

## **SULTAN CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

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**ITEM NO:** Special Presentation  
**DATE:** January 14, 2010  
**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Plan Survey  
**CONTACT PERSON:** Deborah Knight, City Administrator

### **ISSUE:**

The issue before the City Council is to hear the presentation from EMC Research on the outcome of the October-November 2009 phone survey (Attachment A).

The purpose of the survey is to assist the city council in updating the comprehensive plan and other policy decisions.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Hear the presentation from EMC Research and ask questions. Direct staff to areas of concern.

### **SUMMARY:**

EMC research conducted a telephone survey of 300 residences in the City of Sultan. The survey was conducted between October 20, 2009 and November 5, 2009. The sample included all eligible adults in the city to the extent available including those with cell phones.

The overall margin of error for the results is +/- 5.5 points at the 95% confidence interval. Meaning that if the survey was repeated 100 times, the results would be identical to those shown within 5.5 percentage points 95 times out of 100.

In order to save on paper and color ink, the powerpoint presentation is printed with three slides to a page. EMC will present the slides in powerpoint at the Council meeting. Electronic and hard copies are available upon request.

### **ATTACHMENT**

A – EMC Survey Results

# City of Sultan

## October-Nov 2009 Telephone Survey **Draft Report**



**EMC Research, Inc.**

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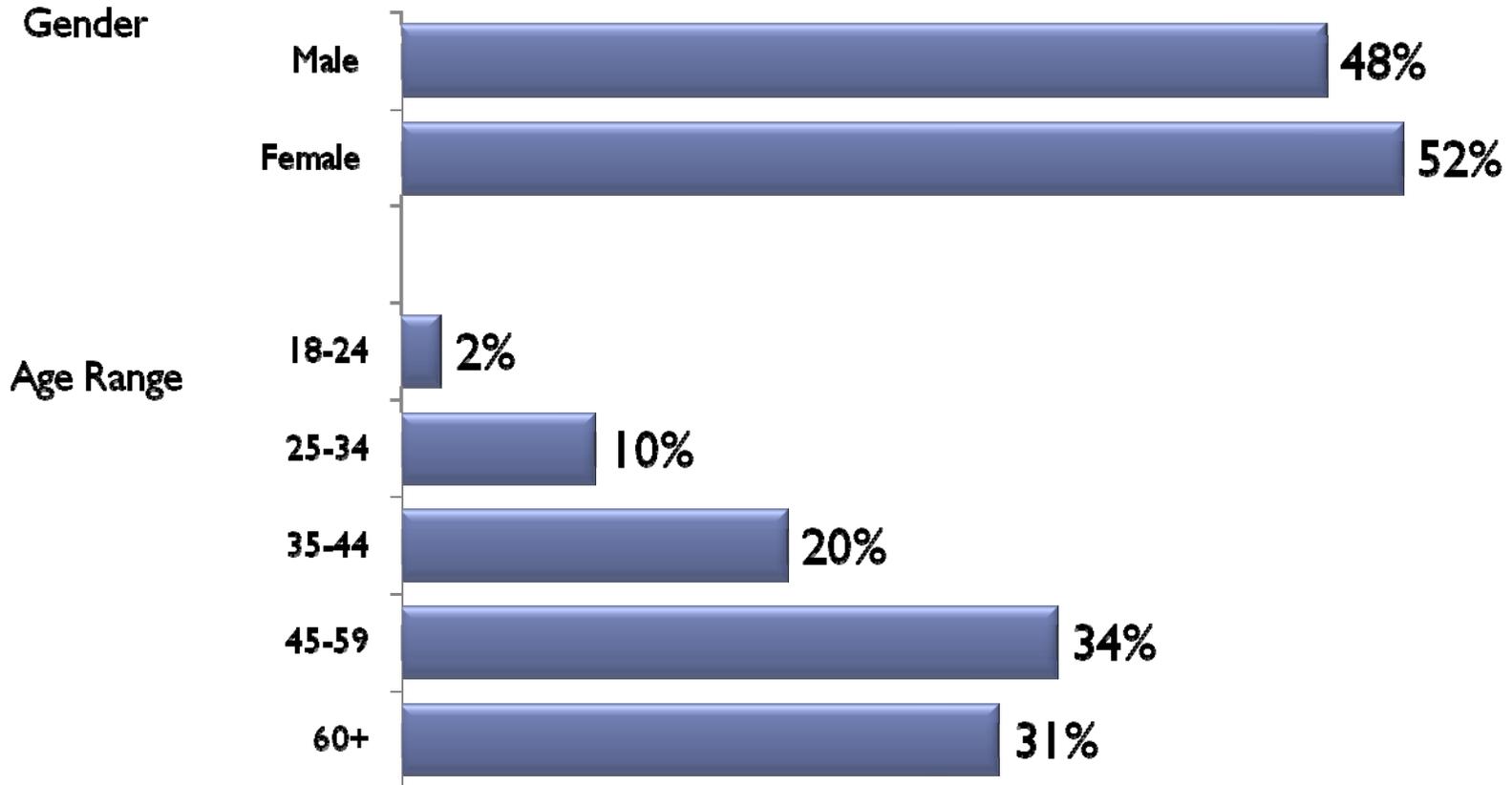
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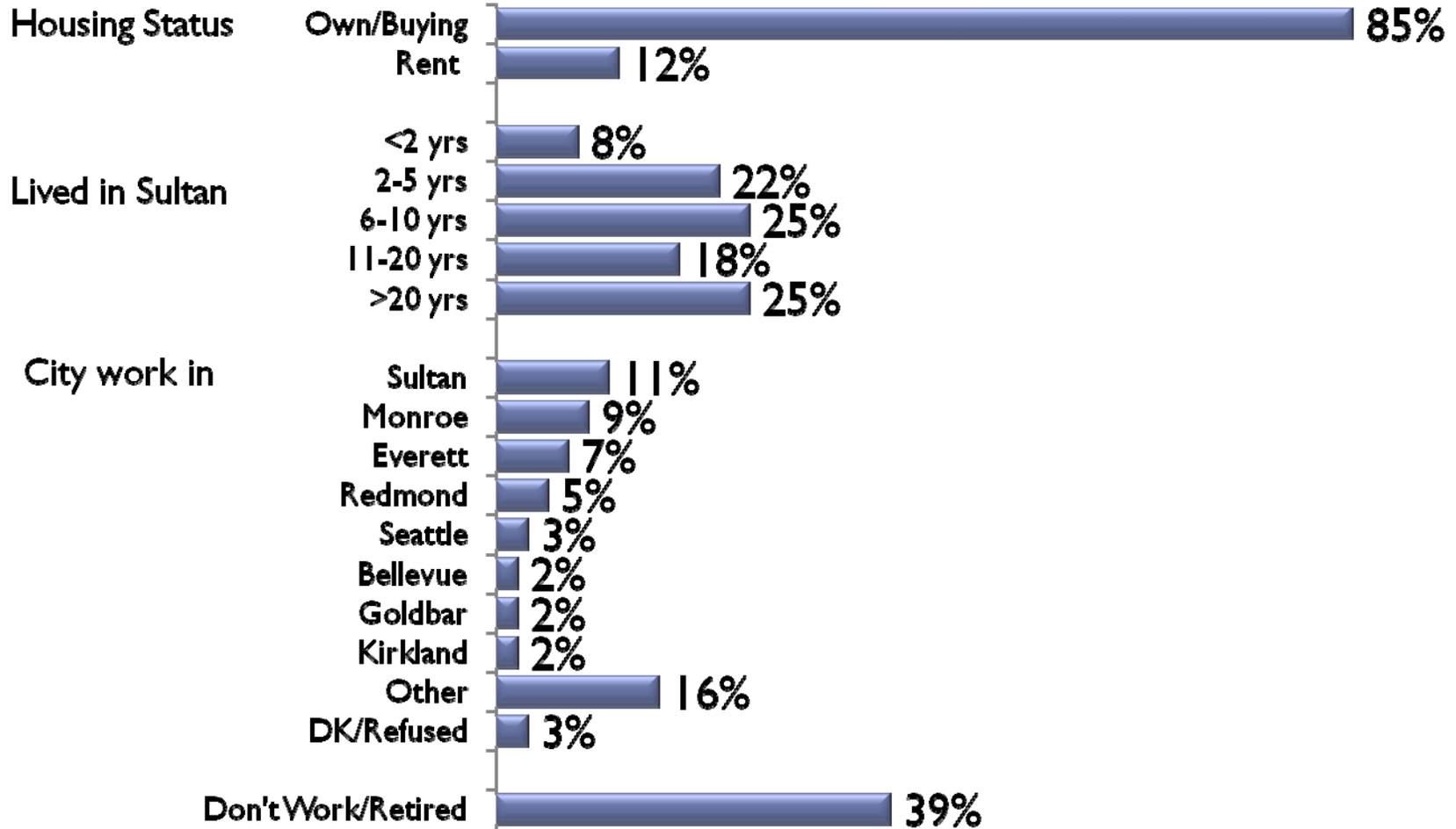
# Methodology

