

City of Salem Community Improvement Bond Survey

May 2022



Research purpose

- Assess voter support for potential community improvement bond.
- Gauge voter priorities for high-level and specific bond projects.

Methodology

- Hybrid (phone and text-to-online) survey of N=425 voters in the city of Salem
- Conducted May 25–28, 2022; 12 minutes to complete
- Sample modeled to match the demographic turnout of the November 2022 election, including by age, gender, education, race, ward, and political party
- Margin of error $\pm 4.8\%$
- Due to rounding, some totals may differ by ± 1 from the sum of separate responses.

Key takeaways: bond support

- Provided with only a ballot title, support for the bond is just shy of a majority, but support increases to 60% when voters learn about bond projects and that the bond will not increase property tax rates.

Key takeaways: high-level project priorities

- Among the high-level categories of projects to be funded, voters are most positive about maintaining streets and sidewalks and replacing aging fire equipment.
- Middle-tier priorities include park improvements, land for future libraries, affordable housing, and fire stations, and upgrades to cybersecurity and computer systems.
- Voters are less positive about seismic safety improvements to the Civic Center.

Key takeaways: specific project priorities

- When it comes to specific transportation projects, a majority of voters are positive about traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements to Pringle and McGilchrest in South Salem.
- A majority of voters are positive about all specific park projects across Salem.
- A majority of voters are positive about specific land purchases for fire stations, libraries, and affordable housing.
- While a majority of voters feel positively about land purchases for affordable housing, consistent with past research, about 1 in 4 voters feel negatively about them.

Key takeaways: reasons to support bond

- Voters find all tested reasons to support the bond convincing, but the most convincing is that the measure would fund critical public infrastructure improvements without increasing property tax rates.
- Consistent with the high priority they give to transportation projects, voters are also persuaded by the idea that most of the money raised from this measure should be invested in repairing and maintaining Salem's streets, bridges, and sidewalks.

Key takeaways: key supporters

- Initial support for the bond is highest among younger and older voters, middle-income voters, voters with a college education, and voters in Wards 6, 7, and 8.
- Initial support is softer among middle-aged voters, lower and higher income voters, voters with a high school education or less, and voters in Wards 2 and 4.
- A majority of voters in all demographic and area groups support the bond after learning more about it, except when it comes to the highest income voters and voters in Wards 2 and 4.

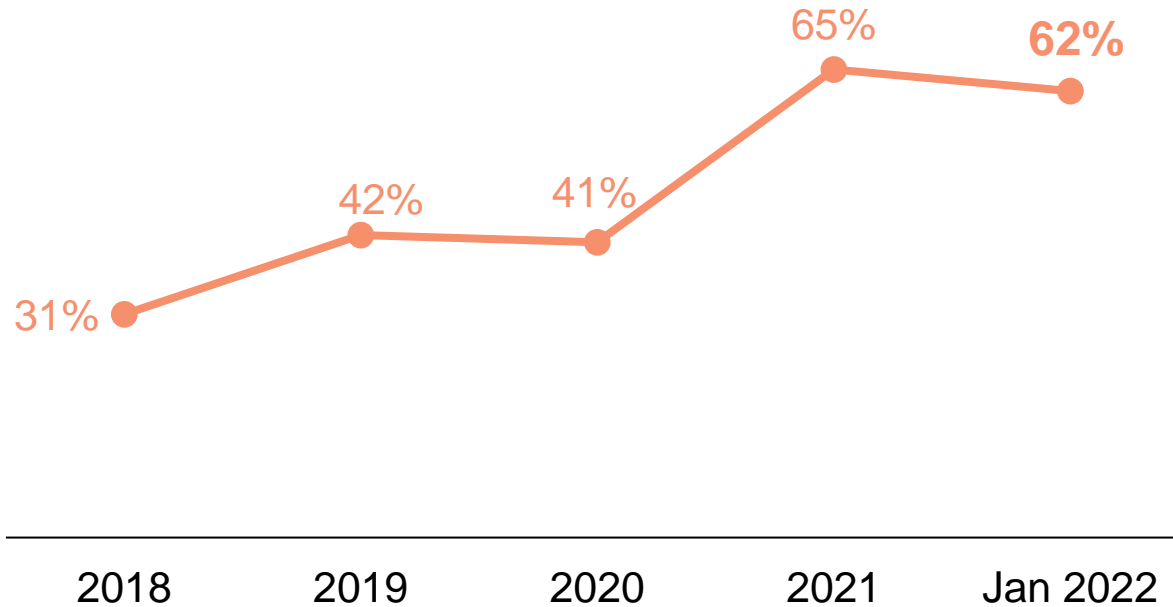
Key takeaways: bike lanes

- Voters are positive about specific projects on Pringle Road, Gilcrest Street, and Fisher Road, which include bike lanes.
- When asked about reallocating \$10 million from other projects to fund dedicated bike lanes, support for the bond declines to 49%.
- A majority of voters in five of eight wards support a bond with dedicated bike lanes separated from traffic.

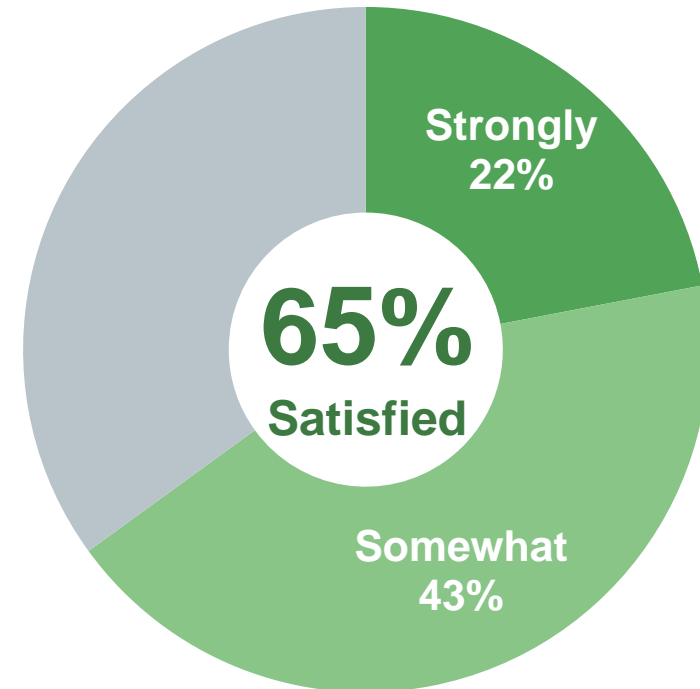
Voter mood

Voters are more likely to feel things in Salem are off on the wrong track in recent years, but 2 in 3 voters are currently satisfied with the quality of their lives in Salem.

Wrong Track: 2018–2022



Quality of Life: May 2022



Voters most often mention homelessness or poverty as the most important issue they would like Salem to address.

60% Homelessness, poverty

12% Crime, drugs

9% Environment

8% Affordable housing

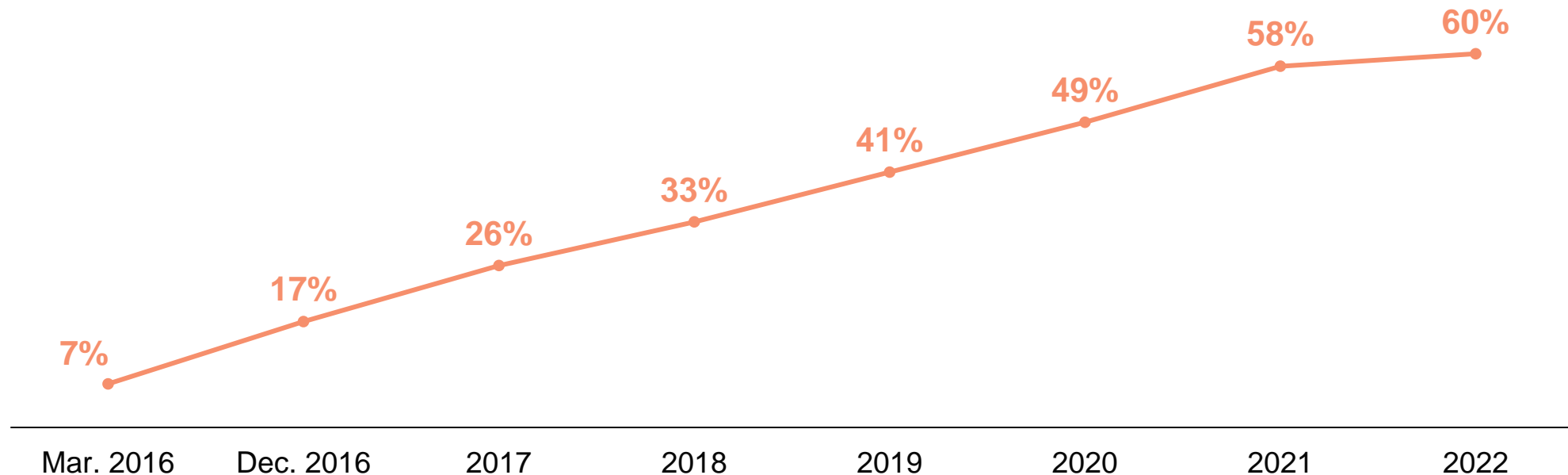
5% Police enforcement, traffic violations

5% Roads, potholes, infrastructure

5% Inflation, gas prices, cost of living

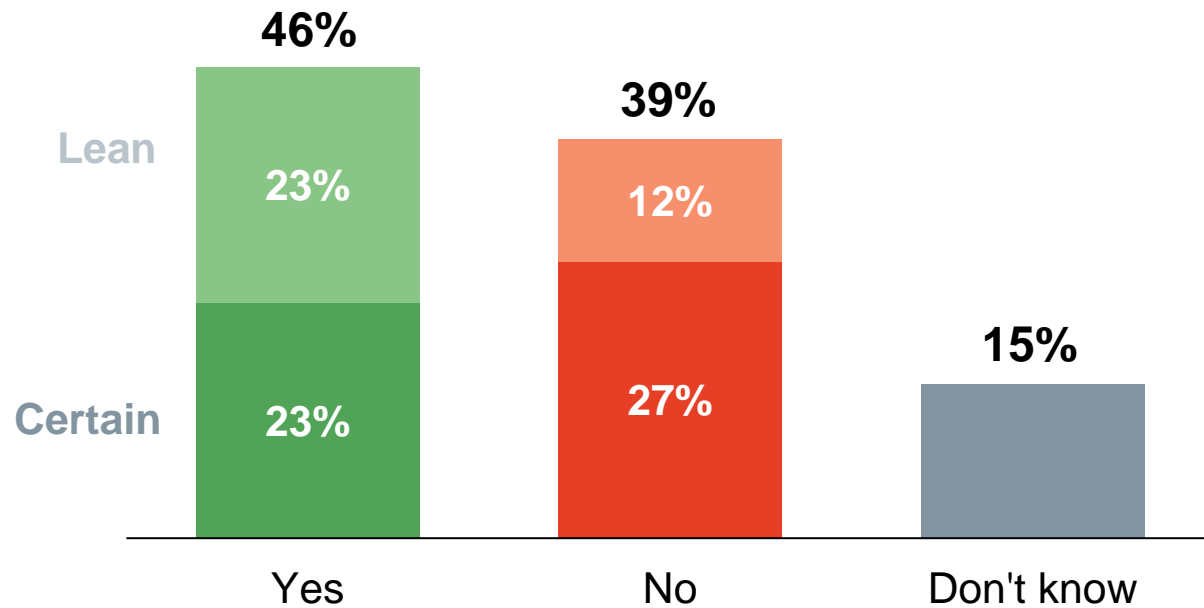
4% Mental health issue

Concerns about homelessness have climbed steadily since 2016.



