



**Sonoma County
Resident Survey
*Conducted March 2023***

- ▶ Survey of Sonoma County residents
- ▶ Mixed-mode methodology (telephone/web) offered in English and Spanish
 - Phone interviews conducted by trained, professional interviewers; landlines & mobile phones included
 - Email and text invitations were sent to complete the survey online
- ▶ Conducted March 28 – April 7, 2023
- ▶ A total of 1,019 interviews were conducted; margin of error ± 3.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence interval

Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

Previous Research

Where applicable, results compared with previous studies:

| Year | Methodology | Universe | Interviewing Dates | Number of Interviews | Margin of Error |
|------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 2023 | Email- and Text-to-Web and Telephone | Adult Residents* | March 28-April 7 | 1,019 | ± 3.1 % pts |
| 2021 | Email- and Text-to-Web and Telephone | Likely Nov. '22 Voters | December 1-8 | 500 | ± 4.4 % pts |
| 2021 | Email- and Text-to-Web and Telephone | Registered Voters | September 30-October 7 | 600 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2020 | Email- and Text-to-Web and Telephone | Likely Nov. '20 Voters | May 3-7 | 612 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2019 | Email-to-Web and Live Telephone** | Likely Mar. '20 Voters | July 9-14 | 627 | ± 3.9 % pts |
| 2016 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | September 6-11 | 400 | ± 4.9 % pts |
| 2015 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | July 6-12 | 601 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2014 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | November 16-20 | 604 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2013 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | April 21-28 | 609 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2011 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | April 14-20 | 600 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2009 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | April 13-29 | 609 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2007 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | April 16-22 | 600 | ± 4.0 % pts |
| 2003 | Live Telephone | Registered Voters | September 15-18 | 612 | ± 4.0 % pts |

*Note: 2023's expanded multi-modal resident survey approach may have some impact on the year-to-year comparisons

**Note: Methodology change from phone-only surveys to hybrid phone/web

***Note: All surveys completed by EMC Research

Key Findings

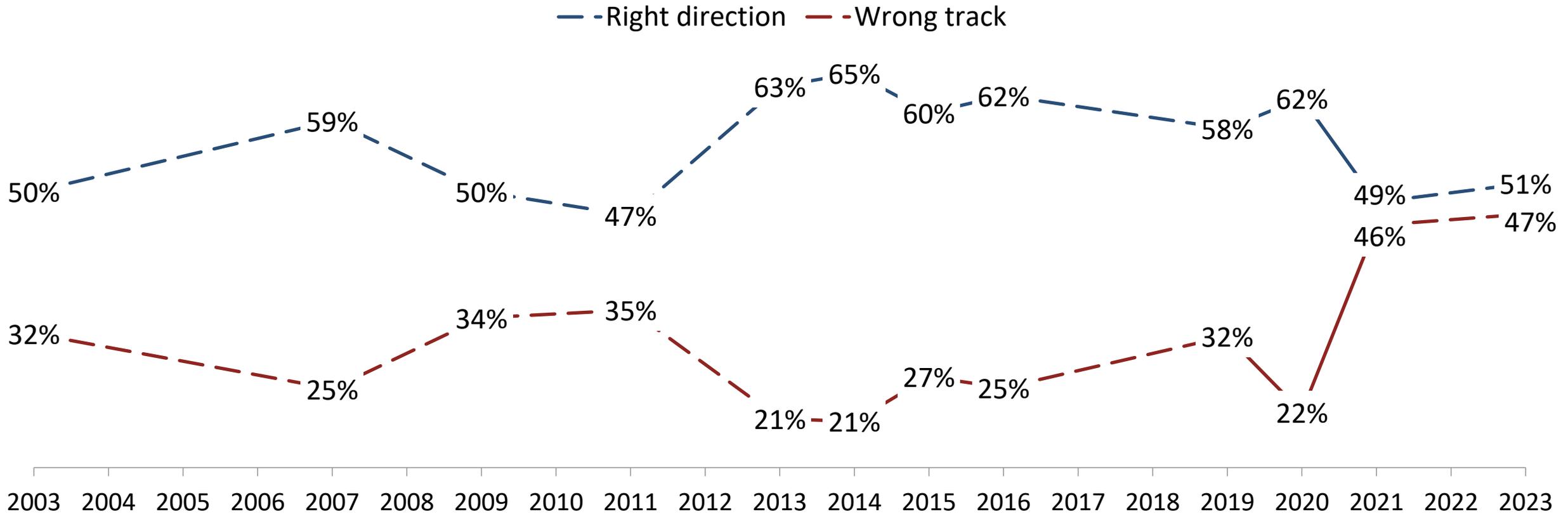
- ▶ Sonoma County residents are divided about the direction of the county, but the majority are content with their quality of life, particularly in their neighborhoods.
- ▶ Majorities say they are excited about the future of Sonoma County, that services are convenient and easy to access, and that Sonoma County is a welcoming place to live. However, a majority are worried about changes happening in the county.
- ▶ Homelessness, affordable housing, road repairs, crime, and cost of living are top concerns for residents. Most residents believe that homelessness has worsened in recent years.
- ▶ Housing affordability is a significant concern, with many residents worried about finding affordable housing for themselves and their loved ones.
- ▶ Overall job ratings for both county and city governments are lukewarm, likely reflecting some general dissatisfaction with government.
- ▶ The county receives positive ratings for emergency and disaster response, fire services, parks and playgrounds, and preservation of natural areas. Ratings for street and road maintenance, services for those experiencing mental health crises, and services for the homeless indicate a desire for improvement in these areas.



Issue Environment

Right Direction/Wrong Track: Sonoma County

Residents are split on the direction of the County, with a slight increase in general optimism since 2021.



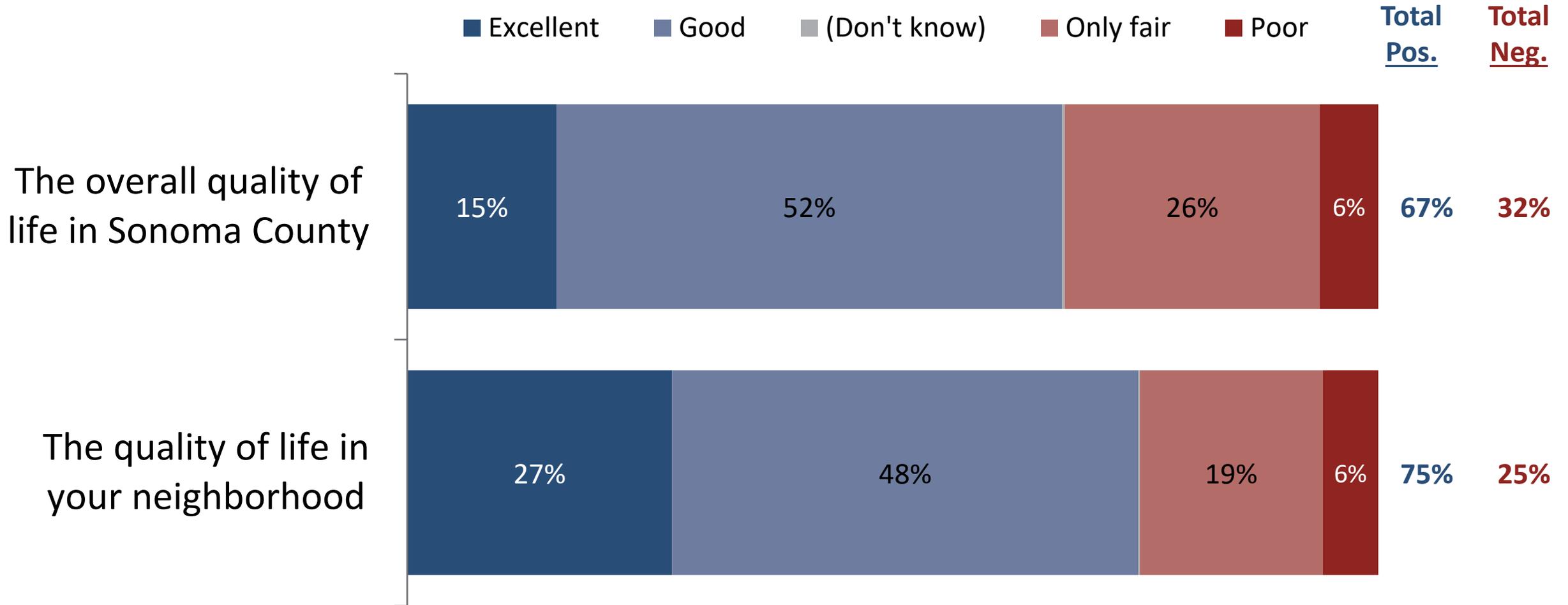
Q4. Do you feel that things in Sonoma County are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?



Quality of Life

Quality of Life

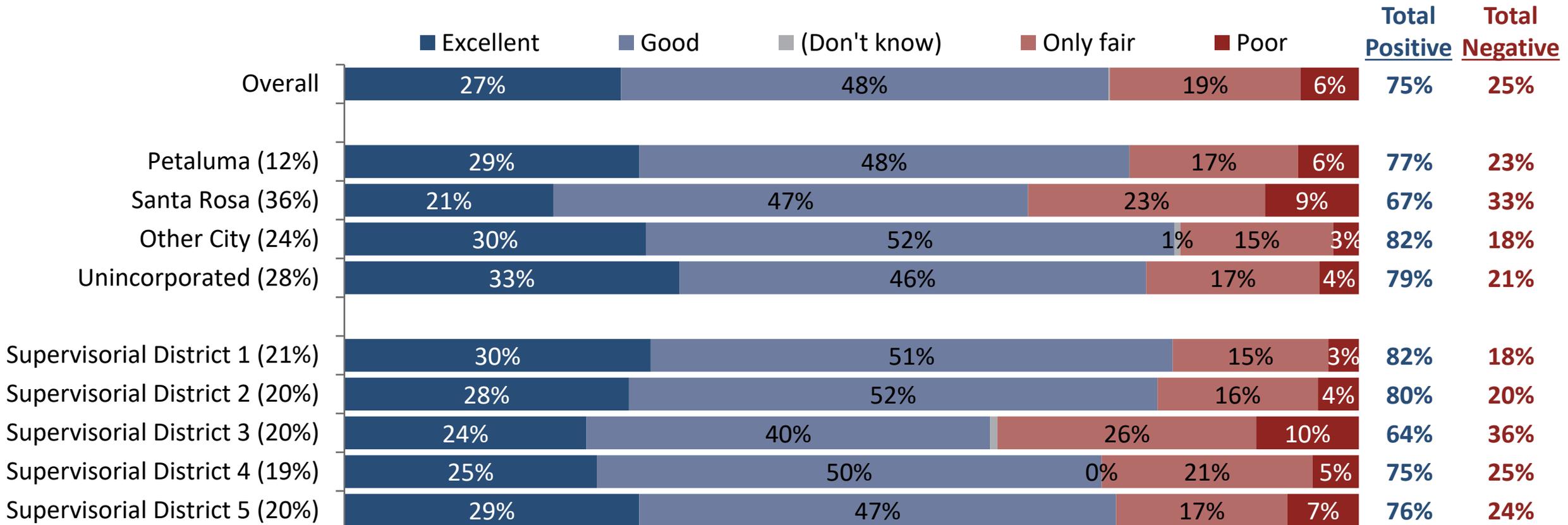
Residents appear happy with the quality of life, especially in their neighborhoods.



Neighborhood Quality of Life by Region

Residents who are in District 1 and District 2 rate the quality of life in their neighborhood more positively than those in other Districts. Residents in unincorporated Sonoma County are more likely to rate their quality of life in their neighborhood as "excellent."

