



Verde Valley

Key Findings from a Survey of Residents March 2012



**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**

#12243

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METHODOLOGY

- **350 residents of the Verde Valley defined as:
Sedona, Clarksdale, Jerome, Cottonwood, Cornville,
Oak Creek, Rimrock, Lake Montezuma, Camp Verde**
- **Margin of error is $\pm 5.24\%$ for the overall sample**
- **Interviews conducted March 13-17, 2012**
- **Interviews were distributed proportionally
throughout the area and are demographically
representative of likely November 2012 voters**

GOALS OF THE SURVEY

- Establish a baseline of understanding among local residents of relationship to and views of the Verde River;**
- Assess concerns related to the state of the River and potential threats to it;**
- Determine the appetite for potential changes which would affect the River and opportunities to visit the River or encourage others to; and**
- Understand how improved opportunities to visit and enjoy the River may be perceived as benefits as well as potential concerns about that.**

KEY FINDINGS



OPPORTUNITIES

#1

Residents closest to the Verde River say that they have a strong connection to it, see it as central to their community and like to at least occasionally visit it themselves.

#2

Residents are interested in engaging in a number of different activities at or along the River.

#3

There is a strong sense that inadequate water supplies are a problem – not only here but among Arizonans generally.

CHALLENGES

#1

The River is not seen in economic terms – not a job creator and not much intensity in the view it attracts tourists.

#2

Residents register support for greater opportunities to visit the River but there may be some tension in that their biggest hesitation is the potential damage to natural areas.

#3

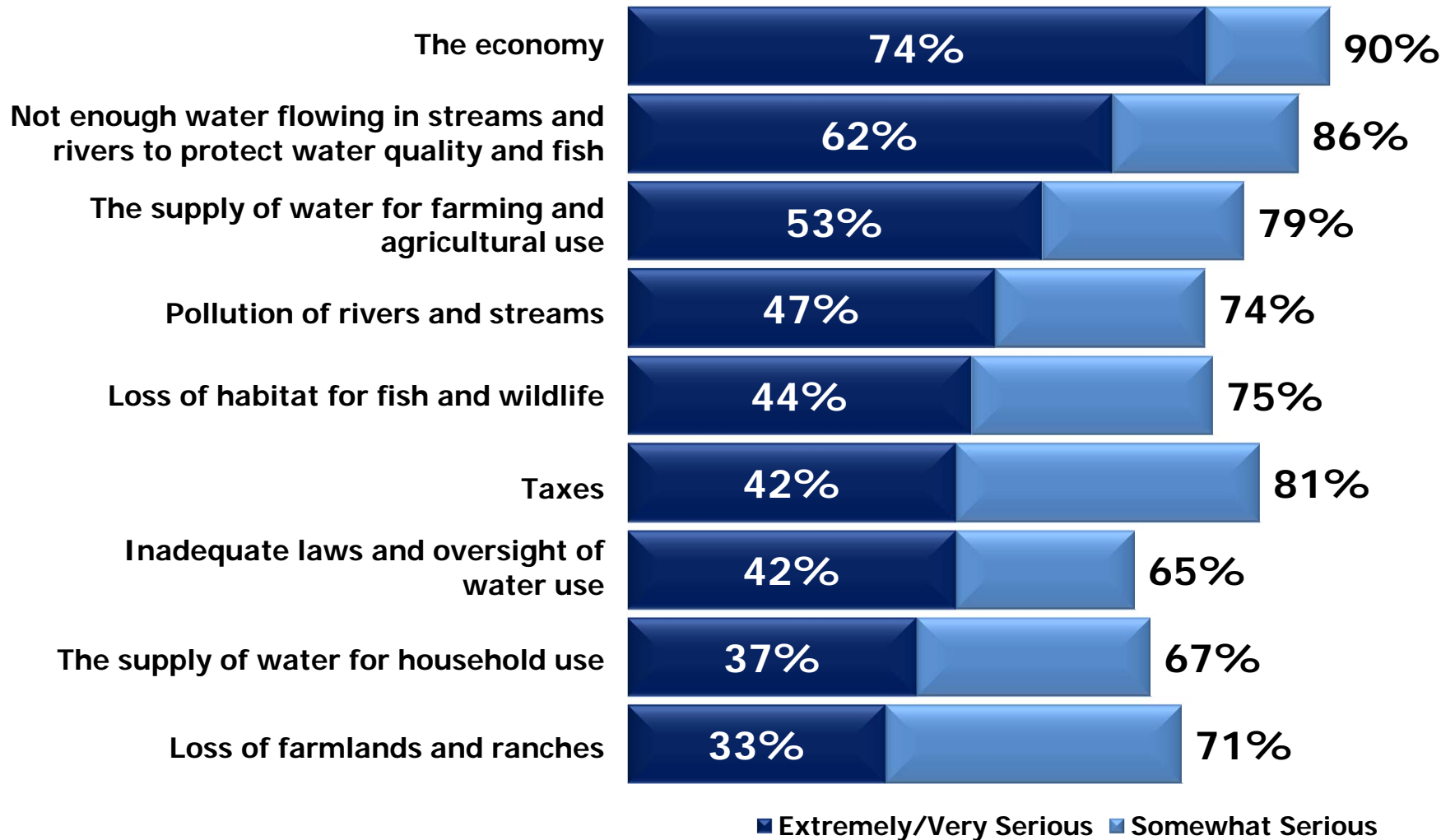
Proximity matters a lot, and there is little potential to build connections with those farther away.

OVERALL VIEWS OF KEY ISSUES

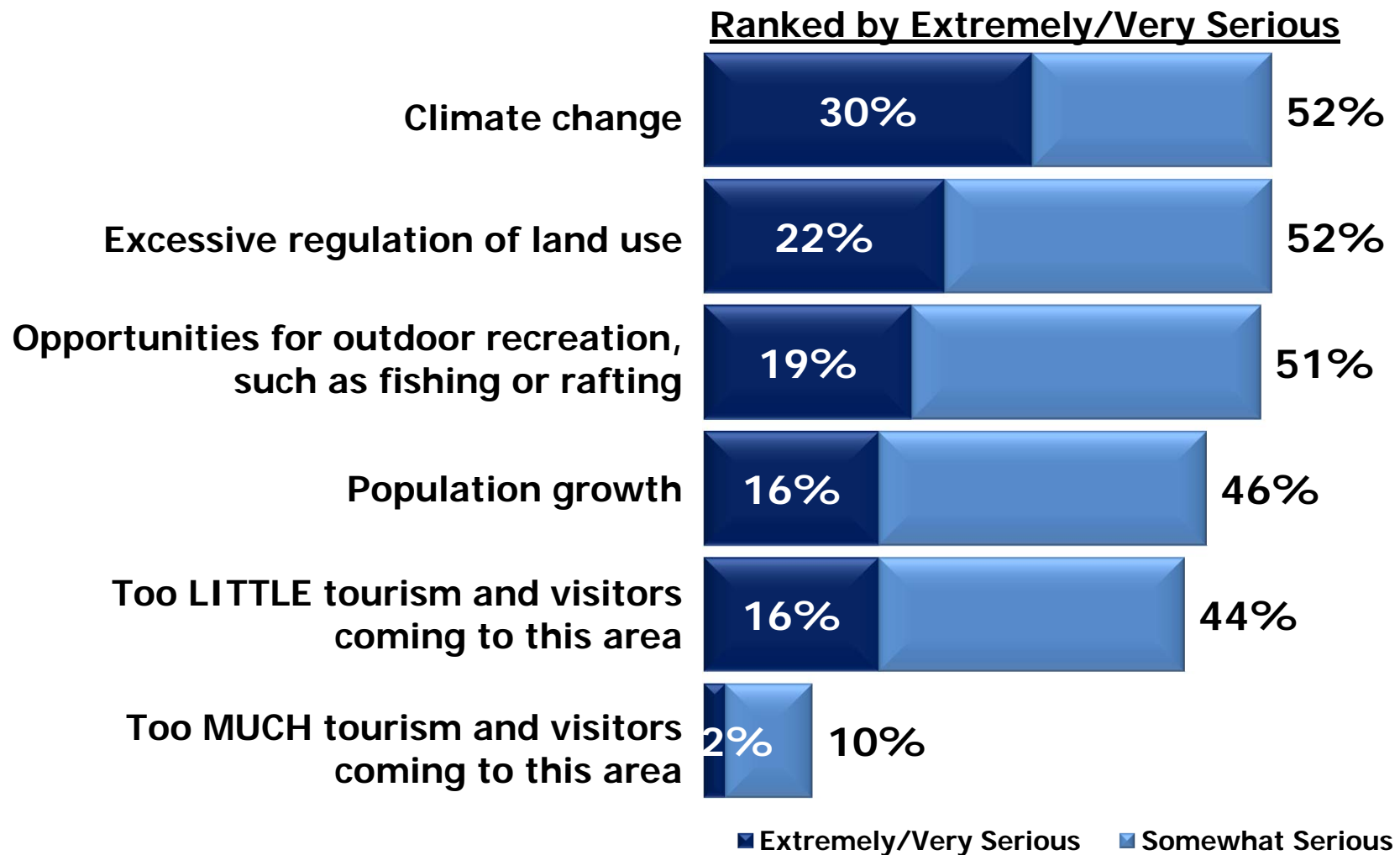


The economy trumps all other issues for residents, although lack of water is a concern.

