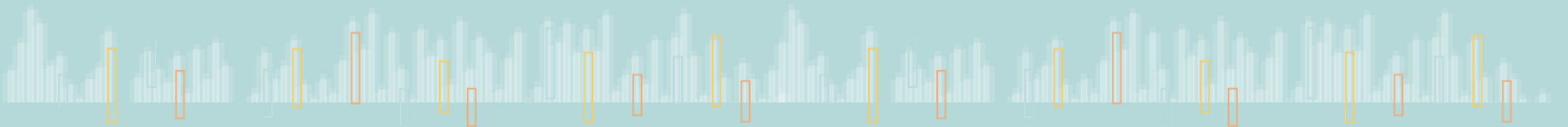


City of Portland Portland Bureau of Transportation Perceptions and Priorities Survey

July 2023



Research purpose

- Gauge levels of satisfaction with the Portland Bureau of Transportation
- Assess perceptions of the local transportation system
- Identify local transportation priorities
- Gauge support for potential revenue increases

Methodology

- Hybrid (phone and text-to-online) survey of N=600 Portland voters
- Conducted July 20-26, 2023; 15 minutes to complete
- Quotas set by age, gender, race, area of the city, and political affiliation; and data weighted by educational attainment and income to match the demographics of the adult population of the City of Portland
- Margin of error for full sample $\pm 4.0\%$; margin of error for split sample $\pm 5.7\%$
- Due to rounding, some totals may differ by ± 1 from the sum of separate responses.

Key takeaways



General public sentiment

- **Confidence in the direction of the city remains low, but it is improving.** While only 2 in 10 Portlanders think the city is heading in the right direction, optimism has increased since 2021, at the height of the pandemic, when only 1 in 10 Portlanders felt the city was on the right path. The pessimistic mood likely intensifies negative attitudes towards PBOT, the local transportation system, and potential funding requests. At the same time, the recent growing positivity suggests Portlanders think the city is starting to turn the corner.

PBOT and top transportation issues

- **Portlanders are more likely to rate PBOT's job performance negatively than positively, with a drop in positive ratings since 2019.** About five in ten Portlanders currently rate PBOT's job performance as either poor or very poor, compared to about four in ten who rate it as good or very good. In 2019, pre-pandemic, about four in ten rated it poorly, compared to about six in ten who rated it positively. Negative ratings for PBOT are higher among Portlanders residing east of I-205, residents ages 45+, higher-income residents in households earning \$150k or more, and those who rely on their personal vehicles as their primary form of transportation.
- **Portlanders say the top issues for PBOT to address are maintenance and safety.** Asked open-ended, about three in ten Portlanders say the top transportation issue for PBOT to address is basic maintenance and repair of roads. About two in ten also mention safety-related issues: safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, safety on public transit, and traffic calming. The remaining top mention, for about one in ten Portlanders, is reducing traffic congestion.

Transportation system

- **Asked about the quality of the transportation system in Portland, majorities give positive ratings for streetlights and signage, bike lanes, and sidewalks.** Majorities rate the quality of the following as either good or very good: street lighting, traffic signals, and signage; bike lanes; and sidewalks.
- **Asked about the quality of the transportation system in Portland, majorities give negative ratings for road maintenance, safety, parking downtown, and traffic congestion.** Majorities rate the quality of the following as either poor or very poor: major streets and roads; maintenance and repair of city streets; safety of city streets when biking and walking. Other areas with majority negative ratings include parking in downtown and the central city; and traffic congestion.
- **Asked about the quality of transportation in their own neighborhoods, most aspects get positive ratings, except for road maintenance, safety, and traffic congestion.** While most aspects of the system get positive ratings at the neighborhood level, majorities give the following negative ratings in their own neighborhoods: maintenance and repair of city streets; safety of city streets when biking and walking; and traffic congestion.

Sources and adequacy of funding

- **Few Portlanders have a clear idea or sense of the primary sources of Portland's transportation funding.** Asked open-ended, four in ten simply mention general taxes. About two in ten point to some combination of income, property, or city taxes. About one in ten point to some combination of federal, state, or city funds. Only one in ten mention gas taxes; and hardly any mention parking fees.
- **Pluralities believe PBOT has adequate funds, but about one in three acknowledge they are unsure.** Provided with no background information and simply asked if PBOT has adequate funds to meet local transportation needs, about four in ten say yes, with about three in ten saying no, and three in ten acknowledging they don't know.
- **Presented with additional information, majorities conclude that transportation revenues are not keeping up with expenses.** When Portlanders are told that gas taxes and parking fees are an important portion of the city's transportation budget, and that gas taxes are not keeping up with inflation and that parking fees are down due to fewer people driving downtown, about five in ten Portlanders find the information believable. For some groups—including Portlanders west of I-205 and younger residents—about six in ten find the information believable.

Spending priority tests

- **When given a choice and when no specific funding mechanisms are mentioned, majorities say PBOT should prioritize an increase in spending.** Asked whether PBOT should maintain current spending even if it means a decline in the quality of the transportation system, moderately increase spending to maintain the system, or more significantly increase spending to improve the system, about six in ten say PBOT should prioritize either a moderate (36%) or larger increase (27%) in spending.
- **After learning more about possible cuts in services, support for an increase in spending grows.** After learning about possible cuts that would lead to a decline in the quality of the transportation system, about seven in ten say PBOT should prioritize either a moderate (42%) or larger increase (27%) in spending.

Potential service reductions

- **Consistent with what Portlanders believe are the top issues that PBOT should address, there is widespread agreement that it is unacceptable to reduce funding for maintenance and safety.** Most say it is unacceptable to reduce the following: maintenance and repair of city streets and bridges; maintenance and repair of streetlights, traffic signals, and signage; safety improvements in areas with more frequent crashes and near schools; programs to reduce abandoned or derelict vehicles on city streets; or reduce traffic safety investigations. At least six in ten Portlanders across all groups say such cuts are unacceptable.
- **Portlanders have mixed sentiments about cuts to transportation alternatives, street cleaning, and activities that help leverage federal funds.** About one in five Portlanders say it is unacceptable to reduce improvements to walking, biking, and access to public transportation; reduce planning activities to leverage external funding; reduce street cleaning; reduce streetcar operations; or reduce community activities like Sunday Parkways and traffic education in schools.
- **Majorities say it is more acceptable to reduce funding for a range of other activities.** These include vegetation trimming along city streets; planning for parking in neighborhoods; education and incentives to help people get around by walking, biking, and transit; and parking enforcement.

Transportation priorities

- **High priorities include fundamentals such maintenance, safety, planning to help attract federal and state funds, and reducing traffic congestion.** Majorities among all groups view these as very high or high priorities.
- **Mid-level priorities include reducing climate pollution, contributing to livability, and increasing non-driving options.** About five in ten Portlanders view the following as very high or high priorities: reducing climate pollutions from the transportation system; contributing to livability by enforcing parking rules and street cleaning; and increasing nondriving options such as walking, biking, and the use of public transportation. When it comes to these mid-level priorities, opinions among groups begin to diverge.
- **Lowest priorities include what Portlanders may view as less essential for a transportation agency: promoting economic recovery, community events, and education.** These include contributing to the economic recovery of the city with projects like adding outdoor seating in business districts, street murals, and public plazas; and leading community activities such as Sunday Parkways, and traffic and safety education in schools. Less than three in ten Portlanders consider these very high or high priorities.

