

# Potential ¼ Cent Sales Tax Measure for Mental Health and Homeless Services in Sonoma County



Sonoma County Community Development Commission

# Serving Our Vulnerable Residents

- Sonoma County Department of Health Services' Behavioral Health Division provides essential mental health services to County's most vulnerable residents, including children, youth, adults, and seniors
- Our focus includes prevention and early intervention, outpatient services, emergency psychiatric care, residential services and suicide prevention
- Helps to provide substance use services to those suffering from alcohol, opioid and drug addiction

# Our Homeless Population

- Sonoma County Community Development Commission is lead agency for providing services to homeless population
- Provides community shelters, transitional housing, housing placement, rental assistance, eviction prevention and street outreach



# Challenges Facing Our Community

- In recent years, the need for mental health services and the rate of homelessness has increased
- 60% of households are impacted by a mental health condition in Sonoma County
- Many in our county are still healing from the trauma caused by the wildfires. Fear, isolation, and anxiety caused by COVID-19 have brought alarming new concerns for the mental health of our community - ready available services are needed



# Budget Cuts

- In the last three years, County programming has been redesigned and improved to operate more efficiently and effectively, however gaps still exist.
- Budget shortfalls from the state have forced continued significant cuts to mental health services, at a time when more and more people need help.
- Cuts have been made to early intervention programs at schools, which are necessary to help ensure all children have access to the health care they need.
- Inpatient psychiatric services have been cut, leaving our County without enough services for those with urgent needs that cannot wait.

# System of Care

- Unmet needs persist across the continuum of care including prevention and early intervention, care coordination, and housing and services for the most vulnerable in the county
- Without additional funding now for the most acute - where services cost the most - more painful reductions to programs and services will occur
- Ripple effects downstream will impact our criminal justice system, health systems, and educational systems - resulting in increased incarcerations, emergency room visits, and homeless on our streets

# Public Opinion Surveys

- EMC Research has conducted three polls regarding this measure since August, 2019.
- It became important to poll post-pandemic response to assess voter opinion during turbulent times.
- Voters continue to believe that there is a great need for funding for addressing homelessness and mental health services.
- Voters are supportive of services for children, veterans, emergency psychiatric care, mental health and addiction facilities and those experiencing homelessness.
- The most recent poll, conducted this June 30-July 2, shows support remains above the two-thirds threshold.

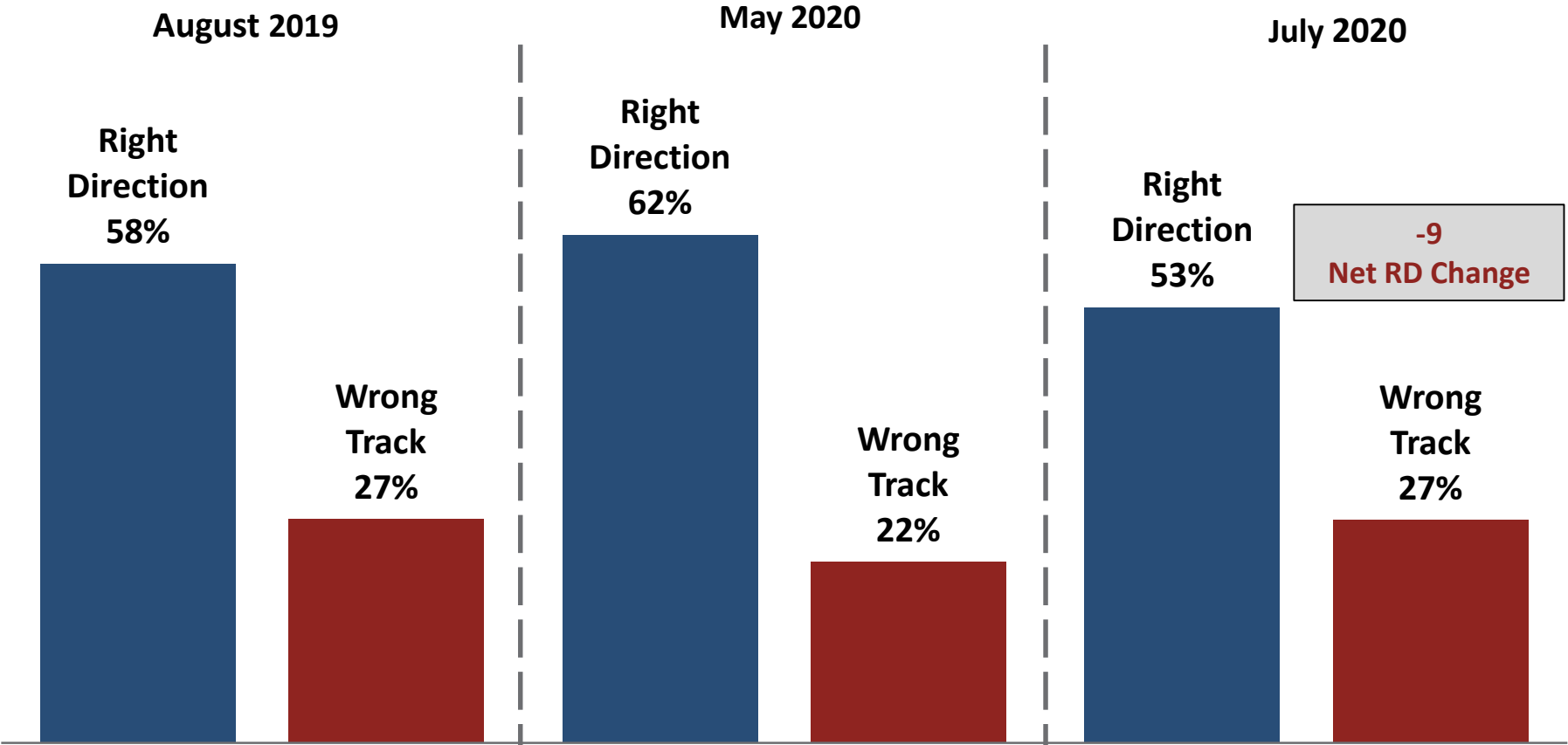
- ▶ Survey of Sonoma County likely November 2020 voters
- ▶ Survey conducted, June 30 – July 2, 2020
- ▶ 615 interviews; overall margin of error  $\pm 3.95$  percentage points
- ▶ A split-sample methodology was used to test different sales tax durations
- ▶ Voters were contacted for phone interviews via landline and cell phone, and via an email invitation to complete a web version of the survey

