

# Purpose of This Study

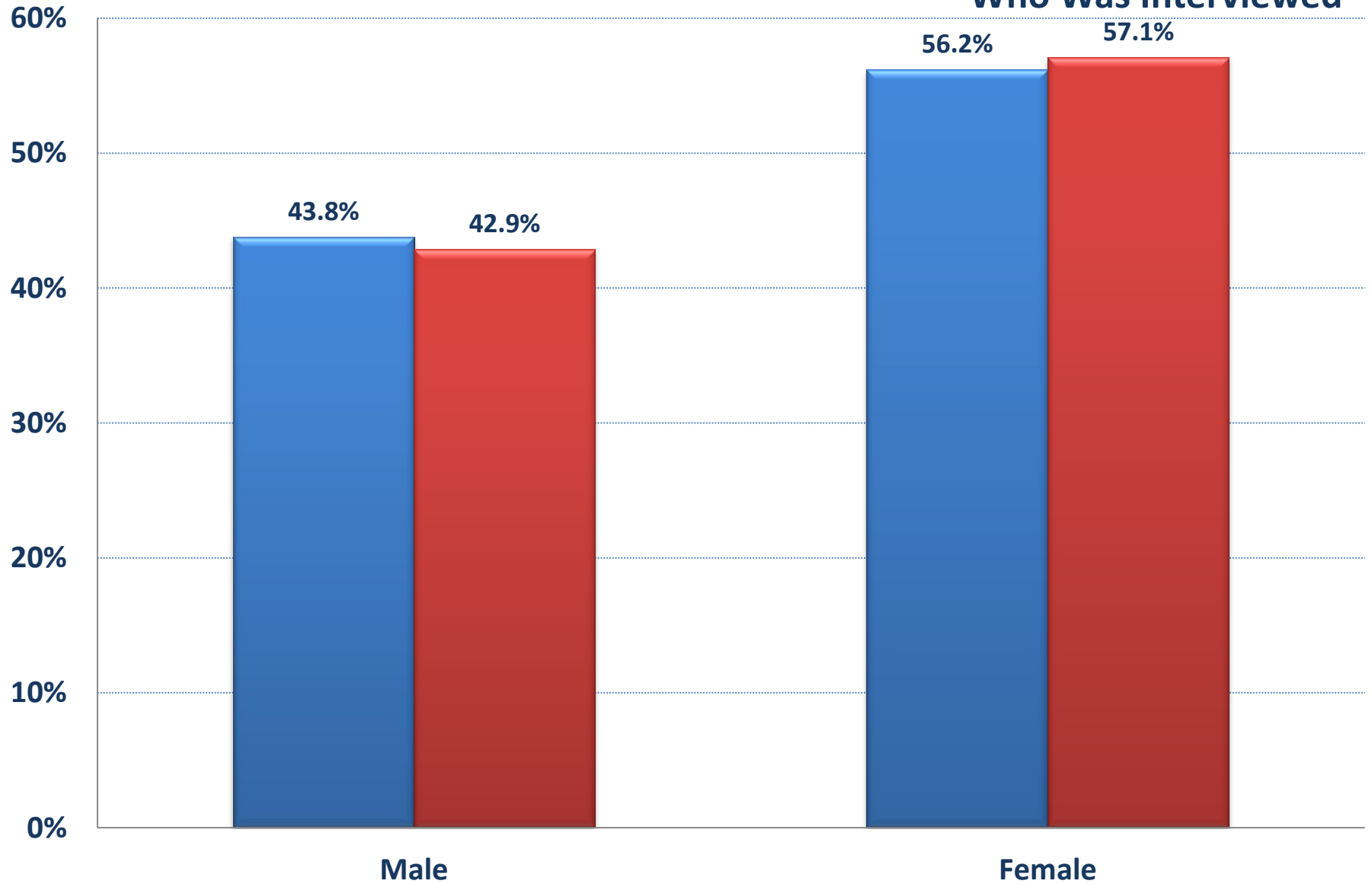
- To explore voter reaction to a proposal to renew and increase the District's existing operating levy.
- To explore voter reaction to a proposal to create a technology levy to support the district's computer and technology programs.
- To determine a cost acceptable to a majority of local voters for each proposal.
- To evaluate voter reaction to a two question ballot.
- Assess the community's perception of the overall quality of the District and its financial management.

# Survey Basics

- This survey involved 401 telephone interviews with registered voters in the Rochester Public School District.
- All interviews were completed between January 20 and January 22, 2015.
- The overall margin of error for the results of this survey is +/- 4.5%\*.
- The sample was controlled to approximate the demographics of registered voters living within the communities served by the District.

\* Margin of error calculated using the American Research Group's web-based calculator.

## Who Was Interviewed



Springsted



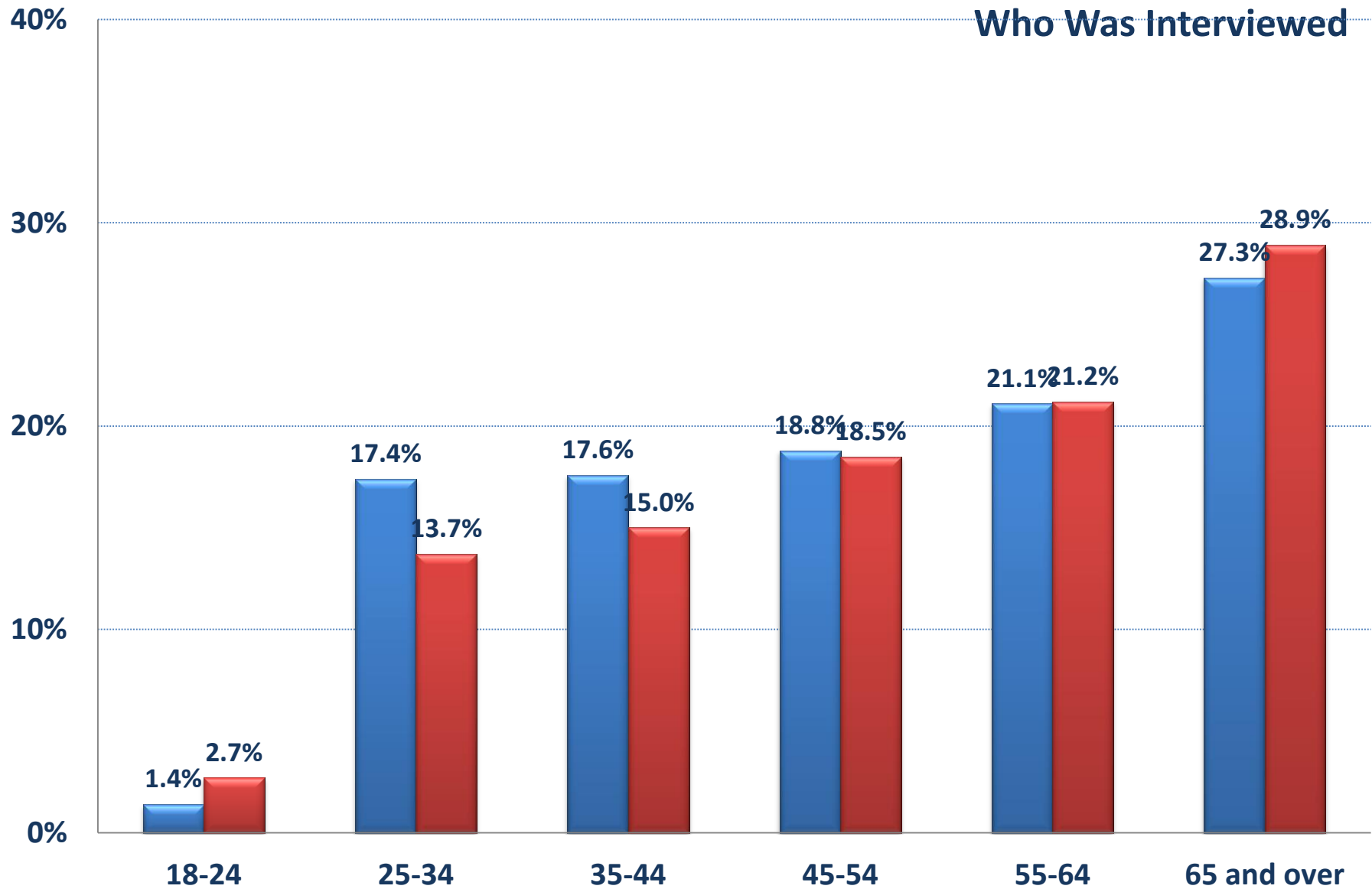
File



Survey



## Who Was Interviewed



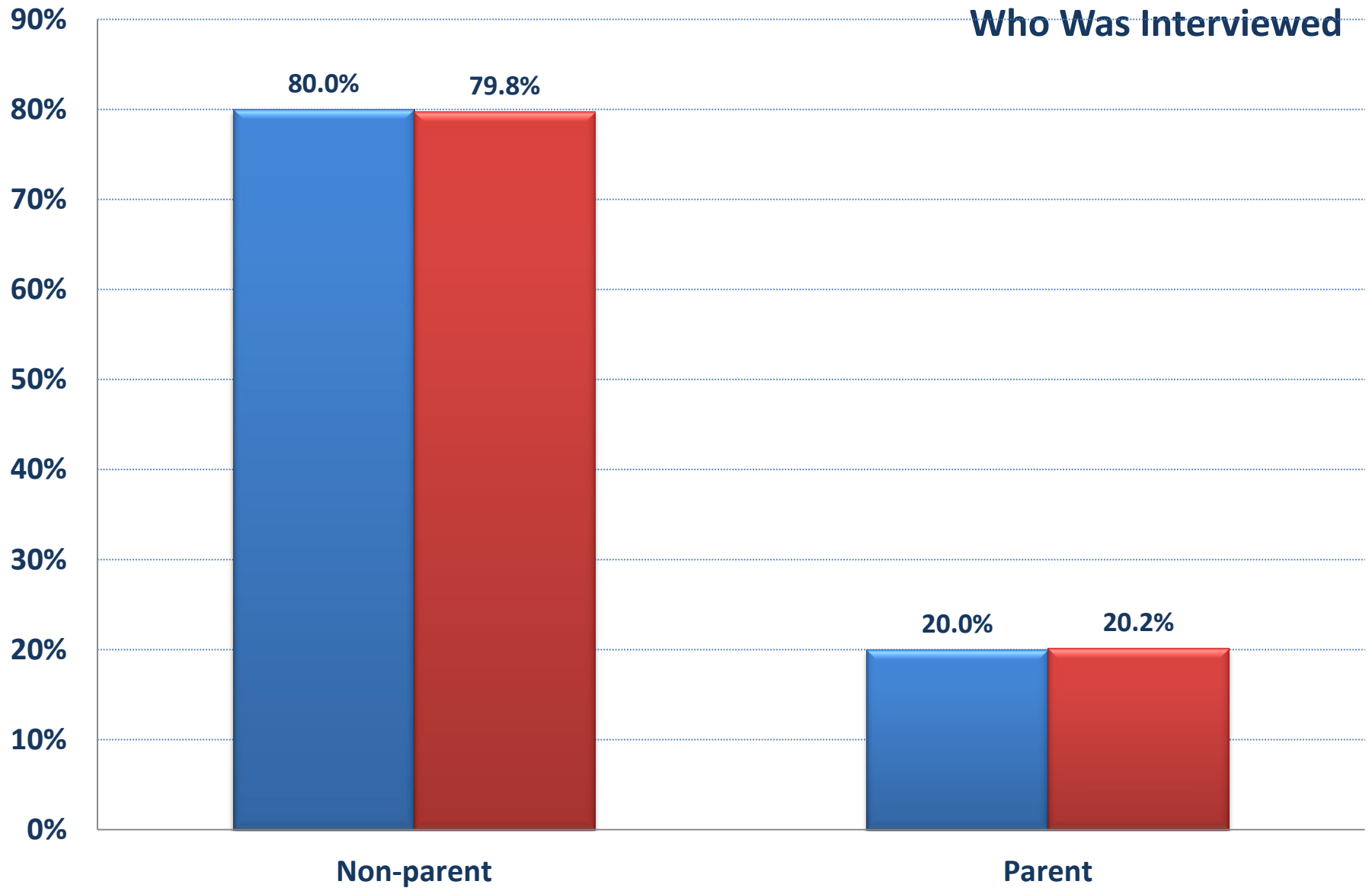
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■ File

■ Survey



## Who Was Interviewed



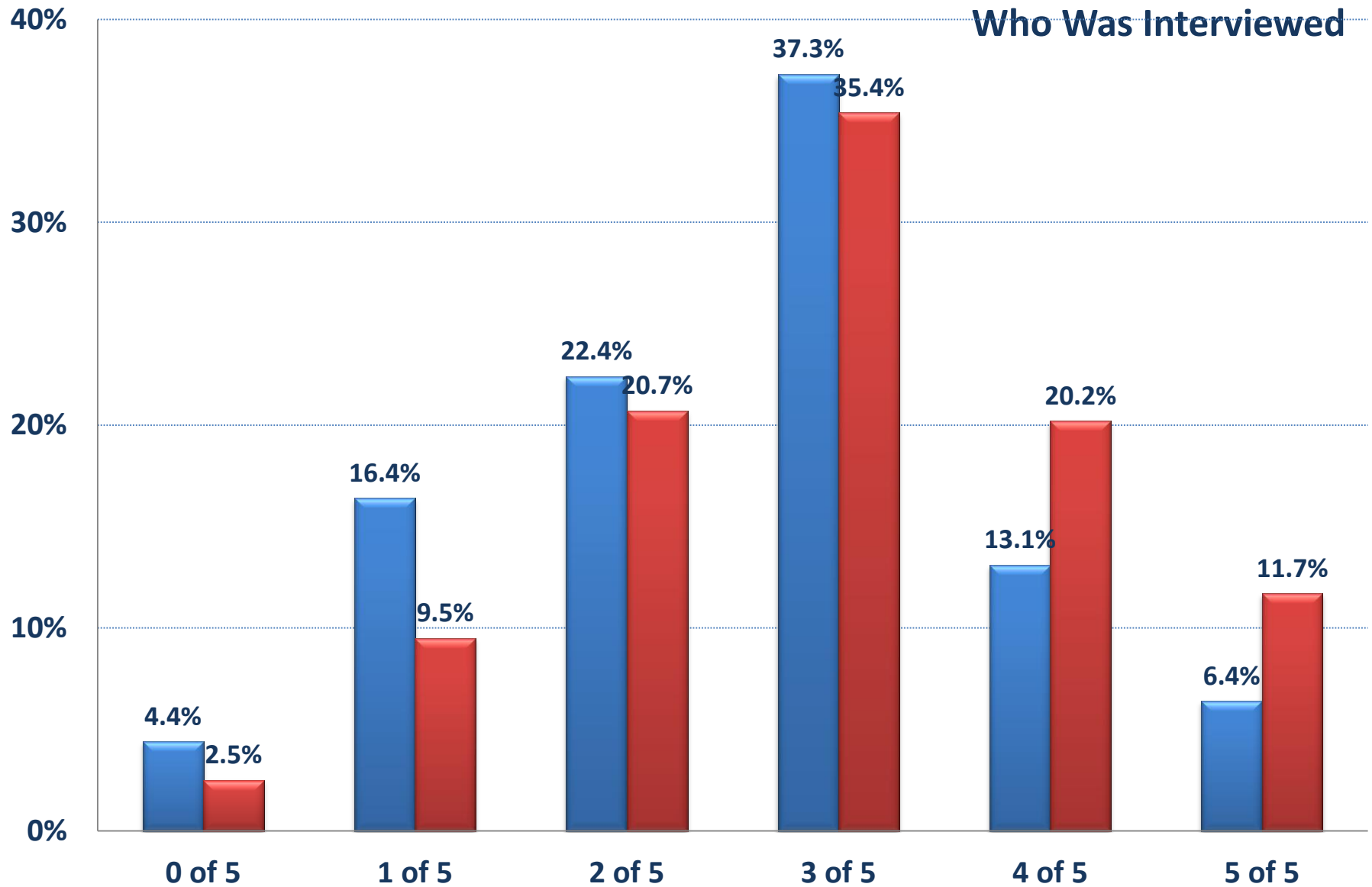
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## Who Was Interviewed



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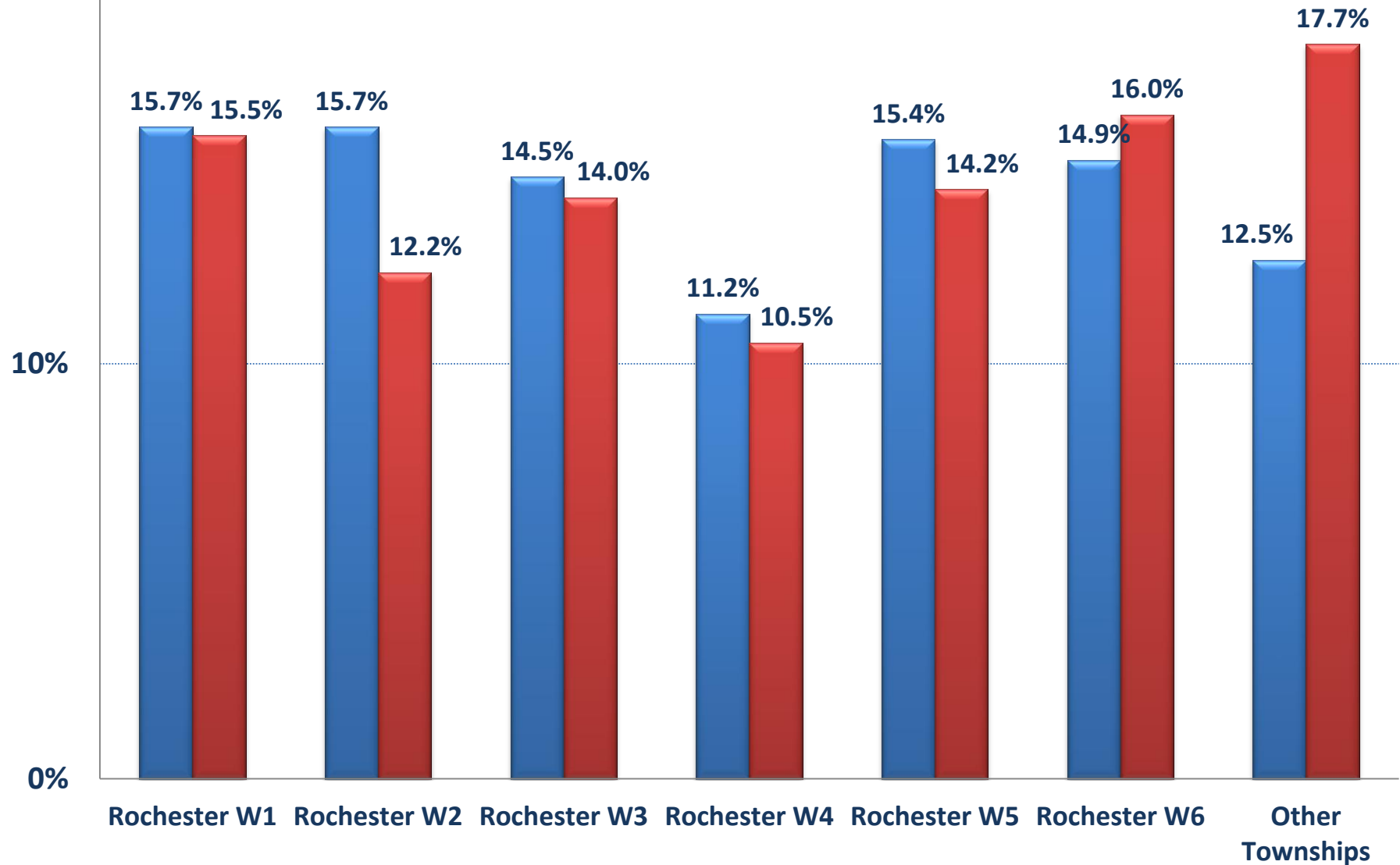
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20%

