



Public Safety Survey  
Downtown Spokane Partnership  
**FINAL REPORT** | *December 2021*

# Methodology

- ▶ This multimodal online and telephone survey was conducted among downtown Spokane stakeholders.
- ▶ The survey was conducted between November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021.
- ▶ The sample was drawn from a list of Downtown Spokane Business Improvement District ratepayers and Downtown Spokane Partnership newsletter subscribers.
- ▶ A total of 391 interviews were completed from a sample of 1,267 unique contacts for a 30.9% response rate, including:
  - 366 responses online
  - 25 responses by telephone

Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

# Key Findings

- ▶ **Downtown Spokane stakeholders are pessimistic about the direction of downtown with homelessness and public safety as top concerns by a wide margin.**
  - Six-in-ten mention homelessness as “the most important problem facing downtown Spokane today” and half mention public safety related issues.
  - Only a third feel things downtown are “generally going in the right direction.” Half think things “have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track.”
  
- ▶ **Respondents overwhelmingly recognize that a thriving downtown is critical to the region’s economic recovery and that downtown cannot fully recover until addiction, mental health, and public safety problems are addressed. But despite their pessimism about the current direction of downtown, they remain optimistic about downtown’s future.**
  
- ▶ **Downtown stakeholders are facing a host of worsening safety and security challenges that are affecting employee and customer safety, the cost of doing business, and property values and leasable rates.**
  - Three-quarters say they are at least somewhat concerned about the level of safety at their worksite/property and most think safety/security issues are worse than 3 to 5 years ago. Four-fifths say they experience at least one “incident of crime” per month near their worksite/property.
  - Strong majorities report increases in all six safety/security issues tested in the survey - homeless encampments, mental health episodes, open drug and alcohol use, customers and employees feeling uncomfortable, and discarded needles.
  - Among those with properties susceptible to trespass, nearly three-quarters say they have experienced individuals hiding in unsecured areas of their worksite/property after hours and half say this happens at least once a week.
  - Many worksites and properties have taken measures in response to security concerns, including reducing building access and investing in exterior lighting and security cameras. One in three report increased maintenance costs to repair property damage.
  - Two thirds of properties with public restrooms have installed locks and a majority of stakeholders believe adding more public restrooms will exacerbate safety/security issues.
  - A majority say that crime/nuisance activity has reduced their worksite’s/property’s “value, leasable rates, or number of customers”

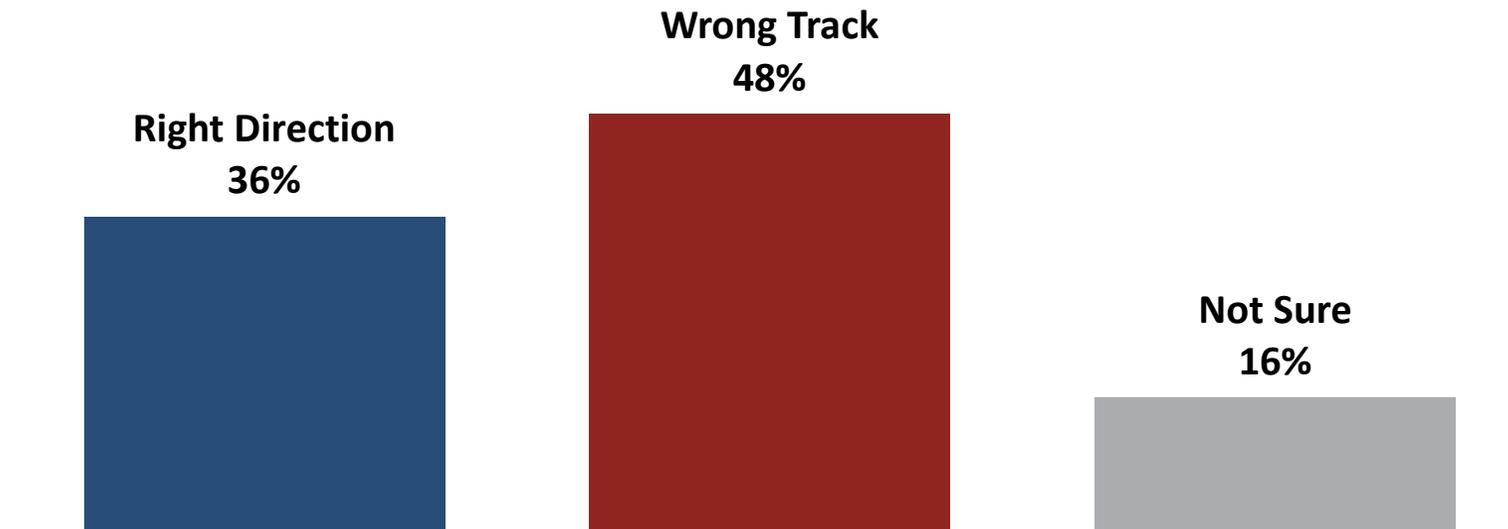


**General Environment**

# Optimism about Downtown Spokane

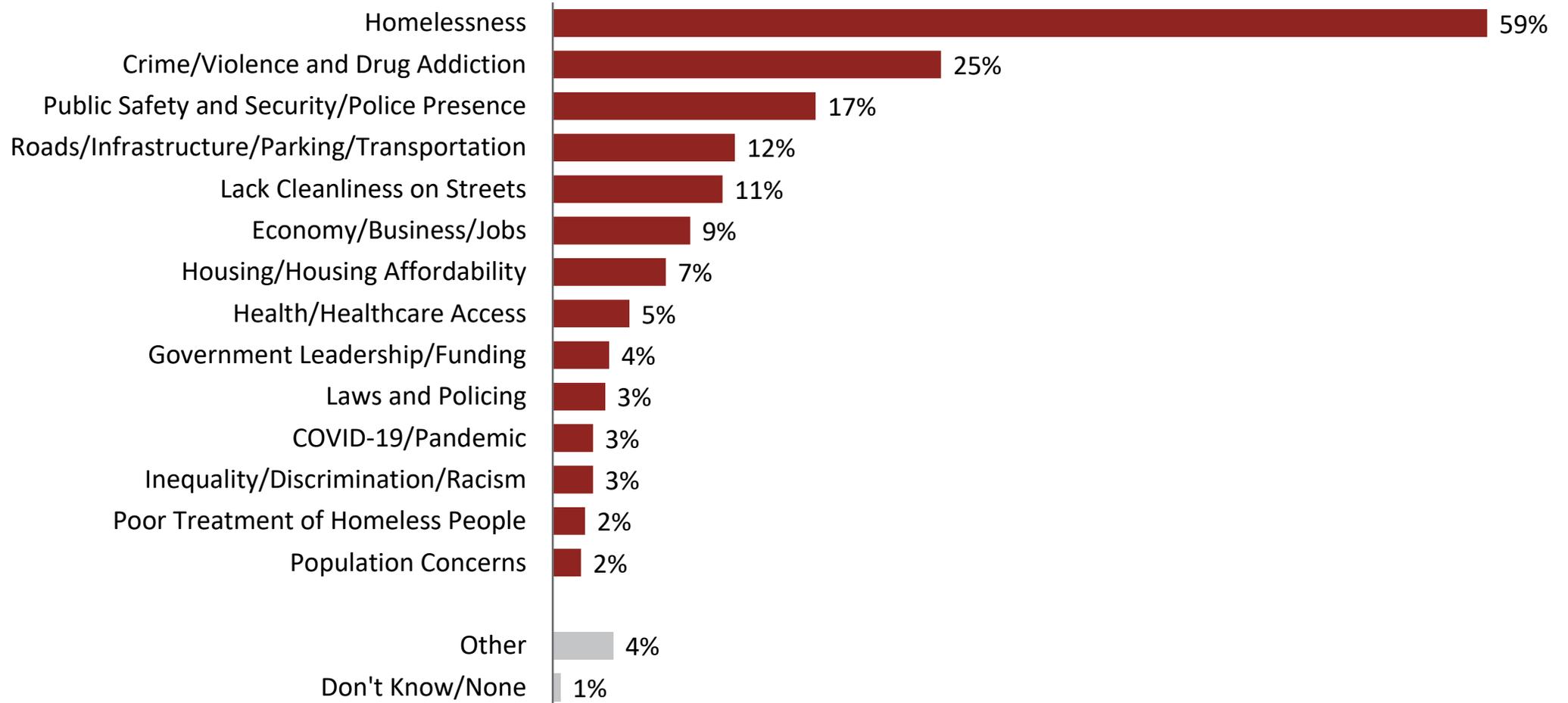
*Only a third of downtown Spokane stakeholders are optimistic about the direction of downtown. Half think things “have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track.”*

