



Cape Elizabeth
School Building Advisory Committee (SBAC)
Voter Survey

September 2023



Agenda

Objectives

Methodology

Detailed Findings

- . November 2022 Proposal
- . New Proposal Development
- . Information About Proposals

Respondent Profile

Conclusions

Objectives

- The primary objectives of this research are to:
 - Understand specifically why Cape Elizabeth voters **avored or opposed** (or did not vote on) the \$115.9 million school buildings bond proposal presented in the November 2022 Referendum
 - Obtain input from Cape Elizabeth residents about **how to handle the needs** of the Cape Elizabeth school buildings.
- Specific learning includes:
 - Understanding residents' reasons for their vote (or not voting) in the November 2022 Referendum;
 - Gauging feelings about specific aspects of the November 2022 Referendum proposal and changes that would increase likelihood to support a proposal;
 - Measuring the level of concern with the current condition of the school buildings;
 - Determining the perceived importance of specific school building features;
 - Identifying previous and preferred sources of information about the proposal, as well as information perceived to be missing at the time of the November 2022 referendum;
 - Understanding perceptions of the size of the school buildings proposed and preference for new construction, renovation, or combination of both;
 - Assessing the impact of the pending property tax revaluation on opinions of a project and level of property tax increase, if any, residents would support to address the needs of the school buildings.

Methodology

- Data Collection – **July 27, 2023 – August 22, 2023**
 - Mailed a survey packet (Cover Letter with instructions, paper survey, postage paid envelope) to **3,874 Cape Elizabeth property owners** (from Cape Elizabeth Town Assessor database)
 - Cover letter included a web survey link and QR Code
 - Paper surveys with web survey link and QR Code were available at Town Hall, Thomas Memorial Library and the Community Center
 - Web survey URL and QR Code posted on Town, School and Library websites
- Respondent Sample:
 - Eligible Cape Elizabeth voters 18 years of age or older – if there were multiple eligible voters living in a household, each eligible voter could respond
 - Received **n=1,652 responses** (n=1,102 web and n=550 paper); a response rate of 22.6% based on the current population of 7,309 adults 18 years or older
 - Strong response – usually target a 15% response to minimize non-response bias
 - A sample size of n=500 or greater is typically considered a meaningful quantity

Methodology: Sample Segments

- Responses are weighted to align the distribution of those who voted in favor or against the referendum with the actual results of the election

<u>Sample Size (raw counts)</u>	
Total	(n=1,652)
Referendum Vote	
In Favor	n=655
Oppose	n=861
Did not vote/ Not aware/ Refused	n=136
Preferred Project Approach	
Renovation and New Construction	n=829
New Construction only	n=389
Renovation only	n=296
No opinion	n=99

<u>Sample Size (raw counts)</u>	
Total	(n=1,652)
Annual Property Taxes	
Less than \$4,000	n=92
\$4,000 to less than \$8,000	n=640
\$8,000 to less than \$15,000	n=556
\$15,000 or more	n=180
Prefer not to answer	n=184
Tax Increase Support	
0%	n=202
Less than 5%	n=283
5% to less than 10%	n=354
10% to less than 15%	n=183
15% or more/Whatever is needed	n=337
Not sure	n=228

Methodology: Sample Segments (cont'd)

<u>Sample Size (raw counts)</u>	
Total	(n=1,652)
Respondent Age	
18 to 44	n=305
45 to 64	n=638
65 or older	n=617
Prefer not to answer	n=92
Household Income	
Less than \$100,000	n=380
\$100,000 to less than \$200,000	n=435
\$200,000 or more	n=448
Prefer not to answer	n=389

<u>Sample Size (raw counts)</u>	
Total	(n=1,652)
Years Lived in Cape Elizabeth	
Less than 5 years	n=243
5 to less than 15 years	n=492
15 years or more	n=855
Kids in Cape Elizabeth Schools	
Yes	n=561
No	n=1,062
Gender	
Male	n=598
Female	n=863

Detailed Findings

Data note:

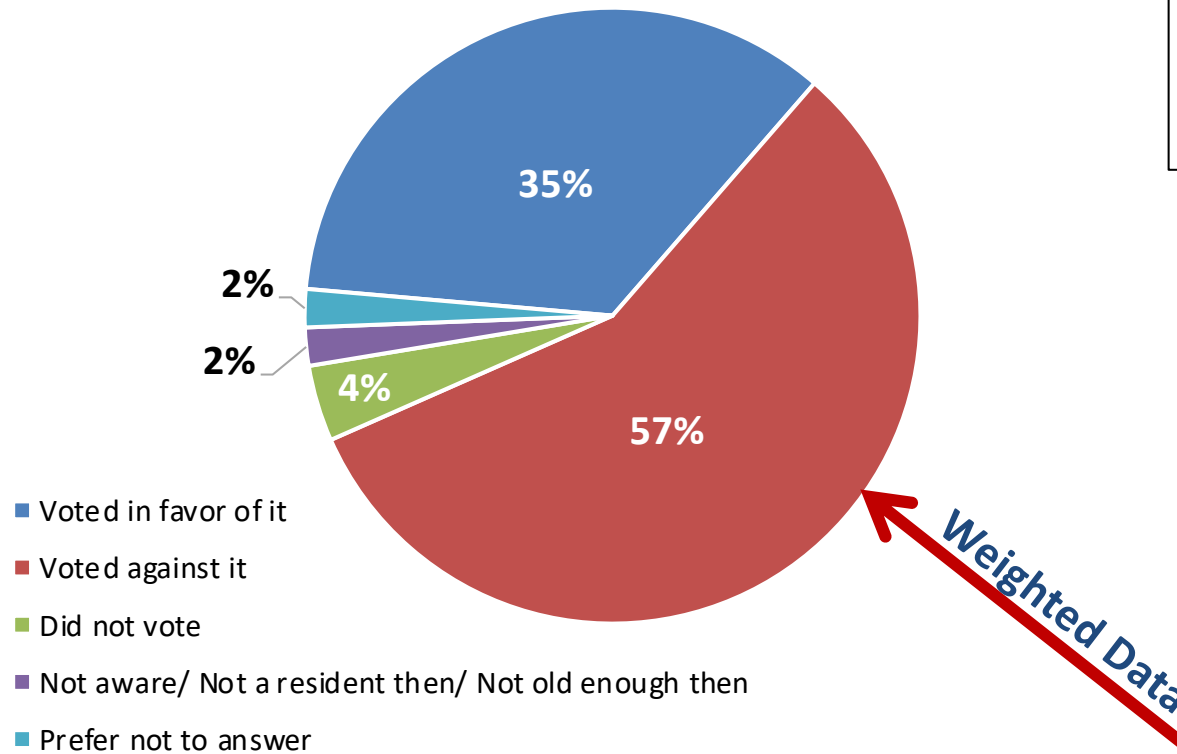
All of the results are based on Cape Elizabeth residents' perceptions and self-reported data.
Perceptions do not always reflect facts.

November 2022 Proposal

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election

Base: All respondents (n=1,652)



Actual Survey Responses (Raw Data)

- In Favor: 40%
- Opposed: 52%
- Other: 8%

November 2022 Vote

- In Favor: 38%
- Opposed: 62%

Weighting Factors

- In Favor: 1 = 0.879
- Opposed: 1 = 1.092
- Other: 1 = 1.000

➤ Q1. We'd like to understand what you liked and did not like about the \$115.9 million school buildings bond proposal presented in the November 2022 election. Did you vote on it and if so, were you in favor of it or against it? (Aided, single response)

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election (cont'd)

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election										
Base: All respondents										
	Age				HH Income				Kids in Schools	
November 2022 Proposal	18 to 44 (n=305) A	45 to 64 (n=638) B	65+ (n=617) C	Refused (n=92) D	<\$100K (n=380) E	\$100K - <\$200K (n=435) F	\$200K+ (n=448) G	Refused (n=389) H	Yes (n=561) I	No (n=1,062) J
Voted in favor of it	71% _{BCD}	40% _{CD}	18%	10%	19%	44% _{EH}	57% _{EFH}	17%	63% _J	22%
Voted against it	24%	53% _A	73% _{AB}	73% _{AB}	72% _{FG}	50% _G	37%	71% _{FG}	32%	69% _I
Did not vote	3%	4%	6% _A	3%	5%	3%	4%	5%	3%	5% _I
Not aware/ Not a resident then/ Not old enough then	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%	1%	2%	9% _{ABC}	2%	1%	1%	5% _{EFH}	2%	2%

A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J: Significantly higher than the indicated column(s) at the 95% level of confidence.