## Who Was Interviewed



Springsted

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■ Survey



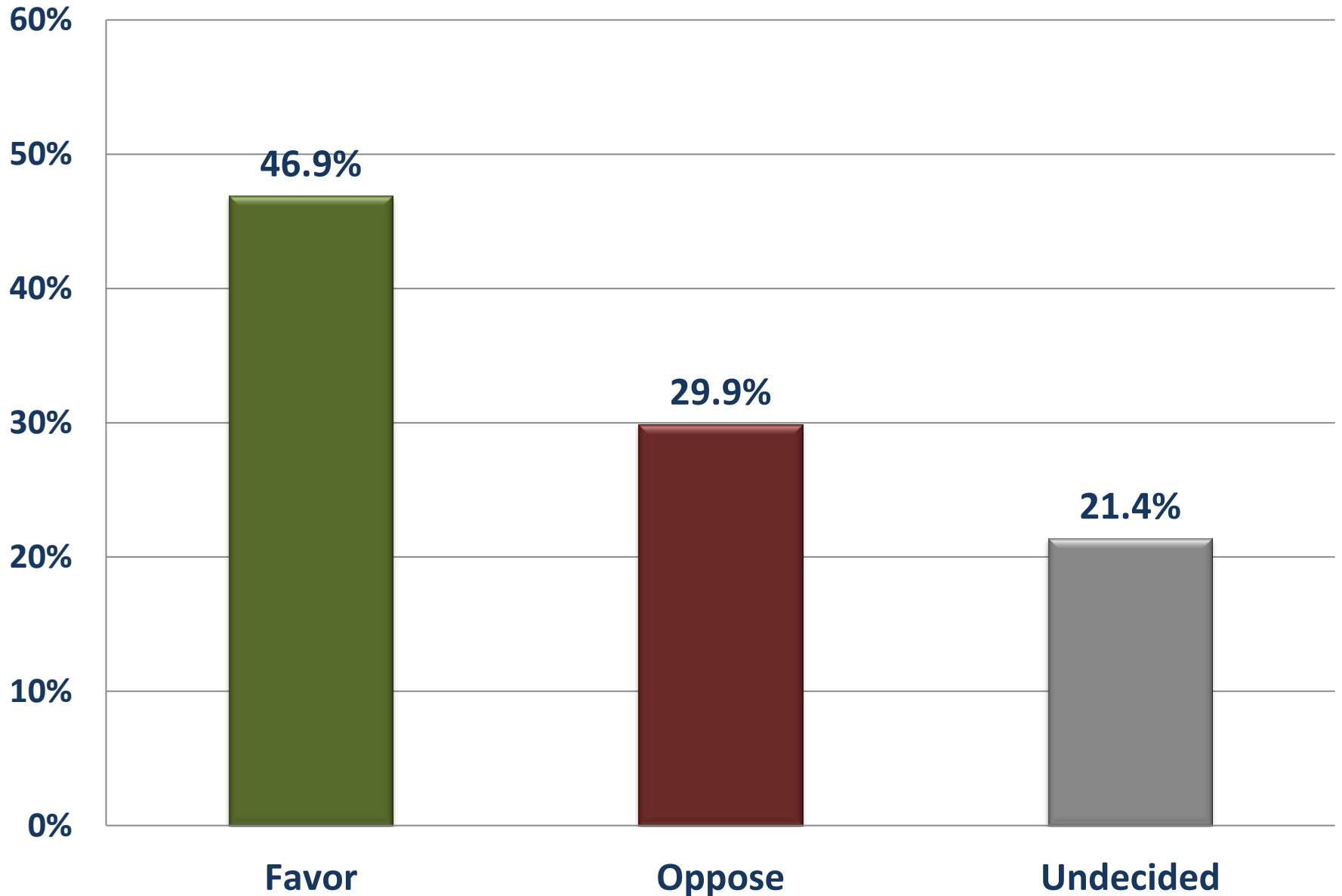
# The Operating Levy's Uninformed Benchmark

“To continue to provide a more comprehensive educational program than would be possible using only state funds, the District may ask voters to renew and increase its existing local school operating levy.

**“Would you favor or oppose such a proposal to renew and increase the District’s existing operating levy?”**



## Uninformed: Op Levy

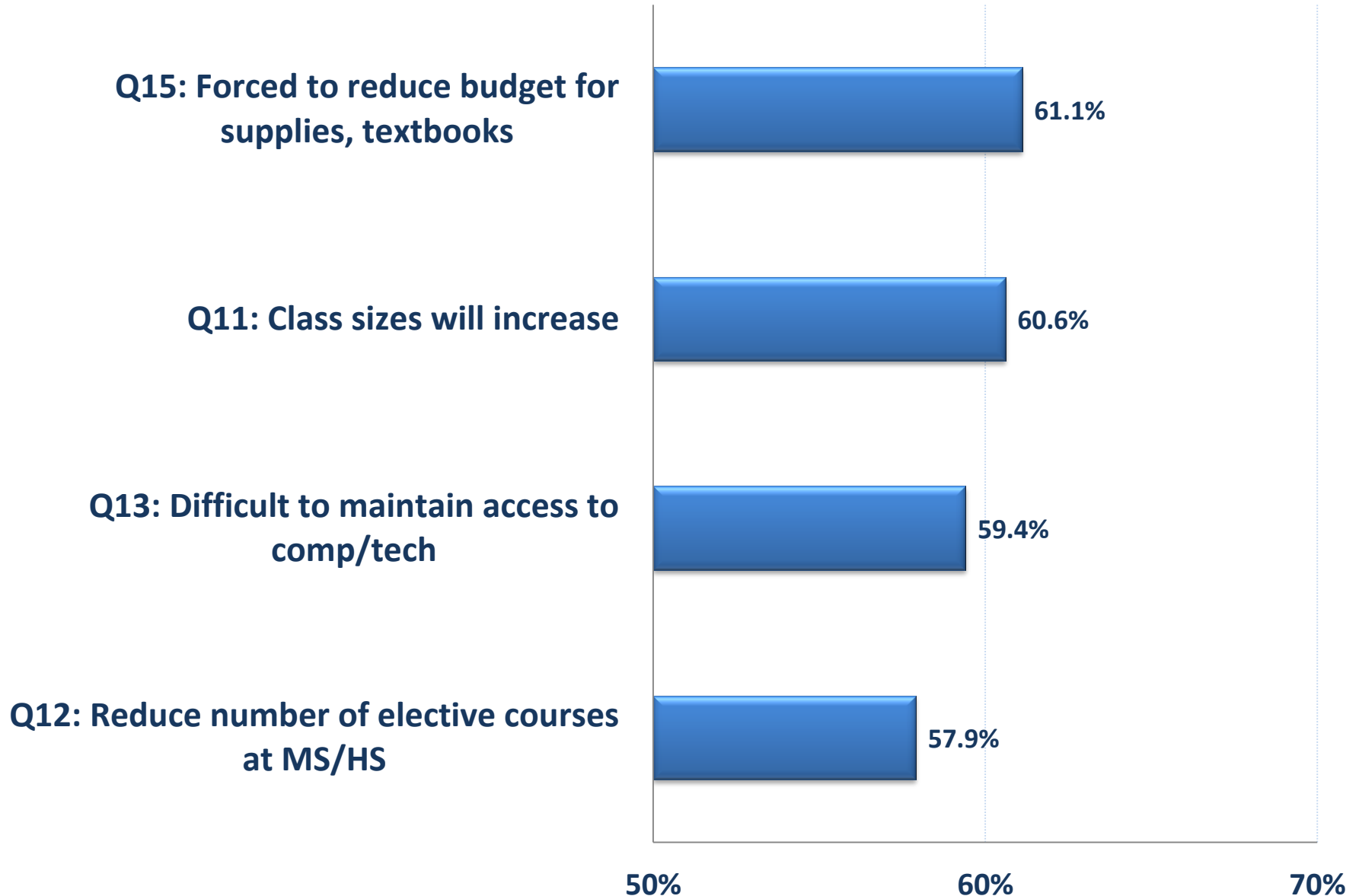


Springsted

# Presenting Information

“I am going to read some statements about the proposal to renew and increase the District’s existing operating levy. Please tell me whether the information in each statement would make you **more likely** or **less likely** to vote for such a proposal.”

## Operating Levy



## Operating Levy

**Q14: If not renewed/increased reduce access to libraries**

56.9%

**Q10: If not renewed and increased cut budget by \$9 mil**

56.1%

**Q16: Forced to reduce transportation**

52.9%

50%

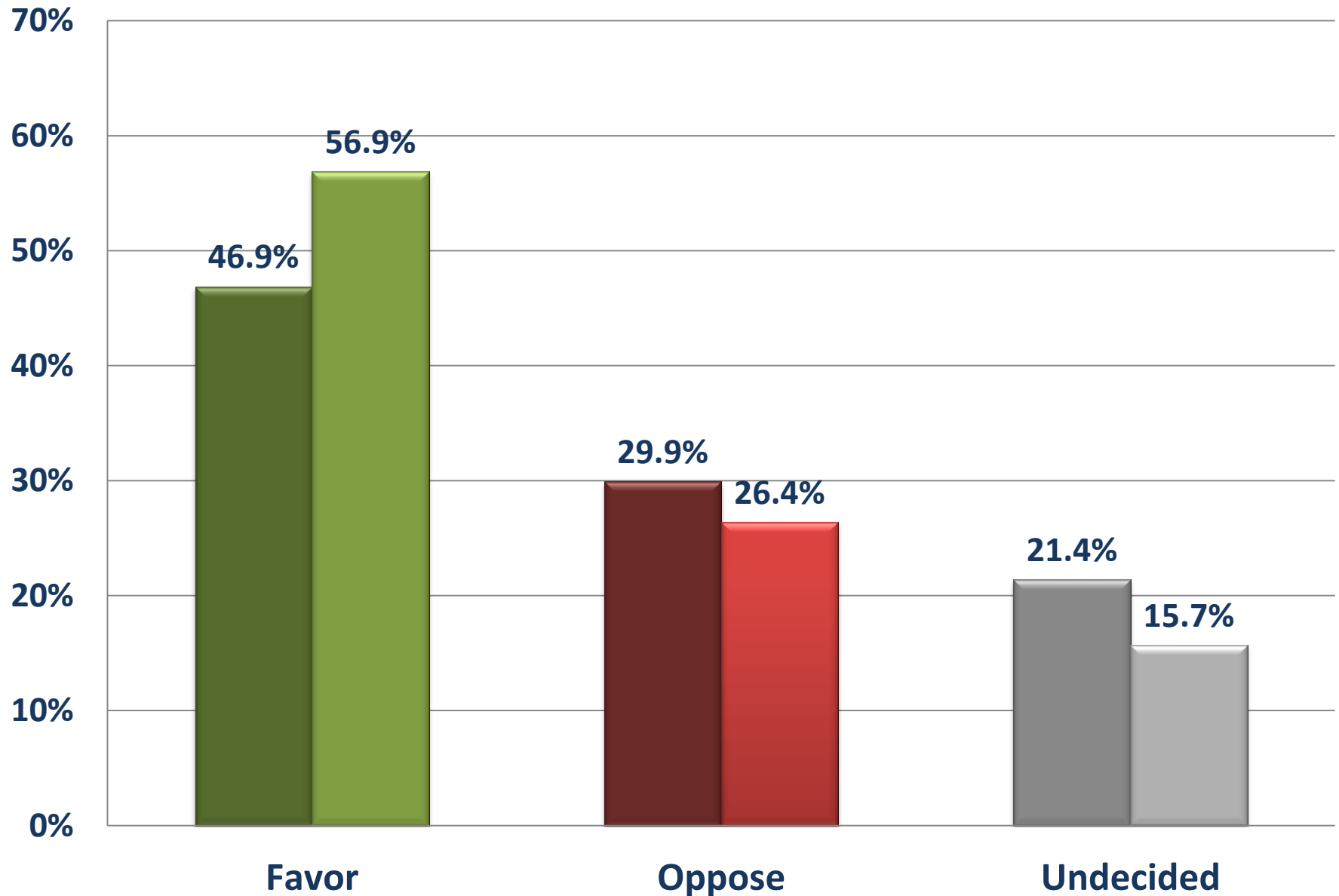
60%

70%

# The Operating Levy's Informed Benchmark

“Now that you have heard some information about the proposal to renew and increase the District’s operating levy, I want to see if it has changed your opinion.

**“Would you favor or oppose a proposal to renew and increase the District’s existing operating levy?”**

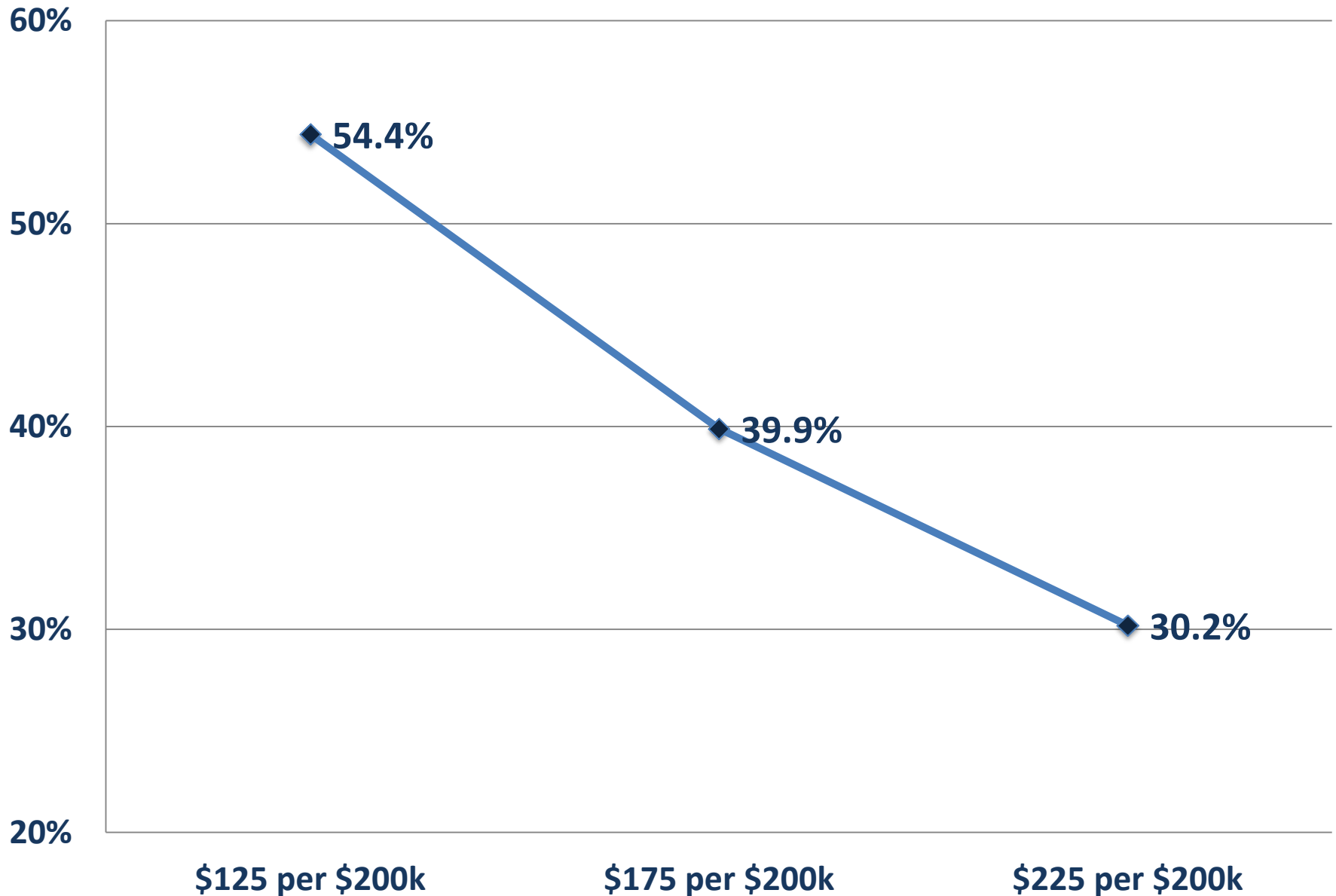


# Operating Levy Tax Rates

“I am going to ask you three questions about the cost of increasing the District’s existing operating levy. These costs will be read to you in a random order. Each will represent an annual cost. For each of the statements, tell me if knowing the cost of the increase would make you favor or oppose a proposal to renew and increase the District’s existing operating levy.

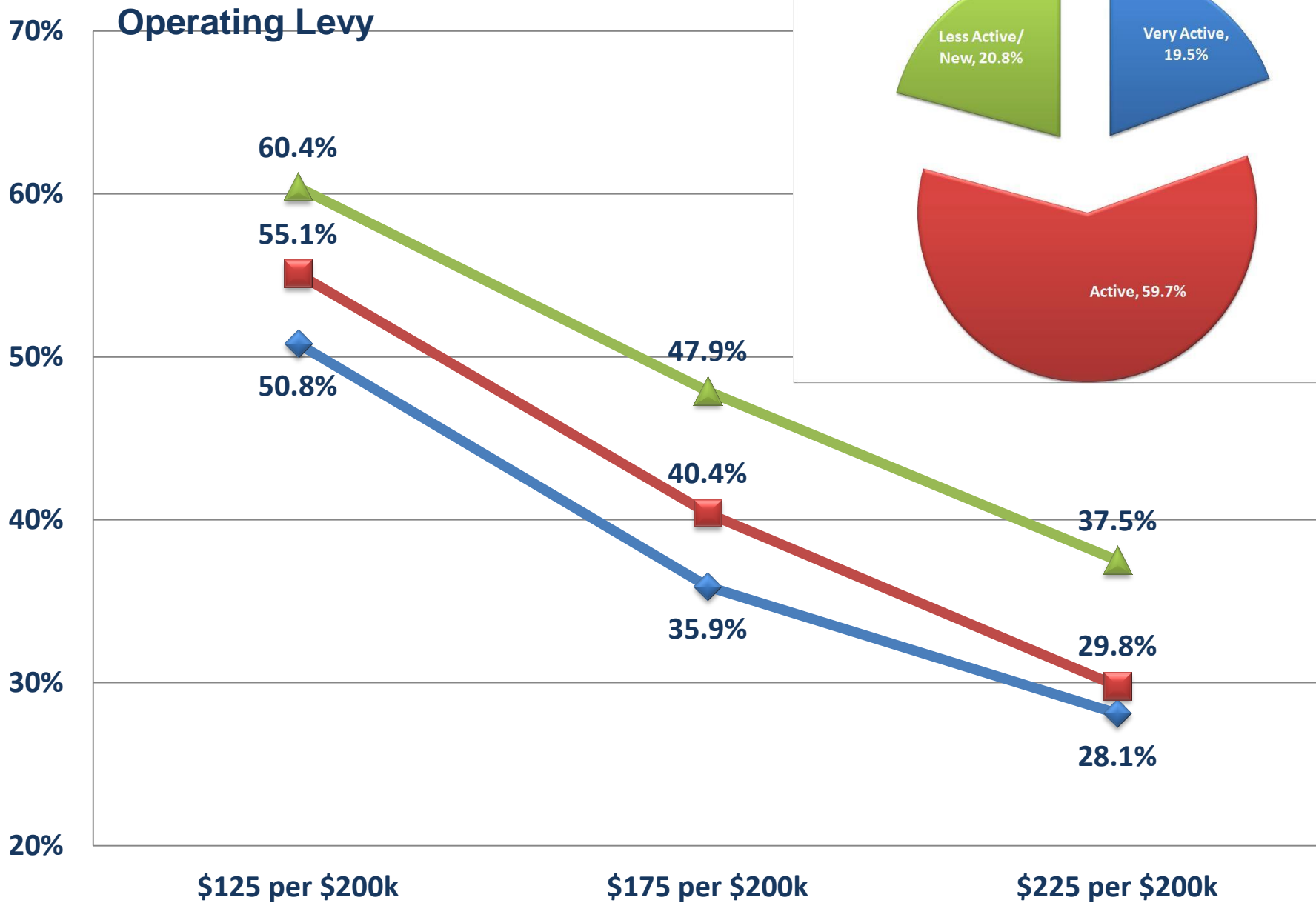
**“Property taxes would be increased by \$125 per year for a home with a value of \$200,000.”**