The quality of life in your neighborhood





Top Issues/Concerns

Local Issues Highlights



95% say homelessness is a serious issue



75% say homelessness has gotten worse in the past few years



92% say cost of living is a serious issue



84% say a lack of available housing for all income levels is a serious issue

Most Important Problems (Open-End)



33% specifically mention homelessness



21% mention affordable housing/cost of living



7% mention road repairs/infrastructure



7% mention crime/drugs

Most Important Problem - Tracked

Homelessness and affordable housing continue to be top-of-mind issues among residents in Sonoma County.

And what do you think is the most important problem facing Sonoma County today?

| Verbatim Responses Coded Into Categories Shown Below | 2003* | 2007 | 2009 | 2011 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2019 | 2020 | Dec. '21 | 2023 |
|--|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|------|
| Homelessness | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2 | 2 | 18 | 20 | 30 | 33 |
| Affordable Housing/Cost of living | 11 | 11 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 28 | 18 | 20 | 21 |
| Road Repairs/Infrastructure | 9 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 11 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 7 |
| Crime/Drugs | 8 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| Growth/Overdevelopment | 15 | 14 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | - | 4 |
| Climate Change/Environment/Wildfires** | 3 | 5 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 20 | 23 | 10 | 6 | 12 | 4 |
| Politicians/Government*** | 6 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| Traffic/Congestion | 23 | 30 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 12 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Inequality**** | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | 4 | 2 |
| Jobs/Economy***** | 18 | 5 | 30 | 30 | 21 | 11 | 7 | - | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Education | 6 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 2 | - | 1 | - | 2 |

*This question was asked as a multi-response in 2003

**Prior to 2019, coded as “Environment/Agriculture/Climate Change” and “Supply of water.” These codes are collapsed here.

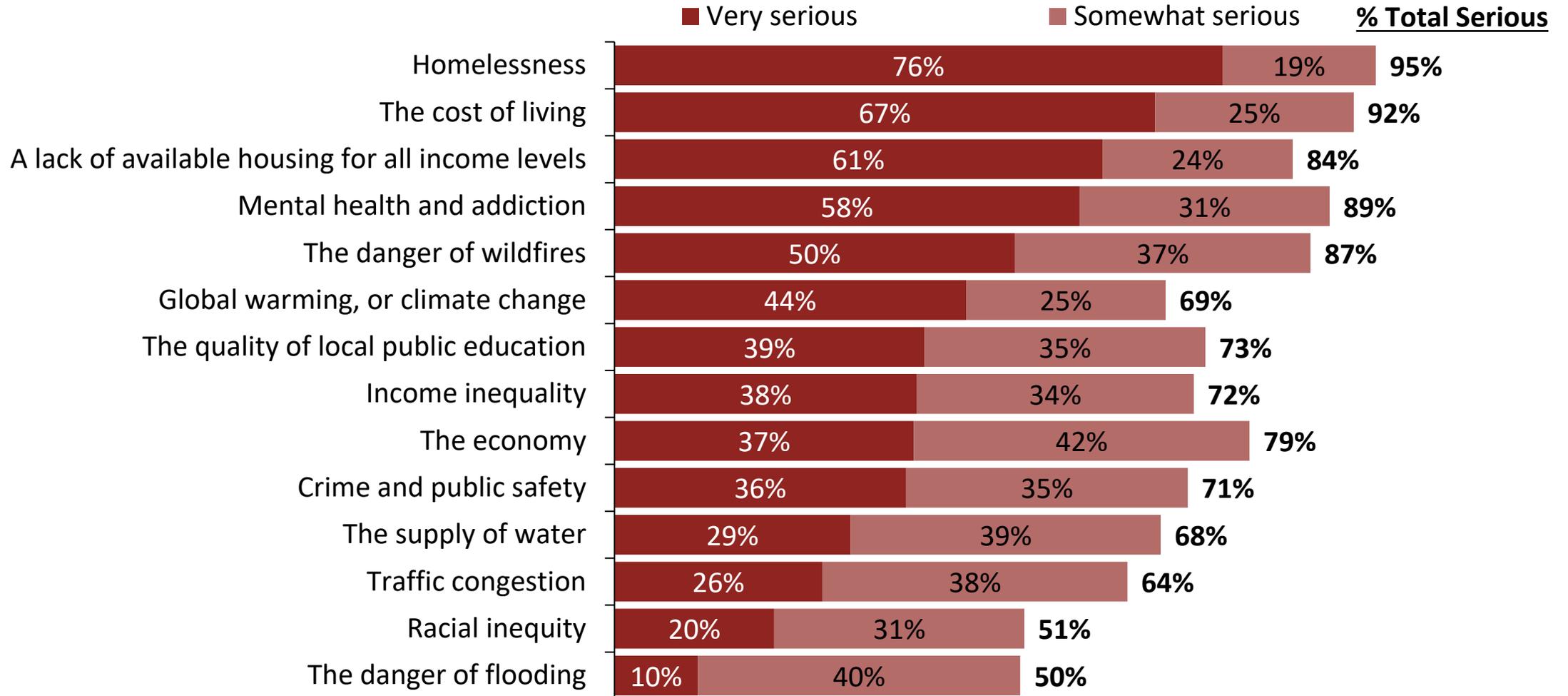
***Prior to 2019, coded as “Poor leadership/government,” “Lack of federal funds,” “Law enforcement/corruption,” and “Government rules/laws/expenditures.” These codes are collapsed here.

****Coded as “Racial Inequality/Policing” in previous surveys.

*****Coded as “Employment/Jobs” and “The economy” in previous surveys. These codes are collapsed here.

Local Issues

The most pressing issues in the community are homelessness and affordability, followed by mental health and addiction.

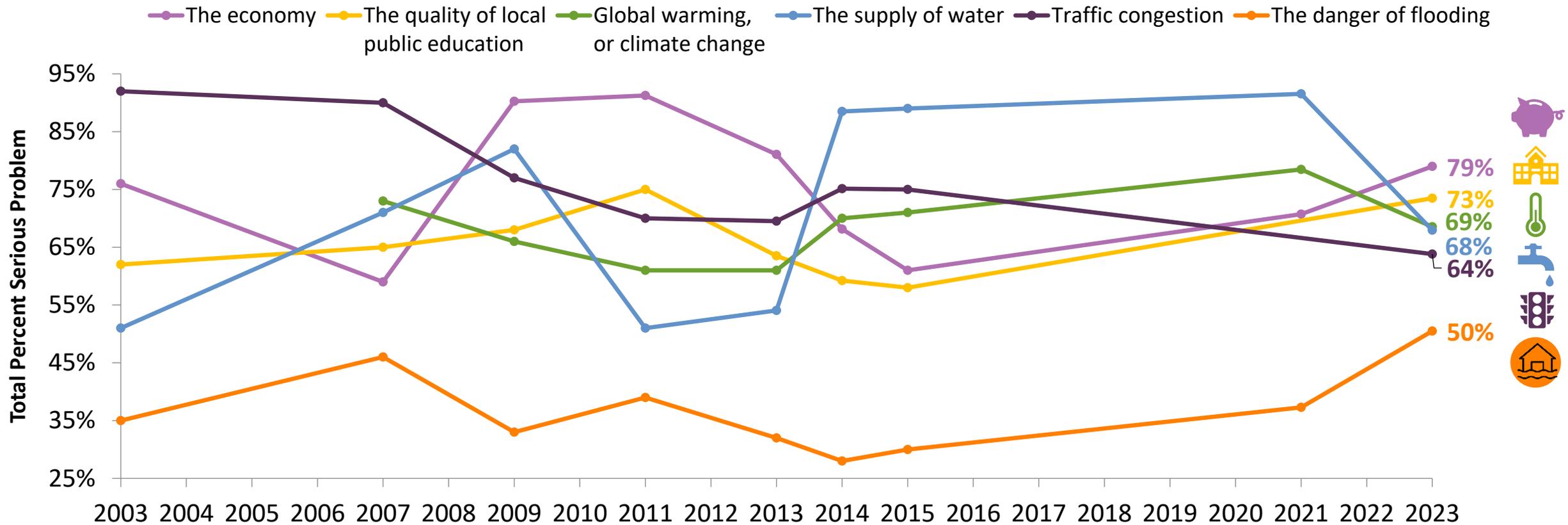


Q8-Q21. Please indicate if you feel each of the following is a very serious problem facing Sonoma County, a somewhat serious problem, a not too serious problem, or a not at all serious problem in this area.

Local Issues, Over Time

Concerns over flooding, the economy, and public education have increased, while concerns over water supply and climate change have decreased since we last tested.

(Not all top issues have been asked over time; showing issues asked over the years only)

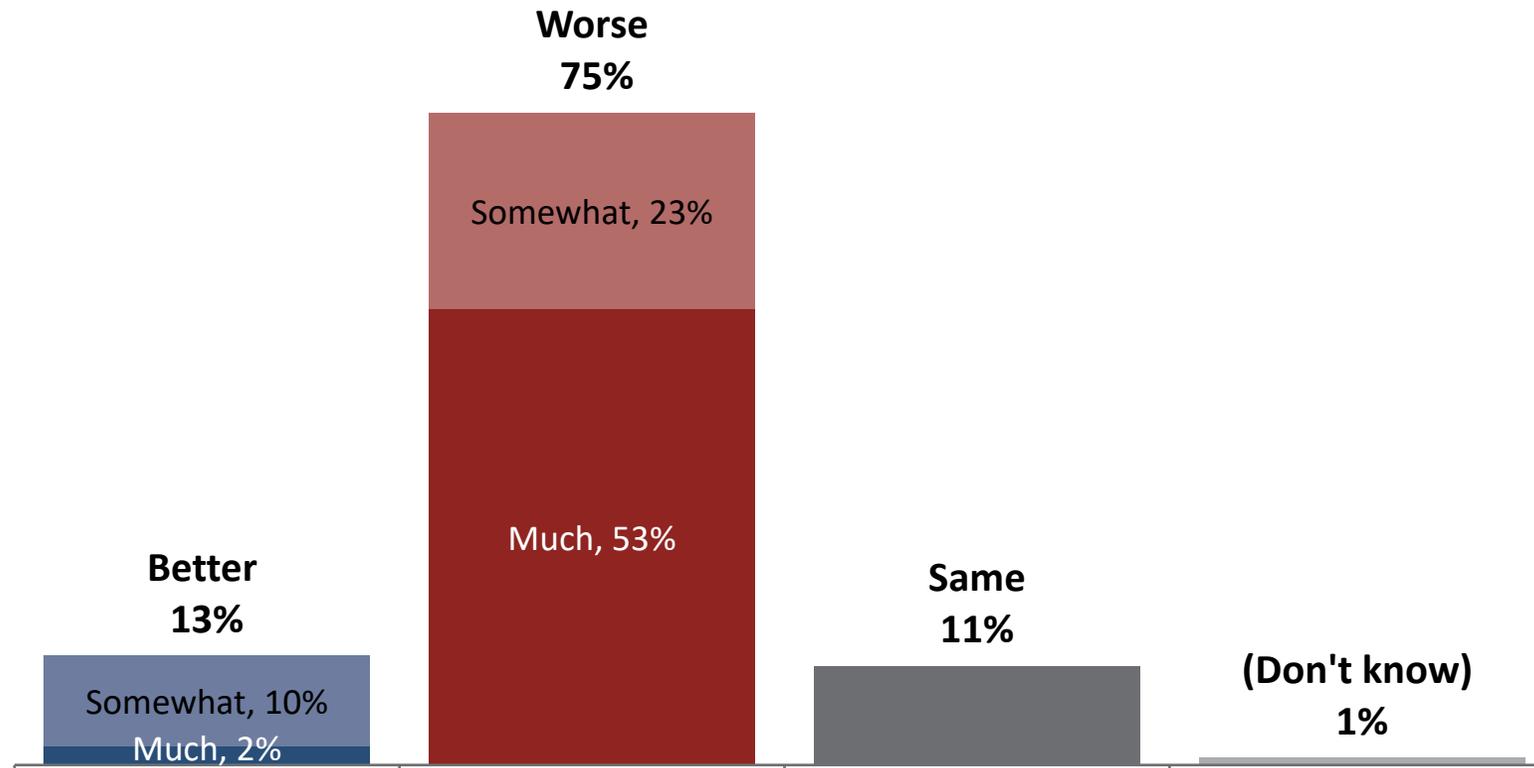


Q8-Q21. Please indicate if you feel each of the following is a very serious problem facing Sonoma County, a somewhat serious problem, a not too serious problem, or a not at all serious problem in this area.

