






# Portland Voter Views of City Charter Reforms

*Key Findings of a Survey Conducted  
February 27-March 15, 2022*



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY

# Survey Methodology

<b>Dates</b>	February 27-March 15, 2022
<b>Survey Type</b>	Dual-mode Voter Survey
<b>Research Population</b>	Likely November 2022 Voters in Portland
<b>Total Interviews</b>	558 Citywide, plus an oversample of 62 BIPOC voters yielding 134 total interviews
<b>Margin of Sampling Error</b>	(Full Sample) $\pm 4.9\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level (Half Sample) $\pm 5.7\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level (BIPOC Sample) $\pm 8.5\%$ at the 95% Confidence Level
<b>Contact Methods</b>	 Telephone Calls  Email Invitations  Text Invitations
<b>Data Collection Modes</b>	 Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews

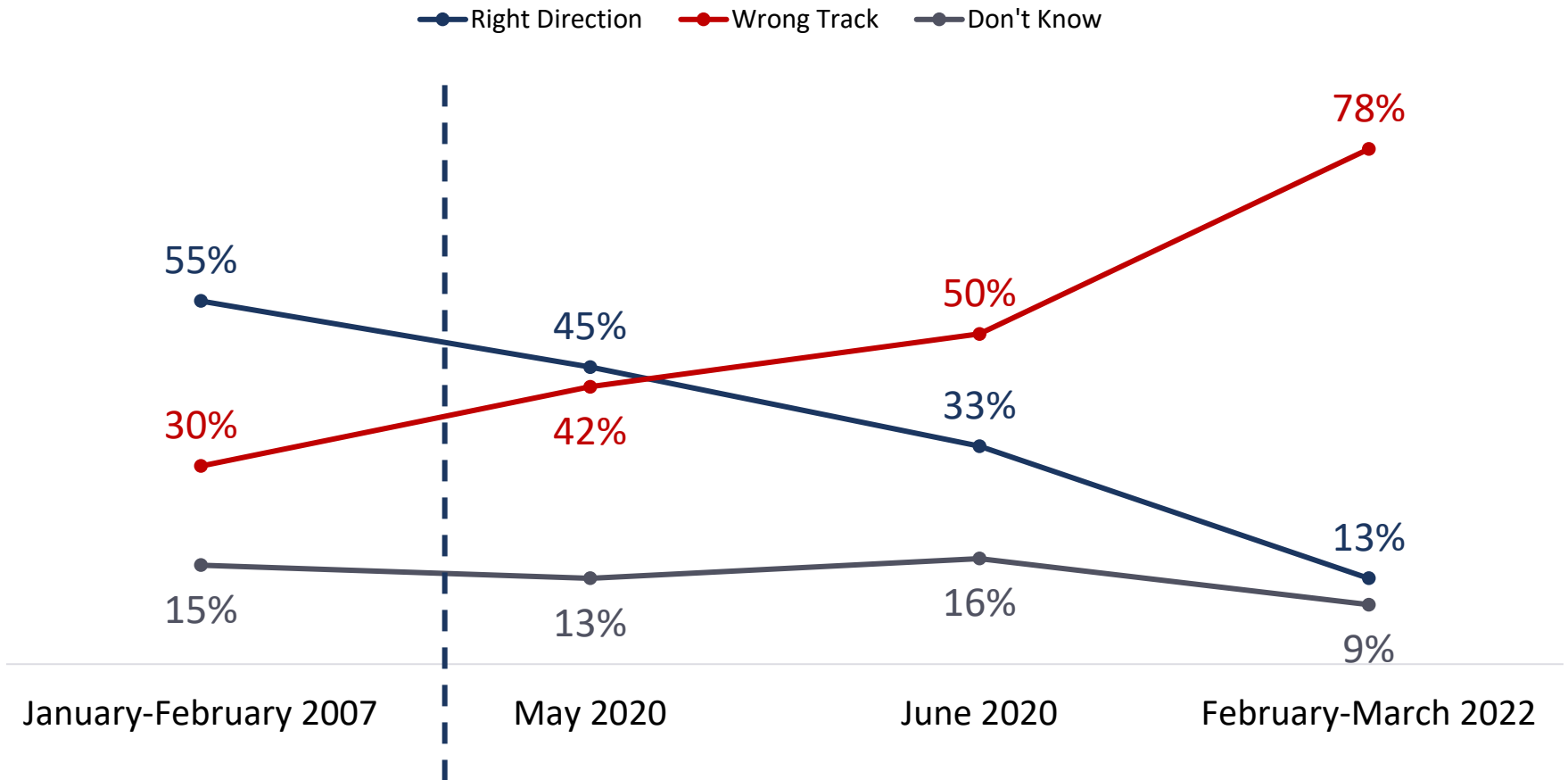
*(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)*



# **Context and Views of City Government**

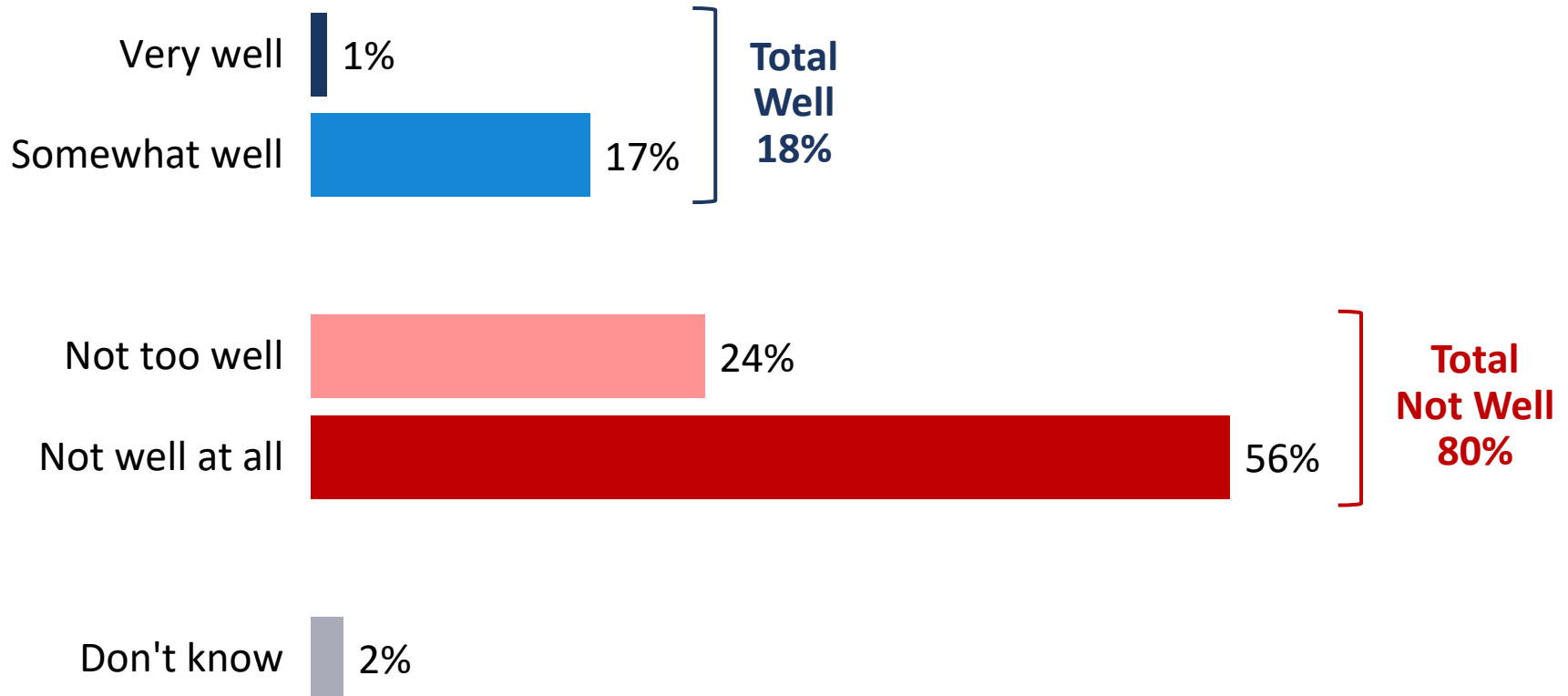
# Nearly four in five Portland voters feel things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track.