**Do you feel that things in downtown Spokane are generally going in the right direction, do you feel that things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track, or are you not sure?**



# Most Important Problem Facing Downtown

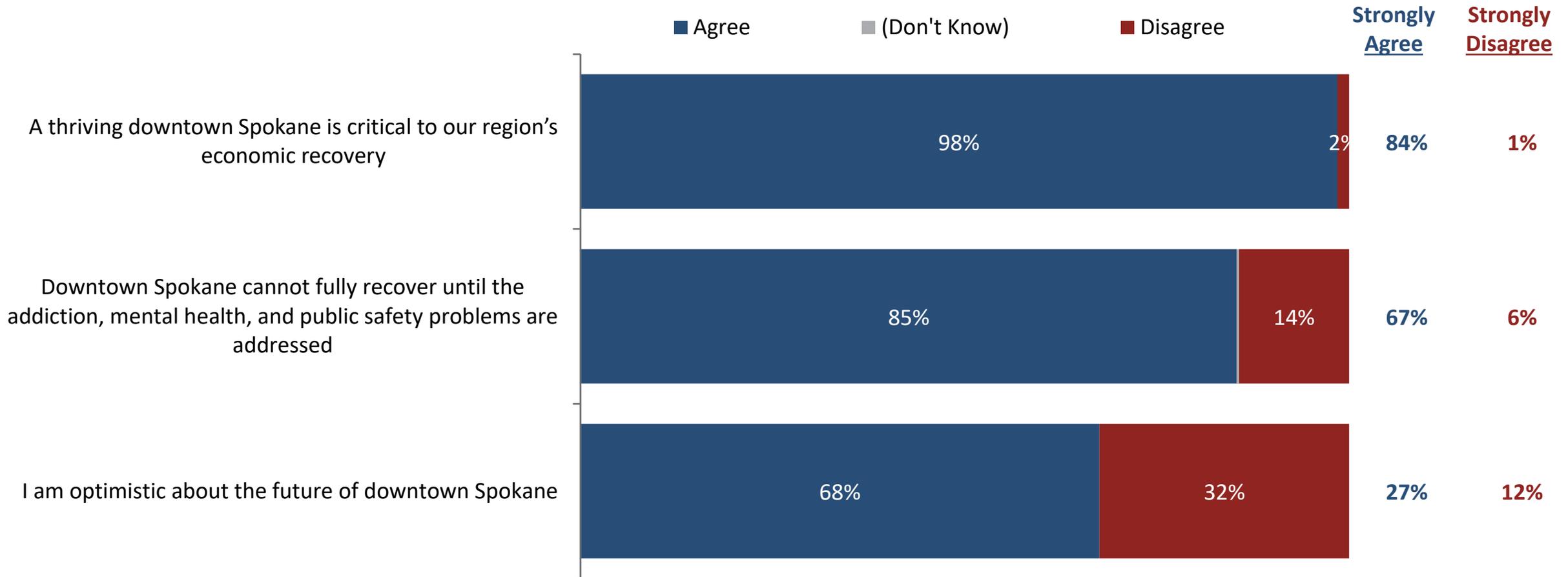
*Homelessness dominates the list of top-of-mind issues facing downtown. Public safety related issues are the second most frequently mentioned concern.*



Q2. What do you think is the most important problem facing downtown Spokane today?  
(MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED)

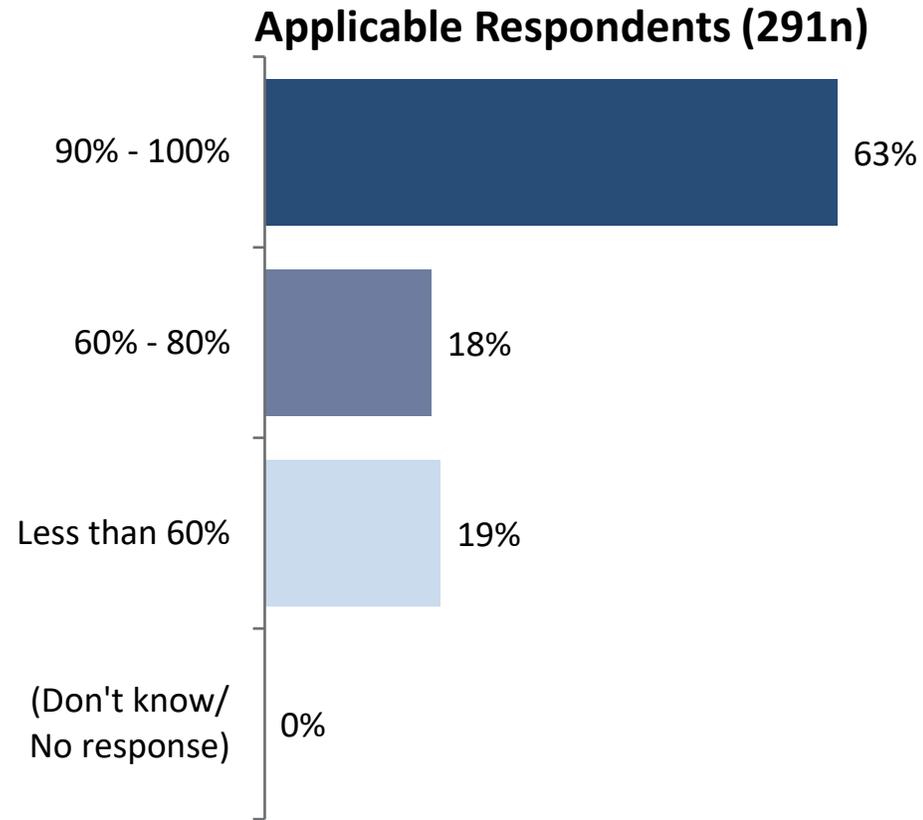
# Attitudes About Downtown

*Respondents overwhelmingly recognize that a thriving downtown is critical to the region's economic recovery and that downtown cannot fully recover until addiction, mental health, and public safety problems are addressed. But despite their pessimism about the current direction of downtown, most remain optimistic about downtown's future.*



*Among the three-quarters who said this question applied to their property or worksite, a majority expect most staff to return to work in person downtown.*

