



Let's Build California: A Voter Mandate

Report by Thinks Insight & Strategy
for Rebuild SoCal Partnership



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Foreword

Southern California's infrastructure challenges are no longer abstract policy debates. Residents across the region feel the consequences of underinvestment in their daily lives: in rising housing costs, constant traffic, unreliable utilities, flooding, and wildfire risk. There is growing concern about whether the region is prepared for the demands of the future.

Despite broad agreement that these are critical issues to address, California continues to struggle to build at the pace and scale needed to fix them. Understanding why was the starting point for this research.

Public debates around infrastructure often rest on assumptions about voters that have not been rigorously tested: that residents oppose growth, are resistant to change, or are unwilling to accept the tradeoffs that come with developing infrastructure systems. Rebuild SoCal Partnership commissioned this study to examine those assumptions directly, in what we believe to be one of the largest and most comprehensive studies of public attitudes toward infrastructure ever conducted in Southern California.

The research combines a representative survey of 5,000 residents across Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura counties with 12 in-depth focus groups conducted throughout the region. Together, this new research provides an unusually detailed picture of how Southern Californians think about infrastructure, growth, governance, affordability, and the future of their communities.

The findings show that Southern Californians overwhelmingly support infrastructure investment and recognize the need for action on housing, transportation, energy reliability, water systems, and climate resilience. At the same time, they are frustrated by delays, rising costs, and a sense that major problems are not being prioritized.

The research also points to a more nuanced public position. Most residents are neither reflexively for nor against development. Their support is conditional: contingent on trust in the institutions delivering projects, confidence that the benefits will be fairly distributed, and the need for development to serve community needs rather than narrow interests. This report describes that majority as 'MIMBYs': Maybe In My Back Yard, in opposition to the traditional 'YIMBY' or 'NIMBY' groups that are often assumed to dominate public views.

The implication is that the principal barrier facing infrastructure development in California is not simply opposition to building. It is a deeper lack of confidence in whether the institutions responsible for delivering projects are doing so efficiently, fairly, and in ways that serve the public interest.

The following report explores those tensions in depth. We hope it contributes to an informed and constructive conversation about how to build the infrastructure Southern California needs – not only to address today's challenges, but to prepare the region for the future.

Jon Switalski, Executive Director, Rebuild SoCal Partnership

Executive Summary

This report draws on a representative survey of 5,000 residents across six counties in Southern California – Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura. This is complemented by 12 qualitative focus groups with 85 residents from the same areas, and a Solutions Summit bringing together 27 Southern California residents for a full day of deliberative discussion. The findings below combine insights from all three elements of this research.

1. There is clear, emphatic support for investment in Southern California's infrastructure

- 85% of Southern Californians are in favor of new infrastructure being built in their neighborhood, while only 10% are against.
- Support for building new infrastructure is consistent across counties, demographics and political views: there is a strong and broad voter mandate to invest.

2. Support for investment is driven by daily experiences of poor quality, ineffective infrastructure

- Almost every Southern California resident (98%) has been personally impacted by issues related to poor infrastructure in the last year.
- Challenges around housing affordability and supply, and traffic and congestion are the most widely felt, but a range of other issues have widespread impacts, including one in two residents who say they have been impacted by flooding or poor storm draining, and one in three who say that wildfires have damaged their home.

3. Infrastructure challenges are perceived as some of the most serious problems facing Southern California, making infrastructure a genuine voter priority

- Infrastructure issues are perceived to be a more serious problem for the area than many wider societal concerns, with housing affordability the number one concern, ranking above every other challenge facing Southern California: from the wider economy to healthcare and crime.

4. Current investment is not considered sufficient, but few are prepared to back increased direct taxation to fund new projects

- A majority of Southern Californians (56%) believe that there is currently too little investment in infrastructure, and only a minority think current levels of investment are sufficient (26%). Some also feel that spending is unfairly distributed, prioritizing the views of wealthier residents who are more easily able to take part in consultations due to their working patterns.
- Housing, roads and highways, and wildfire prevention are the areas where residents see the most urgent need for action, in order to address concerns around safety and affordability.

- In the context of stretched household budgets, there is a strong preference for funding models that do not require increases in direct taxation. In focus groups, many feel they already pay specific taxes or levies for infrastructure, and question where their existing money is being spent. Residents are looking for funding models that share the cost of infrastructure development with private interests.
- Participants were only prepared to consider additional taxation if clear accountability and transparency measures are put in place to give them confidence over the way their money will be spent.



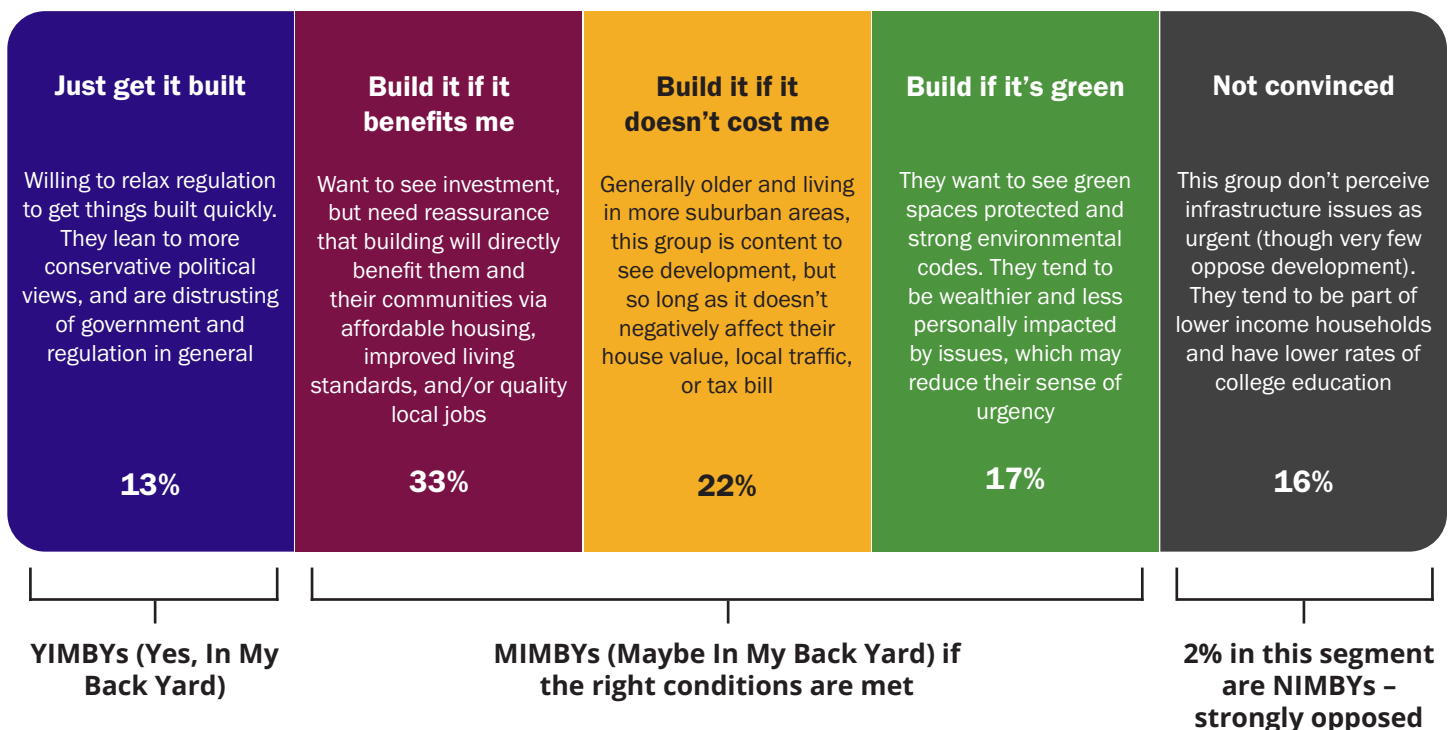
5. There is widespread frustration at the current pace of delivery

- Confidence is low that the current political and planning system is able to effectively and efficiently deliver new housing, transportation improvements and more resilient utilities infrastructure. Participants in focus groups frequently cite long delays and projects that don't seem to make progress.
- There is widespread demand for concrete, ambitious plans to ensure California is ready to cope with future challenges, including a growing population, greater demand for electricity and changing weather patterns.



6. Few Southern Californians are outright NIMBYs. The majority are MIMBYs (Maybe In My Back Yard)

- While demand for infrastructure investment is strong and widespread, segmentation of the population by their attitudes and priorities for development reveals that, for a large majority, their support is in some way 'contingent'.
 - Just 13% of Southern Californians demonstrate YIMBY (Yes, In My Back Yard) attitudes – the 'Just get it built' segment.
 - Three 'MIMBY' segments represent 72% of Southern Californians: 'Build if it benefits me' (33%); 'Build if it doesn't cost me' (22%); and 'Build if it's green' (17%).
- NIMBYs (Not In My Back Yard) are relatively rare, with only 2% of Southern Californians strongly opposing any infrastructure development in their neighborhoods. However, 16% fall into the 'Not convinced' segment, who do not perceive infrastructure issues as urgent in the same way as others.
- Understanding these groups and communicating on what matters to each is key to building broad and durable support for infrastructure investment and development.



7. Across every segment, Southern Californians express distrust in a system that seems to only listen to some voices, and prioritizes the wrong interests

- While Southern Californians are deeply frustrated at the pace of change, many place the blame for this at the feet of vested interests – most commonly developers and elected politicians – who are felt to be in pursuit of narrow electoral and/or financial gain.
- Majorities of Southern Californians believe that elected politicians (57%), and developers (53%) have too much say in the system. Meanwhile 65% say that ‘people like me’ have too little say.

8. In the absence of trust that the interests of developers and politicians are aligned with those of ‘people like me’, few are prepared to endorse steps to ‘streamline’ the system by reducing oversight and community consultation

- There is broad recognition that mismanagement and excessive bureaucracy slows down building, and acknowledgement that permits and processes such as CEQA are part of this.
- Nonetheless, trust in the system and its key players is too weak for Southern Californians to feel comfortable with the removal of existing oversight and consultation.
- Instead, residents want to see more efficient, effective project approvals, without compromising the quality of oversight.

9. There is a need to rebuild confidence and trust in the system, ensuring resident voices are more clearly heard when shaping infrastructure decisions

- Transparency in the process will help address concerns about potential vested interests, through regular progress updates and engagement.
- As part of this, residents also call for a meaningful role in decision-making. Developers should actively engage with residents at the outset of projects, answering the specific concerns of the three ‘MIMBY’ segments to win broad support.

Together, these findings evidence demand for infrastructure development in California that is **faster, fairer, future-facing** and delivered **for the people**.

From research to action:

Participants in the Solutions Summit reviewed findings, heard from experts and considered five potential policy responses, as well as developing principles for decision-makers to follow. Their preferred policy response was an annual Governor’s Report on Infrastructure – which would measure whether California infrastructure projects are being delivered on time, on budget, and producing their intended results.

California Infrastructure Performance Act



STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

Data through Q1 2024



Housing Units Built

24,532
units

85% of annual goal

↑ 12% vs. Q1 2023

Transit Riders
(Daily Avg.)
1.26M
riders

92% of annual goal

↑ 8% vs. Q1 2023

Emissions Reduced
(MT CO₂e)
1.8M
metric tons

78% of annual goal

↑ 15% vs. Q1 2023



Projects On Time

72%
on schedule

↑ 9 pp vs. Q1 2023



Projects On Budget

68%
on budget

↑ 6 pp vs. Q1 2023



Good Jobs Created

18,642
jobs

↑ 14% vs. Q1 2023

PROJECT DELIVERY PERFORMANCE

Share of Projects

■ On Time & On Budget ■ Over Budget ■ Behind Schedule ■ Not Started

By Project Count

52% 16% 20% 12%

By Project Value

48% 22% 18% 12%
Average Cost Overrun
(Projects Over Budget)
14%
Average Schedule Delay
(Projects Behind Schedule)
5.7 months

INVESTING IN CALIFORNIANS

Good Jobs and Workforce Development

Well-Paid Jobs Created

18,642 jobs

85% paying \$25+/hr

↑ 14% vs. Q1 2023

Apprenticeships Created

3,256 apprentices

↑ 22% vs. Q1 2023

Diverse and Local Workforce


46%
Workforce from
Disadvantaged
Communities

61%
Local Workers
Hired

30%
Women
Employed

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT


**Bay Area Rapid Transit
Extension**
Alameda County

🕒 Schedule	On Track
💰 Budget	2% under budget
👤 Good Jobs	1,250 created
🎓 Apprenticeships	210 created

[View Project Details](#)


All projects. All data. All in one place.

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Figure 1: Example Governor's report dashboard, improving transparency and accountability in infrastructure development

Methodology

A representative sample of 5,000 people across Southern California (in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura) were surveyed by a combination of self-completed online surveys, and interviewer-administrated telephone interviews, in both English (82%) and Spanish (18%). This combination of methods was selected to ensure a wide range of people with different backgrounds and digital confidence were able to take part. Representative quotas were set based on US Census data to ensure the sample is an accurate reflection of views across the population. Data was collected between February 12th and March 9th 2026. For more detail, see Appendix (a).

Following the survey, 12 online focus group discussions took place between April 13th and April 22nd with residents of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. Each group was comprised of 8 participants who all resided in the same county and approximate geographic location. This meant they could discuss and engage meaningfully with each other about the infrastructure issues affecting their local area. Ten of these focus groups were conducted in English and two in Spanish.

After the online focus group discussions, an in-person 'Solutions Summit' was hosted on June 20th in Los Angeles with 21 residents of Los Angeles, along with 6 participants from other counties in Southern California who joined virtually. For more detail, see Appendix (b).



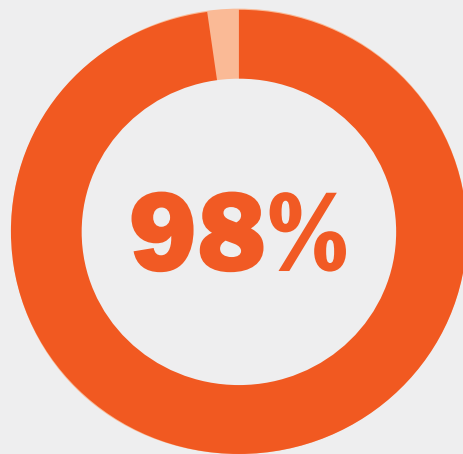
1. Experiences of infrastructure challenges

1.1

Southern Californians experience the effects of poor quality, ineffective infrastructure on a daily basis

Infrastructure challenges in Southern California are a daily reality; 98% of Southern Californians claim to have been personally impacted by issues relating to infrastructure in the past year (Figure 2).

These impacts are near-universal: across counties (where between 97-99% in each county have been personally impacted by issues), age groups (97%-99%) and different levels of household income (97%-99%).



Of Southern Californians have been personally impacted by infrastructure issues

Figure 2: The percentage of Southern Californians who say they have been personally impacted by infrastructure issues in the last year (some or severe impact)

Issues are present in people's daily commutes, their energy bills, their access to affordable housing, and their anxieties when wildfire season comes around. Personal experience is both comprehensive and wide-ranging; Southern Californians typically experience an assortment of issues relating to infrastructure, which are sometimes seen to compound and reinforce one another (e.g. poor public transportation leading to more traffic congestion).



I think that [infrastructure is] only getting worse and worse, and all of these things work together to help society function. When one of these things falls down, the others start falling down as well, because people aren't doing enough to think ahead and plan for these eventualities."

San Diego County

1.2 Experiences of poor infrastructure are dominated by traffic and congestion and housing, but a wide range of other issues affect large groups

Southern California's infrastructure limitations affect most of the population across multiple dimensions of daily life. In terms of personal impact, traffic and congestion is the most widely felt issue, with 86% of residents reporting personal impact (Figure 3).

Over seven in ten have been impacted by the cost or shortage of housing. These two issues, of traffic and housing, are also the two infrastructure challenges most commonly raised in the focus groups as the most pressing issues impacting the area.



“

The reason why people are homeless is because the normal person that has a job can't afford even rent right now. So, you know, that would be a lovely thing to be able to fix, just affordable housing for people that have a certain income. I'm not talking about welfare. I'm talking about normal middle class that can't afford it."

San Fernando

“

It takes an hour an a half to get anywhere outside of, you know, the one area adjacent to you."

