



Critical Insights on Maine™
Summary Results of Proprietary Polling Findings

Prepared for Maine Rail Group

Spring 2025

Introduction



Introduction

Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each spring and fall, Digital Research, Inc. conducts the <i>Critical Insights on Maine™</i> tracking survey, a comprehensive, statewide public opinion poll of registered voters that covers a variety of topics of interest to business leaders, policymakers, and the public at large.• <i>Critical Insights on Maine™</i> has been documenting the attitudes, perceptions, and preferences of Maine’s residents for more than 25 years, making it the longest-running, consistently-administered tracking survey in the Northeast.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In addition to general interest items (the results of which are released to the public, via information provided to local and regional media outlets), the survey also serves as a vehicle for interested parties to include proprietary questions in the poll, the results of which are provided only to the sponsoring entities.• This report presents the results of proprietary questions included in the poll on behalf of the Maine Rail Group that were integrated into the current measurement.
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The current round of the poll included a total of 600 participants across the state who were surveyed by phone (298 study participants) or online (302 respondents) in the Spring of 2025 (March 11th to April 3rd).<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All survey participants were required to be registered voters in Maine.• Final data reflect the demographic make-up of Maine’s voting population and were statistically weighted to appropriately balance results by gender, age, level of education, geographic region of residence, and voter registration profile (see Sample Profile on page 4).• With a total sample of 600 participants, the results presented here have an associated sampling error of +/- 4.0 percentage points at a 95% level of confidence.• The survey took the average participant less than 18 minutes to complete – including both general-interest questions, as well as proprietary items included by sponsoring entities like the Maine Rail Group.



Sample Profile

- As noted, data in this report have been weighted to appropriately balance the sample make-up according to gender, age, level of education, geographic region of residence, and voter registration profile to reflect the make-up of the state's voting population.

Gender Identification	
Female	50%
Male	49%
Non-binary/Other	1%

Self-Reported Age	
Under 35	20%
35-44	20%
45-54	17%
55-64	16%
65 or over	27%

Educational Attainment	
Less than a four-year college degree	66%
Four-year college or more	33%

Congressional District	
One	50%
Two	50%

Self-Reported Party Registration	
Democrat	34%
Republican	30%
Other*	7%
Unenrolled	30%

* Includes Green Independent, Libertarian, No Labels, or some other party not listed.

- Party affiliation data are shown above for the total sample; some variation is seen by Congressional District, in accordance with current registration information made available by the Office of the Secretary of State.



Proprietary Study Findings



Topline Results

The *Critical Insights on Maine™* poll asked Maine voters questions on their overall likelihood of ridership on expanded passenger rail service along a proposed route through central Maine to Bangor and Orono, their likelihood of ridership for specific purposes and destinations along the proposed route, and support or opposition to funding some of the costs of the expanded service through a statewide bond.

Overall Ridership, Potential Frequency of Use

- Based on a brief overview statement outlining the proposed expanded rail service from the existing Amtrak *Downeaster* footprint north through the route proposed, nearly six-in-ten Maine voters surveyed could envision themselves or those close to them riding the train at least occasionally, including fully two-in-ten who would ride it more often (either “regularly” or “all the time”).
- Potential ridership numbers are consistent across demographic and other classification subgroups examined in the poll, with younger residents and those with a more favorable view of Maine’s direction as a state tending to be most optimistic about their potential ridership frequency.

Occasion-specific Ridership, Potential Frequency of Use

- For specific occasions measured in the survey, likely ridership figures (based on the proportion who see themselves riding at least “occasionally”) are most robust for leisure travel purposes, including general pleasure trips, going to concerts/sporting events/cultural opportunities, and shopping/dining/downtown visitation along the route. In each case, roughly six-in-ten (or more) of Maine voters anticipate at least occasional trips on the proposed expanded service route.
- Anticipated usage figures for stated purposes that are more pragmatic in nature (medical facility visits, commuting/business travel, and attending or visiting schools or colleges along the proposed route) are somewhat less robust than those seen for leisure travel.

Voter Reaction to Bond Funding

- A majority of Maine voters polled (fully 63%) would support funding some costs associated with expanded passenger rail service through a statewide bond.
- Support is consistent across demographic and classification subgroups, with more highly educated residents and those with a more favorable view of Maine’s trajectory as a state (particularly Democrats) tending to be most supportive of a bond approach; while Republicans are less supportive of a potential bond approach to funding, it is still notable that just over half of these voters would still support a statewide bond.

