



MEMORANDUM

To: Matt Huffaker, City Manager
City of Santa Cruz

From: Gene Bregman
Gene Bregman & Associates

Date: February 24, 2022

Re: Summary Results of Community Survey

This memorandum presents the highlights of results from a public opinion survey conducted by Gene Bregman & Associates on behalf of the City of Santa Cruz, California (City). A total of 300 likely voters in a June, 2022 election were interviewed on-line and by cell and landline telephone during the period January 20 – 26, 2022. An additional 100 interviews were completed with likely November 2022 voters. There were no meaningful differences between the June and November electorates throughout the entire survey.

Overview

With one important caveat, we believe the City of Santa Cruz is in good position to pass a general half cent sales tax increase this fall. The one caveat, as always, is that there would be no organized opposition from community stakeholders.

Although generally positive opinions of the job being done by Santa Cruz City government have improved since our last survey (April 2021 = 38 percent, January 2022 = 46%), other indicators have declined. First, were perceptions of the City's need for more money. While those saying the City had at least some need was similar in both studies, the proportions saying the City had a "great need" declined from 39 percent to 26 percent.

More important, however, is the decline in voter support for the sales tax increase. Initial test votes in favor in April, 2021 were significantly higher, at 70





percent, than the current favorability level of 61 percent. Fortunately, the election on the sales tax measure will require a "yes" vote of 50%+1 for passage. While 61 percent is not as wide a margin as was the case last April, it should still be enough to assure passage in June.

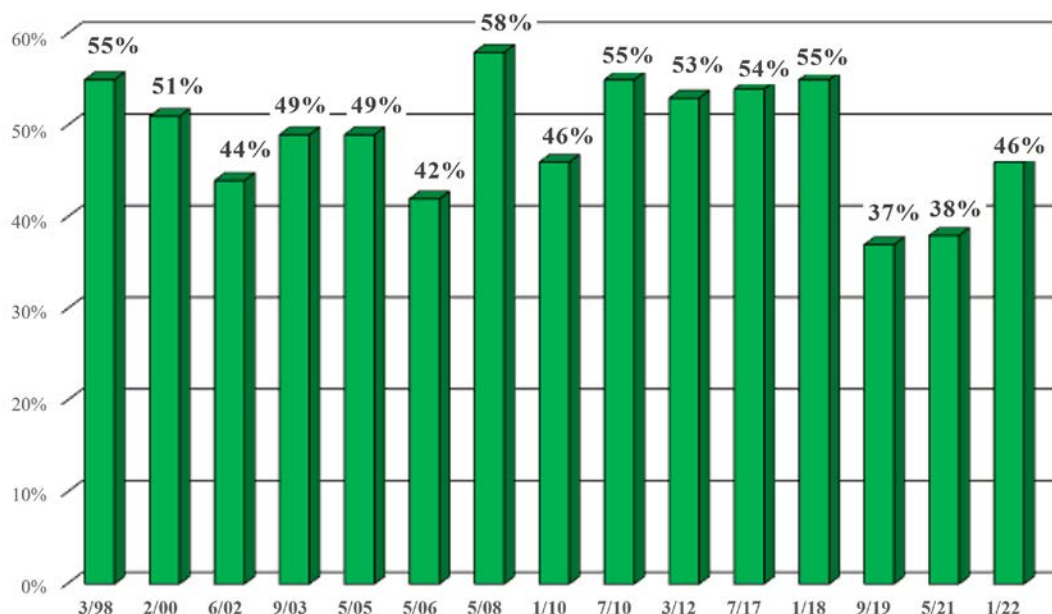
The main uses for any money that would be raised by a sales tax increase coincide with what Santa Cruz voters have seen as the main issues that have been of concern for several years: inadequate and expensive housing, especially for low and moderate income residents; the problems faced by people experiencing homelessness; and the effects on the community from the problems associated with homelessness.

