

Grand Haven Area Public Schools
Post-Election Intelligence Report
June 22, 2023

Introduction

At the Special Election on May 2, 2023, voters rejected Grand Haven Area Public Schools’ \$155 million bond proposal. A total of 10,553 voters cast their ballots, with 47.7% voting yes and 52.3% voting no. GHAPS reports hearing various reasons for the bond’s failure: the total cost was too high, residents did not support building a new middle school outside the City of Grand Haven, voters wanted a clearer picture of what the district would do with the old middle school property, and there are lingering feelings of distrust in the district due to the embezzlement. In addition, an anonymous party launched a large opposition campaign just weeks before the election.

Though the bond proposal failed, the needs of the district and its students remain. GHAPS will most likely need to offer a revised bond proposal to voters in November, but to do so, they will need more than an understanding of why the May proposal failed. They need a deeper understanding of the community’s feelings and priorities. They also need to take intentional steps toward earning the community’s trust by demonstrating a thoughtful, inclusive approach to the post-election research.

Research Methodology

King Media is a full-service marketing, advertising, public relations and digital media agency. With the exception of publishing bond information in the March issue of the Beacon, King was not involved in disseminating information about the district’s bond proposal. King was contracted to conduct post-election research after the failure of the bond.

Our two-pronged research approach included an online community survey and a series of focus groups. Both research methods were approached as a conversation about how to meet the district’s needs rather than an effort to uncover what residents would or would not support on a future bond proposal. We expect that the findings presented in this report will help the district determine bond-related next steps, but our approach was designed to both gather information and build a sense of trust throughout the community.

Online Community Survey

The online community survey opened on May 25, 2023. It was deployed using a two-week Facebook ad campaign that targeted residents living within district boundaries. The campaign delivered 62,457 impressions, reached 14,436 people, and generated 4,606 clicks for a click-through rate of 7.37%, which is more than eight times greater than the industry standard CTR of 0.90%. Of those ad clicks, 1,012 were link clicks that sent users directly to the online survey.

The Facebook campaign also generated robust online discussion, with 158 comments, 56 reactions and 21 shares. The content of these comments has been incorporated into the data analysis.

Performance Overview

Impressions

62,457

Reach

14,436

Frequency

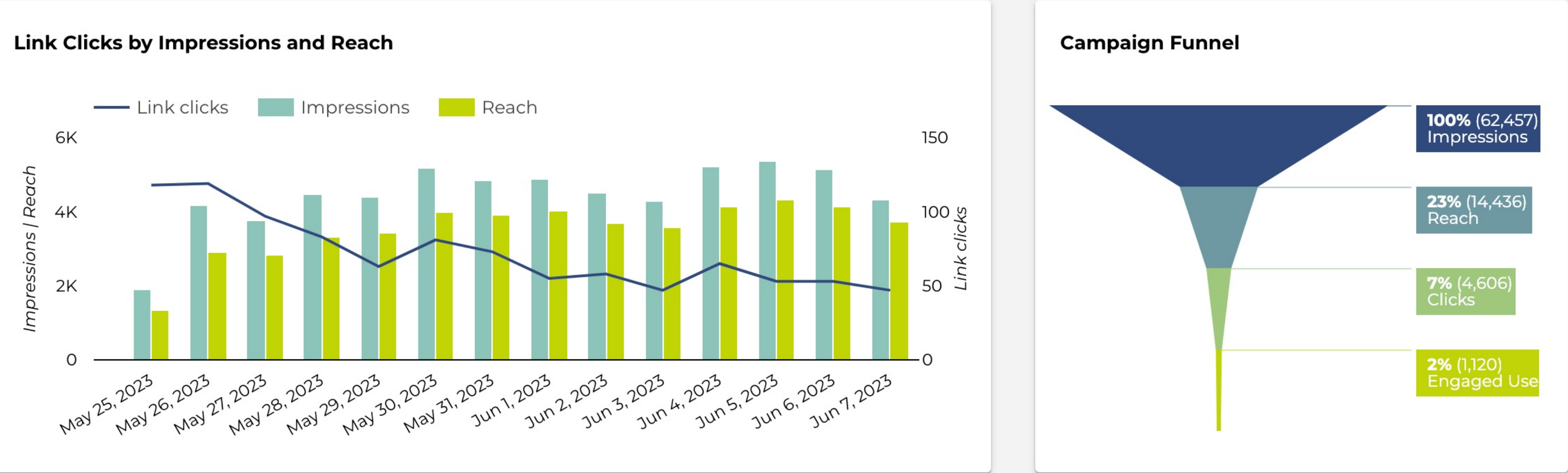
4.33

Clicks

4,606

CTR (All)

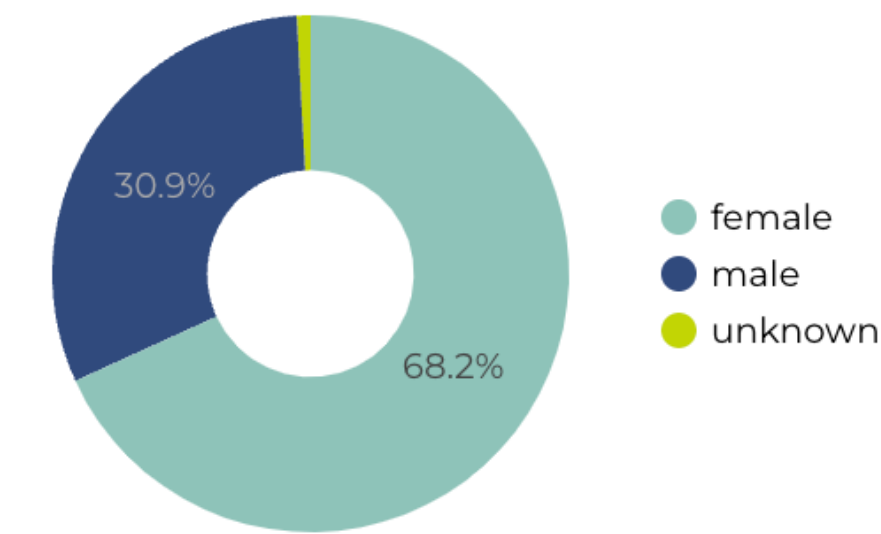
7.37%



| Ad Image ▾ | Ad Copy | Impressions | Reach | Link Clicks | Reactions | Comments | Shares | Saves |
|------------|--|-------------|--------|-------------|-----------|----------|--------|-------|
| | In the May 2nd Special Election, 52% of voters said no to the district's bond proposal. Though the proposal failed, the needs of our students remain. Take our survey to help us decide how to move forward: bit.ly/ghapssurvey | 62,457 | 14,436 | 1,012 | 56 | 158 | 21 | 7 |

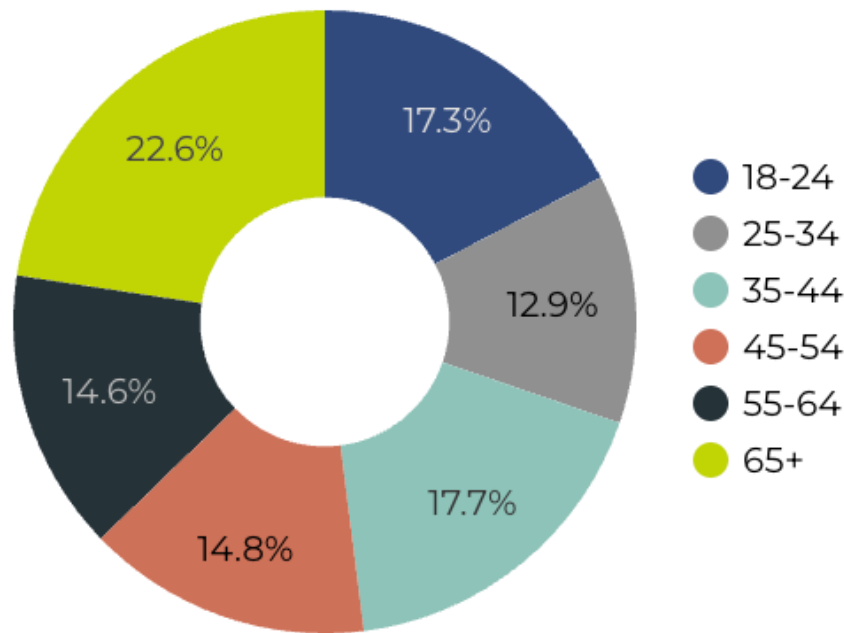
Demographic Overview

Impressions by Gender



| Gender ^ | Impressions | Reach | Clicks | Link clicks |
|-------------|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| female | 42,594 | 9,548 | 3,291 | 708 |
| male | 19,321 | 4,748 | 1,277 | 298 |
| unknown | 542 | 140 | 38 | 6 |
| Grand total | 62,457 | 14,436 | 4,606 | 1,012 |

Impressions by Age

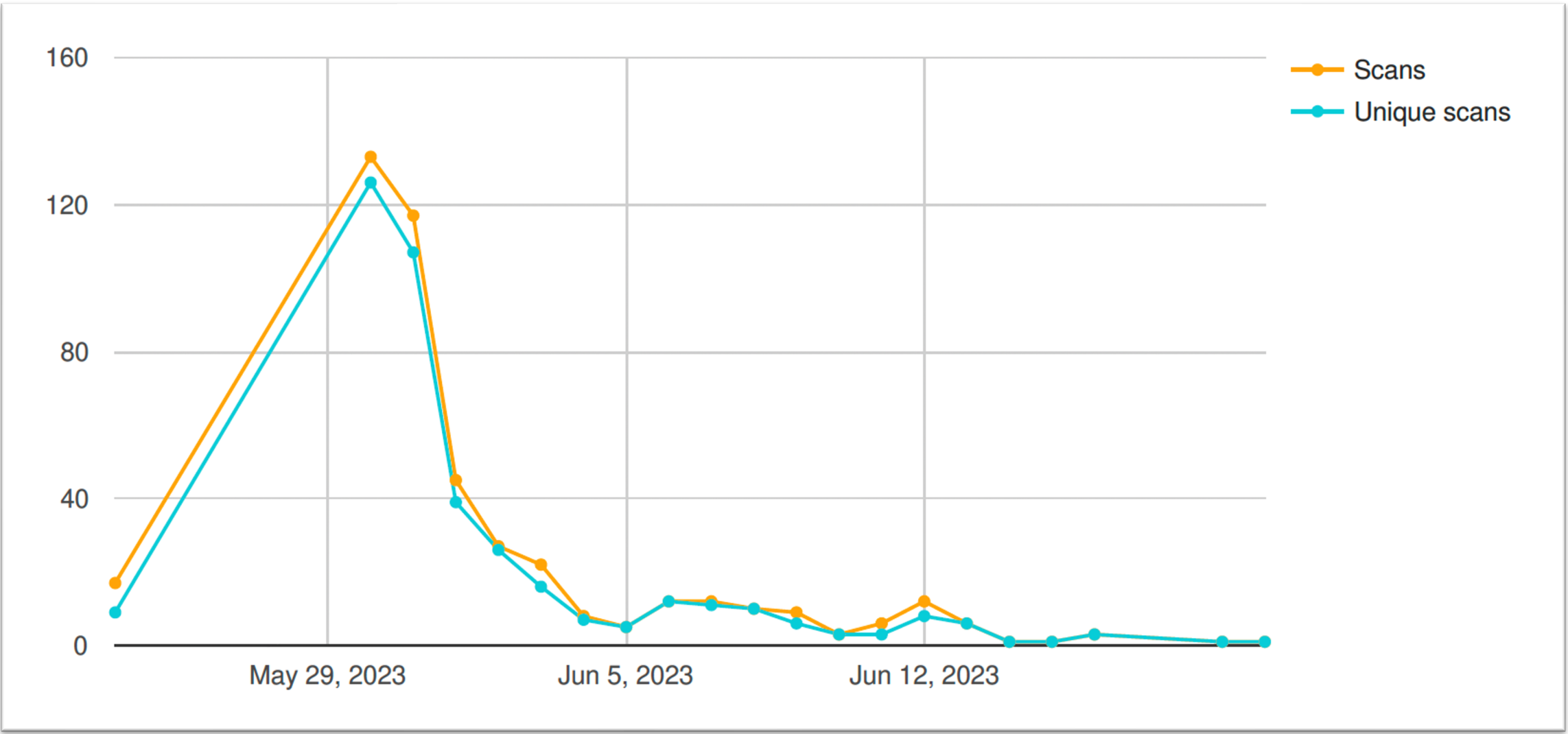


| Age ^ | Impressions | Reach | Clicks | Link clicks |
|-------------|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| 18-24 | 10,824 | 2,848 | 274 | 146 |
| 25-34 | 8,074 | 1,784 | 486 | 119 |
| 35-44 | 11,078 | 2,260 | 936 | 136 |
| 45-54 | 9,223 | 2,120 | 779 | 123 |
| 55-64 | 9,132 | 2,252 | 840 | 158 |
| 65+ | 14,126 | 3,172 | 1,291 | 330 |
| Grand total | 62,457 | 14,436 | 4,606 | 1,012 |

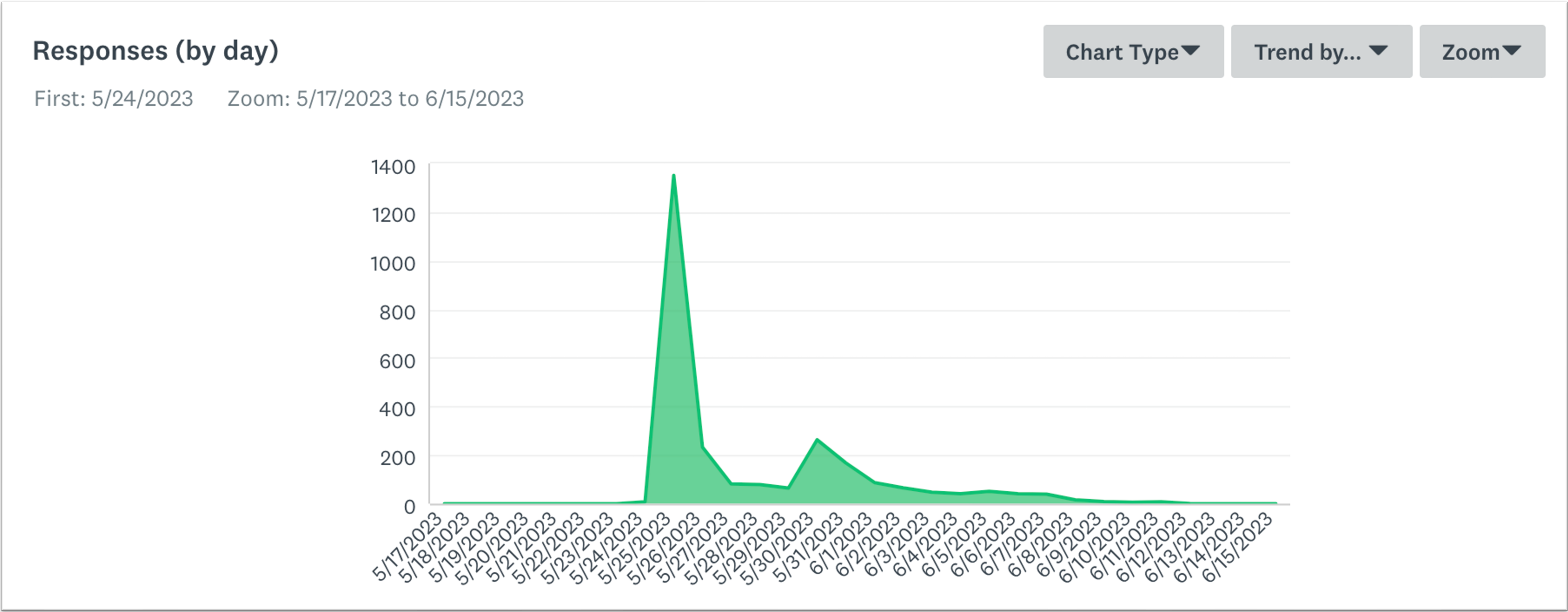
GHAPS also sought survey participants through the following distribution methods:

- Emails to GHAPS families and staff on May 25, 2023
- Link posted to the GHAPS website on May 25, 2023
- Postcard mailing to district residents, received between May 26 and June 5, 2023

The postcard included a QR code, which received 401 unique scans.



The online community survey received 2,658 responses. Of these, 1,620 respondents provided complete enough responses to be considered in the data analysis.



Focus Groups

King conducted focus groups at the GHAPS Education Service Center on June 13 and 14, 2023. Prior to the focus groups, we met with GHAPS to discuss the mix of participants. Our goal was to hear from a wide variety of different voters: parents, non-parents, representatives of the business community, senior adults, local government leadership, members of the nonprofit community, real estate agents, clergy and more. Participants were invited by GHAPS based these suggestions, and from the 60+ invitations they issued, 17 people chose to participate.

Between the two days, we offered four different one-hour time slots to accommodate different schedules:

- June 13: 2 pm and 6 pm
- June 14: 9 am and 12 pm

Based on participant availability, we did not conduct the 6 pm focus group on June 13. However, the remaining focus groups lasted beyond their allotted time for a total of nearly five (5) hours of robust conversation.

Data Analysis

The goal of our research was to understand why the May 2 bond proposal failed, identify the community’s feelings and priorities, and provide information that will help the district determine its next steps related to future bond proposals. We were hired to listen openly to the questions, concerns and feedback of the community; to thoughtfully analyze and synthesize the information; and to provide the district with meaningful findings that help them move forward.

Audience Definitions

Before we dive into the data analysis, it’s important to define the survey audiences. Throughout this report, you will see references to yes voters, no voters, and non-voters.

“Yes voters” are survey respondents who indicated a “yes” vote on the bond proposal. Yes voters comprised 56% of survey responses.

“No voters” are survey respondents who indicated a “no” vote on the bond proposal. No voters comprised 37% of survey responses.

“Non-voters” are survey respondents who indicated that they did not cast a vote on the bond proposal. Non-voters voters comprised 7% of survey responses.

