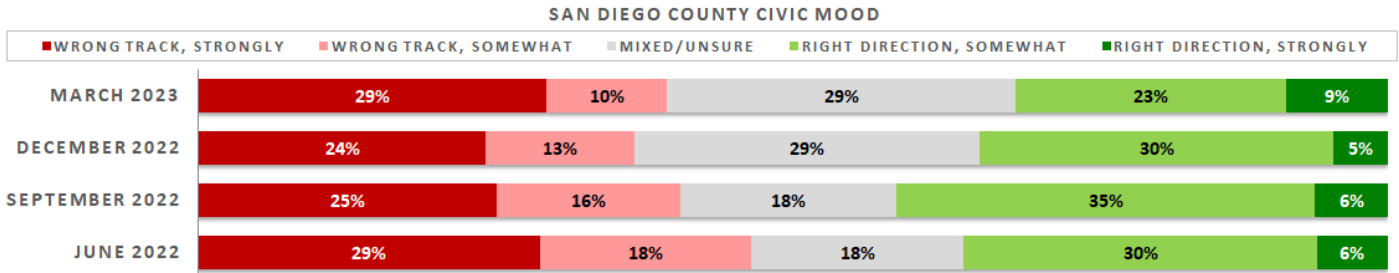


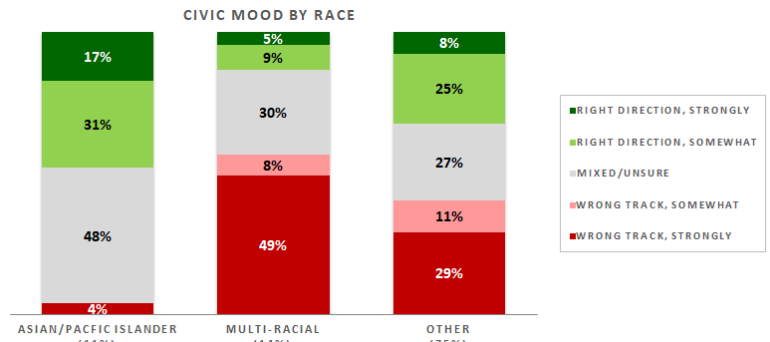
Transit Funding Proposals Opposed, as SANDAG, New Gas Vehicle Ban Roundly Criticized

Mood Remains Unsettled as Homelessness is Top Issue Again

Two months into 2023, San Diegans' views on their county's direction remain very mixed. Thirty-one percent believe things are going in the right direction and 9% – the highest share since last June – *strongly* feel this way. However, more say things are on the wrong track and negative sentiment is much more robust with 29% *strongly* believing this. Another 13% think things are mixed, so residents maintain a dubious outlook.

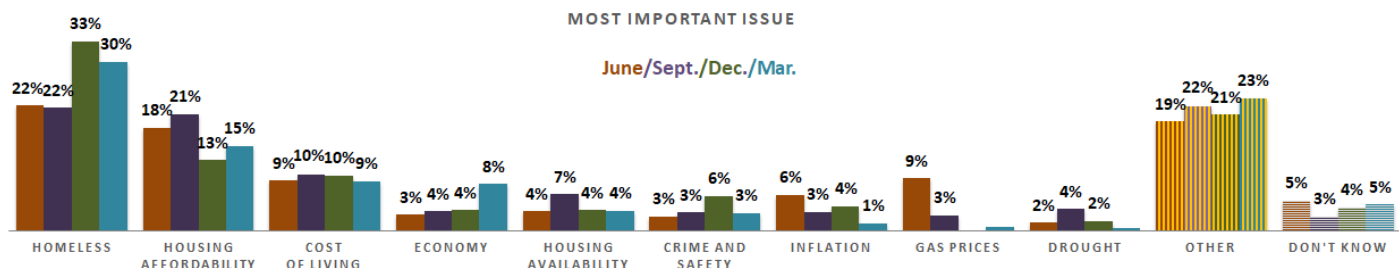


Civic mood is now largely a product of race. Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) residents are the most upbeat, with 48% happy about the county's direction. Multi-racial residents are the least pleased, and 57% are unhappy with the way things are going, 49% of whom *strongly* think things are on the wrong track. Other racial and ethnic communities are more divided. Something is delighting AAPI residents, but negatively impacting San Diegans with multi-racial backgrounds.



