



WORK SESSION

WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Session Date: March 11, 2025

Length of Time Requested: 90

Department(s): Cooperative Library Services, County
Administrative Office

Presented by: Marni Kuyl, Assistant County Administrator
Philip Bransford, Communications Officer
Lisa Tattersall, WCCLS Manager
Erin Calvert, Assistant County Administrator
Sianna Ziegler, EMC Research
Jessica Polsky-Sanchez, EMC Research
Mandip Bagri, EMC Research

Title of Topic:	Results From Round One Voter Surveys for the Library Levy and Next Steps to Referral for Library and Public Safety Local Option Levies
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ATTACHMENTS:

[2025 Levies Work Plan](#)

[Slide deck - library levy polling results and next steps to referral](#)

PURPOSE & DESIRED OUTCOME:

The purpose of today's work session is to:

- Share the results from the Round One Voter Survey for the Library Levy (presentation from EMC Research)
- Convey the Library Levy Steering Committee recommendation on a library levy replacement rate
- Provide an updated timeline for both levy proposals and ballot referral.

Staff seek Board direction on the policy questions, and wish to highlight the proposed timeline, noting that ballot referral must be approved by the Board no later than June 3, 2025.

POLICY QUESTIONS FOR THE BOARD TO CONSIDER:

Staff hope to hear from the Board on these policy questions and look forward to the discussion and direction:

- Does the Board have questions and/or direction for staff?
- Is the Board comfortable with increasing the library levy by \$0.15?
- Is the Board comfortable with the compressed timeline?
- Should staff schedule commissioner briefings to review draft levy proposals ahead of the May 27th Work Session?

SUMMARY OF TOPIC:

The Library and Public Safety Local Option Levy Steering Committees continue to work through financial models and investment scenarios to develop levy proposals for your Board's consideration, for Washington County voters to decide on the November 2025 ballot.

The purpose of this work session is to provide the full Board with the Library Levy Survey Round One polling results with EMC Research, Inc. Staff will be seeking direction about the amount of increase to propose for the library levy, as recommended by the Library Levy Steering Committee.

This Work Session will also discuss the continuing work of the Levy Steering Committees, including the development of scenario and investment areas with the assistance of Department and Finance staff, the timing of the second voter survey that will occur, and the development of the Levy Proposals, all related to Work Session dates with a final Board adoption of Title and Ballot Language no later than June 3, 2025.

Public Safety & Library Levies Work Plan (as of 2/5/2025)

Calendar Year	C24 Q4	C25 Q1	C25 Q2	C25 Q3	C25 Q4	C26 Q1	C26 Q2	C26 Q3	C26 Q4	C27 Q1	C 27 Q2	C27 Q3	C27 Q4
Fiscal Year	F25 Q2	F25 Q3	F25 Q4	F26 Q1	F26 Q2	F26 Q3	F26 Q4	F27 Q1	F 27 Q2	F27 Q3	F27 Q4	F28 Q1	F 28 Q2
Election Schedule	2024 Pres. General Nov 5		2025 Off-yr Primary May 20		2025 Off-yr General Nov 4		2026 Gub. Primary May 19		2026 Gub. General Nov 3				
WA Co Library Levy	Levy study process	Voter surveys & referral		Outreach & Election Day			May 2026 Back-up ballot	Nov 25 WCCLS Levy Effective July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031 (FY27 – FY31)					
	Steering Cm. updated on Funding & Governance, discusses voter survey (Oct 11-25); Board reviews progress in WS (Nov 5 & Dec 17); Board updated on Funding & Governance in WS (Nov 12); Board reviews progress in WS (Nov 5 & Dec 17);	Steering Cm. reviews investment themes, rate scenarios & Round 1 questions (Jan); Board hears update on Library Levy progress in WS (Feb 4); EMC conducts survey interviews (Jan 27-Feb 7); Board updated on survey findings in WS (Mar 11); Steering Cm. reviews Round 2 questions (Mar).	EMC conducts Round Two survey interviews (May. 5-May 16); Board Work Session: updated on findings from survey Round Two & considers proposals for both levies (May 27); Board Meeting: Board adopts Library and Public Safety Levy Proposals (May 27 th) Board considers ballot title/political restrictions apply (June 3); Staff files both measures (June 4) Staff vets with	Staff begins assigning speaking and tabling events (Jul-Sep); Board/Steering Cm members attend editorial board visits (Aug 25-29).	Last possible day to file measure (Sep 4); Staff sends direct mail to voters (Oct 13); Ballots begin arriving for most voters (Oct 17); Election Day (Nov 4).								

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Calendar Year	C24 Q4	C25 Q1	C25 Q2	C25 Q3	C25 Q4	C26 Q1	C26 Q2	C26 Q3	C26 Q4	C27 Q1	C 27 Q2	C27 Q3	C27 Q4
Fiscal Year	F25 Q2	F25 Q3	F25 Q4	F26 Q1	F26 Q2	F26 Q3	F26 Q4	F27 Q1	F 27 Q2	F27 Q3	F27 Q4	F28 Q1	F 28 Q2
Election Schedule	2024 Pres. General Nov 5		2025 Off-yr Primary May 20		2025 Off-yr General Nov 4		2026 Gub. Primary May 19		2026 Gub. General Nov 3				
WA Co Public Safety Levy	Levy study process	Voter surveys & referral		Outreach & Election Day			May 2026 Back-up ballot	Nov 25 Public Safety Levy Effective July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031 (FY27 – FY31)					
	Steering Cm. reviews investment themes, rate scenarios & Round 1 questions (Oct 2-Dec 18); Board reviews progress in WS (Nov 5 & Dec 17); EMC conducts Round One interviews (Dec. 2-13);	Steering Cm. hears findings from voter survey Round One (Jan 3); Board hears findings from voter survey Round One in WS (Jan 14); Steering Cm. reviews Round 2 questions (Mar).	EMC conducts Round Two survey interviews (May. 5-May 16); Board updated on findings from survey Round Two & considers proposals for both levies (May 27); Board considers ballot title/political restrictions apply (June 3); Staff files both measures (June 4) Staff vets with Sec. of State (May 26-June 27); Staff activates Speakers Bureau activated (June 23-27).	Staff begins assigning speaking and tabling events (Jul-Sep); Board/Steering Cm members attend editorial board visits (Aug 25-29).	Last possible day to file measure (Sep 4); Staff sends direct mail to voters (Oct 13); Ballots begin arriving for most voters (Oct 17); Election Day (Nov 4).								



Results from Round One Voter Survey for the Library Levy & Next Steps to Referral for Both Levies

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| March 11, 2025

County Administrative Office

www.washingtoncountyor.gov

→ Overview & Purpose

Purpose of today's presentation:

- Share results from Round One Voter Survey for the Library Levy
- Share recommendation from the Library Levy Steering Committee
- Provide updated timeline for levy proposals and ballot referral

Questions for the Board:

- Does the Board have questions and/or additional direction for staff?
- Is the Board comfortable with increasing the library levy by \$0.15?
- Is the Board comfortable with the compressed timeline?

Survey Results





Washington County, OR
Library Levy Research
January 2025

- ▶ Survey of likely November 2025 voters in Washington County, OR
- ▶ Survey conducted January 27-February 5, 2025
- ▶ 800 interviews; overall margin of error ± 3.5 percentage points
 - Survey utilized a split sample approach to test two potential levy replacement amounts:
 - 400 interviews in each sample; margin of error ± 4.9 percentage points
- ▶ Mixed mode telephone and text/email-to-web methodology:
 - Telephone interviews were conducted by trained, professional interviewers; landlines and mobile phones included
 - Email and text invitations were sent with link to web survey
- ▶ Where applicable, results compared with the following:

Methodology	Dates	Universe	Sample Size	Margin of Error	EMC #
Mixed	December 4-11, 2024	Likely Nov. 2025 Voters	400	± 4.9 percentage points	24-9479

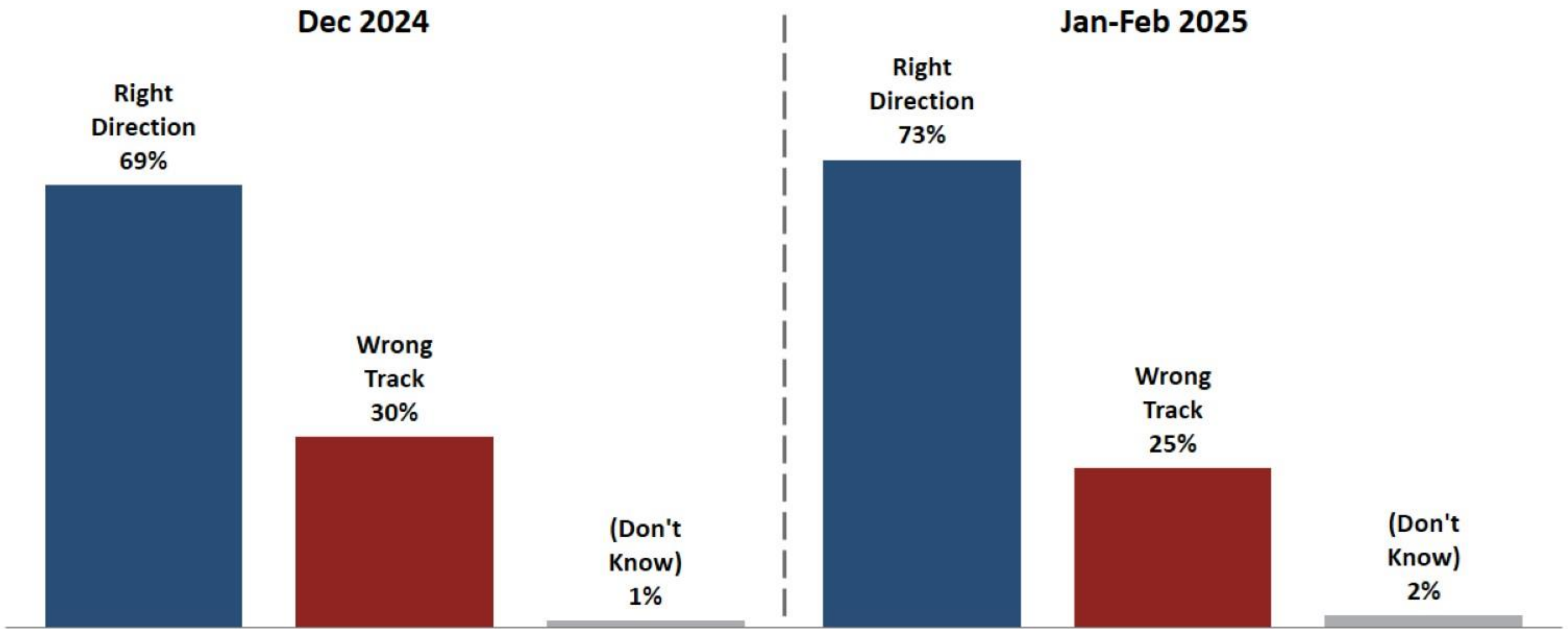
Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.



