



Cotati City Council Agenda Staff Report

Item type: REGULAR AGENDA (ACTION)
To: City Council
Subject: PRESENTATION OF COMMUNITY POLLING RESULTS
Date: February 13, 2024
Written by: Damien O'Bid, City Manager

Recommendation

It is recommended that the City Council receive and discuss the community polling results.

Background

The City has used Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) in the past to conduct surveys of the community to determine satisfaction with City services as well as polls prior to placing Measure S on the ballot.

In polling conducted in November 2020, the City Council directed staff to continue periodic polling, generally using the same questions to track changes in community sentiment over time. Unlike a self-selected survey, which can provide a general sense of community sentiment, continuing the proposed polling program provides statistically valid information within certain margins of error to determine what follow up actions should be explored further.

On September 26, 2023, the City Council authorized an agreement with FM3 to continue the polling effort, largely modeled on the 2020 polling effort. In addition to authorizing the contract, the City Council appointed an ad-hoc committee of the City Council (then Mayor Harvey and Councilmember Lemus) to review the draft polling questions with staff and FM3 prior to initiating the public polling. The public polling was conducted from November 10-December 4, 2023.

Prior polling information can be found on the city website [here](https://www.cotaticity.org/168/Community-Survey-Results)
<<https://www.cotaticity.org/168/Community-Survey-Results>>.

Analysis/Discussion

For the community polling, 441 people over the age of 18 responded to the survey. This resulted in an overall margin of error of +/- 4.9% at a 95% confidence interval. All households were contacted, and interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

By a large margin, the most pressing issue for residents is the availability of housing that working families can afford. Other issues that showed marked increases from 2020 are traffic congestion, crime in general, and potholes and maintenance of local streets. Concerns about the risk of wildfires and impacts of climate change saw decreases from 2020.

An overview summary of the conclusions is included in the attached slide deck.

Financial Considerations

Not applicable.

Environmental Issues

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guideline section 15378.



Cotati Resident Views of Public Safety and Policing

Key Findings of a Survey of Cotati Residents
Conducted November 10-December 4, 2023



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

Survey Specifics and Methodology

Dates	November 10-December 4, 2023
Survey Type	Multi-modal Resident Survey
Research Population	A Random, Representative Sample of Cotati Residents 18+
Total Interviews	441
Margin of Sampling Error	±4.9% at the 95% Confidence Level
Contact Methods	 Telephone Calls  Email Invitations  Postcard Invitations  Text Invitations
Data Collection Modes	 Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews
Survey Tracking	Comparisons to 2009, 2013, 2019 and 2020 Surveys
Languages	English and Spanish

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(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)

Survey demographics reflect the community.

Demographic	%
Male	45%
Female	51%
Nonbinary/Other	4%
<i>Ages 18-49</i>	61%
<i>Ages 50+</i>	38%
White Residents	67%
Residents of Color	28%
<i>Non-college Educated</i>	64%
<i>College-Educated</i>	35%

Demographic	%
Born in the US	92%
Born Outside the US	8%
<i>Speak Another Language at Home</i>	25%
<i>Speak Only English at Home</i>	72%
Spanish Interview	8%
English Interview	92%

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A Note on Demographic Subgroup Analysis

Subgroup	N size	MOE
White residents	295	±5.8%
<i>Residents of color</i>	122	±9.1%

- Given the small size of Cotati, we are somewhat limited in the conclusions we can draw by specific subgroups.
- The pattern across similar questions is more informative than individual percentages.
- Combining a group of “residents of color” is not intended to represent the views of residents who identify as Latino, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, multiracial and Native American as monolithic, but instead to demonstrate areas of key difference within the limits of the survey.
- **Another note:** There are many open-ended questions in the survey. Responses were recorded verbatim and sorted into general categories. In many cases, respondents offered more than one type of response.
- Not all results will sum to 100% due to rounding.

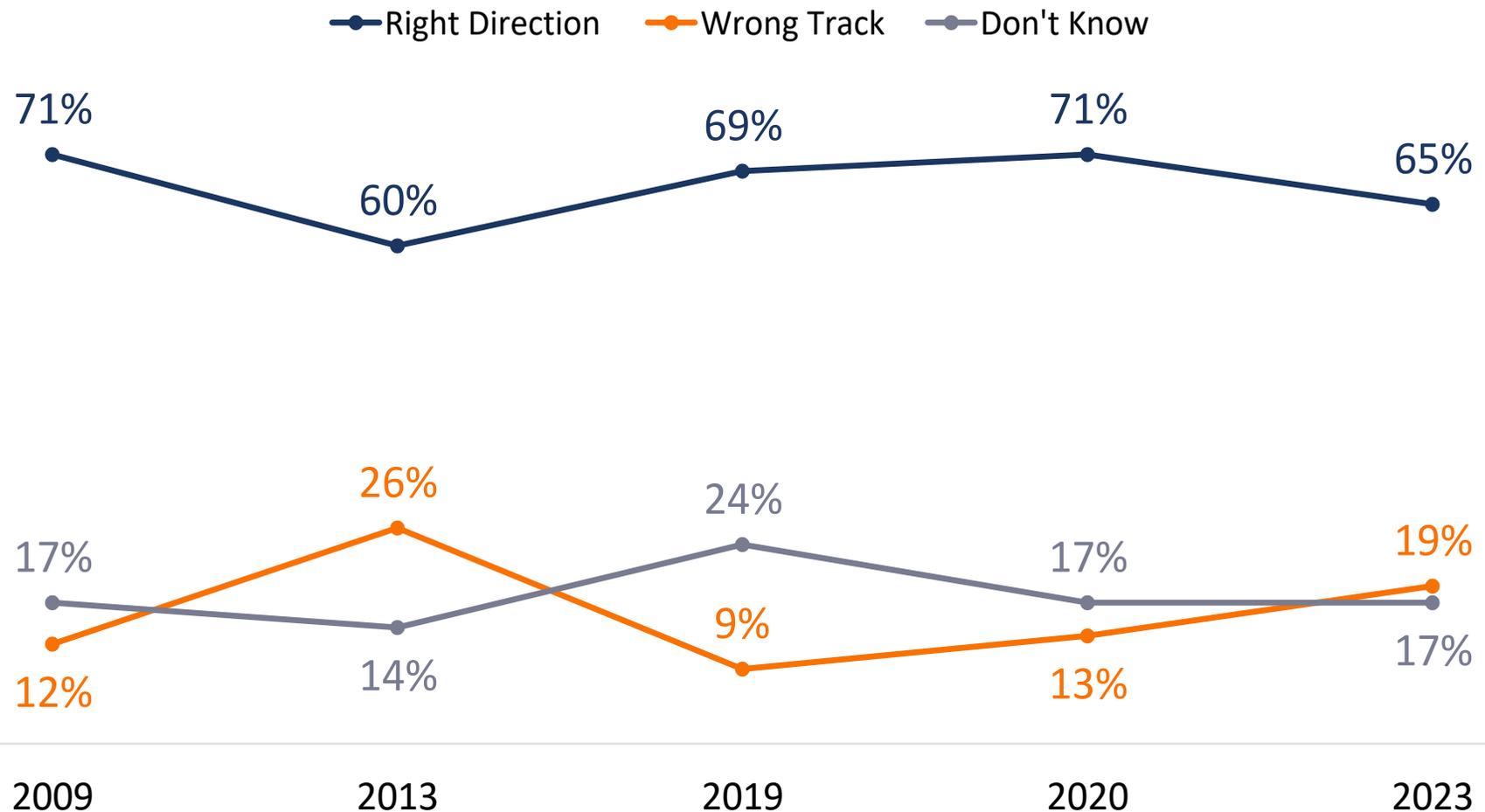
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Community Context

Two-thirds of Cotati residents feel things are headed in the right direction.

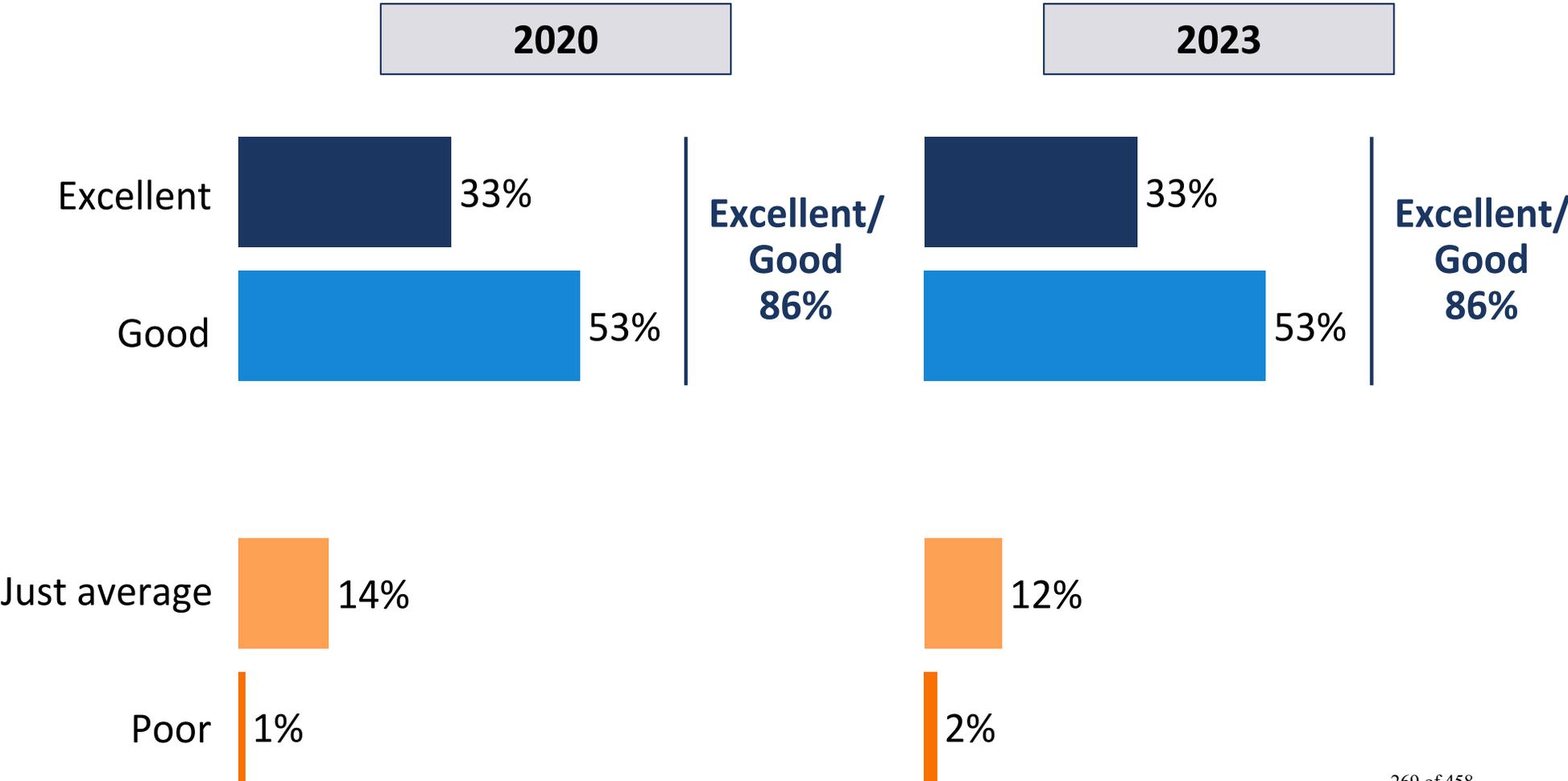
Would you say that things in the City of Cotati are generally headed in the right direction or are they off on the wrong track?



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As in 2020, more than four in five believe that the city is an “excellent” or “good” place to live.

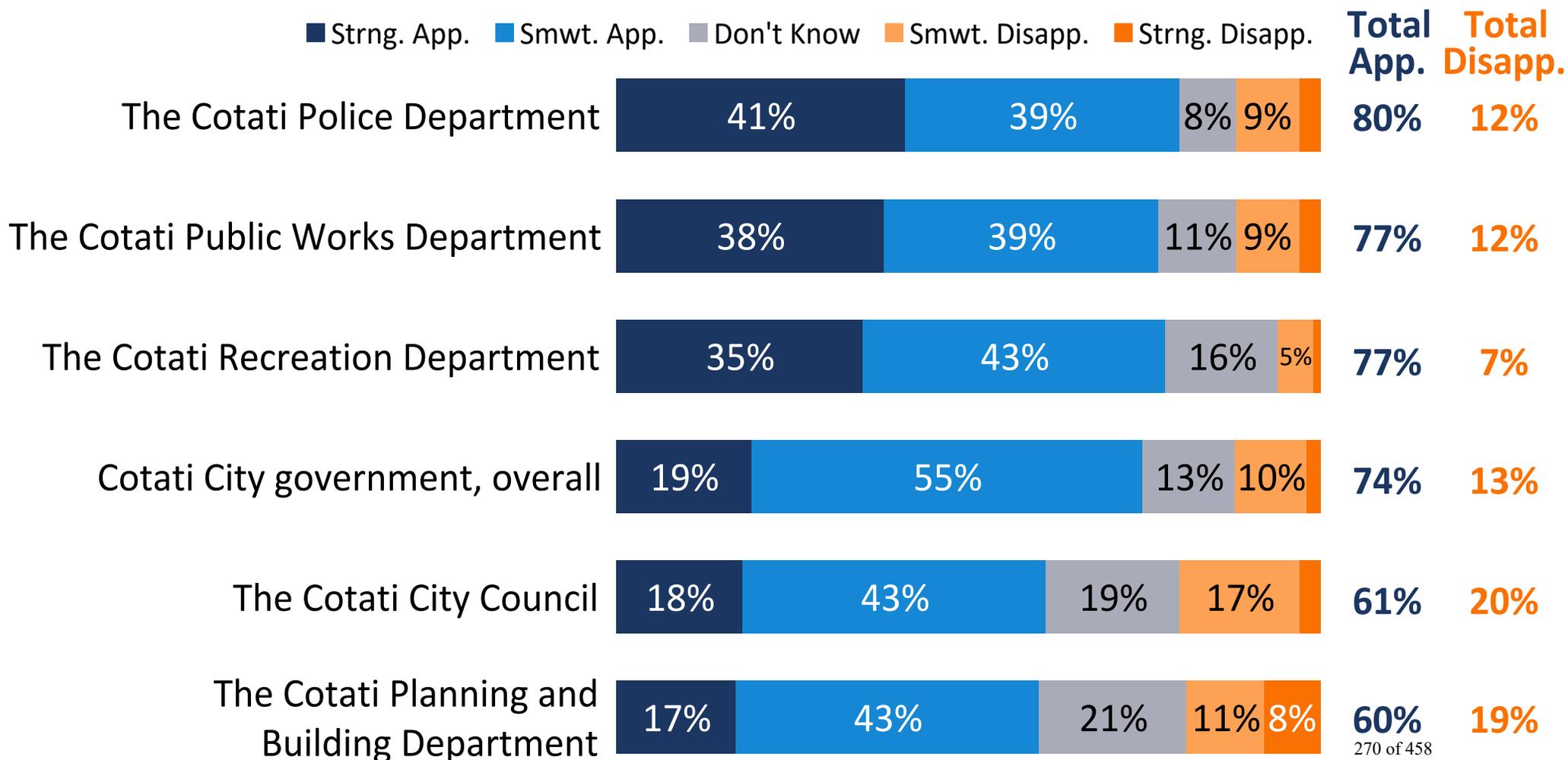
Generally speaking, how would you rate the City of Cotati as a place to live: is it an excellent place to live, a good place to live, just average, poor, or an extremely poor place to live?



