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Examining Vermonters' Attitudes Towards a Sugary Beverage Excise Tax

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Background

- Americans consume more added sugars from sugar sweetened beverages (SSB) than any other food source.¹
- SSB consumption is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular diseases,^{2,3} dyslipidemia,² and diabetes^{4,5} for adults, as well as obesity and metabolic disorders for children.⁶
- Multiple U.S. cities have implemented SSB taxes, reducing consumption of unhealthy beverages while funding public health efforts targeting social and health disparities.⁷

Objectives

- Our project examines Vermonters' attitudes towards implementing a sugary beverage excise tax.
- We investigate whether revenues going toward various public health efforts will influence their support.

Methods

- A nineteen-question anonymous survey was distributed online, via community forums, and in-person locations.
- Registered Vermont voters ≥18 years old were included.
- Data were collected from 11 out of 14 Vermont counties.
- Descriptive statistics and χ^2 tests were performed using R. P values were calculated with Monte Carlo simulation due to small sample sizes.

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Results

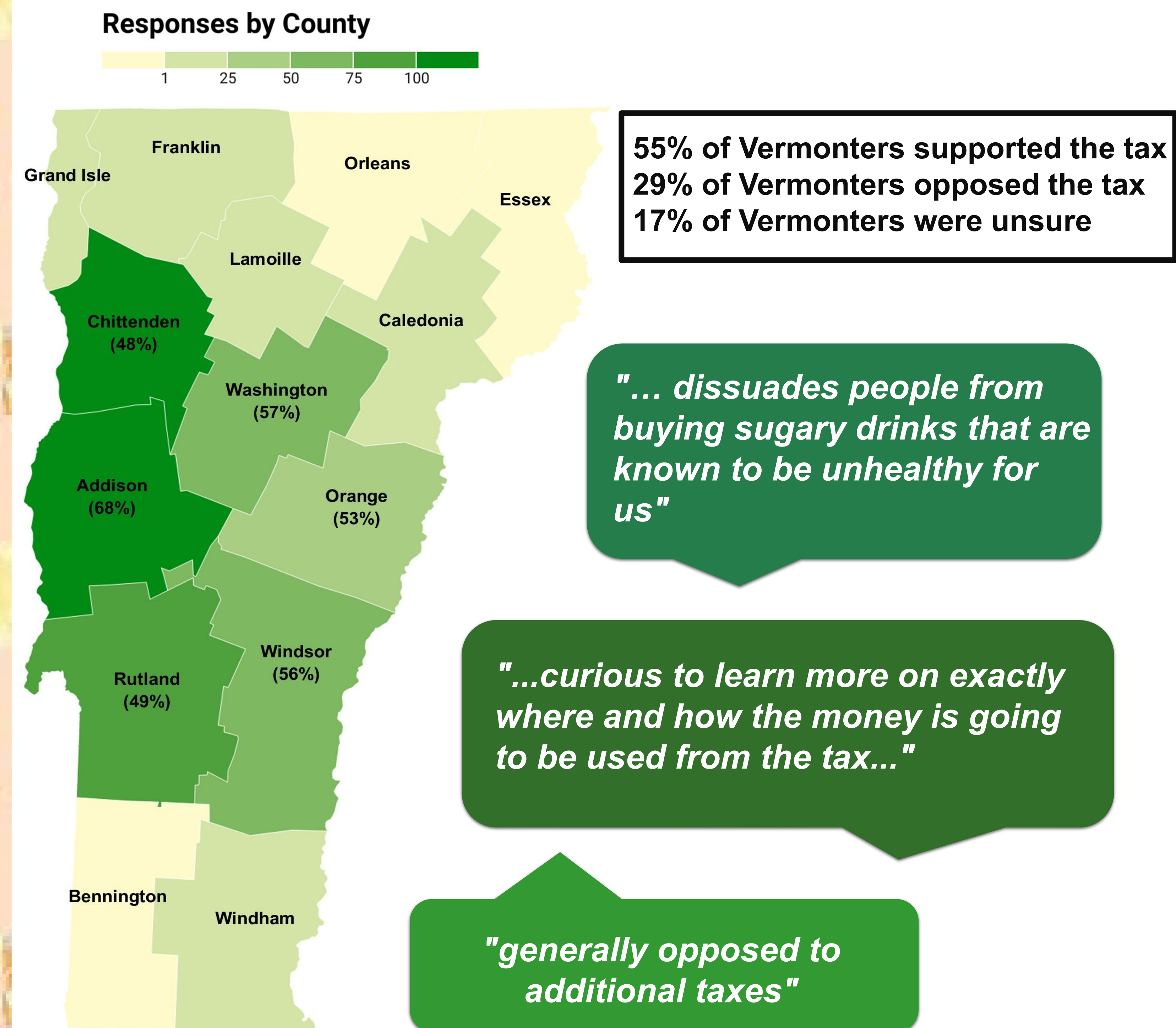


Figure 1: Survey responses by county. Percentage indicates percentage of respondents in support. Percentage support from counties with less than 10 respondents excluded from figure to protect anonymity.

