



# **Douglas Schools Survey**

## **Key Findings**

*May 2022*

# Methodology

New Bridge Strategy conducted a survey among N=400 registered voters throughout Douglas County from May 6-12, 2022.

Interviews were conducted via live telephone interviews (both cell phones and landlines) and online. Interviews were distributed proportionally throughout the county. Quotas were set for key demographic sub-groups, such as gender and age.

The margin of error is  $\pm 4.90\%$  for the overall sample. The margin of error will vary for sub-groups.



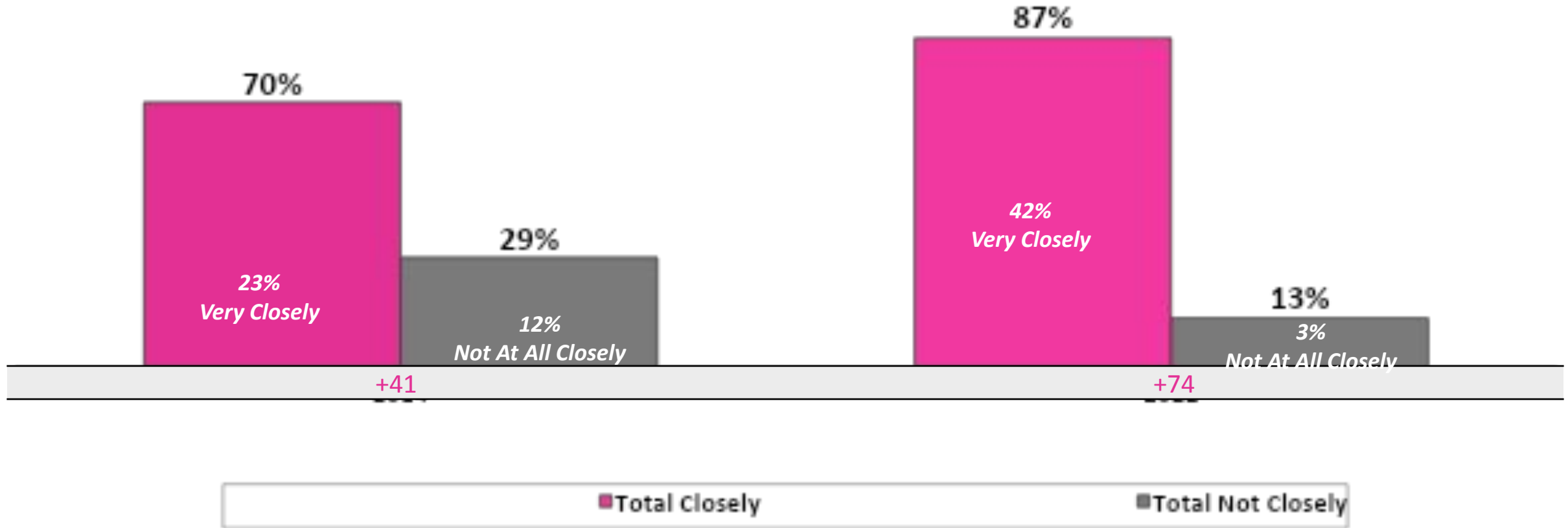
# Core Perceptions

# Fewer than half of voters give Douglas County Schools a grade of an A or B, which is weaker than in the past.

	2014	2016	2018	2022
A	17%	11%	12%	9%
B	35%	38%	46%	36%
<b>Total A/B</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>45%</b>
C	22%	29%	24%	36%
D	10%	9%	7%	10%
F	3%	3%	2%	8%

*Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D and F to rate the quality of their work at school. What grade would you give Douglas County schools?*

# Many more voters say that they closely follow news and events in the Douglas County public school system than in 2014.



How closely do you follow news and events in the Douglas County public school system?



# Ballot Proposals

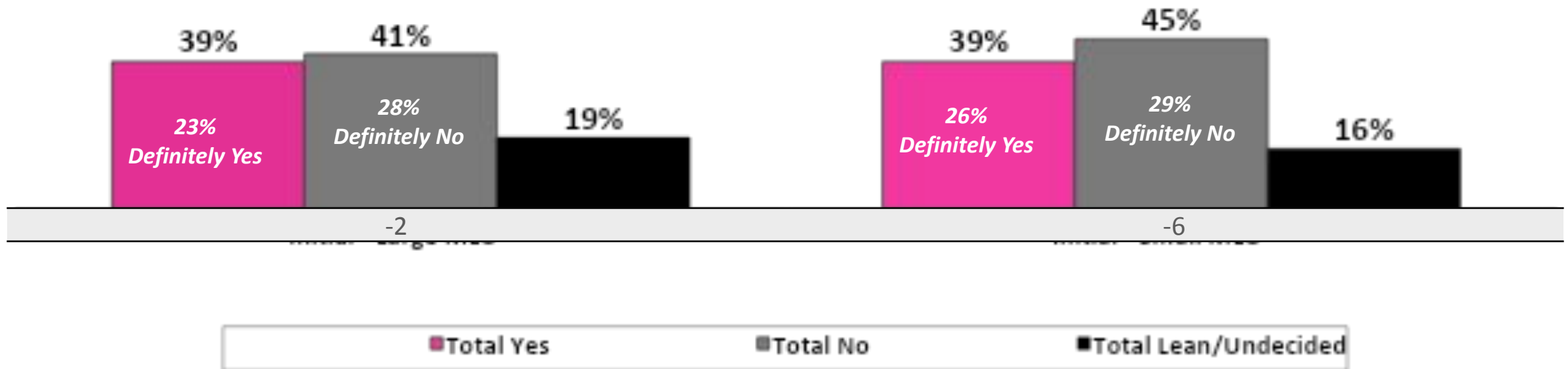
# We provided the following language for the mill levy override, with ½ hearing a larger amount and ½ hearing a smaller amount:

*Shall Douglas County School District taxes be increased 60 million dollars/40 million dollars annually commencing in collection year 2023 and in each year thereafter for general fund purposes, including, but not limited to:*

*Attracting and retaining quality teachers and staff by increasing district salaries to be more competitive with neighboring school districts*

*and shall such tax increase be an additional property tax mill levy in excess of the levy authorized for the district's general fund; provided that the district will be subject to an annual independent audit published on the district's website and that expenditures will be subject to review by a board appointed citizens oversight committee; and shall the district collect property tax revenue previously approved by the voters notwithstanding any mill levy limitation; and shall the district be authorized to collect, retain and spend all revenues from such taxes and the earnings from the investment of such revenues as a voter approved revenue change?*

# Neither proposal receives majority support from the voters. Keep in mind that the MLO proposals in 2018 were over 60% support.

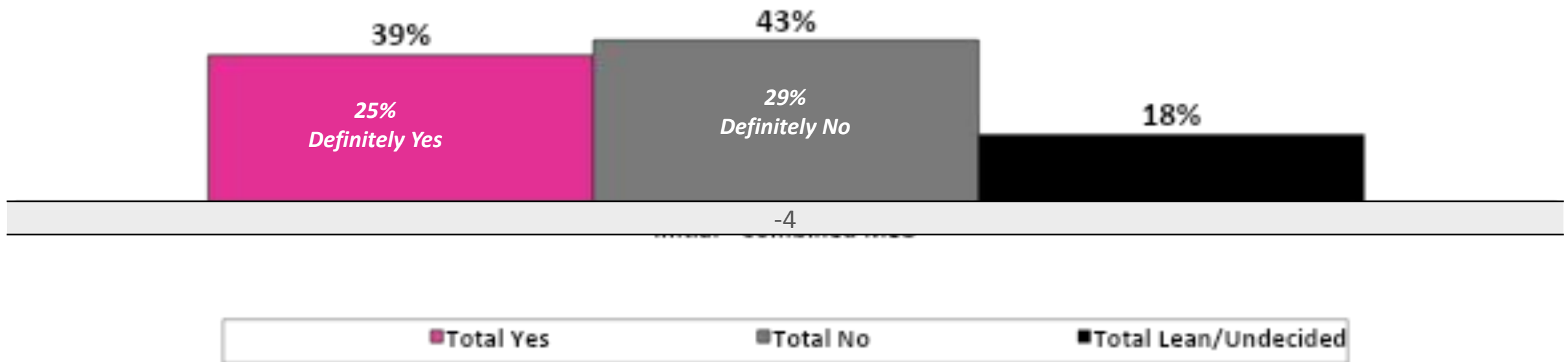


There may be a couple of proposals on the ballot in November regarding funding for schools. For each one, please indicate if the election was being held today and the following proposal was on the ballot, would you vote yes or no on the following question.

