



# **Sebastopol, California**

## **July 2023**





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This report summarizes the results of a voter survey conducted July 22-25, 2023. This was an 11-question survey designed to gauge public support of potential measures for a tax vote within the City of Sebastopol.

Given the small population of voters, all voters with phone numbers were included in the initial survey sample for phone contact.

A total of 2,229 registered voters were included, 799 were contacted. 198 completed all questions.

Survey respondents were contacted by telephone by professional trained interviewers without knowledge of the end client. Both landlines and mobile numbers were utilized. The operator asked for and only spoke with the specific voter selected in the random selection from the voter file.

Be aware that survey research cannot predict the future. Although great care and the most rigorous methods available were employed in the design, execution and analysis of this survey, these results should be seen only as a snapshot of answers given by these respondents to these questions at the time they were interviewed.



## Respondent Profile

The demographic makeup of respondents to a survey can impact the results of a survey and can skew those results when compared to the total target universe. Every effort was made to ensure that the respondents to the survey accurately reflect a cross section of voters, but methods of contact and responsiveness can still result in a skewed population sample. Included below are tables of the respondent population compared to the voting population. Data analysis included analysis for demographics to identify those categories where demographic differences in the respondent population may skew the results, so that adjusted results can be examined. Since the conclusion is that the demographic makeup of respondents closely matches the voting population, the data below includes the raw results without demographic adjustment.

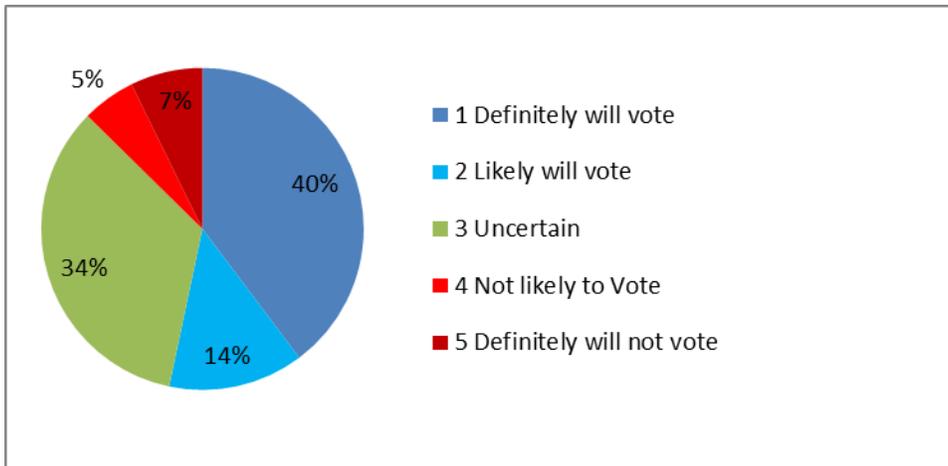
		Respondents	Voters (voter data)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	51%	57%
	Male	49%	43%
<b>Age</b>	Less than 46	34%	31%
	46 to 65	28%	32%
	66 or older	38%	37%

		Respondents	Voters (voter data)
<b>Party Identification</b>	Democratic	67%	69%
	No Party Preference	17%	16%
	Republican	7%	9%
	All Other Parties	9%	7%

In reviewing the comparison of respondents to the voting population, Male voters are somewhat over represented among respondents but overall participation closely matches the voting population.



The first question of the survey asked respondents how likely they would be to vote on a local tax measure. Those who responded that they definitely would not vote were dropped from participation.



