



# Highlights of a Community Survey Conducted for the City of Merced

Survey Conducted  
October 24-29, 2017

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Associates*

FM3

# Survey Methodology

- 400 telephone interviews with voters likely to cast a ballot in November 2018 in the City of Merced
- Interviews conducted October 24-29, 2017
- Interviews in English and Spanish on landlines and cell phones
- Margin of sampling error of  $\pm 4.9\%$  at the 95% confidence level for the full sample;  $\pm 6.9\%$  for half of the sample
- Some percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding
- Select tracks from 2010 and 2005 surveys.





# **Impressions of Life in Merced and of City Government**

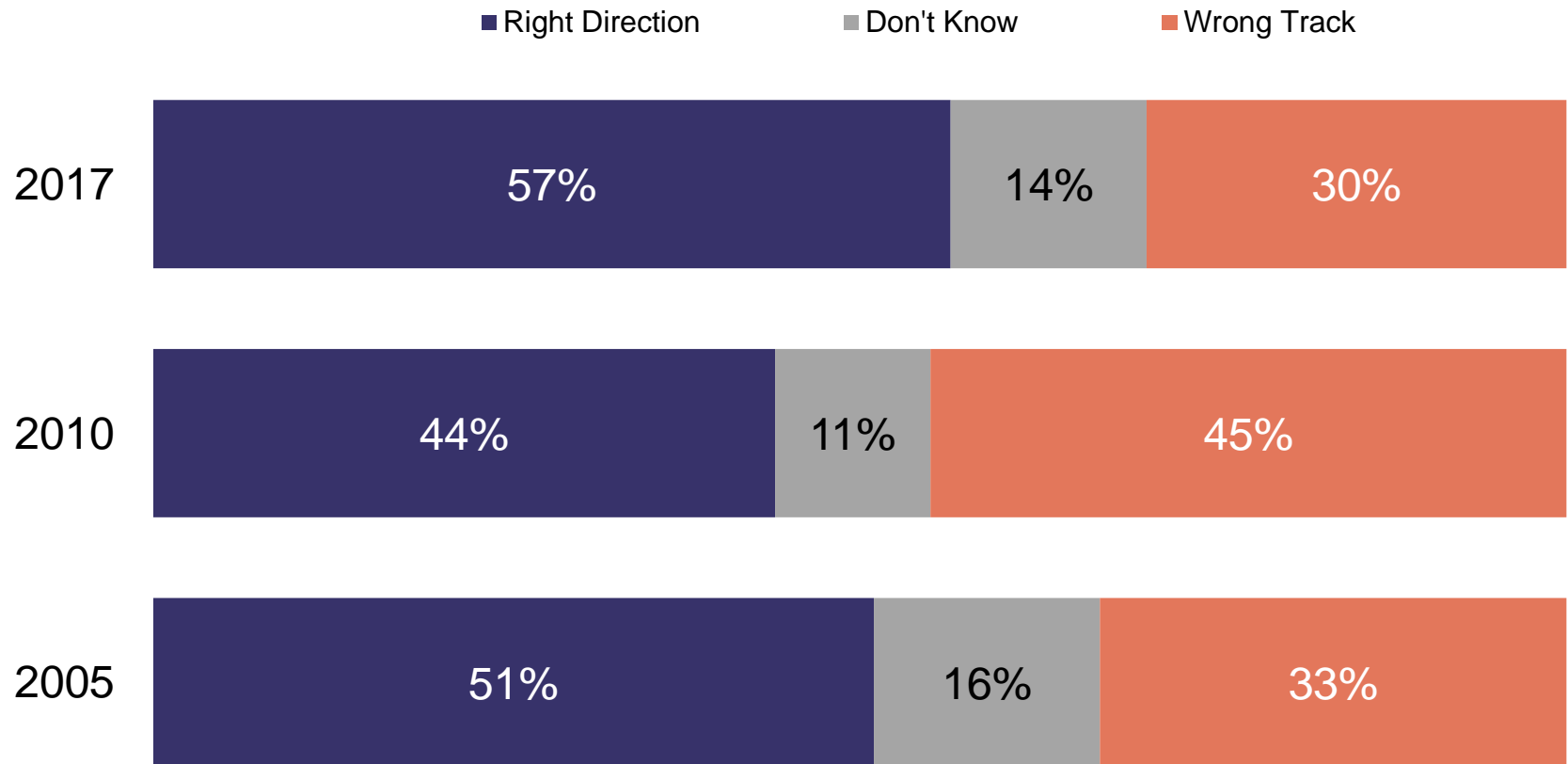
## This section explores:

1. General impressions of the direction of the City
2. Views on City government
3. Perception of problems facing the City



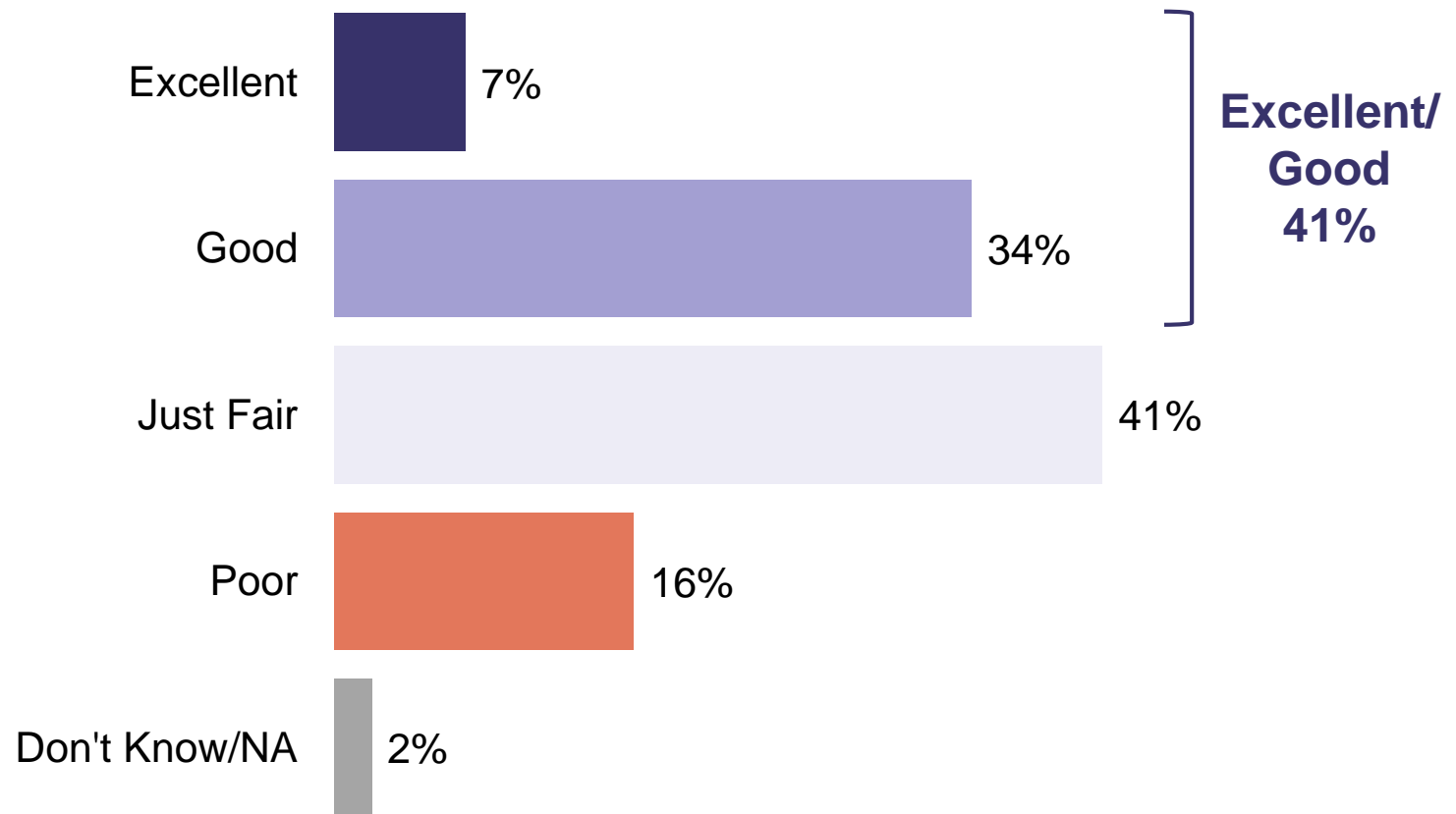
# Optimism has increased since 2010.

