

# Trees, Insects, Diseases, and Firewood: What the Public Has to Tell Us

*Findings From Recent Survey and  
Focus Group Research*

**December 13, 2007**

320-338

*Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates*

*Opinion Research & Public Policy Analysis*

Santa Monica - Oakland - Madison, WI - Mexico City



## Past Research on Forest Pests and Pathogens

## Midwestern Pests and Pathogens Research Methodology

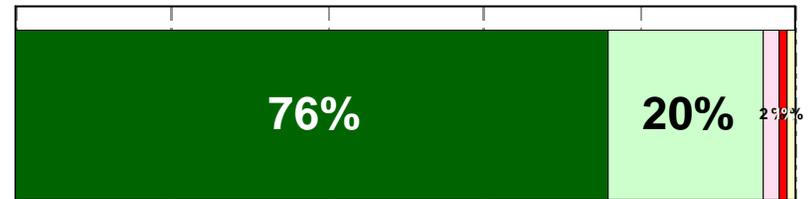
- 800 telephone interviews with registered voters in Wisconsin and Illinois
- 400 interviews in each state
- Interviews conducted March 8-13, 2007
- Margin of sampling error of +/- 4.9% for each state
- Comparison data drawn from national surveys conducted in December 2005 and February 2007
- Surveys preceded by four focus groups with voters in Chicago, IL and Stevens Point, WI

# Midwestern Attitudes Toward Forest Pests and Pathogens

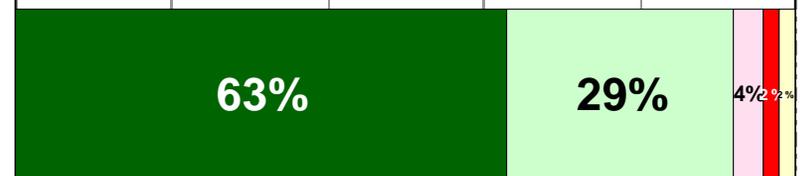
## Voters believe trees contribute to their quality of life.

■ Str. Agr. ■ S.W. Agr. ■ S.W. Disag. ■ Str. Disag. ■ DK/NA

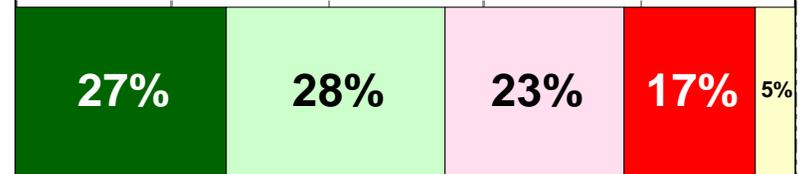
Trees are an important part of the character and quality of life in my neighborhood or town



Being around trees gives me a feeling of peace and tranquility



Forests and trees are disappearing quickly in my area of the country



If an area loses a large number of trees, they almost always grow back on their own



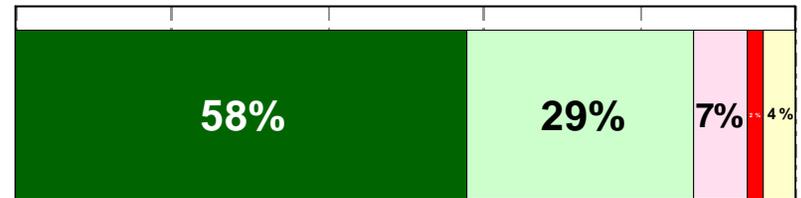
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

# Midwestern Attitudes Toward Forest Pests and Pathogens

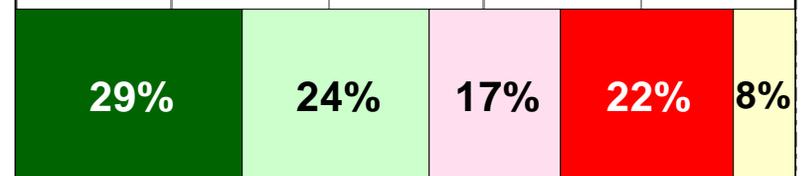
## Voters understand the impact of non-native organisms.

■ Str. Agr. ■ S.W. Agr. ■ S.W. Disag. ■ Str. Disag. ■ DK/NA

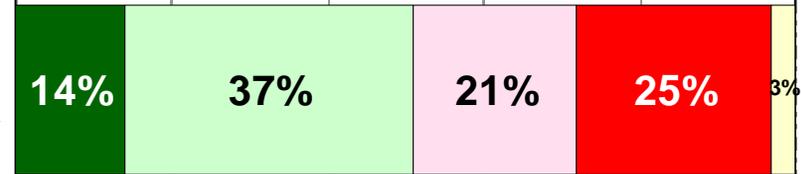
Non-native plants, insects, and animals can do great damage when they are introduced to a new area



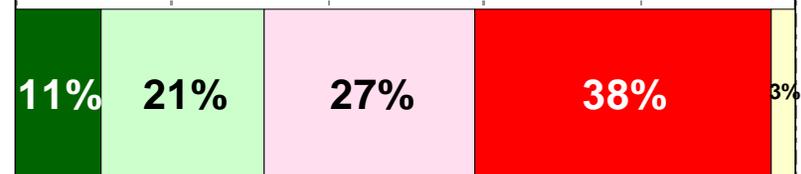
I know of areas in my neighborhood or town where trees have died from disease or insects



It's sad when bugs or diseases kill trees, but it's just a natural process at work



We have lots of things to worry about in the U.S. right now, and tree diseases should be a very low priority



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

# Midwestern Attitudes Toward Forest Pests and Pathogens

**Both in the Midwest and nationally, voters are most inclined to support tougher standards.**

*I am going to read you three statements describing different approaches to protecting forests from insects and diseases. Please tell me which approach you think will be most effective.*

Midwest 3/07

National 2/07

**Toughening and improving regulations designed to prevent invasive insects and diseases from being brought to America**

41%

38%

OR

**Preventing the importation of invasive species by giving consumers more information and encouraging them to buy only plants certified to be free of insects and diseases**

32%

33%

OR

**Devoting more money to existing government efforts to prevent invasive species from entering the country**

10%

16%

All/None/DK/NA

17%

13%

0% 20% 40% 60% 0% 20% 40% 60%

# Midwestern Attitudes Toward Forest Pests and Pathogens

**In the focus groups, a number of obstacles to policy changes emerged from the discussion.**

- Participants objected to strategies that would involve pesticides or the introduction of new species as predators for forest pests.
- More broadly, participants questioned the effectiveness of prevention strategies given that none will be 100% effective.
- A small number saw the impact of pests and pathogens as part of a natural cycle; that concern must be moderated accordingly.
- Hearing the numbers of pests and pathogens already established in North American forests – 400 insects and 24 diseases – made some people feel the battle had already been lost.

# Midwestern Attitudes Toward Forest Pests and Pathogens

## Voters are most willing to take action as consumers.

■ Very Will. ■ S.W. Will. ■ Not Will. ■ DK/NA

**\*Buying plants and trees only from nurseries that are certified as free from diseases and insects that kill trees**



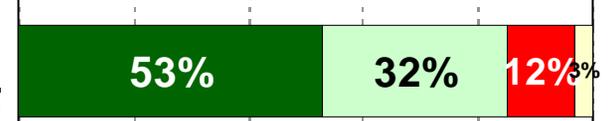
**Cleaning your boots carefully after hiking in a forest**



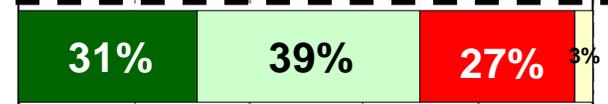
**Buying or cutting firewood only near where you plan to use it, and not transporting it from place to place**



**\*Buying plants and trees only from nurseries that are certified as free from diseases and insects that kill trees, even if certified plants and trees cost 20% more**



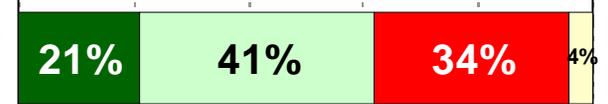
**Writing a letter to your elected officials**



**Volunteering your time on a tree safety day to help detect new infestations of insects and diseases in your community**



**Making a donation to an organization dedicated to stopping the spread of insects and diseases**



0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

## Voters see public health as the most persuasive overall frame.

Which of the following three statements do you think offers the best reason to support additional efforts to fight non-native insects and diseases that kill trees?

Forests are critical to our public health, providing natural filters that keep our air and drinking water clean

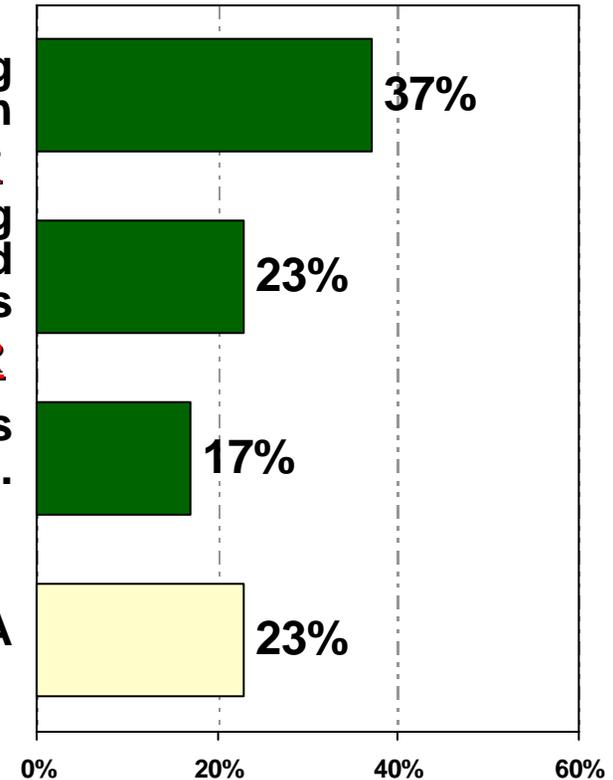
OR

Trees are essential to our quality of life, providing beauty, peace and shade to our homes and communities

OR

Forests are important to our economy, supporting tens of thousands of good-paying jobs across the U.S.

