



Parcel Tax Feasibility Study for Davis Joint USD *Follow-Up Poll*

Telephone Survey of Likely November Voters
Presented to the DJUSD Board of Education
June 2, 2016



MARKET
& OPINION
RESEARCH
SERVICES



DJUSD
DAVIS JOINT UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Methodology

- ▶ Telephone survey of Likely November 2016 Voters in the Davis Joint Unified School District
- ▶ Survey conducted May 15-22, 2016
- ▶ 400 completed interviews; Margin of Error: ± 4.90 percentage points
- ▶ Where applicable, data compared to previous surveys:
 - EMC Research Telephone survey; April 6-17, 2016
 - EMC Research Telephone survey; June 18-21, 2008

Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

Project Purpose

- ▶ The primary goal of this research was to identify the level of support for a proposed \$960 parcel tax on the November 2016 ballot to support an increase in programming.

Key Findings

- ▶ This follow-up survey provides further evidence that voters in the Davis JUSD community believe that the District is doing a very good job providing a high quality education for local students.
- ▶ Initial support for a \$960 parcel tax measure for the schools falls well short of the two-thirds threshold needed for passage, unlike in the earlier study that showed strong support for a \$620 measure.
- ▶ As in the earlier survey, support among key subgroups such as older voters and high-propensity voters is significantly lower than the overall support level. With the higher dollar amount, however, support is also low among a wider audience including district parents.
- ▶ Since many voters are unaware that they are currently paying a parcel tax, any measure may be risky as it appears to be a significant tax increase. However, given strong support for the schools, a November 2016 measure is feasible if it is reasonably priced.



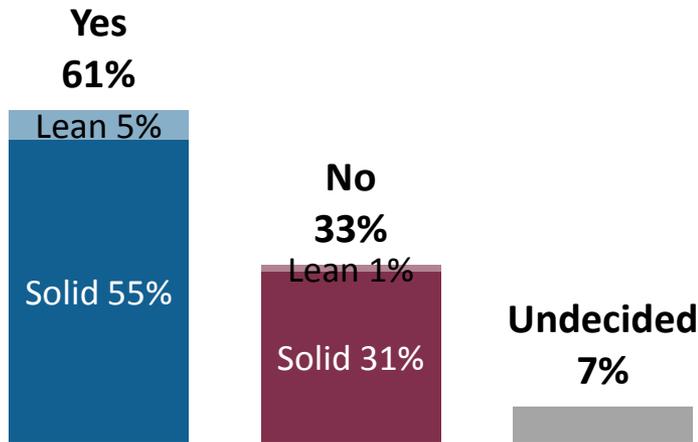
Parcel Tax Measure

Initial Parcel Tax Measure Vote

Initial support for a \$960/parcel measure is below the two-thirds passage threshold.

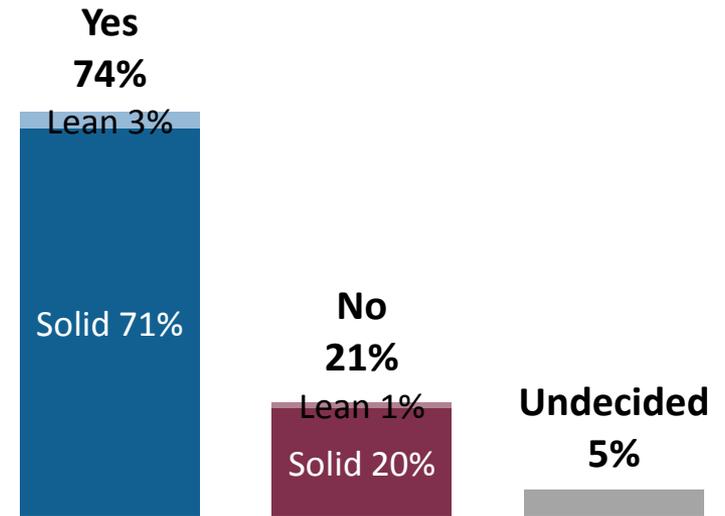
IMPROVE programs, \$960/parcel

To provide outstanding academic programs in math, science, reading and writing, and close the achievement gap by providing more support for struggling students, high-quality teachers, additional literacy and math specialists, innovative science programs and improved art and music, shall Davis Joint Unified School District replace its existing school parcel taxes at the rate of \$960 per parcel for eight years, raising approximately \$14.4M per year for Davis schools, with citizens oversight, annual audits and an exemption available for seniors?



MAINTAN programs, \$620/ parcel

To maintain outstanding academic programs in math, science, reading and writing; retain high-quality teachers; keep class sizes small; support student health and safety; and maintain student athletics, arts and music programs, shall Davis Joint Unified School District replace its expiring school parcel taxes at the 2017-18 rate of \$620 per parcel for 8 years, raising approximately \$9.5 million per year to be used exclusively for Davis schools, with citizens' oversight, annual audits and an exemption available for seniors?

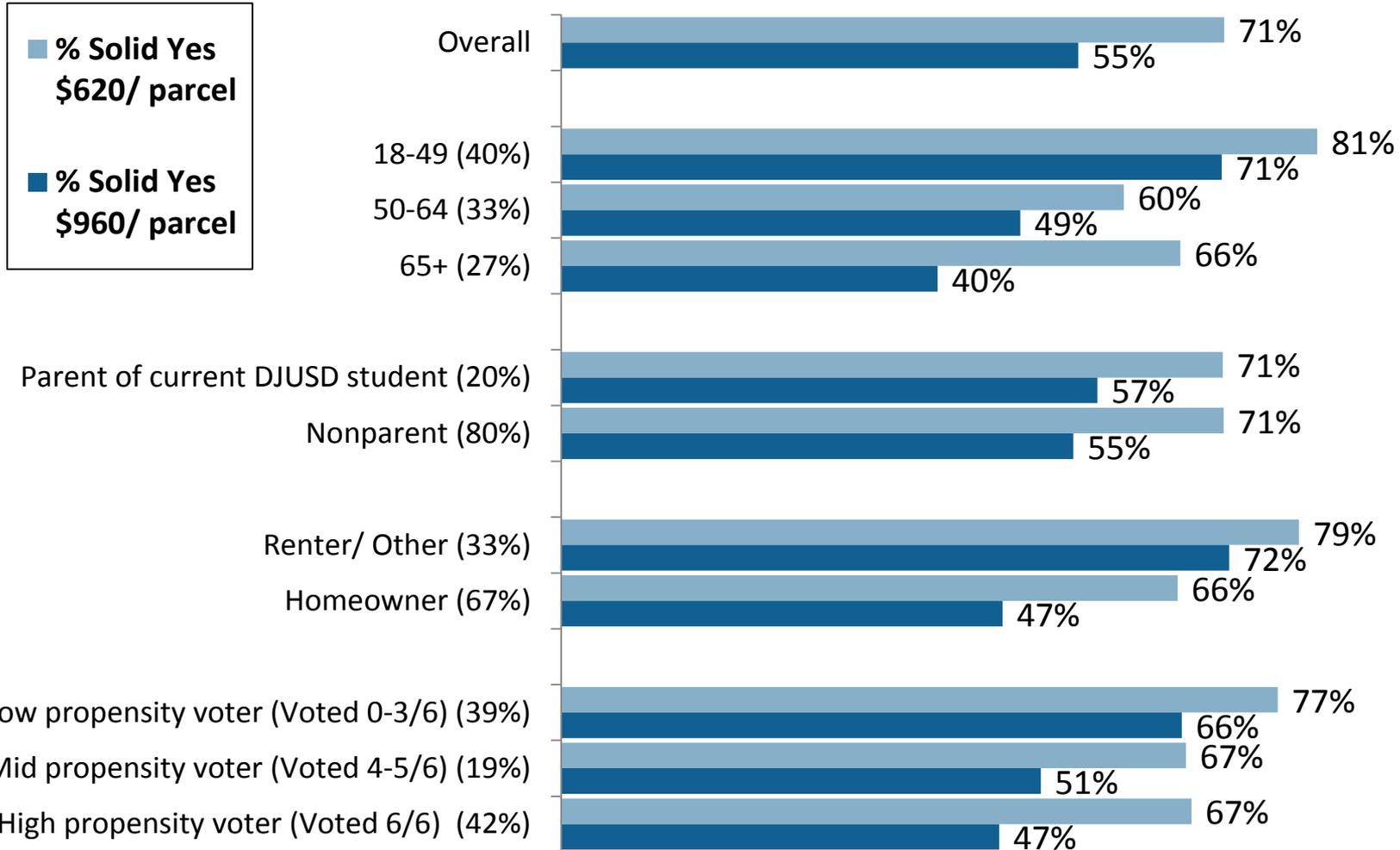


Q10. If the election were held today, would you vote yes to approve this measure or no to reject it?



