



A SURVEY OF COMMUNITY ATTITUDES REGARDING THE CITY OF ELYRIA

May 2008

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BACKGROUND

Survey Methodology

This report presents the findings of a telephone survey completed with 400 registered voters living in the City of Elyria between May 6 and May 10, 2008.

- By design, a sample of voters who voted in two or more of the last four general elections was selected. The interviews were distributed across the city at the ward level in proportion to the total number of voters who voted in at least two of the last four general elections.
- The sample was also stratified one-half male, one-half female.
- The survey of 400 respondents has a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ at the 95% confidence level.

Survey Purpose

The survey had three main purposes. They were:

1. To assess voters' satisfaction with the City of Elyria overall and with a number of city services, the direction of the City, awareness of the City's 2015 Plan and importance of some of the initiatives identified in the plan.
2. To measure support for a some tax options including an income tax increase and a renewal, and preference for a property tax versus an income tax to help pay for city services.
3. To explore why voters think the renewal failed in March, reasons they may have for opposing an increase, and arguments that might increase their likelihood to support an income tax increase to pay for current and additional city services, including how the money would be used.

For geographic analysis, we divided the city into the following three regions:

- Northeast - Wards 4 & 7
- Southeast – Wards 1 & 3 and
- West – Wards 2, 5, & 6.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Voters' ratings of the City of Elyria are mixed.

More voters are satisfied than dissatisfied with the City overall and city services, but they are not very optimistic about the direction of the city and what they get for their tax money.

- 65% are satisfied with Elyria as a place to live and 34% are dissatisfied.
- But only 35% said things in the city are going in the right direction while 43% think things are moving in the wrong direction.
- Similarly, 75% are satisfied with the services provided by the city, while 24% are dissatisfied.
- And a majority of voters are satisfied with six of the seven specific city services tested. Rated lowest was satisfaction with street repair and maintenance with just 26% satisfied.
- But voters are divided on whether they get their money's worth in city services for the amount of taxes they pay with 44% saying they do and 46% saying they do not.

Voters' attitudes toward the city, city services and value for what they pay in taxes all impact their willingness to support a tax increase for the city. Thus, if the City can increase residents' satisfaction with city services, support for an income tax would likely increase.

The March renewal of the city income failed for a variety of reasons.

Most voters (83%) were aware that the City of Elyria had a renewal of the city's one-half percent income tax on the ballot in March that failed. A variety of reasons for why they think the renewal failed, but cited most often were taxes (21%), the poor economy (16%), the city doesn't make good use of the money it has (11%), city services are poor (11%) and didn't know it was a renewal (11%).

There is little chance of passing an increase in the city income tax in August, but a majority of voters would likely support a renewal.

Initial support for a three-quarter percent income tax increase that would replace the existing one-half percent income tax started out at 36% Yes and 55% No. By the end of the survey, support increased but it was still under half with 45% Yes and 48% No. There is little chance of passing an increase in August.

Support increased for a renewal of the existing one-half percent income tax. In addition to the 45% who would support an increase, another 29% of those opposed or undecided said they would vote for a renewal of the existing one-half percent tax. Thus, while the chances of passing the renewal are better, it will still require an active, visible campaign to pass it.

There was little support for a property tax to pay for city services, with just 7% preferring this option. Three-fifths preferred that the City ask for an income tax (61%).

Accountability, creditability and affordability are all reasons for voting against an income tax.

Many voters question the City's past use of money, whether they can believe what the City says and if they could afford to pay more taxes.

- 56% disagreed or do not think the City of Elyria makes good use of the tax money it receives.
- 49% disagreed and do not think they can believe what the City of Elyria tells them about city finances and
- 47% agreed that they would likely to vote for the income tax increase, but they can't afford it.
- And 29% would be less likely to vote for the increase knowing it would cost a family with an annual taxable income about \$10 a month more in taxes.
- Also, 37% would be less likely to vote for the income tax increase if it were permanent.

On the positive side, some of the uses of the tax money were well received.

Importantly, 62% agreed that it is worth paying this income tax increase to maintain and improve city services while only 33% disagreed with this. Thus, voters need to be convinced that the income tax will help improve and maintain city services.

Voters consistently show support for using the money to pay for street repair, police and fire services, as well as attracting jobs, and the City should concentrate its efforts on providing these services.

- Nearly half of the voters (47%) would be more likely to vote for knowing that the additional money from the increase would be used for police and fire personnel and for street repair and maintenance.
- 36% would be more supportive knowing that if the increase fails and the existing levy expires, the City will have to cut \$6 million in spending, which will include major lay-offs in police and fire personnel.
- Three of the four most important initiatives from the 2015 Plan were paving and maintaining city streets (95%), increasing the number of police officers and amount of protection (82%) and increasing the number of firefighters and the amount of fire protection (80%).
- Also important to a large majority of voters was revitalizing downtown Elyria and attracting business and jobs to the city (81%).

Also, half of the voters (52%) are opposed to closing the fire station. In our opinion the City should not close the fire station right now since many voters want the City to spend more on fire protection.

We also suggest gathering more information about the swimming pools before making a decision given that just half of the voters (54%) support replacing the four existing pools with one centrally located swimming pool and four water spray parks.

Also important to passing an income tax is reminding voters that retirement income including pensions and social security will not be taxed. Nearly half (46%) said this would make them more likely to support the income tax.

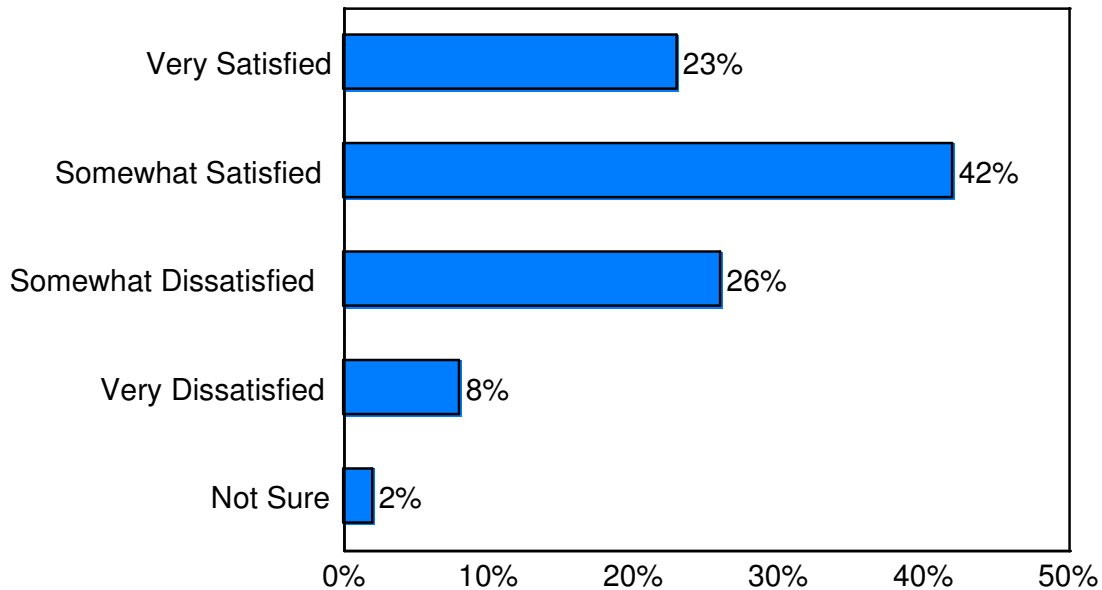
No strong spokesperson or group emerged. At most, a third (34%) said they would find city residents most believable for the city income tax issue. A fifth each preferred hearing from the Mayor (22%), City Council (19%), the City Auditor (17%) as well as police (21%), firefighters (20%) and the Chronicle-Telegram (15%). The City might benefit by asking a citizens committee to review city finances, and verifying the need for an increase and the accountability of city government.

I. Satisfaction with Elyria & City Services

Two-out-of-three voters are satisfied with Elyria as a place to live.

Overall, 65% of the voters said they are satisfied with Elyria as a place to live, but of these, just a fourth (23%) are **very satisfied**. A third of the voters (34%) are somewhat (26%) or very (8%) dissatisfied with Elyria as a place to live.

Q2 OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE CITY OF ELYRIA AS A PLACE TO LIVE



The only significant demographic variation in satisfaction with the City of Elyria as a place to live was by age. And satisfaction increased as age increased. That is, only 50% of the 18 to 34 year olds said they are very or somewhat satisfied with the City of Elyria as a place to live while this increased to about two-thirds among 35 to 49 year olds (61%) and 50 to 64 year olds (65%) while 70% of senior citizens said they are satisfied.