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



# Sonoma County Right Direction/Wrong Track

*A majority of voters continue to feel things in Sonoma County are going in the right direction, but optimism has fallen since May.*



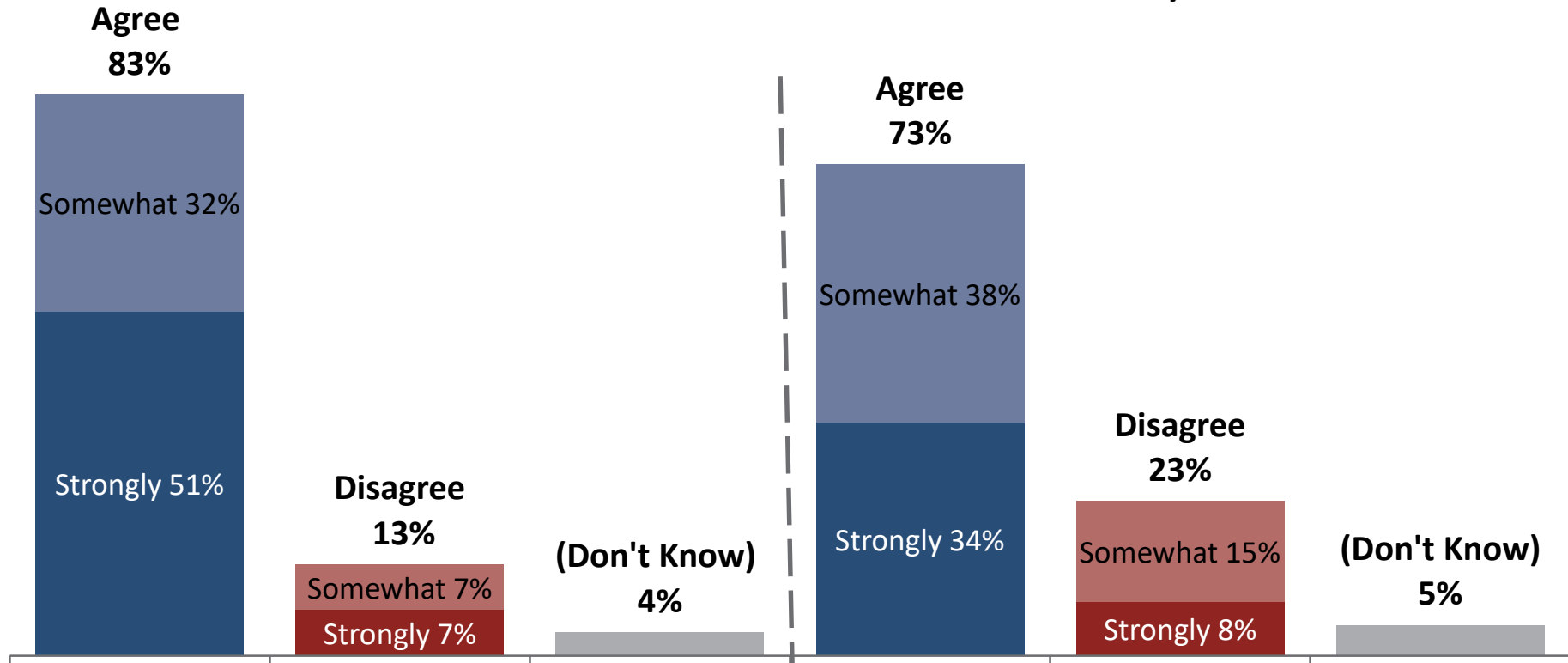
# Sonoma County COVID-19 Response

*While most agree Sonoma County is doing a good job responding to the pandemic, agreement has decreased since May.*