Los Angeles County

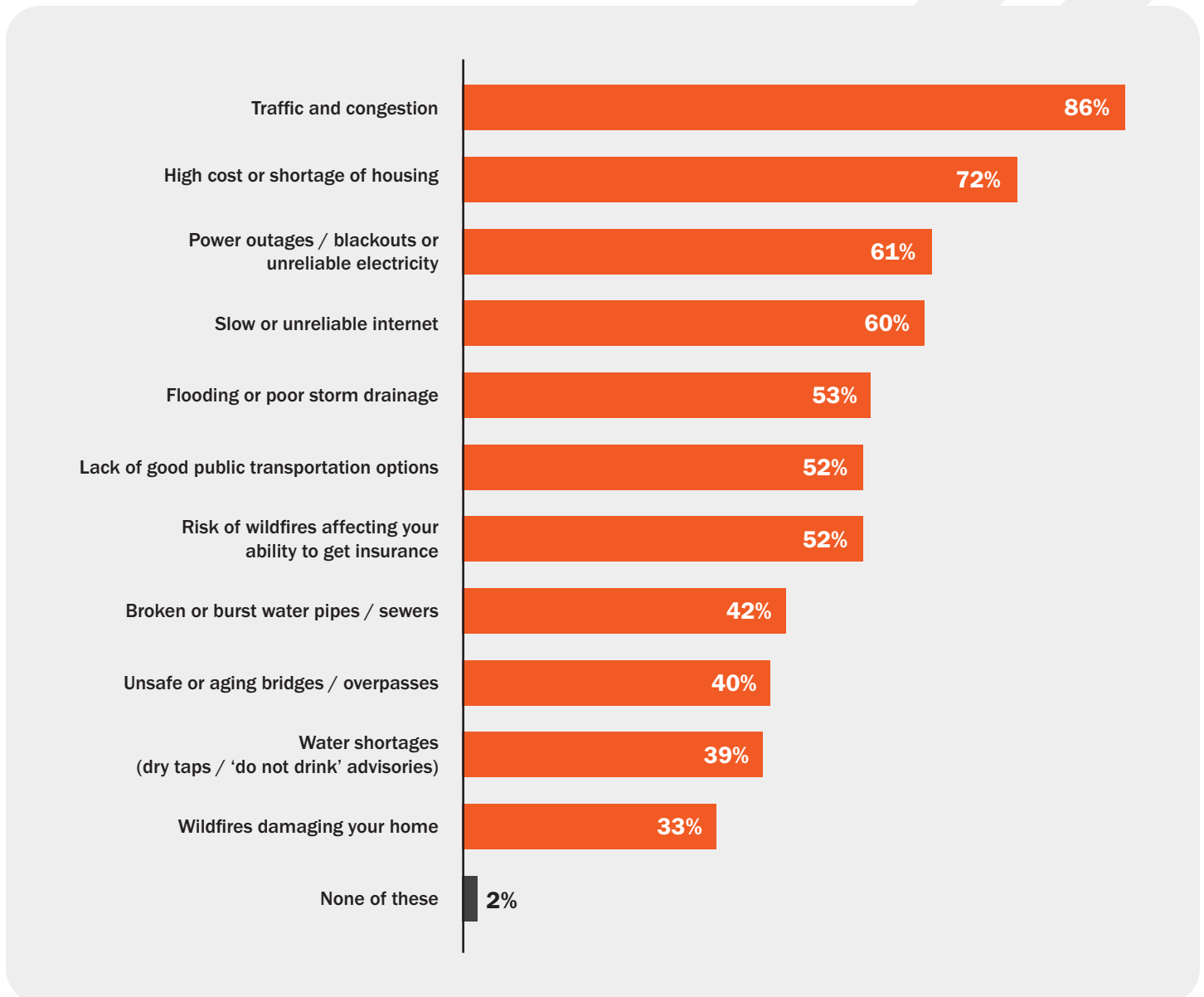


Figure 3: The percentage of Southern Californians who claim to have been personally impacted by specific infrastructure issues in the last year

Beyond traffic and housing, other issues affect a large proportion of the population. Six in ten have experienced power outages or unreliable electricity, and a similar proportion have dealt with slow or unreliable internet. More than half have been affected by flooding or poor storm drainage, half by a lack of good public transport, and half have struggled to get insurance as a result of the risk of wildfires. Below, we explore some of the most pressing issues.

Traffic, congestion and public transit

The experience of traffic and congestion is ubiquitous across Southern California and outranks all other infrastructure concerns. Focus group participants feel that commute times are excessive, with journeys that should take 15 minutes on clear roads taking as long as 90 minutes. Participants often leave home much earlier than they think is reasonable (as early as 4AM, for a 9AM start) for their commute to work, and arrive home much later than otherwise necessary.

Participants feel the situation is complicated further by the poor condition of roads. Potholes are ubiquitous and cause damage to vehicles. Road repair and maintenance is also seen as slow, disruptive, and ineffective, with some participants feeling repairs do not last or leave roads in a worse state than before, while construction zones worsen congestion in the short term.



The amount of traffic has increased tremendously... For me that's the downside of living here, the transportation and the limited options we have [for transport]"

Riverside

Public transportation is not seen as an immediate solution to congestion. This is partly influenced by experiences of existing public transportation systems (such as buses, MetroLink, LA Metro, and the San Diego trolley system) which are often seen as unreliable, infrequent and poorly connected. Safety concerns, sometimes driven by previous experiences with other passengers that have

made them feel threatened, are raised by participants, particularly women, further discouraging use of public transportation.

Many also believe Southern California is too spread out for public transport to offer a genuine alternative to driving in the near term. Public transport is seen as impractical for the urban sprawl across Southern California, requiring most people to drive to reach their nearest public transit station or stop.



I'm for public transportation, so if I can hop on a bus or a train or any of that, I'll be more than glad to do it. I don't have a problem. The thing is that 9 out of 10 times when I look at where my destination is going to be, it's tough to get to it."

San Bernardino

Despite concerns about the difficulty of replacing driving, there is still interest in long-term investment in statewide public transportation corridors, linking major hubs so that cars might only be needed for the 'first and last mile' of journeys. These include interest in rail transit (including commuter rail and metro systems) and improvements to bus service frequency that could help make these modes a more viable alternative to driving.



It blows my mind that there is no way for us in Orange County to get to either John Wayne or LAX by a form of public transportation. We have to Uber, and an Uber is \$150 to get to LAX."

Orange County

Housing

Addressing the shortage of affordable housing is an urgent priority for Southern Californians. They are acutely aware of the rising cost of living, rising house prices, and continual rent increases (with one participant experiencing rent increases of as much as 35% over five years). The high cost of housing has led to some Southern Californians fearing displacement and feeling forced into making difficult choices, such as leaving the area; some described knowing people who 'gave up' and chose homelessness in the face of unaffordable rent.

Additionally, while new housing developments are being built, Southern Californians often believe they are having an adverse effect on housing prices and rents, and fail to always offer affordable homes that local residents are able to purchase. In some cases, residents describe new apartment buildings that remain empty as their prices are too high, adding further frustration to the issue. They also feel that prices in new developments are used as pretext for raising rent for current residents.

Finally, people feel that homelessness is increasingly visible and urgent, strongly empathizing with those made homeless by the housing crisis and linking this directly to the lack of affordable housing.

“

I've been in the same area for 5 years and the rent has increased by 35%. Same landlord, haven't changed, haven't moved, no renovations, nothing, but it's increased by 35%. [...] I've had to get creative in getting a second job to continue living here.”

Orange County

“

You definitely see more and more instances of homeless encampments. They're kind of starting to encroach closer and closer to where I live. I think that's a reflection of the lack of affordable housing that people are starting to sleep on streets”

Orange County

Energy reliability

Southern Californians report that energy networks and the power grid in their local areas are unreliable, largely due to frequent blackouts. Many assume this is due to a lack of available electricity in the power grid. Poor energy reliability has personally impacted many Southern Californians – in one case, a caregiver had to book a hotel to care for elderly clients who relied on motorized beds and oxygen.

Some Southern Californians feel that grid strain will only worsen as more people move to the region, increasing the level of demand. Additionally, concerns are raised about the high costs people pay for electricity, which some feel are disproportionate in Southern California compared to the rest of the nation.



The energy will stop running. It doesn't affect some families if you're lucky enough to have a generator or a backup freezer where you just keep it closed and your food doesn't spoil. But some families don't have that. And what if the energy doesn't come on for 10 hours or 12 hours? What do you do? Now your food is spoiled, and so it just seems to me that the energy is becoming a little bit unreliable – the energy grid."

San Bernardino County

Poor drainage

Poor drainage and flooding are identified as key infrastructure concerns by many Southern Californians, particularly those in San Diego. Flooding frequently occurs after rainfall and leads to traffic and mobility disruptions, such as trapping vehicles in parking garages or residents in their homes, while also posing a hazard to people experiencing homelessness in Southern California. Flooding and poor drainage can also result in significant amounts of property damage and poor water quality in general.

Residents across these counties believe blocked storm drains, aging pipes, and infrastructure which is not suited to the climate (e.g. not accounting for periodic rainfall) are responsible for flooding. Some also feel that further densification will only place greater strain on stormwater and sewerage infrastructure.



When it rains here, just completely everything floods. I've had my parking garages flood because there's a lack of drainage going down and cars literally cannot get out or are floating in the garages."

Los Angeles County

2. Support for local infrastructure investment

2.1

There is widespread support for building infrastructure in Southern California

Southern Californians demonstrate a high level of support for more infrastructure development in their area. 85% of Southern Californians are in favor of developing more infrastructure, including over a third (36%) who are strongly in favor, and nearly half

(49%) who are generally in favor with some concerns (Figure 4). Only 10% are against infrastructure development, of whom only 2% are strongly against it, with an additional 5% unsure.

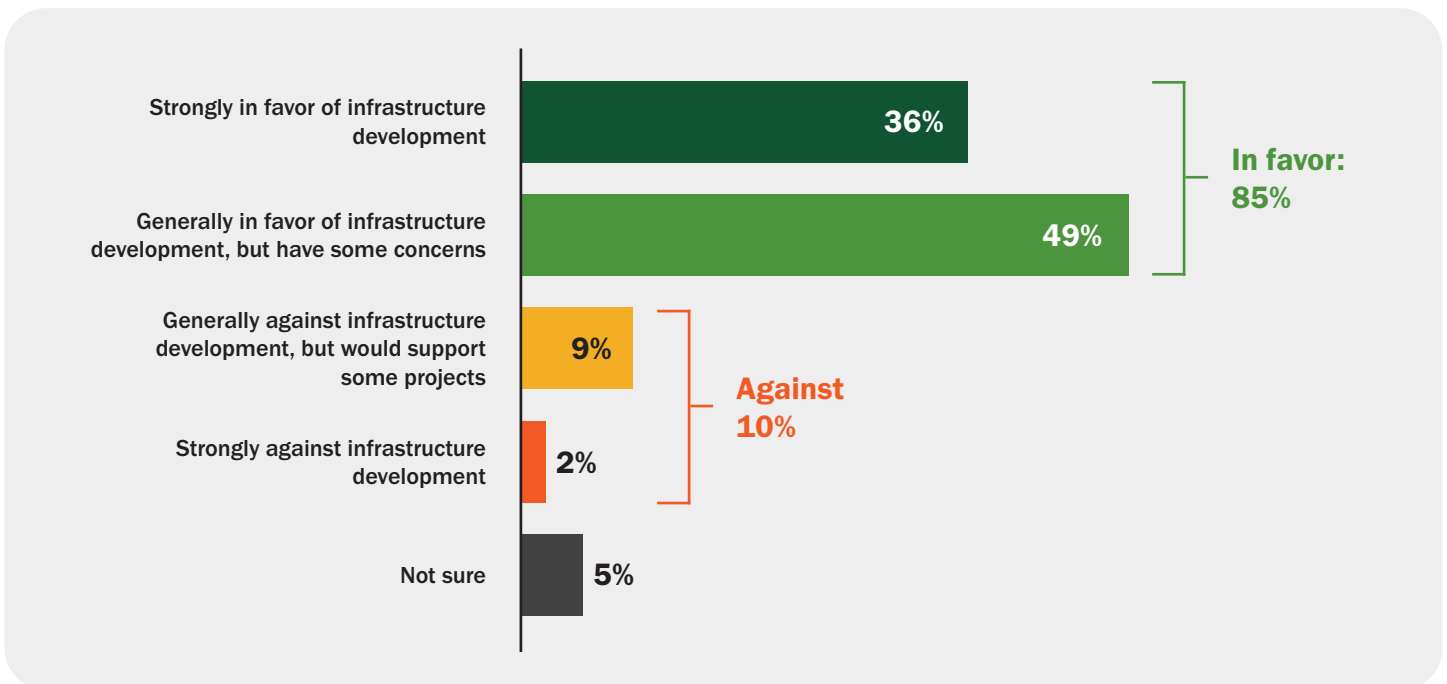


Figure 4: Whether residents are in favor, or not, of infrastructure being built in their local neighborhood

Although support is highest among those living in Los Angeles (87%), support remains robust in Orange (81%), Riverside (83%), San Bernardino (83), San Diego (84%), and Ventura (81%) counties. These modest differences reinforce that support is strong across Southern California.

Additionally, developing infrastructure is a priority regardless of political outlook, with 91% of liberal-leaning voters and 81% of conservative-leaning voters in favor. Support also holds across multiple demographic groups, from younger to older people, men and women, and different levels of affluence.

Qualitatively, participants across the counties and political spectrum attest to the importance of high-quality and long-term infrastructure projects to ensure that Southern California is fit to face future challenges such as climate change, wildfires, and congestion. Participants raise concerns that much of Southern California's infrastructure does not appear to be resilient enough to meet these future challenges, even if systems are in working order now. They therefore want to see forward-thinking infrastructure planning, underpinned by a clear strategy to address societal changes before they place further pressure on infrastructure.

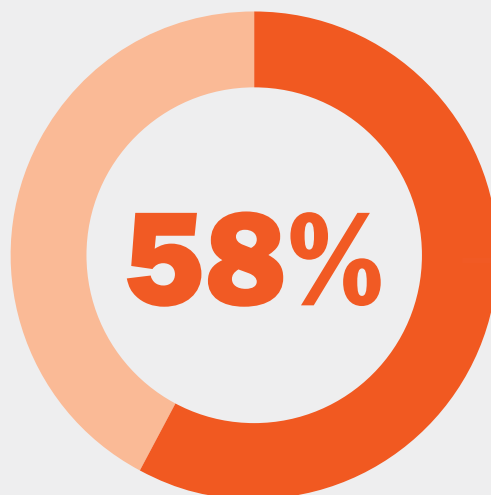
Compared to wider support for infrastructure in their neighborhood, at 85% as highlighted above in Figure 4, Southern Californians' support for a new development within a mile of their home is slightly lower, but a majority would still welcome this at 58%.

“

Everyone I know and I chat with complains about those potholes and complains about the flooding and are terrified that there's going to be some fire and the infrastructure isn't going to be there to save us all... everyone wants infrastructure.”

San Diego County

Concerns about building near to homes established by other research, such as worries about the impact on property values, are not raised strongly by participants in our focus groups, although some raise concerns about over-densification in areas which already feel overcrowded and congested. Instead, negative experiences of being poorly served by infrastructure heighten participants' feelings that greater investment in their local area is needed, and will ultimately impact them positively rather than negatively.



**Would support infrastructure
or a new housing development
within a mile of their home**

Figure 5: Whether residents would support infrastructure or a housing development being built within a mile of their home

2.2 Infrastructure issues outweigh many other concerns for Southern Californians

Southern Californians consider concerns about local infrastructure to be equally as, or more serious than, many pressing societal challenges (Figure 6).

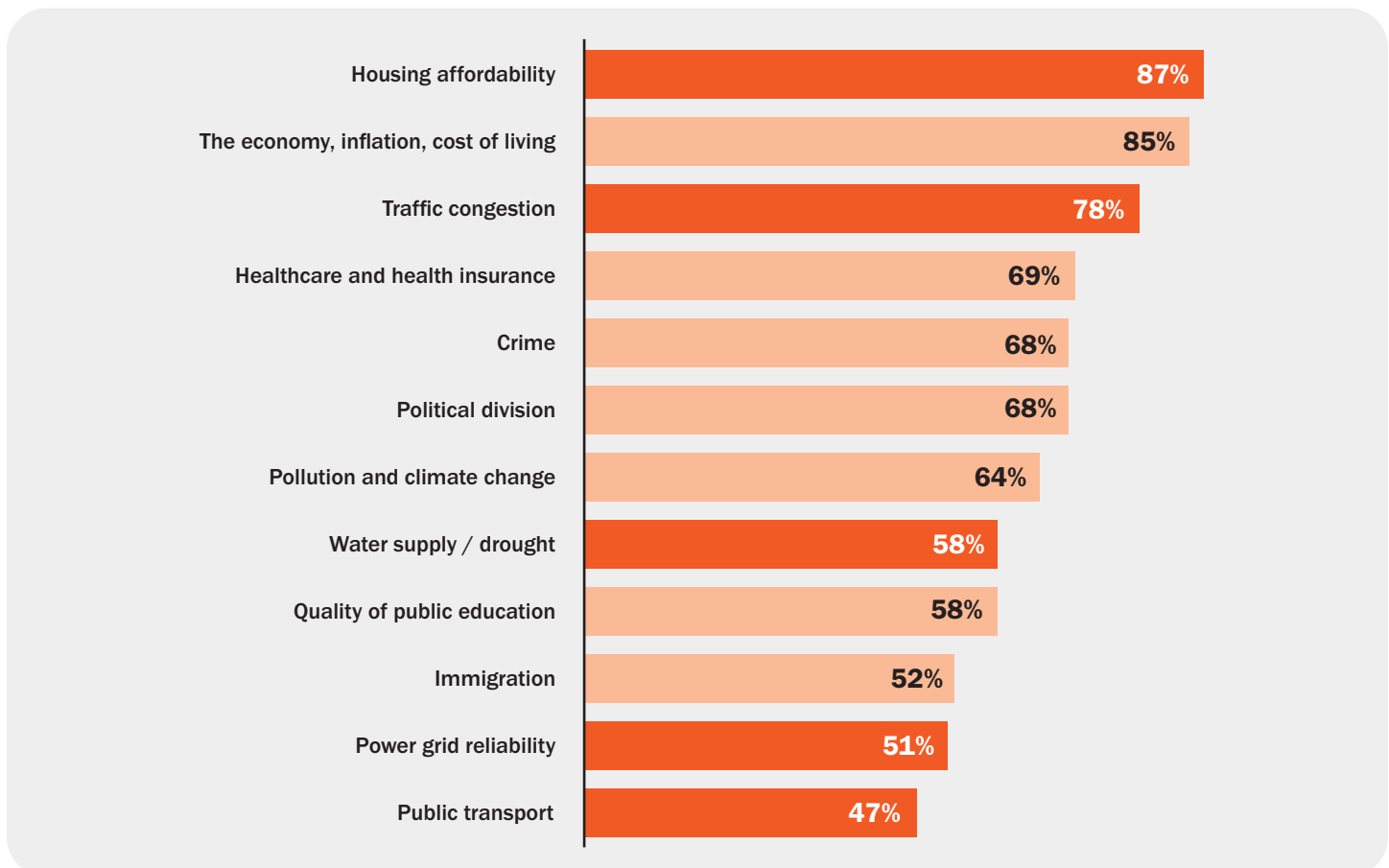


Figure 6: Infrastructure issues in the context of other issues in Southern California: % who think each issue is a problem or serious problem

When asked about the issues facing Southern California, housing affordability (87%) outranks the economy, inflation, and the cost of living (85%). Traffic congestion (78%), ranked the third most pressing issue, outranks healthcare (69%), crime (68%) and political division (68%). Water supply and drought (58%) outranks education (58%) and immigration (52%).

