

# 2017 BOULDER COUNTY ISSUES SURVEY

**Report**

~August, 2017~

*Prepared for:*



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# **I. OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY**

# OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to better understand community reaction towards two possible ballot issues that could be on this November's election ballot, as well as voter support or opposition to two important issues facing the County. The two possible ballot initiatives are: 1) changing the statutory term limits on the office of County Sheriff; and 2) extending the Worthy Cause Tax beyond its expiration at the end of 2018.

# METHODOLOGY

Talmey-Drake Research & Strategy, Inc. conducted the 2017 Boulder County Issues Survey in June of 2017. A random sample was drawn from a list of Boulder County voters, containing both landline and cell phone numbers.

- *Interviews were conducted between May 31 to June 7, 2017.*
- *Results are based on 605 telephone interviews, 50% of which were conducted on respondent cell phones.*
- *The margin of error is plus or minus 4% about any one reported percentage.*

## **II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS**

# KEY FINDINGS

## I. The Climate Today

**For the second year in a row, the Boulder County electorate is slightly less optimistic than they were at the end of 2015 about how things are going in the County. Fifty-six percent (same as 2016 and down from 61% in December of 2015) say that things in Boulder County are going in the right direction, the same as across the state (up from 48% a year ago).**

**In spite of the recent re-assessments, the percent saying County taxes are “Way too high” has remained surprisingly constant. However, the perception of current property taxes among homeowners jumped significantly over the course of the past year.**

# KEY FINDINGS

## II. Extending / Eliminating County Sheriff Term Limits

Survey results show that support for changing the term limits for the County Sheriff has slipped dramatically since it was first asked back in 2011, dropping from 48% in 2011 to 38% today.

## III. Extending the Worth Cause Sales Tax

The County Worth Cause Tax, already extended twice in the past, is likely to be extended a third time if placed on the ballot this coming November. Overall, 80% of voters say they support an extension, with 79% supporting a 10-year extension, while 82% support a 15-year extension. Given the lack of an statistical difference between the two, asking voters to approve a 15-year extension would seem to be appropriate.

# KEY FINDINGS

## **IV. Limited Elk Hunting on Rabbit Mountain Open Space**

**County voters express broad support for allowing limited elk hunting in order to reduce the size of the existing herd on Rabbit Mountain. By a margin of 73% to 19%, voters support vs. oppose allowing limited hunting on Rabbit Mountain.**

## **V. Shooting Ranges vs. Dispersed Shooting**

**By a margin of 71% in favor to 17% opposed, County voters also express broad support for the County developing shooting ranges and facilities in safer areas, in return for the USFS prohibiting Dispersed Shooting in the populated areas of the Boulder County foothills.**

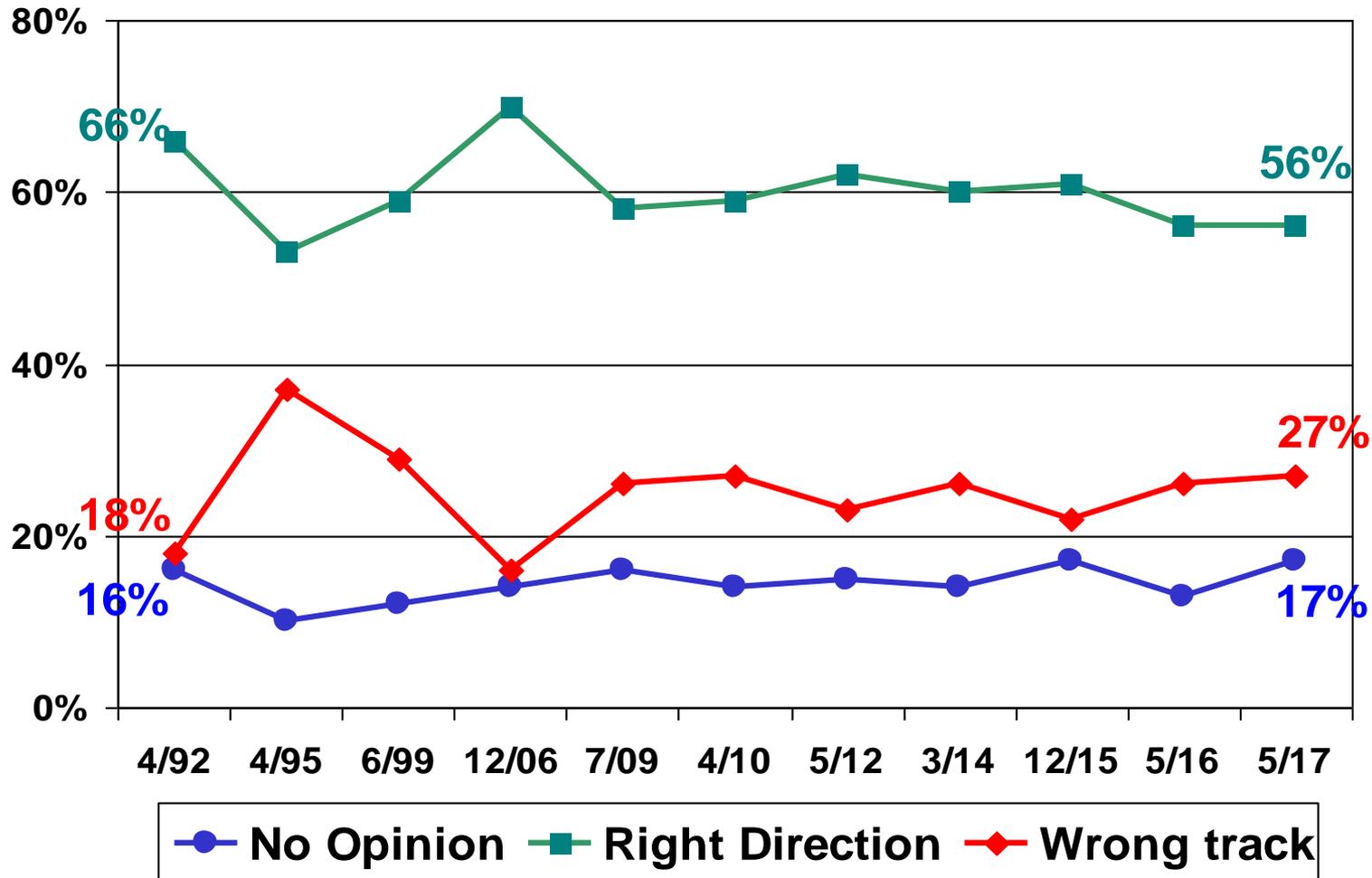
# **III. THE CLIMATE TODAY**

# Climate and Overview

For the second year in a row, the Boulder County electorate is slightly less optimistic than at the end of 2015 about how things are going in the County. And for the first time in recent memory, Coloradans across the state feel just as optimistic as do County residents. Fifty-six percent (same as 2016 and down from 61% in December of 2015) say that things in Boulder County are going in the right direction, the same as across the state (up from 48% a year ago).

