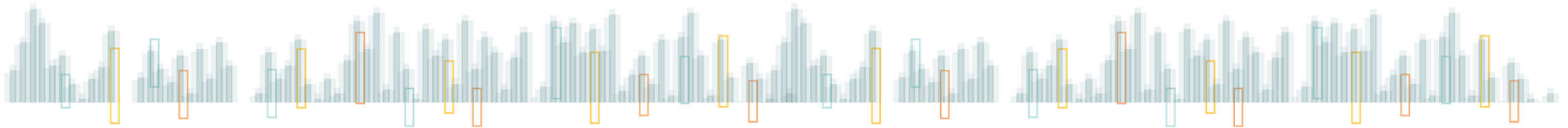




# City of Salem Levy Survey

September 2024



# Research purpose

- Gauge voter support for potential public safety and community livability levies
- Test voter tolerance for different levy rates
- Identify voter preferences for how revenue might support specific staffing and services



# Methodology

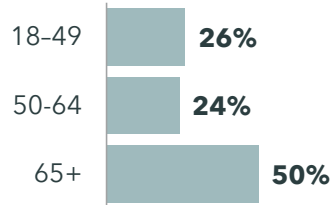
- Hybrid (phone and text-to-online) survey of N=400 voters in the City of Salem
- Conducted September 10-16, 2024; 13 minutes to complete
- Quotas set by gender, age, ward, and political affiliation, and data weighted by race and education level, to ensure a representative sample of likely voters in the May 2025 and November 2024 elections
- Margin of error  $\pm 4.9\%$
- Due to rounding, some totals may differ by  $\pm 1$  from the sum of separate responses



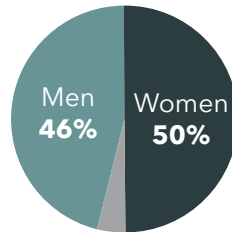
# Demographic breakdown of survey respondents

N=400 Salem Voters

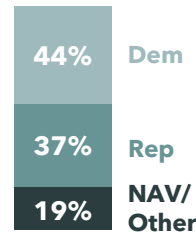
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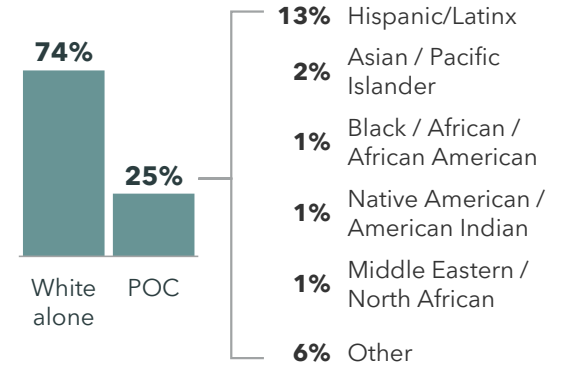
## GENDER



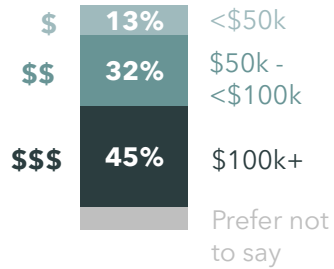
## PARTY



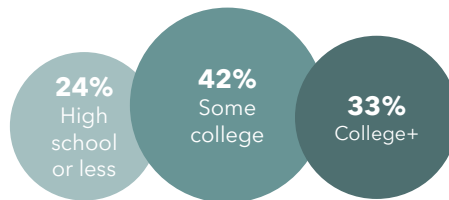
## RACE / ETHNICITY



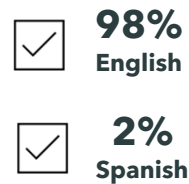
## INCOME



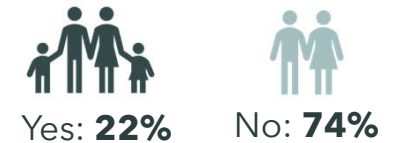
## EDUCATION



## LANGUAGE OF SURVEY

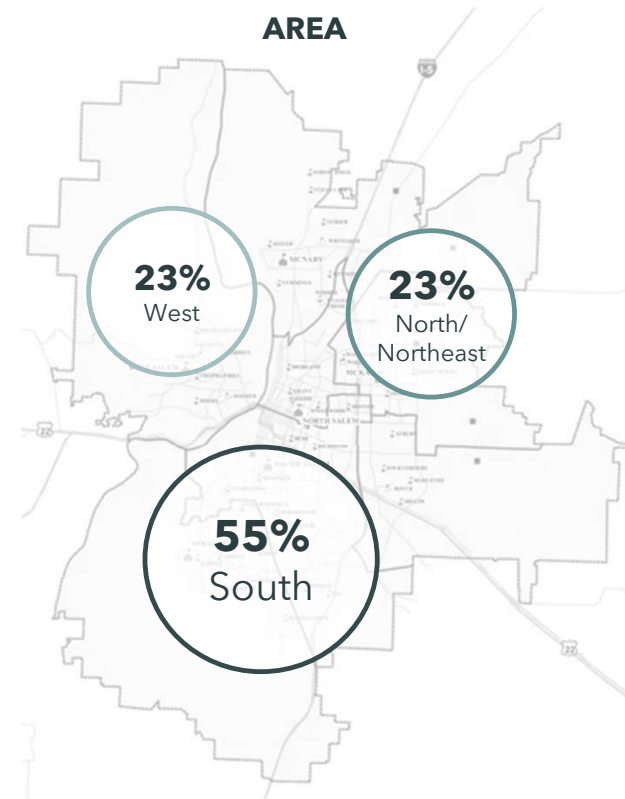
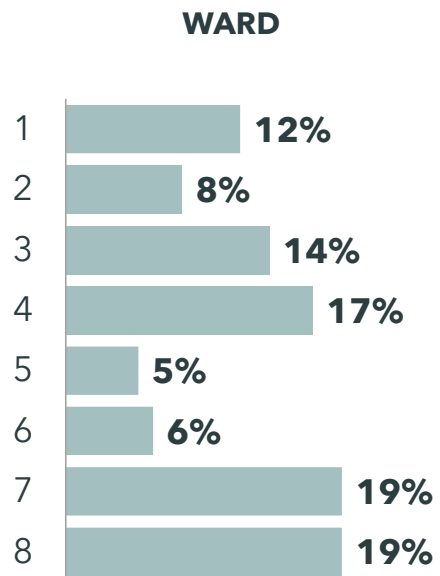


## CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD



## Area breakdown of survey respondents

N=400 Salem Voters



# Key takeaways



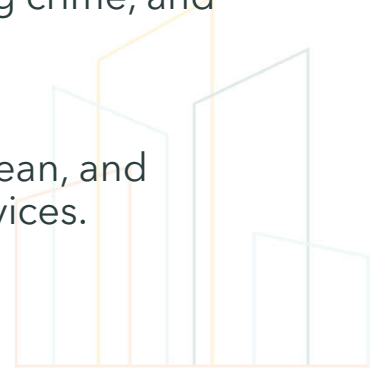
# Voter mood

- Voter confidence in the direction of the City of Salem is increasing, but it remains low.
- Homelessness and public safety are the biggest issues voters want their elected leaders to address.



# Levy options and preferences

- Voters oppose levy options for public safety and community livability, with certainty of opposition far outweighing certainty of support. Offering reduced-cost alternatives does little to boost support.
- Although a majority of voters oppose all levy options, they prioritize a public safety levy over a community livability levy.
- When it comes to a public safety levy, voters prioritize maintaining and adding police over maintaining and adding firefighters; and they prioritize community policing, fighting crime, and tackling drugs over improved fire and emergency response.
- When it comes to a community livability levy, voters prioritize keeping parks safe, clean, and green, and maintaining recreation services over maintaining and adding library services.