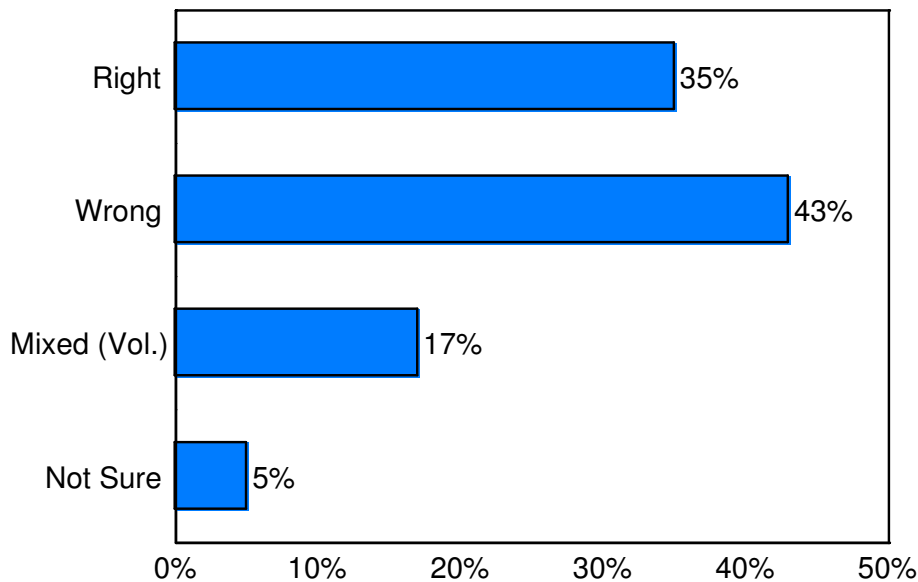
Satisfaction was also lower among those with annual household incomes of \$70,000 or more (58%).

We also notice that those who would support an increase in the city’s income tax were much more apt to be satisfied with the city as a place to live (81%) than those who would vote against an increase (47%) and a renewal (37%).

More said the City is moving in the wrong direction than think it is going in the right direction.

When asked if they think the City of Elyria is generally moving in the right direction or the wrong direction, 43% said wrong direction, while only 35% said right direction. Another 17% said it is mixed or some of both while only 5% weren't sure. Clearly, many voters are not very optimistic about the future of the city.

Q3 DO YOU THINK THE CITY OF ELYRIA IS MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR WRONG DIRECTION



Most demographic groups were more apt to say Elyria is moving in the **wrong direction**. The only exceptions were senior citizens (41/29; right/wrong), voters in the western wards (40/35) and Independent voters (45/38).

Over half of 18 to 34 year olds said the City is going in the wrong direction (38/58; right/wrong) as did about half of 35 to 49 year olds (29/50) and 50 to 64 year olds (34/47).

Here too there is some difference by vote support. Those who would support an income tax increase (54/25) or Moved Positive (40/34) were optimistic about the direction of the City. But a large majority of those who would vote against an increase (20/60) or a renewal (11/73) think the City is moving in the wrong direction. This tells us that the City will have to convince more voters of the importance of supporting a renewal or increase for the future of the City and moving it in the right direction.

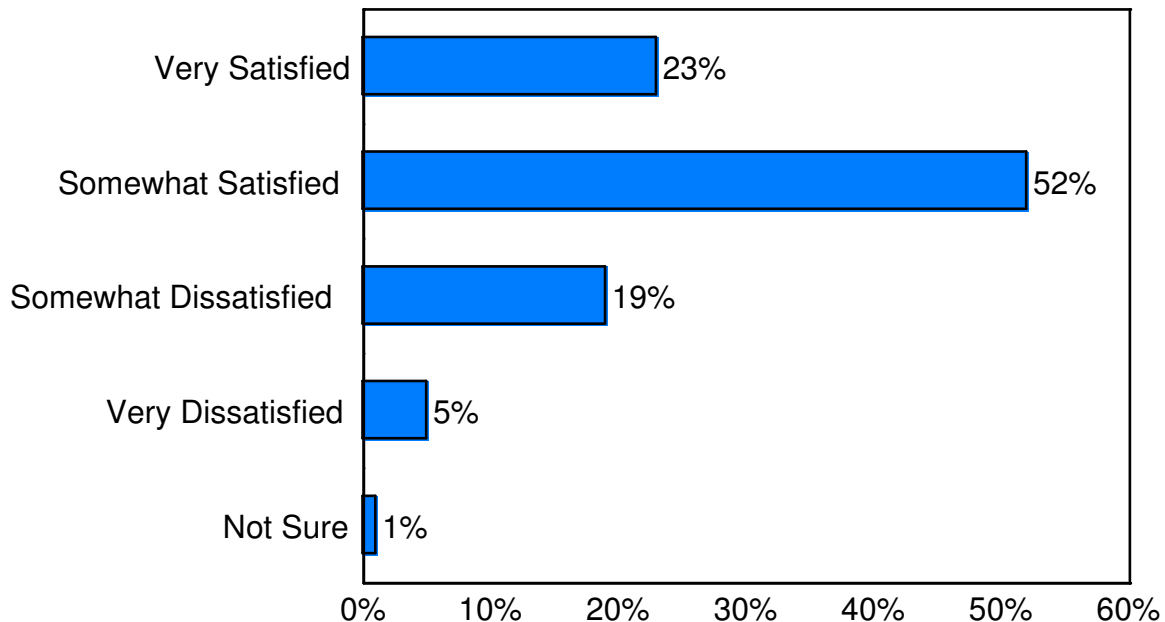
There was a strong correlation between these first two questions. That is...

- Nearly two-thirds of those very satisfied with Elyria as a place to live think it is going in the right direction (65%).
- Those somewhat satisfied with the City are evenly divided (38/34; right/wrong direction).
- 70% of those dissatisfied with Elyria said things are going in the wrong direction.

More voters are satisfied with city services overall.

Three-fourths of the voters (75%) said they are very or somewhat satisfied with the services provided by the City of Elyria compared to 65% satisfied with the City overall. But here too just a fourth (23%) are **very satisfied** while 52% are somewhat satisfied. Another fourth (24%) are somewhat or very dissatisfied with city services overall.

Q4 OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH CITY SERVICES



Here too, the percent satisfied with city services increased as age increased, from 50% among 18 to 34 year olds to 81% among senior citizens. There was also some difference on this by region with voters in the western wards more apt to be satisfied (78/20), followed by voters in the Southeast (74/24) and then voters in the Northeast part of the city (71/28).

Also, residents with incomes of \$70,000 or more were less satisfied with city services (68/32).

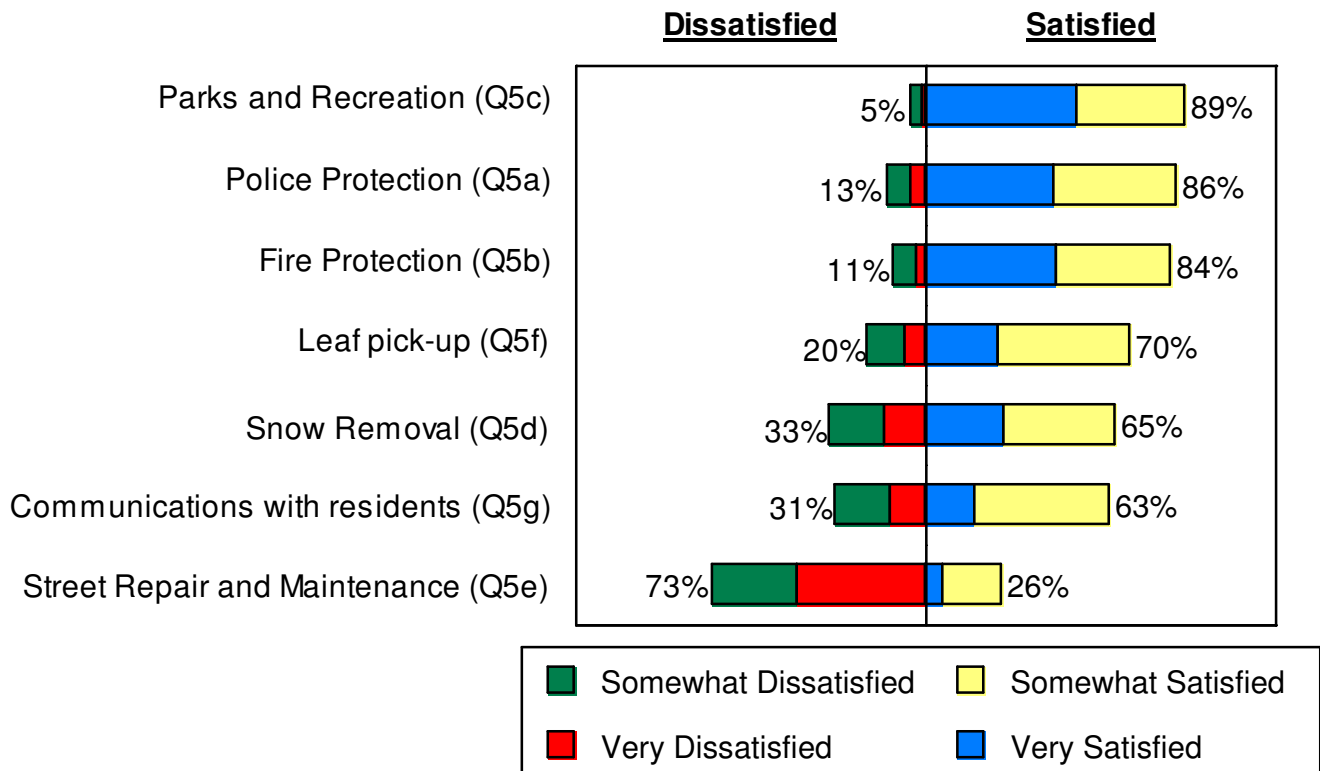
Satisfaction with city services is also a reason for voting against a tax increase as 93% of the supporters are satisfied with city services compared to just 58% of those opposed while 42% of them are dissatisfied with city services.

