
Eau Claire Area School District and City of Eau Claire

2022 Community Survey
Summary of Results



Survey outline

- Survey included interviews with 402 registered voters in the Eau Claire Area School District.
- 306 interviews were with voters residing inside the City of Eau Claire
- Interviews with voters living outside of the City did not include City-specific questions.

Survey outline *(cont.)*

- Interviews were completed between June 1st and June 10th.
- Survey included 43 questions; average interview duration was 15.2 minutes.
- Approximate margin of error for the survey is $\pm 4.9\%$ overall, and $\pm 5.6\%$ for the City-specific questions.

Who we called

- Interviews included demographic targets intended to provide a representative sample of voters in the district.
- To the extent that any demographic dimension was significantly under- or over-sampled, sample weights were adjusted to compensate.

Who we called *(cont.)*

- Demographic targets included:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Voting history
 - Geographic area
 - Parent status (ECASD only)
- Cell phones and homeownership were tracked but were not demographic targets.

Survey structure

- Main body of survey split between questions focused on School District and questions focused on City.
- Half of interviews asked School District section first; half asked City section first.



School District questions

- School District section asked about the potential to exceed the School District's revenue cap, including impacts on school programs and related tax impacts.

Initial support for exceeding revenue cap

“The School District is considering a proposal to ask voters to exceed the state’s revenue cap for 20 years.

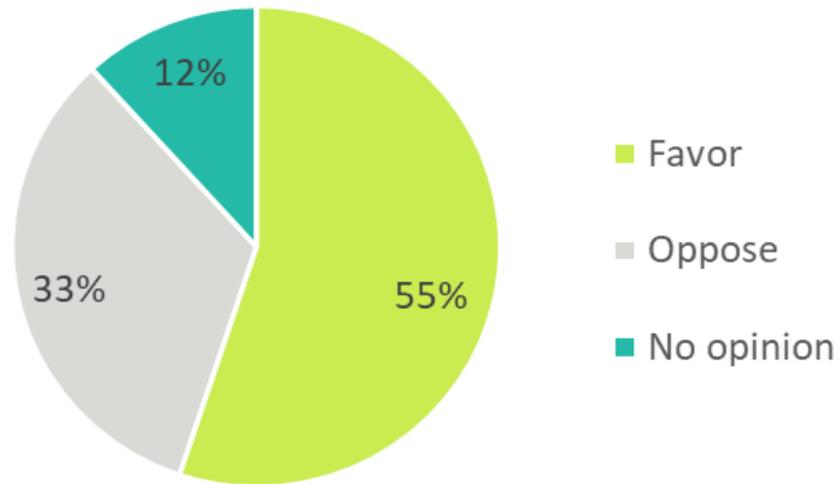
The proposal will raise property taxes to generate \$7.5 million in additional funding per year to invest in building improvements and programs to support student academics and mental health.

Based on what you know now, would you favor or oppose such a proposal?”

REVENUE CAP INCREASE

Initial support

Initial support - exceed revenue cap



Effect of information

- Participants were asked to react to a set of statements about impacts from referendum funding.
- Items were presented in random order, to minimize any bias due to their position on the list.
- One item was presented in two forms, using different wording to describe details.
 - Half of interviews used one version, and half used the other.
 - Smaller size of split sample results in margin of error of $\pm 6.9\%$.



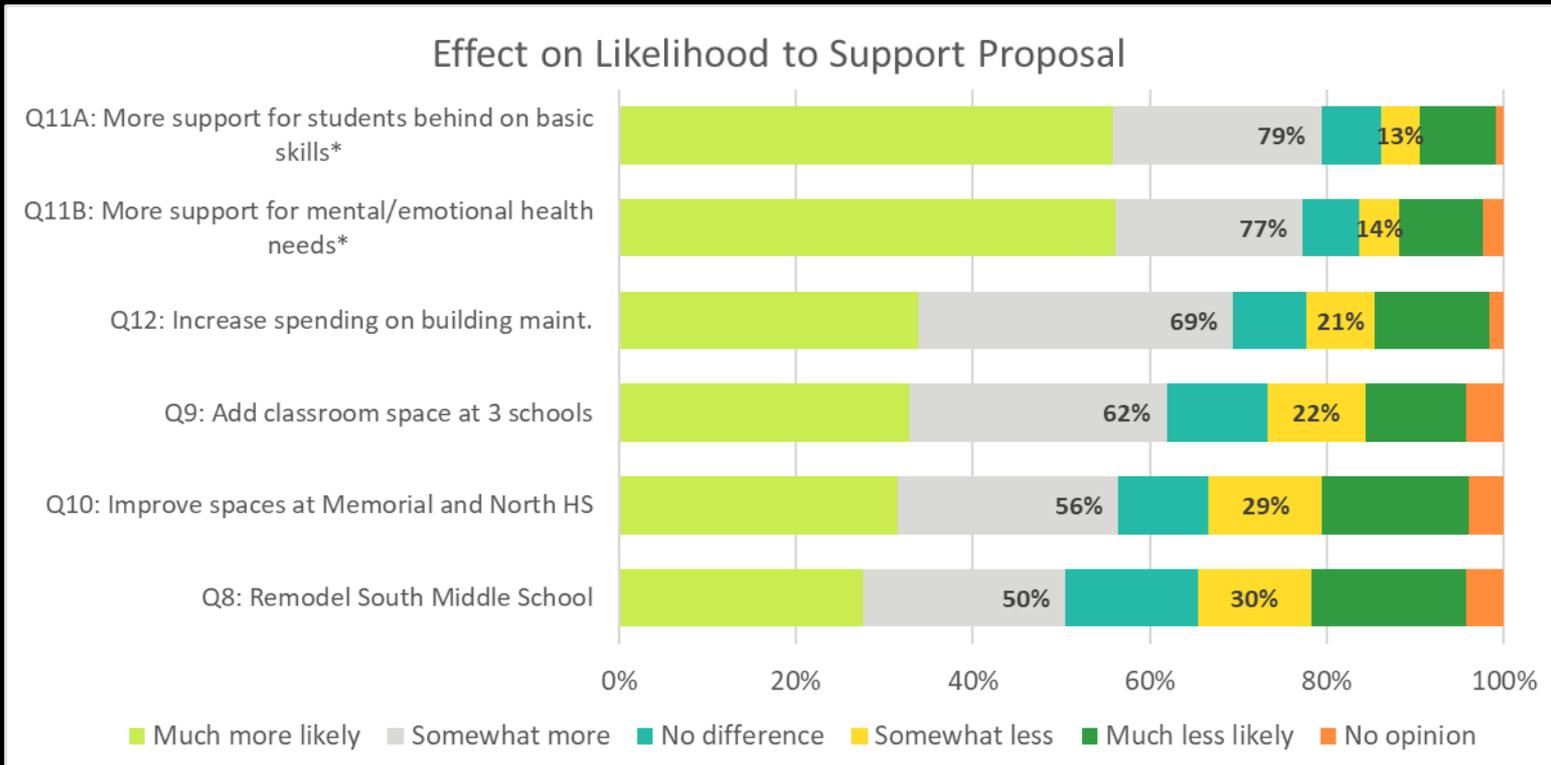
REVENUE CAP INCREASE

Effect of information

“I am going to read some statements about the ways in which the school district uses its referendum funding.

Please tell me whether the information in each statement would make you more likely or less likely to vote for such a proposal.”

Reaction to impacts



Labels show combined % for more/much more and less/much less. Items with asterisk were split-sample questions; smaller sample size provides margin of error of $\pm 6.9\%$.



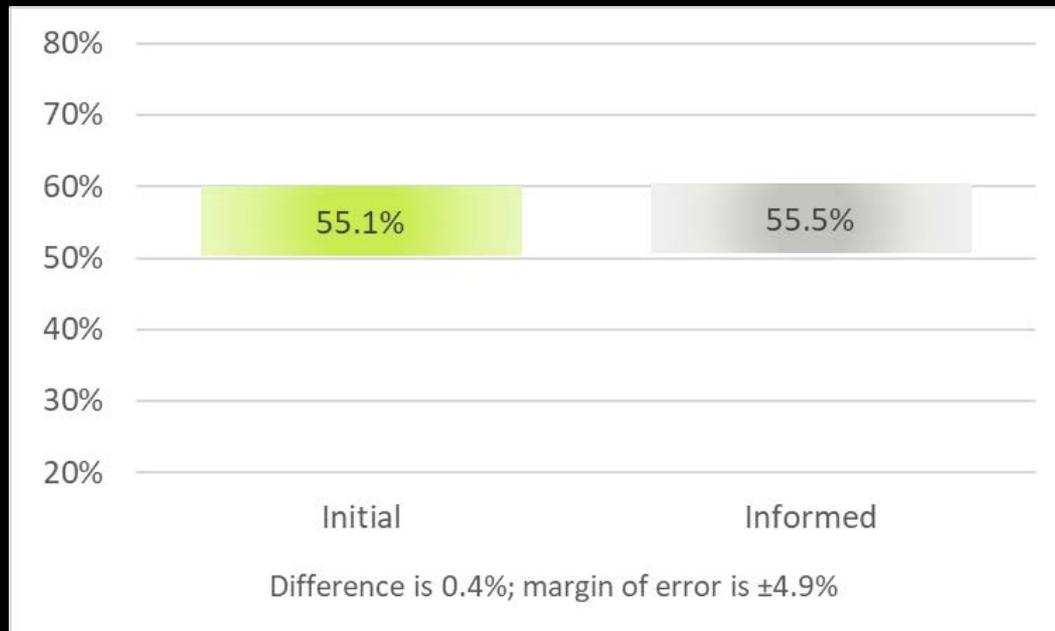
REVENUE CAP INCREASE

Informed support

“Now that you have heard more information about how the money would be used, would you favor or oppose a proposal to raise an additional \$7.5 million above the revenue cap for 20 years?”

REVENUE CAP INCREASE

Comparison – initial and informed

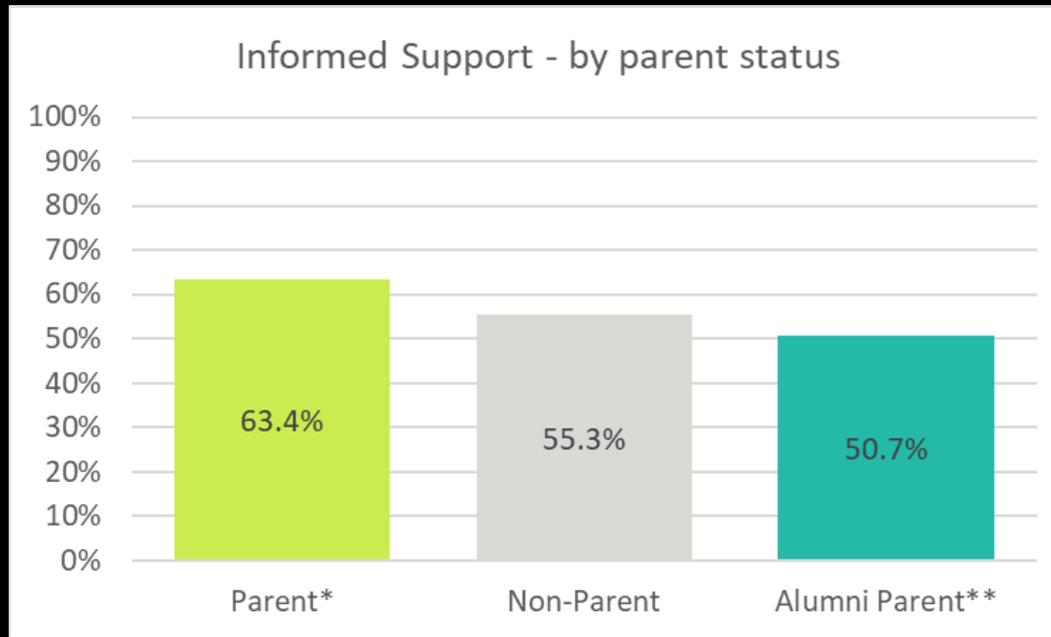


Initial and informed reactions show no significant difference.

Demographic differences

- The following slides show a quick snapshot of differences in support between demographic groups:
 - Parent status
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Location
 - Voting activity
 - Income
 - Education
 - Homeownership
- Charts show level of support after hearing information about each proposal.