*Would you say that things in Portland are generally headed in the right direction, or are they pretty seriously off on the wrong track?*

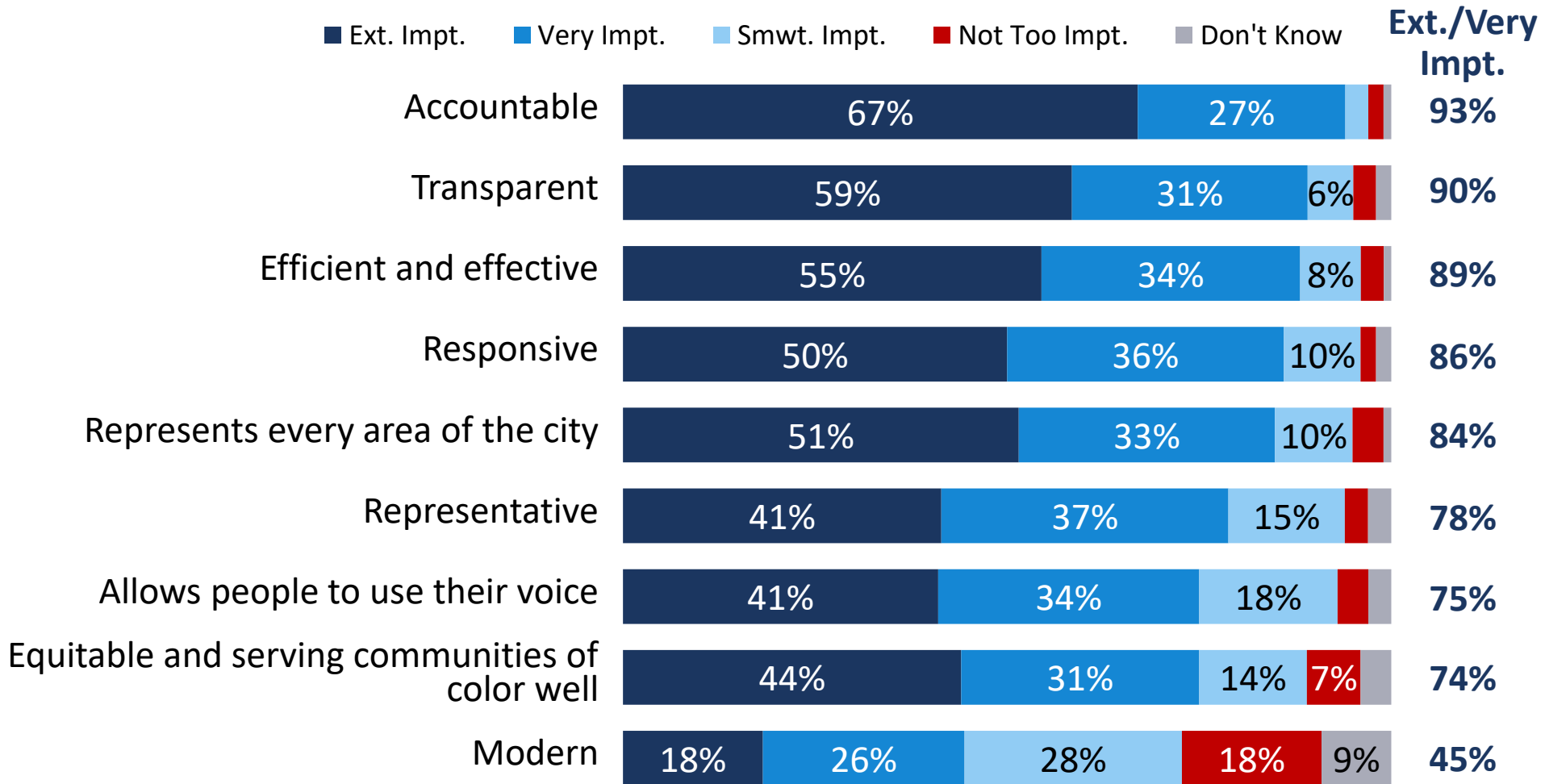


# Four in five believe the current form of government is not serving residents well.

*I'm going to ask you about one change the Charter Commission is considering. Portland is the only city in the country of its size to have a Commission government. This means there are 5 elected leaders who comprise City Council: a mayor and 4 city commissioners, all elected citywide. Each has authority over specific City bureaus, such as parks or water, and together, they pass laws and approve the City budget. In general, how well do you think Portland's current form of government is serving residents?*



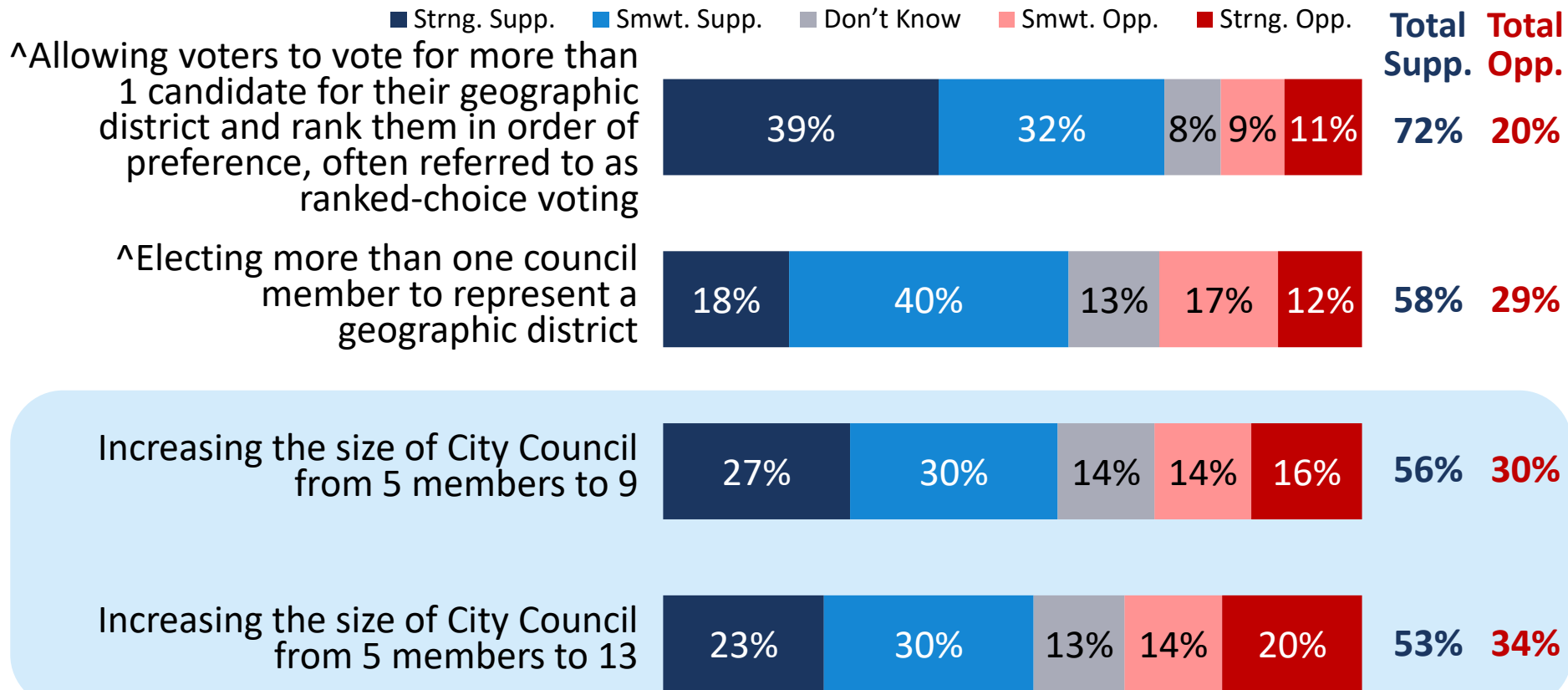
# Voters' most broadly-shared principles for reform include accountability, transparency, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness.




**FM3** Q8. I am going to read you a list of characteristics that could describe Portland's City government. Please tell me how important each one is that Portland's City government has that characteristic: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important.

# Voters broadly support ranked-choice voting, multimember districts, and a larger council.

Here are some ideas that have been proposed to change how voters elect City officials. Please tell me whether you support or oppose each one.



