

VOTER OPINION SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT

PREPARED FOR THE
CITY OF SAN MATEO



JUNE 3, 2020



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INTRODUCTION

Encompassing 15.9 square miles in the San Francisco Bay Area, the City of San Mateo was incorporated in 1894 and is currently home to an estimated 104,570 residents.¹ The City's dedicated team of full-time and part-time employees provides a full suite of services to residents and local businesses.

Over the past decade, the City of San Mateo's revenues have not kept pace with the growing costs associated with providing municipal services and facilities. Although the City has been proactive in responding to this challenge by reducing costs where feasible and through effective financial management practices, the practical reality is that existing revenues simply do not support the high quality services and facilities that residents have come to expect. Unfortunately, the economic fallout of the coronavirus in recent months has served to deepen this disparity, with the City's budget deficit forecast to reach \$7 million next year. To provide some of the funding required to maintain city services and facilities including police patrols and crime prevention, fire, paramedic, and 911 emergency response, street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services, the City of San Mateo is considering an increase to the transient occupancy tax (TOT) that is paid by guests of hotels, motels, and short-term rentals.

MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH The primary purpose of this survey was to produce an unbiased, statistically reliable evaluation of voters' interest in supporting a local transient occupancy tax increase to provide the funding noted above. Additionally, should the City decide to move forward with a measure, the data provide guidance as to how to structure the measure so it is consistent with the community's priorities and expressed needs. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- Gauge current support for enacting a TOT increase measure to provide funding for municipal services and facilities;
- Identify the types of services and projects that voters are most interested in funding, should the measure pass;
- Expose voters to arguments in favor of, and against, the proposed tax measure to assess how information affects support for the measure; and
- Estimate support for the measure once voters are presented with the types of information they will likely be exposed to during an election cycle.

It is important to note at the outset that voters' opinions about tax measures are often somewhat fluid, especially when the amount of information they initially have about a measure is limited. How voters think and feel about a measure today may not be the same way they think and feel once they have had a chance to hear more information about the measure during the election cycle. Accordingly, to accurately assess the feasibility of establishing a TOT increase to fund municipal services and facilities, it was important that in addition to measuring *current* opinions about the measure, the survey expose respondents to the types of information voters are likely to encounter during an election cycle, including arguments in favor of (Question 6) and opposed

1. State of California, Department of Finance, January 2019.

to (Question 8) the measure, and gauge how this type of information ultimately impacts their voting decision.

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY For a full discussion of the research methods and techniques used in this study, turn to *Methodology* on page 27. In brief, the survey was administered to a random sample of 851 registered voters in the City of San Mateo who are likely to participate in the November 2020 election. The survey followed a mixed-method design that employed multiple recruiting methods (telephone and email) and multiple data collection methods (telephone and online). Administered in English and Spanish between May 19 and May 29, 2020, the average interview lasted 17 minutes.

ORGANIZATION OF REPORT This report is designed to meet the needs of readers who prefer a summary of the findings as well as those who are interested in the details of the results. For those who seek an overview of the findings, the sections titled *Just the Facts* and *Conclusions* are for you. They provide a summary of the most important factual findings of the survey in bullet-point format and a discussion of their implications. For the interested reader, this section is followed by a more detailed question-by-question discussion of the results from the survey by topic area (see *Table of Contents*), as well as a description of the methodology employed for collecting and analyzing the data. And, for the truly ambitious reader, the questionnaire used for the interviews is contained at the back of this report (see *Questionnaire & Toplines* on page 29) and a complete set of crosstabulations for the survey results is contained in Appendix A.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS True North thanks the City of San Mateo for the opportunity to assist the City in this important effort. The collective expertise, local knowledge, and insight provided by City staff improved the overall quality of the research presented here.

DISCLAIMER The statements and conclusions in this report are those of the authors (Dr. Timothy McLarney and Richard Sarles) at True North Research, Inc. and not necessarily those of the City of San Mateo. Any errors and omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

ABOUT TRUE NORTH True North is a full-service survey research firm that is dedicated to providing public agencies with a clear understanding of the values, perceptions, priorities, and opinions of their residents and voters. Through designing and implementing scientific surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews, as well as expert interpretation of the findings, True North helps its clients to move with confidence when making strategic decisions in a variety of areas—such as planning, policy evaluation, performance management, establishing fiscal priorities, passing revenue measures, and developing effective public information campaigns.

During their careers, Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles have designed and conducted over 1,000 survey research studies for public agencies, including more than 400 revenue measure feasibility studies. Of the measures that have gone to ballot based on Dr. McLarney’s recommendation, 95% have been successful. In total, the research that Dr. McLarney has conducted has led to over \$33 billion in successful local revenue measures.



JUST THE FACTS

The following section is an outline of the main factual findings from the survey. For the reader's convenience, we have organized the findings according to the section titles used in the body of this report. Thus, if you would like to learn more about a particular finding, simply turn to the appropriate report section.

IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES

- When asked to identify the biggest issue facing San Mateo that they would like the City to address, approximately 16% of respondents could not think of an important issue or indicated that there are currently no issues facing San Mateo—that everything is fine.
- Among those who provided a specific issue, the top responses were related to traffic congestion (23%), affordability of housing (22%), growth and development (13%), and maintenance/repair of infrastructure, streets, and/or sidewalks (10%).
- Given the timing of the survey, it is noteworthy that just 6% of respondents mentioned COVID-19 or coronavirus as the biggest issue facing San Mateo that they would like the City to address.

INITIAL BALLOT TEST

- With only the information provided in the ballot language, 64% of likely November 2020 voters surveyed indicated that they would support the proposed 2% TOT increase, whereas 23% stated that they would oppose the measure and 13% were unsure or unwilling to share their vote choice.
- When it was made clear that the proposed measure will *not* raise taxes for residents of San Mateo—a TOT is paid by visitors who rent a room at a hotel, motel, or vacation rental in the City—and that the measure would increase the current 12% rate to 14%, support for the TOT measure increased to 72%, with 21% opposed and 7% unsure or unwilling to share their opinion.

PROJECTS & SERVICES

When presented with a list of 10 services that could be funded by the TOT measure, voters were most interested in using the money to:

- Maintain streets and repair potholes
- Provide fire protection and emergency medical services
- Maintain quick responses to 911 emergencies
- Maintain parks and recreation facilities including courts, fields and playgrounds
- Prepare for public health emergencies like coronavirus, as well as wildfires, natural disasters, and other large-scale emergencies

POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

When presented with arguments in favor of the measure, voters found the following arguments to be the most persuasive:

- *Fast emergency response times for 911 calls are critical for saving lives. This measure will help ensure that we have enough police officers, firefighters, and paramedics to respond quickly to 911 emergencies.*
- *The funds raised by this measure will help the City keep up with basic repairs and maintenance to streets, infrastructure, and public facilities. If we don't take care of it now, it will be a lot more expensive to repair in the future.*
- *This measure will NOT raise your taxes as a resident of San Mateo. It applies only to visitors who stay in local hotels or short-term vacation rentals.*

INTERIM BALLOT TEST

- After learning more about the services that could be funded, as well as hearing arguments in favor of the measure, overall support among likely November 2020 voters increased to 74%, with 39% of voters indicating that they would *definitely* vote yes on the measure. Approximately 19% of respondents opposed the measure at this point in the survey, and an additional 7% were unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

Of the arguments in opposition to the measure, voters found the following arguments to be the most persuasive:

- *There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent. The City Council can use it for whatever they want. The City government can't be trusted with our tax dollars.*
- *Passing this tax will hurt our local hotels, businesses, and our economy.*
- *City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions and benefits - that's the problem. The City needs to tighten its belt before asking us to raise taxes.*

FINAL BALLOT TEST

- After providing respondents with the wording of the proposed measure, a list of services that could be funded by the measure, as well as arguments in favor of and against the proposal, support for the transient occupancy tax increase was found among 72% of likely November 2020 voters, with 34% indicating that they would *definitely* support the measure. Approximately one-in-five respondents (20%) were opposed to the measure at the Final Ballot Test, and 8% remained unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

RELEVANT ATTITUDES

- Eighty percent (80%) of San Mateo voters surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with the City's overall efforts to provide municipal services, with 25% saying they were very satisfied and 55% somewhat satisfied. Approximately 16% reported that they were dissatisfied with the City's overall performance, and 4% were unsure or unwilling to state their opinion

- When asked to rate the job the City has done in managing its financial resources, opinions were mixed with four-in-ten respondents rating the City's performance in this respect as excellent (6%) or good (35%), 25% rating it fair, 9% rating it poor or very poor, and one-quarter confiding they were not sure (23%) or were not inclined to answer the question (2%).
- When asked about the expectations for the economy six months into the future, San Mateo voters leaned toward pessimism with 45% anticipating the economy will be worse than today, 22% expecting it to be about the same as today, and 30% anticipating it will be better than today's economy.



CONCLUSIONS

The bulk of this report is devoted to conveying the details of the study findings. In this section, however, we attempt to ‘see the forest through the trees’ and note how the collective results of the survey answer the key questions that motivated the research. The following conclusions are based on True North’s interpretations of the survey results and the firm’s collective experience conducting revenue measure studies for public agencies throughout the State.

Are voters supportive of a TOT increase to maintain the quality of city services?

Yes. Voters have a high opinion of the quality of life in San Mateo, they value the services they receive from the City, and they are interested in maintaining the quality of these services. Together, these sentiments translate into solid *natural* support (64%) for increasing the City’s transient occupancy tax by 2% (to 14%) to fund general city services such as police patrols and crime prevention, fire, paramedic, and 911 emergency response, street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services.

The results of this study indicate that, if structured appropriately and combined with an effective public outreach/education effort and a solid independent campaign, the proposed TOT measure has an excellent chance of passage if placed on the November 2020 ballot.

