



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

ARAPAHOE COUNTY

*Key findings from a survey of 400
registered voters in the Arapahoe County,
CO conducted August 10-11, 2011.*

Lori Weigel, Partner // Public Opinion Strategies



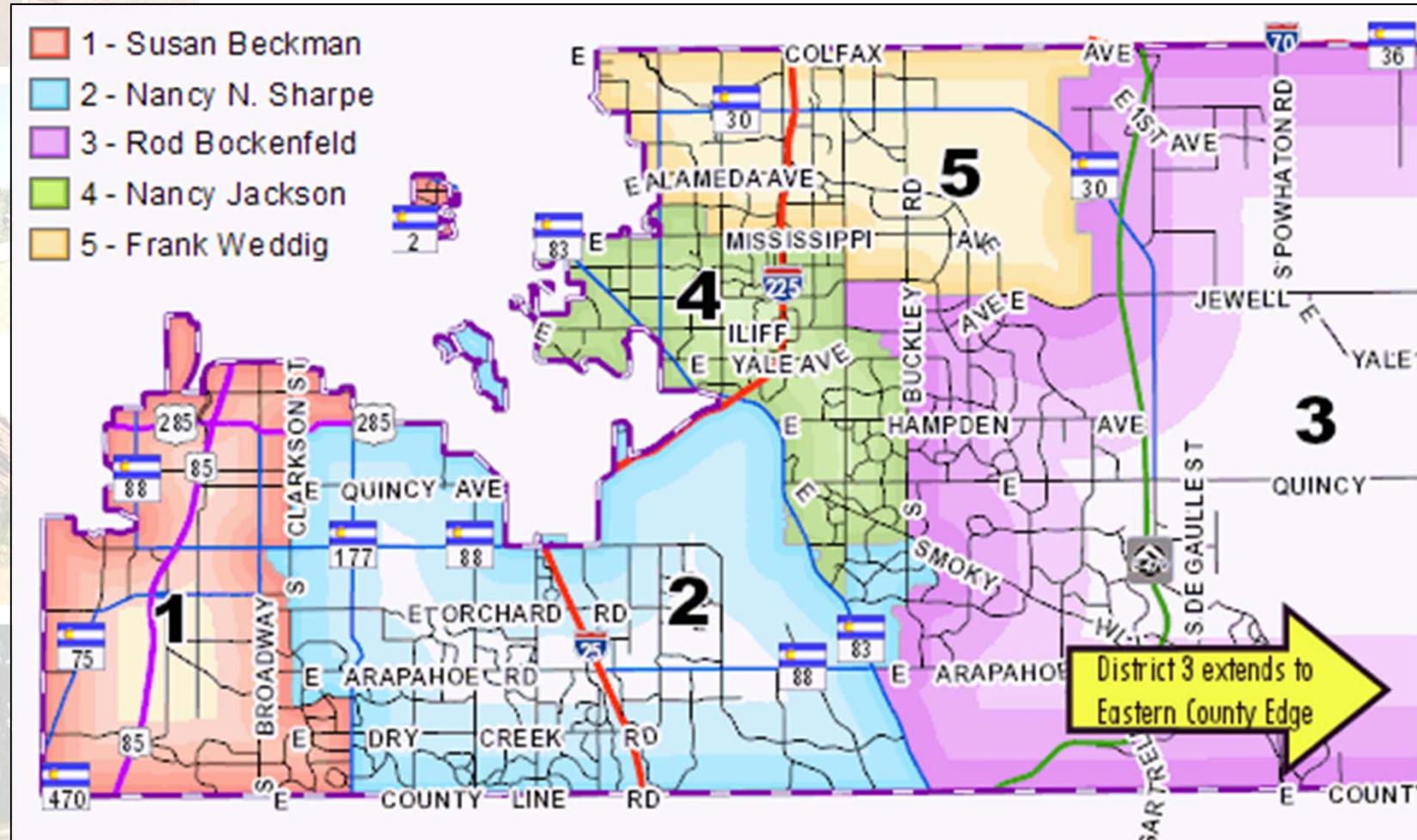
METHODOLOGY



Methodology

- **Public Opinion Strategies conducted a survey of 400 registered voters throughout Arapahoe county. This survey was conducted August 10-11, 2011 and has a margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$.**
- **The sample is proportionate by county commissioner district and representative of active voters.**
- **The survey was designed to examine the priorities of Arapahoe county residents and their willingness to continue funding from the 2003 sales and use tax dedication. Therefore, we interviewed active voters who will likely weigh in on this decision.**

Arapahoe County Map





THE BOTTOM LINE



The Bottom Line

- Voters hold very positive opinions of county government and intensely positive opinions of county Open Space, Trails and Parks.
- A proposal to extend the current .25% sales and use tax for the same purposes as originally approved by the voters in 2003, with the most significant change to the program of allowing 4% to be used for administration and program operations, elicits overwhelming support.
- This is true whether or not the language of the measure utilizes a phrase used in numerous counties, districts and cities for extensions. It is also true among those who have participated in elections similar to 2011.

The Bottom Line



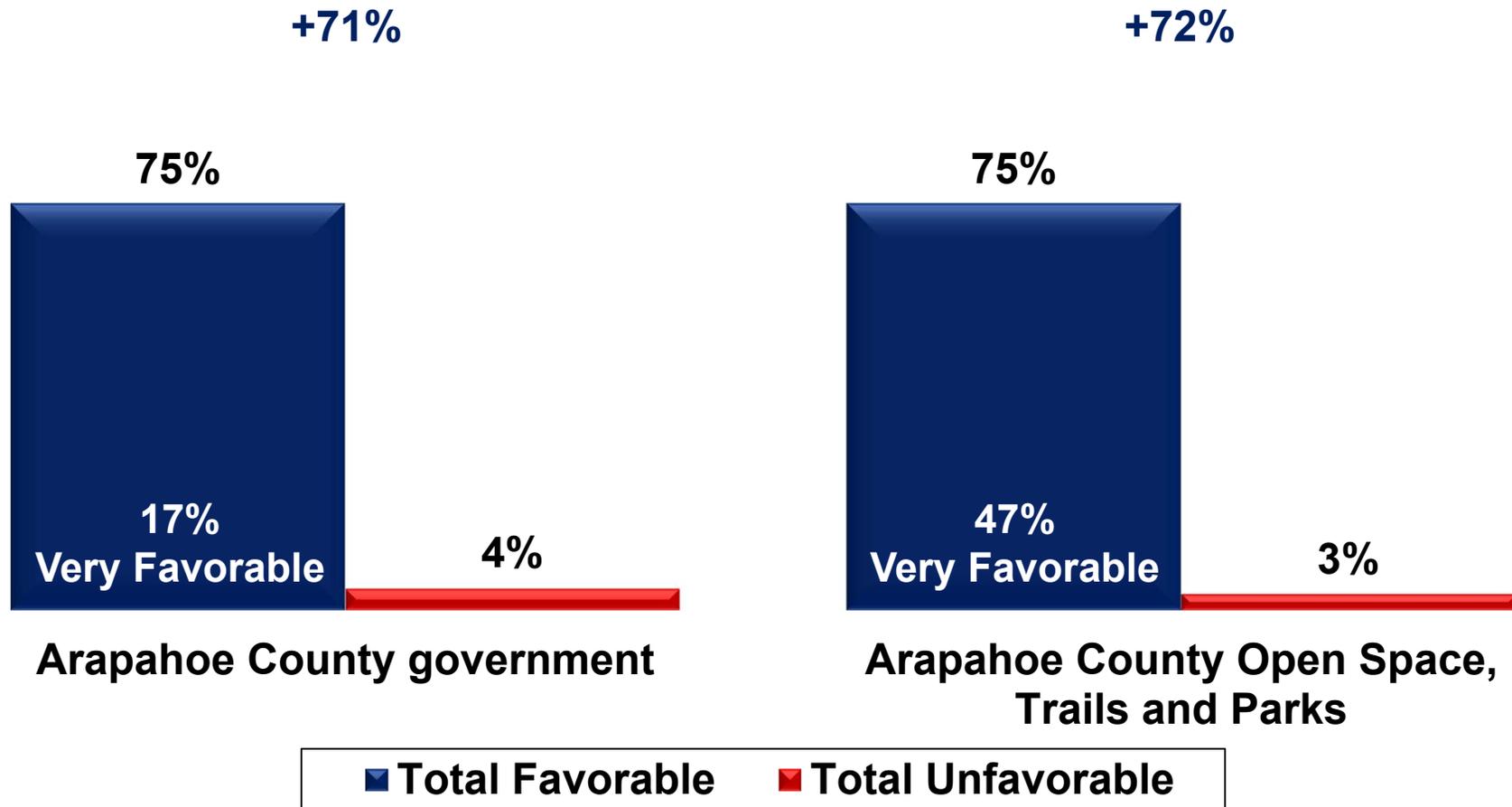
- Residents are most likely to prioritize protecting lands that preserve water quality, natural areas, neighborhood parks, and trails.
- There are two provisions which are or can be made explicit in the measure that enhance accountability: requiring funds be used solely for these purposes and not for anything else, and conducting an annual independent audit that is made available to the public.



