

Air Quality Fees Survey

OCTOBER 2020

Presented to:
Metro Vancouver



Presented by:
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Introduction

Objectives

Metro Vancouver is a federation of 21 municipalities, one electoral area, and one treaty first nation. Metro Vancouver Regional District has been delegated by the province with the authority to manage air quality and regulate the discharge of air contaminants. Metro Vancouver recovers the cost of regulating air contaminant discharges through permit and regulation fees charges to dischargers and from public taxes.

Metro Vancouver requested primary quantitative research with a goal of determining who residents feel should fund the program. Specifically, the research answers the following:

- How do residents rate the air quality in their neighbourhood?
- Are residents aware of a program to reduce harmful air emissions from industry to improve air quality in Metro Vancouver?
- Should funding for the air quality program come from emitters, property taxes, or both?
- Do residents support or oppose scaling fees for emitters?

Methodology

Surveys:	1,138 adult residents
Field dates:	October 1 to 7, 2020
Population:	Metro Vancouver residents
Methodology:	Online
Weighting:	The final weighted sample matches the regional, age, and gender distributions of Metro Vancouver according to the 2016 census.
Margin of error:	A probability sample of 1,138 carries a margin of error +/-2.9 percentage points 95% of the time.

The five sub-regions referenced in the subgroup analysis include the following:

- **Central:** Vancouver, Burnaby, New Westminister, Electoral Area A
- **North West:** West Vancouver, City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, Lions Bay, Bowen Island
- **North East:** Anmore, Belcarra, Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, Pitt Meadows
- **South West:** Delta, Richmond, Tsawwassen First Nation
- **South East:** Township of Langley, City of Langley, Surrey, White Rock

Some charts may not sum to 100% due to rounding and multiple mention questions.

Observations

Businesses that emit pollutants should cover most of the cost for the Air Quality Program regulating industry in Metro Vancouver.

Most residents feel that businesses that emit pollutants should pay for the air quality program designed to reduce pollution from industry. The reason most cited is that *these businesses are expelling the pollutants and profiting from it, so they should be the ones to pay*. Support for this option is relatively consistent among all subgroups of interest.

Even among residents who feel that property taxes should contribute a portion of the expense, nearly all feel that businesses should still fund the majority. A very small minority of residents feels the program should be funded entirely through property taxes.

Overall, residents want those who emit pollutants to be held accountable. The vast majority of residents supports fees to businesses scaled on the amount and harmfulness of the pollutants they emit.

Residents are largely unaware of Metro Vancouver's Air Quality program. One-quarter of residents have heard of Metro Vancouver's Air Quality program. Among those, a very small minority understand its funding.

Air quality is not a top concern among residents. Air quality ranks last behind issues such as cost of living, COVID-19, and housing affordability. Even among residents living with people who have respiratory issues, air quality is still ranked below nearly all other issues.

Air quality in Metro Vancouver neighbourhoods is generally perceived as good, very good, or excellent. Perceptions are mixed, albeit positive ratings (excellent + very good) outweigh negative ratings (poor + fair). Those who rate the region's air quality less than positive (good + fair + poor) cite the presence of *woodsmoke* and *traffic pollution* as factors.

Summary

Air Quality

Air quality is not currently a top concern among Metro Vancouver residents, ranking last behind issues such as *cost of living*, *COVID-19*, and *housing affordability*. Even among residents living with people who have respiratory issues, the region's air quality is a negligible issue. Air quality is generally perceived as good, very good, or excellent. The smaller group assigning lower ratings for air quality, cite the presence of *woodsmoke* and *traffic pollution*.

What are our top issues of concern in the Metro Vancouver region?

Metro Vancouver residents' (residents) most pressing concerns tie to financial well-being and health. The top three areas of concern are **cost of living** (52%), **COVID-19** (47%), and **housing affordability** (46%). Other top issues include **homelessness** (31%), **economy** (27%), **crime** (21%), and the **environment** (19%). Few residents (8%) feel **air quality** is a top concern.

How do residents rate the air quality in our neighbourhood?

Four-in-ten (39%) residents feel that **air quality in their neighbourhood** is excellent (8%) or very good (31%). Just over one-third (36%) feel the air quality is good, while one-quarter (24%) feel it is fair (19%) or poor (5%).

Among residents who feel the air quality in their neighbourhood is poor, fair, or good, most (54%) cite **smoke from forest fires** as the reason they don't rate it higher, followed by **vehicle traffic** (17%).

Has air quality in our neighbourhood gotten better or worse?

Just over one-half (53%) of residents feel that the air quality in their neighbourhood has **stayed about the same over the past five years**. A small minority (5%) feels air quality has improved, while 37% say it has **worsened**. Five percent (5%) are unsure. Note that this survey was conducted shortly after an air quality advisory was in effect due to wildfire smoke from September 8 to 19, 2020.