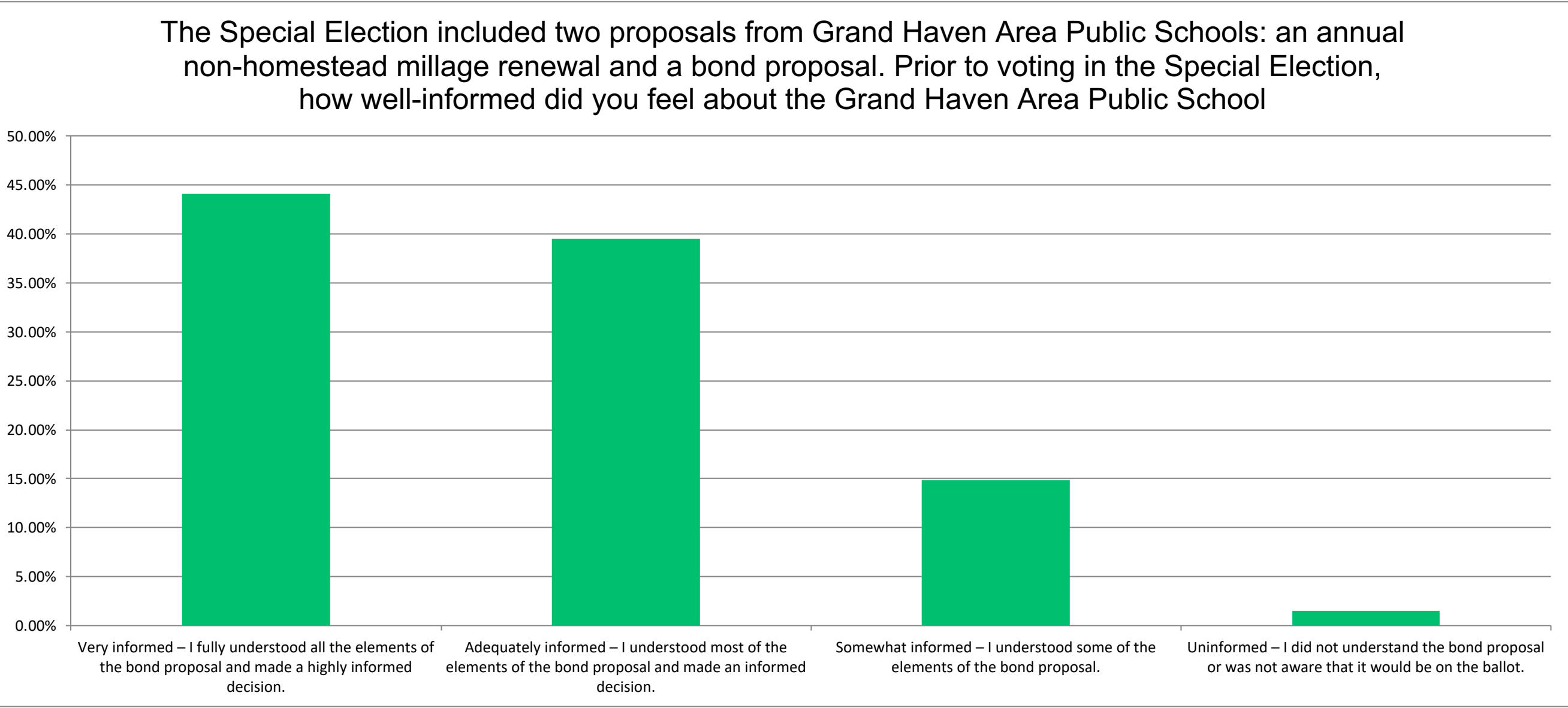
For relevance, we analyzed much of the data in these three separate audience segments.

We did not ask focus group participants to disclose their vote.

Information and Influence

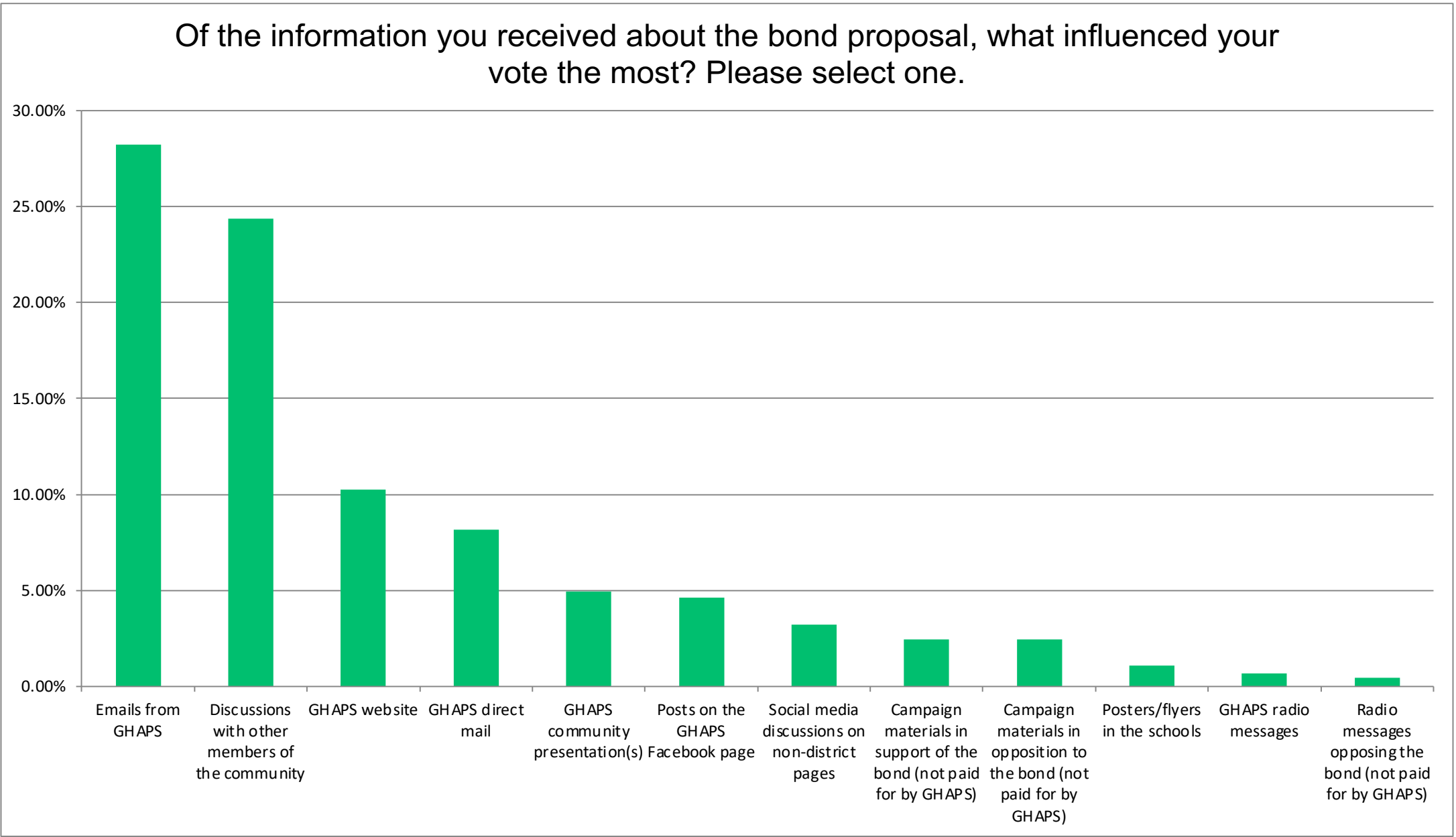
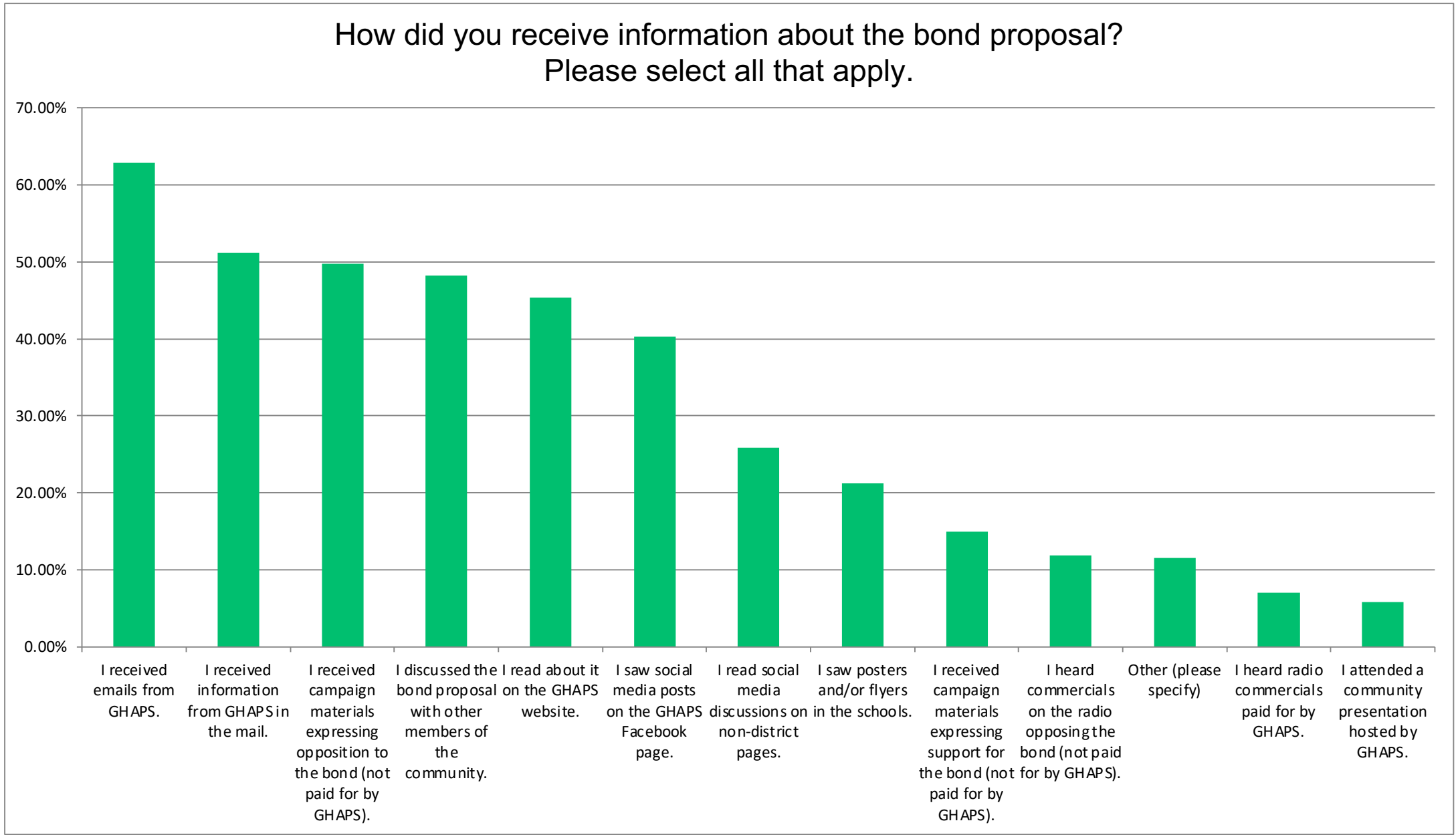
Yes Voters

Yes voters comprised 56% of survey responses. 84% of yes voters felt they were very or adequately informed before casting their vote. 63% of yes voters reported receiving bond proposal information from GHAPS via email, and 28% of yes voters said these emails were the most influential factors in their decision to vote yes, followed closely by discussions with other members of the community (24%). More than half of yes voters received campaign materials expressing opposition to the bond, but only 2% reported that those materials were the most influential in their vote.