Having stated that a TOT measure is feasible, it is important to note that the measure’s prospects will be shaped by external factors and that a recommendation to place the measure on the November 2020 ballot comes with several qualifications and conditions. Indeed, although the results are promising, all revenue measures must overcome challenges prior to being successful. The proposed measure is no exception. The following paragraphs discuss some of the challenges and the next steps that True North recommends.

Which projects and services do San Mateo voters view as priorities?

A general tax is “any tax imposed for general governmental purposes”² and is distinguished from a special tax in that the funds raised by a general tax are not earmarked for a specific purpose(s). Thus, a general tax provides a municipality with a great deal of flexibility with respect to what is funded by the measure on a year-to-year basis.

Although the San Mateo City Council would have the discretion to decide how to spend the revenues, the survey results indicate that San Mateo voters are primarily interested in using the proceeds to fund public works and public safety. Specifically, voters most strongly favored using measure proceeds to maintain streets and repair potholes, provide fire protection and emergency medical services, maintain quick responses to 911 emergencies, maintain parks and recreation facilities including courts, fields and playgrounds, and prepare for public health emergen-

2. Section 1, Article XIII C, California Constitution.

cies like coronavirus, as well as wildfires, natural disasters, and other large-scale emergencies.

How might a public information campaign affect support for the proposed measure?

As noted in the body of this report, individuals' opinions about revenue measures are often not rigid, especially when the amount of information presented to the public on a measure has been limited. Thus, in addition to measuring current support for the measure, one of the goals of this study was to explore how the introduction of additional information about the measure may affect voters' opinions about the proposal.

It is clear from the survey results that voters' opinions about the proposed TOT measure are sensitive to the nature, and amount, of information they have about the measure. Clarifications about how a transient occupancy tax works, information about the specific services and infrastructure improvements that could be funded by the measure, as well as arguments in favor of the measure were found by many voters to be compelling reasons to support the proposed TOT—effectively increasing support for the measure to 74% at the Interim Ballot Test. However, voters also exhibited some sensitivity to opposition arguments, and there is a risk they could be swayed by divisive and hyper-partisan campaigning during the November election cycle. Accordingly, one of the keys to building and *sustaining* support for the proposed measure will be the presence of an effective, well-organized public outreach effort and a separate, independent campaign that focuses on the need for the measure as well as the many benefits that it will bring.

How might changes to the economic or political climate alter support for the measure?

A survey is a snapshot in time—which means the results of this study and the conclusions noted above must be viewed in light of the *current* economic and political climates. On the one hand, this should provide some reassurances to the City that a measure is feasible. Even with the present levels of uncertainty and concern regarding COVID-19 and the trajectory of the economy, a supermajority of voters in San Mateo were supportive of the proposed TOT measure to maintain city services. Their support for a TOT increase also weathered exposure to negative arguments about the measure, taxes, and the economy.

On the other hand, the months leading up to the November 2020 election are likely to be punctuated with dramatic events on the public health, economic, and political fronts. Exactly how these events unfold and may shape voters' opinions remains to be seen. Should the economy and/or political climate improve, support for the measure could increase. Conversely, negative economic and/or political developments (including devolving into a hyper-partisan environment), could dampen support for the measure below what was recorded in this study.

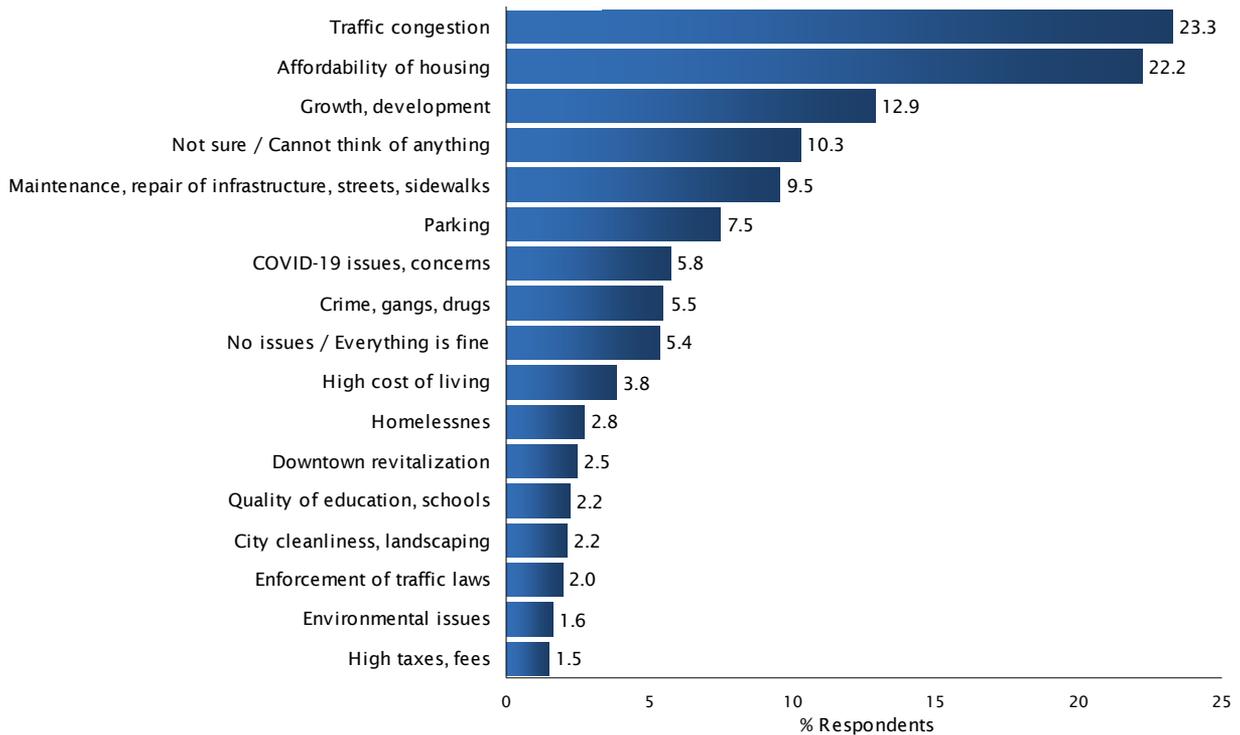
IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES

The first substantive question of the survey asked respondents to identify the biggest issue facing San Mateo today that they would like the City to address. Question 2 was presented in an open-ended manner, allowing respondents the opportunity to mention any issue that came to mind without being prompted by or restricted to a particular list of issues. True North later reviewed the verbatim responses and grouped them into the categories shown in Figure 1.

Approximately 16% of respondents could not think of an important issue or indicated that there are currently no issues facing San Mateo—that everything is fine. Among those who provided a specific issue, the top responses were related to traffic congestion (23%), affordability of housing (22%), growth and development (13%), and maintenance/repair of infrastructure, streets, and/or sidewalks (10%). Given the timing of the survey, it is noteworthy that just 6% of respondents mentioned COVID-19 or coronavirus as the biggest issue facing San Mateo that they would like the City to address.

Question 2 *What would you say is the biggest issue facing San Mateo that you would like the City to address?*

FIGURE 1 BIGGEST ISSUE FACING CITY



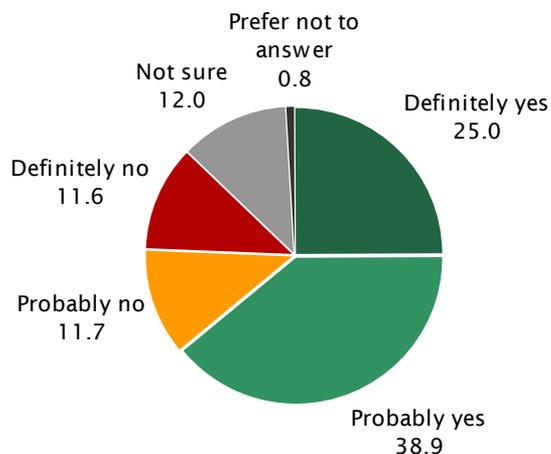
INITIAL BALLOT TEST

The primary research objective of this survey was to estimate voters' support for increasing the City's transient occupancy tax by 2% (to 14%) to fund general city services such as police patrols and crime prevention, fire, paramedic, and 911 emergency response, street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services. To this end, Question 3 was designed to take an early assessment of voters' support for the proposed measure.

The motivation for placing Question 3 near the front of the survey is twofold. First, voter support for a measure can often depend on the amount of information they have about a measure. At this point in the survey, the respondent has not been provided information about the proposed measure beyond what is presented in the ballot language. This situation is analogous to a voter casting a ballot with limited knowledge about the measure, such as what might occur in the absence of an effective campaign. Question 3, also known as the Initial Ballot Test, is thus a good measure of voter support for the proposed measure *as it is today*, on the natural. Because the Initial Ballot Test provides a gauge of natural support for the measure, it also serves a second purpose in that it provides a useful baseline from which to judge the impact of various information items conveyed later in the survey on voter support for the measure.

Question 3 *Later this year, voters in San Mateo may be asked to vote on a local ballot measure. Let me read you a summary of the measure. To fund general city services such as police patrols and crime prevention; fire, paramedic, and 9-1-1 emergency response; street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services; shall an ordinance be adopted increasing the City of San Mateo's existing transient occupancy (hotel) tax paid by hotel/motel guests to 14%, providing approximately 1.2 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with independent audits and all funds locally controlled? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 2 INITIAL BALLOT TEST



As shown in Figure 2, 64% of likely November 2020 voters surveyed indicated that they would support the proposed TOT increase, whereas 23% stated that they would oppose the measure and 13% were unsure or unwilling to share their vote choice. For general taxes in California, the level of support recorded at the Initial Ballot Test is approximately 14 percentage points above the simple majority (50%+1) required for passage.

SUPPORT BY SUBGROUPS For the interested reader, Table 1 shows how support for the measure at the Initial Ballot Test varied by key demographic traits. The blue column (Approximate % of Universe) indicates the percentage of the electorate that each subgroup category comprises. The largest differences in support for the measure occur among partisan subgroups and according to how voters perceive the City’s fiscal management practices.