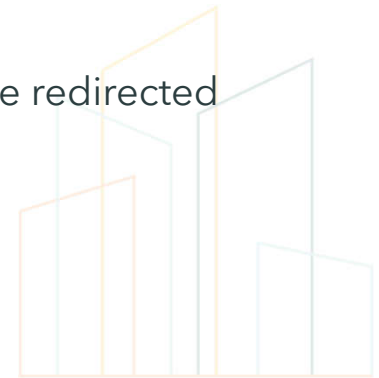
# Public safety levy

- Support for the public safety levy is higher among women, voters age 65+, and Democrats.
- Opposition is higher among men, voters ages 18-64, and Republican and non-affiliated voters.
- Supporters say public safety is a core service and the levy will make Salem safer.
- Opponents cite mistrust of government and opposition to additional taxes.



# Community livability levy

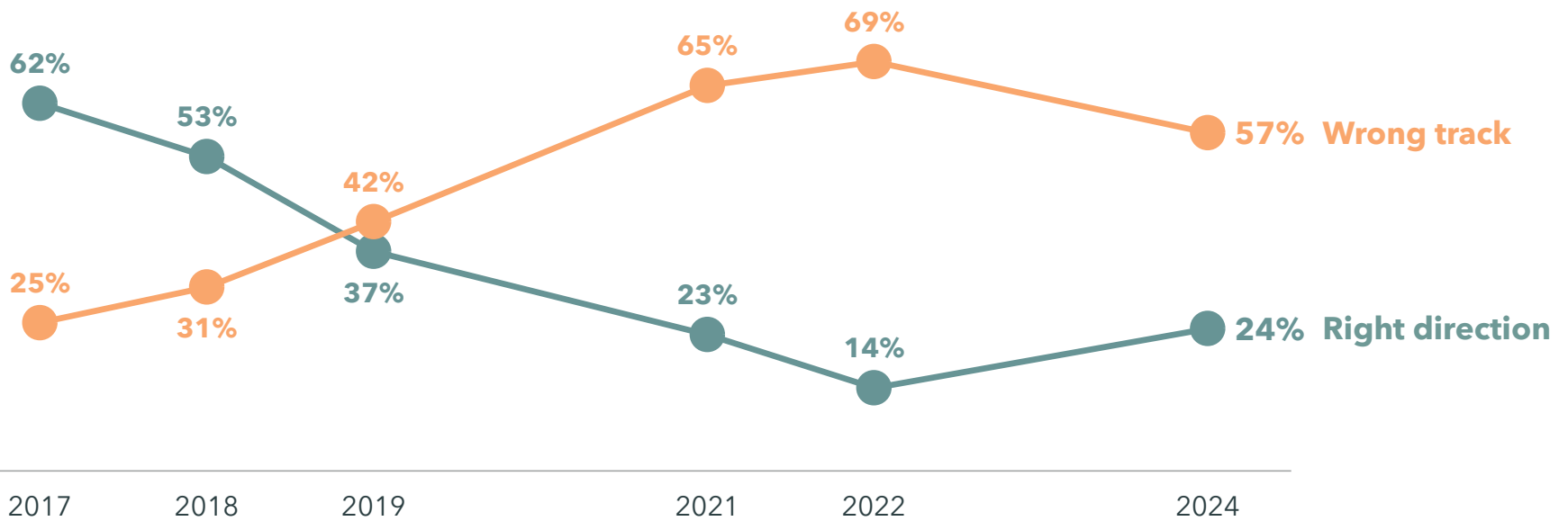
- Support for the community livability levy is higher among women, voters ages 18-49, Democrats, and renters.
- Opposition is higher among men, voters ages 50-64, homeowners, and Republican and non-affiliated voters.
- Supporters say libraries and parks are necessary core services, that libraries are essential for education and literacy, and that funds are needed to keep parks clean and safe.
- Opponents are opposed to additional taxes and believe any necessary funds can be redirected from other programs.



# Voter mood and top issues



# Salem voters are more likely to think the City is on the wrong track, but voter mood has improved since 2022.

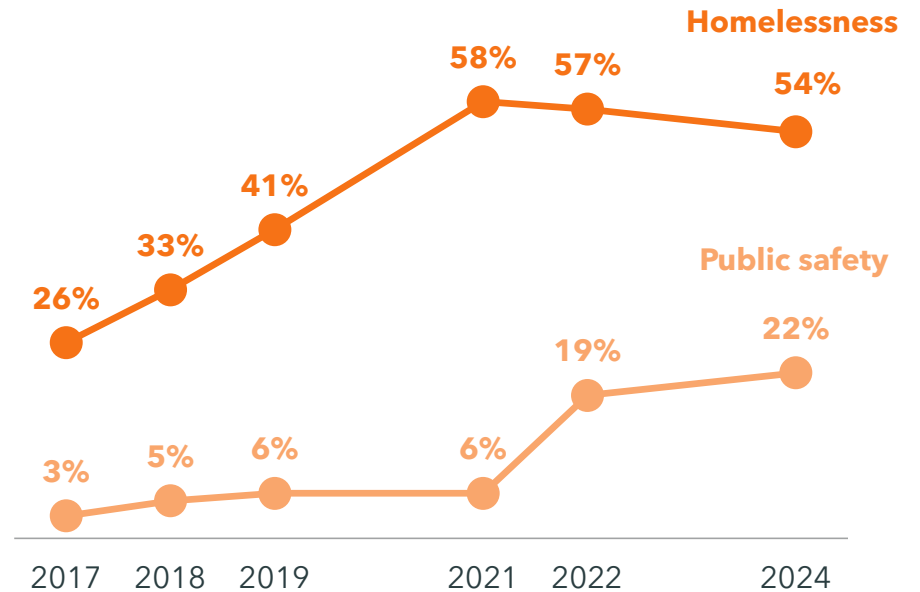


# Homelessness and public safety are the biggest issues voters want leaders to address.

**54%** Homelessness

**22%** Public safety concerns

- 9% Infrastructure/ Roads
- 9% Affordable housing/ Housing
- 7% Cost of living/ Inflation
- 6% Budget mismanagement
- 4% Clean up the city/ Trash/ Waste
- 3% Education
- 3% Parks
- 2% Library
- 2% Traffic

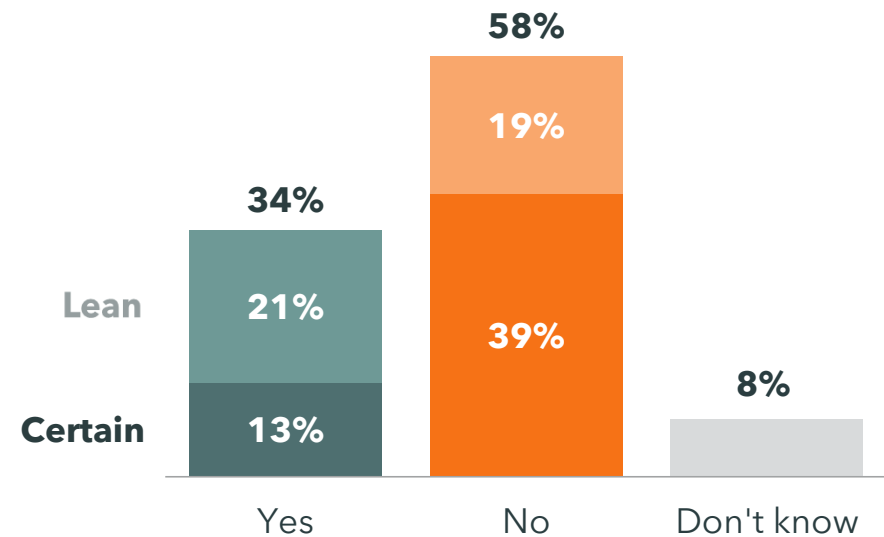


# Public safety: levy ballot tests



# Provided with only a ballot title, support for the public safety levy is low and soft.

*Shall Salem improve public safety services for fire and police with a five-year levy, \$1.50 per \$1,000 assessed value? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than three percent.*



