

A photograph of a smiling Black family sitting on a couch. A woman with curly hair is on the left, holding a baby. A man is on the right, holding another baby. The two babies are clapping their hands together. The scene is bright and warm, with a window in the background.

Sustainability Research Survey Results

Strong Start for Children Threatened

Neuroscience shows a unique window, **0-5 years, for brain development**
Quality **early learning** and **early childhood** services turn the curve

The Problem: Yolo County children lack access to affordable, quality early learning and early childhood supports

Under-investment and Diminishing Public resources

- Childcare system battered by the pandemic, lacking infant/toddler care, costs are unaffordable
- Accelerated decline of Proposition 10 for early childhood
- State/County funding shrinking; Federal funding uncertain
- Medi-Cal only partially covers the true cost of services

Finding Solutions



F5 Network (F5A, F5CA, County Commissions)

- *First 5 CA Sustainability, Diversification & Capacity Building: A Playbook for Local First 5 Commissions*
- **First 5 Association Policy Priorities:**
 - Choose Children Campaign
 - Advocacy for administration of existing/new state funding
 - New Medi-Cal benefit

Local Effort

June 2021 elected leaders Op Ed and Roadmap to the Future Framework

Recent Voter-Led Ballot Measures for Children

Alameda (March 2020)

- ½ cent sales tax dedicated to children
- Placed on ballot via voter signatures, requiring only 50% plus 1 vote for passage
- Administered by First 5 Alameda
- Upheld by California Supreme Court 2024

Sonoma (November 2024)

- ¼ cent countywide sales tax dedicated to childcare (60%) and early childhood programs (40%)
- Placed on ballot via voter signatures, requiring only 50% plus 1 vote for passage
- Administered by First 5 Sonoma



Role of First 5 Local Public Agencies

Legally allowed to support bringing a measure to ballot (e.g., funding research and opinion surveys, providing professional advice to draft measure language, supply needs and services data/information)

In alignment with Statute, First 5 may continue public education/awareness related to improving development of children ages 0-5

Aligned with mission to administer public funds supporting children's health and development, F5 may serve as administrative and fiscal agent for children's measures

Once a measure is placed on the ballot, public agencies *cannot* participate in campaigns or voter persuasion



FM3 Survey

Commissioned by First 5 Yolo

Countywide community survey to better understand the depth and breadth of community perception of early childhood and childcare needs and the extent of support for additional revenue generation options.






Yolo County Voter Attitudes Towards Early Childhood and Child Care Funding

Key Findings of a Countywide Survey Conducted July 31-August 6, 2025



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

Survey Methodology

Dates	July 31-August 6, 2025
Survey Type	Dual-mode Voter Survey
Research Population	Likely November 2026 Voters in Yolo County
Total Interviews	607
Margin of Sampling Error	(Full Sample) $\pm 4.0\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level
Contact Methods	 Telephone Calls  Email Invitations  Text Invitations
Data Collection Modes	 Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews

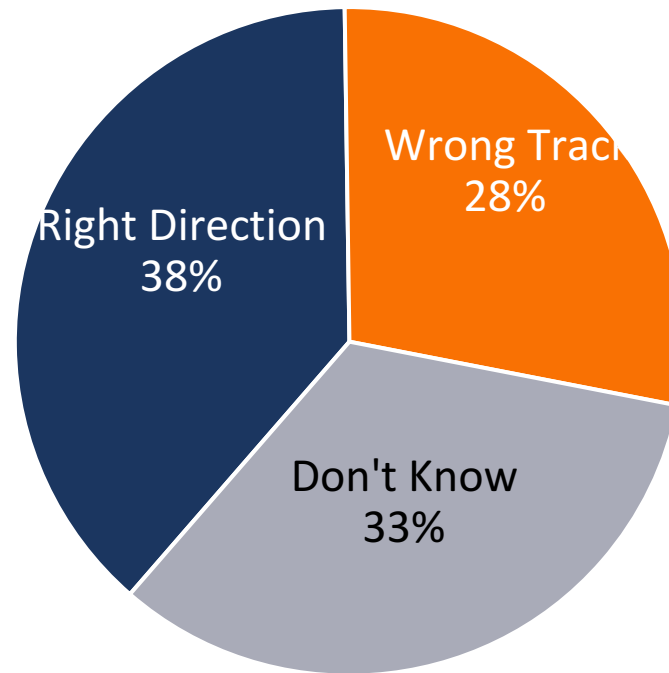
(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)



Issue Context

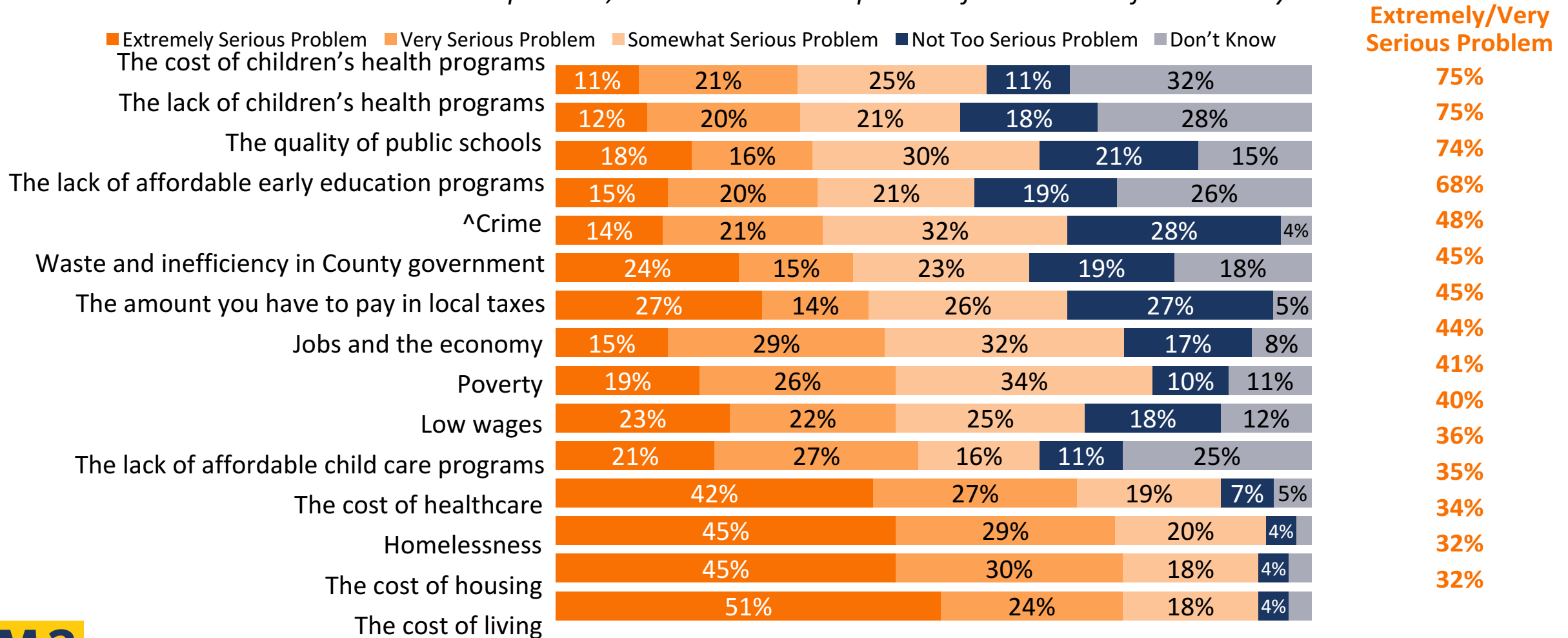
Voters are mixed on the overall direction of Yolo County.