A majority expressed satisfaction with six of seven specific city services asked about.

Two-thirds or more were satisfied with 6 of the 7 city services tested. For those six items, satisfaction ranged from 63% very or somewhat satisfied with communications, to 89% satisfied with parks and recreation. However, this was the only service in which more than half were very satisfied (52%).

In contrast, just one-fourth of the voters (26%) were satisfied with street repair and maintenance while 29% were somewhat dissatisfied with this and 44% were **very dissatisfied**.

Q5 SATISFACTION WITH SPECIFIC CITY SERVICES



The ratings for the six items in which a majority were very or somewhat satisfied were:

- Parks and recreation (89% satisfied and 5% dissatisfied)
- Police protection (86% and 13%)
- Fire protection (84% and 11%)
- Leaf pickup (70% and 20%)
- Snow removal (65% and 33%) and
- Communications with residents (63% and 31%).

Even though a majority were satisfied with most of these items, there is still room for improvement since in most cases, less than half are very satisfied.

Satisfaction with street repair and maintenance was low across the board, but it was even lower among voters under age 50 (18% satisfied) than it was among voters aged 50 and over (31%). It was also lower in the Northeast (23%) and West (25%) than it was in the Southeast (31%).

On the other hand, satisfaction with parks and recreation was high among all groups, but it was slightly higher in the Northeast (92%) and Southeast (89%) than in the West (84%).

About four-fifths or more of every group was also very or somewhat satisfied with police protection and fire protection in Elyria.

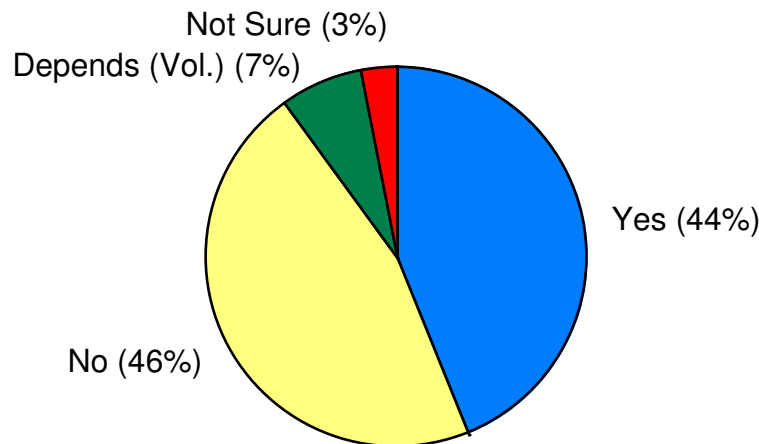
Satisfaction with leaf pick-up and snow removal dropped off, and younger voters were less satisfied with these two services than older voters. Also, voters in the Northeast and Southeast were more apt to be satisfied with leaf pick-up (73% and 74%) than voters in the West (60%). But there was little difference by region on snow removal.

About two-thirds of every group was satisfied with city communications.

Voters are divided on whether they get their money's worth for the services.

When asked to think about the city services they get and the amount of city taxes they pay, voters were divided. That is, 44% feel they get their money's worth, but 46% do not think they get what they pay for. Of the remainder, 7% volunteered that it depends and 3% weren't sure.

Q6 GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH IN CITY SERVICES FOR THE AMOUNT OF TAXES PAID



As might be expected, most of those very satisfied with city services feel they get their money's worth (78%) while those somewhat satisfied with city services are divided (45/42). But 83% of those dissatisfied with city services do not think they get their money's worth.

All demographic groups were divided on this. Younger respondents were more apt to say they don't get their money's worth while senior citizens were more apt to say they do (51/35). Voters in the West (41/51) and Northeast (40/46) were more likely to say they don't get their money's worth while voters in the Southeast tend to think they do (49/42).

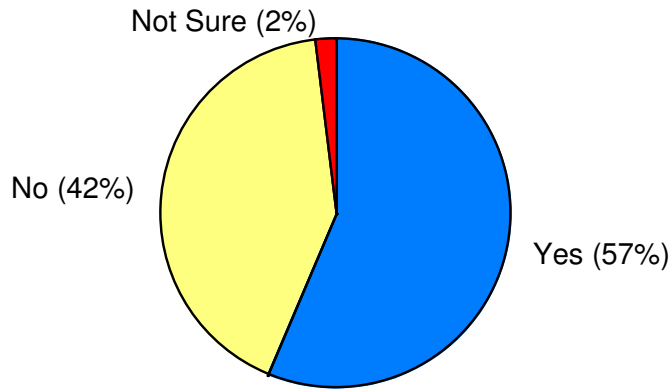
Importantly, here too, there is a difference by vote with a large majority of those who would support the income tax increase saying they get their money's worth (72/17) while those opposed looked the opposite (22/70) and do not think they get what they pay for.

This is clearly a strong reason for voting against a renewal or an increase in the city income tax. Again, the City will have to convince voters that the income tax is crucial to maintaining and improving city services, that they don't have enough money now or won't if the existing levy expires, and that the money won't be wasted or misused.

Over half have heard of the City's 2015 Plan.

Overall, 57% of the respondents said they have heard of the City's 2015 Plan to make improvements and keep Elyria a desirable place to live. But a significant minority of voters (42%) are not aware of the plan.

Q9 HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE CITY'S 2015 PLAN TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS AND KEEP ELYRIA A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE



About half or more of most groups said they have heard of the City's 2015 Plan. Awareness was a little lower among 18 to 34 year olds (50%), voters aged 65 and over (51%), those with incomes of less than \$30,000 (46%), Independents (50%) and less frequent voters (46%).

There was no difference by satisfaction with the City, city services or the direction of the city by whether they had heard of the 2015 Plan. Thus, awareness of the plan does not seem to impact their outlook for the future.

There was a slight difference in voters' willingness to support a tax issue by their awareness of the plan. That is, those aware of the City's 2015 Plan were slightly more supportive of the income tax increase (41/53) than those not aware (30/59).

II. Support for a Tax Issue

Most voters were aware that the city's income tax renewal failed in March.

Overall, 83% of the voters said they were aware that the City of Elyria had a renewal of the city's one-half percent income tax issue on the ballot in March that failed. Just 17% were not aware the renewal failed in March, and it was higher among 18 to 34 year olds (35%) and 35 to 49 year olds (23%).

A variety of reasons were given for why they think it failed, but 21% said taxes are too high, they are against paying more taxes, while 16% cited the poor economy, loss of jobs, gas prices, money is tight, etc. and 7% said they are retired, on a fixed income, can't afford.

A number of respondents also said the income tax failed because the city wastes money, could do more with what they have (11%). Some cited specific examples saying services, particularly the roads, are bad (11%), people are dissatisfied with the city (4%), don't trust the Mayor (4%) or the city (2%), too many city officials (2%), they got raises (2%) and the closed fire station (2%).

A fifth also cited communication problems, saying people didn't know it was a renewal (11%), they weren't informed about the issue (8%) and didn't know what the money would be used for (2%).