\*Sample A, N=200 \*\*Sample B, N=200

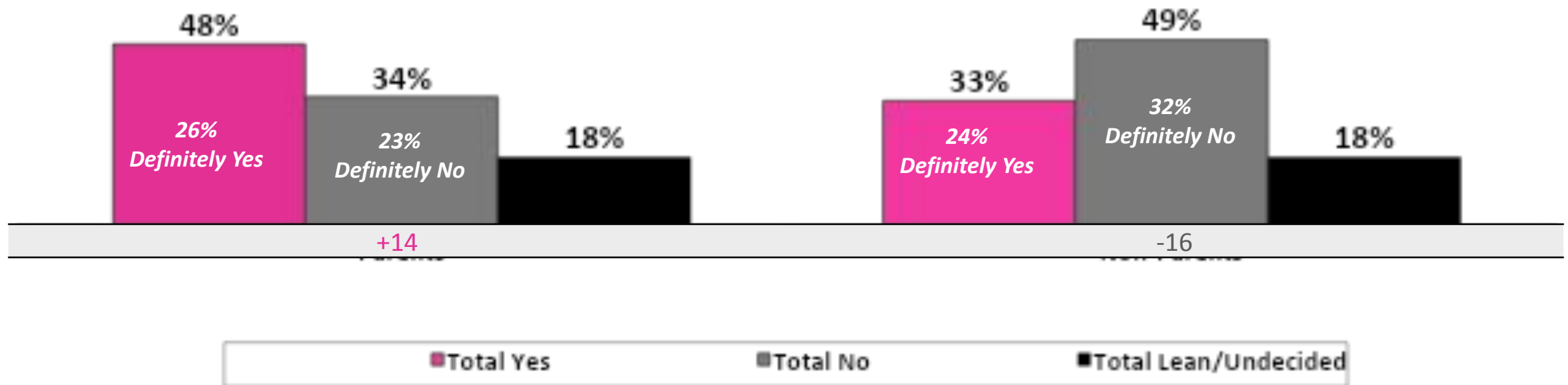


**Given there is little difference in support, we combined the two questions in order to have greater confidence in examining sub-groups.**



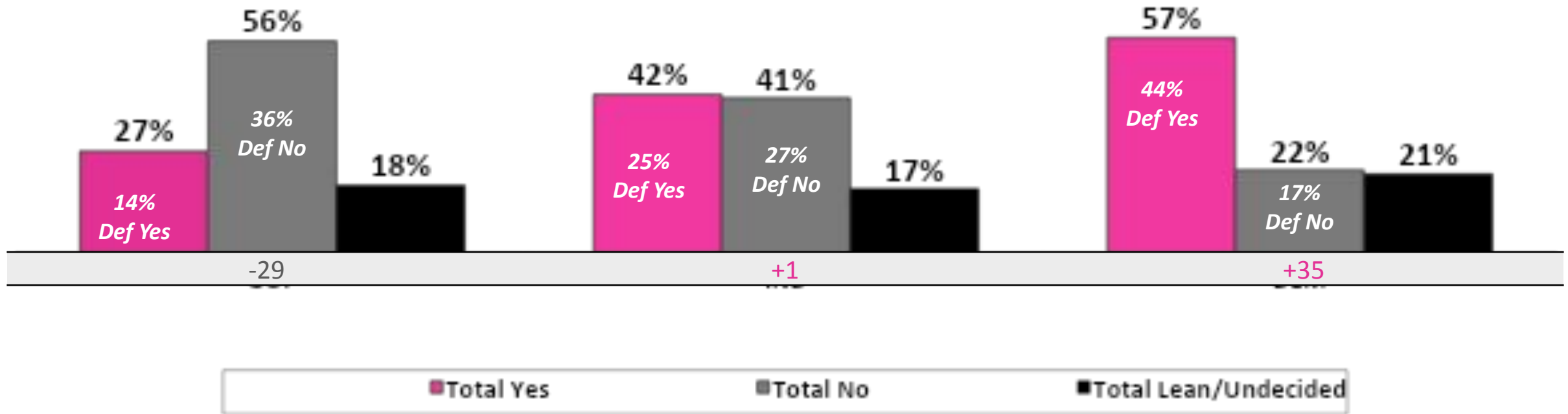
*There may be a couple of proposals on the ballot in November regarding funding for schools. For each one, please indicate if the election was being held today and the following proposal was on the ballot, would you vote yes or no on the following question.*

# Parents are much more supportive on the initial combined MLO ballot than those without children in their home.



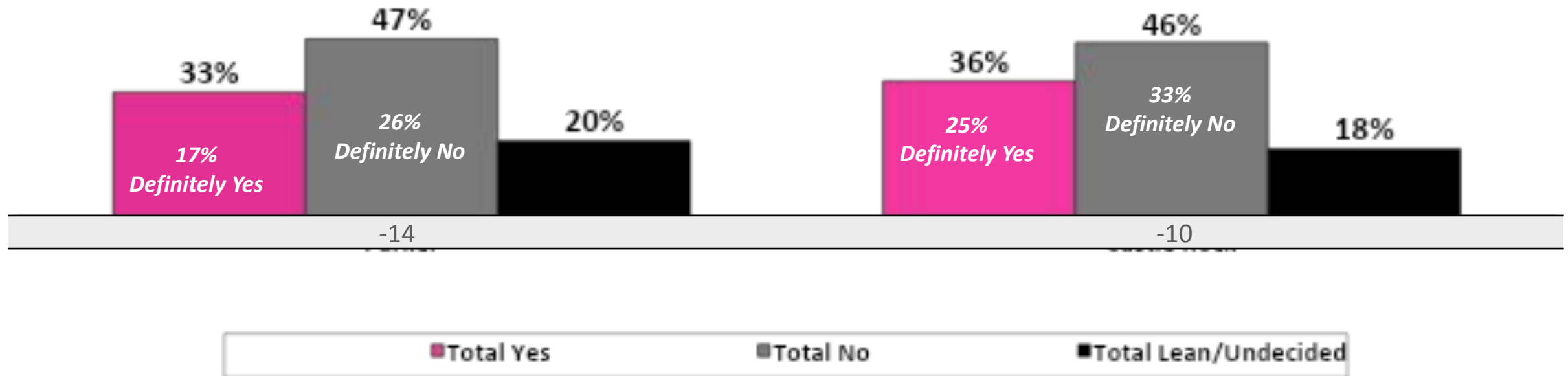
*There may be a couple of proposals on the ballot in November regarding funding for schools. For each one, please indicate if the election was being held today and the following proposal was on the ballot, would you vote yes or no on the following question.*

# Most Democrats vote in favor of the combined MLO proposal, while most Republicans vote against it.



*There may be a couple of proposals on the ballot in November regarding funding for schools. For each one, please indicate if the election was being held today and the following proposal was on the ballot, would you vote yes or no on the following question.*

# Among major communities, the combined MLO proposal is below the 50% threshold.



*There may be a couple of proposals on the ballot in November regarding funding for schools. For each one, please indicate if the election was being held today and the following proposal was on the ballot, would you vote yes or no on the following question.*

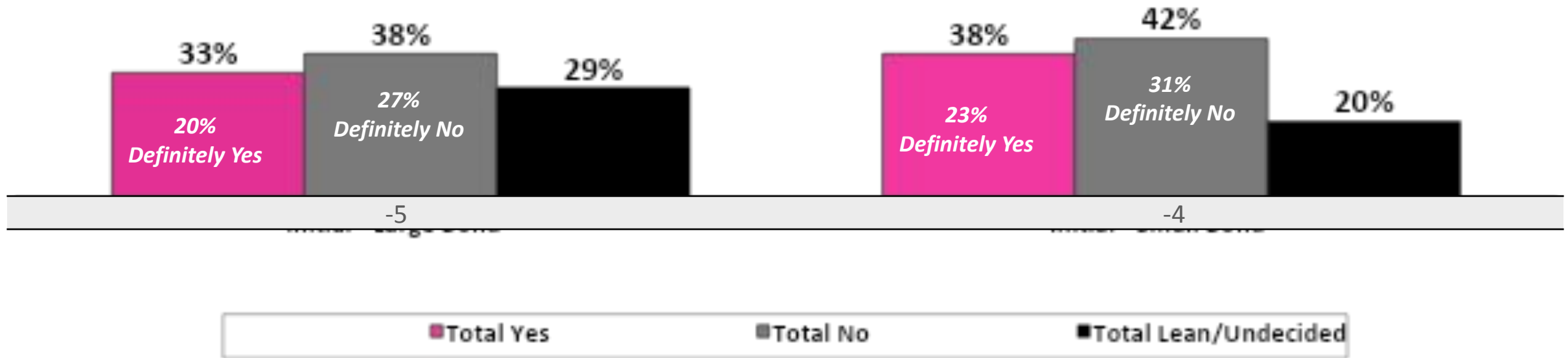
## On the bond proposal, we also split the sample asking ½ about a “smaller” amount and ½ a “larger” amount, as follows:

*Shall Douglas County School District debt be increased \$450/250 million, with a repayment cost of \$775.4/416.1 million, and shall district taxes be increased not more than \$49.7/32.6 million annually to pay such debt which is not expected to require any increase in the district’s current debt service mill levy of 8.054 mills, all for the purposes of...*

- Updating and repairing school and other buildings to continue providing safe, efficient, quality learning environments for students and teachers.*
- Constructing new neighborhood elementary schools and creating additions to some existing middle schools to accommodate more students and reduce crowding at existing schools.*

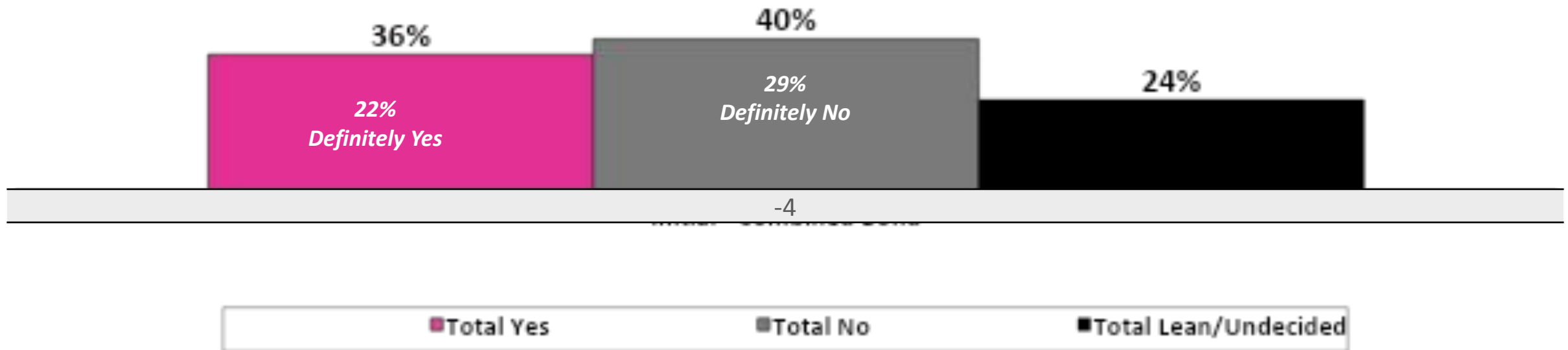
*and for acquiring, constructing or improving any capital assets that the district is authorized by law to own provided that the district will be subject to an annual independent audit published on the district’s website and expenditures will be subject to review by a board appointed citizens oversight committee; and shall the mill levy be imposed in any year in an amount sufficient to pay the principal of, premium, if any, and interest on such debt or any refunding debt (or to create a reserve for such payment) provided that any revenue produced by such mill levy shall not exceed \$32.6 million annually such debt to be evidenced by the issuance of general obligation bonds to be sold in one series or more, for a price above or below the principal amount of such series, on terms and conditions and with such maturities as permitted by law, including provisions for redemption of the bonds prior to maturity with or without payment of the premium of not to exceed three percent?*

# More voters are supportive of the small bond proposal than the large bond proposal, but a plurality would still vote against it.



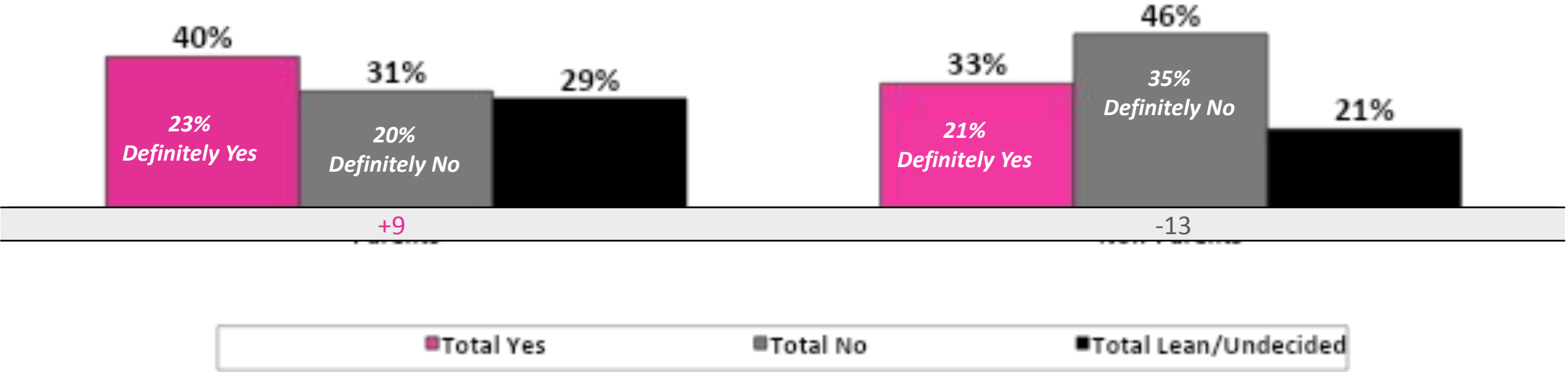
The next proposal would read as follows –  
\*Sample A, N=200 \*\*Sample B, N=200

Again, given the similar responses, we combined the bond proposal to better examine sub-groups.



*The next proposal would read as follows –*

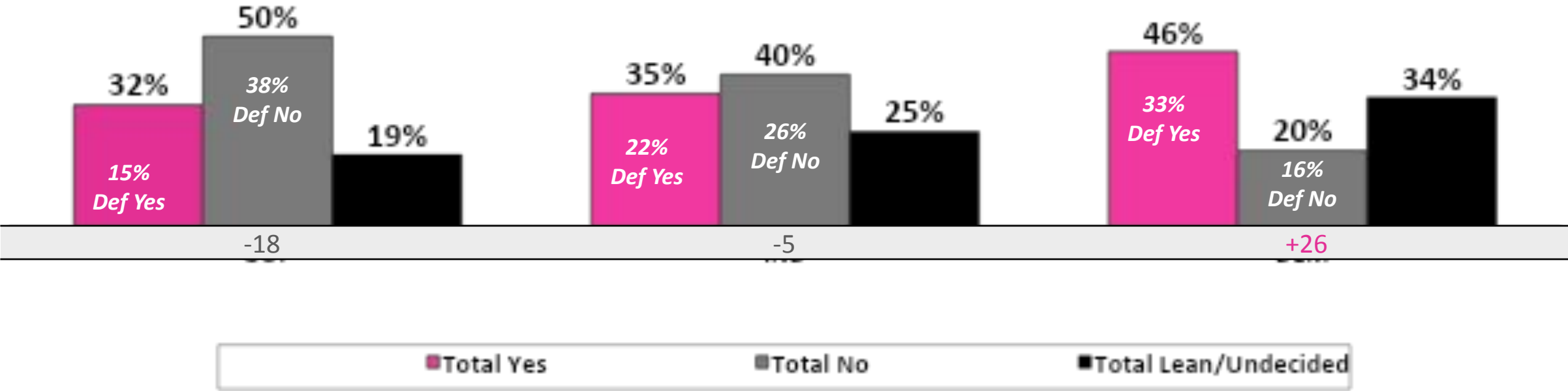
# Parents are slightly more likely to support the combined bond proposal, but they are well below the critical 50% threshold.