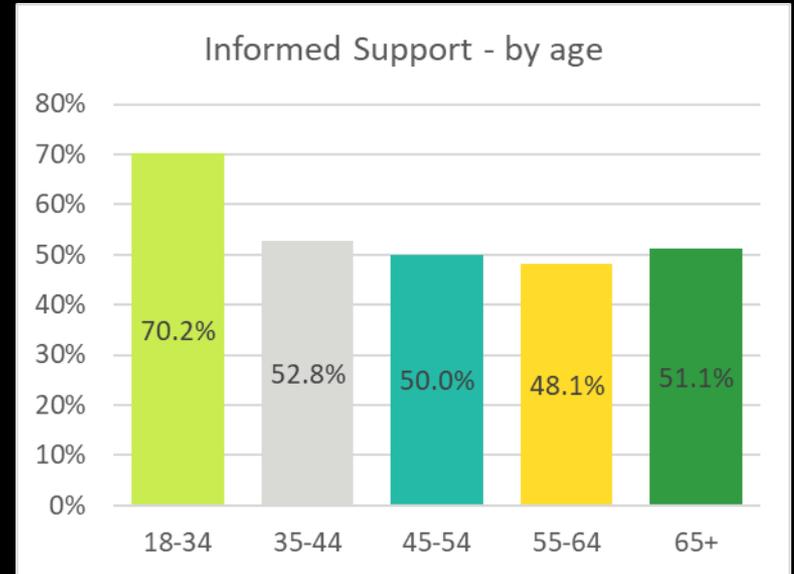
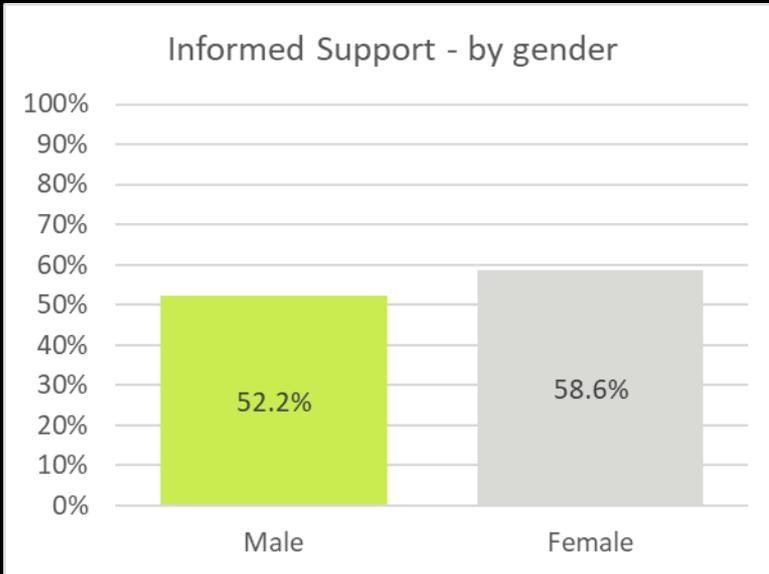
Demographic differences *(cont.)*



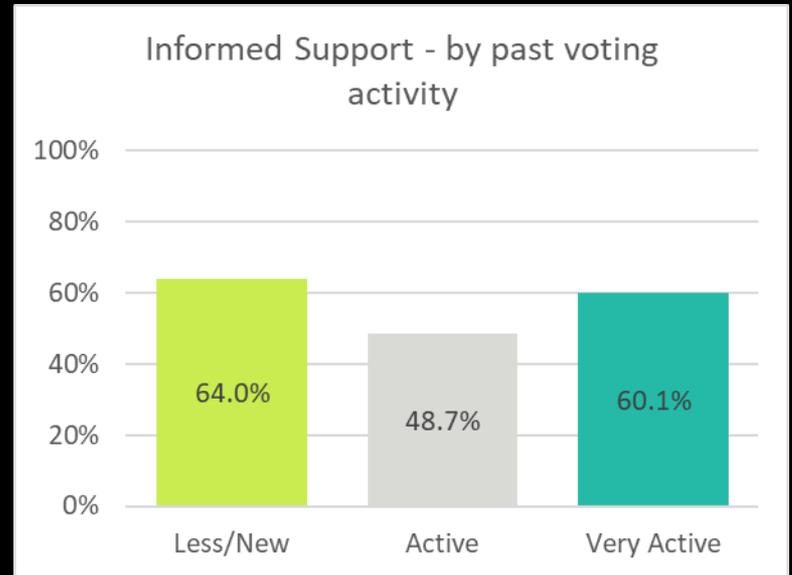
* "Parent" includes respondents with children attending ECASD schools.

** "Alumni Parent" includes parents whose grown children attended ECASD in the past.

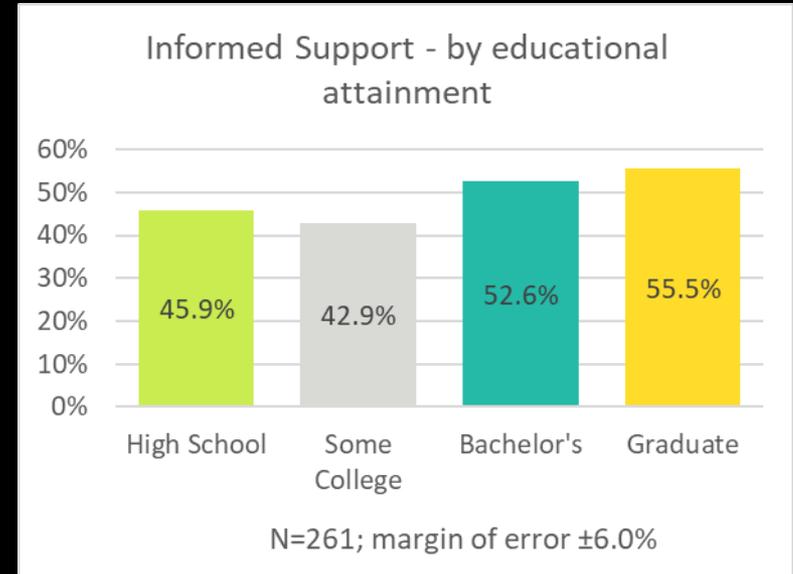
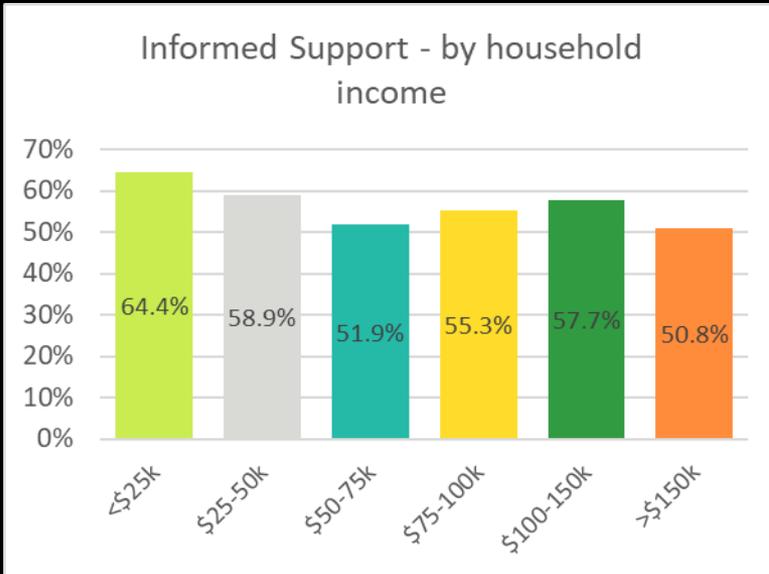
Demographic differences *(cont.)*



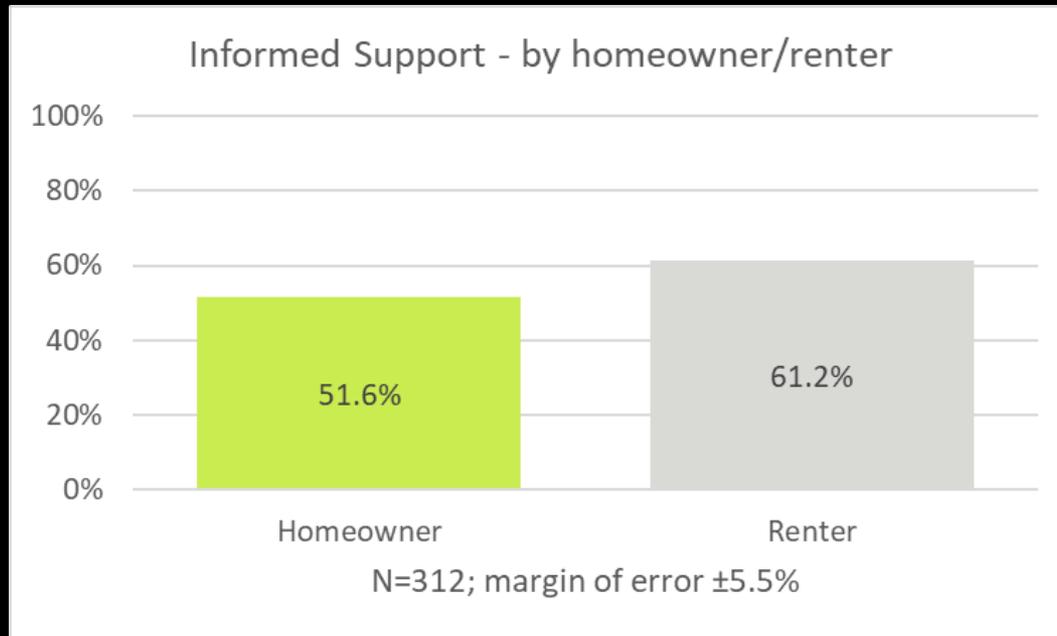
Demographic differences *(cont.)*



Demographic differences *(cont.)*



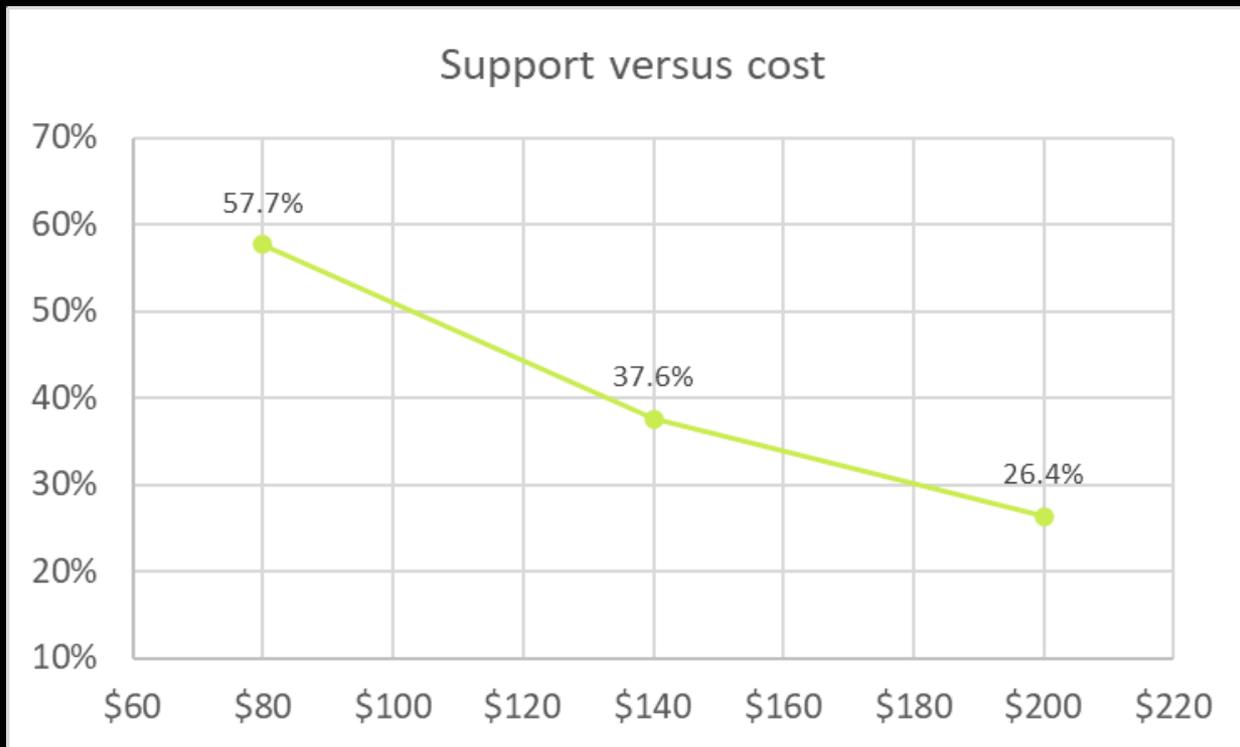
Demographic differences *(cont.)*



Impact of cost information

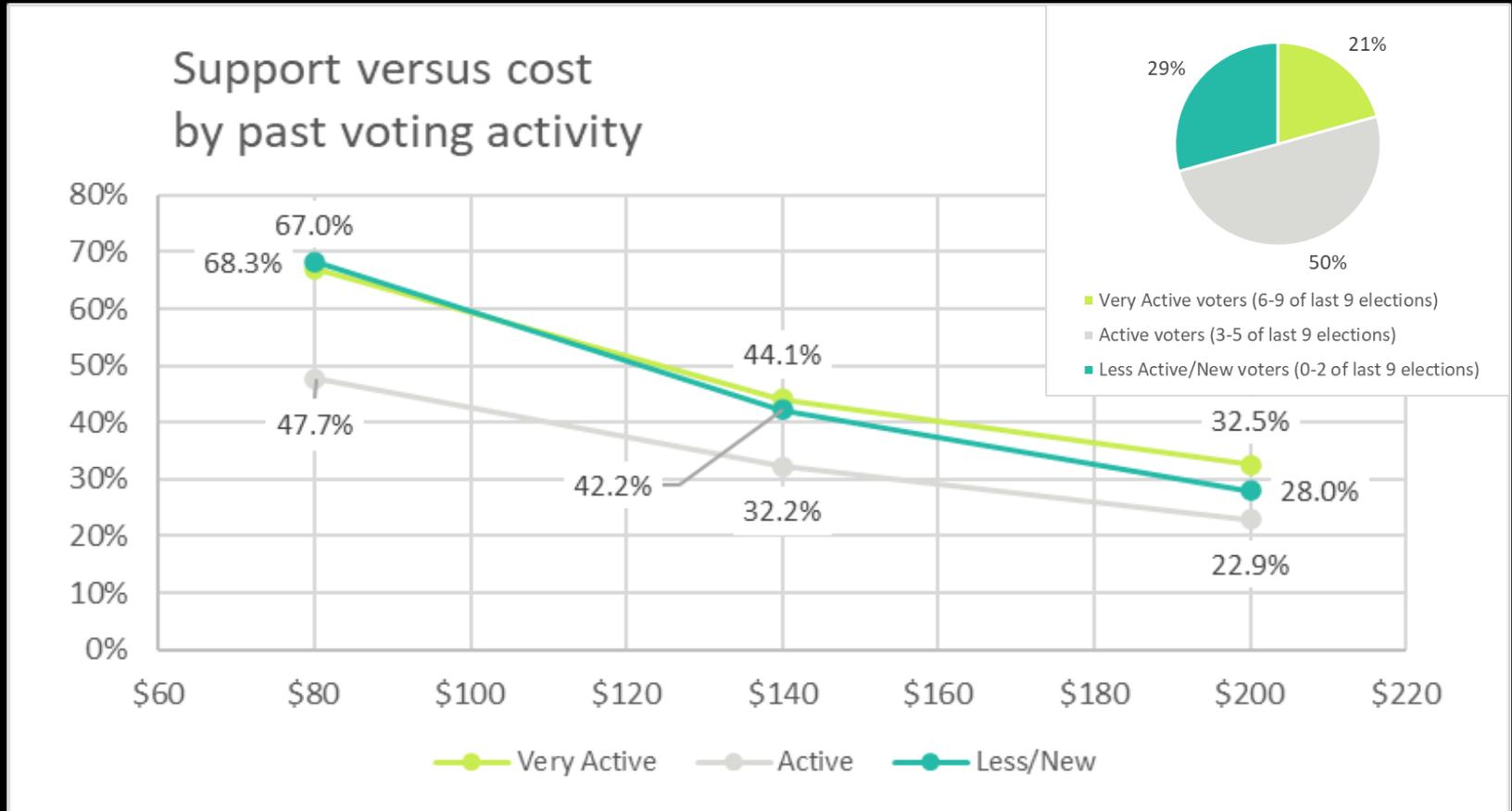
- Participants were asked about three potential property tax increases to fund programs: \$80, \$140 and \$200 per year on an average home valued at \$200,000.
- To preclude responses given in anticipation of higher or lower options, dollar values were presented in random order.

