



# Telephone Survey of Santa Clara County Voters Re: Water Conservation Conducted for: Santa Clara Valley Water District

**April 2017**

# Methodology

---

- ▶ Telephone survey of registered voters in Santa Clara County
- ▶ Conducted by trained, professional interviewers from March 23 – 28, 2017
- ▶ 400 completed interviews
- ▶ Margin of error:  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points
- ▶ Interviews conducted in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese

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

# Key Findings

---

- ▶ In spite of the wet winter and potential end to the drought, voters in the Santa Clara Valley Water District still see the need to prepare for the future and invest in a more reliable water supply.
- ▶ They do not recall cutting back their water use during the drought as having been much of a challenge.
- ▶ A majority are open to a small rate increase of \$5-10 per month, but many oppose a larger \$20-30 increase.
- ▶ Framing the investment as something that would ensure a more reliable water supply is sufficient—adding information on the corresponding use reductions could introduce confusion.
- ▶ Specific investments in recycled water for irrigation and industrial uses, storm water capture, and updating aging infrastructure generate the most enthusiasm.



# Water Use Reductions

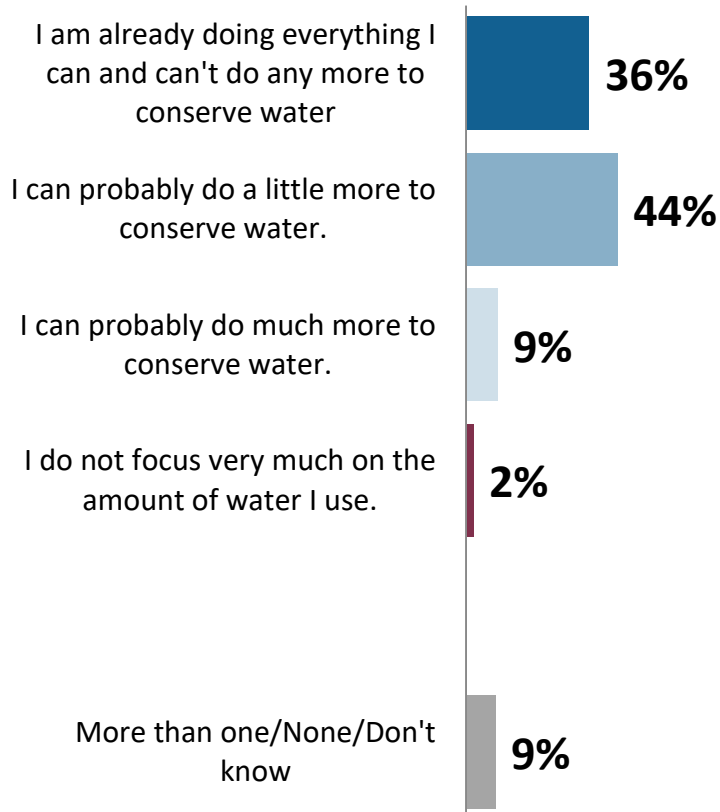


# Efforts to Reduce Water Use

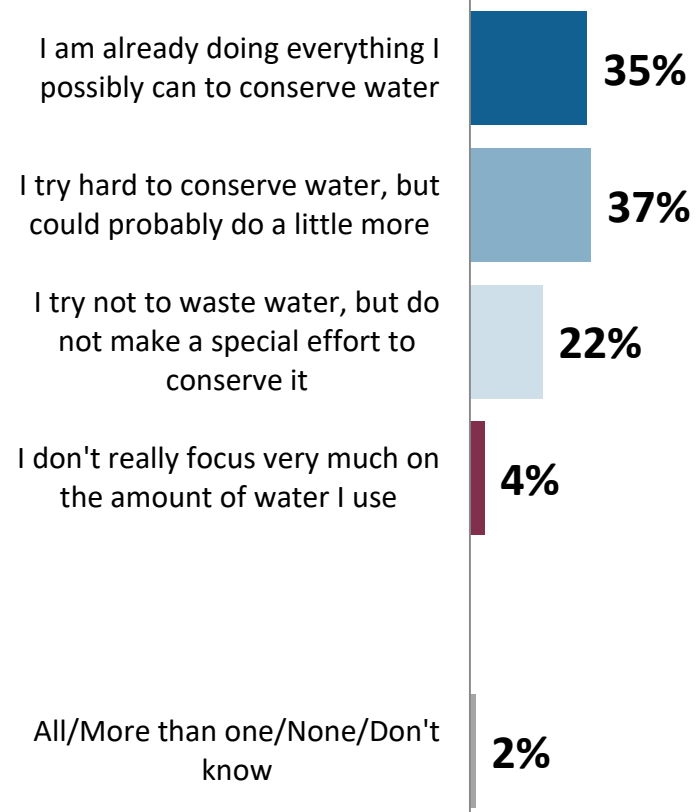
*Most report they are still making an effort to conserve water, although the majority could do more. The number who say they're doing everything they can to conserve has not changed since a similar question in 2015.*

