



Findings from the Ashland Budget Survey
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Research Team

Karen Miller-Loessi, Ph.D.

Dan Rubenson, Ph.D.

Eva Skuratowicz, Ph.D.

Pat Acklin, M.S.

Research Assistants

Hood Alrahbi

Brooke Carlton

Pandora Hamsa

Katherine Hardenbergh

Emilio McCutcheon

Katie Minich

Overview

- Present findings on policy options, increased spending for public safety, and overall attitudes towards how to balance the budget
- Findings without interpretation
- Please hold questions until the end
- Handout with all the numerical findings

Survey Design

- To maintain a balanced budget, two main questions:
 - Cut spending, increase fees, or a combination?
 - What are Ashlanders' specific priorities?
- Adapted to Council/City's requests throughout
 - Not prescriptive: Community input on priorities rather than specific dollar cuts/increases
 - Reflects alternative approaches to the budget: cutting and/or spending
- Survey design is grounded in the academic literature on budget surveys
 - Context is important: real choices not generalizations
 - Reflects the complex choices faced by the Council and the City government

Issues in Survey Design

General fund only

- Each box (choice set) would balance budget
 - Will hand out results for each choice set
- Identify implications for households
- Blanket approaches such as “eliminate waste”, “cut across the board”, or “reduce employee compensation” don’t tell us about community priorities
- Changes in staffing levels follow identified priorities

Survey Design

- Internal validation by cross-referencing. Each possible budget cut appears in two boxes, within two contexts.
- Two questions (1 & 14) directly address the choice between balancing the budget entirely through unspecified spending cuts or increased fees
- Two questions address increased spending for public safety
- Open comment line for each choice set

Methodology

- Distribution – city utility addresses, population unit is households – 10,766
- Returned surveys – 2,647
- Response rate – 25%
 - Estimated margin of error
 - large N
 - small MOE 1.5 – 1.9%
- Data entry – 6 students (25% verification rate)
- Statistical analysis (SPSS)
- Open-ended comments

Demographics

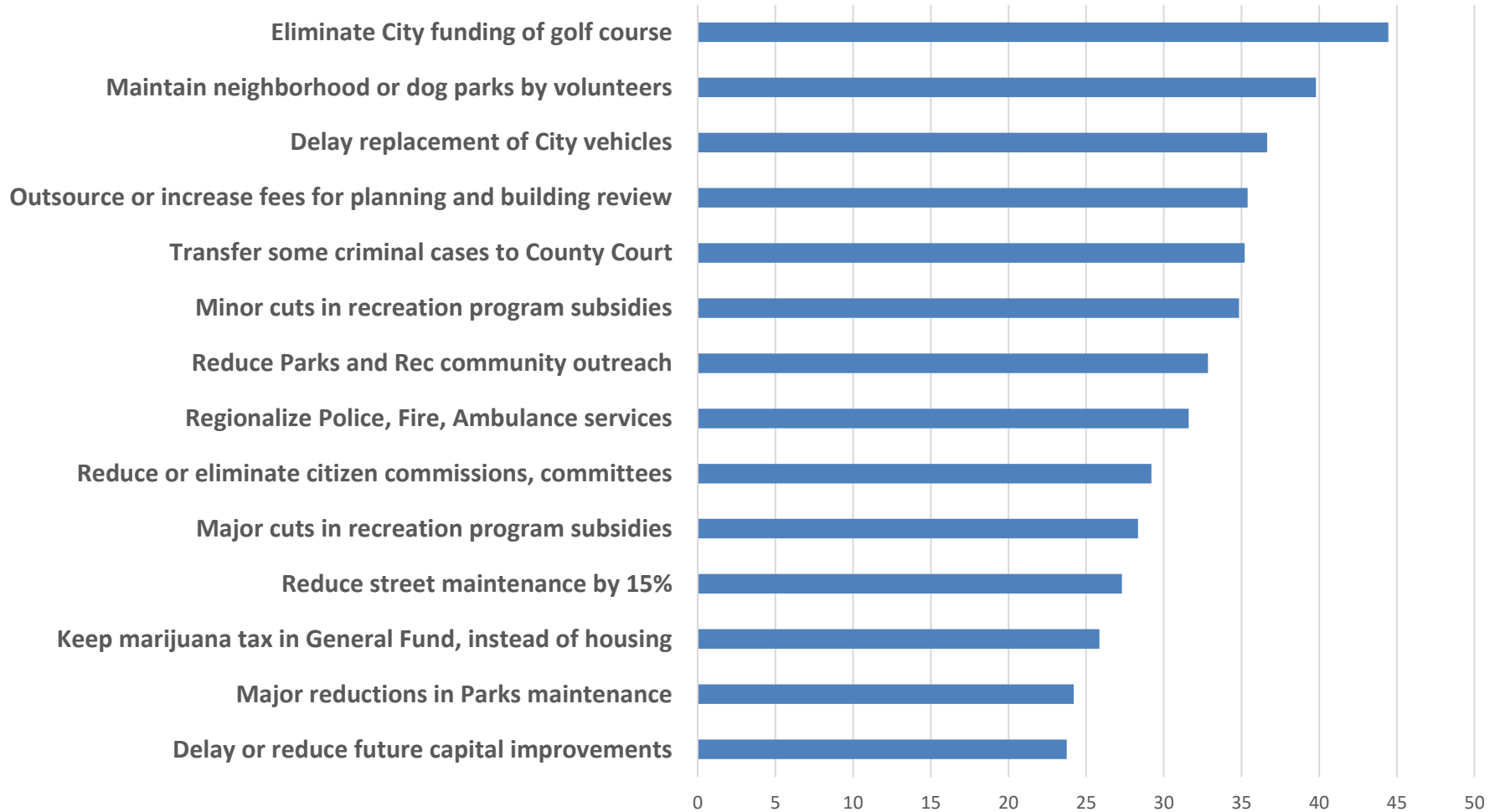
- Own - 85%, Rent – 15%
- Home – 98%, Business – 2%

