

REVENUE MEASURE FEASIBILITY SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT

PREPARED FOR THE
CITY OF ATASCADERO



FEBRUARY 4, 2020

ITEM NUMBER: C-2
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INTRODUCTION

Located along California's scenic central coast, the City of Atascadero is committed to building community by fostering an outstanding quality of life with excellent public service, stewardship of the environment, preservation of local heritage, and promotion of economic prosperity. Founded in 1913 and incorporated in 1979, the City provides a full suite of municipal services to an estimated 30,405 residents¹ and local businesses.

Over the past decade, the City of Atascadero'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 its costs where feasible, reducing staff positions, and through effective financial management practices, the practical reality is that existing revenues simply do not support the high quality services that residents have come to expect. To provide the funding required to maintain and improve the quality of essential city services, the City of Atascadero is considering establishing a local revenue measure.

MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH The primary purpose of this study was to produce an unbiased, statistically reliable evaluation of voters' interest in supporting a general sales tax measure to provide the funding noted above. Additionally, should the City decide to move forward with a revenue 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, *baseline* support for enacting a local sales tax measure to ensure adequate funding for general municipal services;
- Identify the types of services 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 sales tax increase to fund municipal services, it was important that in addition to measuring *current* opinions about the measure (Question 5), the survey expose respondents to the types of information voters are likely to encounter during an election cycle, including arguments in favor of (Question 8) and opposed to (Question 10) the measure, and gauge how this type of information ultimately impacts their voting decision (Questions 9 & 11).

1. Source: California Department of Finance estimate, January 2019.

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY For a full discussion of the research methods and techniques used in this study, turn to *Methodology* on page 30. In brief, the survey was administered to a random sample of 787 voters in the City of Atascadero 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 between January 18 and January 23, 2020, the average interview lasted 16 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 33) and a complete set of crosstabulations for the survey results is contained in Appendix A.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS True North thanks the City of Atascadero for the opportunity to assist the City in this important effort. The collective expertise, local knowledge, and insight provided by city staff and representatives 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 Atascadero. 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 concerns 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 350 revenue measure feasibility studies. Of the measures that have gone to ballot based on Dr. McLarney’s recommendation, 97% have been successful. In total, the research that Dr. McLarney has conducted has led to over \$32 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.

QUALITY OF LIFE & CITY SERVICES

- Eight-in-ten voters shared favorable opinions of the quality of life in Atascadero, with 17% reporting it is excellent and 64% stating it is good. Approximately 16% of voters surveyed said the quality of life in the City is fair, whereas about 2% used poor or very poor to describe the quality of life in Atascadero.
- When asked what changes the City could make to improve the quality of life in Atascadero, 12% of respondents could not think of a desired change (9%) or reported that no changes are needed (2%). Among specific changes desired, addressing the homeless issue was the most common (21%), followed closely by improving and maintaining infrastructure, streets, and roads (19%) and improving shopping and dining opportunities (17%).
- More than three-quarters (76%) of Atascadero voters surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with the City's efforts to provide municipal services, with 19% saying they were very satisfied and 57% somewhat satisfied. Approximately 18% reported that they were dissatisfied with the City's overall performance, and 6% were unsure or unwilling to state their opinion.

INITIAL BALLOT TEST

- With only the information provided in the ballot language, 67% of likely November 2020 voters surveyed indicated that they would support the proposed one-cent sales tax, whereas 27% stated that they would oppose the measure and 7% were unsure or unwilling to share their vote choice.
- Among voters who initially opposed the sales tax or were unsure, a belief that taxes are already too high, a perception that city funds have been/will be mismanaged or misspent, and a desire for additional information about the measure were the most common reasons mentioned for their position.

SERVICES

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

- Provide fire protection and paramedic services
- Provide quick responses to 911 emergencies
- Repair and maintain public facilities and infrastructure

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 ensure that we have enough police officers, firefighters, dispatchers, and paramedics to respond quickly to 911 emergencies.*
- *We have fewer police officers today than we did 10 years ago, meanwhile our population and the number of 911 emergency calls continues to grow. We need more police officers to keep our community safe.*
- *The City of Atascadero has just three police officers on duty at a time, which is less than half the number of police officers that experts agree is needed to keep a community of our size safe. This measure will improve our public safety.*

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 for the proposed sales tax among likely November 2020 voters increased slightly to 68%, with 36% of voters indicating that they would *definitely* vote yes on the measure. Approximately 24% of respondents opposed the measure at this point in the survey, and an additional 8% 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, which means the City can divert the money to pet projects.*
- *Taxes are already too high, we can't afford another tax increase. This is especially true for seniors and others on fixed incomes.*
- *This tax will last forever. There is not expiration date.*

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 one-cent sales tax measure was found among 65% of likely November 2020 voters, with 33% indicating that they would *definitely* support the measure. Approximately 26% of respondents were opposed to the measure at the Final Ballot Test, and 9% were unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

SUPPORT AT LOWER RATE

- Voters who did not support the proposed measure at the Final Ballot Test were asked if they would support the measure at a lower tax rate of one-half cent. An additional 6% of voters indicated they would support the measure under this condition.

RELEVANT ATTITUDES

- After being informed that the City currently spends approximately \$500,000 each year to operate and maintain the zoo, two-thirds of voters (68%) favored keeping the zoo open despite the cost, whereas 21% preferred to close the zoo to save money, and 11% preferred to not answer the question.
- When asked to rate the job the City of Atascadero had done in managing its financial resources, approximately one-quarter of respondents confided that they were unsure (24%) or preferred to not answer the question (2%). The remaining respondents were divided between those who provided an excellent (4%) or good rating (31%), those who offered fair (25%), and those who felt the City's performance in this respect has been poor (9%) or very poor (4%).

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 experience conducting revenue measure studies for public agencies throughout the State.

Is it feasible to place a local sales tax measure on the ballot in 2020?

Yes. Atascadero voters have a high opinion of the quality of life in the community, with eight-in-ten voters rating the quality of life in the City as excellent or good. Voters also value the services they receive from the City and see opportunities to strengthen public safety and public works. Together, these sentiments translate into strong *natural* support (67%) for establishing a one cent sales tax to provide funding for general city services such as police and crime prevention, fire protection, paramedics, and 911 emergency response, maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure, and recreation, community services, and other 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 sales tax measure has a very good chance of passage if placed on the November 2020 ballot.

Having stated that a general sales tax 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 services do Atascadero 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 Atascadero City Council would have the discretion to decide how to spend the revenues, the survey results indicate that voters are most interested in using the proceeds to fund public safety and public works. Specifically, voters most strongly favored using measure proceeds to provide fire protection and paramedic services, provide quick responses to 911 emergencies, repair and maintain public facilities and

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

infrastructure, maintain parks and recreation facilities including courts, fields and playgrounds, and keep public areas clean and free of graffiti.

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 revenue measure are somewhat sensitive to the nature, and amount, of information they have about the measure. 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 sales tax. However, voters also exhibited some sensitivity to opposition arguments designed to reduce support for the measure. 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 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. Should the economy and/or political climate improve, support for the measure could increase. Conversely, negative economic and/or political developments, especially at the local level, could dampen support for the measure below what was recorded in this study.

QUALITY OF LIFE & CITY SERVICES

The opening section of the survey was designed to gauge voters' opinions regarding the City of Atascadero's performance in providing municipal services, as well as their perceptions of the quality of life in the City.

QUALITY OF LIFE At the outset of the interview, voters were asked to rate the quality of life in the City of Atascadero using a five-point scale of excellent, good, fair, poor, or very poor. As shown in Figure 1 below, eight-in-ten voters shared favorable opinions of the quality of life in Atascadero, with 17% reporting it is excellent and 64% stating it is good. Approximately 16% of voters surveyed said the quality of life in the City is fair, whereas about 2% used poor or very poor to describe the quality of life in Atascadero.

