






# Rescue Union School District Voter Views of a Potential Bond Measure

*Key Findings of a Survey of Rescue Union School District Voters  
Conducted January 23-30, 2024*



OPINION  
RESEARCH  
& STRATEGY

# Survey Methodology

<b>Dates</b>	January 23-30, 2024
<b>Survey Type</b>	Dual-mode Voter Survey
<b>Research Population</b>	Likely November 2024 Voters in Rescue Union School District
<b>Total Interviews</b>	515
<b>Margin of Sampling Error</b>	±4.9% at the 95% Confidence Level
<b>Contact Methods</b>	 Telephone Calls  Email Invitations  Text Invitations
<b>Data Collection Modes</b>	 Telephone Interviews  Online Interviews

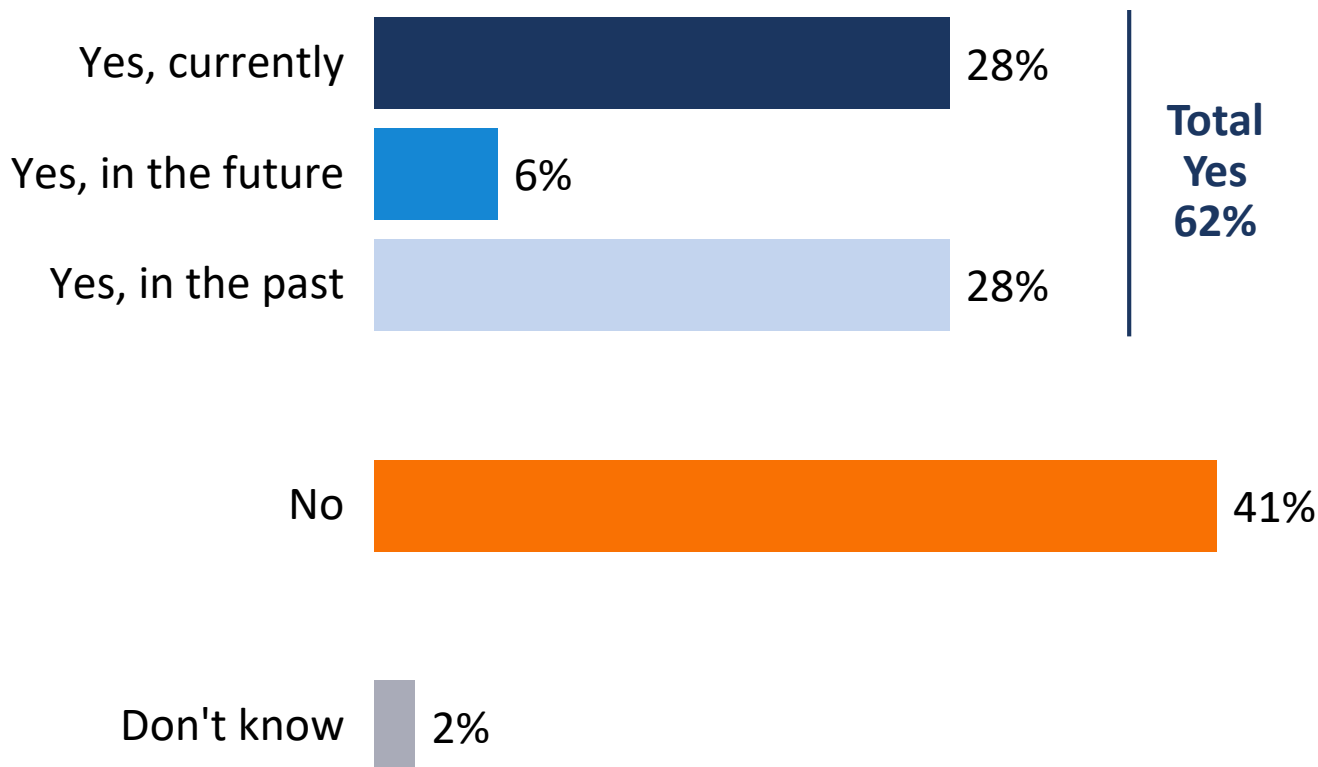
*(Note: Not All Results Will Sum to 100% Due to Rounding)*



# Issue Context

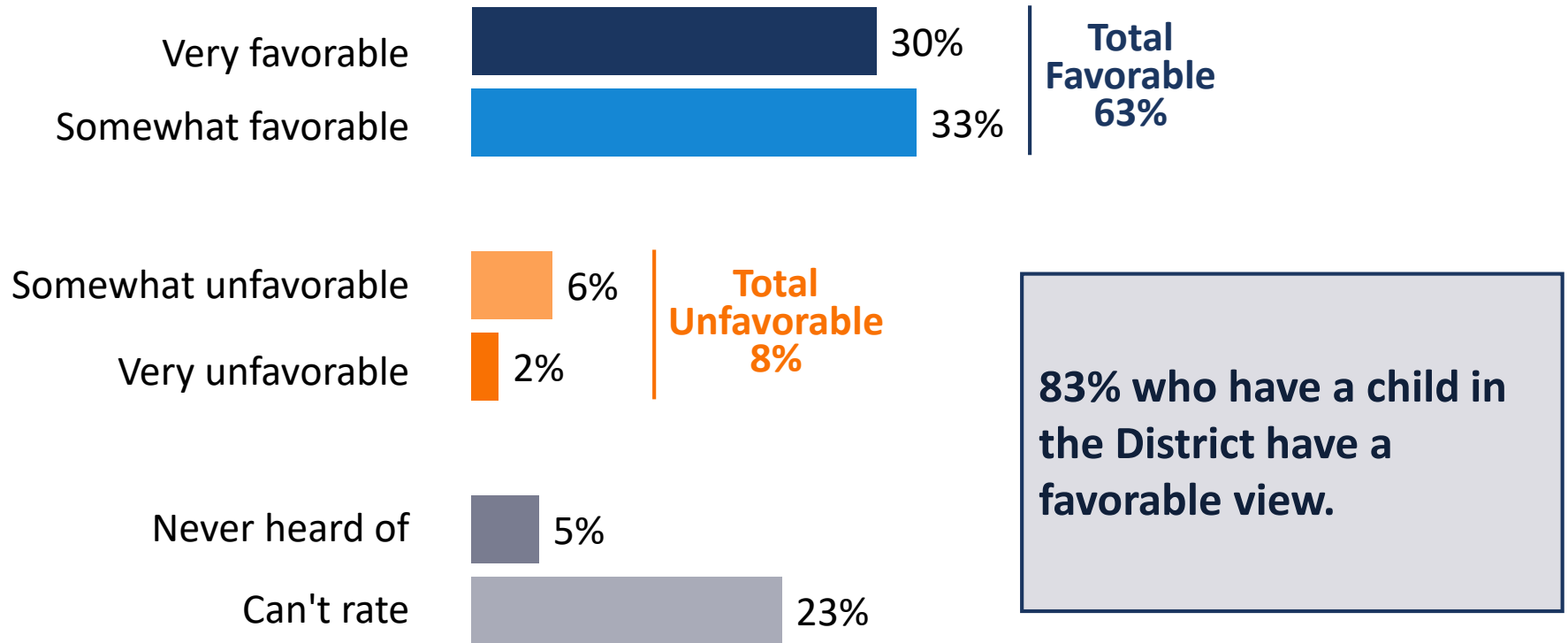
# Three in five voters have a child or grandchild who does or did attend Rescue Union schools.

*Do you have a child or grandchild who attends a school in the Rescue Union School District?*



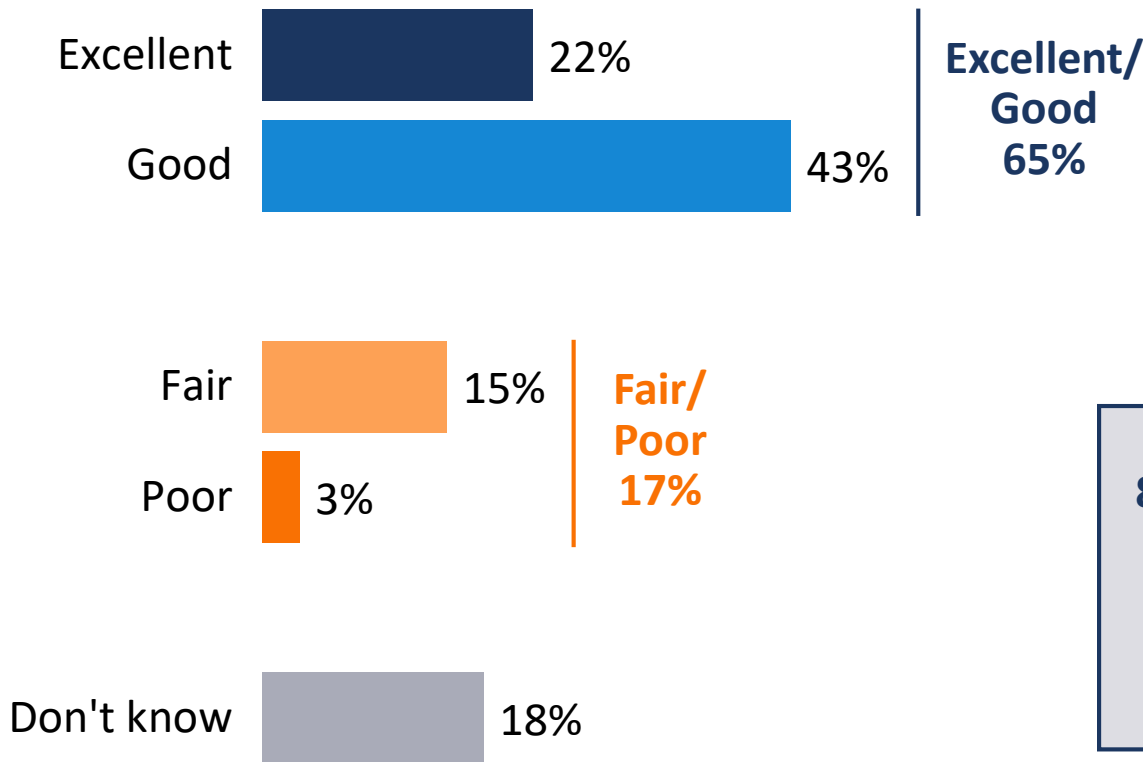
# Three in five voters have a favorable opinion of the school district.

*Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the Rescue Union School District?*



# Two-thirds rate the quality of education as either “excellent” or “good.”

*From what you know or what you’ve heard, how would you rate the quality of education in Rescue Union School District: is it excellent, good, fair, or poor?*



85% who have a child in the District rate the quality of education as “excellent” or “good.”

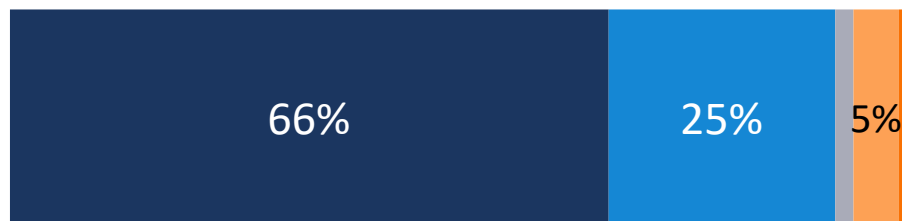
# Voters overwhelmingly agree that good schools maintain property values, and that it's important to invest in schools for the benefit of future students.

*I am going to read you a series of statements about Rescue Union School District schools. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the statement.*

■ Strng. Agree ■ Smwt. Agree ■ Don't Know ■ Smwt. Disagree ■ Strng. Disagree

**Total Agr.** **Total Disagr.**

It is important for us to invest in our schools for the benefit of future students



**91%** **7%**

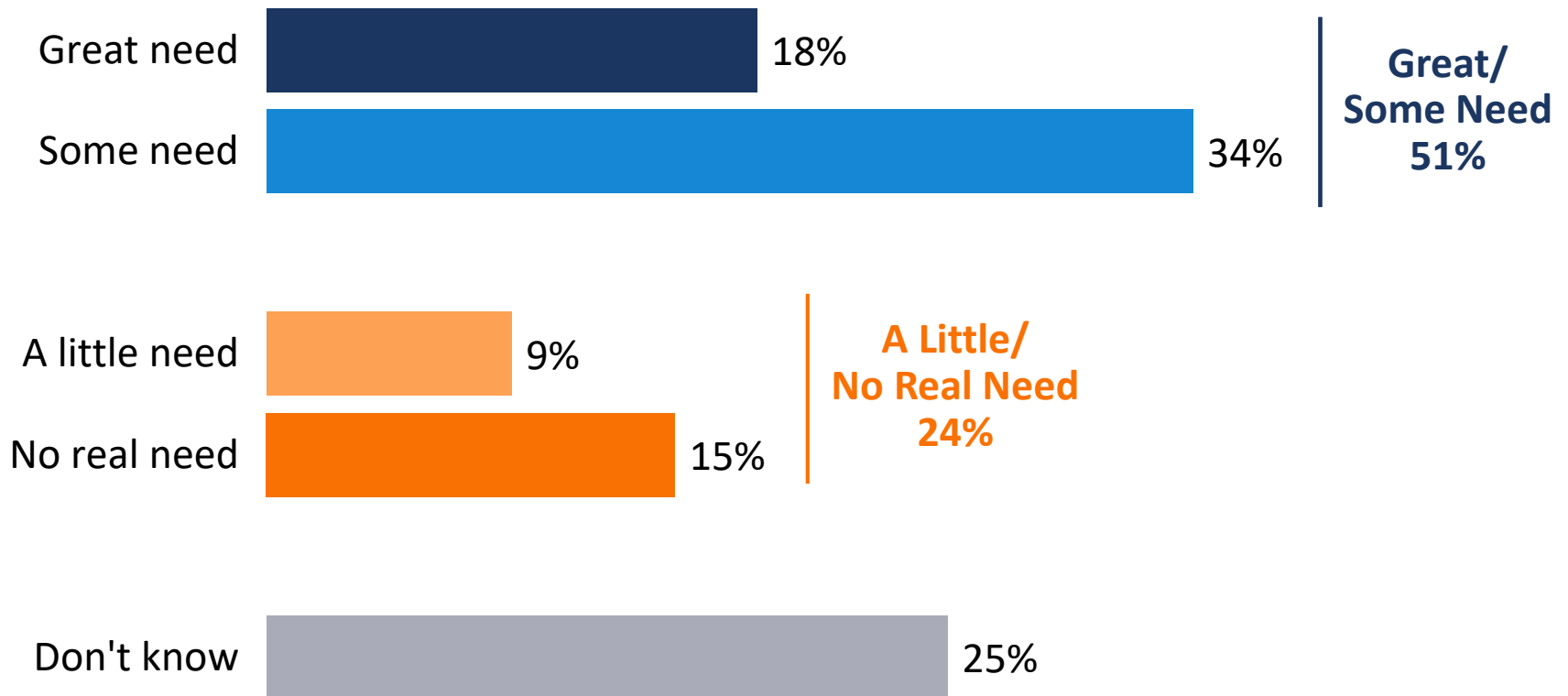
Good schools maintain property values



**88%** **6%**

# Half of voters see “great” or “some need” for funding, and one-quarter are unsure.

*In general, do you think the Rescue Union School District has a great need for additional funding, some need for additional funding, a little need, or no need for additional funding?*







# **Views of a Bond Measure**

# Hypothetical Bond Measure Language

*55% Vote Threshold Required*

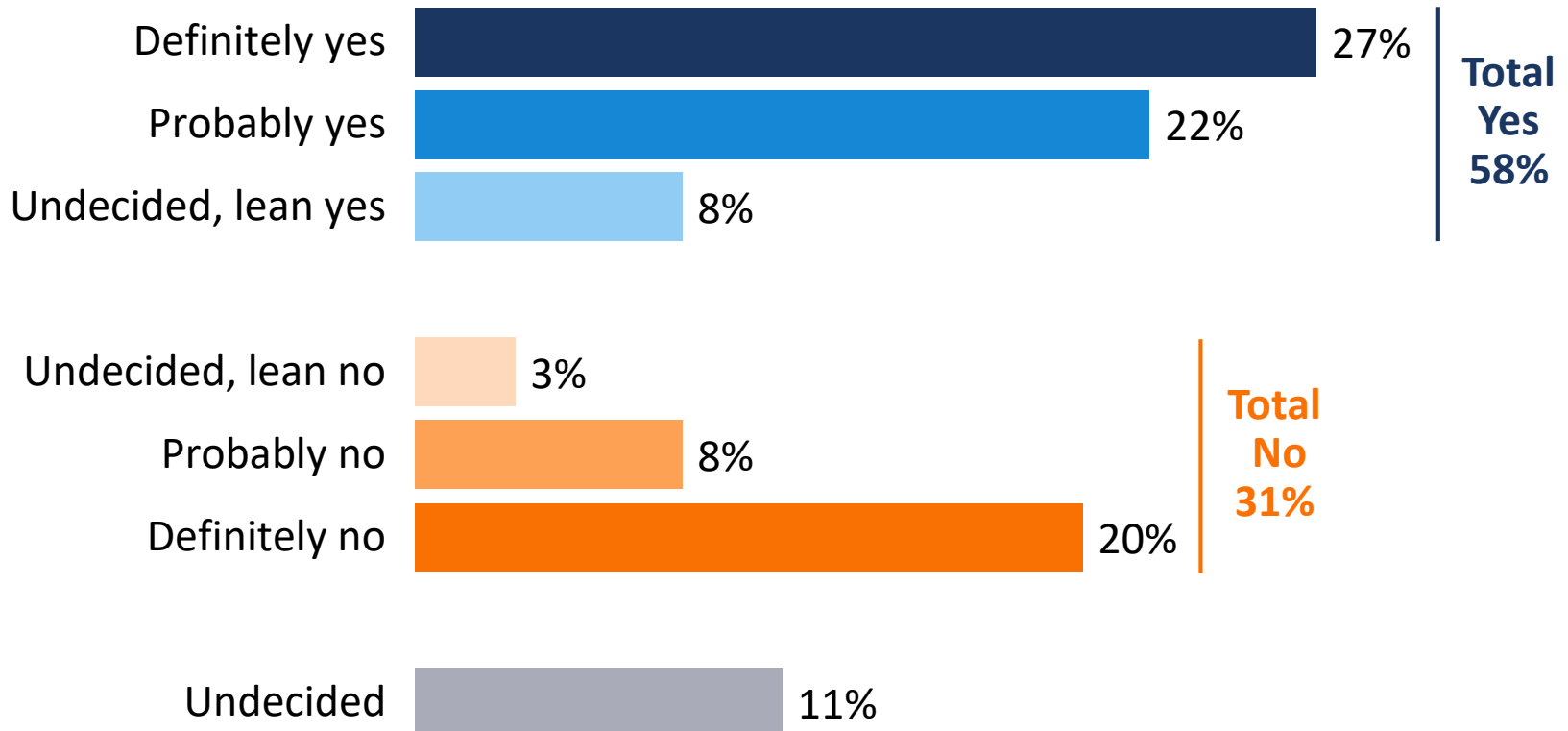
**Rescue Union School District Classroom Repair/Safety Measure.** To maintain/repair neighborhood elementary and middle schools by:

- Repairing outdated plumbing, electrical, heating/air conditioning, roofs by replacing outdated portable classrooms with permanent buildings;
- Providing classrooms that meet modern academic, disabled access, technology standards;
- Improving school security;

shall Rescue Union School District's measure authorizing \$75 million in bonds at legal rates, levying \$30 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation, raising approximately \$5 million annually while bonds are outstanding, be adopted, requiring audits, public oversight/spending disclosure, funds controlled locally?