Potential new sources of revenue

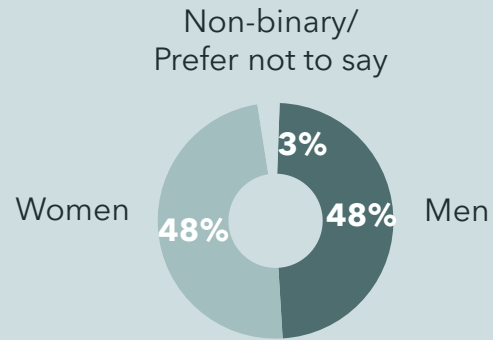
- **Opposition to specific tested funding options outweighs support.** Asked to consider possible new sources of revenue, only about four in ten strongly or somewhat support the following: identifying new funding sources even if it means paying more in local taxes and fees; directing a larger portion of the city's general funding to transportation even if it means less funding for other city services; or increasing the existing gas tax and parking fees.
- **Strength of opposition is greater to increasing existing gas taxes and parking fees and identifying new local funding sources.** About six in ten either strongly or somewhat oppose all three possible tested sources of revenue, but "strength" of opposition is higher to increasing gas taxes and parking fees and identifying new funding sources.

Snapshot of respondents

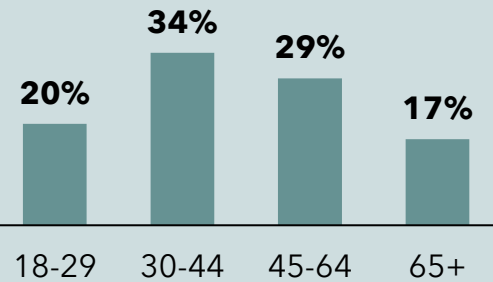


Demographics

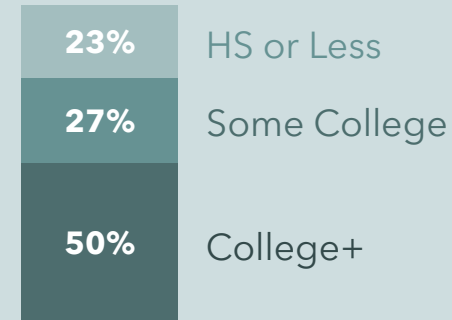
Gender



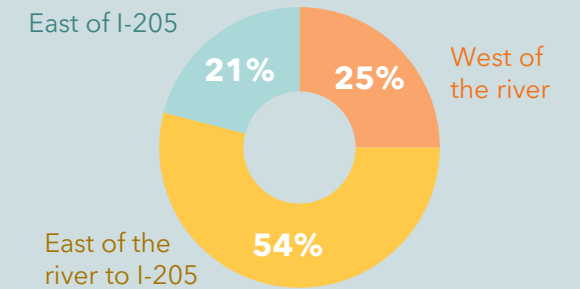
Age



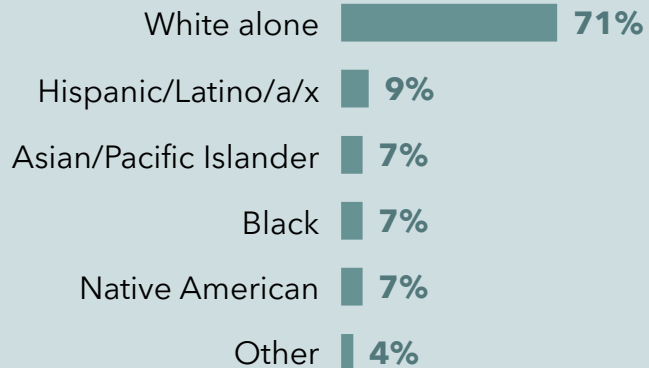
