

BOND TRACKING SURVEY

CONDUCTED FOR THE
SANTA MARIA JOINT UNION
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESENTED BY
TIMOTHY McLARNEY PH.D.

6/4/2024





PURPOSE OF STUDY

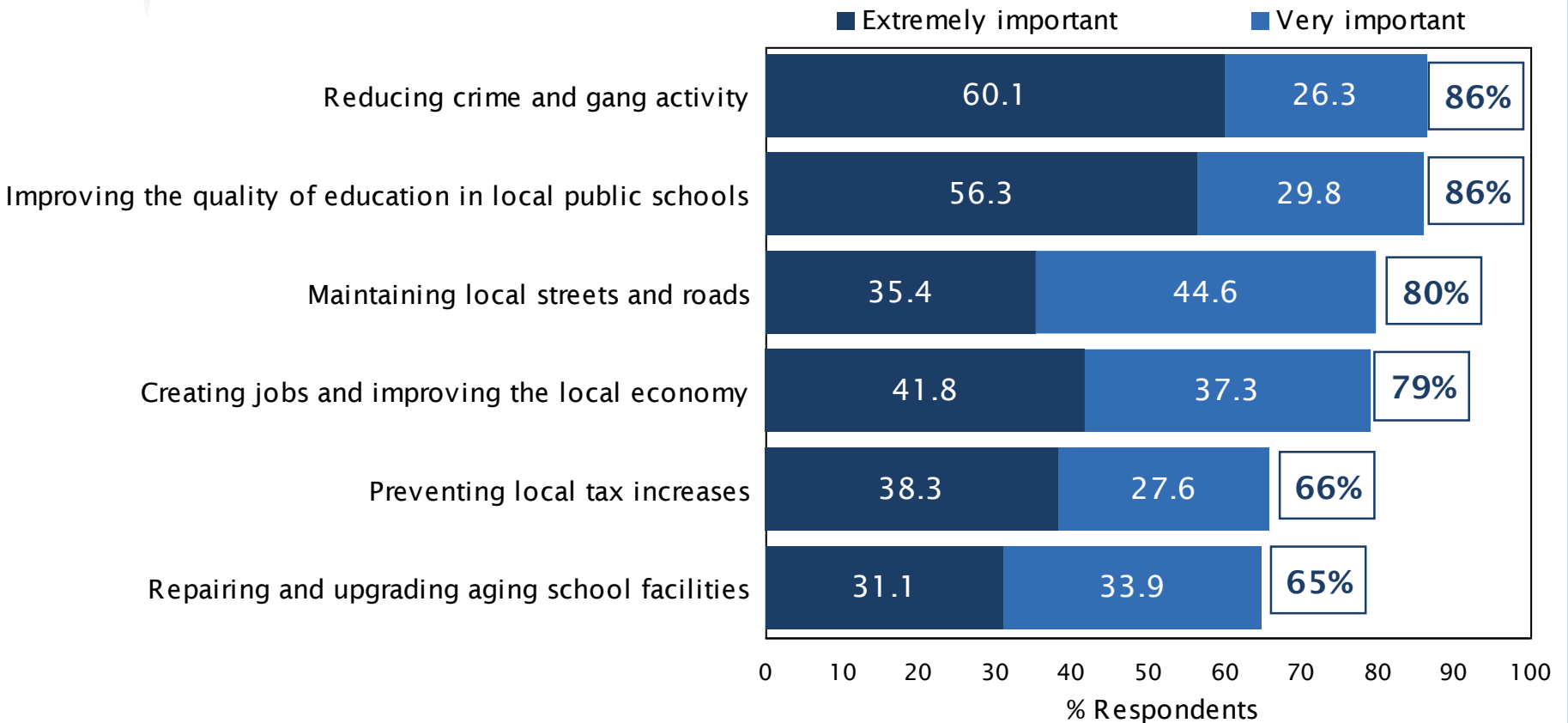
- Provide up-to-date assessment if a bond measure is feasible
- Identify how to create a measure consistent with community priorities
- Gather information needed for communications & outreach