Q8 REASONS WHY VOTERS THINK INCOME TAX FAILED IN MARCH	
	All Respondents*
	%
Against new taxes, taxes too high already	21
Poor economy, no jobs, losing jobs, money is tight	16
Retired, can't afford, older people voted against	7
Just voted for a new high school	3
Tax hike will hurt city	1
A lot of people work outside the city	1
Poor use of funds, do more with what they have, don't need	11
City services are poor, roads are bad	11
People are dissatisfied with city	4
Mayor running city into the ground, unable to run city	4
Don't trust city, won't go where they say	2
City officials got raises	2
Too many administrators, city officials on payroll	2
Closed fire station	2
Didn't know it was a renewal, ballot wording wrong, confusing	11
Not enough communication, not informed, assumed it would pass	8
Don't need the money, didn't know where it would go	2
Other	2
Don't know	10

*Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses, 2 responses accepted

There is little chance of passing an income tax increase in August.

Just over a third (36%) initially said they would definitely or probably vote Yes on a three-quarter percent income tax increase to replace the city's existing one-half percent income tax. Over half (55%) said they would vote No on this increase. In addition, more than twice as many said they would **definitely vote no** on this increase (28%) as said they would **definitely vote yes** (12%).

Q10 FIRST VOTE ON THREE-QUARTER PERCENT INCOME TAX INCREASE	
	All Respondents
	%
Definitely For	12
Probably For	24
Probably Against	27
Definitely Against	28
Need more information (Vol.)	6
Not Sure	2

Even at the end of the survey, when asked a second time how they would vote on this issue after being presented with a number of reasons in favor and some reasons against, support was still under half. Just 45% said they would vote Yes, while more (48%) said they would vote No. This three-quarter percent income tax increase would likely fail if it were on the ballot in August.

Q22 SECOND VOTE ON THREE-QUARTER PERCENT INCOME TAX INCREASE	
	All Respondents
	%
Definitely For	17
Probably For	28
Probably Against	20
Definitely Against	28
Not Sure	7

Support for an income tax to pay for city services is strongly impacted by voters' opinion of the city, city services, their outlook and if they feel they get their money's worth in services for what they pay now. For example, a majority of those very satisfied with the city overall voted Yes on the income tax increase (59%) while those somewhat satisfied tended to vote No (38/49). But those who are dissatisfied overwhelmingly voted no (20/75).

Similarly, 60% of those who think they get their money's worth in city services for the amount of taxes they pay supported an increase in the city's income tax, but 77% of those who don't think they get their money's worth opposed the tax increase. The same kinds of correlations occurred by satisfaction with city services and if they think the city is going in the right or wrong direction. **Before passing an increase, the City will have to convince voters that they are doing as much as they can with the money they have. It might help if the City form a citizens committee to review city finances and verifying the need for an increase and the accountability of city government.**

There was some positive vote movement on the increase.

For further analysis, we created a vote movement variable by combining the results to the first and second vote on the three-quarter percent increase. As shown below, just a third of the voters (33%) said they would vote Yes on the income tax increase both times they were asked. These **Yes/Yes** voters are the issue's core supporters and would almost certainly support a renewal as well as an increase.

Another 15% of the voters **Moved Positive**, which means that they initially voted No on the income tax increase, but then voted Yes or were undecided the second time asked, or they were undecided initially and then supported it. Even with this movement, the Yes/Yes and Moved Positive voters combine for just 48% of the voters, again telling us that it is unlikely that this issue could pass in August.

VOTE MOVEMENT ON INCOME TAX INCREASE	
	All Respondents
	%
Yes/Yes	33
Moved Positive	15
Moved Negative/Not Sure	8
No/No	43

Nearly as many voters (43%) opposed the income tax increase both times they were asked and much of this was strong (definitely no). Typically, little can be done to convince **No/No** voters to support a tax issue.

Five percent of the voters **Moved Negative**, which means they voted for the income tax increase the first time then became opposed or undecided by the end of the survey, or they started out undecided then voted against the second time. Just 3% were **Undecided** both times.

In the first vote question, there were no subgroups in which a majority would support the income tax increase, but the groups more likely to be **Yes/Yes** voters were:

- 18 to 34 year olds (46%)
- Senior citizens (39%)
- Voters with incomes of \$50,000 or more (40%) and
- Independents (40%).

Moved Positive voters were more apt to be:

- 35 to 49 year olds (21%)
- Those who do not work in Elyria (21%)
- Independents (21%) and
- Those who voted in just 2 of the last four general elections (22%).

About half of the following groups were **No/No** voters:

- 50 to 64 year olds (48%)
- Those who do not work in Elyria (48%)
- Those with incomes under \$50,000 (50%) and
- Democrats (48%).

There is a better chance of renewing the City's existing one-half percent income tax.

Those voting No or Not Sure the second time on the three-quarter percent income tax were asked how they would vote if the City put a renewal of the existing one-half percent income tax on the ballot, and over half of them would vote yes, which is 29% of all voters. Thus, in addition to the 45% in favor of the three-quarter percent increase, another 29% said they would support a renewal of the existing one-half percent income tax, making the chances of passing the renewal issue much better.

But we must clarify that that surveys measure what people **say** they will do and not their actual voting behavior. This issue failed in March and could fail again given the current economy, voters' attitudes toward taxes and their satisfaction with city services. To increase the chances of passing the renewal, voters will have to be told that it is not an increase, what the money will be used for and the importance of continuing this funding for city services.

Q23 VOTE ON RENEWAL OF EXISTING ONE-HALF PERCENT INCOME TAX INCREASE	
	All Respondents
	%
For Increase	45
For Renewal	29
No on Both	20
Not Sure on Renewal	6

Between a fourth and a third of every subgroup said they would support the renewal of the existing one-half percent income tax. This includes 26% of the frequent voters who would support a renewal while 46% would support an increase.

There is little support for a property tax.

Voters clearly prefer an income tax to pay for city services with 61% saying this. Only 7% favored the City asking for a property tax to pay for city services. There were 22% who voluntarily said the City shouldn't ask for either one.

Q24 PREFER AN INCOME TAX OR A PROPERTY TAX TO PAY FOR CITY SERVICES	
	All Respondents
	%
Income Tax	61
Property Tax	7
Either (Vol.)	2
Neither (Vol.)	22
Not Sure	8

Over half of every demographic group preferred that the City ask for an income tax to pay for city services. But many of the No voters on the increase didn't like either option (41%).

Main reasons for supporting the increase were to improve city services and to keep Elyria a desirable place to live.

Nearly two-fifths of the voters who would support the tax increase are voting yes to maintain or improve city services (38%) while a fifth said it is good for the city, keep it desirable, need improvements (21%). Another fifth (19%) said the city needs the money, costs keep going up, need more to keep up.

A few others specifically said the roads need improved (7%), need the fire station (7%) and need more police (3%).

Q11 REASONS FOR VOTING YES ON INCOME TAX INCREASE	
	Of Those Voting Yes*
	%
To maintain, improve city services	38
For the city, keep it good, desirable, improving	21
City needs the money, costs are increasing, costs more to keep up	19
Roads are poor, need improved	7
Need firefighters, keep station open	7
Tax credit for retired, work in other city	3
To keep, hire more police	3
Three-quarter percent is low, not much money	2
Tax rate is low	1
Always vote for	1
Need more info	4
Other	2
*Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses, 2 responses accepted	

Taxes and poor use of money were the main reasons for opposing an increase in the city income tax.

About a fourth said taxes are too high or they are against more taxes (24%) while about a sixth each said they are retired, can't afford more taxes (17%) and the economy is poor, money is tight (14%).

Another reason for voting no on the increase was that the city wastes money, uses funds poorly, don't know where money goes (23%), along with they don't trust the city (7%), city officials just got raise (3%), and services are poor (11%).

