

# UTAH RANKED CHOICE VOTING MUNICIPAL ELECTION SURVEY

VOTER EXPERIENCE IN THE 2021 UTAH RCV PILOT PROGRAM



# SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## SAMPLING, MODE, & MARGIN OF ERROR

- 1,995 Utah voters participated in this survey (1,471 living in RCV cities; 524 in Non-RCV cities)
- Survey sample relied on a model of 2021 municipal general election turnout estimated using age, party registration, active status, length of registration, and past election turnout. A Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS) sample was drawn using this predicted turnout estimate such that voters with a higher probability of voting had a higher probability of being selected in the sample. We also utilized ballot return reports from Salt Lake, Utah, and Grand Counties to randomly sample confirmed voters to receive survey invitations as a supplement to the PPS likely voter sampling.
- Data were weighted according to the projections to the likely voter proportions provided by the PPS sample, including weights for registered party, gender, quintiles of turnout probability, congressional district, county, and age to reflect the likely voter population statewide.
- Margin of error: +-2.6 percentage points

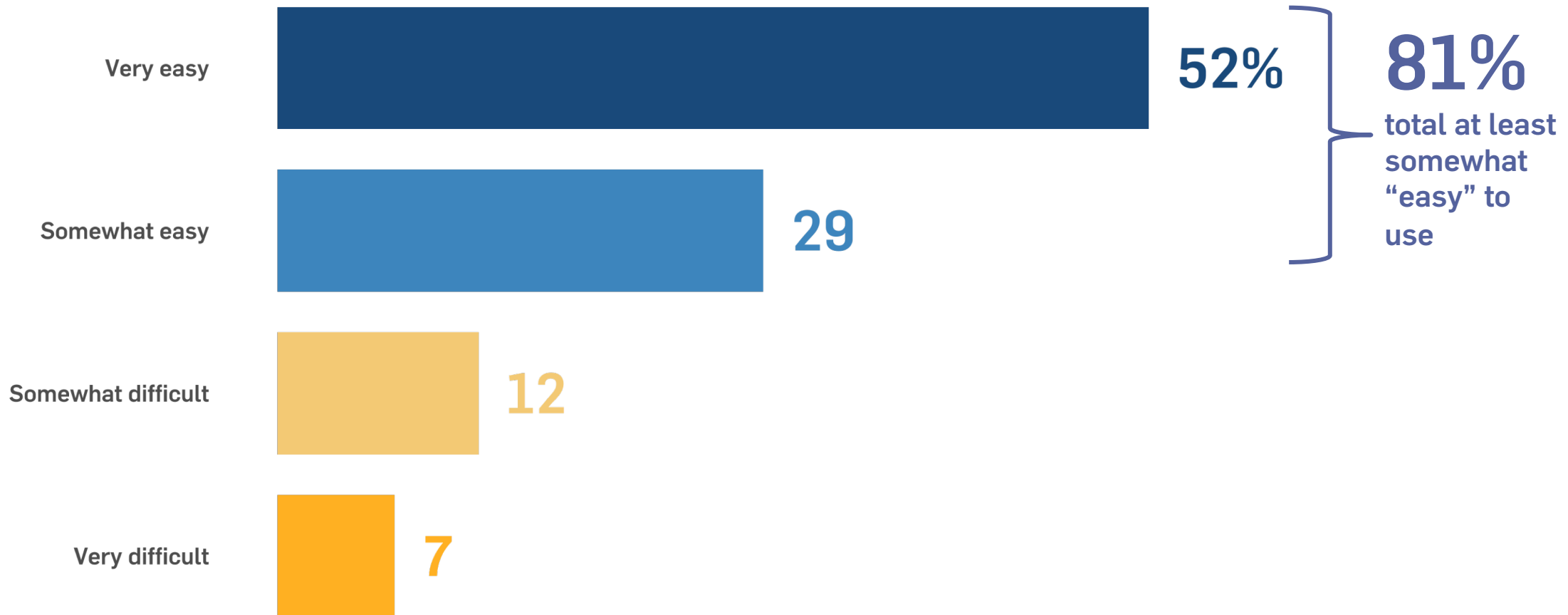
# **RCV EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS**

# MAJORITY OF RCV VOTERS FOUND METHOD “VERY EASY”

The majority of respondents who participated in RCV elections had no hard time filling out the ballot and 81% said it was at least somewhat easy.



