

# *Do Voters Really Mean What They Say?*



## *Attitudes Toward Institutional Reform in California*

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*Partner*

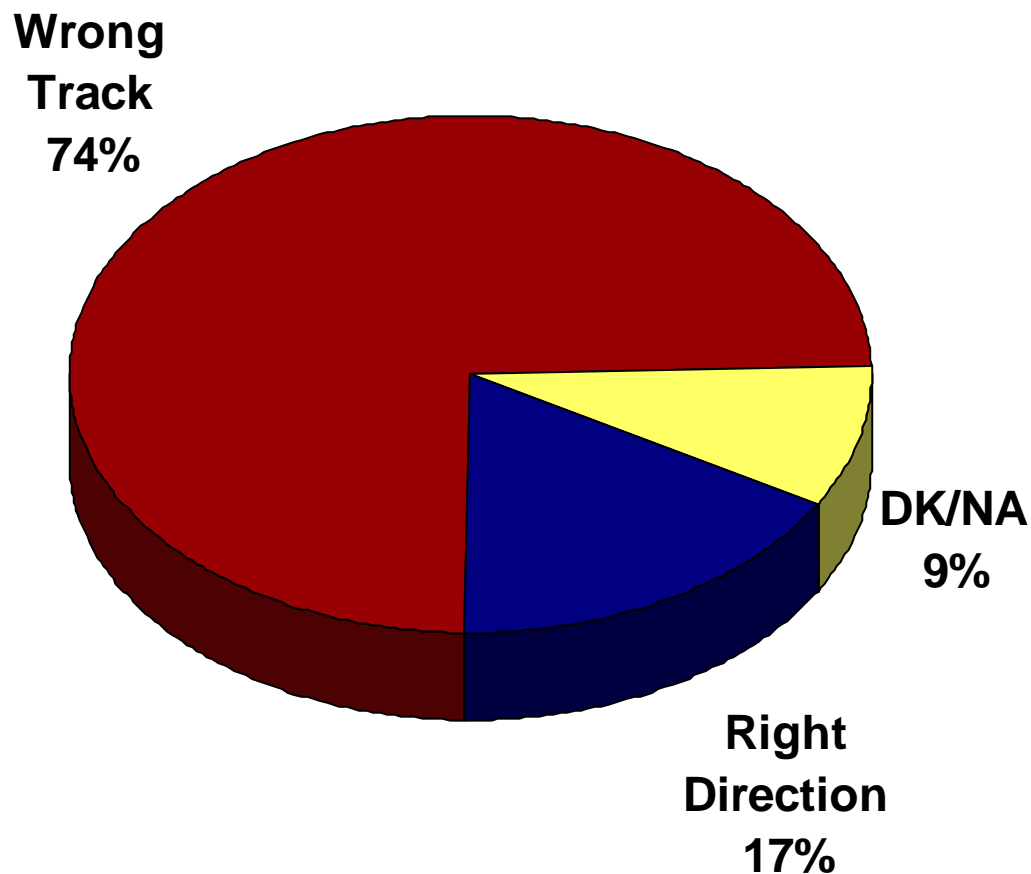
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Santa Monica, CA – Oakland, CA – Madison, WI – Mexico City

# **Section I: Just How Bad Is It Out There?**

# Three in four voters think the state of California is on the “wrong track.”

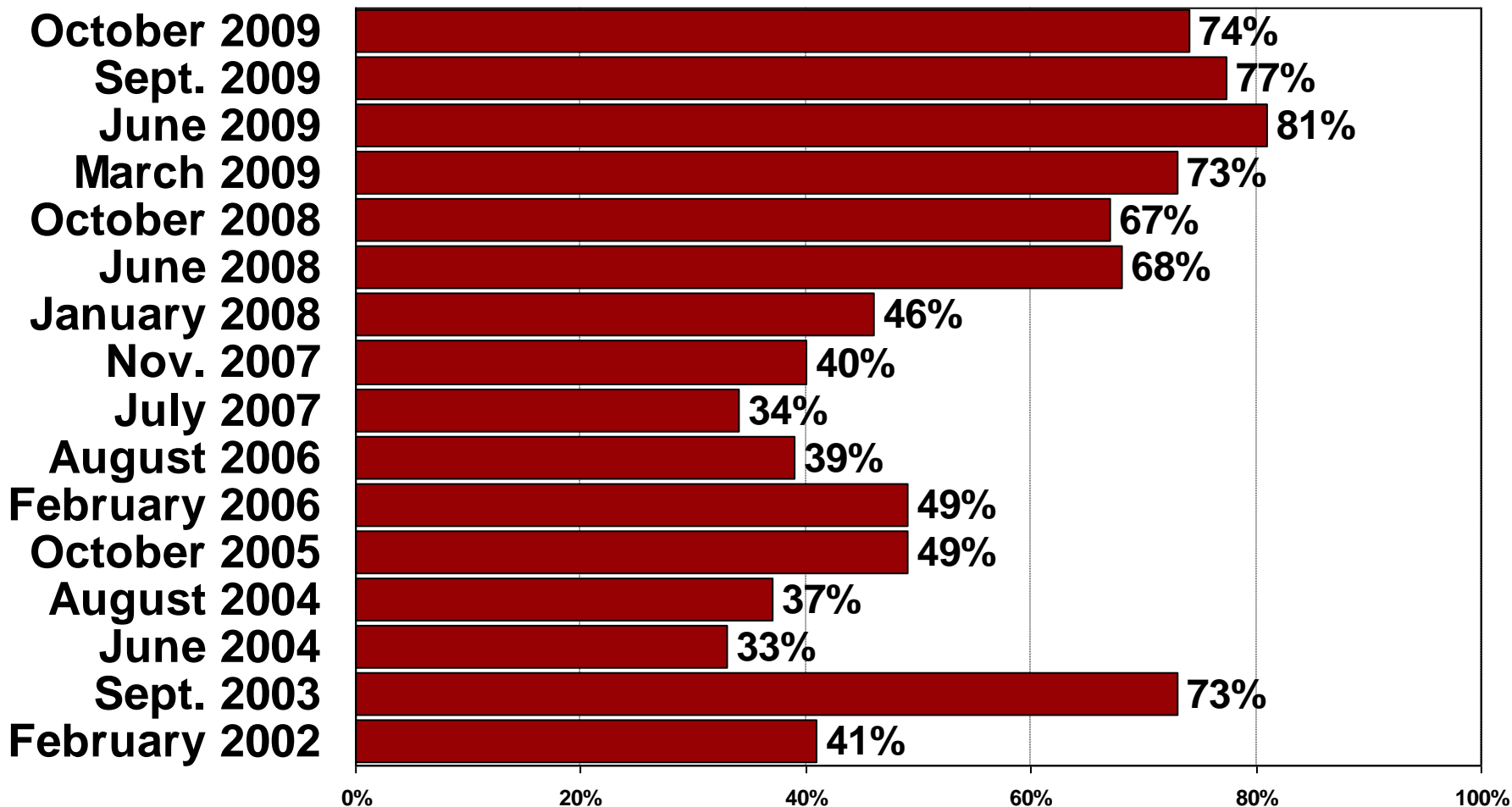


2. Would you say that things in \_\_\_\_\_ are generally headed in the right direction or do you feel that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Source: FMM&A Statewide Survey, October 2009

# These negative feelings are at a historic high – trumping even the weeks before the recall election.

*Percent that believes California is on the “wrong track”*



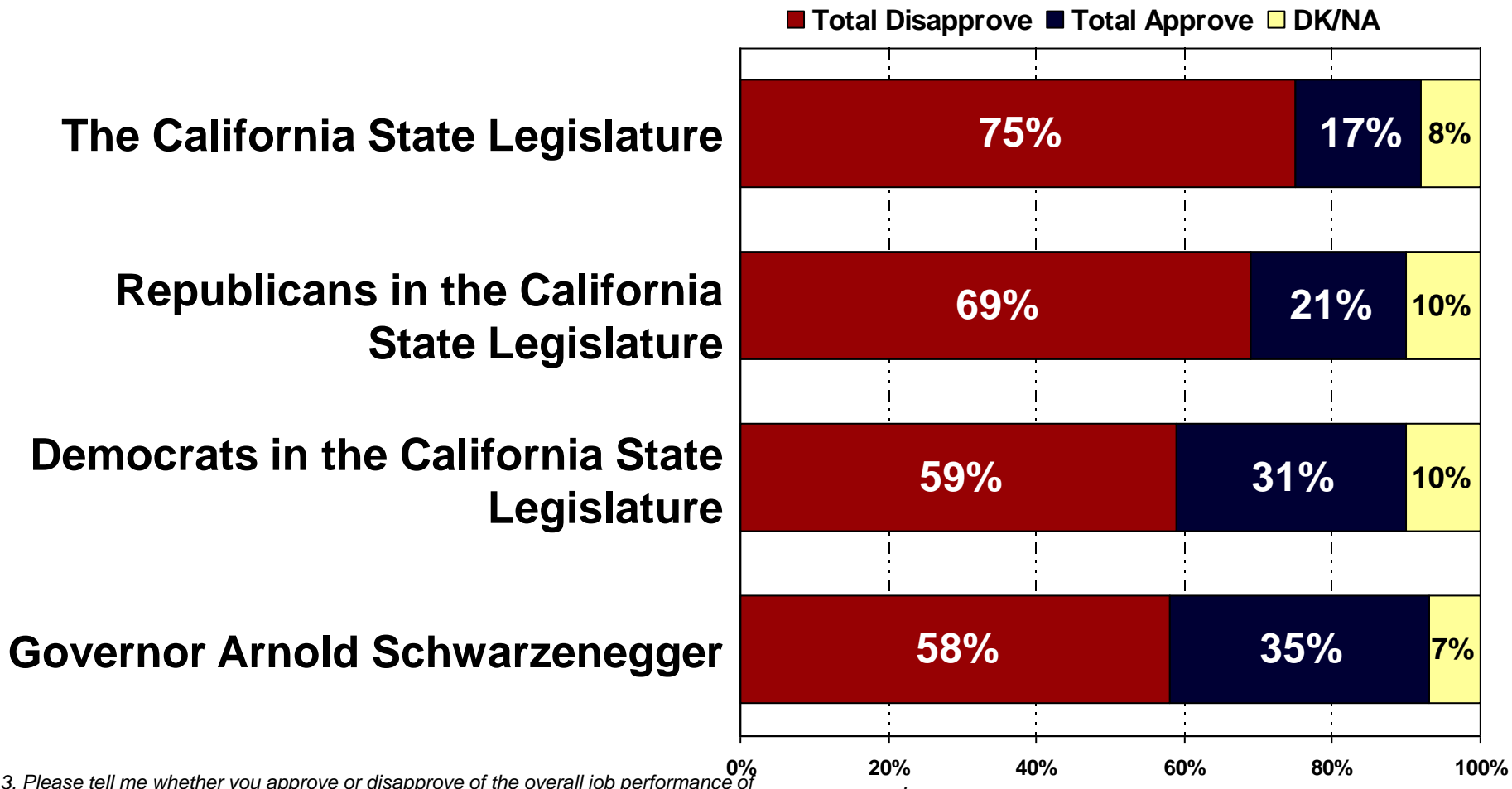
2. Would you say that things in \_\_\_\_\_ are generally headed in the right direction or do you feel that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