Q11 REASONS FOR VOTING NO ON INCOME TAX INCREASE	
	Of Those Voting No* %
Taxes too high, against new taxes	24
Retired, can't afford	17
Poor economy, no jobs, losing jobs, money is tight	14
Just voted for a new high school	1
Too much money	1
Tax hike will hurt city	1
Poor use of funds, waste money, do more with what they have	23
City services are poor, need improved	11
Don't trust city, money won't go where they say	7
City officials got raises	3
Don't need the money, cut other things first	3
Mayor running city into the ground, can't run city	1
Need more info	1
Other	2
*Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses, 2 responses accepted	

III. Reasons Against an Income Tax

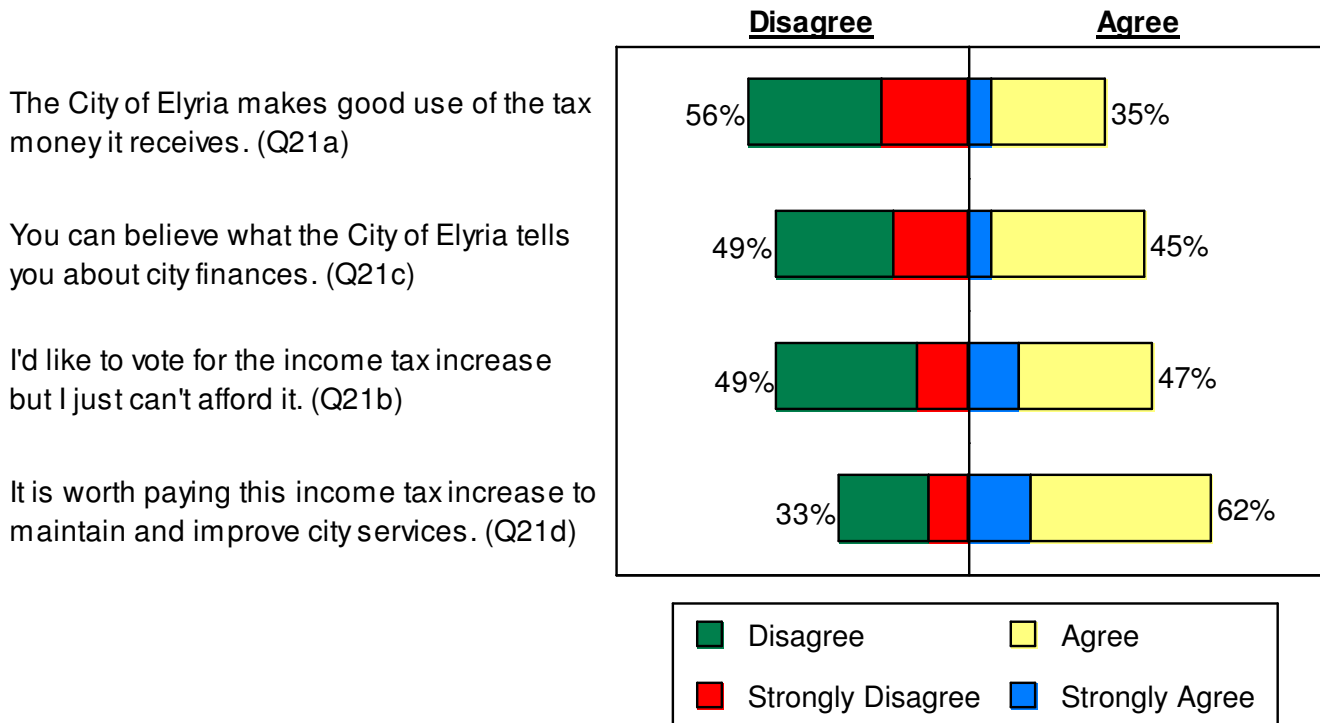
Many voters question the city's use of its money.

Four reasons for voting against were tested and over half (56%) disagreed or do not think the City of Elyria makes good use of its tax money. Only a third (35%) agreed and thinks the City does a good job with its tax money.

Nearly half (49%) also disagreed that they can believe what the City of Elyria tells them about city finances. Just 45% agreed with this statement and think they can believe what the City says about its finances.

The level of disagreement with these two questions will make it difficult for the City of Elyria to pass an increase in the income tax.

AGREE/DISAGREE STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CITY OF ELYRIA



Yes/Yes and No/No voters looked the opposite on these two questions. That is, 64% of the tax supporters think Elyria makes good use of their tax money while 82% of those opposed disagreed and do not think the city does a good job with its tax money. They likely believe that the City can do more with the money they have and are not willing to give the City more money if they think it will be wasted.

Similarly, 68% of the Yes/Yes voters agreed they can believe what the City tells them while 75% of those opposed disagreed with this. Thus, the City lacks credibility with many voters and this impacts their willingness to support a tax increase to pay for additional city services.

Nearly half (47%) agreed that they would like to vote for the income tax increase, but they just can't afford to pay any more taxes, but 49% disagreed with this. Cost is still an issue for many voters, but it is not the main reason for voting no on the income tax since there was less difference on this by vote. That is, 35% of Yes/Yes voters and 50% of No/No voters said they can't afford to pay more taxes.

Agreement that they can't afford to pay more taxes was higher among senior citizens (51% agreed), females (51%) and those with incomes under \$50,000 (57%).

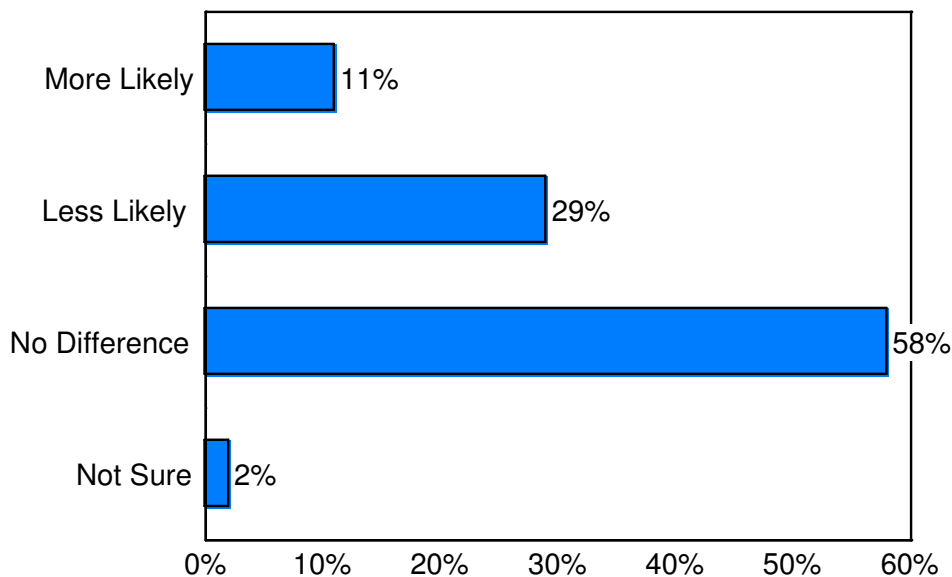
On the positive side, 62% agreed that it is worth paying this income tax increase to maintain and improve city services. Only 33% disagreed and do not think that it is worth it. This too divided those in favor versus those opposed. That is, 98% of Yes/Yes voters agreed that the tax is worth it to maintain and improve city services while just 31% of the No/No voters agreed and 64% of them disagreed. Over half of every subgroup agreed with this.

The results to this last question suggests that there is a chance of passing an income tax increase at some point, but it will require proving that the City does not waste taxpayer money, the money will improve the city, and it is worth paying more to get more. It will also require having some credible spokespeople talk about the need for a tax increase to improve city services.

The cost of the increase is more of a negative than a positive, but most said it doesn't matter to them.

Voters were told that if the income tax increase passes, a family with a taxable income of \$50,000 a year would pay about \$10 a month more in taxes. Nearly a third (29%) said this would make them **less likely** to vote for the income tax increase while only 11% said it would make them more likely to vote yes on it. Well over half (58%) said the cost doesn't matter to them.

Q13 LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING YES ON THE INCOME TAX INCREASE KNOWING IF IT PASSES A FAMILY WITH AN ANNUAL TAXABLE INCOME OF \$50,000 WILL PAY ABOUT \$10 A MONTH MORE IN TAXES



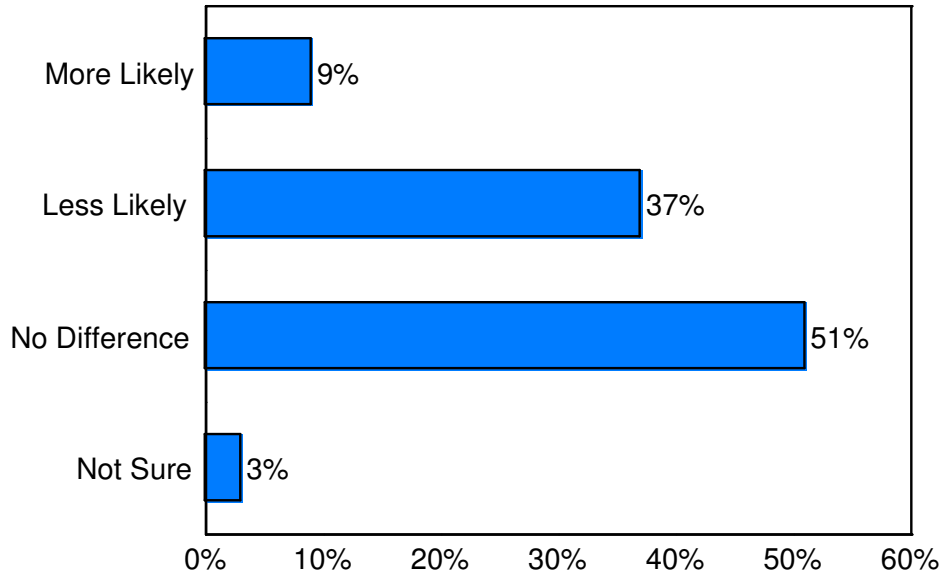
A majority of most groups said the additional cost does not make a difference to them, but between a fourth and a third of most groups were negatively impacted by the additional cost of the increase.