Summary of Results

- Opinions of the job being done by Santa Cruz City Government have improved since the last survey we conducted for the City, as 46 percent this year and 38 percent in 2021 rated City government as doing an "excellent" or a "good" job in providing services to the people who live here.**

Chart 1

Excellent / Good Ratings for Job Being Done by Santa Cruz City Government





2. Most voters recognize that the City needs more money, as 68 percent said there was at least some need for more money. However, the 26 percent saying there was a "great need" for more money is a significant decline from April 2021, and more in line with the "great need" proportions seen in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Chart 2

Need For More Money for the City of Santa Cruz

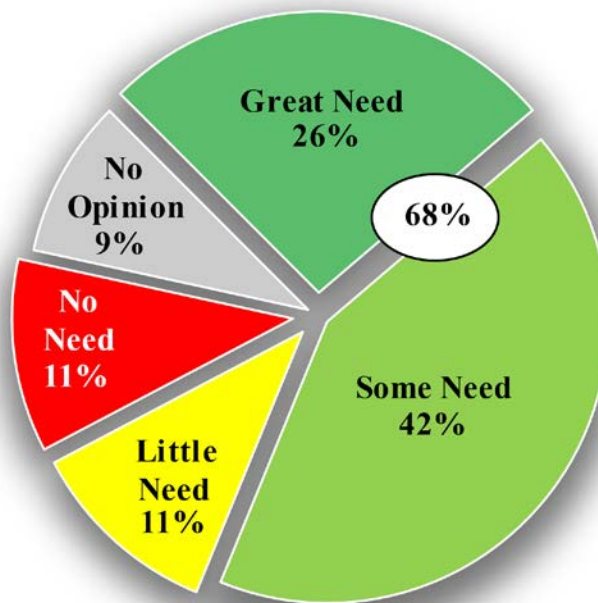
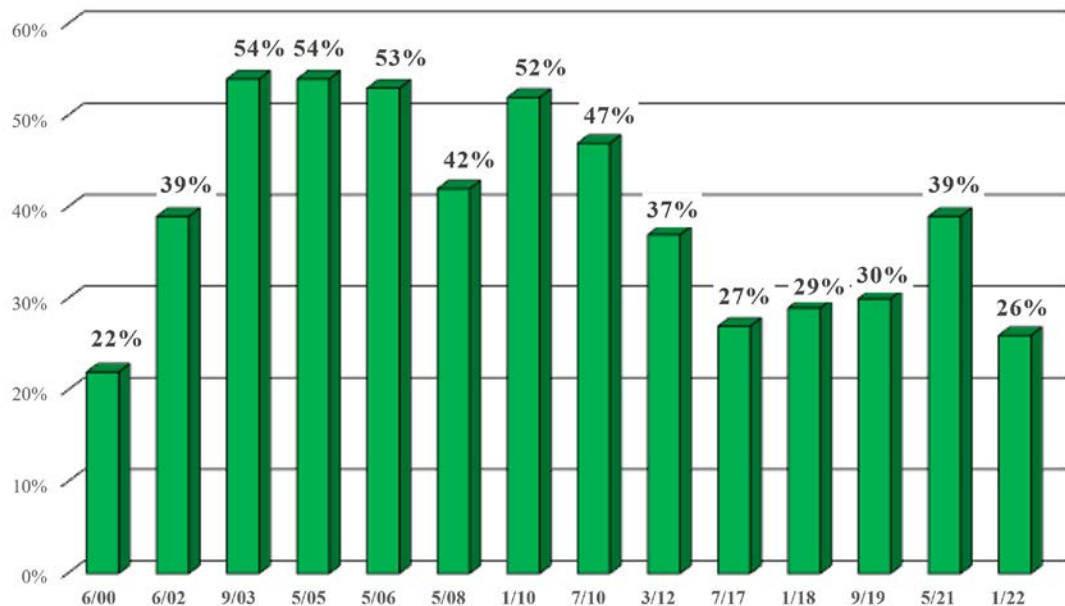




