



County of
Sonoma

Sonoma County 2013 Community Opinion Research

**Key Findings From
Survey and Focus Group Research**

320-572

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates - FM3
Public Opinion Research & Strategy

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Survey Methodology

- Data Collection: 500 telephone interviews and five focus groups among residents
One focus group with local business leaders
- Field Dates: September-November, 2013
- Survey Margin of Error: +/-4.4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level
- Focus Group Methodological Considerations: While participants were selected to be diverse and representative, focus group research cannot be considered to represent those of the broader population with statistical precision.

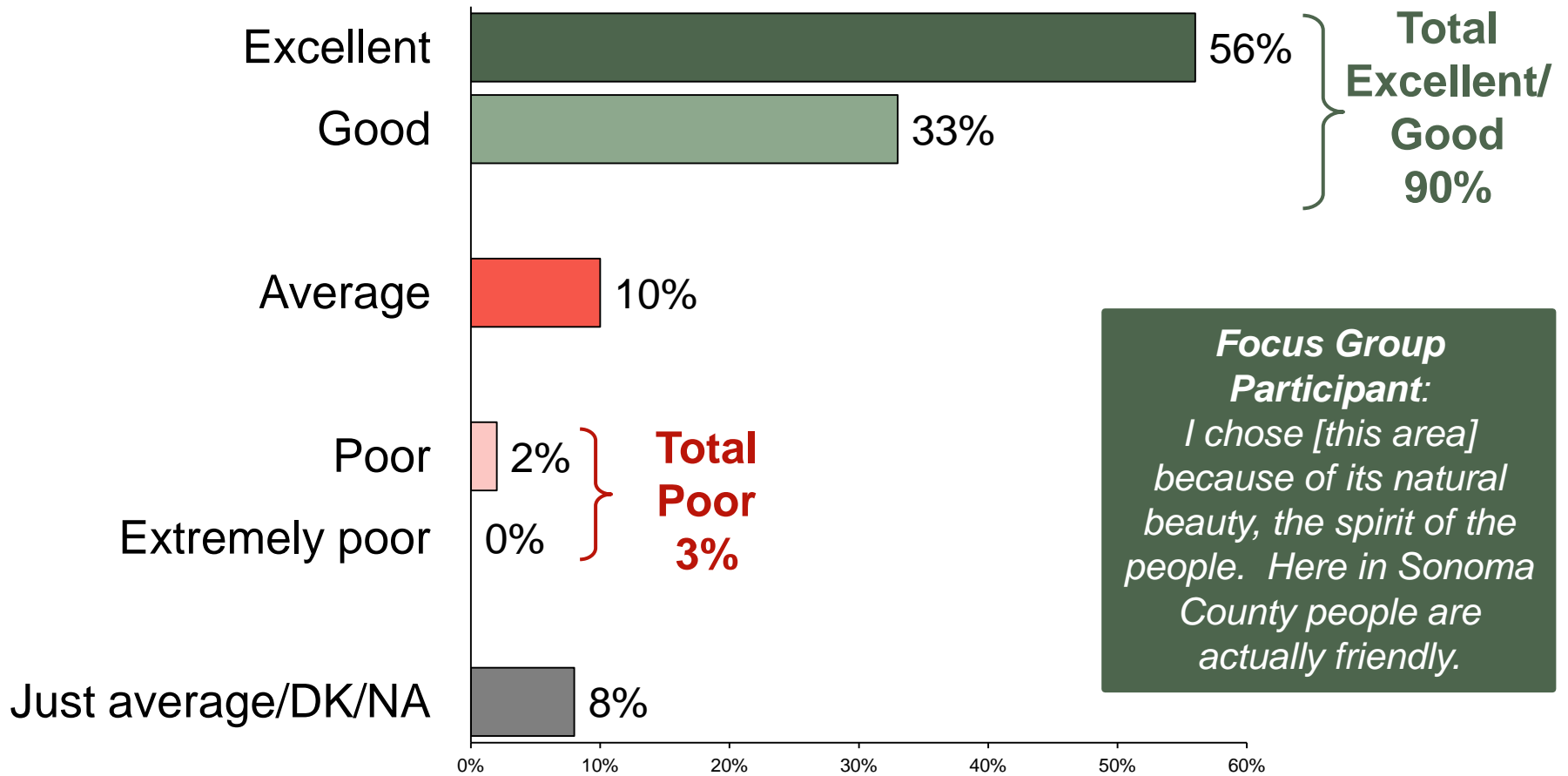


County of
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Sonoma County Quality of Life

Residents express remarkably high levels of satisfaction with the overall quality of life in the County.

How would you rate Sonoma County as a place to live: is it an excellent place to live, a good place to live, just average, poor, or an extremely poor place to live?



In the focus groups, Latino residents expressed greater concern that lower income areas and residents of color don't necessarily enjoy the same quality of life as others.

LATINO RESIDENT:

Everyone has opportunity because there's no law against you, like changing your school for your kids in any Sonoma County school, but who really has the resources to get their kid out of a bad neighborhood to the better school if they don't have a car, because they don't have money...

LATINO RESIDENT:

People look down on a farmer or a janitor and stuff like that, so [we need] more understanding that you need those people in your community to work together, to function together.