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Residents broadly approve of the job the City's staff and Council are doing.

I am going to read you the names of a few organizations active in public life. Please tell me if you approve or disapprove of the job being done by that organization.



Approval of the recreation department is slightly higher than in 2020; for Council, it's slightly lower.

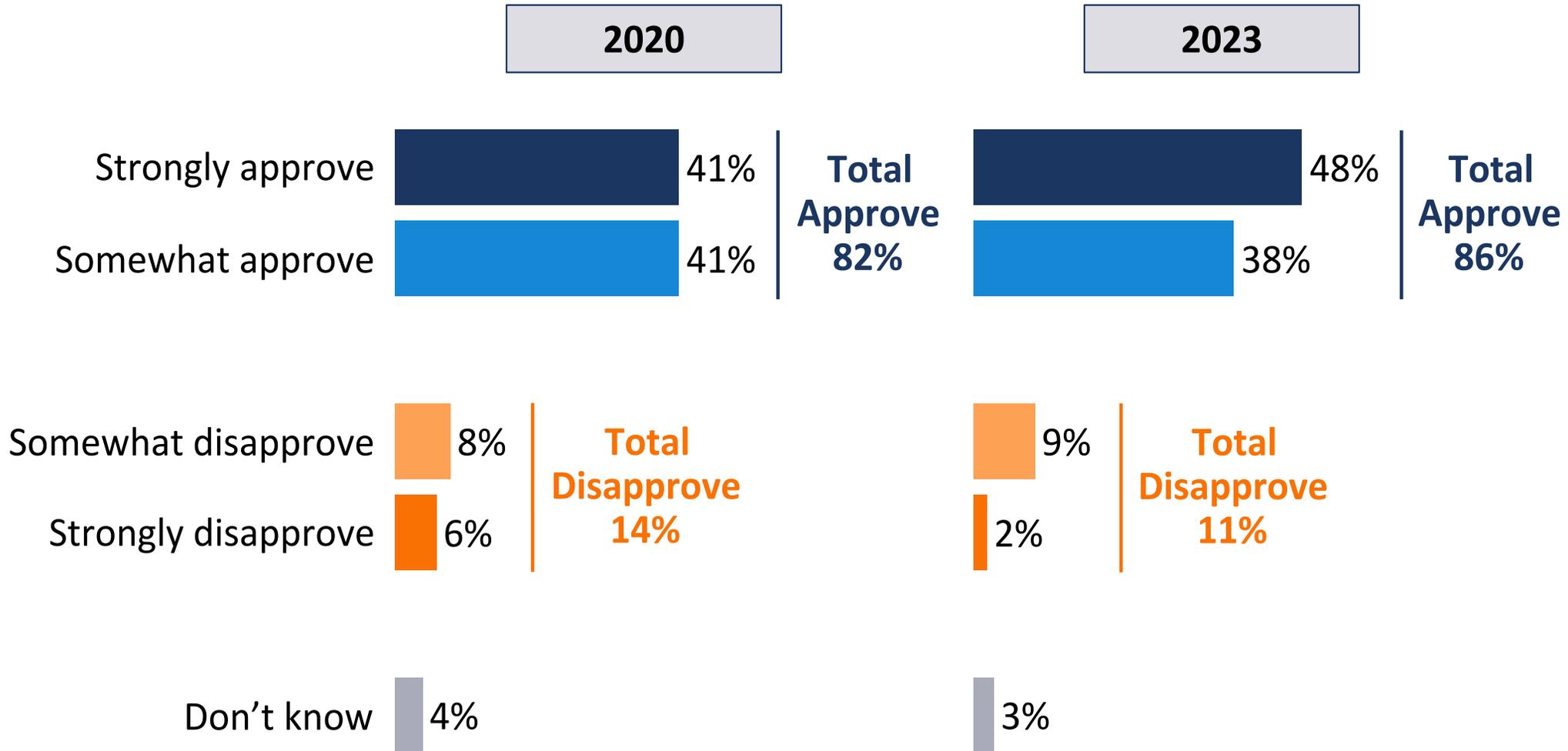
Department (Total Approve)	2009	2013	2019	2020	2023	Difference (2020-2023)
The Cotati Recreation Department	--	--	71%	70%	77%	+7%
The Cotati Police Department	85%	81%	82%	75%	80%	+5%
The Cotati Public Works Department	--	--	72%	74%	77%	+3%
The Cotati Planning and Building Department	--	--	49%	57%	60%	+3%
Cotati City government, overall	81%	65%	67%	72%	74%	+2%
The Cotati City Council	83%	55%	61%	69%	61%	-8%

The decline in City Council's rating from 2020 comes largely from an uptick in those who "somewhat disapprove."

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Generally speaking, Cotati residents largely approve of police officers, as they did in 2020.

In general, do you approve or disapprove of police officers?

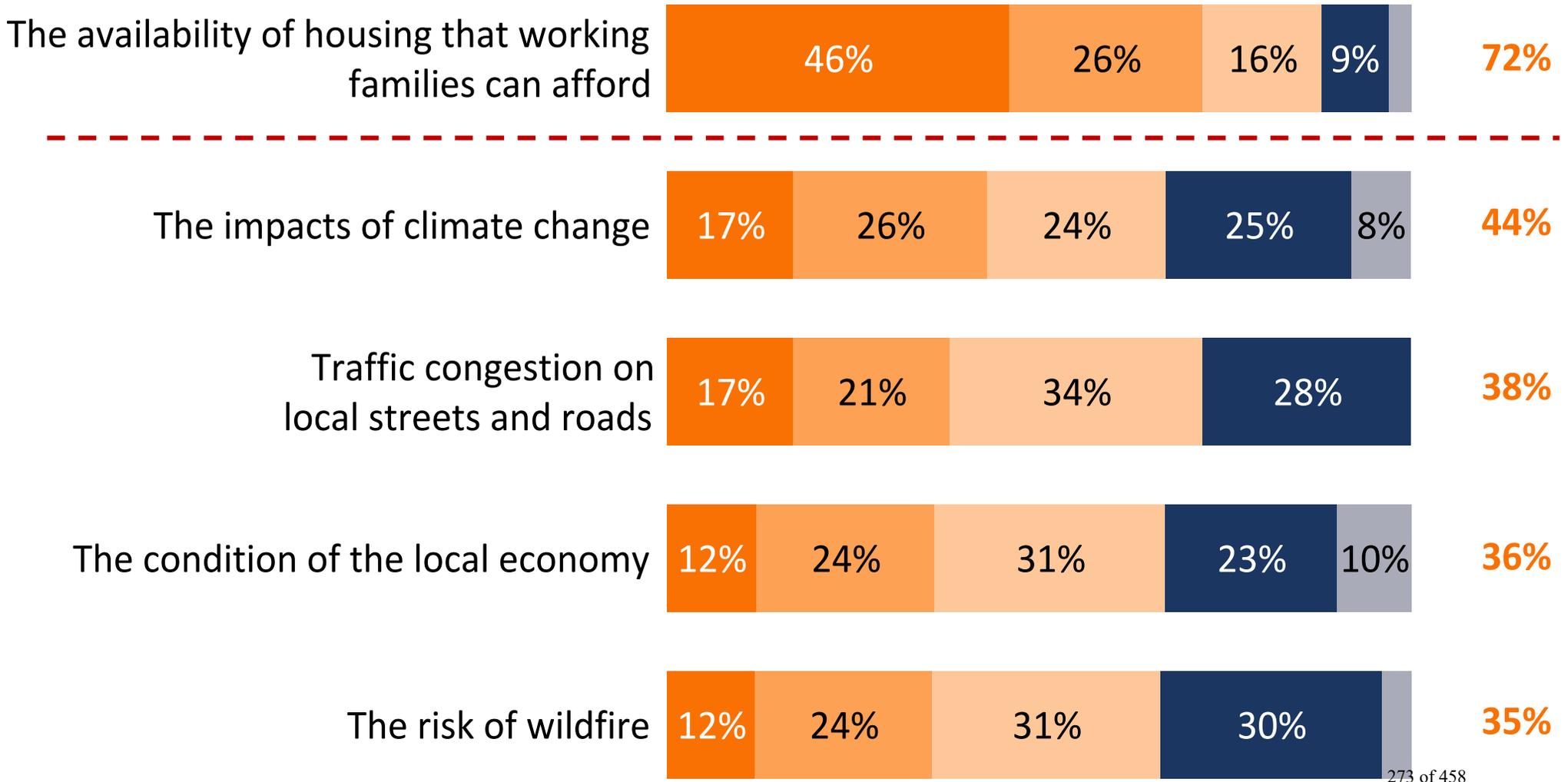


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Residents' most broadly shared problem is the availability of housing working families can afford; no other issues meet that high level of concern.

■ Ext. Ser. Prob.
 ■ Very Ser. Prob.
 ■ Smwt. Ser. Prob.
 ■ Not Too Ser. Prob.
 ■ Don't Know

Ext./Very Ser. Prob.

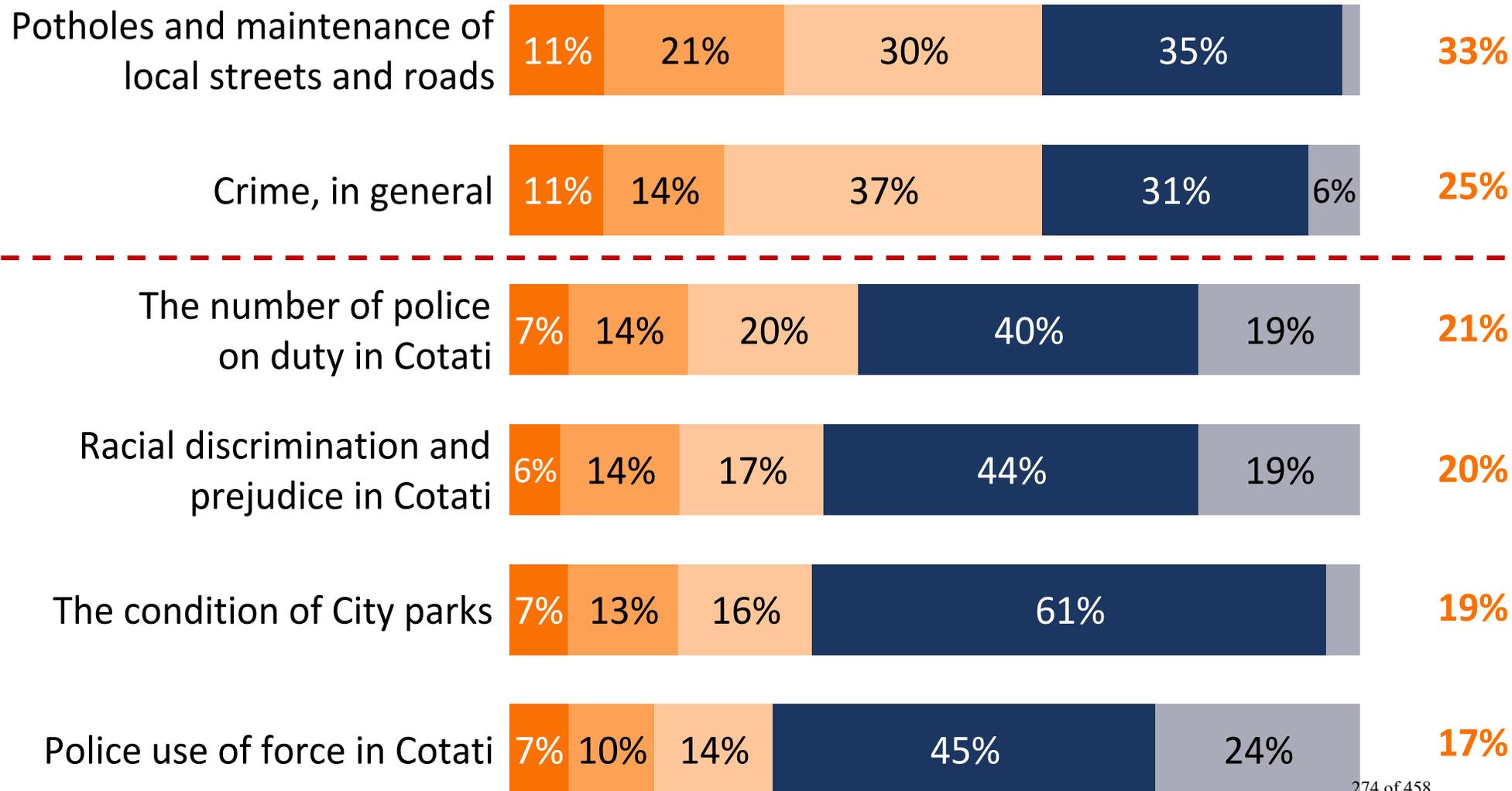


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Relatively few are intensely concerned about police issues, discrimination, or parks.

Ext. Ser. Prob. Very Ser. Prob. Smwt. Ser. Prob. Not Too Ser. Prob. Don't Know

Ext./Very Ser. Prob.



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Concern about housing costs, traffic and crime have increased notably since 2020.

Problem (Extremely/Very Serious Problem)	2009	2013	2019	2020	2023	Difference (2020-2023)
The availability of housing that working families can afford	--	--	55%	52%	72%	+20%
Traffic congestion on local streets and roads	25%	20%	26%	22%	38%	+16%
Crime, in general	14%	10%	5%	15%	25%	+10%
Potholes and maintenance of local streets and roads	--	36%	26%	27%	33%	+6%
The number of police on duty in Cotati	--	31%	15%	16%	21%	+5%
Police use of force in Cotati	--	--	--	21%	17%	-4%
The condition of the local economy	45%	35%	22%	41%	36%	-5%
Racial discrimination and prejudice in Cotati	--	--	--	25%	20%	-5%
The risk of wildfire	--	--	--	43%	35%	-8%
The impacts of climate change	--	--	--	53%	44%	-9%

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For residents of color, every concern is more broadly shared than it is among white voters.