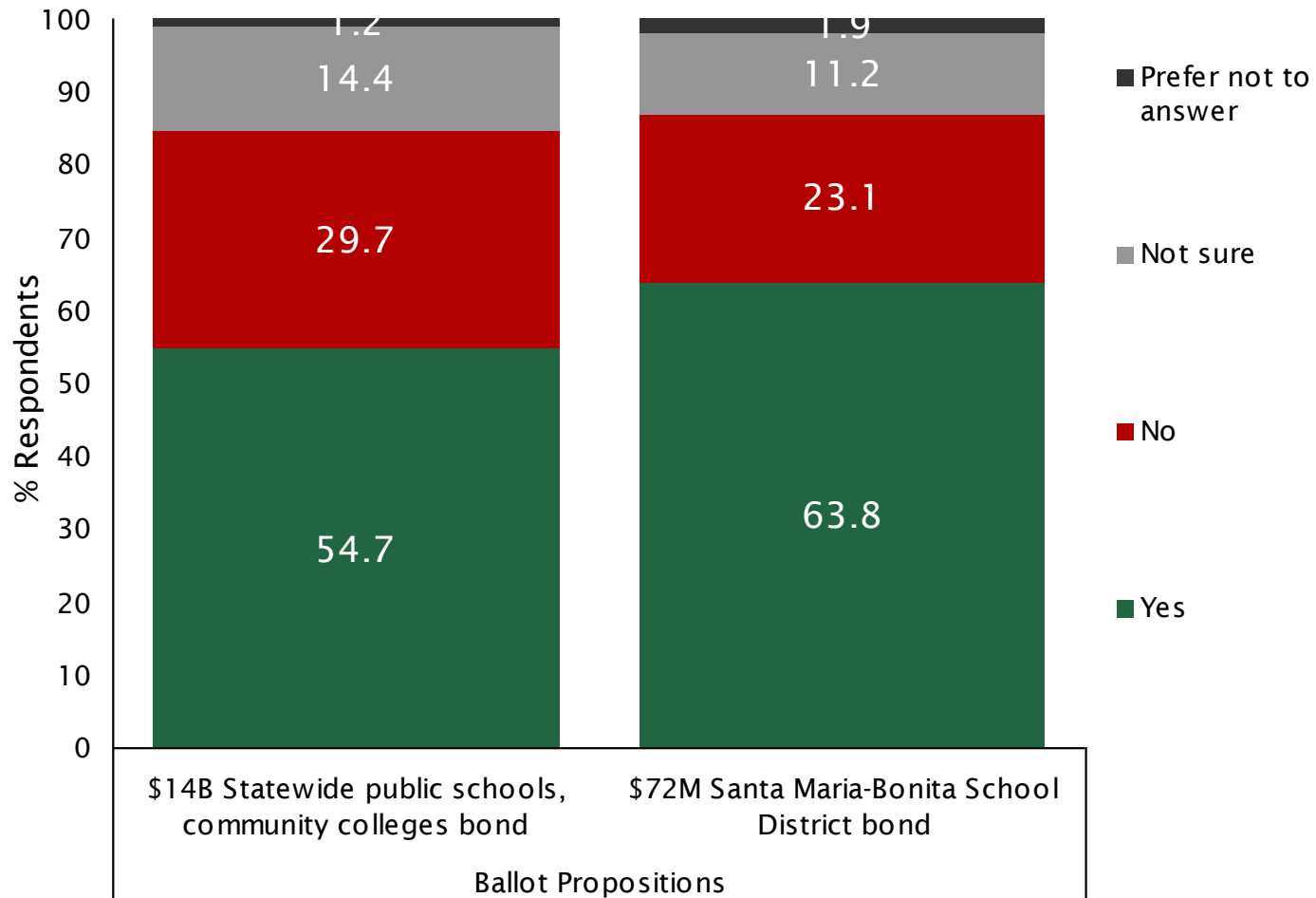
METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

- **How did we select voters to survey?**
 - Stratified & Clustered Random Sample of likely voters (2024) using age, gender, partisanship, household party type, and sub-geographies
 - Ensures balanced, representative sample of likely voters
- **How did we recruit participation?**
 - Personalized email, text, and telephone calls
 - PINs to restrict access and ensure one complete per respondent
- **How were voters able to share their opinions?**
 - Secure, PIN-protected website that scales to the device
 - Telephone (land line or mobile)
 - English & Spanish
- **What was the sample size?**
 - 405 completed interviews
 - Overall margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$ @ 95% level of confidence