Over a third of the voters work in Elyria (38%) and they looked similar to respondents overall on this question. Over half said the additional cost does not matter to them (57%), but 29% were negatively impacted while only 11% were positively impacted by what the increase would cost.

Making the income tax permanent is more of a negative.

Nearly two-fifths of the voters (37%) would be **less likely** to vote for the income tax increase knowing it would be permanent. Just 9% said this would make them more likely to vote for while 51% said this makes no difference to them.

Q12 LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING YES ON THE INCOME TAX INCREASE KNOWING IT WOULD BE PERMANENT



Two-fifths of those who Moved Positive on the increase (40%) would be less likely to vote for the increase if it was permanent as were 53% of those opposed. Also, 41% of those who work in Elyria and would pay the tax would be less likely to support it if it is permanent.

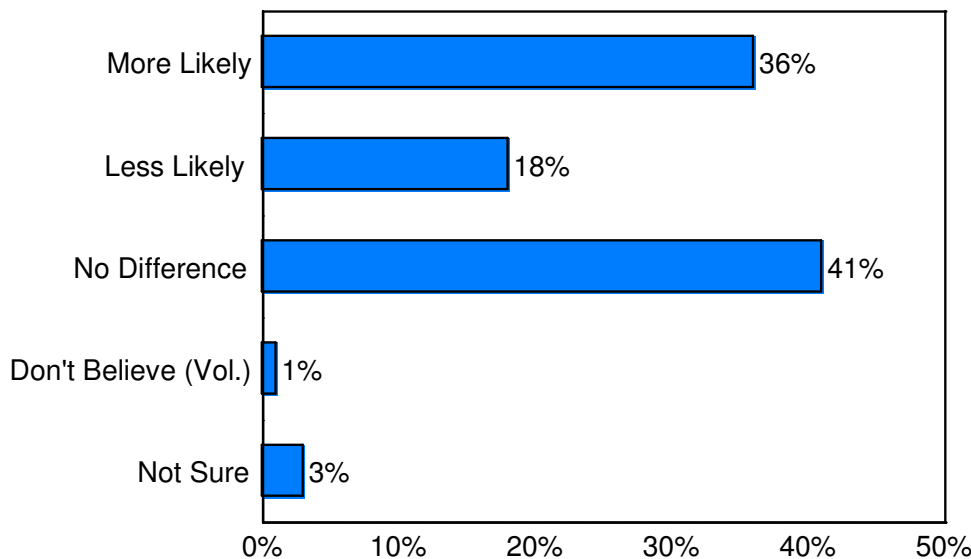
We do not recommend making the three-quarter percent income tax permanent.

IV. Arguments in Favor of an Income Tax

Voters need to know that the City will have to cut services if either the increase or the renewal fails.

Over a third (36%) would be **more likely** to vote for the income tax knowing that if the increase fails and the existing tax expires, the City will have to cut \$6 million in spending and will include major lay-offs of both police and fire personnel. Just 18% said this would make them less likely to vote for while 41% said it doesn't make a difference to them.

Q14 LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING YES ON THE INCOME TAX INCREASE KNOWING IF IT FAILS AND THE EXISTING TAX EXPIRES THE CITY WILL HAVE TO CUT \$6 MILLION IN SPENDING INCLUDING MAJOR LAY-OFFS OF POLICE AND FIRE PERSONNEL



This is an important argument for the income tax renewal as well as the increase. The City will have to make it clear that the existing income tax pays for \$6 million in services that will be cut if the renewal fails. Also, if Elyria has already cut spending, they should remind voters of that as well.

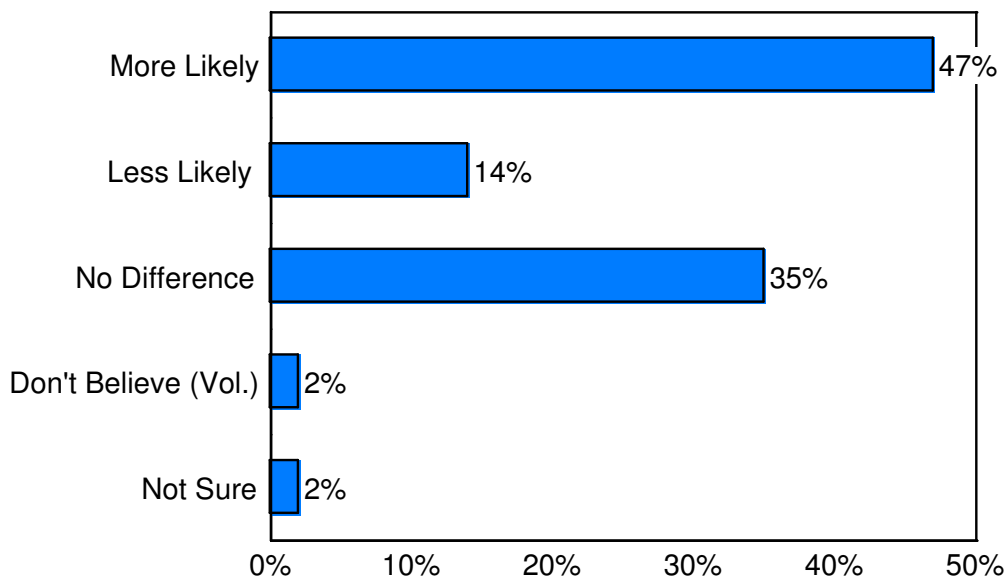
The response to this question also varied among those in favor and those opposed or not sure. Looking at vote movement we see that 68% of the Yes/Yes voters and 49% of the Moved Positive voters would be more likely to support the tax knowing the City would have to cut \$6 million in services if the increase fails and existing tax expires. But a majority of the No/No and Moved Negative voters said these cuts would make no difference to them (57% and 46%) or would make them less likely to vote for the increase (30% and 11%). This is probably because many of these voters don't think the city uses its tax money very well.

Knowing the city will have to make cuts if the increase or the renewal fails is important to about a third or more of most demographic groups.

Important to the tax issue is knowing how the money would be used.

Nearly half (47%) would be more likely to vote Yes on the income tax increase knowing that the additional money from the tax would be used primarily for police and fire personnel and for street resurfacing and maintenance. Just 14% were negatively impacted by this while 35% were not impacted. These uses of the money are important to voters and can be used in a campaign for an increase or a renewal.

Q15 LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING YES ON THE INCOME TAX INCREASE KNOWING THE ADDITIONAL MONEY WILL BE USED PRIMARILY FOR POLICE AND FIRE PERSONNEL AND FOR STREET RESURFACING AND MAINTENANCE



Here too, a majority of those opposed to the income tax increase either said using the money for police, fire and street repair wouldn't make a difference to them (44%) or would make them less likely to support the issue (22%).

