



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL  
THE EARTH'S BEST DEFENSE



# Reducing Vehicle Miles Travelled: *A Summary of National Perspectives*

*Key Findings From a National Survey Conducted June 24 – July 2, 2012*

220-3437

*Fairbank,  
Maslin,  
Maullin,  
Metz &  
Associates*

FM3

**DAVE METZ & LORI WEIGEL**



**PUBLIC OPINION  
STRATEGIES**

220-3437

# Methodology

- Telephone interviews with 800 likely voters nationwide with a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.0%
- Complementary samples in targeted regions:
  - *150 interviews in Cuyahoga County, OH*
  - *150 interviews in Bucks and Montgomery Counties, PA*
  - *200 interviews in Mecklenburg County, NC*
- Interviews conducted June 24 – July 2, 2012
- Interviews on land lines and cellular phones
- Preceded by in-depth focus groups in Charlotte, NC; Raleigh, NC; Cleveland, OH; and suburban Philadelphia, PA
- Bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R)



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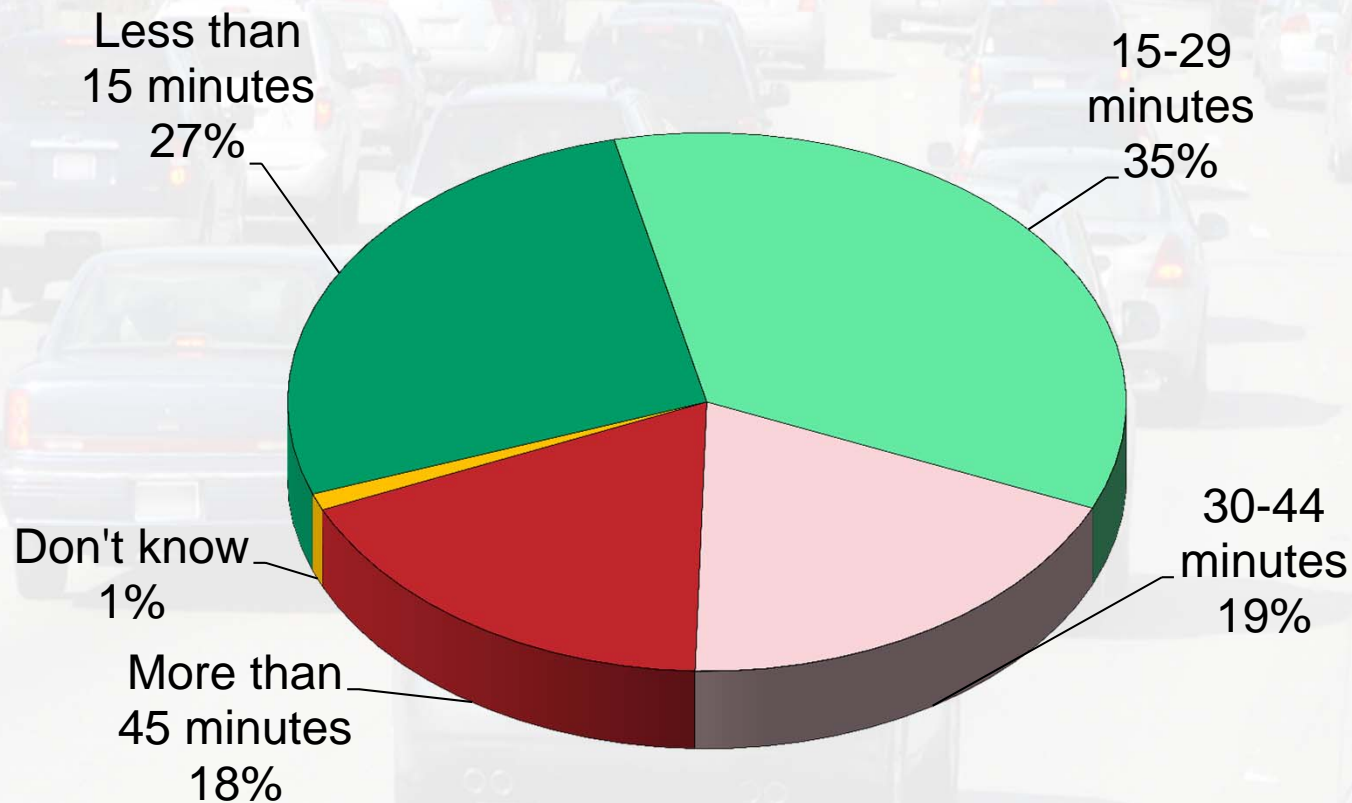
# How Americans Get Around



# Most citizens have commutes of less than half an hour; one in five commute more than 45 minutes.



*And if you had to estimate, how many minutes is your typical one way commute?*



Only one-third have used alternate transportation (biking, carpools, buses or trains) in the past month; two-thirds report *ever* having used it.

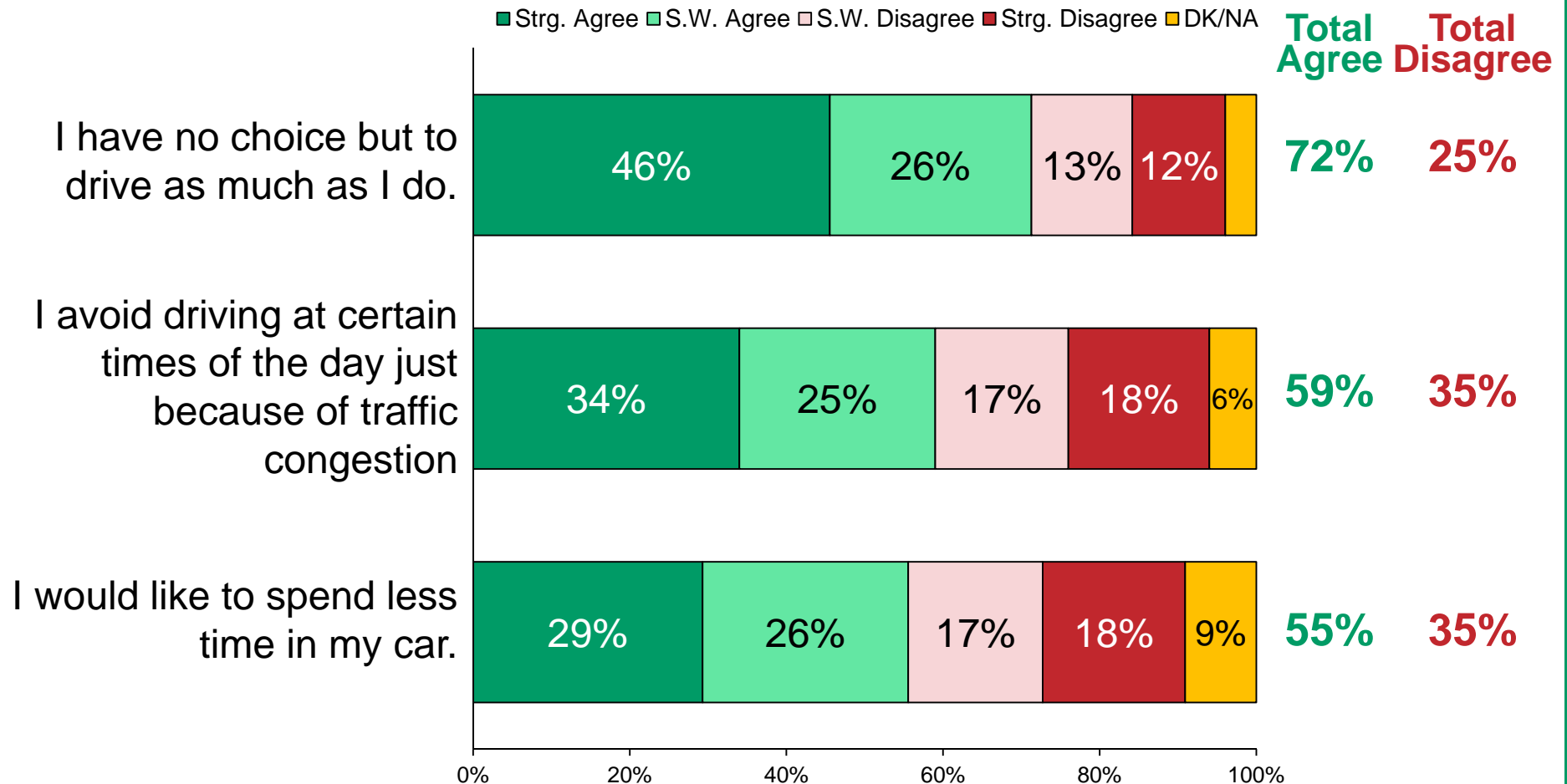
36%

Have used carpool, taken a bus, ridden the train or biked in the past month

66%

Have *ever* used one of these forms of transportation

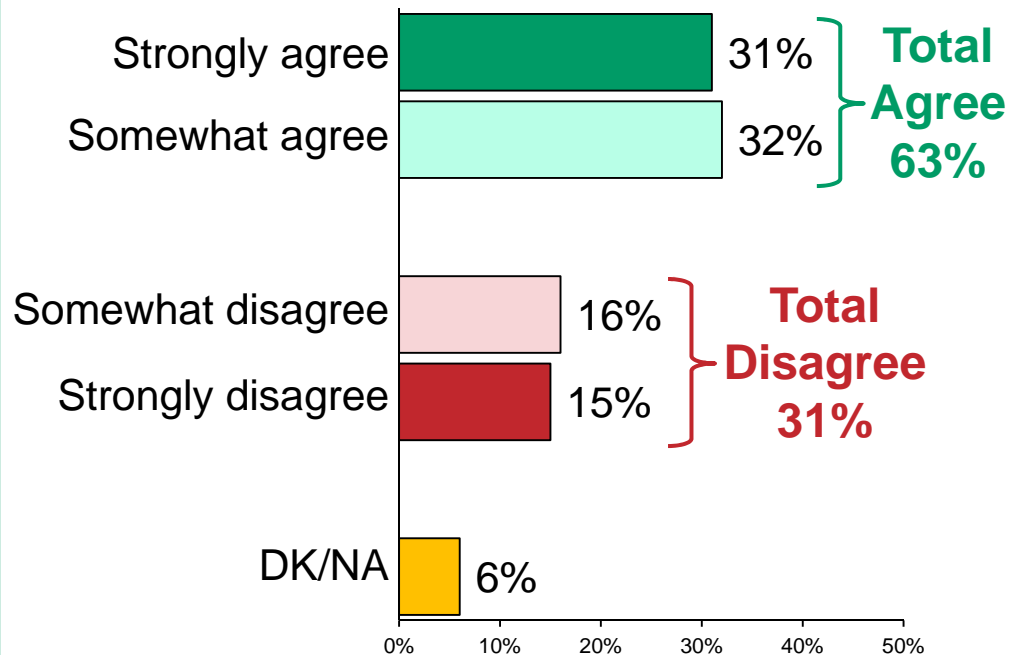
# Most citizens would like to drive less, but do not believe it is a realistic option for them.