Impact of cost information *(cont.)*



Potential tax impacts tested were \$80, \$140 and \$200.

Impact of cost information (cont.)





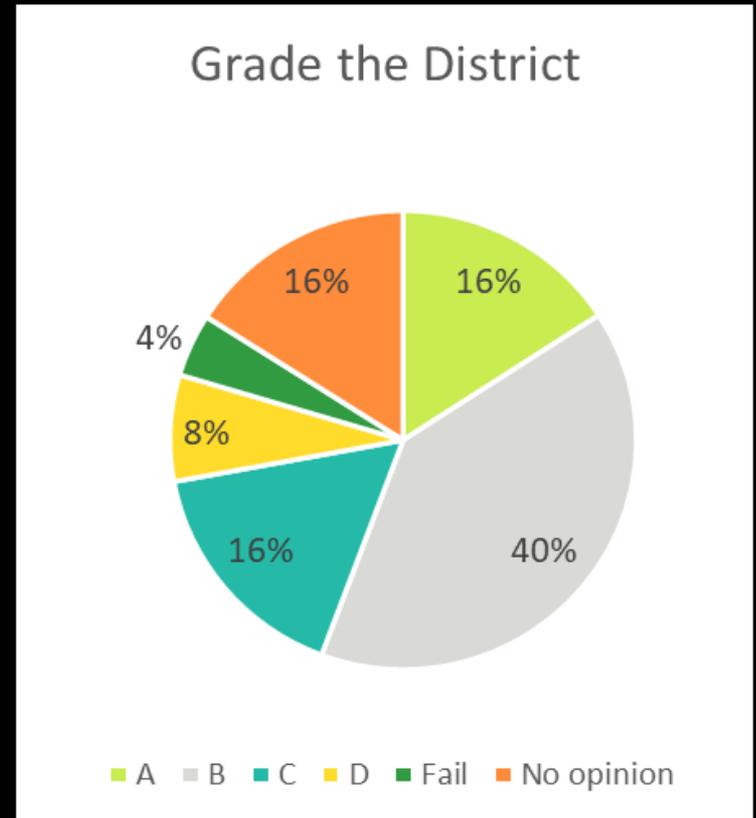
Grading the District

“Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the Eau Claire school district was graded in the same way.

What grade would you give to the public schools here?”

Overall grades

- 56% of respondents gave A and B grades to the School District.
- 12% gave D and F grades.
- 16% of participants could not offer a response.

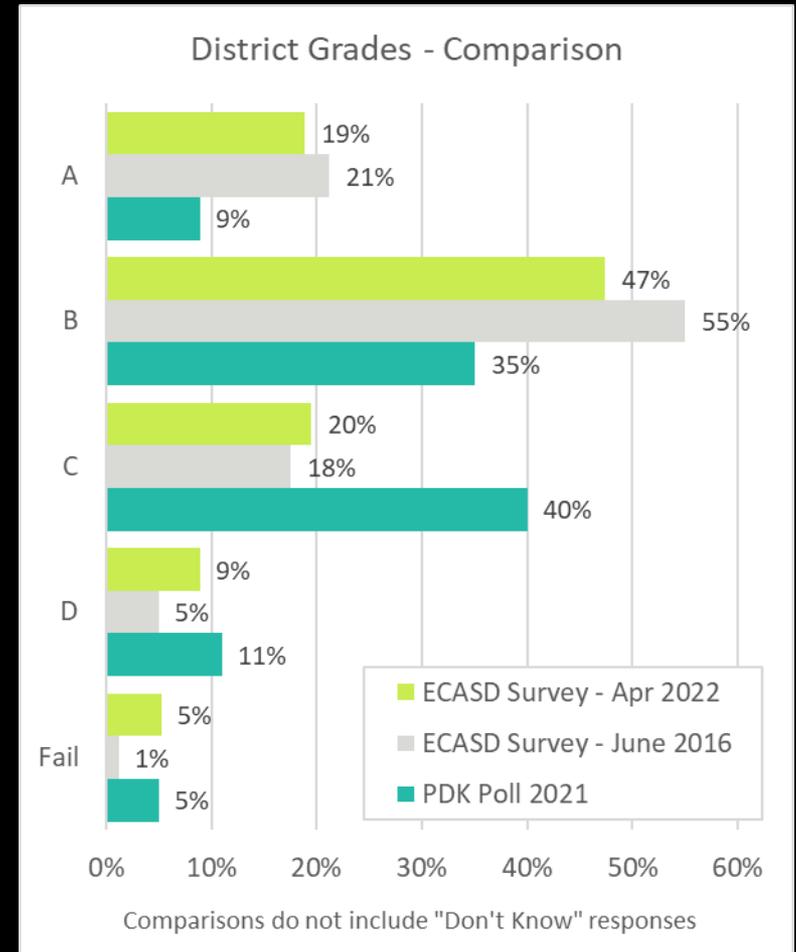


Benchmark grades

- For reference, we compare District grades from current survey against a national benchmark, the PDK *Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, conducted in 2021.
- We also look at survey responses from the survey ECASD completed in June of 2016.
- For purposes of comparison between surveys, we do not include “I Don't Know” responses.

Benchmark grades *(cont.)*

- Very good grades by comparison to national benchmark from PDK.
 - Much higher proportion of A and B grades.
- Fewer B grades than were seen in 2016 survey.
 - D and F grades up slightly.



Funding environment

The next question asked participants to react to a statement about the District and its funding:

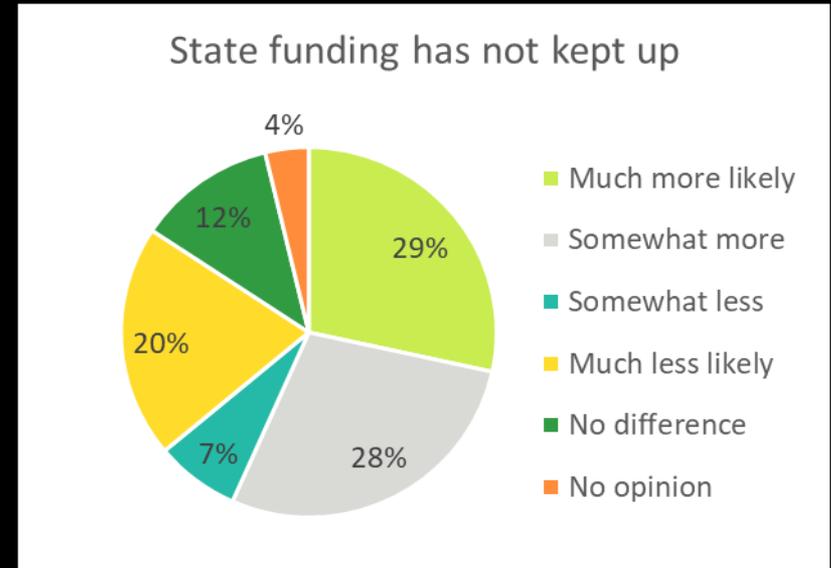
“State funding has not kept up with rising costs for many years, putting increasing pressure on the school district’s budget.”

- Respondents were asked whether this statement made them more likely or less likely to support the proposal to exceed the revenue cap.

FUNDING ENVIRONMENT

Funding environment *(cont.)*

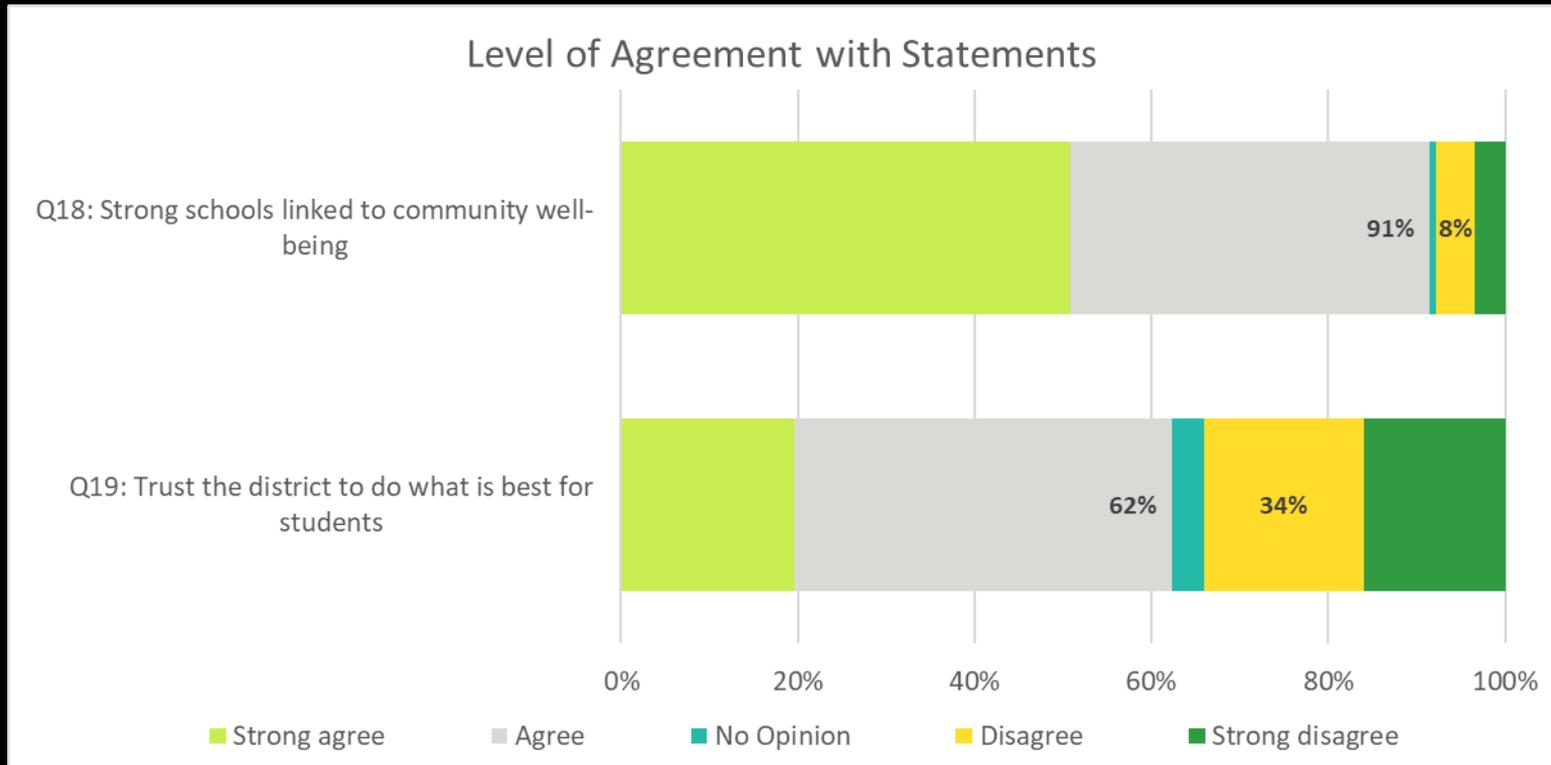
- 57% said the statement about State funding made them more likely to support the proposal.
- 27% said it made them less supportive.



Schools and the community

- Participants were asked to react to a pair of statements about the school district:
 - Strong public schools are directly linked to the well-being of our community
 - I trust the school district to do what is best for students.
- Respondents were asked for their level of agreement with each statement.

Schools and the community (cont.)



- Labels are combined % of agree/strong agree and disagree/strong disagree



City-specific questions

- City section asked about quality of life in Eau Claire as well as a potential tax increase to provide additional funding for parks and recreation, police, and emergency services.

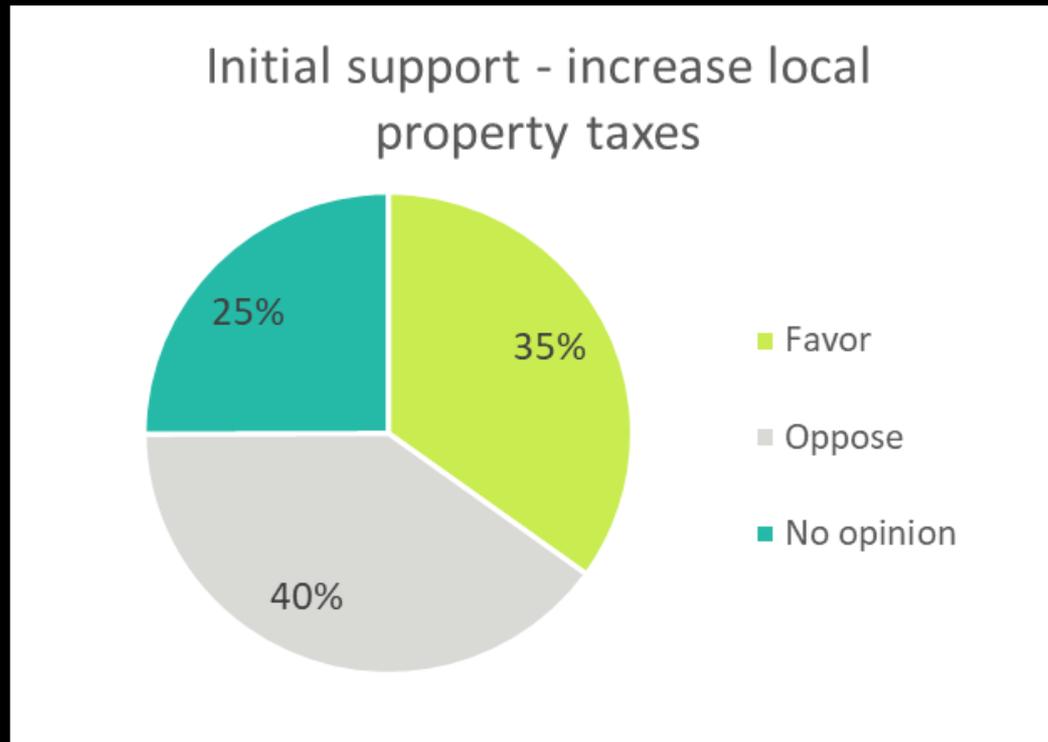
Initial support for property tax increase

“The City of Eau Claire is considering a proposal to ask voters to increase property taxes to provide additional funding to pay for basic City services that cannot be funded under current State revenue limits.