***Which of the following statements best describes your current efforts to reduce your water use?***

## 15-5606 Drought and Drought Policy Survey



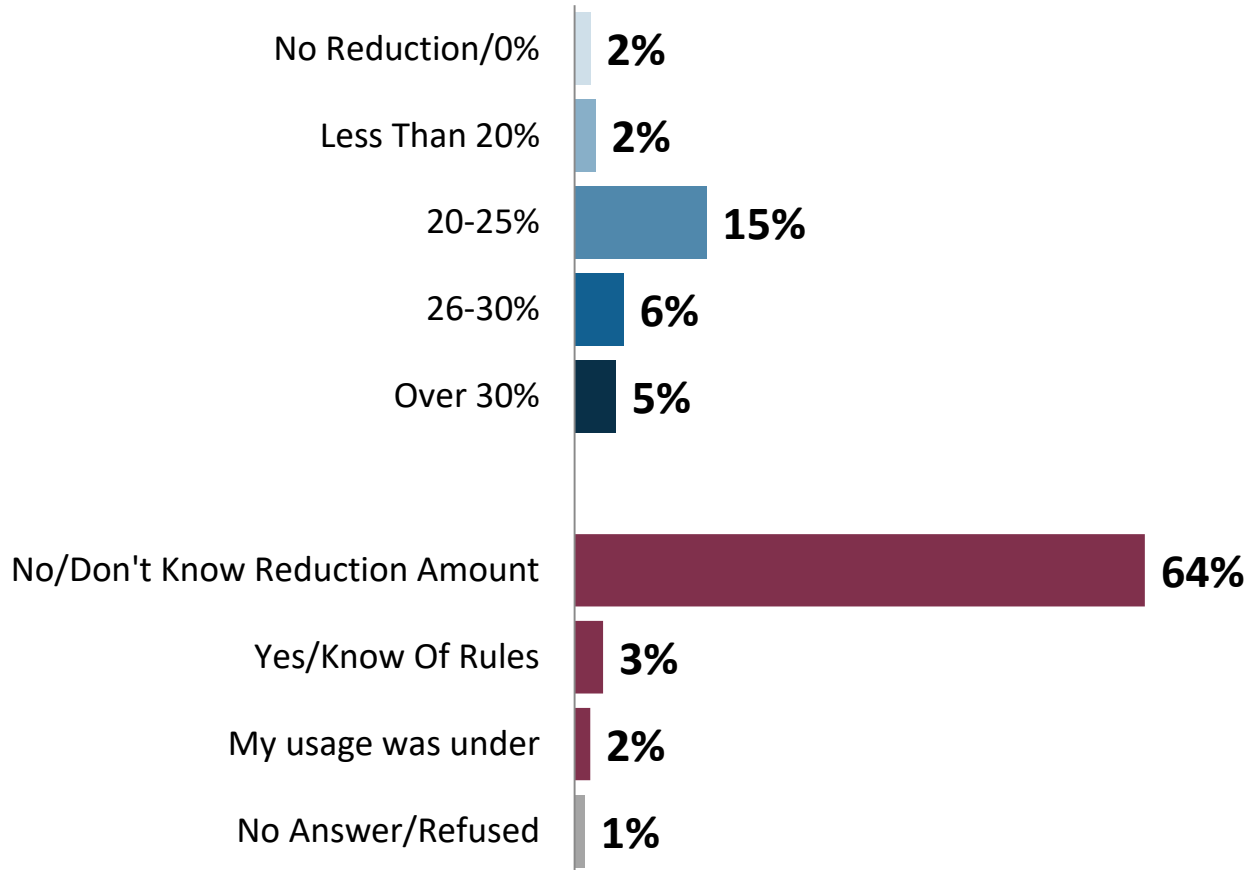
## 2017 Water Conservation Survey



# Knowledge of Water Use Reduction

*Few recall how large of a reduction in water use was called for last summer.*

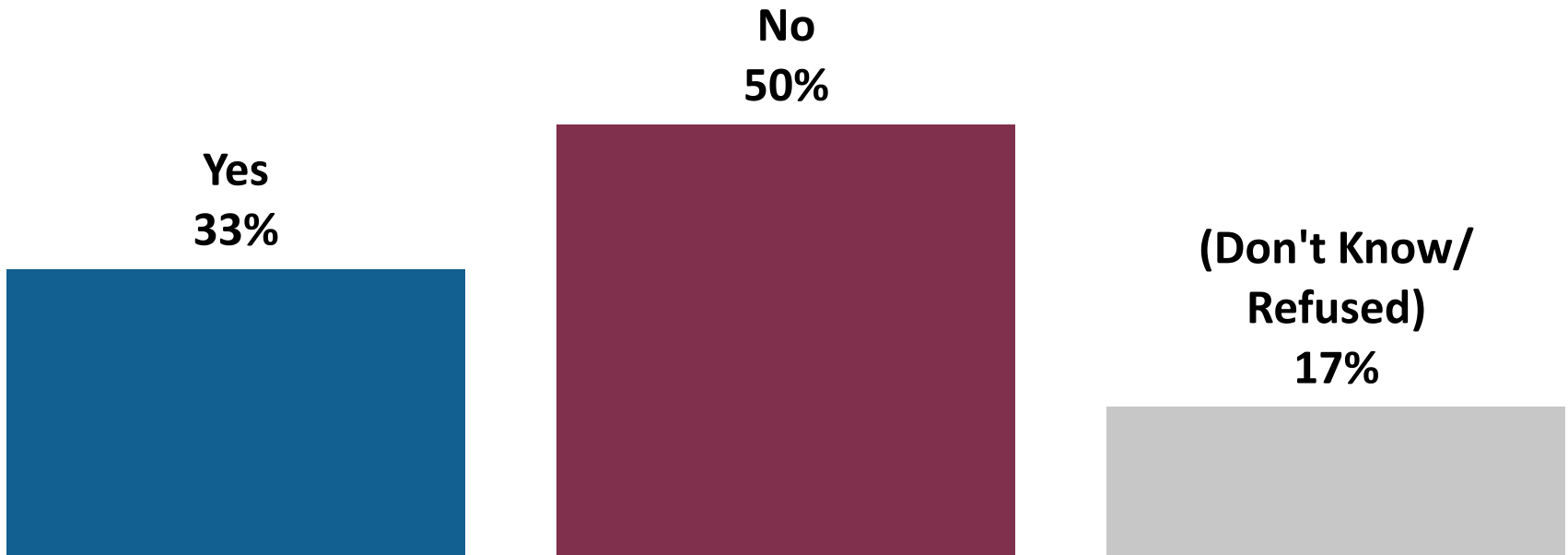
***Do you happen to know how much of a reduction in water use your local water agency was calling for last summer during the statewide drought?***



# Knowledge of Fines

*Only a third report that their local agency imposed fines during the drought.*

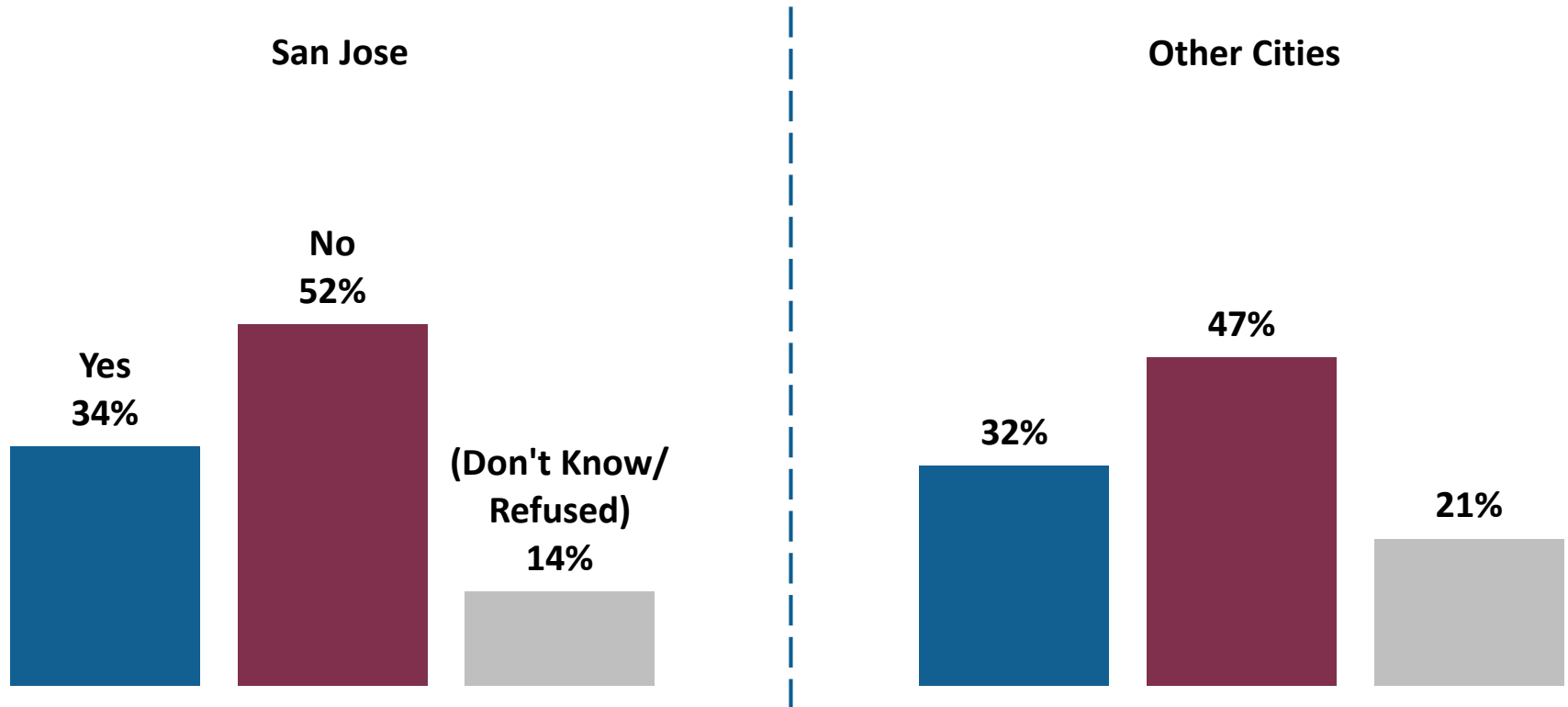
***As far as you know, did your local water agency impose any fines or surcharges for using too much water during the statewide drought?***



# Knowledge of Fines by City

*Recollection of fines or surcharges is similar in San Jose and other cities.*

***As far as you know, did your local water agency impose any fines or surcharges for using too much water during the statewide drought?***

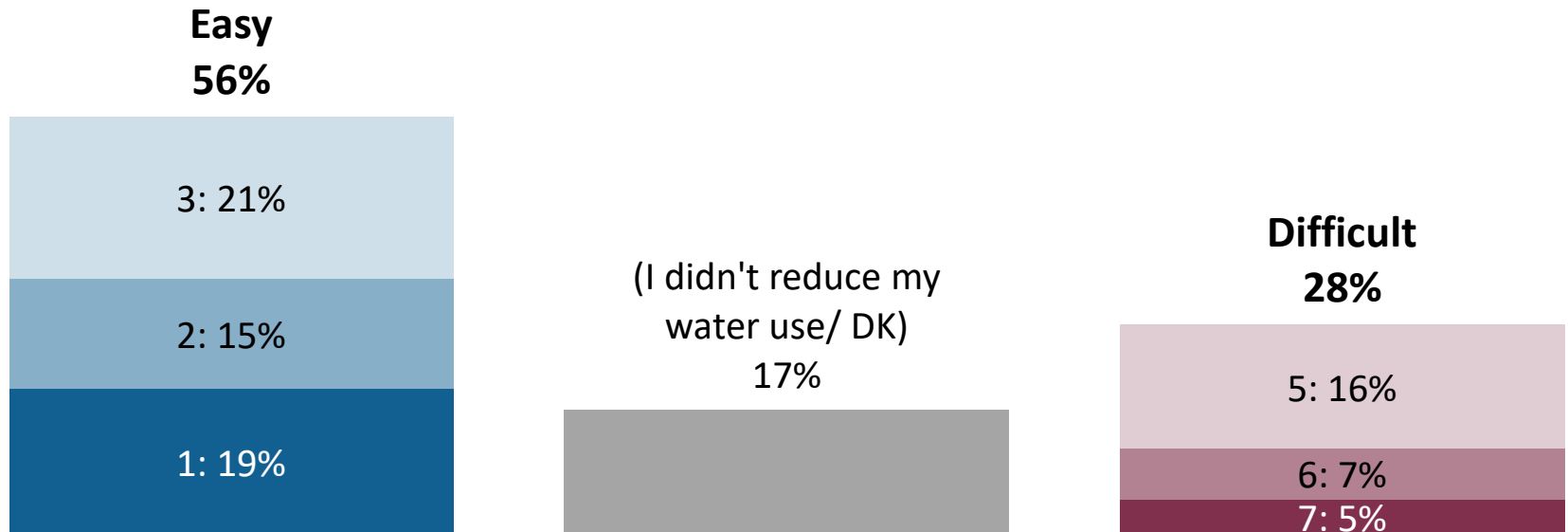




# Reducing Water Use During the Drought

*A majority felt that reducing their water use during the drought was relatively easy.*

***Thinking about a scale where 1 is very easy and 7 is very difficult, how easy or difficult was it for you to reduce your water use during the drought?***

