


Tri-Valley Water Supply Reliability Issues Survey

Survey Conducted November 12-18, 2015

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates – FM3

PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH & STRATEGY

320-677

Methodology

- 601 telephone interviews with registered voters via landline and cell phones
  - 500 interviews across the entire region
- Oversamples to reach 200 interviews in each subregion; results were weighted back to their natural voter proportions.
  - Pleasanton
  - Livermore (suppliers include the City and CalWater)
  - DSRSD (including Dougherty Valley)
- Interviews conducted November 12-18, 2015
- Margin of sampling error +/-4.4% at the 95% confidence interval for the full region
  - +/-6.9 % for each subregion
- Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%

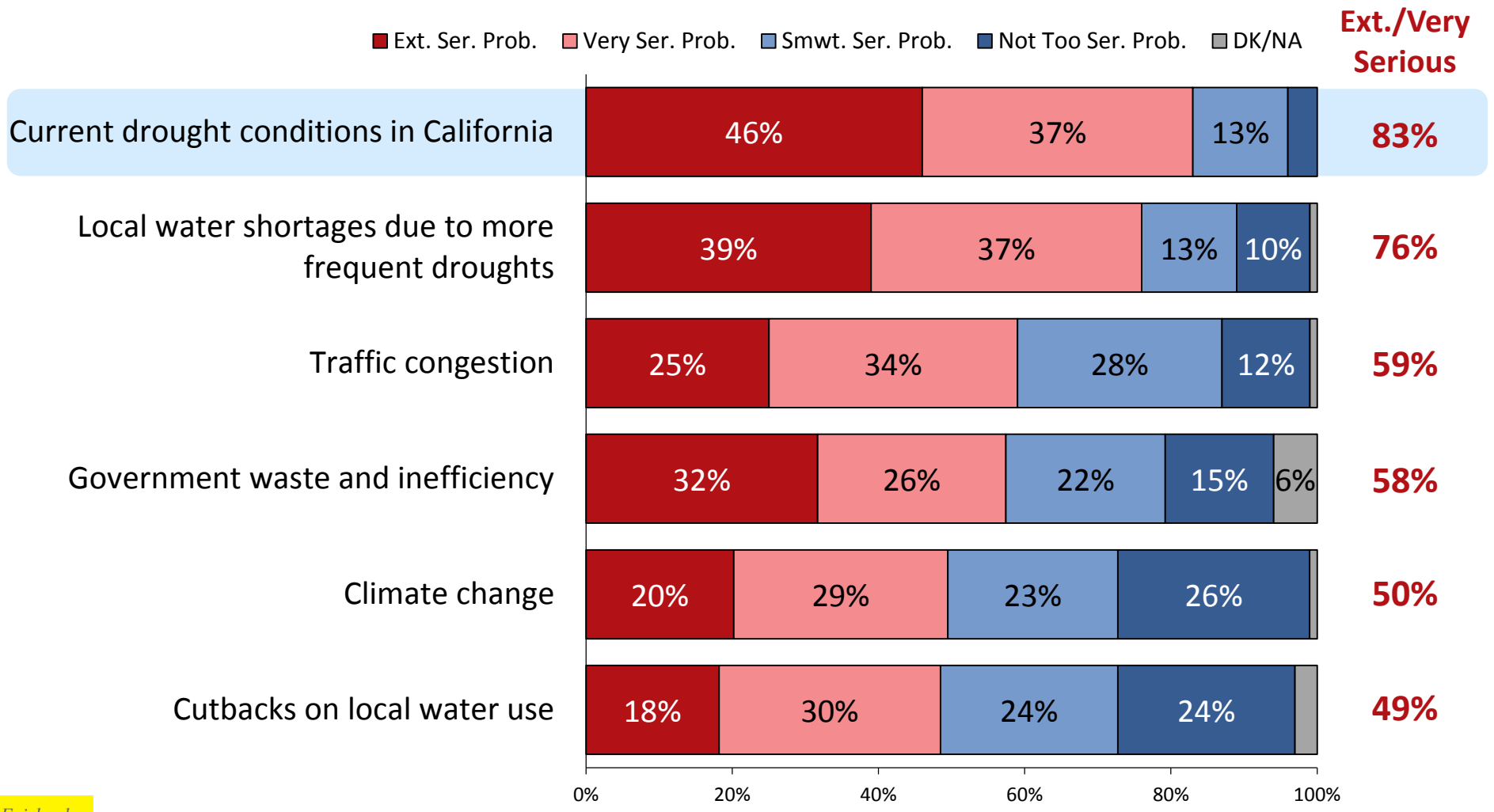
Key Findings

- The drought is by far the top problem for Tri-Valley residents; however, their water bill is among the least urgent issues.
- Very few residents know where their water comes from other than “the tap” or “the city.”
- Local water suppliers get high marks for quality and reliability.
- 73% say they are at least somewhat familiar with recycled water; 30% have used it to irrigate their lawn or garden.
- 63% support a proposal to supplement drinking water supplies with recycled water; those who support the proposal cite the drought, while those who oppose it have issues with trust and disgust.
- While supportive arguments push support to 73%, critical statements reset support at 65%.



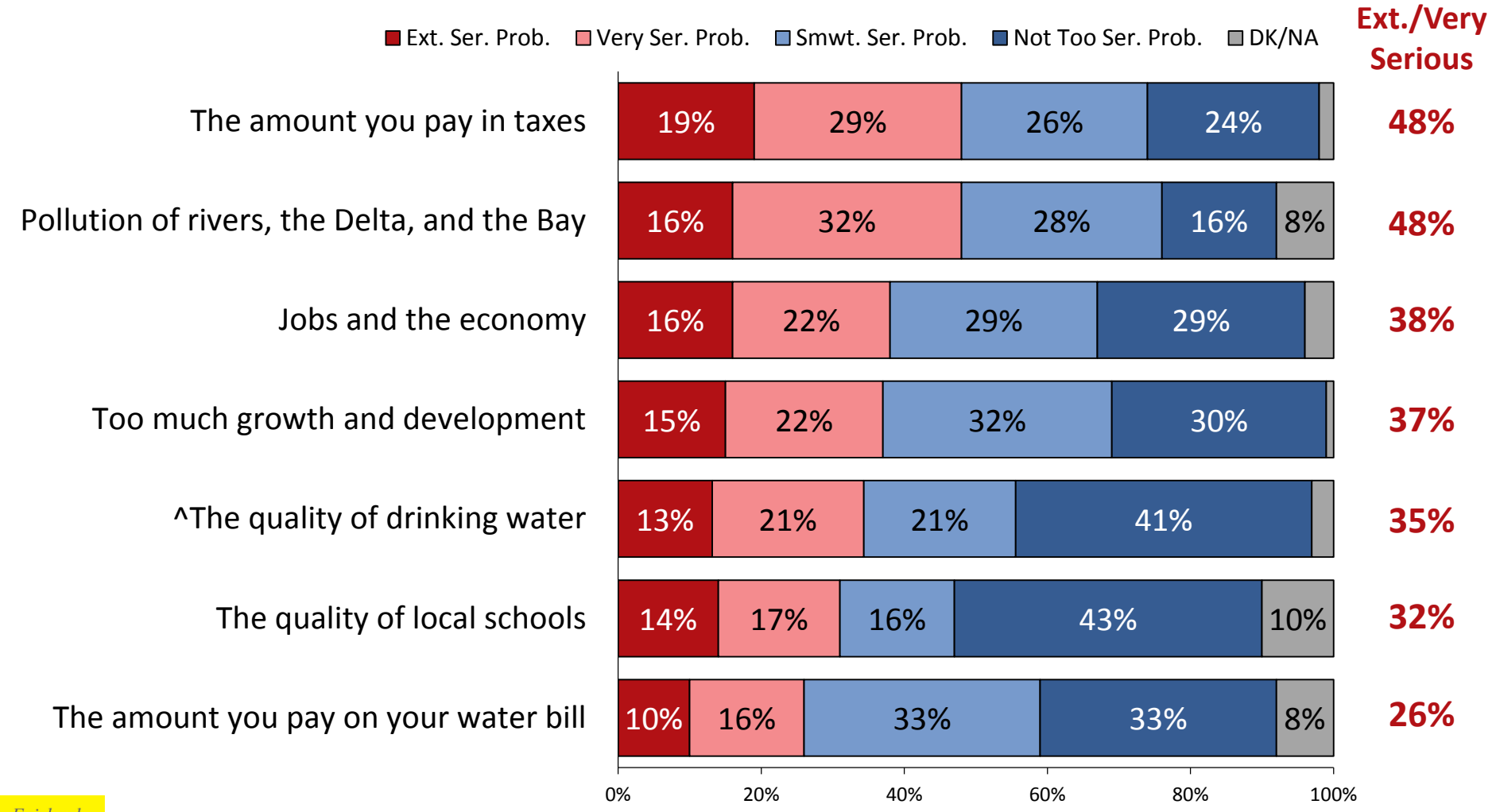

Community Context and Views of Local Water Suppliers

The drought is seen as by far the most serious problem facing the Tri-Valley.



Q1. I am going to read you a list of several different issues that people have said are problems in your community. Please tell me how serious each problem is to you personally: an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or a not too serious problem. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Tax and water bills are seen as much less serious.