Overall Issue Environment

Direction of Washington County

Likely November voters continue to be in a good mood about the direction of Washington County.



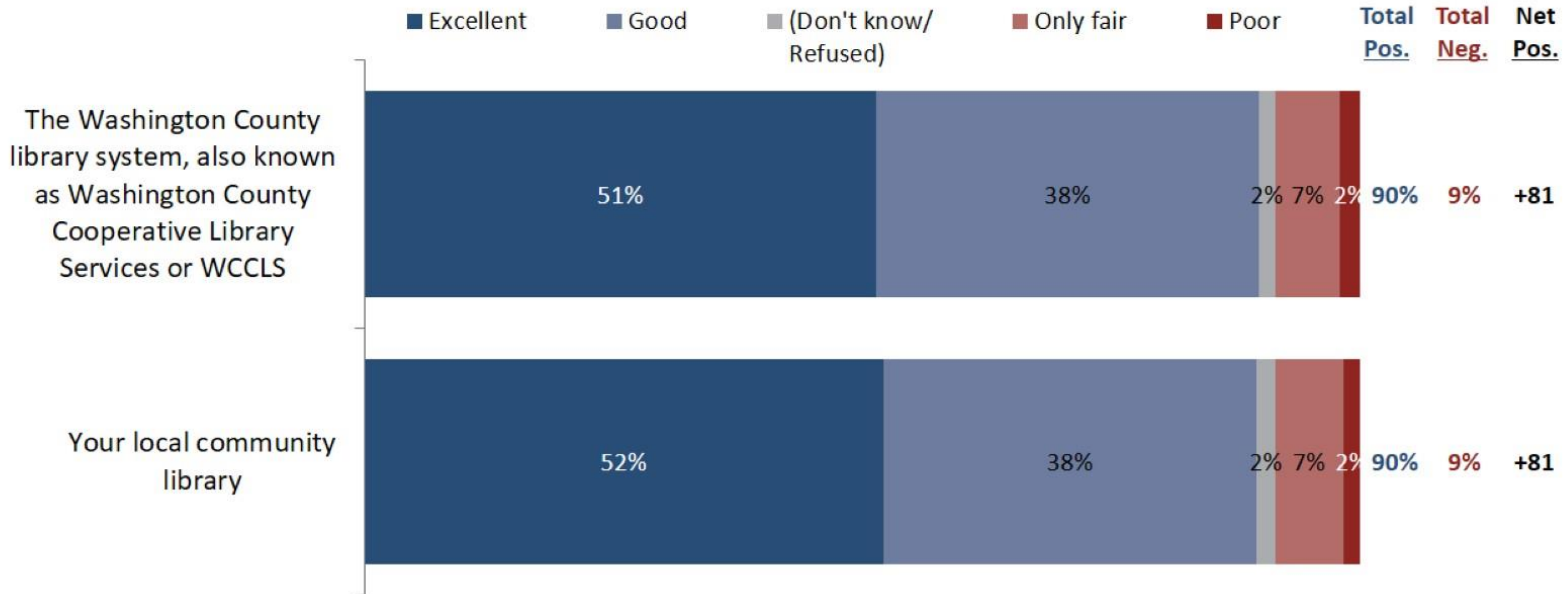
Q3. Do you feel that things in Washington County are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?



Library Perceptions

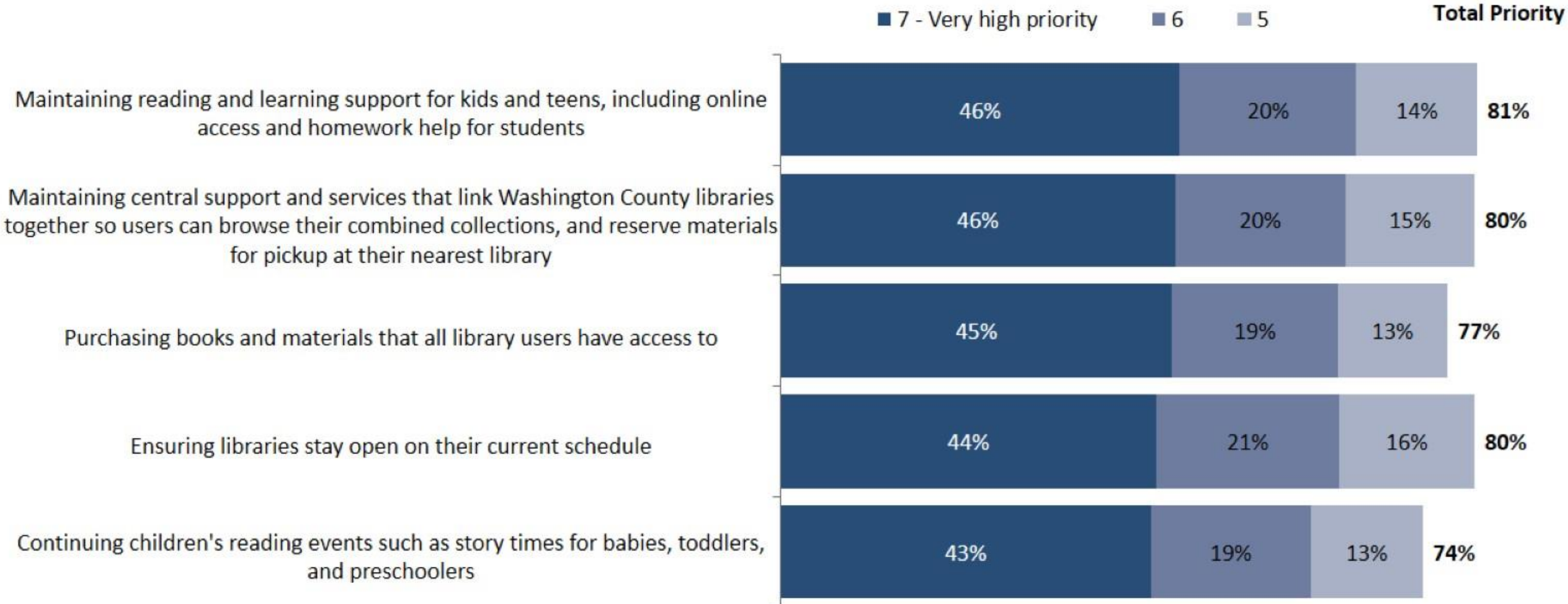
Library System Ratings

Voters overwhelmingly rate both their local community library and WCCLS as a whole positively.



Library Services Priorities

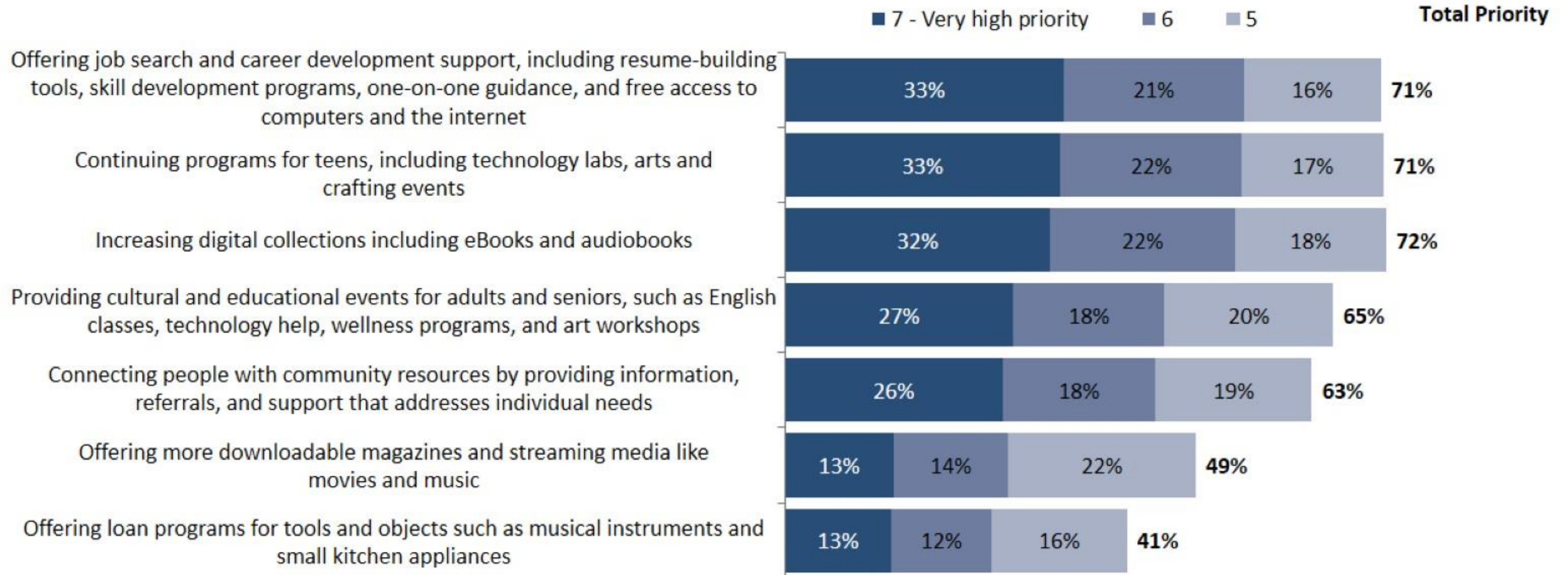
Support for students, central services, core collections materials, maintaining open hours, and children's reading events are all rated as high priorities.