Education



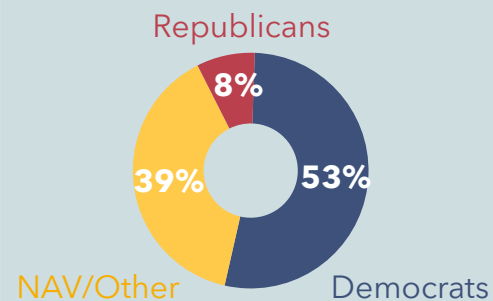
Area



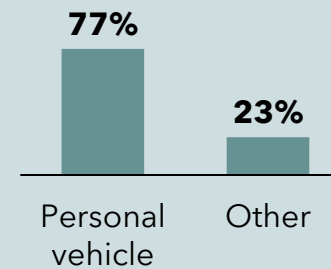
Race/Ethnicity



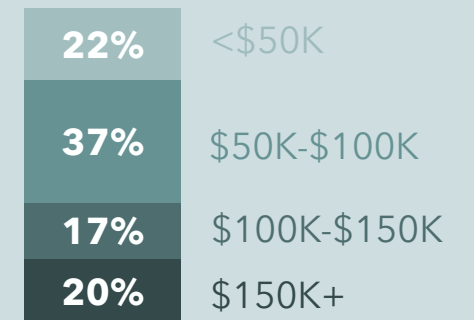
Party Registration



Transportation



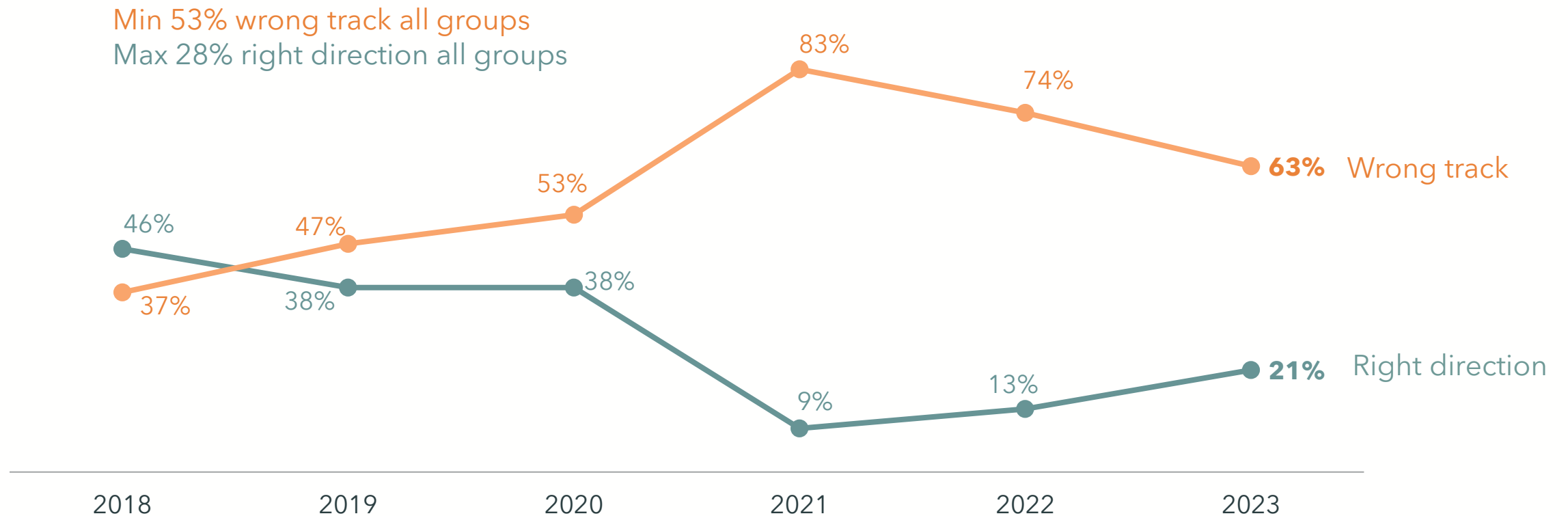
Income



General public sentiment



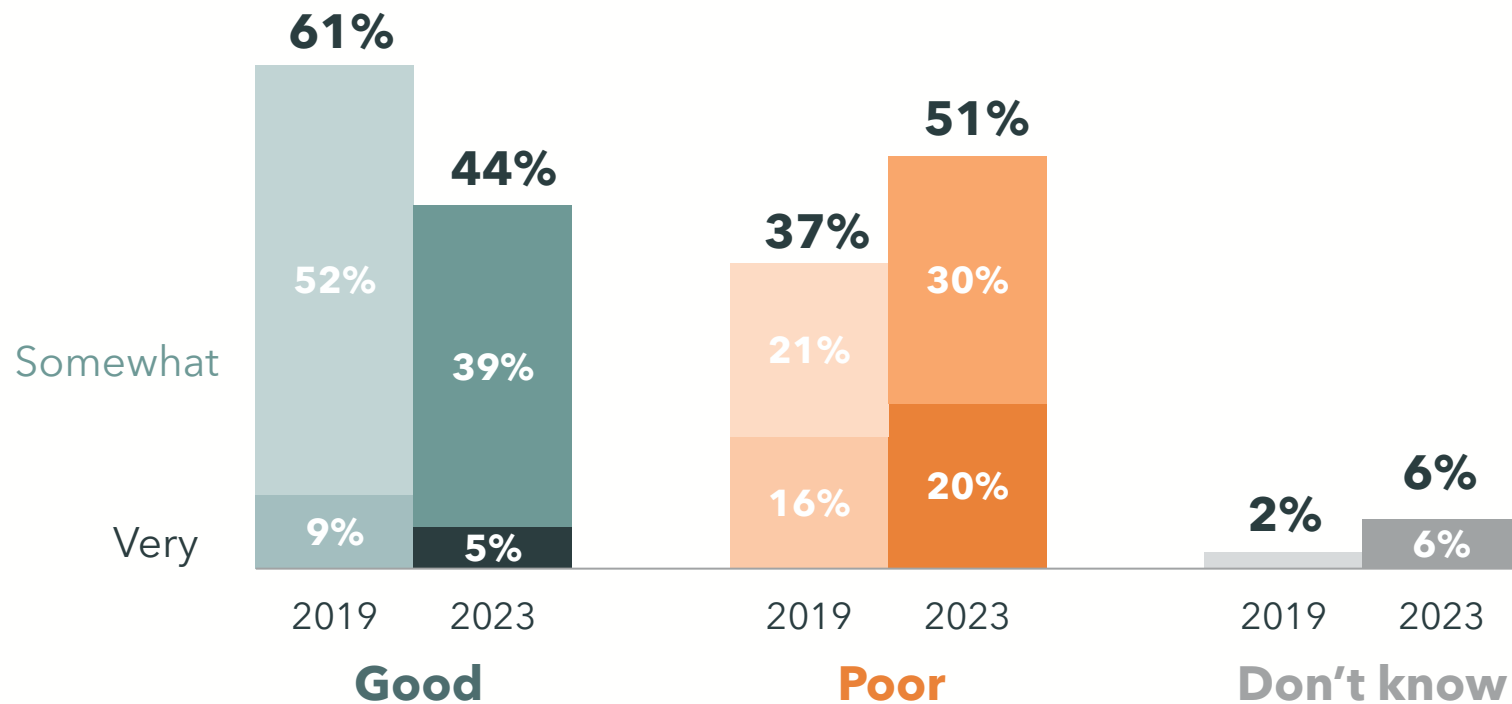
Confidence in the direction of the city remains low, but it has improved since 2021.



Perceptions of PBOT and top issues



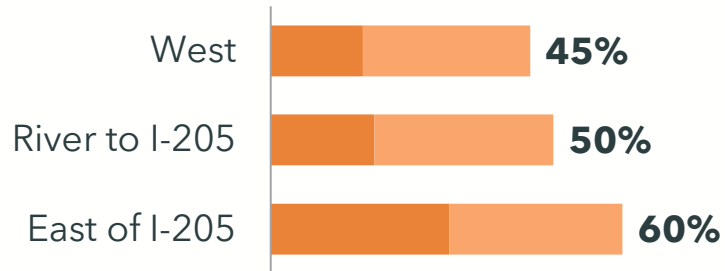
Portlanders are more likely to rate PBOT's job performance negatively than positively, with a significant decrease in positivity since 2019.



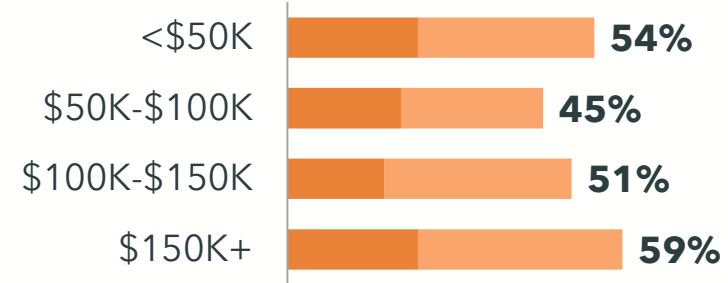
Portlanders residing east of I-205, older and higher-income residents, and residents who primarily drive their own personal vehicles are more likely to rate PBOT negatively.

Very / somewhat poor

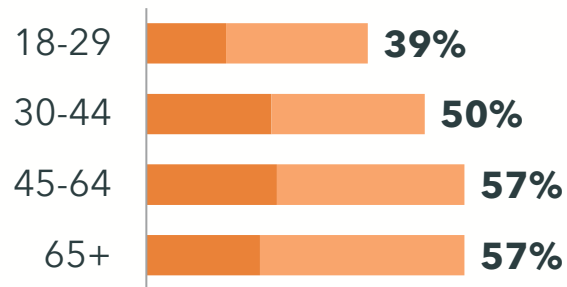
AREA



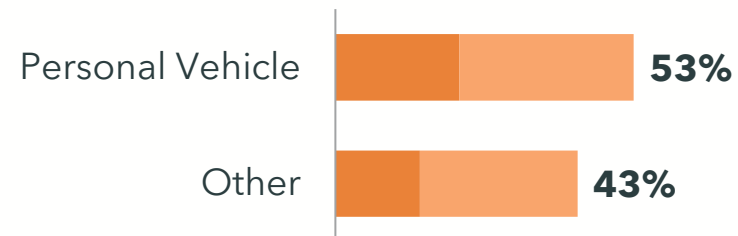
INCOME



AGE



TRANSPORTATION



Portlanders say the most important issues for PBOT to address are basic maintenance and safety.