Chart 3

Comparisons of Great Need for More Money for the City of Santa Cruz



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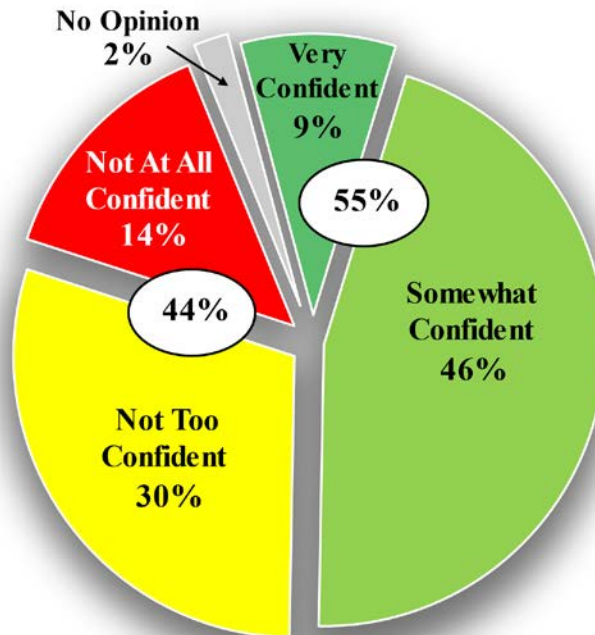
Women and registered Democrats were more likely to say there was a great need for more money.

3. A majority of voters (55 percent) said that they were at least "somewhat confident" that relative to the Coronavirus, life will return to normal in the near future. 44 percent were "not too" or "not at all confident" that "life will become more normal".



Chart 4

Confidence That Post-Coronavirus Life Will Return to Normal in Near Future



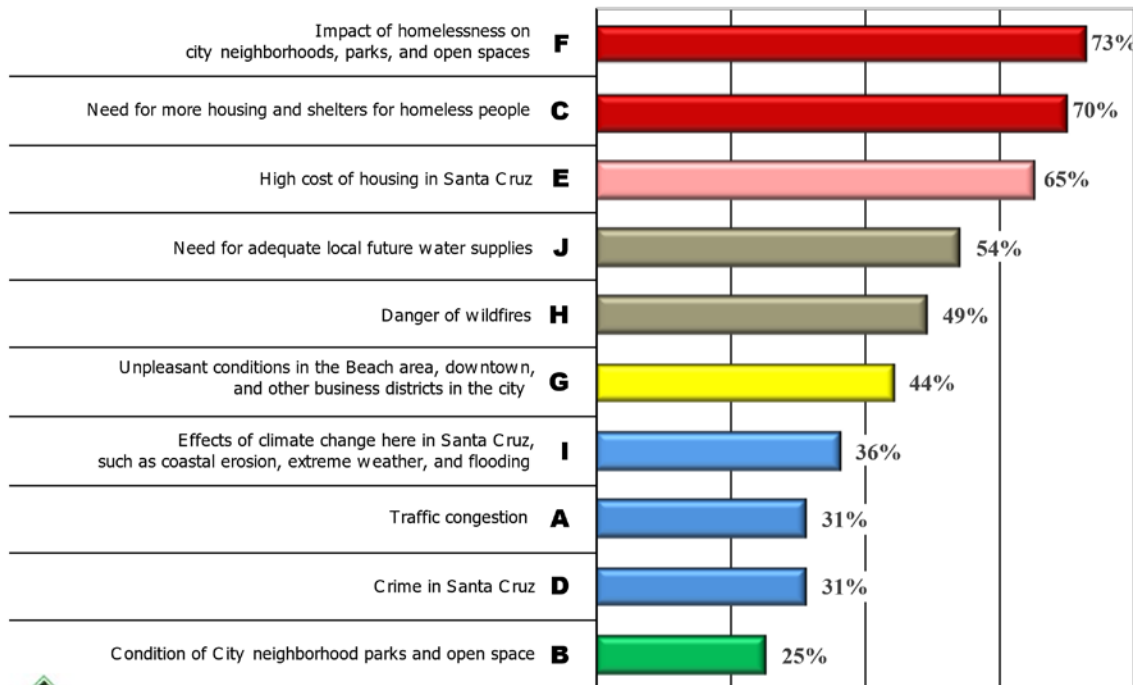
It is interesting that there were no statistically significant differences among voter sub-groups on this question.

