

North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District (NCPRD) Board of Directors

Policy Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: 5/17/23

Approx. Start Time: 1:30pm

Approx. Length: 30 min

Presentation Title: North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District Update on Polling

Department: North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District (NCPRD)

Presenters: Michael Bork, NCPRD Director; Clark Worth, Principal, and Libby Barg Bakke, Principal, Consor Strategic Planning & Communications

Other Invitees: Jeff Munns, Assistant County Counsel

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

Informational update on recent polling and to seek guidance from the Board on next steps based on the polling data.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

NCPRD staff solicited quotes in late 2022 from firms to provide professional strategy and polling services. Since its formation in 1990, NCPRD has been a service district of Clackamas County as defined under ORS Chapter 451 "County Service Facilities." The Chapter 266 "Park and Recreation District" is the standard structure for parks districts in Oregon, with NCPRD being an exception as the only 451 Park District in Oregon.

In January 2023, NCPRD staff hired Consor Strategic Planning & Communications to research and assess the feasibility and community support for a governance change. As communicated to the Board at the March 15 NCPRD Board meeting, NCPRD staff contracted for this statistically validated process, and obtained results and analysis from Consor as presented in the attached report. The data shows a very high level of support for a locally elected board. The entire report is attached, but overall:

- **A large majority of voters support the tested ballot measure.** 73% of voters said "yes" after being presented with a ballot title that mentions a locally elected board and no change in tax rate, and after hearing arguments pro and con.
- **There is strong support for the measure across all groups.** Strong majorities among all groups—including by age, income, area of residence, race and ethnicity, party affiliation, and voters with and without children—support the measure.
- **The most compelling arguments in support of the measure, for all groups, highlight the themes of local control and no new taxes.** This ballot measure is mainly focused on the principle that community members who live in the District and who pay for parks should be the ones making the decisions about them.

Based on the positive data, NCPRD staff asks the NCPRD Board of Directors to consider the timing to reform NCPRD as an ORS 266 Special Park District. The earliest a ballot measure could be done is November 2023. The measure would modify District governance, requiring an election of Directors who reside within the District boundary, which would be done in a subsequent election. The measure would not include any increase to the existing permanent tax rate.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):

Is this item in your current budget? YES NO

The consultant costs are in current budget and proposed budget for FY 2023/24.

An estimate of expected cost savings and expenditures would be finalized in next steps but is not yet reflected in future years' budgets.

What is the cost? What is the funding source?

The contract for Consor strategy and polling to fully bringing measure to the ballot is \$91,000. Up to \$59,000 in additional funds are budgeted for a second phase such as preparing for election of directors and \$26,000 is budgeted for public education materials. The funding source is NCPRD General Fund.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

- How does this item align with your Department's Strategic Business Plan goals?
 - Provide leadership, community engagement, strategic planning, financial and operational support services to the Board of Directors and District staff so they can make informed decisions and effectively provide services to District residents
- How does this item align with the County's Performance Clackamas goals?
 - Build public trust through good government

LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

Reforming NCPRD as 266 Park and Recreation District requires the Board to hold a public hearing to consider Adoption of an Order to Initiate Formation of the District under ORS 198.835. The Board would then hold a second public hearing to consider Adoption of an Order to Refer Formation of the District to the voters within the proposed territory pursuant to ORS 198.805. Should voters approve the formation of the new district, the election of directors would be done in a subsequent election pursuant to ORS Chapters 255 and 266.

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:

NCPRD Director Michael Bork updated NCPRD Board of Directors at the March 15, 2023 quarterly public NCPRD Board meeting, noting research on a possible NCPRD governance change was underway, with initial results forthcoming.

OPTIONS:

1. Does the Board wish to pursue a reformation of NCPRD as an ORS 266 Special Park and Recreation District, with the same permanent tax rate that exists today? If yes, when?

RECOMMENDATION:

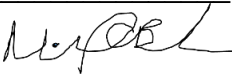
N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

1. NCPRD Survey Report (April 2023)

SUBMITTED BY:

Division Director/Head Approval _____

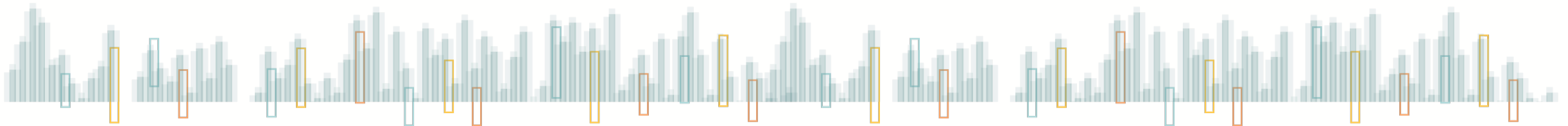
Department Director/Head Approval 

County Administrator Approval _____



North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District Survey

April 2023

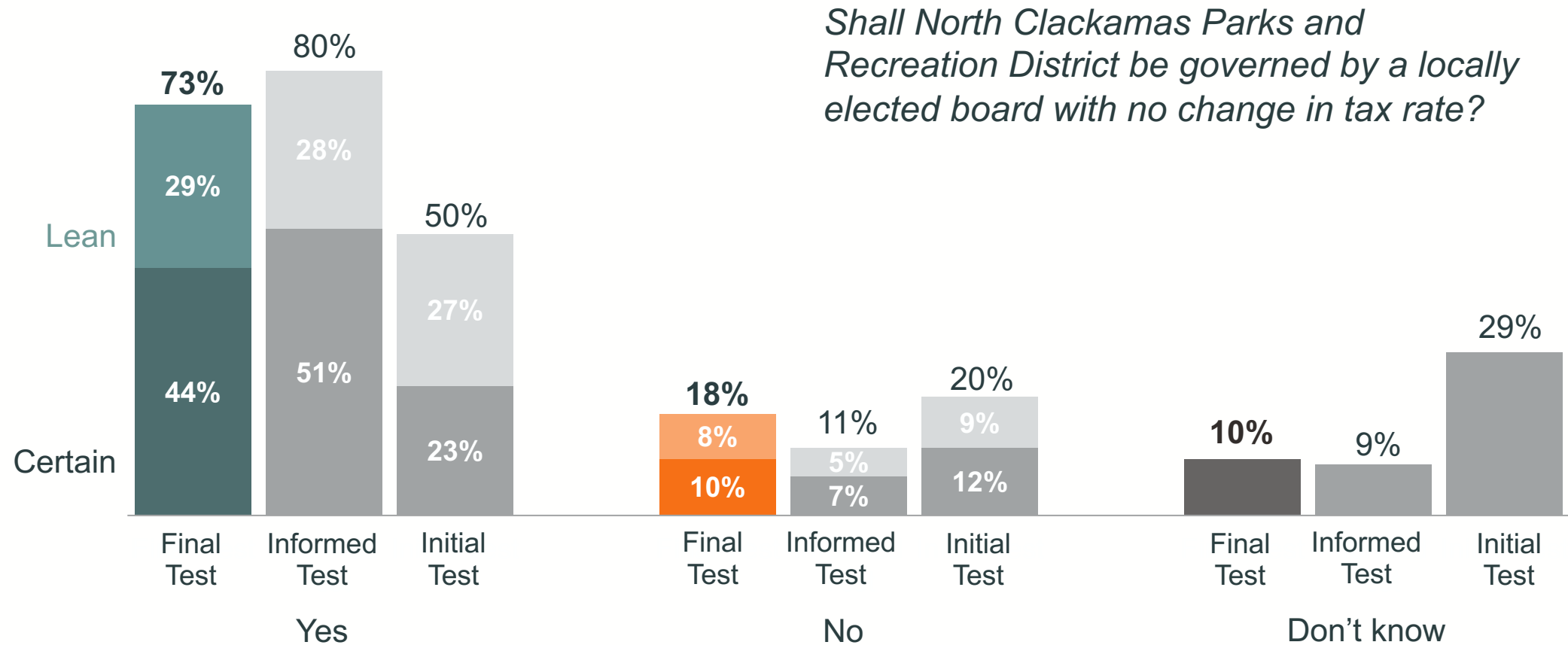


Research purpose

- Assess voter satisfaction with local parks and recreation services
- Gauge support for potential ballot measure establishing a locally elected board to govern the North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District
- Identify the strongest arguments for and against the ballot measure
- Determine voter priorities when it comes to parks and recreation services

Big Results:

73% of voters remain supportive after hearing arguments pro and con.



Methodology

- Hybrid (phone and text-to-online) survey of N=400 North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District voters
 - N=150 City of Milwaukie voters (oversample to ensure a sufficient sample size for analysis)
 - N=250 Rest of District voters
- Conducted April 12–19, 2023; 13 minutes to complete
- Quotas set by age, gender, political affiliation, and area of the District, and data weighted by educational attainment and race and ethnicity to match the profile of likely voters in the November 2023 election; total results also weighted by area to represent their proportional size
- Margin of error $\pm 4.9\%$
- Due to rounding, some totals may differ by ± 1 from the sum of separate responses

Key takeaways: parks satisfaction

- **North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District voters want to see improvements to their community.** Voter mood about the direction of their community is slightly more negative than positive, but more positive than in nearby communities where voters feel more alienated and skeptical of leaders. This suggests that District voters want positive changes and will be open to proposals by local leaders to help make them happen.
- **Voters take pride in their local parks and recreation services—and want to ensure that they will be able to continue to enjoy them.** Compared to other services in their community, voters are more satisfied with local parks and recreation services. At first glance, this may suggest that proposed governance changes to parks are neither salient nor necessary. But those who are most satisfied with parks are also strongly supportive of recharter, suggesting that voters believe maintaining—and potentially improving—these prized services requires greater local control.
- **When it comes to District services, offering more recreation programs for kids is by far the top priority for all voters.** Most voters—regardless of where they live, their political affiliation, and whether they have children in their households—say offering more recreation programs for kids should be the District’s top priority. When talking about tangible benefits resulting from recharter, the possibility of new recreation programs for kids unites all groups.