Source: FMM&A Statewide Surveys 2002-Present

# Voters of all parties overwhelmingly think California is on the “wrong track.”

Sub-Group	Right Direction	Wrong Track	DK/NA
Democrat	17%	73%	10%
Republican	15%	79%	6%
DTS/Other	19%	67%	14%

# Not surprisingly, voters disapprove of the performance of state legislators in both parties and the Governor...

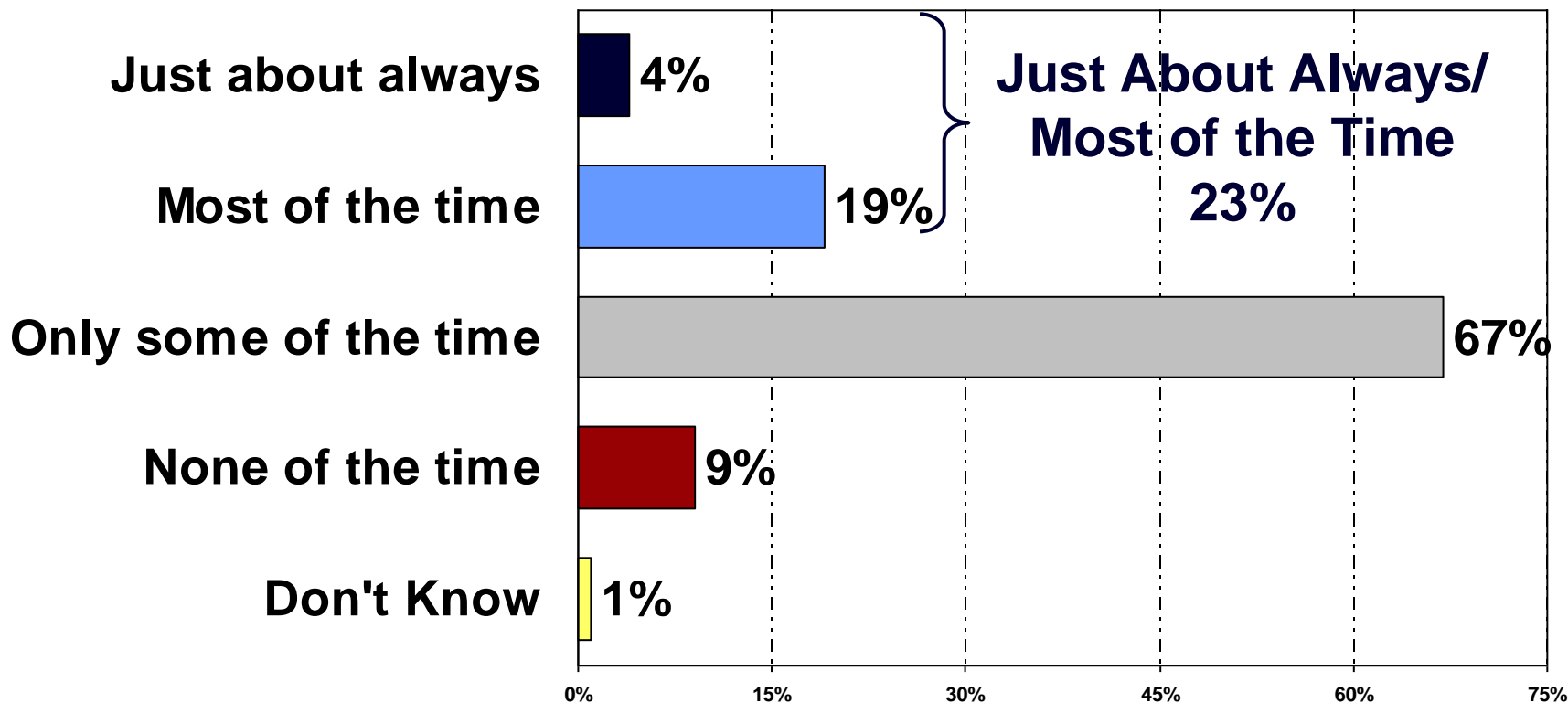


3. Please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the overall job performance of \_\_\_\_\_.

Source: FMM&A Statewide Survey, June 2009

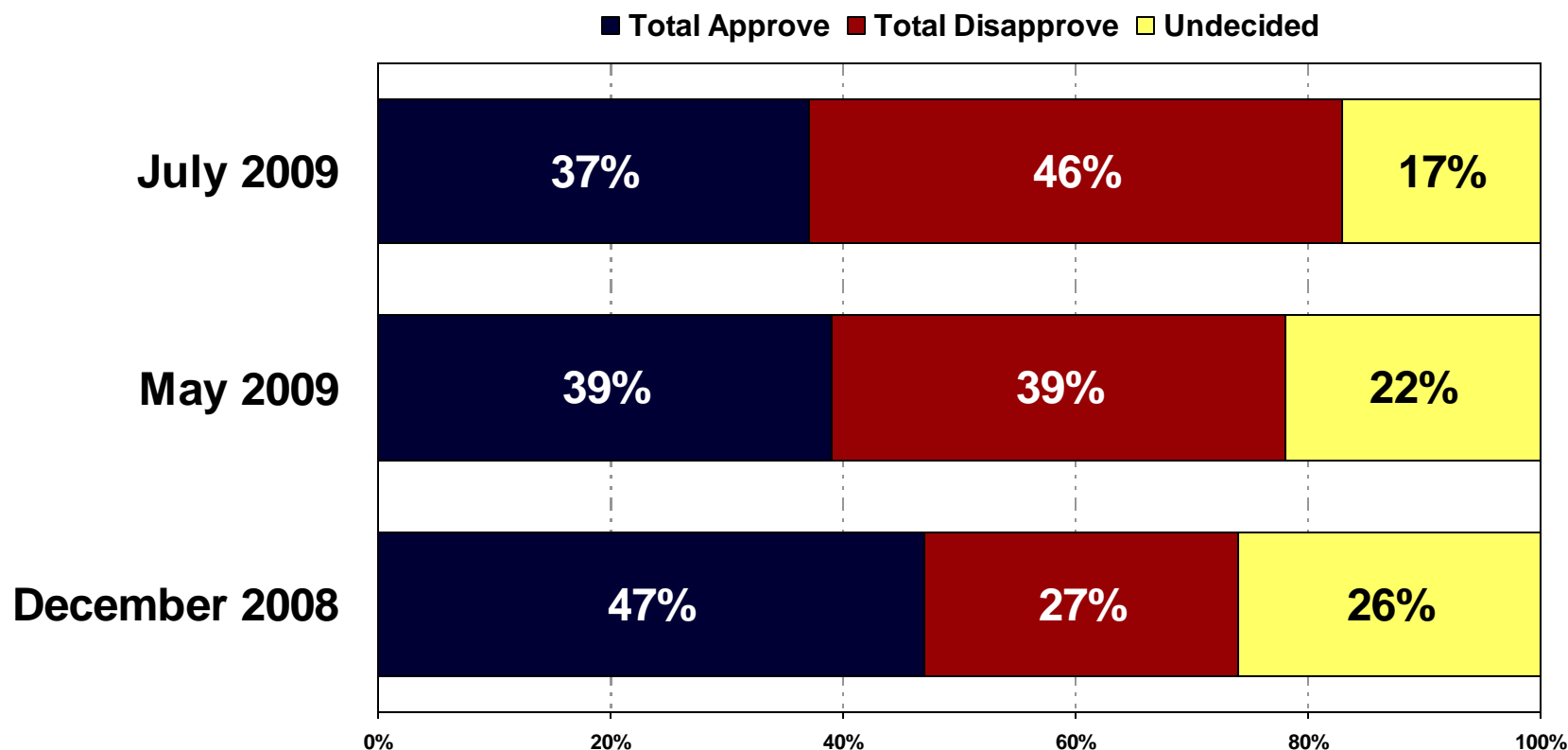
# ...and less than one-quarter think Sacramento can be trusted “to do what is right” on a regular basis.

*“How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Sacramento to do what is right?”*



# These sentiments have even come to affect voters' perception of their own state legislators.

## *Job Approval for "Your State Senator"*

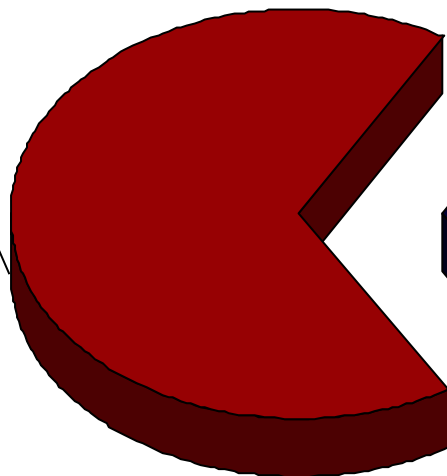




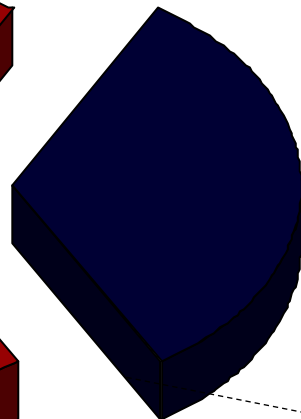
**Of course, these sentiments must be understood in a context where voters feel disconnected from their legislators.**

*“Can you tell me the name of the person who represents your area in the California State Senate?”*