San Diegans' top concerns remain stubbornly unchanged. At 30%, homelessness easily and disturbingly remains the primary complaint, outpacing other issues by double digits. With three-in-ten residents putting it at the top of their list even as recession fears loom, the pervasiveness of the problem is clear. In a warning for politicians, homelessness is even more problematic for voters than for non-registrants.

Housing affordability and the cost of living remain the second- and third-most important issues, respectively. The former causes Latinos more anxiety, as 24% say it's the most important issue facing San Diegans. Living costs are a bigger focus for residents with no college experience.



Eight percent say the economy and jobs are most important – double December’s 4% – and worries are surging among certain groups. Latinos, especially those who primarily speak Spanish, residents north of SR-78 as well as those in the county’s south suburbs, and folks with no college

experience all posted double-digit increases of more than 15%. Concern also rose among smaller shares of middle-aged adults and nonpartisans. Economic issues are hitting those who haven’t attended college, but more educated residents are focused on other things.

Utility costs have also significantly increased (from 1% in December to 5% today). This increase is largely due to men, north county residents, and whites placing more emphasis on the issue. Utility costs are a very hot issue among men living in lower-income neighborhoods, as 16% put it at the top of their list.

Four percent make housing availability their top focus. This issue is more prominent in the south-central neighborhoods, where one-in-ten say it is most important.

As we approach Tax Day and with several tax proposals being bandied about, the number of residents pointing to taxes as most important has risen from 1% to 4%. This significant bump is mostly driven by AAPI folks, Republicans, as well as residents who did not graduate high school; all are at least four times more likely to name taxes than they were three months ago. Presently, taxes are more top-of-mind in moderate-to-high income neighborhoods (averaging more than \$70,000 a year), where 18% of them mention taxes.

At 3%, the shares citing crime and safety are down from 6% in December.

A Closer Look at San Diego’s Communities of Color

- ✓ **The AAPI community is much more satisfied with the county’s direction**
- ✓ **The mood among African Americans and Latinos is roughly comparable to all residents**
- ✓ **More AAPI residents emphasize taxes, but rarely cite housing affordability**
- ✓ **Housing affordability and jobs and the economy are more top-of-mind for Latinos, while homelessness, utility costs, and taxes are less so**
- ✓ **Issue priorities among African Americans mirror those of all San Diegans**



		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Civic Mood	Wrong track, strongly	31%	27%	21%	8%	29%
	Wrong track, somewhat	15%	6%	6%	4%	10%
	Mixed/Unsure	21%	41%	32%	38%	29%
	Right direction, somewhat	26%	16%	26%	32%	23%
	Right direction, strongly	6%	9%	15%	17%	8%

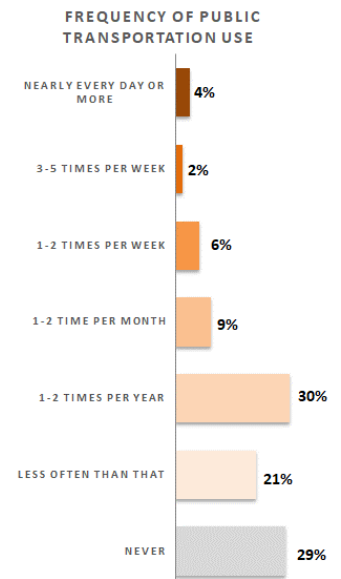
		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Most Important Issue	Homelessness	33%	22%	22%	43%	30%
	Housing availability	11%	25%	22%	5%	15%
	Cost of living	11%	5%	12%	5%	9%
	Economy/Jobs	4%	21%	1%	0%	8%
	Utility costs	8%	1%	2%	1%	5%
	Housing availability	3%	2%	3%	7%	4%
	Taxes	1%	0%	0%	20%	4%
	Crime and safety	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%
	Infrastructure/Road repair	1%	4%	4%	1%	2%
	Inflation	2%	2%	2%	0%	2%
	Bad political leadership	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Government overreach	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Overdevelopment/ Overpopulation	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Illegal immigration/Border	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%
	Traffic	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%
	SANDAG	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Schools/Education	0%	2%	2%	2%	1%
	Environment and climate change	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Gasoline prices	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Other	4%	5%	25%	0%	5%	
Nothing/Don't know	3%	6%	1%	14%	5%	