4. Similarly to the last two surveys conducted (in 2019 and 2021), the three most serious issues or problems facing the City of Santa Cruz were related to housing and homelessness. First was the "impact of homelessness on city neighborhoods, parks and open spaces" (Very serious = 73 percent), followed by "need for more housing and shelters for homeless people" (70 percent) and the "high cost of housing in Santa Cruz" (65 percent).



Chart 5

Very Serious Issues / Problems in the City of Santa Cruz



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Some of the problems were more or less serious to various voter groups, as follows:

- Women were more concerned with the need for more shelters and housing for homeless people, the high cost of housing, the danger of wildfires, and the effects of climate change.
- Voters under 50 years of age were more concerned with the need for more shelters and housing for homeless people, and the high cost of housing. Those 50 and over were more concerned with the impact of homelessness on city neighborhoods, parks and open spaces, and unpleasant conditions in the Beach area, downtown, and other business districts in the City.
- People who vote "no" on the sales tax measure are most concerned with the impact of homelessness on city neighborhoods, parks and open spaces.

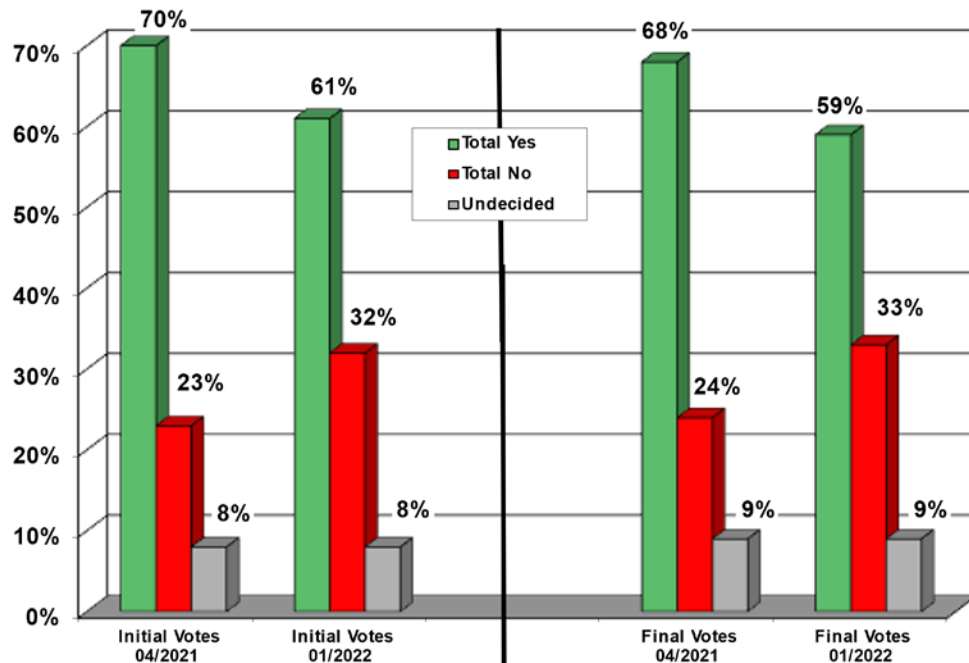


5. Although support has declined since April 2021, most Santa Cruz voters support a half cent sales tax increase in order "to protect quality of life in the City of Santa Cruz through programs to support resources to mitigate the impacts of homelessness, create affordable housing, maintain City facilities and essential infrastructure, fix streets, support transit, maintain parks and recreation facilities for youth and seniors, reduce wildfire risk, fight climate change, and prevent reductions in funding for important City services." Support remains steady after these voters learned positive and negative information about this possible ballot measure.