The next proposal would read as follows –

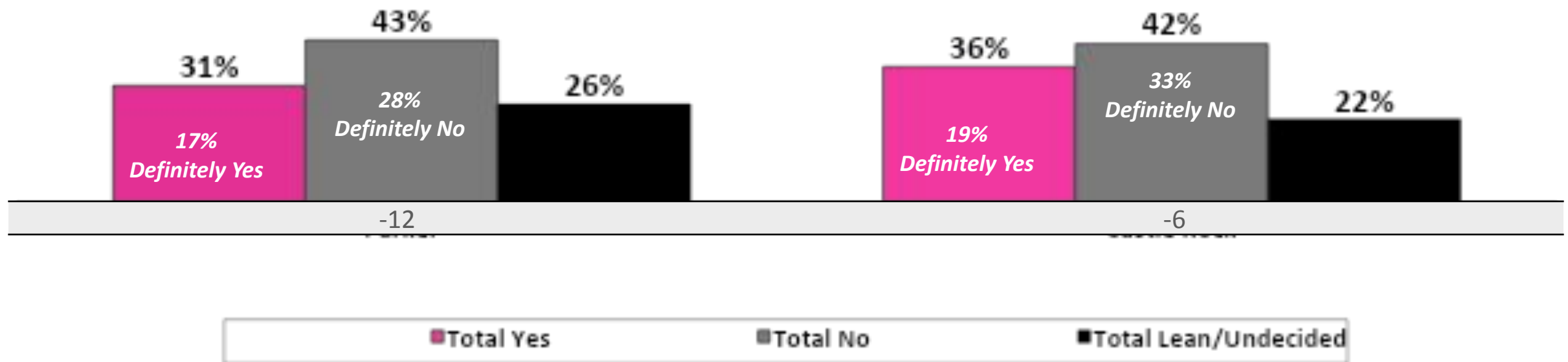


# Irrespective of party, the bond proposal falls below the 50% mark.



The next proposal would read as follows –

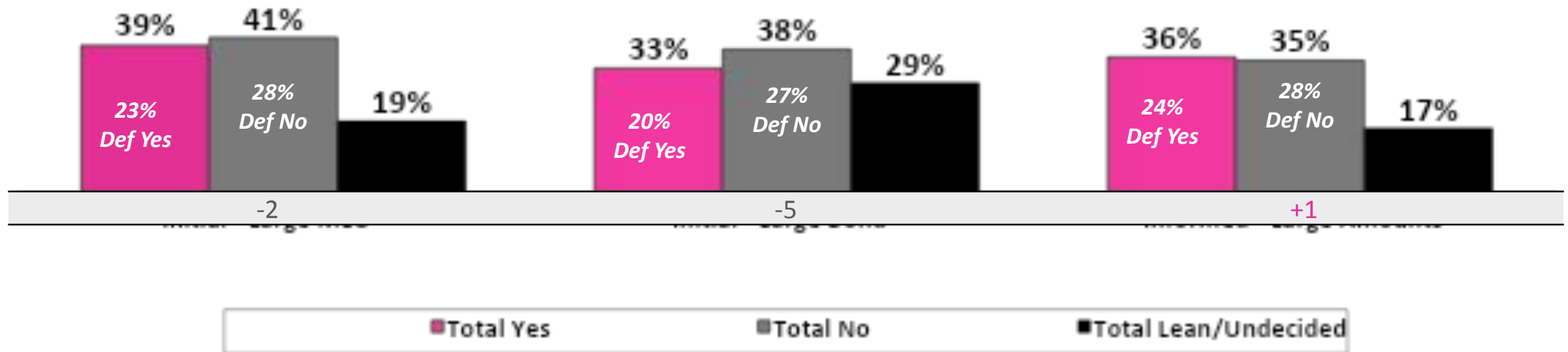
# Even in some communities that would benefit from a new school, voters there reject the bond proposal.



The next proposal would read as follows –

# When voters hear the cost impact of the larger property tax increases, voters continue to be divided.

*And, if voters approve BOTH of these measures, it would raise property taxes by approximately \$295 dollars per year for the average homeowner in the district with a home value of \$559,000 thousand dollars.*

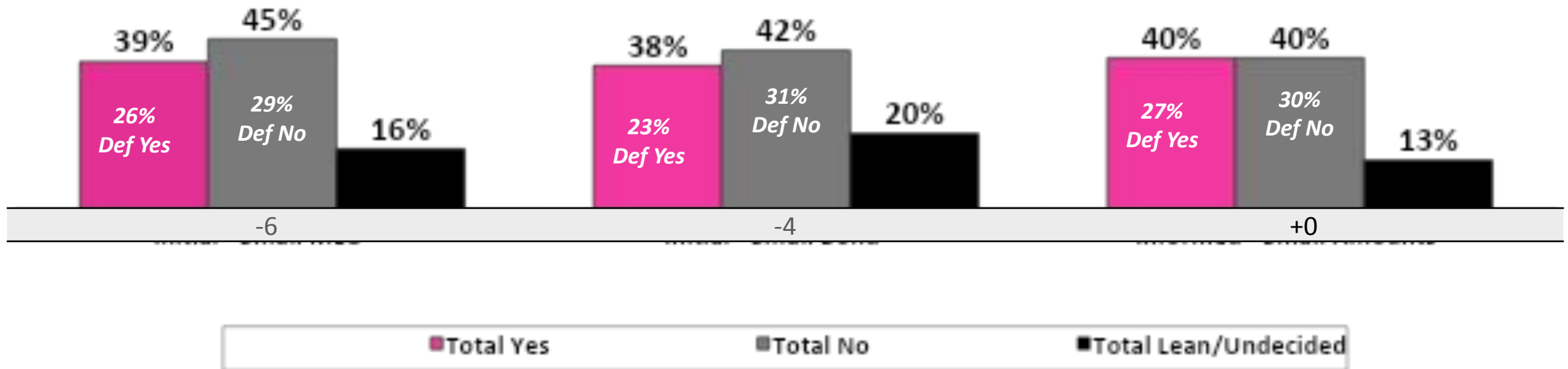


Knowing that, would you then vote Yes in support of these measures or vote No against them?

\*Sample A, N=200

# Similarly, voters who heard the smaller MLO and bond, are still split on supporting the proposals after hearing the cost impact for homeowners.

*And, if voters approve BOTH of these measures, it would raise property taxes by approximately \$176 dollars per year for the average homeowner in the district with a home value of \$559,000 hundred thousand dollars.*



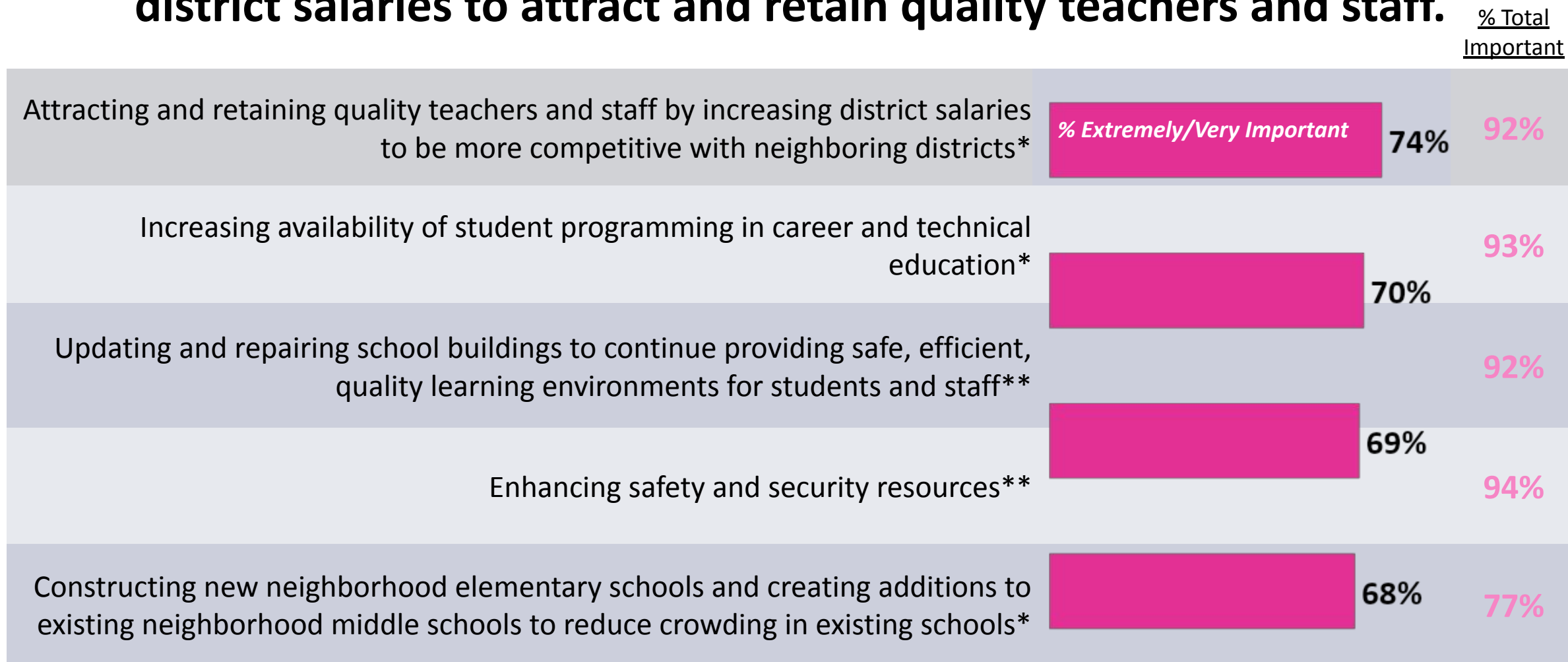
*Knowing that, would you then vote Yes in support of these measures or vote No against them?*