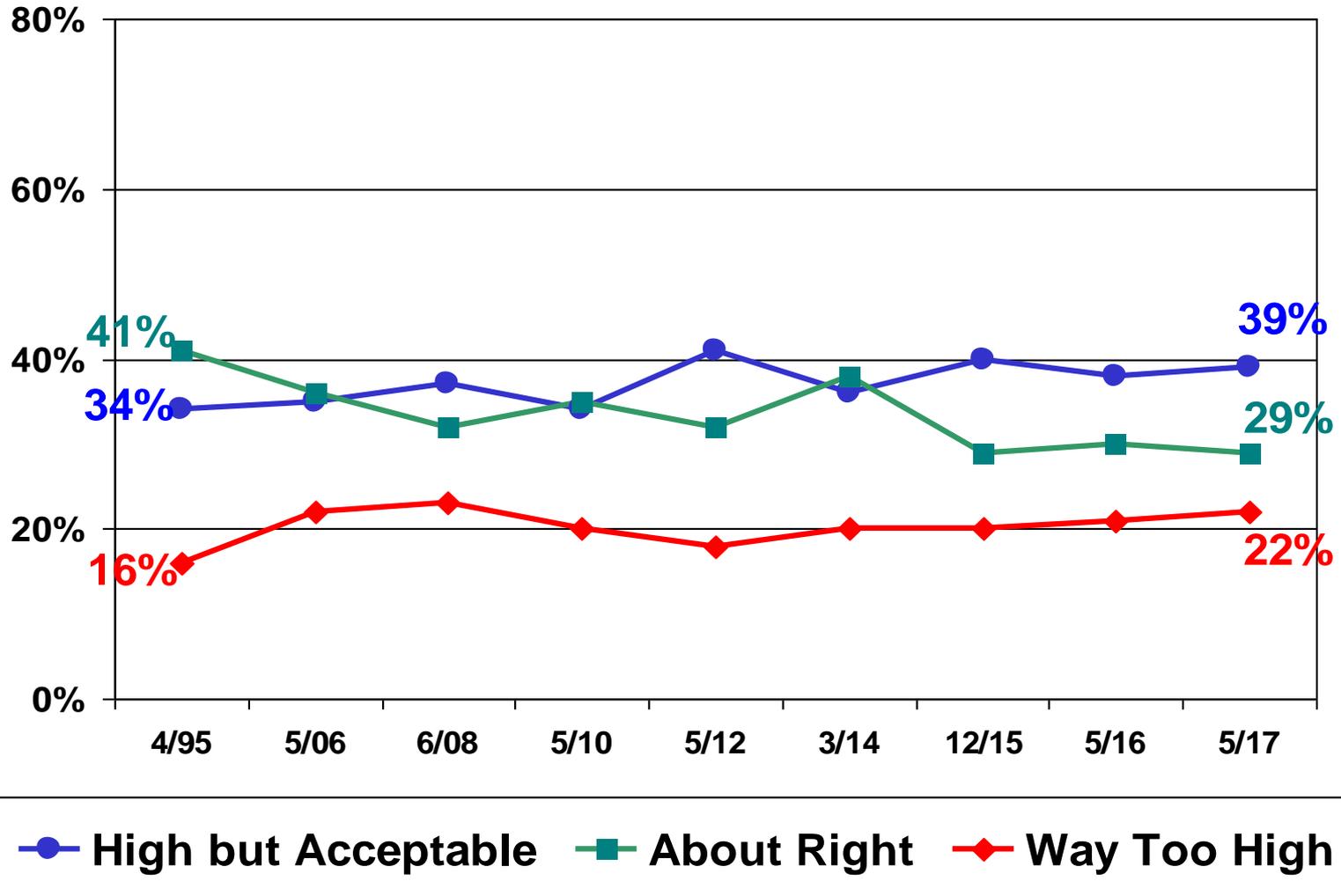
To further understand the climate in Boulder County today, voters were also asked how they feel about the County's tax burden. In spite of the recent reassessments, the percent saying County taxes are "Way too high," has surprisingly remained fairly constant. However, the perception among homeowners of current property taxes being "way too high" jumped up 10 points compared to 2016, no doubt reflecting the recent increase in property value seen in the county.

# How are Things Going in Boulder County Today?



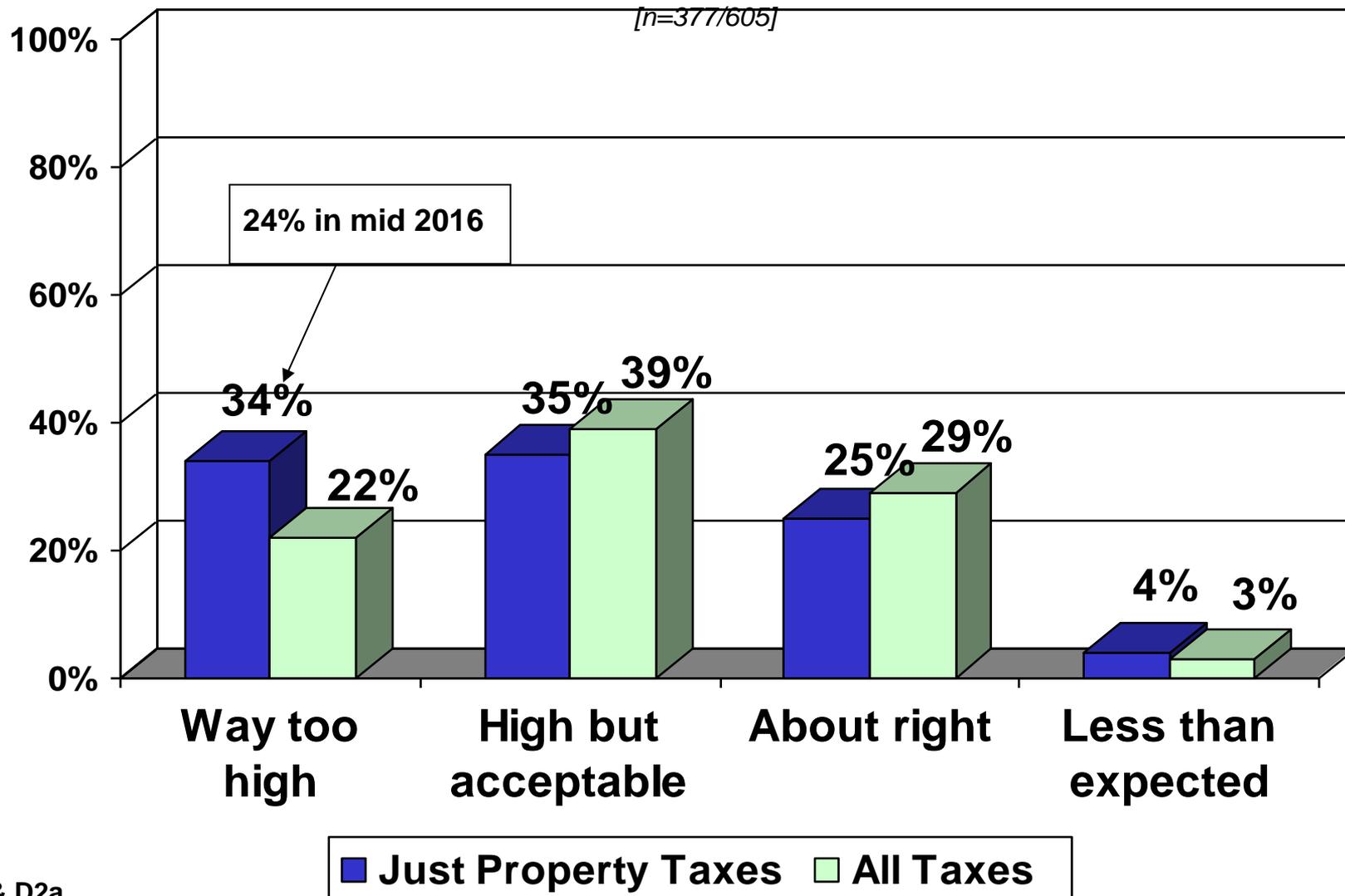
Sample sizes are approximately 600, except for 500 for 1995 & 2006

