

2018 BOULDER COUNTY APRIL ISSUES SURVEY

Report
~2018~

Prepared for:



Drake
research & strategy, inc.

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I. OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY



OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to better understand community reaction towards four possible ballot issues, as well as to better understand what voters feel are the major issues facing Boulder County today. The four possible ballot initiatives are: 1) two proposals dealing with funding transportation improvements; 2) a proposal for an increase in the County's Offender Management Sales Tax; and 3) a proposal to raise from two to three the limit on the number of terms the Boulder County Commissioners can serve.



METHODOLOGY

Drake Research & Strategy, Inc. conducted the 2018 Boulder County Issues Survey in April of 2018. A random sample was drawn from a list of Boulder County voters, containing both landline and cell phone numbers.

- *Interviews were conducted between April 24 to 30, 2018.*
- *Results are based on 605 telephone interviews, 62% 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

#1. For the third year in a row, the percent of Boulder County voters who feel things are going in the right direction in the County rests in the mid to upper 50% range. The 58% in Boulder County who feel things are going in the right direction today is two points higher than that expressed by voters in a statewide survey conducted by Drake Research in January, 2018.

Additionally, the percent saying County taxes are “Way too high” has remained surprisingly constant over the years, even declining 3 points over 2017’s result (19% v. 22% in ’17). The sensitivity to property taxes among homeowners also declined from 34% to 32% this year. However prior to the last property value reassessments, just 24% felt their property taxes were “Way too high.”



KEY FINDINGS

II. Ballot Proposals: Commissioner Term Limits

#2 *Changing the maximum number of terms a Boulder County Commissioner can serve from 2 four-year terms to 3 four-year terms faces an uphill battle, and it makes only a slight difference if the proposal is designed so that it does NOT apply to any incumbent commissioners. A proposal to loosen term limits on current incumbents fails 34% in favor to 50% opposed (versus 34% to 59% in 2011), while one that does not apply to incumbents falls short by a 36% to 52% (versus 41% to 53% in 2011) margin. This is a far better result than the 27% overall “in favor” vote a similar initiative got when tested in 2010. If this proposal were placed on the November ballot, the chances of it passing are slim.*



KEY FINDINGS

II. Ballot Proposals: Sales Tax for the County Jail

#3 County voters were asked about a proposal to make improvements to the now 30 year old County jail and its programs. To fund the improvements, the County Offender Management Sales Tax would be raised by .185% for five years beginning in 2020, the same year as the Flood Sales Tax in the same amount expires. Based on voter reaction to this proposal, if placed on the ballot, the chances of it passing are very good.



KEY FINDINGS

II. Ballot Proposals: Sales Tax for Transportation

#4 Two alternative proposals were tested to fund transportation improvements in Boulder County. The first would raise the State Sales Tax to fund improvements, administered by the State, to I-25, I-70 and to state highways (119 and Hwy 7) in Boulder County, as well as some funding for local transit. If placed on the ballot, such a proposal is likely to pass at either of its two levels of tax increase tested.

#5 The second proposal would raise the County sales tax to fund transportation improvements in Boulder County, administered by the County, including to highways 7 and 119, some money for local transit, as well as for intercommunity bicycle connections. Like the first proposal, this second proposal is likely to pass at either of its two levels of tax increase tested.



III. THE CLIMATE TODAY



Climate and Overview

There has been a slight uptick in optimism among the Boulder County electorate, with 58% saying things are going in the right direction, compared to 56% over the past two years. Coloradans across the state feel just slightly less optimistic (56% in January, 2018) than County residents do today.

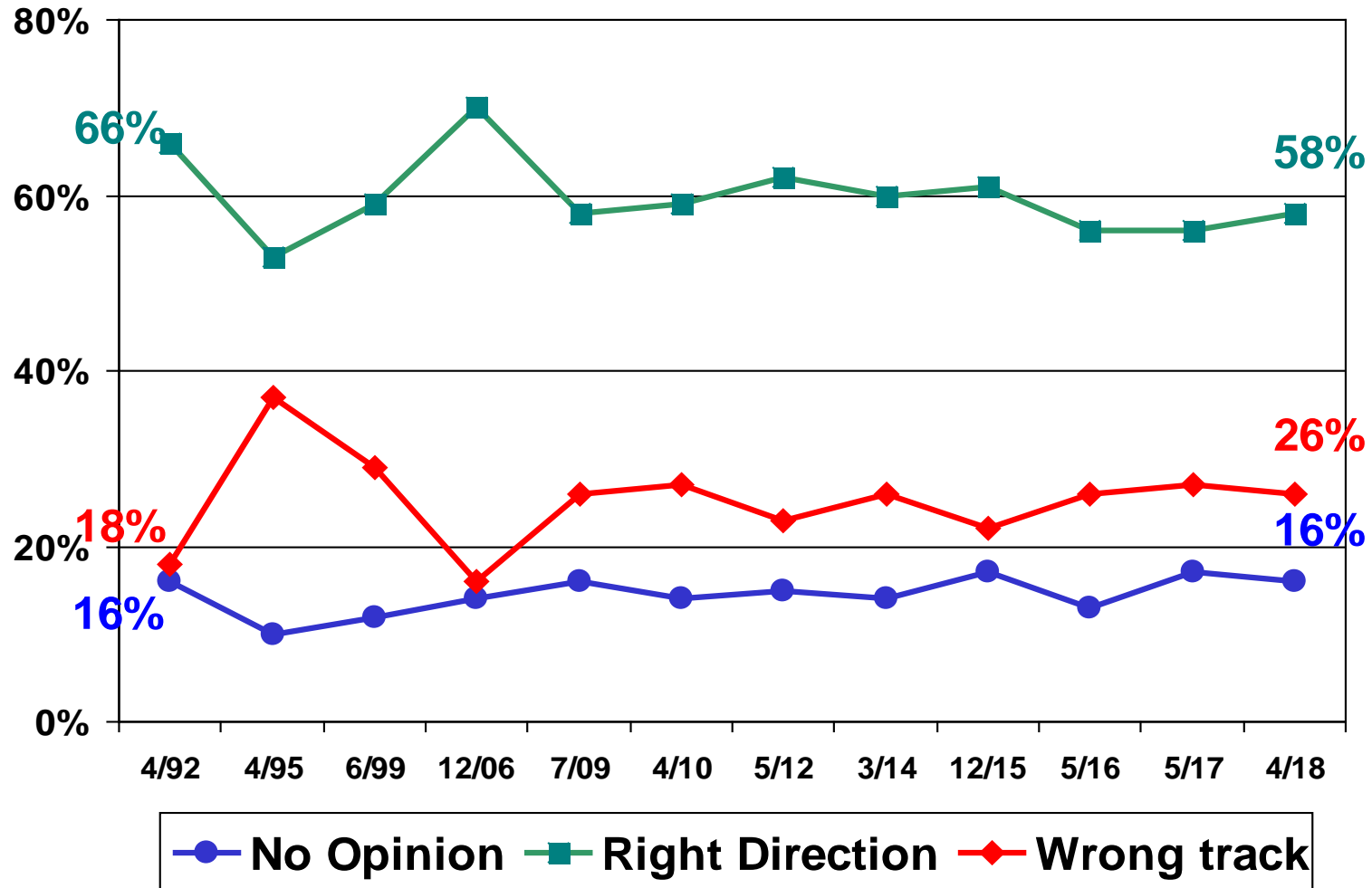
To further understand the climate in Boulder County today, voters were also asked how they feel about the County's tax burden. The percent saying County taxes are "Way too high" actually dipped slightly over the past year, And despite recent re-assessments, the perception among homeowners of current property taxes being "way too high" also declined slightly.