**Sonoma County is doing a good job responding to the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic.**

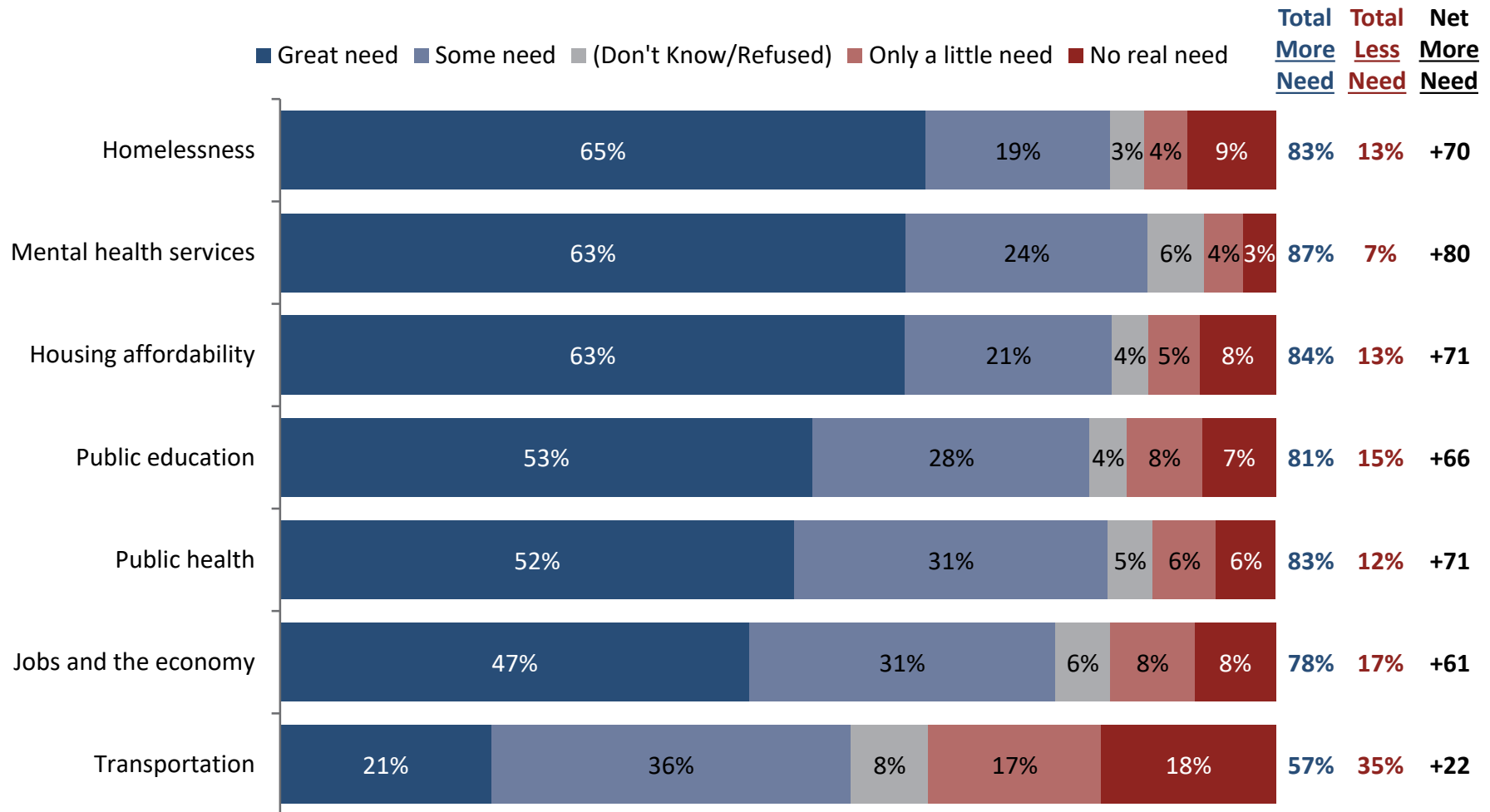
**May 2020**

**July 2020**



# Funding Priorities

*Voters indicate a need for more money for a number of priorities, with addressing homelessness, mental health services, and housing affordability having the highest intensity.*

