



Pend Oreille Public Utility District

Key Findings from a Survey of Pend Oreille County Customers
January 2025



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METHODOLOGY

- Strategies 360 conducted a representative, multi-modal survey of **300 residential customers** in Pend Oreille County, Washington.
- Interviews were conducted **November 3 - 18, 2024**. A combination of live interviewers calling landline and mobile phones, in addition to online interviews via email and SMS invitations were used to ensure greater coverage of the population sampled.
- The margin of error for a survey of 300 interviews is **±6 %** at the 95% confidence level.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

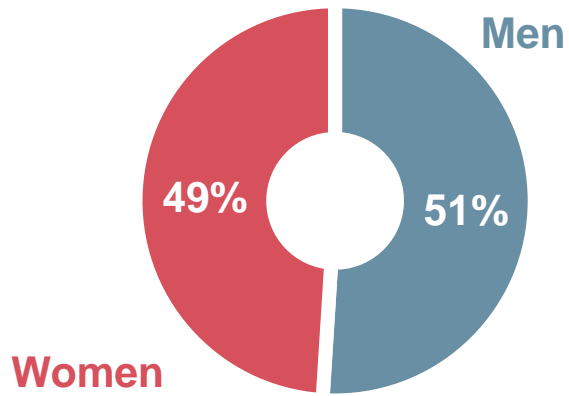
- ❖ **Majority of customers are satisfied with Pend Oreille PUD:** Customers (residential rate payers) view the PUD with general satisfaction. This is despite a majority of customers believing the state is on the wrong track and a plurality believing Pend Oreille County is on the wrong track.
- ❖ **Customer perceptions on bill affordability:** When asked, customers believe that their electric bills are either lower or the same as other localities in the state. Almost 3 in 4 residents view their energy bills as affordable.
- ❖ **Customers want the core functions of the PUD providing electricity done well, reliably, and consistently.** Customers view core functions such as bill affordability, service affordability, and safety as the highest priorities for Pend Oreille PUD.
- ❖ **Rate increases are acceptable to customers for the purpose of supporting core functions:** The survey data supports smaller, incremental rate increases for those performance reasons but not for expansion of services, ancillary reasons or new services. Customers repeatedly prioritized stability and reliability of existing services.



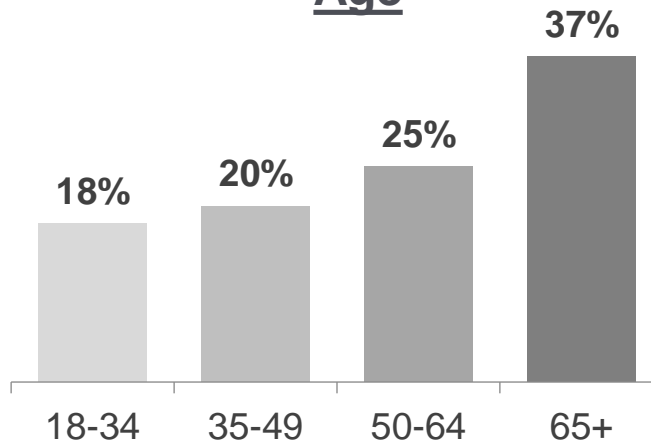
PEND OREILLE PUD CUSTOMER DEMOGRAPHICS

Representative demographics of Pend Oreille County adults per US Census

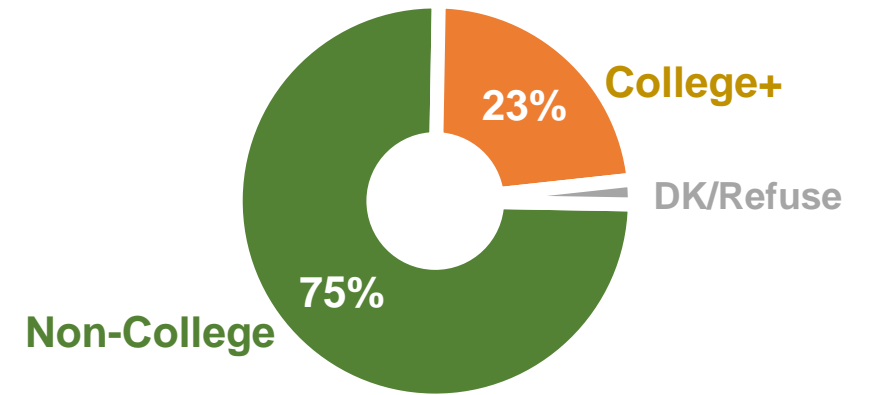
Gender



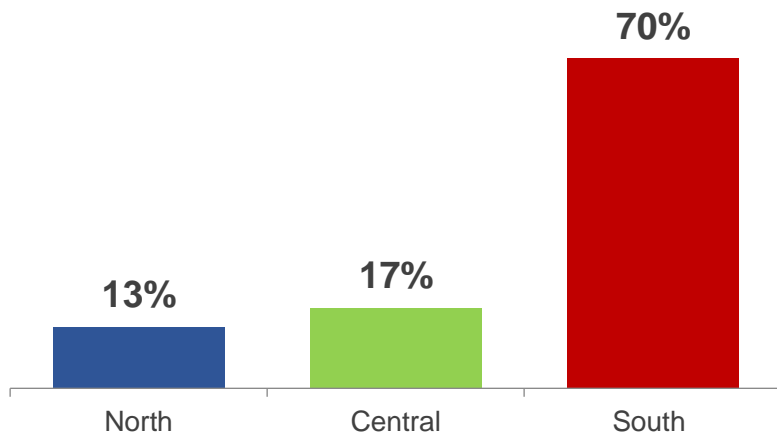
Age



Education



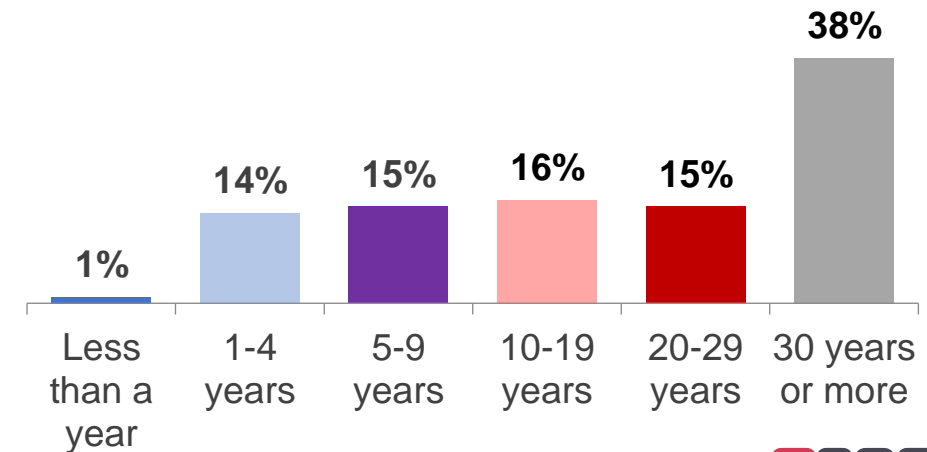
Region



Race

White/Caucasian	94%
Hispanic/Latino	4%
Black/AA	1%
Native American / Alaska Native	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%
Mixed race/multi-racial	-