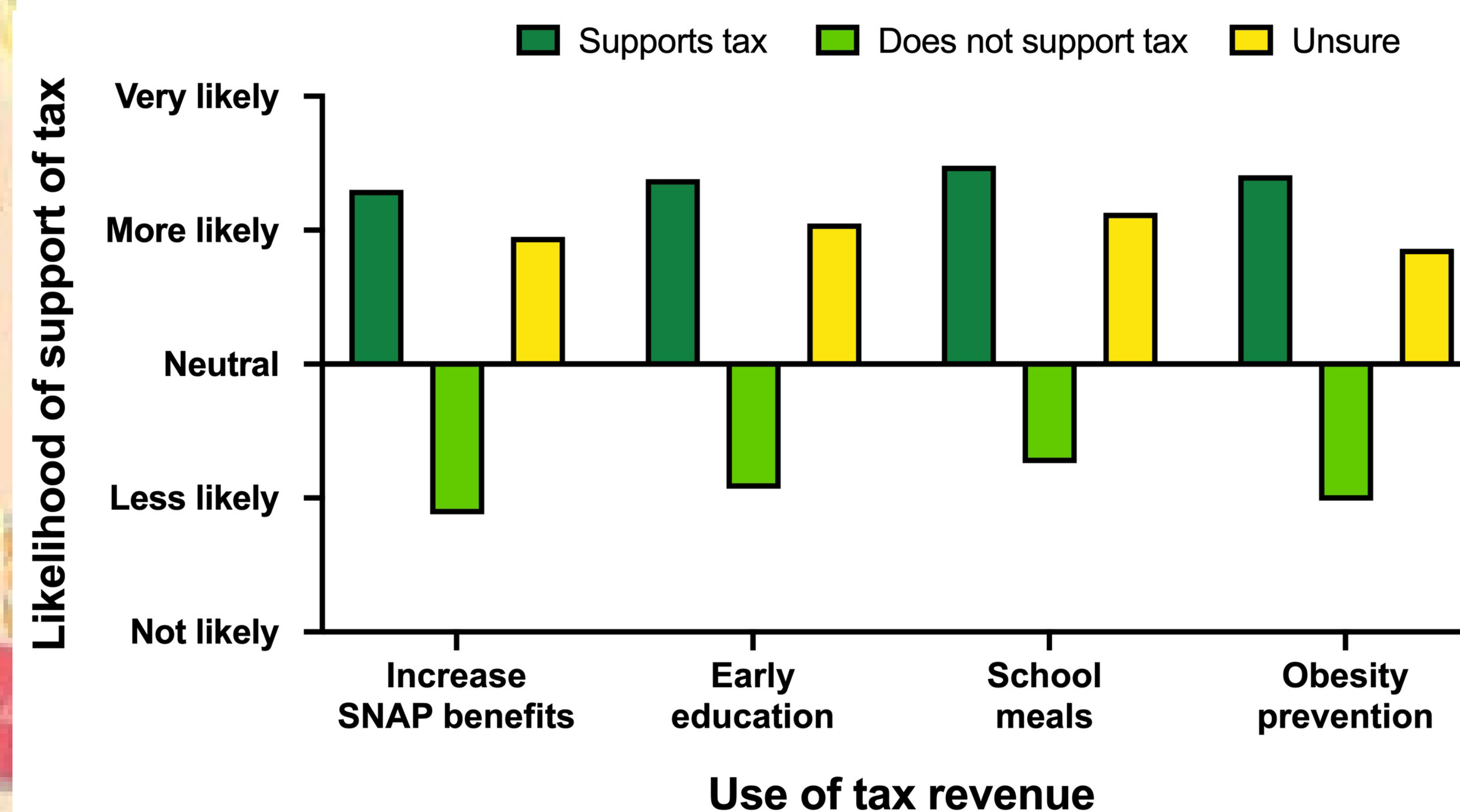


Figure 2: Respondents were asked to rate how likely they were to support a sugary beverage tax if the tax revenue went towards the four categories listed above. Possible responses were "Not likely", "Less likely", "Neutral", "More likely", or "Very likely". These responses were numerically coded -2 to 2, with higher values corresponding to greater support, lower values corresponding to less support.