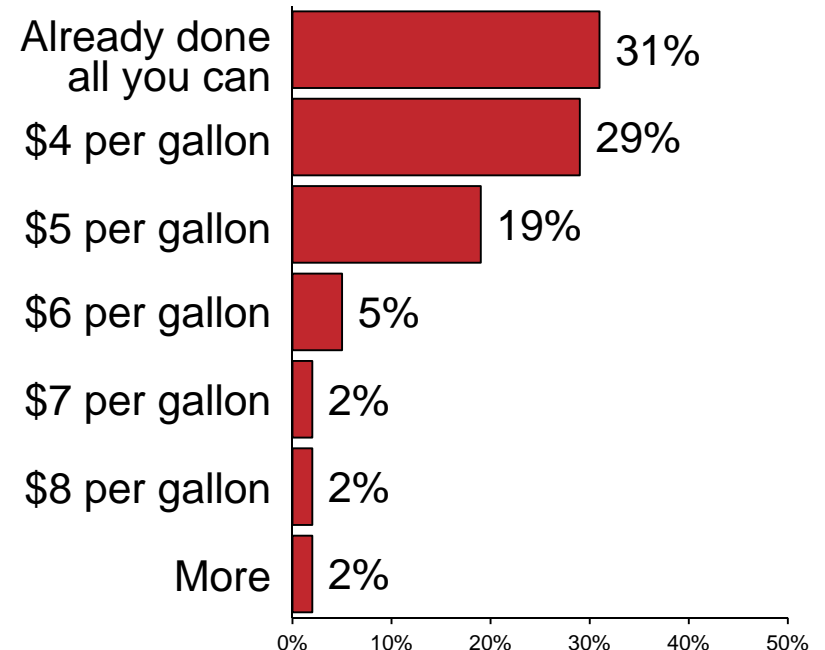


# Most Americans say that gas prices are already causing them to drive less; they are highly price sensitive.

*"I am choosing to drive less due to gas prices."*



*At what price per gallon of gasoline would you make significant changes in your routine in order to drive less?*



# Citizens express a clear preference for communities with short commutes and smaller homes and lots...

Statement	National	Mecklenburg County, NC	Cuyahoga County, OH	Suburban Philadelphia, PA
A community where the houses are smaller and on smaller lots, and you would have a shorter commute to work, 20 minutes or less	<b>49%</b>	43%	74%	49%
A community where the houses are larger and on larger lots, and you would have a longer commute to work, 40 minutes or more	<b>29%</b>	45%	20%	35%
Both/Neither/Don't know/NA	<b>22%</b>	12%	6%	16%

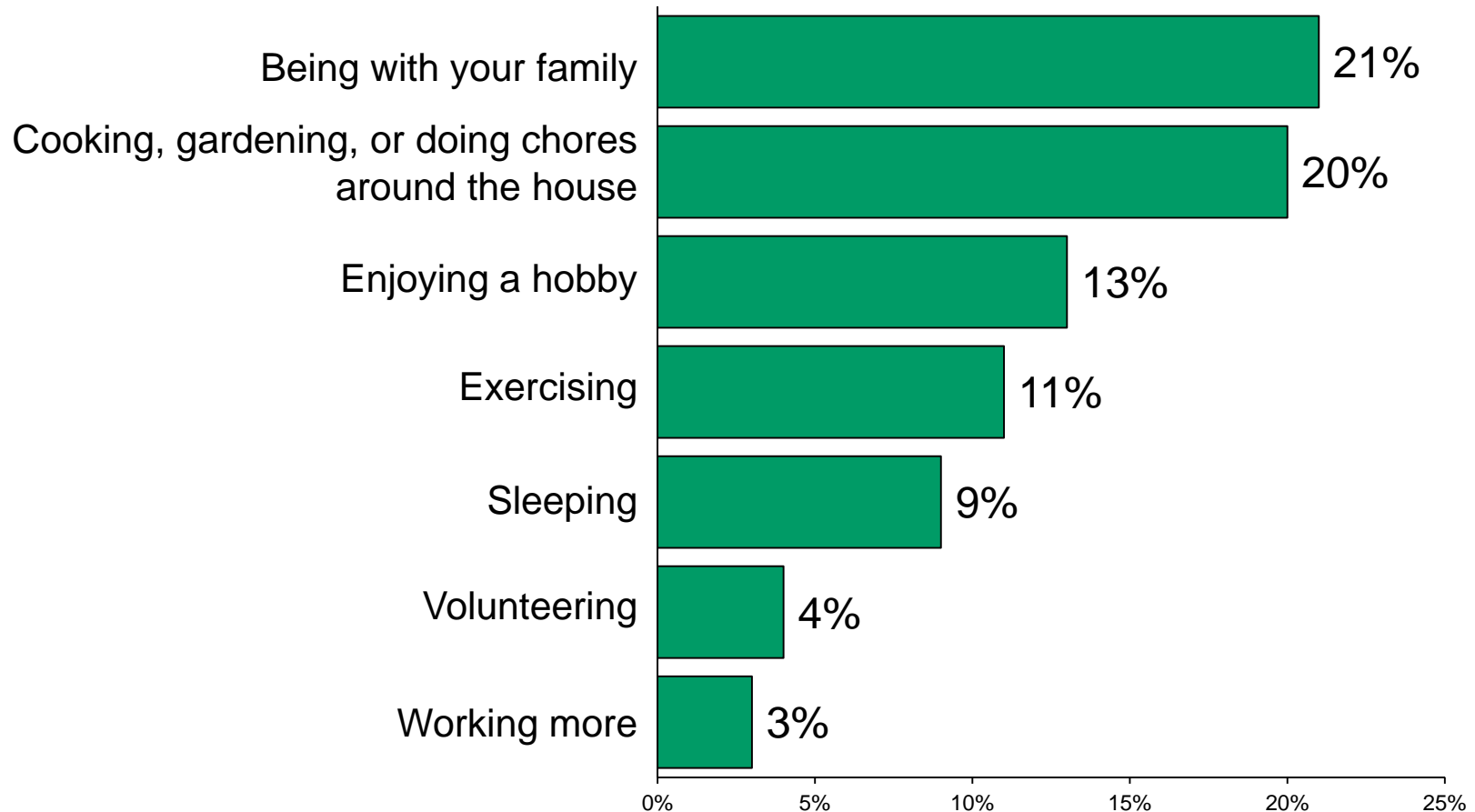


...but are more divided on whether they want to live in a community with houses *only*.

Statement	National	Mecklenburg County, NC	Cuyahoga County, OH	Suburban Philadelphia, PA
A community where the neighborhood has a mix of houses, apartments, townhouses, stores and other businesses that are easy to walk to	49%	51%	59%	57%
A community where the neighborhood has houses only and you have to drive to stores and other businesses	40%	46%	30%	34%
Both/Neither/Don't know/NA	12%	4%	12%	9%

# If citizens were able to drive less, they would spend that time with family or at home.

*If you did not have to spend that time each day commuting, which of the following do you think you would be most likely to do with the extra time?*





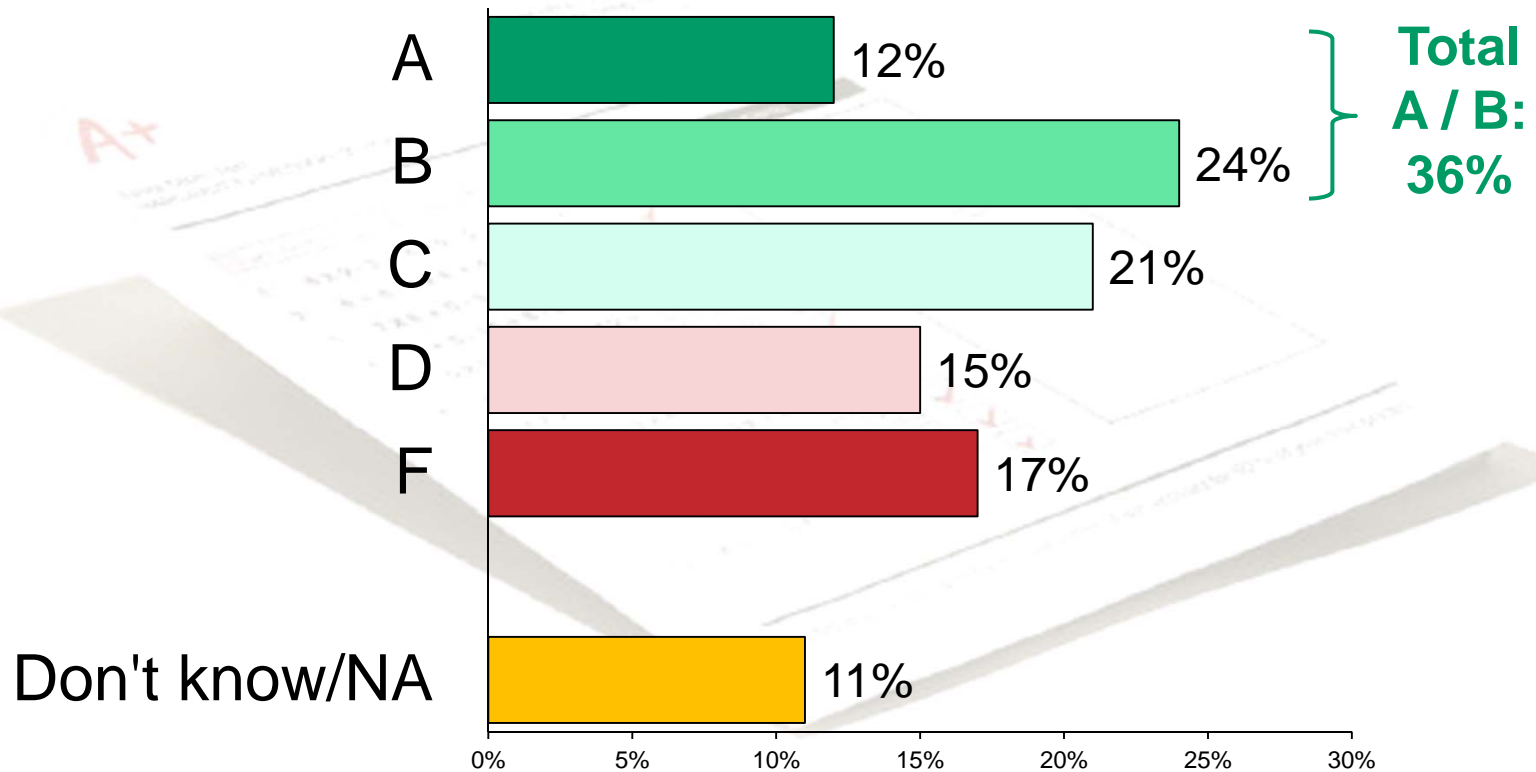
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# Perceptions of the Transportation System