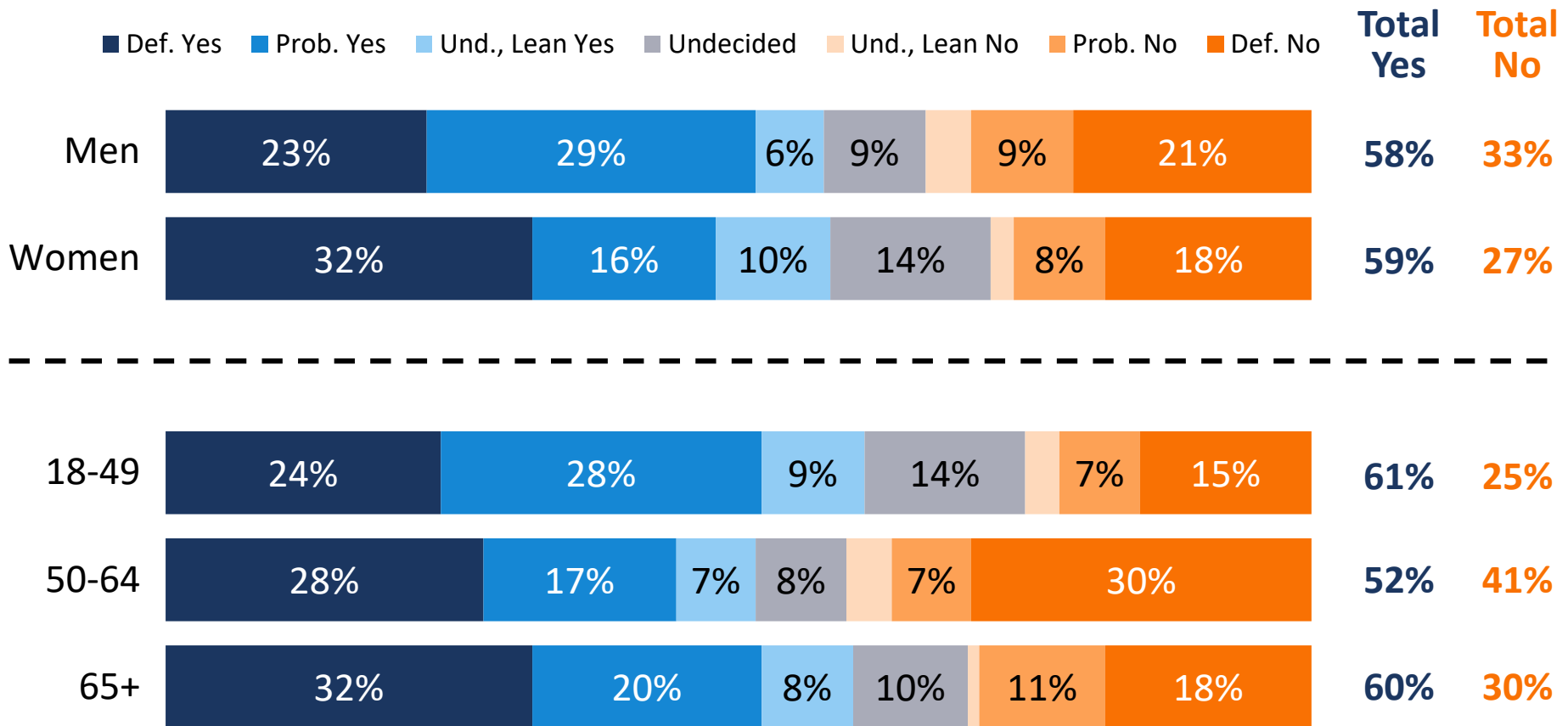
# The measure has support from nearly three in five – within the margin of error for passage at 55%.

*+/-4.9% Margin of Error*



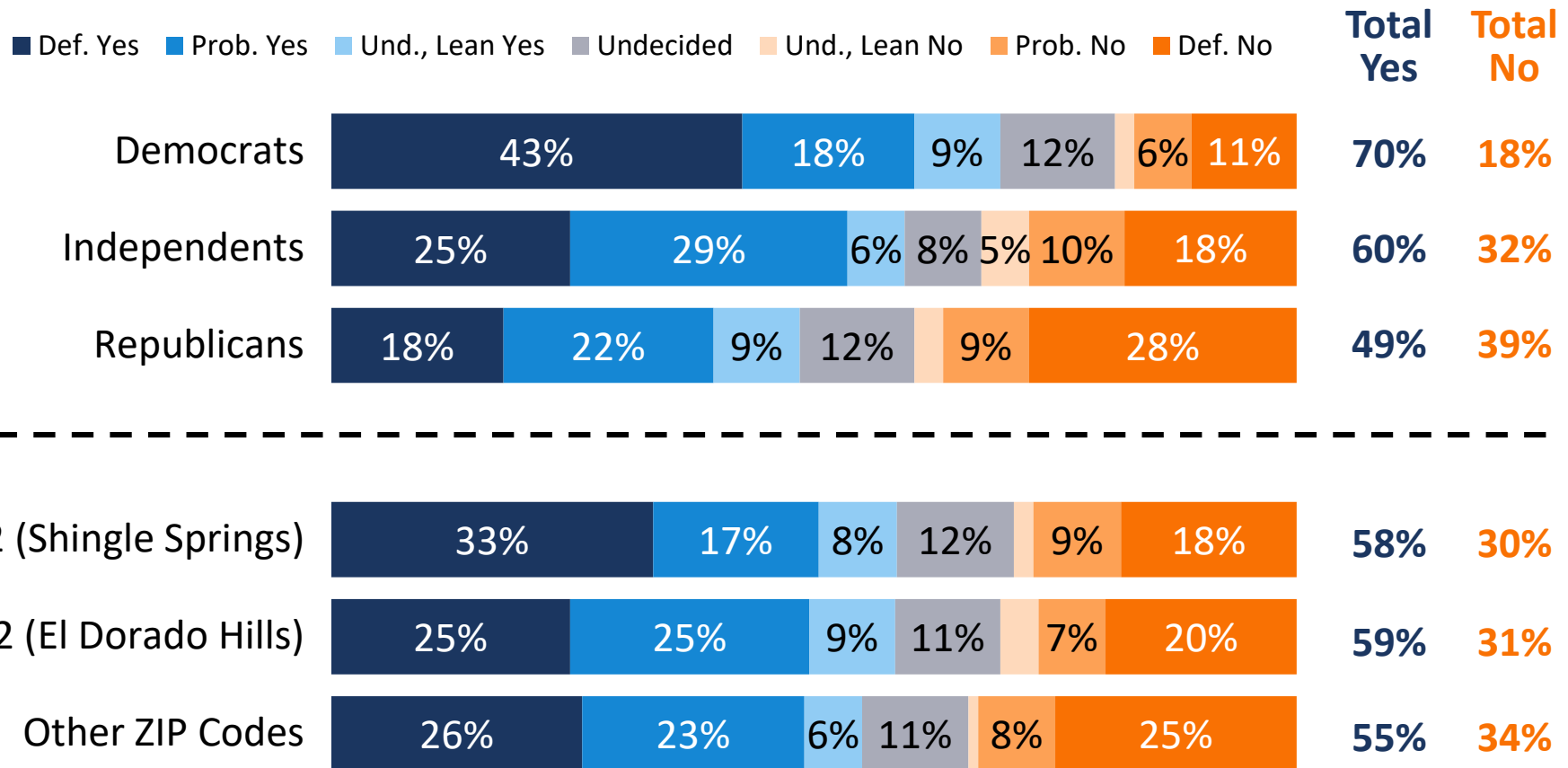
# Support is broader among voters under 50 and seniors than those aged 50 to 64.