Finally, when asked what's the single most important issue Boulder County faces today, by far the largest single response was affordable housing (25%), followed distantly by too much growth (11%).



How are Things Going in Boulder County Today?

[2018 n=605]

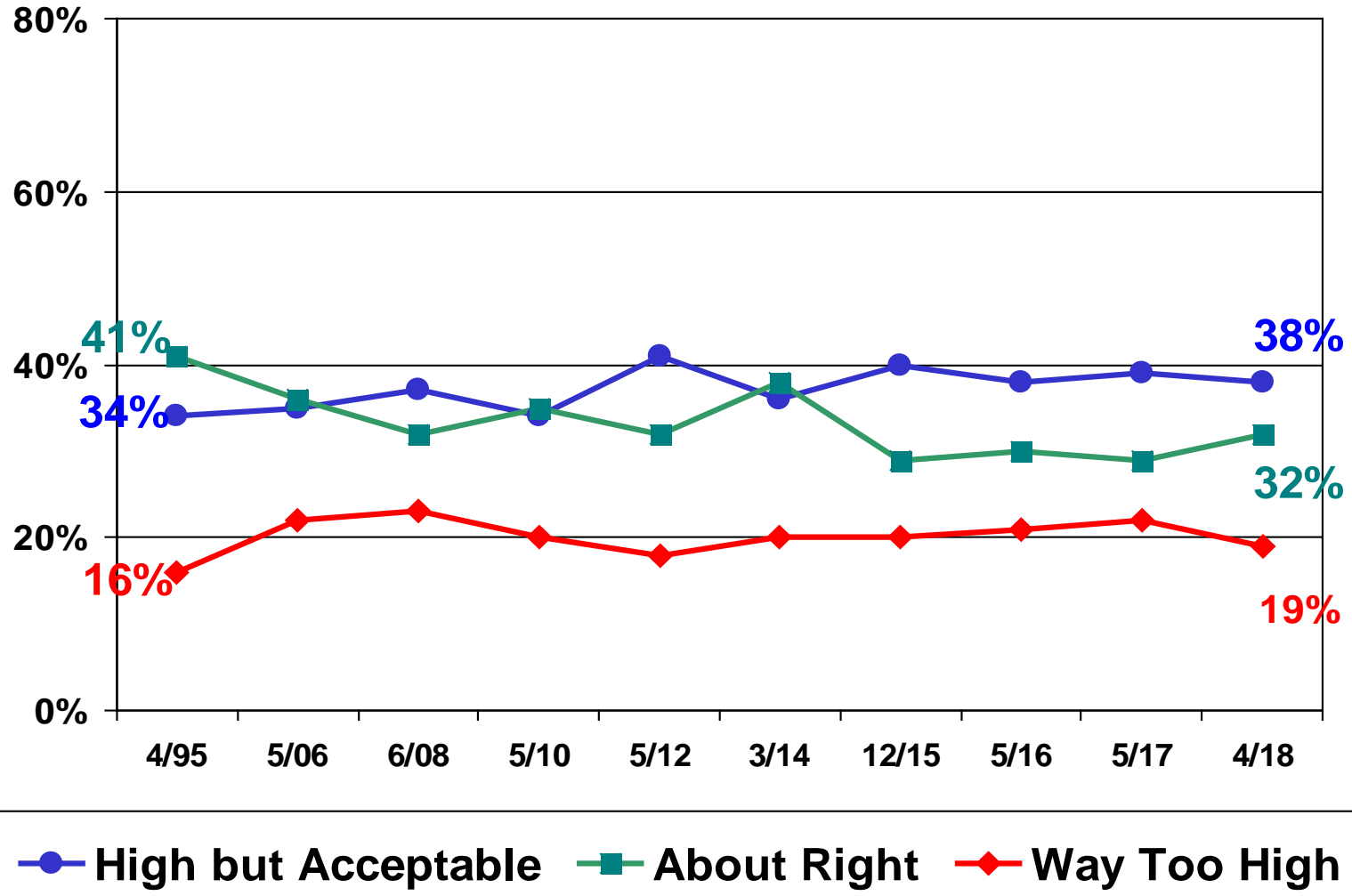


Sample sizes are approximately 600, except for 500 for 1995 & 2006



Perception of Boulder County Taxes

[2018 n=605]