Differences Outside Subsample Margin of Error Highlighted

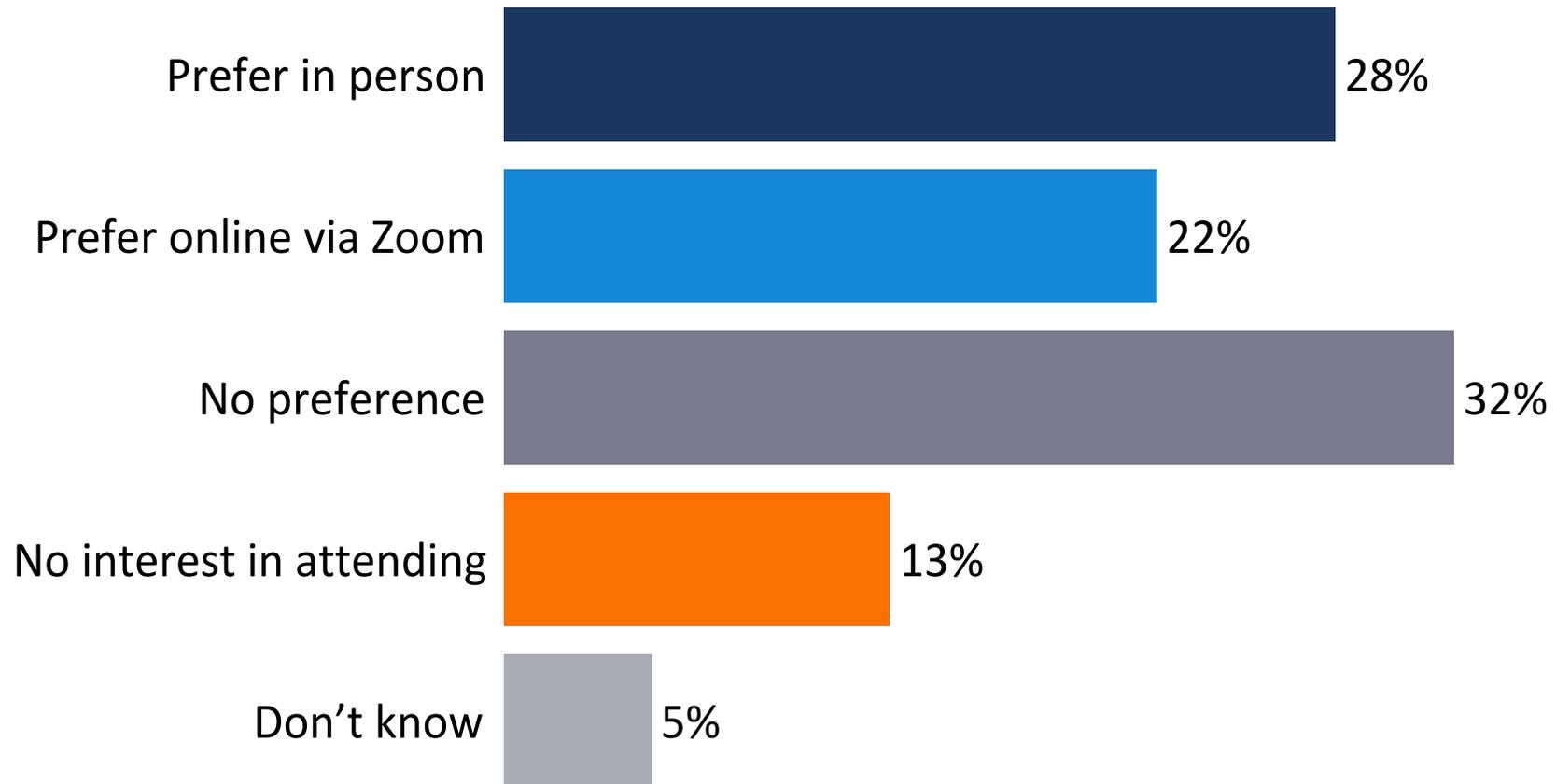
Problem (Extremely/Very Serious Problem)	All Res.	Race/Ethnicity		Diff.
		White Residents	Residents of Color	
The availability of housing that working families can afford	72%	69%	83%	+14
The impacts of climate change	44%	42%	50%	+8
Traffic congestion on local streets and roads	38%	34%	47%	+13
The condition of the local economy	36%	29%	52%	+23
The risk of wildfire	35%	34%	43%	+9
Potholes and maintenance of local streets and roads	33%	28%	47%	+19
Crime, in general	25%	20%	39%	+19
The number of police on duty in Cotati	21%	14%	37%	+23
Racial discrimination and prejudice in Cotati	20%	11%	45%	+34
The condition of City parks	19%	14%	36%	+22
Police use of force in Cotati	17%	13%	29%	+16

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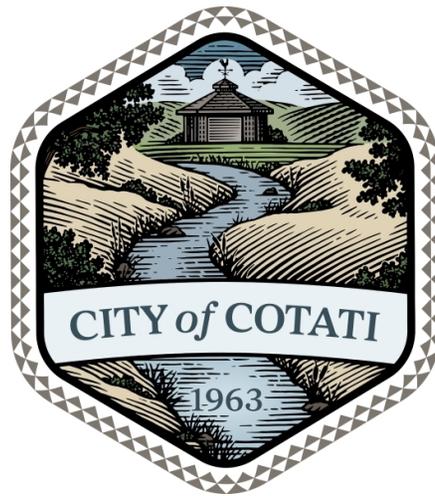
Q4. I'd like to read you some problems facing the City of Cotati that other people have mentioned. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or a not too serious problem in Cotati.

Residents are split on whether they prefer Zoom over in-person, with many saying they have no preference.

If you have attended or were to attend a City of Cotati public meeting, do you prefer to participate in-person or online via Zoom?



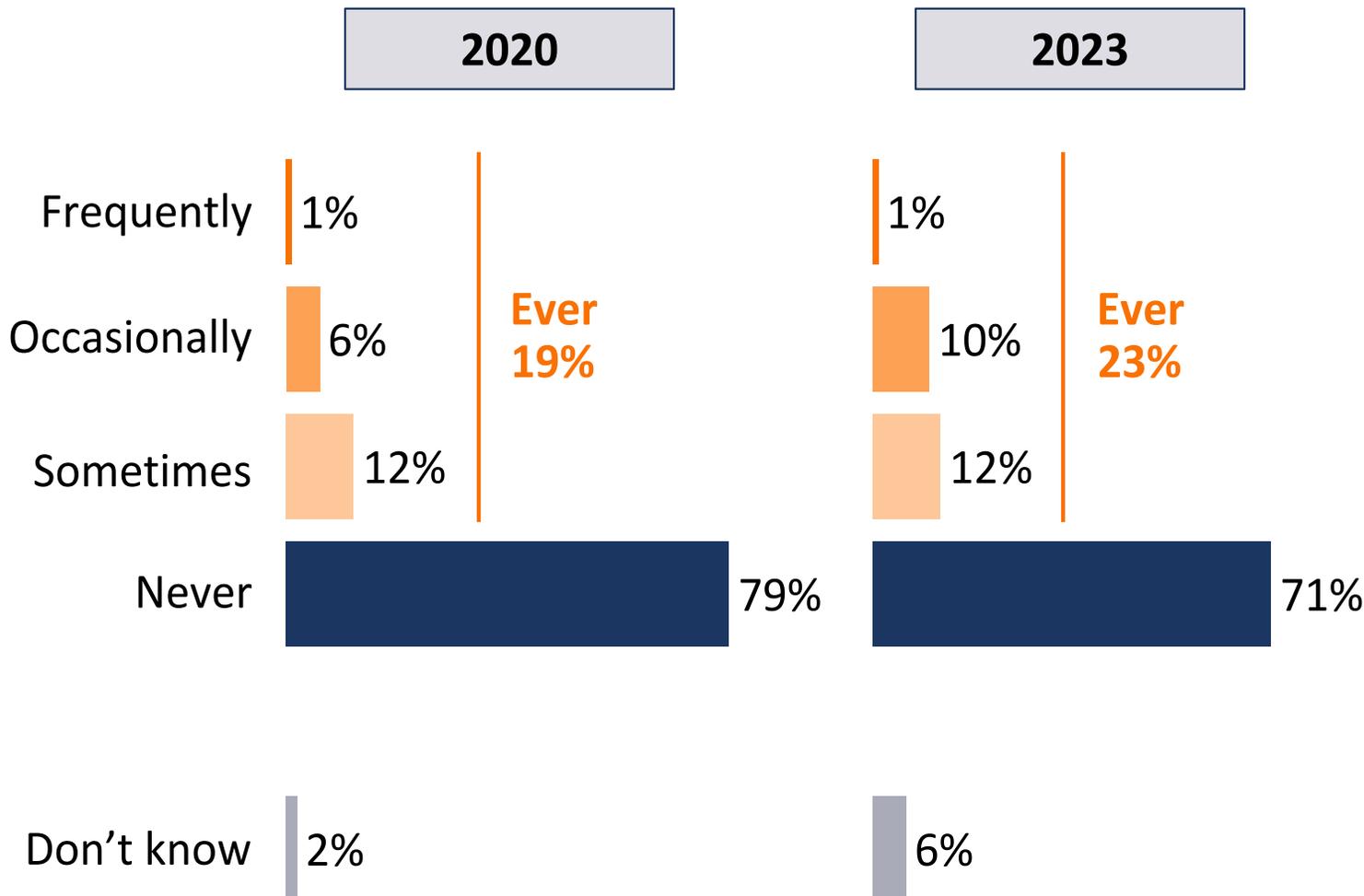
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Experiences of Racism in Cotati

About one-quarter say they have personally experienced racism in Cotati.

Within the last five years, have you personally experienced racism in Cotati frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never?

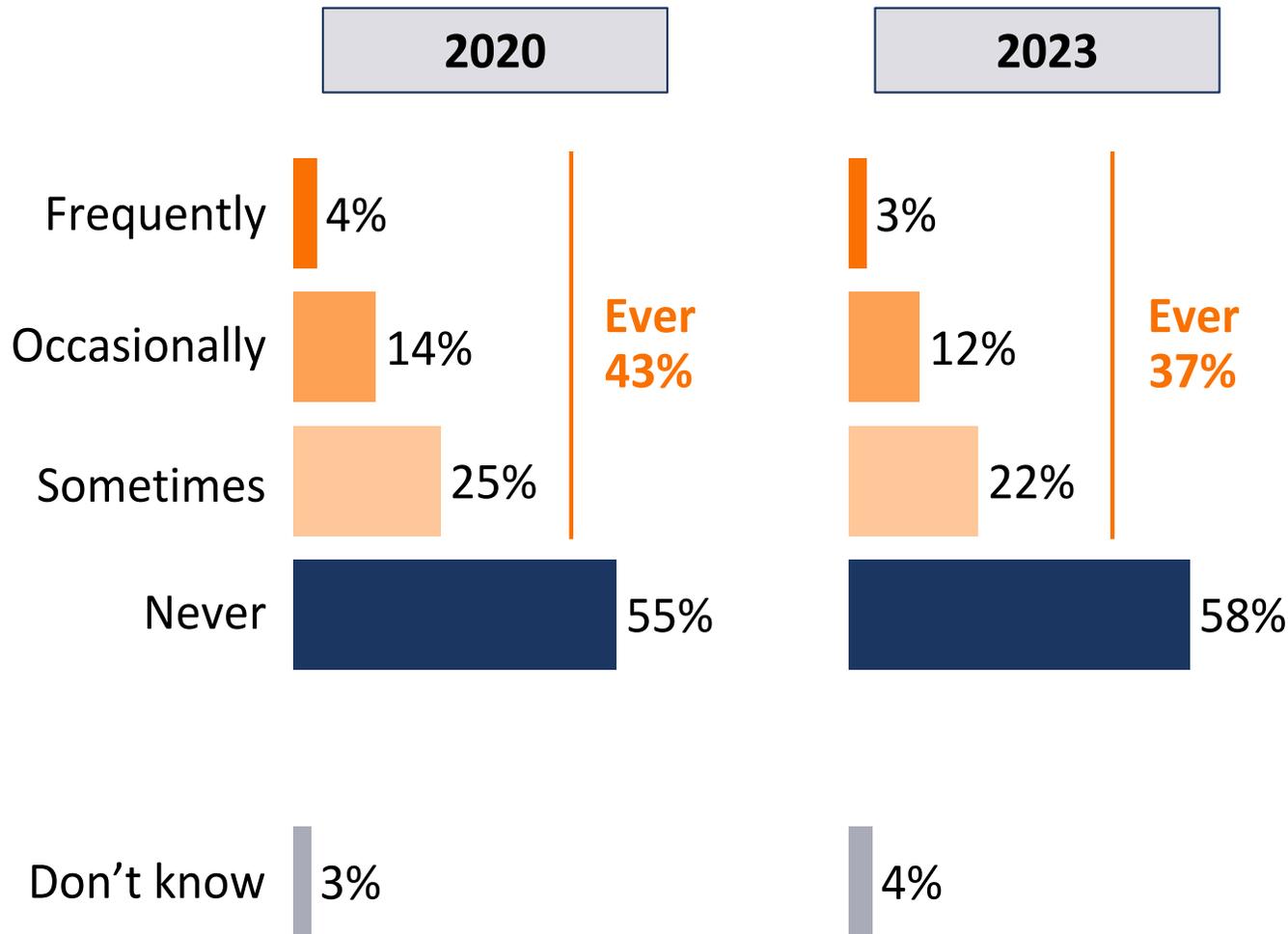


This difference from 2020 is within the margin of error.

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About two in five have observed racism in Cotati.

Within the last five years, have you observed racism in Cotati frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never?



This is down a few points from 2020.

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Residents of color are much more likely to have experienced and observed racism.