➤ Q1. We'd like to understand what you liked and did not like about the \$115.9 million school buildings bond proposal presented in the November 2022 election. Did you vote on it and if so, were you in favor of it or against it? (Aided, single response)

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election (cont'd)

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election											
Base: All respondents											
	Annual Property Taxes					Project Approach				Gender	
November 2022 Proposal	<\$4K (n=92) A	\$4K- <\$8K (n=640) B	\$8K- <\$15K (n=556) C	\$15K+ (n=180) D	Refused (n=184) E	Both (n=829) F	New Only (n=389) G	Reno Only (n=296) H	No Opinion (n=99) I	Male (n=598) J	Female (n=863) K
Voted in favor of it	33%	35%	39% _{DE}	31%	28%	29% _H	86% _{FHI}	---	27% _H	35%	40% _J
Voted against it	55%	58%	55%	59%	57%	62% _G	9%	92% _{FGL}	61% _G	59% _K	52%
Did not vote	5%	4%	3%	6%	4%	5%	2%	5%	5%	4%	4%
Not aware/ Not a resident then/ Not old enough then	4%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	4% _{GH}	2%	2%
Prefer not to answer	2%	1%	1%	2%	9% _{ABCD}	2%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%

A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J: Significantly higher than the indicated column(s) at the 95% level of confidence.

➤ Q1. We'd like to understand what you liked and did not like about the \$115.9 million school buildings bond proposal presented in the November 2022 election. Did you vote on it and if so, were you in favor of it or against it? (Aided, single response)

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election (cont'd)

Age Distribution Base: All respondents											
	Annual Property Taxes					HH Income				Kids in School	
Age	<\$4K (n=92) A	\$4K- <\$8K (n=640) B	\$8K- <\$15K (n=556) C	\$15K+ (n=180) D	Refused (n=184) E	<\$100K (n=380) F	\$100K - <\$200K (n=435) G	\$200K+ (n=448) H	Refused (n=389) I	Yes (n=561) J	No (n=1,062) K
18 to 44	25% _D	18%	16%	11%	18%	9%	21% _{FI}	28% _{FGI}	10%	37% _K	8%
45 to 64	28%	34%	43%	51% _{ABE}	32%	23%	40% _{FI}	56% _{FGI}	31% _F	57% _K	30%
65 or older	41% _E	46% _{CDE}	37% _E	37% _E	19%	67% _{HGI}	38% _H	15%	37% _H	2%	57% _K
Refused	6%	2%	4%	2%	31% _{ABC D}	1%	1%	1%	22% _{FGH}	4%	5%

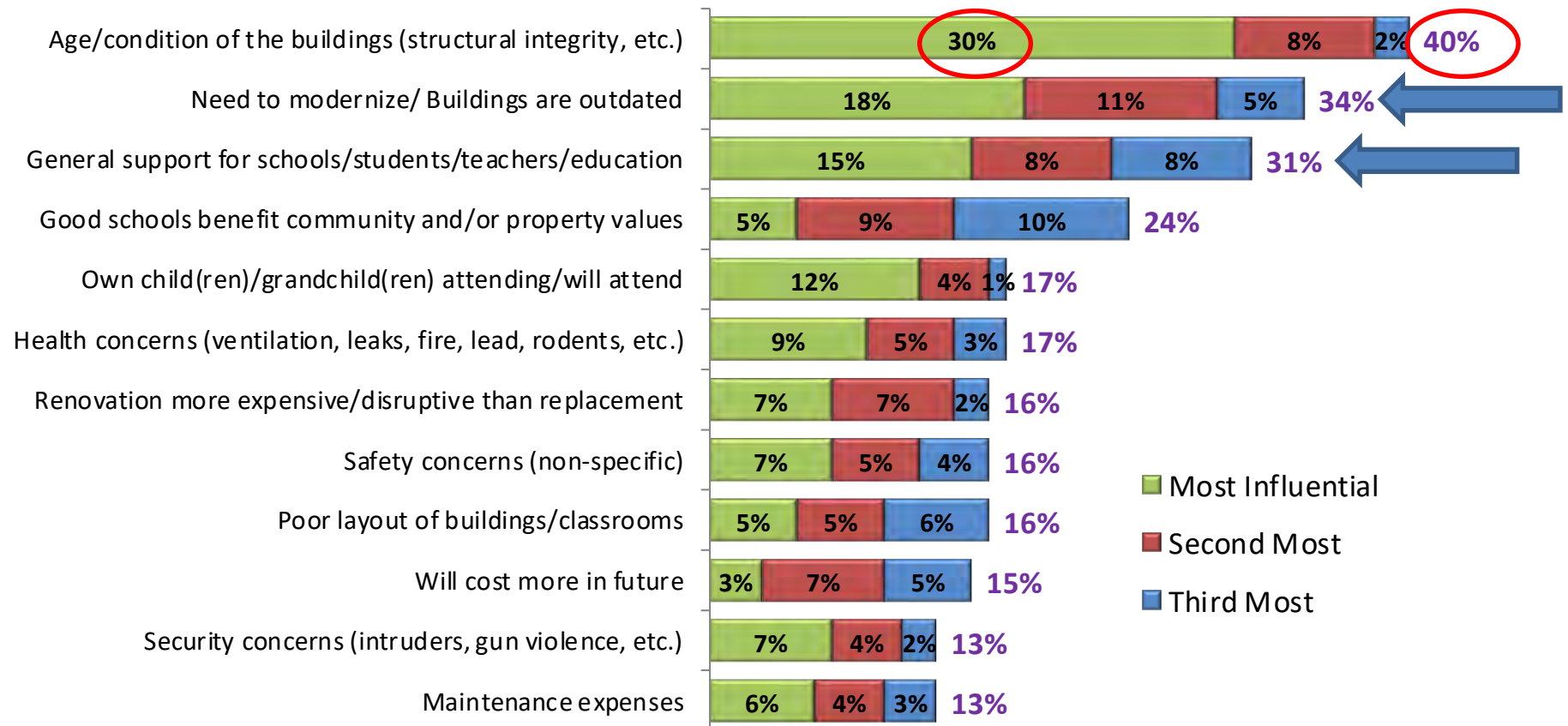
A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J,K: Significantly higher than the indicated column(s) at the 95% level of confidence.

➤ Q1. We'd like to understand what you liked and did not like about the \$115.9 million school buildings bond proposal presented in the November 2022 election. Did you vote on it and if so, were you in favor of it or against it? (Aided, single response)

Reasons for Vote **In Favor** of Proposal

Reasons for Vote **in Favor** of Proposal

Base: Those who voted **in favor** of the proposal and provided a response (n=634)