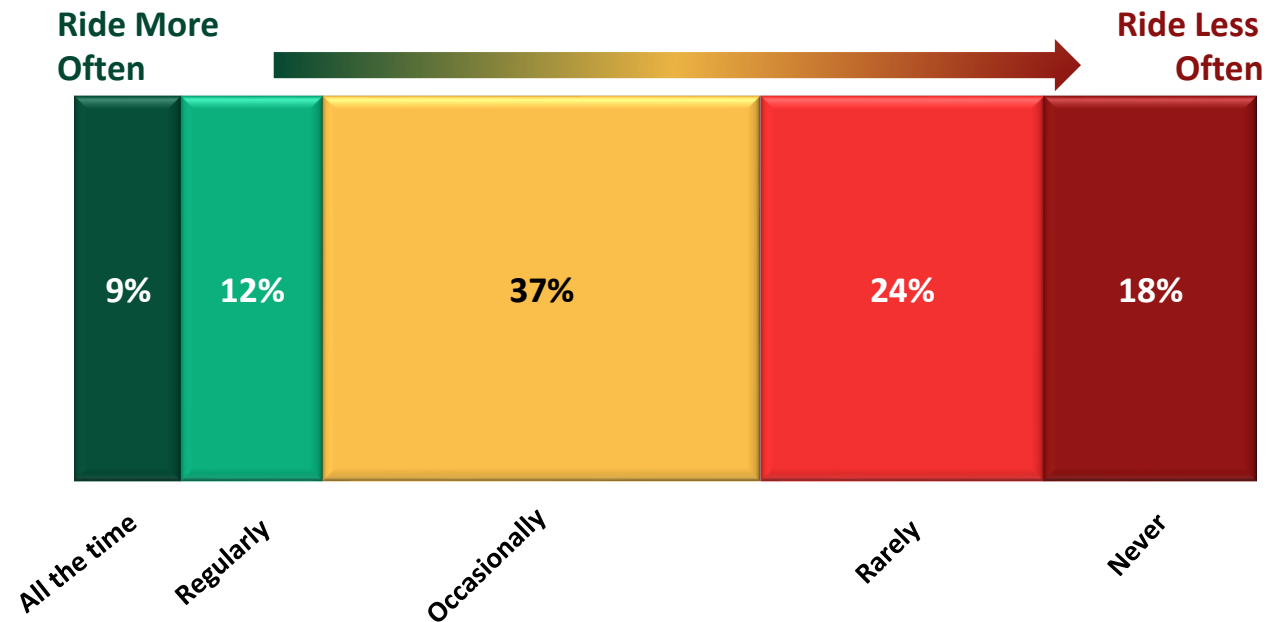


If Maine offered expanded passenger rail service, nearly six-in-ten voters polled believe they or people close to them would ride the proposed route at least occasionally.

- The *Critical Insights on Maine™* tracking survey presented poll participants with a summary description of possible expansion of passenger rail service in Maine. After all were provided with this summary information, participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they or friends and family would use such a service.
- If Amtrak *Downeaster* passenger rail service were extended along the route proposed, two-in-ten of those polled would could be considered more regular users of the service.

Legislation being proposed in Maine will study the possibility of extending Amtrak's Downeaster passenger train service north through Lewiston, Waterville and Bangor and on to Orono.

If such service were offered, about how often could you see yourself, members of your family, or close friends riding the train on this route?



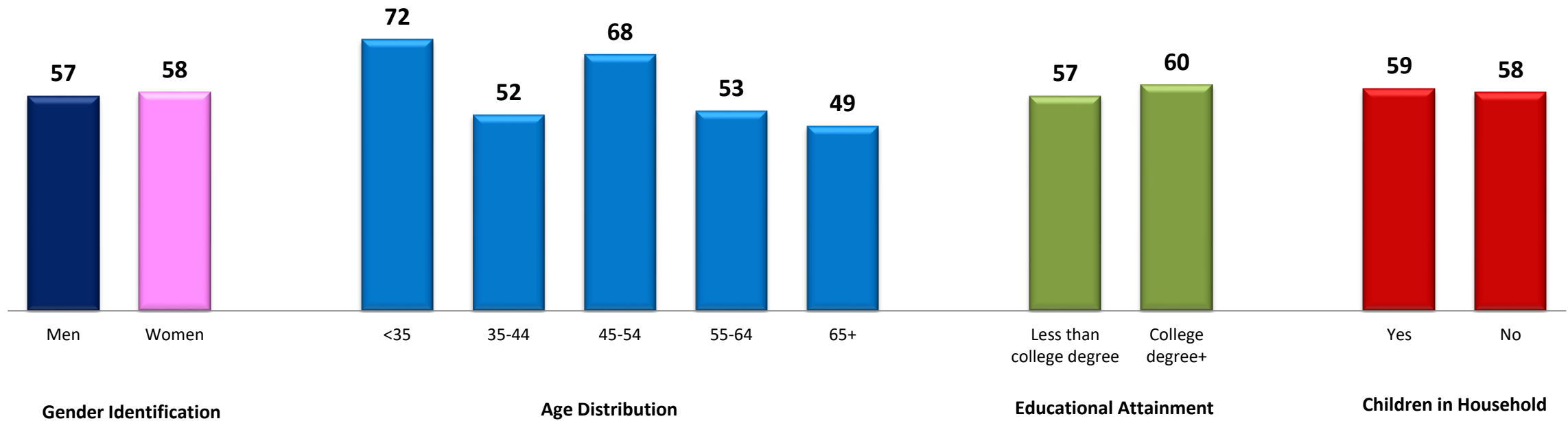
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Using a gauge of at least occasional use as a measure of potential ridership, half or more of voters across core demographic subgroups can be seen as prospective riders.

- Younger residents (age 35 or under) boast the greatest proportion of at least occasional passengers, including 31% who claim that they would ride more regularly.