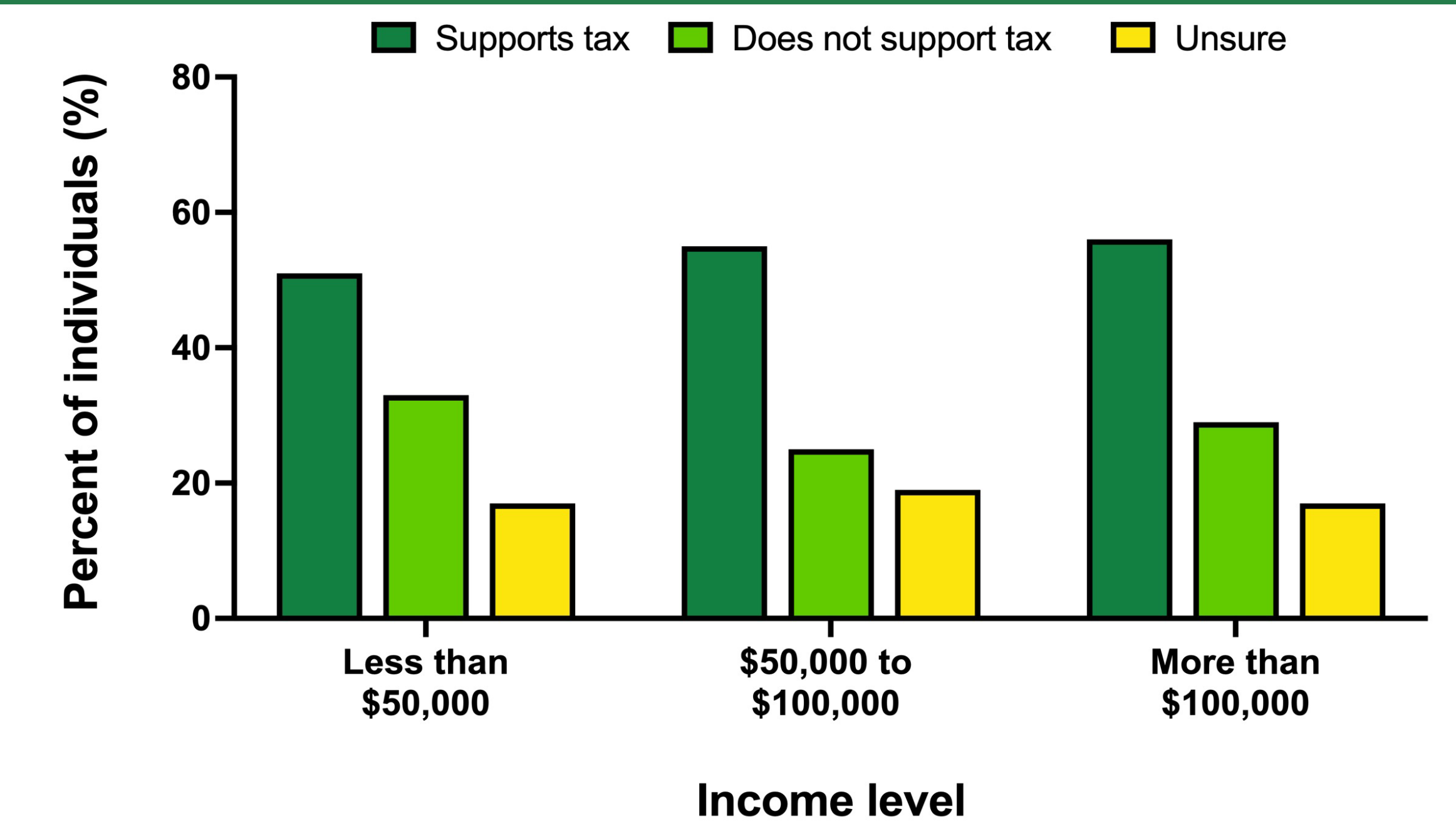


Figure 3: There was no statistical difference in support for a sugary beverage tax between income groups.