Question 2 *How would you rate the overall quality of life in Atascadero? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor?*

FIGURE 1 QUALITY OF LIFE

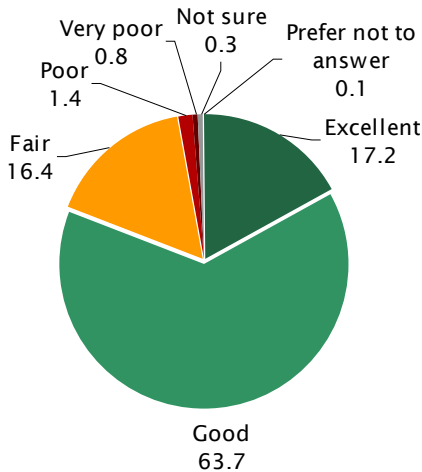
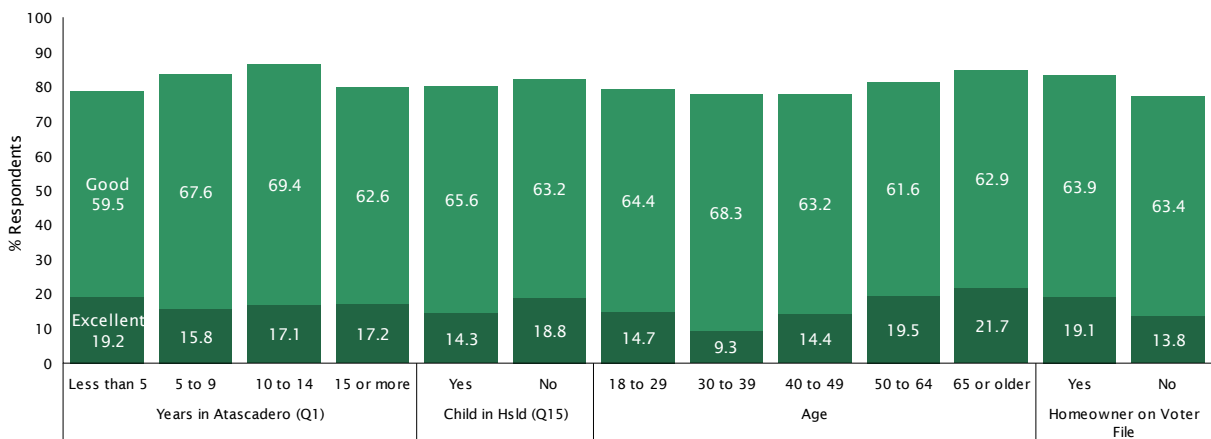


Figure 2 shows how ratings of the quality of life in Atascadero varied according to length of residence, presence of a child in the home, age, and home ownership status. Although some subgroups (e.g., those over the aged 65 or older and homeowners) were more likely than their counterparts to rate the quality of life in the City as excellent, the most striking pattern in the figure is the consistency of opinion. Approximately eight-in-ten respondents in every subgroup rated the quality of life in Atascadero as excellent or good.

FIGURE 2 QUALITY OF LIFE BY YEARS IN ATASCADERO, CHILD IN HSLD, AGE & HOMEOWNER ON VOTER FILE



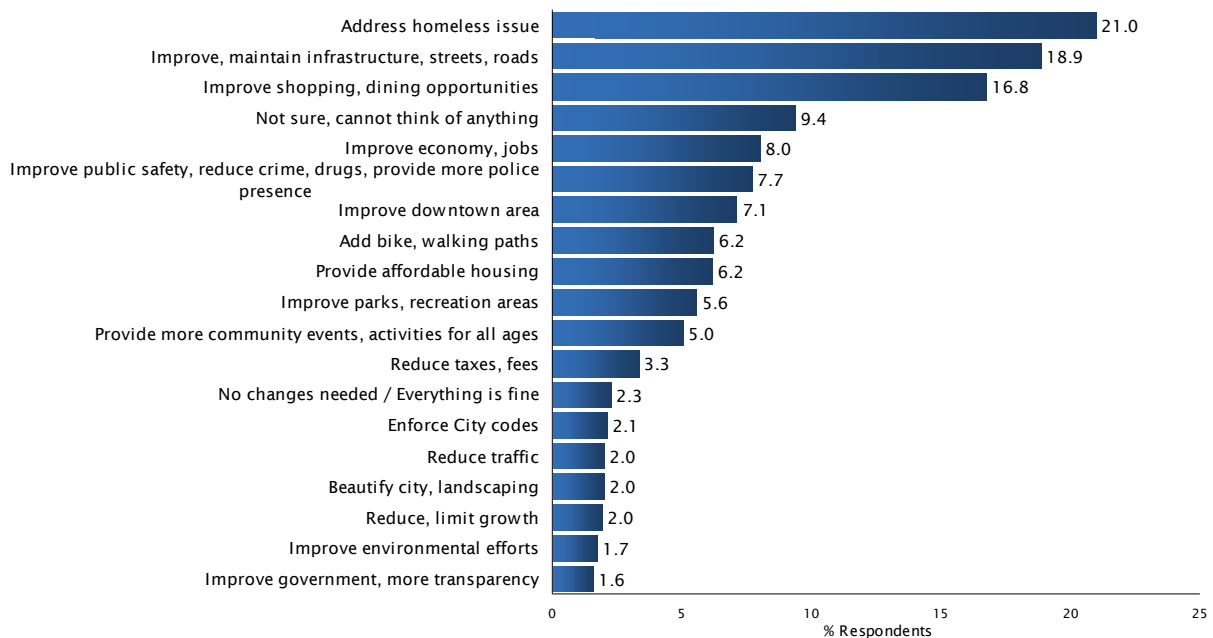
CHANGES TO IMPROVE ATASCADERO The next question in this series asked voters to indicate the one thing that city government could *change* to make Atascadero a better place to live, now and in the future. Question 3 was posed in an open-ended manner, allowing residents to mention any aspect or attribute that came to mind without being prompted by or restricted to a particular list of options. True North later reviewed the verbatim responses and grouped them into the categories shown in Figure 3 below.

Overall, 12% of respondents could not think of any desired changes (9%) or reported that no changes are needed (2%) to make Atascadero a better place to live. Among specific changes desired, addressing the homeless issue was the most common (21%), followed closely by improving and maintaining infrastructure, streets, and roads (19%) and improving shopping and dining opportunities (17%).

Other changes mentioned by at least 5% of respondents included improving the local economy and jobs (8%), improving public safety (8%), improving the downtown area (7%), adding bike and walking paths (6%), providing affordable housing (6%), improving parks and recreation areas (6%), and providing more community events and activities for residents of all ages (5%).

Question 3 *If the city government could change one thing to make Atascadero a better place to live now and in the future, what change would you like to see?*

FIGURE 3 CHANGES TO IMPROVE CITY



OVERALL PERFORMANCE RATING The final question in this series asked respondents to indicate if, overall, they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of Atascadero 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.

As shown in Figure 4 below, 76% of Atascadero voters surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with the City’s efforts to provide municipal services, with 19% saying they were very satisfied and 57% somewhat satisfied. Approximately 18% reported that they were dissatisfied with the City’s overall performance, and 6% were unsure or unwilling to state their opinion. For the interested reader, Figure 5 displays how the percentage of respondents satisfied with the City’s overall performance varied across several demographic subgroups.

Question 4 *Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of Atascadero is doing to provide city services?*

FIGURE 4 OVERALL SATISFACTION

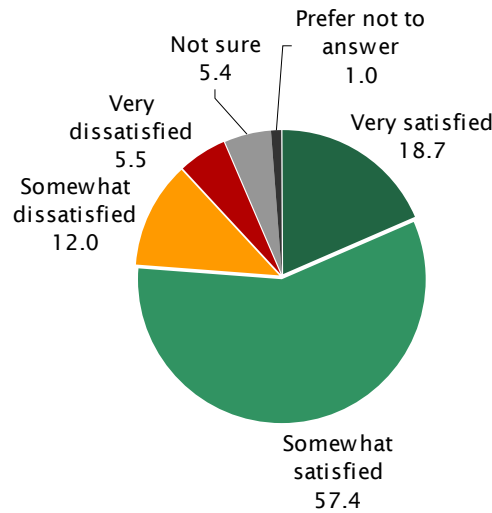
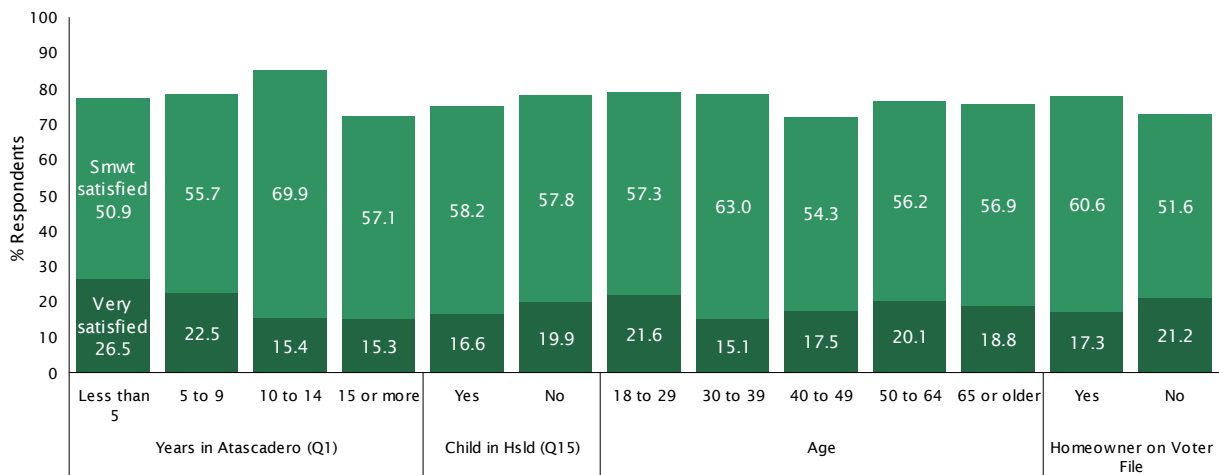