What impacts air quality in Metro Vancouver?

Among the six potential sources of air pollution presented in the survey, the largest group (73%) of residents cites **wildfires** for having a major impact on air quality. **Vehicles** rank second for their impacts on air quality (46%), followed by **industrial and manufacturing facilities** (31%). Seventeen percent (17%) cite **land clearing and agricultural sources**, while a small minority feels that **indoor residential wood burning** (8%) and **heating and cooling buildings and homes using natural gas** (5%) have major impacts.

Awareness of Metro Vancouver's Air Quality Program

Residents are largely unaware of Metro Vancouver's Air Quality program. Among those claiming knowledge, a very small minority understands how it is funded.

Are residents aware of a program in Metro Vancouver to reduce harmful air emissions from industry?

One-quarter (24%) of residents say they know of a **program to reduce harmful air emissions from industry to improve air quality in Metro Vancouver**. Three-quarters (76%) have not heard of the program.

Among those aware of this program, half (49%) believe the program is funded by **fees paid by businesses in the region emitting air pollutants**. Four-in-ten (39%) believe the program is funded through **property taxes**. One-third (33%) incorrectly cite **provincial taxes** as the funding source. A further 22% cite **federal taxes**. One-third (33%) are uncertain of the funding source.

Notably, just 6% correctly understand that the program is currently funded **only** through property taxes and fees.

Summary cont'd

Air Quality Program Fees

Most residents feel that businesses emitting pollutants should pay for the air quality program designed to reduce pollution from industry. Even residents who feel that property taxes should contribute a portion of the expense, most feel businesses should fund majority of the program's costs. A very small minority of residents feels that the program should be funded entirely through property taxes.

Where do residents believe funding for the air quality program should come from?

Residents were provided a brief explanation of the current funding program for the Metro Vancouver's air quality program regulating industry ("air quality program") along with three funding options to consider.

A majority (63%) of residents feels that **Metro Vancouver businesses emitting pollutants** should fund the program.

Just under one-quarter (23%) of residents feel **both fees to emitters and residential and business property taxes** should fund the program. Seventeen percent (17%) feel **emitters should fund the majority**; just 2% opt for a **50/50 split** between the two (fees to emitters and property taxes). On average, these residents feel that 69% of the cost should be allocated to emitters, the balance (31%) to be covered via property taxes.

A small minority (5%) feel that the program should be funding only through **business and residential property taxes**.

One-in-ten (9%) do not have an opinion about program funding.

Why should the program be funded through fees to pollutant emitters?

Emitters (businesses) should fund the air quality program because **they are causing the pollution** according to 69% of residents. Other reasons include that **emissions are tied to business' output and revenue** (8%), **it makes emitters accountable and may encourage them to improve their operations** (7%), and **residents already pay enough taxes** (6%). Six percent (6%) are unsure.

Why should the program be funded through property taxes?

Just over one-half (53%) who feel the air quality program should be funded through property taxes do not have an explanation. Two-in-ten (20%) feel that **air quality impacts everyone**, meaning everyone should pay. One-in-ten (9%) say **it is fair**, and 6% feel that higher fees could **damage local businesses**. One-in-ten (10%) state other reasons.

Why should the program be funded from property taxes and fees to emitters?

Among residents who believe property taxes and fees to emitters should fund the air quality program, a majority (62%) feel it is **fair that both pay since everyone pollutes**. One-in-ten (10%) feel that **businesses should be protected and supported**. Eight percent (8%) feel that **businesses should pay a majority (but not the whole cost) since they are the emitters**. A very small minority (5%) feels that residents should take on some of the cost because they **consume or benefit from what businesses produce**; a further 3% feel that it is beneficial to **spread the cost**.

Do we support scaling fees for emitters?

The vast majority (92%) of residents' support (strongly + somewhat) **fees that scale to volume and harmfulness of emissions**, including a majority (63%) strongly supporting this fee structure. Just 4% oppose. Four percent (4%) are uncertain.

