

**School District of River Falls**  
**Project Oversight Committee**  
Wednesday, October 25, 2023 - 3:00 PM  
District Office  
852 E Division Street  
River Falls, Wisconsin 54022

Educational Program Committee members: Alan Tuchtenhagen (Chair), Lindsey Curtis, & Cindy Holbrook  
Agendas can be viewed at <https://www.rfsd.k12.wi.us/district/school-board.cfm> or at  
<https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Organization/1447>

**1. CALL TO ORDER - 3:00PM**

**2. MANNER OF PUBLIC NOTIFICATION OF MEETING**

**3. HEARING OF VISITORS OR DELEGATIONS**

**4. Review Community Referendum Survey Results**

**2**

**Description:** The committee will review the Community Referendum Survey results in order to develop a recommendation to the full Board of Education regarding the scope of facility improvements to be included on the February 20, 2024 ballot.

**Recommended Action:** None, informational only.

**5. Consideration of adjourning to closed session pursuant to Wis. Stat. sec. 19.85(1)(e), which permits convening in closed session for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session, to review the facility assessment and detailed cost estimates. Roll call vote required.**

**6. CONVENE TO CLOSED SESSION**

**7. RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION AND AFFIRM ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION IF NECESSARY**

**8. ADJOURN**



# School District of River Falls

Community Survey Report  
October 16, 2023

# Contents



**Background Info**



**Survey/Respondent  
Information**



**Results & Analysis**



**Wrap-up/Questions**





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

- Founded in **2002** to provide independent research
- Conducted over **10,000** staff, parent, and student, and community surveys for school improvement
- Helped more than **900** districts navigate the strategic planning and referendum planning process



# Survey Deployment Process

- Residences in the district were mailed a survey.
- Parents and staff were also emailed a survey participation link.
- All surveys include a one-time-use access code.

