

To: Interested Parties  
 From: Margie Omero, Purple Strategies  
 Date: February 22, 2016  
 Re: Recent Polling in Tucson, AZ

Our recent poll of Tucson voters show — not surprisingly — that few are initially eager for a new sales tax increase. That said, providing the beginning sketches of context, to explain funds would be used to improve roads and protect existing services, brings support for new increases to even. When it comes to a property tax increase, estimating the likely cost per taxpayer and explaining the purpose appear to boost support.

### **Roads & the economy are top Tucson concerns**

Voters see roads needing repair as the number one issue facing their city. It's both the top issue (26%) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important issue (19%). Frequent voters are even more likely to prioritize roads (31% most important issue). Growth of the economy and jobs are a close second (24% most important, 16% 2<sup>nd</sup> most important). We'll see below these issues are also top reasons to support a sales tax increase.

At a distant third is a worry about taxes; only 11% say "local taxes like sales and property taxes are too high" is the most important issue facing the city, with very little difference by party. Almost as many are worried about a budget shortfall (9% most important issue).

### **Without justification, more oppose a sales tax increase**

Just over half (52%) oppose increasing the city's sales tax, and most of that opposition is strong (40% of voters overall). Just four in ten (39%) support the increase, with far less of that being strong support (25% of overall). No subgroup we examined begins net supportive of the increase.

It's worth noting that the initial question of a sales tax increase makes no mention of how the revenue generated would be used. More information about the increase quickly moves some voters.

### **Roads, first responders, and basic services can move support to even**

When given a list of uses for the additional revenue, roads top the list (74% more likely to support a sales tax increase if the money used for that purpose), followed by preventing cuts to city services generally, or to police and firefighters specifically (63% and 71%, respectively). Explicitly identifying the city budget as the beneficiary is a lower-tier reason (58% and 51%, depending on language used), as is a focus on parks and playgrounds (53%).

Additional information both for and against a sales tax increase brings support to even. Just about half (49%) agree that "taxes are high enough as it is," although about as many (46%) agree "Tucson is in desperate need of more resources simply to maintain existing city services." Democrats are far more likely to agree with the pro-increase side (57%), and Republicans agree with the anti-increase side (70%), while there is little difference between whites (47% pro-increase) and Latinos (45%).

<i>Which of the following comes closest to your own view?</i>	Total	Dem	Ind	GOP	White	Latino
Tucson is in desperate need of more resources simply to maintain existing city services like police and firefighters, and to improve basic needs like our roads and parks. If we all chip in, we can make Tucson a safer and more desirable place to live.	46%	57%	43%	25%	47%	45%
Taxes are high enough as it is. The Tucson City government should live within its means. We should be cutting government waste and inefficiency rather than changing our city's charter to raise taxes.	49%	38%	51%	70%	48%	49%

After hearing this additional information along with uses for new revenue, support edges out opposition in a re-ask of the question about a sales tax increase (48% favor, 47% oppose), with a far narrower gap in strength (27% strong support, 35% strong oppose) than in the initial question. Over the course of the survey, 12% of voters move toward favoring the proposal, including those who either move to support or move from opposition to undecided. Voters more likely to move toward favor include those under 50 (19% are movers), liberals (17%), renters (16%), Democrats (15%) and voters with a high school education or less (15%).

In a further example of the importance of explaining a tax increase's purpose — and of the salience of road improvements — in a separate question about a property tax increase supporters also edge out the opposition (49% favor, 46% oppose). This question wording explains the average cost (\$27 dollars a year per taxpayer for the average homeowner) and estimates the amount to be raised (\$100 million for road improvements). Successful ballot language for any new revenue should include these elements. The same groups that move in favor of the sales tax increase with additional information are also more likely to support a property tax increase.

### **In City races, voters want to know candidates' party, but are divided on ward-level elections**

We also asked respondents about two frequently discussed election reforms. Overwhelmingly, voters want to see candidates' political party printed on the ballot (72% should be printed, 18% should not). Democrats and Republicans are even more likely to want to identify candidates by party when voting (77% and 78%, respectively). While more Independents want the ballot to be party blind (27%), even a majority (58%) of those voters want party affiliation easily accessible.

However there is both confusion and division on ward-level Council primary elections. A slim plurality (36%) want to make both Council primaries and general elections city-wide, and a quarter (26%) want to make both primaries and general elections ward-level only. Another quarter are not sure (23%) and fewer (16%) want to keep elections as they are. Among those who vote most frequently in municipal elections, there is less confusion, but more division (34% city-wide only, 31% ward-level only, 20% keep as-is, 15% unsure). To fully explore this complicated topic, additional research and explanation is likely needed.



**Methodology:** Purple Insights conducted 500 telephone interviews of likely 2016 voters in Tucson, Arizona between February 9th and 13th, 2016. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of the interviews were completed with voters on landlines and 41% were completed with voters on their cell phones. Respondents were randomly selected from a voter file and language of choice interviewing was available to Spanish-speaking voters. The margin of error for Tucson voters is +/-4.4%.