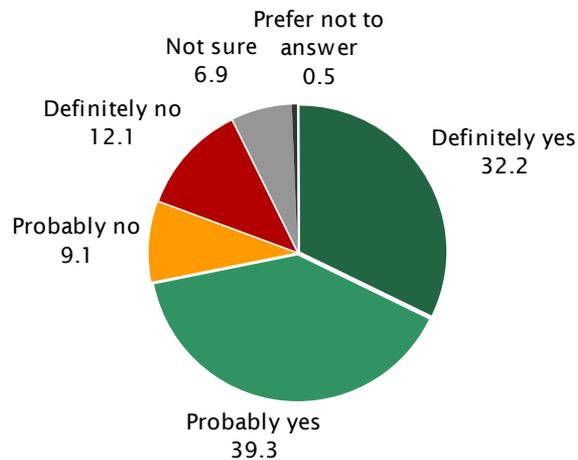
TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	% Not sure
Overall		100	63.9	12.0
Years in San Mateo (Q1)	Less than 5	18	74.1	4.9
	5 to 9	15	68.8	8.3
	10 to 14	10	60.6	21.1
	15 or more	56	60.7	13.9
Overall Satisfaction (Q10)	Satisfied	84	69.3	11.8
	Dissatisfied	16	42.2	10.1
Homeowner on Voter File	Yes	59	64.5	10.4
	No	41	63.0	14.4
Fiscal Management Rating (Q11)	Excellent, good	55	74.5	9.8
	Fair	33	60.8	12.3
	Poor, very poor	12	34.7	7.9
Opinion of Economy in Six Months (Q12)	Better	31	65.7	8.9
	About the same	22	64.5	14.5
	Worse	46	63.3	13.0
Party	Democrat	54	72.3	11.8
	Republican	16	48.0	10.2
	Other / DTS	30	57.3	13.4
Age	18 to 29	16	62.7	20.4
	30 to 39	19	60.3	9.4
	40 to 49	17	66.5	12.6
	50 to 64	25	64.9	10.4
	65 or older	23	64.6	9.7
Registration Year	Since Nov 16	24	67.5	14.0
	Jun 10 to <Nov 16	17	54.2	19.3
	Jun 04 to <Jun 10	12	63.3	8.7
	Before June 04	47	65.7	9.3
Household Party Type	Single dem	30	73.2	9.9
	Dual dem	14	73.6	10.8
	Single rep	6	44.2	11.4
	Dual rep	4	42.7	14.1
	Other	22	57.7	14.2
	Mixed	24	60.7	13.3
Voting Propensity	High	39	65.1	8.8
	Medium	33	66.7	12.8
	Low	29	58.9	15.5
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	86	65.1	12.6
	No	14	56.1	8.2
Gender	Male	48	63.4	9.1
	Female	52	66.1	14.7

CLARIFICATION OF TOT Although the ballot language tested in Question 3 indicated that a transient occupancy tax is a tax paid by hotel and motel guests, we find that some voters initially perceive the tax to also apply to residents. For this reason, Question 4 clarified that the proposed measure will *not* raise taxes for residents of San Mateo—a TOT is paid by visitors who rent a room at a hotel, motel, or vacation rental in the City—and that the measure would increase the current 12% rate to 14%. With the aforementioned clarification, support for the TOT measure increased to 72%, with 21% opposed and 7% unsure or unwilling to share their opinion (Figure 3).

Question 4 *This measure will NOT raise taxes for residents of San Mateo. A Transient Occupancy Tax is a tax paid by visitors who rent a room at a hotel, motel, or vacation rental in the City. The current tax rate is 12%. This measure would increase the rate to 14%. Knowing this, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 3 INITIAL BALLOT TEST WITH CLARIFICATION



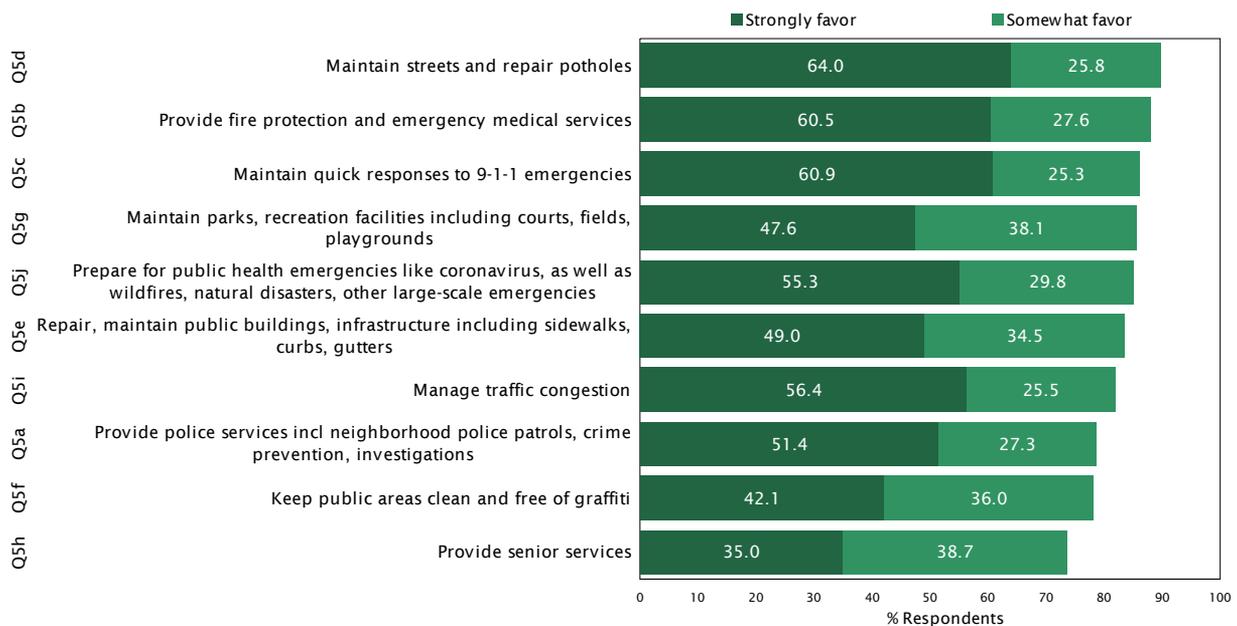
PROJECTS & SERVICES

The ballot language presented in Question 3 indicated that the proposed measure would provide funding for general city services in the City of San Mateo such as police patrols and crime prevention, fire, paramedic, and 911 emergency response, street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services. The purpose of Question 5 was to provide respondents with a full range of services that may be funded by the proposed measure, as well as identify which of these services voters most favored funding with the proceeds of the measure.

After reading each service, respondents were asked if they would favor or oppose spending some of the money on that particular item assuming that the measure passed. Descriptions of the services tested, as well as voters' responses, are shown in Figure 4 below. The order in which the services were presented to respondents was randomized to avoid a systematic position bias.

Question 5 *The measure we've been discussing will provide funding for a variety of services in the City of San Mateo. If the measure passes, would you favor or oppose using some of the money to: _____, or do you not have an opinion?*

FIGURE 4 PROJECTS & SERVICES



All services tested were favored by at least 74% of voters surveyed. That said, voters prioritized using funding from the measure to maintain streets and repair potholes (90% strongly or somewhat favor), provide fire protection and emergency medical services (88%), maintain quick responses to 911 emergencies (86%), maintain parks and recreation facilities including courts, fields and playgrounds (86%), and prepare for public health emergencies like coronavirus, as well as wildfires, natural disasters, and other large-scale emergencies (85%).

SERVICE RATINGS BY INITIAL SUPPORT Table 2 presents the top five services (showing the percentage of respondents who *strongly* favor each) by position at the Initial Ballot Test. Not surprisingly, individuals who initially opposed the measure were generally less likely to favor spending money on a given service when compared with supporters. Nevertheless, initial supporters, opponents, and the undecided did agree on four of the top five priorities for funding.

TABLE 2 TOP PROJECTS & SERVICES BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q3)	Item	Projects & Services Summary	% Strongly Favor
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 544)	Q5d	Maintain streets and repair potholes	68
	Q5b	Provide fire protection and emergency medical services	67
	Q5c	Maintain quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	67
	Q5i	Manage traffic congestion	63
	Q5j	Prepare for public health emergencies like coronavirus, as well as wildfires, natural disasters, other large-scale emergencies	63
Probably or Definitely No (n = 197)	Q5d	Maintain streets and repair potholes	53
	Q5c	Maintain quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	45
	Q5b	Provide fire protection and emergency medical services	42
	Q5i	Manage traffic congestion	40
	Q5g	Maintain parks, recreation facilities including courts, fields, playgrounds	35
Not Sure (n = 102)	Q5b	Provide fire protection and emergency medical services	64
	Q5d	Maintain streets and repair potholes	63
	Q5c	Maintain quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	61
	Q5j	Prepare for public health emergencies like coronavirus, as well as wildfires, natural disasters, other large-scale emergencies	59
	Q5i	Manage traffic congestion	52

POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

If the City chooses to place a measure on the November 2020 ballot, voters will be exposed to various arguments about the measure in the ensuing months. Proponents of the measure will present arguments to try to persuade voters to support a measure, just as opponents may present arguments to achieve the opposite goal. For this study to be a reliable gauge of voter support for the proposed TOT measure, it is important that the survey simulate the type of discussion and debate that will occur prior to the vote taking place and identify how this information ultimately shapes voters' opinions about the measure.

The objective of Question 6 was thus to present respondents with arguments in favor of the proposed measure and identify whether they felt the arguments were convincing reasons to support it. Arguments in opposition to the measure were also presented and are discussed later in this report (see *Negative Arguments* on page 18). Within each series, specific arguments were administered in random order to avoid a systematic position bias.