*Would you say that things in Merced are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are seriously off on the wrong track?*



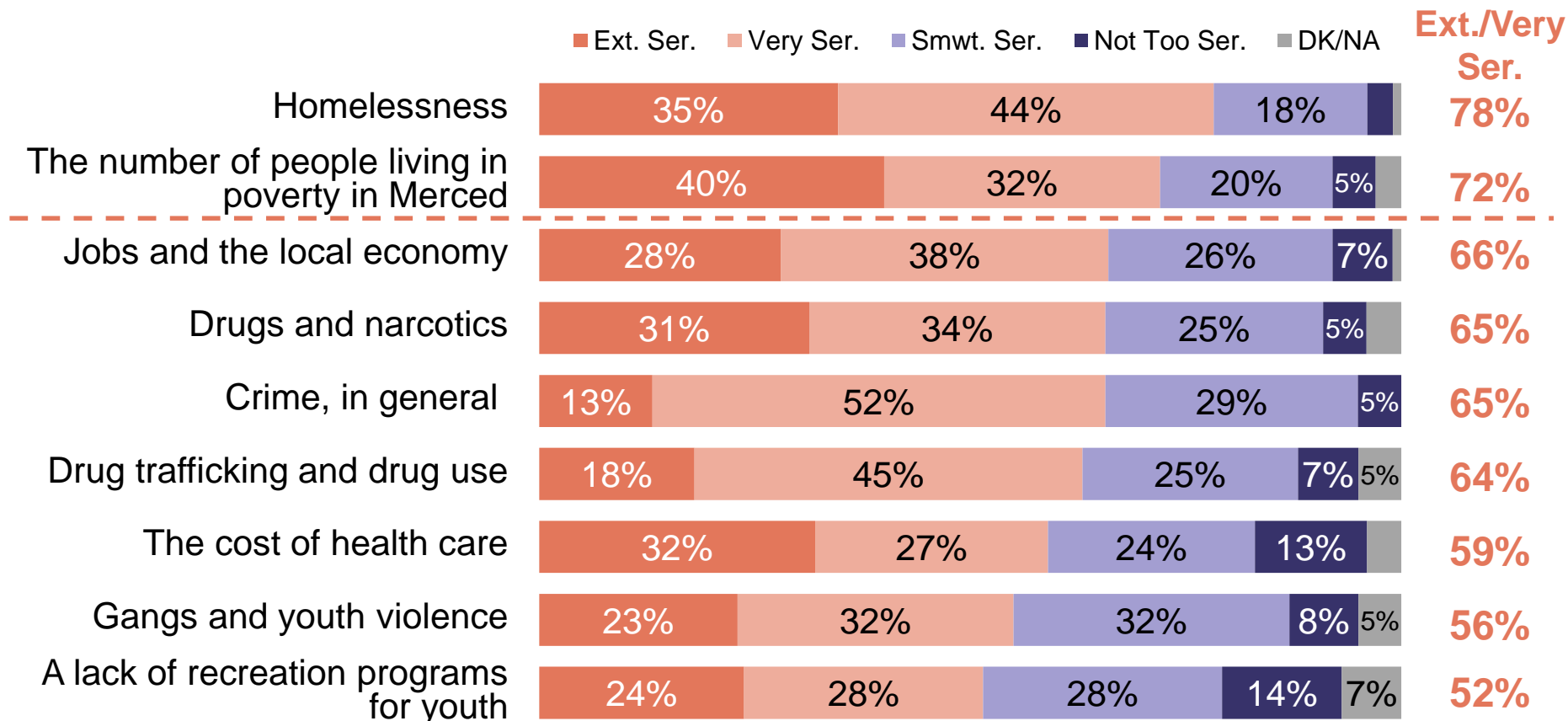
# Most expressed positive-to-neutral feelings about the City's provision of services.

*Overall, how would you rate the job being done by the City of Merced in providing services and taking care of the needs of local residents?*



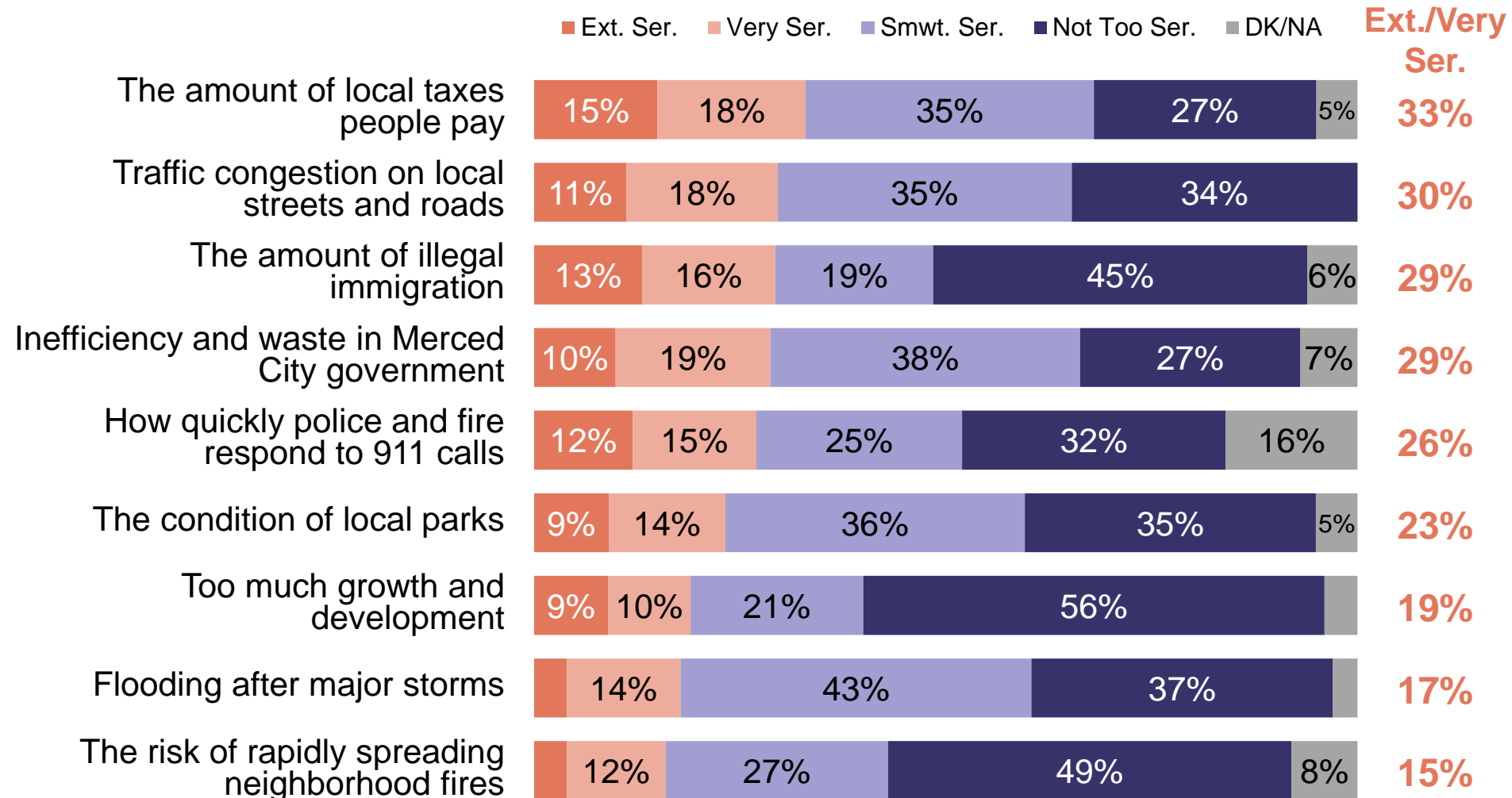
# Homelessness and poverty topped the list of local concerns.

*I am going to read you a list of issues some people say may be problems in Merced. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem in Merced.*



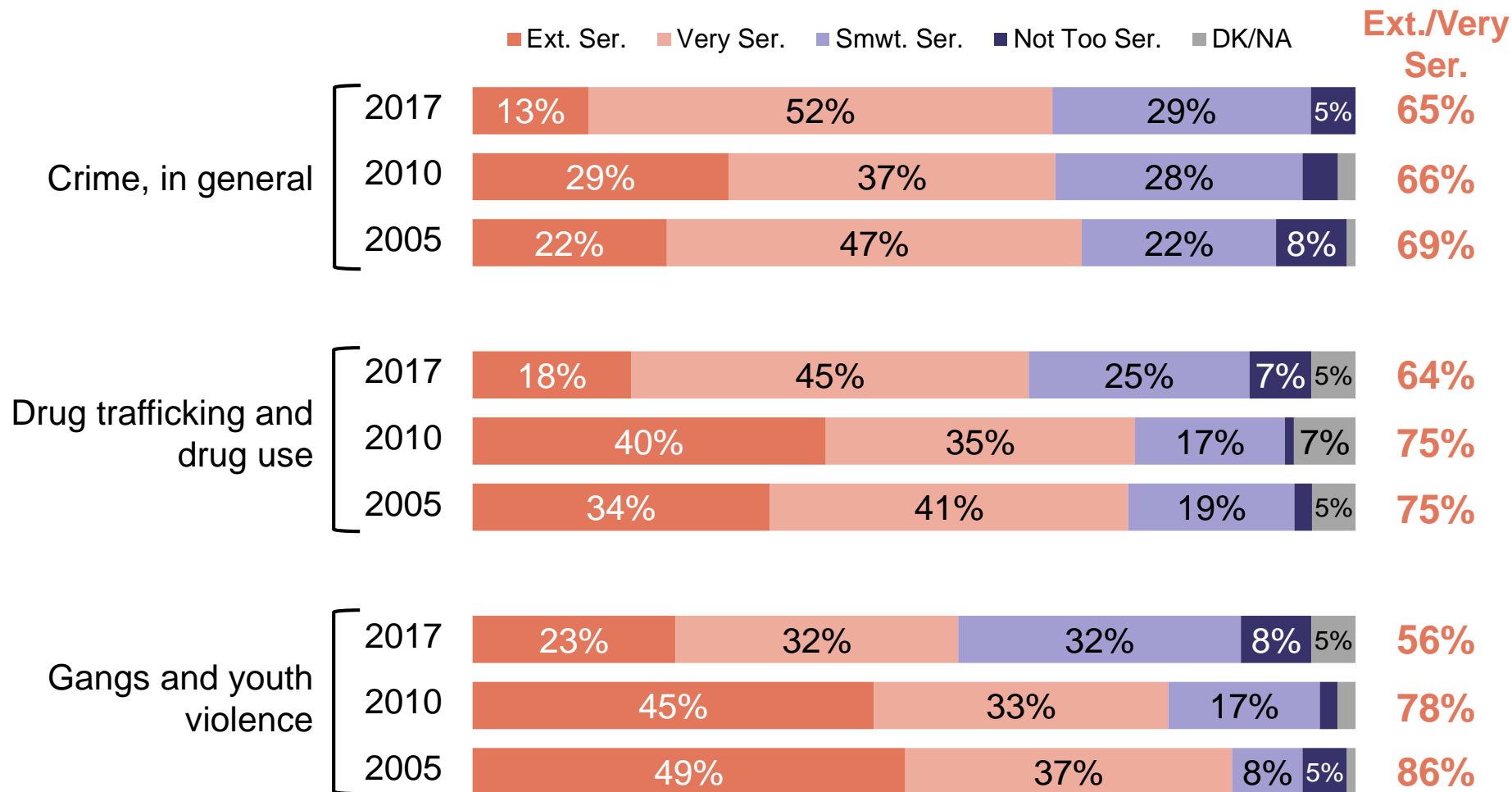
*I am going to read you a list of issues some people say may be problems in Merced. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem in Merced.*