Ranked by Extremely/Very Serious

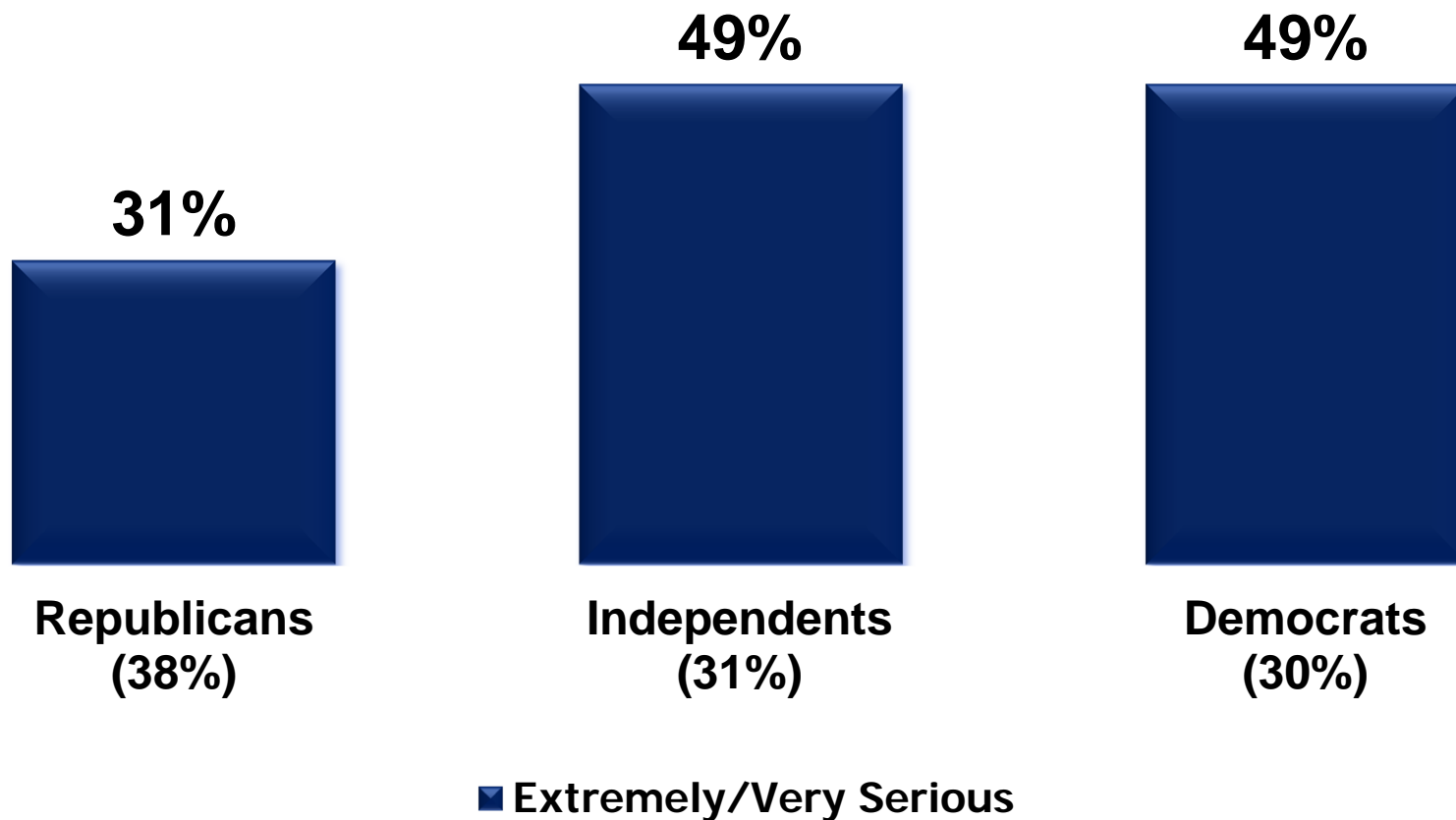


However too little tourism in the area is not perceived to be a dramatic problem by most residents.



Among Verde Valley residents, there is some partisan distinction in views of having too little oversight of water use.

Inadequate Laws and Oversight of Water By Party



In a recent survey of Arizona residents, inadequate water supplies was a leading concern.

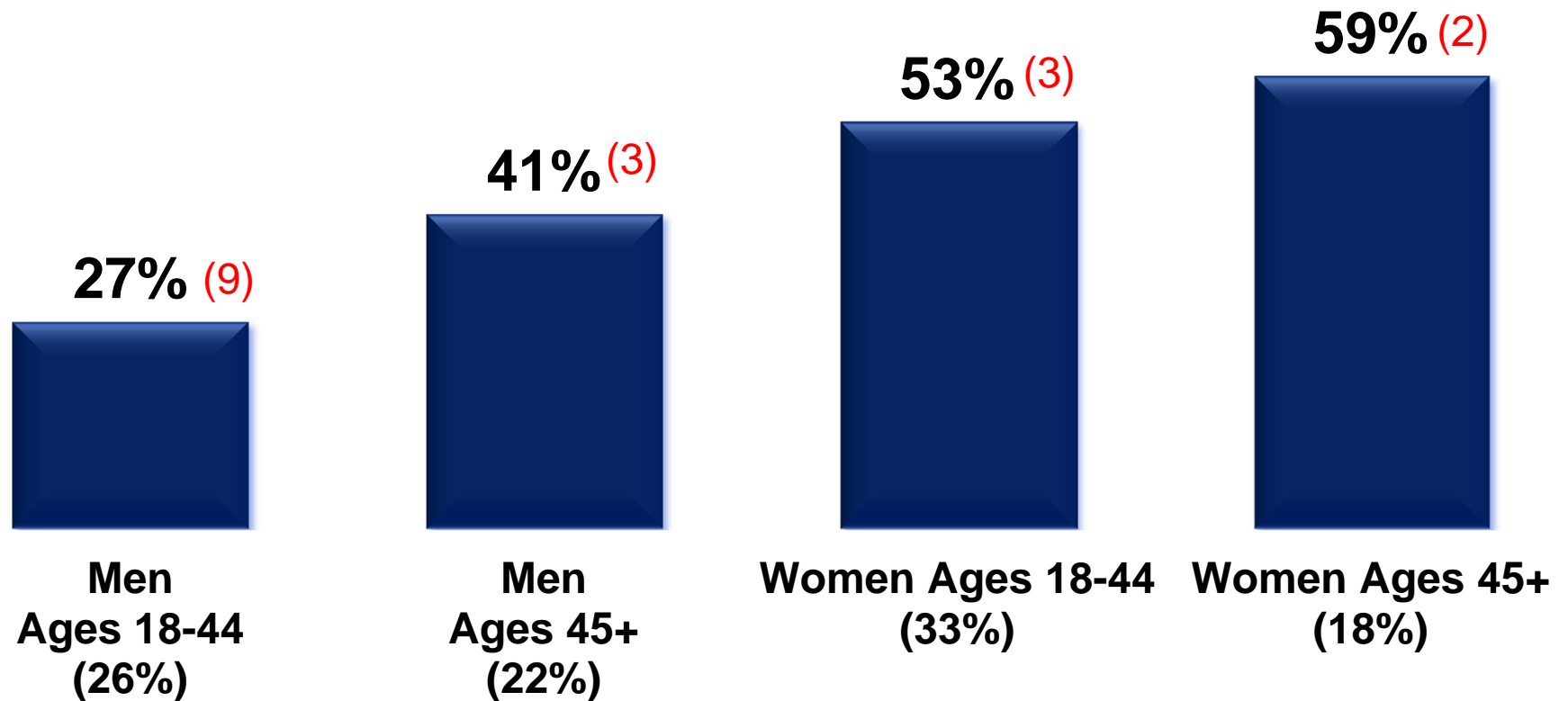
AZ Statewide Data from Western States Survey

	% Extremely/ Very Serious	% Total Serious
Our dependence on foreign oil	74%	93%
Air pollution and smog	46%	84%
Cuts to funding for state parks, protection of our natural areas and water quality	45%	84%
Inadequate water supplies	44%	81%
Cuts to funding for state parks	39%	80%
Toxins and pesticides in our food and drinking water	39%	77%
Pollution of rivers, lakes and streams	36%	79%
Loss of family farms and ranches	36%	73%
Toxic chemicals in products we have in our homes like household cleaners or toys	29%	68%
Loss of habitat for fish and wildlife	28%	75%
The impact of oil and gas drilling on our land, air and water	28%	57%
The impact of mining on land and water	25%	70%

Water supplies was an upper tier concern for Arizona women.

“Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues some people say are problems in Arizona. For each one, please tell me if you think it an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in Arizona.”

Inadequate Water Supply by Gender/Age



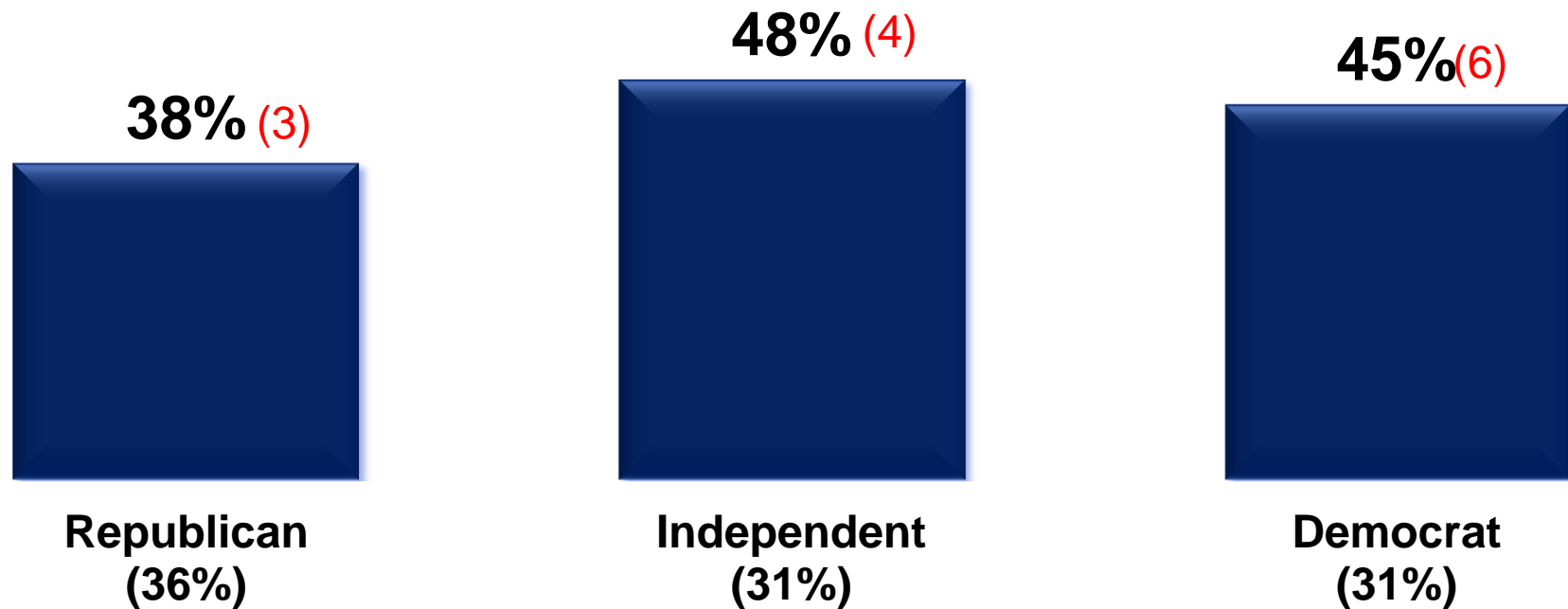
**Rank order in red parentheses*

■ **Extremely/Very Serious**

It was also a concern across the political spectrum.

“Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues some people say are problems in Arizona. For each one, please tell me if you think it an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in Arizona.”