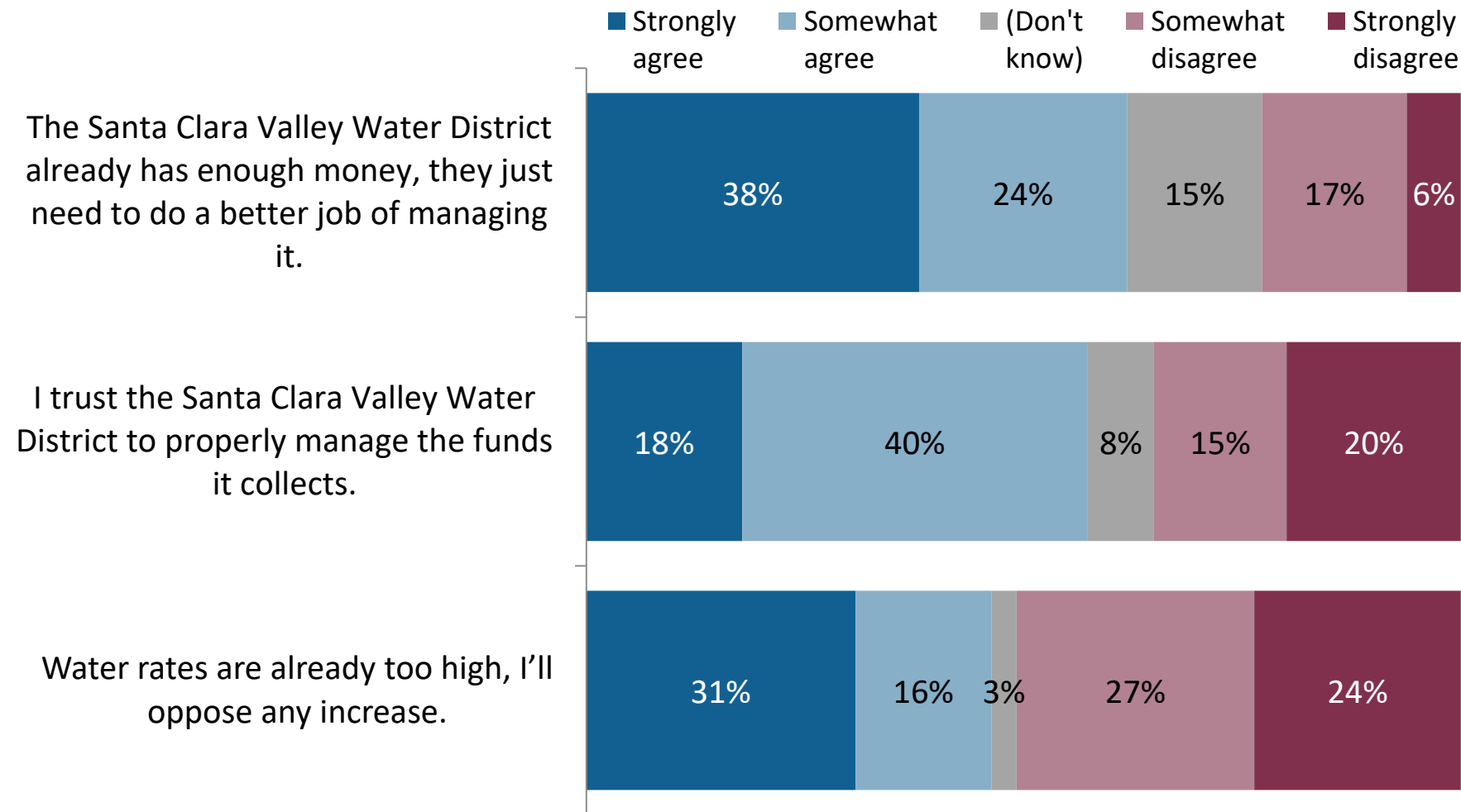




# Support for Increased Water Rates

# Water Attitudes

*While there is widespread agreement that SCVWD already has enough money, most voters also trust the District to spend funds properly and less than a third are strongly opposed to rate increases.*

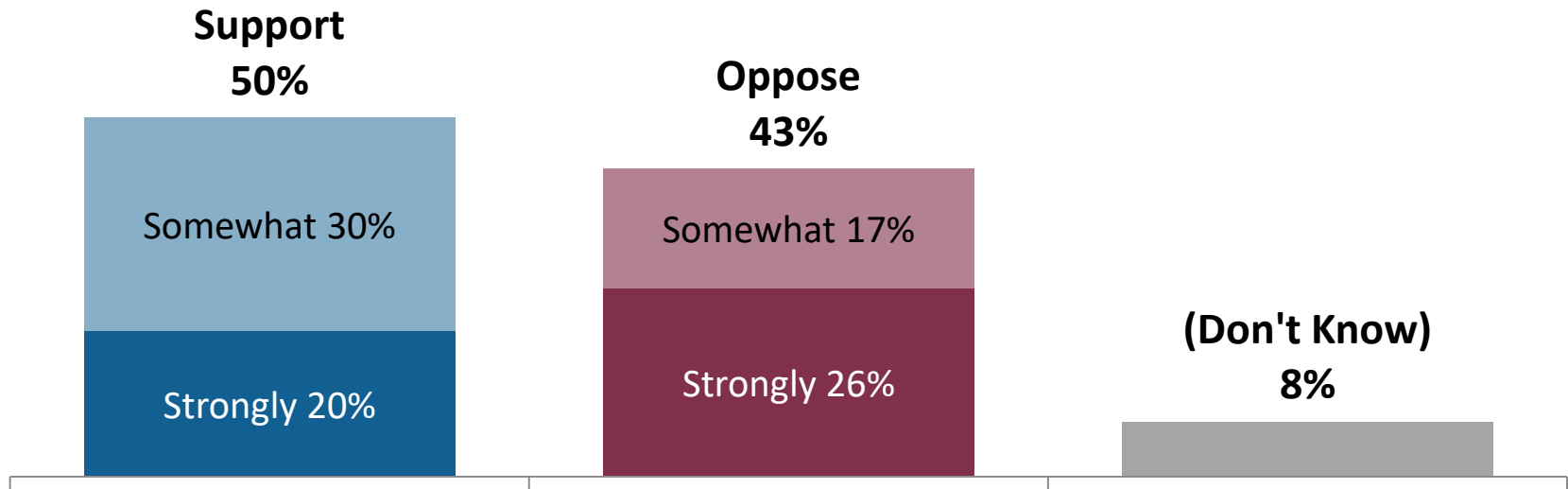


Q12-14. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.

# Initial Support for Increase

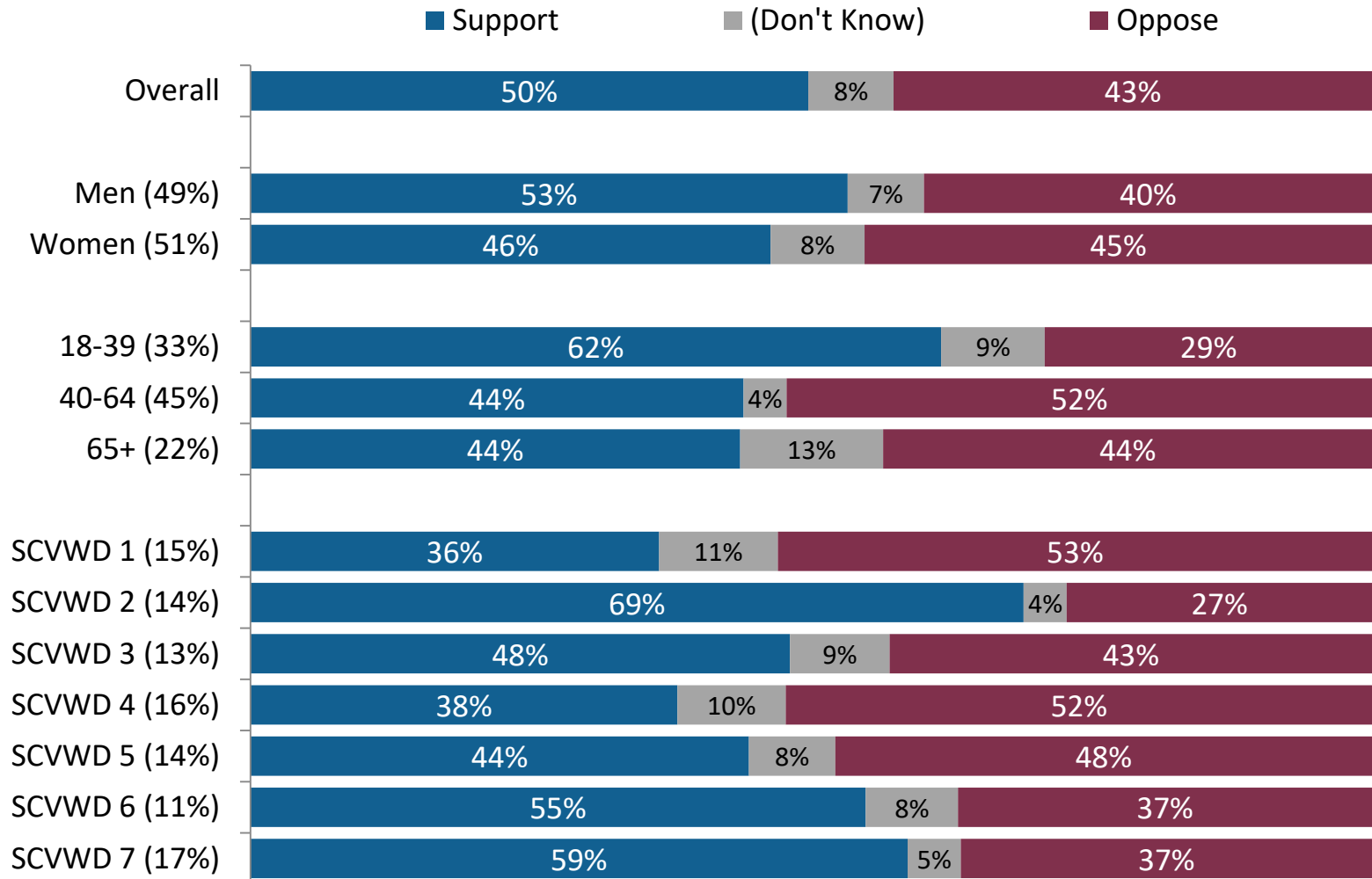
*Before hearing any details, half at least somewhat support increasing water rates to ensure a more reliable supply of water.*