## Operating Levy



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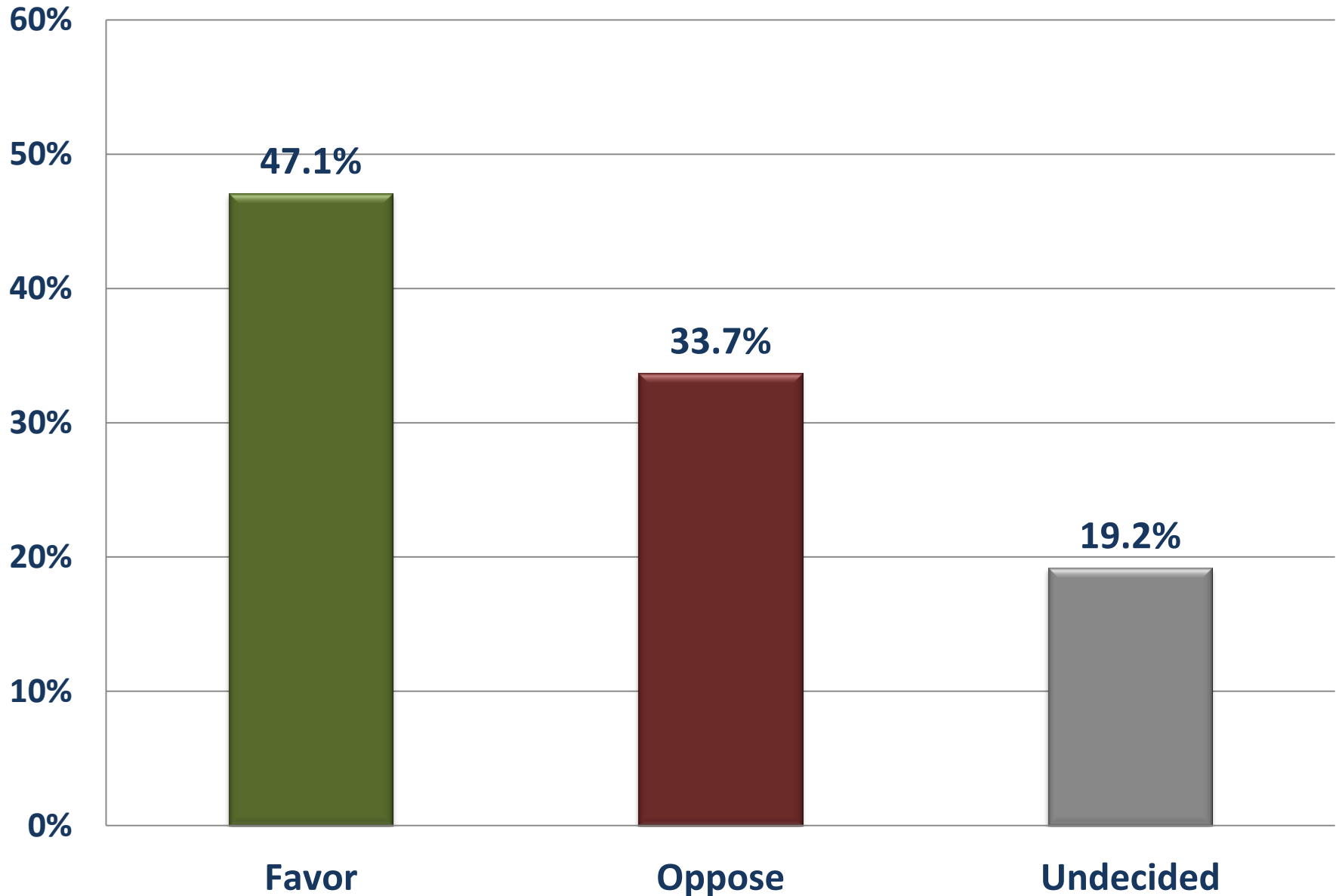


# The Technology Levy's Uninformed Benchmark

“The district may ask voters to approve a technology levy. Such a proposal would raise property taxes in order to support the district’s computer and technology programs.

**“Would you favor or oppose such a proposal?”**

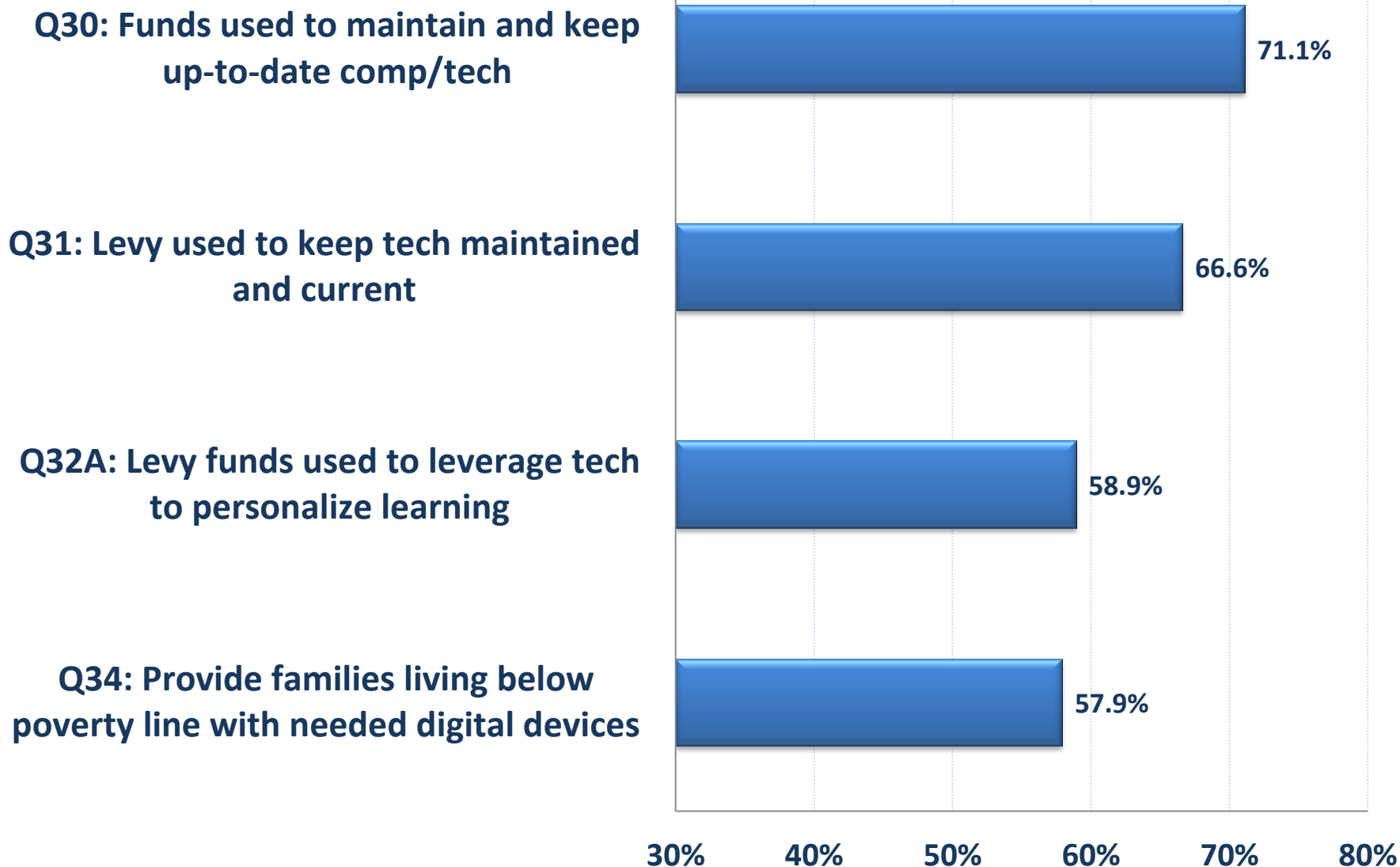
## Uninformed: Tech Levy



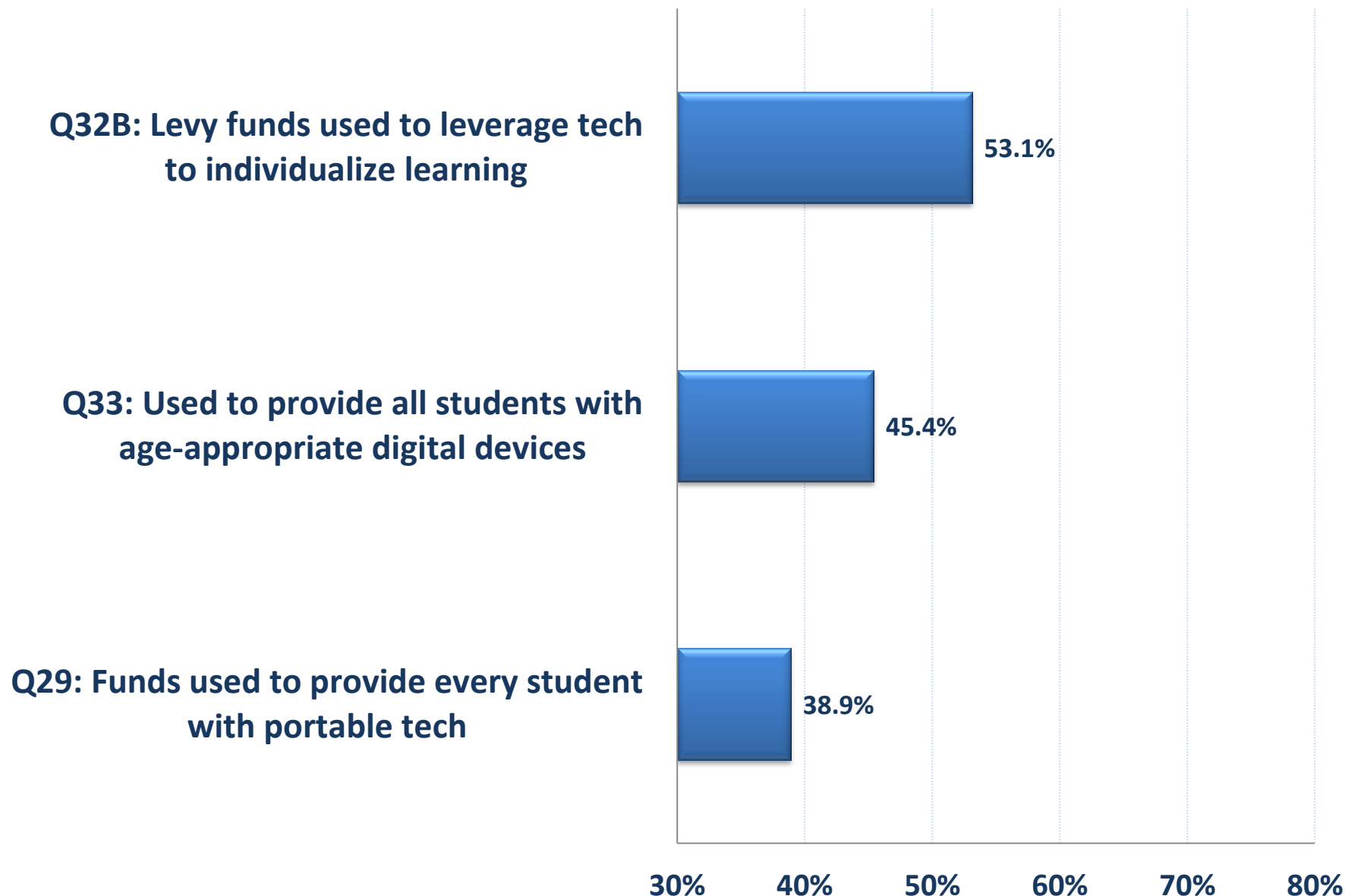
# Presenting Information

“I am going to read some statements about the technology levy the District 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.”

## Technology Levy



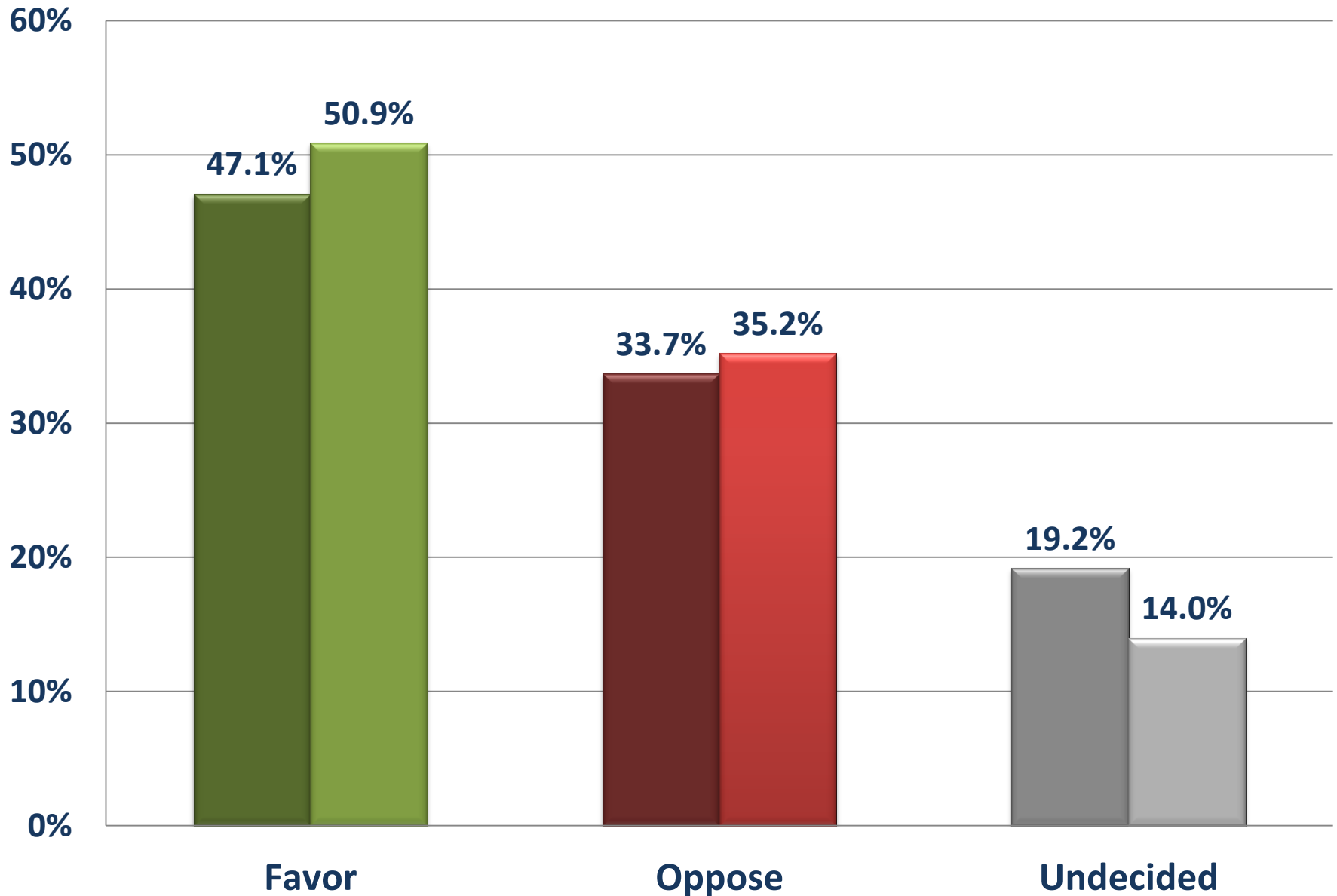
## Technology Levy



# The Technology Levy's Informed Benchmark

“Now that you have heard some information about the technology levy the District is considering, I want to see if this information has changed your opinion.

**“Would you favor or oppose such a proposal?”**



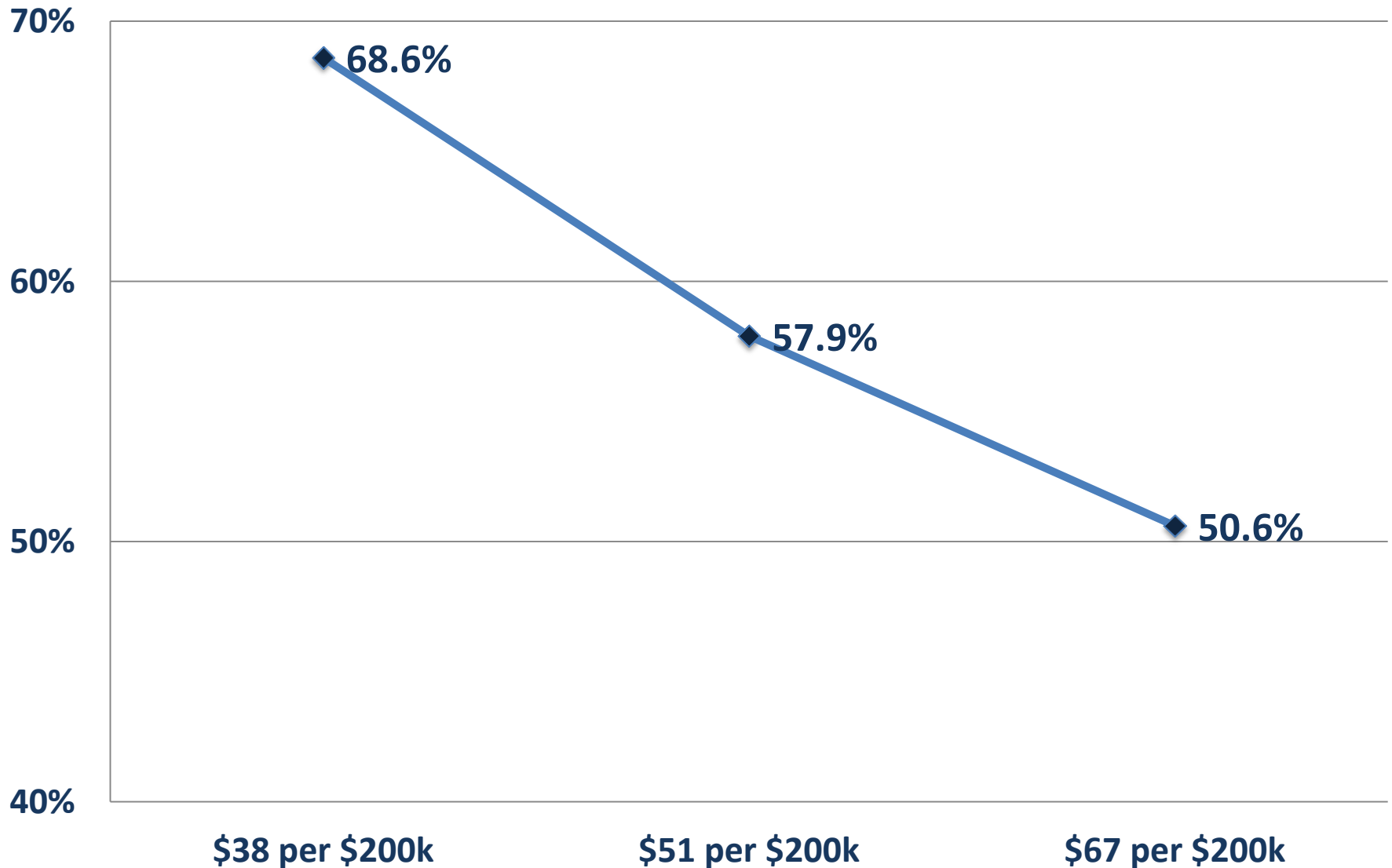


# Technology Levy Tax Rates

“I am going to ask you three questions about the cost of the technology levy the District is considering. These costs will be read to you in a random order. Each will represent an annual cost. For each of the statements, tell me if knowing the cost of the technology levy would make you favor or oppose a local technology levy.