Inadequate Water Supply by Party



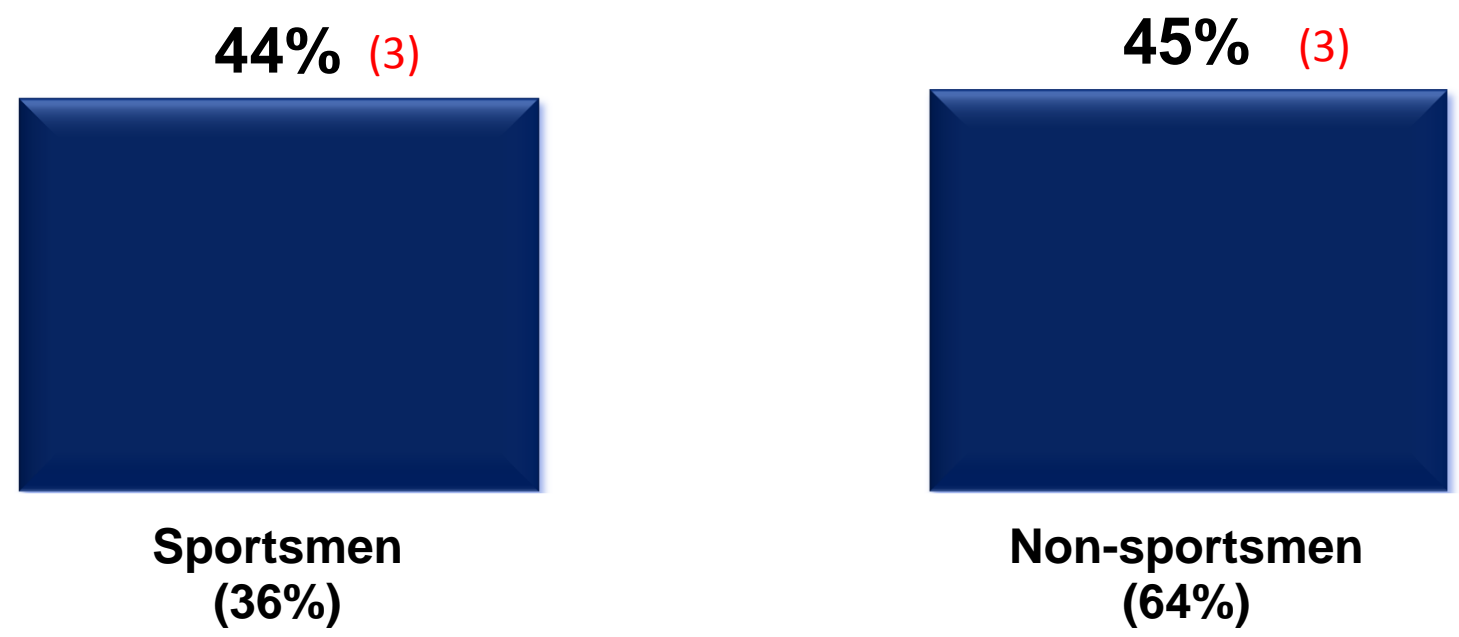
**Rank order in red parentheses*

■ **Extremely/Very Serious**

And was equally shared among sportsmen and those who do not hunt or fish.

“Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues some people say are problems in Arizona. For each one, please tell me if you think it an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in Arizona.”

Inadequate Water Supply by Sportsmen



**Rank order in red parentheses*

■ **Extremely/Very Serious**

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RIVER



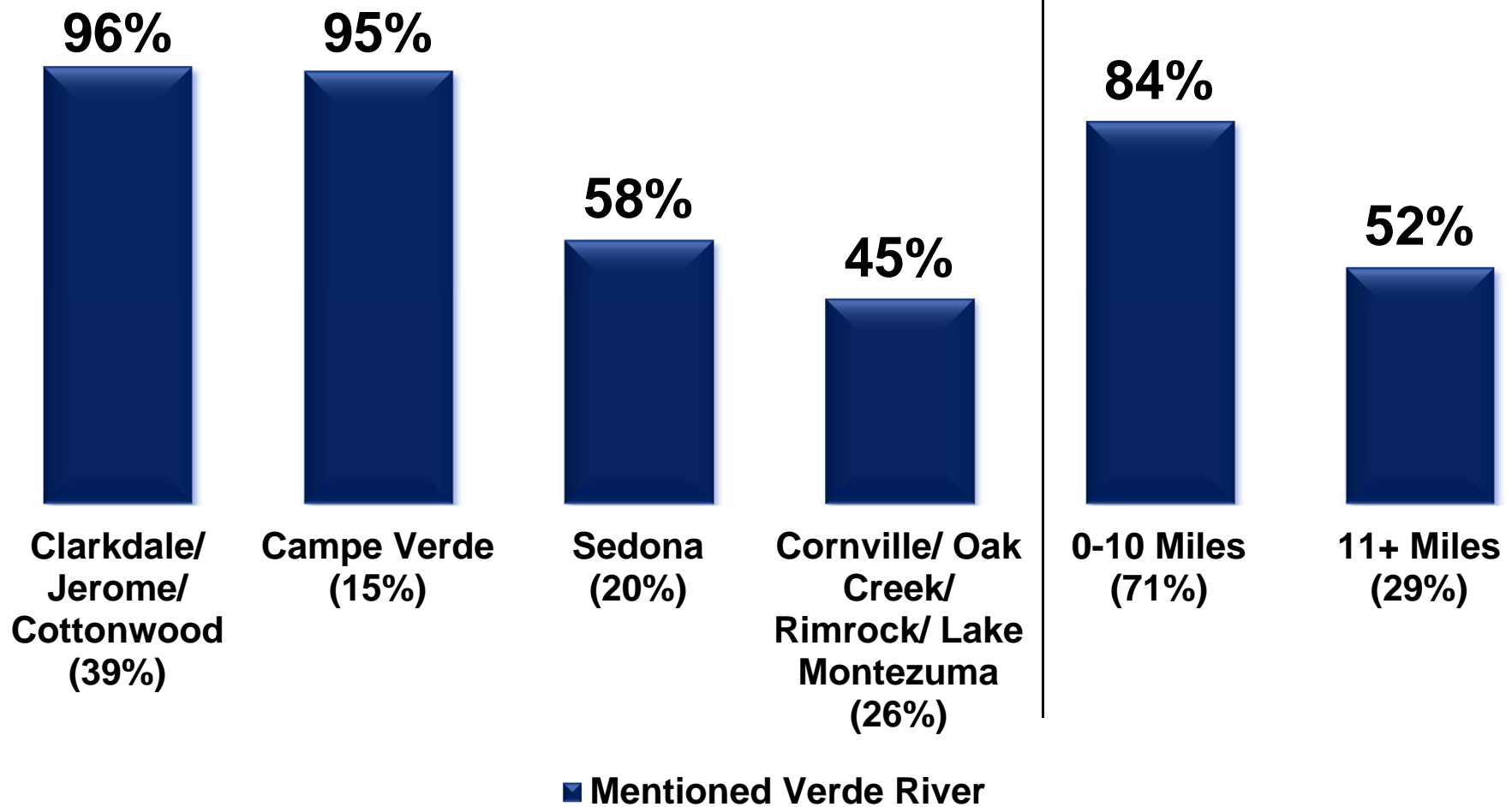
The vast majority of residents think of the Verde River as the one closest to them, while Oak Creek is also prominent.

“Based on what you know, what is the name of the river closest to your home?”

Verde River	75%
Oak Creek	17%
Beaver Creek	4%

Predictably, where one lives in this area plays a significant role in how top-of-mind the Verde River is for respondents.

% Name Verde River by Area



Nearly two-in-five residents say they go to the River at least once a month, and one-in-five go weekly.

*Top Sub-Groups
Visit River Once a Week or More*

Moms	33%
Women Income \$40K-\$80K	31%
Clarkdale Area Men	28%
Democratic Men	27%
Women Age 18-54	26%
Clarkdale/Jerome/Cottonwood	25%
Camp Verde	25%
0-10 Miles Away	25%
Independent Women	25%
Parents	25%
Income Over \$100K	24%
Age 18-44	23%

Remember that previous polling among local residents demonstrated a number of points of contact with the Verde River.

Past surveys indicated that...

- 14% belong to a group or association dealing with water issues;**
- 46% say they fish;**
- 23% say they canoe or kayak;**
- 19% say they river raft;**
- Other recreation may also take place near the river.**

Residents who say they “never” go to the River, are either not interested or able to anymore, or are more likely to go to Oak Creek.

Older now/Health issues	24%
No appeal/No reason to visit	23%
Live near Oak Creek/Too far away	19%
Don't like water activities/fishing	11%
Not outdoorsy	8%
Too busy	5%
Already close/Live on the water	4%
Too muddy/polluted	3%
Afraid of water	1%
Too hot	1%

Seen in a different way, one can see how these dominant themes are not ones likely to change without a shift in activities available.

Old/Not in good health

Don't like water activities/fishing

Not outdoorsy

Already close/live on the water
Too busy

Live near Oak Creek/Too far away

Too nearby/visited

No appeal/no reason to visit

PERCEPTIONS OF THE RIVER



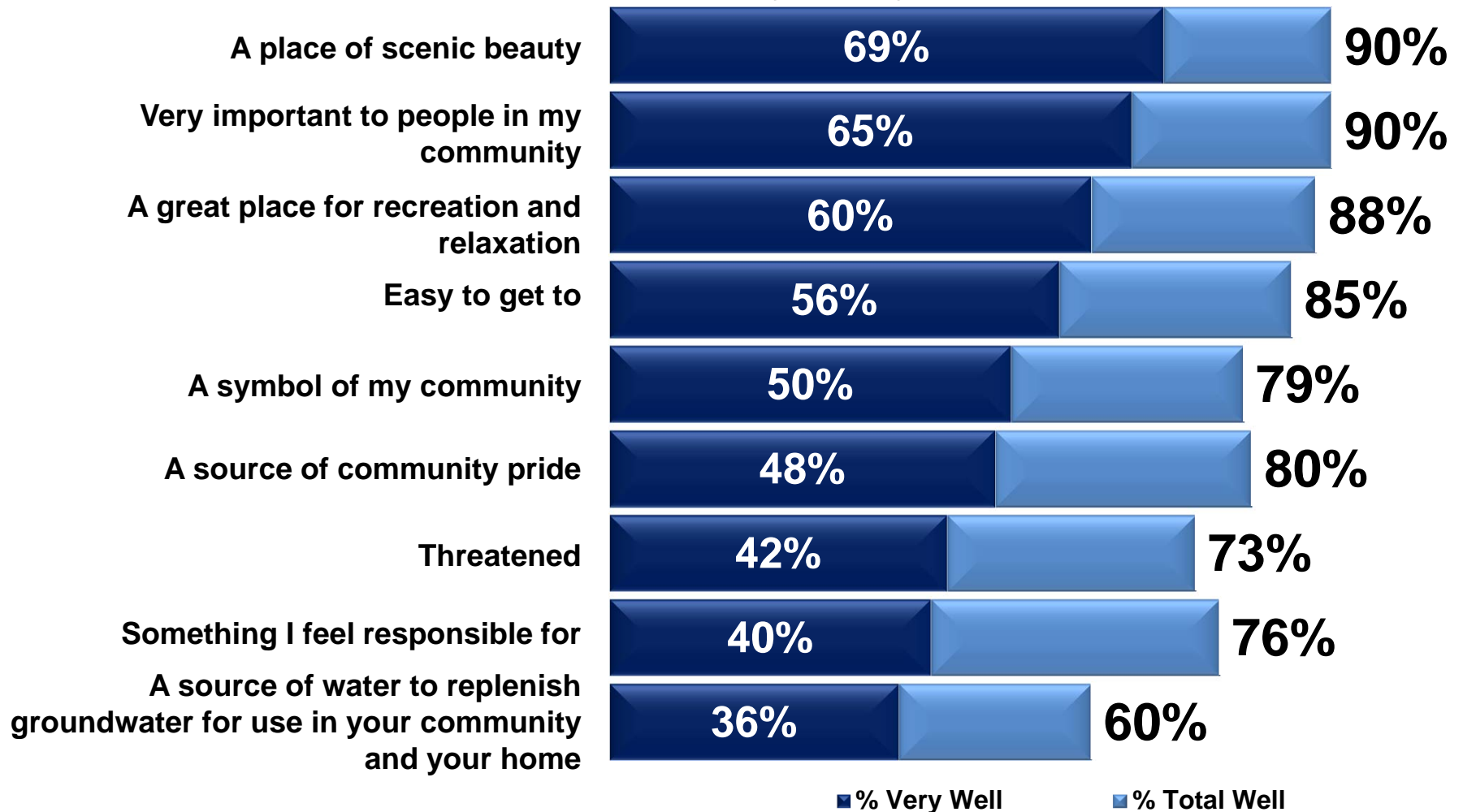
What We Did:

We provided respondents with a number of different phrases that might be used to describe the Verde River to assess core perceptions of the River in these communities.

