

Community Survey Results

School District of Ladysmith

Fall 2021



SCHOOL PERCEPTIONS

Our mission is to help educational leaders gather, organize, and use data to make strategic decisions.

- Founded in **2002** to provide independent research
- Conducted more than **10,000** staff, parent, student, and community surveys for school improvement
- Helped more than **800** districts navigate the strategic planning and referendum planning process

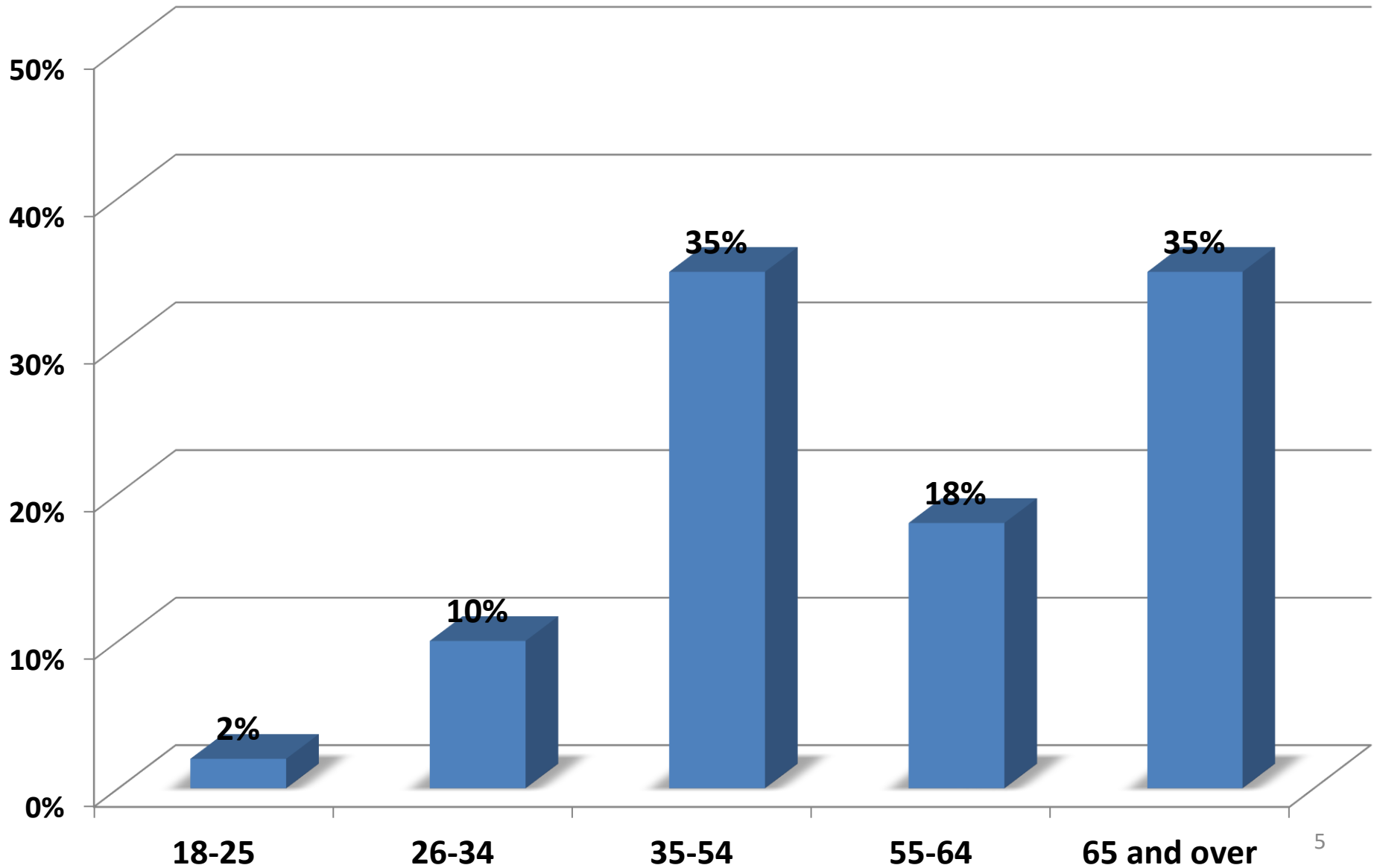
Survey Summary

- The survey was conducted in October of 2021.
- Residents within the District were mailed a paper survey.
 - Each survey included a unique survey access code for those who preferred to take the survey online.
- Total responses = 477 (216 paper)
- Participation rate = 20%

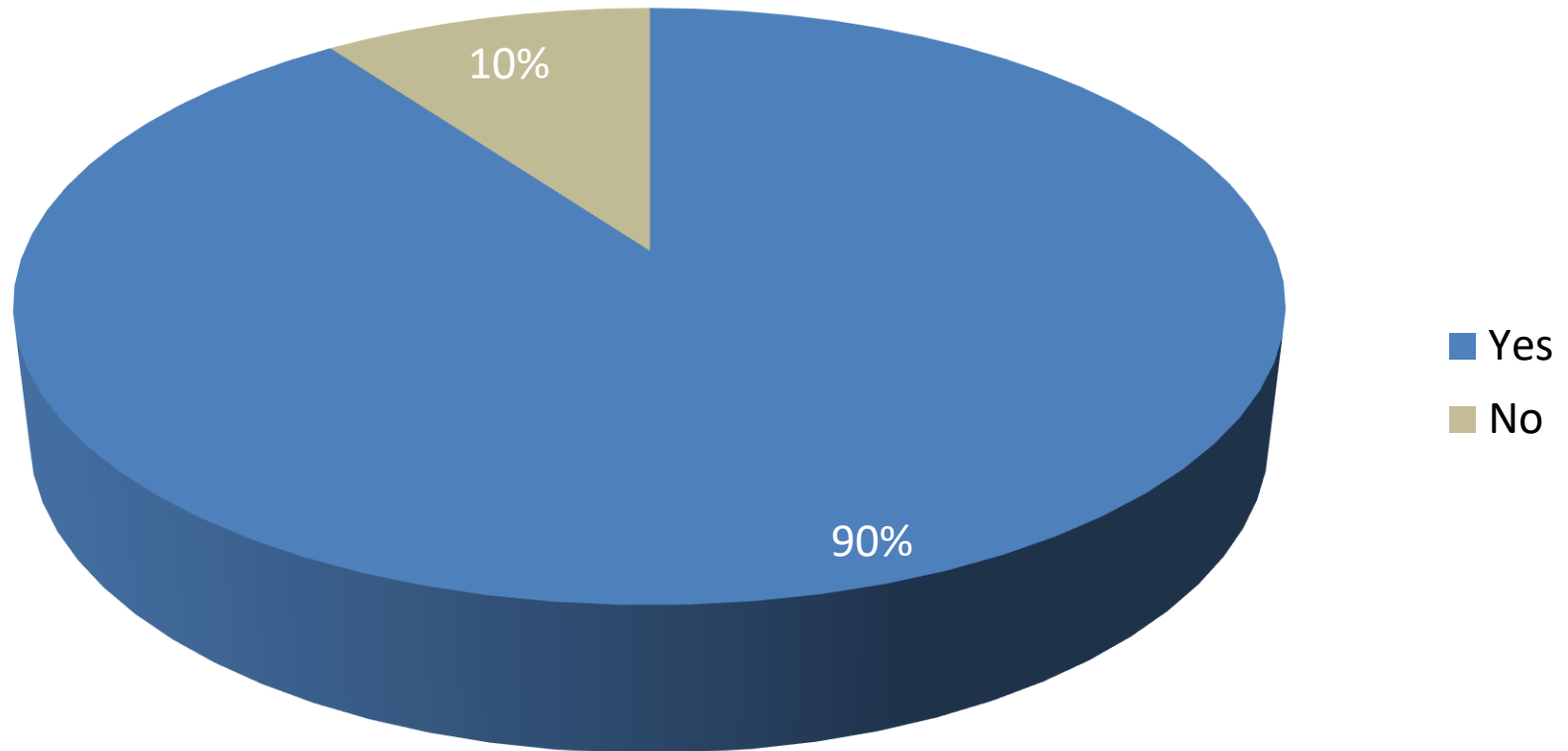
Respondent Information



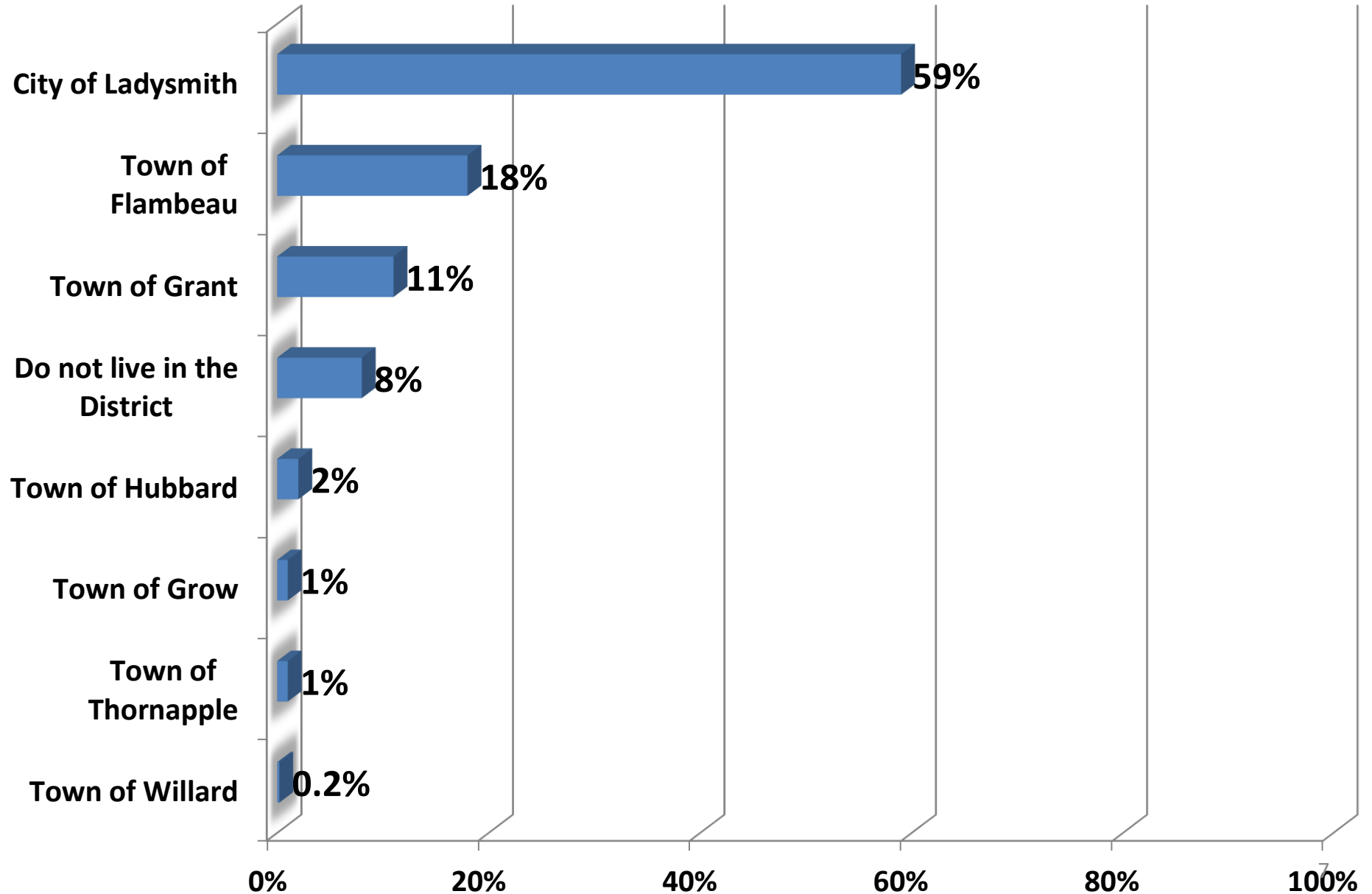
What is your age?