*In general, would you say you support or oppose modest increases in water rates to ensure a more reliable supply of water for our future?*



# Initial Support by Subgroup

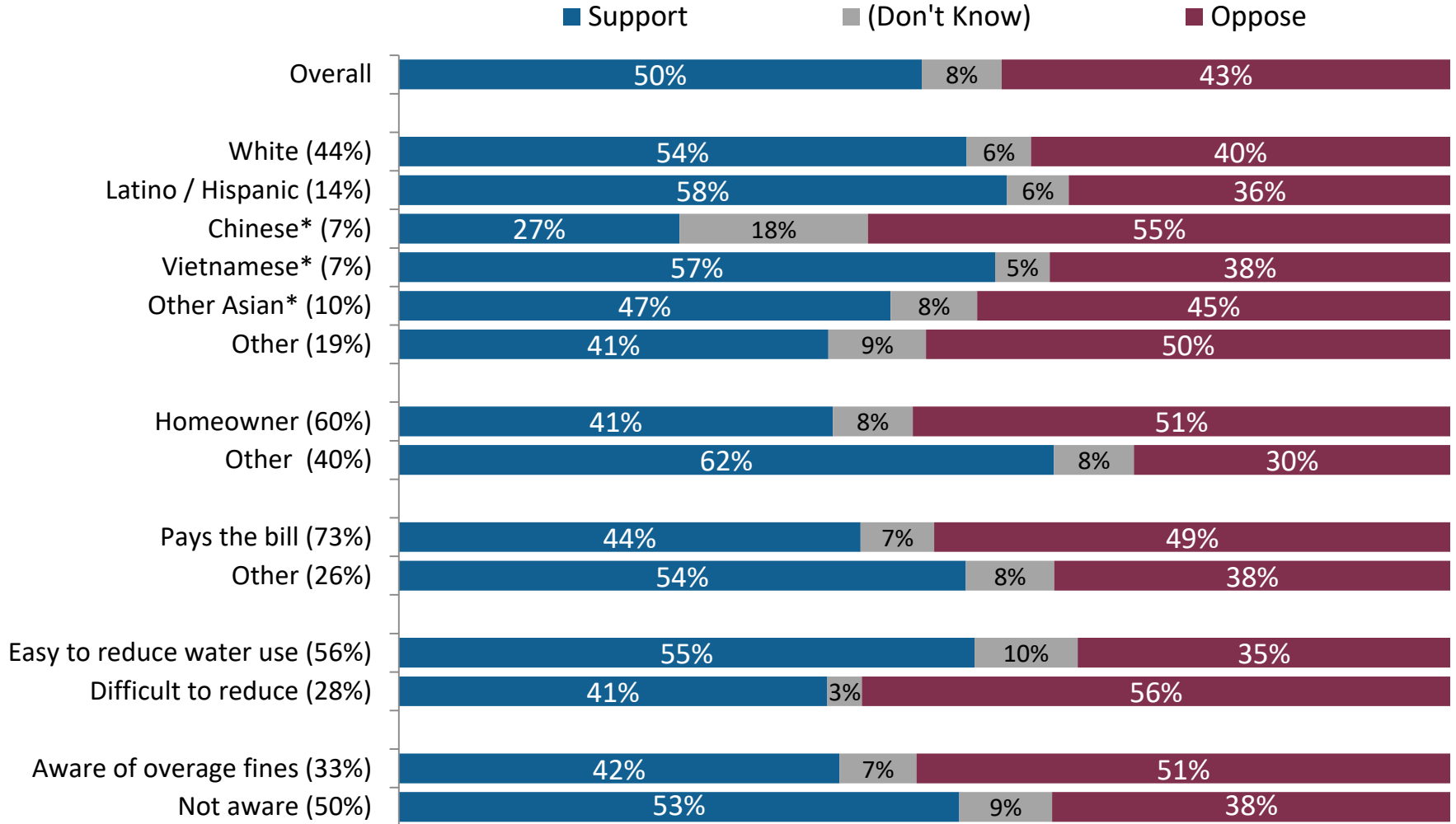
*Younger voters are likely to support increased rates to ensure a more reliable supply of water.  
Support varies considerably by geography.*



Q7. In general, would you say you support or oppose modest increases in water rates to ensure a more reliable supply of water for our future?

# Initial Support by Subgroup

*Homeowners and water bill-payers are more likely to oppose modest rate increases, as are those who found it harder to reduce their water use during the drought.*



*\*use caution when generalizing the results among these groups due to small sample sizes*

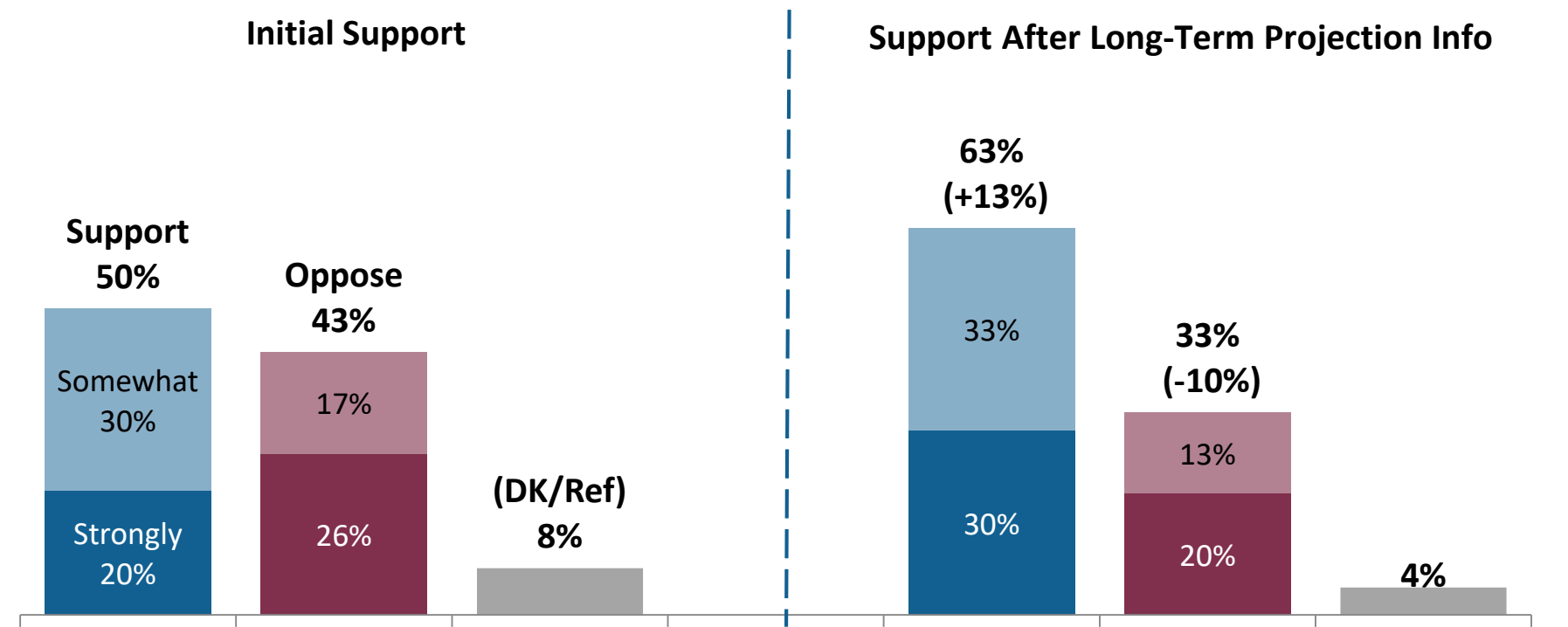
Q7. In general, would you say you support or oppose modest increases in water rates to ensure a more reliable supply of water for our future?