# Only one-third of Americans would grade the availability of public transportation in their community as an "A" or "B."

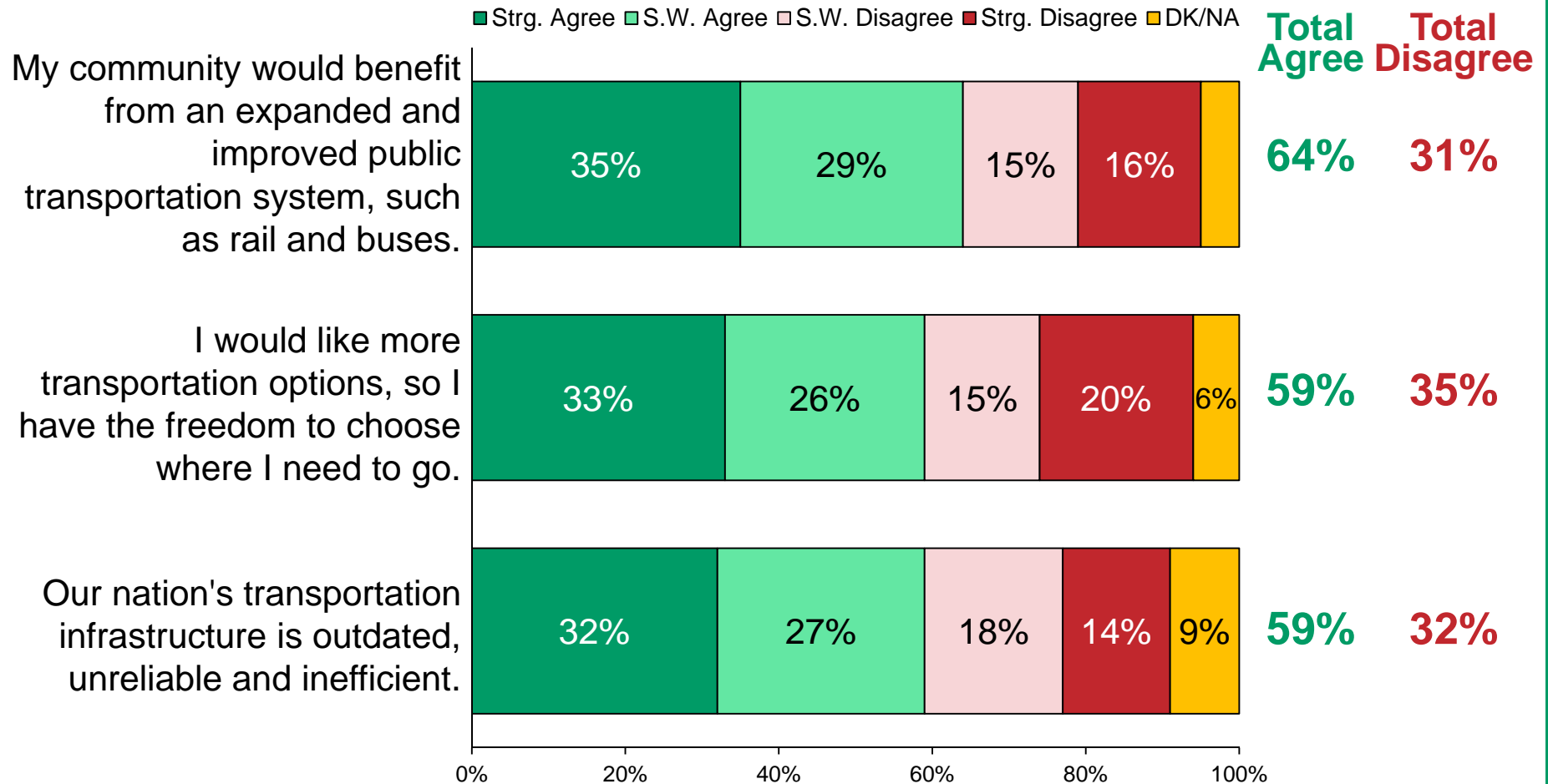
*How would you grade the availability of convenient public transportation in your community, including buses or trains – would you grade it an A, B, C, D, or F, with an "A" grade being excellent, and "F" being poor?*



**Not surprisingly, residents of our more urban/suburban target communities are generally more pleased.**

Grade	Total	Mecklenburg County, NC	Cuyahoga County, OH	Suburban Philadelphia, PA
A	12%	15%	22%	19%
B	24%	32%	37%	25%
C	21%	30%	28%	22%
D	15%	11%	8%	13%
F	17%	6%	2%	13%
Don't know	11%	6%	3%	8%

# Americans clearly believe that our current transportation infrastructure is outdated, and want improved public transportation.







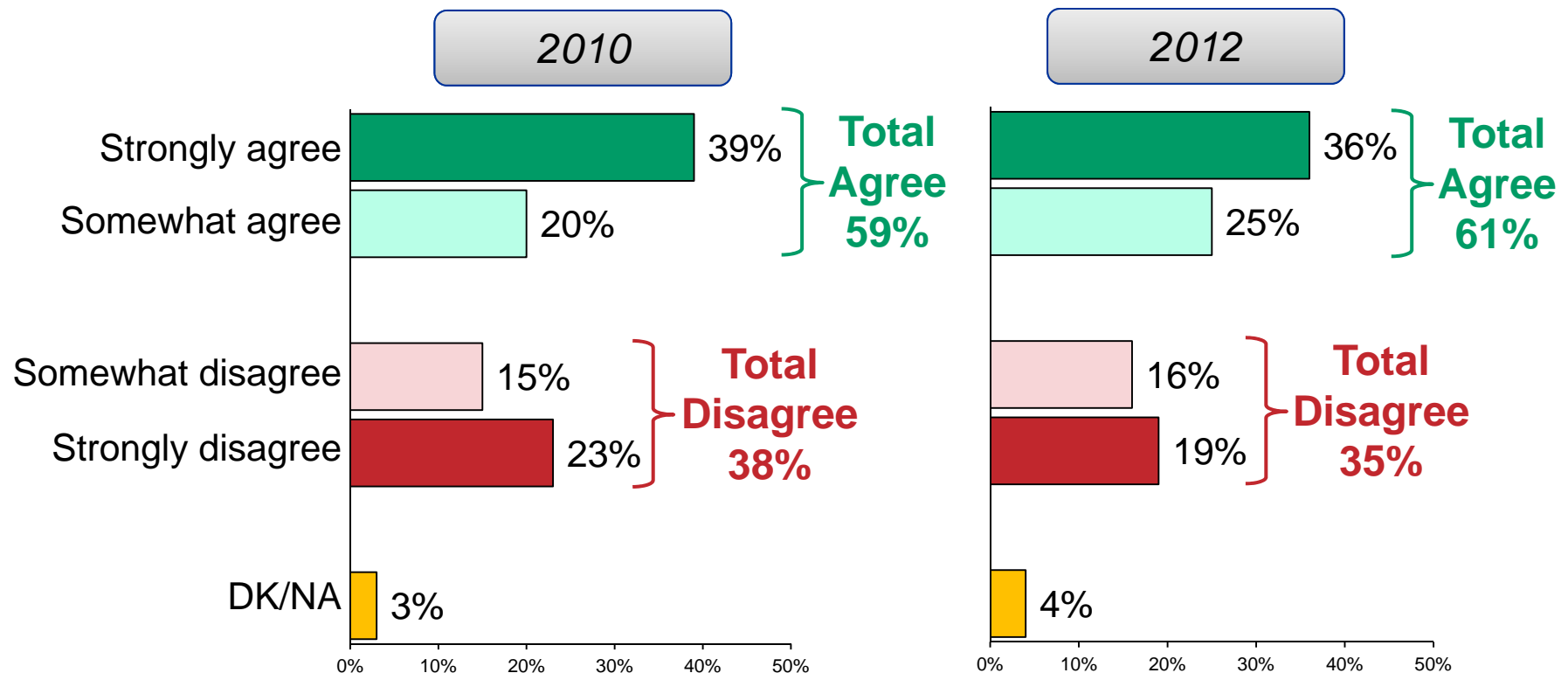
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# Willingness to Use Public Transportation