Initial ballot test

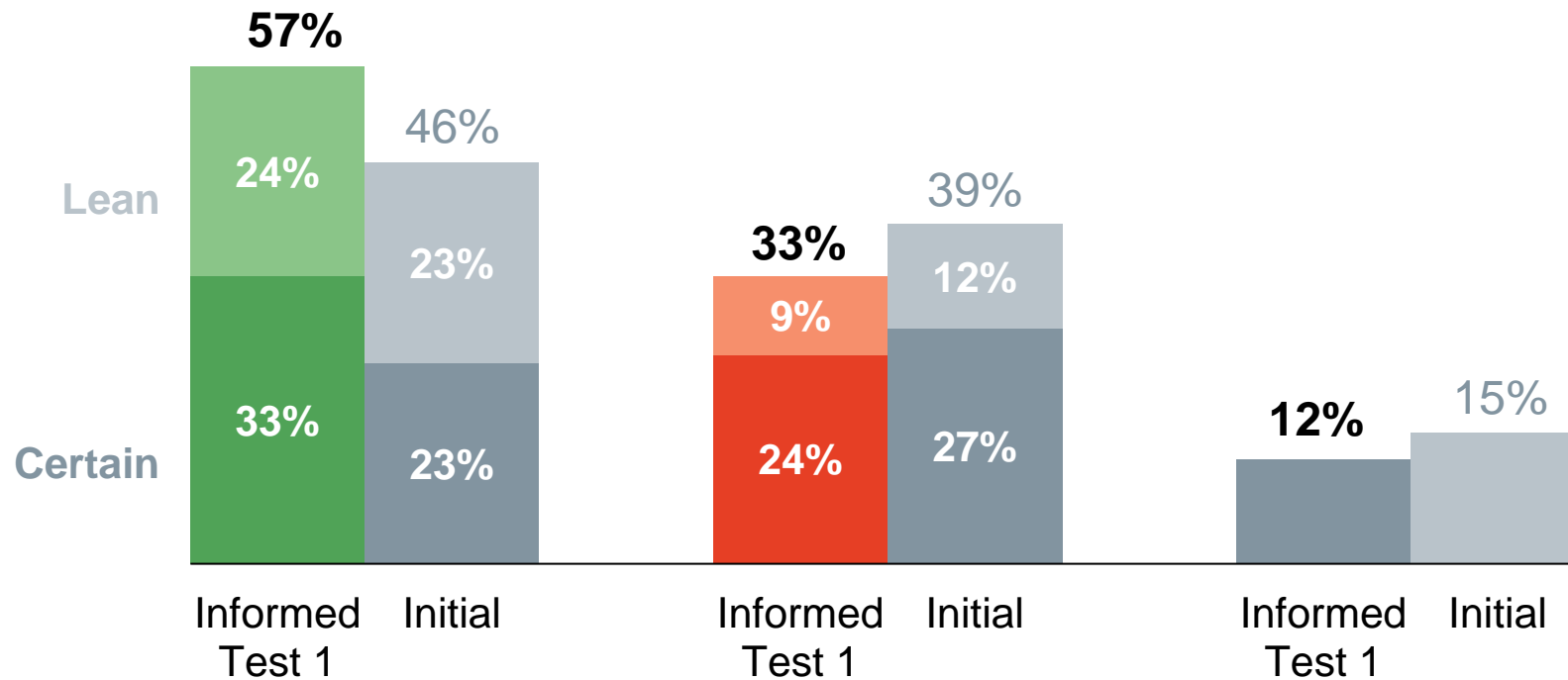
Provided with only a ballot title, 46% of Salem voters support the bond.



Shall City of Salem issue up to \$300,000,000 in general obligation bonds for streets, fire equipment, parks, and public safety? If the bonds are approved, they would be payable from taxes on property or property ownership that are not subject to the limits of sections 11 and 11b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.

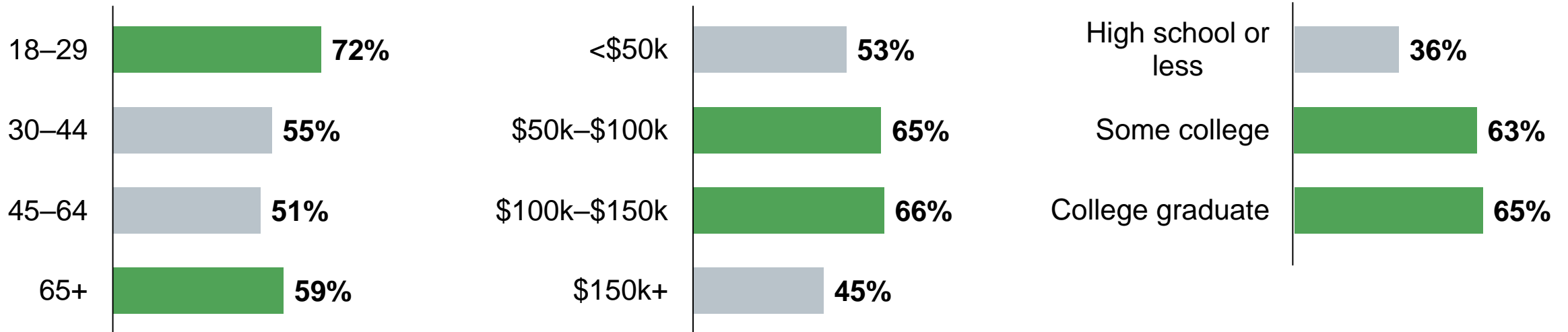
First informed ballot test

Support immediately increases to 57% when voters learn the bond will not increase current property tax rates. Certainty of support also increases significantly.

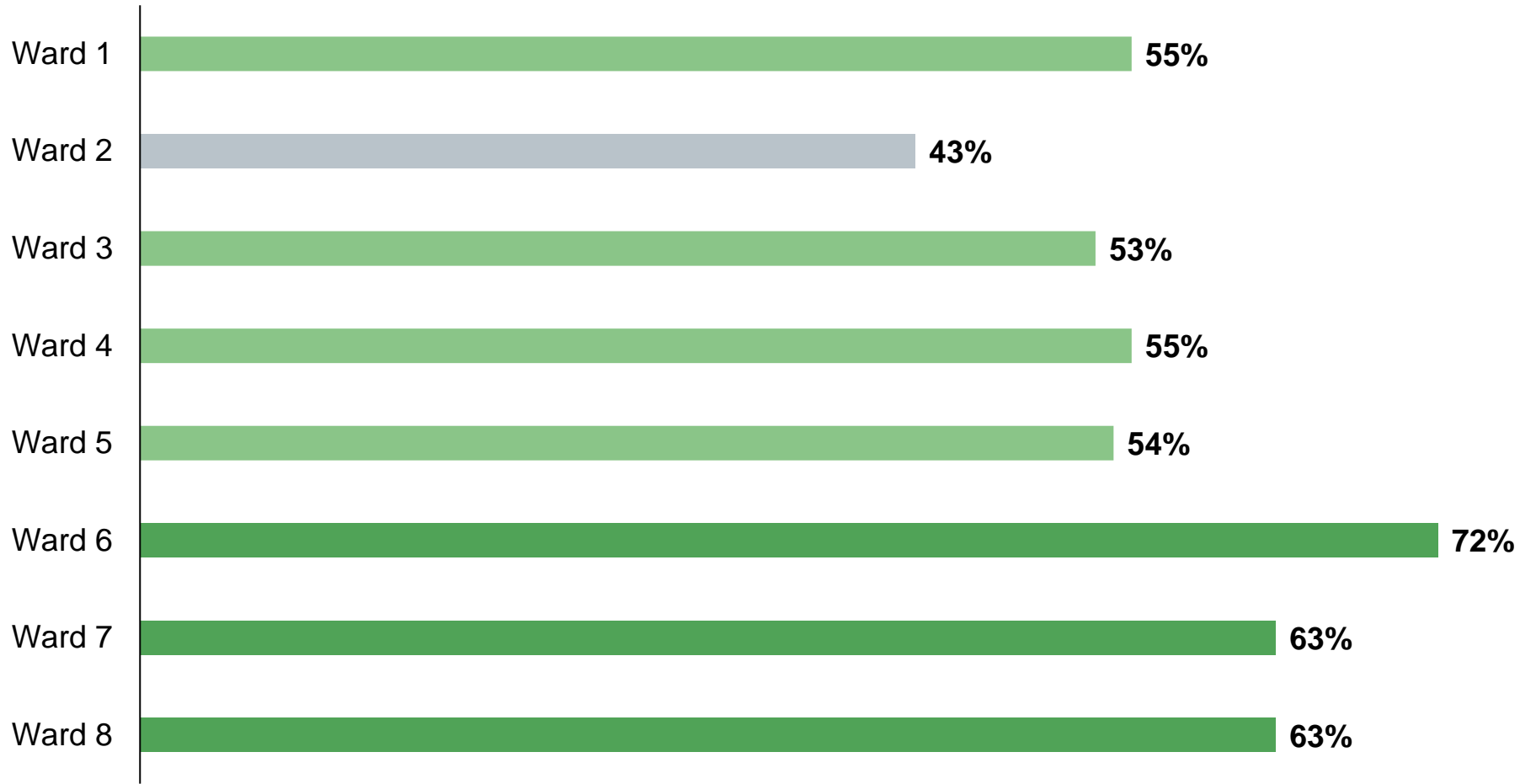


*This measure would replace existing bond payments. If passed, **property tax rates would stay at their current rates**. If the measure fails, property taxes would decrease \$90 per year for the typical household with an assessed value of \$200,000 and the City of Salem would not make these improvements to streets, fire, parks, and public safety.*

Younger and older voters, middle-income voters, and voters with a college education are the biggest supporters of the bond.