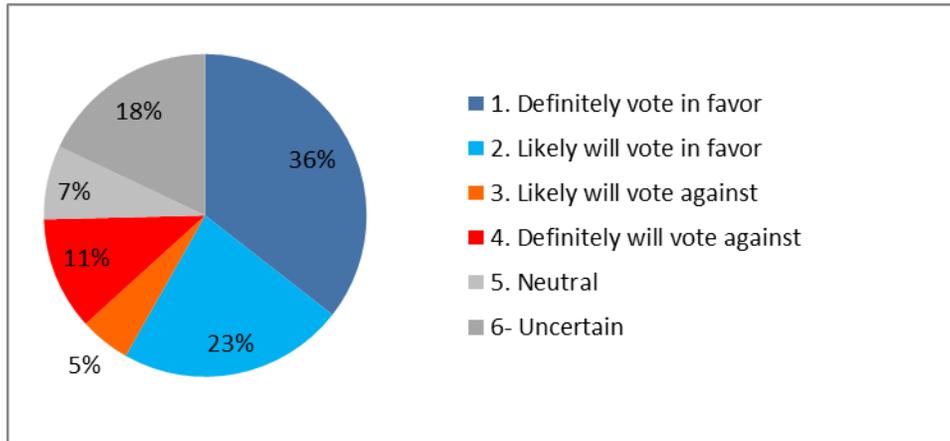
## Support for a special sales tax

Respondents were asked about both a  $\frac{1}{2}$  percent tax and a  $\frac{1}{4}$  percent tax for city services. They were then given a series of questions regarding city budget priorities, and were asked again about the  $\frac{1}{2}$  percent and  $\frac{1}{4}$  percent tax. As a final question, respondents were asked about preferences for inclusion of a sunset clause in the tax measure.

In all questions, the number of respondents who said they would likely or definitely vote in favor of the special tax was close to 60%. The number who responded that they would likely or definitely vote against the special tax was below 20%. Among all respondents the support for a  $\frac{1}{2}$  percent tax rated slightly higher than for a  $\frac{1}{4}$  percent tax. Support for either proposal was strongest among those voters who indicated they Definitely would cast a vote. After questions about budget priorities, among those who said they would definitely vote, 65% would likely or definitely vote in favor of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  percent tax and 68% said they would likely or definitely vote in favor of a  $\frac{1}{4}$  percent tax.

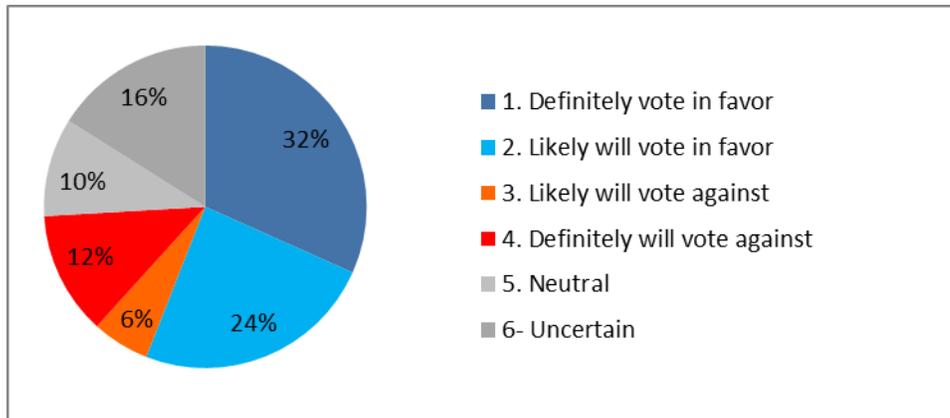
Q2: A special sales tax of one half percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$1,500,000 or most of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a half percent sales tax?

+/- 6.0%



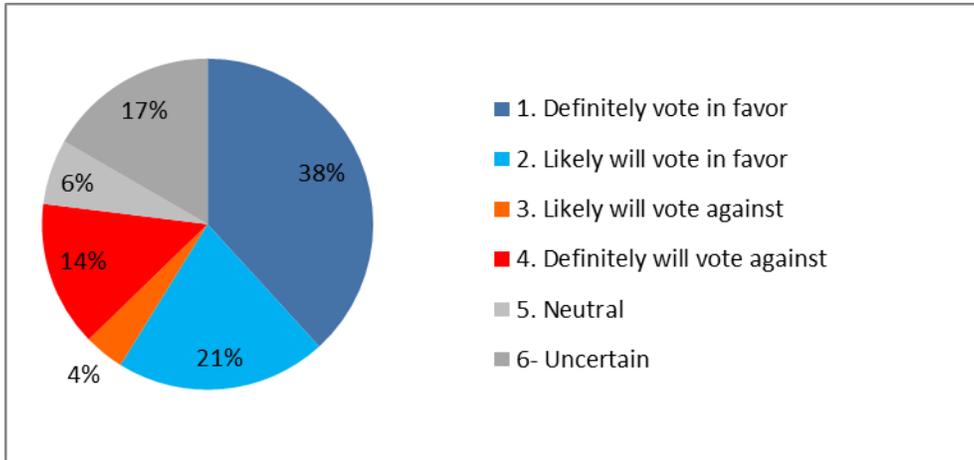
Q3: As an alternative, a special sales tax of one quarter percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$750,000 or roughly half of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a quarter percent sales tax?