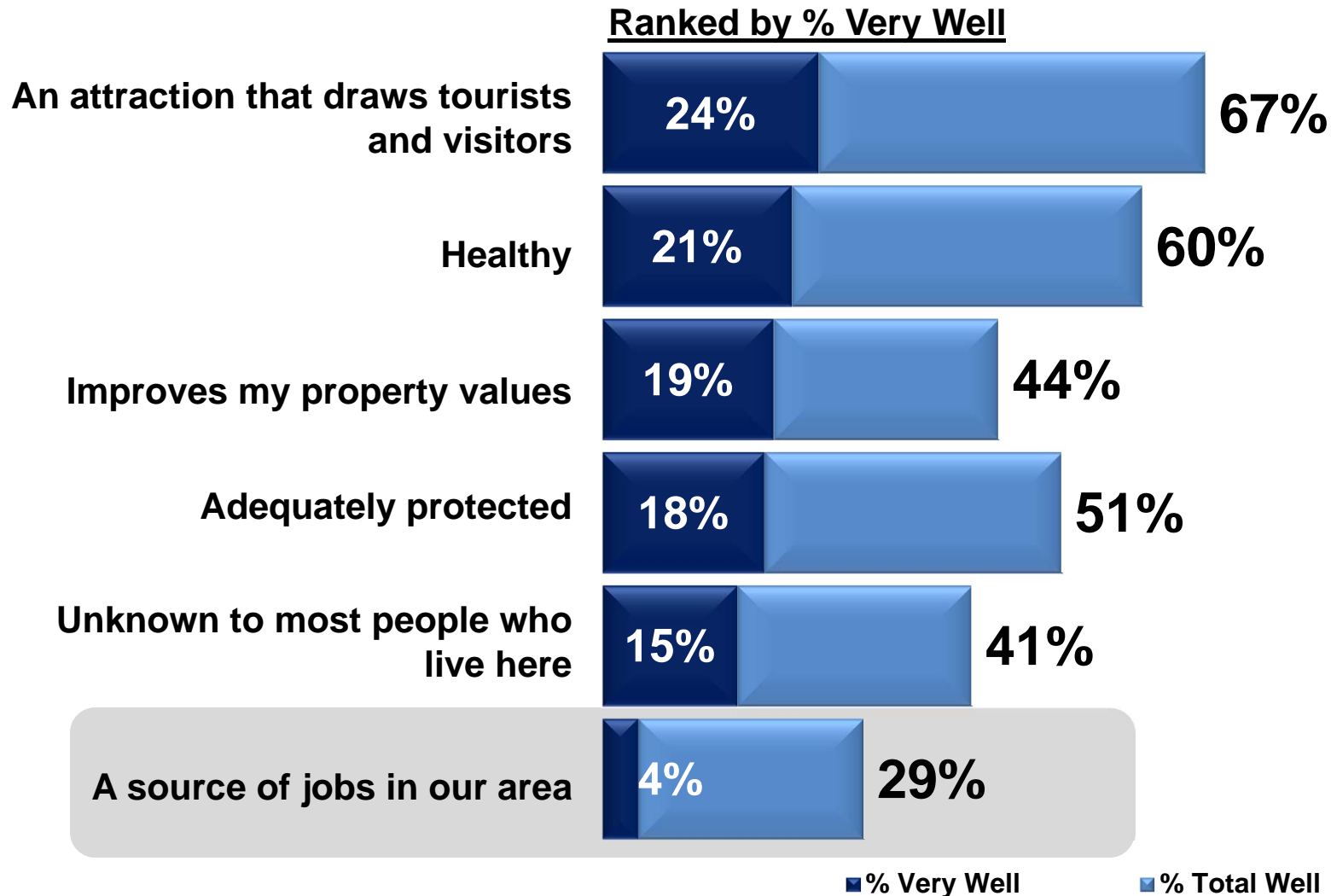
“I'm going to read you a list of words and phrases. After you hear each one, please tell me how well you think it describes the Verde River - very well, somewhat well, not very well or not at all well.”

Residents think of the River as a great place to go, and three-quarters say they feel a responsibility for the river.

Ranked by % Very Well



Residents are least likely to think of the River as a source of jobs in the community.



There is a significant difference in views based on how often one visits the River.

% Describes the River Very Well by Frequency of Visits

	Total Visited	Never Visited
A place of scenic beauty	73%	52%
Very important to people in my community	69%	47%
A great place for recreation and relaxation	64%	38%
Easy to get to	59%	43%
A symbol of my community	53%	34%
A source of community pride	52%	31%
Threatened	47%	23%
Something I feel responsible for	45%	19%
A source of water to replenish groundwater for use in your community and your home	38%	28%
An attraction that draws tourists and visitors	26%	16%

Predictably, community identification varies by where one lives in the area.

% Describes the River Very Well by Region and Proximity to River

	Sedona	Clarkdale/ Jerome/ Cottonwood	Cornville/ Oak Creek/ Rimrock/ Lake Montezuma	Camp Verde	0-10 Miles	11+ Miles
Very important to people in my community	42%	70%	61%	89%	74%	44%
A symbol of my community	25%	60%	48%	59%	58%	28%

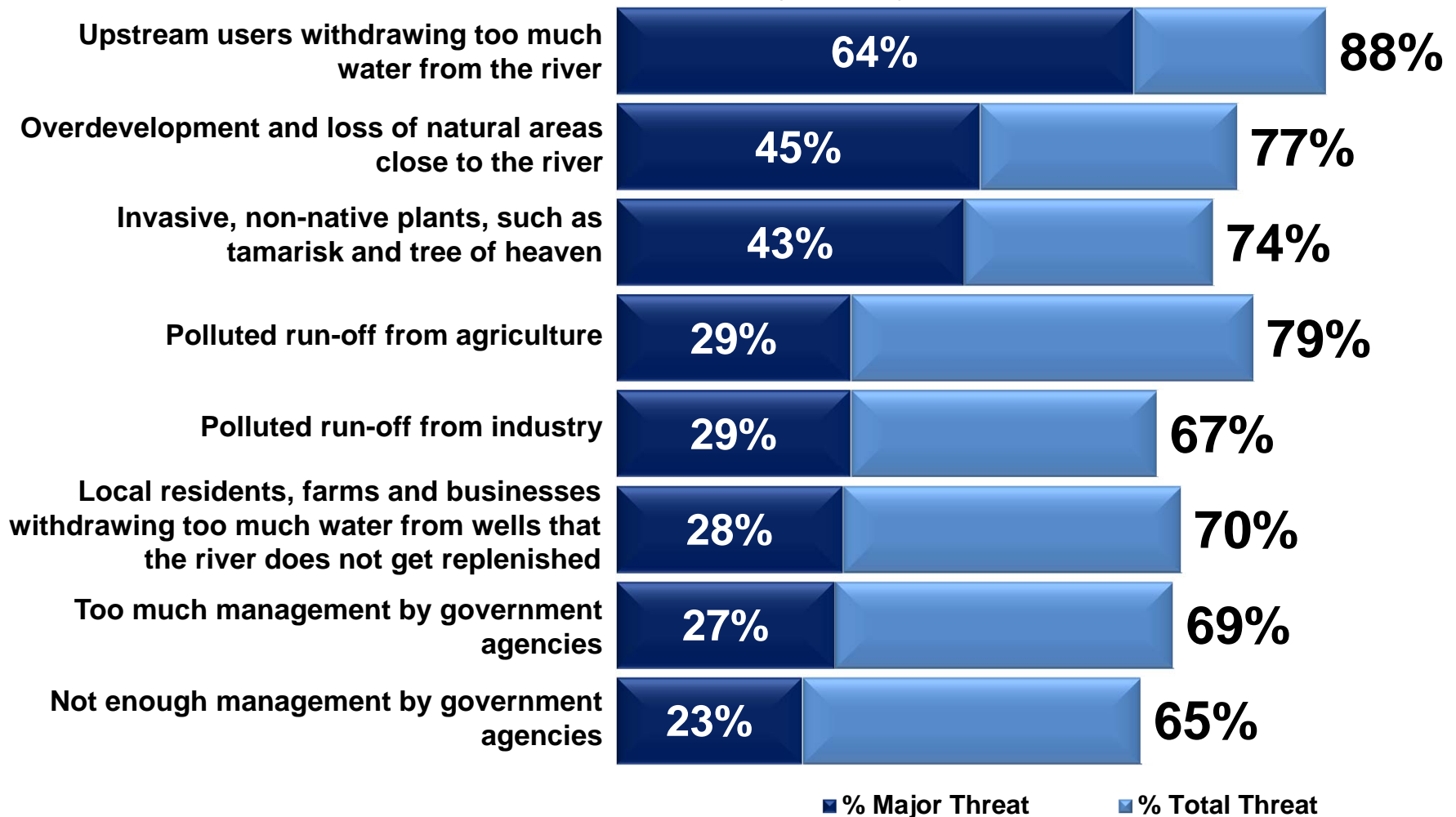
Most residents – even those who don't go to the River – think it is easy to get to.