# Perception of Boulder County Taxes



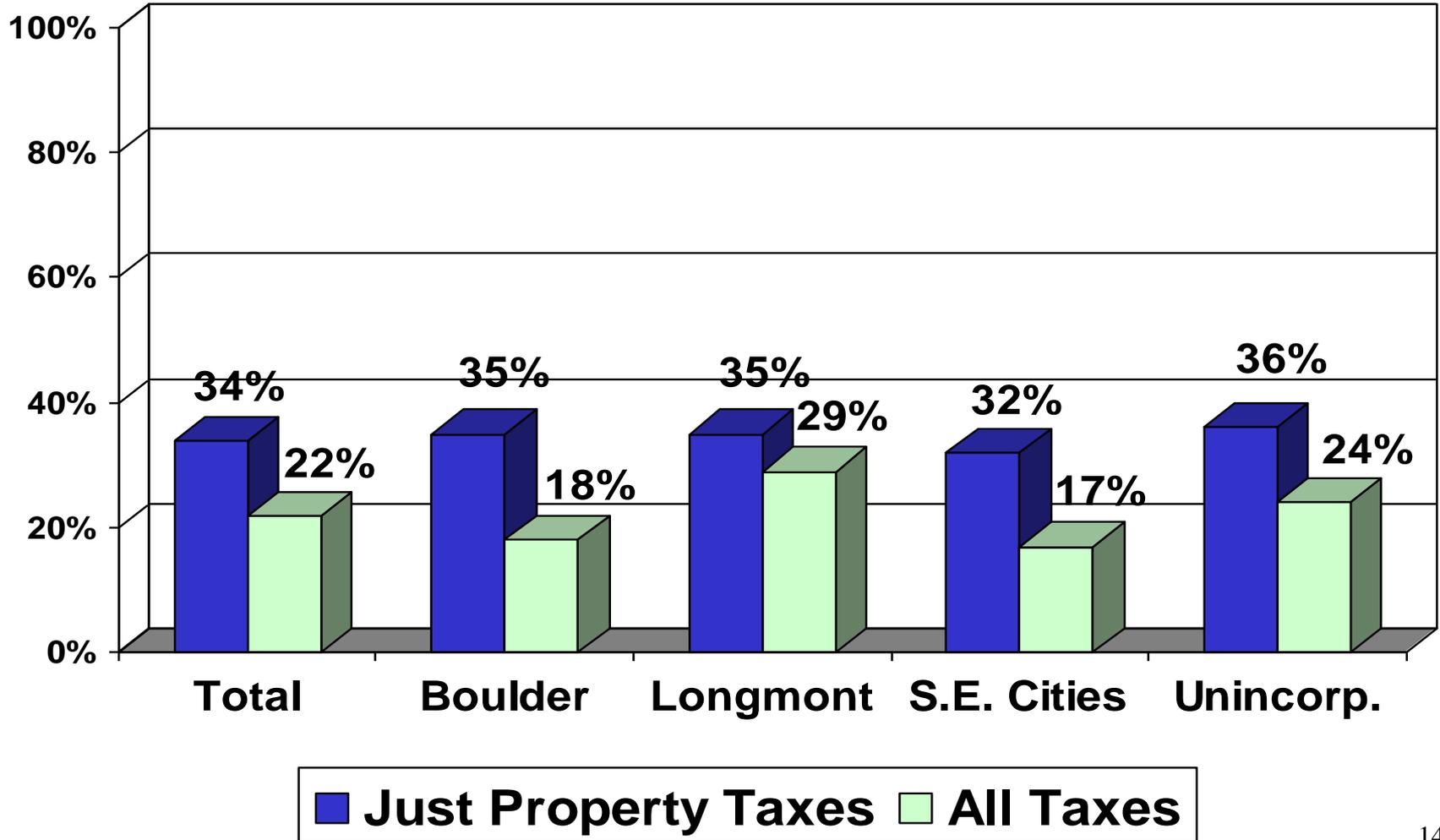
# Perception of Boulder County Property Tax vs. All County Taxes

- Only those who own home are asked about property taxes -



# Perception of Boulder County Property Tax vs. All Taxes: By Region

- Percent saying taxes are "Way too high" -



# **IV. BALLOT PROPOSALS TESTED**

# Ballot Proposals Tested

Poll respondents were read two different ballot proposals, as well as two non-ballot proposals, and asked for their degree of support on each. The proposals tested include:

- A ballot proposal to extend/eliminate the term limits on the office of the Boulder County Sheriff;
- A ballot proposal for a 10/15 year extension of the point zero five percent current Worthy Cause tax, set to expire in 2018;
- A proposal to allow limited hunting on the County's Rabbit Mountain Open Space land to reduce the rapidly expanding elk herd on the property; and
- A proposal for the County to establish shooting ranges and facilities in safe areas of the County so that the United States Forest Service (USFS) will prohibit their policy of "Dispersed Shooting" in the populated areas of the foothills in western Boulder County.

**A. TERM LIMITS ON THE  
OFFICE OF COUNTY  
SHERIFF**

# Term Limits for the County Sheriff

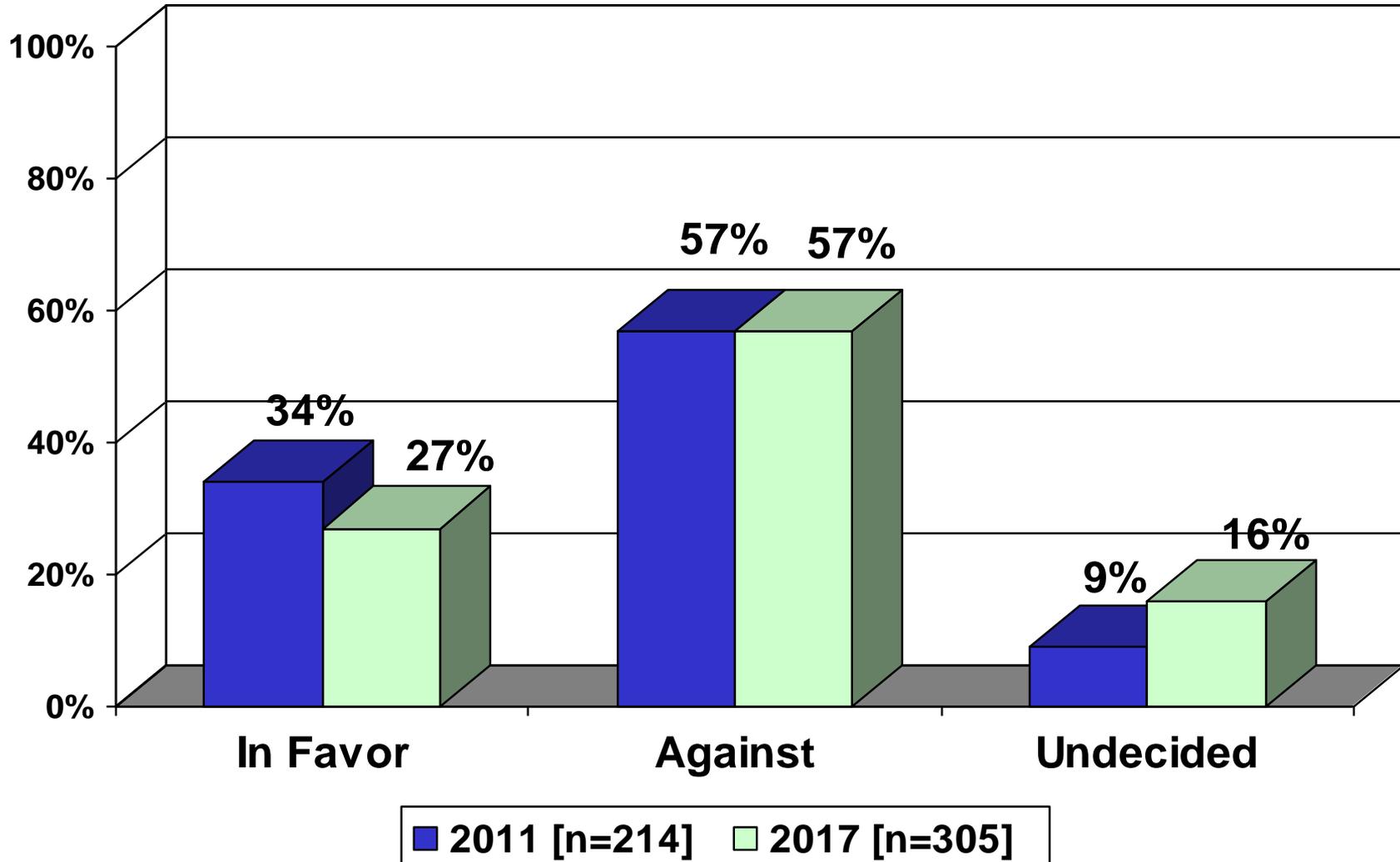
The commissioners are considering a request by police chiefs from across the County to put a proposal on this November's ballot to allow the County Sheriff to serve up to five terms in office, up from the four terms that voters granted in 2011.

Results from pre-election polling on adding a term has dropped from 48% in favor of a fourth term back in 2011, to just 38% in favor of adding a fifth term today. Some of that 10 point drop may be due to the general distrust of government that has sprung up of late, as evidenced by the term limits placed on City Council members approved by City of Boulder voters just last year.

That said, while the 2011 poll showed 48% voter support for increasing the sheriff's terms, it actually passed with 60%. So it's not impossible that with a moderate campaign effort, a large percent of the 19% of voters who say they are undecided, as well as some who are against, could be won over by election day.