FIGURE 5 OVERALL SATISFACTION BY YEARS IN ATASCADERO, CHILD IN HSLD, AGE & HOMEOWNER ON VOTER FILE



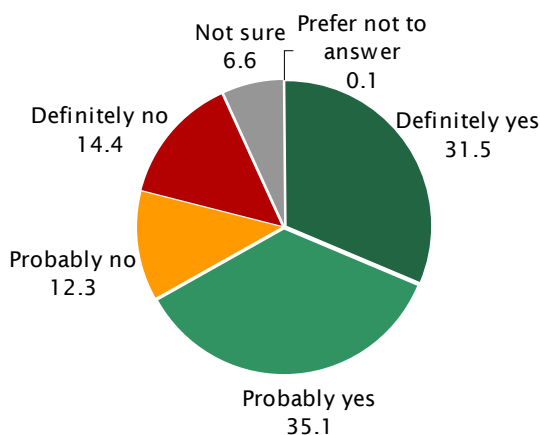
INITIAL BALLOT TEST

The primary research objective of this survey was to estimate voters' support for establishing a one-cent sales tax to provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as police and crime prevention, fire protection, paramedics, and 911 emergency response, maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure, and recreation, community services, and other city services. To this end, Question 5 was designed to take an early assessment of voters' support for the proposed measure.

The motivation for placing Question 5 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 5, 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 5 *Later this year, voters in Atascadero may be asked to vote on a local ballot measure. Let me read you a summary of the measure. To provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as police and crime prevention; fire protection, paramedics, and 911 emergency response; maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure; and recreation, community services, and other city services; shall an ordinance establishing a one-cent sales tax be adopted, providing approximately 5 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with annual independent audits and all money locally controlled? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 6 INITIAL BALLOT TEST



As shown in Figure 6, 67% of likely November 2020 voters surveyed indicated that they would definitely or probably support the proposed one-cent sales tax, whereas 27% stated that they would oppose the measure and 7% 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 17 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 most striking pattern is that support for the proposed measure exceeded the 50% threshold in every identified subgroup with the exception of those dissatisfied with the City’s overall performance (43%). That said, initial support for the sales tax measure did vary somewhat across voter subgroups, with the largest differences found among partisan subgroups (household and individual), length of residence categories, age, and voter registration year.

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

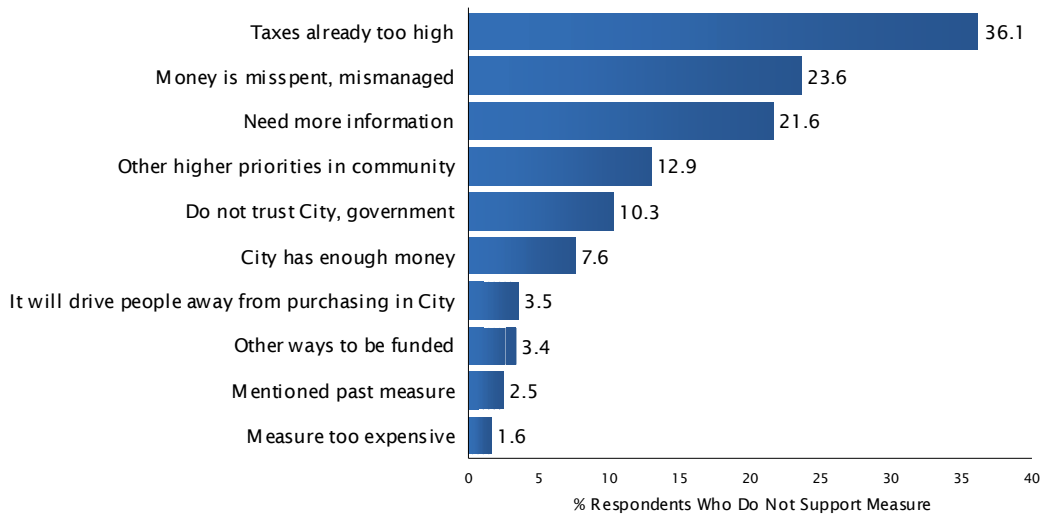
		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	% Not sure
Overall		100.0	66.6	6.6
Years in Atascadero (Q1)	Less than 5	19.5	76.5	5.8
	5 to 9	17.6	72.1	4.5
	10 to 14	13.0	67.8	7.0
	15 or more	49.8	60.3	7.7
Overall Satisfaction (Q4)	Satisfied	81.3	71.7	6.5
	Dissatisfied	18.7	42.6	5.6
Child in Hsld (Q15)	Yes	29.9	71.1	6.0
	No	70.1	65.0	6.9
Party	Democrat	32.9	77.2	5.9
	Republican	39.7	56.4	6.6
	Other / DTS	27.4	68.6	7.5
Household Party Type	Single dem	15.7	74.1	6.5
	Dual dem	9.7	80.0	4.5
	Single rep	13.2	54.3	6.9
	Dual rep	16.4	50.5	7.6
	Other	19.0	69.0	6.8
	Mixed	25.9	71.7	6.6
Age	18 to 29	11.8	77.7	4.8
	30 to 39	16.5	76.8	5.1
	40 to 49	14.3	65.5	6.0
	50 to 64	25.9	62.1	9.3
	65 or older	31.5	61.3	6.1
Registration Year	Since Nov 16	12.8	81.6	2.7
	Jun 10 to <Nov 16	16.9	76.7	5.5
	Jun 04 to <Jun 10	17.8	65.6	7.5
	Before June 04	52.5	60.0	7.6
Homeowner on Voter File	Yes	64.2	63.8	7.9
	No	35.8	71.6	4.2
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	81.0	66.3	6.3
	No	19.0	67.6	8.1
Likely Mar 2020 Voter	Yes	82.8	64.6	7.1
	No	17.2	76.0	4.3
Likely Nov 2020 Voter	Yes, natural	95.0	66.2	6.8
	Yes, GOTV	5.0	74.1	3.6
Gender	Male	47.6	62.5	4.6
	Female	52.4	73.4	7.8

REASONS FOR OPPOSING MEASURE Respondents who opposed the measure (or were unsure) at the Question 5 Initial Ballot Test were asked if there was a particular reason for their position. Question 6 was asked in an open-ended manner, allowing respondents to mention any reason that came to mind without being prompted by, or restricted to, a particular list of options.

Among specific reasons offered for not supporting the measure, a belief that taxes are already too high was the most common, mentioned by 36% of voters who received the question, followed by the perception that city funds have been/will be mismanaged or misspent (24%) and a desire for additional information about the measure (22%).

Question 6 *Is there a particular reason why you do not support or are unsure about the measure I just described?*

FIGURE 7 REASONS FOR NOT SUPPORTING MEASURE



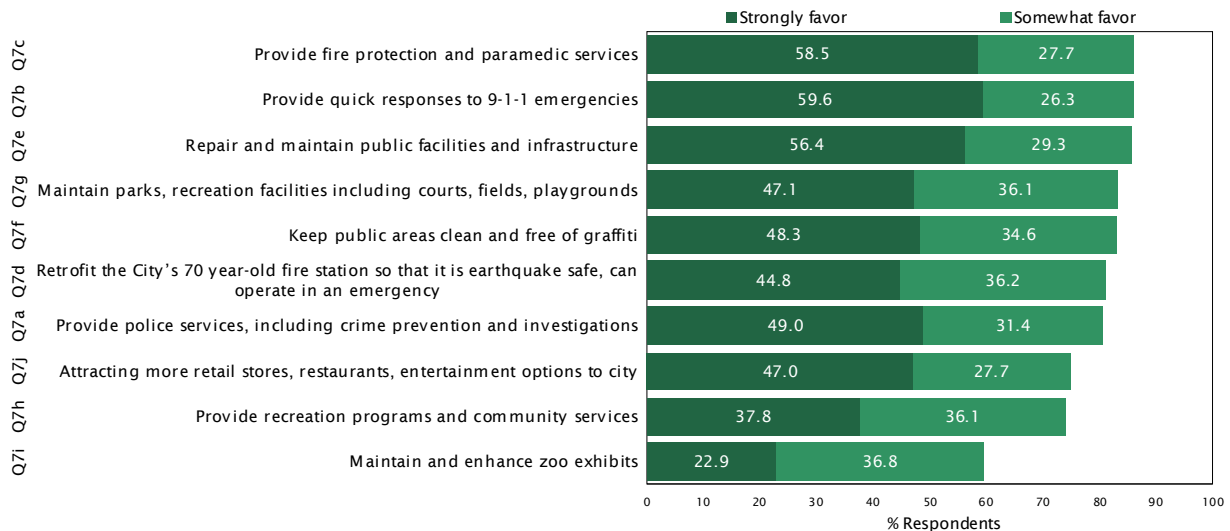
SERVICES

The ballot language presented in Question 5 indicated that the proposed measure would provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as police and crime prevention, fire protection, paramedics, and 911 emergency response, maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure, and recreation, community services, and other city services. The purpose of Question 7 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 8 below. The order in which the services were presented to respondents was randomized to avoid a systematic position bias.