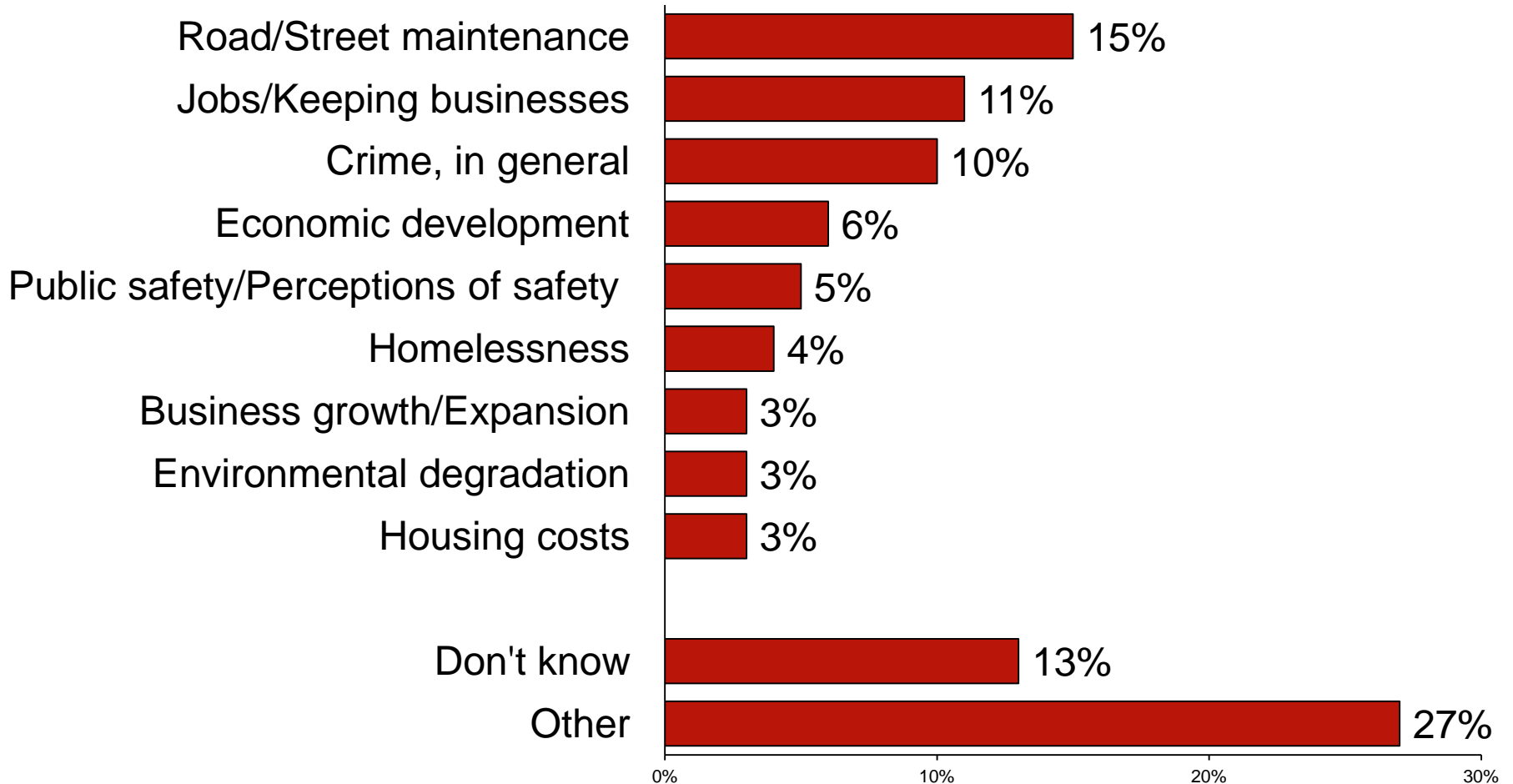
LATINO RESIDENT:

I feel like it depends on where you are raised, you have less opportunities...I feel like most of the Hispanics don't make enough money to live in a better place and that takes them away from their dream.



Among survey respondents, road maintenance, jobs, and crime emerge as the most serious local issues.

(Open Ended; First Choice; 3% and Above Responses Only)