Question 6 *What I'd like to do now is tell you what some people are saying about the measure we've been discussing. Supporters of the measure say: _____. Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to SUPPORT the measure?*

FIGURE 5 POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

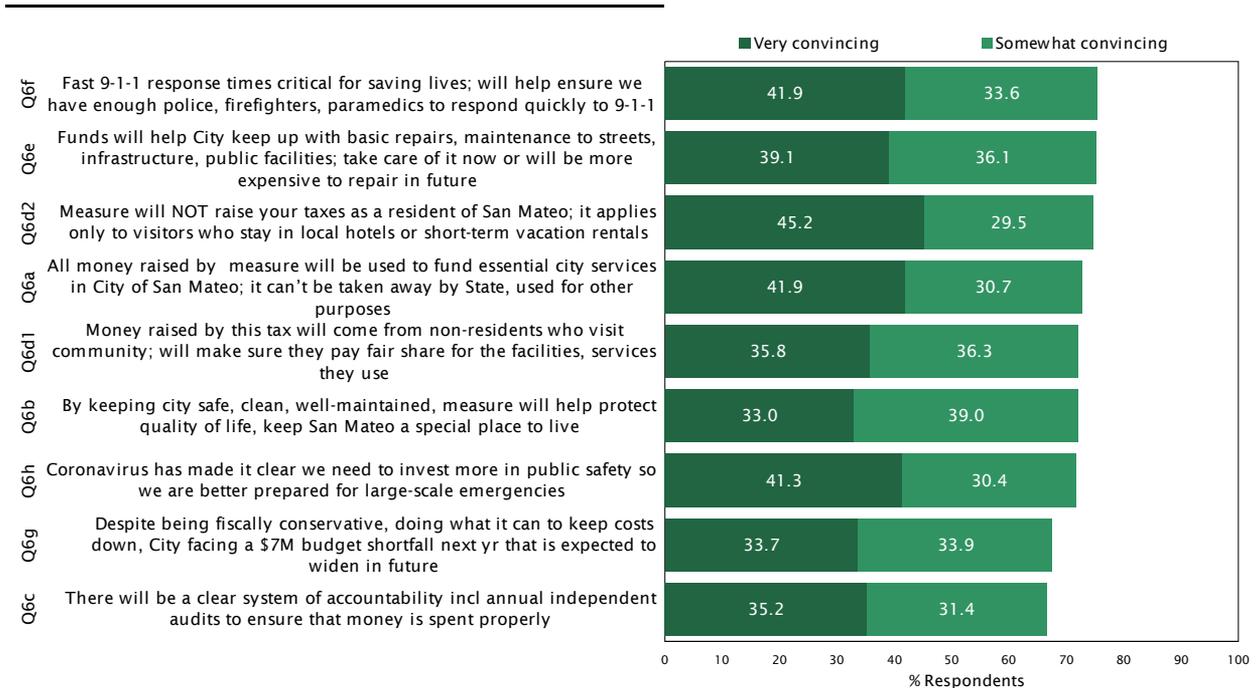


Figure 5 presents the truncated positive arguments tested, as well as voters' reactions to the arguments. The arguments are ranked from most convincing to least convincing based on the percentage of respondents who indicated that the argument was either a 'very convincing' or 'somewhat convincing' reason to support the TOT measure. Using this methodology, the most compelling positive arguments were: *Fast emergency response times for 911 calls are critical for saving lives. This measure will help ensure that we have enough police officers, firefighters, and paramedics to respond quickly to 911 emergencies* (76% very or somewhat convincing), *The*

funds raised by this measure will help the City keep up with basic repairs and maintenance to streets, infrastructure, and public facilities. If we don't take care of it now, it will be a lot more expensive to repair in the future (75%), and This measure will NOT raise your taxes as a resident of San Mateo. It applies only to visitors who stay in local hotels or short-term vacation rentals (75%).

POSITIVE ARGUMENTS BY INITIAL SUPPORT Table 3 lists the top five most convincing positive arguments (showing the percentage of respondents who cited it as *very* convincing) according to respondents' vote choice at the Initial Ballot Test. The positive arguments resonated with a higher percentage of voters initially inclined to support the measure compared with those who initially opposed the measure or were unsure. Nevertheless, four arguments were ranked among the top five most compelling by all three groups.

TABLE 3 TOP POSITIVE ARGUMENTS BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

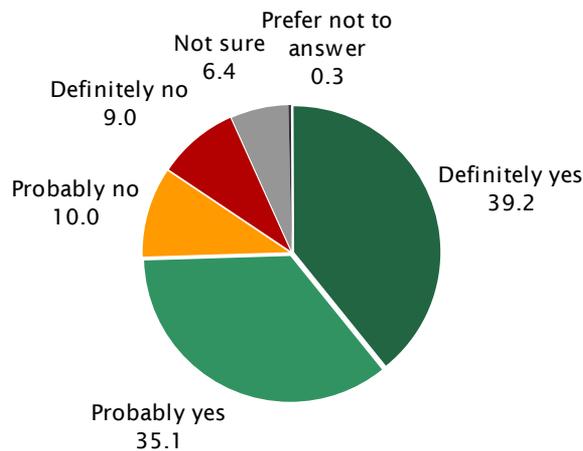
Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q3)	Item	Positive Argument Summary	% Very Convincing
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 544)	Q6d2	Measure will NOT raise your taxes as a resident of San Mateo; it applies only to visitors who stay in local hotels or short-term vacation rentals	57
	Q6f	Fast 9-1-1 response times critical for saving lives; will help ensure we have enough police, firefighters, paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1	53
	Q6a	All money raised by measure will be used to fund essential city services in City of San Mateo; it can't be taken away by State, used for other purposes	52
	Q6e	Funds will help City keep up with basic repairs, maintenance to streets, infrastructure, public facilities; take care of it now or will be more expensive to repair in future	51
	Q6h	Coronavirus has made it clear we need to invest more in public safety so we are better prepared for large-scale emergencies	51
Probably or Definitely No (n = 198)	Q6d2	Measure will NOT raise your taxes as a resident of San Mateo; it applies only to visitors who stay in local hotels or short-term vacation rentals	17
	Q6h	Coronavirus has made it clear we need to invest more in public safety so we are better prepared for large-scale emergencies	16
	Q6c	There will be a clear system of accountability incl annual independent audits to ensure that money is spent properly	16
	Q6a	All money raised by measure will be used to fund essential city services in City of San Mateo; it can't be taken away by State, used for other purposes	15
	Q6f	Fast 9-1-1 response times critical for saving lives; will help ensure we have enough police, firefighters, paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1	14
Not Sure (n = 102)	Q6f	Fast 9-1-1 response times critical for saving lives; will help ensure we have enough police, firefighters, paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1	41
	Q6a	All money raised by measure will be used to fund essential city services in City of San Mateo; it can't be taken away by State, used for other purposes	41
	Q6h	Coronavirus has made it clear we need to invest more in public safety so we are better prepared for large-scale emergencies	41
	Q6c	There will be a clear system of accountability incl annual independent audits to ensure that money is spent properly	38
	Q6d2	Measure will NOT raise your taxes as a resident of San Mateo; it applies only to visitors who stay in local hotels or short-term vacation rentals	34

INTERIM BALLOT TEST

After exposing respondents to services that could be funded by the measure as well as the types of positive arguments voters may encounter during an election cycle, the survey again presented respondents with the ballot language used previously to gauge how support for the proposed TOT measure may have changed. As shown in Figure 6, overall support among likely November 2020 voters increased to 74%, with 39% of voters indicating that they would *definitely* vote yes on the measure. Approximately 19% of respondents opposed the measure at this point in the survey, and an additional 7% were unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

Question 7 *Sometimes people change their mind about a measure once they have more information about it. Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it again. To fund general city services such as police patrols and crime prevention; fire, paramedic, and 9-1-1 emergency response; street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services; shall an ordinance be adopted increasing the City of San Mateo's existing transient occupancy (hotel) tax paid by hotel/motel guests to 14%, providing approximately 1.2 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with independent audits and all funds locally controlled? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 6 INTERIM BALLOT TEST



SUPPORT BY SUBGROUPS Table 4 on the next page shows how support for the measure at this point in the survey varied by key voter subgroups, as well as the change in subgroup support when compared with the Initial Ballot Test. Positive differences appear in green and negative differences appear in red. As shown in the table, support for the TOT measure increased between the Initial and Interim Ballot Test for all but one subgroup, with many subgroups exhibiting double-digit increases in support for the measure.