Key takeaways: support for measure

- **An overwhelming majority of voters support the tested ballot measure.** Provided with nothing but a ballot title that briefly mentions a locally elected board and no change in tax rate, 50% of voters support the measure. Provided with additional information that reinforces these two key elements, support increases to 80%. After hearing arguments pro and con, support remains high at 73%.
- **There is strong support for the measure across all groups.** Despite slightly higher support among Democrats and those who use parks and recreation services more frequently, strong majorities among all groups—including by age, income, area of residence, race and ethnicity, party affiliation, and voters with and without children—support the measure. In a community that is sometimes divided, especially by political fault lines, this is a measure that all groups can feel good about and that can unify the community.

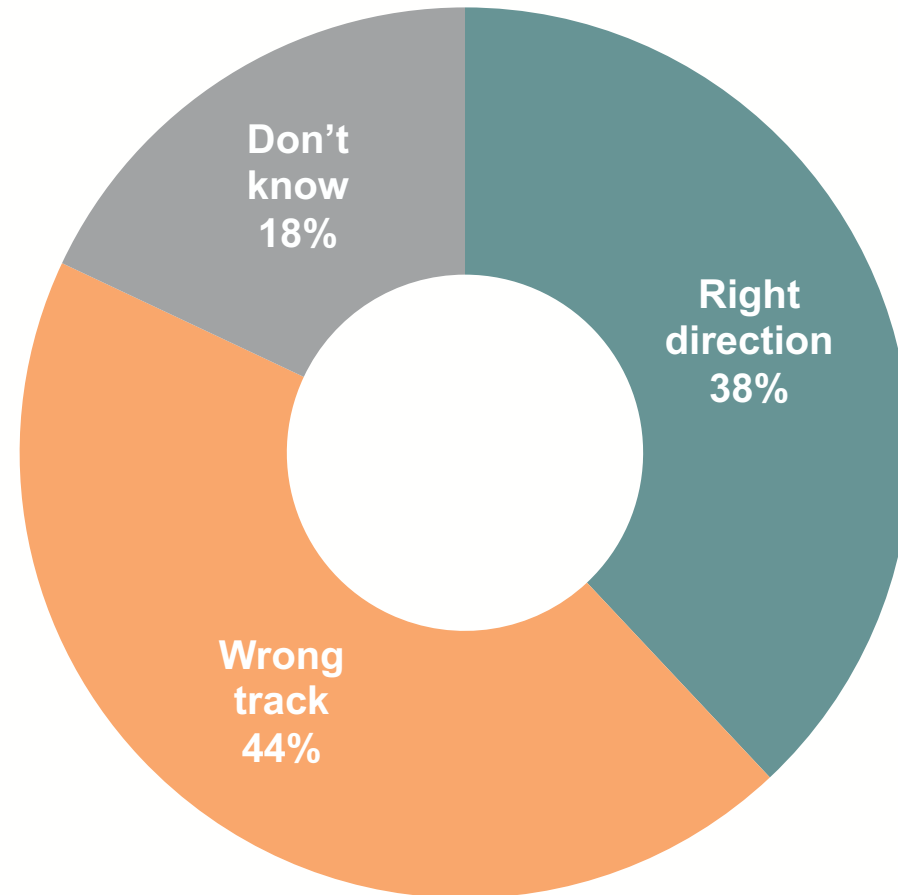
Key takeaways: arguments pro and con

- **The most compelling arguments in support of the measure, for all groups, highlight the themes of local control and no new taxes.** This ballot measure is less about addressing badly needed improvements to parks and recreation services—although some improvements, like more recreation programs for kids, are clearly desired. It’s more about the principle that community members who live in the District and who pay for parks should be the ones making the decisions about them.
- **Arguments against the measure test comparatively less well. Still, it’s important to address voter concerns about increased costs to taxpayers.** Whether they highlight concerns about additional layers of government and wasting taxpayer money, other and more pressing priorities, satisfaction with the status quo, or potential new taxes—these arguments against the measure test less well. Still, a slim majority found one opposition argument convincing: that recharter would create a new layer of government and waste taxpayer money. In focus groups, voters also expressed concern that recharter might increase taxes. So, it’s important to reinforce that this ballot measure is basically about local control. It is not a money measure, and the current tax rate will simply carry over.

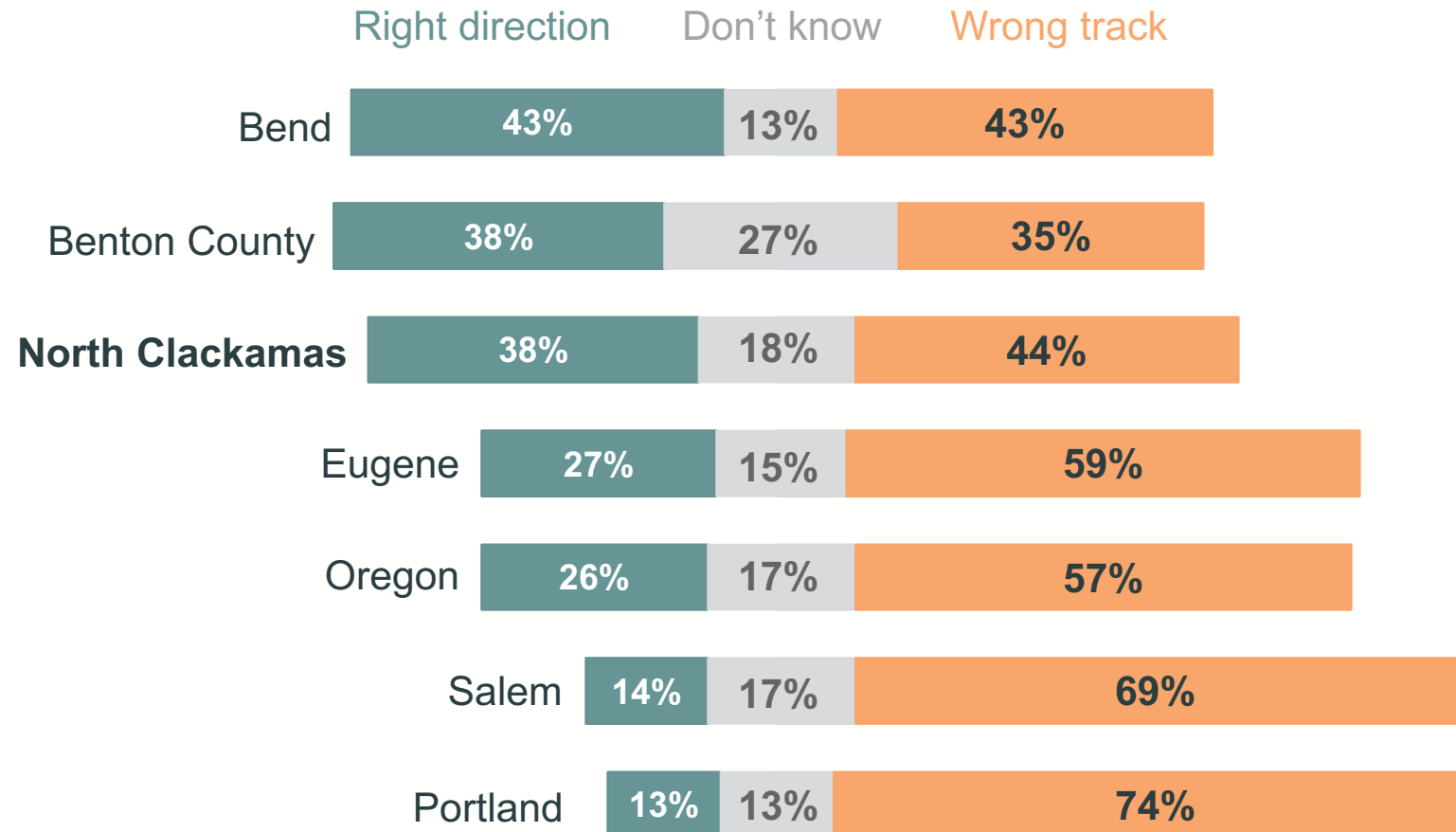
General mood and top issues



Just under half of District voters say their community is headed in the right direction.



District voters are comparatively more positive than voters in many other Oregon communities.



Homelessness, public safety, and roads are the top issues voters would like their elected leaders to address. Parks and recreation do not register as top concerns.