Based on what you know now, would you favor or oppose such a proposal?”

PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

Initial support





PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

Effect of information

- Participants were asked to react to a set of statements about impacts related to a potential increase in local property taxes.
- Items were presented in random order, to minimize any bias due to their position on the list.



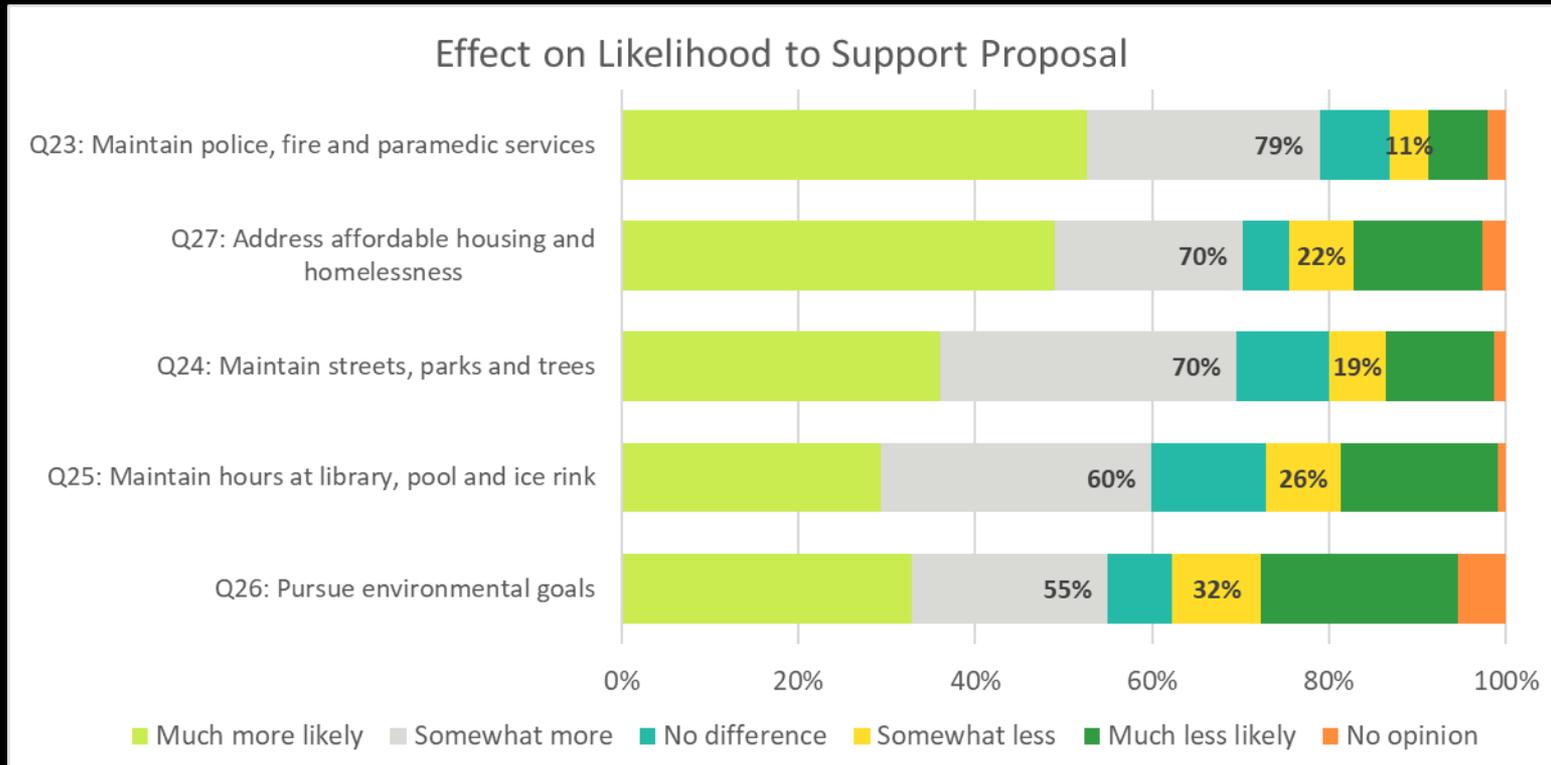
PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

Effect of information

“I am going to read some statements about the potential increase in local property taxes which the City is considering.

Please tell me whether the information in each statement would make you more likely or less likely to vote for such a proposal.”

Reaction to impacts



Labels show combined % for more/much more and less/much less.

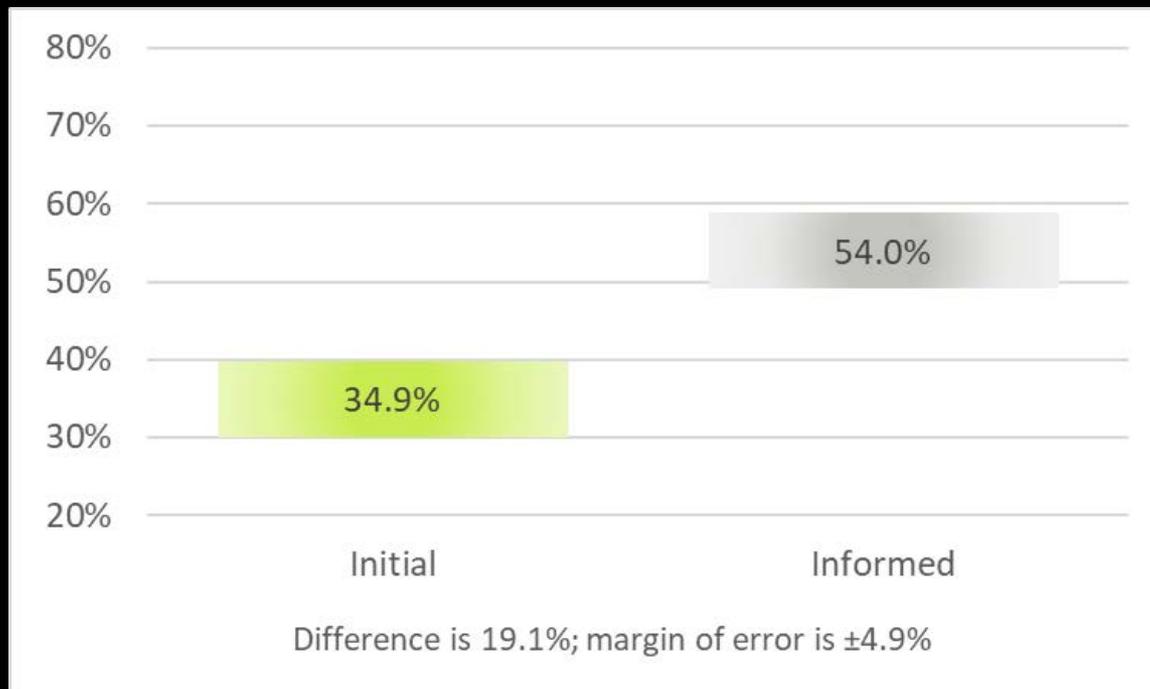
Informed support

- Participants were asked to provide their reaction a second time, to see if details about the proposal had an effect on their support:

“Now that you have heard more information about how the money would be used, would you favor or oppose a proposal to raise local property taxes?”

PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

Comparison – initial and informed

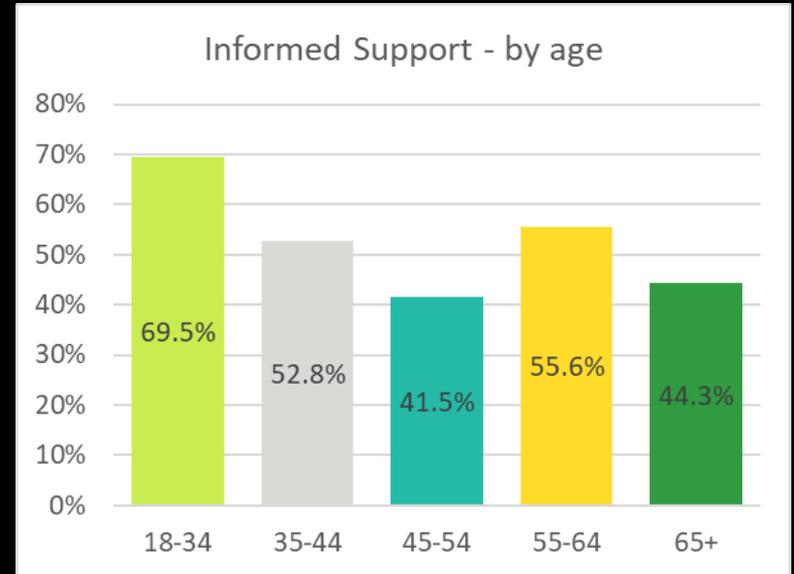
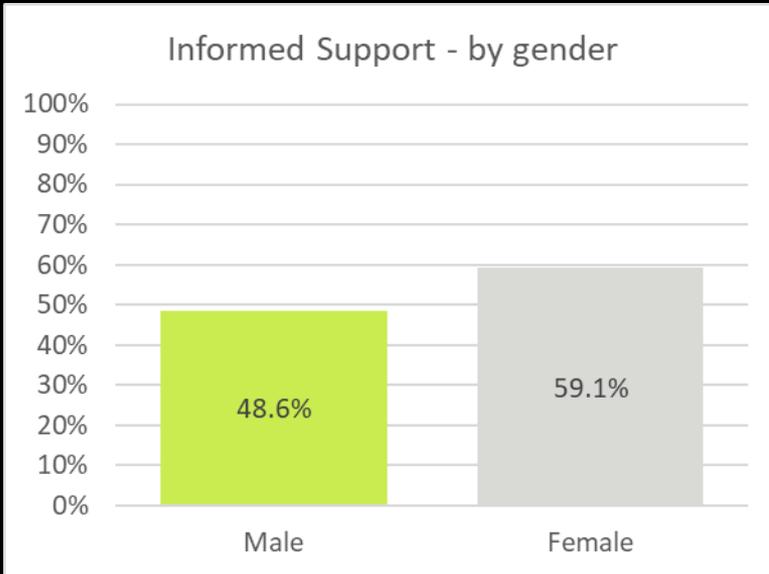


Difference between initial and informed reactions is significant.

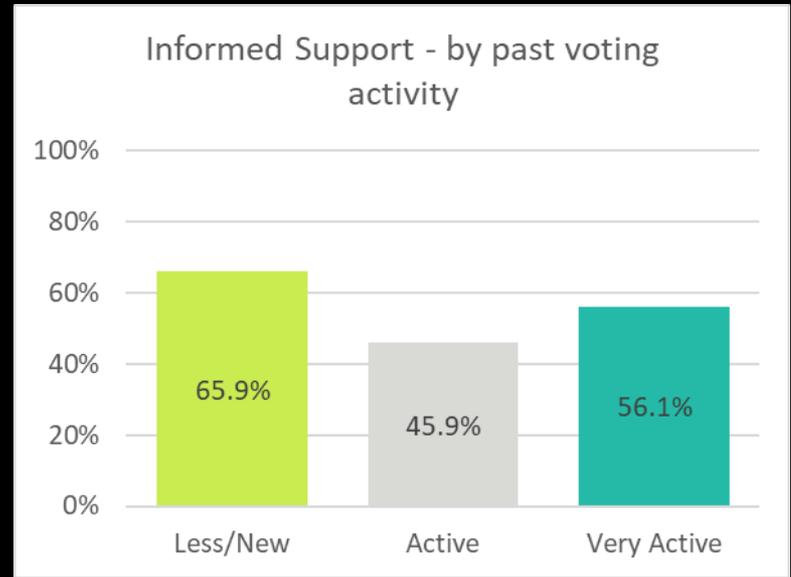
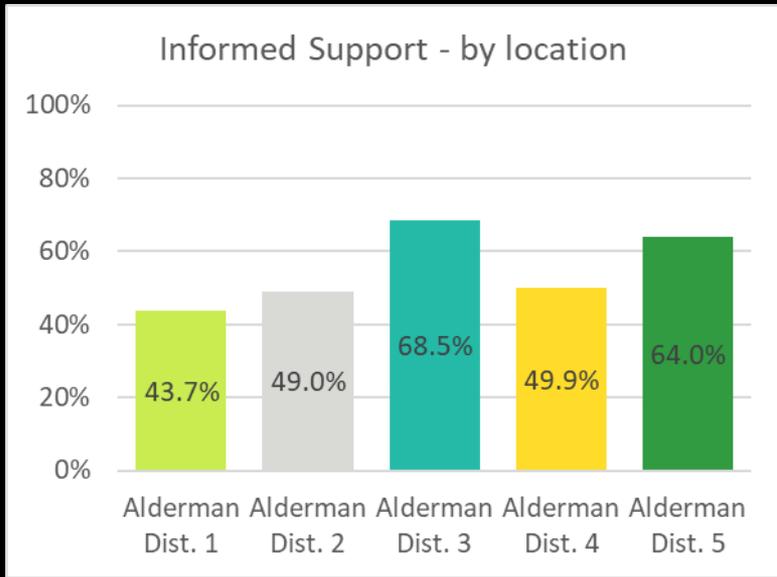
Demographic differences

- The following slides show a quick snapshot of differences in support between demographic groups:
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Location
 - Length of residence
 - Voting activity
 - Income
 - Education
 - Homeownership
- Charts show level of support after hearing information about each proposal.