**EMBARGOED**

**UNTIL NOON MONDAY, FEB. 22, 2016**



**City of Tucson, AZ  
Ballot Initiative Survey  
February 2016**

**METHODOLOGY**

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*Note: All numbers are percentages. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

**PRIORITIES**

<b>1. How closely do you follow news about the government of the City of Tucson?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Extremely closely	15
Very closely	32
Somewhat closely	40
Not too closely	10
Not at all closely	3
Don't know	0

<b>2. What do you think is the most important issue facing Tucson right now? What do you think is the second most important issue?</b>	<b>Most Important</b>	<b>Second Most Important</b>	<b>Combined Total</b>
Our roads are in need of repair	26	19	45
The growth of jobs and the economy in the city is not what it should be	24	16	40
Local taxes like sales tax and property tax are too high	11	13	24
Crime is too high	8	13	21
Our city doesn't have the funds it needs to maintain current basic services	9	9	18
Our public transit system is outdated and unreliable	4	8	12
Public employees pensions are burdening the city budget	5	6	11
We don't have enough parks and playgrounds	2	2	4
Something else	10	7	17
Don't know	2	7	9

## SALES TAX

<b>3. There is currently discussion over a proposal to increase the current sales tax by half of one percent from 2 percent to 2-point-5 percent. This would cost taxpayers an extra 25 cents for every fifty dollars spent on anything other than food. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Strongly favor	25
Somewhat favor	14
Somewhat oppose	12
Strongly oppose	40
Don't know	9
<b>NET FAVOR</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>NET OPPOSE</b>	<b>52</b>

<b>4. Here are some things people say the money raised by the sales tax could be used for. After each, please tell me if you would be more or less likely to support an increase in the sales tax if the money raised was spent on that purpose?</b>	<b>Much More Likely</b>	<b>More Likely/ Less Likely</b>
To repair and improve our roads	50	74 / 23
To keep the number of city police and firefighters from declining	42	71 / 23
To keep Tucson from cutting basic services	35	63 / 29
To make capital improvements, such as new police cars and improved first-responder technology	35	62 / 33
<b>SPLIT A: To keep the city from going further into debt</b>	33	58 / 36
To make Tucson a more thriving city	30	58 / 34
To improve our public transportation system	26	54 / 40
<b>SPLIT B: To make it possible to balance the city's budget</b>	24	51 / 41
To improve local parks and playgrounds	24	53 / 44

<b>5. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Taxes are high enough as it is. The Tucson City government should live within its means. We should be cutting government waste and inefficiency rather than changing our city's charter to raise taxes.	49
Tucson is in desperate need of more resources simply to maintain existing city services like police and firefighters, and to improve basic needs like our roads and parks. If we all chip in, we can make Tucson a safer and more desirable place to live.	46
Neither	3
Don't know	3



<b>6. Sometimes over the course of a survey people change their minds. There is currently discussion over a proposal to increase the current sales tax by half of one percent from 2 percent to 2-point-5 percent. This would cost taxpayers an extra 25 cents for every fifty dollars spent on anything other than food. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Strongly favor	27
Somewhat favor	21
Somewhat oppose	12
Strongly oppose	35
Don't know	5
<b>NET FAVOR</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>NET OPPOSE</b>	<b>47</b>

#### PROPERTY TAX

<b>7. There is currently a proposal to increase Tucson property taxes in order to pay for 100 Million dollars in city road improvements. This proposal would cost the average homeowner approximately 27 dollars more a year. Do you favor or oppose this proposal?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Strongly favor	31
Somewhat favor	18
Somewhat oppose	11
Strongly oppose	36
Don't know	5
<b>NET FAVOR</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>NET OPPOSE</b>	<b>46</b>

#### CITY ELECTIONS

<b>8. Currently, Tucson city council candidates run in primary elections in their home ward, and the winners then run in a city-wide election. How do you think city council elections in Tucson should work?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Hold city-wide primary and city-wide general elections	36
Hold ward-only primaries and ward-only general elections	26
Hold ward-only primaries and city-wide general elections	16
I'm not sure about this	23
<b>9. Currently in Tucson city council and Mayoral elections, the candidates' political party -- such as Democrat, Republican, or something else -- is printed on the ballot. How do you think Mayoral and city council elections in Tucson should work?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Candidates' political party should be printed on the ballot	72
Candidates' political party should not be printed on the ballot	18
I'm not sure about this	10

## DEMOGRAPHICS

10. Gender	Tucson Voters
Male	46
Female	54
11. Age	Tucson Voters
18 to 34	12
35 to 49	16
50 to 64	32
65+	40
12. In politics today, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?	Tucson Voters
Strong Democrat	37
Not so strong Democrat	5
Independent, lean Democrat	9
Independent	25
Independent, lean Republican	4
Not so strong Republican	2
Strong Republican	15
Don't know	3
<b>TOTAL DEMOCRAT</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>TOTAL REPUBLICAN</b>	<b>22</b>
13. Do you consider yourself a liberal, conservative, or moderate?	Tucson Voters
Strong liberal	19
Not so strong liberal	6
Moderate, lean liberal	9
Moderate	30
Moderate, lean conservative	6
Not so strong conservative	6
Strong conservative	17
Don't know	6
<b>TOTAL LIBERAL</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>TOTAL CONSERVATIVE</b>	<b>30</b>

<b>14. Now thinking about your housing, do you own or rent your primary residence?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Own	70
Rent	25
Other	3
Prefer not to say	3

<b>15. What is your current marital status?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Single	25
Living with a partner	2
Married	48
Separated	0
Divorced	10
Widowed	11
Prefer not to say	4

<b>16. How many children under 18 do you have either living with you or not living with you currently?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
0	75
1	9
2	10
3	3
4	0
5	0
6 or more	0
Prefer not to say	3

<b>17. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Less than high school	3
High school graduate	19
Some college/vocational/2-year college	30
College graduate	29
Post-graduate work or degree	17
Prefer not to say	1



<b>18. Just to ensure proper representation by race, what is your racial or ethnic background?</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
Black/African-American	3
White	69
Hispanic/Latino	21
Asian	0
Native American	1
Multi-Racial	3
Some other race	1
Prefer not to say	2

  

<b>19. Interview Language</b>	<b>Tucson Voters</b>
English	95
Spanish	5