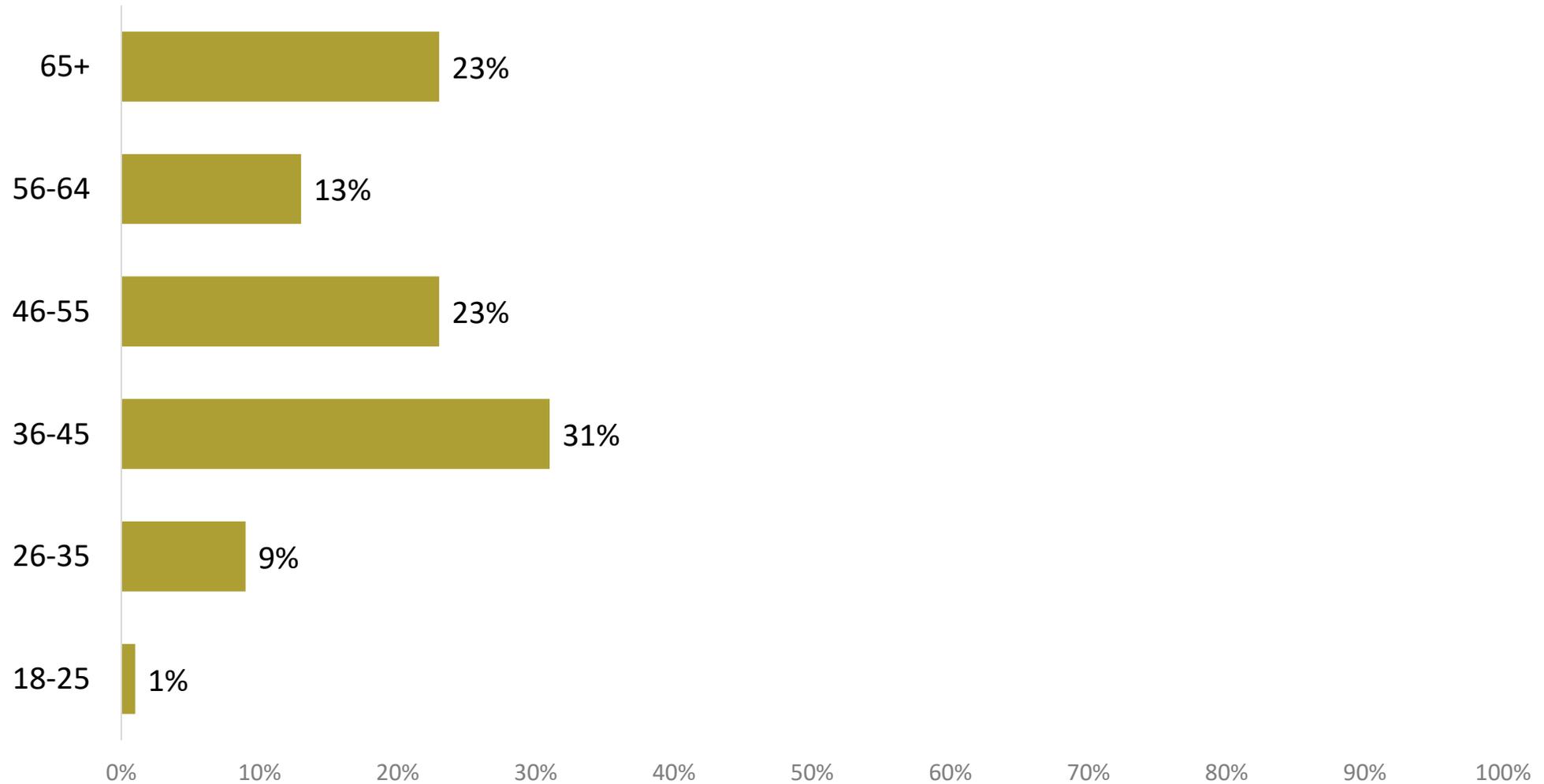


# Survey Information

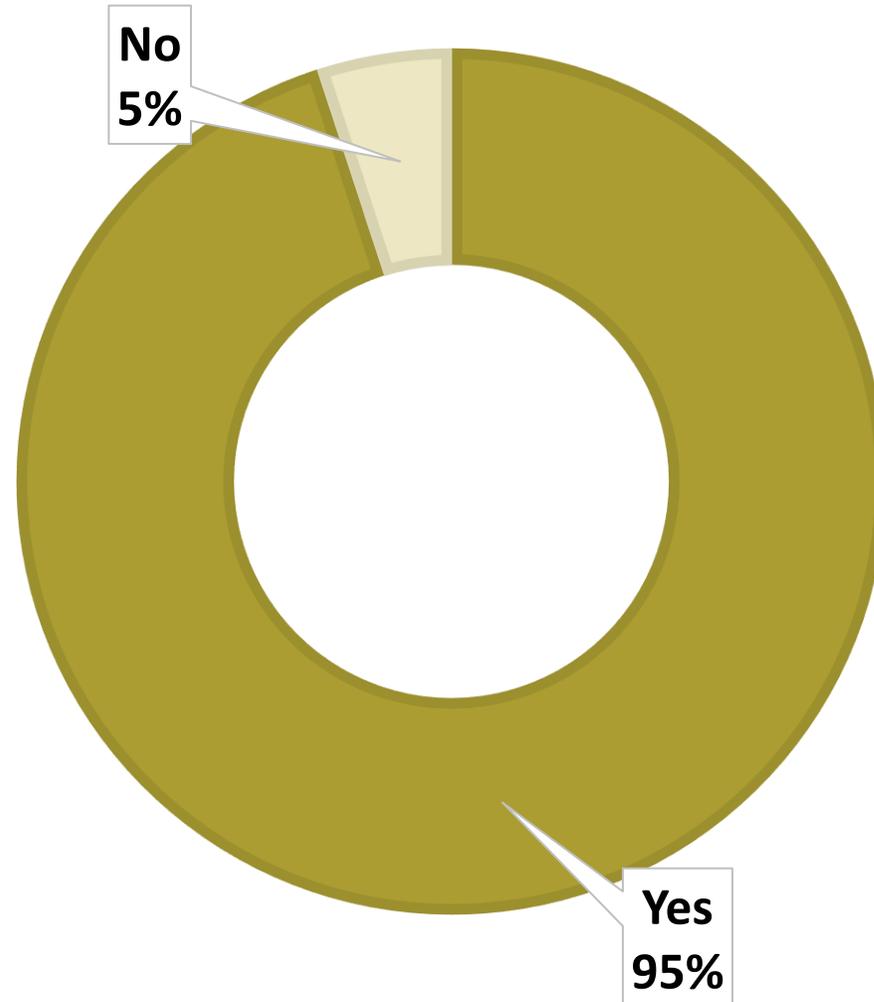
- Survey deadline **October 3, 2023**
- **1,995** total respondents (1,547 in 2019-20)
- **19%** response rate
- **+/- 2.22%** margin of error



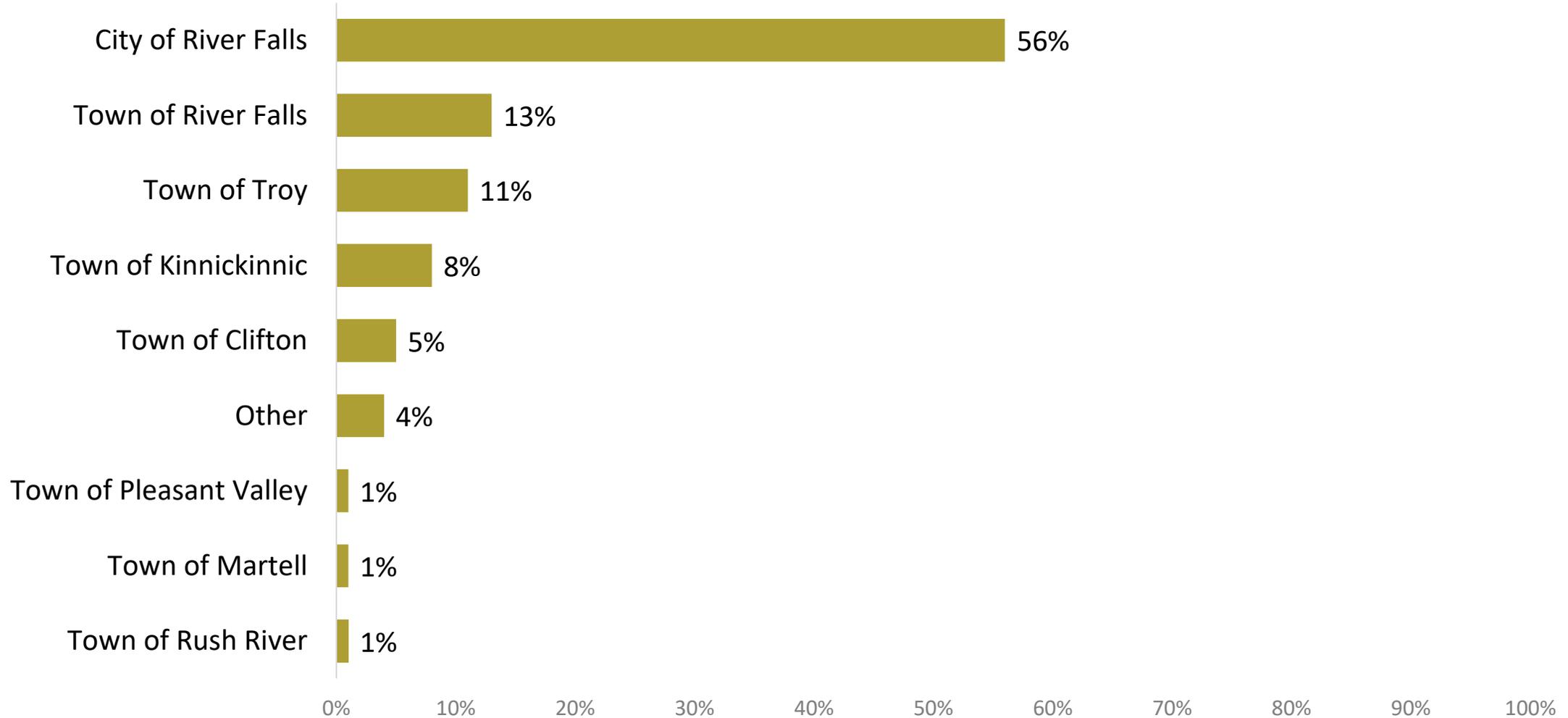
# What is your age?



# Do you live in the School District of River Falls?



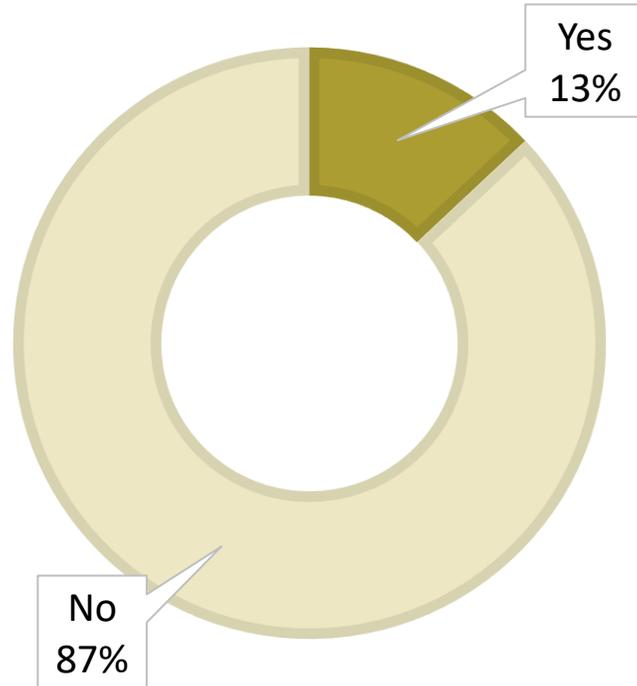
# In which city/township do you reside?



