

Money In Chicago Politics Survey

Report Of Findings

Commissioned by:



Prepared by:

CRAIN'S CUSTOM MEDIA
A DIVISION OF CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS

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Executive Summary

- Based on a survey of Chicago area decision-makers working at organizations with at least \$1 million in annual revenue, nearly eight-in-ten (79%) felt that the City of Chicago is off on the wrong track. Only 11% felt that the City of Chicago is going in the right direction, while 10% were not sure.
- More than half (53%) felt that the influence of money in Chicago politics is bad and getting worse, while 39% felt that the influence of money is bad and staying about the same. On the other side of the rating scale, 6% felt that the influence of money in Chicago politics is good and staying the same, while 2% felt it was good and getting better.
- When thinking about the ethical behavior of Chicago elected and appointed officials over the past five years, more than half (53%) felt this is a *very* serious issue, while slightly more than one-third (35%) felt this is *somewhat* of a serious issue.
- More than half (53%) felt that big campaign donors have a *great deal* of impact on increasing Chicago corruption, while 39% felt they have *some* impact.
 - The rating of impact of big donors on increasing Chicago corruption was significantly correlated with the rating of ethical behavior of Chicago officials. For example, among those who felt that big campaign donors have a great deal of impact, 71% also felt that Chicago official ethical behavior is a very serious issue.
- Most (91%) felt that companies that engage with the political process in Chicago by using paid lobbyists and making political contributions gain a business advantage.
 - Slightly more than half (54%) of these respondents felt that campaign contributions give companies a more significant advantage than the services of paid lobbyists. However, this still leaves 46% who felt that the services of paid lobbyists give companies a more significant advantage than campaign contributions. Thus, respondents were roughly split on whether lobbying or contributions had the more significant effect.
- More than half (54%) felt that lobbying of Chicago City Council members and other officials has a *great deal* of impact on increasing corruption, while another 39% felt this has *some* impact.
 - The rating of impact of lobbying on increasing Chicago corruption was significantly correlated with the rating of ethical behavior of Chicago officials. For example, among those who felt that lobbying has a great deal of impact, 72% also felt that Chicago official ethical behavior is a very serious issue.

Executive Summary (Continued)

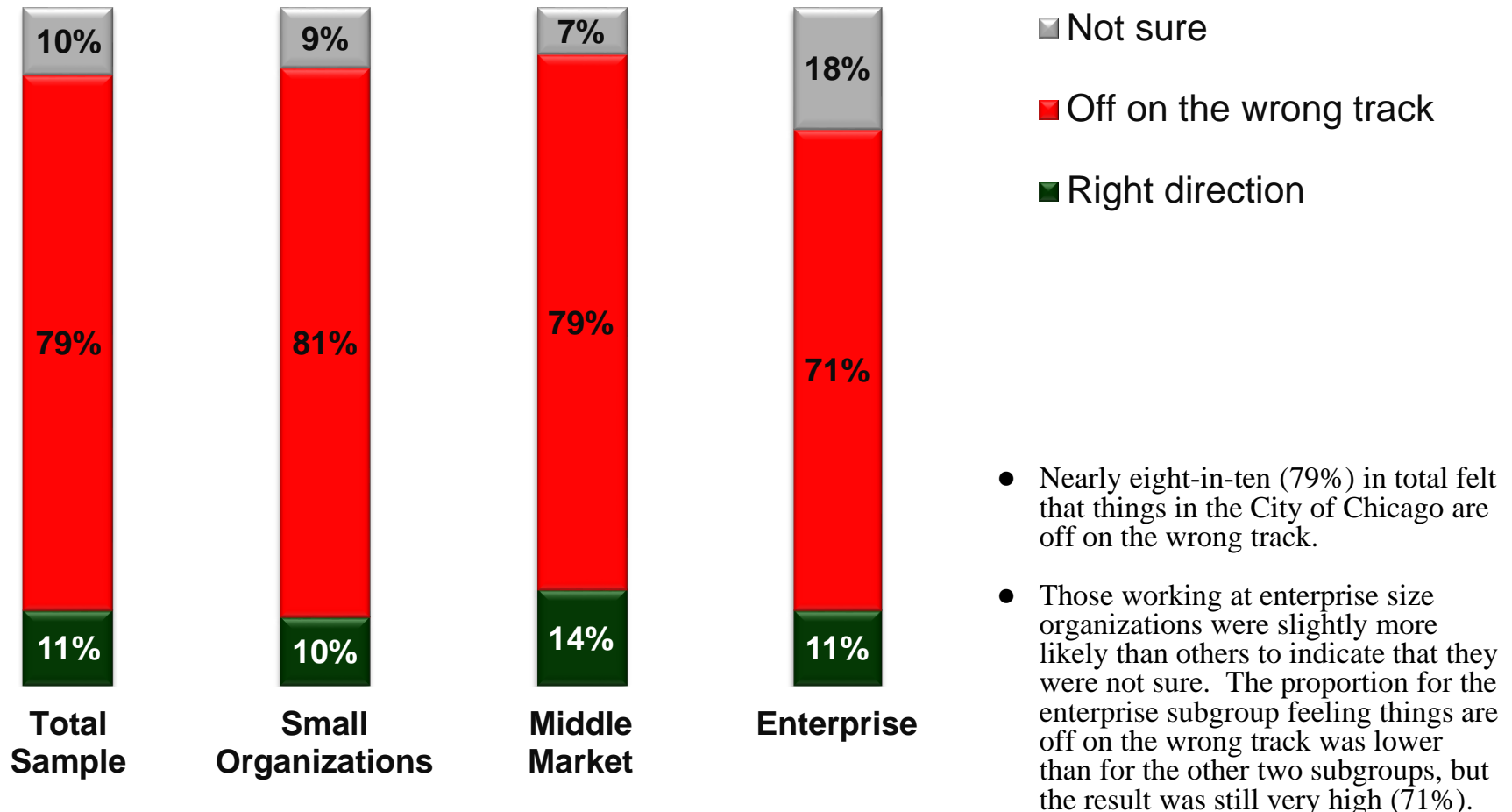
- Approximately eight-in-ten (81%) felt that Chicago's elected officials are generally more responsive to lobbyists than to voters. Others either felt that Chicago's elected officials are generally more responsive to voters than to lobbyists (9%) or they were not sure (10%).
- More than half (58%) would support a program that encourages small-dollar contributions. One-in-six (17%) would not support this type of program, while 25% were not sure. The sizable proportion who were not sure suggests that there is room for further communication / education about this type of program, while the finding that the majority would support it suggests that there is significant potential for this type of program in the future.
- Some (15%) felt that a small donor program would *strongly* improve the quality of candidates who run for municipal office in Chicago, while nearly one-third (32%) felt that this would lead to *some* improvement. Only 5% felt that this would have a negative impact, although many felt it would make no difference in the quality of candidates (35%) or they weren't sure (13%).
 - The rating of the impact of a small donor program was significantly correlated with the willingness to support this type of program. For example, among those who would support it, 70% felt that a small-donor program would lead to *at least* some improvement in the quality of candidates, while this was true for 4% of those who indicated that they would *not* support this type of program.
- Most (92%) felt that a form of crony capitalism is practiced in Chicago. (This was after crony capitalism was defined as the unhealthy relationship between some businesses and government, which can lead to favoritism in the form of tax breaks, government grants, and other incentives.)
- Half (50%) felt that there is *a lot* of pressure on business leaders in Chicago to make political contributions, while 38% felt there is *some* pressure.