**DK/NA  
67%**



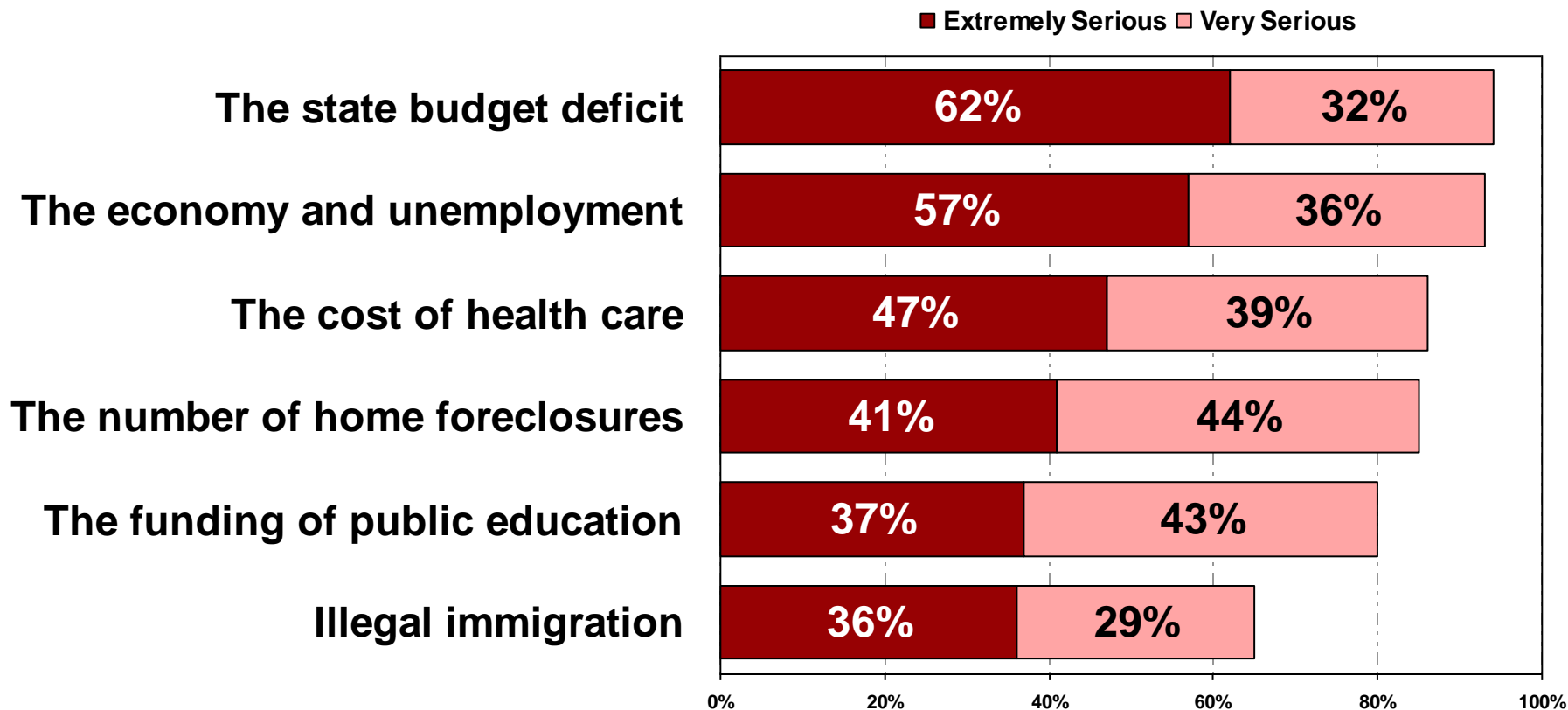
**Name  
offered  
33%**



***Only 7% of  
California  
voters are able  
to correctly  
name their state  
senator.***

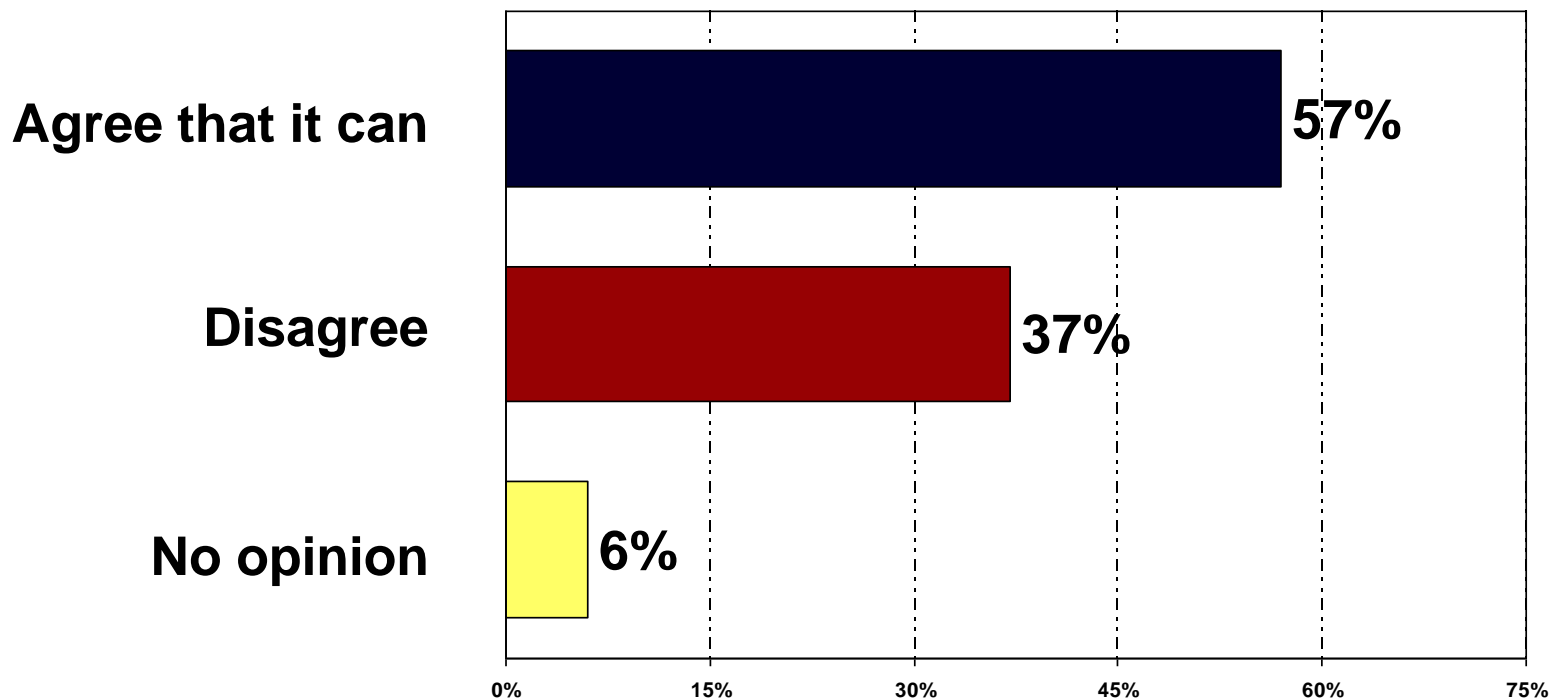
# **Section II: The Role of California's State Budget**

# In October, voters still regard the state budget deficit as the most pressing problem facing the state.



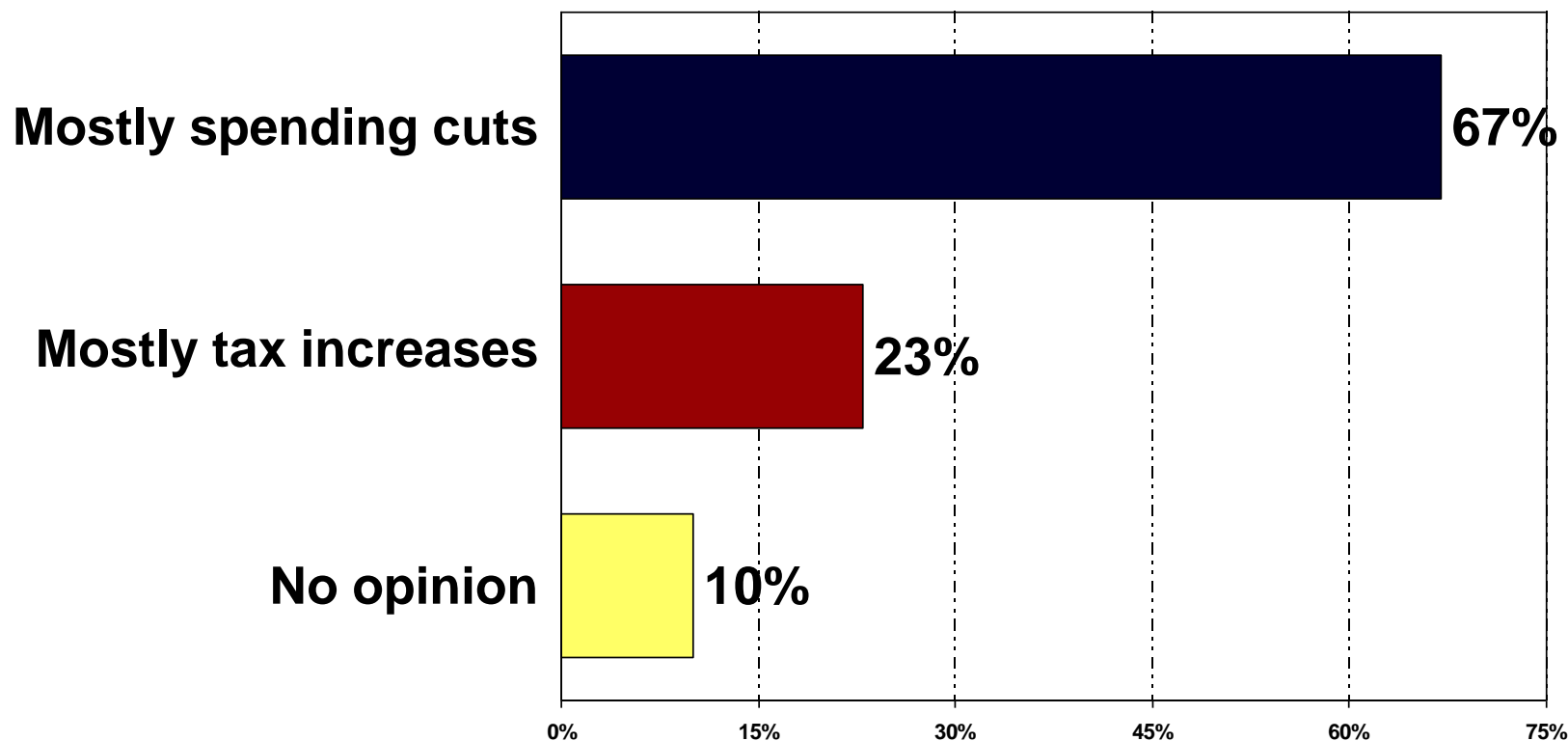
# Three in five voters believe that the State can cut up to \$25 billion in waste and inefficiency.