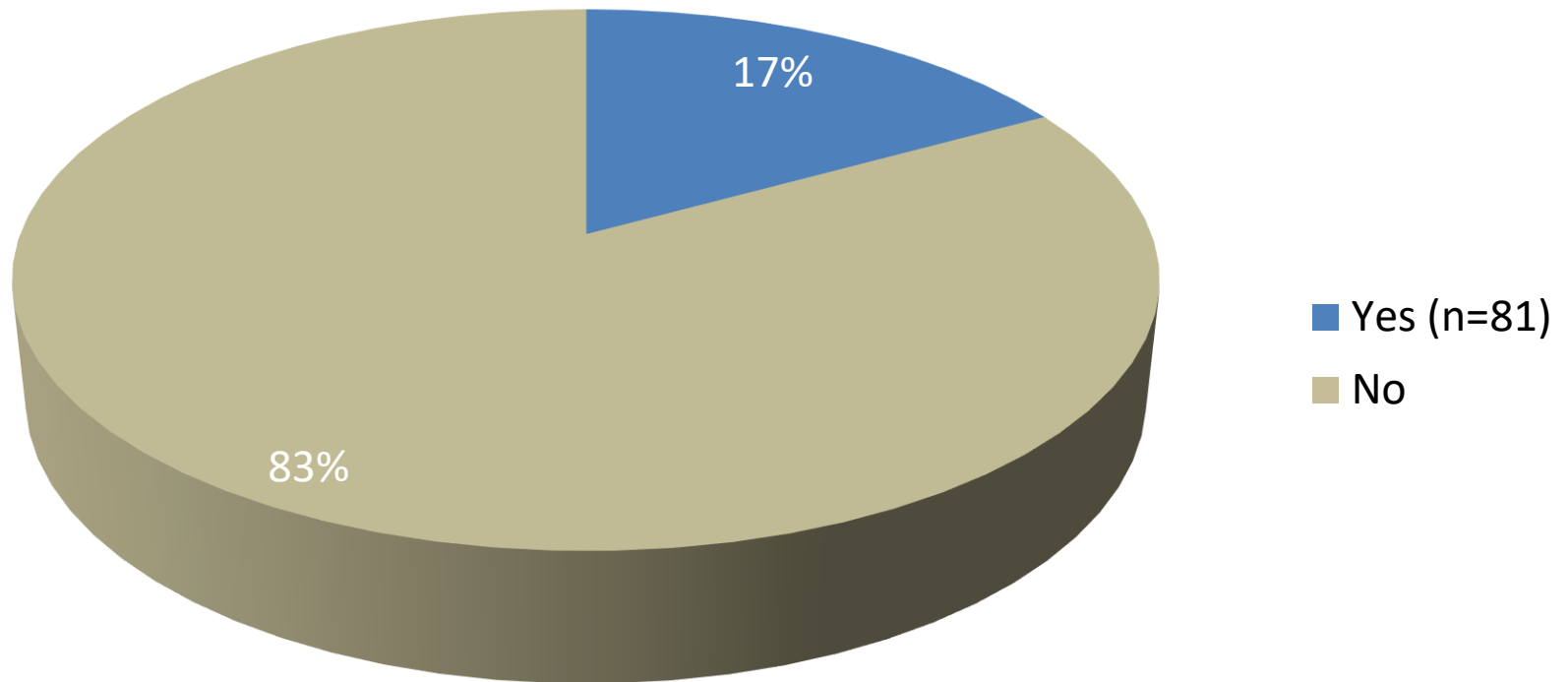
Is your primary residence in the School District of Ladysmith?



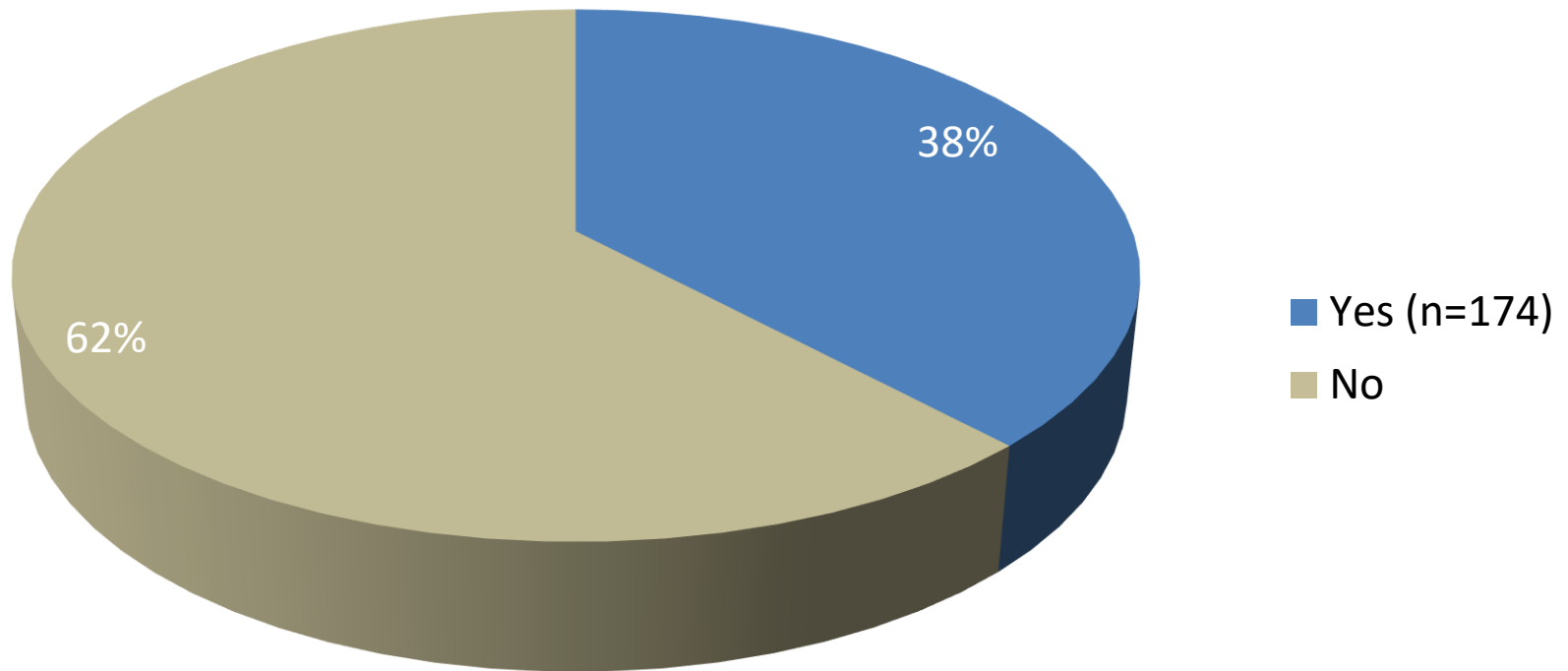
In which municipality do you reside?



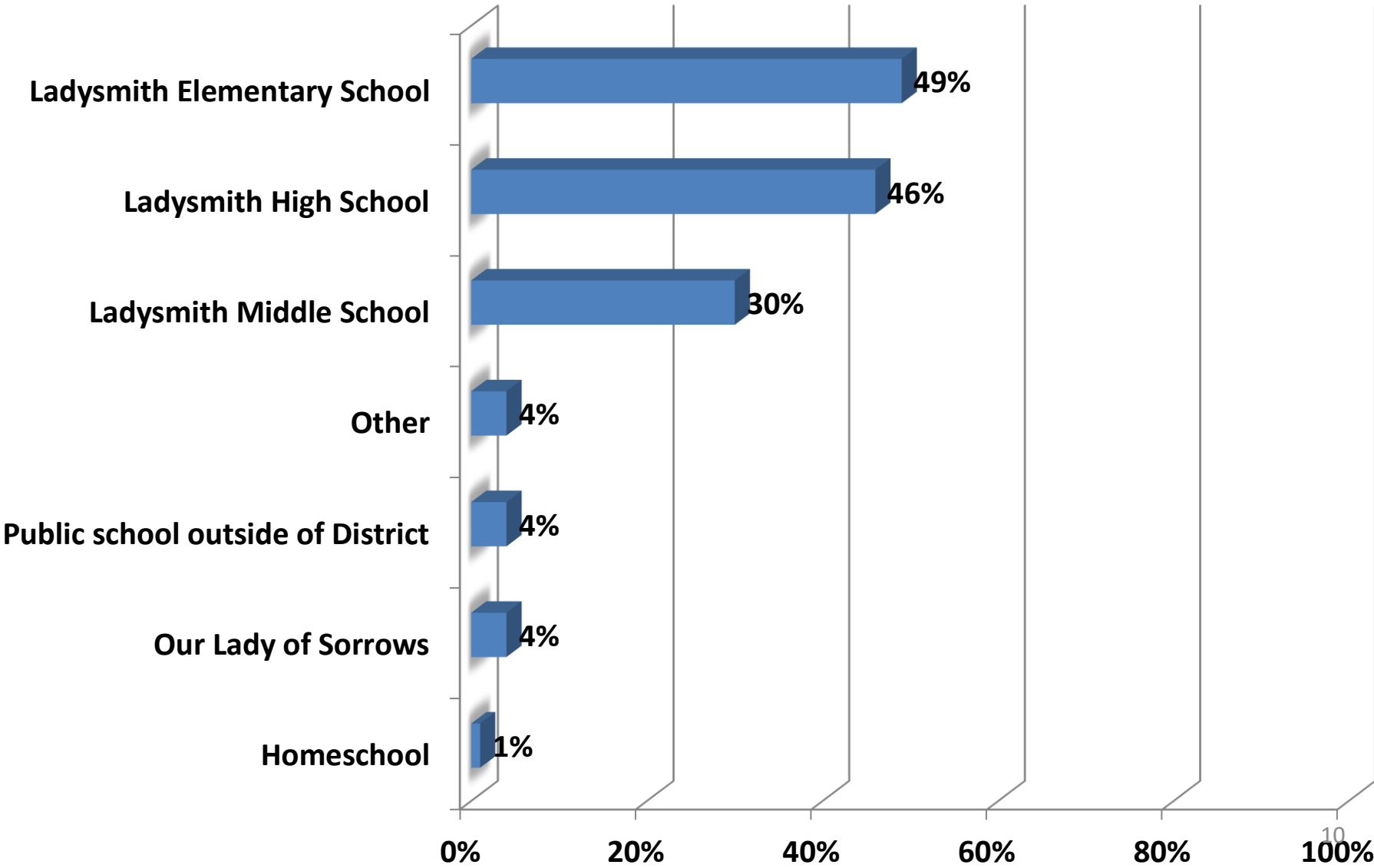
Are you an employee of the School District of Ladysmith?



