

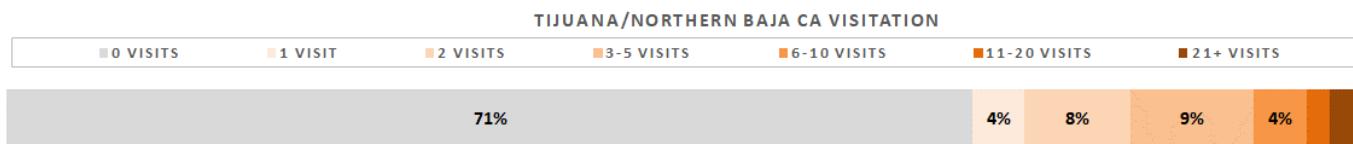
## Residents Wary of Northern Baja and 71% Haven't Visited as Security Concerns are Up

San Diego-Tijuana not Considered a “Mega Region,” But Funding Sewage Treatment is Praised

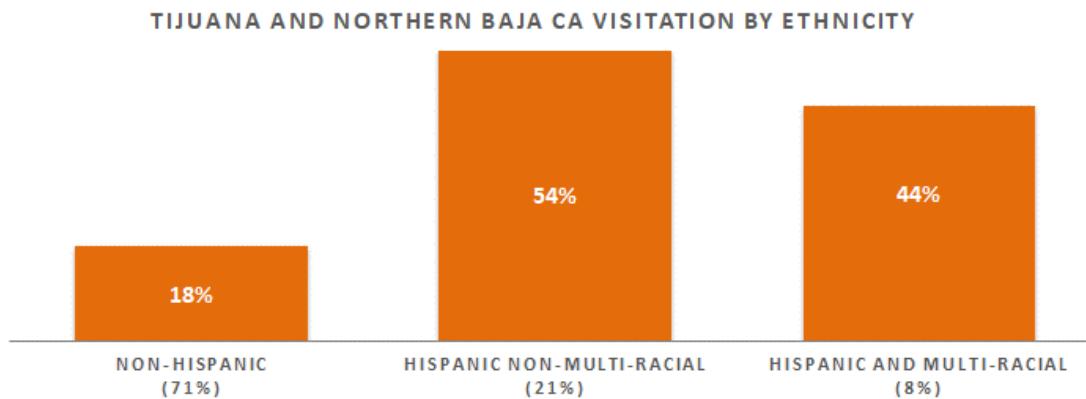
San Ysidro is one of the world's busiest land-border crossings. Before the pandemic, more than 100,000 people crossed the San Diego-Tijuana border every day, linking the two metropolises in a way unlike other major cities. And the cities will soon become more intertwined with the recently announced Otay Mesa East Port of Entry. According to Governor Newsom's office, “The new state-of-the-art border crossing facility will reduce wait times, curb greenhouse gas emissions, power economic growth, and bolster binational trade along the busiest border region in the Western Hemisphere.” Boosters have heralded the area a “mega-region,” although safety concerns seem endemic. Sewage from Tijuana entering the Pacific Ocean is another challenge. An American proposal to treat the water in Mexico is being considered.

### ***Tijuana and Northern Baja California Visitation***

Seventy-one percent of San Diego residents have not visited Tijuana or northern Baja California in the past year. This percentage may seem exceptionally high given that the county borders Mexico. However, COVID-19 shut down nonessential crossings for 20 months, with the border only reopening in November 2021.



That said, 29% have made at least one trip south of the border, and county residents average two visits per year, rising to 8.4 crossings if the resident lives in the south suburbs. Most visitors are Hispanic. Among non-Hispanics, residents in north coastal cities like Carlsbad or Oceanside are more likely to visit.



### **A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color**

- ✓ Slightly fewer African Americans visited Tijuana or Baja in the last year
- ✓ Asian residents are half as likely as the wider population to visit; just 15% report doing so

- ✓ Slightly more than half of Latinos visited northern Baja during the past 12 months, and Hispanics who consider themselves *not* to be multi-racial (generally White Hispanics) tended to visit more regularly than Hispanics who consider themselves to be multi-racial. Therefore, it's not only whether one is Hispanic that determines visitation to Baja, as lower levels of Hispanicity lead to more cross-border travel.