*The state government has been facing large budget deficits over the past several years. Some people believe that simply by eliminating waste and inefficiencies our state government can provide roughly the same level of services it currently does, even if the budget has to be cut by 20 to 25 billion dollars.*

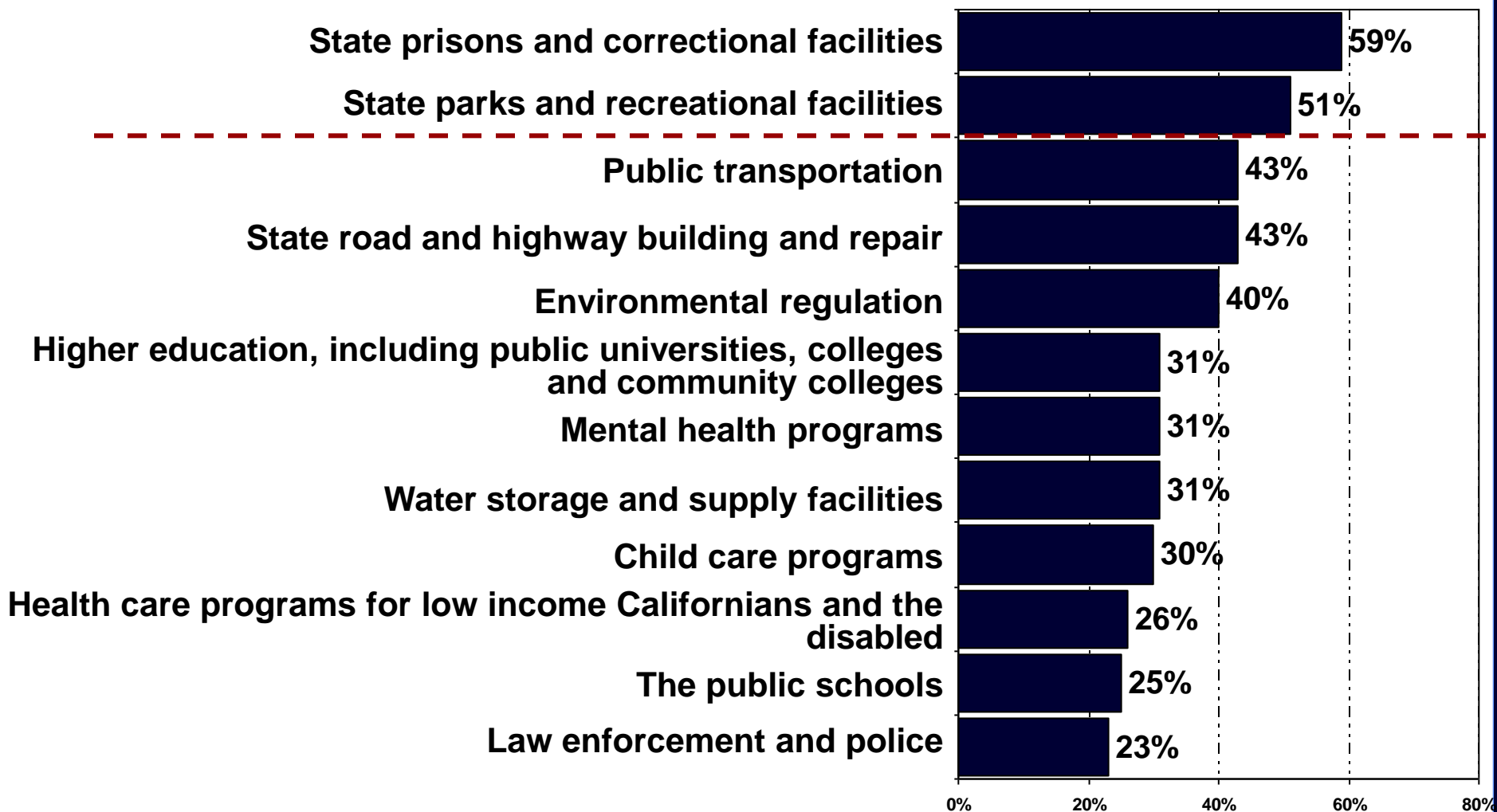


# When forced to choose, two-thirds of voters believe the deficit can be dealt with mainly through spending cuts...

*Should the state's current budget deficit be dealt with mostly through spending cuts or mostly through tax increases?*



# ...though the only specific services they are willing to cut are prisons and parks.



# When given the option, half support a combination of reduced spending and new taxes and fees.

*We should balance the budget...*

Primarily by cutting services, so that we can avoid further increases in taxes or fees

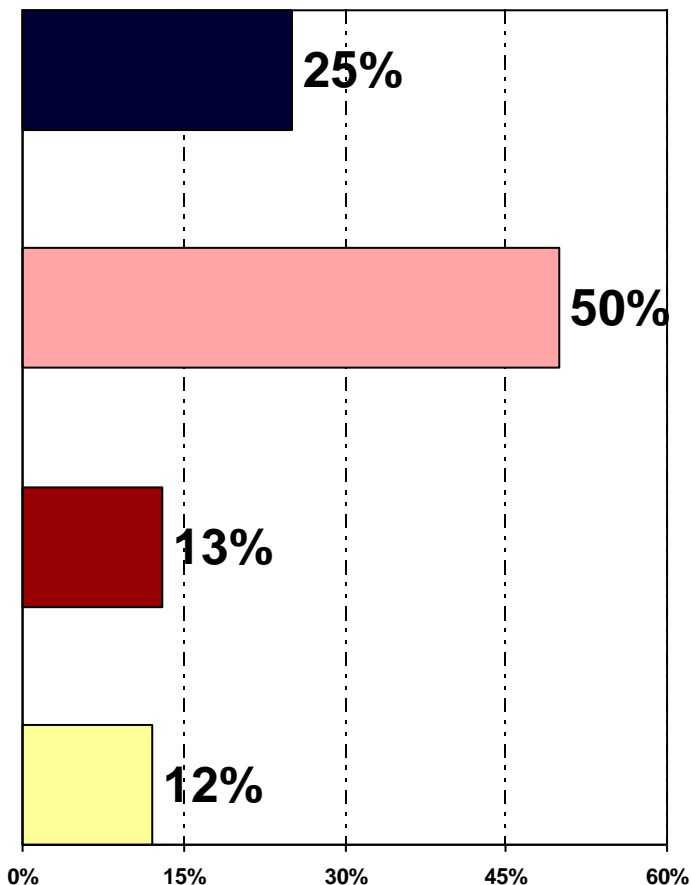
*OR*

Through a combination of service cuts and tax or fee increases

*OR*

Primarily by raising taxes and fees, so that we can avoid more cuts to vital services

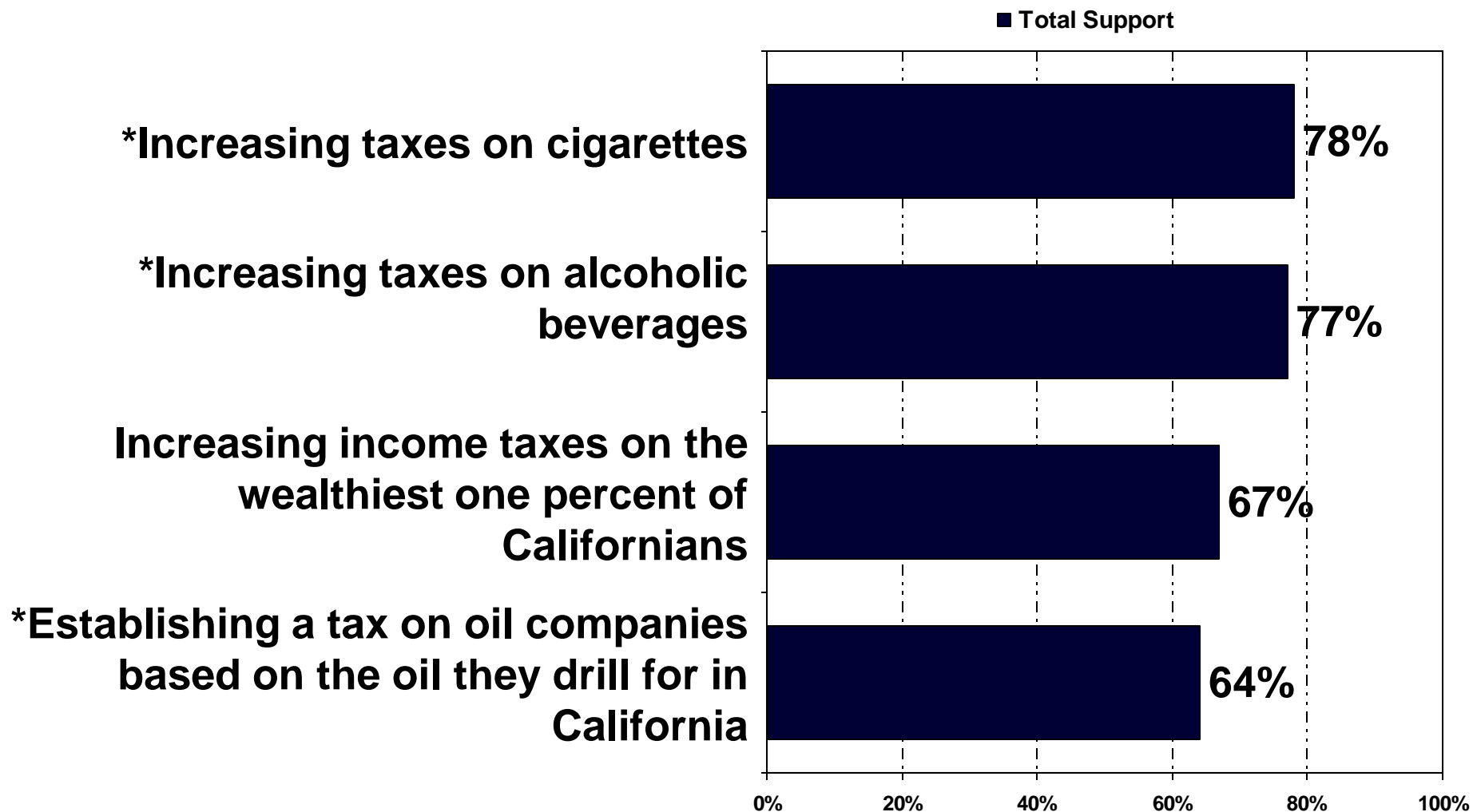
All/Neither/DK/NA



I'm going to read you three statements about the state budget. Please tell me which statement comes closest to your opinion.

Source: FMM&A Statewide Voter Survey, June 2009

# Voters support a variety of specific revenue-generating proposals, with raising taxes on cigarettes and alcohol as the most popular.