*\*\*Sample B, N=200*



# **Communicating More about the Ballot Proposals**

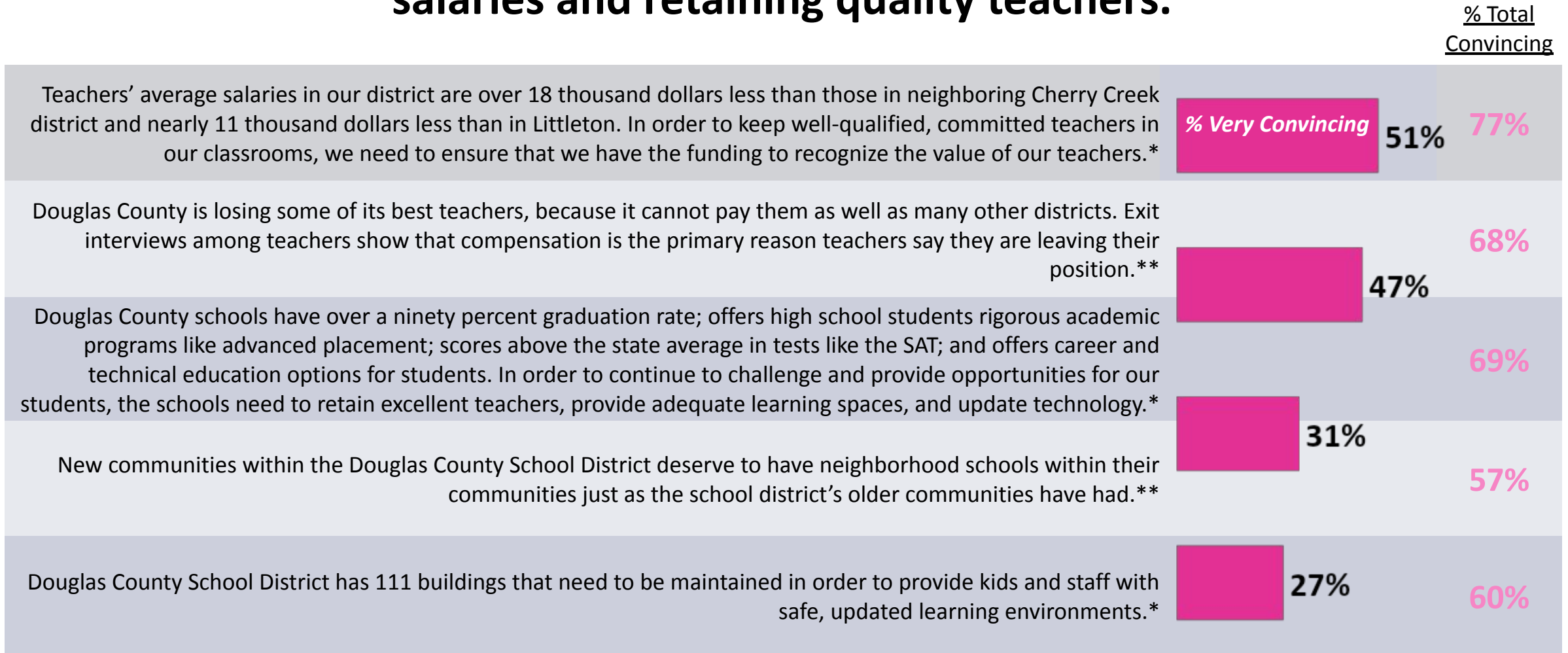
# Nearly three-in-four voters say it is extremely or very important to increase district salaries to attract and retain quality teachers and staff.



*I'm going to read you some specific things which MIGHT be funded if the proposals are placed on the ballot in the future. Keeping in mind that it is difficult for everything to be equally important, please tell me how important each one of these is to you personally. Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not very important to ensure funding is dedicated to that purpose?*

*\*Sample A, N=200 \*\*Sample B, N=200*

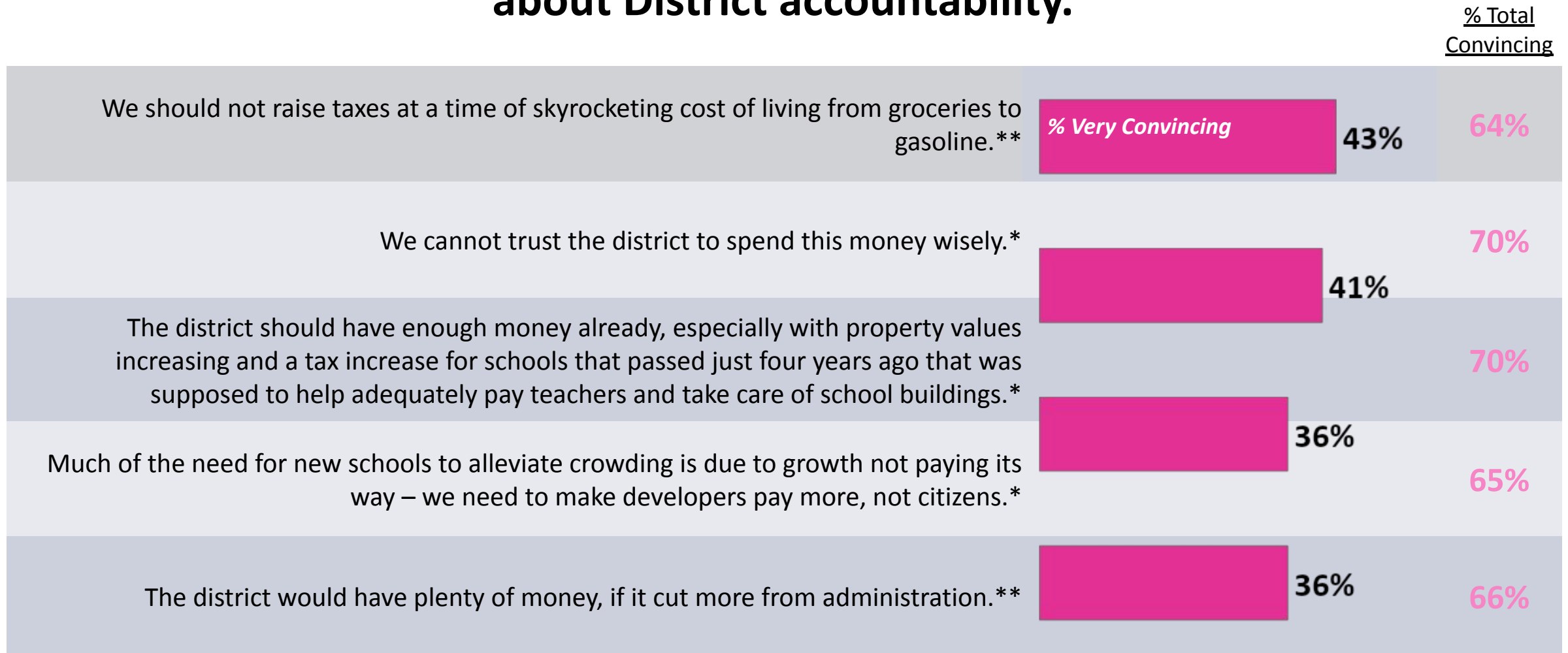
# The strongest rationales in support of the funding proposals focus on teacher salaries and retaining quality teachers.