+/- 6.1%



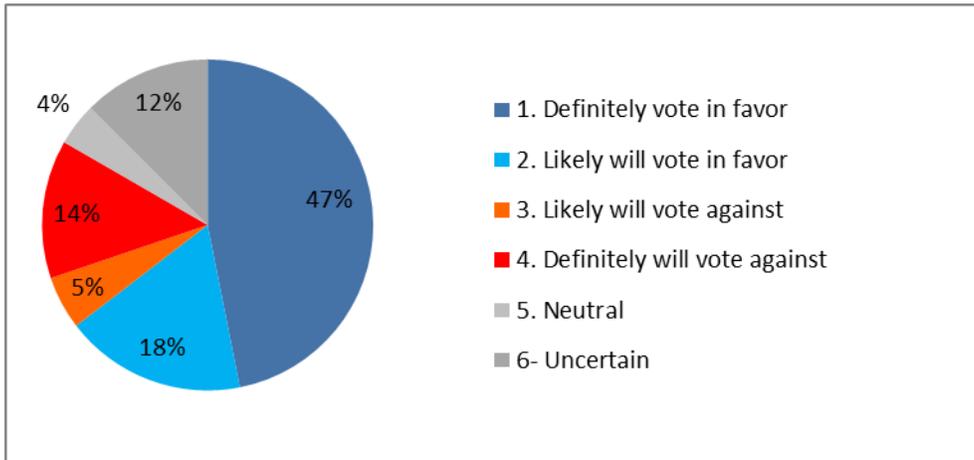
Q9: A special sales tax of one half percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$1,500,000 or most of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a half percent sales tax?