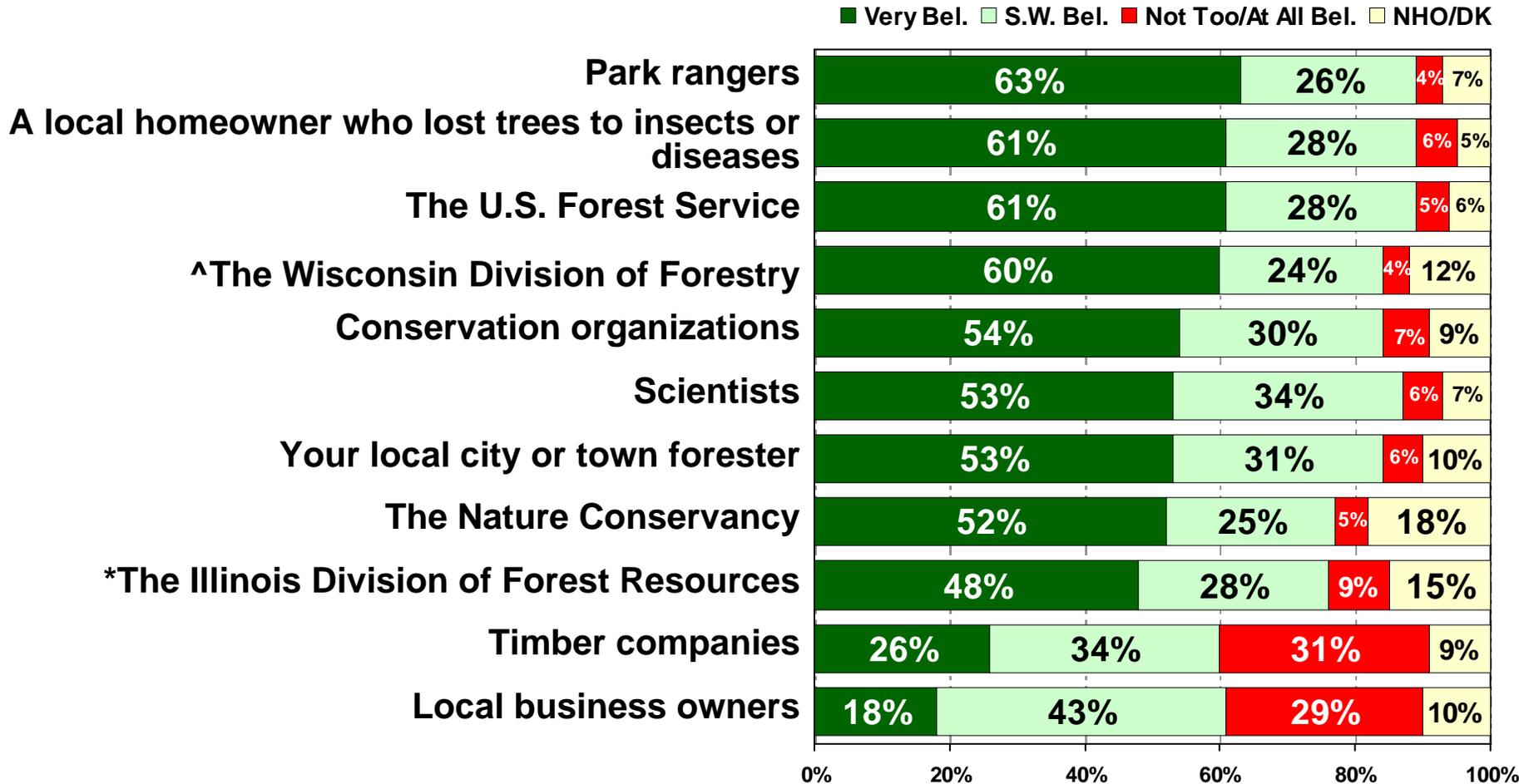
All/None/DK/NA



# Midwestern Attitudes Toward Forest Pests and Pathogens

## Homeowners and public agencies are highly credible.

Slide 10



17. I'm going to read the names of some people and organizations that might speak out about issues relating to forest health. Please tell me whether or not you would consider that person or organization to be a believable source of information about forest issues. If you have never heard of the person or organization, or have no opinion about it, please tell me that too. \*Asked in IL only; ^Asked in WI only.

## Patterns of Firewood Use

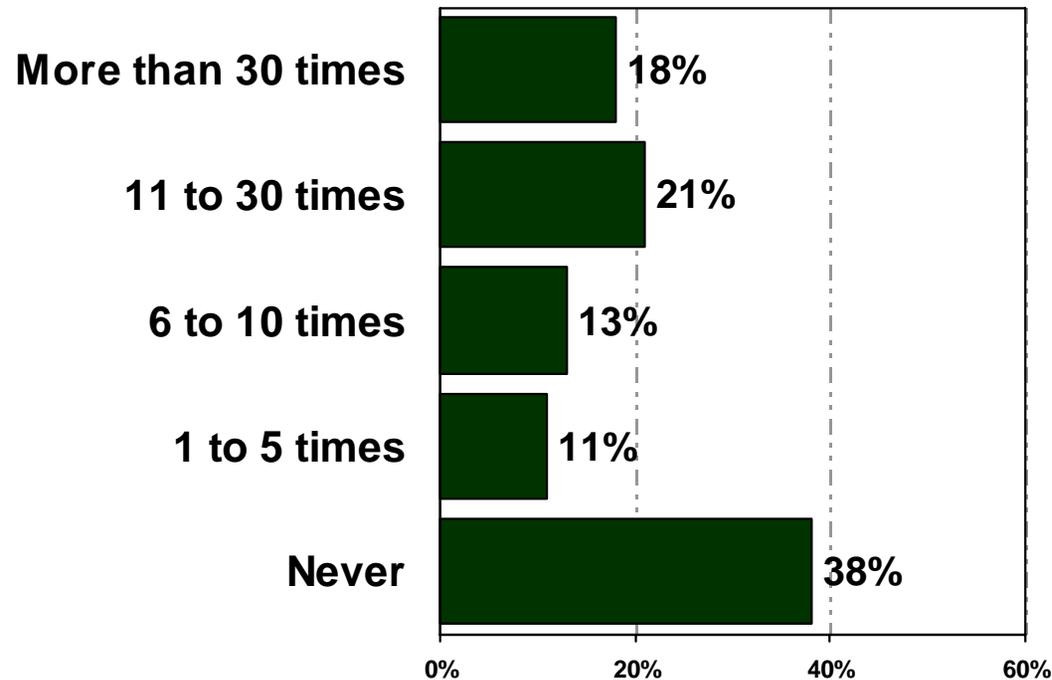
## Firewood Survey Methodology

- Survey of 600 adults who burn firewood indoors or outdoors at least once per year
- 300 interviews each with residents of states in the Northeast (NY, NJ, PA and New England states) and Upper Midwest (WI, IL, IN, MI, OH, WV)
- Interviews conducted December 1-9, 2007
- Overall margin of sampling error of +/- 4.0%
- Preceded by four focus groups with firewood users in the Detroit and Boston areas

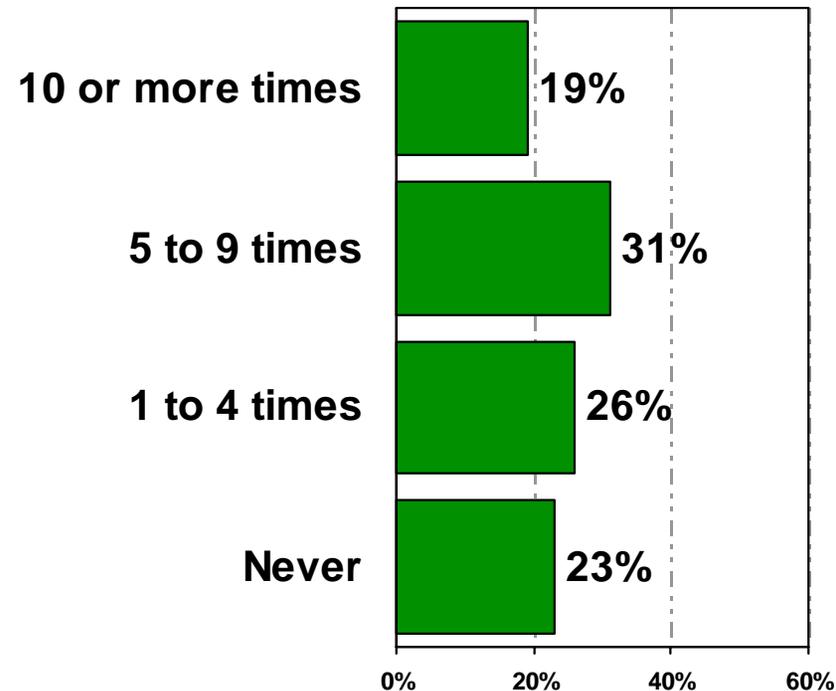
## Respondents were more likely to use firewood outdoors than indoors.

Number of times per year respondents burn firewood...

### Indoors



### Outdoors

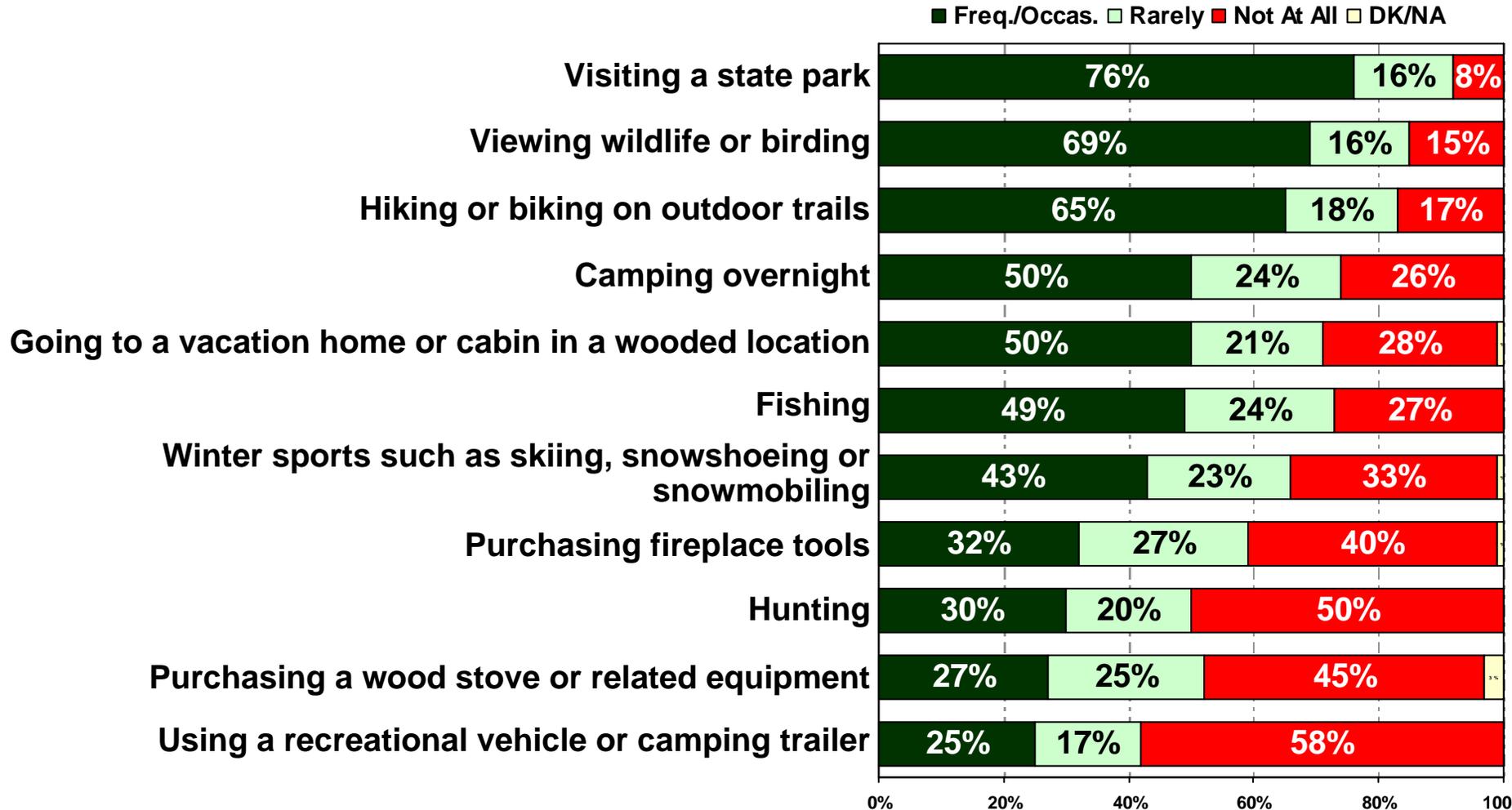


1. I'd like to start by asking you some questions about your use of firewood. In the course of a typical year, how often do you burn firewood in a fireplace or wood stove indoors?
2. And in the course of a year, how often do you burn firewood outdoors in a backyard fire pit, or while camping, hiking, hunting, fishing or participating in other outdoor recreational activities?