Do you have a child(ren) attending the School District of Ladysmith?



If you have school-aged children, what school(s) do they attend? *(Mark all that apply.)*

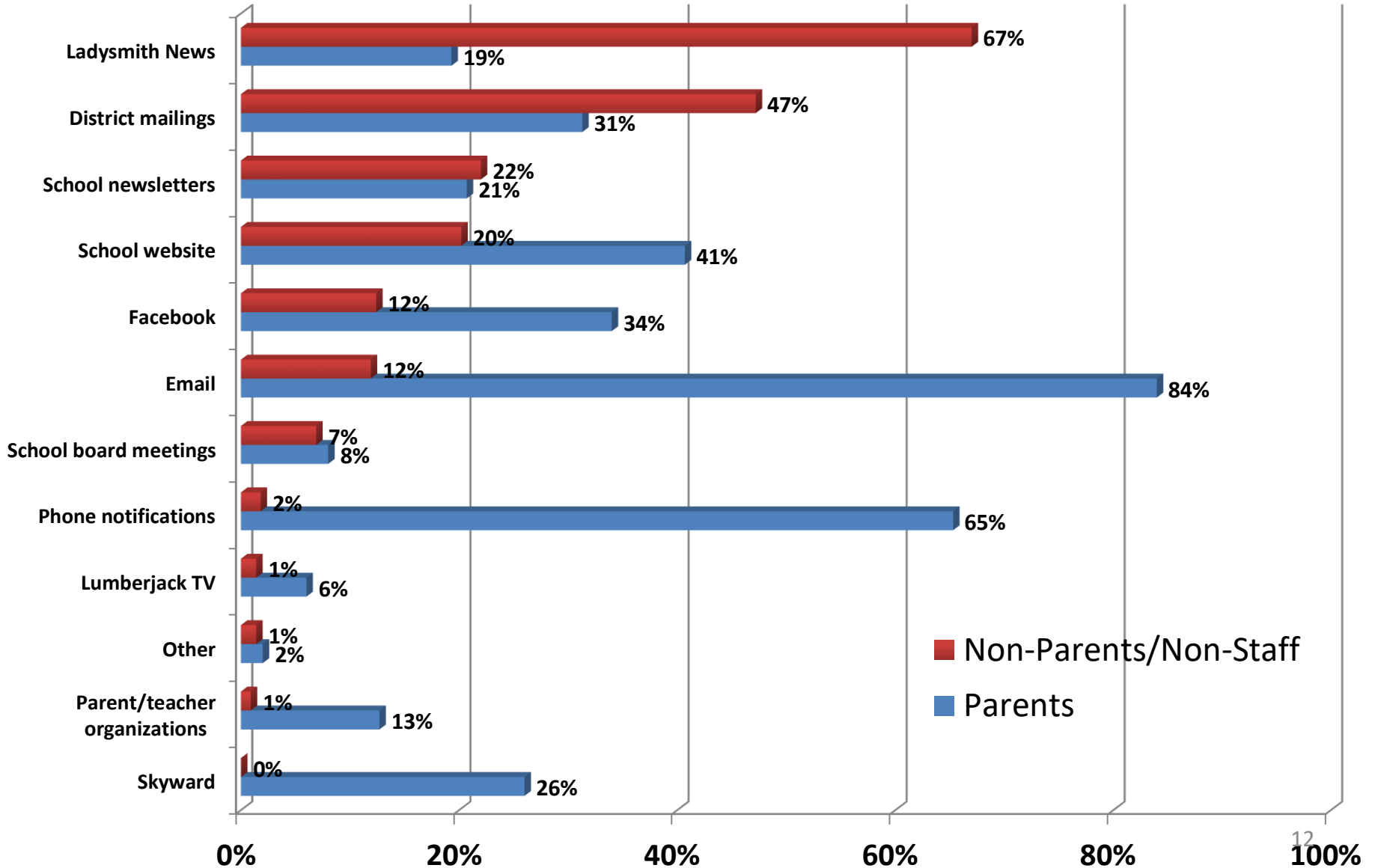


Communication



How do you like to receive school and district information?

(Mark all that apply.)

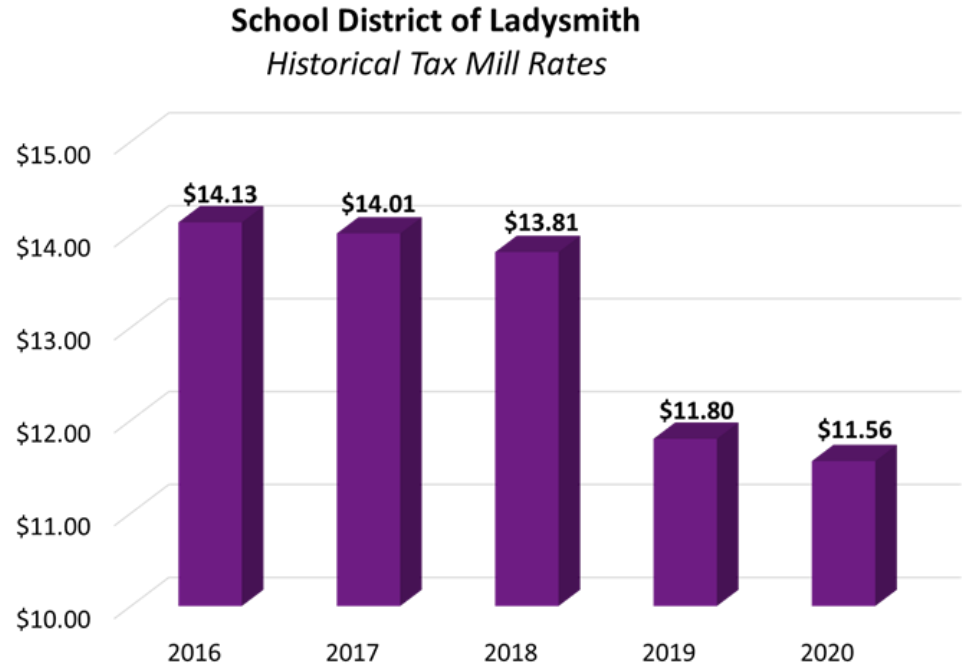


Financial Background



Based on careful planning, Ladysmith's mill rate (which is used to calculate property taxes) has **dropped 20 percent** compared to the 2016 level, saving taxpayers \$257 on each \$100,000 of assessed property value. (This is shown in the graph to the right.)

In addition, the Board has taken the opportunity to prepay debt and will soon pay off a large loan that helped update our schools in 2001. **This effort will reduce the tax impact of any new spending.**



Local Funding Sources



There are two types of referenda school districts in Wisconsin can use.

Type	Purpose
Capital referendum	This allows a district to issue debt to pay for major building projects, such as renovations or building a school. Much like a home mortgage, a capital referendum is typically financed over an extended period of time, often up to 20 years.
Operational referendum	This is used to support day-to-day school operations, such as educational programming, student services, and building maintenance. Funds secured through an operational referendum are used within the year they are received.

Operational Funding Challenges



Operational referenda have become quite common in Wisconsin. In fact, in the last 10 years, voters in over 200 districts across the state—almost half the total in Wisconsin—have passed this type of referendum to help deal with ongoing budget challenges. **However, Ladysmith has not pursued an operational referendum during this time.**

To balance the budget, we have made the following changes:

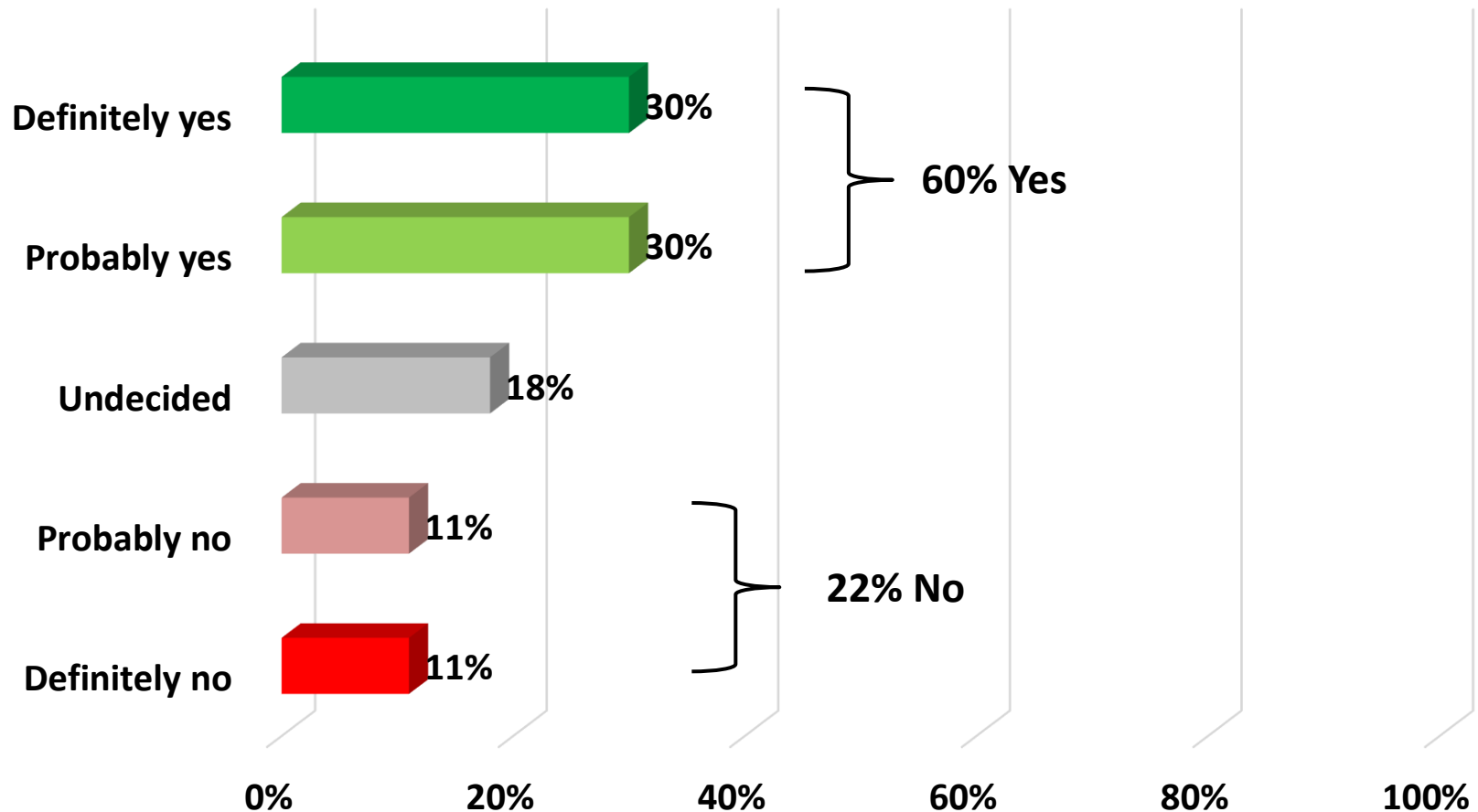
- Reduced the number of full-time positions.
- Decreased health insurance coverage and asked employees to pay a greater percentage of premiums.
- Reduced our school buildings from three to two to increase operational efficiencies.