Q8.-Q19. I'd like to read you a list of items related to library services in Washington County. Please rate each one using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means you feel that item should be a very low priority for Washington County libraries, and 7 means that you feel that item should be a very high priority.

Library Services Priorities

Most other library services tested are rated as important by majorities, but intensity is lower. Downloadable and streaming media and the loan program for tools and instruments are important to a smaller segment.



Q8.-Q19. I'd like to read you a list of items related to library services in Washington County. Please rate each one using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means you feel that item should be a very low priority for Washington County libraries, and 7 means that you feel that item should be a very high priority.

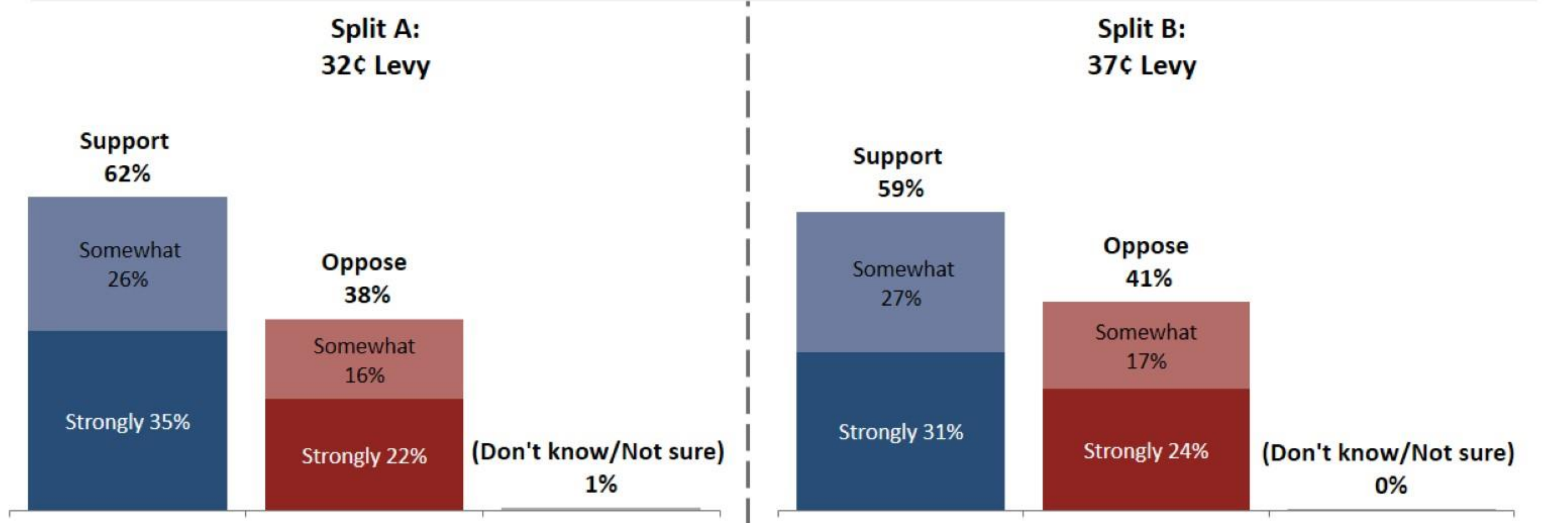


Library Levy Replacement

Initial Levy Support

Initially, both levy amounts are well above the majority threshold. Note that half of support is in the “somewhat” category.

Shall Washington County support library services countywide by levying (**SPLIT A: 32¢/SPLIT B: 37¢**) per \$1,000 assessed value for five years, beginning in 2026? This measure replaces current local option taxes. In its first year, typical homeowners with an assessed value (not market value) of about \$360,000 would pay (**SPLIT A: \$114/SPLIT B: \$132**)?

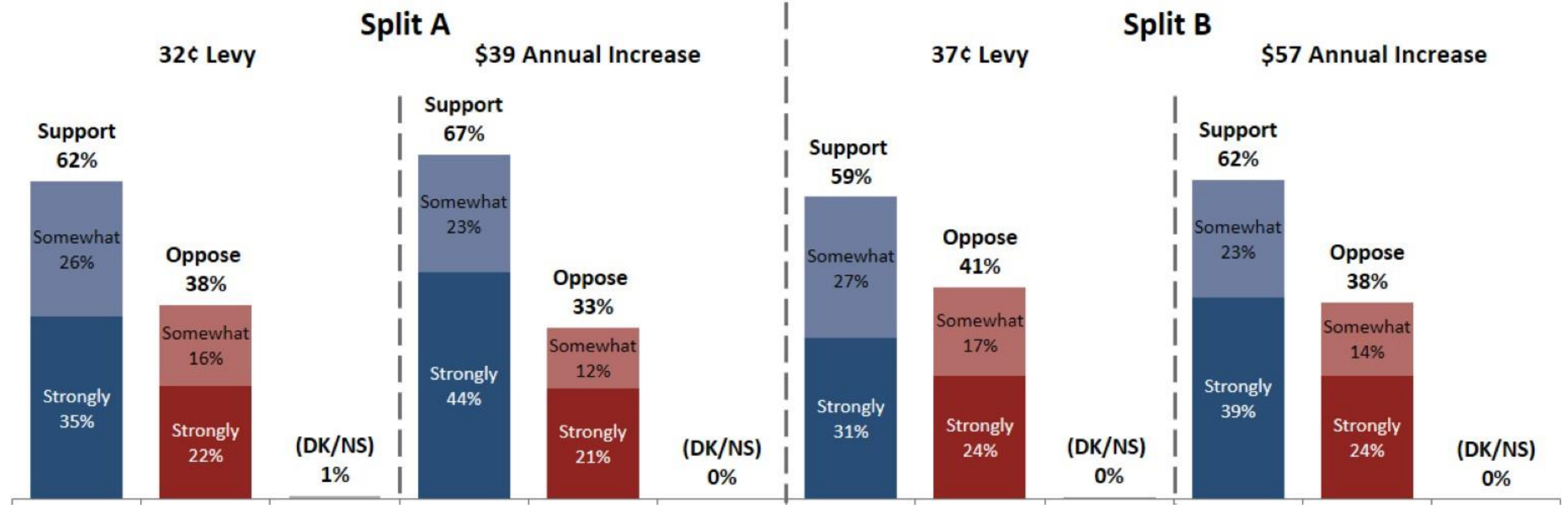


Q6. If the election was held today, would you support or oppose this measure to replace Washington County’s library services levy?

Support After Increase Information

Explaining the cost difference compared to the current levy increases and solidifies support, with the smaller increase seeing a slightly larger gain.

Because this measure replaces the existing levy, the actual cost increase would only be about **(SPLIT A: \$39/SPLIT B: \$57)** more in the first year for the average homeowner, which is about **(SPLIT A: \$3.25/SPLIT B: \$4.75)** more a month.



Q7. Knowing this, would you support or oppose the measure to replace Washington County’s library services levy?

Library Levy Information Statements

Children's Events - Last year, Cooperative libraries held over 6,000 children's reading events that had more than 200,000 attendees. Funds from the levy would support these critical programs and events, including the annual summer reading program and literacy programs for preschoolers that help more children enter school ready to read.

Student Support - Last year, over 10,000 students used reading and learning support programs offered by Cooperative libraries, including online access, online tutoring, and homework help. Funds from the levy would help maintain these programs that benefit students and improve school success in the County.

Maintain Hours - Currently, most Washington County Cooperative Libraries are open at least six days a week, and there is at least one Cooperative library open 360 days a year. The levy would help local libraries maintain current open hours and avoid needing to reduce hours.

User Savings - On average, Washington County library users save \$1,000 annually by borrowing library materials instead of purchasing them.

Purchase Materials - Each Cooperative library contributes its books and materials to the shared countywide collection of over 1.9 million items. Funds from the levy would be used to purchase more books and other materials that all library users throughout the county have access to.

E-books and Audiobooks - Over 1.6 million e-books and 1.4 million audiobooks are now checked out of Washington County libraries each year, and demand for these materials has been growing steadily every year. Funds from the levy would be used to increase the copies of e-books and audiobooks available.