Background & Methodology

- **Crain's Custom Media** conducted a web survey to address topics related to money in Chicago politics. The survey was commissioned by the Committee for Economic Development. The nonpartisan, business-led public policy organization is part of The Conference Board.
- Crain's Custom Media assembled a list of potential study participants from the Metro Chicago area.
- E-mail invitations were sent out beginning on May 17, 2016. The e-mail invitation had a link that the respondent could click on to begin the survey.
- To qualify to complete the full survey, respondents had to indicate that their organization had **at least \$1 million in revenue** in 2015 and that they work in a **top management position** (e.g., Chairman, CEO, CFO, COO, Owner, President, Partner, VP, Executive Director, Managing Director, Controller, Treasurer, etc.) or an **upper management position** (e.g., Director, Senior Manager, etc.).
- The survey was kept open until each of three organization size categories had a minimum of 75 completed surveys. Since the number of organizations in each category varied, the number of completes for two of the categories exceeded 75 by the time this goal was achieved for the smallest category. The final number of completed surveys by category – and the revenue ranges for each category – is shown below:
 - 268 completes among those working for an organization with between \$1 million and \$49.9 million in annual revenue (labeled “**Small Organizations**” throughout this report).
 - 76 completes among those working for an organization with between \$50 million and \$499.9 million in annual revenue (labeled “**Middle Market**” throughout this report).
 - 84 completes among those working for an organization with \$500 million or more in annual revenue (labeled “**Enterprise**” throughout this report).
- Thus, there were 428 respondents in total. Throughout this report, results are shown for the total sample as well as by the three subgroups defined above.

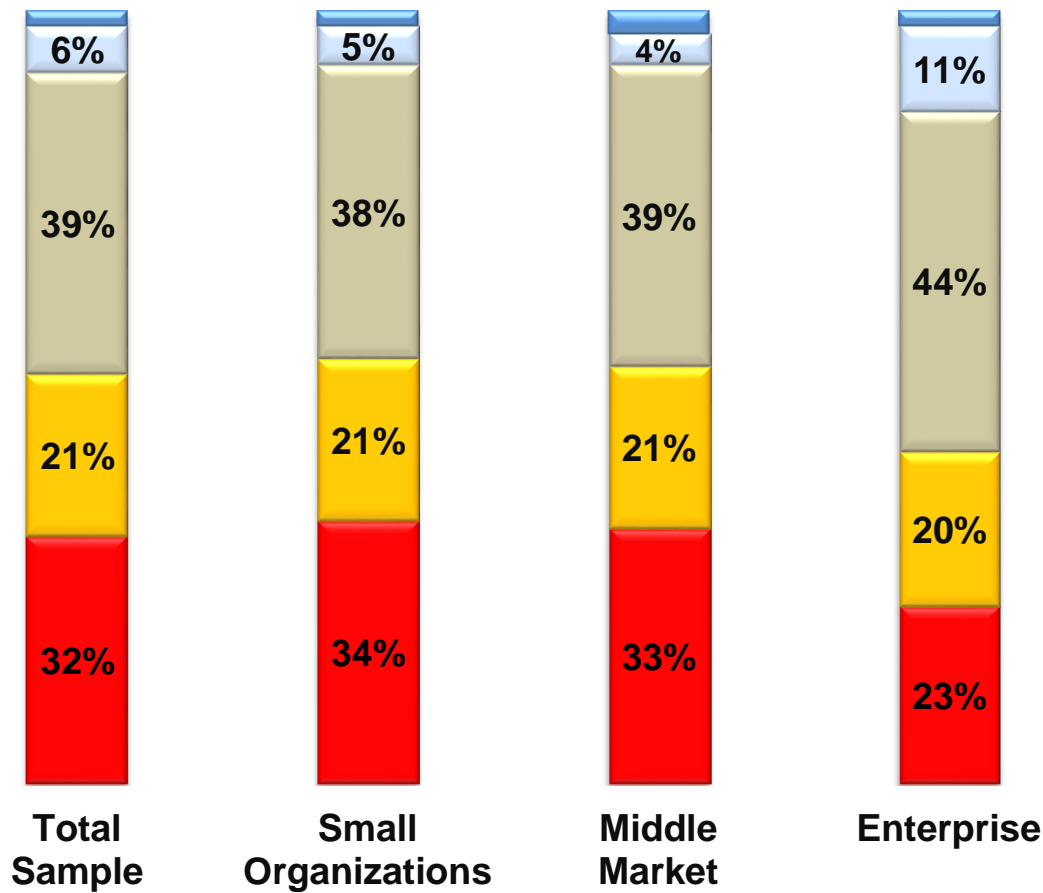
Right Direction vs. Wrong Track

In general, do you feel that things in the City of Chicago are headed in the right direction or do you feel things are off on the wrong track?