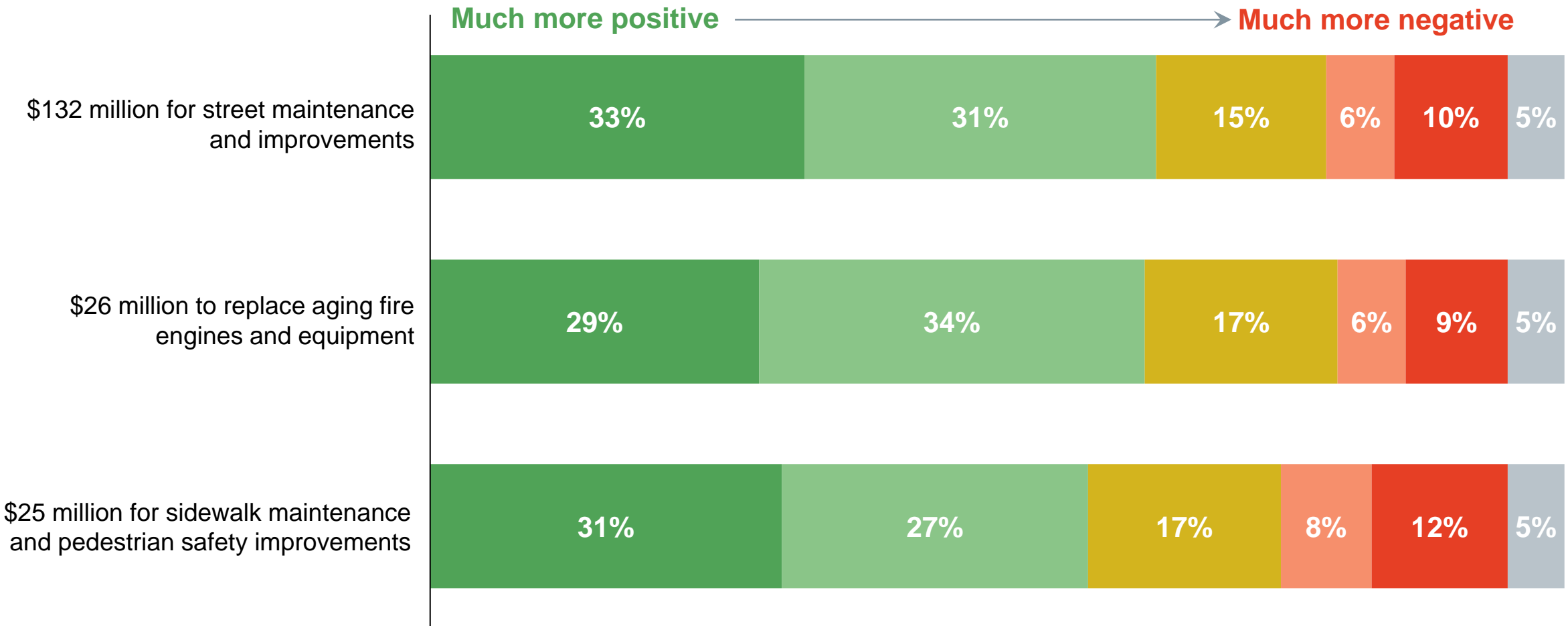


A majority of voters across most wards support the bond. Support is especially high in Wards 6, 7, and 8.



High-level project priorities

Voters are most positive about maintaining streets and sidewalks and replacing aging fire equipment.



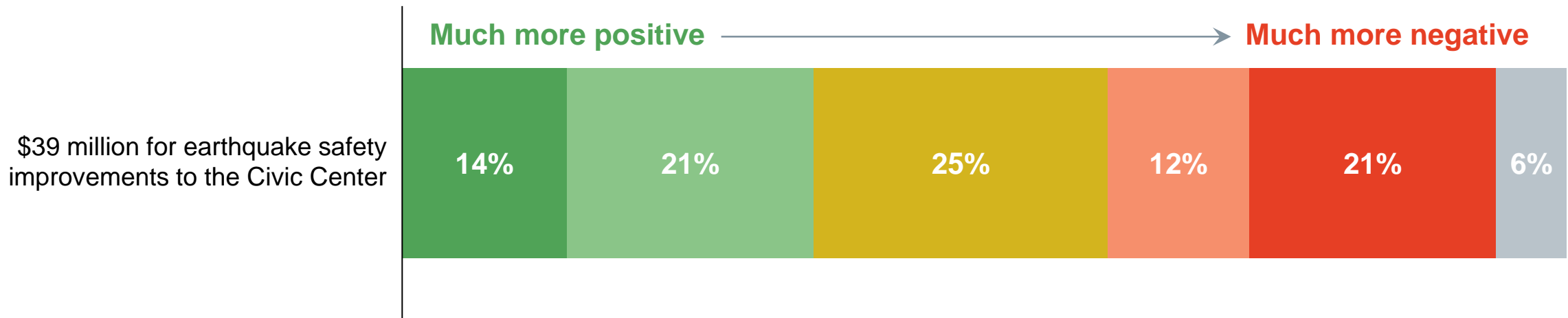
Second-tier priorities include park upgrades and land for future libraries and affordable housing. About 1 in 4 feel negatively about land purchases that may be used for affordable housing.



Just under a majority of voters are positive about land for future fire stations and upgraded cybersecurity and computer systems.



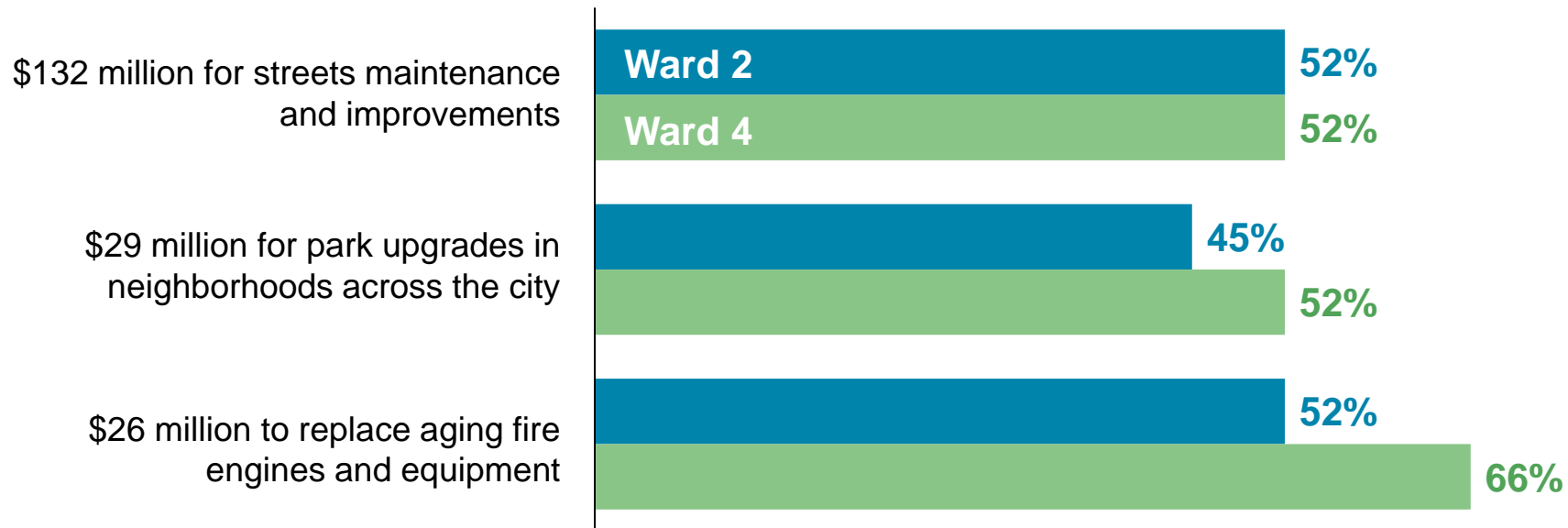
Voters are less positive about earthquake safety improvements to the Civic Center.



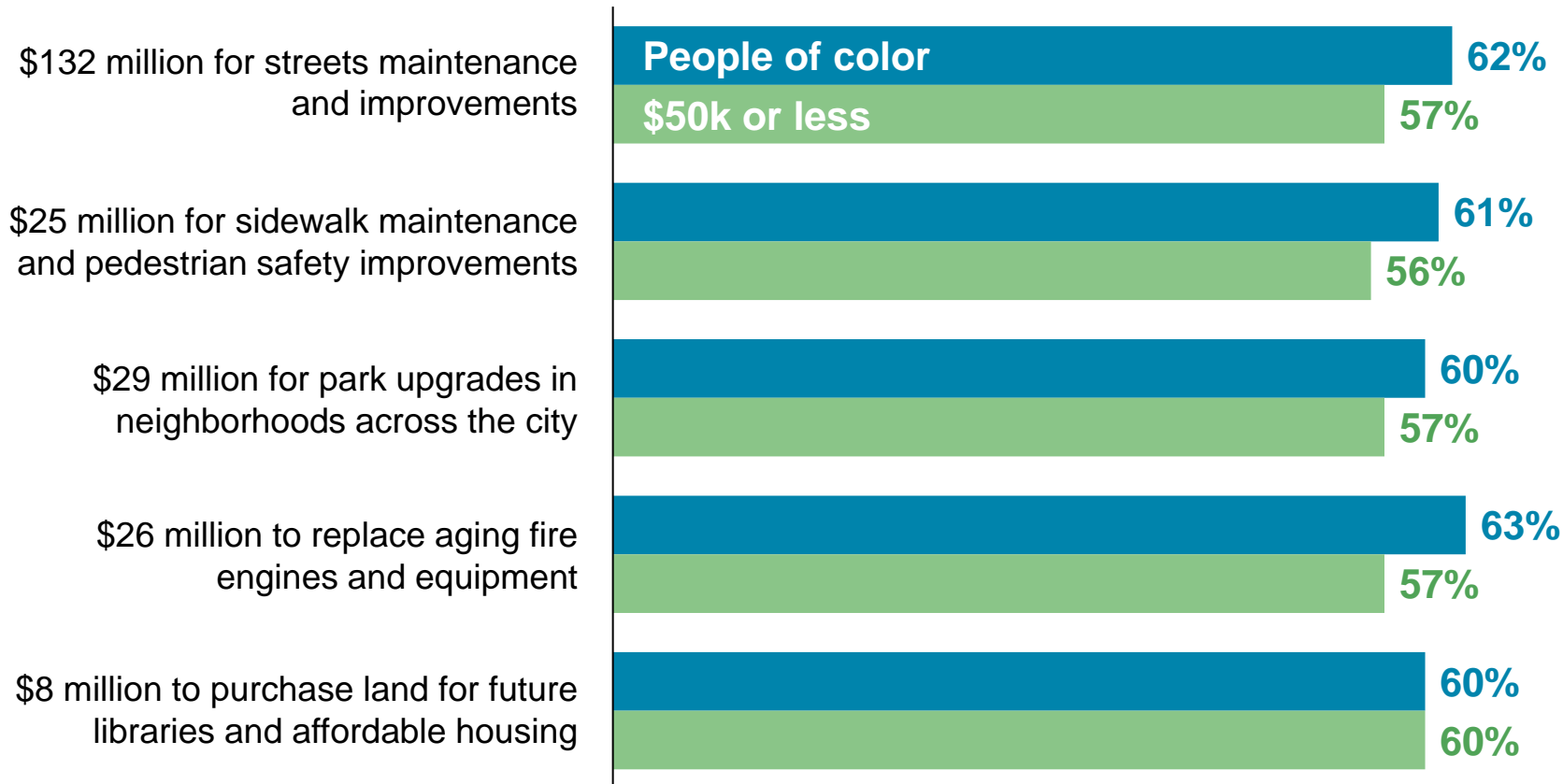
While voters in each ward differ in their positivity toward projects, they tend to be the most positive about similar projects.