TABLE 4 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INTERIM BALLOT TEST

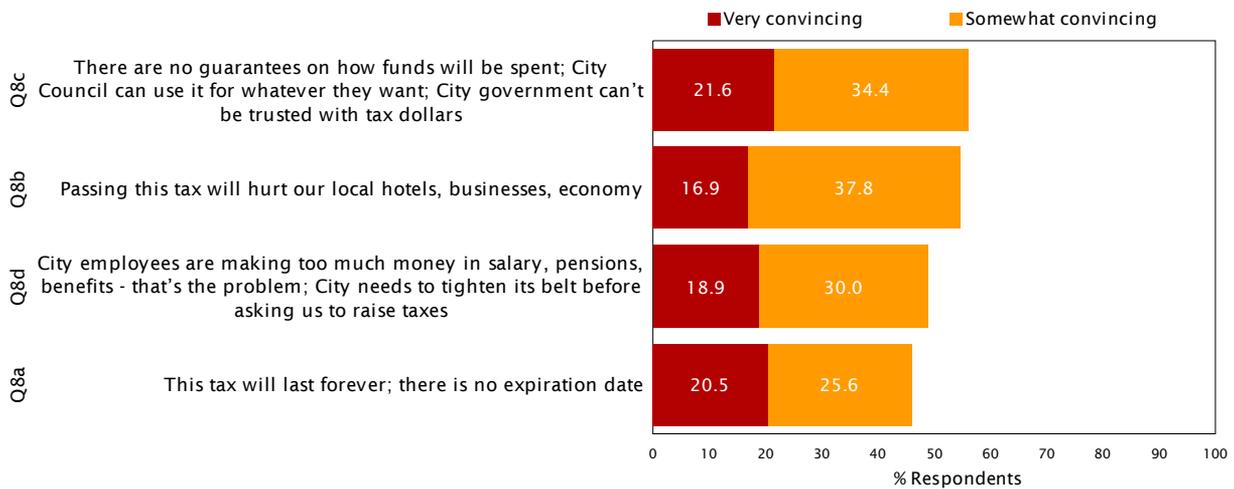
		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	Change From Initial Ballot Test (Q3)
Overall		100	74.3	+10.5
Years in San Mateo (Q1)	Less than 5	18	82.9	+8.8
	5 to 9	15	74.2	+5.5
	10 to 14	10	78.5	+17.9
	15 or more	56	71.6	+10.9
Overall Satisfaction (Q10)	Satisfied	84	81.0	+11.7
	Dissatisfied	16	43.4	+1.3
Homeowner on Voter File	Yes	59	74.5	+10.1
	No	41	74.0	+11.0
Fiscal Management Rating (Q11)	Excellent, good	55	87.6	+13.1
	Fair	33	71.9	+11.1
	Poor, very poor	12	34.4	-0.2
Opinion of Economy in Six Months (Q12)	Better	31	73.5	+7.8
	About the same	22	77.0	+12.5
	Worse	46	73.3	+10.0
Party	Democrat	54	83.0	+10.7
	Republican	16	58.1	+10.1
	Other / DTS	30	67.6	+10.2
Age	18 to 29	16	77.4	+14.8
	30 to 39	19	69.2	+8.8
	40 to 49	17	79.4	+12.8
	50 to 64	25	74.3	+9.3
	65 or older	23	72.8	+8.2
Registration Year	Since Nov 16	24	74.5	+7.0
	Jun 10 to <Nov 16	17	73.0	+18.8
	Jun 04 to <Jun 10	12	79.0	+15.7
	Before June 04	47	73.5	+7.8
Household Party Type	Single dem	30	81.9	+8.7
	Dual dem	14	82.9	+9.4
	Single rep	6	52.3	+8.1
	Dual rep	4	49.6	+6.9
	Other	22	66.5	+8.8
	Mixed	24	76.8	+16.1
Voting Propensity	High	39	74.4	+9.2
	Medium	33	78.5	+11.7
	Low	29	69.6	+10.7
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	86	75.9	+10.8
	No	14	64.4	+8.3
Gender	Male	48	68.1	+4.7
	Female	52	81.4	+15.3

NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

Whereas Question 6 of the survey presented respondents with arguments in favor of the transient occupancy tax measure, Question 8 presented respondents with arguments designed to elicit opposition to the measure. In the case of Question 8, however, respondents were asked whether they felt that the argument was a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to *oppose* the measure. The arguments tested, as well as voters' opinions about the arguments, are presented below in Figure 7.

Question 8 *Next, let me tell you what opponents of the measure are saying. Opponents of the measure say: _____. Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to OPPOSE the measure?*

FIGURE 7 NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS



The most compelling negative arguments were: *There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent. The City Council can use it for whatever they want. The City government can't be trusted with our tax dollars* (56% very or somewhat convincing), *Passing this tax will hurt our local hotels, businesses, and our economy* (55%), and *City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions and benefits - that's the problem. The City needs to tighten its belt before asking us to raise taxes* (49%).

NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS BY INITIAL SUPPORT Table 5 on the next page ranks the negative arguments (showing the percentage of respondents who cited each as very convincing) according to respondents' vote choice at the Initial Ballot Test.

TABLE 5 NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

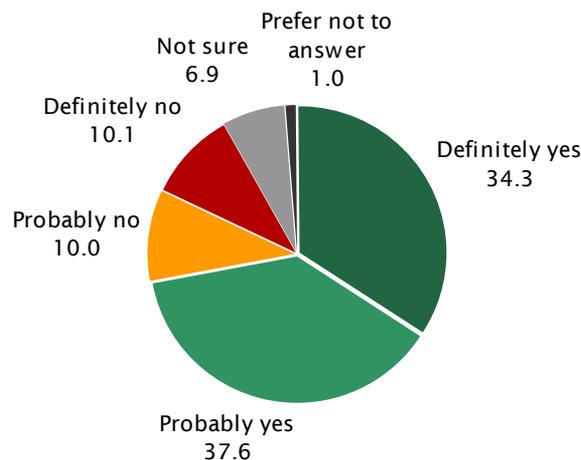
Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q3)	Item	Negative Argument Summary	% Very Convincing
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 544)	Q8c	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent; City Council can use it for whatever they want; City government can't be trusted with tax dollars	16
	Q8a	This tax will last forever; there is no expiration date	15
	Q8d	City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions, benefits - that's the problem; City needs to tighten its belt before asking us to raise taxes	14
	Q8b	Passing this tax will hurt our local hotels, businesses, economy	7
Probably or Definitely No (n = 198)	Q8b	Passing this tax will hurt our local hotels, businesses, economy	44
	Q8c	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent; City Council can use it for whatever they want; City government can't be trusted with tax dollars	42
	Q8a	This tax will last forever; there is no expiration date	39
	Q8d	City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions, benefits - that's the problem; City needs to tighten its belt before asking us to raise taxes	34
Not Sure (n = 102)	Q8b	Passing this tax will hurt our local hotels, businesses, economy	20
	Q8d	City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions, benefits - that's the problem; City needs to tighten its belt before asking us to raise taxes	17
	Q8a	This tax will last forever; there is no expiration date	14
	Q8c	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent; City Council can use it for whatever they want; City government can't be trusted with tax dollars	13

FINAL BALLOT TEST

Voters' opinions about ballot measures are often not rigid, especially when the amount of information presented to the public on a measure has been limited. A goal of the survey was thus to gauge how voters' opinions about the proposed measure may be affected by the information they could encounter during the course of an election cycle. After providing respondents with the wording of the proposed measure, services that could be funded, and arguments in favor of and against the proposal, the survey again asked voters whether they would vote 'yes' or 'no' on the proposed transient occupancy tax measure.

Question 9 *Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it one more time. To fund general city services such as police patrols and crime prevention; fire, paramedic, and 9-1-1 emergency response; street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services; shall an ordinance be adopted increasing the City of San Mateo's existing transient occupancy (hotel) tax paid by hotel/motel guests to 14%, providing approximately 1.2 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with independent audits and all funds locally controlled? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 8 FINAL BALLOT TEST



At this point in the survey, support for the transient occupancy tax increase was found among 72% of likely November 2020 voters, with 34% indicating that they would *definitely* support the measure. Approximately one-in-five respondents (20%) were opposed to the measure at the Final Ballot Test, and 8% remained unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.



CHANGE IN SUPPORT

Table 6 provides a closer look at how support for the proposed measure changed over the course of the interview by calculating the difference in support between the Initial, Interim, and Final Ballot tests within various subgroups of voters. The percentage of support for the measure at the Final Ballot Test is shown in the column with the heading *% Probably or Definitely Yes*. The columns to the right show the difference between the Final and the Initial, and the Final and Interim Ballot Tests. Positive differences appear in green, and negative differences appear in red.

TABLE 6 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT FINAL BALLOT TEST

		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	Change From Initial Ballot Test (Q3)	Change From Interim Ballot Test (7)
Overall		100	71.9	+8.0	-2.4
Years in San Mateo (Q1)	Less than 5	18	81.7	+7.6	-1.2
	5 to 9	15	70.0	+1.2	-4.2
	10 to 14	10	75.7	+15.1	-2.8
	15 or more	56	69.4	+8.6	-2.3
Overall Satisfaction (Q10)	Satisfied	84	78.1	+8.8	-2.9
	Dissatisfied	16	42.8	+0.7	-0.6
Homeowner on Voter File	Yes	59	72.7	+8.2	-1.9
	No	41	70.8	+7.8	-3.2
Fiscal Management Rating (Q11)	Excellent, good	55	84.7	+10.2	-2.9
	Fair	33	69.0	+8.2	-2.9
	Poor, very poor	12	30.3	-4.3	-4.1
Opinion of Economy in Six Months (Q12)	Better	31	70.3	+4.6	-3.2
	About the same	22	75.0	+10.5	-2.0
	Worse	46	71.0	+7.7	-2.3
Party	Democrat	54	80.6	+8.3	-2.4
	Republican	16	54.9	+6.9	-3.2
	Other / DTS	30	65.5	+8.2	-2.1
Age	18 to 29	16	74.9	+12.2	-2.6
	30 to 39	19	68.4	+8.1	-0.8
	40 to 49	17	73.8	+7.2	-5.6
	50 to 64	25	72.2	+7.3	-2.1
	65 or older	23	71.1	+6.5	-1.7
Registration Year	Since Nov 16	24	73.7	+6.2	-0.8
	Jun 10 to <Nov 16	17	69.4	+15.2	-3.6
	Jun 04 to <Jun 10	12	74.9	+11.6	-4.1
	Before June 04	47	71.2	+5.5	-2.3
Household Party Type	Single dem	30	78.8	+5.6	-3.1
	Dual dem	14	83.3	+9.7	+0.4
	Single rep	6	51.1	+6.9	-1.2
	Dual rep	4	49.6	+6.9	No change
	Other	22	64.6	+6.8	-1.9
	Mixed	24	72.4	+11.7	-4.4
Voting Propensity	High	39	72.1	+6.9	-2.3
	Medium	33	73.9	+7.1	-4.6
	Low	29	69.5	+10.6	-0.1
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	86	73.0	+7.9	-2.9
	No	14	65.0	+8.9	+0.7
Gender	Male	48	66.9	+3.5	-1.2
	Female	52	77.9	+11.7	-3.5

As expected, voters generally responded to the negative arguments with a reduction in their support for the TOT measure when compared with levels recorded at the Interim Ballot Test. The trend over the course of the entire survey (Initial to Final Ballot Test), however, was one of *increasing* support, averaging +8% overall.