SANDAG and Public Transportation

San Diego County covers more than 4,200 square miles. With municipalities scattered across the area and many residents commuting to and from work, driving a car is considered a necessity. Indeed, [our June 22 installment shows 95% drive a car or motorcycle](#). According to its [website](#), the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) is “both a metropolitan planning organization and a council of governments.” It brings “together local decision-makers to develop solutions to regional issues including improving equity, transportation, air quality, clean energy, economic development, goods movement, public health, public safety, housing, and more.” The Association has had its share of controversy. It is also promoting a plan to build out a \$165 billion public transportation network largely based on bus lanes and trolley lines across the county which would be free for residents to use.

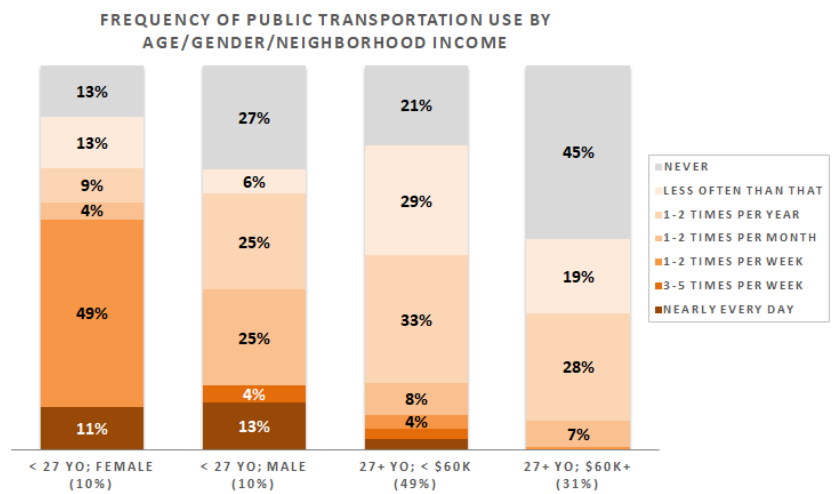
Public Transportation Usage

The county has a network of public busses, trolleys, and trains, but only 11% (roughly 285,000 adults) report using public transport weekly, with just 5% taking it multiple times a week (likely commuters). Another 9% use it monthly, but nearly half use it less frequently than that and a sizeable 28% – more than 700,000 residents – claim to have *never* availed themselves of San Diego



County’s public transit options. Although [official Metropolitan Transit System reports](#) show ridership is up compared to recent years, public transportation remains very underutilized.

Those younger than 27 use it much more regularly. Sixty percent of women 26 or younger take public transport at least once a week compared to 17% of men in the same age bracket. Ridership drops precipitously among those older than 26. Nine percent in neighborhoods where annual incomes are \$59,000 or less take public transit weekly, and that’s much more often than the 1% who earn more than that who are weekly riders. Public transport is an economical option for some earning lower incomes, especially considering the record-high gas prices Californians paid last year. However, once they turn 27, even their reliance on public transit wanes.



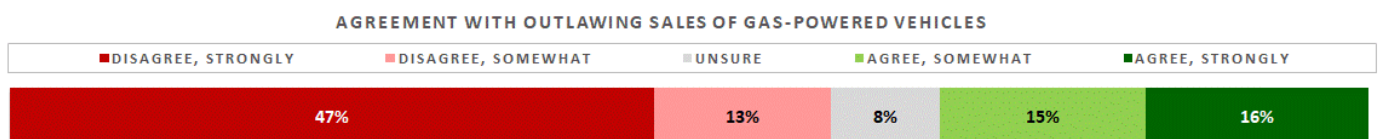
A Closer Look at San Diego’s Communities of Color