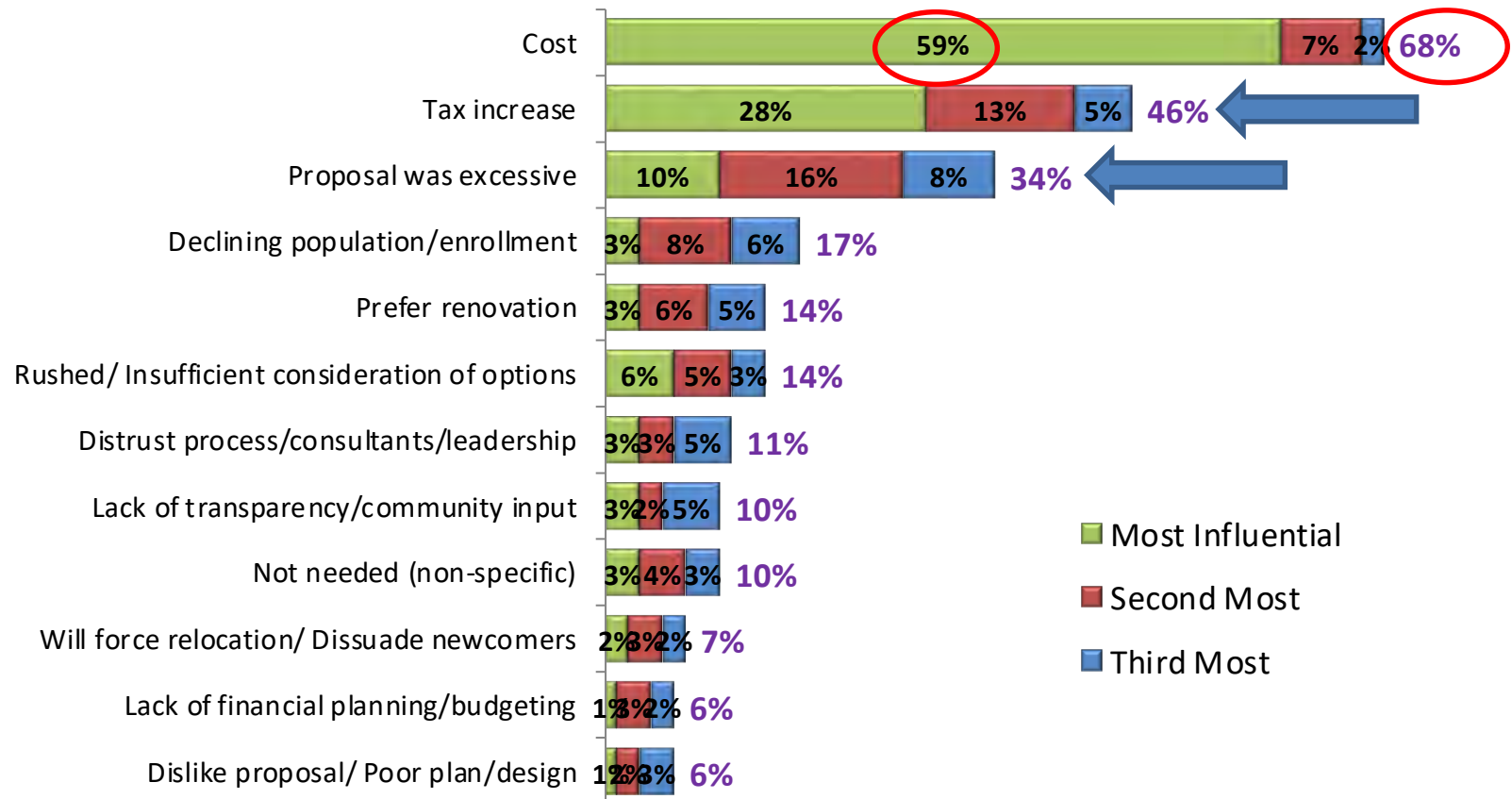


➤ Q2. What were the first, second and third most influential reasons for your vote (in favor or against) or your decision not to vote on the school buildings proposal in the November 2022 election? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Reasons for Vote **Against** Proposal

Reasons for Vote **Against** Proposal

Base: Those who voted **against** the proposal and provided a response (n=844)

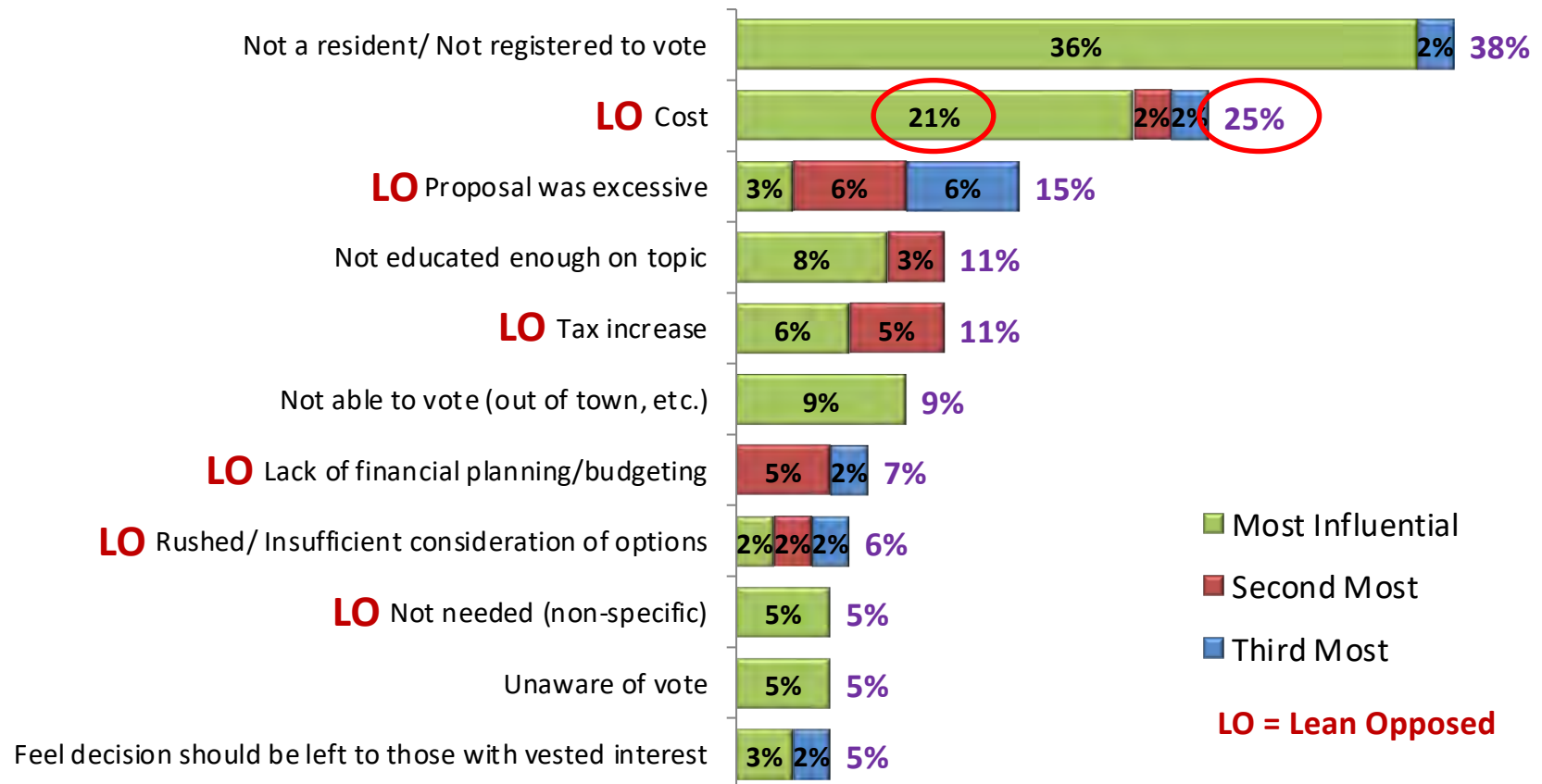


➤ Q2. What were the first, second and third most influential reasons for your vote (in favor or against) or your decision not to vote on the school buildings proposal in the November 2022 election? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Reasons for Not Voting on Proposal

Reasons for Not Voting on Proposal

Base: Those who did not vote on the proposal and provided a response (n=66)