- ▶ EMC Research conducted a telephone survey of 300 residents in the City of Sultan.
- ▶ The sample includes all eligible adults in the City of Sultan to the extent available including those with cell phones.
- ▶ The overall margin of error for the results is  $\pm 5.5$  points at the 95% confidence interval. This confidence interval means that if the survey was repeated 100 times, the results would be identical to those shown within 5.5 percentage points 95 times out of 100.
- ▶ The survey was conducted between October 20<sup>th</sup> – Nov 5<sup>th</sup> , 2009.
- ▶ Due to rounding, some questions may not add to exactly 100%.

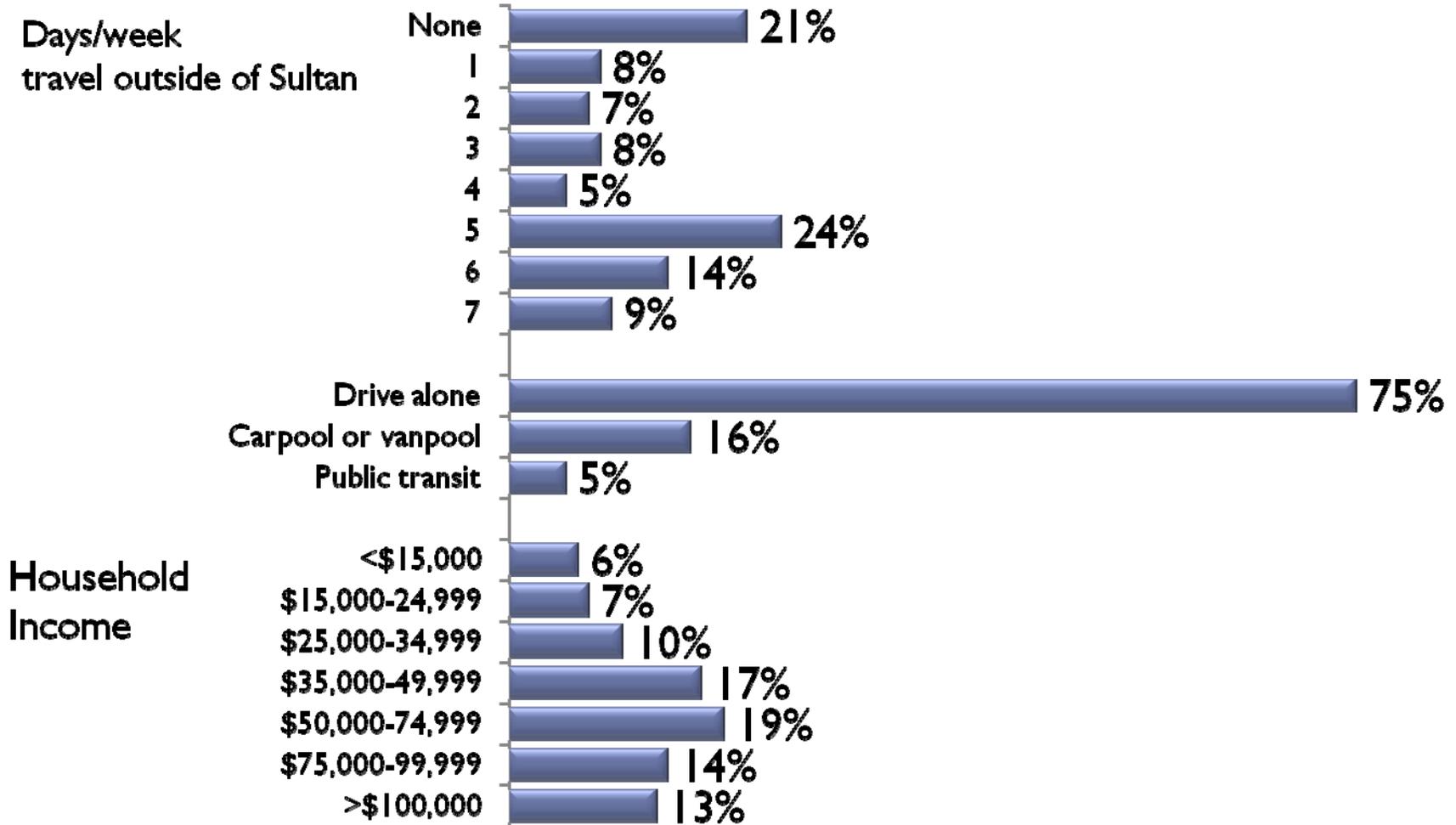
# Demographics



# Demographics



# Demographics



# Key Findings

- 1. Despite a slightly negative overall outlook, residents in Sultan are very satisfied with their quality of life.**
- 2. An open ended question about the most important problem in Sultan reveals crime, drugs, and economic development to be the biggest overall concerns among residents.**
- 3. Residents give Sultan city government passing job performance ratings**
- 4. Residents want to see future development policy that focuses on economic and commercial growth rather than growing the population.**
- 5. There is a small majority opposed to a town center operating fund, though this may have more to do with how much they think it might cost as they also indicate economic growth is important.**
- 6. A majority of residents favor a new sports park proposal even when presented with the cost (\$40/Yr) , a sign that residents are willing to invest in Sultan.**

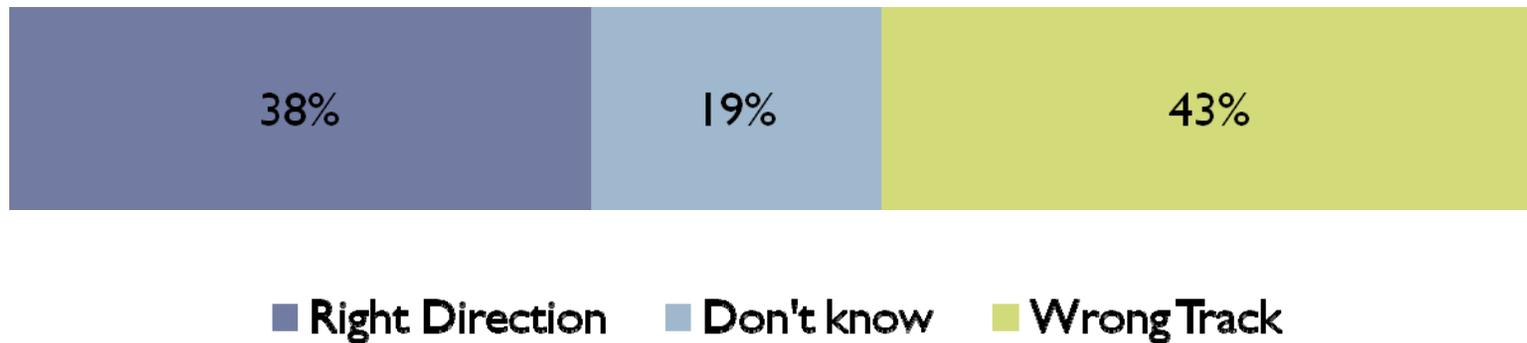
# Issue Environment

# Summary

- ▶ **Just over a third (38%) of residents think things in the City of Sultan are moving in the right direction – 43% think things are headed in the wrong direction, 19% are unsure.**
- ▶ **Residents mention crime, drugs, jobs, and economic development as the most important problems Sultan city government can do something about. Homelessness was the third most mentioned, slightly above roads and traffic related issues.**
- ▶ **Residents are overwhelmingly positive (78%) about the quality of life in Sultan (Excellent 20% / Good 58%). Less than quarter (22%) say quality of life is fair or poor.**