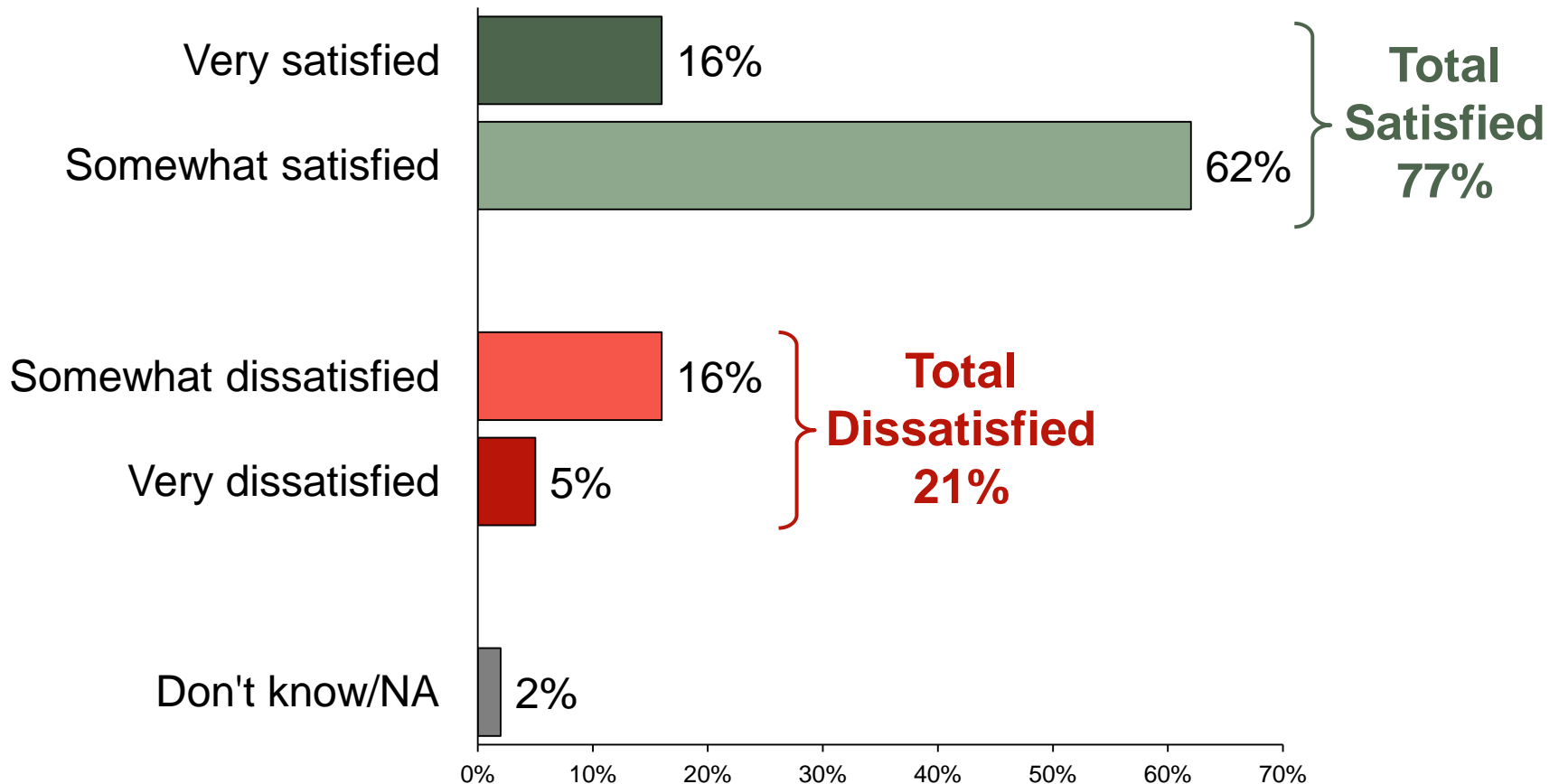


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Perceptions of Sonoma County Government

Three quarters of residents say they are satisfied with the quality of County services.

Thinking about the overall quality of the services provided by Sonoma County government, would you say that you are..?



Business leaders expressed a desire to engage on a higher level with County government.

- Business leaders agreed that the County is accessible and responsive when the business community seeks engagement.
- Nearly all, however expressed an interest in having the County reach out more proactively to inform business leaders of important issues facing the county.
- They also expressed an interest in having the County proactively engage the community on how to make business growth and development easier.

BUSINESS LEADER:

If you want to talk to, or have a presentation, or have some interest in something for your individual group, you can make a phone call and within a month you will have a presentation.

Business leaders also highlighted several areas in which they would like to work with the County to improve the local business climate.

- Participants identified the permitting process and regulatory environment as significant challenges to attracting and retaining business.
- Several felt the County didn't have a detailed understanding of their industry.
- Many also desired a better balance between protecting the environment and supporting business growth. Didn't believe these two priorities as necessarily had to be in conflict.

BUSINESS LEADER:
The impact of the wine and tourism industry on the economy is significant, but I think not well understood, particularly in terms of county leaders and county offices overall.

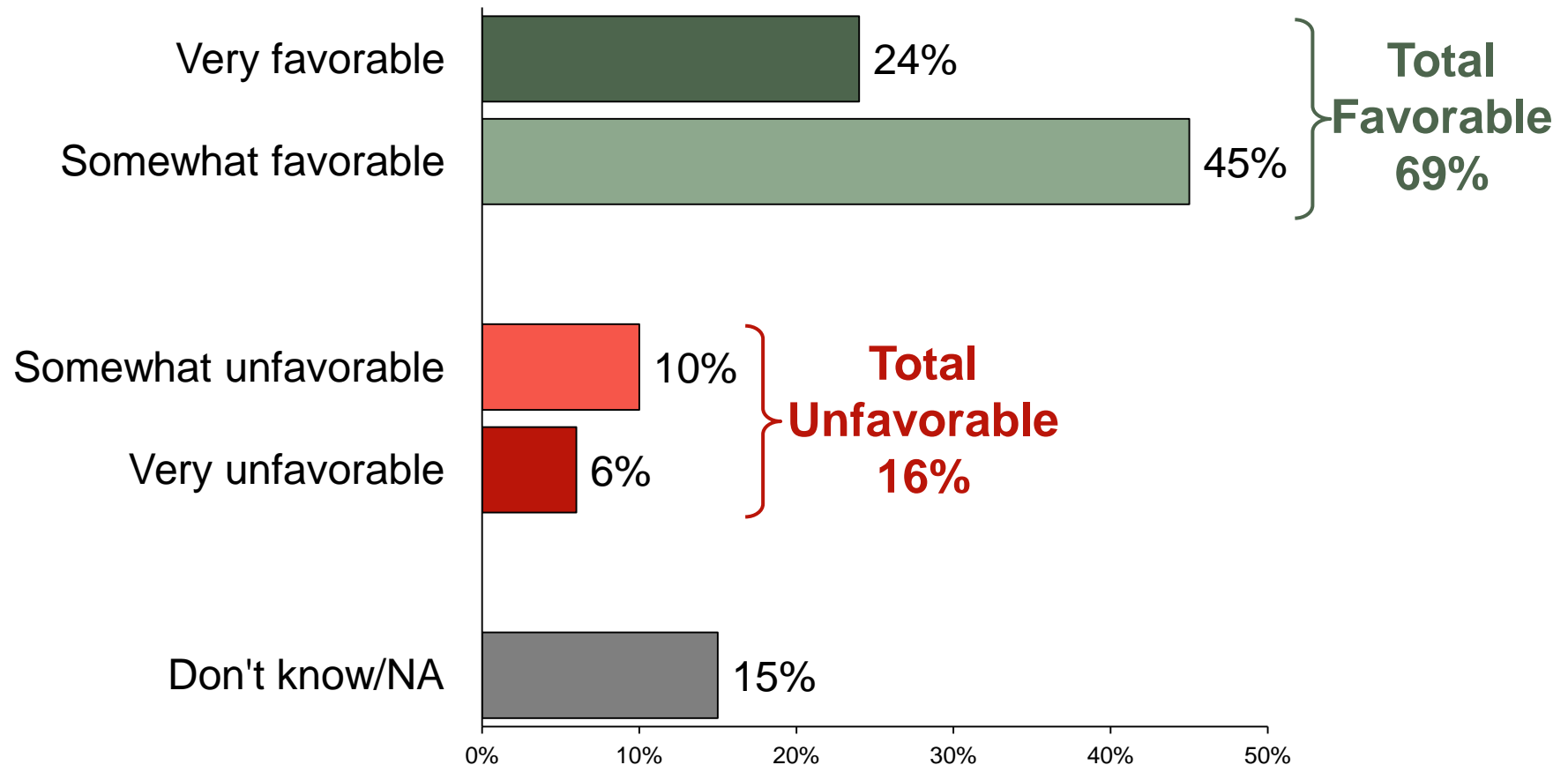


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Perceptions of Sonoma County Employees