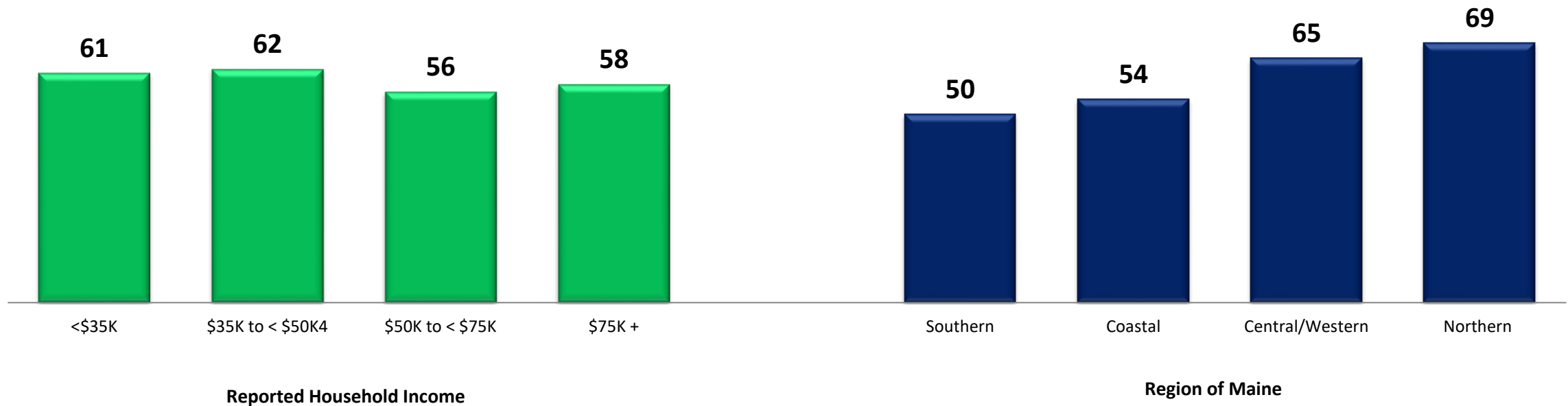
% Potential Ridership | Occasionally/Regularly/All the time



Potential ridership figures are consistent across all economic subgroups, while potential appears more robust among those residing in the interior and northern portions of the proposed route.

- Indeed, majorities across each economic group would ride at least occasionally, while two-thirds (or more) of residents in the Central/Western Mountains and more Northern counties make similar ridership claims.

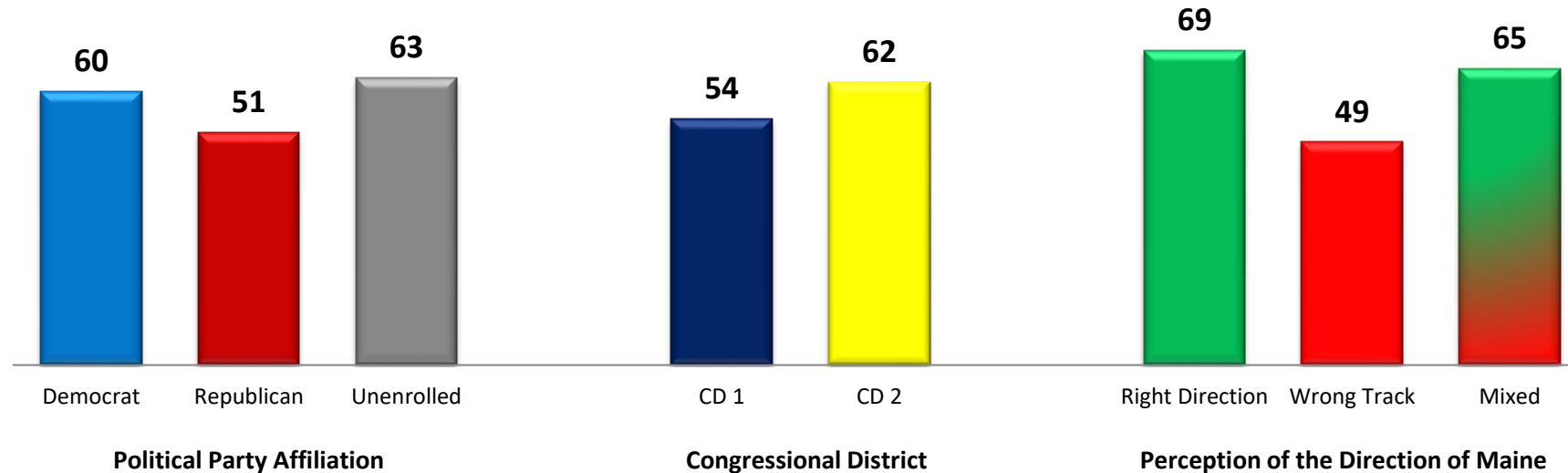
% Potential Ridership | Occasionally/Regularly/All the time



Some variance is observed according to political leanings and perspectives, with ridership figures being directionally a bit lower among self-reported GOP voters, as well as among those who believe Maine is headed in the wrong direction as a state.