# General Mood

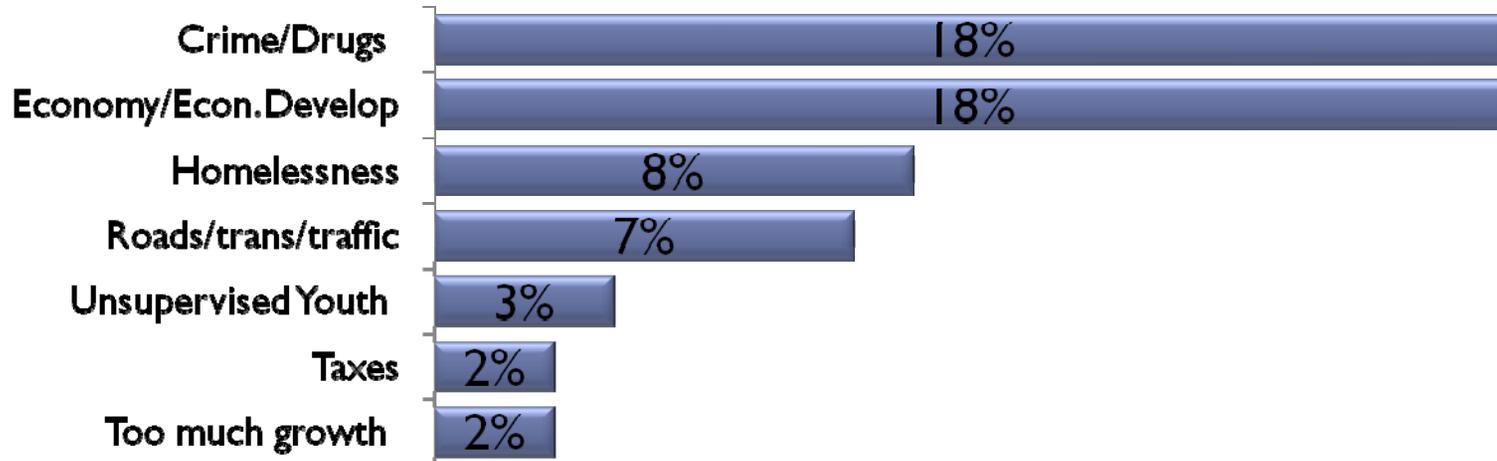
*Do you feel things in Sultan are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?*



The right direction/wrong track question is a confluence of a variety of factors into one rating. It can include respondent feelings about economic security, personal safety, agreement with the country or state’s leadership, and can even be influenced by the season.

# Most Important Problem

*What do you think is the most important problem facing Sultan that city government can do something about?*



This question is asked in an open ended format. Verbatim answers are collected and then coded into categories; categories reaching or exceeding 10% are considered significant.

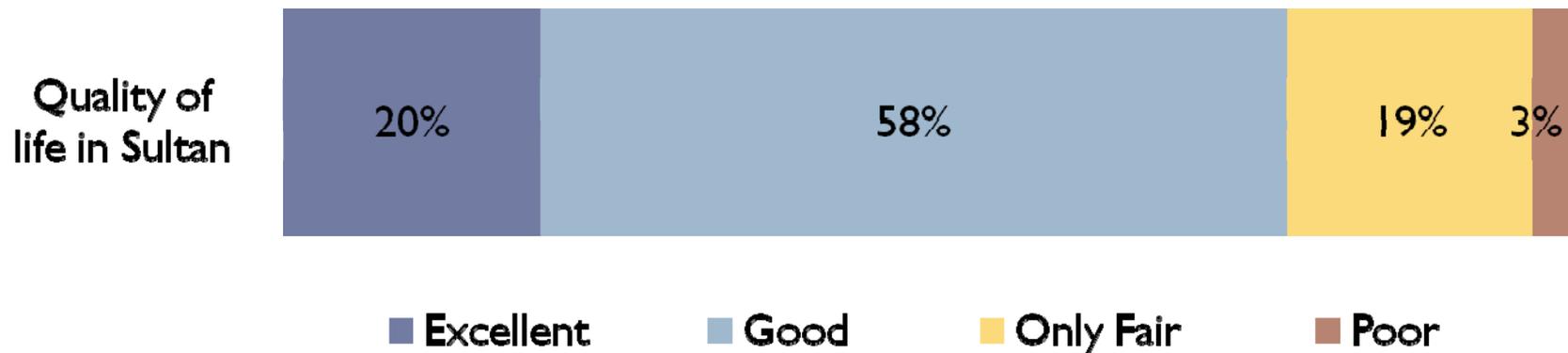
Two items account for a significant (38%) proportion of responses, and both items are key elements of personal safety and security.

The proportion of mentions of homelessness is noticeably higher than in other local cities.

“Too much growth” is an item that is frequently mentioned more often in surrounding cities, an indication that growth is not as significant an issue in Sultan as it likely was a few years ago.

# Quality of Life in Sultan

*I'm going to ask you to rate some items relating to the City of Sultan. Use a scale of excellent, good, only fair, or poor. How would you rate your quality of life in the city of Sultan?*



Despite having a slightly negative outlook on how things are going in Sultan, residents are generally happy with their quality of life, with three quarters (78%) giving a positive rating.

In addition to the combined positive response, intensity is another indication of general satisfaction with quality of life. The positive extreme (20% Excellent) significantly outweighs the negative extreme (3% Poor).