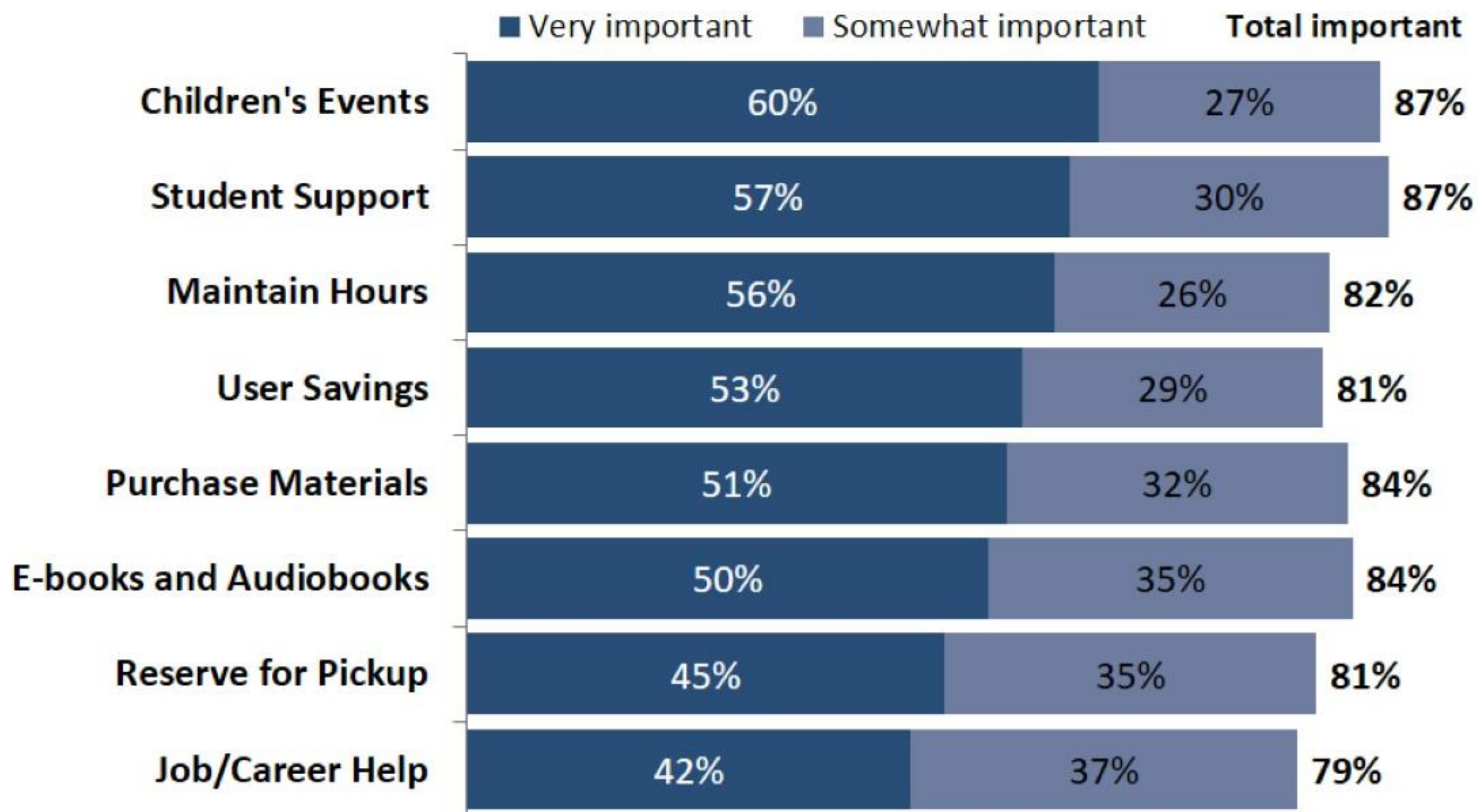
Reserve for Pickup - Funds from the levy help support online access that allows users to reserve books that can be picked up at any Washington County Cooperative library.

Job/Career Help - Cooperative libraries provide information, resources, and instruction to assist job seekers and those looking to improve their skills or develop in their careers. Funds from the levy would help libraries continue these critical services.

Library Levy Information Statements



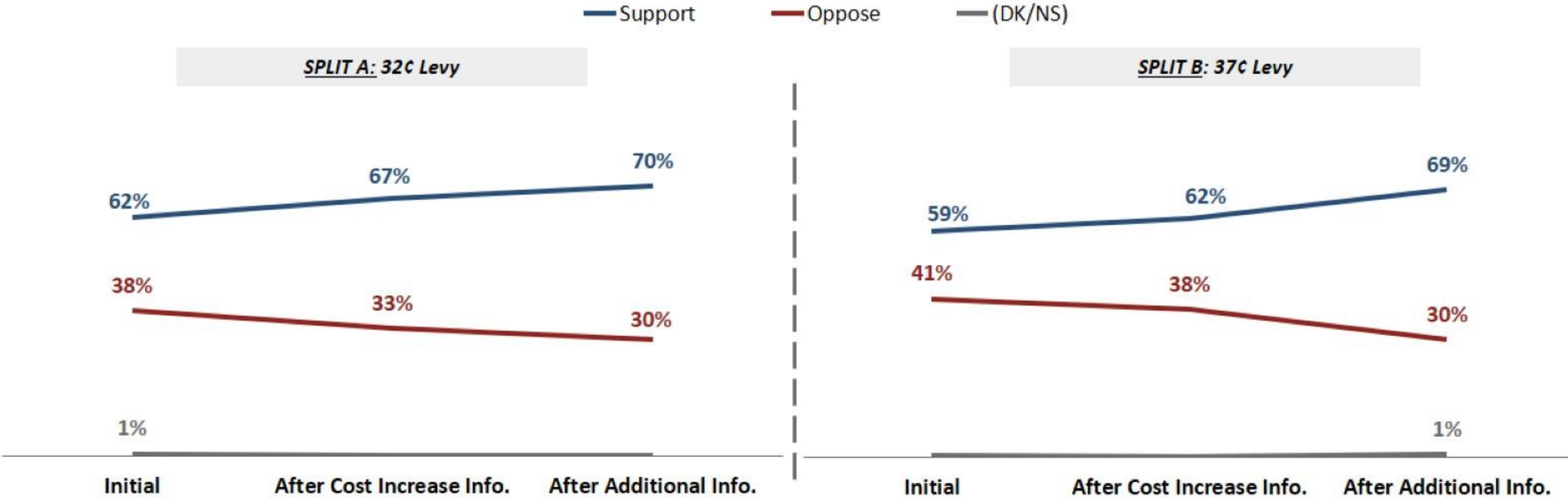
More information about how many children and youth in the county benefit from reading events and student support programs resonates especially strongly.



Support After More Information

After more information about library services and how they benefit the community, the two levy amounts are statistically even.

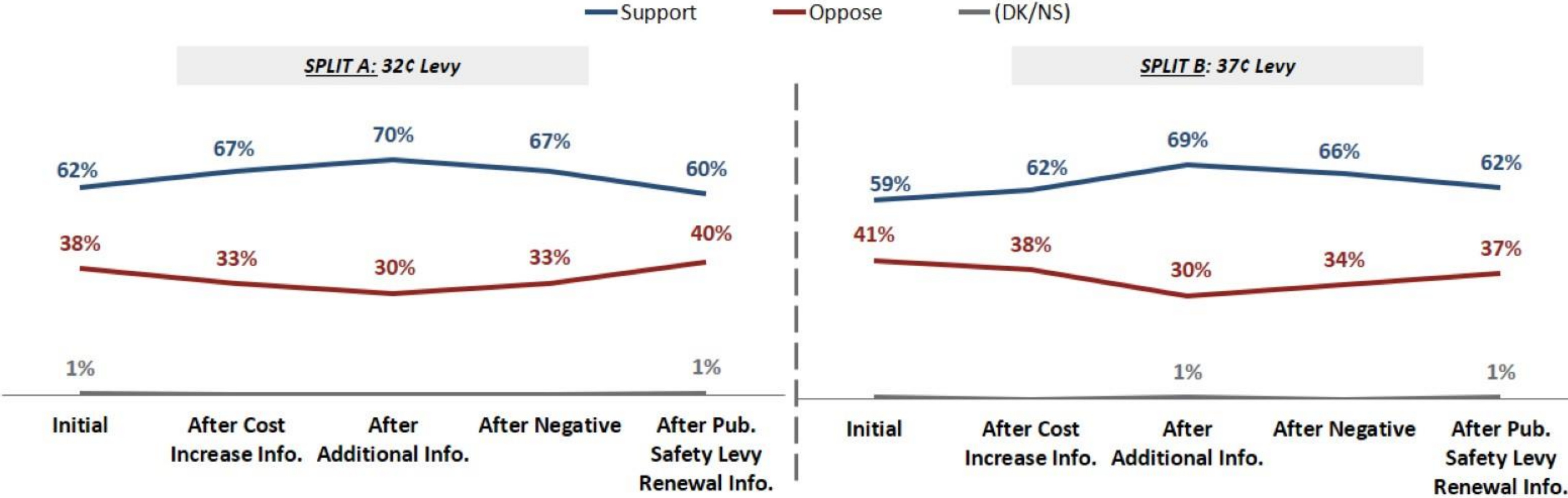
Given everything you've heard, would you support or oppose the measure to replace Washington County's library services levy?



Support After Additional Information

After a negative statement, support for both amounts declines a little. Learning the cost of the public safety measure that will be on the same ballot reduces support back to about where it was at the start.

