
Eau Claire Area School District

2024 Community Survey
Summary of Results

The Morris Leatherman Company





INTRODUCTION

Survey outline

- Survey included interviews with 400 registered voters in the Eau Claire Area School District.
- Interviews were completed between April 2nd and April 16th.
- Survey included 35 questions; average interview length was 10 minutes.
- Approximate margin of error is $\pm 4.9\%$.



INTRODUCTION

Who we called

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

Who we called *(cont.)*

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

Survey structure

- This survey focused on a potential funding increase above the District's revenue cap.
- We measured initial support for the idea of a tax increase, then measured reactions to a variety of potential impacts to school programs and staffing.
- Participants were asked for their opinion again after hearing details on how the additional funding would be used.



FUNDING INCREASE

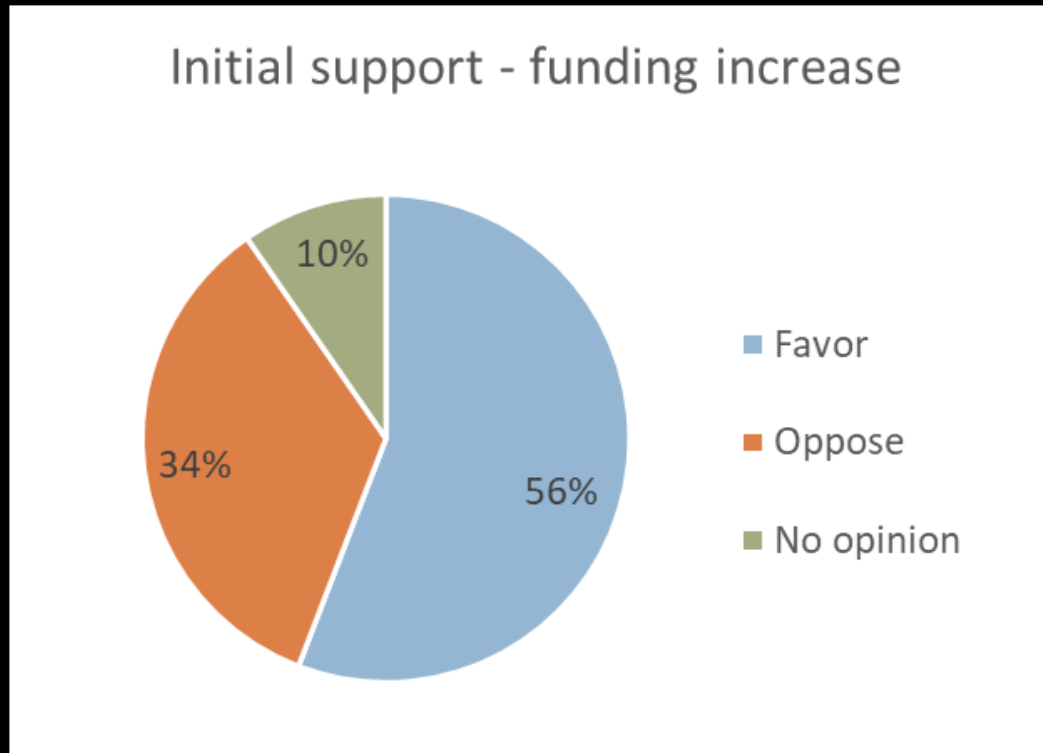
Funding increase – initial support

“The Eau Claire Area School District is considering putting a referendum before voters asking to raise up to \$20 million per year for up to 5 years. The additional funding will be invested in high-priority programs to improve academic performance of students and to attract, retain, and train high-quality teachers and staff.

Based on what you know today, would you support or oppose such a proposal?”

FUNDING INCREASE

Initial support





FUNDING INCREASE

Effect of information

- Participants were asked to react to 20 specific impacts to school programs and staffing if funding were approved.
- Items were presented in random order to minimize any bias due to their position on the list.



FUNDING INCREASE

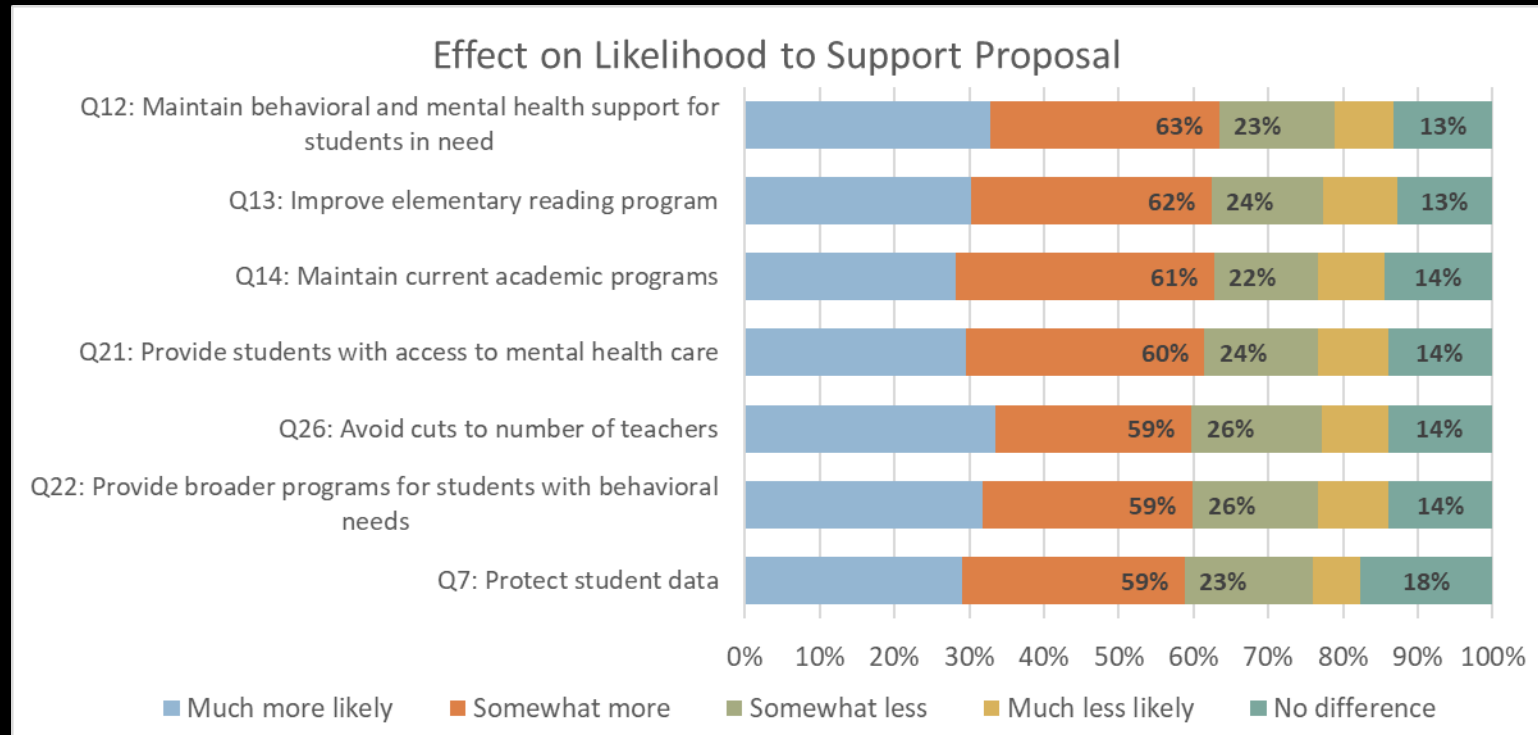
Effect of information

“I am going to read some statements about the ways in which the Eau Claire Area School District could use its referendum funding.