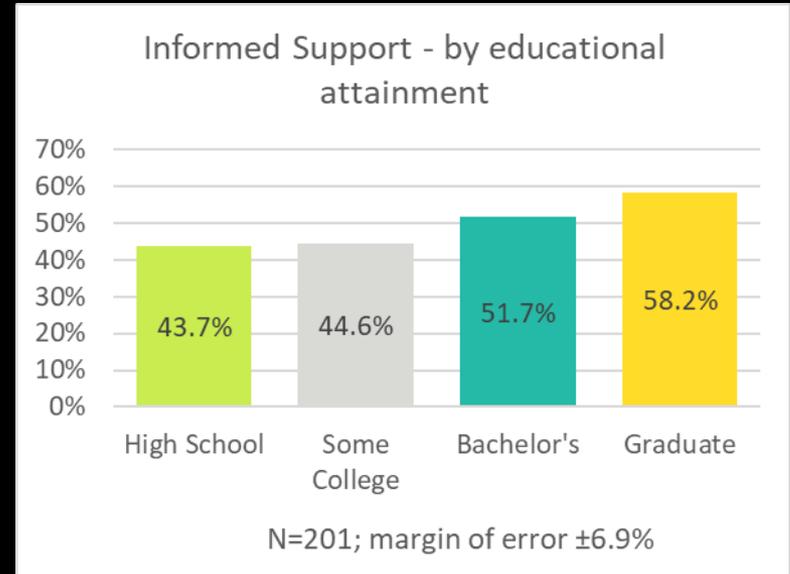
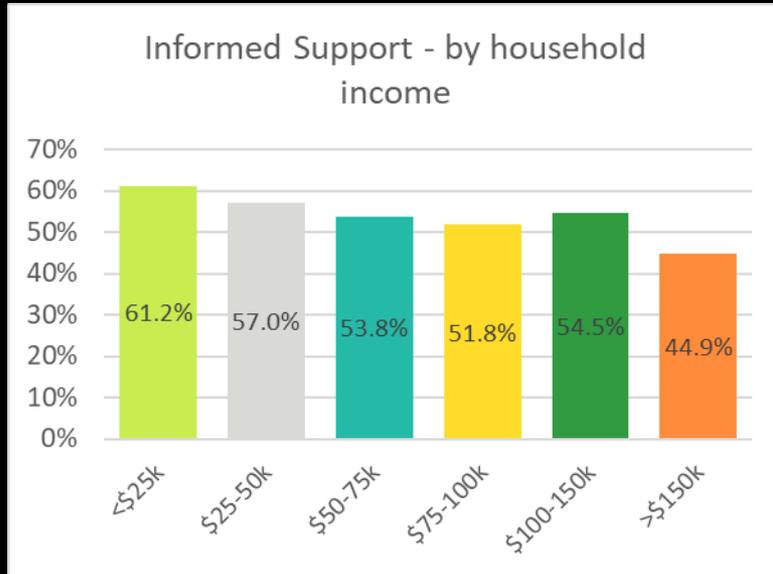
Demographic differences *(cont.)*



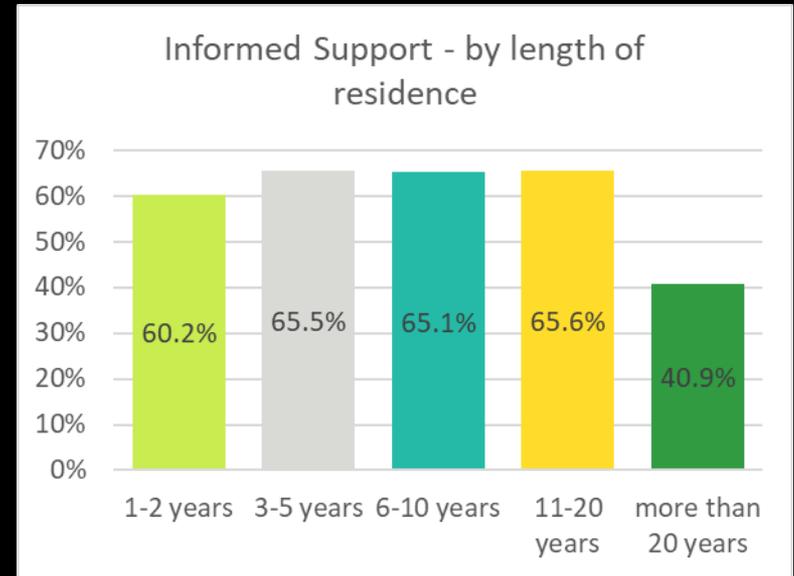
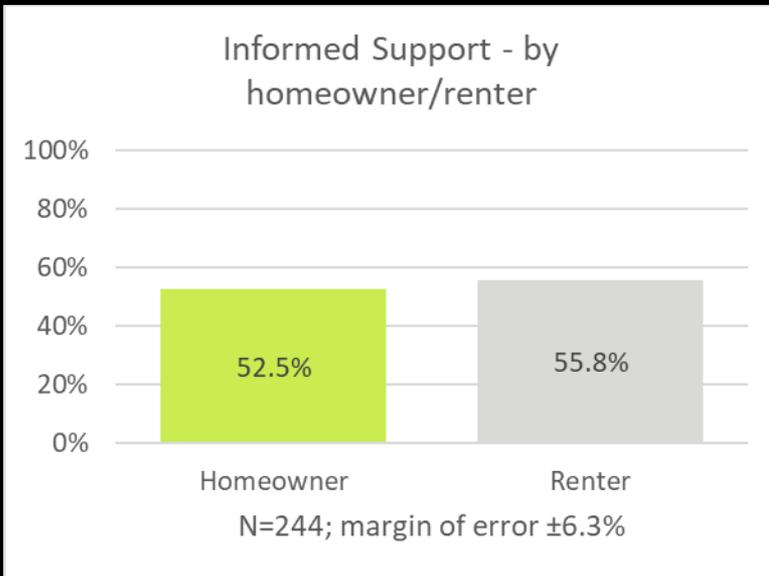
Demographic differences *(cont.)*



Demographic differences *(cont.)*



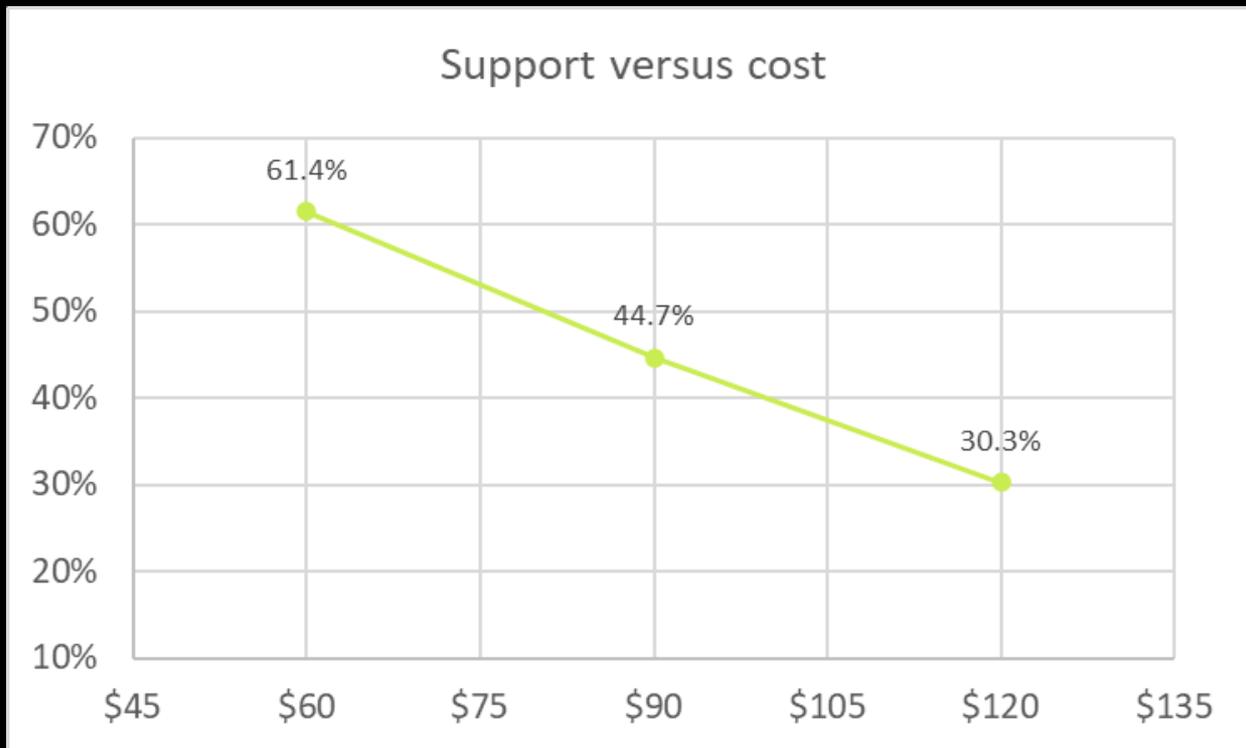
Demographic differences *(cont.)*



Impact of cost information

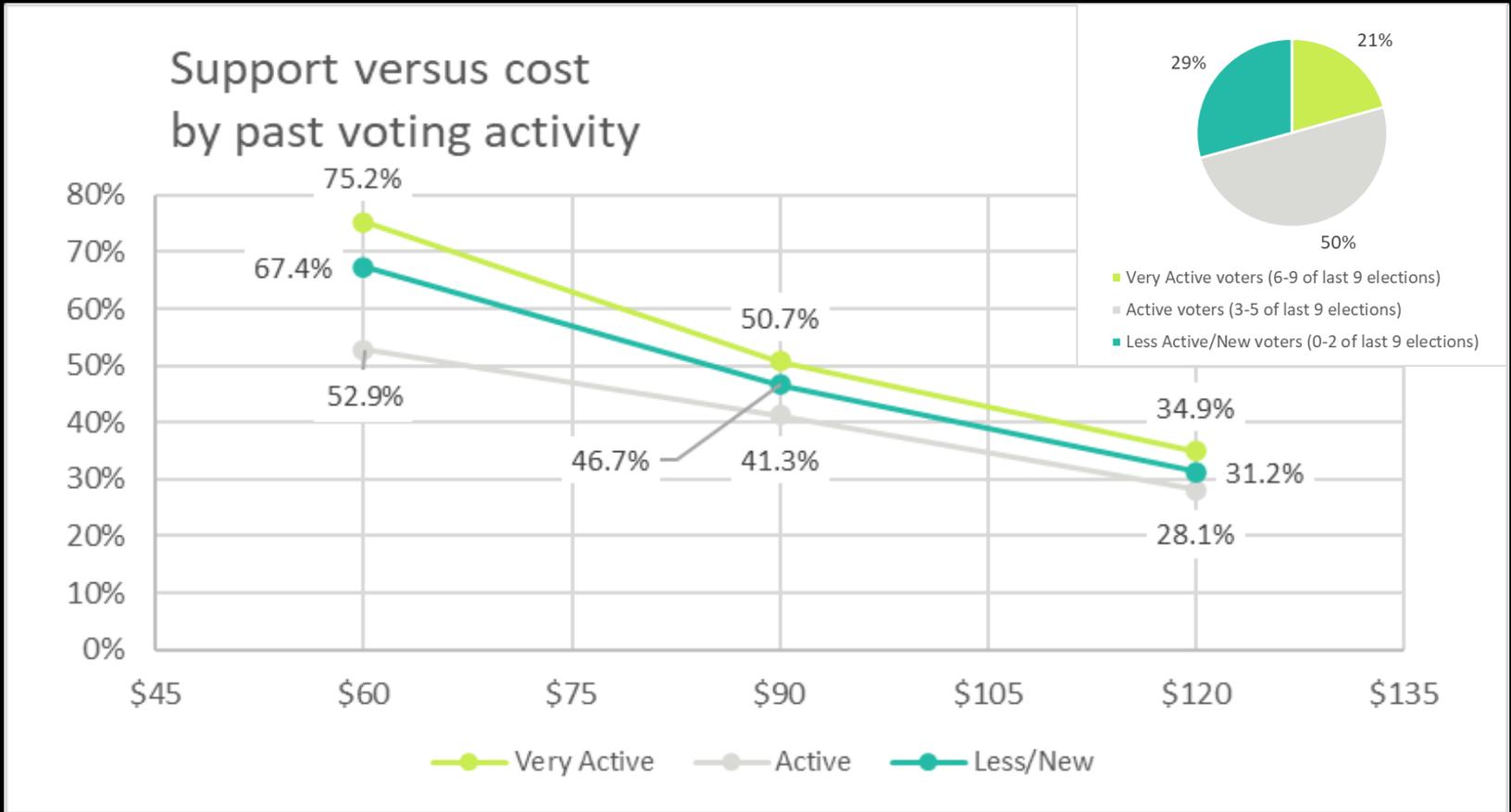
- Participants were asked about three potential property tax increases to fund programs: \$60, \$90 and \$120 per year on an average home valued at \$200,000.
- To preclude responses given in anticipation of higher or lower options, dollar values were presented in random order.

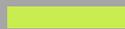
Impact of cost information *(cont.)*



Potential tax impacts tested were \$60, \$90 and \$120.

Impact of cost information (cont.)