Parcel Tax Measure Initial Support, by Subgroup

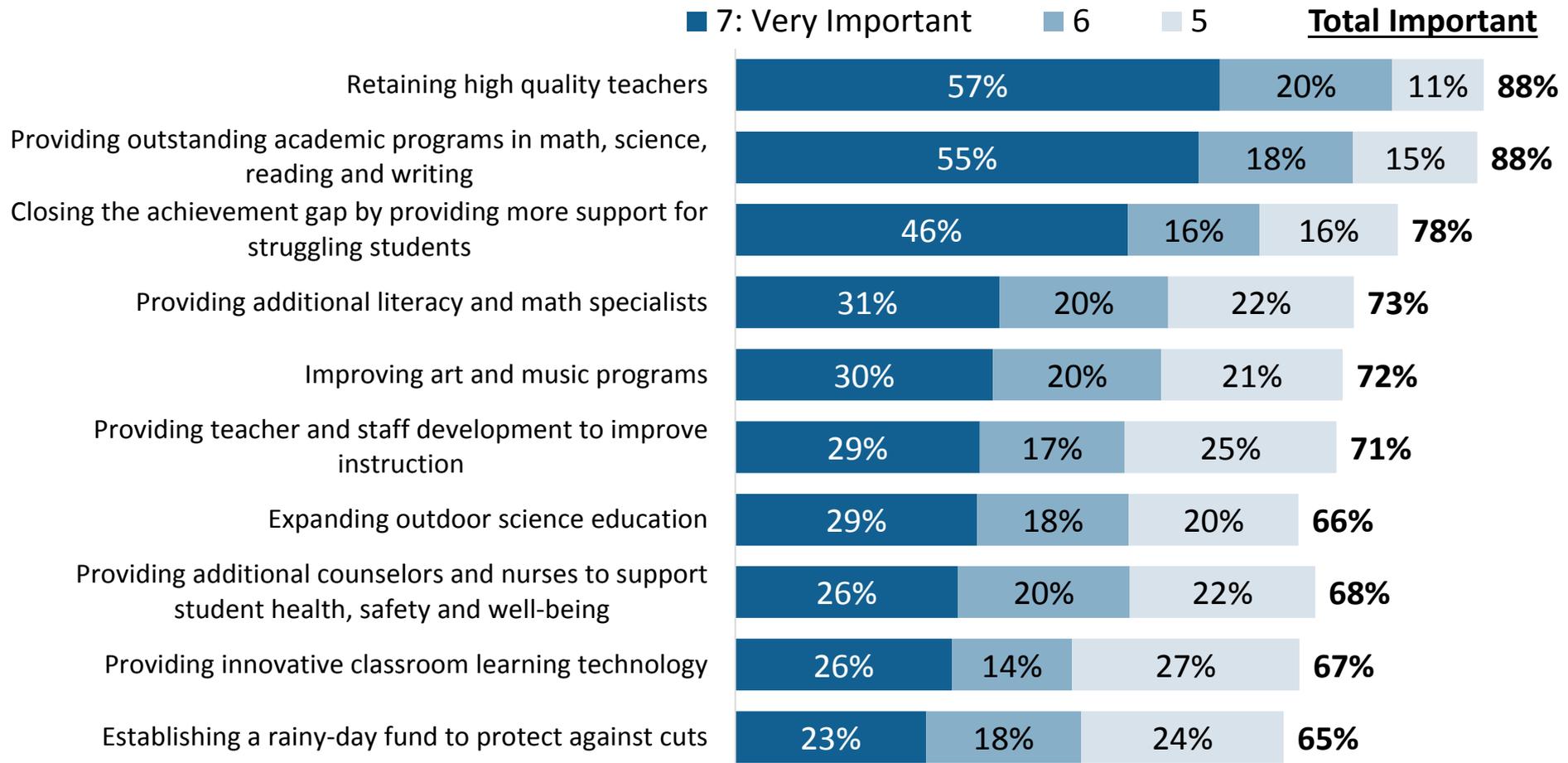
Support for the \$960 amount fails to surpass the two thirds passage threshold in key groups that supported the \$620 parcel amount.



Q10. If the election were held today, would you vote yes to approve this measure or no to reject it?

Parcel Tax Components

Voters continue to find retaining high quality teachers, outstanding academics and support for struggling students to be very important priorities; other elements are important but with less intensity



Q11-Q20: I'm going to read you a list of specific programs and components that could be part of the Davis Joint Unified School District parcel tax measure. On a scale of one to seven, where one is not important at all and seven is very important, please tell me how important each of the projects is to you.

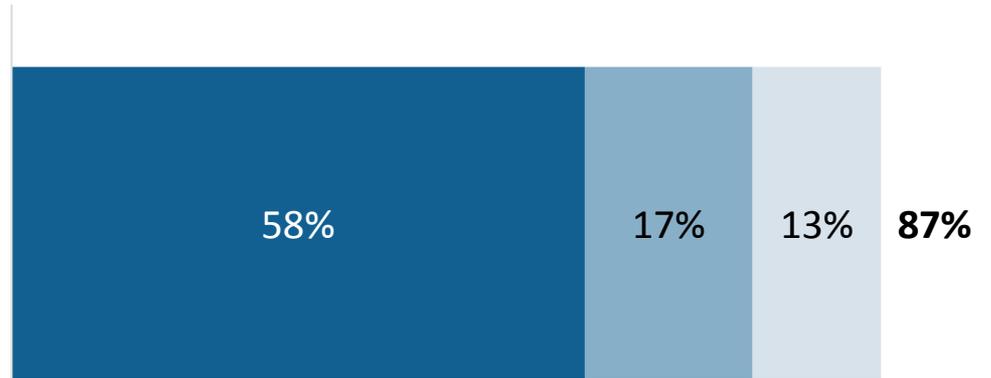


Measure Components Comparison: Struggling Students

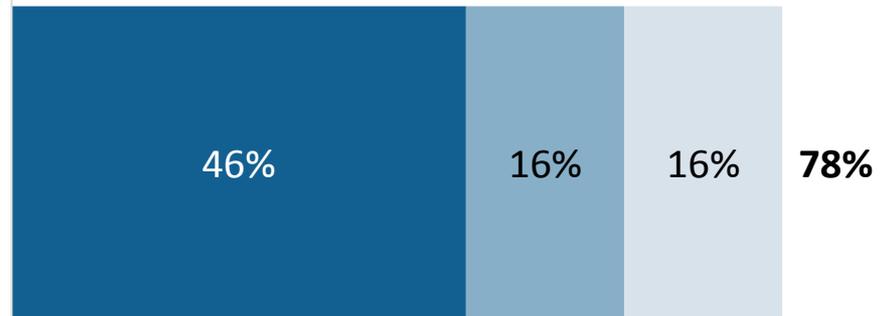
There is a substantial difference in the intensity of importance ratings between the language tested in the two polls.