Would you say things in Yolo County are headed in the right direction, or do you feel they are off on the wrong track?



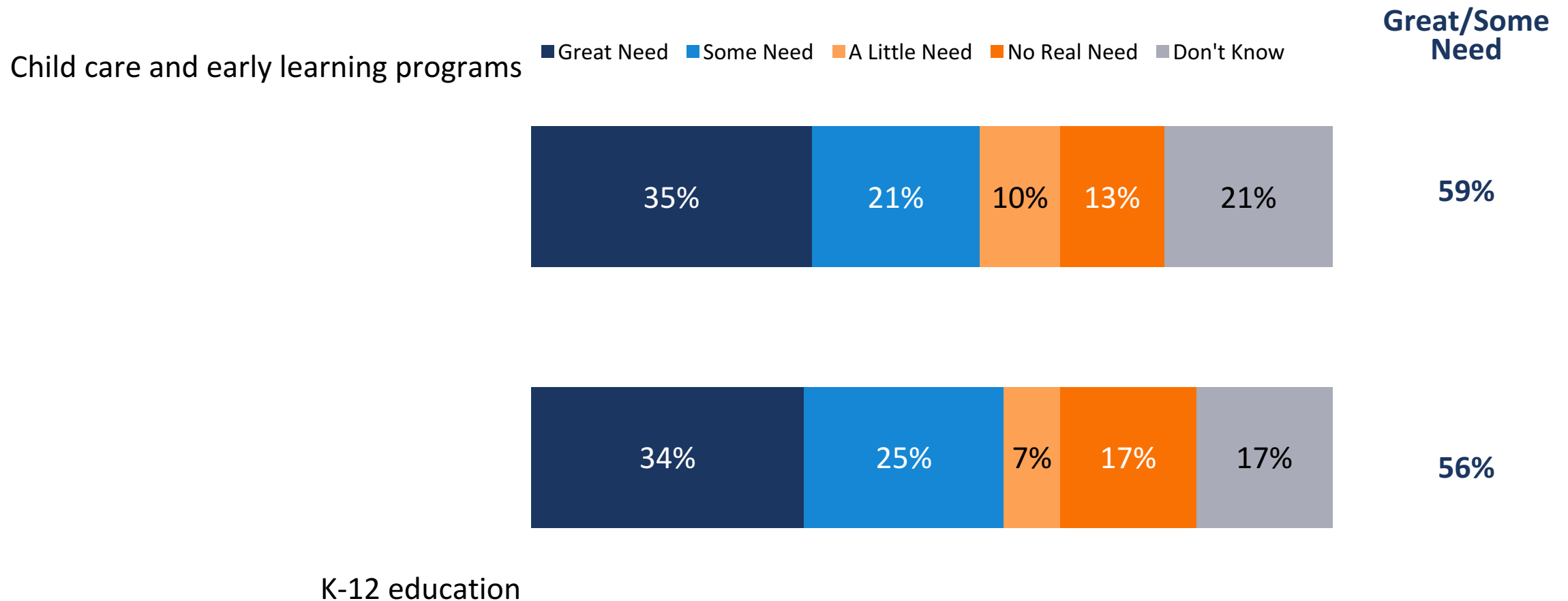
The biggest concerns in the county are the costs of living, housing, and healthcare, as well as homelessness.

Please consider the following issues that some people suggest are problems facing Yolo County residents. Please indicate whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem for residents of Yolo County.



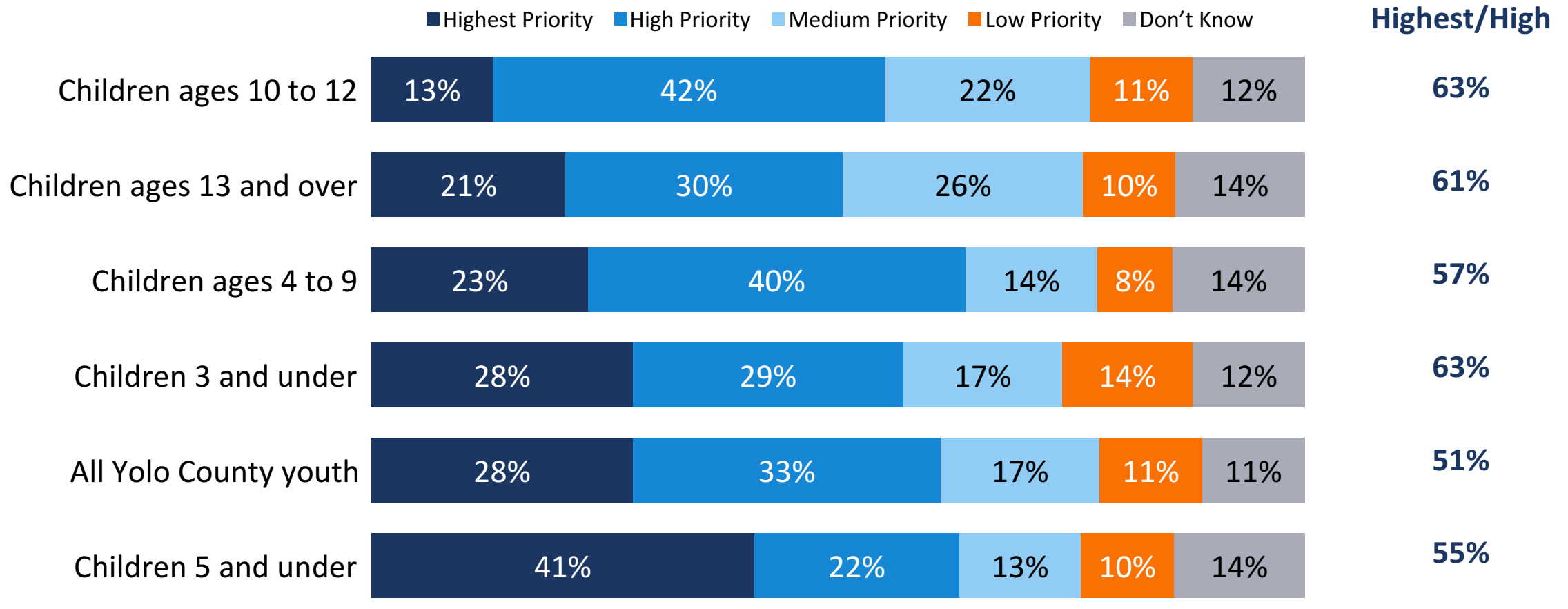
Nearly three in five voters see a need for funding K-12 education as well as child care and early learning programs.

