

Marin Emergency Radio Authority [MERA]

Funding Marin Emergency Radio Authority's Next Generation System: Findings from a Recent Survey

Interviews Conducted:
March 4-10, 2013

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates - FM3
Public Opinion Research & Strategy

SANTA MONICA • OAKLAND • MADISON • MEXICO CITY

220-3611

Methodology

- FM3 completed 601 telephone interviews with Marin County voters likely to vote in the November 2014 general election
- Interviews conducted between March 4-10, 2013
- Margin of sampling error of +/- 4.0 %
- Due to rounding, not all percentages sum to 100%
- Interviews were conducted on landlines (76%) and cellphones (24%)

Key Findings

1. Voters are not overly worried about maintaining reliable communications during a major emergency or natural disaster, though they have positive impressions of first responders.
2. Support for a \$45 annual parcel tax funding a new countywide emergency communications system is broad (58%), but falls short of the two-thirds vote threshold.
3. However, it increases notably (64%) after a simple explanation of why the measure is being considered and what it would fund.
4. Voters place more value in the benefits of new system over the new technologies a system would use.
5. The most compelling reasons to support a finance measure:
 - i. How critical the communication system is to first responders
 - ii. The need to upgrade the system to manage the aftermath of a major emergency or natural disaster.

Public and Market Research
Marin County
Marin Emergency Radio Authority [MERA]
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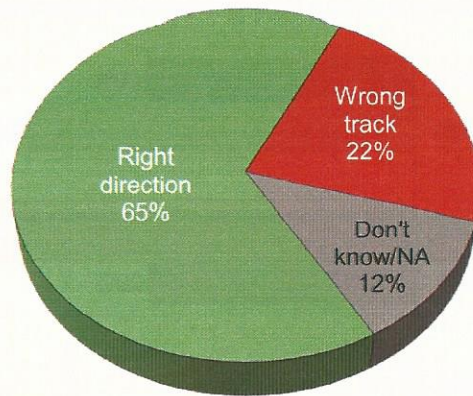
Marin Emergency Radio Authority [MERA]

Issue Context

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Most voters feel things in Marin County are headed in the right direction.

"Would you say that things in Marin County are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?"

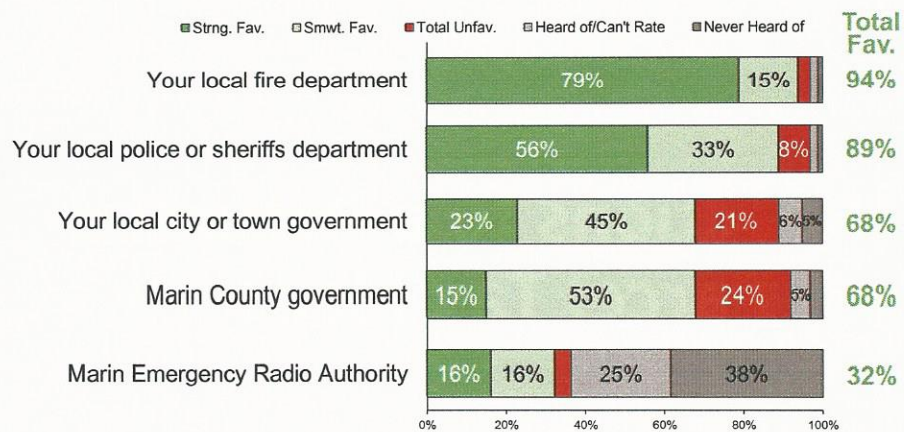


Public, Marin, March, April & December 2012
Public Opinion Survey

Q2.

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Most voters have a favorable opinion of their local police, sheriff, and fire departments, but few have heard of the Marin Emergency Radio Authority.



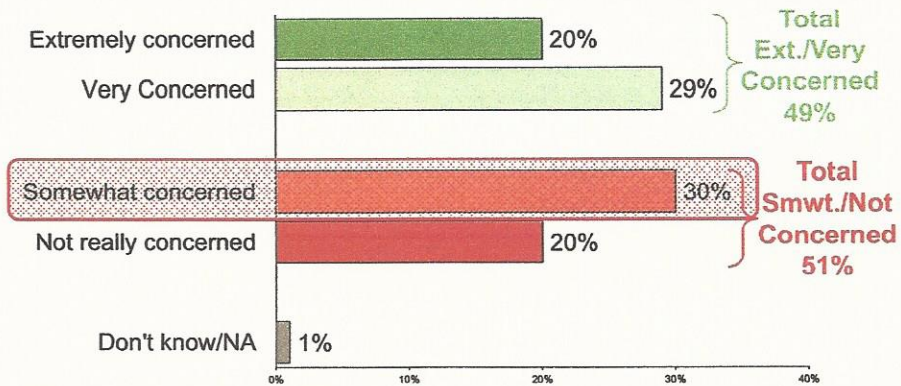
Public, Marin, March, April & December 2012
Public Opinion Survey

Q3.

5

Voters are not overly concerned that first responders can maintain communications during an emergency.

"In general, how concerned are you about police, firefighters, and emergency medical first responders from different communities maintaining reliable communications during a major emergency or natural disaster?"



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Marin Emergency Radio Authority [MERA]

Reactions to a Potential Parcel Tax Measure

7

Hypothetical Ballot Language Tested

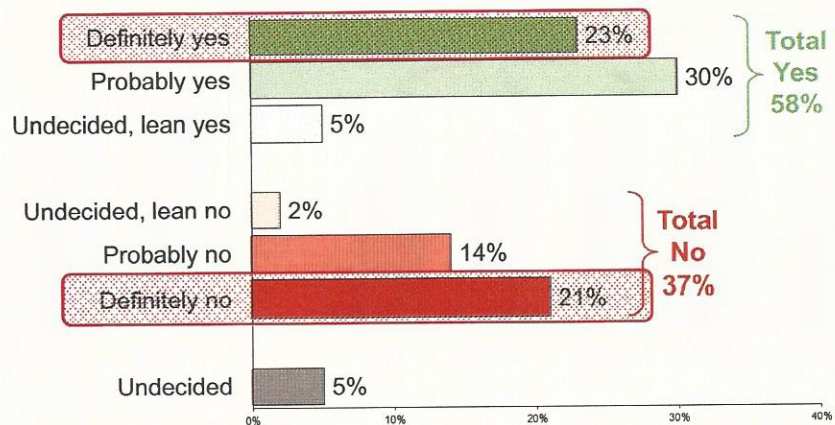
Marin County Emergency Communications and Response Measure. To modernize Marin County's aging emergency communications system used for 911 calls; improve emergency communications reliability during earthquakes, floods, fires and other natural disasters; reduce emergency response times; and maintain reliable communications among police, fire, and medical first responders from different communities, shall Marin County establish a \$45 annual parcel tax for 20 years on behalf of the Marin Emergency Radio Authority with annual independent audits and public expenditure reports?