30% General repair/maintenance

12% Safety for bicyclists/pedestrians

9% Traffic congestion/flow

8% Improve public transit

6% Safety on public transit

5% Homeless camps/vehicles

4% Traffic calming

2% Nothing

11% Other

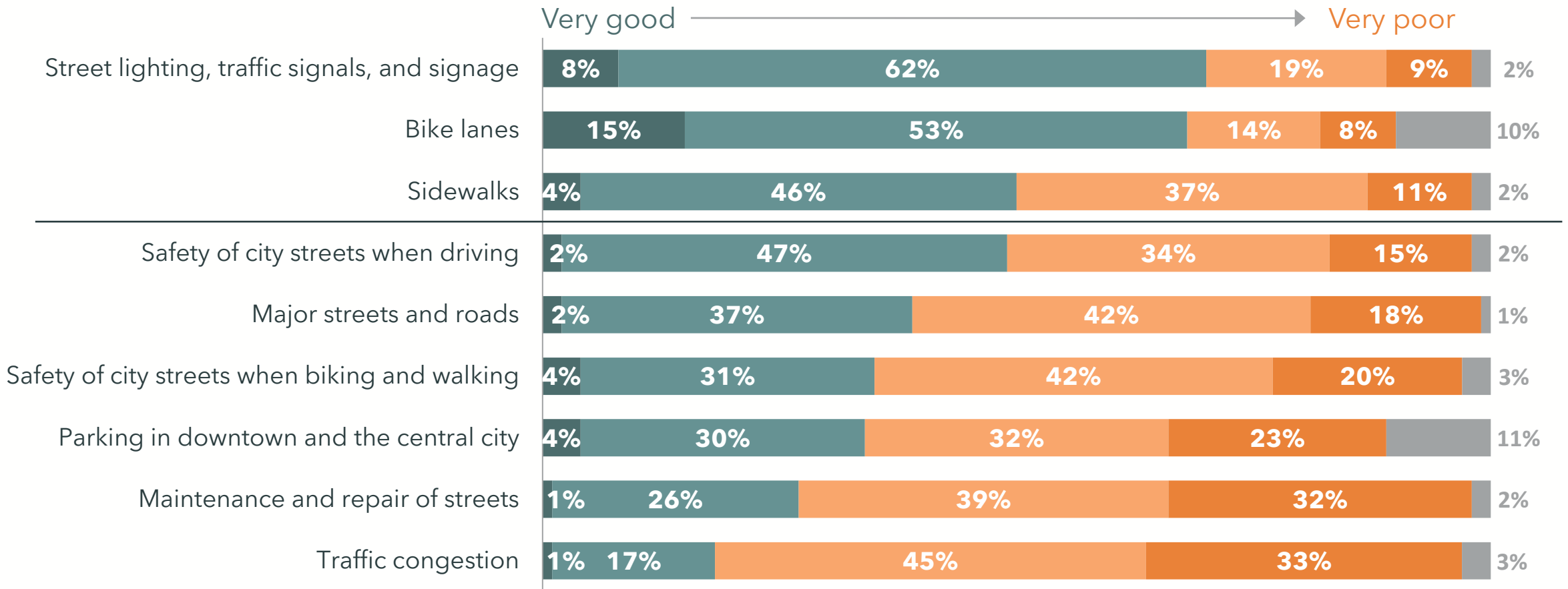
3% Don't know



Perceptions of the transportation system

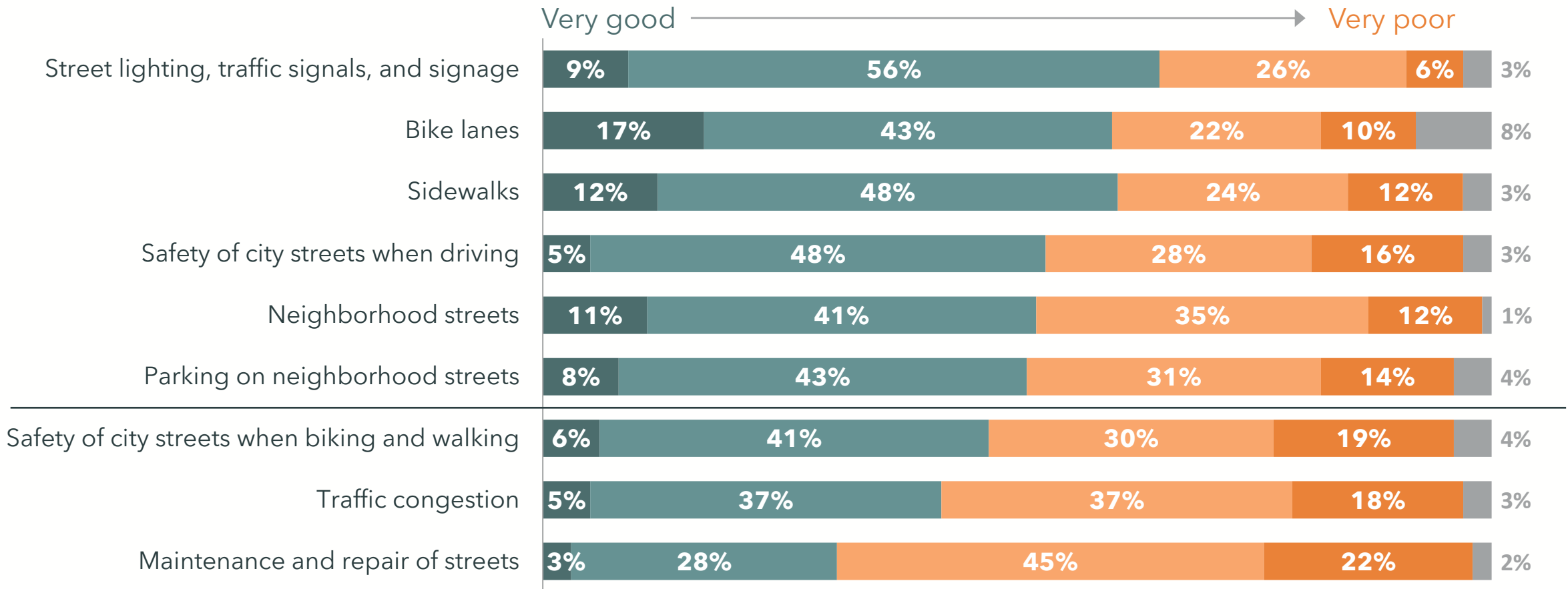


Asked about the quality of transportation *in Portland*, streetlighting, bike lanes, and sidewalks get majority positive ratings.



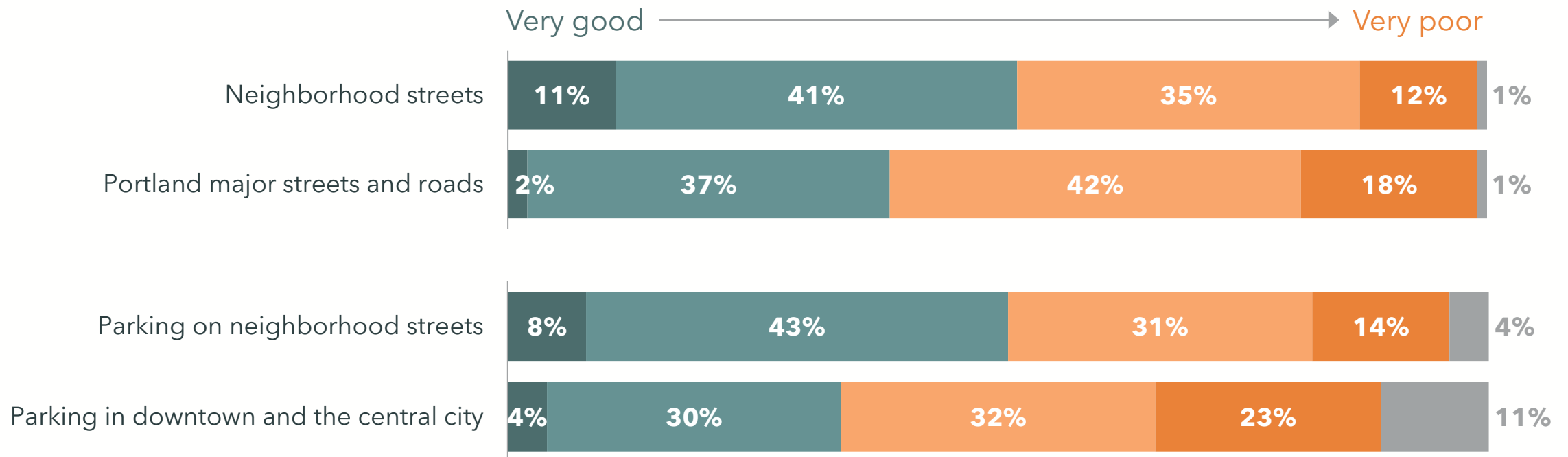
n=300

Asked about the quality of transportation *in their own neighborhoods*, more aspects of the system get majority positive ratings.



n=300

Portlanders have a more favorable view of streets and parking *in their own neighborhoods* than of major streets and parking *in Portland and the central city*.