Question 7 *The measure we've been discussing will provide funding for a variety of services in your community. If the measure passes, would you favor or oppose using some of the money to: -----, or do you not have an opinion?*

FIGURE 8 SERVICES



Overall, the services that resonated with the largest percentage of respondents were providing fire protection and paramedic services (86% strongly or somewhat favor), providing quick responses to 911 emergencies (86%), and repairing and maintaining public facilities and infrastructure (86%).

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 three of the top five priorities for funding.

TABLE 2 TOP SERVICES BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q5)	Item	Project or Improvement Summary	% Strongly Favor
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 524)	Q7c	Provide fire protection and paramedic services	69
	Q7b	Provide quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	69
	Q7e	Repair and maintain public facilities and infrastructure	66
	Q7f	Keep public areas clean and free of graffiti	58
	Q7g	Maintain parks, recreation facilities including courts, fields, playgrounds	58
Probably or Definitely No (n = 210)	Q7j	Attracting more retail stores, restaurants, entertainment options to city	37
	Q7b	Provide quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	36
	Q7e	Repair and maintain public facilities and infrastructure	32
	Q7c	Provide fire protection and paramedic services	31
	Q7a	Provide police services, including crime prevention and investigations	29
Not Sure (n = 52)	Q7c	Provide fire protection and paramedic services	59
	Q7b	Provide quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	58
	Q7e	Repair and maintain public facilities and infrastructure	54
	Q7f	Keep public areas clean and free of graffiti	50
	Q7a	Provide police services, including crime prevention and investigations	50

POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

If the City chooses to place a measure on an upcoming 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 sales tax 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 8 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 20). Within each series, specific arguments were administered in random order to avoid a systematic position bias.

Question 8 *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 9 POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

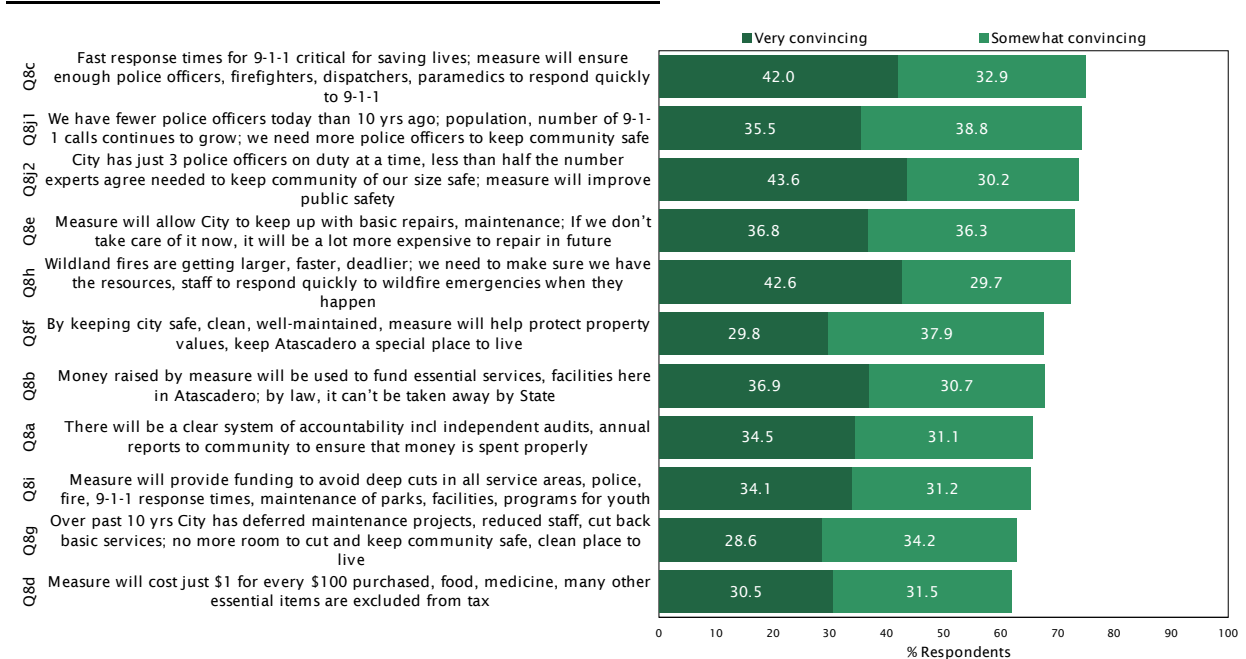


Figure 9 presents the truncated positive arguments tested, as well as voters' reactions to the arguments. The arguments are ranked from most convincing to least convincing based on the percentage of respondents who indicated that the argument was either a 'very convincing' or 'somewhat convincing' reason to support the sales tax 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 ensure that we have enough police officers, firefighters, dispatchers, and paramedics to respond quickly to 911 emergencies* (75% very or somewhat convincing), *We have fewer police officers today than we did 10 years ago - meanwhile our popula-*

tion and the number of 911 emergency calls continues to grow. We need more police officers to keep our community safe (74%), The City of Atascadero has just three police officers on duty at a time, which is less than half the number of police officers that experts agree is needed to keep a community of our size safe. This measure will improve our public safety (74%), The funding raised by this measure will allow the City to keep up with basic repairs and maintenance to public facilities and infrastructure. If we don't take care of it now, it will be a lot more expensive to repair in the future (73%), and Wildland fires are getting larger, faster, and deadlier. We need to make sure we have the resources and staff to respond quickly to wildfire emergencies when they happen (72%).

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, three arguments were ranked among the top five most compelling by all three groups.

TABLE 3 TOP POSITIVE ARGUMENTS BY POSITION AT INITIAL BALLOT TEST

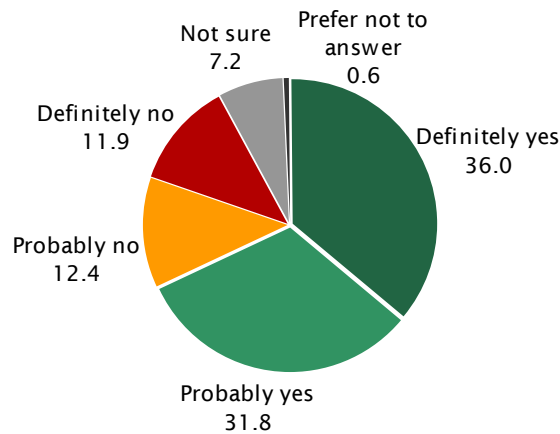
Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q5)	Item	Positive Argument Summary	% Very Convincing
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 524)	Q8j2	City has just 3 police officers on duty at a time, less than half the number experts agree needed to keep community of our size safe; measure will improve public safety	57
	Q8h	Wildland fires are getting larger, faster, deadlier; we need to make sure we have the resources, staff to respond quickly to wildfire emergencies when they happen	54
	Q8c	Fast response times for 9-1-1 critical for saving lives; measure will ensure enough police officers, firefighters, dispatchers, paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1	53
	Q8e	Measure will allow City to keep up with basic repairs, maintenance; If we don't take care of it now, it will be a lot more expensive to repair in future	48
	Q8b	Money raised by measure will be used to fund essential services, facilities here in Atascadero; by law, it can't be taken away by State	48
Probably or Definitely No (n = 210)	Q8h	Wildland fires are getting larger, faster, deadlier; we need to make sure we have the resources, staff to respond quickly to wildfire emergencies when they happen	15
	Q8c	Fast response times for 9-1-1 critical for saving lives; measure will ensure enough police officers, firefighters, dispatchers, paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1	15
	Q8j1	We have fewer police officers today than 10 yrs ago; population, number of 9-1-1 calls continues to grow; we need more police officers to keep community safe	14
	Q8a	There will be a clear system of accountability incl independent audits, annual reports to community to ensure that money is spent properly	14
	Q8j2	City has just 3 police officers on duty at a time, less than half the number experts agree needed to keep community of our size safe; measure will improve public safety	12
Not Sure (n = 52)	Q8h	Wildland fires are getting larger, faster, deadlier; we need to make sure we have the resources, staff to respond quickly to wildfire emergencies when they happen	38
	Q8a	There will be a clear system of accountability incl independent audits, annual reports to community to ensure that money is spent properly	38
	Q8j2	City has just 3 police officers on duty at a time, less than half the number experts agree needed to keep community of our size safe; measure will improve public safety	37
	Q8c	Fast response times for 9-1-1 critical for saving lives; measure will ensure enough police officers, firefighters, dispatchers, paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1	37
	Q8j1	We have fewer police officers today than 10 yrs ago; population, number of 9-1-1 calls continues to grow; we need more police officers to keep community safe	32

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 sales tax measure may have changed. As shown in Figure 10, overall support among likely November 2020 voters increased slightly to 68%, with 36% of voters indicating that they would *definitely* vote yes on the measure. Approximately 24% of respondents opposed the measure at this point in the survey, and an additional 8% were unsure or unwilling to state their vote choice.