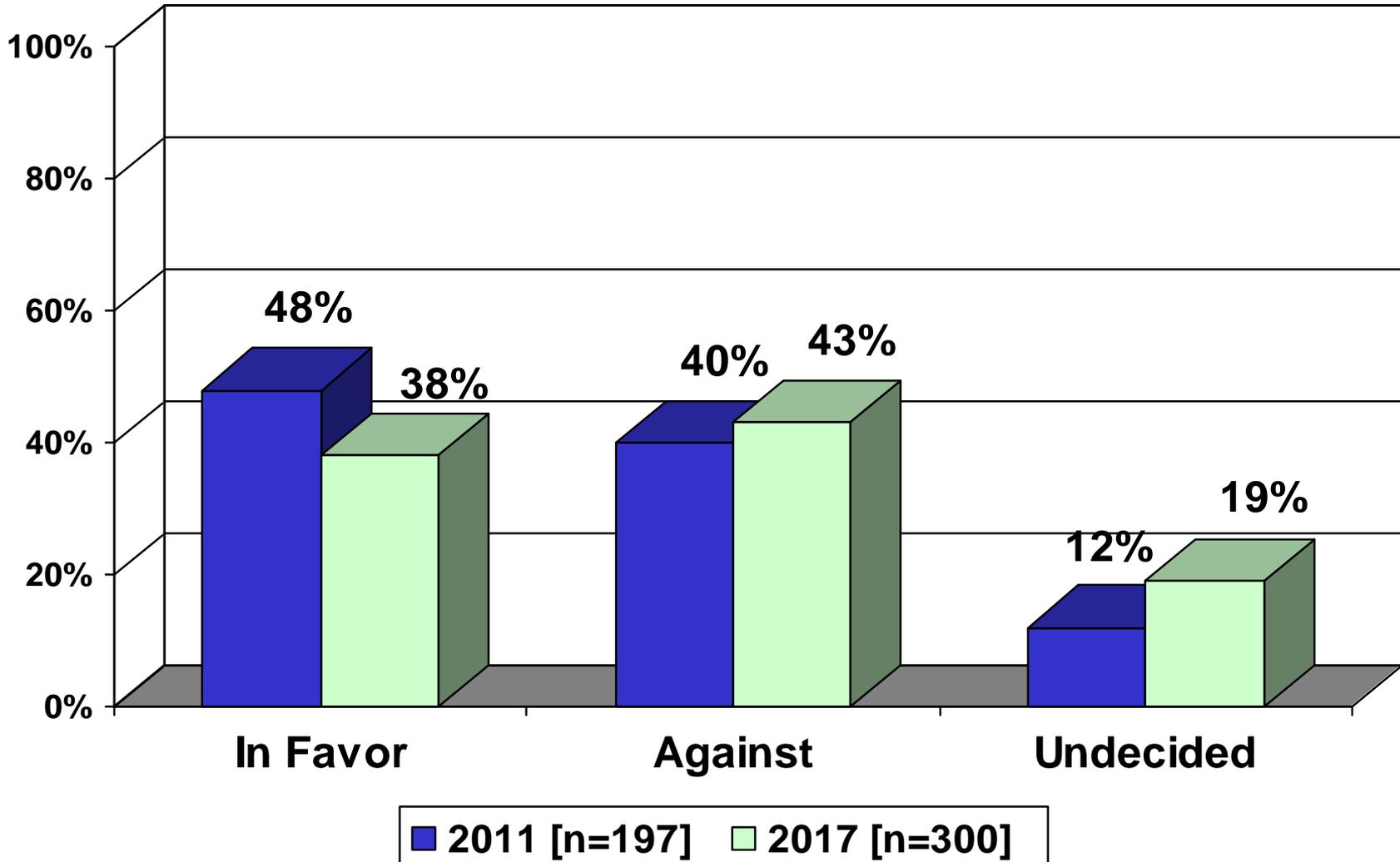
# Eliminate Sheriff Term Limits

- Results from 2011 vs. Results from 2017 -



# Allow Sheriff to Serve a Fourth Term (2011) / Fifth Term (2017)

- Results from 2011 vs. Results from 2017 -



**B. EXTENTION OF THE  
WORTHY CAUSE SALES TAX**

# Extension of the Worthy Cause Tax

In 2008 county voters approved a 10-year extension of a .05 percent “Worthy Cause” sales and use tax that helps with debt reduction and funding of capital facilities for nonprofit organizations. These funds help with the high price of obtaining and/or improving facilities that fit nonprofits’ specific needs as they provide service to the community. The tax expires in 2018, and the Commissioners feel it is important to have the certainty of an extension in place before it expires at the end of next year.

Voters were asked how they felt about a ballot proposal on this November’s ballot extending the tax for two different length terms: One half the voters surveyed were given an option of extending it for 10 years; the other half for 15 years.

# Extension of the Worthy Cause Tax *(cont.)*

Based on survey results, the County Worthy Cause Tax, already extended twice in the past, is likely to be overwhelmingly extended a third time if placed on the ballot this coming November. Overall, 80% of voters say they support an extension, with 79% supporting one of 10 years, while 82% support a 15-year extension. Given the lack of a statistical difference between the level of support for the two different length of extensions, asking voters to approve a 15-year extension would seem to be a logical decision. And the fact that 64% of those who say they support the tax say they support it strongly, indicates that there is little chance that support for the tax could drop below 50% before election day.

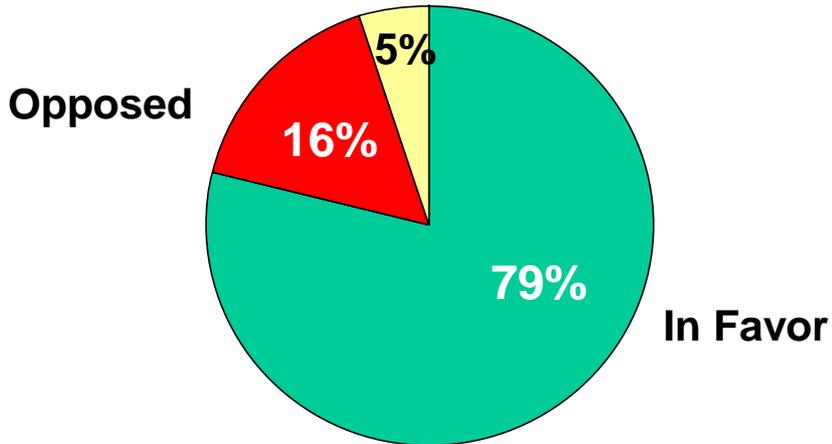
# Extending the Worth Cause Sales Tax

- Extending for 10 vs.15 Years -

## Extend for 10 Years

(n=300)