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

FUNDING INCREASE

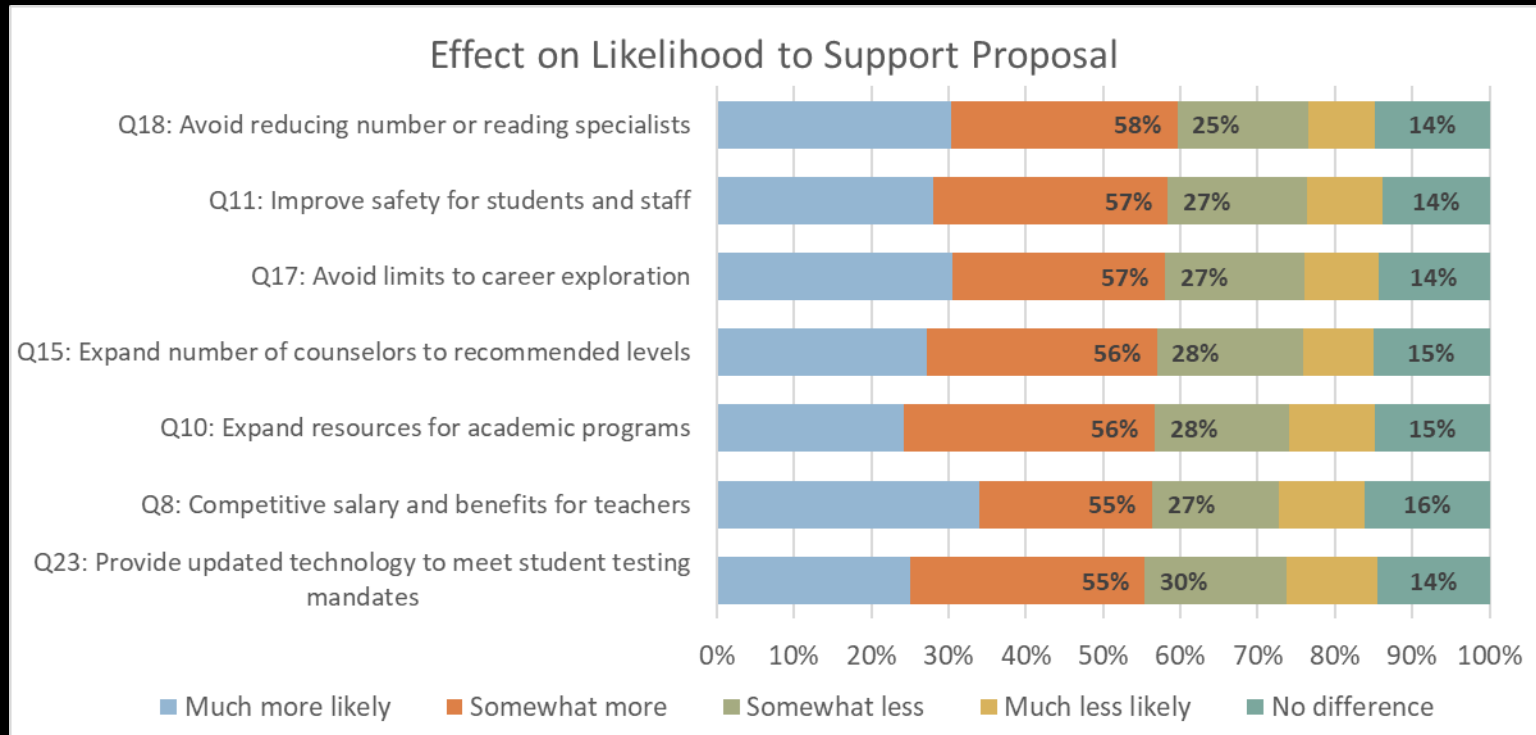
Reaction to impacts



Labels show combined % for more/much more, less/much less, and no difference. Numbers may not add to 100%, as up to 3% of respondents expressed no opinion on various elements.

FUNDING INCREASE

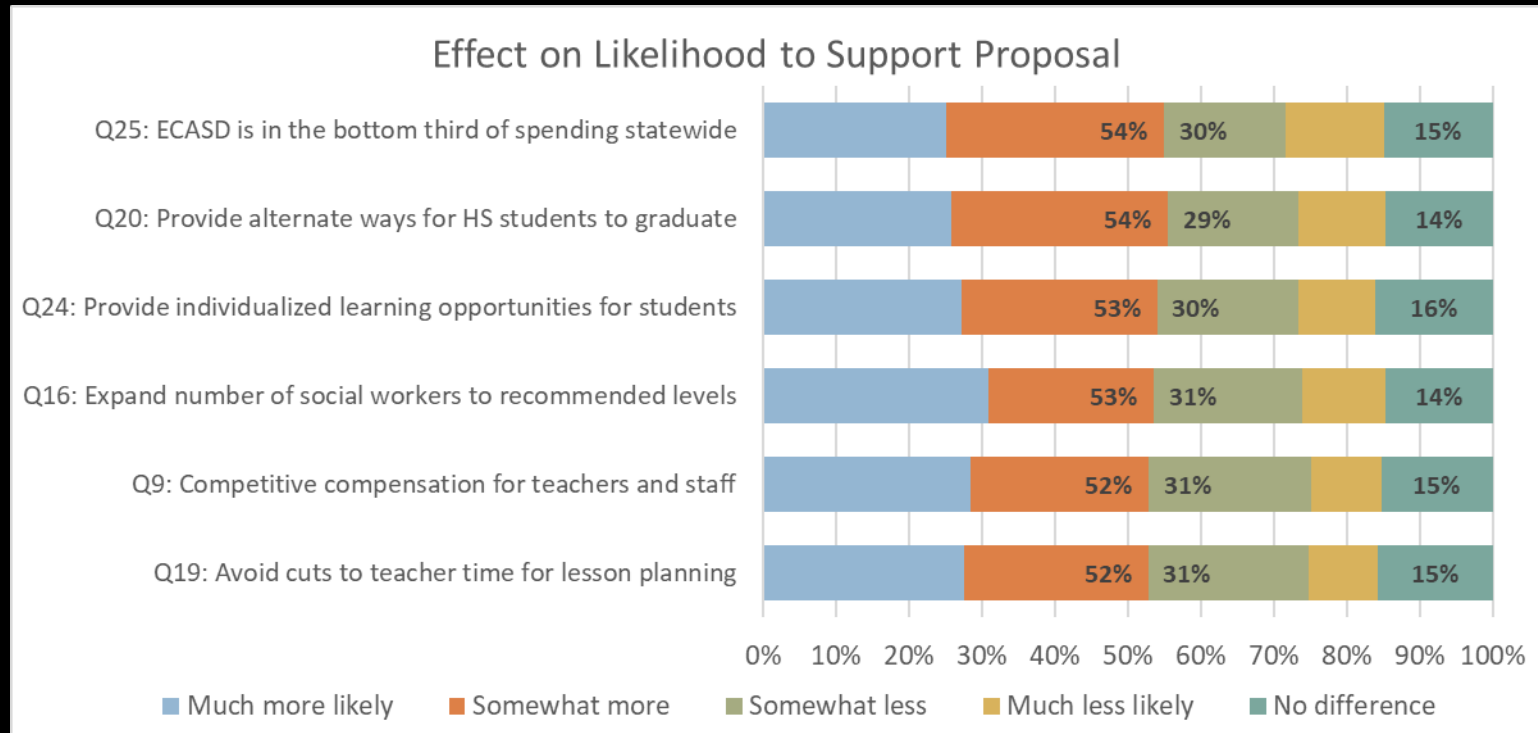
Reaction to impacts (cont.)



Labels show combined % for more/much more, less/much less, and no difference. Numbers may not add to 100%, as up to 3% of respondents expressed no opinion on various elements.

FUNDING INCREASE

Reaction to impacts (cont.)



Labels show combined % for more/much more, less/much less, and no difference. Numbers may not add to 100%, as up to 3% of respondents expressed no opinion on various elements.