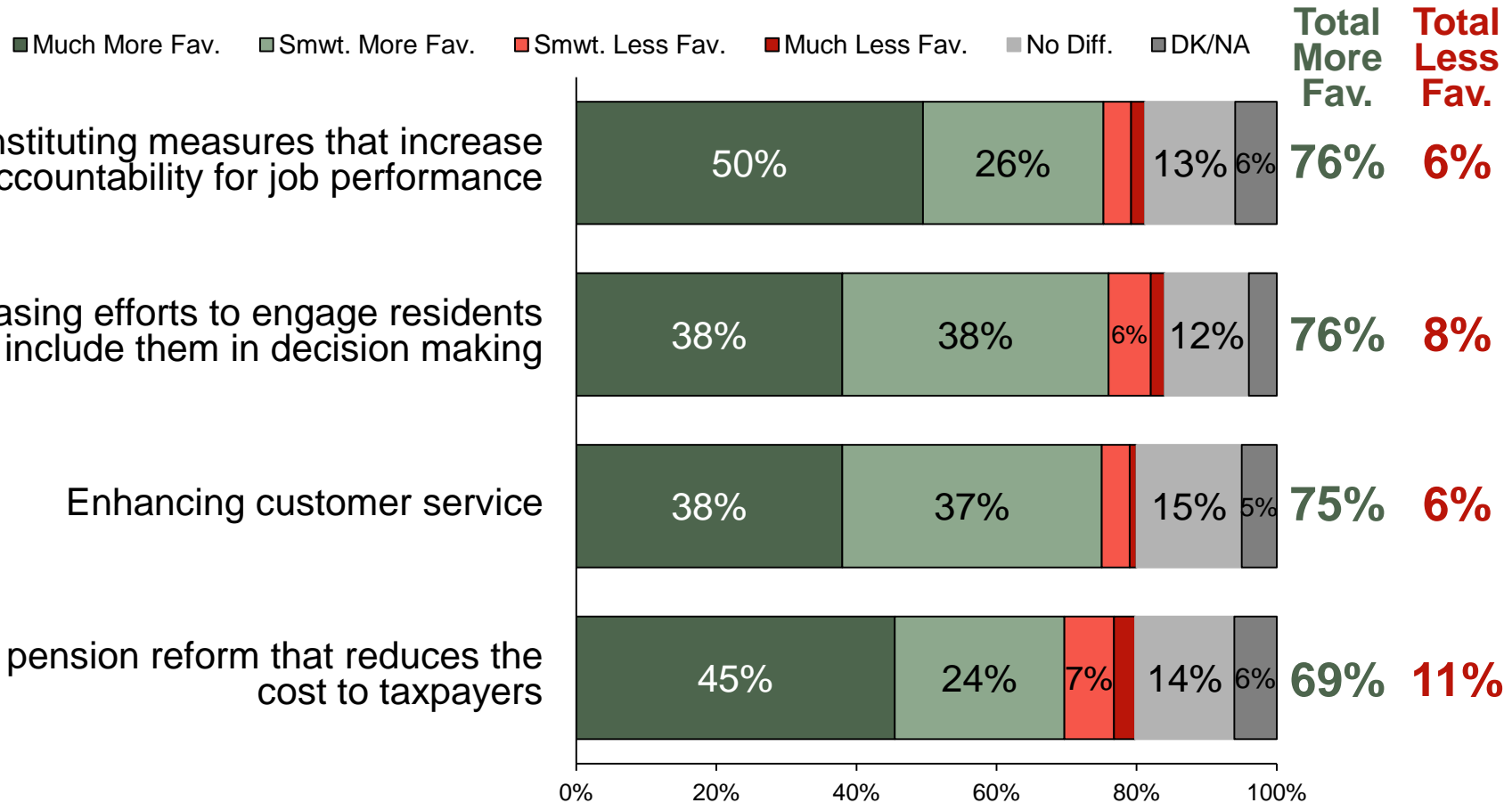
Close to seven in ten residents have a favorable opinion of county employees.

In general, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of County employees?