37% Homelessness

26% Public safety

11% Traffic/Roads

7% Education/Schools

6% Government/Politicians

6% Housing affordability

4% Gun violence

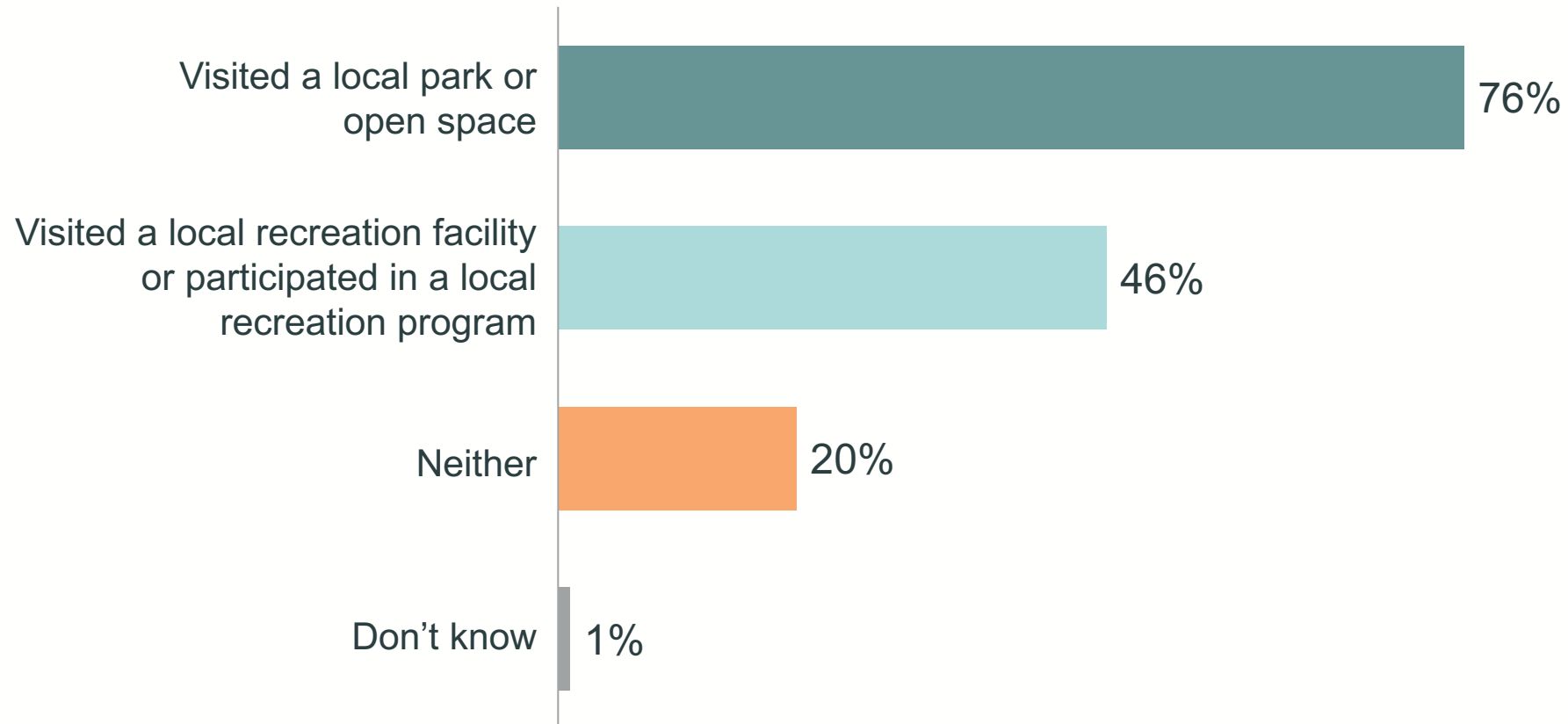
3% Taxes

5% Don't know

Parks and recreation usage

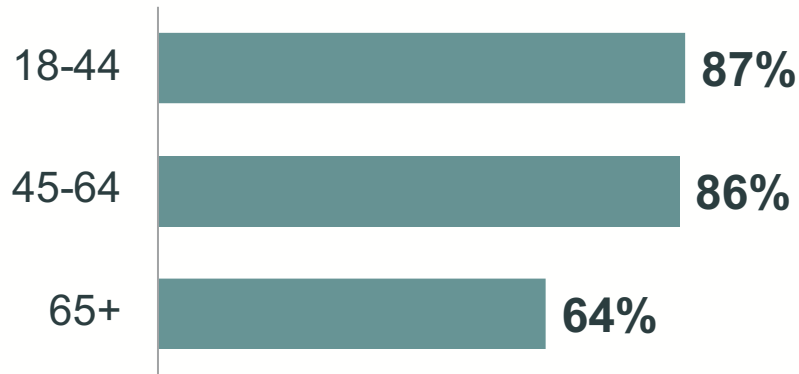


Most residents have visited a local park in the last year and about half have visited a local recreation facility.



Although most have *visited a local park or open space* in the last year, visitors are more often younger, middle-to-upper income, and with children at home.

AGE



INCOME



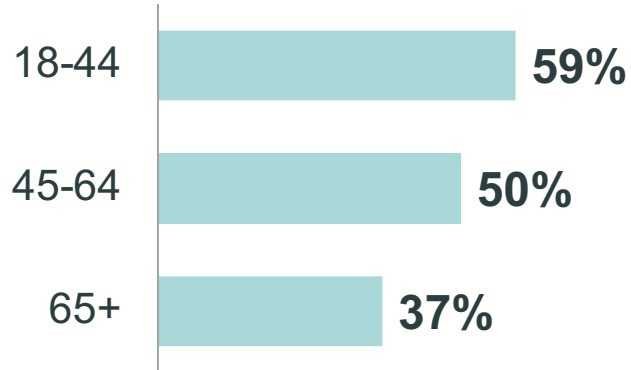
HOUSEHOLD



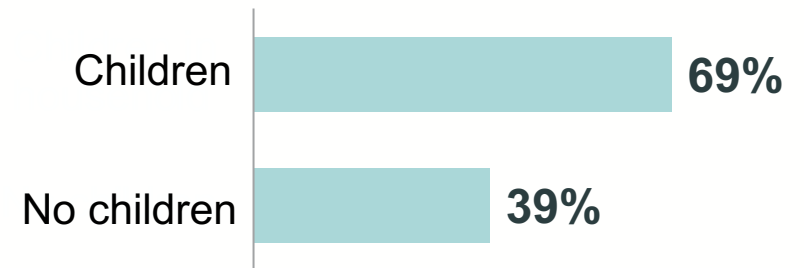
**Minimum
64% all groups**

Although about one in two have *visited a recreation facility or participated in a recreation program*, visitors are more often younger and with children at home.