## Voters were then provided with the following explanation about the public safety levy:

*Funding from the public safety levy would deliver the following:*

- *Retain 27 firefighters and add 18 to staff the city's two new fire stations.*
- *Retain 18 police officers and current graffiti removal and crime reporting staff and add 18 officers.*

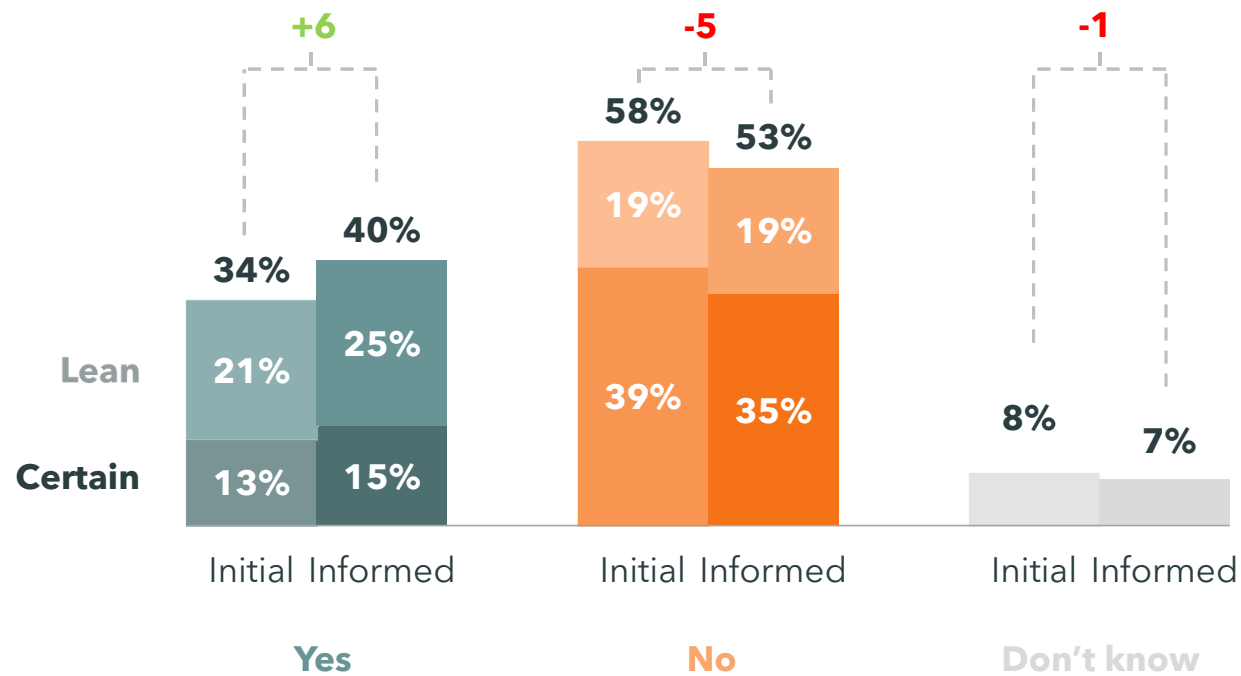
*These increased staffing levels would improve public safety in the following ways:*

- *Improve city-wide fire response times.*
- *Enhance firefighters' ability to handle multiple complex emergencies happening at the same time.*
- *Improve survival rates city-wide for critical emergencies.*
- *Allow police to investigate and solve more crimes.*
- *Add police resources to fight violent crime and dangerous street drugs like fentanyl.*
- *Increase proactive community policing to reduce neighborhood crimes.*

*The cost of this levy would be \$351 per year for a typical home with an assessed, not market, value of \$234,000. Levy spending would be overseen by an independent board of citizens.*

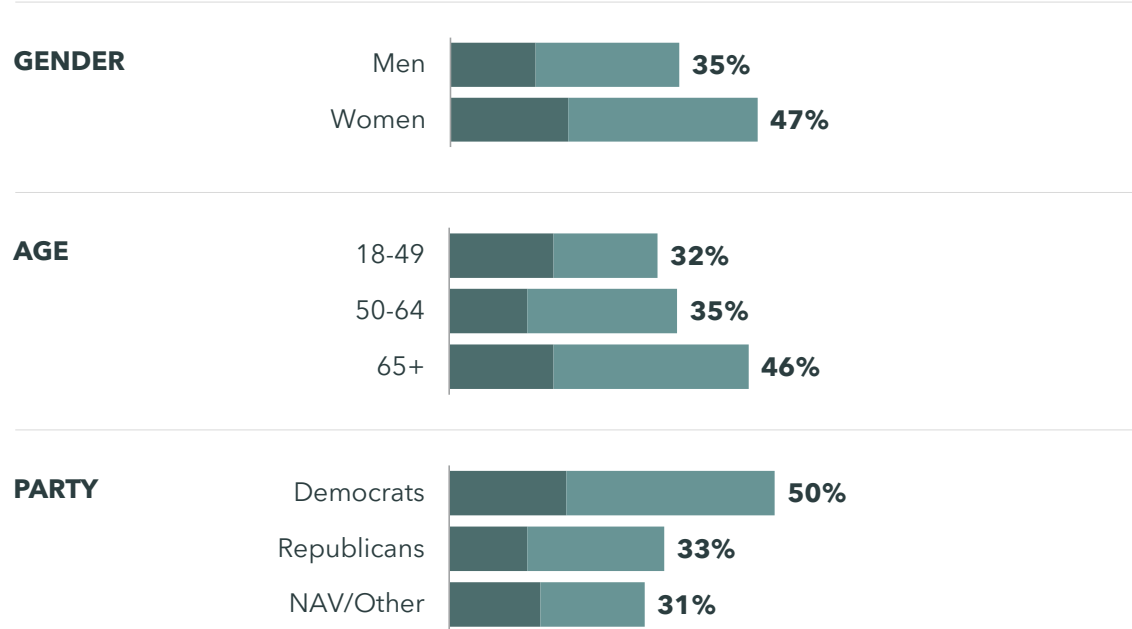


After learning more about the measure, including cost per typical household, support for the measure increases slightly.