Residency*



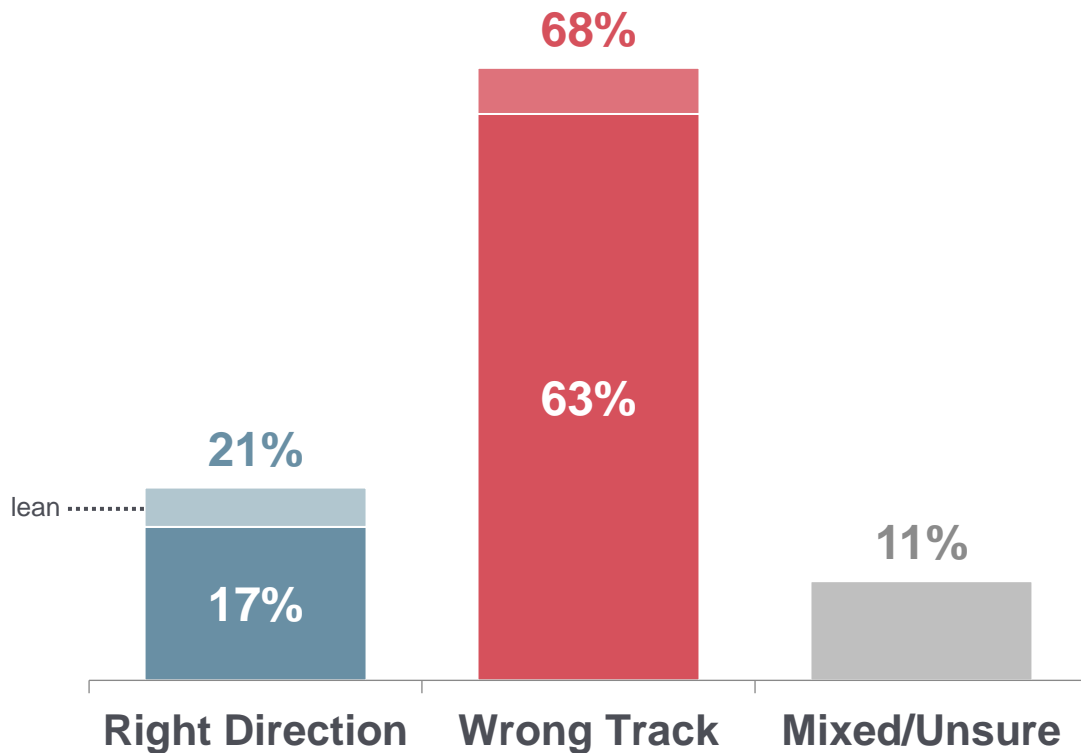
*directional distribution



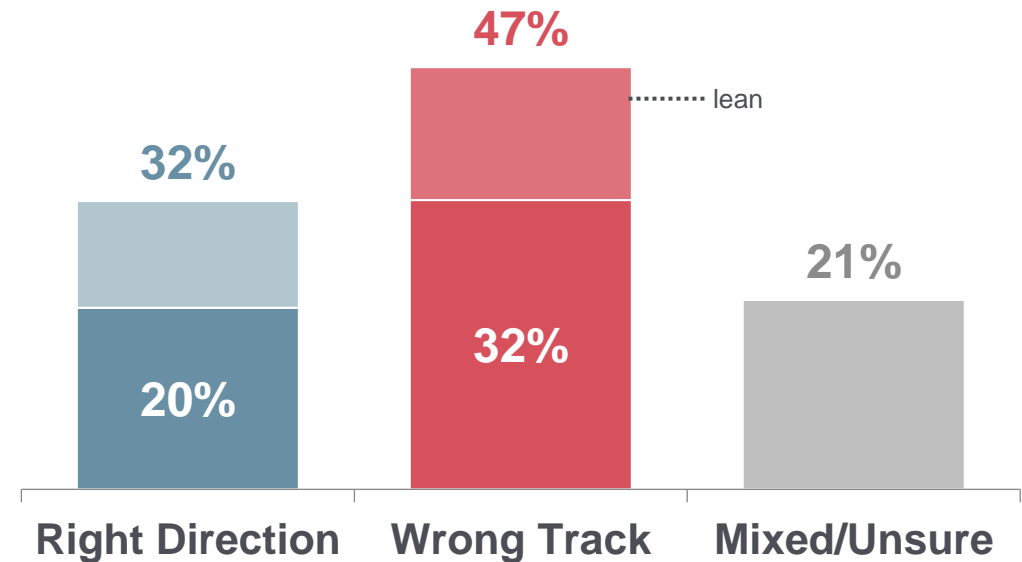
PERSPECTIVES ON PRICE AFFORDABILITY AND RATES

Pend Oreille County residents believe Washington state and Pend Oreille County are both on the wrong track, but to a lesser degree in Pend Oreille County.

Direction of Washington state*



Direction of Pend Oreille County**

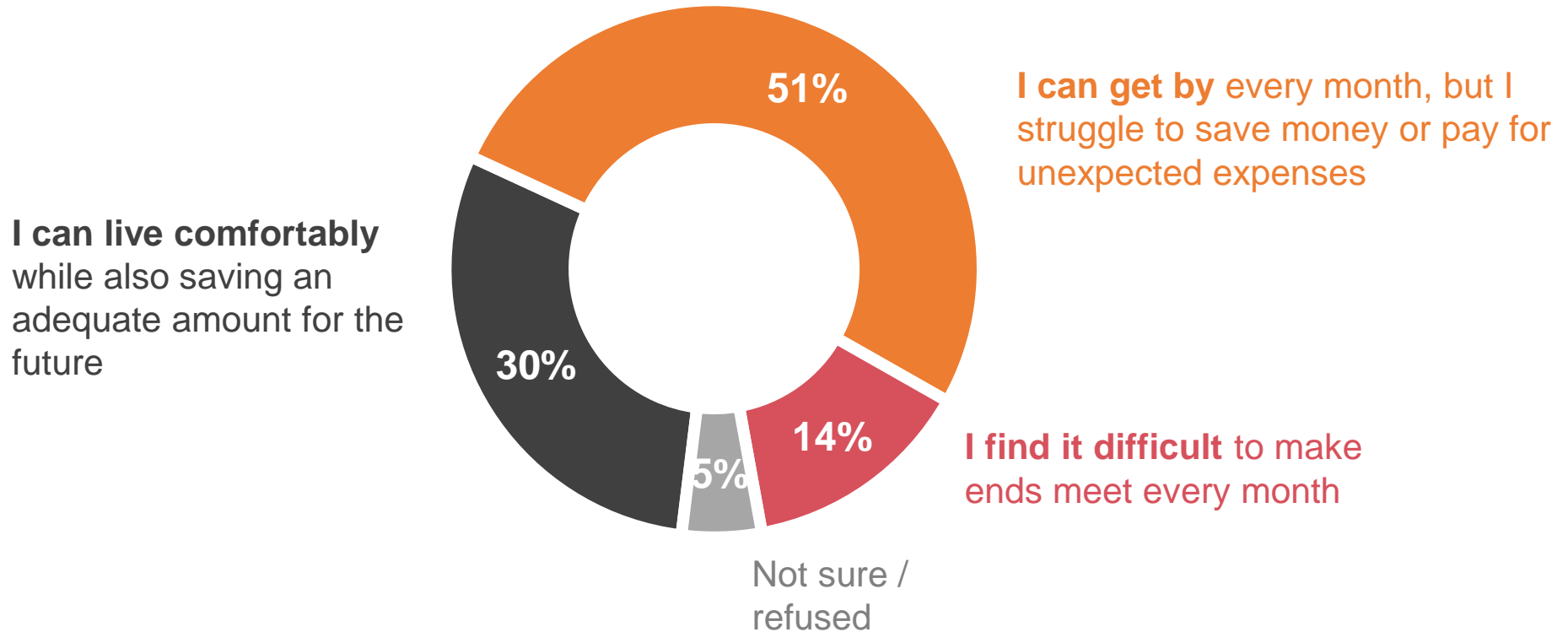


*In general, would you say that things in the state of Washington are heading in the right direction or are things off on the wrong track?

**In general, would you say that things in Pend Oreille County are heading in the right direction or are things off on the wrong track?

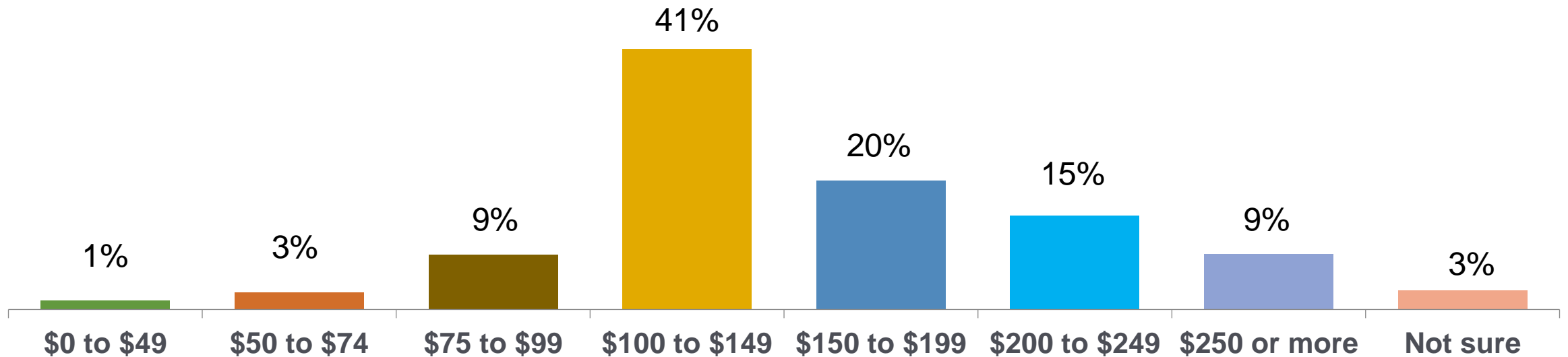
Half of Pend Oreille County residents say they can get by every month, but struggle to save money or pay for unexpected expenses. Only about one-third say they live comfortably and can save for the future.

Which of the following best describes your personal financial situation?