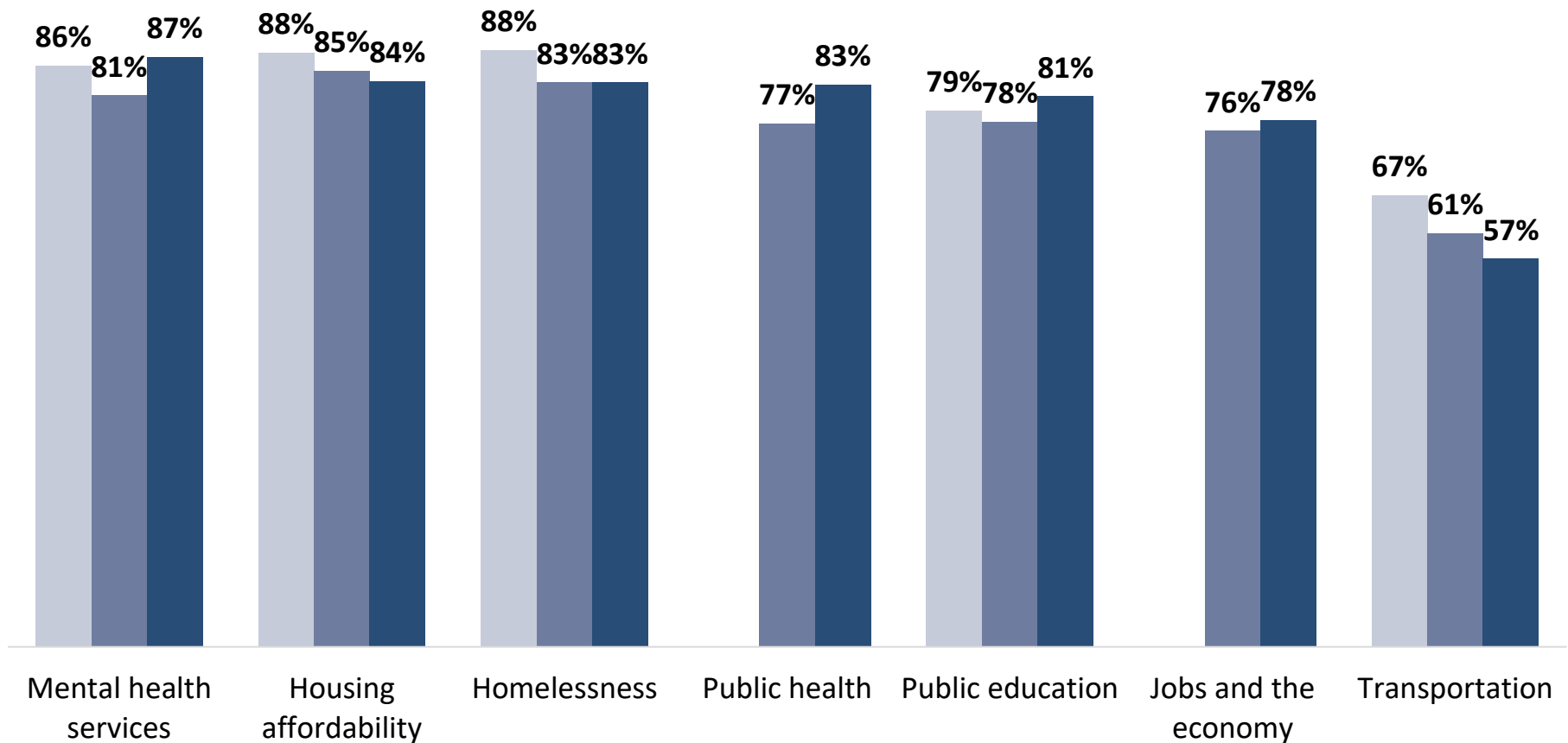


# Funding Priorities Tracked

*Perceived funding need for mental health services, public health, public education, and the economy have increased slight since May.*

% Total Need

■ Aug. 2019 ■ May 2020 ■ July 2020



# Initial Vote: 10 Year vs. No Sunset

*The 10 year duration receives support above two-thirds, while no sunset is significantly lower.*

## **Split A: 10 Year (n=300)**

### **Sonoma County Local Mental Health, Addiction and Homeless Services Measure.**

To provide local mental health and addiction services and facilities for children, adults, veterans, seniors and those experiencing homelessness including: permanent supportive housing; crisis assessment; emergency psychiatric care; early detection and intervention; suicide prevention; and opioid and substance use prevention, treatment and recovery, shall the

County of Sonoma establish a ¼ cent sales tax for **10 years**, providing approximately \$25 million annually, with annual audits and citizen oversight to ensure funds are properly spent?

**Yes  
71%**

**+48  
Net Yes**

**No  
24%**

**(Undecided+Leans)  
5%**

## **Split B: No Sunset (n=315)**

### **Sonoma County Local Mental Health, Addiction and Homeless Services Measure.**

To provide local mental health and addiction services and facilities for children, adults, veterans, seniors and those experiencing homelessness including: permanent supportive housing; crisis assessment; emergency psychiatric care; early detection and intervention; suicide prevention; and opioid and substance use prevention, treatment and recovery, shall the

County of Sonoma establish a ¼ cent sales tax **until ended by voters**, providing approximately \$25 million annually, with annual audits and citizen oversight to ensure funds are properly spent?