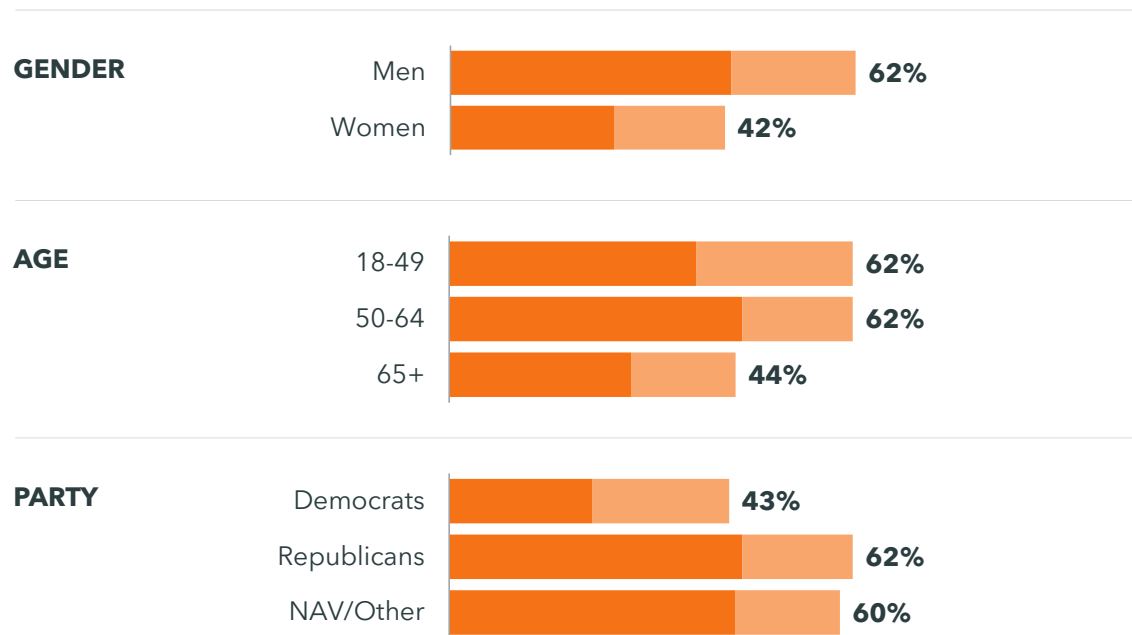
# Supporters of the public safety levy are more likely to be women, older, and Democratic.

% Certain / lean towards "yes"

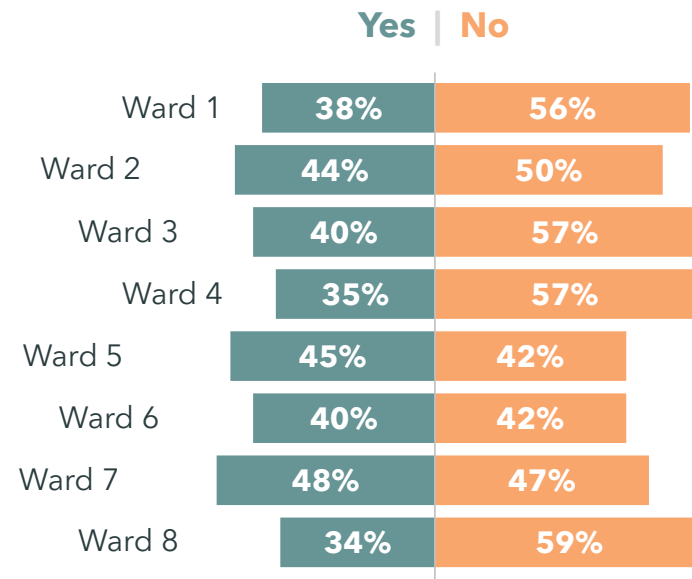
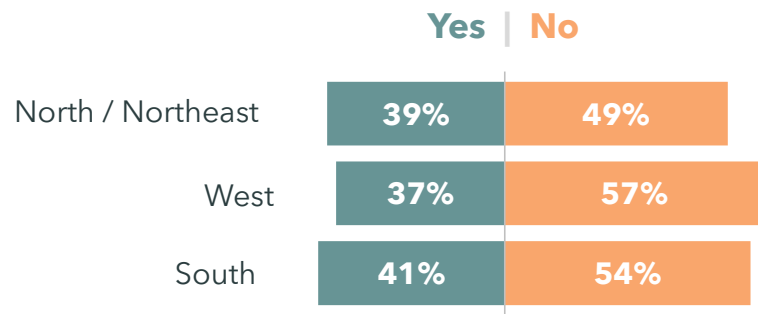


# Opponents of the public safety levy are more likely to be men, younger, and either Republican or nonaffiliated.

% **Certain** / lean towards "no"



**Notably, there are no significant differences by area or ward when it comes to levy support or opposition.**



*Due to small sample sizes for each ward, the differences by ward in this case are not statistically significant.*

In their own words, voters who support the measure most often mention two main reasons: the need to make Salem safer and ensuring that core services are provided.

*Why would you vote "yes" for the public safety levy?*



*n=159*

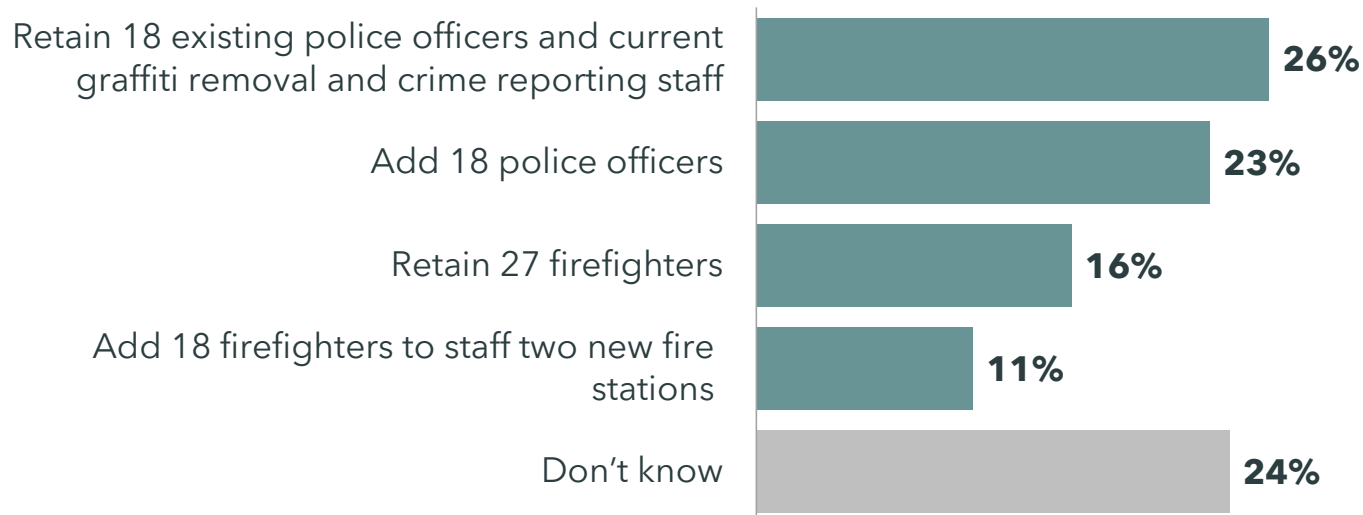
In their own words, voters who oppose the measure most often mention concerns about government accountability and additional tax increases.