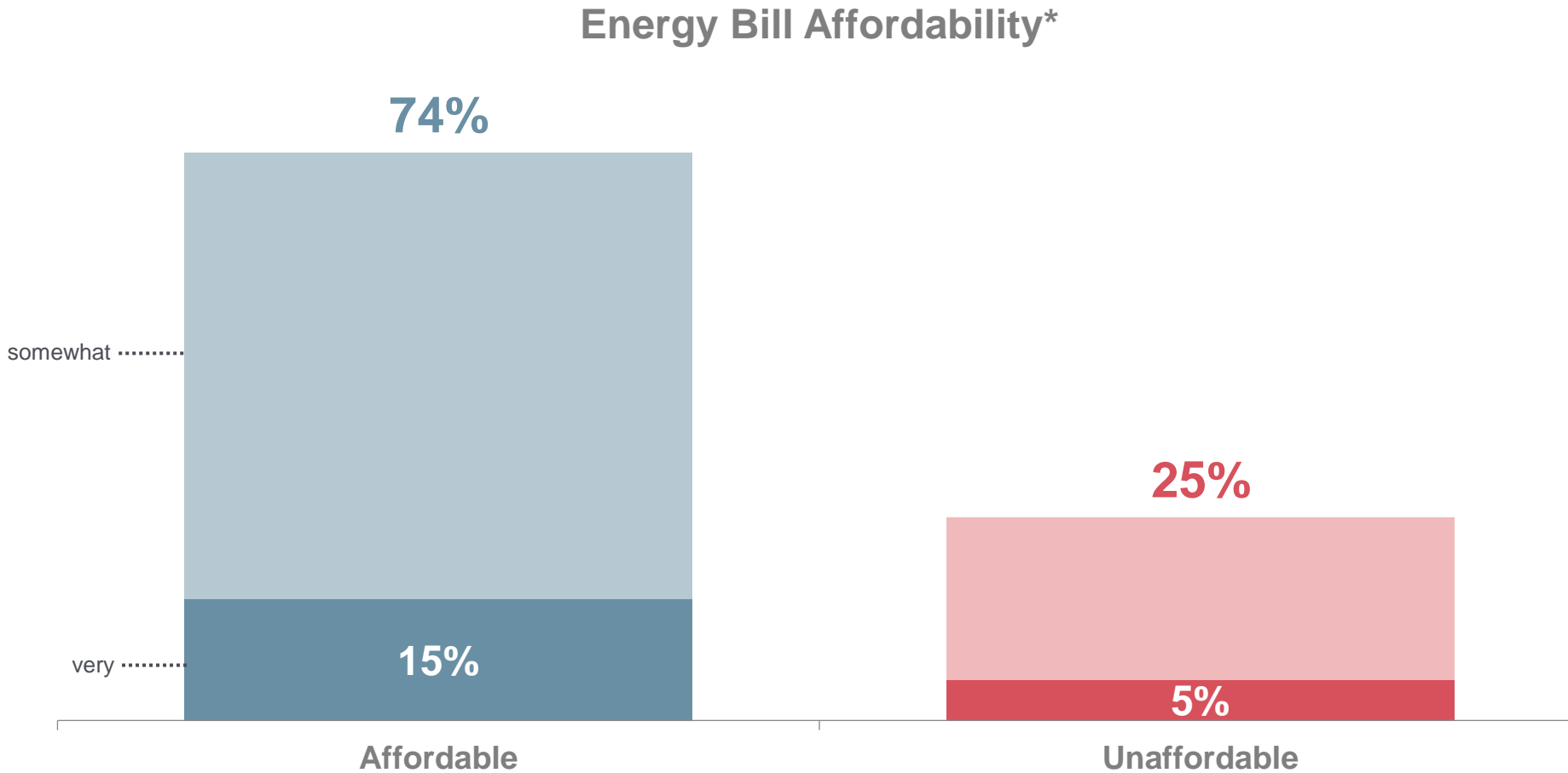
Most rate payers report their electricity bills are between \$100 to \$200 per month in Pend Oreille county.

Estimated monthly electricity bill*



*If you had to guess, about how much would you say you pay per month for your electricity bills? I understand that this may fluctuate, but if you had to give a rough estimate of the average amount you spend on your electricity bills per month, what would it be? Please select from the list below:

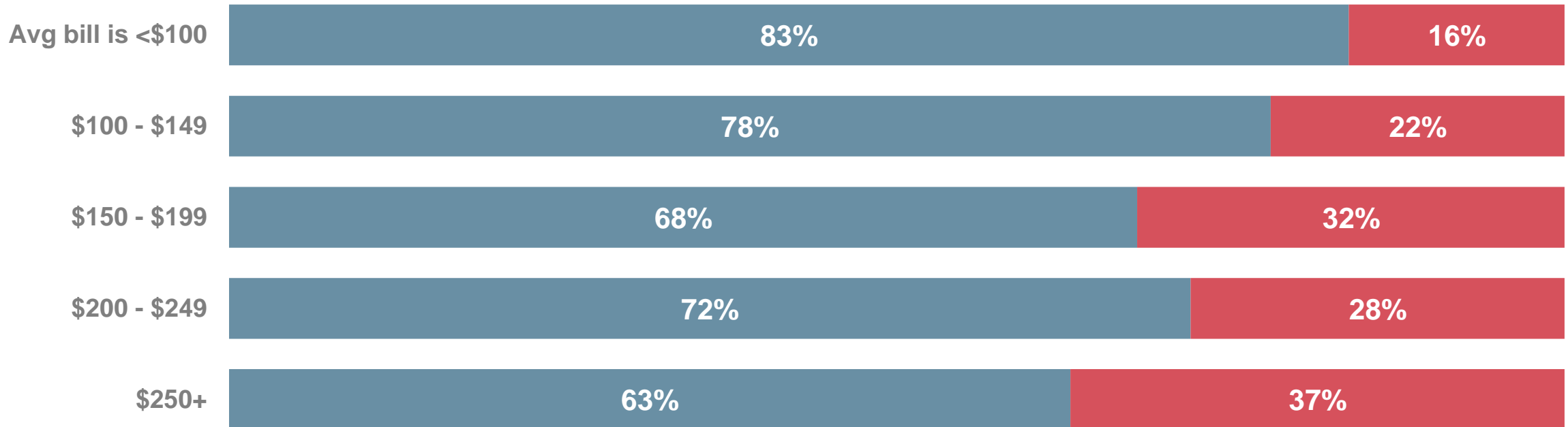
Energy bills are seen as affordable except among those struggling economically.



Threshold for Unaffordability: Once energy bills exceed \$150 per month, perceptions of unaffordability begin to spike.

Perception of bill affordability by self-reported average bill*

total affordable | total not affordable

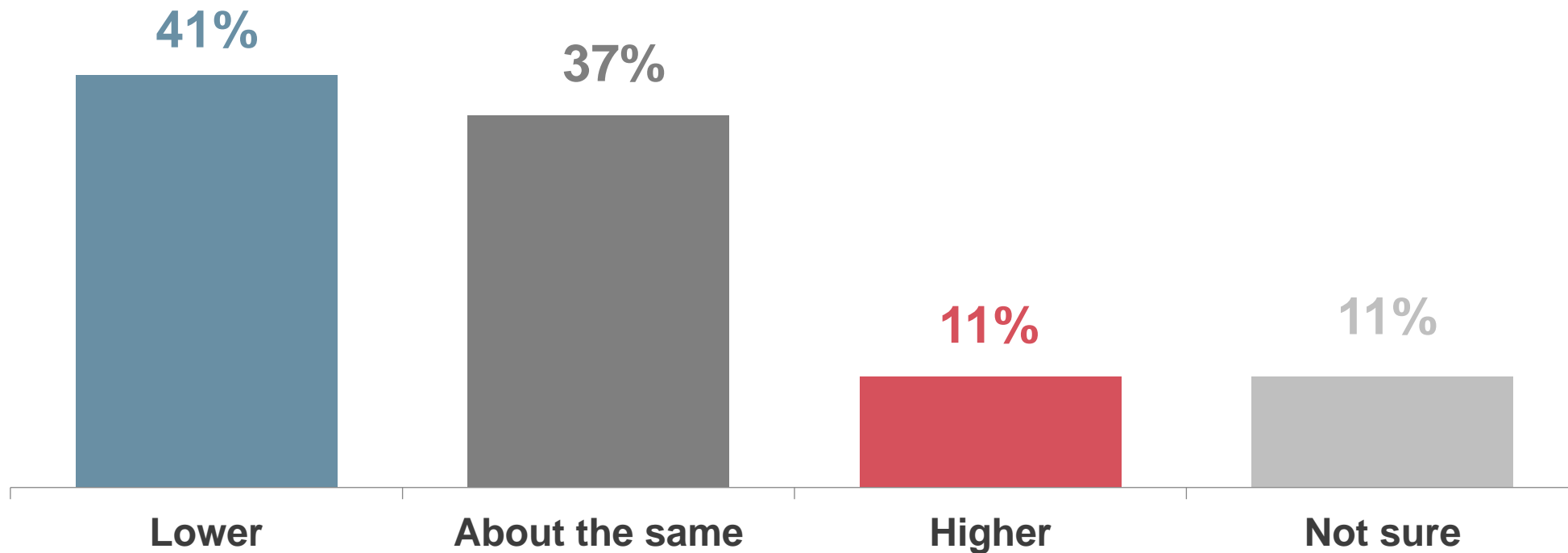


*If you had to guess, about how much would you say you pay per month for your electricity bills?
and

In general, how affordable are your energy bills for your household? Would you say that in general your electricity bills are very affordable, somewhat affordable, not very affordable, or not at all affordable for you?