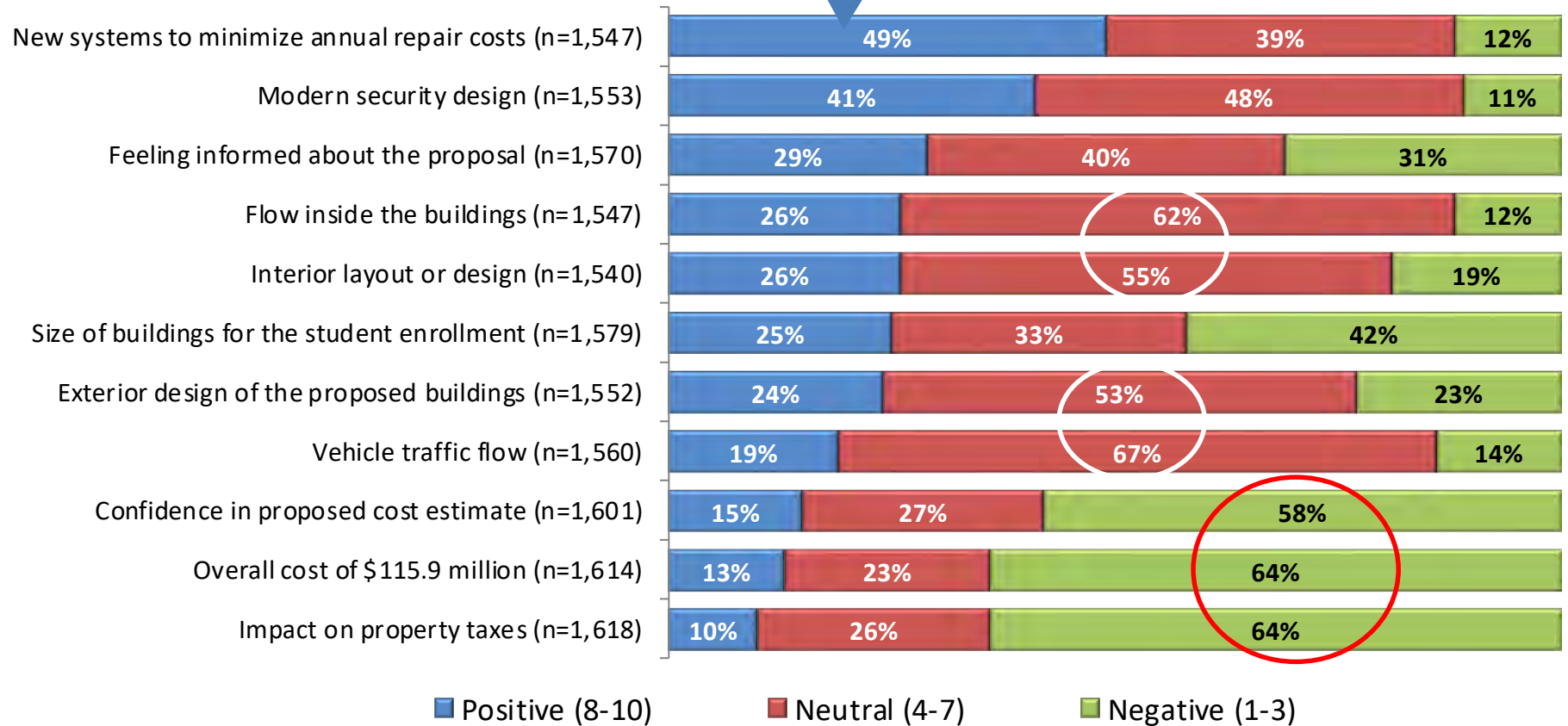
➤ Q2. What were the first, second and third most influential reasons for your vote (in favor or against) or your decision not to vote on the school buildings proposal in the November 2022 election? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Feelings About Specific Aspects of Proposal

Feelings About Specific Aspects of Proposal

Base: Those who provided a response

No majority Positive

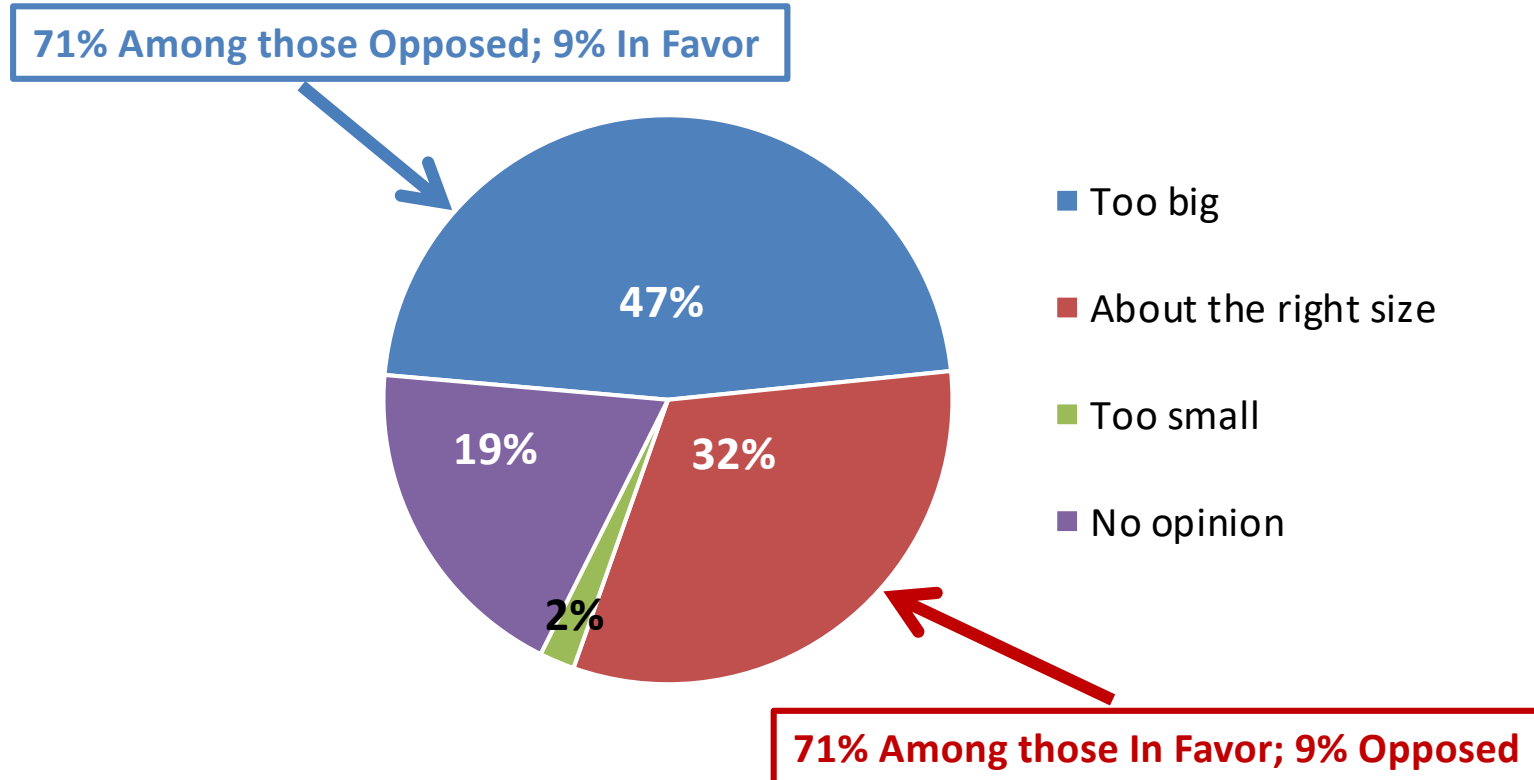


➤ Q3. Regarding the November 2022 school buildings proposal, please indicate the extent to which you feel negative or positive, if either, about each of the following aspects. (Ten-point scale: 1="Very Negative"; 10="Very Positive")

Perception of Size of School Buildings Proposed

Perception of Size of School Buildings Proposed

Base: Those who provided a response (n=1,600)