- Age

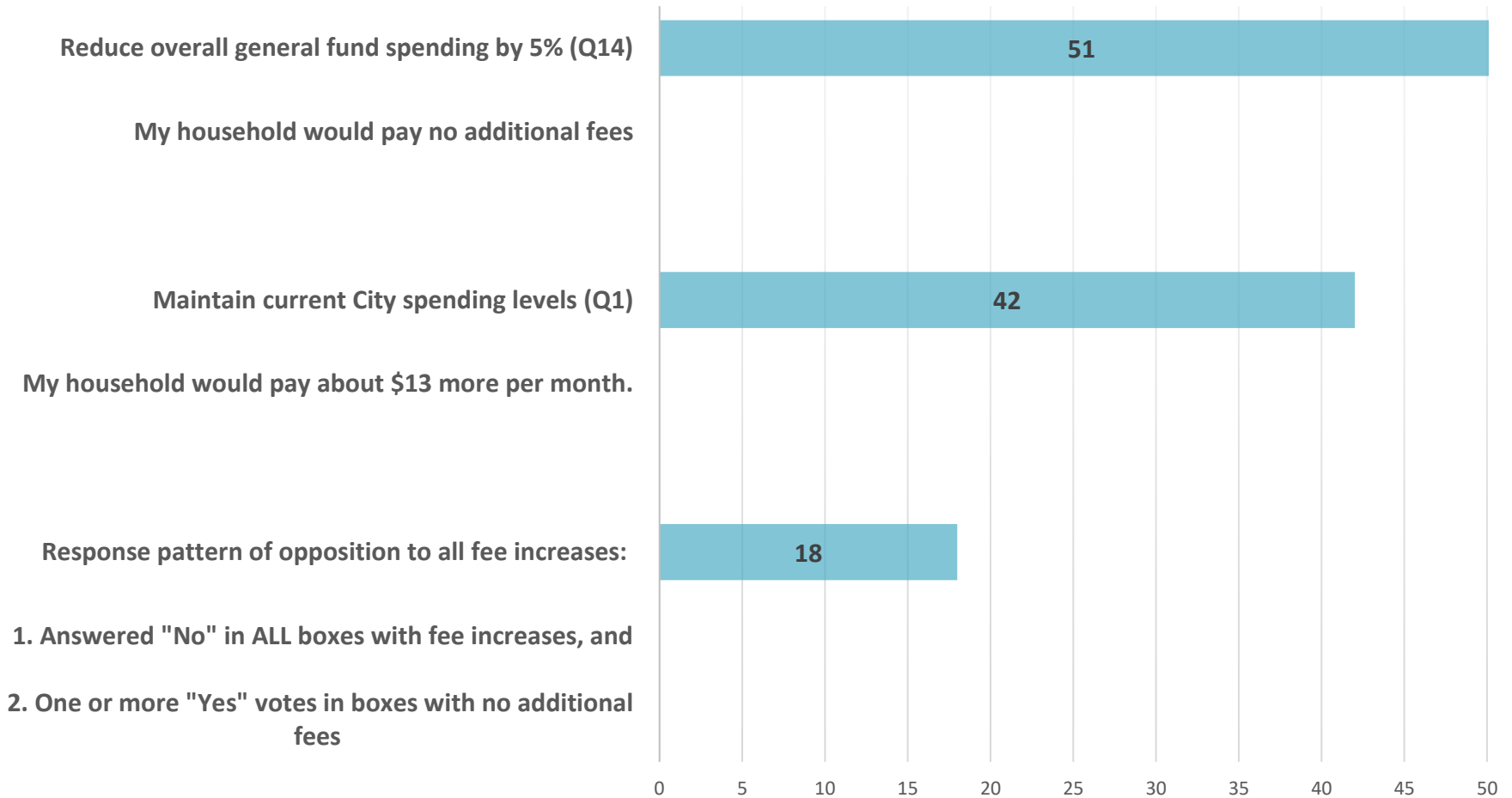
Age	Number	%
20-29	36	2%
30-39	97	5%
40-49	196	9%
50-59	235	11%
60-69	555	27%
70-79	699	33%
80 & up	267	13%
total	2085	
missing	561	21%