Most rate payers view electricity rates within the county as lower or the same as the rest of Washington State counties.

Perceptions of electricity prices in Pend Oreille County vs. other places in Washington state*



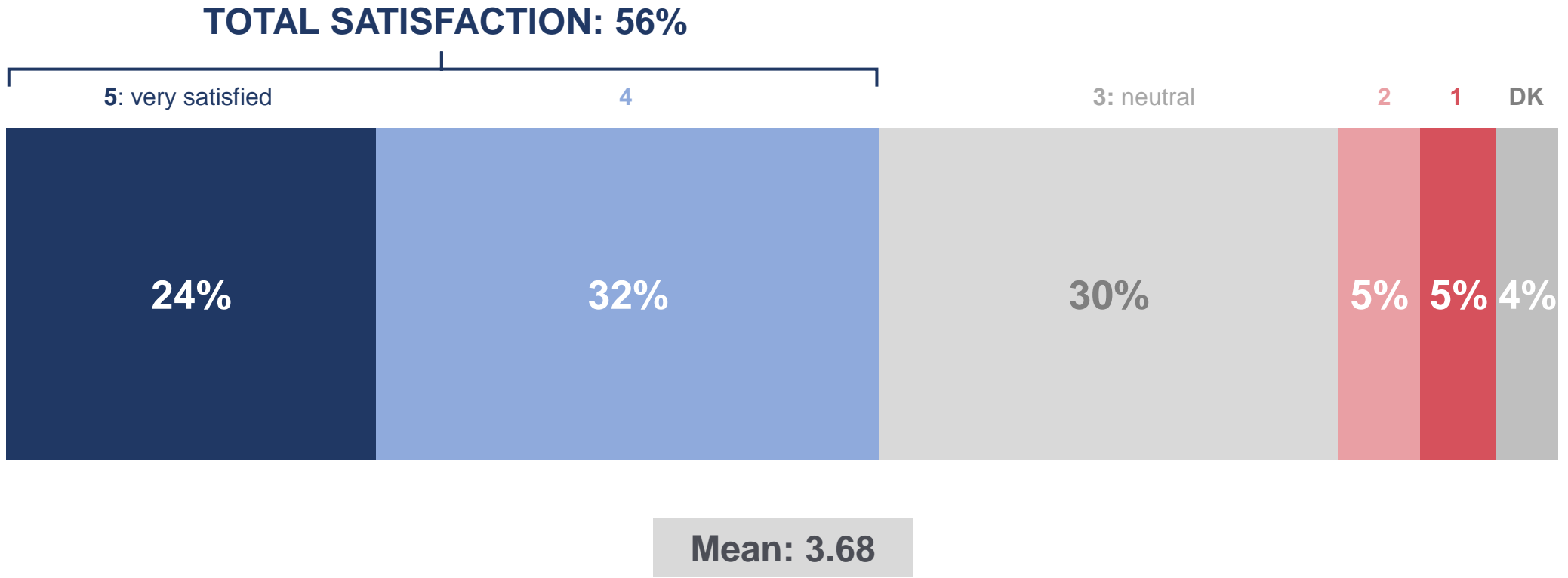
*How do you think the prices you pay for electric power here in Pend Oreille County compare to the prices in most other places in Washington?



SATISFACTION WITH PUD

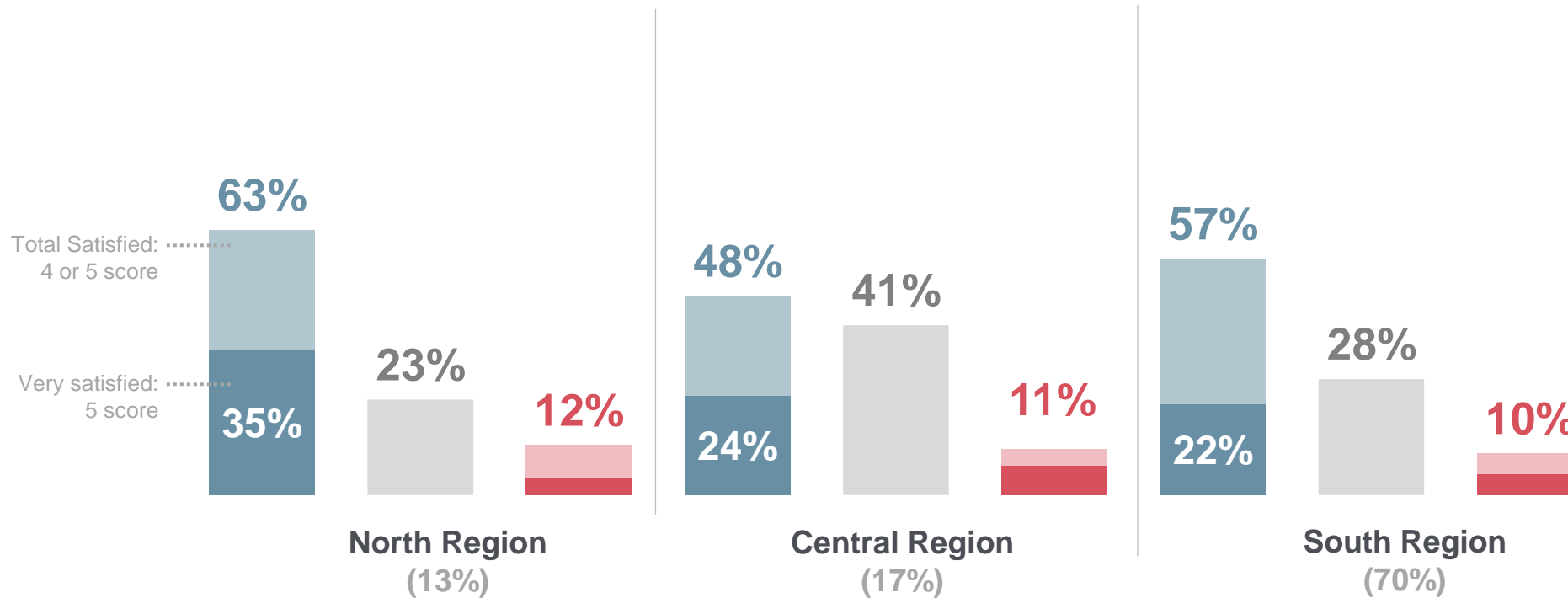
More than half of rate payers in the county are overall satisfied with the Pend Oreille PUD. A sizeable amount say they are neutral and few report dissatisfaction.

Overall satisfaction with Pend Oreille PUD on a scale from 1 to 5



There is no significant variation across geography outside a high level of neutral perceptions in the Central region, despite higher statistical margins of error within smaller geographic regions (e.g., use caution).

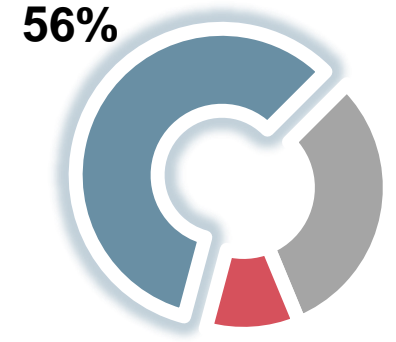
Satisfaction with Pend Oreille PUD* by geographic region**



* Q8. Overall, how satisfied in general are you with the Pend Oreille Public Utility District, also known as PUD? Please use a scale of one to five?