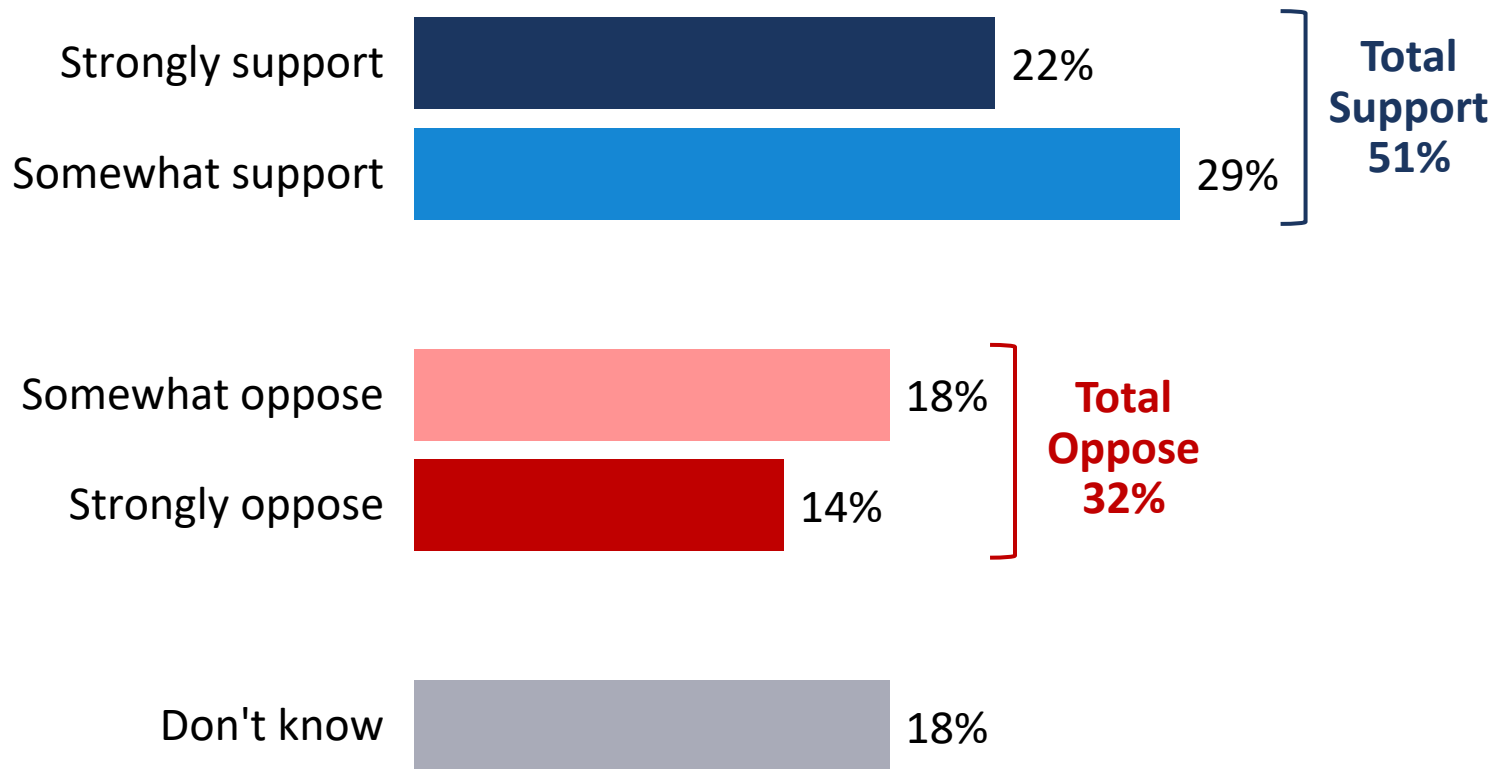


# **A Mayor/Council Structure**



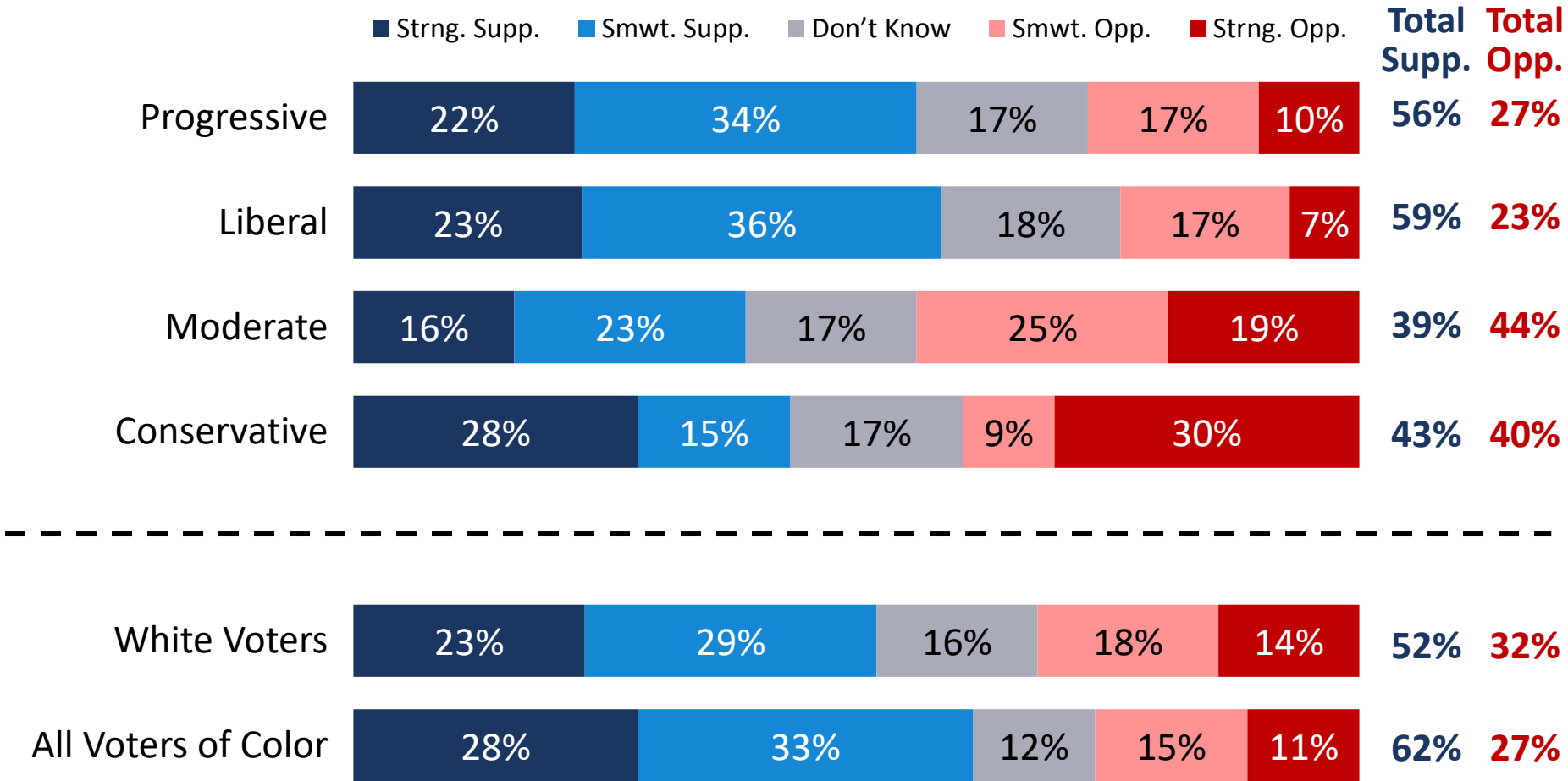
# A slim majority supports changing to a mayor/council government structure.

*Some people have proposed changing Portland's form of government to a mayor elected citywide who runs the city's day-to-day operations, with the help of a chief administrative officer, and a City Council that sets policy. The mayor would have no veto power over City Council decisions. Would you support or oppose this change?*



# Progressives and liberals are more likely to favor this approach than are moderates and conservatives.

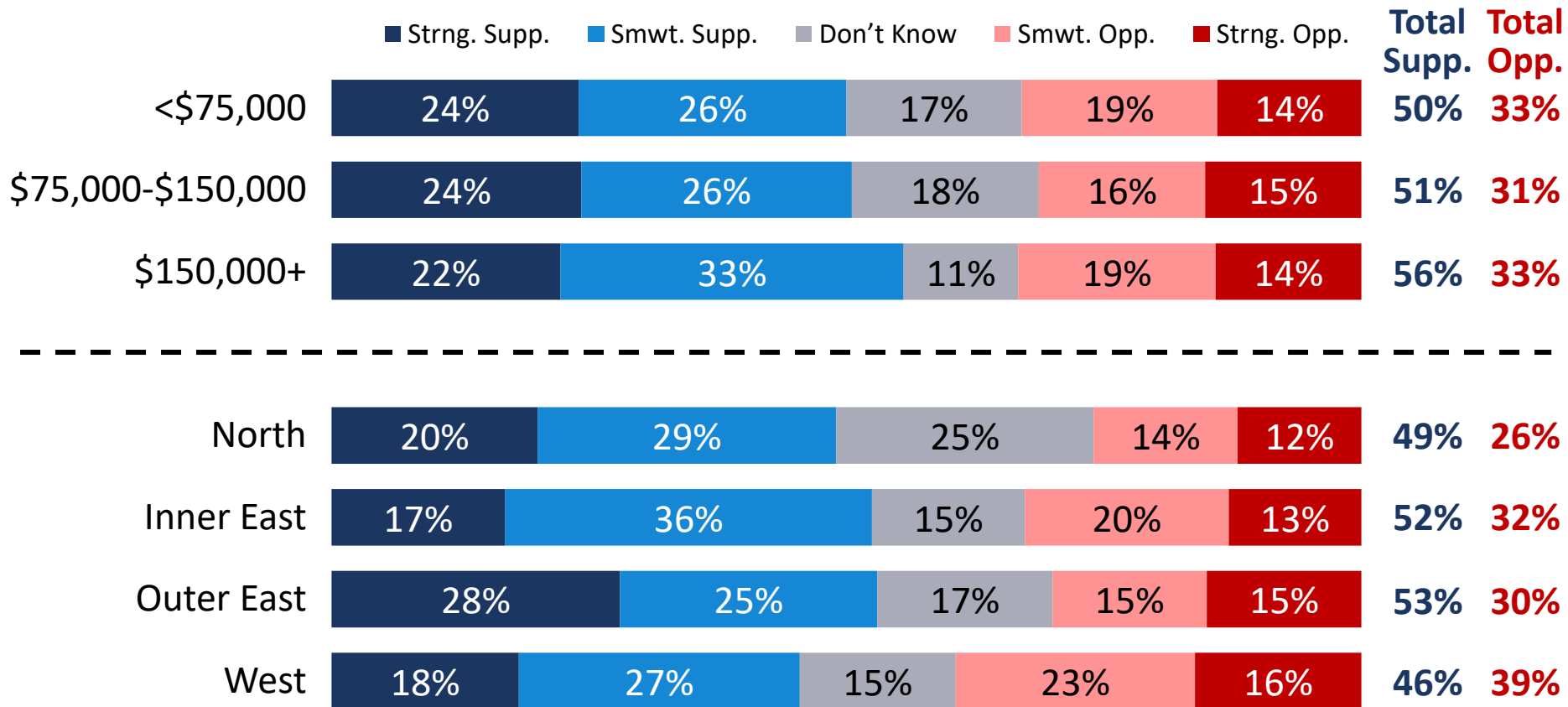
Support for Mayor/Council Reform by Ideology & Race/Ethnicity



Q11. Some people have proposed changing Portland's form of government to a mayor elected citywide who runs the city's day to day operations with the help of a chief administrative officer, and a City Council that sets policy. The mayor would have no veto power over City Council decisions. Would you support or oppose this change?