I am going to read you some reasons some people say we should vote YES in favor of the funding proposals for all Douglas County public schools. After I read each one, please tell me whether that statement is very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not at all convincing as a reason to vote YES, IN FAVOR OF these possible school funding measures...

\*Sample A, N=200 \*\*Sample B, N=200

# The two strongest hesitations are raising taxes during inflation, and concern about District accountability.

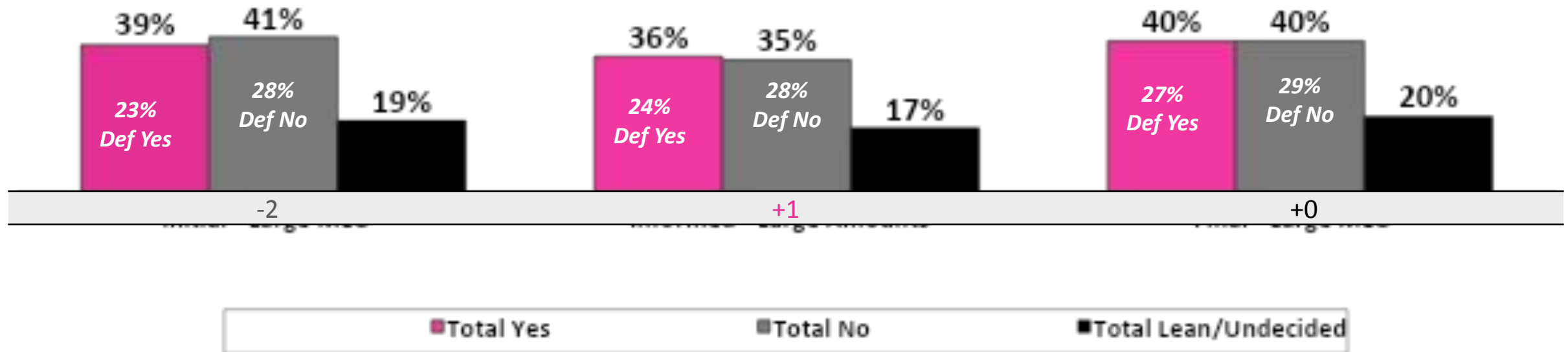


I am going to read you some reasons why some people say they will vote No AGAINST these funding proposals for all Douglas County public schools. After I read each one, please tell me whether that statement is very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing or not at all convincing as a reason to vote NO, AGAINST the issue...

\*Sample A, N=200 \*\*Sample B, N=200



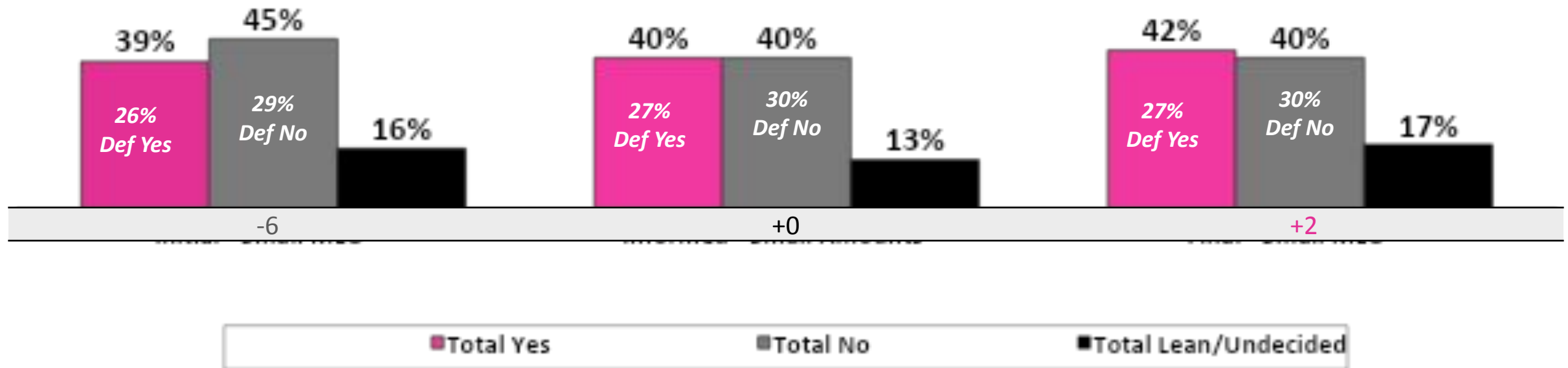
After having heard more about the proposals, we asked the ballot questions again. For the larger MLO amounts, there is really no movement.



After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –

\*Sample A, N=200

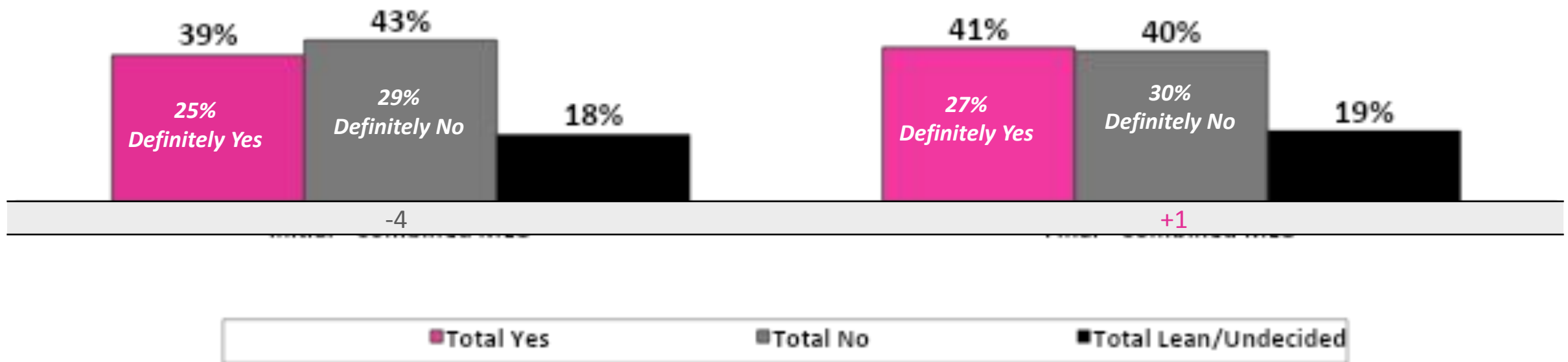
# The final small MLO ballot also shifts only slightly.