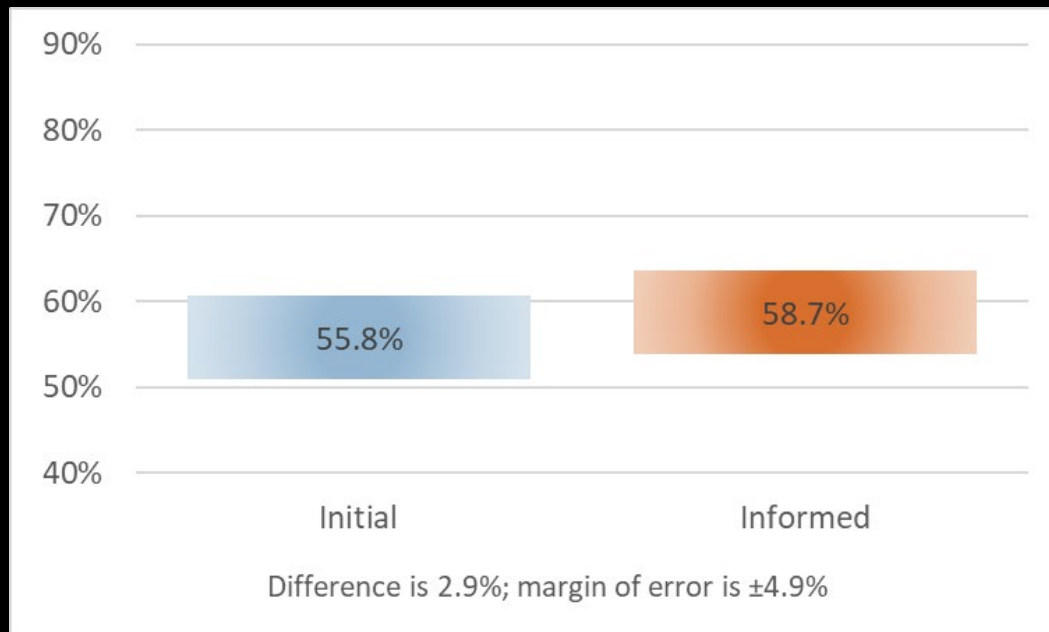
FUNDING INCREASE

Funding increase – informed support

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

FUNDING INCREASE

Comparison – initial and informed



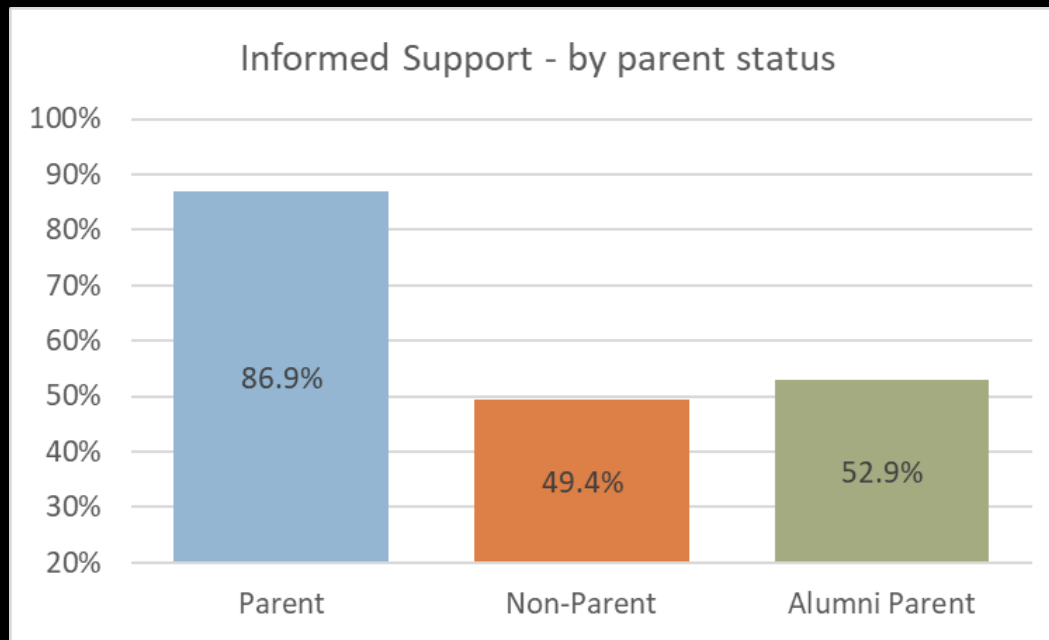
Difference is not statistically significant.

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.

FUNDING INCREASE

Demographic differences *(cont.)*

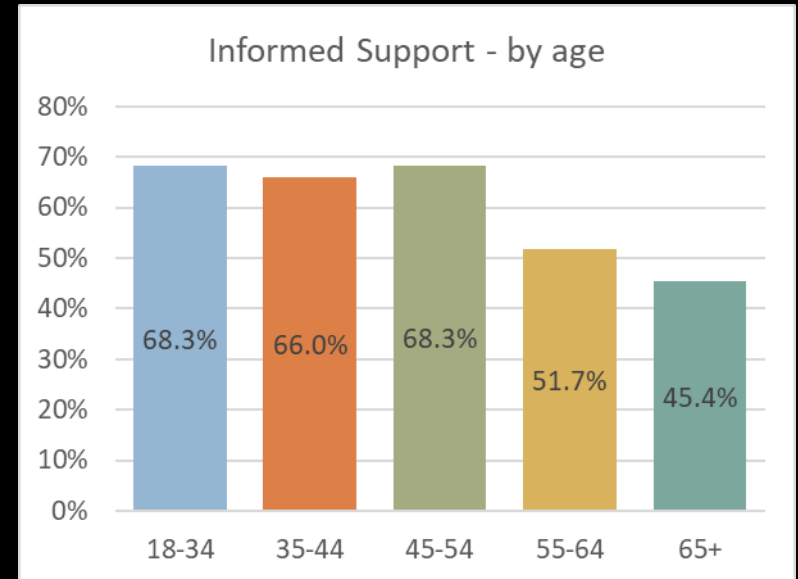
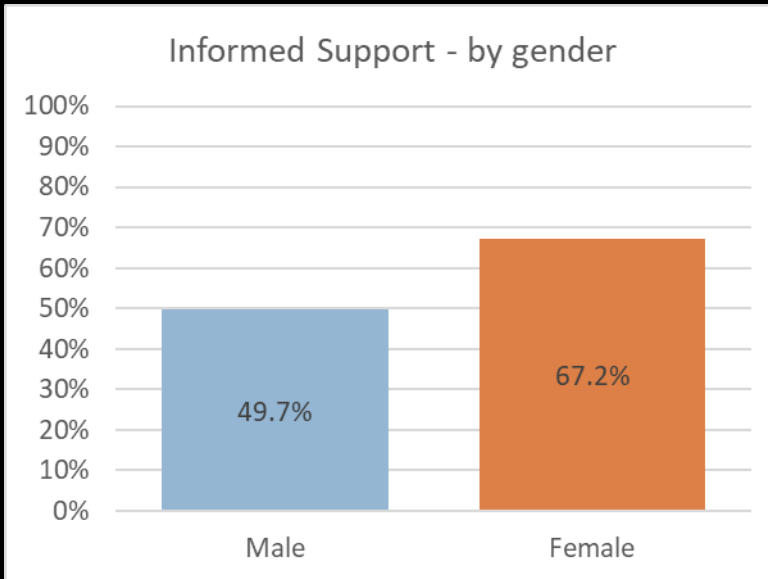


* "Parent" includes respondents with children attending ECASD schools.

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

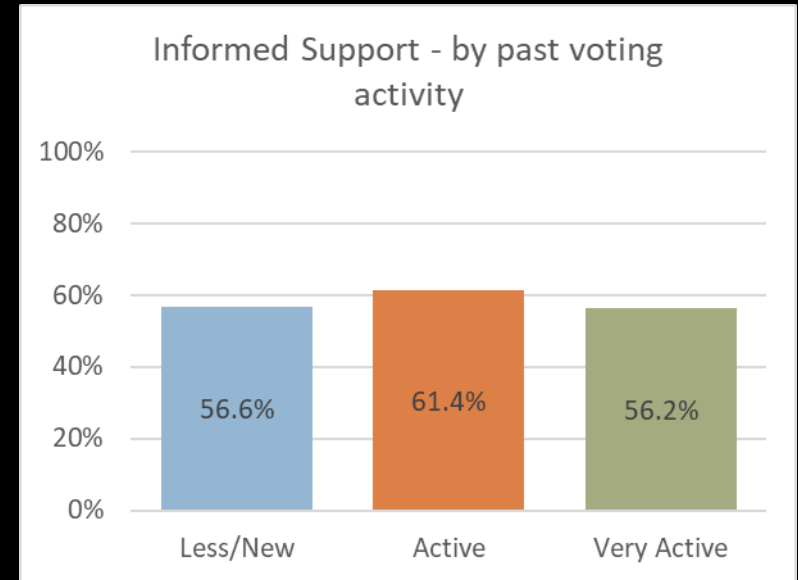
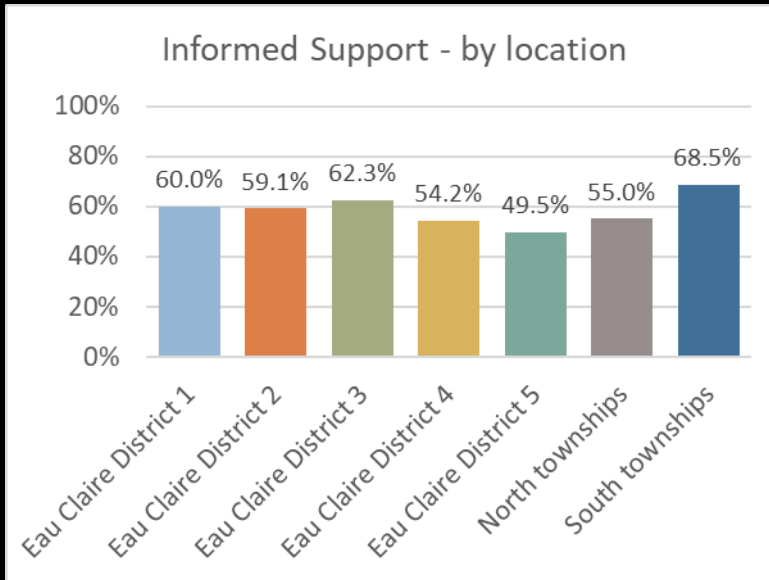
FUNDING INCREASE