Whereas Table 6 displays change in support for the measure over the course of the interview at the subgroup level, Table 7 displays the individual-level changes that occurred between the Initial and Final Ballot tests for the measure. On the left side of the table is shown each of the response options to the Initial Ballot Test and the percentage of respondents in each group. The cells in the body of the table depict movement within each response group (row) based on the information provided throughout the course of the survey as recorded by the Final Ballot Test. For example, in the first row we see that of the 25% of respondents who indicated that they would definitely support the measure at the Initial Ballot Test, 21.6% also indicated they would definitely support the measure at the Final Ballot Test. Approximately 2.8% moved to the probably support group, 0.3% moved to the probably oppose group, 0.0% moved to the definitely oppose group, and 0.3% stated they were now unsure of their vote choice.

To ease interpretation of the table, the cells are color coded. Red shaded cells indicate declining support, green shaded cells indicate increasing support, whereas white cells indicate no movement. Moreover, within the cells, a white font indicates a fundamental change in the vote: from yes to no, no to yes, or not sure to either yes or no.

TABLE 7 MOVEMENT BETWEEN INITIAL & FINAL BALLOT TEST

Initial Ballot Test (Q3)		Final Ballot Test (Q9)				
		Definitely support	Probably support	Probably oppose	Definitely oppose	Not sure
Definitely support	25.0% →	21.6%	2.8%	0.3%	0.0%	0.3%
Probably support	38.9% →	9.5%	26.5%	0.9%	0.5%	1.5%
Probably oppose	11.7% →	1.0%	2.4%	6.1%	0.6%	1.5%
Definitely oppose	11.6% →	0.1%	1.0%	1.6%	8.3%	0.6%
Not sure	12.8% →	2.2%	4.8%	1.0%	0.8%	4.1%

As one might expect, the information conveyed in the survey had the greatest impact on individuals who either weren't sure about how they would vote at the Initial Ballot Test or were tentative in their vote choice (probably yes or probably no). Moreover, Table 7 makes clear that although the information did impact some voters, it did not do so in a consistent way for all respondents. Some respondents found the information conveyed during the course of the interview to be a reason to become more supportive of the measure, whereas a smaller percentage found the same information to be a reason to be less supportive. Although 19% of respondents made a *fundamental*³ shift in their opinion about the measure over the course of the interview, the net impact is that support for the measure at the Final Ballot Test was approximately 8% higher than support at the Initial Ballot Test.

3. This is, they changed from a position of support, opposition or undecided at the Initial Ballot Test to a different position at the Final Ballot Test.

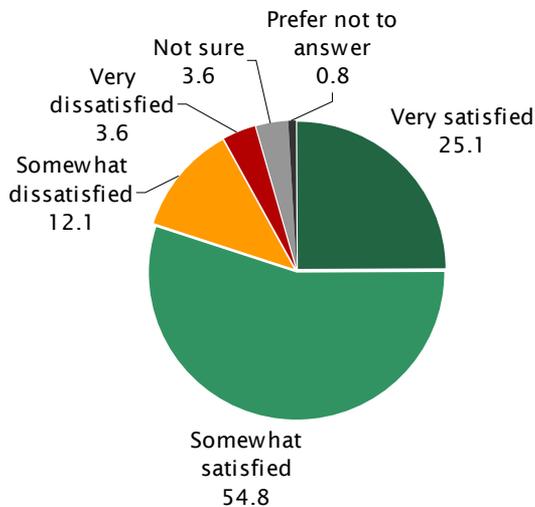
RELEVANT ATTITUDES

The final substantive section of the survey explored voters' perceptions of the City's performance in providing services and managing its finances, respectively, as well as their expectations for the economy.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING The first question in this series asked respondents to indicate if, overall, they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of San Mateo is doing to provide city services. Because this question does not reference a specific program, facility, or service and requested that the respondent consider the City's performance in general, the findings of this question may be regarded as an *overall performance rating* for the City.

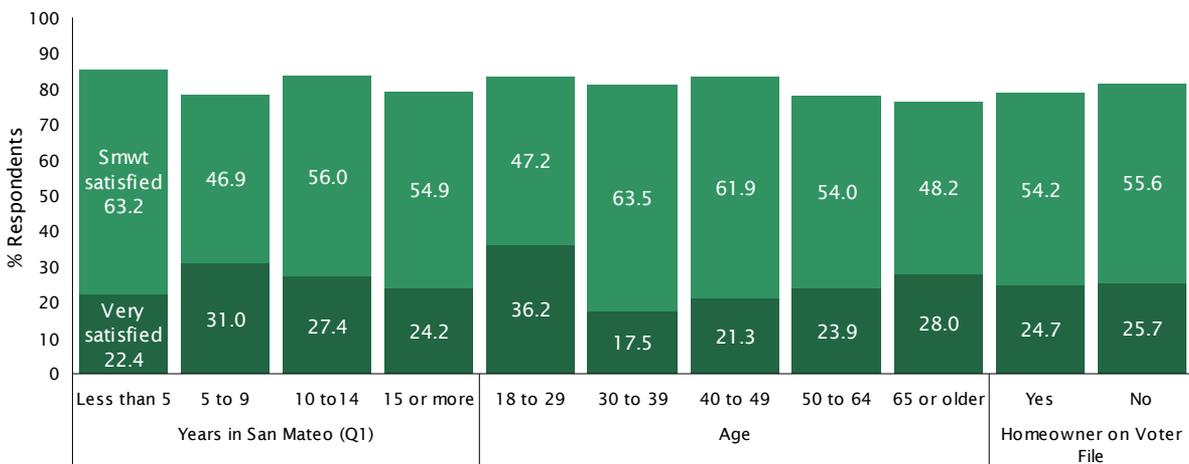
Question 10 *Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of San Mateo is doing to provide city services?*

FIGURE 9 OVERALL SATISFACTION



Overall, 80% of San Mateo voters surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with the City's efforts to provide municipal services, with 25% saying they were very satisfied and 55% somewhat satisfied. Approximately 16% reported that they were dissatisfied with the City's overall performance, and 4% were unsure or unwilling to state their opinion (Figure 9). For the interested reader, Figure 10 displays how the percentage of respondents satisfied with the City's overall performance varied by length of residence, age, and home ownership.

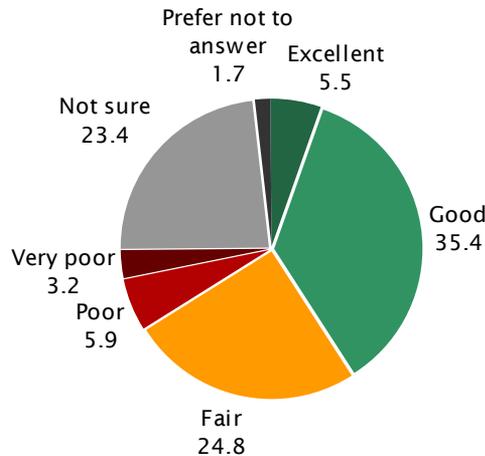
FIGURE 10 OVERALL SATISFACTION BY YEARS IN SAN MATEO, YEARS IN SAN MATEO, AGE & HOMEOWNER ON VOTER FILE



FISCAL MANAGEMENT In a similar manner, respondents were asked to rate the job the City has done in managing its financial resources. As shown in Figure 11, opinions were mixed with four-in-ten respondents rating the City’s performance in this respect as excellent (6%) or good (35%), 25% rating it fair, 9% rating it poor or very poor, and one-quarter confiding they were not sure (23%) or were not inclined to answer the question (2%).

Question 11 *In your opinion, has the City of San Mateo done an excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor job of managing its financial resources?*

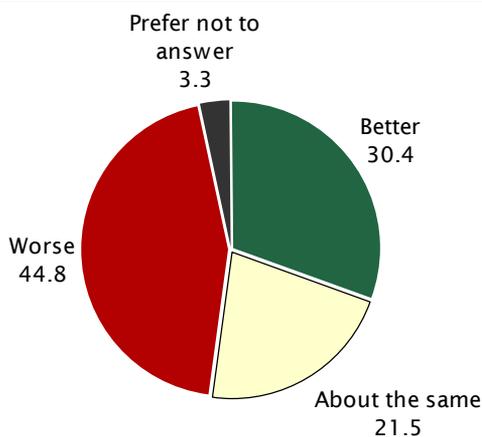
FIGURE 11 FISCAL MANAGEMENT RATING



EXPECTATIONS FOR THE ECONOMY The arrival of coronavirus in California triggered a statewide shelter-in-place mandate in March, effectively shuttering most sectors of the world’s fifth largest economy for the past three months. Although the State has begun a phased reopening of the economy, the public health and economic impacts of the coronavirus are likely to be felt well into the future. Recognizing that voters’ expectations for the economy may shape how they view a local tax measure, the survey addressed this topic directly.

Question 12 *Looking ahead six months from now, do you think the economy will be better than today, be about the same as today, or will it be worse than today?*

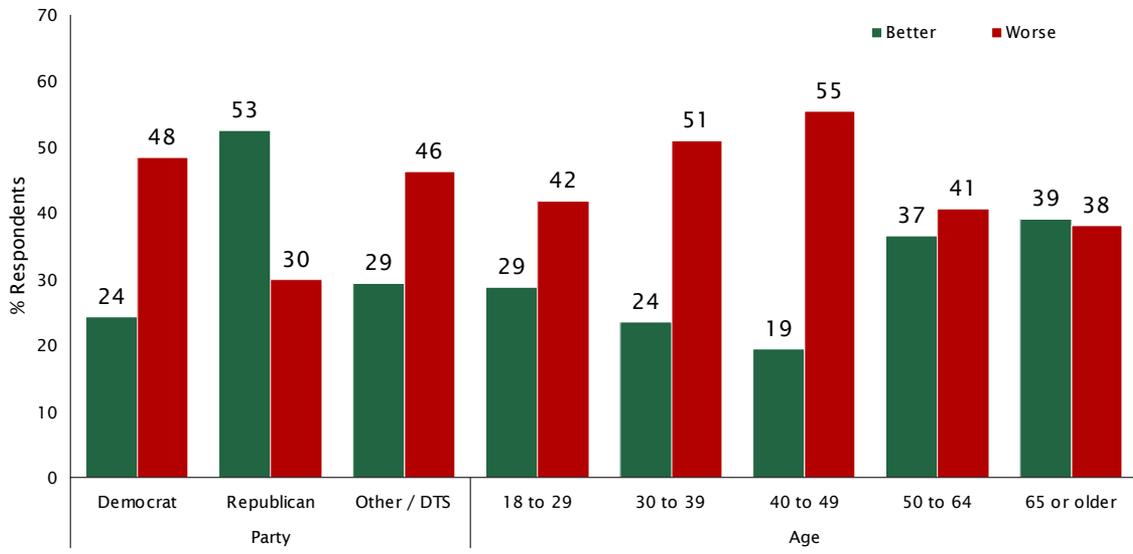
FIGURE 12 OPINION OF ECONOMY IN SIX MONTHS



When asked about their expectations for the economy six months into the future, San Mateo voters leaned toward pessimism with 45% anticipating the economy will be worse than today, 22% expecting it to be about the same as today, and 30% anticipating it will be better than today’s economy (Figure 12).