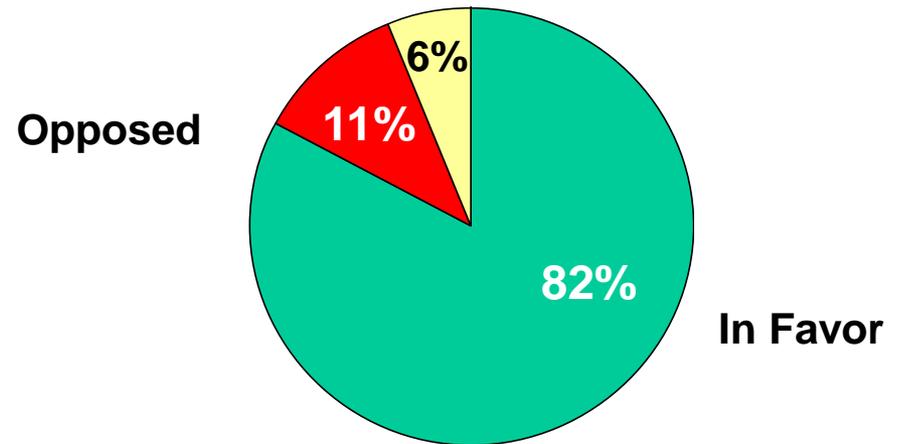
Undecided



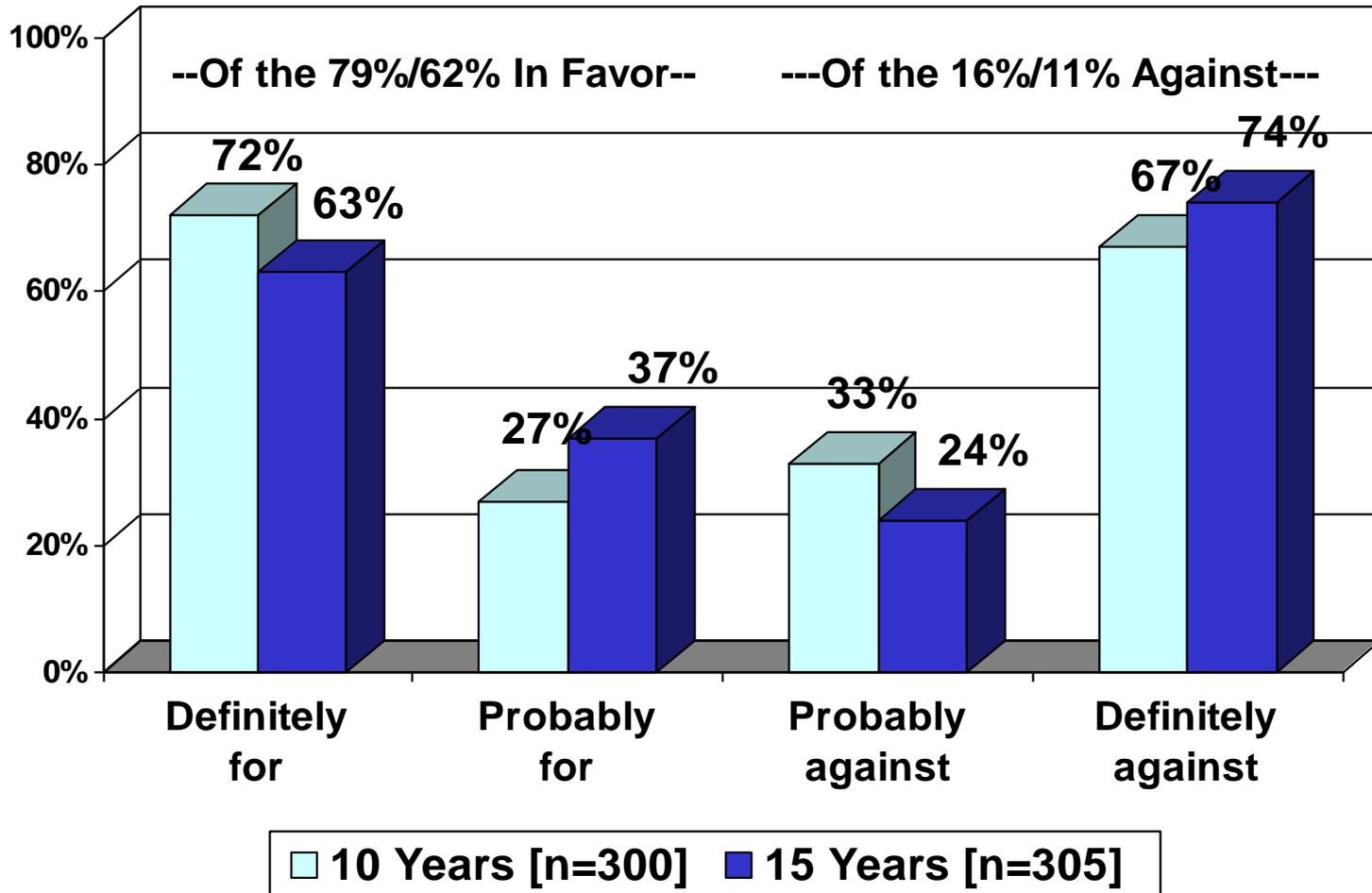
## Extend for 15 Years

(n=305)

Undecided



# Strength of Support/Opposition For Worthy Cause Tax Extension



# Rationale For Extending The Worthy Cause Tax

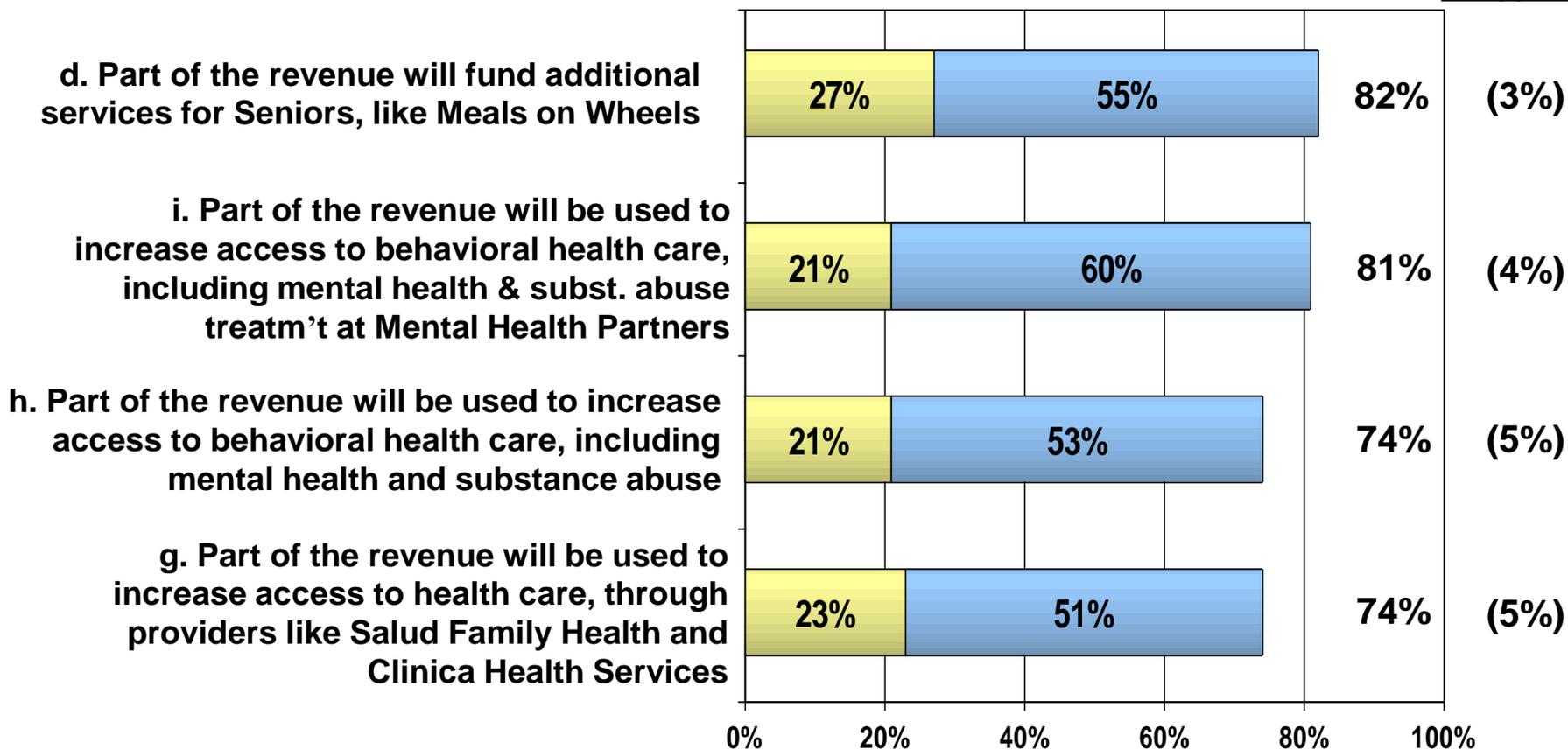
Boulder County voters were asked to rate the importance of nine overarching reasons to support the extension of the County's Worthy Cause tax. As the following graphs show, four reasons stood out above the others, and the inclusion of names of specific partners enhances the appeal among voters.