IMPORTANCE OF ISSUES



CROWDED BALLOT SIMULATION





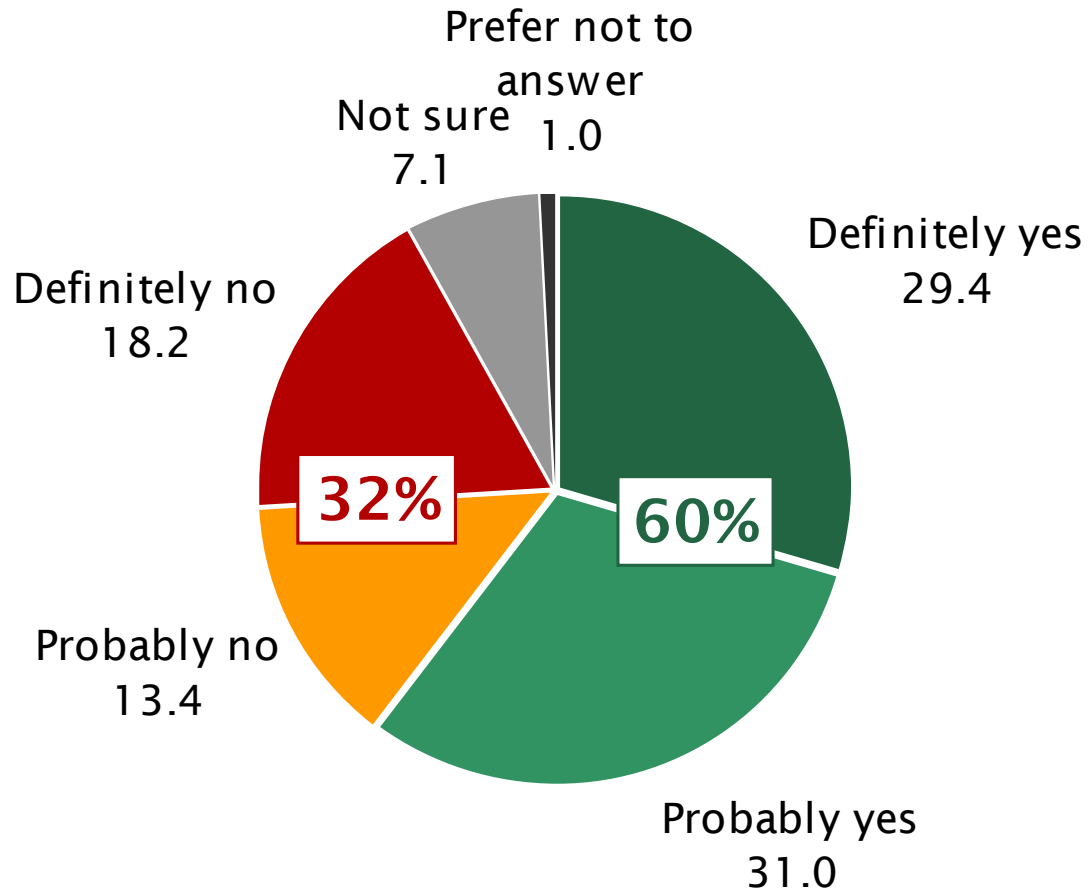
INITIAL BALLOT TEST

Santa Maria Joint Union High School District College/Career Preparation Measure. In order to:

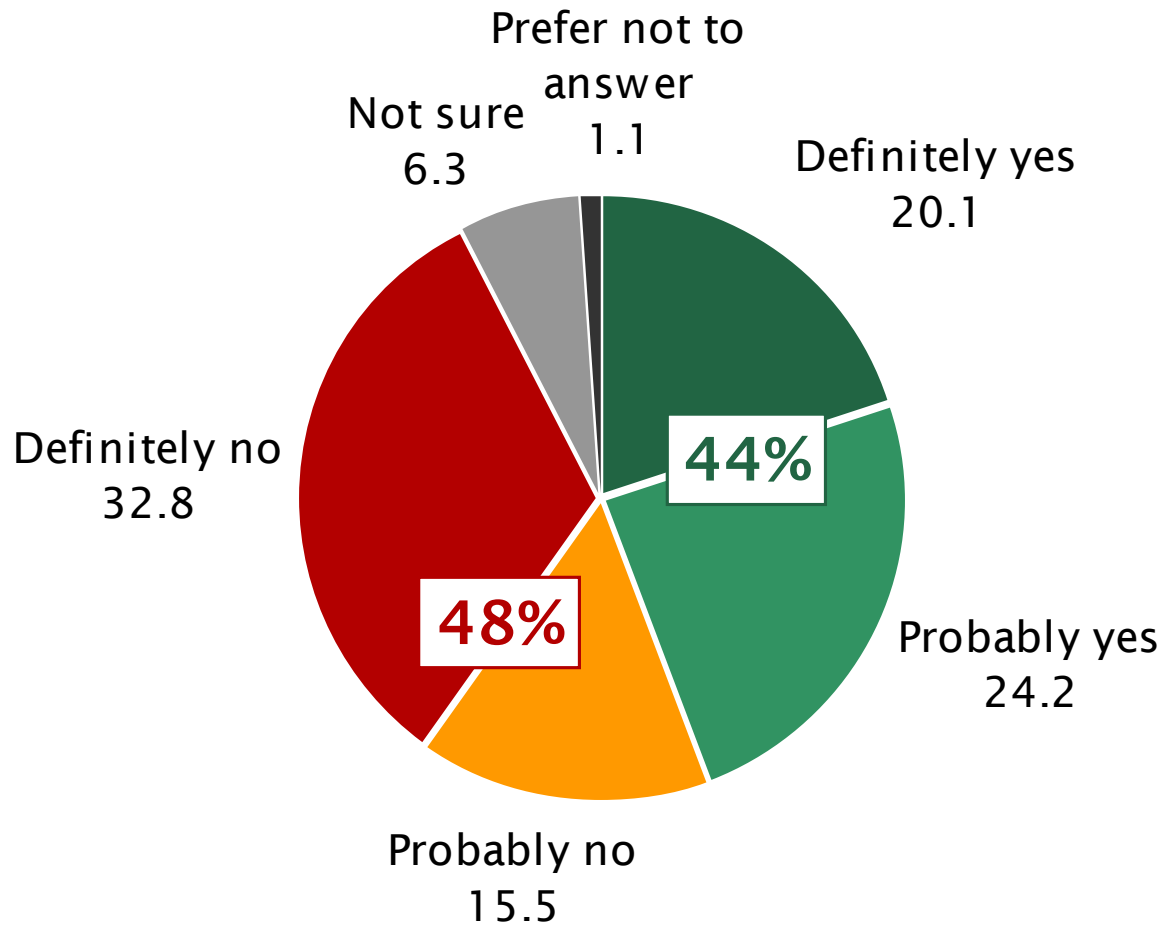
- Provide up-to-date classrooms, labs, and career training facilities to prepare students for college and in-demand careers in science, engineering, technology, and skilled trades;
- Improve student safety/school security;
- Replace aging portables
- And relieve student overcrowding