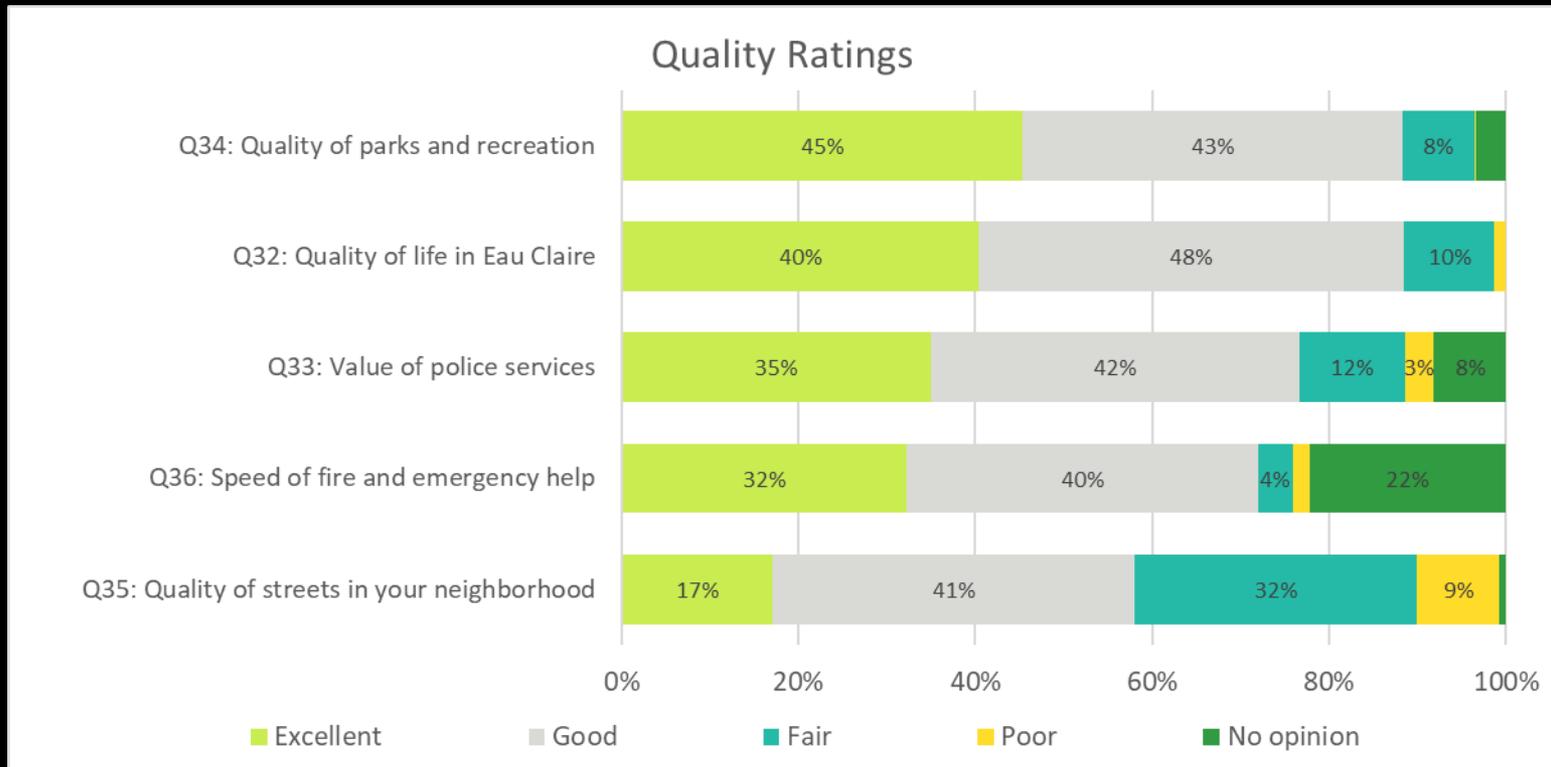
QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life

- Participants were asked to react to a series of statements about the quality of life and municipal services in Eau Claire.
- Respondents were asked to rate each item on a scale from “Excellent” to “Poor.”

QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life (cont.)



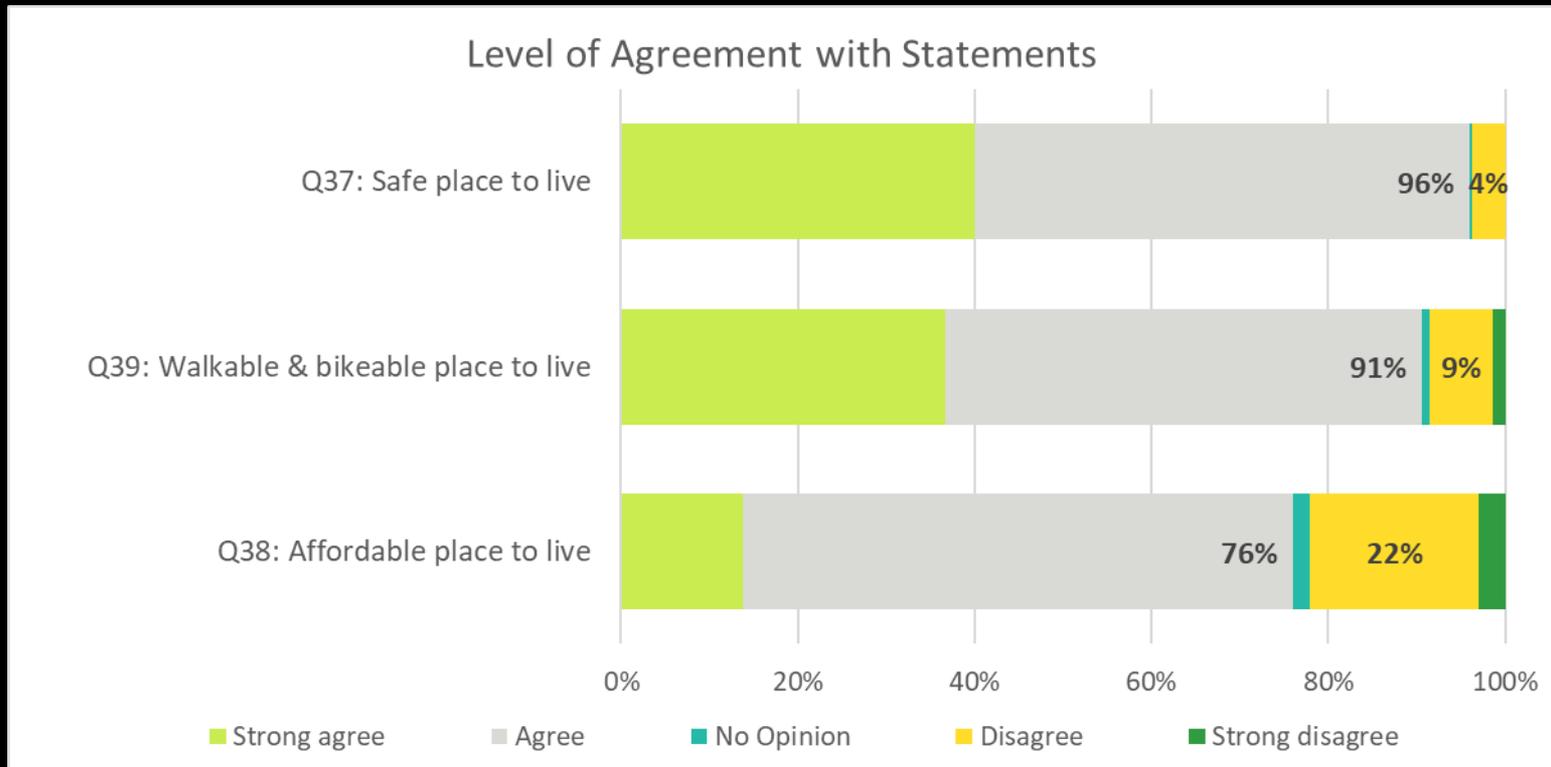
Labels are omitted for values under 3%.

Living in Eau Claire

- Participants were asked to react to three statements about the City:
 - I feel safe in Eau Claire.
 - Eau Claire is an affordable place to live.
 - Eau Claire is a walkable and bikeable place to live.
- Respondents were asked for their level of agreement with each statement.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Living in Eau Claire (cont.)



- Labels are combined % of agree/strong agree and disagree/strong disagree



Community environment

- The questions in the following sections relate to potential reactions to a ballot with two tax proposals, tax aversion in general, and sources of information.
- These questions were asked of all 402 participants.

Two-question ballot

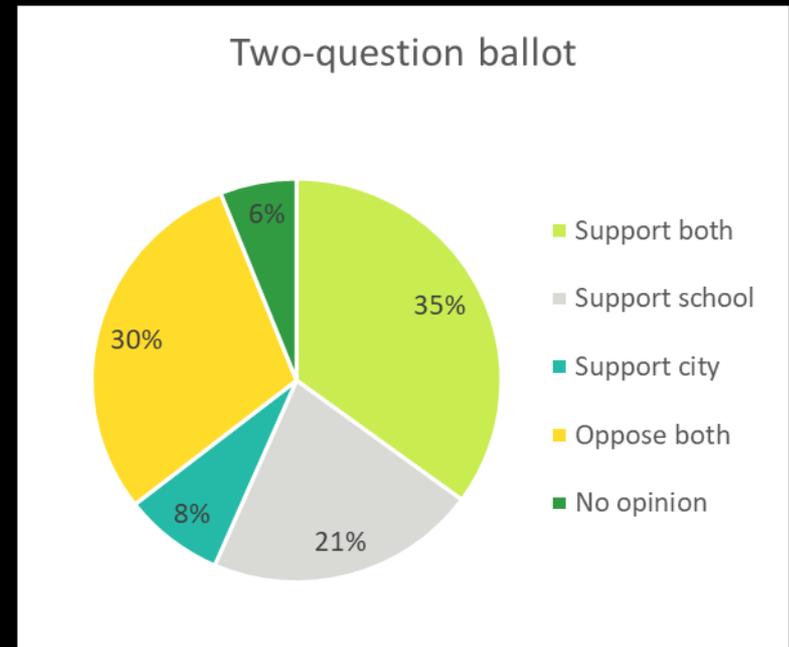
After hearing the school district and city sections of the survey, participants were asked the following:

“Assume for the moment that the school district and the city each put a proposal on the ballot. One would provide additional funding for school programs and would increase taxes by \$140 on an average home. The second would provide additional funding for City services and would increase taxes by \$90 on an average home.

If you were given such a ballot, which of the following best describes how you would vote?”

Two-question ballot *(cont.)*

- 35% would support both proposals on the ballot.
 - 56% said they would support the ECASD proposal, on its own or combined with the City proposal.
 - 43% would support the City proposal, either on its own or combined.
- 30% would oppose both proposals.

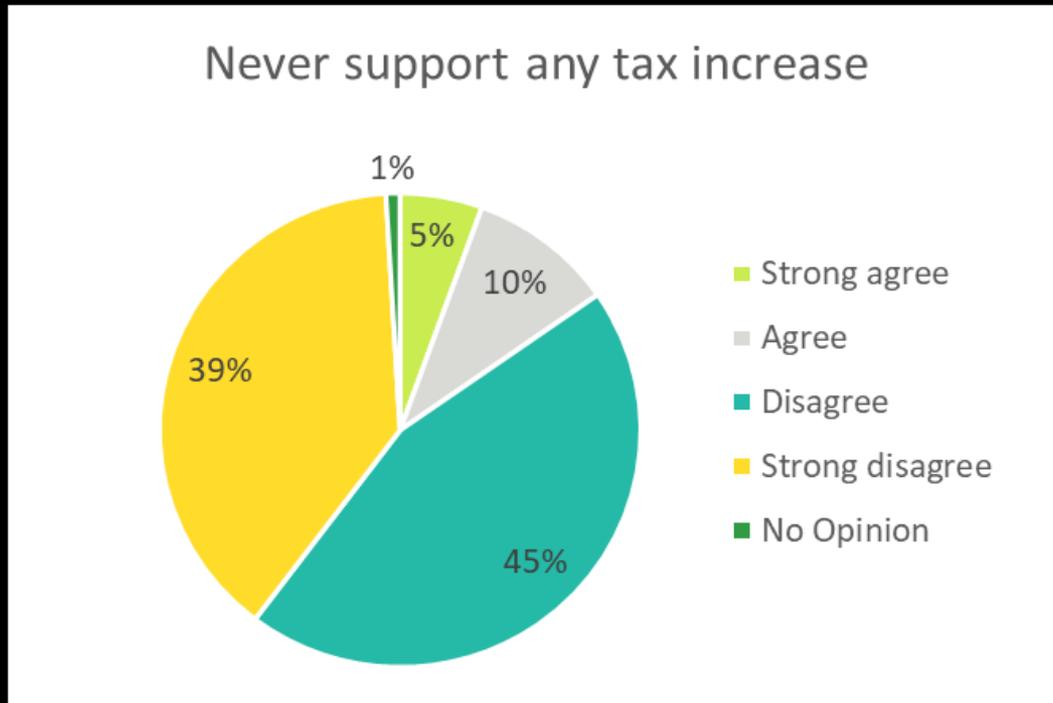


Tax aversion

Participants were asked how much they agreed with the following statement:

“I would never vote for a tax increase, no matter the amount or how the money raised would be used.”