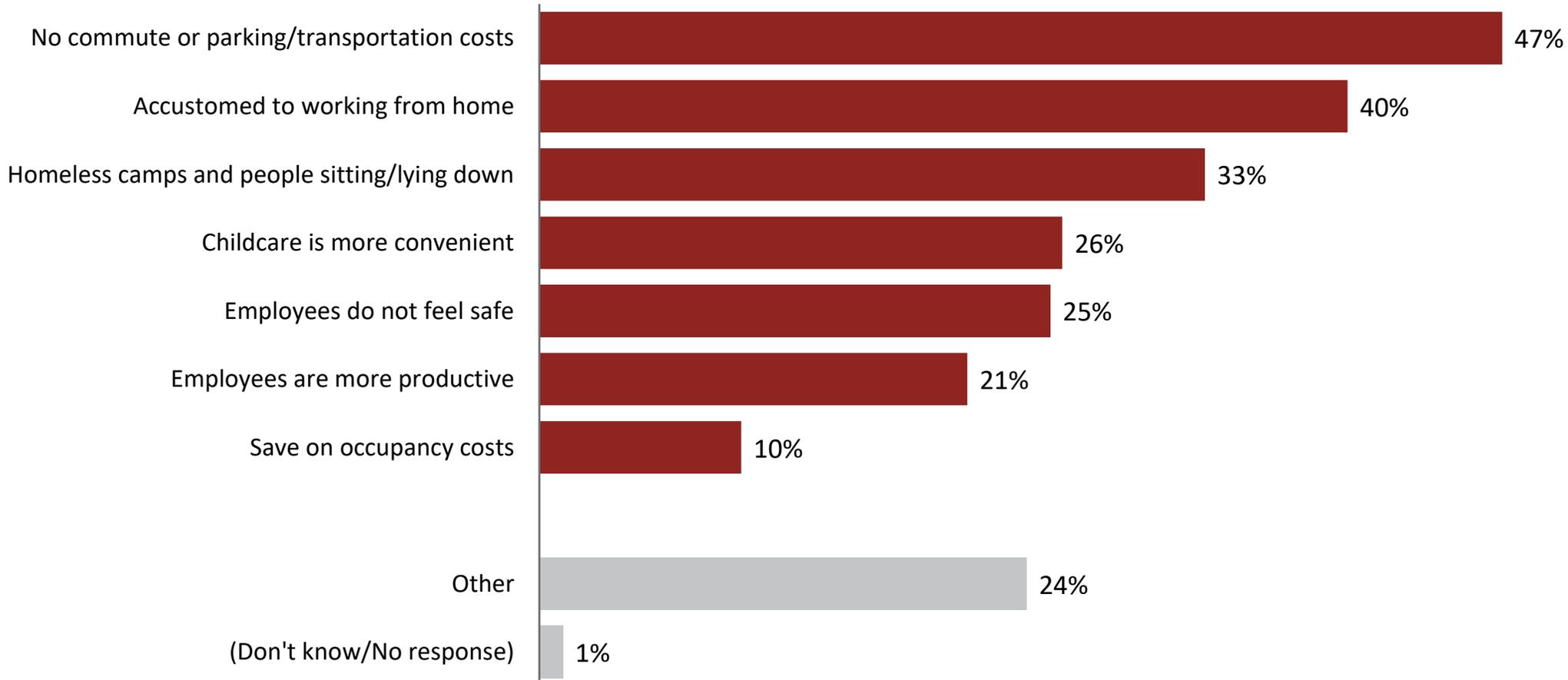
**If you have a downtown worksite, what percentage of staff do you anticipate returning to work in person downtown?**



# Employee Remote Work Preferences

*Among the 44% who say their company is providing permanent remote working arrangements the top reasons are reducing commutes and transportation costs and shifts in employee expectations. One third mention concerns about homelessness and a quarter mention safety concerns.*

## Applicable Respondents (172n)

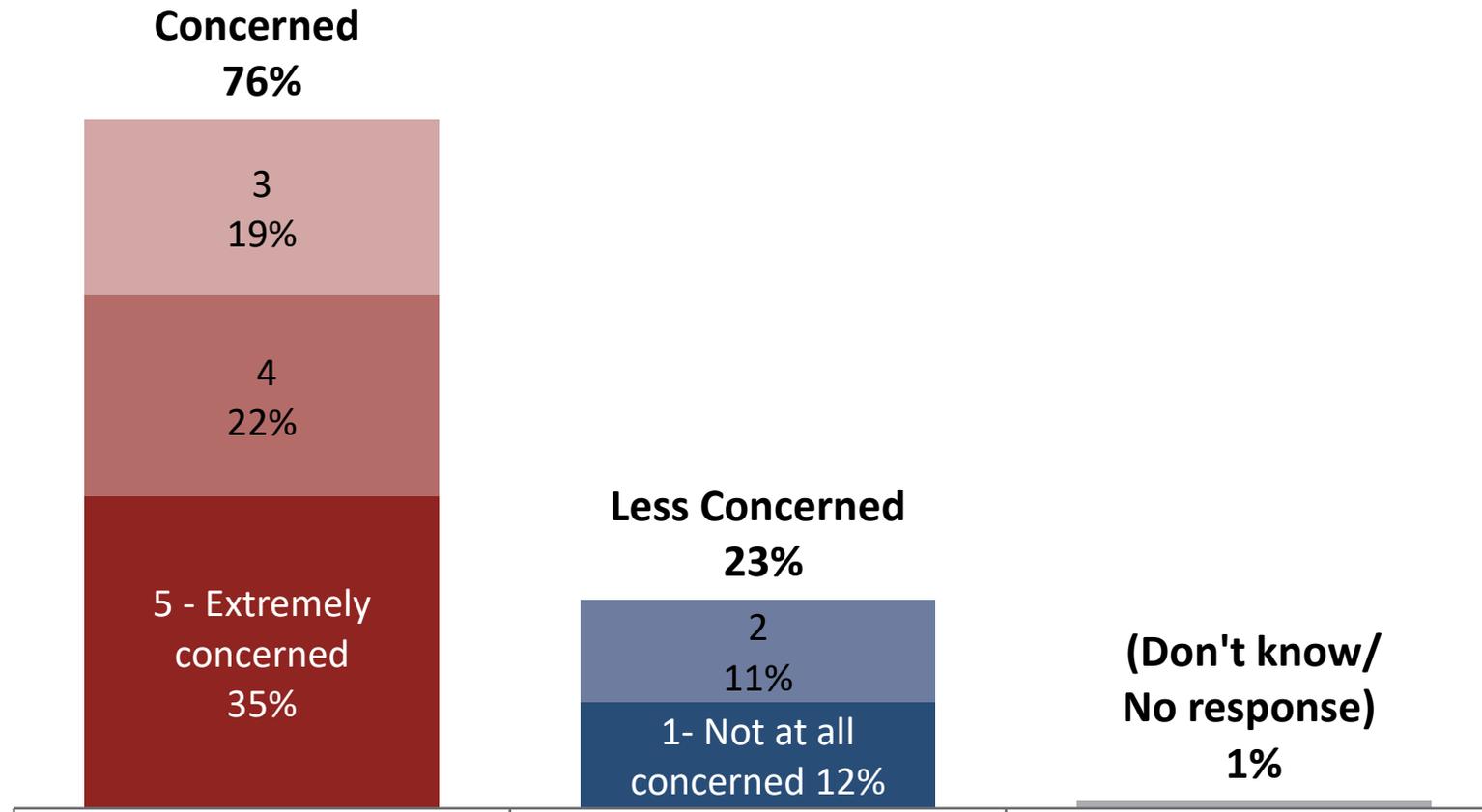




**Worksite/Property  
Safety**

# Worksite/Property Safety

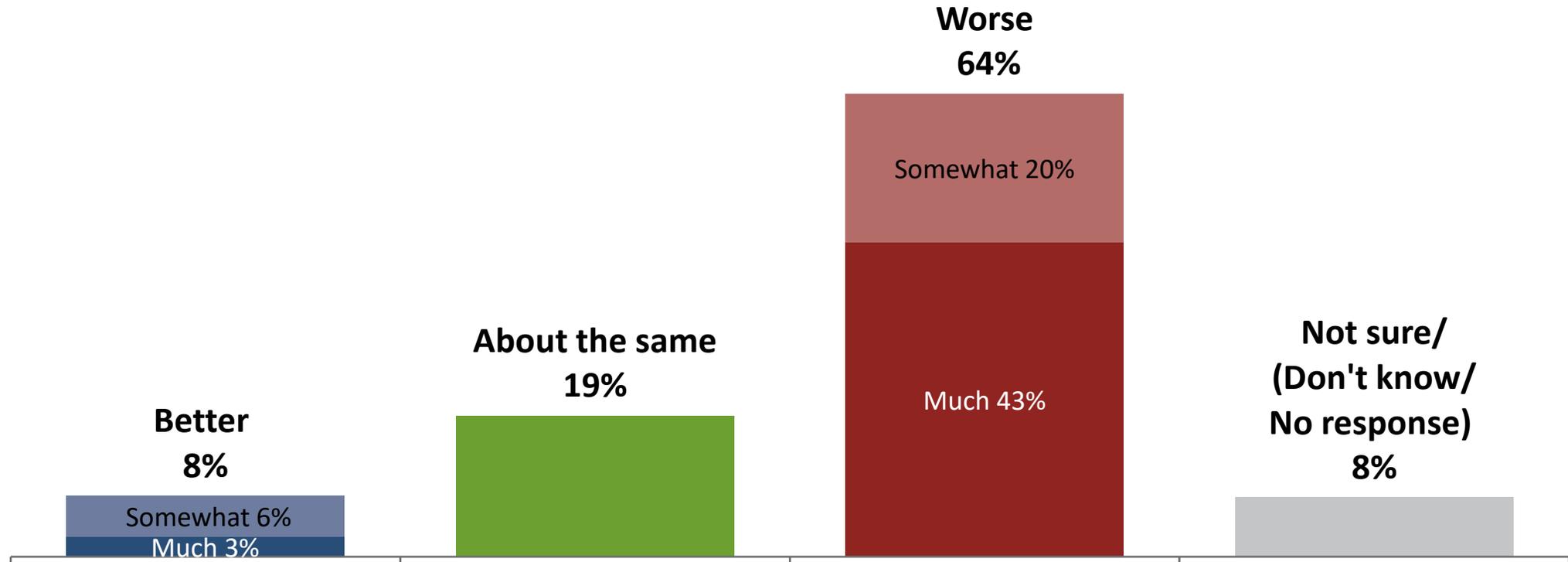
*Three-quarters of respondents are at least moderately concerned about the level of safety and security at their downtown worksite or property. This includes a third who are “extremely concerned.”*