# Other issues were seen as pressing problems by fewer than half of respondents.

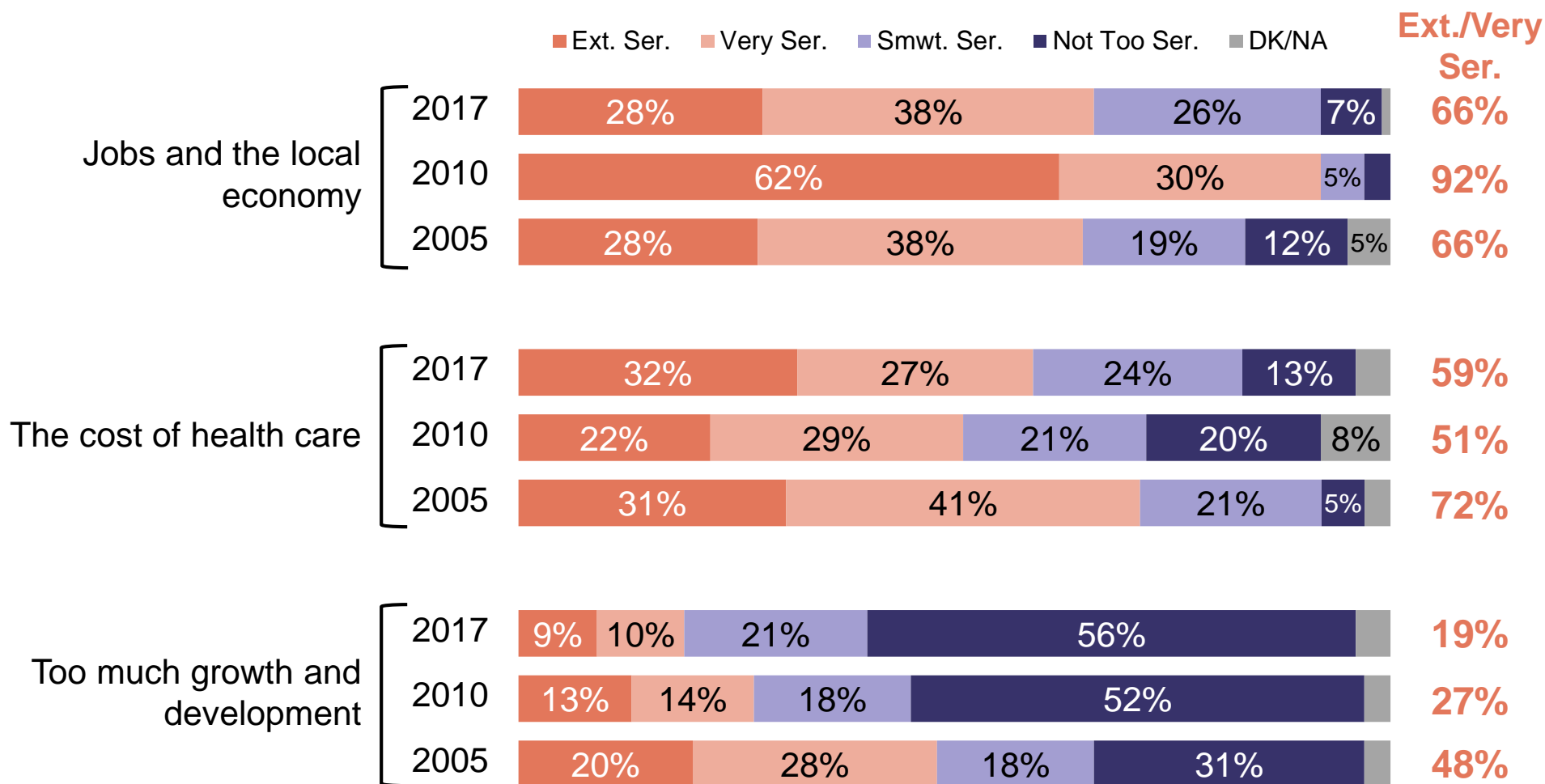




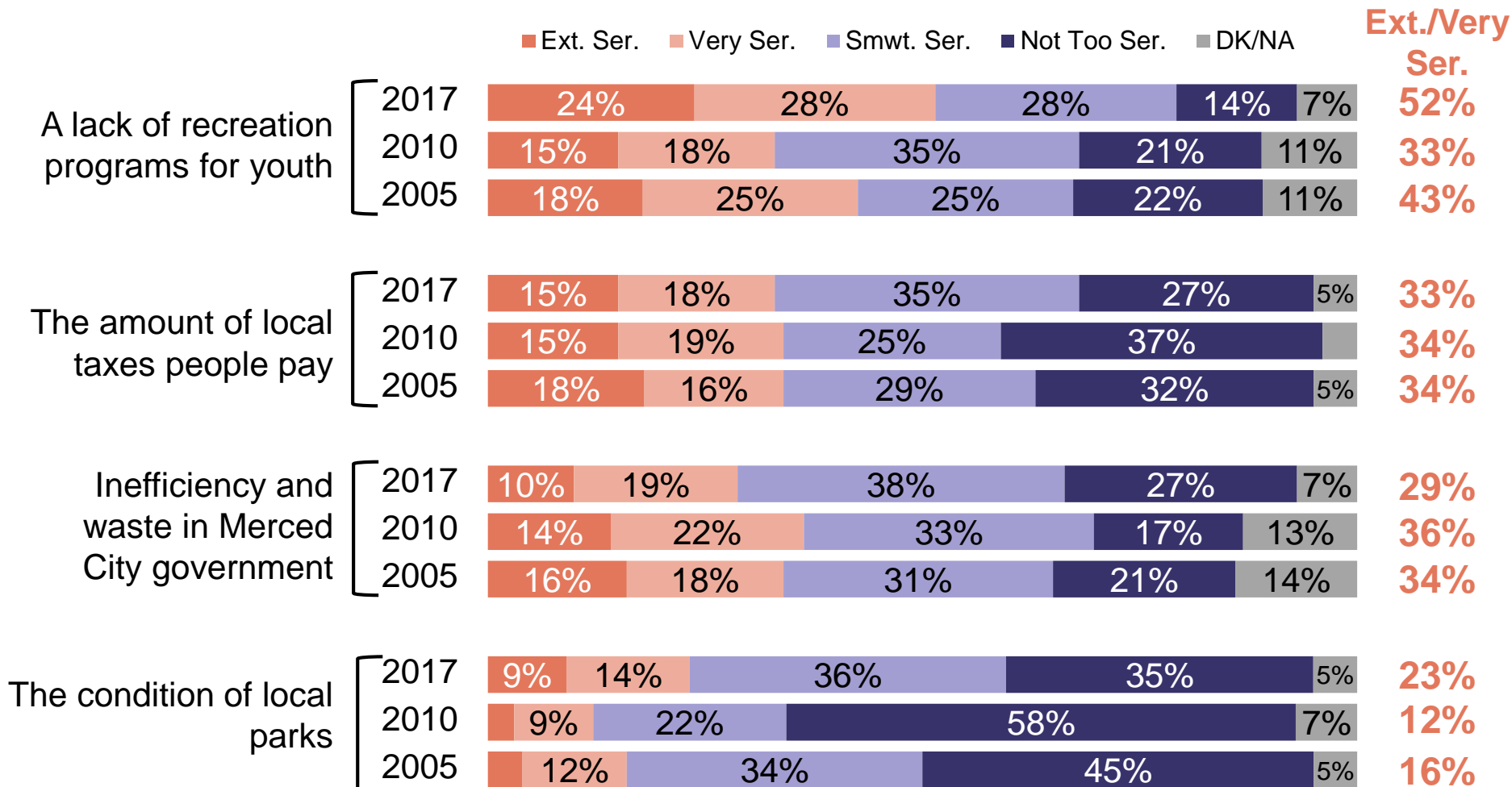
# While majorities continue to harbor concerns about crime, those concerns have decreased in intensity.