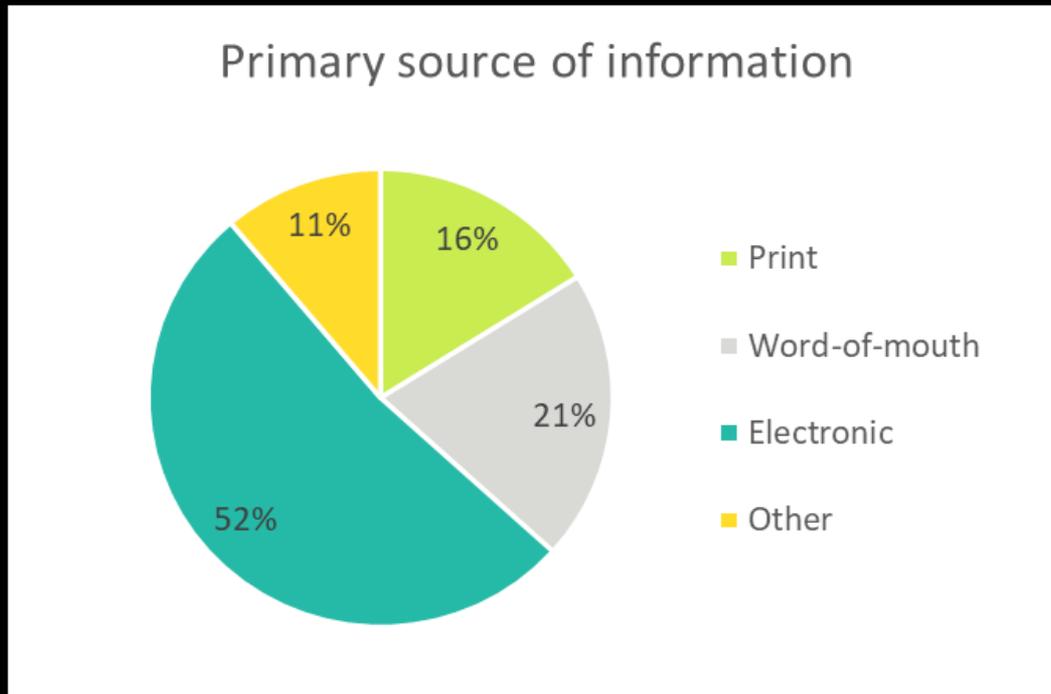
Tax aversion *(cont.)*



Primary information source

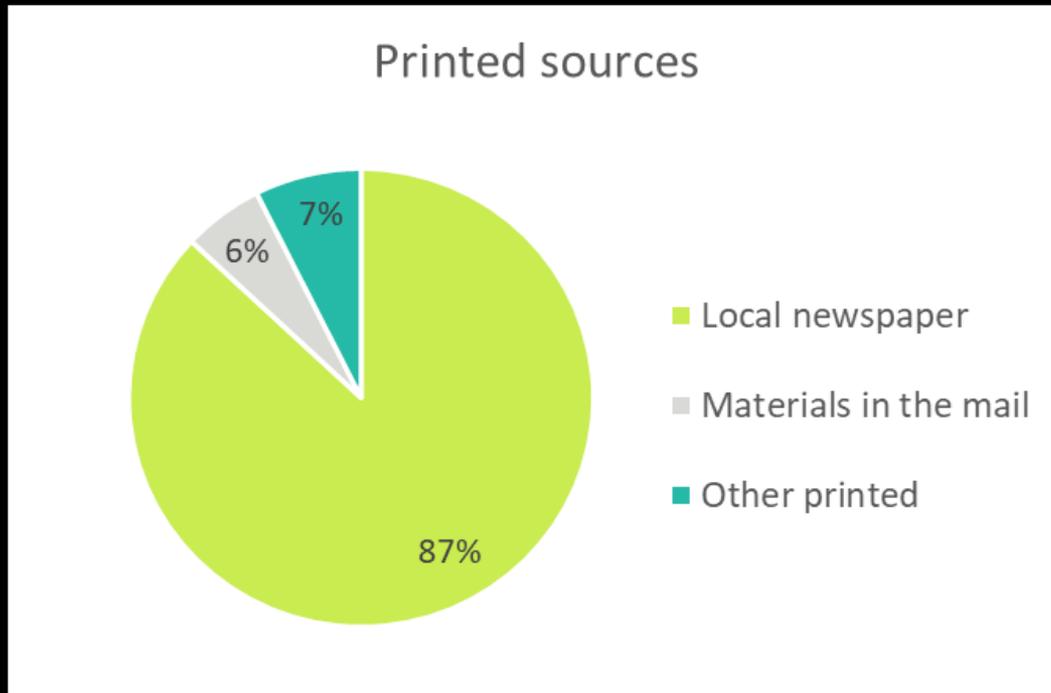
- Participants were asked where they got most of their information about events in the community.
- First question asked about sources in broad terms: printed materials, word-of-mouth, or electronic sources.
 - Each group then chose from a list of specific examples in the appropriate category.

Primary information source – general



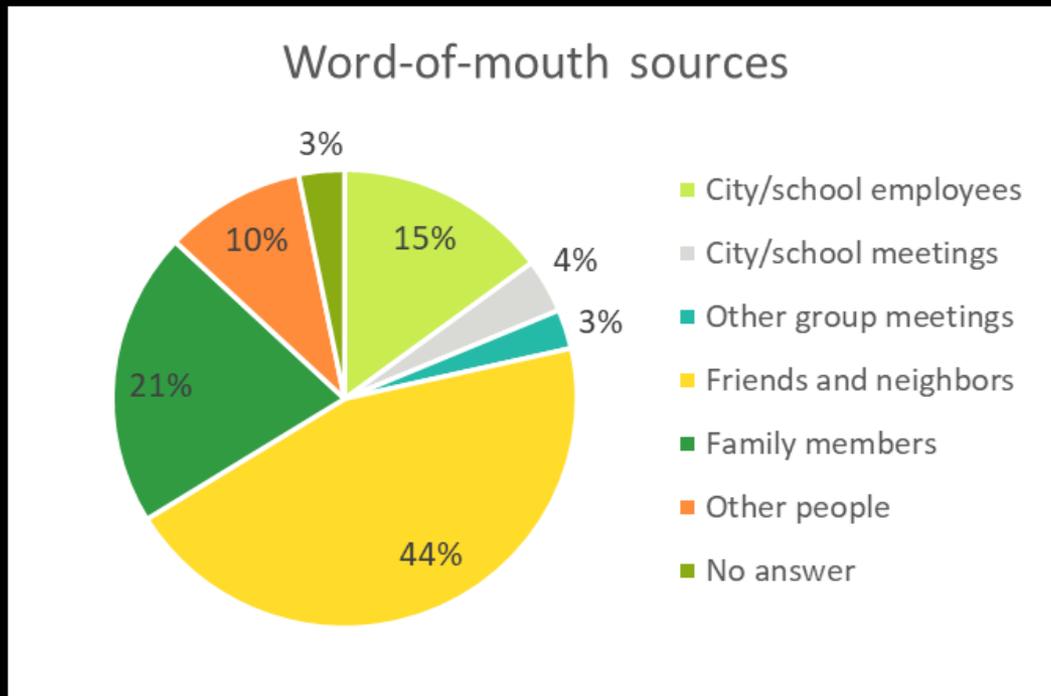
- “Other” responses were primarily “All of the above” or a similar combination of sources.

Primary information source – print sources



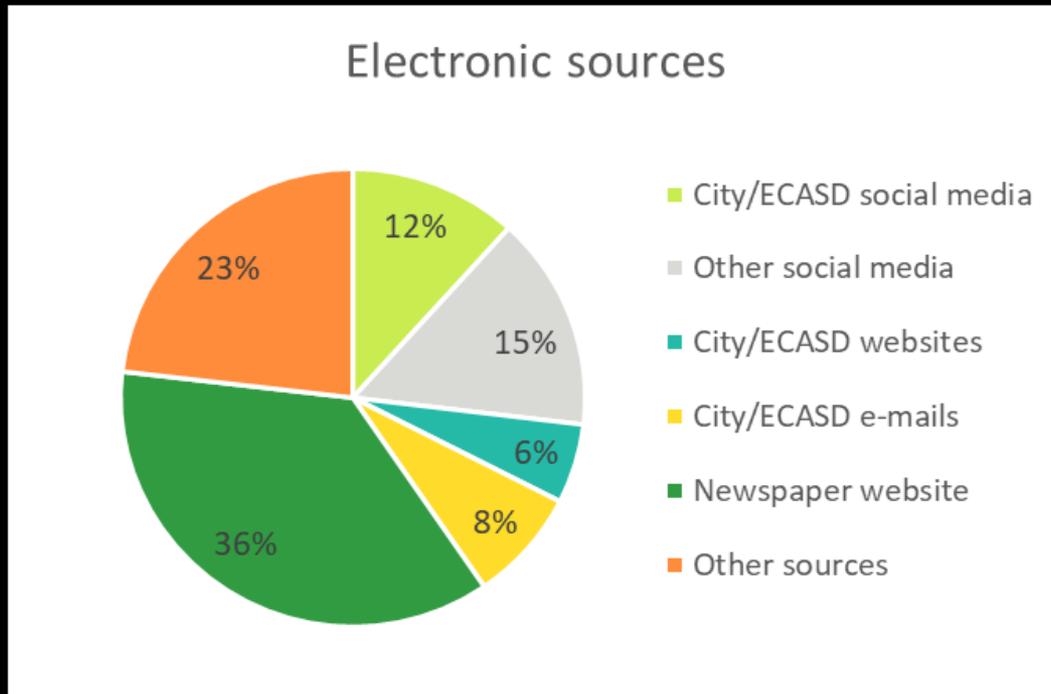
- “Other” responses were for multiple kinds of print materials.

Primary information source – word-of-mouth



- “Other” responses were primarily from participants mentioning their own personal experience.

Primary information source – electronic



- “Other” responses were primarily television news or multiple electronic sources.



SURVEY FINDINGS

ECASD: support for exceeding revenue cap

- Initial support for increase was 55.1%.
- Informed support for increase was 55.5%.
- Information about the proposal increased support by 0.4 percentage points, which is not statistically significant.

ECASD: program impacts

- Greatest positive impacts seen from increasing support for students needing help with basic skills or mental & emotional health needs.
- Smallest positive impact from remodeling South HS.
- Positive reaction to items on the list averaged 66%, with a high of 79% and a low of 50%.
- Negative reaction to the list ranged from 13% to 30%, with an average value of 22%.
- Split-sample question relating to student support showed little difference between versions.

ECASD: potential tax impacts

- At the time of data collection, support levels rise above margin of error (54.9%) at an impact of \$85 per year.
- Looking at weighted turnout of Less Active, Active and Very Active voters, support rises above margin of error at the \$80 impact level.
- Undecided voters were 6.5% to 11.5% of participants at each impact level.



SURVEY FINDINGS

ECASD: funding environment

- Responses to statements about State funding gaps received positive support from 57% of participants.
- 91% agreed that strong schools are linked to the well-being of the community.
- 62% agreed that they trust the School District to do what is best for students.



SURVEY FINDINGS

City: support for property tax increase

- Initial support for increase was 34.9%.
- Informed support for increase was 54.0%.
- Information about the proposal increased support by 19.1 percentage points, which is statistically significant.



SURVEY FINDINGS

City: program impacts

- Greatest positive impacts seen from maintaining police, fire and paramedic services.
- Smallest positive impact from environmental goals.
- Positive reaction to items on the list averaged 67%, with a high of 79% and a low of 55%.
- Negative reaction to the list ranged from 11% to 32%, with an average value of 22%.

City: potential tax impacts

- At the time of data collection, support levels rise above margin of error (55.6%) at an impact of \$70 per year.
- Looking at weighted turnout of Less Active, Active and Very Active voters, support again rises above margin of error at the \$70 impact level.
- Undecided voters were 8.0% to 12.5% of participants at each impact level.



SURVEY FINDINGS

City: quality of life

- Quality of parks and recreation programs and quality of life each tested very well.
- Ratings for street maintenance showed much lower consensus among respondents.

Findings: potential two-question ballot

- Given a ballot with proposals from both the City and the School District, 56% said they would support the School District's proposal.
 - 35% would support both proposals on the ballot.
 - 21% would support only the ECASD proposal.
- 43% would support the City's proposal.
 - 35% would support both proposals on the ballot.
 - 8% would support only the City's proposal.



Recommendations

- Responses at this time indicate that for an average homeowner, a school tax increase of up to \$80 or a city tax increase of up to \$70 would be feasible.
- If both proposals appear on the same ballot, support for both is likely to be lower than for each separately.
- Changes in the final ballot proposal and factors such as local economic conditions and campaign efforts leading up to a future referendum can affect voter support and turnout.



Thank you!

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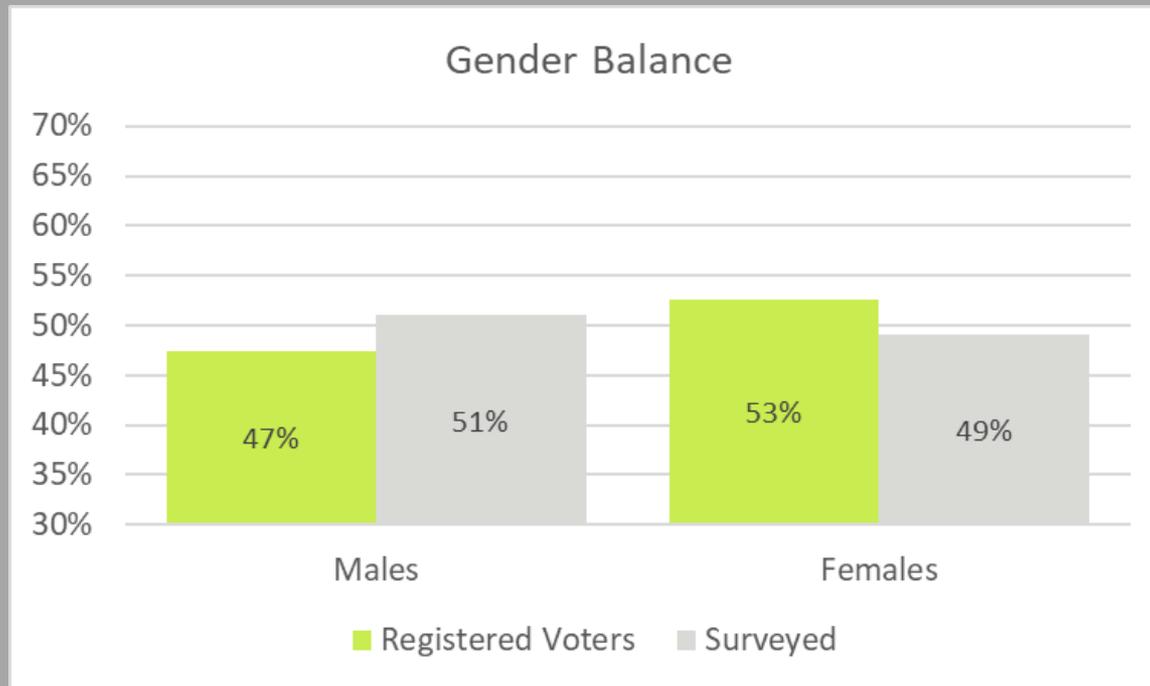


Survey demographics

- The following slides show proportions of total interviews versus targets before any sample weighting was performed.
- Targets for parent status were used for ECASD only.
- After re-balancing, samples were each within 2% of targets.
- Cell phones and homeownership were tracked for informational purposes, but were not treated as targets.