Even with the budget reductions identified above, the District will need to secure an additional \$600,000 for each of the next five years to maintain current programs and services. Please note that operational referendum approval ***would not increase taxes over the current level.***

Would you support a \$600,000 operational referendum to maintain current programs and services for each of the next five years?

Approval would not increase taxes over the current level.

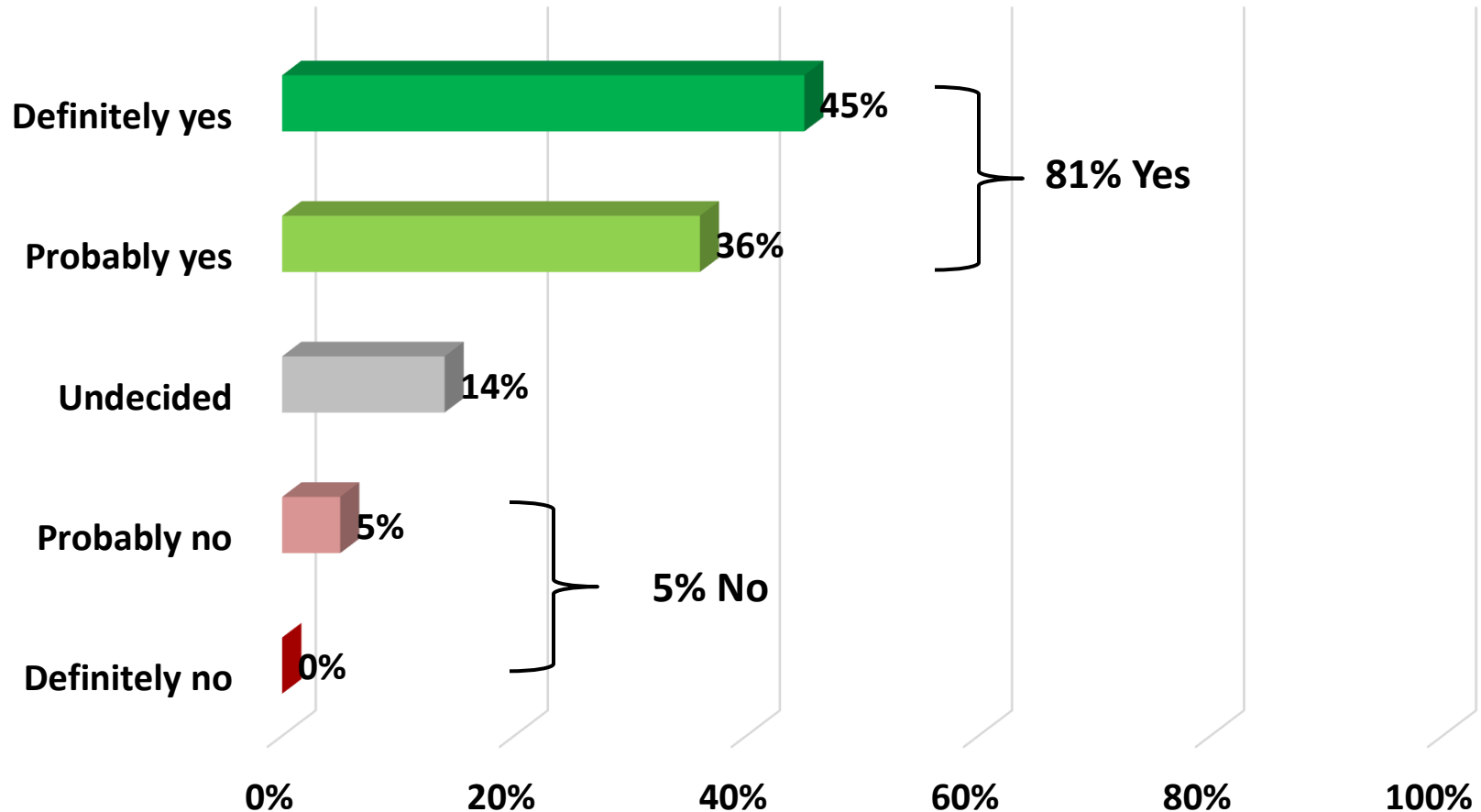
All Residents



Would you support a \$600,000 operational referendum to maintain current programs and services for each of the next five years?

Approval would not increase taxes over the current level.

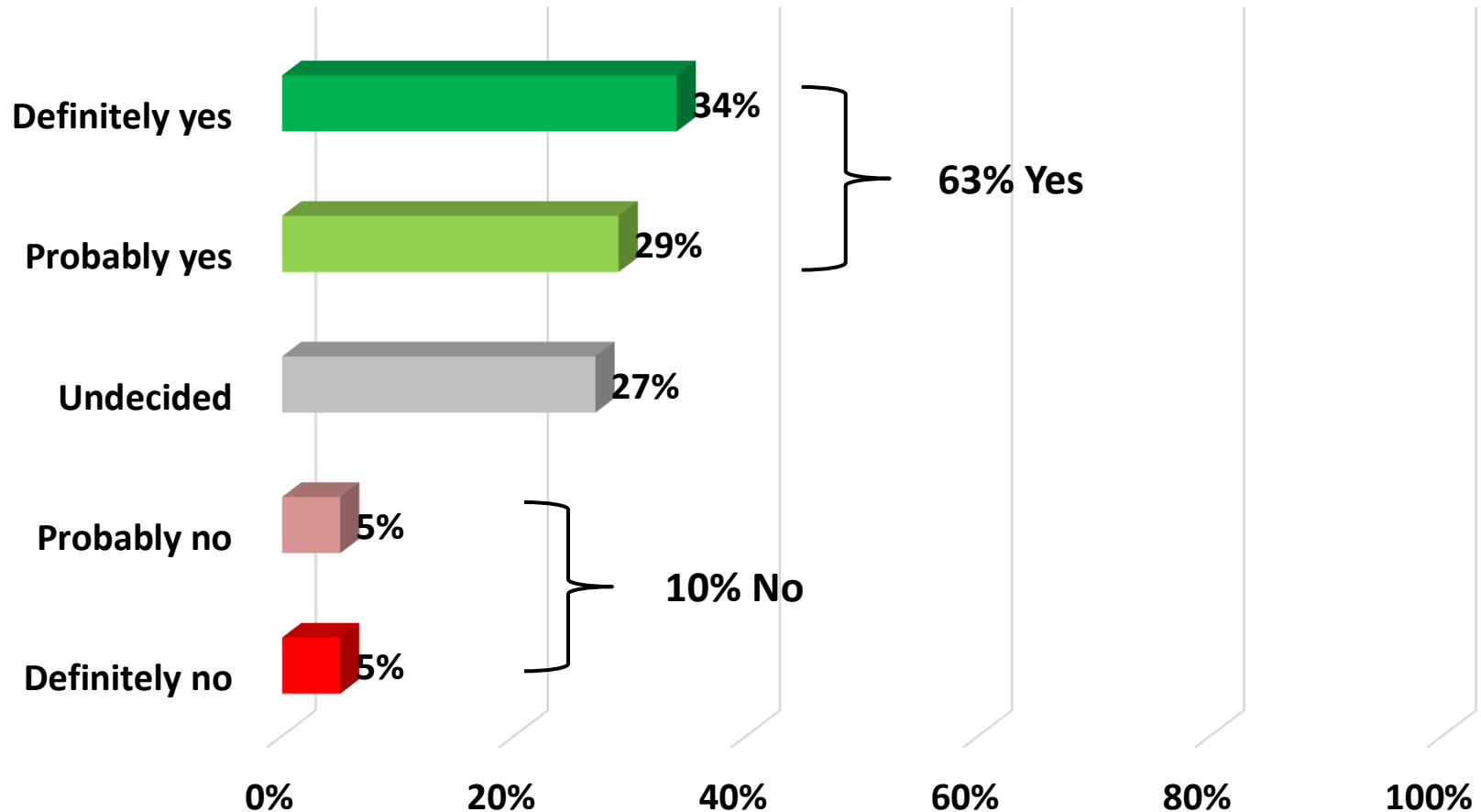
Staff Residents



Would you support a \$600,000 operational referendum to maintain current programs and services for each of the next five years?

Approval would not increase taxes over the current level.