■ 7: Very Important ■ 6 ■ 5 **Total Important**

Providing support for struggling students
(\$620 measure)

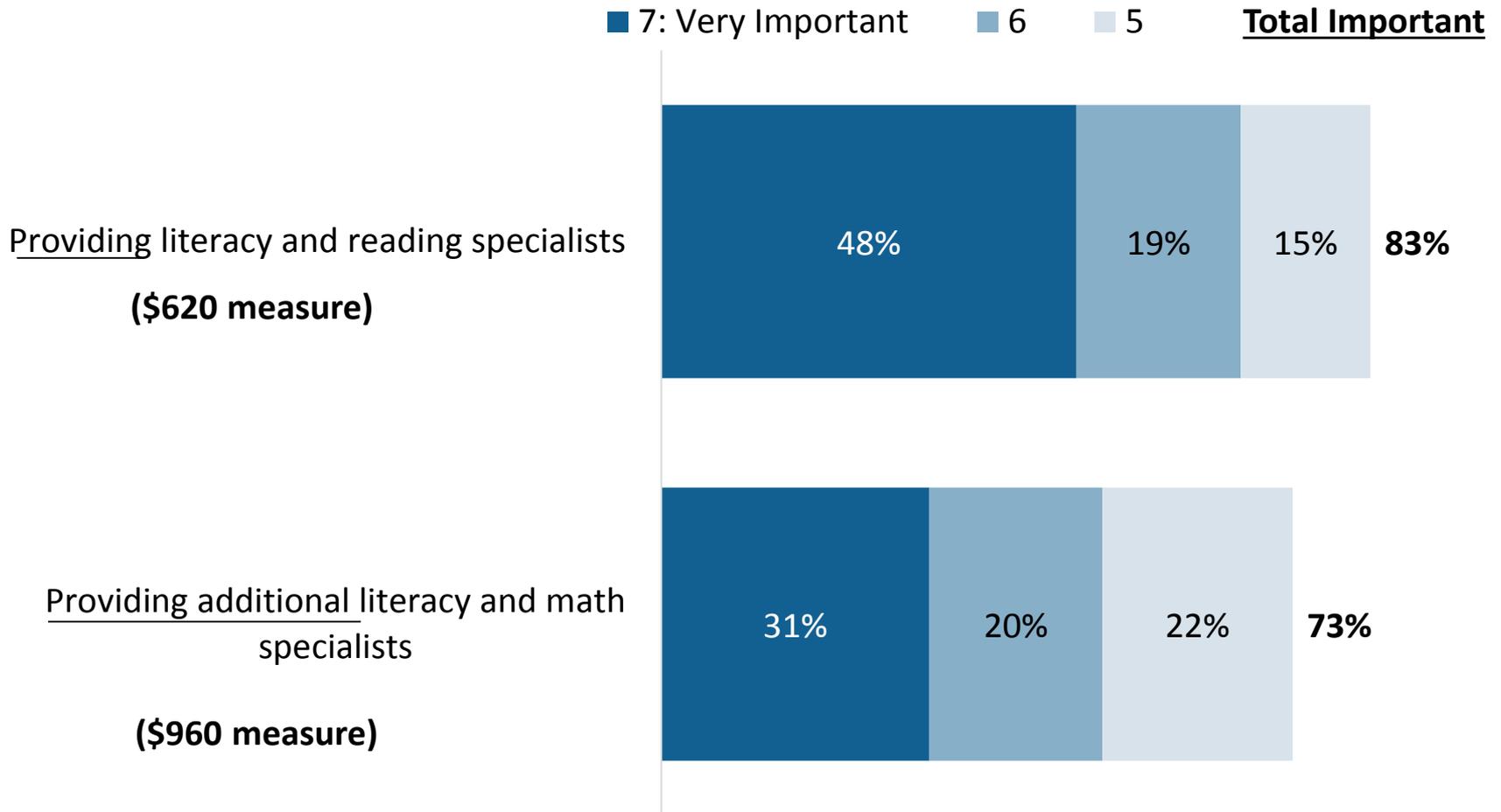


Closing the achievement gap by providing more support for struggling students
(\$960 measure)



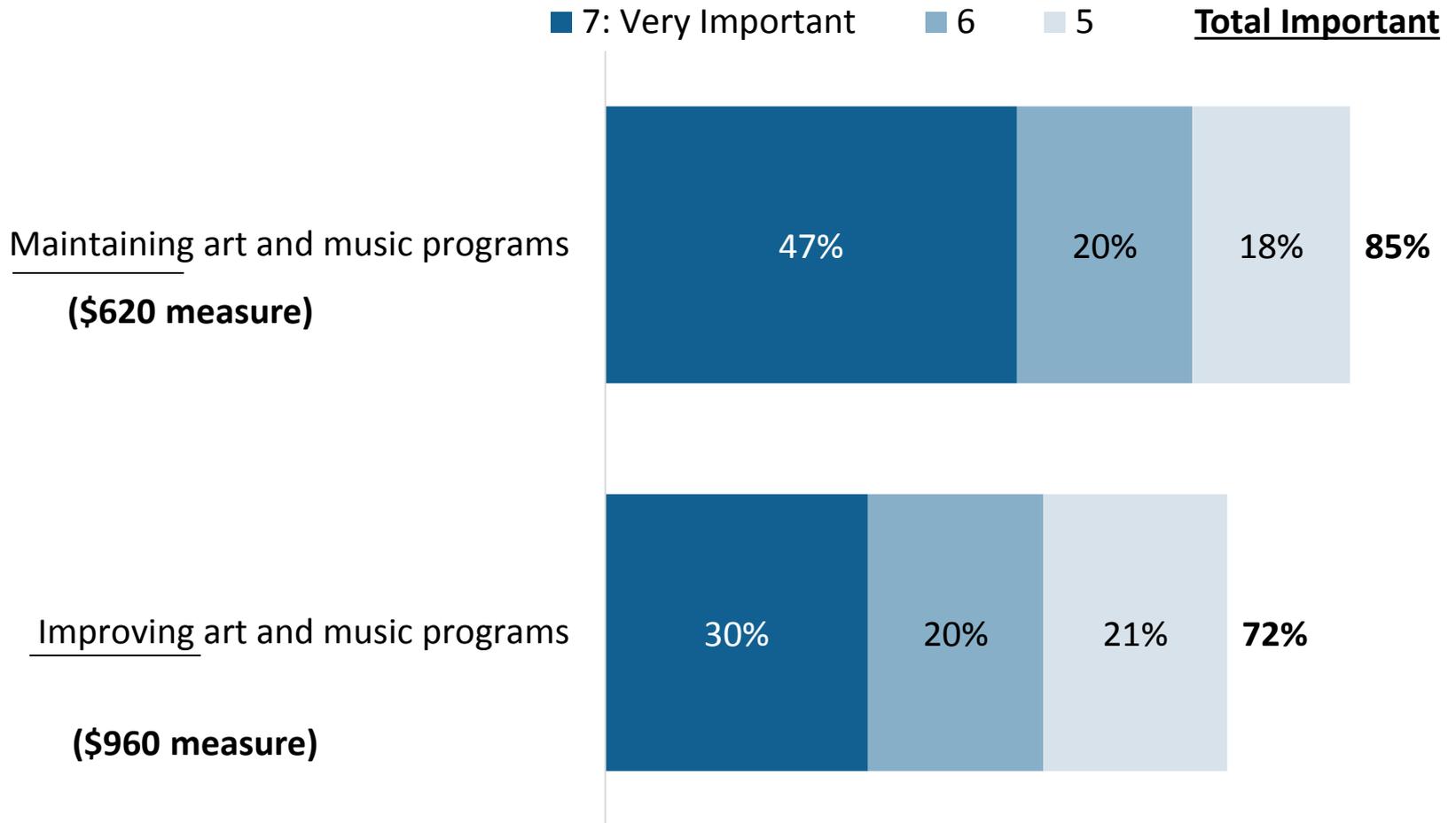
Measure Components Comparison: Providing Specialists

The addition of the word “additional” may have impacted importance ratings, although the change from “reading specialists” to “math specialists” may have also had an impact.