% Describes the River Very Well by Frequency of Visits

	Visit River Weekly +	Visit River Monthly	Visit River a Few Times a Year	Never Visit River
Easy to get to	67%	61%	55%	43%

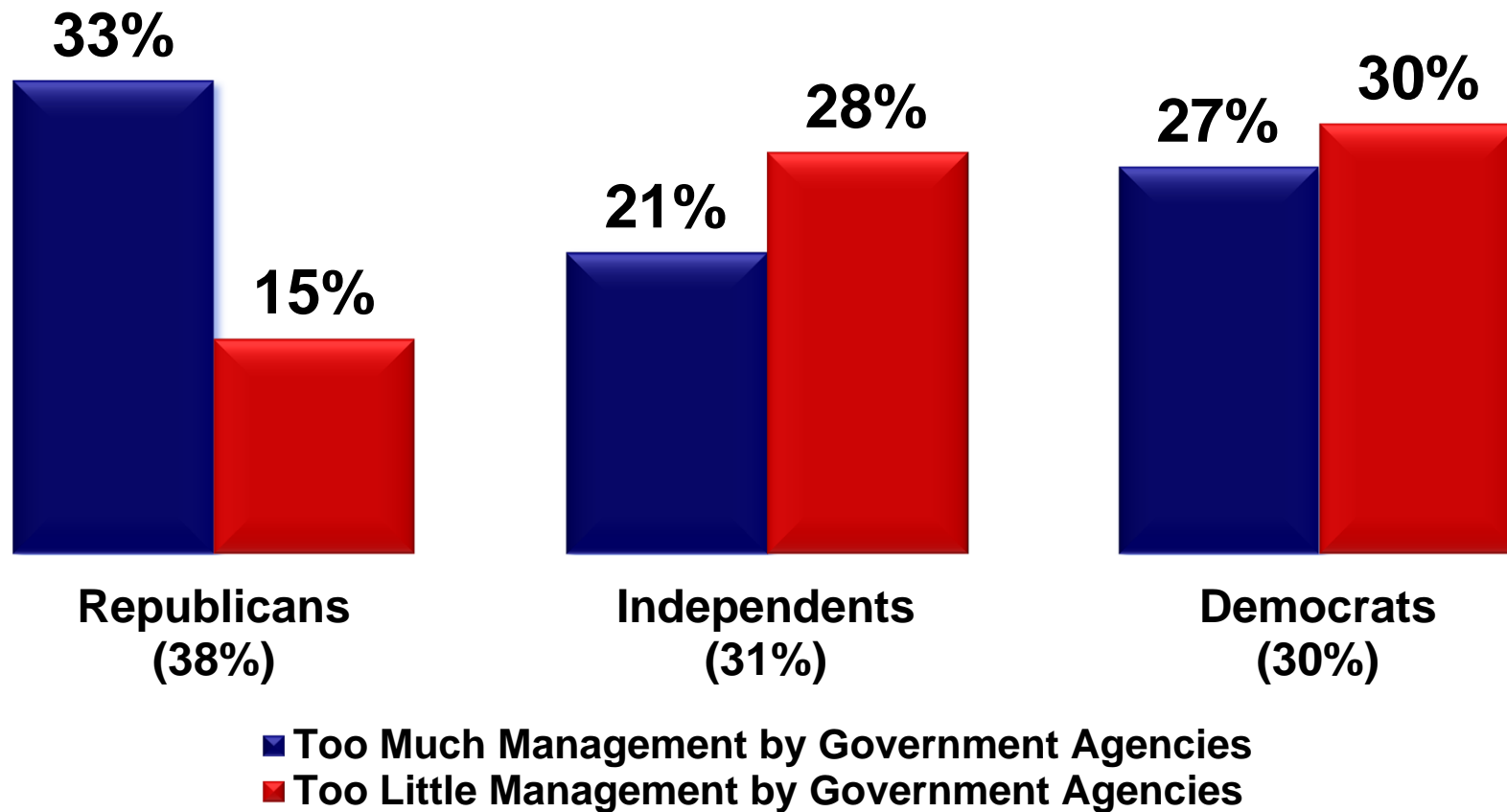
Upstream users taking too much water is considered to be the greatest threat to the River.

Ranked by % Major Threat



Republicans are the most likely to differentiate between too much and too little management of the Verde River by government.

% Major Threat by Party

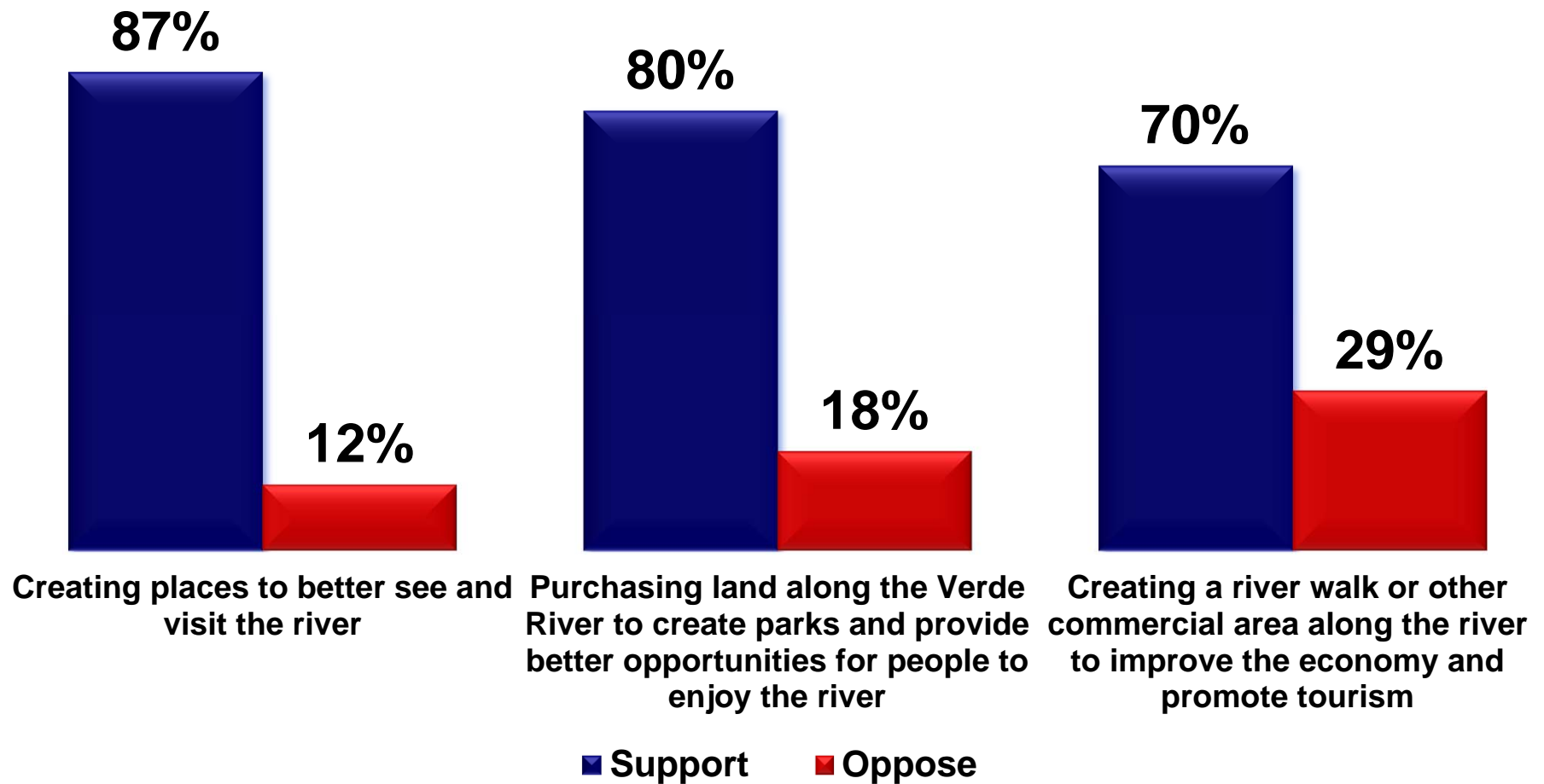


POTENTIAL CHANGES WHICH WOULD AFFECT THE RIVER

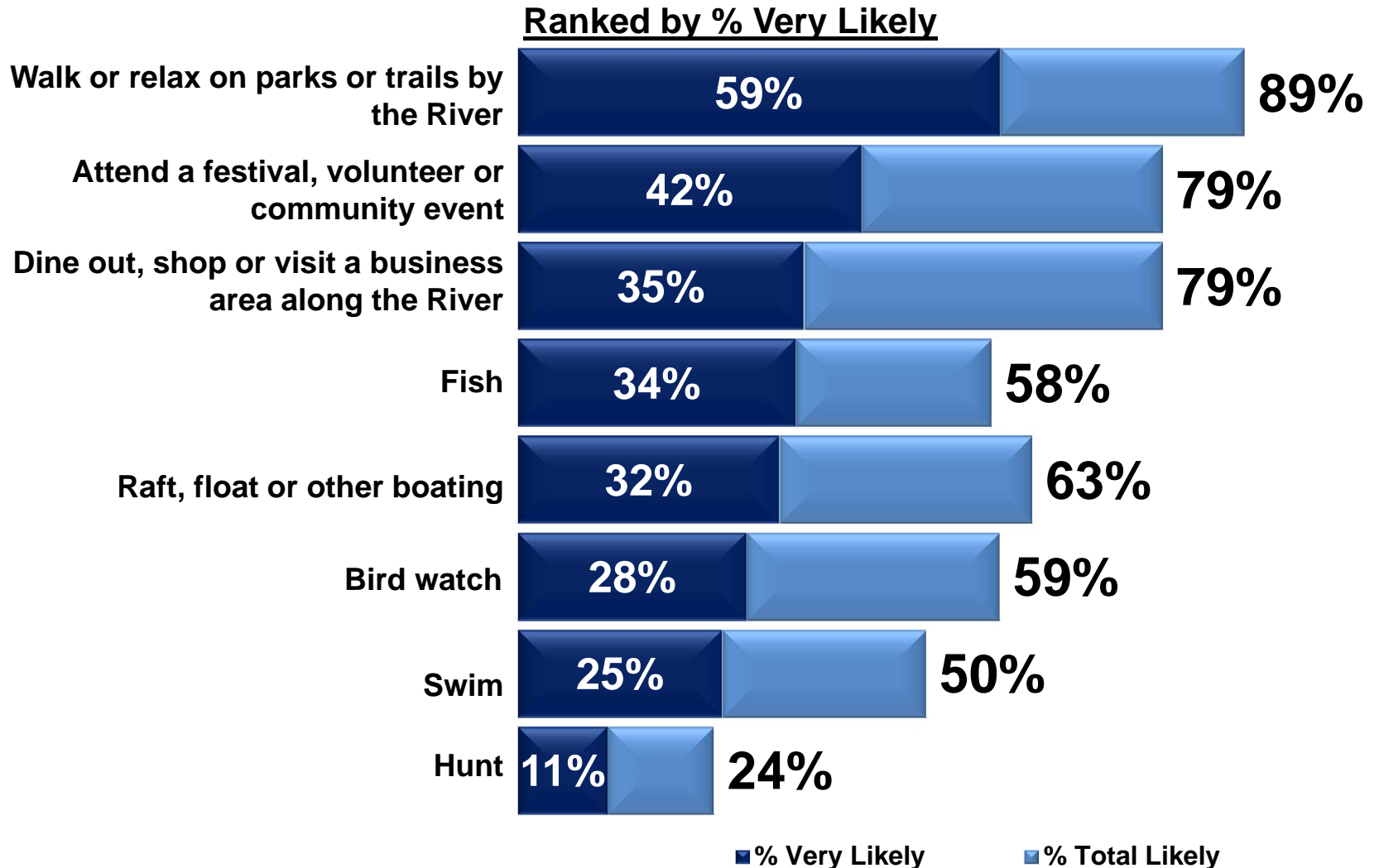


Local residents support plans to provide greater opportunities to visit the Verde River.