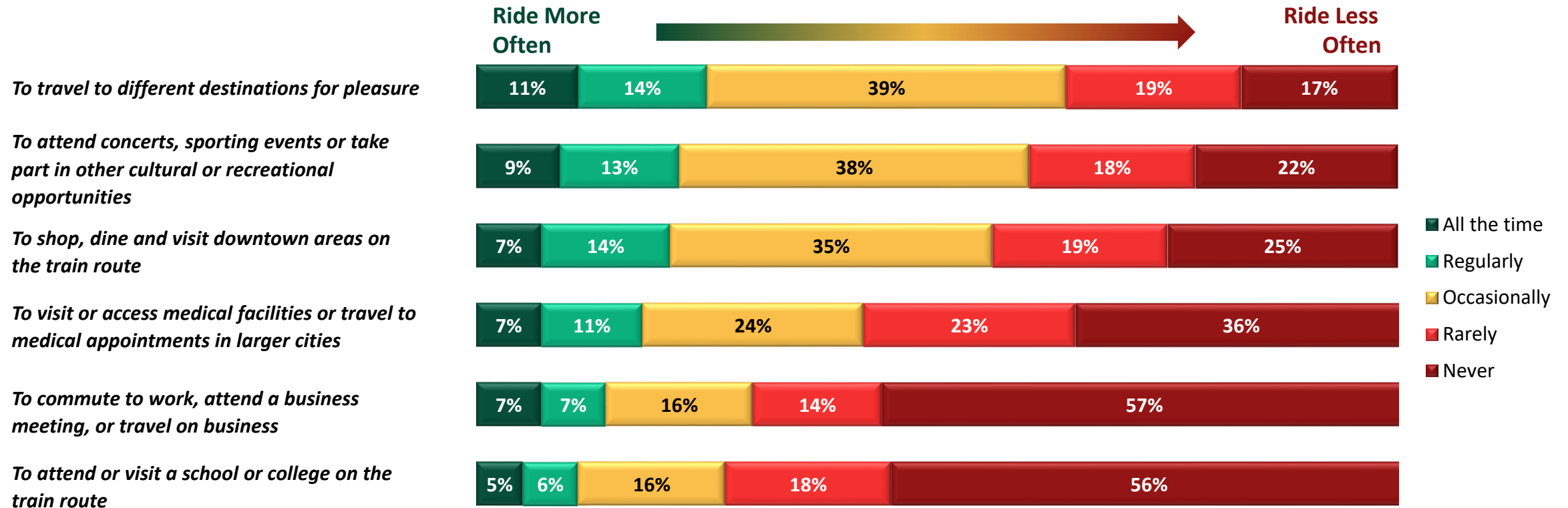
- Notably, two-thirds or more of those who believe the state is on an upward trajectory (or even mixed) would ride the expanded rail service at least occasionally; while numbers are significantly lower among those with a more pessimistic view of Maine’s path, it is still relevant to note that nearly half of these voters would ride at least occasionally.

% Potential Ridership | Occasionally/Regularly/All the time



Route destinations tied to more leisure-based purposes (pleasure travel, attending concerts/events, and shopping/dining) tend to garner more robust proportions of potential riders.

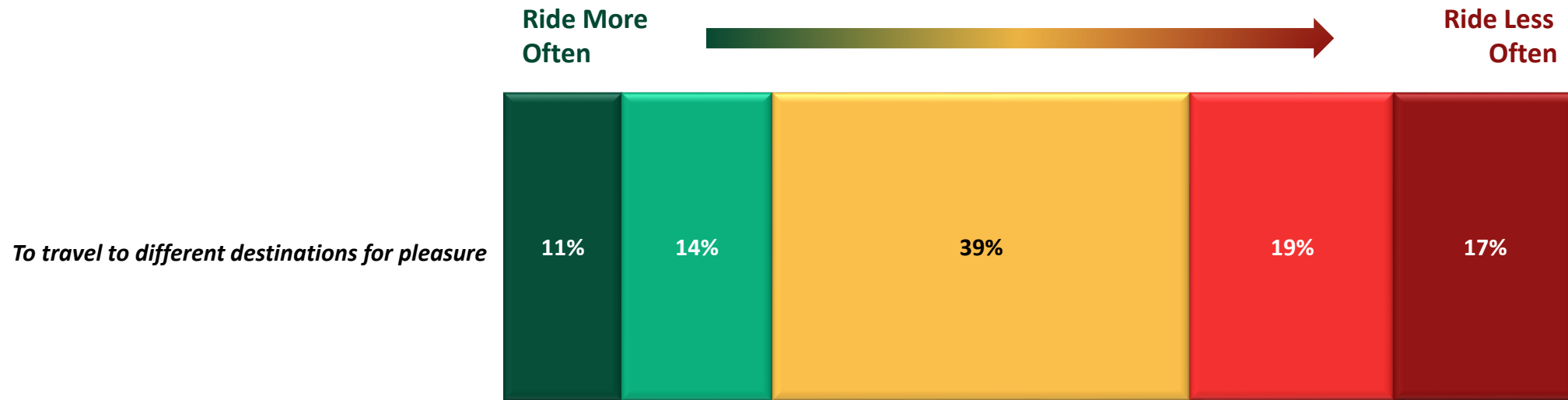
The poll also presented several ridership occasions and destinations and asked participants to indicate the frequency with which they might envision using the proposed rail service.



If this extended train service becomes available in Maine – linking these northern and central points in the state to Portland and points south to Boston’s North Station – how might you envision using this new service? Please tell us about how often could you see yourself, members of your family, or close friends using this service for each of the following purposes.