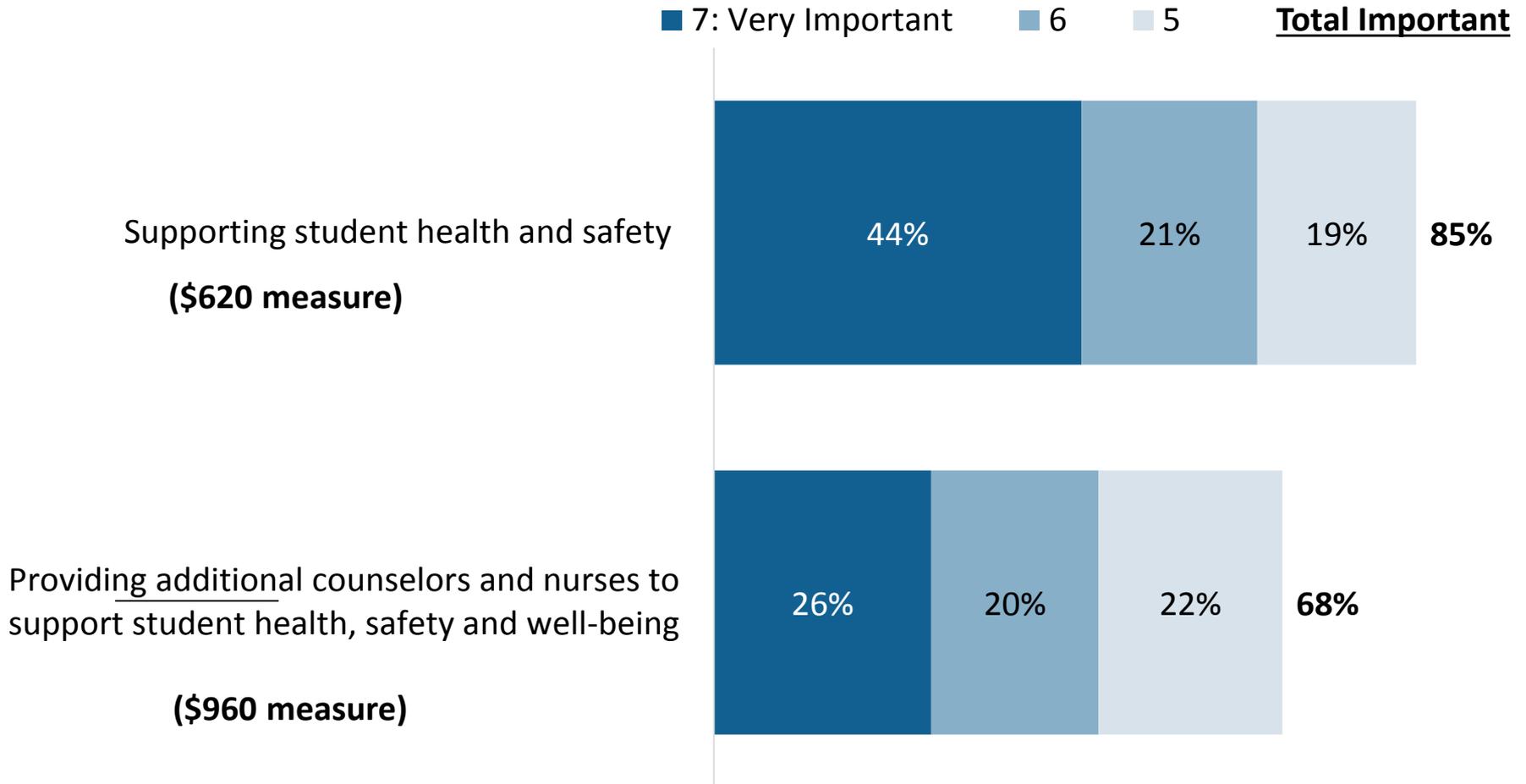
Measure Components Comparison: Arts and Music Programs

“Maintaining” appears to resonate stronger than “improving” art and music.



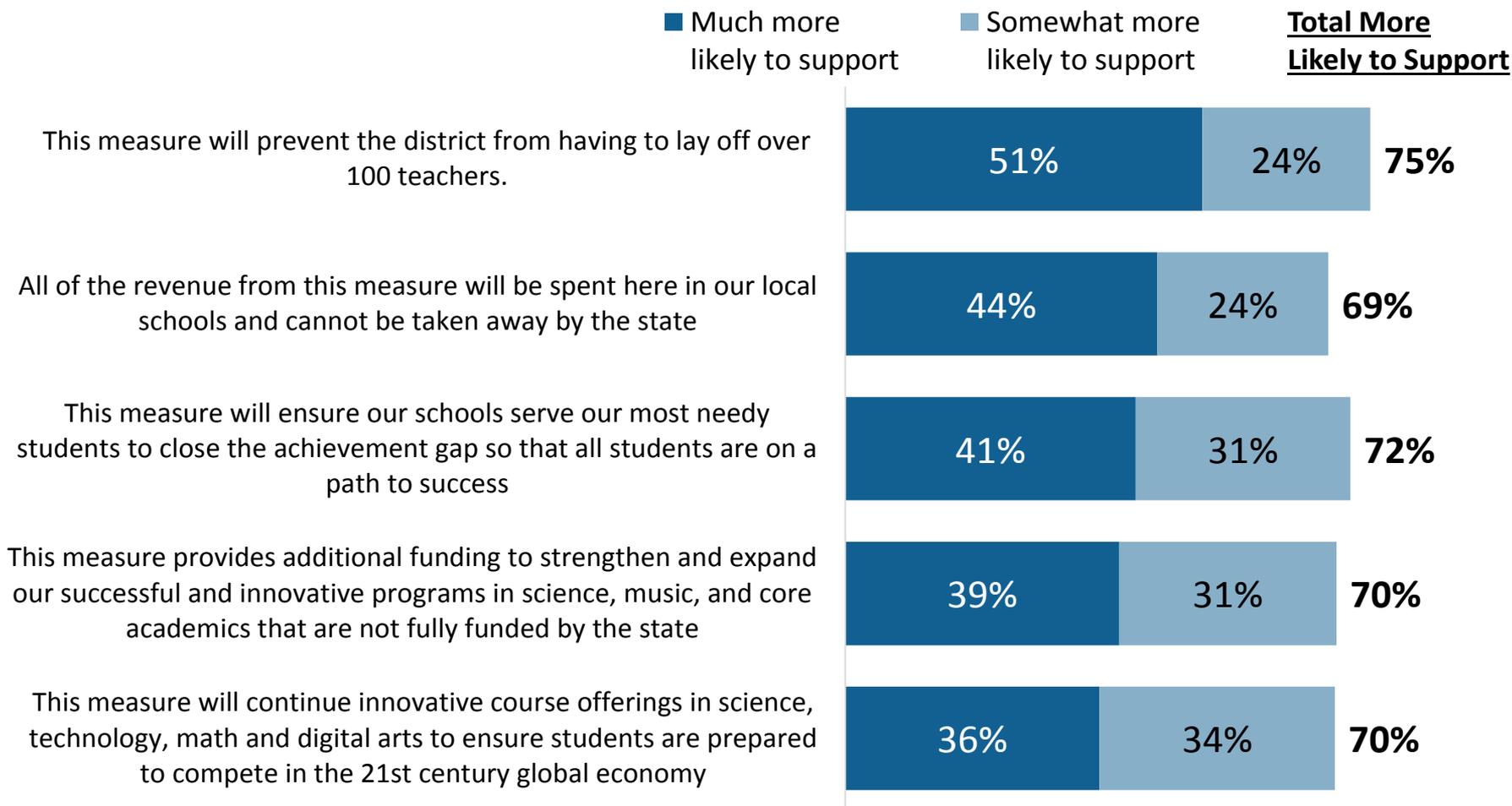
Measure Components Comparison: Student Health & Safety

The simpler language tested in the first poll garnered a stronger importance rating than more detailed “additional” language.



Top Support Statements

Preventing teacher layoffs, keeping all funding local and closing the achievement gap are compelling reasons to support the measure.



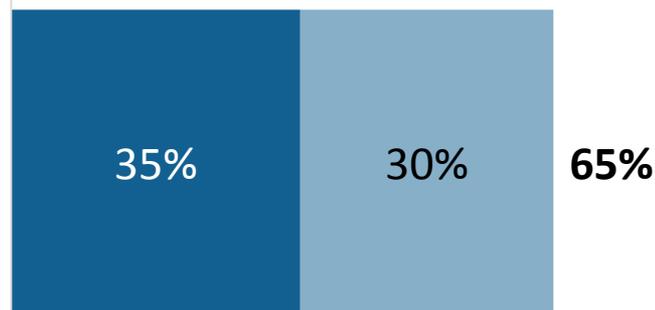
Q21-Q27: Now I'm going to read you some additional information about the proposed school parcel tax measure for Davis Joint Unified School District. After hearing each statement, please tell me if it makes you much more likely to the support the measure, somewhat more likely to support it, or if it makes no difference to you.