Palmer, Mark, Mayor, City of Los Altos, CA
11/14/2014 10:11:11 AM

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Although a majority of voters would initially vote "yes," support falls short of two-thirds.

"If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?"

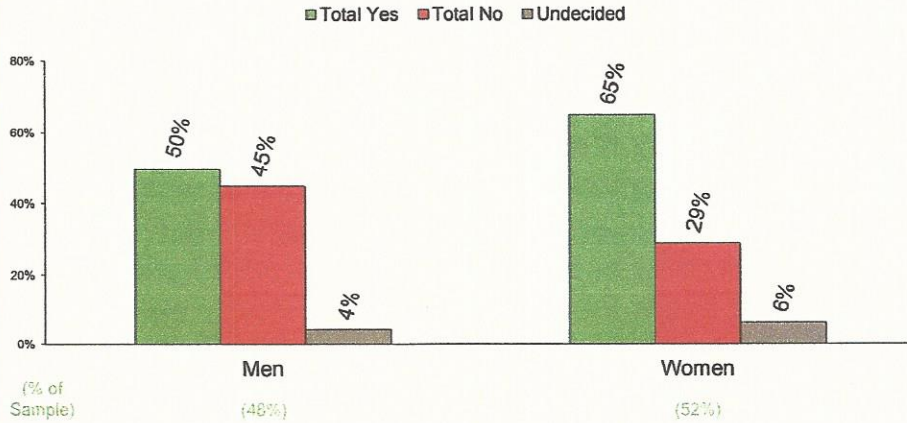


Palmer, Mark, Mayor, City of Los Altos, CA
11/14/2014 10:11:11 AM

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Women are much more supportive than men.

Initial Vote by Gender



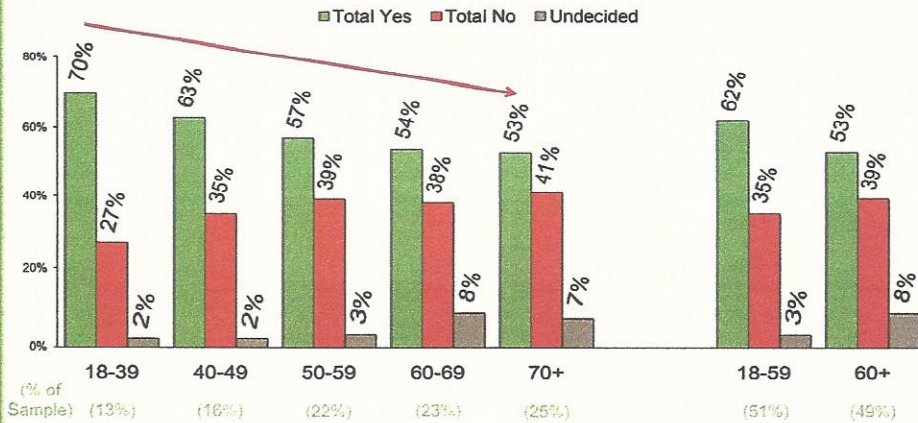
Palmer, Harris, Miller, Mink & Associates, LTD.
Public Opinion Research

4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

10

Support decreases with age.

Initial Vote by Age



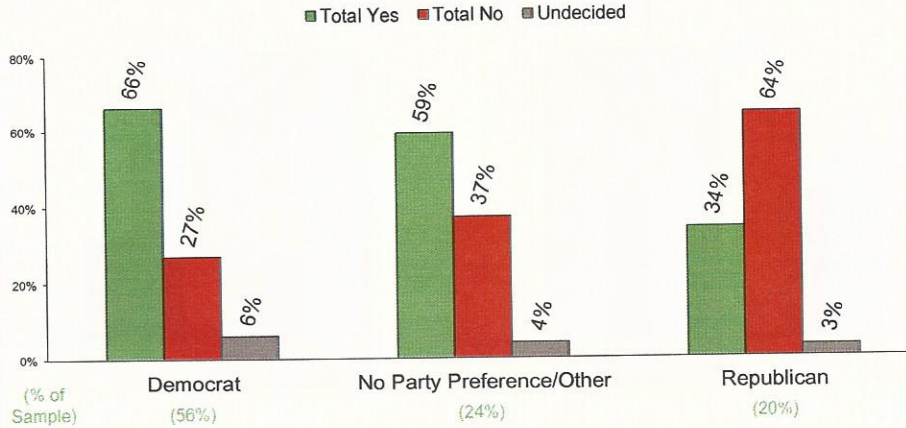
Palmer, Harris, Miller, Mink & Associates, LTD.
Public Opinion Research

4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

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Support among Democrats is as strong as opposition among Republicans.

Initial Vote by Party

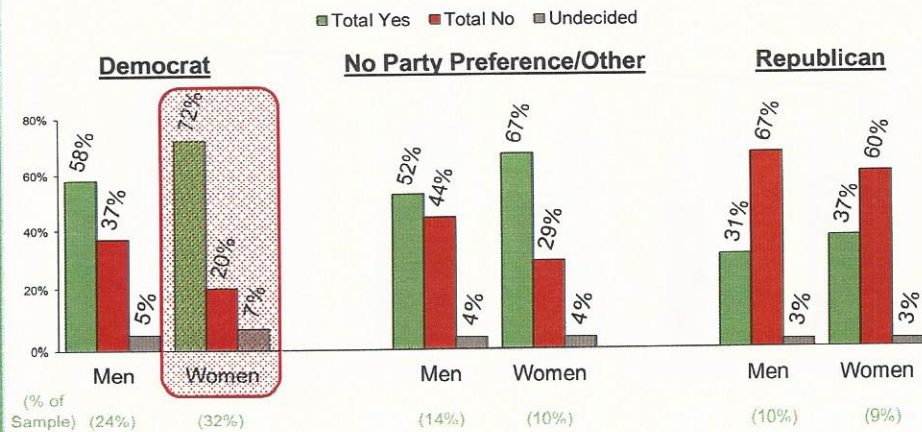


Pollster: Marking Martin, LLC & Associates, LLC
 Date: 08/11/11
 Method: Telephone Interview

4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

Support exceeds two-thirds among Democratic women.