Indeed, all infrastructure-related issues are seen as a problem in Southern California by a majority or near majority of residents.



I think the cost of living is becoming an issue for sure...even though there's lots of new construction, it's [housing] really unaffordable. One income families are just unheard of. And then even with dual income families, it's hard to find a place."

San Bernardino County

3. Infrastructure funding and planning

3.1 Current levels of investment are considered inadequate

The current level of investment into infrastructure is seen as insufficient to address the scale of the challenge Southern California is facing. Over half (56%, Figure 7) say that current investment is too low.

In focus groups, many participants feel that too little is being done to address the pressing challenges they face day-to-day, or to plan ahead for future issues such as climate change and population growth.

Too much: 13%

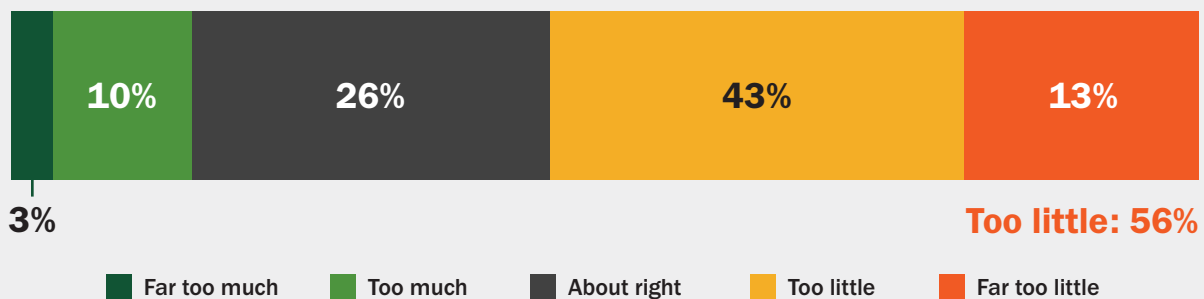


Figure 7: Whether Southern California invests too much or too little in infrastructure

There is a strong appetite for change, and for this change to happen quickly. Participants feel that, currently, both the ambition and the pace of change are too limited to lead to meaningful improvements that they personally will benefit from. This frustration is felt tangibly by residents who feel they are paying for projects with their tax dollars, without seeing the benefits in their own lives.

Those who have witnessed recent improvements in their local area are more likely to feel that current investment is effective. However, these are viewed as the exception rather than the norm.

“

In my city, in the last election there were a couple of measures passed where they were going to use tax dollars for improvements to roads and things. And I've already seen it done. There's been a few sections of our neighborhood that have already been addressed, and they've already finished the construction, fixing, widening some lanes, fixing intersections [...] it happened pretty quickly within a year”

Los Angeles County

3.2 Southern Californians highlight equity gaps in current infrastructure investment

There is a sense among Southern Californians that they are being under-served by their infrastructure compared to other states, with focus group participants drawing comparisons to states like New York which they feel provide better infrastructure for residents. They feel frustrated as they see California as an overall wealthy state, and feel they have a high tax burden, so expect to be better served by infrastructure than those in other states.



I grew up in New York [...] I grew up in an apartment building my whole life. I never had issues with drainage, weather, transport. And here it's like literally a drop of rain and you're screwed."

Los Angeles County

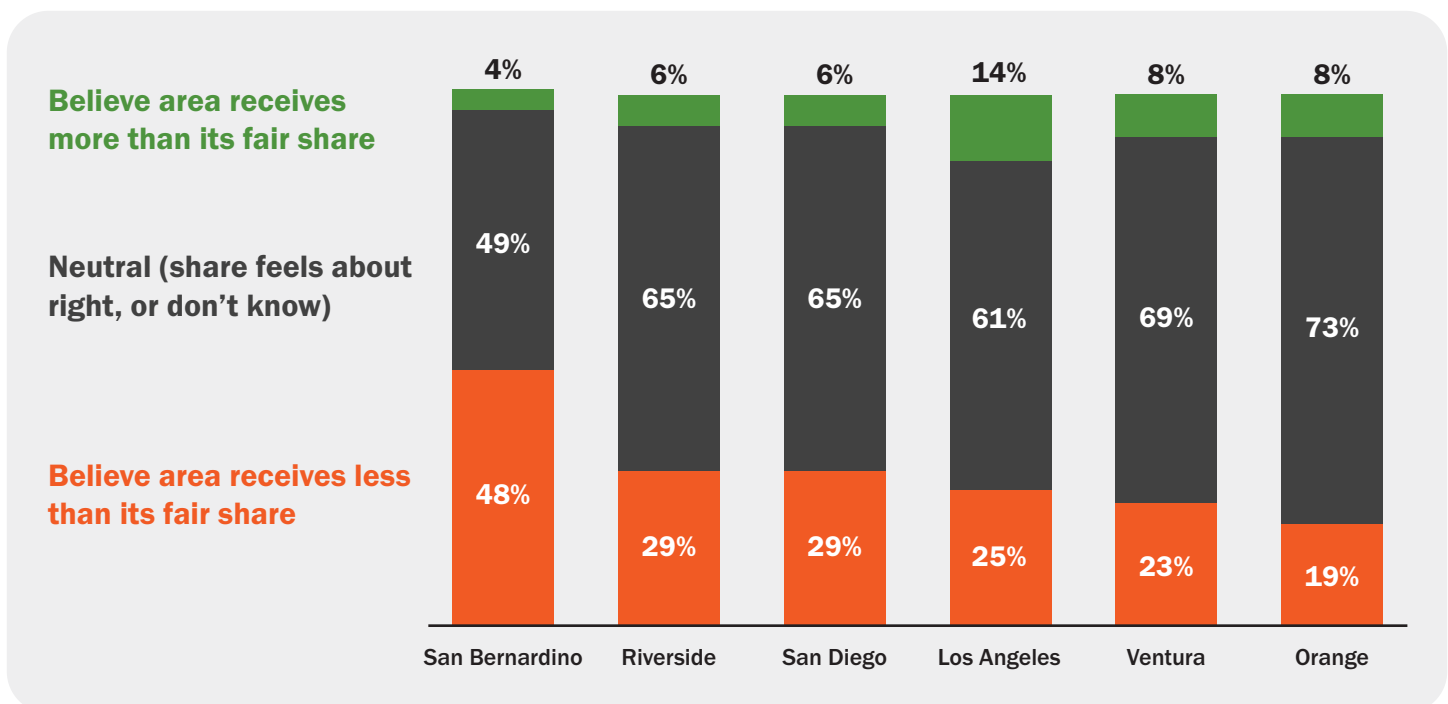


Figure 8: Residents of each counties' beliefs about whether their area receives its fair share of investment compared to other areas in Southern California.

Similarly, some point out that more affluent master-planned communities have better infrastructure than communities which were formed over time through urban sprawl. Other factors such as utility monopolies are seen to burden lower-income households with sudden price increases. In addition to this, lower-income households feel priced out of their local areas by new luxury housing developments.

Southern Californians feel that residents in wealthier communities have an outsized influence on infrastructure decisions. They are seen to exert pressure and get their way owing to greater wealth, connections, and spare time, enabling them to take part in consultation processes such as those that take place under planning regulations, to influence planning outcomes. As some Southern Californians also point out, the state has an

incentive to cater to communities where property taxes are highest, which in turn concentrates higher-quality infrastructure in these areas.

“

There's a lot of very wealthy people here, and there's the rest of us. When I was an intern in the planning department, the wealthy La Jollans would come to all the meetings and complain and get what they want, but the meetings were in the middle of the day when the rest of us were working. It would be good for the working class to have more access to meetings and have venues to talk to our leaders.”

San Diego County



3.3

In the context of financial pressures, Southern Californians prioritize funding models that do not increase household costs

In the context of wider economic challenges, Southern Californians are reluctant to support any changes that would impact their household finances. Almost half (45%) of Southern Californians describe their financial situation as either difficult, or just getting by, particularly in San Bernadino (53%). Consequently, many find it hard to contend with the idea of increases to bills or taxes, even for infrastructure projects they support.

In addition, residents are reluctant to support higher taxes and additional fees for infrastructure without greater transparency and accountability on how this money is spent and how projects are governed. However, it is worth noting that support for paying directly for projects (through tax dollars) would likely increase as these needs are better met. This is discussed in more detail in section 5, below.

Given these concerns, funding mechanisms tested in the survey that would directly increase household costs attract the least support (Figure 9). Bonds, repaid through taxation over time, are supported by only

21%, making these the most popular of the taxation options but still only accepted by a minority. User fees for improved services, such as tolls, are supported by 18%. Direct tax and bill increases are backed by smaller minorities: a ringfenced sales tax increase is the most accepted, but only by 17% of Southern Californians.

More popular are funding models which do not impact household costs (at least directly). The most popular model in the survey is a public-private partnership (36%), followed by reallocating existing government budgets (34%), and developer fees or fees on new construction (28%). While utilizing funding from private companies and developers is generally preferred, residents do raise some concerns about private sector involvement in the focus groups. In particular, they worry that pressure or involvement from private corporations could lead to prioritization of projects that do not reflect community needs. They also worry that costs would eventually still be passed on to citizens as the end users of the infrastructure.

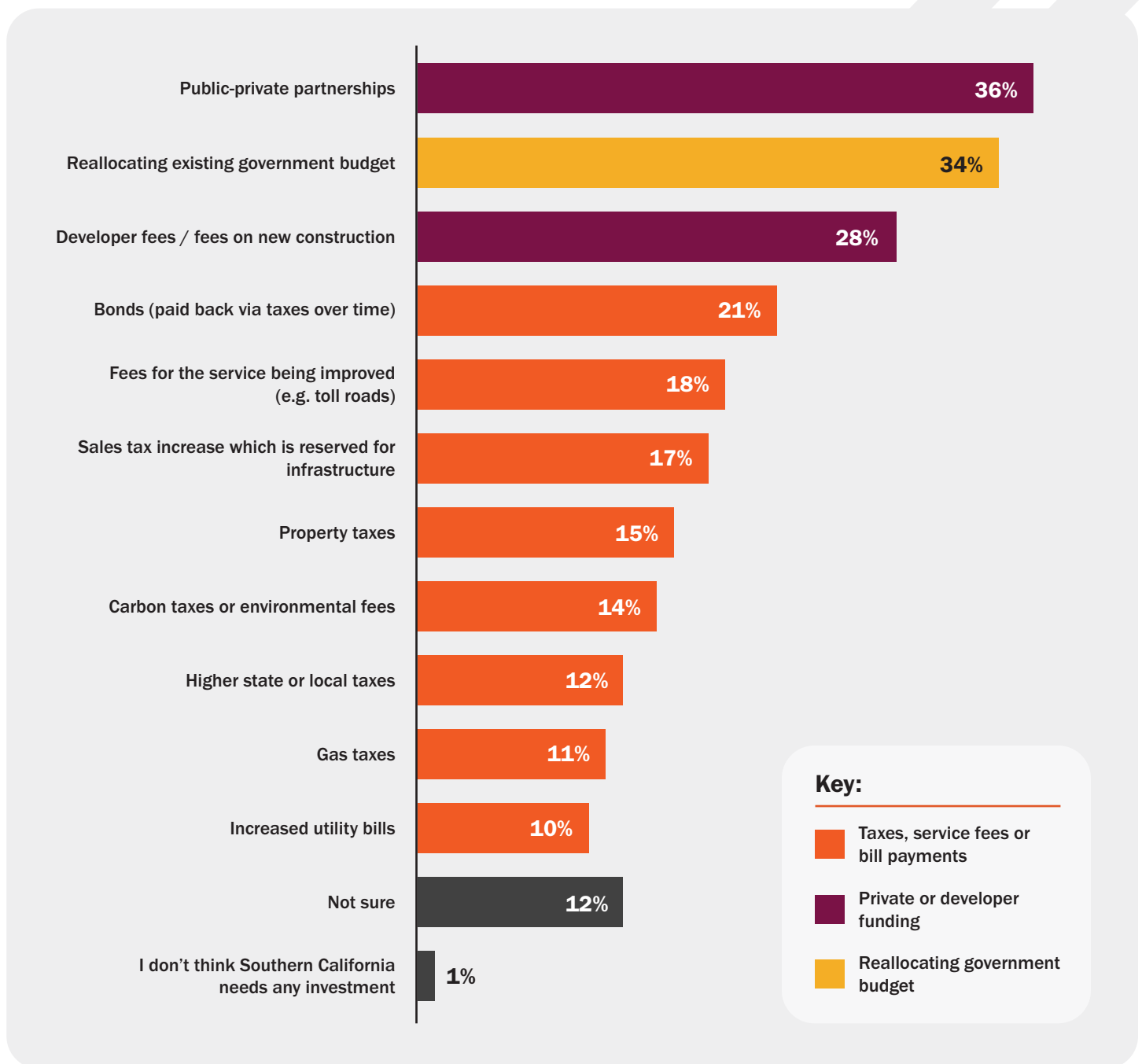


Figure 9: Preferred funding models for infrastructure projects in Southern California

Across these funding models, there is some variation by age. Younger residents (18-34) are significantly more likely to consider several direct taxation options. This includes sales tax increases (20% vs. 12% of 55+), property taxes (20% vs. 9%), and higher state or local taxes (18% vs. 6%). This likely reflects a combination of lower home ownership rates and differing

attitudes to the role of government. By contrast, older residents show a stronger preference for public-private partnerships (40% of 55+ vs. 32% of 18-34s), and developer fees (33% vs. 24%). Those earning lower household incomes, and those in Riverside County are particularly resistant to direct tax funding models, likely reflecting affordability concerns.

4. Conditions for winning support for infrastructure projects: Segmentation of views

4.1 Southern Californians' support for specific infrastructure projects is contingent on meeting key conditions

In the survey, participants were asked about the importance of different conditions to winning their support for an unspecified new infrastructure project in their area. The conditions include both cost avoidance ('no additional cost to me') as well as feeling the benefits personally through better standards of living. The creation of high-quality local jobs also appeals to a broad group of people, and is something that should be highlighted when introducing new infrastructure projects to communities (Figure 10).



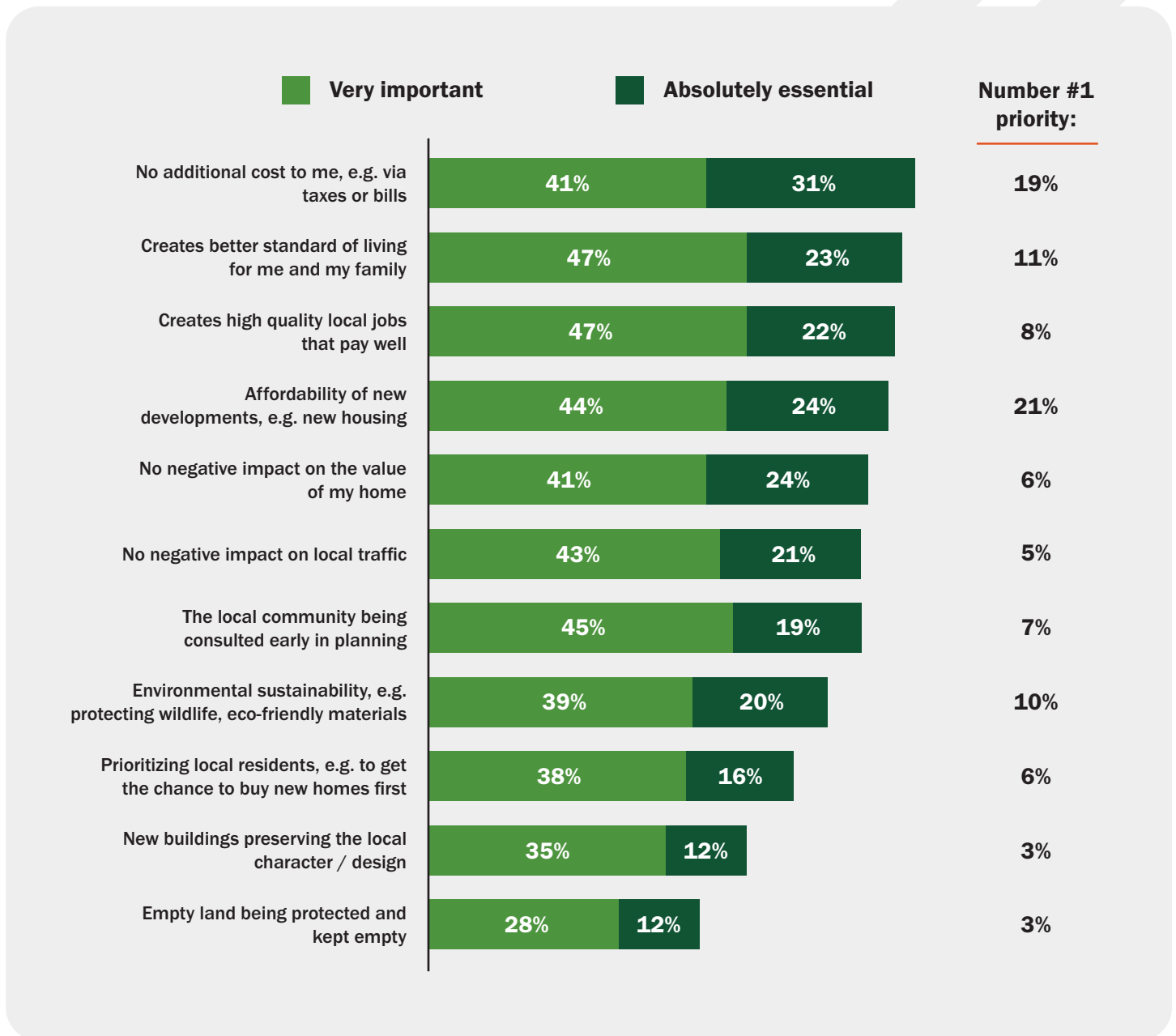


Figure 10: Importance of conditions being met to winning support for a infrastructure project in their area, and to what extent each is selected as the 'number one' priority when asked to choose

This is reflected in the conversation in the focus groups. While participants support infrastructure projects with a clear public benefit either at present or in the future, they are most supportive of projects which directly impact them in the short term – especially if these help address the most pressing challenges they face day-to-day.