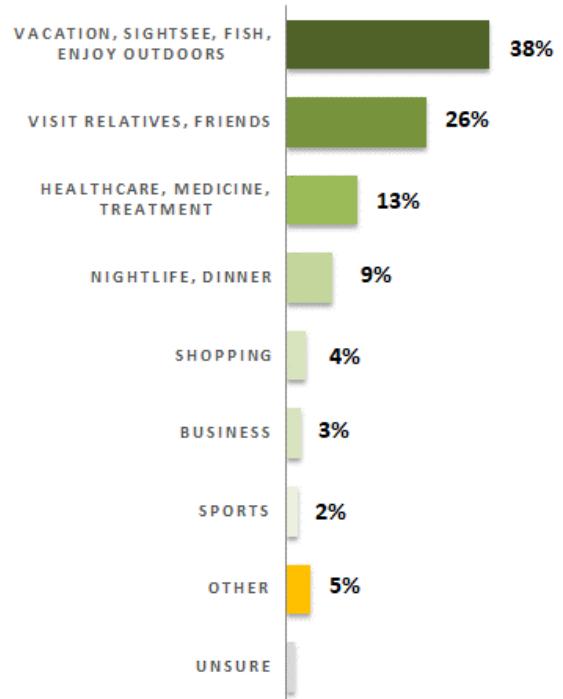
		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Tijuana and Northern Baja visitations in past year	0	70%	48%	81%	85%	72%
	1	3%	2%	3%	8%	4%
	2	10%	16%	3%	3%	8%
	3-5	9%	16%	6%	4%	9%
	6-10	4%	8%	5%	0%	4%
	11+	4%	10%	2%	0%	4%

### Reasons for Visiting Tijuana and Northern Baja

When asked why they visit Tijuana and the surrounding areas, nearly four-in-ten cross the border for vacation and sightseeing (which includes outdoor activities like fishing). These are extremely popular draws for visitors living outside the south suburbs, as 46% of them mainly hit northern Baja for vacations. Only 14% of south suburbanites visit for fun – after all, they live next to the border so going to northern Baja might not seem like a vacation. Vacationers, however, are not frequent repeat visitors: on average those who mainly vacation in the area went there 3.4 times last year.

Roughly one-third of San Diego adults are Latino, so it's unsurprising to find that 26% of all visitors cross the border mainly to visit relatives and friends. In fact, 43% of Latino visitors say family and friends are their main reason for making the trip. But proximity actually trumps ethnicity in this case. Sixty percent of visitors living between SR-54 and SR-94 and 41% of those residing south of SR-54 mainly go to visit loved ones. It's likely that those with *Tijuanezes* as friends and family make it a point to live closer to them to make travel more convenient. Only a tiny 4% of Baja visitors living north of SR-94 cross into Mexico to visit friends and family. Having relatives and friends across the border leads to a lot more crossings than vacations and sightseeing do, as those mainly crossing to see family and friends report 10.5 visits in the past year.

REASON FOR GOING TO TIJUANA AND NORTHERN BAJA (n=184)



Health-related services are often less expensive in Mexico, and 14% of Tijuana's visitors from San Diego County go to access healthcare, medicine, or treatment. Travelling to Mexico for this purpose is far more

common among women in their late-20s through early 40s, with 37% of them mainly visiting for healthcare. Visitors older than 62 are another group often heading to Tijuana for medical reasons, as 32% report doing so. Healthcare travelers are the most frequent of all, averaging 11.3 visits in the past year.

Nine percent say they mainly visited Baja for the nightlife or to have dinner, but that increases to 15% for *non-Hispanics*. There's an aspect of exotic excitement for non-Latinos just south of the border. The only Hispanics who take advantage of Tijuana's nightlife are those in the south suburbs – living closer to the border; no Hispanics (in our survey) living north of National City travel there for nighttime entertainment. Visitors looking for nighttime entertainment are relatively infrequent, averaging only 4.7 trips to Tijuana in the past year.