Information and Influence

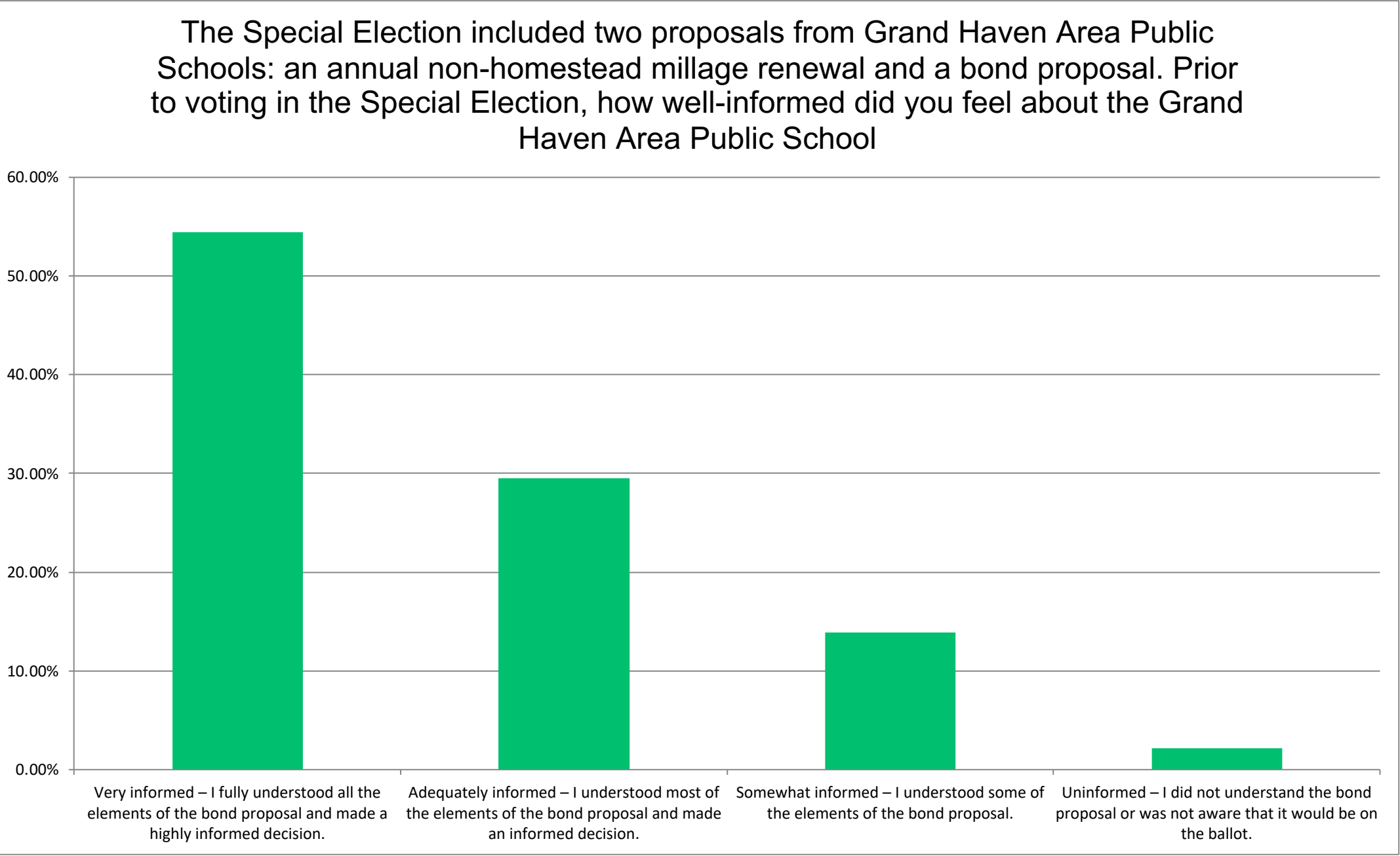
Yes Voters



Information and Influence

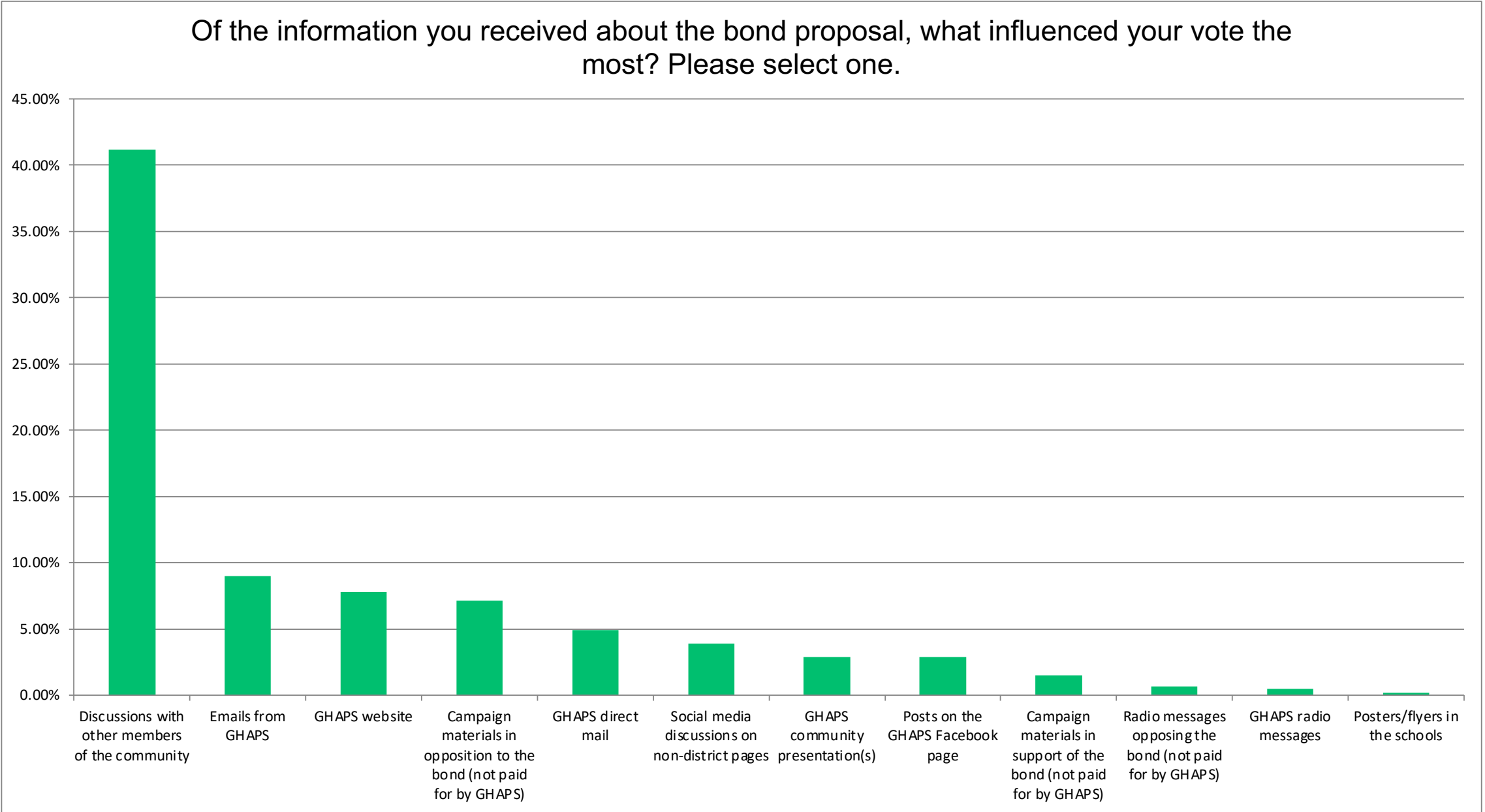
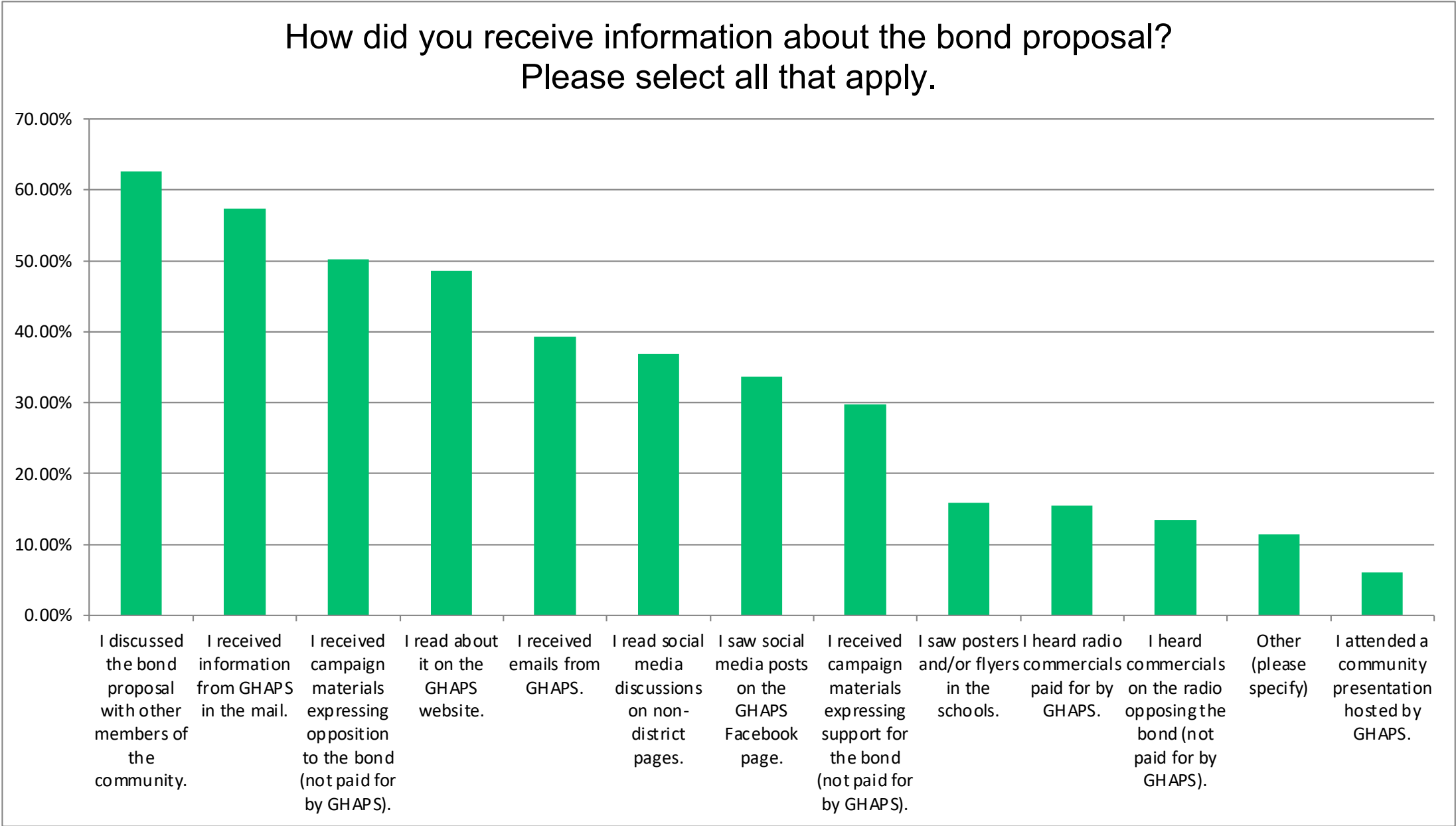
No Voters

No voters comprised 37% of survey responses. Like yes voters, 84% of no voters felt they were very or adequately informed before casting their vote. 39% of no voters reported receiving bond proposal information from GHAPS via email, but only 9% of no voters said these emails were the most influential factors in their decision to vote no. By far, the most influential factor in their votes was the discussions they had with other members of the community (41%). More than half of no voters received campaign materials expressing opposition to the bond, but only 7% reported that those materials were the most influential in their vote.



Information and Influence

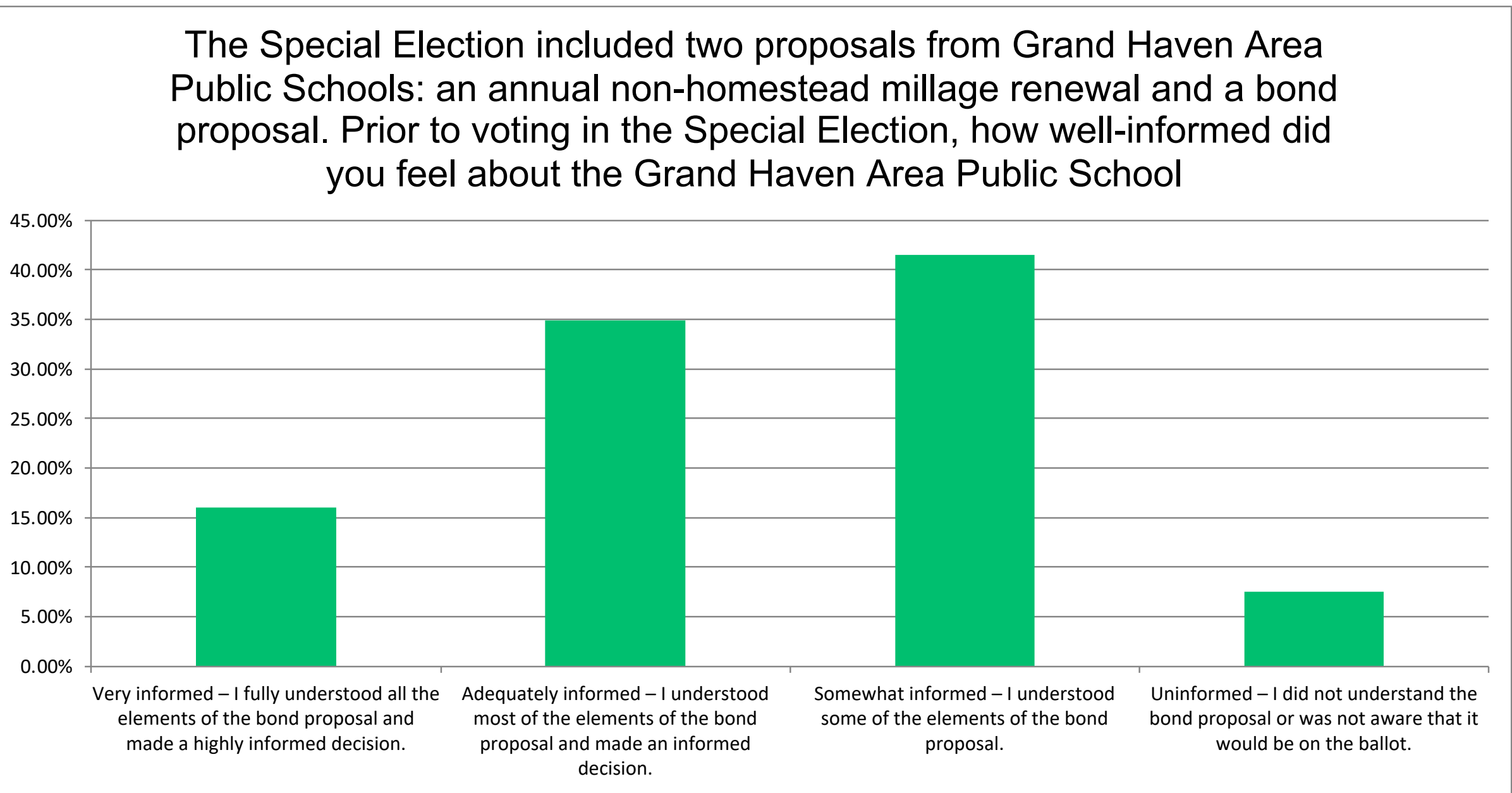
No Voters



Information and Influence

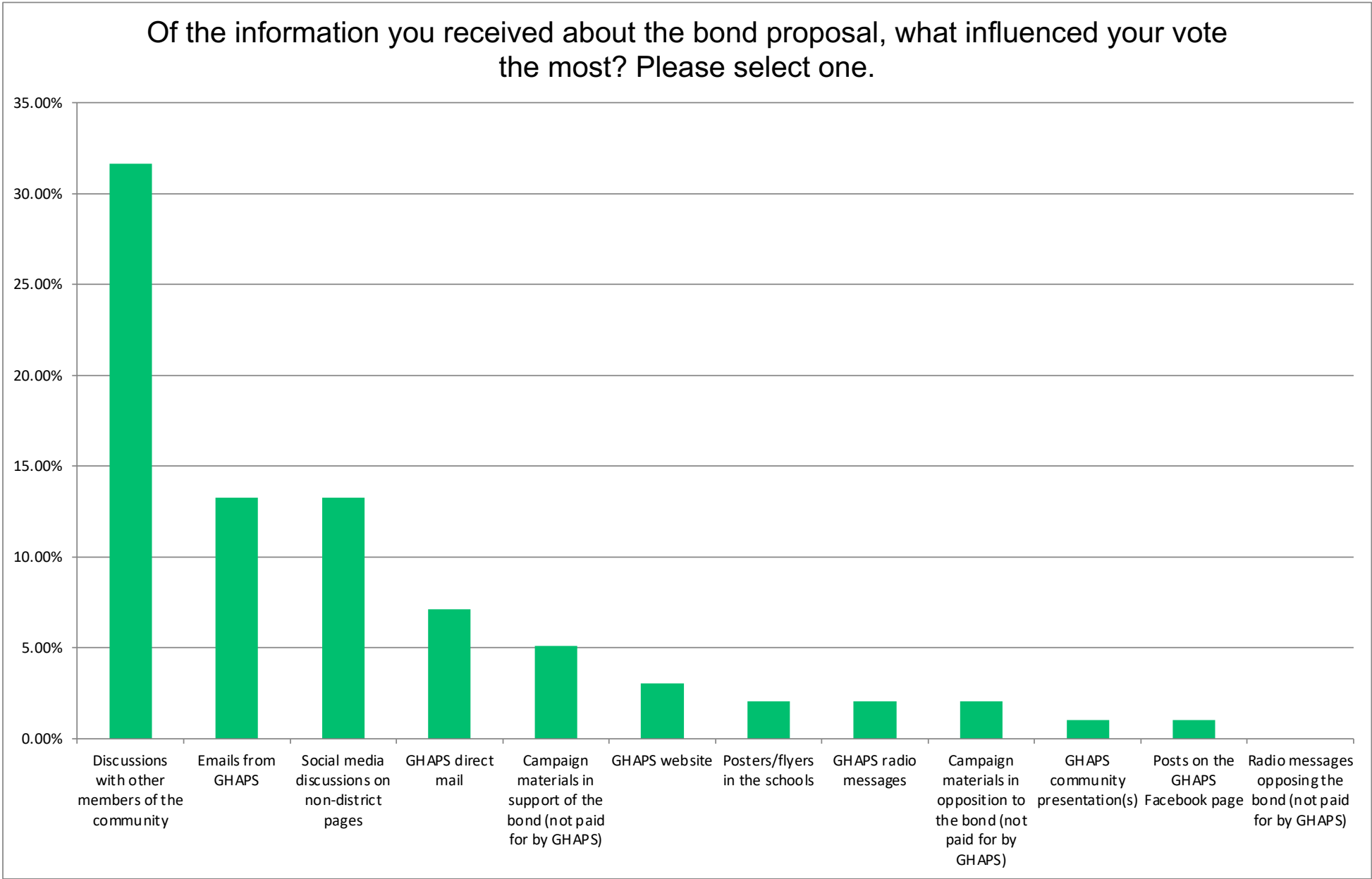
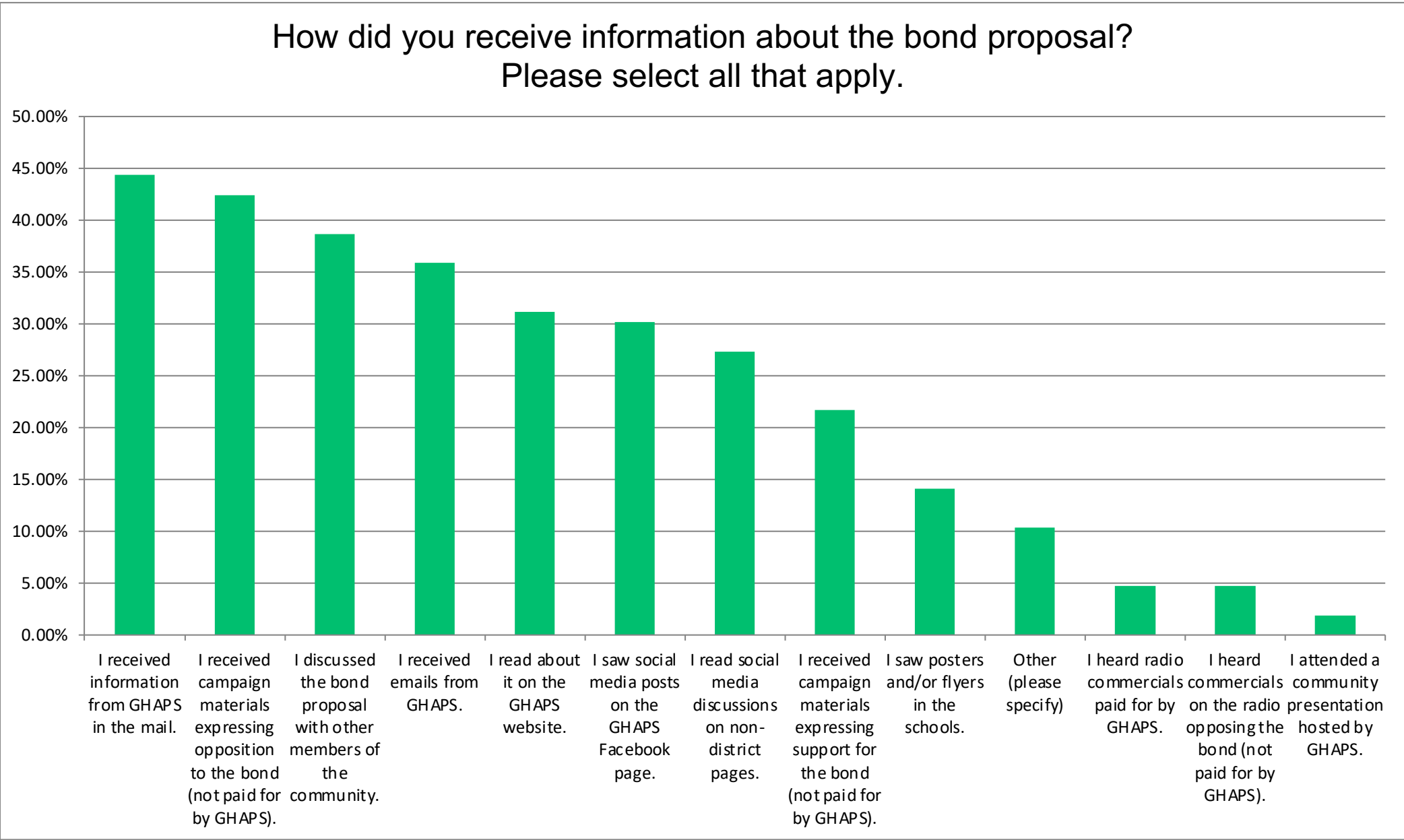
Non-voters

Non-voters comprised 7% of survey responses. Nearly half of non-voters felt they were somewhat informed or not informed before the election. 36% of non-voters voters reported receiving bond proposal information from GHAPS via email, but only 13% of non-voters said these emails were the most influential factors in their decision. Like no voters, the most influential factor was the discussions they had with other members of the community (32%). 42% of non-voters received campaign materials expressing opposition to the bond, but only 2% reported that those materials were the most influential in their decision not to vote.



Information and Influence

No Voters



Information and Influence

Implications

Whether survey respondents voted yes, no, or not at all, their discussions with other members of the Grand Haven community had the most significant influence on their decisions. When asked to share a few words about why they voted the way they did, no voters tended to be more detailed in their reasoning. Yes voters frequently expressed the sentiment that they always supported school bonds or that they voted yes “for the students.” These differences tell us that in conversations about the bond proposal, no voters were more likely to have thought-provoking responses than yes voters. Put another way, they may have made their case for a no vote more convincingly than yes voters.

This dynamic played out in the focus groups, too. Participants were able to more thoroughly express their concerns with the bond than articulate specific reasons for supporting the proposal.