Personally Experienced

Observed

■ Frequently ■ Occasionally ■ Sometimes

■ Frequently ■ Occasionally ■ Sometimes

All Residents 10% 12% **23%**

12% 22% **37%**

White Residents 6% 8% **16%**

10% 20% **31%**

Residents of Color 21% 23% **46%**

6% 19% 30% **55%**

Ages 18-49 14% 13% **29%**

5% 15% 26% **45%**

Ages 50-64 6% 13% **19%**

7% 20% **28%**

Ages 65+ 9% **12%**

8% 13% **22%**

<\$100,000 15% 12% **29%**

15% 23% **42%**

\$100,000+ 7% 13% **20%**

10% 23% **35%**

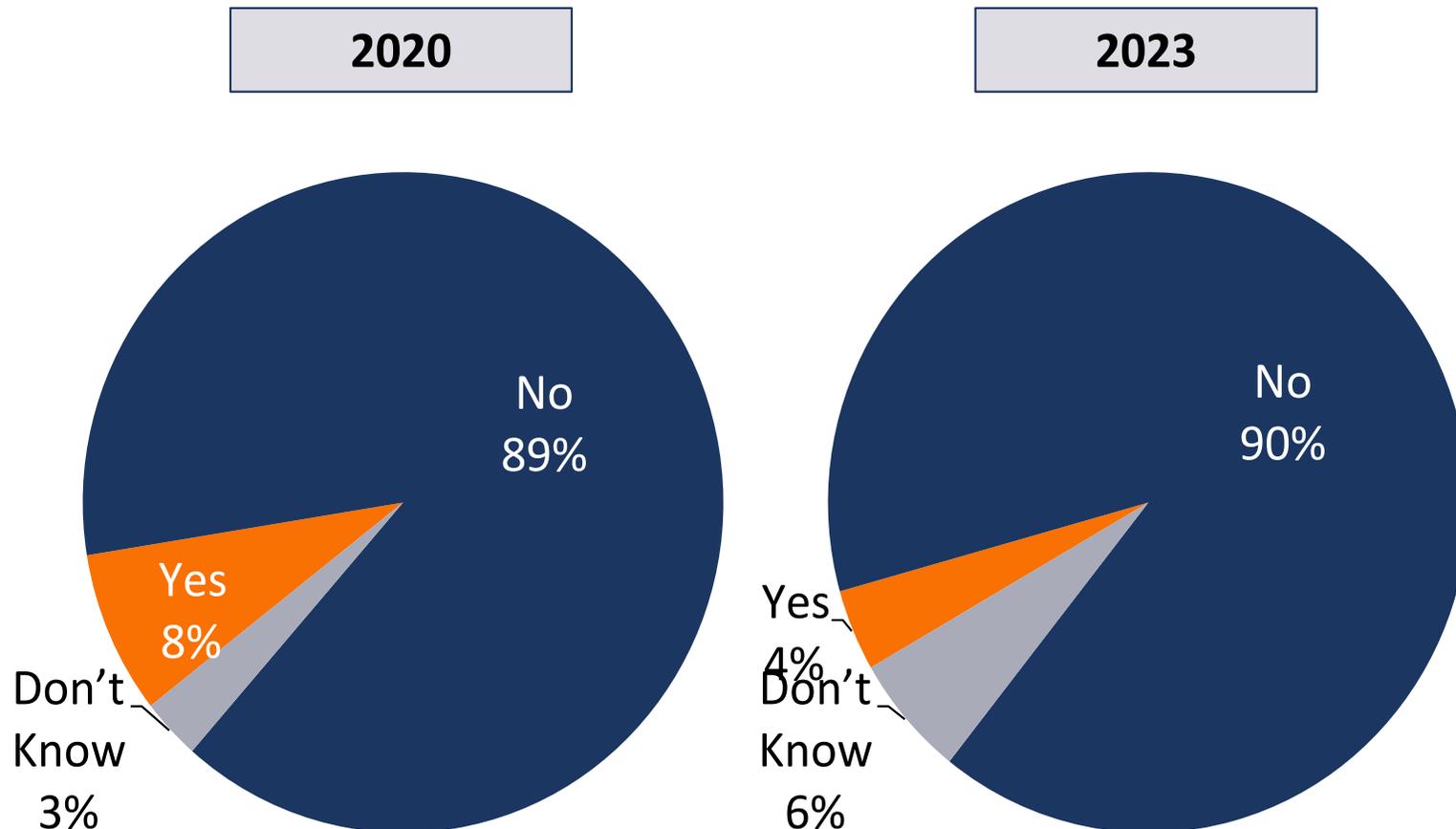
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Q5. Within the last 5 years, have you personally experienced racism in Cotati frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never?

Q6. Within the last 5 years, have you observed racism in Cotati frequently, occasionally, sometimes, or never?.

As in 2020, very few have experienced or observed racism involving a City employee.

Have you experienced or observed racism involving a City of Cotati service or employee?



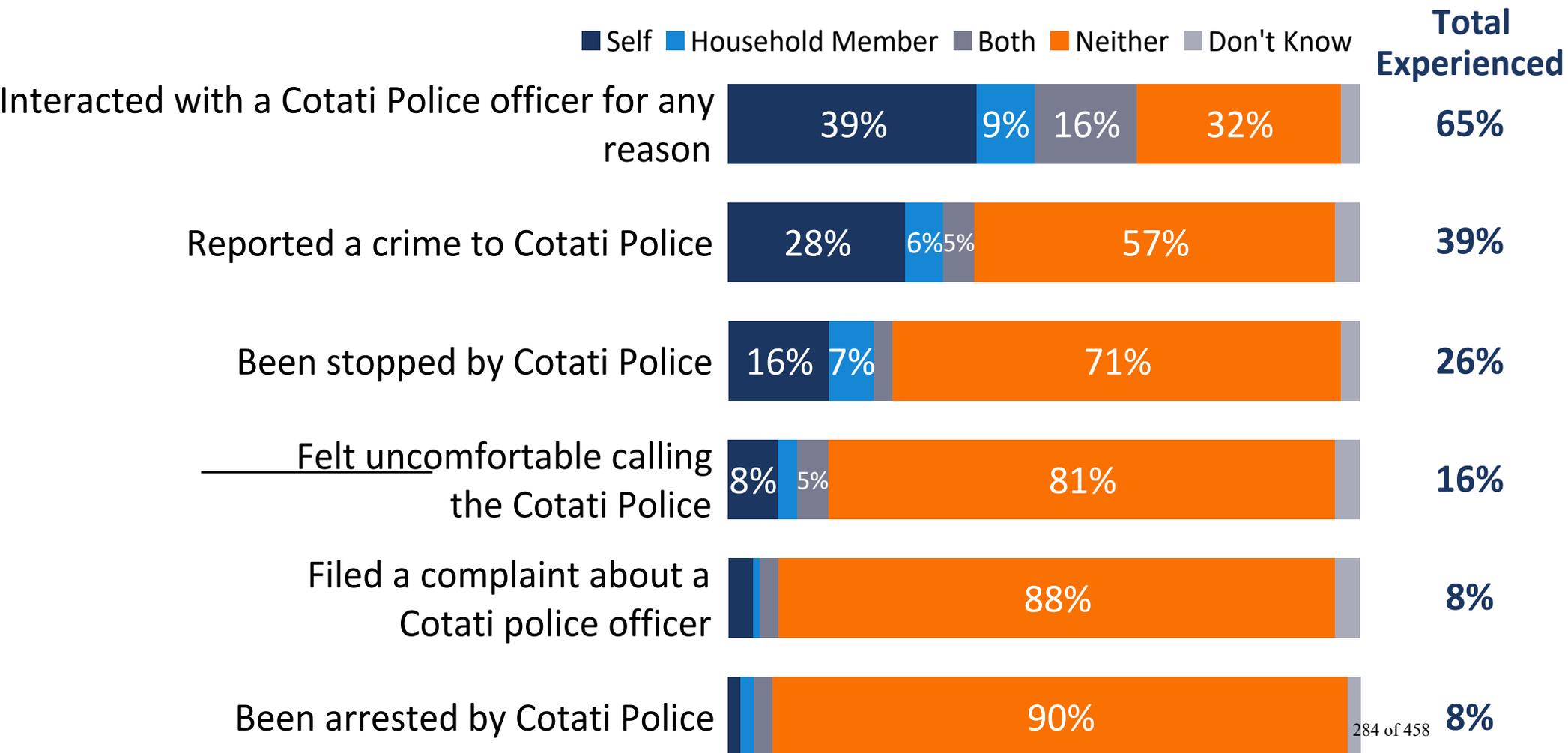
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Experiences with Policing

Two-thirds have interacted with a Cotati Police officer or have a household member who has.

Keeping in mind that this survey is completely confidential, I'd like to know more about your experiences with public safety in Cotati. I am going to read a list of experiences people may have had. Please tell me whether you personally, or someone in your household, has had that experience in Cotati in the last five years.



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A slightly higher share have reported a crime to Cotati Police than in 2020.

Experience (Total Experienced)	2020	2023	Difference (2020-2023)
Reported a crime to Cotati Police	31%	39%	+8%
Felt <u>uncomfortable</u> calling the Cotati Police	10%	16%	+6%
Filed a complaint about a Cotati police officer	2%	8%	+6%
Been arrested by Cotati Police	4%	8%	+4%
Interacted with a Cotati Police officer for any reason	62%	65%	+3%
Been stopped by Cotati Police	31%	26%	-5%

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Differences by race are not statistically significant.

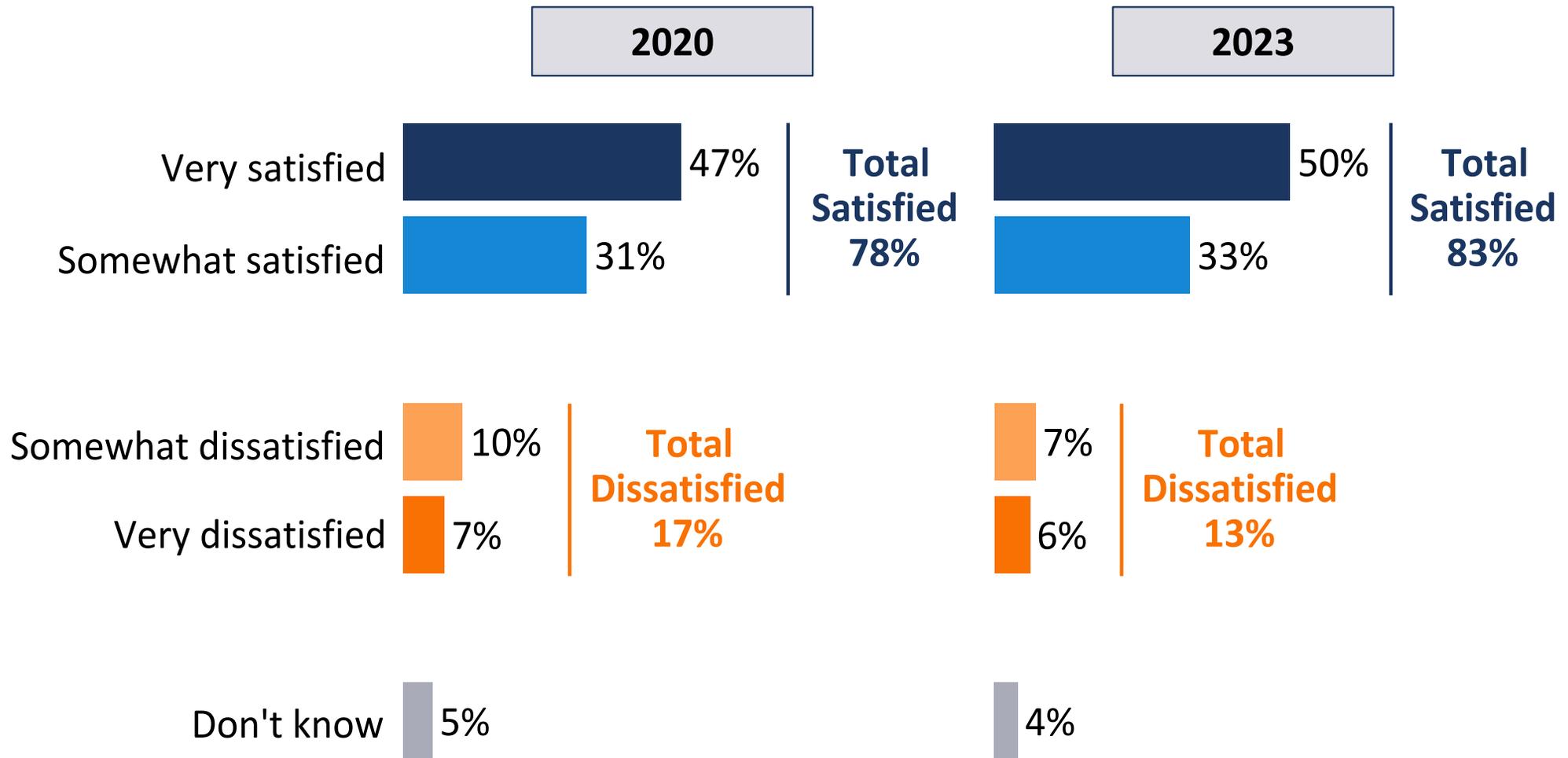
Differences Outside Subsample Margin of Error Highlighted

Experience (Total Experienced)	All Res.	Race/Ethnicity	
		White Residents	Residents of Color
Interacted with a Cotati Police officer for any reason	65%	68%	58%
Reported a crime to Cotati Police	39%	43%	28%
Been stopped by Cotati Police	26%	27%	24%
Felt <u>uncomfortable</u> calling the Cotati Police	16%	15%	19%
Filed a complaint about a Cotati police officer	8%	8%	10%
Been arrested by Cotati Police	8%	6%	12%

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Four in five are satisfied with Cotati Police interactions, with half “very satisfied.”

*In general, were you or the household member satisfied or dissatisfied with that interaction with the Cotati Police officer?
(Asked of Those with an Experience with Cotati Police Only, n=287)*



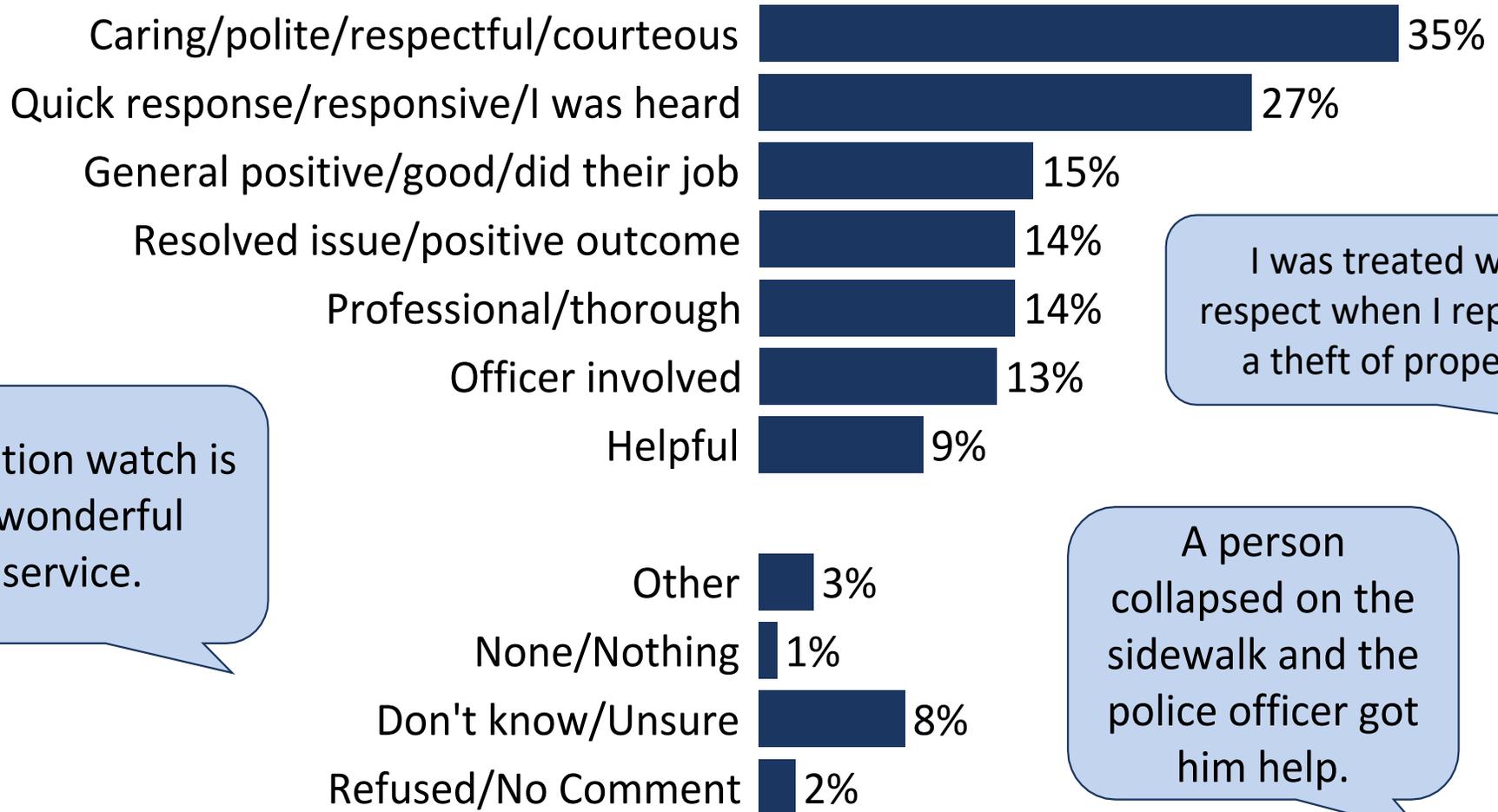
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Those who were satisfied reported that police were polite and responsive.