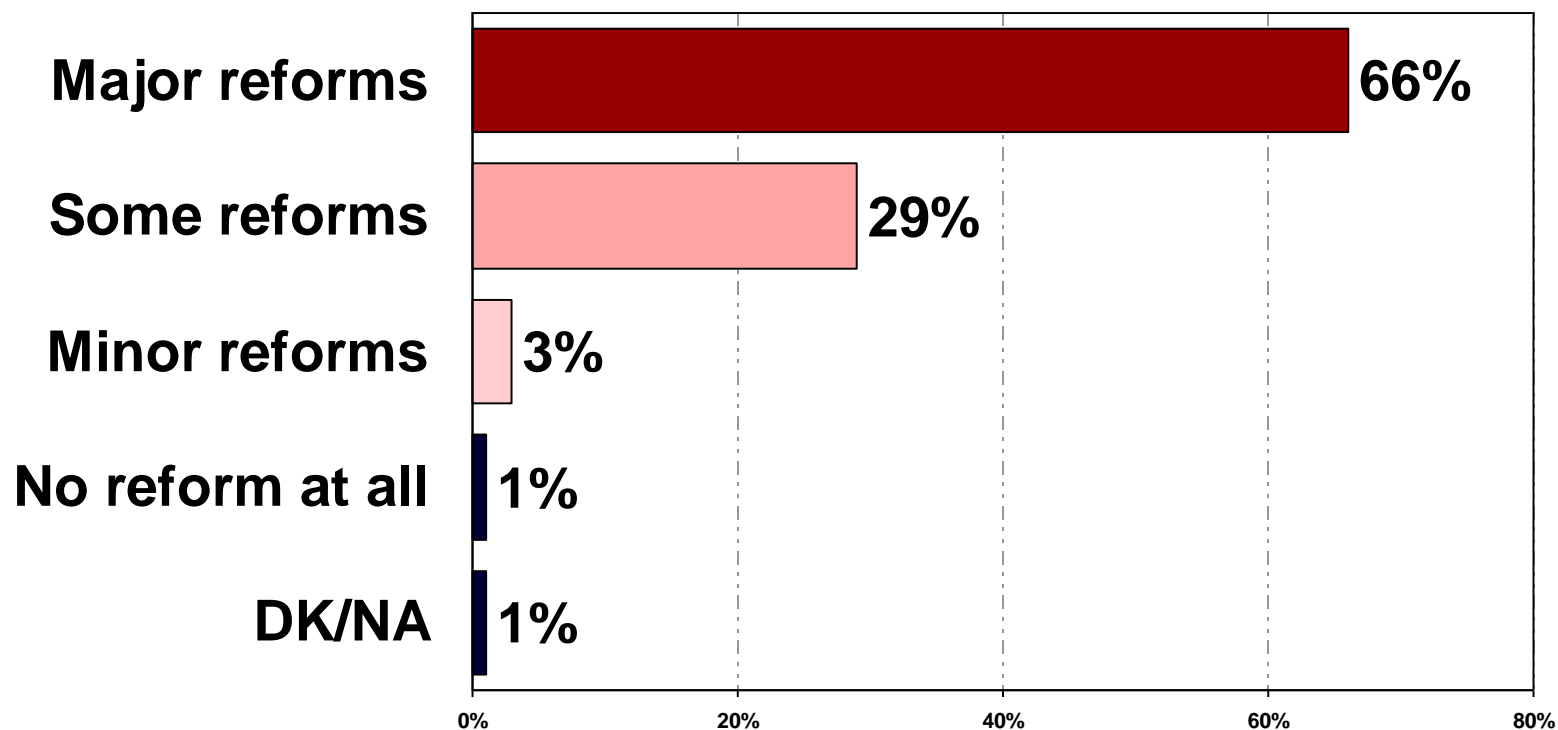
I am going to read you some of the proposals they are considering. Please tell me whether it sounds like something you would support or oppose as a strategy for balancing the state budget. \*Split Sample. Source: FMM&A Statewide Voter Survey, June 2009



# **Section III: What Does This Mean for Reform?**

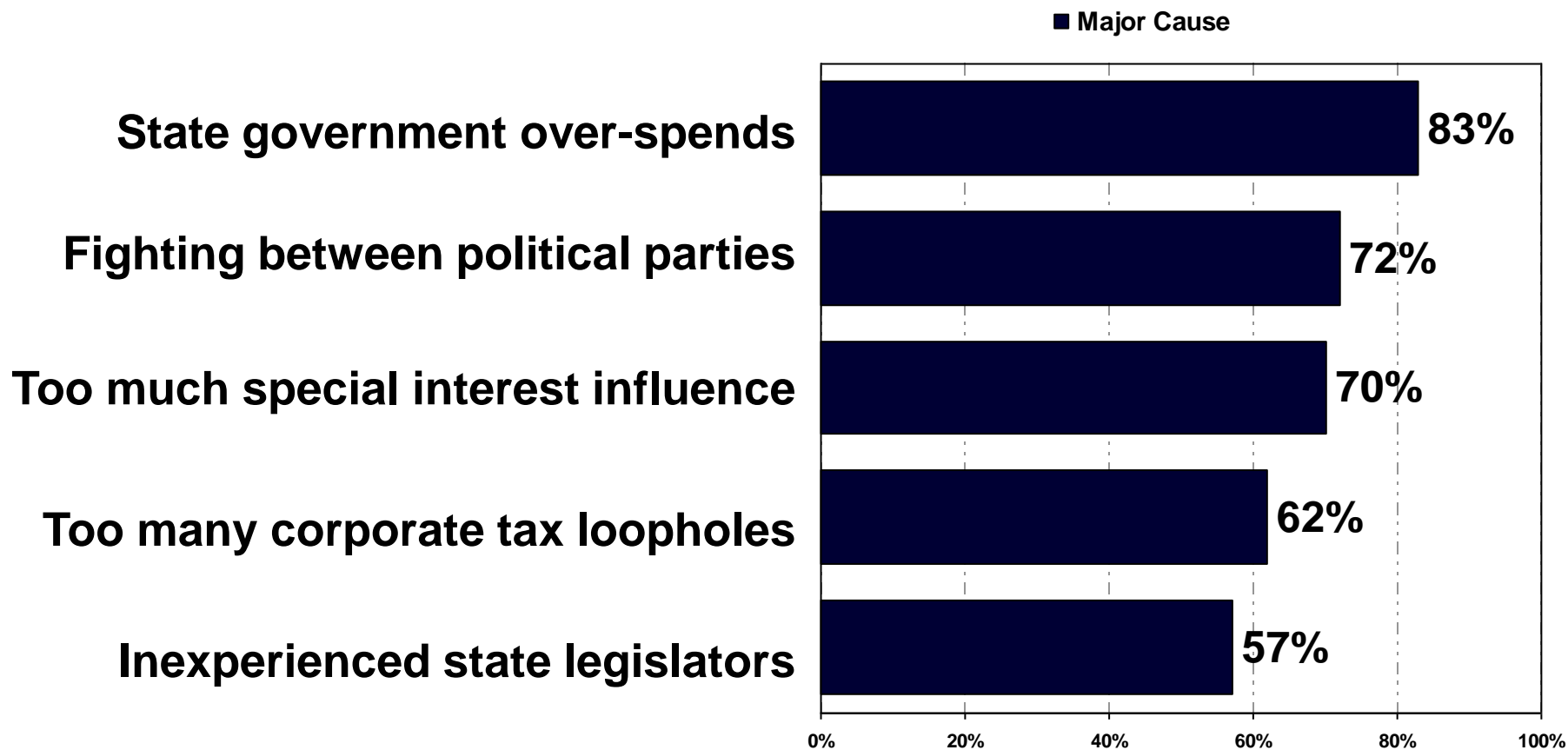
# Two in three voters call for “major reform” of state government.

*Overall, do you think state government in California needs major reforms, some reforms, minor reforms or no reform at all?*



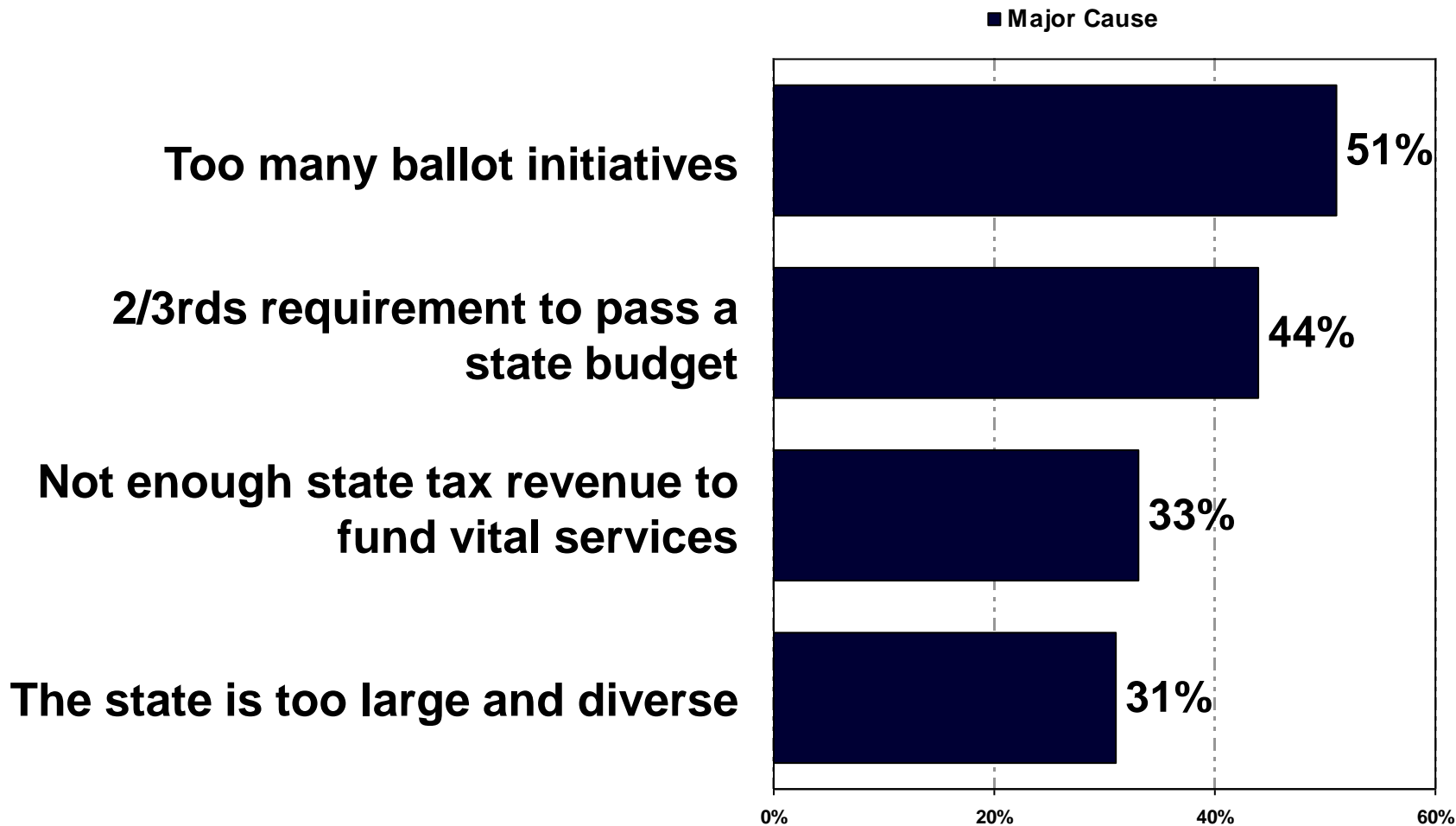
# But while voters are quick to pin the state's budget problems on legislators and special interests...

*Please tell me whether you think it is a major cause, a minor cause, or not a cause at all of California's problems in passing a budget.*



# ...relatively few fault structural issues.

Please tell me whether you think it is a major cause, a minor cause, or not a cause at all of California's problems in passing a budget.