CORE VIEWS

Residents have positive impressions of both county government broadly, and Open Space, Trails and Parks specifically.

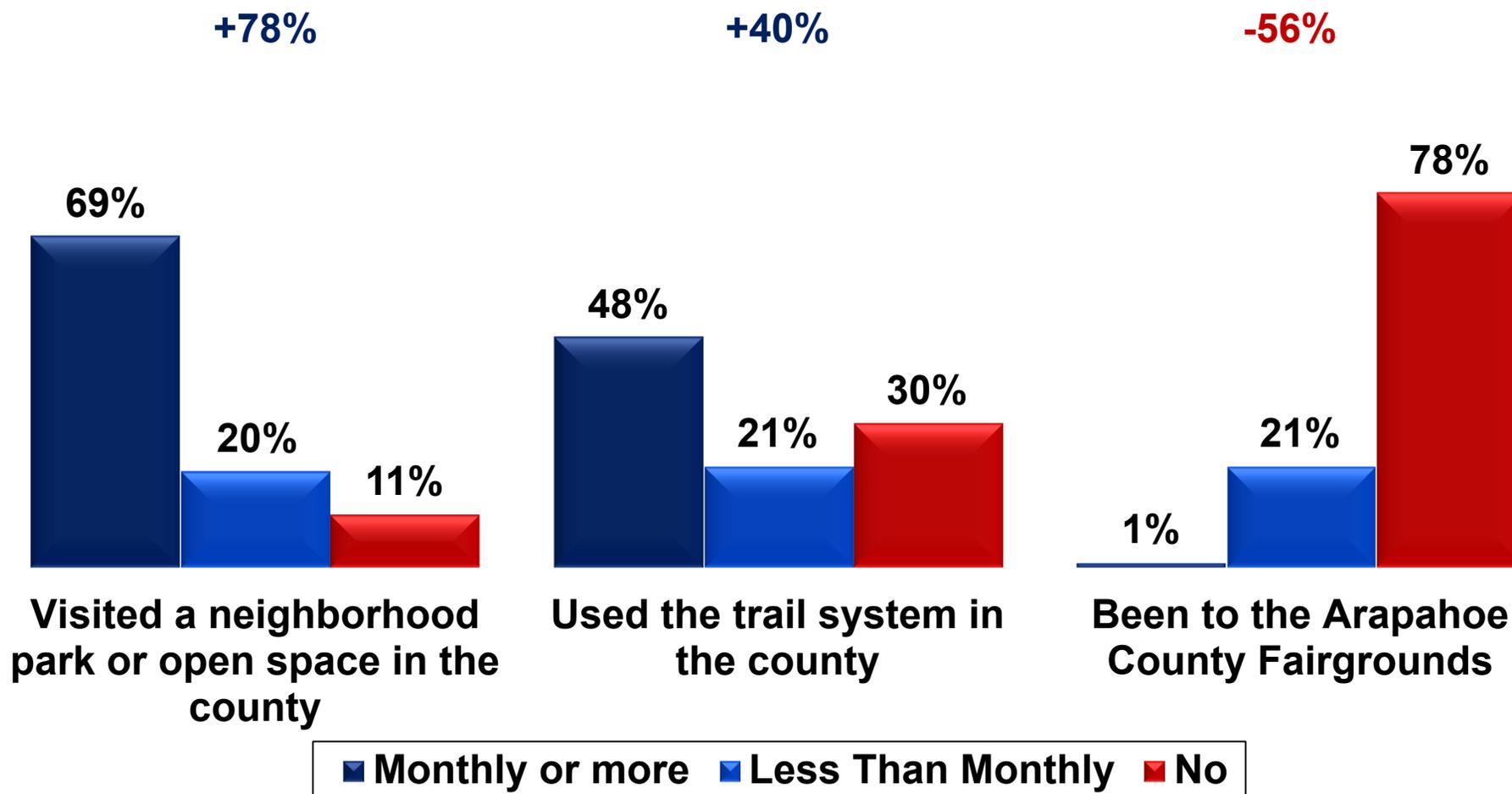
Favorable/Unfavorable Opinion



Now I'm going to read you the names of a few local government agencies. Please tell me whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each one.

The vast majority of residents have been to a park or used trails in the county, but not to the Fairgrounds.

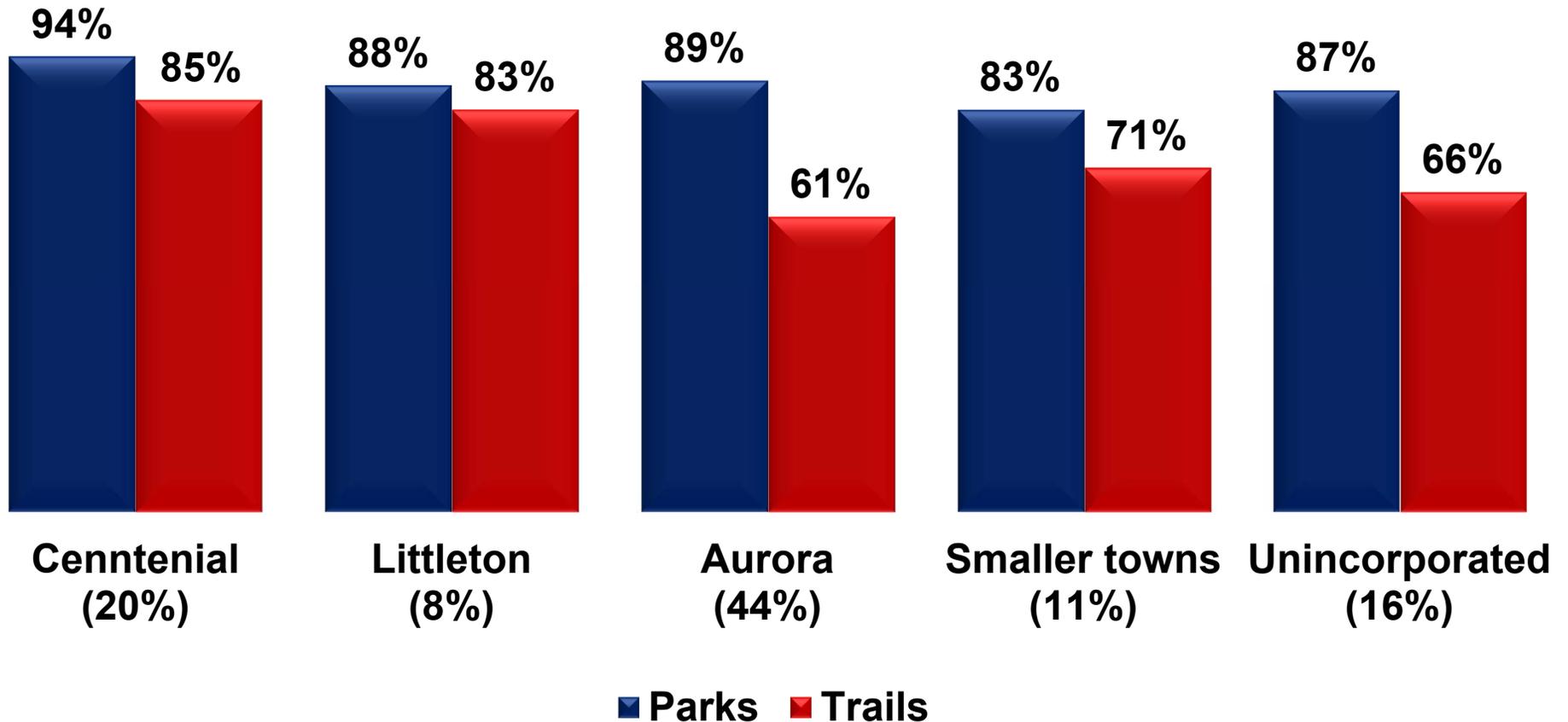
Frequency of Use of Parks and Recreation