4.2 Contingency of support suggests there is an overarching position of 'MIMBYism' amongst Southern Californians

Development is often discussed in the context of 'NIMBYism'. Short for 'Not In My Back Yard', this refers to the tension that many people support infrastructure in principle, but do not want to see new projects built near to their homes.

In Southern California however, residents say they will support projects near to their homes, if certain conditions around how projects are funded, managed and planned are met. This

is in line with their strong overall demand for investment.

This suggests that 'MIMBYism', or 'Maybe In My Back Yard' is the dominant position. The 'MIMBY' phenomenon has previously been identified in research by Demos in 2025 in the UK, which challenges established ideas about NIMBYism being a key barrier to effective planning.¹



¹ See Demos report, The MIMBY Majority (May 2025): https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/The-MIMBY-Majority_Report_2025_May_a.c.pdf

4.3 Understanding different views through segmentation

Specific conditions for support vary across individuals: 'MIMBYs' are not a singular, coherent group, but are driven by different priorities. To explore this in more detail, a purposive segmentation was designed to understand what makes different people support or oppose infrastructure projects.

This analysis enabled the identification of coherent groups within the SoCal population, pinpointing different populations of interest

and understanding how to win their support for infrastructure projects, turning 'maybe' into 'yes' by tapping into what is most important to each group. Further information on the segmentation process can be found in the appendix.

The logic flow for defining each segment is shown in Figure 11, with the relative size of each group in the SoCal population:

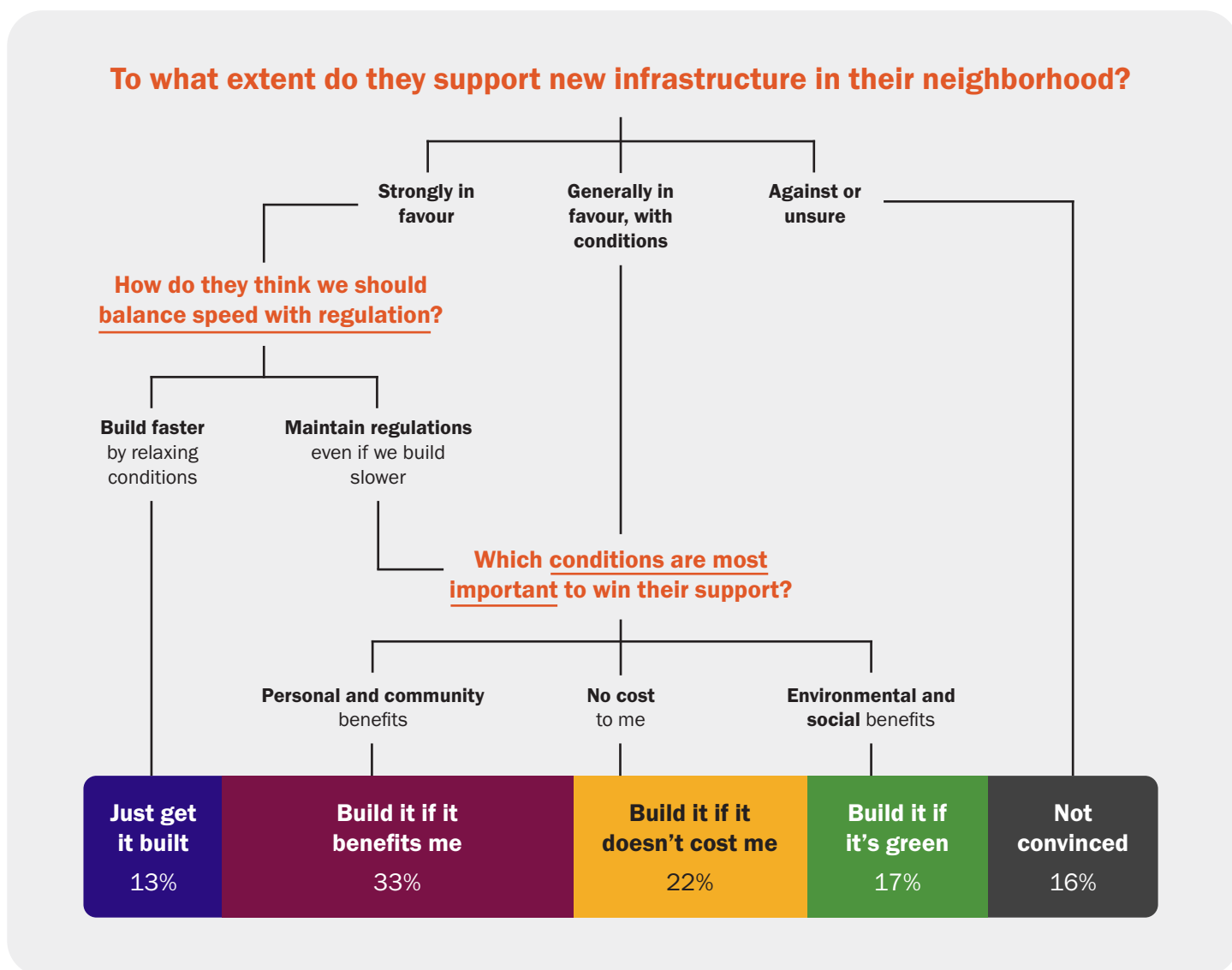


Figure 11: Logic flow of segmentation

1. The segmentation starts with strength of support for new infrastructure.

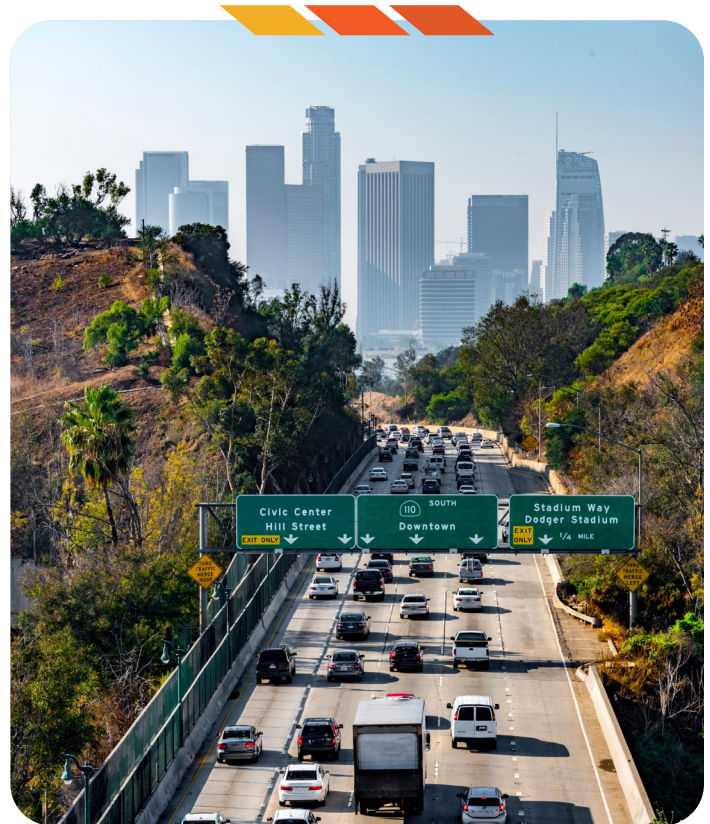
- a. Those who are most strongly in favor of new infrastructure are split by how they believe speed and regulation should be balanced.
 - i. Those who are strongly in favor and happy to relax regulations, are our first group, 'Just get it built'.
 - ii. Those who are strongly in favor in principle, but do want to keep regulations, are merged with those who are generally in favor but have conditions to favor new infrastructure.

3. The remaining group are those who are against or unsure about new infrastructure. As this group is already small, we did not split it further, but rather focused on who they are and what prevents them supporting infrastructure.

In all, this identifies five groups of Southern Californians, of which four are in favor of infrastructure (some with important conditions), and one generally against. There are important differences in the demographics and attitudes of each group, explored below.

2. The conditional group (the 'MIMBYs') are split according to the conditions that are most important to win their support for a project:

- a. **Personal and community benefits:** Affordability of new developments, prioritizing local residents e.g. to buy new homes first, creating high quality local jobs and creating a better standard of living.
- b. **No cost to me:** Including no additional cost via taxes or bills, no negative impact on home values and no negative impact on traffic.
- c. **Environmental / societal benefits and protections:** Including environmental sustainability of projects, protecting empty land, community consultation and preserving local character or design.



Segment 1: Just get it built (13% of Southern Californians)

Headline views: Current investment in infrastructure is not solving issues, and we need to do whatever it takes to get it fixed.

Demographics & location: Skew slightly male, varied ages. Slightly higher incomes. More likely in LA/urban areas.

Politics: They have more conservative views, and are more likely Republican supporters / Trump voters than other groups. Distrusting of government regulation: thinks the country needs a strong leader, willing to break rules to get things done.

Infrastructure issues and barriers: Roads and highways are a key issue for them, they feel very impacted by traffic and congestion. They are less directly impacted by housing issues but support more affordable housing too. They are happy to see environmental and quality regulations including CEQA relaxed, if it gets projects built faster – right now, they think infrastructure is built much more slowly and less efficiently than in the past.

They believe that long permit processes and restrictions are preventing infrastructure investment. They are more willing to consider taxation as a means to solve issues – although their preference is to reallocate budget from other programs. They can be described as YIMBYs.

Segment 2: Build if it benefits me (33% of Southern Californians)

Headline views: I agree we have urgent problems to fix, but I need to feel the benefits for me and my community.

Demographics & location: Tend to be younger. Across the counties, with a slight skew to more urban areas including LA.

Politics: Holding more liberal views, they are the group most likely to be registered Democrats and to have voted for Harris. They feel the government needs to do more to reduce inequality, but also that business should be regulated.

Infrastructure issues and barriers: Housing and affordable homes are a key issue for them, as well as public transportation. They generally want to see good standards maintained, but most important to them is that new developments benefit the local community, including their families – through affordability, standard of living and creation of quality jobs. They want to feel a personal impact from infrastructure investment, for them and their community.

They see the main barrier as a lack of funding, coupled with high cost of construction and a lack of political will to solve the issues. They think the burden of cost of infrastructure should fall on the rich, or developers (through fees) – their relationship to developers would likely need to improve to see them open up to other possibilities.

Segment 3: Build it if it doesn't cost me (22% of Southern Californians)

Headline views: I can see there are problems to solve – but just make sure it doesn't cost me anything

Demographics & location: Skew older (55+), living in more suburban areas including in Orange and Riverside counties.

Politics: Slightly more conservative – with a slight skew to third-party voting in the 2024 election / No Party Preference or independent voter registration. They are less supportive of a 'large state' / significant government intervention in issues.

Infrastructure issues and barriers: Feel their own quality of life is already quite good, but do recognize that the state invests too little in infrastructure more widely. They are slightly more hesitant about developments very close to their home. Traffic is the biggest issue that affects them personally. They feel least able to have a say in infrastructure decisions.

Like 'Just get it built', they feel that long permit processes get in the way of infrastructure, as well as poor government management. But mostly, they just don't want to be personally impacted, especially by having to pay additional taxes. They feel existing government budget should be reallocated instead.

Segment 4: Build if it's green (17% of Southern Californians)

Headline views: Let's only build what we really need to: we need to protect the environment in our beautiful state

Demographics & location: Mixed ages, across SoCal. Higher education attainment and higher income.

Politics: Liberal views, more likely to have voted Harris in 2024 and to be registered Democrat voters. They hold the strongest pro-environmental views of any group, and this influences how they think about infrastructure.

Infrastructure issues and barriers: Feel very satisfied with their quality of life, and that it is better than others in SoCal. For them, current investment in infrastructure feels about right, as they are less likely to be personally impacted by issues. They also feel most able to have a say in decisions.

They feel that standards should be maintained, and are particularly concerned by environmental impacts (generally supporting CEQA) and wanting to protect empty land – but also maintaining the character and design of their area. Likely because of their higher income, they are slightly more open to higher taxation than other groups (though still prefer private-public partnership funding models).

Segment 5: Not convinced (16% of Southern Californians)

Headline views: I don't know what the problem is, and I don't want to be bothered by it

Demographics & location: Mixed ages, across SoCal particularly in more suburban and rural areas. Generally lower income and lower rates of college education.

Politics: Less likely to have voted, but with a slight skew to conservative attitudes. Those who did vote in 2024 are slightly more likely to have voted Trump.

Infrastructure issues and barriers: This is the group who are most likely to show signs of 'NIMBYism' – not wanting a development within a mile of their home. They don't perceive infrastructure issues the way other groups do – they are more concerned about crime and immigration. Still, they are more likely to feel 'generally against' or 'not sure' about infrastructure being built near them than very strongly against the idea, with only 10% of this group feeling they are strongly against infrastructure (representing 2% of Southern Californians overall).

They therefore don't have clear views on lots of the debates, tending to feel that they 'don't know' when asked to consider their opinion. Of all the issues, investment in housing is the one that has the most opportunity to win this group over, if clear benefits can be presented to them.

5. Trust and transparency in the planning system

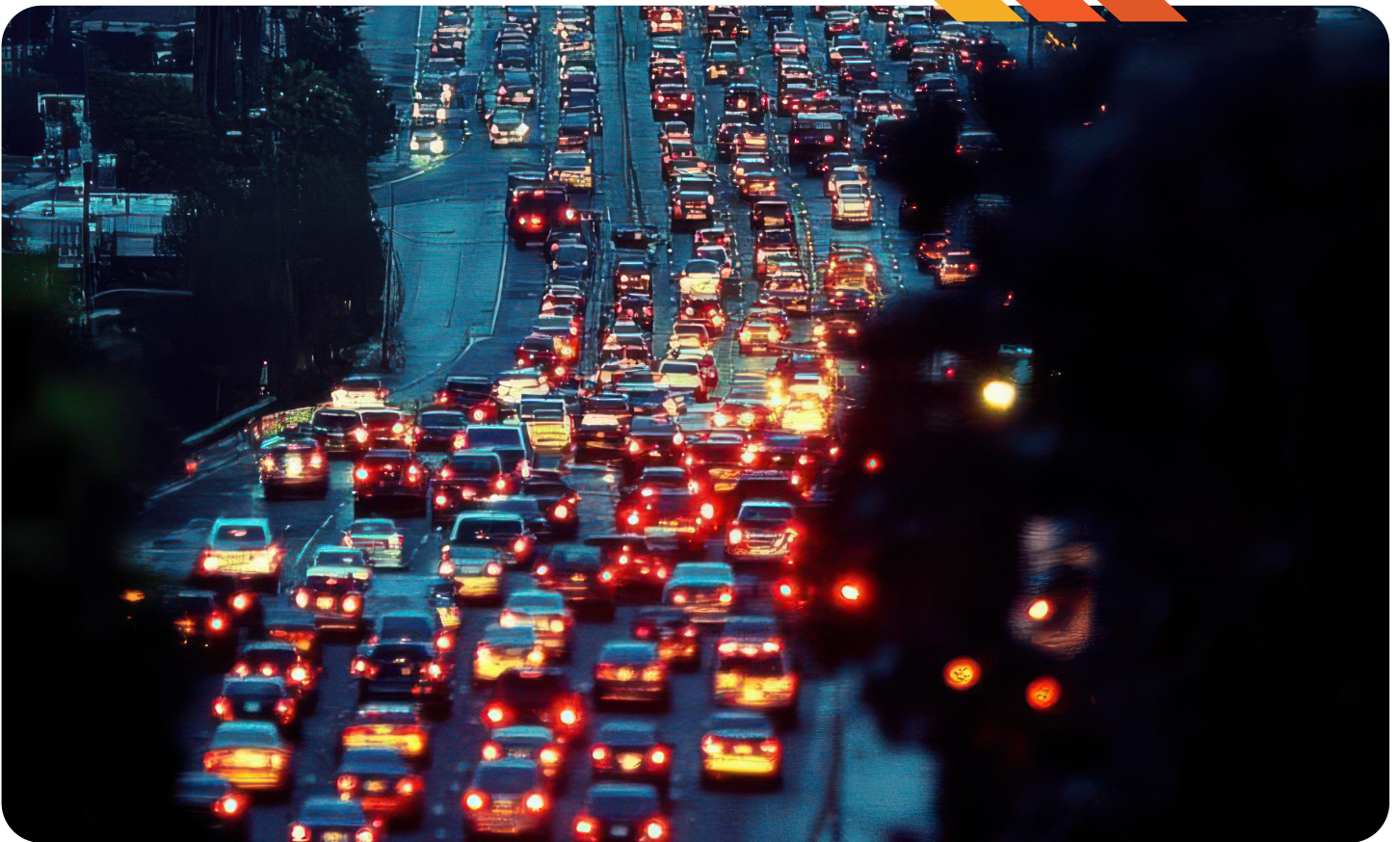
5.1

Southern Californians' appetite for investment in infrastructure coexists alongside deep frustration with current perceived failures to solve infrastructure issues

Across all five segments, there is an additional barrier to overcome: a lack of trust in the planning system to effectively answer infrastructure challenges, by ensuring the right projects get built quickly, cost-efficiently and to the right standards.

When asked about the biggest barriers to infrastructure projects in the survey,

residents frequently point to political and institutional concerns. The top three barriers that residents identify are the high cost of construction and materials (44%), poor government management (41%), and long permit and approval processes (40%). Three quarters (75%) cite at least one political barrier (Figure 12).