AGE



HOUSEHOLD

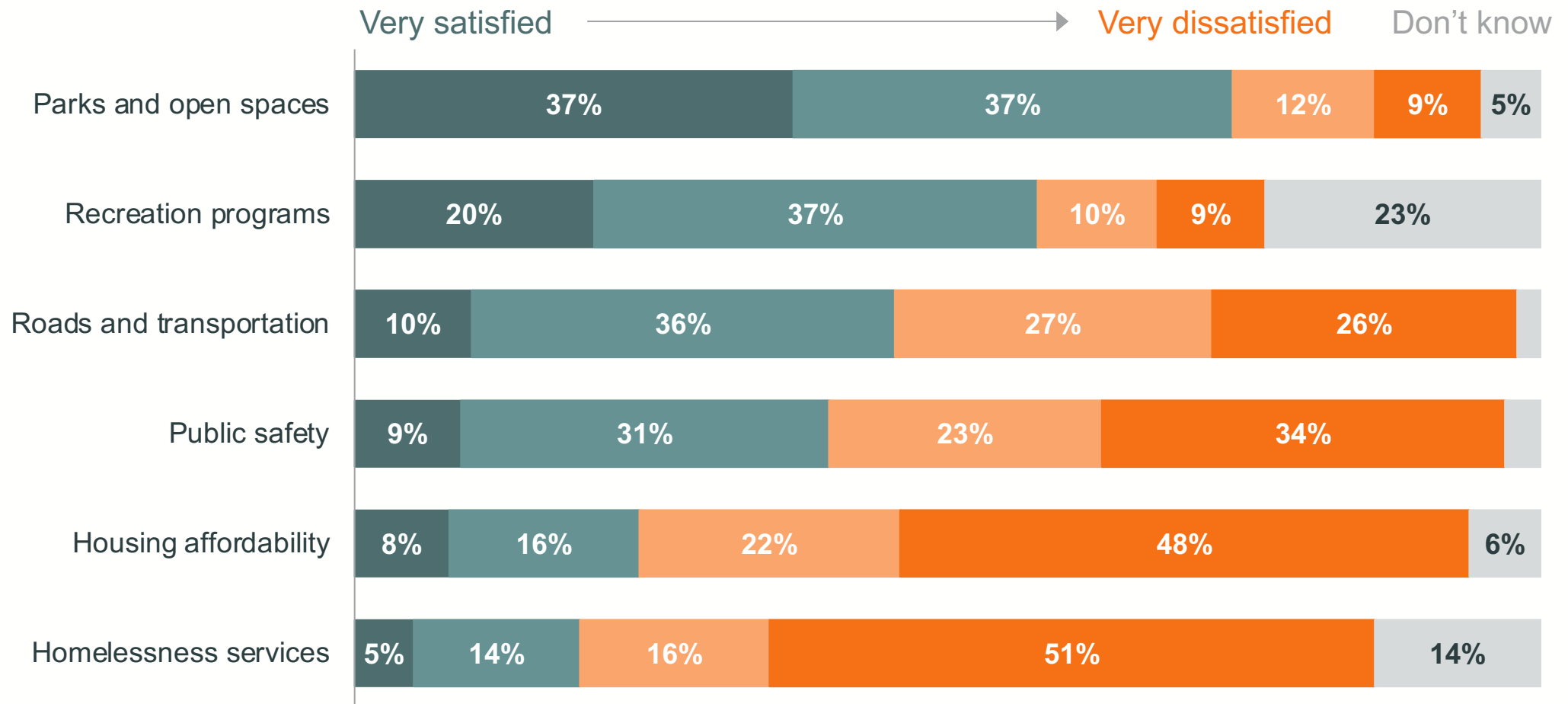


**Minimum
37% all groups**

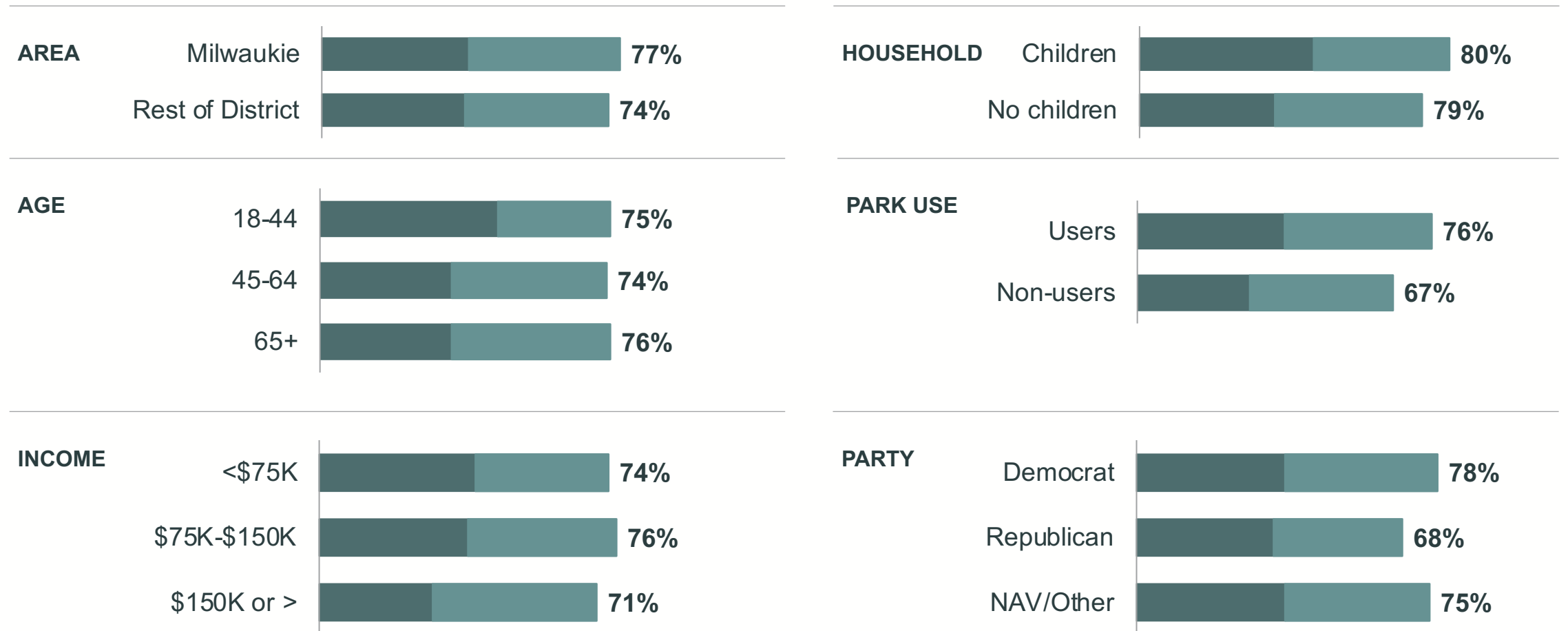
Satisfaction with services



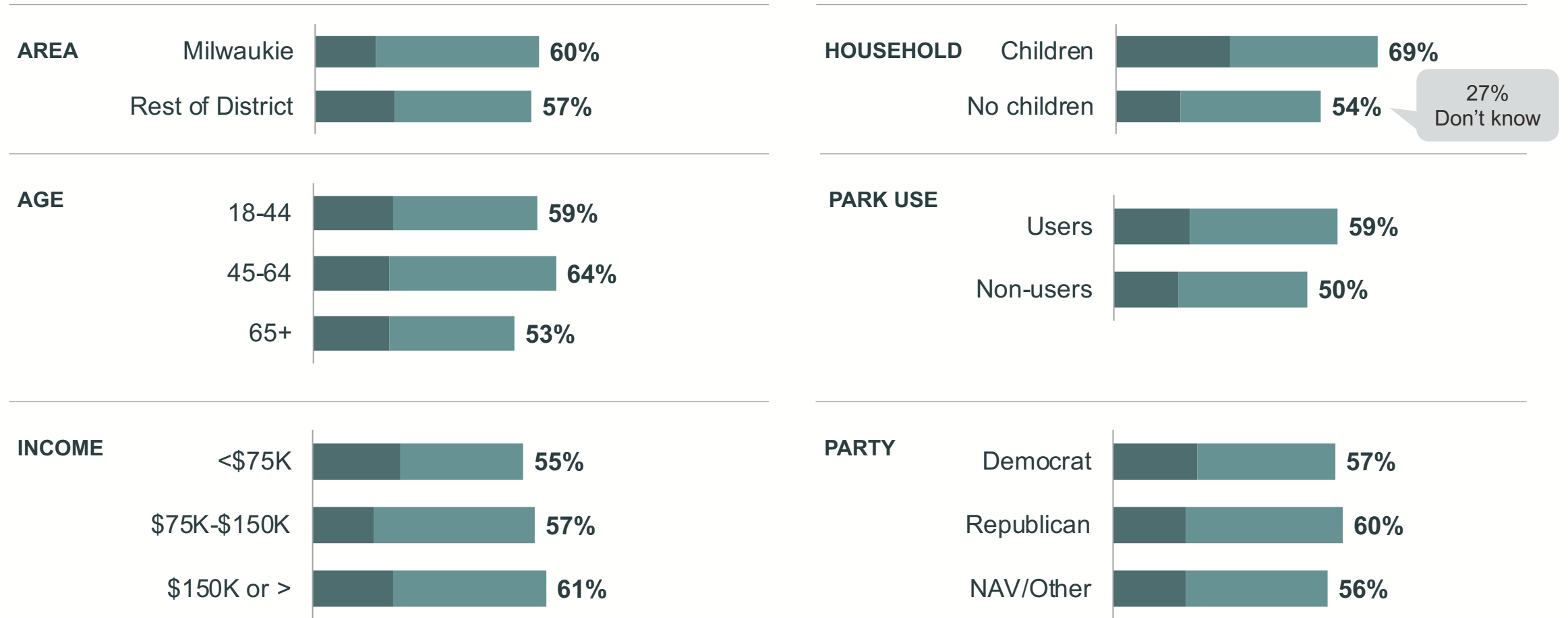
Voters are satisfied with parks and recreation compared to other services. Limited awareness partly explains lower satisfaction with recreation.



All groups express high overall satisfaction with local parks and open spaces.



Majorities are satisfied—though less so—with recreation programs. The only significant difference is among voters with no children, who are less aware of such programs.

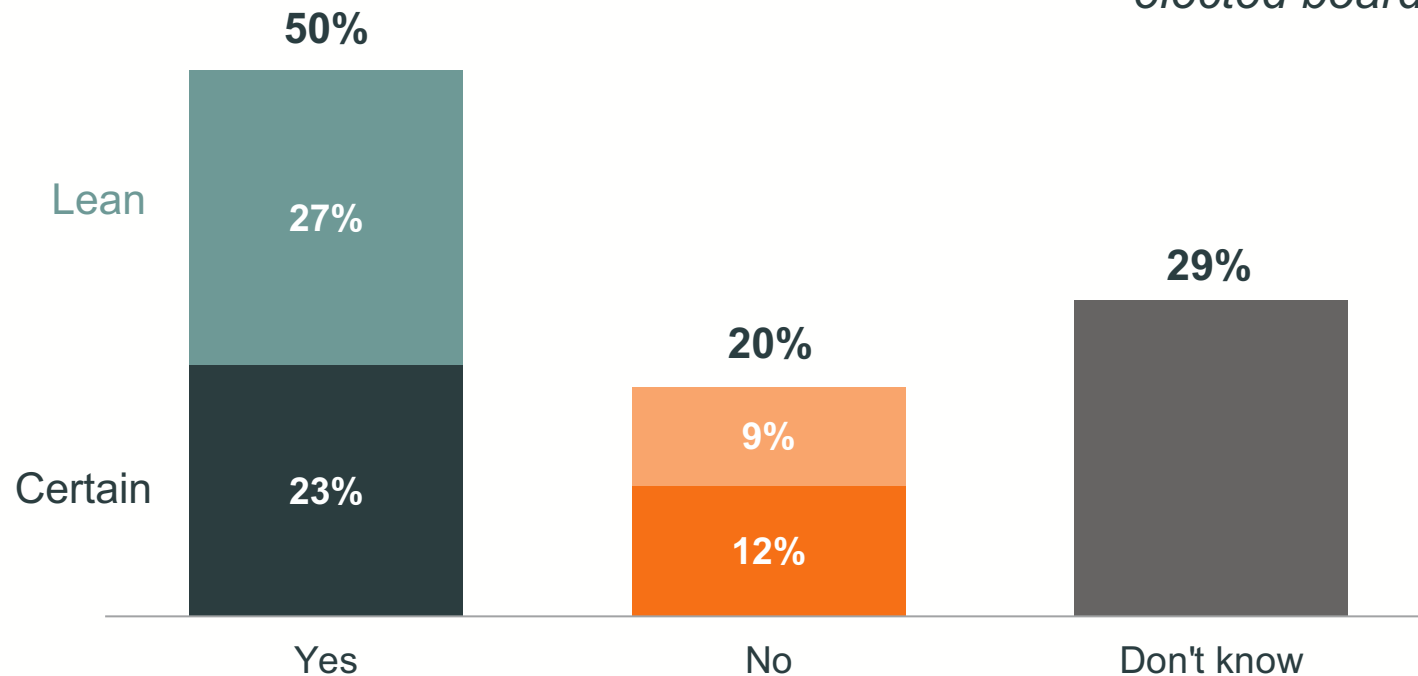


Ballot test



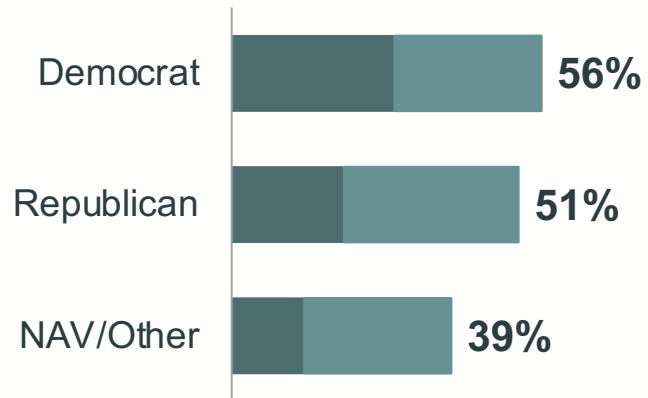
In an initial test—after learning only the ballot title—50% of voters support the ballot measure.