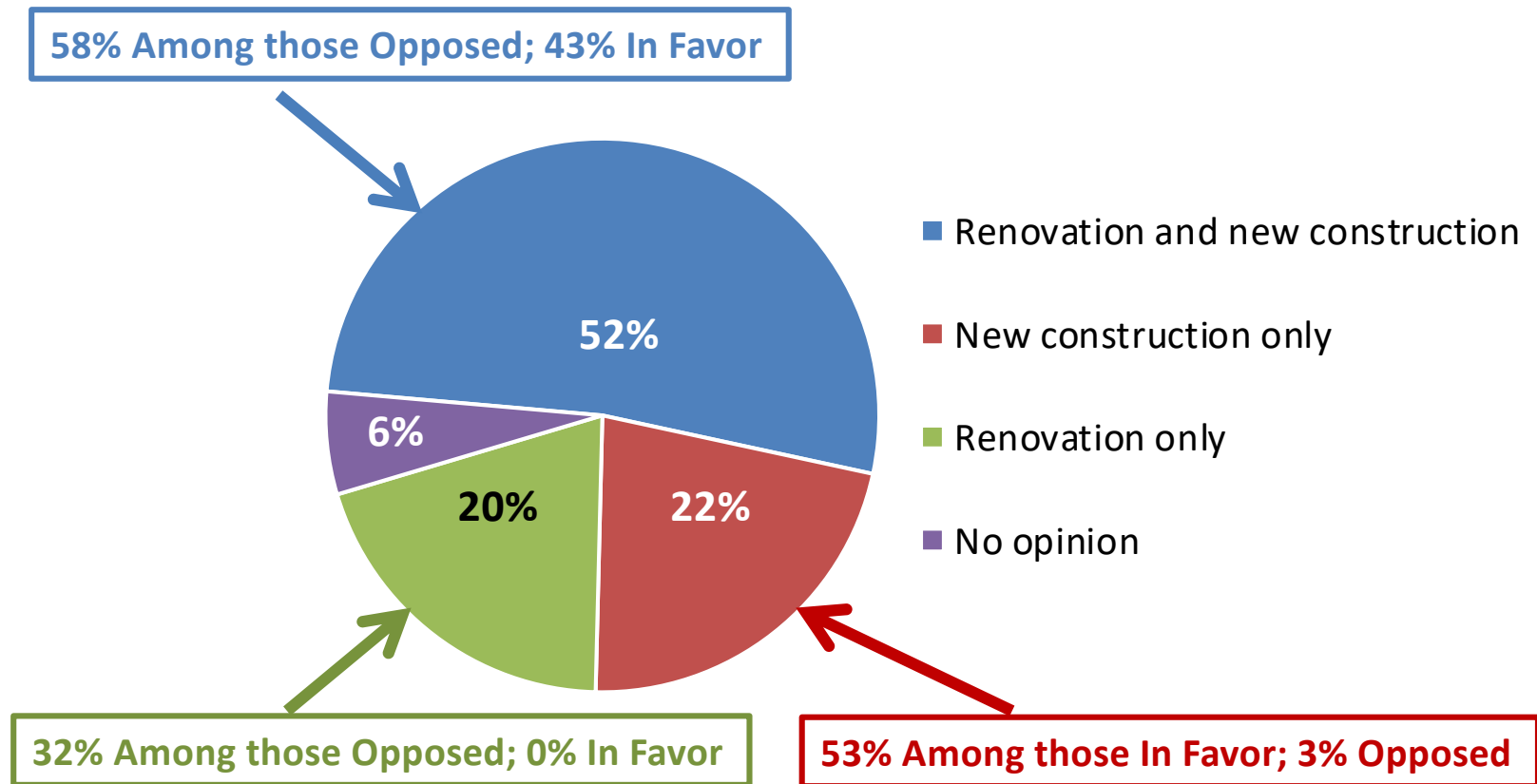


➤ Q12. Do you feel the sizes of the school buildings proposed in November 2022 were...? (Aided, single response)

New Construction and/or Renovation

New Construction and/or Renovation

Base: Those who provided a response (n=1,613)



➤ Q13. Should a proposal for the school buildings focus on...? (Aided, single response)

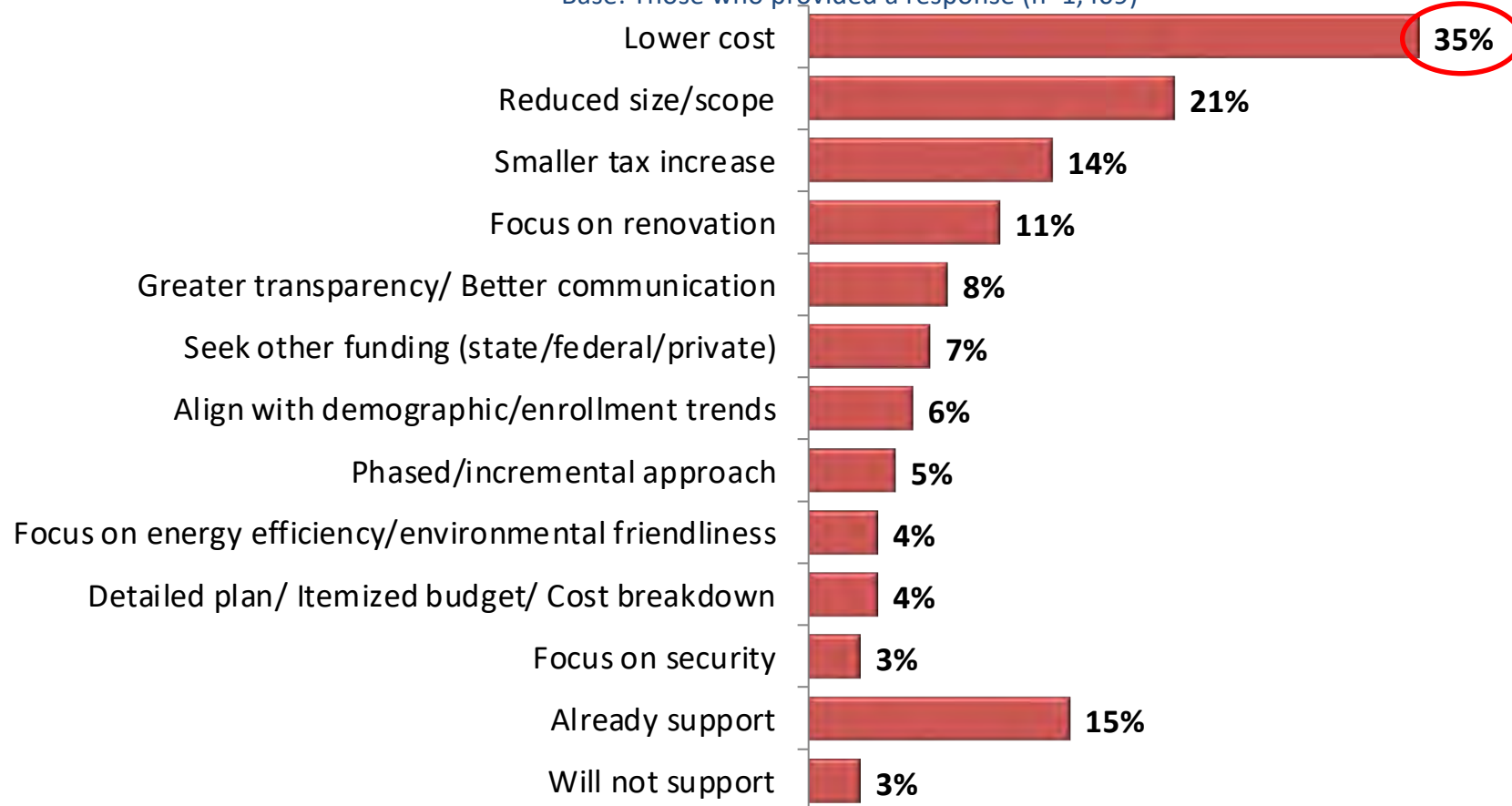
New Proposal Development

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support a Proposal:

All Respondents

Base: Those who provided a response (n=1,409)



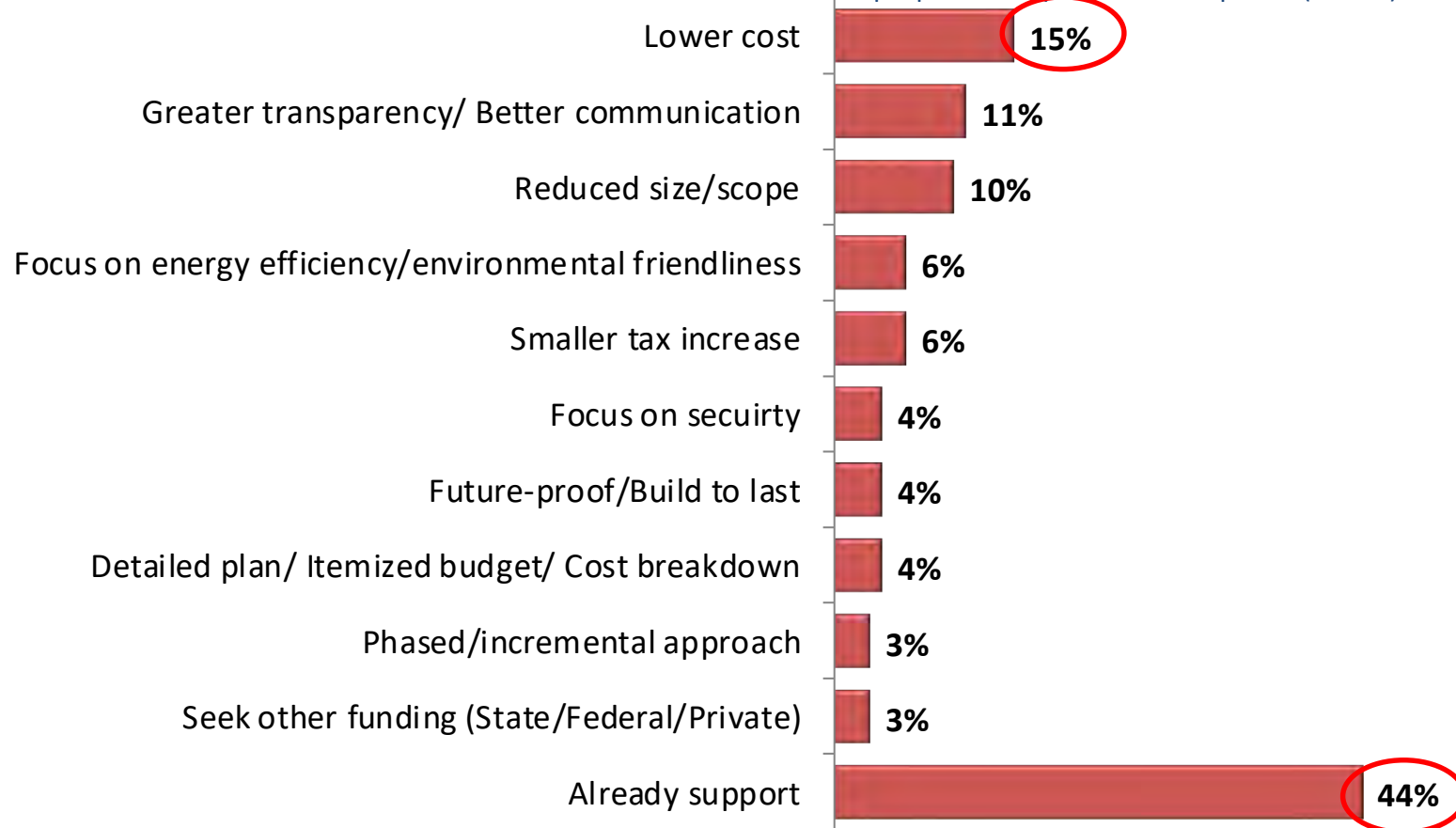
➤ Q4. If a revised school building proposal was to be presented, what changes or conditions would increase your likelihood to support it? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal (cont'd)