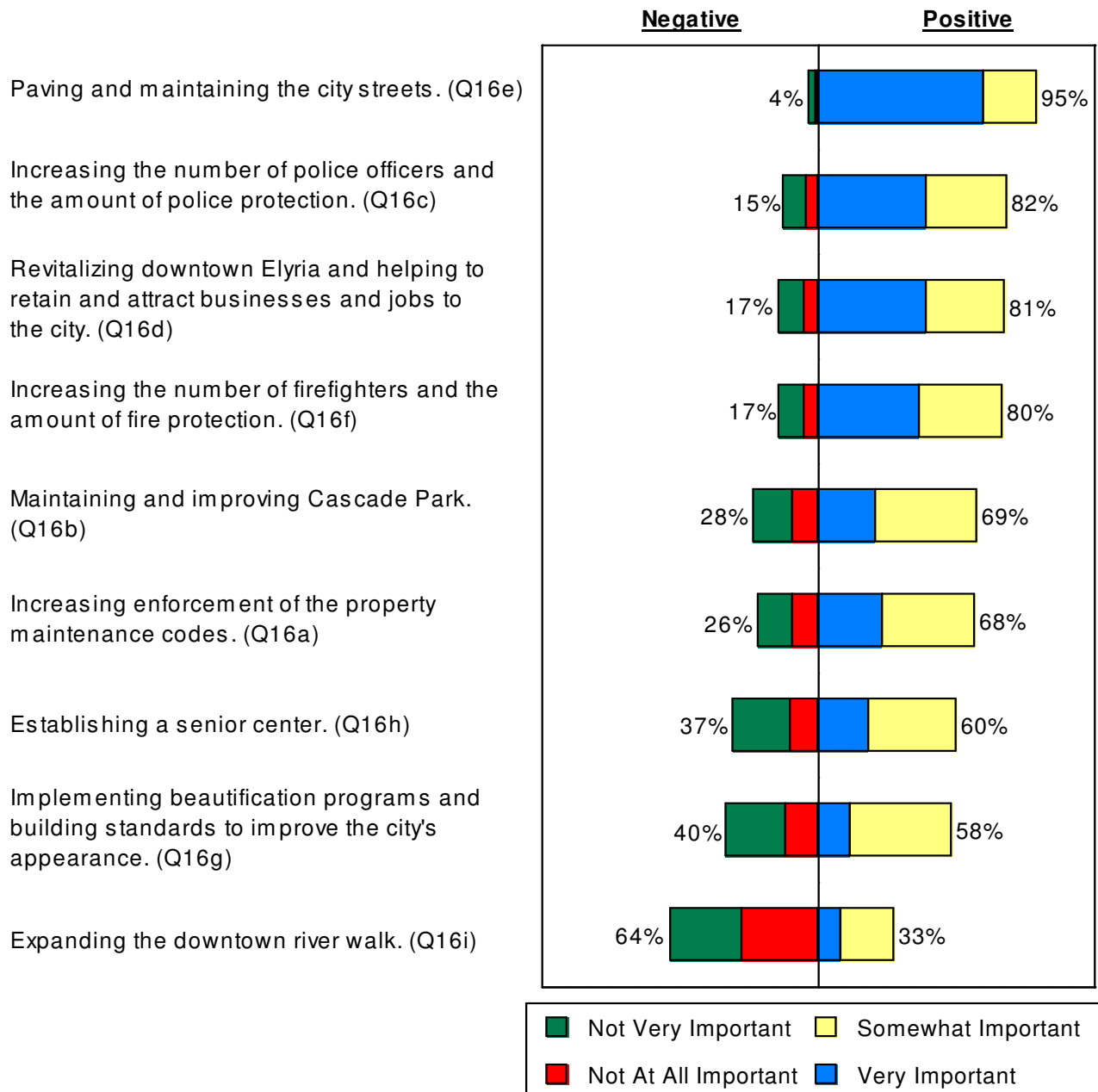
A majority of Yes/Yes (68%), Moved Positive voters (53%) and Moved Negative voters (59%) said spending the additional money on police, fire and streets would make them more likely to support the increase.

Police, fire, streets and revitalizing downtown also emerged as important uses of city tax money from the 2015 Plan.

Respondents were asked the importance of spending money from the tax increase on nine initiatives identified in the 2015 Plan, and three of the four strongest ones were police, fire and street repair.

In fact, 95% of the voters said it is **very or somewhat important** to spend the money on paving and maintaining city streets, of which 72% said **very** important. Even if the City puts the renewal issue on the ballot, they need to make repairing city streets a priority.

Q16 THINGS FROM THE 2015 PLAN THAT THE MONEY FROM THE INCOME TAX MAY BE USED FOR



Four-out-of-five voters also said it is very or somewhat important to increase the number of police officers and the amount of police protection (82%), and to increase the number of firefighters and the amount of fire protection (80%).

The fourth item rating high in importance was revitalizing downtown Elyria and helping to retain and attract businesses and jobs to the city, with 81% saying this is very or somewhat important.

Secondary in importance were:

- Maintaining and improving Cascade Park (69%)
- Increasing enforcement of the property maintenance codes (68%)
- Establishing a senior center (60%) and
- Implementing beautification programs and building standards to improve the city's appearance (58%).

Finally, only a third (33%) rated expanding the downtown river walk as very or somewhat important.

Most important to every voter group was paving and maintaining the streets, even 66% of those opposed rated this as **very important**.

Also very important to a majority of Yes/Yes voters and about two-fifths of the other voter groups, including the No/No voters, were increasing police protection, increasing fire protection and revitalizing downtown Elyria.

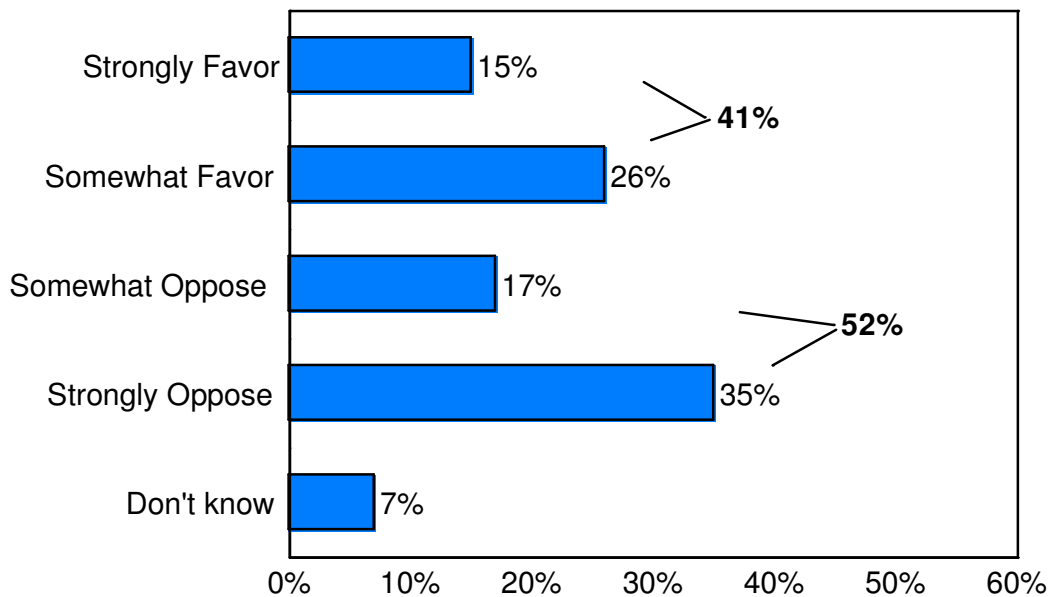
Only a third or less said the remaining five items were very important. Therefore, the city should focus on street repair, police, fire and attracting jobs to downtown.

A majority oppose closing a fire station.

Even though it would save the city \$200,000 a year, increase response time by less than one minute in some areas and is already temporarily closed, over half of the voters (52%) are opposed to closing one of the city's fire stations. And of these, 35% are **strongly opposed**.

Just 41% favored closing a fire station, of which just 16% were strongly in favor even knowing about the cost savings.

Q19 FAVOR OR OPPOSE CLOSING ONE OF THE CITY'S FIRE STATIONS



In addition, Yes/Yes voters are evenly divided on closing a fire station (48/47) while a large majority of those who would support a renewal are opposed to closing it (35/57). Therefore, some support for an increase and a renewal could be at risk if the City were to close one of the fire stations.

In our opinion, the city should not close a fire station right now as this seems contrary to spending more money to increase fire protection. And even though it would save money, many voters don't necessarily believe the City needs more money, it just needs to do a better job with the money it has.

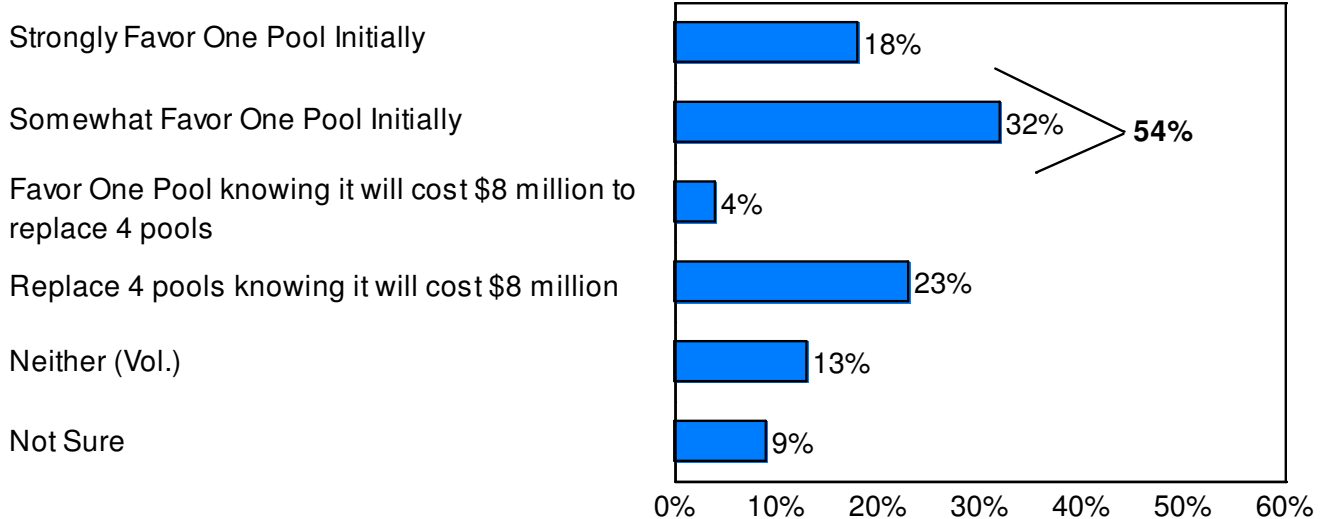
The City should gather more information about the pools before it acts.