Shall North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District be governed by a locally elected board with no change in tax rate?

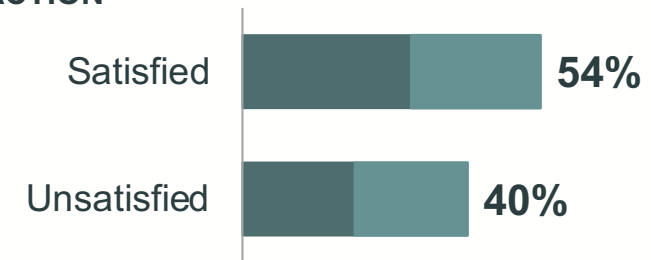


Initial support for the measure is stronger among Democrats and voters satisfied with parks.

PARTY

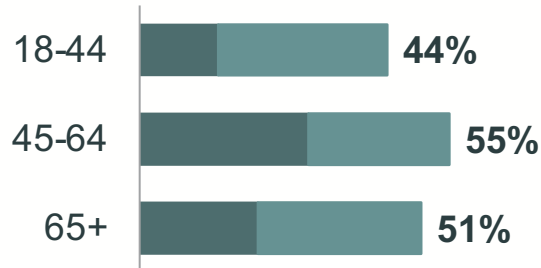


PARKS SATISFACTION

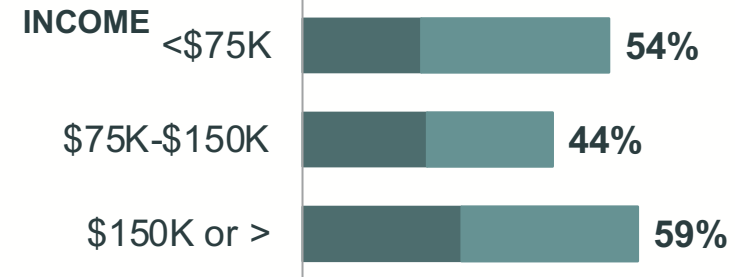


Initial support is softer among younger voters, middle income voters, NAV/Other voters, and those who have not visited parks in the last year.

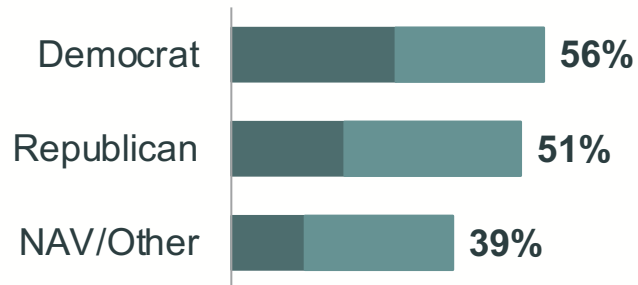
AGE



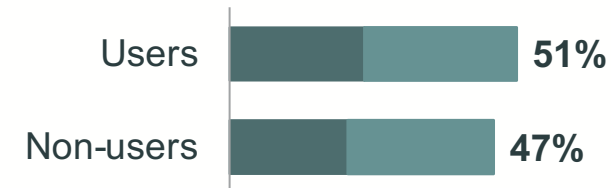
INCOME



PARTY

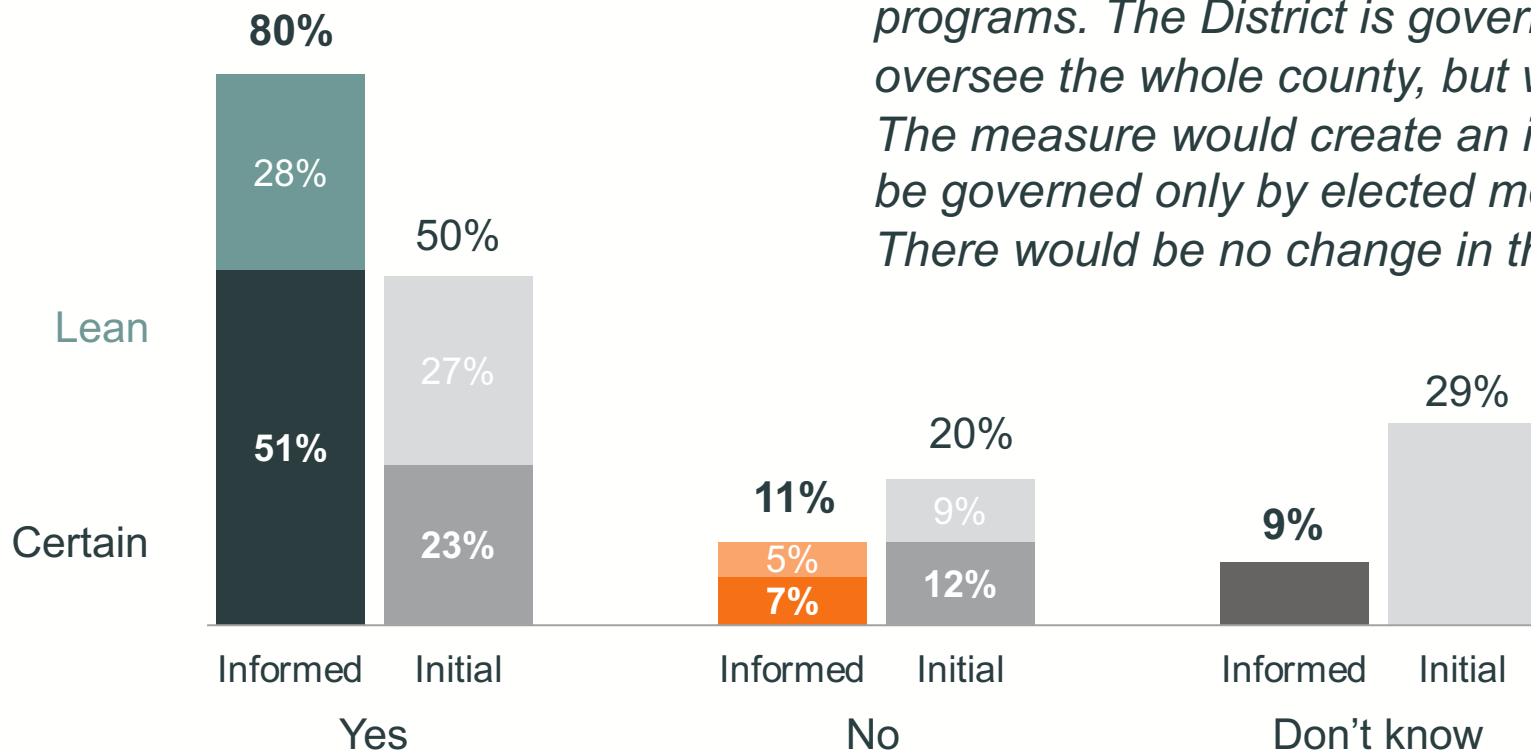


PARK USE



Provided with additional information about the measure, support increases dramatically to 80%.

North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District, or "The District," is located in northern Clackamas County. Residents in the District pay a local property tax to fund parks, open spaces, and recreation programs. The District is governed by County Commissioners who oversee the whole county, but who may or may not live in the District. The measure would create an independent parks district that would be governed only by elected members who live within the District. There would be no change in the property tax rate.



Provided with this additional information, support increases among every demographic group.

Groups with largest increase in support

Group	Initial support	Informed support	Point increase
Unsatisfied with parks	40%	82%	42
18–44	44%	82%	38
\$75k–\$150k	44%	80%	36
Children in household	50%	85%	35
NAV/Other	39%	74%	35
Women	47%	81%	34
Milwaukie	47%	80%	33
Park users	51%	83%	32
White	51%	82%	31

*****All other demographic groups increased by minimum 23 points*****

Asked in an open-ended question why they support the measure, voters say it's about local control and ensuring that board members live in the District.

35% Greater local control

33% Board members should live in the District

10% Protect and improve local parks and recreation

8% Dissatisfaction with County Board

8% Will keep taxes low

6% Conditionally support if no new taxes

2% Need more information

2% More accountability

1% Don't know

n=318

The majority who support the measure care deeply about the principle of local control. Improving parks is important, but secondary.