Influence Of Money In Chicago Politics

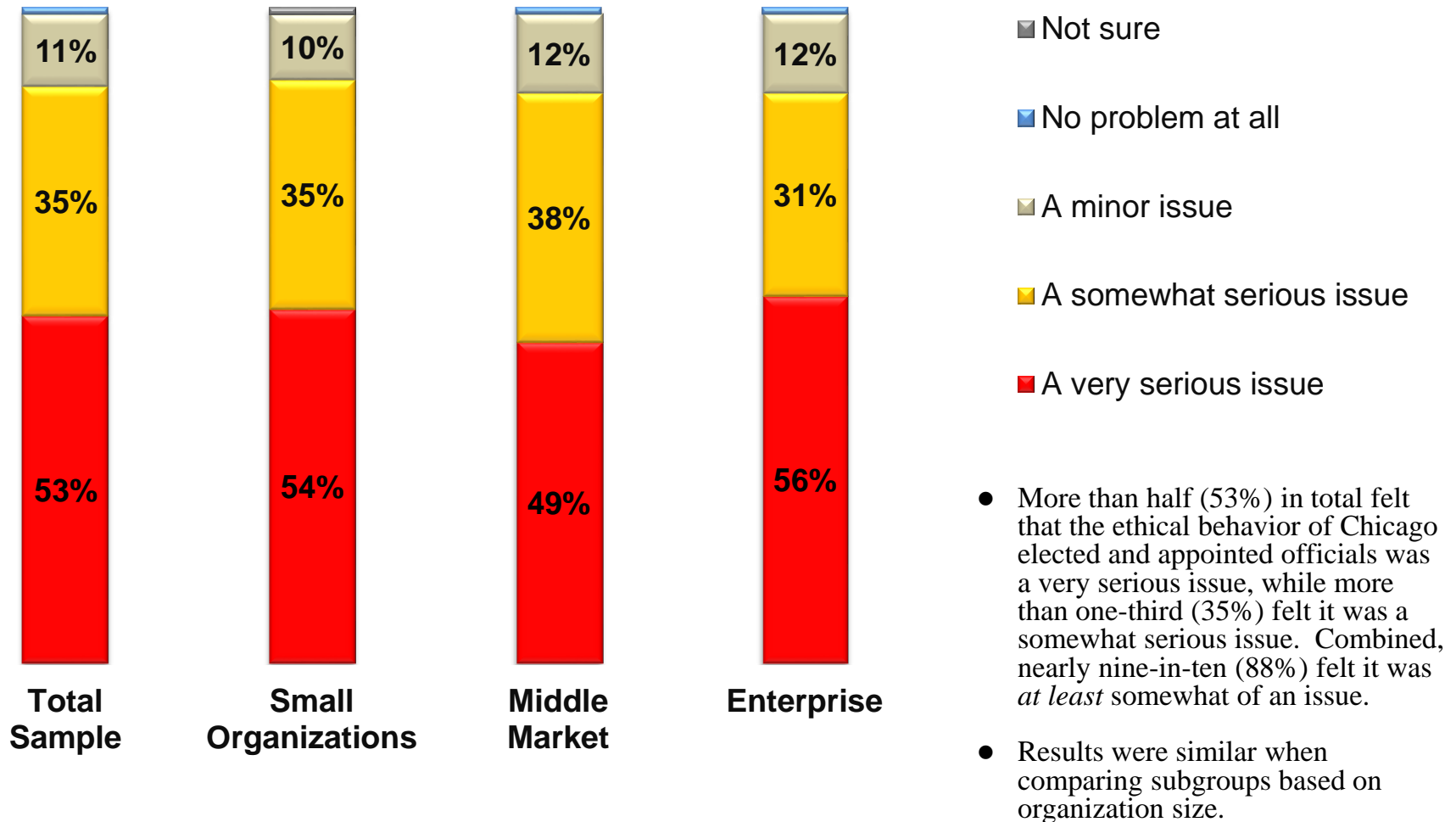
Do you think the influence of money in politics in Chicago is ...



- Good and getting much better
 - Good and getting somewhat better
 - Good and staying about the same
 - Bad and staying about the same
 - Bad and getting somewhat worse
 - Bad and getting much worse
- Nearly one-third (32%) in total felt that the influence of money in politics in Chicago is bad and getting *much* worse, although respondents working at enterprise size organizations were slightly less likely to answer this way.
 - More than half (53%) gave a rating of either bad and getting much worse or bad and getting somewhat worse.
 - None of the respondents selected good and getting much better, even though that was an option in the survey.

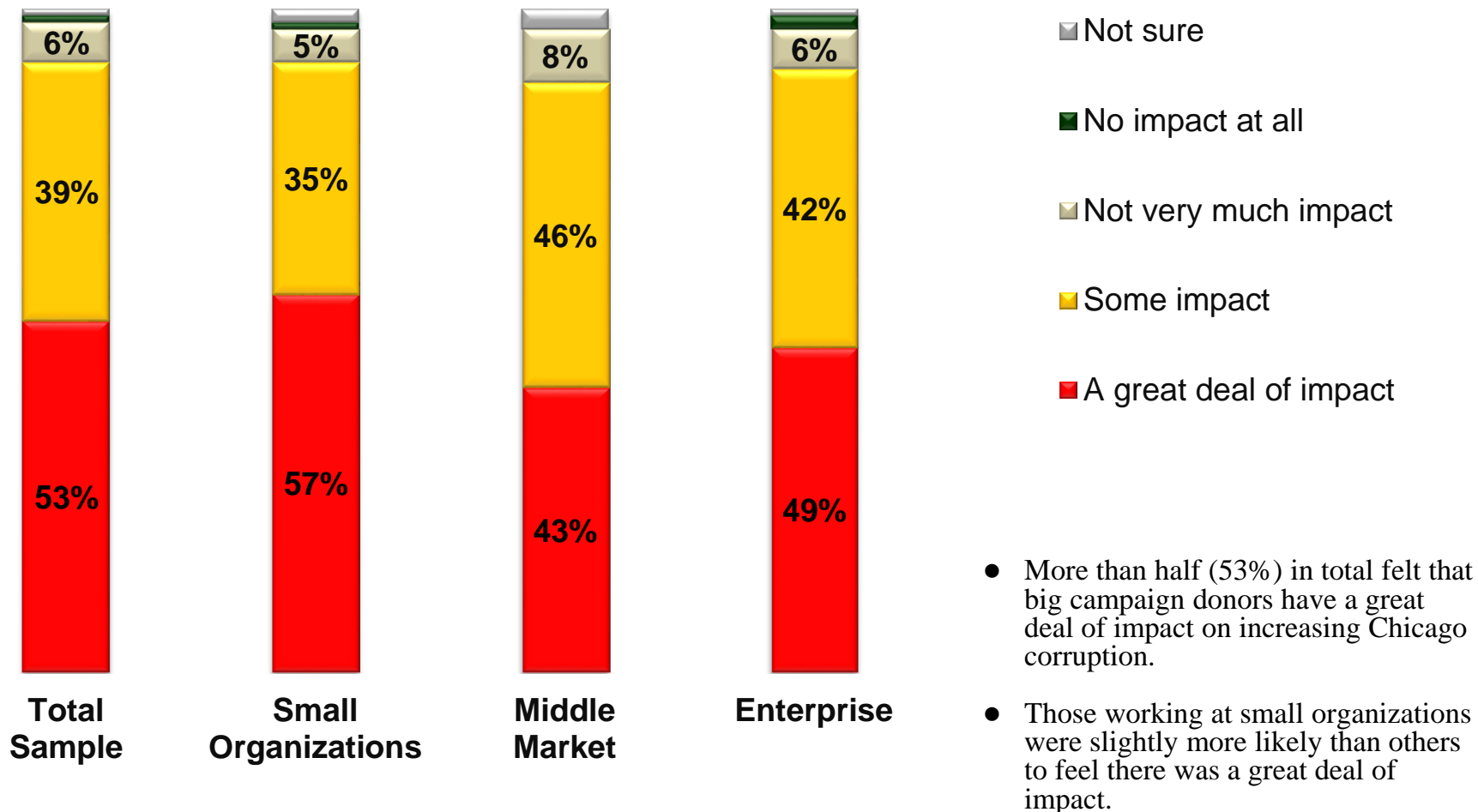
Ethical Behavior

How would you rate the ethical behavior of Chicago elected and appointed officials over the past five years?