Question 9 *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 provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as police and crime prevention; fire protection, paramedics, and 911 emergency response; maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure; and recreation, community services, and other city services; shall an ordinance establishing a one-cent sales tax be adopted, providing approximately 5 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with annual independent audits and all money locally controlled? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 10 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 sales tax measure increased or decreased by modest amounts (less than 5 percentage points) between the Initial and Interim Ballot Test for nearly all voter subgroups.

TABLE 4 DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF SUPPORT AT INTERIM BALLOT TEST

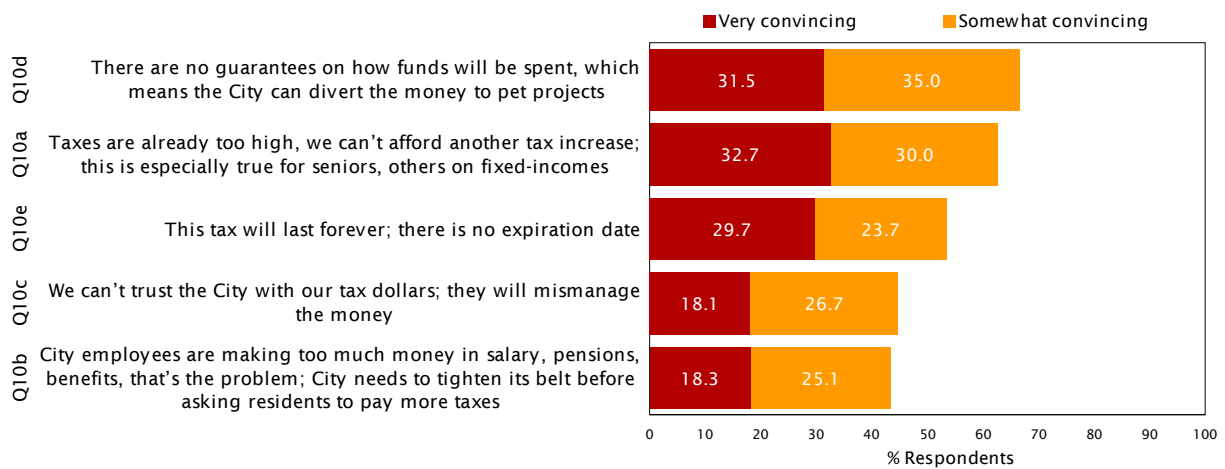
		Approximate % of Voter Universe	% Probably or Definitely Yes	Change From Initial Ballot Test (Q5)
Overall		100.0	67.8	+1.3
Years in Atascadero (Q1)	Less than 5	19.5	81.0	+4.4
	5 to 9	17.6	69.9	-2.3
	10 to 14	13.0	65.0	-2.9
	15 or more	49.8	62.6	+2.3
Overall Satisfaction (Q4)	Satisfied	81.3	73.4	+1.7
	Dissatisfied	18.7	42.3	-0.4
Child in Hsld (Q15)	Yes	29.9	69.6	-1.5
	No	70.1	67.7	+2.7
Party	Democrat	32.9	80.6	+3.4
	Republican	39.7	55.3	-1.1
	Other / DTS	27.4	70.7	+2.1
Household Party Type	Single dem	15.7	77.2	+3.1
	Dual dem	9.7	83.5	+3.5
	Single rep	13.2	53.3	-1.0
	Dual rep	16.4	50.3	-0.2
	Other	19.0	71.2	+2.2
	Mixed	25.9	72.3	+0.7
Age	18 to 29	11.8	79.1	+1.5
	30 to 39	16.5	77.9	+1.1
	40 to 49	14.3	66.0	+0.5
	50 to 64	25.9	64.7	+2.5
	65 or older	31.5	61.8	+0.6
Registration Year	Since Nov 16	12.8	87.0	+5.4
	Jun 10 to <Nov 16	16.9	75.7	-1.0
	Jun 04 to <Jun 10	17.8	65.5	-0.2
	Before June 04	52.5	61.5	+1.5
Homeowner on Voter File	Yes	64.2	66.1	+2.3
	No	35.8	70.9	-0.7
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	81.0	68.0	+1.7
	No	19.0	66.9	-0.6
Likely Mar 2020 Voter	Yes	82.8	64.9	+0.2
	No	17.2	82.2	+6.2
Likely Nov 2020 Voter	Yes, natural	95.0	67.1	+0.9
	Yes, GOTV	5.0	81.4	+7.2
Gender	Male	47.6	62.3	-0.2
	Female	52.4	76.0	+2.6

NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

Whereas Question 8 of the survey presented respondents with arguments in favor of the sales tax measure, Question 10 presented respondents with arguments designed to elicit opposition to the measure. In the case of Question 10, 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 11.

Question 10 *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 11 NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS



Most voters found the negative arguments tested to be less convincing than the positive arguments. The most compelling negative arguments were: *There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent, which means the City can divert the money to pet projects* (67% very or somewhat convincing) and *Taxes are already too high - we can't afford another tax increase. This is especially true for seniors and others on fixed incomes* (63%).

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

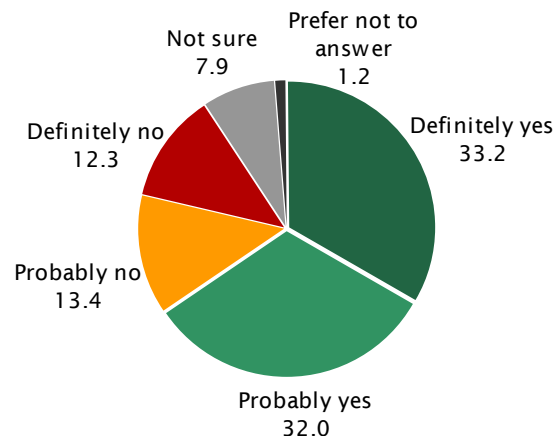
Position at Initial Ballot Test (Q5)	Item	Negative Argument Summary	% Very Convincing
Probably or Definitely Yes (n = 524)	Q10d	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent, which means the City can divert the money to pet projects	21
	Q10a	Taxes are already too high, we can't afford another tax increase; this is especially true for seniors, others on fixed-incomes	18
	Q10e	This tax will last forever; there is no expiration date	16
	Q10b	City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions, benefits, that's the problem; City needs to tighten its belt before asking residents to pay more taxes	10
	Q10c	We can't trust the City with our tax dollars; they will mismanage the money	8
Probably or Definitely No (n = 210)	Q10a	Taxes are already too high, we can't afford another tax increase; this is especially true for seniors, others on fixed-incomes	68
	Q10e	This tax will last forever; there is no expiration date	60
	Q10d	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent, which means the City can divert the money to pet projects	57
	Q10c	We can't trust the City with our tax dollars; they will mismanage the money	44
	Q10b	City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions, benefits, that's the problem; City needs to tighten its belt before asking residents to pay more taxes	39
Not Sure (n = 52)	Q10a	Taxes are already too high, we can't afford another tax increase; this is especially true for seniors, others on fixed-incomes	42
	Q10d	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent, which means the City can divert the money to pet projects	35
	Q10e	This tax will last forever; there is no expiration date	29
	Q10c	We can't trust the City with our tax dollars; they will mismanage the money	16
	Q10b	City employees are making too much money in salary, pensions, benefits, that's the problem; City needs to tighten its belt before asking residents to pay more taxes	16

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 sales tax measure.