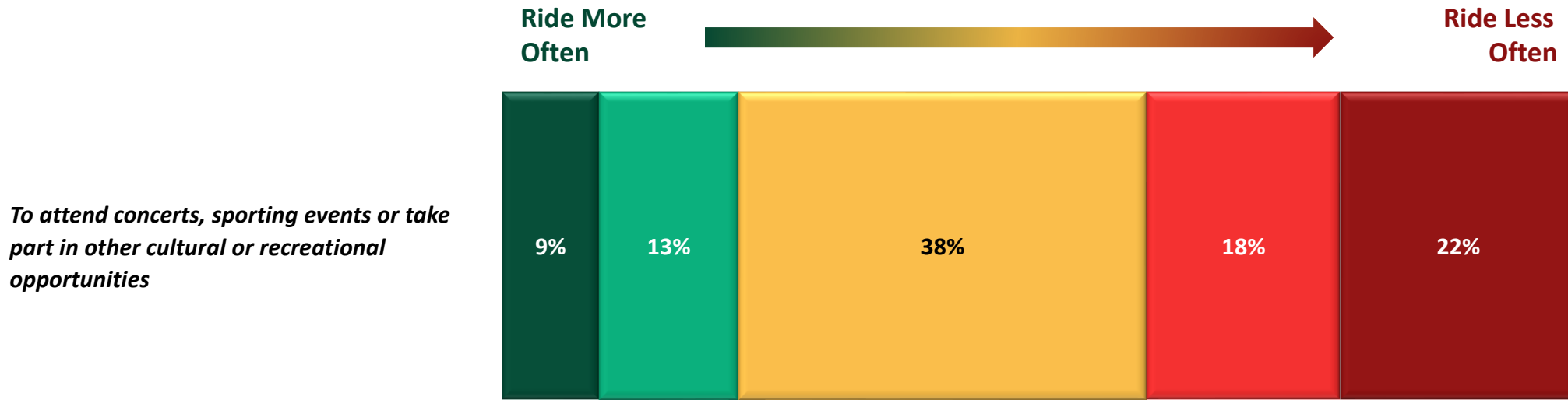
Close to two-thirds of Maine voters see themselves riding the train at least occasionally for pleasure travel to different destinations along the proposed train route.



- Among the 64% of Maine voters who would ride at least occasionally for pleasure, numbers are particularly favorable for the following resident subgroups:
 - Younger residents (73% would ride at least occasionally);
 - College grads (70%); and
 - Those who see Maine as on the right track (79%) or have a mixed perception (70%).



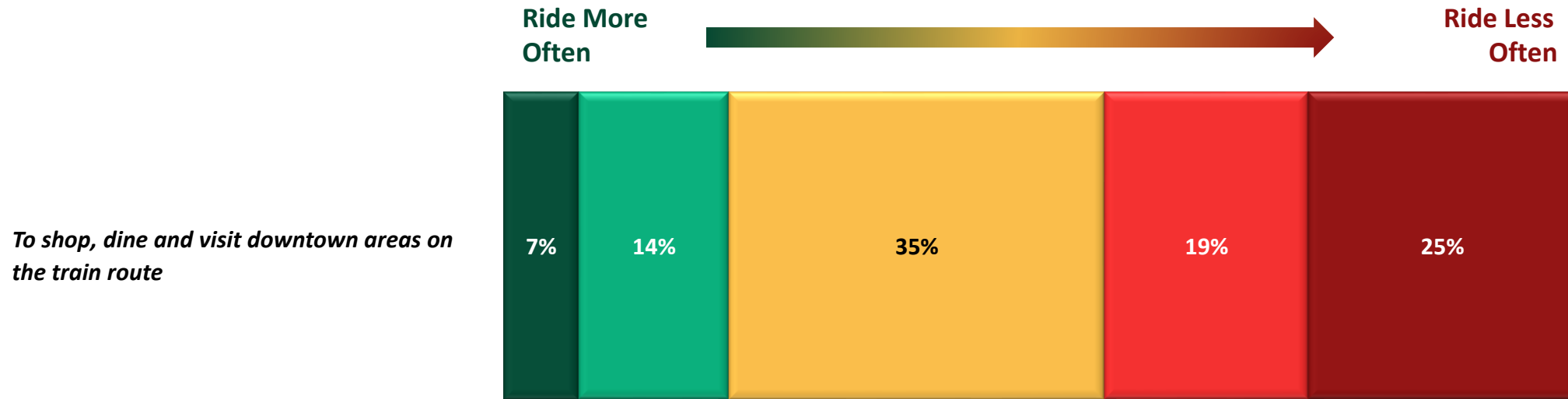
A strong majority of voters see themselves riding the train at least occasionally for travel to concerts, sporting events, and other cultural/recreational opportunities along the route.



- Among the 60% of voters polled who would ride the train at least occasionally for events and similar needs, numbers are again particularly favorable for younger residents (72% of those age 35 or under would ride at least occasionally), as well as among unenrolled voters (68%) and those who see Maine as being on the right track as a state (73%) or have a mixed perceptions (69%).