# Safety Trend

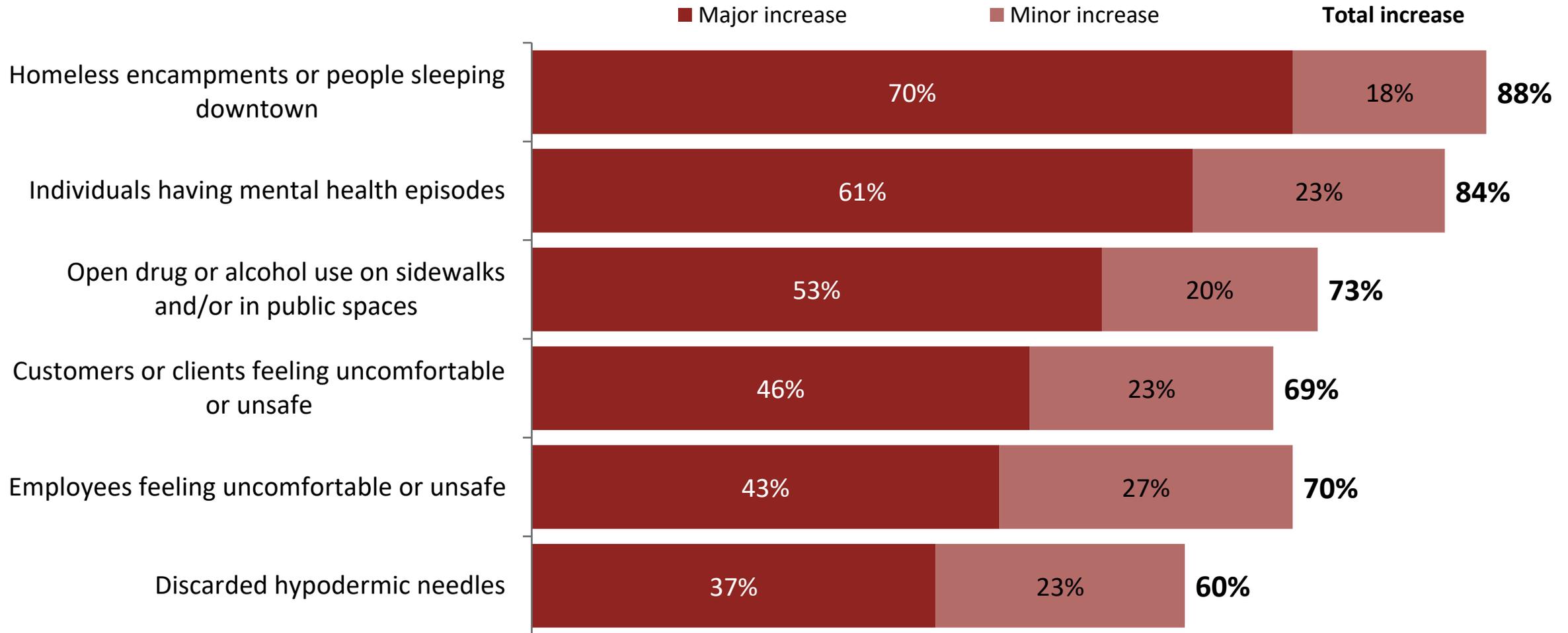
*Respondents who believe the safety and security of their worksite/property has gotten worse outnumber those who've said it's gotten better by a margin of 8-to-1. Another fifth say it's stayed about the same.*

**Thinking about the overall safety and security of your worksite or property, would you say things are better or worse than they were 3 to 5 years ago?**



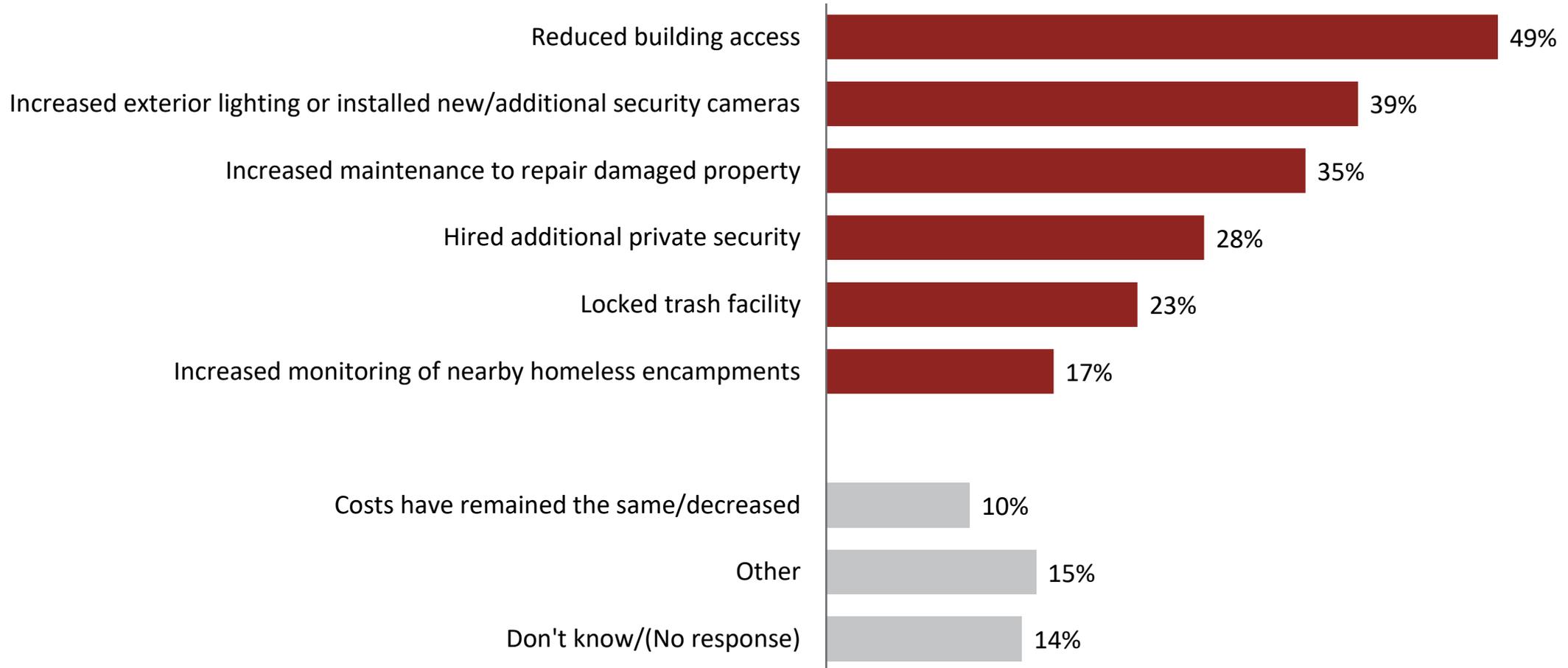
# Safety Trends

*Most say that each of the issues tested have increased in recent years. Strong majorities have seen a “major increase” in encampments, individuals experiencing mental health episodes, and open drug or alcohol use.*