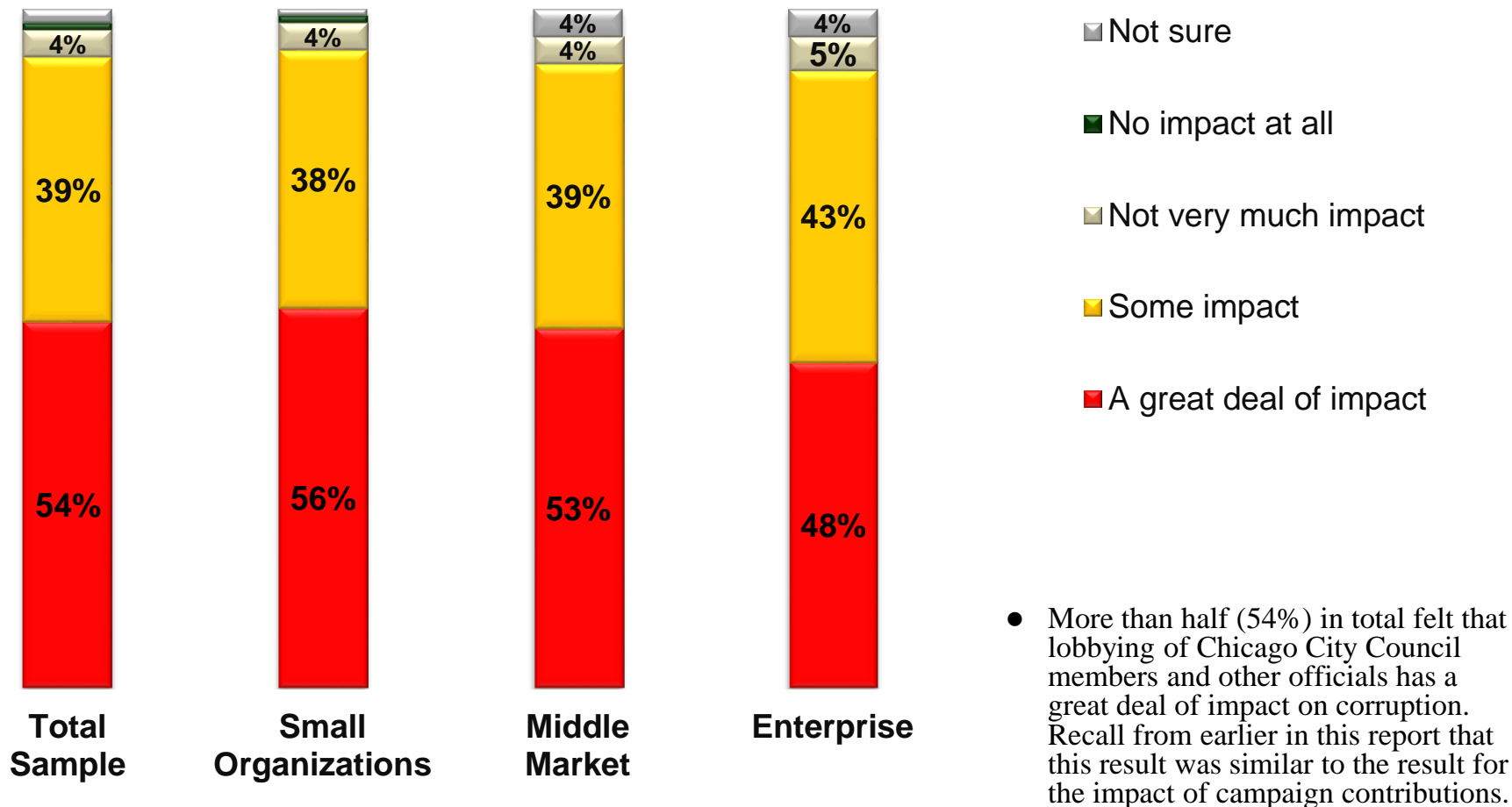
Campaign Donor Impact On Corruption

How much of an impact do you feel big campaign donors have on increasing Chicago corruption?