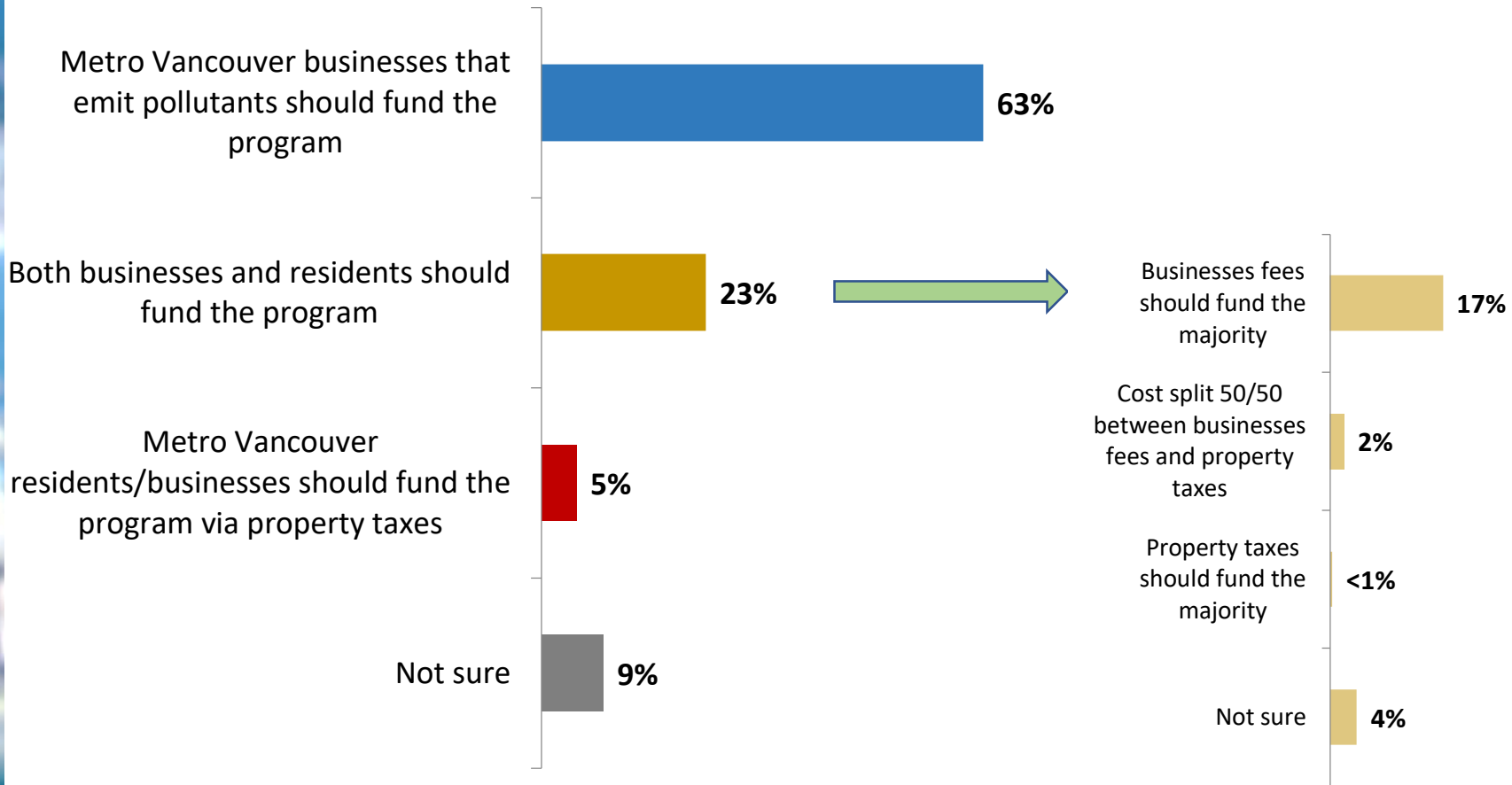
KEY FINDINGS



An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Vancouver, showing a dense urban area with a mix of residential and commercial buildings. The city is situated along a coastline with a large body of water and mountains in the background. A semi-transparent blue rectangular box is overlaid on the top portion of the image, containing white text.

Air Quality Program Fees

Where do we feel funding for the air quality program should come from?



Younger residents are more likely than older residents to feel that the air quality program should be **funded via property taxes**:

- 18 to 44 (7%)
- 45 and older (3%)