Thinking back over the past year, please tell me if you or another member of your household have done any of the following activities in your local area. How frequently—at least weekly, at least monthly, or less often than that?

Use of parks and trails does vary by geography.

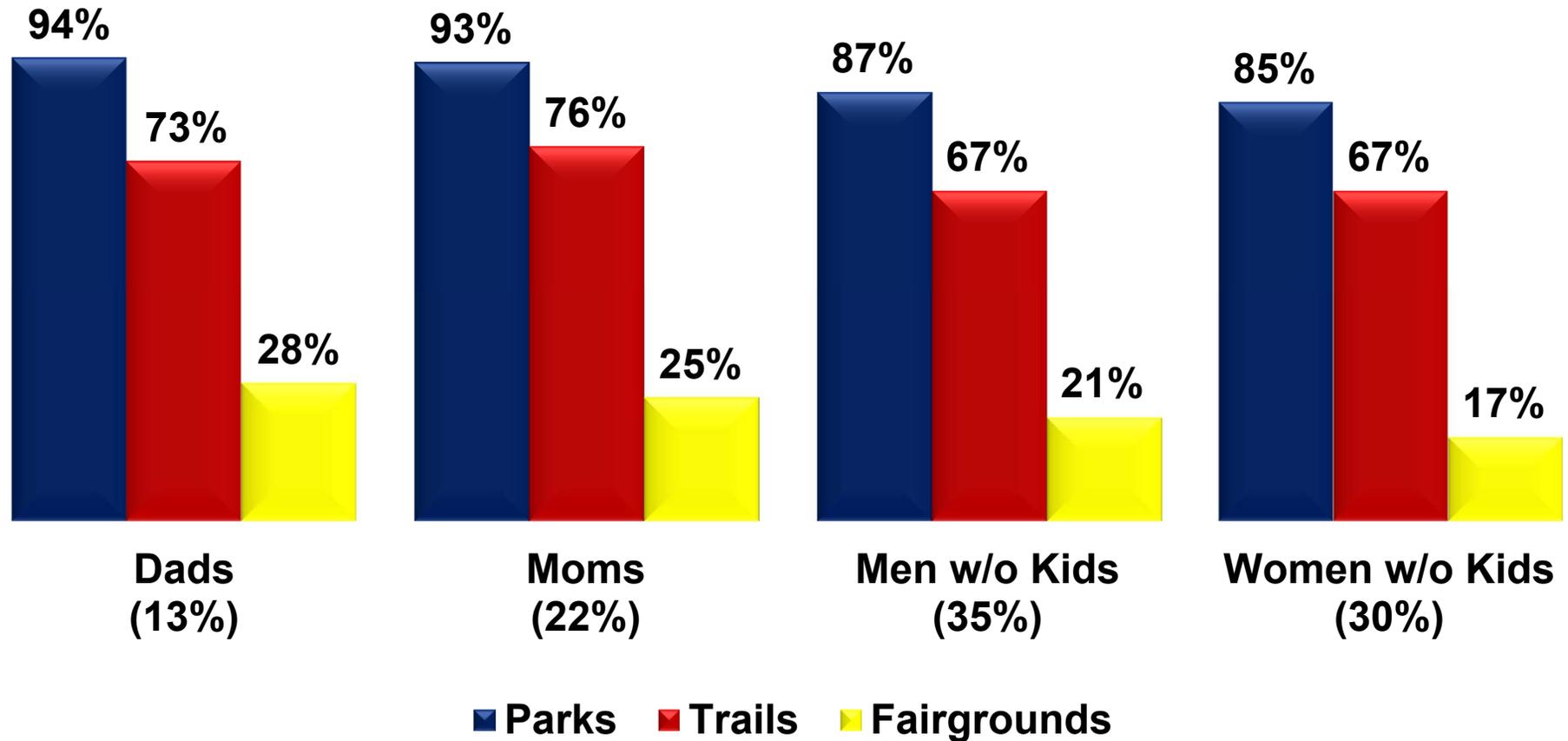
Use by City



Thinking back over the past year, please tell me if you or another member of your household have done any of the following activities in your local area. How frequently—at least weekly, at least monthly, or less often than that?

Parents are a bit more likely to have utilized these amenities than those without children at home.

Use by Parental Status



Thinking back over the past year, please tell me if you or another member of your household have done any of the following activities in your local area. How frequently—at least weekly, at least monthly, or less often than that?



OPEN SPACE, TRAILS AND PARKS PROPOSAL

Respondents were split into two representative halves of the overall sample and asked about the following funding extension proposal. Half heard “without raising taxes” as a preliminary phrase, while the other half did not.

Without raising additional taxes, shall the existing one-quarter of one percent Arapahoe County sales and use tax, or 25 cents for every 100 dollars, which will not be collected on sales of food or prescriptions drugs, be extended for the same purpose to:

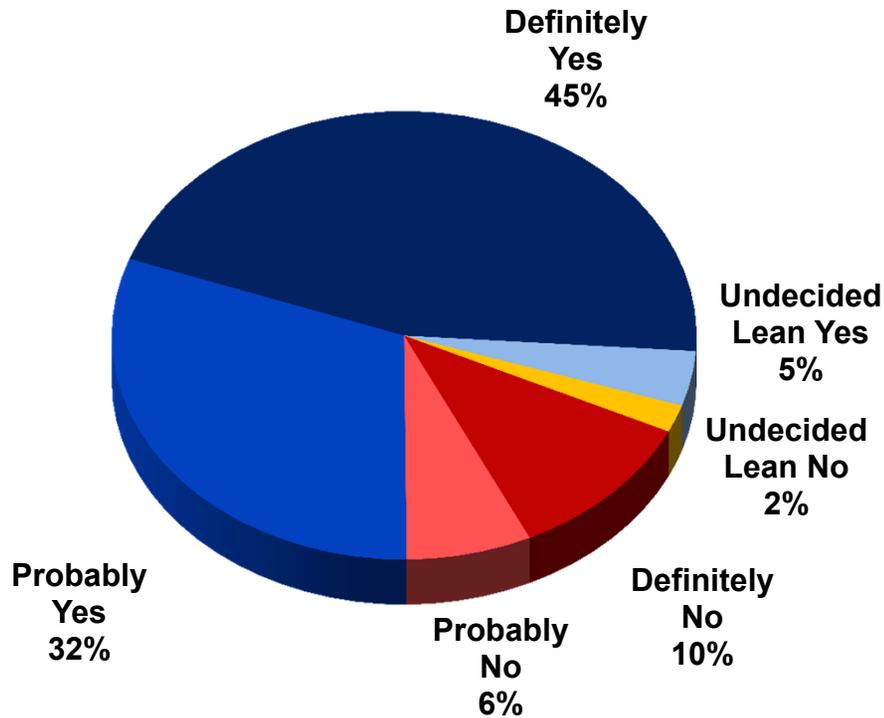
- Preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas;
- Protect lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lakes and streams;
- Provide, maintain and improve neighborhood and regional parks, open space, sports fields, picnic facilities, and biking, walking and multi-use trails;
- Protect wildlife habitat and corridors;
- Protect views, vistas and ridgelines;
- Preserve agricultural and ranch lands; and
- Enhance and maintaining designated heritage areas

With the requirements that the county's program expenditures for projects and grants will first be submitted to a citizen advisory board for a recommendation to the county commissioners; and that the county program will be subject to an annual independent audit, and continuing these funds as a voter approved revenue change, the above constituting no significant changes to the program, except allowing no more than four percent be used for administration and program operations?