Initial Support by Party by Gender

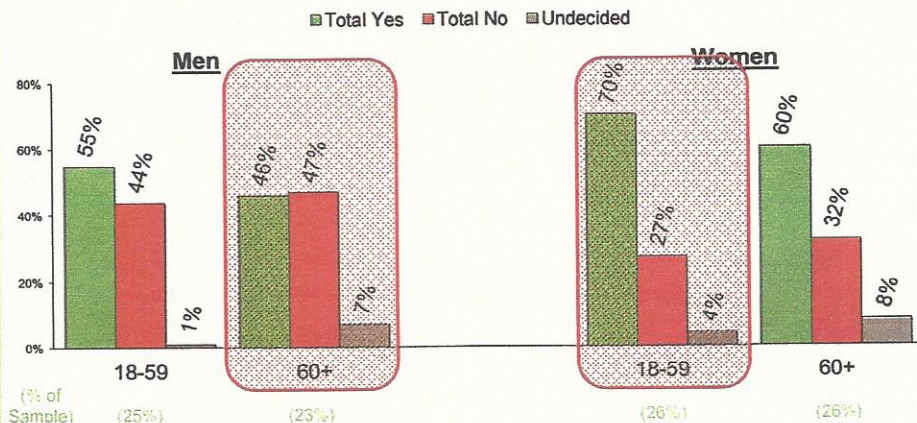


Pollster: Marking Martin, LLC & Associates, LLC
 Date: 08/11/11
 Method: Telephone Interview

4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

Younger women are most supportive; older men are evenly divided.

Initial Vote by Gender by Age



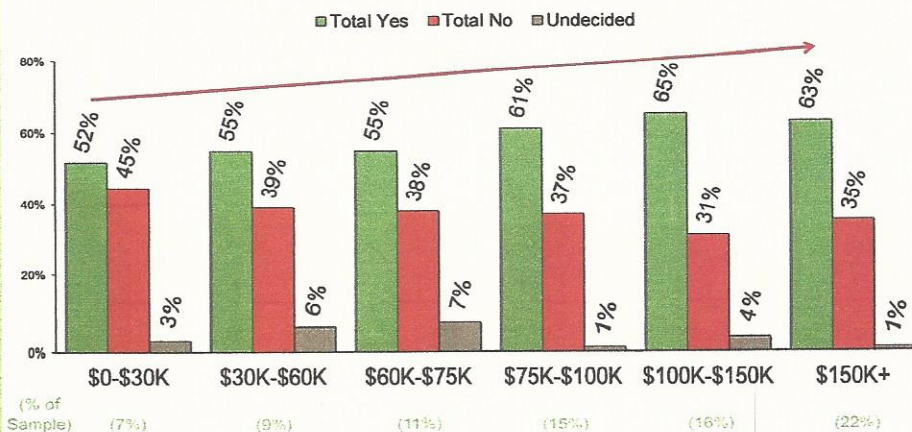
Public Mind Survey: Mind & Issues: 2007

4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

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Support increases with higher levels of household income.

Initial Vote by Income

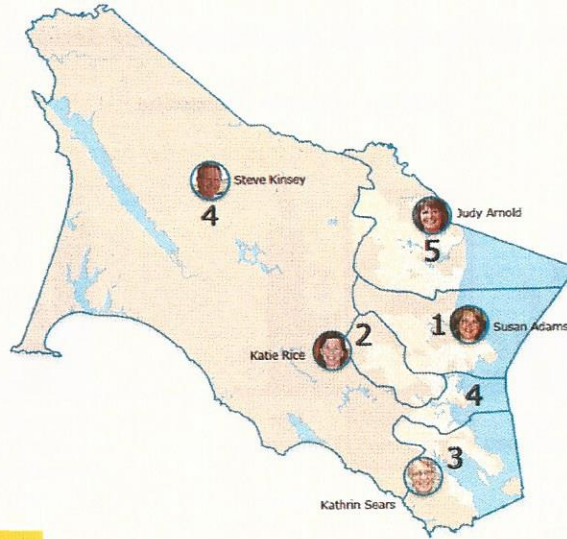


Public Mind Survey: Mind & Issues: 2007

4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

15

Marin County Supervisor Districts

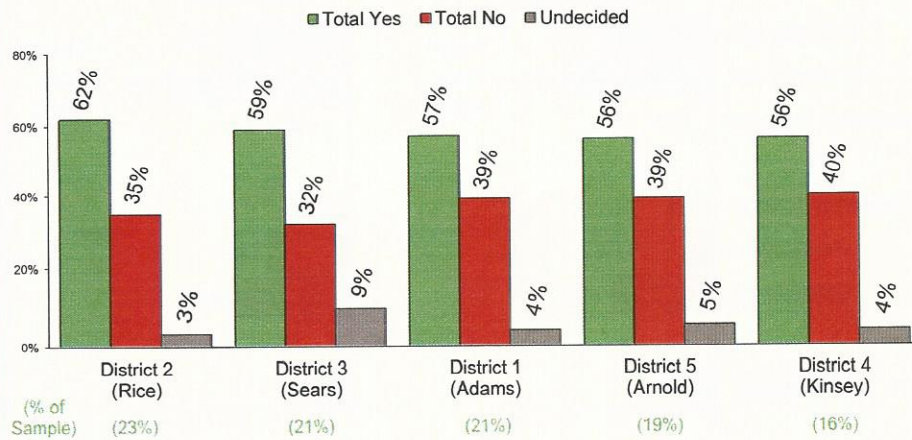


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Support is somewhat higher in District 2, but generally consistent across the County.