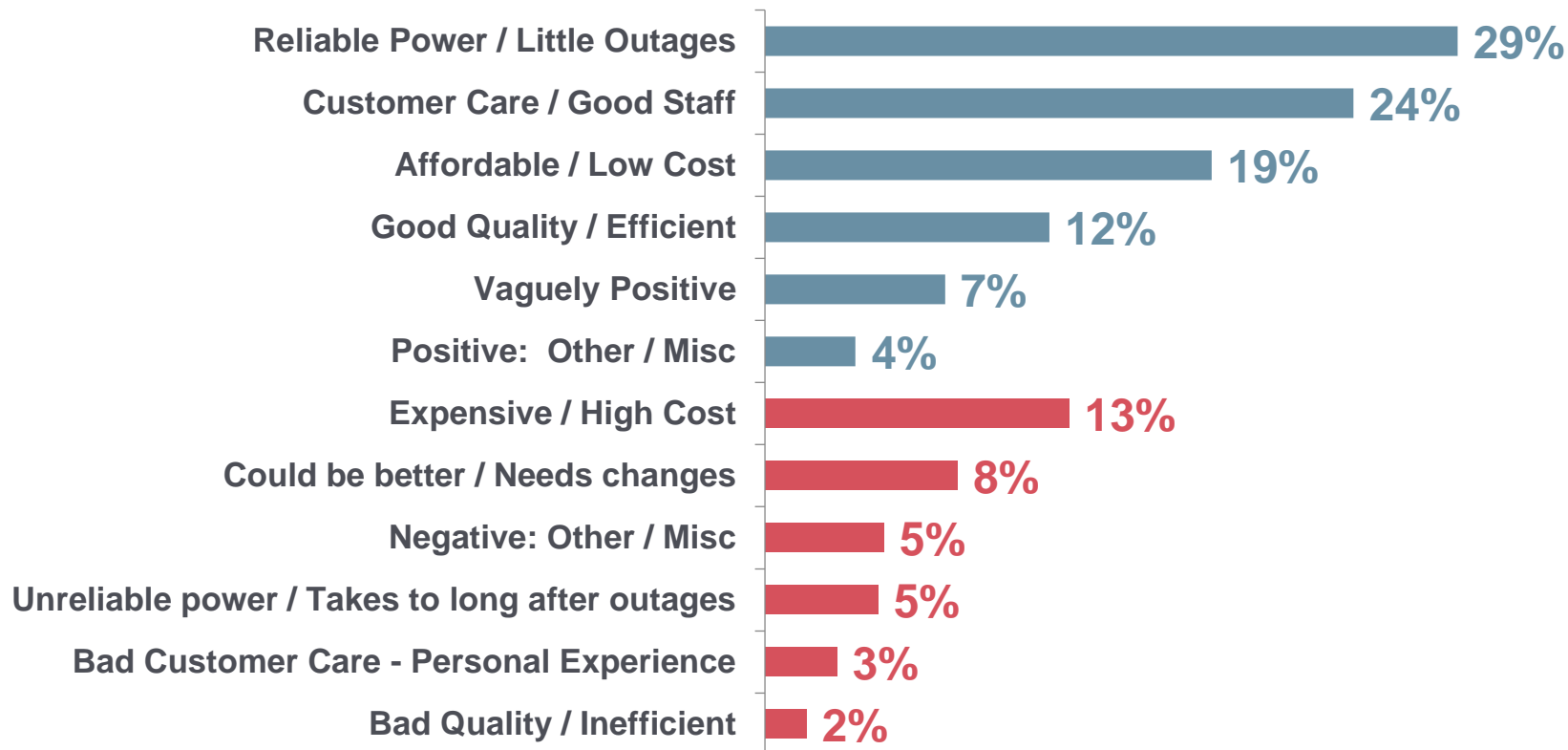
**Region is defined by zip code: North (99139, 99152, 99153), Central (99119, 99180), and South (99156, 99009(partial), 99006(partial))

Qualitative data demonstrates that satisfaction for a majority of customers are motivated primarily by performance of core PUD functions such as electric bill affordability and service reliability.



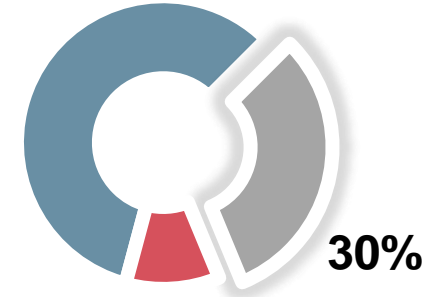
total satisfied | neutral | total dissatisfied

[Among only satisfied customers] In your own words, can you explain why you rated your overall satisfaction positively?*

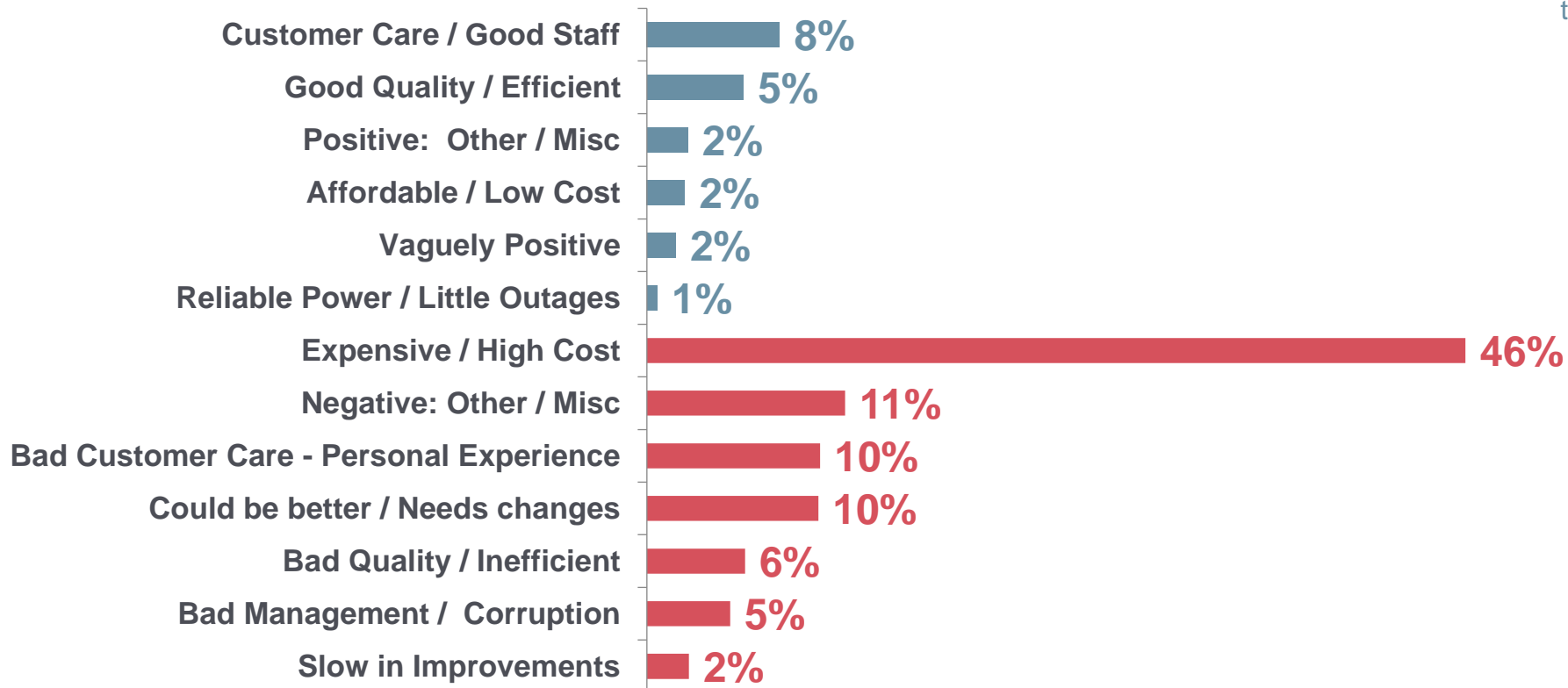


Neutral satisfaction perceptions are motivated by a mixture of positive and negative feedback.

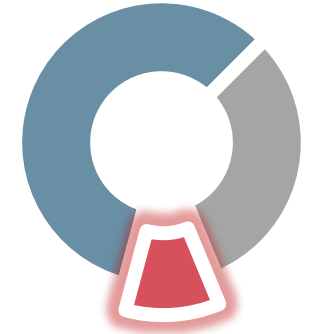
[Among only neutral customers] In your own words, can you explain why you rated your overall satisfaction neutral or mixed?*



total satisfied | neutral | total dissatisfied



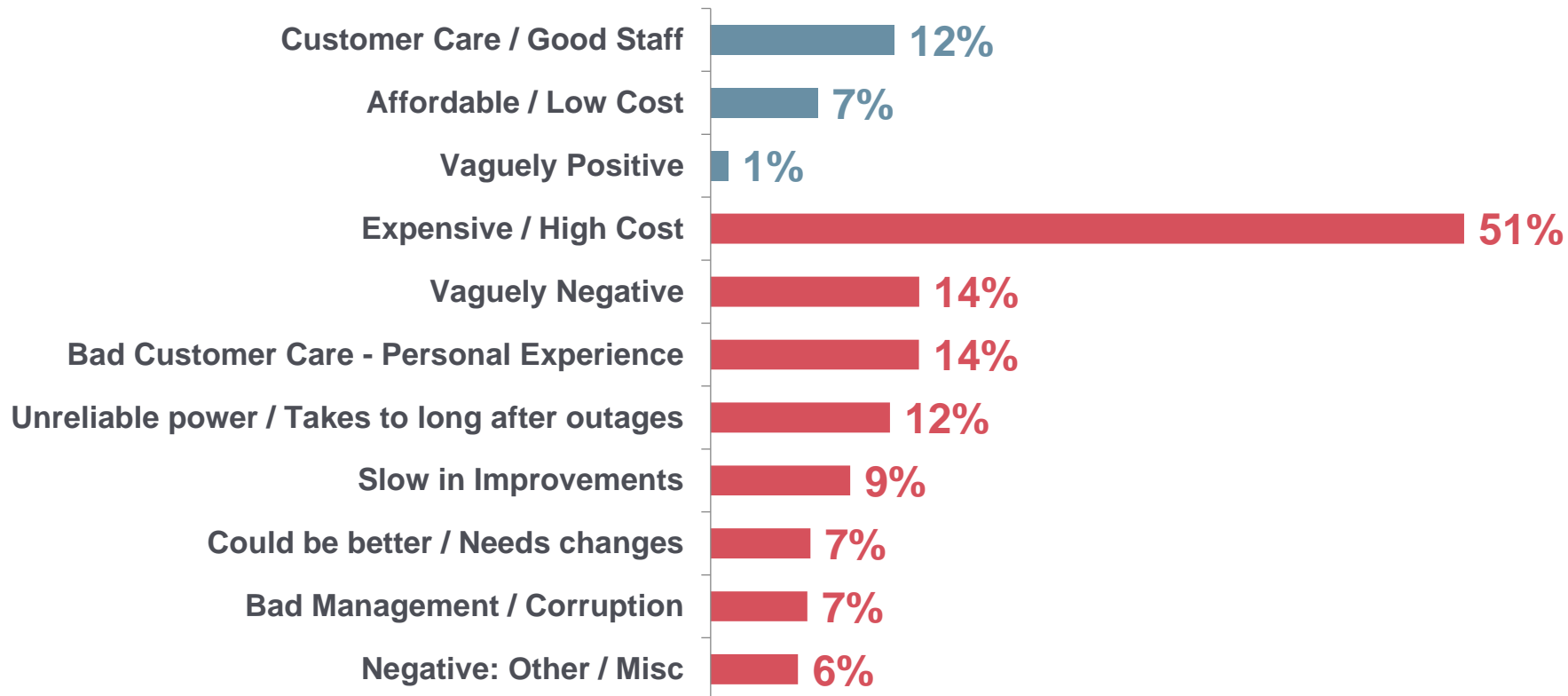
Dissatisfaction is related to primarily cost of electricity and perceptions of unreliability.