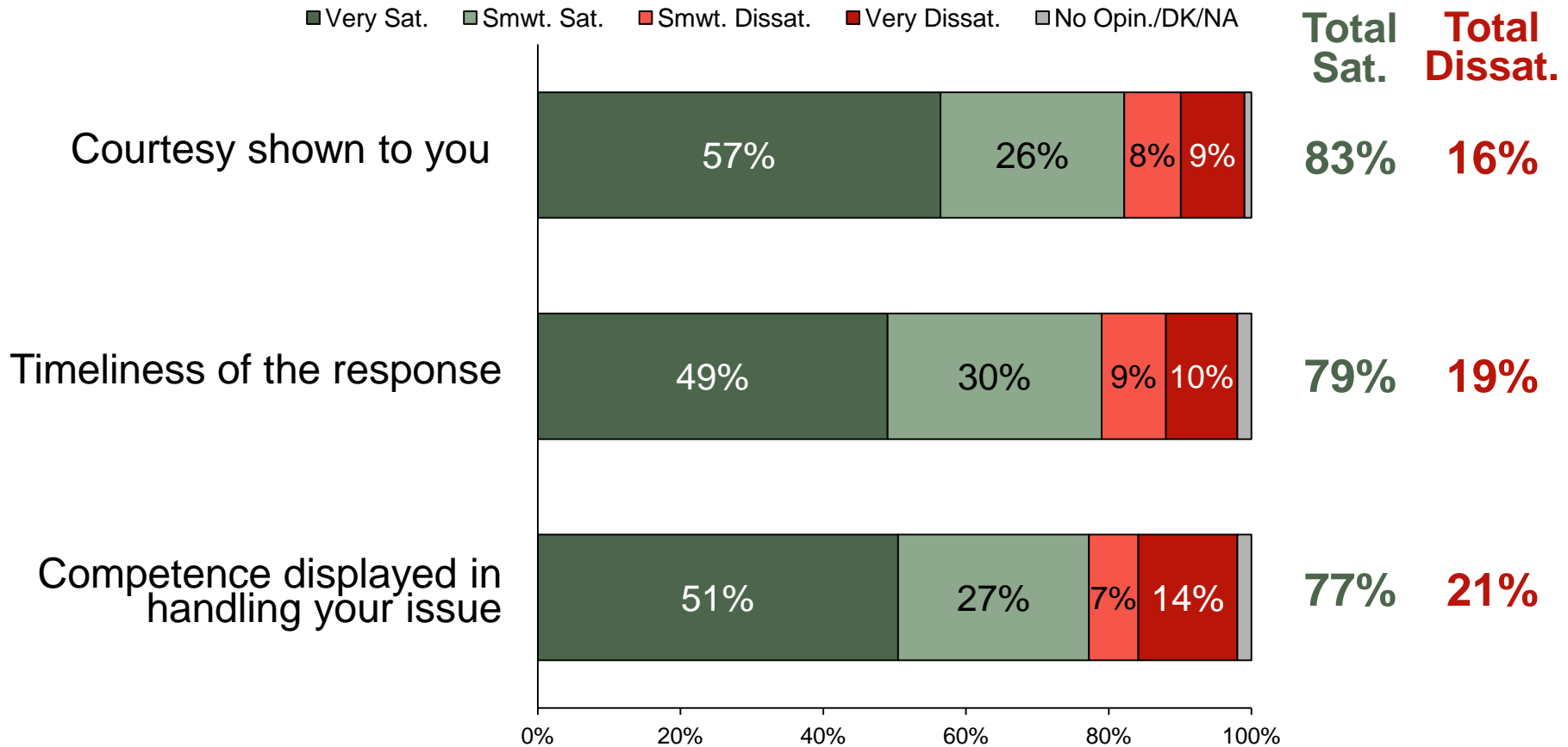
All of the actions that might be undertaken to improve perceptions were viewed favorably.

I would like to read you a list of potential actions that might be undertaken by the County. For each one, please tell if that action would cause you to have a much more favorable, somewhat more favorable, somewhat less favorable or much less favorable opinion of County employees.



Of those who have had contact with Sonoma County employees, majorities express satisfaction with their experiences.

Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the _____ by the Sonoma County employee or employees with whom you had contact?