Initial Vote by Supervisor District



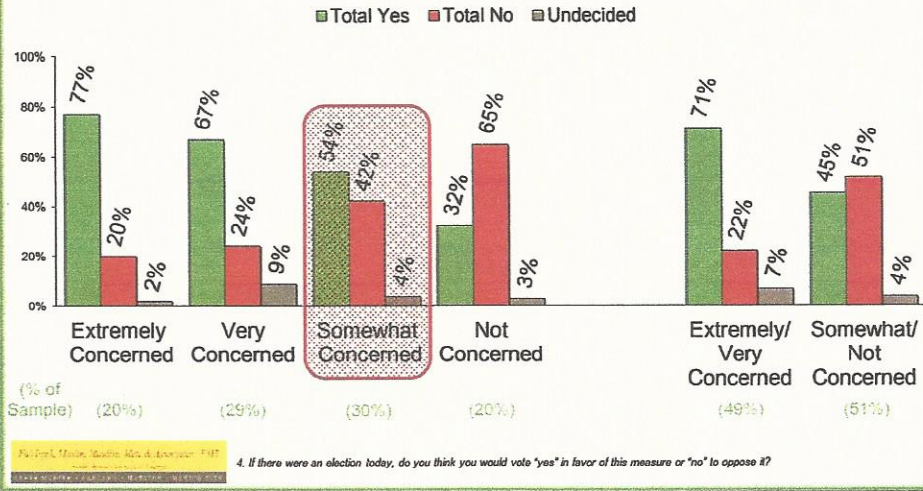
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 415.456.1234 | www.palmerandmartin.com

4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

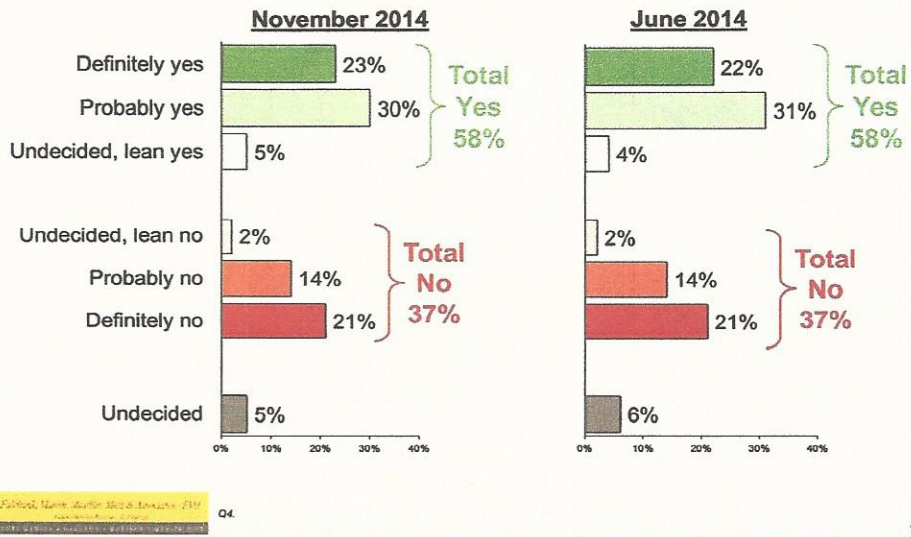
17

Those "somewhat" concerned about communications in an emergency are only mildly supportive of a measure.

Initial Vote by Concern About Emergency Services

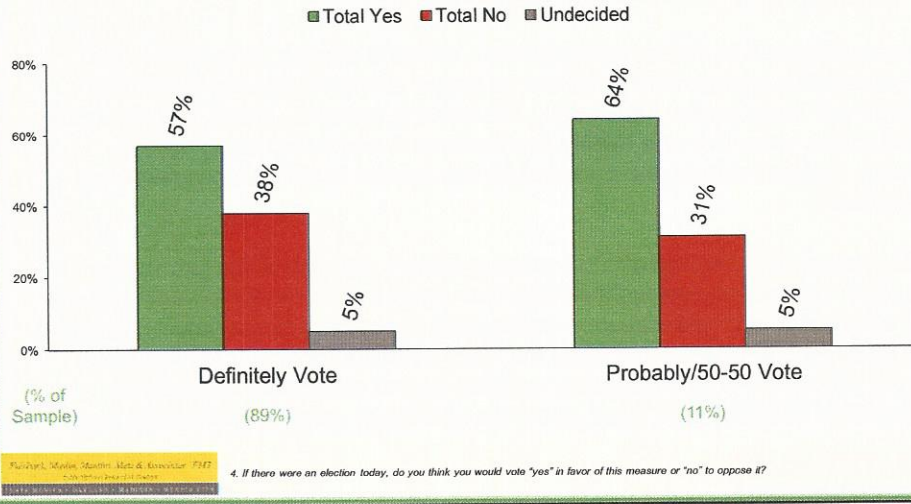


There is little difference between a June and November 2014 election, but...



...support is greater among lower-propensity voters, when self-reported...

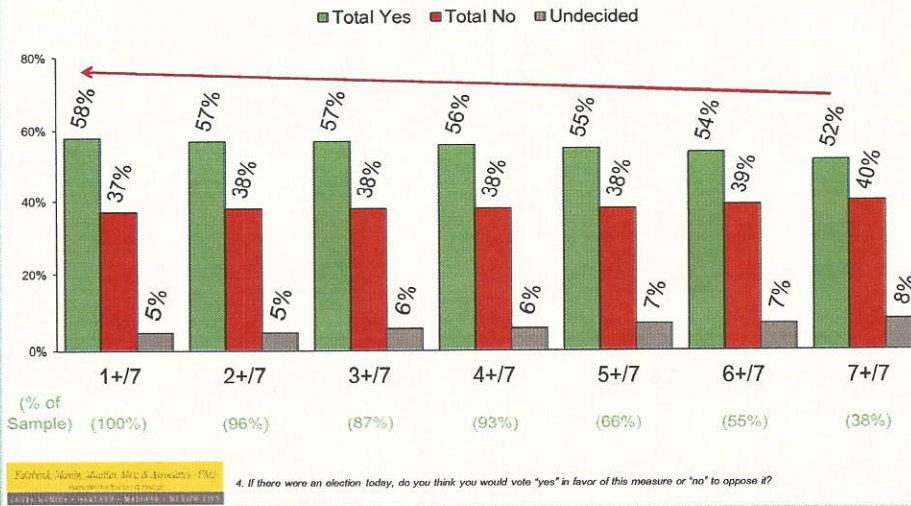
Initial Vote by Self-Reported November 2014 Vote Likelihood



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...or based upon their vote histories.

Initial Vote by Election Participation History



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Measure Explanation

Marin County's existing emergency communications system is used every time someone calls 911 and when police, fire, and emergency medical personnel in Marin County communicate with each other.