*Why would you vote "no" for the public safety levy?*

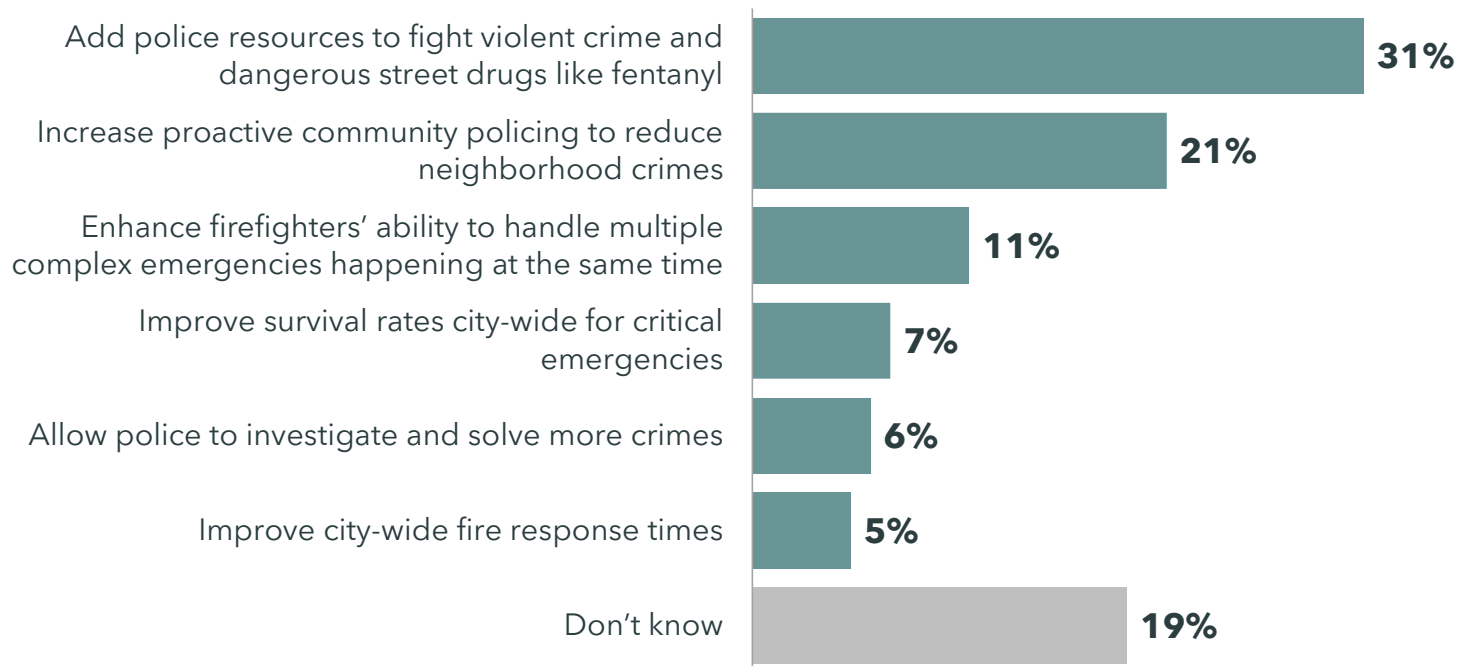


n=213

# Voters consider retaining and adding police officers to be the most important staffing components of the public safety levy.



# When offered a choice, voters say resources to address crime and drugs, and increased community policing, are the most important outcomes for the levy.



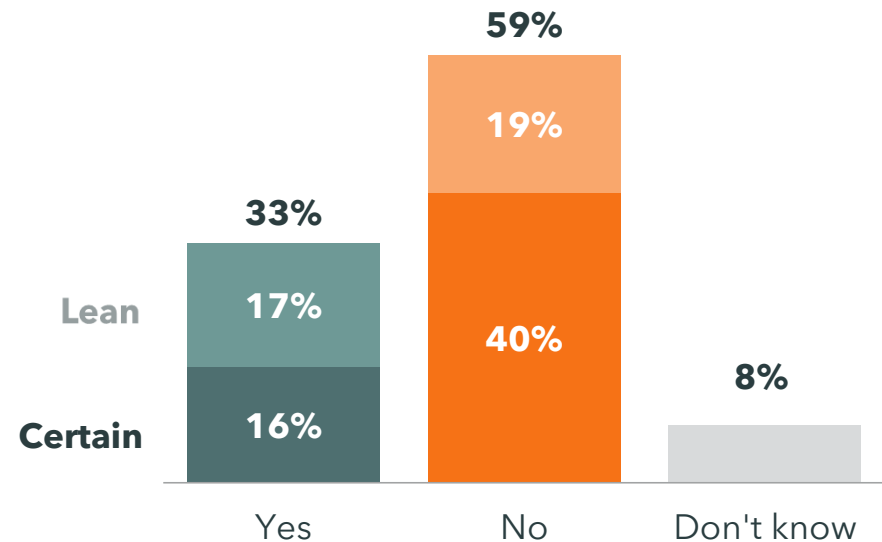


# Community livability: levy ballot tests



# Provided with nothing but a ballot title, support for the community livability levy is low and soft.

*Shall Salem improve community livability for libraries and parks and recreation with a five-year levy, \$1.50 per \$1,000 assessed value? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than three percent.*



# Voters were then provided with the following explanation about the community livability levy:

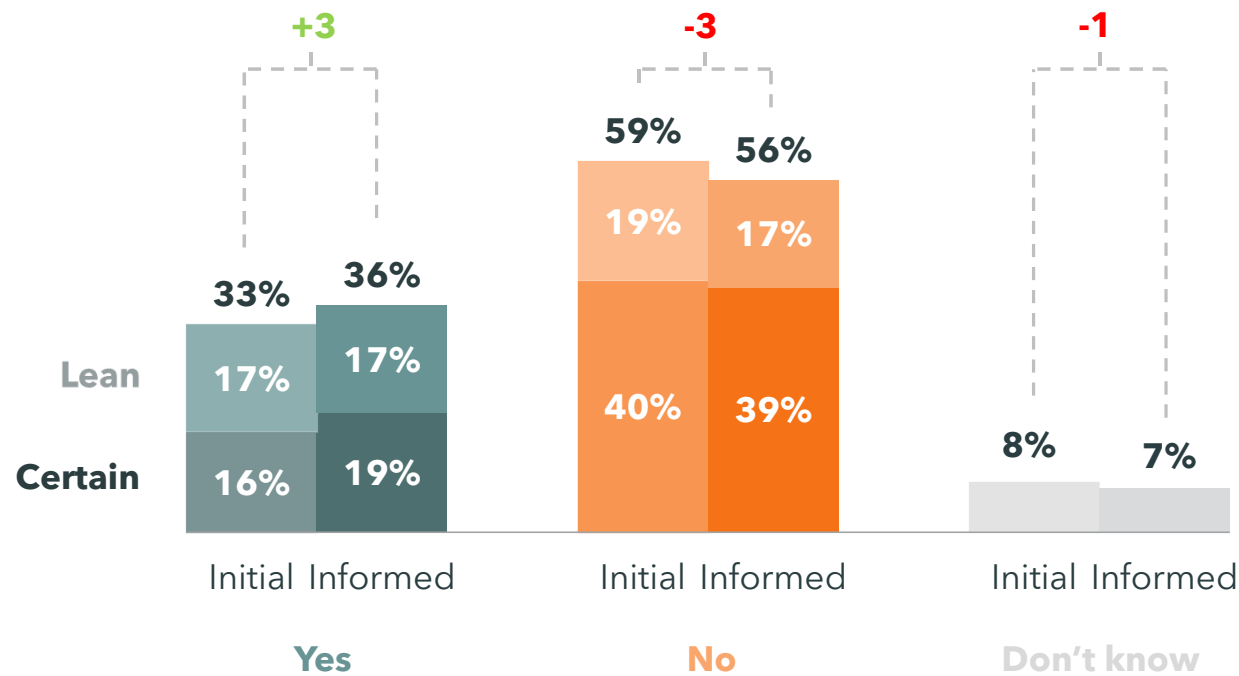
*Here is additional information about this levy option.*

*Funding from the levy would deliver the following for community livability:*

- *Keep existing library services and hours at the Main Library and West Salem Branch.*
- *Expand library service and hours to seven days a week at the Main Library and five days a week at the West Salem Branch.*
- *Keep parks safe, clean, and green; and keep community events, summer camps, and recreation activities.*
- *Keep Center 50+ services and hours.*

*The cost of this levy would be \$351 per year for a typical home with an assessed, not market, value of \$234,000. Levy spending would be overseen by an independent board of citizens.*

After learning more about the levy, including cost per typical household, support for the measure increases slightly.