Despite the furor over the anonymous campaign materials opposing the bond, relatively few survey respondents or focus group members allowed them to significantly influence their votes. Focus group participants did express a wish that the district had responded with more concrete facts to dispel the misinformation and viewed the lack of response as a missed opportunity to provide more clarity.

Alignment with District Priorities

The point of a strategic plan is to provide a roadmap for decision-making. The current GHAPS strategic plan lists student growth and success, school safety, and social/emotional wellness as the district’s priorities for the 2022-23 school year. Ideally, the elements of a bond proposal are clearly tied to the priorities outlined in a district’s strategic plan, so we asked survey respondents to rate how well different elements of the bond proposal aligned with one or more of the identified priorities.

Yes Voters

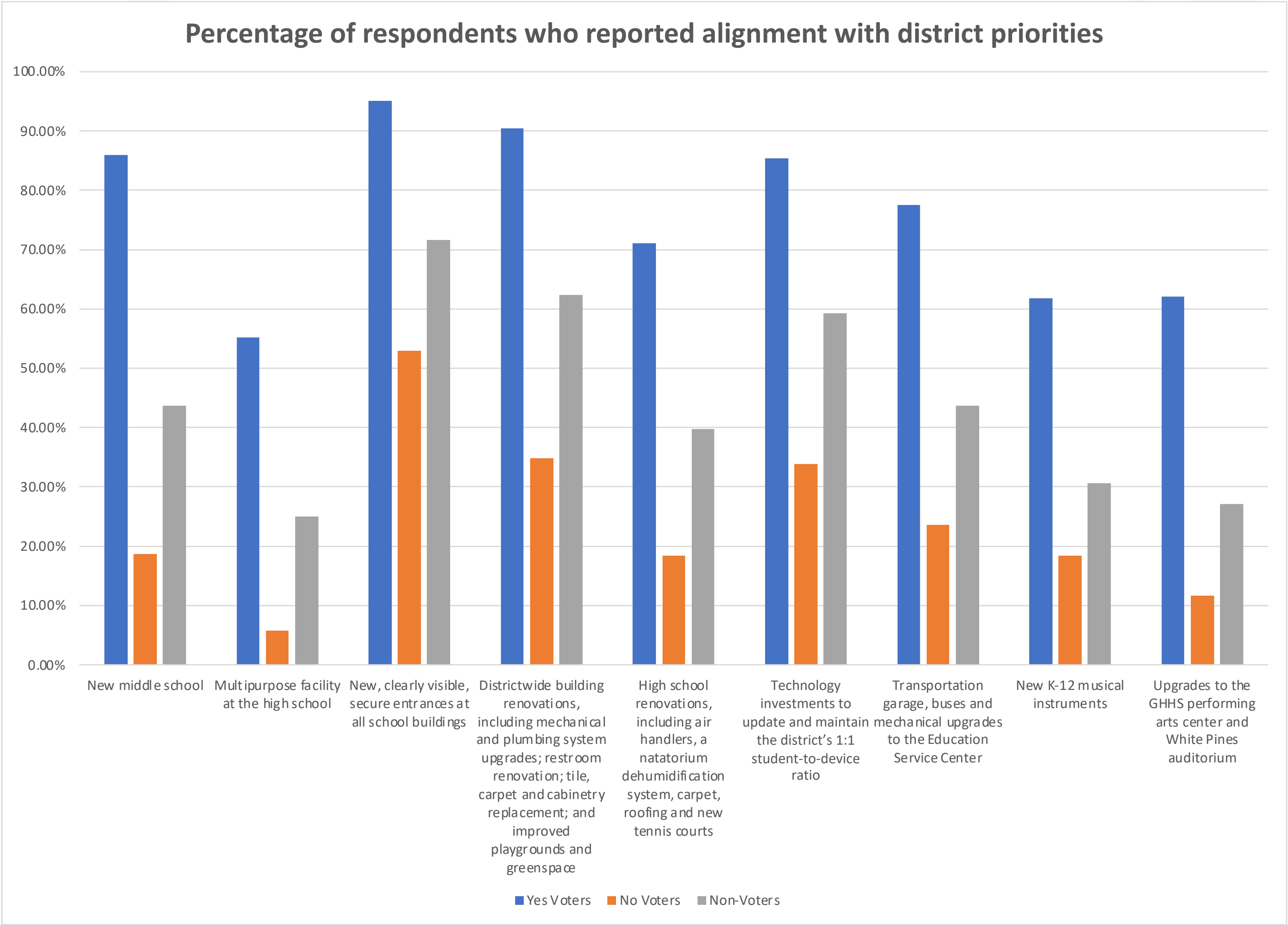
More than 70% of yes voters believe most elements of the bond proposal are aligned with one or more district priorities. The exceptions were upgrades to the GHHS performing arts center and White Pines auditorium (62%), new K-12 musical instruments (62%), and the multi-purpose facility at the high school (55%).

No Voters

In contrast, only 50% of no voters believe that having new, clearly visible, secure entrances at all school buildings is aligned with the district’s priorities. The rest of the elements of the bond are ranked as somewhat aligned or not aligned by no voters.

Non-Voters

Non-voters’ opinions of the bond’s alignment with district priorities are similar to yes voters, though only secure entrances achieved more than 70% alignment.



Alignment with District Priorities

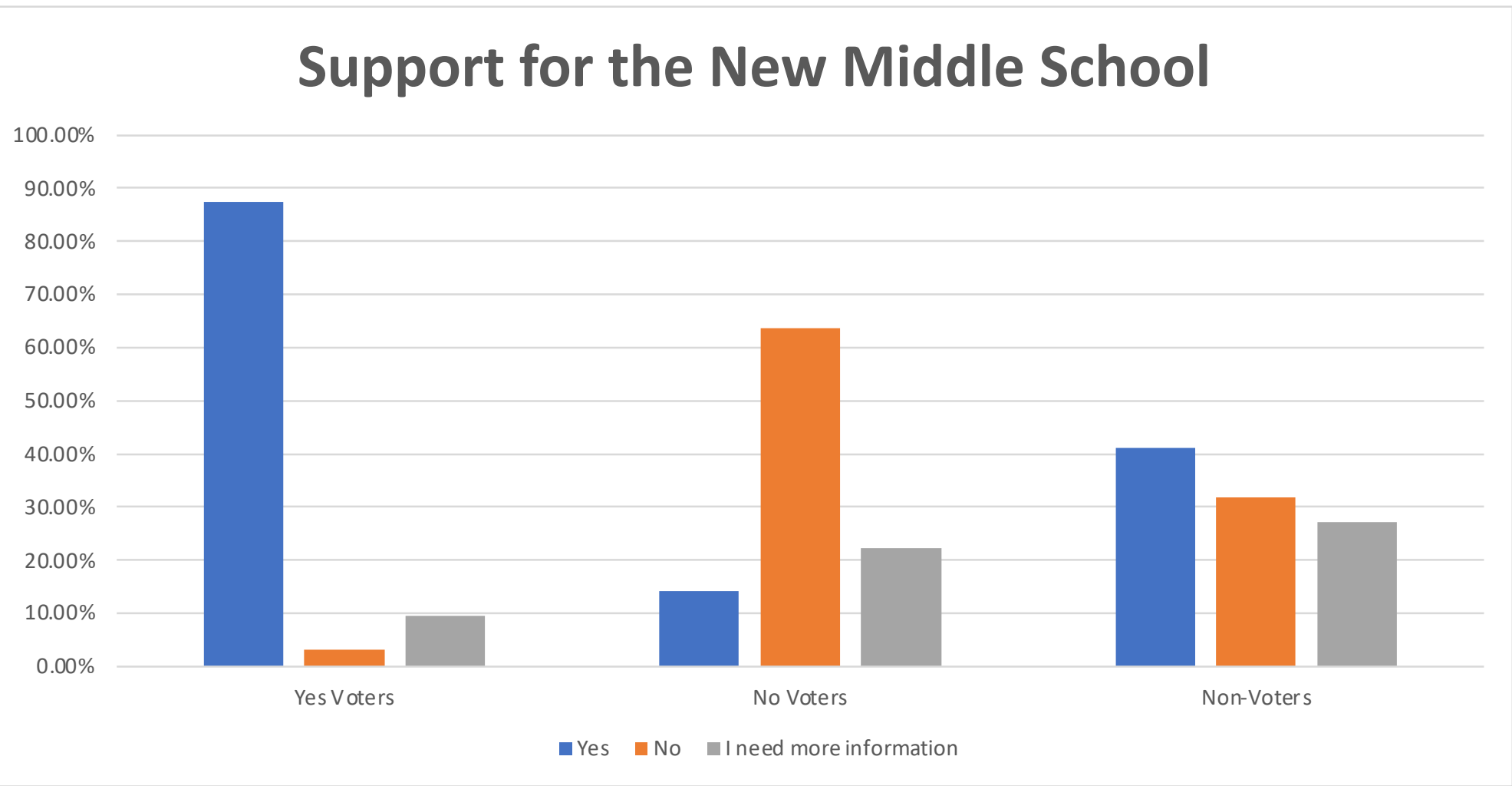
Implications

This survey did not explore whether voters agree with the district’s current priorities. However, survey responses indicate that GHAPS did not strongly demonstrate how some elements of the bond aligned with the district’s strategic plan. This is most apparent in respondents’ feelings about the multipurpose facility, new musical instruments, and upgrades to the performing arts venues. Based on additional information gathered during the focus groups, projects like these are more difficult to justify because voters – especially parents – perceive that those projects only benefit students involved in those specific activities. There was also a lack of clarity surrounding those three elements, which will be discussed later in this report.

It is vitally important for GHAPS to communicate a clear vision for the district through its strategic plan, and for any future bond proposals to clearly tie back to the priorities established in that plan. If the community doesn’t buy into the vision for the district and/or doesn’t see how their investment in a school bond will help move that vision forward, it will continue to be difficult to secure voter support.

The New Middle School

The bond proposal addressed the replacement of the 70-year-old Lakeshore Middle School. The facilities assessment recommended a new middle school be built on a district-owned 90-acre parcel at the corner of Lincoln Street and 152nd Avenue in Grand Haven Township. Analysis shows new construction to be safer, more cost-effective, and more logistically feasible than renovating the existing building. The proposed bond investment was approximately \$84.75 million. Given this information, we asked survey respondents and focus group participants whether they felt this project was an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 57% of survey respondents answered yes, 27% answered no, and 15% said they needed more information. Yes voters were more likely to support the new middle school (88%) while no voters were not (14%). Non-voters were split, with 41% supporting and 32% not.



The New Middle School

Qualitative Responses

Open-ended questions on the survey and discussions in the focus groups reveal hesitancy and uncertainty from yes, no and non-voters alike. Our research indicates that GHAPS did not sufficiently build the case for the proposed solution to the situation at Lakeshore Middle School. Participants expressed concern about losing the neighborhood feel of LMS, wondered how it would impact those who live in the area, and discussed whether not having students in the downtown would be a negative for businesses and organizations. They questioned what the district would do with the old building and the land, and generally agreed that they would have appreciated a more concrete answer than “we’ll figure it out.” They talked about the logistics of transportation, since the proposed new location would not be walkable, as well as traffic concerns. They also wondered how much of a challenge the new location would be for families who live north of the bridge. Some even questioned the need for a new building, citing declines in enrollment and population. It was suggested that the district could combine elementary schools to make room for middle school students elsewhere, if LMS was so bad it couldn’t continue to be used as a school.

The New Middle School

Qualitative Responses (cont.)

Based on the research, we recommend GHAPS take the time to fully examine and explain the complexities surrounding the middle school. The following questions and issues should be addressed:

What work does the current middle school need and why?

What would the cost be to update the current building? What limitations exist? What logistics would need to be considered for an update to the current building?

If the cost, limitations and/or logistics of updating the current building make it more advantageous to build a new school, what are the various onsite and offsite options?

What would be the cost, limitations and logistics of demolishing the existing middle school and building a new one on the same site?

If the cost, limitations and/or logistics of building on the same site make it more advantageous to build a new school on a different site, what are the options?

The New Middle School

Qualitative Responses (cont.)

For each potential site, GHAPS should evaluate how student transportation needs will change. How many students who previously walked to school will need to be bused? Does the district have enough buses and drivers to accommodate the new needs? If not, how will that be addressed?

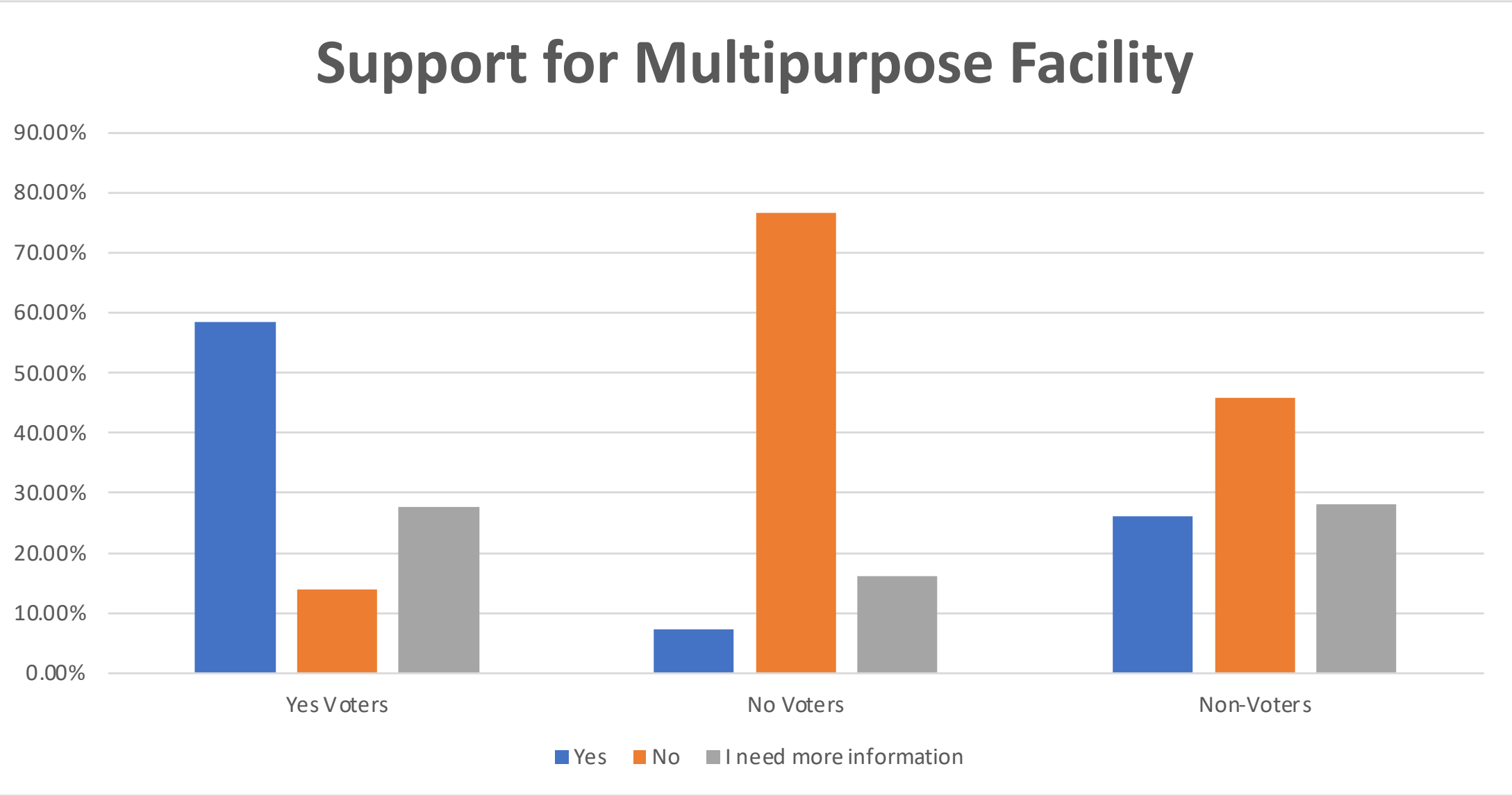
GHAPS should also have traffic studies done to determine the impact of increased traffic in the proposed location(s). Will new traffic signals be needed? Will speed limits need to be reduced? Are there other traffic safety concerns that will need to be addressed?

What are the implications for Grand Haven if there is no longer a school in the City? How will removing it change the fabric of the neighborhoods and community?

If the district is going to propose building a new middle school on a new site, they need to provide a plan for the existing building and land. Voters, especially those who live near LMS, want to be assured that they will have a say in what replaces the middle school. They want to preserve their property values and the desirable characteristics of the neighborhood. They want to be part of the conversation – to ask questions, get answers and offer opinions.

Multipurpose Facility

The bond proposal included a new multipurpose facility at the high school, which would be used for additional practice and gathering space for sports, marching band, clubs and the community. The proposed bond investment was approximately \$15 million. Given this information, we asked survey respondents and focus group participants whether they felt this project was an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 37% of survey respondents answered yes, 39% answered no, and 23% said they needed more information. Yes voters were more likely to support the multipurpose facility (58%) while no voters and non-voters were not (7% and 26%, respectively).