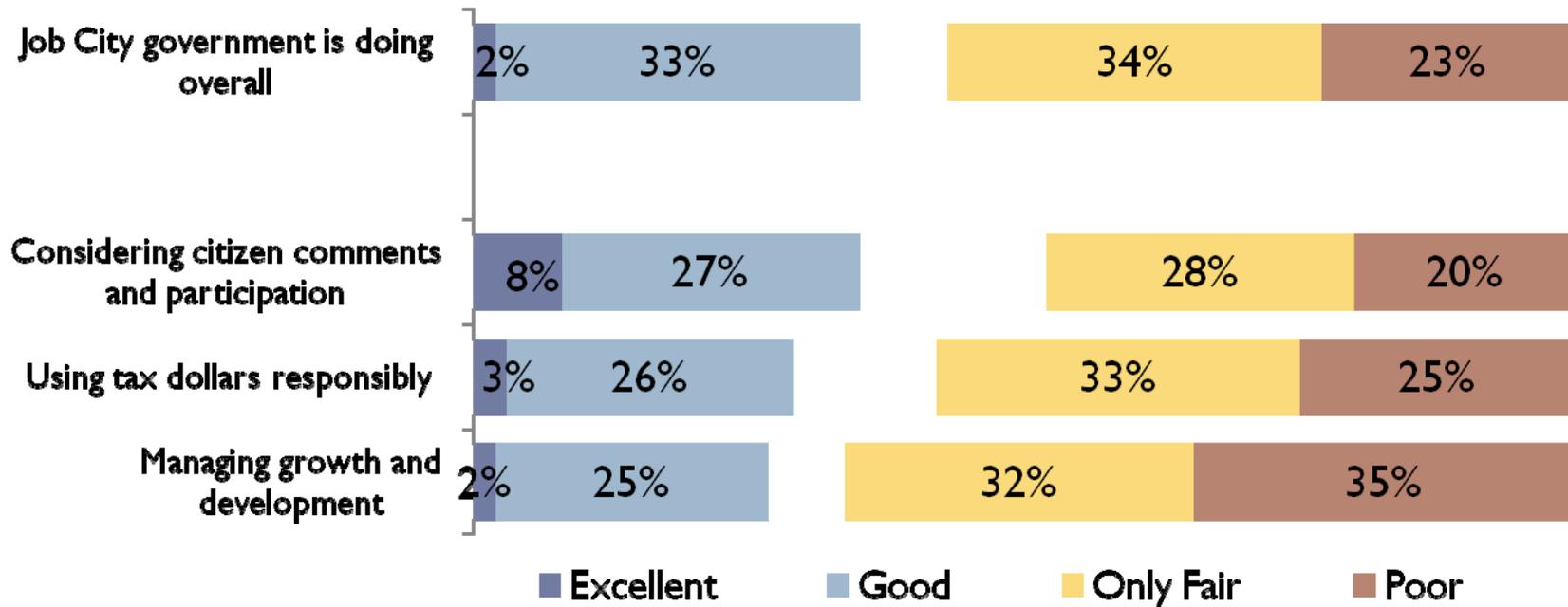
# City Government Ratings

# Summary

- ▶ **Job performance ratings for Sultan city government are average compared with other cities. The bulk of responses are in the middle ratings (Good / Only Fair) with a consistent quarter giving a negative job rating.**
- ▶ **As expected with crime and drugs as the most important problem, residents rate preventing crime and protecting the community as the highest priority for the City. Supporting business and economic development, retail and commercial development, and creating more jobs all follow closely behind. Addressing climate change was the lowest priority.**
- ▶ **In a somewhat surprising finding, a strong majority of residents (59%) say the city tax rate is about right or too low.**
- ▶ **Residents are slightly more concerned about fees paid for water, sewer, and garbage collection than with city taxes, with almost half (46%) saying fees are much or somewhat too high.**
- ▶ **Almost two-thirds (62%) of residents who have been assisted by a city employee in the last twelve months give a positive (Excellent / Good) job rating.**

# Overview of City Performance

*I'm going to ask you to rate some items relating to the City of Sultan.*

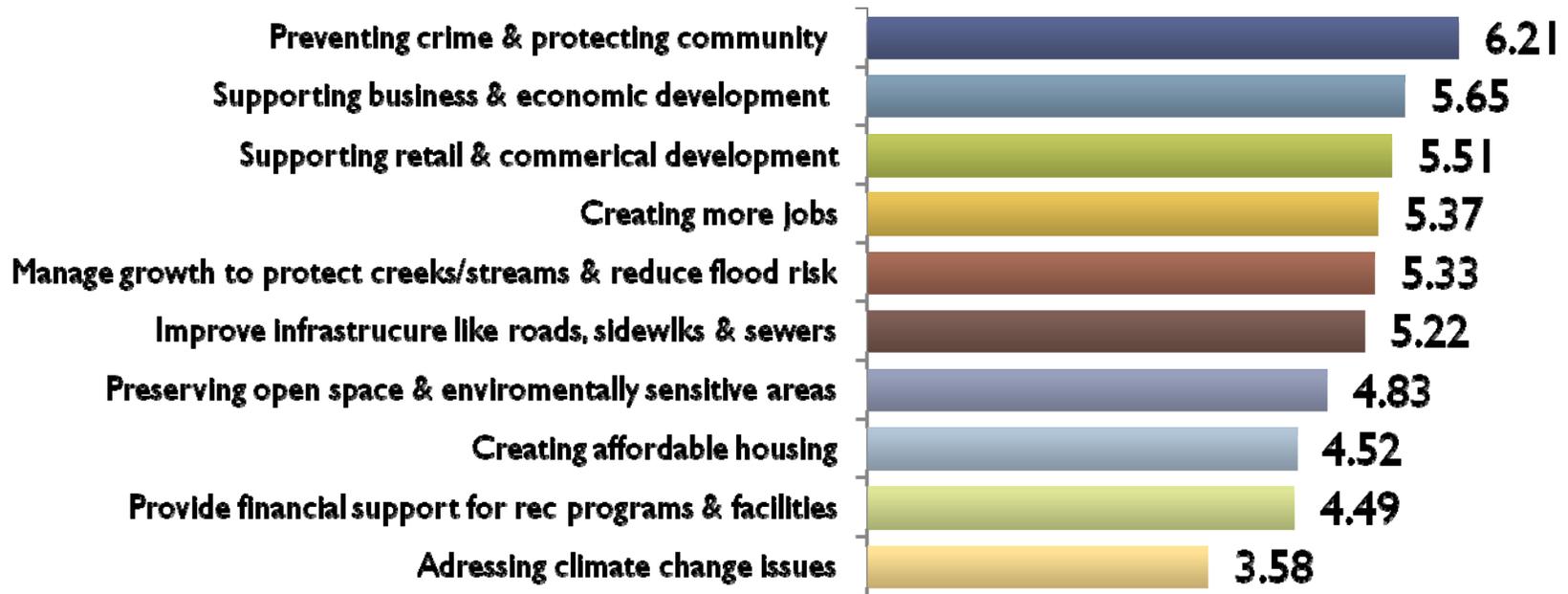


Job ratings for the City's performance on a series of items is average compared with other local governments, with the largest proportion found in the middle ratings (Good/Only Fair).

In each instance, however, there is a significant proportion giving the most extreme negative rating (Poor).

# Priority Areas for Focus (Mean Rating)

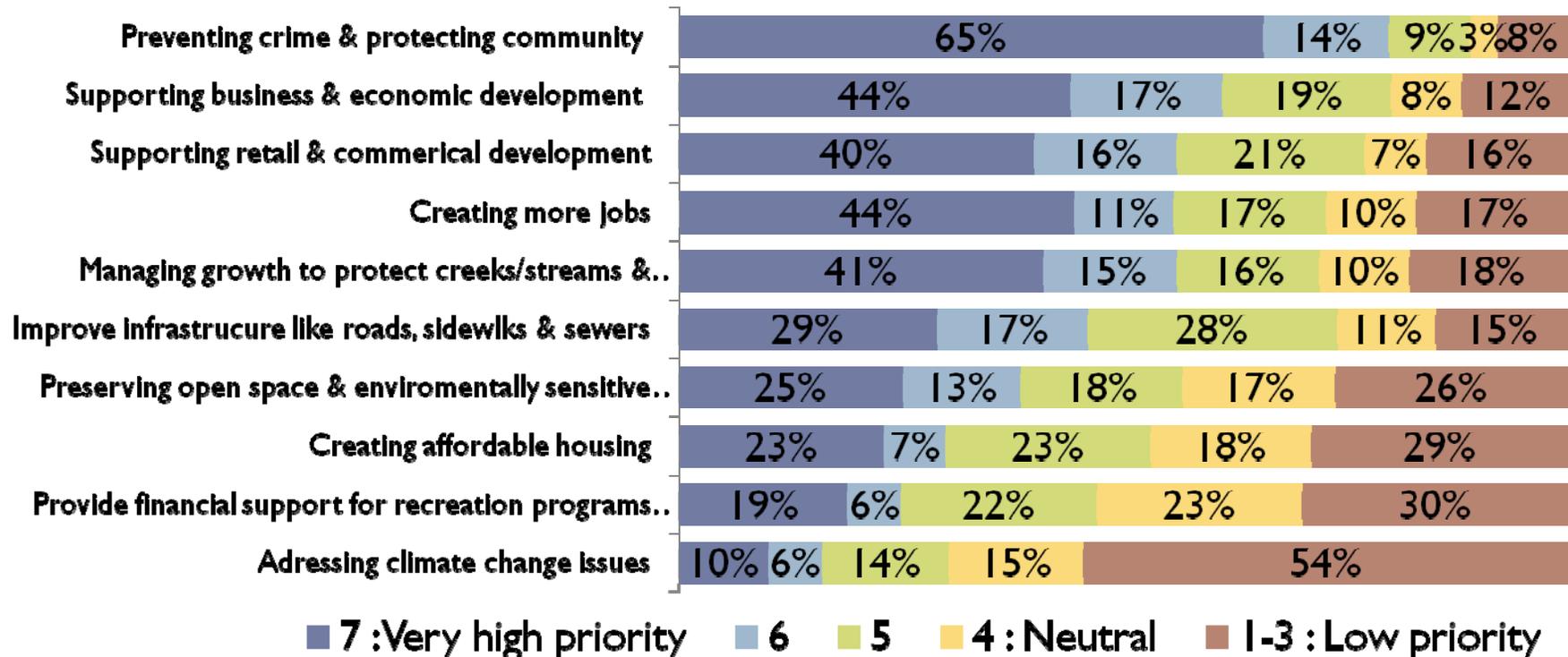
*I'm going to read you a list of items that the City of Sultan could focus on over the next 2 years. Use a scale where 1 means it is a very low priority and 7 means it is a very high priority for funding.*



On this scale, items approaching 7 are the most important, while items near or below the midpoint of 4 are less important.