# Top Tier Reasons to Vote For Extending the Worthy Cause Tax

- Percent saying “Much more/Somewhat more” likely” to vote Yes -

[n=605]

Makes Likely to Oppose

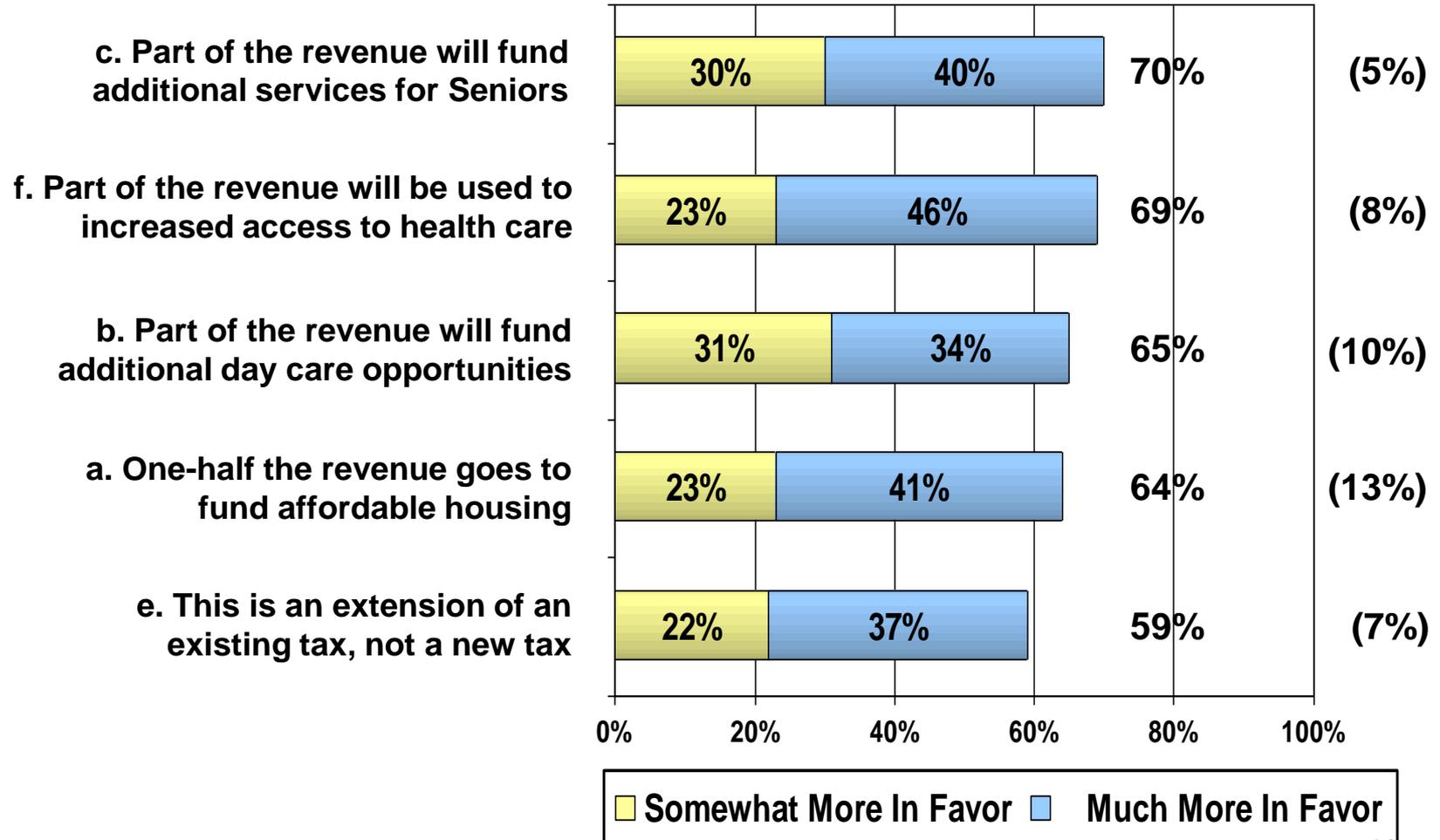


# Lower Tier Reasons to Vote For Extending the Worthy Cause Tax

- Percent saying “Much more/Somewhat more” likely” to vote Yes -

[n=605]

Makes Likely to Oppose



**V. LIMITED ELK HUNTING ON  
RABBIT MOUNTAIN OPEN  
SPACE**

# Elk Hunting on Rabbit Mountain

Since 2003, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of elk on the County's Rabbit Mountain Open Space land, located between Longmont and Lyons. This increase has led to extensive damage to the highly diverse ecosystem of Rabbit Mountain. Additionally, the elk are causing damage to neighboring residential fences, landscaping, and agricultural crops. As a result, the County has been considering a wide range of actions to reestablish the seasonal migration and reduce the size of this herd. One option that has been considered is to allow limited hunting on Rabbit Mountain Open Space, which is an action supported by Colorado Parks & Wildlife.

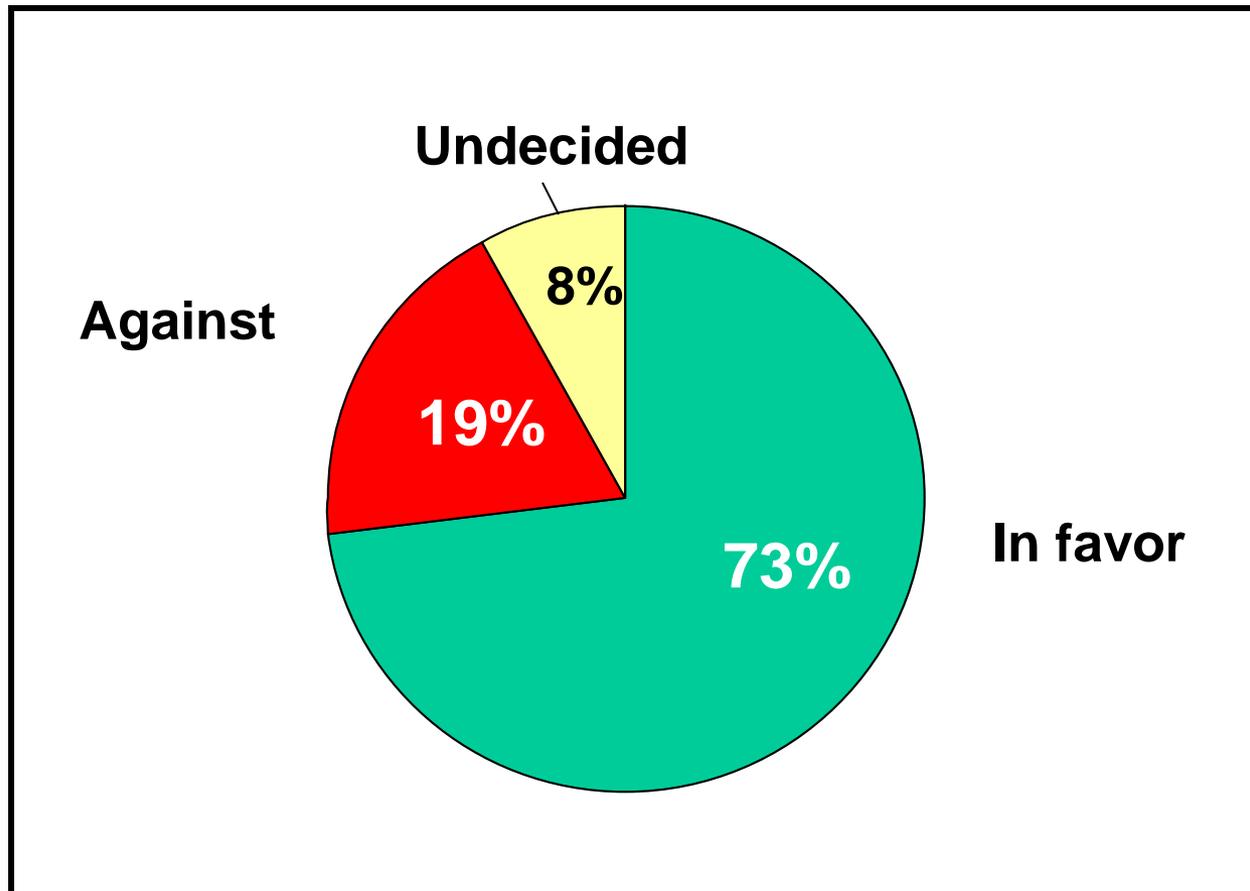
# **Elk Hunting on Rabbit Mountain** *(cont.)*

To gain a broader understanding on where the public stands on the issue of hunting as a possible solution to reducing the size of the elk herd on Rabbit Mountain, voters were first asked if they had heard of the problem being caused by the elk on Rabbit Mountain, and then how they felt about allowing limited hunting there to reduce the size of the herd.