## Demographic profile of firewood users

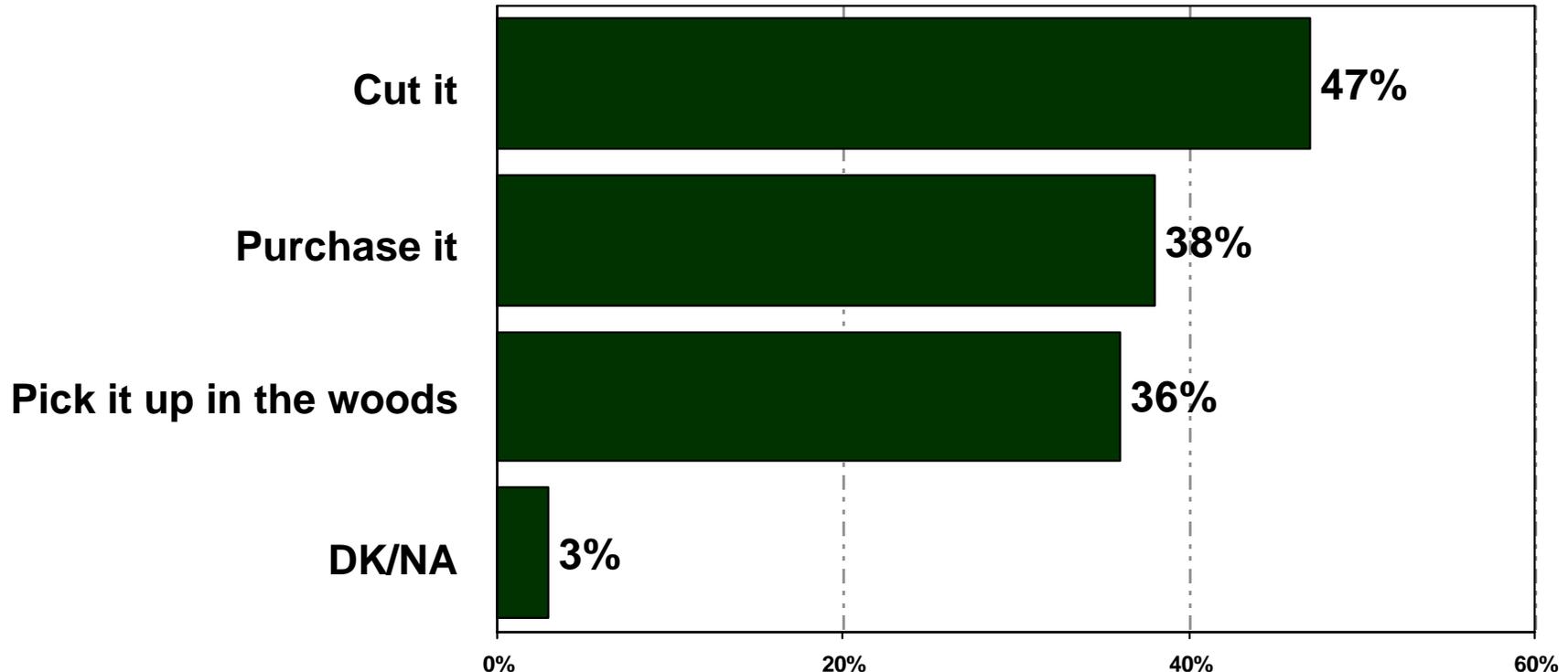
- **HEAVY USERS (21% of total):** Frequent outdoor recreation participants, members of environmental organizations, and suburban residents.
- **MODERATE USERS (46% of total):** Mothers, women under 50, college-educated women, non-members of environmental organizations, small town and rural residents.
- **LIGHT USERS (33% of total):** Seniors, those under age 30, renters, residents of urban areas, and people of color.

## In general, firewood users engage in many recreational activities.



## Nearly half of respondents say they cut their own firewood.

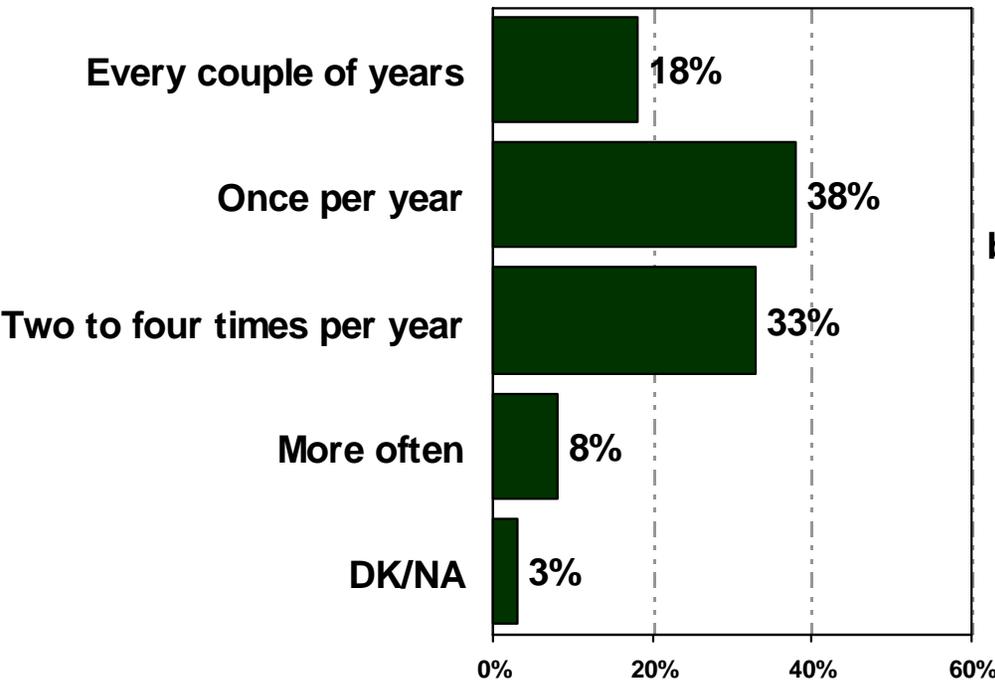
*Where do you get your firewood: do you cut your own firewood, do you pick it up in the woods, do you purchase it, or use some combination of these approaches?*



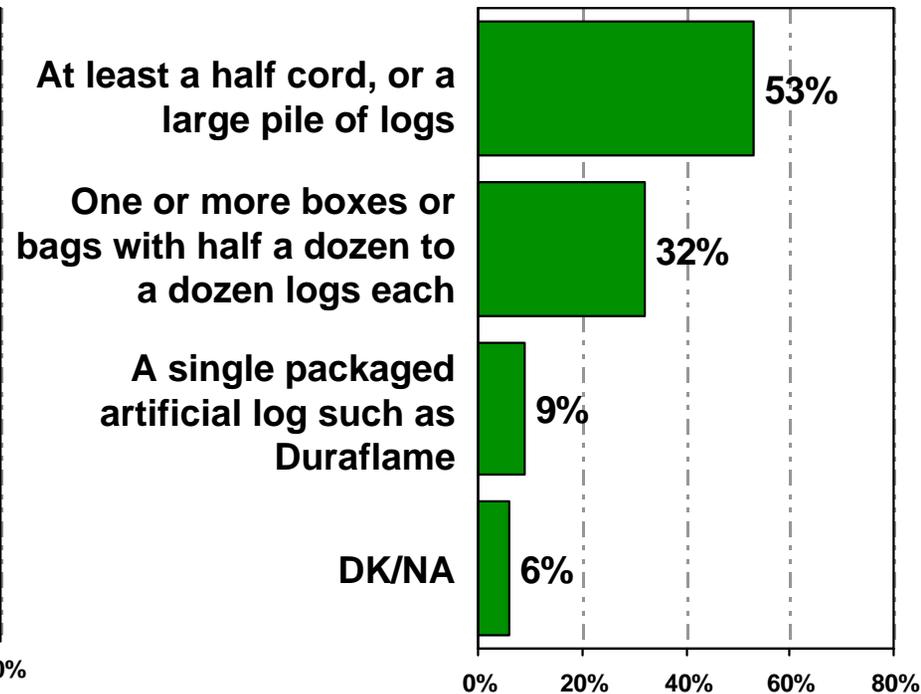
## Most firewood purchasers get it at least annually and in bulk.

(Asked only of the 38% who purchase firewood)

**How often do you typically purchase firewood:**



**How much firewood do you typically buy when you purchase it:**



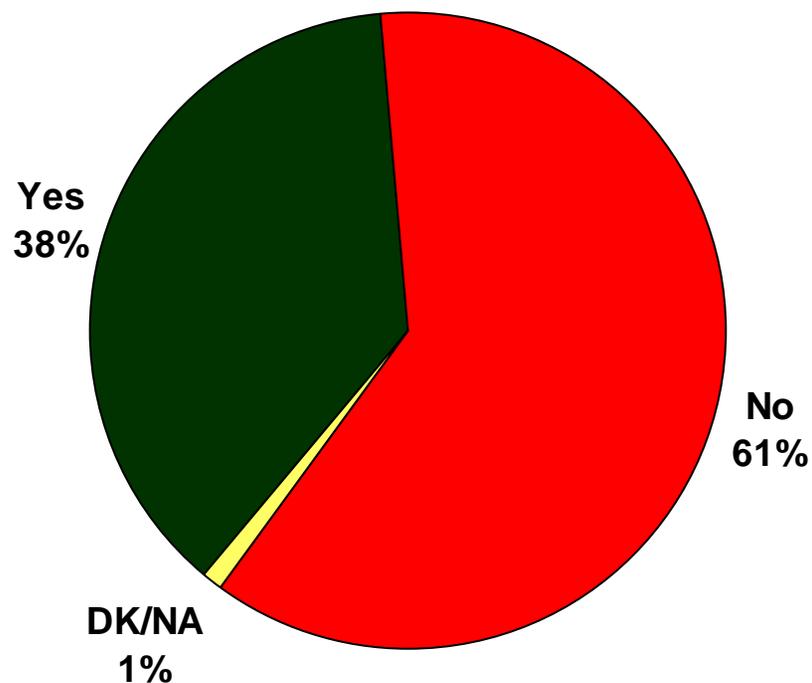
## Ways of Locating Firewood Sellers

- **Word of mouth/friend/neighbor/co-worker/family (46%)**
- **Newspaper ad (16%)**
- **Shopping (11%)**
- **Driving down the highway (7%)**
- **Billboard (4%)**
- **Yellow pages (2%)**
- **Campground vendor (2%)**
- **Logger (1%)**