There is statistically no distinction in residents' response to the proposal, with or without this phrase.

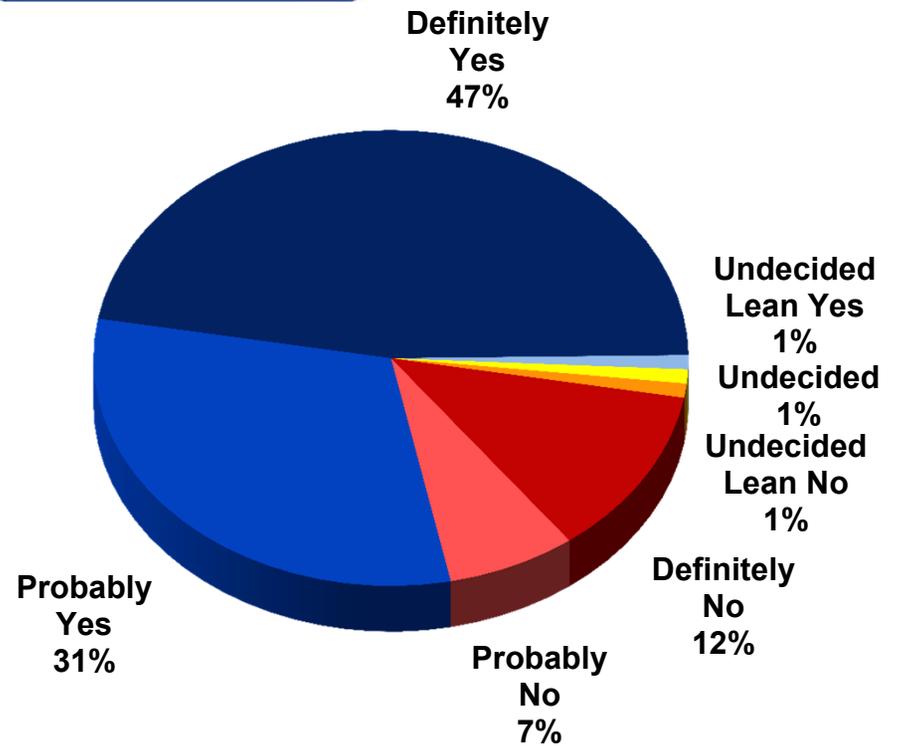
“Without Raising Taxes”