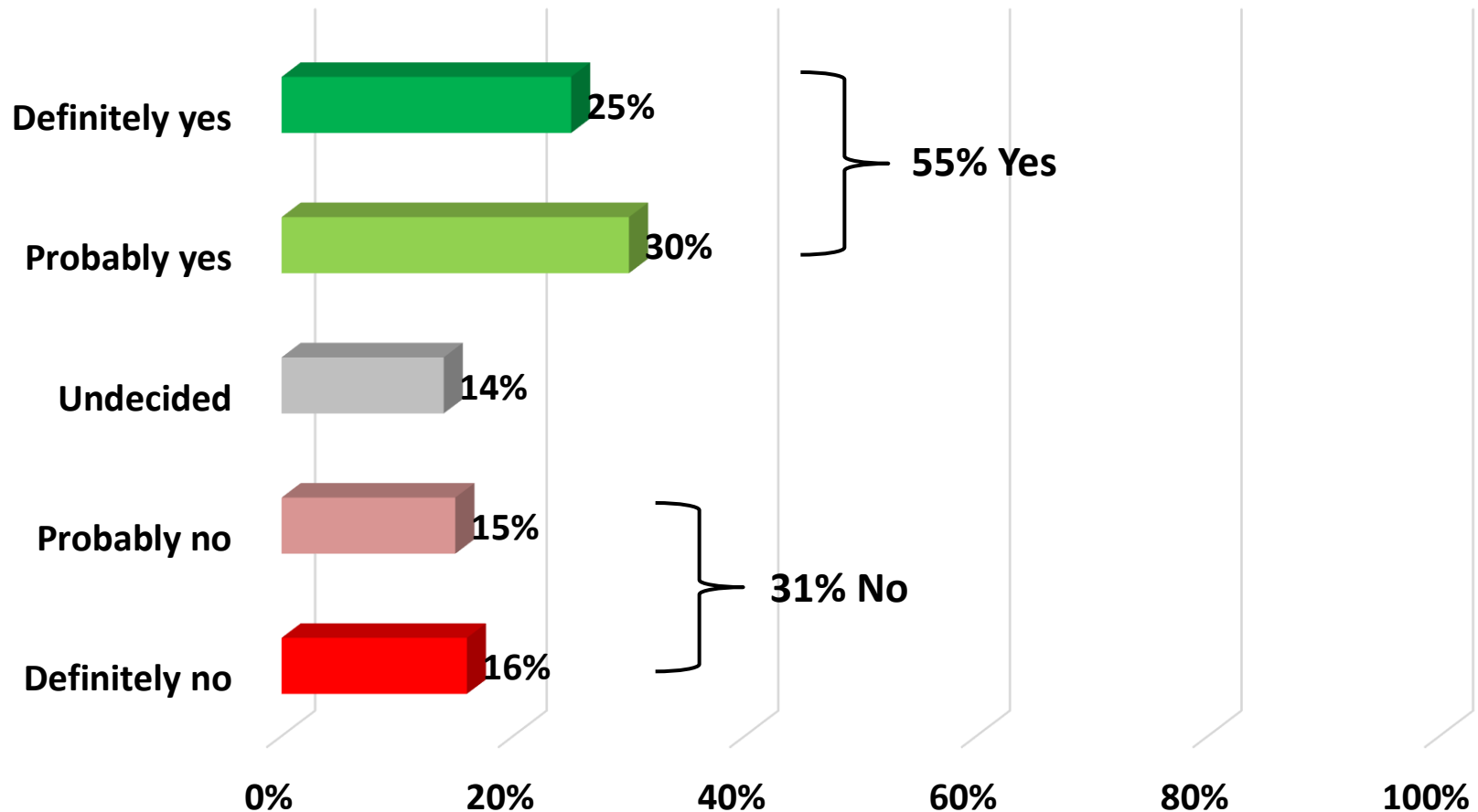
Parent Residents (Non-Staff)



Would you support a \$600,000 operational referendum to maintain current programs and services for each of the next five years?

Approval would not increase taxes over the current level.

Non-Parent Residents (Non-Staff)



Facility Background Information



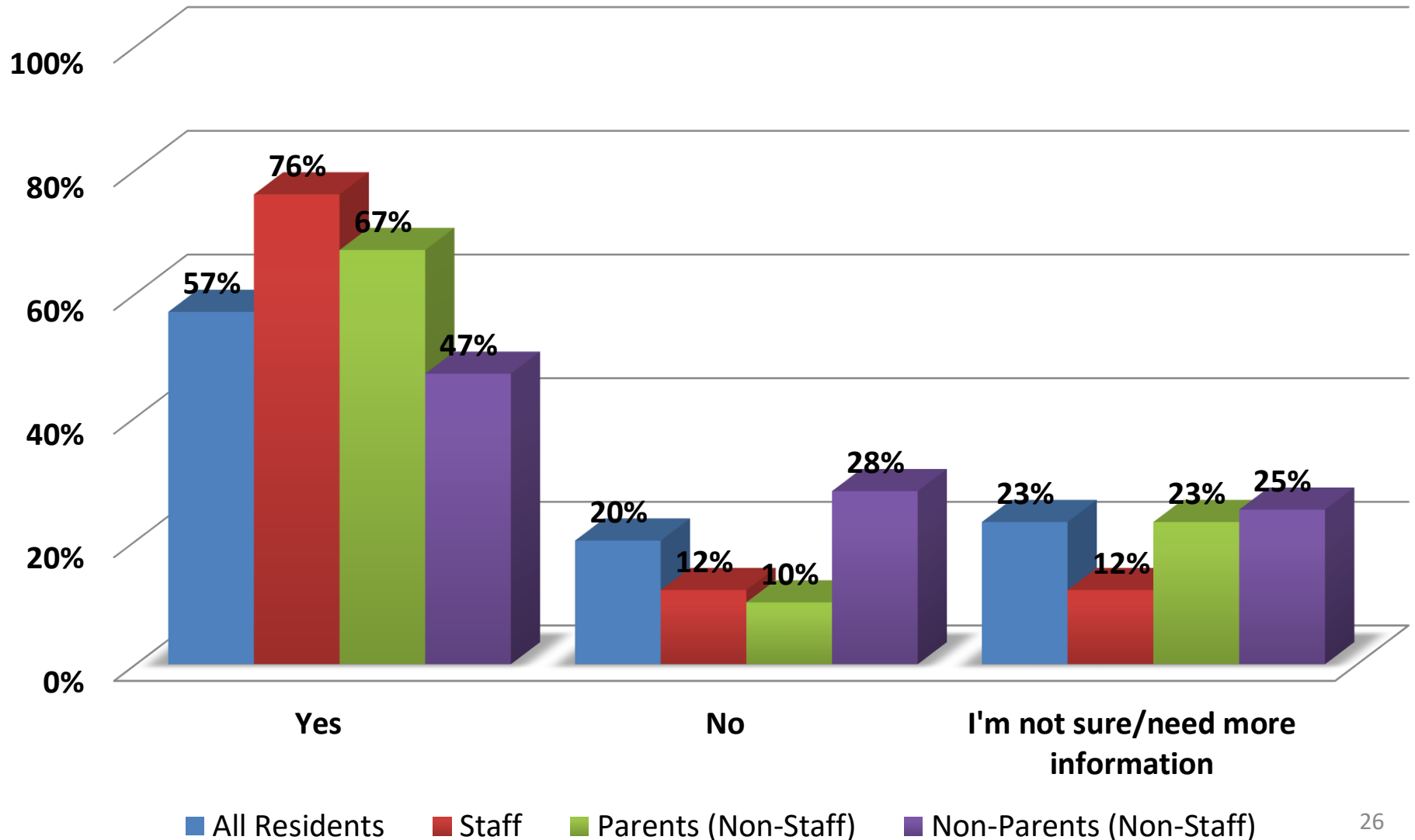
Last year, the Board, administration, and a community task force began studying options to update the middle-high school building, which is nearly 50 years old. The recent facility assessment identified the following as the most pressing issues:

- The **main entrance** should be modified to better monitor and control visitor access.
- **Classrooms** throughout the school are too small, have poor acoustics, and lack areas for both large- and small-group instruction/tutoring.
- Some **major building systems**, including plumbing, heating/ventilation, and electrical, have exceeded their service life and need to be repaired and/or replaced.
- **STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) classrooms and labs** lack student collaboration and groupwork space.
- **Restrooms** need to be updated and modified to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- Due to their age, classroom **floors, lights, ceilings, and casework** need replacing.
- The **auditorium** lacks appropriate heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), and lights, curtains, ceilings, and seats must be replaced.
- **Locker rooms** are aged and worn and should be updated.
- Some **athletic fields** need to be updated, and the bleachers and press box need to be replaced to address safety concerns.

In addition, the report noted that the **elementary school** has minor maintenance needs that would be addressed as well.

Because of the significant needs at the middle-high school building, some people have asked if it may be the right time to consider building a new school. However, the estimated cost to build a new school is well over \$30 million. **We cannot borrow this much money, and therefore, this is not a viable option.** Fortunately, the building is structurally sound, and the site can support future expansion.

Would you support the District exploring a referendum to update the middle-high school site?



Recommended Facility Plan

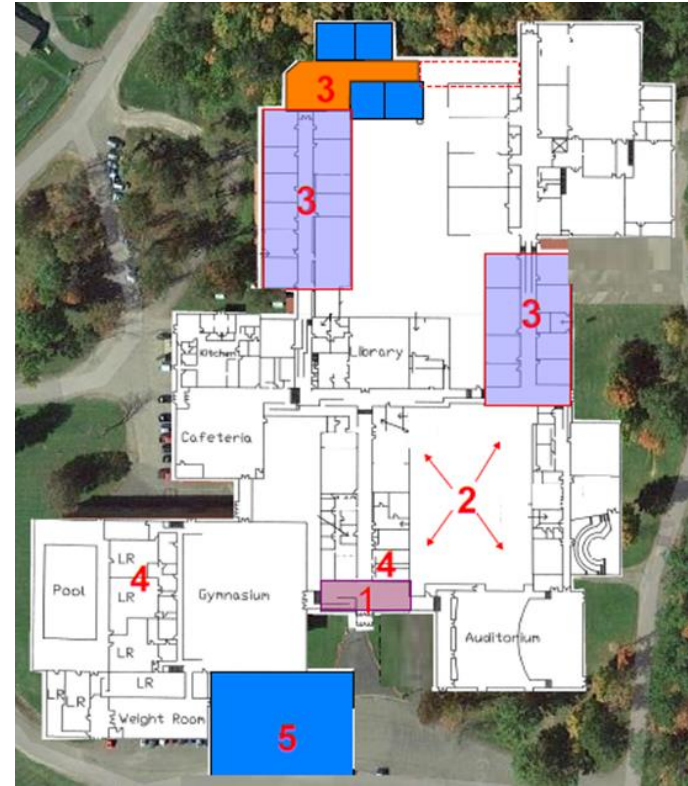


If the community supports exploring a referendum, a task force (made up of local businessowners, community members, parents, school staff, and students) is recommending a plan that would:

- ① Improve safety and security.
- ② Update building systems and infrastructure.
- ③ Remodel classrooms at both the middle and high school levels to expand sizes, improve acoustics, and add flexible learning areas.
- ④ Improve public restrooms and locker rooms.
- ⑤ Expand gym space to better accommodate school programming and after-school activities, including community use.*
- ⑥ Improve athletic field safety with better drainage, new bleachers, new press box, and updates to the softball field.

** The District is applying for a FEMA grant that would make the gym into a storm shelter and would offset up to 50% of this project.*

The estimated cost of the recommended plan is \$21 million.