- ✓ **Black residents are 5x more likely to use public transit weekly than others**
- ✓ **Latinos are more likely to have used San Diego’s public transport system at least once**
- ✓ **The Asian community contains more weekly riders**

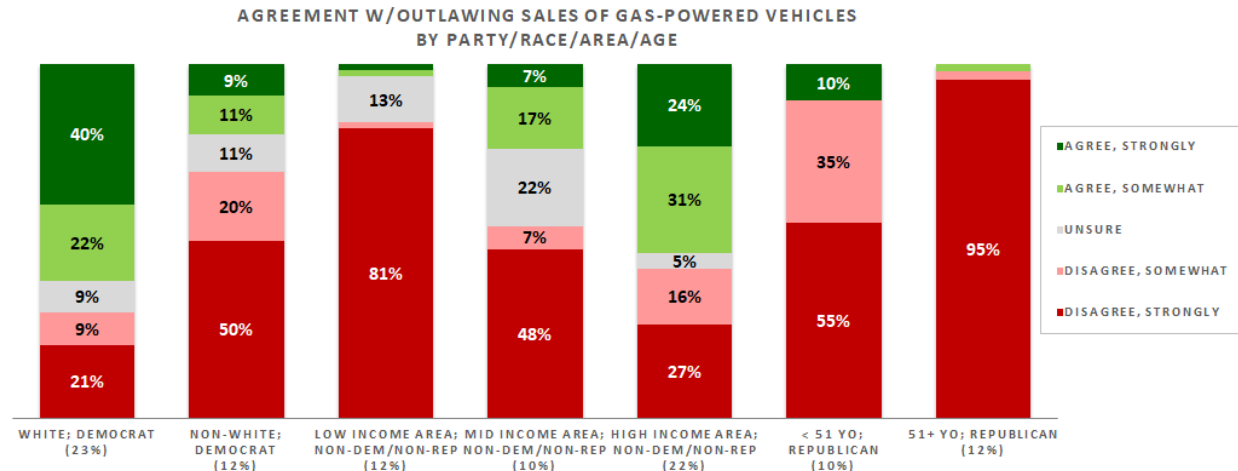
		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Frequency of public transportation use	Nearly every day or more	1%	4%	19%	7%	4%
	3 to 5 times a week	2%	0%	8%	1%	2%
	Once or twice a week	0%	14%	2%	18%	6%
	Once or twice a month	10%	9%	4%	7%	9%
	Once or twice a year	28%	37%	17%	33%	30%
	Less often than that	24%	21%	12%	6%	21%
	Never	35%	16%	38%	29%	29%

Outlawing the Sale of Gas-Powered Vehicles

Last year the [California Air Resources Board](#) voted unanimously to ban the sale of new gasoline-powered vehicles starting in 2035 to help fight climate change. Six-in-ten San Diegans, however, disagree with that decision, 47% *strongly* so. Just 32% agree with the Board, but even that support is lukewarm. A small 8% aren’t sure what to make of it. Although the ban doesn’t go into effect for more than a decade, outlawing the sale of new gas vehicles is unpopular.



This is a mostly a partisan issue. Republicans vehemently oppose the decision, with nearly all who are older than 50 *strongly* disagreeing with it. In fact, only two segments agree with the ban: White Democrats and other non-Republicans in middle-to-upper income neighborhoods. Therefore, Democrat minorities and nonpartisan, minor party, and non-registrants in lower income areas find themselves agreeing with Republicans when it comes to outlawing the sale of gas-powered cars.