Total % positive / Top 3 projects	Ward							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
\$132m for street maintenance and improvements	70	52	52	52	71	83	73	63
\$26m to replace aging fire engines and equipment	66	52	66	66	65	64	60	61
\$25m for sidewalk maintenance and pedestrian safety improvements	61	44	53	45	69	74	64	56
\$29m for park upgrades in neighborhoods across the city	64	45	54	52	52	57	56	58
\$8m to purchase land for future libraries and affordable housing	62	38	56	46	51	71	57	54
\$18m for upgraded critical computer systems and cybersecurity upgrades	47	29	47	42	42	69	58	50
\$14m to purchase land for future fire stations	47	44	56	51	53	51	33	48
\$39m for earthquake safety improvements to the Civic Center	45	25	36	31	47	38	35	30

Voters in Wards 2 and 4—the areas with the lowest support for the bond—are most positive about streets and sidewalks, parks, and fire equipment.

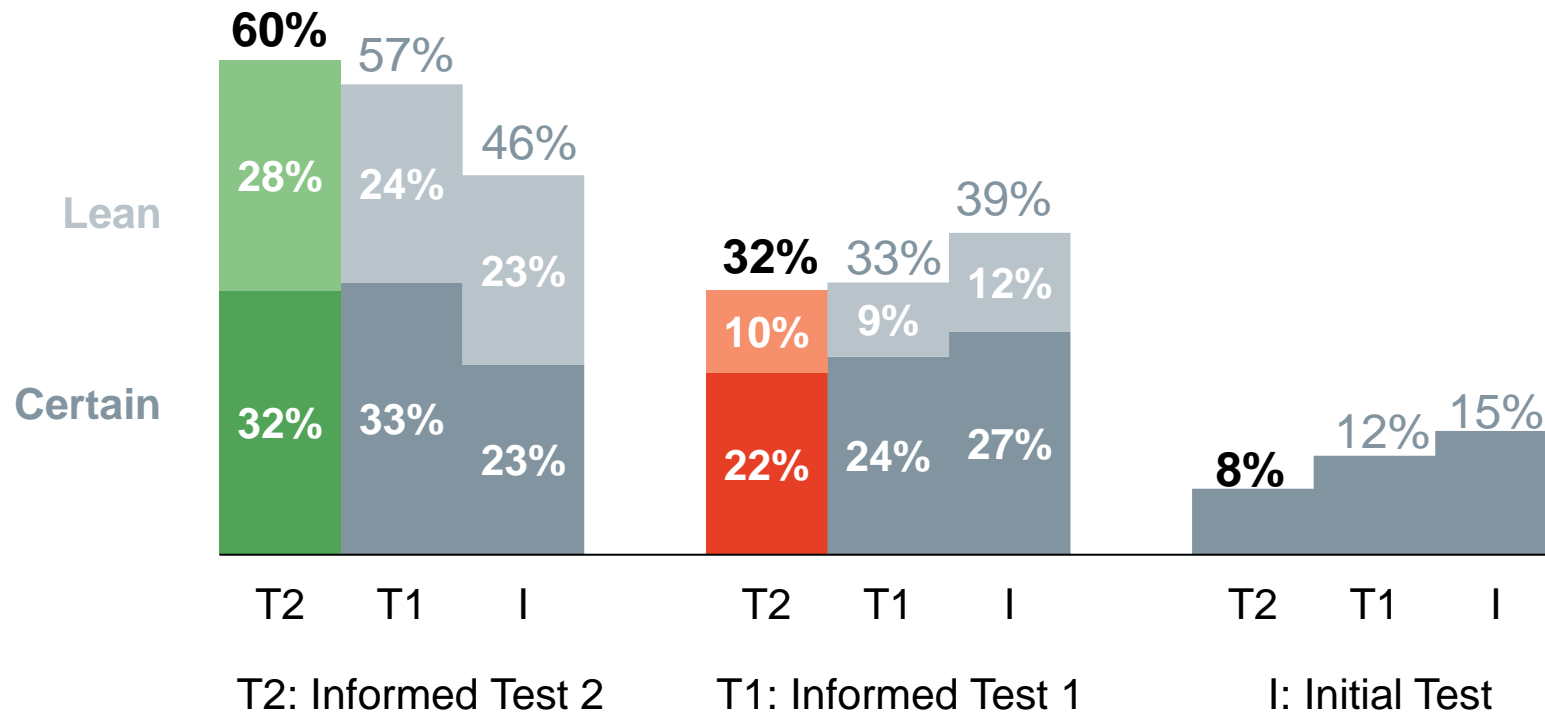


People of color and lower-income voters are more positive about streets and sidewalks, parks, fire equipment, libraries, and affordable housing.



Second informed ballot test

Support increases to 60% after voters learn more about projects and estimated amounts.



Shall City of Salem issue up to \$300,000,000 in general obligation bonds for streets, fire equipment, parks, and public safety? If the bonds are approved, they would be payable from taxes on property or property ownership that are not subject to the limits of sections 11 and 11b, Article XI of the Oregon Constitution.

Specific projects

When it comes to specific transportation projects, a majority of voters are positive about traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements to Pringle and McGilchrest in South Salem.

Much more positive
→
 Much more negative

In South Salem, upgrades to Pringle Road and McGilchrest Street to improve traffic flow, add new bike lanes, and improve pedestrian crossings



In Northeast Salem, upgrades to Fisher Road to improve traffic flow, add new bike lanes, and improve pedestrian crossings



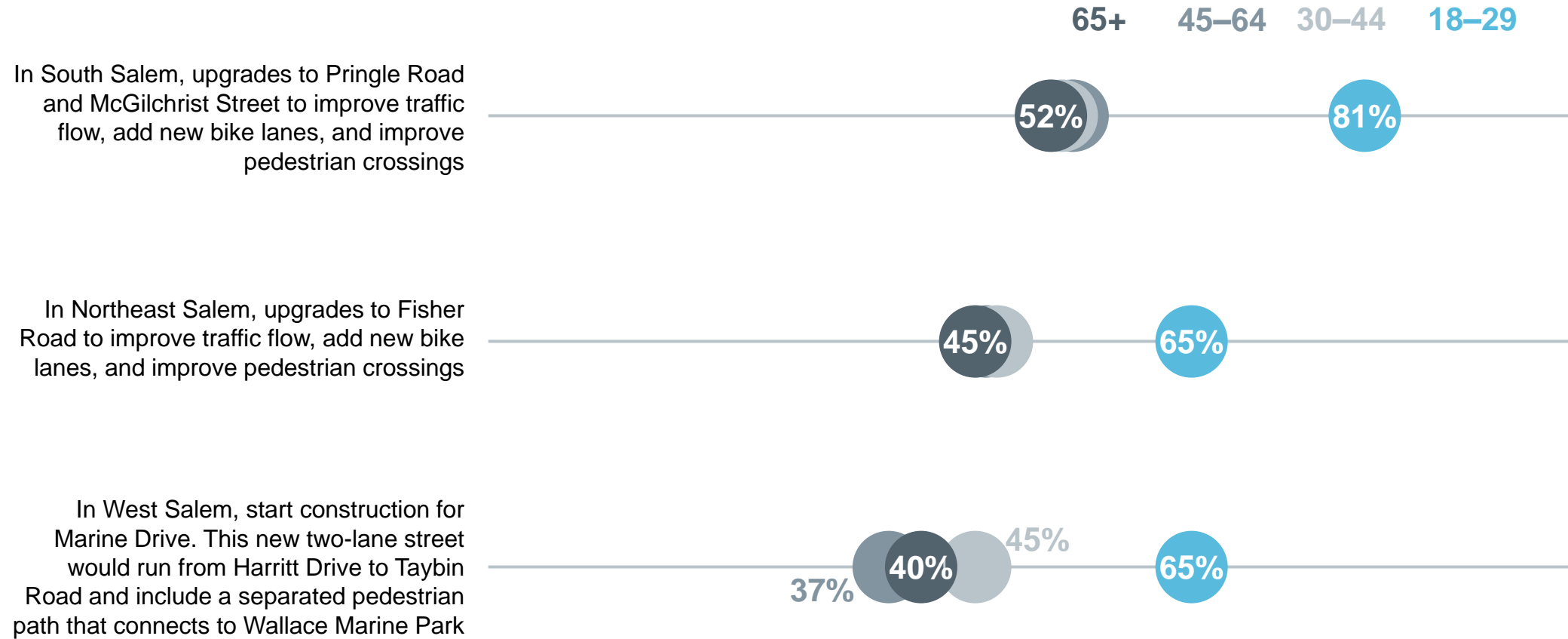
In West Salem, start construction for Marine Drive. This new two-lane street would run from Harritt Drive to Taybin Road and include a separated pedestrian path that connects to Wallace Marine Park



Positivity varies across wards, but voters in 5 of 8 wards are most positive about specific projects on Pringle and McGilchrest.

Total % positive / Top project	Ward							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
S Salem Pringle Road and McGilchrest Street: traffic flow, bike lanes, pedestrian crossings	45	56	57	47	49	71	68	57
NE Salem Fisher Road: traffic flow, bike lanes, pedestrian crossings	57	35	40	41	51	70	53	44
W Salem Marine Drive: two-lane street and separated pedestrian path	49	32	44	34	44	39	44	59

Positivity about specific transportation projects is especially high among younger voters.