## Moving Firewood

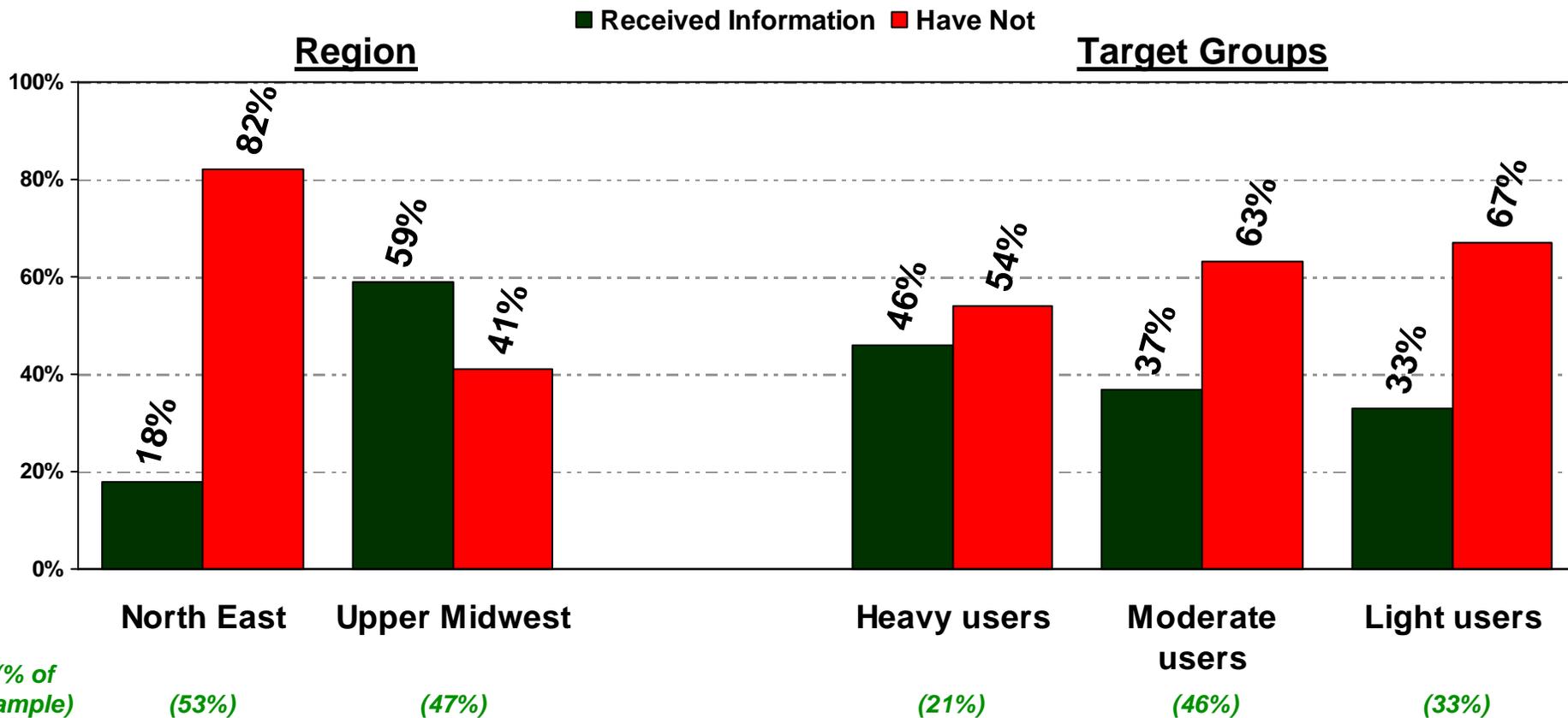
## About two in five have heard messages about moving firewood.

*Have you ever seen, heard, or read any information urging the public not to move firewood from place to place?*



## Demographics of Firewood Message Awareness

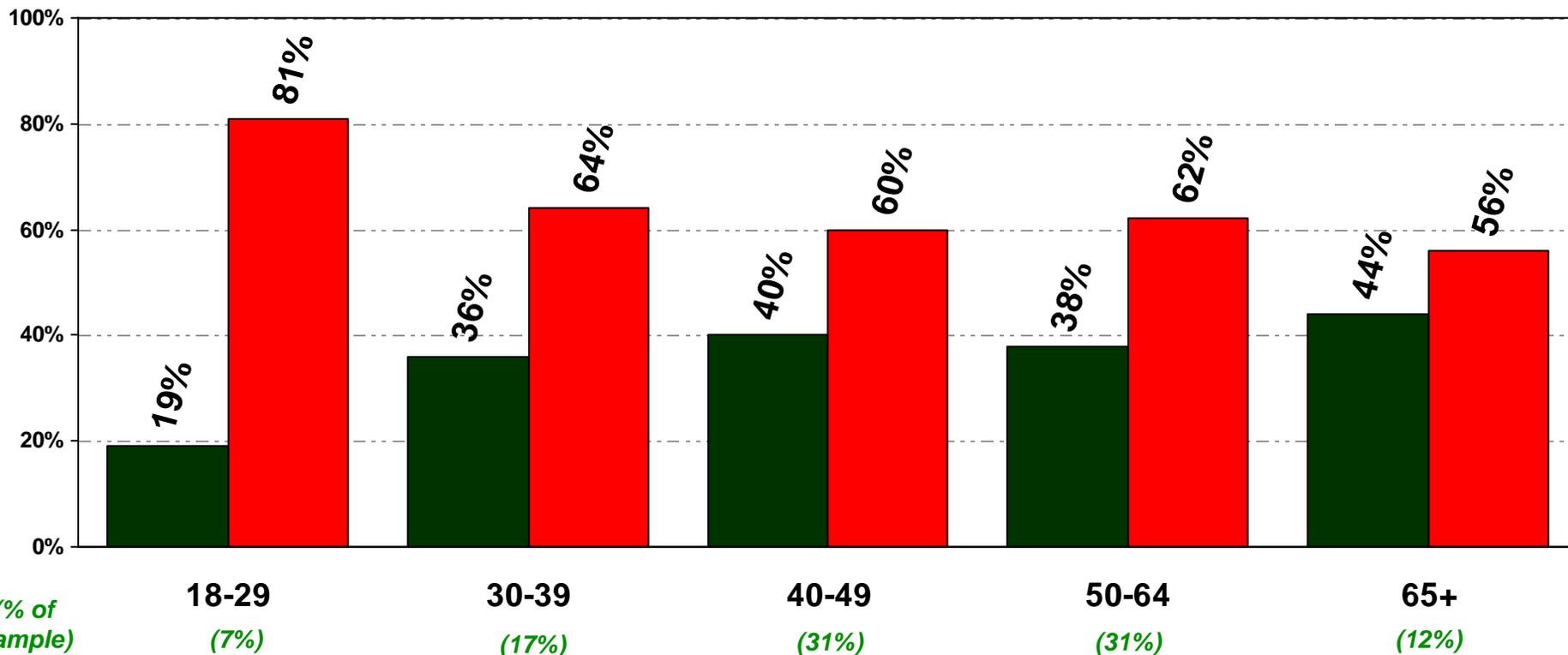
### Region and Target Groups



## Demographics of Firewood Message Awareness

### Age

■ Received Information ■ Have Not



## **Detroit focus group participants understood the issue...**

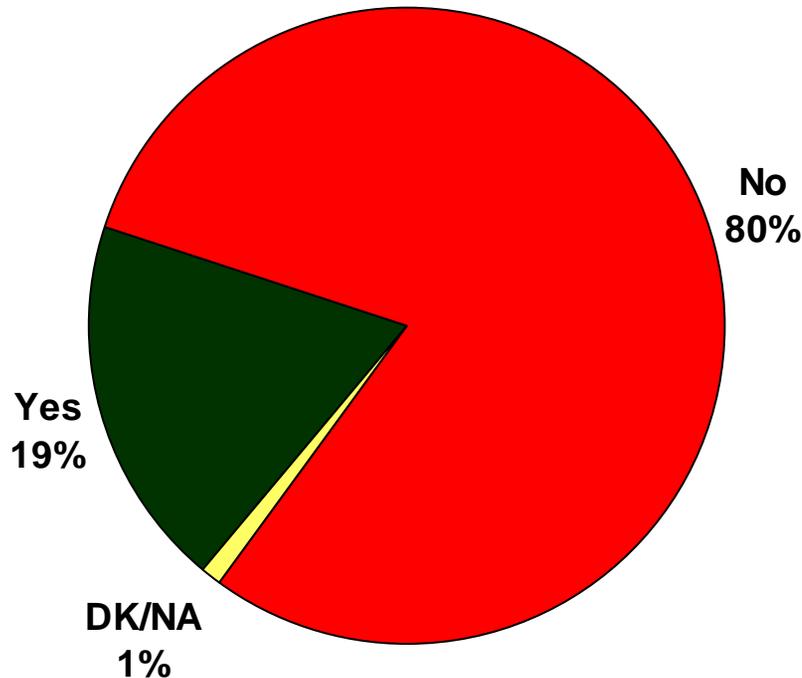
- *I've had to take two down because of the disease. And, my girlfriend in Muskegon, who wanted to take the wood... I [told her] no. They can travel right through and take it to the other side of the state.*
- *The gentleman that came...to cut down our tree...said, "Now what are your plans for it?" Because they didn't take it away...And I said, "I don't know." He said, "Cut it up. Use it for firewood. But, don't let anyone take it from here, because you are transporting the disease." And, I never had thought of it until he told me....Now that I know that, I never travel and take wood from a place to a place. That stuck with me because, I lost two beautiful trees.*
- *I saw a highway billboard sign, griping about people taking wood up North. When I saw that a few years ago, I thought it was a problem.*

## **...but not those in Boston.**

- *I was just thinking, geez...for something that may be potentially serious, it doesn't seem to be very newsworthy. I haven't heard any of that, in the paper, or in the news. Maybe it's just me, maybe I wasn't listening long enough, or not watching.*

## Overall, one in five firewood users say they are aware of laws or regulations limiting the ability to move firewood.

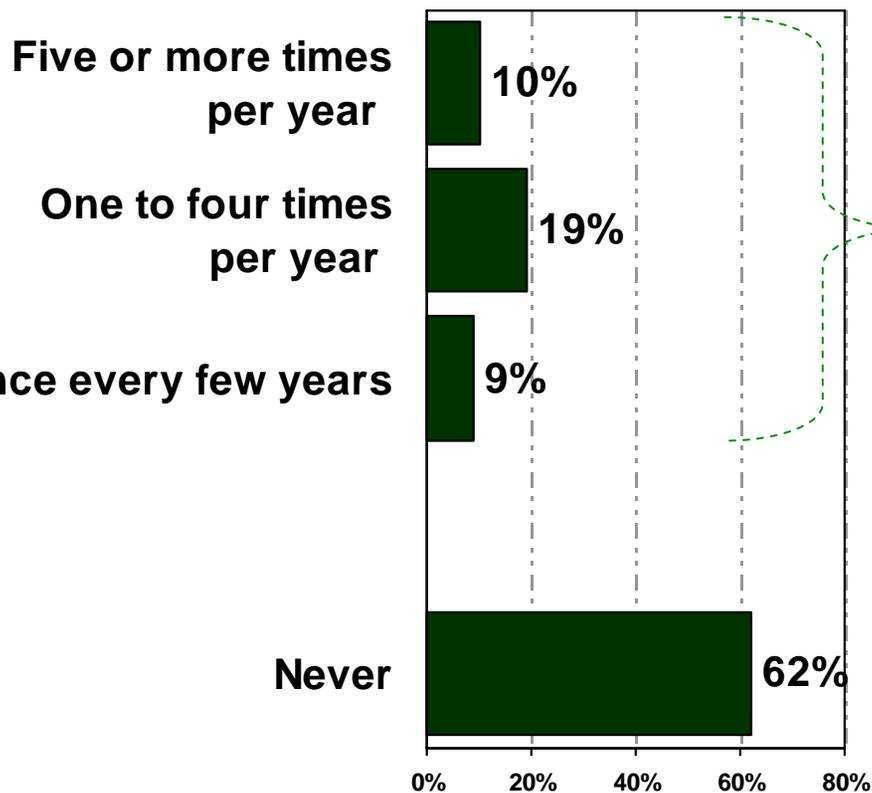
*Are you aware of any state laws or regulations in your area that limit the public's ability to move firewood from one location to another?*