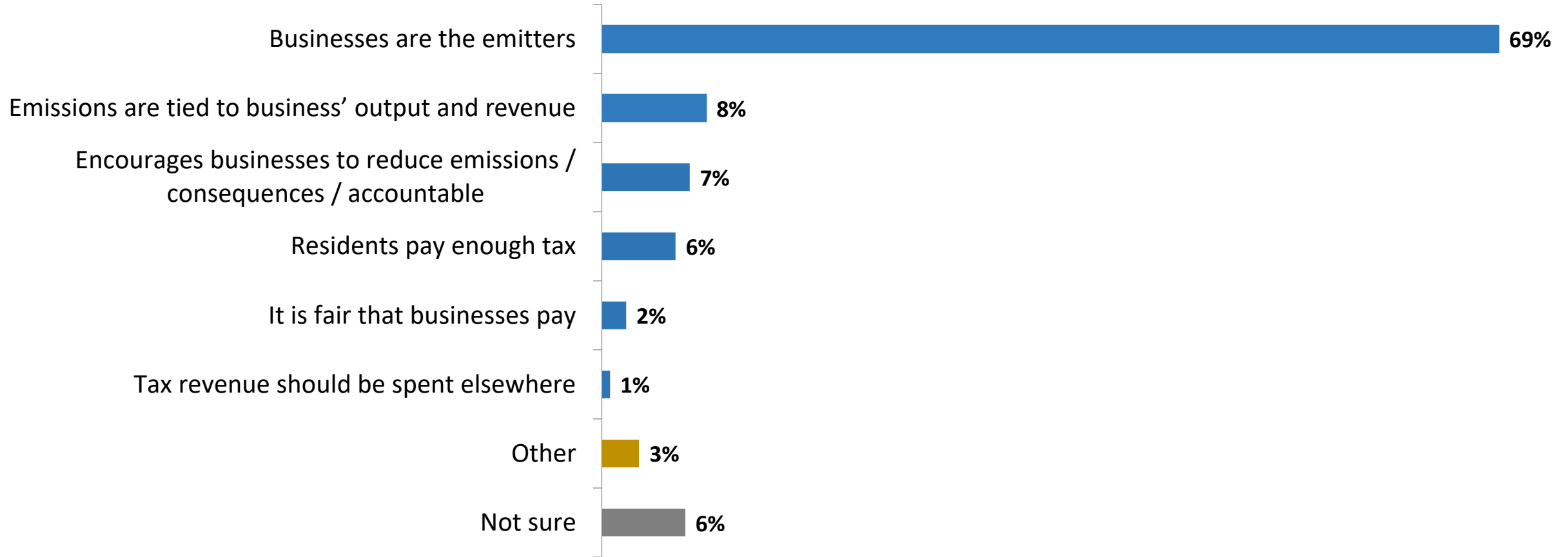
Residents who are currently employed are most likely to feel that **businesses that emit pollutants should fund the program via fees**:

- Employed (66%)
- Unemployed (64%)
- Retired (57%)
- Homemaker (56%)
- Student (44%)

C1. The fee structure is being reevaluated as costs have increased over the past few years and taxpayers are now paying more. In general, how do you feel Metro Vancouver's air quality program for industrial emissions should be funded?

Base: Total, n=1,138

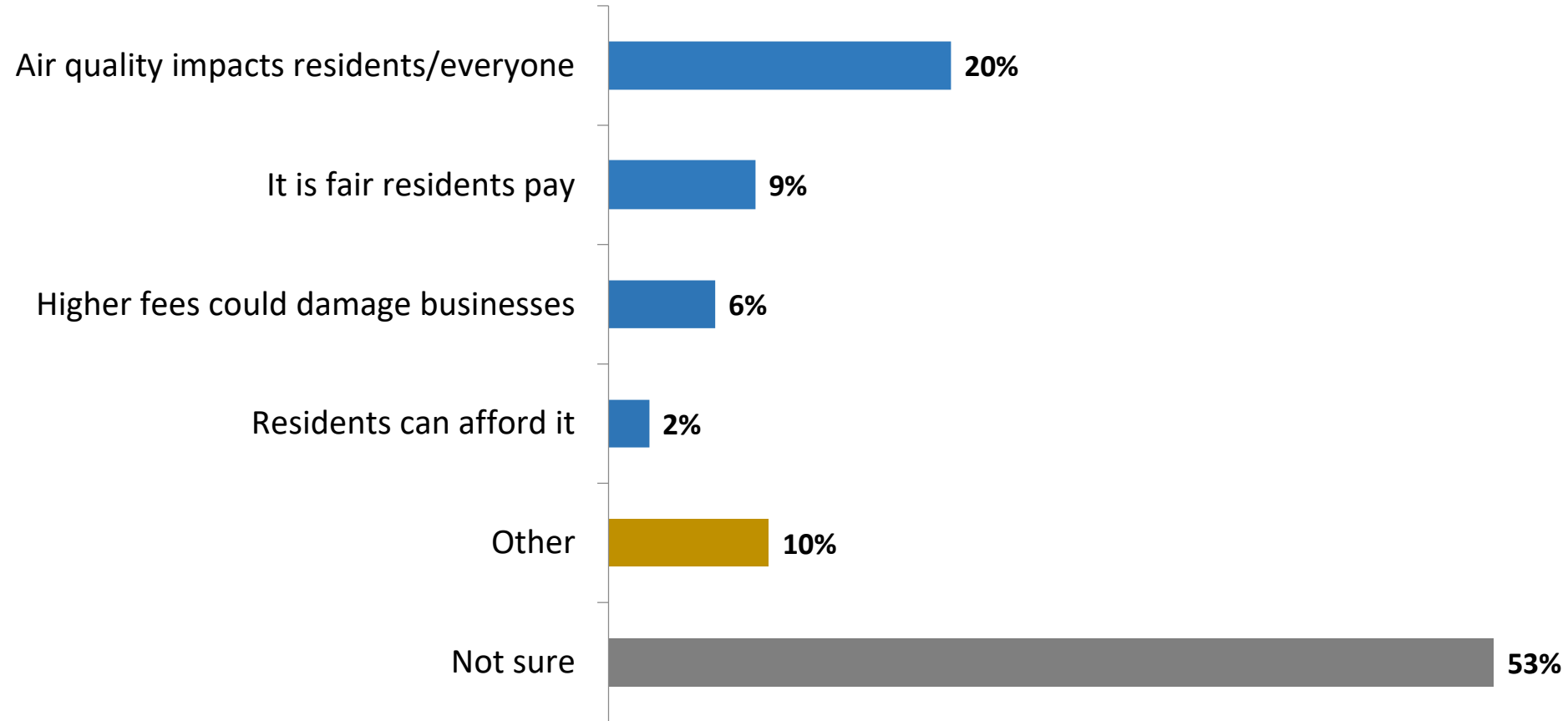
Why do we feel businesses that emit pollutants should fund the air quality program?