# Higher-income Portland voters favor the mayor/council structure by a broad margin.

Support for Mayor/Council Reform by Household Income & Region



Q11. Some people have proposed changing Portland's form of government to a mayor elected citywide who runs the city's day to day operations with the help of a chief administrative officer, and a City Council that sets policy. The mayor would have no veto power over City Council decisions. Would you support or oppose this change?

# Voters next heard a very brief exchange of pros and cons on a mayor/council structure.

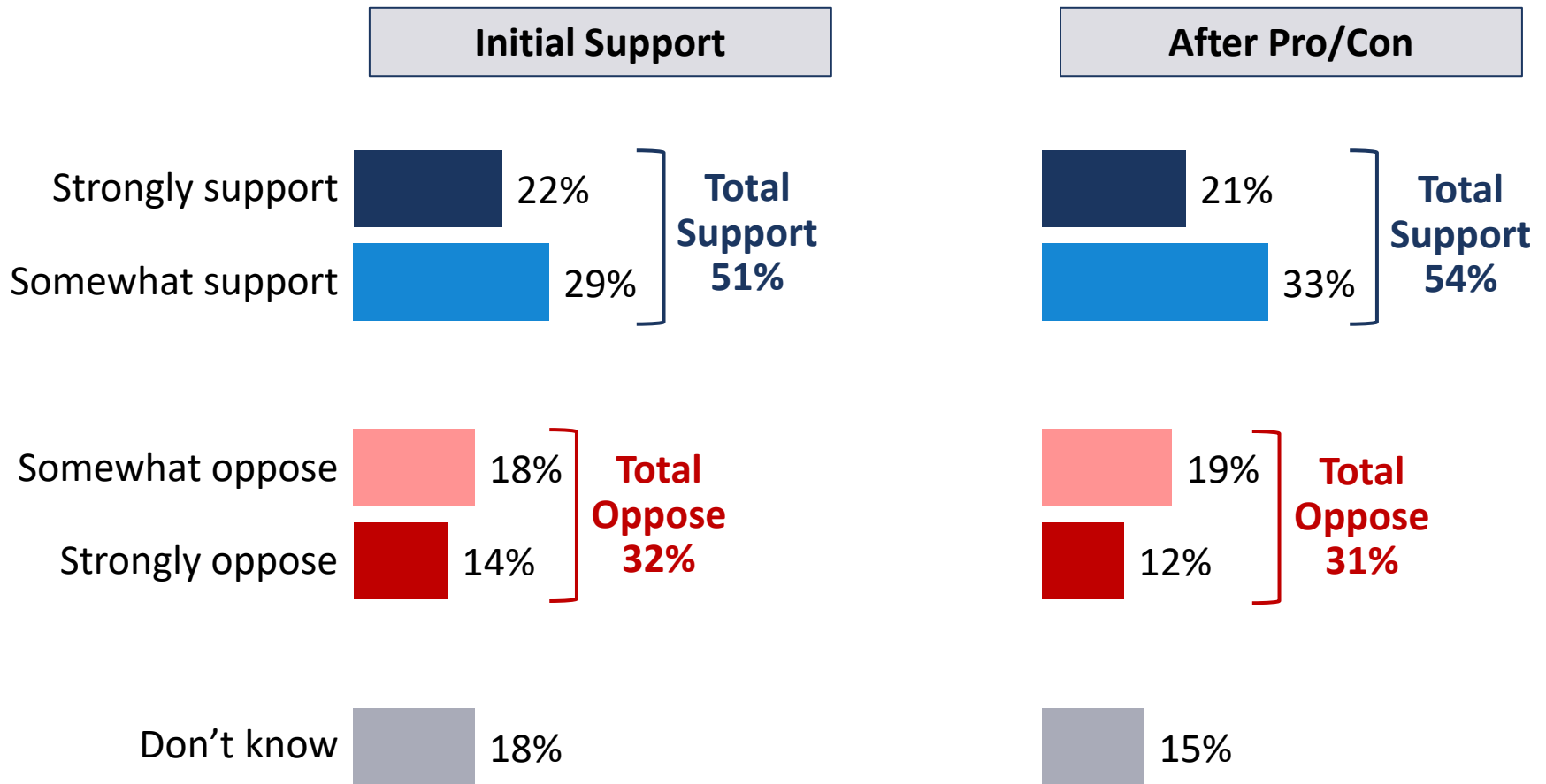
**Supporters** say this structure allows the mayor to provide strong political leadership to quickly address urgent local issues, and since the mayor is elected citywide, they will be accountable to voters.

**Opponents** say this structure puts too much power in the hands of one single elected official who could be beholden to special interests.



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# This exchange does little to shift opinions overall.

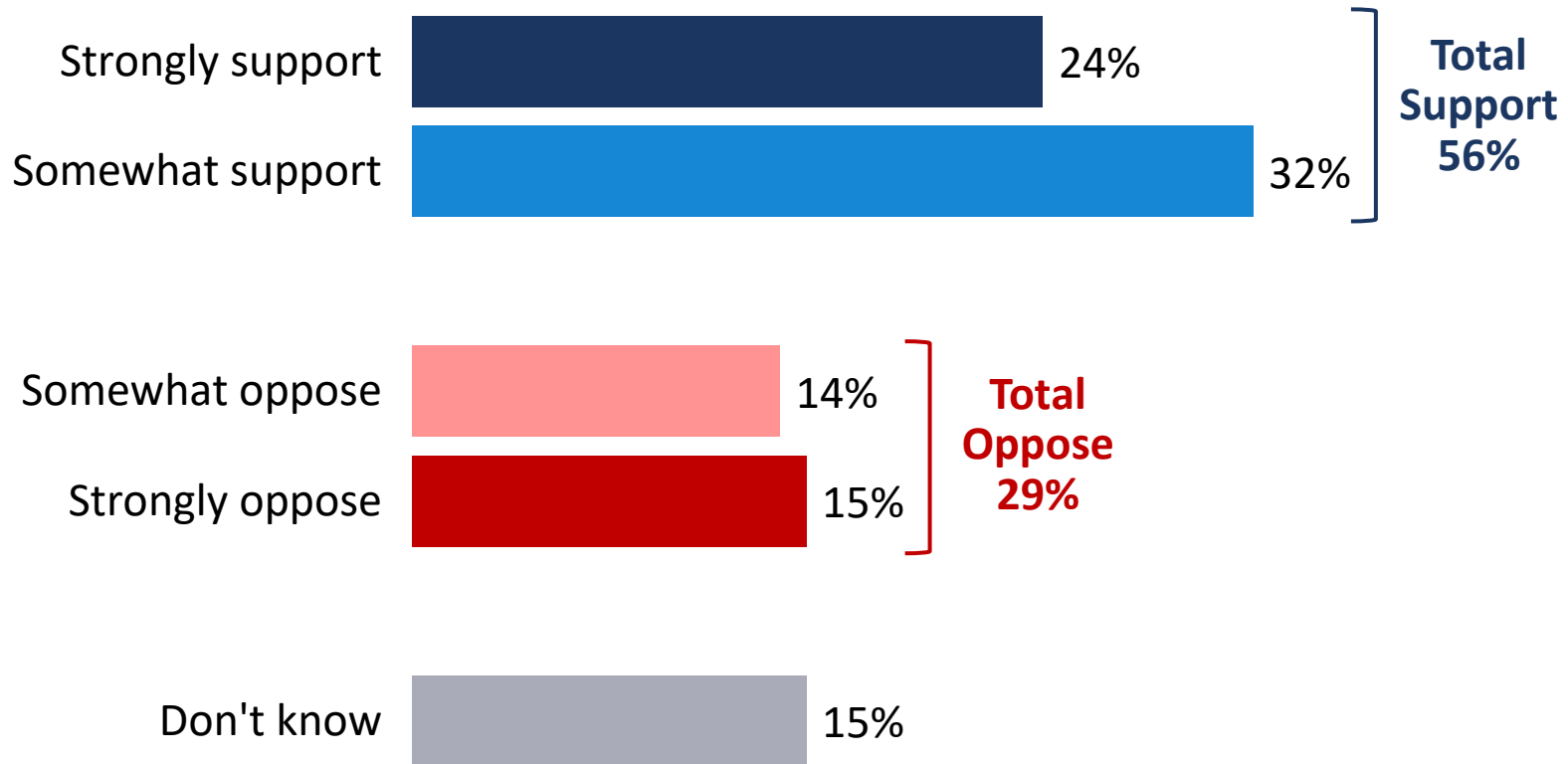


Q11. Would you support or oppose this change?