# Fewer are concerned about the local economy, though it still rates as one of Merced's biggest problems, overall.



# A perceived lack of recreation programs for youth has increased significantly as a concern since 2010.





# **Attitudes Toward Public Safety**

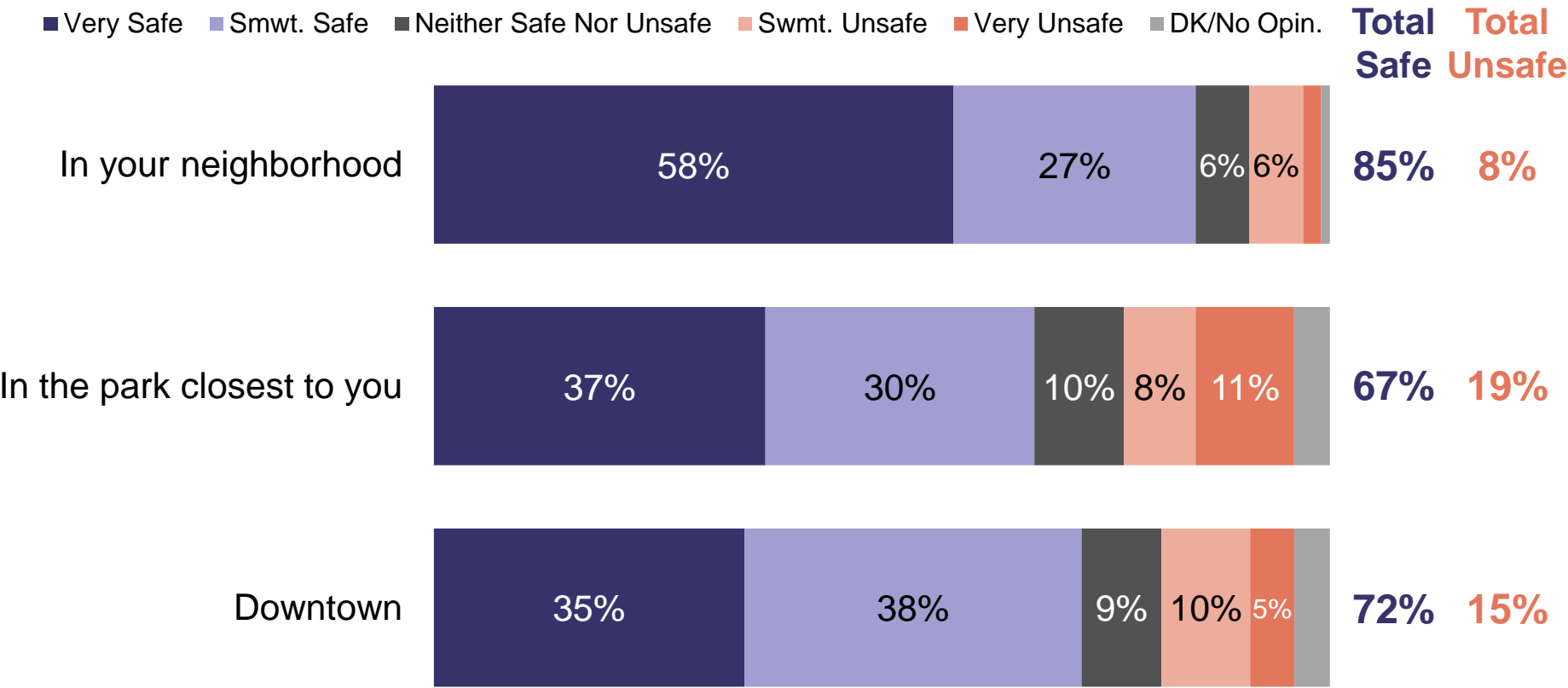
# This section explores:

1. Perceptions of safety across the City during different times of day
2. Perception of changes in the overall level of crime
3. Perceptions of the change in violent and property crime



# Respondents indicated they feel safe during the day, particularly in their neighborhoods.

*How safe do you feel walking around during the day \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
Do you feel safe, unsafe, or neither safe nor unsafe?*



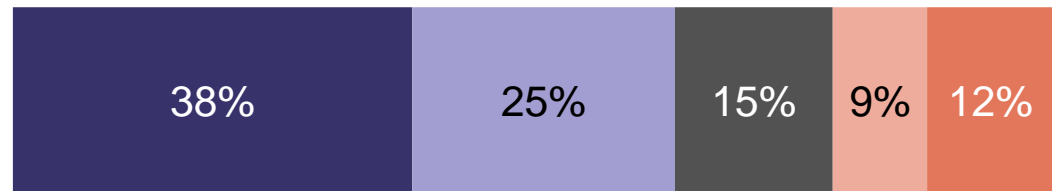
# At night pluralities feel unsafe in neighborhood parks and Downtown.

*How safe do you feel walking around at night \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
Do you feel safe, unsafe, or neither safe nor unsafe?*

■ Very Safe ■ Smwt. Safe ■ Neither Safe Nor Unsafe ■ Swmt. Unsafe ■ Very Unsafe ■ DK/No Opin.

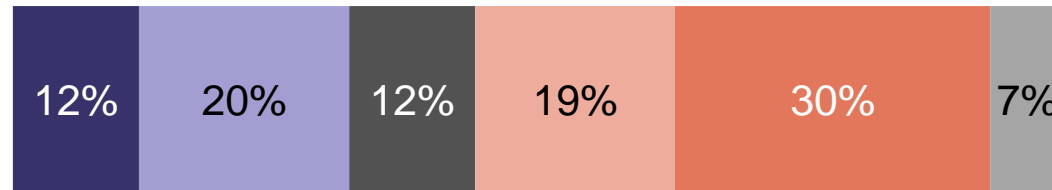
**Total Safe** **Total Unsafe**

In your neighborhood



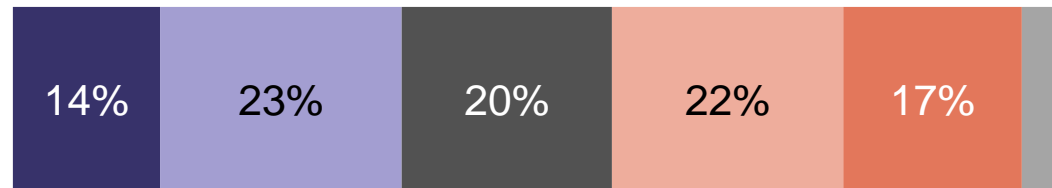
**63%** **21%**

In the park closest to you



**32%** **49%**

Downtown



**37%** **40%**

# Perceptions of daytime safety appear much higher than nighttime safety.

*How safe do you feel walking around during the day \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
Do you feel safe, unsafe, or neither safe nor unsafe?*

Area	Day	Night	$\Delta$
In your neighborhood	85%	63%	-22%
In the park closest to you	67%	32%	-35%
Downtown	72%	37%	-35%



# Perceptions of daytime safety have decreased slightly.

*How safe do you feel walking around during the day \_\_\_\_\_ ?*

Area	2005	2010	2017
In your neighborhood	93%	88%	85%
In the park closest to you	75%	72%	67%
Downtown	78%	78%	72%

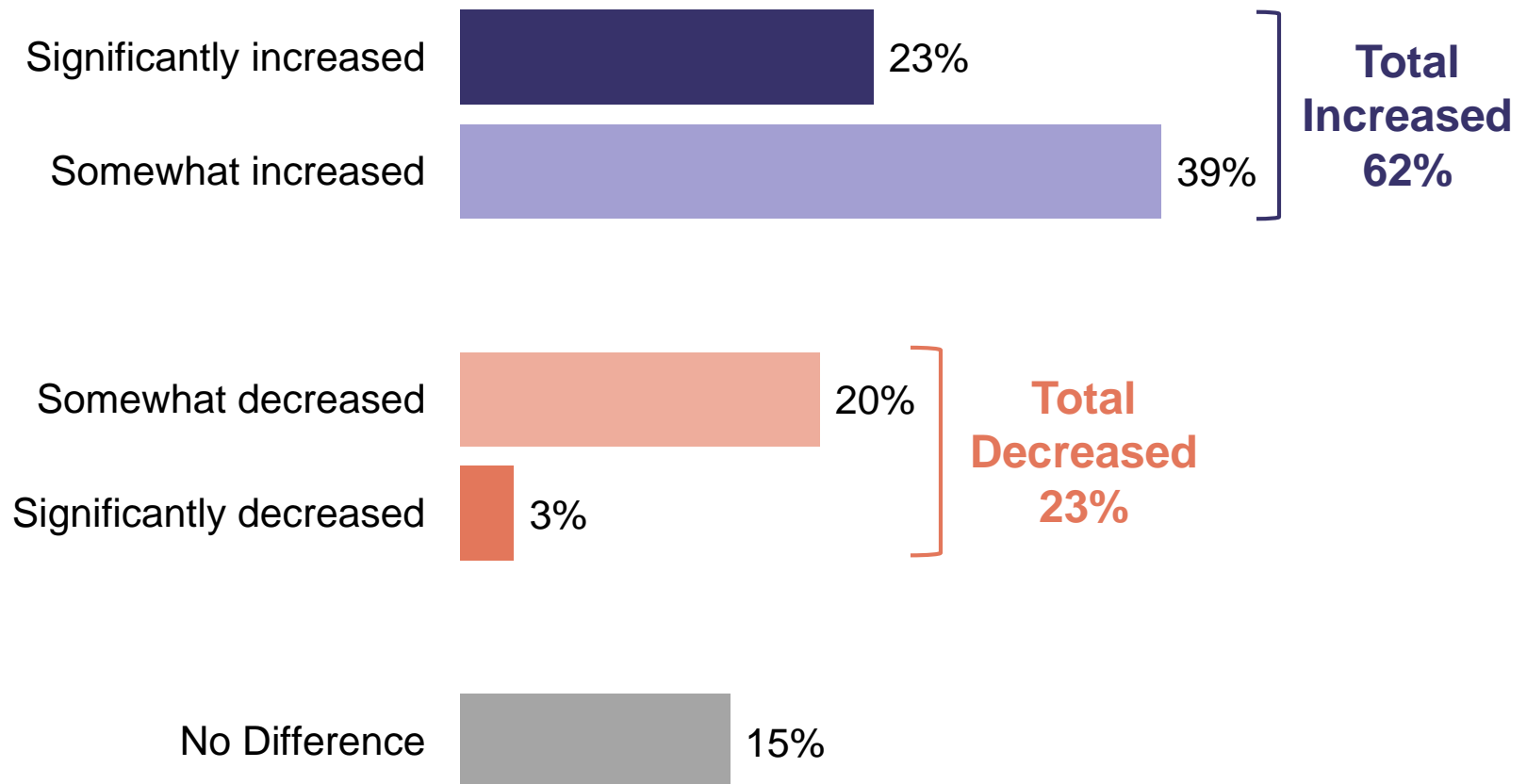
# Fewer feel safe in Downtown at night than in 2010.