**Yes  
65%**

**+36  
Net Yes**

**No  
28%**

**(Undecided+Leans)  
7%**

**66.7  
%**

# Initial Vote Tracked: 10 Year Duration

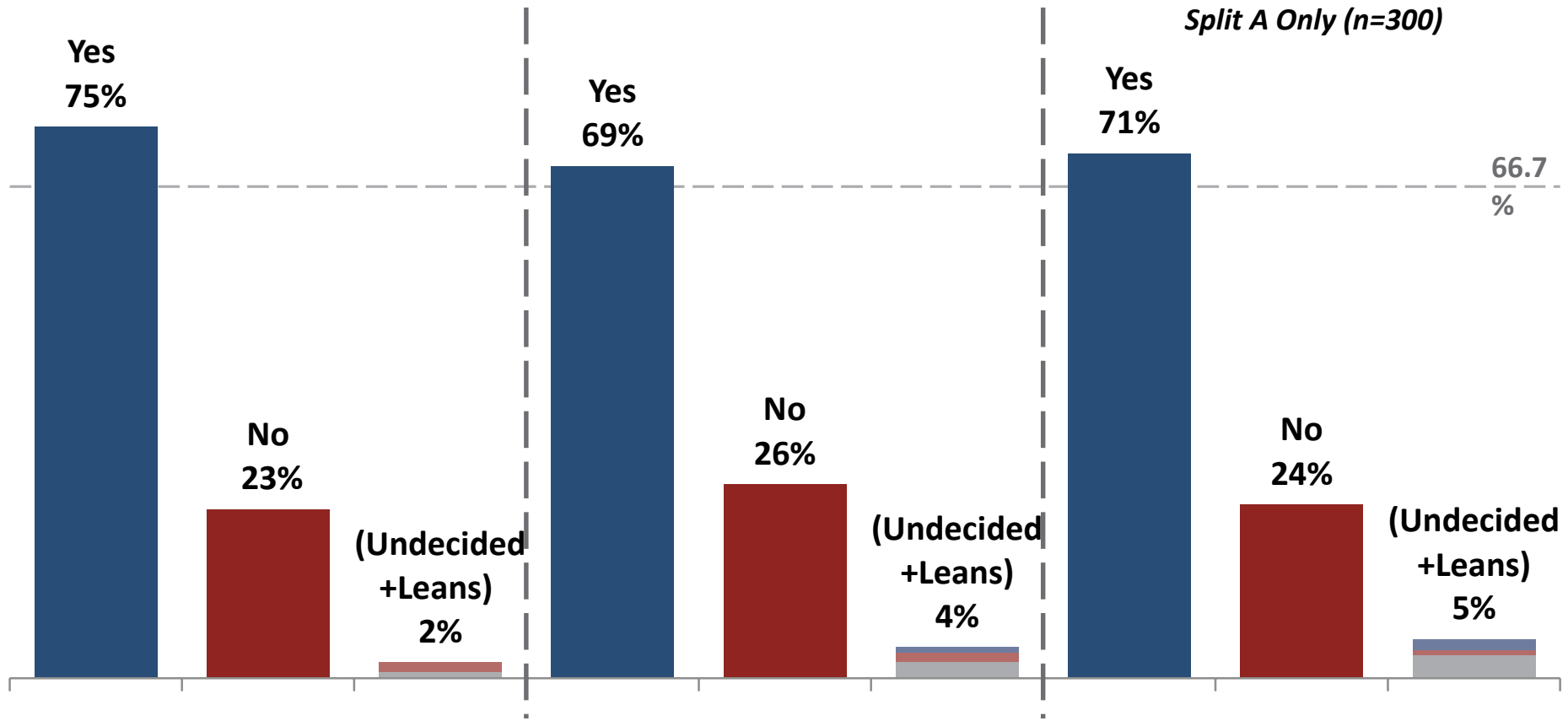
*Solid support has consistently tested above the two-thirds threshold.*