*Initial Vote by Gender & Age*



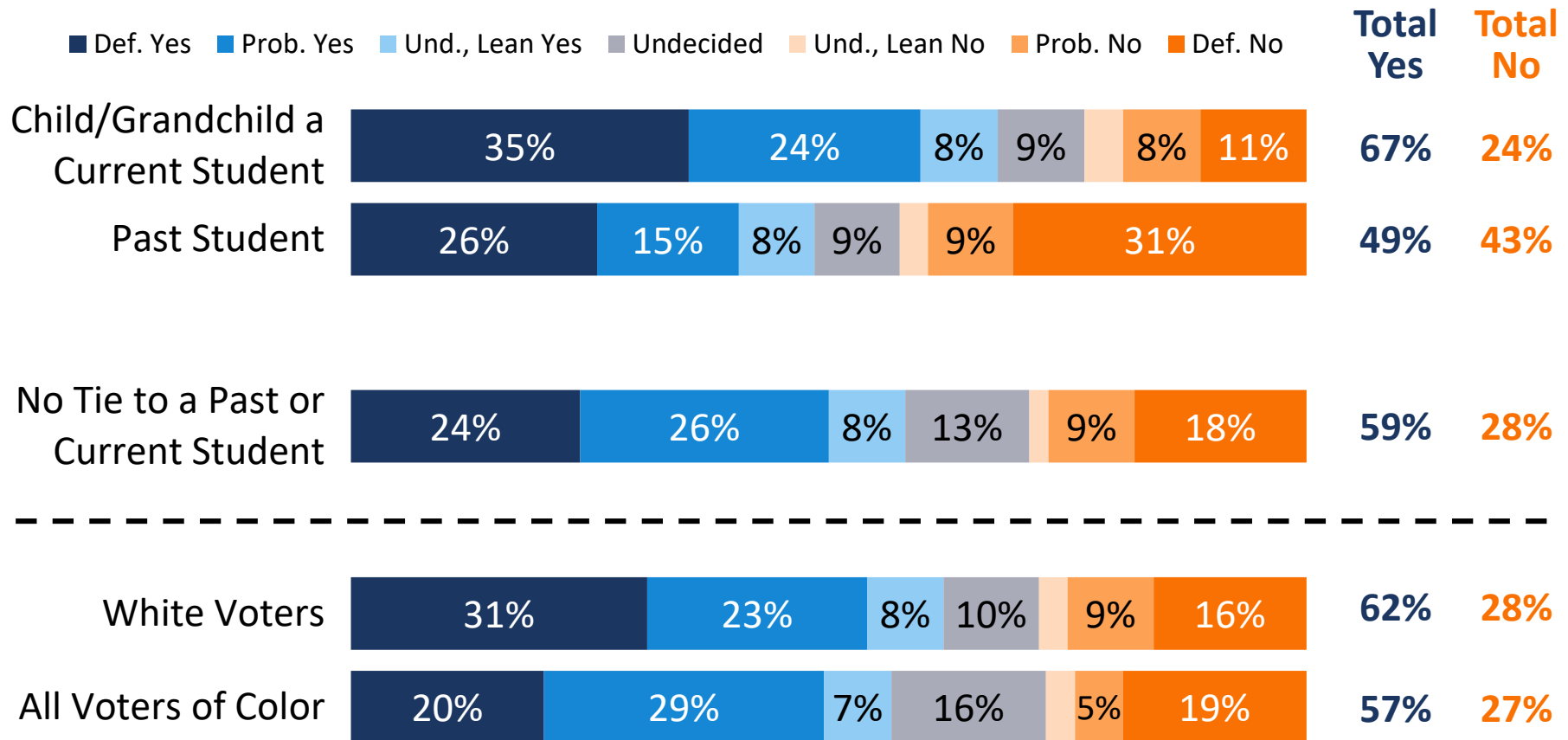
# Seven in ten Democrats and three in five independents support the measure.

Initial Vote by Party & ZIP Code



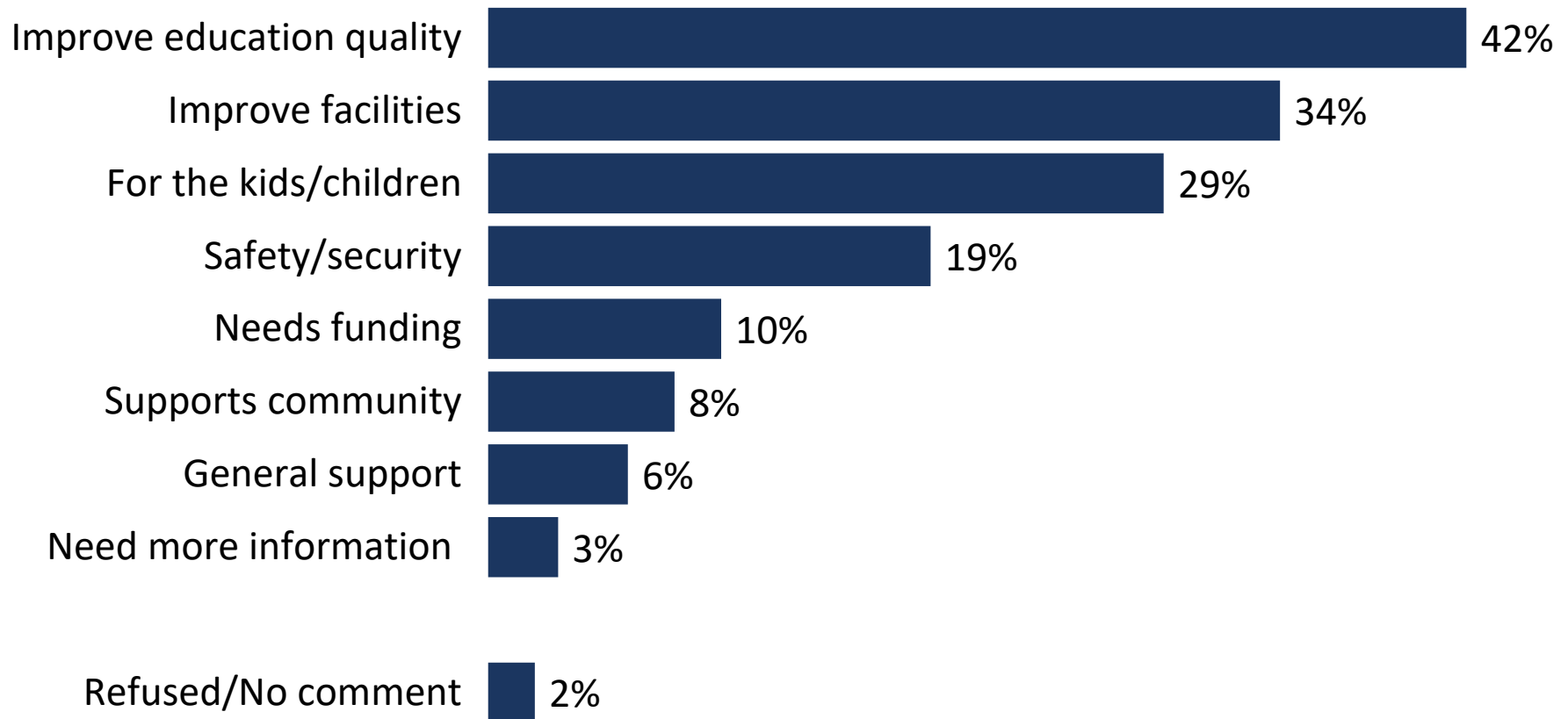
# Parents and grandparents of current and former students are especially supportive.

*Initial Vote by Child Attends RUSD & Race/Ethnicity*



# Supporters of a measure cite their desire to improve education quality.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote YES on the measure?  
(Open-ended; Asked of Yes Voters Only, n=299)*



# Verbatim Responses from Supporters

A lot of public schools in California don't get the funding they deserve.

It is important for students in the RUSD to learn in an environment that is up to date.

I feel like some of the schools could use updating.

The schools need it, and the kids need it more. No excuse not to invest in the kids.

Kids are our future. They need a comfortable and safe environment for learning.

Functional and up to date educational facilities are crucial to our community.

School and kids. Easy decision.

We need to put money into education and with that comes the infrastructure and safety.

Not fixing this now could be more costly later.

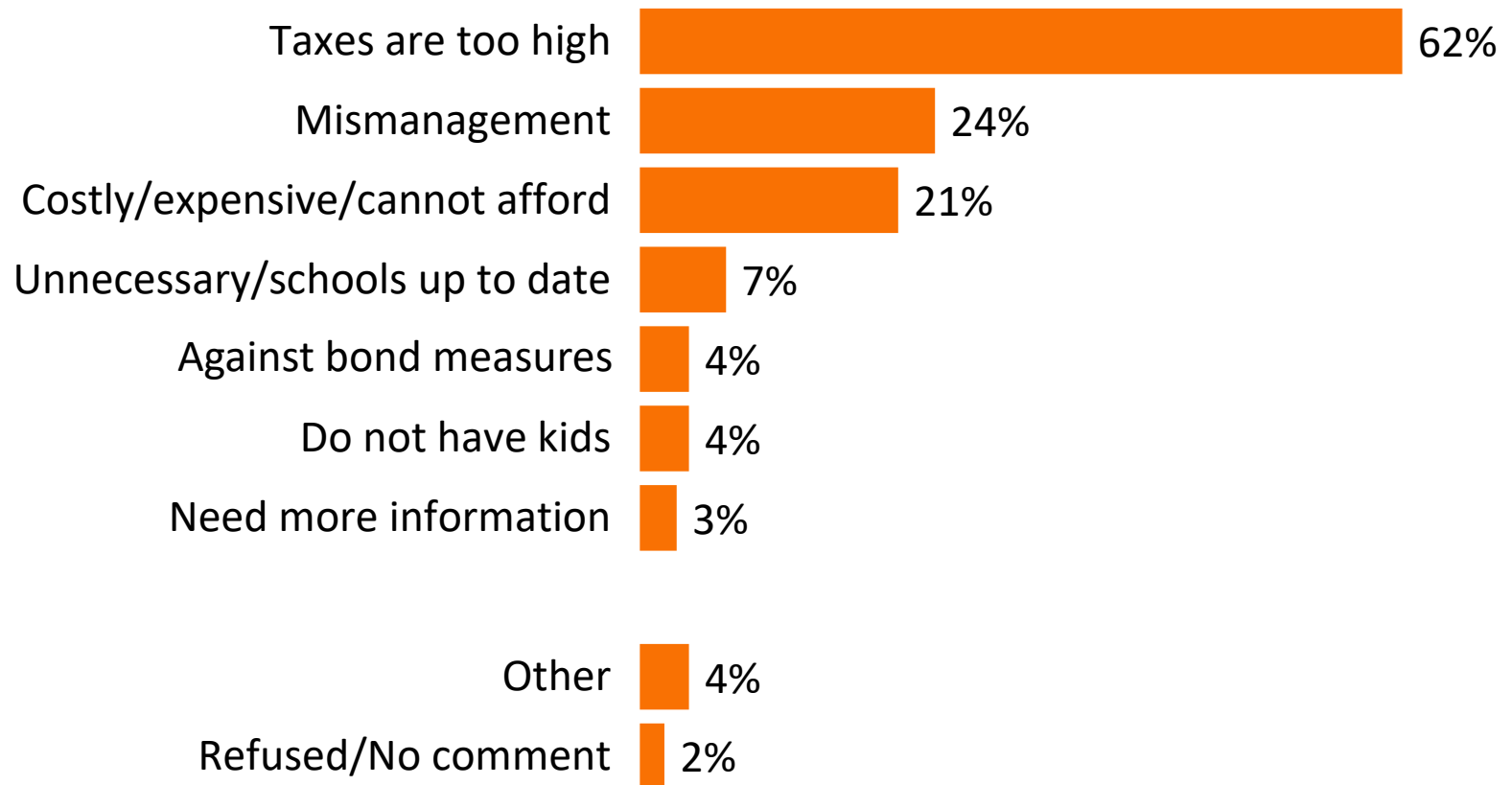
The school buildings, especially the portables, need updating. I'm always in favor of making security and safety a top priority.