Support for Ideas to Safeguard the River



They say they would be likely to engage in a number of activities near the River.



Those with children at home are more likely to say they would engage in these activities.

% Very Likely to Engage in Activities by Parent/Not Parent

	Parents	Not Parents	Net Difference
Walk or relax on parks or trails by the river	72%	53%	+19%
Attend a festival, volunteer or community event	53%	38%	+15%
Dine out, shop or visit a business area along the river	32%	36%	-4%
Fish	53%	26%	+27%
Raft, float or other boating	48%	26%	+22%
Bird watch	27%	29%	-2%
Swim	43%	16%	+27%
Hunt	17%	8%	+9%

Predictably, those closer to the River are also more inclined to engage in these activities.

% Very Likely to Engage in Activities by Proximity to River

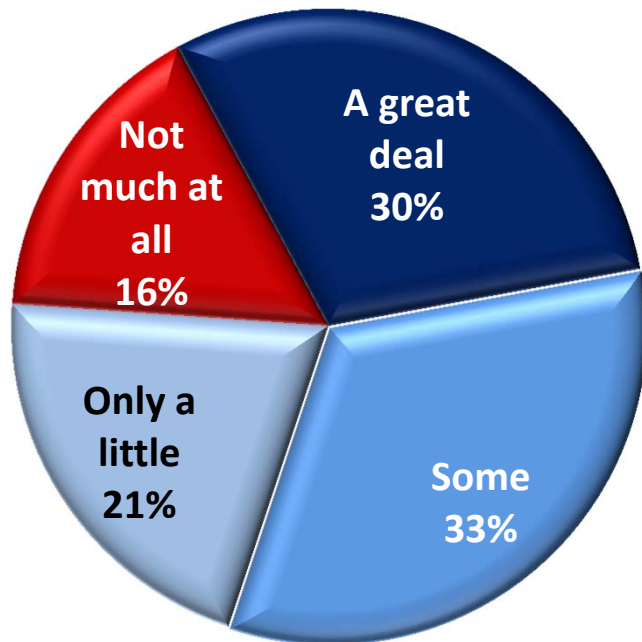
	0-10 Miles	11+ Miles
Walk or relax on parks or trails by the river	62%	51%
Attend a festival, volunteer or community event	48%	29%
Dine out, shop or visit a business area along the river	38%	27%
Fish	39%	24%
Raft, float or other boating	36%	24%
Bird watch	29%	26%
Swim	28%	16%
Hunt	14%	2%

Three-in-five see a personal benefit to access, and four-in-five think their community will benefit.

“And if the Verde River was safeguarded and there were greater opportunities to recreate, visit, and enjoy the River, how much do you think you and your family/our community would benefit from this?”

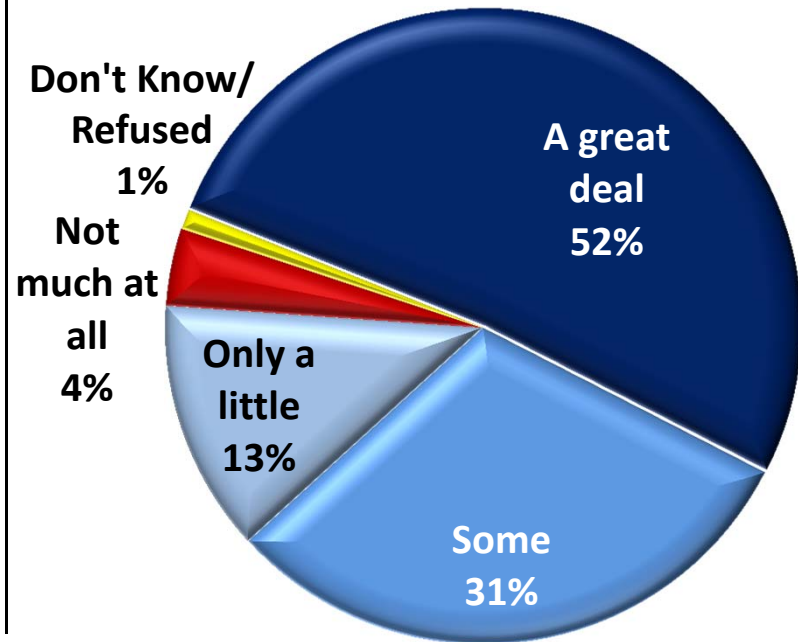
Family Would Benefit

Total Great Deal/Some 63%
Total A Little/Not Much 37%



Community Would Benefit

Total Great Deal/Some 82%
Total A Little/Not Much 17%

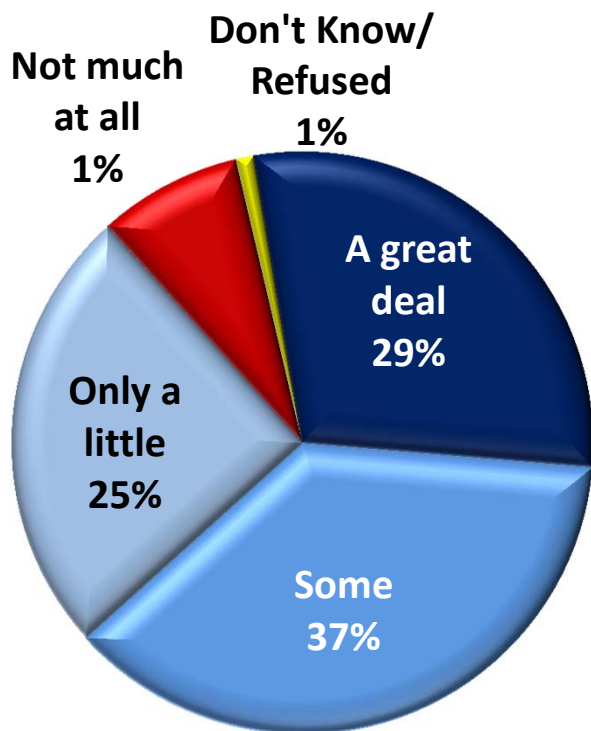


Those with and without kids at home see a benefit for their family in improved access to the River.

“And if the Verde River was safeguarded and there were greater opportunities to recreate, visit, and enjoy the River, how much do you think you and your family would benefit from this?”

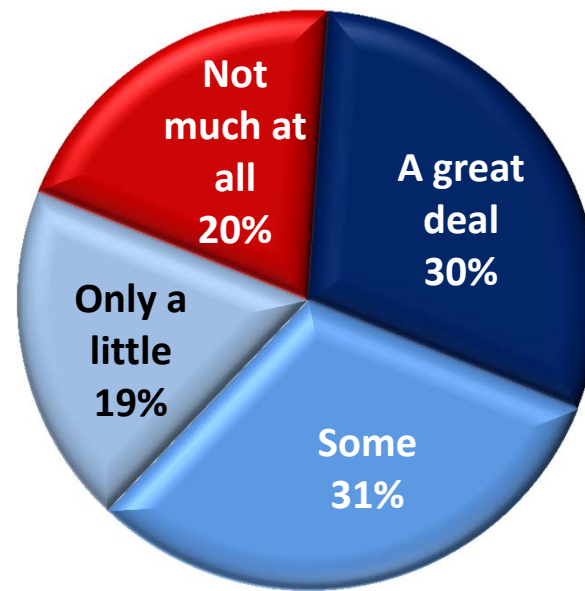
Parents

Total Great Deal/Some	67%
Total A Little/Not Much	33%



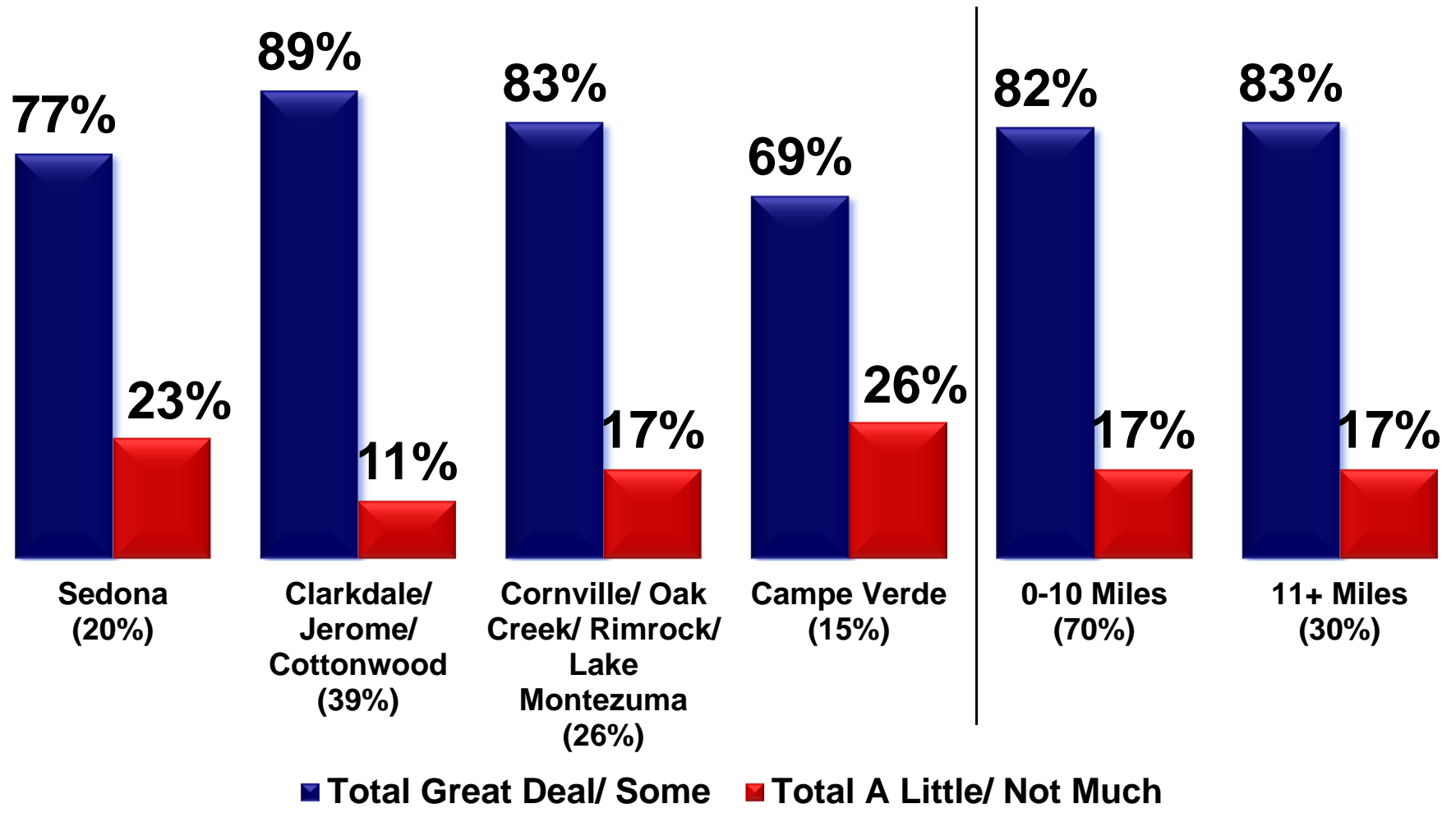
No Children at Home

Total Great Deal/Some	61%
Total A Little/Not Much	39%



All communities and residents farther from the River perceive a benefit.