*How safe do you feel walking around during the night \_\_\_\_\_ ?*

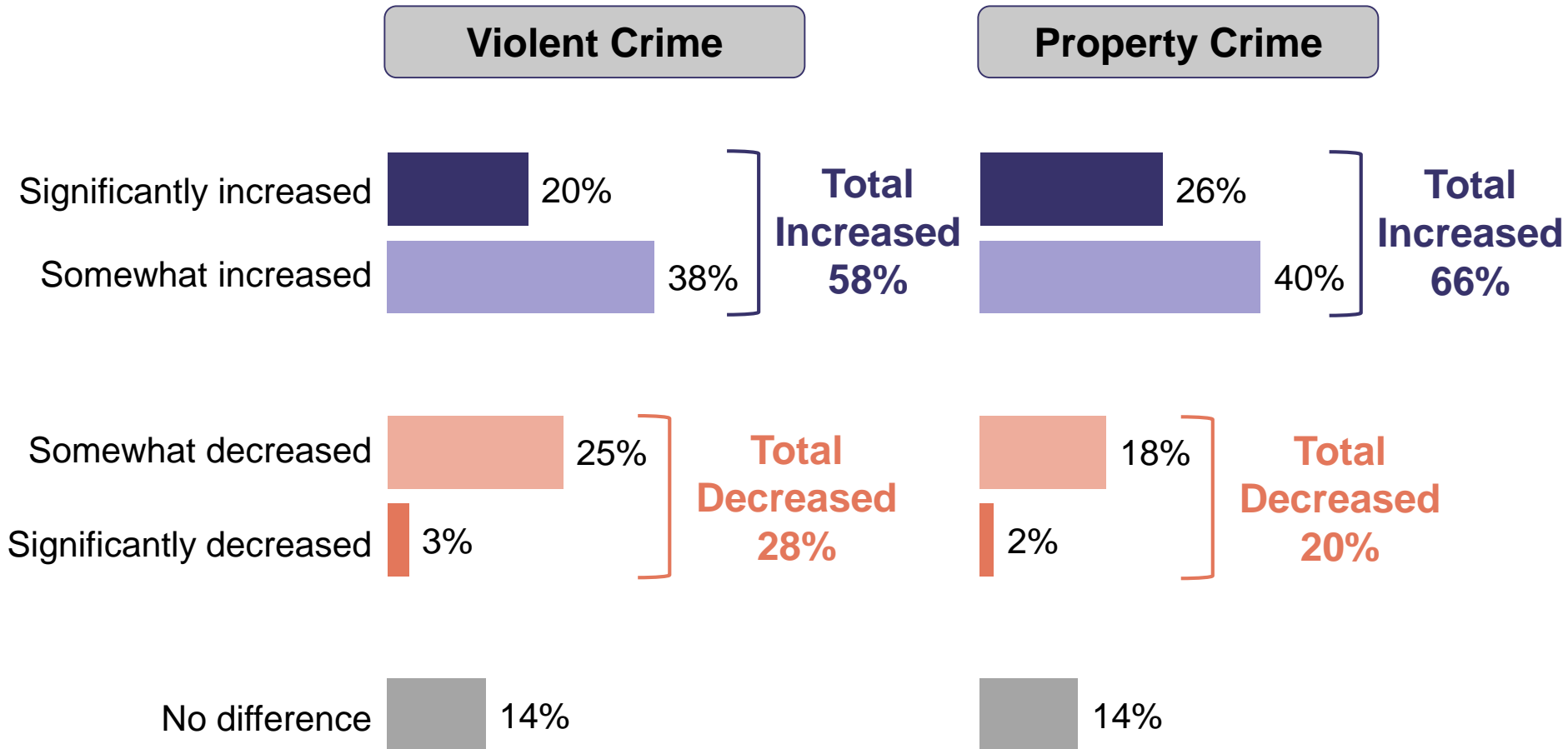
Area	2005	2010	2017
In your neighborhood	66%	62%	63%
In the park closest to you	35%	32%	32%
Downtown	39%	49%	37%

# Three in five said they feel crime has increased over the past few years.

*Over the past few years do you feel the level of crime in Merced has increased or decreased?*



# A majority said they feel violent crime has increased and two-thirds that property crime has increased.





# **Potential Recreational Cannabis Regulations and Revenue**

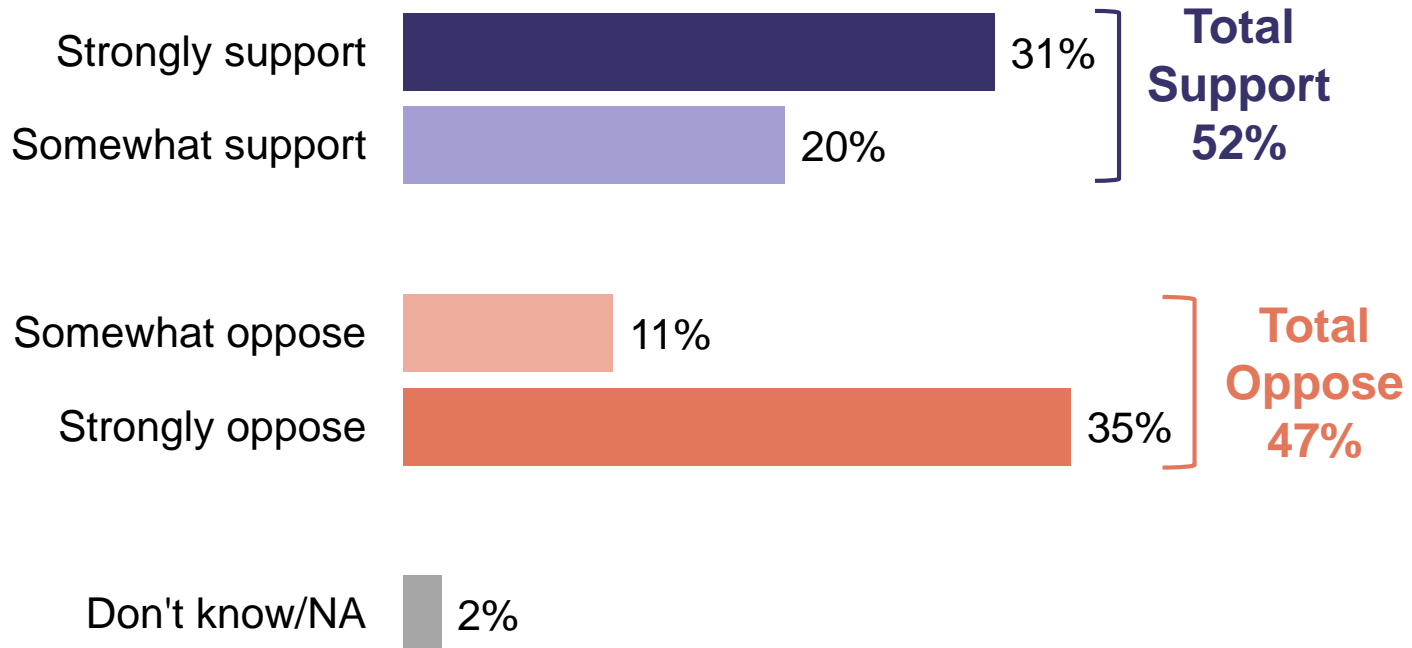
# This section explores:

1. Views towards commercial cannabis cultivation in Merced
2. Views towards a potential gross-receipts tax on cannabis businesses