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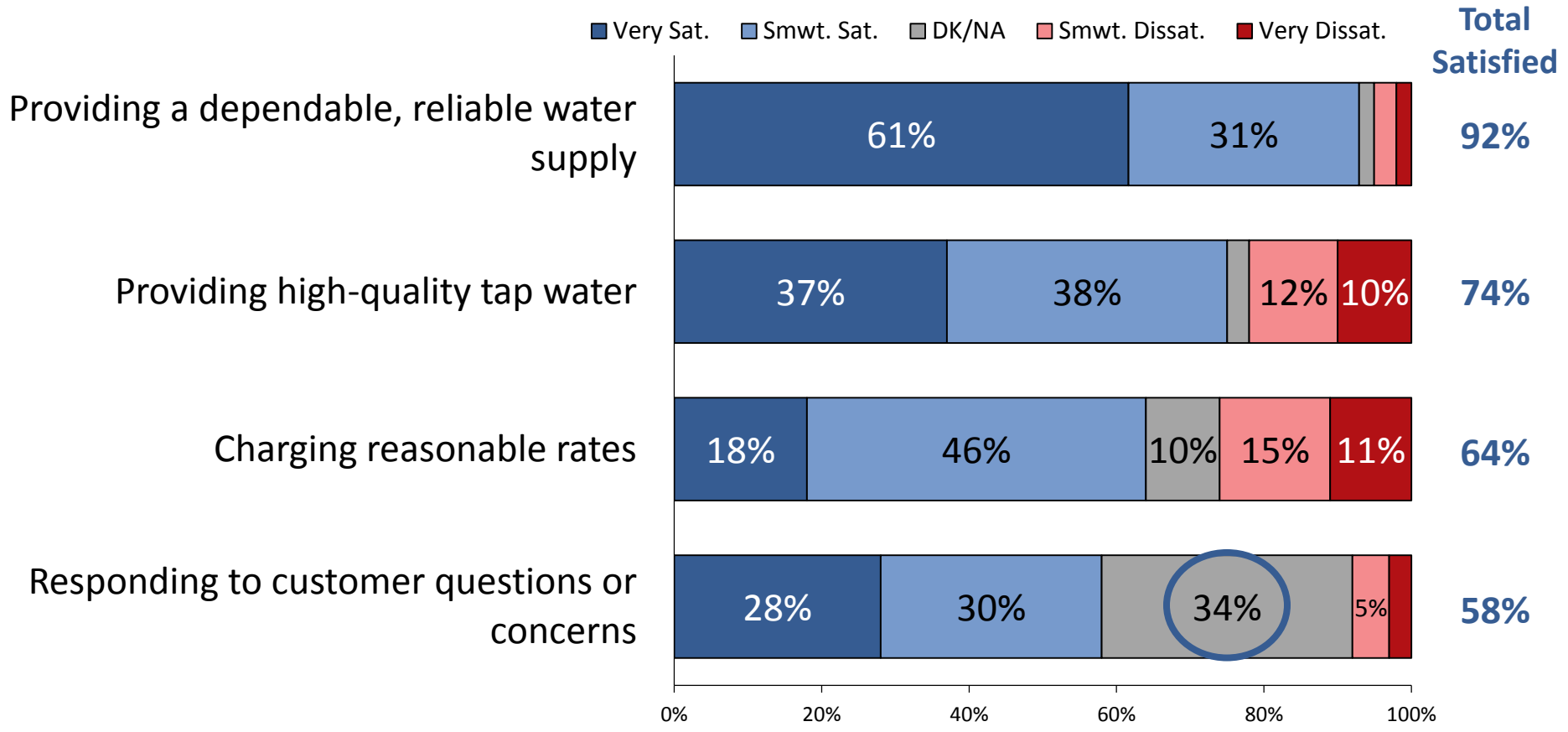
Few know the source of their drinking water.

In your own words, please tell me the physical source of your home's drinking water. If you are unsure, you can tell me that, too.

Q2. Open Ended

Local water agencies get high marks for quality and reliability.

I am going to read you a list of different aspects of service provided by your local water agency. Please tell me how satisfied you are with each aspect of service.



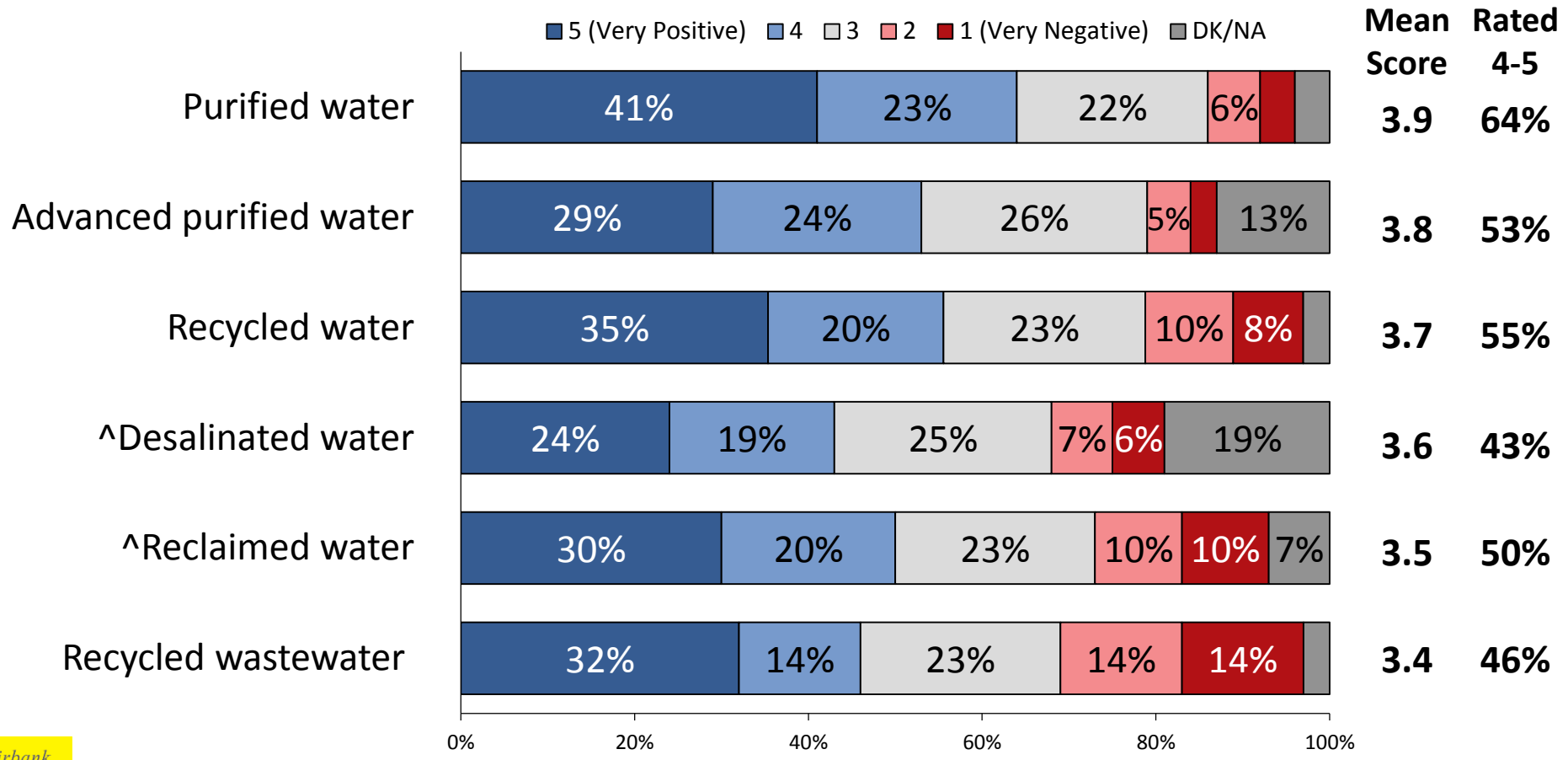
Q5. Asked Only of Those Who Do Not Have Water Provided by a Well On Their Property; n=591




Initial Impressions of Recycled Water

The word "purified" inspires positive reactions.

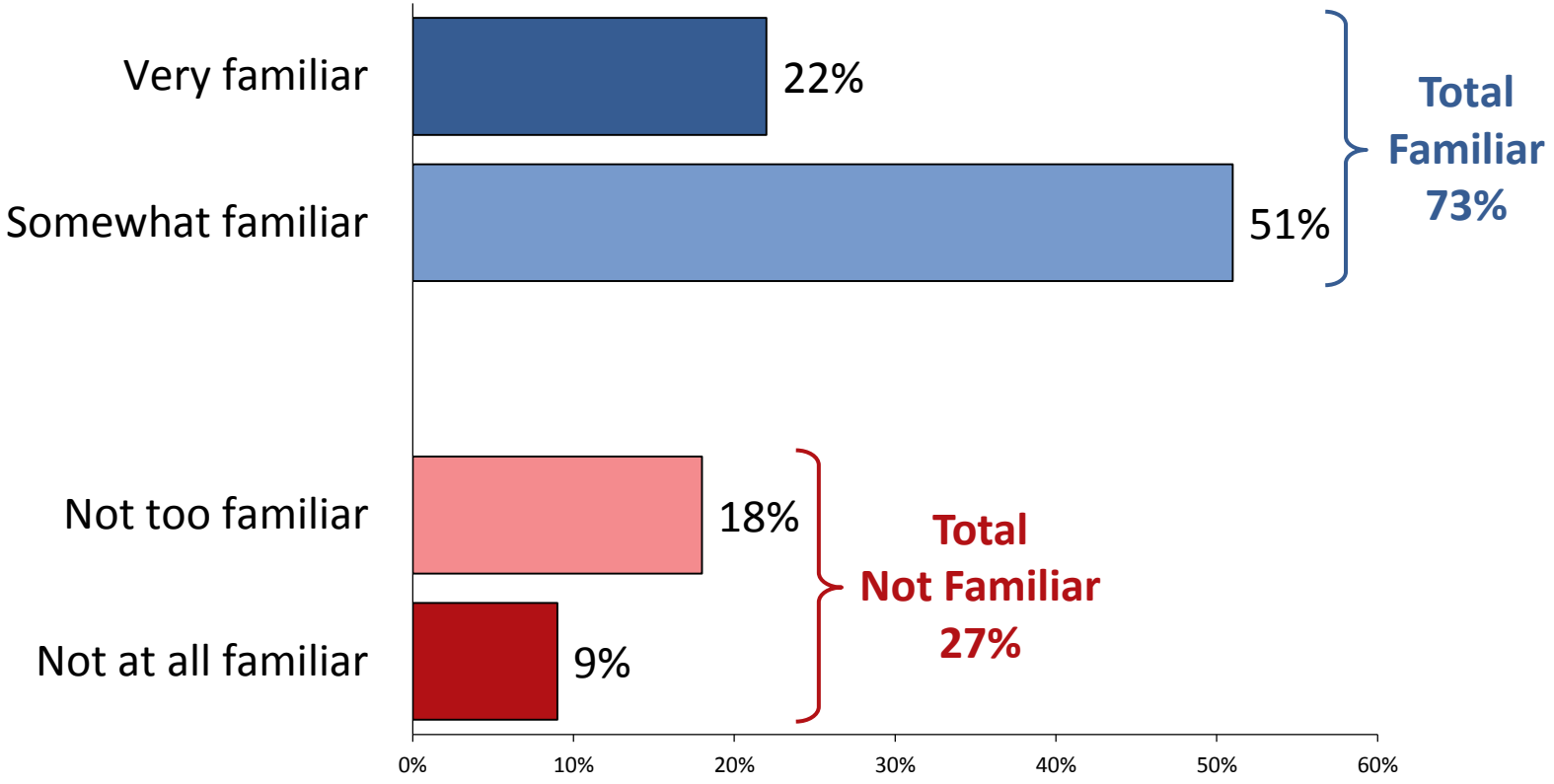
I am going to read you some different terms. I am not asking you to define or explain the term, but just tell me whether you have a positive or negative reaction to each one. We will use a scale of one to five, where one means VERY NEGATIVE and five means VERY POSITIVE.