Total Yes 77%
Total No 17%^



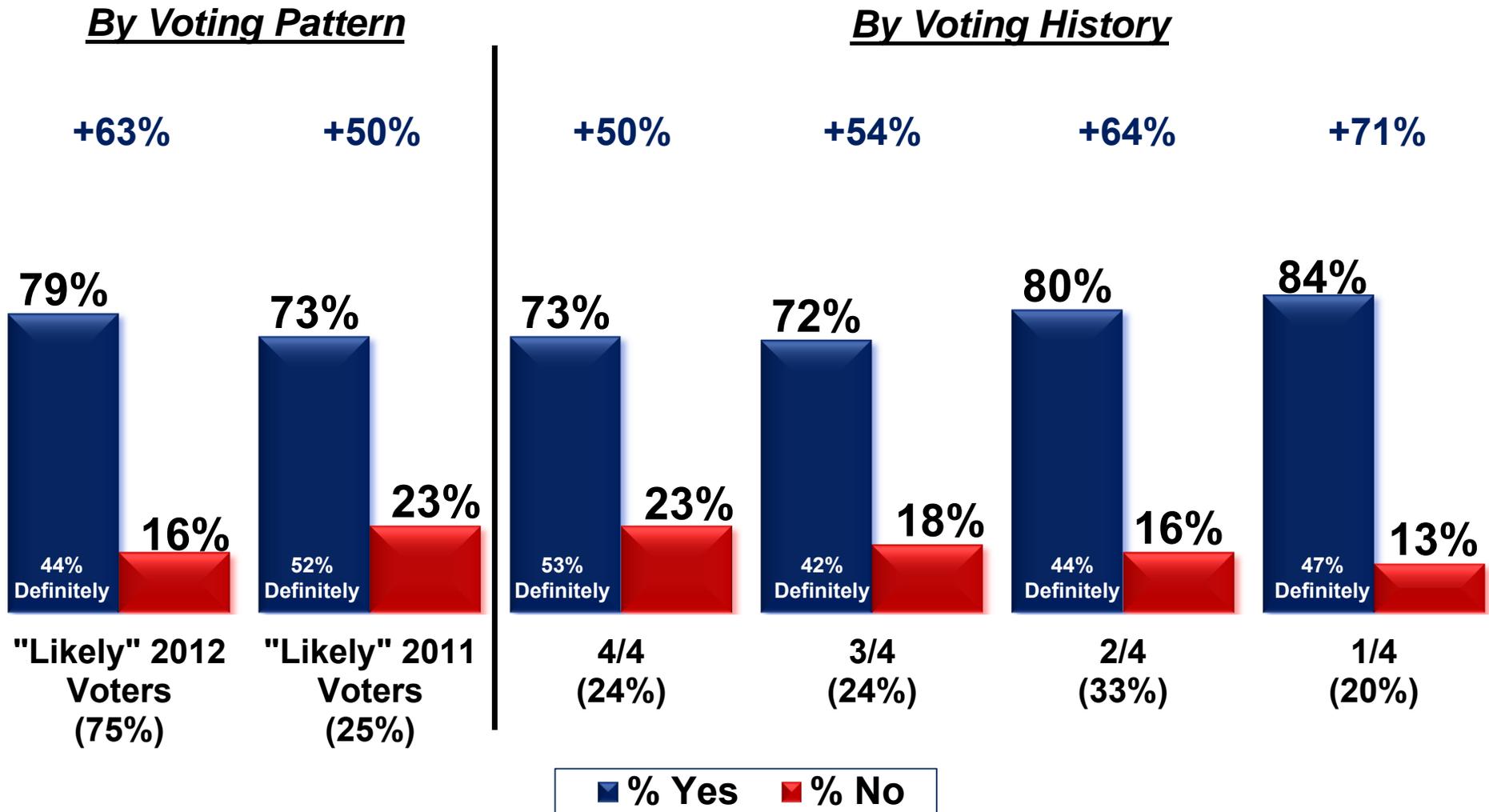
Plain Language

Total Yes 78%
Total No 19%



^ Denotes Rounding

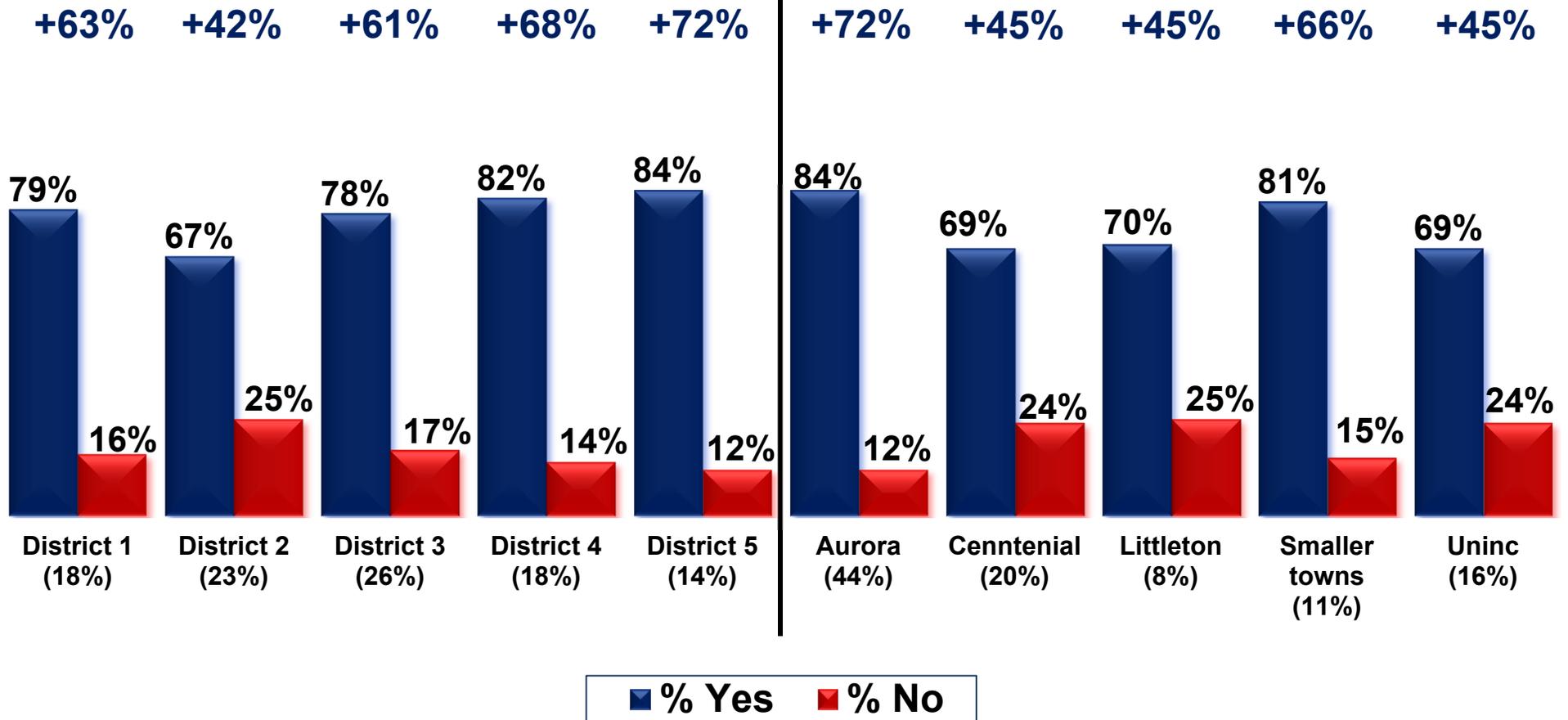
There is not a dramatic distinction between those who have participated in generally lower turn-out “off-year” elections like 2011 and those who participate in even year elections.



Support is strong throughout the county.