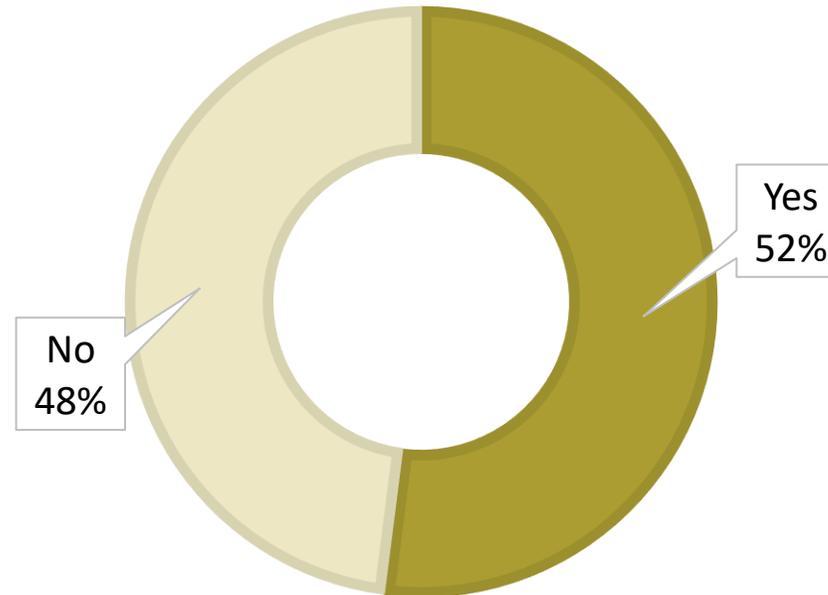
# Respondent Information



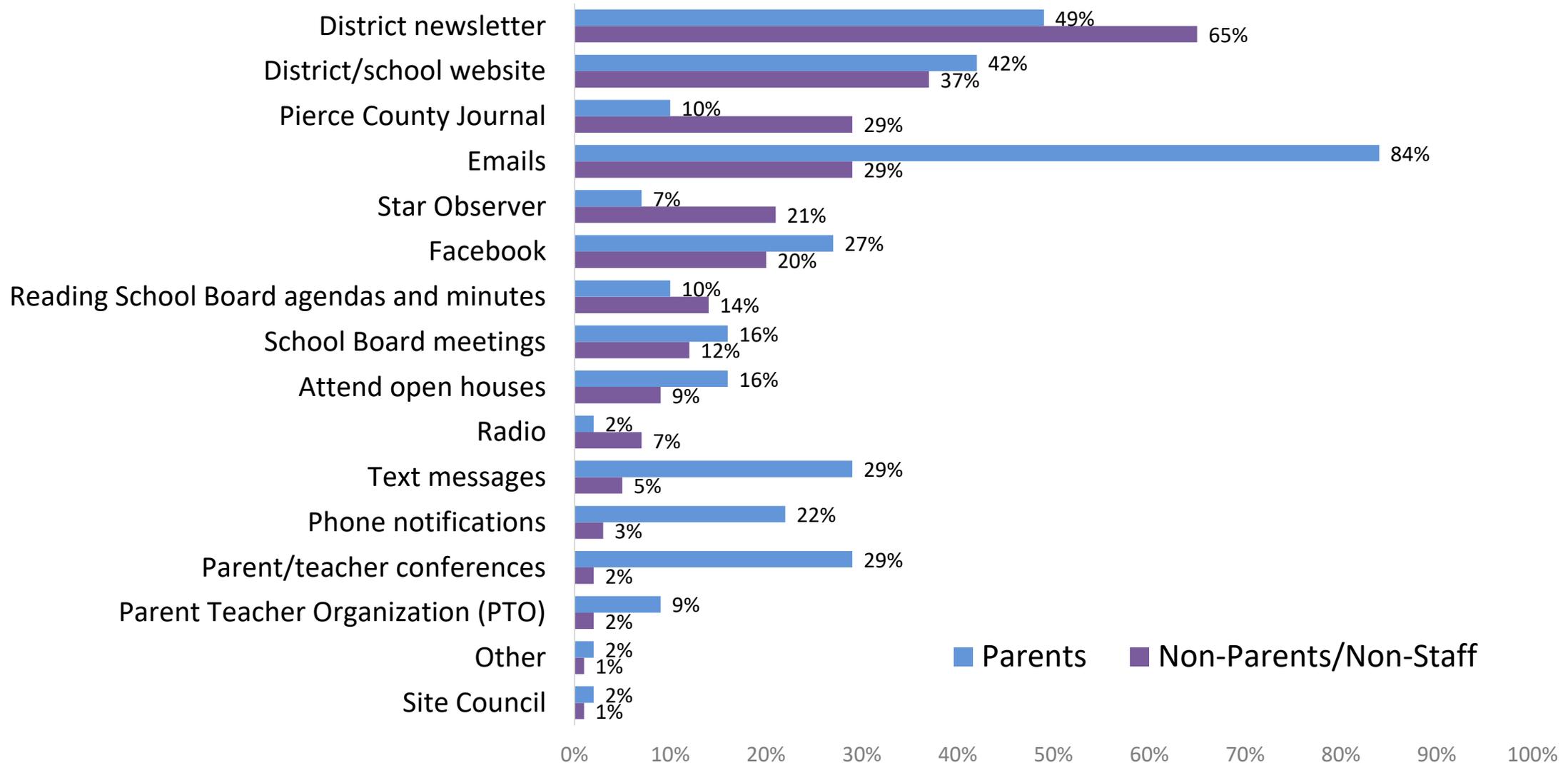
Are you an employee of the School District of River Falls?



Do you have children attending a school in the District?



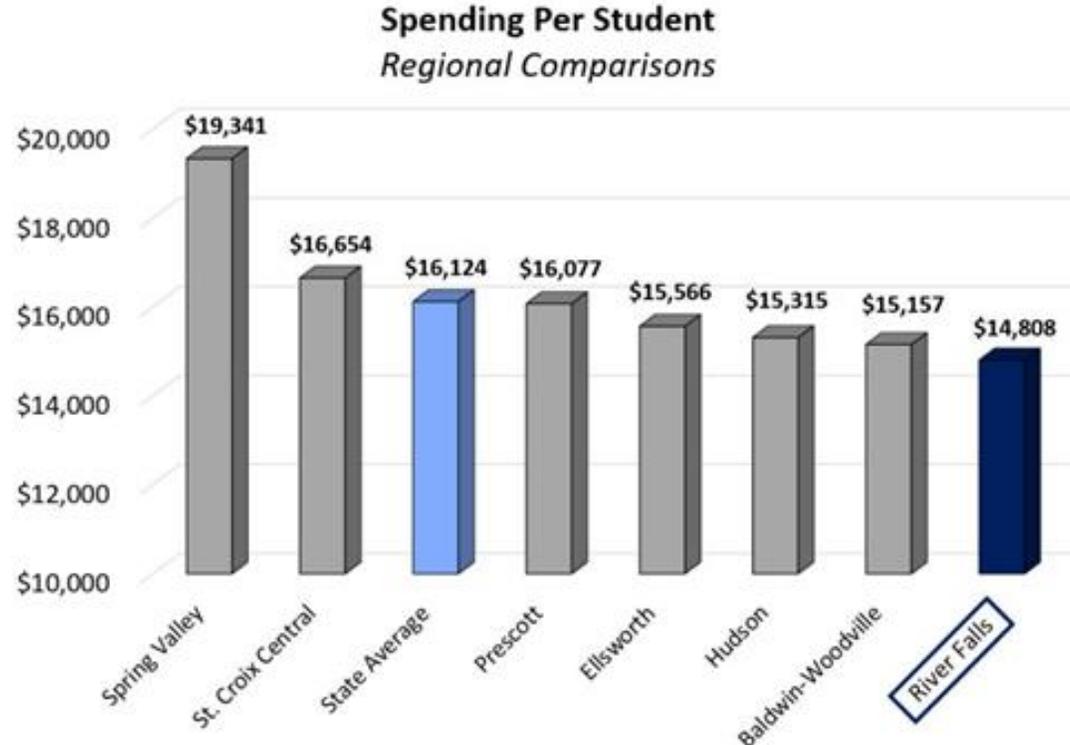
# How do you like to receive school/District information?