Q6. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Most are at least "somewhat familiar" with recycled water.

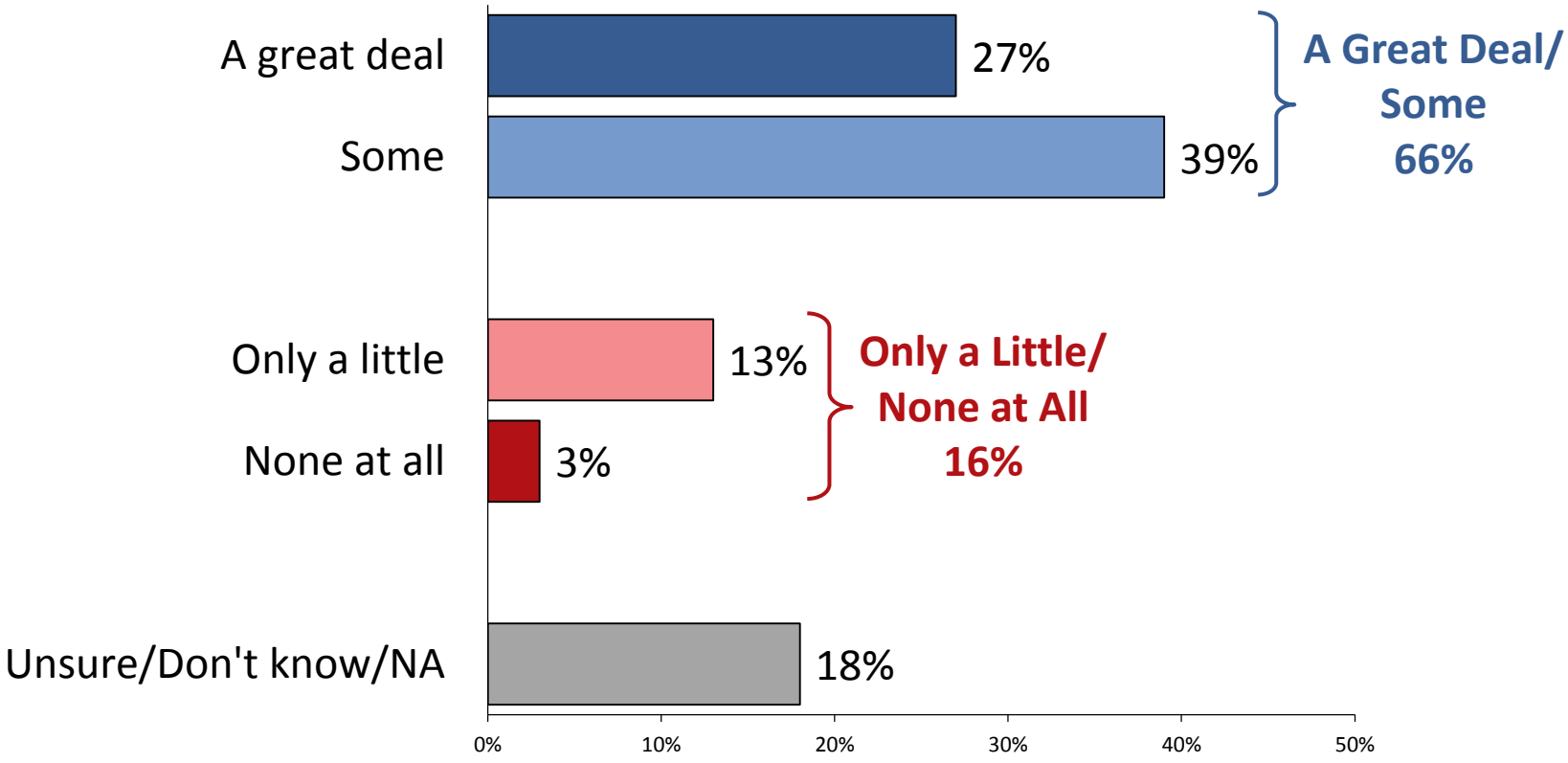
How familiar would you say you are with recycled water: very familiar, somewhat familiar, not too familiar, or not at all familiar?



Q7.

Two-thirds think at least some recycled water is currently used in their community.

How much recycled water do you think is currently being used in your community: a great deal, some, only a little, or none at all? If you are unsure, you can tell me that, too.



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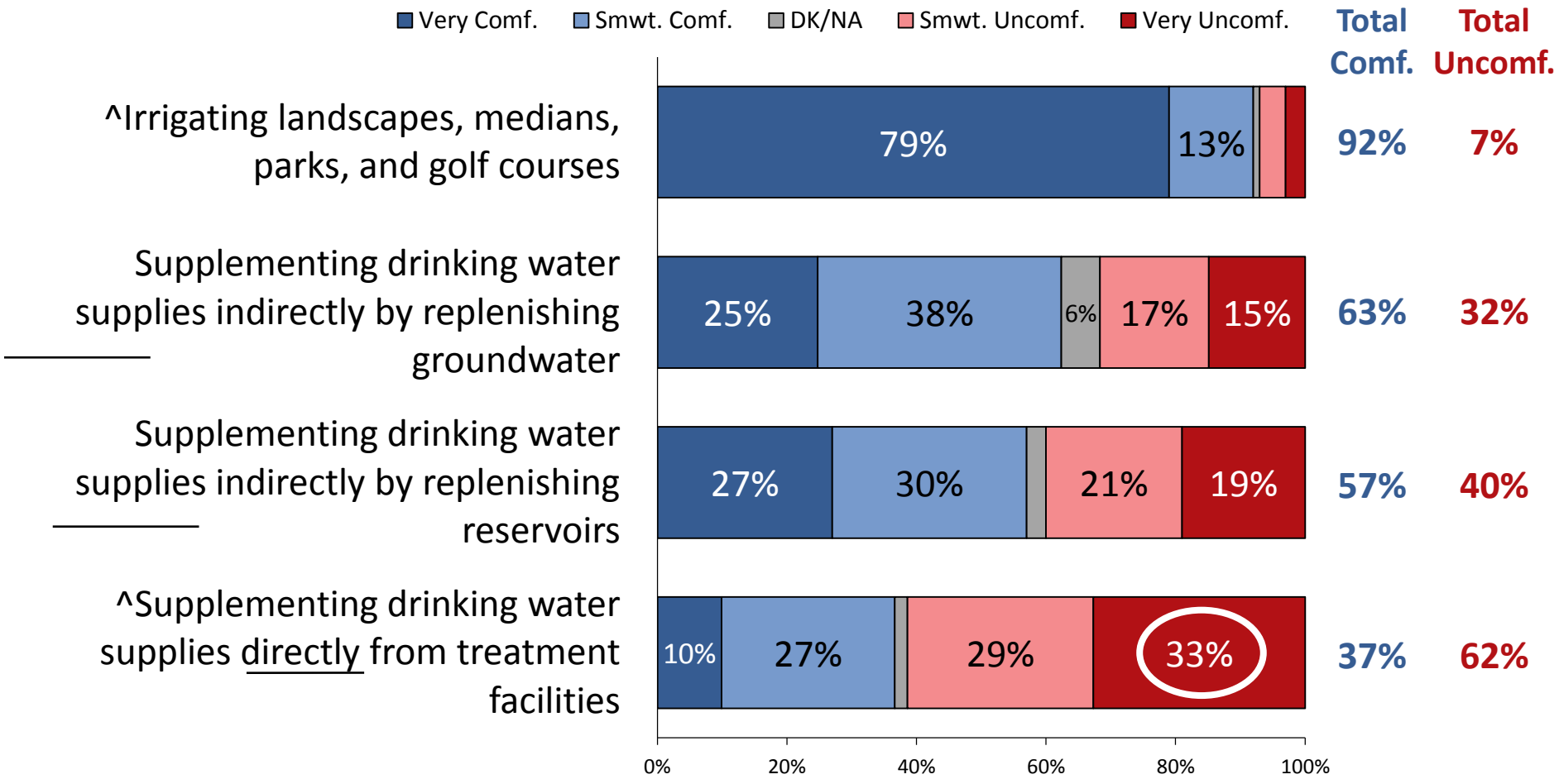
Q9.