“How easy or difficult did you find Ranked Choice Voting to use?” (shown to RCV election voters only) (n = 1,123)



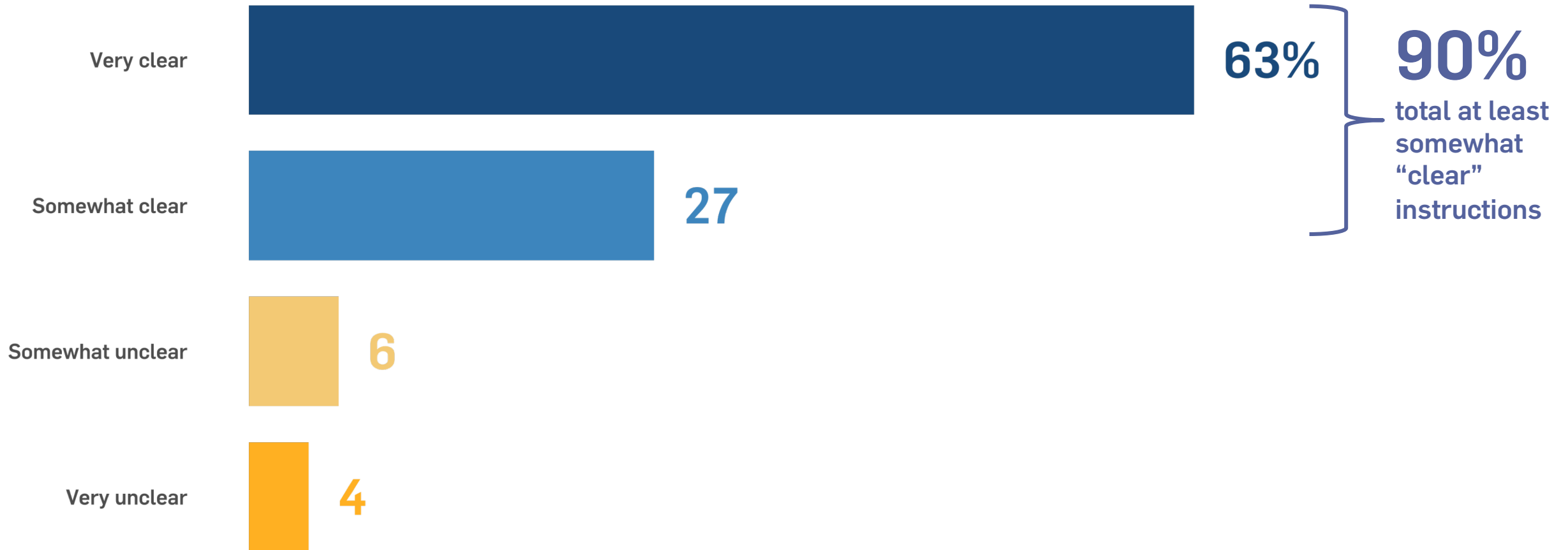


# 90% OF RCV PARTICIPANTS SAY INSTRUCTIONS WERE CLEAR

While some are concerned that the way to properly fill out a Ranked Choice ballot are unclear or counterintuitive, 90% of our respondents who participated in Ranked Choice Voting elections said the instructions on their ballots were somewhat or very clear, with over 6 in 10 respondents saying they were “very clear”.



“How clear or unclear were the instructions you received about how to fill out your Ranked Choice ballot?” (shown to RCV election voters only) (n = 1,102)