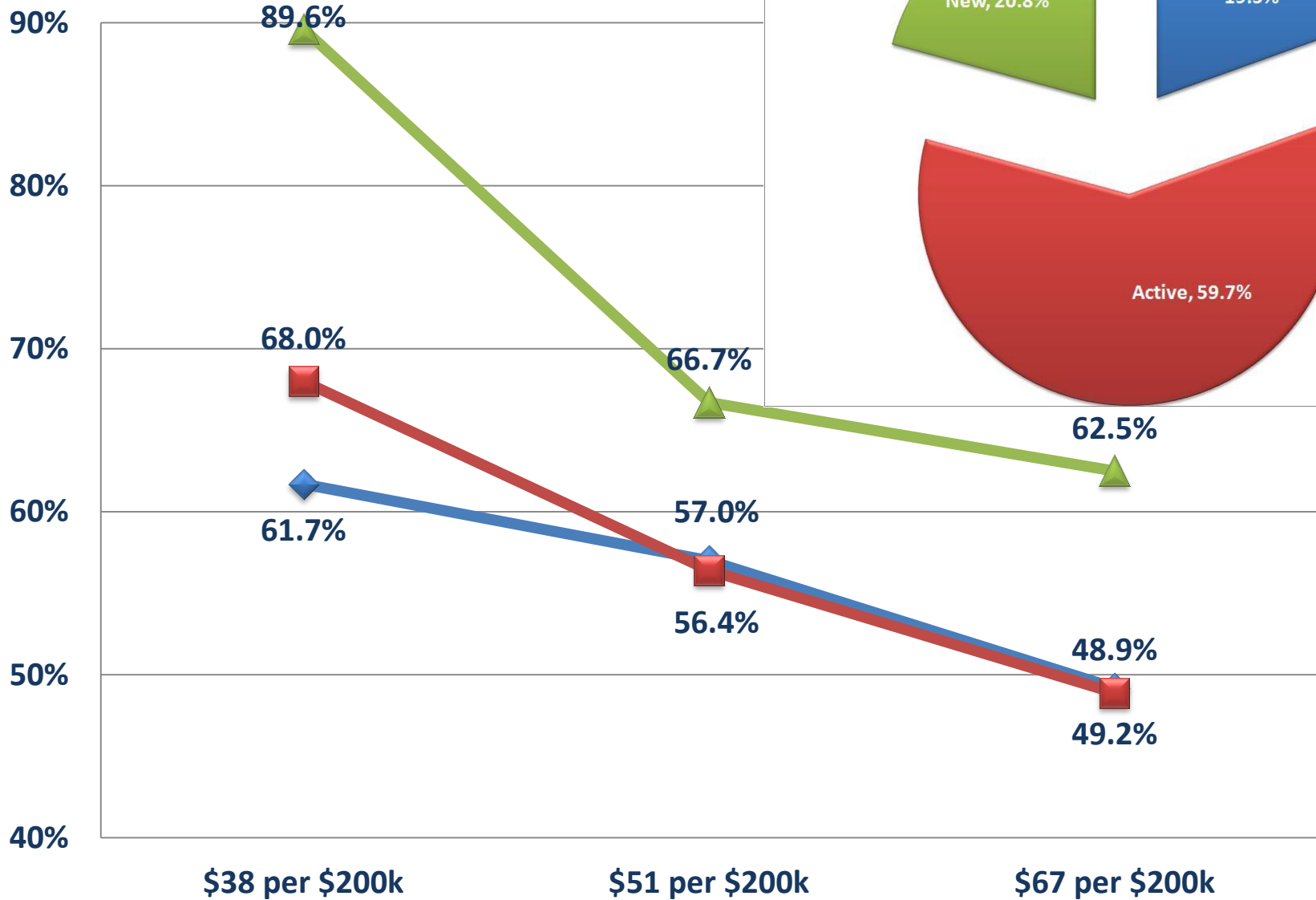
**“Property taxes would be increased by \$38 per year for a home with a value of \$200,000.”**

## Technology Levy



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# Technology Levy



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Very Active Active Less Active/ New



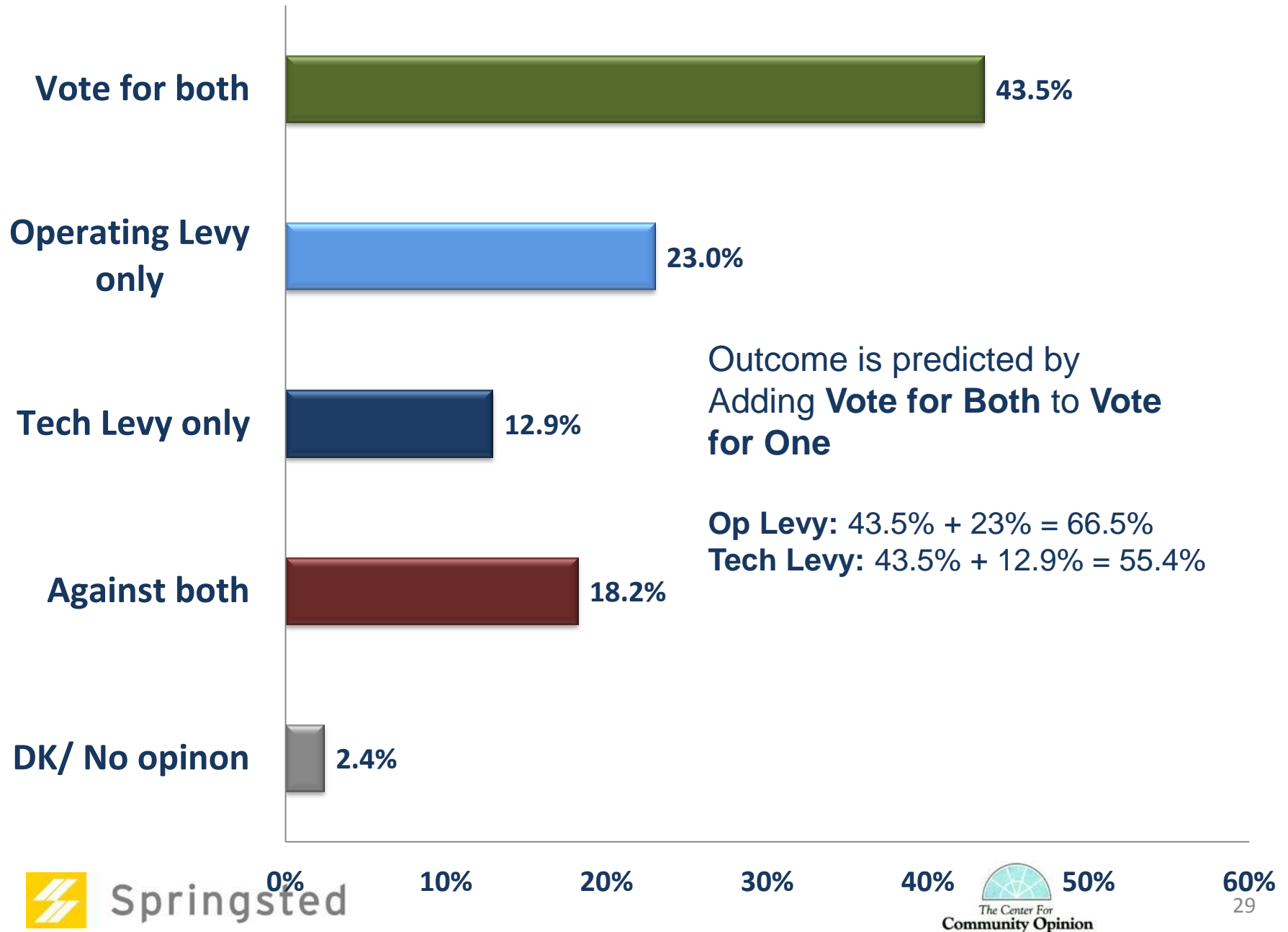
# A Two Question Ballot

To test the idea of placing both an operating levy and a technology levy on the same ballot, two questions were used. Half of those interviewed were asked a question with no reference to cost:

“Assume the District places two proposals on the ballot. One would renew and increase the District’s existing operating levy. The second would be a technology levy that would raise local funds to pay for classroom computers and technology. If you were handed such a ballot, which of the following best describes how you would vote:

- 1) Vote for both;
- 2) Vote only to renew and increase the existing operating levy;
- 3) Vote only for the technology levy; or
- 4) Vote against both.”

Without Reference to Cost

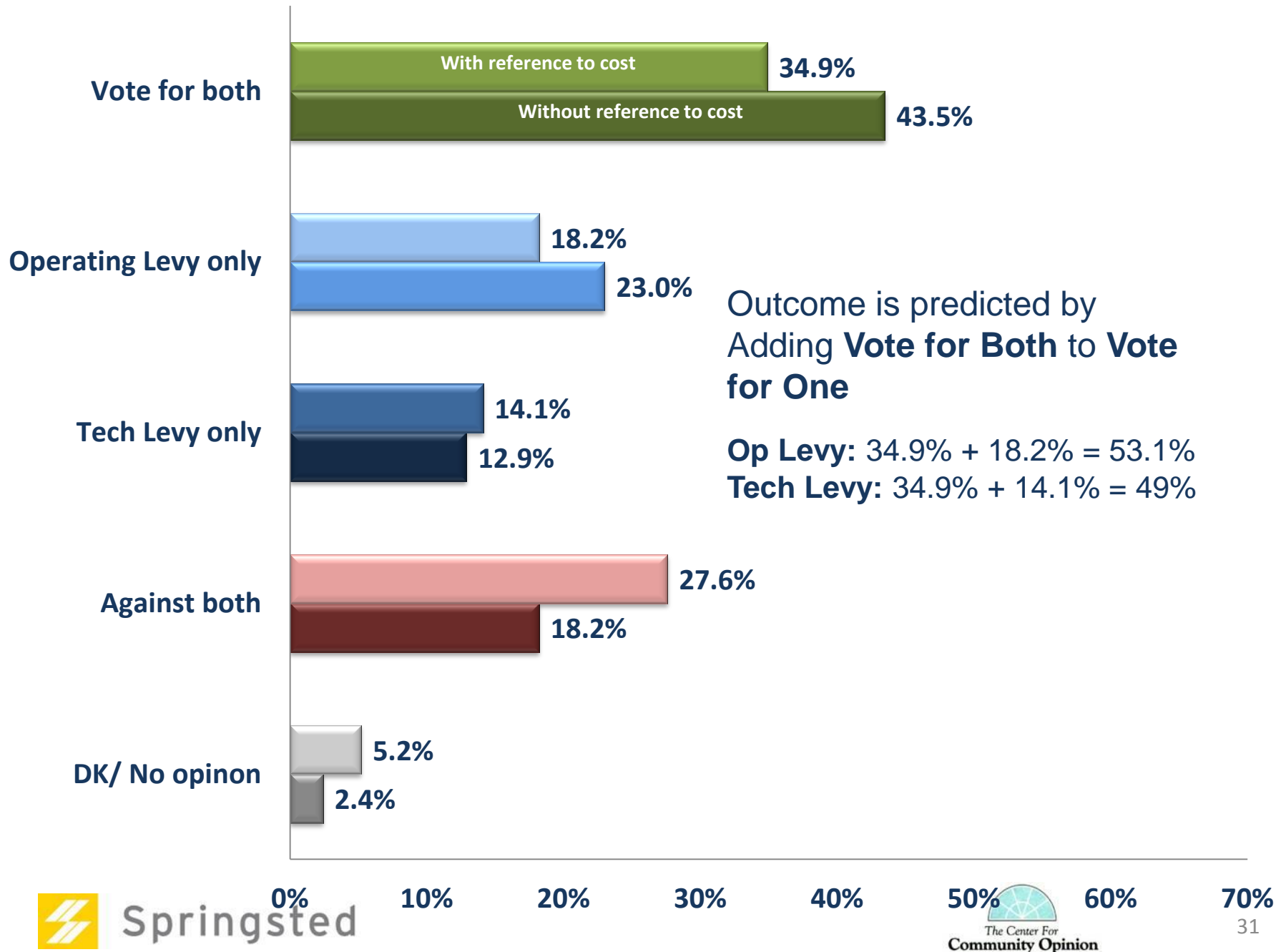


# A Two Question Ballot

The other half of those interviewed were asked a very similar question but were told how much the two proposals would cost:

“Assume the District places two proposals on the ballot. One would renew and increase the District’s existing operating levy. The second would be a technology levy that would raise local funds to pay for classroom computers and technology. **Together they would increase property taxes by \$226 per year for a home with a value of \$200,000.** If you were handed such a ballot, which of the following best describes how you would vote:

- 1) Vote for both;
- 2) Vote only to renew and increase the existing operating levy;
- 3) Vote only for the technology levy; or
- 4) Vote against both.”

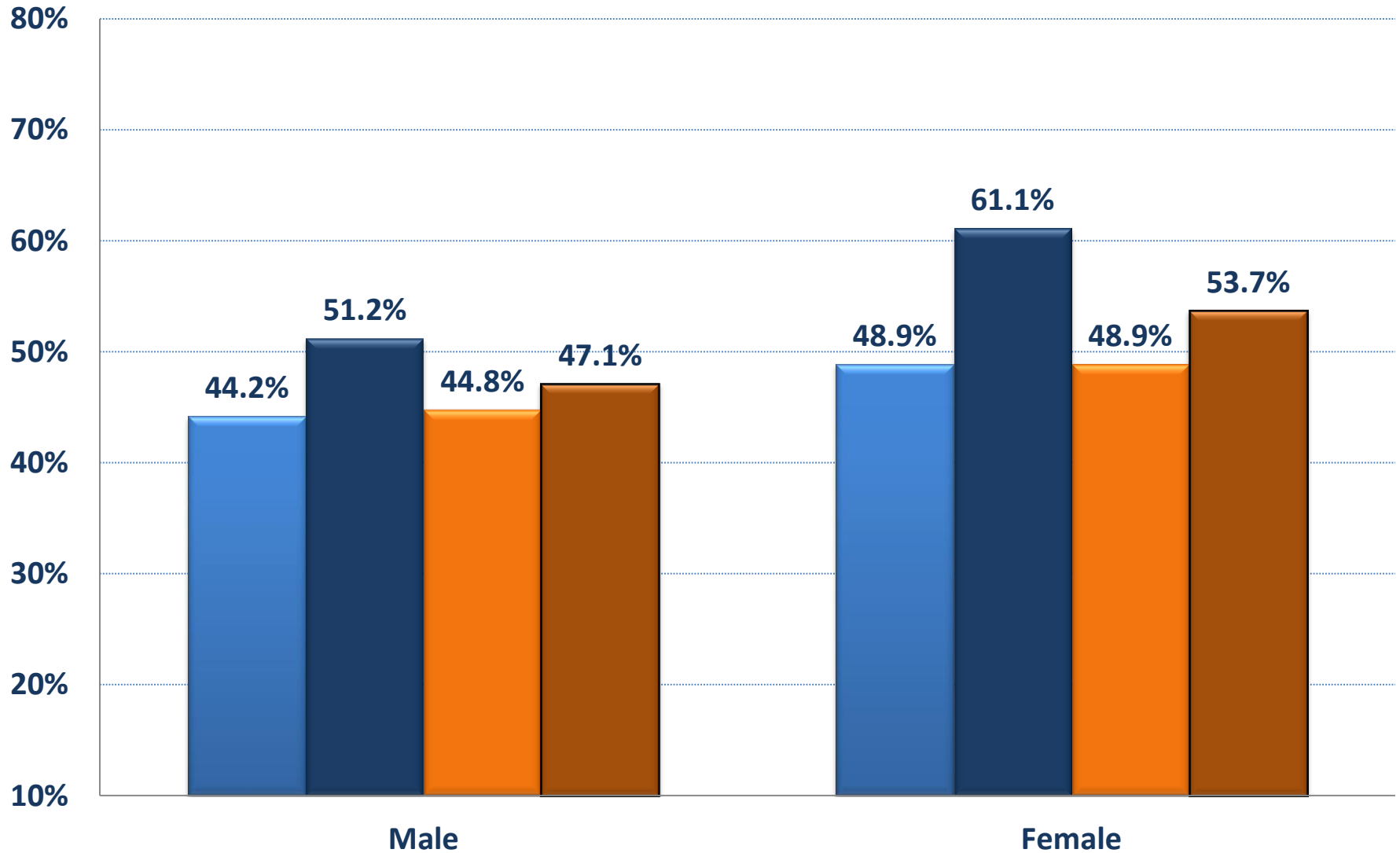


# Demography

Each of the next slides presents the percentage favoring both tax proposals for each of the benchmark questions.