# Response to Increased Security Concerns

*Half say they have limited access to their properties in response to security concerns and 4-in-10 have installed new cameras or lighting. One third have increased maintenance to repair damage and a quarter have hired additional private security.*



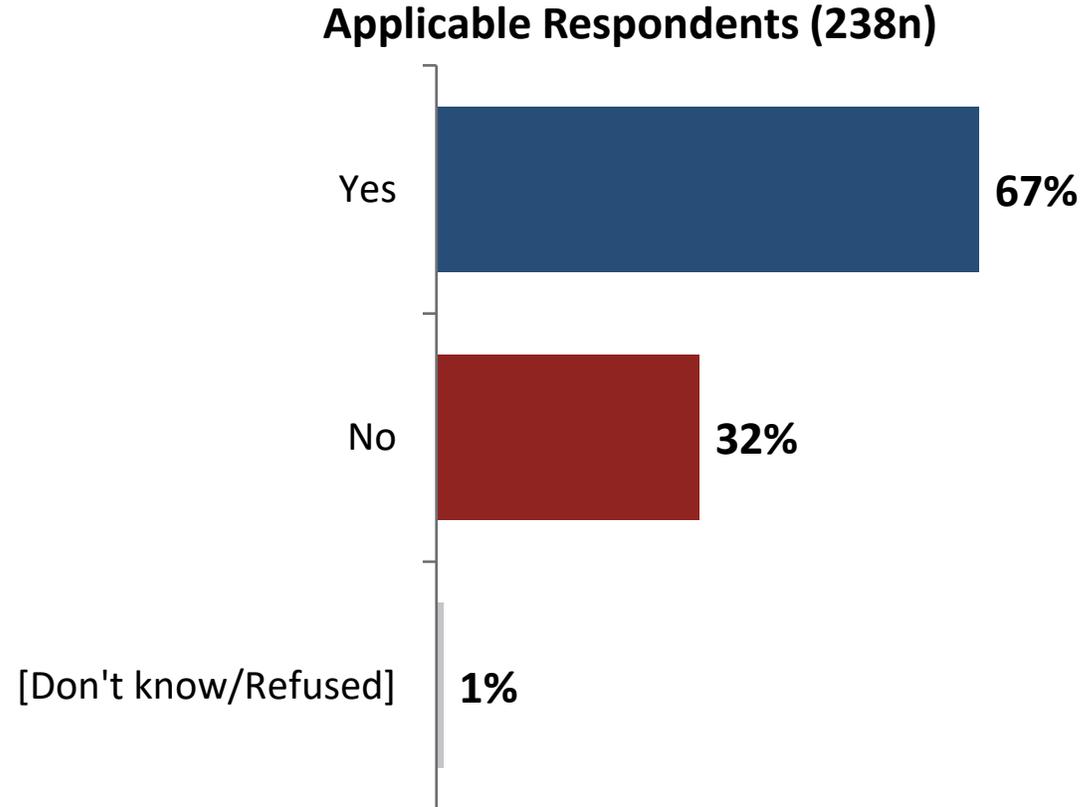
Q16. Which of the following actions have been taken at your worksite or property in response to security concerns? Select all that apply.

**(MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED)**

# Worksite Restroom Policy

*Of respondents whose worksite or property has a public restroom, two-thirds have had to install locks due to security issues.*

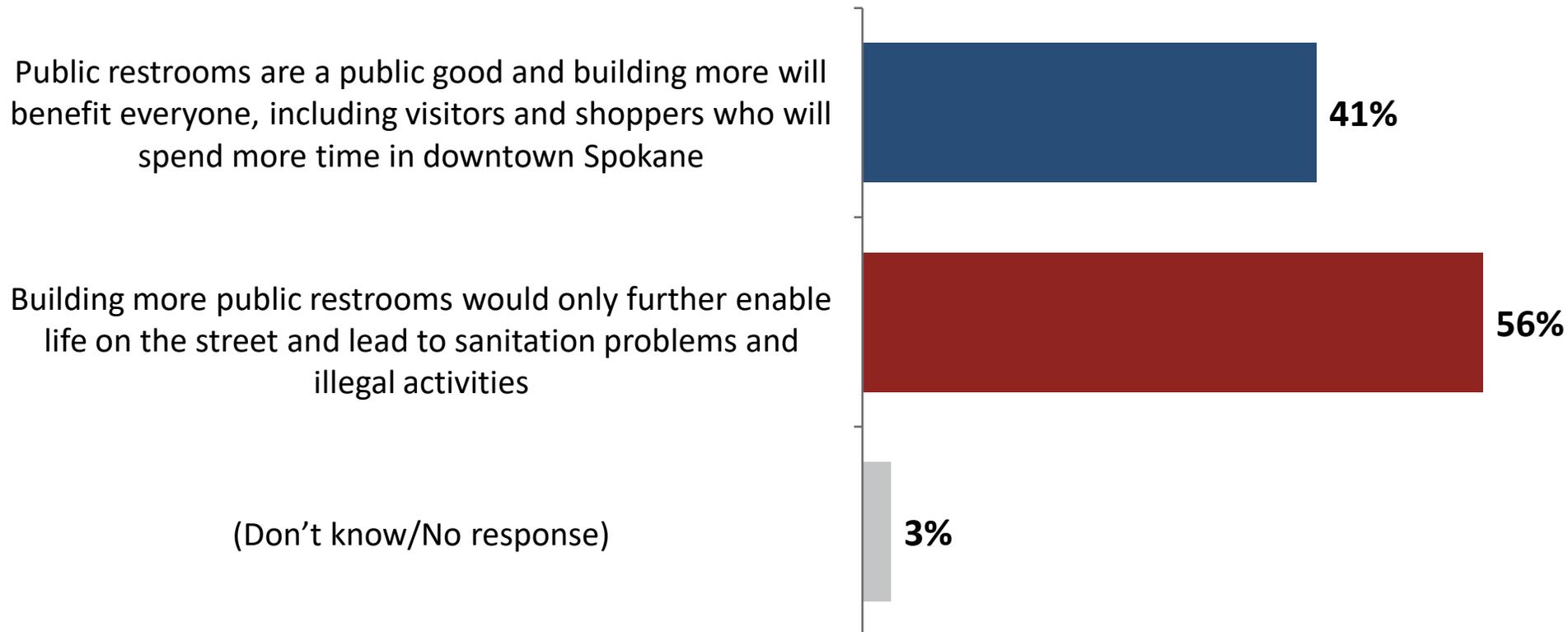
**If your worksite or property has restrooms that the public can reach, have locks been installed due to security/crime issues?**



# Public Restrooms

*By a 56% to 41% margin respondents believe that additional public restrooms near businesses and properties in downtown would create more problems than they would solve.*