Question 11 *Now that you have heard a bit more about the measure, let me read you a summary of it one more time. To provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as police and crime prevention; fire protection, paramedics, and 911 emergency response; maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure; and recreation, community services, and other city services; shall an ordinance establishing a one-cent sales tax be adopted, providing approximately 5 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with annual independent audits and all money locally controlled? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?*

FIGURE 12 FINAL BALLOT TEST



At this point in the survey, support for the one-cent sales tax measure was found among 65% of likely November 2020 voters, with 33% indicating that they would *definitely* support the measure. Approximately 26% of respondents were opposed to the measure at the Final Ballot Test, and 9% were 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 (Q5)	Change From Interim Ballot Test (Q9)
Overall		100.0	65.2	-1.4	-2.6
Years in Atascadero (Q1)	Less than 5	19.5	76.4	-0.2	-4.6
	5 to 9	17.6	69.1	-3.0	-0.8
	10 to 14	13.0	64.3	-3.5	-0.6
	15 or more	49.8	59.7	-0.5	-2.9
Overall Satisfaction (Q4)	Satisfied	81.3	71.0	-0.7	-2.4
	Dissatisfied	18.7	39.3	-3.4	-3.0
Child in Hsld (Q15)	Yes	29.9	66.1	-5.0	-3.6
	No	70.1	65.1	+0.1	-2.6
Party	Democrat	32.9	77.5	+0.3	-3.1
	Republican	39.7	53.7	-2.7	-1.6
	Other / DTS	27.4	67.1	-1.5	-3.6
Household Party Type	Single dem	15.7	74.3	+0.2	-2.9
	Dual dem	9.7	80.5	+0.4	-3.1
	Single rep	13.2	50.3	-4.0	-3.0
	Dual rep	16.4	48.4	-2.1	-1.9
	Other	19.0	69.0	+0.0	-2.2
	Mixed	25.9	69.4	-2.2	-2.9
Age	18 to 29	11.8	75.9	-1.8	-3.3
	30 to 39	16.5	75.1	-1.7	-2.8
	40 to 49	14.3	64.5	-1.0	-1.5
	50 to 64	25.9	62.9	+0.7	-1.8
	65 or older	31.5	58.3	-3.0	-3.5
Registration Year	Since Nov 16	12.8	82.0	+0.4	-5.0
	Jun 10 to <Nov 16	16.9	74.5	-2.2	-1.2
	Jun 04 to <Jun 10	17.8	64.5	-1.2	-1.0
	Before June 04	52.5	58.4	-1.6	-3.1
Homeowner on Voter File	Yes	64.2	63.2	-0.5	-2.9
	No	35.8	68.7	-2.9	-2.2
Likely to Vote by Mail	Yes	81.0	65.2	-1.2	-2.8
	No	19.0	65.3	-2.3	-1.7
Likely Mar 2020 Voter	Yes	82.8	62.2	-2.4	-2.6
	No	17.2	79.4	+3.4	-2.7
Likely Nov 2020 Voter	Yes, natural	95.0	64.6	-1.6	-2.6
	Yes, GOTV	5.0	77.5	+3.4	-3.9
Gender	Male	47.6	59.5	-3.0	-2.7
	Female	52.4	73.1	-0.3	-2.9

As expected, voters generally responded to the negative arguments with a reduction in their support for the sales tax 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) was also one of modestly declining support for many voter subgroups, averaging -1 percentage points overall. Nevertheless, support for the proposed measure at the Final Ballot Test remained 15 percentage points above the simple majority required for passage of a general tax.

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 31.5% of respondents who indicated that they would definitely support the measure at the Initial Ballot Test, 26.1% also indicated they would definitely support the measure at the Final Ballot Test. Approximately 4.1% moved to the probably support group, 0.3% moved to the probably oppose group, 0.0% moved to the definitely oppose group, and 0.9% 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 (Q5)		Final Ballot Test (Q11)				
		Definitely support	Probably support	Probably oppose	Definitely oppose	Not sure
Definitely support	31.5% →	26.1%	4.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%
Probably support	35.1% →	6.9%	24.4%	0.7%	0.4%	2.7%
Probably oppose	12.3% →	0.0%	1.6%	7.9%	1.5%	1.3%
Definitely oppose	14.4% →	0.0%	0.1%	3.5%	10.3%	0.5%
Not sure	6.7% →	0.2%	1.7%	1.0%	0.1%	3.6%

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 slightly larger percentage found the same information to be a reason to be less supportive. Despite 12% of respondents making 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 one percentage points lower 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.

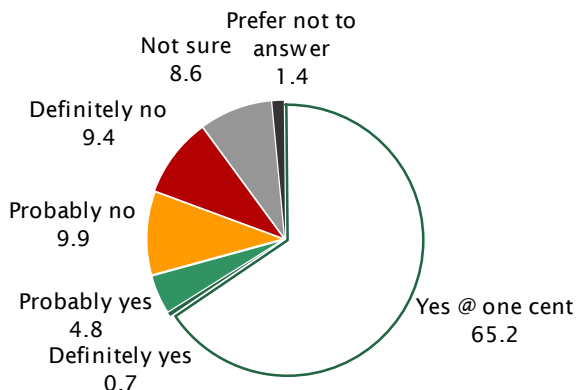
FINAL BALLOT TEST AT LOWER RATE

The ballot language tested throughout the survey indicated that the measure would increase the local sales tax rate by one cent and be used to fund general city services. Voters who did not support the proposed measure at the Final Ballot Test (Question 11) were subsequently asked if they would support the measure if the rate were set at a lower amount: one-half cent.

As shown in Figure 13, lowering the tax rate to one-half cent generated a modest amount of additional support for the proposed measure. An additional 6% of voters indicated they would support the measure if the tax rate were lowered to one-half cent, although nearly all of the additional support for the measure was 'soft' (probably yes).

Question 12 *What if the measure I just described raised the sales tax by a lower amount: one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no on the measure?*

FIGURE 13 FINAL BALLOT TEST AT ONE-HALF CENT



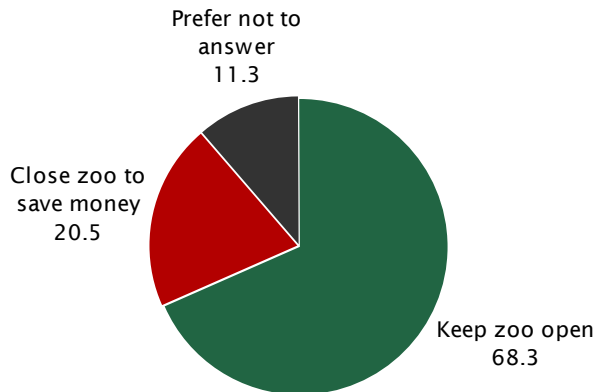
RELEVANT ATTITUDES

The final substantive section of the survey focused on the City’s financial management practices in general, as well as the use of General Fund dollars to operate and maintain the Charles Paddock Zoo.

SHOULD THE CITY CONTINUE TO OPERATE THE ZOO? When placed into competition with public safety and public works services earlier in survey (see *Services* on page 14), respondents rated operating the zoo as being a comparatively low priority for future sales tax revenues. Anticipating that this might be the case, Question 13 first informed voters that the City currently spends approximately \$500,000 each year to operate and maintain the zoo, then asked if they think the City should remain open or be closed to save money. As shown in Figure 14, two-thirds of voters (68%) favored keeping the zoo open despite the cost, whereas 21% preferred to close the zoo to save money, and 11% preferred to not answer the question.

Question 13 *The City of Atascadero operates the Charles Paddock zoo, which is the Central Coast's only accredited zoo. In a typical year, the City spends about 500 thousand dollars of its general fund budget to operate and maintain the zoo. In your opinion, should the City keep the zoo open or should the zoo be closed to save money?*

FIGURE 14 OPINION OF ZOO

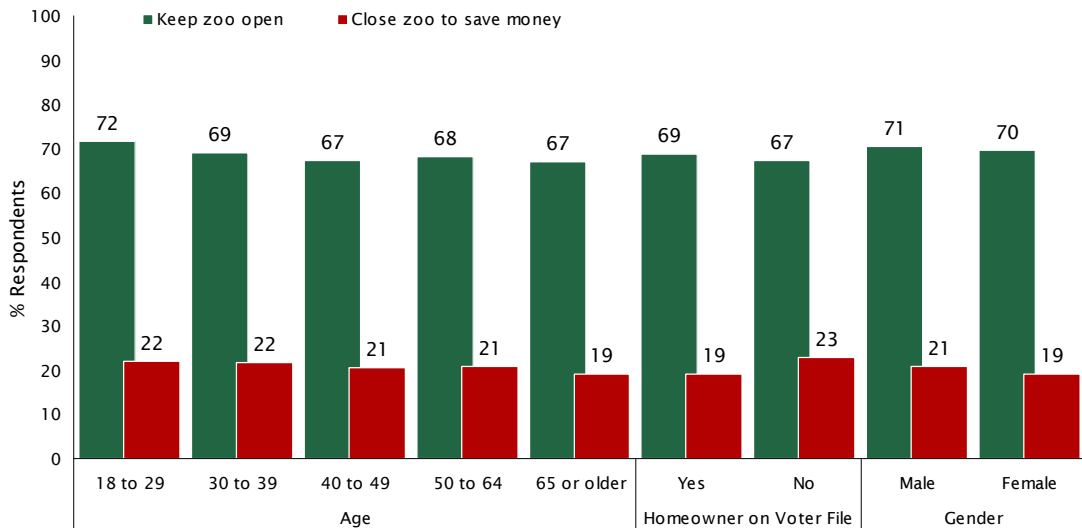


Support for keeping the zoo open were strikingly similar across subgroups of Atascadero residents, as shown in figures 15 and 16 on the next page. Supporters of the zoo outnumbered those who prefer it be closed by a large margin in every subgroup.