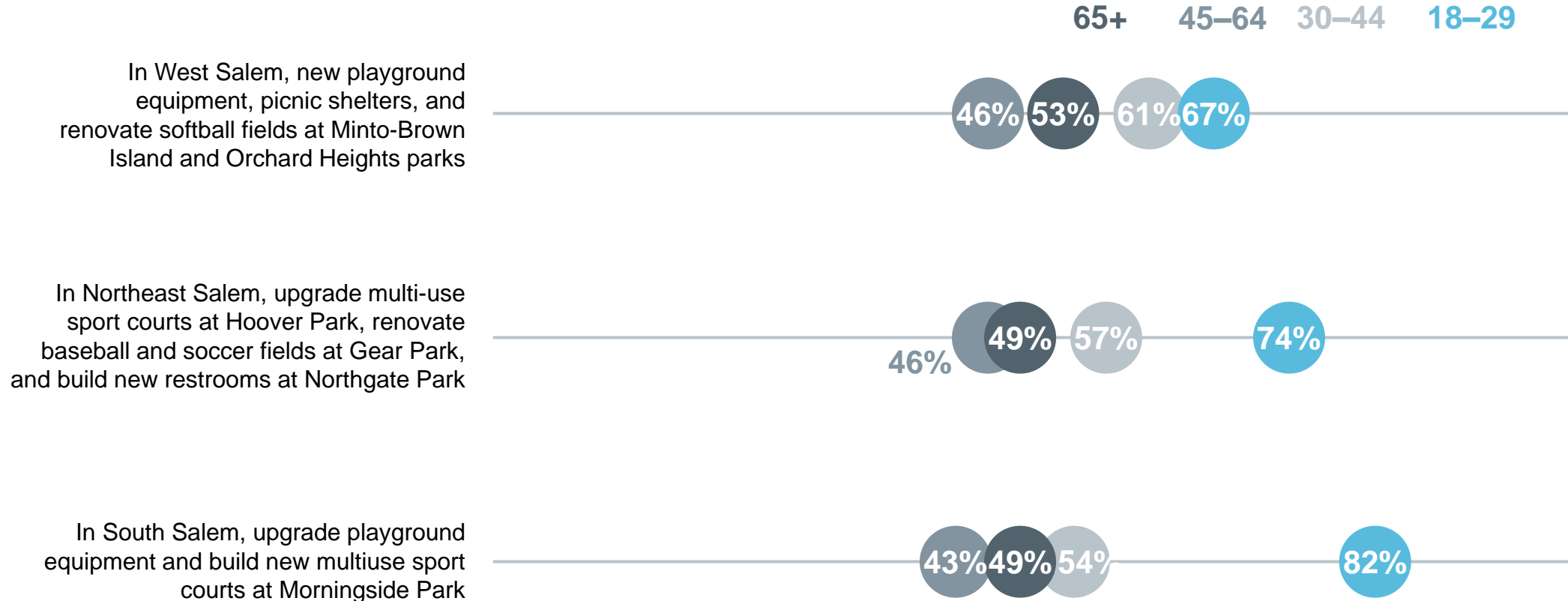
A majority of voters are positive about all potential park projects across Salem.



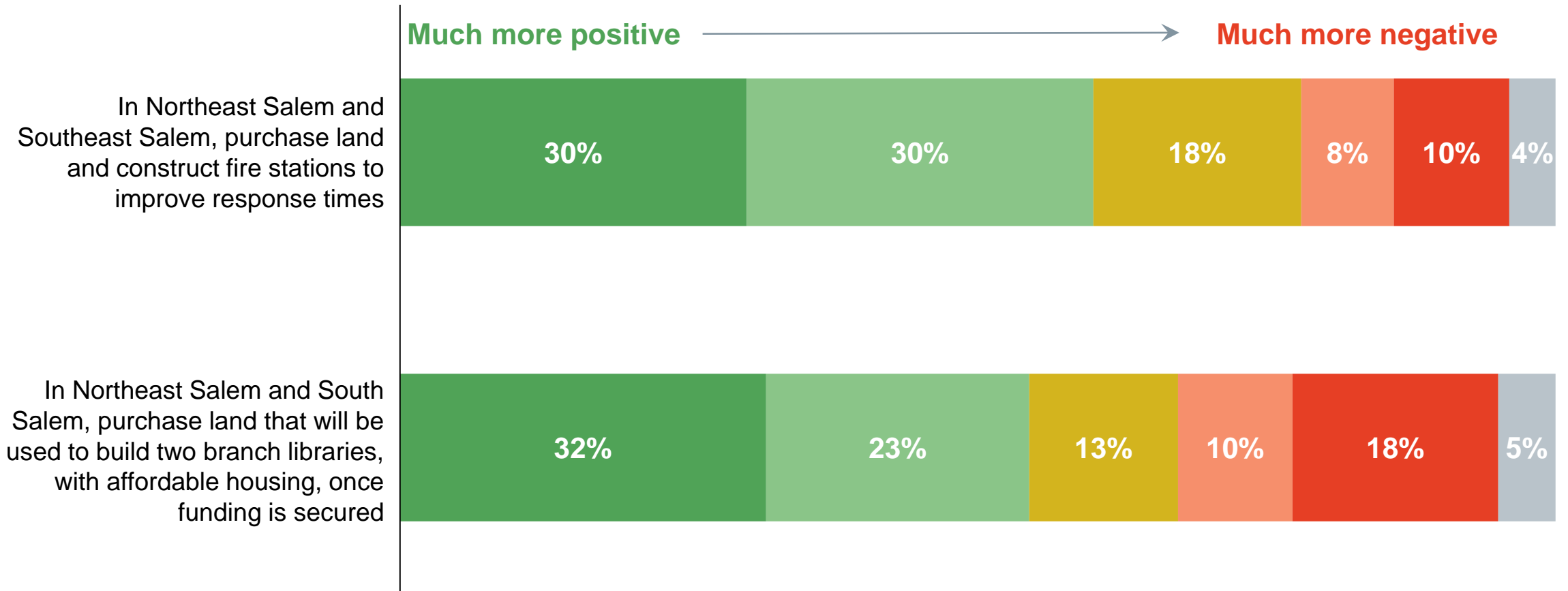
Positivity is high for specific parks projects, but top preferences vary by ward.

Total % positive / Top project	Ward							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
W Salem park upgrades: Minto-Brown Island and Orchard Heights	60	47	55	49	54	54	49	67
NE Salem park upgrades: Hoover, Gear Park, and Northgate	59	52	49	51	61	58	52	52
S Salem park upgrades: Morningside	49	44	55	56	44	59	51	60

Positivity for specific park projects is especially high among younger voters.



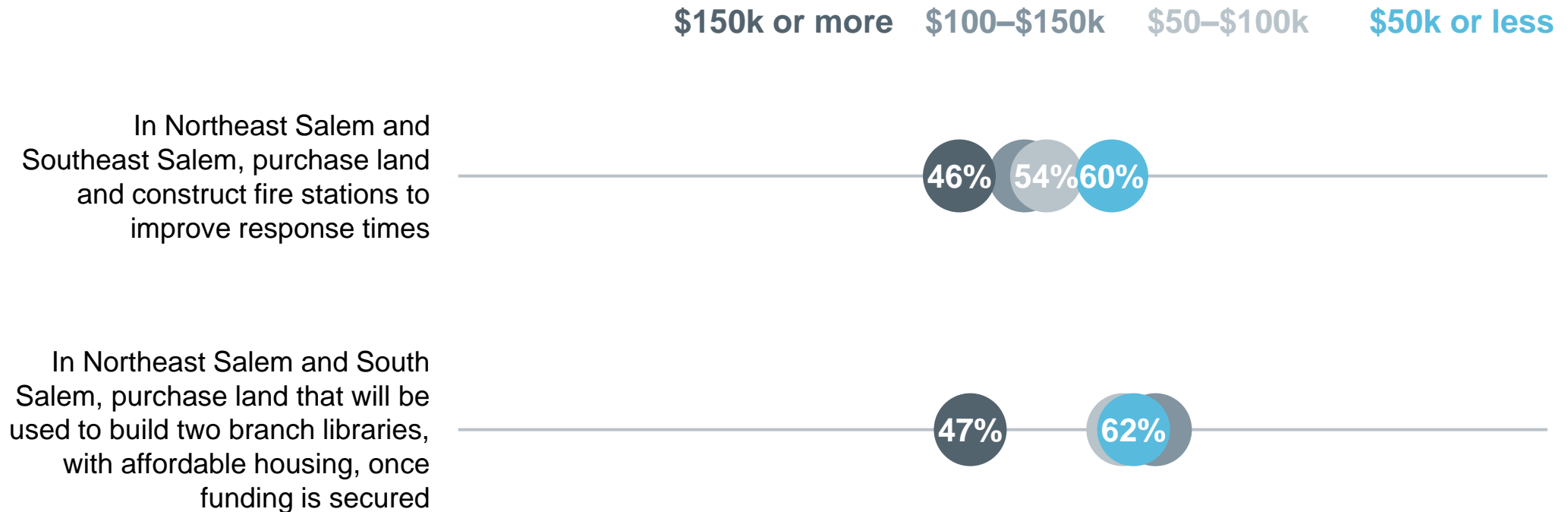
A majority of voters are positive about land purchases for fire stations, libraries, and affordable housing. Negativity is high for land purchases that include affordable housing.



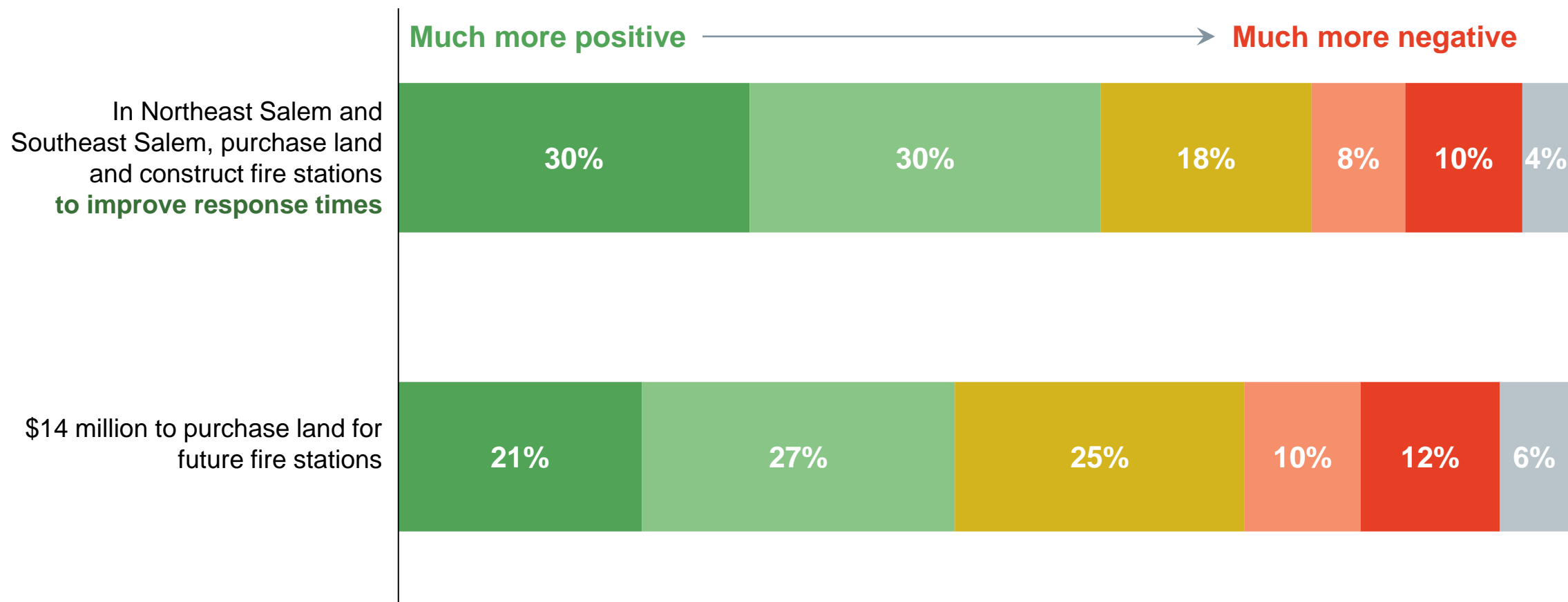
A majority of voters are positive about specific land purchases for fire stations, libraries, and affordable housing. Positivity is lowest in Ward 2.