Multipurpose Facility

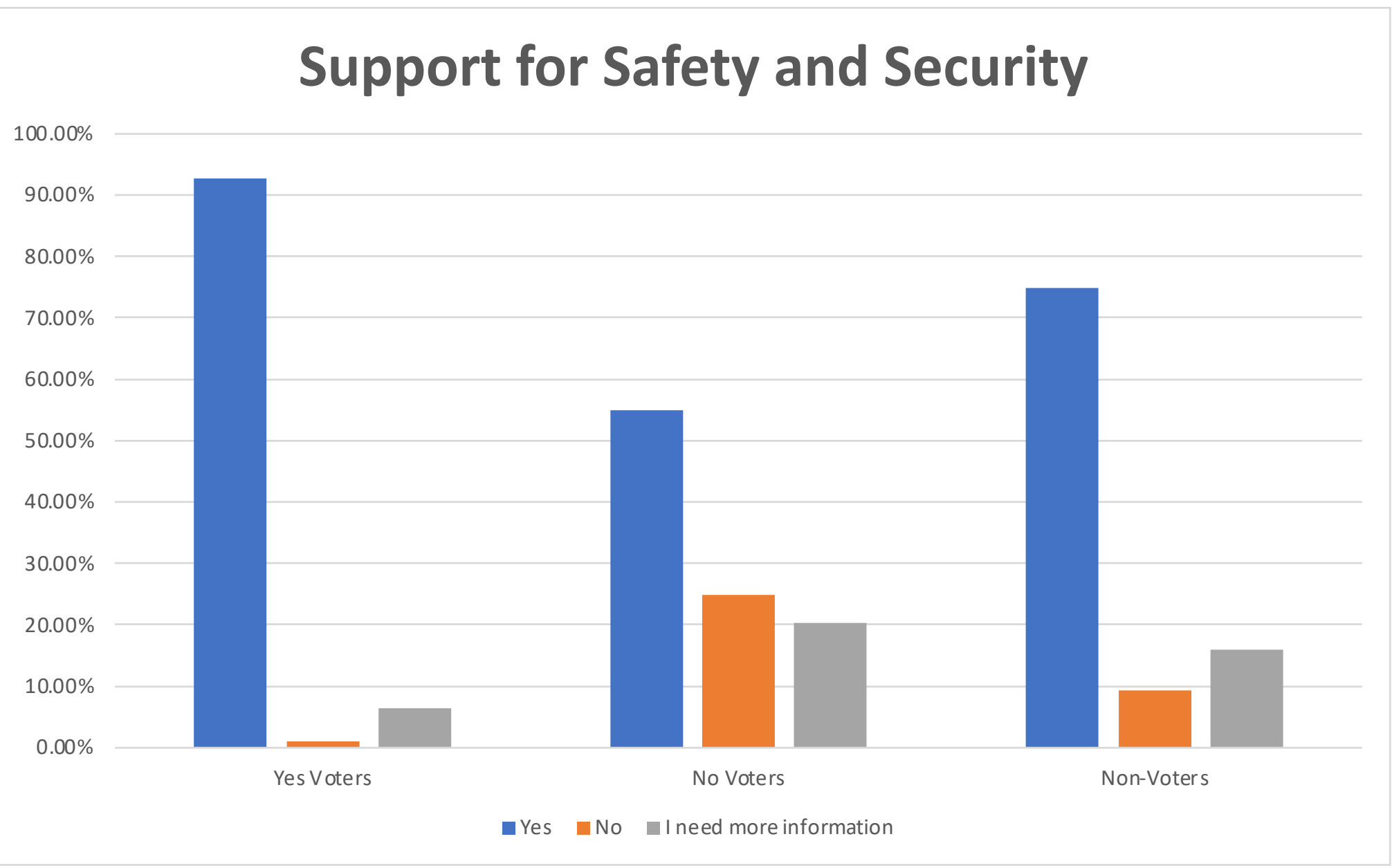
Qualitative Responses

Open-ended questions on the survey and discussions in the focus groups reveal a lack of clarity surrounding this element of the proposal. Some research participants did not understand what the proposed facility was or how it would be used. Others assumed it was just for student athletics and questioned how scheduling priorities would be established. Many felt it was a “nice to have” not a “need to have” and believed it was an attempt to keep up with other districts rather than address an identified need for GHAPS. Some expressed the opinion that true community use would probably be limited, so it shouldn’t be positioned as a space for the community.

As with the middle school, we recommend GHAPS expand on the plans for a multipurpose facility if it is to be included in a future bond proposal. Help voters understand the existing facilities, what groups use them, and whether demand exceeds supply. Provide a clear vision for how a multipurpose facility aligns with the district’s priorities and enhances the educational experience of students.

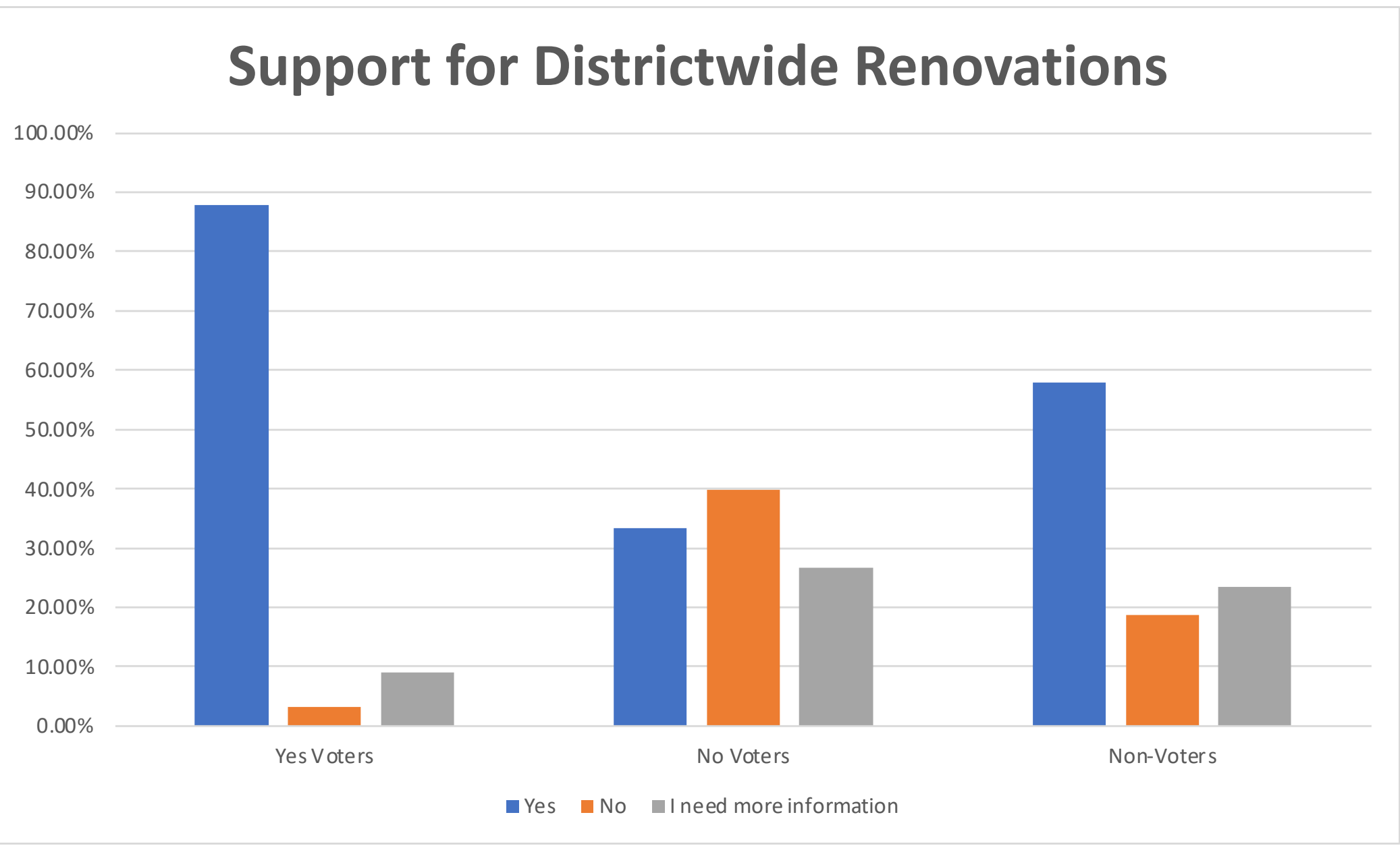
Safety and Security

The bond proposal included allocations for new, clearly visible, secure entrances at all school buildings. The proposed bond investment was approximately \$5.2 million. Given this information, we asked survey respondents whether they felt this project was an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 78% of survey respondents answered yes, 10% answered no, and 12% said they needed more information. Yes and non-voters were more likely to support the safety and security elements of the bond proposal (92% and 75%, respectively), though 55% of no voters were still in support. Answers to open-ended questions and general discussion in focus groups affirmed that investments in safety and security are important to voters.



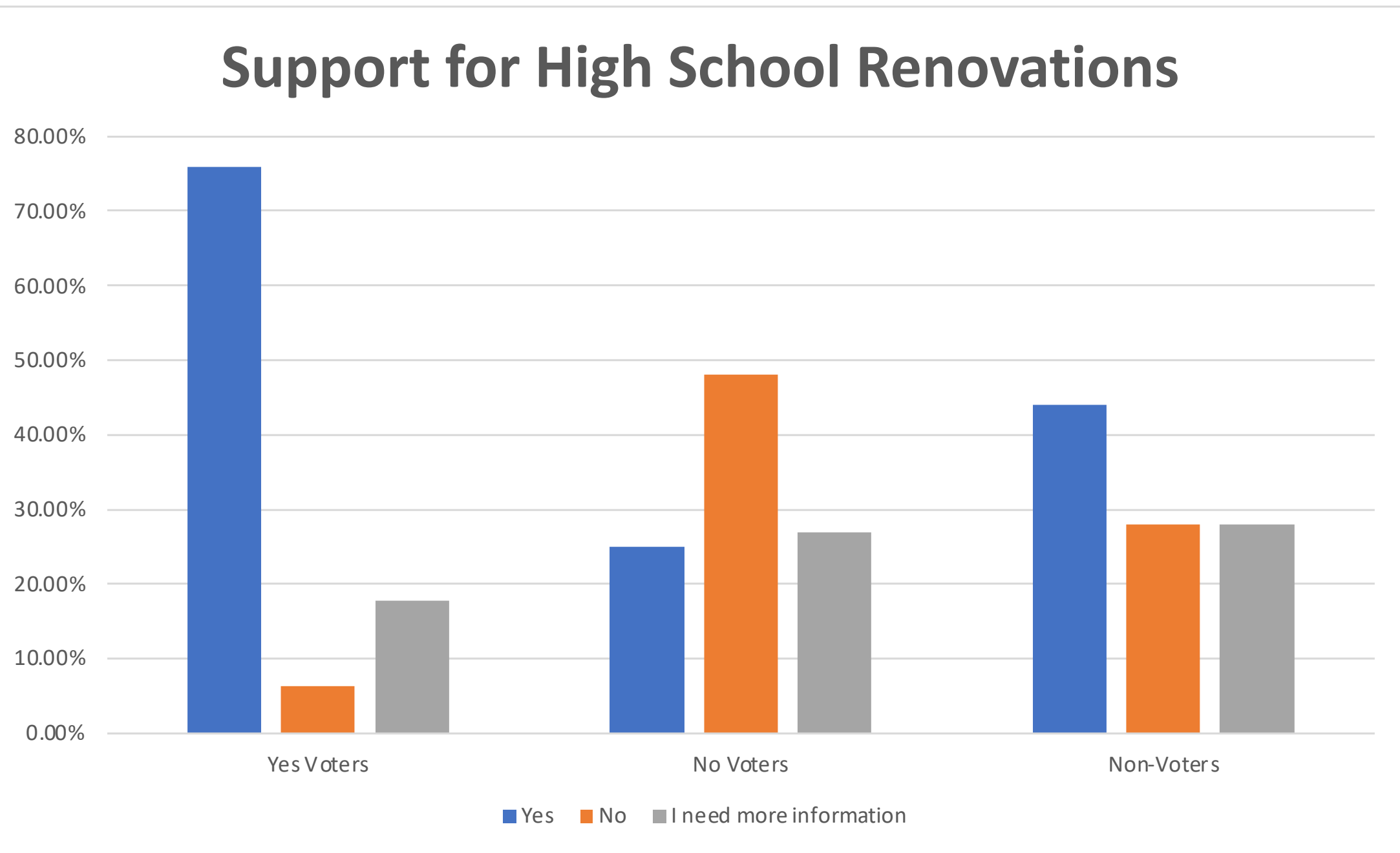
Districtwide Building Renovations

Based on the facilities needs assessment, the bond proposal included allocations for districtwide building renovations. These included mechanical and plumbing system upgrades; restroom renovation; tile, carpet and cabinetry replacement; and improved playgrounds and greenspace. The proposed bond investment was approximately \$23.2 million. Given this information, we asked survey respondents whether they felt these projects were an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 66% of survey respondents answered yes, 18% answered no, and 17% said they needed more information. Yes and non-voters were more likely to support the districtwide renovations (88% and 56%, respectively), while 33% of no voters were in support.



High School Renovations

Under the bond proposal, the high school would have received a new roof, carpet, air handlers, a natatorium dehumidification system and tennis courts. The proposed bond investment was approximately \$13.3 million. Given this information, we asked survey respondents whether they felt these projects were an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 55% of survey respondents answered yes, 23% answered no, and 22% said they needed more information. 75% of yes voters indicated support for the districtwide renovations, while 44% of non-voters and 25% of no voters were in support.



Districtwide and High School Renovations

Qualitative Responses

Open-ended questions on the survey and discussions in the focus groups indicate that voters would like more detail about the various renovation projects. Many seem to feel that these systems have not been adequately maintained, hence the request for money to fix them. Some also think the bond dollars are for maintenance and argue that those maintenance costs should be built into operating budgets, not bond proposals.

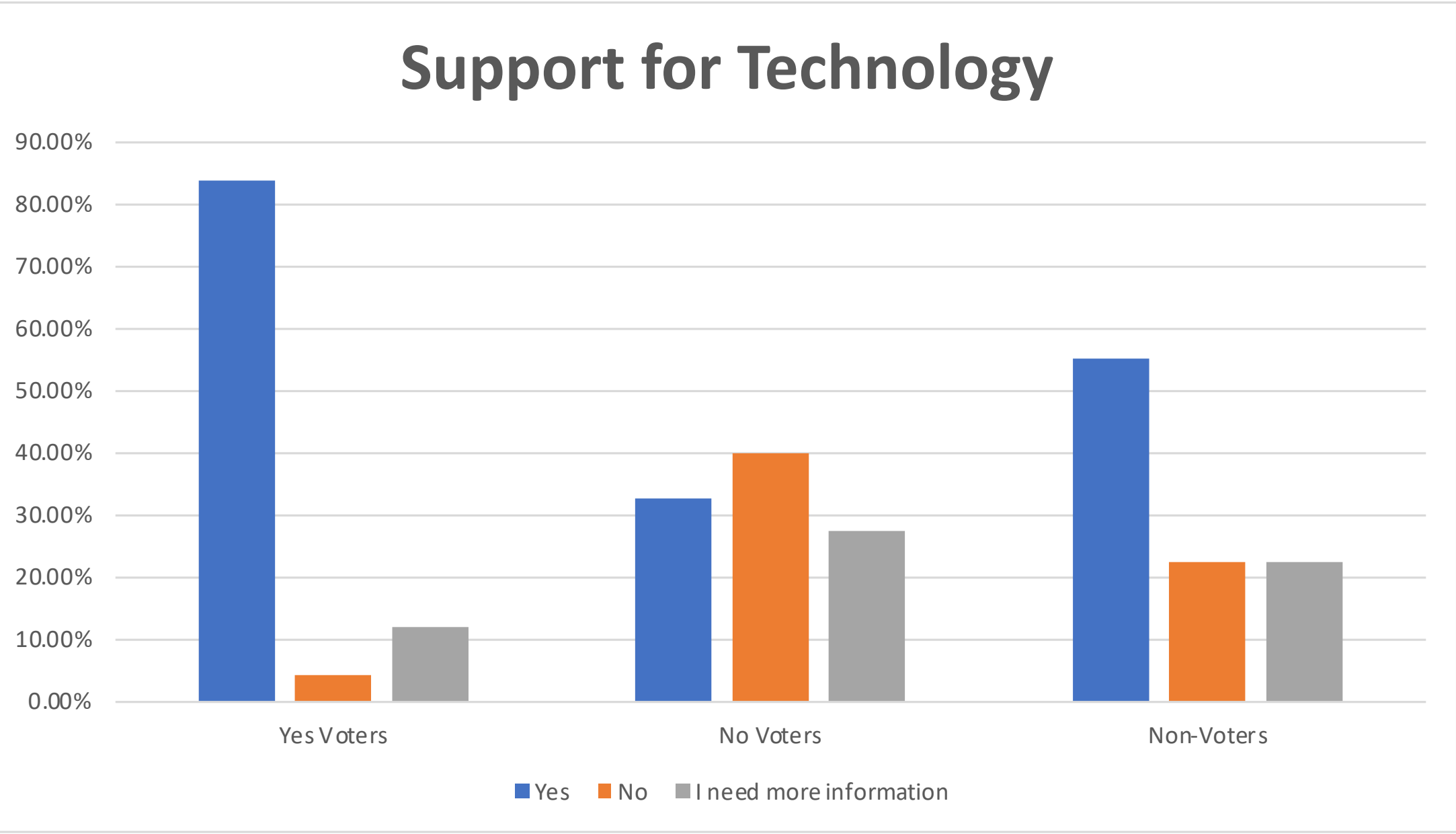
In addition, many research participants expressed concern that there is “too much” on these lists. They would prefer to see the district separate essential needs from things that would be nice to have and wondered about other options for funding some of those “wants.” For example, they feel that a new roof is necessary while playground and tennis court upgrades may not be.

Some focus group participants and open-ended survey responses addressed disparities between the elementary buildings. They would like the district to make sure students in all elementary buildings have the same quality of facilities and experiences, regardless of how much money buildings can generate through fundraising efforts.

The 2019 Facilities Assessment appears to be a comprehensive report that could have answered many of voters’ questions, if the information had been presented in a way that made it easy to find and interpret. If it is used as a resource for future bond proposals, the fact that it was conducted by an independent third party should be emphasized.

Technology

The bond proposal included approximately \$10 million to update and maintain the district’s 1:1 student-to-device ratio. Given this information, we asked survey respondents whether they felt these projects were an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 63% of survey respondents answered yes, 19% answered no, and 18% said they needed more information. 84% of yes voters indicated support for the technology funding, while 55% of non-voters and 33% of no voters were in support.