Only 4% visited for the shopping. While few go to shop, those who do make purchases are frequent repeat customers, averaging 12.8 visits last year. At more than one Baja visit per month, the shoppers are the most active border crossers. Three percent visit for business and 2% hit Tijuana for sports.

#### A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color

- ✓ Reasons for visiting among the African American and AAPI communities are in line with those of the general population
- ✓ Latinos who cross the border visit friends and family first and go for vacation second

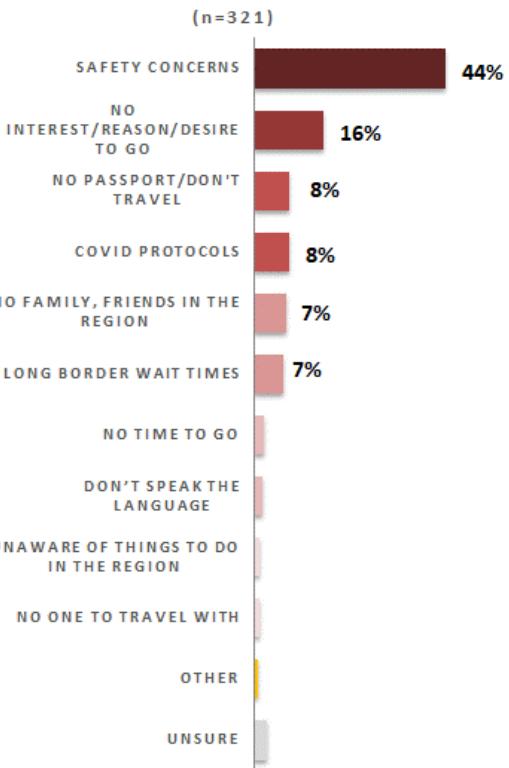
		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
<b>Reasons for Visiting Tijuana and Northern Baja</b>	Vacation, sightsee, fish, enjoy outdoors	36%	29%	46%	36%	38%
	Visit relatives, friends	26%	41%	25%	7%	26%
	Healthcare, medicine, treatment	14%	17%	6%	13%	13%
	Nightlife, dinner	7%	6%	6%	18%	9%
	Shopping	3%	2%	17%	10%	4%
	Business	4%	2%	0%	0%	3%
	Sports	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	Other	6%	3%	0%	0%	4%
	Unsure	1%	0%	0%	17%	2%

## Barriers to Visiting Tijuana and Northern Baja

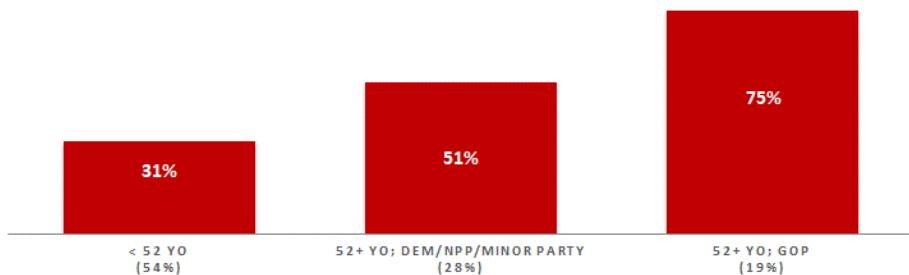
When those who have *not* visited Tijuana or northern Baja are asked why, safety concerns easily top the list. Forty-four percent cite this as their number one reason for not visiting, dwarfing all other rationales. It's easy to understand why San Diegans are concerned: news stories about human smuggling, drug cartels, and associated violence create local news headlines nearly every week.

Safety concerns increase with age and are politically tinged. Perhaps due to certain news outlets covering stories about violence in Mexico more regularly, Republican non-visitors older than 51 are the most worried about their safety, as three-quarters don't visit for that reason. Even half of the Democrats and nonpartisans who are 52 and older express safety concerns, so violence in northern Baja is clearly a worry for older residents, but Republicans are far more anxious. Security fears are less of a barrier for younger residents, with only 14% younger than 29 avoiding Tijuana for safety reasons.