**August 2019**

**May 2019**

**July 2020**

*Split A Only (n=300)*

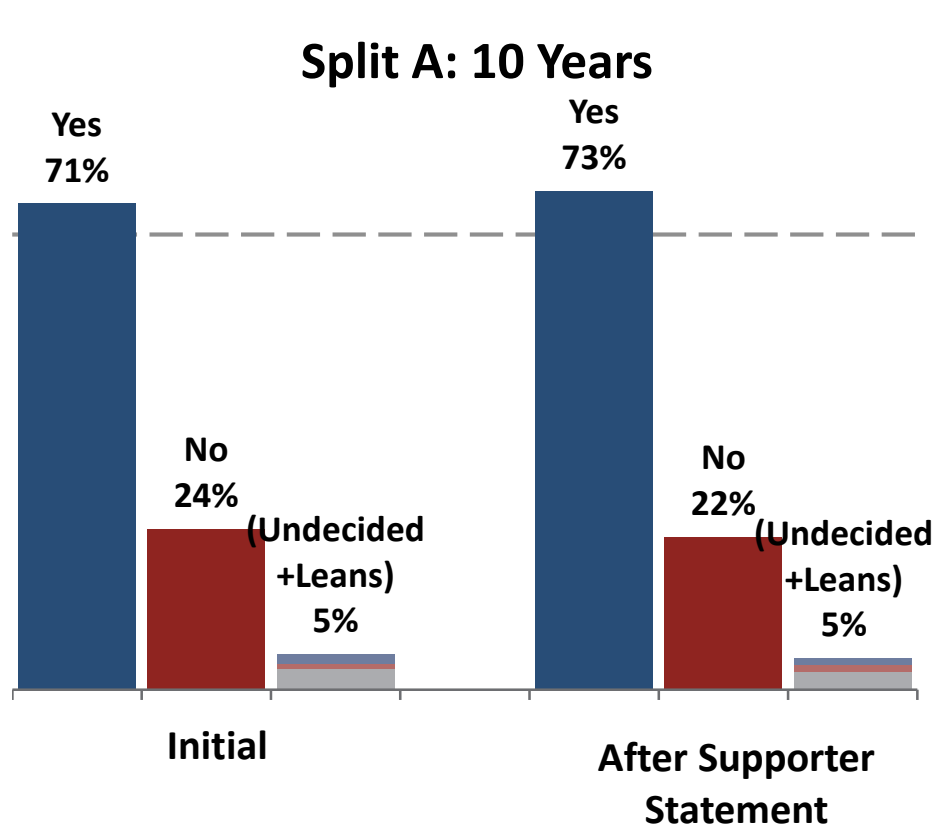


# Measure Vote After Supporter Statement

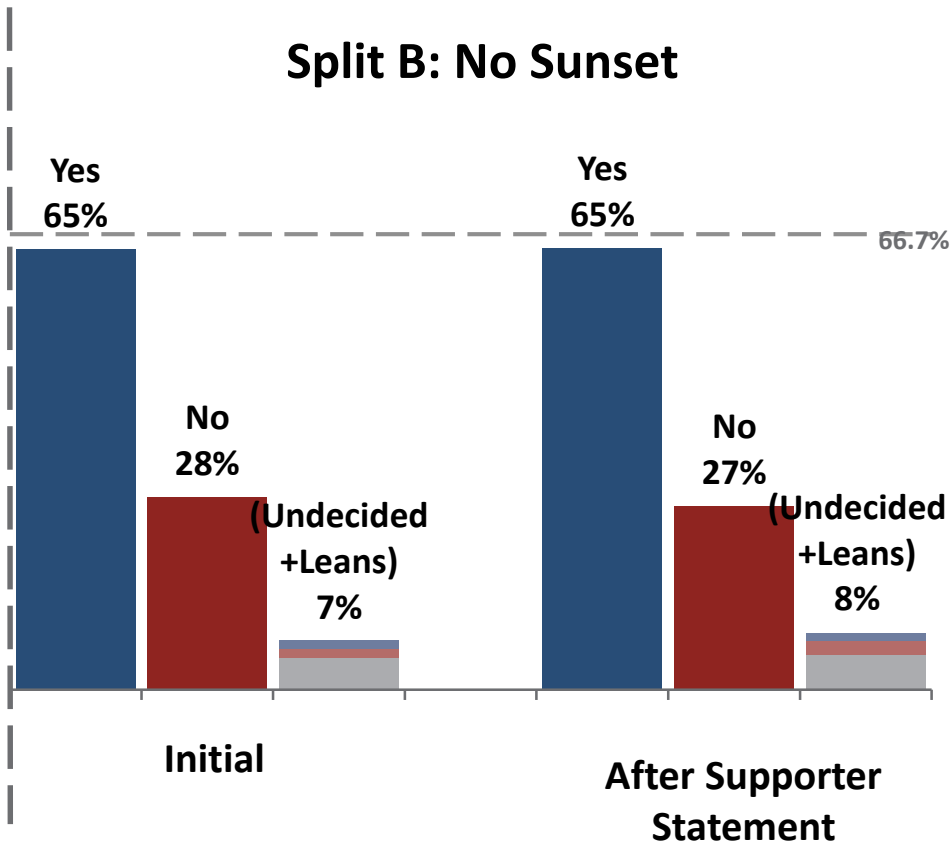
*There is no statistical impact on support after voters are provided a statement in support of the measure.*

Supporters of the measure say behavioral and mental health conditions have been a growing epidemic. This measure will add needed emergency psychiatric services and provide resources and treatment in schools across the county and to those who are experiencing homelessness. These services will take the burden off law enforcement and first responders who have been left to handle mental health emergencies and will make Sonoma County safer and healthier.