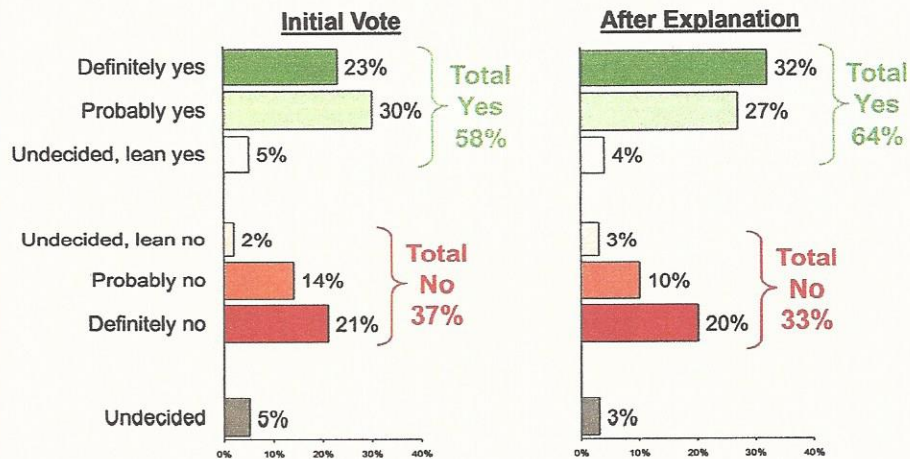
It was designed to last for twenty years – which is coming up in 2018 – and because key replacement parts are no longer available, repairs have to be made with used parts. Additionally, the existing system currently serves nearly 400 radios more than the twenty-five hundred it was designed to handle. These factors increase the potential for the system to fail during emergency situations.

This measure would replace the existing system with a new system using modern communication technologies that would better handle increased levels of emergency communications – particularly in cases of major natural disasters or other emergencies – and meet the 2021 deadline for implementing new, more rigorous federal emergency communication standards. It would be funded by establishing a local parcel tax of \$45 per year for the next 20 years.

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After an explanation of the measure, support nearly reaches the two-thirds threshold.



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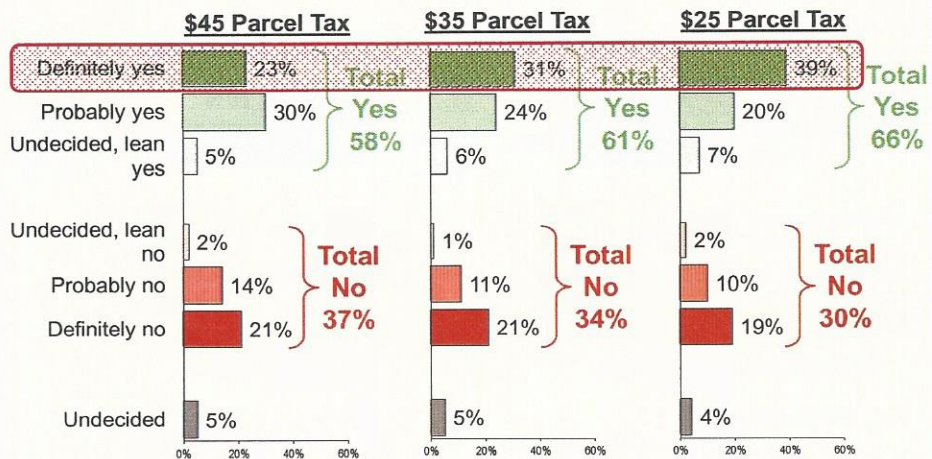
04/05

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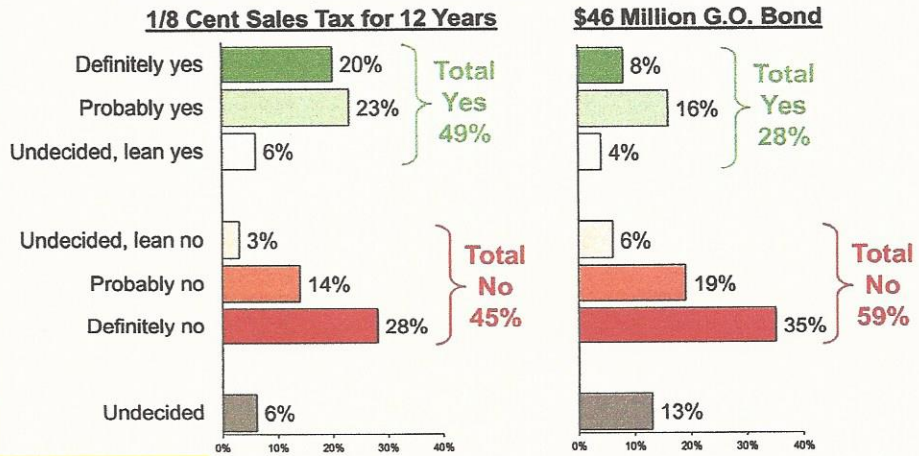
Designing a Measure

A lower parcel tax yields greater – and more intense – support.



Other methods of generating revenue yield far less support from voters.

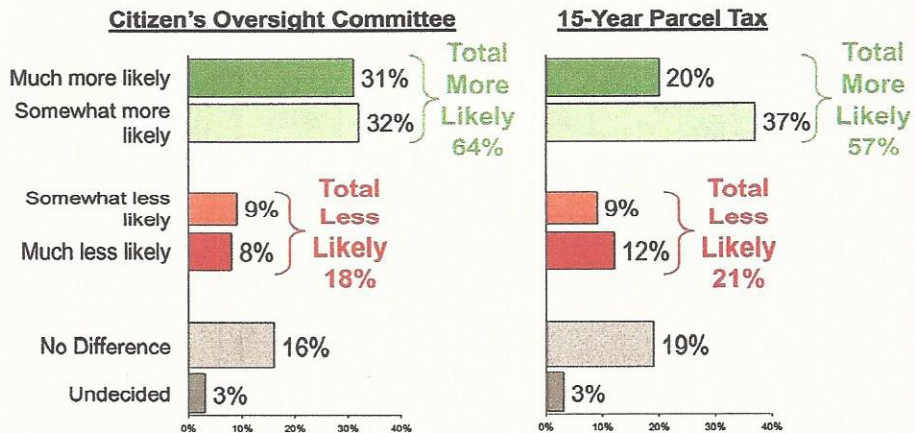
"What if rather than establishing a local parcel tax of \$45 per year for the next 20 years to replace Marin County's existing emergency communications system, this measure instead _____?"



Fairfax, Martin, Muller, Min. & Lawrence 11/07
 Q9a/b.

26

Including a citizens' oversight committee is likely to increase support more than reducing the sunset to 15 years.