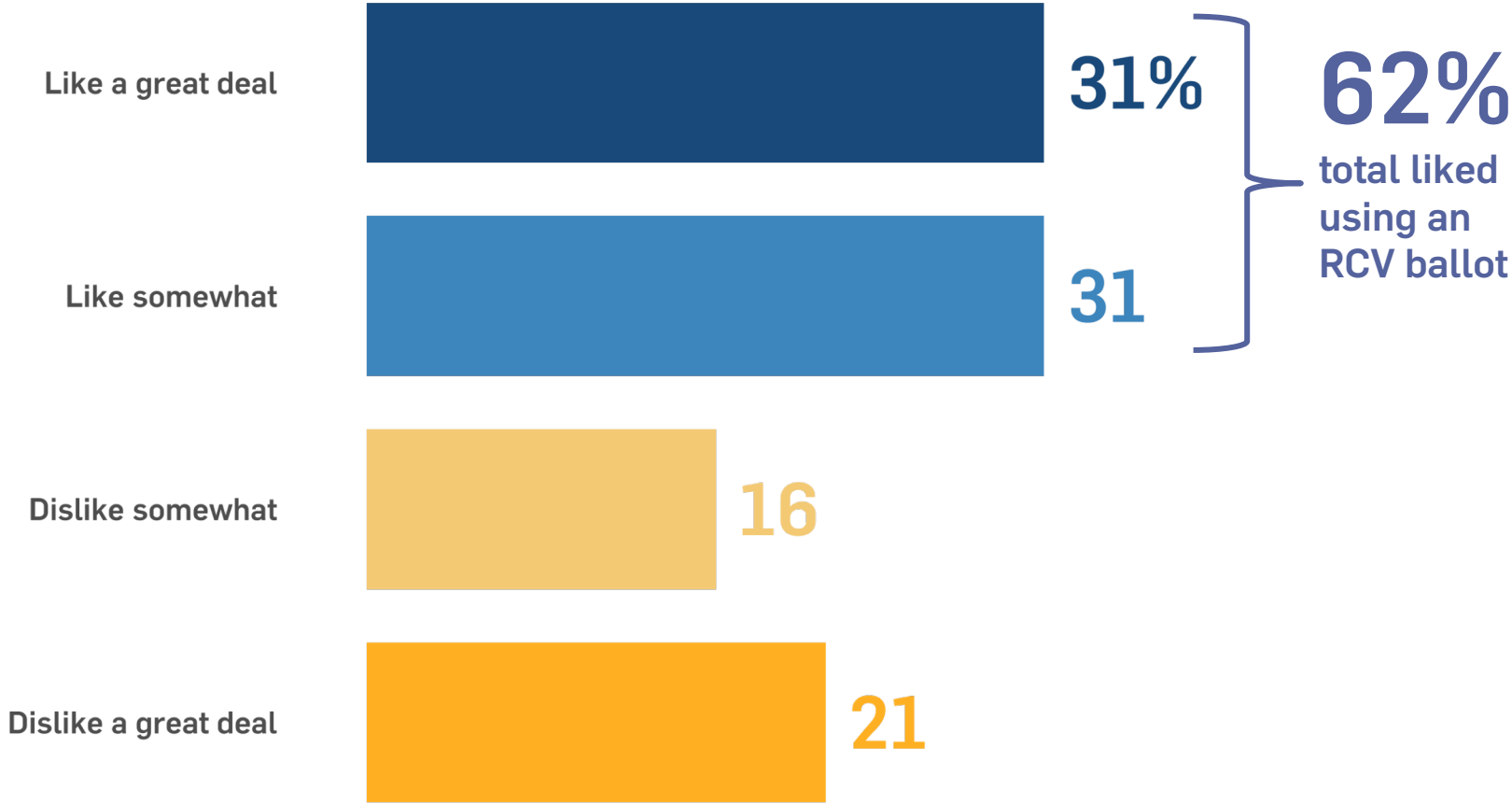


# 3-OUT-OF-5 VOTERS IN RCV ELECTIONS LIKED THE PROCESS

A solid majority of respondents who participated in RCV elections said they liked using a Ranked Choice Voting ballot (62%). Of those, 31% said they liked it a great deal, and 31% said they liked it somewhat.



“How much did you like or dislike using a Ranked Choice Voting ballot?” (shown to RCV election voters only) (n = 1,110)