Q12. Having heard this, would you support or oppose changing Portland's form of government to a mayor elected citywide who runs the city's day to day operations, and a City Council that sets policy, with no mayoral veto over City Council decisions?

# Support is a few points higher with ranked-choice voting included.

*Would you support or oppose shifting to this form of government if you knew it would also implement ranked-choice voting, allowing voters to vote for multiple candidates for each office and rank them in order of preference?*

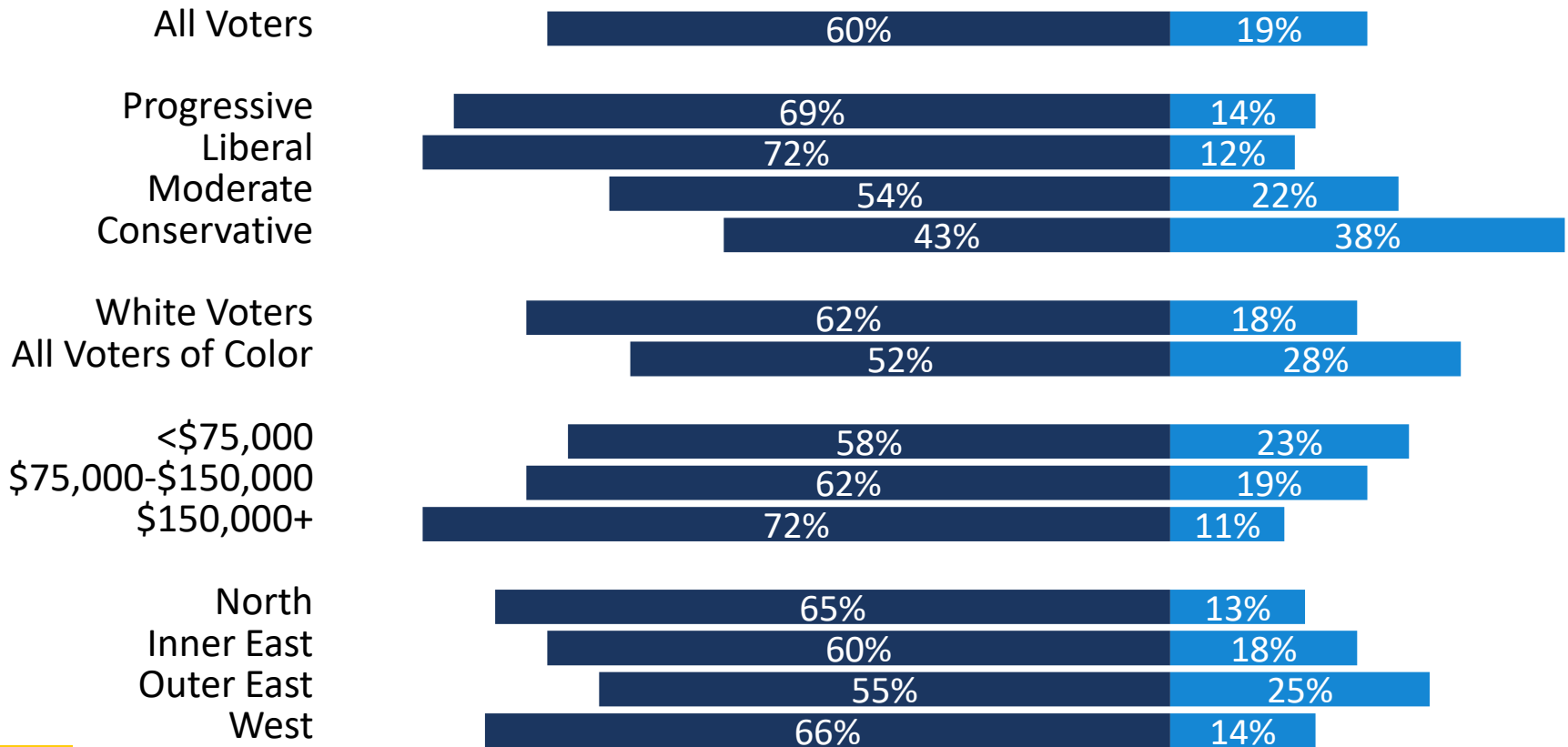


# Voters across ideology, race/ethnicity, income and neighborhood prefer this change to the status quo.

A mayor elected citywide who runs the city's day to day operations, and a City Council that sets policy, with no mayoral veto over City Council decisions.

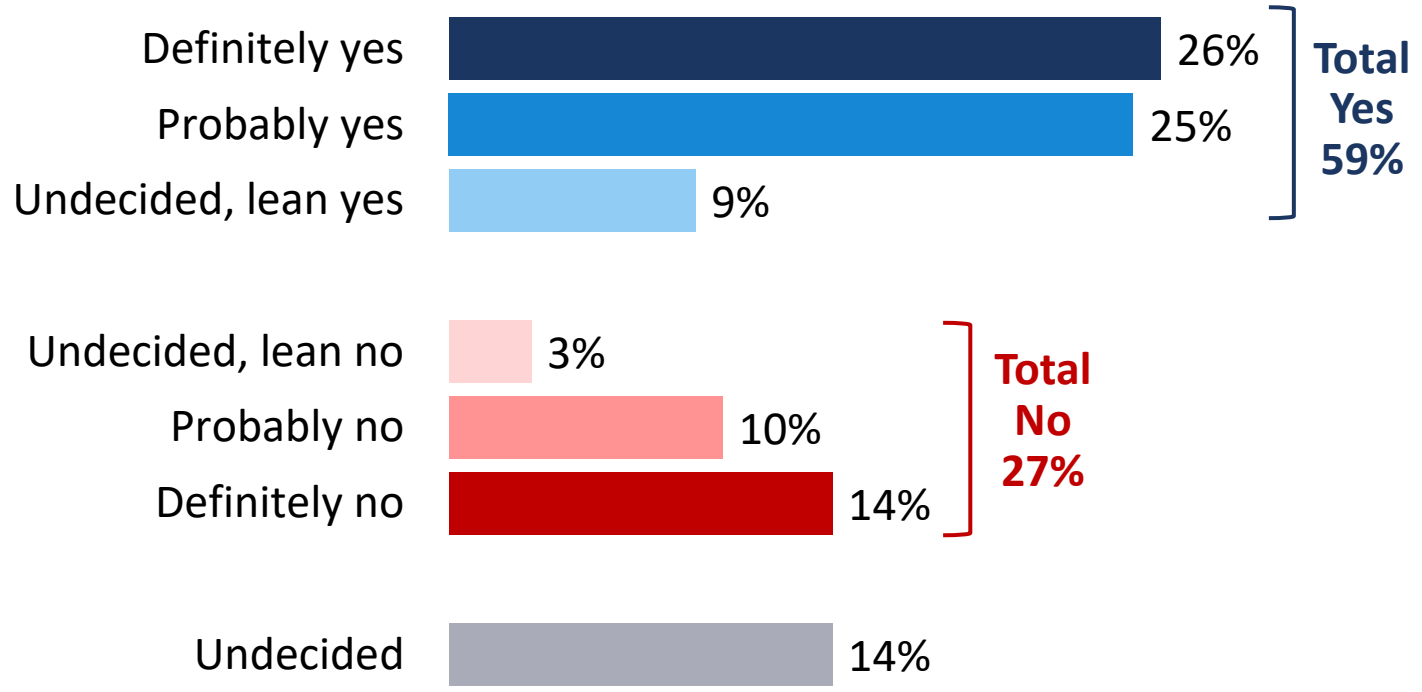
OR

Our current Commission form of government, with an elected mayor and 4 elected city commissioners who make up the City Council and each have authority over specific City bureaus.