C2. Why do you feel that the air quality program should be funded this way?

Base: Those who feel that businesses should pay, n=711

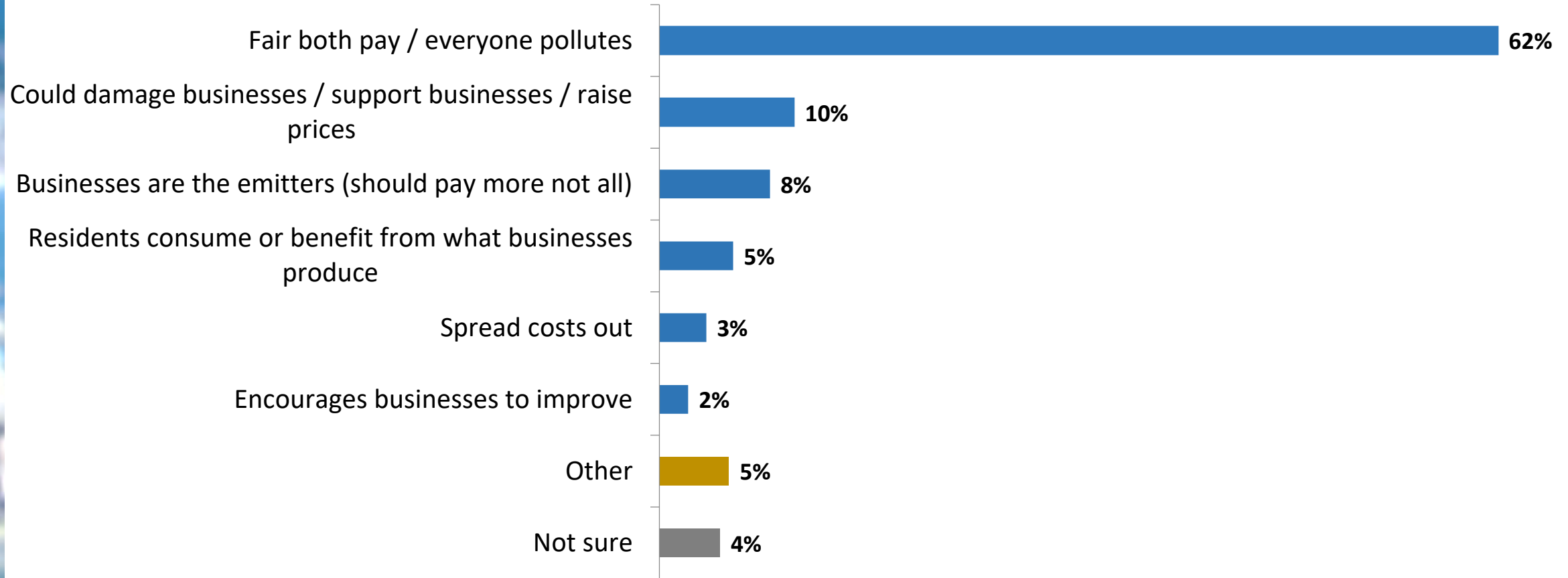
Why do residents feel property taxes should fund the air quality program?



C2. Why do you feel that the air quality program should be funded this way?

Base: Total who feel that property taxes should fund the air quality program, n=57