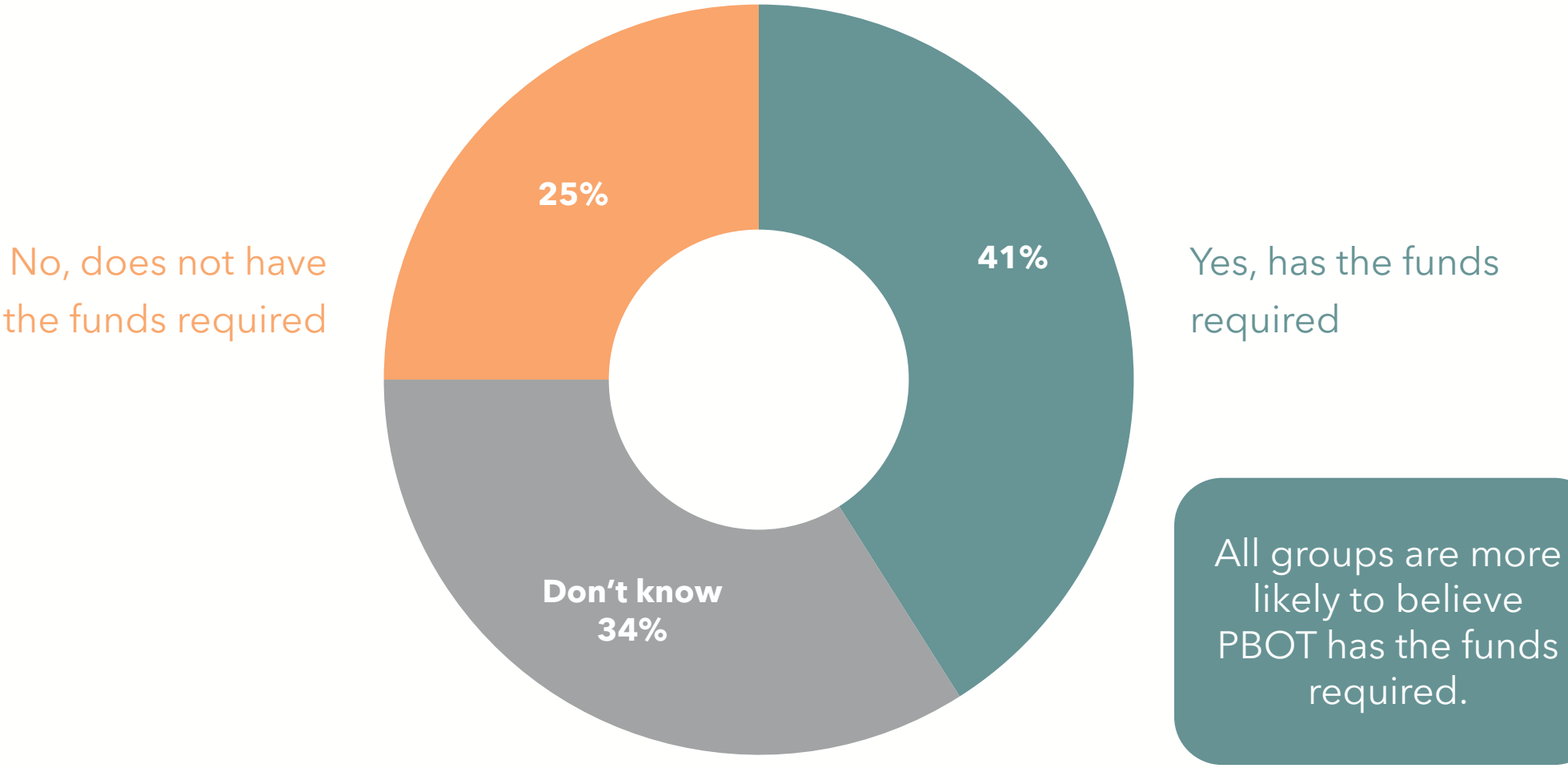


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Perceptions of transportation funding



A plurality of voters believe PBOT has the funds to meet the city's transportation needs, but many are unsure.



Few Portlanders have a clear sense of the primary source of funding for PBOT. Gas taxes and parking fees are rarely mentioned.

40% General taxes

10% Gas taxes

8% Income taxes

5% Property taxes

5% Federal funds

4% State funds

4% City taxes

3% City general fund

2% Parking fees

3% Other

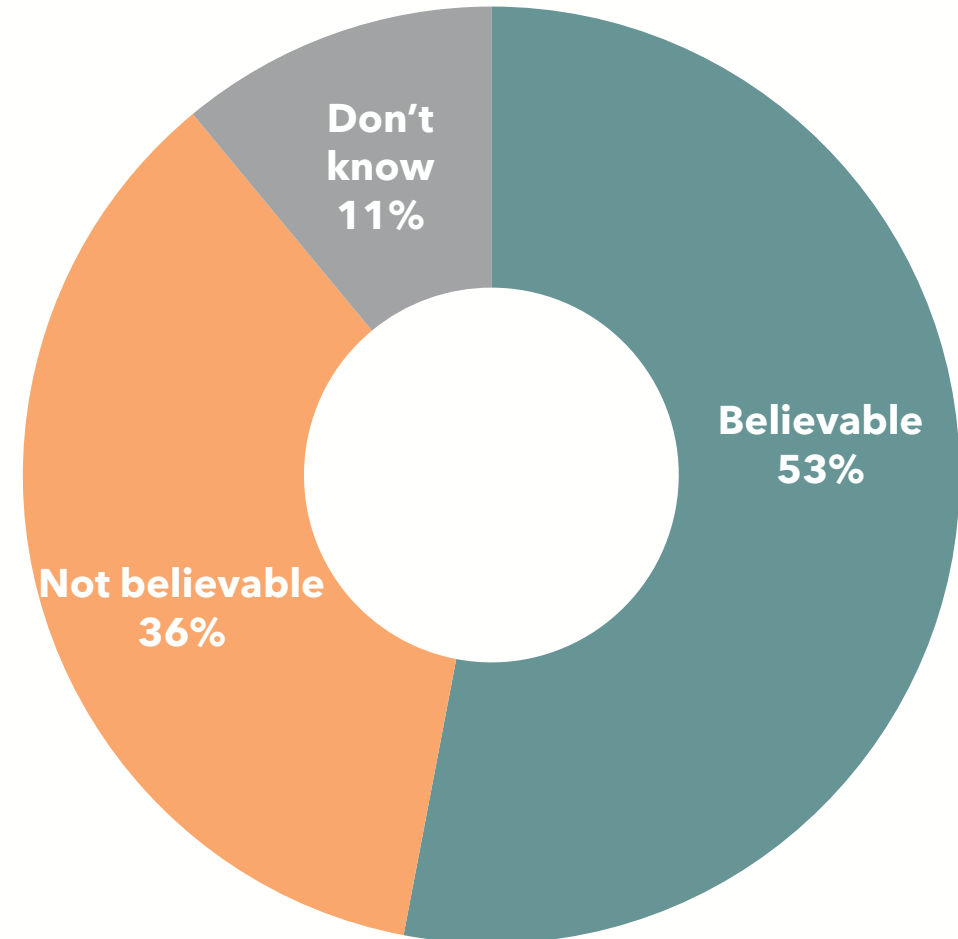
11% Don't know

Provided with key information, a majority believe that transportation revenues are not keeping up with expenses.