Benefit You and Your Family by Region and Distance from River



Interacting with nature and water conservation are perceived benefits of this effort.

“What would be the biggest benefit about an effort to improve opportunities to visit and enjoy the River?”

Greater opportunities for children and adults to learn about and appreciate nature	32%
Improved water conservation	26%
Improved quality of life	19%
Improved economy and more jobs	13%

Residents are most likely to focus on the potential adverse effects on the environment.

“And what would be your biggest hesitation or concern about an effort to improve opportunities to visit and enjoy the River?”

Potential damage to natural areas along the river, fish and wildlife **47%**

Growth and development **17%**

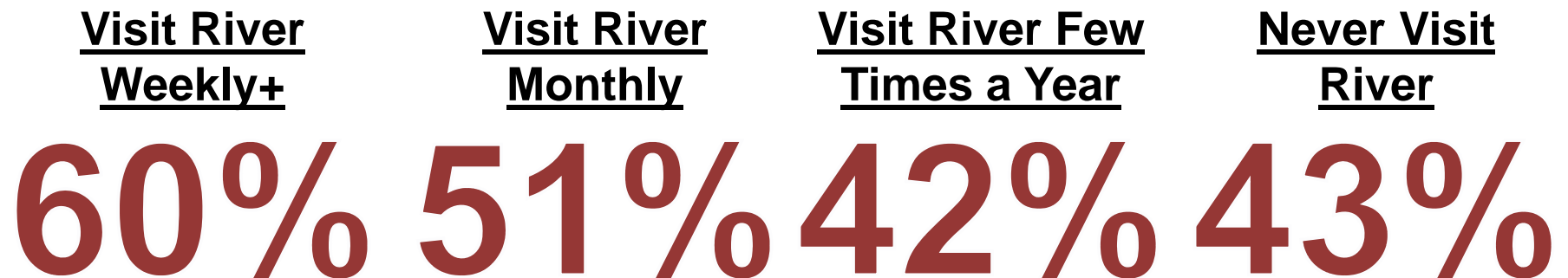
Waste of money **16%**

Traffic congestion from visitors **12%**

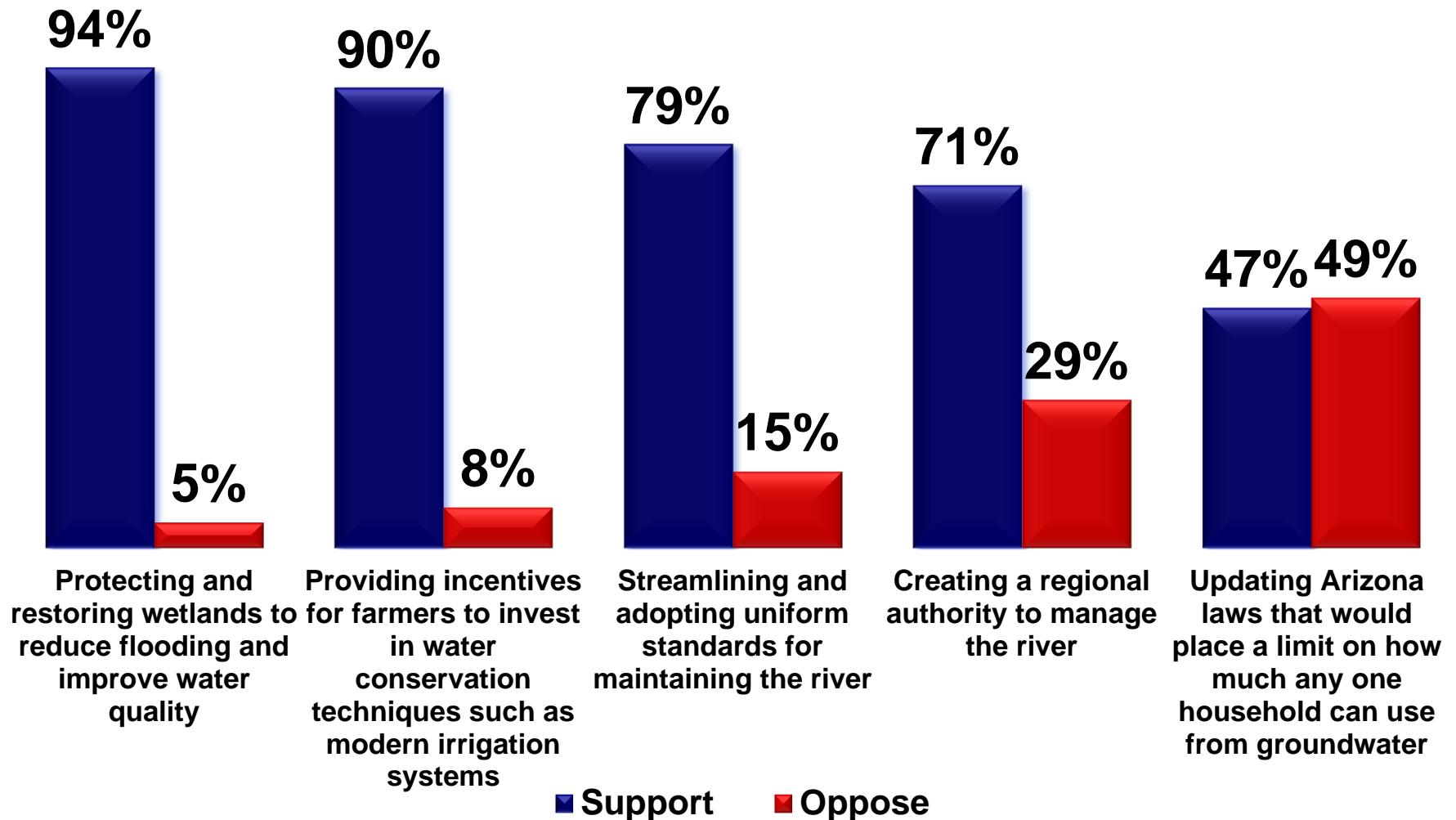
Those who visit the river most frequently now are most concerned about potential damage.

“And what would be your biggest hesitation or concern about an effort to improve opportunities to visit and enjoy the River?”

Potential damage to natural areas along the river, fish and wildlife



Other potential changes are also popular. The only issue which receives a divided response is over limits on groundwater use.

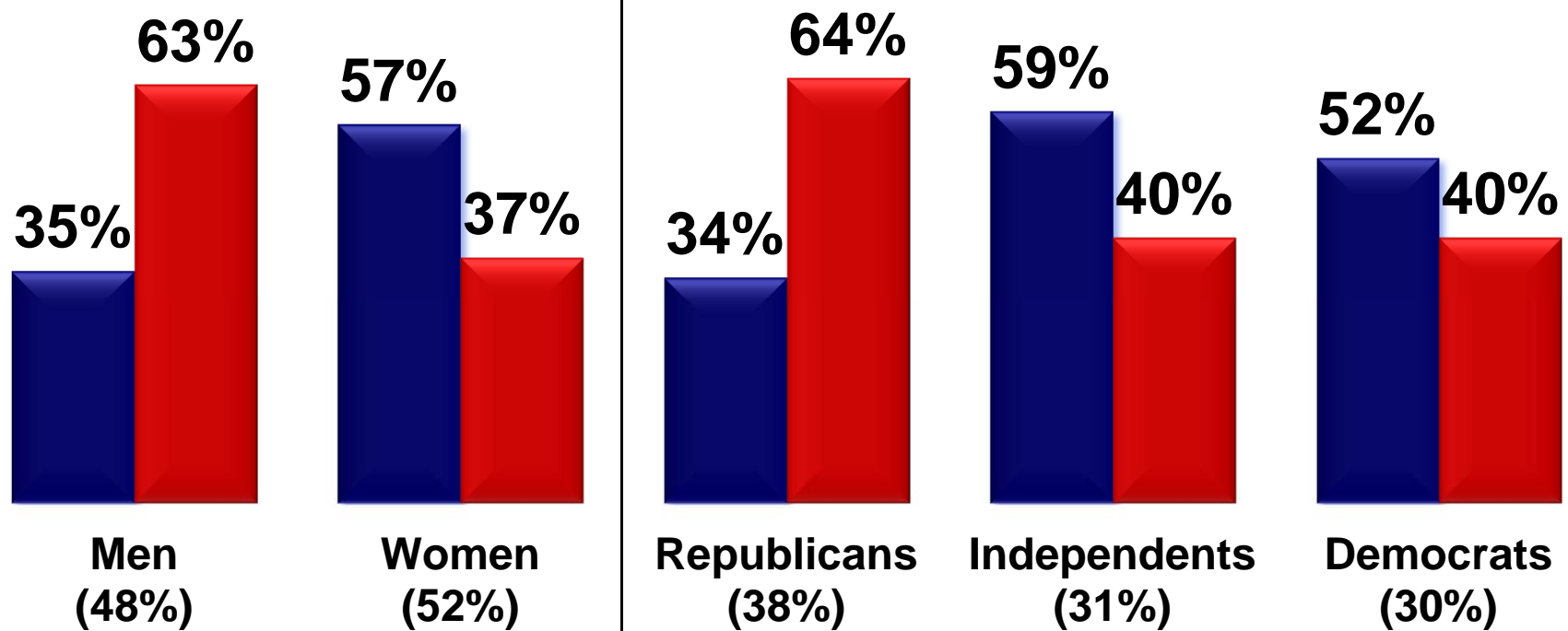


CAUTION

**The devil is typically in the details.
Just because a policy has conceptual
support does not mean that
specifics do not reduce support for
that policy in practice.**

There is a clear partisan and gender distinction in attitudes on the most divisive issue.