# *A. Reforming the State Budget*

# **In principle, voters back a variety of budget reforms.**

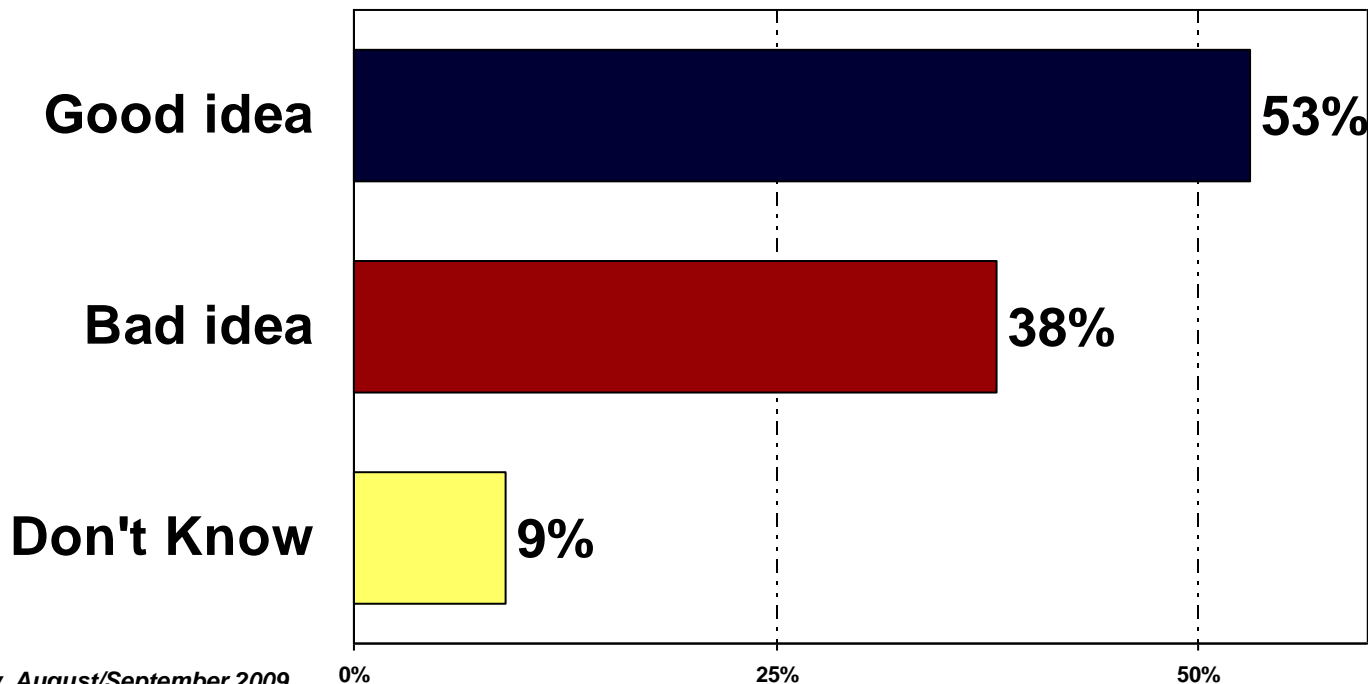
<b>Policy</b>	<b>Support</b>
<b>Require that state programs identify a funding source for any new spending they require</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>Require the Legislature to measure the effectiveness and results of programs when making budget decisions, and periodically consider eliminating ineffective ones</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Require the Legislature to craft two-year budgets every year, as well as multi-year revenue and spending forecasts</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Prohibit the state from using unexpected increases in revenue to fund ongoing programs</b>	<b>58%</b>

# Support for these ideas cuts across party lines.

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Independents</b>
<b>Require that state programs identify a funding source for any new spending they require</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Require the Legislature to measure the effectiveness and results of programs when making budget decisions, and periodically consider eliminating ineffective ones</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>81%</b>
<b>Require the Legislature to craft two-year budgets every year, as well as multi-year revenue and spending forecasts</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Prohibit the state from using unexpected increases in revenue to fund ongoing programs</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>61%</b>

# A majority supports reducing the two-thirds vote in the State Legislature needed to pass a budget...

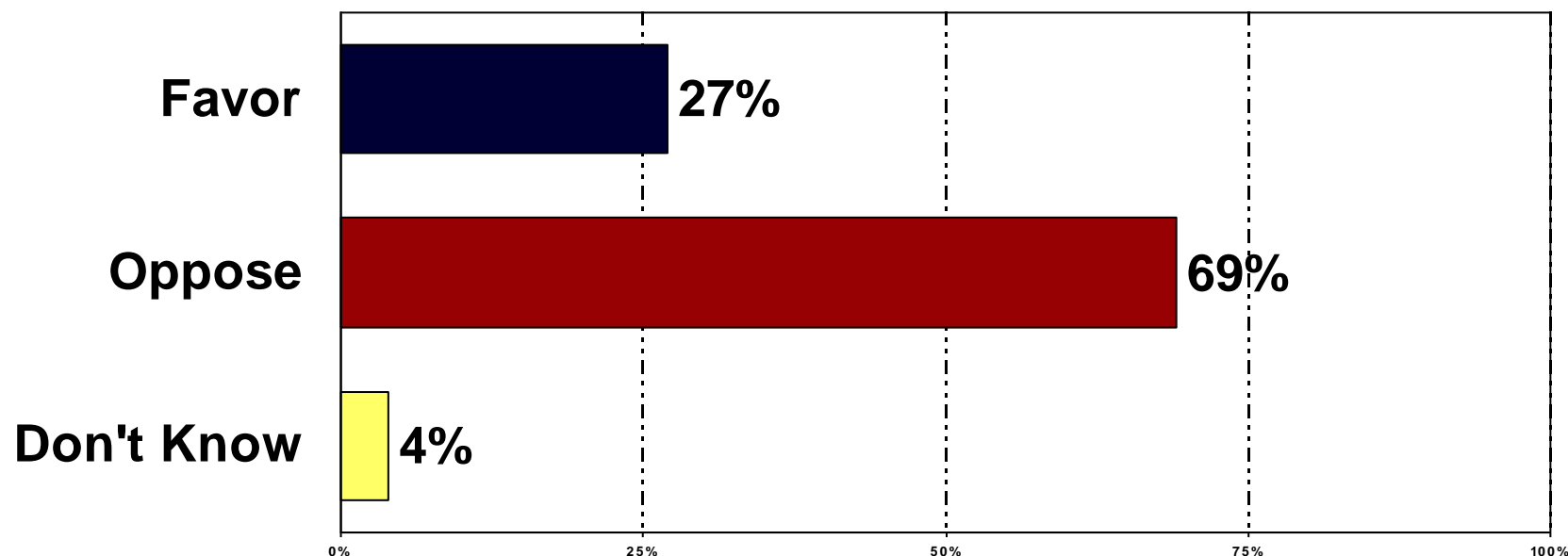
*“As you may know, the California state constitution requires that two-thirds of the state legislature agree to a state budget for it to pass. Do you think it’s a good idea or a bad idea to replace the two-thirds vote requirement with a 55% majority vote for the state legislature to pass a budget?”*





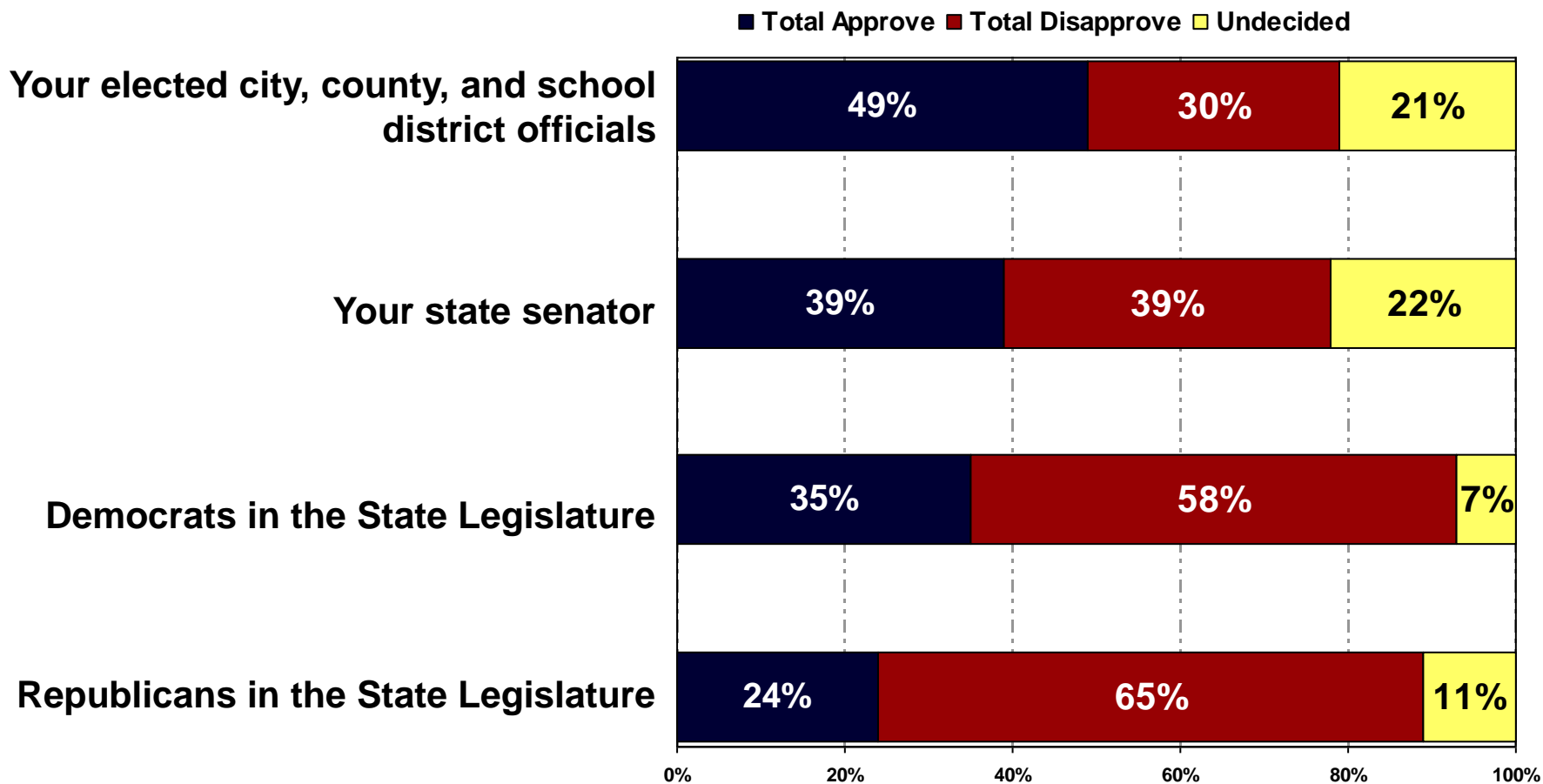
## ...but voters do not want to make it easier for the State Legislature to raise taxes.