## REASON FOR NOT GOING TO TIJUANA AND NORTHERN BAJA



## SAFETY CONCERN BY VISITATION/AGE/PARTY



One of every six non-visitors haven't visited because they have no interest or desire to go. Non-Whites who don't visit respond this way more often, as 30% say it's the main reason they haven't visited Baja.

There are also reasons for not visiting that are not specific to Baja. Eight percent claim they haven't visited because they don't have a passport or don't travel. Men tend to say this more often. COVID protocols are a barrier for another 8% of non-visitors. It's a bigger hurdle for north coastal residents as well as for AAPI folks elsewhere. This hurdle should disappear in the coming months. However, publicizing safety precautions for the foreseeable future may help ease some remaining anxieties.

Not having friends or family in the region hinders 7% of non-visitors. This is obviously more prevalent among non-Latinos. Another 7% cite long border wait times. This is a bigger impediment for residents younger than 34; wait times are more of a deterrent for them than safety issues.

Fewer than 5% mention not having the time to go (2%), not speaking Spanish (2%), being unaware of what there is to do in the region (1%), or not having a travel partner (1%).

## A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color

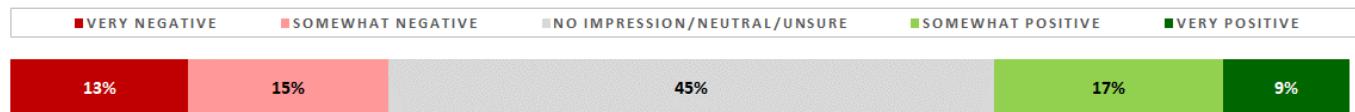
- ✓ The Black community sees long border wait times as the reason for not visiting more than any other ethnic group.
- ✓ AAPI residents more frequently have no interest or desire to visit.
- ✓ It's very rare for Latinos to point to not having friends or family in the region as a reason for not making the trip to Baja.

	White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Reasons for Not Visiting Tijuana and Northern Baja	Safety concerns	48%	38%	38%	42%
	No interest/reason/desire to go	8%	19%	12%	25%
	No passport/Don't travel	11%	10%	1%	3%
	COVID protocols	9%	10%	8%	13%
	No family, friends in the region	8%	1%	1%	8%
	Long border wait times	7%	7%	20%	2%
	No time to go	1%	7%	7%	1%
	Don't speak the language	2%	0%	0%	3%
	Unaware of things to do in the region	1%	0%	0%	0%
	No one to travel with	0%	4%	4%	0%
	Other	1%	0%	3%	2%
	Unsure	4%	4%	4%	0%
					3%

## Impressions of Northern Baja California

Despite being geographical neighbors, a large plurality of San Diegans – 42% – have no impression or a neutral impression of northern Baja. Among the 58% who have one, 27% hold positive views while 28% are negative, so the region has as many fans as critics.

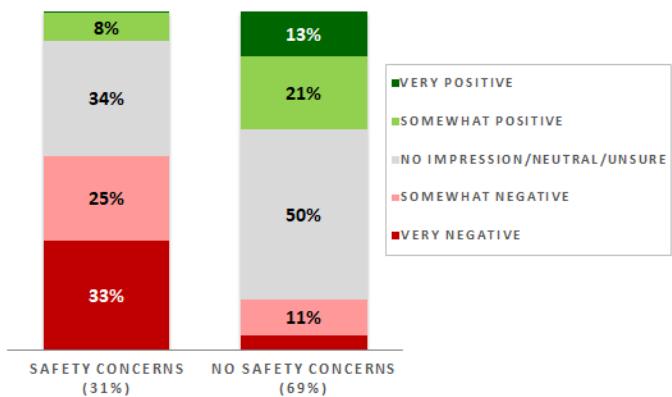
DO YOU HAVE A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE IMPRESSION OF NORTHERN BAJA CA, OR DO YOU NOT HAVE ANY IMPRESSION OF IT?