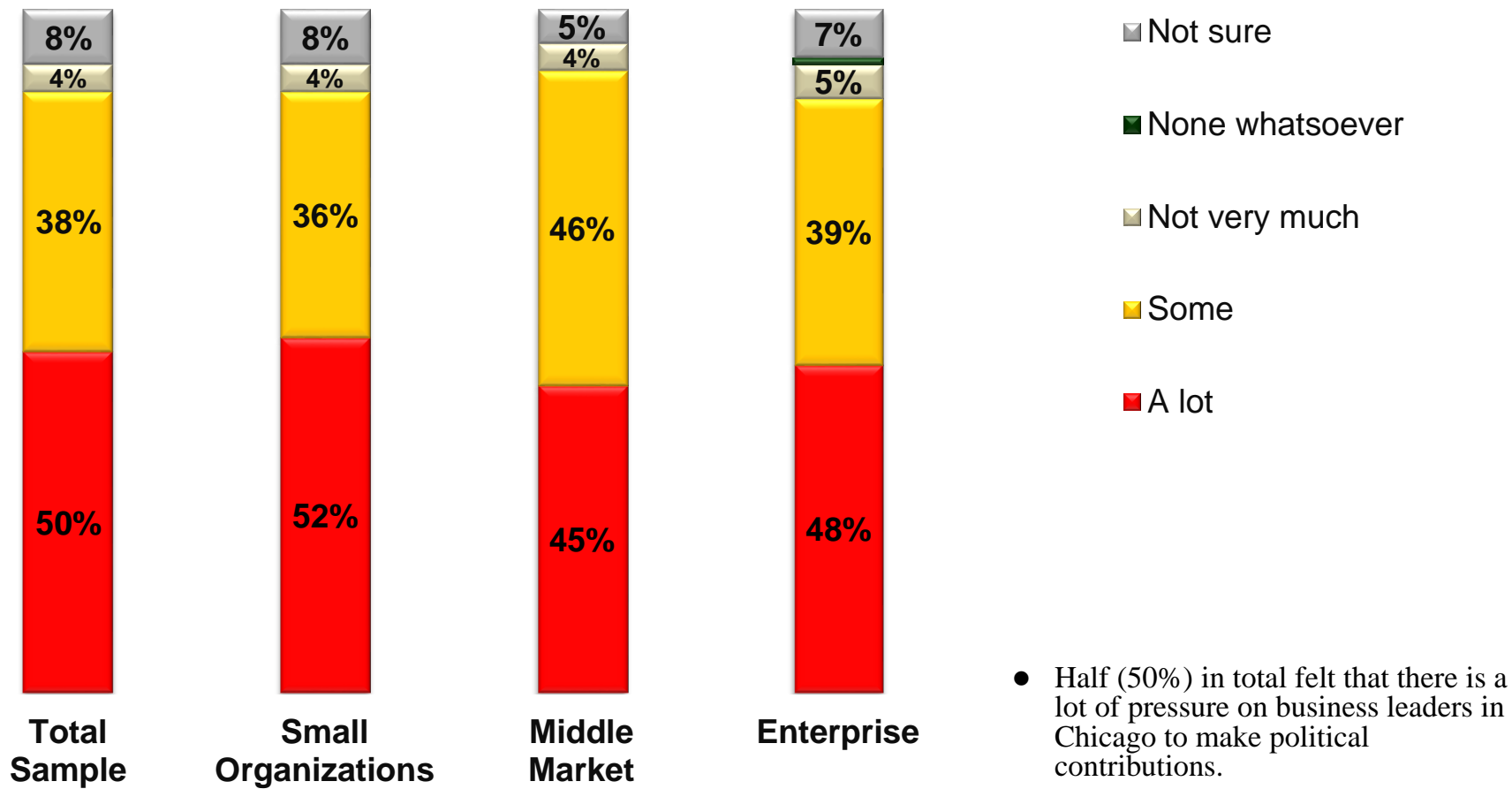
Lobbying Impact On Corruption

How much of an impact do you feel the lobbying of Chicago City Council members and other officials has on increasing City government corruption?



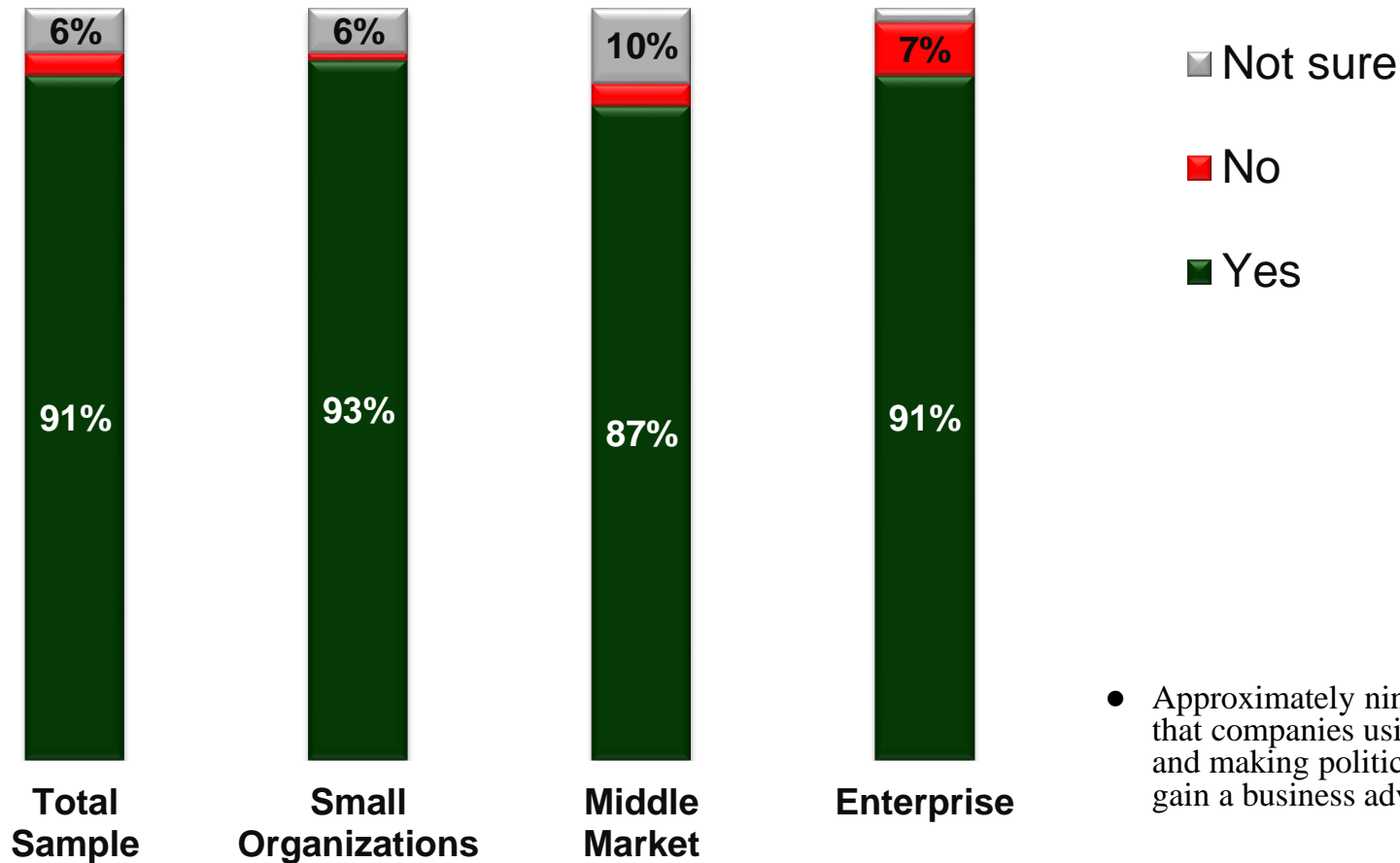
Pressure On Business Leaders

In your opinion, how much pressure is placed on business leaders in Chicago to make political contributions?