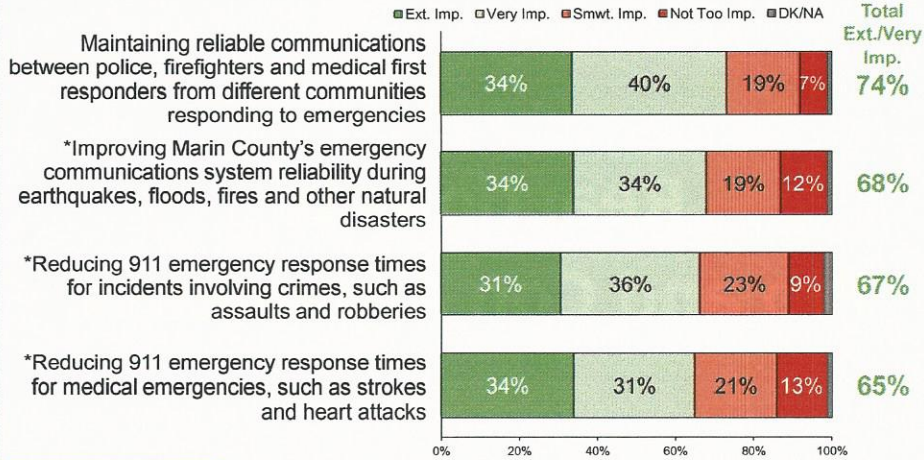


Fairfax, Martin, Muller, Min. & Lawrence 11/07
 Q9a/b.

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Voters value the benefits of reliable communications and reduced response times...

"I am going to read you a list of ways in which the funds generated by this ballot measure could be spent and their benefits. Please tell me how important you feel that benefit is to you personally: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important."

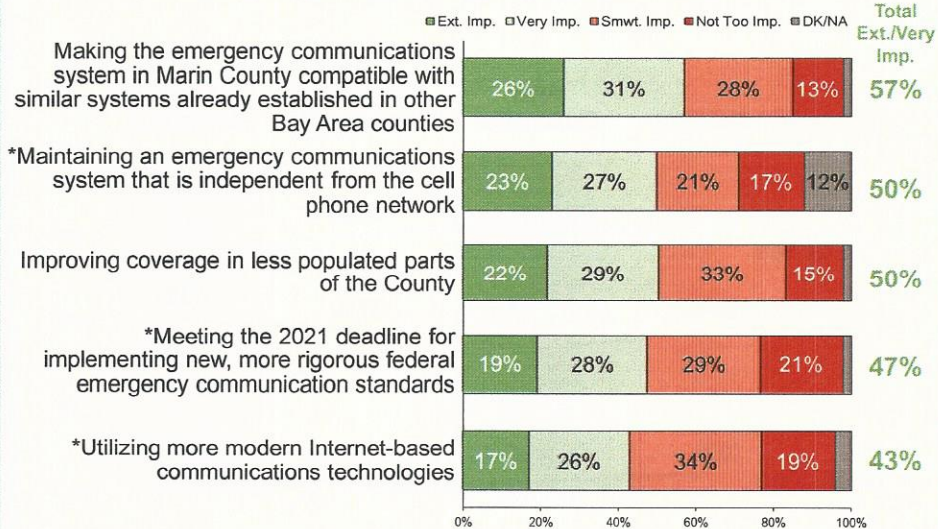


Flint, Merrill, Marler, Miller & Associates - F317

Q10. *Split Sample

28

...and are less enamored with the details of how those benefits would be achieved.



Flint, Merrill, Marler, Miller & Associates - F317

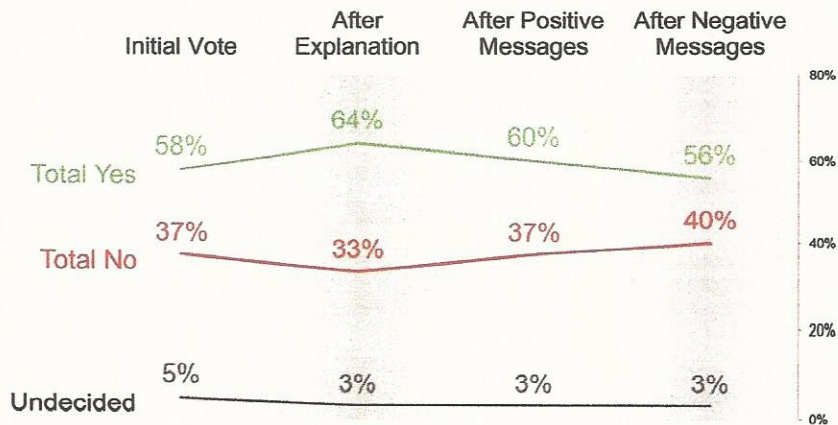
Q10. *Split Sample

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Reactions to Pro and Con Arguments

Providing additional information did little to change voters' minds.



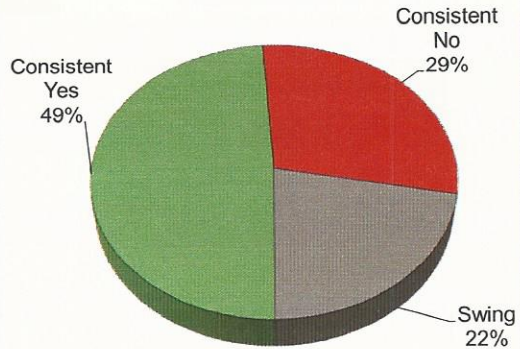
Segmenting the Electorate

❖ **Consistent Yes:** Voters who consistently indicated that they would vote yes on the measure.

❖ **Consistent No:** Voters who consistently indicated that they would vote no on the measure.

❖ **Swing:** Those who changed their vote or were consistently undecided.

The following slide shows demographic groups that *disproportionately* fall into one category or the other.



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Demographic Profile of the Segments

Consistent Yes	Swing	Consistent No
49% of the Electorate	22% of the Electorate	29% of the Electorate
Democratic Women	HH Income <\$60,000	Republicans (All ages and genders)
Liberals	Republican Women	Conservatives
Democrat Ages 18-59	Democrats Ages 60+	Men
Ages 18-39	Supervisorial Districts 3 & 5	Independent Men
Women Ages 18-59	Voters of Color	San Rafael
Renters	Age: 65+	Independents Ages 60+
Democrats	Unincorporated County	Ages 70+
HH Income >\$75,000	Women Ages 60+	
Supervisorial District 2	Very Conservative	
Independent Women	Novato	

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Subsets of Persuadable Voters

Positive Movers After Explanation

7% of the Electorate

Latinos (small sample)

Republican Women

Novato

Supervisorial District 5

Republicans Ages 18-59

Negative Movers after Pros/Cons

9% of the Electorate

HH Income <\$30,000

Moderate/Liberal Republicans

Supervisorial District 5

Novato

Republican Women

Republicans

Republicans Ages 18-59

Very Conservative

Public Works Dept. Nov 4, 2010 110

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Both natural disasters and day-to-day emergencies were convincing reasons for voters to support the measure.