Schools are a huge draw to people wanting to move to this location, however, most schools in our district look old and outdated (because they are).



# Those who oppose the measure are broadly opposed to new taxes.

*In a few words of your own, why would you vote **NO** on the measure?  
(Open-ended; Asked of No Voters Only, n=160)*



# Verbatim Responses from Opponents

Because I already pay a ridiculous amount in taxes as a middle-class homeowner. The state needs to come up with a better plan to fund school improvement needs.

The 2 RUSD schools my kids attend are newer and in great shape.

Live on fixed income, PG&E RATE increase 17%, homeowners rate increase 24% (this year) with 350% increase due to "rezoning" fire districts with no end in sight to these rate increases.

The government never uses the tax money as intended.

I have yet to see any dire need for such repairs.

What happened to the COVID money?

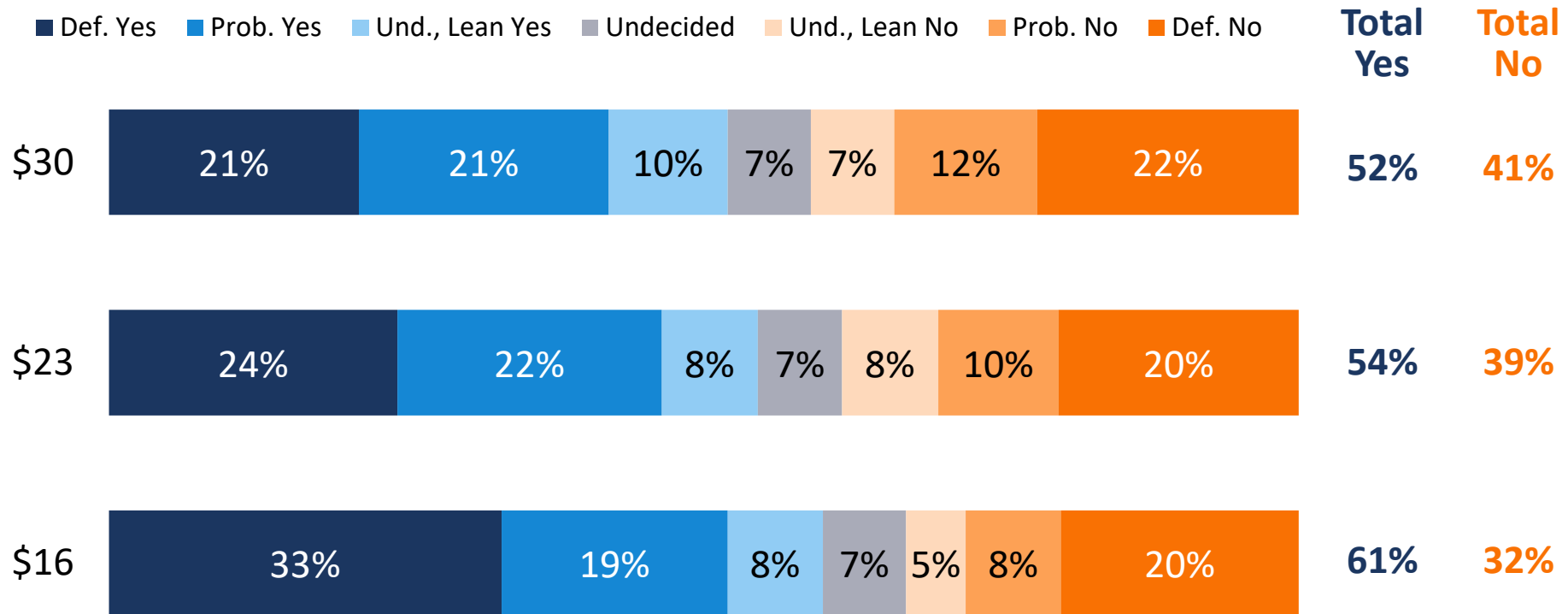
No kids in the school system ever, no desire to have fees levied.

I do not think taxes should be raised for any reason. Audits and cuts should be made elsewhere in the government. Taxes are high enough in the state and county.

There are several school bonds on our tax bill already. I would like to see the schools make more efficient use of the money they have.

# At \$16 per \$100,000 assessed valuation, support increases to three in five.

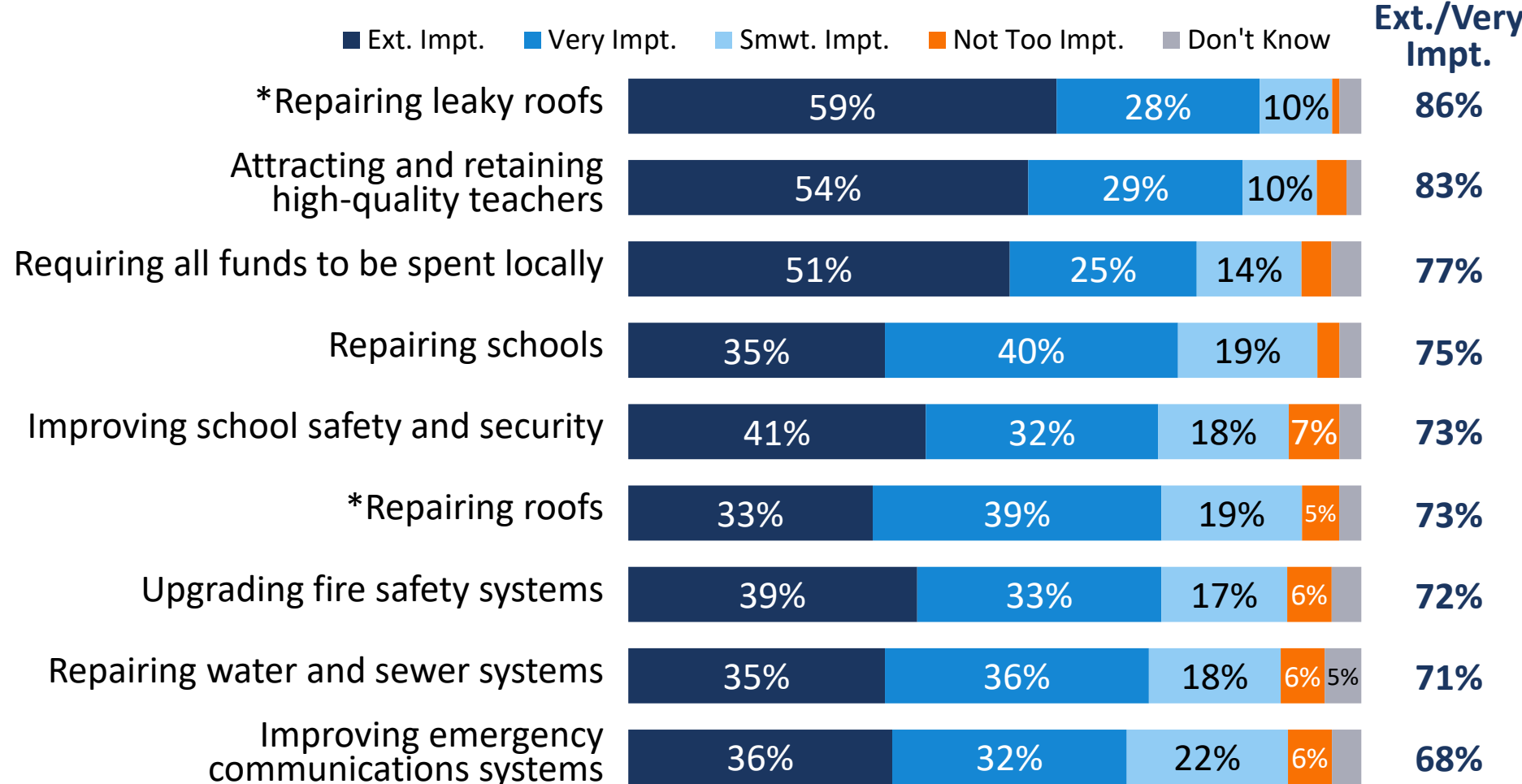
Suppose the bond measure I just described resulted in an annual property tax of \_\_\_\_\_ per \$100,000 of assessed property valuation—which is based on the amount your house is valued at for property taxes, not the current market value of your house. In that case, would you vote yes or no?