FIGURE 15 OPINION OF ZOO BY YEARS IN ATASCADERO, OVERALL SATISFACTION & CHILD IN HSLD



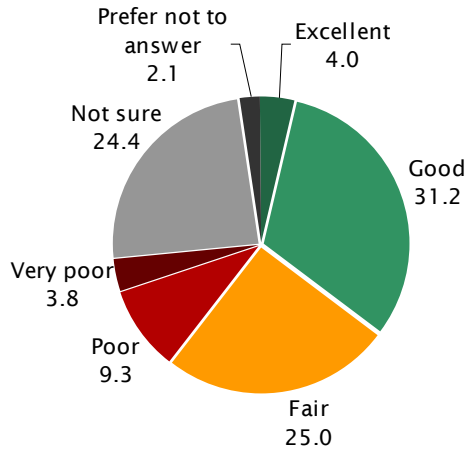
FIGURE 16 OPINION OF ZOO BY AGE, HOMEOWNER ON VOTER FILE & GENDER



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT Respondents were also asked to rate the job the City of Atascadero had done in managing its financial resources (see Figure 17). Approximately one-quarter of respondents confided that they were unsure (24%) or preferred to not answer the question (2%). The remaining respondents were divided between those who provided an excellent (4%) or good rating (31%), those who offered fair (25%), and those who felt the City’s performance in this respect has been poor (9%) or very poor (4%).

Question 14 *In your opinion, has the City of Atascadero done an excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor job of managing its financial resources?*

FIGURE 17 FISCAL MANAGEMENT



BACKGROUND & DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE 8 DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAMPLE

<i>Total Respondents</i>	787
Years in Atascadero (Q1)	
Less than 5	19.4
5 to 9	17.5
10 to 14	13.0
15 or more	49.6
Prefer not to answer	0.5
Child in Hsld (Q15)	
Yes	29.1
No	68.1
Prefer not to answer	2.8
Gender	
Male	44.4
Female	48.8
Prefer not to answer	6.8
Age	
18 to 29	11.8
30 to 39	16.5
40 to 49	14.3
50 to 64	25.9
65 or older	31.5
Party	
Democrat	32.9
Republican	39.7
Other / DTS	27.4
Homeowner on Voter File	
Yes	64.2
No	35.8
Registration Year	
Since Nov 16	12.8
Jun 10 to <Nov 16	16.9
Jun 04 to <Jun 10	17.8
Before June 04	52.5
Likely to Vote by Mail	
Yes	81.0
No	19.0
Likely Mar 2020 Voter	
Yes	82.8
No	17.2
Likely Nov 2020 Voter	
Yes, natural	95.0
Yes, GOTV	5.0
Household Party Type	
Single dem	15.7
Dual dem	9.7
Single rep	13.2
Dual rep	16.4
Other	19.0
Mixed	25.9

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 Atascadero 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 items in a set order can lead to a systematic position bias in responses, items were asked in random order for each respondent.

Some of the questions asked in this study were presented only to a subset of respondents. For example, only individuals who did not support the sales tax or were unsure at the Final Ballot Test (Question 11) were asked if they would support the measure at a lower tax rate (Question 12). The questionnaire included with this report (see *Questionnaire & Toplines* on page 33) identifies the skip patterns that were used during the interview to ensure that each respondent received the appropriate questions.

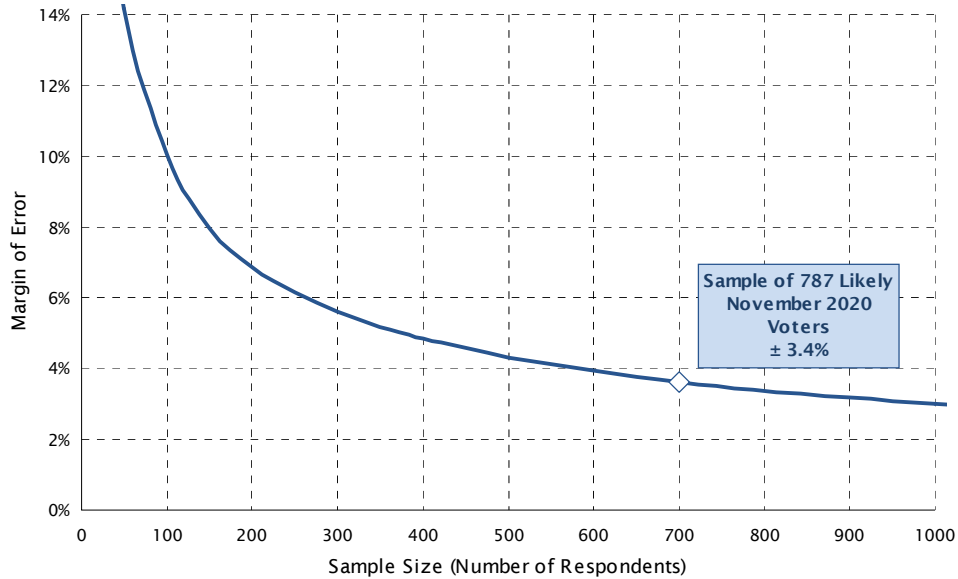
PROGRAMMING & PRE-TEST Prior to fielding the survey, the questionnaire was CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) programmed to assist interviewers when conducting telephone interviews. The CATI program automatically navigates skip patterns, randomizes the appropriate question items, and alerts 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.

SAMPLE The survey was administered to a random sample of 787 registered voters in the City 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 this 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 787 voters for a particular question and what would have been found if all 16,119 likely November 2020 voters identified in the City had been surveyed for the study.

Figure 18 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 $\pm 3.4\%$.

FIGURE 18 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 18 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 16 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, an email reminder notice was also sent to encourage participation among those who had yet to take the survey. A total of 787 surveys were completed between January 18 and January 23, 2020.

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

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 tables. Occasionally, these rounding rules lead to small discrepancies in the first decimal place when comparing tables and charts for a given question. Due to rounding, some figures and narrative include numbers that add to more than or less than 100%.

QUESTIONNAIRE & TOPLINES



City of Atascadero
Revenue Measure Feasibility Survey
Final Toplines (n=787)
January 24, 2020

Section 1: Introduction to Study

Hi, may I please speak to _____. My name is _____ and I'm calling from TNR, an independent public opinion research firm. We're conducting a survey of voters about important issues in the City of Atascadero (Uh-TASK-uh-DAIR-Oh) 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 needed: Your answers will be confidential. The City will be provided with a summary of all survey responses, not individual responses.

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: Quality of Life & City Services

I'd like to begin by asking you a few questions about what it is like to live in Atascadero.

Q1	How long have you lived in the City of Atascadero?		
1	Less than 1 year		2%
2	1 to 4 years		17%
3	5 to 9 years		18%
4	10 to 14 years		13%
5	15 years or longer		50%
99	Prefer not to answer		0%
Q2	How would you rate the overall quality of life in Atascadero? Would you say it is excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor?		
1	Excellent		17%
2	Good		64%
3	Fair		16%
4	Poor		1%
5	Very Poor		1%
98	Not sure		0%
99	Prefer not to answer		0%

City of Atascadero Survey

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Q3		If the city government could change one thing to make Atascadero a better place to live now and in the future, what change would you like to see? Verbatim responses recorded and later grouped into categories shown below.	
	Address homeless issue		21%
	Improve, maintain infrastructure, streets, roads		19%
	Improve shopping, dining opportunities		17%
	Not sure, cannot think of anything		9%
	Improve public safety, reduce crime, drugs, provide more police presence		8%
	Improve economy, jobs		8%
	Improve downtown area		7%
	Provide affordable housing		6%
	Improve parks, recreation areas		6%
	Add bike, walking paths		6%
	Provide more community events, activities for all ages		5%
	Reduce taxes, fees		3%
	Reduce traffic		2%
	Beautify city, landscaping		2%
	Improve environmental efforts		2%
	Reduce, limit growth		2%
	Enforce City codes		2%
	Improve government, more transparency		2%
	No changes needed / Everything is fine		2%
Q4		Generally speaking, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the job the City of Atascadero is doing to provide city services? <i>Get answer, then ask: Would that be very (satisfied/dissatisfied) or somewhat (satisfied/dissatisfied)?</i>	
1	Very satisfied		19%
2	Somewhat satisfied		57%
3	Somewhat dissatisfied		12%
4	Very dissatisfied		6%
98	Not sure		5%
99	Prefer not to answer		1%

Section 3: Initial Ballot Test

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

Q5 To provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as:

- Police and crime prevention
- Fire protection, paramedics, and 9-1-1 emergency response
- Maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure
- And recreation, community services, and other city services

shall an ordinance establishing a one-cent sales tax be adopted, providing approximately 5 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with annual independent audits and all money locally controlled?