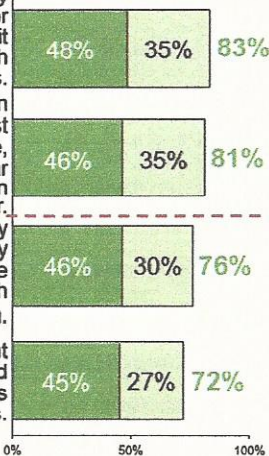
(NATURAL DISASTER) This measure will make the emergency communications system in Marin County more reliable during a major natural disaster – such as an earthquake, flood or fire – by enabling it to handle the high volume of communications that follow such disasters.

(DAY-TO-DAY USE) We need to pass this measure to replace Marin County's aging emergency communications system for more than just natural disasters and other major emergencies. It is used by all police, fire and emergency medical personnel in the County for their regular communications and anytime anyone calls 911, handling 5.4 million calls last year.

***(REPAIRS)** Repairs to Marin County's existing emergency communications system are made with used parts because key replacement parts are no longer available. This measure will replace the old system with a modern, more reliable system that will be much easier to maintain.

***(CAPITAL)** The funds generated by this measure can only be spent on capital purchases, such as radios, computer systems and communication towers. It cannot be spent on administration, salaries or pensions.

Very Conv. Smwt. Conv.



Public Works Dept. Nov 4, 2010 110

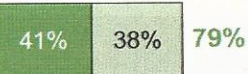
11. I am going to read you some statements from people who may support this ballot measure. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support such a measure. *Split Sample

35

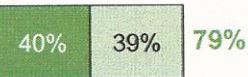
Getting into the details was less compelling.

■ Very Conv. □ Smw. Conv.

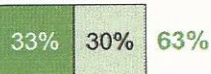
*(**COVERAGE**) This measure will expand Marin County's emergency communications system to better cover several underserved areas in which local police, fire and emergency medical responders currently have limited to no ability to use their radios.



(**SCALE**) Marin County's existing emergency communications system is currently being used by nearly 400 more radios than the 2,500 it was designed to handle, significantly straining the system during emergencies. This measure will double system capacity to handle the current number of radios, as well as future expansion.



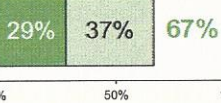
(**FEDERAL REGULATIONS**) Marin County's existing emergency communications system uses radio frequencies that must be given back to the federal government by 2021. We need this measure to transition emergency communications to new radio frequencies before the deadline.



(**EXISTING SYSTEM**) This measure will build upon the existing and successful partnerships of the 25 member agencies currently using Marin County's emergency communications system. It will not increase administrative costs and it will not create any new bureaucracies.



*(**LIFESPAN**) Technology changes frequently – just think about cell phones – and emergency communications systems are no different. This measure is needed to replace Marin County's current system that was designed in 1998 to last until 2018.



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11. I am going to read you some statements from people who may support this ballot measure. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support such a measure. *Split Sample

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Natural disasters, day-to-day communications and not spending funds on administration were compelling among persuadable voters.

(% Very Convincing)

Message	All Voters	Swing Voters	Positive Movers
Natural Disaster	48%	48%	59%
*Repairs	46%	44%	46%
Day-to-Day Use	46%	45%	55%
*Capital	45%	42%	61%
*Coverage	41%	35%	45%
Scale	40%	35%	46%
Federal Regulations	33%	34%	39%
Existing System	30%	29%	41%
*Lifespan	29%	20%	22%

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11. I am going to read you some statements from people who may support this ballot measure. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support such a measure. *Split Sample

37

Referencing the existing partnerships, new technology, and federal regulations may actually *reduce* support.


(% Not Convincing/Don't Believe)

Message	All Voters	Swing Voters	Negative Movers
Existing System	37%	33%	39%
Federal Regulations	33%	32%	38%
*Lifespan	32%	32%	31%
*Capital	27%	30%	28%
*Repairs	22%	14%	25%
*Coverage	19%	20%	18%
Scale	19%	18%	14%
Day-to-Day Use	18%	14%	14%
Natural Disaster	16%	11%	5%

Public Opinion Matters: Marin County 2012

11. I am going to read you some statements from people who may support this ballot measure. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support such a measure. *Split Sample

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Marin Emergency Radio Authority [MERA]

Conclusions

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Conclusions

1. Voters don't currently see emergency communications as a major problem in the County, though they clearly like the idea of improving response times and being better prepared for major emergencies or natural disasters.
2. This leaves MERA facing an electorate generally inclined to support a parcel tax measure, but not at sufficient levels for passage without additional education.
3. However, taking the following steps will make passing a parcel tax in 2014 more achievable, though it will still be challenging:
 - i. Engaging in a public education effort that focuses on the benefits (e.g., ensuring reliable day-to-day emergency communications and emergency communications after a major emergency or natural disaster) of a new system and not its mechanics
 - ii. Including accountability provisions (e.g., citizen oversight and guarantees that no funds will be spent on administration and pensions)
 - iii. Lowering the annual tax amount

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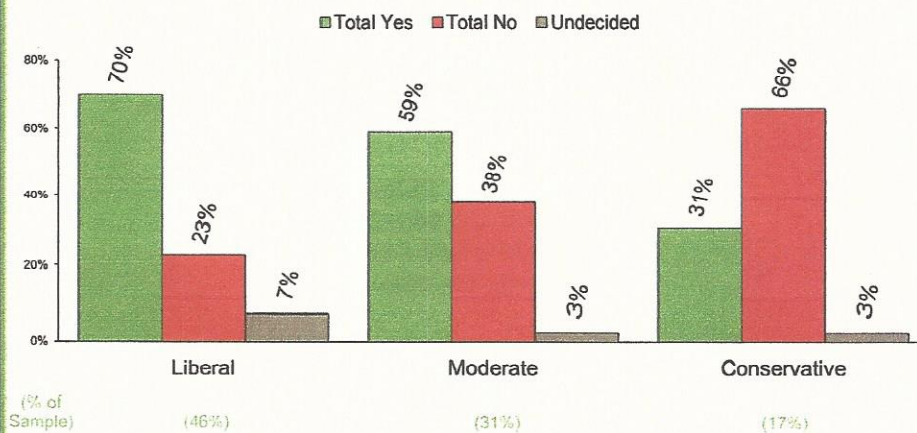
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Supplemental Slides

Support among liberals is as strong as opposition among conservatives.