In a few words of your own, why were you **SATISFIED** with that interaction?

Open-ended; Asked of Satisfied Residents Only, n=237

Multiple Responses Accepted



Vacation watch is a wonderful service.

I was treated with respect when I reported a theft of property.

A person collapsed on the sidewalk and the police officer got him help.

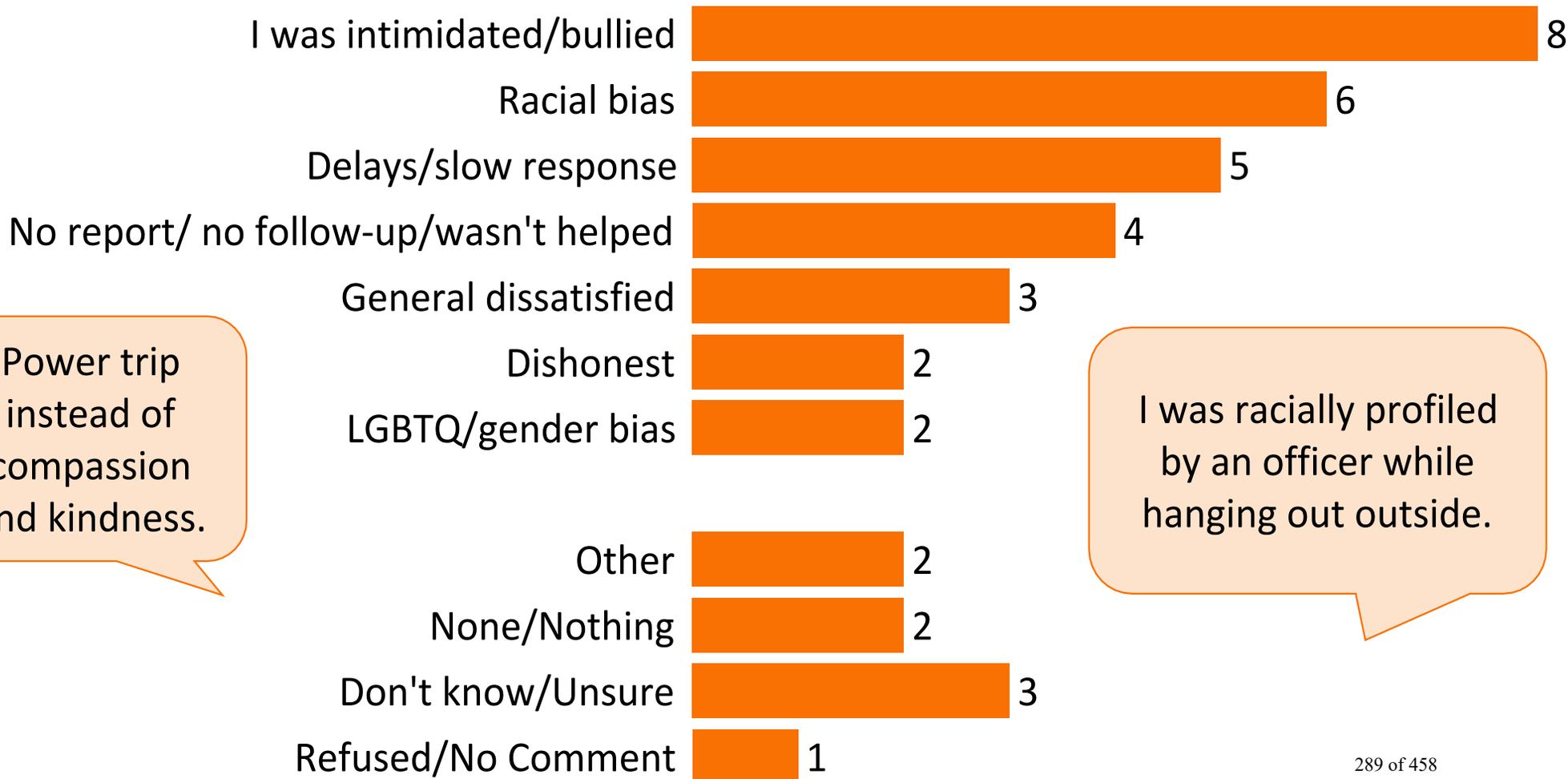
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Those dissatisfied with their interaction feel they were intimidated or bullied.

In a few words of your own, why were you **DISSATISFIED** with that interaction?

Open-ended; Asked of Dissatisfied Residents Only, n=37

Multiple Responses Accepted; n size, Not Percentage Shown



Power trip instead of compassion and kindness.

I was racially profiled by an officer while hanging out outside.

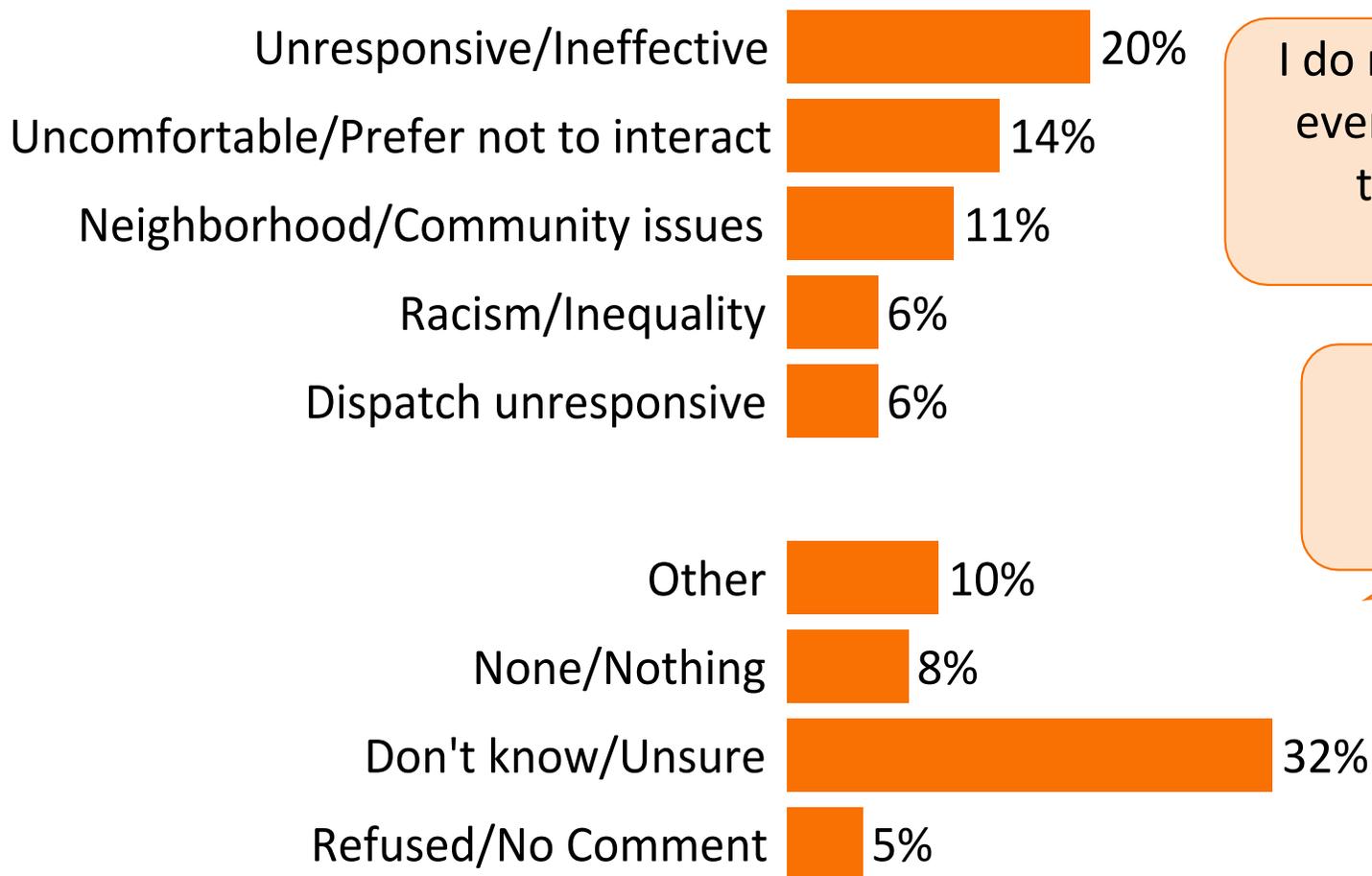
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Those who felt uncomfortable calling the police felt that police would be unresponsive.

What made you or your household member uncomfortable calling the police?

Open-ended; Asked of Residents Uncomfortable Calling the Cotati Police, n=69

Multiple Responses Accepted



I do not believe that police are even equipped to be of help, they only ever escalate situations.

[I thought] I wouldn't get equal service once they knew my name.

Discriminatory behavior of chief and his officers.

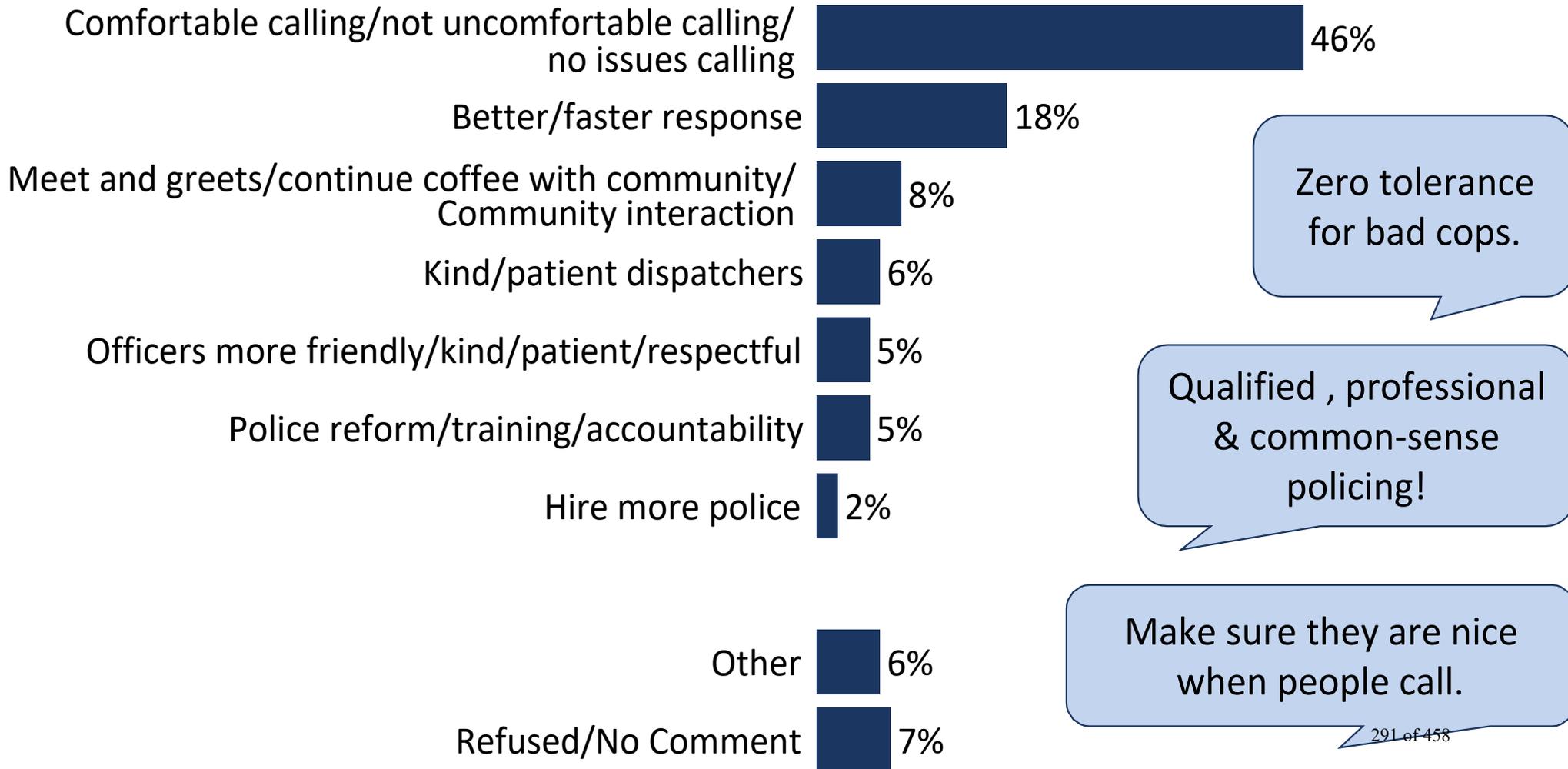
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Most say they feel comfortable calling the police.

calling the police.

In a few words of your own, what can the City do to make you feel more comfortable calling the police when needed?