Politics Leading To Business Advantage

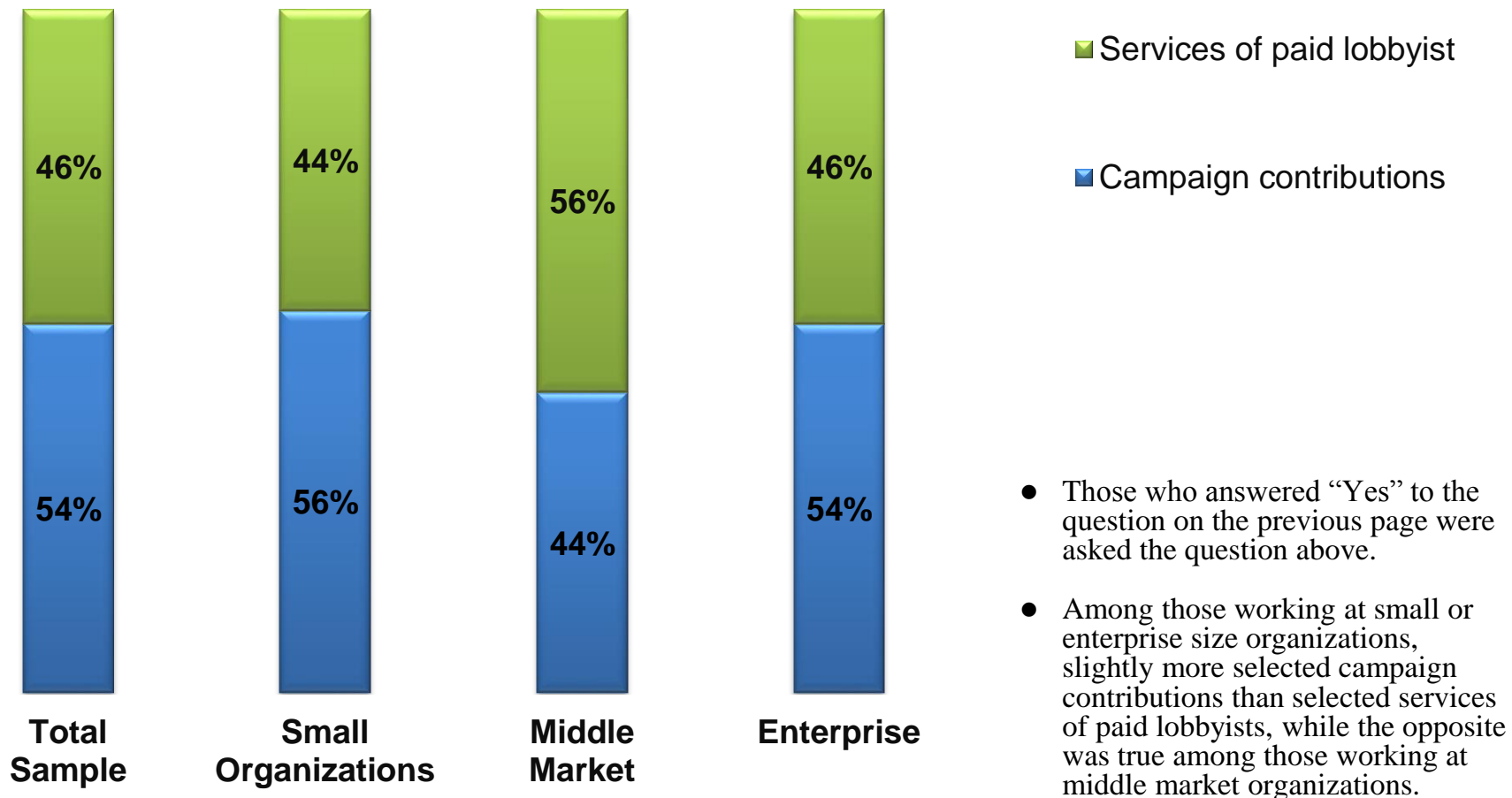
Do you think companies that engage with the political process in Chicago by using paid lobbyists and making political contributions gain a business advantage?



- Approximately nine-in-ten (91%) felt that companies using paid lobbyists and making political contributions gain a business advantage.

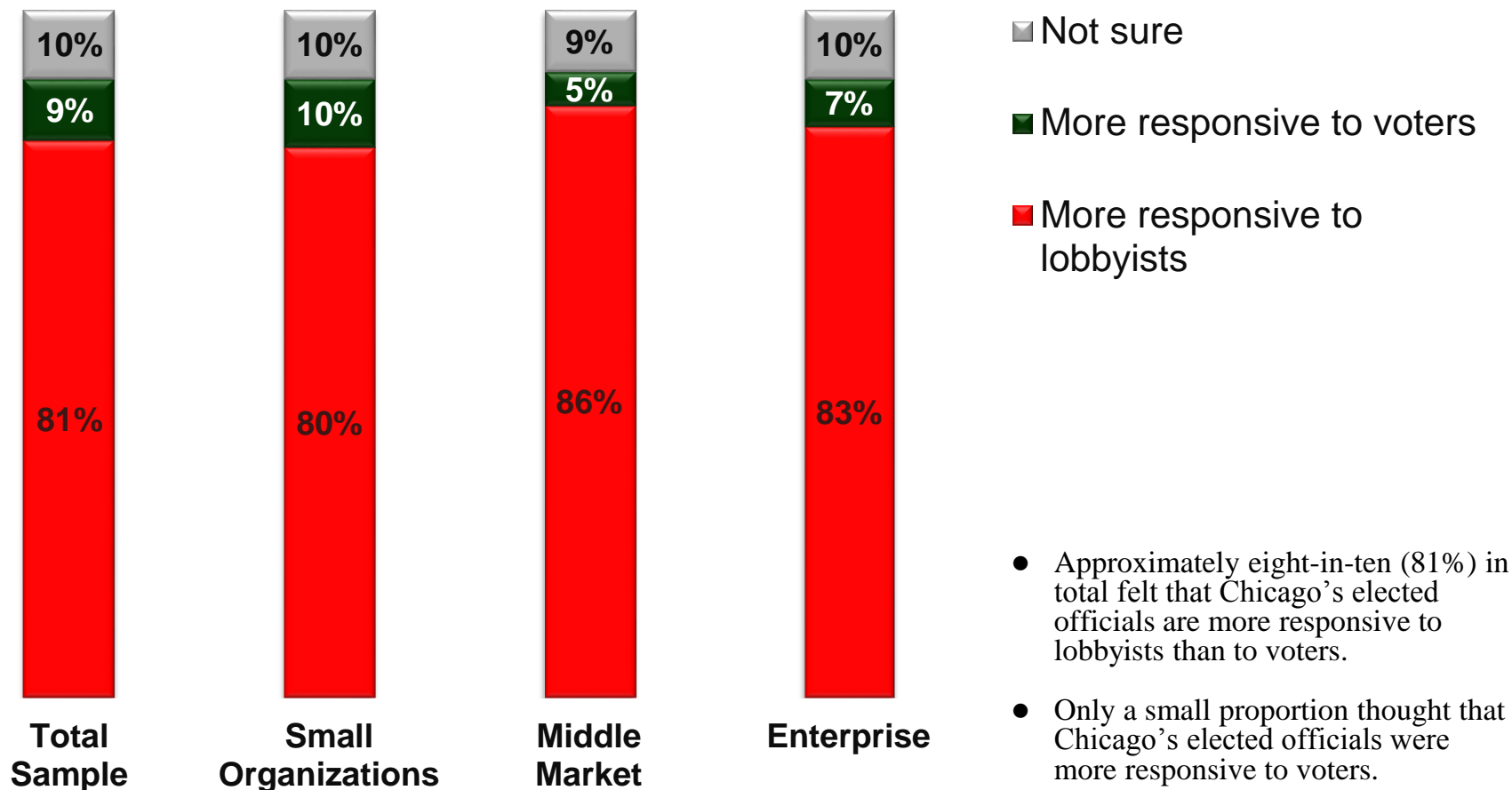
Most Significant Advantage

Which do you think gives them a more significant advantage?