“I want local people making decisions for our community.”
–Democrat, Milwaukie

“More local control of funds for projects.”
–Republican, Milwaukie

“If you don’t live there, you shouldn’t govern there.”
–Republican, Rest of District

“I want my tax dollars being spent by a representative that lives and sees what changes we need.”
–Democrat, Milwaukie

“It takes people who live here to make a change.”
–NAV/Other, Rest of District

“To improve the parks.”
–NAV/Other, Rest of District

Voters who oppose the measure say it is because they distrust potential new leaders and are concerned about too much government.

33% Distrust of potential new leaders

21% Too much government/waste

16% Not a top priority

10% Dissatisfaction with NCPRD

8% May increase taxes

8% Parks are fine

5% Don't know

The minority who oppose the measure express concerns about new leadership, additional layers of government, and other priorities.

“I’m not interested in a board with a political agenda overseeing the parks.”

—Republican, City of Milwaukie

“I don’t know if we have qualified people to take control.”

—Republican, Rest of District

“We don’t need any more government.”

—Democrat, City of Milwaukie

“We already have too much government. I don’t want to add more layers.”

—NAV/Other, Rest of District

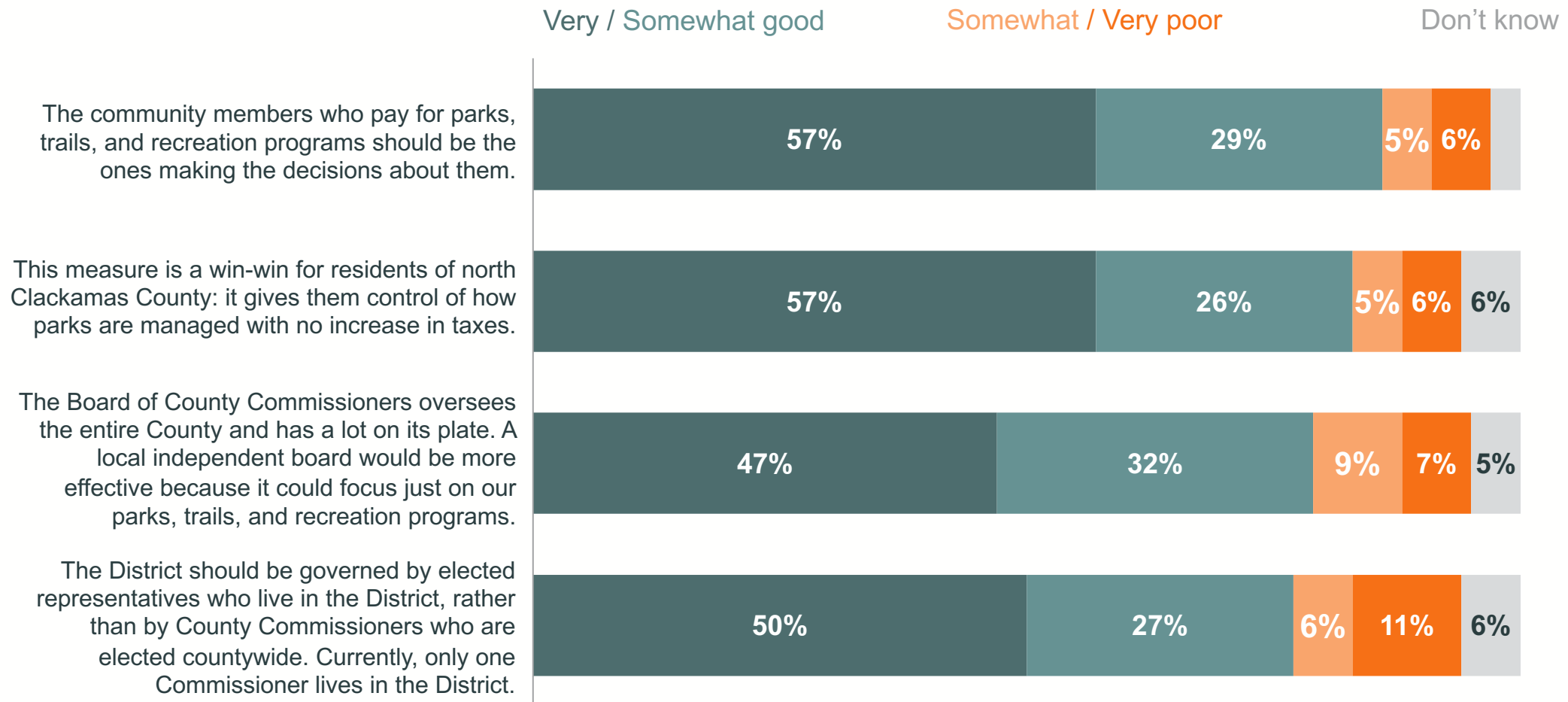
“Too many homeless to worry about parks.”

—Republican, Rest of District

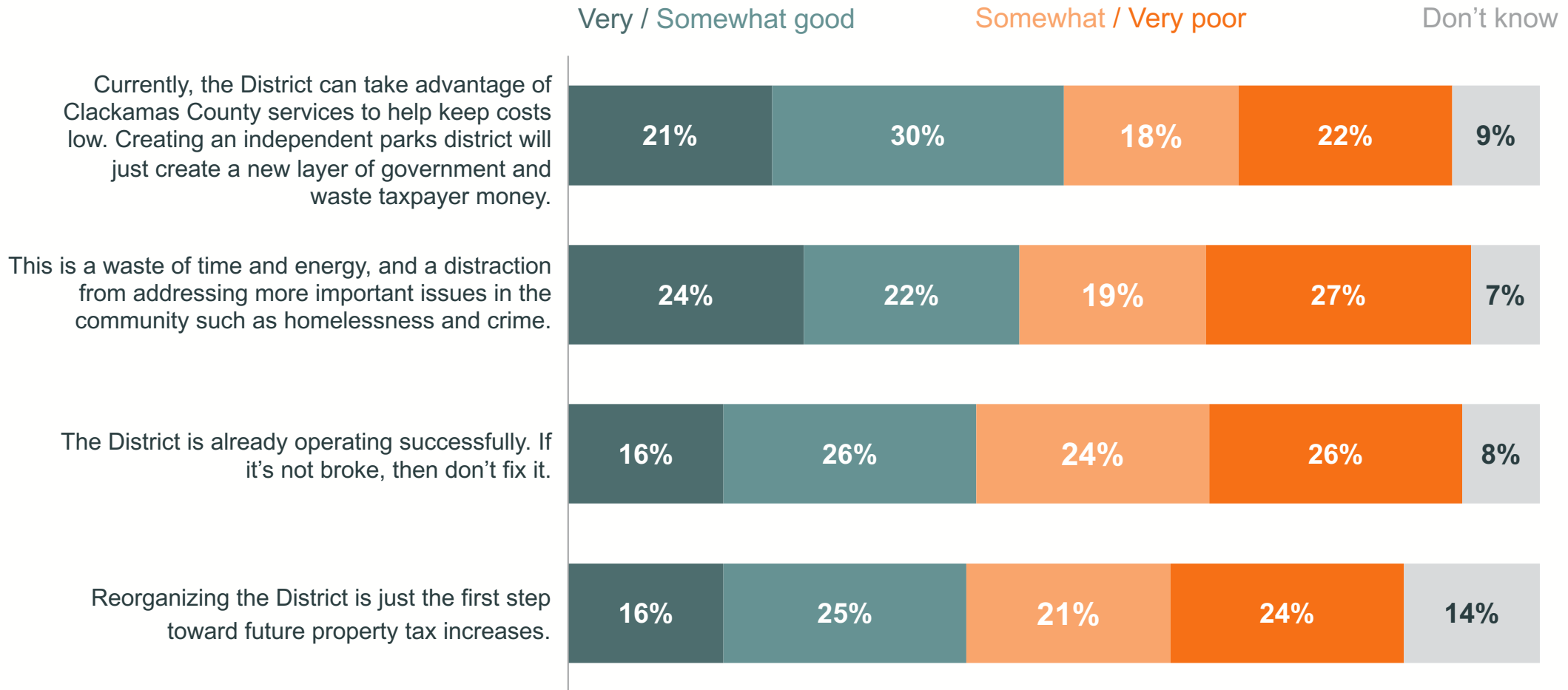
Reasons to support and oppose



Most voters find all reasons to support the measure convincing. Arguments about local control over decisions and taxation are the most compelling.