It turns out that while about a third (31%) of voters had actually heard of the issue facing Rabbit Mountain, voters overwhelming support limited hunting as a means to cull the herd.

# Support / Opposition to Limited Elk Hunting on Rabbit Mountain Open Space

(n=605)



# Reasons to Allow Elk Hunting on Rabbit Mountain Open Space

Boulder County voters were asked to rate the importance of seven different statements about allowing hunting on Rabbit Mountain, to see which ones resonate the most with voters. The statement that moves the most voters to support limited hunting is that the elk are destroying the eco-system of Rabbit Mountain.

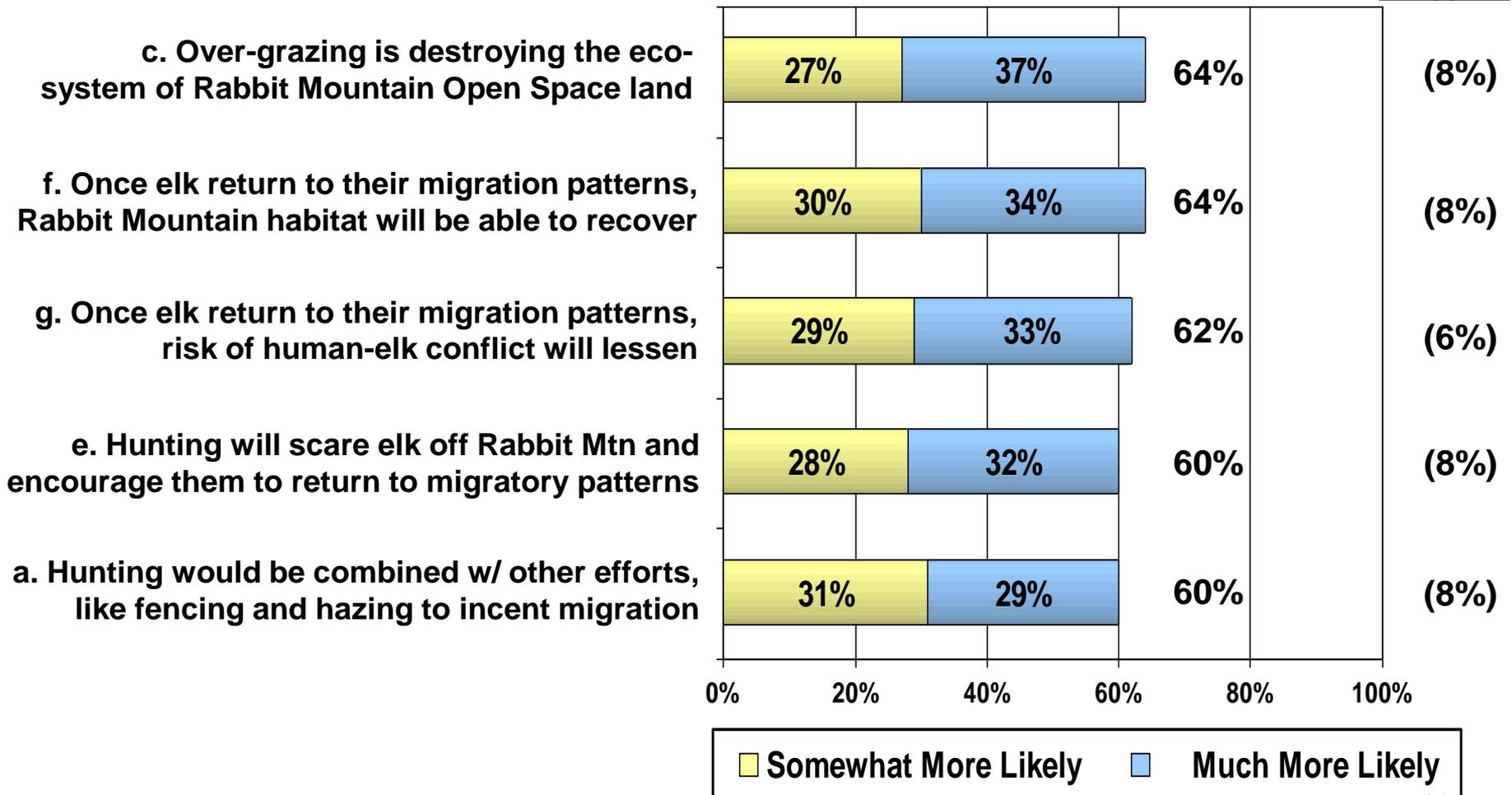
The statement that moves the least number of voters to support hunting is that Rabbit Mountain would have to be closed on the three days a week that hunting would be allowed.

# Top Tier Reasons to Allow Elk Hunting on Rabbit Mountain Open Space

-Percent saying it makes them “Much more/Somewhat more” likely to support-

[n=605]

Makes Likely to Oppose



# Lower Tier Reasons to Allow Elk Hunting on Rabbit Mountain Open Space

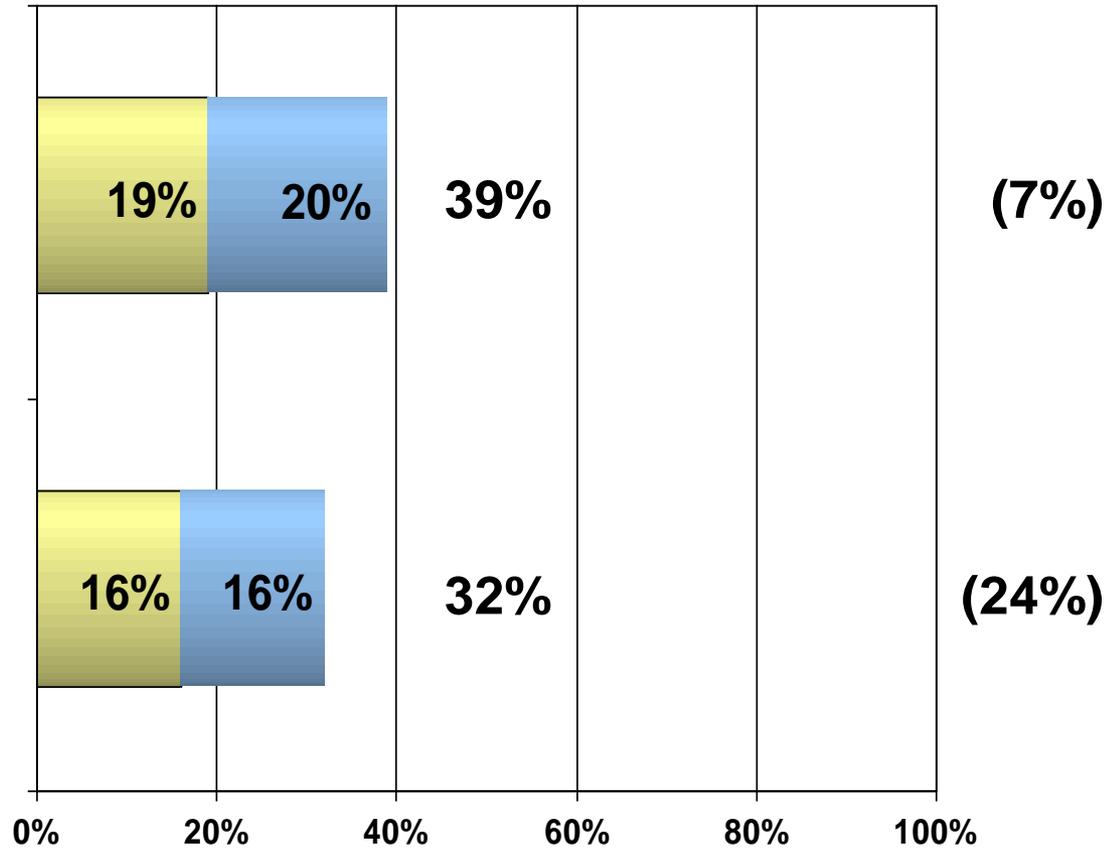
-Percent saying it makes them “Much more/Somewhat more” likely” to support-

[n=605]

Makes Likely to Oppose

d. Notification of area closure would be by signage at entry points, on social media and the and on County’s web page

b. Hunting would require closing Rabbit Mountain from Mon. to Thurs. from Sept. to Jan.