Demographic differences *(cont.)*



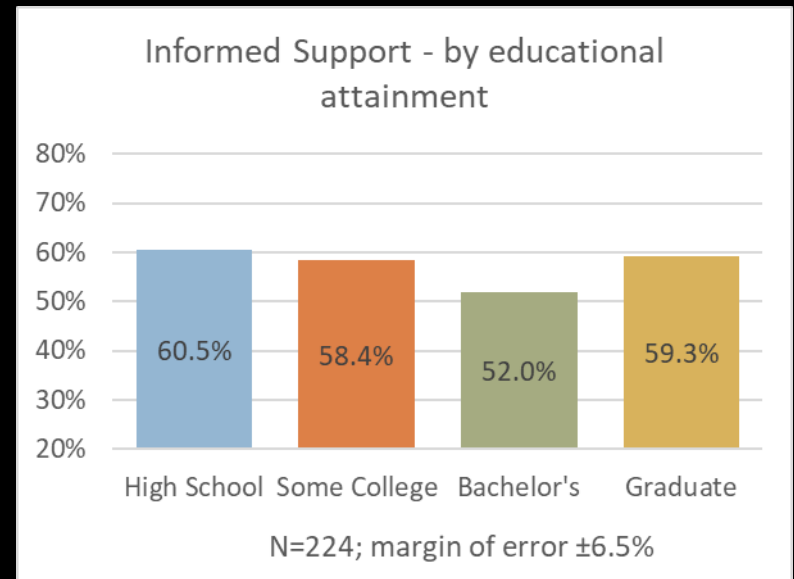
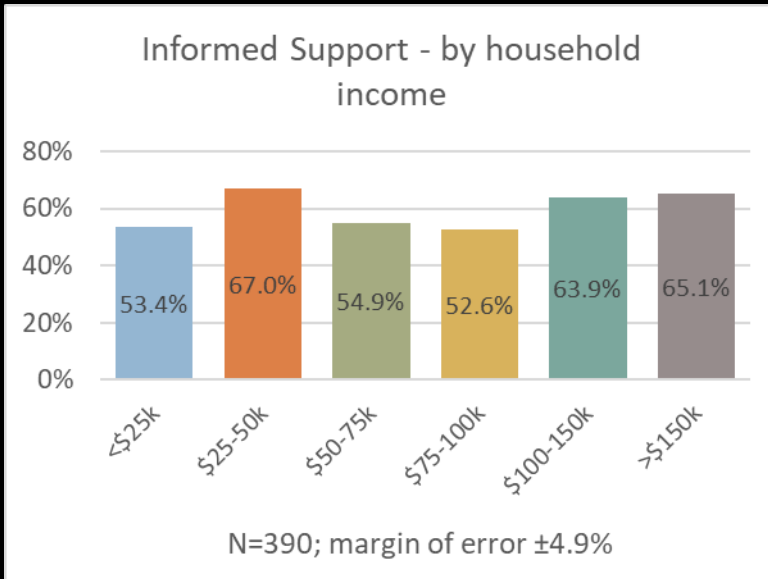
FUNDING INCREASE

Demographic differences *(cont.)*



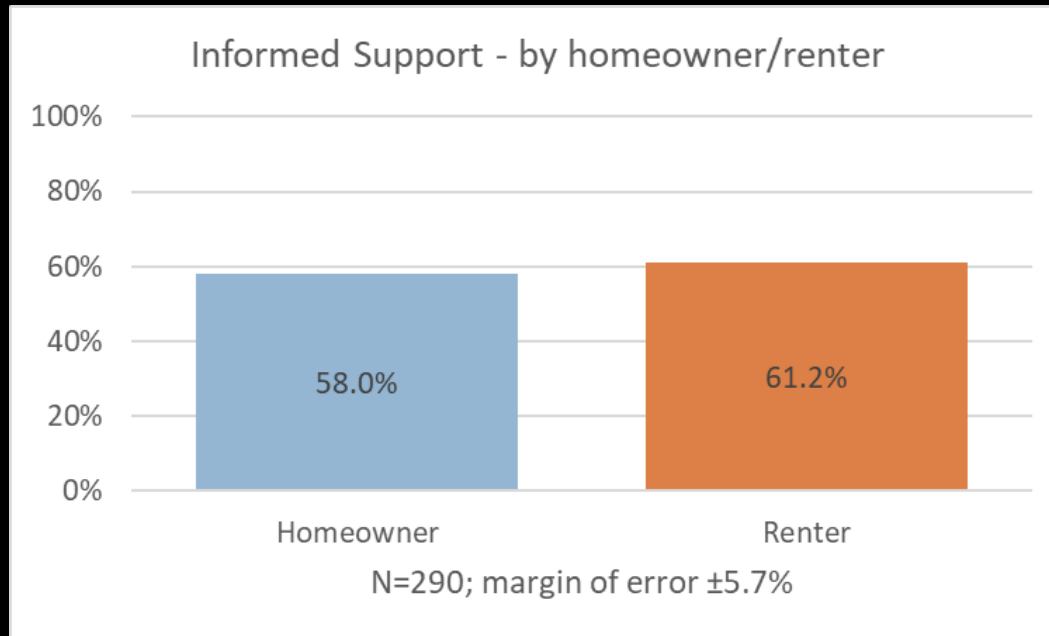
FUNDING INCREASE

Demographic differences *(cont.)*



FUNDING INCREASE

Demographic differences *(cont.)*



Impact of cost information

“I am going to ask you some questions about the potential costs for increasing the funds for these programs. Each question presents you with both the monthly and annual costs for a home worth about \$200,000.

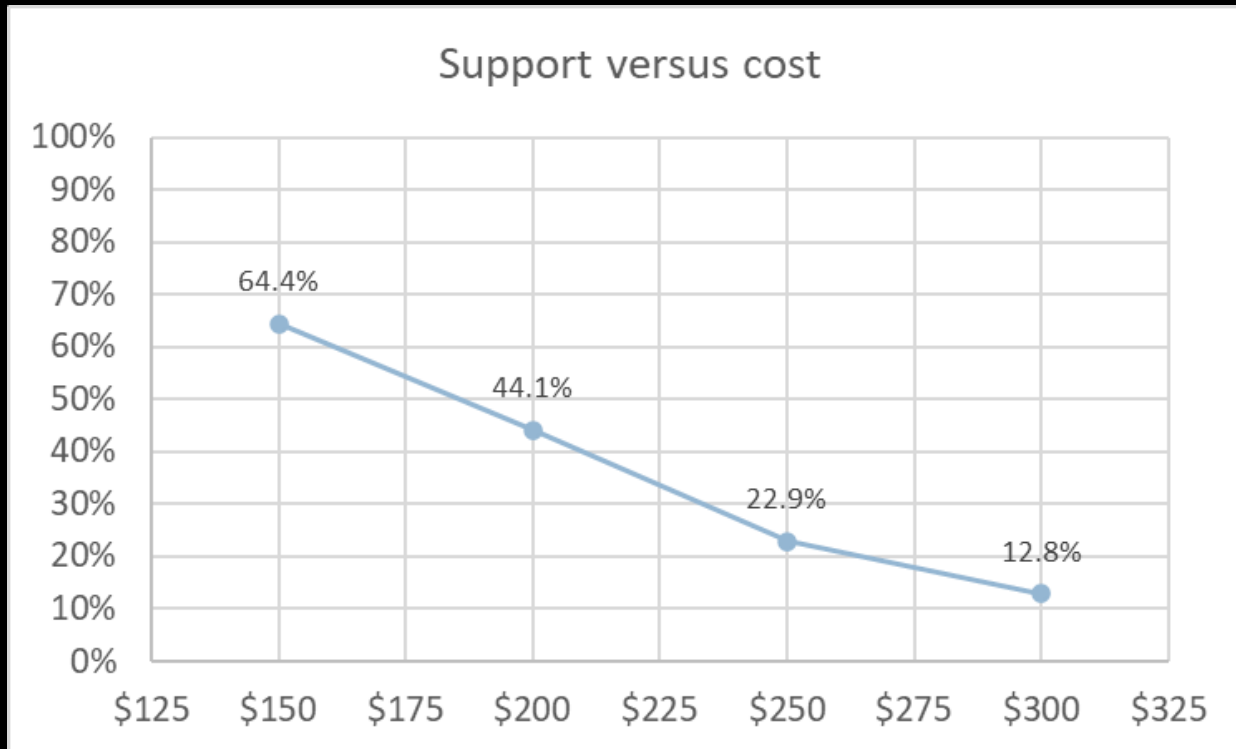
For each one, please tell me if knowing the cost of the proposal would make you support or oppose such a proposal.”

Impact of cost information *(cont.)*

- Participants were asked about four potential property tax increases to fund programs: \$150, \$200, \$250 and \$300 per year on an average home valued at \$200,000.
- Dollar amounts were presented in terms of both monthly and annual impacts.
- To preclude responses given in anticipation of higher or lower options, impacts were presented in random order.