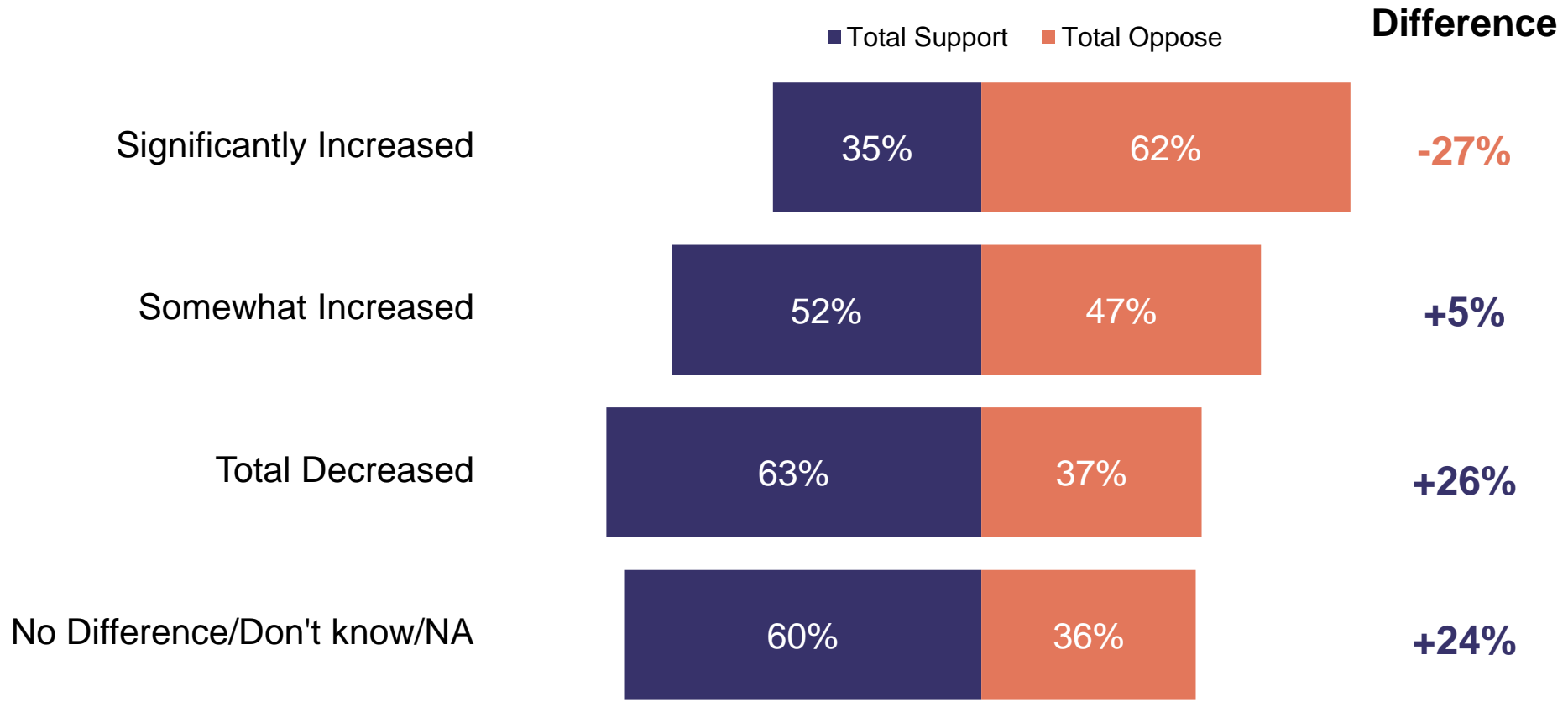
# Respondents were evenly divided on allowing cannabis businesses in the City.

*Voters in California and in the City of Merced approved Proposition 64 last year, allowing for the recreational use of marijuana and empowering cities to establish local cannabis regulations. Proposition 64 also gave cities the choice as to whether to allow commercial cannabis businesses to operate in their cities, something City of Merced is currently considering. Do you generally support or oppose allowing cannabis businesses within Merced city limits?*



# Those who perceived a significant increase in crime were most strongly opposed to permitting cannabis businesses.

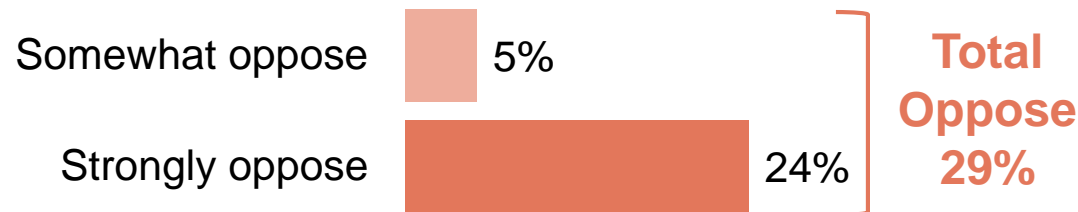
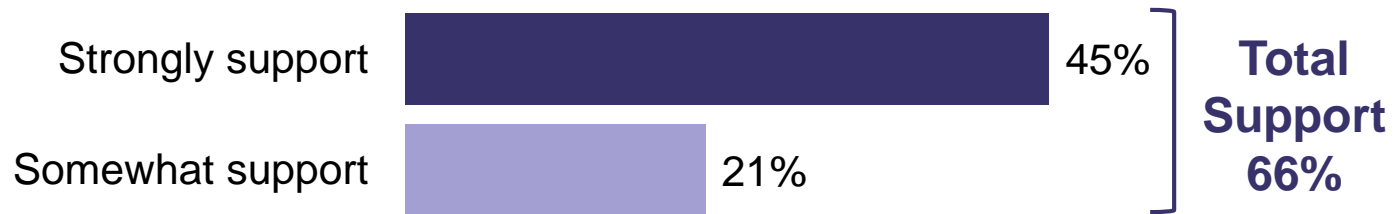
*Support for Cannabis Business by Overall Crime*





# Two-thirds supported a potential gross-receipts tax on recreational marijuana.

*If the City were to allow commercial cannabis businesses within Merced city limits, would you support or oppose a 15% gross receipts tax on businesses selling recreational marijuana?*



However, support falls within the MOE ( $\pm 4.9\%$ ) of the two-thirds vote threshold

# Half of those opposed to allowing cannabis businesses to operate in the City were still supportive of a recreational marijuana tax.

Demographic Group	Total Support	Total Oppose
Ethnicity		
Latinos	72%	23%
Whites	66%	26%
All Voters of Color	68%	29%
Support for Cannabis Business		
Total Support	82%	14%
Total Oppose	49%	45%



# **Interest in a Potential Public Safety Infrastructure Measure**

# This section explores:

1. Attitudes towards two versions of a potential public safety infrastructure measure (sales tax and bond)
2. Comparison between the two versions of the potential measure



Half of respondents  
were initially asked  
about a conceptual  
Public Safety Bond  
measure.

Half of respondents  
were initially asked  
about a conceptual  
Public Safety Sales  
Tax measure.

# Conceptual Ballot Measure

## Languages Tested

### **CITY OF MERCED POLICE, FIRE, EMERGENCY OPERATIONS/PUBLIC FACILITIES UPGRADE MEASURE.**

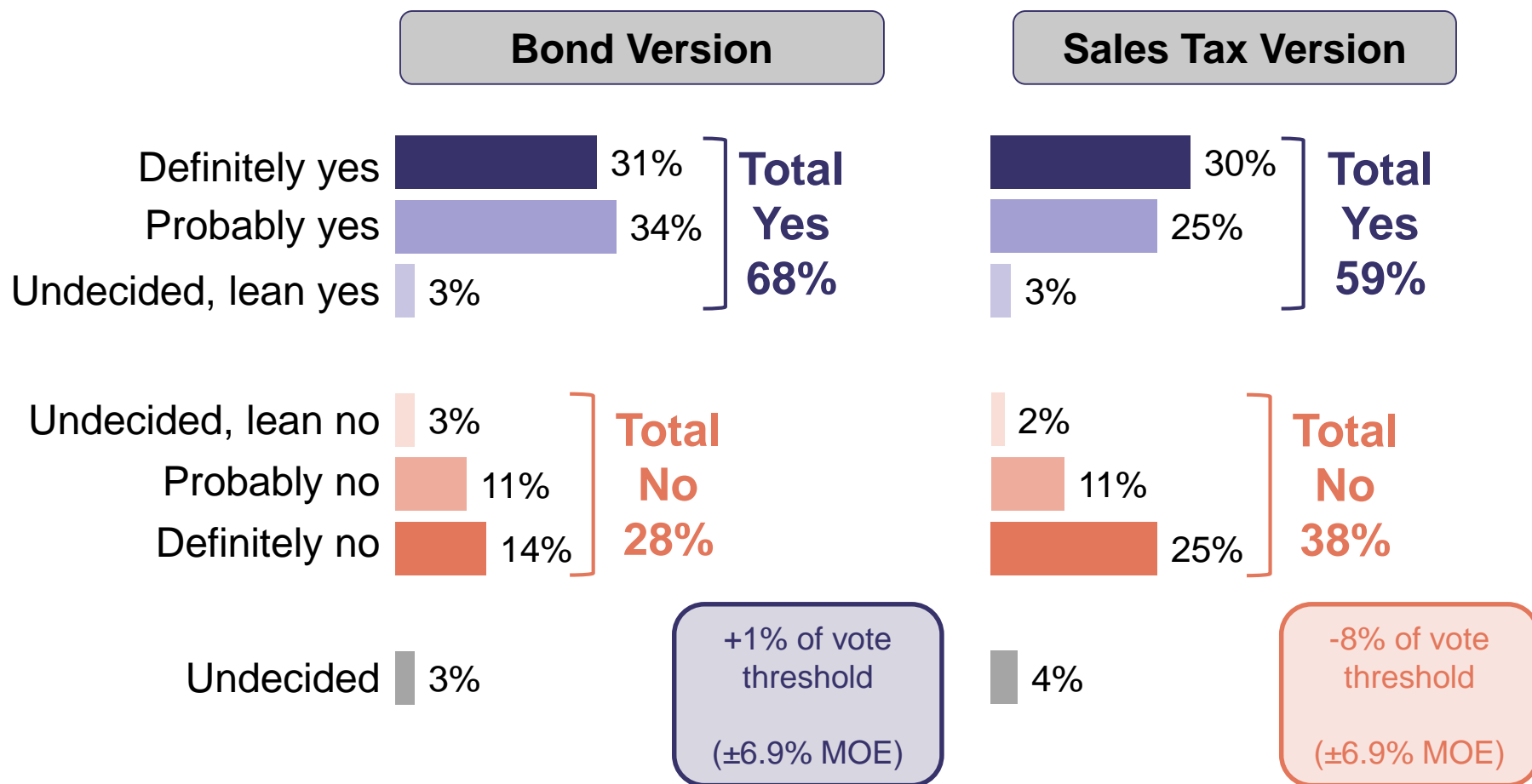
To help reduce gang violence/robberies/homicides/blight; improve responsiveness to 911 calls/natural disasters; and retain experienced police officers/firefighters by installing modern 911 dispatch technology and upgrading police, fire, and Emergency Operations Center facilities and improving their earthquake safety, shall the City of Merced issue \$49 million in bonds subject to annual performance/ financial audits and independent citizens' oversight, ensuring funds are used only for these purposes?