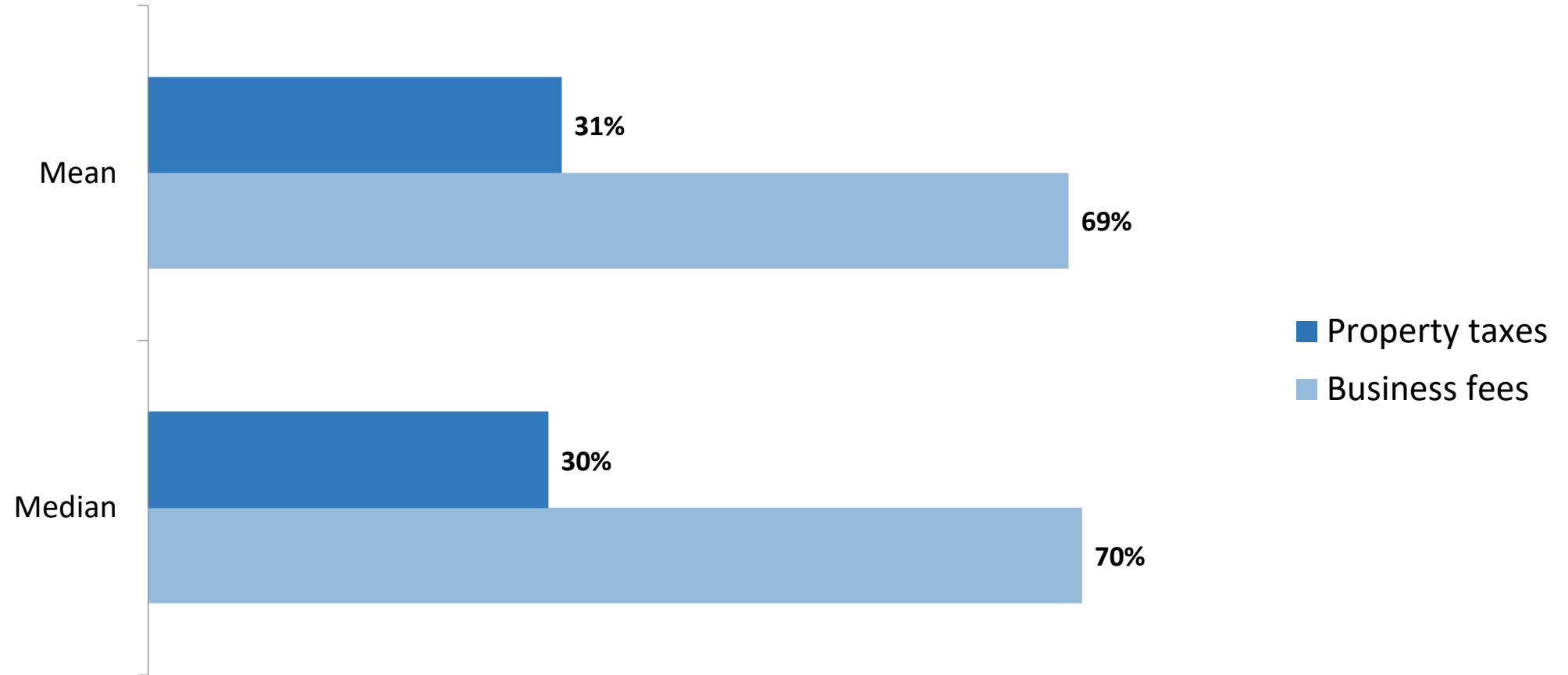
Why do residents feel both property taxes and fees paid by businesses should fund the air quality program?



C2. Why do you feel that the air quality program should be funded this way?

Base: Total who feel that both property taxes and fees paid by businesses (emitters) should fund the air quality program, n=267

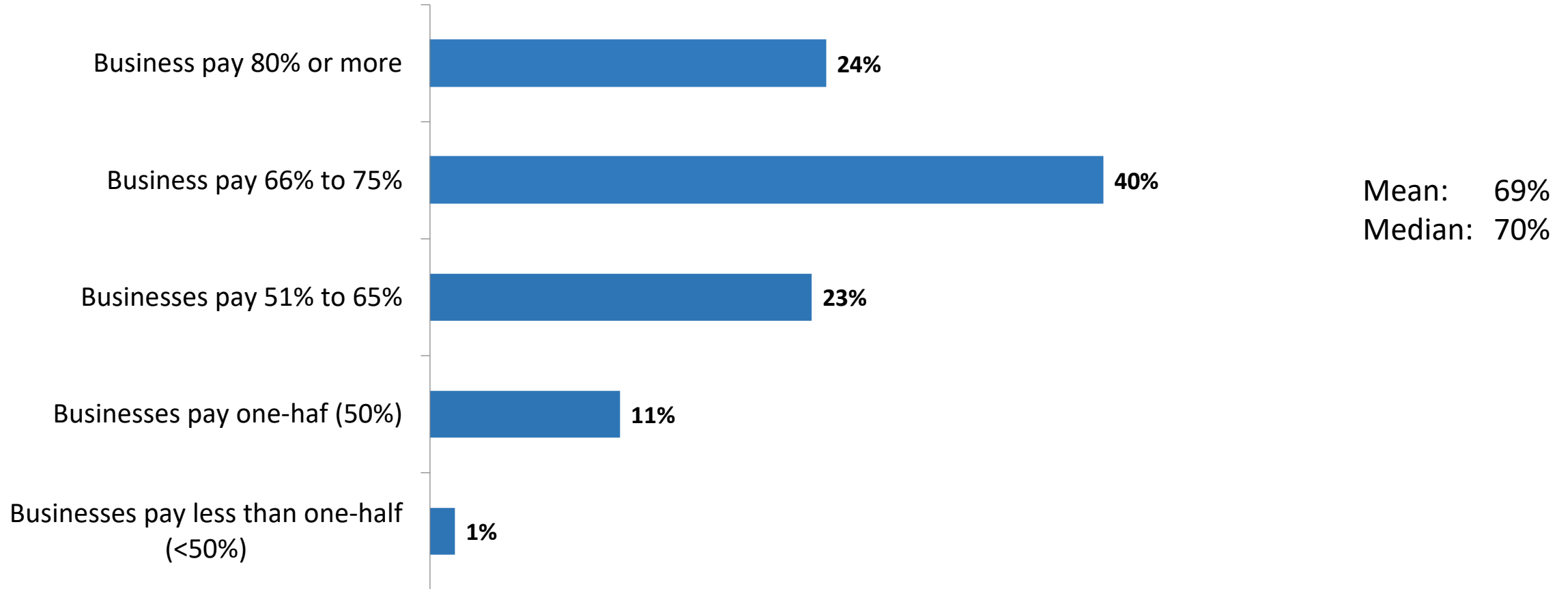
How much of the program cost should be funded by fees to businesses and property taxes