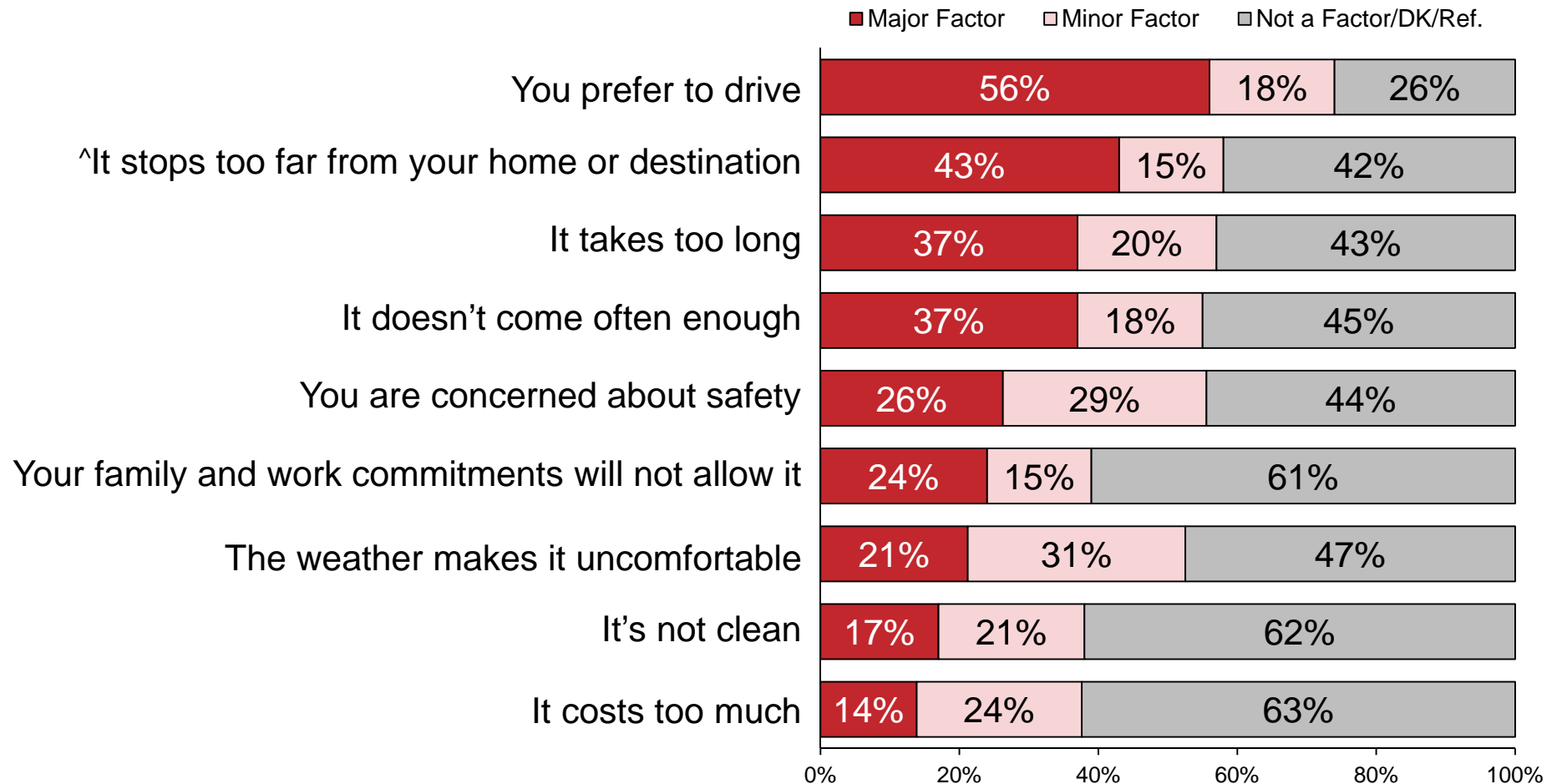


# In principle, most Americans would like to use public transportation more often.

*"I would like to use public transportation more often, but it is not convenient to or available from my home or work."*



# A preference for driving and a lack of convenient stops are the main reasons for not using public transportation more often.



# There are some differences among the target communities in their perceptions of these obstacles.

(% Major Factor)

Factor	National	Mecklenburg County, NC	Cuyahoga County, OH	Suburban Philadelphia, PA
You Prefer To Drive	<b>56%</b>	64%	50%	46%
^Stops Too Far From Home	<b>43%</b>	51%	23%	41%
Doesn't Come Often Enough	<b>37%</b>	23%	23%	32%
It Takes Too Long	<b>37%</b>	27%	29%	30%
Concerned About Safety	<b>26%</b>	26%	24%	29%
Family/Work Not Allow It	<b>24%</b>	27%	23%	20%
Weather - Uncomfortable	<b>21%</b>	15%	30%	15%
It's Not Clean	<b>17%</b>	15%	20%	7%
It Costs Too Much	<b>14%</b>	16%	14%	10%



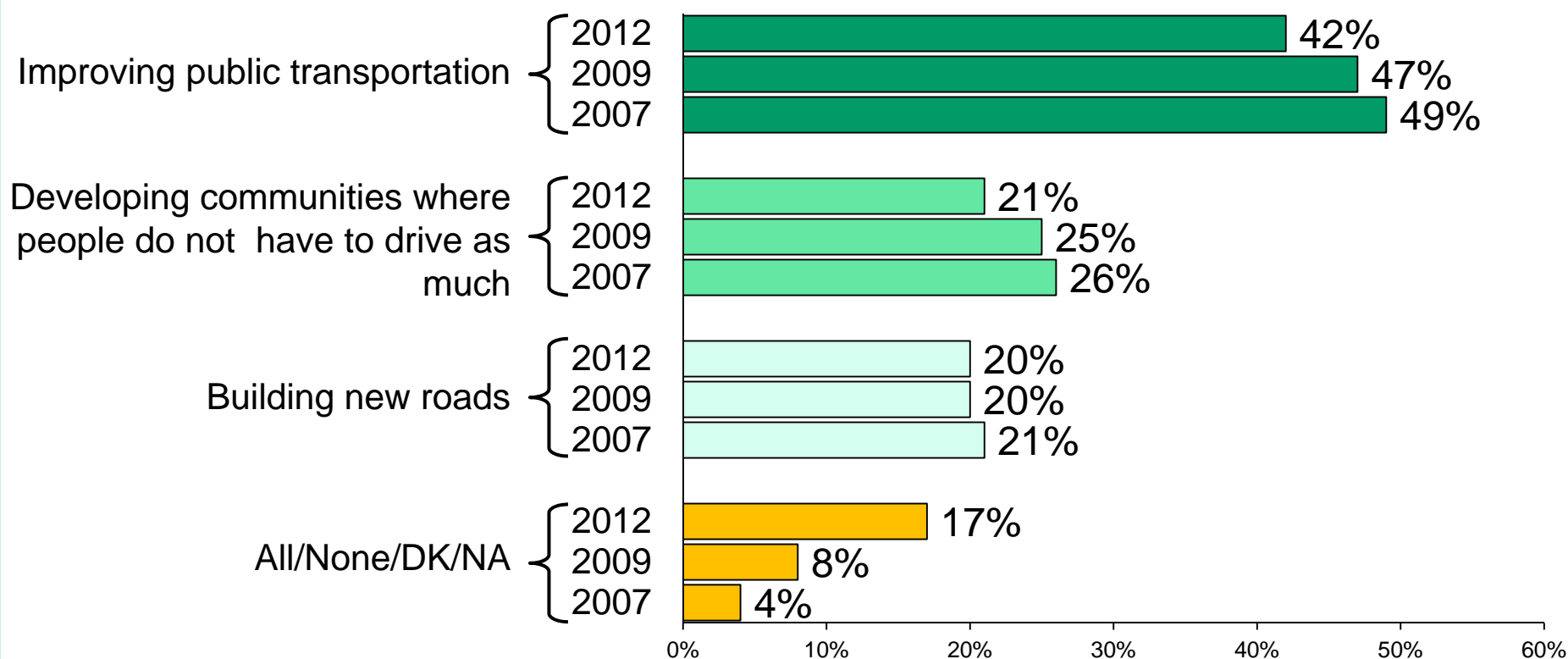
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# Support for Policy Changes



# Only one in five Americans backs building new roads as a solution for traffic congestion.

*Which of the following proposals is the best long-term solution to reducing traffic in your area?*





# Focus group participants preferred expanding transit to widening roads to reduce traffic.

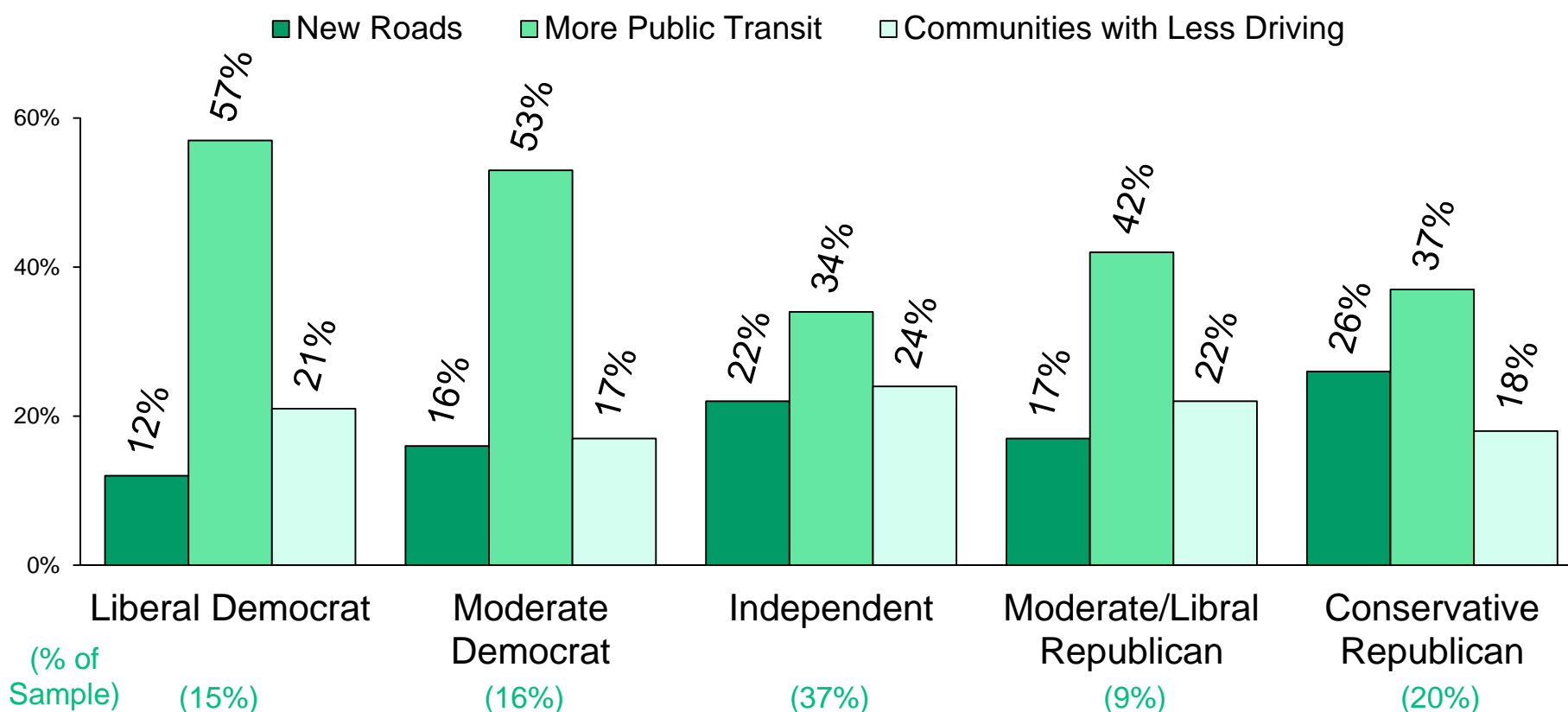
- Some participants instinctively thought that more space on key roads would ease congestion.
- But most quickly identified it as a temporary solution – one which would simply induce more demand, or move bottlenecks further down the highway.
- A greater number perceived that removing more cars from the road by offering more transit would have more impact.