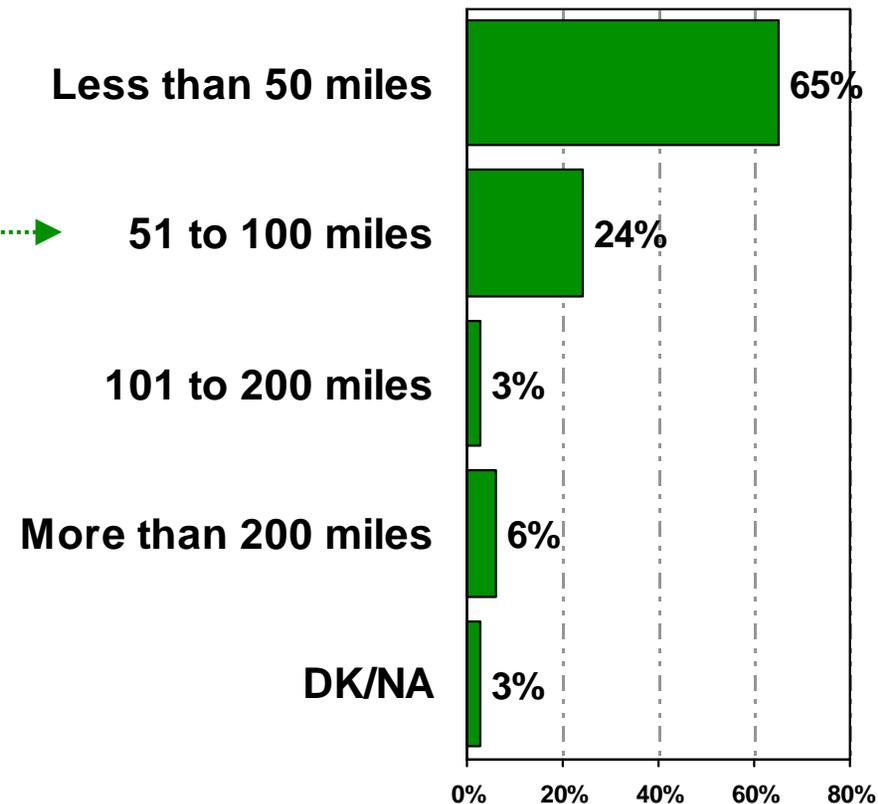
- 6% say they are aware of such laws in the Northeast
- 34% say they are aware of such laws in the Upper Midwest
- 46% in Michigan and 52% in Ohio are aware