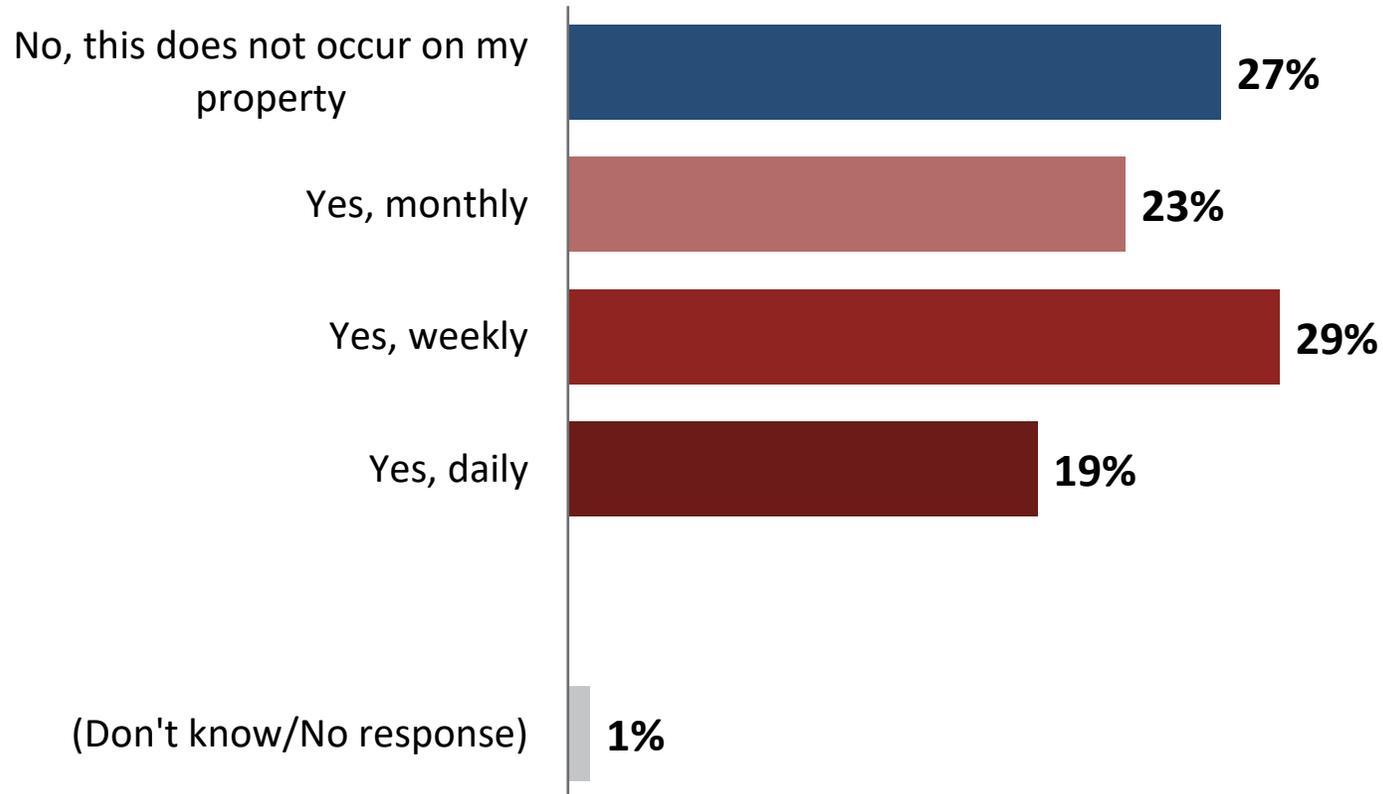
**If the City of Spokane constructed and maintained additional public restrooms near businesses and properties in downtown, which of the following would best describe your opinion:**



# Trespassing

*Of the 84% who say this question applies to their property/worksites, three-quarters report experiencing individuals hiding after hours in unsecured areas at least monthly – and one-in-five say it is a daily occurrence.*

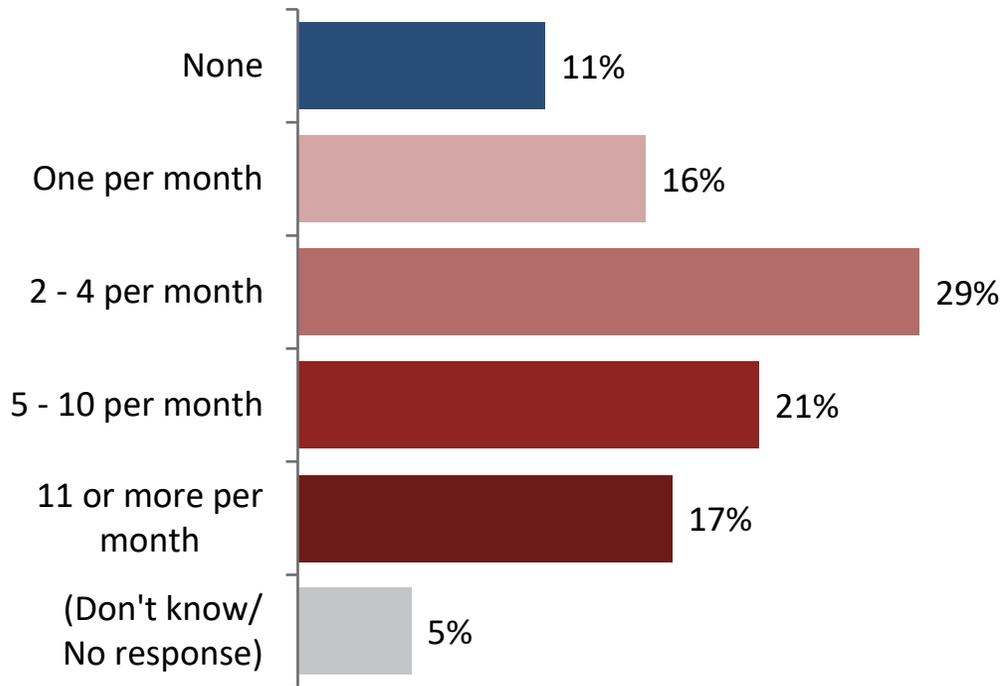
## Applicable Respondents (329n)



# Reporting Crimes

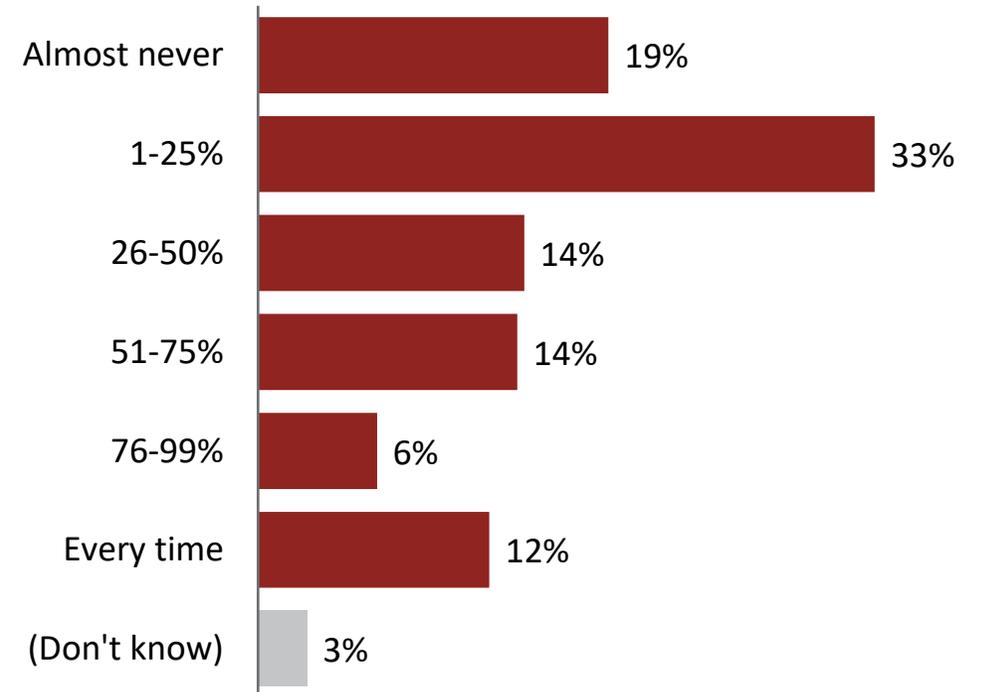
*Four-in-five say that a crime occurs near their worksite or property at least once a month and more than a third (39%) experience five or more incidents per month – and most incidents go unreported.*