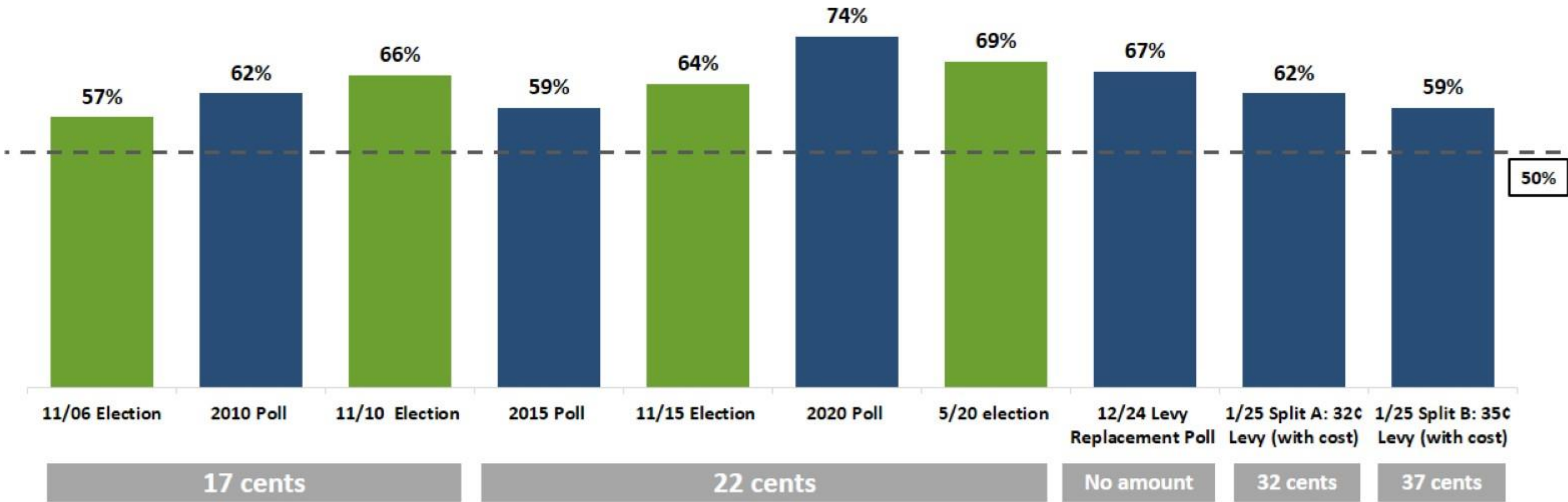
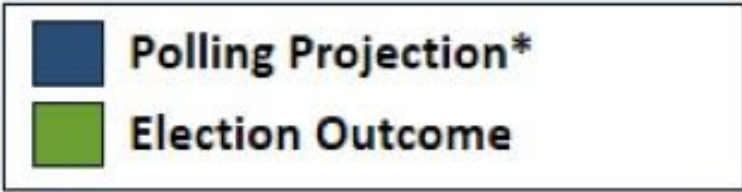
And knowing that both public safety and library measures would appear on the same ballot, would you support or oppose the measure to replace Washington County’s library services levy?



Library Levy Historical Context

Note: December 2024 poll estimate did not include a rate and was asked at the end of the survey.

% TOTAL yes shown



- ▶ Likely November 2025 voters continue to be optimistic about the direction of Washington County; optimism/pessimism about the direction of the county is strongly tied to measure support, meaning strong negative economic events would pose a challenge for either levy.
- ▶ Washington County Cooperative Library Services and local libraries are both rated very highly, and voters see core library services as a high priority.
- ▶ At both levy amounts tested—32¢ and 37¢—a library levy replacement looks viable in the current environment.
 - The two possible measures differ the most after the cost increase over what voters are paying now is explained, with higher support for the smaller levy.
 - At the same time, nearly half of support even in the final test is in the "somewhat" category. Historically in Washington County these voters have supported the measure at the ballot box.
 - Once additional information is communicated, there is essentially no difference in support.
- ▶ This survey does not test other measures that might be on the ballot; while there appears to be a good cushion of support for libraries, the impact of other measures is not known.



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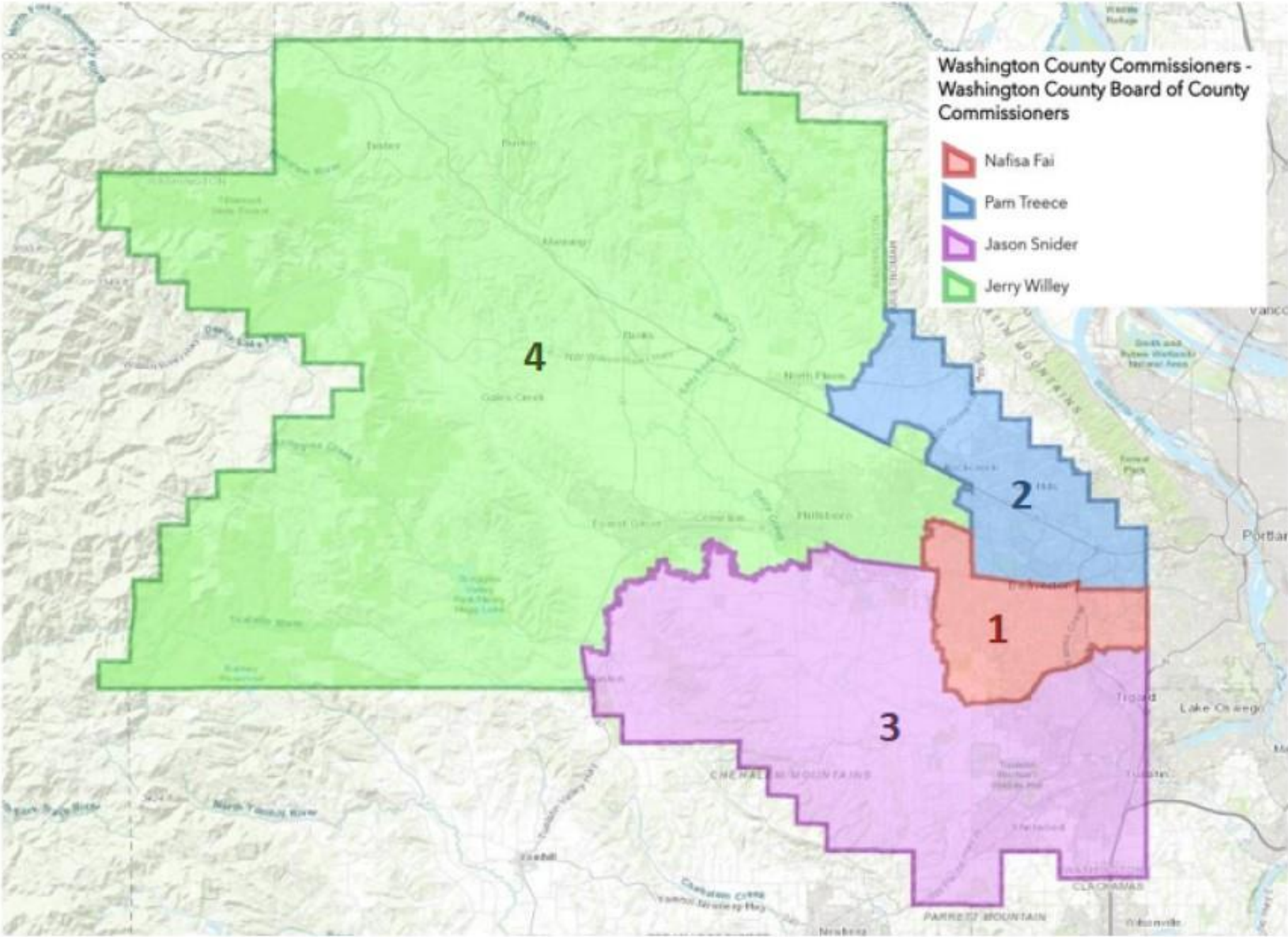
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Appendix