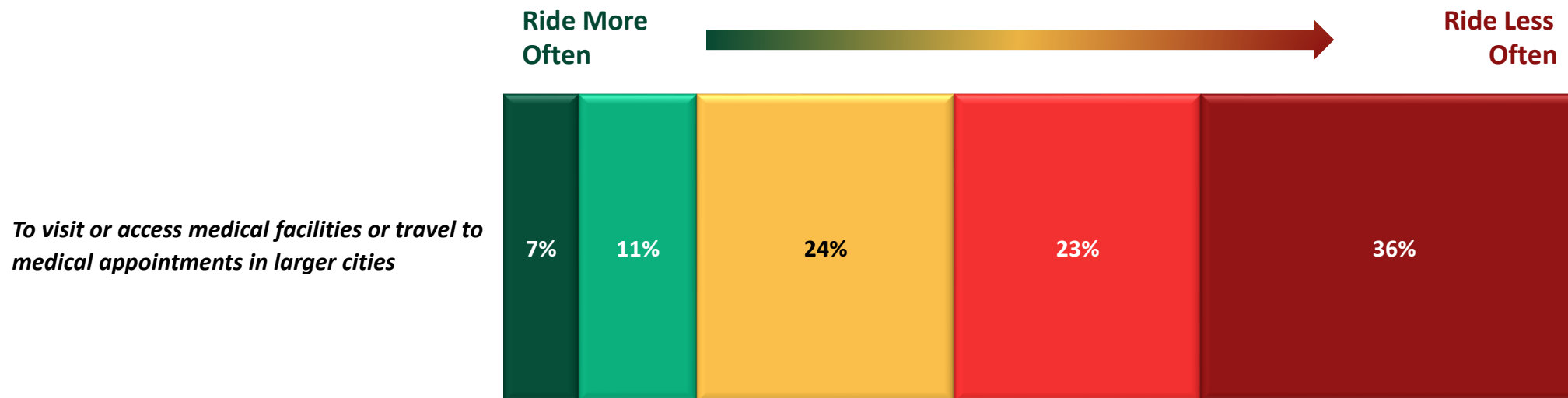
Close to six-in-ten Maine voters see themselves riding the train at least occasionally to shop, dine, and visit the downtown areas along the proposed train route.



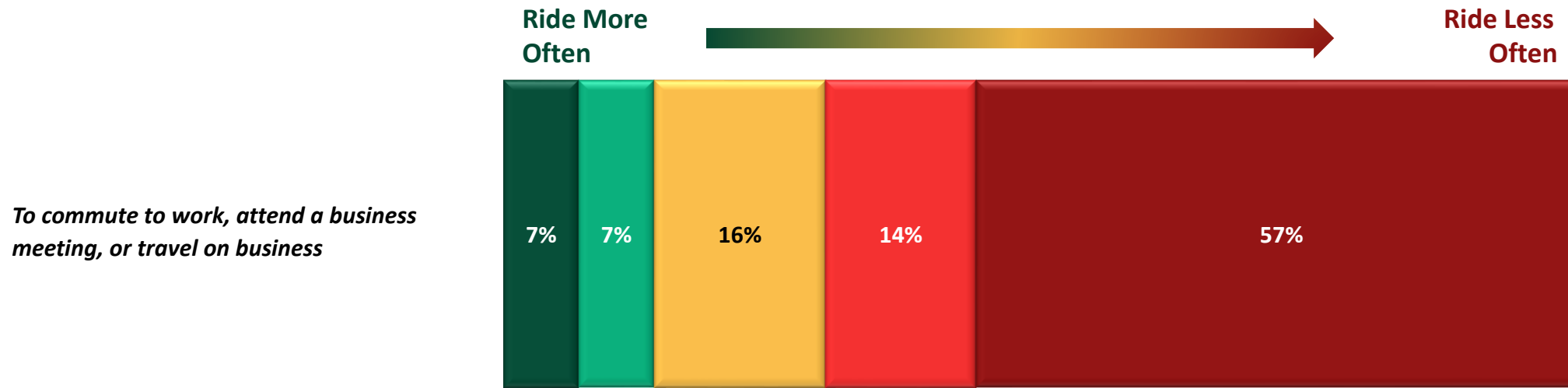
- Among the 56% of Maine voters who would ride at least occasionally to shop, eat, or visit downtowns, numbers are particularly favorable for Democratic voters (62%) and those who see Maine on the right track (68%) or have a mixed perceptions (63%); on this and other ridership measures, GOP voters tend to be more pessimistic, on average.



Perceived usage numbers for travel for more pragmatic reasons (vs. pleasure/recreation/leisure) tend to be less robust, with medical-related travel boasting the highest numbers at 41% envisioning at least occasional usage.