## Gender



■ Op Levy Uninform

■ Op Levy Inform

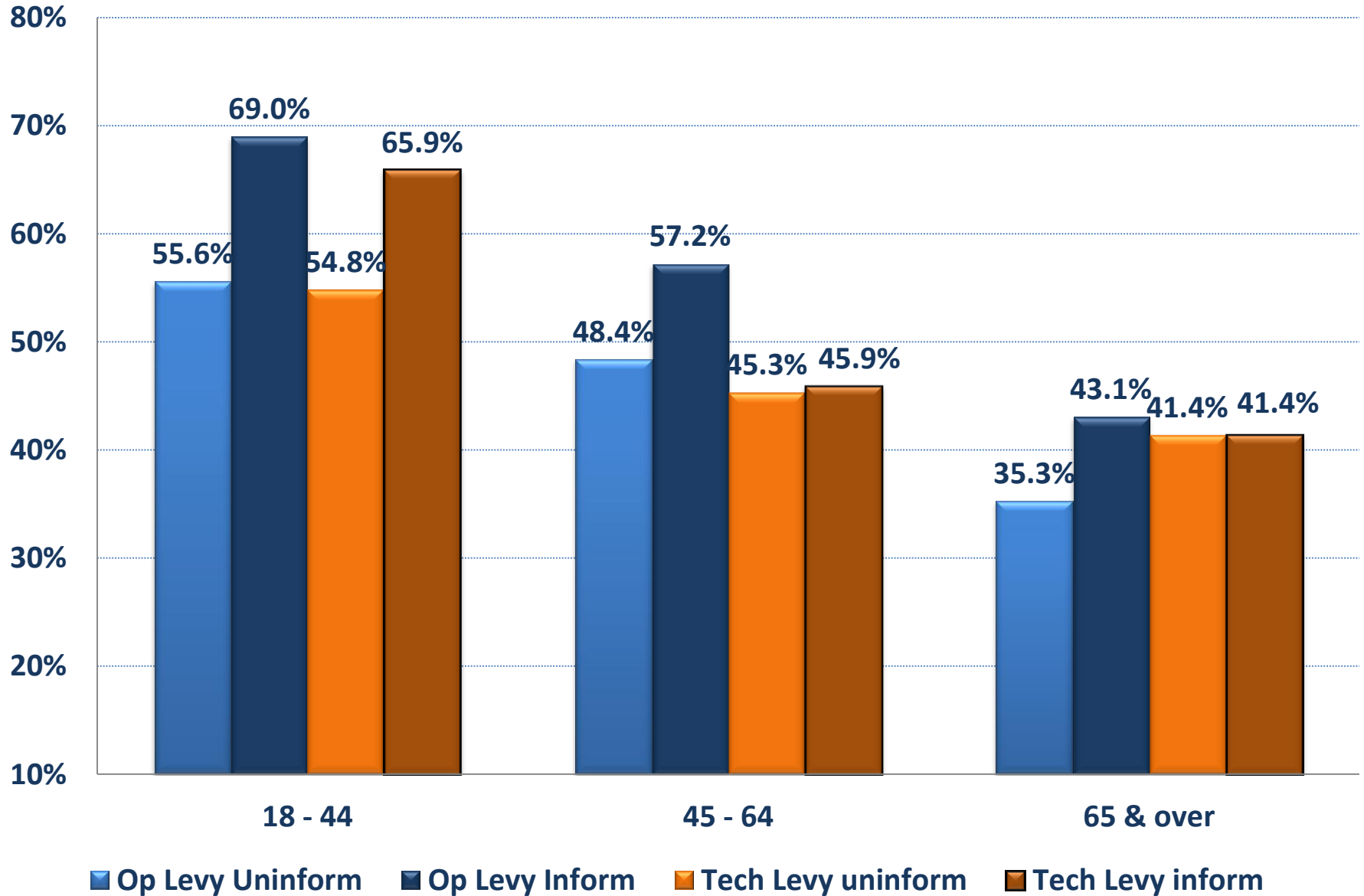
■ Tech Levy uninform

■ Tech Levy inform

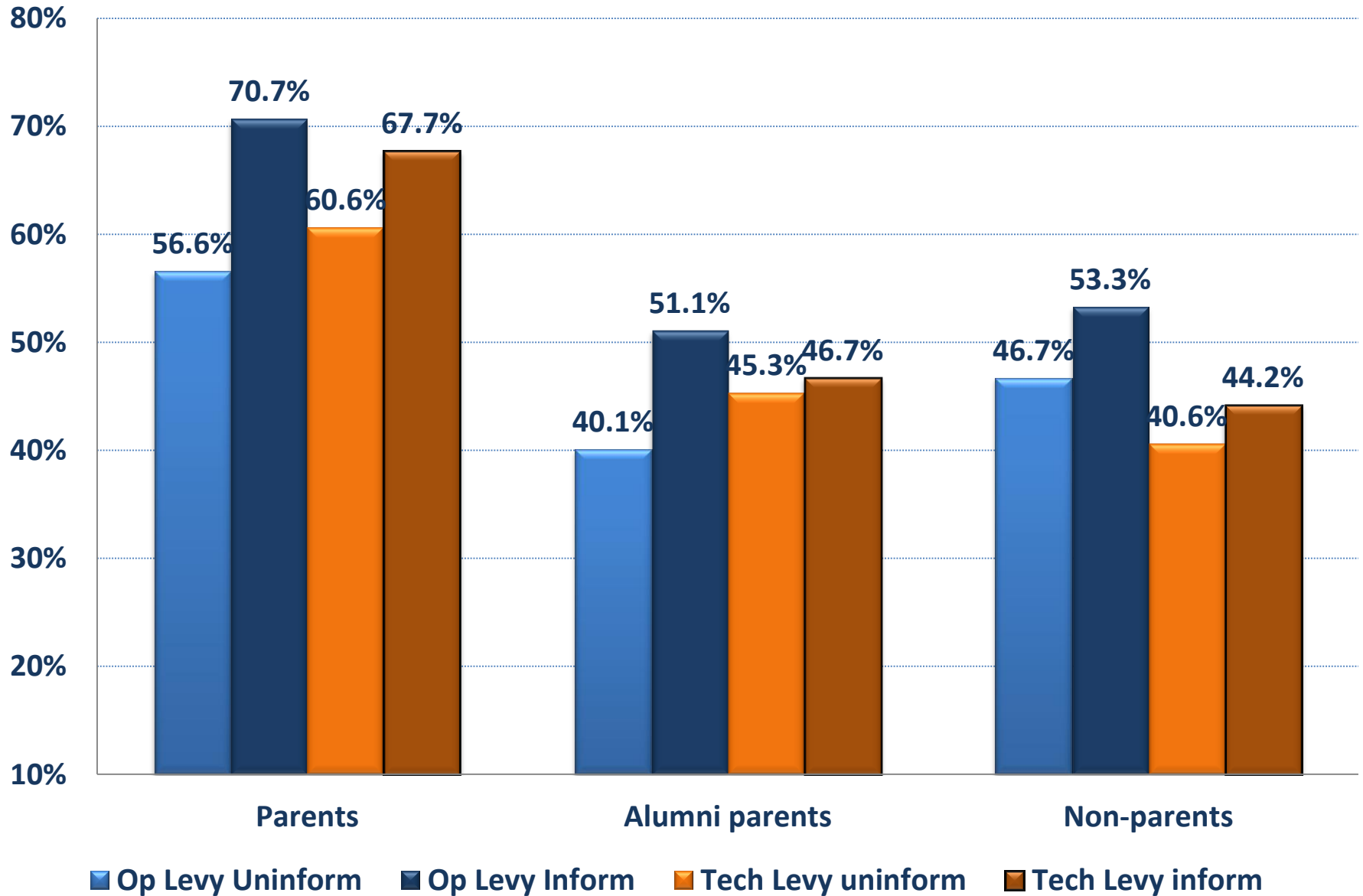


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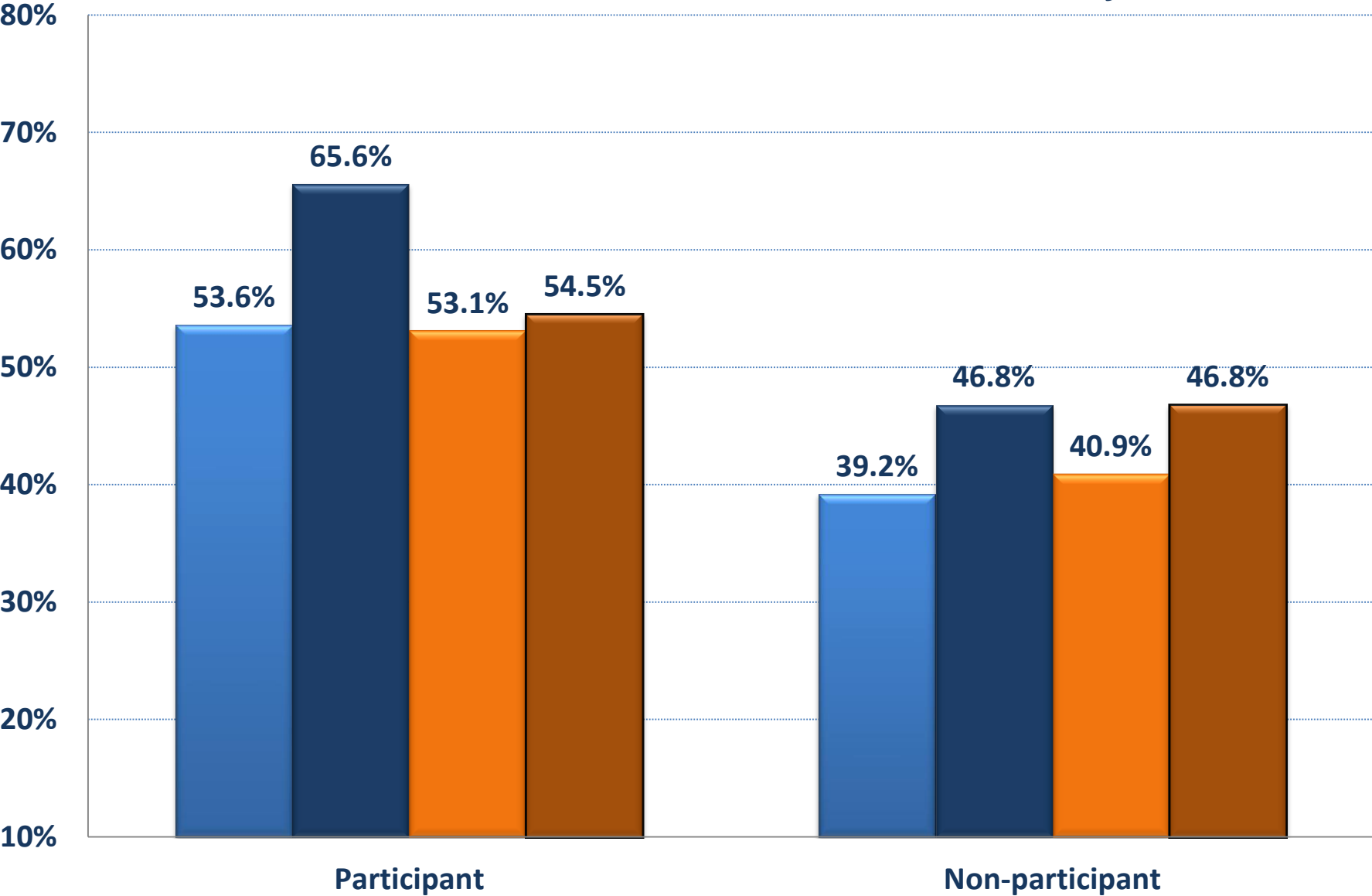