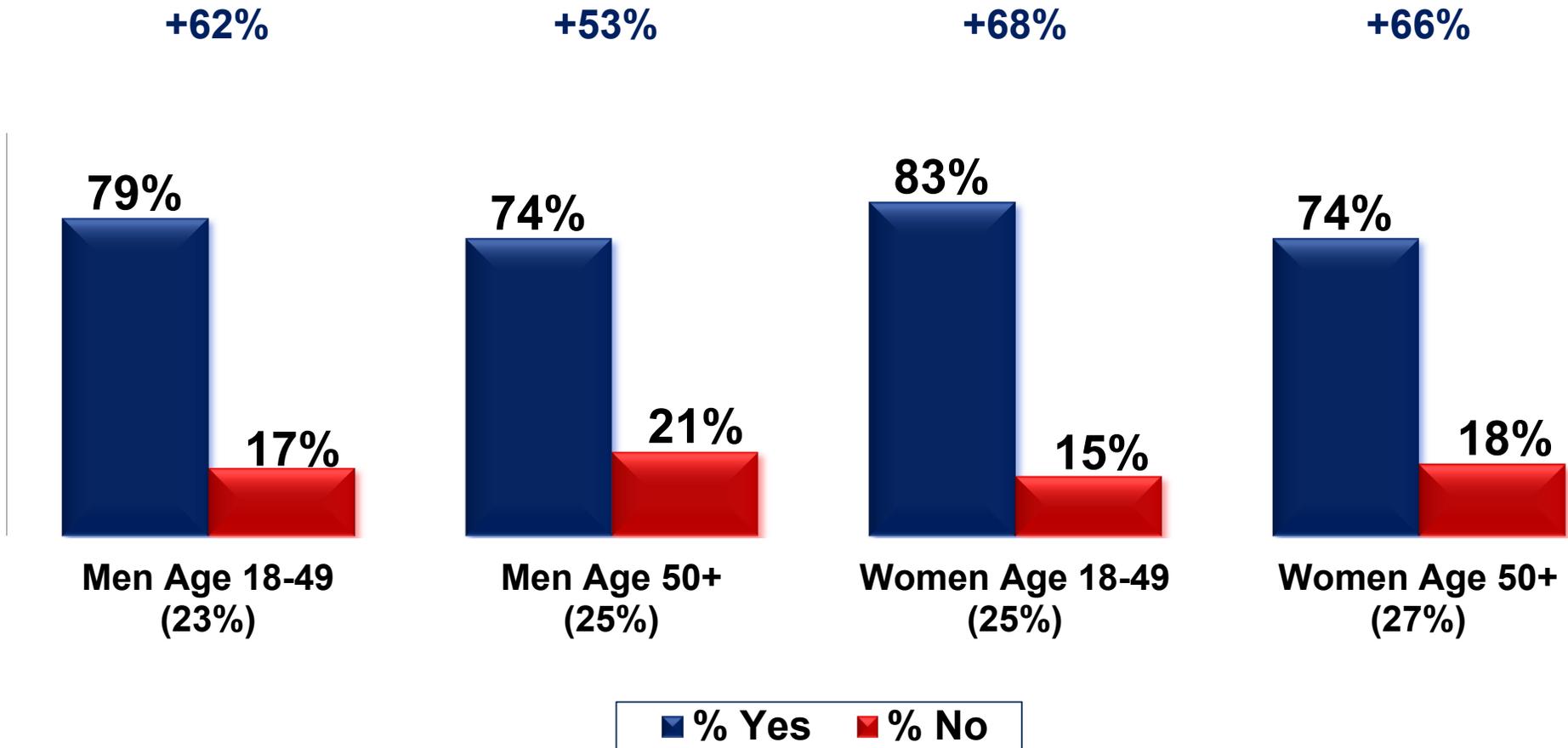
By District

By City



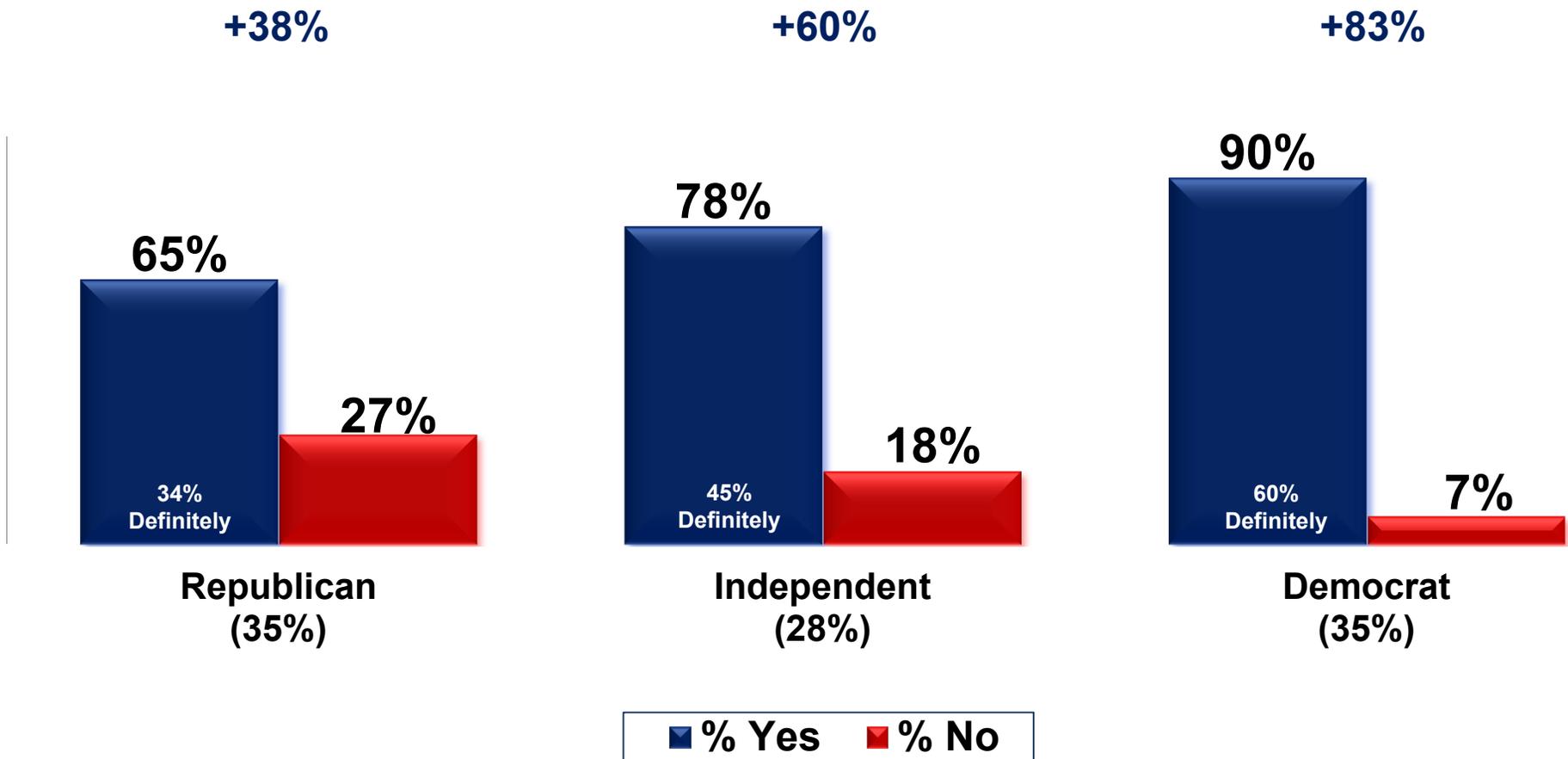
Younger women are one of the most supportive sub-groups in the county.

By Gender/Age



There is a relationship between party and support for the proposal.

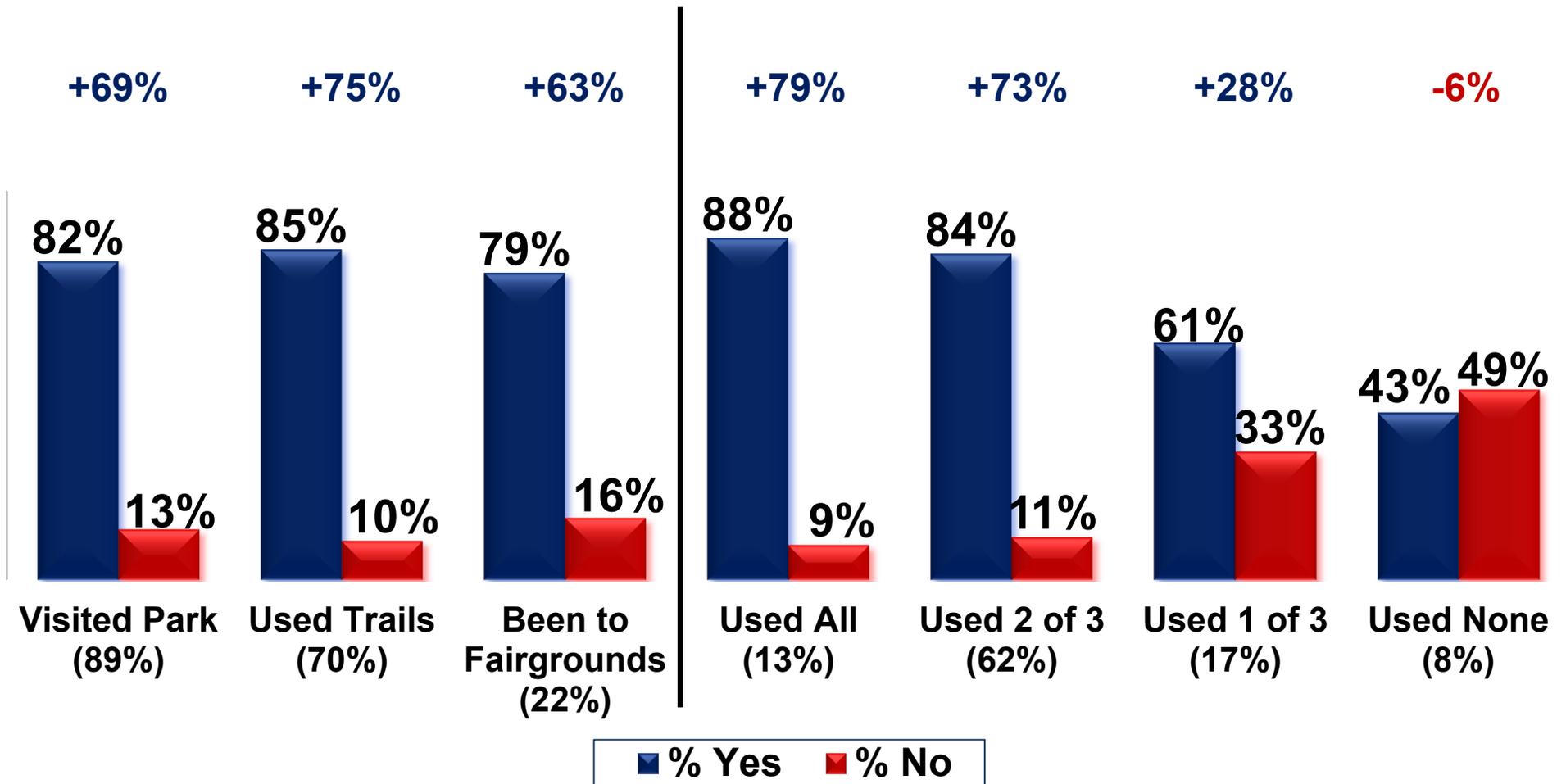
By Party



Predictably those who use these amenities are more likely to support extending funding for them.