Here is a series of education and youth programs in Yolo County. Please indicate if you think there is a great need for additional funding, some need, a little need, or no real need for additional funding for this type of program.



Voters see children 5 and under as the highest priority for additional funding.

Here is a list of different groups of Yolo County children and youth that may benefit from these services. Please tell me how high a priority you think it should be to provide additional funding to help that group of children and youth: one of the highest priorities, a high priority, a medium priority, or a low priority.





Introducing Potential Revenue Mechanisms

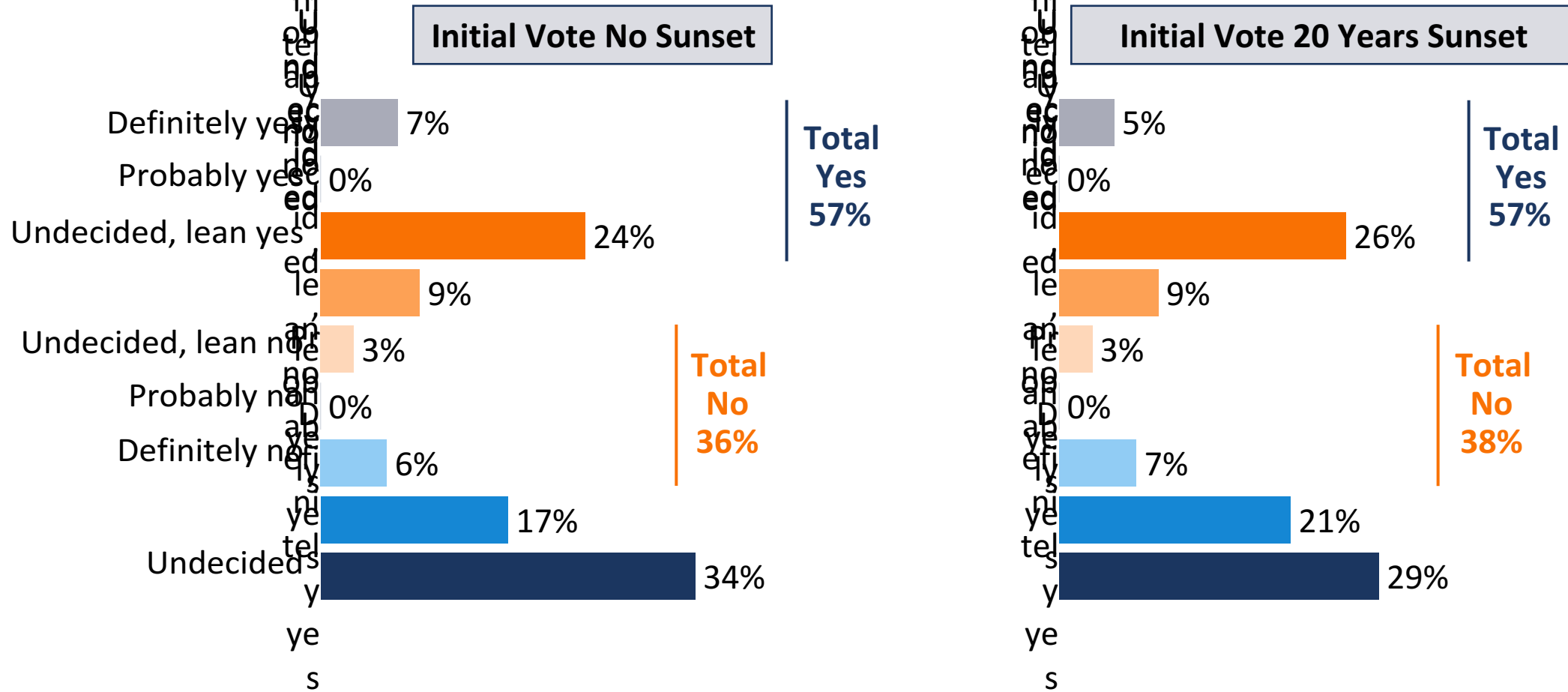
Ballot Language Tested

(50% Threshold for Passage)

To improve the health and well-being of Yolo County children by: increasing access to quality child care and early childhood programs to start kindergarten ready to learn; preventing child abuse and neglect; and increasing access to vital health services for children, such as preventive health care, mental health services, and health education; shall the Yolo County measure establishing a half-cent sales tax, providing \$27 million annually, **(SPLIT SAMPLE A ONLY: until ended by voters)** **(SPLIT SAMPLE B ONLY: for 20 years)**, subject to independent audits and review by an oversight commission, be adopted?

Initial support for the measure starts above the 50% threshold, with slightly greater intensity of support for a version with no sunset.

MOE ±5.7%

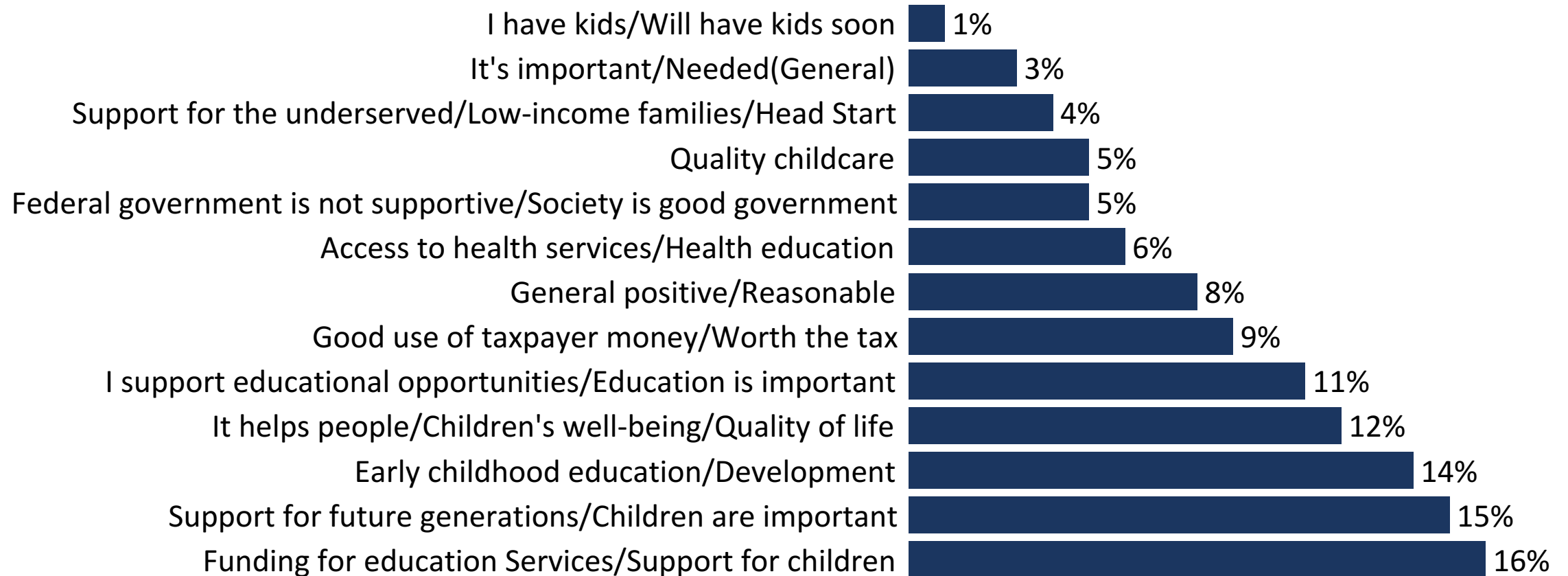


56% of parents support the proposed measure, as do 57% of non-parents.