An important portion of Portland's transportation budget comes from gas tax and parking fees. But gas tax revenues have not kept up with inflation and parking revenues have declined because fewer people are parking downtown since the pandemic.

The city estimates that it will soon have an annual transportation budget shortfall of about \$30 million and the city will need to make significant cuts to transportation projects unless it can find additional revenue sources.

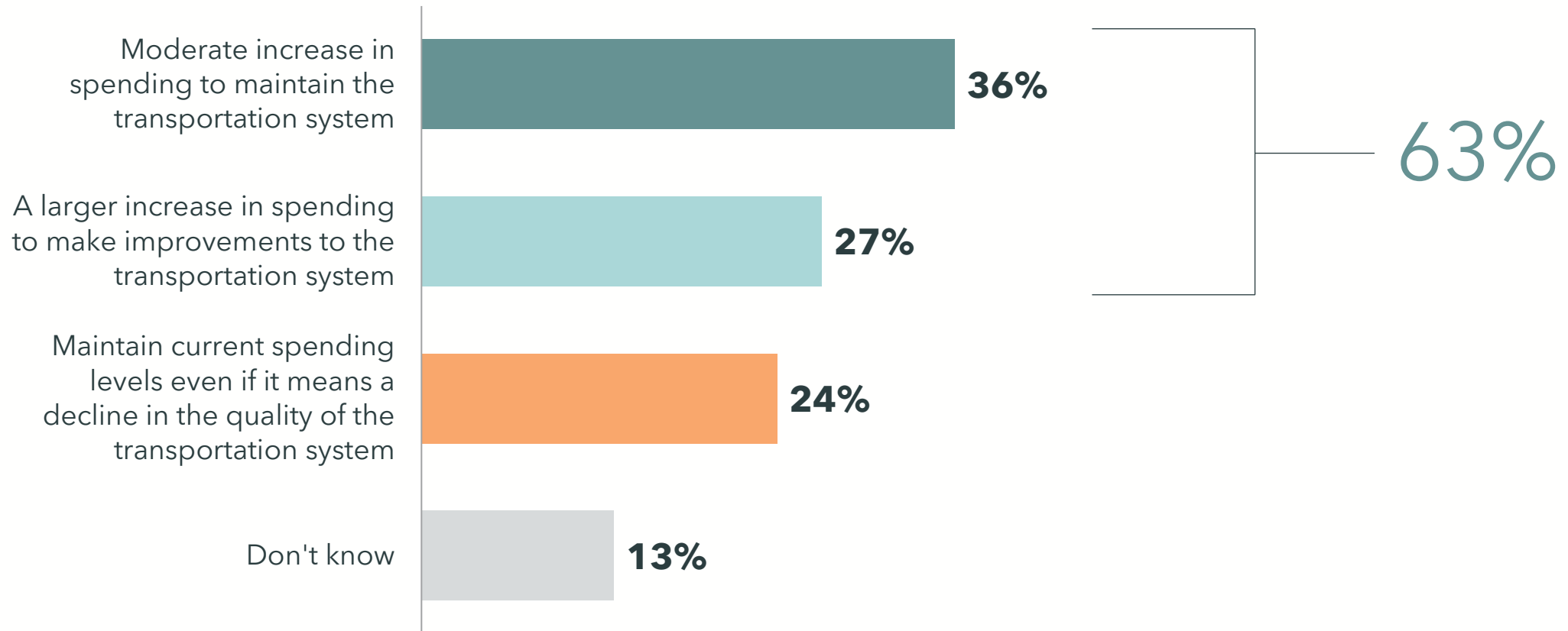
Do you think this statement is believable or not believable?



Spending priority test



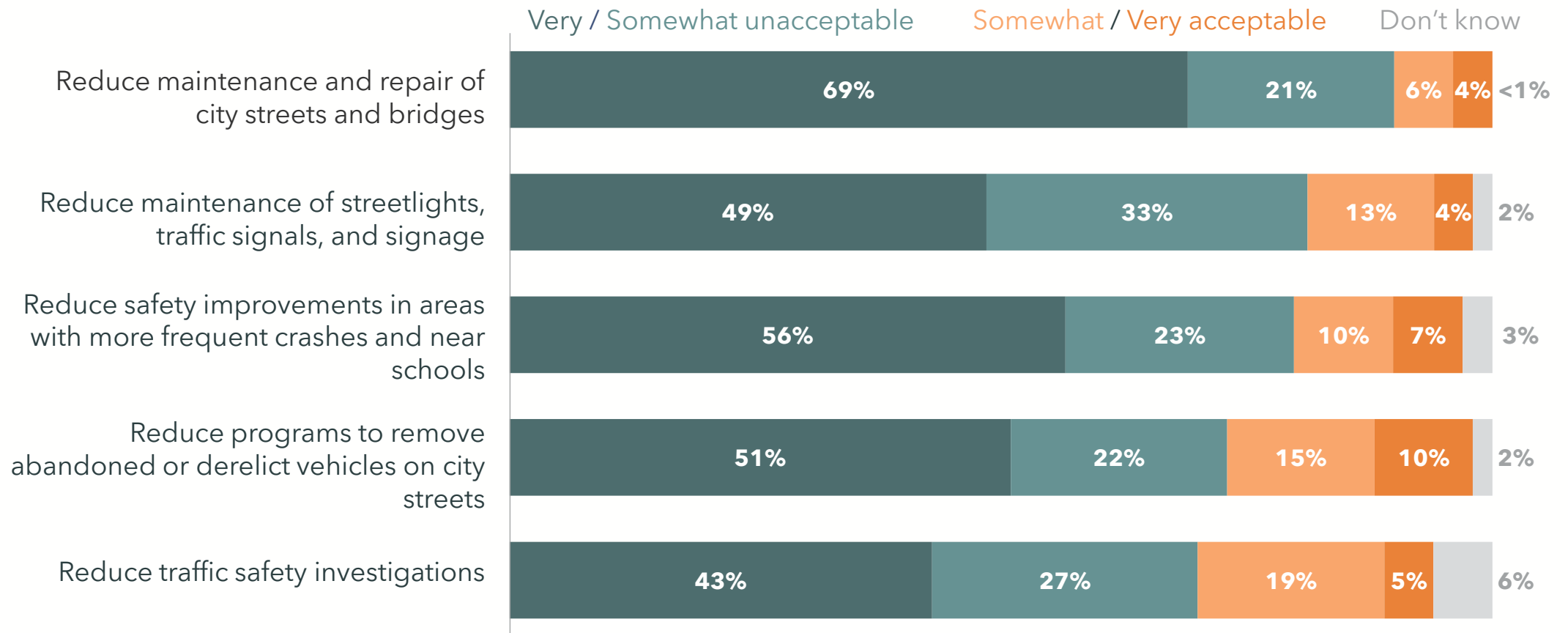
Without mentioning a specific funding mechanism, nearly 2 in 3 Portlanders, when given a choice, say PBOT should prioritize a moderate or larger increase in spending.