## Split A: 10 Years



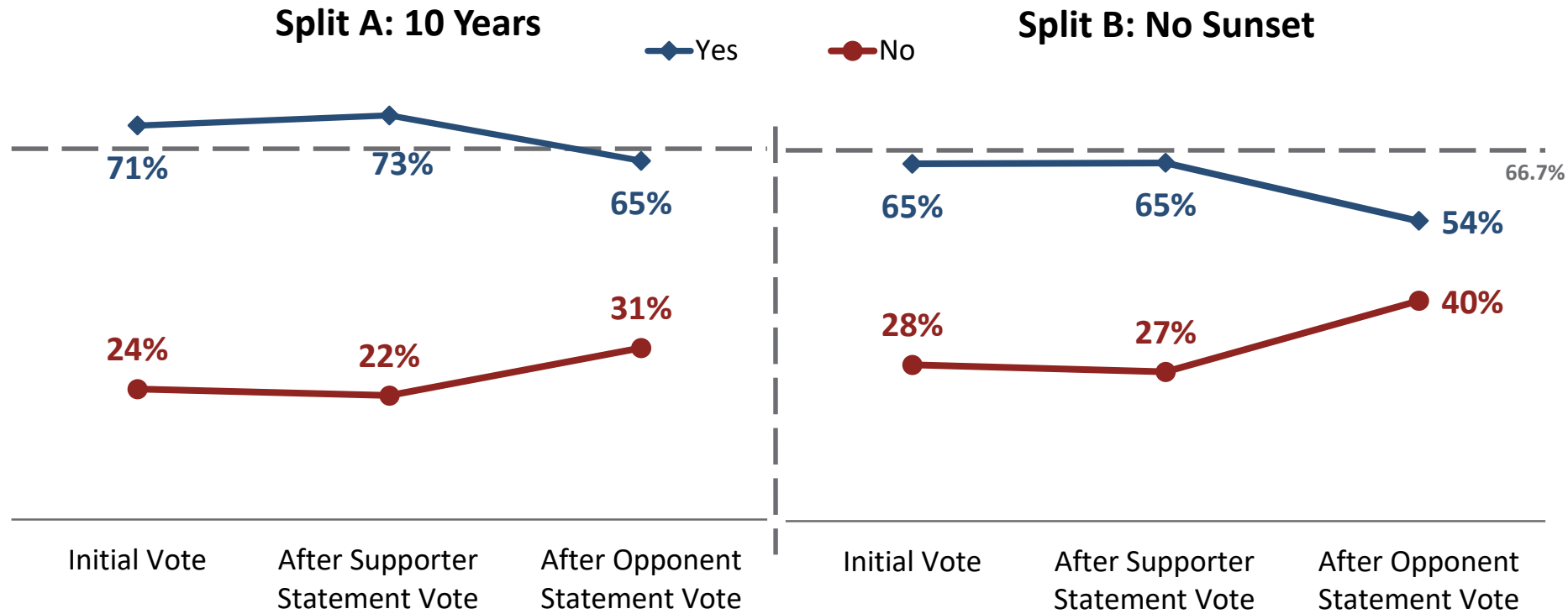
## Split B: No Sunset



# After Opposition Statement Vote

*An opposition statement resonates and drives support below the two-thirds threshold for both measure durations tested.*

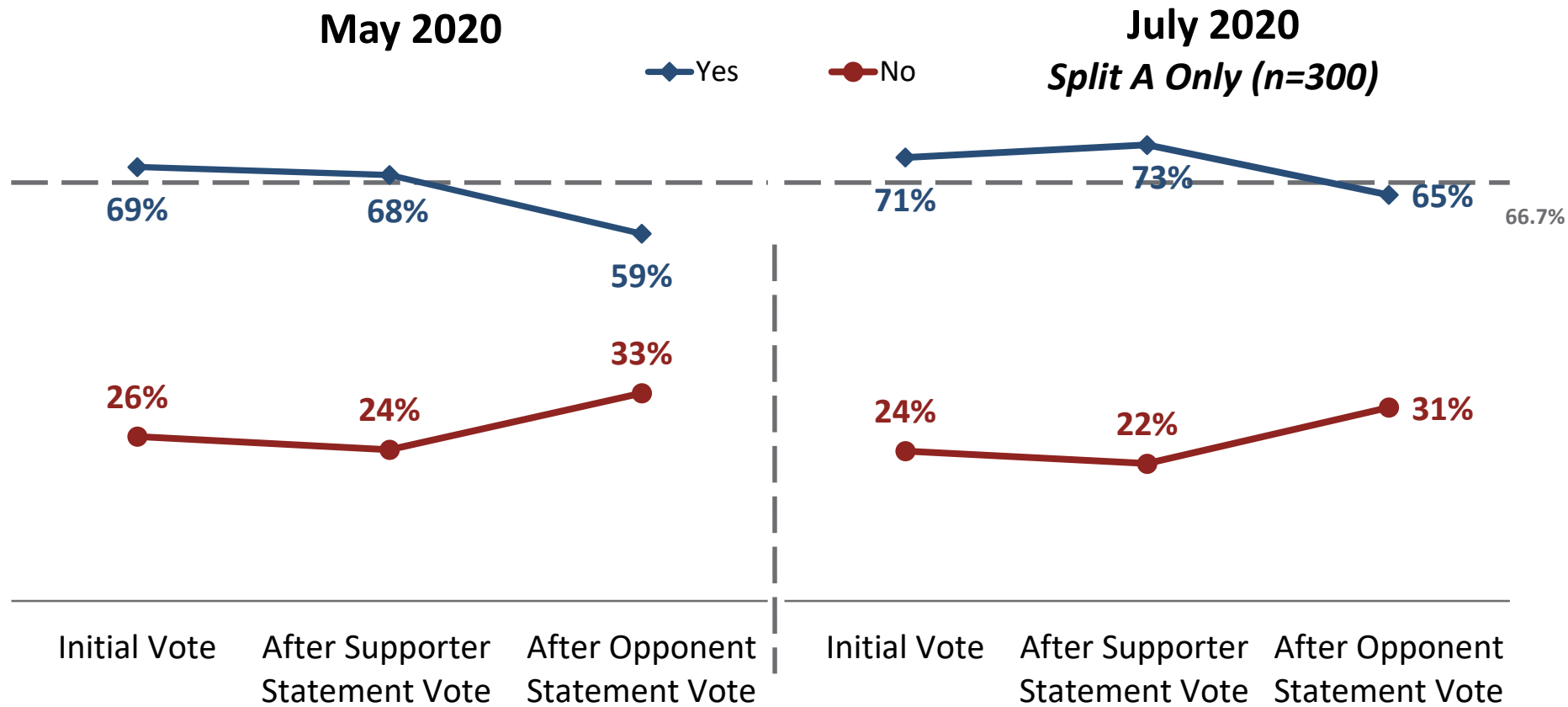
Opponents of the measure say now is not the time to be increasing taxes. The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the economy, leaving many without jobs and others struggling to get by. This is a tax we just can't afford.