Supporters are motivated by the importance of supporting children and providing them with early childhood services that foster development.

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

(Open-ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, n=348)



Verbatim Comments from Supporters

Taxes are the price you pay for the standard of living you want.

The tax is small and for worthy programs. The audit is a crucial piece driving my support.

It seems like a low impact tax that would go towards a good cause.

My own children greatly benefited from early childhood education programs such as head start and speech therapy prior to kindergarten.

Federal support for these programs is threatened.

Early childhood programs are critical to long term health and development. They will save money in the long run on social services and kids deserve to be cared for and supported.

Our children are our future. The first five years are especially important.

Given the current trajectory of this country, it is more important than ever to help children from poor families.

I'll always say yes to measures that help our kids.

I won't notice an increase and it will help put low-income kids in safe environment.

Early childhood education is critical to success for all Californians. An equitable approach to early education will make such a difference as children progress through the system.

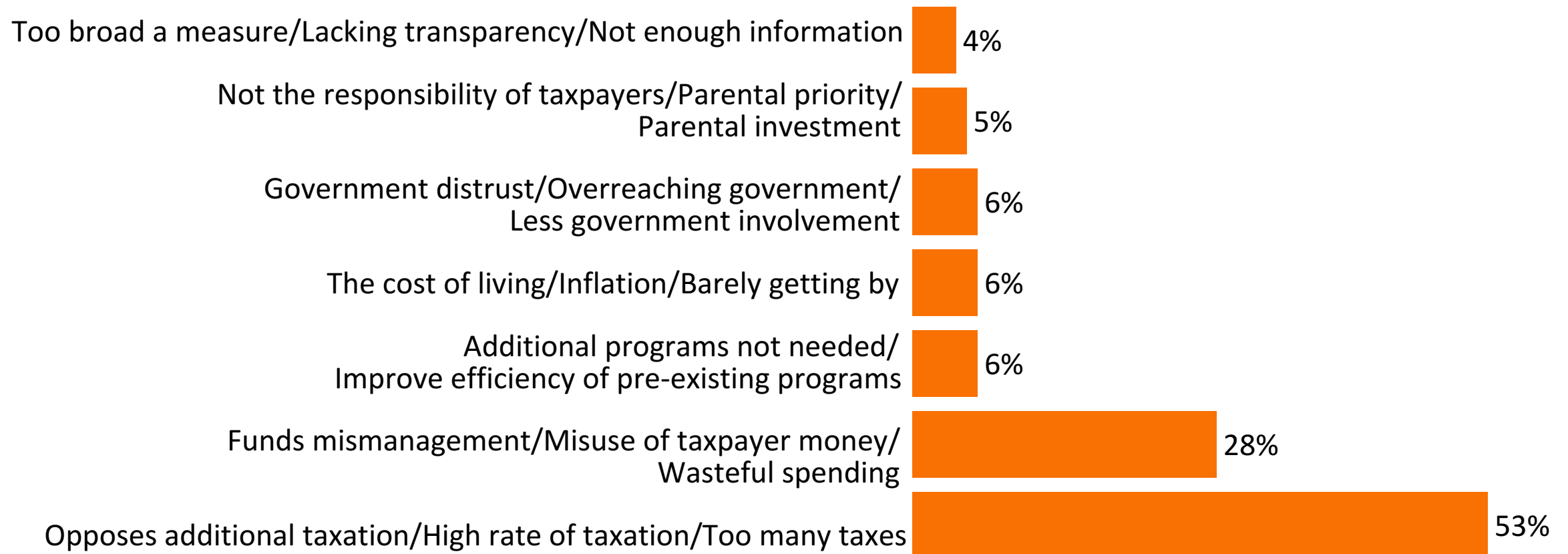
Aligns with my values of what the government should be doing and where taxes should be going.

I have no children, but I am always willing to pay taxes for education. The provisions of this bill all seem beneficial.

Opposition is driven by voters being resistant to more taxes and a lack of trust in the government's ability to manage funds.

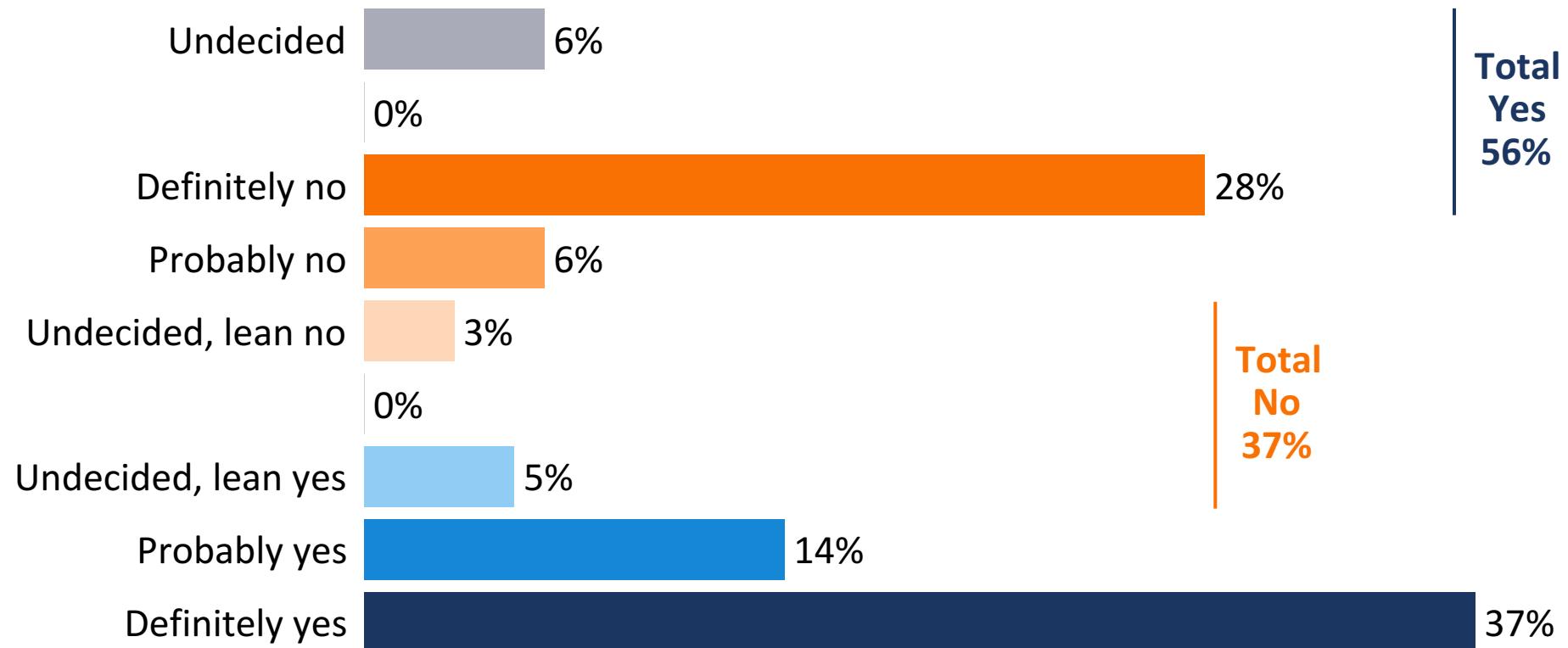
*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on this measure?*