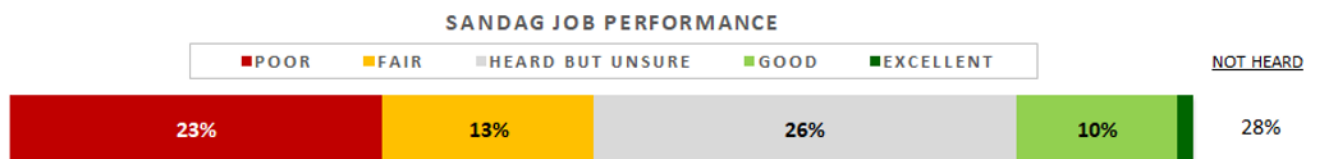
A Closer Look at San Diego’s Communities of Color

✓ There’s distaste for the ban across AAPI, Black, and Latino communities

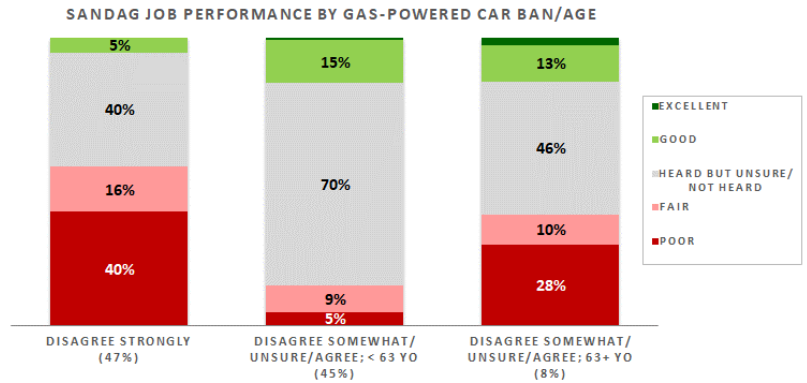
		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Agreement w/outlawing sales of gas-powered vehicles	Disagree, strongly	51%	46%	50%	21%	47%
	Disagree, somewhat	9%	4%	22%	53%	13%
	Unsure	6%	13%	5%	3%	8%
	Agree, somewhat	13%	21%	14%	15%	15%
	Agree, strongly	22%	14%	8%	9%	16%

SANDAG Job Performance

Most San Diegans have at least heard of SANDAG before, but only 47% are familiar enough with the Association to rate its job performance. Latinos tend to be less familiar, as only 43% know of it. The organization struggles among residents with an opinion. Only 1% think it’s doing an excellent job and 10% rate its performance good, while 36% believe it’s doing only a fair or poor job – with nearly twice as many saying *poor* than *only fair* – making for a dismal performance ratio of 1:3.3. SANDAG is not in the good graces of many San Diegans and proposals originating from it will be met with ample skepticism.



Views of SANDAG are heavily tied to opinions of the gas vehicle ban. Those who *strongly* disagree with it are much more critical of the Association. Those with less negative views of the ban aren't necessarily SANDAG fans – instead they often cannot rate it, but seniors aged 64-plus tend to offer up harsher reviews more often than their younger counterparts do. The implication here is that residents sense SANDAG is aligned with the decision to outlaw new gas-powered vehicles starting in 2035 and that doesn't sit well with lots of folks.



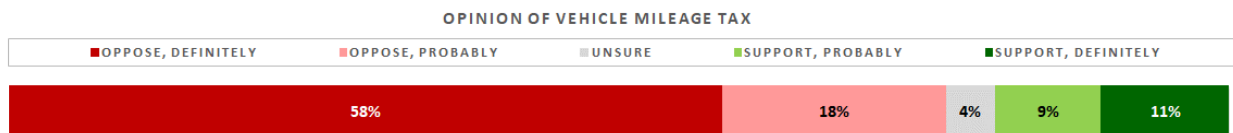
A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color

- ✓ None of the AAPI residents (in our sample) think SANDAG is doing an excellent job; instead, they often know about the Association but cannot rate it
- ✓ Most Latinos are unfamiliar with SANDAG
- ✓ African American residents are less harsh on SANDAG