Technology

Qualitative Responses

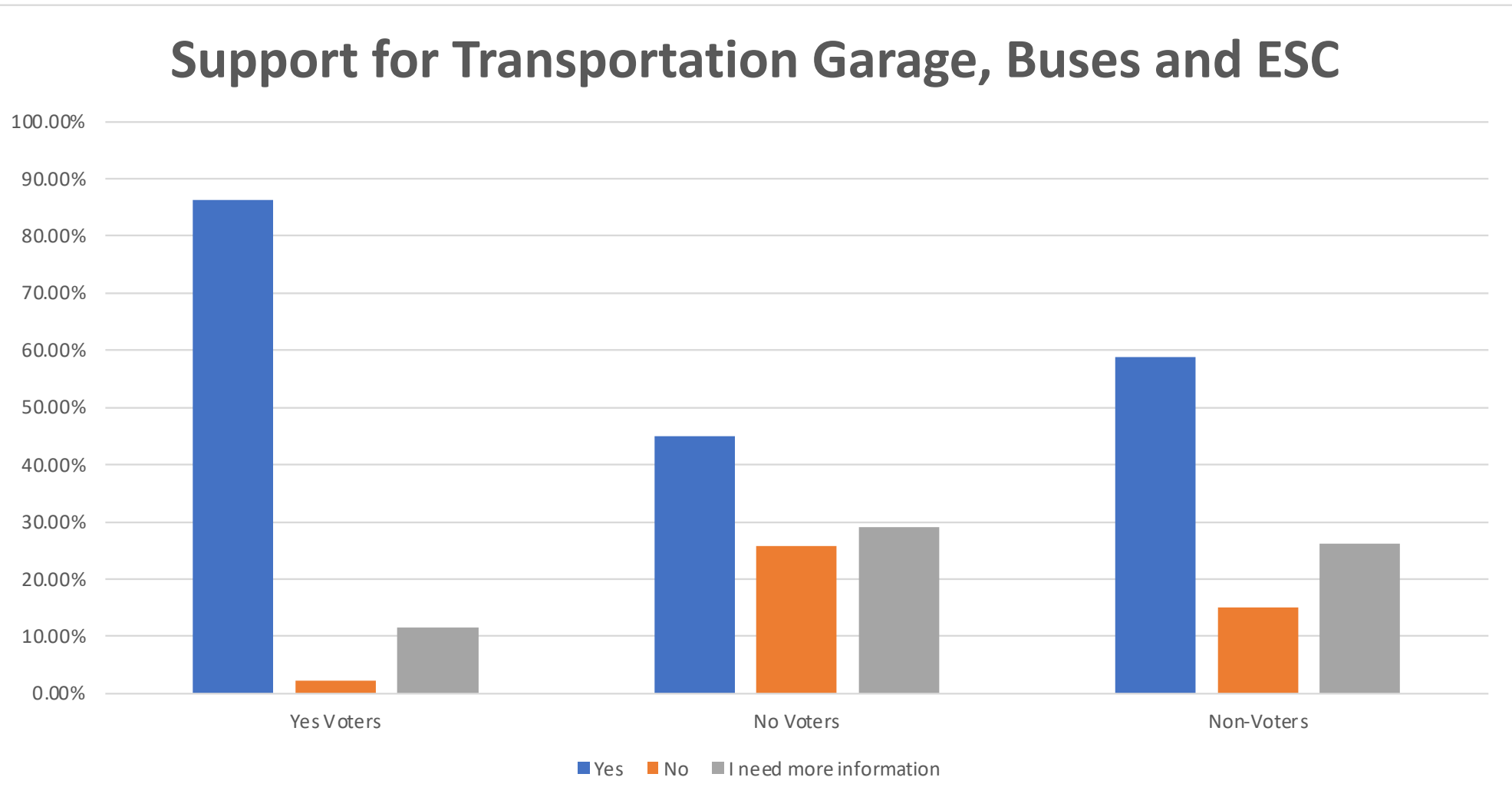
In response to the open-ended survey question regarding technology, yes, no and non-voters expressed varying degrees of support for technology investments. Some, mostly yes voters, said it was important to provide students with up-to-date technology. Many respondents from each audience, however, questioned whether students younger than middle or high school were best served by using devices to learn. There were concerns about the amount of screentime and its impact on students. There were also questions about how the funds would be spent and over what period of time. Some respondents referenced the embezzlement scheme that depleted the district’s technology fund and questioned whether that money had been recovered.

Based on the research, we recommend that any inclusion of technology funds on future bond proposals be accompanied by more detailed budget information. Given the connection between the embezzlement and the previous technology fund, we also recommend providing information on the district’s procurement process, starting with the bid process and including invoice verification.

Transportation Garage, Buses and Education Service Center

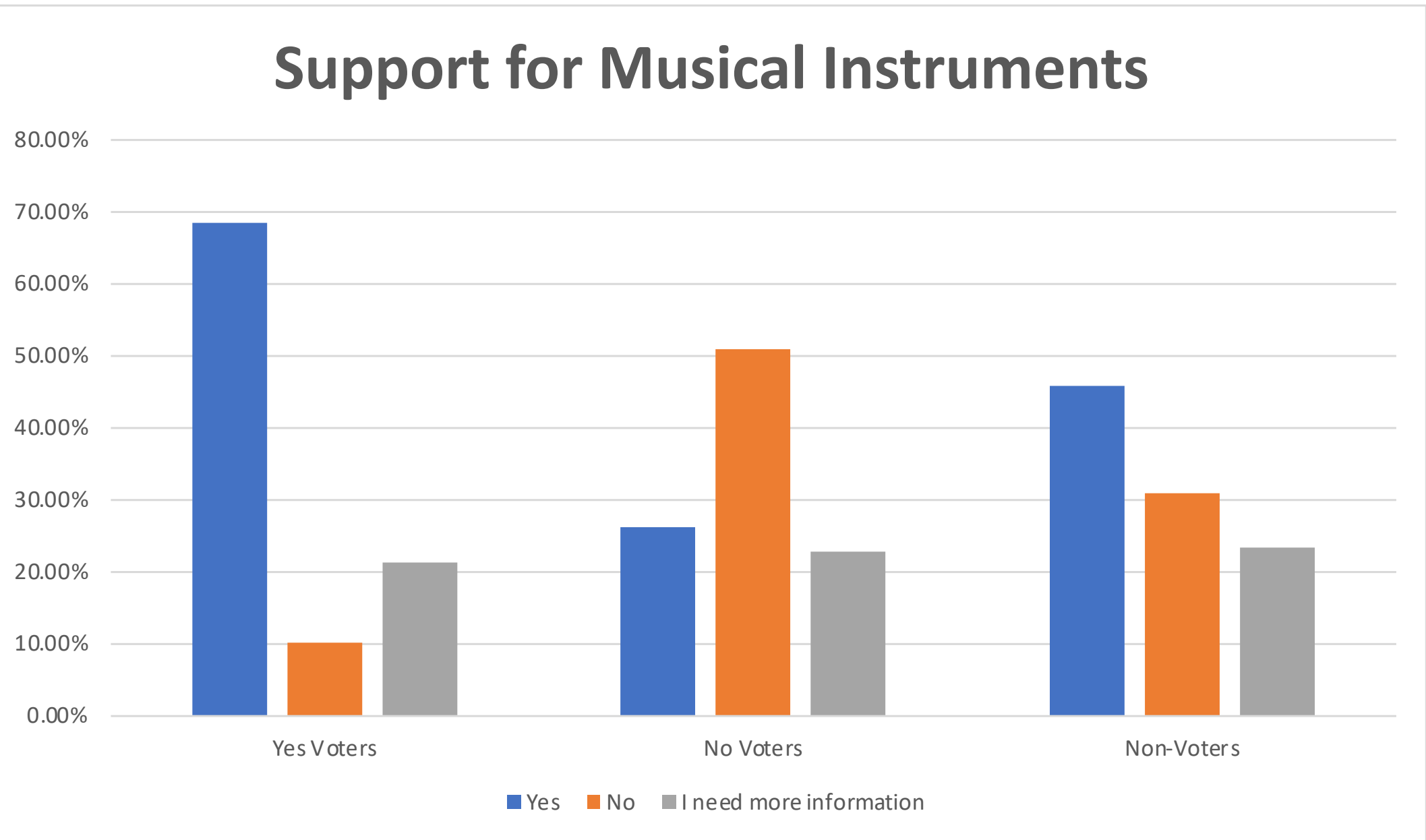
The bond proposal included restoring the transportation pole barn, replacing school buses that have outlived their useful life, and mechanical upgrades to the Education Service Center. The proposed bond investment was approximately \$3.8 million. Given this information, we asked survey respondents whether they felt these projects were an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 69% of survey respondents answered yes, 12% answered no, and 19% said they needed more information. 86% of yes voters indicated support for these initiatives, while 59% of non-voters and 58% of no voters were in support.

Answers to open-ended questions generally affirmed that safe, reliable transportation is important to voters. However, there were inquiries about whether bus replacements should be built into the operating budget and what the additional renovation projects would entail.



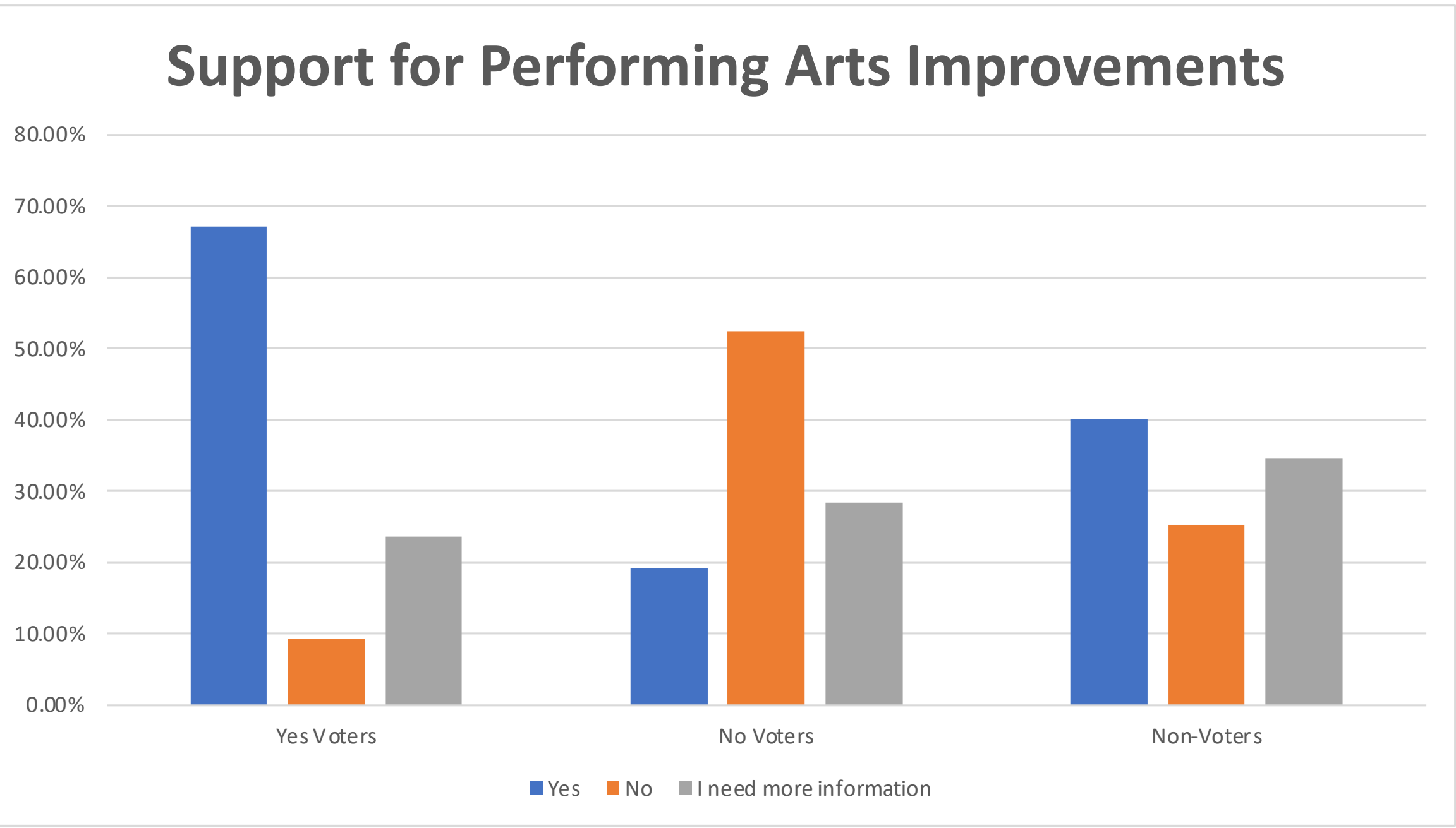
Musical Instruments

The bond proposal included approximately \$1.5 million for new K-12 musical instruments. This included replacements for wind and string instruments typically provided by the district in grades 5-12, as well as instruments to support elementary music specials and the choir program. Given this information, we asked survey respondents whether they felt these projects were an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 51% of survey respondents answered yes, 27% answered no, and 22% said they needed more information. 68% of yes voters indicated support for purchasing musical instruments, while 46% of non-voters and 26% of no voters were in support.



Performing Arts Center and Auditorium Improvements

The bond proposal included \$1.5 million in upgrades to the GHHS performing arts center and the White Pines auditorium. Given this information, we asked survey respondents whether they felt these projects were an effective use of taxpayer money. Overall, 48% of survey respondents answered yes, 26% answered no, and 26% said they needed more information. 67% of yes voters indicated support for the performing arts facility improvements, while 40% of non-voters and 19% of no voters were in support.



Musical Instruments and Performing Arts Improvements

Qualitative Responses

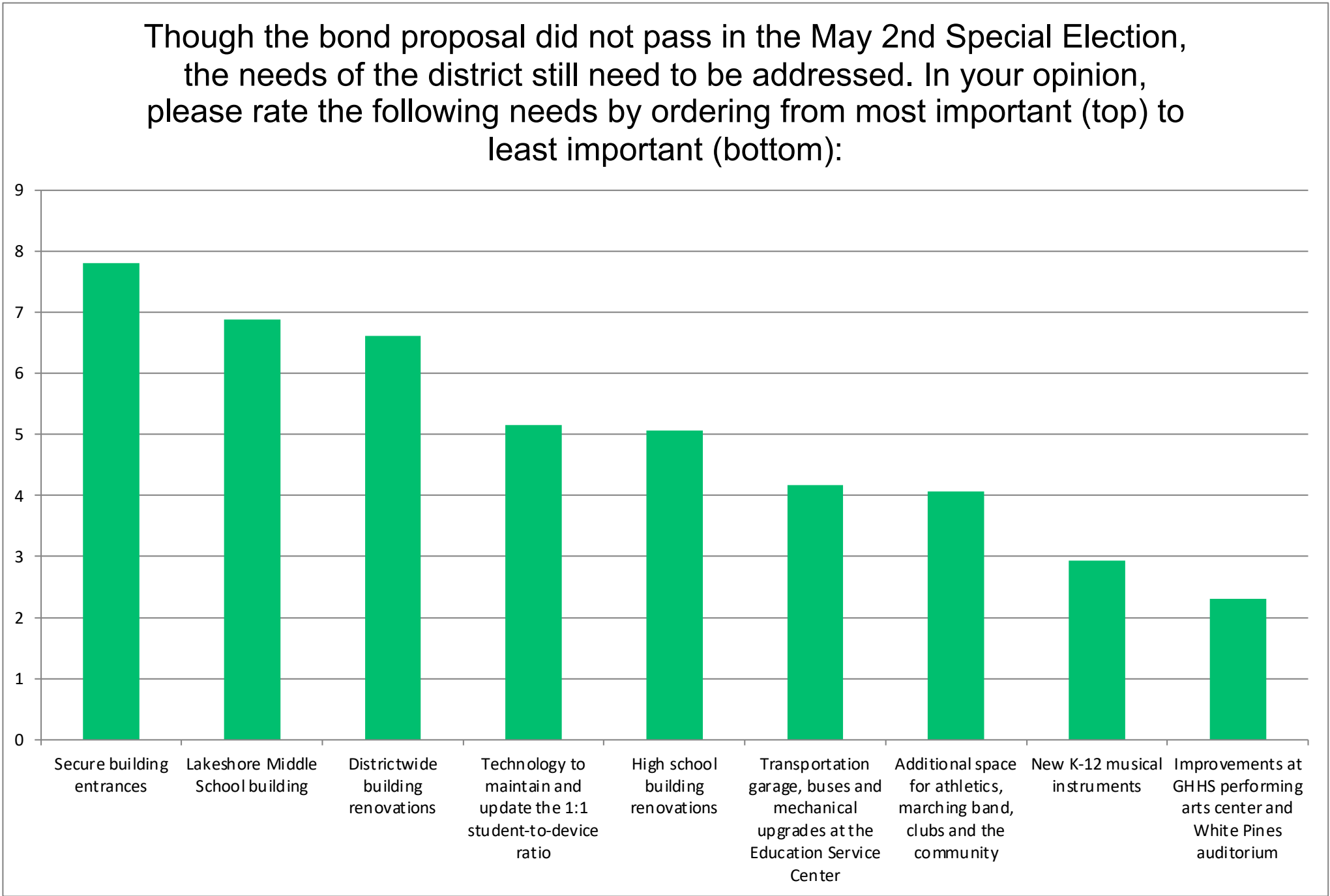
In response to the open-ended survey questions regarding musical instruments and improvements to performing arts spaces, as well as general focus group discussion, many research participants acknowledge the importance of the arts as part of a well-rounded education. These areas are easy for the parents of band, orchestra, choir and theater students to support, but the necessity of the projects was questioned by voters who did not have a direct connection to the district’s performing arts programs.

There was significant confusion about whether this would mean families no longer needed to purchase or rent their students’ musical instruments. The now infamous “Steinway piano” featured prominently in responses from those who did not support this part of the bond proposal, with cost claims ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000. Many also wanted more details about the specific improvements proposed for the GHHS Performing Arts Center and the White Pines auditorium. Consistent with feedback on other elements of the proposal, research participants wanted more information and an understand of the district’s “wants” versus “needs.”

Voter Priorities

After providing their opinions on whether different elements of the bond proposal were good uses of taxpayer funds, survey respondents were asked to rank the needs addressed in the bond proposal from most to least important. Overall, survey respondents identified secure building entrances, Lakeshore Middle School and districtwide building renovations as their top priorities. Yes, no and non-voters agreed on these top three priorities, though their order varied slightly by audience.