Washington County Commissioner Districts



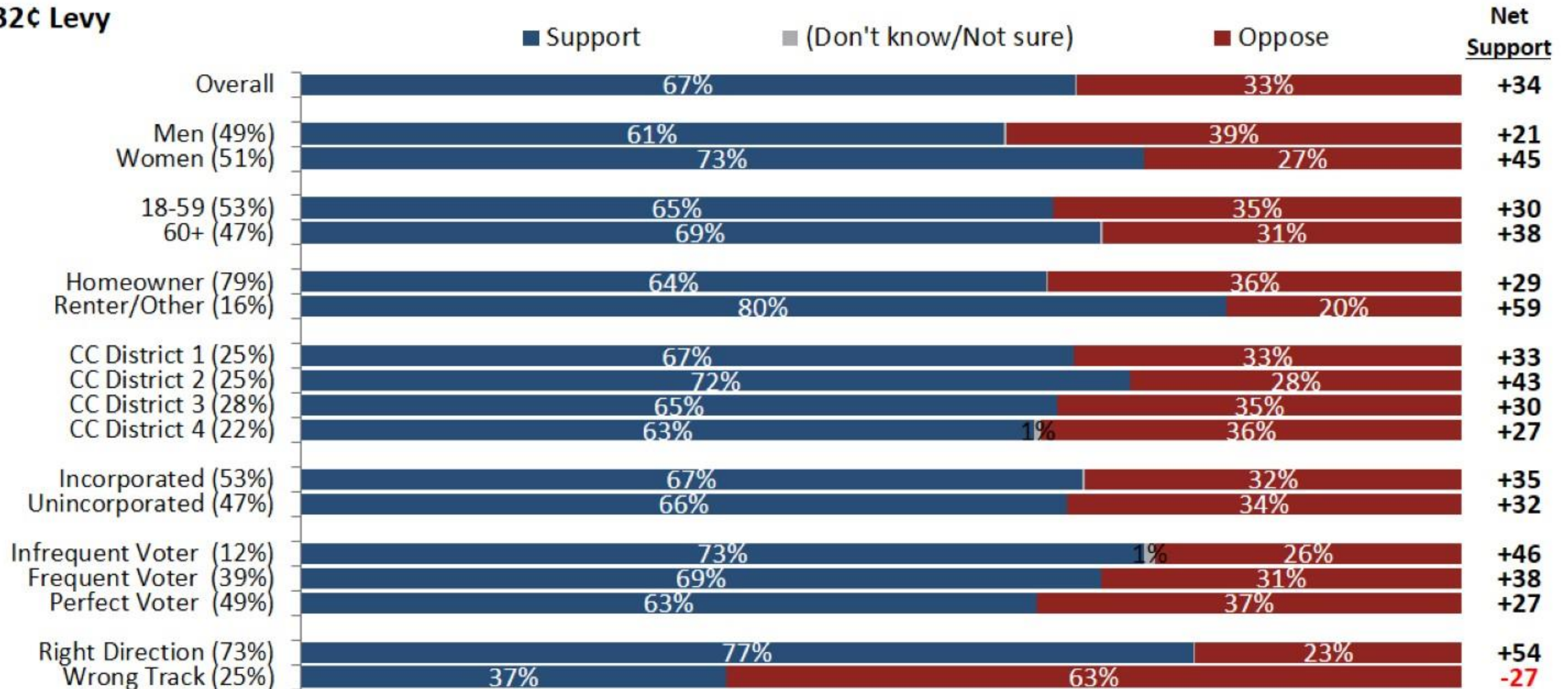


Library Levy

Initial Levy Replacement Measure by Subgroups

Women are more supportive of a 32¢ levy than men, but there is not a substantial difference based on age. Those who think the County is headed in the right direction are far more supportive than those who think it is on the wrong track.

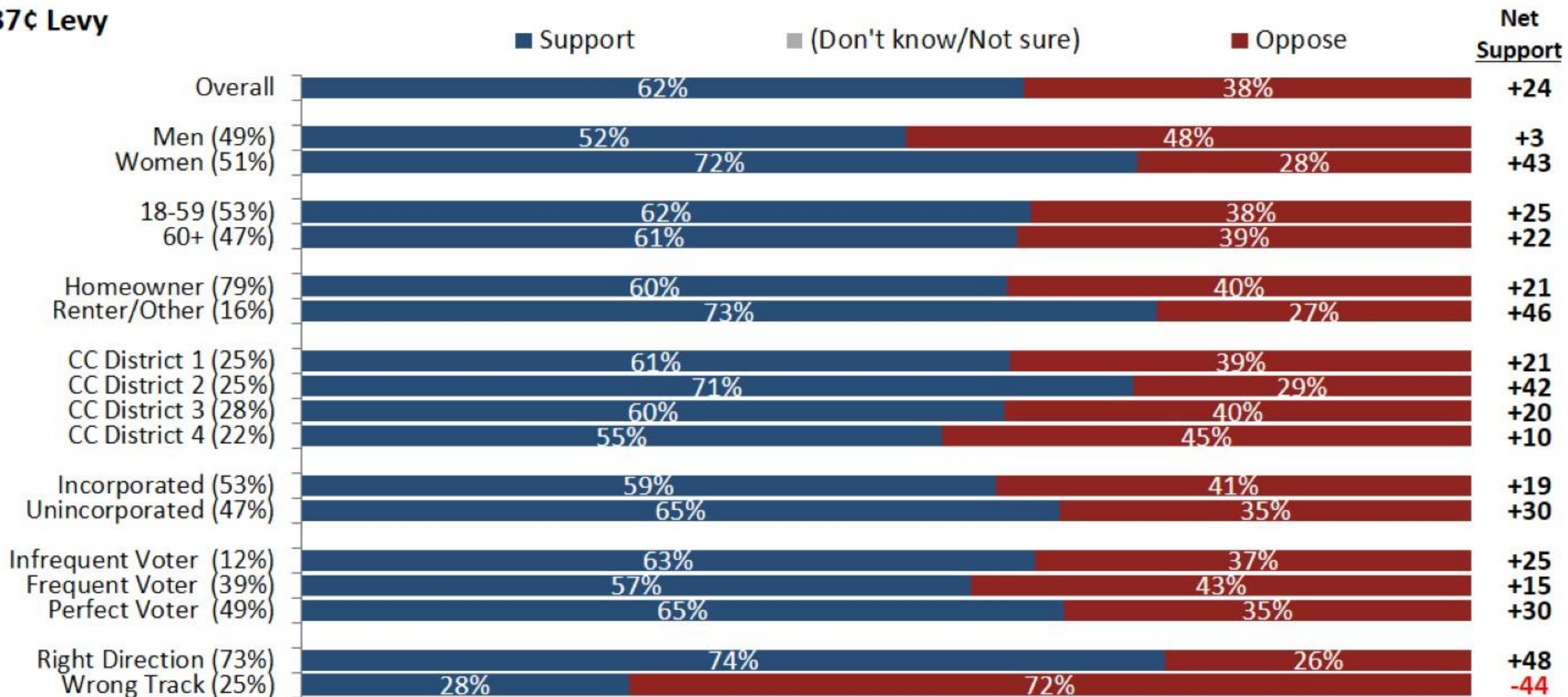
Split A: 32¢ Levy



Initial Levy Replacement Measure by Subgroups

Most demographic patterns are similar for the higher levy amount, but there is an even larger difference in support between those who feel the county is going in the right direction and those who say it is on the wrong track.

Split B: 37¢ Levy



Negative Statement

Opponents of the proposed library levy say taxes are already too high, and now is not the right time to ask taxpayers for more. After years of historic inflation, families are struggling to keep up with rising prices and the growing cost of living. Instead of raising taxes even more, the library system just needs to do a better job managing the funds they already have.

Given everything you've heard, would you support or oppose the measure to replace Washington County's library services levy?



Public Safety Levy Renewal

December 2024 Ballot Measure Language

Some point out that Washington County has grown and that there is a need to expand and enhance our public safety resources and court system capacity. Do you support or oppose a measure for public safety in Washington County that would levy a fixed rate of 65 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value, costing the average homeowner \$225 in the first year?

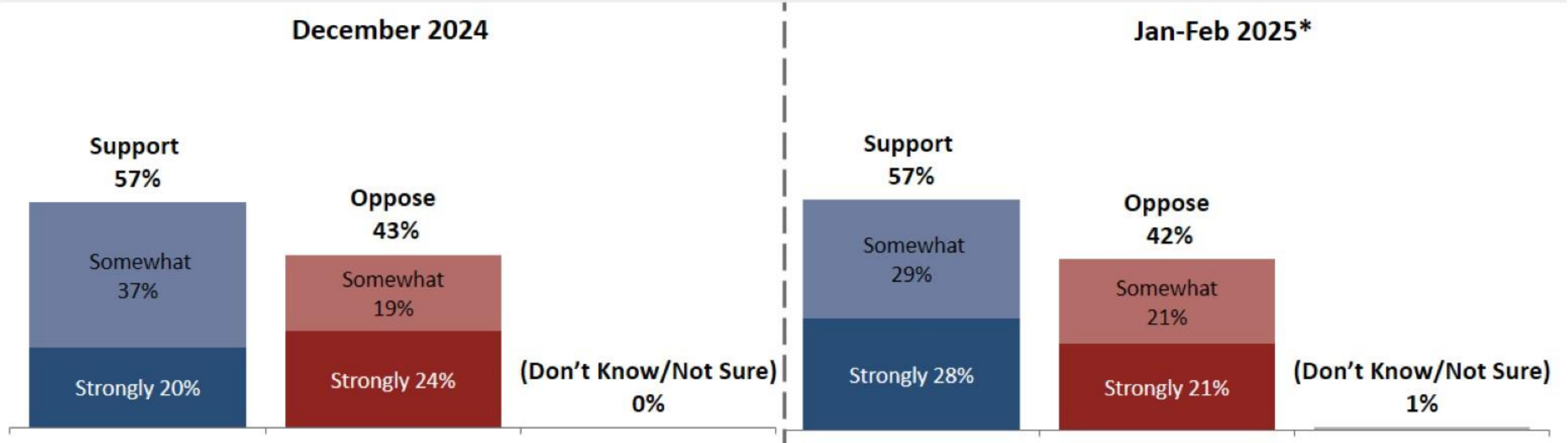
January-February 2025 Ballot Measure Language

There may be another measure on the ballot later this year that reads as follows: Shall Washington County support enhanced public safety services countywide by levying 65¢ per \$1,000 assessed value for five years, beginning in 2026? This measure replaces current local option taxes. In its first year, typical homeowners with an assessed value (not market value) of about \$360,000 would pay \$232. Knowing that both public safety and library measures would appear on the same ballot, would you support or oppose the measure to replace Washington County's public safety levy?

Public Safety Levy Renewal Measure

Note that in the December survey, the support question occurred much earlier in the survey.

There may be another measure on the ballot later this year that reads as follows: Shall Washington County support enhanced public safety services countywide by levying 65¢ per \$1,000 assessed value for five years, beginning in 2026? This measure replaces current local option taxes. In its first year, typical homeowners with an assessed value (not market value) of about \$360,000 would pay \$232. Knowing that both public safety and library measures would appear on the same ballot, would you support or oppose the measure to replace Washington County’s public safety levy?