Potential service reductions

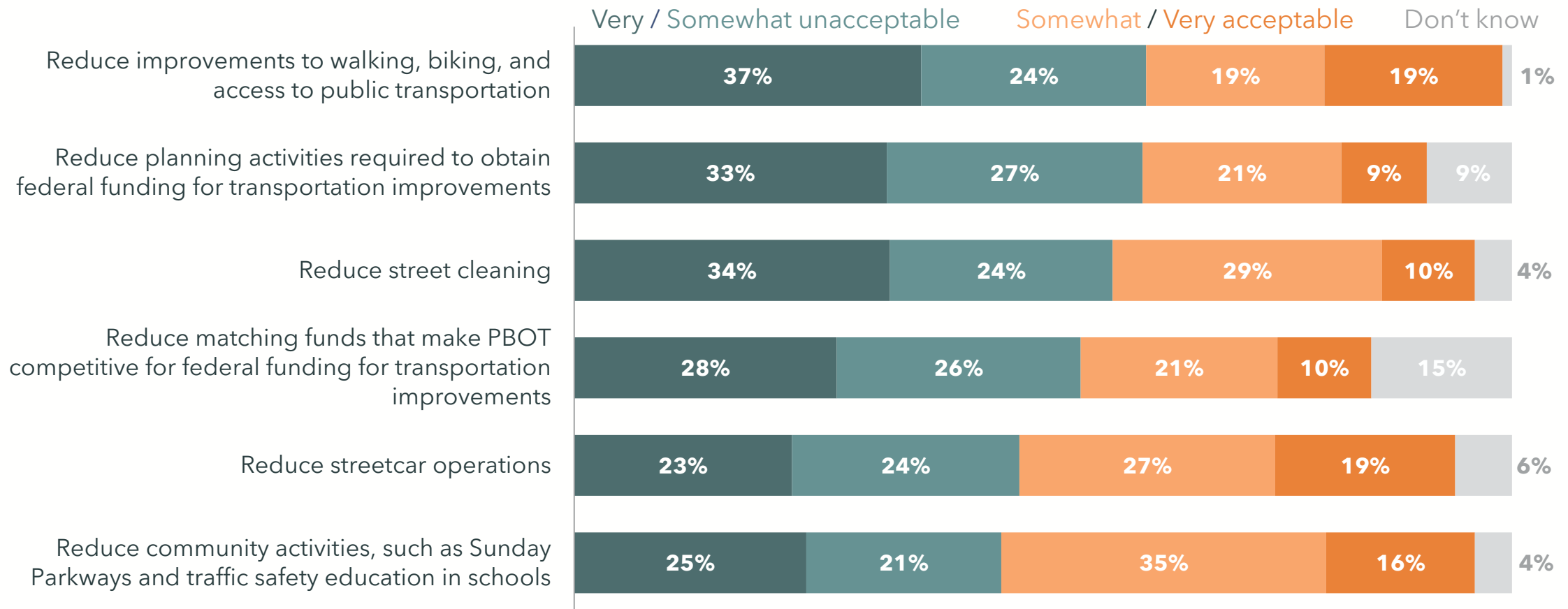


When it comes to potential service cuts, most say it is unacceptable to reduce maintenance and safety.



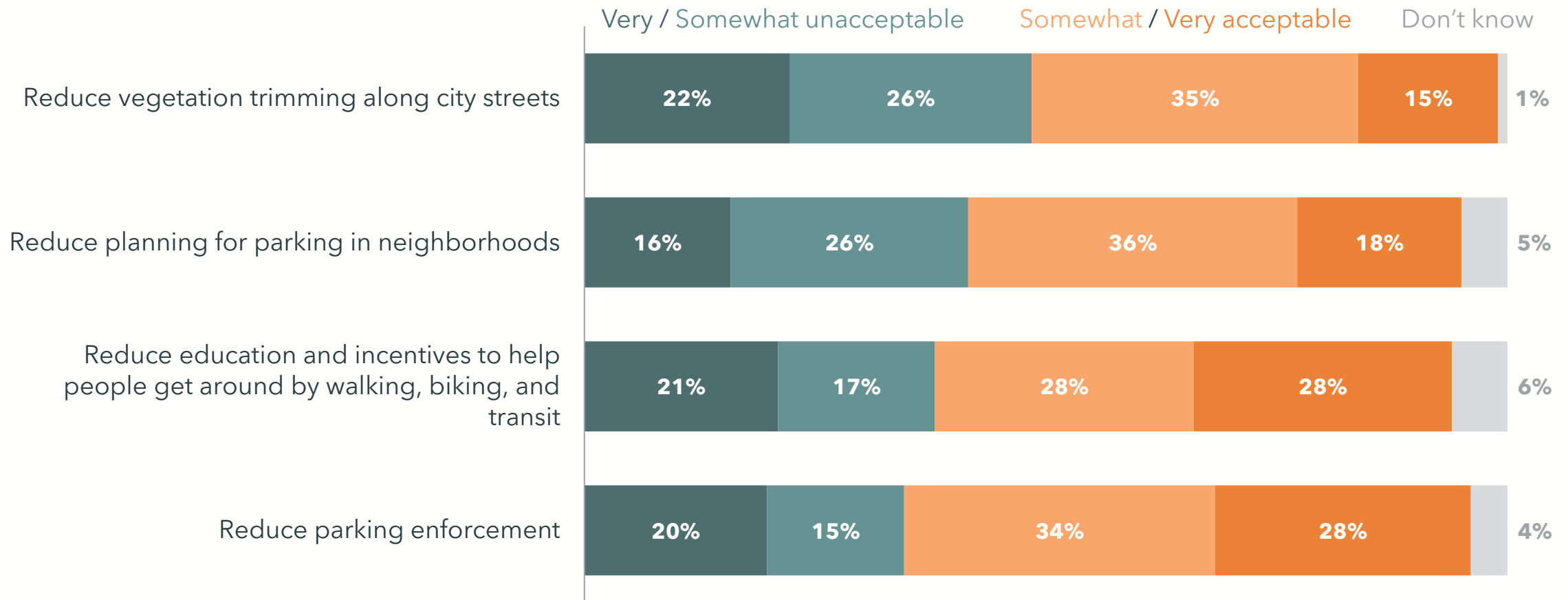
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Portlanders are less opposed to cuts for transportation alternatives, street cleaning, and activities that help leverage federal funds.



n=300

Majorities say it is acceptable to reduce services in a range of other activities.