**CHARLOTTE FEMALE:** They already have [the roads] in place, so it seems it would be an easier fix to go ahead and get what we've already got fixed up and better and more efficient, than add something new and start over again

**CHARLOTTE MALE:** It seems like every time they add a lane, it doesn't improve the transportation that much. It might for a mile, and then it bottlenecks back up. Unless they expand it in a big way, it's not going to do that much for it.

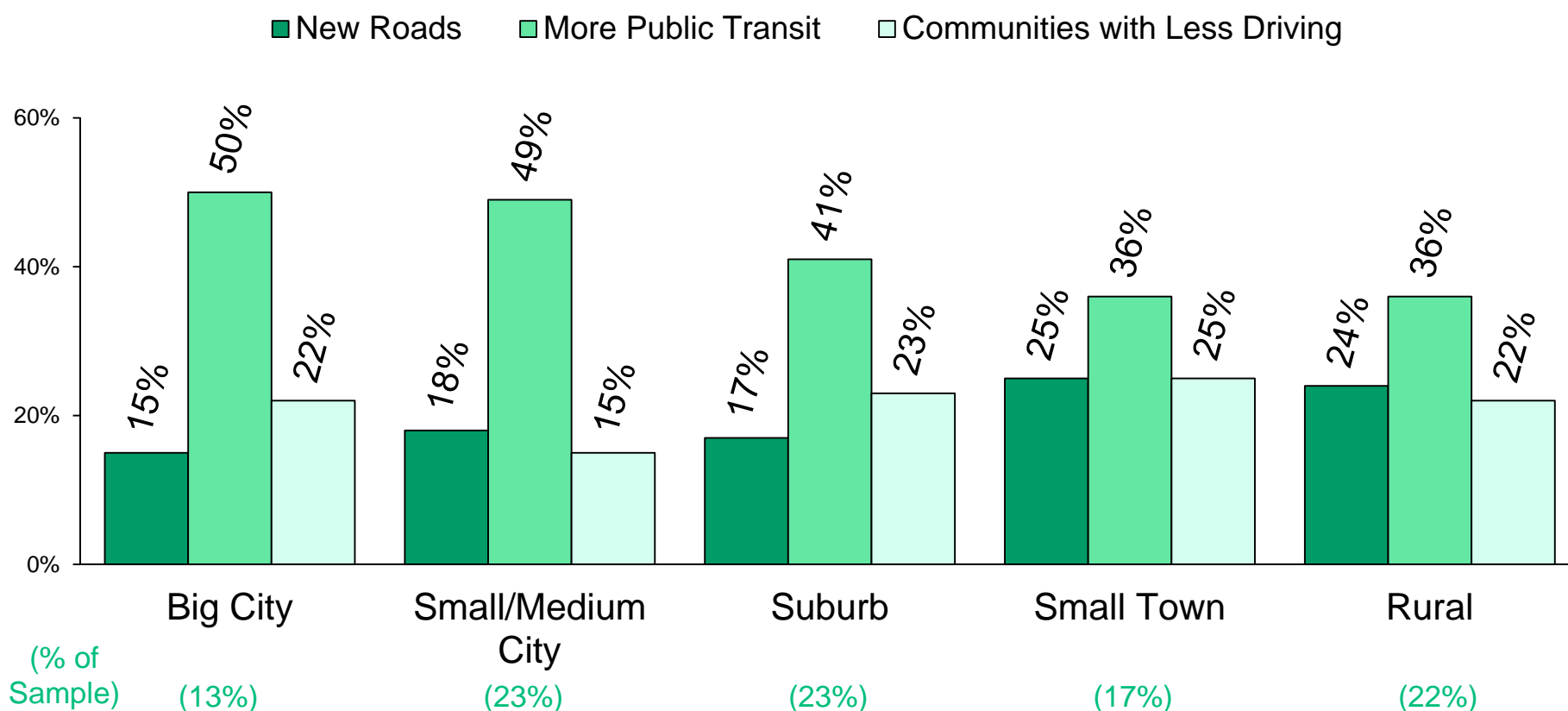
# Americans of all ideological backgrounds favor public transportation.

## *Preferred Approach to Reducing Traffic, by Party and Ideology*



# Even rural residents see enhancing public transportation as the most effective approach.

## *Preferred Approach to Reducing Traffic, by Type of Area*



## These same preferences apply in the target communities.

Proposal	National	Mecklenburg County, NC	Cuyahoga County, OH	Suburban Philadelphia, PA
Improving public transportation	42%	39%	35%	46%
Developing communities where people do not have to drive as much	21%	22%	33%	20%
Building new roads	20%	25%	21%	14%
All/None/DK/NA	17%	14%	11%	21%

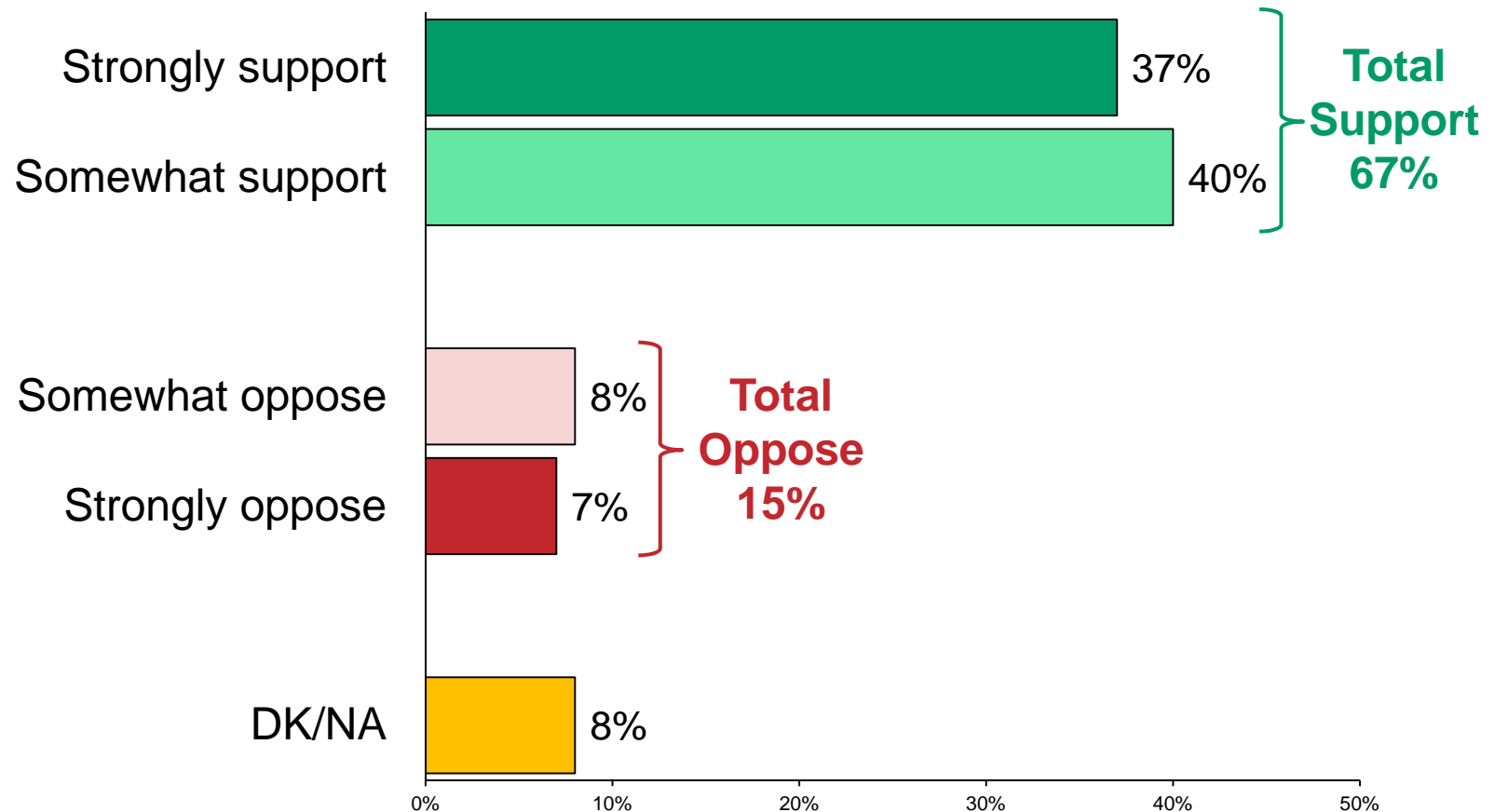
# Citizens also like the idea of infill development, especially in the target communities...

Where do you think new development should be built in your community?

Statement	National	Mecklenburg County, NC	Cuyahoga County, OH	Suburban Philadelphia, PA
Within existing cities and suburbs	<b>53%</b>	51%	63%	61%
Outside existing cities and suburbs on undeveloped lands	<b>30%</b>	39%	23%	22%
Both/Neither/DK/NA	<b>16%</b>	9%	13%	17%