By Amenity

By Activity Level



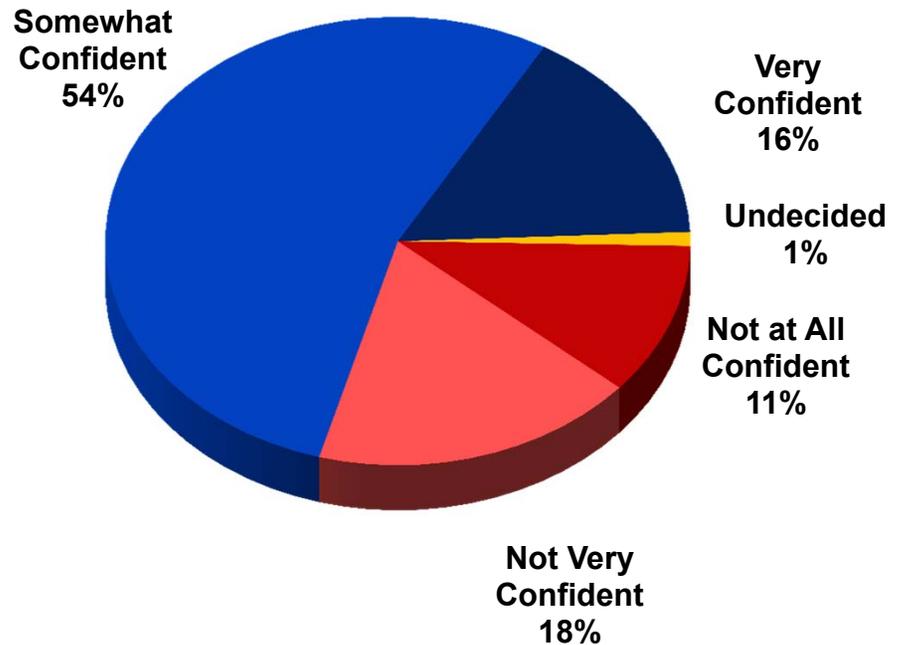
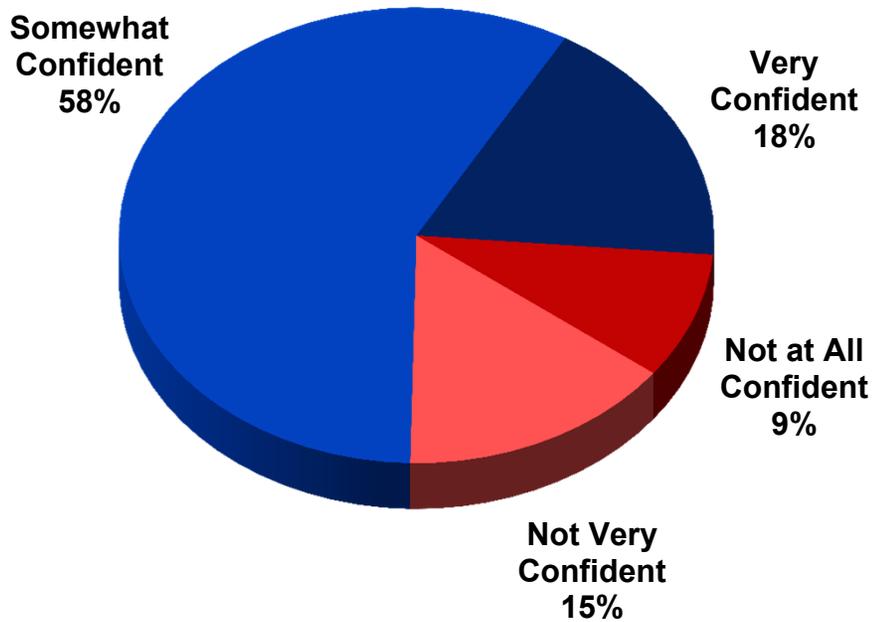
Residents are generally confident that taxpayer funds from this proposal will be used wisely, and do not differentiate dramatically between county and municipal governments.

County Government

City or Town Government

Total Confident 76%
Total Not Confident 23%^

Total Confident 70%
Total Not Confident 29%



^ Denotes Rounding

**Responses Split Sampled. County Government, N=195 / City or Town Government, N=205*

*How confident would you say you are that your **county/city or town government** would handle this taxpayer money wisely?*

There are a number of provisions in the measure which inspire greater confidence and support for the proposal.

Ranked by % Much More Likely

Require that funds are used solely for parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities, and cannot be used for any other purpose.



Conduct an annual independent audit and make it available to the public.



Base funding priorities on the recommendations of a local citizens committee.



Distribute funds throughout the county, by allocating fifty percent of the revenue collected to city and town governments to help provide, improve and maintain parks, trails, and natural areas.

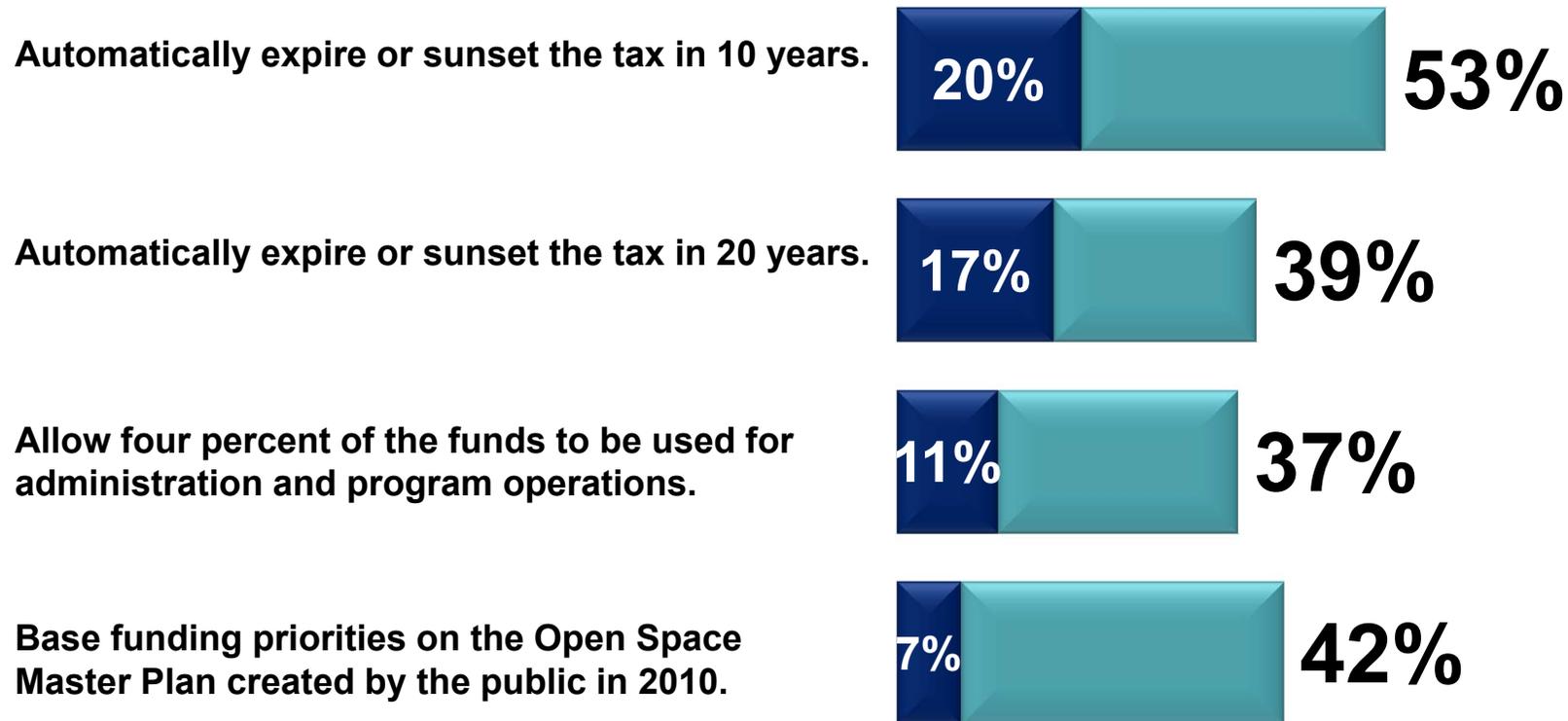


■ % Much More Likely ■ % Somewhat More Likely

For each one, please indicate whether you would be more likely to vote Yes in favor of the measure, less likely to vote Yes or whether it makes no difference at all in how you would vote on this measure.

The initial language tested did not include a sunset and residents indicate that its inclusion would not dramatically increase their support.

Ranked by % Much More Likely



■ % Much More Likely ■ % Somewhat More Likely

For each one, please indicate whether you would be more likely to vote Yes in favor of the measure, less likely to vote Yes or whether it makes no difference at all in how you would vote on this measure.



FUNDING PRIORITIES

Protecting natural areas, open space, lands that preserve water quality and neighborhood parks are all deemed very important to residents.