After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –

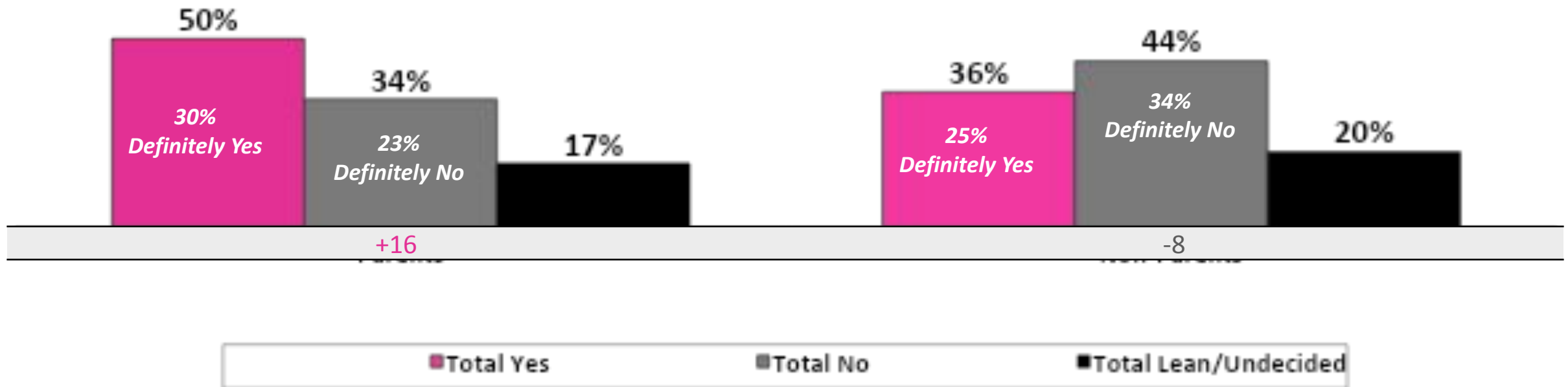
\*\*Sample B, N=200

# Support for the proposals slightly increases on the final combined MLO ballot.



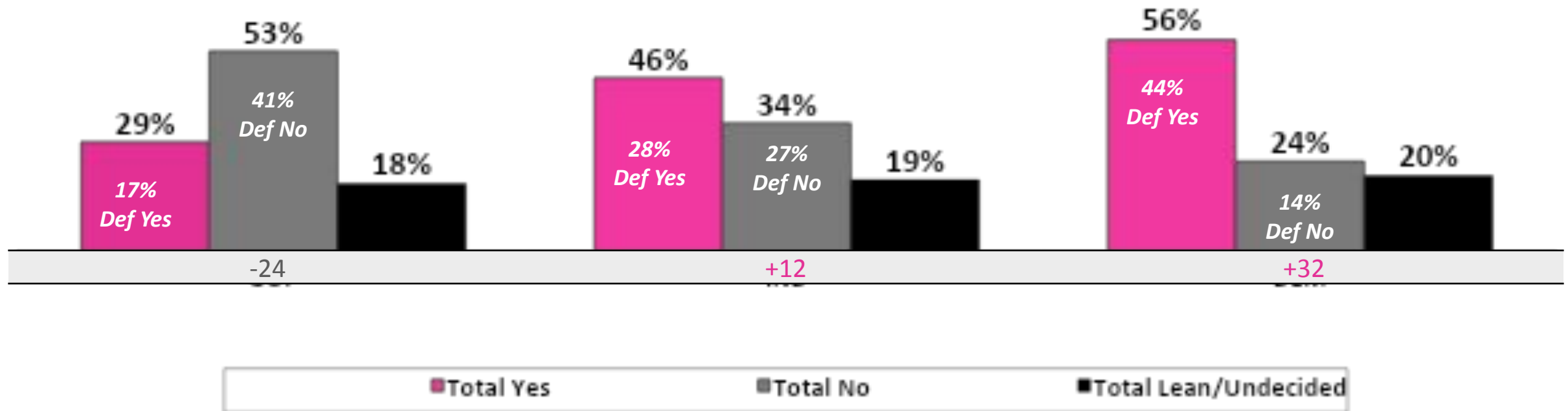
*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*

# Half of parents support the MLO proposals after having heard more about it.



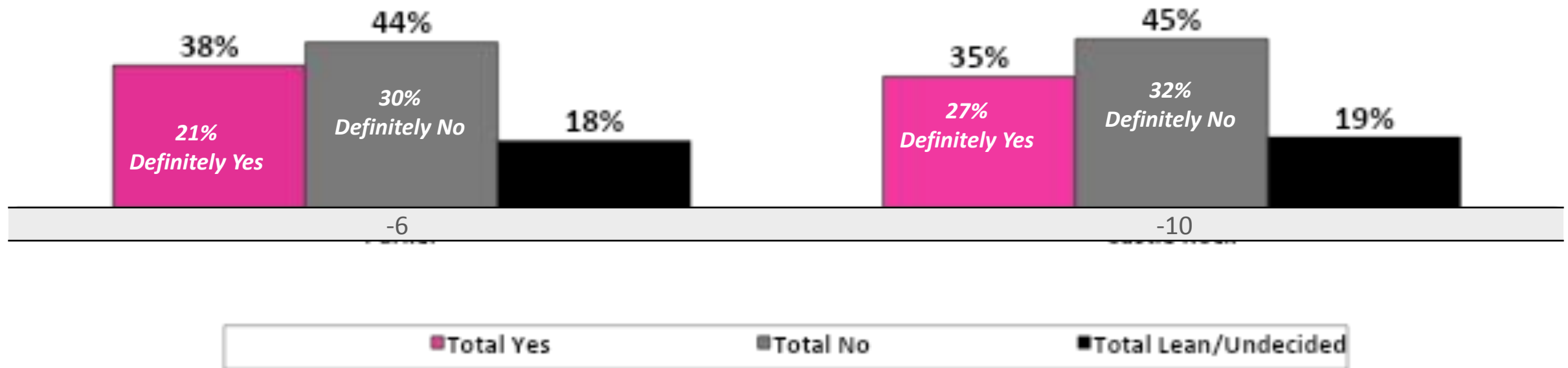
*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*

# Democrats and Independents are more likely to support the proposals on the final combined MLO ballot than oppose them.



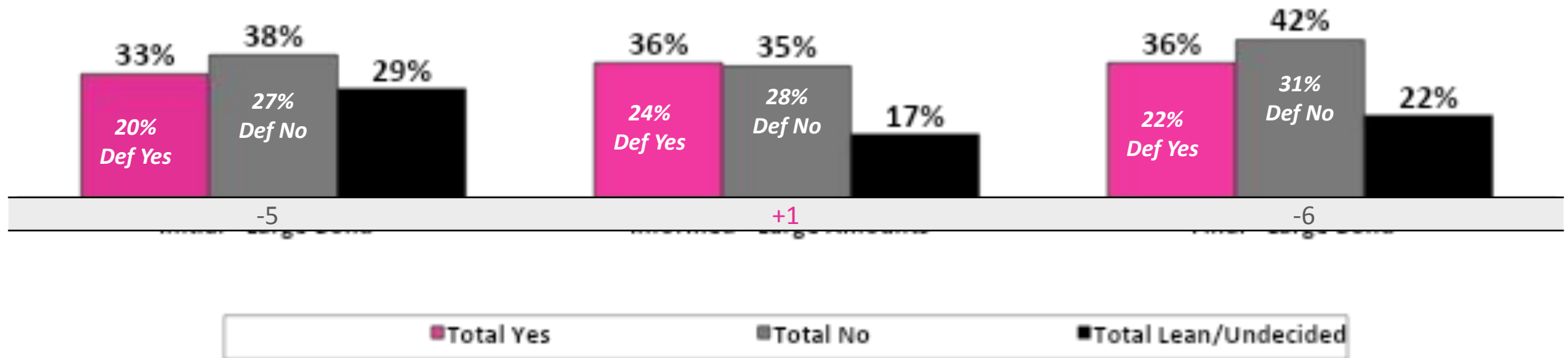
*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*

# Support for and opposition to the MLO proposals is still well below 50% in most of the major communities.



*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*

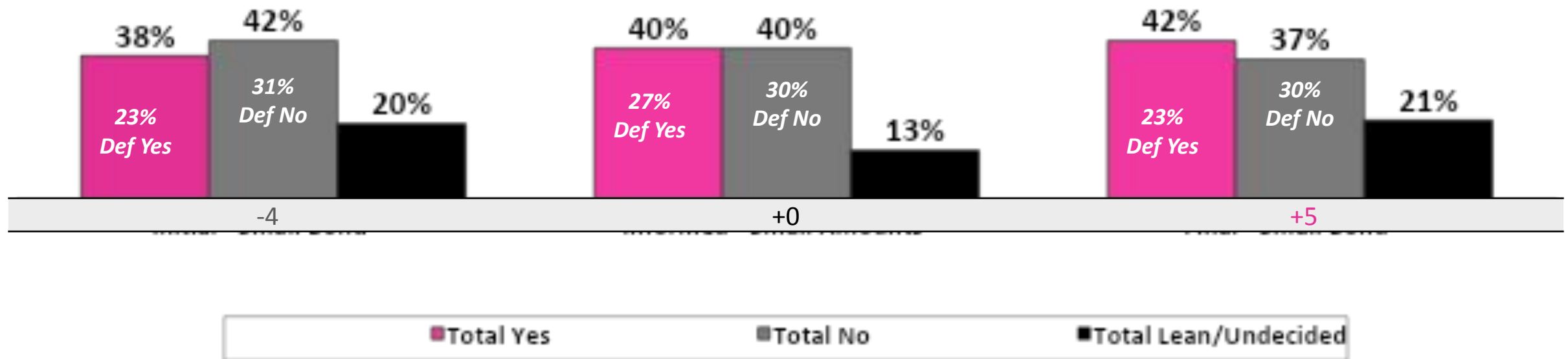
# Looking at the bond proposals, on the initial large bond ballot, support remains low.