There was little difference between the initial vote on the measure and the vote after participants heard positive and negative information, with support at 61 percent and 59 percent, respectively.

Chart 6

Comparison of Votes on Sales Tax Measure: April 2021 vs. January 2022



Support tended to be strongest among those who have lived in the City for less than twenty years and registered Democrats. Support was weakest among registered Republicans, those registered as "decline to



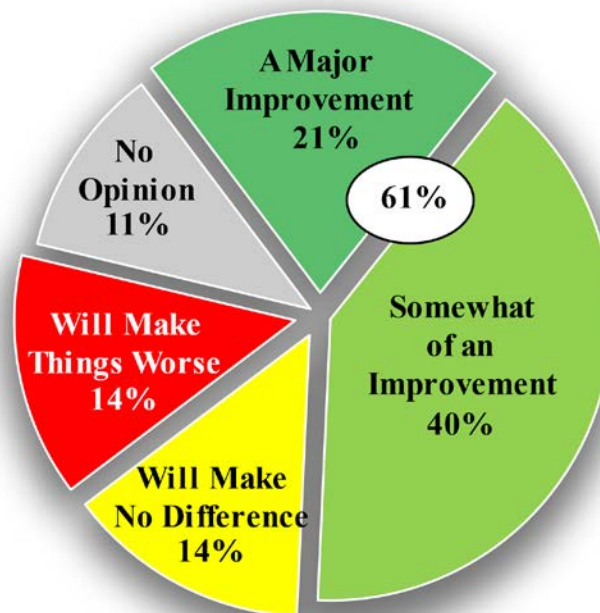
state” or with some “other” party, and those who have lived in the City for 20 years or more.

It should also be noted that when we looked at a larger, November 2022 turnout voting universe, there was little change in support from the June voters.

6. **Most voters (61 percent) said that there will be at least somewhat of an improvement in the various problems associated with homelessness because of one recent ordinance passed by the City with the goal of establishing safe parking areas for those people living in their vehicles and another ordinance setting regulations for camping outdoors in the City, including penalties for violations of the regulations, while also establishing various services, such as sanctioned indoor and outdoor shelters and camps, and storage facilities for those experiencing homelessness.**