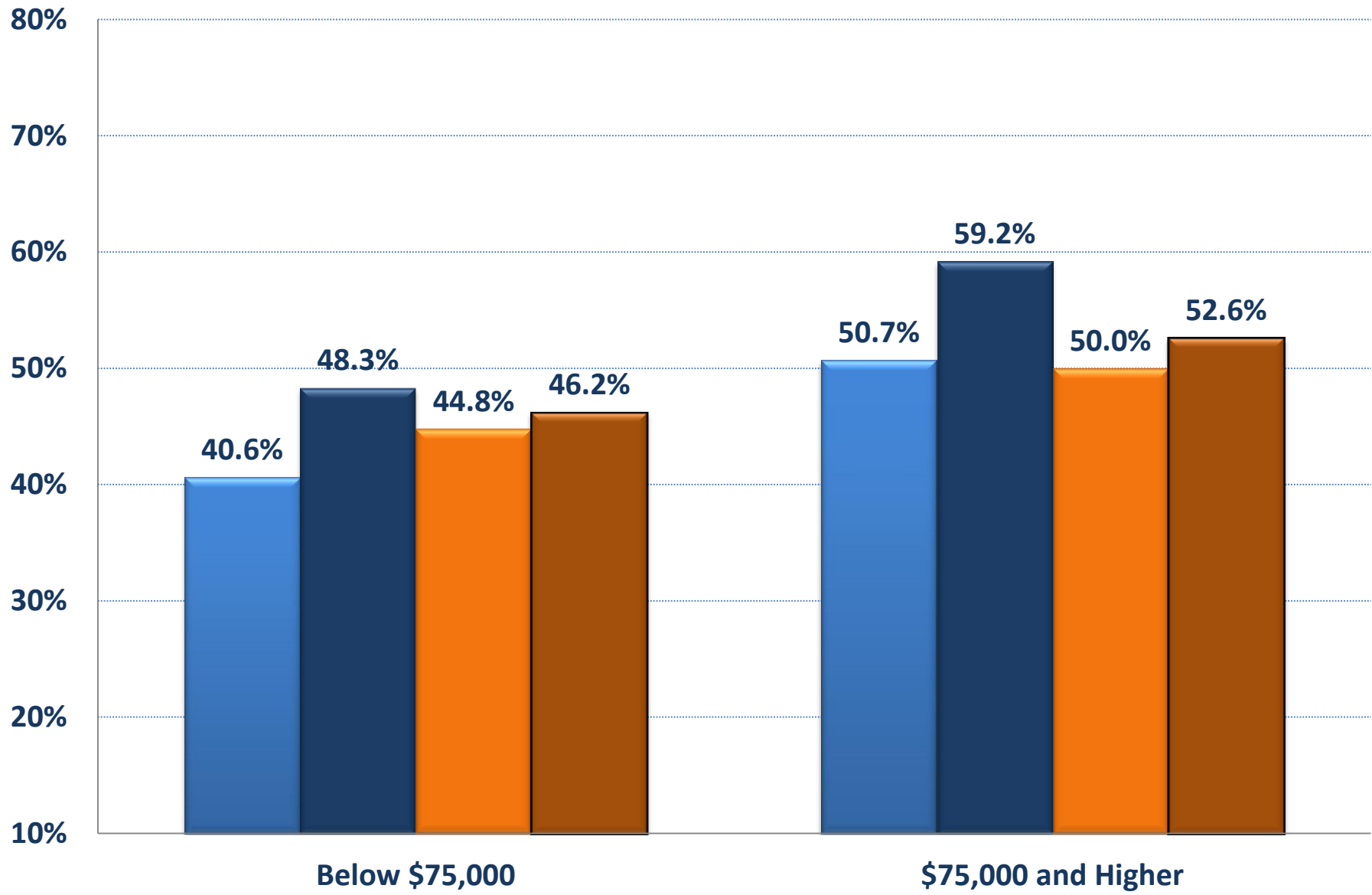
## Parent Status



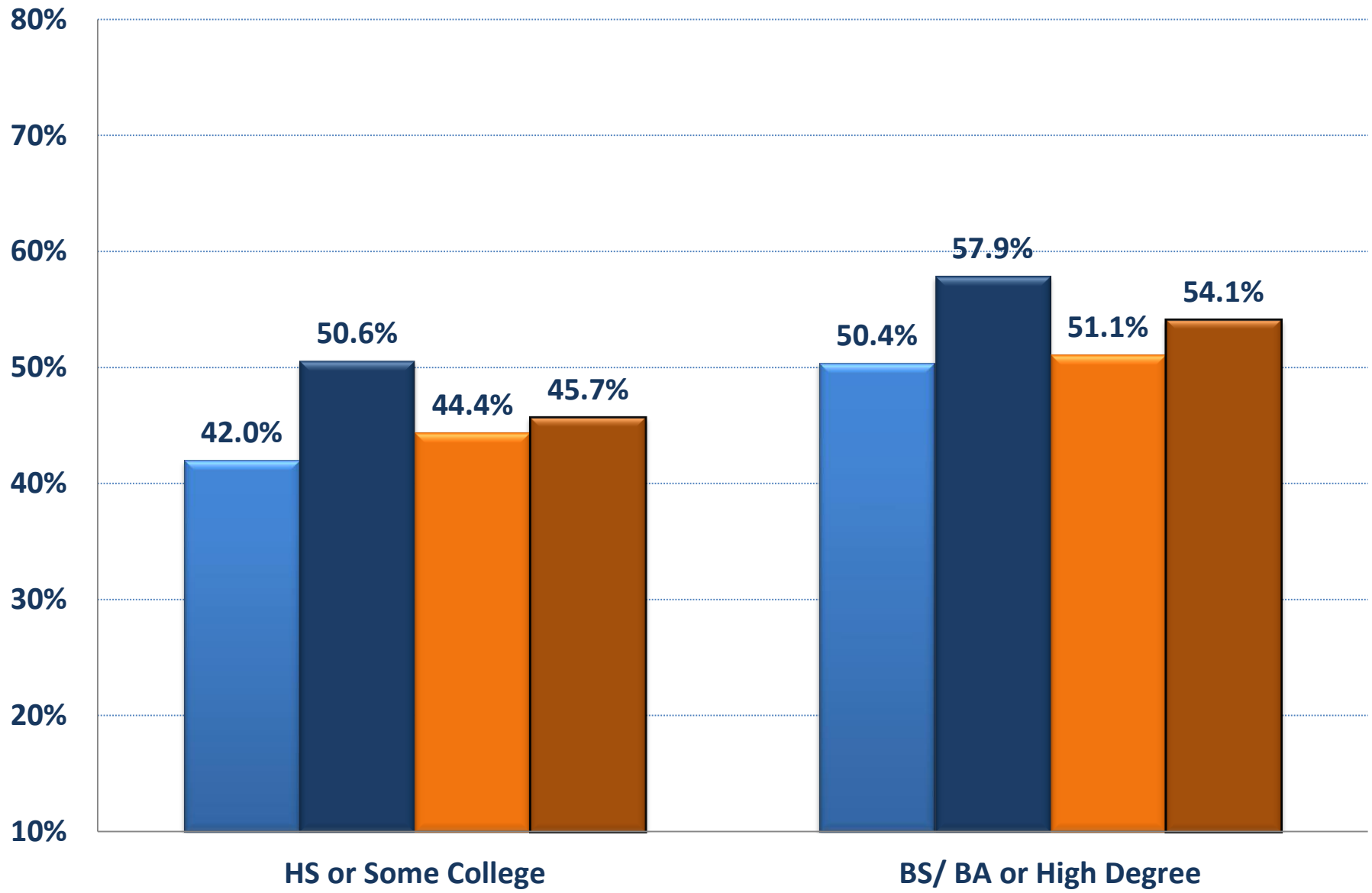
Community Education



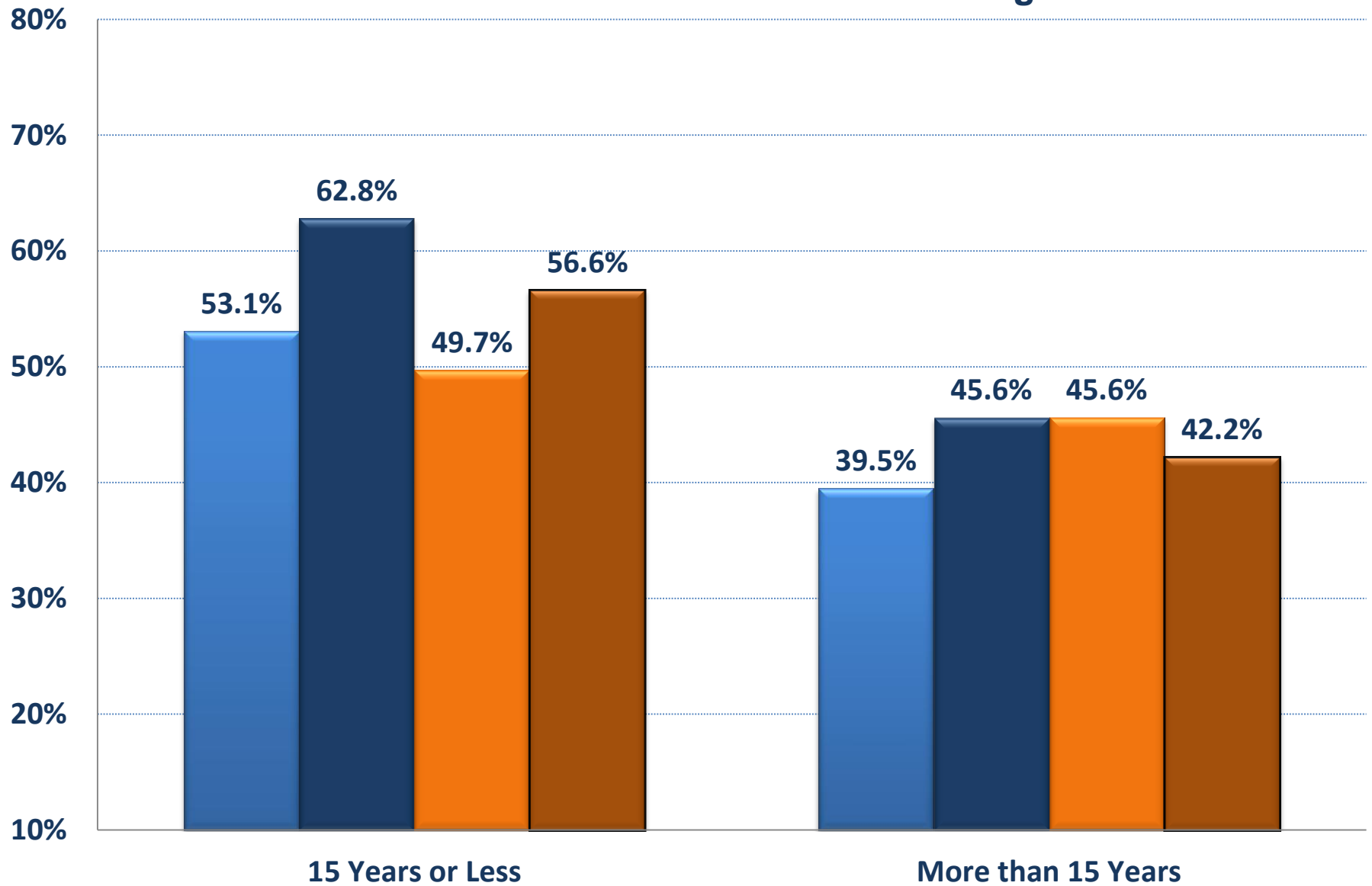
## Income



## Education



## Length of Residence

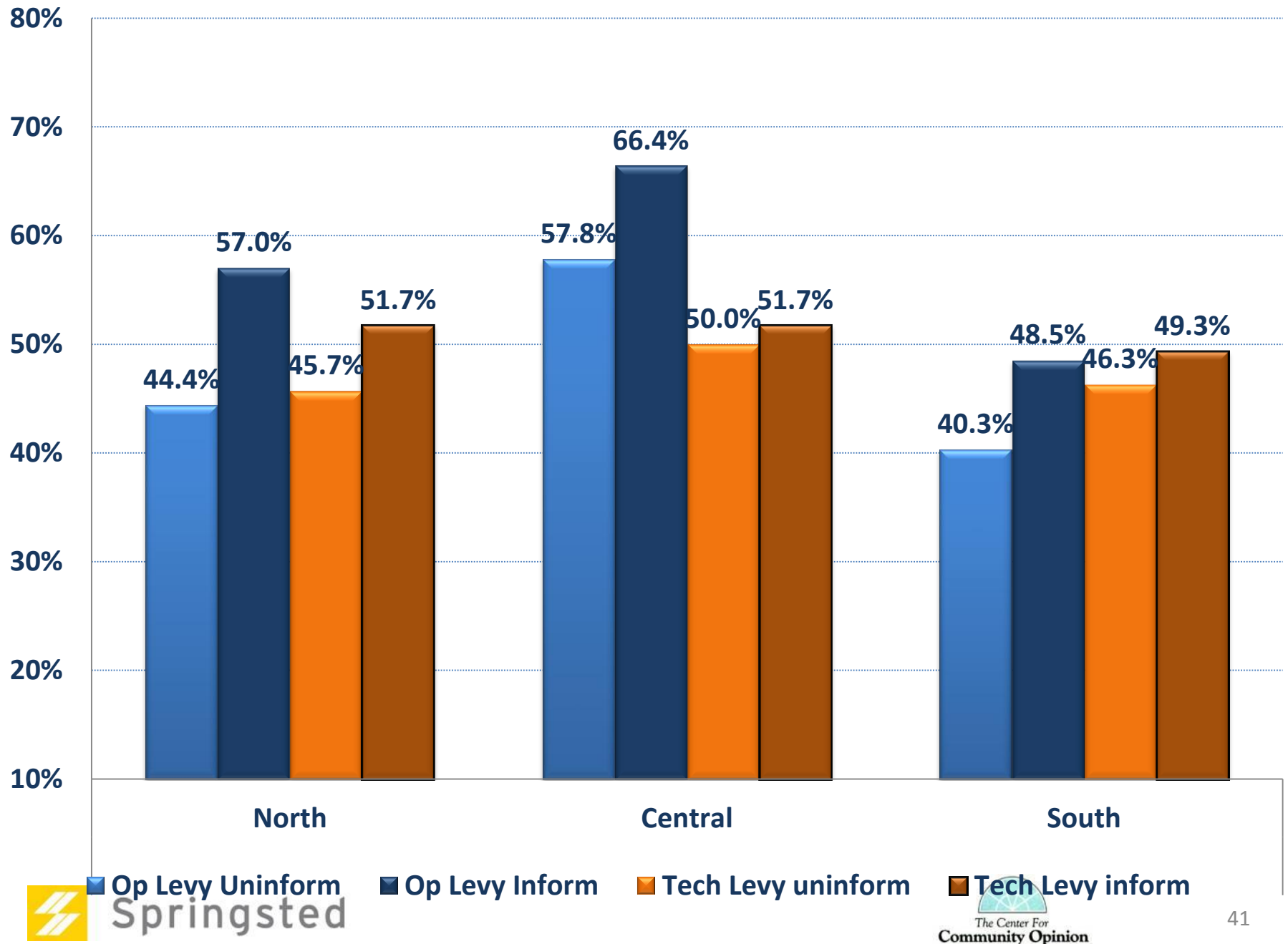


# Defining Areas

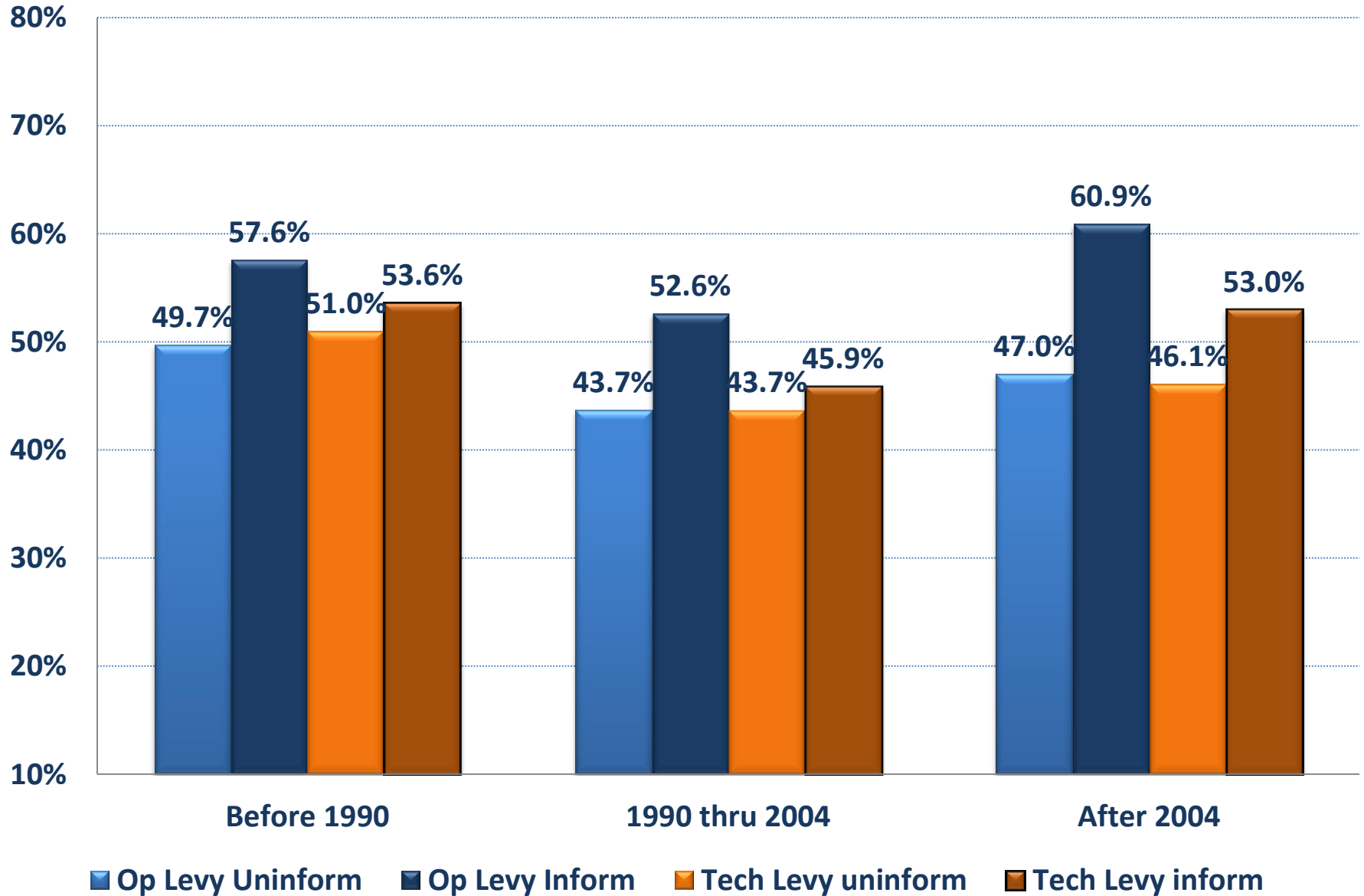
- Three areas were defined using the Wards and Townships found in the voter data.
  - **North:** Rochester W3, Rochester W6, Cascade Twps, Farmington Twp, Hammond, Hyde Park Twp, New Haven Twp, Oronoco, Oronoco Twp, Salem Twp, Viola Twp and Zumbro Twp.
  - **Central:** Rochester W2, Rochester W5 and Haverhill Twp.
  - **South:** Rochester W1, Rochester W4, Marion Twp, Pleasant Grove Twp, Rochester Twp and High Forest Twp.



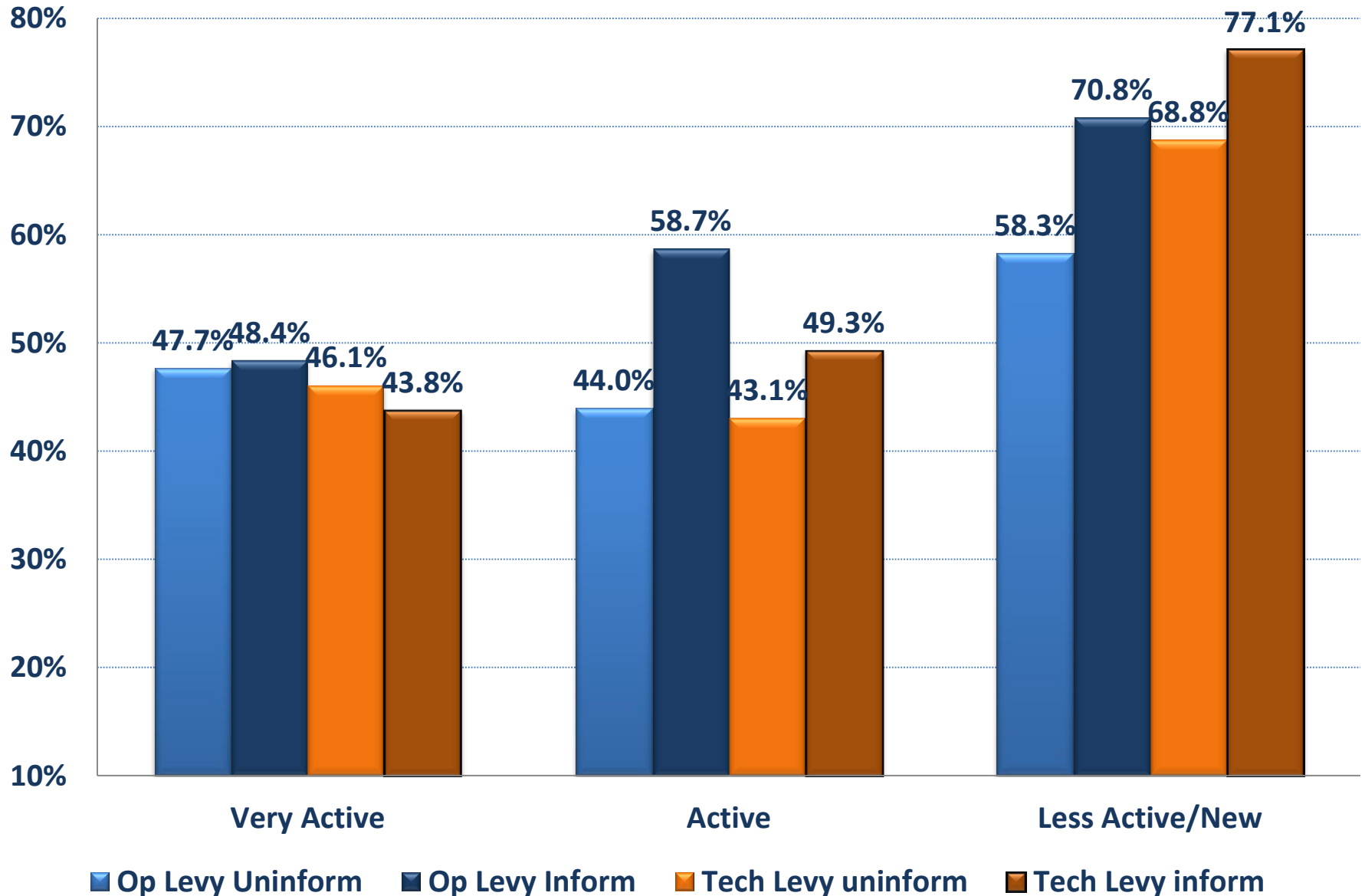
## Area of the District



## Registration Date

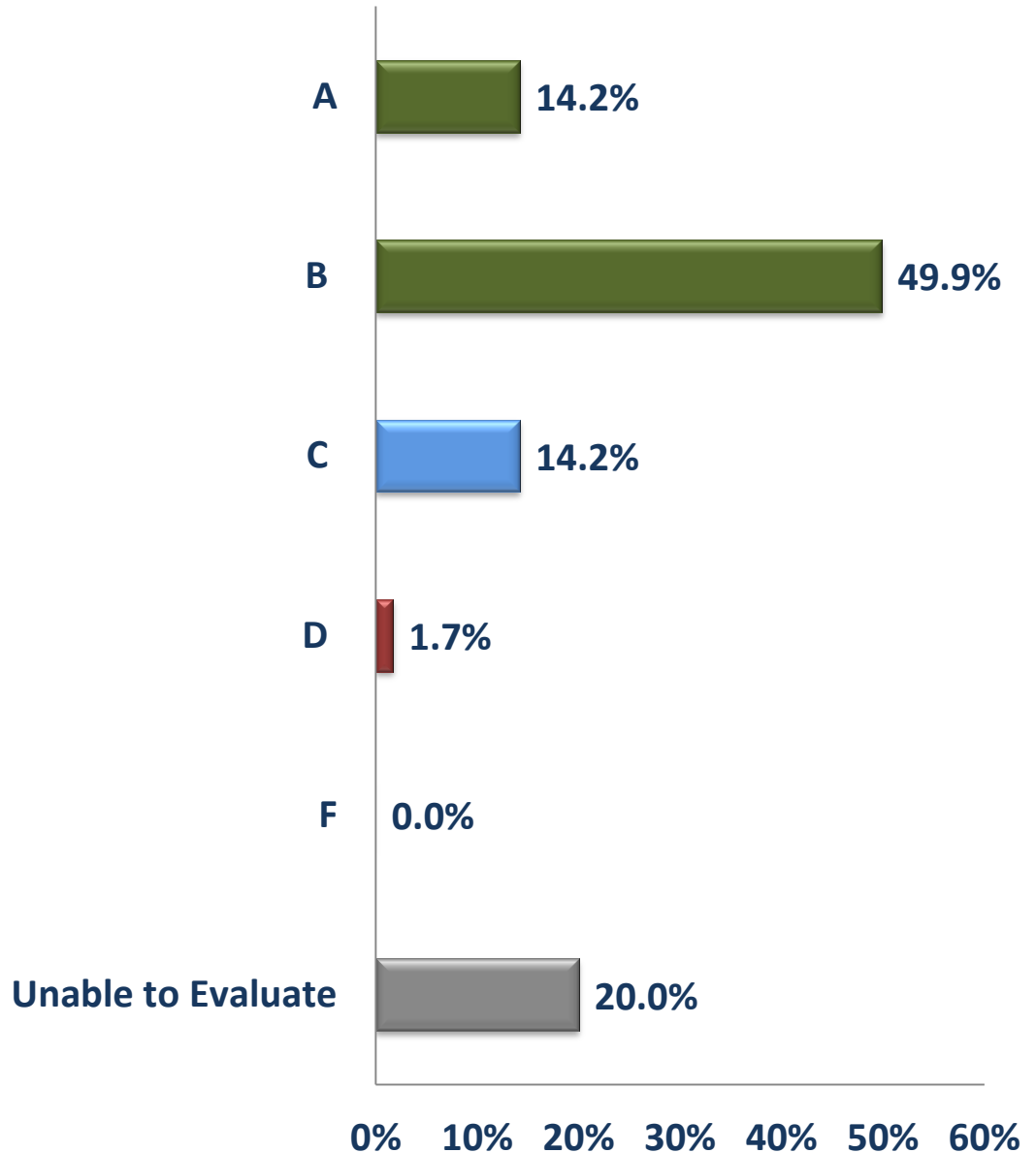


## Voter Activity Scale



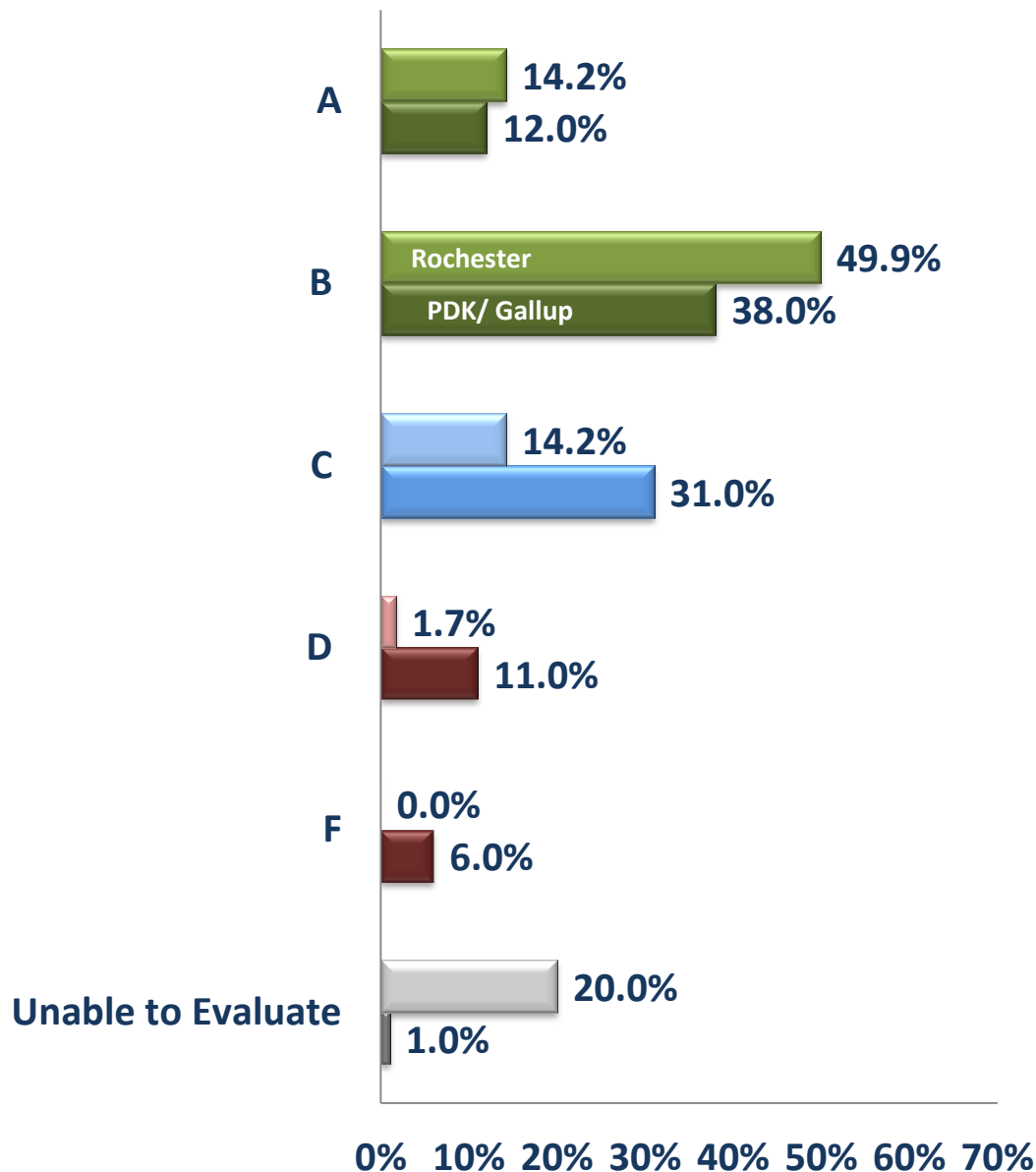
## Grade the District

“Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and F to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the schools in the Rochester School District were graded in the same way. What overall grade would you give the schools in the Rochester School District?”