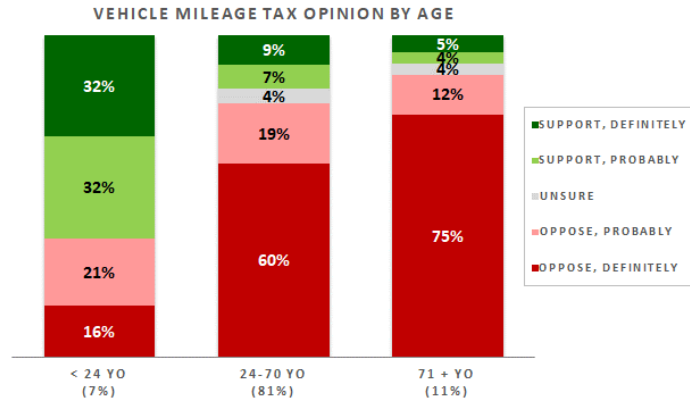
		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
SANDAG job performance	Never heard	17%	55%	23%	9%	28%
	Poor	31%	9%	14%	4%	23%
	Fair	12%	11%	31%	20%	13%
	Heard but unsure	25%	16%	11%	67%	26%
	Good	13%	9%	18%	1%	10%
	Excellent	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%

Funding SANDAG's Public Transportation Network – Mileage Tax Proposal

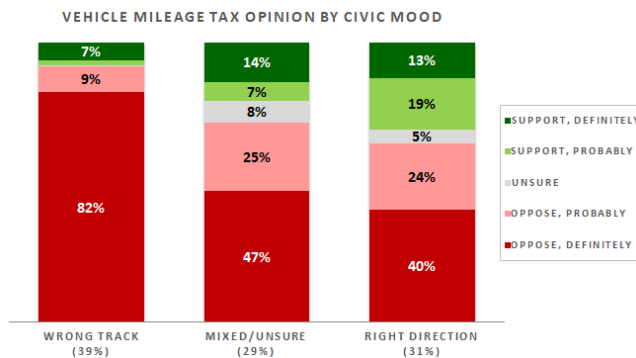
SANDAG has proposed two main funding streams to build, maintain, and subsidize its transportation plan. A vehicle mileage tax that would cost San Diego County drivers four cents for every mile driven is hugely unpopular, with 77% opposed to the plan, with 58% *definitely* opposed. Only 19% support the mileage tax and *definite* support is weak at only 11%. If this proposal were put to a vote, SANDAG would be in for a massive uphill battle in a county that has one of the [highest cost of living averages in the world](#) as well as some of the highest [gas prices](#) and [tax burdens](#) in the nation. Selling residents on more fees will be very challenging; even more so if the economic outlook worsens.



Opinions of the mileage tax largely come down to age. The youngest adults – those aged 18 to 24 – buck the overall trend to support the tax, although not overwhelmingly so. Opposition increases as folks get older. The proposal might have some hope of acceptance if young San Diegans were the only ones who had a say, but they only make up a small 12% of the population.



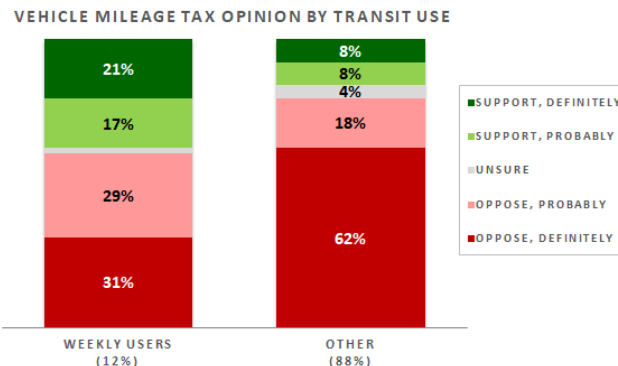
The public’s general mood also plays an important role. Critics of the county’s current path overwhelmingly oppose the mileage tax while those with mixed views also line up in opposition. Residents who are happy with the direction are more receptive to the proposal, but even most of them are opposed or leaning that way. Should the mood improve, support will follow, but the time isn’t right at this point.



Location is another factor. San Diegans in unincorporated communities are decidedly against a milage tax and you’d be hard pressed to find someone in these areas who is supportive.

How frequently one uses public transportation also impacts views.

Weekly public transit riders are twice as supportive of a mileage tax to fund SANDAG’s project than are moderate- and non-users. Afterall, these folks will be the primary beneficiaries of expanded and free transportation. However, they comprise only a small portion of the population and even most of them are dubious about the project, suggesting they also drive cars and are thus subject to the tax, and/or they feel the tax is unfair or too costly.