Homelessness in Sonoma County

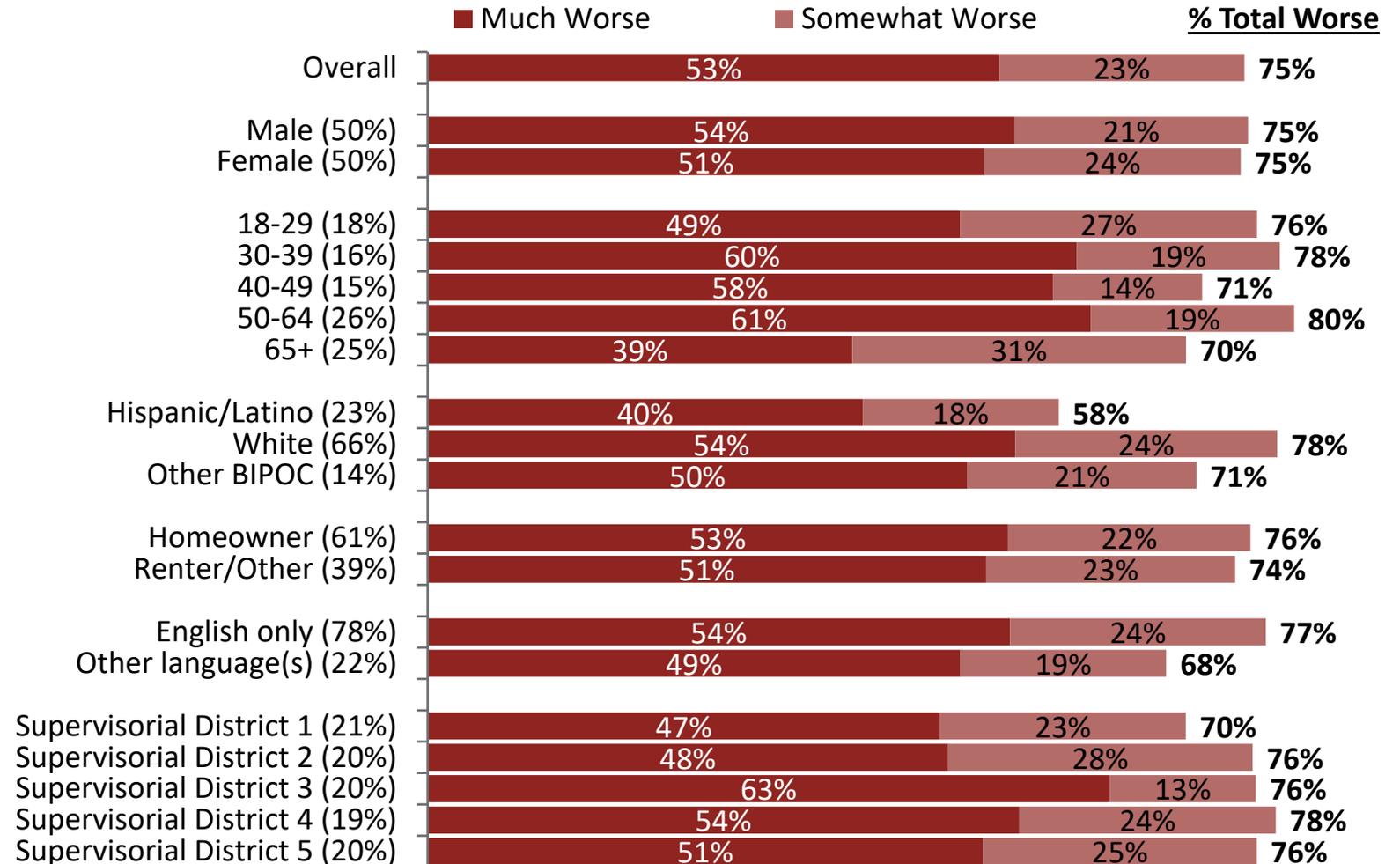
Three-quarters of residents say homelessness in Sonoma County has gotten worse in the past few years.

Would you say that homelessness in Sonoma County has gotten better in the past few years, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?



Homelessness in Sonoma County by Subgroups

The perception that homelessness has worsened is widespread across demographic subgroups.



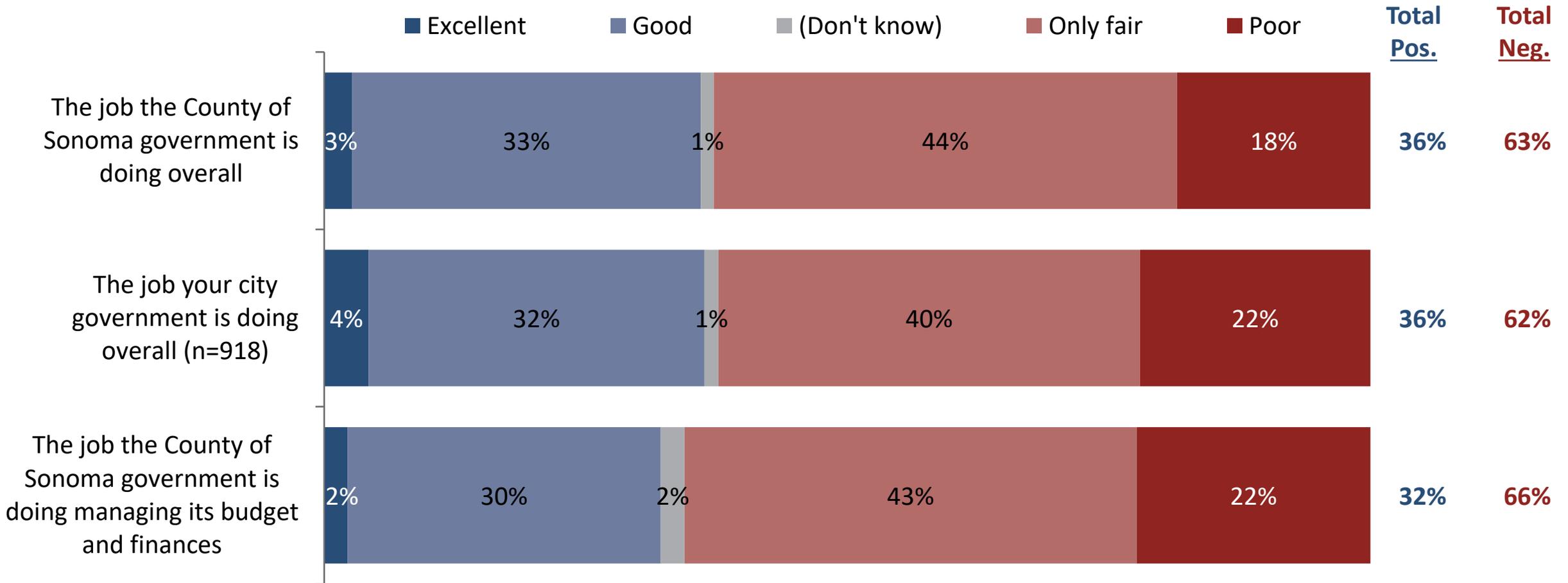
Q48. Would you say that homelessness in Sonoma County has gotten better in the past few years, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?



**County of Sonoma Government
Overall Ratings**

Overall Ratings

The county and city governments receive similarly negative job ratings. Given the nearly identical ratings of county and city governments, this negativity likely reflects general sentiment toward government, rather than specific sentiment toward the County.

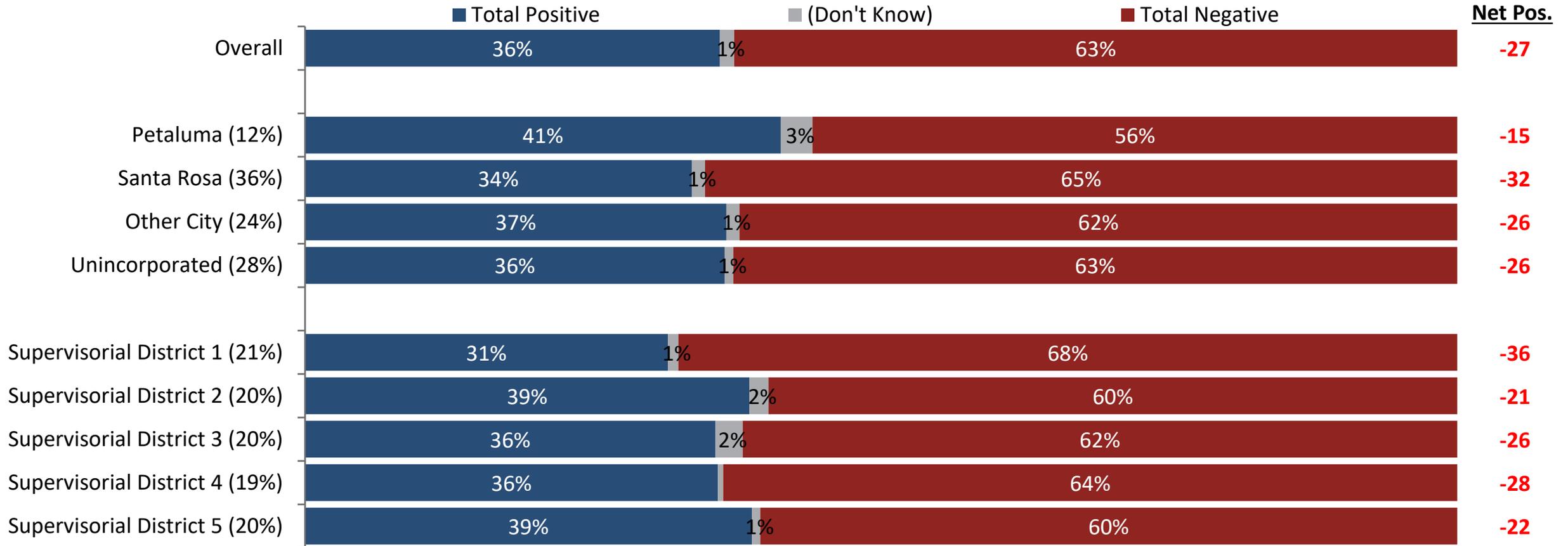


Q22. – Q24. Please rate how you think the County of Sonoma government is doing in each of the following areas. Please use a scale of excellent, good, only fair, or poor. If you aren't sure one way or the other, please just say so.

County of Sonoma Government Overall Ratings by Region

Residents who live in Districts 2 and 5 are slightly more likely to rate the job the County of Sonoma is doing overall positively.

The job the County of Sonoma government is doing overall



Q22. Please rate how you think the County of Sonoma government is doing in each of the following areas. Please use a scale of excellent, good, only fair, or poor. If you aren't sure one way or the other, please just say so.