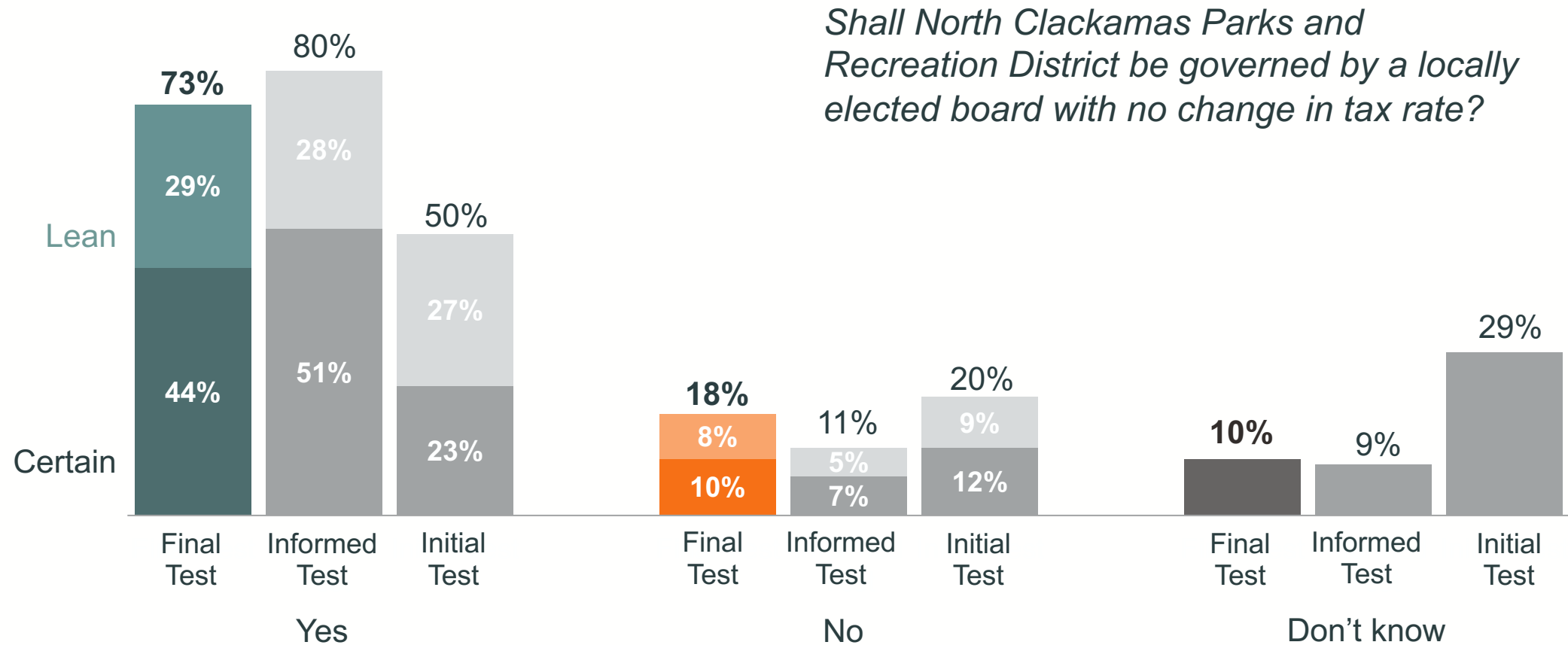
Reasons to oppose the measure are far less convincing. The best highlight concerns about additional layers of government and the need to address bigger priorities.



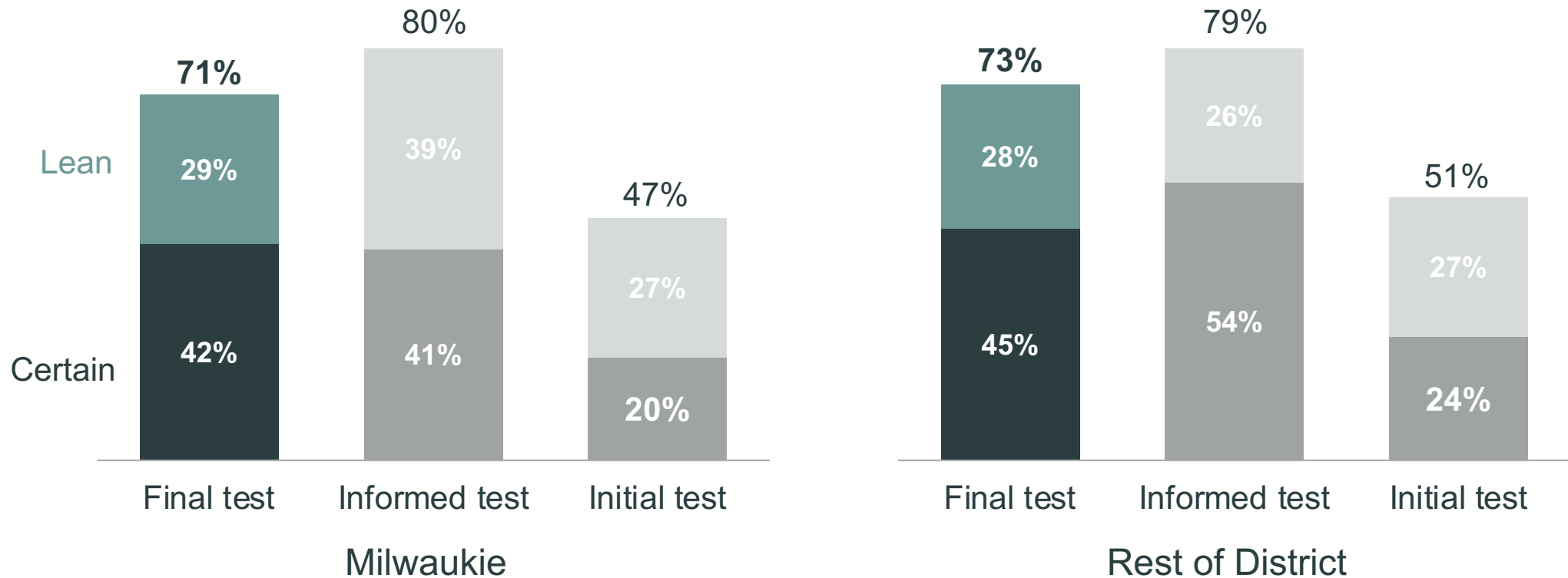
Final ballot test



73% of voters remain supportive after hearing arguments pro and con.



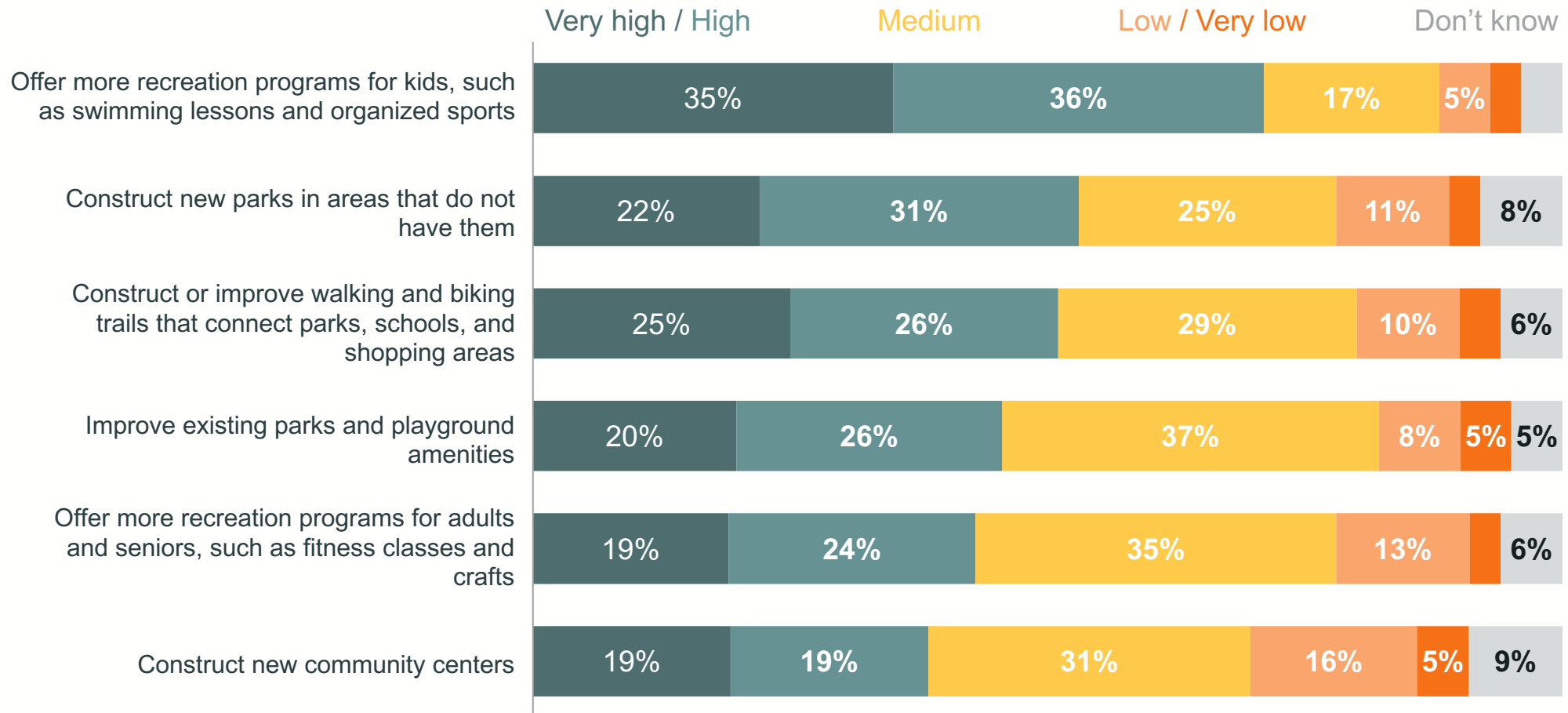
Support for the measure is high among voters in both Milwaukie and the rest of the District.