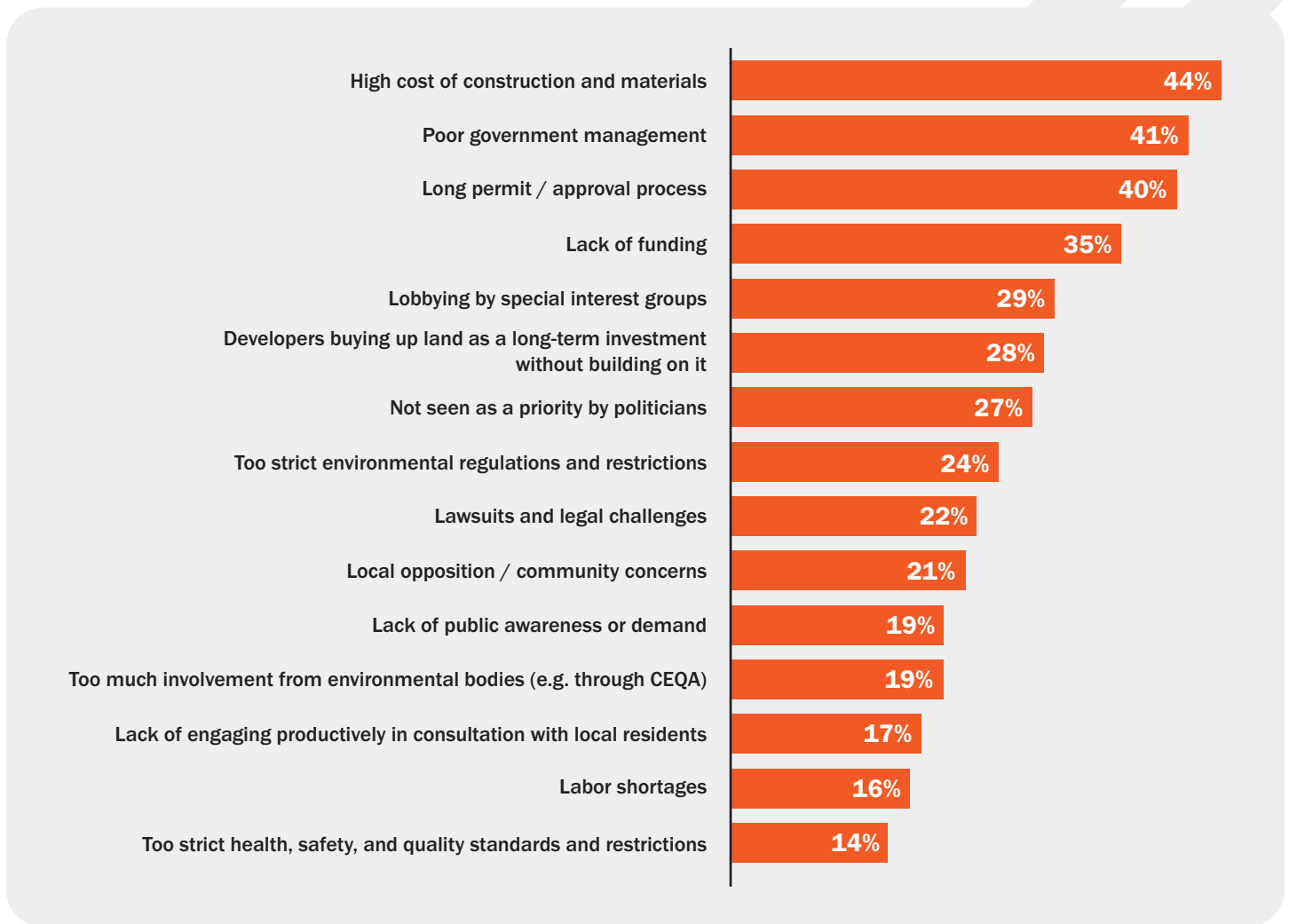


Figure 12: The biggest perceived barriers to infrastructure projects in Southern California

In the focus groups, one of the main challenges raised by residents is slow progress on major infrastructure projects. Participants feel that poor governance is widely to blame for this, with project delays and slow execution causing costs to spiral out of control. Red tape, regulations and planning requirements such as CEQA are also seen as cumbersome, leading to delays in projects.

High speed rail is commonly cited as an example of a poorly managed project which has been held up by red tape and poor planning, and many question how the actual costs have ballooned from the originally outlined budget.

“

They always go over budget and then they've got to wait until they raise taxes and get more money elsewhere. California high-speed rail is a great example. It was supposed to be \$20 billion. It's now going to be \$130 billion. Like, how do you screw up 6 times?”

Los Angeles County

Slow progress on infrastructure leads to the feeling for many that projects are announced, funded, then never materialize. This disconnect generates a high level of mistrust in the system.

5.2 There is particular distrust in current systems and key actors to spend public money effectively

A common view among Southern Californians is that when funds are raised for infrastructure, this money is not then being used effectively to maintain or improve it. This means that a policy of increasing investment alone is not seen as sufficient to address the challenges the area is facing.

Residents believe that funds are being misallocated and spent on projects that do not address urgent priorities or genuine needs. This includes poorly planned initiatives (such as public transportation routes connecting areas with little demand, or luxury housing developments that sit empty), as well as projects that are seen to benefit only a wealthy minority.

Linked to this is a broader feeling that the system is weighted towards vested interests, with leaders diverting money raised to other projects. Many also blame corruption, and assume that key actors are simply pocketing money earmarked for infrastructure development.

“

The problem is that there's no transparency and accountability with the politicians that are spending our tax money”

Orange County

5.3 Distrust means there is unwillingness to see current quality standards relaxed, but many call for reform to speed up the processes behind the regulation

Though the demand for more infrastructure is strong, Southern Californians are cautious about relaxing environmental and quality standards to build it. A majority (65%) want to see these standards maintained, even if this leads to slower infrastructure development. This holds true across a whole host of demographic groups, including across age groups, counties, and people living in urban vs. suburban or rural areas (Figure 13).

Those earning lower incomes under \$50,000 are particularly likely to want to see standards maintained, potentially pointing to a lack of trust among this group that if standards were relaxed, the issues they experience would be resolved.

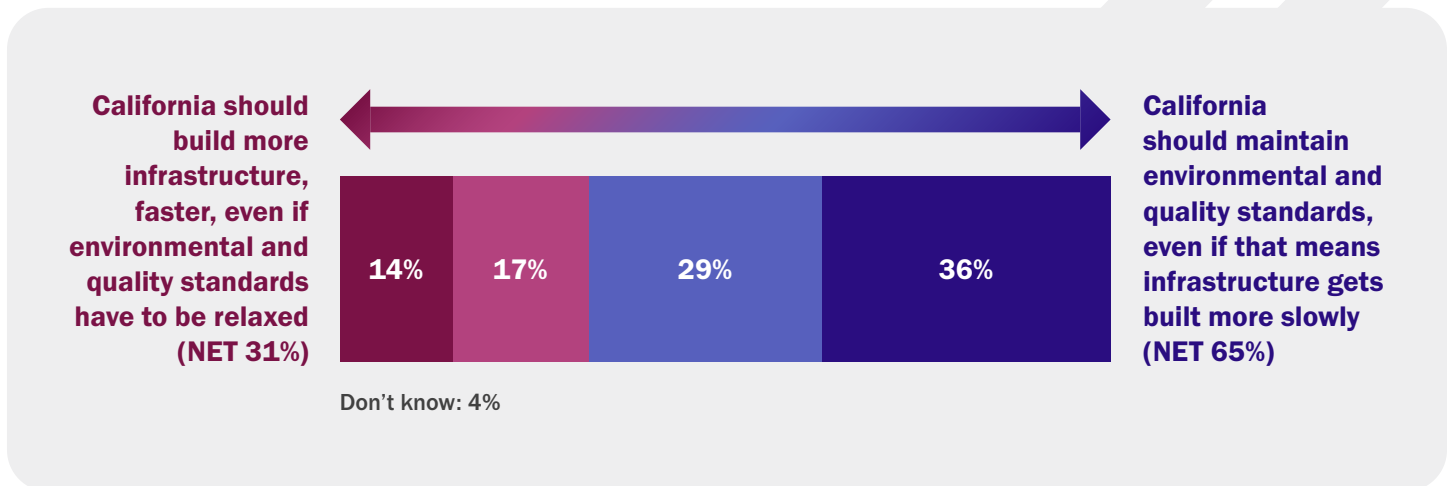


Figure 13: Attitudes towards trade-off of speed vs. standards

The focus group discussion reveals more nuance to these arguments. While residents generally want infrastructure to be built faster, they also want environmental standards to be maintained. These quality standards are seen as essential tools to hold politicians and developers to account. However, most recognize that regulation and processes can hold down the progress of infrastructure development.

Instead, Southern Californians call for regulatory processes such as CEQA to be streamlined, so they do not hold up infrastructure development while providing necessary safeguards to protect residents and the environment. Those most familiar with regulations call for better federal funding so there is sufficient resource to make decisions and carry out assessments much more quickly.

“

I'm glad it's there. I do also realize we don't have our high-speed rail, maybe because a lot of these environmental reviews and processes. So how do we clear out some of that red tape but still adhere to that, to protecting our environment?”

San Diego County

Some also feel that processes should be in place so that lengthy red tape and regulation can be circumvented when infrastructure projects are meeting a clear and urgent public need, especially when they address issues around safety (i.e. storm or wildfire resilience).

5.4 There is demand for more effective community consultation with the public

Currently, residents do not always feel empowered to shape the decisions that are made. When asked whether different groups have ‘too much’, ‘too little’ or ‘about the right amount’ of influence over infrastructure decisions, elected representatives, developers

and construction companies top the list of those with too much influence. Meanwhile, residents are most likely to feel that ‘people like them’ and local community groups have too little influence (Figure 14).

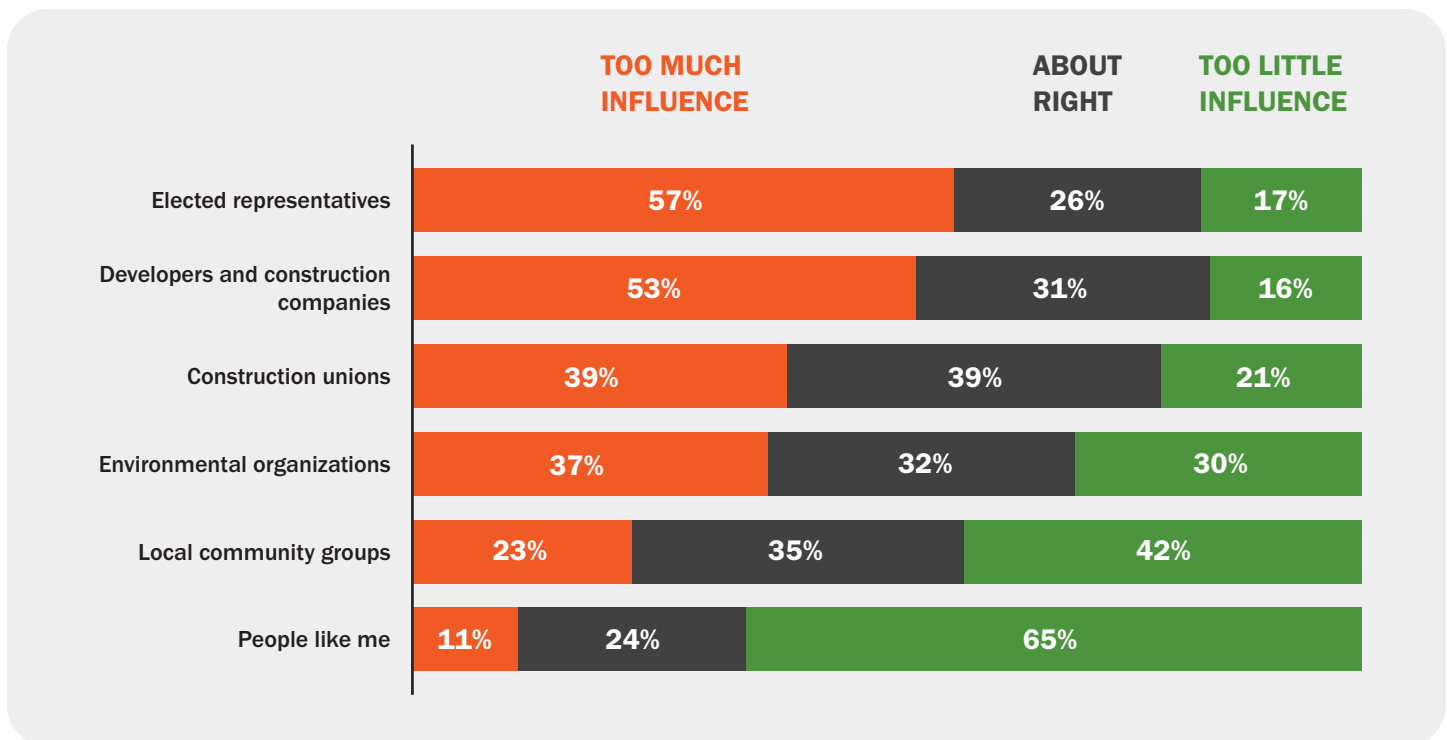


Figure 14: Perceived levels of influence on infrastructure projects, amongst those who had an opinion on each (i.e. excluding ‘don’t know’)

In practice, Southern Californians want to have the opportunity to input into decisions around infrastructure as citizens. They call for multiple ongoing and accessible channels for consultation, in formats ranging from town hall meetings, referendums, mail-outs or app-based opportunities to share their views.

While views differed on the best methods to consult local residents, most agreed that appropriate engagement would help build greater trust, transparency and accountability in infrastructure development.

“

If they want more public support for infrastructure, then they need to involve the public and, you know, involve them in every step of the process.”

Riverside County

They wanted to ensure that any consultation would be meaningful, with direct follow-through and accountability built in from the very beginning. Linked to this, many called for simple, accessible and neutral information to help them understand infrastructure projects affecting them.

Consultation should also aim to reach beyond the loudest voices, and hear from those who may potentially be negatively affected by infrastructure projects or who are typically excluded from the conversation.

“

Please make it easier for us to understand and apply [...] It's like old school goal setting because it's SMART, measurable, local, attainable, you know. Just make it simple for us.”

San Bernardino County

5.5

Southern Californians want to see greater transparency and accountability in infrastructure planning processes

In all of the focus groups, residents are emphatic that they want to see greater transparency and accountability around infrastructure. They say having mechanisms in place to ensure these are met would increase their support for infrastructure projects, and willingness to contribute financially to them.

The most common processes Southern Californians want to see in place surround financial transparency to prevent corruption and misallocation of funds. They want developers and planners to share public ledgers and itemized financial statements throughout infrastructure development, so citizens can check how and where tax dollars are being spent.

Residents also expect decision-makers to share clear information about the progress on infrastructure projects with the public. They call for documents such as progress reports and timelines, which should be made available to the general public.

They also call for better, independent,

oversight of infrastructure projects and decision-making. They feel that processes such as audits would help identify issues earlier, and allow for remedial action where necessary. They see a role for oversight bodies, which could be run either by civilians or a range of experts as part of independent committees, who could weigh in on decisions around infrastructure to ensure they meet the needs of the community. Some also speak about tools to hold decision-makers accountable when projects are not delivered or trust is broken, such as financial redress or legal action.

“

When there's cop abuse or cop violation of rights, there's an independent committee from citizens that are residents that oversees the case. If they did that for infrastructure as well, I think that would give us more reason to believe in it”

San Diego County

6 Views of three key infrastructure debates

In both the survey and the focus groups, Southern Californians weighed in on three important policy debates across key infrastructure challenge areas. These were: building new homes through infill versus greenfill, investing in road infrastructure versus public transit, and investing in electrifying the grid versus maintaining gas infrastructure.

6.1 Housing: Southern Californians' support for infill is conditional on affordability and planning for higher population density

Debate text shown: "Current state policy in California places restrictions on building homes on empty and undeveloped land. Instead, policy encourages housing to be built in existing urban areas, known as 'infill'. This results in homes that are closer to urban areas and jobs, but the homes tend to be much smaller, with less space. Which of the following comes closest to your view?"

Respondents in the survey are very much split on the debate, with 46% agreeing that prioritizing infill is a good policy overall and 47% saying this is a bad policy (Figure 15). Southern Californians identify with both arguments in favor of and against infill, as discussed below.

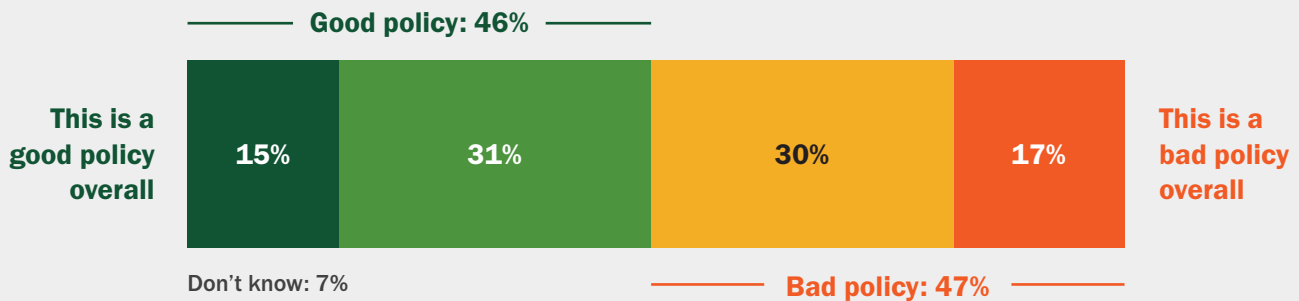


Figure 15: Support for current housebuilding policy. N.B. Good policy = support of infill // Bad policy = rejection of infill

Arguments for supporting infill housing

In the survey, the idea of having more walkable neighborhoods, enabling people to live closer to where they work, is the most compelling argument for infill. Notably, protecting empty land for nature is a lesser immediate priority, with most people most concerned about personal impacts.