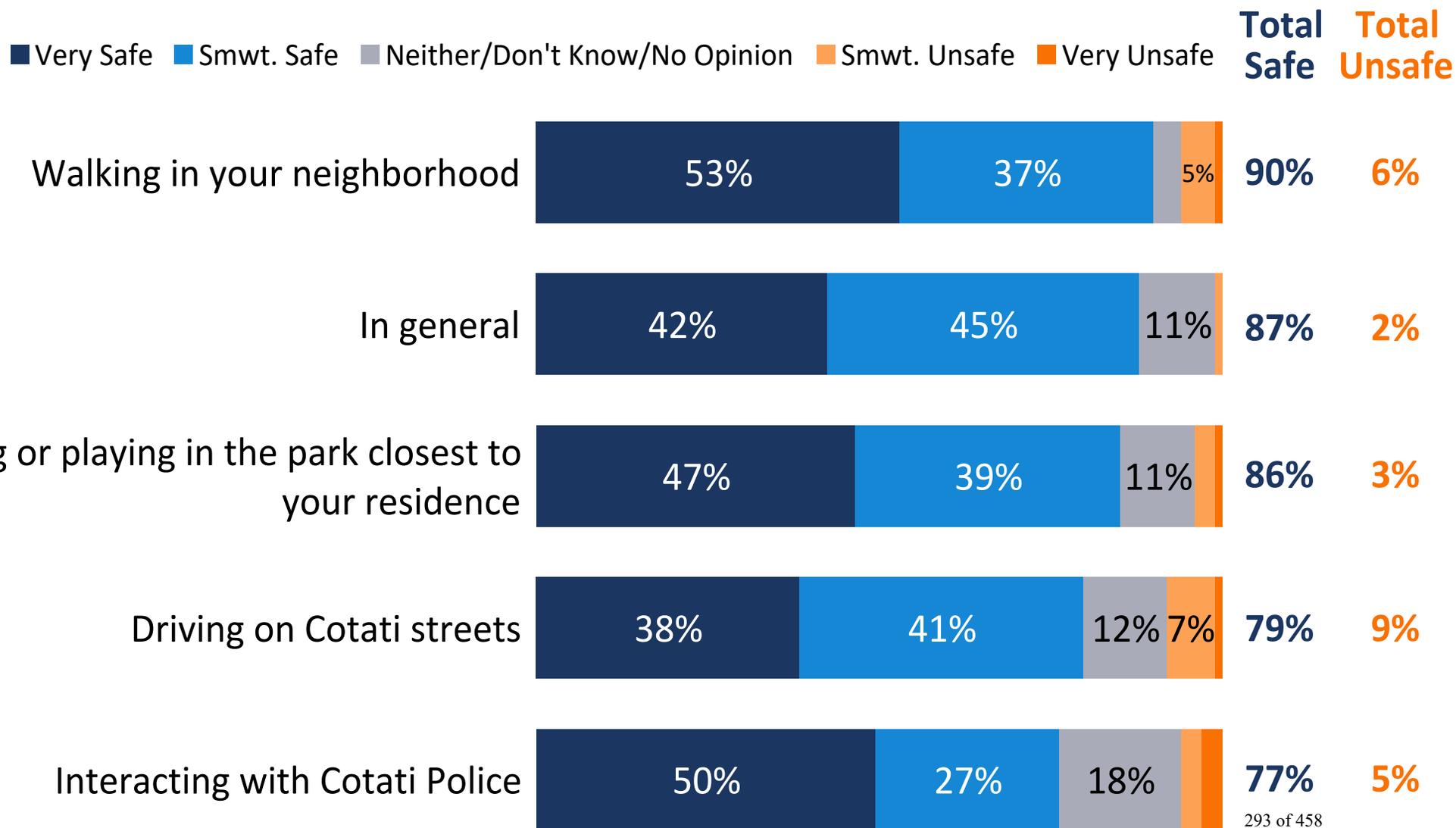
Open-ended; Multiple Responses Accepted





Views of Public Safety and Policing

About nine in ten residents say they feel safe in Cotati in general.



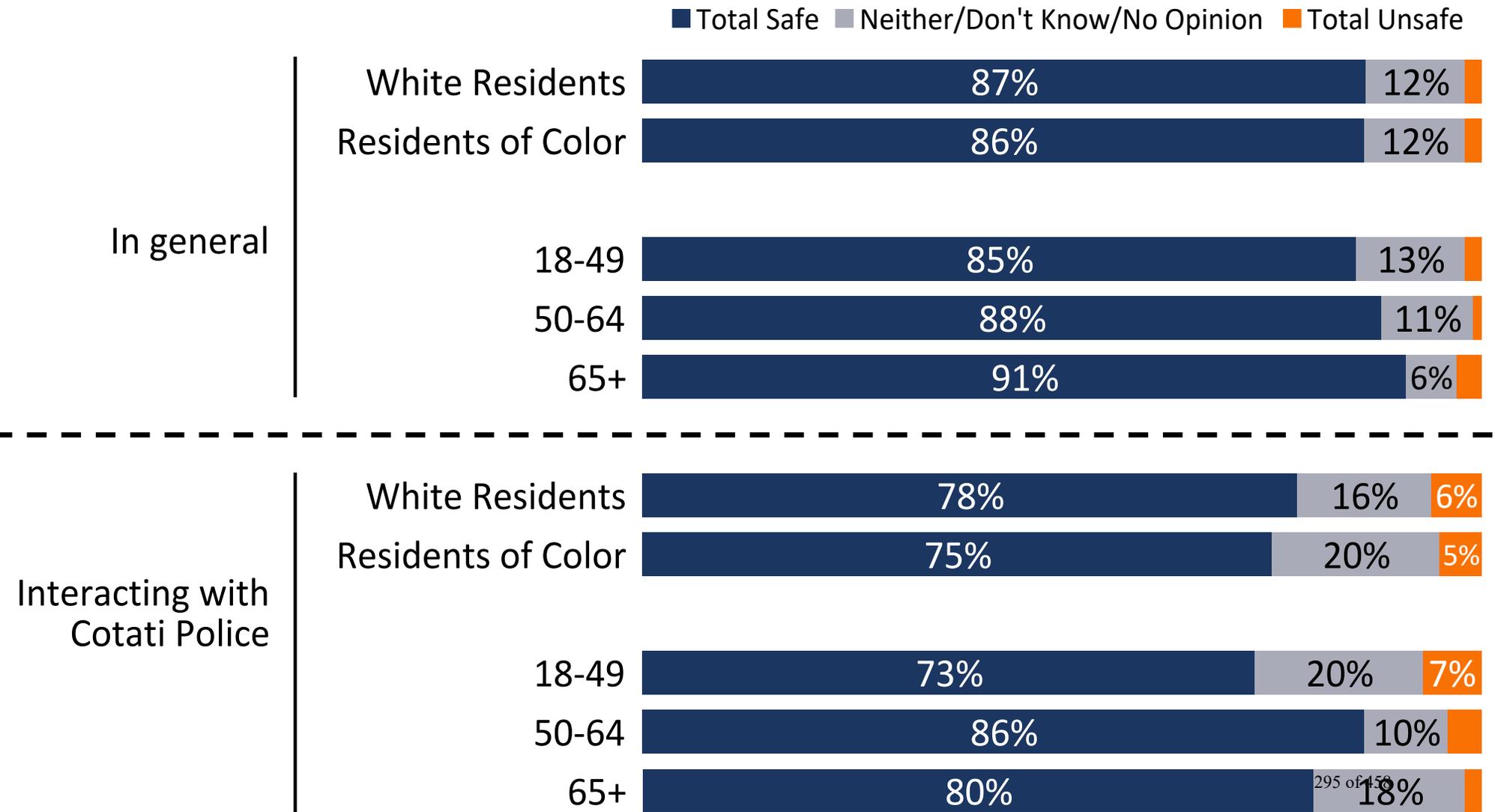
Perceptions of driver safety have declined slightly.

Activity in Cotati (Total Safe)	2020	2023	Difference (2020-2023)
Interacting with Cotati Police	72%	77%	+5%
Walking in your neighborhood	86%	90%	+4%
In general	86%	87%	+1%
Walking or playing in the park closest to your residence	85%	86%	+1%
Driving on Cotati streets	87%	79%	-8%

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Very broad shares feel safe in general, as well as specifically interacting with Cotati Police.

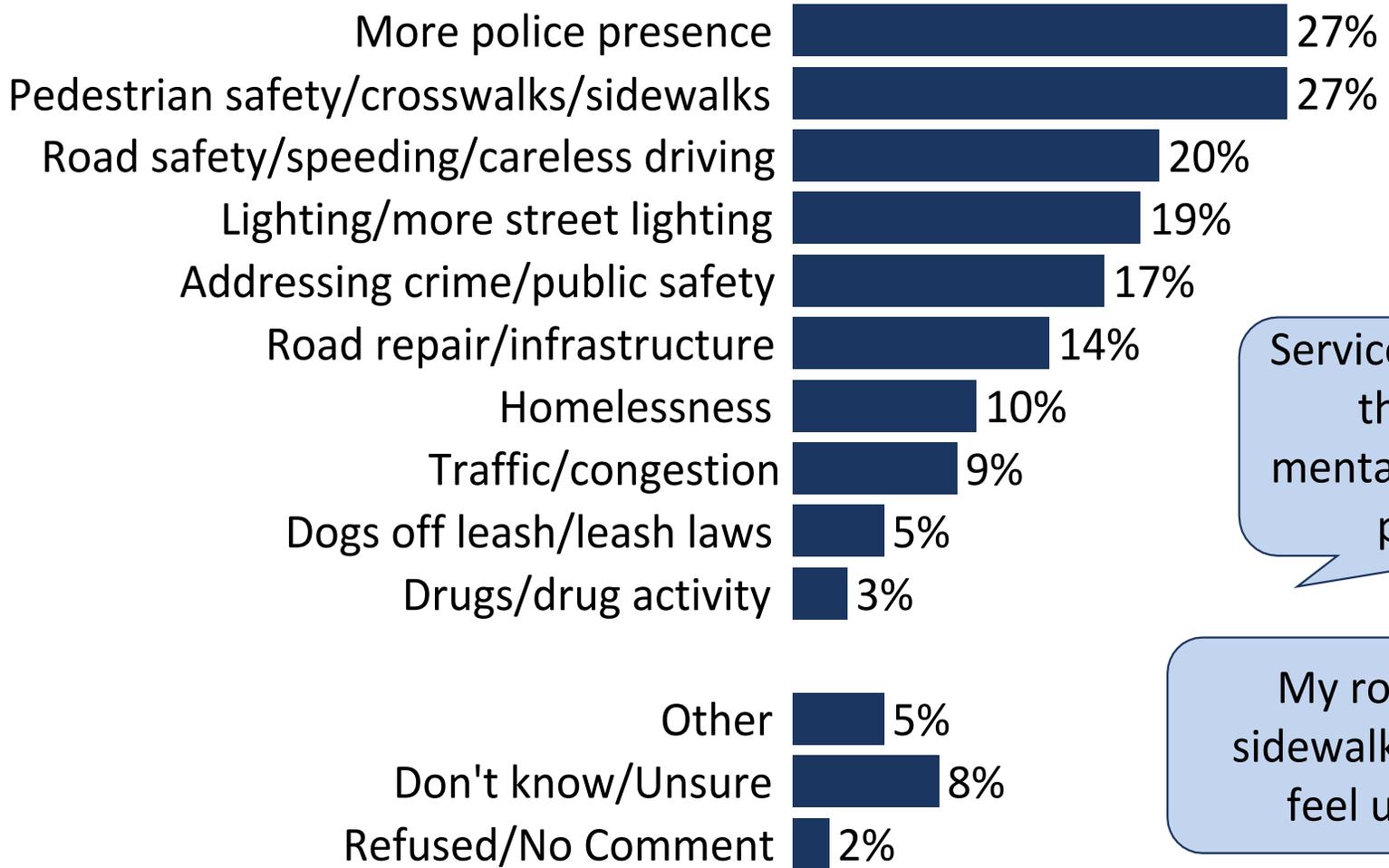
Perceptions of Safety in Cotati by Race/Ethnicity & Age



Q7a & b. How safe do you feel in Cotati _____? Do you feel safe, unsafe, or neither safe nor unsafe?

For those who feel unsafe at times, more policing and improved pedestrian safety would help.

*Earlier you said that you feel unsafe at times in Cotati.
 In a few words of your own, what would make you feel safer in Cotati?
 (Open-ended; Asked of Residents Who Feel Unsafe in Cotati, n=69)*



Speeding cars are a concern while driving and walking in town.

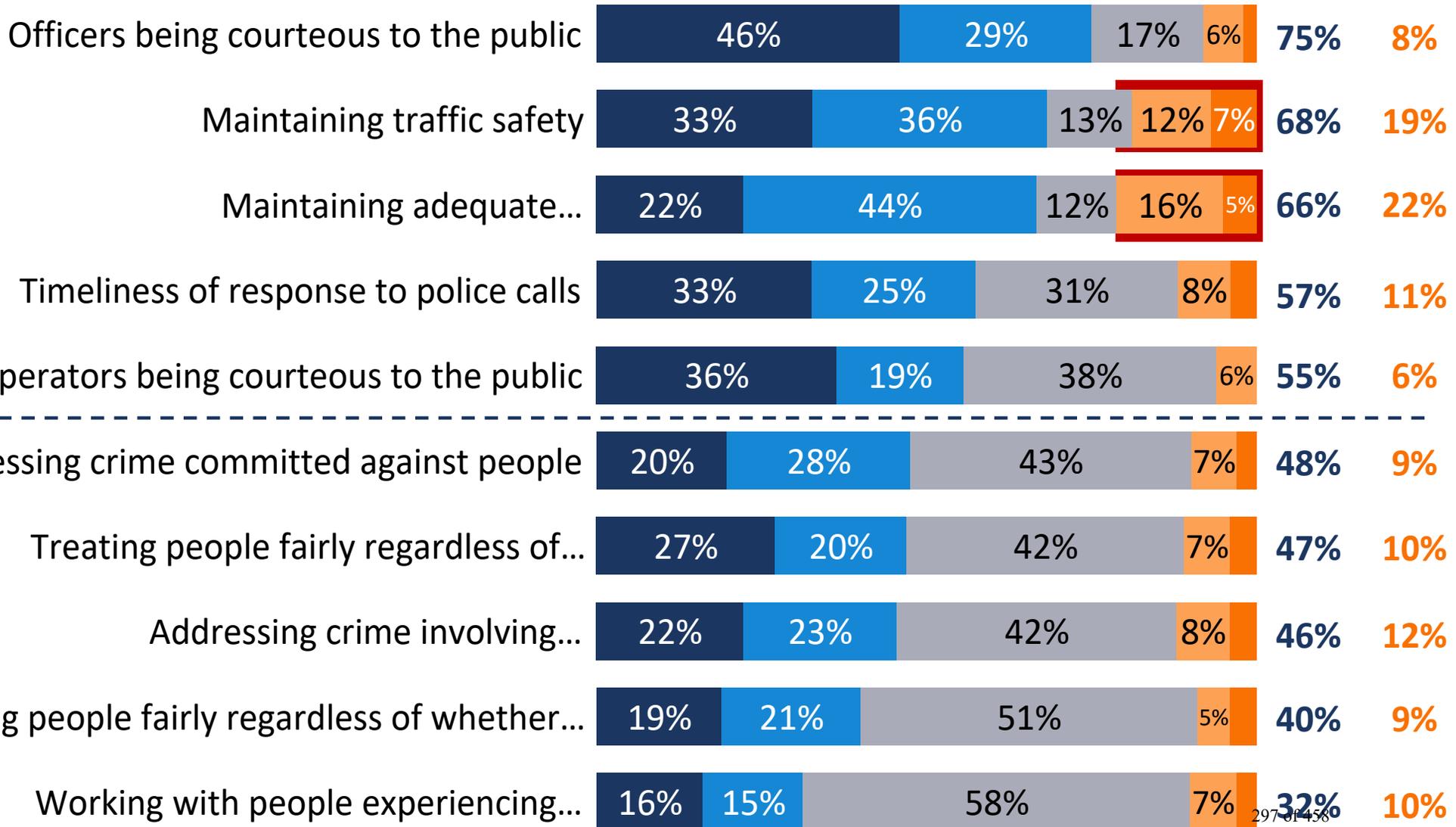
Services and safe places for the unhoused and mentally unstable. A bigger police presence.