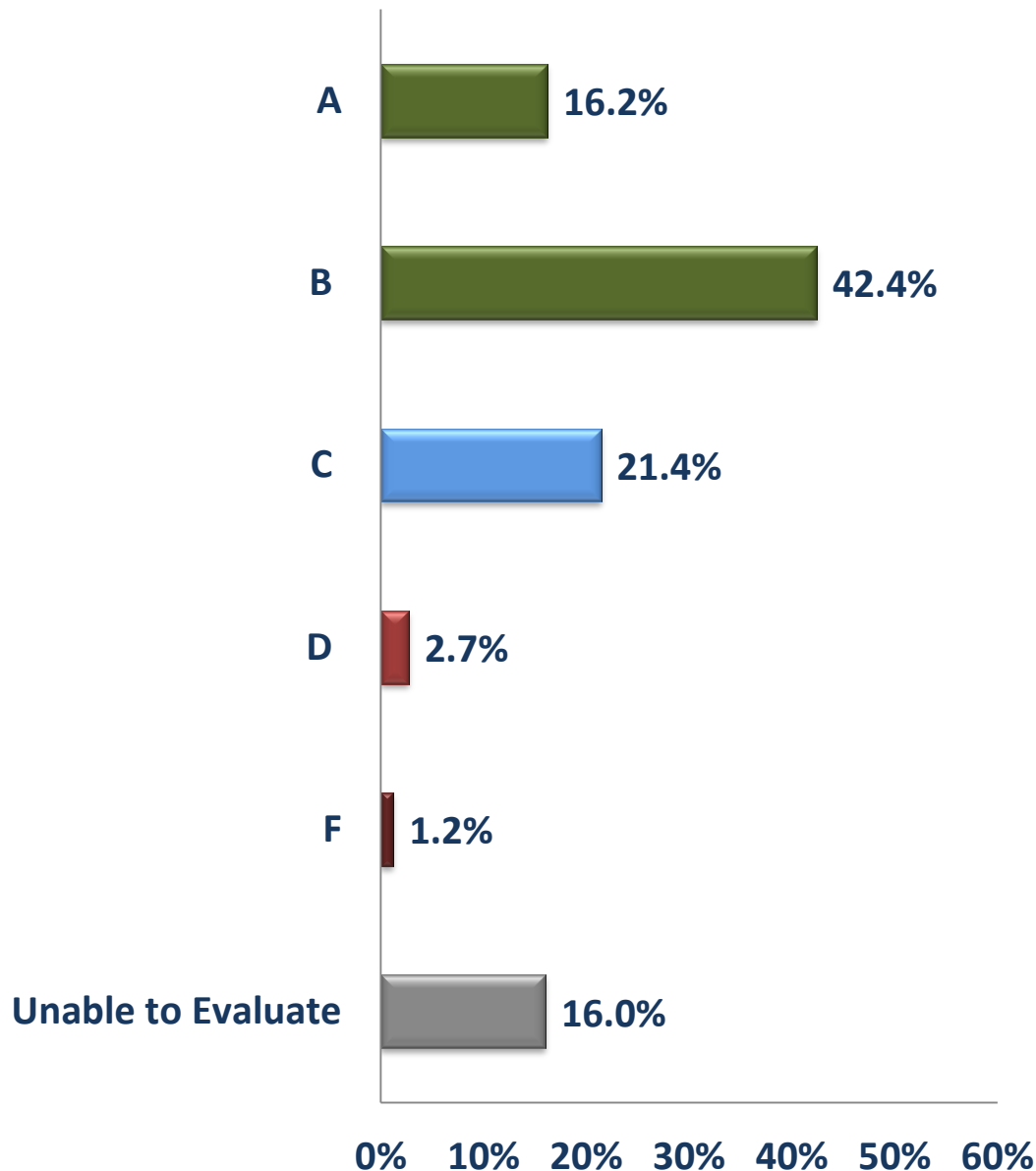
## Grade the District: Compared to National

Voters in the Rochester Public Schools are more likely to give their local schools an A or a B than are those interviewed nation-wide. They are also less likely to give the District a D or an F than those interviewed in a national survey. National numbers come from the 2014 Phi Delta Kappa/ Gallup annual Poll of the Public's Attitudes Towards the Public Schools.



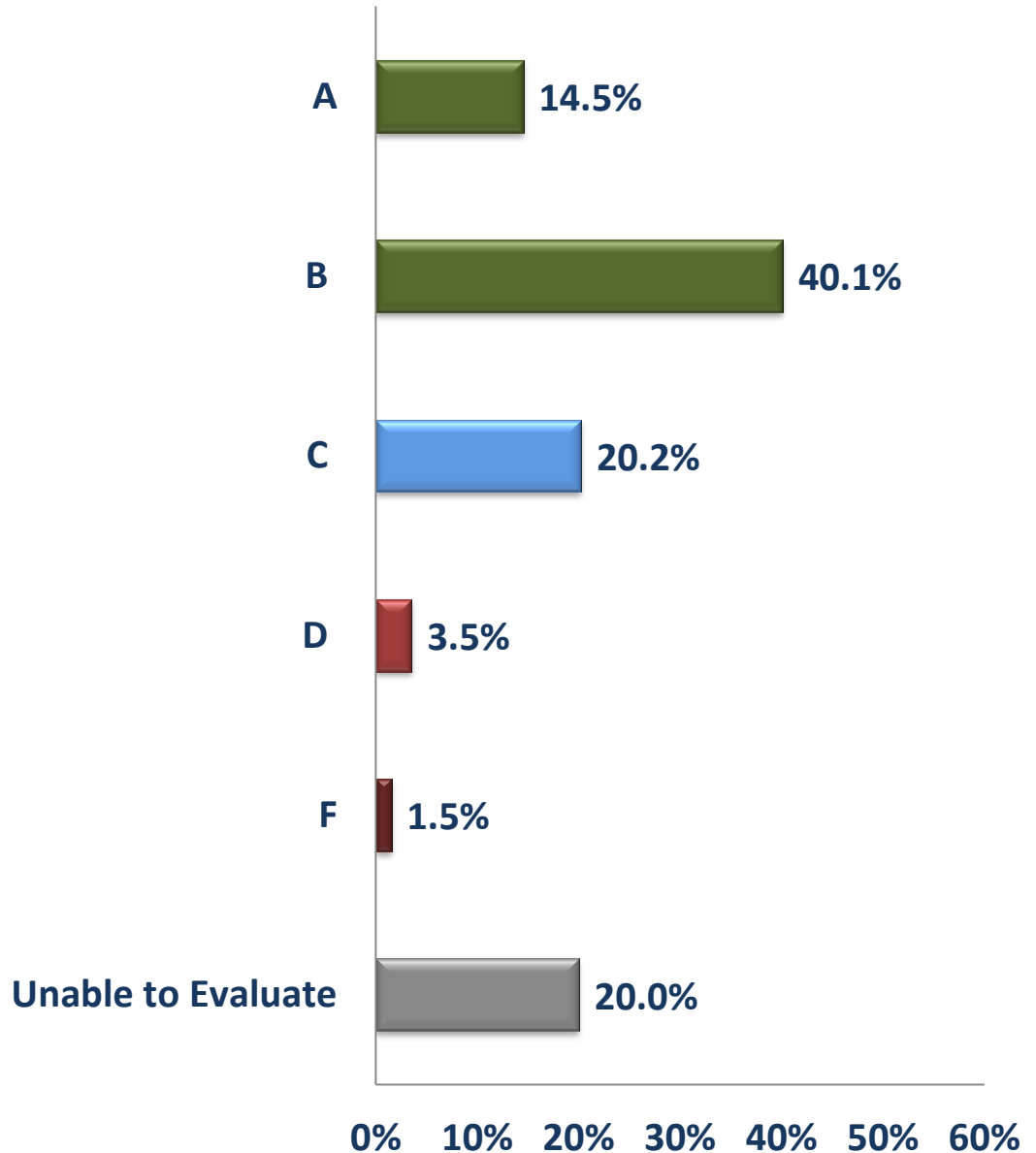
## Informed

“How would you grade the job the district has done keeping the public informed of District plans and events?”



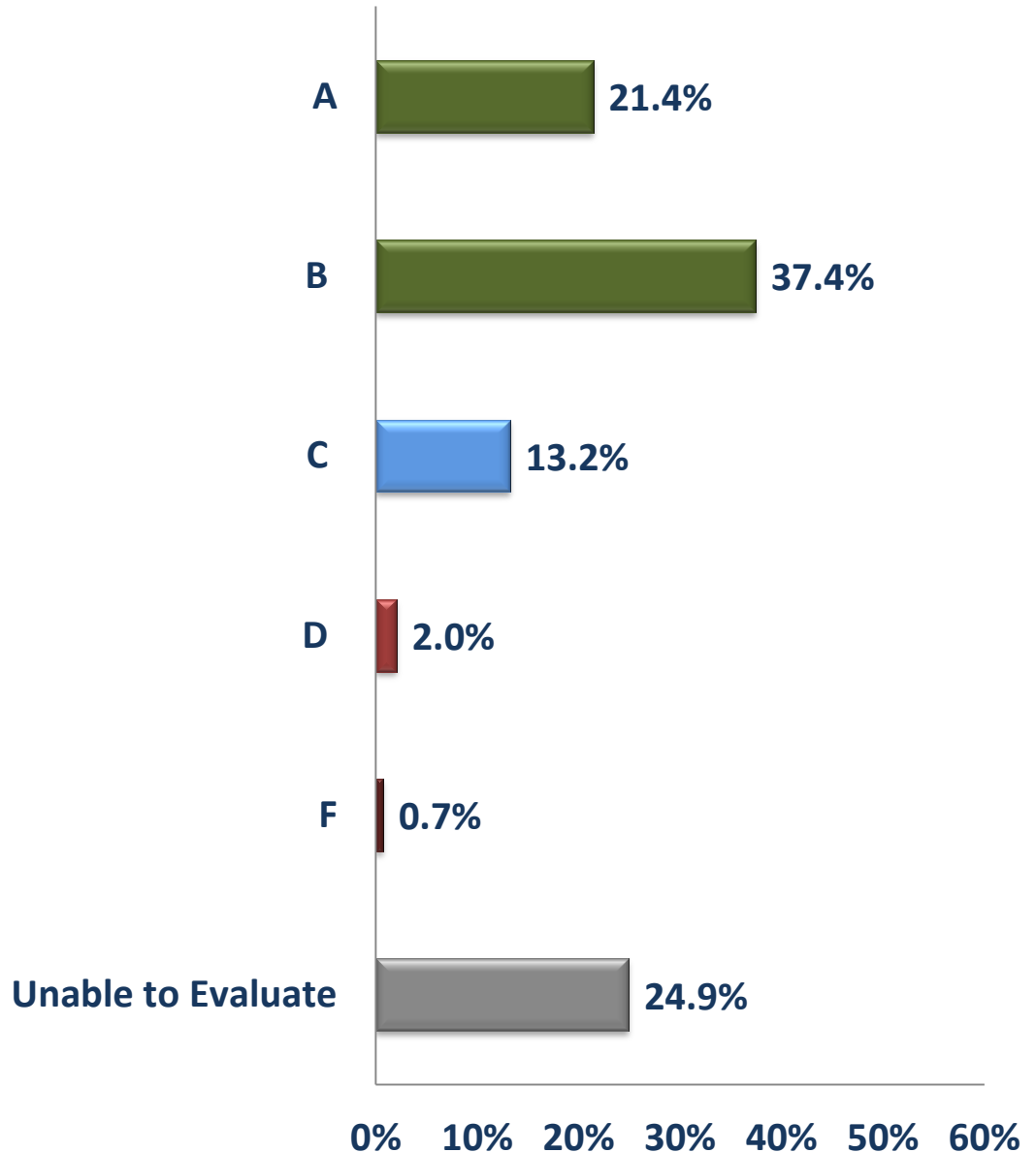
# Planning

“How would you grade the job the District has done planning for the educational needs of the community?”



# Computers and Technology

“How would you grade the job the District has done providing students and teachers with access to up-to-date classroom computers and technology?”

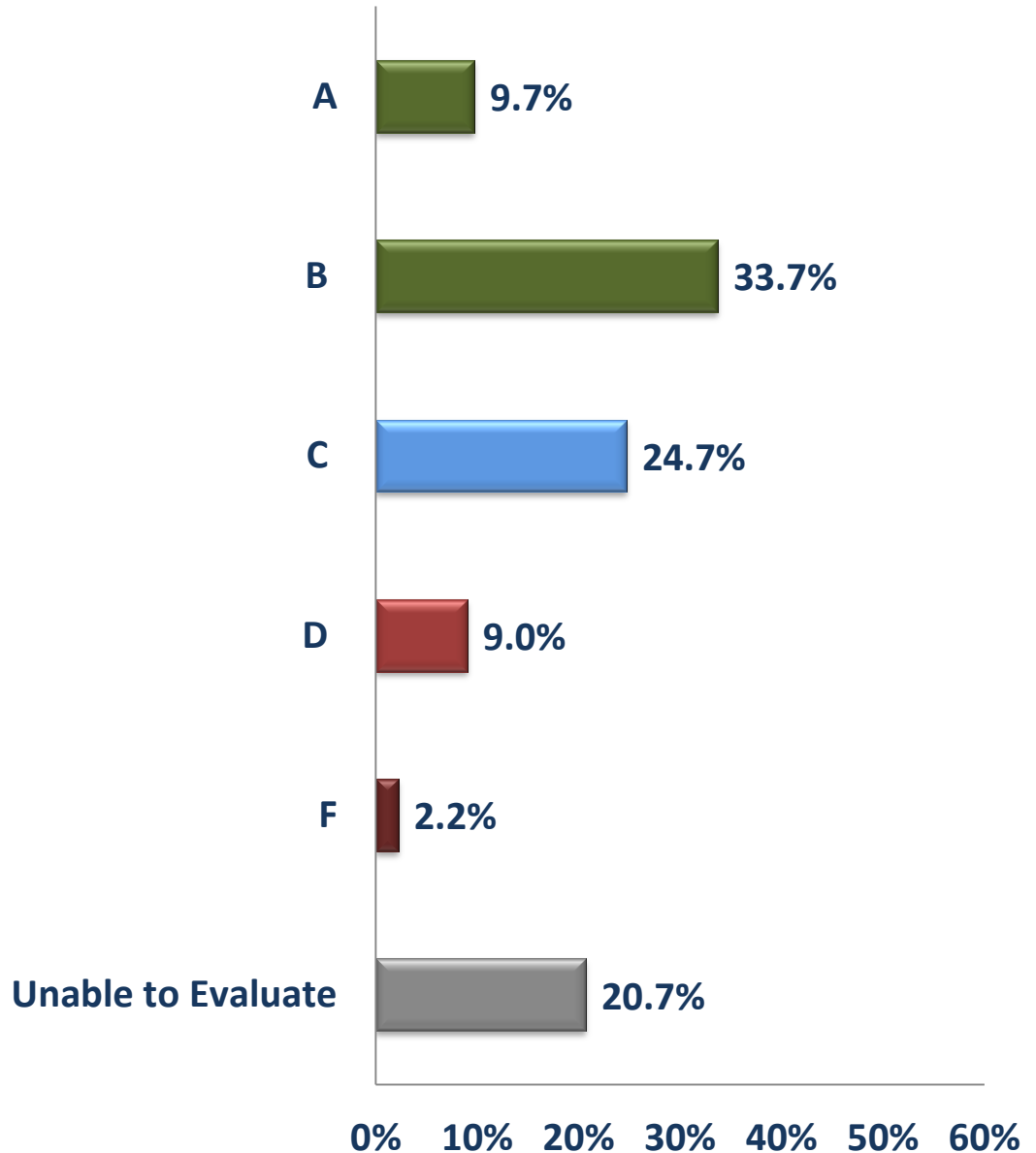




# Financial Management

“Consider the financial management of the Rochester Public Schools.

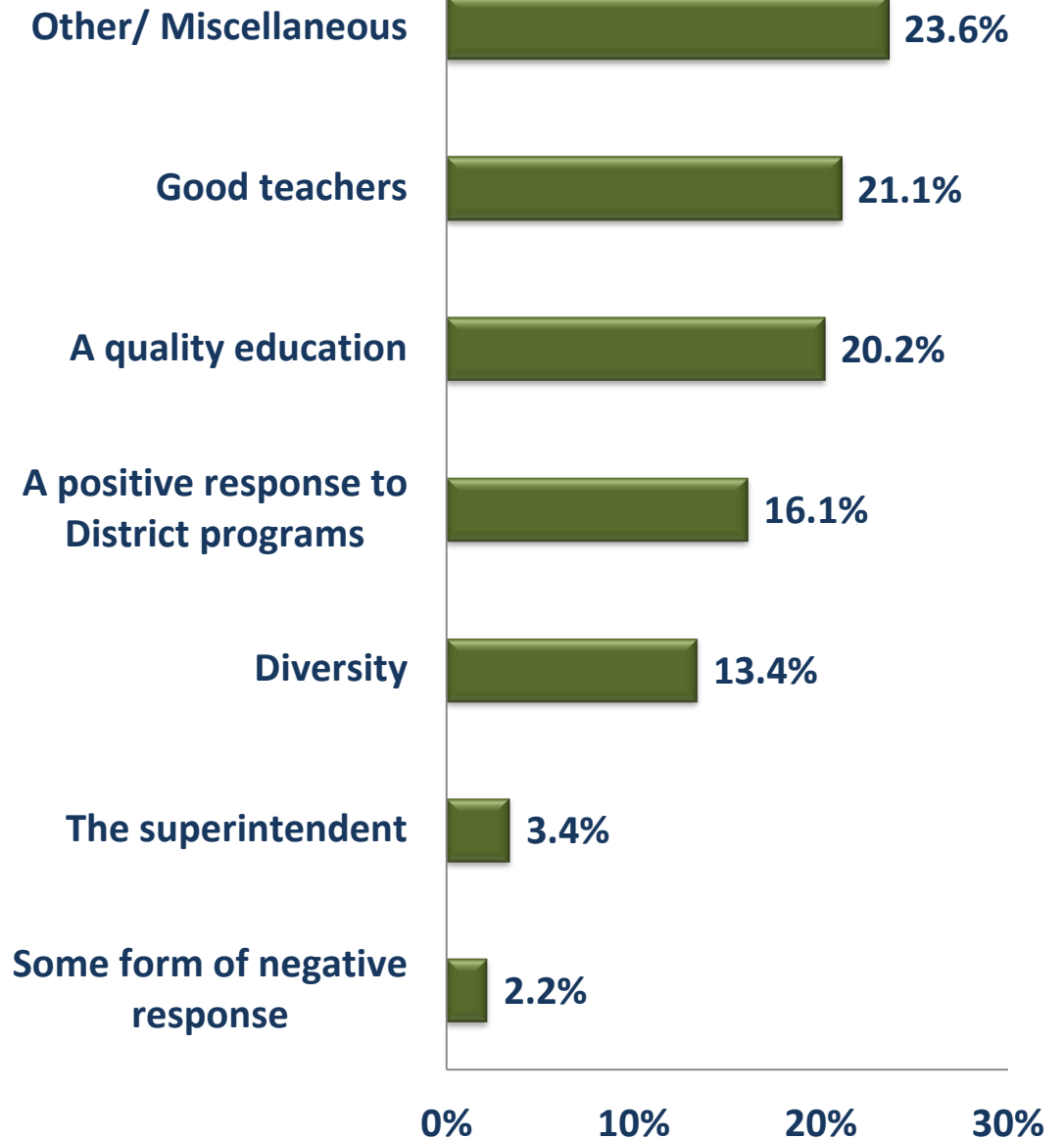
“What grade would you give the job the district has done managing its finances?”