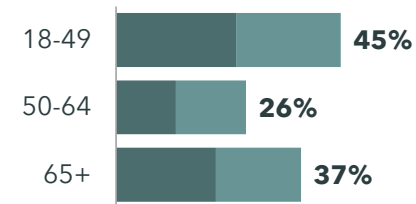
# Supporters of the community livability levy are more likely to be women, younger, renters, and Democratic.

% Certain / lean towards "yes"

## GENDER



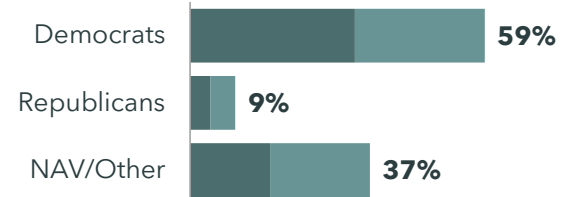
## AGE



## HOUSING



## PARTY



# Opponents of the community livability levy are more likely to be men, middle-aged, homeowners, and Republican or nonaffiliated.

% **Certain** / **lean towards "no"**

## GENDER



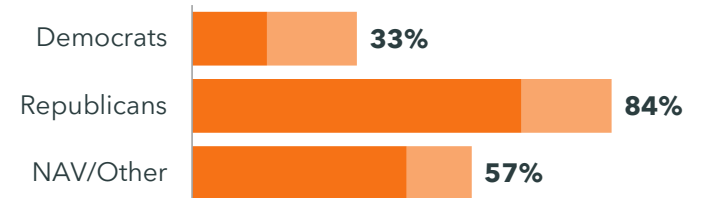
## AGE



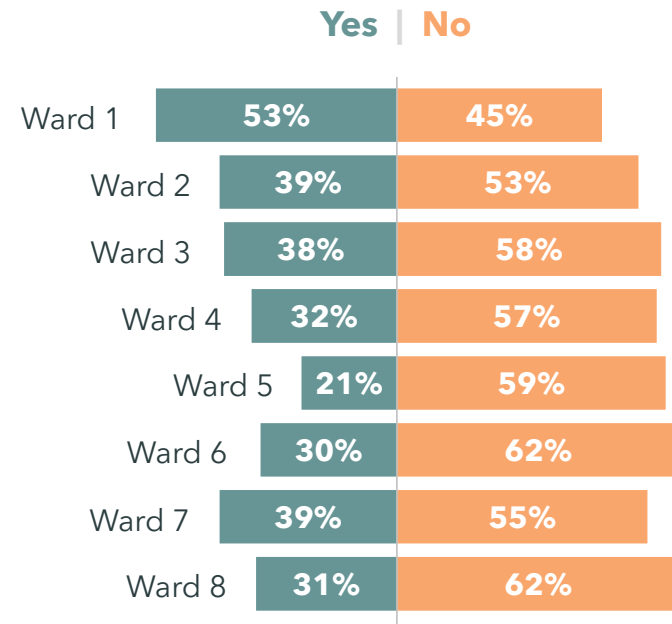
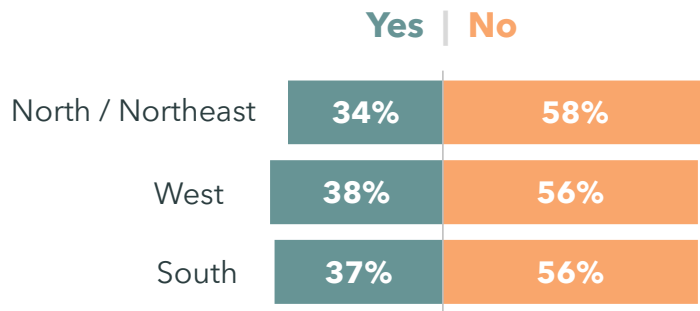
## HOUSING



## PARTY



Notably, there are few significant differences by area or ward when it comes to levy support or opposition.



*The only significant difference is greater support for the levy in Ward 1 compared to Wards 4, 5 & 8.*

In their own words, voters who support the levy most often mention libraries and parks as essential services, and the desire for clean and safe parks.

*Why would you vote "yes" for the community safety levy?*

<b>26%</b>	<b>Library is essential for education/literacy</b>
<b>18%</b>	<b>Help maintain parks/keep them clean and safe</b>
<b>18%</b>	<b>Needed core services</b>
12%	Services underfunded
12%	Improve livability/quality of life
12%	Good for community
7%	Will benefit everyone
2%	Good for children

*n=146*



In their own words, voters opposed to the levy most often mention concerns about more taxes and the belief that existing funds could be redirected to public safety.

*Why would you vote "no" for the community safety levy?*

<b>32%</b>	<b>Property taxes too high/can't afford</b>
<b>27%</b>	<b>Redirect funds from other programs</b>
<b>17%</b>	<b>Opposed to any new taxes</b>
13%	Not a top priority
10%	Government mismanagement
8%	Need to evaluate entire budget first
7%	Prefer money for public safety
3%	Parks full of homeless/drugs
2%	Not a core service

n=225

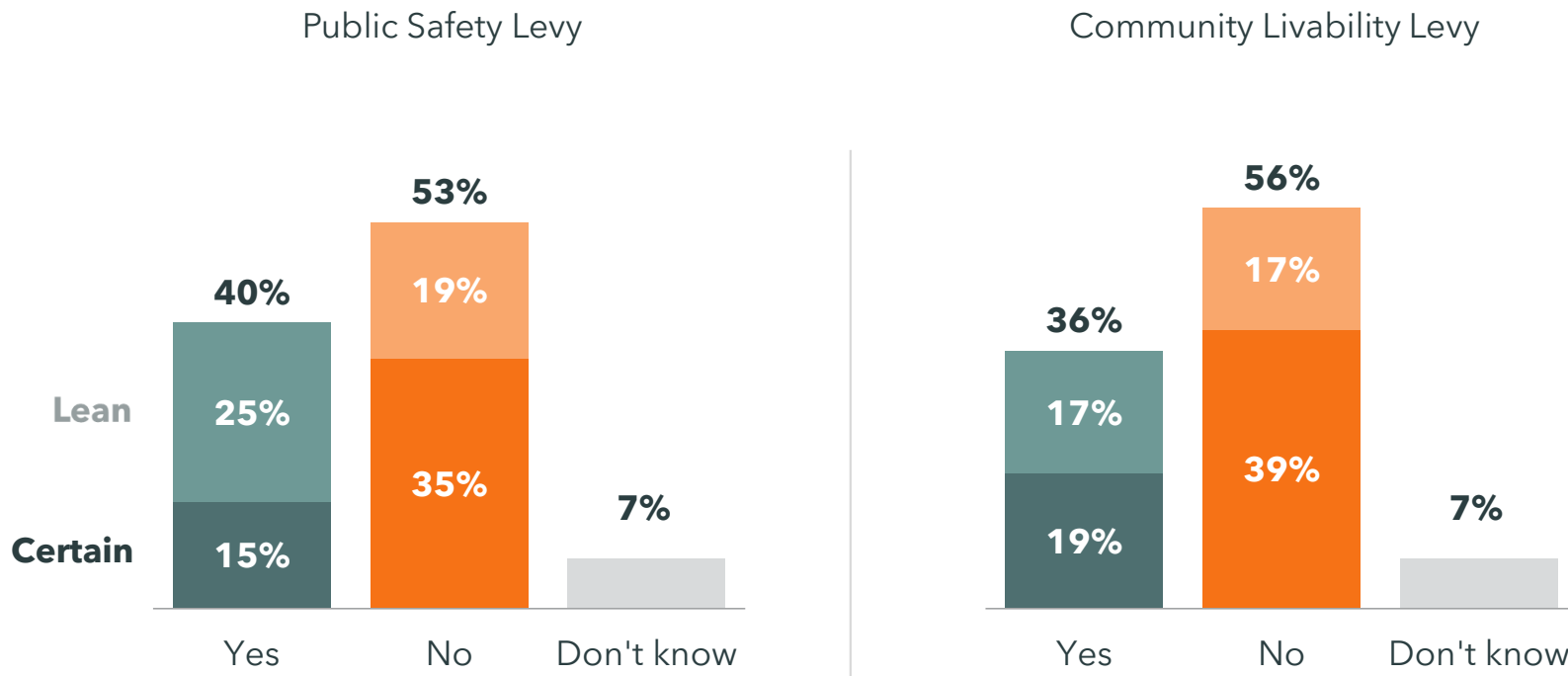
# When offered a choice, voters say maintaining recreation activities and keeping parks clean and safe are the most important outcomes for the levy.