**VI. DISPERSED SHOOTING ON  
U.S. FOREST SERVICE LAND  
IN BOULDER COUNTY**

# Dispersed Shooting on USFS Land

Currently the U.S. Forest Service allows Dispersed Shooting, which allows recreational shooting on most Forest Service land, including its land in Boulder County, as long as it is conducted at least 150 yards away from a residence, building, campsite, developed recreation area or occupied area.

In order to address safety concerns raised by Dispersed Shooting in populated areas of western Boulder County, the USFS is willing to close some areas to Dispersed Shooting if the County develops specific shooting facilities to provide the public opportunities for recreational sport shooting. These closures for Dispersed Shooting would not impact hunting during hunting season or shooting on private land.

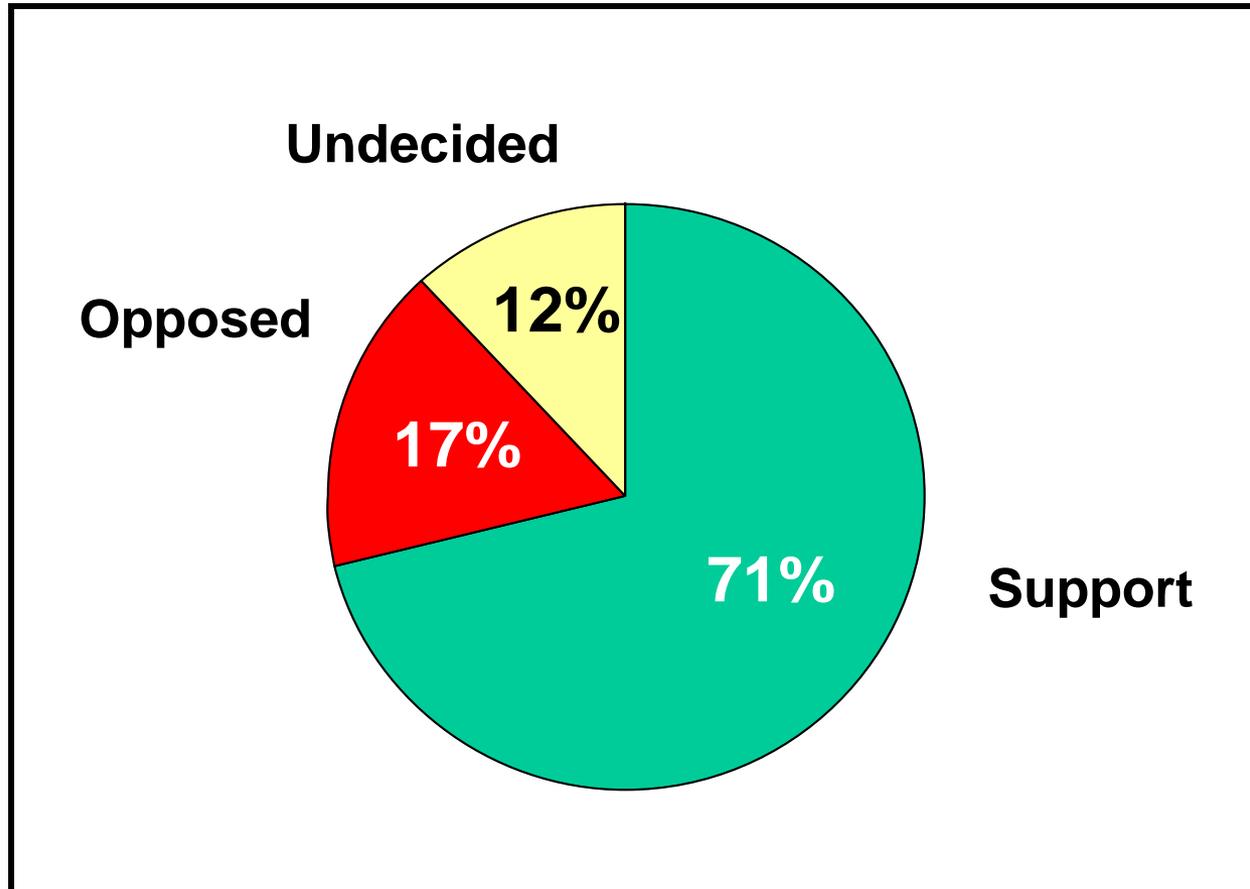
# **Dispersed Shooting on USFS Land** *(cont.)*

With that backdrop, the Commissioners wanted to find out how voters across the County feel about developing a limited number of specific shooting ranges and/or facilities in order to allow the US Forest Service to prohibit Dispersed Shooting in the populated areas of western Boulder County.

Based on survey results, a substantial 42% of voters have read or heard about this issue, and there is widespread support for developing shooting ranges and facilities, with little opposition.

# Support / Opposed to Shooting Ranges on USFS Land in Boulder County

(n=605)



**VII. DEMOGRAPHIC  
BREAKOUTS ON BALLOT AND  
OTHER PROPOSALS**

# Demographic Breakouts

The two charts that follow show how the support for the four proposals differ by where people live and by other key demographics, such as:

- Most likely voters<sup>1</sup>
- Gender
- Age
- Own v. Rent homes
- Students
- Political party
- Income
- Race

<sup>1</sup> Most likely voters, who make-up 56% of the survey respondents, are defined using a combination of likelihood to vote, how much they follow politics, as well as their past self-identified voting behavior in the 2016 Presidential election.

# Demographic Breakouts *(cont.)*

The Term limits proposal gets it's greatest support from those living in unincorporated areas, as well as those age 55 and over. It's least support comes from those under the age of 55 and from Latinos and those who live in Longmont and the SE Cities (Louisville, Lafayette, Superior and Erie).

The Worthy Cause extension gets its greatest support from students/renters and Democrats. The least amount of support comes from those living in unincorporated areas, Republicans and those age 65 and over. .

Support for limited hunting on Rabbit Mountain is highest among those age 18-34, Republicans and males; lowest among Latinos, females and those age 35-44.

Support for shooting ranges and facilities is fairly uniform across most demographics, but highest among those with incomes \$100,000 or more, and lowest among Republicans.

# Demographic Breakouts

- Shows percent saying “In Favor” -

Proposal	Total	Blder	SE Cities	Long't	Uninc.	Student	Not Student
Term Limits on Sheriff	32%	35%	26%	28%	42%	26%	33%
Worthy Cause Extension	81%	80%	85%	82%	73%	88%	80%
Elk Hunting	73%	77%	69%	74%	71%	79%	72%
Shooting Ranges	71%	72%	71%	67%	76%	75%	74%

Proposal	Total	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	Own	Rent
Term Limits on Sheriff	32%	23%	23%	40%	53%	36%	24%
Worthy Cause Extension	81%	85%	83%	81%	71%	78%	87%
Elk Hunting	73%	79%	67%	72%	75%	72%	74%
Shooting Ranges	71%	69%	73%	74%	70%	75%	72%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference

<sup>1</sup> As in the past, the “S.E. Cities” category is comprised of Louisville, Lafayette, Superior and Erie, while “Uninc” includes unincorporated areas as well as other small towns.

# Demographic Breakouts

- Shows percent saying "In Favor" -

Proposal	Total	Male	Female	Most Likely Voters	Rep.	Dem.	U's
Term Limits on Sheriff	32%	31%	34%	39%	36%	32%	32%
Worthy Cause Extension	81%	77%	84%	80%	42%	93%	82%
Elk Hunting	73%	80%	67%	72%	89%	69%	72%
Shooting Ranges	71%	69%	73%	74%	59%	75%	71%

Proposal	Total	<\$60K	\$60-\$99K	\$100K+	White	Latino
Term Limits on Sheriff	32%	34%	32%	31%	33%	23%
Worthy Cause Extension	81%	86%	80%	80%	83%	84%
Elk Hunting	73%	74%	76%	70%	76%	49%
Shooting Ranges	71%	76%	68%	80%	74%	79%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference. **With Male/Female, the statistical difference for Sheriff Term Limits is in the vote against: Males 54%; Females 46%.**