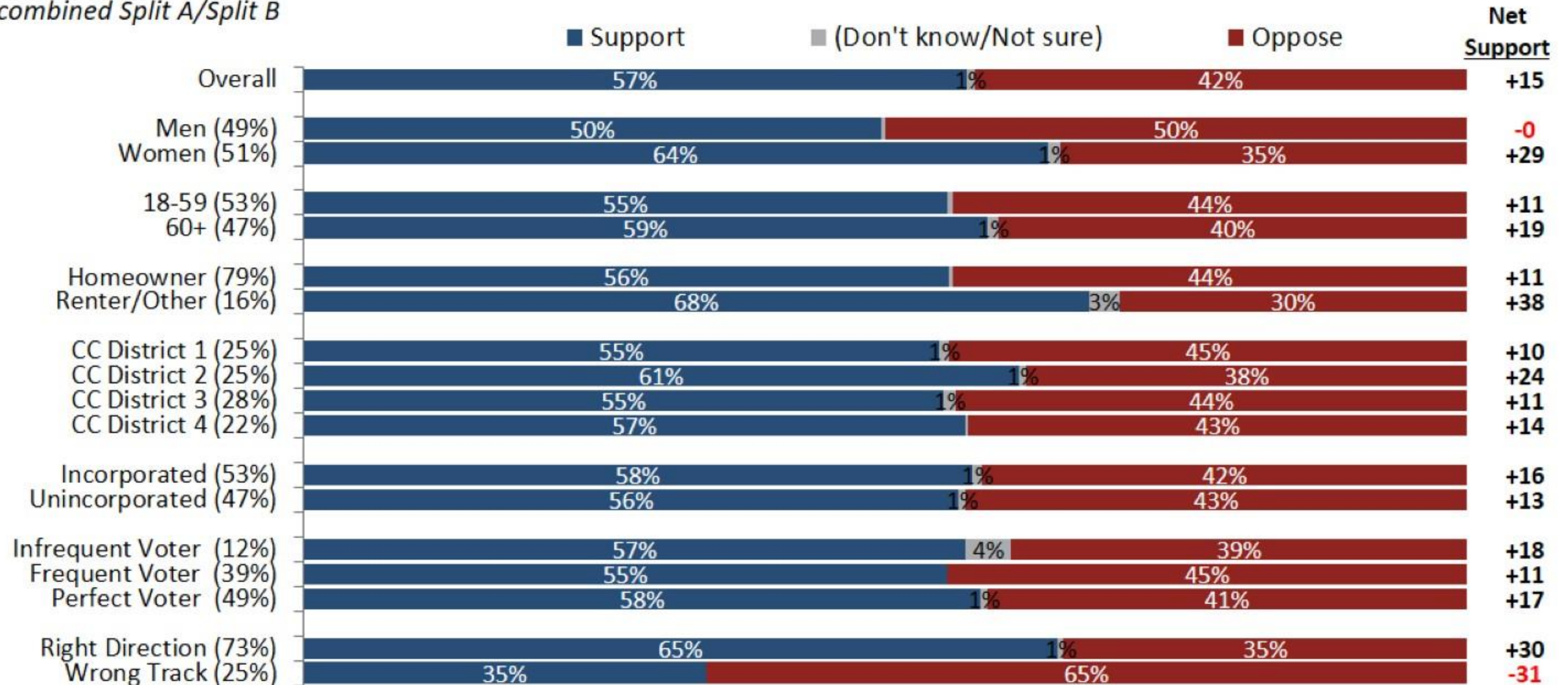


*Showing combined Split A/Split B
Q30.

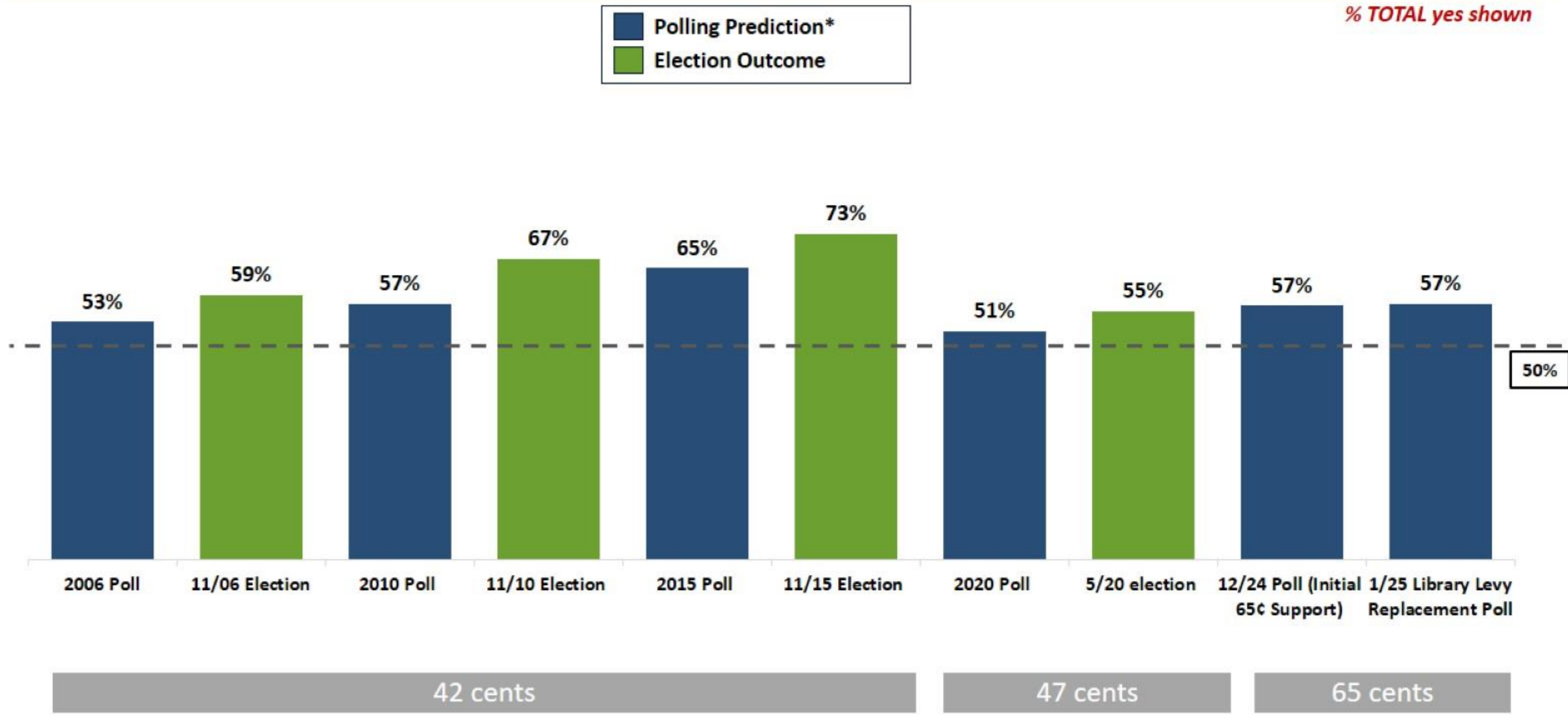
Public Safety Levy Renewal Measure by Subgroups

As with the library levy measure, there is a substantial difference in support between those who feel the county is going in the right direction and those who say it is on the wrong track.

*Showing combined Split A/Split B



Public Safety Levy Historical Context





Library Levy Steering Committee

- Steering committee recommending a 15-cent increase in library levy rate to 37 cents
- 37 cent rate supports base service levels as recommended by the cooperative funding and governance process
- Rate provides additional operational stability for the library system



Library Levy Steering Committee

- Importance of robust community engagement and voter education
- Last increase in library levy was 5 cents in 2015

Projected annual and monthly increase for both rates

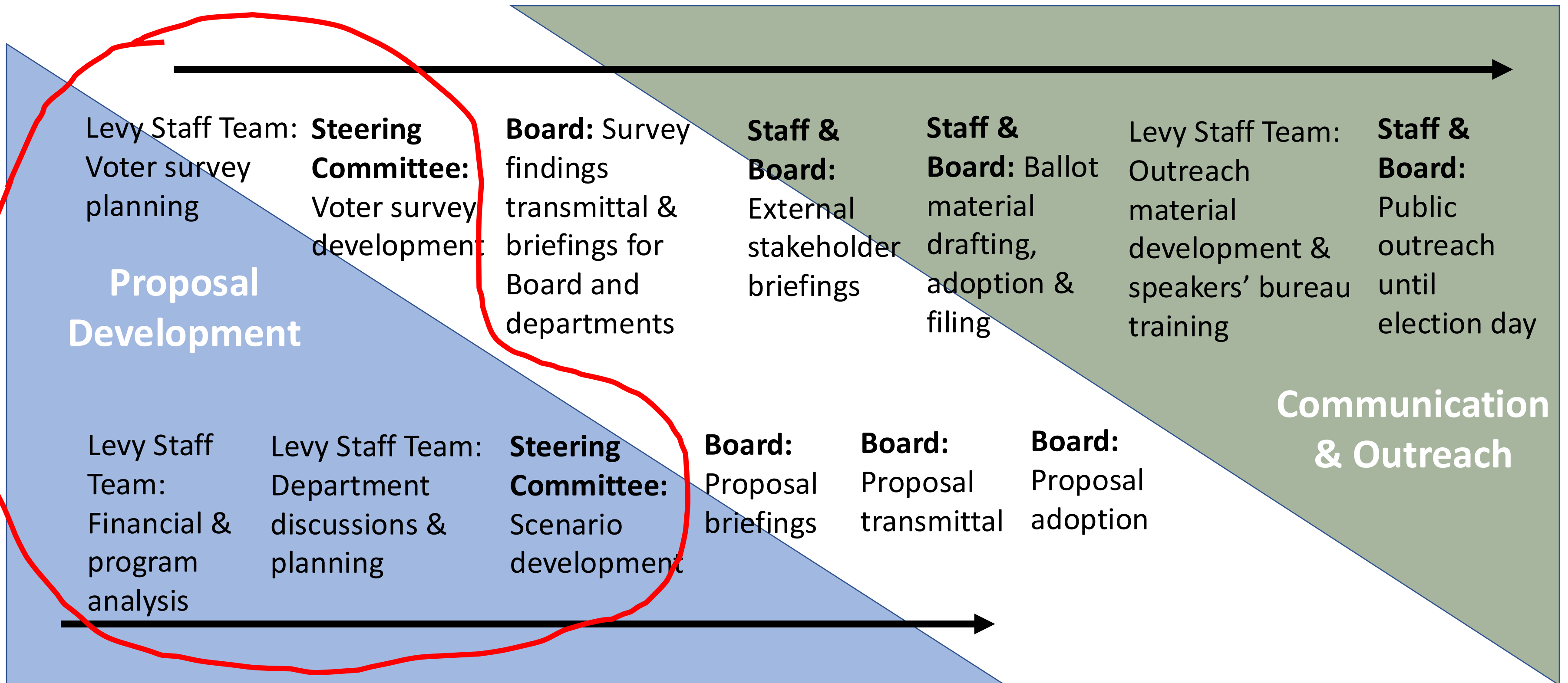
	Current Rate 22 cents (FY25-26)	32 cents (FY26-27)	Proposed Rate 37 cents (FY26-27)
Total annual cost	\$75.29	\$114.17	\$132.01
Total monthly cost	\$6.27	\$9.51	\$11.00
Annual increase amount		\$38.88	\$56.72
Monthly increase amount		\$3.24	\$4.73
<i>Based on projected average assessed value of \$356,780 in FY26-27</i>			