**In an average month, how many incidents of crime typically take place near your worksite or property?**  
(324n)



**83%** **n=270**

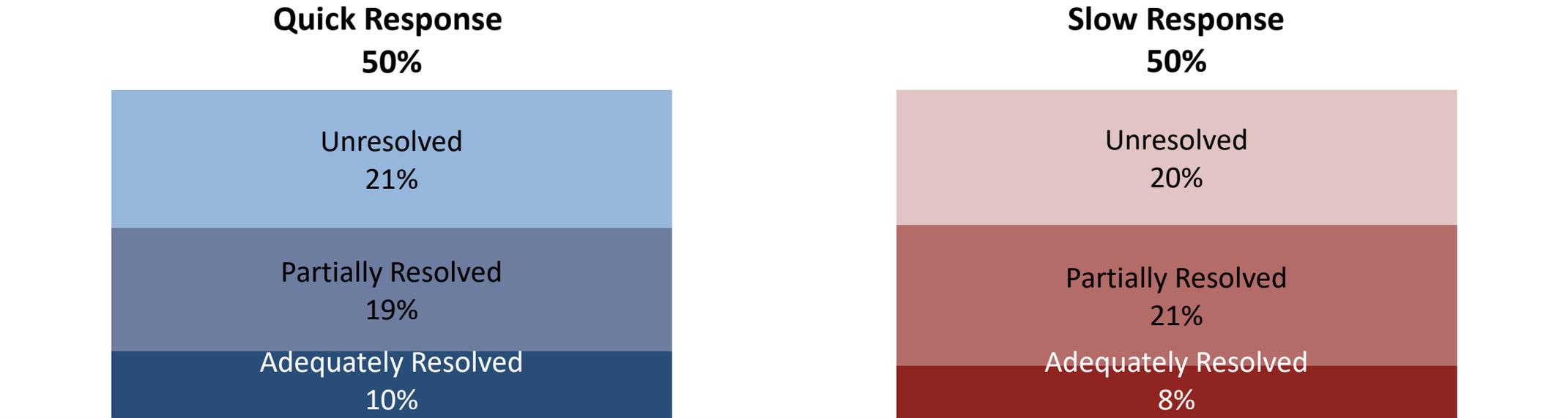
**What percentage of the time are these issues reported to the city or directly to the police?**  
(270n)



# Police Response to Crime Reports

*Among those who indicate that there have been incidents of crime near their worksite or property, respondents split evenly in their evaluation of police response time, but relatively few believe those incidences are adequately resolved.*

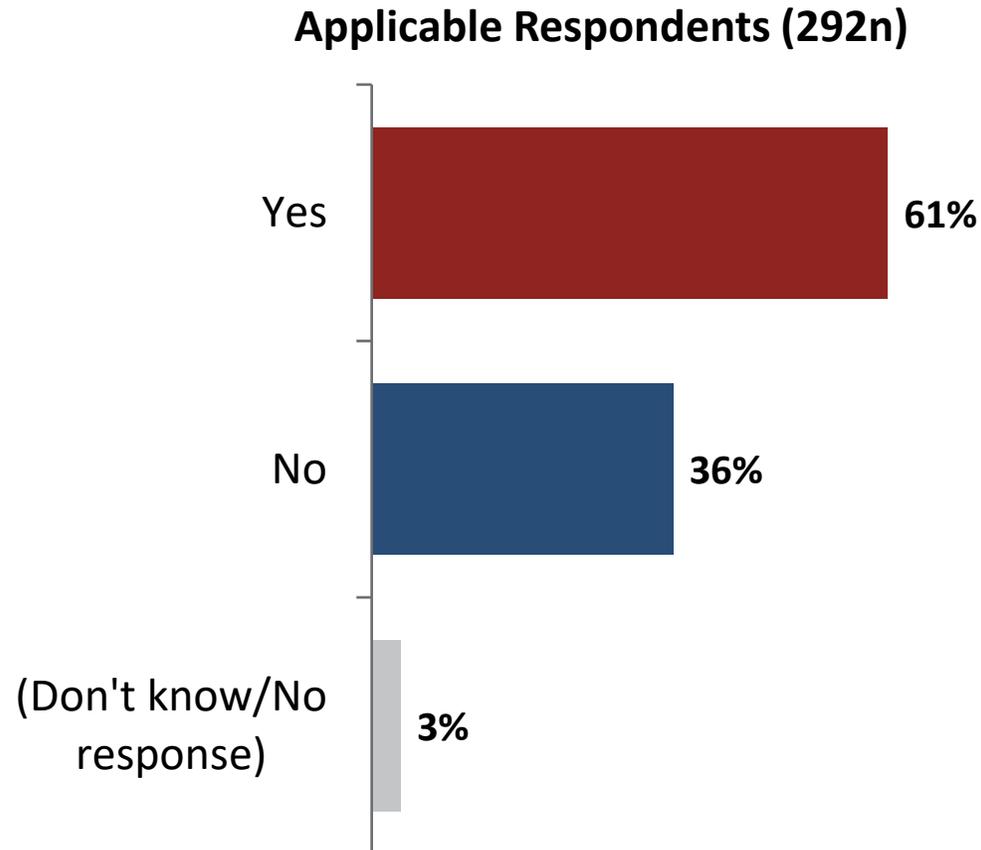
**Generally speaking, how would you characterize the city's/police department's response to complaints?  
(232n)**



# Financial Impacts of Public Safety

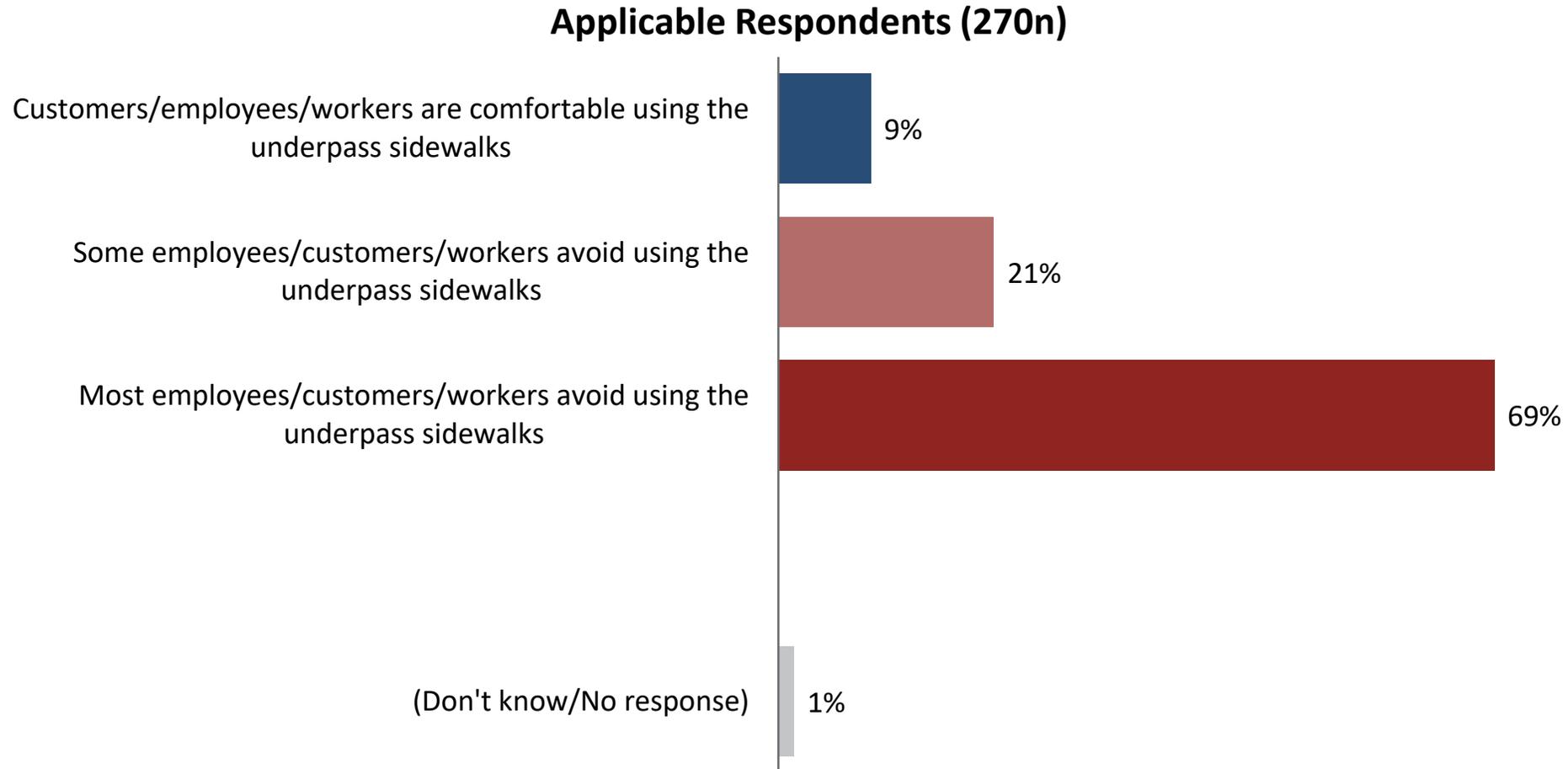
*Among the 75% of respondents who say this question about public safety impacts on property values applies to their worksite or property, a strong majority say there has been a financial impact.*