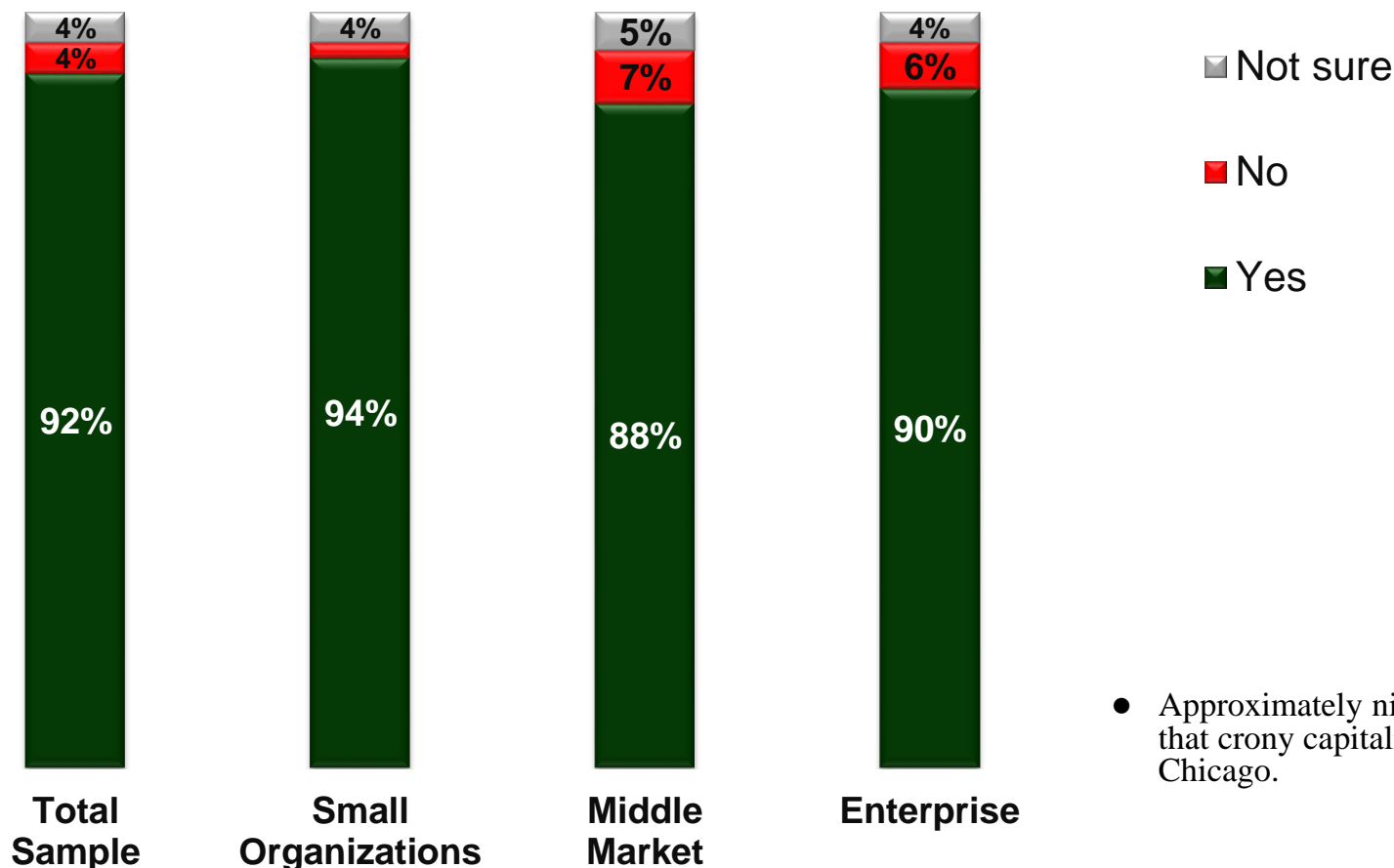
Responsive To Lobbyists vs. Voters

Generally, do you think Chicago's elected officials are more responsive to lobbyists or more responsive to voters?



Crony Capitalism

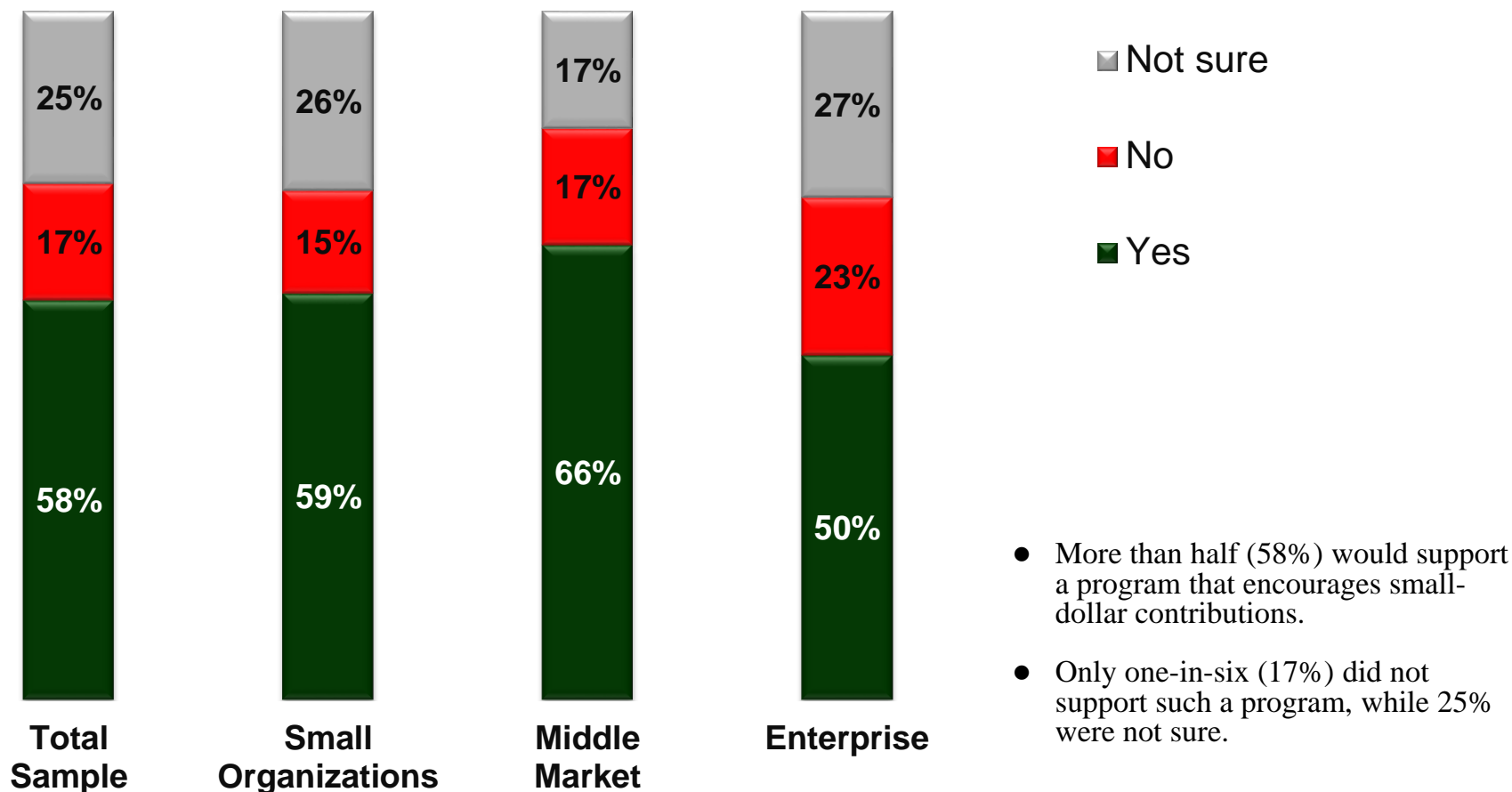
Crony capitalism is defined as the unhealthy relationship between some businesses and government, which can lead to favoritism in the form of tax breaks, government grants, and other incentives. Do you believe a form of crony capitalism is practiced in Chicago?