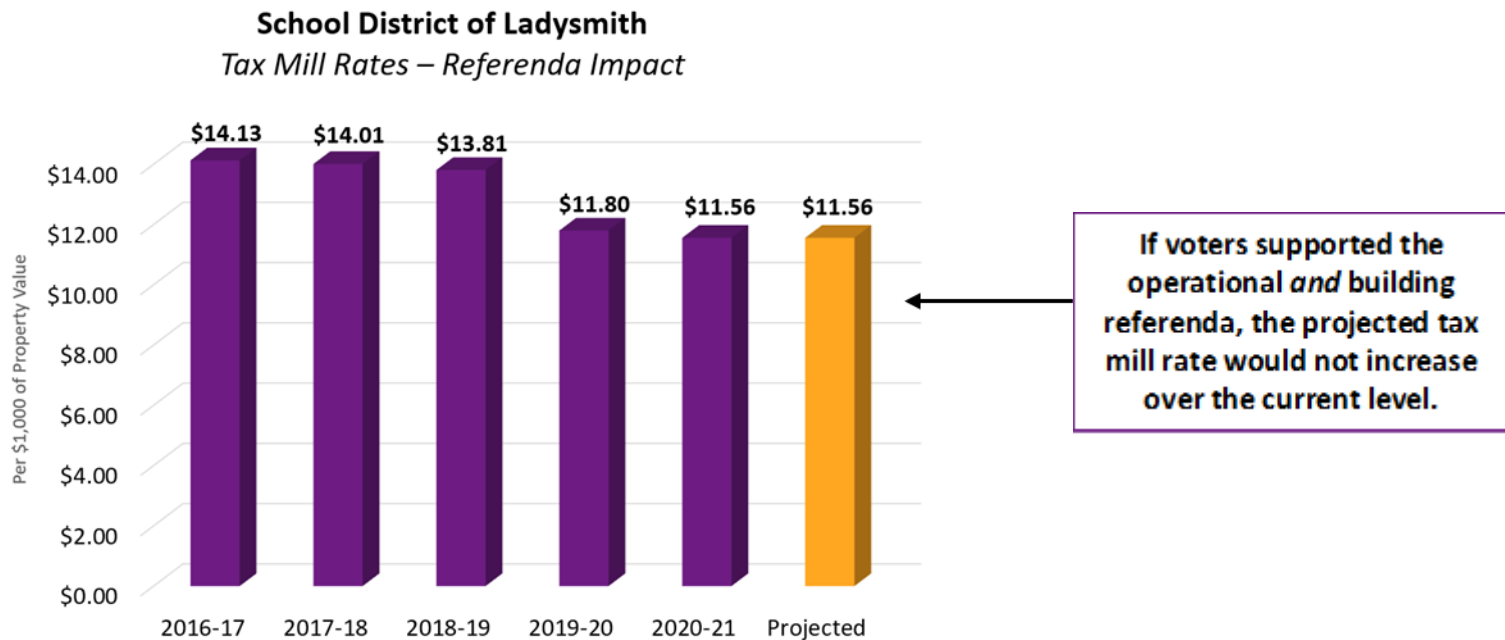


Funding Support



The recommended plan is estimated to cost \$21 million. Voters would need to approve a referendum to pay for this project. The Board of Education believes this is a good time to consider this option for the following reasons.

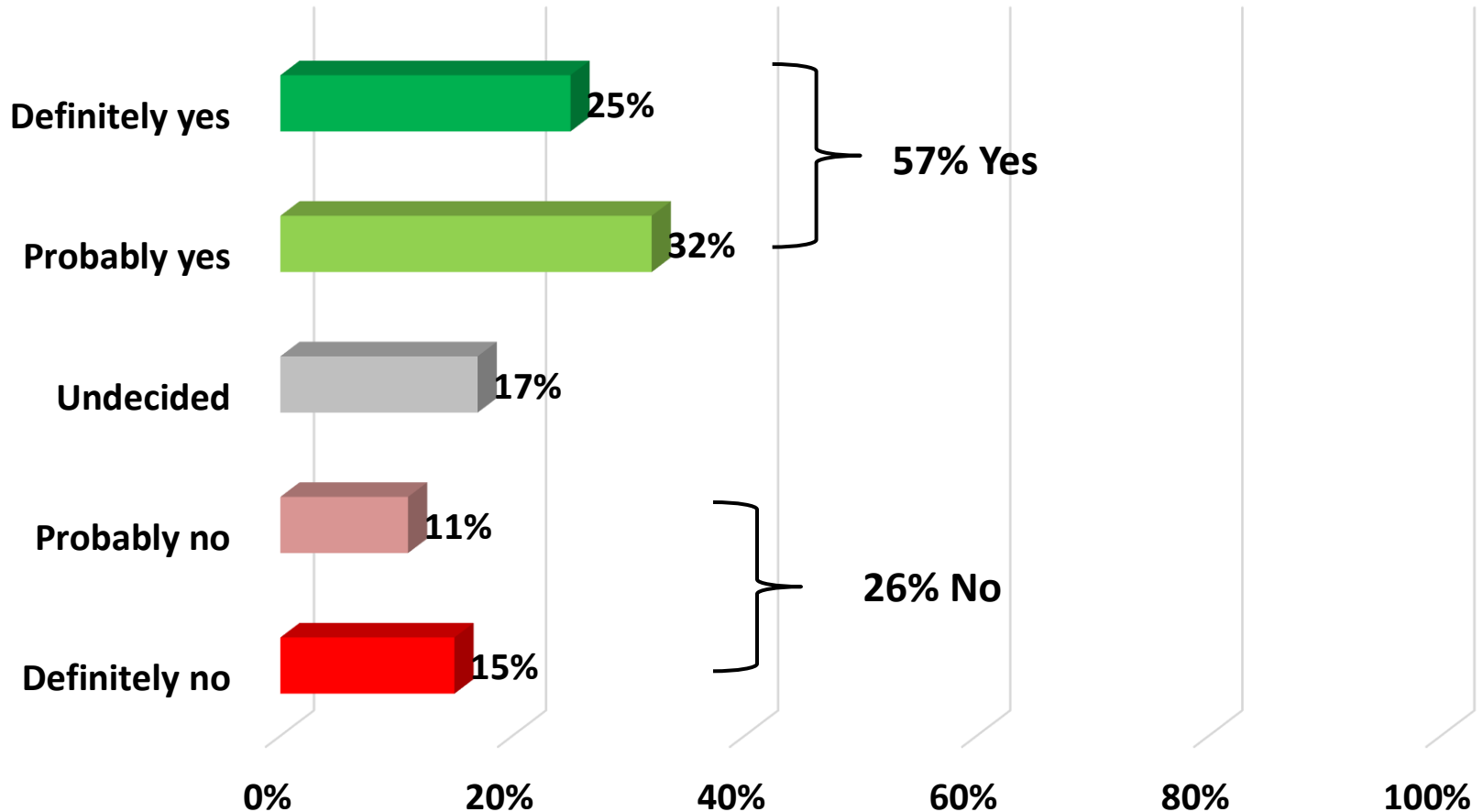
- ✓ Because of careful financial planning, the District can fund the full project without increasing taxes over the current level.
- ✓ Interest rates remain near historic lows.
- ✓ Our facility needs are not going away, and costs will likely increase as time goes on.
- ✓ The District is applying for a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant to construct a storm shelter. If received, the grant would pay for more than 50% of the gym.



Would you support a \$21 million referendum to fund the recommended plan described on page 5 of the survey?

Representing no tax increase over the current level, assuming multi-phased borrowing with interest rates between 3.75-4.00 percent.

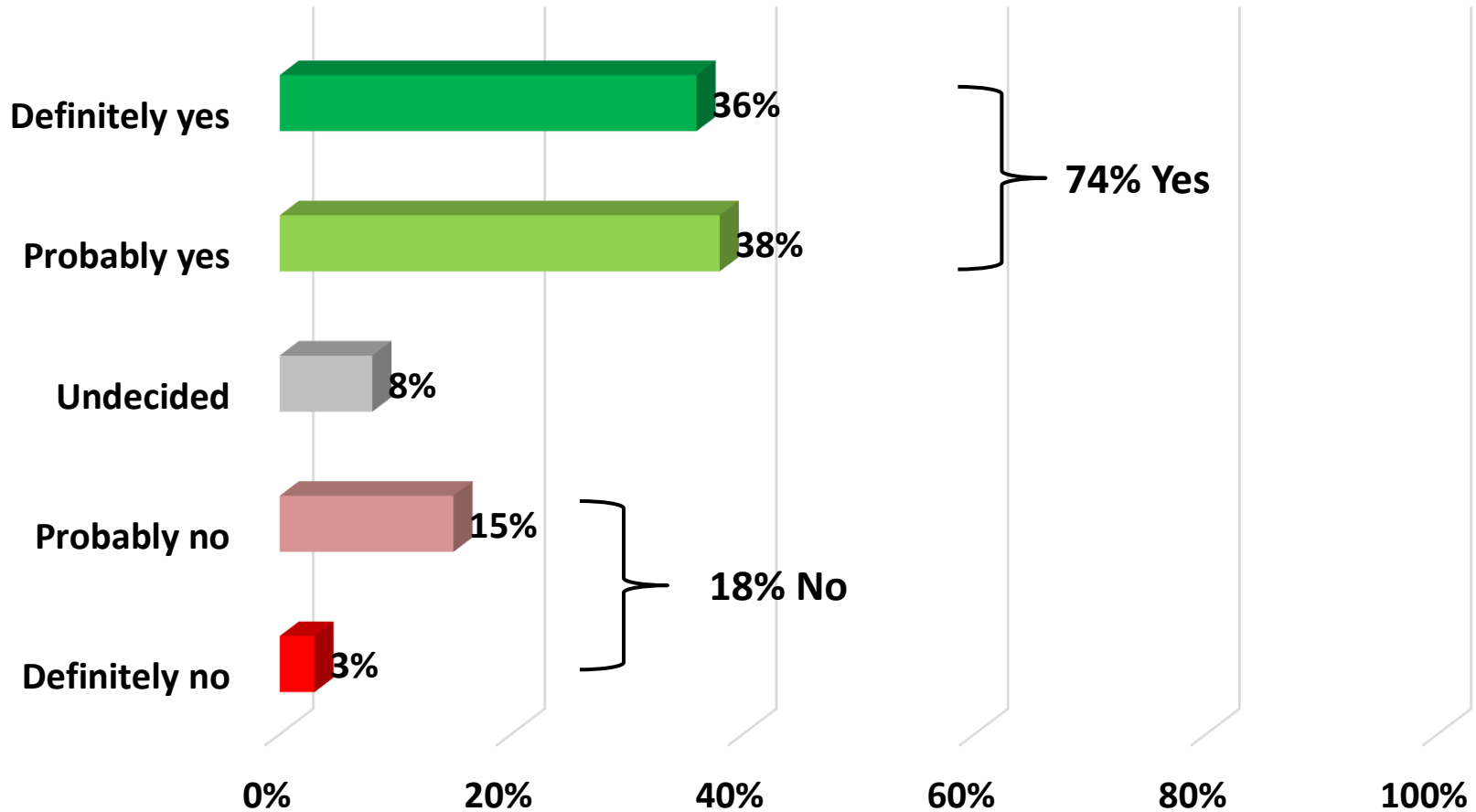
All Residents



Would you support a \$21 million referendum to fund the recommended plan described on page 5 of the survey?