Views largely come down to the safety issue and visitation. Those who say they don't go to northern Baja specifically because they're concerned about their safety savage the area: 32% give it very negative reviews and another 25% have somewhat negative impressions. If safety concerns were eliminated, favorable impressions of Baja would trump negative ones by more than a 2:1 margin.

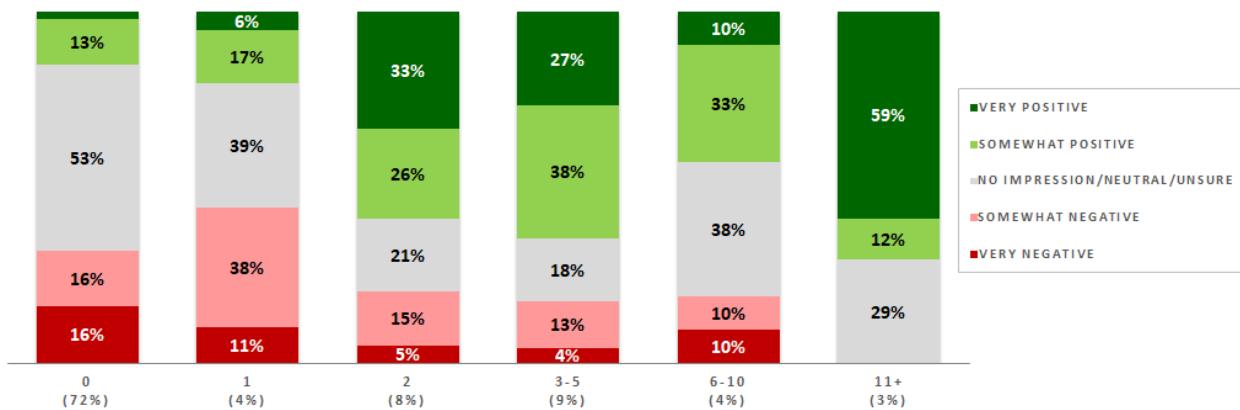
As for visitation, most who haven't made the trip across the border in the past year don't

### IMPRESSIONS OF NORTHERN BAJA CA BY SAFETY CONCERN



have any impression of the area. However, nearly one-third fall on the negative side, while only 15% like northern Baja. Opinions get a little clearer and a little less negative if a county resident has visited once, but the real payoff occurs when they come back. The results are remarkably strong among two-time visitors and impressions improve the more a resident visits.

IMPRESSIONS OF NORTHERN BAJA CA BY TIJUANA AND NORTHERN BAJA VISITATIONS IN PAST YEAR



Other factors influencing views of Tijuana and northern Baja include residents' outlook on the county (those very down on it are negative about the region), homeownership (renters are more positive about Tijuana and northern Baja), and age (most young residents don't know about the area, while middle-aged folks lean positive and almost half of seniors dislike it).

### A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color

- ✓ Views among African Americans reflect those of all San Diegans.
- ✓ 64% of AAPI residents hold either neutral views or have no impression of northern Baja and none in our sample voiced *very positive* views of the region.
- ✓ Latinos frequently hold more positive views overall and are twice as likely to have a *very positive* opinion. Hispanics who consider themselves to be multi-racial express positive sentiments far more often than Hispanics who consider themselves *not* to be multi-racial (generally White Hispanics) do (49% to 33%).

	White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Impression of Northern Baja California	No Impression	34%	37%	69%	62%
	Very negative	14%	10%	1%	12%
	Somewhat negative	17%	10%	8%	18%
	Neutral/Unsure	6%	4%	4%	2%
	Somewhat positive	18%	18%	10%	5%
	Very positive	11%	20%	7%	0%

### Are San Diego and Tijuana a Mega-Region?

Just 19 miles separate downtown San Diego from downtown Tijuana and business boosters continue to pitch the two metropolises as a "mega-region." However, most San Diego residents view the two as distinct cities, with the bulk – 55% -- saying they are *definitely* distinct municipalities. Just one-quarter consider San Diego and Tijuana a "mega region." Although San Diego is hugely influenced by Latino culture – whether it be the cuisine, architecture, or street names, to mention a few elements – residents

generally view the two cities as independent of each other. The international border is indeed a dividing line.