# Funding Challenges



Although the most recent budget passed by the state increased school funding, the money we receive on a per-student basis remains near the bottom of all districts in Wisconsin. Based on the most current data available, the School District of River Falls ranked 333<sup>rd</sup> out of 421 districts in the state.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction School Financial Services Data Warehouse

# Referendum Funding



There are two types of referenda voters can approve to provide schools with additional funding.

1. A **capital (facilities) referendum** allows a district to issue debt (take out a loan) to pay for major facility improvements. This is the type of referendum River Falls voters supported in 2018.

2. An **operational referendum** allows districts to exceed the state-imposed revenue limit to fund daily operations. The School District of River Falls has not yet pursued this type of referendum in the past 25 years. However, 84% of other districts in Wisconsin have sought such support.

# Funding for Operations



The District has been hampered by low revenue compared to most other schools in the state. As a result, we are projecting the budget deficit to grow to more than \$3 million over the next three years.

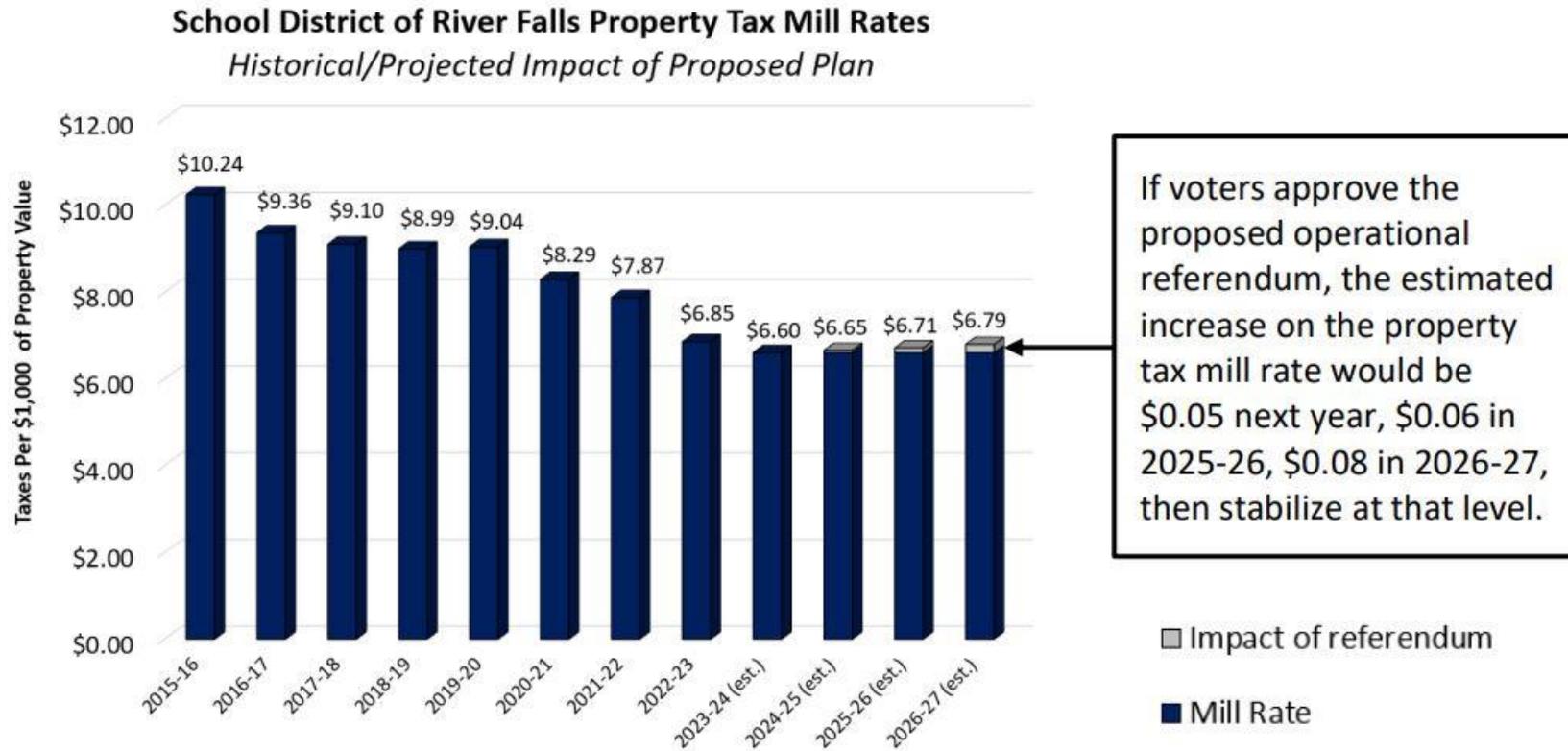
In February 2024, the School Board will be asking voters to consider an operational referendum that would provide \$1 million next year, \$2 million in the 2025-26 school year, and then \$3 million on an ongoing/recurring basis to pay for:

- ✓ **Current Programs and Services:** This includes all academic and co-curricular offerings, student support services, summer school, advanced high school courses, and maintaining class sizes.
- ✓ **High-Quality Staffing:** In order to attract and retain high-quality staff, we need to remain competitive in our region for staff wages and benefits. Our compensation is below average for teachers and some support staff groups in our regional comparisons.
- ✓ **Paying for Increasing Operational Costs:** This includes safety and security systems, curriculum materials, utilities, insurance, transportation, fuel, and technology.