# Two-thirds support a measure that establishes a mayor/council structure with a larger council.

*Amends Charter: Changes government structure; city council elected by district. Shall elected mayor be responsible for managing city functions, overseen by larger city council, with members elected by districts?*



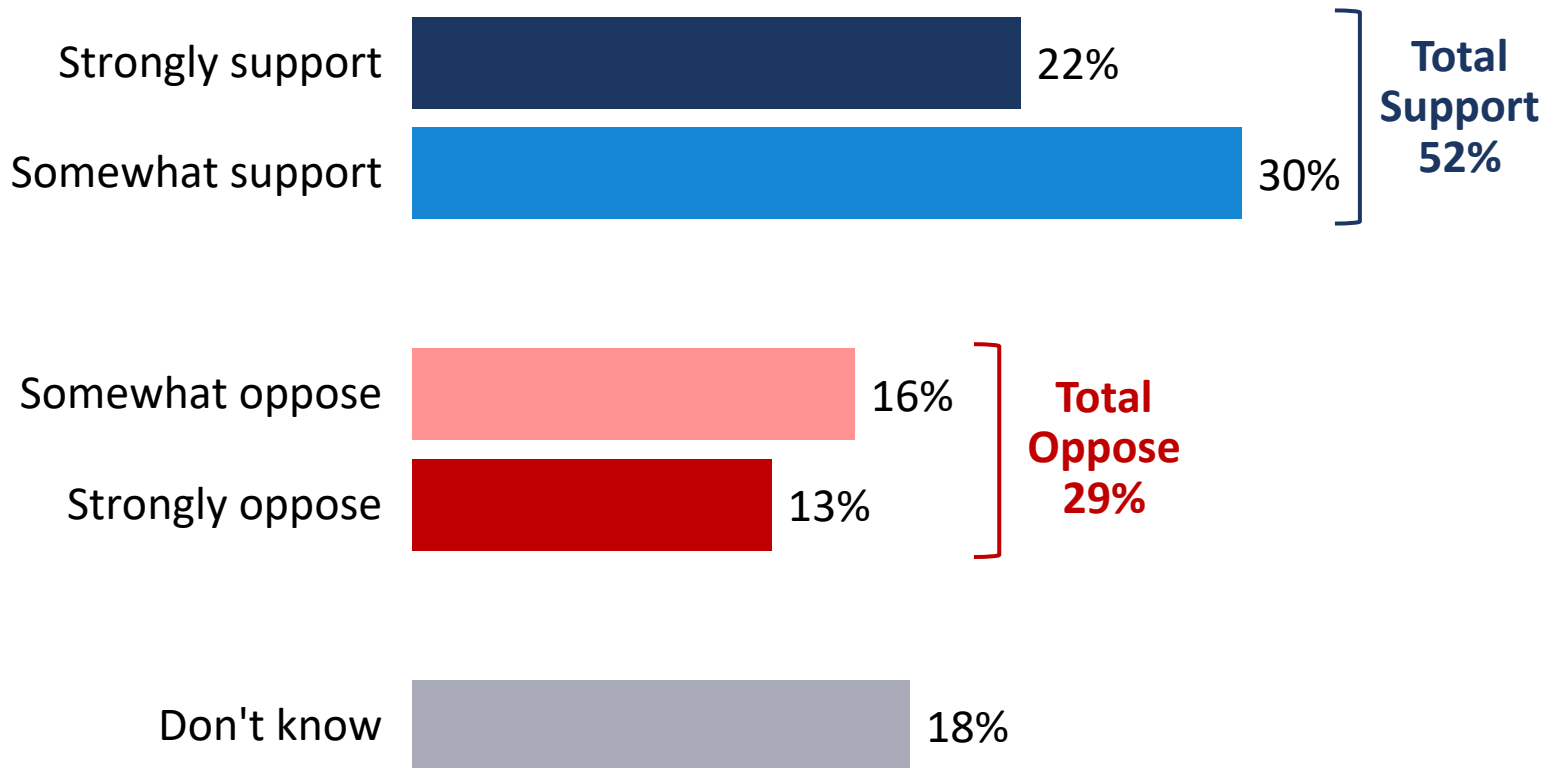




# **A Council / Manager Structure**

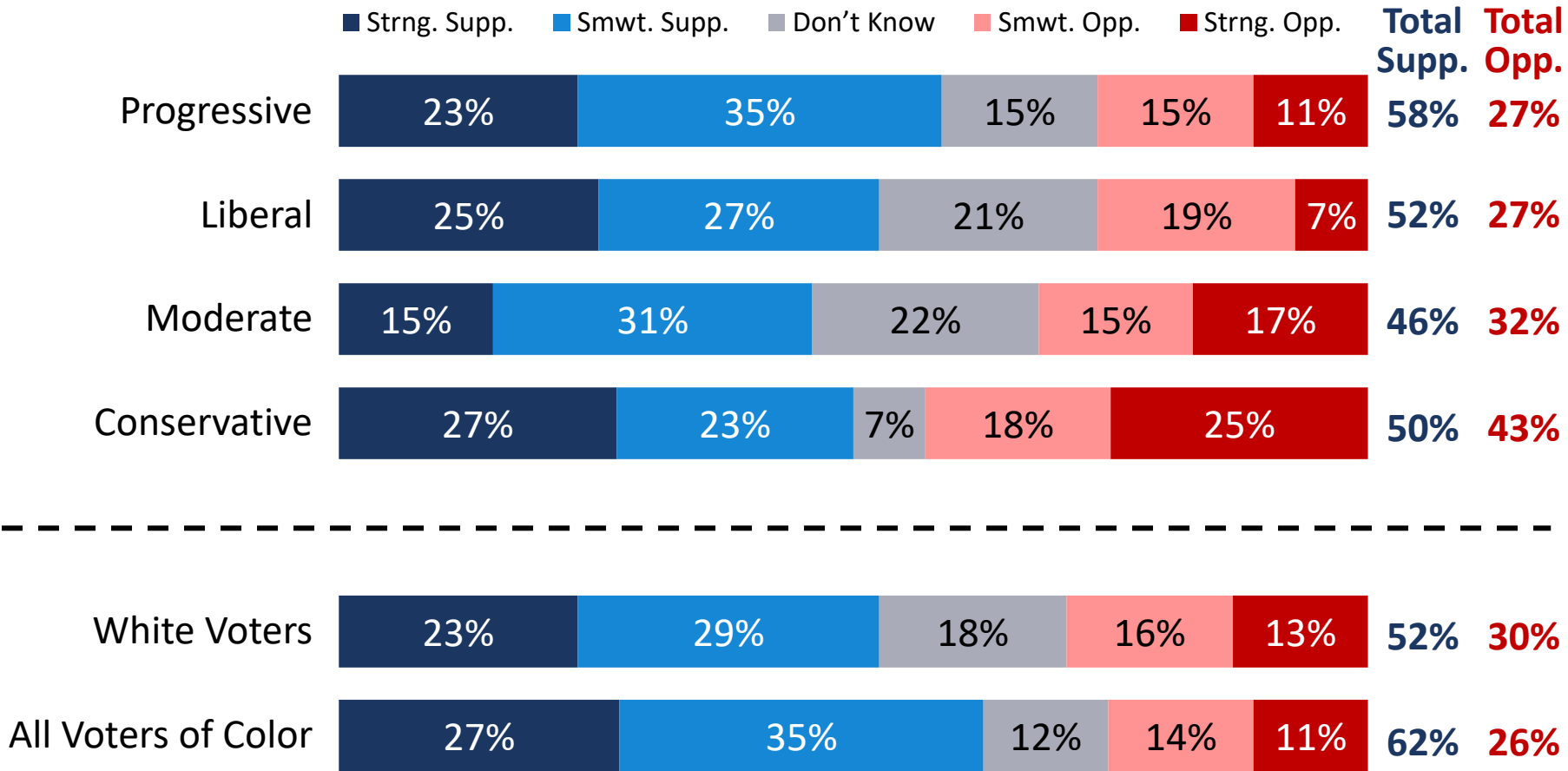
# Half of voters support a council/manager structure, with one in five undecided.

*Some people have proposed changing Portland's form of government to one with a City Council, a city manager, and a mayor. The City Council passes laws and appoints and oversees an experienced city manager, who runs day-to-day operations of the city. The mayor would be a member of City Council with no additional powers. Would you support or oppose this change?*