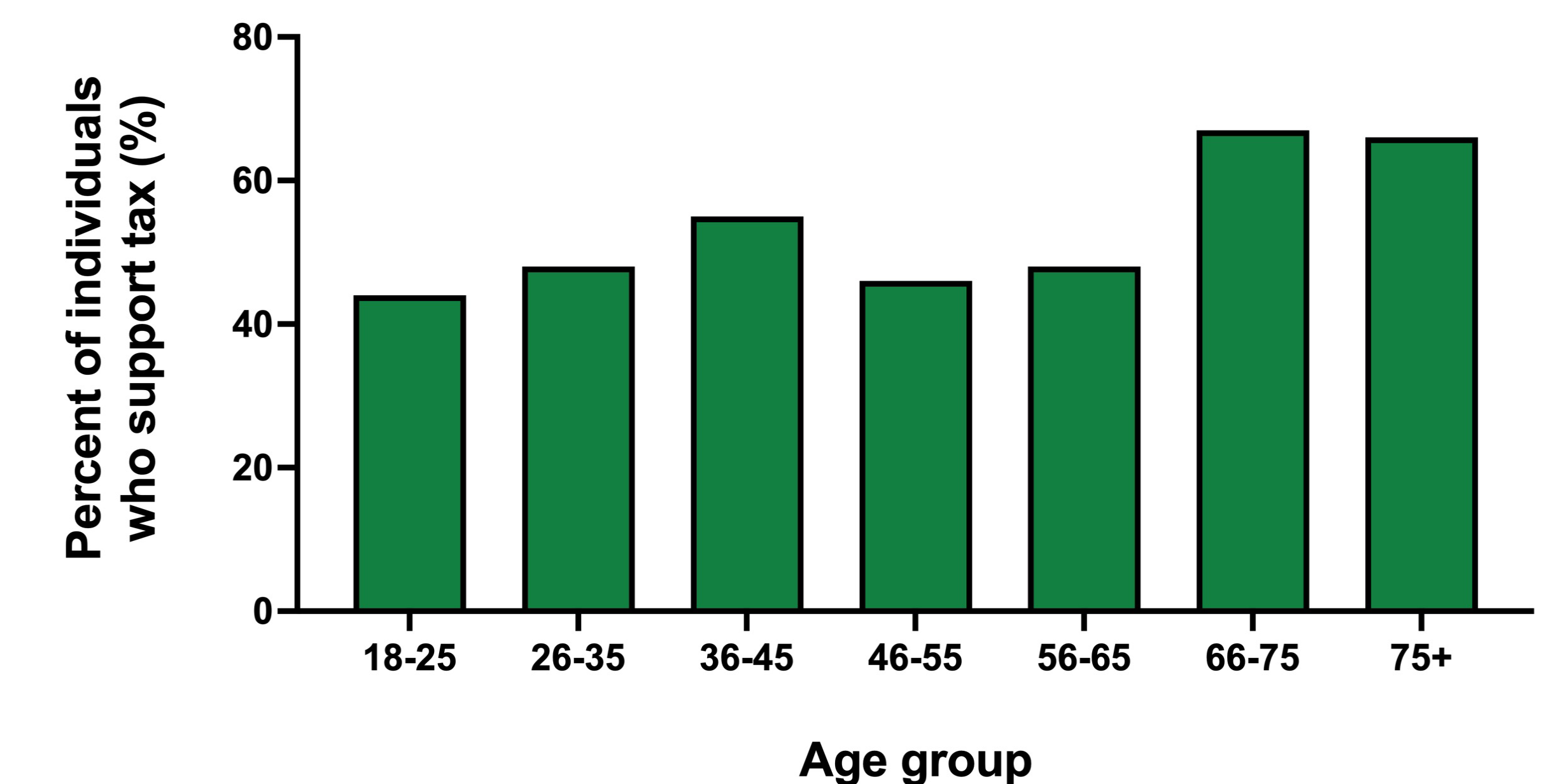


Figure 4: There was a statistical difference in support for a sugary beverage tax between age groups: $\chi^2 (1, N = 521) = 24.85, p = 0.02$.

Discussion

- Over half of respondents were in support of a sugary beverage excise tax.
- If Vermont legislature tried to pass a sugary beverage excise tax, those opposed to the tax would be less likely to support it if the revenue went towards public health efforts; however, those in support or unsure of their support were more likely to support the tax if revenue went towards public health efforts.
- Of the proposed public health efforts, use of revenue towards school meals had the greatest average increase in support amongst all groups.
- The survey was limited as a convenience sample and dependent on internet access. These factors potentially limit the generalizability of this study to the general population because of selection bias.