### **CITY OF MERCED 911 EMERGENCY OPERATIONS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES UPGRADE MEASURE.**

To help reduce gang violence/robberies/homicides; improve 911 response; and retain experienced police officers/firefighters by installing modern 911 dispatch technology and upgrading Merced's public facilities and Emergency Operations Center for seismic/health/safety standards, shall the City of Merced establish a .25 cent sales tax raising \$3 million annually for 20 years with authority to incur debt to accelerate infrastructure projects, including annual audits/independent citizens oversight?

***Both conceptual measures dedicating revenues to public safety infrastructure projects would have a two-thirds vote threshold for passage.***

# While both received majority support, only the bond measure (just barely) reached the two-thirds vote threshold.







# **Respondents' Public Safety Infrastructure Spending Priorities**

This section explores how survey respondents ranked proposed public safety priorities, in order of personal importance.



# The highest priorities were fire response, retaining police officers, gang prevention, and keeping funds local.

■ Ext. Impt. ■ Very Impt. ■ Smwt. Impt. ■ Not Too Impt. ■ DK/NA **Ext./Very Impt.**

Responding quickly to neighborhood fires



**89%**

Retaining qualified police officers



**87%**

Ensuring all funds are used only in Merced



**83%**

Preventing gang activity in the City



**83%**

Helping to retain skilled police officers