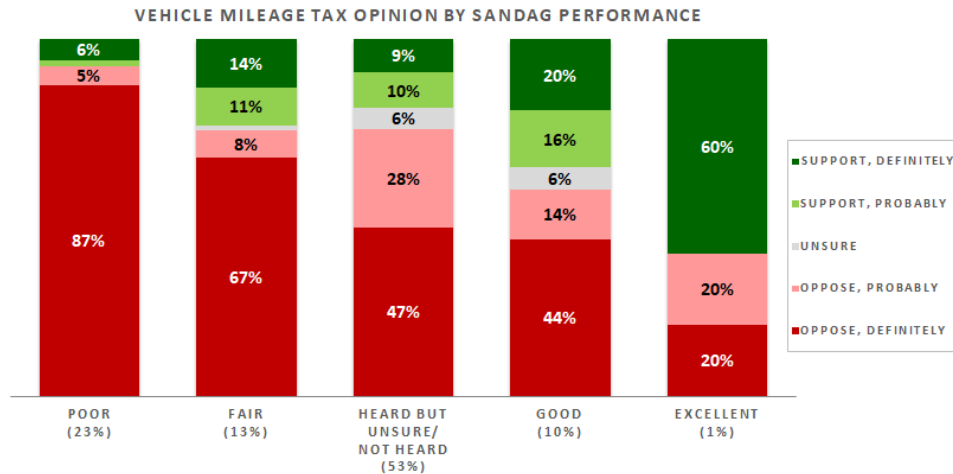


Democratic women are bigger supporters of the project at 34%, but even among a group that would traditionally be deemed more “pro-public transport,” supporters are outnumbered almost 2:1. This proposal struggles even among its (arguably) logical allies.

It’s a similar story among San Diegans with a college degree. Although they are more supportive than the wider population, most are opposed, with a slim majority in the *definitely* opposed bucket.

Finally, SANDAG is the sponsor of the project and tax proposal, so it’s not surprising that the Association’s job performance comes into play. That said, only those who think it is doing an excellent job (a tiny 1%) support the tax; all others are opposed and opposition solidifies as reviews worsen. If

SANDAG can improve its image, opposition will drop, but it would need to be seen doing an excellent job among the bulk of the population to have a chance at gaining majority support for the proposal; being seen only as “good” will not get the job done.



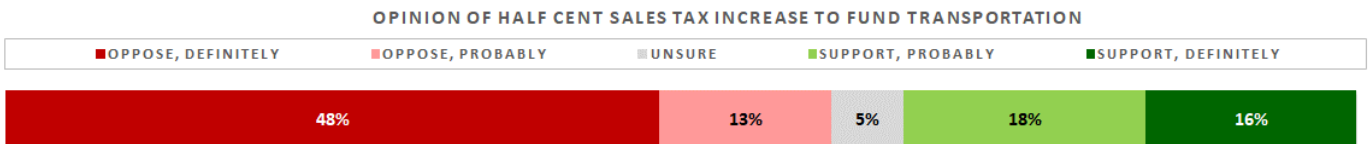
A Closer Look at San Diego’s Communities of Color

✓ All ethnic communities oppose the VMT, though Asians and Blacks are less critical

		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Vehicle mileage tax opinion	Oppose, definitely	66%	50%	46%	48%	58%
	oppose, probably	14%	27%	11%	18%	18%
	Unsure	4%	4%	2%	6%	4%
	Support, probably	10%	3%	18%	21%	9%
	Support, definitely	6%	15%	23%	7%	11%