Timeline for Levy Proposals & Ballot Referral



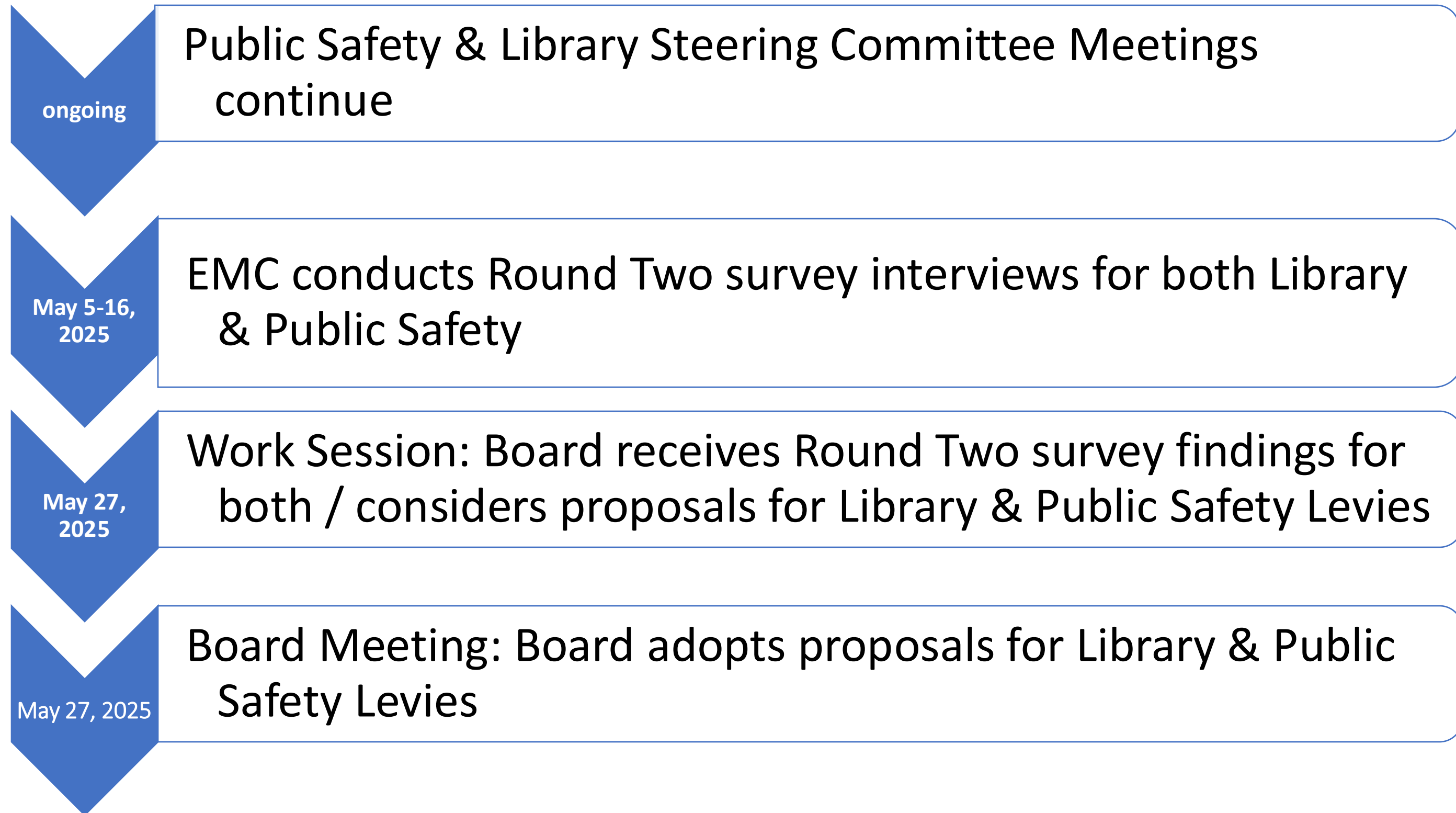


General Approach



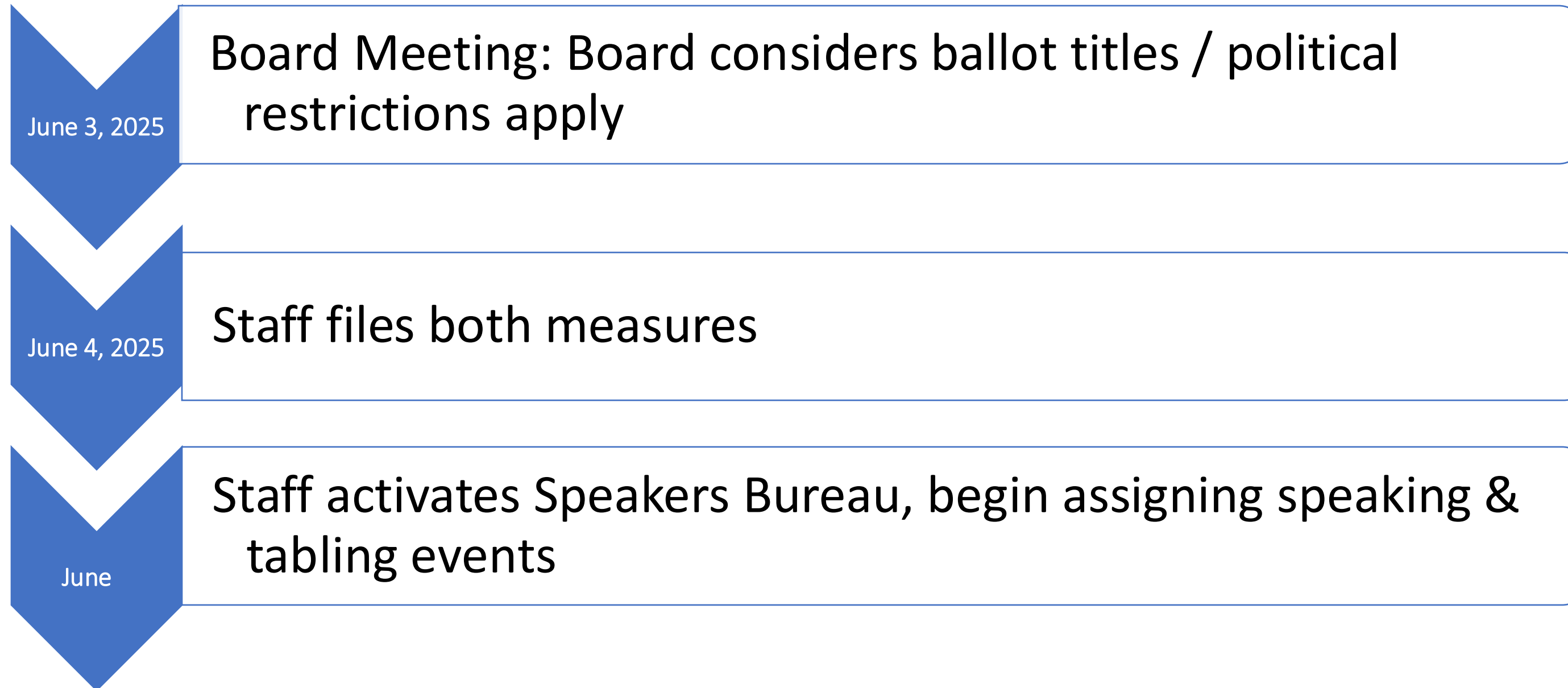


Proposed Workplan Milestones





Proposed Workplan Milestones -continued





Revised Timing of Voter Surveys

Round One: Broad Themes

- Public Safety:
 - Interviews in early December
 - Include a few questions about Library Levy
- Library Levy:
 - Interviews in January
 - Include a few questions about Public Safety Levy

Round Two: Viability Test for Both Levies

- Move interviews to May
- Focus on reaction to ballot language
- Validation of levy-funded services (current & proposed investments)
- Shortened turnaround time for proposals, ballot title and language



Board discussion

Questions for the Board:

- Does the Board have questions and/or additional direction for staff?
- Is the Board comfortable with increasing the library levy by \$0.15?
- Is the Board comfortable with the compressed timeline?

Questions





County Administrative Office
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