My roads do not have sidewalks, which make me feel unsafe on walks.

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Satisfaction with officer courtesy, traffic safety, and timeliness is all high.

■ Very Sat.
 ■ Smwt. Sat.
 ■ No Opinion/Don't Know
 ■ Smwt. Dissat.
 ■ Very Dissat.
 Total Sat. Total Dissat.



Q12. I am going to mention different aspects of police services specifically. I would like you to tell me how satisfied you are personally with the job being done by the City of Cotati Police in providing that program or service to City residents: very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.

Perceptions of officer courtesy have increased slightly since 2020.

Aspect (Total Satisfied)	2020	2023	Difference (2020-2023)
Officers being courteous to the public	70%	75%	+5%
911 operators being courteous to the public	52%	55%	+3%
Treating people fairly regardless of their race or ethnicity	44%	47%	+3%
Timeliness of response to police calls	56%	57%	+1%
Addressing crime committed against people	48%	48%	0%
Treating people fairly regardless of whether they are homeless	40%	40%	0%
Working with people experiencing a mental health crisis	32%	32%	0%
Addressing crime involving property damage or theft	47%	46%	-1%
Maintaining adequate neighborhood patrolling	70%	66%	-4%
Maintaining traffic safety	73%	68%	-5%

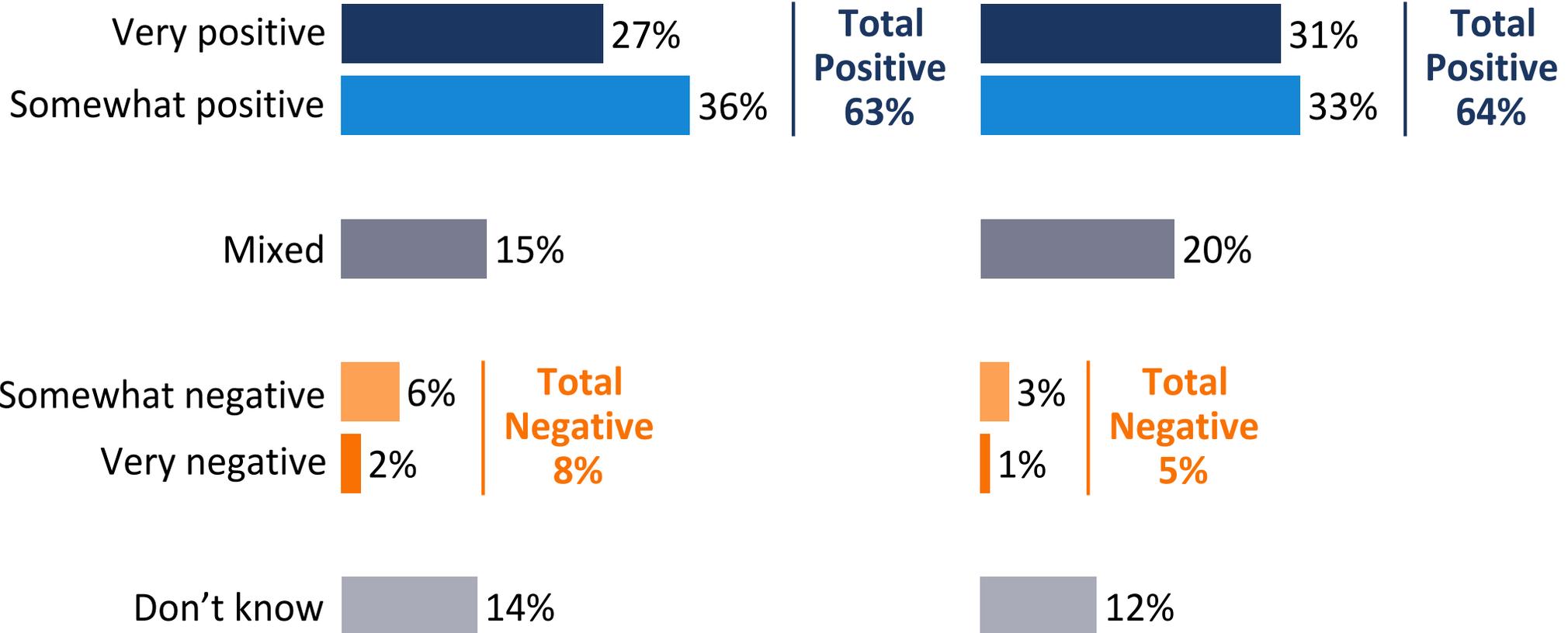
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Three in five believe the relationship between police and residents is a positive one.

Do you believe the relationship between the Cotati police specifically and Cotati residents generally is a positive or a negative one?

2020

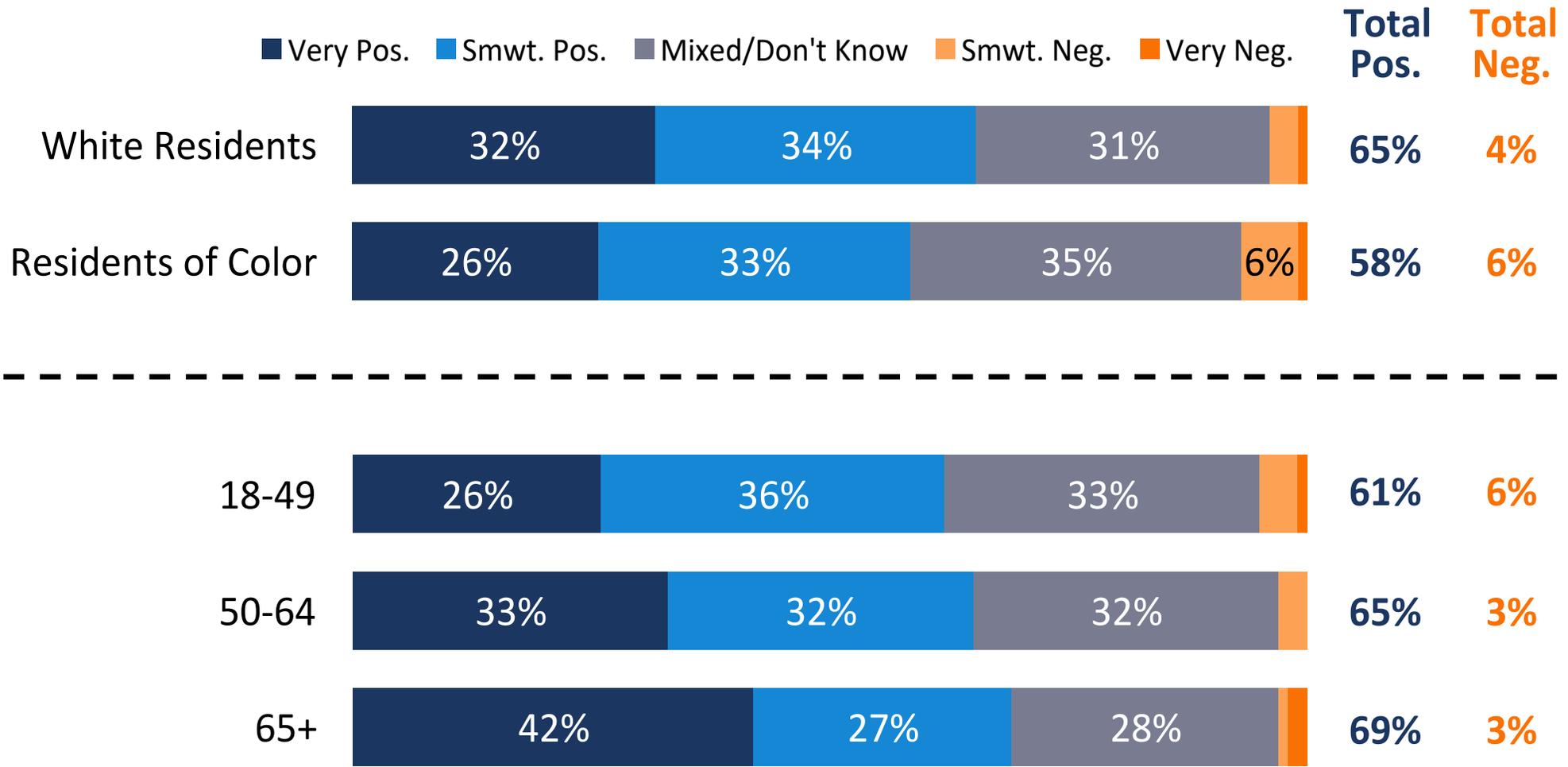
2023



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Residents of color are a bit more mixed in this perception, though largely positive.

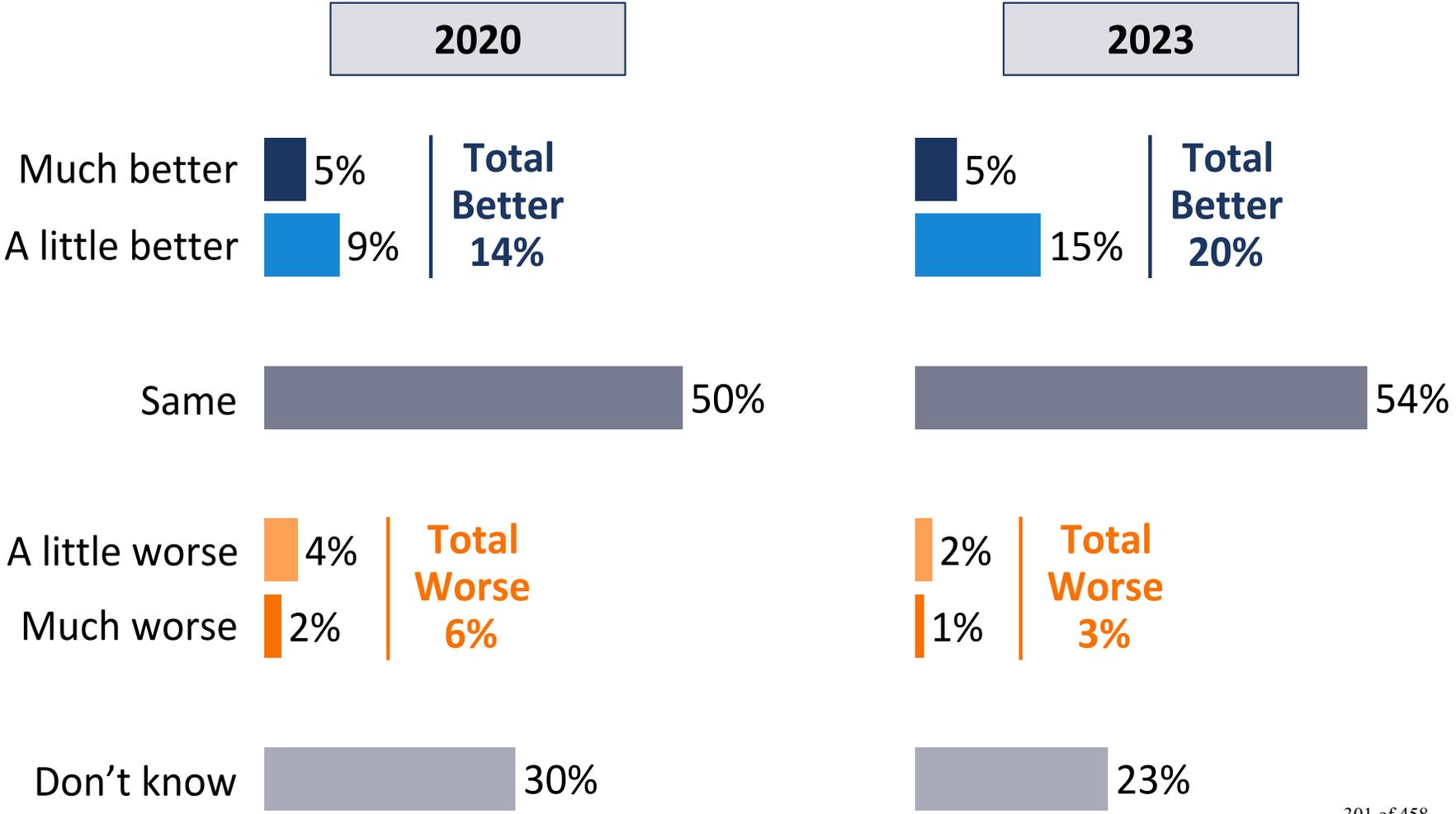
Cotati Police Relationship by Race/Ethnicity & Age



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Majorities believe this relationship is about the same as it has been over the last five years.

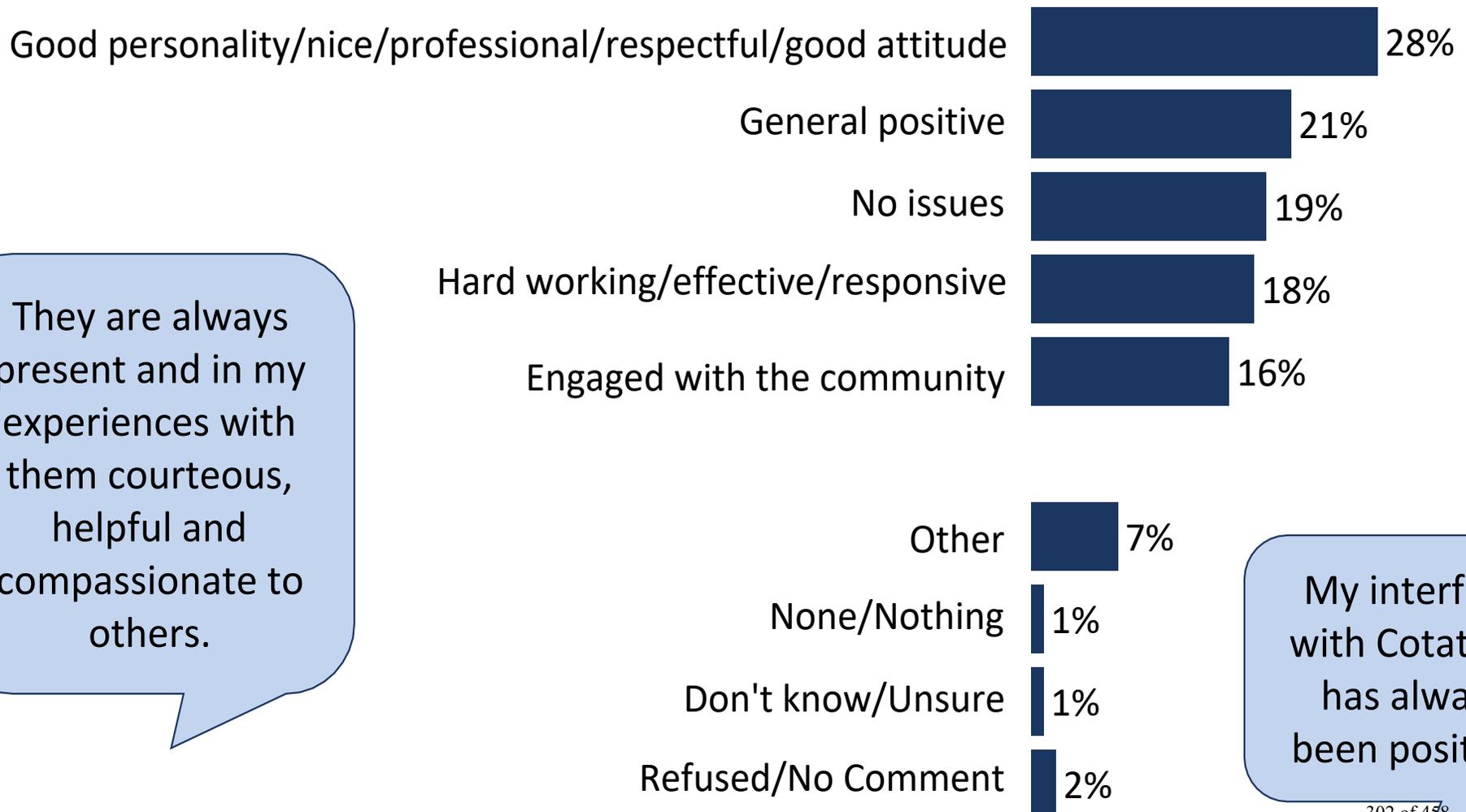
And has this relationship gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same over the last five years?