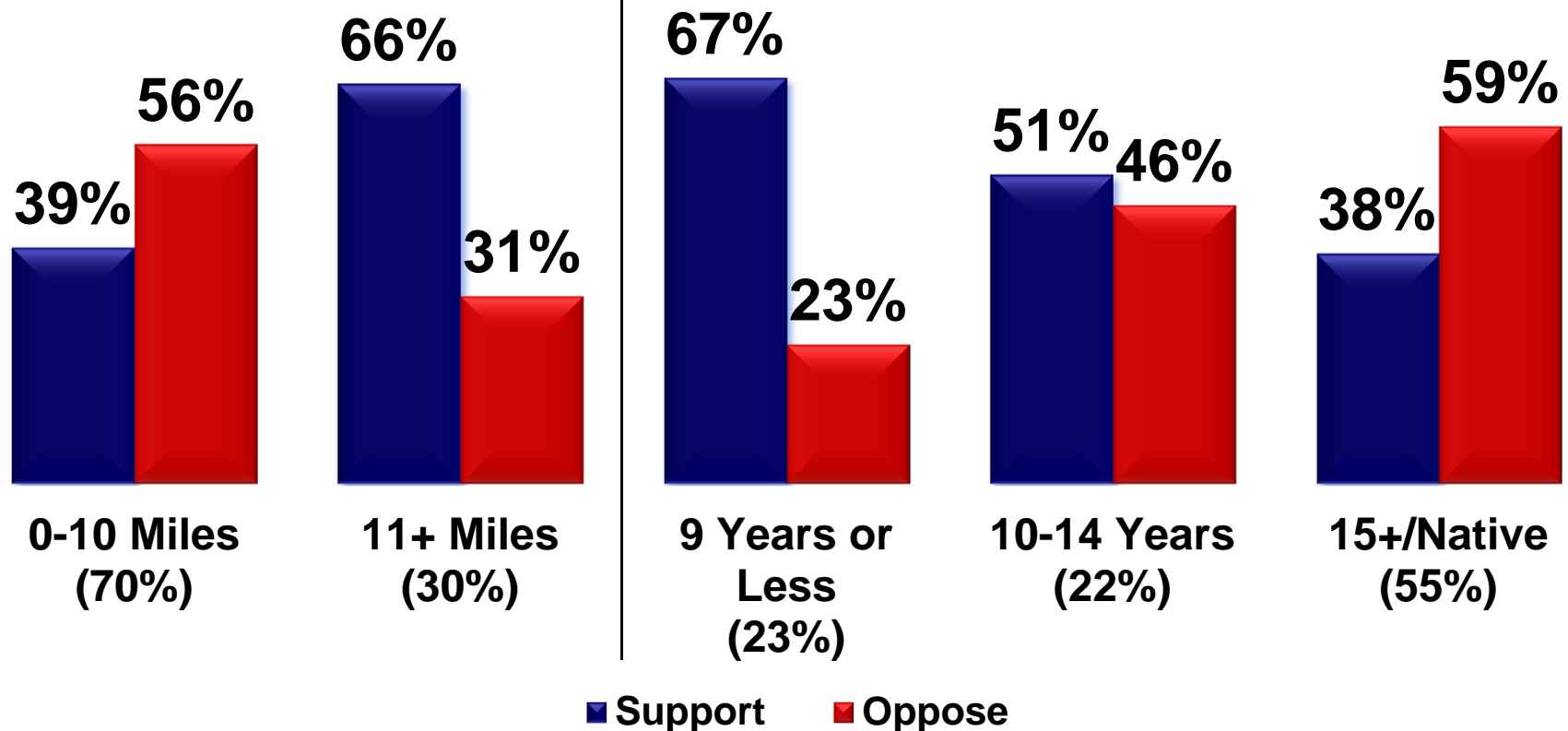
*Updating AZ Laws that Place Limit on Household Water Usage
By Gender and Party*



■ Support ■ Oppose

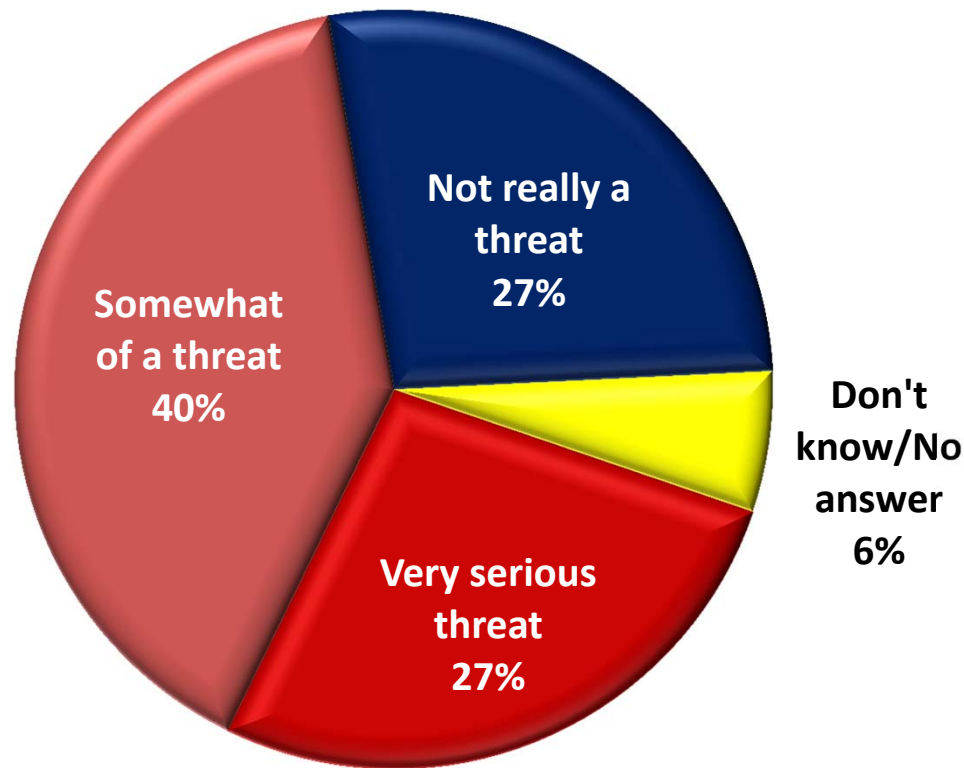
Long-time residents and those closest to the River are least supportive of limits on use of groundwater.

*Updating AZ Laws that Place Limit on Household Water Usage
By Proximity to River and Residency*



Notably, this response is despite the fact that previous polling indicated residents thought pumping of underground water is at least somewhat of a threat.

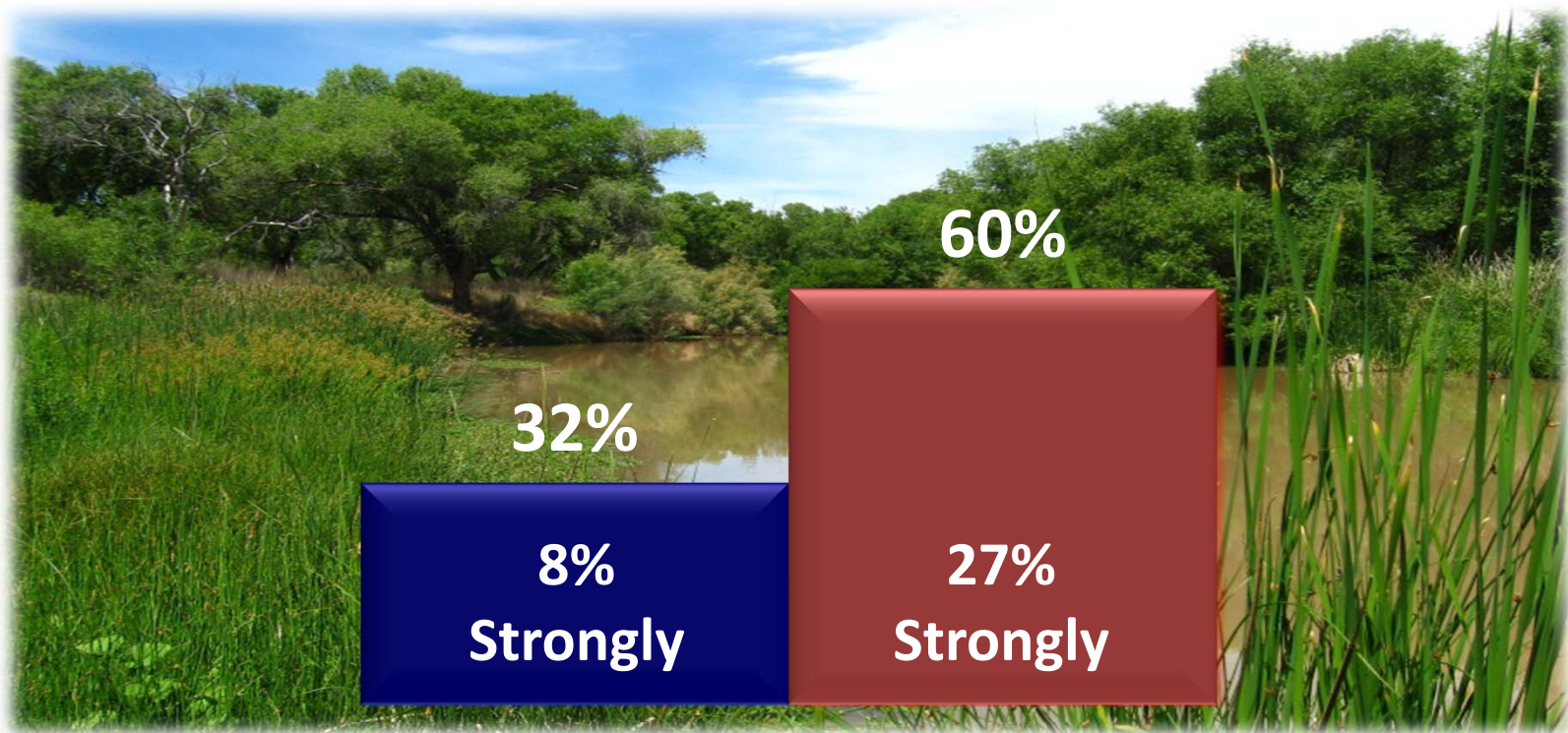
Pumping Underground Water Threat to Verde River



"In the past few years, there has been a great deal of discussion about the pumping of groundwater and the amount of water in the Verde River. In your opinion is pumping water from underground...?"

And that they rejected the idea that residents should be allowed to pump whatever they “need.”

“People should be allowed to pump as much water as they need.”



■ Agree ■ Disagree

Conclusions



Conclusions

- **Residents have a strong affinity to the Verde River, and even those who are farther physically away or think of Oak Creek as “their river,” perceive a benefit if there are more opportunities to visit the Verde River. They say they are likely to engage in a number of activities if there is improved access.**
- **Residents are also concerned about water supplies and nearly three-quarters think of the Verde River as threatened. There is strong conceptual support for taking a number of actions to help safeguard the River, but the most personal – limits on groundwater use – is also the most divisive.**



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**PUBLIC OPINION
STRATEGIES**