Shall Santa Maria Joint Union High School District's measure authorizing 194 million dollars in bonds at legal rates be adopted, levying approximately \$24 per \$100,000 assessed valuation (\$13 million annually) while bonds are outstanding, with independent oversight, audits, and all funds staying local? If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on this measure?

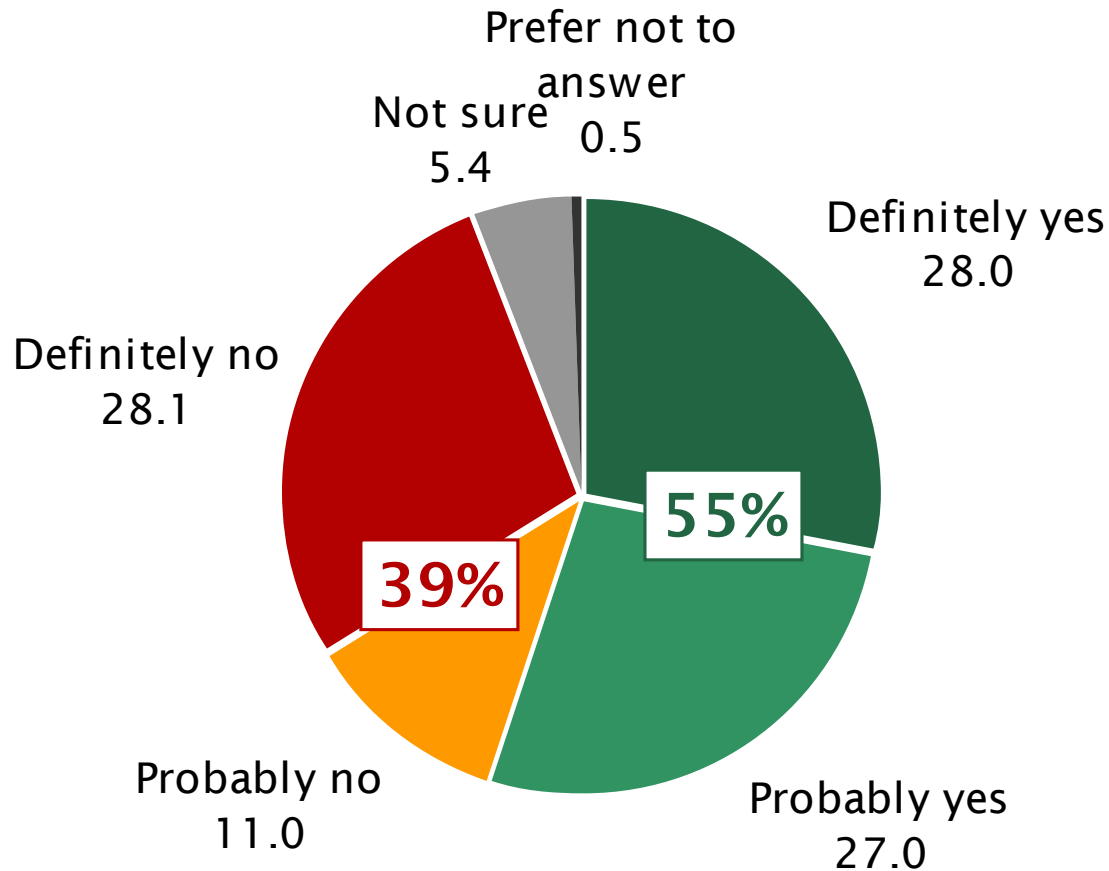
INITIAL BALLOT TEST



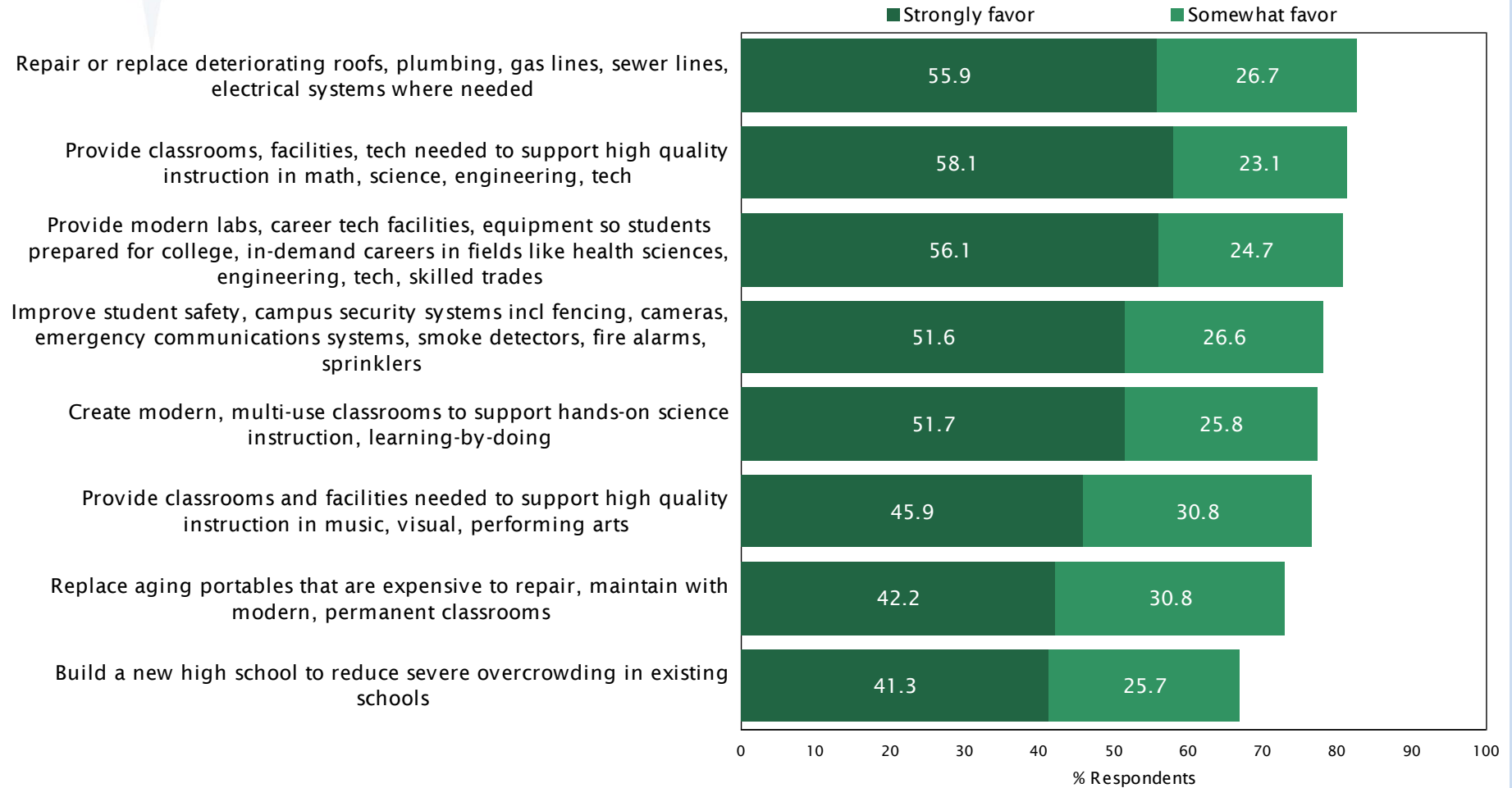
SUPPORT AT \$24 PER \$100K



IF \$77 PER YEAR FOR TYPICAL OWNER



PROJECTS & IMPROVEMENTS



POSITIVE ARGUMENTS

50+ portable classrooms 20+ yrs old, deteriorating; structural damage, water leaks; expensive to keep repairing; need bond to replace portables with modern, permanent classrooms

Student safety, security has become a top priority for schools around nation; bond will provide increased safety, security that will protect students, staff in case of an emergency

Measure will ensure students who plan to go to college prepared to succeed, those who don't, receive career training they need to compete for good paying jobs