As would be expected in a city concerned about crime and the economy, preventing crime is the highest priority by a significant margin, followed by three items related to jobs and economic growth.

# Priority Areas for Focus (Frequency)

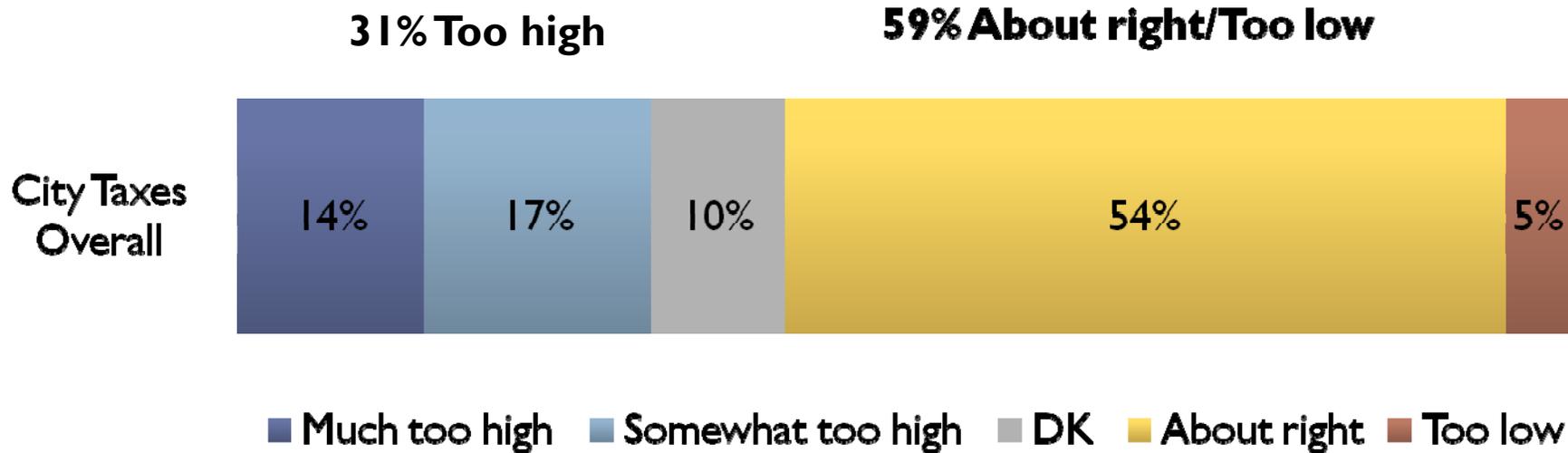


Another way to view these items is by their intensity. As in the previous graph, preventing crime and protecting the community is the highest priority by a significant margin, with two-thirds (65%) rating that item a 7, the highest priority rating possible.

The next four items all receive a large proportion of '7' ratings, while the remaining items all receive much smaller proportions of '7' ratings and increasing "lowest priority" ratings.

# City Taxes

*Thinking just about the taxes you pay to the City of Sultan, overall, do you think City taxes are: too high, too low, or about right? (IF “Too High” : “Would you say they are much too high or somewhat too high?”)*

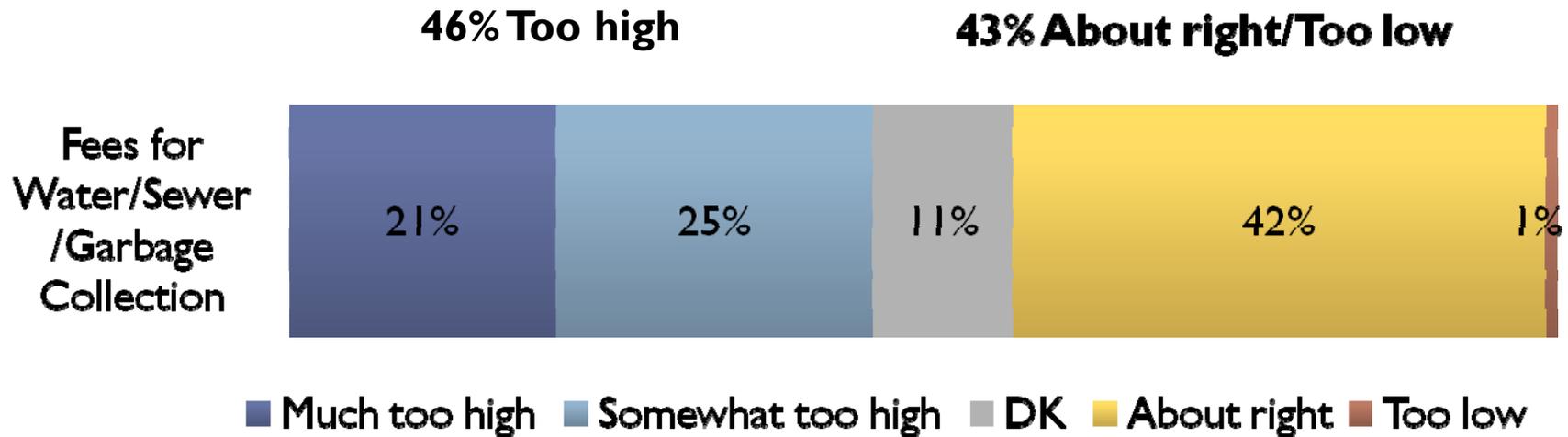


Given the overall pessimistic outlook and level of concern about the economy and economic development, it is somewhat surprising that a majority (59%) of residents say that the City’s tax rate is about right or too low.

About a third (31%) say the tax rate is too high, though only half of this (14%) is in the “much too high” category.

# City Fees

*Thinking just about the fees you pay for water, sewer and garbage collection, do you think fees are too high, too low, or about right?*