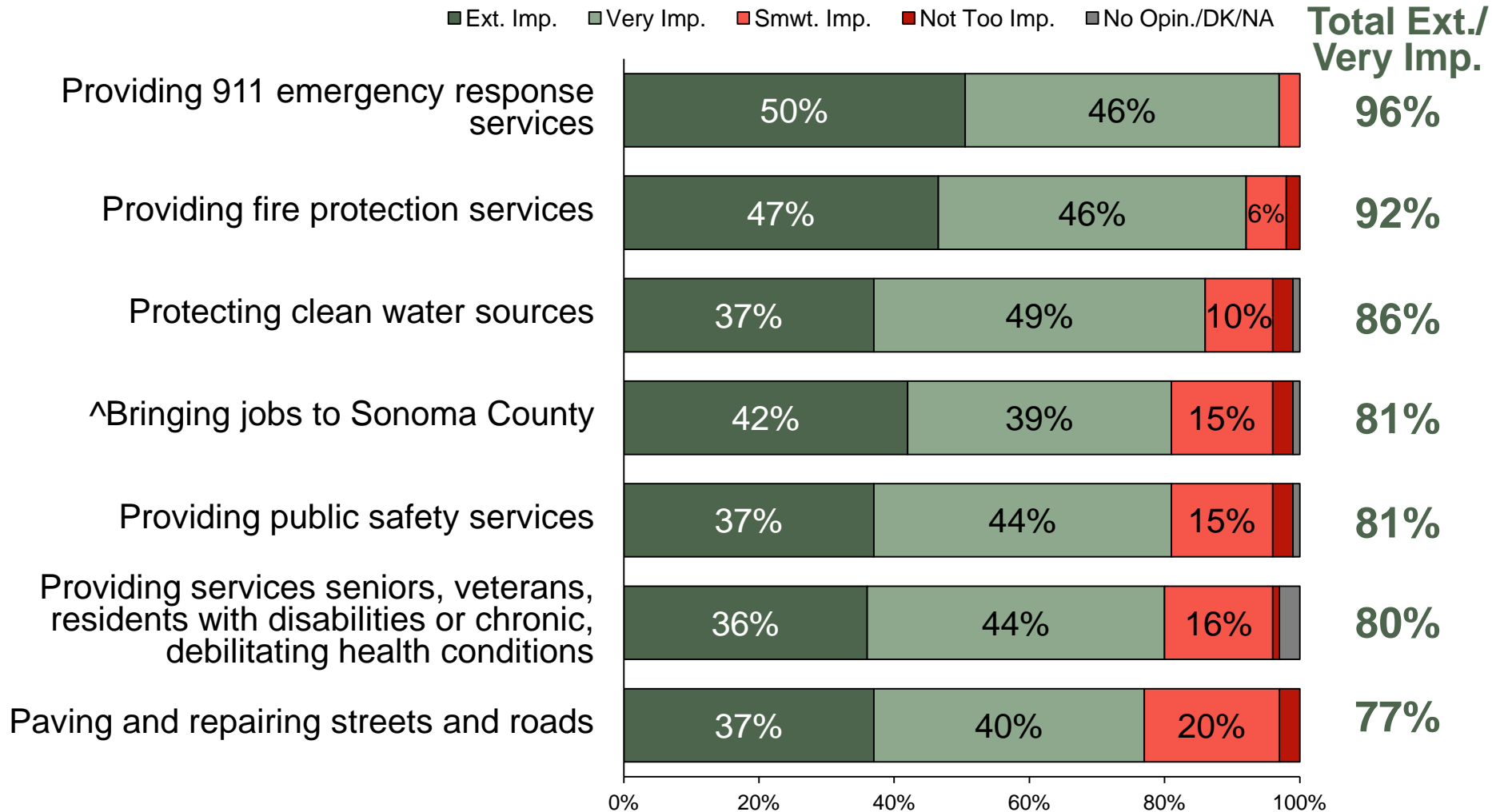




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Perceptions of County Services

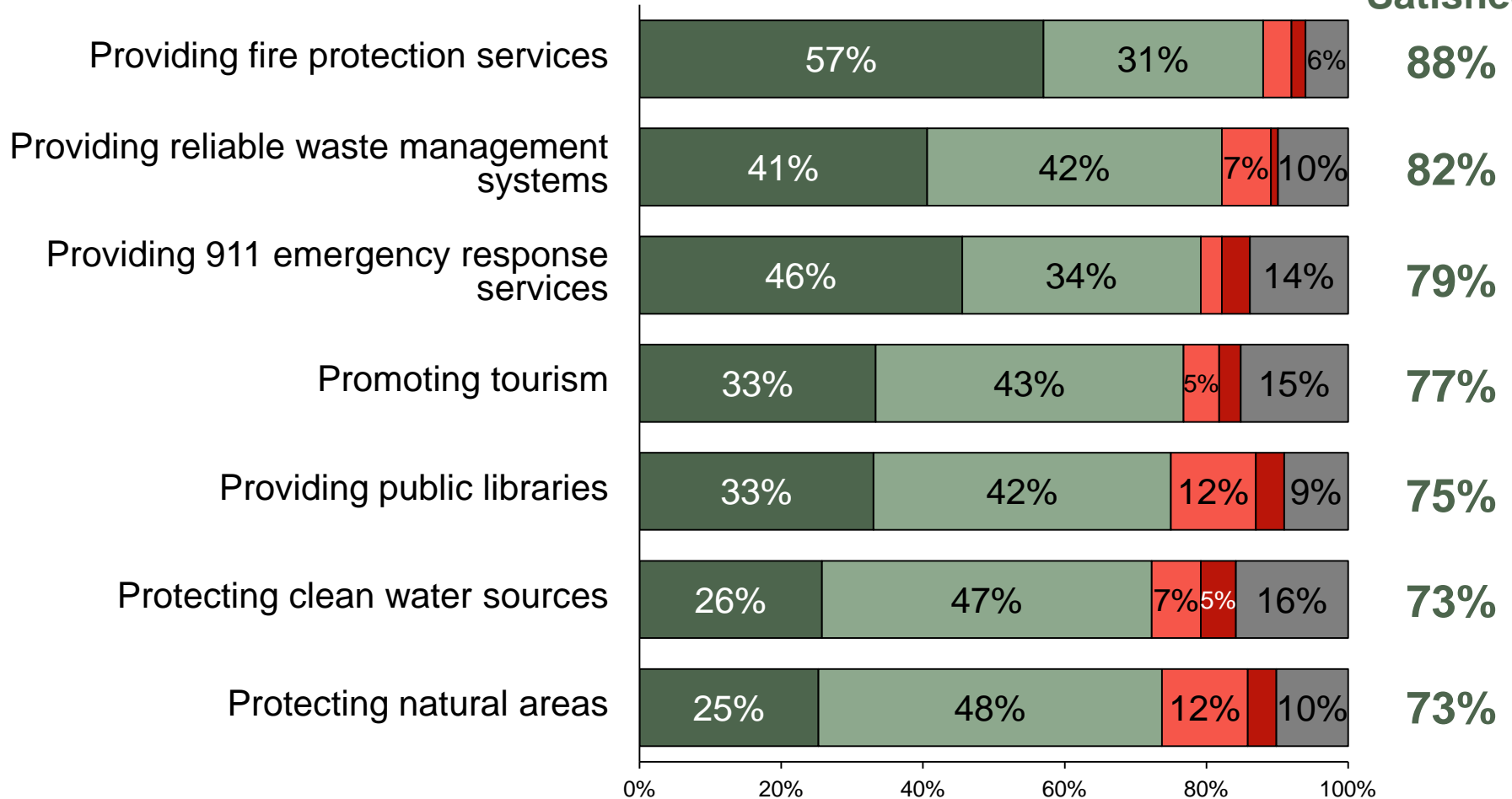
Broad consensus exists that public safety services are among the County's most important functions.



Residents express the highest levels of satisfaction with fire protection services and waste management.

■ Very Sat.
 ■ Smwt. Sat.
 ■ Smwt. Dissat.
 ■ Very Dissat.
 ■ No Opin./DK/NA

Total Satisfied



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Residents place a high priority on jobs and road maintenance, but less than half are satisfied with the County's performance in these areas.

Issue	Ext./Very Important Priority	Total Satisfied
Providing 911 emergency response services	96%	79%
Providing fire protection services	92%	88%
Protecting clean water sources	86%	73%
Bringing jobs to Sonoma County	81%	49%
Providing public safety services	81%	72%
Providing services for seniors, veterans, residents with disabilities or chronic debilitating health conditions	80%	53%
Paving and repairing streets and roads	77%	35%



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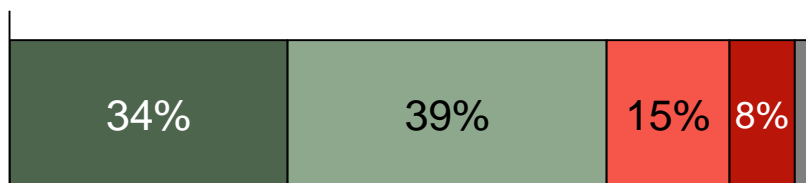
Perceptions of Strategic Goals and Priorities

Residents broadly approve of the County's performance in key areas tied to the County's strategic priorities.