+/- 6.8%



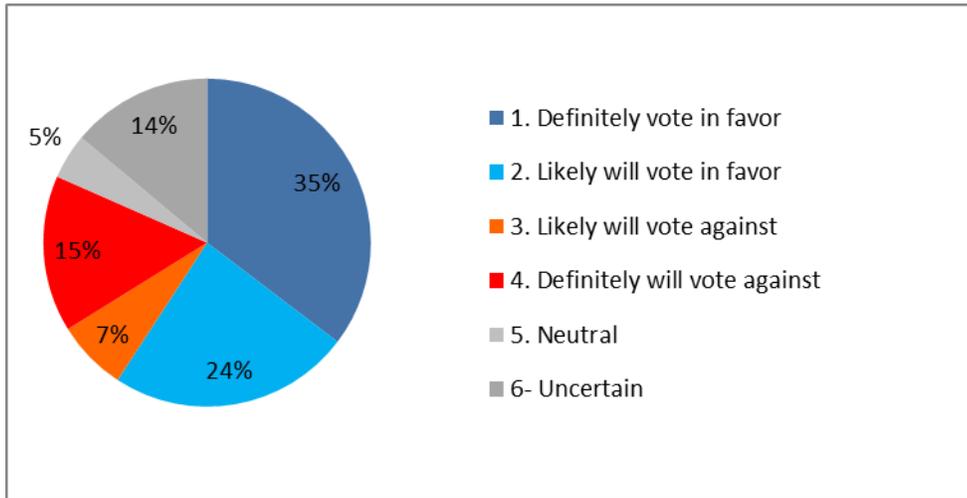
Definitely Will Vote

+/- 9.9%



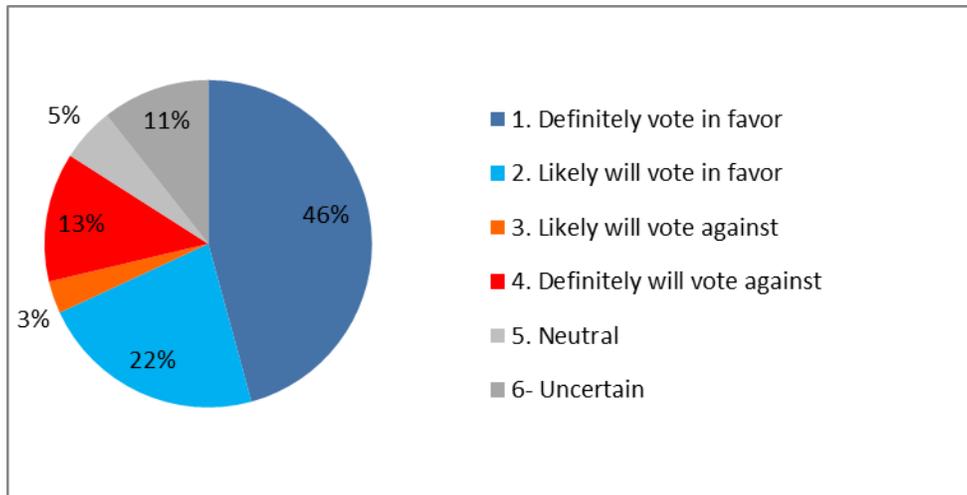
Q10: As an alternative, a special sales tax of one quarter percent has been proposed that would raise approximately \$750,000 or roughly half of the city's projected deficit. Would you vote in favor or against a quarter percent sales tax?

+/- 6.8%



Definitely Will Vote

+/- 10%



## Budget Priorities

Q4: Considering that the city needs to reduce reliance on the use of reserve funds, I am going to read you a list of specific city programs and I ask that you select which program you feel is most important to MAINTAIN in the budget

1. Continue funding one police position	11%
2. Continue funding one fire position	23%
3. Continue funding a homeless outreach coordinator	11%
4. Continue to support wrap-around prevention and social services through the Sebastopol Library	11%
5. Continue to prioritize public safety and crime reduction	5%
6. Continue to support Community programming such as a public pool, senior center, drug and alcohol prevention services, and youth leadership programs	22%
7. None	3%
8. Uncertain	15%

Q5: Now, given that same list of programs, which would you feel is the first area to CUT in the budget to reduce reliance on reserve funds?

1. Eliminate one police position	31%
2. Eliminate one fire position	2%
3. Eliminate a homeless outreach coordinator	16%
4. Cut wrap-around prevention and social services through the Sebastopol library	11%
5. Deemphasize public safety and crime reduction	5%
6. Reduce community programming such as a public pool, senior center, drug and alcohol prevention services, and youth leadership programs	9%
7. None	4%
8. Uncertain	23%



Q6: Looking at the priorities of city budgeting regarding prevention services, would you agree or disagree that a high priority should be put into expanding the preventive services provided by the Sebastopol Police Department for people experiencing and at risk of mental and behavioral health challenges?

1. Definitely agree	43%
2. Somewhat agree	20%
3. Somewhat disagree	9%
4. Definitely disagree	8%
5. Neutral	20%

Q7: Looking again at the priorities of city budgeting regarding prevention services, would you agree or disagree that a high priority should be put into the preventive services operated through the Sebastopol Library for people experiencing and at risk of mental and behavioral health challenges?

1. Definitely agree	42%
2. Somewhat agree	22%
3. Somewhat disagree	9%
4. Definitely disagree	10%
5. Neutral	19%

Q8: Looking at the priorities of city budgeting regarding parks, would you agree or disagree that a high priority should be put into maintenance and programming for the City of Sebastopol Parks?