## Greatest Strength

“Please tell me briefly  
what you believe is  
the best thing about  
Rochester Public  
Schools.”

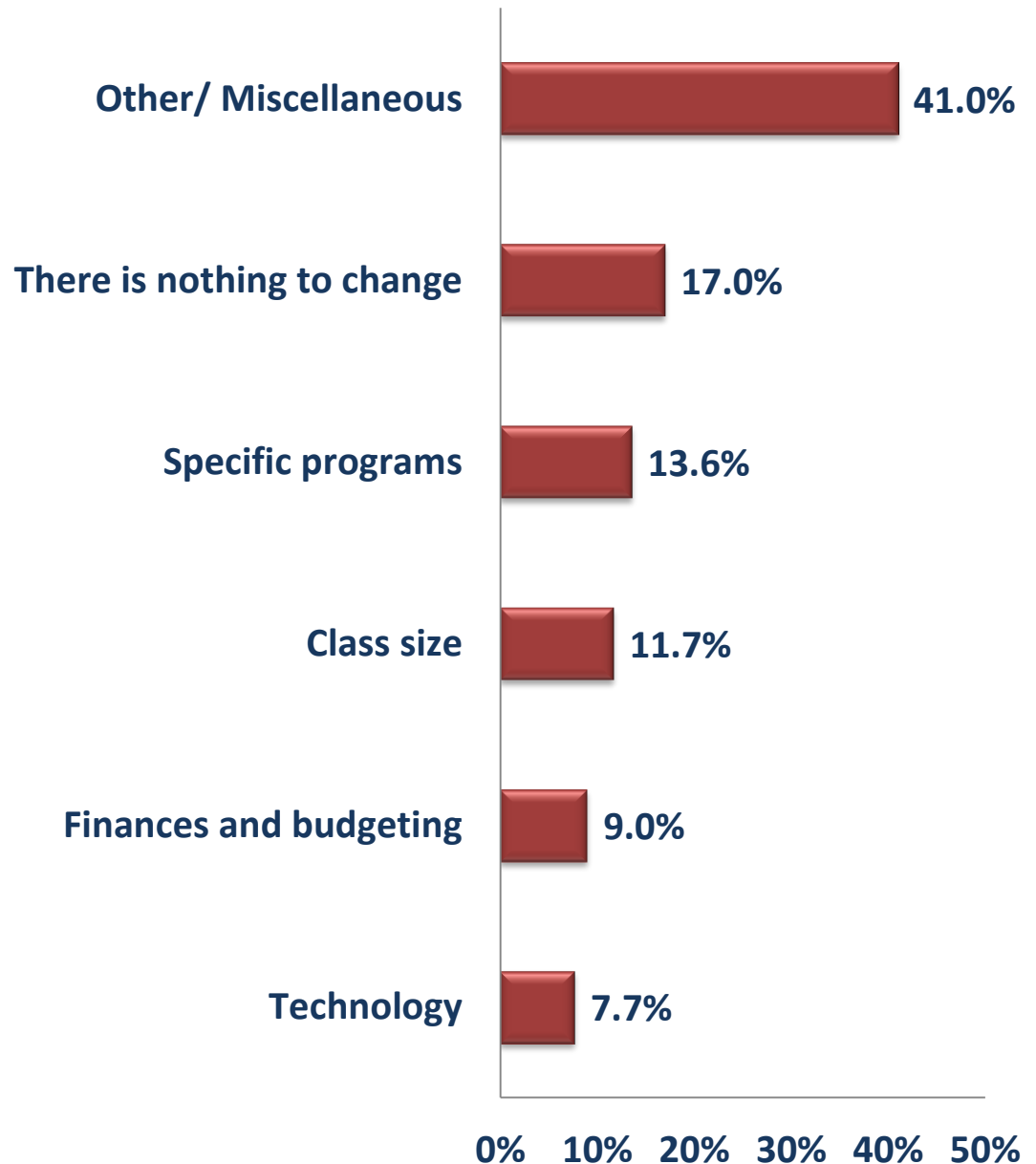
An open-ended question.



## Thing to Change

“If you could change one thing about Rochester Public Schools, please briefly describe what you would change.”

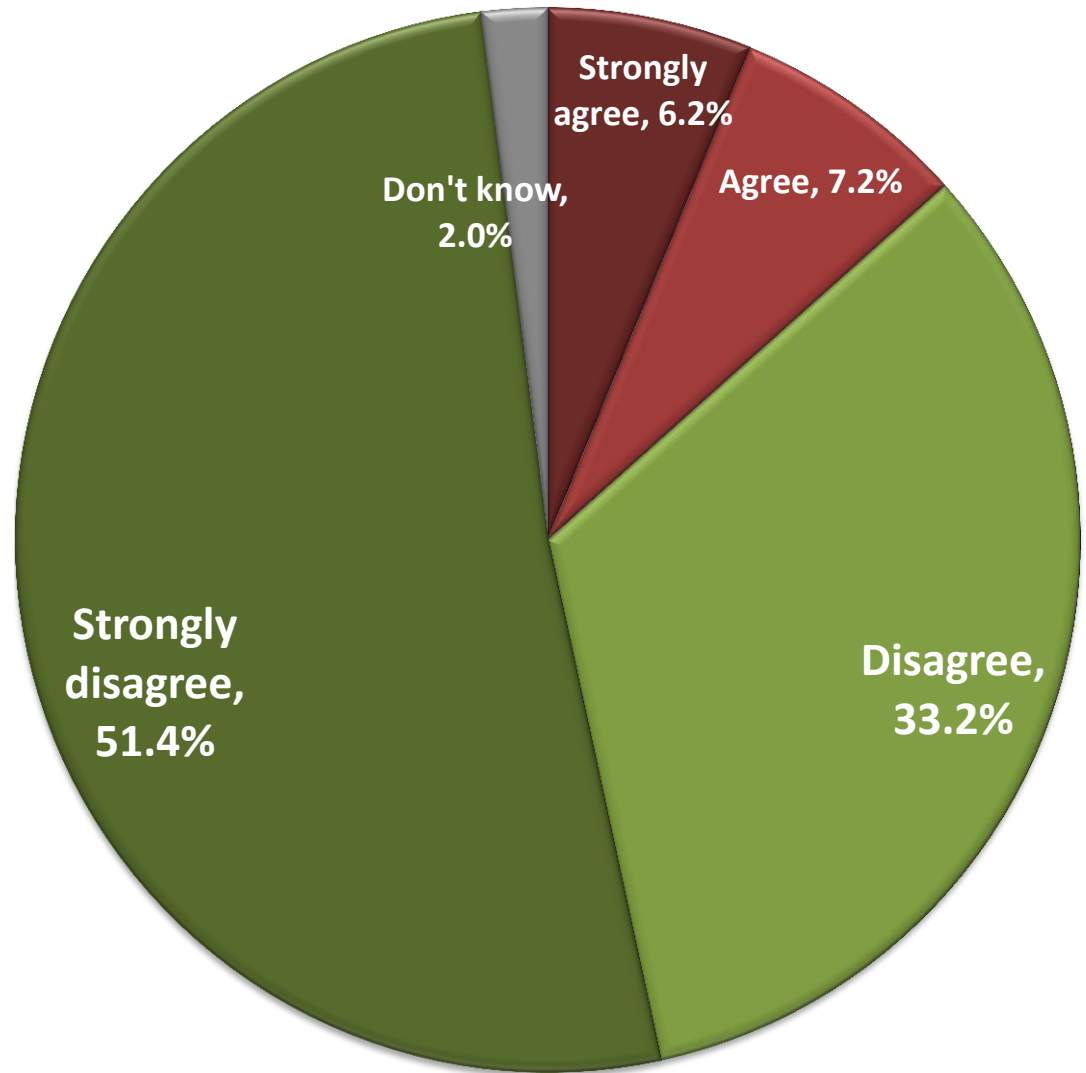
An open-ended question.



## Never

"Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement:

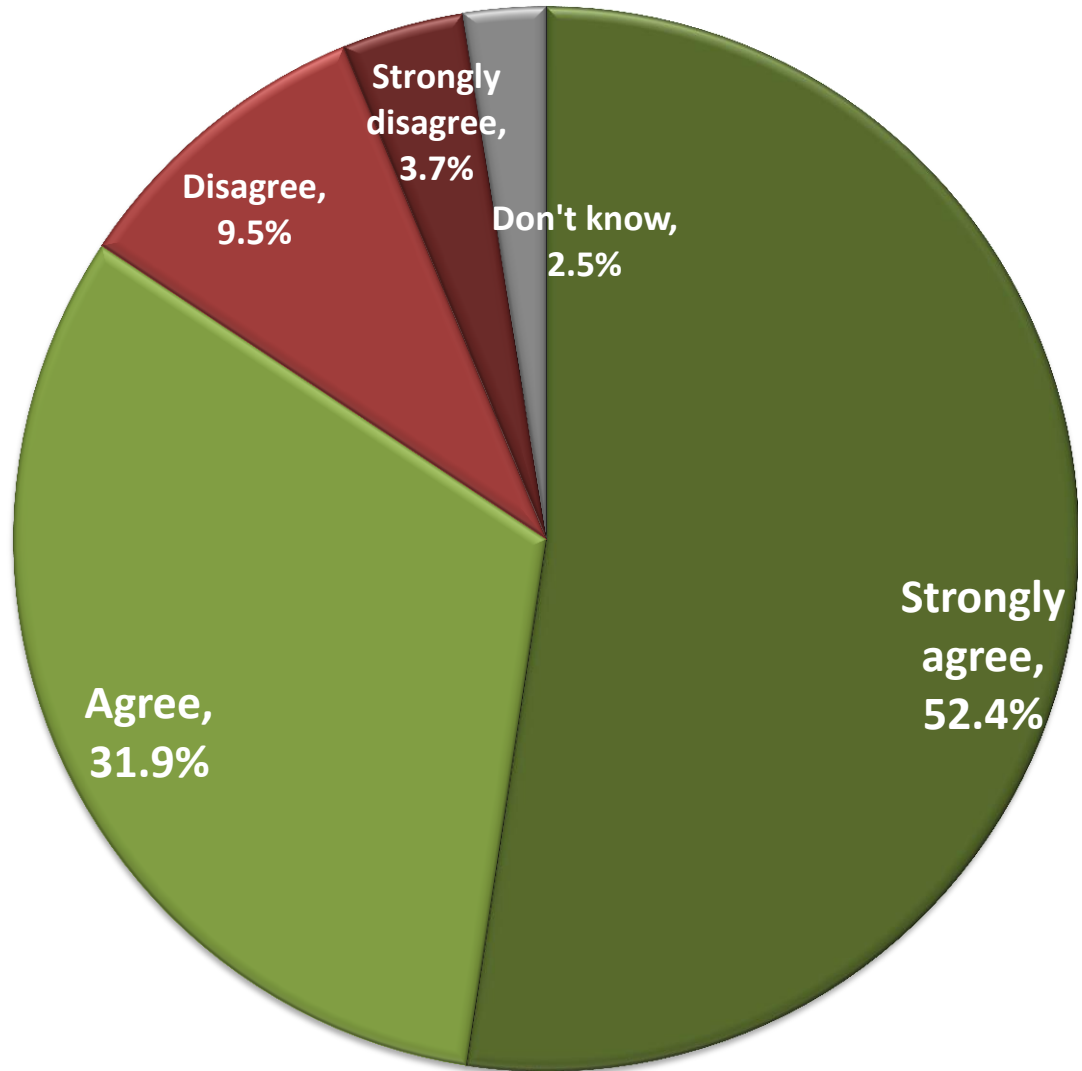
**"I would never vote for a tax increase no matter what the money would be used for."**



## Importance of Access

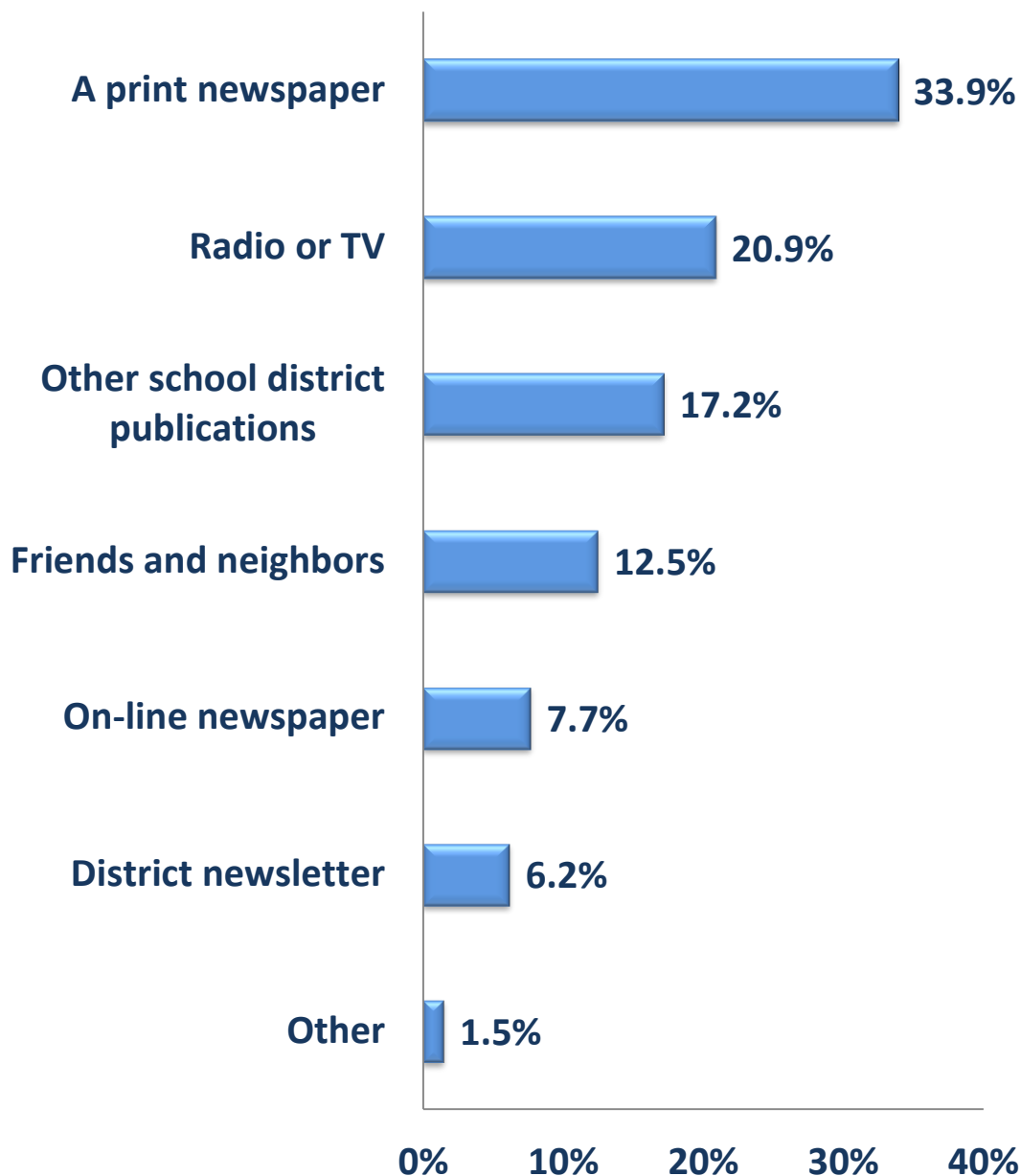
“Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement:

**“It is important to provide students and teachers with access to digital tools, resources and technology in order to prepare them for college, a career or to be future ready after high school.”**



## Source of Information

“Where do you receive most of your information about the Rochester Public Schools?”



# Conclusions and Recommendations

- **The presentation of information about the consequences of failing to renew and increase the District's existing operating level produces majority support for a small increase.**
  - Before information about the consequences of failing to renew and increase the levy was presented, 46.9% said they would support such a proposal with 29.9% opposed and 21.4% undecided.
  - After the presentation of information, support increased to 56.9% with opposition essentially unchanged at 26.4%. The percentage undecided dropped to 15.7%.
  - To be successful, we recommend that the cost of increasing the levy not exceed \$125 for a home with a value of \$200,000. This cost made 54.4% say they would favor such a proposal with 37.4% opposed and 7.5% undecided.
  - All of the statements presented in the survey concerning the consequences of failing to renew and increase the levy made at least 50% more likely to support the proposal. Two statements made more than 60% more likely to vote for such a proposal:
    - Q15. If the levy is not renewed and increased the District will be forced to reduce its budget for classroom supplies, including textbooks **(61.1% more likely)**.
    - 11. If the levy is not renewed and increased District class sizes will increase **(60.6% more likely)**.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

- **There is a weaker level of support available for a technology levy although voters have a positive reaction to the lower cost of such a proposal.**
  - Before information about the ways technology levy funds would be used to benefit students and teachers was presented, 47.1% said they would support such a proposal with 33.7% opposed and 19.2% undecided.
  - After the presentation of information, support increased to 50.9% with 36.2% opposed and 14% undecided. Given the margin of error for this study, the increase in the level of support is too small to be significant.
  - To be successful, we recommend that the cost of a technology levy be set at or below \$58 for a home with a value of \$200,000. The presentation of a cost of \$67 for the same home made 50.6% favor such a proposal. Given the margin of error of this study, this response represents a narrow win or a narrow loss. The presentation of a cost of \$51 made 57.9% favor such a proposal, a cost clearly acceptable to local voters. Using both responses, we recommend a maximum cost of \$58 for a home with a value of \$200,000.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

- Five of the seven statements presented in the survey concerning the ways in which technology levy funds would benefit students and teachers made at least 50% more likely to support the proposal. Two statements made more than 60% more likely to vote for such a proposal:
  - 30. Funds will be used to maintain and keep up-to-date classroom computers and technology **(71.1% more likely)**.
  - Q31. Levy funds will be used to keep technology well maintained and current **(66.6% more likely)**.
- The two statements that made fewer than 50% more likely to support a technology levy concerned using the funds to provide students with equipment. There were:
  - Q33. Levy funds will be used to provide all students from kindergarten to 12th grade with age-appropriate digital devices **(45.4% more likely/ 40.4% less likely)**.
  - Q29. Funds will be used to provide every student with portable technology, like an iPad. **(38.9% more likely/ 46.6% less likely)**.
- **If both proposals were placed on the same ballot, the total cost to taxpayers would need to be kept at or below \$125 for a home with a value of \$200,000.**
  - The idea of presenting voters with a two question ballot was tested in two ways in this survey. Half of those interviewed were asked if they would vote for both proposals without reference to cost. In response, both proposals with majority support with 66.5% supporting the operating levy and 55.4% supporting the technology levy.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

- The other half of those interviewed were asked if they would vote for both proposals knowing that the total cost for a home with a value of \$200,000 would be \$226. In response, both proposals would narrowly win or narrowly fail with 53% supporting the operating levy and 49% supporting the technology levy.
- We therefore recommend that the total cost of the two proposals if placed on the same ballot be set at or below \$125 for such a home. This cost is recommended because it is the highest acceptable cost measured in this survey.
- The perception of the District is very good.
  - When asked to grade the schools in the District, 64.1% gave the District an A or a B.
  - When asked to grade the job the District has done keeping the public informed, 58.6% gave the District an A or a B.
  - When asked to grade the job the District has done planning for the needs of the community, 54.6% gave the District an A or a B.
  - When asked to grade the job the District has done providing access to up-to-date computers and technology, 58.8% gave the District an A or a B.
  - When asked to grade the financial management of the District, 43.4% gave the District an A or a B.