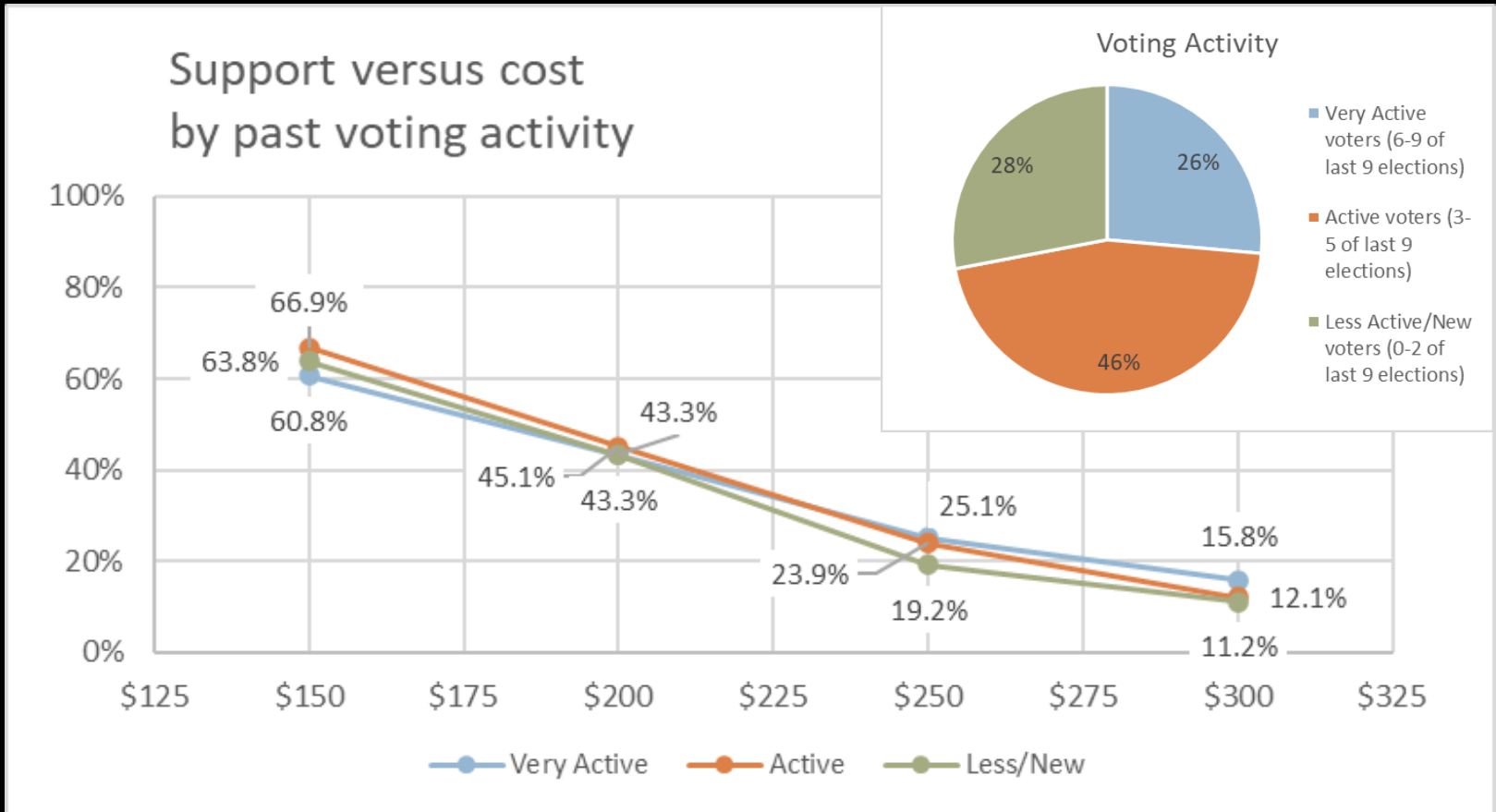
TAX IMPACTS

Impact of cost information *(cont.)*



Potential tax impacts tested were \$150, \$200, \$250 and \$300 per year.

Impact of cost information (cont.)



Impact of state funding

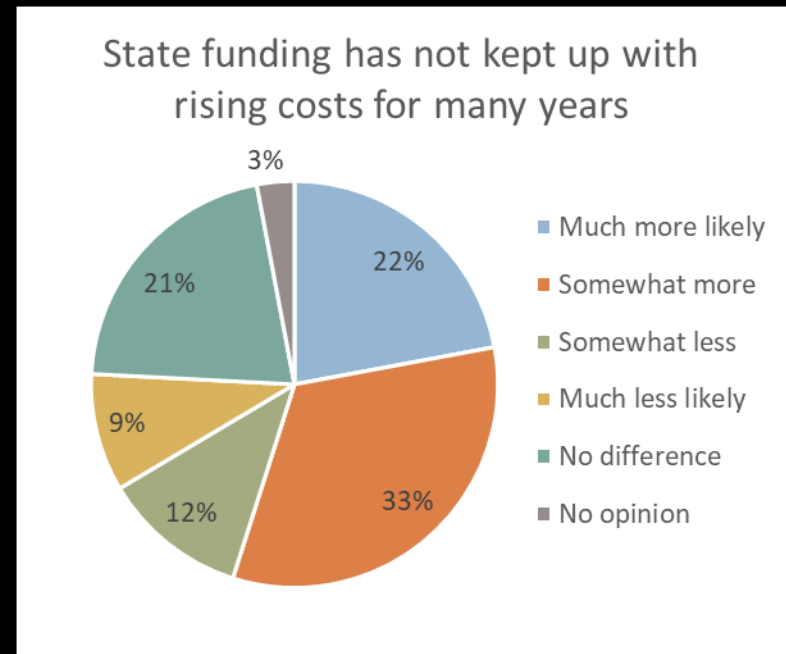
“Please tell me whether the information in this statement would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to support an increase in the tax levy:

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

TAX IMPACTS

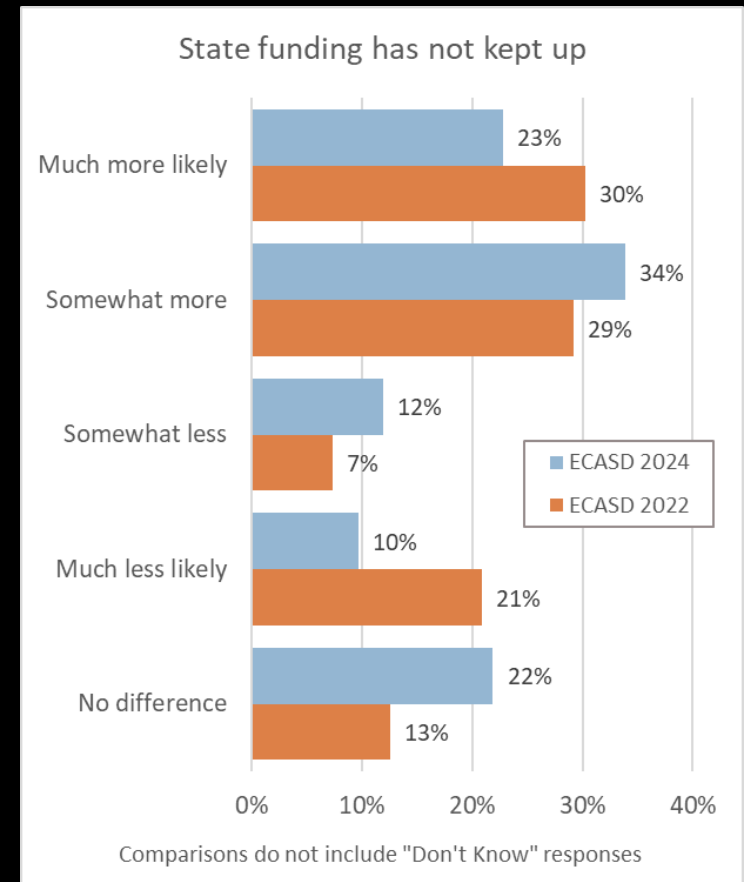
Impact of state funding *(cont.)*

- 55% of participants were more likely to support an increase in the tax levy.
- 21% were less likely to support.
- 24% were indifferent or had no response to offer.



Impact of state funding *(cont.)*

- Opinions are not as strong as what was shown in 2022 survey.
 - Fewer respondents said they were “much” more or less likely to support.
 - Many more felt indifferent to the statement about state funding.





Grading the district

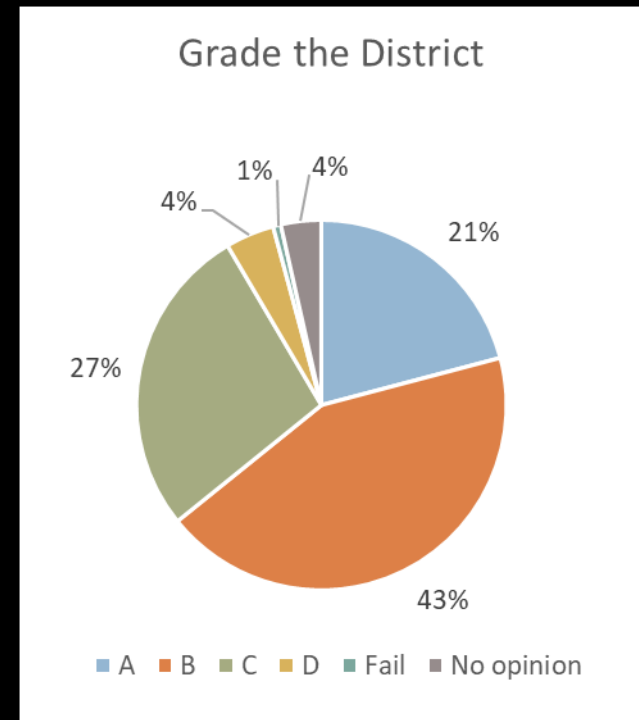
“Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the Eau Claire Area Public Schools were graded in the same way.

What grade would you give to the Eau Claire Area Public Schools?”

GRADING THE DISTRICT

Grading the district *(cont.)*

- 64% of participants gave the district a grade of A or B.
- 5% gave grades of D or Fail.
- 4% had no response to offer.