Initial Vote by Ideology

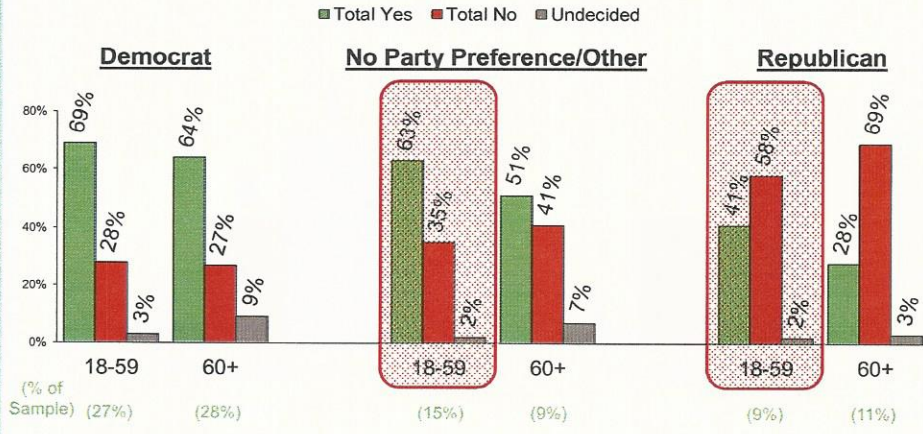


Farthest, Marin County Board of Supervisors, 2010
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4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

Younger Republicans and independents are more supportive than their older counterparts.

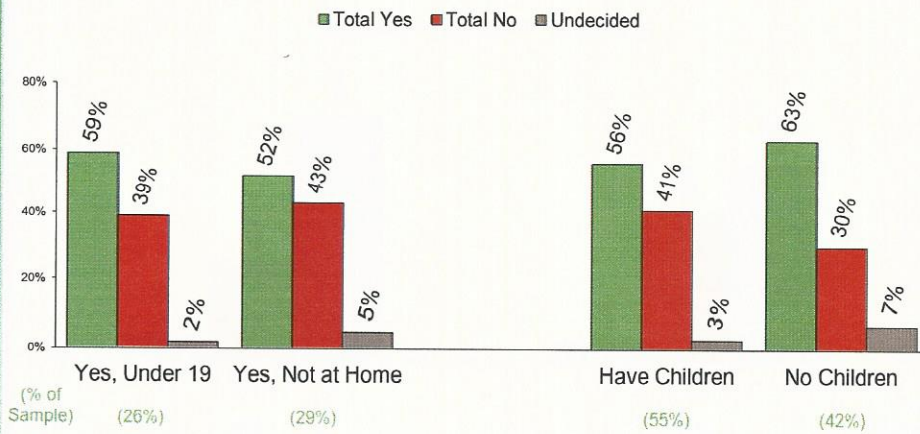
Initial Support by Party by Age



Fluharty, Myles, Martin, Micek & Associates, LLC
 4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it? 44

Having children doesn't appear to be a major influence on support...

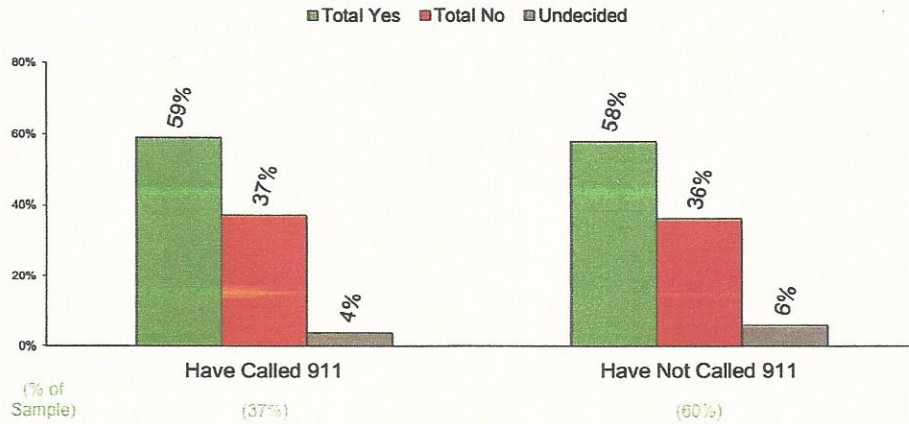
Initial Vote by Children at Home



Fluharty, Myles, Martin, Micek & Associates, LLC
 4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it? 45

...neither does having called 911.

Initial Vote by Having Called 911 in the Past Five Years



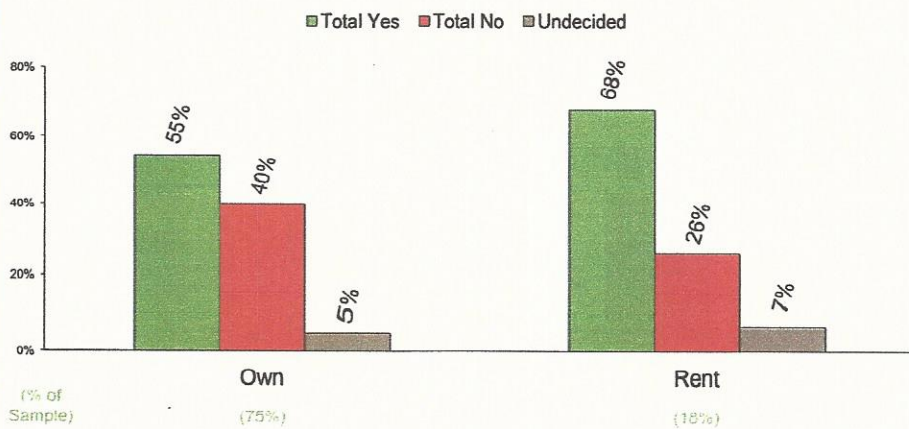
Palmer, Meyer, Moore, Morik & Associates, PA
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4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

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Renters are notably more supportive than homeowners.

Initial Vote by Residence



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4. If there were an election today, do you think you would vote "yes" in favor of this measure or "no" to oppose it?

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