C3. What proportion of the cost for the air quality program do you feel should be allocated to Metro Vancouver businesses that emit pollutants and residents?

Base: Residents who feel that it should be funded by fees and property taxes, n=267

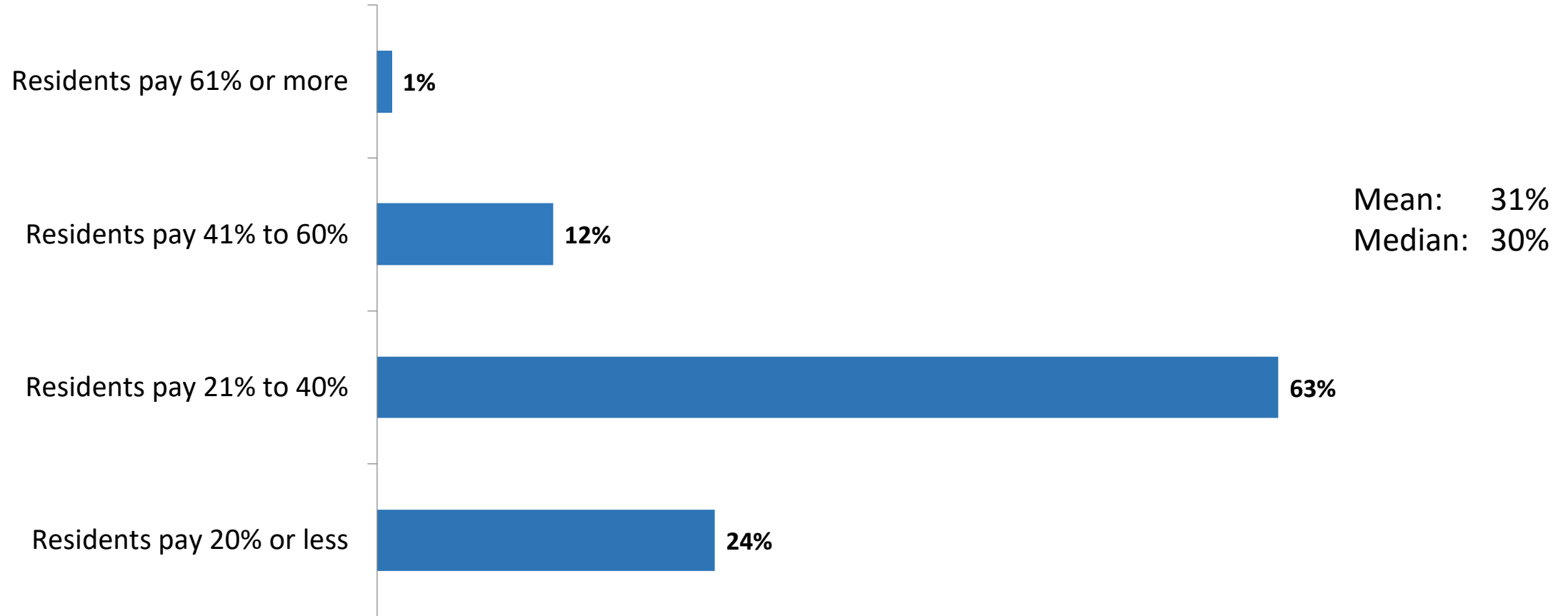
How much of the program cost should be paid from fees to businesses?



C3. What proportion of the cost for the air quality program do you feel should be allocated to Metro Vancouver businesses that emit pollutants and residents?