(Open-ended; Asked of No Voters Only, n=223)



A quarter-cent sales tax doesn't lead to meaningfully stronger support overall, although support is more intense.

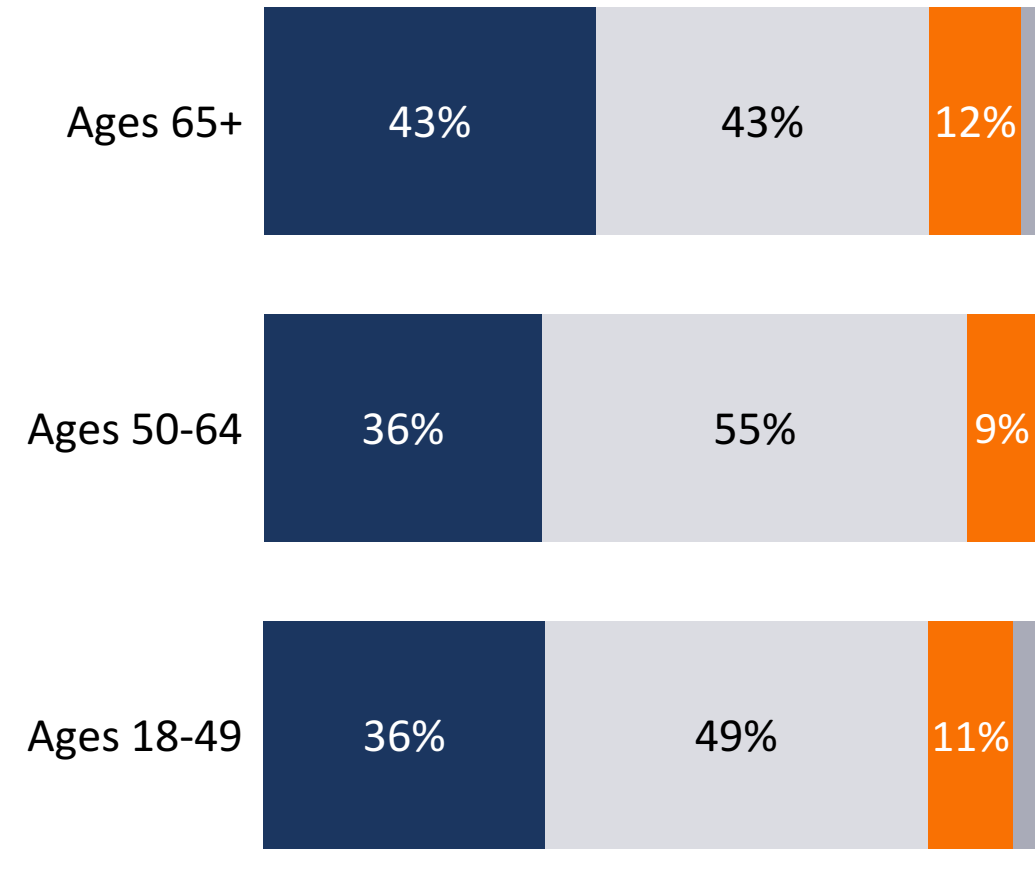
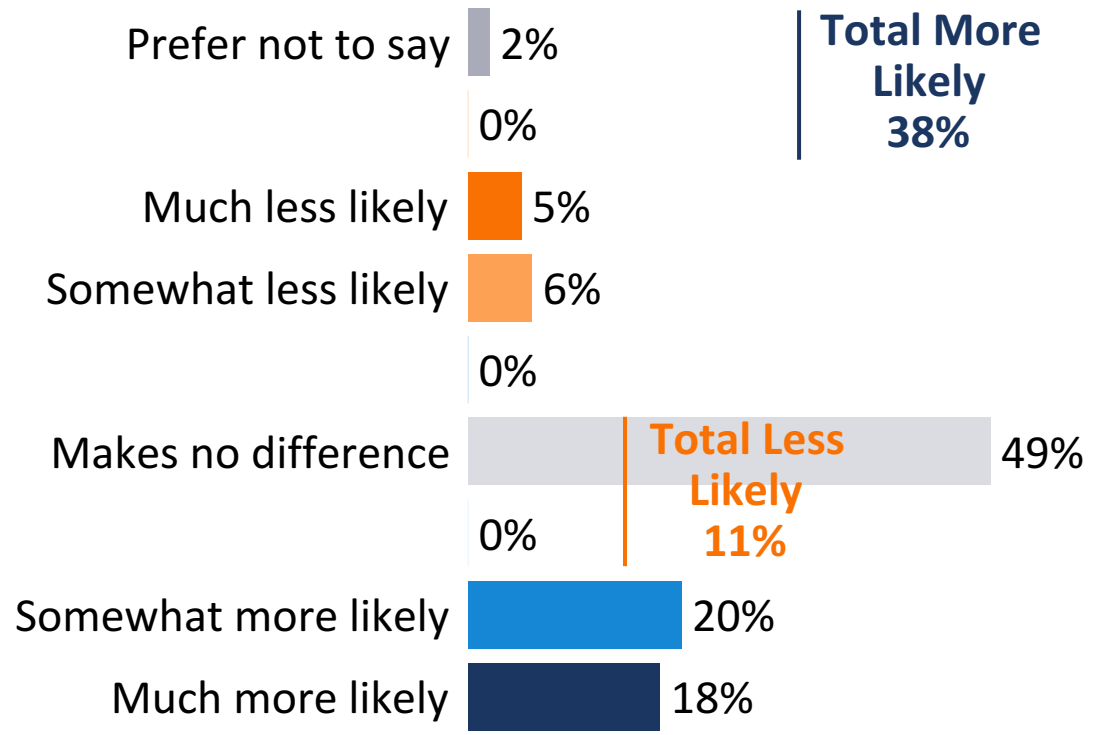
*Suppose this measure established a sales tax increase of a quarter-cent instead of a half-cent.
In that case, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*



A plurality of voters say adding funding for seniors wouldn't affect their views on the measure.