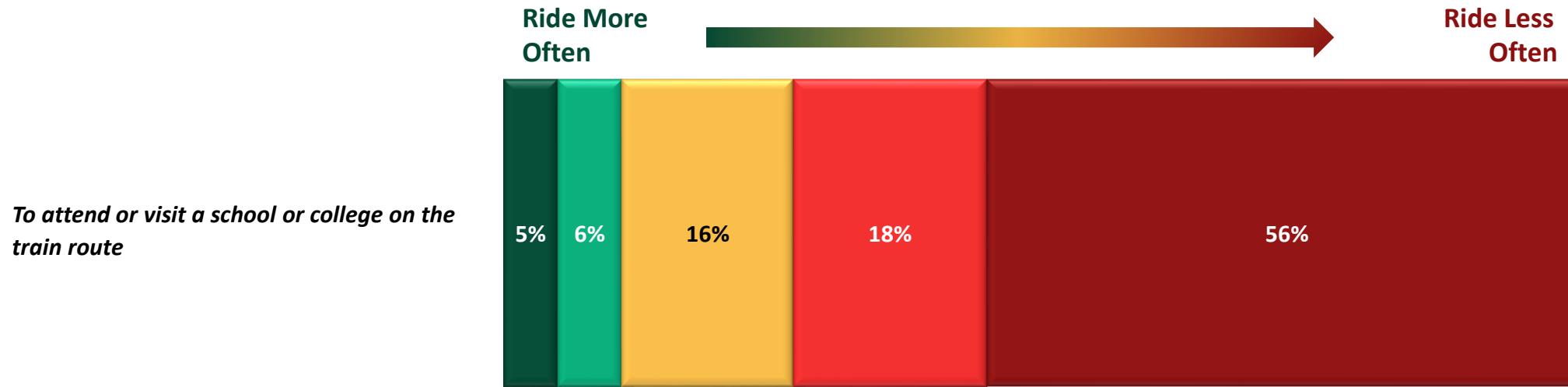
About three-in-ten voters see themselves riding the train at least occasionally for business purposes (either commuting, attending meetings, or other business travel).



- Among the 29% of voters polled who would ride the train at least occasionally for business-related needs, numbers are again particularly favorable for younger residents (46% of those age 35 or under would ride at least occasionally to commute, attend meetings, or for other business needs).



About one-quarter of voters see themselves riding the train at least occasionally to attend or visit a school or college along the route.



- Among the 26% of those polled who would ride the train at least occasionally for education-related needs, numbers are again particularly favorable for younger residents (39% of those age 35 or under would ride at least occasionally to attend or visit schools or colleges on the route); usage figures for those age 55 or older for education purposes are much less robust.



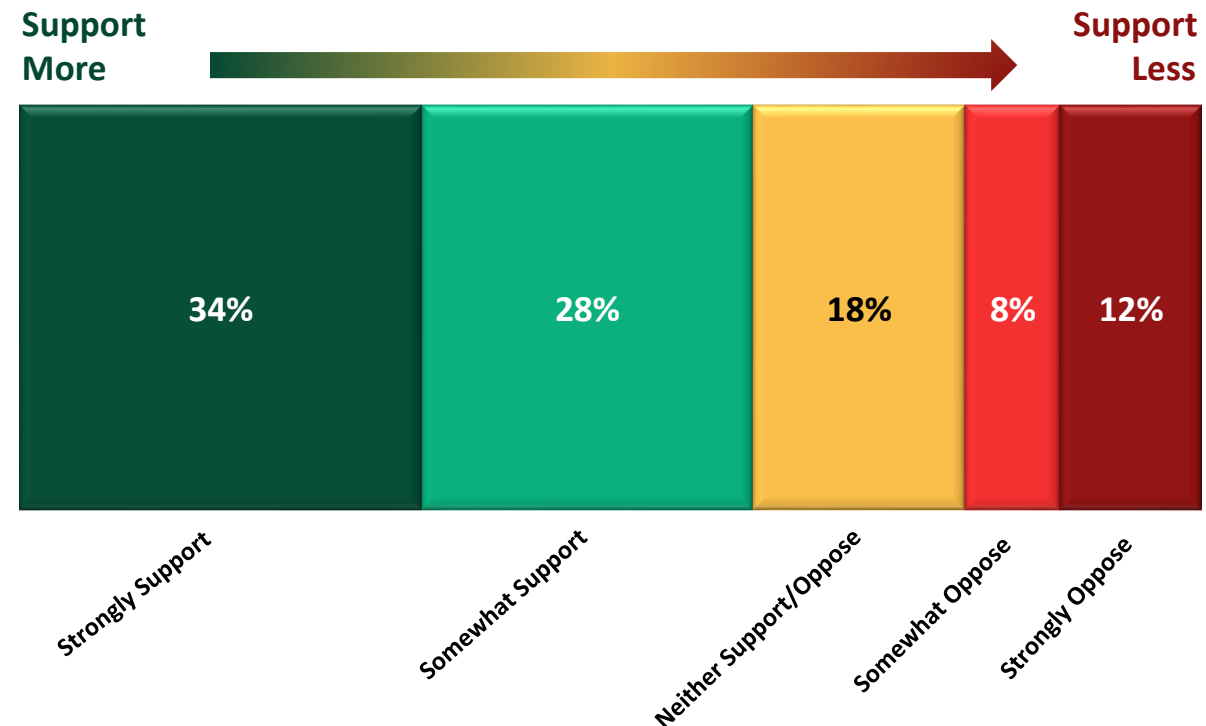
More than six-in-ten Maine voters support a statewide bond to fund planning and construction costs associated with the proposed rail expansion.

- *Critical Insights on Maine™* also presented participants with a summary description of how an expansion of passenger rail service might be funded, including a statewide bond that would fund some of the costs remaining after using federal resources; voters were asked to indicate their level of support or opposition to this funding mechanism.

The legislation being proposed would allow Maine to receive 100% federal funding to study the feasibility of extending train service into central and northern points in Maine. Costs for preparing a service plan would be 90% funded by federal dollars, and a federal grant would pay 80% of the costs for equipment and track work.

The limited remaining costs for this expanded train service could be funded through a statewide bond.

Do you support or oppose such a bond to fund these planning and construction costs?