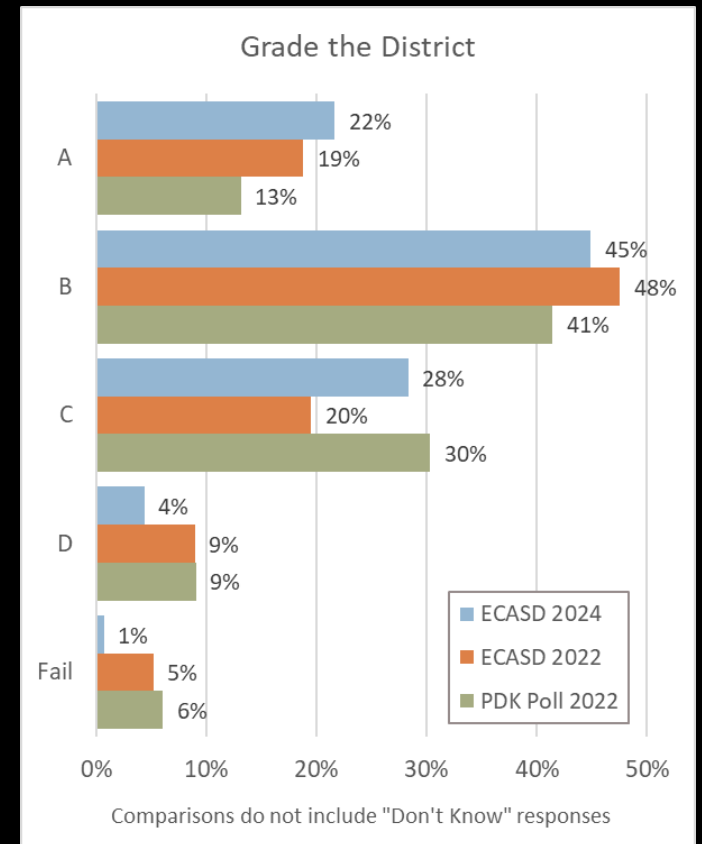


Benchmark comparisons

- For comparisons, we look at the grades given by the community this year and those from previous surveys and a national benchmark.
- National benchmark is the *PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, conducted in 2022.
- Previous ECASD survey was completed in June of 2022.
- For purposes of comparison between surveys, we do not include “I Don’t Know” responses.

Benchmark comparisons *(cont.)*

- Grades were better than national benchmark.
 - Higher proportion of A grades given to Eau Claire; fewer D and Fail grades.
- Fewer D and Fail grades in 2024 compared to the previous survey in 2022.

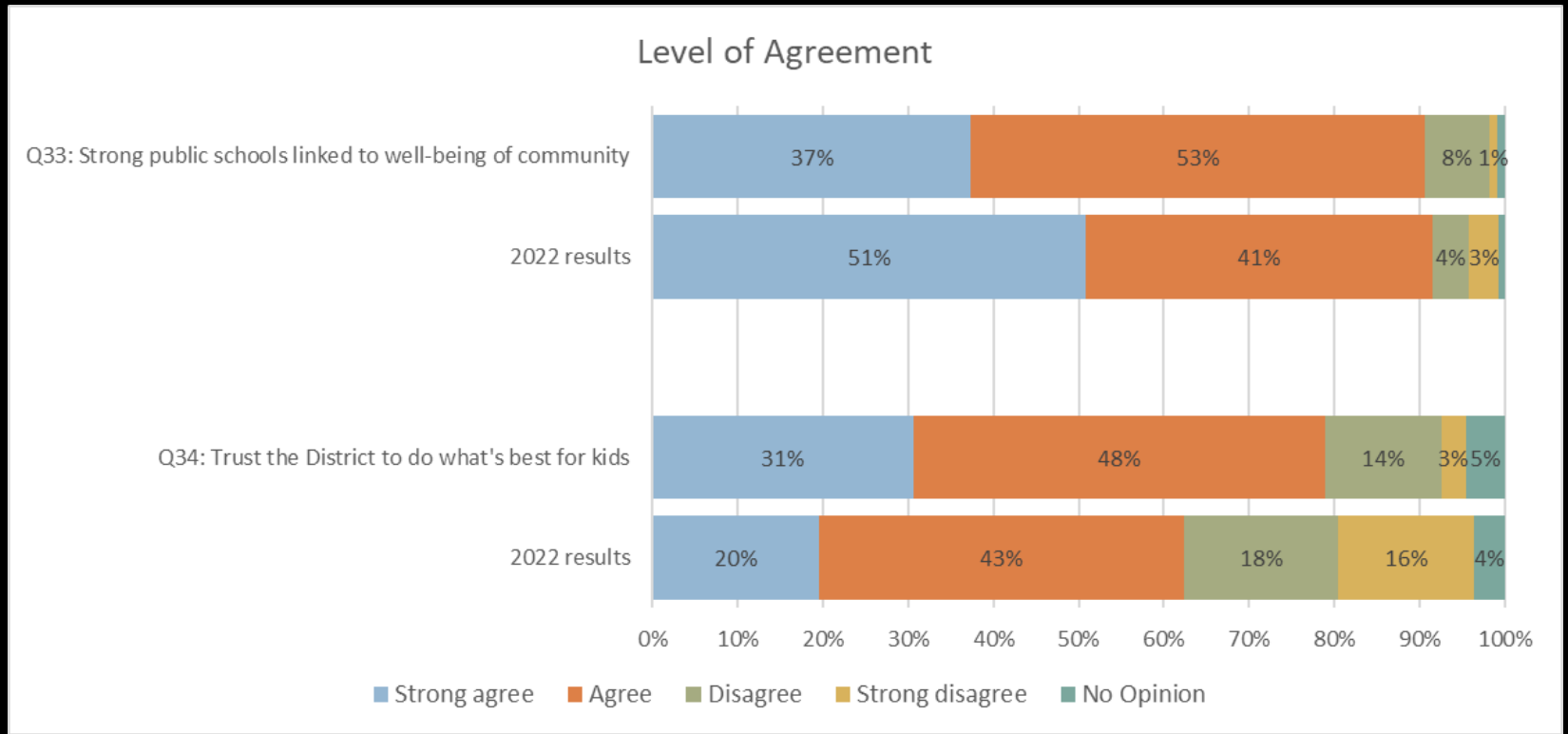


Community perceptions of the school district

- Late in the survey, participants were asked to react to two statements about the school district:
 - Strong public schools are directly linked to the well-being of our community.
 - I trust the Eau Claire School District to do what's best for kids.
- Respondents were asked for their level of agreement with each statement.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Community perceptions *(cont.)*



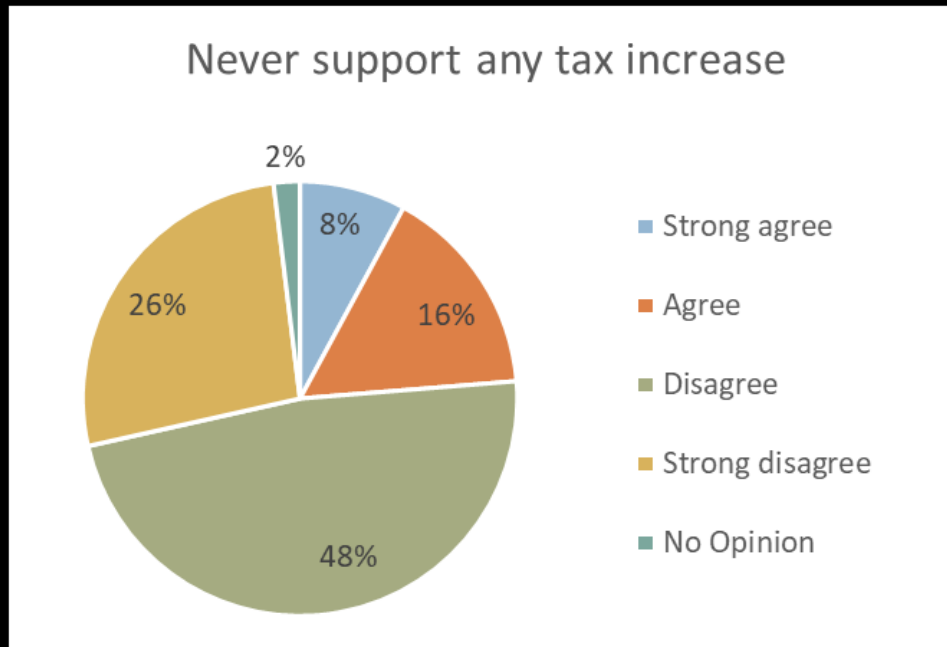
Tax aversion

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

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

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Tax aversion (cont.)

