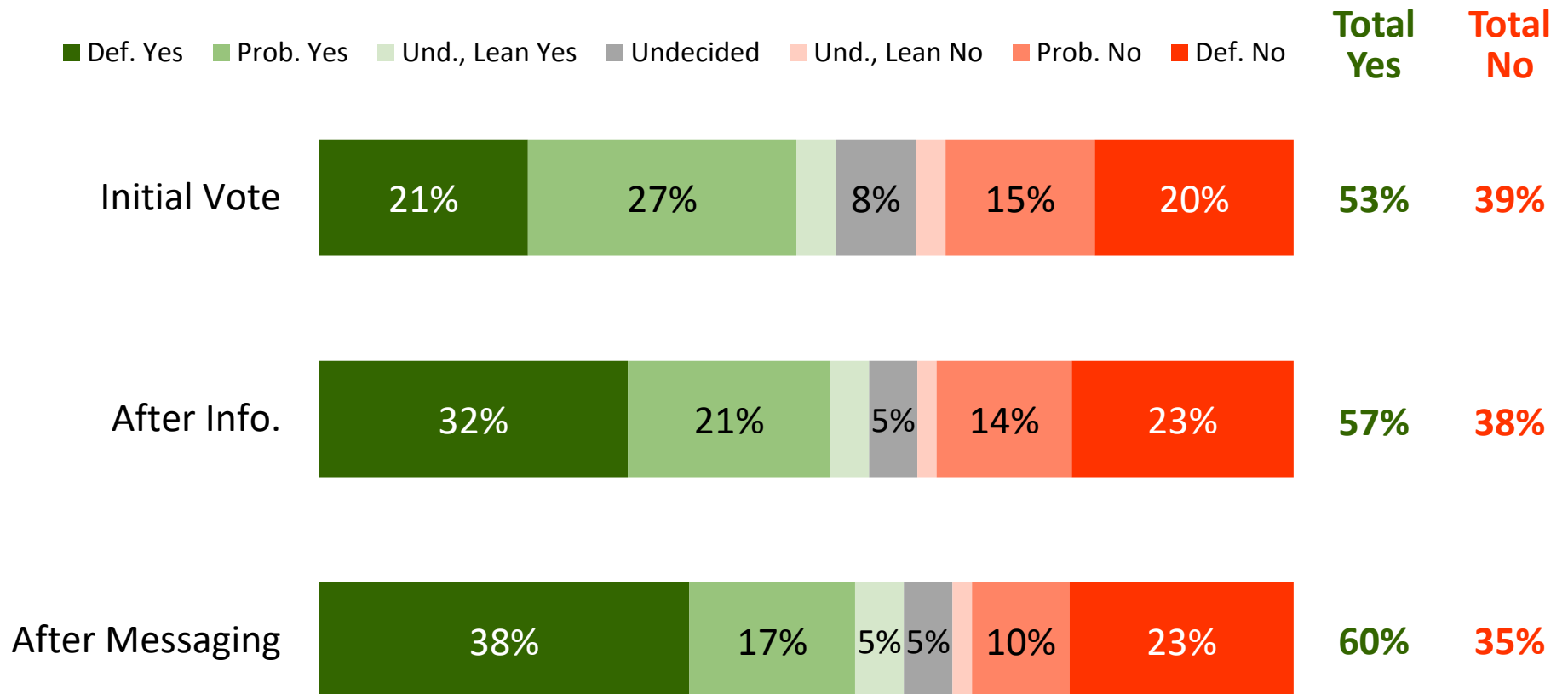


# Messaging and Movement



# As voters learn more about the bond measure, the “yes” vote and its intensity increases.

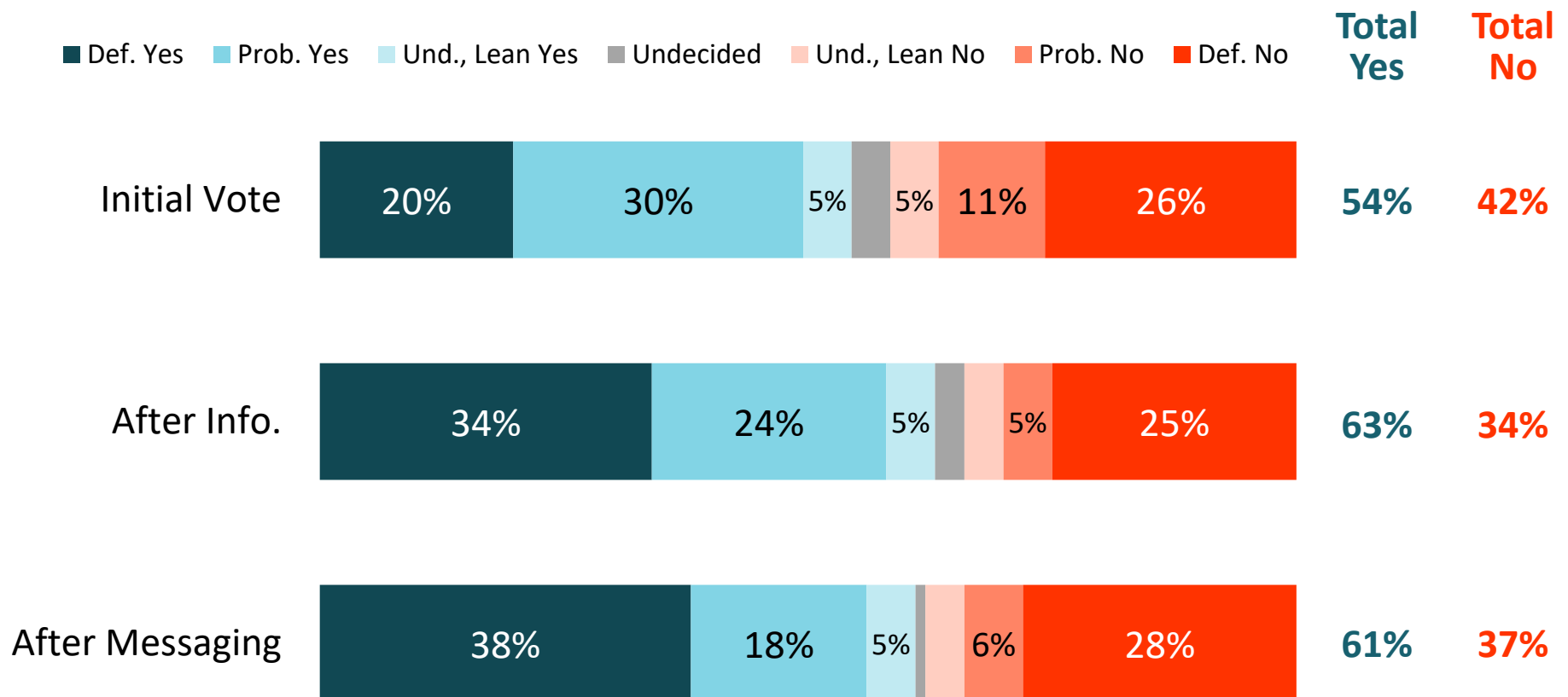
## Bond Measure Votes





# After plain language, the levy “yes” vote increases to more than three in five; messaging has no impact on support statistically.

*Levy Measure Votes*



# Messaging in Support of the Measures

**(ACCESS)** Without new investments, the parks system will likely lose one out of five park facilities, like playgrounds, community centers, restrooms, and more over the next 15 years and we will not have the equitable park system the community deserves.

**(TRANSFORMATION)** Nature should be a part of every community. As our community grows and changes, we need to protect and preserve our parks, rivers, wetlands, trees, and other important natural features in urban areas for the benefit of all Portlanders and wildlife.

**(EVERYONE)** Now, more than ever, we need parks and natural areas that are accessible to everyone and cost nothing to use. People need places to exercise, play, and enjoy beautiful natural areas, parks, and trails that are affordable, close to home, and open to all Portlanders.

**(RECREATION)** Portland's recreation programs are crucial in providing free and low-cost and accessible opportunities for kids to stay safe and out of trouble. Due to the economic downturn, Portland is running millions of dollars short in funding for recreation programs - just at the moment when local families will need them most. This measure will help to prevent cuts in these vital recreation programs.

**(FUTURE GENERATIONS)** This measure will preserve Portland's natural beauty by protecting rivers, streams, trees, natural areas, and wildlife habitat. It will ensure that our children, grandchildren, and all future generations enjoy the same quality of life we do.

**(TREES)** Portland's park system includes one-point-four million trees, which help to reduce air pollution, cool our city, fight climate change, and improve our quality of life. This measure will protect our urban forest and plant more trees in parts of Portland that currently lack them.

# Messaging in Support of the Measures; Continued

**(KIDS HELPED)** This measure will help Portland Parks & Recreation provide 150,000 life-saving swim lessons every year; let 100,000 kids experience outdoor camps; and provide thousands of scholarships for kids experiencing poverty.

**(REC STAFF)** Portland's recreation staff are public servants including childcare providers, pre-school teachers, swim teachers, lifeguards, exercise instructors, camp counselors, art instructors, music teachers, and senior fitness instructor. This diverse staff is the heart of Portland's recreation programs, and this measure will help keep them working for us.

**(HEALTH)** This measure will help keep our community healthy. Portland kids, families, and seniors who visit parks for play and exercise have better physical, psychological, and mental health outcomes.