Service Ratings

Service Ratings Highlights

88%

Rate Fire Services positively

39%

Say they have sought County Services in the last two years

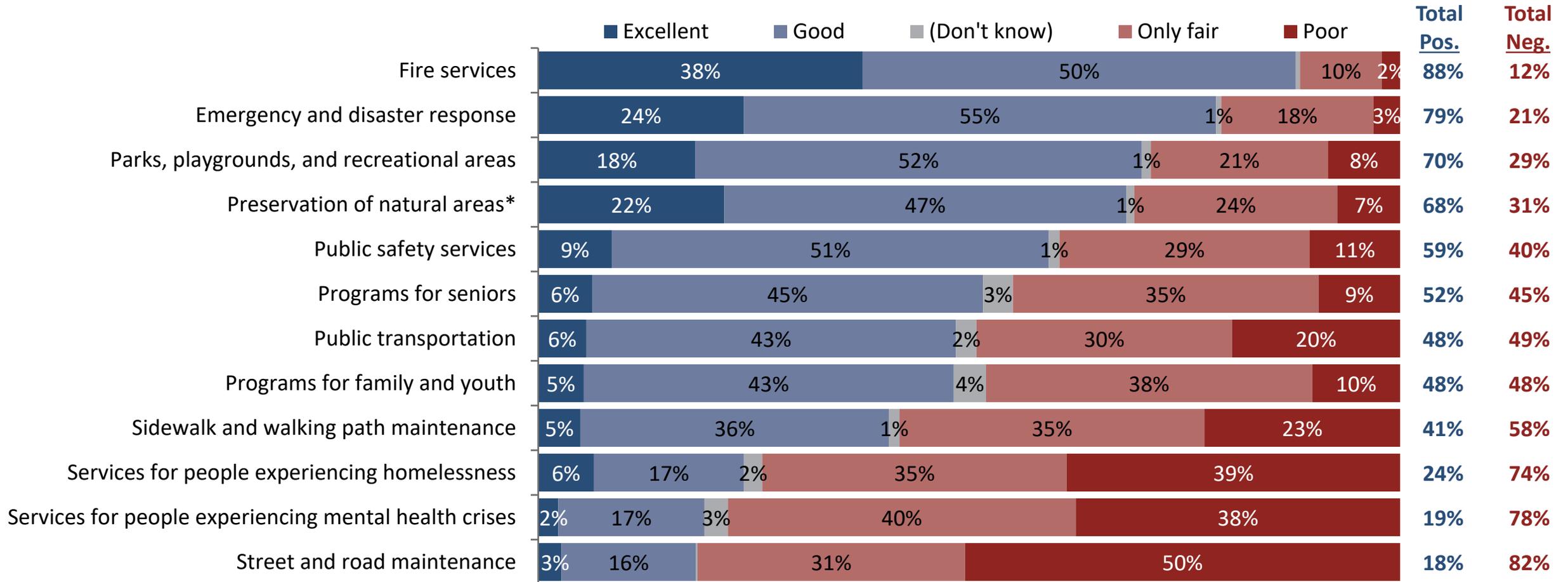
56%

*Of those who sought services rate their experience positively

(*Among those who have sought services in the last two years; n = 413)

Service Ratings

The County receives positive ratings for fire services, emergency and disaster response, parks and playgrounds, preservation of natural areas, public safety and programs for seniors. Other programs show room for improvement.



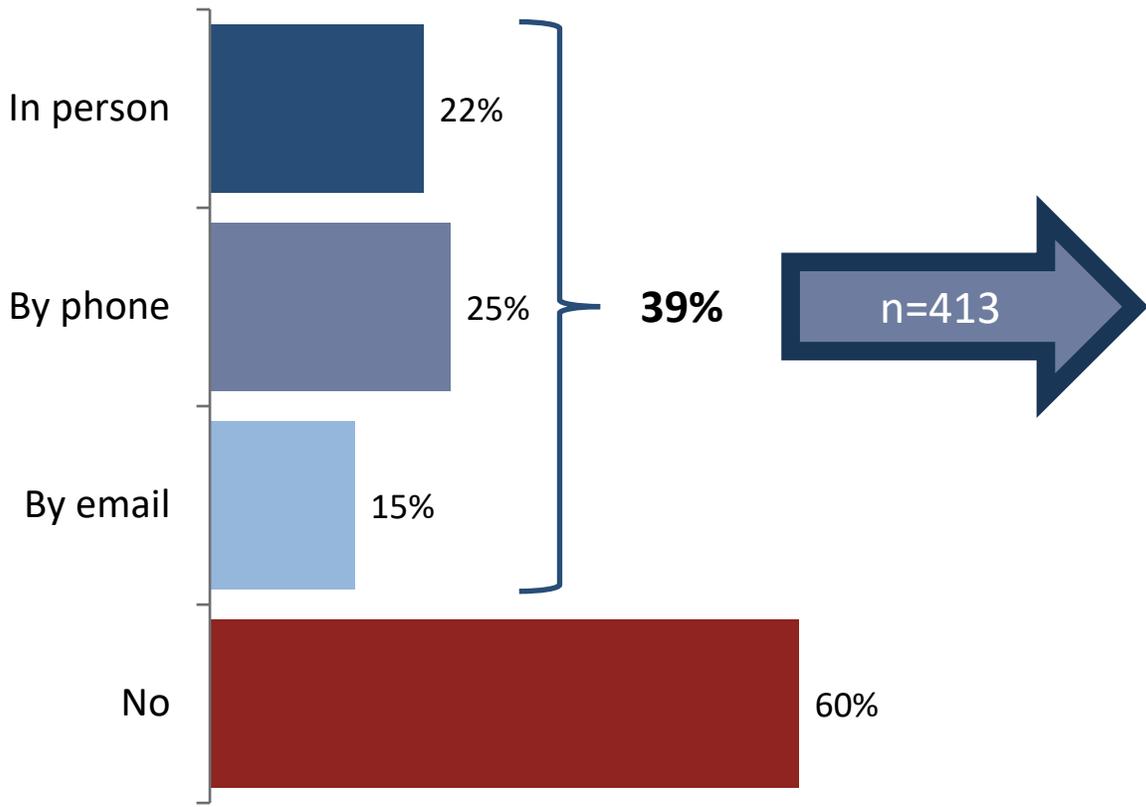
Q25-Q36. And again using a scale of excellent, good, only fair, or poor, how would you rate each of the following in Sonoma County?

*Full question text: Preservation of natural areas such as open space, farmlands and greenbelts

Service Ratings – Services Sought

About 2 in 5 report having interacted with a county employee while seeking services in the past two years, with a third of those specifically seeking development services.

Have you had any interactions with a county employee in the process of seeking services in the last two years?



| In which department or departments did you seek services? | % |
|---|-----|
| Permit Sonoma | 20% |
| Sonoma Public Infrastructure (formerly TPW) | 8% |
| Community Development Commission | 3% |
| Human Services | 11% |
| Health Services | 10% |
| Clerk-Recorder-Assessor-Registrar of Voters | 7% |
| Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector | 4% |
| Sonoma Public Infrastructure (formerly GS) | 1% |
| Human Resources | 1% |
| Sonoma County Employees' Retirement Association | 1% |
| Information Systems | 1% |
| County Administrator's Office | 1% |
| Sheriffs Office | 4% |
| Justice Services (Unspecified) | 2% |
| Law Library | 1% |
| Sonoma County Regional Parks | 5% |
| Agricultural, Weights & Measures | 1% |
| City Services | 4% |

Development Services (31%)

Health and Human Services (22%)

Administrative Support & Fiscal Services (16%)

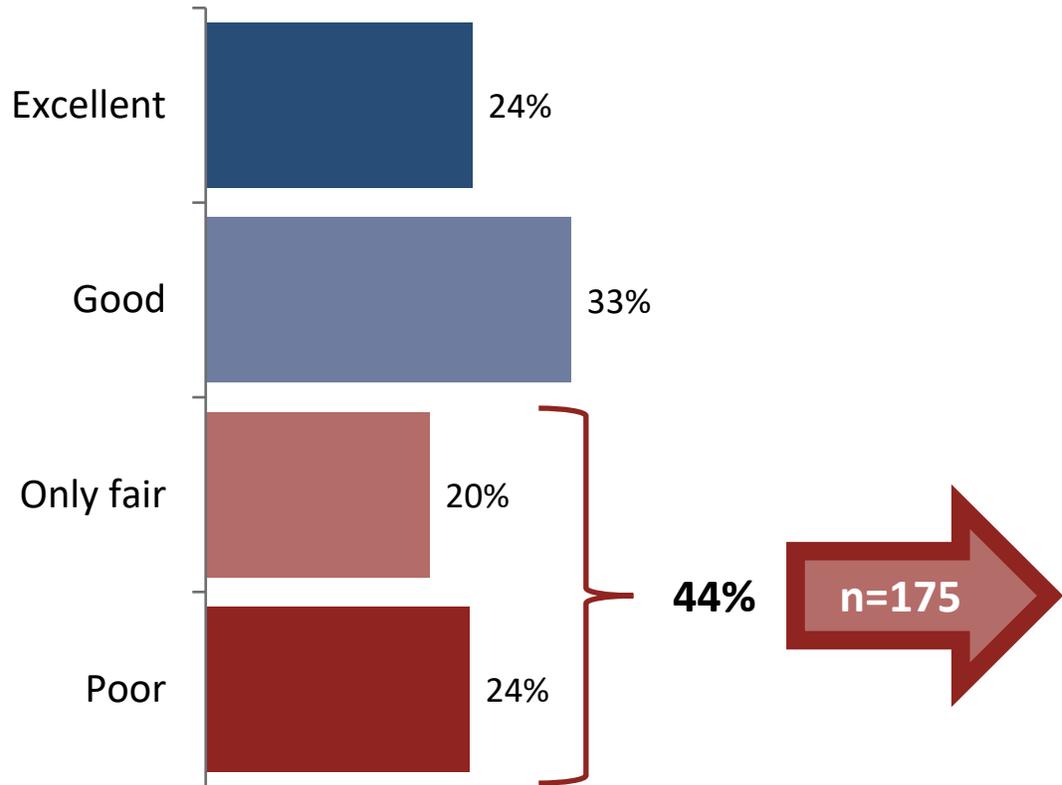
Justice Services (8%)

Natural Resources (7%)

Service Ratings – Service Experience

Of those who sought services, 44% rated their experience as "only fair" or "poor," with the top mentioned reasons being a slow process/unresponsive, poor customer service, and not having the issue resolved.

How would you rate your experience with the county service or services you accessed? Would you say your experience was excellent, good, only fair, or poor?