Voters’ expectations for the economy were strongly correlated with their party affiliation and age. Democrats, those not affiliated with a major party, and voters under 50 were generally pessimistic, whereas Republicans were generally optimistic (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13 OPINION OF ECONOMY IN SIX MONTHS BY PARTY & AGE





BACKGROUND & DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE 8 DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAMPLE

<i>Total Respondents</i>	851
Years in San Mateo (Q1)	
Less than 5	17.9
5 to 9	15.2
10 to 14	10.1
15 or more	55.9
Prefer not to answer	0.9
Homeowner on Voter File	
Yes	59.2
No	40.8
Age	
18 to 29	16.1
30 to 39	19.4
40 to 49	17.0
50 to 64	24.8
65 or older	22.7
Registration Year	
Since Nov 16	23.5
Jun 10 to <Nov 16	17.2
Jun 04 to <Jun 10	12.0
Before June 04	47.3
Party	
Democrat	53.8
Republican	16.1
Other / DTS	30.1
Household Party Type	
Single dem	30.0
Dual dem	14.1
Single rep	6.4
Dual rep	3.8
Other	22.2
Mixed	23.6
Likely to Vote by Mail	
Yes	86.4
No	13.6
Voting Propensity	
High	38.9
Medium	32.5
Low	28.6
Gender	
Male	46.6
Female	50.6
Prefer not to answer	2.8

In addition to questions directly related to the proposed measure, the study collected basic demographic information about respondents and their households. Some of this information was gathered during the interview, although much of it was collected from the voter file. The profile of the likely November 2020 voter sample used for this study is shown in Table 8.



M E T H O D O L O G Y

The following sections outline the methodology used in the study, as well as the motivation for using certain techniques.

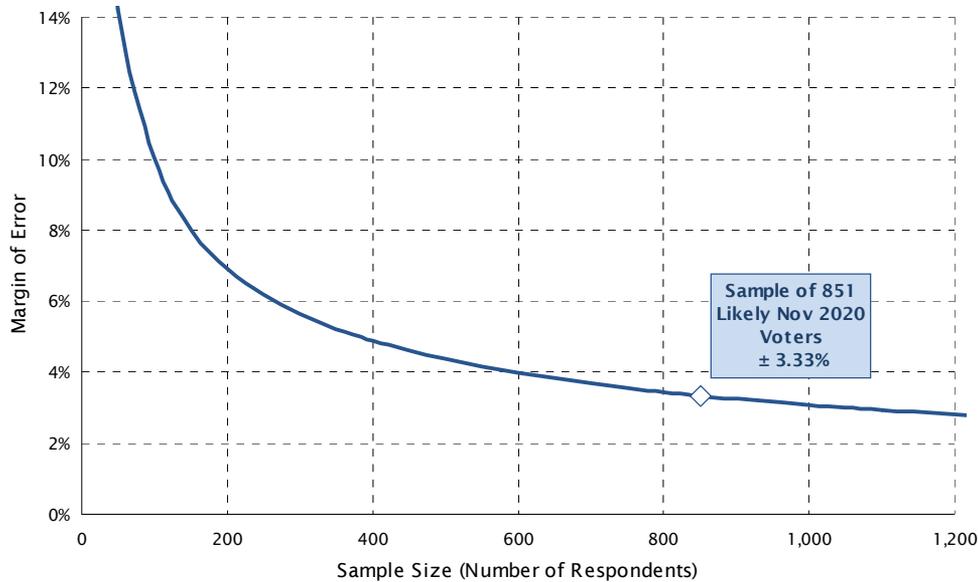
QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT Dr. McLarney of True North Research worked closely with the City of San Mateo to develop a questionnaire that covered the topics of interest and avoided possible sources of systematic measurement error, including position-order effects, wording effects, response-category effects, scaling effects, and priming. Several questions included multiple individual items. Because asking the items in a set order can lead to a systematic position bias in responses, items were asked in random order for each respondent.

PROGRAMMING, PRE-TEST & TRANSLATION Prior to fielding the survey, the questionnaire was CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) programmed to assist interviewers when conducting telephone interviews. The CATI program automatically navigates skip patterns, randomizes the appropriate question items, and alerts the interviewer to certain types of keypunching mistakes should they occur. The survey was also programmed into a passcode-protected online survey application to allow online participation for sampled voters. The integrity of the questionnaire was pre-tested internally by True North and by dialing into voter households in the City prior to formally beginning the survey. Once finalized, the questionnaire was professionally translated into Spanish to allow for data collection in English and Spanish.

SAMPLE The survey was administered to a stratified and clustered random sample of 851 registered voters in the City of San Mateo who are likely to participate in the November 2020 election. Consistent with the profile of this universe, the sample was stratified into clusters, each representing a combination of age, gender, and household party type. Individuals were then randomly selected based on their profile into an appropriate cluster. This method ensures that if a person of a particular profile refuses to participate in the study, they are replaced by an individual who shares their same profile.

STATISTICAL MARGIN OF ERROR By using the probability-based sampling design noted above, True North ensured that the final sample was representative of voters in the City who are likely to participate in the November 2020 election. The results of the sample can thus be used to estimate the opinions of *all* voters likely to participate in the November 2020 election. Because not all voters participated in the study, however, the results have what is known as a statistical margin of error due to sampling. The margin of error refers to the difference between what was found in the survey of 851 voters for a particular question and what would have been found if all of the estimated 51,645 likely November 2020 voters identified in the City had been surveyed for the study.

Figure 14 provides a graphic plot of the *maximum* margin of error in this study. The maximum margin of error for a dichotomous percentage result occurs when the answers are evenly split such that 50% provide one response and 50% provide the alternative response. For this survey, the maximum margin of error is $\pm 3.3\%$ for questions answered by all 851 respondents.

FIGURE 14 MAXIMUM MARGIN OF ERROR DUE TO SAMPLING

Within this report, figures and tables show how responses to certain questions varied by subgroups such as age, gender, and partisan affiliation. Figure 14 is thus useful for understanding how the maximum margin of error for a percentage estimate will grow as the number of individuals asked a question (or in a particular subgroup) shrinks. Because the margin of error grows exponentially as the sample size decreases, the reader should use caution when generalizing and interpreting the results for small subgroups.

RECRUITING & DATA COLLECTION The survey followed a mixed-method design that employed multiple recruiting methods (telephone and email) and multiple data collection methods (telephone and online). Telephone interviews averaged 17 minutes in length and were conducted during weekday evenings (5:30PM to 9PM) and on weekends (10AM to 5PM). It is standard practice not to call during the day on weekdays because most working adults are unavailable and thus calling during those hours would likely bias the sample.

Voters recruited via email were assigned a unique passcode to ensure that only voters who received an invitation could access the online survey site, and that each voter could complete the survey only one time. During the data collection period, email reminder notices were also sent to encourage participation among those who had yet to take the survey. A total of 851 surveys were completed in English and Spanish between May 19 and May 29, 2020.

DATA PROCESSING Data processing consisted of checking the data for errors or inconsistencies, coding and recoding responses, and preparing frequency analyses and crosstabulations.

ROUNDING Numbers that end in 0.5 or higher are rounded up to the nearest whole number, whereas numbers that end in 0.4 or lower are rounded down to the nearest whole number. These same rounding rules are also applied, when needed, to arrive at numbers that include a decimal place in constructing figures and charts. Occasionally, these rounding rules lead to small discrepancies in the first decimal place when comparing tables and pie charts for a given question.

QUESTIONNAIRE & TOPLINES



City of San Mateo
TOT Feasibility Survey
Final Toplines (n=851)
May 2020

Section 1: Introduction to Study

Hi, may I please speak to _____. My name is _____, and I'm calling on behalf of TNR, an independent public opinion research firm. We're conducting a survey of voters about important issues in the City of San Mateo (Muh-TAY-O) and I'd like to get your opinions.

If needed: This is a survey about important issues in your community. I'm NOT trying to sell anything and I won't ask for a donation.

If needed: The survey should take about 12 minutes to complete.

If needed: If now is not a convenient time, can you let me know a better time so I can call back?

If the person asks why you need to speak to the listed person or if they ask to participate instead, explain: For statistical purposes, at this time the survey must only be completed by this particular individual.

If the person says they are an elected official or is somehow associated with the survey, politely explain that this survey is designed to measure the opinions of those not closely associated with the study, thank them for their time, and terminate the interview.