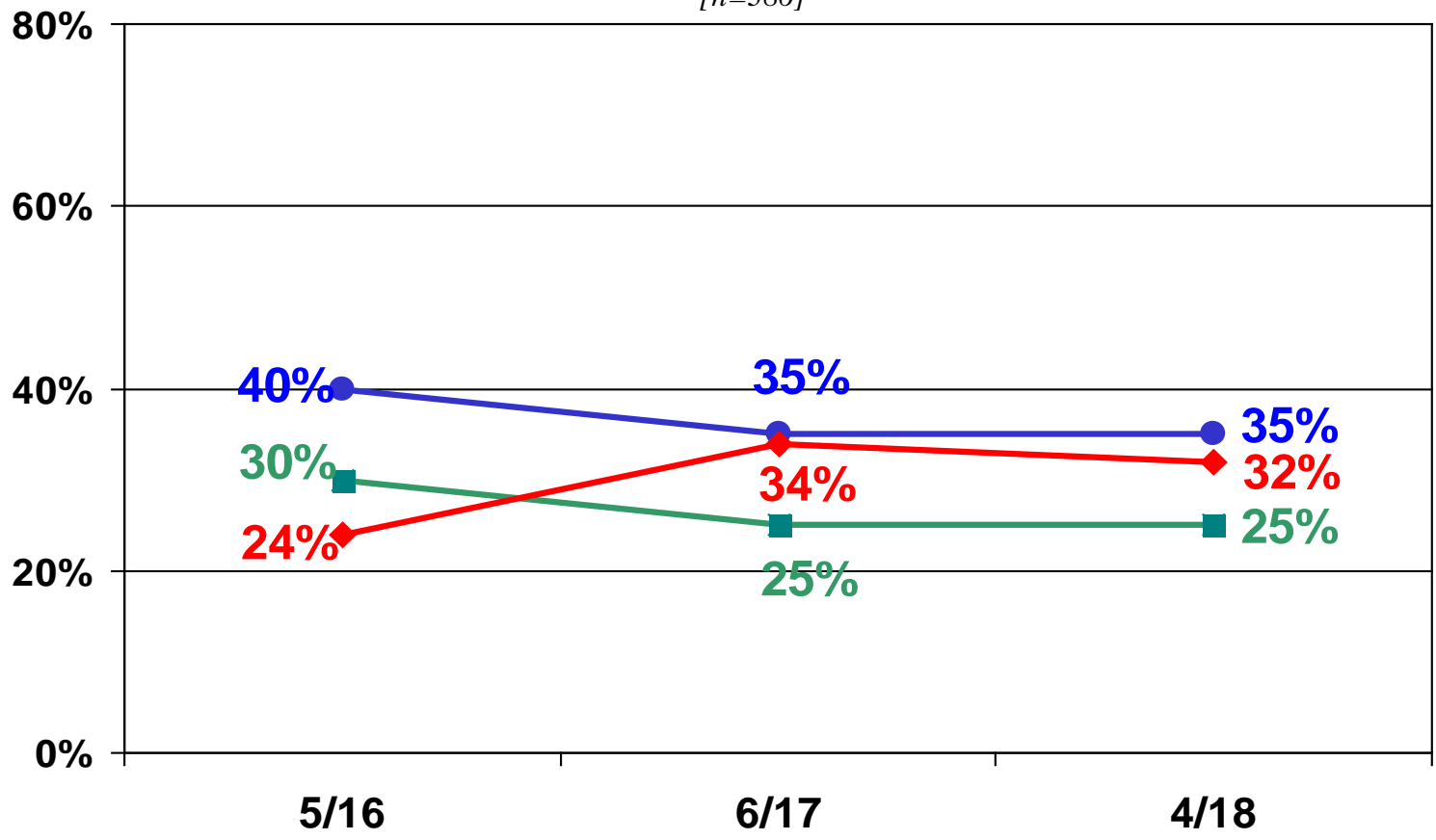
Sample sizes are approximately 600, except for 500 for 1995 & 2006



Perception of Boulder County Property Taxes

- Asked only of homeowners -

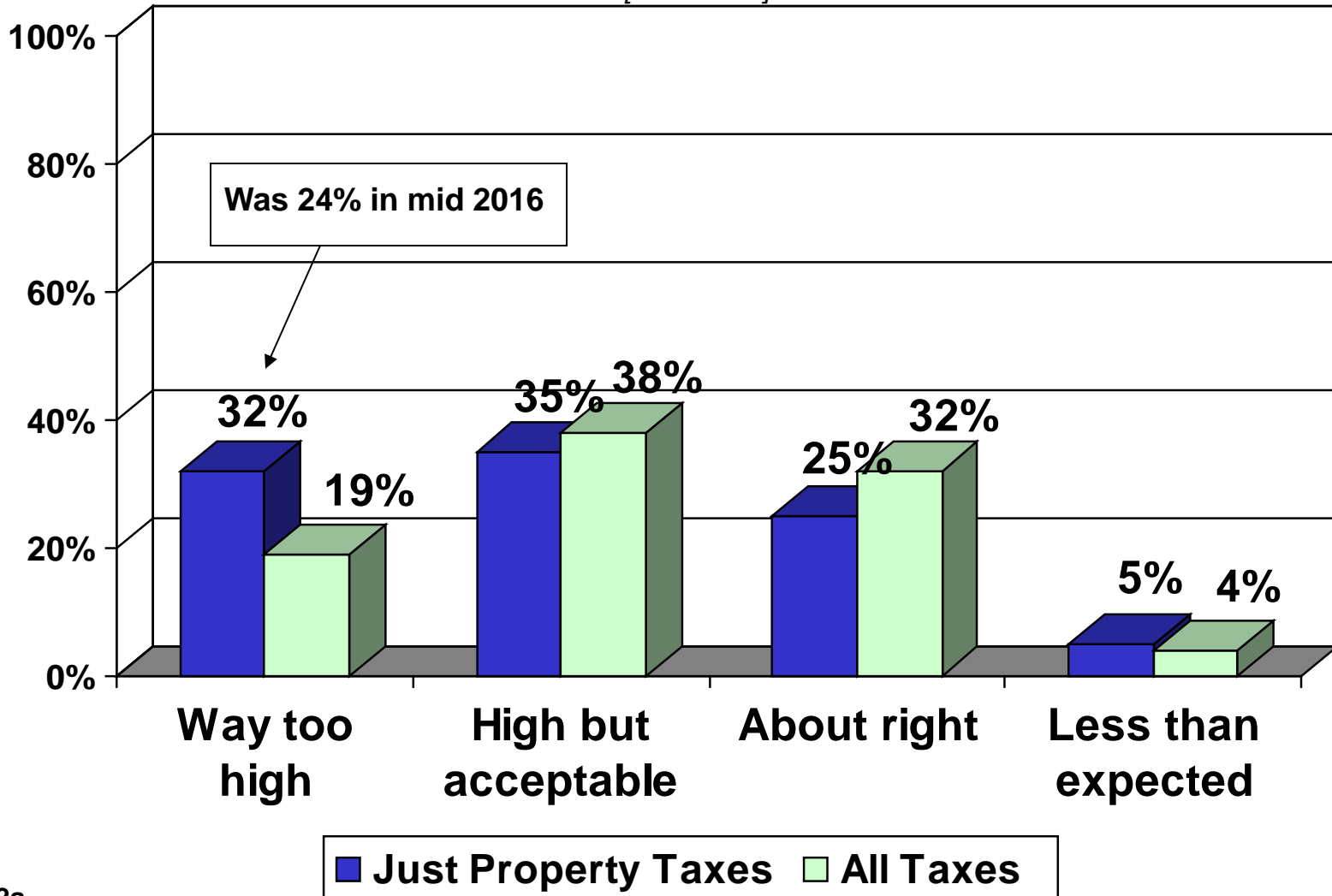
[n=386]