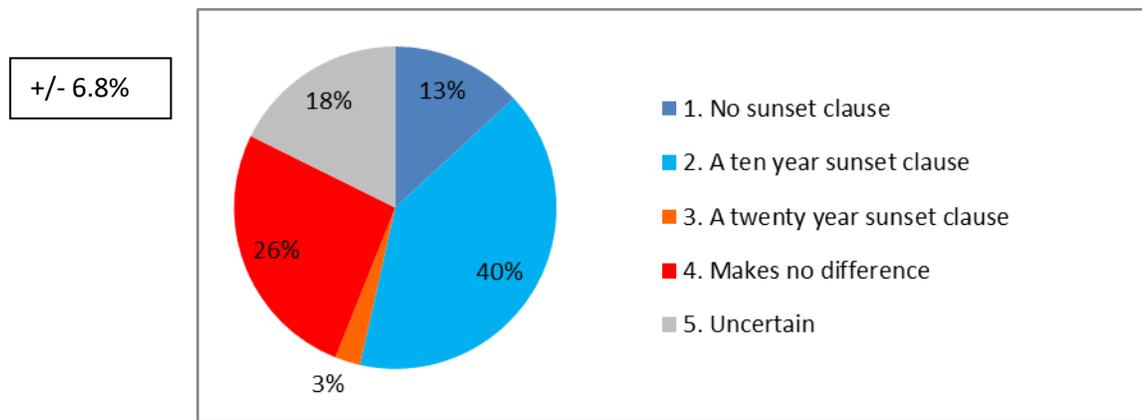
1. Definitely agree	55%
2. Somewhat agree	25%
3. Somewhat disagree	5%
4. Definitely disagree	5%
5. Neutral	10%



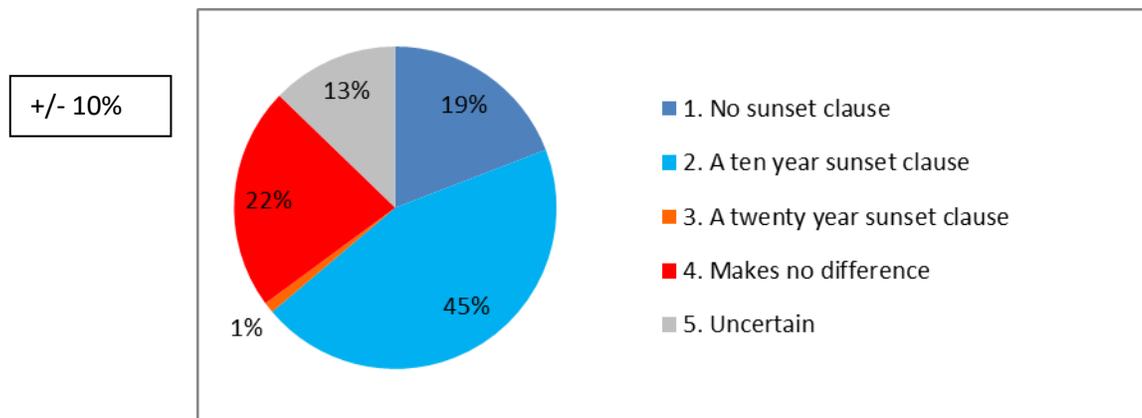
## Sunset Clause

Finally, when asked about inclusion of a Sunset Clause in the measure, a strong preference was shown for the 10-year sunset, with virtually no support for a 20-year sunset. A significant number of respondents indicated that they had no preference or would prefer no sunset.

Q11: Finally, the city has the option of proposing this special tax as a permanent tax until repealed, or build in a sunset clause to automatically end the tax after a certain period of time. Would you prefer: no sunset clause, a ten year sunset clause, a twenty year sunset clause or does it make no difference?



### Definitely Will Vote



## Summary Conclusions

- The sample of respondents closely matches the Sebastopol voting demographic.
- If put to a vote today, with no campaign in favor or opposed, it is likely that a 1/4 cent sales tax would receive a 2/3rds vote, however, support is soft enough that an opposition campaign could easily erode that to below 2/3rds.
- Support for the 1/4 cent sales tax is unsteady, with 56% (+/-6.1%) at the beginning of the poll in support, undecideds at 26% and opposition at a low 16%. This points to the need for a robust public education campaign and separate ballot measure campaign as necessary for passage to gain the 2/3rd majority needed to pass the measure.
- When looking at those who self-identify as very likely to vote in a special election, the 68% threshold is met for a 1/4 cent sales tax, with a +/-10% margin of error (58%-78% range).
- While support for both the 1/2 cent and 1/4 cent tax was roughly equal, support for the 1/4 cent tax was strongest among those who self-identified as very likely to vote.
- Support for Parks, Fire, and Community Services are highest amongst the issues we tested.
- While voters showed strongest support for a ten-year sunset clause, many indicated that either they preferred no sunset clause or the sunset clause made no difference to them. Virtually none selected a 20-year sunset clause.