Section 2: Importance of Issues

Q1	To begin, how long have you lived in the City of San Mateo?		
	1	Less than 1 year	5%
	2	1 to 4 years	13%
	3	5 to 9 years	15%
	4	10 to 14 years	10%
	5	15 years or longer	56%
	99	Prefer not to answer	1%
Q2	What would you say is the biggest issue facing San Mateo that you would like the City to address? Verbatim responses recorded and later grouped into categories shown below.		
	Traffic congestion		23%
	Affordability of housing		22%
	Growth, development		13%
	Maintenance, repair of infrastructure, streets, sidewalks		10%
	Not sure / Cannot think of anything		10%
	Parking		7%
	COVID-19 issues, concerns		6%
	Crime, gangs, drugs		5%
	No issues / Everything is fine		5%
	High cost of living		4%
	Homelessness		3%

City cleanliness, landscaping	2%
Quality of education, schools	2%
Enforcement of traffic laws	2%
High taxes, fees	2%
Downtown revitalization	2%
Environmental issues	2%

Section 3: Initial Ballot Test

Later this year, voters in San Mateo may be asked to vote on a local ballot measure. Let me read you a summary of the measure.

Q3	To fund general city services such as:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Police patrols and crime prevention ◇ Fire, paramedic, and 9-1-1 emergency response ◇ Street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services 		
Q3	Shall an ordinance be adopted increasing the City of San Mateo's existing transient occupancy (hotel) tax paid by hotel/motel guests to 14%, providing approximately 1.2 (one-point-two) million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with independent audits and all funds locally controlled?		
	If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? <i>Get answer, then ask: Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?</i>		
	1	Definitely yes	25%
	2	Probably yes	39%
	3	Probably no	12%
	4	Definitely no	12%
	98	Not sure	12%
	99	Prefer not to answer	1%
Q4	This measure will NOT raise taxes for residents of San Mateo. A Transient (Tran-zee-int) Occupancy Tax is a tax paid by visitors who rent a room at a hotel, motel, or vacation rental in the City. The current tax rate is 12%. This measure would increase the rate to 14%.		
	Knowing this, would you vote yes or no on this measure? <i>Get answer, then ask: Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?</i>		
	1	Definitely yes	32%
	2	Probably yes	39%
	3	Probably no	9%
	4	Definitely no	12%
	98	Not sure	7%
	99	Prefer not to answer	0%

Section 4: Projects & Services							
Q5	The measure we've been discussing will provide funding for a variety of services in the City of San Mateo. If the measure passes, would you favor or oppose using some of the money to: _____, or do you not have an opinion? <i>Get answer, if favor or oppose, then ask: Would that be strongly (favor/oppose) or somewhat (favor/oppose)?</i>						
	<i>Randomize</i>	Strongly Favor	Somewhat Favor	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not sure	Prefer not to answer
A	Provide police services including neighborhood police patrols, crime prevention and investigations	51%	27%	8%	7%	6%	1%
B	Provide fire protection and emergency medical services	61%	28%	4%	3%	4%	1%
C	Maintain quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	61%	25%	4%	3%	6%	1%
D	Maintain streets and repair potholes	64%	26%	3%	3%	3%	1%
E	Repair and maintain public buildings and infrastructure including sidewalks, curbs and gutters	49%	35%	6%	4%	5%	1%
F	Keep public areas clean and free of graffiti	42%	36%	8%	5%	8%	1%
G	Maintain parks and recreation facilities including courts, fields and playgrounds	48%	38%	5%	4%	4%	1%
H	Provide senior services	35%	39%	10%	6%	8%	1%
I	Manage traffic congestion	56%	25%	7%	4%	6%	1%
J	Prepare for public health emergencies like coronavirus, as well as wildfires, natural disasters, and other large-scale emergencies	55%	30%	6%	4%	4%	1%

Section 5: Positive Arguments							
What I'd like to do now is tell you what some people are saying about the measure we've been discussing.							
Q6	Supporters of the measure say: _____. Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to SUPPORT the measure?						
	<i>Randomize. Split Sample D1/D2 using odd/even clusters.</i>	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Not At All Convincing	Don't Believe	Not sure	Prefer not to answer
A	All money raised by the measure will be used to fund essential city services in the City of San Mateo. It can't be taken away by the State or used for other purposes.	42%	31%	16%	8%	2%	1%

B	By keeping our city safe, clean and well-maintained, this measure will help protect our quality of life and keep San Mateo a special place to live.	33%	39%	19%	6%	2%	1%
C	There will be a clear system of accountability including annual independent audits to ensure that the money is spent properly.	35%	31%	19%	12%	2%	1%
D1	Money raised by this tax will come from non-residents who visit our community. This measure will make sure they pay their fair share for the facilities and services they use while in our city.	36%	36%	20%	5%	2%	1%
D2	This measure will NOT raise your taxes as a resident of San Mateo. It applies only to visitors who stay in local hotels or short-term vacation rentals.	45%	29%	15%	6%	4%	2%
E	The funds raised by this measure will help the City keep up with basic repairs and maintenance to streets, infrastructure, and public facilities. If we don't take care of it now, it will be a lot more expensive to repair in the future.	39%	36%	15%	7%	1%	1%
F	Fast emergency response times for 9-1-1 calls are critical for saving lives. This measure will help ensure that we have enough police officers, firefighters, and paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1 emergencies.	42%	34%	14%	7%	2%	2%
G	Despite being fiscally conservative and doing what it can to keep costs down, the City is facing a 7-million-dollar budget shortfall next year that is expected to widen in the future. If we want to keep San Mateo a safe, clean place to live, we need to support this measure.	34%	34%	19%	8%	3%	2%
H	The coronavirus pandemic has made it clear that we need to invest more in public safety so we are better prepared for large-scale emergencies. This measure will provide some of the funding the City needs to ensure we have enough first-responders, stockpile emergency supplies, and help keep residents safe.	41%	30%	16%	7%	4%	2%

Section 6: Interim Ballot Test

Sometimes people change their mind about a measure once they have more information about it. Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it again.

Q7	To fund general city services such as:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Police patrols and crime prevention ◊ Fire, paramedic, and 9-1-1 emergency response ◊ Street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services 		
	Shall an ordinance be adopted increasing the City of San Mateo’s existing transient occupancy (hotel) tax paid by hotel/motel guests to 14%, providing approximately 1.2 (one-point-two) million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with independent audits and all funds locally controlled?		
	If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? <i>Get answer, then ask:</i> Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?		
	1	Definitely yes	39%
	2	Probably yes	35%
	3	Probably no	10%
4	Definitely no	9%	
98	Not Sure	6%	
99	Prefer not to answer	0%	

Section 7: Negative Arguments

Next, let me tell you what opponents of the measure are saying.

Q8	Opponents of the measure say: _____. Do you think this is a very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not at all convincing reason to OPPOSE the measure?						
	<i>Randomize</i>	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Not At All Convincing	Don't Believe	Not sure	Prefer not to answer
A	This tax will last forever. There is no expiration date.	20%	26%	36%	9%	7%	2%
B	Passing this tax will hurt our local hotels, businesses, and our economy.	17%	38%	28%	12%	4%	1%
C	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent. The City Council can use it for whatever they want. The City government can't be trusted with our tax dollars.	22%	34%	26%	11%	5%	1%
D	City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions and benefits - that's the problem. The City needs to tighten its belt before asking us to raise taxes.	19%	30%	31%	13%	6%	1%

Section 8: Final Ballot Test

Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it one more time.

Q9	To fund general city services such as:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Police patrols and crime prevention ◊ Fire, paramedic, and 9-1-1 emergency response ◊ Street maintenance, traffic improvements, community facilities, infrastructure improvements, and other general city services 	
Shall an ordinance be adopted increasing the City of San Mateo's existing transient occupancy (hotel) tax paid by hotel/motel guests to 14%, providing approximately 1.2 (one-point-two) million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with independent audits and all funds locally controlled?		
If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? <i>Get answer, then ask:</i> Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?		
1	Definitely yes	34%
2	Probably yes	38%
3	Probably no	10%
4	Definitely no	10%
98	Not Sure	7%
99	Prefer not to answer	1%

Section 9: Background & Demographics

Thank you so much for your participation. I have just three background questions for statistical purposes.

Q10	Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of San Mateo is doing to provide city services? <i>Get answer, then ask:</i> Would that be very (satisfied/dissatisfied) or somewhat (satisfied/dissatisfied)?	
1	Very satisfied	25%
2	Somewhat satisfied	55%
3	Somewhat dissatisfied	12%
4	Very dissatisfied	4%
98	Not sure	4%
99	Prefer not to answer	1%

Q11		
In your opinion, has the City of San Mateo done an excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor job of managing its financial resources?		
1	Excellent	6%
2	Good	35%
3	Fair	25%
4	Poor	6%
5	Very poor	3%
98	Not Sure	23%
99	Prefer not to answer	2%
Q12		
Looking ahead six months from now, do you think the economy will be better than today, be about the same as today, or will it be worse than today?		
1	Better	30%
2	About the same	22%
3	Worse	45%
99	Prefer not to answer	3%
Those are all of the questions that I have for you. Thanks so much for participating in this important survey.		

Post-Interview & Sample Items

S1		
Gender		
1	Male	47%
2	Female	51%
3	Prefer not to answer	3%
S2		
Party		
1	Democrat	54%
2	Republican	16%
3	Other	5%
4	DTS	25%

S3 Age on Voter File		
1	18 to 29	16%
2	30 to 39	19%
3	40 to 49	17%
4	50 to 64	25%
5	65 or older	23%
S4 Registration Date		
1	Since Nov 2016	24%
2	Jun 2010 to before Nov 2016	17%
3	Jun 2004 to before Jun 2010	12%
4	Before June 2004	47%
S5 Household Party Type		
1	Single Dem	30%
2	Dual Dem	14%
3	Single Rep	6%
4	Dual Rep	4%
5	Single Other	15%
6	Dual Other	7%
7	Dem & Rep	5%
8	Dem & Other	13%
9	Rep & Other	4%
0	Mixed (Dem + Rep + Other)	1%
S6 Homeowner on Voter File		
1	Yes	59%
2	No	41%
S7 Likely to Vote by Mail		
1	Yes	86%
2	No	14%

S8 Likely November 2020 Voter		
1	Yes	100%
2	No	0%
S9 Voting Propensity		
	High	39%
	Medium	33%
	Low	29%