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal:

In Favor

Base: Those who voted in favor of the November 2022 proposal and provided a response (n=552)



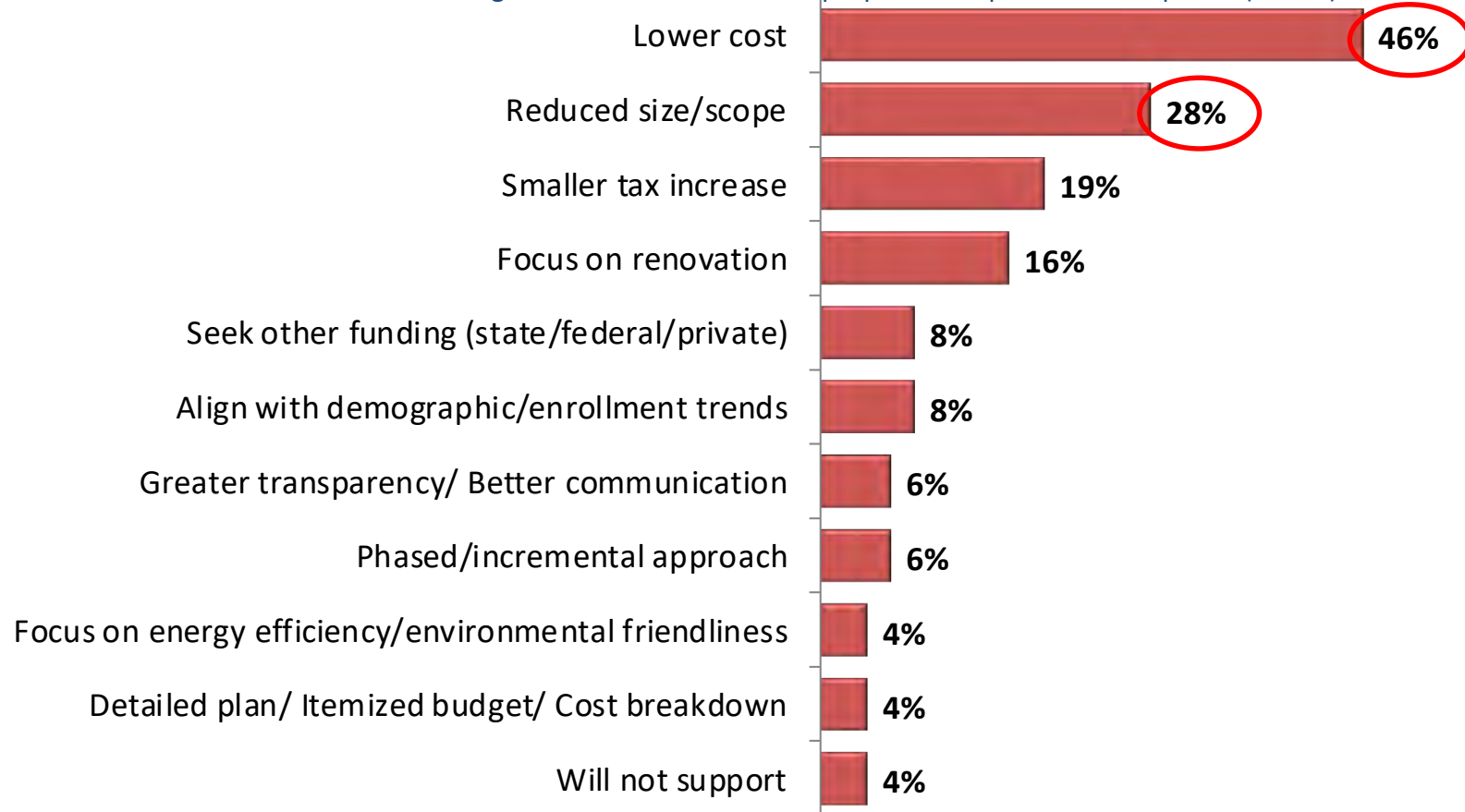
➤ Q4. If a revised school building proposal was to be presented, what changes or conditions would increase your likelihood to support it? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal (cont'd)

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal:

Opposed

Base: Those who voted against the November 2022 proposal and provided a response (n=771)



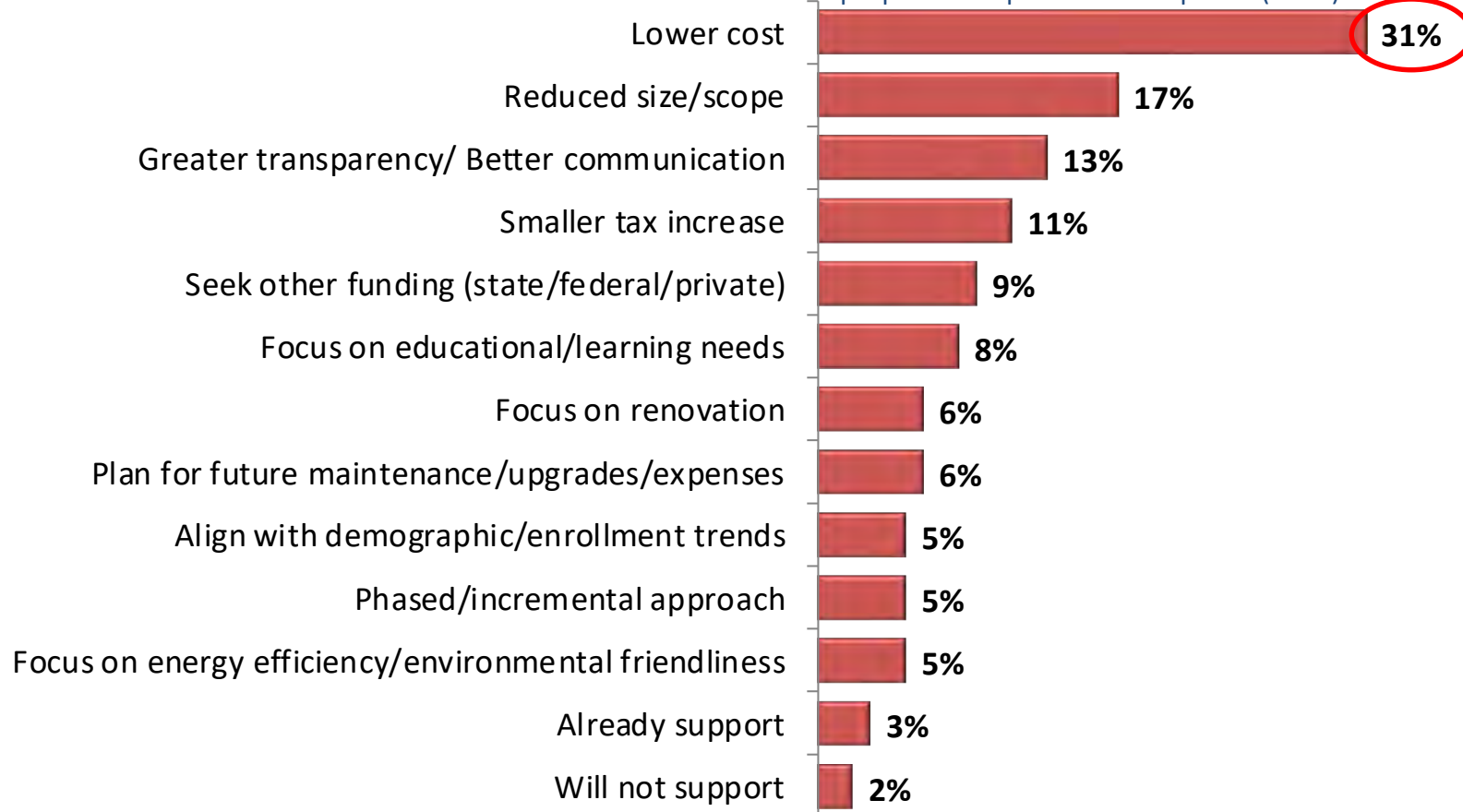
➤ Q4. If a revised school building proposal was to be presented, what changes or conditions would increase your likelihood to support it? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal (cont'd)