- Approximately nine-in-ten (92%) felt that crony capitalism is practiced in Chicago.

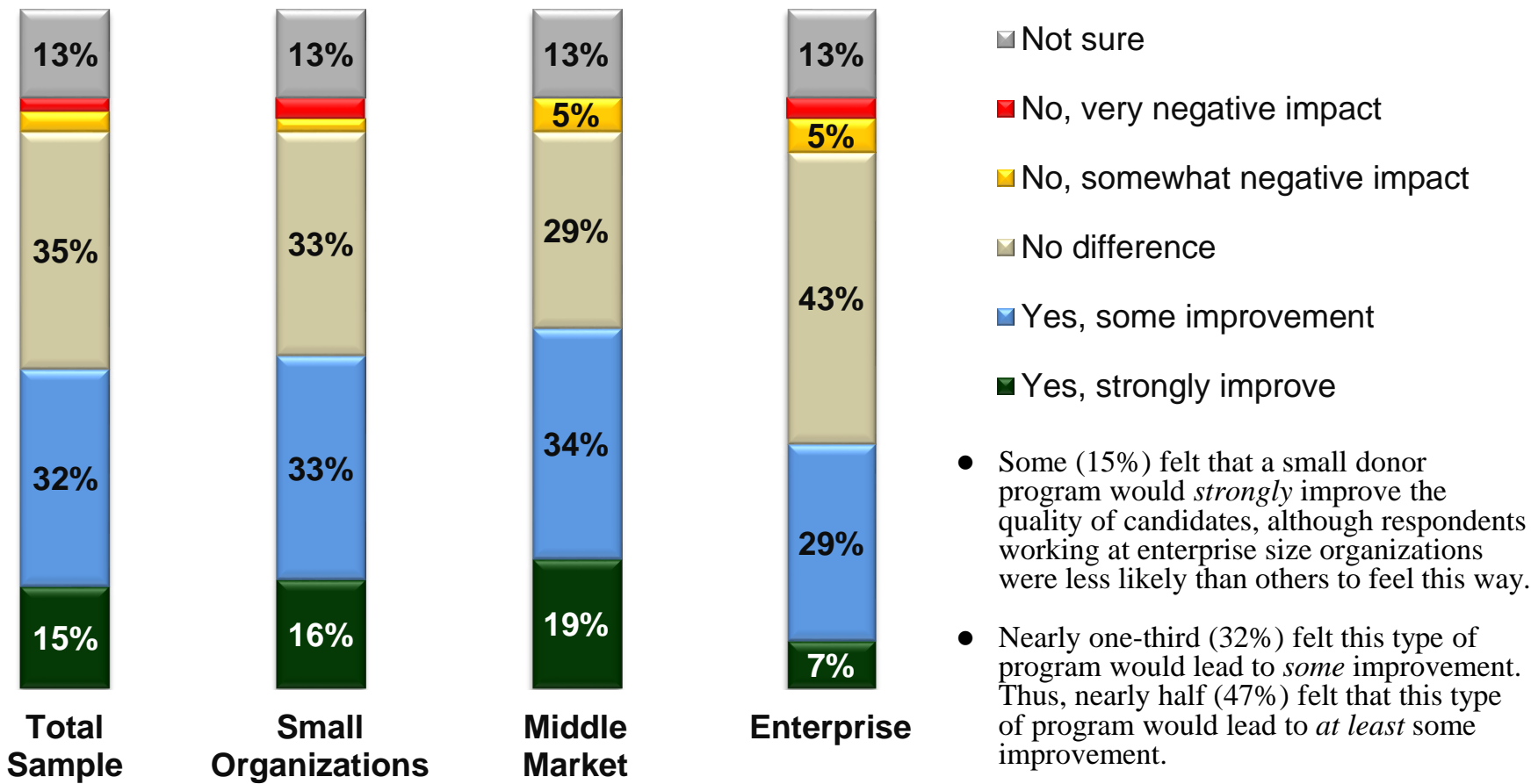
Small-dollar Contributions

In 2015, Chicago voters overwhelmingly passed a referendum calling for adoption of a small-donor matching program, in which a candidate accepts restrictions on contributions and expenditures in return for a public match, usually below \$200. Would you support a program that encourages small-dollar contributions?



Small Donor Impact On Candidate Quality

Do you believe a small donor program would improve the quality of candidates who run for municipal office in Chicago?



- Among those who answered “Yes” to the question on the previous page, 70% felt that a small donor program would lead to *at least* some improvement in the question above, while this was true for 4% of those who answered “No” on the previous page.

Reducing the Influence of Money in Chicago Politics

In the 2015 municipal election, more than \$40 million was spent on the mayoral race alone.

In February 2015, 79% of Chicago voters approved this advisory ballot question: "Should the City of Chicago or the State of Illinois reduce the influence of special interest money in elections by financing campaigns using small contributions from individuals and a limited amount of public money?"

This fall, the City Council will consider a proposed ordinance introducing a small-donor match campaign finance program. Contact your alderman to share your support

**For more information visit:
ced.org/projects/single/money-in-politics-project/all**