After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –

\*Sample A, N=200

# The “small” bond ballot remains well below 50% threshold after voters hear more as well.

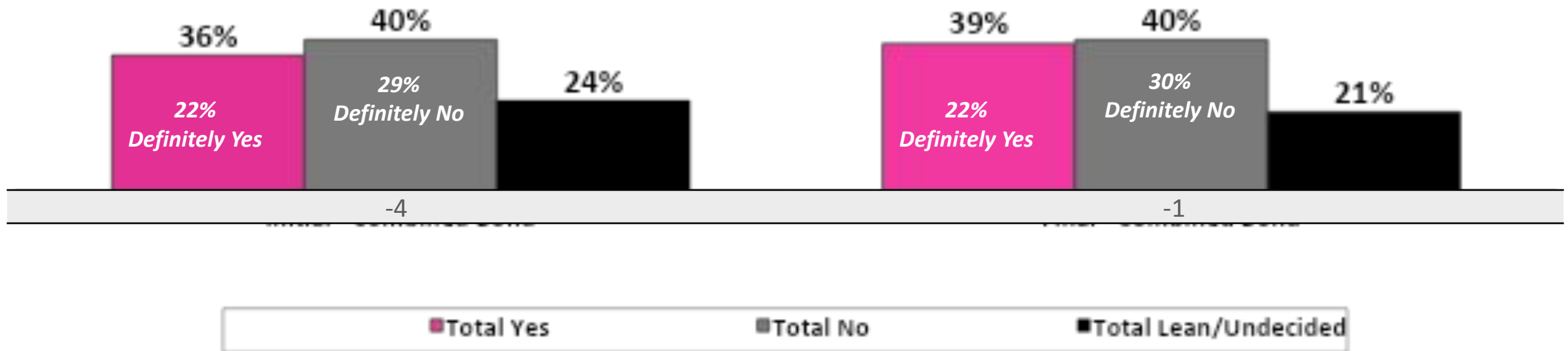


After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –

\*\*Sample B, N=200

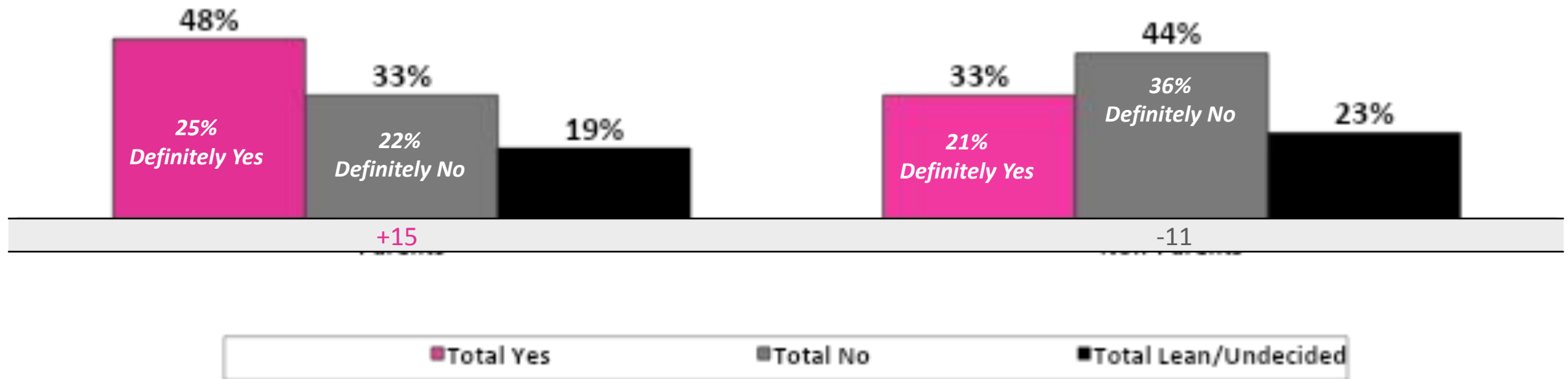


# The final combined bond ballot does not change very much from the initial combined bond ballot; voters are split.



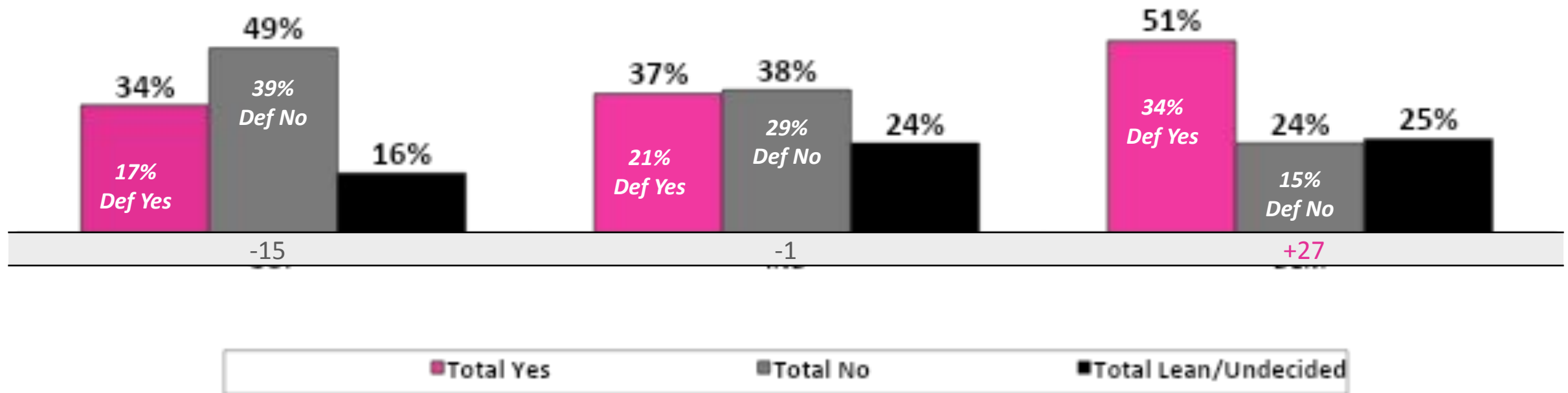
*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*

# Parents are more likely to support the proposals on the final combined bond ballot.



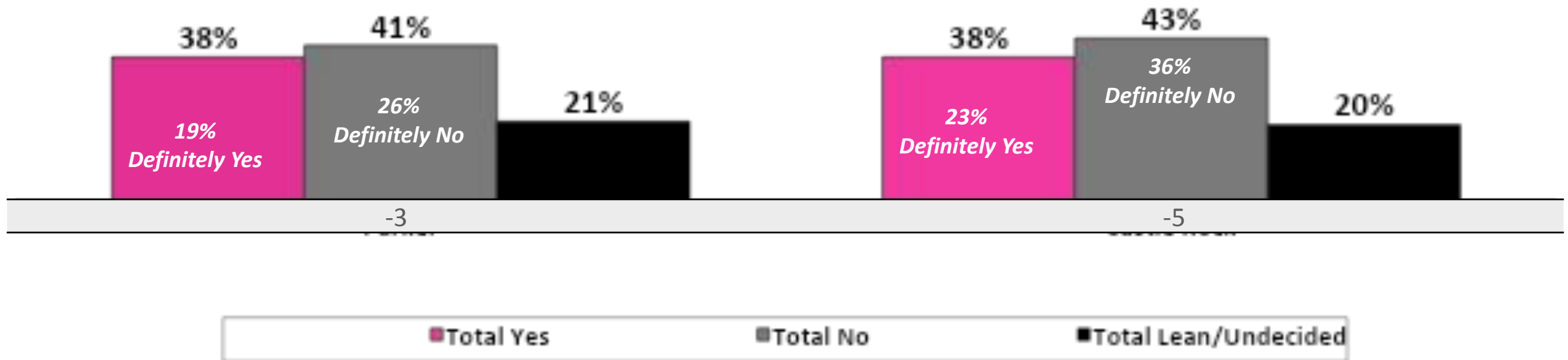
*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*

# More Democrats offer support on the final combined bond ballot.



*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*

# Support for the proposals on the combined final bond ballot is very similar in Parker and Castle Rock.



*After having heard more about this, please consider again the proposals we discussed –*



# The Bottom Line

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- None of the proposals can be considered viable at this time. All four iterations of the MLO/bond are well below the 50% threshold. Neither the bond nor the MLO request receive majority support with most demographic, partisan or geographic key sub-groups.
- Voters do feel it is important to increase teachers' salaries, but are less inclined to support construction of new schools – much as we saw in 2018. However, in neither case does providing a rationale for increasing funding move voters significantly. This is not the right time to move forward with a funding request to the voters.
- Overall, views of the District have deteriorated in the last four years. Voters are paying significant attention to news from the District, particularly compared to eight years ago.



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