	<u><i>% Extremely Important</i></u>	<u><i>% Total Extremely/Very Important</i></u>
Protecting lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lakes and streams.	29%	79%
Protecting our quality of life.	23%	76%
Preserving natural areas.	18%	74%
Providing, maintaining and improving neighborhood parks.	14%	73%
Maintaining trails, such as the Cherry Creek trail, Mary Carter Greenway, and along the Highline Canal.	20%	65%
Providing, maintaining and improving biking, walking and multi-use trails.	21%	64%
Preserving urban and rural open space.	15%	62%
Providing access to natural areas for disabled residents, including such things as a handicap accessible fishing pier and playgrounds.	16%	62%
Protecting wildlife habitat and corridors.	13%	62%

Now, I am going to read you a list of projects that could be funded if voters approve this measure. As I read each one, please tell me how important it is to you personally that each one be funded: Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you?

Many elements of funding evident in the eastern portions of the country – working farms, forests, prairies, and historic sites – fall into a second tier.

	<u>% Extremely Important</u>	<u>% Total Extremely/Very Important</u>
Preserving remaining forest land in the county.	16%	61%
Providing, maintaining and improving regional parks.	9%	60%
Improving water conservation and energy efficiency and lighting at parks, nature centers and ball fields.	21%	58%
Enhancing and maintaining historic sites.	10%	55%
Providing safety improvements at trails and parks.	12%	55%
Providing, maintaining and improving playgrounds.	12%	54%
Protecting working farms and ranches.	9%	52%
Preserving native prairies.	9%	49%

Now, I am going to read you a list of projects that could be funded if voters approve this measure. As I read each one, please tell me how important it is to you personally that each one be funded: Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you?

These projects fall into a lower tier as fewer residents deem them to be “very important.”

	<u><i>% Extremely Important</i></u>	<u><i>% Total Extremely/Very Important</i></u>
Connecting trails throughout the county, such as the Cherry Creek trail, Mary Carter Greenway, and along the Highline Canal.	11%	46%
Improving parks with such things as additional restrooms and covered picnic areas.	6%	42%
Providing, maintaining and improving sports fields.	6%	41%
Maintaining and connecting trails along the South Platte River.	11%	41%
Protecting views, vistas and ridgelines.	10%	38%
Preserving lands that separate communities.	7%	36%
Providing swimming beaches and waterparks.	6%	34%
Providing, maintaining and improving picnic facilities.	4%	31%
Maintaining the Arapahoe County fairgrounds and regional park.	6%	31%
Providing fishing areas.	6%	30%
Creating new dog parks.	3%	18%

Now, I am going to read you a list of projects that could be funded if voters approve this measure. As I read each one, please tell me how important it is to you personally that each one be funded: Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you?

Some important distinctions can be drawn based on residents' responses. For example, neighborhood parks are perceived as more important than regional parks.

% Total Extremely/Very Important

Providing, maintaining and improving **neighborhood** parks

73%

Providing, maintaining and improving **regional** parks.

60%

Maintaining trails, such as the Cherry Creek trail, Mary Carter Greenway, and along the Highline Canal.

65%

Connecting trails throughout the county, such as the Cherry Creek trail, Mary Carter Greenway, and along the Highline Canal.

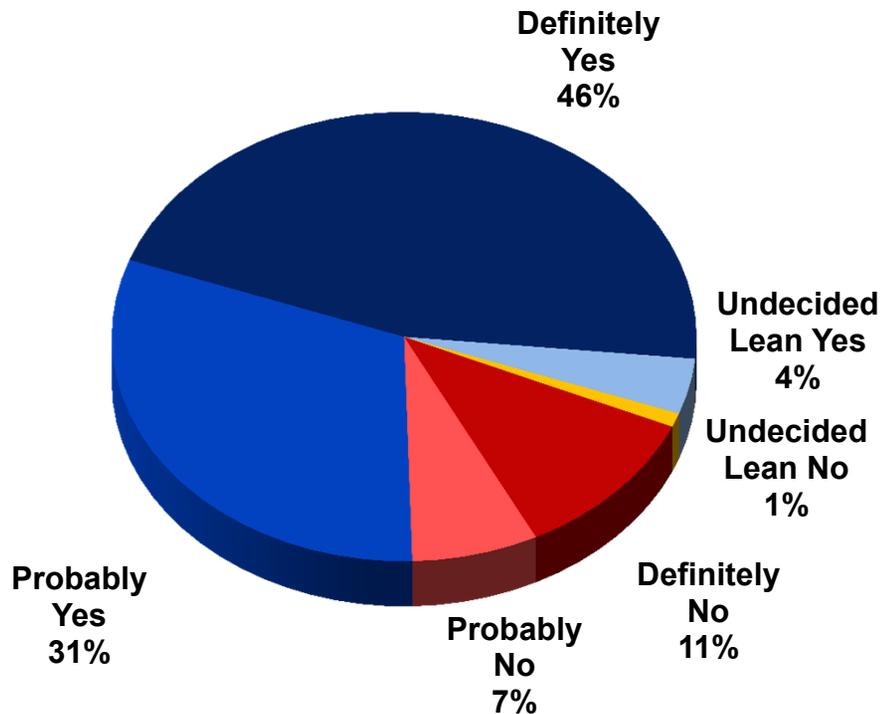
46%

Now, I am going to read you a list of projects that could be funded if voters approve this measure. As I read each one, please tell me how important it is to you personally that each one be funded: Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not important to you?

Intensity of support increases after respondents hear more on both sides of the issue.

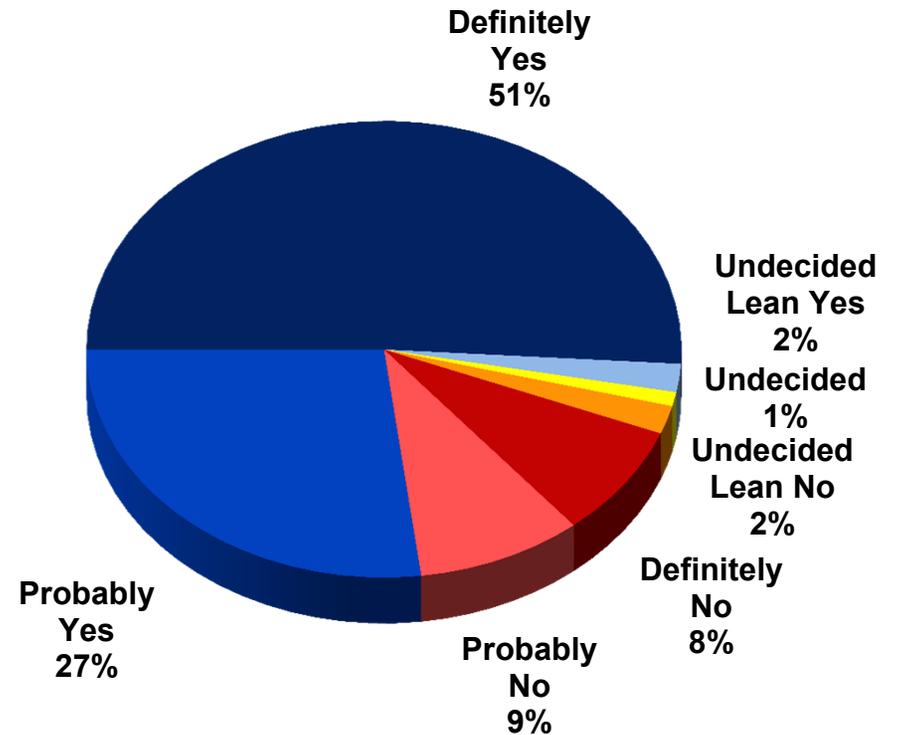
Initial

Total Yes 77%
Total No 18%^



Informed

Total Yes 78%^
Total No 17%



[^] Denotes Rounding



CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions



The measure to extend the current .25% sales and use tax for open space, parks, trails and other uses is positioned very well for November 2011 ballot. Support is strong based on the ballot language tested in the survey; is broad-based and wide-spread; and is even stronger among those who utilize these amenities in the county.

Residents who hear more about the measure demonstrate even more intense support, indicating the value that a clear and strong communications effort by an eventual campaign could bring to this effort.



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