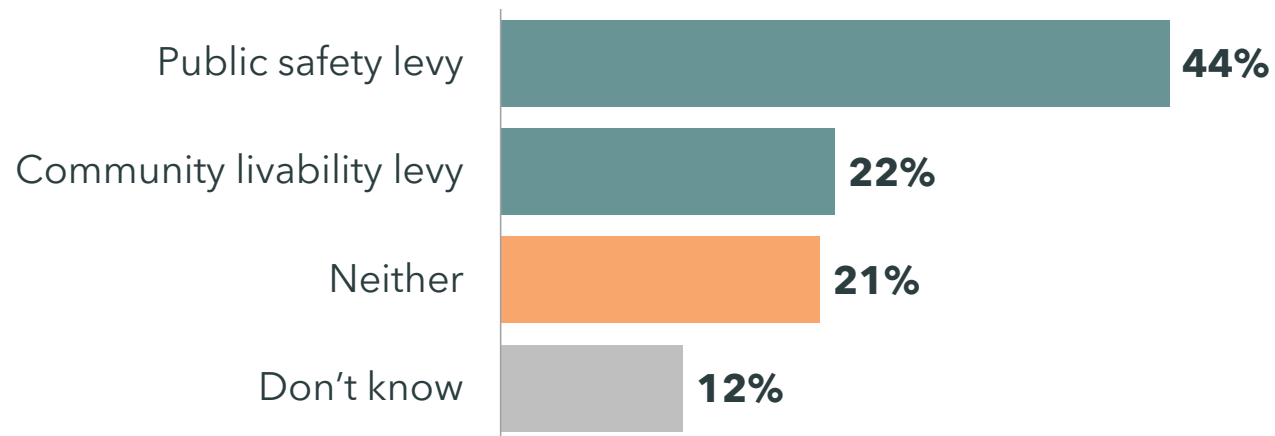
# Comparing two proposed levy options



# Asked to consider the levies independently, voters show a slight preference for the public safety levy.



Specifically asked to choose between the two levy options, voters show a strong preference for the public safety levy.



In their own words, voters who support the public safety levy but oppose the community livability levy say more police are needed and public safety is a higher priority.

**Why do you support the public safety levy but oppose the community livability levy?**

<b>28%</b>	<b>Need more police</b>
<b>23%</b>	<b>Public safety a higher priority</b>
18%	Parks not essential
11%	Libraries not essential
11%	Rarely use library
8%	Need more firefighters/emergency responders
7%	Tackle crime
6%	Tackling crime/enforcing camping bans will improve parks
6%	Public safety underfunded
6%	Address homelessness
4%	Rarely use parks
2%	Fight drugs

n=56

In their own words, voters who support the community livability levy but oppose the public safety levy say police are overfunded and unaccountable.

*Why do you support the community livability levy but oppose the public safety levy?*

- 33%** **Police overfunded**
- 27%** **Police not accountable/ police mistrust**
- 19% Unfair to choose between safety and livability
- 15% Want money for livability and police but not fire
- 12% Parks programs can help reduce crime
- 9% Want money for livability and fire but not police
- 8% Good for community
- 7% Library is essential for education/literacy
- 7% Needed core services
- 6% Improve livability/quality of life
- 5% Underfunded