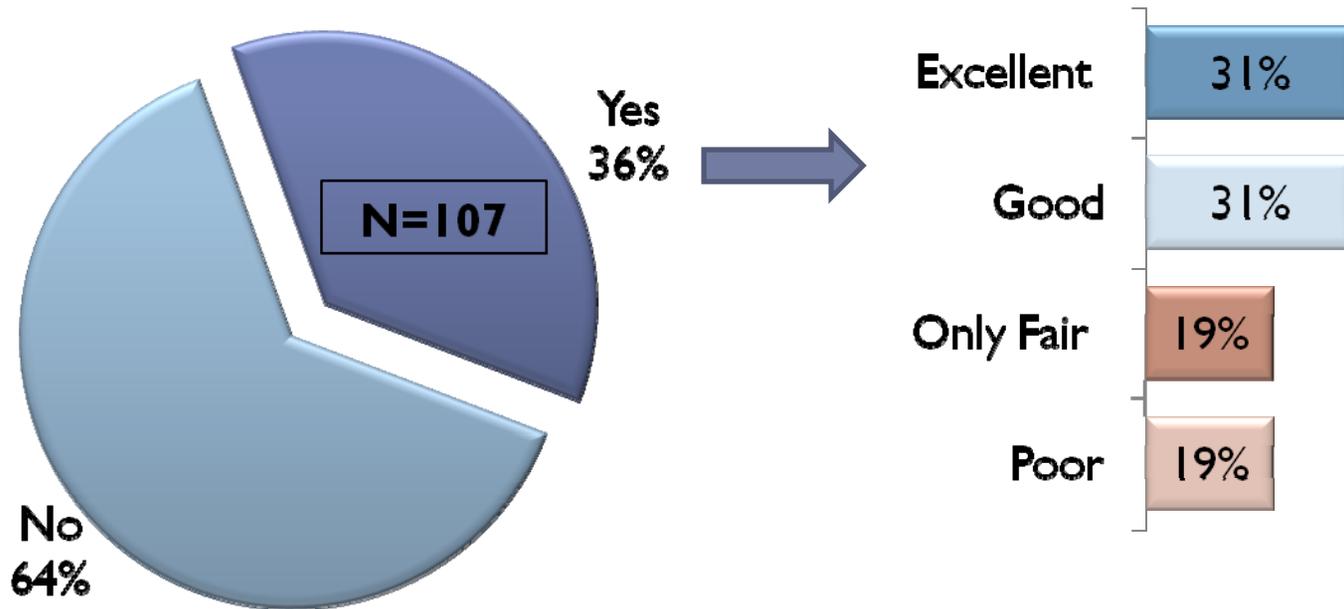


Unlike the City’s tax rates, there is more concern about the level of fees for utilities that residents pay. Almost half (46%) say these fees are much or somewhat too high.

There is also a noticeably higher intensity in the “much too high” category, with two in ten (21%) saying these fees are much too high.

# City Assistance

*Have you contacted a City employee for assistance in the last 12 months? How would you rate the job the City employee performed when they assisted you?*



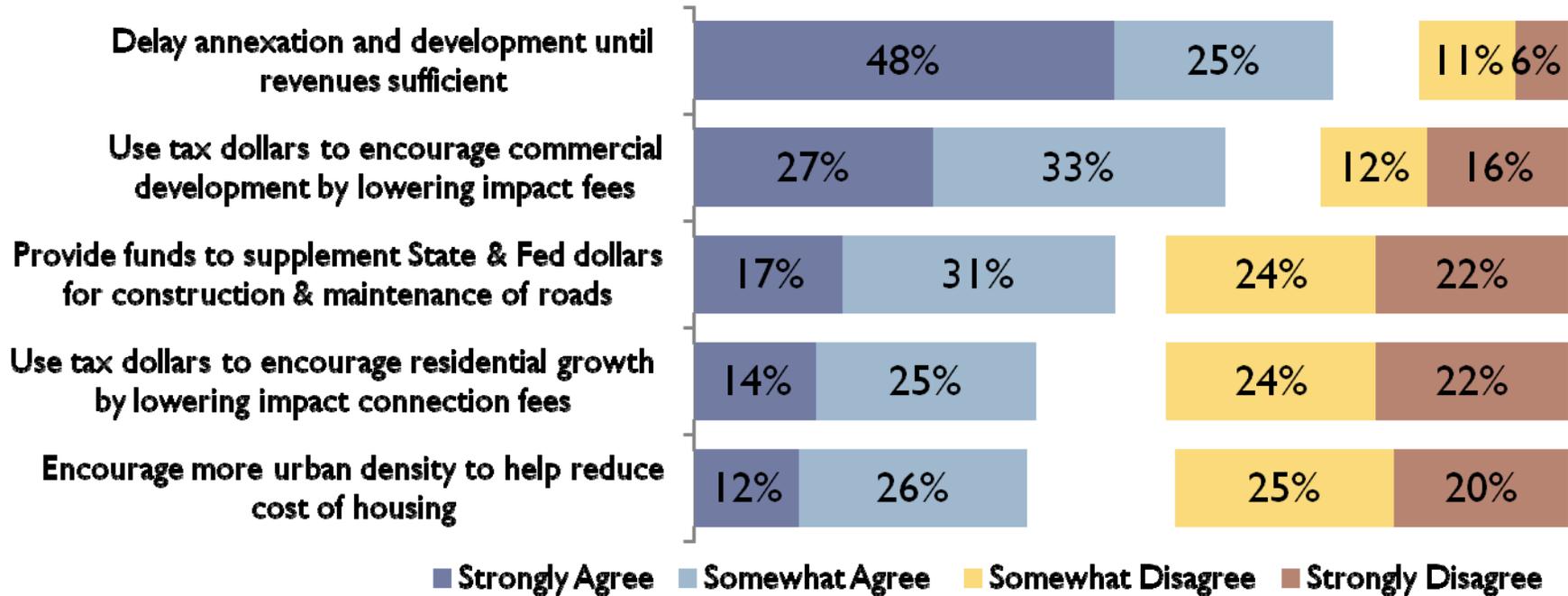
The third (36%) who said they have been assisted means the margin of error for the job rating is significantly higher than the rest of the survey at +/-9.7 points.

# Policy Direction / Funding Priorities

# Summary

- ▶ **Residents want to see future development policy that focuses on economic and commercial growth rather than in growing the population. Growth and sprawl was not mentioned as a significant issue in the open ended question, indicating there is not significant opposition to residential growth.**
- ▶ **Almost half of residents disagree Sultan should use tax dollars to encourage residential growth (45%) or encourage more urban density (28%).**
- ▶ **Residents choose adding an additional police officer as the highest funding priority, followed by funding an economic development plan. Adding animal control or code enforcement officers were viewed as the lowest funding priorities.**

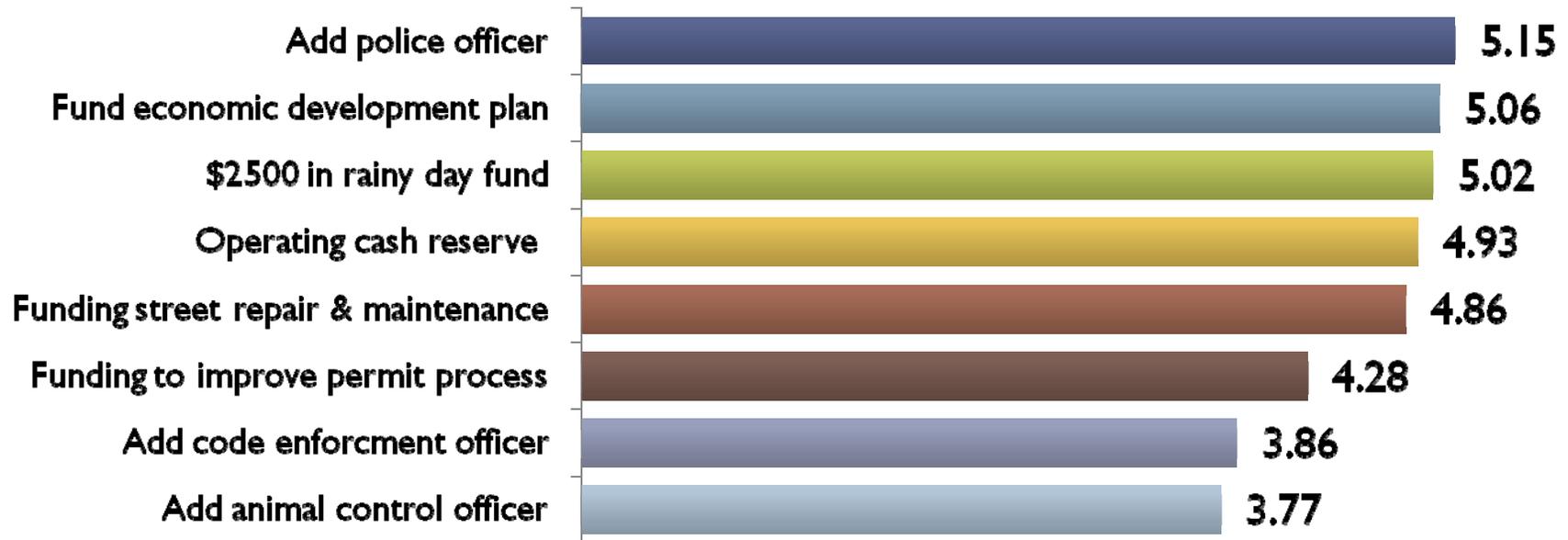
# Policy Direction



Although a majority of residents say annexation and development should be delayed until revenues are sufficient, this does not necessarily mean the City should not invest in commercial development. Jobs and economic growth are two of the most highly rated items throughout the survey; residents are simply indicating that they do not want this growth to come at the expense of their quality of life in Sultan.