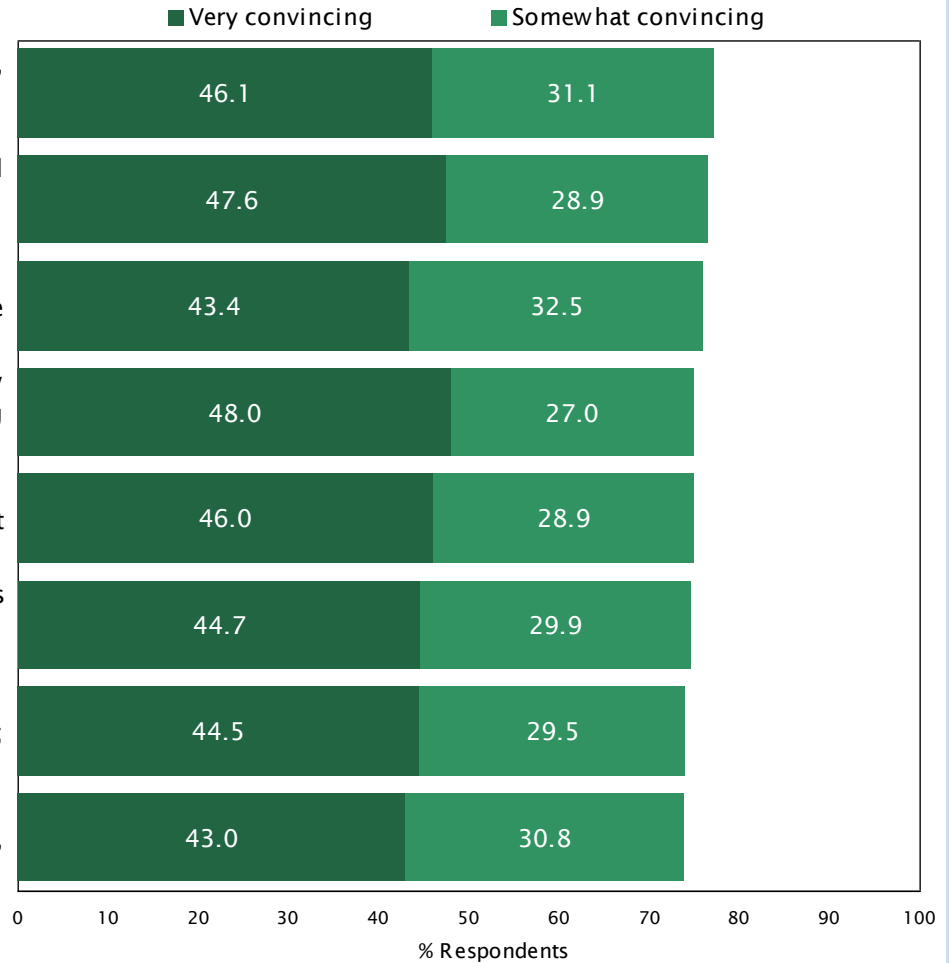
All local HS overcrowded, most built for 2,000 students, majority now have 3,100+, continuing to grow; need HS, add classrooms at existing schools to keep up with growth

Even with no school-age children, supporting school bond is a wise investment; good schools improve quality of life in community, protect value of homes