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal:

Did Not Vote

Base: Those who did not vote on the November 2022 proposal and provided a response (n=64)

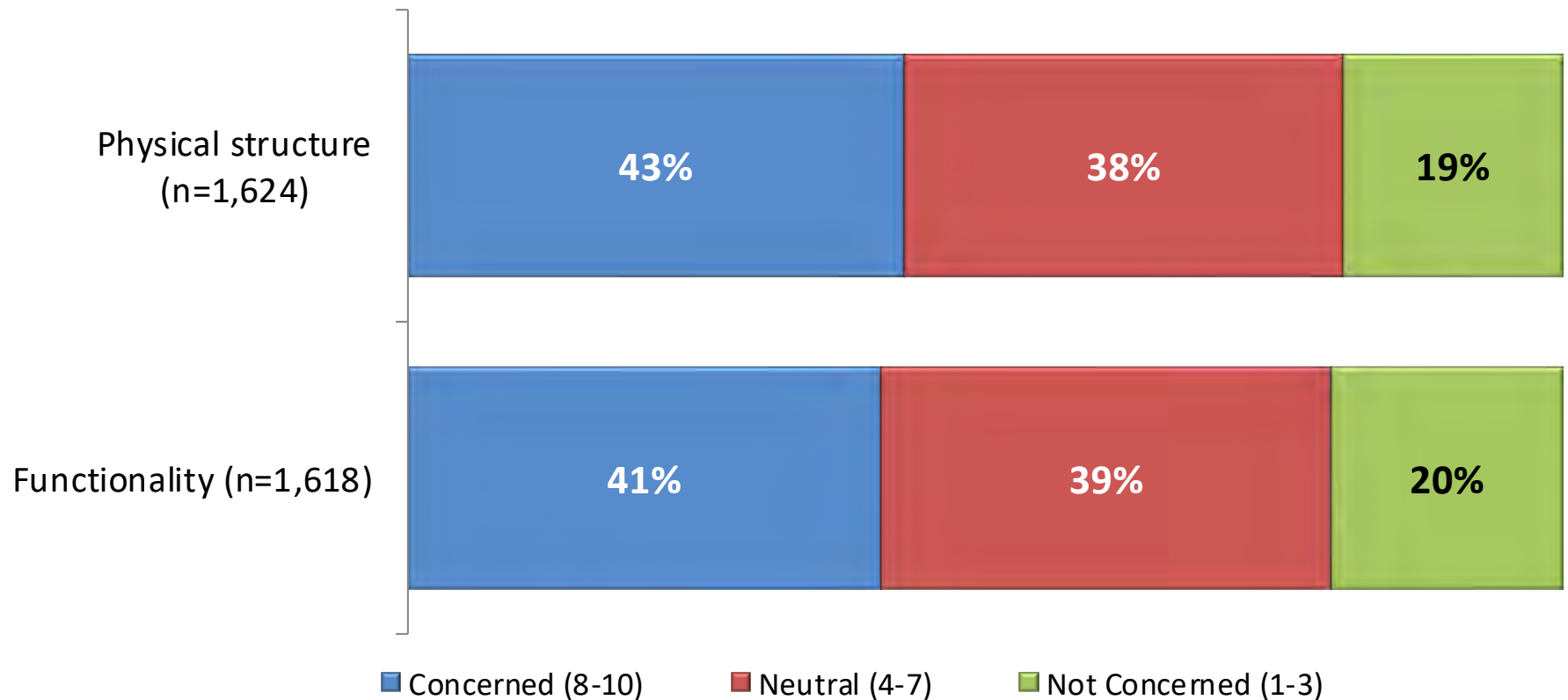


➤ Q4. If a revised school building proposal was to be presented, what changes or conditions would increase your likelihood to support it? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Concern About Current Condition of Buildings

Concern About Current Condition of Buildings

Base: Those who provided a response



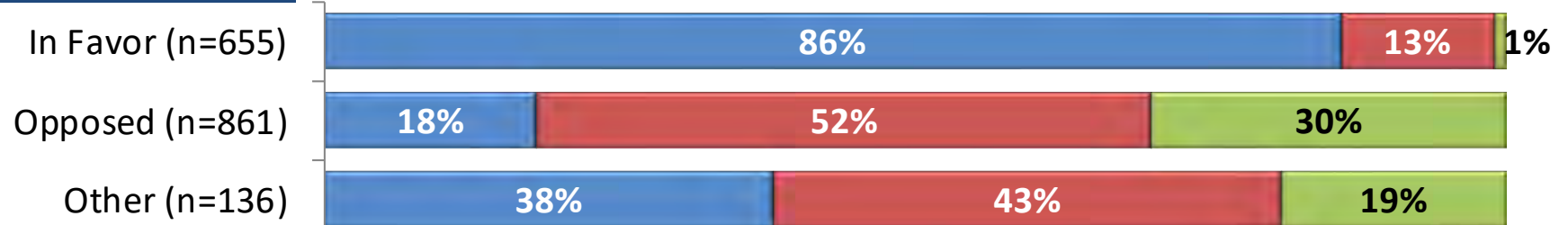
➤ Q5. To what extent are you not concerned or concerned, if at all, about the current condition of the Cape Elizabeth school buildings? (Ten-point scale: 1="Not at All Concerned"; 10="Very Concerned")

Concern About Current Condition of Buildings (cont'd)

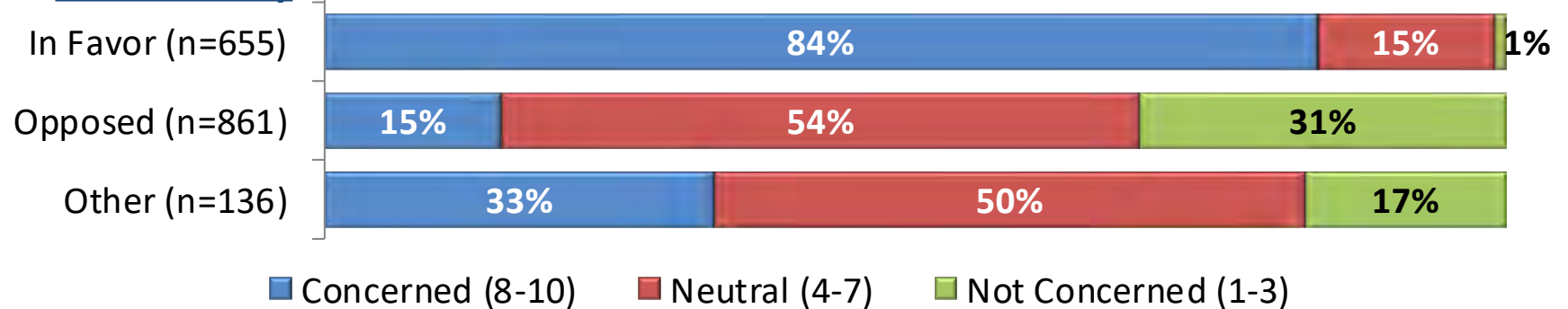
Concern About Current Condition of Buildings