I am going to read you a list of these goals. Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the job County government is doing in meeting that particular goal.

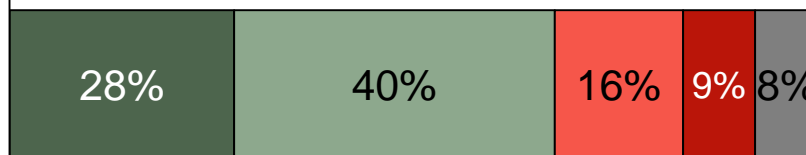
■ Strg. App. ■ Smwt. App. ■ Smwt. Disap. ■ Strg. Disap. ■ DK/NA

Fostering a safe, healthy, and caring community that meets the basic needs of all residents



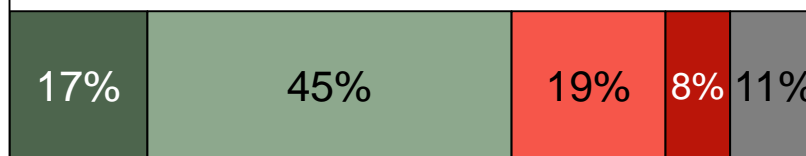
Total App. 73%
Total Disap. 23%

Balancing local economic growth with the needs of local farmers and the natural environment



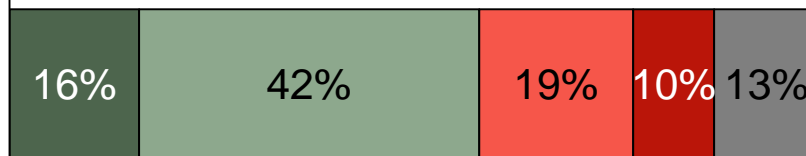
Total App. 68%
Total Disap. 25%

Fostering an engaged, informed and civic-minded community through better access to and participation in County government and enhancing community based partnerships



Total App. 62%
Total Disap. 27%

Investing in the future through infrastructure, sustainability of local resources and prevention focused strategies



Total App. 58%
Total Disap. 30%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Participants felt that the County should place an especially high priority on protecting open space and creating a strong economy.

(Participants Asked to Select Top Four Priorities)

Strategic Outcomes	Times Chosen Among Top 4
Protecting and maintaining parks, public lands and open space	24
Promoting a strong, diverse and sustainable economy that supports job retention and job growth	21
Supporting the overall health of the community, beginning with the healthy development of children	19
Investing in policies and interventions that reduce poverty and increase equal opportunity for quality education and good health	18
Maximizing the use of renewable energy, promoting water conservation and reducing green-house gas production	16
Ensuring that local resources, such as timber, aggregate resources, energy and water, are sustainably managed	12



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Attitudes Toward Potential Revenue Measures

Ballot Language Tested

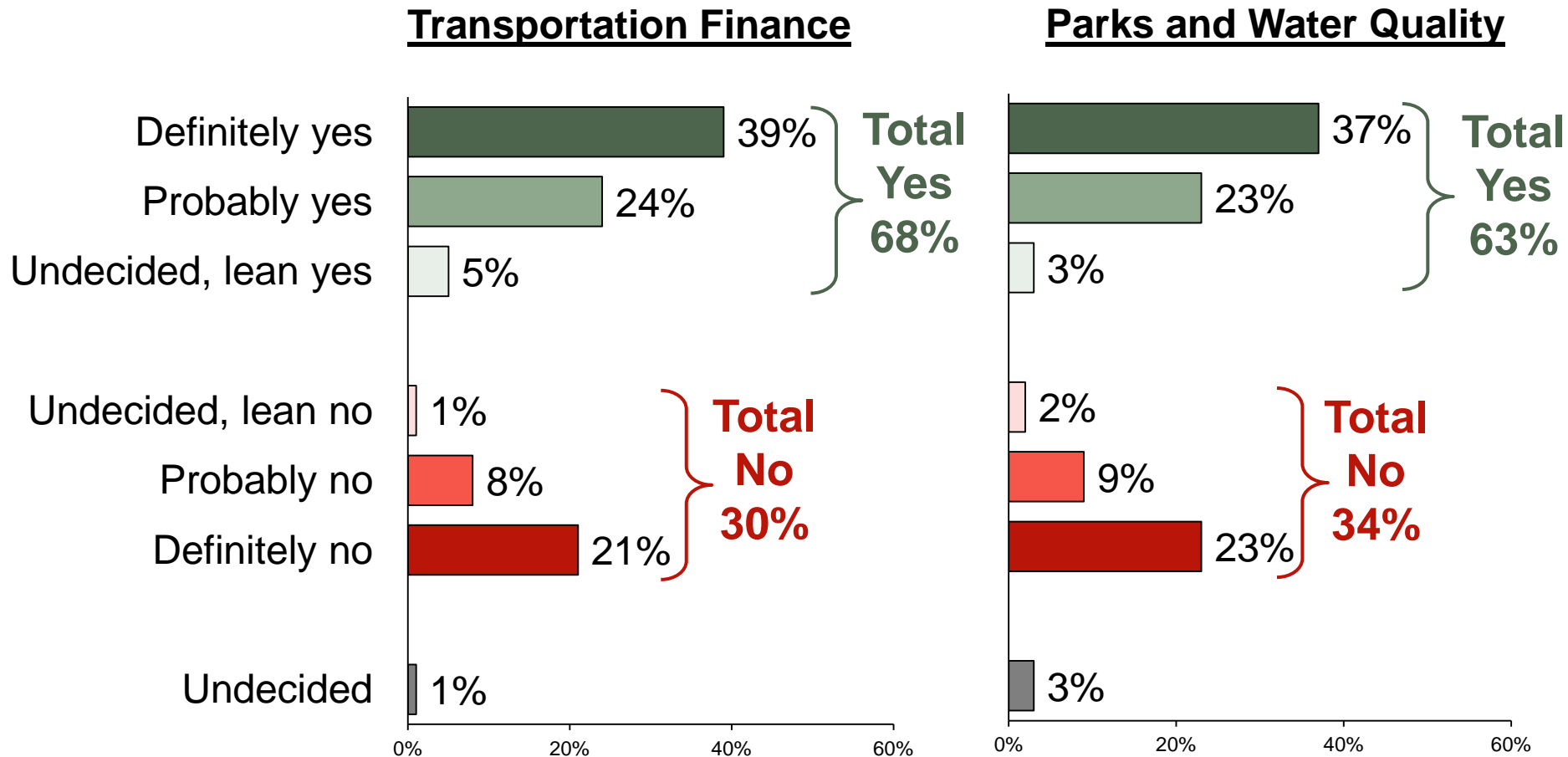
Sonoma County Fix-It First Transportation Act.