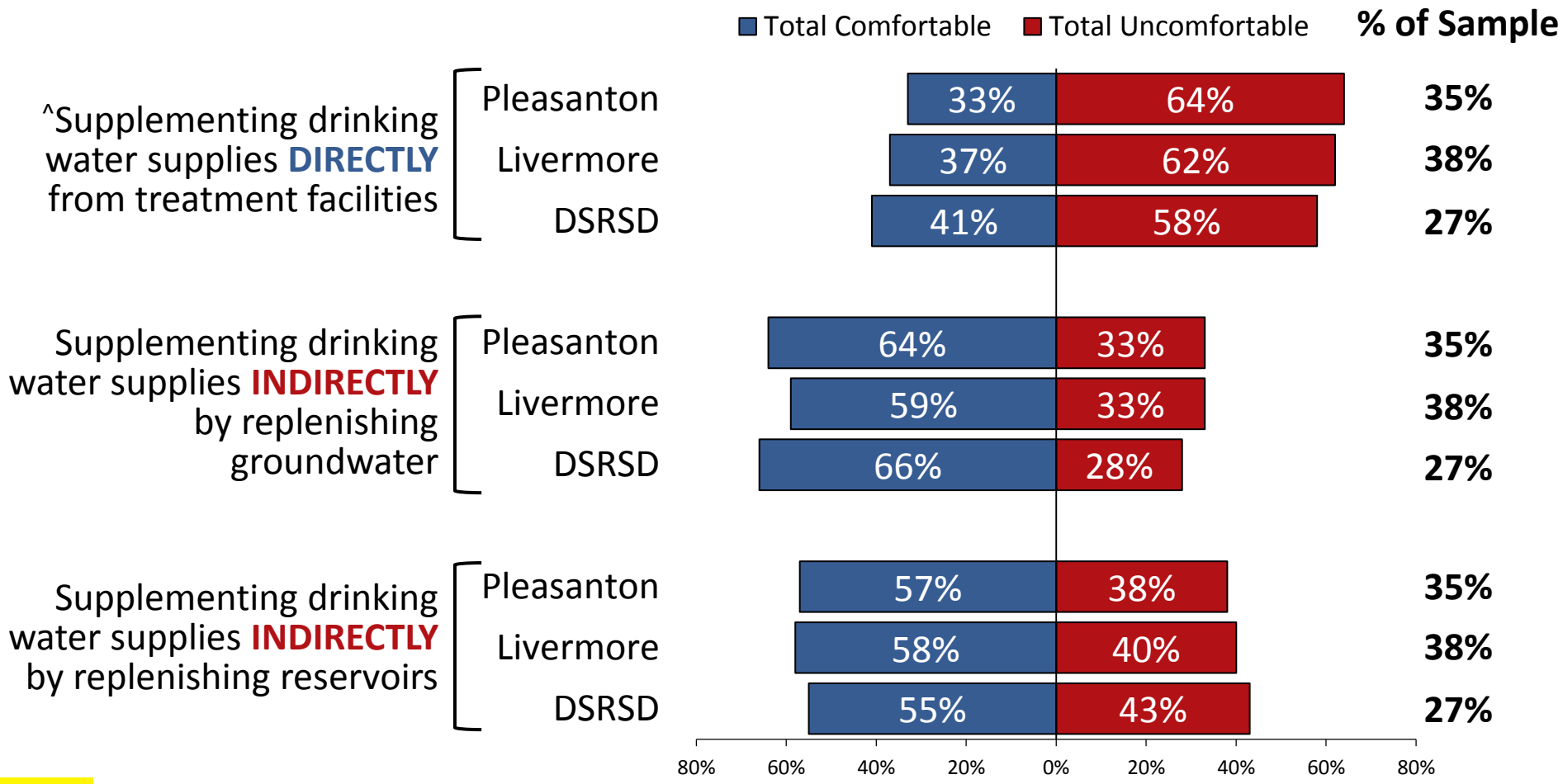
Voters are much more comfortable with indirect than direct reuse.



Q10. I am going to read you a list of some potential specific uses of recycled water in your community. Please tell me whether you are personally comfortable or uncomfortable with that usage of recycled water. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Differences by subregion are small.

Comfortability with Uses of Recycled Water by Subregion



Q10 b/c/d. I am going to read you a list of some potential specific uses of recycled water in your community. Please tell me whether you are personally comfortable or uncomfortable with that usage of recycled water. ^Not Part of Split Sample



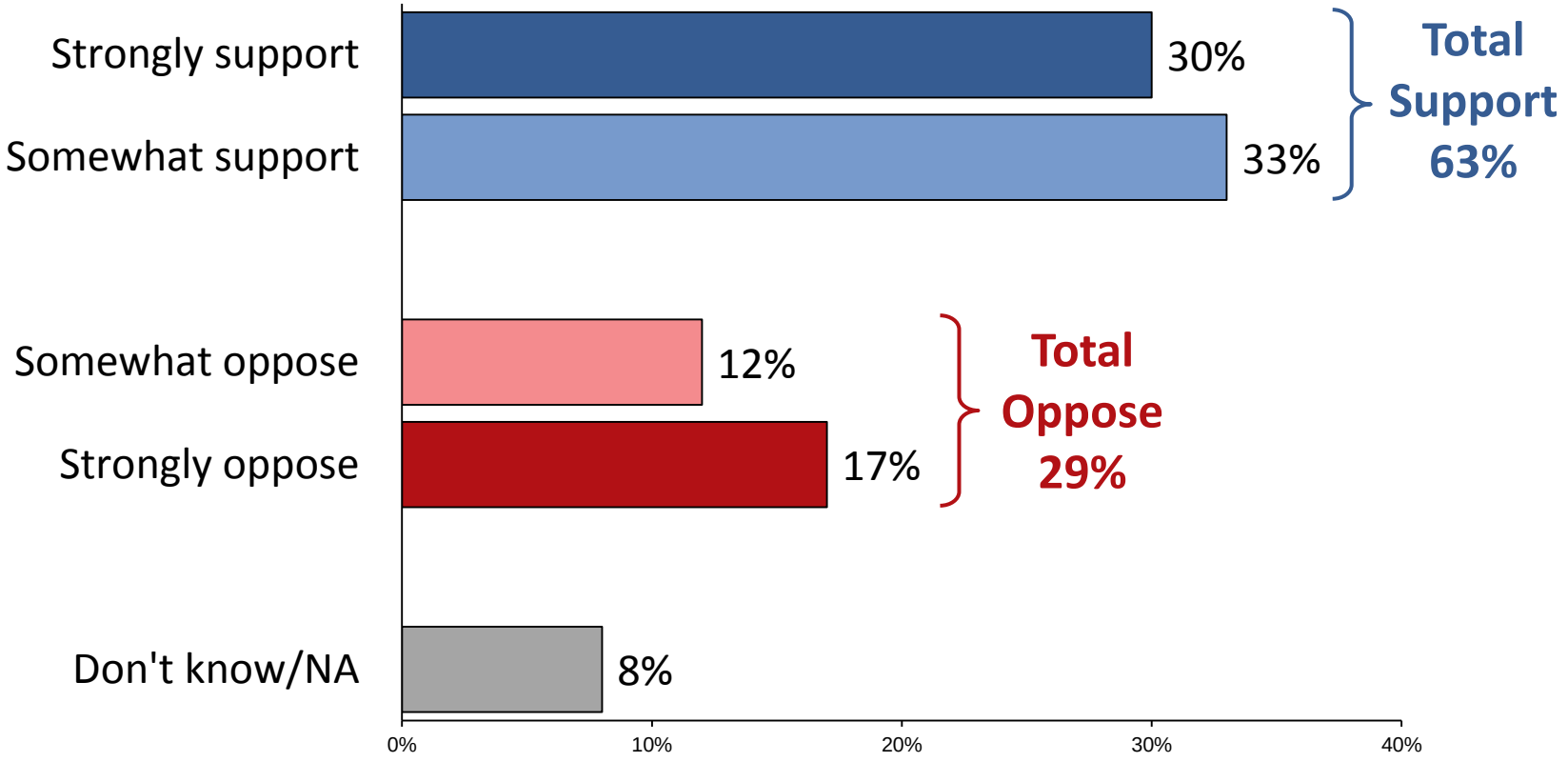

Introducing the Proposal

Proposal Tested

Under this proposal, local sewer water from your community would undergo advanced purification and would then be blended into the local groundwater supplies. After being naturally filtered through the local groundwater system for several years, this enhanced water supply would be pumped out through wells to supplement local drinking water, making this source of water more reliable and sustainable – even in drought years. Recycling local wastewater would dramatically reduce the need for our community to import less reliable water supplies from the Delta or other sources.

More then three in five support the proposal, with surprisingly few undecided.

Does this proposal to supplement local drinking water supplies with recycled water sound like something you would support or oppose?