Representing no tax increase over the current level, assuming multi-phased borrowing with interest rates between 3.75-4.00 percent.

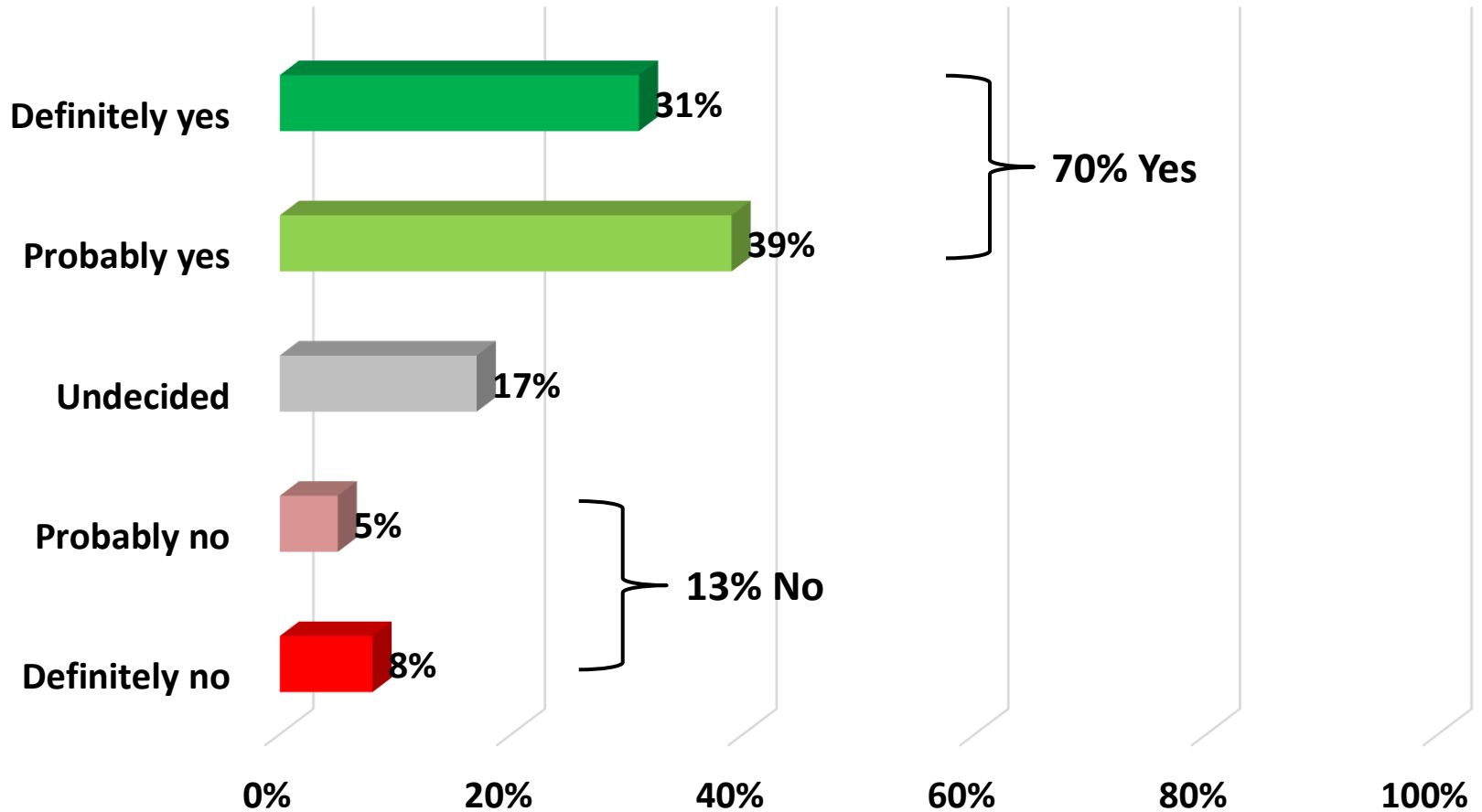
Staff Residents



Would you support a \$21 million referendum to fund the recommended plan described on page 5 of the survey?

Representing no tax increase over the current level, assuming multi-phased borrowing with interest rates between 3.75-4.00 percent.

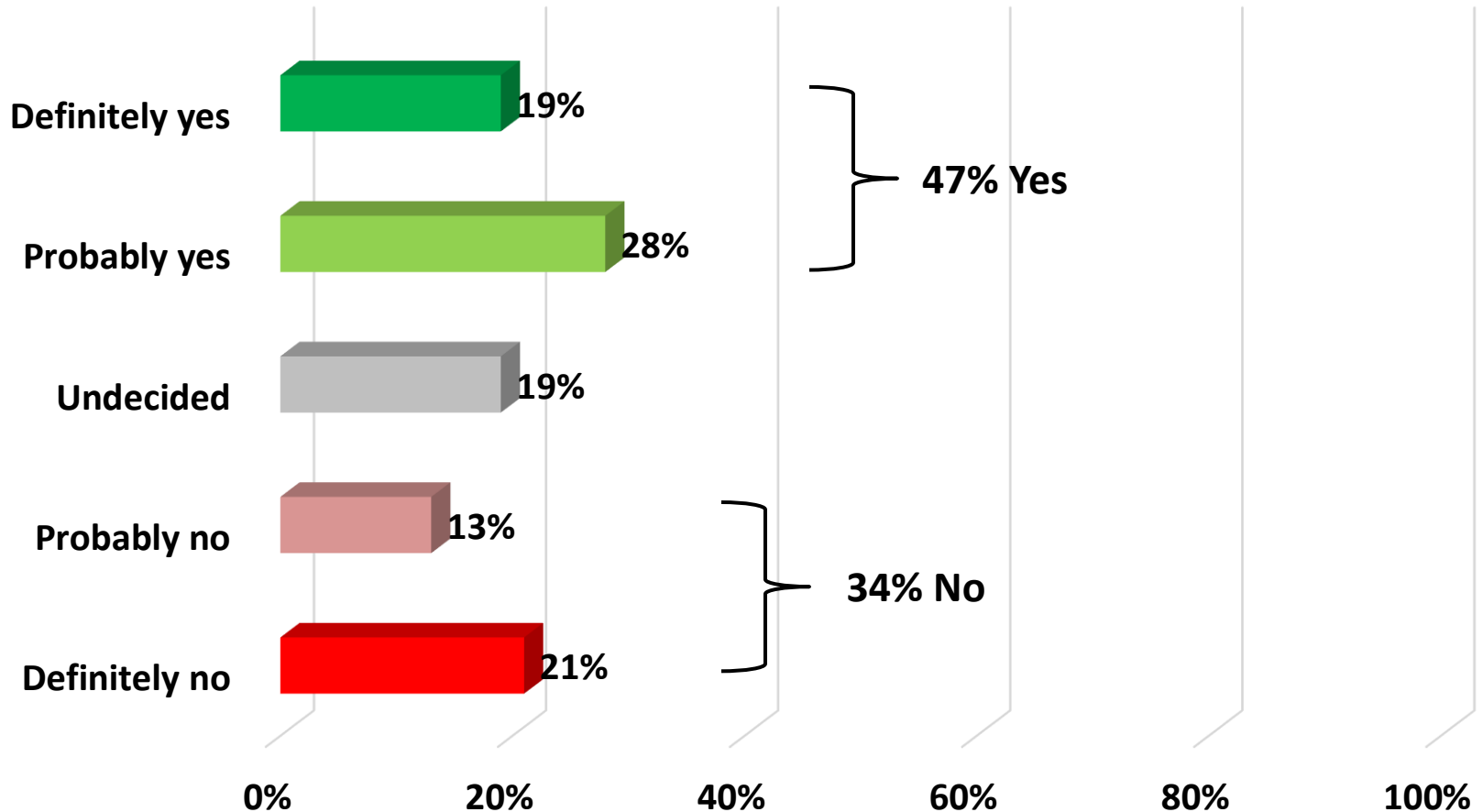
Parent Residents (Non-Staff)



Would you support a \$21 million referendum to fund the recommended plan described on page 5 of the survey?

Representing no tax increase over the current level, assuming multi-phased borrowing with interest rates between 3.75-4.00 percent.

Non-Parent Residents (Non-Staff)