# Support After Long-Term Projection Information

*Support increases to well over a majority once voters hear more information about the need for investments in water supply reliability.*

*Despite the recent rain, our local water suppliers are continuing to evaluate long-term water supply needs for our area given future challenges such as droughts, climate change, and population growth. Projections show that in future drought years we may have to cut back water use by up to 30%. To prepare for water shortages during drought years, local water agencies are planning to invest in projects that would ensure a more reliable water supply like expanding reservoirs, expanding the use of recycled water and increasing storm water reuse. These investments would increase water rates for local residents, but would mean that customers would not have to make such significant cuts in water use during drought years.*

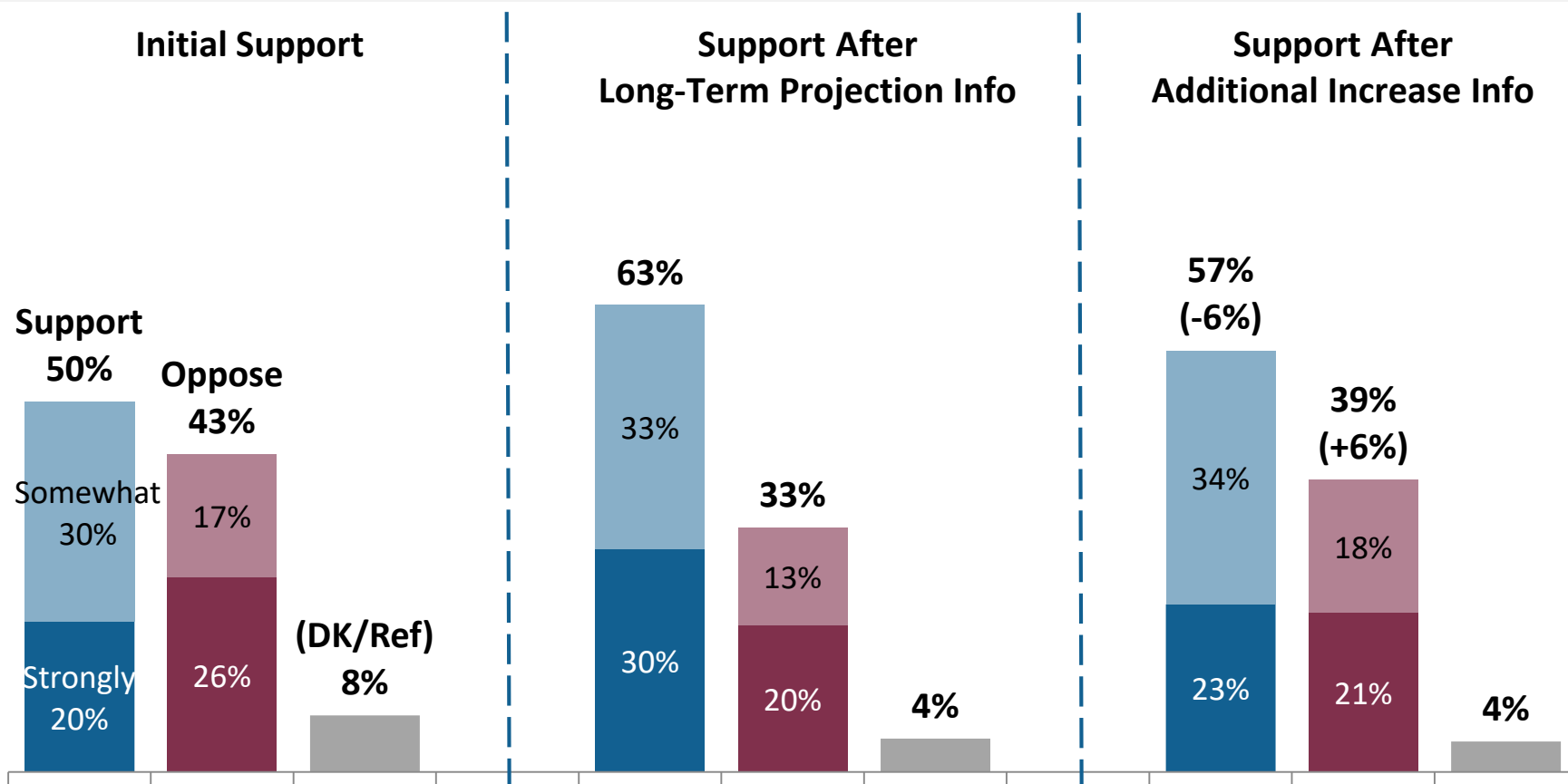


Q8. Given what you've heard, would you say you support or oppose modest increases in water rates to ensure a more reliable supply of water for our future?

# Support After Additional Increase Information

*Support decreases slightly after voters learn that these increases would come on top of other increases that are already planned, but a majority remains supportive.*

*Rate increases to further improve water supply reliability would be in addition to already planned increases, primarily for maintaining and improving existing infrastructure.*

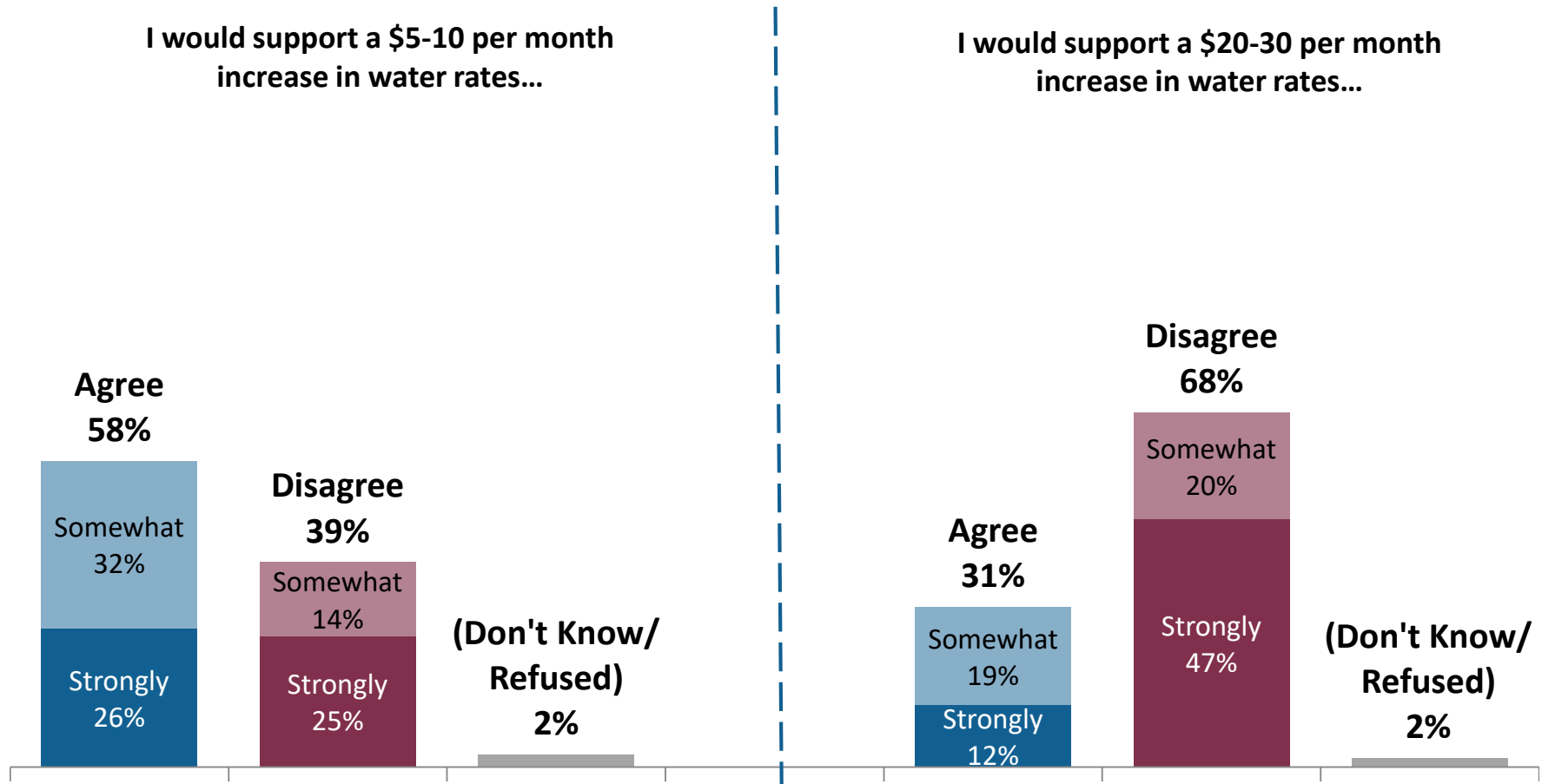


Q9. Given what you've heard, would you say you support or oppose modest increases in water rates to ensure a more reliable supply of water for our future?

# Attitudes Toward Specific Increases

# Attitudes Towards Water Rates Increase

*A majority would support a \$5-10 per month increase. Twenty to \$30 is a much harder sell.*



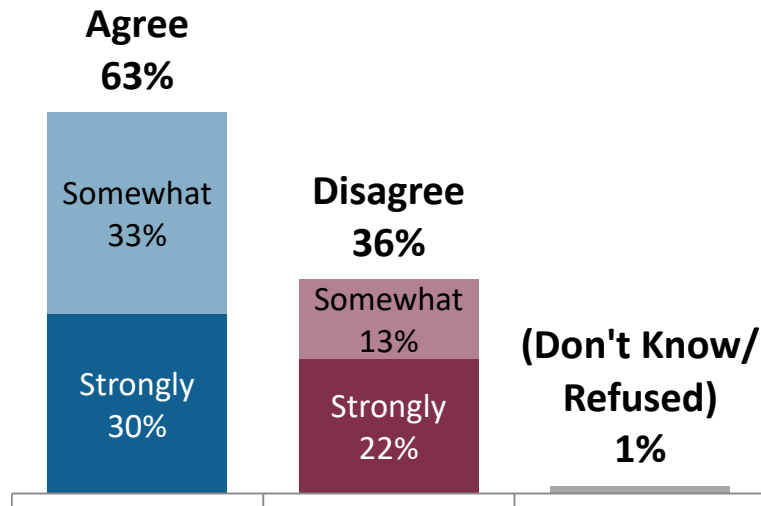
Q10-11. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.