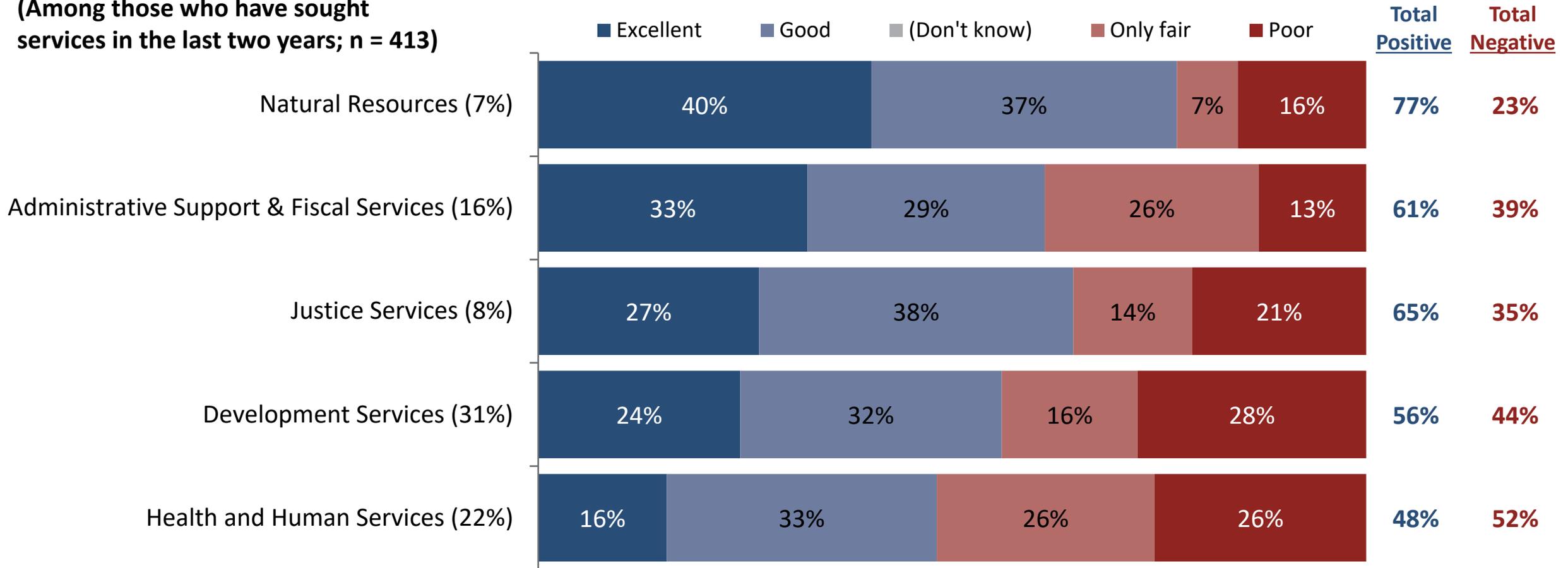
Why did you rate your experience as [only fair/poor]?

| (Open-ended question; Verbatims coded into responses below) | % |
|---|-----|
| Slow process/Unresponsive | 29% |
| Poor customer service | 21% |
| Issue not resolved | 14% |
| General negative | 9% |
| Poor service options | 8% |
| Unable to provide answers/Given incorrect information | 7% |
| Other | 12% |
| None/Don't know/No opinion | 0% |

Service Ratings by Department

Residents who sought services from the Natural Resources department rate their experience more positively than those who sought services with other departments. Ratings of interactions within most departments are more positive than negative.

(Among those who have sought services in the last two years; n = 413)



(NOTE: Excluding responses coded as "City Services")

Q38/Q39. How would you rate your experience with the county service or services you accessed? Would you say your experience was excellent, good, only fair, or poor?



Attitudes about Sonoma County

Attitudes Highlights

85%

Agree they are concerned about friends/family finding affordable housing

62%

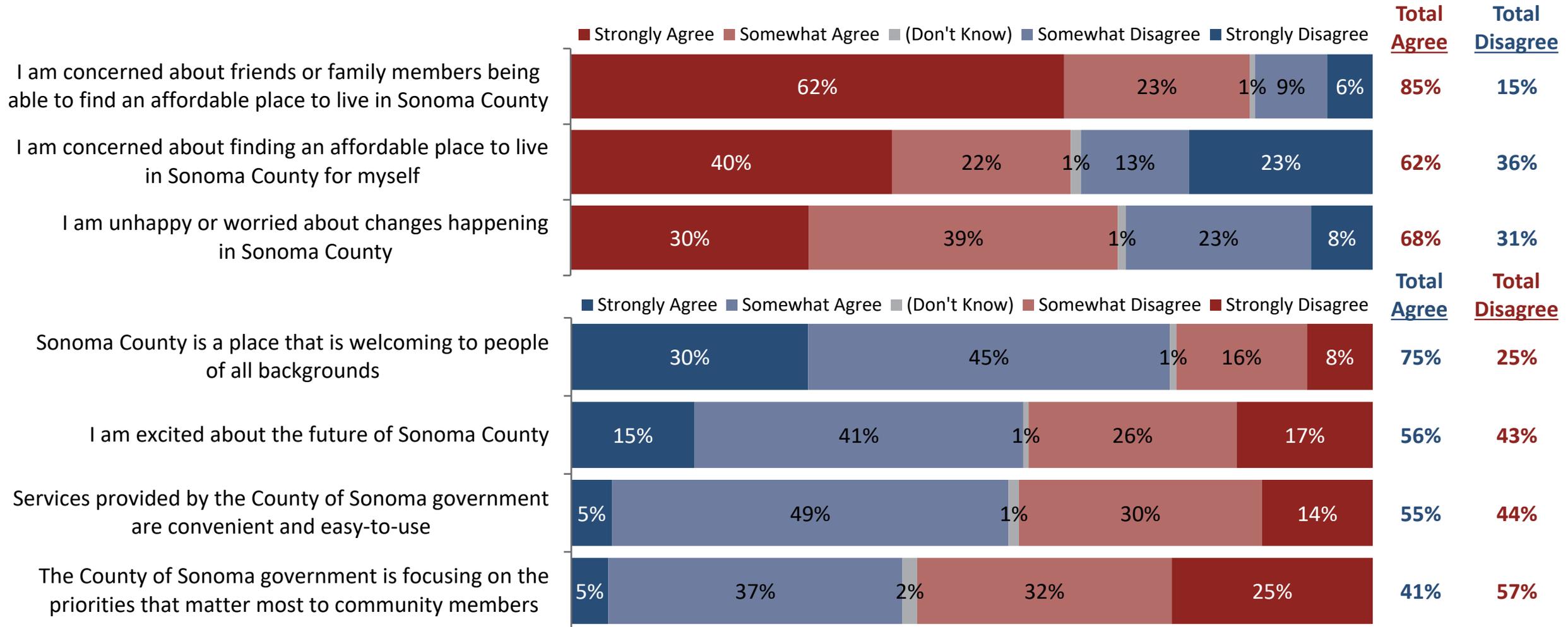
Agree they are concerned about finding affordable housing for themselves

75%

Agree Sonoma County is a place that is welcoming to people of all backgrounds

Attitudes about Sonoma County

Housing affordability is a major concern, with a majority saying they are concerned about themselves, and nearly nine in ten expressing concern about friends or family members being able to find an affordable place to live within Sonoma County.



Sonoma County Outlook Segmentation

While a majority are excited about the future in the county even if they are also worried, about two in five are truly pessimistic, saying they are both not excited about the future and worried about changes.

I am excited about the future of Sonoma County / I am unhappy or worried about changes happening in Sonoma County

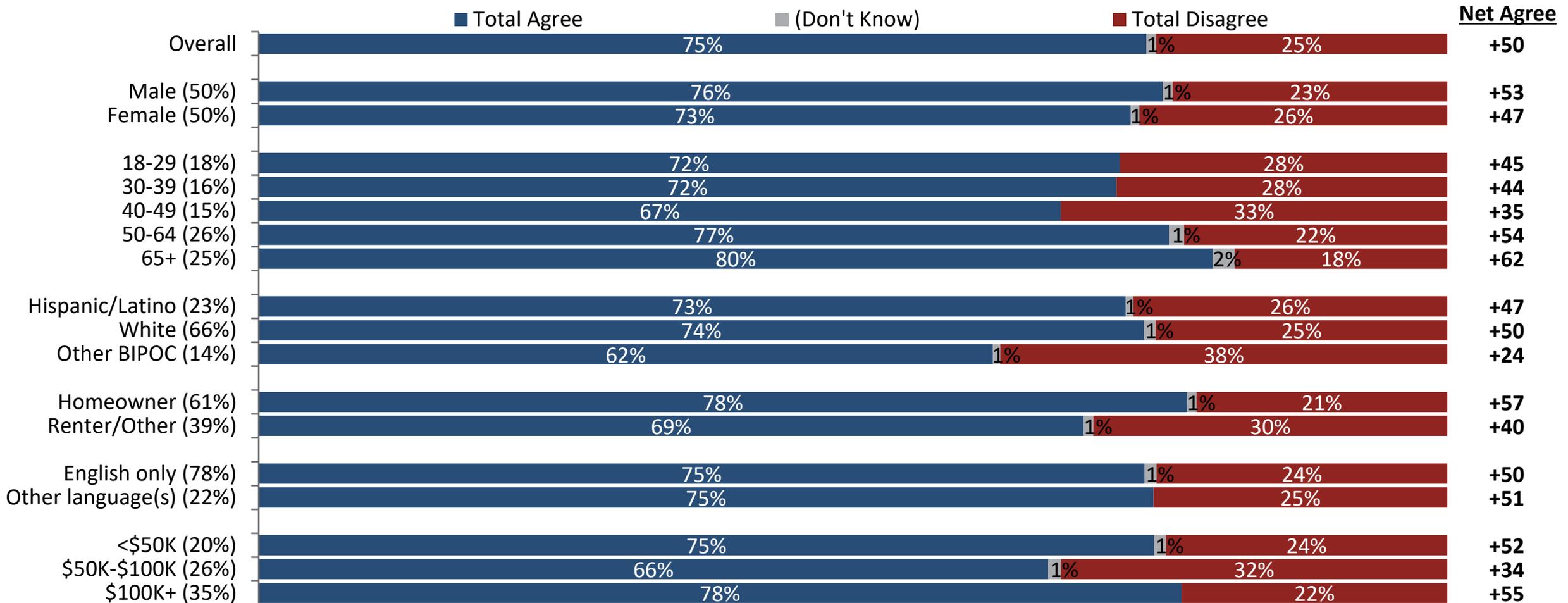
- Excited & Not Worried:** Respondents who agreed they were excited about the future of Sonoma county and disagreed with the statement that they were worried about changes happening in Sonoma County.
- Excited & Worried:** Respondents who agreed they were excited about the future of Sonoma county and agreed that they were worried about changes happening in Sonoma County.
- Not Excited & Not Worried:** Respondents who disagreed with both statements.
- Not Excited & Worried:** Respondents who disagreed that they were excited about the future of Sonoma county and agreed that they were worried about changes happening in Sonoma County.



Attitudes about Sonoma County by Subgroups

Residents across subgroups agree Sonoma County is a place that is welcoming to people of all backgrounds.

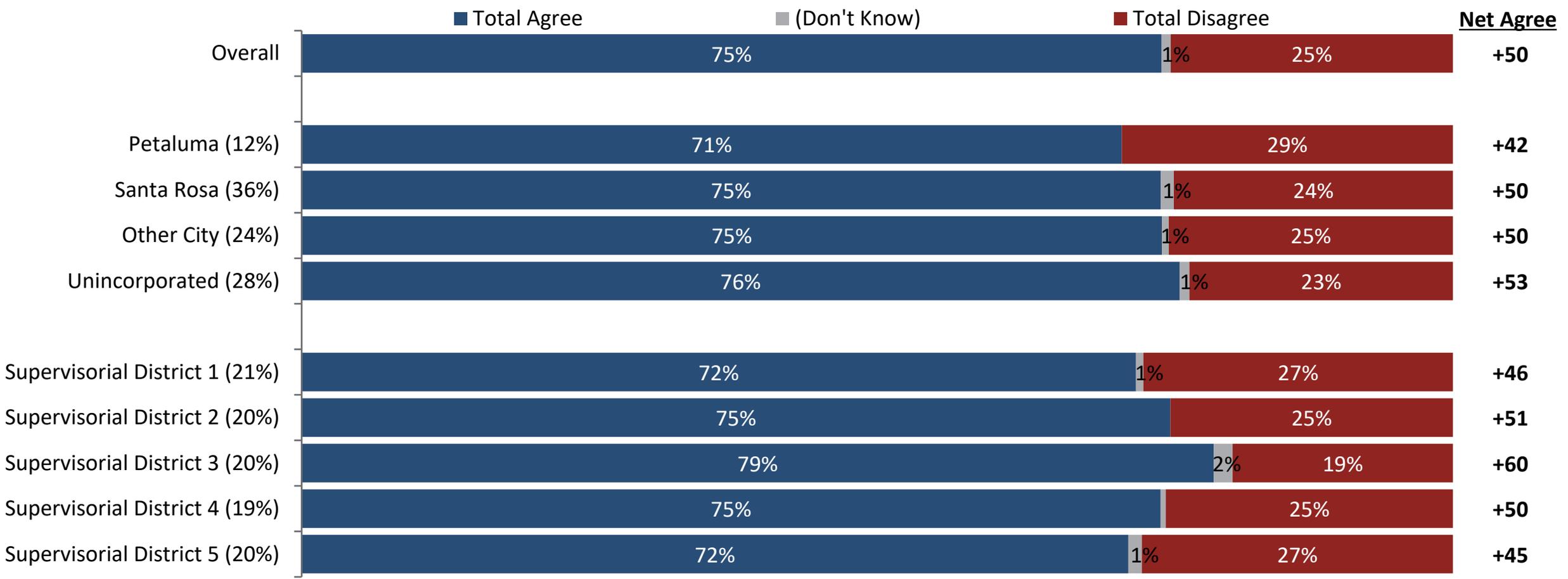
Sonoma County is a place that is welcoming to people of all backgrounds



Attitudes about Sonoma County by Region

Similarly, residents across regions agree Sonoma County is a place that is welcoming to people of all backgrounds.