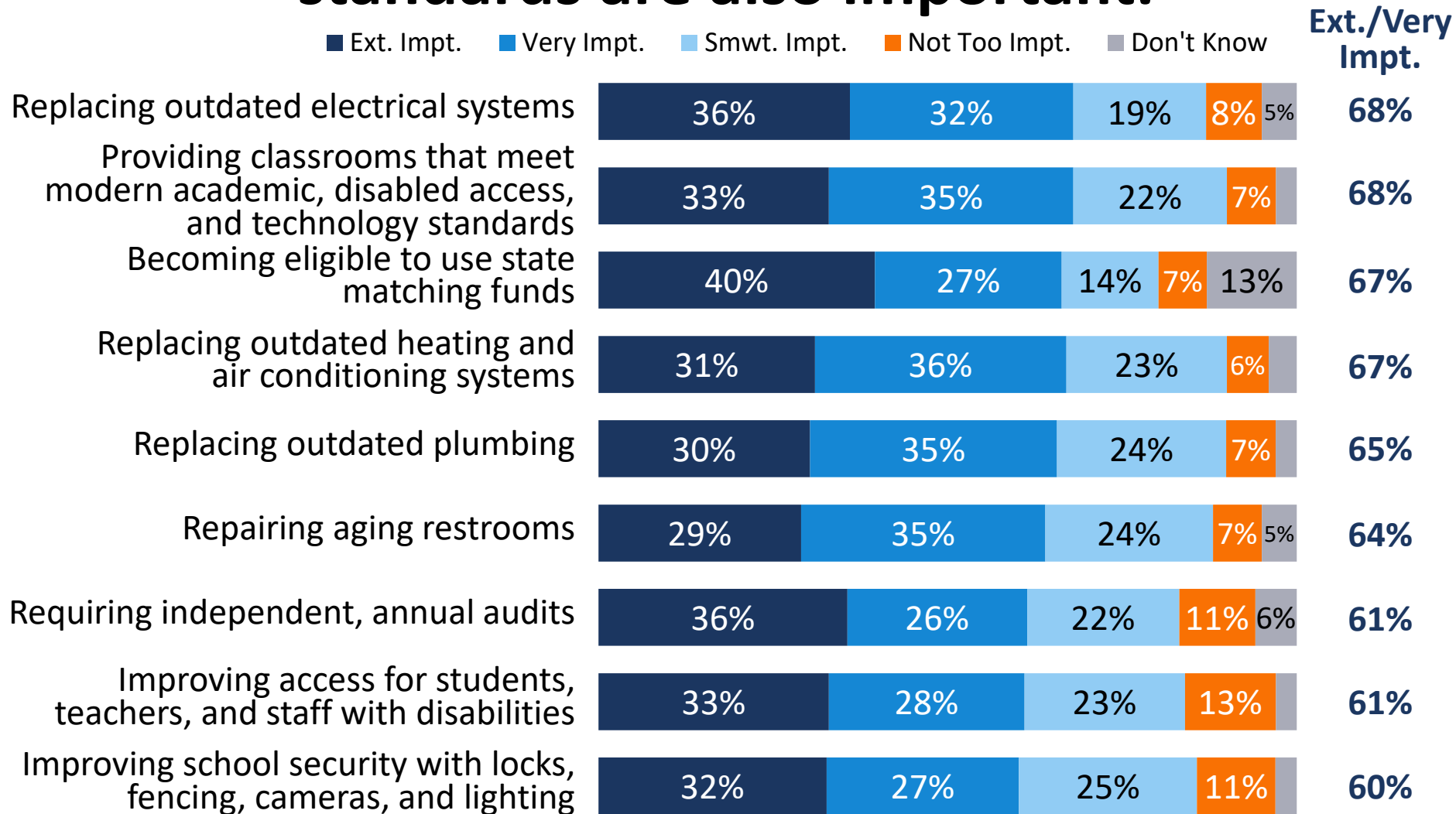
# **Voter Priorities**

# Voters' top priorities for the measure include repairing leaky roofs, attracting quality teachers, and improving school safety and security.



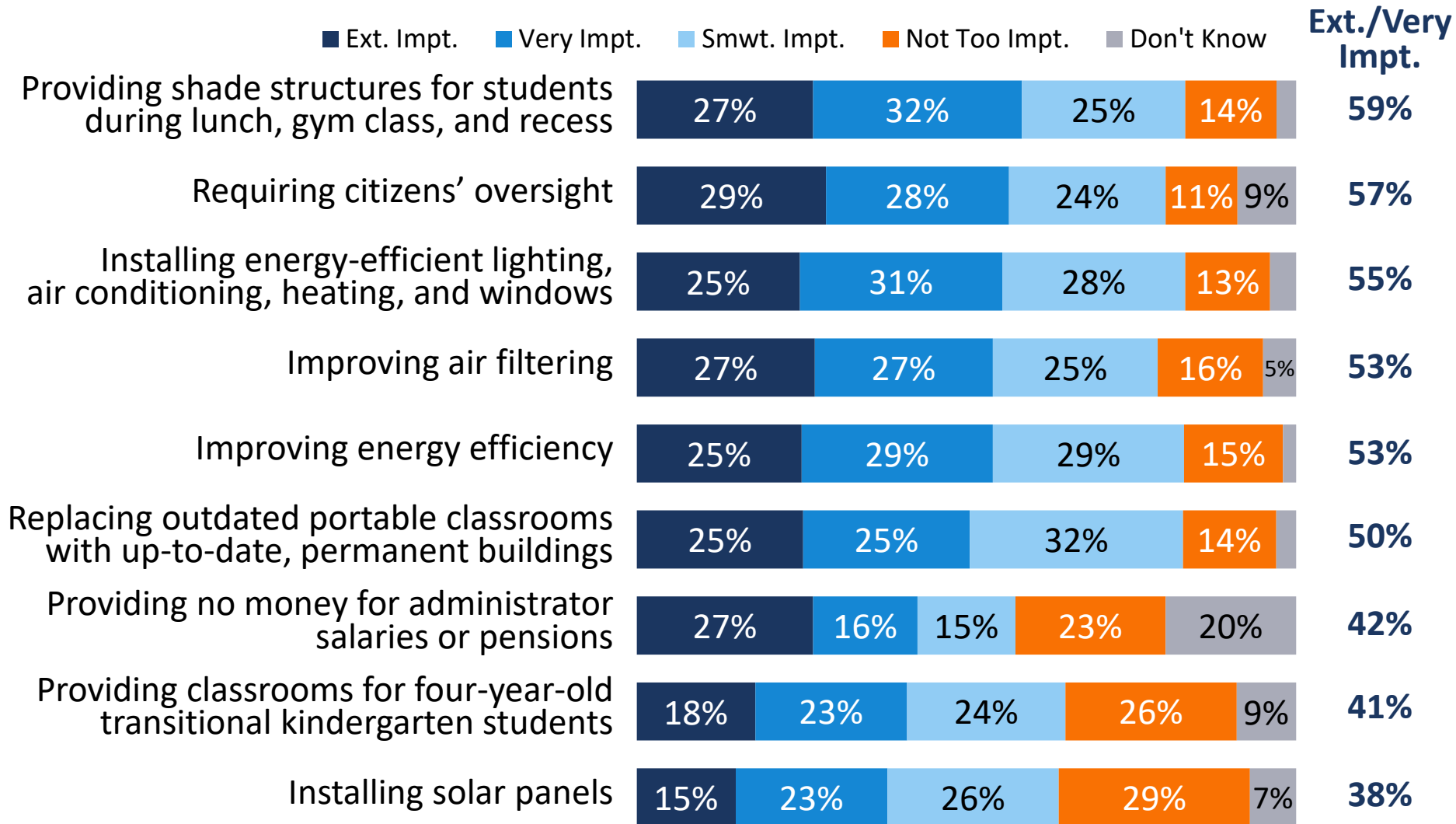
Q8. I'd like to return to the bond measure we were discussing before. I am now going to read you a list of individual projects and provisions that could be included in the bond measure. Please tell me how important it is to you that each be included in the measure: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important? \*Split Sample

# Classrooms that meet modern standards are also important.



Q8. I'd like to return to the bond measure we were discussing before. I am now going to read you a list of individual projects and provisions that could be included in the bond measure. Please tell me how important it is to you that each be included in the measure: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important? Not Part of Split Sample

# Priorities, continued



Q8. I'd like to return to the bond measure we were discussing before. I am now going to read you a list of individual projects and provisions that could be included in the bond measure. Please tell me how important it is to you that each be included in the measure: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important? Not Part of Split Sample