Additional Support Statements

Other messaging fails to move more than two-thirds.

■ Much more likely to support ■ Somewhat more likely to support **Total More Likely to Support**

The Davis community values education as a core element of our quality of life. This measure will strengthen programs in math, science, reading & writing to ensure our students get the top-rate education they deserve & that our community demands.



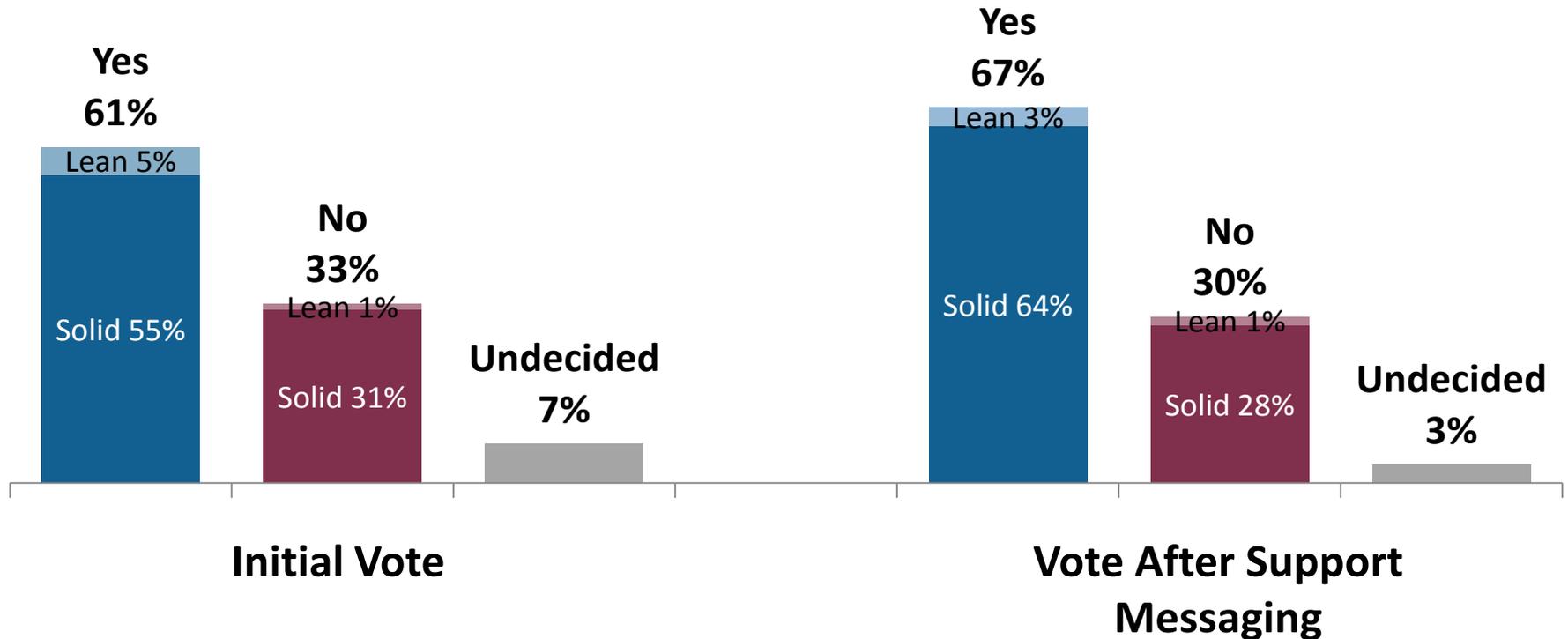
This measure will establish a portion of the budget as a rainy-day fund to protect our schools against damaging cuts in the face of uncertain education funding from the state



Q21-Q27: Now I'm going to read you some additional information about the proposed school parcel tax measure for Davis Joint Unified School District. After hearing each statement, please tell me if it makes you much more likely to the support the measure, somewhat more likely to support it, or if it makes no difference to you.

After Information: Parcel Tax Measure Vote

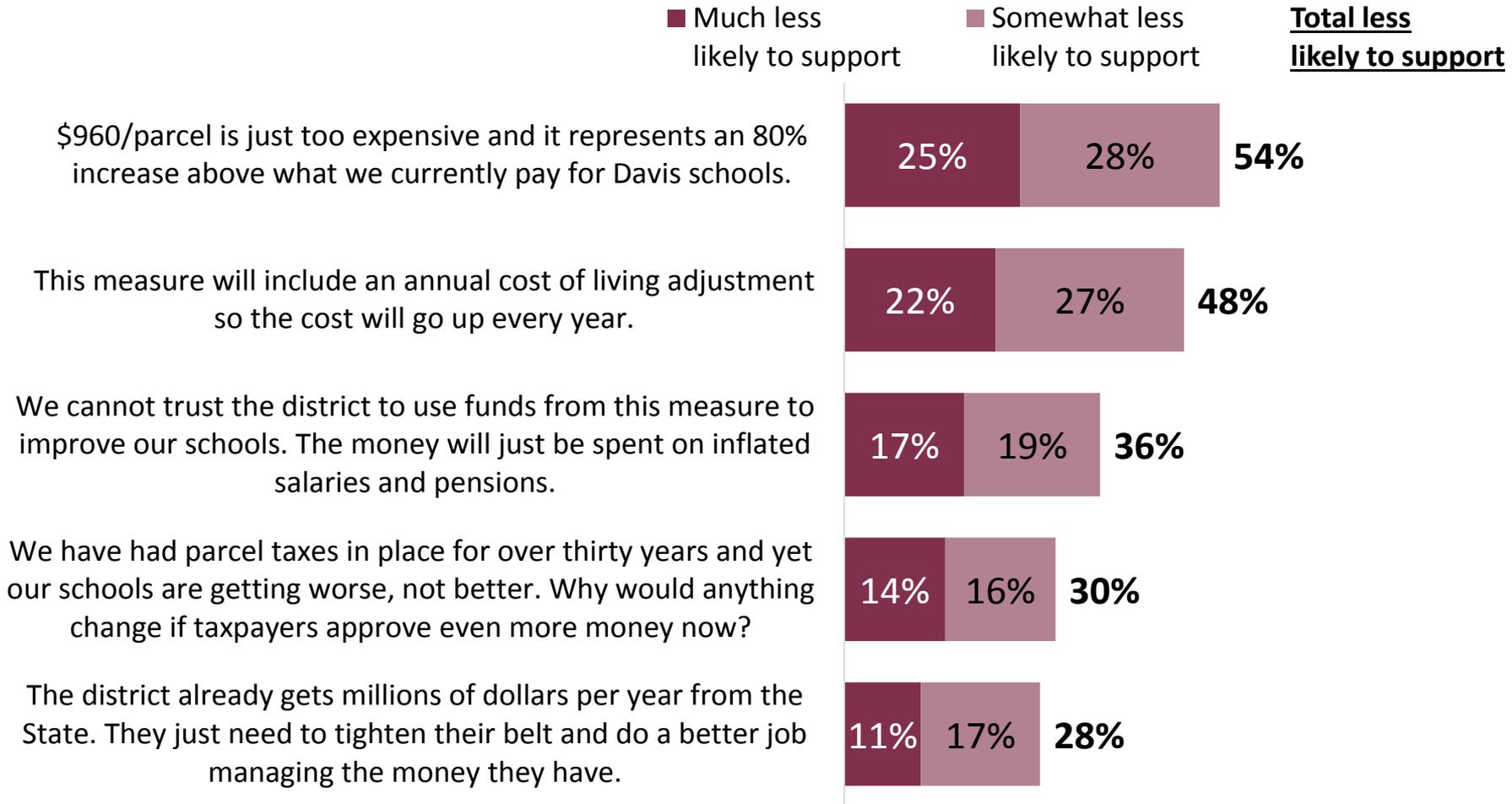
After positive messaging, support just barely reaches two-thirds, including the “soft” yes.