# Vote Progression Tracked

*Support for the measure is slightly higher than May; however, the impact of additional information is consistent.*



# Conclusions

- ▶ The Behavioral Health measure remains viable, receiving support over the two-thirds threshold needed for passage.
- ▶ The environment for November continues to be a question mark. Now more than 100 days since the shelter in place order, optimism and positive feelings may be waning after surging in May. Additionally, anti-tax attitudes have steadily increased as the recession has waged on. Continued deterioration of voter optimism and tax tolerance could pose a headwind for measure success in the fall.
- ▶ Despite those concerns, voter awareness of the need for mental health services remains high, the measure has consistently tested above two-thirds, and the November election should be an advantageous climate for this measure.

# Potential Local Measure

- The County is considering placing a  $\frac{1}{4}$  cent sales tax measure on the ballot in November 2020.
- The measure would generate approximately \$25 million each year for 10 years.
- In order to pass, the measure must be supported by 66.7% of those who vote on the measure.
- All funds would stay local and no funding could be taken away by the State.
- An independent citizen oversight committee would review expenditures and provide reports to the community.



# Why November 2020

- Highest turnout of tax supportive voters in the next 4-year cycle – won't happen again until Nov 2024
- High turnout includes renters, people of color, young voters, etc.
- Economy, and therefore willingness to support tax measures, is likely to be worse in 2022
- Public awareness of homelessness and mental health needs is at an all time high due to recent developments, including fires, JRT and COVID-19
- No state or other regional homeless measures are on the ballot



# Outreach

- City Managers
- City Mayors and reps
- Redwood Community Health Coalition – Sonoma County FQHC Leadership
- Police Chiefs
- Sheriff Essick
- Catholic Charities
- Sonoma County Business Representatives
- ESC Union Leadership
- NAMI\*
- DA Jill Ravitch
- St Vincent de Paul Board
- Sonoma County Medical Association
- Health Action Council
- Santa Rosa Junior College Staff & Leadership
- COTS
- Los Cien\*
- Santa Rosa Metro Chamber Advocacy Committee
- Graton Rancheria Leadership
- SEIU Leadership

*\*Presentation scheduled or pending*

# Outreach

- All city council members
- West County Community Services
- Judge DeMeo
- Reach for Home
- Sonoma Applied Village Services
- Buckelew Programs
- Social Advocates for Youth
- The Living Room
- YWCA
- Interfaith Shelter Network
- PEP Housing
- Community Action Partnership
- Petaluma People Services
- Russian Riverkeepers
- Sonoma County Acts of Kindness
- Squeaky Wheel Bicycle Coalition
- Veterans Resource Center
- Sonoma County Office of Education / Leadership 40
- Kashia Band of Pomo Indians

# Details of Measure

## Behavioral Health Facilities

*22% of Total Funding*

**Residential Care Facility**

**Transitional Housing for individuals discharging from crisis services**

**Psychiatric Health Facility & Operations**

# Details of Measure

## Emergency Psychiatric / Crisis Services

*44% of Total Funding*

**Mobile Support Team Expansion / Crisis, Assessment, Prevention, and Education (CAPE)**

**Crisis Stabilization Unit**

**Residential Crisis Services**

**Inpatient Hospital Services – Adult**





# Details of Measure

## Outpatient & Substance Use Disorder Services

*18% of Total Funding*

**Mental Health Services at Children's Shelters**

**Mental Health Services at Community College for Students (including Veterans)**

**Services to support Residential Care Facilities, Permanent Supportive Housing, and other Housing**

**Substance Use Disorder Services Expansion**

# Details of Measure

**Behavioral Health Homeless** *14% of Total Funding*  
**Transitional & Permanent Supportive Housing**  
*2% of Total Funding*

**Behavioral Health Services for individuals who are homeless**

**Care Coordination for High Needs Homeless**

**Supportive Housing Pool**



# Next Steps & Questions

- Continue seeking feedback from community organizations and leaders
- First reading July 28
- Second reading and BOS vote on August 4
- Questions and feedback?