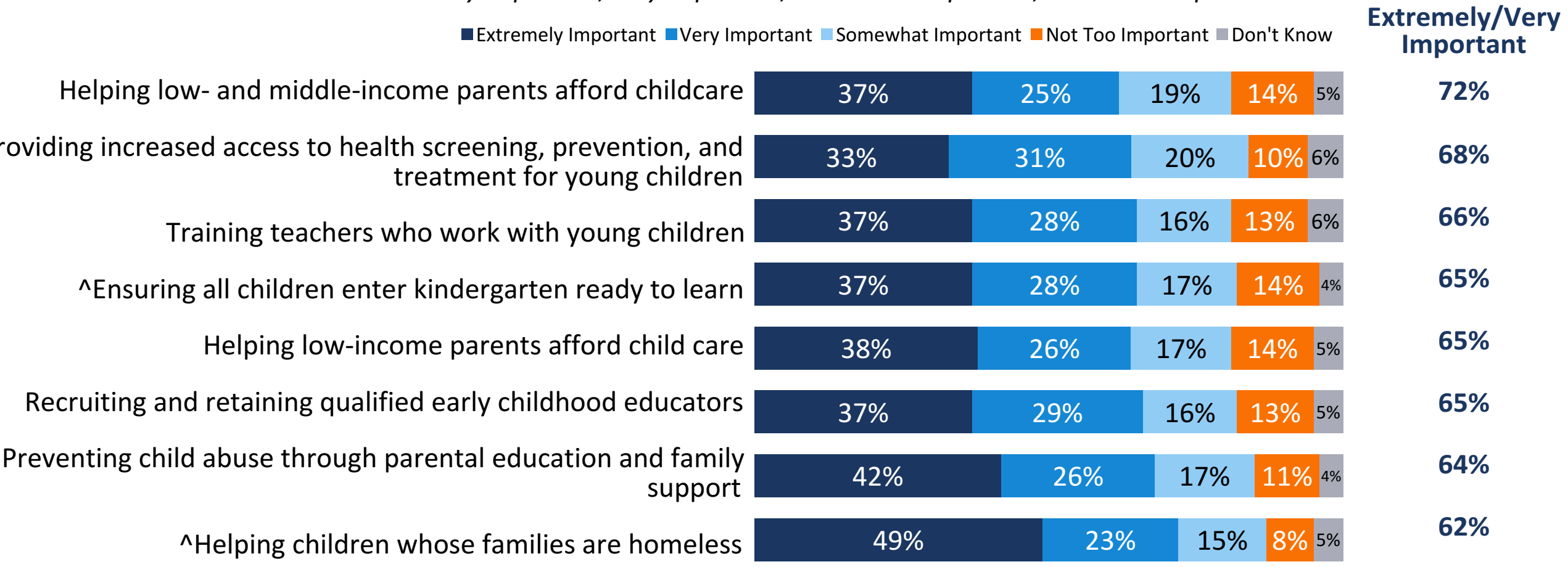
Suppose in addition to providing funds to help care for children and youth, this measure also provided funding to help provide care for seniors in Yolo County. In that case, would you be more likely or less likely to support this measure, or would it make no difference to you?

■ Total More Likely ■ Makes No Difference ■ Total Less Likely ■ Prefer Not to Say

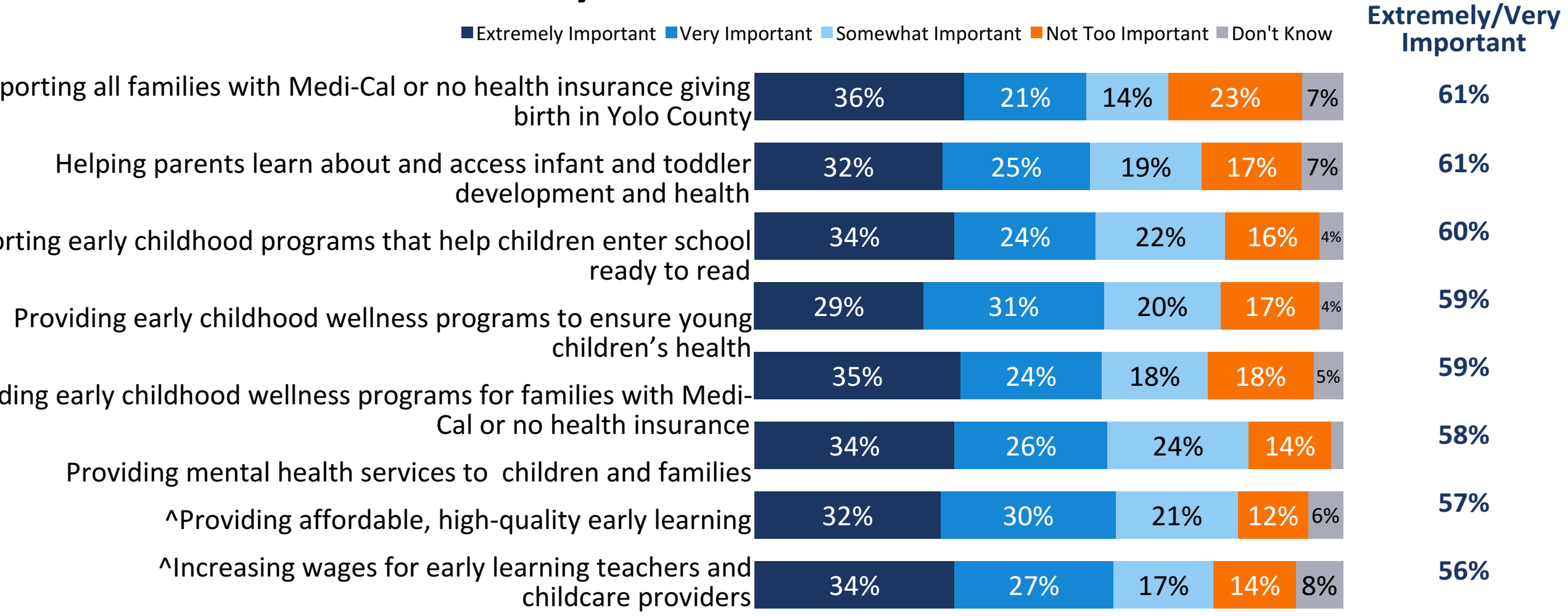


Helping children who are homeless and preventing child abuse are top spending priorities.

Please consider some potential elements of this measure, including ways in which the funds it generates could be spent. Please indicate how important each one is to you personally, regardless of how you feel about the measure: either extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important.