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Most with a positive impression had something good to say about the officer's personality.

*In a few words of your own, why do you believe that relationship is **POSITIVE**?
(Multiple Responses Accepted; Those with Perception of Positive Relationship Only, n=282)*



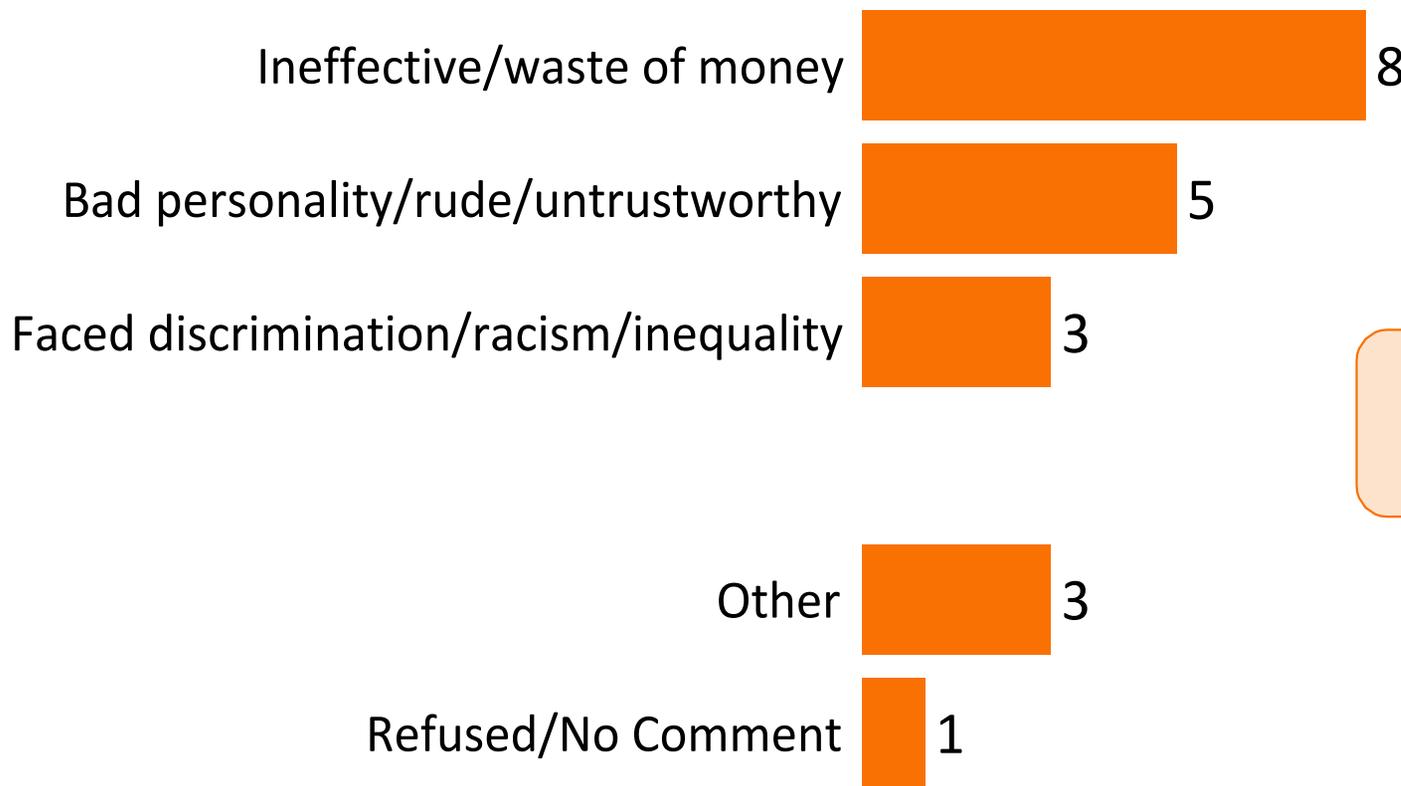
They are always present and in my experiences with them courteous, helpful and compassionate to others.

My interface with Cotati PD has always been positive.

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The few with a negative impression felt that police were ineffective or untrustworthy.

*In a few words of your own, why do you believe that relationship is **NEGATIVE**?
(Multiple Responses Accepted; Those with Perception of Negative Relationship Only, n=20;
n size, Not Percentage Shown)*



They don't live in town and seem to interact with other people.

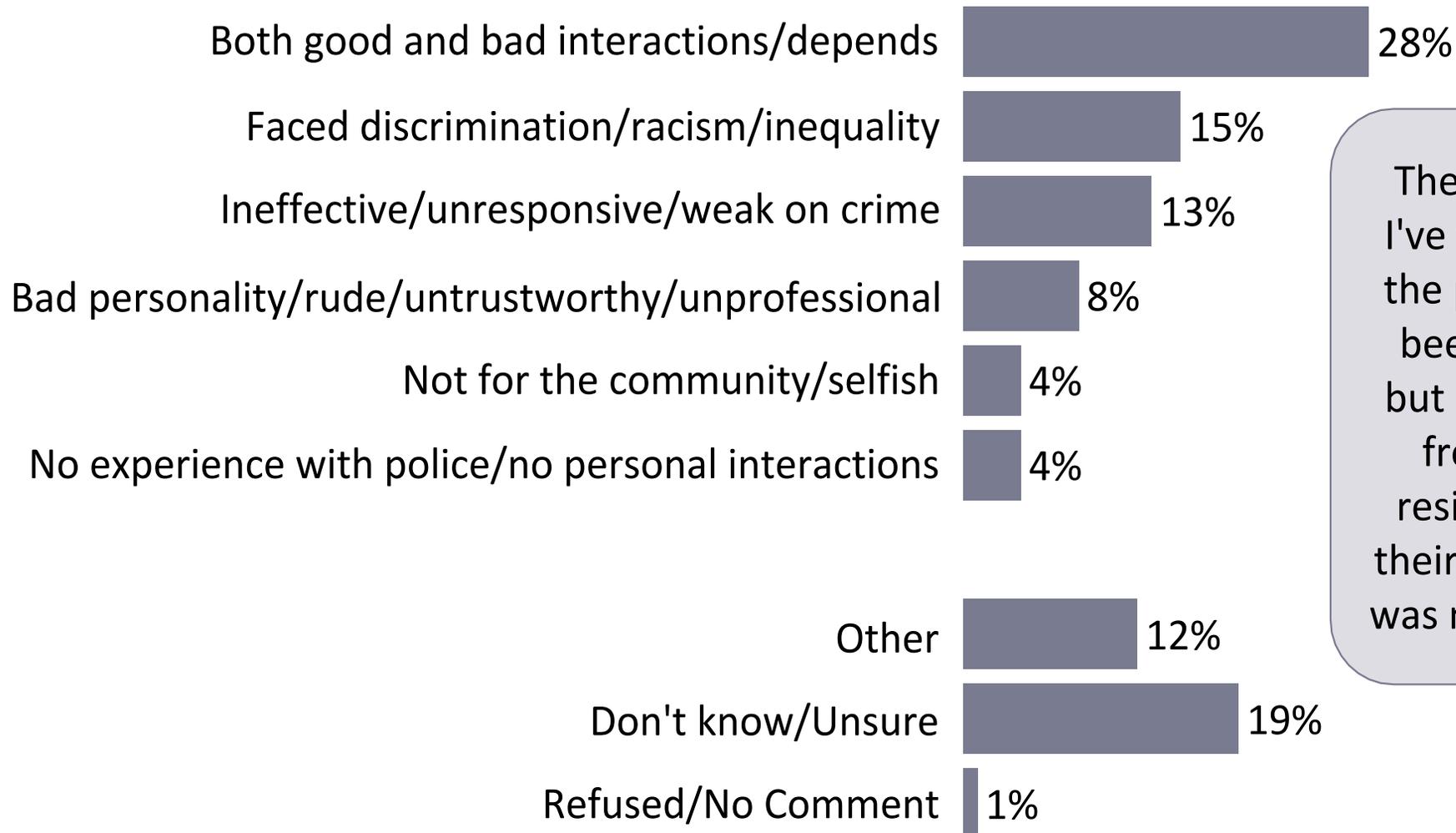
Not very respectful.

Young and full of power.

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Those with a mixed impression had the sense that the relationship depends on many factors.

*In a few words of your own, why do you believe that relationship is **MIXED**?
(Multiple Responses Accepted; Those with Perception of Mixed Relationship Only, n=86)*

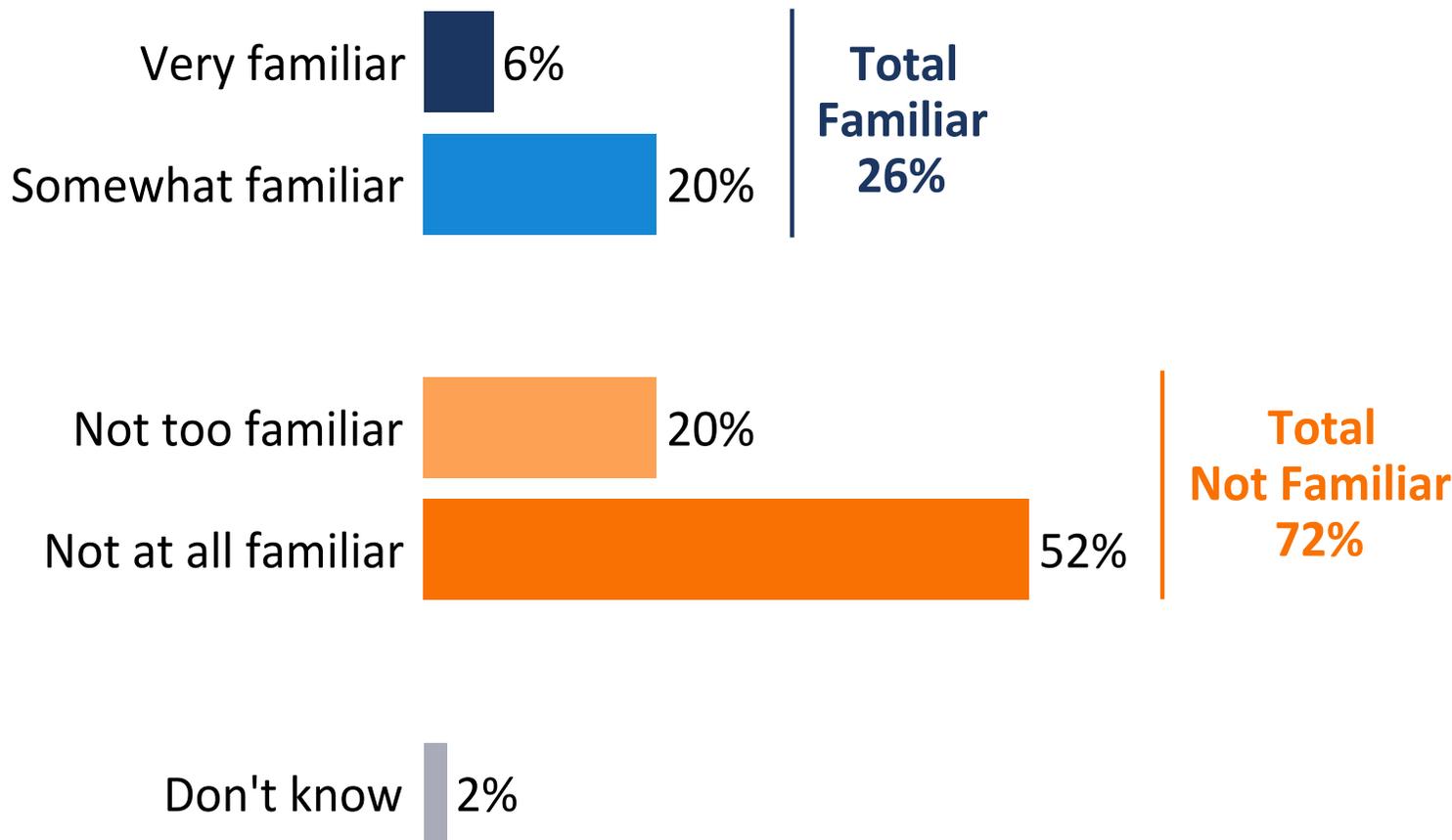


The few times I've talked with the police have been positive but have heard from other residents that their experience was not positive.

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More than seven in ten residents are unfamiliar with the SAFE Program.

How familiar are you with the mobile mental health services program provided by the City of Cotati to assist people in crisis known as SAFE, or Specialized Assistance for Everyone?



Those with a tie to someone in law enforcement and those who speak a language other than English at home are more likely to be familiar with the program.

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Conclusions

Conclusions

- A lack of housing that working families can afford is a top-tier issue facing the city, with no other concern rating nearly as high.
- Cotati is perceived as a safe city overall. Broad majorities say they feel safe interacting with police, driving, walking and playing in their parks and neighborhoods. Perceptions of safety while driving have declined slightly from 2020.
- As in 2020, residents also believe Cotati is an “excellent” or “good” place to live and approve of City government generally.
- Police officers and the department are broadly viewed favorably. Issues related to police conduct and discrimination are not seen as top-tier problems by most residents; these concerns are slightly more prevalent among residents of color, but still rank lower than items like housing costs and crime, more broadly.
- About one-quarter have personally experienced racism, and they are more likely to be residents of color; residents of color and younger residents are more likely to report having observed racism. Reports of racism from City employees are rare.
- Negative perceptions of police are rare, and are often tied to discrete experiences.
- Most residents are unfamiliar with the SAFE Program.

For more information,
contact:



OPINION
RESEARCH
& STRATEGY

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