To fix potholes, maintain and repair local streets and roads; and finish highway 101 widening, shall Sonoma County establish a ¼ cent sales tax with annual independent audits, citizens' oversight and all funds remaining local to improve Sonoma County roads?

Sonoma County Park and Water Quality Improvement Measure.

To keep parks open; increase public access to parks; protect natural areas; protect drinking water sources; create and improve parks, trails and bikeways; restore wetlands, preserve fish and wildlife habitat, and improve flood control and water quality in rivers, lakes and streams, shall Sonoma County establish a ¼ cent sales tax with annual independent audits, citizens' oversight and all funds remaining local to improve Sonoma County parks and water quality?

More than 2/3rds of voters support a transportation finance measure; support for a parks measure is somewhat lower.

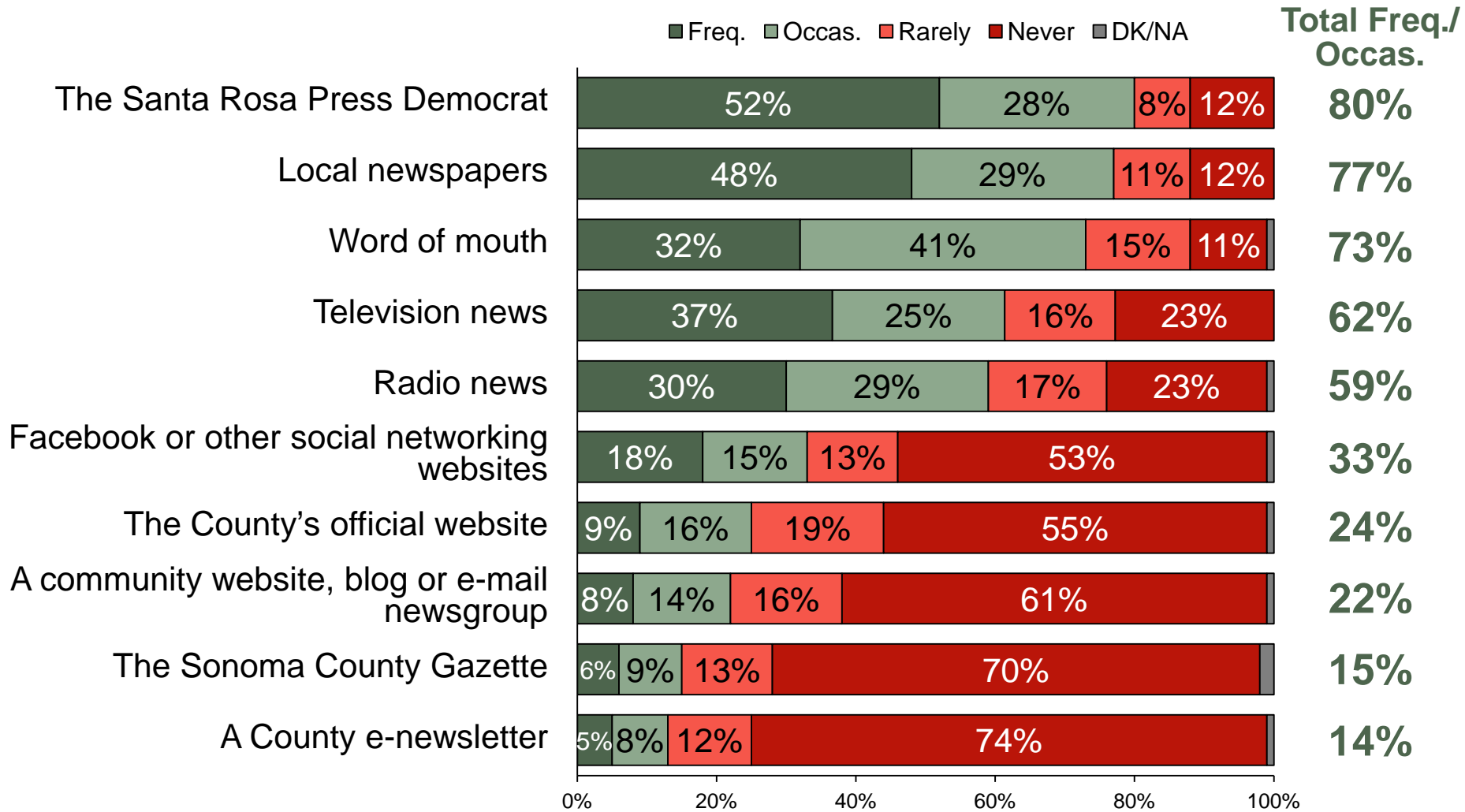




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Reaching Residents with Information About County Government

Residents are most likely to get their news about Sonoma County government from the *Santa Rosa Press Democrat* or other local newspapers.



For more information, contact:

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