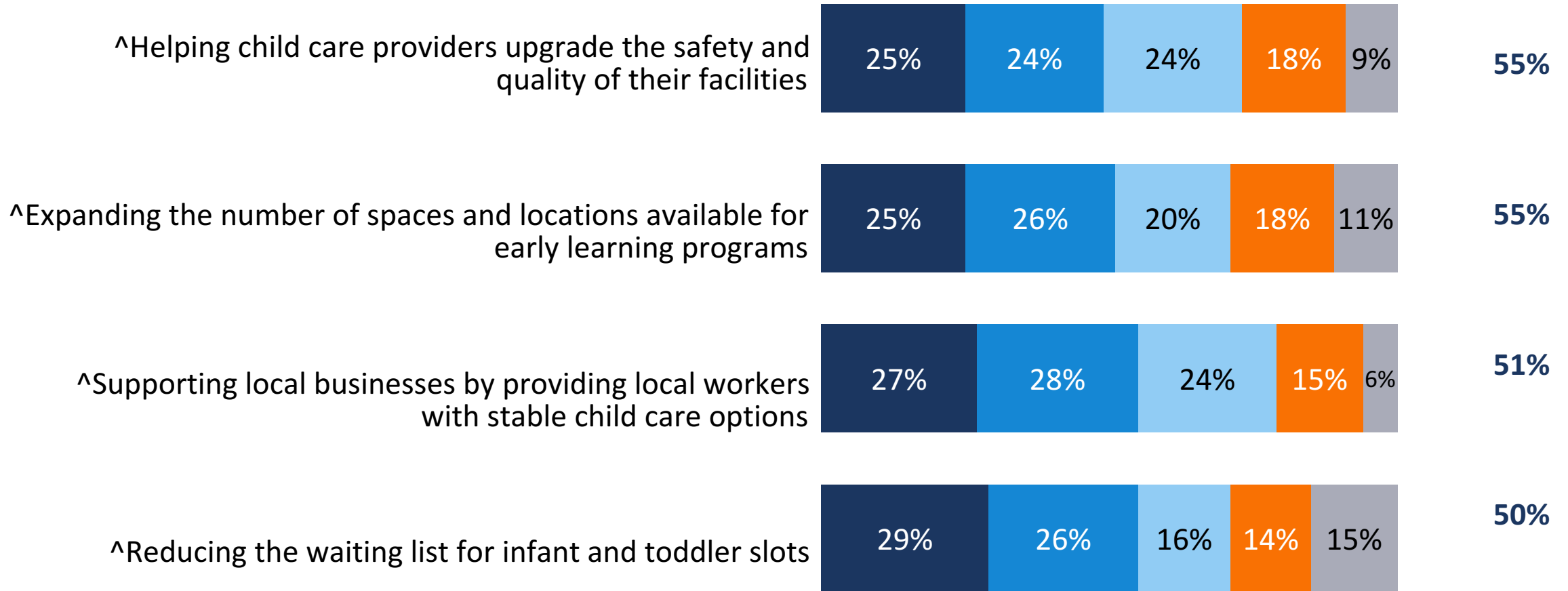
There is strong support above the 50% threshold for early learning workforce and early childhood mental health and wellness.



A majority say reducing waitlists and supporting local businesses is important.

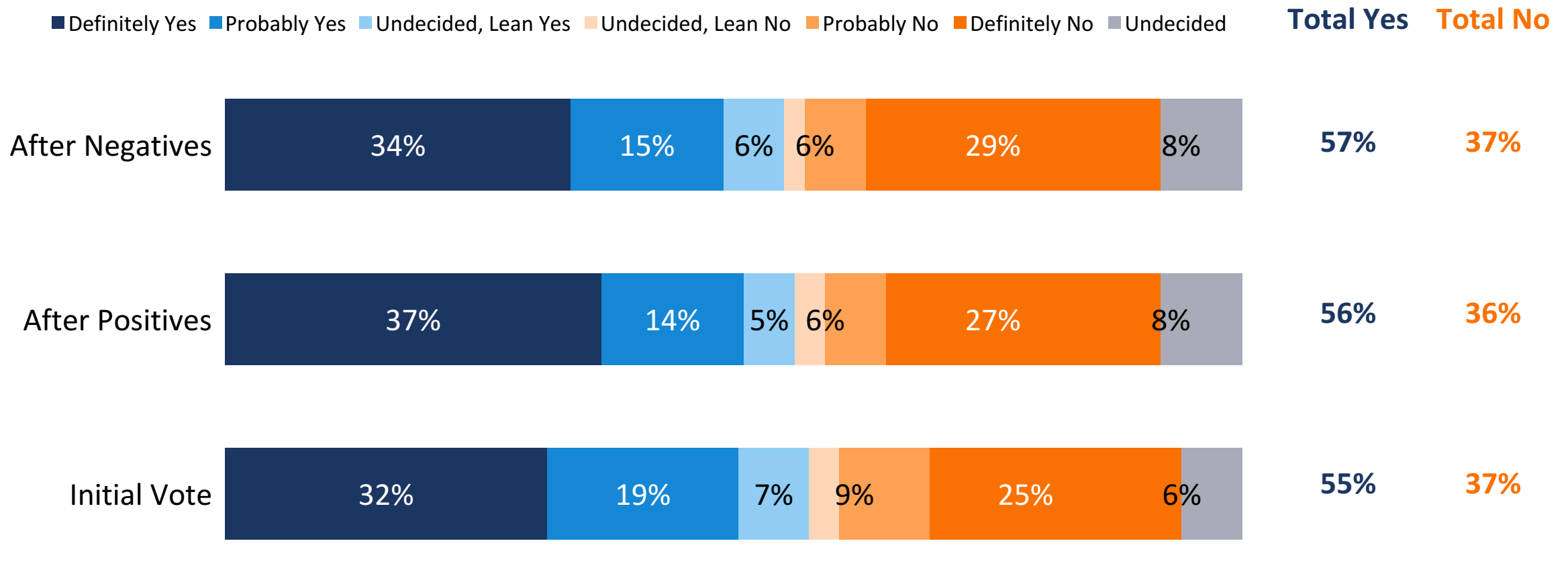
■ Extremely Important ■ Very Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Too Important ■ Don't Know