- Education

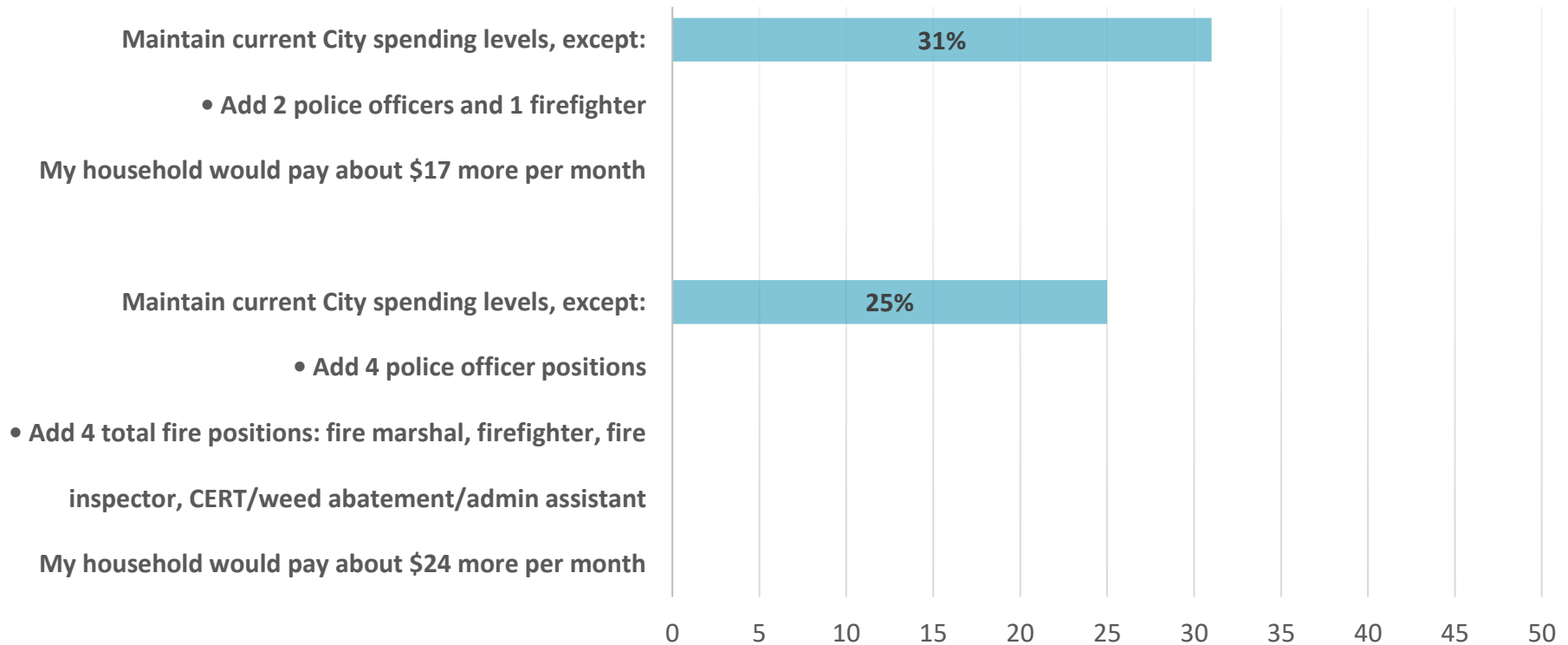
Willingness to reduce specific City services or activities (percent supporting each cut)



REDUCE SPENDING OR INCREASE FEES TO BALANCE THE BUDGET? (NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES)



SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY SPENDING



Summary

- Wide range of opinions represented
- Not an overwhelming mandate for any specific policy change, specific service cuts
- Maintain quality of life, pursue opportunities to control costs
 - Expect City to find a balance
- Support for citizen involvement and volunteerism

Going Forward

Written report

- include ALL of the comments
- more detail on methodology