Perception of Boulder County Property Tax vs. All County Taxes

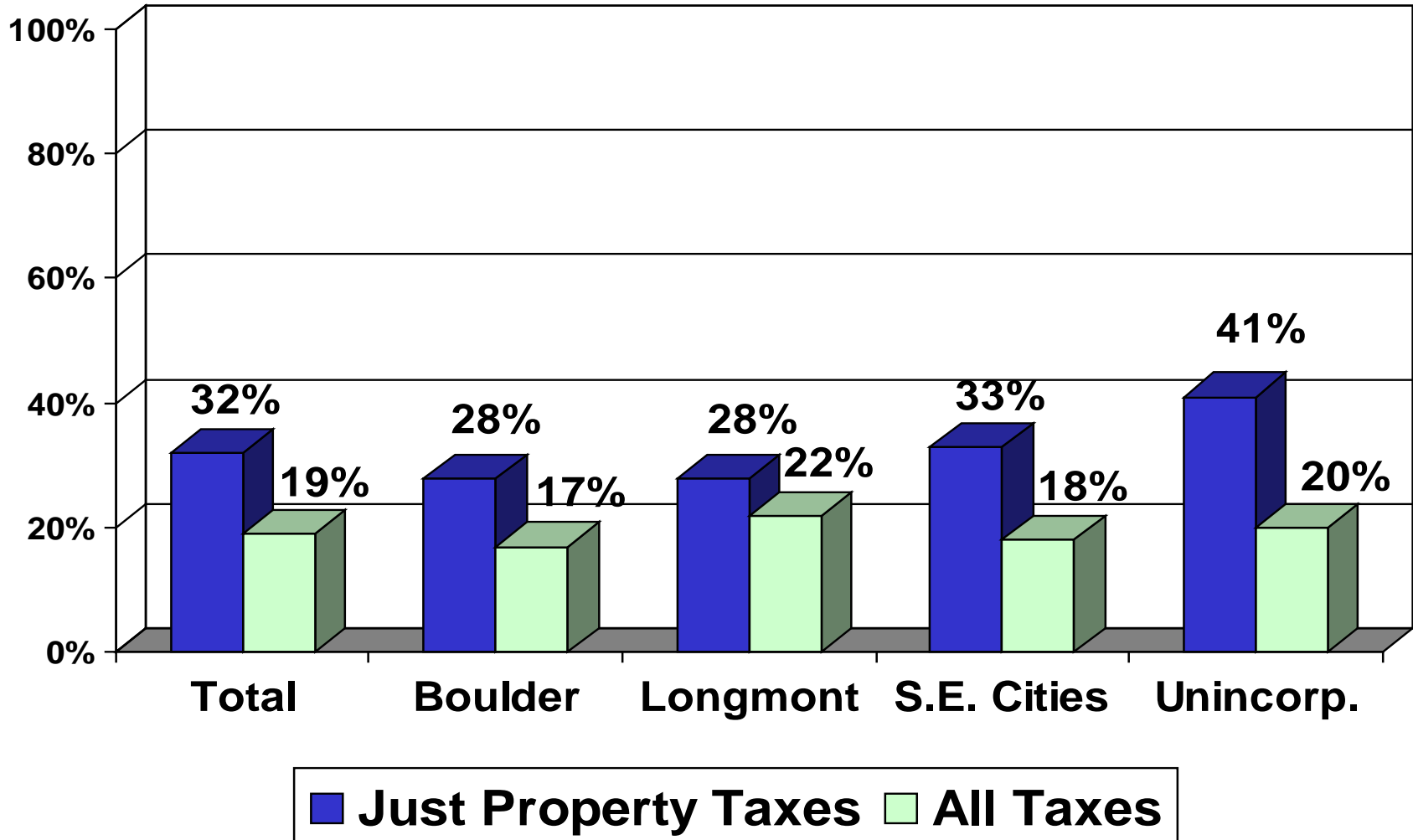
- Only those who own home are asked about property taxes -

[n=386/605]



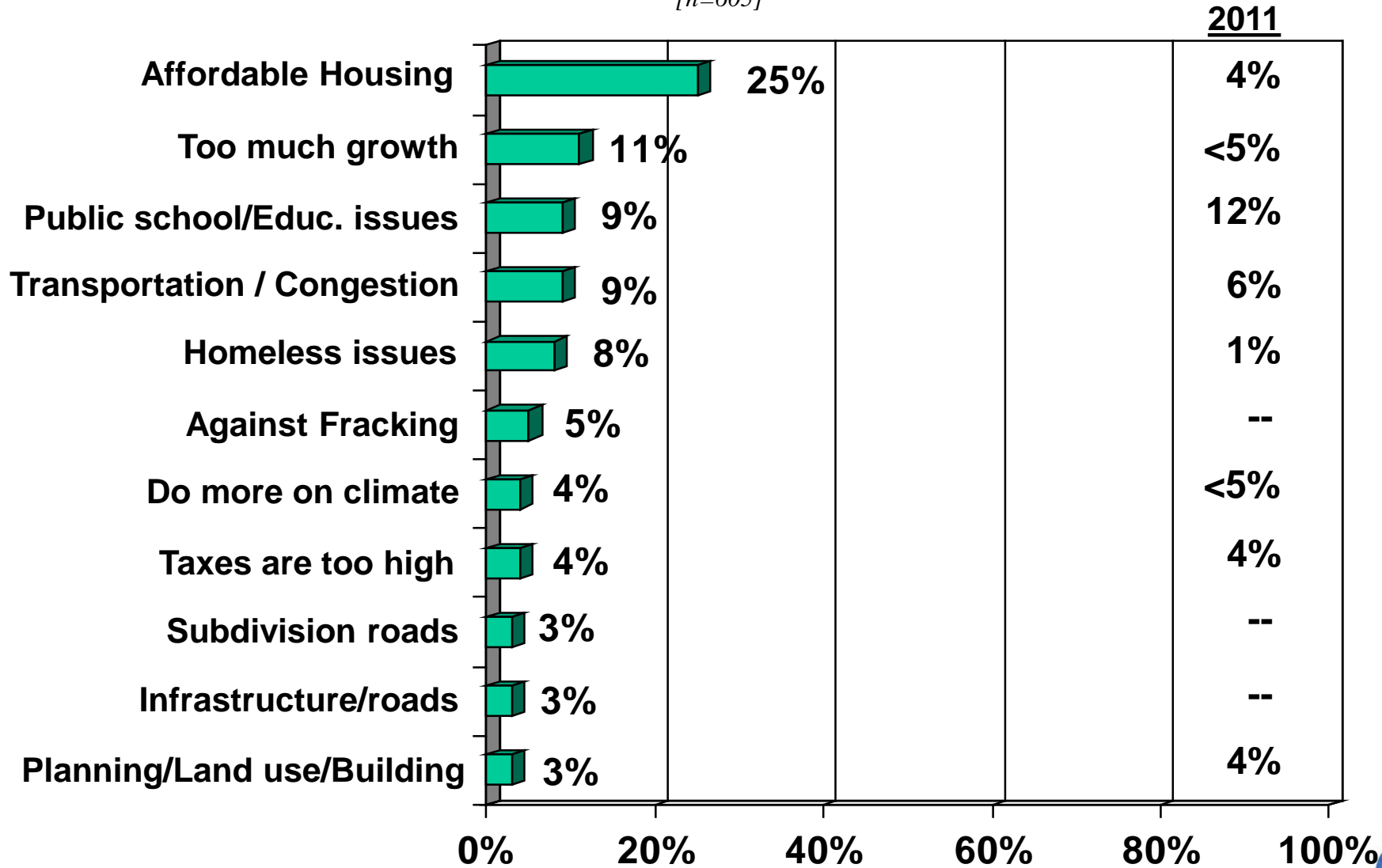
Perception of Boulder County Property Tax vs. All Taxes: By Region

- Percent saying taxes are "Way too high" -



What is the Most Important Issue Facing Boulder County Today?¹

[n=605]



¹ Only response codes receiving 3% or more responses are shown



IV. BALLOT PROPOSALS TESTED



Ballot Proposals Tested

Survey respondents were read four different ballot proposals, and asked for their degree of support on each. The proposals tested include:

- A ballot proposal to extend the maximum number of terms Boulder County Commissioners can serve;
- A ballot proposal to increase the Boulder County Offender Management Sales Tax to fund improvements to the County Jail and its programs, replacing the Flood Sales Tax of equal value, set to expire in 2020;
- A ballot proposal to increase the State Sales Tax to fund transportation improvements along I-25 and I-70, as well as to state highways in Boulder County; and
- A ballot proposal to increase the County Sales Tax to fund improvements to the transportation system in Boulder County.