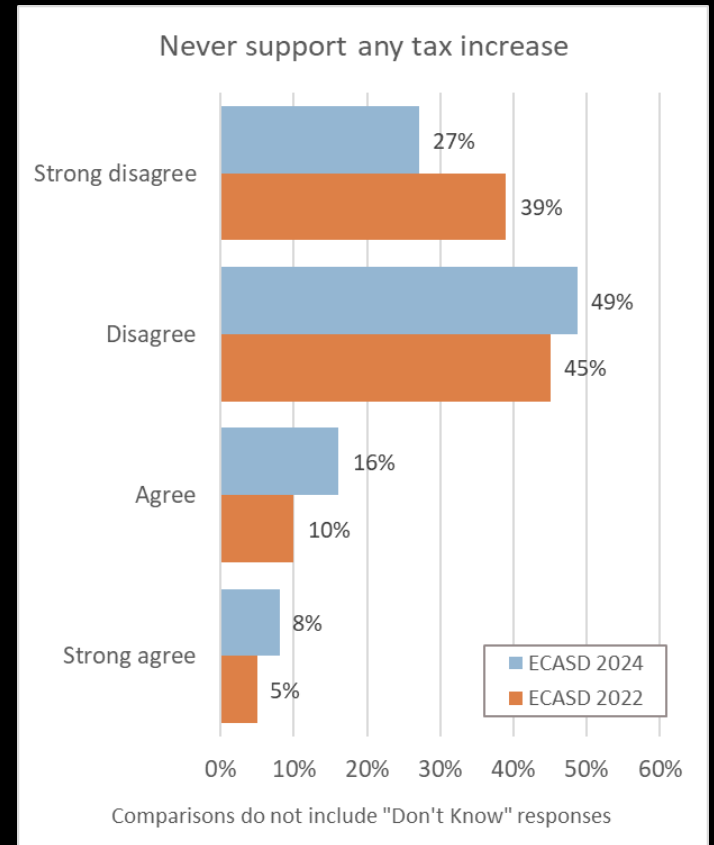


- Combined agreement of 24% is at the high end of the 15%-25% range typically seen in Wisconsin and Minnesota school districts.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Tax aversion *(cont.)*

- Tax environment has worsened since 2022 survey.
 - Agreement with anti-tax statement increased from 15% to 24%.
 - Strong disagreement fell from 39% to 27%.





SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings: funding increase

- Initial support for proposed plan was 55.8%.
- Informed support was 58.7%.
- Information about the proposal increased support by 2.9 percentage points.
 - Difference not enough to be statistically significant.



SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings: funding increase *(cont.)*

- Greatest positive impacts from mental health resources and elementary reading programs.
- Comparatively smaller positive impacts from lesson planning time and teacher & staff compensation.
- Positive impacts ranged from 52% to 63%.
- Negative impacts ranged from 22% to 31%.



SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings: demographic support

- Highest support for funding increase comes from parents, female voters, and voters under 54 years of age.
- Lowest support from voters over 65 years of age, males, and non-parent voters.



SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings: potential tax impacts

- At the time of data collection, overall support levels rise above margin of error (54.9%) at an impact of \$175 per year.
- Looking at weighted turnout of Less Active, Active and Very Active voters, support rises above margin of error at the \$170 impact level.
- Undecided voters were 2-3% at each tax impact level.



SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings: grading the district

- 64% gave A and B grades to the district; only 5% gave D or Fail grades.
- Grades were better than national benchmark and 2022 survey results.



SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings: tax climate

- 24% of participants indicated that they would not support any tax increase for any reason.
 - 2022 survey results showed tax aversion at 15%.
- Typical tax aversion levels seen in Wisconsin and Minnesota school districts range from 15% to 25%.



Thank you!

The Morris Leatherman Company

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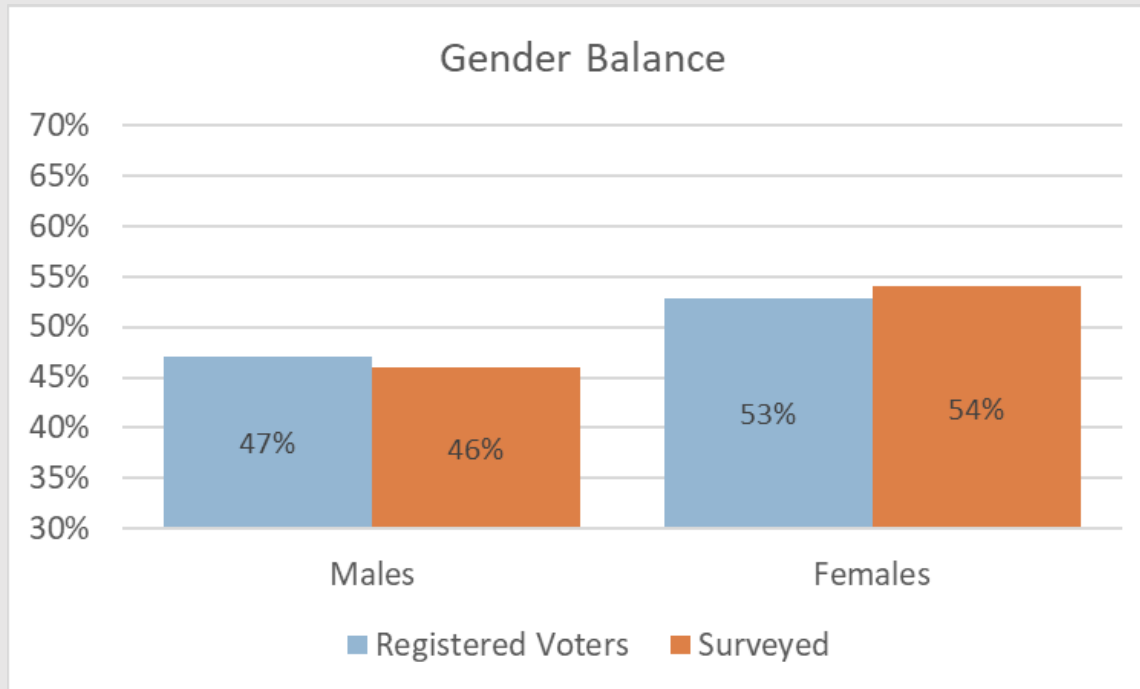


Survey demographics

- The following slides show proportions of total interviews versus targets before any sample weighting was performed.
- After re-balancing, samples were each within 1.5% of targets.

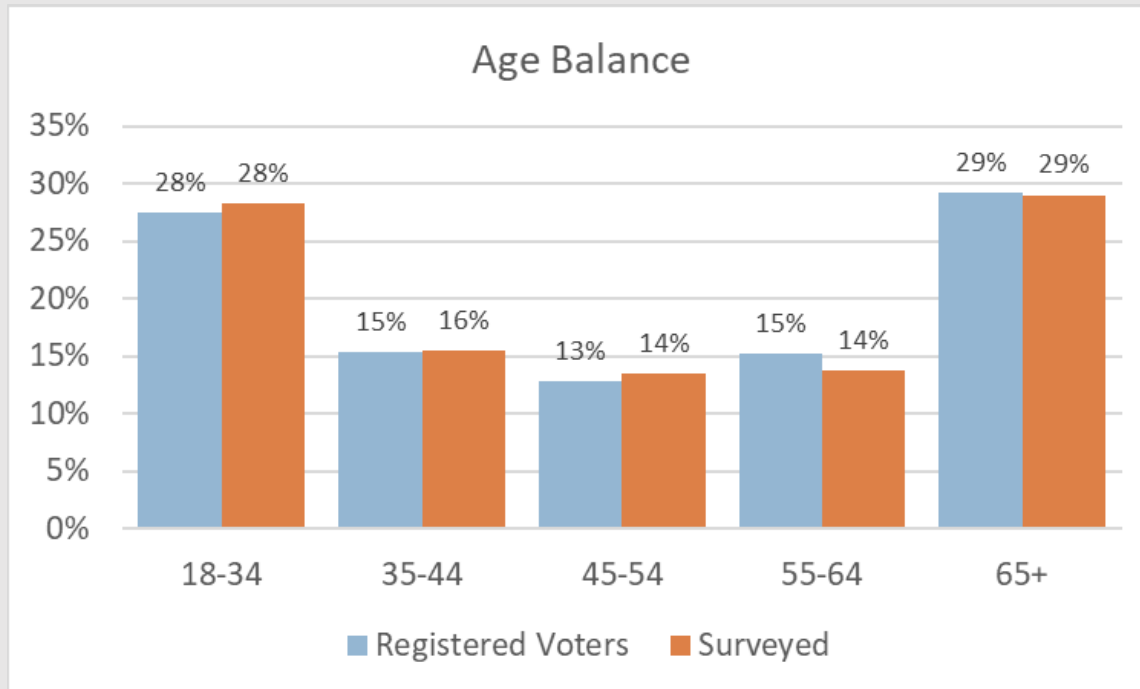
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Gender