# Funding for Operations (Continued)

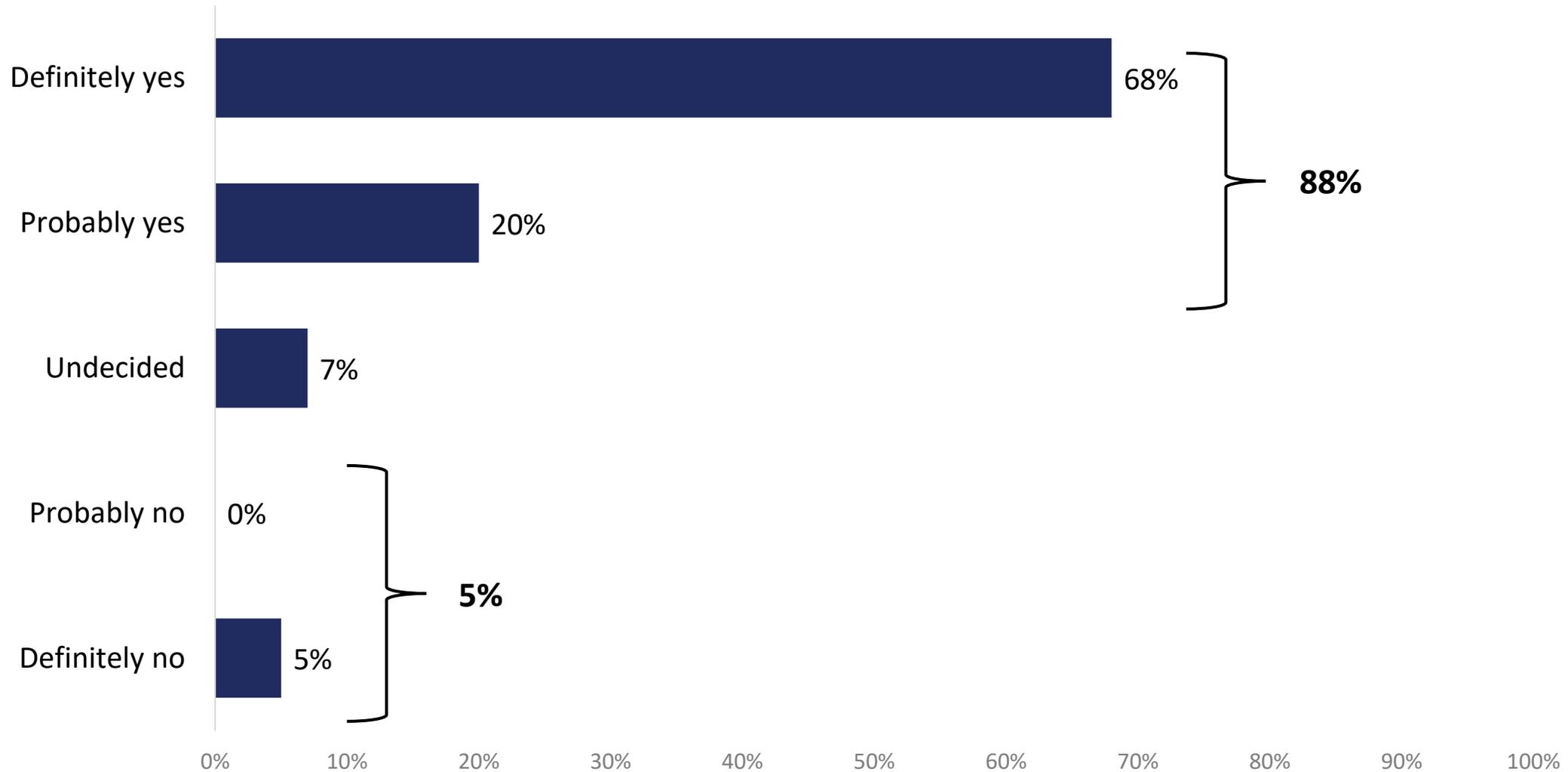


The chart below shows the historical tax mill rates (which are used to calculate a school district's share of local property taxes). It also shows the estimated tax mill rate impact of the proposed operational referendum and reflects a 16% increase in property values this year.



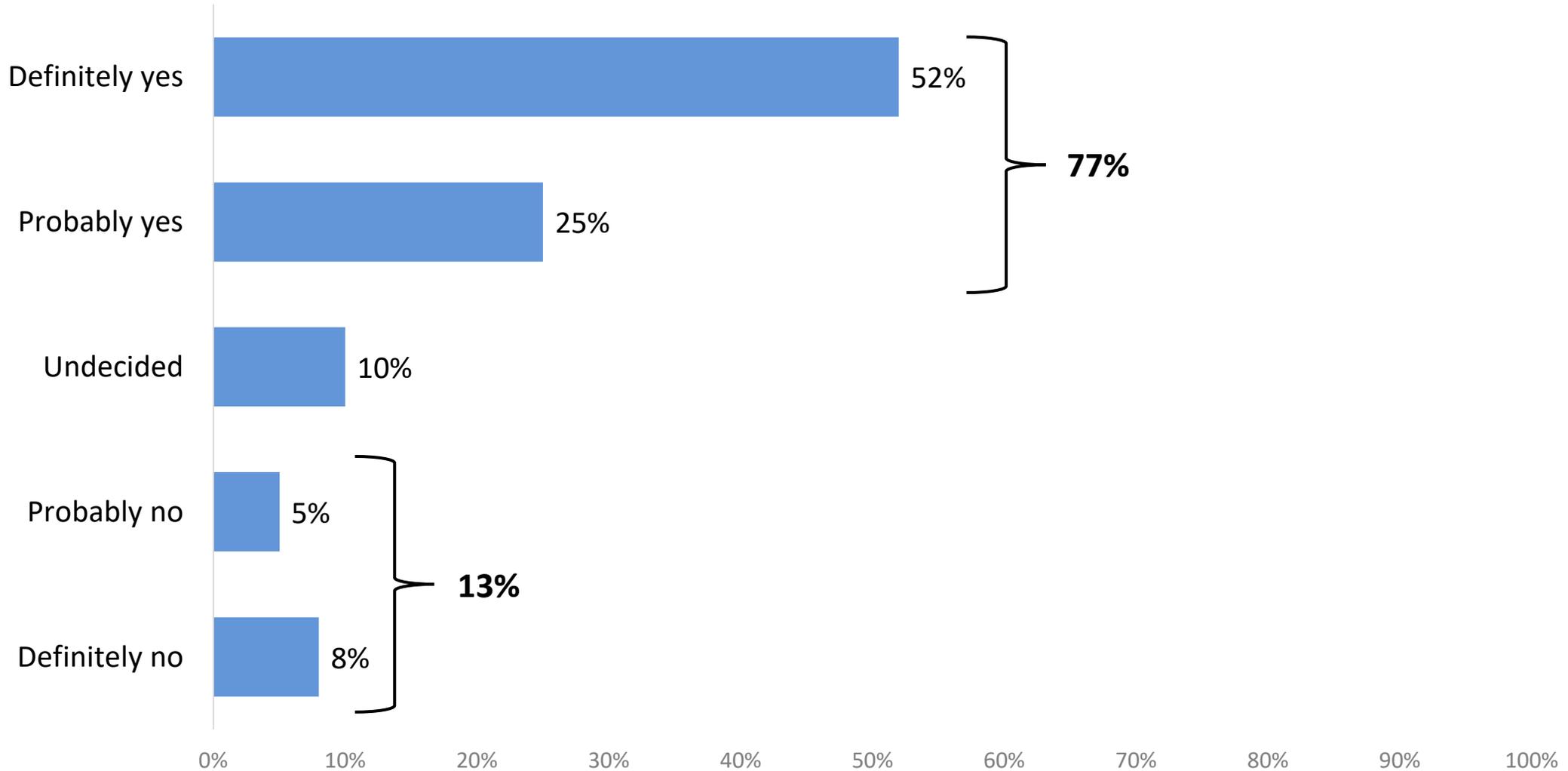
# Would you support the operational referendum?