# Priorities for Funding

*I'm going to read you a list of items the city council is considering funding in the 2010 budget. For each one, please tell me how important it is to provide funding for that item.*



It is not surprising that adding a police officer would be the highest rated priority given concerns about crime and drugs.

The next four items are all closely behind, including the economic development plan. The fact that these items are so closely rated means they are all highly valued by citizens and the City should feel confident that tackling any or all of them would be in the public interest.

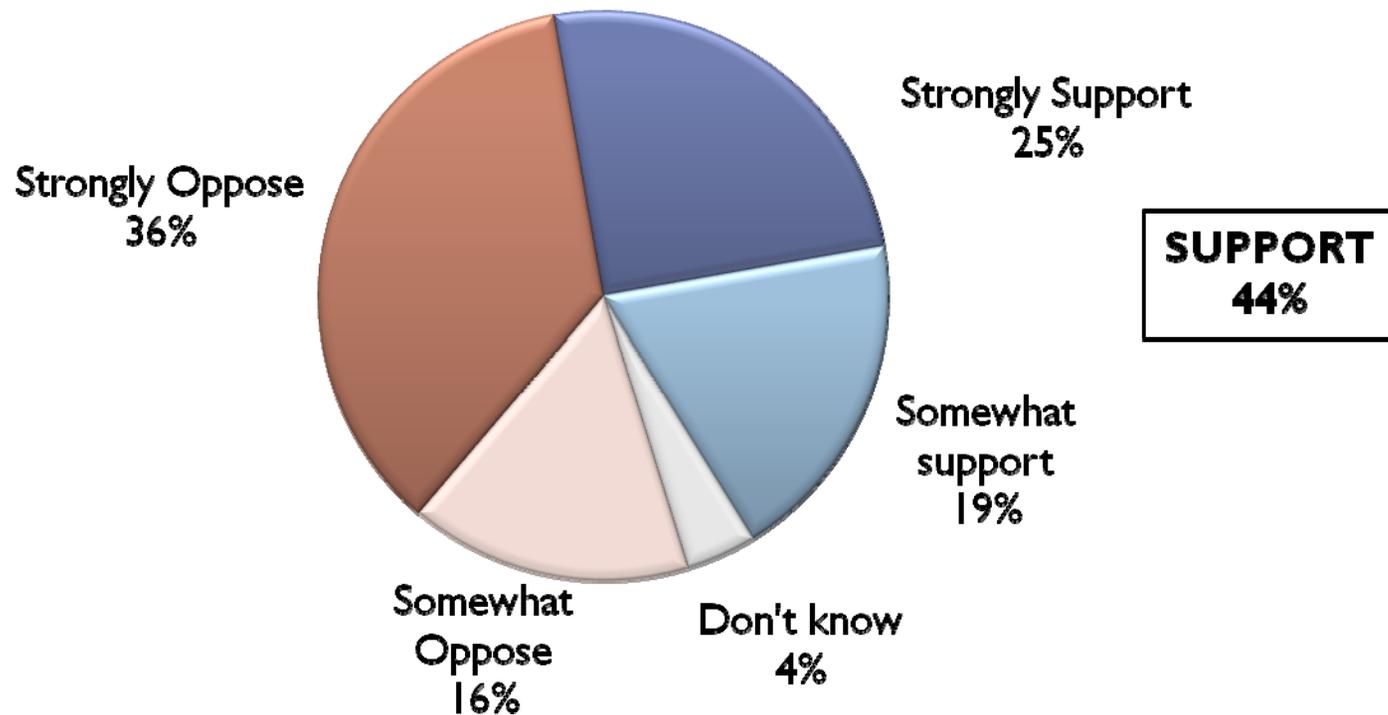
# Support for Operating Fund/Park Proposal

# Summary

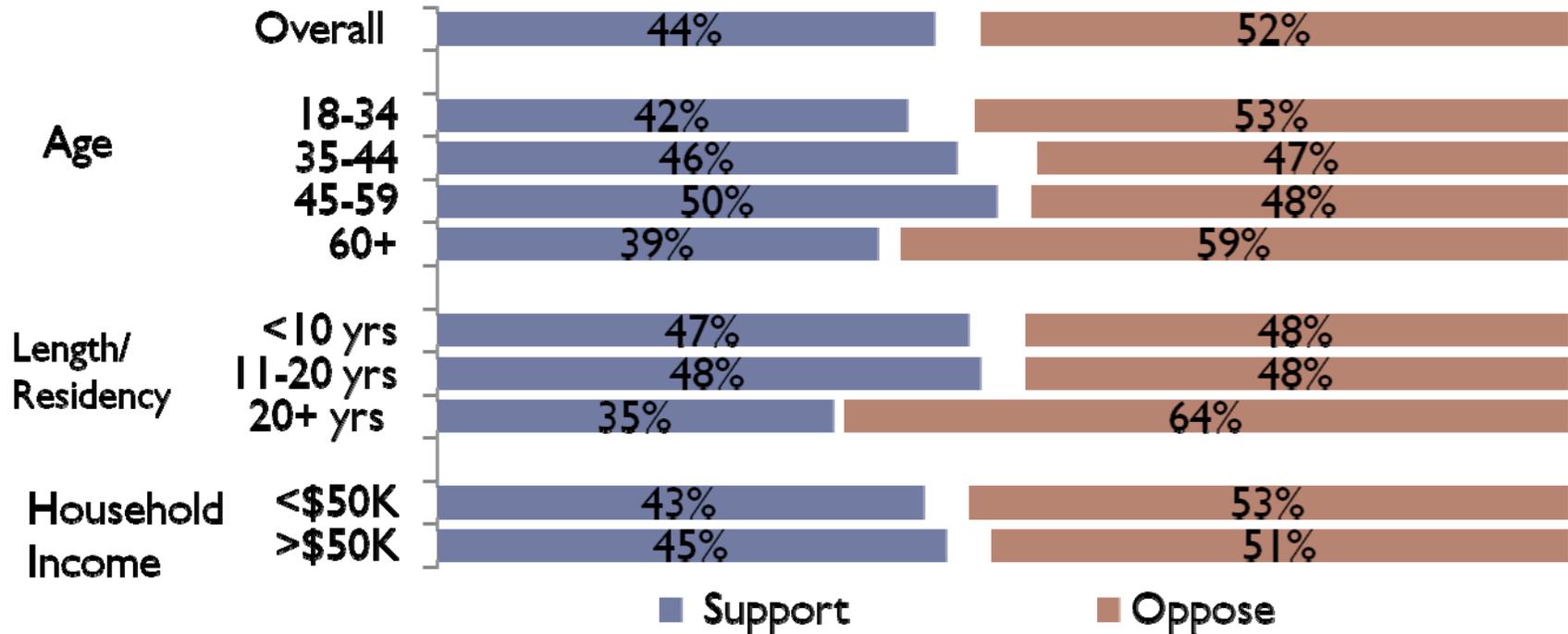
- ▶ **Residents oppose a new town center operating fund by a slim margin (44% Support / 52% Oppose). The question text did not include how much the downtown redevelopment to Rice Road would cost the individual, so residents may presume they are responsible for some portion of the \$5M price. Economic growth is a high priority throughout the survey, so it is possible that with more information a town center fund could gain majority support.**
- ▶ **A majority of residents support (51% Favor / 45% Oppose) a proposal for new sports park ,which includes \$40 dollar cost to the average homeowner. This is a positive sign that even with the cost, the majority of residents are willing to invest in Sultan.**
- ▶ **Opposition to the town center and sports park proposals is highest among older residents and long term Sultan residents, with stronger support among midrange age categories and shorter term residents.**
- ▶ **Residents with a higher incomes are more likely to support both proposals, with the margin much closer among other subgroups.**

# Support for Town Center Operating Fund

As you may know, Downtown Sultan is inside the flood plain of the Sultan and Skykomish Rivers. There is a proposal being considered to develop a new town center away from the flood plain in the area of Highway 2 and Rice Road. The city would need an operating fund of \$5M to help develop this new town center. Would you support or oppose setting aside a portion of property and sales tax revenue to help support development of a new town center away from the flood plain?