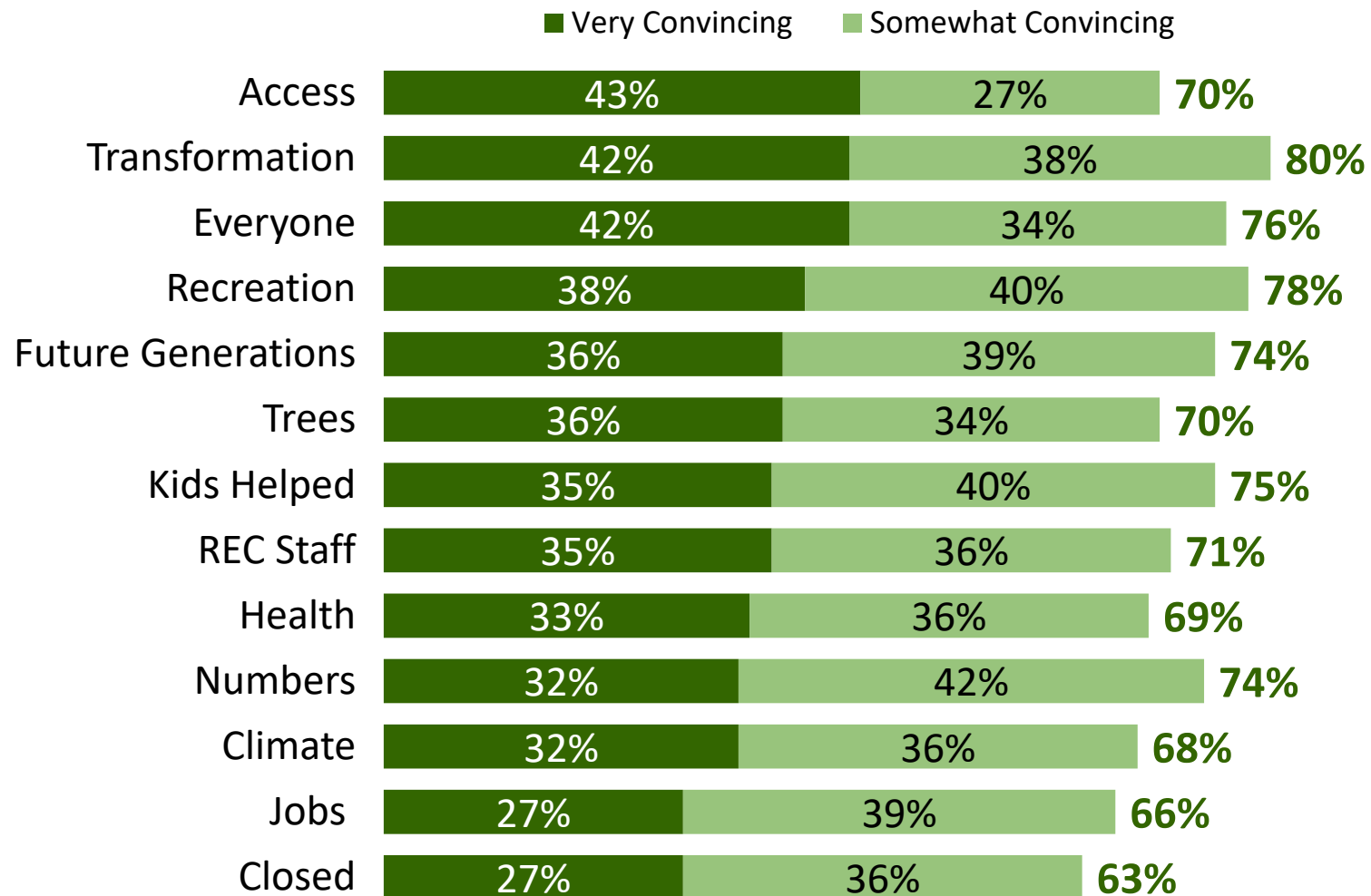
**(NUMBERS)** This measure will help support and maintain the park and recreation system that Portlanders count on - including nearly 12,000 acres of parks, 157 miles of trails, and 8,000 acres of natural areas and open space.

**(CLIMATE)** The global climate crisis puts our communities and natural areas at risk, with extreme weather threatening people, water, and wildlife. Investing in Portland's trees, parks and natural areas is part of the solution because they can diminish the impacts of climate change; help remove carbon pollution; improve air quality; and act as buffer zones during disasters, like flooding.

**(JOBS)** By investing in maintaining and repairing our park infrastructure, which helps attract tourists to the city, this measure will preserve hundreds of good-paying, local jobs in parks and recreation. That's more important than ever in times of economic uncertainty.

**(CLOSED)** Today Portland Parks & Recreation has many closed facilities and they need new investments to keep parks and facilities open. This measure can help to provide them.

# Preventing cuts and protecting access to nature are highly compelling messages.



**For more information, contact:**



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