# ...and explicitly back policies to promote it.

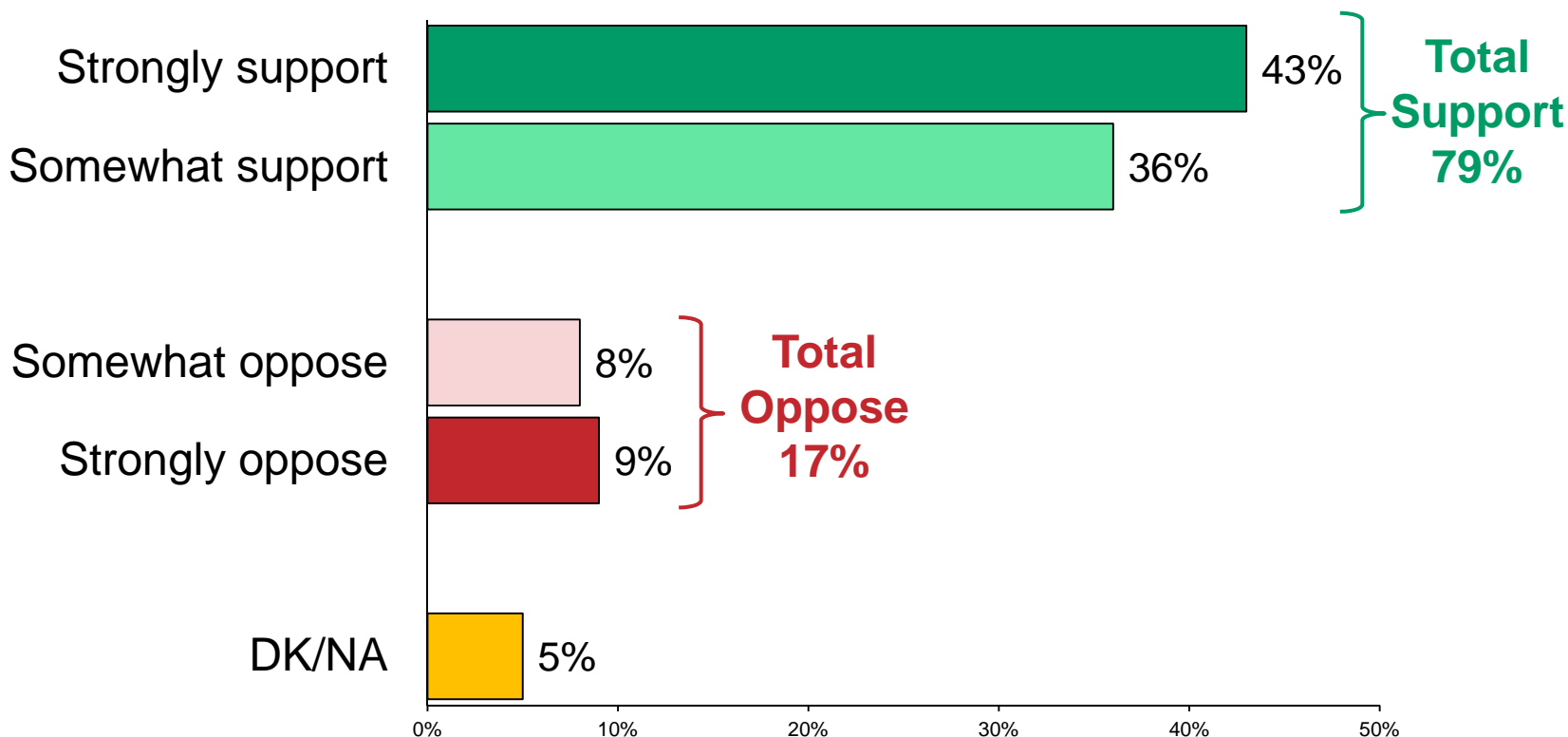
*Setting new standards for local planning that guide new development into existing cities and or near public transportation.*



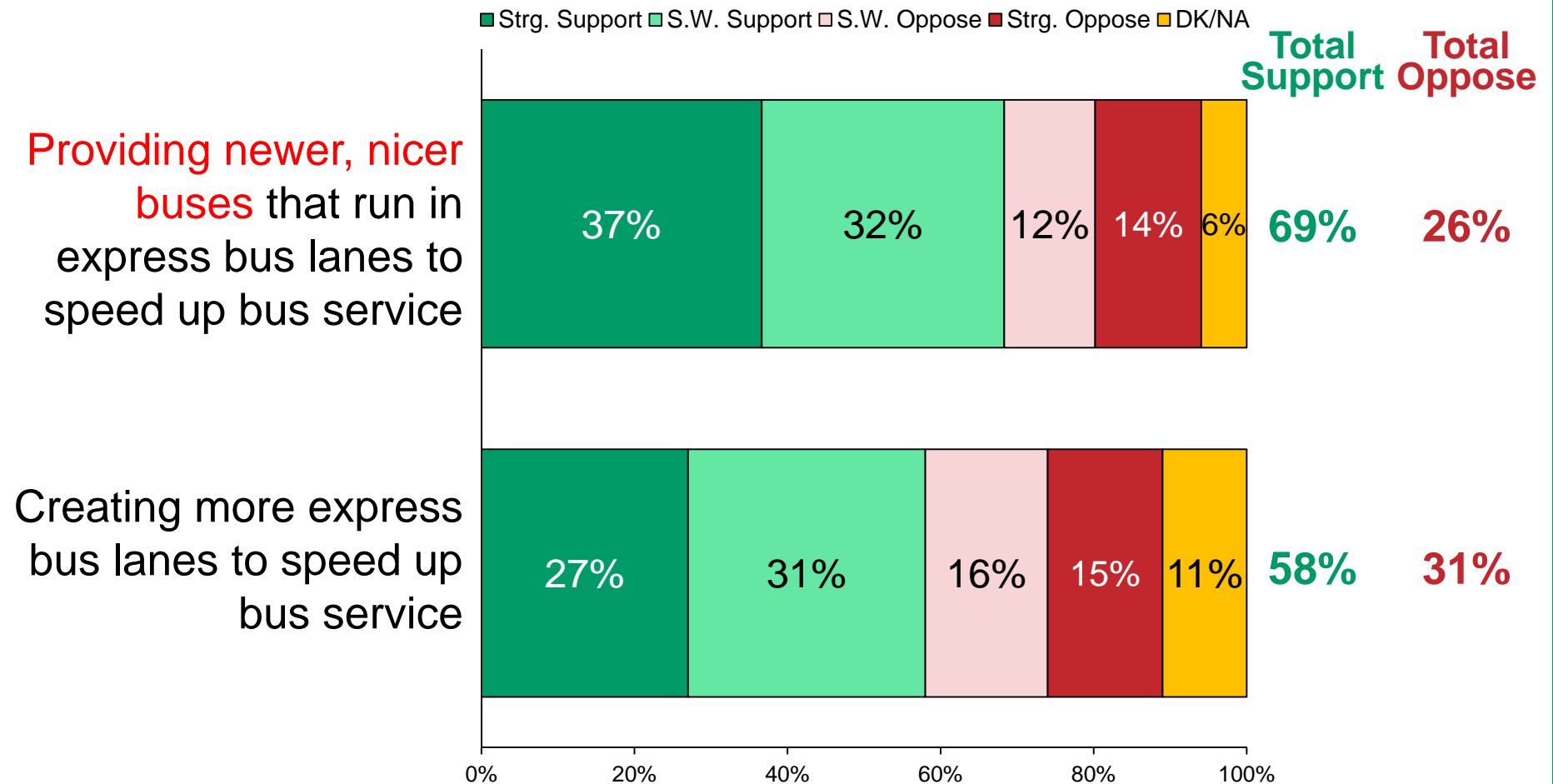


# Citizens also strongly endorse policies that would connect outlying areas with public transportation.

*Building new public transportation routes that connect suburbs and other communities to each other, rather than just to downtown areas.*



# Citizens are more likely to support express bus systems if the vehicles themselves are upgraded.





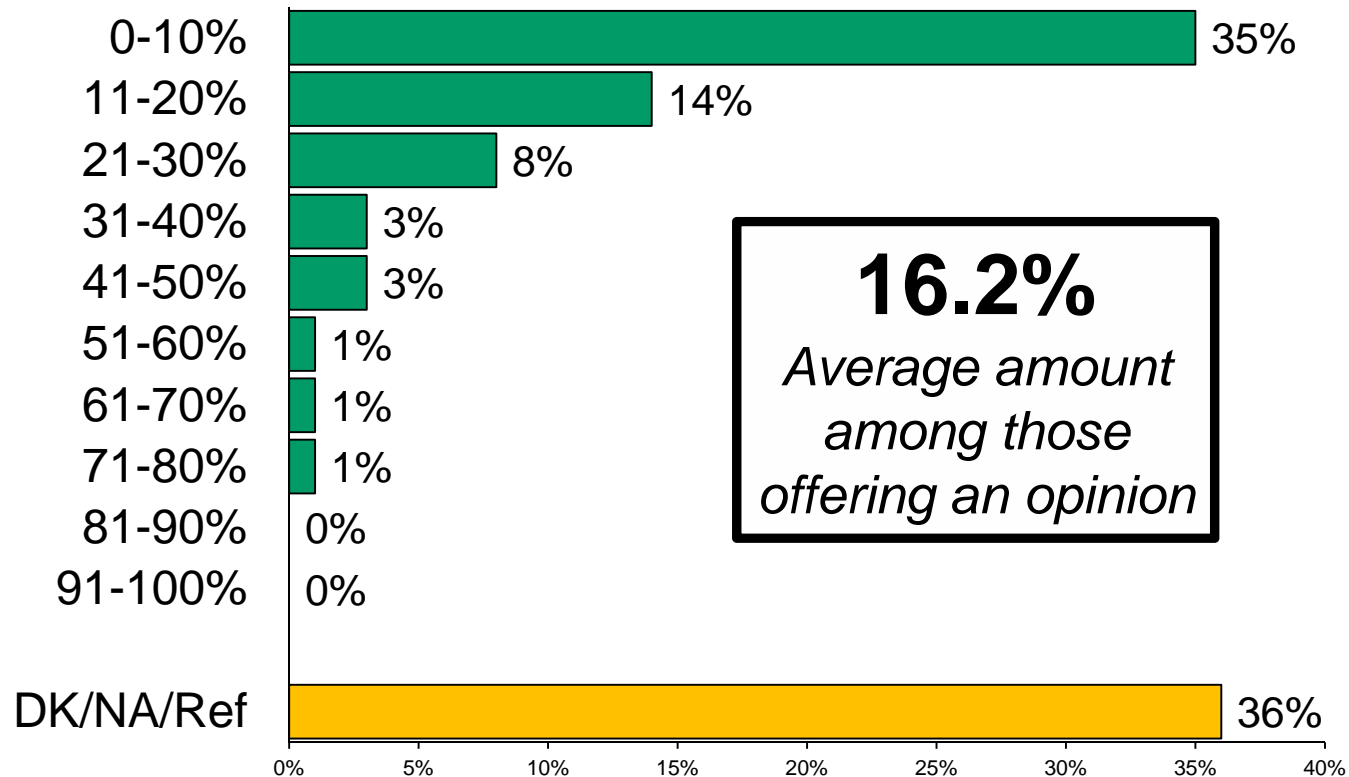
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# Funding Transportation Improvements