**A. PROPOSAL TO EXTEND
COMMISSIONERS' TERM
LIMITS**



Ballot Proposals Tested: Extend Commissioners' Term Limits

County Commissioners in Boulder County are currently limited to serving two consecutive 4-year terms in office. Voters were also queried about a possible proposal to change the two term limit to a total of three terms in office. One version of the proposal tested states that the change would not apply to existing office holders; the other allowed that it would. The one that excludes current office holders gets a slightly higher vote than the one that does not.

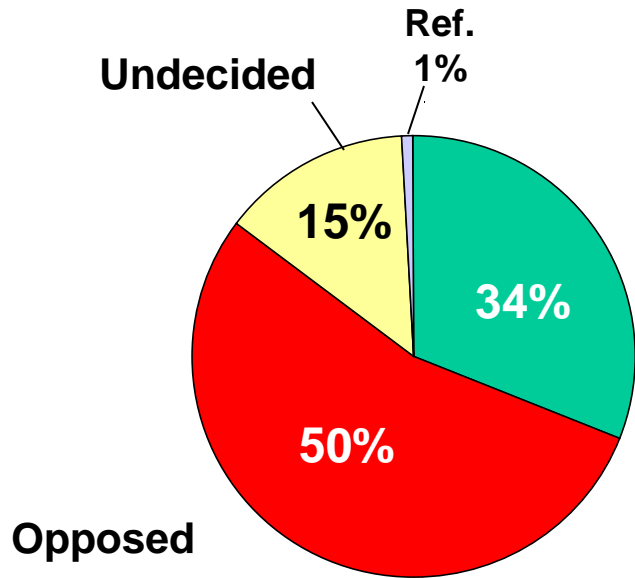


Term Limits for County Commissioners

- Change Limits from Two Terms to Three Terms -

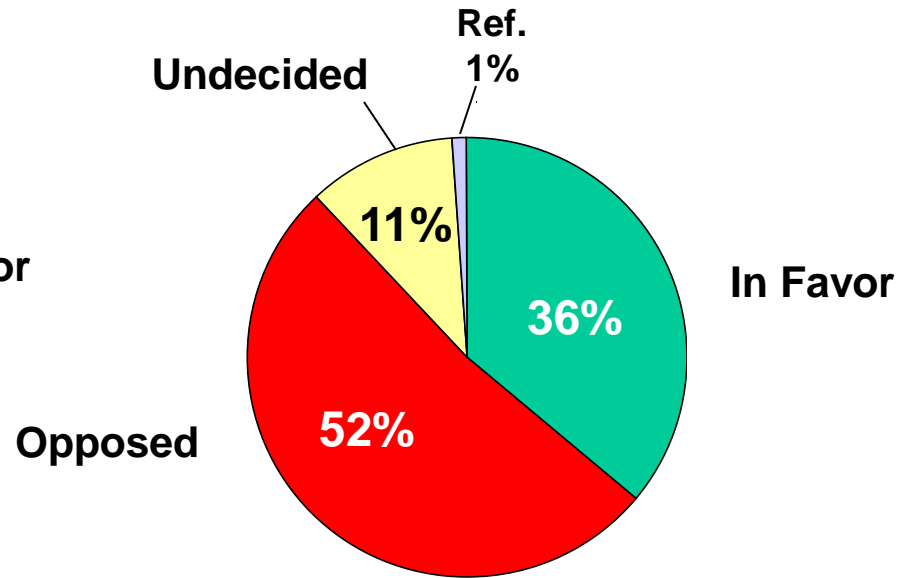
Would Apply
to Current Commissioners

[n=304]



Would NOT Apply
to Current Commissioners

[n=301]



**B. PROPOSAL TO FUND
IMPROVEMENTS TO THE
COUNTY JAIL AND ITS
PROGRAMS**



Improvements to the County Jail and its Programs

The Commissioners are considering a ballot proposal to increase the Boulder County Offender Management Sales Tax by .185% for five years, beginning in 2020, which would sunset in 2025.

Revenue from this new tax would be used to fund the following: making improvements to the Boulder County jail to more safely house inmates with mental and physical health issues; increasing space for inmates participating in alternative sentencing programs like work-release; adding space to properly process inmates in and out of the facility; and adding needed administrative space.