#### DO YOU CONSIDER SAN DIEGO AND TIJUANA A MEGA-REGION OR DO YOU CONSIDER THEM DISTINCTLY SEPARATE CITIES?



Upbeat residents are less likely to discount the "mega-region" concept. To be sure, most who feel the County is heading in the right direction do think San Diego and Tijuana are separate, but they are less certain about this than negative residents. Virtually all of the latter see the region as two separate entities.

#### SAN DIEGO/TIJUANA MEGA-REGION SENTIMENT BY CIVIC MOOD

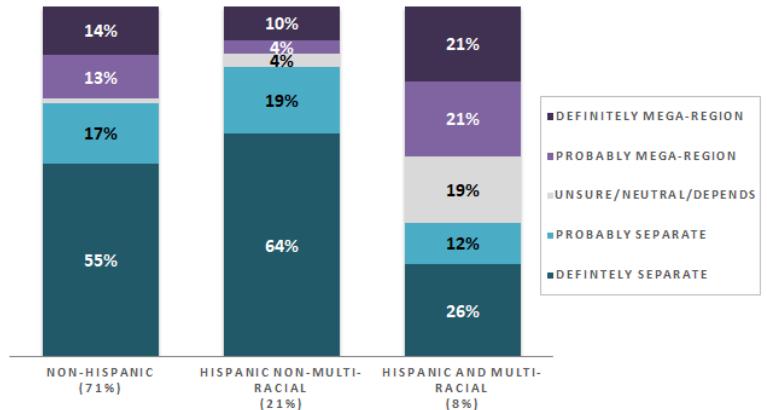


There is a political aspect to the mega-region concept. Republicans are largely united in their belief that the two border cities are separate. That sentiment is also fairly strong among nonpartisans, minor party voters, and those not registered to vote. However, while most Democrats also disagree with the mega-region idea, more than one-third do buy into it.

A large minority (42%) of Hispanics who consider themselves to be multi-racial believe San Diego and Tijuana are a mega-region. On the other hand, fewer Hispanics who consider themselves not to be multi-racial (generally White Hispanics) see agree with the mega-region concept than do those folks who are not Hispanic at all.

National City residents are a bit of an outlier when it comes to the mega-region idea; fewer than half feel San Diego and Tijuana are separate entities.

#### SAN DIEGO/TIJUANA MEGA-REGION SENTIMENT BY ETHNICITY



## A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color

- ✓ Views about the San Diego-Tijuana mega-region among Blacks, Asian-American/Pacific Islanders, and Latinos (in general) are similar.

		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Are SD/Tijuana a mega-region?	Definitely separate	56%	56%	67%	54%	55%
	Probably separate	19%	16%	9%	17%	17%
	Unsure/Neutral/Depends	2%	8%	2%	1%	3%
	Probably Mega-Region	10%	9%	11%	17%	11%
	Definitely Mega-Region	14%	12%	10%	11%	14%