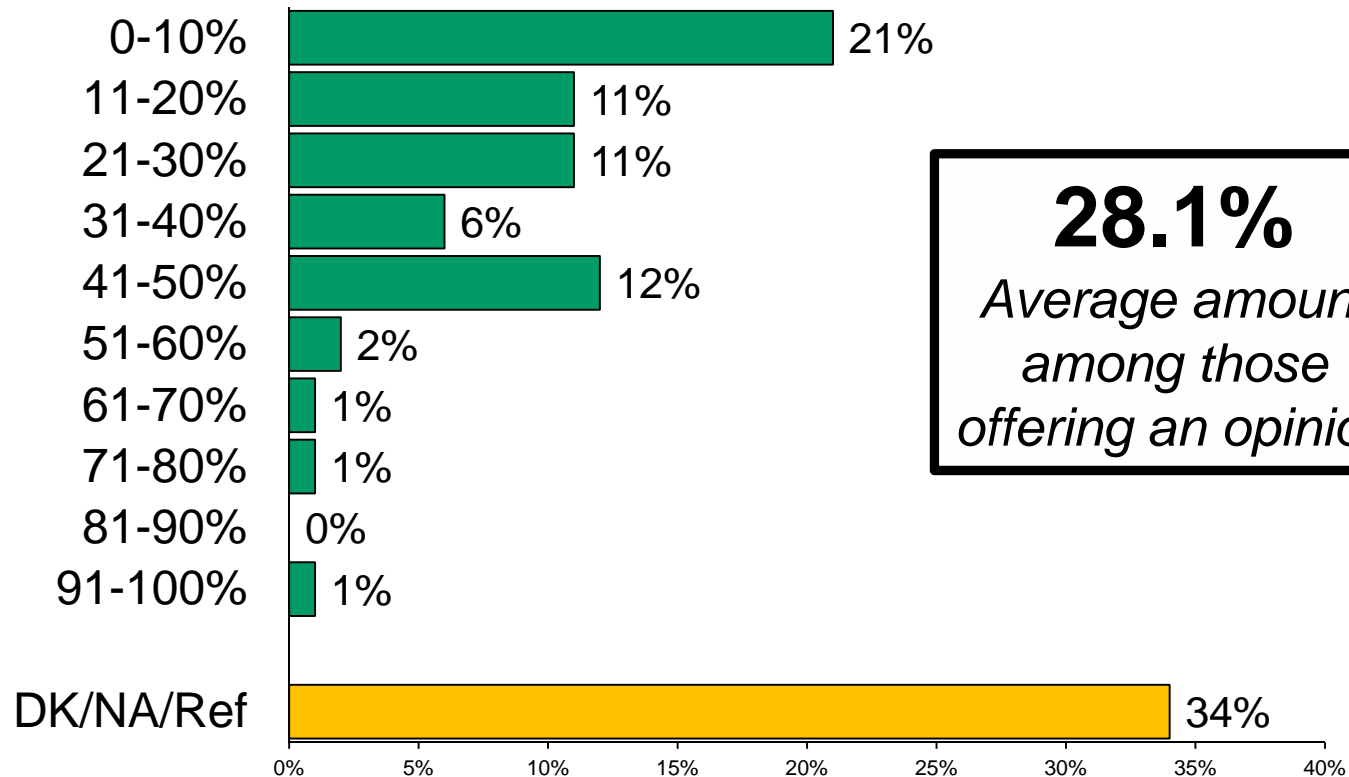
# Americans over-estimate what their state spends on public transportation...

*If you had to guess, what proportion of every dollar your state spends on transportation would you estimate currently goes to improving and maintaining public transportation – like buses or trains?*



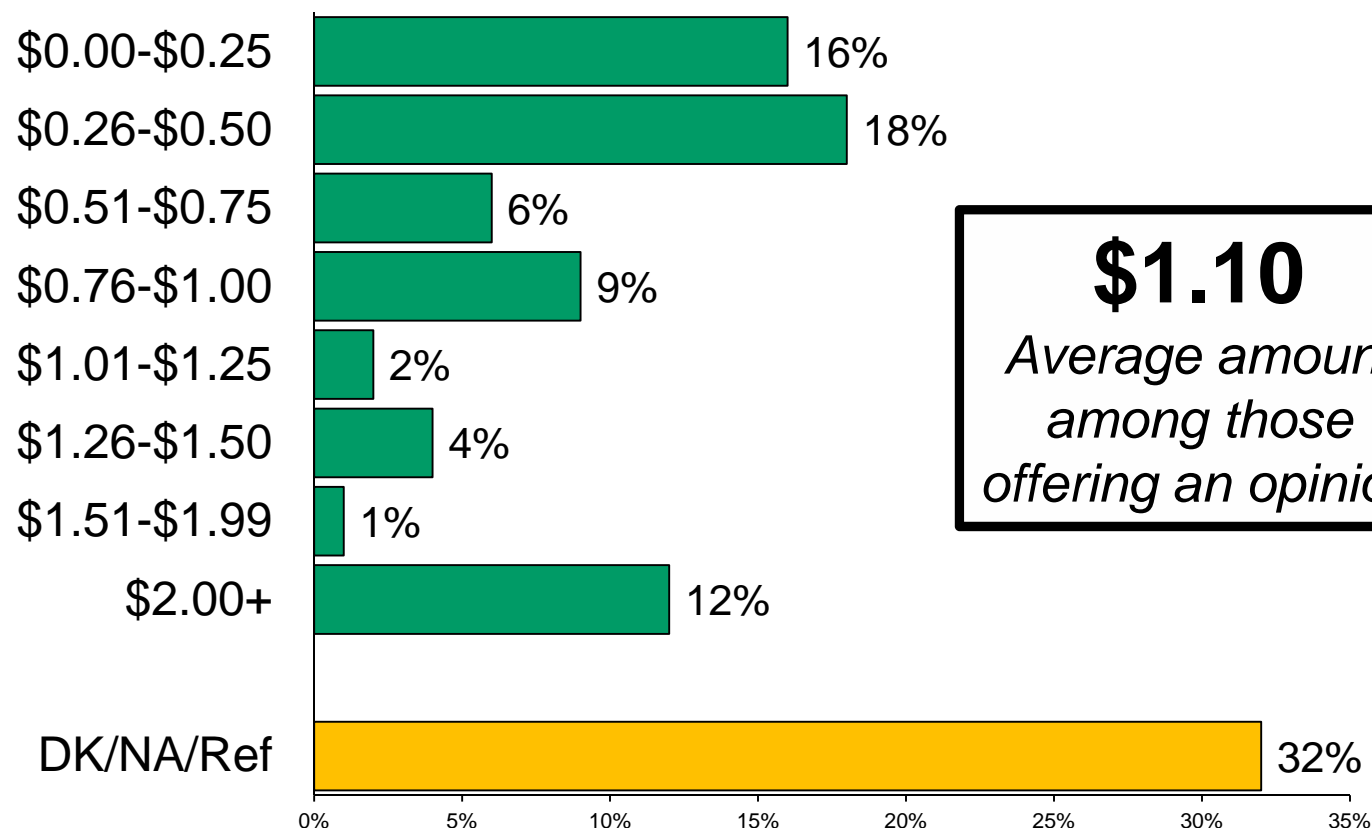
## ...and still would like that proportion nearly doubled.

*If you were in charge of your state's transportation budget, what proportion of every dollar would you spend on improving and maintaining public transportation – like buses or trains?*



# Citizens also offer a wide range of estimates of how much their states bring in in gas taxes.

*If you had to guess, how much of the cost of every gallon of gas in your state would you say goes to taxes?*