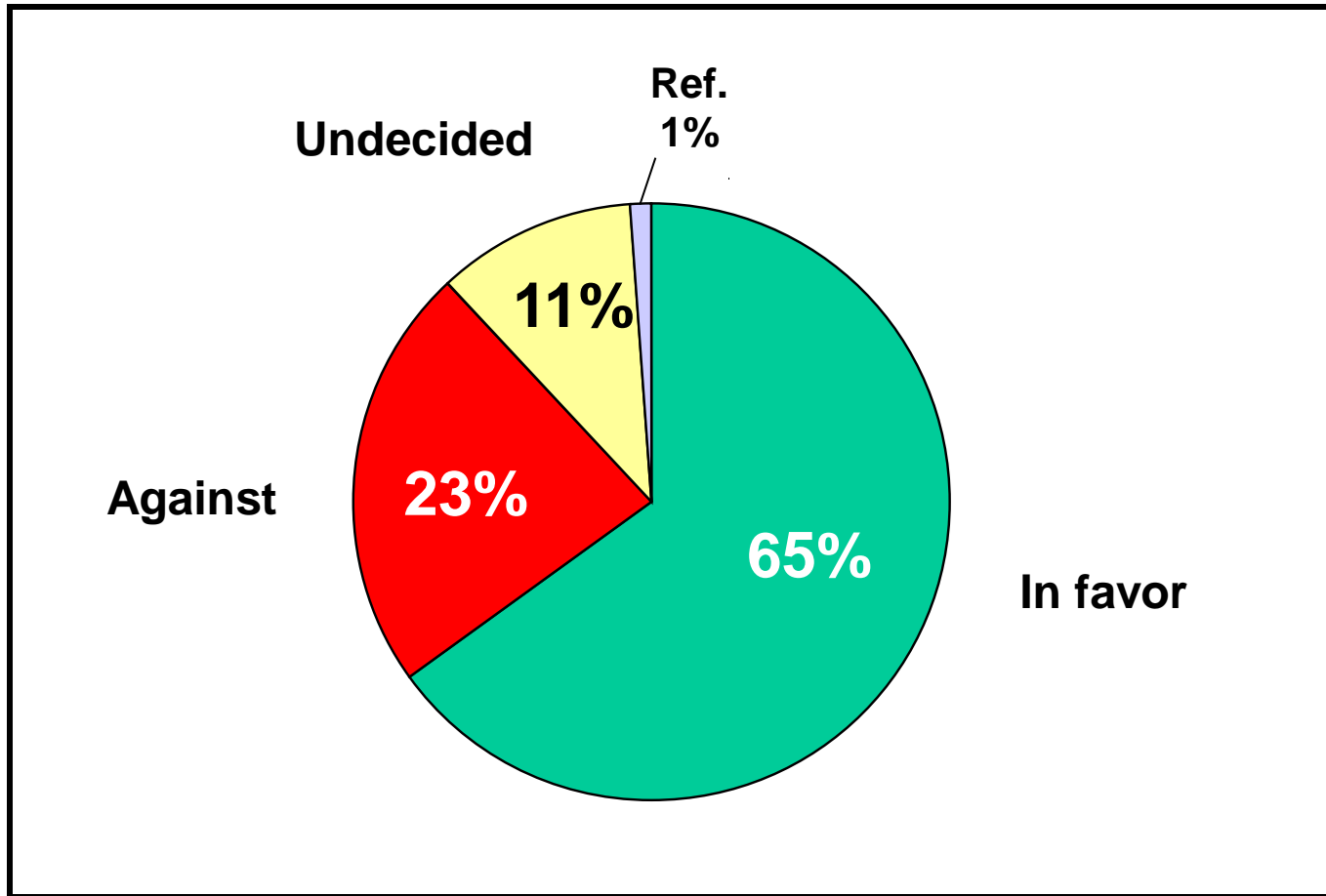
Additionally, the new .185% sales tax will replace the current Flood Sales Tax of the same value, that expires in 2020, so that the County Sales Tax will remain exactly the same as it is today, until the new tax expires in 2025, when it will go down.

Voters were asked if they would support or oppose this proposal.



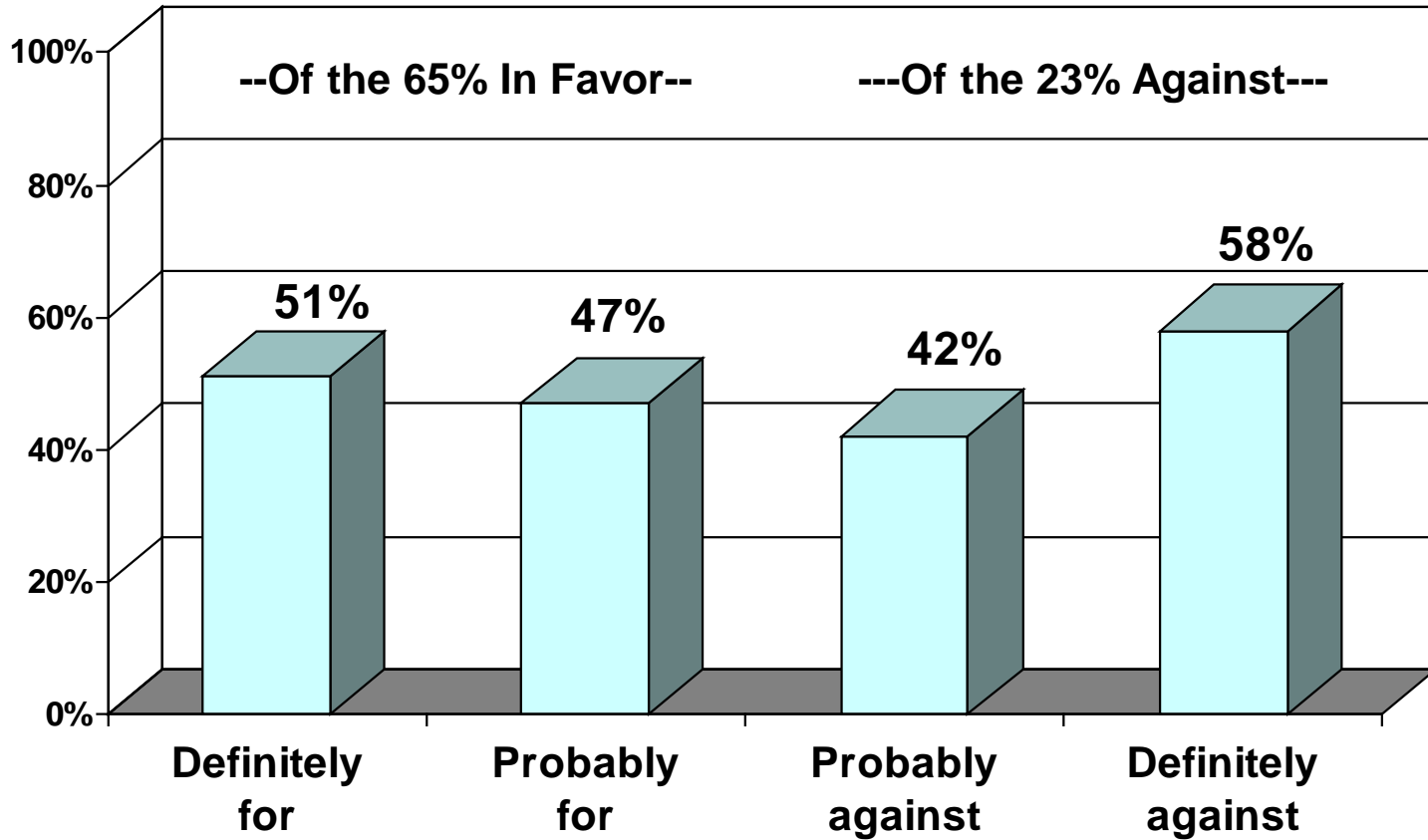
Proposal to Fund Improvements to The Jail and its Programs

[n=605]



Strength of Support/Opposition For Sales Tax Increase for County Jail

[n=605]



C. SALES TAX INCREASE TO FUND TRANSPORTATION



Sales Tax Increase for Transportation

Both the State of Colorado and Boulder County are considering increasing the sales tax to fund transportation improvements. Two versions of the proposed increase were tested. One half the sample got version one; the second half got version two.

The first version tested two levels of increase to the State sales tax: a .05% and a .1% increase. Money raised by the tax would be used to fund improvements to interstates and state highways, including improvements to I-25 and I-70, as well as highway 119, known as the Diagonal, between Boulder and Longmont, and highway 7, also known as Arapahoe Rd, between Erie, Lafayette and Boulder, as well as provide some funding for transit service between the various communities throughout Boulder County. The majority of these funds could only be used for improvements to state highways, and would be administered by the Colorado Department of Transportation, with a portion allocated to local governments for local transportation purposes.