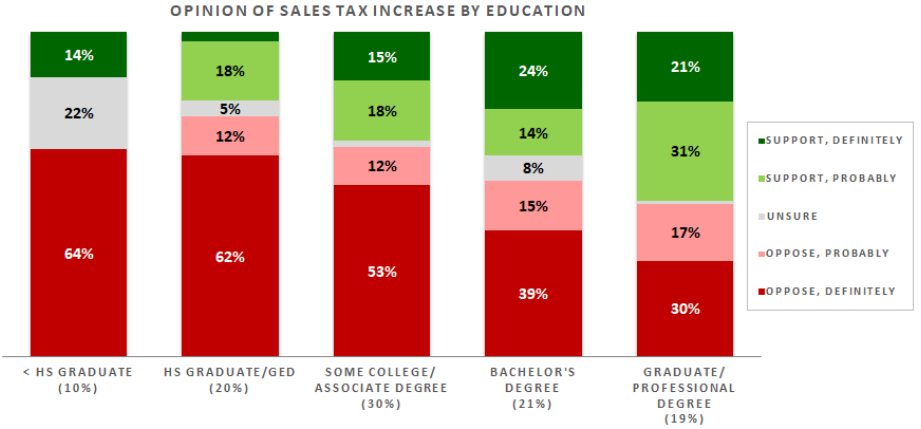
Funding SANDAG’s Public Transportation Network – Sales Tax Proposal

The other funding proposal would raise the sales tax by a half cent. This option is slightly more palatable, but also not acceptable. Sixty-one percent oppose the increase – nearly half strongly. This tax would apply to all San Diegans – not just drivers – and residents still can’t stomach it.



Most who are very happy with the county support the proposal, as do half who are only somewhat pleased. In contrast, the folks who are least happy are unquestionably against the sales tax increase, while those in the middle are more opposed than not. Better times would help grow support, but unfortunately for tax proponents, those good times are unlikely any time soon.

Educational attainment is another important influencer. Those with advanced degrees are on board, but they only comprise 19% of the population, so this won't carry the sales tax to victory. Support drops incrementally as education levels decline, and most San Diegans without a bachelor's degree – who account for 60% of the population – do not want a new sales tax.

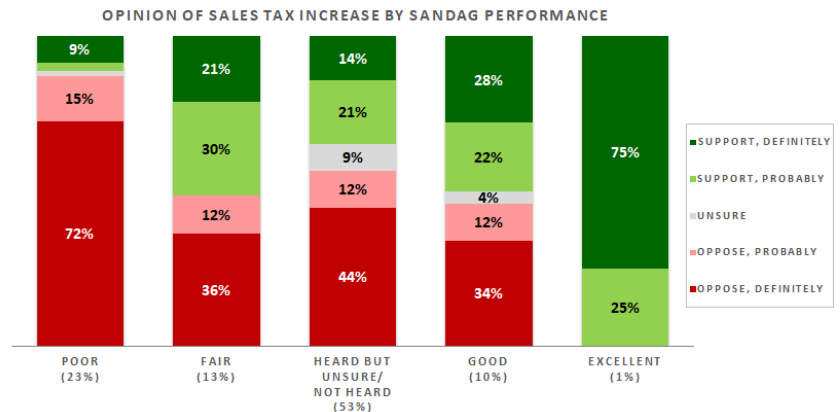


National City residents are a pocket of strong support: 63% support it, 44% strongly so. Unfortunately for SANDAG, National City is a tiny municipality.

This is also another partisan issue. Republicans gag at the premise of another tax and most independents and minor party voters join them in their disgust. Democrats are the proposal's flagbearers and although 56% of them support it, only 25% *definitely* do, so even they are not in the bag.

Women 55 and older support the tax increase twice as often as others, but even they favor the proposal only 48% of the time.

Perceptions of SANDAG's job performance are again influential, but far from the only opinion driver. Fans generally like the tax increase, while critics are generally opponents. Again, to substantially increase the proposal's appeal, SANDAG would need to meet the threshold of doing a good or excellent job. Anything less is not enough to improve opinion.



A Closer Look at San Diego's Communities of Color

- ✓ **Latinos are more stridently opposed to a sales tax increase than residents overall**
- ✓ **For AAPI and Black folks, views on a sales tax increase reflect those of the wider populace**

		White	Latino	Black	Asian	All
Opinion of sales tax increase	Oppose, definitely	45%	56%	45%	41%	48%
	Oppose, probably	13%	9%	11%	18%	13%
	Unsure	2%	12%	1%	6%	5%
	Support, probably	20%	12%	33%	24%	18%
	Support, definitely	20%	11%	10%	11%	16%