Parks and recreation priorities

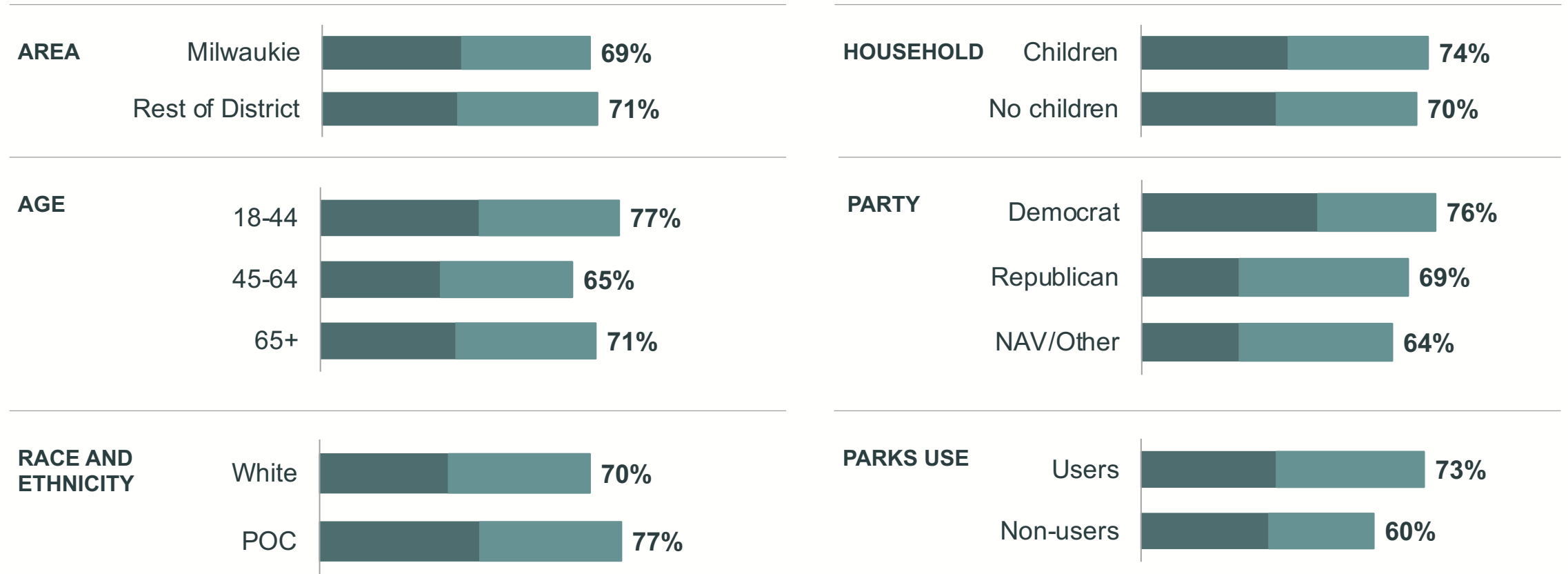


Recreation programs for kids is by far the top priority for District voters.



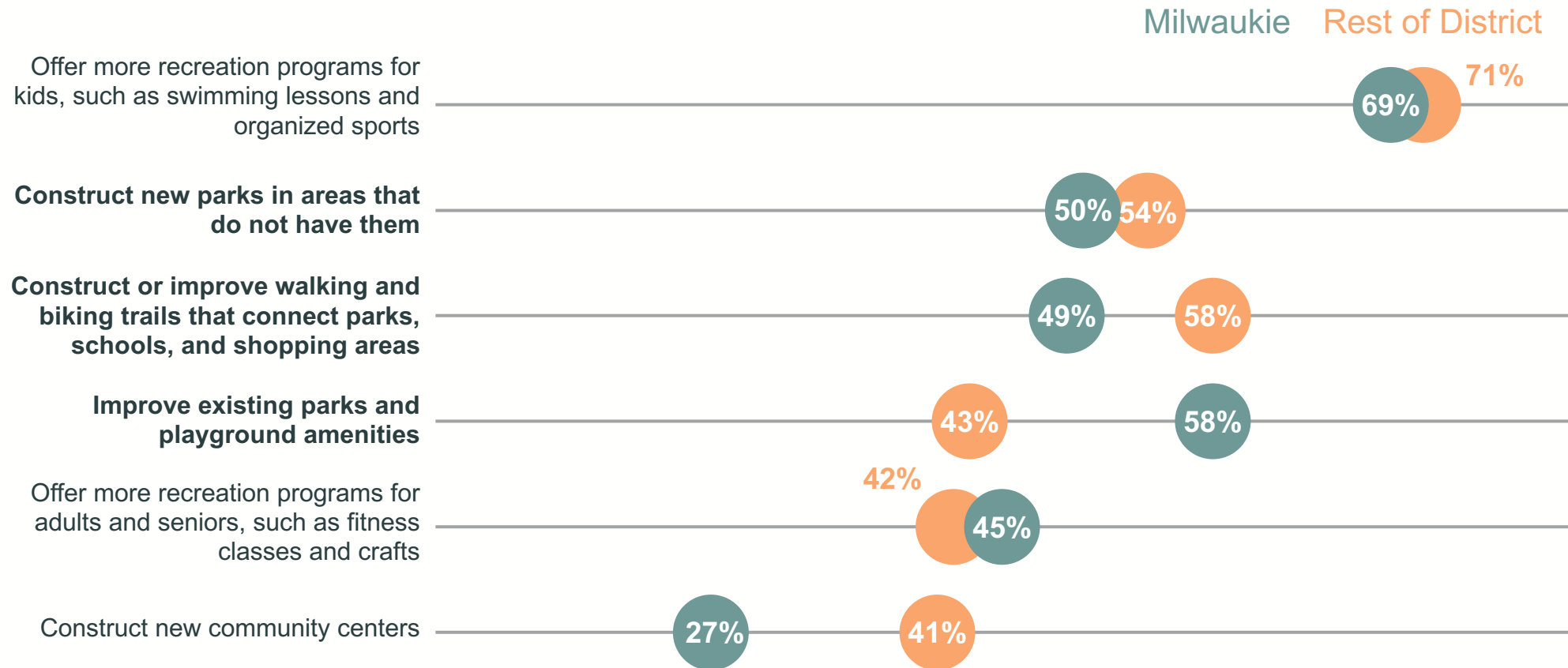
Key groups are united in saying that recreation programs for kids should be the District's top priority.

Recreation programs for kids as very high or high priority

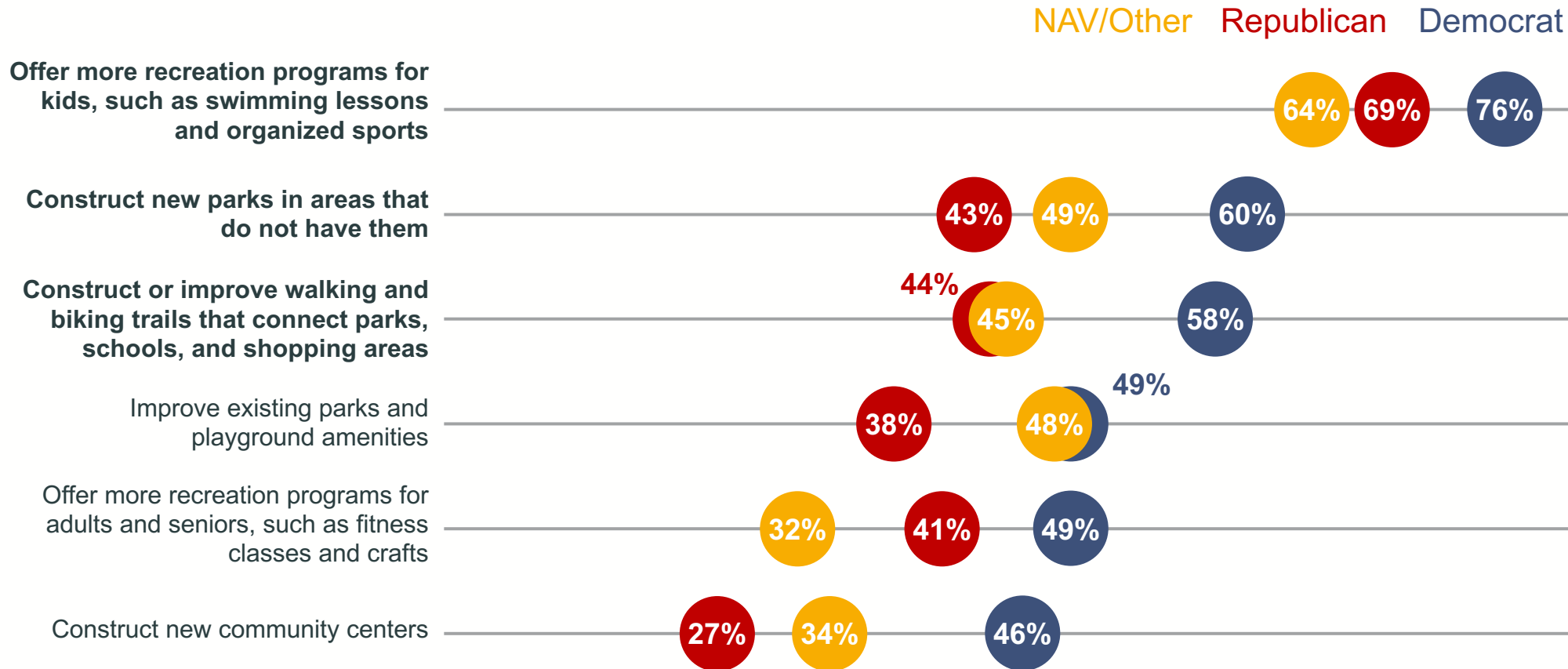


Minimum 64% all groups

When it comes to secondary priorities, Milwaukie voters tend to prefer improving existing facilities, while voters in the rest of the District tend to prefer building new ones.



Democrats are more likely to prioritize potential park projects highly, but top priorities are similar regardless of political affiliation.





Tony Iaccarino

tiaccarino@dhmresearch.com

John Horvick

jhorvick@dhmresearch.com

Brandon Cruz

bcruz@dhmresearch.com