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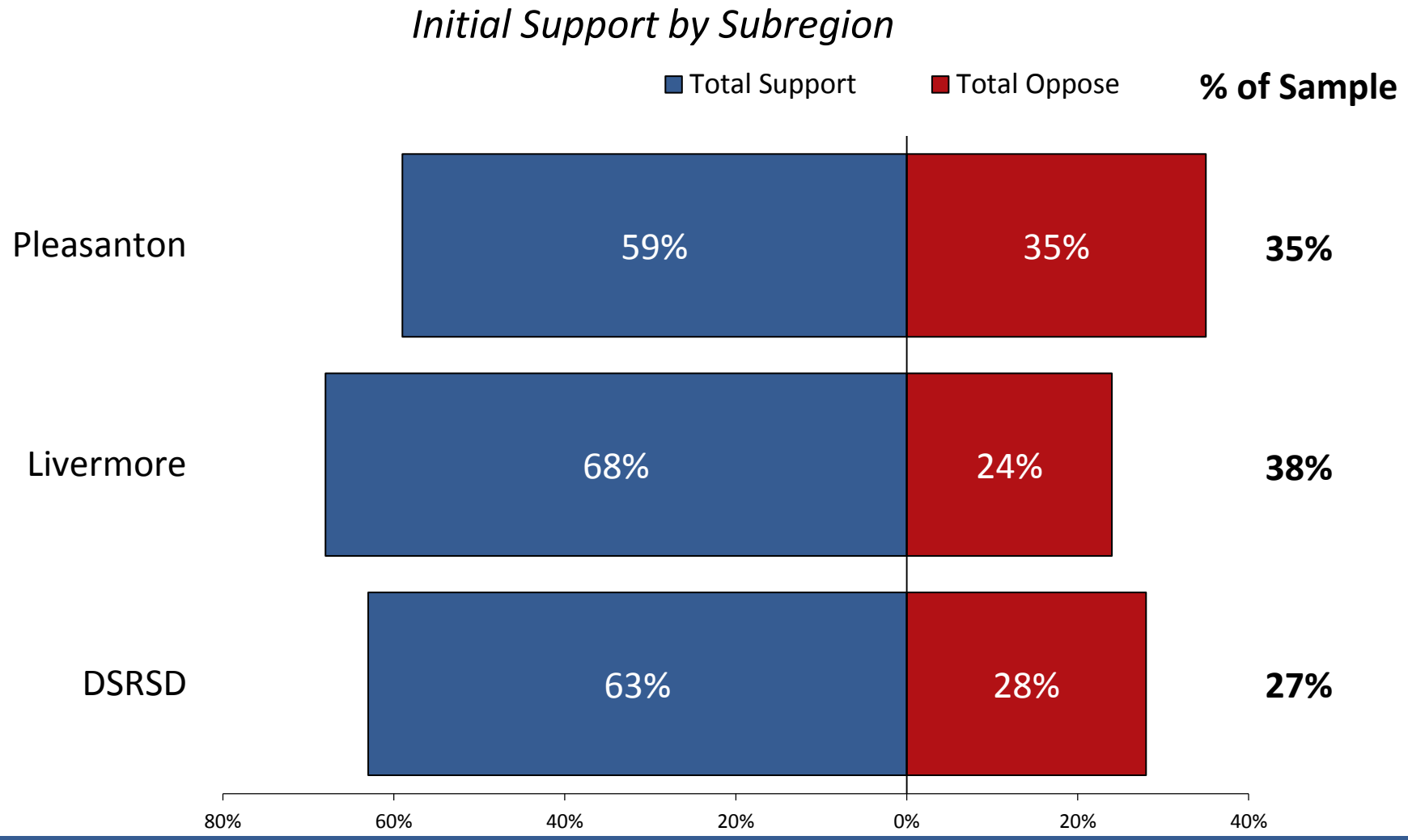
Q11.

While majorities in every subregion support the proposal, the feeling is strongest in Livermore.

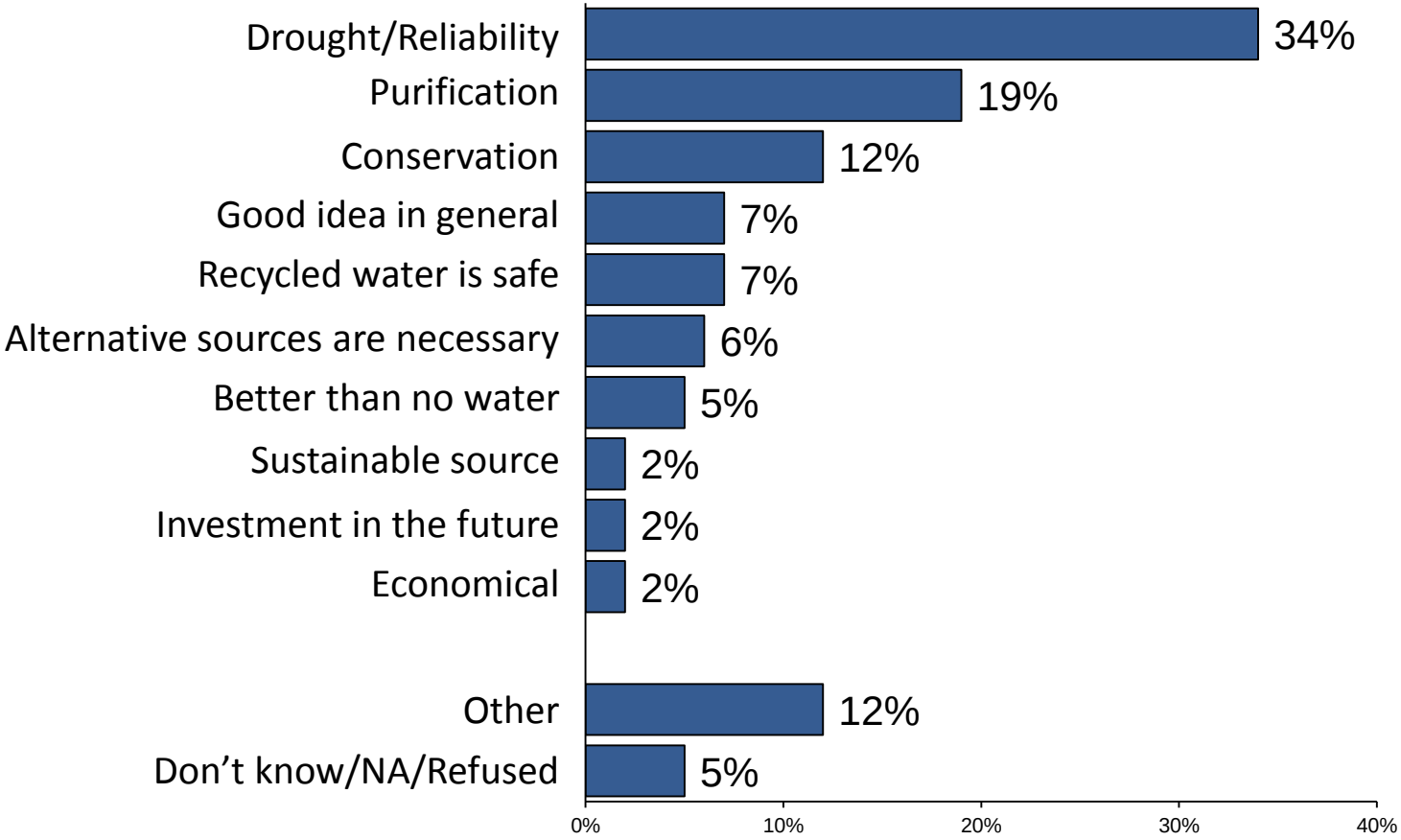


Q11. Does this proposal to supplement local drinking water supplies with recycled water sound like something you would support or oppose?

Supporters cite need for new sources and trust in the process.

*In a few words of your own, why would you **SUPPORT** supplementing local drinking water supplies with recycled water?*

(n=362)

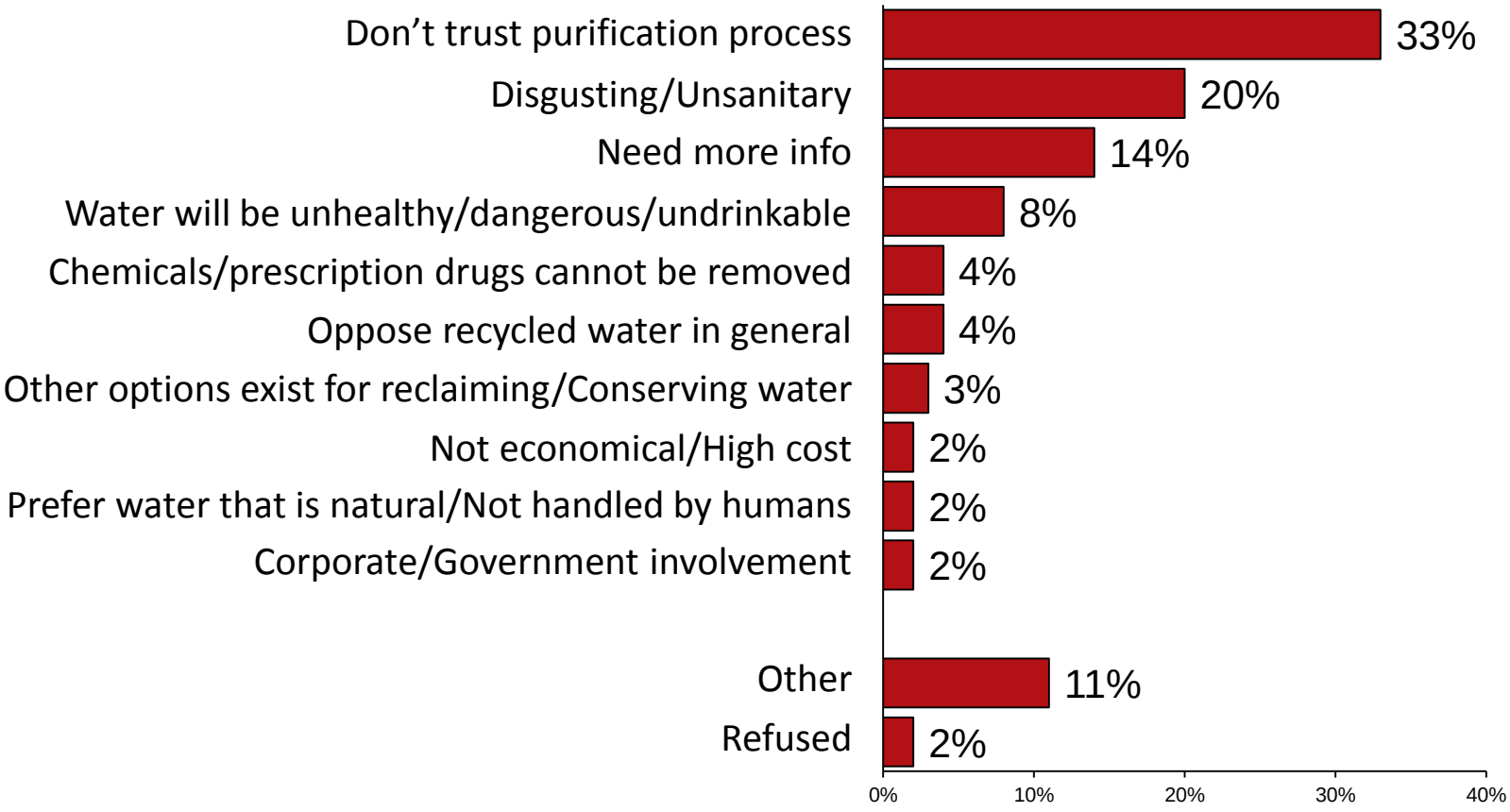


Q12a. Open Ended; Asked Only of Supporters; 2% and Above Shown

Those opposed say they don't trust the purification process.