If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure? *Get answer, then ask: Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?*

1	Definitely yes	31%	Skip to Q7
2	Probably yes	35%	Skip to Q7
3	Probably no	12%	Ask Q6
4	Definitely no	14%	Ask Q6
98	Not sure	7%	Ask Q6
99	Prefer not to answer	0%	Skip to Q7

Q6 Is there a particular reason why you do not support or are unsure about the measure I just described? *If yes, ask: Please briefly describe your reason? Verbatim responses recorded and later grouped into categories shown below.*

Taxes already too high	36%
Money is misspent, mismanaged	24%
Need more information	22%
Other higher priorities in community	13%
Do not trust City, government	10%
City has enough money	8%
It will drive people away from purchasing in City	4%
Other ways to be funded	3%
Measure too expensive	2%
Mentioned past measure	2%

Section 4: Services							
Q7	The measure we've been discussing will provide funding for a variety of services in your community. 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 crime prevention and investigations	49%	31%	7%	7%	3%	3%
B	Provide quick responses to 9-1-1 emergencies	60%	26%	5%	3%	4%	2%
C	Provide fire protection and paramedic services	58%	28%	5%	4%	3%	2%
D	Retrofit the City's 70-year-old fire station so that it is earthquake safe and can operate in an emergency	45%	36%	8%	6%	4%	2%
E	Repair and maintain public facilities and infrastructure	56%	29%	5%	4%	3%	2%
F	Keep public areas clean and free of graffiti	48%	35%	7%	5%	3%	2%
G	Maintain parks and recreation facilities including courts, fields, and playgrounds	47%	36%	8%	4%	3%	2%
H	Provide recreation programs and community services	38%	36%	11%	7%	6%	2%
I	Maintain and enhance zoo exhibits	23%	37%	15%	15%	8%	2%
J	Attracting more retail stores, restaurants and entertainment options to our city	47%	28%	11%	8%	5%	2%

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.							
Q8	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 J1/J2</i>	Very Convincing	Somewhat Convincing	Not At All Convincing	Don't Believe	Not sure	Prefer not to answer
A	There will be a clear system of accountability including independent audits and annual reports to the community to ensure that the money is spent properly.	34%	31%	17%	12%	3%	2%

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B	All money raised by the measure will be used to fund essential services and facilities here in Atascadero. By law, it can't be taken away by the State.	37%	31%	16%	10%	3%	3%
C	Fast emergency response times for 9-1-1 calls are critical for saving lives. This measure will ensure that we have enough police officers, firefighters, dispatchers, and paramedics to respond quickly to 9-1-1 emergencies.	42%	33%	14%	6%	3%	3%
D	This measure will cost just 1 dollar for every 100 dollars purchased – and food, medicine and many other essential items are excluded from the tax.	31%	31%	22%	9%	4%	3%
E	The funding raised by this measure will allow the City to keep up with basic repairs and maintenance to public facilities and infrastructure. If we don't take care of it now, it will be a lot more expensive to repair in the future.	37%	36%	14%	7%	2%	3%
F	By keeping our city safe, clean and well-maintained, this measure will help protect our property values and keep Atascadero a special place to live.	30%	38%	19%	8%	2%	3%
G	The City has done a good job keeping costs down. Over the past 10 years it has deferred maintenance projects, reduced staff, and cut back on basic services. There is no more room to cut if we want to keep our community a safe, clean place to live. We need to support this measure.	29%	34%	20%	11%	4%	3%
H	Wildland fires are getting larger, faster, and deadlier. We need to make sure we have the resources and staff to respond quickly to wildfire emergencies when they happen.	43%	30%	15%	7%	3%	3%
I	This measure will provide the funding needed to avoid deep cuts in all service areas, including police, fire protection, 9-1-1 emergency response times, the maintenance of parks and public facilities, as well as programs for youth.	34%	31%	19%	11%	3%	3%
J1	We have fewer police officers today than we did 10 years ago – meanwhile our population and the number of 9-1-1 emergency calls continues to grow. We need more police officers to keep our community safe.	36%	39%	13%	8%	2%	2%
J2	The City of Atascadero has just three police officers on duty at a time, which is less than <i>half</i> the number of police officers that experts agree is needed to keep a community of our size safe. This measure will improve our public safety.	44%	30%	11%	11%	2%	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.

Q9	To provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and crime prevention • Fire protection, paramedics, and 9-1-1 emergency response • Maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure • And recreation, community services, and other city services 		
	shall an ordinance establishing a one-cent sales tax be adopted, providing approximately 5 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with annual independent audits and all money 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	36%
	2	Probably yes	32%
	3	Probably no	12%
4	Definitely no	12%	
98	Not sure	7%	
99	Prefer not to answer	1%	

Section 7: Negative Arguments

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

Q10	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	Taxes are already too high - we can't afford another tax increase. This is especially true for seniors and others on fixed incomes.	33%	30%	23%	9%	3%	2%
B	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 residents to pay more taxes.	18%	25%	27%	19%	8%	3%
C	We can't trust the City with our tax dollars. They will mismanage the money.	18%	27%	28%	19%	6%	3%
D	There are no guarantees on how funds will be spent, which means the City can divert the money to pet projects.	32%	35%	17%	9%	6%	2%

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<i>Only odd clusters receive item E.</i>							
E	This tax will last forever. There is no expiration date.	30%	24%	30%	9%	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.

Q11	To provide funding for general city services in the City of Atascadero, such as:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and crime prevention • Fire protection, paramedics, and 9-1-1 emergency response • Maintenance of parks, public facilities and infrastructure • And recreation, community services, and other city services 			
	shall an ordinance establishing a one-cent sales tax be adopted, providing approximately 5 million dollars annually for city services until ended by voters, with annual independent audits and all money 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	33%	Skip to Q13
	2	Probably yes	32%	Skip to Q13
	3	Probably no	13%	Ask Q12
4	Definitely no	12%	Ask Q12	
98	Not sure	8%	Ask Q12	
99	Prefer not to answer	1%	Skip to Q13	
Q12	What if the measure I just described raised the sales tax by a lower amount: one-half cent? Would you vote yes or no on the measure? <i>Get answer, then ask: Would that be definitely (yes/no) or probably (yes/no)?</i>			
		Def, prob yes @ one-cent (Q11)	65%	
	1	Definitely yes	1%	
	2	Probably yes	5%	
	3	Probably no	10%	
	4	Definitely no	9%	
	98	Not sure	9%	
	99	Prefer not to answer	1%	

Section 9: Background & Demographics

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

Q13 The City of Atascadero operates the Charles Paddock zoo, which is the Central Coast's only accredited zoo. In a typical year, the City spends about 500 thousand dollars of its general fund budget to operate and maintain the zoo.
In your opinion, should the City keep the zoo open or should the zoo be closed to save money?

1	Keep the zoo open	68%
2	Close the zoo to save money	20%
99	Prefer not to answer	11%

Q14 In your opinion, has the City of Atascadero done an excellent, good, fair, poor or very poor job of managing its financial resources?

1	Excellent	4%
2	Good	31%
3	Fair	25%
4	Poor	9%
5	Very poor	4%
98	Not Sure	24%
99	Prefer not to answer	2%

Q15 Do you have children under the age of 18 living in your household?

1	Yes	29%
2	No	68%
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	44%
2	Female	49%
3	Prefer not to answer	7%

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S2 Party		
1	Democrat	33%
2	Republican	40%
3	Other	8%
4	DTS	20%
S3 Age on Voter File		
1	18 to 29	12%
2	30 to 39	17%
3	40 to 49	14%
4	50 to 64	26%
5	65 or older	32%
S4 Registration Date		
1	Since Nov 2016	13%
2	Jun 2010 to before Nov 2016	17%
3	Jun 2004 to before Jun 2010	18%
4	Before June 2004	52%
S5 Household Party Type		
1	Single Dem	16%
2	Dual Dem	10%
3	Single Rep	13%
4	Dual Rep	16%
5	Single Other	13%
6	Dual Other	6%
7	Dem & Rep	5%
8	Dem & Other	8%
9	Rep & Other	11%
0	Mixed (Dem + Rep + Other)	2%
S6 Homeowner on Voter File		
1	Yes	64%
2	No	36%

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S7	Likely to Vote by Mail		
	1	Yes	81%
	2	No	19%
S8	Likely March 2020 Voter		
	1	Yes	83%
	2	No	17%
S9	Likely November 2020 Voter		
	1	Yes, natural	95%
	2	Yes, GOTV	5%