Q28: Given what you've heard, if the election were held today, would you vote yes to approve or no to reject a measure that reads

Opposition Statements

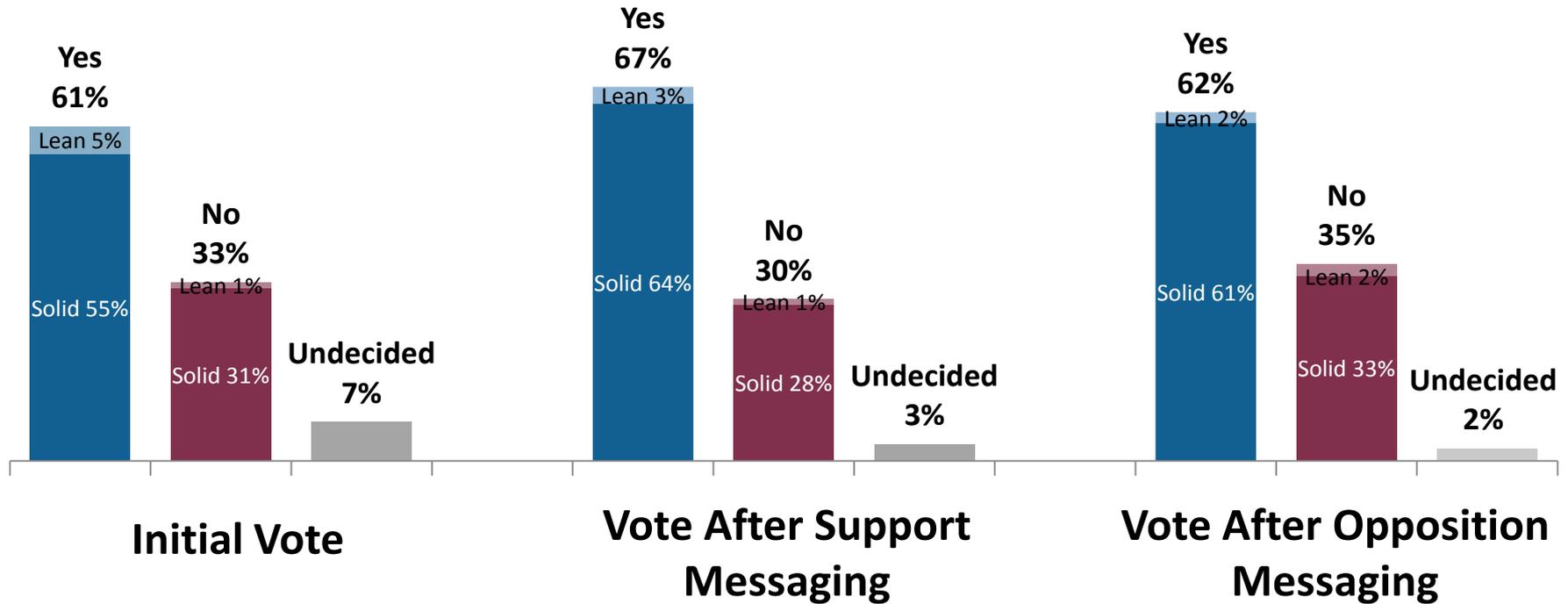
The amount of the proposed parcel tax makes more than half of the voters less likely to support the measure. Nearly half say the COLA makes them less likely to support the measure.



Q29-Q33: Now I'm going to read you some things that opponents of the proposed school parcel tax measure for Davis Joint Unified School District have said. After hearing each statement, please tell me if it makes you much less likely to the support the measure, somewhat less likely to support it, or if it makes no difference to you.

After Opposition: Parcel Tax Measure Vote

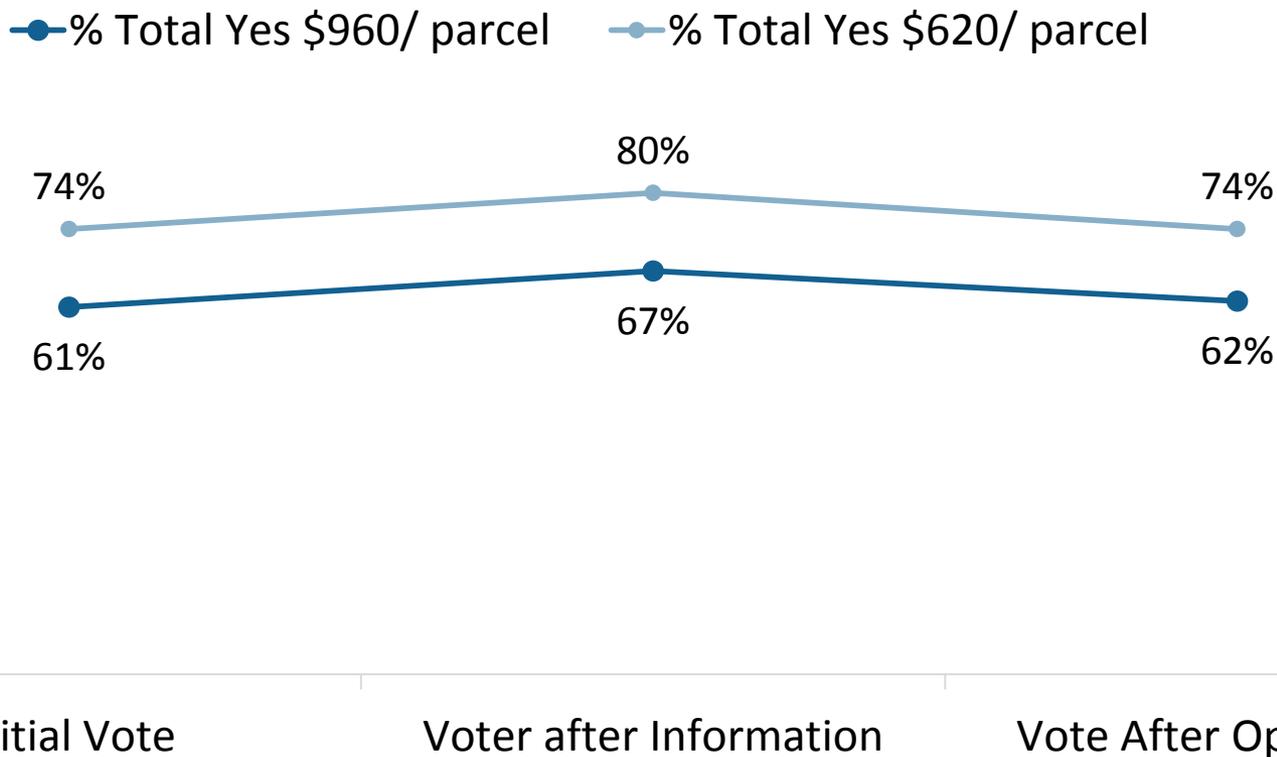
Support drops after opposition messaging.



Q34: Given everything you've heard, if the election were held today, would you vote yes to approve or no to reject the parcel tax measure for Davis Joint Unified School District?

Total Vote Progression: Tracked

Support for the \$620 parcel tax measure tested in April was consistently more than 10% higher than support for the \$960 measure tested in this poll.