*In a few words of your own, why would you **OPPOSE** supplementing local drinking water supplies with recycled water?*

(n=168)



Q12b. Open Ended; Asked Only of Those Who Oppose; 2% and Above Shown




Information, Messaging and Movement

Respondents then heard a variety of positive messages.

Messages
(DROUGHT-PROOF) We're in the fourth year of a historically severe drought, with the lowest Sierra snowpack levels ever recorded in California. We don't know when this drought will end. Given how serious this is, we simply need to find drought-proof sources of water for our community.
(ENVIRONMENT – LESS WATER) Using recycled water is good for our environment. The more recycled water we use, the less we have to take out of rivers and streams and our scarce groundwater supplies. That's good for rivers, streams, and the fish, plants, and wildlife that rely on them.
(ASTRONAUTS/SUBMARINES) Advanced purified water – like the kind we would have available under this proposal – is held to even higher standards than bottled water. The process of testing and purifying the water uses the best available science. It is what NASA astronauts drink on the International Space Station and what crewmembers drink on submarines.
^**(LOCAL CONTROL)** We need to consider <u>all</u> options to ensure a reliable and locally controlled supply of water for ourselves and future generations. This proposal will help ensure that our local water supplies are not dependent on decisions made by agencies in other parts of the state, making our community more independent.

Q13. I am going to read you some statements from <u>supporters</u> of this proposal. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to <u>support</u> supplementing local drinking water supplies with recycled water. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Messages

(RELIABLE) We have already had to reduce our water use drastically, in part because we can't bank on our local supplies. Unless we start developing local sources of water, we face a future of unreliable water supplies in our community and homes. This proposal would help ensure that we will have water when we need it.

(LANDSCAPING) During this drought, we've all had to cut back, and we can see the evidence with brown lawns throughout our neighborhoods. This proposal will provide us with more reliable supplies for watering our lawns, gardens, and other landscaping throughout the year and during droughts.

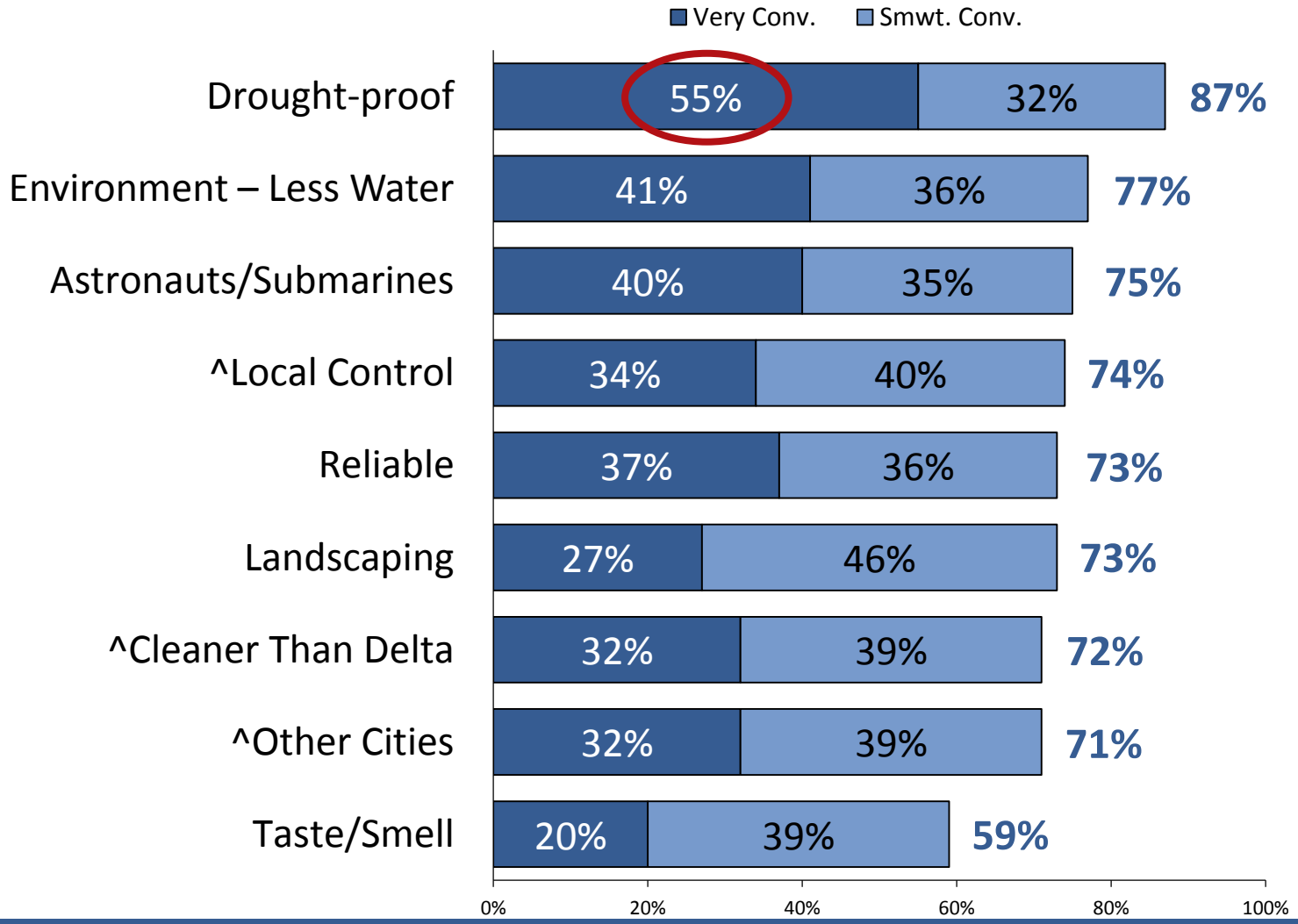
^**(CLEANER THAN DELTA)** Currently, we get much of our water from the Delta – in other words, it's treated wastewater from people and businesses in the Sacramento area. Under this proposal, the recycled water would actually be cleaner than what we are drinking now. It would be treated, naturally filtered underground, and disinfected again before supplementing our drinking water supplies.

^**(OTHER CITIES)** Several communities, including Orange County, Pasadena, and Washington, D.C., already use advanced purification processes to produce purified recycled water suitable for drinking and household use. There have been no problems whatsoever from this use of recycled water.

(TASTE/SMELL) Anyone who has tried East Bay MUD or San Francisco water knows it smells and tastes better than ours, particularly in the summer. This proposal requires that recycled water go through multiple phases of treatment, filtration, and disinfection, resulting in better smelling and tasting water in our community throughout the year.

Q13. I am going to read you some statements from supporters of this proposal. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support supplementing local drinking water supplies with recycled water. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Among a variety of highly persuasive messages, the drought stands out.



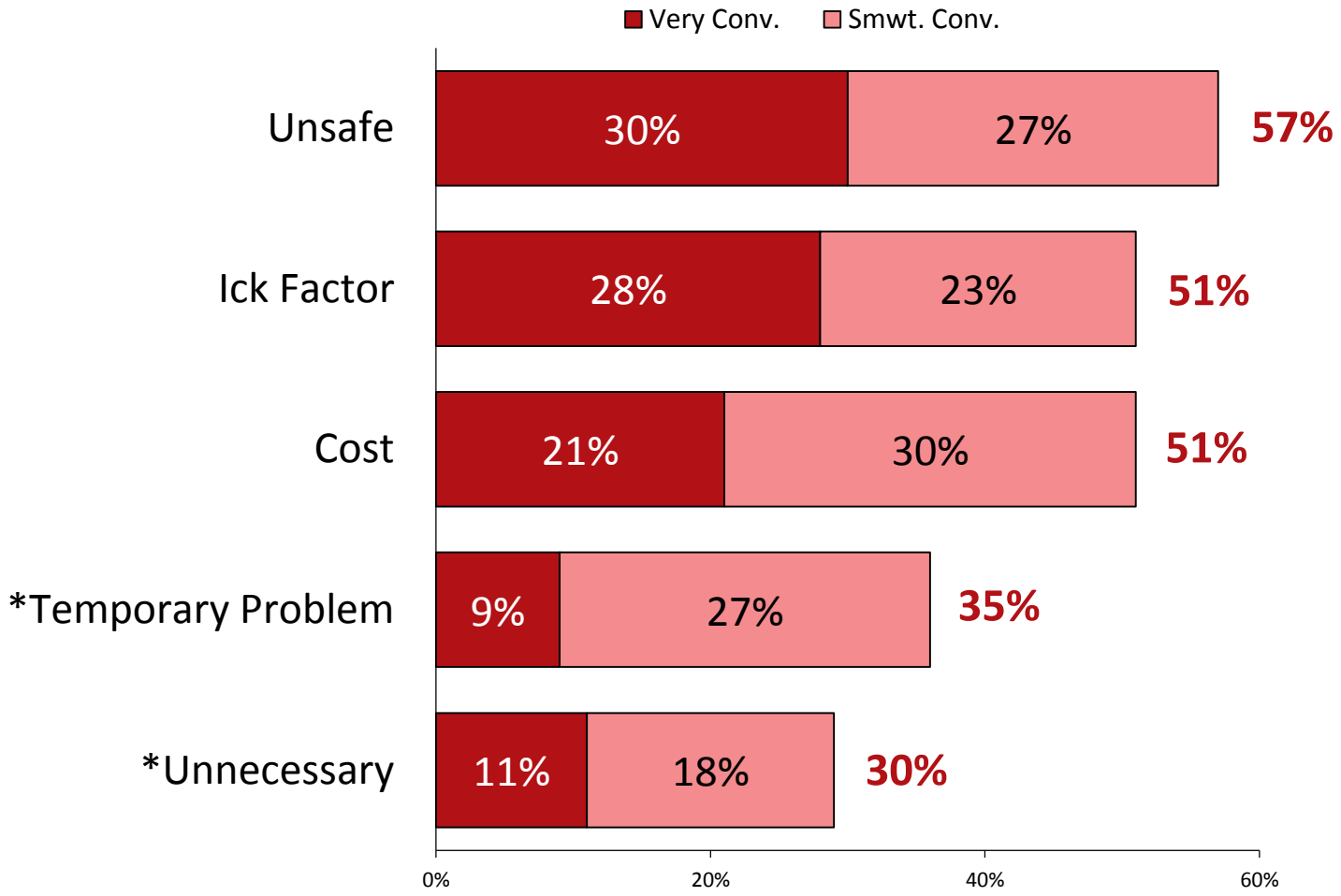
Q13. I am going to read you some statements from supporters of this proposal. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support supplementing local drinking water supplies with recycled water. ^Not Part of Split Sample