## *Resident Staff*



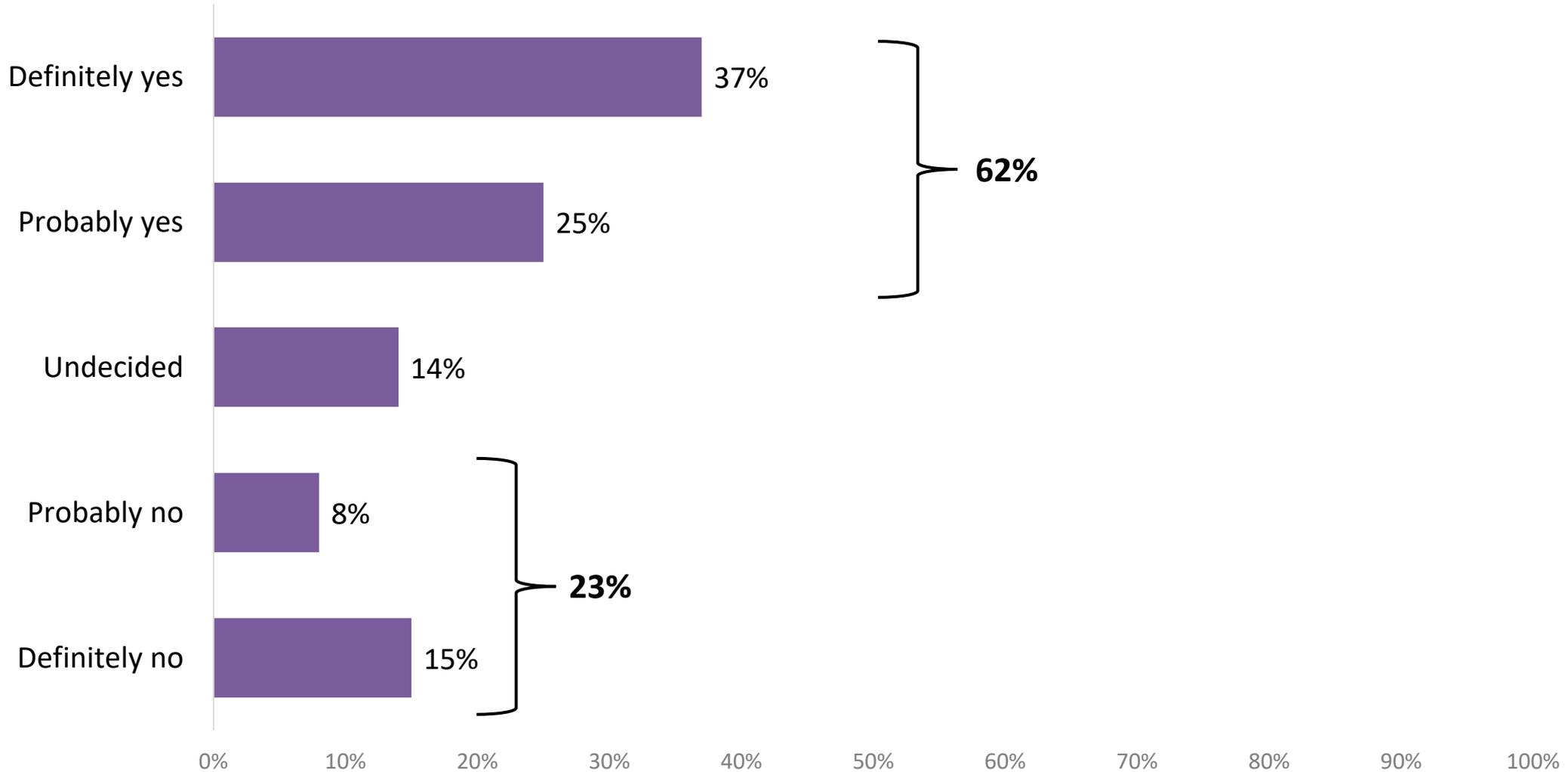
# Would you support the operational referendum?

## *Resident Parents*

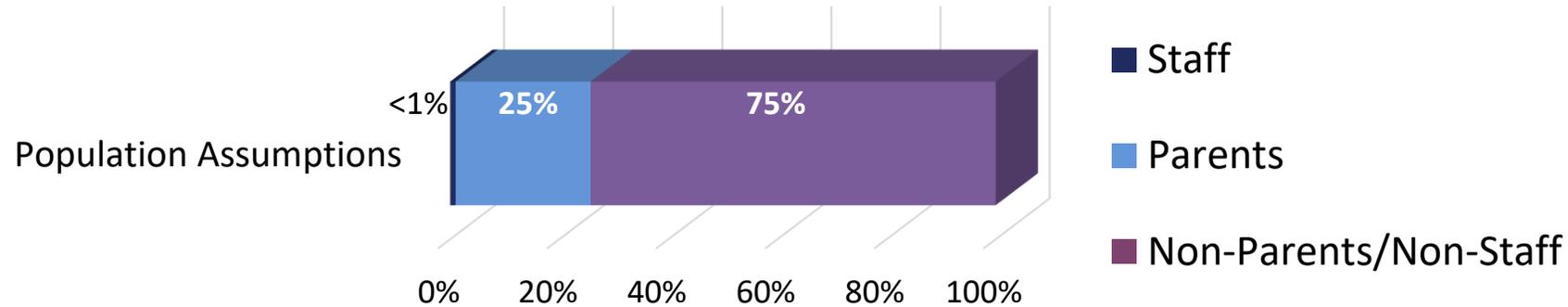


# Would you support the operational referendum?

## *Resident Non-Parent/Non-Staff*



# Additional Analysis: Would you support the operational referendum?



Weighted support for *Definitely yes* and *Probably yes*:

$$0.25 (77\%) + 0.75 (62\%) = \underline{\underline{65.75\%}}$$



# Cost-Cutting Options

If voters do not support the operational referendum, budget cuts will be needed. The District does not endorse or recommend any of the following, but we must consider all options. **Survey results will help determine what cuts are made.**



# Cost-Cutting Options

Yes = 10 No = 1 Median Score = 5.5



	Staff	Parents	Non-Parents/Non-Staff
Should the District reduce transportation services?	2.38	2.84	4.23
Should the District delay curriculum updates?	3.20	3.26	4.03
Should the District delay technology upgrades?	2.29	3.27	3.75
Should the District reduce student support services?	1.57	2.33	3.11
Should the District reduce middle/high school athletics and fine arts offerings?	1.69	2.12	2.59
Should the District reduce elementary school "specials"?	1.38	1.78	2.49
Should the District reduce spending on routine building maintenance?	1.67	2.17	2.41
Should the District reduce middle/high school course offerings?	1.64	1.90	2.34
Should the District cut teachers and increase class sizes?	1.14	1.51	2.20

# Facility Projects

These projects were not funded in the previous referenda and cannot be paid for in the annual budget.

**Safety, Security, and Building Systems** We prioritize building maintenance and security at all levels, yet the annual budget restricts the ability to invest in all systems. Potential projects include improving building security, improving air quality/energy efficiencies, as well as upgrading generators, kitchen exhaust systems, and restrooms at multiple buildings.

**Estimated cost: \$22.4 million**

**Would you support the safety, security, and building systems plan?**

**School Forest** Historically, students and our community had very limited access to the 70-acre school forest. In partnership with the Kinni River Land Trust, we gained better access. Volunteers are improving trails and restoring the prairie. This project would build a classroom, restrooms, and a gravel access road.