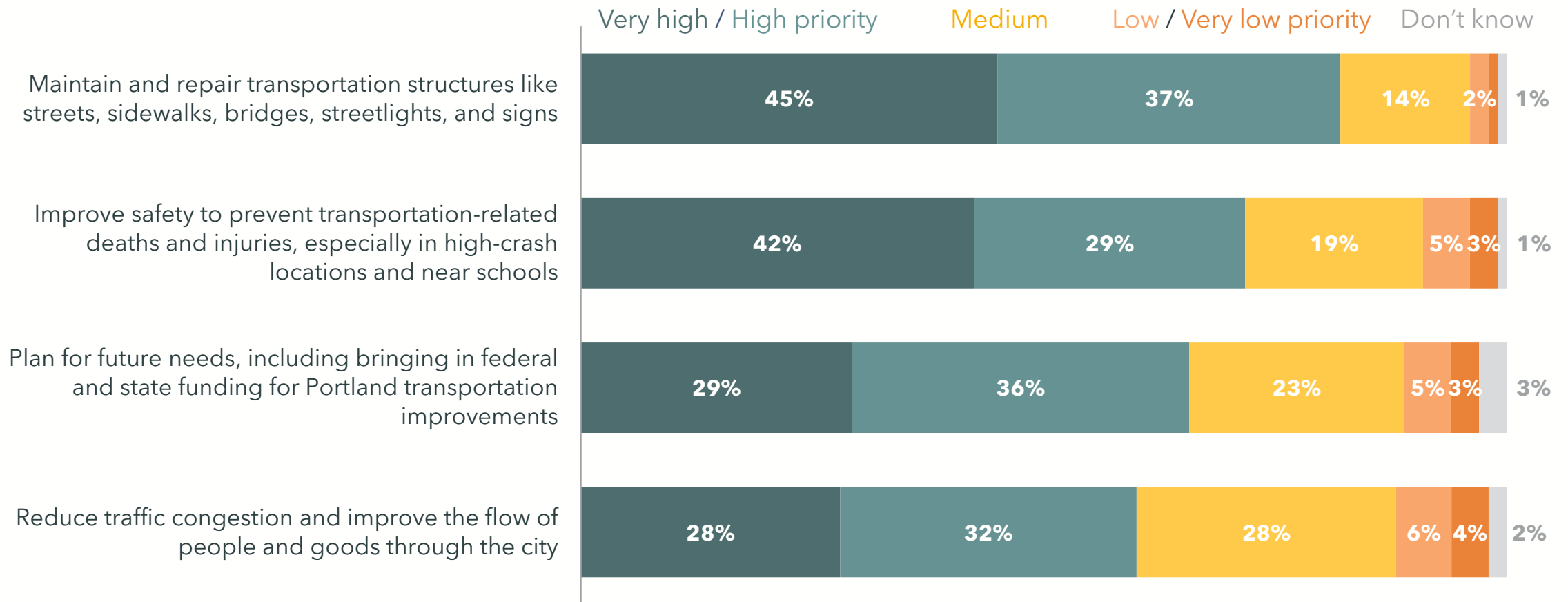


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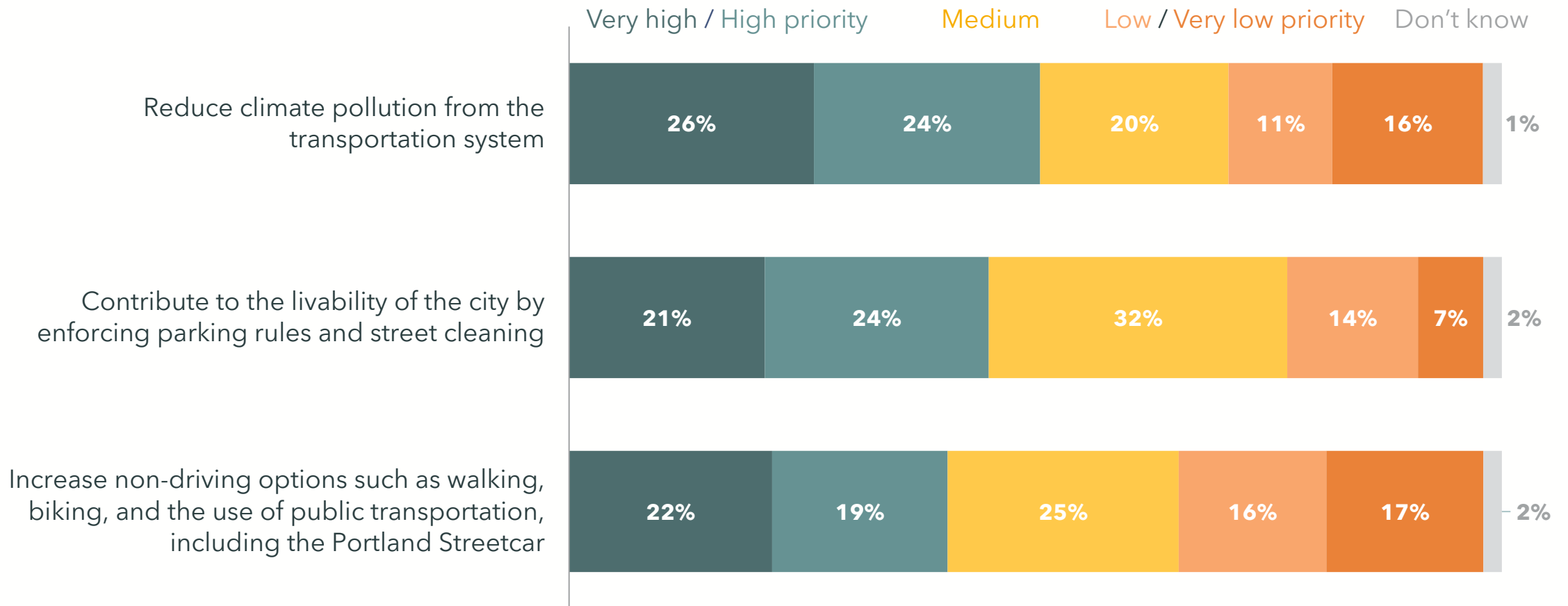
Transportation priorities



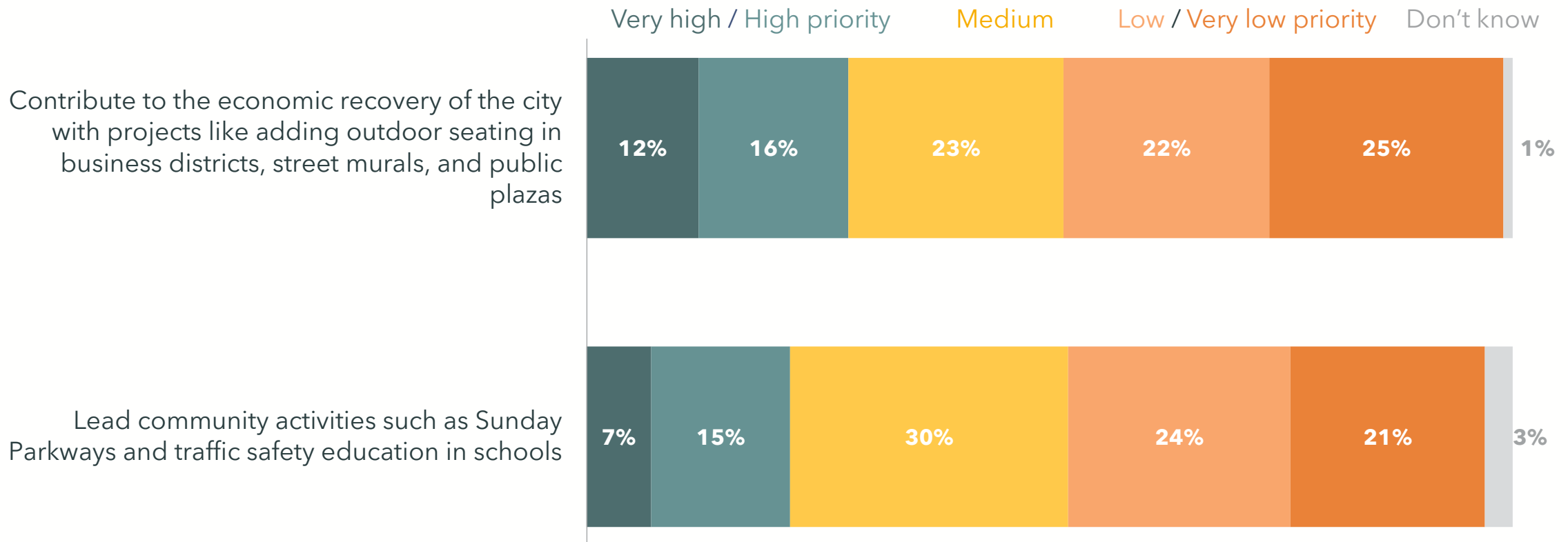
High priorities include maintenance, safety, planning to help attract federal and state funds, and reducing traffic.



Mid-level priorities include reducing climate pollution, contributing to livability, and increasing non-driving options.



Low priorities include what Portlanders may see as less essential to a transportation agency: economic recovery, and community events and education.



Potential new sources of revenue



Opposition to specific funding options outweighs support, with opposition strongest to increasing gas taxes and parking fees and identifying new local sources.