Extremely/Very Important

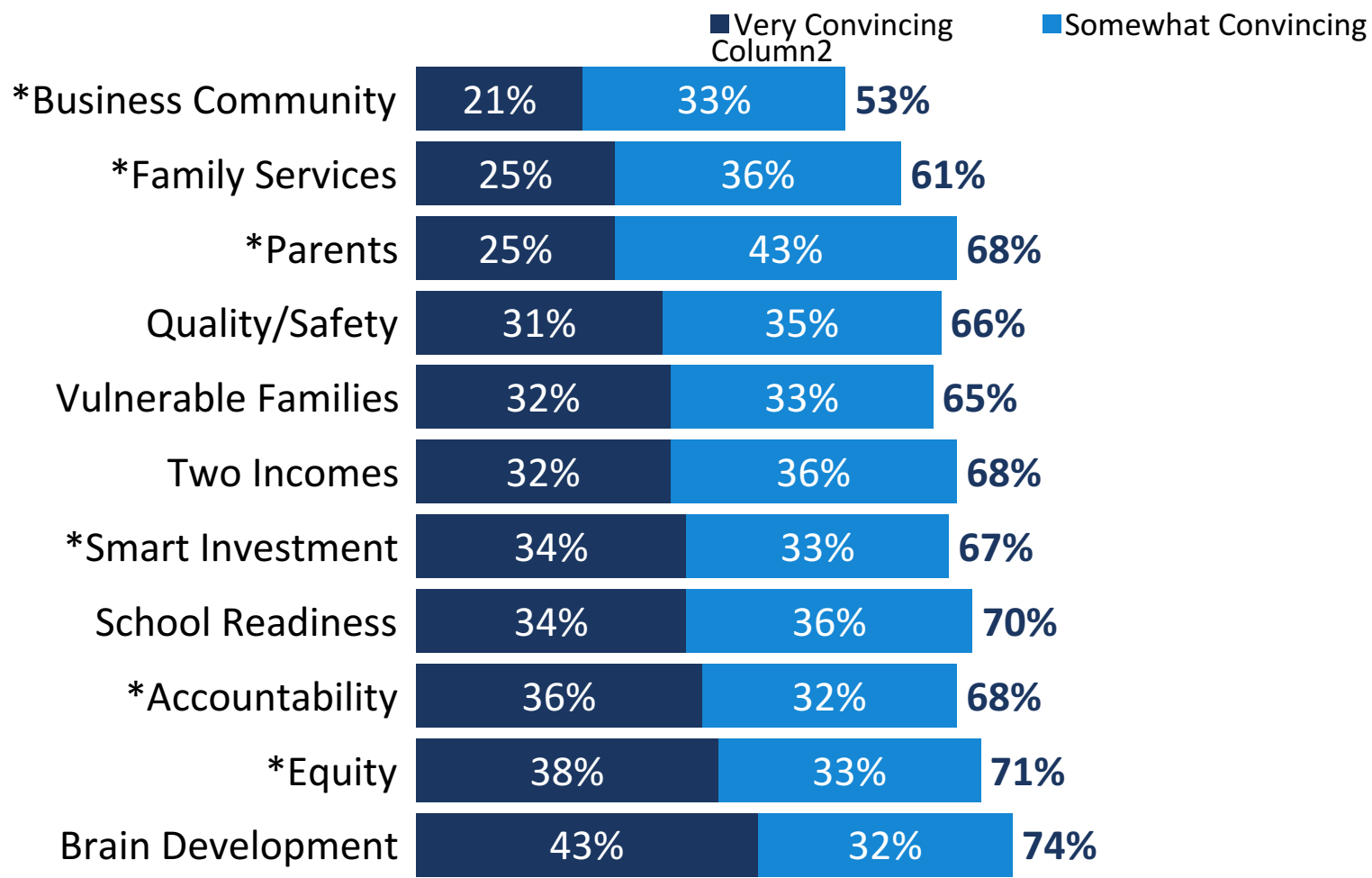


Q9. Please consider some potential elements of this measure, including ways in which the funds it generates could be spent. Please indicate how important each one is to you personally, regardless of how you feel about the measure: either extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Support is consistent and above the 50% threshold after an exchange of information.



Voters respond most strongly to statements about brain development, equity, and school readiness.



Q11. Please consider the following statements from people who may support this potential measure. Please indicate whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support the measure. If you do not believe the statement, you can indicate that instead. *Split Sample

Positive Messaging

Ranked by Very Convincing

43%

(BRAIN DEVELOPMENT) Research shows that 90% of a child's brain development occurs before age five. These critical years lay the foundation for the rest of a child's life. By expanding access to early childhood care and quality pre-school for children, as well as access to family services for parents, we can help ensure that every child in Yolo County gets off to a strong start.

38%

***(EQUITY)** Pre-school should not be a luxury only available to a few families. In Yolo County, the cost of child care is about \$14,000 per year. This measure will make early education available and more affordable to families of all incomes, including middle-class families.

Positive Messaging (Continued)

Ranked by Very Convincing

34%

(SCHOOL READINESS) By increasing access to quality early learning programs, this measure strengthens TK-12 education. Currently, over half of Yolo County kids enter kindergarten unprepared and are reading below grade level in third grade. Studies show that kids who go to high-quality pre-school and other early learning programs are more likely to read proficiently by the third grade, and more likely to graduate and go on to college.

34%

***(SMART INVESTMENT)** This proposal is a smart investment. Research shows that for every dollar invested in early childhood programs, between \$7 and \$13 are saved in benefits to the community, including higher graduation rates, lower incarceration rates, and lower healthcare costs.

Positive Messaging (Continued)

Ranked by Very Convincing

<p>32%</p>	<p>(TWO INCOMES) With the rising cost of living, many Yolo County families need two incomes to get by. This proposal will help expand access to affordable child care — giving parents peace of mind that their children are safe, and giving employers confidence that their employees have the dependable, reliable child care they need to stay on the job.</p>
<p>32%</p>	<p>(VULNERABLE FAMILIES) This measure invests in services that specifically support low-income families with no health insurance or on Medi-Cal, including homeless children, foster children, and children who need extra support, helping to close the gap in academic, health, and criminal justice outcomes.</p>
<p>31%</p>	<p>(QUALITY/SAFETY) No parent should have to worry about the care their child is receiving while they are at work. This measure will help ensure that Yolo County residents have quality child care programs that meet safety standards, so parents can go to work with the peace of mind knowing their kids are safe and well cared for.</p>



Conclusions

Conclusions

- The **proposed sales tax measure providing funding for childcare and early childhood programs in Yolo County appears viable**, if placed on the ballot through the initiative process.
- **Three in five voters see a need for funding childcare initiatives** including childcare and early learning, on par with the need for K-12 education funding.



Conclusions *(Continued)*

- A **majority of voters consistently supports the proposed measure**, with support particularly strong among Democratic voters, voters under age 50, and lower-income voters.
 - There is **little difference in support** for a version of the measure **with or without a sunset**.
 - While a **lower tax rate does not lead to an increase in overall support**, support is more definite at a lower rate.



Conclusions *(Continued)*

- Voters place the **greatest priority on helping vulnerable children**, preventing abuse, and retaining and attracting qualified providers and educators.
- Support for the measure is **consistent after an exchange of pro and con messaging**:
 - The strongest positive messages focus on early brain development and ensuring that preschool is not a luxury.
 - A statement asserting that there are other, higher priorities does not resonate.
- The survey results show **a path for the measure succeed on the November ballot**, maintaining support in face of a broader anti-tax climate and high cost of living environment will be critical.



Lucia Del Puppo

Lucia@FM3research.com

Suzanne Brewster

Suzanne@FM3research.com