Total % positive / Top project	Ward							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
NE & SE Salem: land for fire stations	58	41	75	56	66	83	56	55
NE & S Salem: land for libraries and affordable housing	62	43	56	51	56	65	56	49

Positivity for specific land purchases for libraries, affordable housing, and fire stations is especially high among lower-income voters.

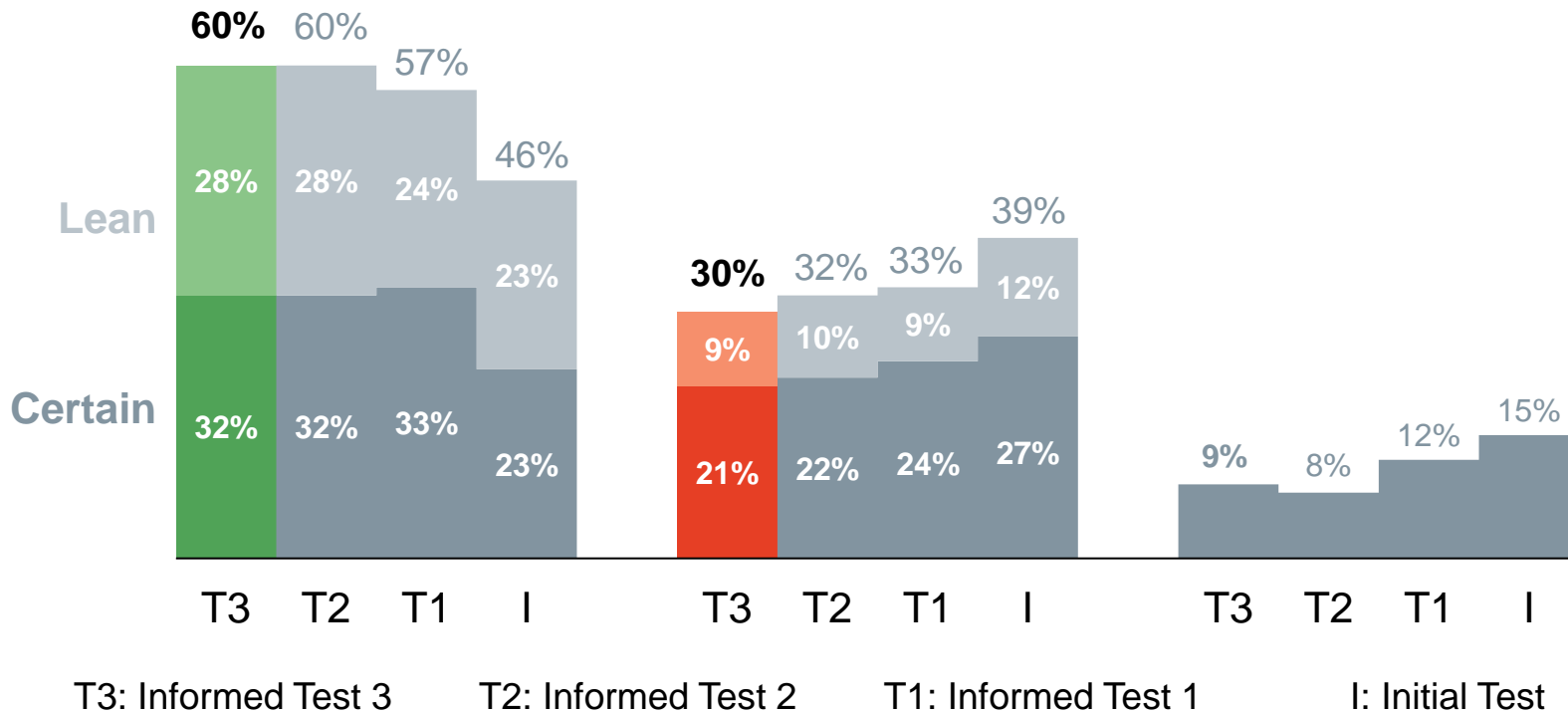


Highlighting the benefit provided by land purchases for fire stations makes voters feel more positive about the bond.



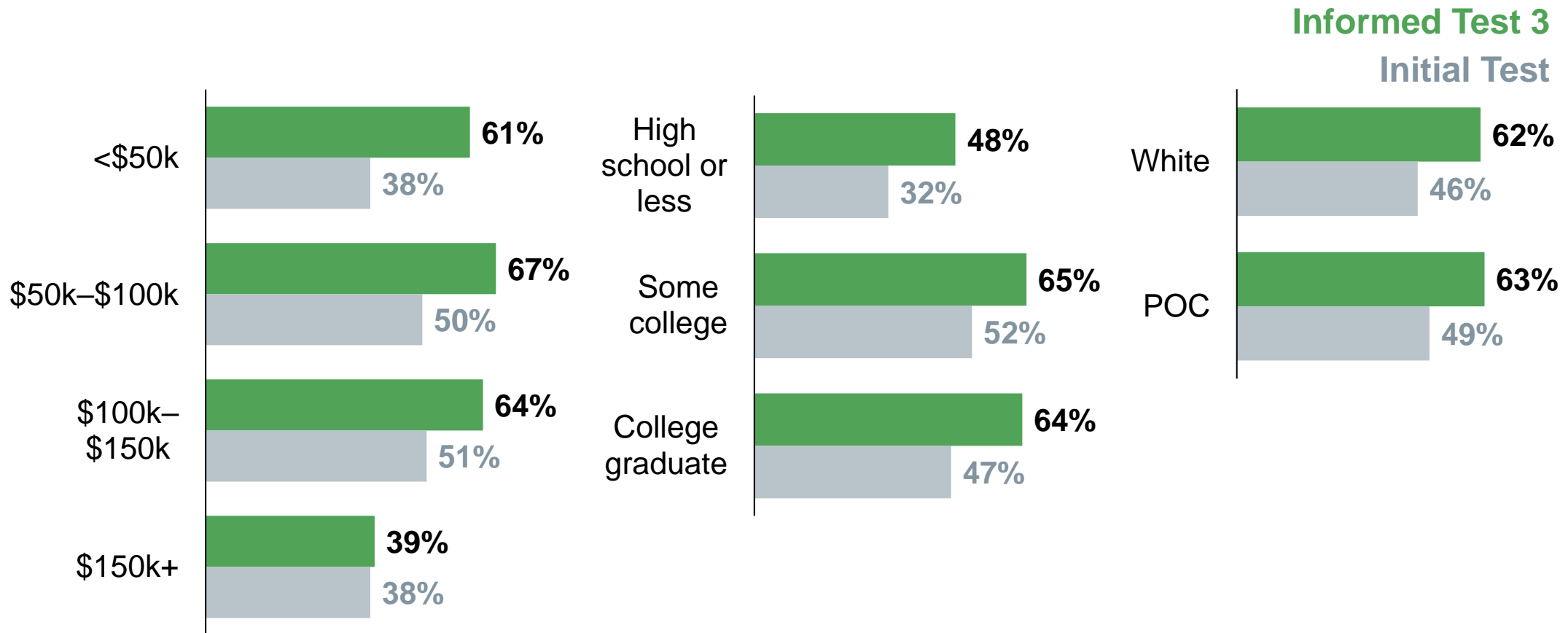
Third informed ballot test

After hearing more about specific projects, support for the bond remains steady at 60%.