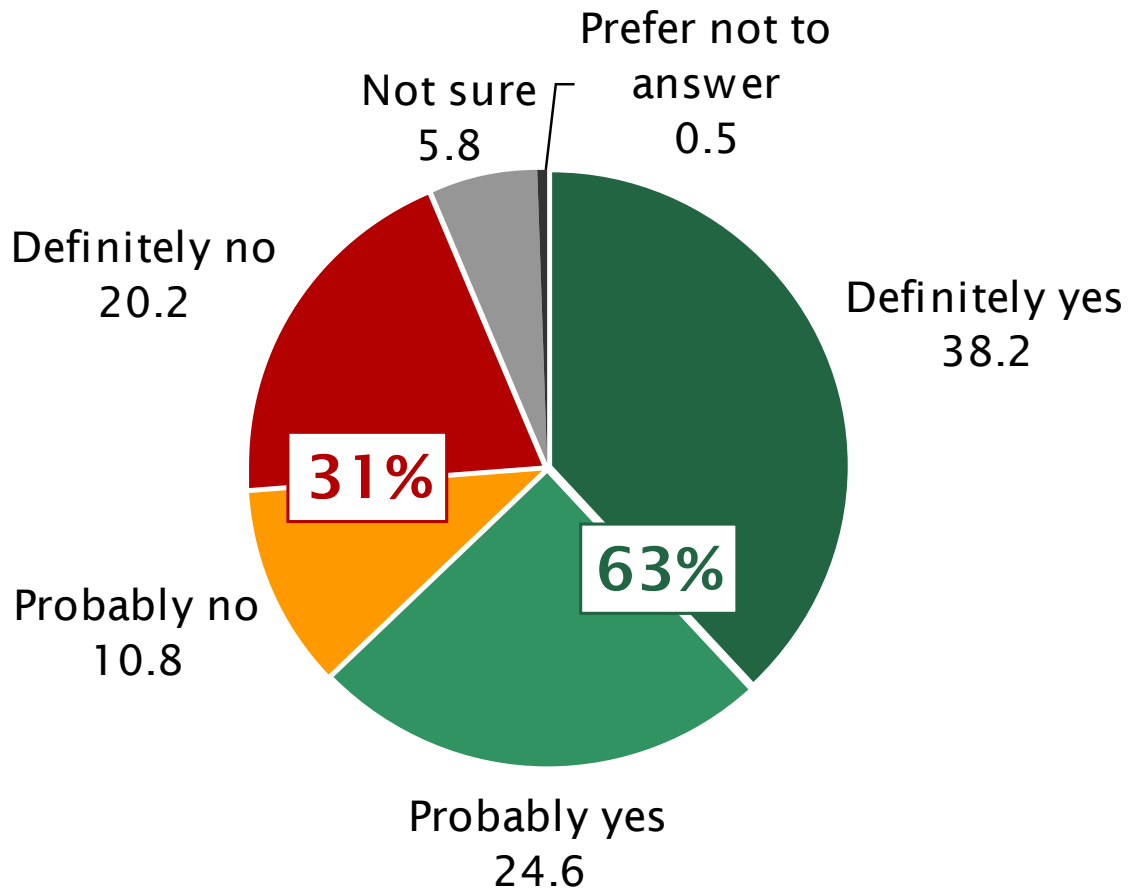
If we want kids to succeed in college, careers, must be skilled in today's tech, have adv classes in science, math, engineering, tech; measure helps make this possible

Studies have shown overcrowded not safe; makes it hard to respond to fire, emergencies, increases health risks, increases violence on campus; students deserve better

Measure requires transparent system of accountability, project list describing how money will be used, Citizens' Oversight Committee, public disclosure of how funds are spent