10%

total satisfied | neutral | total dissatisfied

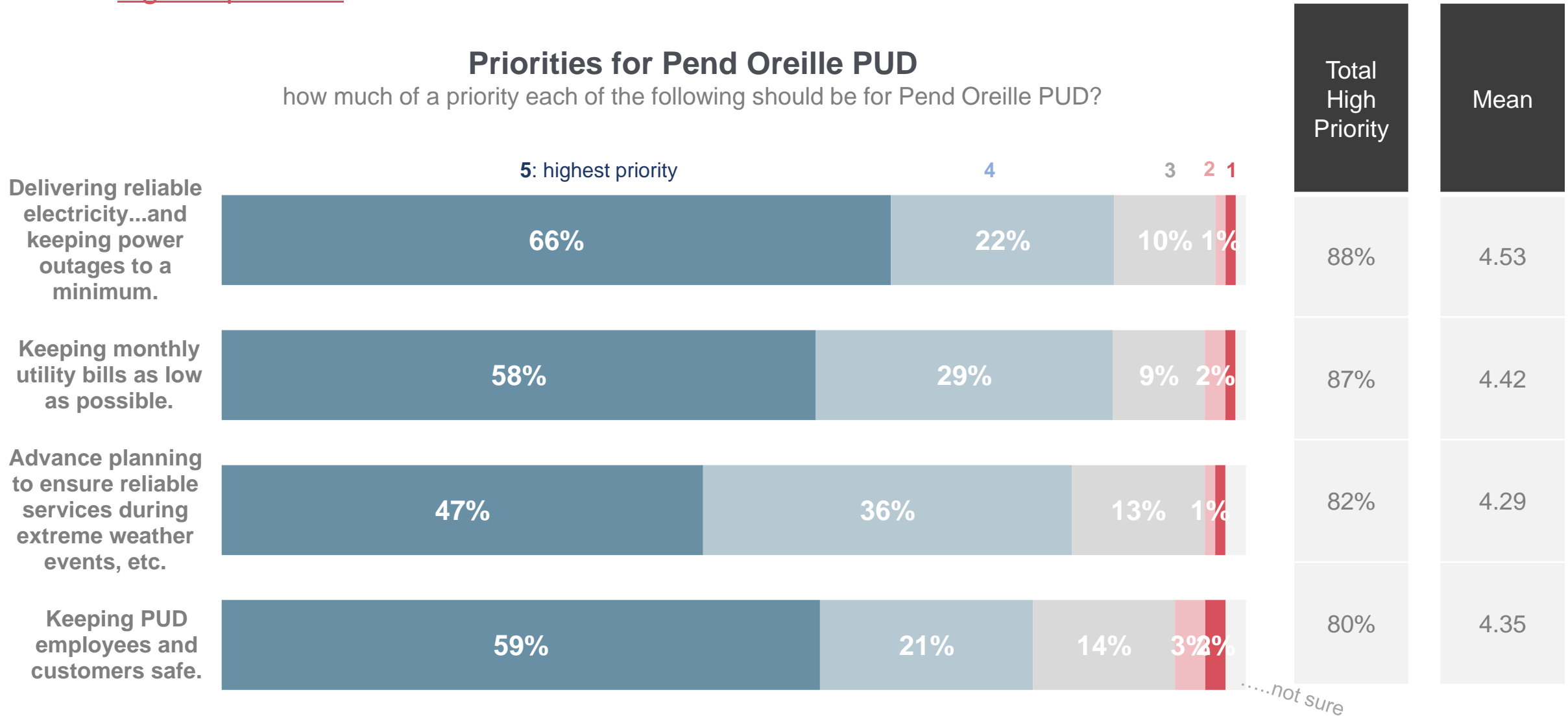
[Among only dissatisfied customers] In your own words, can you explain why you rated your overall satisfaction negatively?*





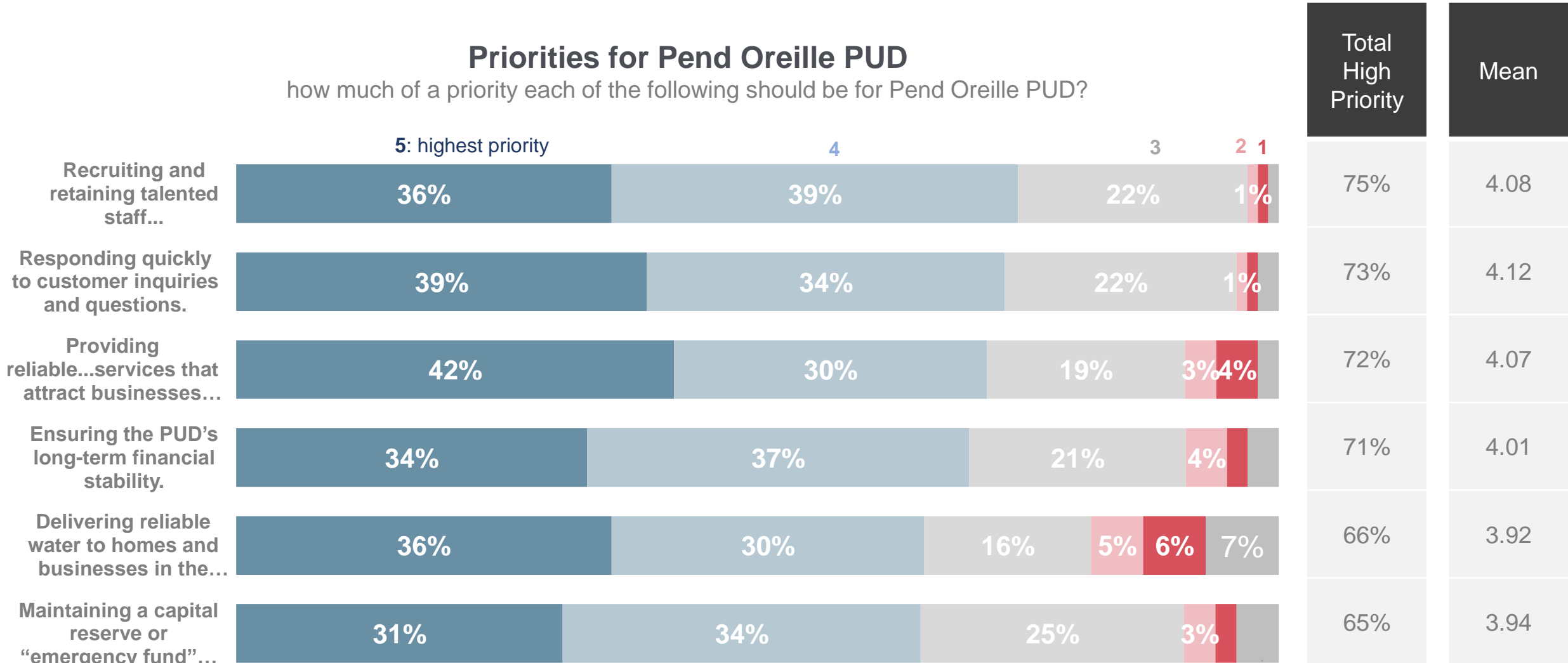
PEND OREILLE PUD PRIORITIES

Customers view core functions such as bill affordability, service affordability, and safety as the highest priorities for Pend Oreille PUD.



“Please choose on a scale of 1-5 how much of a priority each of the following should be for Pend Oreille PUD. A rating of “1” means it should be one of Pend Oreille PUD’s lowest priorities, while a rating of “5” means it should be one of the highest priorities. Remember that while all of these may be important priorities, not all of them can be a “5.”

A mixture of staffing, customer service, financial responsibility, attracting businesses and water service receive relatively middling priority – they are important but not the highest priority.