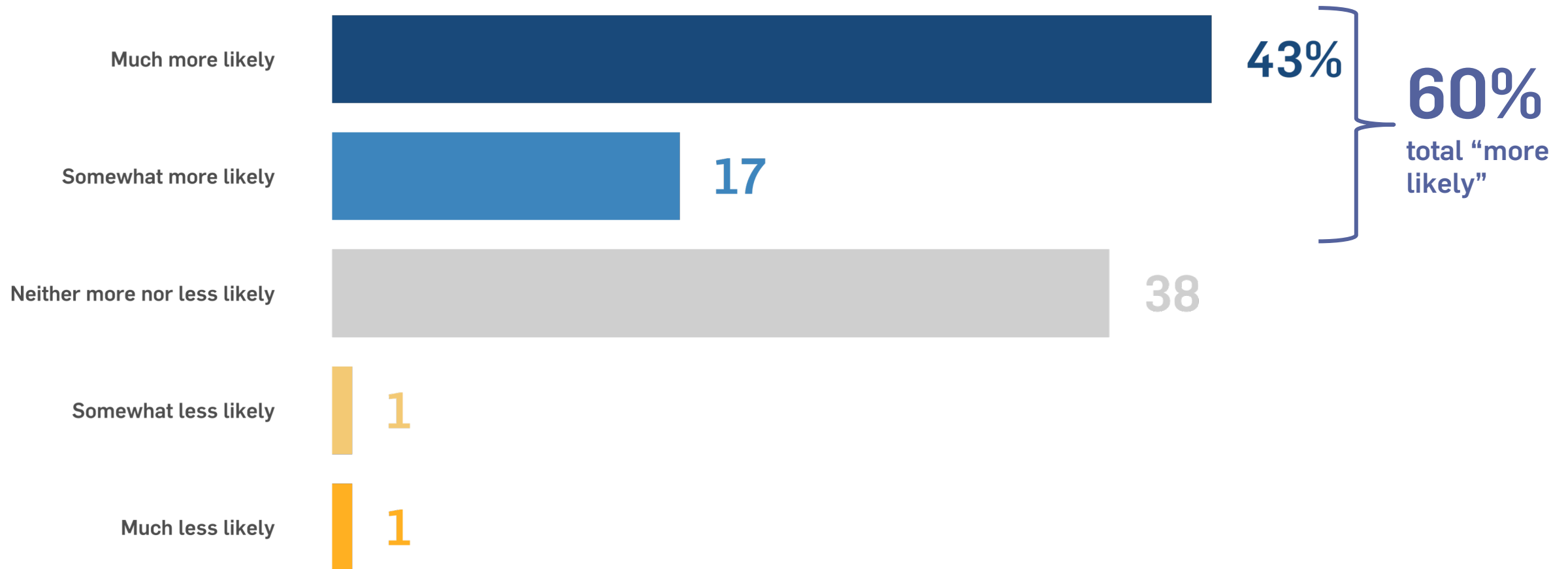
*SLC voters were 29 percentage points more likely to say they liked RCV than were Sandy residents (80% total SLC compared to 51% total Sandy), but a majority of the voters in both of these cities gave positive reviews.*

# RCV PARTICIPANTS LIKELIER TO VOTE FOR FAVORITE CANDIDATE

We asked exclusively voters who participated in RCV elections if they were more or less likely to vote for their favorite candidate in this election. 60% of respondents said they were, with 43% saying they were much more likely, and 17% saying they were somewhat more likely.



"Some voters claim that in some elections they vote for a candidate that is not their favorite because their favorite candidate has little or no chance of winning their vote will be wasted. Were you more or less likely to vote for your favorite candidate in this election?" (shown to RCV election voters only) (n = 1,110)



# **RCV PARTICIPANTS vs. NON-RCV PARTICIPANTS**



# OVERALL SATISFACTION SAME FOR RCV/NON-RCV ELECTIONS

We asked all voters their overall satisfaction with their voting experience in the 2021 municipal elections. Grouped by whether a voter participated in an RCV election or not, the levels of overall satisfaction are about the same for all voters.



“Overall, how satisfied were you with your voting experience in this year's Municipal Election?” (n = 1,627)

Very satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Not too satisfied

Not at all satisfied

RCV  
Participants

64%

22

7

7

Non-RCV  
Participants

65

24

6

5

# RCV PARTICIPANTS SPLIT ON ELECTION RULES PREFERENCE

When asked which election rules and outcomes they prefer, voters are divided. Even among those who participated in RCV elections, our respondents were split on whether it's important to have the winning candidate get a majority or just a plurality of votes. Absent any details about how RCV works in practice, non-RCV participants heavily favor the status quo, winner take all election rules.



"Which statement comes closest to your opinion for the best method to select your city council members and mayor?"  
(n = 1,627)

Prefer winning candidate gets a majority of votes through RCV

It doesn't matter to me what system is used

Prefer winning candidate gets the most votes, majority or not

RCV  
Participants

43%

14

43

Non-RCV  
Participants

31

12

57

# WINNING A MAJORITY – ISSUE FRAMING

After being asked directly whether they would prefer to elect their local officials via RCV or simple plurality voting, respondents were given additional information about how RCV works and were then asked how important it is to them that a candidate wins a majority of the votes.