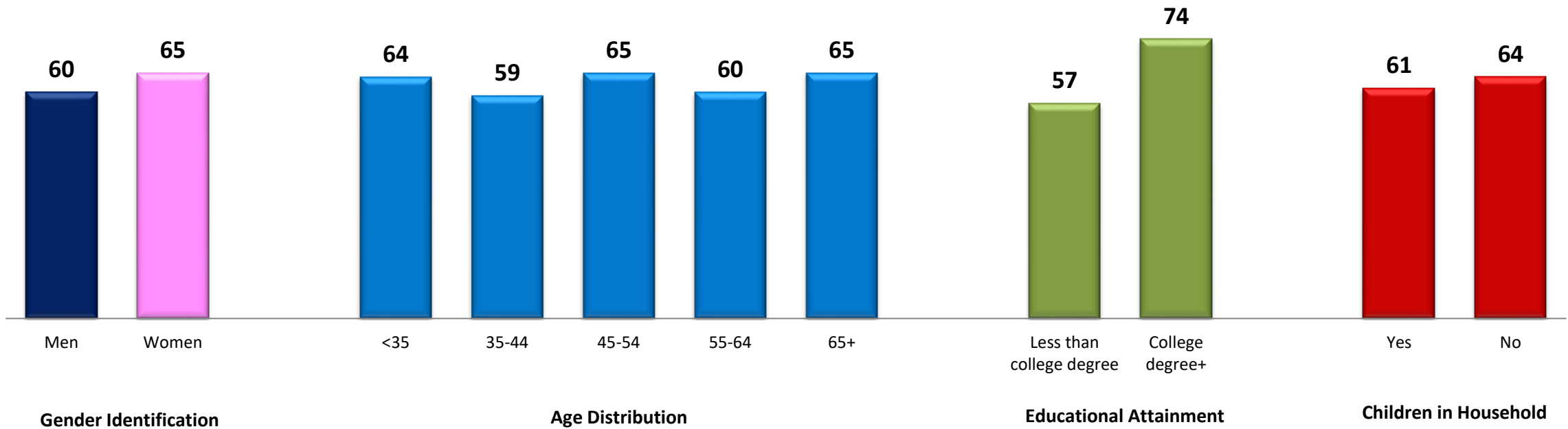
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A majority of voters across all demographic and classification subgroups under examination express support for statewide bonding as a funding mechanism for expanded rail service.

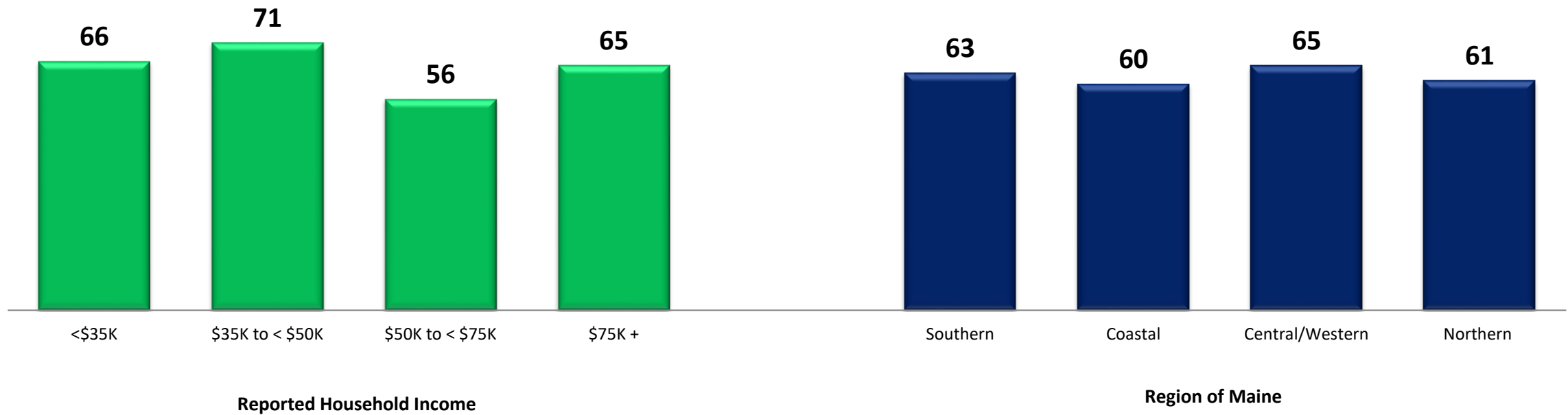
- Support among more highly-educated voters is quite robust, with three-quarters of those with at least a four-year college degree expressing support for bond funding; this level of support is significantly greater than that indicated by those without a college degree.

% Support | Strongly/Somewhat



Funding through a statewide bond garners majority support across all economic groups, as well as across all regions of the state of Maine.

% Support | Strongly/Somewhat



As seen with potential ridership, support for statewide bonding shows some differences according to political leanings and perspectives, with more support for bonding among self-reported Democrats, as well as among those with a more positive view of Maine's direction.

- While support for funding through a statewide bond is most common among self-reported Democrats, it is notable that more than half of Republicans are supportive of the approach.
- Similarly, while those with a more optimistic (or even mixed) view of the state's trajectory are most supportive of bonding, half of those who see Maine as being on the wrong track are still supportive of funding rail expansion through a bond measure.

% Support | Strongly/Somewhat