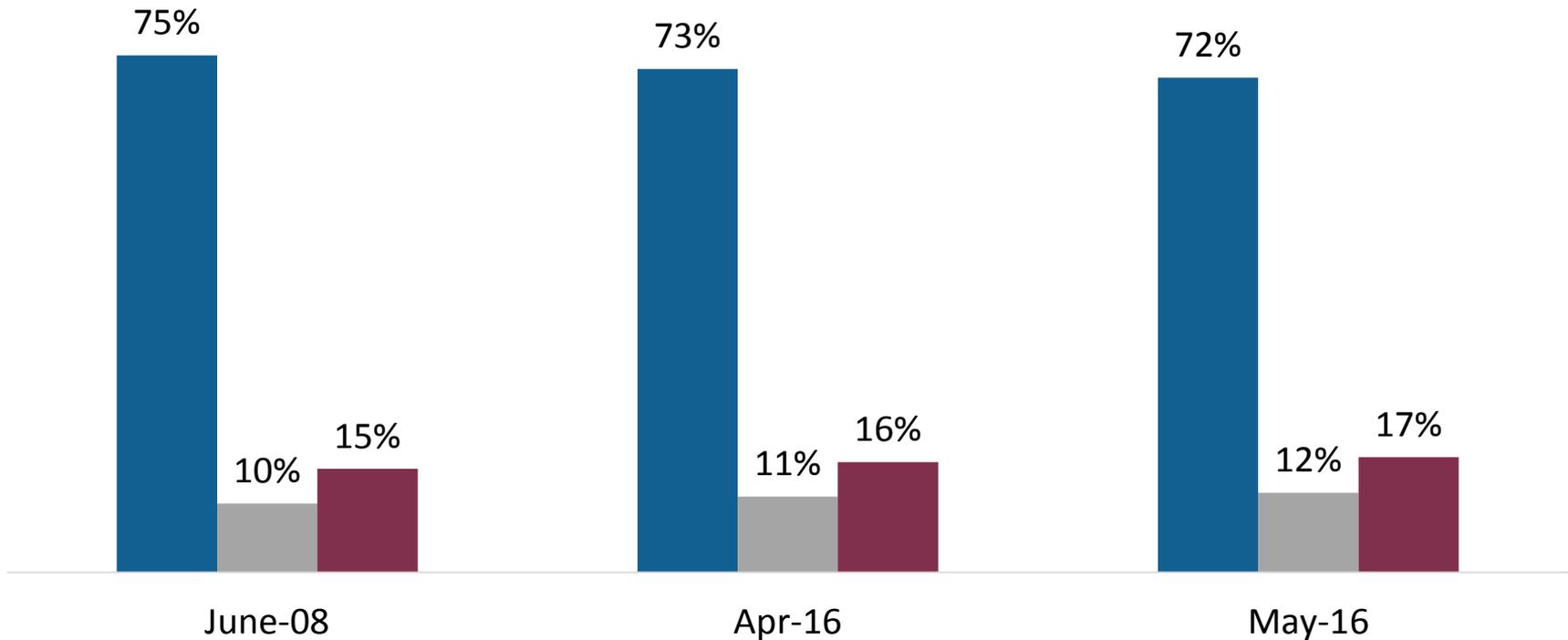


Issue Environment

Right Direction/Wrong Track: the Davis Area

Davis voters continue to feel optimistic.

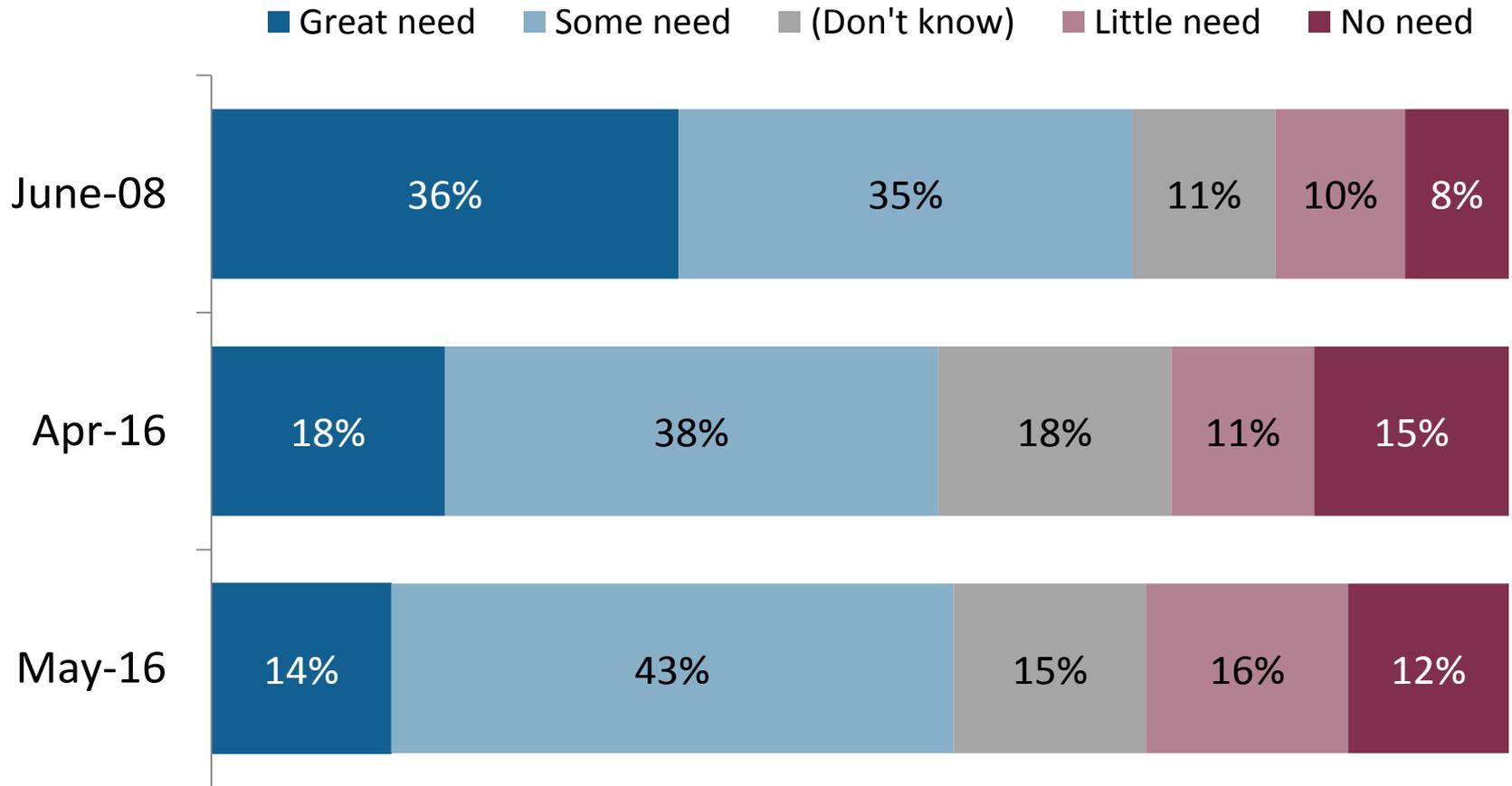
■ Right Direction ■ (Don't know) ■ Wrong Track



Q4. Do you think things here in Davis are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Davis JUSD Need for Funding

The perceived need for funding is fairly consistent with what we observed in the April survey.

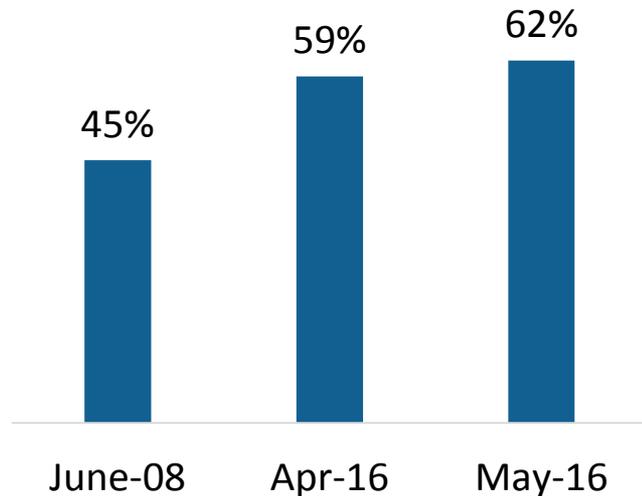


Awareness of Existing Tax

Consistent with the April survey, about 60% of voters are aware of current parcel tax(es) for Davis JUSD.

Is there, or is there not, a school parcel tax for Davis Joint Unified School District?

■ Yes, there is a parcel tax



Q6: As you may know, some school districts have a parcel tax in place and others do not. Is there, or is there not, a school parcel tax for Davis Joint Unified School District?