## Nearly half of firewood users move firewood at least occasionally.

### Frequency of Moving

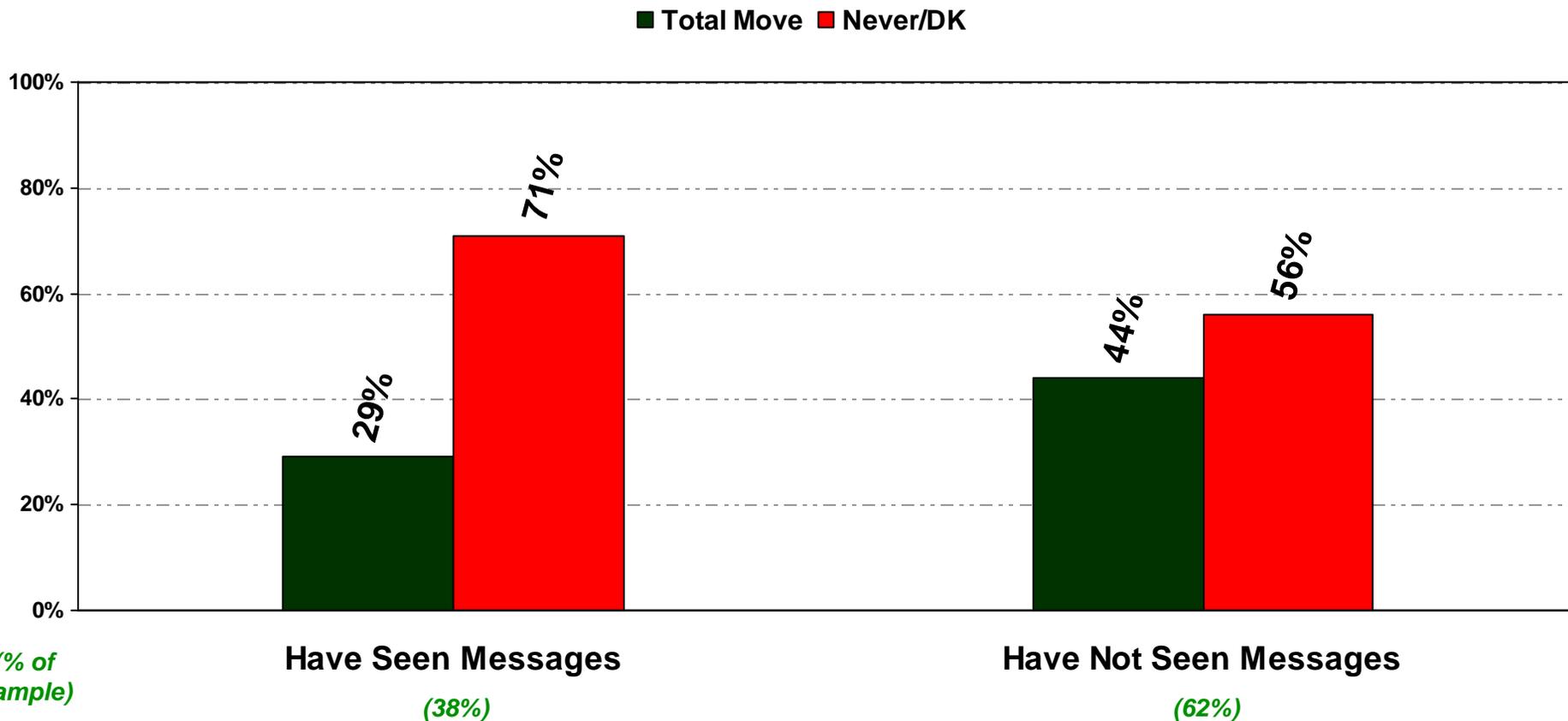


### Distance Moved



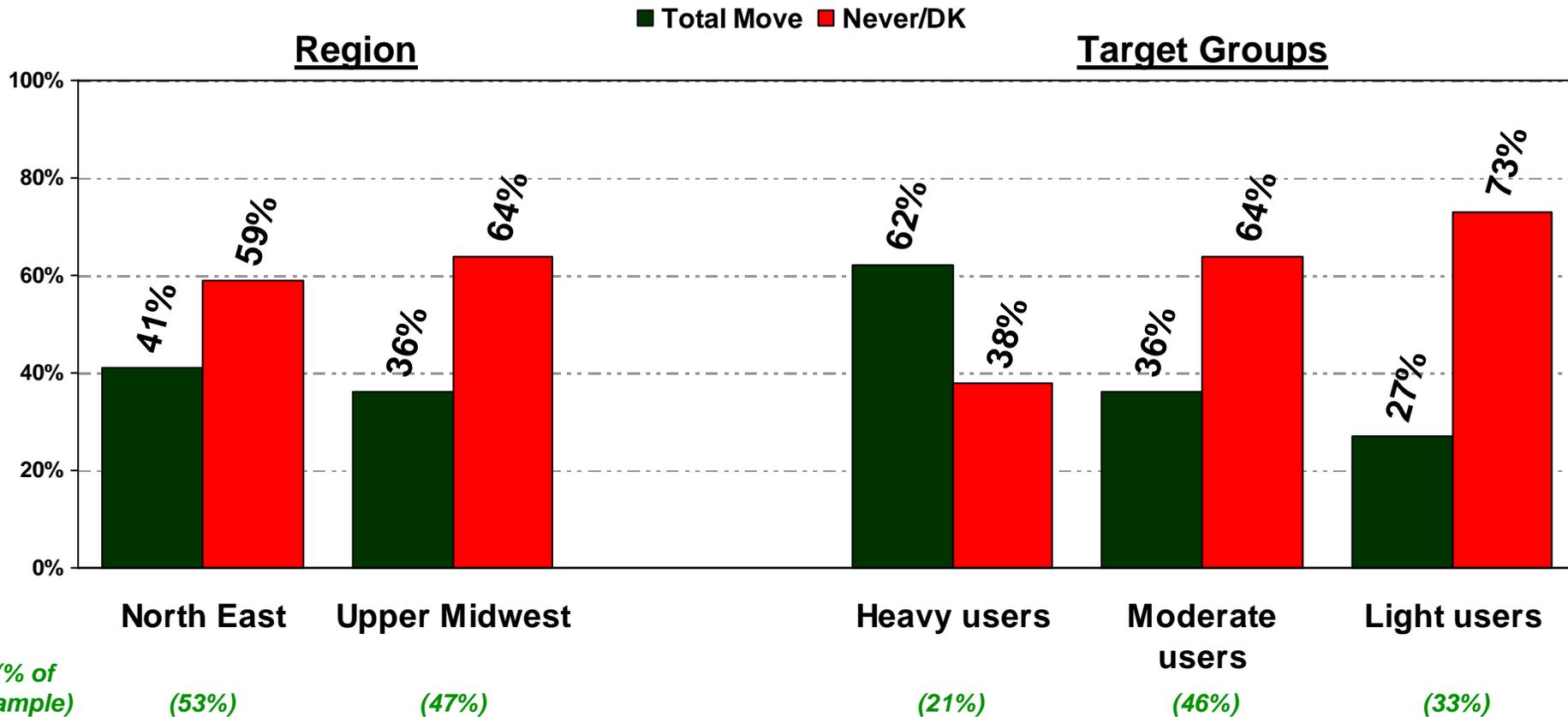
## Demographics of Firewood Movers

### Impact of “Don’t Move Firewood” Messages



## Demographics of Firewood Movers

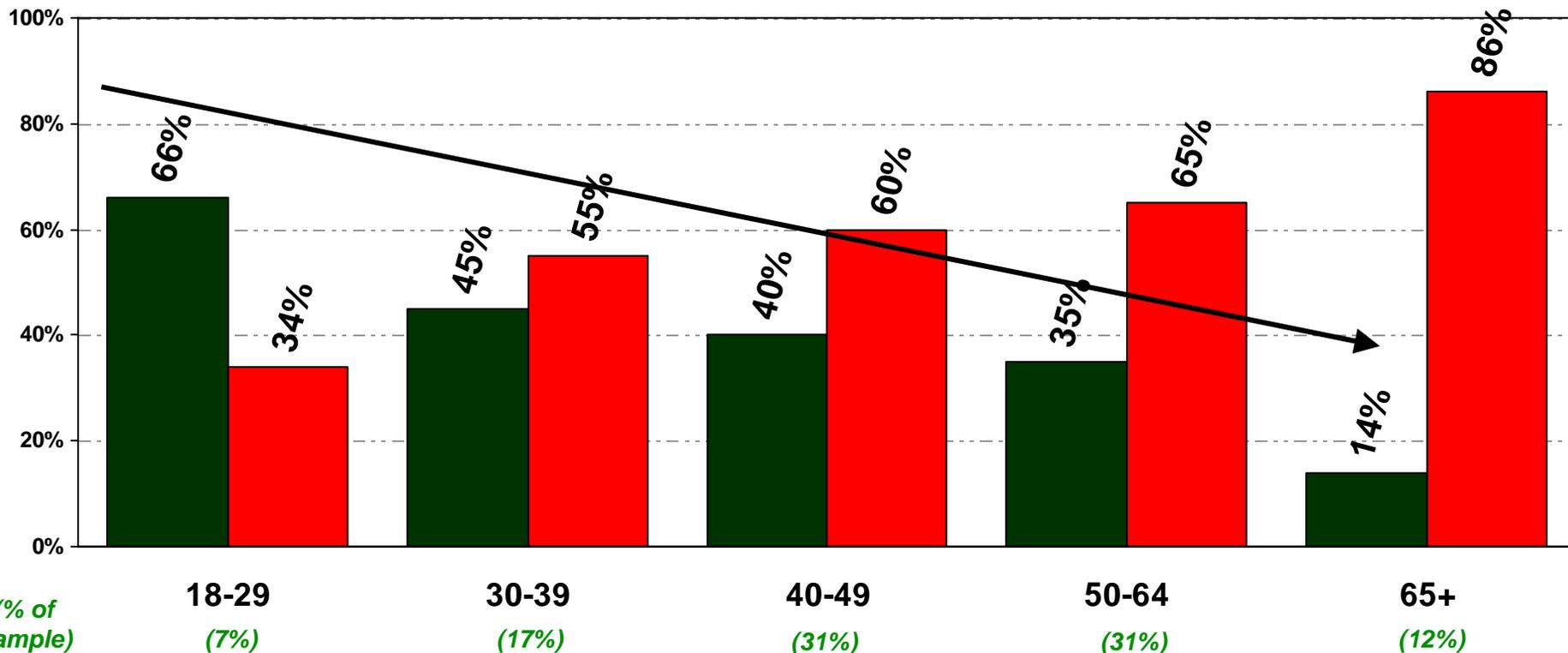
### Region and Target Groups



## Demographics of Firewood Movers

### Age

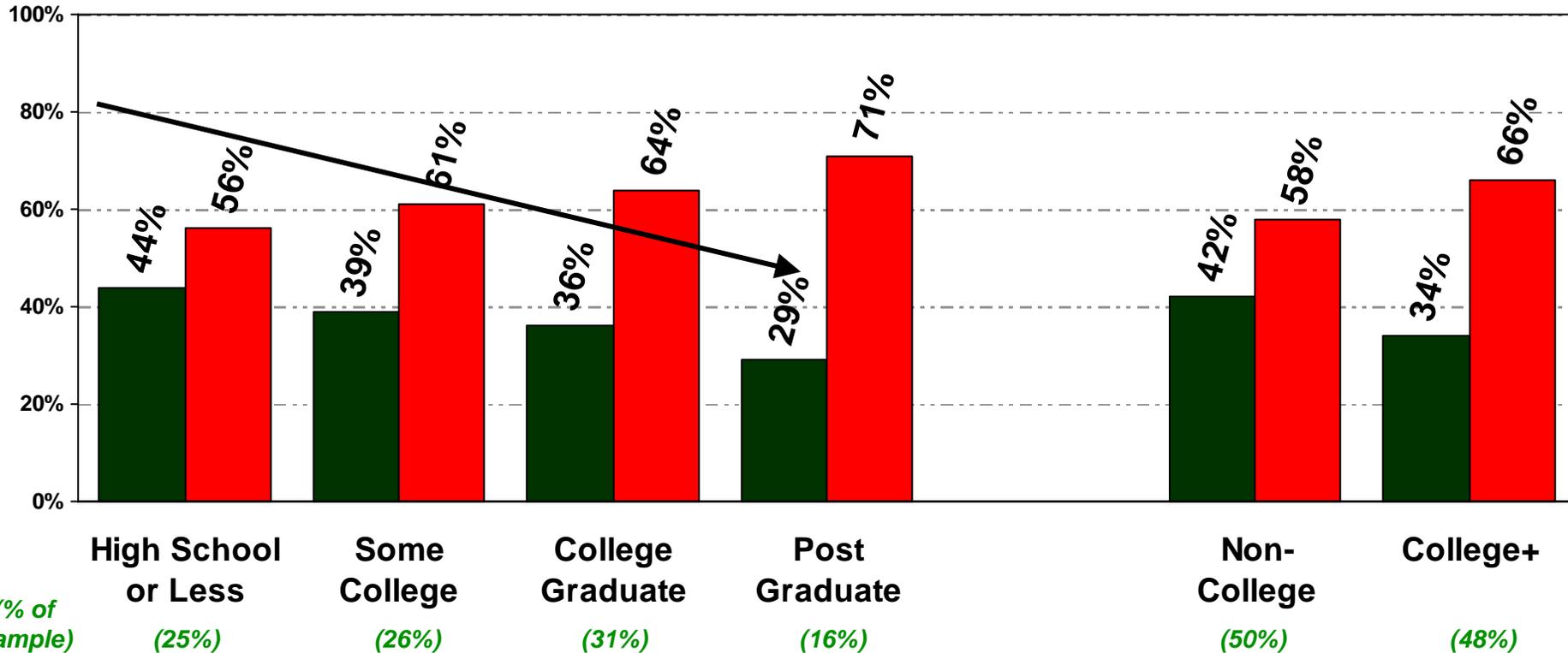
■ Total Move ■ Never/DK



## Demographics of Firewood Movers

### Education

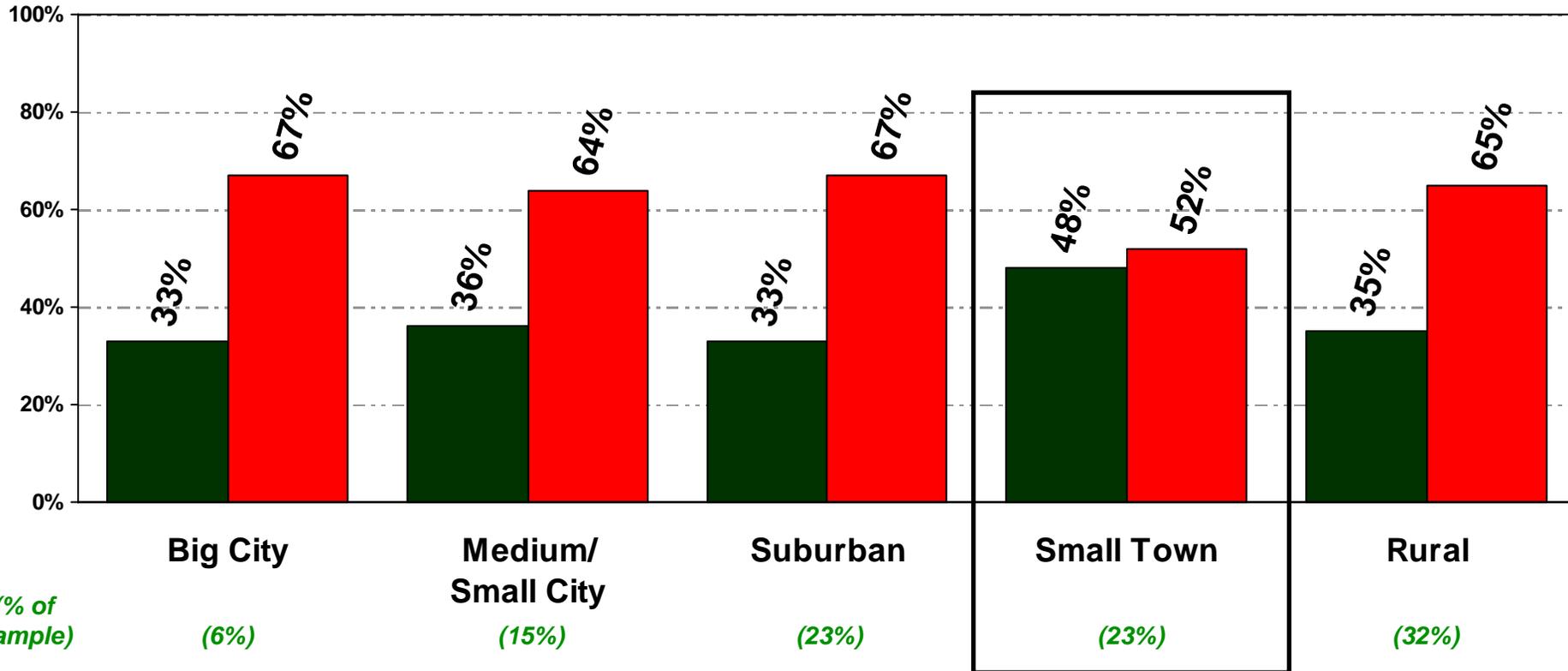
■ Total Move ■ Never/DK



## Demographics of Firewood Movers

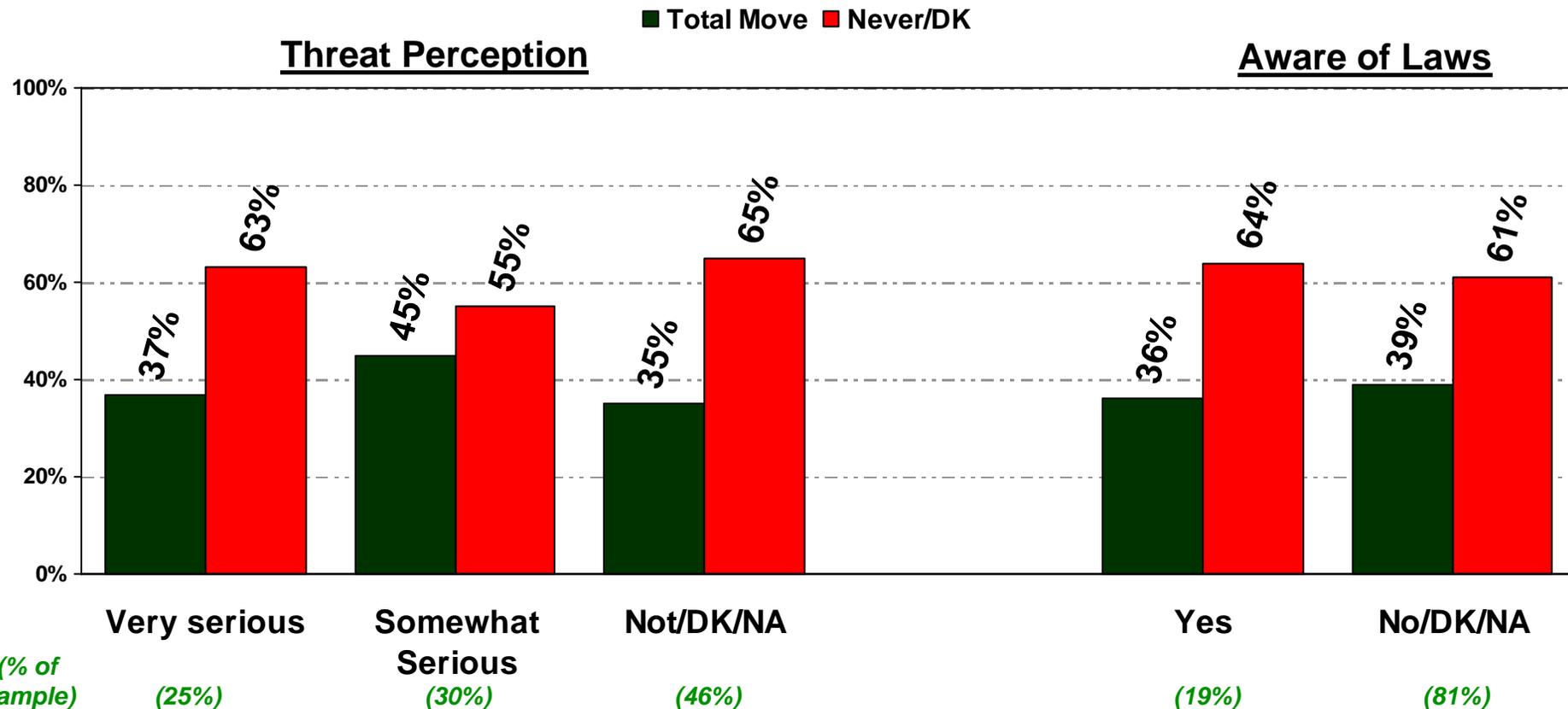
### Area of Residence

■ Total Move ■ Never/DK



## Demographics of Firewood Movers

### Threat Perception and Awareness of Laws



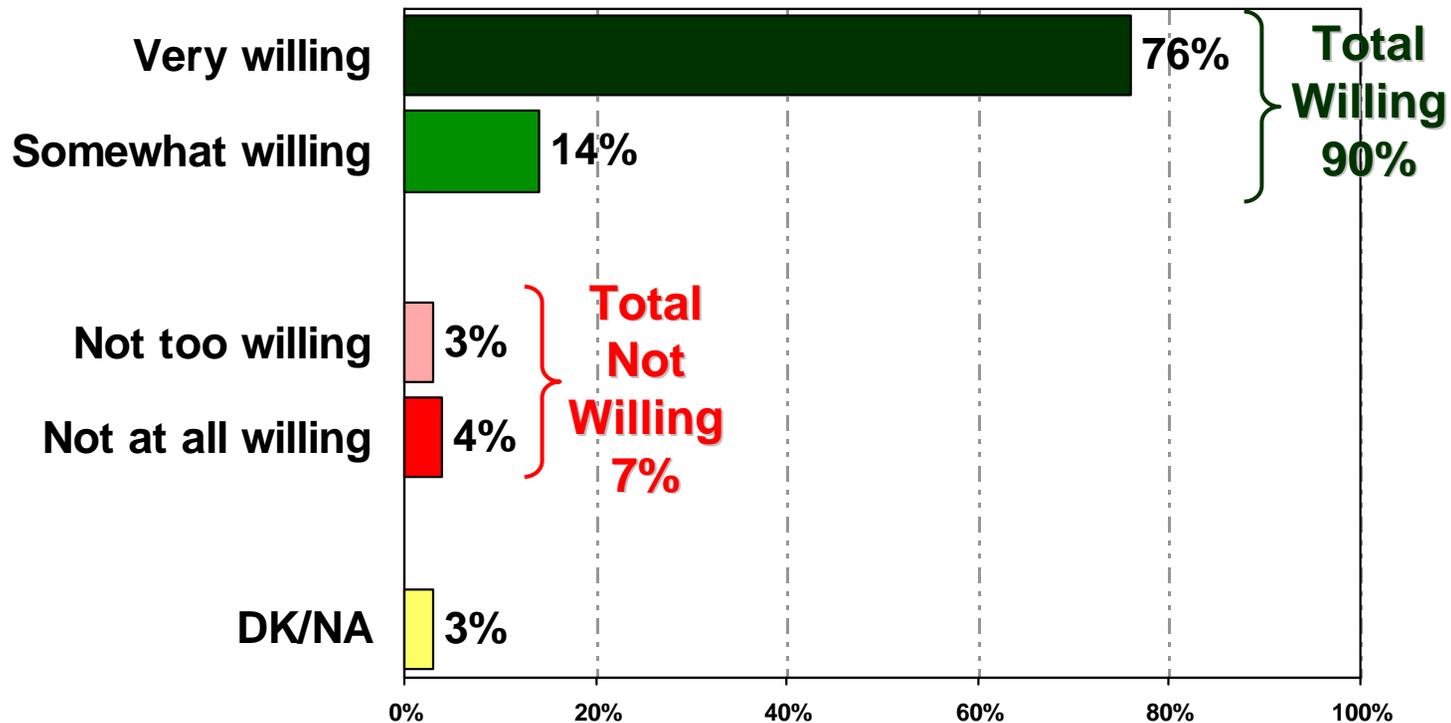
## Communicating About Moving Firewood

## Background Information Provided

**More than 400 non-native insects and 24 non-native diseases that harm trees are now established in North American forests, with more on the way. The U.S. Forest Service says that these insects and diseases can harm the health, productivity, and even the existence of certain kinds of trees. One of the major ways that these insects and diseases spread is on firewood carried from place to place, which moves them much farther than they could fly on their own. As a result, the public is being urged not to move firewood from one location to another.**

## Given this information, respondents are very willing to use only local firewood.

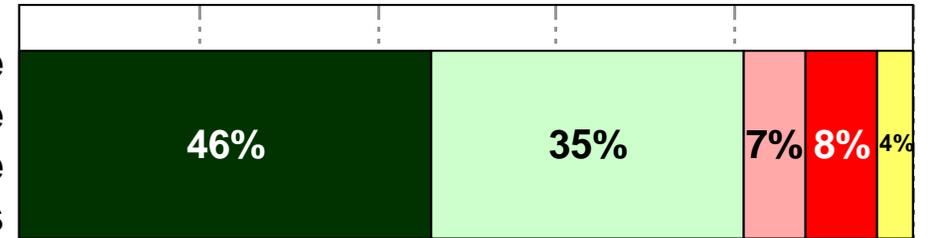