Sonoma County is a place that is welcoming to people of all backgrounds

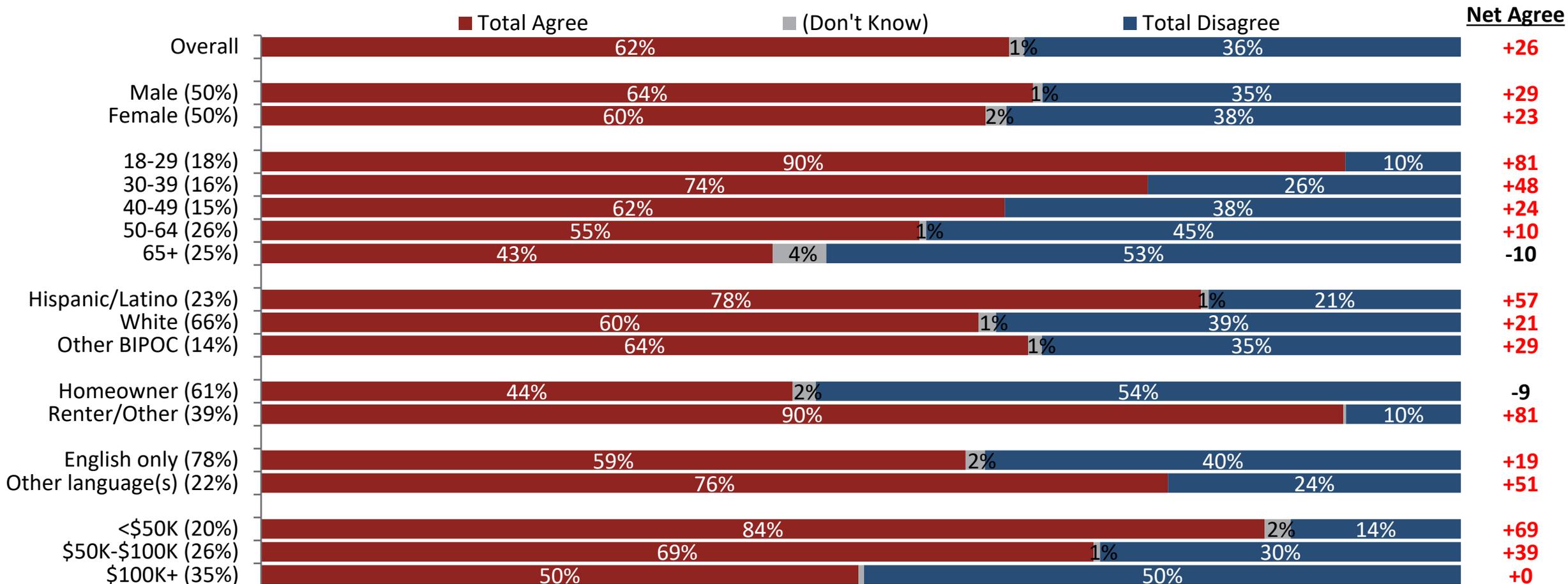


Q43. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Attitudes about Sonoma County by Subgroups

Younger residents, those who are renters, make less than \$50,000, and speak a language other than English are much more likely to be concerned about finding an affordable place to live.

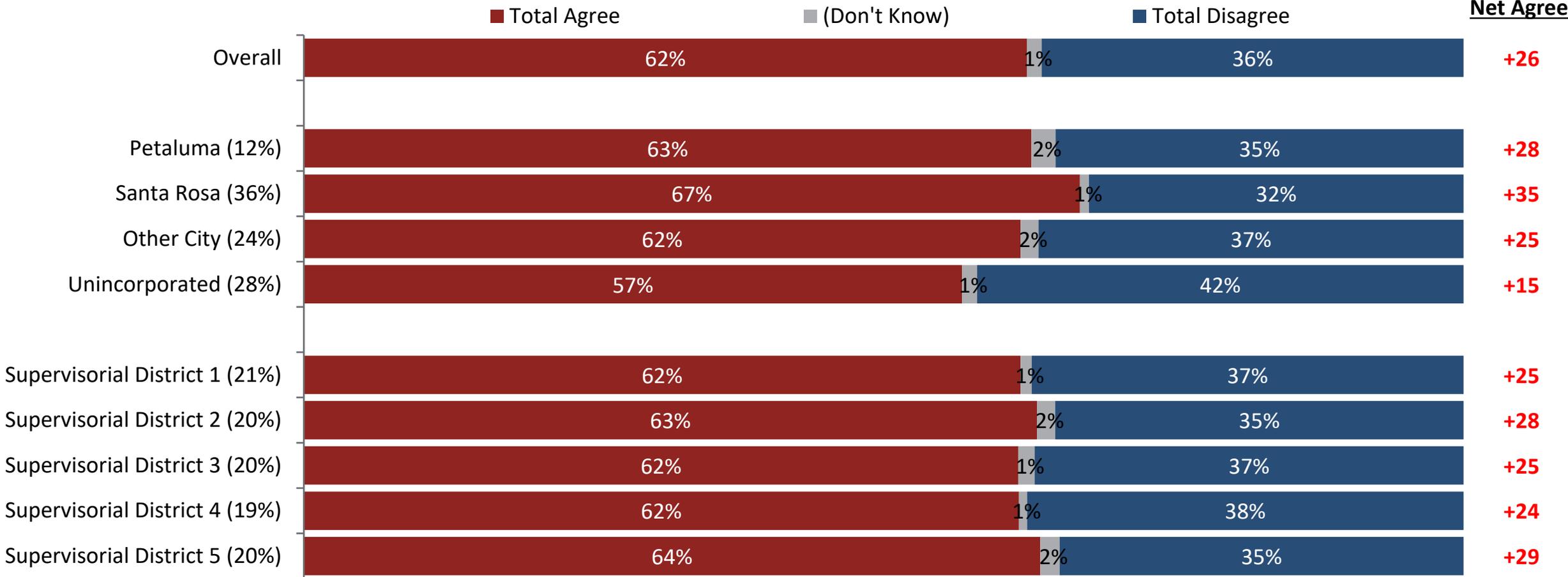
I am concerned about finding an affordable place to live in Sonoma County for myself



Attitudes about Sonoma County by Region

Residents across Sonoma County are concerned about finding an affordable place to live.

I am concerned about finding an affordable place to live in Sonoma County for myself



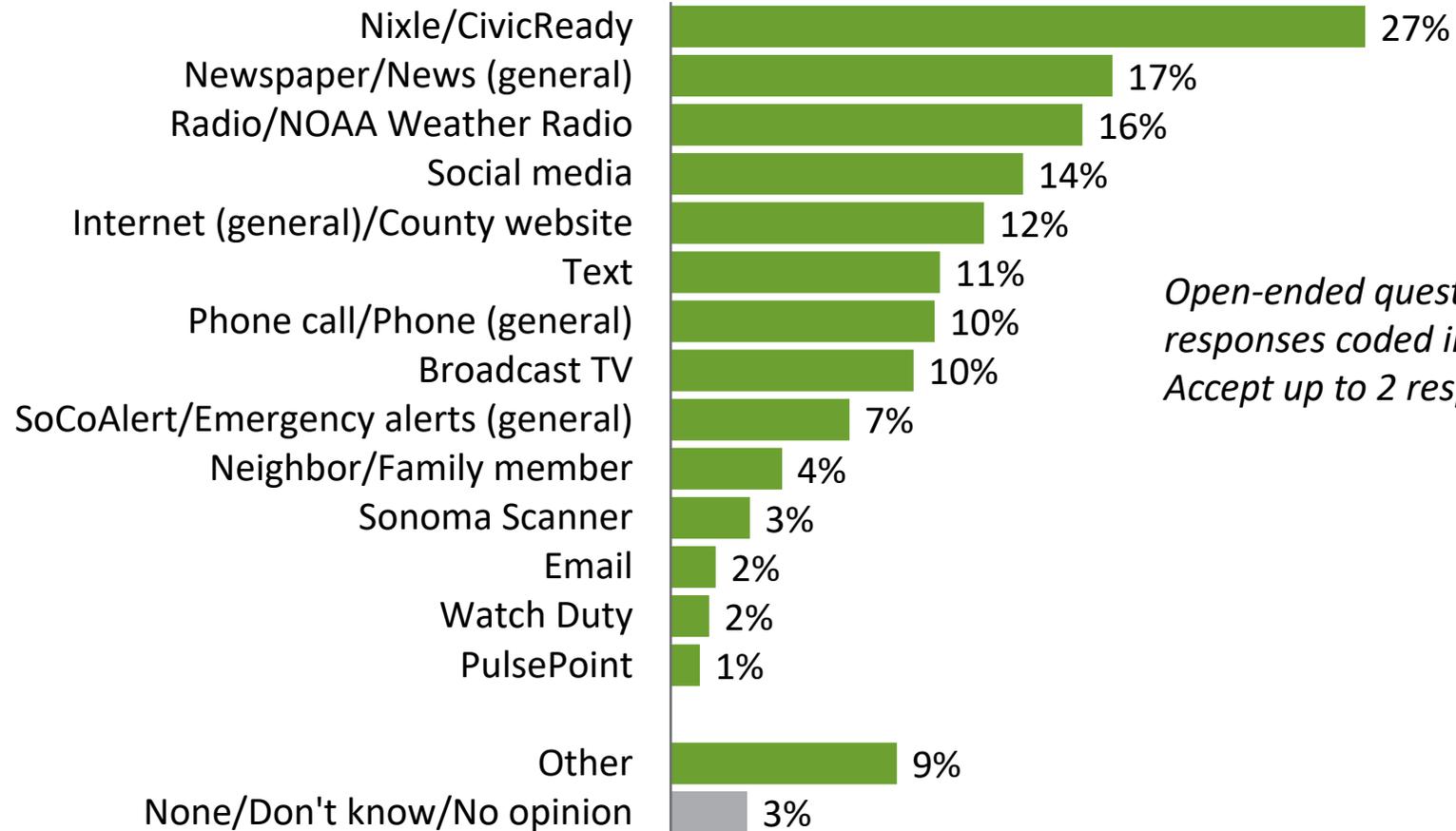


Communications

Emergency Information Sources

Nixle/CivicReady, newspapers, and the radio are the top sources residents report using to stay informed during an emergency.

What sources do you use to stay informed or for information during an emergency?