A variety of opposition messages came next.

Messages
(UNSAFE) Recycled water contains everything that has been in the human body – including prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, household products, food additives, and much more. Scientists simply cannot guarantee that the chemicals leftover even after this water is treated won't harm us or our children.
(ICK FACTOR) Let's be clear: This proposal means drinking treated sewage water. I'm just not comfortable with water from the toilet coming out of my tap, no matter how much it's purified, tested, or treated.
(COST) This proposal is sure to increase our water bills, which are already out of hand and seem to go up every year. Our local water agencies should look for more cost-effective solutions rather than building large and expensive projects.
***(TEMPORARY PROBLEM)** California faces a temporary drought that is a part of the regular cycle of dry and wet years, and a few years of wetter weather, including the predicted El Niño later this year, will ease the problem. This kind of drastic plan will soon be just unnecessary.
***(UNNECESSARY)** Our current drinking water supplies taste fine and every time I turn on the tap, water comes out. This sort of risky and expensive proposal seems unnecessary when everything is working fine as it is.

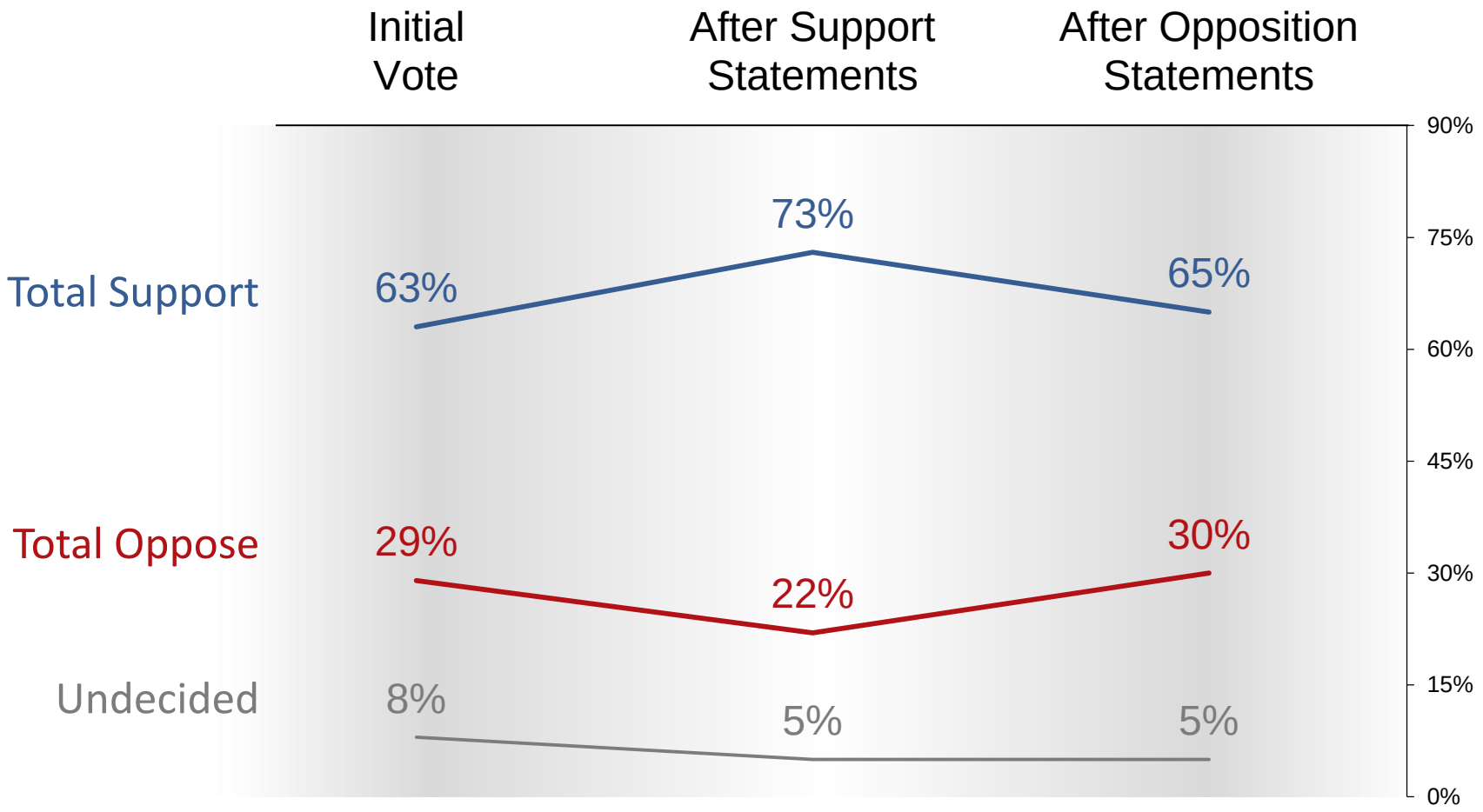
*Q15. I am going to read you some statements from opponents of this proposal. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to oppose supplementing local drinking water supplies with recycled water. *Split Sample*

While opposition messages are less convincing overall, safety and "toilet-to-tap" inspire the most intensity.



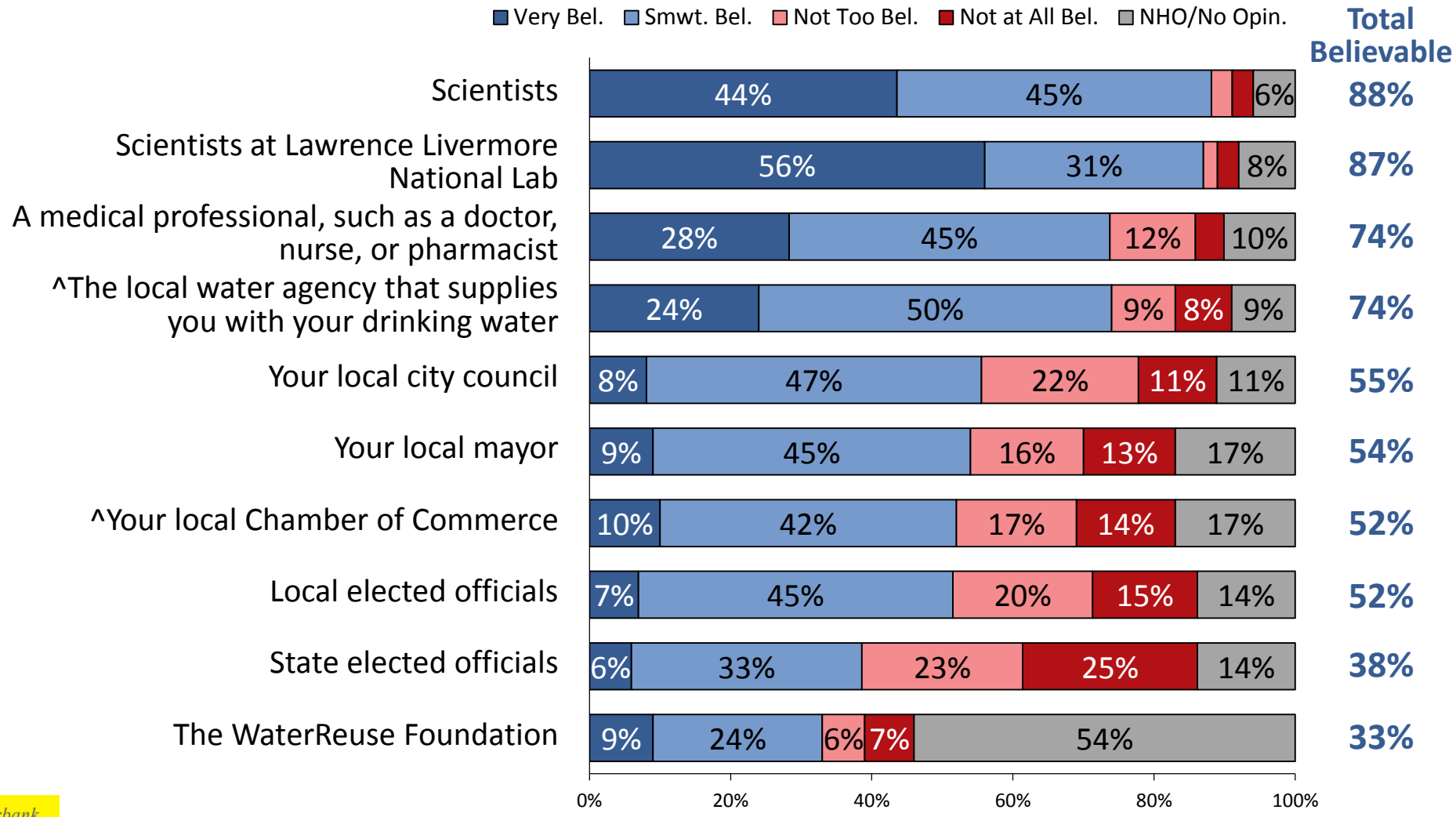
*Q15. I am going to read you some statements from opponents of this proposal. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to oppose supplementing local drinking water supplies with recycled water. *Split Sample*

Though critical messages decrease support, the proposal is still supported by nearly two-thirds.