# Attitudes Toward a \$5 to \$10 Increase

*Those who hear an increase amount only are more open to a \$5-10 increase than those who also hear about the corresponding tradeoff in cutbacks.*

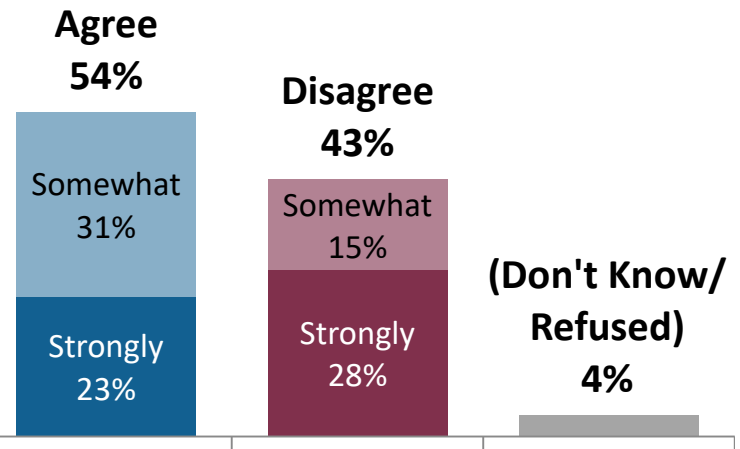
## Rate Increase Only n=200, MoE=±6.9%

*In order to ensure a more reliable supply of water for our area, I would support a \$5-10 per month increase in water rates now to invest in infrastructure for the future.*



## Percent Reduction and Rate Increase n=200, MoE=±6.9%

*In order to avoid having to reduce my water use by more than 20% during drought years, I would support a \$5-10 per month increase in water rates now to invest in infrastructure for the future.*



Q11. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.

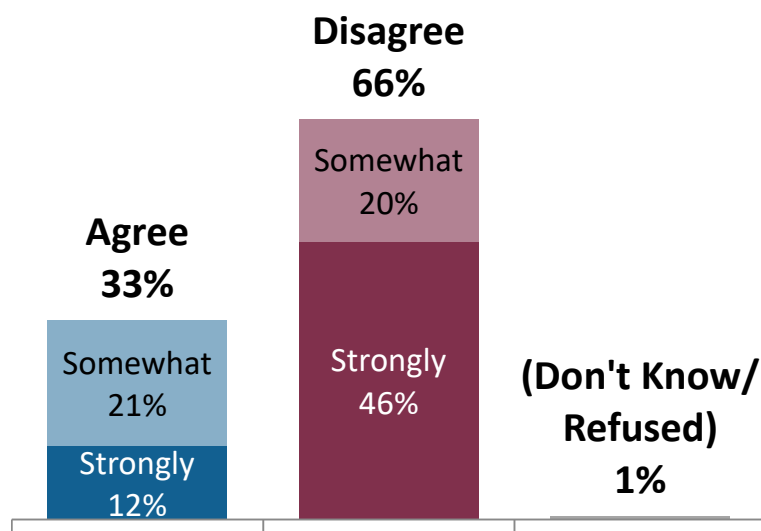
# Attitudes Toward a \$20 to \$30 Increase

*Including the reduction tradeoff does not make a \$20-30 increase more palatable.*

## Rate Increase Only

n=200, MoE=±6.9%

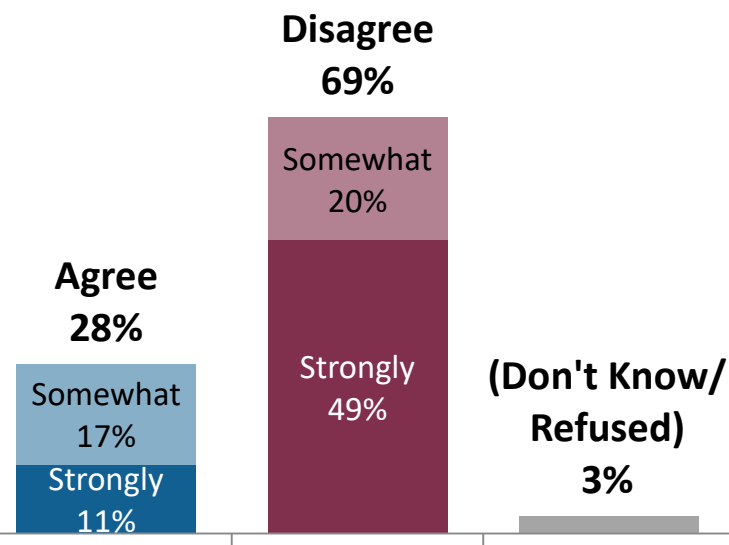
*In order to ensure a more reliable supply of water for our area, I would support a \$20-30 per month increase in water rates now to invest in infrastructure for the future.*



## Percent Reduction and Rate Increase

n=200, MoE=±6.9%

*In order to avoid having to reduce my water use by more than 10% during drought years, I would support a \$20-30 per month increase in water rates now to invest in infrastructure for the future.*

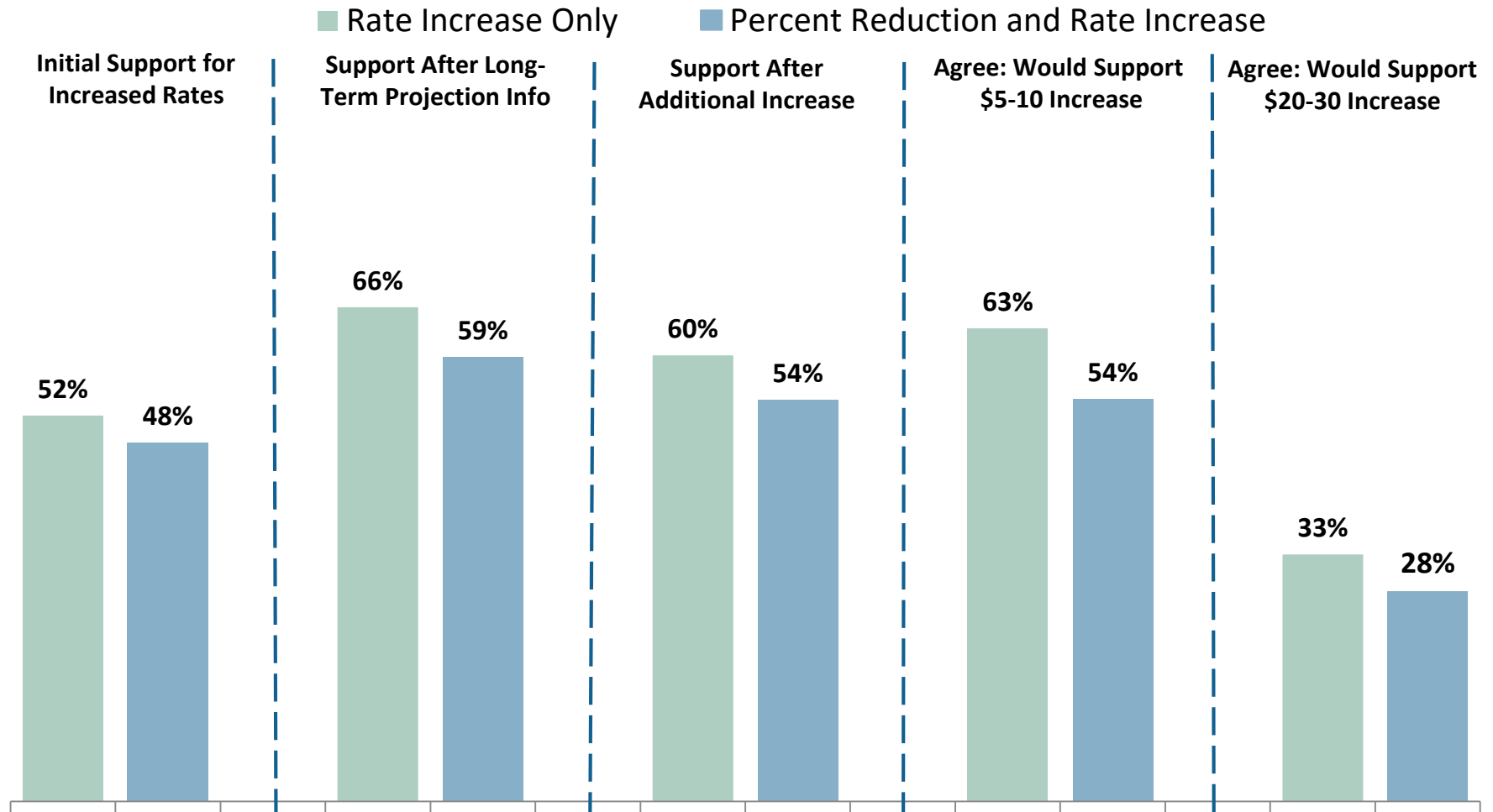


Q10. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements.