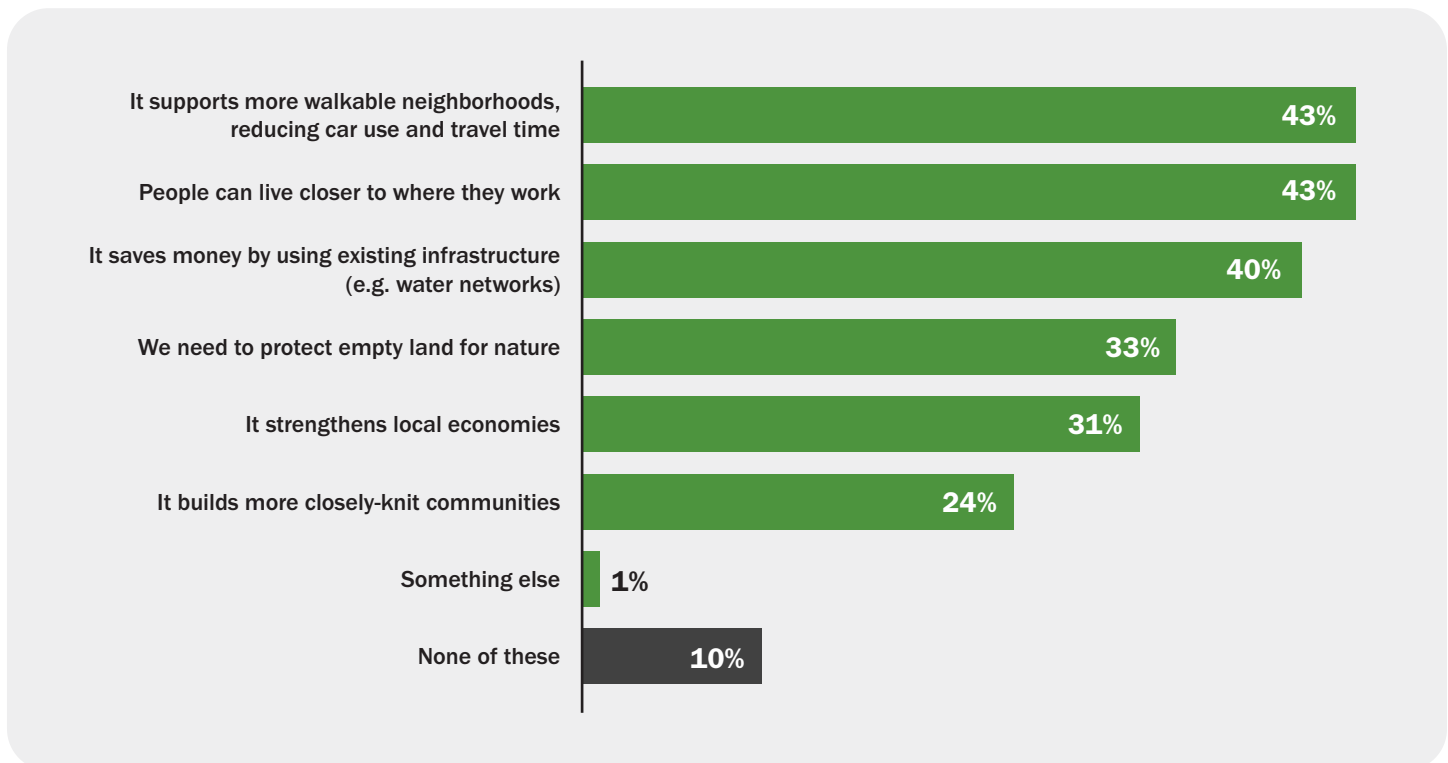


Figure 16: Rationale for support for current housebuilding policy

In the focus groups, Southern Californians raise additional benefits of infill to increase housing stocks, to help address high rental prices and address homelessness. Like the survey, they also see a benefit to reducing traffic and commuting, as people are living closer to schools and jobs, which will support walkable neighborhoods and public transportation hubs. They see infill housing as most suitable for younger professionals who are single or childless, but do not think it would work for larger families.

Southern Californians' view of the use of greenfill is also colored by their view of the environment, and to what extent this is a priority to them personally. Those who spend a lot of time in nature, or feel particularly ecologically-minded, are least supportive of greenfill compared to infill, and are most likely to raise arguments against building on new land.

Arguments against infill housing

Similarly, concerns that infill could increase traffic and congestion or result in overcrowded neighborhoods are the main arguments against the current policy.

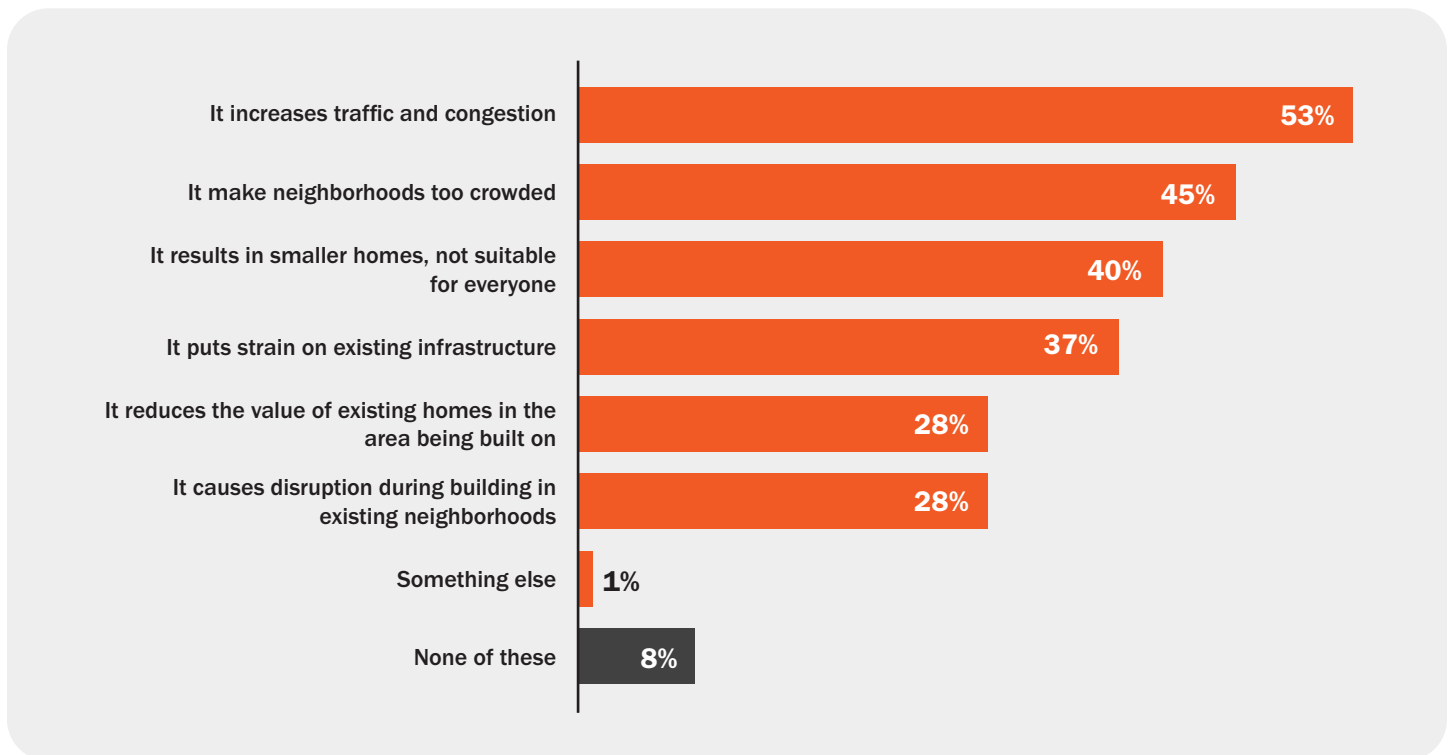


Figure 17: Rationale for opposition to current housebuilding policy

In the focus groups, Southern Californians raise concerns around the overpopulation of affected neighborhoods. They worry about whether current infrastructure such as power, water or parking will be sufficient for a higher density of housing, and worry that neighborhoods may lose their current community feel.

In practice, many say that infill housing can lead to higher rental or property prices rather than improving affordability across Southern California. They see that many new housing developments are luxurious, pricing out middle class individuals. Some say they see their own rent or housing prices increasing as

a consequence of such new luxury housing developments, as landlords realize they can charge more in the area than they were previously.

“

They're not prioritizing families, people that want to be part of the community. The houses I've seen be bought along the PCH in Malibu are being bought by private equity and they're being bought by people that don't live in this country."

Los Angeles County

Conditions for supporting infill housing

Southern Californians say they support infill housing if the following conditions are met:

- New housing development address challenges around rent affordability, by building properties which are affordable for working and middle-class residents.
- There is a sufficient level of supporting infrastructure in place to reduce the feeling of overcrowding, traffic and strain on utilities. For example, planners should upgrade water, sewerage and drainage systems, as well as providing adequate parking places.
- The impact of new housing on commute times and neighborhood planning is directly addressed with current and new residents in impacted areas.
- Parks and urban green spaces are considered and protected, as those living in infill housing are much less likely to have yards.
- Greenfill housing continues to be available, for those who want or need more space (e.g. those with larger families) and those who prefer to live in quieter suburban areas.



6.2 Transportation: Southern Californians want better public transportation in the long term, but feel road maintenance also needs to be prioritized in the short term

Debate text shown: “In recent years, California has restricted investment in roads and highways, while increasing funding for public transportation. This has resulted in more public transportation options (like buses) and less lane expansion on roads and highways. Which of the following comes closest to your view?”

Residents are split in their support and opposition to increasing investment in public transportation. Half (50%) say they think this is a bad policy overall, while 45% think this is a good policy (Figure 18).

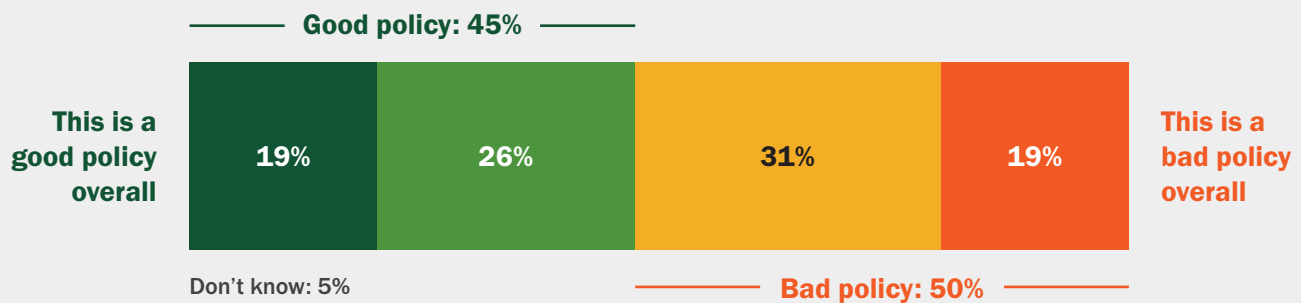


Figure 18: Support for current policy on public transport vs. roads and highways investment. N.B. Good policy = support for increasing investment in public transportation // Bad policy = rejection of increasing investment in public transportation

Arguments for investing in public transportation

Positive affirmative arguments for public transportation make a stronger case than arguments against investing in roads. Some agree that people need to be encouraged to consider alternatives to driving, or are open to traveling by public transportation more.

Making the link to air quality is also a relatively strong argument. On the other hand, negative arguments against investing in roads are less effective. For example, the argument that investing in roads doesn't actually reduce traffic is less widely known.

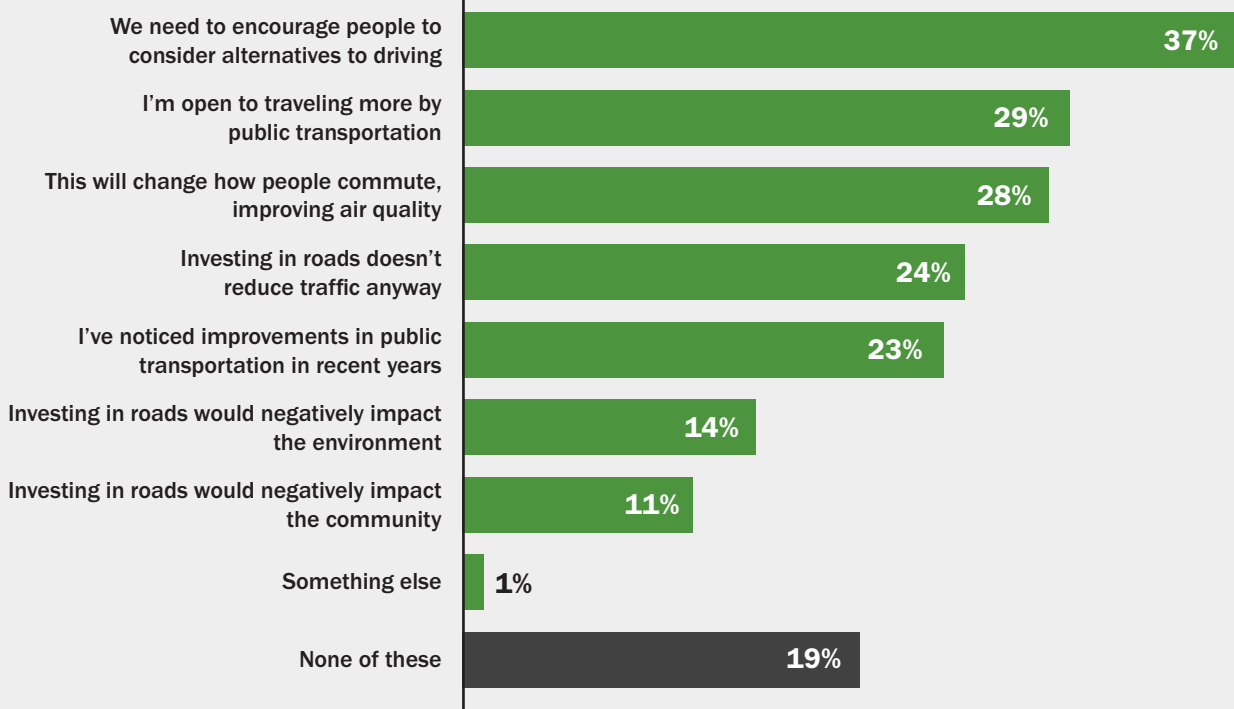


Figure 19: Rationale for support for current policy on public transport vs. roads and highways investment

In the focus groups, most Southern Californians take a nuanced position towards the debate of investment in roads vs public transit infrastructure. Some see that investment in roads often has little impact on traffic and commuting times, and so suspect that investment in public transportation will have a more significant impact on both of those issues.



There have been studies that have shown adding a lane to the 405 or the 5 costs billions and does minuscule difference in the time to commute."

Los Angeles County

Residents feel that better access to public transportation is key for those on lower incomes, who may struggle to afford cars, and struggle with the unreliability of current public transportation options. While most

don't see public transportation as something they would use themselves at present, they do see specific use cases where they would find it more practical (i.e. large sporting events).

Arguments against investing in public transportation

The strongest arguments against investment in public transport in the survey are centered around the strong inclination to be able to choose to drive – Southern Californians'

attachment to driving is strong and will be a difficult habit to shift quickly. Many still feel that investing in roads would reduce traffic problems.

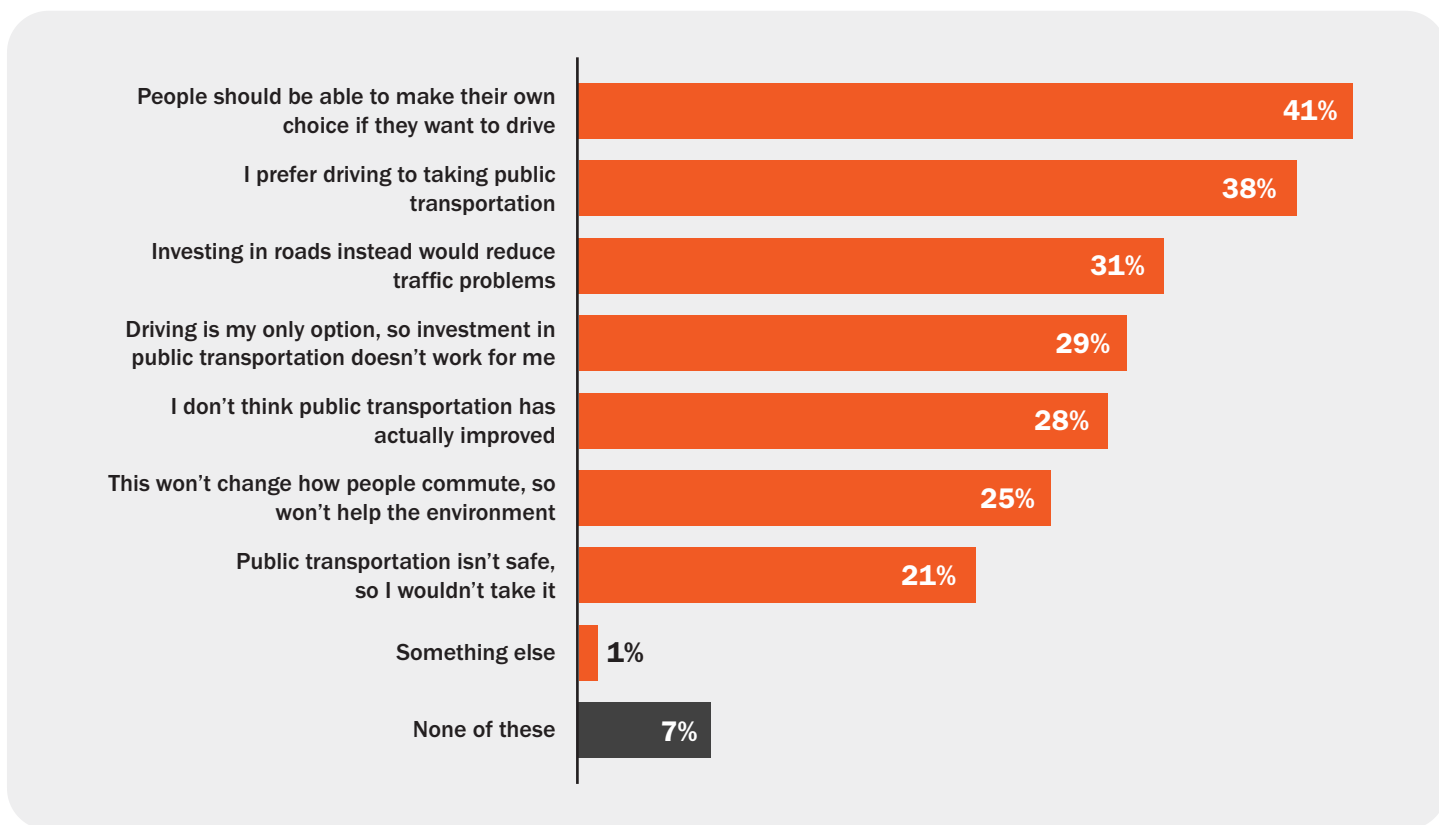


Figure 20: Rationale for opposition to current policy on public transport vs. roads and highways investment

In the focus groups, residents raise further challenges around public transportation. While they do see public transportation as potentially helpful to ease traffic and reduce commuting time, this feels a long way in the future.