Q11/Q14/Q16. Does this proposal to supplement local drinking water supplies with recycled water sound like something you would support or oppose?

Scientists, medical professionals and water agencies are the most-trusted messengers on recycled water.



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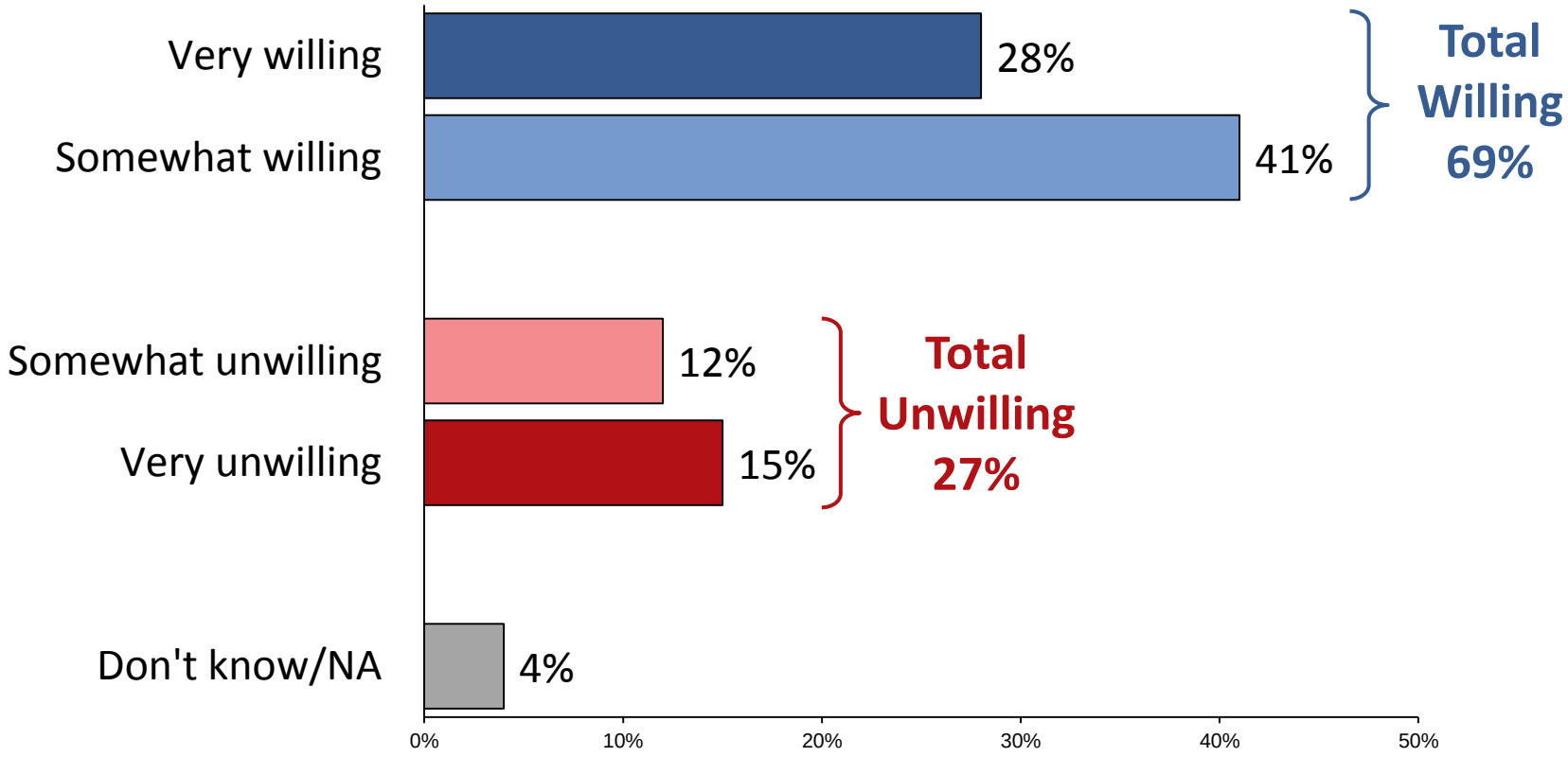
Q17. I am now going to read you a list of people and organizations that may take a position on the recycled water proposal we have been discussing. Please tell me if you would find that person's or organization's opinion very believable, somewhat believable, not too believable, or not at all believable. ^Not Part of Split Sample




Customers' Willingness to Pay

In the abstract, about three in five are willing to pay more to ensure a reliable water supply.

Regardless of whether recycled water is part of the solution, ensuring a reliable, local water supply may increase your monthly water bill. Would you be willing to pay a little more each month to ensure a reliable supply of water with fewer reductions during droughts?



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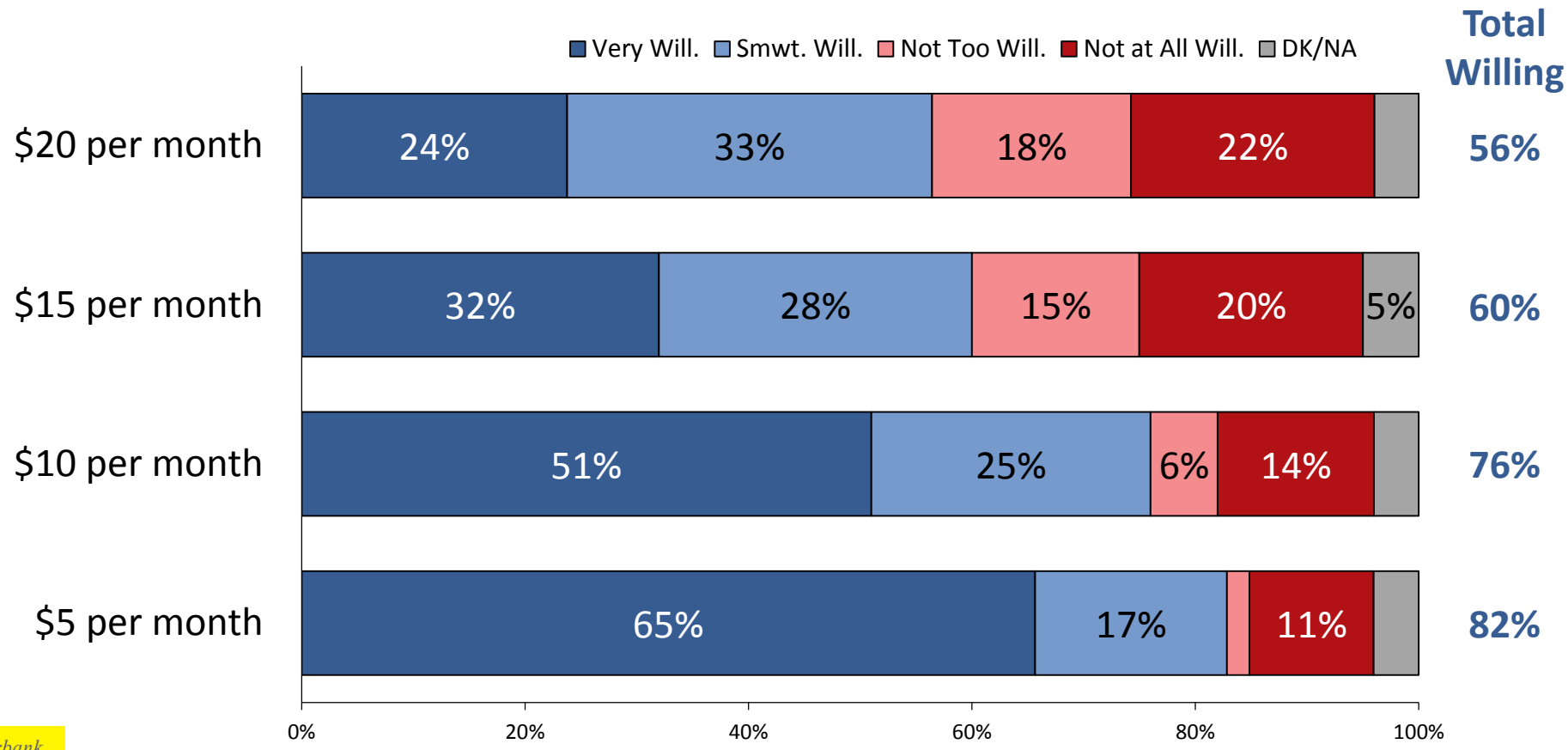
Q18.

A majority is "very willing" to pay up to $10 per month.

Suppose this fee to ensure a reliable, local water supply were for _____. In that case, would you be very willing, somewhat willing, not too willing, or not at all willing to pay it?



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Q19.




Conclusions

Conclusions

- The results suggest that a majority of Tri-Valley voters would support a proposal to supplement local drinking water supplies with recycled water, support that endures in the face of criticism.
- However, that support is strong only for indirect supplementation; voters are very uncomfortable with direct supplementation.
- The severity of the drought is a key driver of this support.
- The proposal is vulnerable to arguments about safety and the "ick" factor.
- However, residents lack important information: few know the current physical source of their water, and many of those who support *and* oppose the proposal cite a need for more information.
- A majority is willing to pay up to $20 monthly to ensure reliability of their water supply, and few currently see their water bill as an important problem.

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