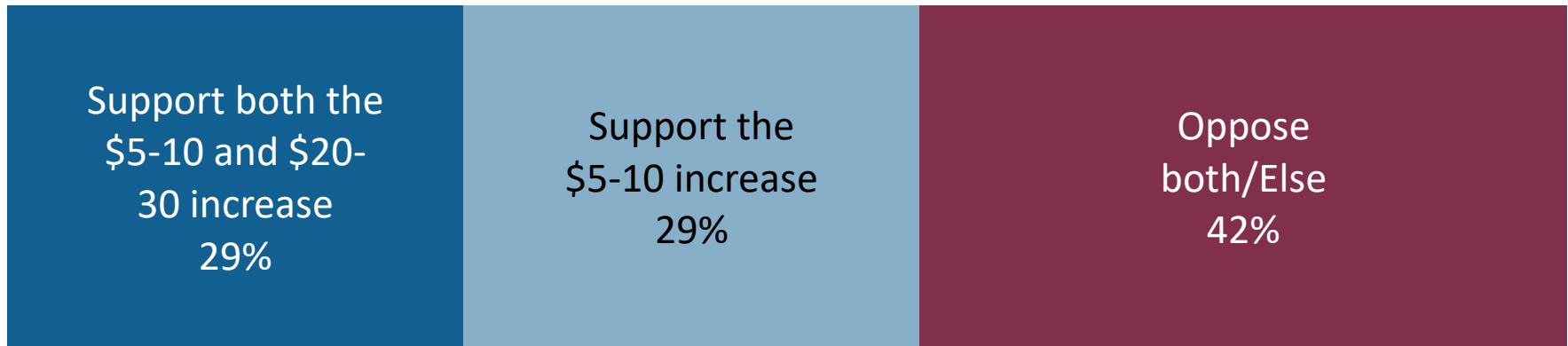
# Support and Attitudes - Rate Increase Only

*Although we don't see that explaining the limit on cutbacks is helpful, note that those who heard about the reduction targets were less supportive of rate increases throughout.*



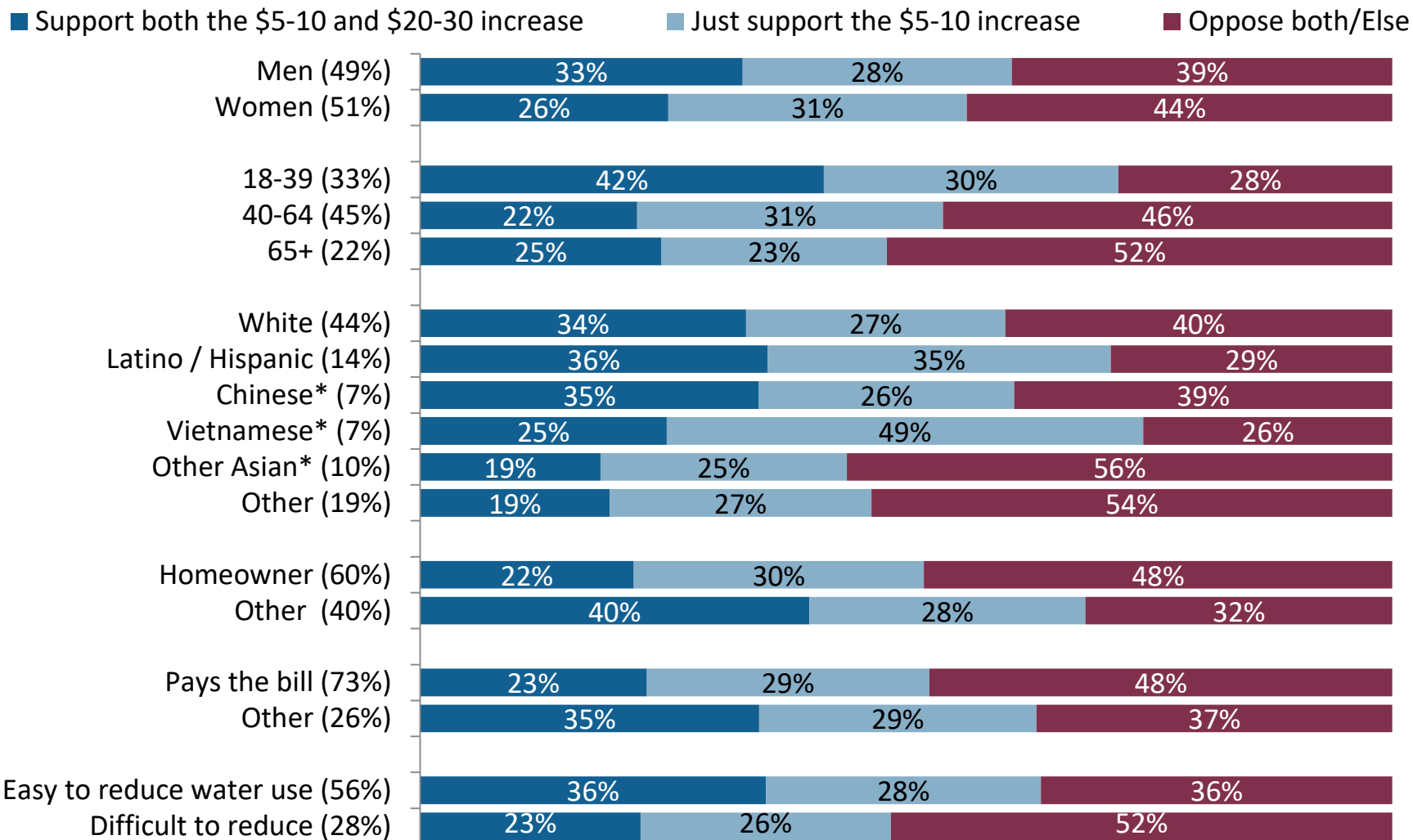
# Support Segmentation: Increase in Water Rates

*Just under a third support both increase amounts. The same number support the smaller increase only.*



# Support Segmentation by Subgroup

*Younger voters and renters are most likely to be supportive of both increases.*



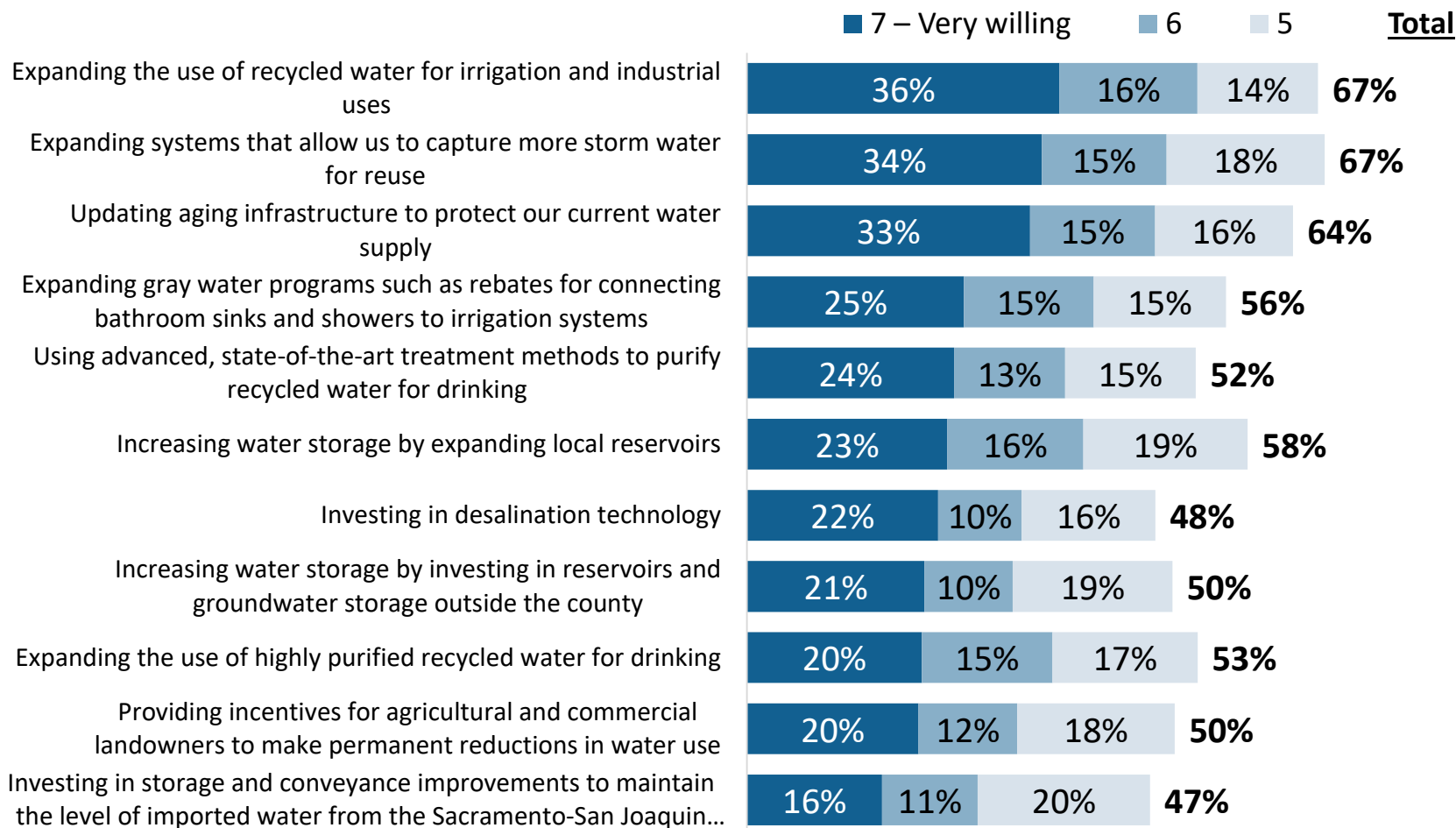
*\*use caution when generalizing the results among these groups due to small sample sizes*