**Estimated cost: \$1 million**

**Would you support the school forest plan?**

**Transportation Maintenance Facility** The bus maintenance shop (built in 1966) is too small and has electrical, plumbing, and structural problems. We operate 27 buses and have invested more than \$2.5 million in the fleet over the last 15 years. By owning our buses, we are more efficient and can provide better service. We would like to protect this investment by building a new maintenance shop with an office area and restrooms.

**Estimated cost: \$3 million**

**Would you support the transportation maintenance facility plan?**



# Facility Projects-(Continued)

These projects were not funded in the previous referenda and cannot be paid for in the annual budget.



**Multi-Purpose Indoor Facility** Programming for physical education, athletics, intramurals, clubs, youth athletics, and broader community use is hampered by a combination of limited space, growing demand, and seasonal weather challenges. The high school wrestling practices are held in the middle school basement. This project would build a multi-purpose facility at the high school for both school and community use (including a wrestling practice space).

**Estimated cost: \$4 million**

**Would you support the multi-purpose indoor facility plan?**

**Stadium** Currently, the District does not have its own stadium. Consequently, we cannot host regional track meets or marching band competitions. Varsity football games are played at the UW-River Falls field at a cost of \$2,500 per game. This project would build a stadium at the high school artificial turf site for all outdoor sports with a concession stand, restrooms, press box, and add bleachers.

**Estimated cost: \$4 million**

**Would you support the plan to build a stadium?**

**Renaissance Academy (REN)** The District leases the REN alternative high school building to serve 60 students. We have the option to purchase the building, thus restoring over \$200,000 annually to our operating budget.

**Estimated cost: \$3.6 million.**

**Would you support purchasing the REN building?**

These projects were not funded in the previous referenda and cannot be paid for in the annual budget. All questions begin with: “Would you support...”



...the transportation maintenance facility plan?		<i>Score = 8.22</i>
...the safety, security, and building systems plan?		<i>Score = 8.10</i>
...the multi-purpose indoor facility plan?		<i>Score = 5.92</i>
...the school forest plan?		<i>Score = 5.38</i>
...purchasing the REN building?		<i>Score = 5.30</i>
...the plan to build a stadium?		<i>Score = 4.97</i>

Yes=10 No=1 Not sure=0

# Funding Support for Facility Projects

The Board of Education and District leaders will establish a plan based on the community's priorities and willingness to support the projects financially.

COST REVIEW	
Safety, Security, and Building Systems	\$22.4 million
School Forest	\$1 million
Transportation Maintenance Facility	\$3 million
Multi-Purpose Indoor Facility	\$4 million
Stadium	\$4 million
Purchase REN building	\$3.6 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$38.0 million</b>

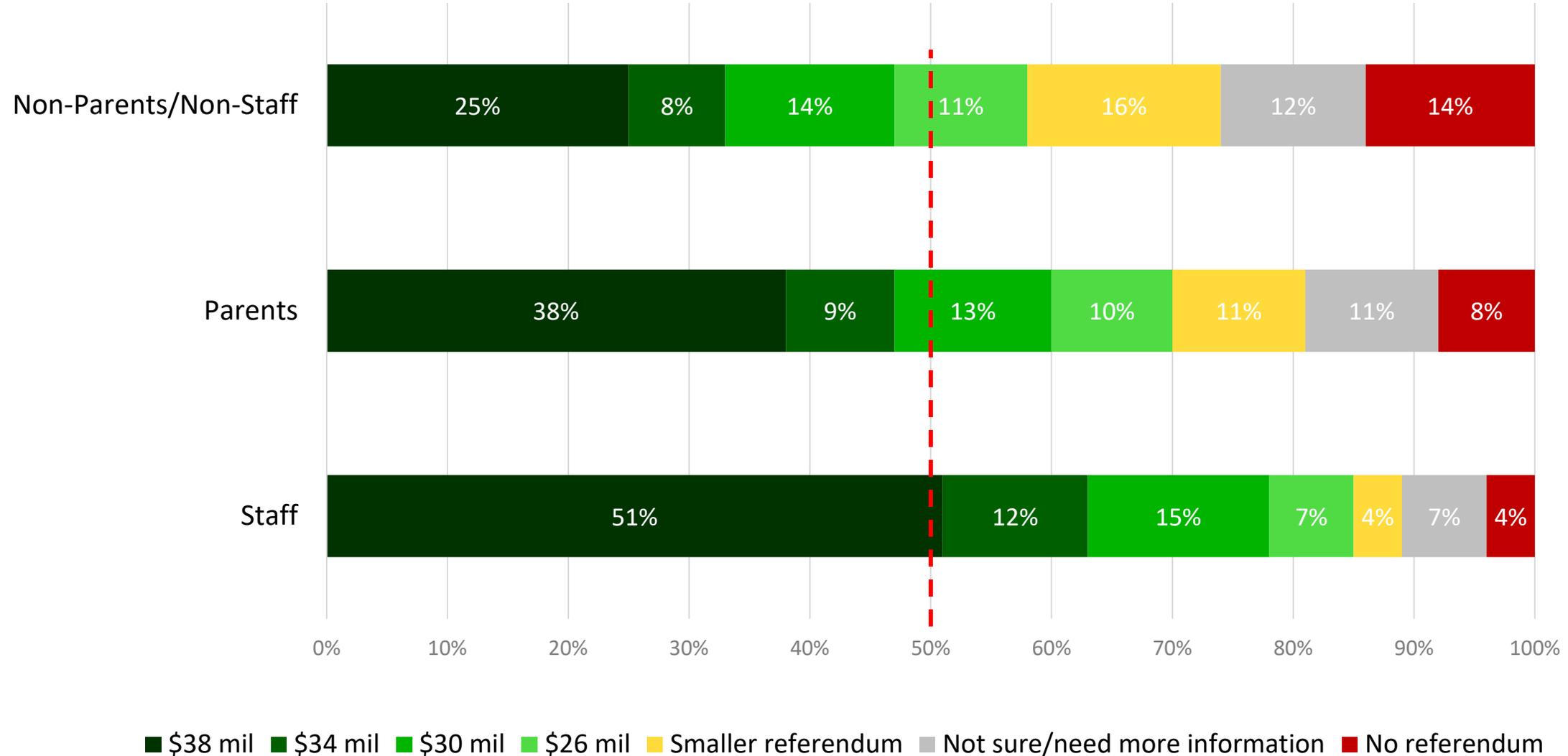


# Funding Support for Facility Projects

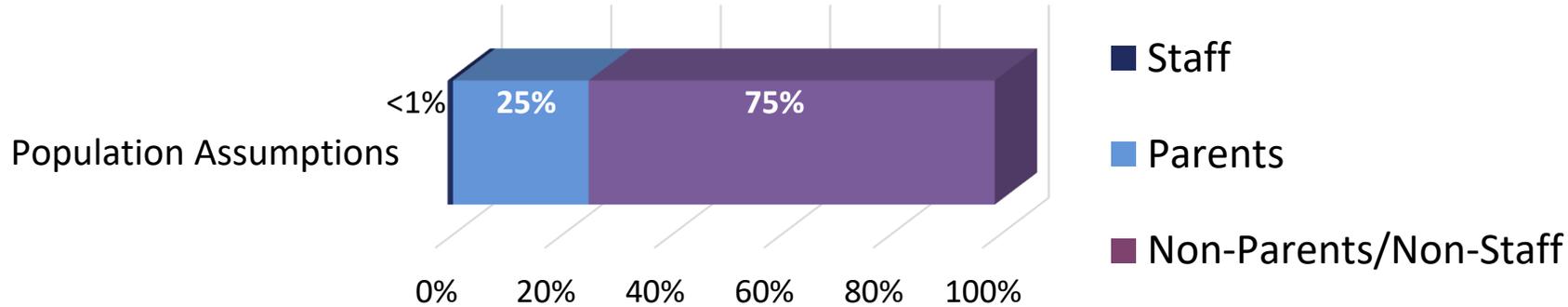


ANNUAL PROPERTY TAX IMPACTS				
<b>Capital referendum amount</b>	<b>\$26 million</b>	<b>\$30 million</b>	<b>\$34 million</b>	<b>\$38 million</b>
Estimated average tax increase per \$100,000 of property value over the current tax rate	\$56 per year	\$61 per year	\$66 per year	\$71 per year