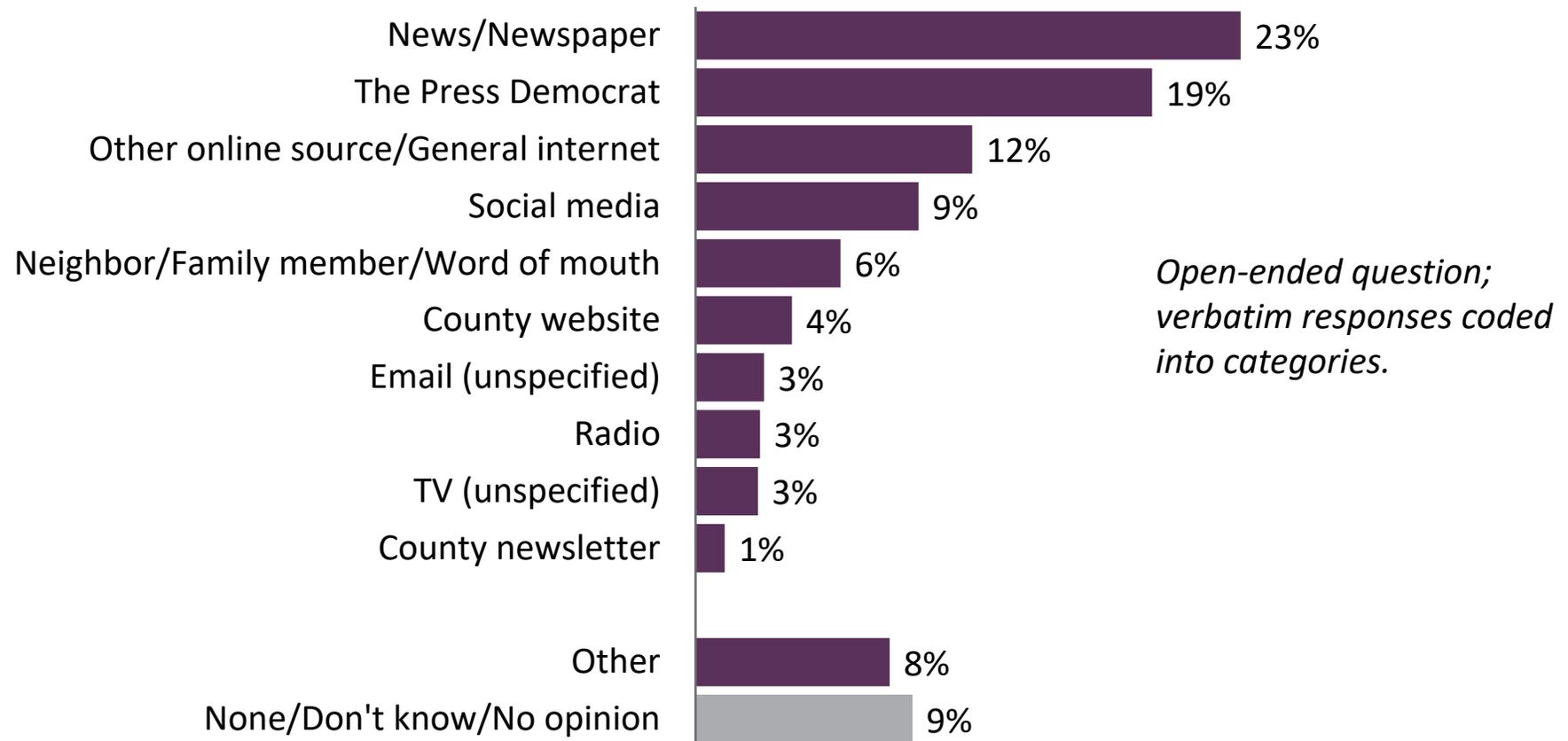


Open-ended question; verbatim responses coded into categories. Accept up to 2 responses.

Information Sources

The Press Democrat, other news sources, and the internet are the top-mentioned sources respondents use to find out what is going with Sonoma County.

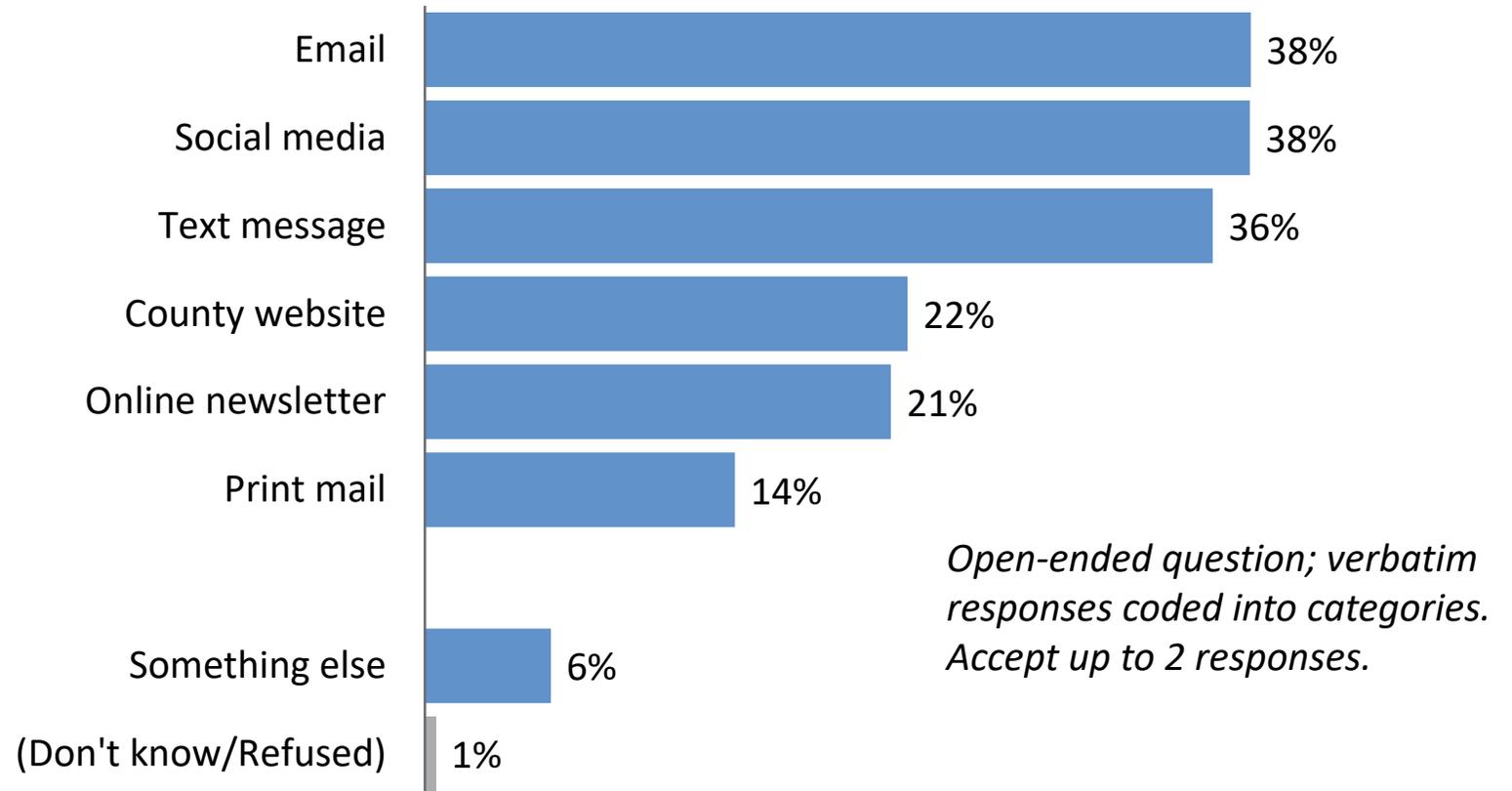
What is your primary source of information for finding out what is going on with Sonoma County government, if any?



County Communication

Email, social media, and text message are the best ways for the County to communicate with the local community on information about local news and events.

What do you think would be the best way for the County to communicate with the local community on information about local news and events? (Select up to 2)





Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- ▶ Although these poll results demonstrate some of the worries and concerns of Sonoma County residents, most are happy with the quality of life in Sonoma County, and a majority look forward to the future.
- ▶ In addition, most who have accessed county services in recent years have had positive interactions with county employees.
- ▶ Homelessness and housing affordability are top concerns, suggesting that countywide policies addressing these issues would be welcome by residents.
- ▶ The condition of roads in the county also appears to be a primary concern, so focusing on improving road maintenance and infrastructure should remain a top priority.
- ▶ Additional research may be prudent in the future to augment the findings from this scientifically valid, representative survey of residents.