Just half of the voters (50%) favored replacing the four swimming pools the City has now with one new large outdoor pool in a central location and four water spray parks even knowing it will save the City about a million dollars each year in operations costs. A significant minority opposed this idea (44%)

Even when those opposed were told that it would cost the City about \$8 million to replace the four current swimming pools, support for building one new large pool increased only 4% to 54% in favor.

A fourth (23%) favored replacing the four current pools knowing it would cost the City about \$8 million, while 13% voluntarily said the City shouldn't do either one, and 9% weren't sure.

Q17 & Q18 FAVOR OR OPPOSE BUILDING ONE NEW CENTRAL OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOL AND FOUR WATER SPRAY PARKS AND KNOWING IT WILL COST \$8 MILLION TO REPLACE 4 CURRENT POOLS



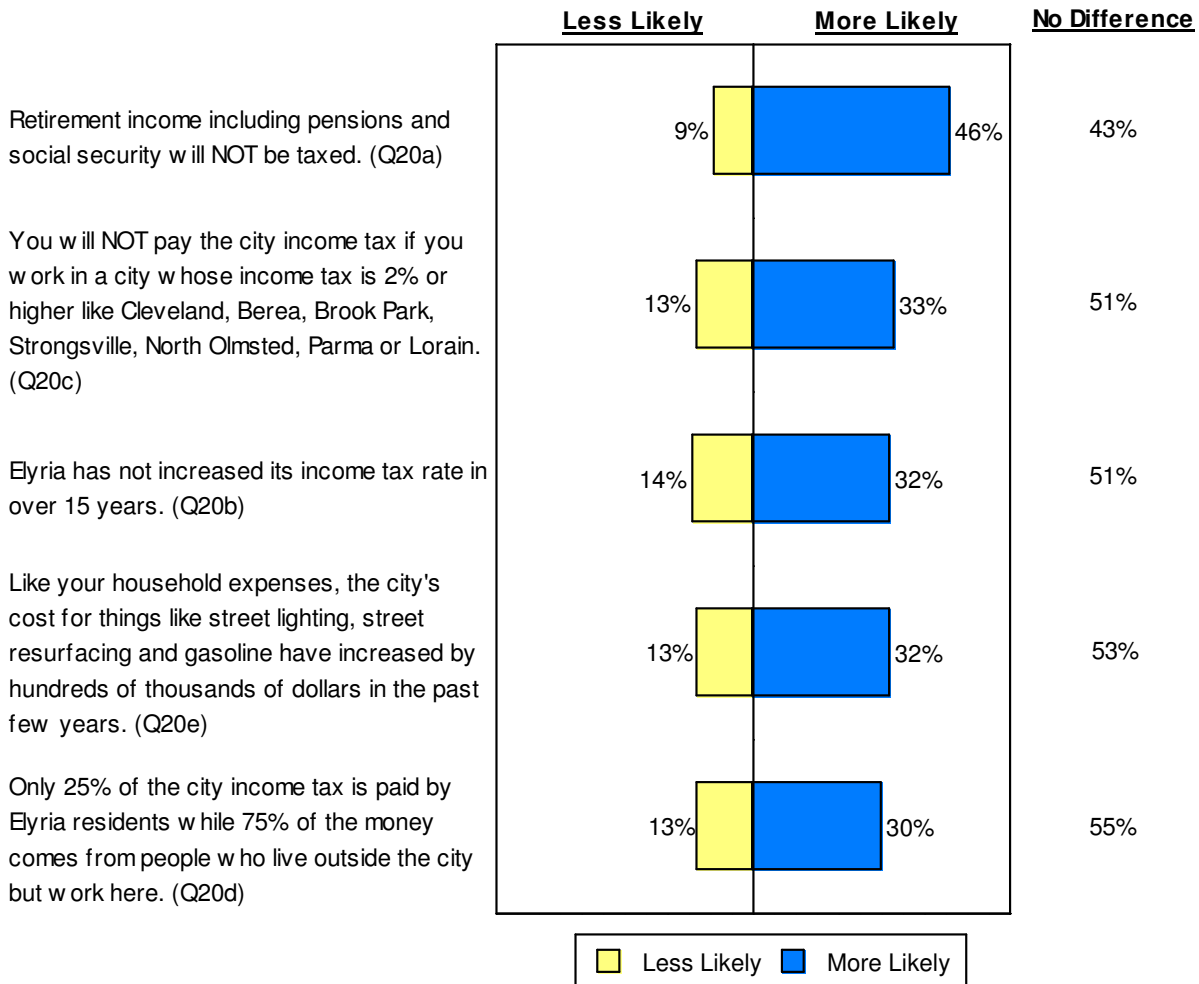
About two-thirds of Yes/Yes (65%) and Moved Positive (63%) voters favored replacing the four current pools with one new large pool. But support for this dropped off to 43% among those who would support a renewal and to 27% among those opposed to both a renewal and an increase.

Since more voters favor replacing the four existing pools (23%) than strongly favor building one new pool (18%), we suggest that the City gather more information from residents before making a decision.

Not taxing retirement income is a big plus for the income tax among senior citizens.

Five other reasons in favor of the income tax increase were tested and the strongest of these was that retirement income including pensions and social security will not be taxed. Nearly half of all respondents (46%) said this would make them more likely to vote for the income tax increase.

Q20 LIKELIHOOD OF VOTING YES ON THE INCOME TAX INCREASE KNOWING...



Only a third were positively impacted by the other four arguments. They were:

- You will not pay the income tax if you work in a city whose income tax is 2% or higher like Cleveland, Berea, Brook Park, Strongsville, North Olmsted, Parma or Lorain (33% more likely)
- Like your household expenses, the city's cost for things like street lighting, street resurfacing and gasoline has increased by hundreds of thousands of dollars in the past few years (32%)
- Elyria has not increased its income tax rate in over 15 years (32%) and
- Only 25% of the city income tax is paid by Elyria residents while 75% of the money comes from people who live outside the city but work here (30%).

Over half of senior citizens (52%) were positively impacted knowing their retirement income would not be taxed as were over half of those with incomes of less than \$50,000 (52%) and those who voted in three of the last four general elections (58%). This was also a positive argument among Yes/Yes (60%), Moved Positive (53%) and Moved Negative (59%) voters.

Well over half of the Yes/Yes voters also said they would be more likely to vote for the increase knowing the city's expenses have gone up in the past few years (58%) and that it has been 15 years since the City increased its tax rate (55%). About two-fifths of Moved Positive voters said these two reasons would make them more likely to vote for an increase (37% and 39%). These will be important arguments if the city decides to ask voters for an income tax increase.

Less important to voters were knowing that they won't pay the tax if they already work in a city whose rate is 2% or higher and that 75% of the money comes from people who live outside the city but work here. Only about half of the Yes/Yes voters were positively impacted by these two arguments (49% and 52%) and it was a third or less among Moved Positive voters (35% and 24%). These reasons didn't make much difference to voters who work in or outside of Elyria and their results were nearly identical on each statement.

City residents were the strongest spokespeople.

No dominant spokesperson or group emerged. At most, a third (34%) said city residents would be the most believable spokespeople for the city income tax issue.

The rest of the choices read to respondents were preferred by about a fifth each including the Mayor (22%), City Council (19%) and City Auditor (17%) as well as police officers (21%) and firefighters (20%). Just 15% chose the Chronicle-Telegram.

Q25 MOST BELIEVABLE SPOKESGROUP FOR CITY INCOME TAX ISSUE	
	All Respondents
	%
City Residents	34
Mayor	22
Police Officers	21
Firefighters	20
City Council Members	19
City Auditor	17
Chronicle-Telegram	15
Other (Vol.)	2
None/Not Sure	11

Yes/Yes voters were more apt to want to hear from the Mayor (34%), followed by city residents (25%), police officers (25%) and City Council (24%).

Moved Positive voters chose the Mayor (30%) as often as city residents (32%).

Moved Negative (51%) and No/No (38%) voters were most apt to say city residents would be most believable as did those who would support the renewal (43%).