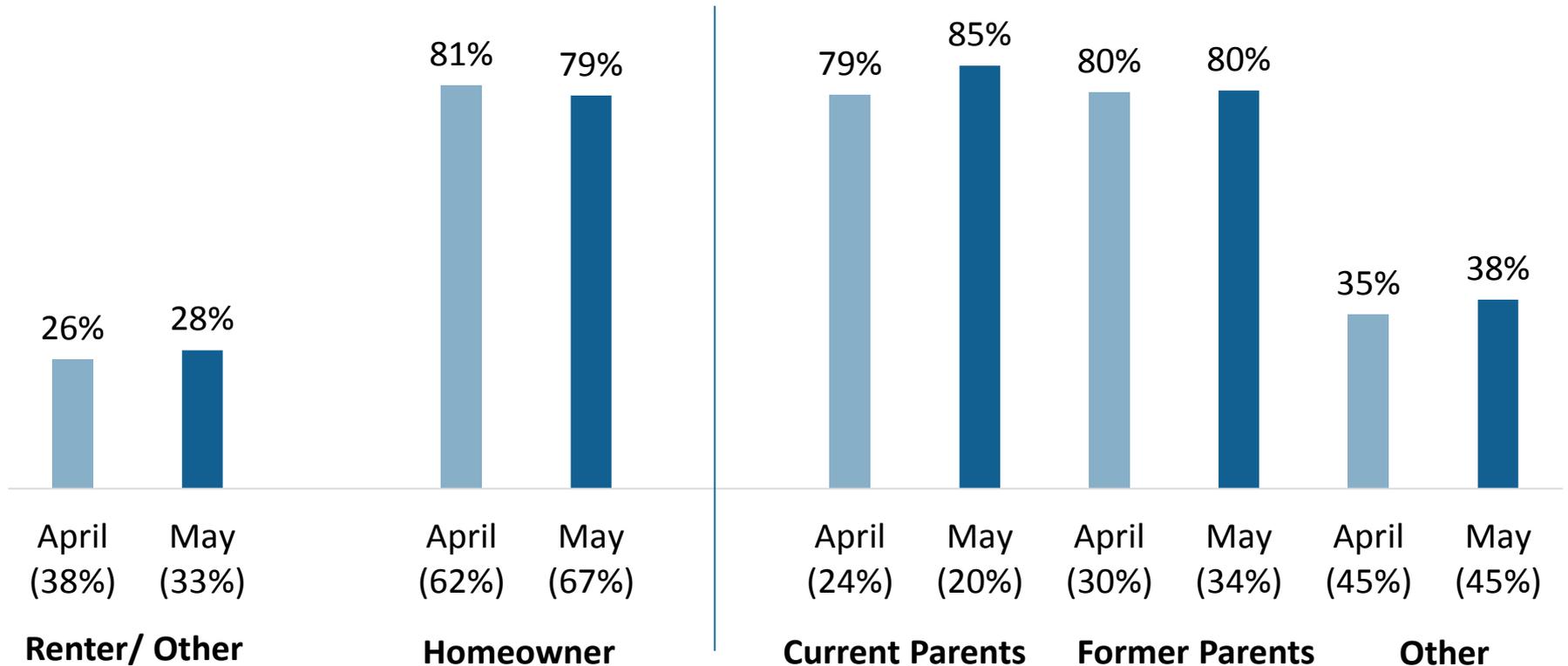
Q7: I know you may not know exactly, but approximately how much do Davis homeowners pay each year for the school parcel taxes?

Approximately how much do Davis homeowners pay each year for the school parcel taxes?

Amount	April -16	May -16
>\$200	7%	8%
\$201-\$400	8%	9%
\$401-\$700	7%	9%
\$700+	6%	6%
Don't know	31%	30%
Not aware of tax	42%	38%

Awareness of Existing Tax by Subgroup

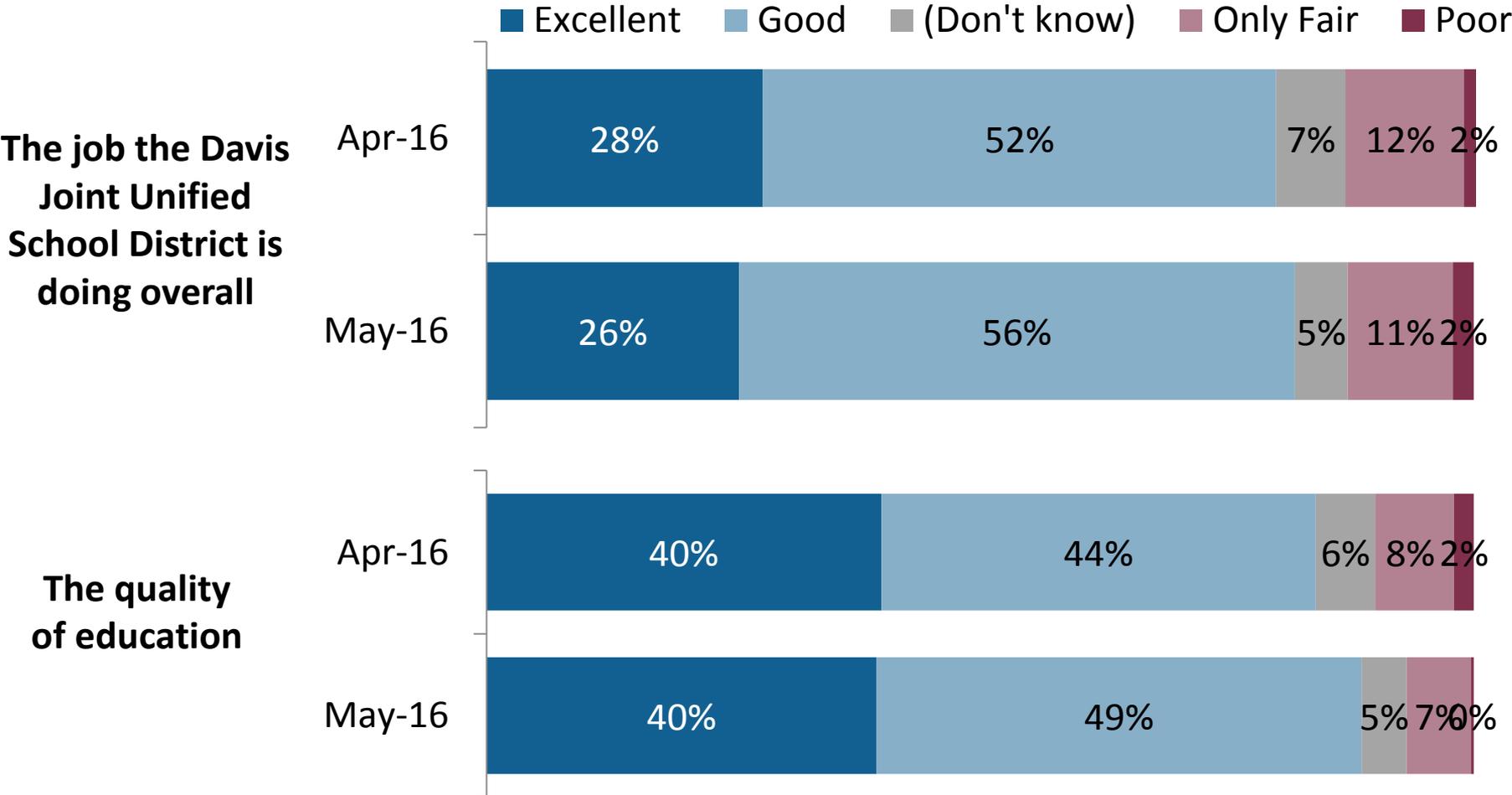
Awareness that there is a parcel tax is far higher among homeowners and current or former parents compared to renters and those who never had a child in a Davis school.



Q6: As you may know, some school districts have a parcel tax in place and others do not. Is there, or is there not, a school parcel tax for Davis Joint Unified School District?

Quality of Education Rating

Voters consistently rate the District and the quality of education positively.



Q8-Q9: Regardless of whether or not you have children currently in school, using a scale of excellent, good, only fair, or poor, please rate the following areas relating to the Davis Joint Unified School District



Conclusions

- ▶ Both the initial and follow-up surveys demonstrate that Davis JUSD voters have a strong appetite for maintaining and improving the schools – well over half would even support a \$960 parcel tax for improvements. However, there does appear to be significant price sensitivity when it comes to such a high dollar amount. Given the supermajority threshold needed for passage, \$960 is probably just too high.
- ▶ The two surveys should inform the discussion around the potential risks and rewards associated with the parcel tax amount.
- ▶ With clear evidence of price sensitivity among voters, we recommend moving forward with a measure that is no higher than \$620 per year.

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