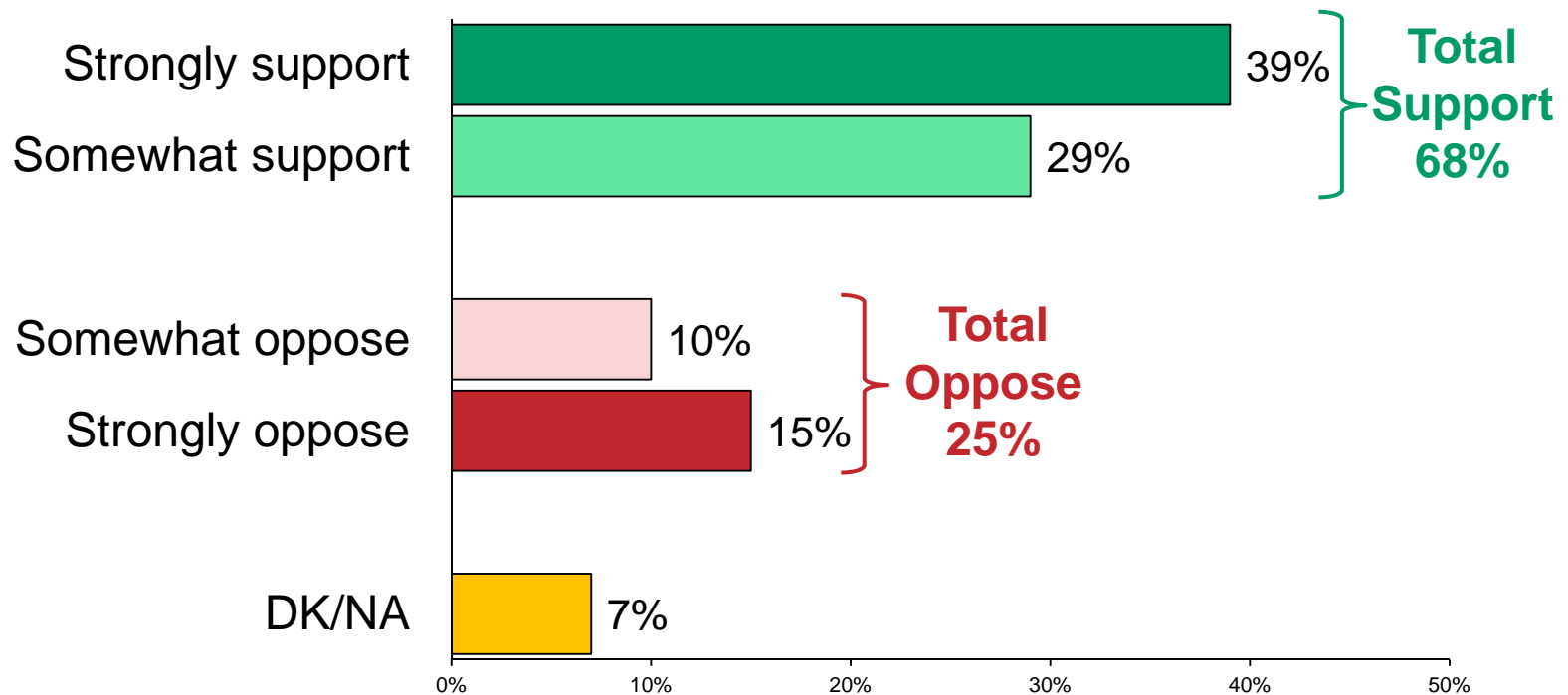


**\$1.10**

*Average amount  
among those  
offering an opinion*

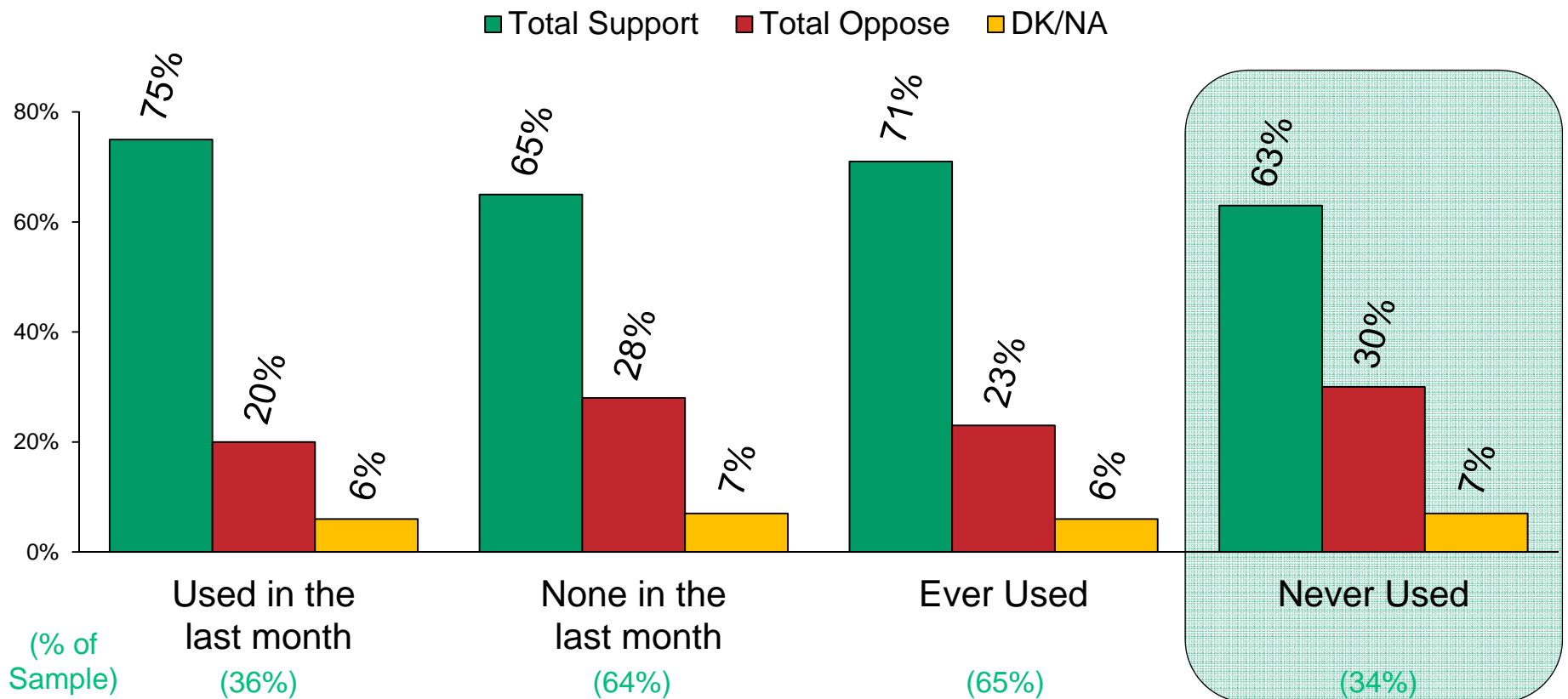
# Americans strongly support more local investment in improvements to public transportation.

*In order to reduce traffic congestion and provide more transportation choices, would you support or oppose local governments in your area investing more to expand and improve public transportation, including buses, trains, and light rail?*



# Non-users of transit are nearly as supportive as users.

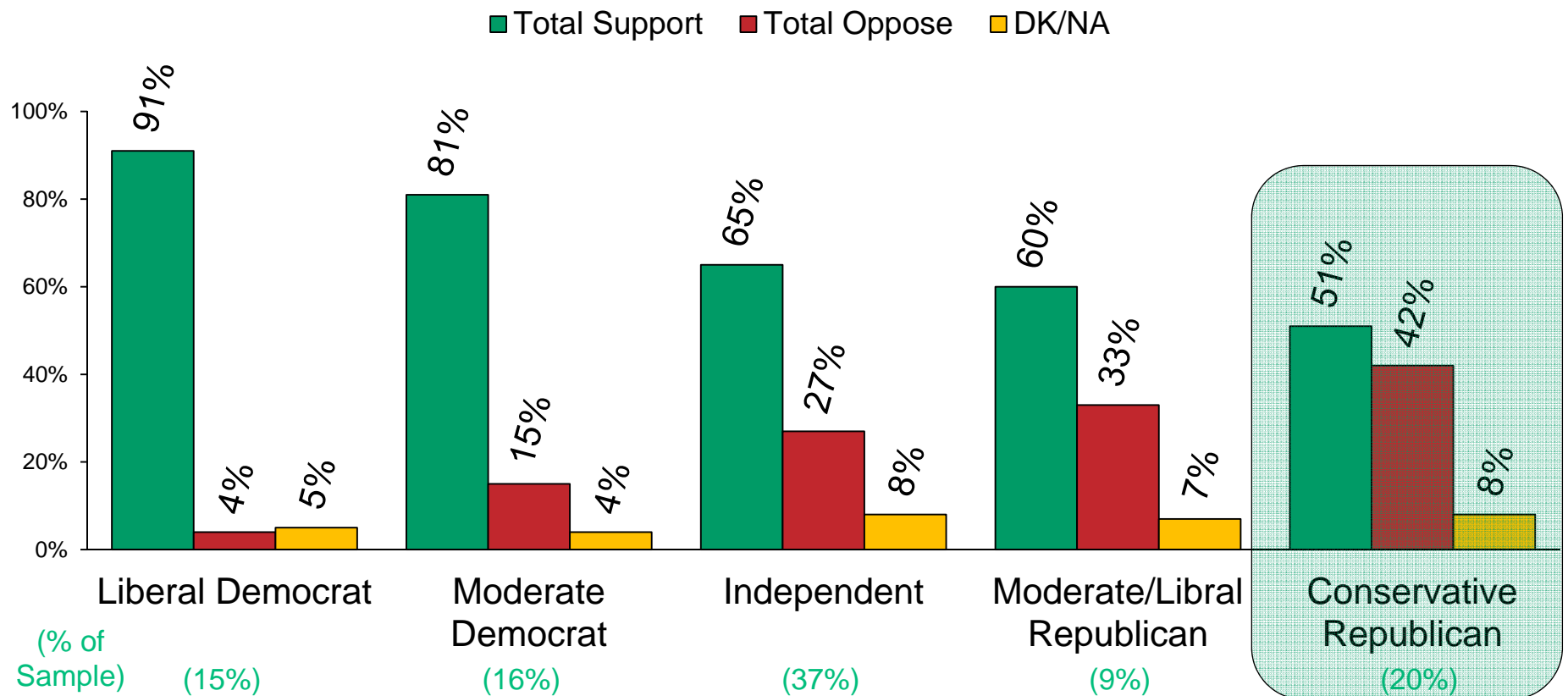
## *Support for Local Transportation Investment by Alternative Transportation Use*





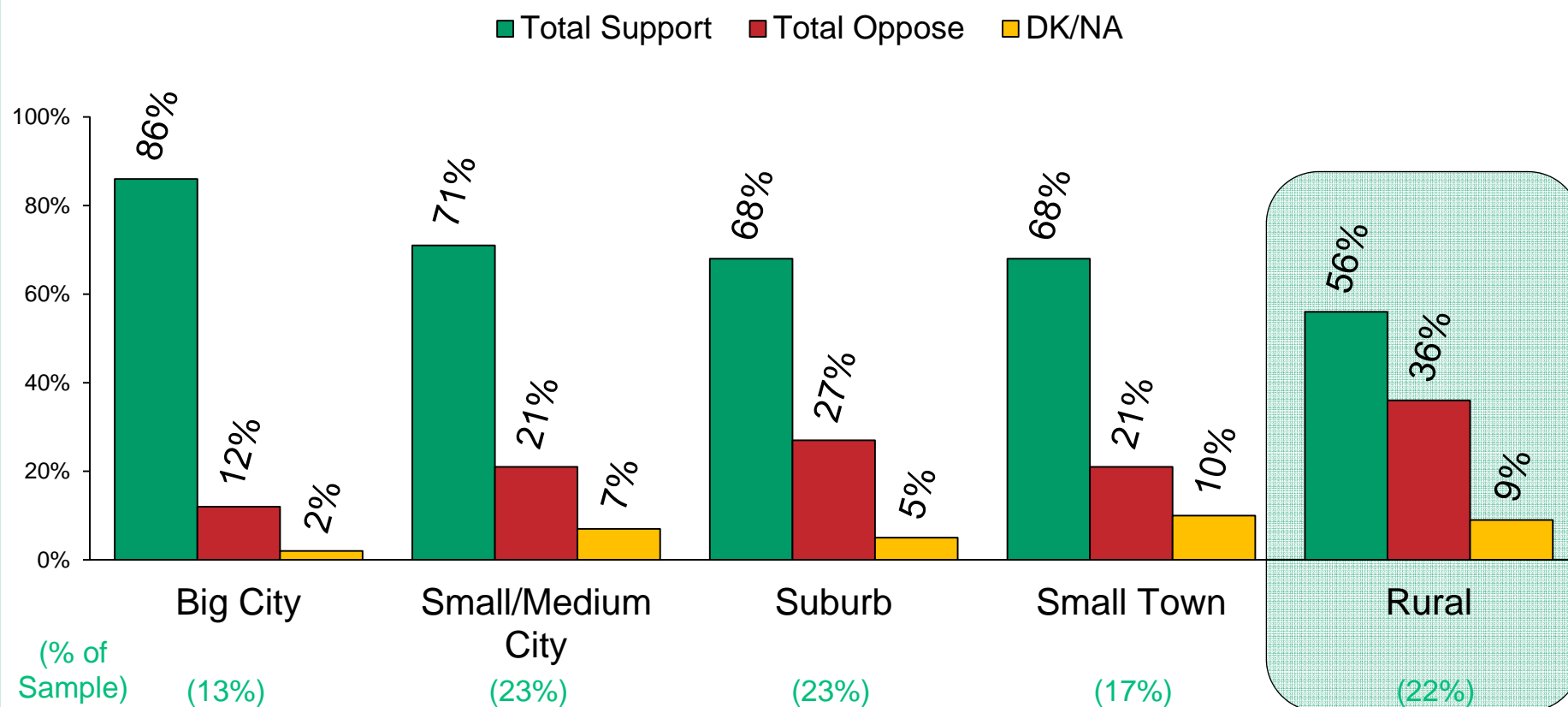
# A majority of conservative Republicans back these investments.

## *Support for Local Transportation Investment by Party and Ideology*



# Even rural citizens support investment in public transportation by a 20-point margin.

## *Support for Local Transportation Investment by Type of Area*



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