Sales Tax Increase for Transportation

The second version of the tax increase tested support for the same two levels of increases—a .05% and a .1%—but this time to the Boulder County sales tax, not the State sales tax. Money raised by the tax would be used to improve the county transportation system, including repaving and improving the county road system, as well as contributing to state highway improvements in Boulder County, in particular highway 119, known as the Diagonal, between Boulder and Longmont, and highway 7, also known as Arapahoe Rd, between Erie, Lafayette and Boulder. Additionally, the tax would provide some funding for transit service and bicycle connections between the various communities throughout Boulder County. These funds would be used primarily for the county roads, transit and bikeways, and would be administered by Boulder County.

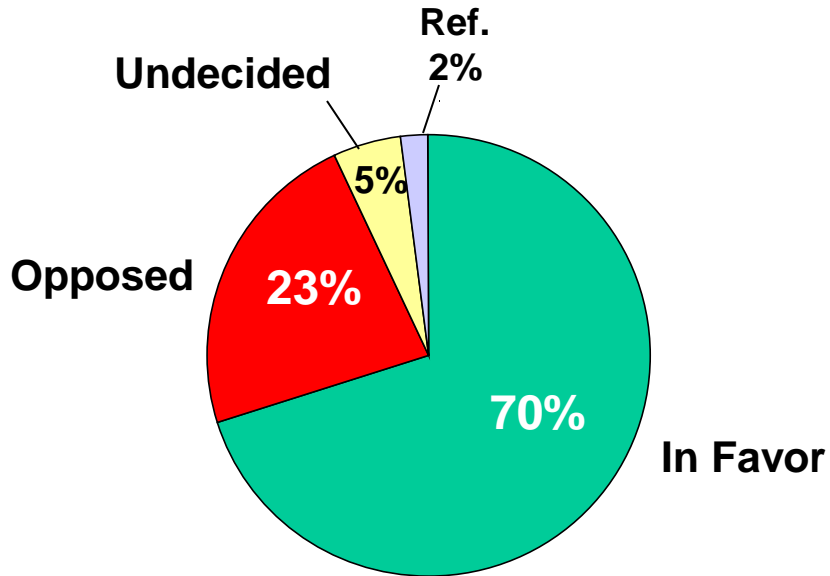
The results are shown on the following two pages.



Increasing State Sales Tax to Fund Transportation-Related Projects

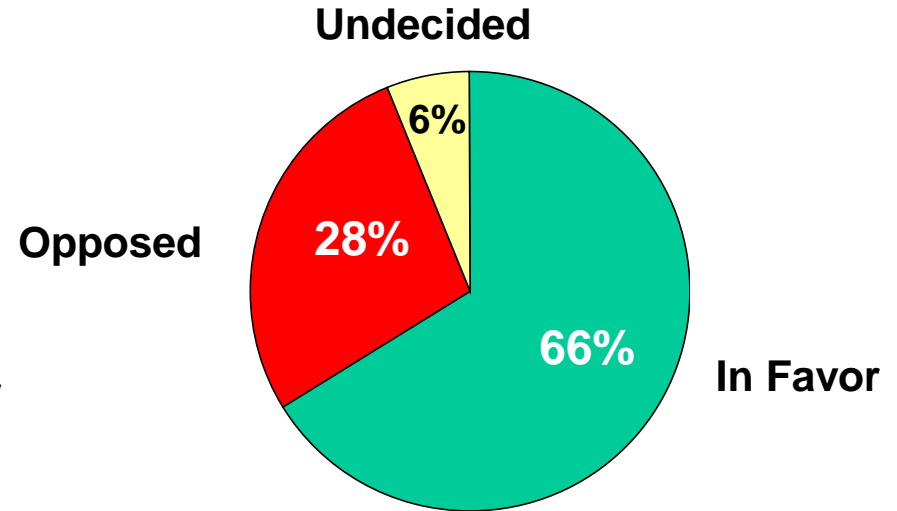
Increase Tax .05%

(n=147)



Increase Tax .1%

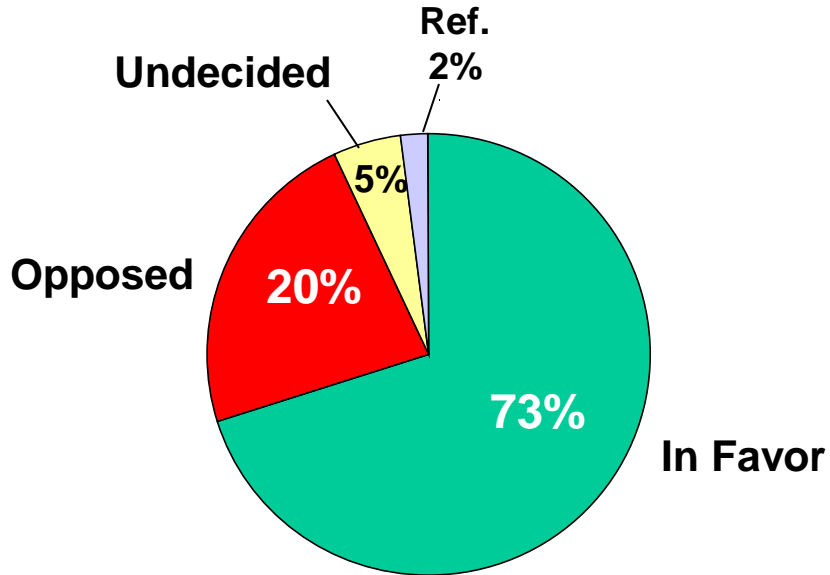
(n=155)



Increasing County Sales Tax to Fund Transportation-Related Projects

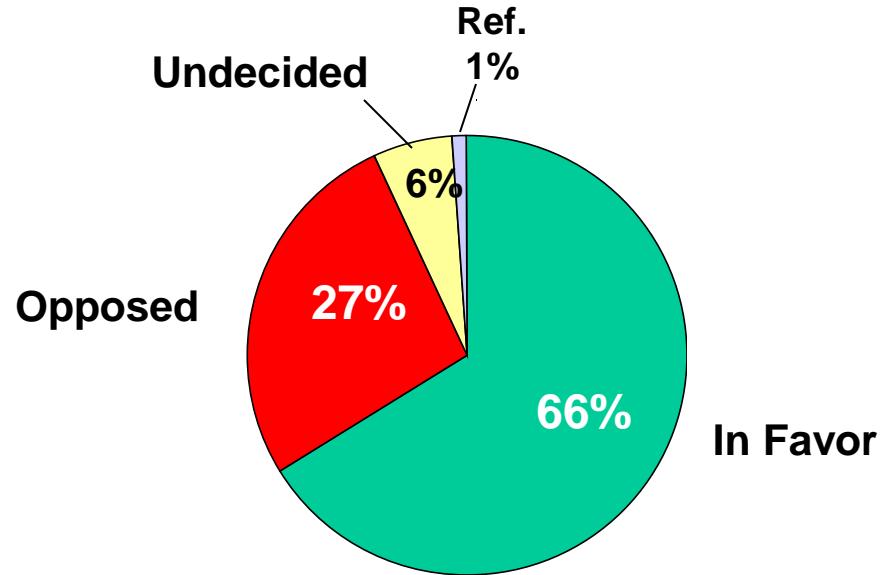
Increase Tax .05%

(n=152)