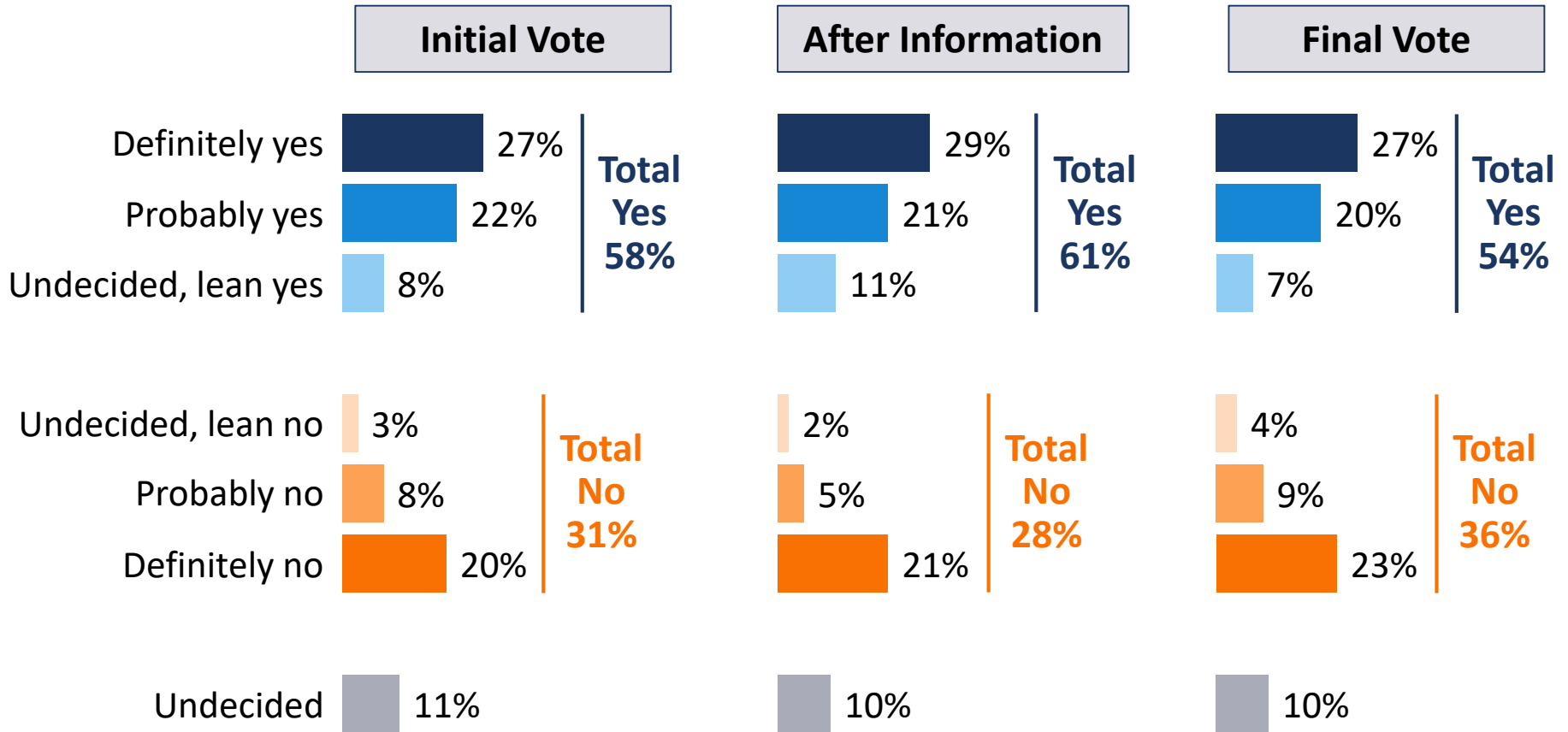


# **Information and Movement**



# Support moves within the margin of error of the 55% needed for passage as voters learn more.

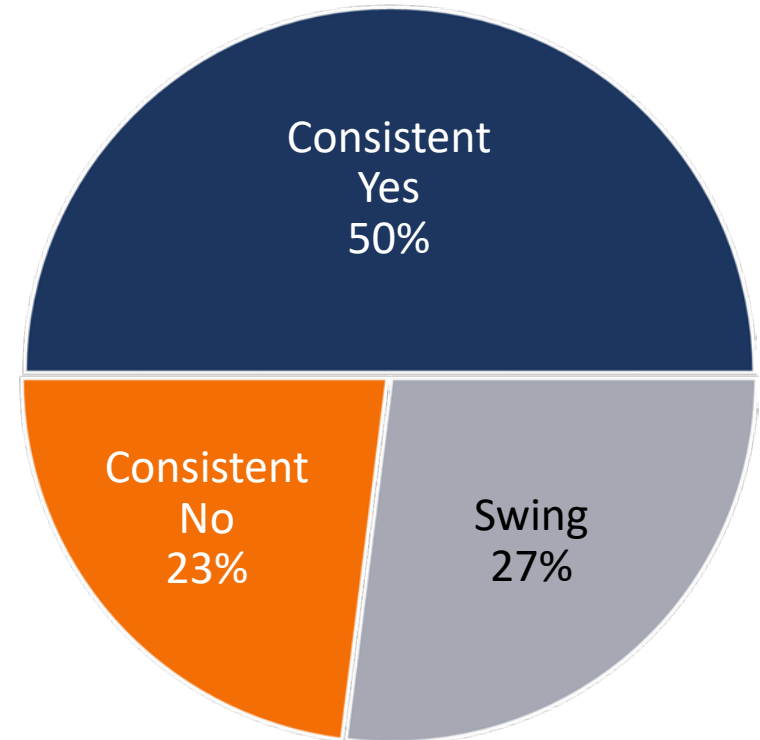
*+/-4.9% Margin of Error*



# Segmenting the Electorate by Consistency of Support

- ❖ **Consistent Yes:** Voters who consistently indicated they would vote “yes” on the measure.
- ❖ **Consistent No:** Voters who consistently indicated they would vote “no” on the measure.
- ❖ **Swing:** Voters who do not fall into any of the other categories – remaining consistently undecided or switching positions.

The following slide shows demographic groups that *disproportionately* fall into one category or the other.



# Demographic Profile of the Segments

Consistent Yes	Swing	Consistent No
<b>50% of the Electorate</b>	<b>27% of the Electorate</b>	<b>23% of the Electorate</b>
Democratic Women	Ages 18-29	Republicans Ages 50+
Renters	Republicans Ages 18-49	Ages 50-64
Democrats Ages 50+	Republican Women	Independents Ages 50+
Democrats	High School Educated	Election Day Voters
Democrats Ages 18-49	All Voters of Color	Republicans
Democratic Men	Republicans	Ages 50+
Independents Ages 18-49	Non-College Educated Men	Child Attended RUSD
Latino Voters	College-Educated Women	Men Ages 50+
Child Currently Attends RUSD	Republican Men	Republican Men
Independent Women	Men Ages 18-49	Independent Men
Women Ages 18-49	Ages 75+	
White Voters		
Independents		
Independent Men		

# Information in Favor of the Measure

## Ranked by Very Convincing

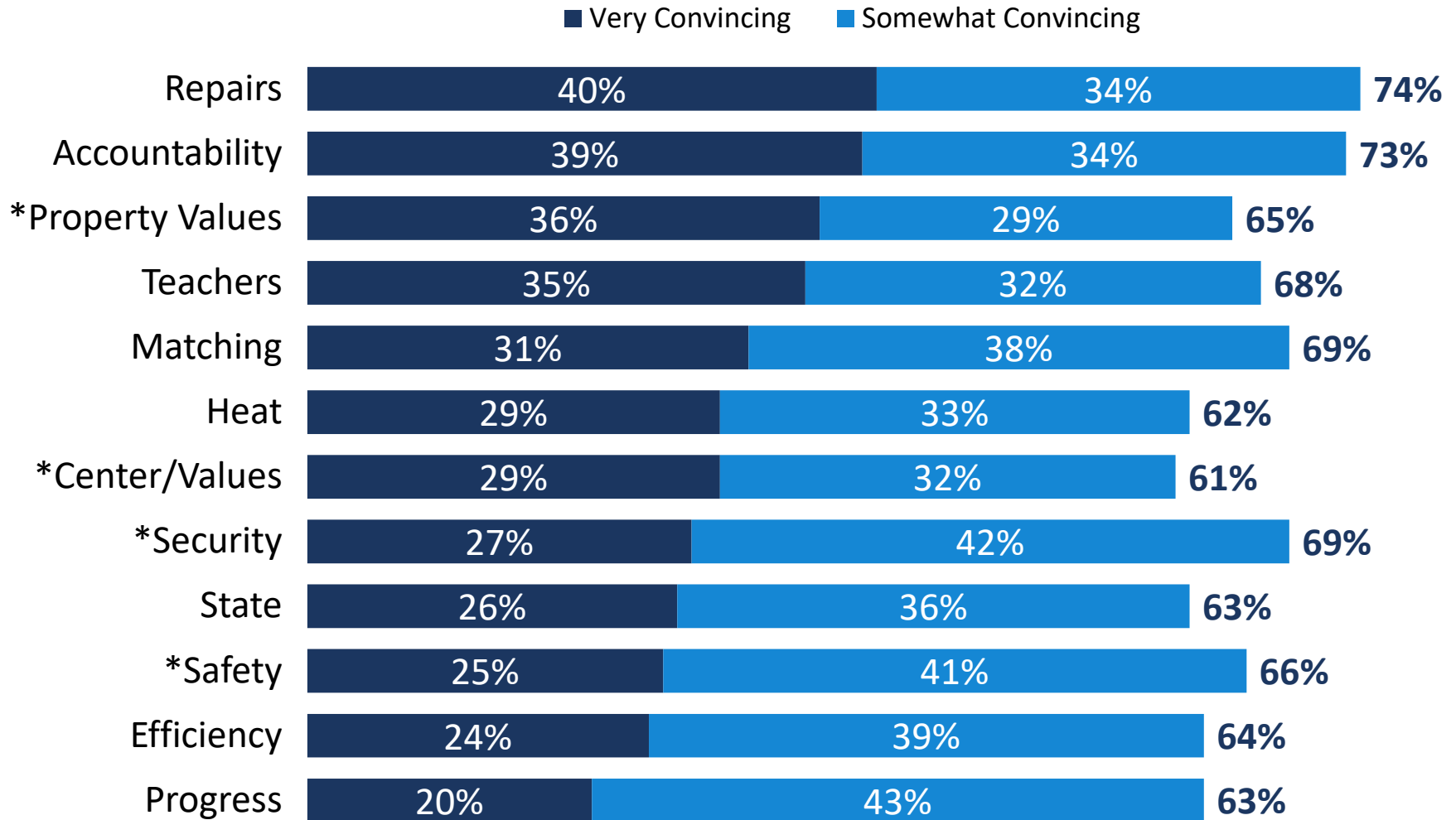
40%	<b>(REPAIRS)</b> Our local schools need basic health and safety improvements – the oldest schools were built in the 1950s. This measure will repair deteriorating classrooms, plumbing, electrical systems, air conditioning, roofs, and bathrooms. Children deserve safe, clean schools so they can learn.
39%	<b>(ACCOUNTABILITY)</b> This bond measure includes strict accountability requirements including a citizens' oversight committee, and independent annual financial and performance audits. No money from this measure will go towards administrators' salaries or pensions and all funds will be used locally.
36%	<b>*(PROPERTY VALUES)</b> Many families move to our area because of our schools' reputation for high-quality education. Improving our schools will increase local property values and help us ensure that young people who grow up here know their children and future generations will be able to send their children to good, quality schools if they stay.
35%	<b>(TEACHERS)</b> Quality classrooms and good teachers are essential to classroom education. This measure will improve the quality of education for every student and help attract and retain quality teachers by improving classrooms and teaching environments.
31%	<b>(MATCHING)</b> Passing this measure will help ensure that local schools have access to state matching funds and allow them to take advantage of funds that would otherwise go to other districts.
29%	<b>(HEAT)</b> It's hard for students to learn in classrooms with broken air conditioning or play and exercise in the hot sun - and days of extreme heat are becoming more common. This bond measure will ensure that every student and teacher has shade when they are outside and air conditioning when they are inside, so they can focus and learn.