Having heard this, let me ask you: how willing would you be to use only firewood that you gathered or purchased in a local area, and not move firewood from place to place:



## Users support the idea of limiting firewood transportation to state lands.

■ Strng. Supp. □ S.W. Supp. □ S.W. Opp. ■ Strng. Opp. □ DK/NA

**Prohibiting the transport of firewood into state parks or state lands, and only allowing the use of firewood gathered on site or sold by state land managers**



**Having occasional checkpoints on state highways to ensure that people are not moving firewood**



**Placing a state tax on firewood sales to raise money to fight the spread of insects and diseases**



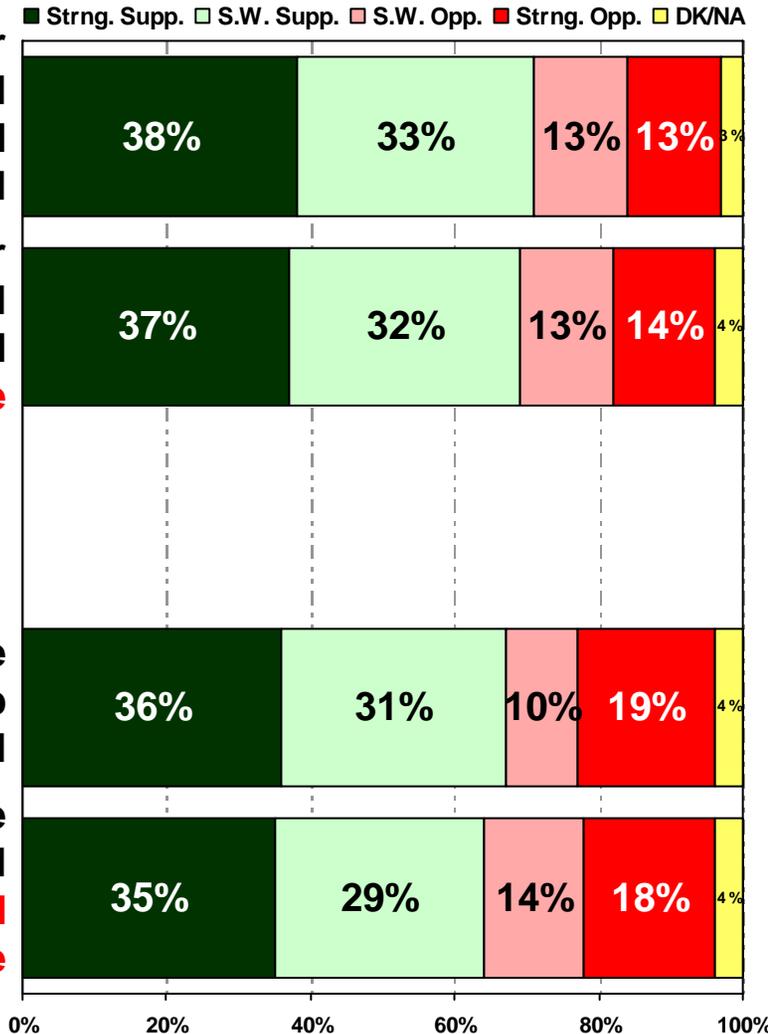
## A state certification is also popular.

\*Creating an official, but voluntary, state certification for firewood that is free of insects or diseases and encouraging people to only purchase such certified firewood

\*Creating an official, but voluntary, state certification for firewood that is free of insects or diseases and encouraging people to only purchase such certified firewood, **even though it might cost slightly more**

\*Requiring all firewood distributors to be licensed by the state, with an agreement to follow procedures to keep insects and diseases from surviving in firewood

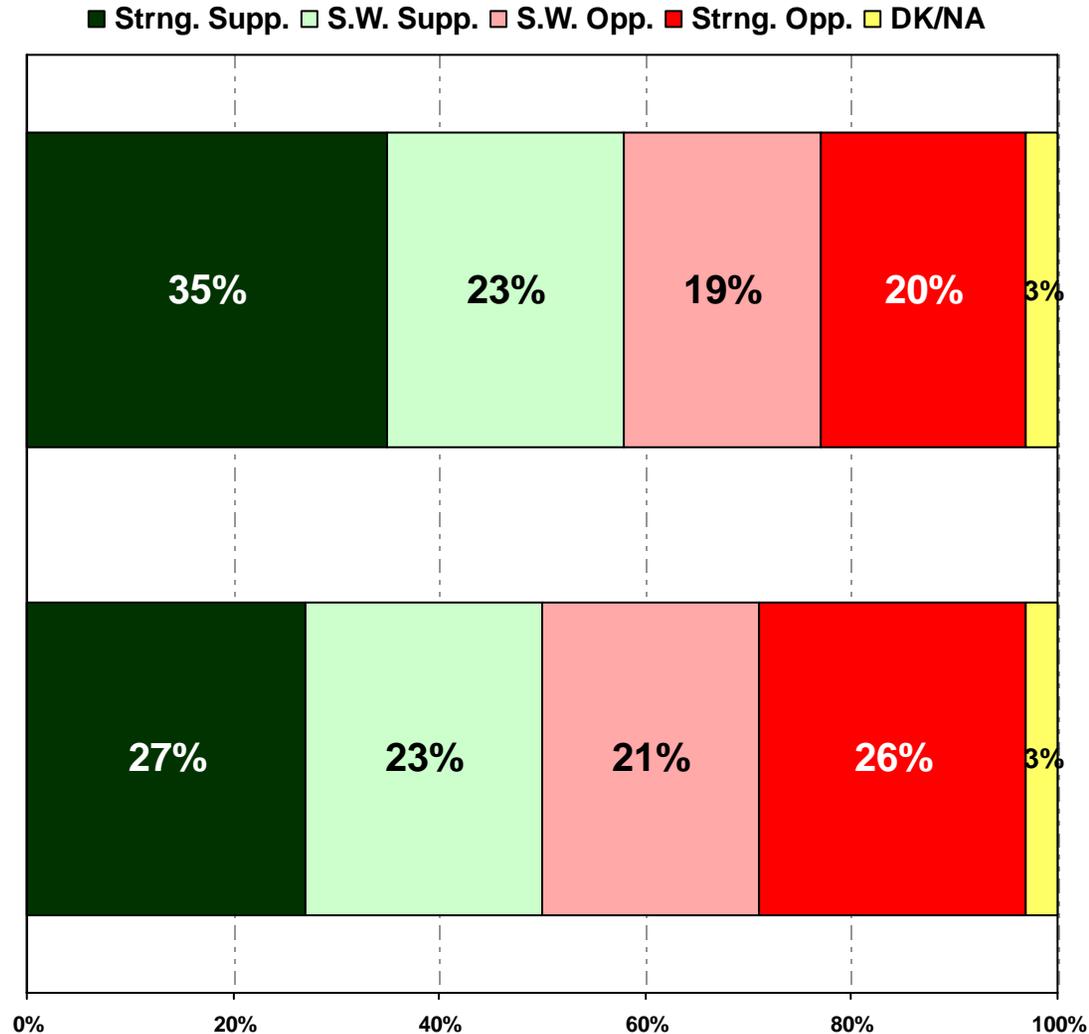
\*Requiring all firewood distributors to be licensed by the state, and agree to follow procedures to keep insects and diseases from surviving in firewood, **though they would make firewood cost slightly more**



## Continued

**\*Making it illegal to transport  
firewood across state lines**

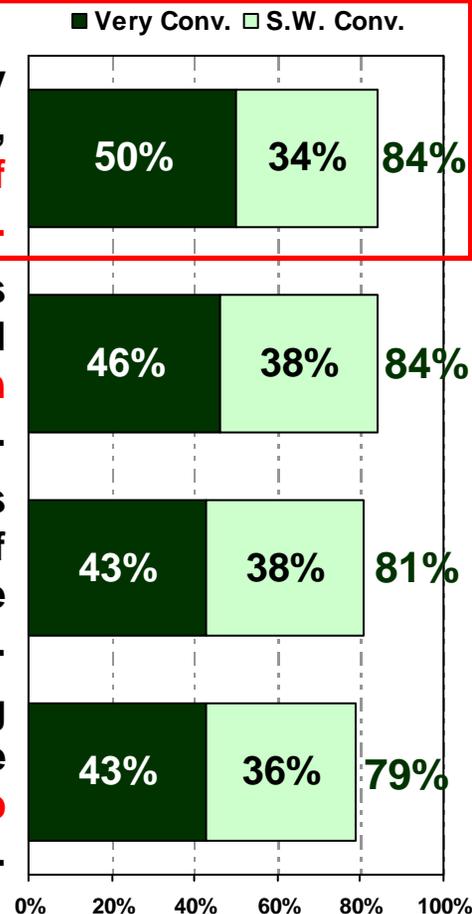
**\*Making it illegal to transport  
firewood across county lines**