Chart 7

Expected Effect of Recent Ordinances on Problems Associated with Homelessness



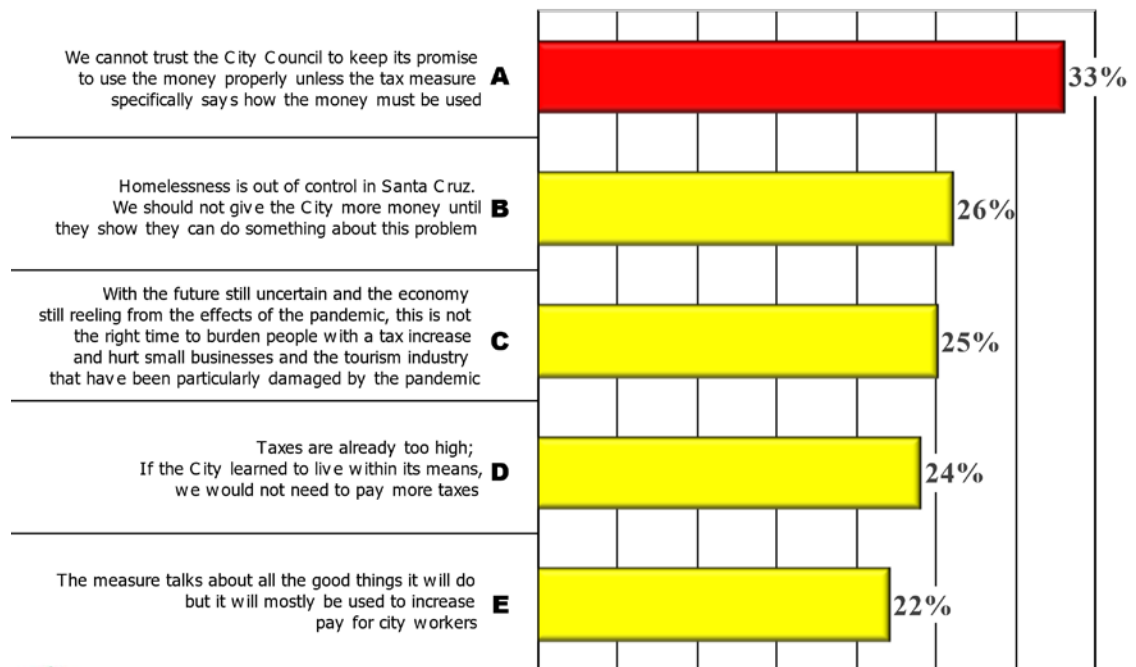


More people thought there would be an improvement among homeowners and those who have lived in the City for more than 20 years.

7. Among the five reasons to oppose the sales tax measure, the most effective would make about three voters in ten “much more likely” to oppose the measure: 33 percent said they would be much more likely to oppose the measure because “we cannot trust the City Council to keep its promise to use the money properly unless the tax measure specifically says how the money must be used”. Between 22 and 26 percent said the other listed reasons to oppose it would be effective.

Chart 8

Proportions Much More Likely to Oppose Sales Tax Measure



All or most items tended to be more effective with Republicans and to a lesser extent among those registered as “decline to state” or “other” parties, than among Democrats.

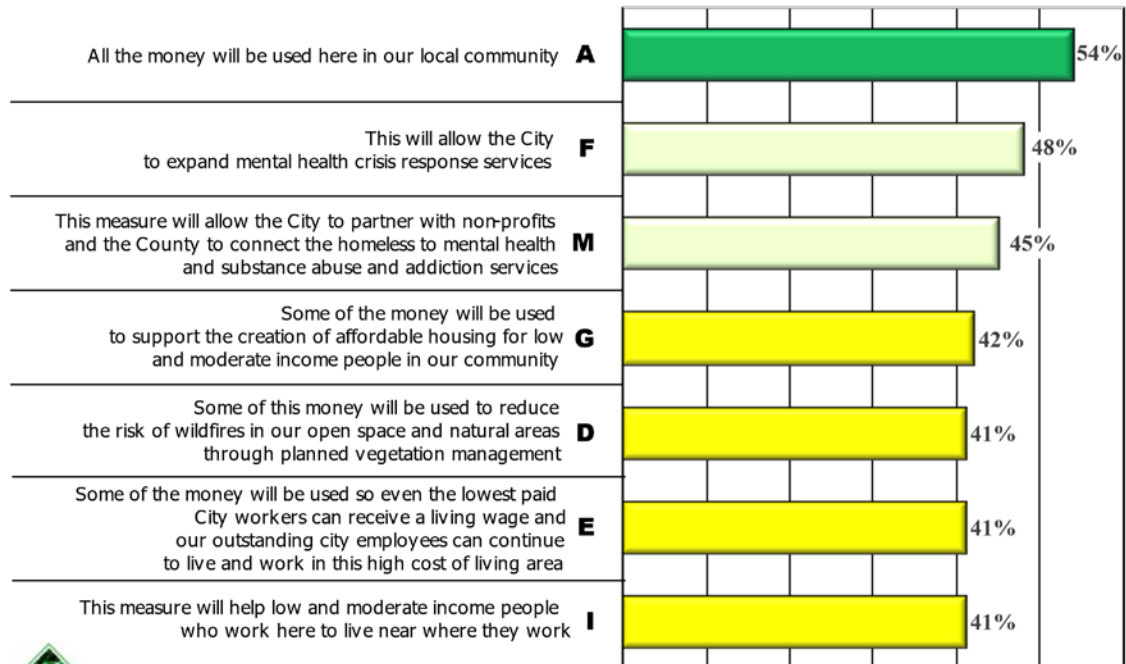
8. Of the 15 reasons to support a sales tax measure, the one with the most positive effect was that “all the money will be used here



in our local community" (Much More Likely = 54 percent). Just behind were that "this will allow the City to expand mental health crisis response services" (48 percent) and "this measure will allow the City to partner with non-profits and the County to connect the homeless to mental health and substance abuse and addiction services" (45 percent).