INTERIM BALLOT TEST

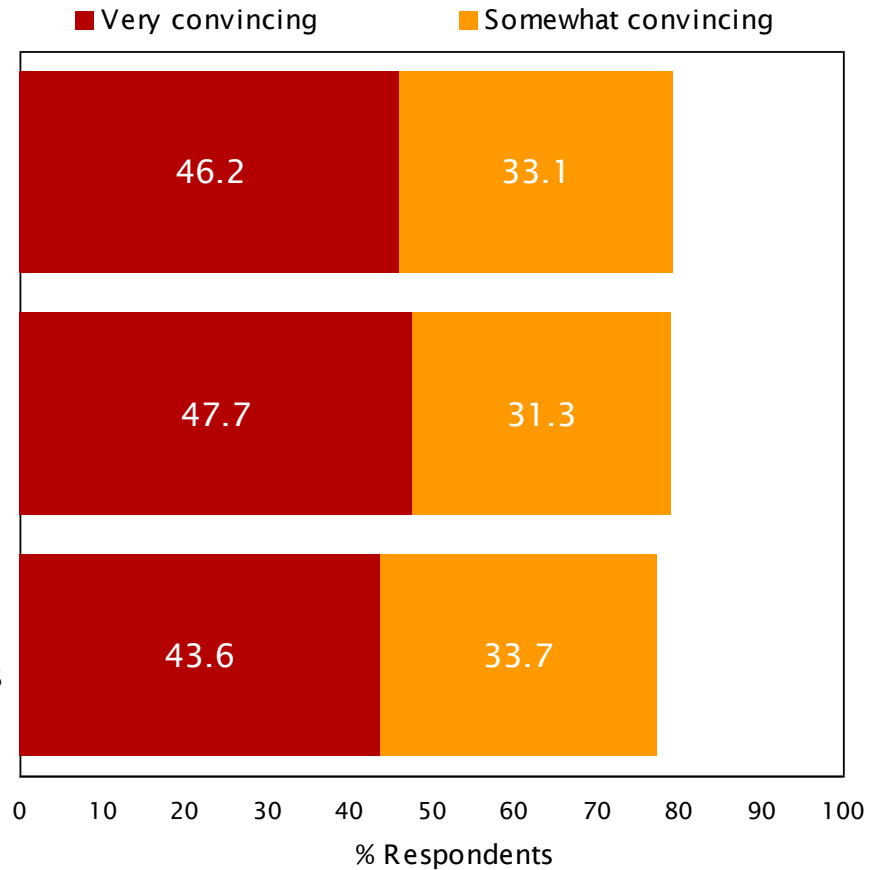


NEGATIVE ARGUMENTS

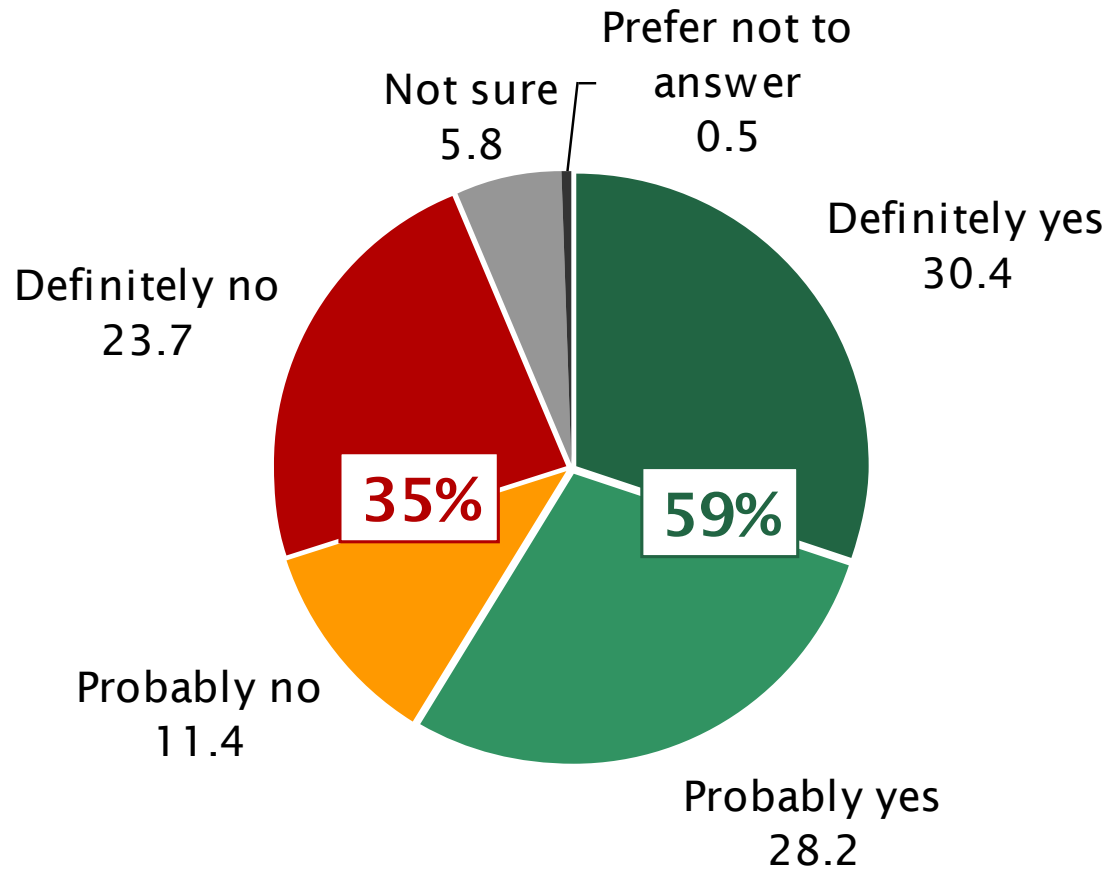
Property owners are already paying too many taxes, school bonds, local taxes; a lot of new tax increases on Nov ballot; enough is enough; can't afford to keep raising taxes

Residents, local businesses hit hard by inflation, high interest rates, high gas prices; many are struggling to stay afloat; now is not the time to raise taxes

Community is already an expensive place to live, especially for young families, seniors, those on fixed incomes; passing bond will make it even less affordable



FINAL BALLOT TEST





KEY CONCLUSIONS

Does a bond appear to be feasible for a 2024 ballot? *Yes, but it will require effective outreach/engagement to be viable and is not without risk.*

Positive Signs

- Voters rank improving the quality of education in local schools among the *most* important issues facing the community
- Solid support for a bond measure at Initial Ballot Test (60%)
- Popular projects and improvements
- Strong positive arguments
- All ballot tests are above 55%, even after negative arguments

Challenges

- Tax rate sensitivity
- Opposition arguments resonate (-4%)
- Electoral climate: Hyper-partisanship, statewide initiatives & overlapping measures



OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Snapshot in time, not a crystal ball**
- **Tax Rate:** Keep affordable
- **Project Priorities:** Repairs to older facilities, STEM, career tech, safety/security
- **District Communications:** Continue the conversation with the community to strengthen awareness of facility needs, how they connect to educational opportunities/student achievement, and consensus on a bond proposal.
- **Independent Campaign:** Need to have solid independent campaign to navigate through the election cycle, communicate key messages, turn out supporters, and weather uncertainties.