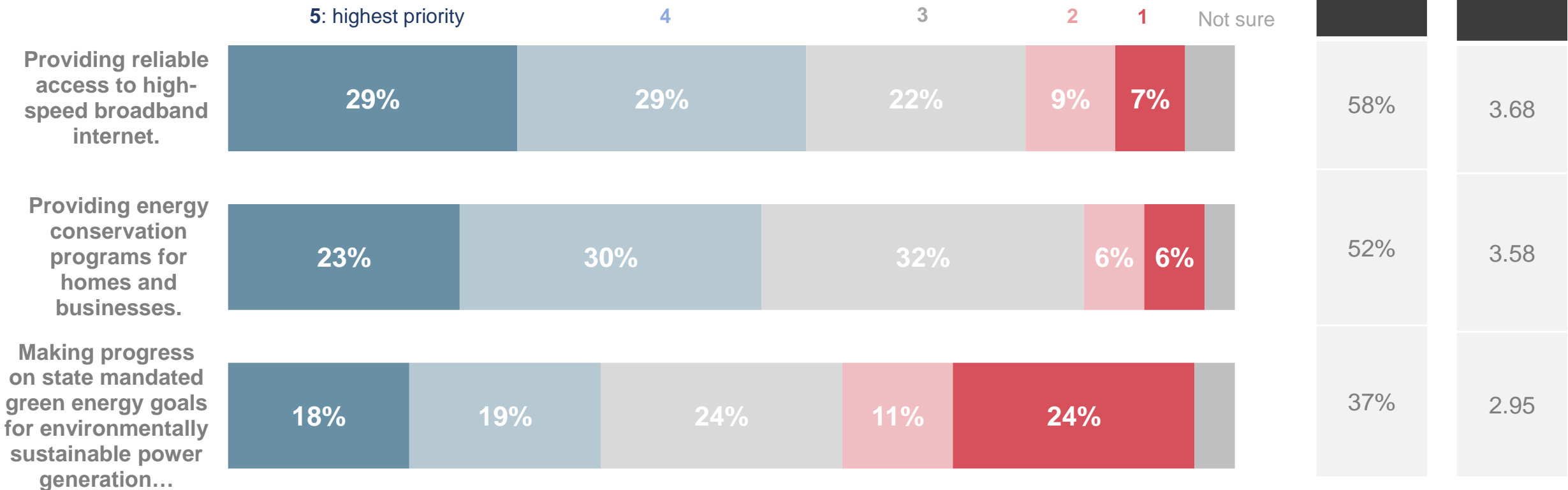


"Please choose on a scale of 1-5 how much of a priority each of the following should be for Pend Oreille PUD. A rating of "1" means it should be one of Pend Oreille PUD's lowest priorities, while a rating of "5" means it should be one of the highest priorities. Remember that while all of these may be important priorities, not all of them can be a "5."

Delivering broadband access, conservation programs, and green energy receive the relatively lowest priority in the eyes of customers. There is notable pushback by more than 1-in-3 on “state mandated green energy goals”.

Priorities for Pend Oreille PUD

how much of a priority each of the following should be for Pend Oreille PUD?



“Please choose on a scale of 1-5 how much of a priority each of the following should be for Pend Oreille PUD. A rating of “1” means it should be one of Pend Oreille PUD’s lowest priorities, while a rating of “5” means it should be one of the highest priorities. Remember that while all of these may be important priorities, not all of them can be a “5.”

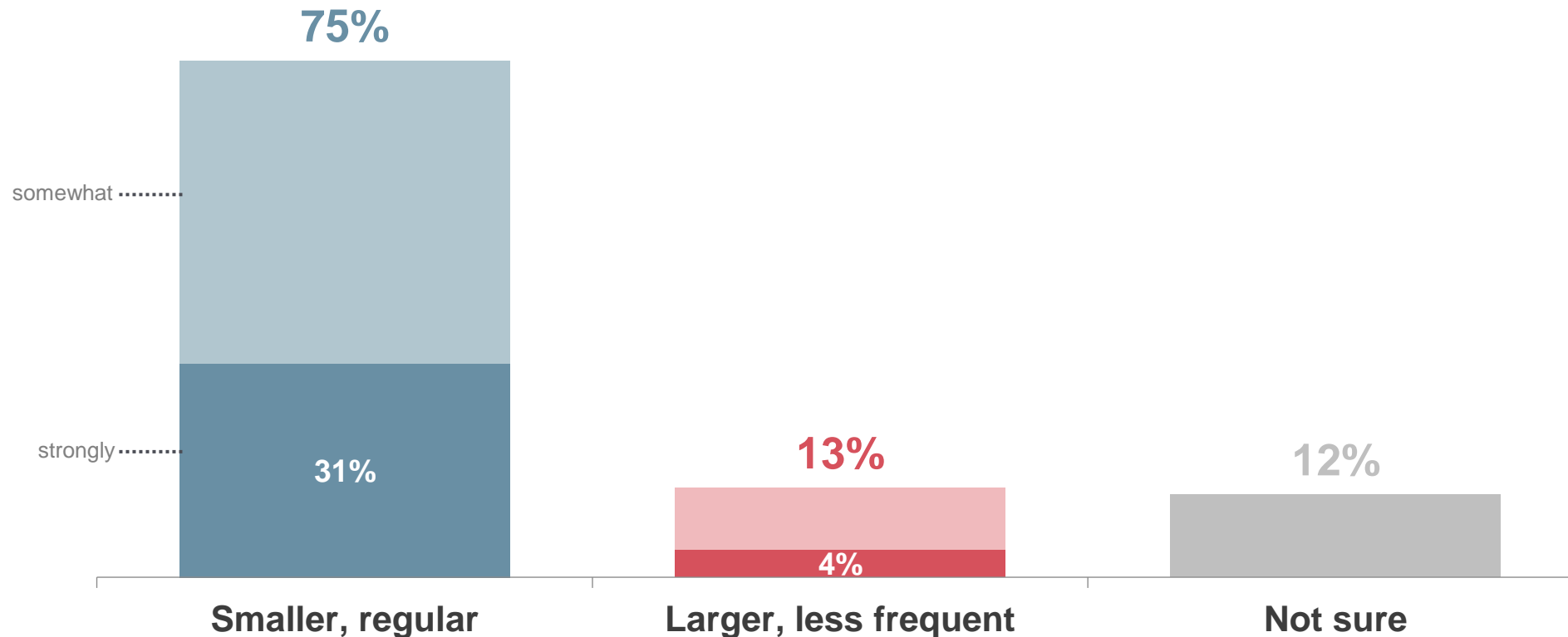


RATE INCREASE PREFERENCE

Across all demographics and categories, customers prefer rate increases that are smaller and more regular as opposed to larger and less frequent.

Rate increases smaller and regular, or larger and less frequent?*

*Which approach comes closest to your point of view? Should the PUD make small rate increases each year, or should the PUD space them out with larger increases when they do happen?



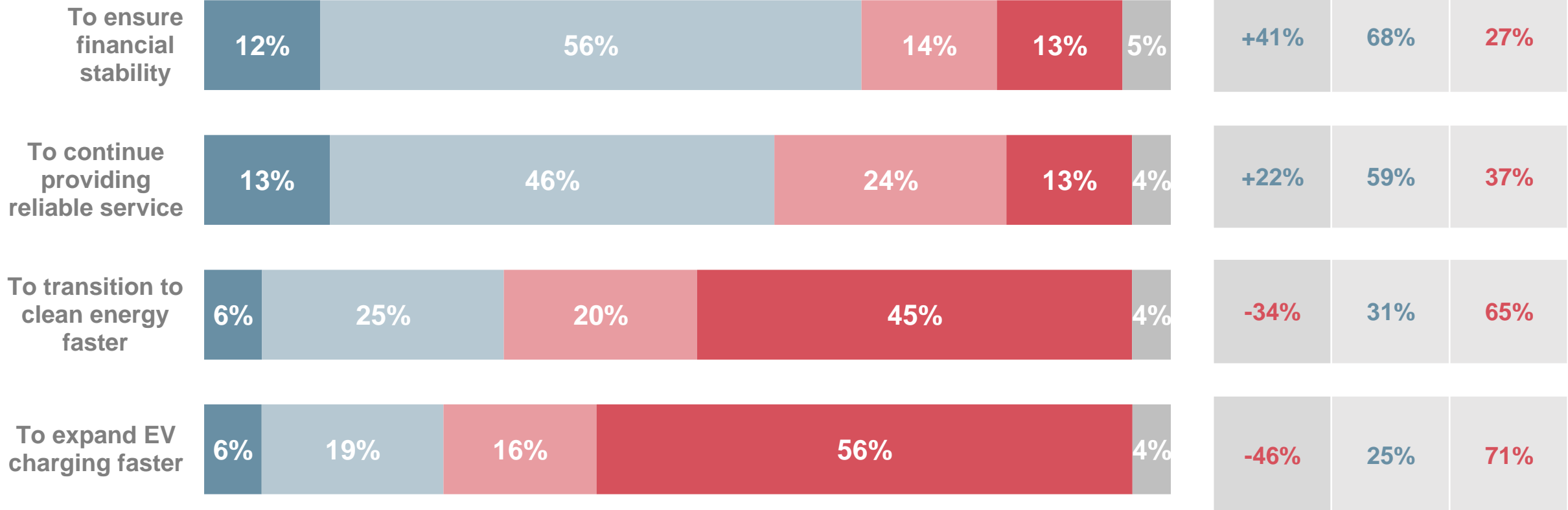


RATE INCREASE REASON

A strong majority of PUD customers support increasing rates as needed to ensure financial stability and continue providing reliable, high-quality service. An even stronger majority opposes raising rates to pay for EV charging infrastructure or clean energy transition.