Chart 9

Top Scoring Reasons Much More Likely to Favor Sales Tax Measure

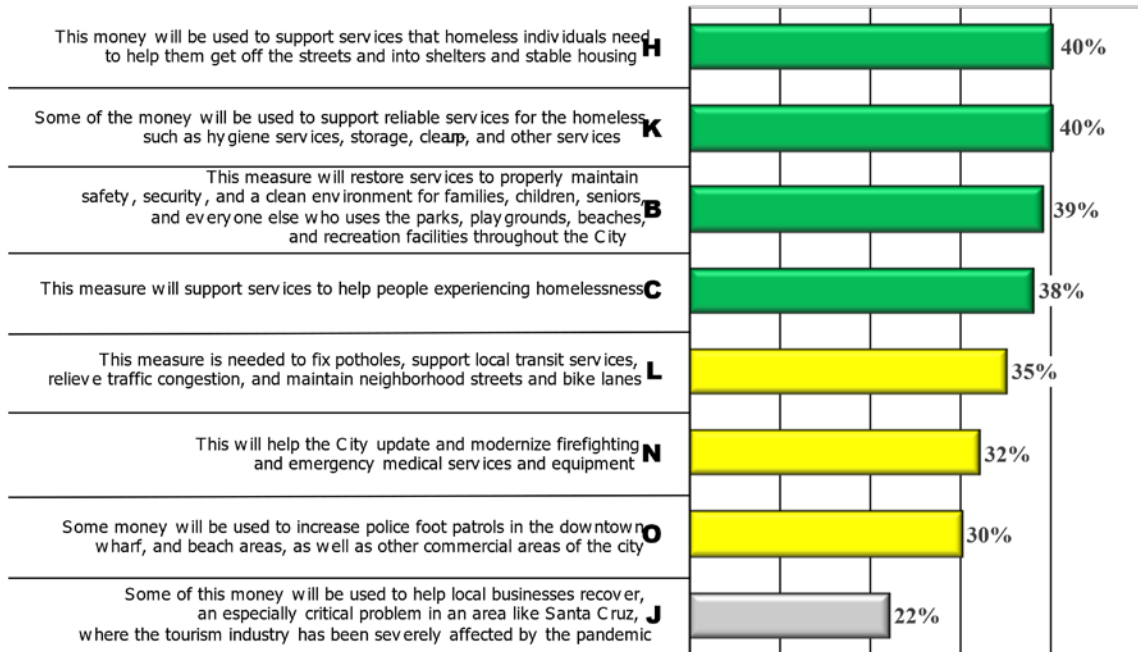


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Chart 10

Other Reasons Much More Likely to Favor Sales Tax Measure



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All or most items were more effective with Democrats than Republicans or other voters, and with renters than homeowners.

9. Eight reasons were asked in both the 2021 and 2022 surveys. Among these, five of the eight showed significant declines in effectiveness from one poll to the next:

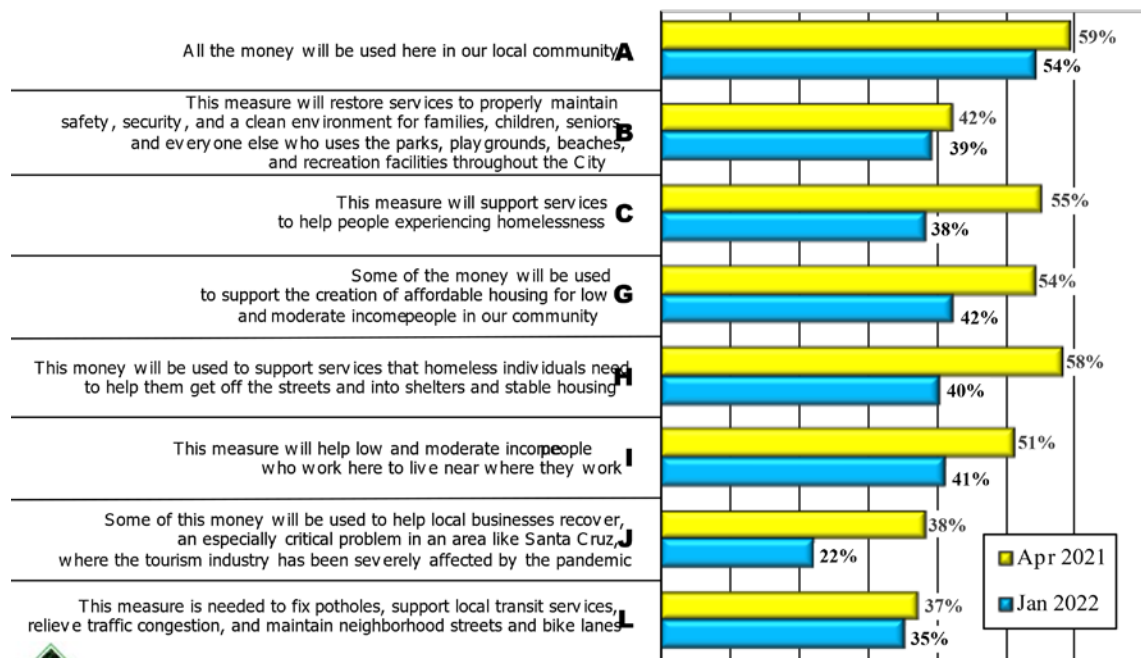
- This money will be used to support services that homeless individuals need to help them get off the streets and into shelters and stable housing (Much More Likely 2021 = 58%, 2022 = 40%)
- This measure will support services to help people experiencing homelessness: (2021 = 55%, 2022 = 38%)
- Some of the money will be used to support the creation of affordable housing for low and moderate income people in our community (2021 = 54%, 2022 = 42%)



- This measure will help low and moderate income people who work here to live near where they work (2021 = 51%, 2022 = 41%)
- Some of this money will be used to help local businesses recover, an especially critical problem in an area like Santa Cruz, where the tourism industry has been severely affected by the pandemic (2021 = 38%, 2022 = 22%)

Chart 11

Comparison of Much More Likely Proportions to Vote Yes: April 2021 vs. January 2022



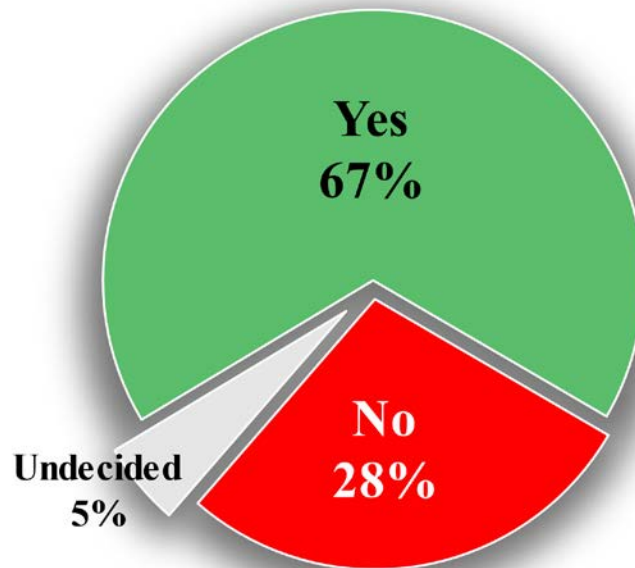
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10. Two-thirds of voters (67 percent) would vote in favor of an increase in the TOT "to address the impacts of homelessness and conditions downtown and the beach areas of Santa Cruz, as well as generally supporting other City services"



Chart 12

Vote on TOT Measure



Support was strongest among Democrats and those under 40 years of age but lowest among those registered as Republicans or in some other manner, and those who had voted "no" on the sales tax measure.