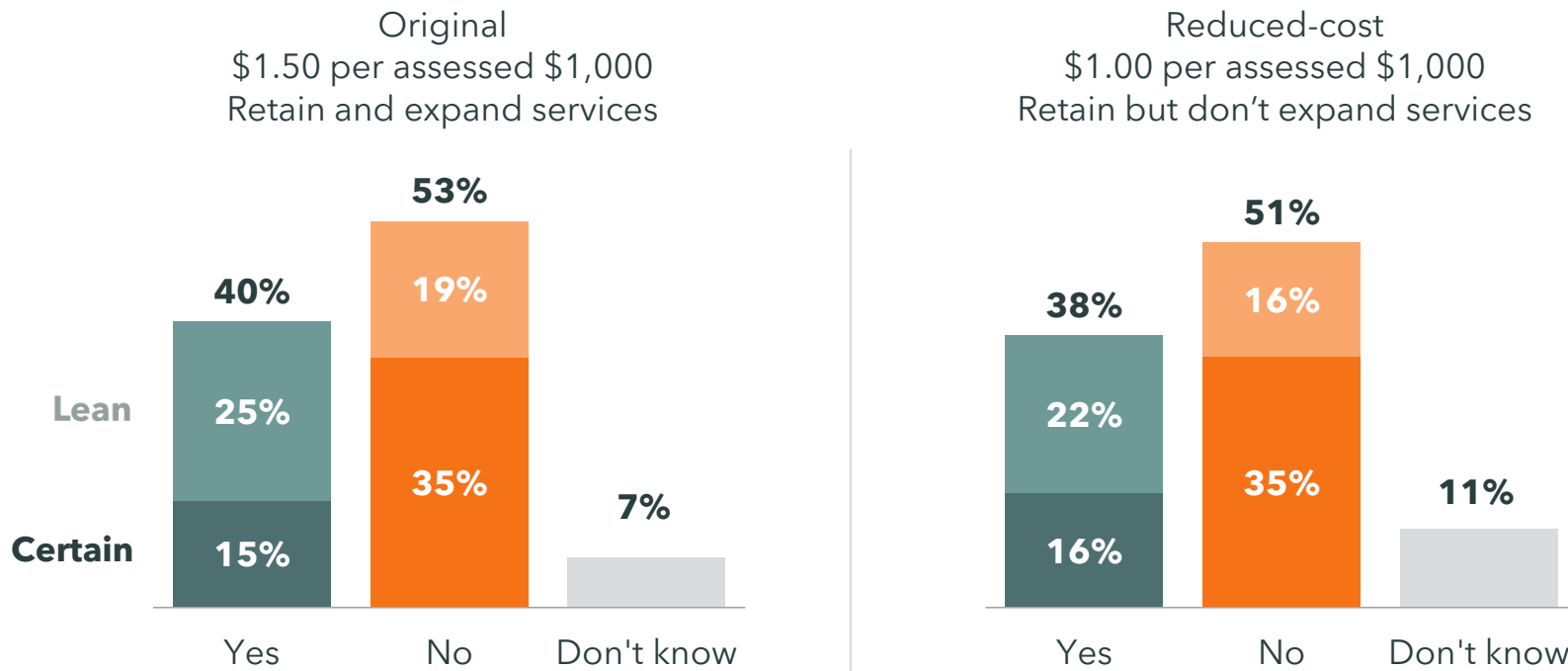
*n=50*

# Reduced-cost levy options

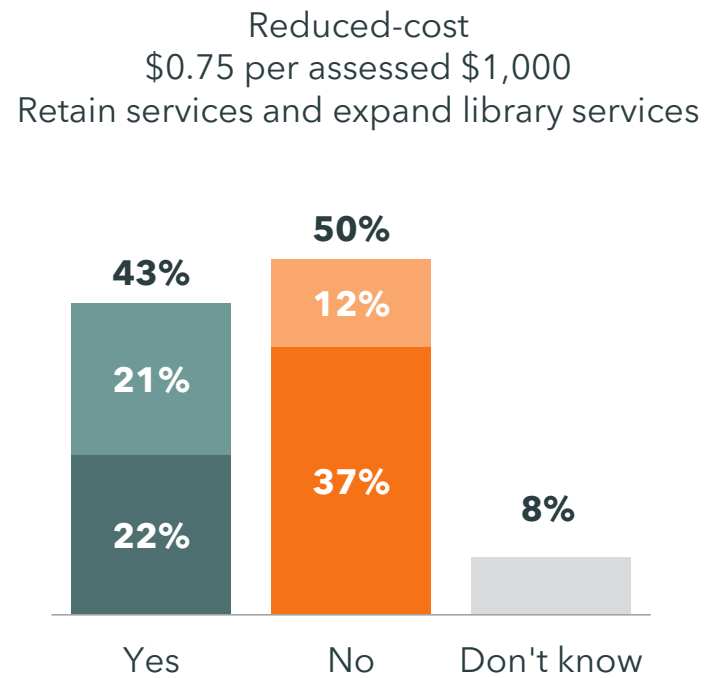
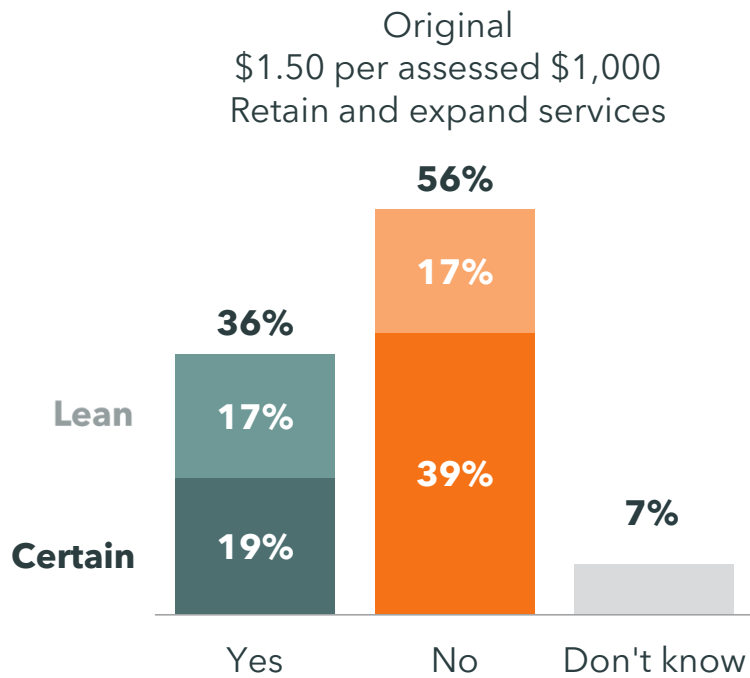




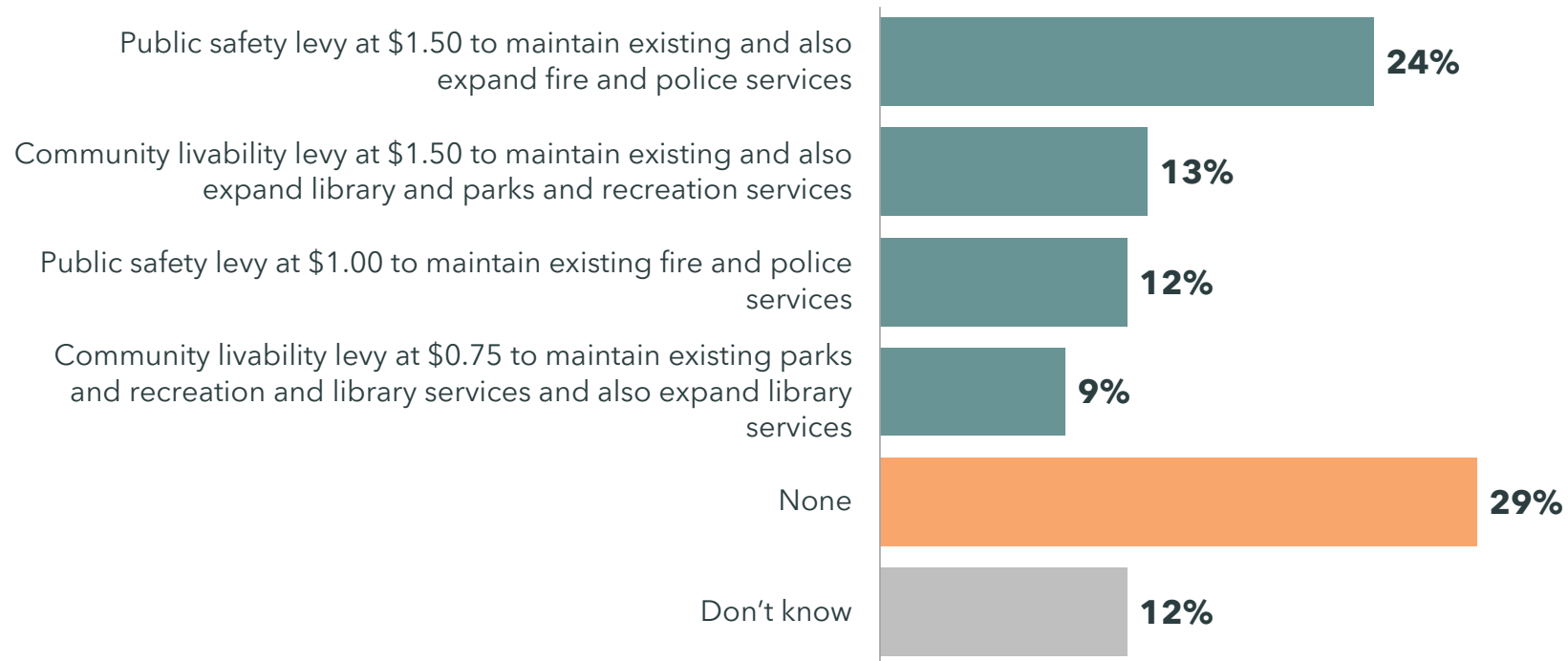
# A reduced-cost levy alternative for public safety fares slightly worse than the original proposed levy.



# A reduced-cost levy alternative for community livability fares slightly better than the original proposed levy.



# Asked to choose between four options, voters prefer the original public safety levy that maintains and expands services, but a plurality are opposed to all options.





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