## Funding Wastewater Treatment Facilities

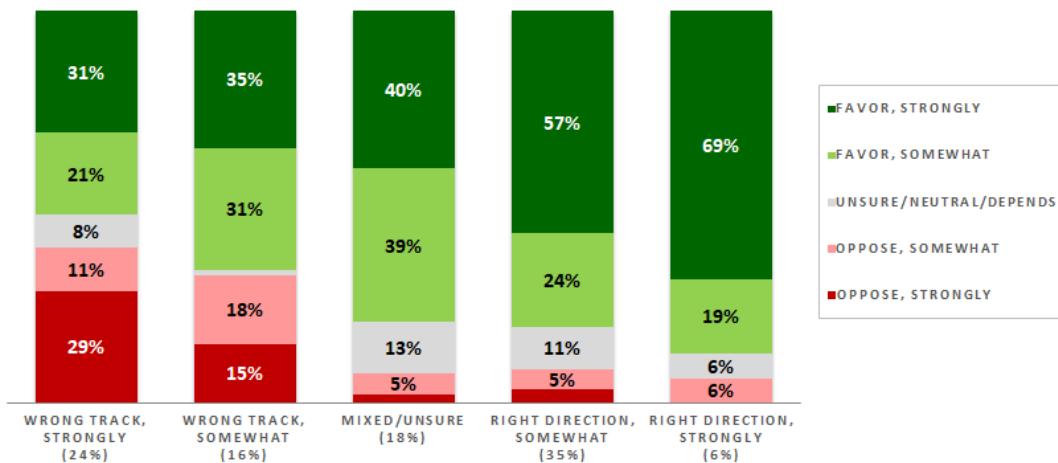
In an effort to control sewage that enters the Pacific Ocean from Tijuana and then fouls San Diego area beaches, the US government is spending \$300 million to plan, design, and construct wastewater treatment facilities in Mexico. Even though San Diegans generally reject the “mega-region” concept and even though the facilities will be located across the border, they mostly support expending these funds. Seventy-two percent favor spending money on the Mexican treatment plants – 45% *strongly* so – and just one-in-five oppose it. The remaining 9% say it “depends” or are unsure about the expenditure.



Opinions related to paying for wastewater treatment facilities in Mexico to keep San Diego area beaches clean are interestingly unrelated to feelings about northern Baja or even how often someone visits the area. Opinions of funding the project apparently tap into San Diegans pride in their beaches, which are a major tourism driver. Cleaning up local beaches helps to maintain a high quality of life and keep tourism flowing to the area. Because this issue directly impacts them and their region’s image, San Diegans embrace the idea of the U.S. picking up a big piece of the tab.

Residents who feel good about the county's direction are very gung-ho about building a waste treatment facility in Mexico. That's a good start, but it's the widespread support the facilities get from those who are unsure about the County's direction that cement this as a popular project. Residents who think things are on the wrong track are much less in favor, although even most them are supportive. The insight: when people believe times are good, they are far more supportive of projects like this. If things turn sour, in a recession, for example, support for paying for wastewater treatment facilities in Mexico will ebb. However, there is enough support - even from dissatisfied residents – that paying for the project will always be popular if it is framed as protecting area beaches.

OPINION OF PAYING FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES IN MEXICO BY CIVIC MOOD



Residents' sensibilities as to whether San Diego and Tijuana are a mega-region also come into play. Fans of the mega-region idea are all-in on paying for the wastewater treatment facilities in Mexico. They are a relatively small minority, so the proposal is broadly popular because even the large group who definitely believe the two cities are separate also favor paying for the project. Their sentiment is less intense and 27% actually oppose it, but "the separatists" are essentially saying, "San Diego and Tijuana aren't the same, but the new facilities would help San Diego."

Women older than 55 are also bigger fans of funding the project.

#### A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color

✓ All communities support funding the wastewater treatment plant.	U.S. paying for wastewater treatment facilities in Mexico sentiment		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
		Oppose, strongly	10%	11%	5%	14%	11%
		Oppose, somewhat	8%	10%	9%	13%	9%
		Unsure/Neutral /Depends	10%	10%	11%	6%	9%
		Favor, somewhat	26%	23%	38%	32%	27%
		Favor, strongly	47%	47%	37%	35%	45%

*Findings are based on the results from our scientific poll of 505 San Diego County adult residents. The poll was conducted in English and Spanish by Competitive Edge Research & Communication (CERC), a national research firm based in San Diego, from September 2 through 10, 2022. The maximum margin of sampling error for the total sample is +/- 4.4%. The margin of sampling error for subgroups is larger. Interviews were conducted by trained professionals at CERC's El Paso, TX, facility, and via the web for residents with an e-mail address or cell phone number in the sample.*