***“Proposition 13 generally requires a 2/3 vote of the State Legislature to increase state taxes. Would you approve or disapprove of changing Proposition 13 to enable the Legislature to increase state taxes by a simple 50 percent majority vote?”***



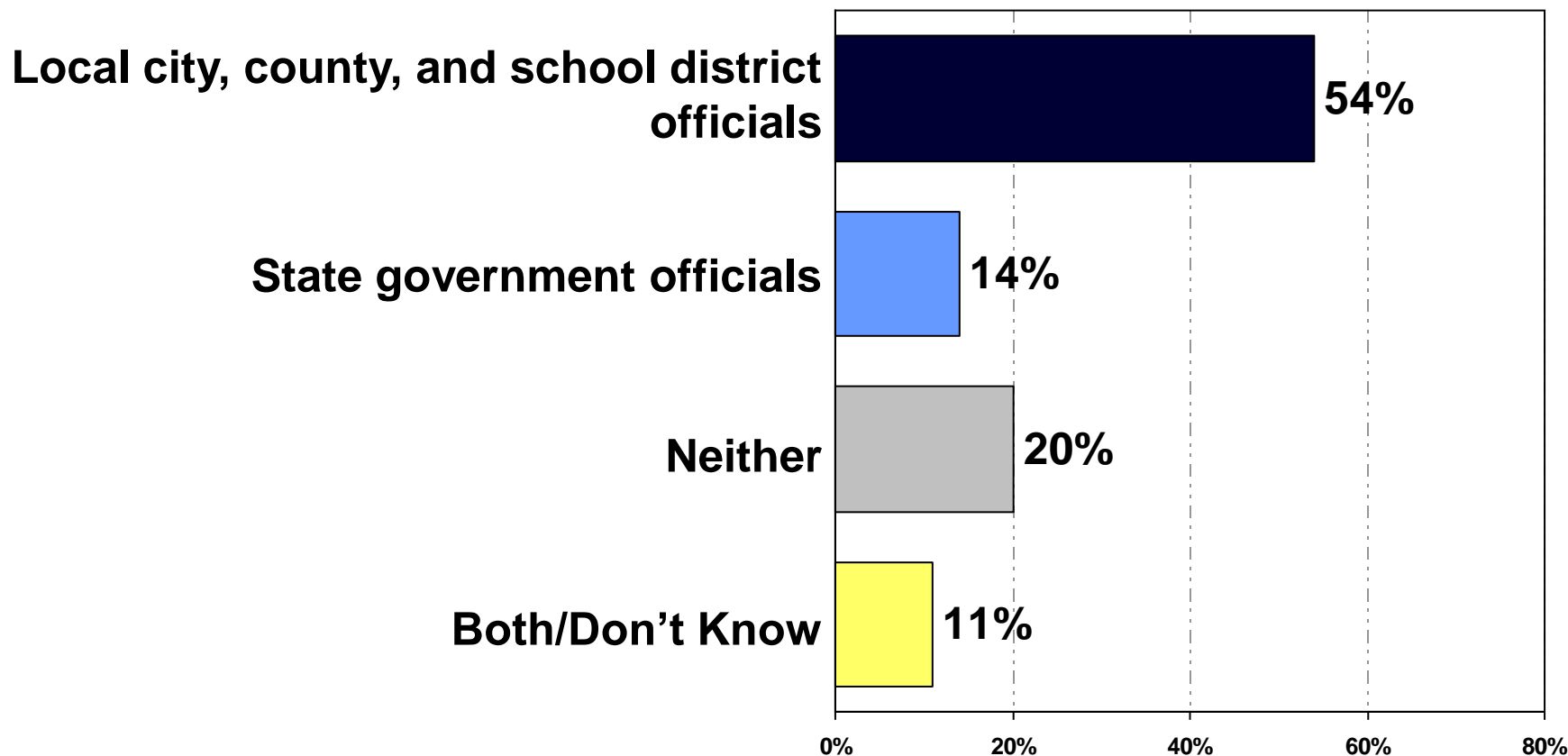
## *B. Empowering Local Communities*

# Voters have a higher regard for local officials than State officials.



# Voters also consider local officials more trustworthy than state officials.

*In general, whom do you trust more to make decisions about funding and management of public services:*



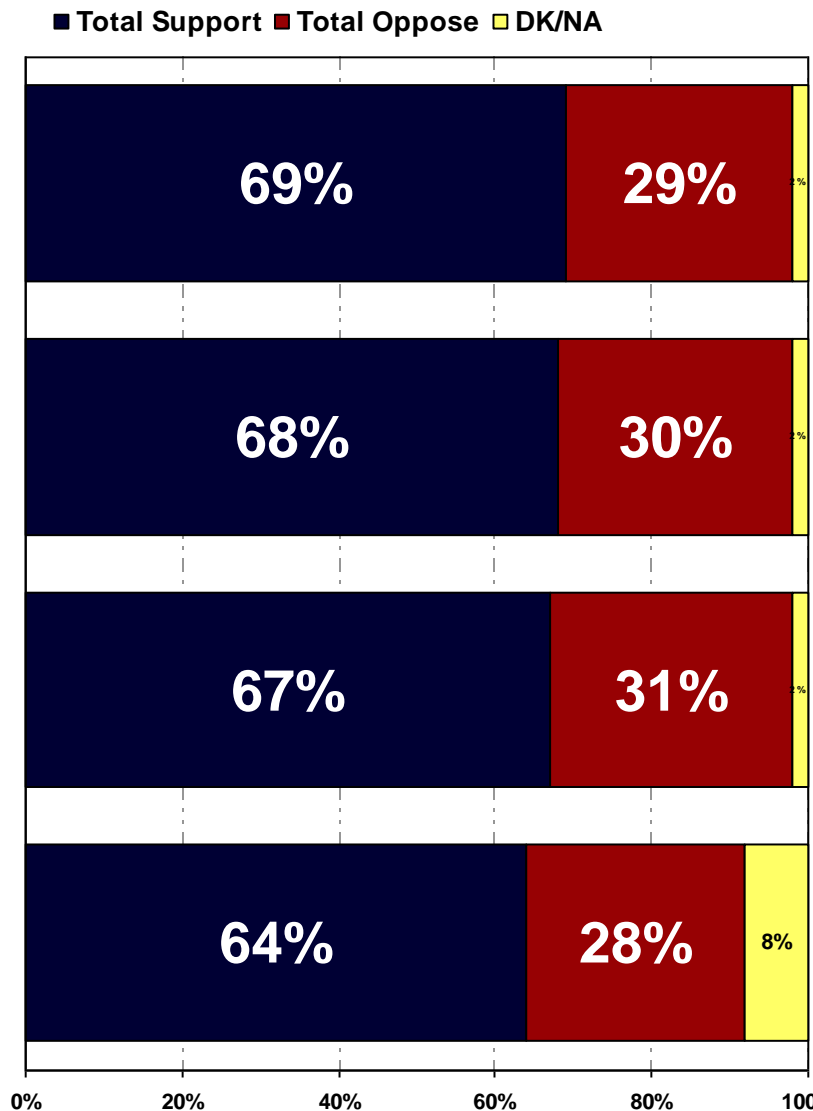
# Voters strongly support policies to protect local funds from the State.

Prohibiting the state from borrowing/taking local government funds for police, fire, 911 emergency services, health care, parks and libraries and other local government services

Prohibiting the state from borrowing/taking gas tax funds dedicated to public transportation services, like bus, shuttles, light-rail, regional commuter rail, and other public transportation services

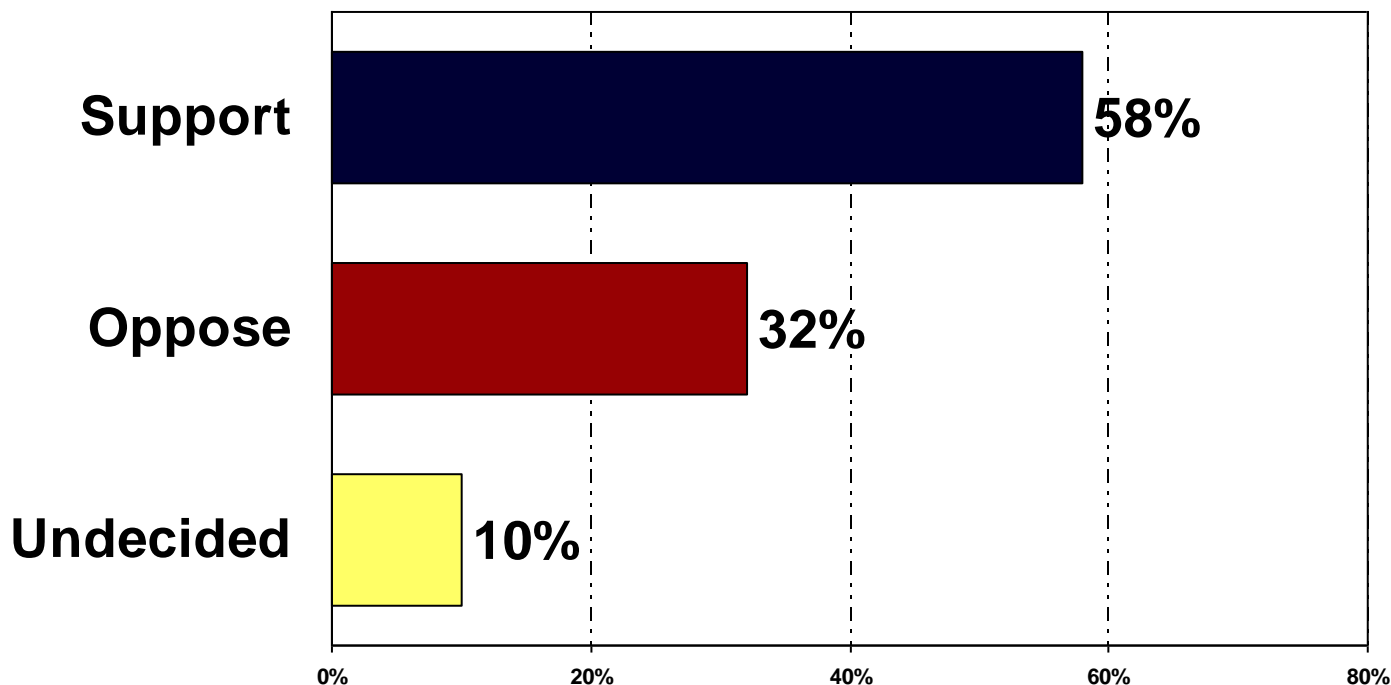
Prohibiting the state from borrowing/taking gas tax funds dedicated to transportation improvements like road safety repairs, traffic congestion relief, pothole repairs, traffic signal synchronization, street maintenance, and freeway and highway improvements

Prohibiting funds raised by a local ballot measure for local services from being taken by state government



## Voters also back shifting funding and responsibility from the state to local government.

“Shifting responsibility and funding for programs delivered locally, like education and health care, from state to local government.”