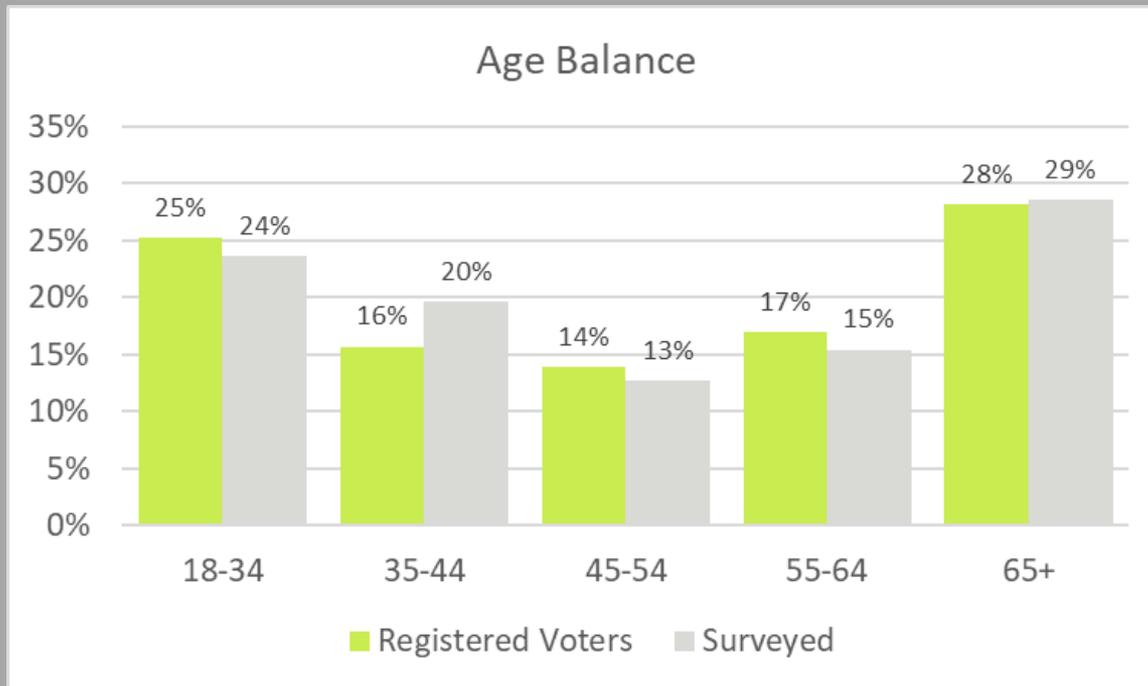
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Gender



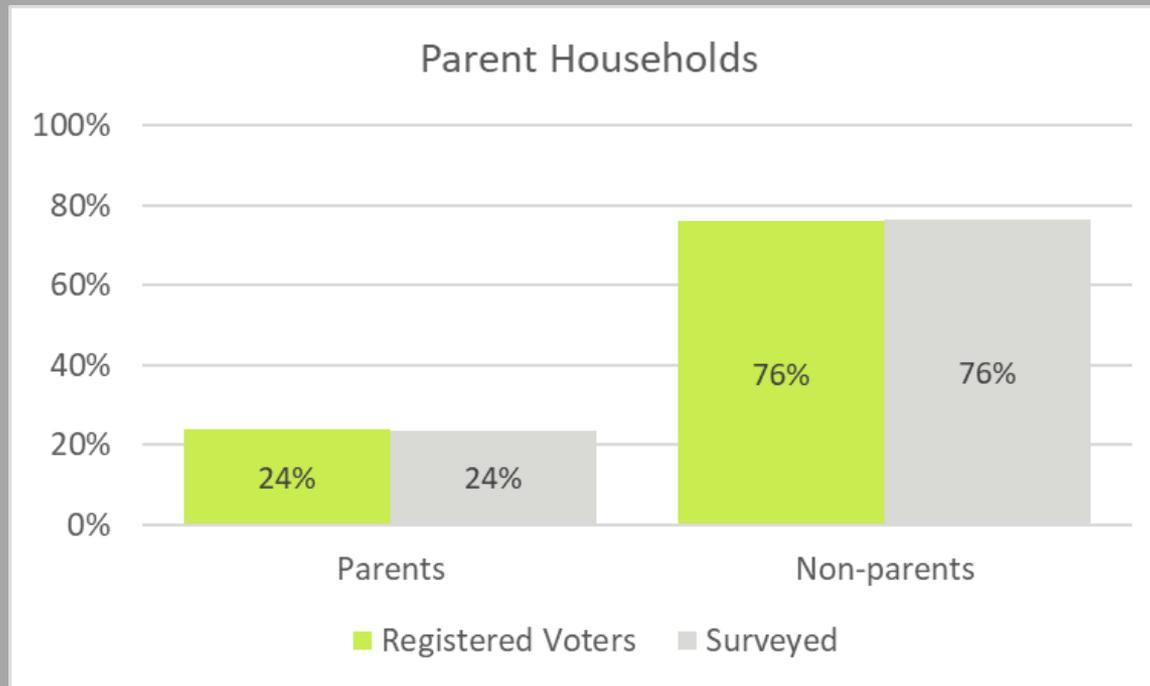
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Age



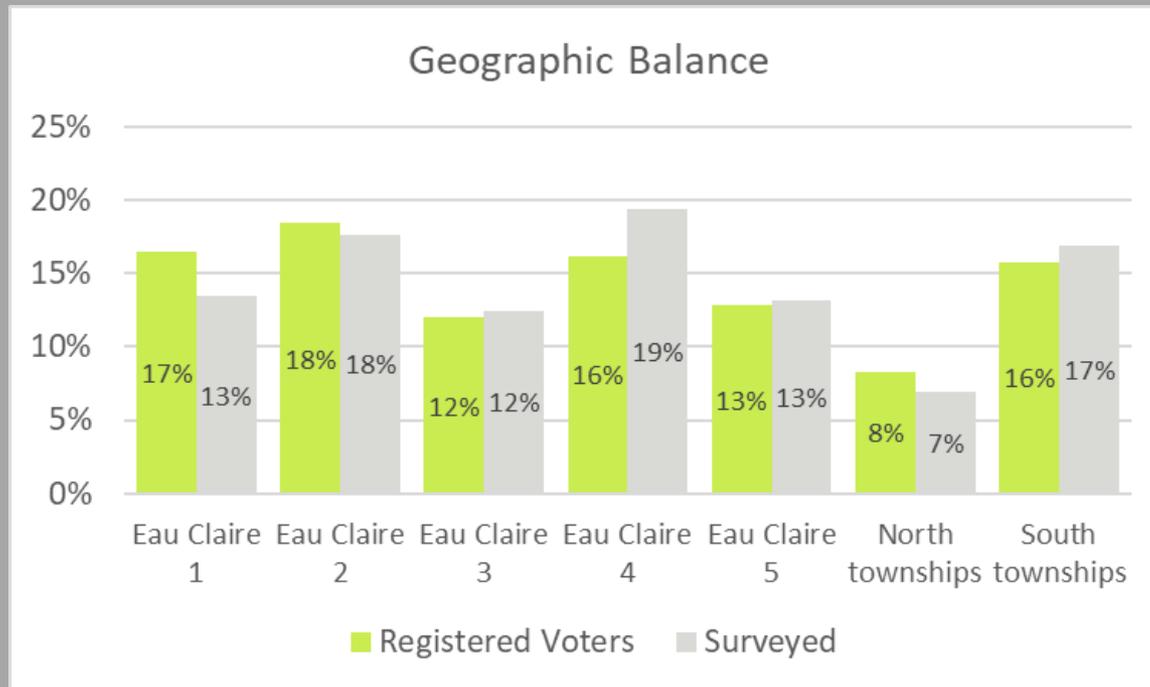
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Parent households



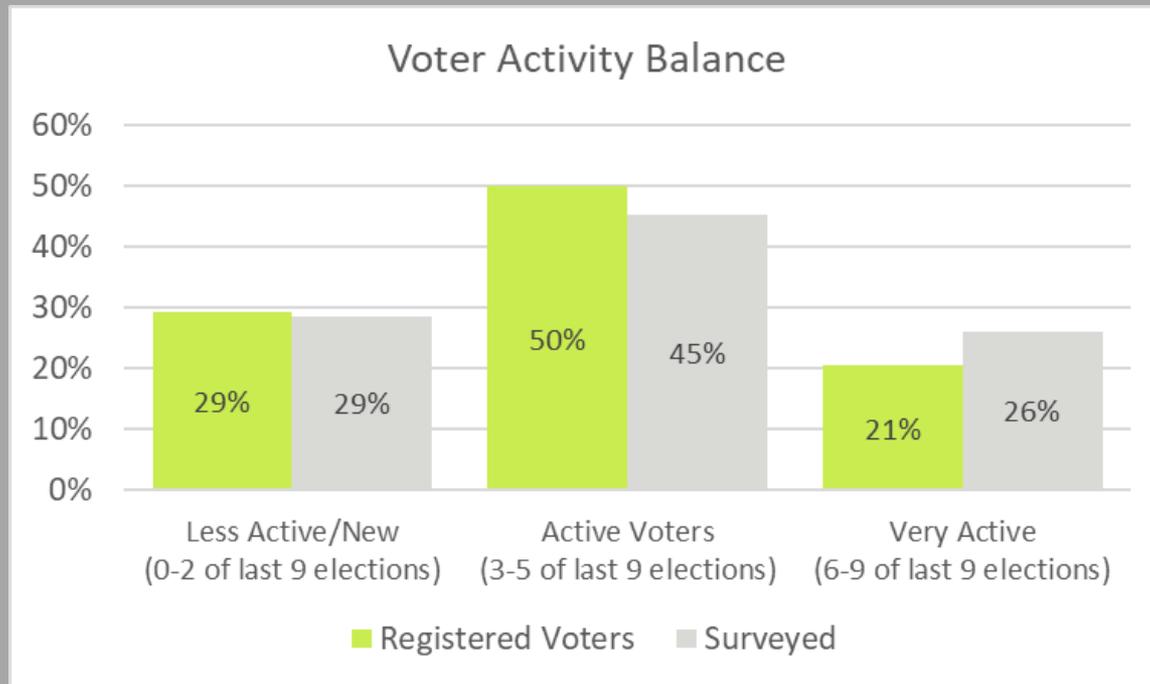
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Supplementary demographics: Location



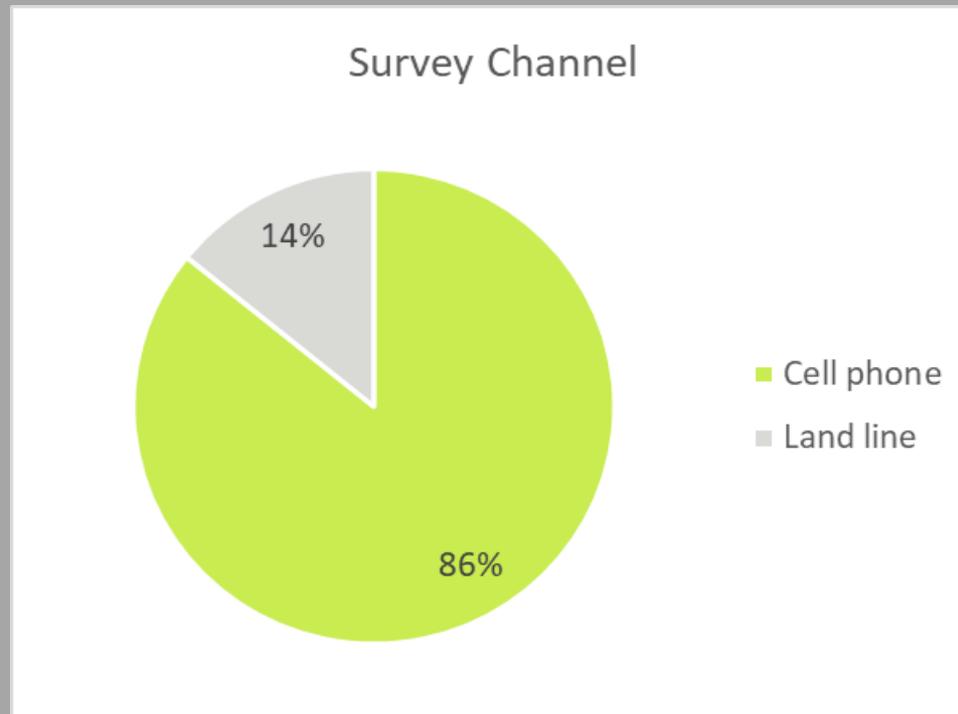
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Past voting activity



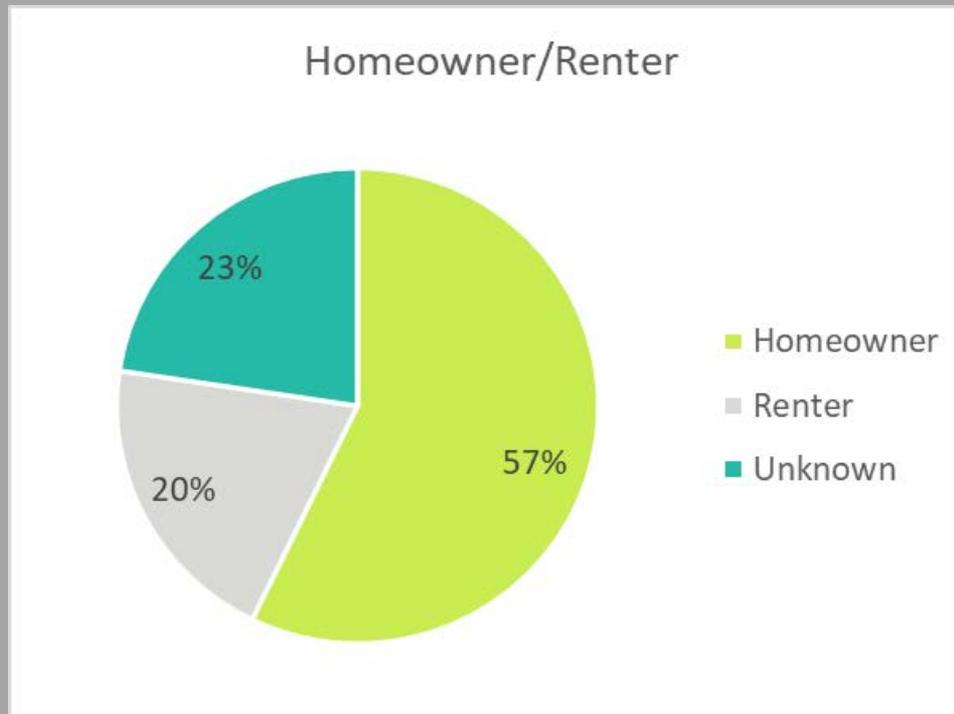
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Supplementary demographics: Survey channel



SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Supplementary demographics: Homeowner/renter





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