*“The vote counting system used to pick Utah's Governor and other state and county officials requires that the candidate with the most votes wins (even if that means that a winning candidate gets less than a majority of votes but wins with a “plurality” in a multi-candidate race).*

*Ranked Choice Voting requires that a candidate receive a majority (50 percent of the votes plus one) to win. If a candidate receives a majority of the first-choice votes cast for that race, that candidate will be elected. However, if no candidate receives a majority of the first-choice votes cast, an elimination process begins. The candidate who received the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. Next, each vote cast for that candidate will be transferred to the voter's next-ranked choice among the remaining candidates. This elimination process will continue until one candidate receives a majority and is deemed the winner.*

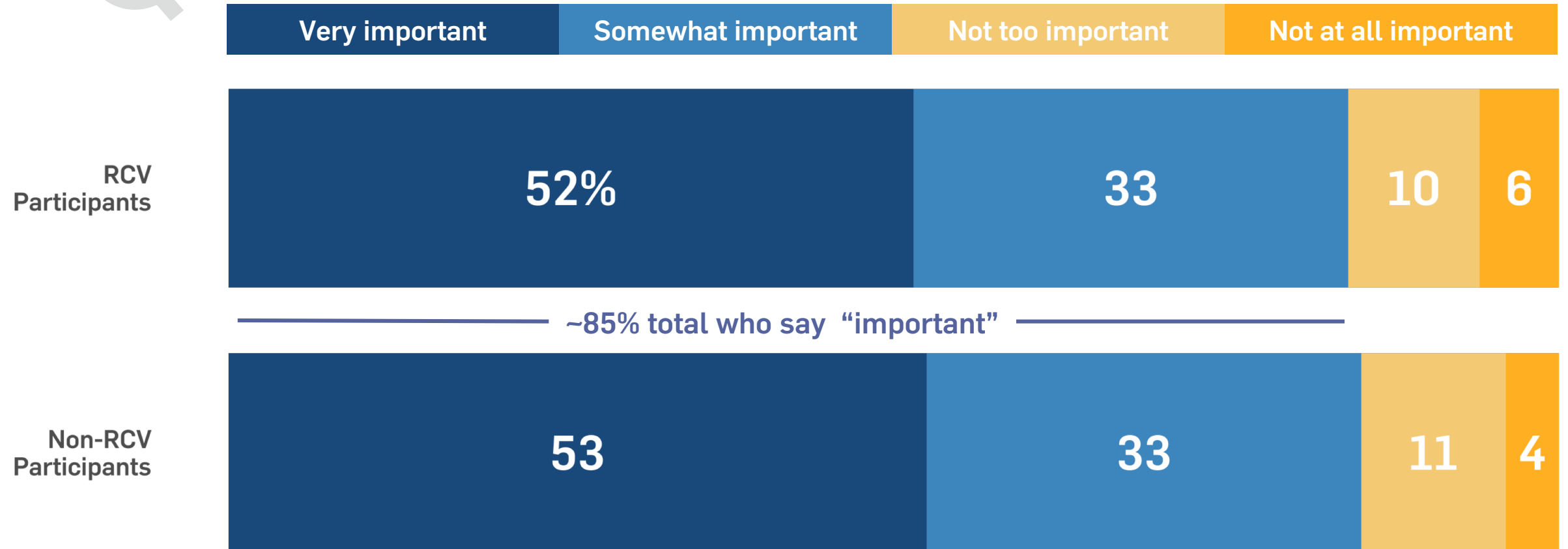
*How important is it to you that a candidate wins a majority of the votes in an election?”*

# 85% SAY WINNING A MAJORITY OF VOTES IS IMPORTANT

Once presented with additional detail about how RCV ensures a candidate wins a majority of the votes in an election, about 85% of all respondents – RCV participants and Non-RCV participants alike – say it is important that a candidate wins a majority of votes in an election. While this appears to be a disconnect given that Non-RCV participants are more resistant to Ranked Choice Voting when explicitly asked what rules they favor, it does highlight a potential opportunity to persuade those who may be on the fence about this process.



How important is it to you that a candidate wins a majority of the votes in an election? (n = 1,483)





# VOTERS WITH RCV EXPERIENCE WANT MORE

Both RCV and Non-RCV participants are interested in seeing RCV employed more often in Utah elections. Half of RCV participants think the process should be used for statewide elections while 19% think it should be used for only local elections. Among Non-RCV participants, a total of 54% say RCV should at least be done in local elections, and 36% say it should be used for statewide elections.



“Which statement comes closest to your opinion for how Utah's elected officials should be chosen in the future?” (n = 1,424)

RCV should be used for more Utah elections, including statewide offices like Governor or Congress

RCV should only be used for municipal or other local elections

RCV should not be used for any Utah elections

RCV  
Participants

50%

19

31

Non-RCV  
Participants

36

18

46



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