# Town Center Support (Sub-group)

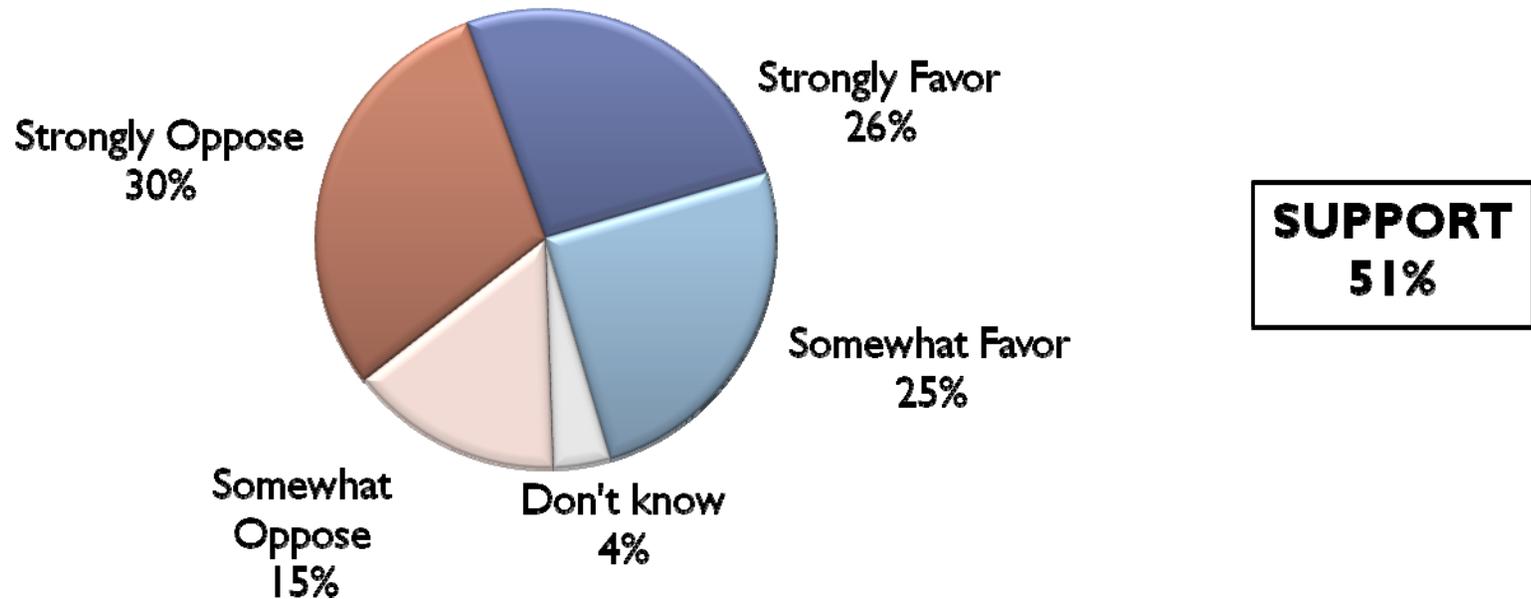


While there is variation among subgroups, most are at or above majority opposition.

Subgroup support is lowest among the longest term residents and residents over 60 years old. Given that these are the most tax sensitive groups and the amount they would personally contribute to this effort is not mentioned, it is possible that support could grow among all groups with a price tag similar to the following question (\$40).

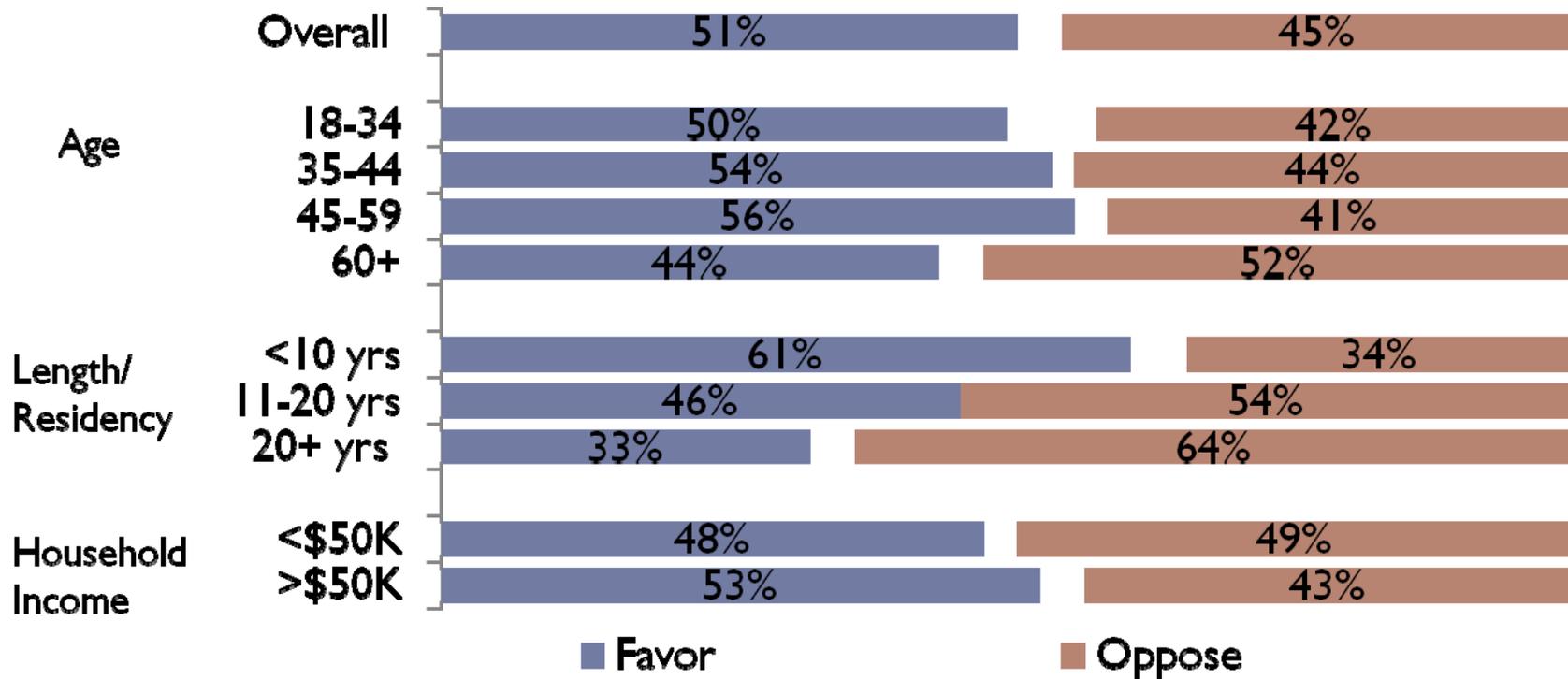
# Support for Sports Park Proposal

*There is a proposal to develop a new sports park in the Sultan Basin Road area. The park would include soccer and softball fields, and picnic facilities. Construction would be funded by an increase in property taxes in the City of Sultan of fifteen cents per one thousand dollars of assessed property value, which is \$40 a year for the average homeowner in Sultan. In general, do you favor or oppose this proposal?*



As the survey was conducted among all residents instead of registered voters, it does not necessarily predict how a potential measure would perform on the ballot.

# Support for Park Proposal (Sub-group)



There is greater subgroup variation among subgroups on this question, with some showing majority support while others (older residents and those living 20+ years) show stronger opposition.

# Key Findings

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