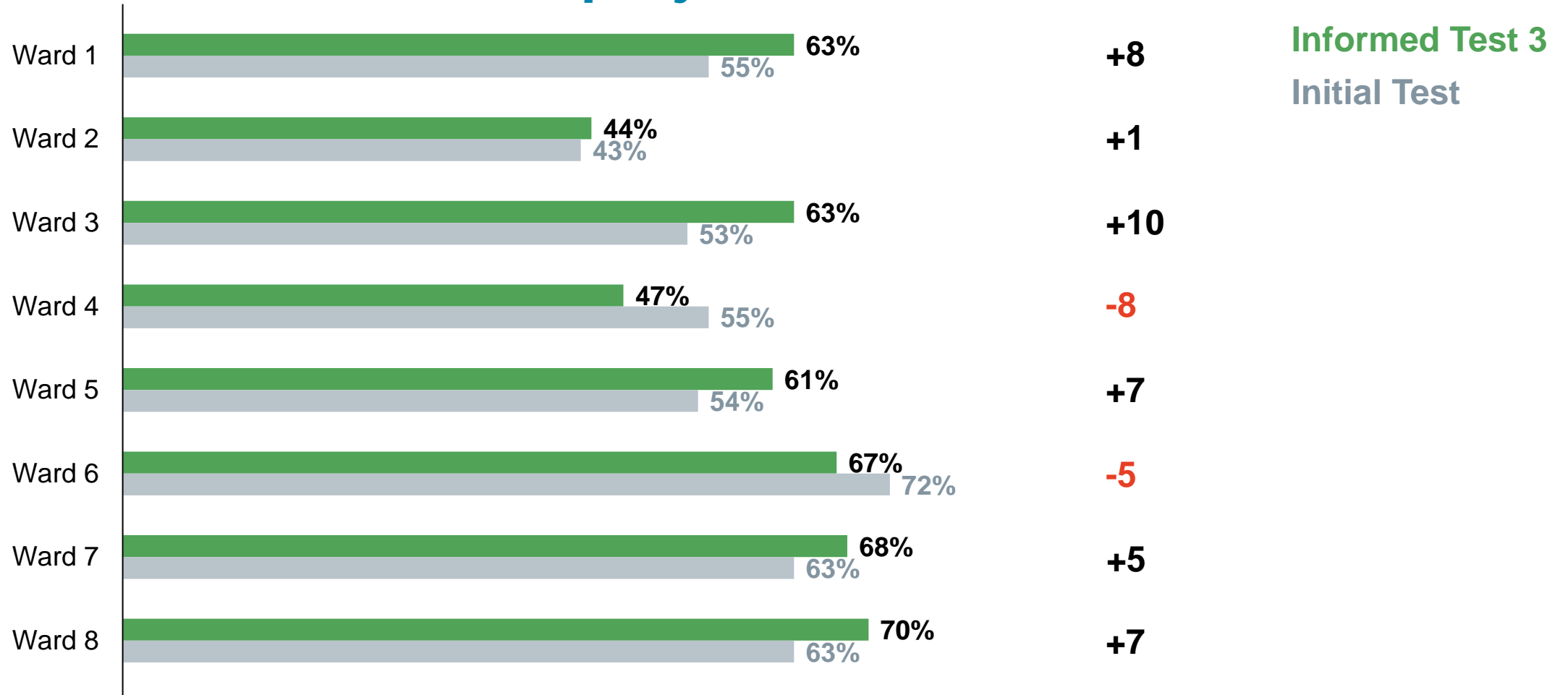


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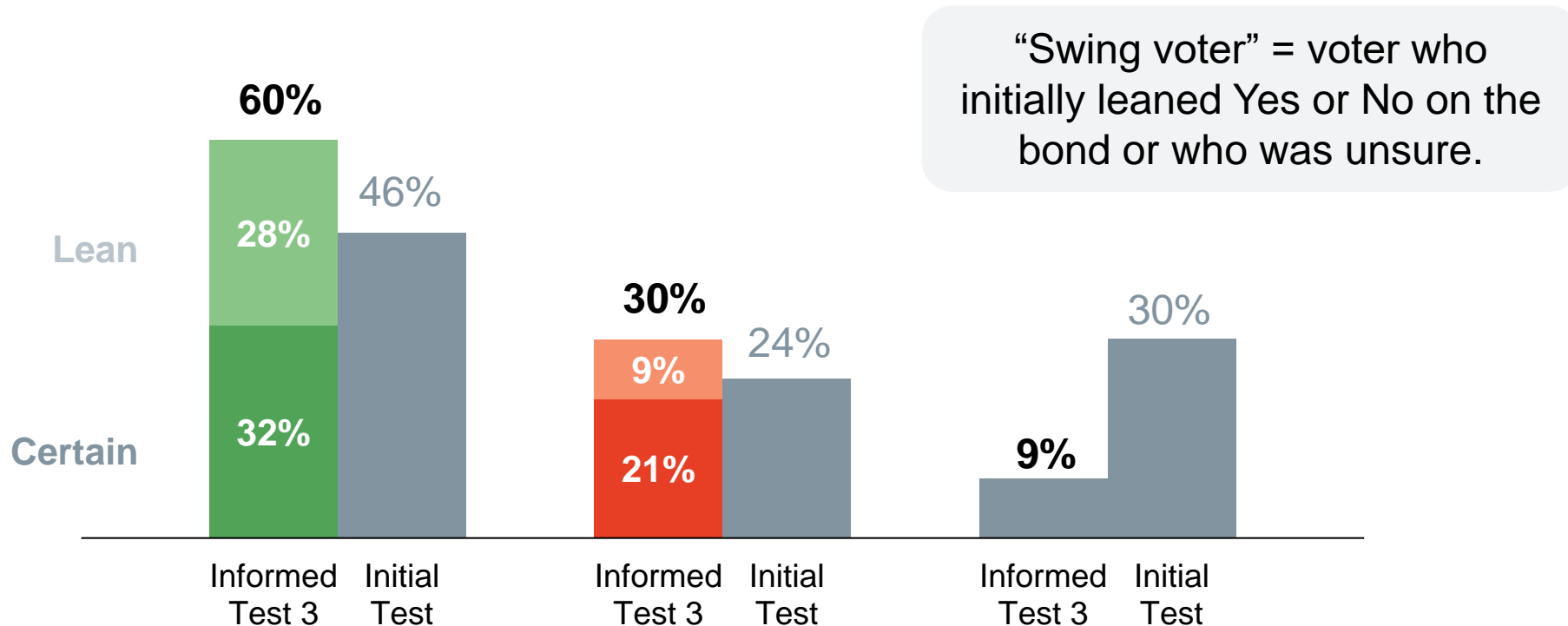
Support among key groups increases after learning more about projects.



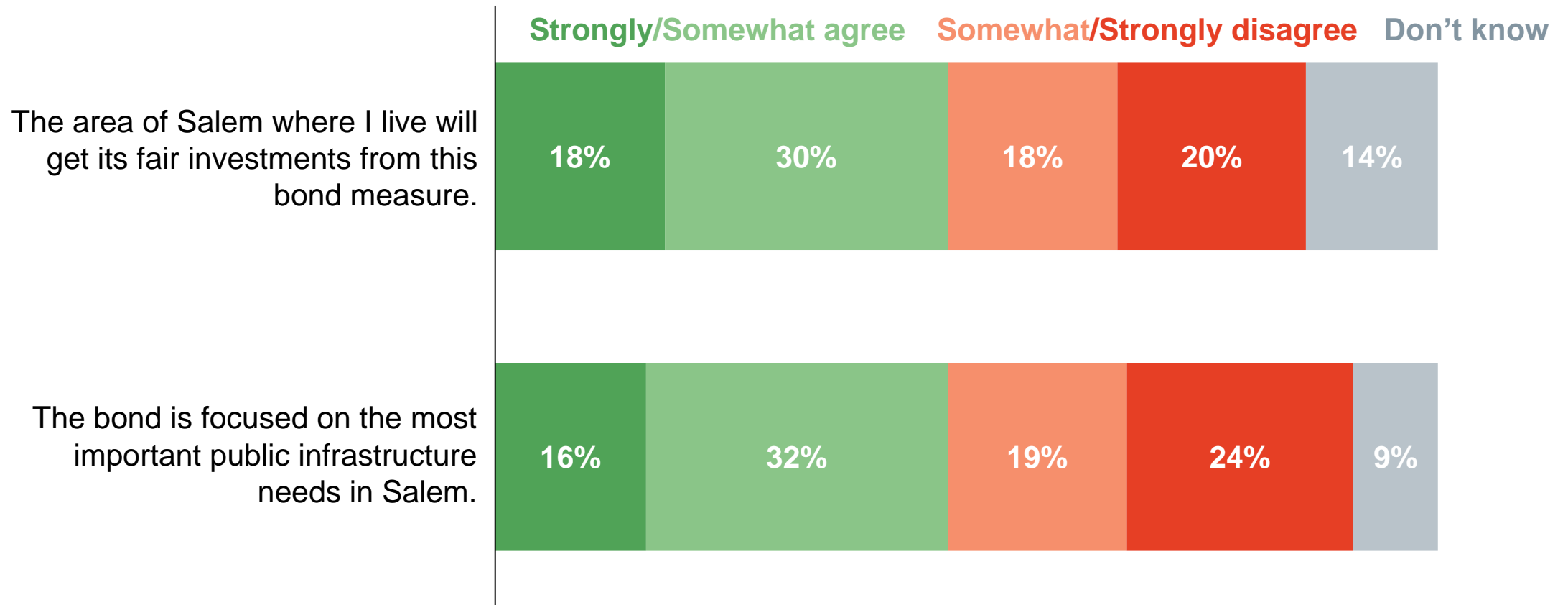
Support for the bond increases in most wards as voters learn more about the projects it will fund.



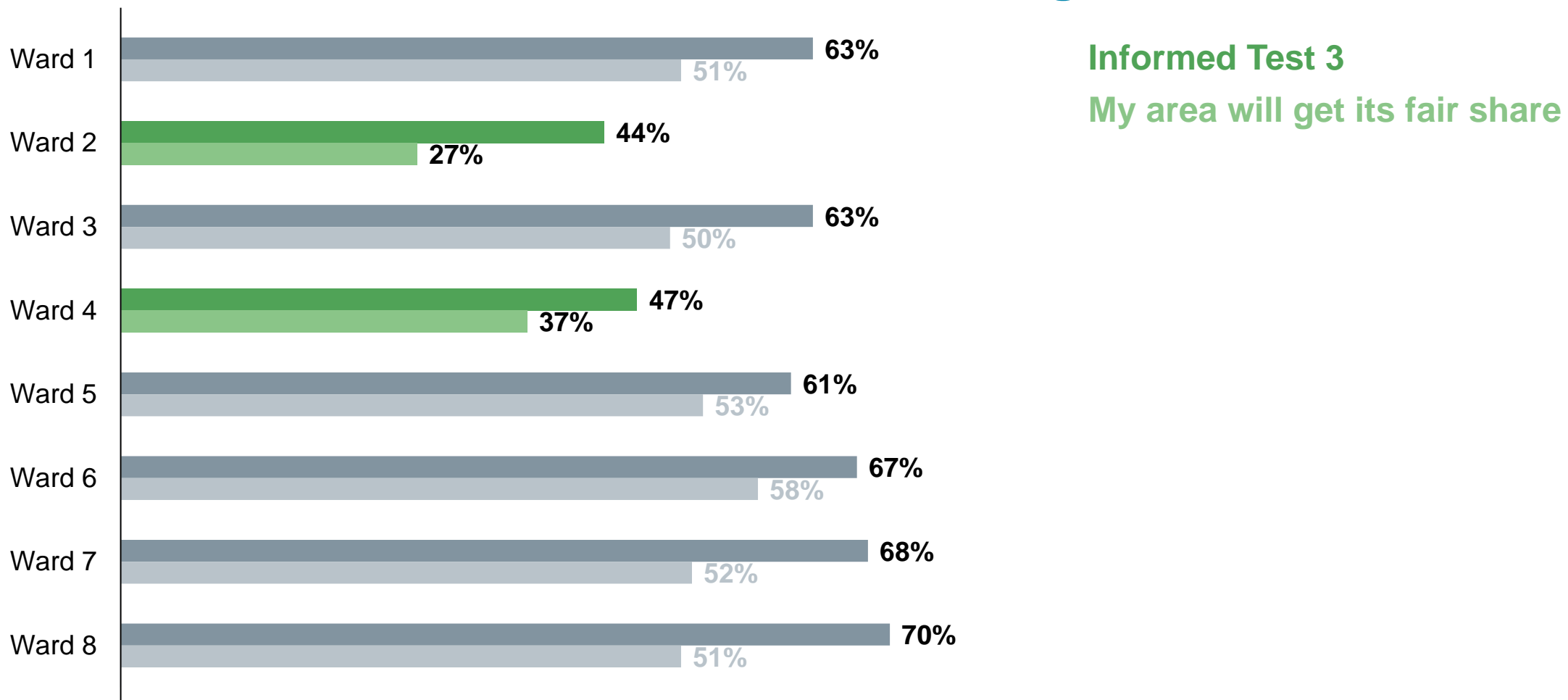
After learning more about the bond, swing voters become much more supportive.