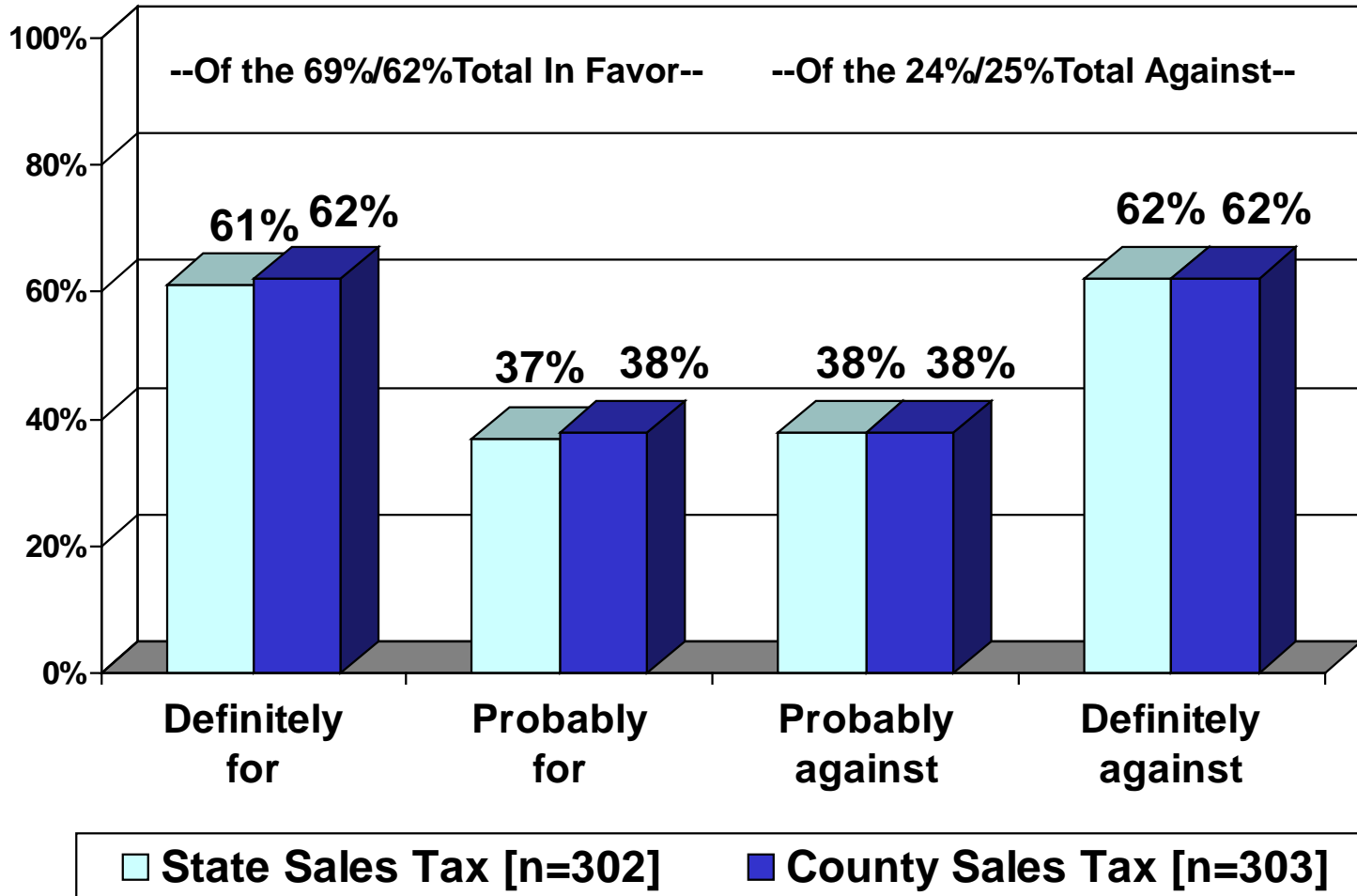


Increase Tax .1%

(n=151)



Strength of Support/Opposition For The State/County Sales Tax Increase



V. DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKOUTS ON BALLOT PROPOSALS



Demographic Breakouts

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

- Most likely voters¹
- Gender
- Age
- Own v. Rent homes
- Students v. non-students
- Political party
- Income
- Race

¹ Most likely voters, who make-up 61% 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 statistically greater support from those living in Longmont, Democrats and those with higher incomes. It's least support comes from Latinos, Republicans and those who live in the unincorporated areas of Boulder County

The sales tax proposal for the County Jail gets statistically greater support from females, Democrats and Anglos. The least amount of support comes from Republicans and Latinos.

The State sales tax proposal for transportation gets statistically greater support from Democrats and from those living in Longmont. The least amount of support comes Republicans.

The County sales tax proposal for transportation gets statistically greater support from Democrats and those living in the City of Boulder. The least amount of support comes from those living in unincorporated areas and from Republicans.



Demographic Breakouts

- Shows percent saying "In Favor" -

Proposal	Total	Blder	SE Cities	Long't	Uninc.	Student	Not Student
Term Limits	35%	36%	33%	41%	27%	29%	37%
Jail Tax	66%	72%	63%	63%	60%	69%	66%
State Transportation	69%	68%	69%	75%	64%	64%	72%
County Transportation	68%	75%	68%	67%	55%	61%	73%

Proposal	Total	18-34	35-54	55-64	65+	Own	Rent
Term Limits	35%	37%	31%	40%	38%	36%	35%
Jail Tax	66%	70%	70%	61%	66%	64%	72%
State Transportation	69%	76%	68%	63%	68%	67%	74%
County Transportation	68%	72%	74%	69%	61%	68%	71%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference

¹ 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	35%	34%	37%	34%	26%	40%	33%
Jail Tax	66%	61%	71%	66%	38%	73%	69%
State Transportation	69%	70%	69%	69%	50%	73%	71%
County Transportation	68%	65%	71%	68%	53%	84%	59%

Proposal	Total	<\$60K	\$60-\$99K	\$100K+	White	Latino
Term Limits	35%	30%	39%	42%	35%	46%
Jail Tax	66%	65%	71%	69%	69%	54%
State Transportation	69%	67%	62%	73%	71%	54%
County Transportation	68%	69%	63%	72%	71%	57%

 Shading indicates there is a statistical difference.



VI. APPENDIX: PERCENTAGE RESULTS