Reasons to support rate increases*

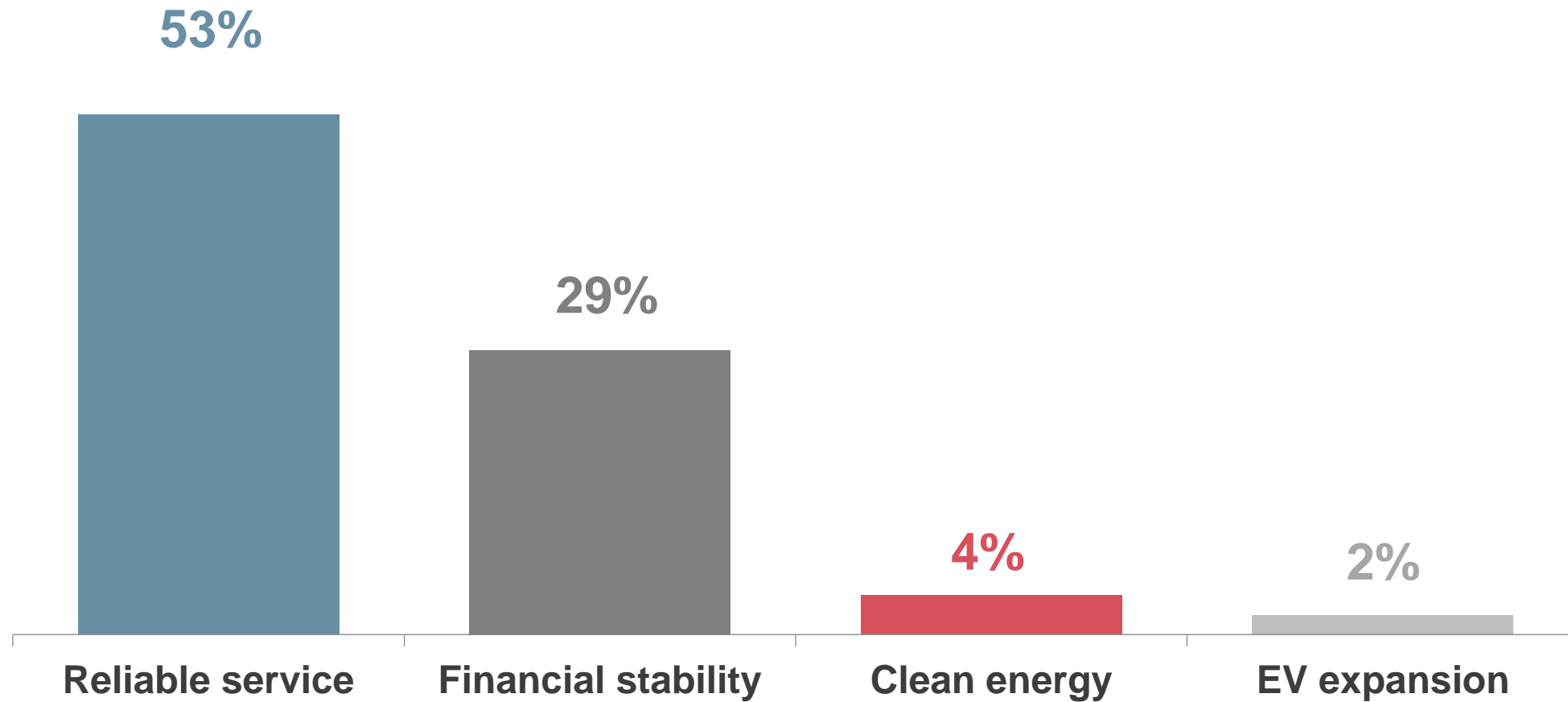
strongly support | somewhat support | somewhat oppose | strongly oppose | not sure



*Next, here are some factors the PUD might consider in deciding whether rate increases are necessary. For each, please indicate whether you would support or oppose an overall rate increase for the purpose of that factor. And whether that would be strongly or somewhat?

When forced to choose only one reason for a rate increase, “service reliability” beats out “financial stability.”

Most important factor when considering a rate increase*



*Here is that same list of factors for considering rate increases. Please select the factor (MAX ONE) you believe is the most important for Pend Oreille PUD to consider at this time.



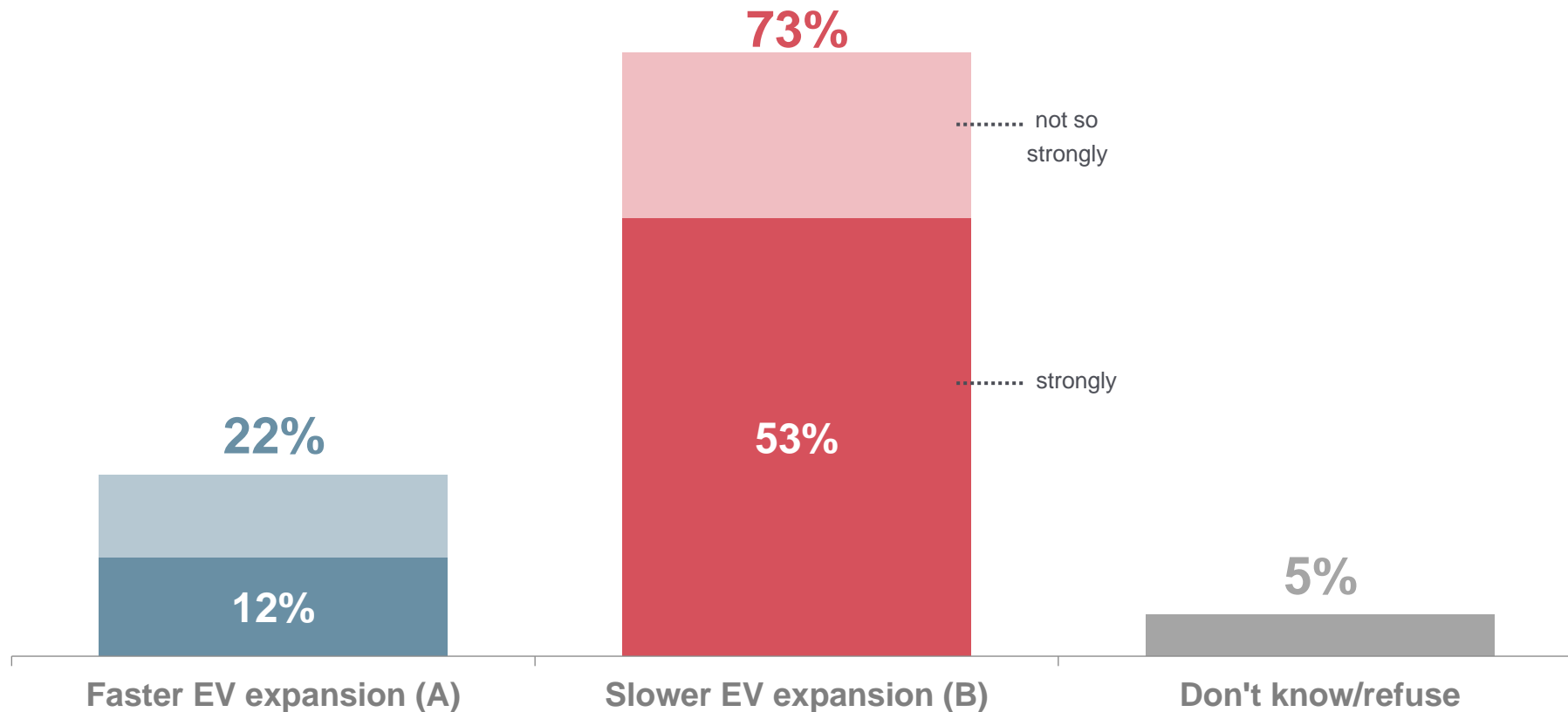
EV EXPANSION

Pend Oreille PUD customers do not support expanding EV charging infrastructure if it means charging customer higher rates.

Work faster to expand EV charging infrastructure, or work more slowly?

STATEMENT A: Some people say that Pend Oreille PUD should work faster to expand electric vehicle charging station infrastructure, even if it means charging customers higher rates for electricity.

STATEMENT B: Other people say Pend Oreille PUD should work more slowly to expand vehicle charging station infrastructure and keep pressure from EV mandates on electric rates lower for as long as possible.





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