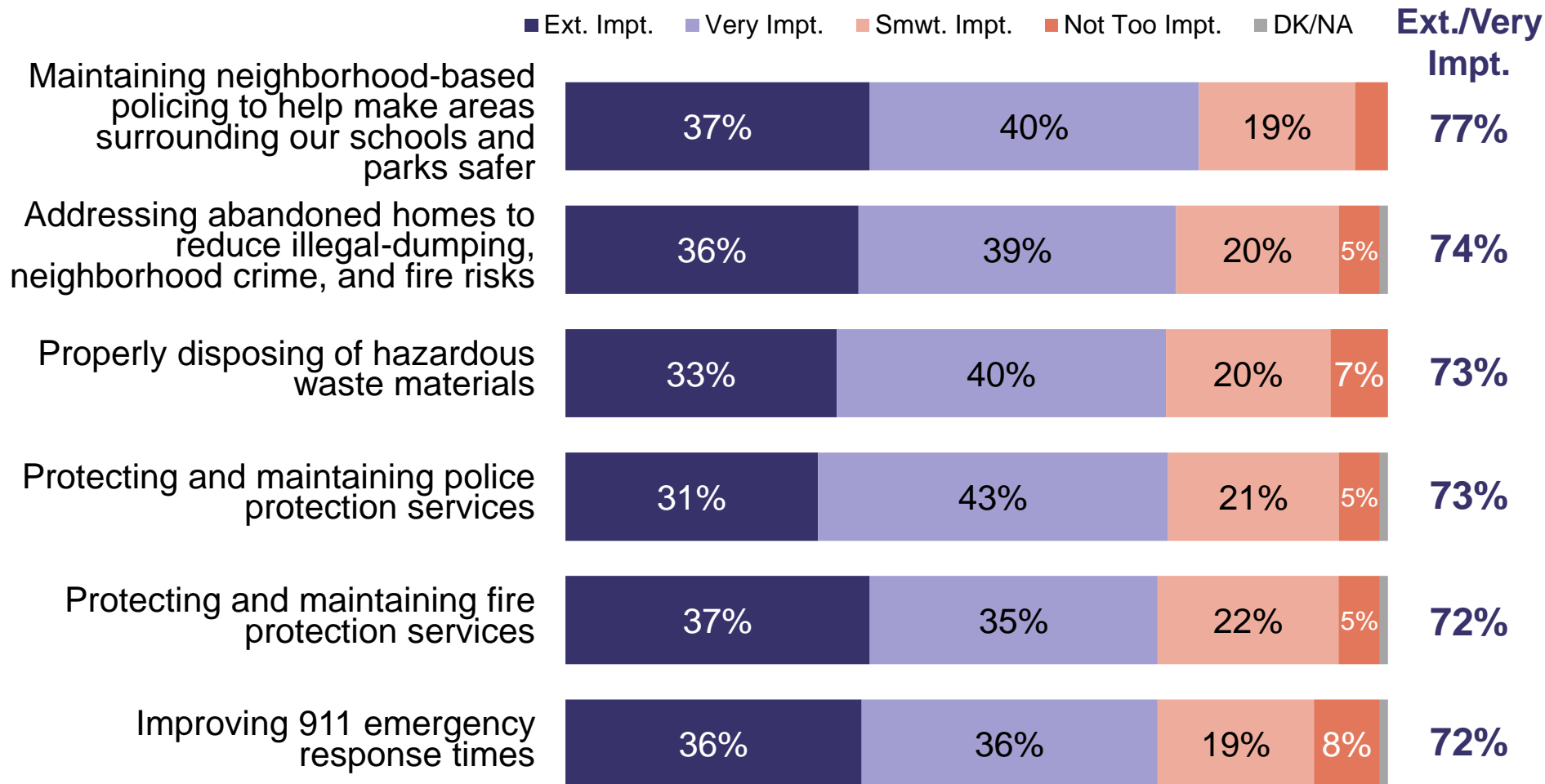
**83%**

Protecting and maintaining 911 police response times

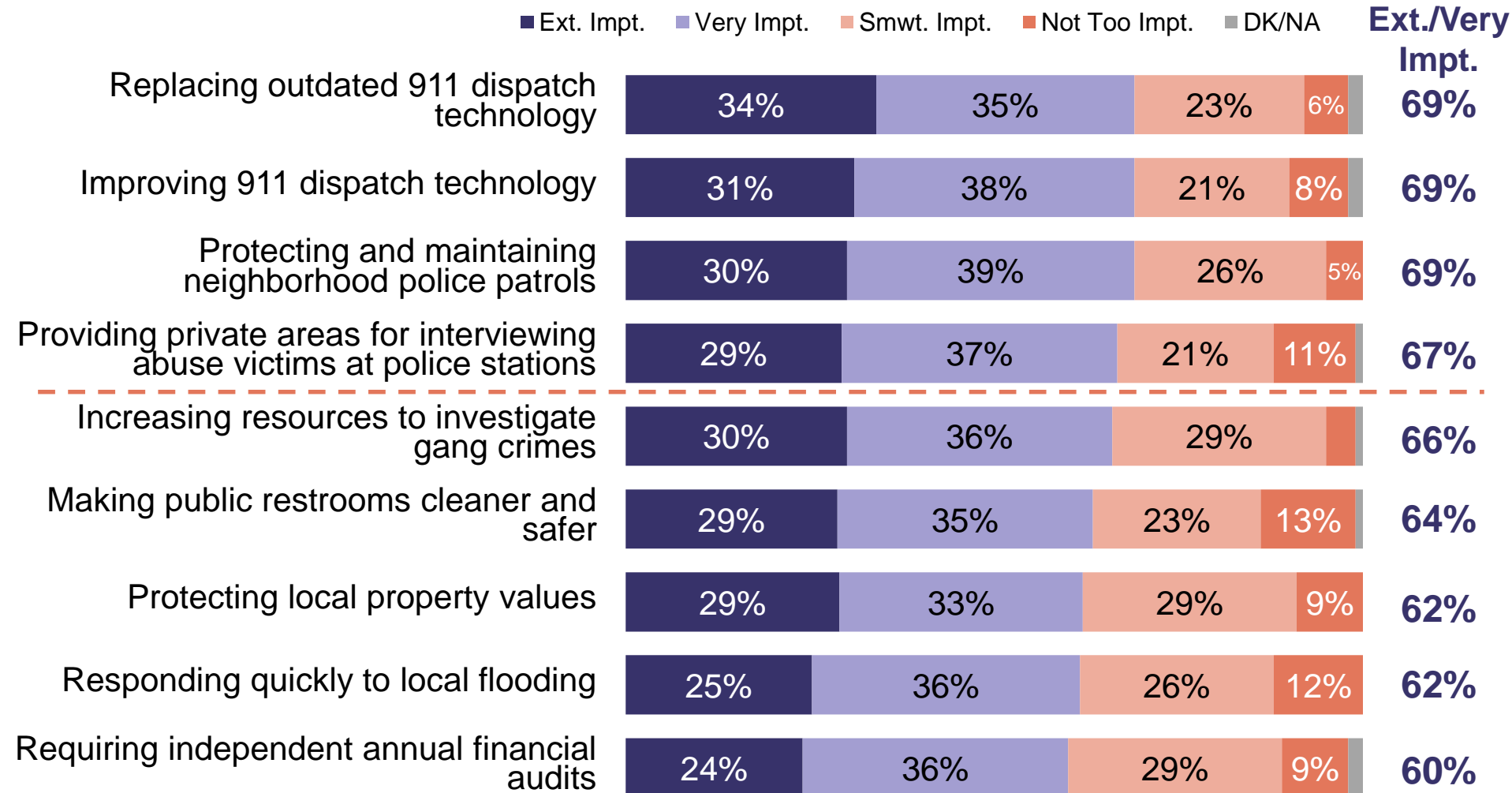


**80%**

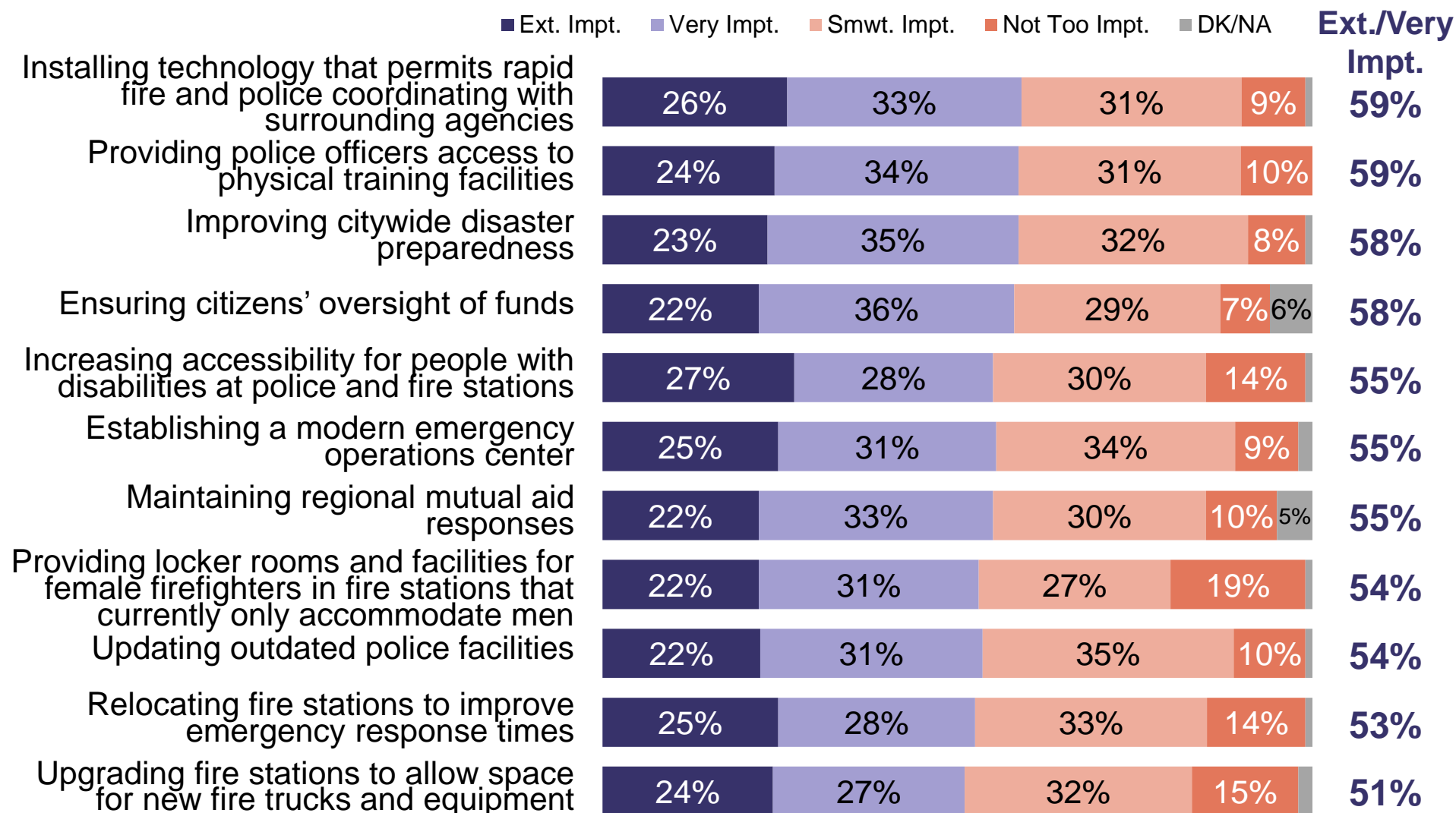
# Approximately three-quarters valued neighborhood-based policing and reducing illegal dumping and blight.



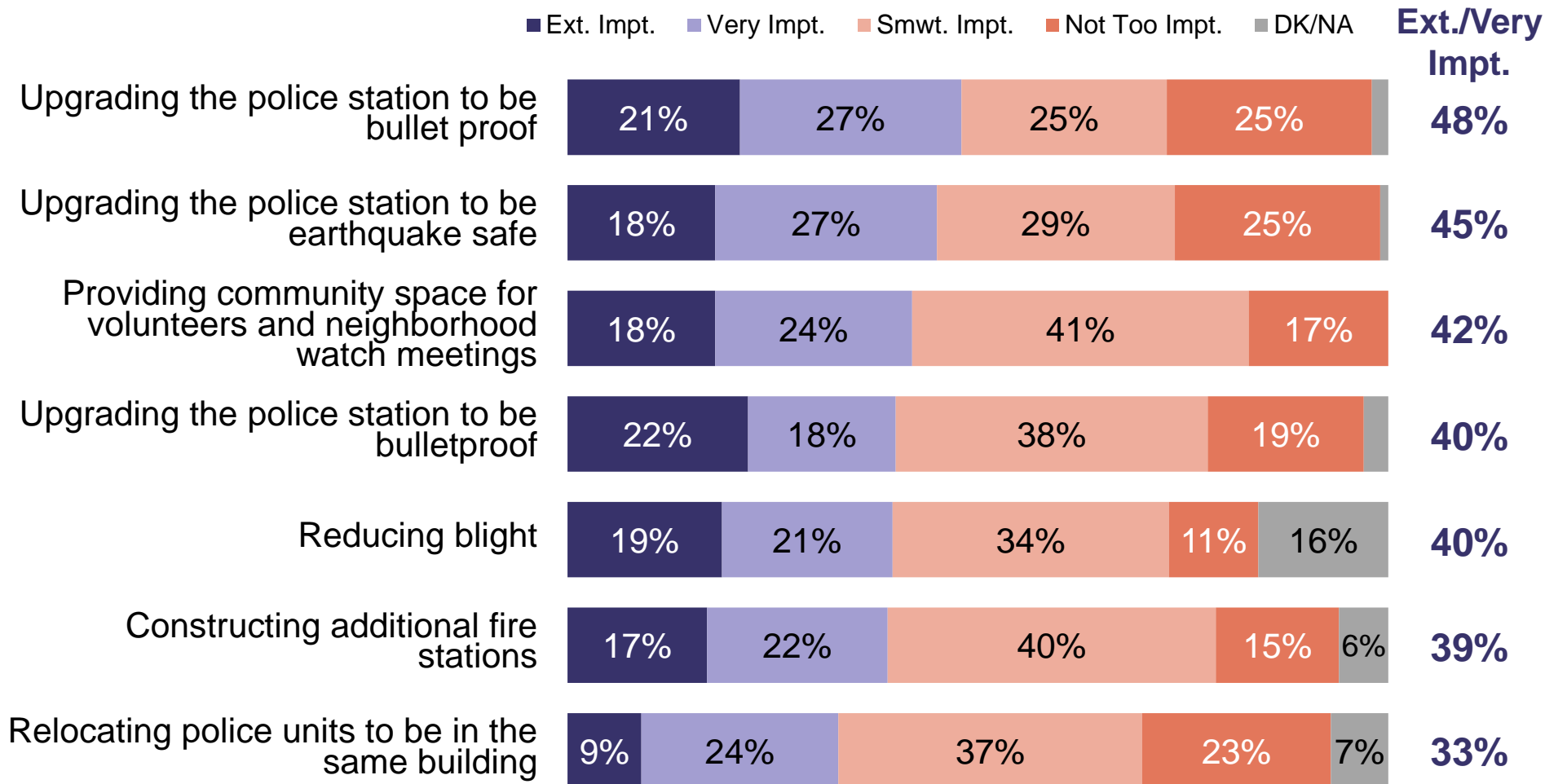
# Replacing and improving dispatch technology were middle-tier priorities.



# Facility improvements were generally seen as less important than the benefits they afforded.



# Blight reduction was seen as less important when not connected to issues of public safety .





# Conclusions



# Conclusions

- ✓ More feel optimistic about the direction of the City than when last asked in 2010.
- ✓ Concerns about poverty and homelessness run high, followed closely by the local economy and crime.
- ✓ Most feel much safer during that day than at night throughout the City.
- ✓ There is a sense that crime is on the rise, particularly property crime.
- ✓ Though closely divided on whether commercial cannabis businesses should be allowed in Merced, it appears many would support a gross-receipts tax on these businesses.
- ✓ Majorities would support a measure generating funds for public safety infrastructure investments.
- ✓ While a bond measure demonstrated the best possibility of passing (over a sales tax), these results reveal much uncertainty at this time given any measure's two-thirds vote threshold.

# For more information, contact:



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