As a follow-up, we asked survey respondents if there were any other priorities that should have been included in the bond proposal. The most common response was that the proposal was already too large. No other consistent themes emerged, however the topic of air conditioning in the buildings did come up a few times.



Perceptions of the District

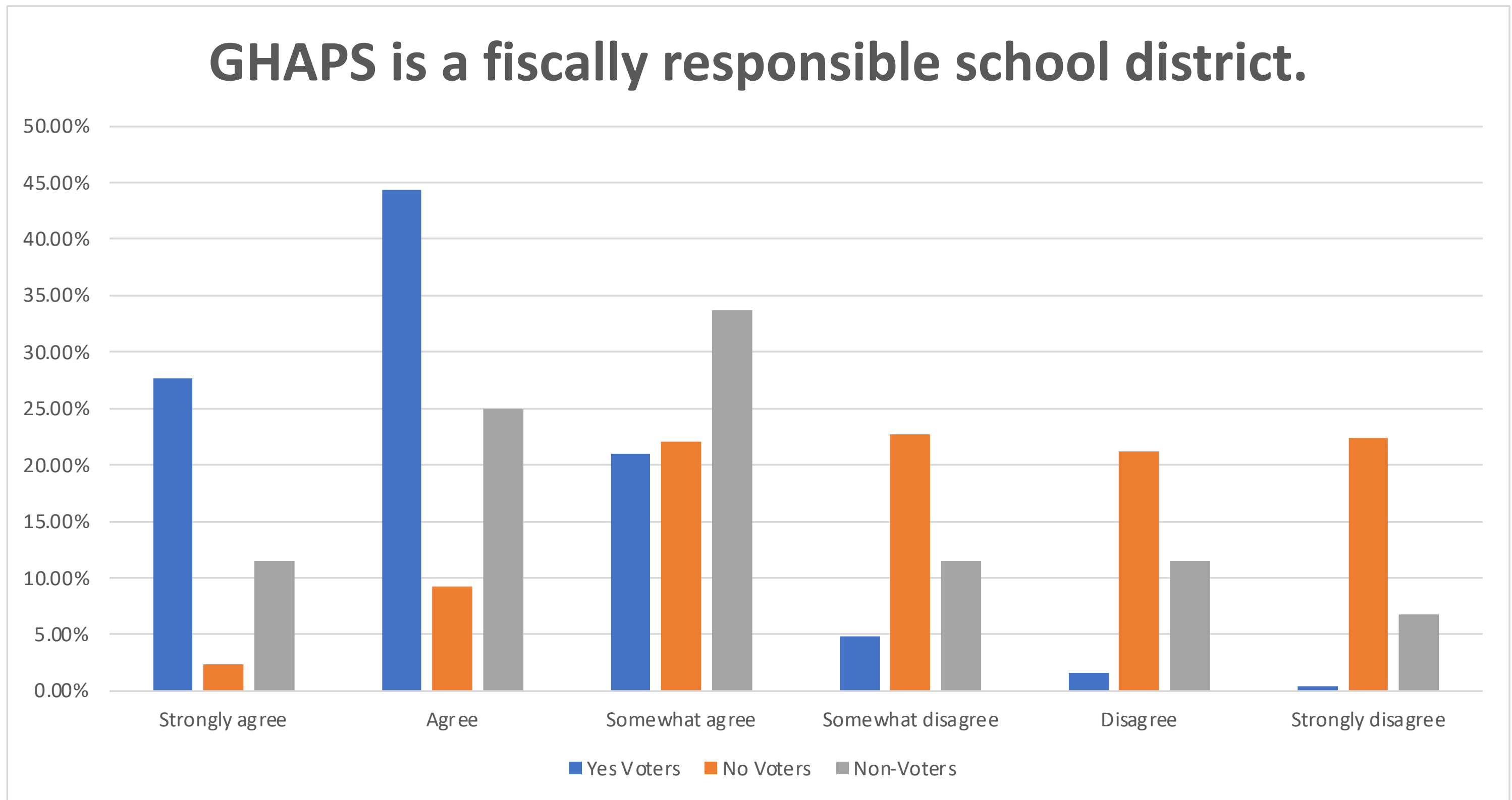
Initial feedback after the failure of the bond proposal indicated that voters' perceptions of the district may have influenced their decision whether to support the bond proposal. The research confirmed a correlation between yes votes and positive opinions of the district. It also identified opportunities for improvement among all voters, especially those who voted no or not at all.

Fiscal Responsibility

When asked whether GHAPS was a fiscally responsible district, 72% of yes voters indicated agreement or strong agreement. In contrast, only 12% of no voters agreed or strongly agreed. Among non-voters, 37% agreed or strongly agreed. In the focus groups, there were passionate conversations about whether, in the wake of the embezzlement, district leadership could be trusted to make sound financial decisions. Participants who had personally worked with GHAPS leadership and understand internal processes tended to believe there were many reasons to trust the district's financial decision-making, while others still feel the district has not done nearly enough to communicate what happened with the embezzlement and what steps have been taken to prevent future theft.

Perceptions of the District

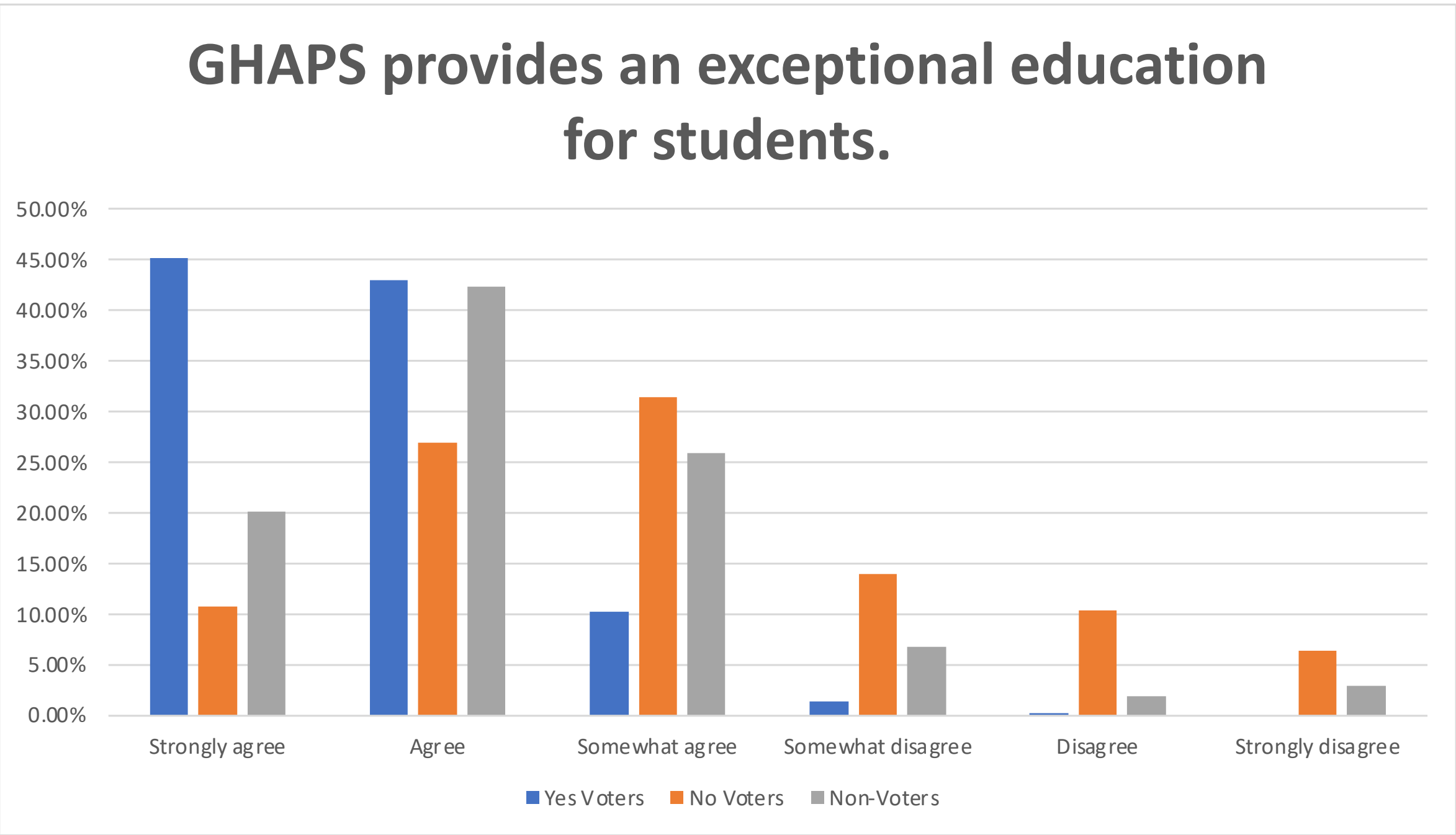
Fiscal Responsibility



Perceptions of the District

Exceptional Education

When asked whether GHAPS provided an exceptional education for students, 88% of yes voters indicated agreement or strong agreement. In contrast, 38% of no voters agreed or strongly agreed. Among non-voters, 37% agreed or strongly agreed. The quality of educational instruction was not specifically discussed in the focus groups, but open-ended responses throughout the survey indicated that many no voters feel the district needs to place more focus on “the basics” like reading, writing and math, rather than diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives and other controversial topics.



Perceptions of the District

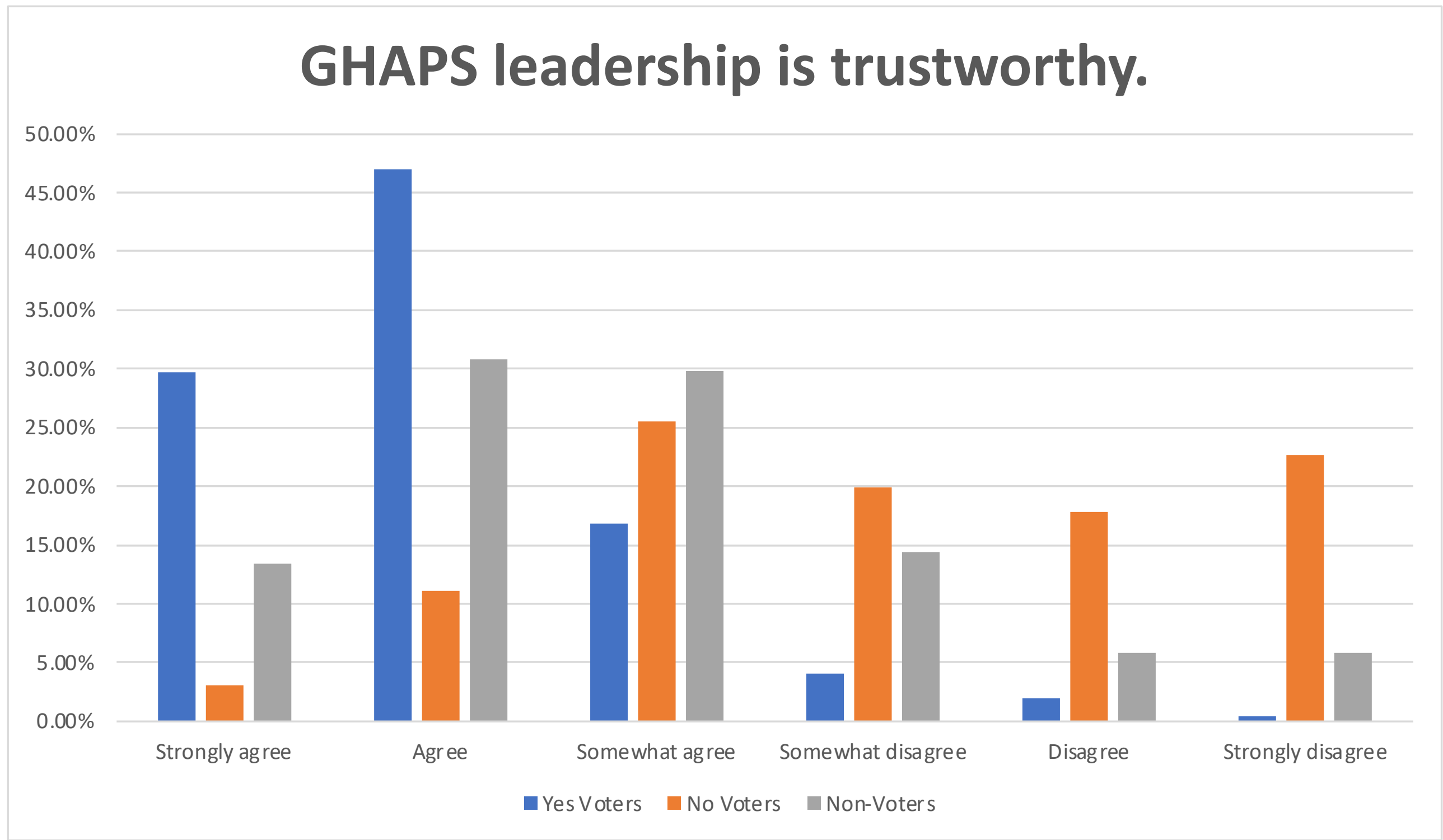
Trustworthy Leadership

When asked whether GHAPS leadership was trustworthy, 77% of yes voters indicated agreement or strong agreement. In contrast, only 14% of no voters agreed or strongly agreed. Among non-voters, 44% agreed or strongly agreed.

Trust was a consistent theme raised in the focus groups. Many participants, regardless of their decision on the bond proposal, expressed frustration with a perceived lack of transparency. They wished for more details about exactly how the funds in the bond proposal would have been spent. Some feel the lack of trust and transparency started during the pandemic, increased during the embezzlement, and came to a head with the bond proposal. In the focus groups and in the open-ended questions, some research participants questioned whether hiring an “insider” as the district’s current superintendent was the right decision. In general, they want more transparent communication from the district so the trust can be rebuilt.

Perceptions of the District

Trustworthy Leadership



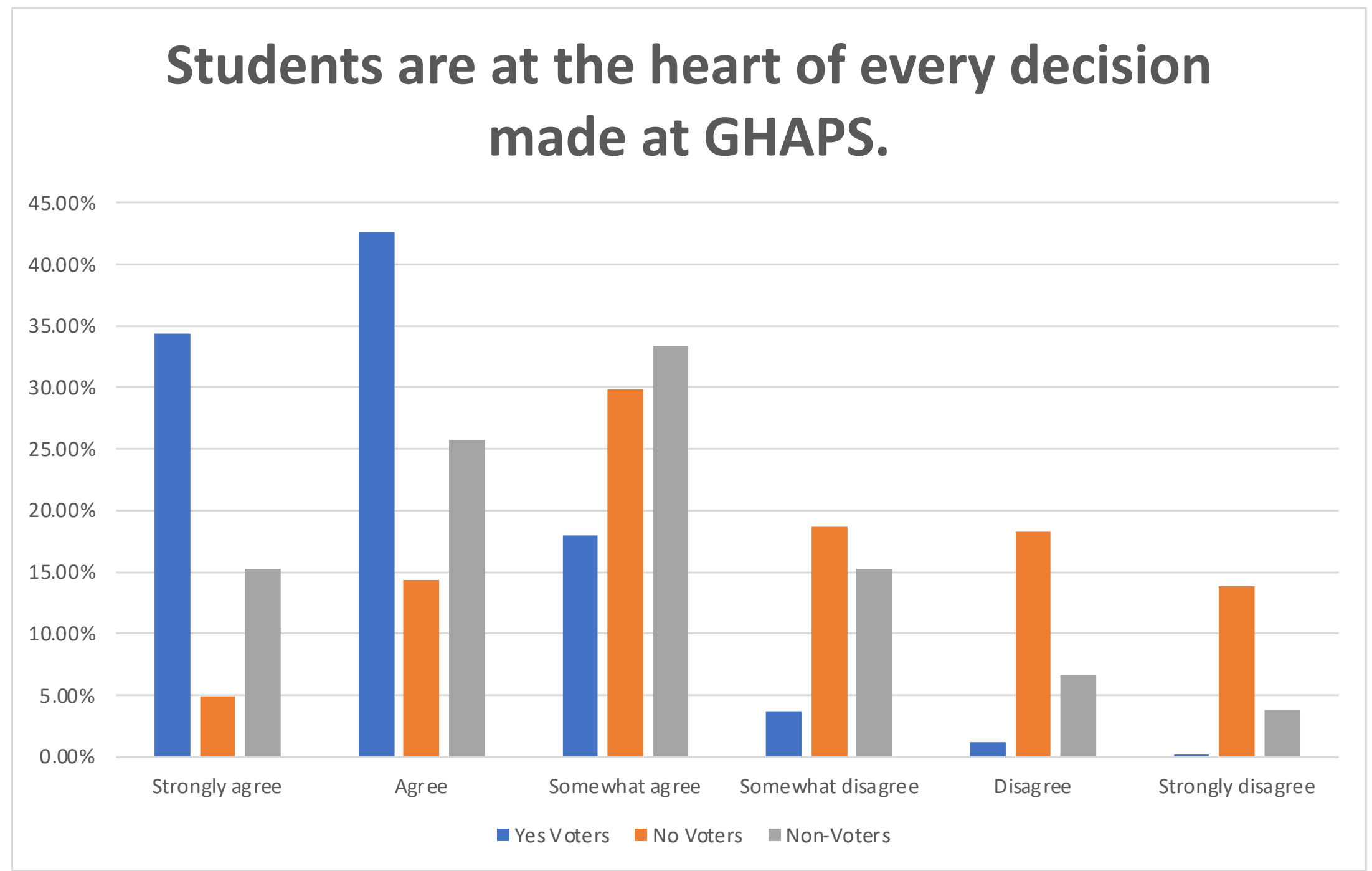
Perceptions of the District

Student Focus

When asked whether students were at the heart of every decision made at GHAPS, 77% of yes voters indicated agreement or strong agreement. In contrast, only 19% of no voters agreed or strongly agreed. Among non-voters, 41% agreed or strongly agreed.