Sothern Californians say that public

transportation, particularly rail, often feels unsafe. They also find that current public transportation routes are poorly linked, meaning journeys by public transport take much longer than journeys by car. While further investment in public transportation may help address these issues, many residents

feel this change would happen slowly, and won't be sufficient for most people to consider taking public transport.

Residents struggle to picture what a fully linked up public transportation network across the state of California would look like, and how this might work in practice independently of cars. As most neighborhoods in Southern California are spread out, linking these together by public transport is a significant challenge, and most hubs would still require individuals to drive by car for the final mile of their journey.

Conditions for supporting investment in public transportation

Southern Californians say they support investment in public transportation if the following conditions are met:

- Ensuring that existing public transportation is better funded so services are safer, more reliable, more frequent and run for longer throughout the day.
- The move towards public transportation is incentivized – either financially or by being practically an easier choice. While residents see that disincentivizing driving might help, they are reluctant to support measures that might place more financial strain on Southern Californians.
- Continuing a certain amount of investment in roads to keep them safe (i.e. repairing potholes) and roll out traffic calming measures such as priority lanes rather than building new roads.
- Focusing first on building public transportation between hubs such as stadiums or large offices.

Participants also recognize that there is a stigma attached to taking public transportation and that investment alone won't be sufficient to change long-held views.

“

This is not the city to force people into buses because we are 100 miles away from each other. Santa Clarita, Palmdale, they can't do buses. We all have to drive.”

Los Angeles County



6.3

Electrification: Southern Californians agree electrification will be beneficial in the long term, but worry about bills and blackouts in the shorter term

Debate text shown: “As part of its effort to reduce carbon emissions and limit climate change, the state of California is phasing out natural gas as an energy source over time, by prohibiting investment in the gas pipeline system and requiring new homes to be electric-only. This means that over time, California will rely on renewable electric power sources instead of gas, but this may increase energy bills, at least in the short term. Which of the following comes closest to your view?”

In the survey, half of respondents say that electrification is a bad policy overall (50%), while 44% say this is a good policy overall (Figure 21). Southern Californians are relatively split on this policy, revealing uncertainty around some of the ramifications and impacts.

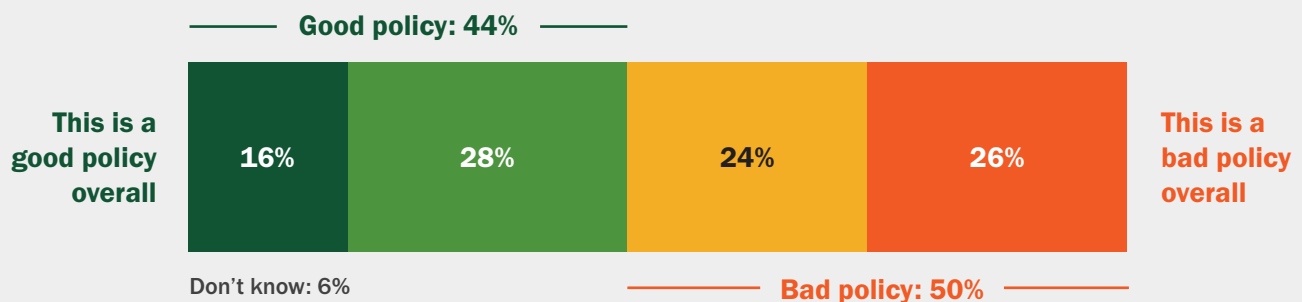


Figure 21: Support for current electrification and energy infrastructure policy. N.B. Good policy = support for electrification // Bad policy = rejection of electrification

Arguments for electrification

In the survey, environmental arguments make the strongest case for electrification, especially when positioned as protecting future generations. Arguments about energy security are less immediately powerful,

at least at the time of surveying – though with continued instability in the energy markets, these arguments may become more compelling over time.

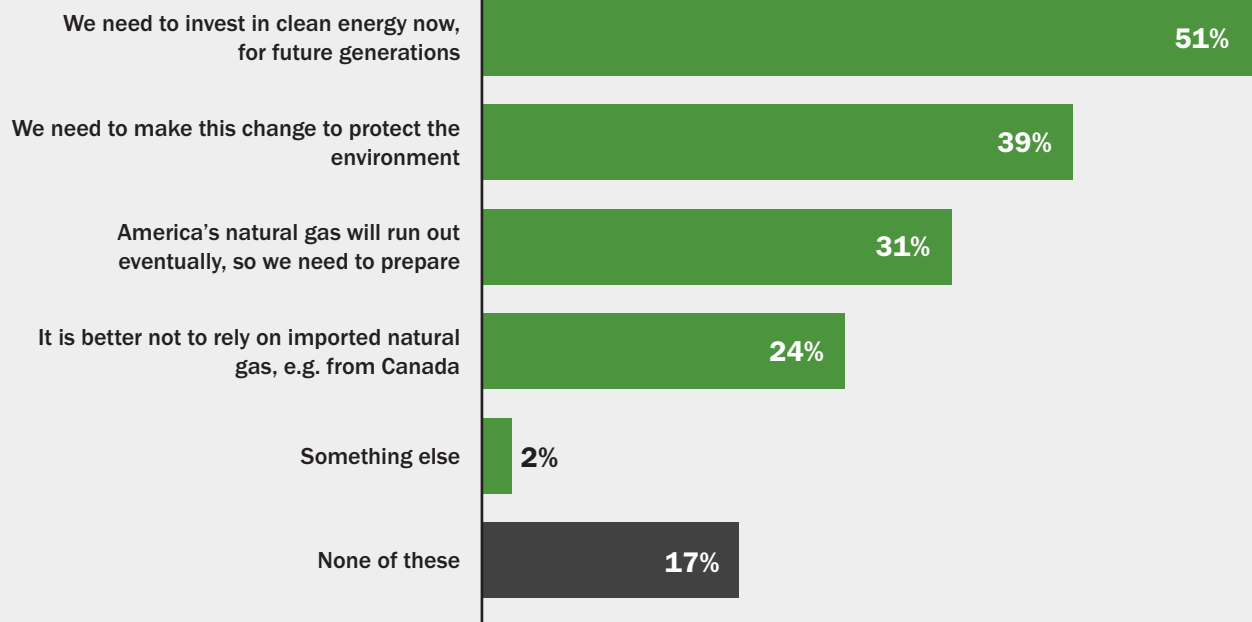


Figure 22: Rationale for support for current electrification and energy infrastructure policy

Southern Californians in the focus groups see clear environmental benefits to electrification, and support for renewable energy often aligns with their interest in environmental topics and feelings around protecting nature in their area. They also recognize the need for energy independence and security in an increasingly tumultuous world. Residents think that Southern California could benefit from both solar and wind power, potentially leading to cheaper utility bills in the future.



As an ecologist, I understand, because we think it's not a big impact, but it is, with cars and gas and everything, it creates climate change. I'm for electricity if it's an increase in bills in the short terms, but then it will be decreasing [in future]."

Orange County

Arguments against electrification

Given worries about the cost of living and state of the economy are high on people's agendas, it is no surprise that the fear of electrification affecting energy bills is the biggest argument against the policy. There

are also some small pockets of Southern Californians who don't believe that climate change is caused by human activity, or is happening at all.

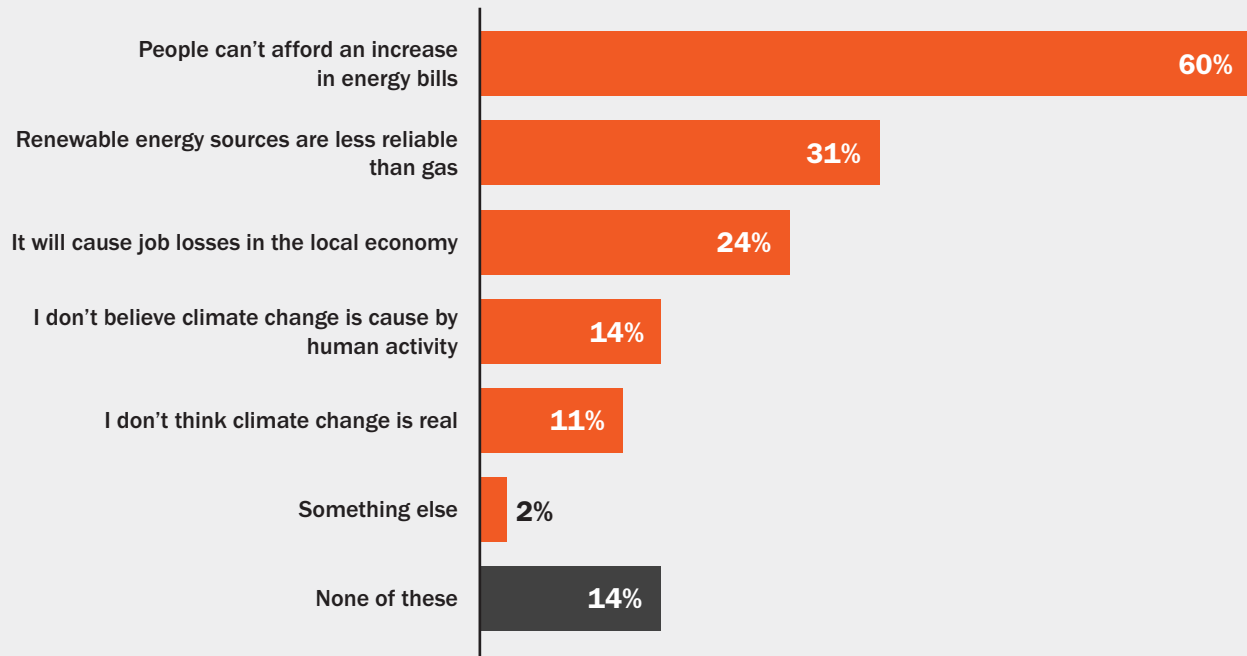


Figure 23: Rationale for opposition to current electrification and energy infrastructure policy

In the focus groups, the concern around rising living costs and energy bills remains high, with many worrying that a move away from gas will increase both their bills in the short and long term, but also that it could lead to an increase in taxes to fund the switch. Participants worry that moving away from gas could have implications for the reliability of the grid, potentially putting residents at risk.

A small number also express concern that this policy is overreach from the government, taking away choice and freedom from Southern Californians without consulting them.

“

Putting that much more strain on the grid system is going to be ridiculous. We're going to have so many people at the same time on the grid that it's going to cause major blackouts.”

San Bernardino County

Conditions for supporting electrification

Southern Californians say they support investment in electrification if the following conditions are met:

- Gas infrastructure remains for as long as necessary, so residents continue to have the choice between using electricity and gas.
- There is a clear plan in place for investing in the grid and energy market to ensure that people and businesses will have access to enough power as needed.
- Support with energy bills is available, especially for those on the lowest incomes, so the switch away from gas does not have an outsized impact on more vulnerable people.



7. Solutions Summit

7.1 What we did

To explore the challenges around infrastructure decision-making in more depth, we held a Solutions Summit, bringing together 27 Southern California residents for a full day of deliberative discussion. Southern Californians from a wide range of backgrounds were invited, to share their views and experiences and come to a shared perspective.

Participants spent the day learning about the challenges around infrastructure, hearing from experts such as Marc Dunkelman, author of *Why Nothing Works*, and Denise Cooper of Cooper Engineering. Participants also explored five hypothetical policy proposals to simulate discussions and inform their final principles:

- **The California Infrastructure Performance Act / Governor's report**, a policy to track agency performance and measurable outcomes from infrastructure projects.
- **Early, binding community co-design**,

designed to involve residents earlier in the planning process.

- **A single-stop agency for approval**, with one lead agency coordinating permits and approvals.
- **Fast-track approval** for projects with a clear public need, and firm deadlines for agencies to approve projects.
- **Master planning areas**, which would entail approving a wider development plan so individual projects can move forward more quickly.

This allowed them to develop a greater understanding of current decision-making processes around infrastructure, discuss different viewpoints, and ultimately develop a set of core shared recommendations for decision-makers in Southern California. The Solution Summit complements the breadth of the survey and focus groups, to provide a deeper view of the public's mandate for developing infrastructure in Southern California.



7.2 Key themes

As we heard in the survey and focus groups, there is frustration with a system that does not appear to deliver the infrastructure that communities need. Participants in the Solutions Summit describe decision making as slow, inefficient, and difficult to understand, with too many organizations involved and little transparency over how decisions are made.

There is also a clear lack of trust in the main organizations expected to deliver change and the infrastructure people need. Trust is conditional and tied to visible performance – with communities needing to first see

improvements in a timely manner. Currently, few feel they see any tangible change in their area, with few infrastructure projects being approved, and any approved projects progressing very slowly. Where necessary infrastructure has been developed, residents are not always satisfied that they deliver the results that their local area needed – with some having adverse impacts (e.g. housing developments aiming to improve affordability actually leading to higher rents in their area). Without seeing tangible change in their area, residents' trust in elected officials and agencies is very low.

7.3 Participant principles for improving infrastructure delivery

At the end of a day of deliberation, participants in the Summit worked together to develop a set of 5 key principles for decision makers. These principles were the result of a full day of learning more about infrastructure and discussing and deliberating the current issues with others in the room. As these are rooted in the issues participants saw with the current process, the principles below emphasize opportunities to rebuild public trust in the infrastructure development process.

Principle 1: Commit to timely project delivery that solves real issues

Southern Californians say that infrastructure development should aim to address the issues that average residents are experiencing – especially the most urgent and pressing issues around

affordability, transit and general quality of life. Participants argue that approved infrastructure projects should clearly demonstrate public benefit, and show that they address genuine community need.

To ensure important projects are timely, residents feel decision-makers should focus on speeding up and streamlining approval processes. Currently, many feel that projects which are seen to serve a profit motive (e.g. luxury housing developments) are approved more quickly and easily than projects which have a clearer public benefit (e.g. the Brightline West high-speed rail project). Residents want this reversed, with prioritizations and easier approval processes for projects which have the clearest social and societal value.

Principle 2: Demonstrate transparency and accountability

Summit participants felt transparency should be embedded throughout the project lifecycle – starting at the design of new infrastructure through to the end of construction. Residents want to see information shared with the public, in a centralized and accessible manner, so citizens can easily check how projects are progressing against core targets. Participants particularly want to know how their tax dollars are being used, whether timelines are being met, how many jobs are being created, and what the real meaningful outcomes will be (or are) for residents.

There should also be clear processes for accountability in place with clarity on which organizations and officials are responsible for delivery, and enforcement powers when targets are missed – this would help ensure that decision-makers are delivering on their promises.

Principle 3: Listen to communities early and meaningfully

Southern Californians argue that residents should be involved as early as possible in the design of infrastructure projects. They feel that early involvement would build trust, help avoid changes and delays to project down the line, and reduce the risk of legal challenges later on.

They feel this engagement also needs to be meaningful, and truly aim to capture a wide range of perspectives through deep engagement with residents. Participants felt that current processes don't work for everybody – with town hall meetings being inaccessible, and ballot votes being difficult to understand. Instead, they want engagement to be captured through multi-channel outreach and real co-creation with residents.

Residents also want to ensure that consultation processes would have guardrails to ensure that the loudest voices do not derail projects, and to prevent slow engagement causing delays to urgent and essential projects.



Principle 4: Set and share realistic deadlines

Residents want infrastructure projects to move at pace to ensure progress and reduce admin costs, with clear, hard deadlines that decision-makers must meet. Accountability processes also come in here, with consequences for funders or project managers if deadlines are missed.

However, there is caution around ensuring that projects are not moving too quickly and being approved without the appropriate checks, safety measures and public engagement. There is an expectation that deadlines would be reasonable and project-appropriate, recognizing the complexity of some infrastructure.

Principle 5: Plan for tomorrow, not just today

Southern Californians feel it is essential for decision-makers to look long-term, planning ahead for infrastructure which anticipates growth, climate and changing population needs. Residents feel that while there are urgent issues which need resolving, infrastructure should also think about how these needs may evolve 25-30 years in the future.

To do this, they argue decision-makers should plan in terms of broader areas rather than individual projects, allowing for greater savings and efficiencies in the long term. In addition, leadership will be essential to ensure that projects are considering future needs, and overcoming political turnover year-on-year.

7.4

Putting participant principles into practice: the Governors' Report on Infrastructure

Throughout the survey, focus groups and Solutions Summit, rebuilding trust emerged as one of the greatest challenges facing infrastructure delivery. In all strands of the research Southern Californians consistently called for greater transparency, clearer accountability, and stronger evidence that infrastructure is delivering meaningful improvements for communities.

As such, participants particularly gravitated towards one policy proposal introduced during the Solutions Summit, an annual Governor's Report on Infrastructure. Published by a trusted, independent source, the report would provide Southern Californians with a clear and accessible view of infrastructure delivery.

Residents say introducing a report like this will address the perceived lack of transparency around infrastructure, while also holding decision-makers to account through publicly available metrics and statistics.

Residents' concerns around accountability and trust point to a strong case for responsibility for this report sitting with the Governors' office rather than another, less well-known and democratically accountable, government department, agency or organization. There is some skepticism about the reliability of the statistics and whether agencies and developers will report accurately, and participants felt that the high profile of the Governor's office would ensure appropriate scrutiny of the report and its contents.