Attachment 4  
Page 23 of 28



# Willingness to Pay for Specific Improvements

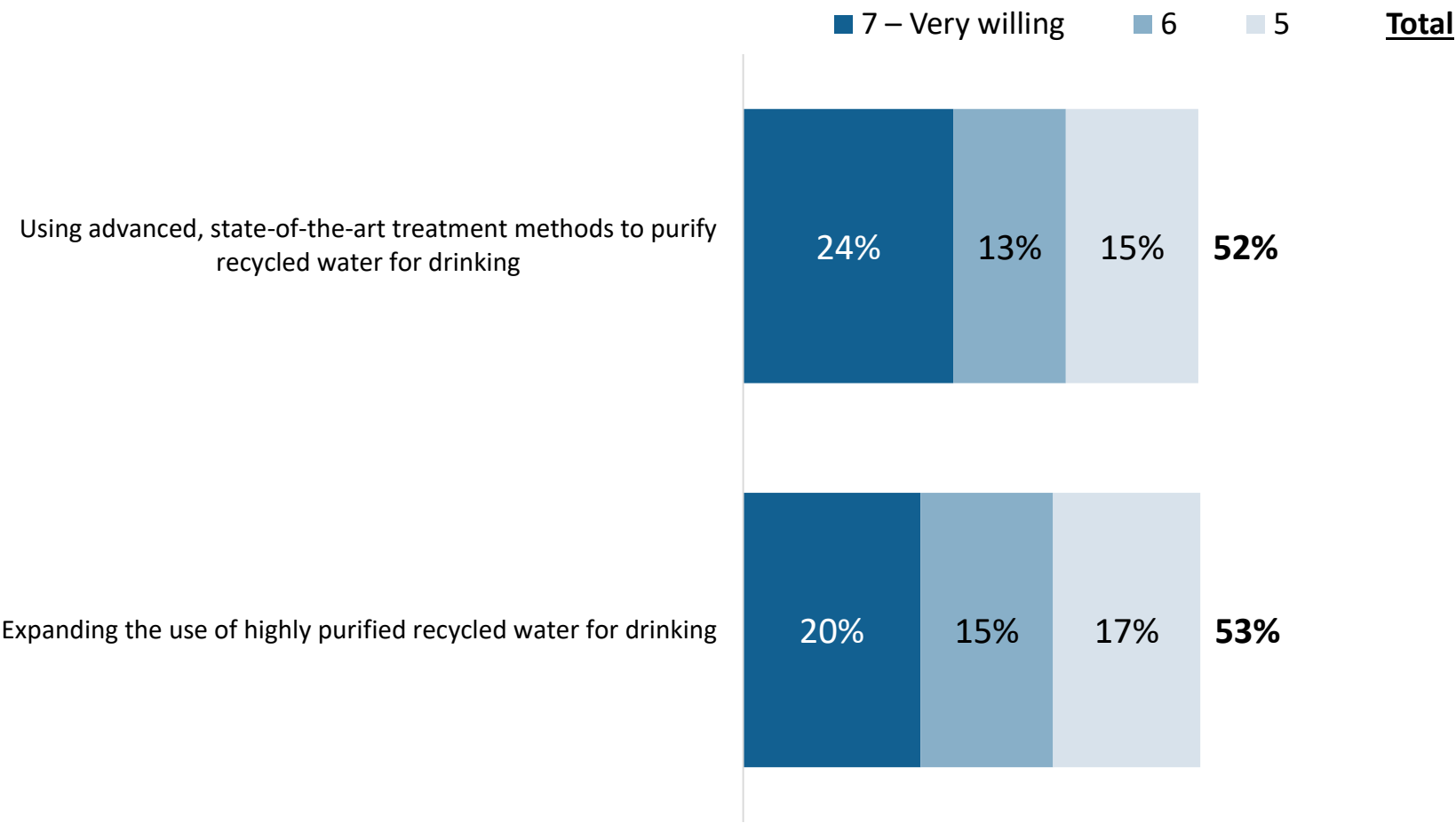
*Expanding purple water use and storm water capture and updating aging infrastructure are the specific improvements for which voters are most willing to pay increased rates.*



Q15-Q25. I'm going to read you a list of improvements the Santa Clara Valley Water District could make to ensure a more reliable supply of water. These improvements could potentially lead to changes in water rates. For each one, please indicate your willingness to pay increased rates for each type of improvement. Please use a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means you are not at all willing to pay higher water rates for that item, and 7 means you are very willing to pay higher water rates for that item.

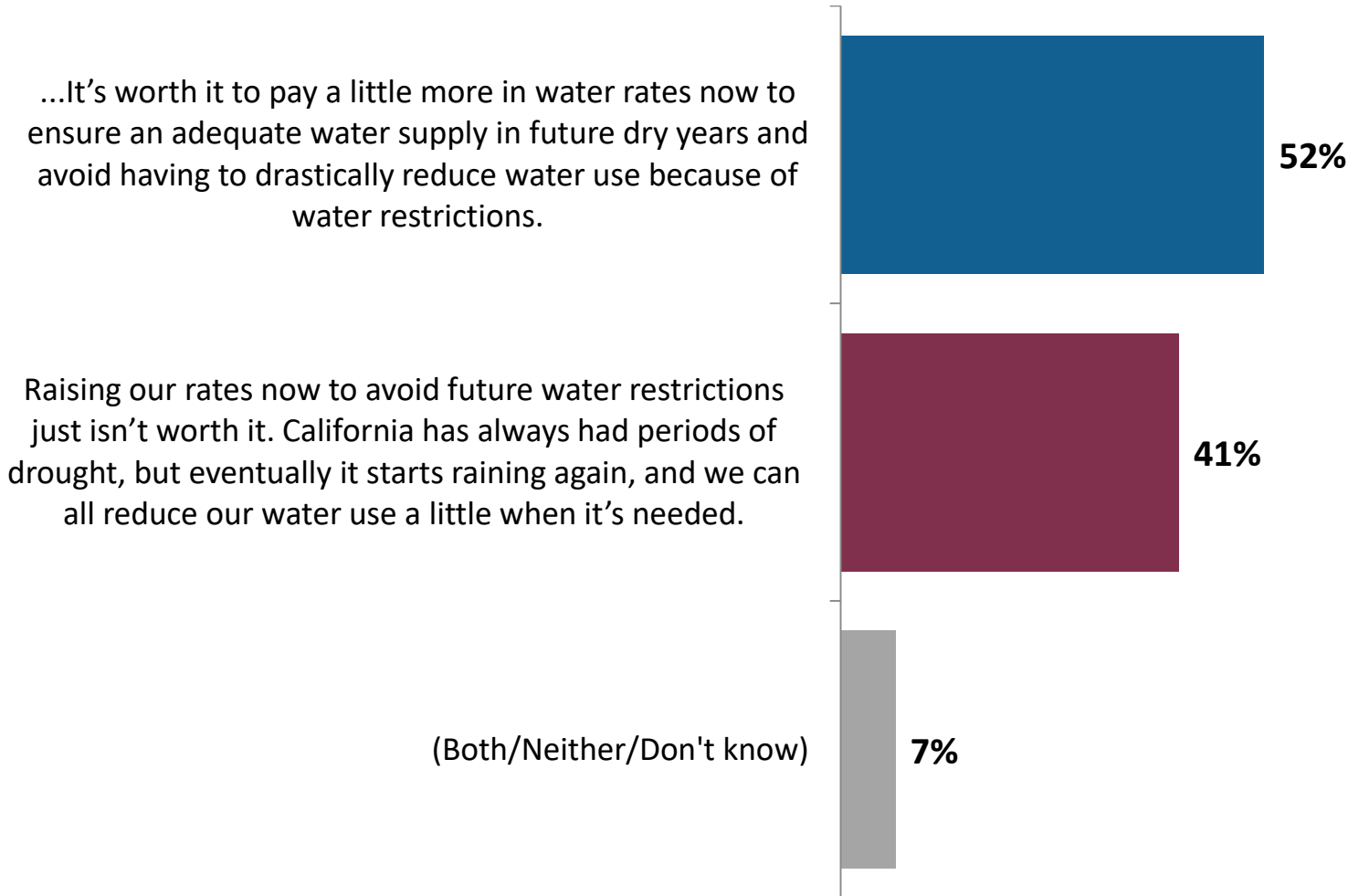
# Willingness to Pay for Potable Reuse

*State-of-the-art treatment of recycled water for drinking generates slightly more enthusiasm than highly purified recycled water.*



# Forced Choice: Worth Investing Now?

*Just about half agree that it's worth it to pay more now to be prepared for future dry years and avoid big water restrictions later.*



Q26. Now I'd like to read you a pair of statements. Please tell me whether the first one or the second one is closer to your opinion.



# Forced Choice: Cost Sharing

*Half feel that residents and businesses should all share the cost of ensuring an adequate water supply, while slightly fewer say it's not fair for residents to shoulder the burden.*

It's not fair to ask residents to shoulder the burden of paying for rate increases when the reason we won't have enough water in the future is because of developers and corporations increasing demand.

43%

Having a reliable water supply benefits everyone in Santa Clara County—residents and businesses alike—and we should all share the cost of making sure there's enough water to go around.

50%

(Both/Neither/Don't know) 7%

Q27. Now I'd like to read you a pair of statements. Please tell me whether the first one or the second one is closer to your opinion.

# Contacts

---



**Ruth Bernstein**

510-550-8922

[ruth@emcresearch.com](mailto:ruth@emcresearch.com)

**Jessica Polsky**

510-550-8933

[jessica@emcresearch.com](mailto:jessica@emcresearch.com)

**Sianna Ziegler**

206-204-8045

[sianna@emcresearch.com](mailto:sianna@emcresearch.com)