# Assuming the projects funded were acceptable to you, what referendum amount would you support?



# Weighted support analysis:



**\$26 million:**  $0.25 (70\%) + 0.75 (58\%) = 61.0\%$

**\$30 million:**  $0.25 (60\%) + 0.75 (47\%) = 50.3\%$

**\$34 million:**  $0.25 (47\%) + 0.75 (33\%) = 36.5\%$

**\$38 million:**  $0.25 (38\%) + 0.75 (25\%) = 28.3\%$



# How is the District doing in each of the following areas?

*Great=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1*



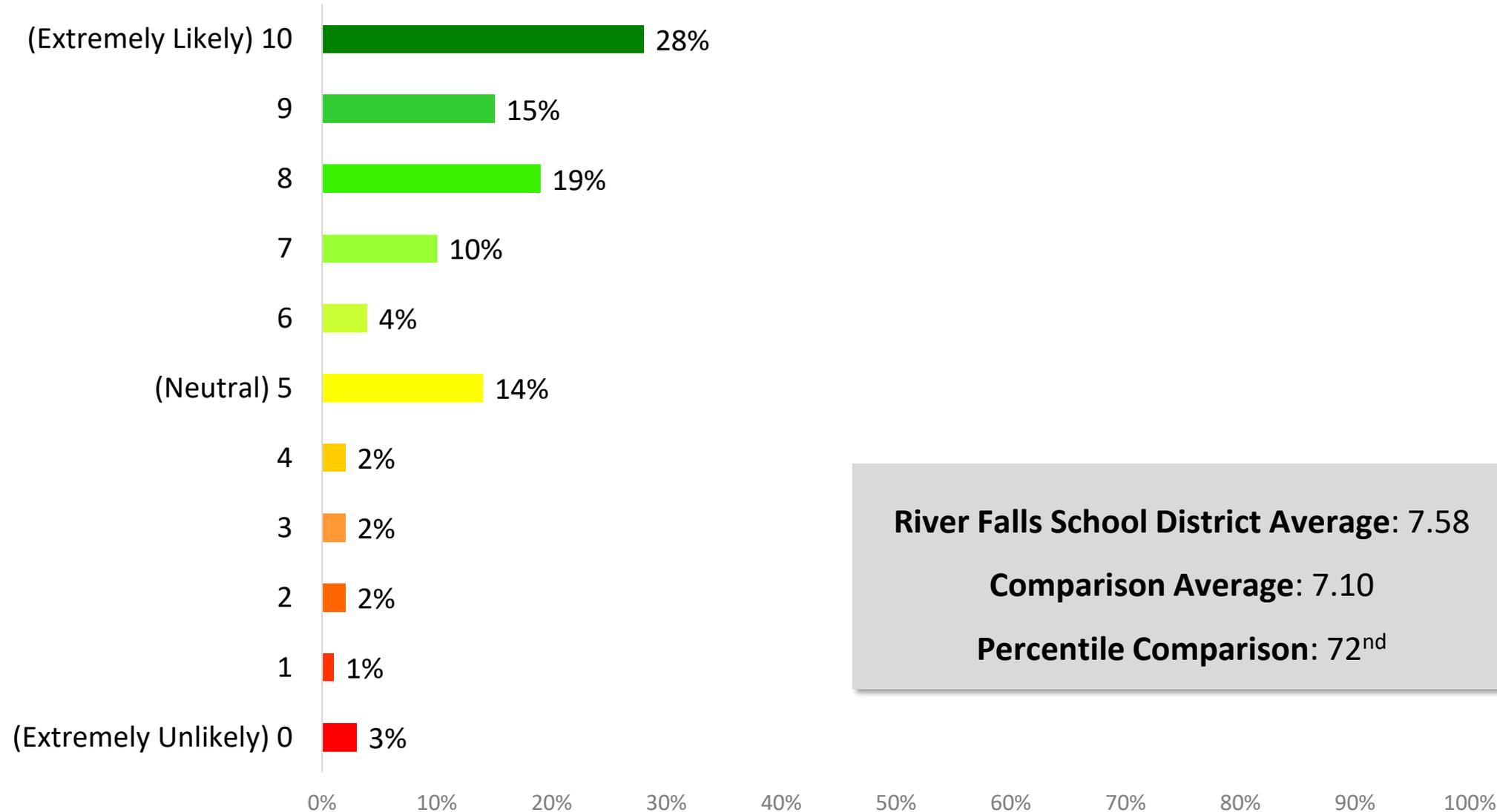
Item	Staff	Parents	Non-Parents/Non-Staff
Delivering a high-quality education	3.48	3.18	3.14
Keeping the public informed	3.37	2.99	2.79
Managing funds appropriately	3.17	2.76	2.62
Building pride in the community	3.39	3.08	3.05

# How is the District doing in the following areas?



Item	Percent “Great” or “Good”	Average	Comparison Percentile
Delivering a high-quality education	85%	3.21	75 <sup>th</sup>
Keeping the public informed	74%	2.97	73 <sup>rd</sup>
Managing funds appropriately	80%	3.11	68 <sup>th</sup>
Building pride in the community	67%	2.79	54 <sup>th</sup>

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



# What did we learn?

- If held today, the community would likely support the operational referendum.
- If held today, the community would likely support a \$26 million capital referendum, and potentially up to \$30 million, if the projects included were acceptable.
- Of the capital projects tested, the Safety, Security, and Building Systems and Transportation Maintenance Facility received the most support.
- Respondents scored the District above the median on all satisfaction metrics.



# What did we learn?



<b>Project Based on Priority</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Cumulative Cost</b>
<b>Transportation Maintenance Facility</b>	\$3M	\$3M
<b>Safety, Security, and Building Systems</b>	\$22.4M	\$25.4M
<b>Multi-purpose Indoor Facility</b>	\$4M	\$29.4M
<b>School Forest</b>	\$1M	\$30.4M
<b>Purchase REN Building</b>	\$3.6M	\$34M
<b>Outdoor Athletics</b>	\$4M	\$38M



# SCHOOL PERCEPTIONS

*Measuring what matters*

262.644.4300 | [schoolperceptions.com](http://schoolperceptions.com)