## A recreation-focused message is particularly strong.

Ranked by Very Convincing Reason Not to Move Firewood

Our forests provide us places to hike, camp, view wildlife, and just enjoy the beauty of nature. When people buy firewood and bring it to the forest, it can spread diseases and insects that kill trees, **putting our enjoyment of these forests at risk.**



Forests provide natural filters that give us clean air, and are also sources of much of the nation's clean drinking water. Moving firewood can spread the insects and diseases that destroy these forests and **threaten our clean air, clean water, and public health.**

\*Non-native insects and diseases have already cost cities and towns around the country millions of dollars for removal and replacement of street trees, which helps drive up local taxes. Not moving firewood is one thing we can do to **help prevent these costs.**

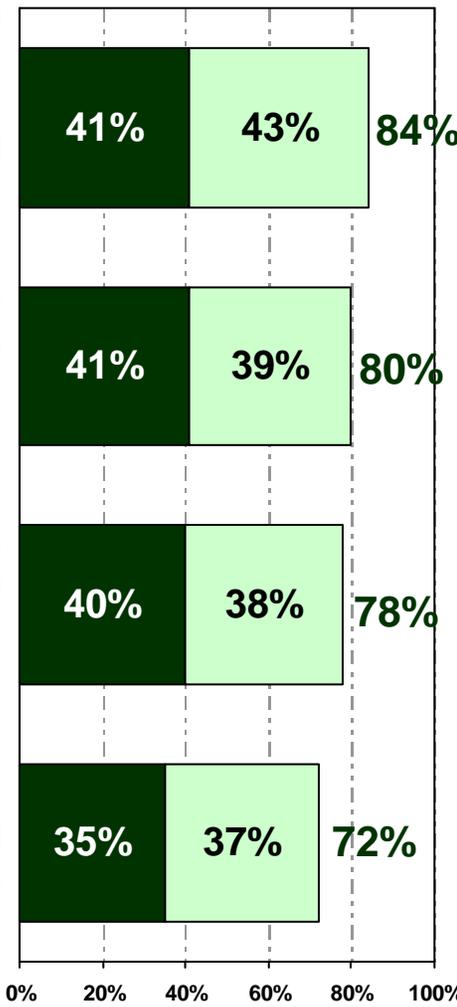
Our forests are our most important line of defense against global warming – providing natural filters that take carbon out of the air. Stopping the spread of tree-killing insects and diseases is an important step to **help deal with the climate crisis.**

## Continued

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■ Very Conv. □ S.W. Conv.

The trees in our communities, in our yards and along our streets are a major part of our neighborhood quality of life. Moving firewood can spread insects and diseases that kill trees – carrying them much farther than they can fly, bringing them to new neighborhoods and forcing neighborhood trees to be cut down.



Not moving firewood is one of the most effective steps to prevent the spread of tree-killing insects and diseases. In states where it is illegal to move firewood, the spread of these insects and diseases is slowed, potentially saving hundreds of thousands of acres of forests.

Not moving firewood helps keep our forests safe from fire. By preventing the spread of insects and diseases that kill trees, we reduce the amount of dead trees that make forest fires more likely and put lives and property at risk.

\*Spreading insects and diseases that kill trees could cost us thousands of jobs and do serious damage to our economy -- costing jobs in everything from the timber industry to tourism and forcing cities and property owners to replace millions of trees.

19. Here are some statements that urge people not to move firewood from place to place. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason not to move firewood. If you do not believe the statement, please tell me that too. \*Split Sample

## Information distributed at state parks is most likely to have an impact.

A flyer distributed when you enter a state park

A news article in your local newspaper

A poster or notice at places where firewood, camping gear, or sporting goods are sold

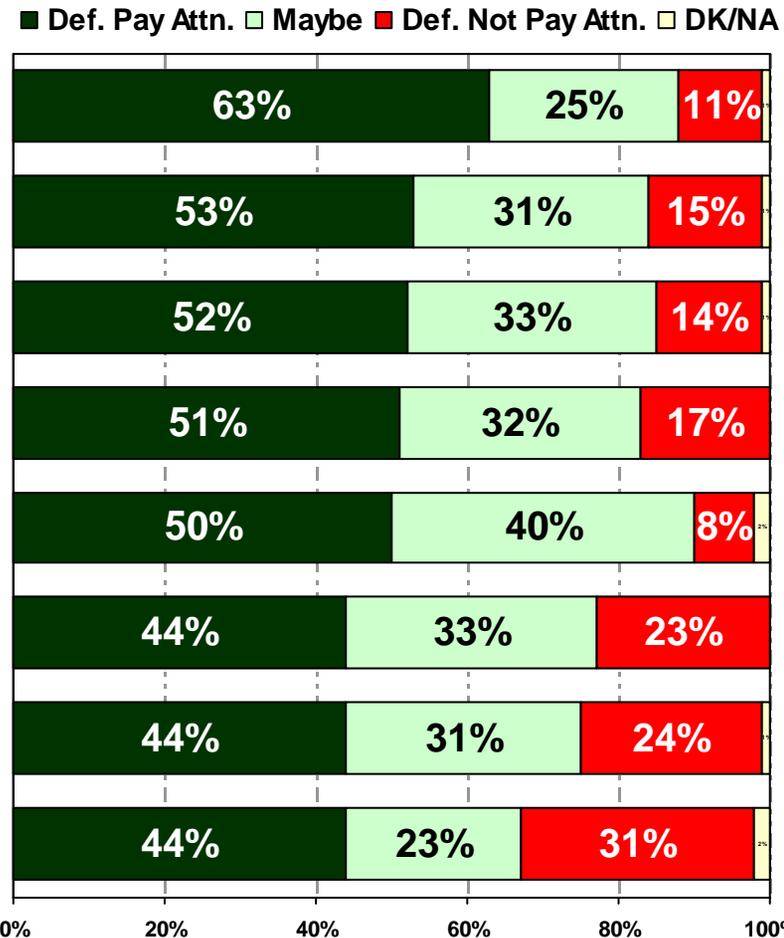
An ad on broadcast television

Information from a friend or neighbor

An advertisement in the newspaper

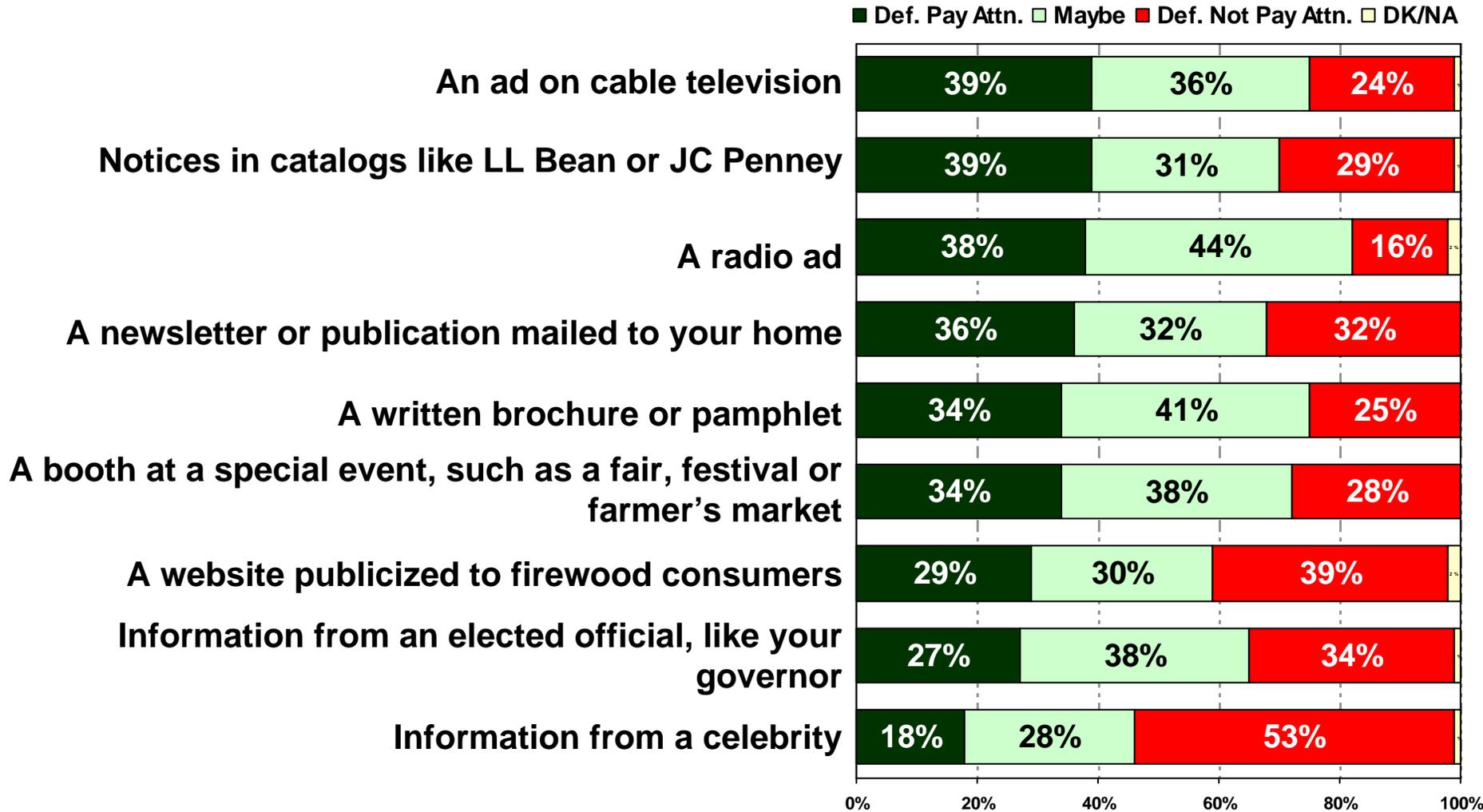
A billboard on the highway

A label on firewood packages



21. I am going to read you a list of ways to present information about not moving firewood to the public. For each one I mention, please tell me whether you would definitely pay attention, maybe pay attention, or definitely not pay attention to information about not moving firewood if it were presented to you in that way.

## Continued



21. I am going to read you a list of ways to present information about not moving firewood to the public. For each one I mention, please tell me whether you would definitely pay attention, maybe pay attention, or definitely not pay attention to information about not moving firewood if it were presented to you in that way.

## Key Findings on Firewood

- **A little bit of information should go a long way in motivating behavioral changes**
- **There is little resistance to policies that limit firewood movement**
- **There are high rewards for targeting the heavy users, and there should be distinct ways to reach them**
- **Messages focusing on recreation, public health, and neighborhood and cost impacts are likely to be effective**
- **Point-of-purchase and point-of-use information is likely to be helpful, and cost-effective**
- **Informal networks are likely to be critical in getting the word out**

***Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates***

*Opinion Research & Public Policy Analysis*

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Santa Monica - Oakland - Madison, WI - Mexico City

**DAVE METZ**

**1999 Harrison St., Suite 1290**

**Oakland, CA 94612**

**Phone (510) 451-9521**

**Fax (510) 451-0384**

**dave@fmma.com**