# Information in Favor of the Measure *(Continued)*

## Ranked by Very Convincing

29%	<b>*(CENTER/VALUES)</b> Our local public schools are the center of our neighborhoods. They reflect and reinforce values we care about like honesty, trust, and compassion. We should support our schools as they shape the children who are the future of our communities.
27%	<b>*(SECURITY)</b> Many of our neighborhood schools have outdated or insufficient security features that need to be improved. It is essential to upgrade emergency communication systems, locks, cameras, security fencing, and lighting, and upgrade other vital security systems to provide safe learning environments.
26%	<b>(STATE)</b> Our district has provided excellent education even as the state of California continues to underfund local public education. Now it's up to us to invest in locally controlled funding for the basic repairs needed to maintain these high-quality schools for our students and teachers.
25%	<b>*(SAFETY)</b> Funding from this measure will make basic improvements to student safety, like repairing cracked asphalt that is a tripping hazard for elementary school students on the playground, upgrading electrical wiring, and installing fencing and door locks.
24%	<b>(EFFICIENCY)</b> This measure will fund basic energy and water efficiency upgrades like roofing, windows, lighting, heating, and cooling, as well as adding solar panels on roofs and parking lots. These upgrades will save the District money that can be spent in classrooms instead.
20%	<b>(PROGRESS)</b> Our local elementary school district has used existing funding to make critical upgrades like adding air filtration systems and solar panels that will save money in the long run. This new funding will continue investing in maintaining and repairing our schools so they remain in good condition for years to come.

# The need for basic repairs and the accountability provisions in the measure are key themes.



Q9. I am going to read you some statements that supporters of this potential school bond measure might make. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support this potential school bond measure. \*Split Sample

# For swing voters, accountability is a key message, followed by the need for basic repairs.

Statement	Very Convincing			
	All Voters	Targets		
		Consistent Yes	Swing	Consistent No
Repairs	40%	61%	32%	5%
Accountability	39%	50%	41%	11%
*Property Values	36%	53%	19%	16%
Teachers	35%	60%	16%	4%
Matching	31%	45%	26%	5%
Heat	29%	45%	22%	4%
*Center/Values	29%	49%	16%	2%
*Security	27%	42%	13%	8%
State	26%	39%	24%	2%
*Safety	25%	40%	20%	2%
Efficiency	24%	43%	10%	2%
Progress	20%	34%	12%	1%

Q9. I am going to read you some statements that supporters of this potential school bond measure might make. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to support this potential school bond measure. \*Split Sample

# Information Critical of a Measure

## Ranked by Very Convincing

38%

\*(**BONDS WRONG WAY**) A bond measure is the wrong way to fund these improvements. This measure will actually cost taxpayers twice as much to pay off with interest – more than \$125 million. That is way too much debt to leave to our children and grandchildren.

34%

(**TAXES**) Local and state taxes are out of control. Enough is enough. We just cannot afford any more taxes.

31%

(**PRIOR BOND**) Many local families are still paying off a bond measure for Rescue Union schools from 1998. They should finish paying off that bond before asking for even more.

16%

\*(**WASTE**) If the District could cut its own budget, administrative salaries, and pensions, it would have the funds needed for school improvements.

13%

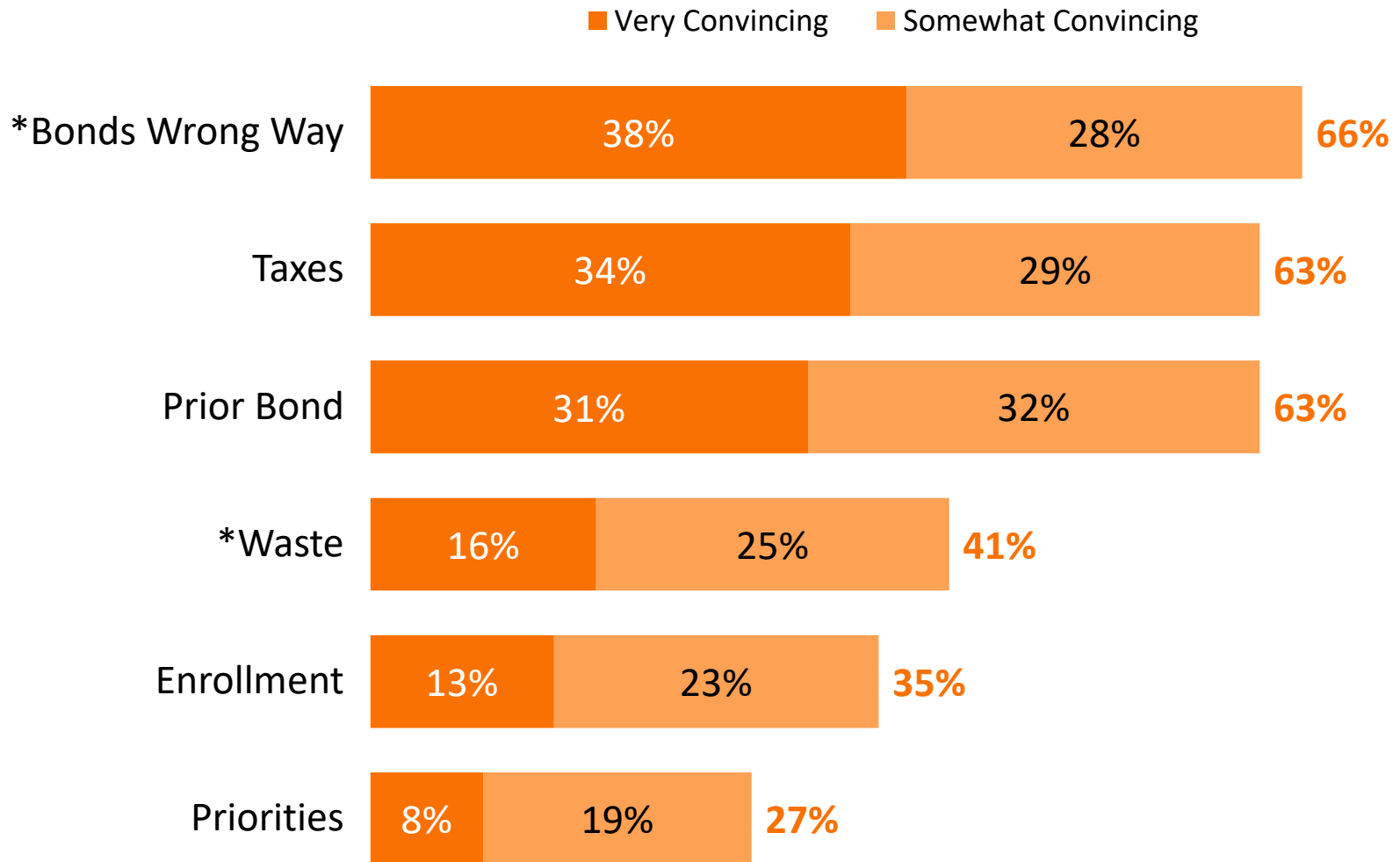
(**ENROLLMENT**) Rescue Union enrollment has been declining for nearly a decade, and they currently have only 3,500 students. They should be able to make do with what they have.

8%

(**PRIORITIES**) We cannot afford to spend more tax dollars on local schools when there are so many other issues – such as potholes, traffic, and public safety – that are much higher priorities locally.



# An anti-tax message, as well as one saying that bonds are a bad way to fund repairs, stands out for critics.



Q11. I am going to read you some statements opponents of this potential school bond measure may make. Please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing as a reason to oppose this potential school bond measure. \*Split Sample

# For swing voters, these top two messages are highly compelling.

Statement	Very Convincing			
	All Voters	Targets		
		Consistent Yes	Swing	Consistent No
*Bonds Wrong Way	38%	18%	42%	75%
Taxes	34%	11%	41%	76%
Prior Bond	31%	13%	34%	67%
*Waste	16%	6%	22%	32%
Enrollment	13%	2%	16%	31%
Priorities	8%	2%	9%	20%



# Conclusions

# Conclusions

- A Rescue Union School District bond measure faces a challenging path to approval in November, but a measure could be successful with a strong informational effort.
  - The measure begins with 58% support based on the measure language, which is within the margin of error of the 55% threshold needed for passage.
  - The community sees the District quite favorably but is not especially aware of your needs.
  - Voters are very receptive to messaging about measure accountability, the need for basic repairs, and connecting good schools to property values – bringing support to about three in five.
- Voters' top priorities include repairing leaky roofs, attracting and retaining high-quality teachers, repairing schools (broadly), and improving school safety and security. A focus on the need to replace portables doesn't connect as well as being specific about the needed repairs.
- Local control of funds is also highly valued by District voters.
- The key challenge is that a simple anti-tax message, or one that says that bonds are the wrong way to fund these priorities, are effective frames for opponents, and reduce support to 54%.

For more information,  
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