Other concerns include whether this will add another bureaucratic step and counter delivering infrastructure quickly and efficiently. Supporters of this policy also warn that it must have 'teeth' and enforceable impacts for underperforming projects in order to truly be effective and build trust with the public.

Residents had a number of ideas for the measures they would like to see in the report:

- **Timeliness:** How quickly decision makers have responded to known infrastructure challenges, whether projects are progressing on schedule, and where delays have occurred.
- **Costs:** How public funding has been spent, whether projects remain within budget, and how taxpayer money is being used.
- **Impact:** Whether completed projects have delivered the benefits originally intended, including improvements to communities and residents' quality of life.
- **Jobs:** The number and type of jobs created or displaced through infrastructure investment.
- **Looking ahead:** The infrastructure projects planned for the years ahead, giving residents greater visibility of future priorities and investment.

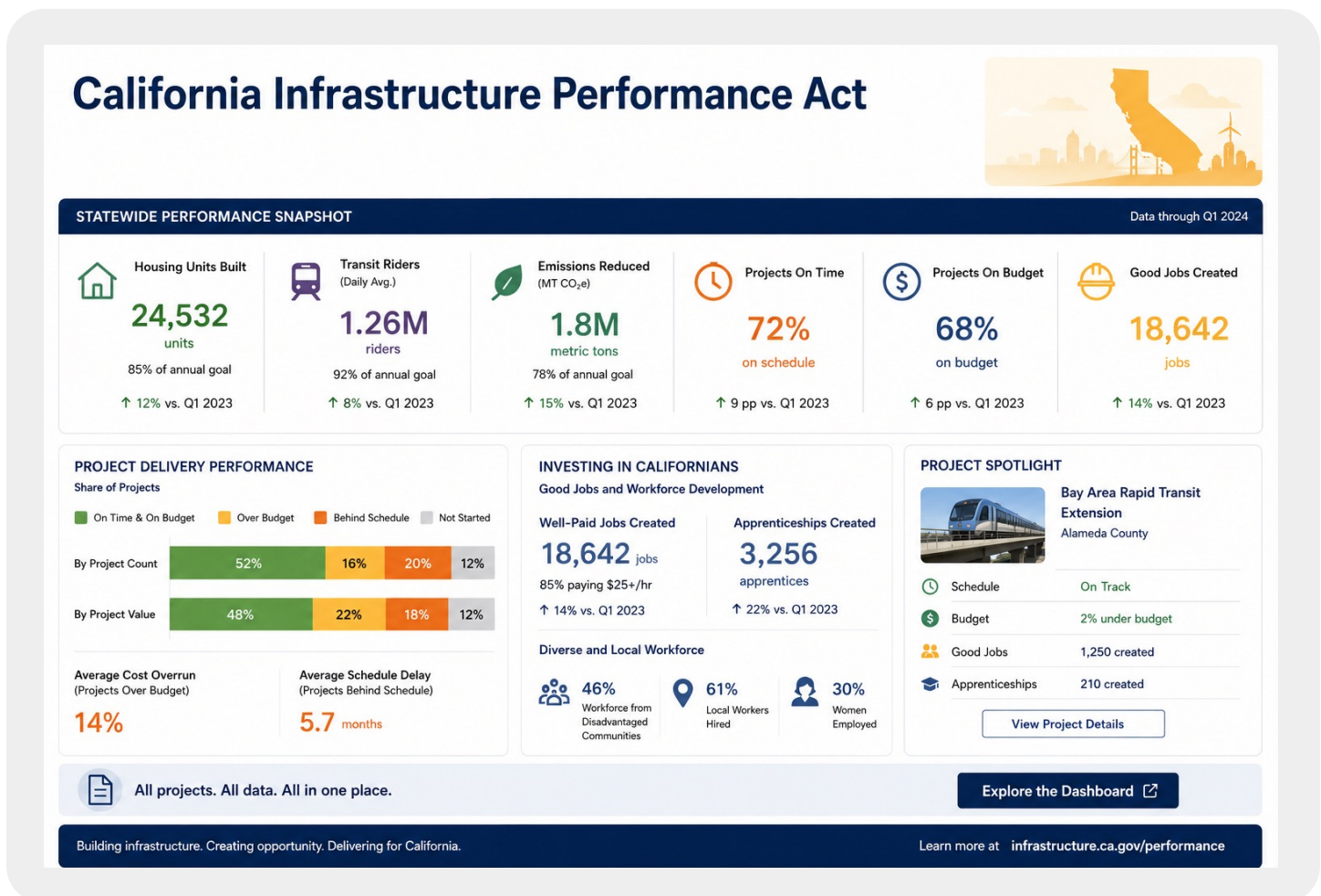


Figure 24: Example Governor's report dashboard

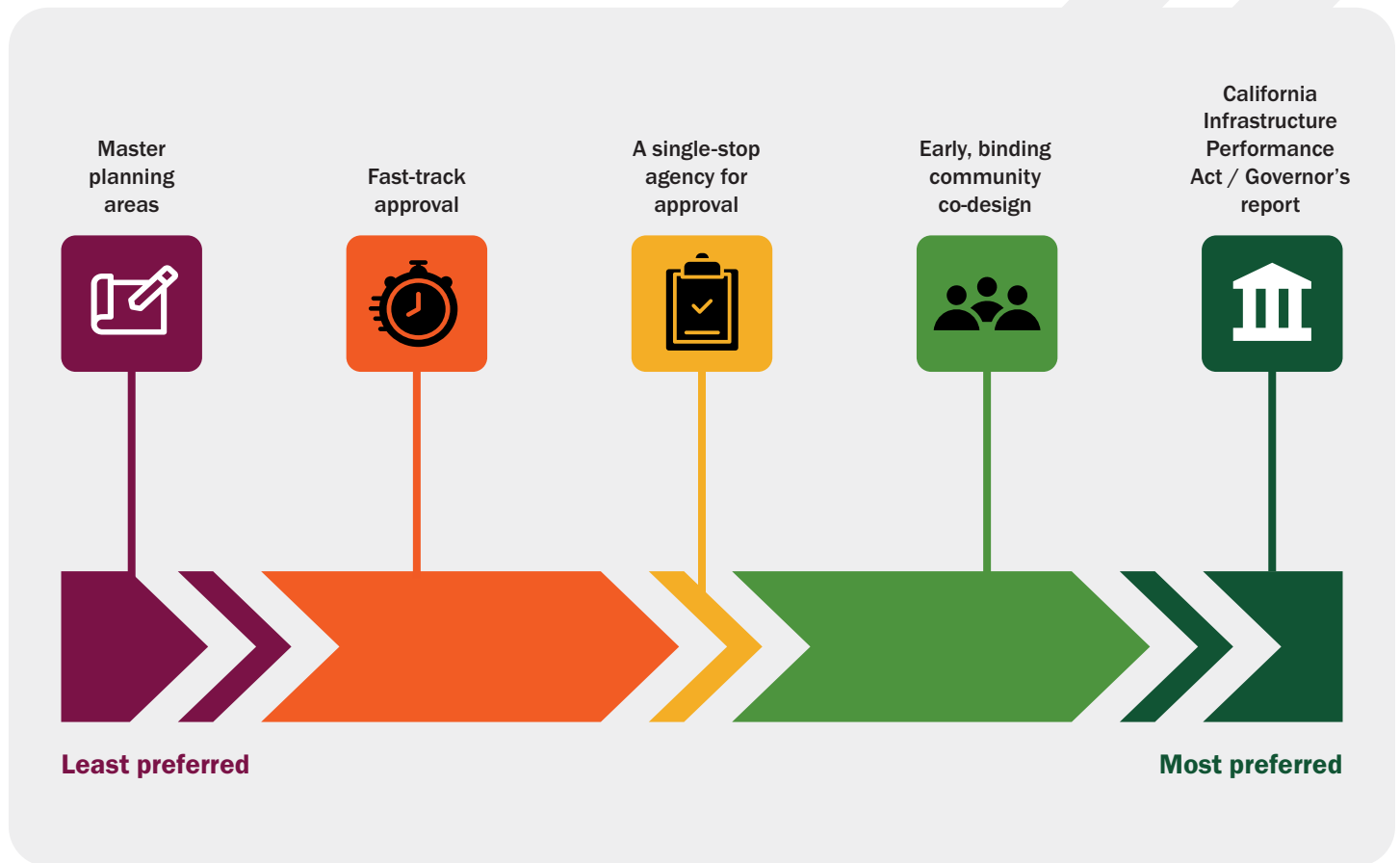


Figure 25: Policy proposals in order of participants' preference, indicating strongest support for the Governor's report.

8 Appendix (a): Quantitative methodology

8.1 Overview

This research was conducted by Thinks Insight & Strategy, an independent research agency, on behalf of Rebuild SoCal. The study aimed to provide robust, representative data on public attitudes toward infrastructure in Southern California, covering understanding of infrastructure challenges, levels of support for investment, motivations and barriers, and how views vary across the region's diverse communities.

Fieldwork was conducted between February 12th and March 9th 2026. The survey was administered online and by telephone (CATI) and was available in both English and Spanish to ensure representation of Southern California's linguistically diverse population.

8.2 Sample

A total of **5,000 adults aged 18+** were surveyed across six counties of Southern California. Of these, 4,000 interviews were conducted online and 1,000 by telephone (CATI). The survey was completed in English by 4,213 respondents and in Spanish by 787 respondents.

The sample was structured to ensure sufficient base sizes for robust analysis at the county level and across key demographic subgroups. Counties were sampled proportionate to their population size. The county-level breakdown is below.

The sample also included sufficient representation across key demographic variables for subgroup analysis, including age, gender, ethnicity, household income, homeownership status, urbanity, education, employment, and political affiliation.

County	n
Los Angeles	2,238
San Diego	756
Orange	727
Riverside	580
San Bernardino	508
Ventura	191
Total	5,000

8.3 Analysis and reporting

Data were analyzed at the total sample level and across key subgroups. Statistical significance testing was applied at the 95% confidence level across all subgroup comparisons. In this report, subgroup differences are only referenced where they are statistically significant.

The margin of error for statistics presented among the total sample is approximately $\pm 1.39\%$.

The segmentation analysis combined Latent Class Analysis and K-Means clustering across a range of attitudinal variables, with the final segmentation structure based on the variables that emerged most consistently as important drivers of support for infrastructure. Factor analysis was used to identify groupings of conditions that tend to be selected together. Full details of the segmentation methodology are provided in Section 7.5.

8.4 A note on interpretation

Where percentages are reported in the body of this report, they refer to the total sample of 5,000 Southern Californian adults unless otherwise stated. Some questions were only asked of a subset of respondents (for example, the policy debate sections were each shown to a randomized portion of the sample); in these cases, base sizes are noted in the data tables. All figures presented in this report, for example among sub-groups of interest, are among a base size of at least 100.

Percentages may not always sum to 100% due to rounding or where respondents were able to select more than one answer.

8.5 Segmentation approach

We ran a large number of statistical models, modelling with both **Latent Class Analysis and K-Means clustering**, to understand how different attitudes and concerns group together.

After running dozens of models, with different survey question inputs and numbers of segments, we identified the questions that appeared repeatedly as important factors. These were:

- Overall support for infrastructure being built near them (A10)
- Headline attitudes to regulation vs. speed (A13_1)
- Most important conditions to gain their support for a project (A17)
 - > The groups of conditions are based on **factor analysis**, which is a statistical technique used to identify types of conditions that tend to be selected together. This means we can be confident in these groupings as reflecting real priorities for different groups of people.

We then created a purposive segmentation by combining the most important factors to **driving support of infrastructure projects**.

9. Appendix (b): Qualitative methodology

9.1 Overview

Focus groups were conducted online from April 13th to April 22nd, moderated by researchers from Thinks and Market Probe International. Participants were recruited by Market Probe International in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. Recruitment criteria included favorability towards infrastructure investment, demographic and socioeconomic criteria, political affiliation, and personal impact of poor infrastructure. Each group was comprised of approximately 8 participants who all resided in the same county and geographic area.

As with the quantitative survey, fieldwork was conducted in both English (10 groups)

and Spanish (2 groups, in Los Angeles and Riverside / San Bernardino).

The focus groups covered topics from the survey in greater depth. Participants shared their experiences of living in Southern California and infrastructure in their local areas. They were asked to delve deeper into the debates which emerged from the quantitative fieldwork, including greenfill vs. infill, roads vs. public transportation, and gas vs. electrification and renewable energy. Additionally, participants were encouraged to think about some of the perceived roadblocks to infrastructure development in Southern California, along with how infrastructure is currently funded.

9.2 Overview of Solutions Summit

The Solutions Summit was hosted on June 20th in Downtown Los Angeles, moderated fully by researchers from Thinks, with participants recruited by Sago. Participants had not been involved with the previous qualitative phase of this research. The recruitment criteria were broadly similar to the previous qualitative phase except all participants attending in-person were drawn from the Los Angeles area. A virtual group was conducted simultaneously to allow representation from other counties in Southern California.

Participants were provided with a more in-depth understanding of California's regulatory landscape and explored again some of the perceived barriers to developing infrastructure. After exploring several case studies, participants deliberated on a number of hypothetical reforms and policy proposals to help them ideate on potential solutions to the barriers they identified. This approach encouraged participants to reach a deeper understanding of how their shared goal of infrastructure development could be achieved responsibly.

9.3 Qualitative sample in detail

County	Los Angeles 4x English groups 1x Spanish group	San Diego 2x English groups	Orange County 2x English groups	Riverside & San Bernardino 2x English groups 1x Spanish group
Location	Group 1: Southeast LA county Group 2: West Side/ South Bay Group 3: San Fernando Valley/ North LA County Group 4: LA City Group 5: No specific location quota within county	Group 6: North & East Group 7: City	Group 8: Coastal Group 9: Inland	Group 10: Riverside Group 11: San Bernardino Group 12: No specific location quota within county

Quota Category	Requirement	Los Angeles	San Diego	Orange County	Riverside & San Bernardino
Strongly in favor of infrastructure investment	Min 3 per group	19	7	6	10
Generally in favor of infrastructure investment (with some concerns)	Min 3 per group	21	9	10	14
Ethnic minority background	County-specific minimums	18	4	5	16
Hispanic Origin	County-specific minimums	16	4	2	15
Other Origin	County-specific minimums	24	12	14	9
Income <\$50k	Min 1 per group	8	3	4	6
Income \$50k–\$74k	Min 1 per group	9	3	2	4
Income \$75k–\$99k	Min 1 per group	9	5	3	9
Income \$100k–\$199k	Min 1 per group	14	5	7	7

Income >\$200k	Exclude	0	0	0	0
Gender – Men	Min 3 per group	19	7	7	11
Gender – Women	Min 3 per group	21	9	9	13
Age 18–34	Min 2 per group	17	7	4	6
Age 35–54	Min 2 per group	13	5	7	12
Age 55+	Min 2 per group	10	4	5	6
Trump voters	Min 20 across sample	13	3	4	3
Harris voters	Min 30 across sample	23	9	7	14
3rd-party/ Non-voters	Min 10 across sample	4	4	5	7
Infrastructure Impacts	Traffic & congestion min. 2	34	13	11	22
	Transport min. 2	17	9	6	6
	High cost or shortage of housing min. 2	22	12	5	11
Infrastructure Impacts	Traffic & congestion min. 2	34	13	11	22
	Transport min. 2	17	9	6	6
	High cost or shortage of housing min. 2	22	12	5	11
	Water shortages min. 2	4	0	1	1
	Flooding min. 2	6	4	5	7
	Power min. 2	12	2	2	9
	Internet min. 2	17	4	2	12
	Bridges/ overpasses min. 2	4	1	0	0
	Wildfires min. 2	6	0	0	1
	Insurance min. 2	6	3	3	2
	Burst water pipes min. 2	3	2	1	1

9.4 Qualitative sample in detail (Solutions Summit)

9.4.1 Virtual sample

Quota Category	Requirement	Total
Male	Min 3	3
Female	Min 3	3
18-34	Min 1	1
35-54	Min 1	3
55+	Min 1	2
San Bernadino	Min 1	1
Riverside	Min 1	1
Orange County Inland	Min 1	1
Orange County Coastal	Min 1	1
San Diego City	Min 1	1
San Diego north/east	Min 1	1
'Just get it built' attitudinal segment	Min 1	1
'Build it if it benefits me' attitudinal segment	Min 1	2
'Build it if it doesn't cost me' attitudinal segment	Min 1	1
'Build it if it's green' attitudinal segment	Min 1	2
Ethnic minority background	Min 2	1
Hispanic origin	Min 2	1
Other origin	Min 2	5
Income <\$50k	Min 1	2
Income \$50k-\$74k	Min 1	2
Income \$75k-\$99k	Min 1	2
Income \$100k-\$199k	Min 1	0
Harris voters	Min 2	2
Trump voters	Min 2	2
Independent / Didn't vote	Min 2	2
Infrastructure impacts	All	6

9.4.2 In-person sample

Quota Category	Requirement	Total
Male	Min 12	11
Female	Min 12	10
18-34	Min 8	7
35-54	Min 8	7
55+	Min 8	7
South East LA County	Min 4	4
West Side / South Bay	Min 4	6
San Fernando Valley / North LA County	Min 4	5
LA City	Min 4	6
'Just get it built' attitudinal segment	Min 6	6
'Build it if it benefits me' attitudinal segment	Min 6	5
'Build it if it doesn't cost me' attitudinal segment	Min 6	3
'Build it if it's green' attitudinal segment	Min 6	7
White alone	Min 12	13
Ethnic minority background	Min 6	8
Hispanic origin	Min 9	6
Other origin	Min 10	15
Income <\$50k	Min 3	6
Income \$50k-\$74k	Min 3	4
Income \$75k-\$99k	Min 3	6
Income \$100k-\$199k	Min 3	5
Harris voters	Min 10	11
Trump voters	Min 7	6
Independent / Didn't vote	Min 3	4
Infrastructure impacts	All	21