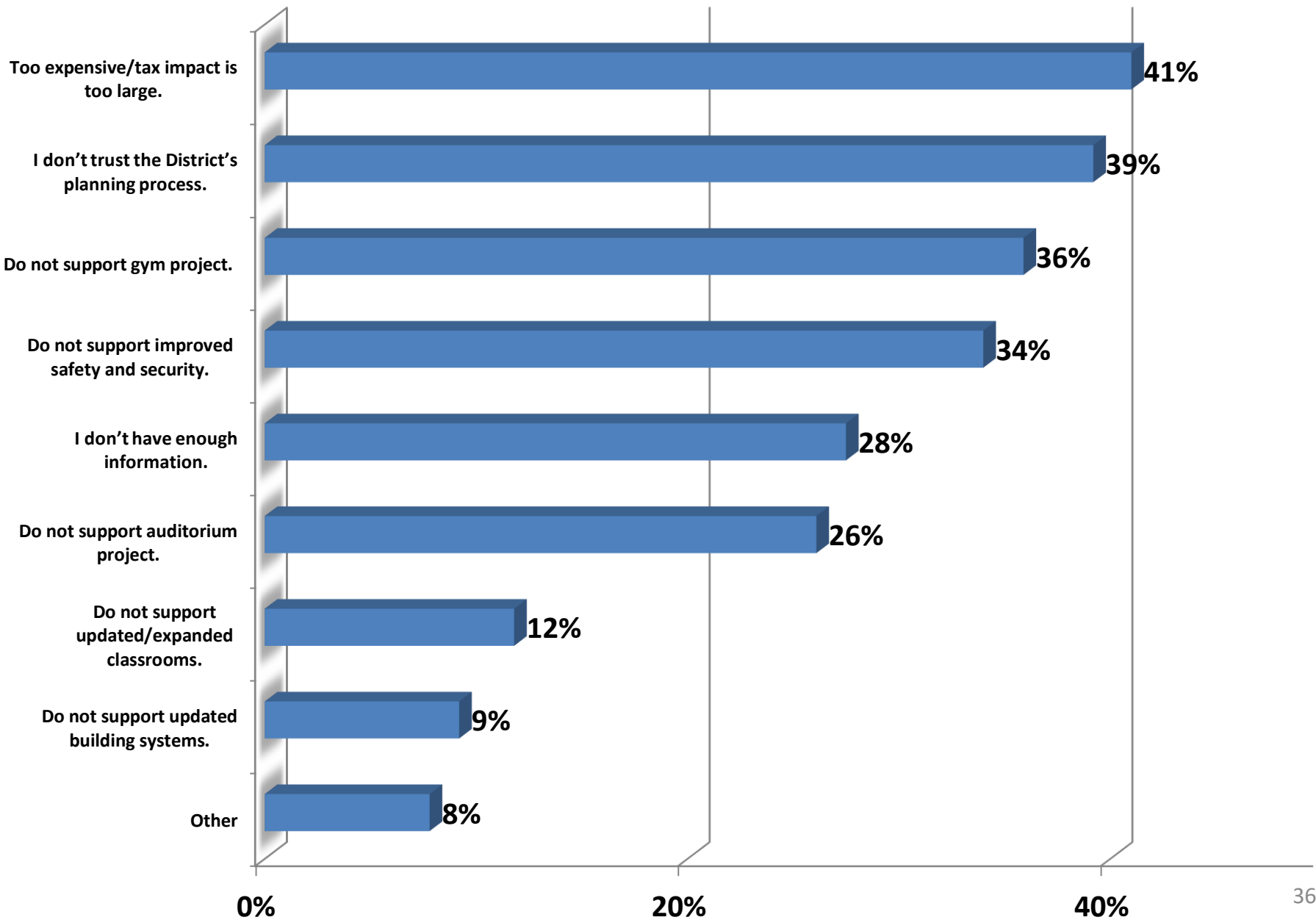


Would the recommended plan be supported?

Resident population assumptions:

- Non-parent/non-staff = 75%
 - Parents = 25%
 - Staff = ~1%
-
- Of those responding “Definitely yes” or “Probably Yes”
 - $0.75 (47\%) + 0.25 (70\%) = \underline{\underline{52.8\%}}$

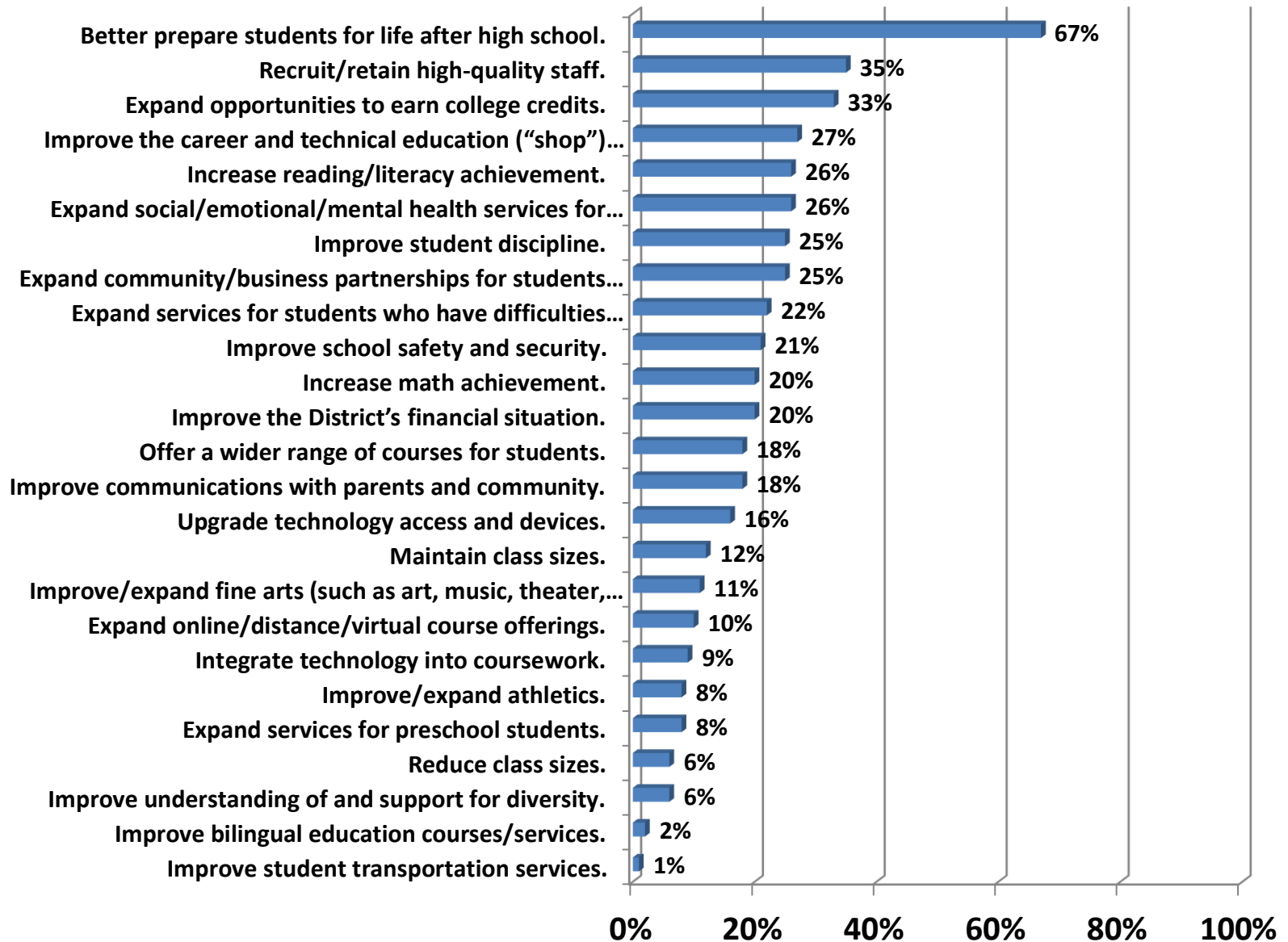
If you chose “Probably no” or “Definitely no,” why? *(Please select all that apply.)*



Future Planning



Please choose up to five areas that you believe we should focus our planning efforts.

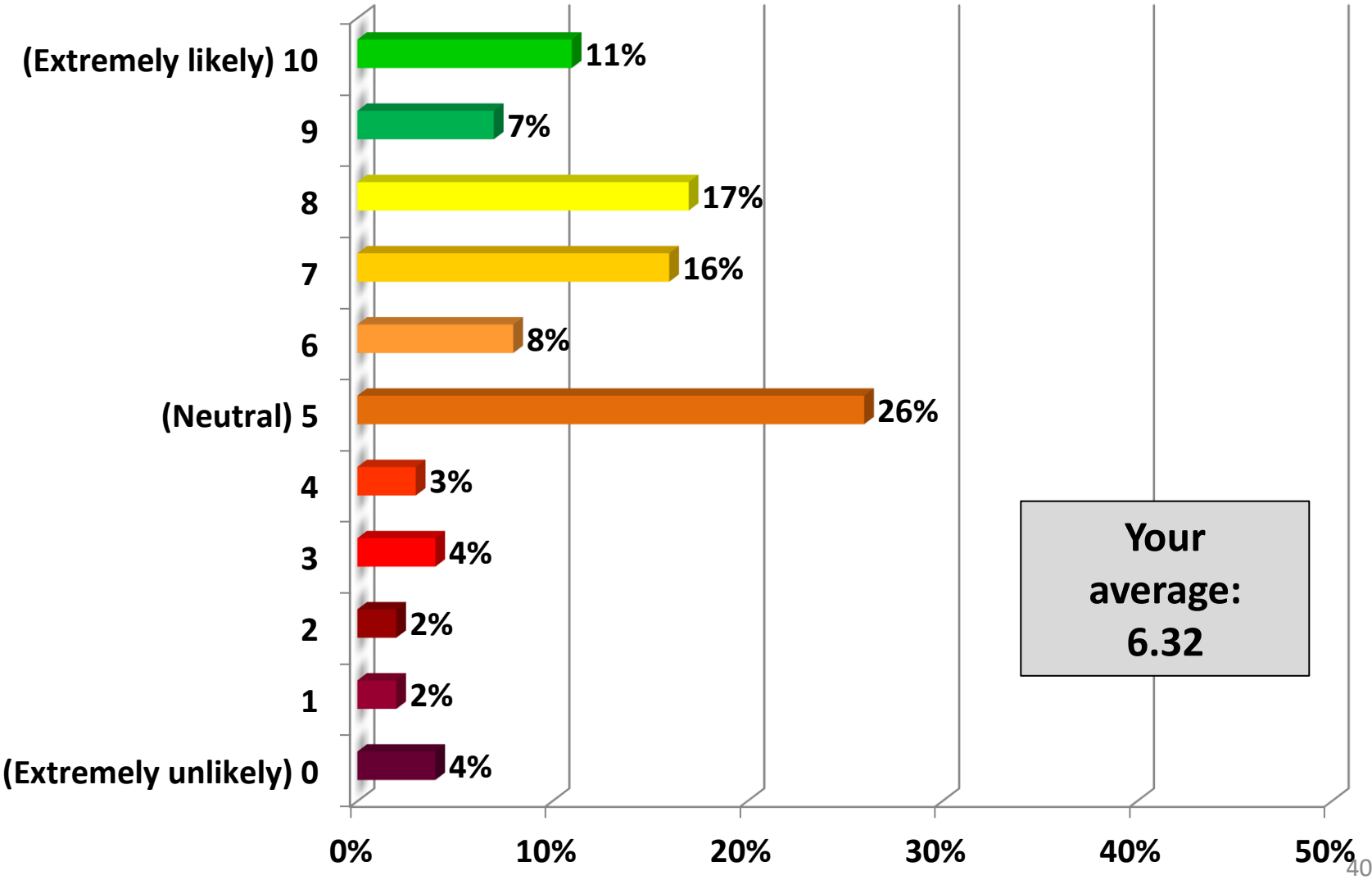


Overall Satisfaction



On a scale of 0–10, how likely would you be to recommend the District to a friend or family member?

(All Respondents)



In Review



What did we learn?

- A majority of all key subgroups support the proposed operational referendum (\$600,000/year).
- If held today, the outcome of a capital referendum for the recommended plan would be very close, but respondents lean toward support.
 - Respondents expressed concerns regarding the project's cost.
 - Respondents want more information before deciding.
- For future planning, the District should focus on:
 - Prepping for life after HS
 - Recruiting/retaining high-quality staff
 - Earning college credits while in school

Thank you!



Parent Surveys - Staff Surveys - Student Surveys - Community Surveys
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