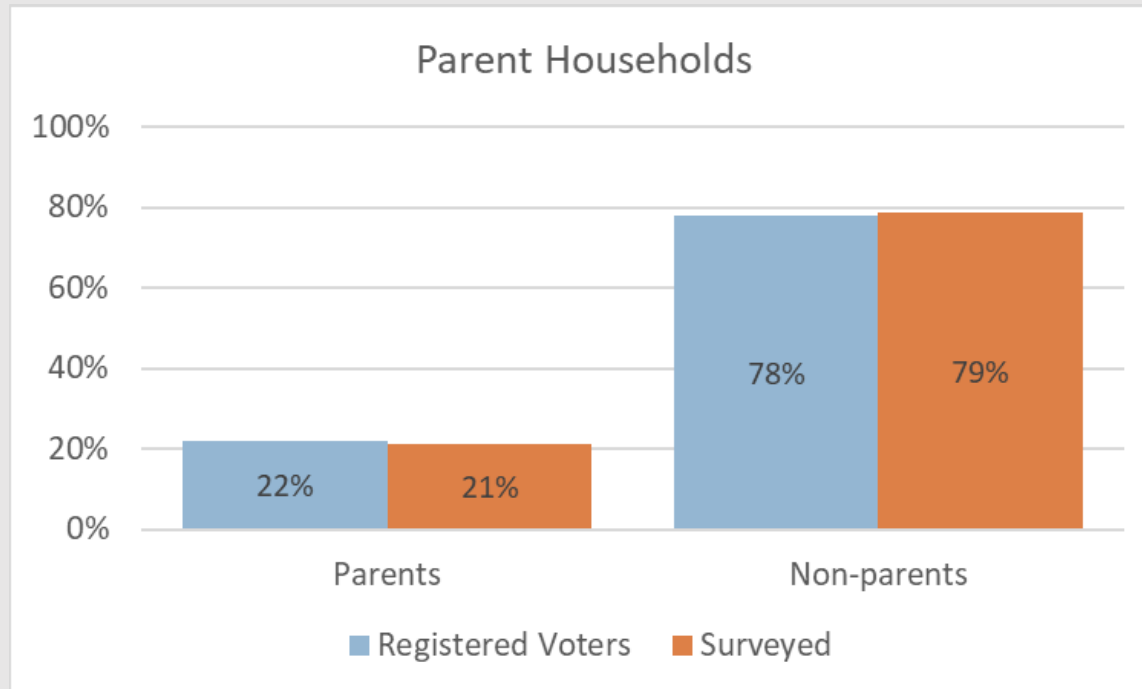
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Age



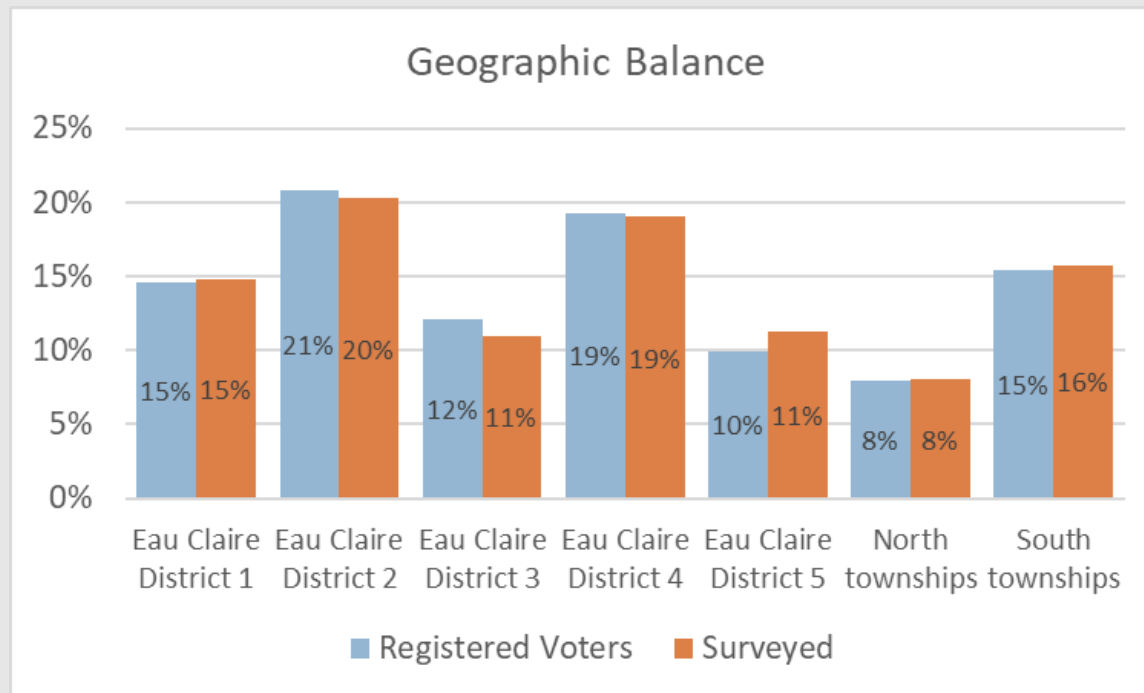
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Parent households



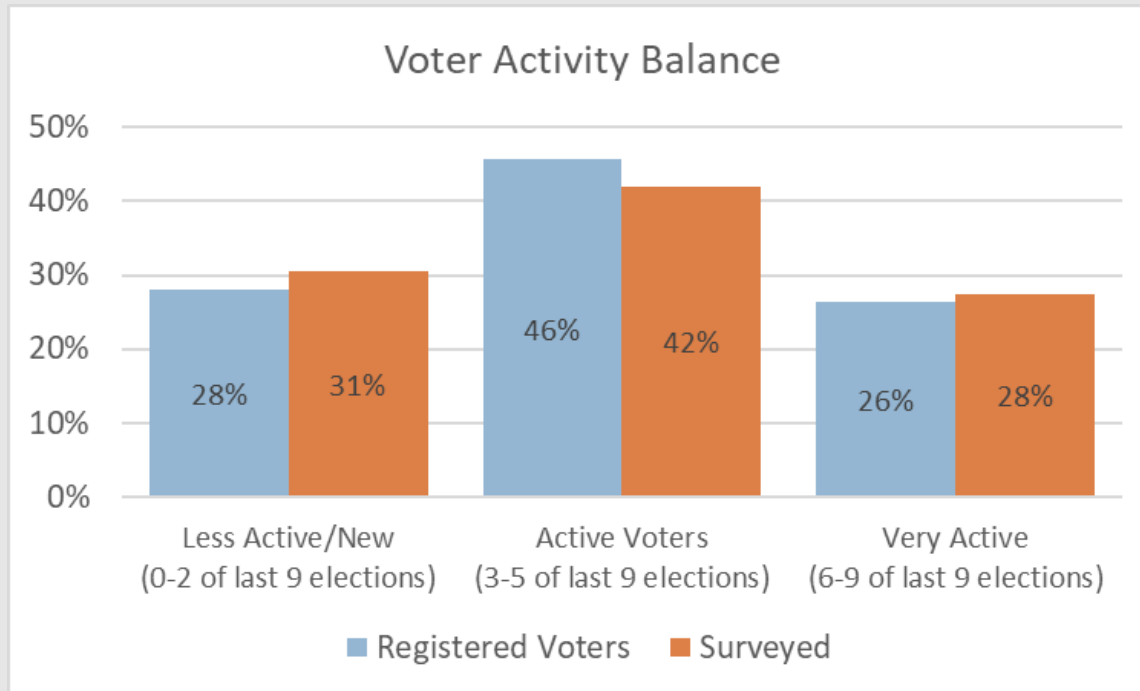
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Supplementary demographics: Location



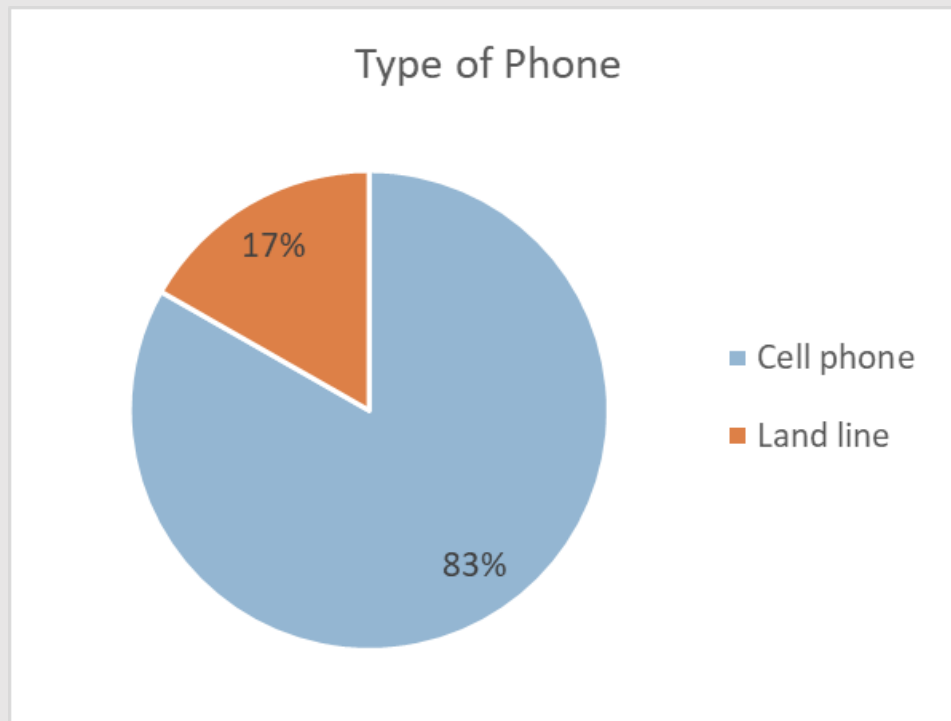
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic targets: Past voting activity



SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Supplementary demographics: Survey channel



SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Supplementary demographics: Homeowner/renter