This question was not directly posed to focus group participants, but putting students first came up in general discussion. Some focus group participants felt the district did not connect the bond proposal to student success. They cited the videos release by the district, which all featured interviews with administrators. They wished student voices had been part of the district’s communication – or even teachers, who they noted were absent from the videos as well.

Students are at the heart of every decision made at GHAPS.

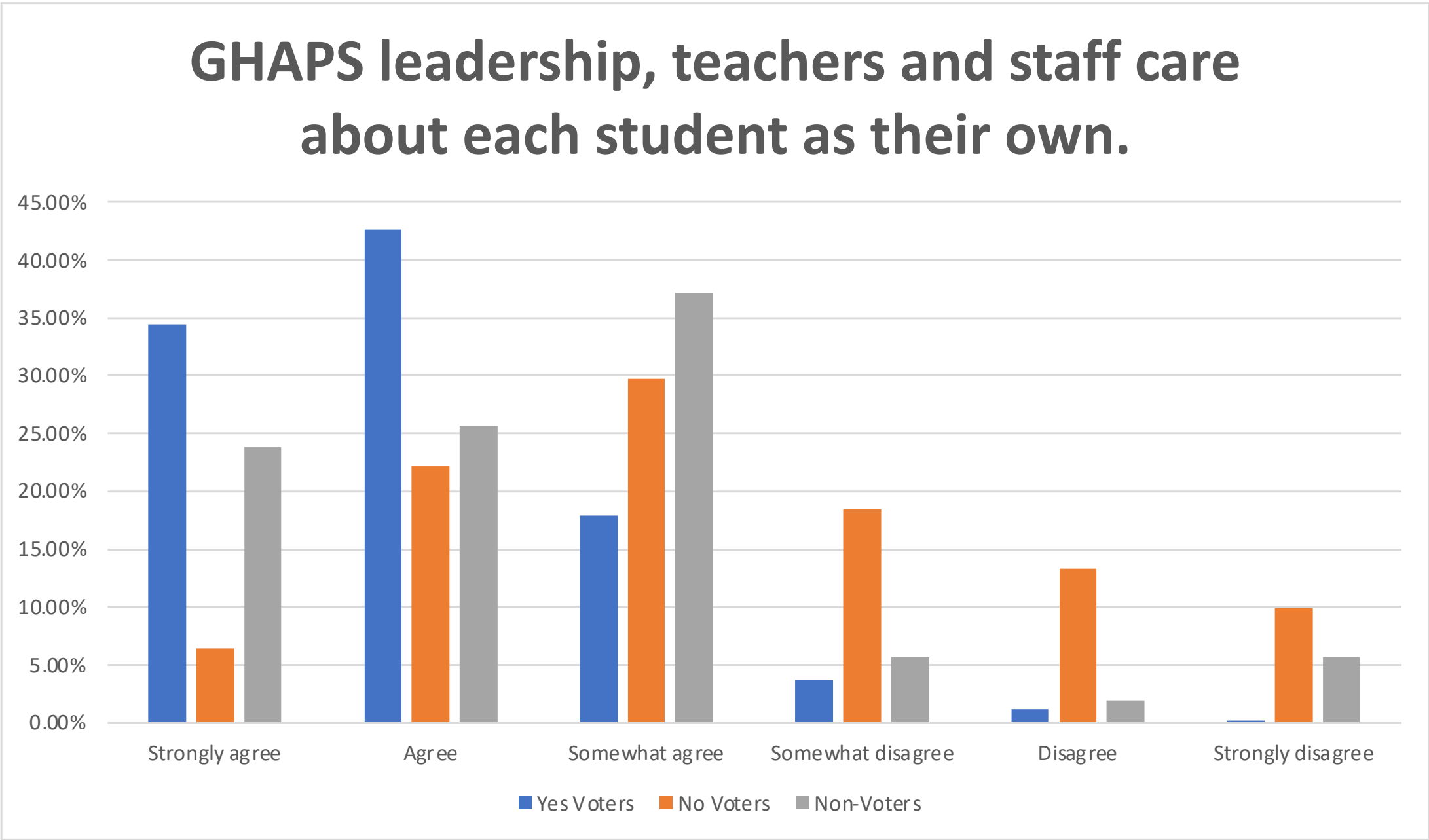


Perceptions of the District

Care for Students

When asked whether GHAPS leadership, teachers and staff care about each student as their own, 79% of yes voters indicated agreement or strong agreement. In contrast, only 29% of no voters agreed or strongly agreed. Among non-voters, 50% agreed or strongly agreed.

This question was not directly posed to focus group participants, and the issue of whether GHAPS cares about its students did not come up in conversation.

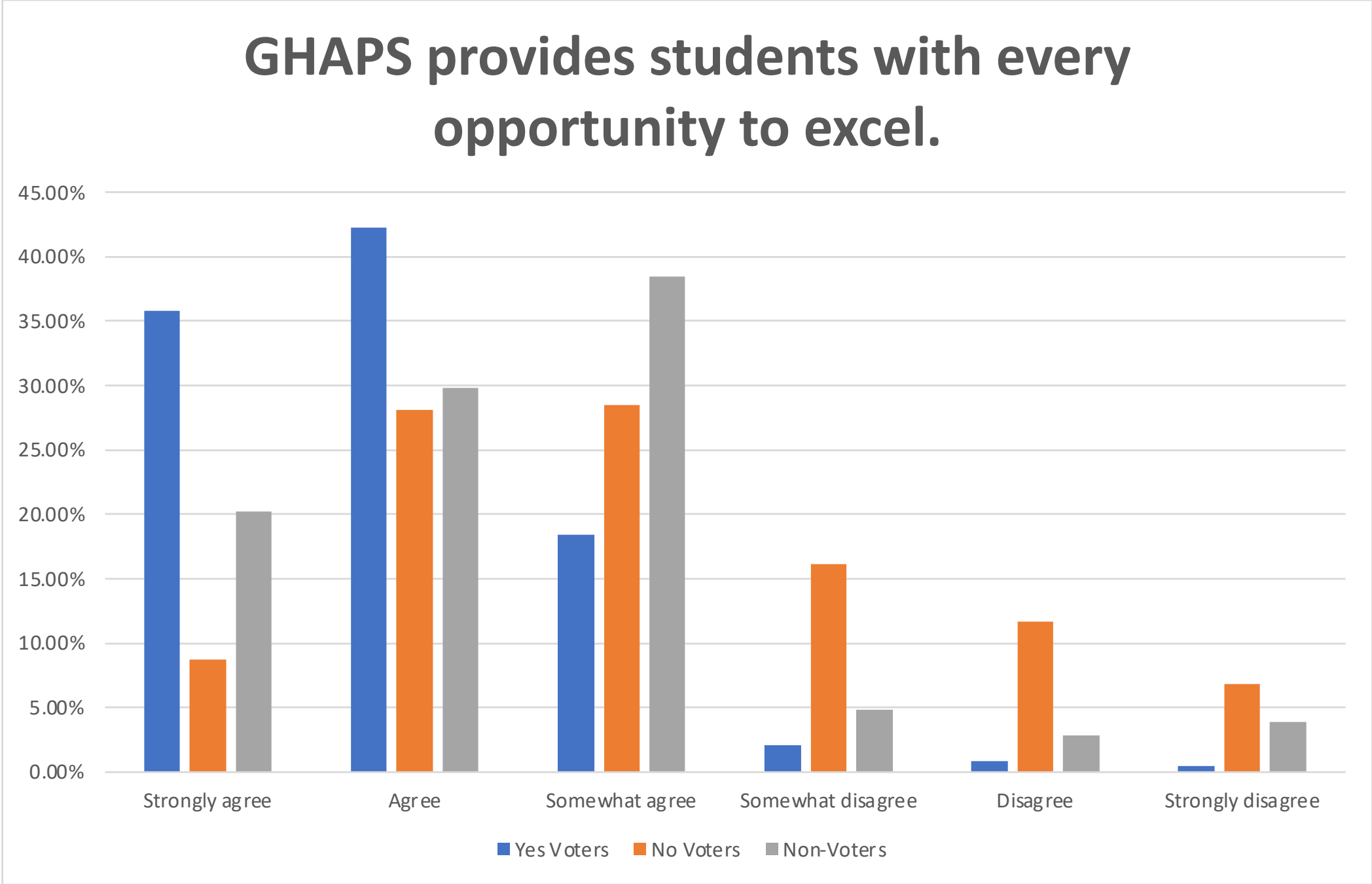


Perceptions of the District

Opportunity to Excel

When asked whether GHAPS provides students with every opportunity to excel, 78% of yes voters indicated agreement or strong agreement. In contrast, 37% of no voters agreed or strongly agreed. Among non-voters, 50% agreed or strongly agreed.

This question was not directly posed to focus group participants, and the issue of whether GHAPS provides students with every opportunity to excel did not come up in conversation.

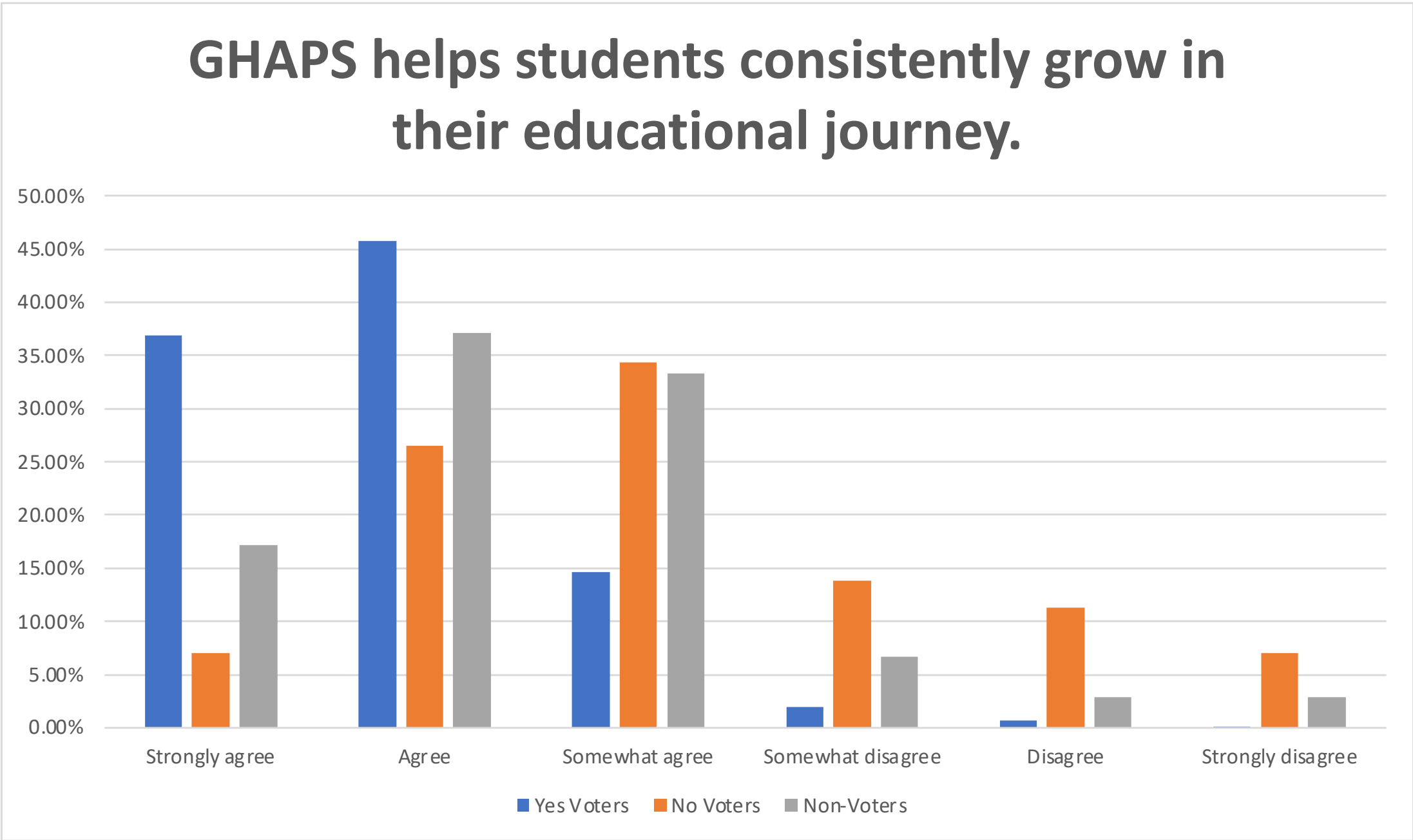


Perceptions of the District

Consistent Growth

When asked whether GHAPS helps students consistently grow in their educational journey, 83% of yes voters indicated agreement or strong agreement. In contrast, 37% of no voters agreed or strongly agreed. Among non-voters, 54% agreed or strongly agreed.

This question was not directly posed to focus group participants, and the issue of whether GHAPS helps students consistently grow in their educational journey did not come up in conversation.



Mega-themes

The quantitative and qualitative data we gathered during the community survey and focus group helped us identify a set of mega-themes: persistent threads that continuously emerged in participants’ responses. These mega-themes are intended to guide GHAPS as the district makes decisions about how to meet their needs.

Trust

Trust is the foundation of any relationship, including the relationship between a school district and its community. According to our research, many voters feel that trust has been breached. They talk about the embezzlement scheme and how GHAPS has not provided them with enough information about how it happened and what measures have been put into place to prevent it from happening in the future. That leads to questions about how ESSER funds were spent and why some asks in the bond proposal weren't addressed with those dollars.

A lack of trust in the district also led many research participants to question how the district came up with the dollar amount for the bond proposal. There is a feeling that the district calculated how much money they could get without raising taxes and then set about figuring out how to spend it, rather than starting with the district's priorities and asking for what was truly needed.

Many research participants, especially those who had reservations about the bond proposal, felt the district did not engage with the community during the process. They want more conversation leading up to the development of future bond proposals and want to feel that their voices are truly heard.

Trust (cont.)

There are parents in the district who feel their concerns aren't taken seriously. Most understand that they will not always get everything they want, but they don't want to be brushed off, either.

Trust is built – or rebuilt – through both words and actions. As it pertains to future bond proposals and general relationships with the community, GHAPS leadership needs to actively seek out opportunities to listen to the community. They need to acknowledge the concerns of parents and clearly communicate how those concerns are being addressed in alignment with the district's priorities, as established in the strategic plan. They need to work with parents in good faith, understanding that everyone involved wants what's best for their children, even when opinions on how to get there differ.

Transparency and Clarity

One of the biggest ways the district can rebuild trust is through transparency and clarity. This can start with a reevaluation of what can be shared about the embezzlement and continue by developing a plan to proactively share additional information that demonstrates the district’s fiscal responsibility.

As it relates to future bond proposals, the community wants to see more diligence and planning, especially as it relates to Lakeshore Middle School. They want to see details about the long-term vision for the district, taking into account projected enrollment and population growth. They want clear connections between the district’s priorities and the elements of bond proposals, with a special emphasis on how the projects impact students. If Success For All is the GHAPS rallying cry, it needs to be evident that the investments being made support that mission.

While not all voters want to dig through detailed financial documents, those with reservations want that information to be available so they can make informed decisions. They want to see specific line items for different projects, and they want to understand exactly where their money is going.

Priorities

Simply put, many people felt the May 2nd bond proposal was too much: too much money, too much stuff. They want GHAPS to come back with a proposal that covers the “needs” rather than including all the “wants,” too. A more thoughtful proposal will demonstrate to them that the district is being a good steward of their tax dollars, especially in this time of high inflation and economic uncertainty.

Further, voters want to be informed, and GHAPS needs to make future bond proposals clear and easy to understand. It’s difficult for people to feel like they have a full understanding of something with so many different elements.

As the survey demonstrated, even the no voters understand that addressing Lakeshore Middle School is important. Especially with that project, they want the district to work with the community to establish the right priorities and provide in-depth exploration of possible scenarios before asking the community to support one approach.

Communication

The research indicates that GHAPS needs to do a better job communicating information about future bond proposals. This doesn't mean sending out more emails or even more mailers: it means making sure the content of their communication helps voters understand what the bond proposal is asking for, why each element is needed, and how it will improve students' education.

Even the district's yes voters had reservations about the bond proposal. Many set those aside and cast their votes in support of the bond proposal, but they weren't well-equipped to share their opinions with friends and neighbors. In contrast, no voters were easily able to articulate their concerns and point to specific examples where they felt the bond proposal did not deserve community support. Since discussions with other community members were clearly one of the most influential factors in voters' decisions, arming people with information they can share is crucial for future bond proposals.

Conclusion

It will be necessary for GHAPS to pursue future bond proposal to meet the district's needs. King's area of expertise is in engaging stakeholders to gather information, analyzing that information in ways that will help GHAPS and its bond planning team move forward, and leading communication efforts to inform the community. Though we are not experts in bond planning, we would like to offer some recommendations for consideration in the planning process:

- Lakeshore Middle School is a complicated issue. The community clearly wants more conversation, evaluation of options, impact studies and plans for the existing site if a move is necessary. This process can't feel rushed or superficial – it has to be thoughtful, genuine and intentional. If possible, we believe voters would appreciate not being asked to make a decision on the middle school in November 2023 unless they feel confident that the district has done its due diligence, communicated with clarity and transparency, and engaged with the community to establish the proper priorities.
- The amount was too high. Due to inflation and economic uncertainty, many families were uncomfortable with a \$155 million bond. They welcome a tax break, even if it's small. By separating the district's needs from the wants and exploring other potential funding models for the projects, we believe GHAPS will experience better support for future proposals.

Conclusion (cont.)

- Meet people where they are. Very few research participants attended the community presentations hosted by GHAPS. The district should plan community engagement sessions and informational presentations where people naturally gather. Partner with local businesses and organizations to host events where you can share information – strong schools build strong communities, and it's in their best interest to help the district spread the word.
- Be humble. Own any mistakes that were made related to this bond proposal and ask the community to partner with you as you plan for next steps. This research should be the first of many community outreach efforts as you determine future bond proposals. We understand there is a sense of urgency, but part of rebuilding trust in the community is taking time to do it right.

Thank you for your trust and confidence in King. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the district's pursuit of Success For All.

Thank you.