Base: Residents aware of the air quality program and feel that it should be funded by fees and property taxes, n=267

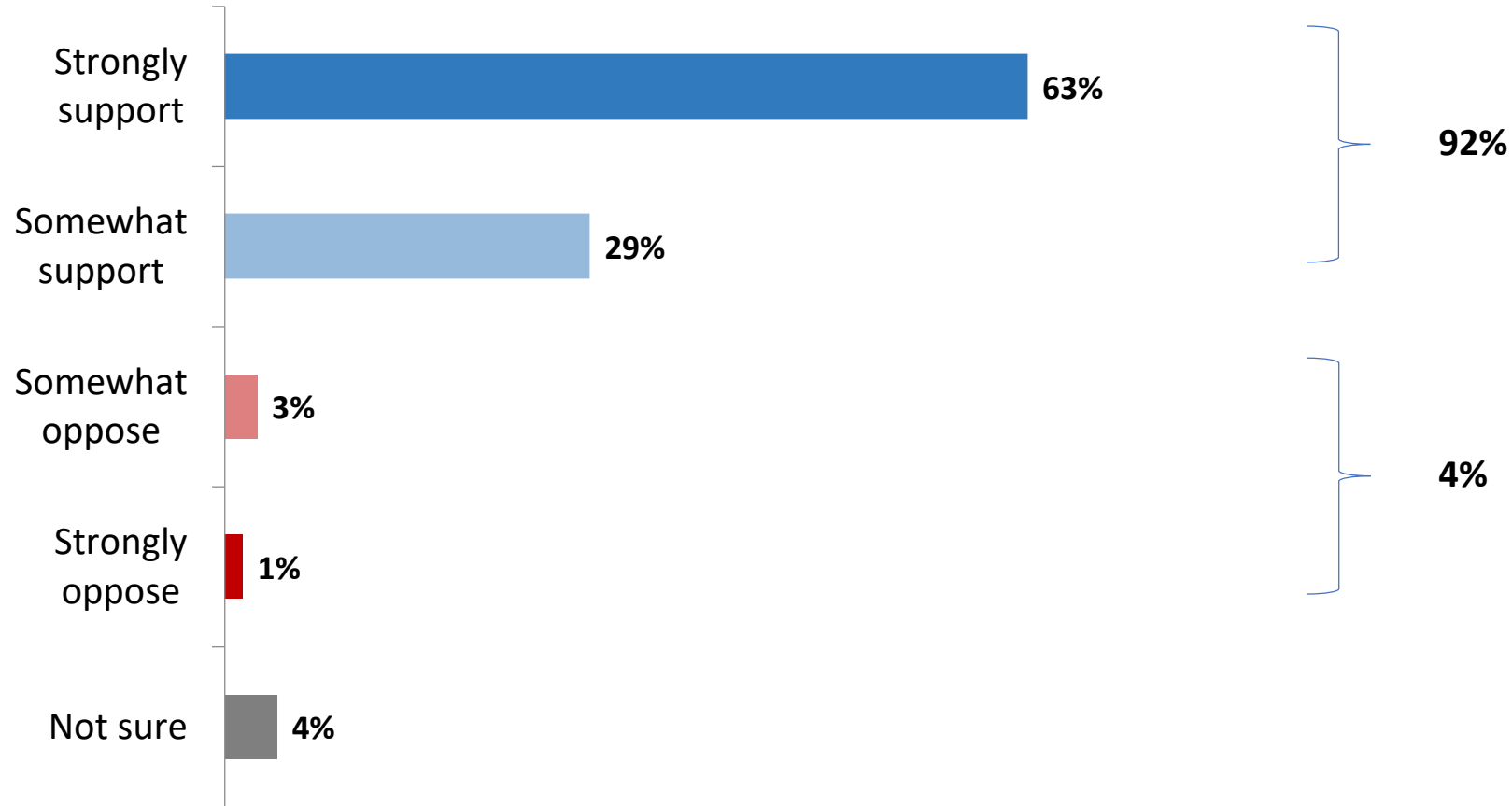
How much of the program cost should be paid for by property taxes?



C3. What proportion of the cost for the air quality program do you feel should be allocated to Metro Vancouver businesses that emit pollutants and residents?

Base: Residents aware of the air quality program and feel that it should be funded by fees and property taxes, n=267

Do we support scaling fees?



Residents living in the Central sub-region are most likely to strongly support scaling fees:

- Central (73%)
- North West (64%)
- North East (61%)
- South West (54%)
- South East (54%)

C4. Metro Vancouver is also considering applying fees based on a scale where Metro Vancouver businesses that emit more pollutants, or pollutants that are more harmful, are charged a higher fee, and business that discharge less or less harmful pollutants are charged a lower fee. Do you support or oppose scaling fees?

Base: Total, n=1,138

Thank you

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