# Progressives are more likely than others to support this shift.

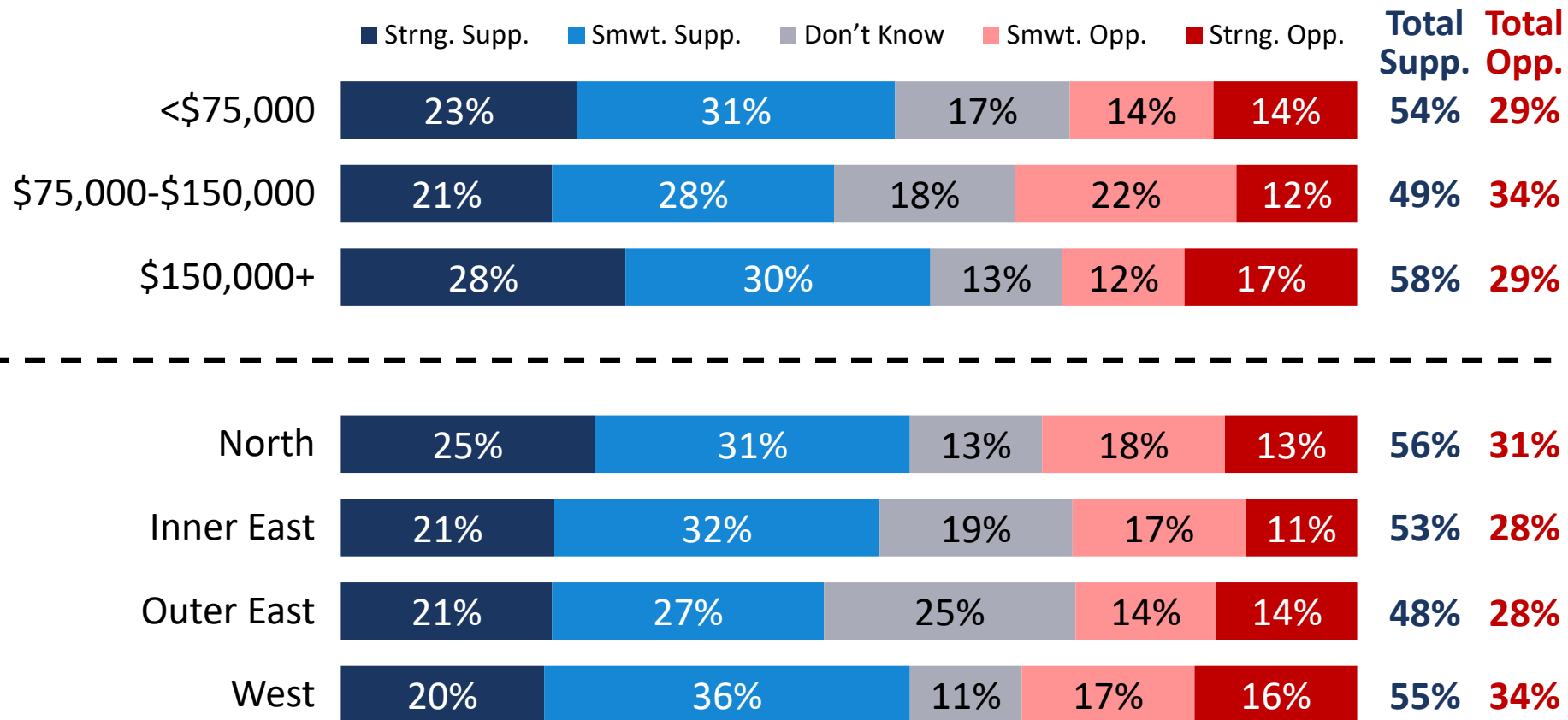
*Support for Council/Manager Reform by Ideology & Race/Ethnicity*



Q15. Some people have proposed changing Portland's form of government to one with a City Council, a city manager, and a mayor. The City Council passes laws and appoints and oversees an experienced city manager, who runs day-to-day operations of the city. The mayor would be a member of City Council with no additional powers. Would you support or oppose this change?

# Higher-income voters are more supportive.

Support for Council/Manager Reform by Household Income & Region



Q15. Some people have proposed changing Portland's form of government to one with a City Council, a city manager, and a mayor. The City Council passes laws and appoints and oversees an experienced city manager, who runs day-to-day operations of the city. The mayor would be a member of City Council with no additional powers. Would you support or oppose this change?

# Voters next heard a very brief exchange of pros and cons on council/manager reform.

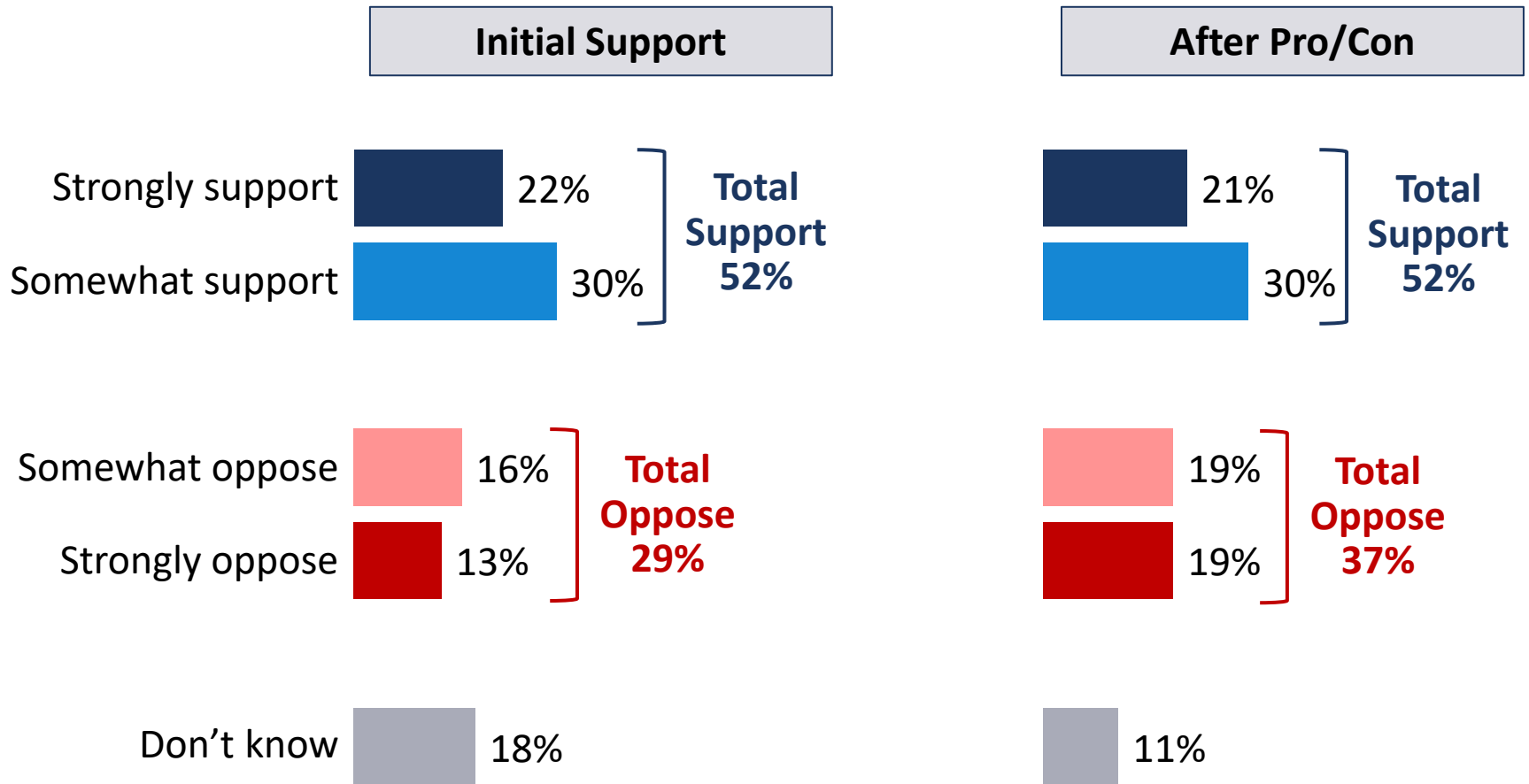


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**Supporters** say this form of government allows City Council to focus on long-term issues and serving resident needs, while an experienced city manager runs the day-to-day operations of government.

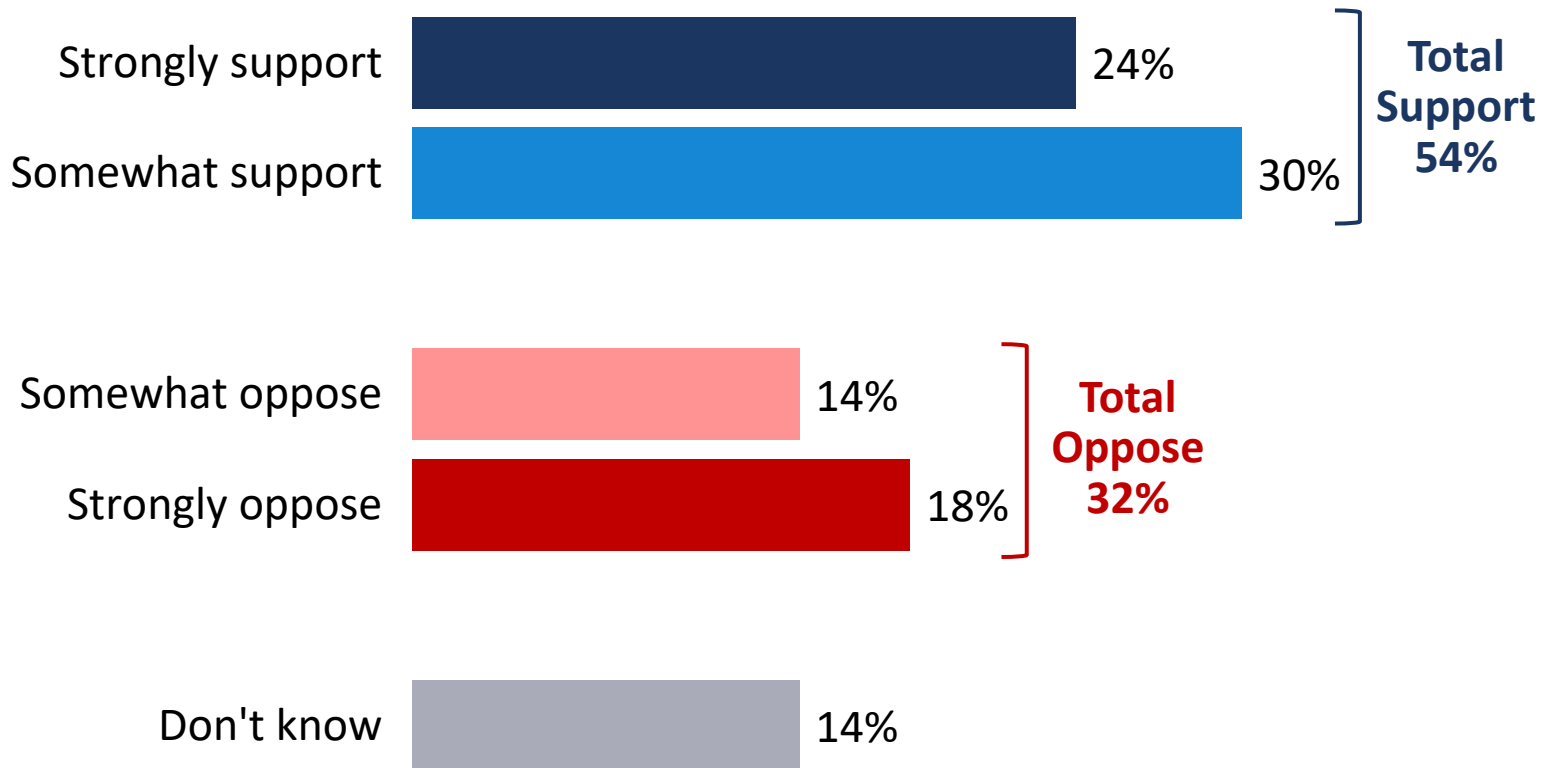
**Opponents** say this form puts too much power over decisions in the hand of a single, unelected City employee who cannot be removed by voters and may not understand the needs of all segments of the community.