**Has crime, drug use, or nuisance activity reduced your worksite or property's value, leasable rates, or number of customers?**



# Railroad Viaduct/Underpass

*Among the 69% of respondents who say their customers/employees park south of the railroad tracks, 9 out of 10 say some (21%) or most (69%) customers and/or employees avoid using the underpass sidewalks.*

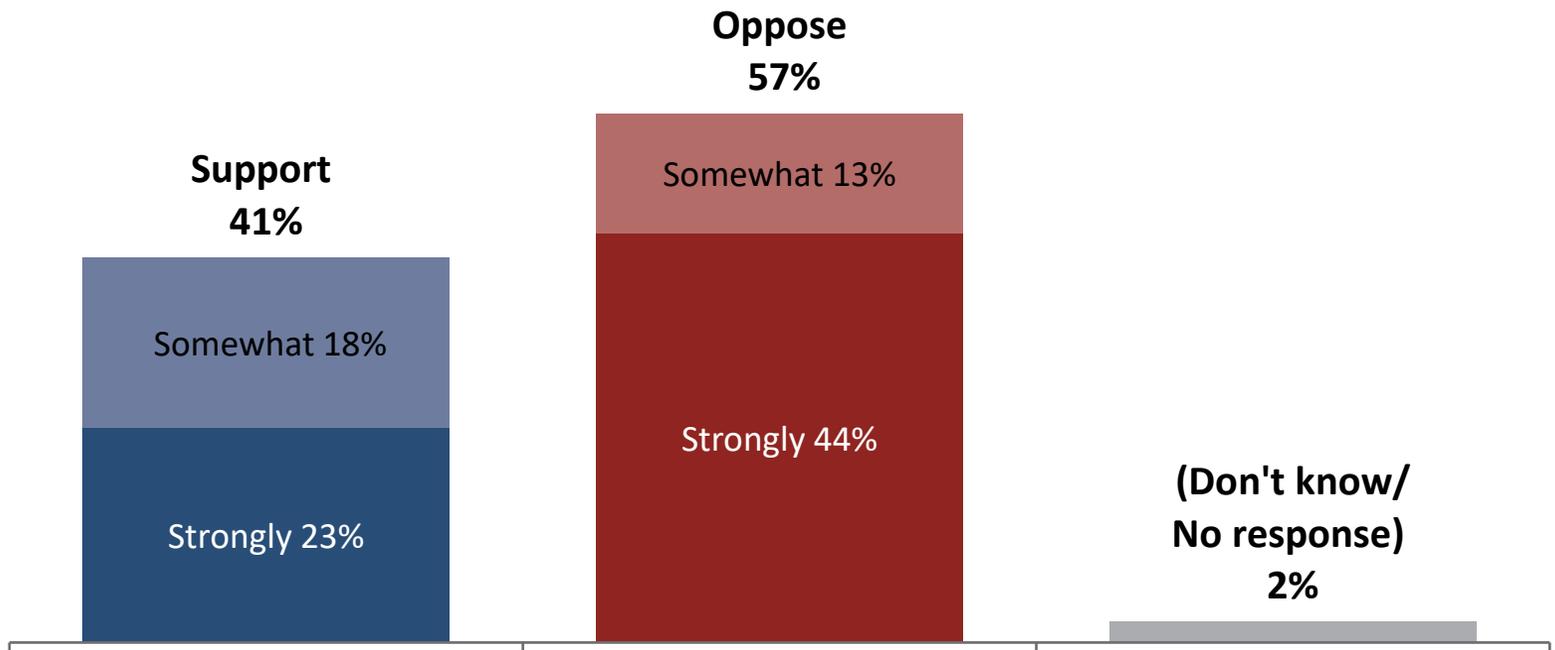


Q24. Thinking about when employees, co-workers, or customers park south of the railroad viaduct and walk through an underpass to get to work, home, or business, which of the following best describes your opinion?

# Support for Decriminalization

*Nearly 6-in-10 oppose the State Legislature's recent decriminalization of hard drug possession, including nearly half who strongly oppose the legislation.*

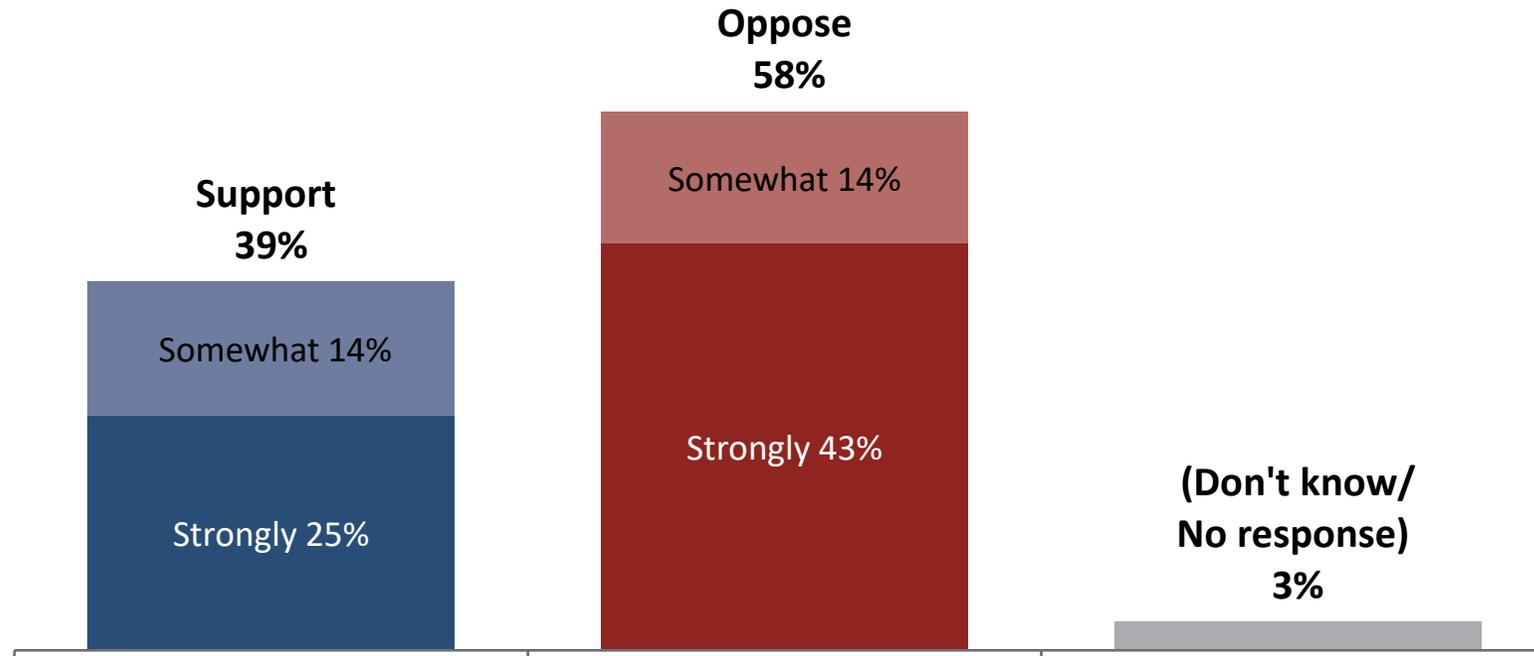
**In the last legislative session, the Washington State Legislature passed a law decriminalizing simple possession of hard drugs such as heroin, crystal methamphetamine, and cocaine. Do you support or oppose this new legislation that makes simple possession a gross misdemeanor instead of a felony?**



# Support for Police Reform

*Nearly 6-in-10 oppose the recent changes the state legislature has made regarding policing – and almost half are strongly opposed.*

**In the last legislative session, the Washington State Legislature approved several changes to laws regarding policing: the use of force, police tactics and equipment, and police oversight and misconduct reporting, among others. The intent of the Legislature was to reform police behavior. Several police chiefs and sheriffs have spoken with concern about the new law and the restrictions it places on police operations. Do you support or oppose this new legislation?**





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