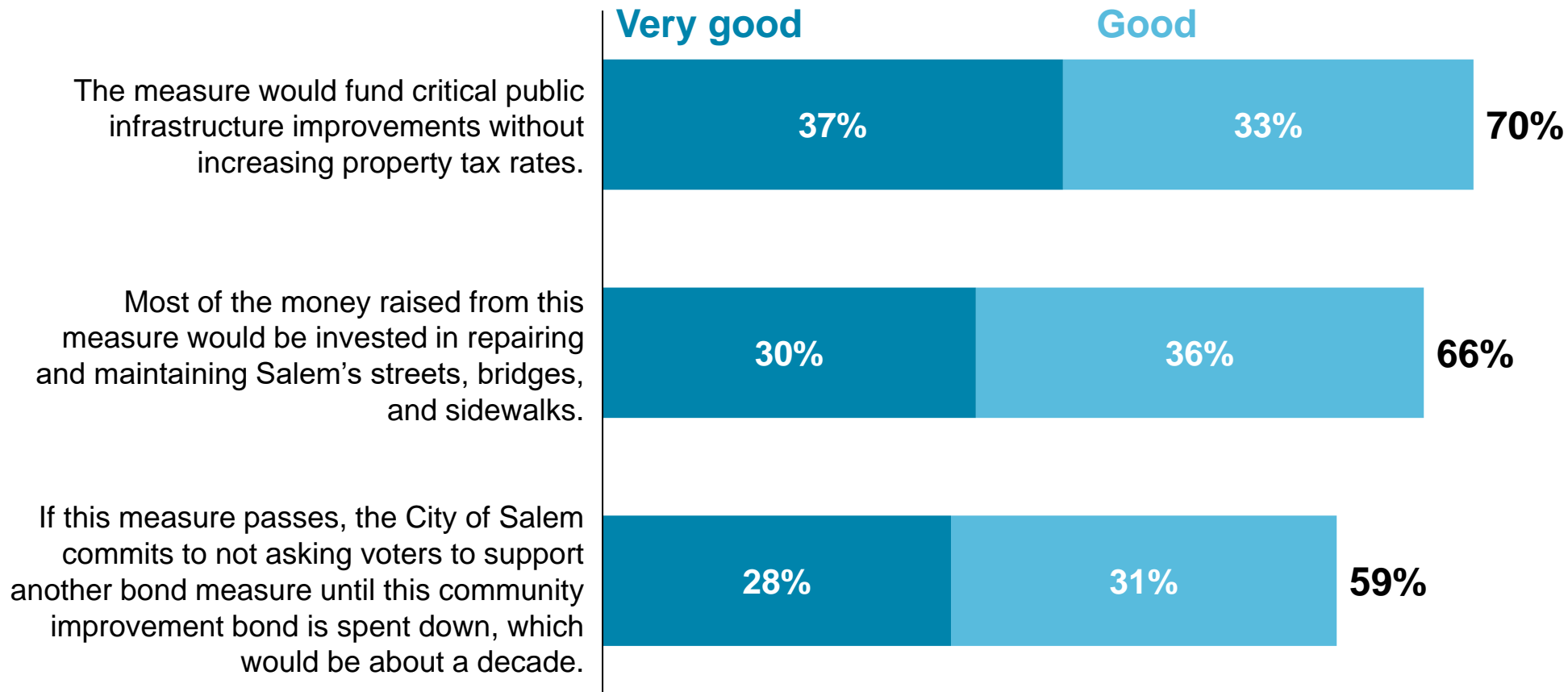
About four in ten voters are concerned their areas will not get their fair share of investments and that the bond is not focusing on the most important infrastructure needs.



Support for the bond is lower in Wards 2 and 4, where voters are also less convinced that their area will get their fair share.

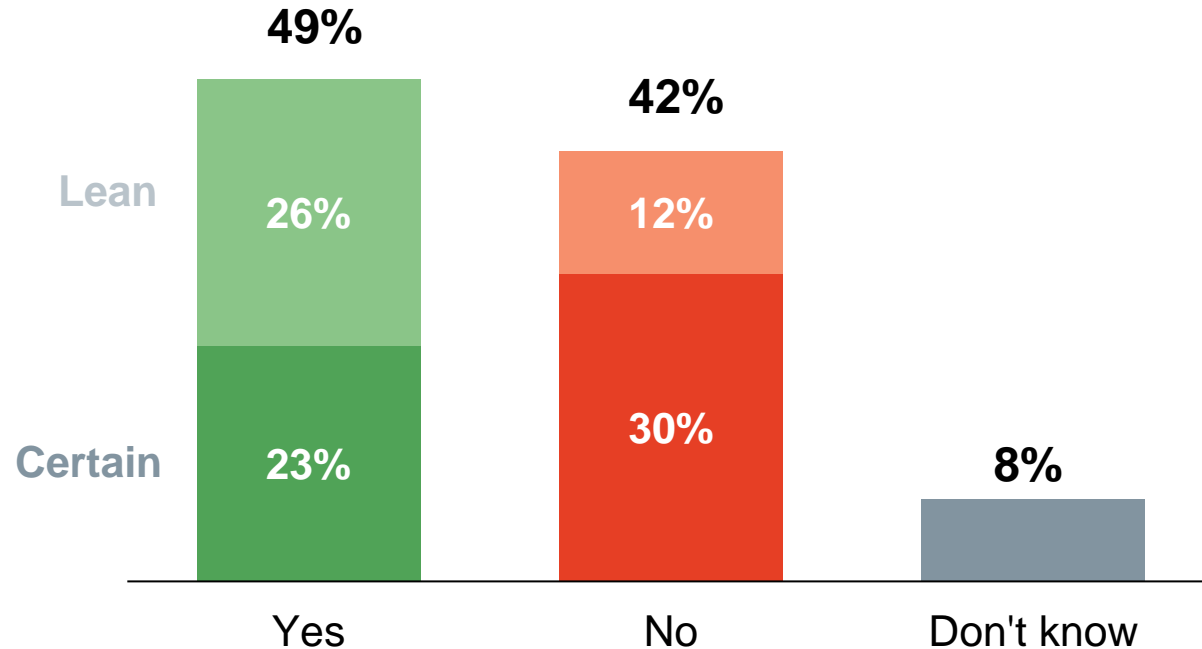


Voters find all tested reasons to support the bond convincing, especially that the bond would not increase current property tax rates and that most of the money would go to maintaining streets, bridges, and sidewalks.



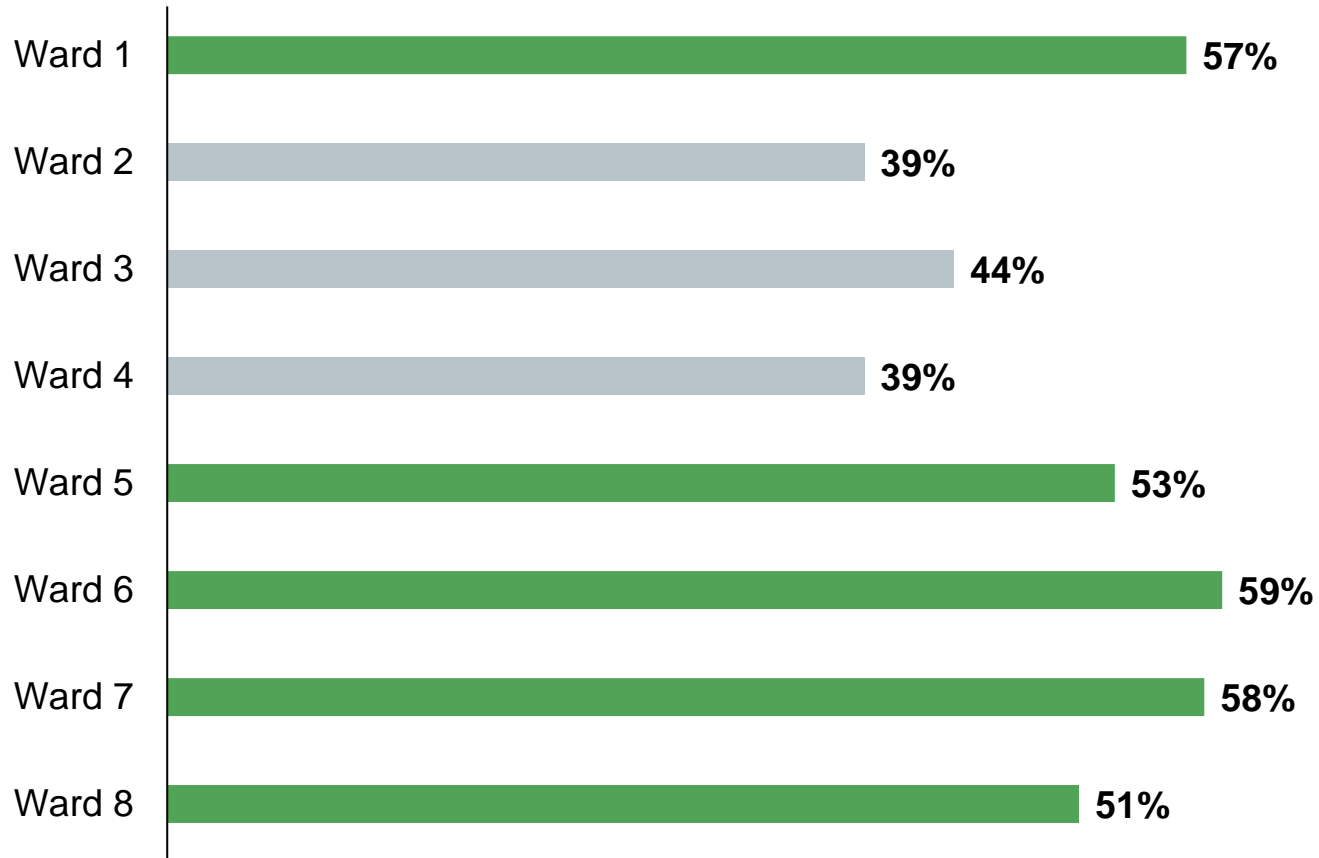
Dedicated bike lanes test

Asked about a potential bond package that funds dedicated bike lanes by reducing money for other projects, roughly half of voters remain supportive of the option. Note, that this is only funding question that called out a funding trade off.



Allocating \$10 million to dedicated bicycle lanes separated from traffic. This change would not increase the total amount of the measure. Instead, the funds would come from reductions in spending for other public infrastructure projects.

A majority of voters in five of eight wards support a bond with dedicated bike lanes separated from traffic.





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