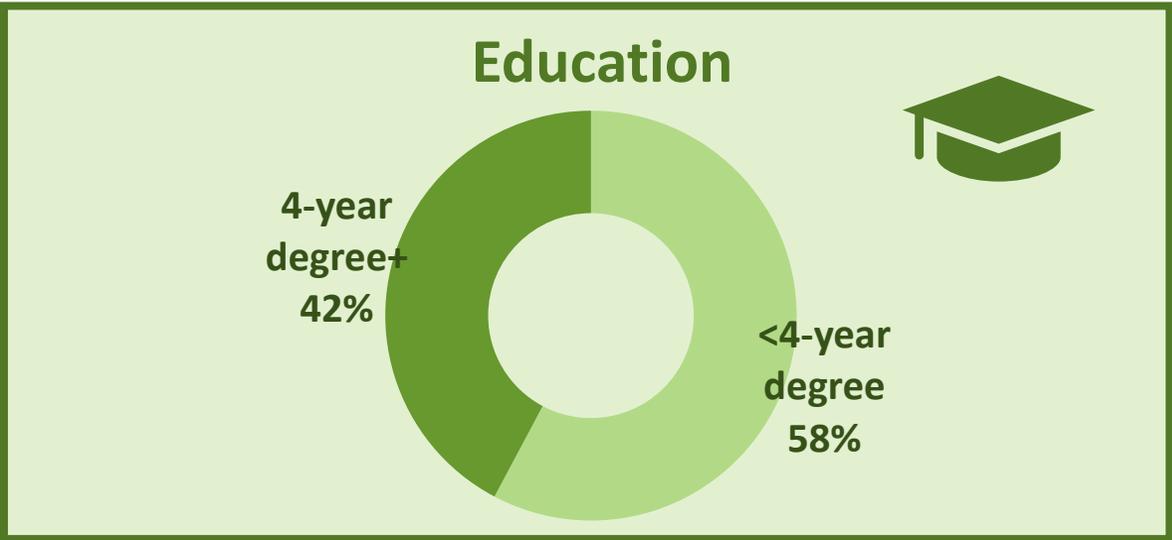
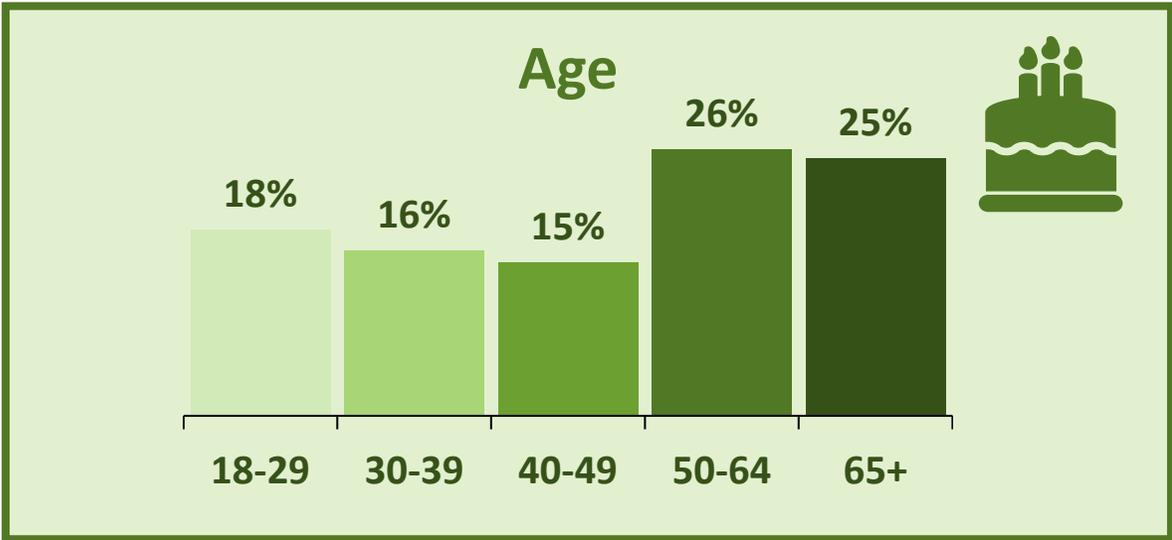
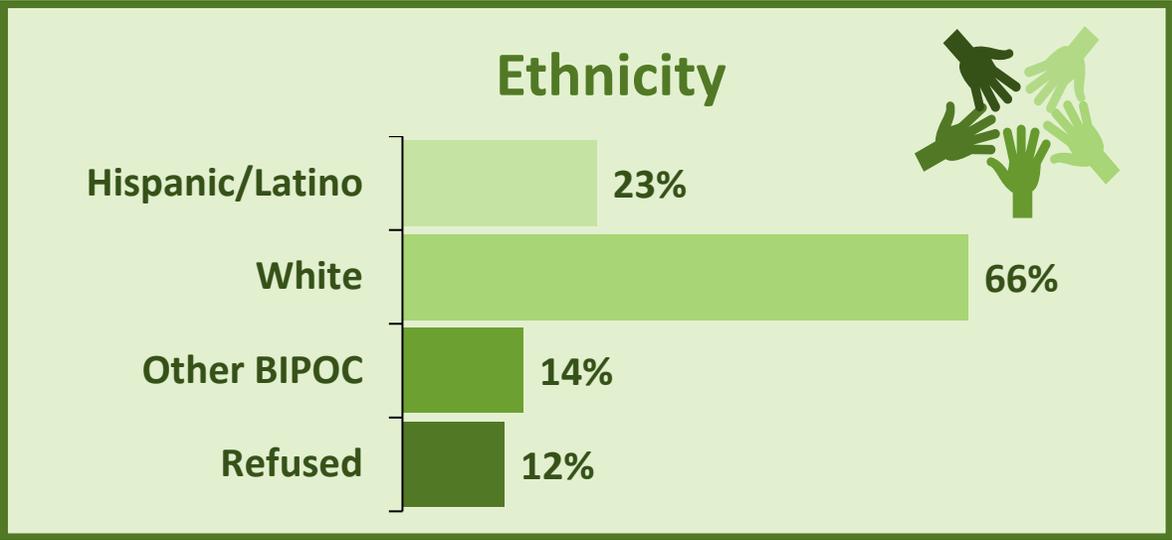
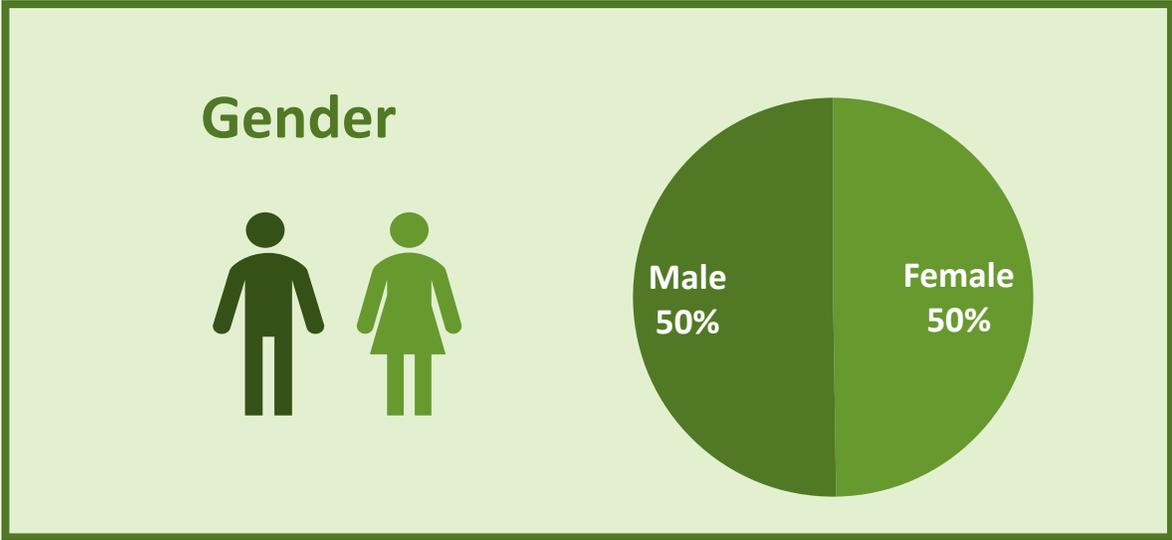
Jessica Polsky-Sanchez
jessica@emcresearch.com
510.550.8933

Sabrina Smith-Holmes
sabrina@emcresearch.com
206.652.5023

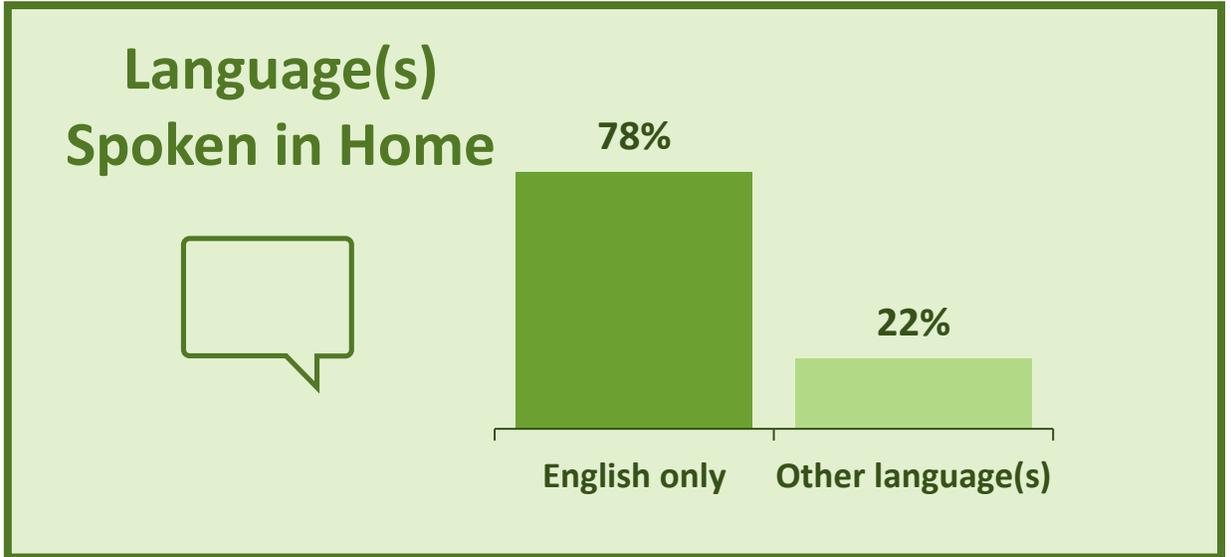
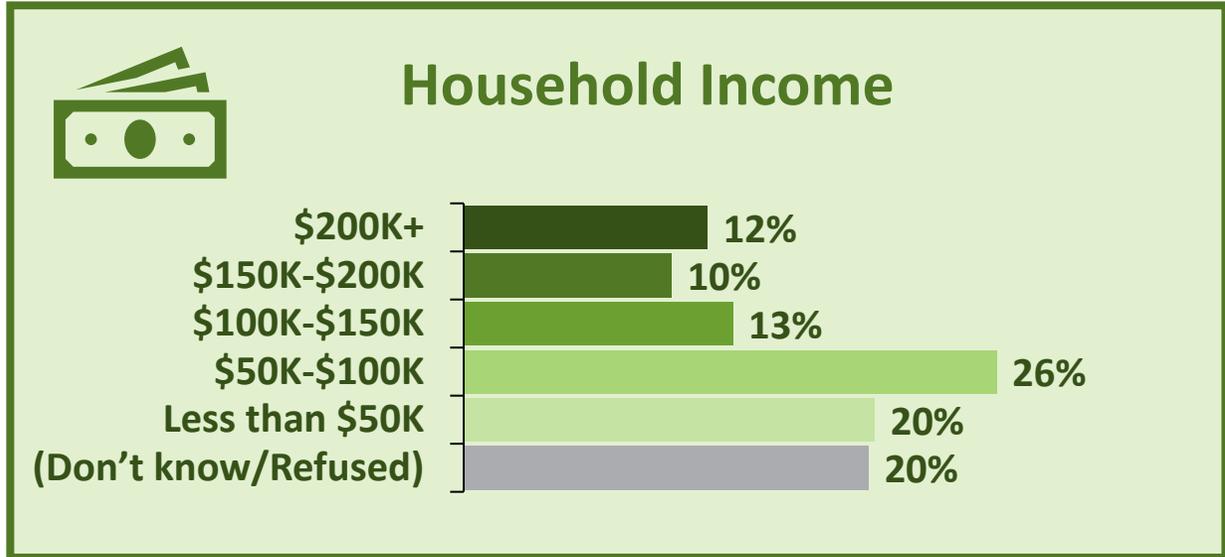
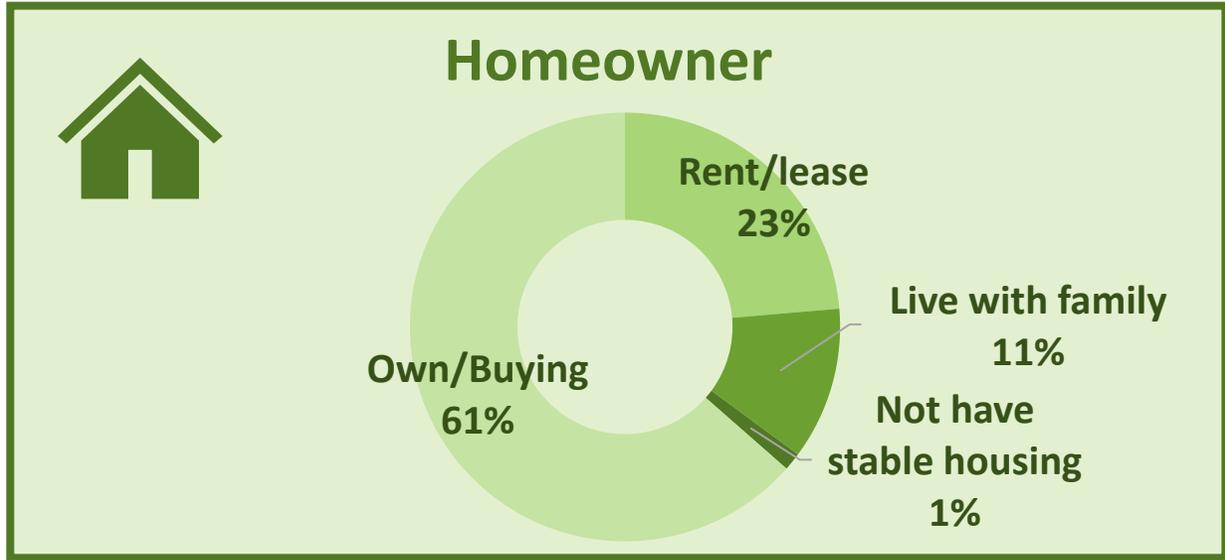


Appendix

Respondent Profile



Respondent Household Profile



Direction of Sonoma County

Residents in Sonoma County are divided about the way things are going in the county.

Do you feel that things in Sonoma County are generally going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