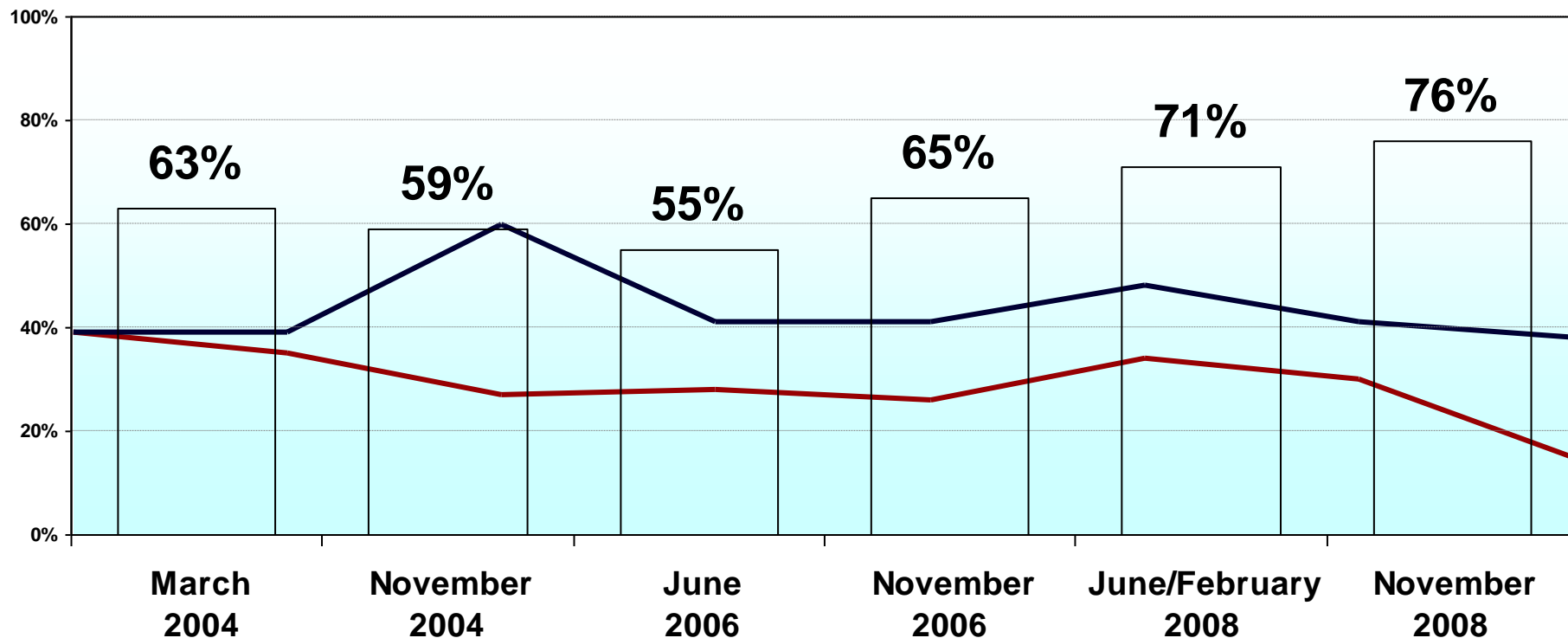


# Voters have increasingly supported local ballot measures to fund services provided by cities, counties, schools and special districts.

<b>Election</b>	<b>Total Number of Local Ballot Measures Passed</b>	<b>Percentage Success Rate of All Measures</b>
November 2008	233	<b>76%</b>
June/February 2008	99	<b>71%</b>
November 2006	132	<b>65%</b>
June 2006	53	<b>55%</b>
November 2004	127	<b>59%</b>
March 2004	77	<b>63%</b>

# Juxtaposing the success rate of local ballot measures against job approval ratings for the Governor and State Legislature shows an interesting trend.

Job Approval Ratings — State Legislature — Governor

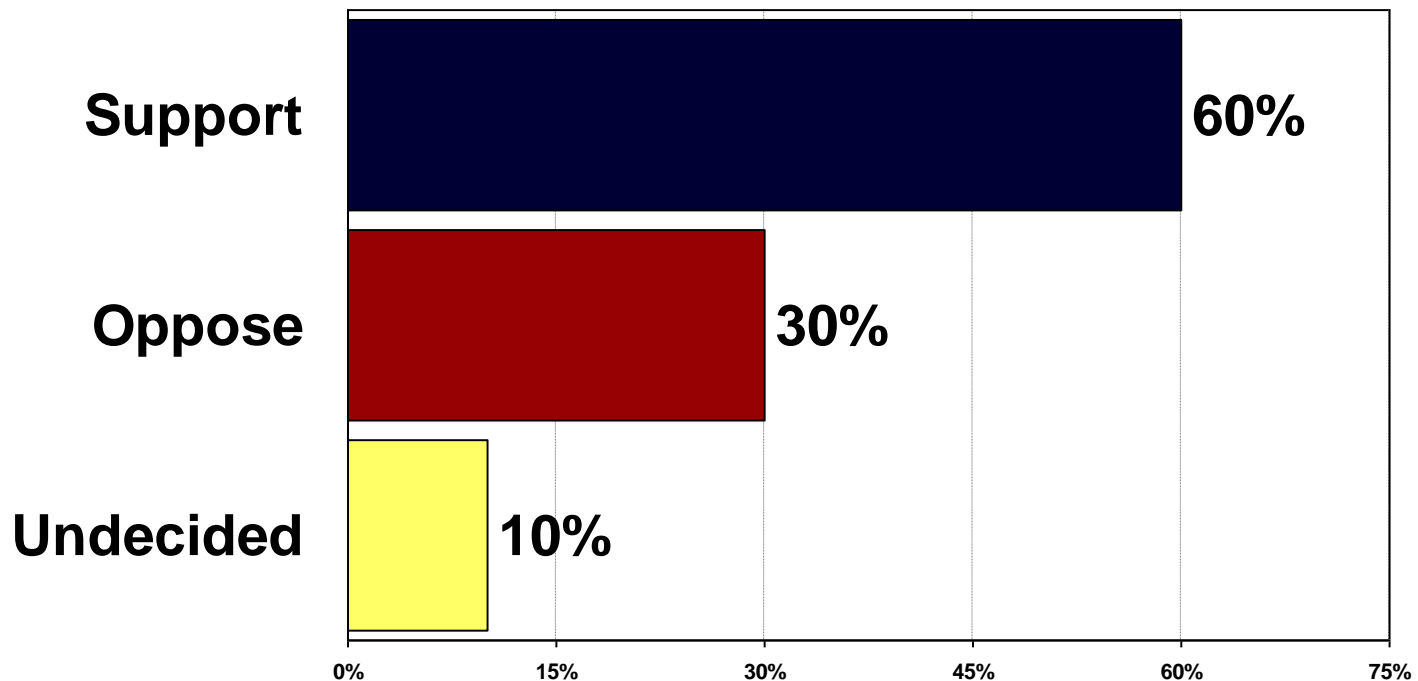




## *C. A State Constitutional Convention*

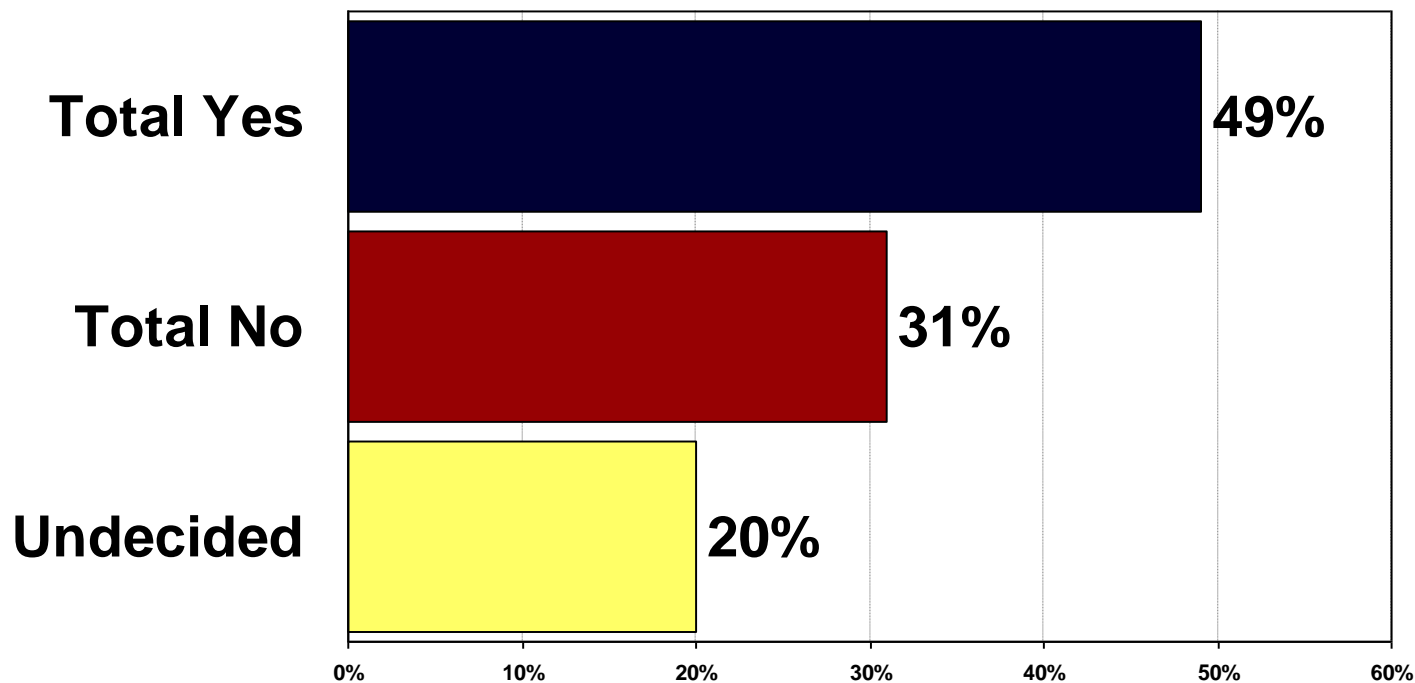
# Voters support a potential measure allowing them to call a constitutional convention.

*Currently in California, a state constitutional convention may only be called by a two-thirds vote of the State Legislature. The voters may not call a convention. Would you support or oppose a measure enabling California voters – now and in the future – to call for a state constitutional convention?*



# A plurality of voters also say they would vote to hold a convention, though many are initially unsure.

*Would you vote yes in favor of authorizing a state constitutional convention or no to oppose authorizing a state constitutional convention?*



# **Section IV: Final Thoughts**

# Final Thoughts

- ❖ **Voters' unhappiness with state government has reached an unprecedented scope and intensity – creating a favorable environment for reform.**
- ❖ **But voters have, at best, a limited understanding of the structural problems that constrain state and local governments in California.**
- ❖ **As a result, the most far-reaching reform proposals are met with uncertainty or lukewarm support – which creates vulnerability in the context of initiative campaigns.**
- ❖ **In this environment, successful reform efforts must be straightforward and easy to explain; must impact voters' lives in ways they can understand; and must be backed by a broad and diverse coalition outside government.**

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