# This information increases opposition to the idea slightly.



# However, the margin of support increases modestly if RCV is stipulated as part of it.

*Would you support or oppose shifting to this form of government if you knew it also would implement ranked-choice voting, allowing voters to vote for multiple candidates for each office and rank them in order of preference?*

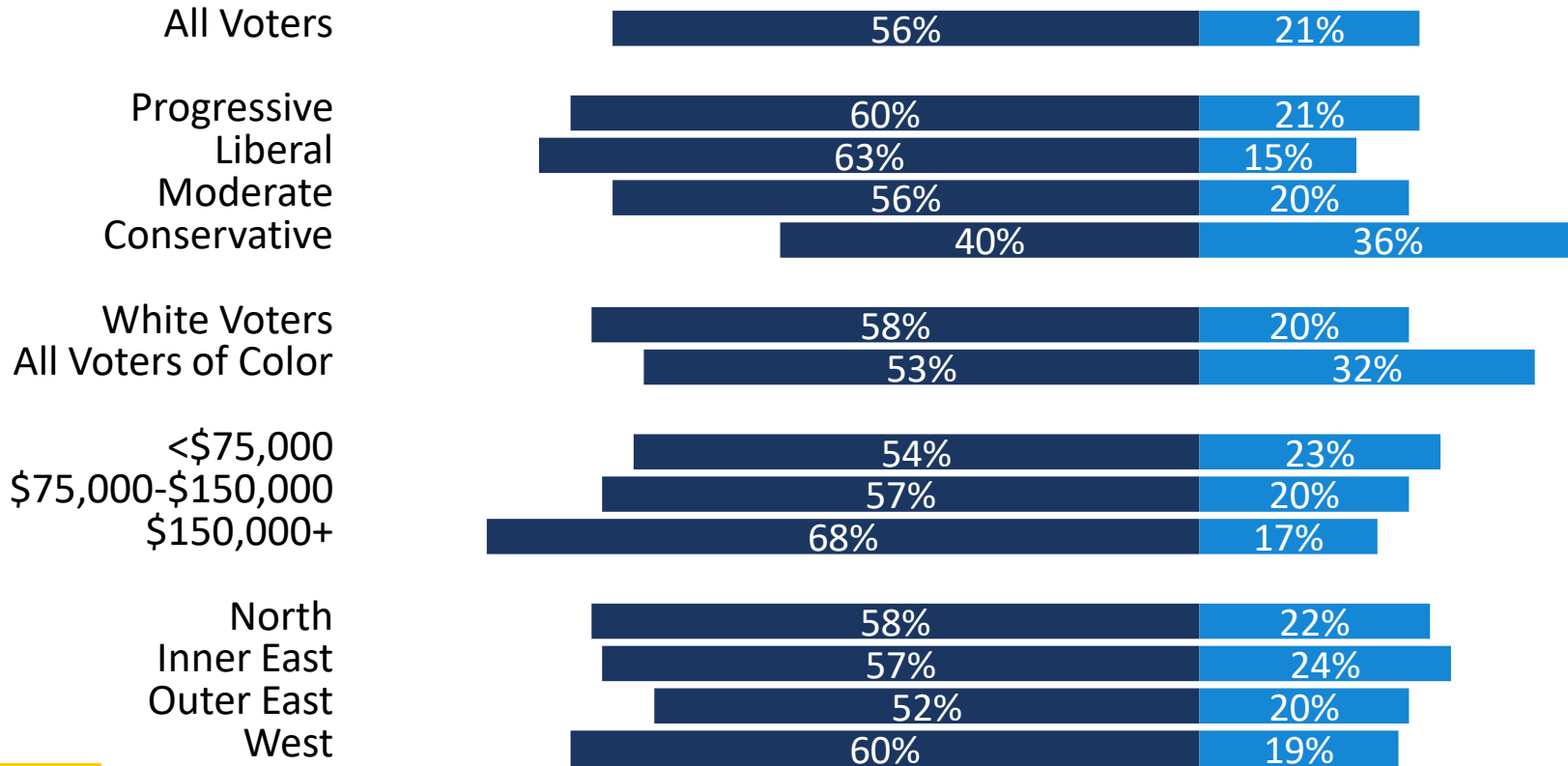


# Other than conservatives, voters across ideology, race/ethnicity, income and neighborhood prefer this reform to the status quo.

A City Council, a city manager, and a mayor. The City Council passes laws and appoints and oversees a city manager, who runs day-to-day operations of the city. The mayor would be a member of City Council with no additional powers.

OR

Our current Commission form of government, with an elected mayor, a chief administrative officer, and 4 elected city commissioners who make up the City Council and each have authority over specific City bureaus.

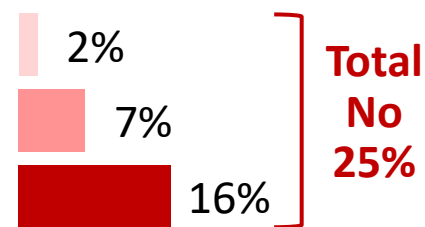
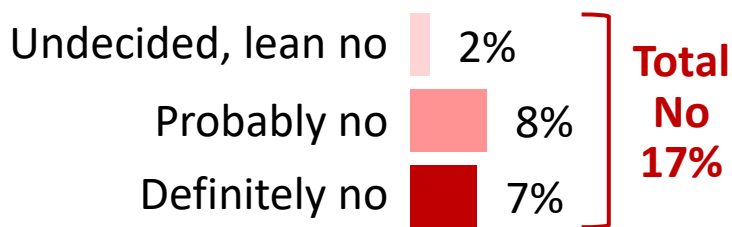
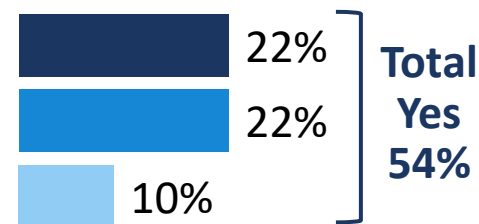
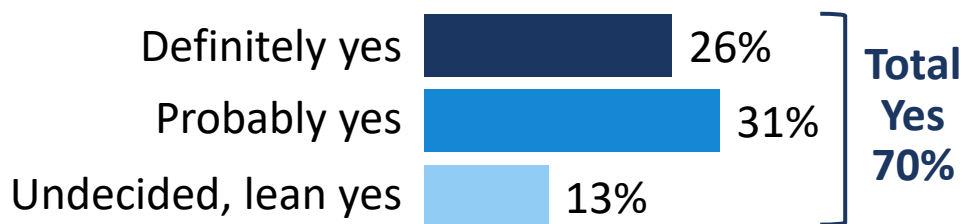




# Voters support two measures that establish a council/manager form of government.

**Amends Charter: Changes government structure; city council elected by district.** Shall city manager be responsible for managing city functions, appointed and overseen by larger city council, with members elected by districts?

**Amends Charter: Changes form of City Government.** Shall elected City Council appoint a city manager to manage all City bureaus, subject to the mayor and City Council's policy and quasi-judicial oversight?



Undecided 13%

Undecided 21%



# Conclusions

# Conclusions

- Portland voters have a great appetite for reform to the structure of the city government.
- They are very pessimistic broadly about the direction of the city, and they are very dissatisfied with the current form of government.
- Portlanders' guiding principles for reform are transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, responsiveness, and representing every area of the city.
- Though they are broadly very dissatisfied with the status quo, they do not draw strong distinctions between mayor/council or council/manager forms, supporting both as alternative structures.
- Ranked-choice voting is broadly appealing, and does not reduce support for either mayor/council or council/manager approaches.
- Majorities also support multimember districts and a larger City Council.

**For more information,  
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**OPINION  
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