Base: Those who provided a response

Physical Structure



Functionality



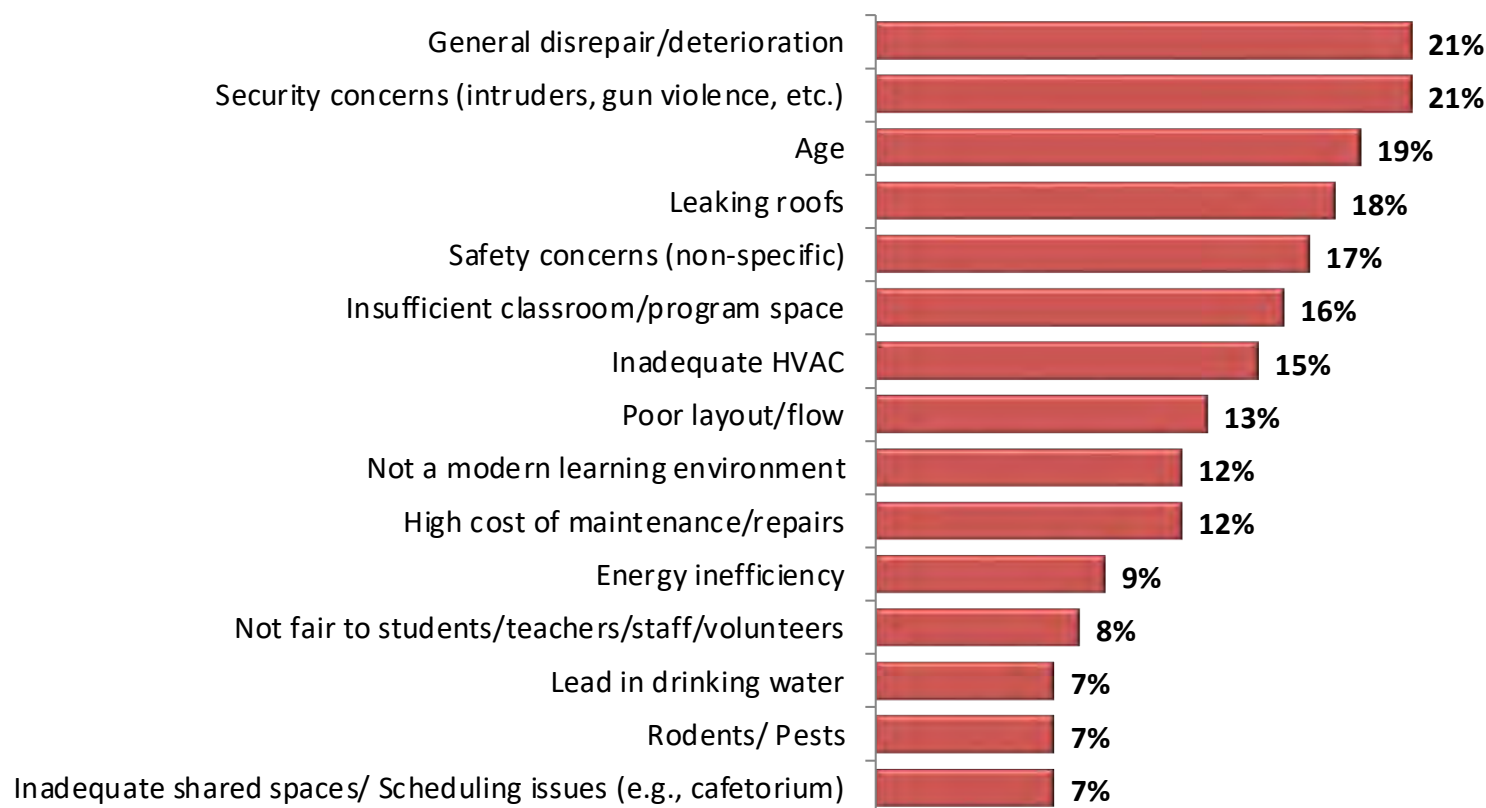
➤ Q5. To what extent are you not concerned or concerned, if at all, about the current condition of the Cape Elizabeth school buildings? (Ten-point scale: 1="Not at All Concerned"; 10="Very Concerned")

Reasons for Level of Concern About Condition of Buildings

Reasons for Level of Concern About Condition of Buildings:

Concerned

Base: Those who provided “concerned” (8-10) ratings for both physical structure and functionality provided a response (n=543)



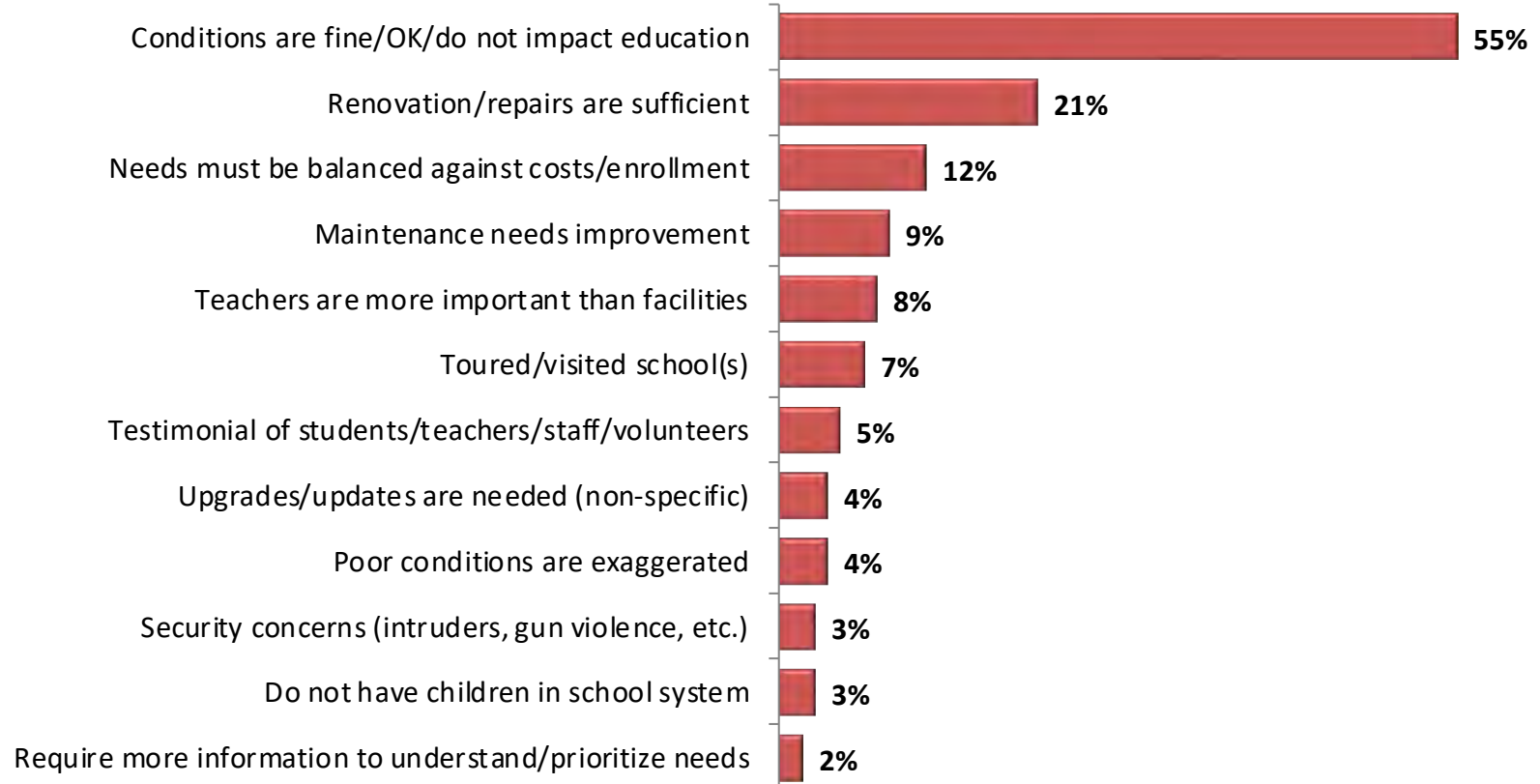
➤ Q6. Please explain your rating of not being concerned or being concerned about the current condition of the school buildings. (Unaided, multiple responses)

Reasons for Level of Concern About Condition of Buildings (cont'd)

Reasons for Level of Concern About Condition of Buildings:

Not Concerned

Base: Those who provided “not concerned” (1-3) ratings for both physical structure and functionality provided a response (n=177)



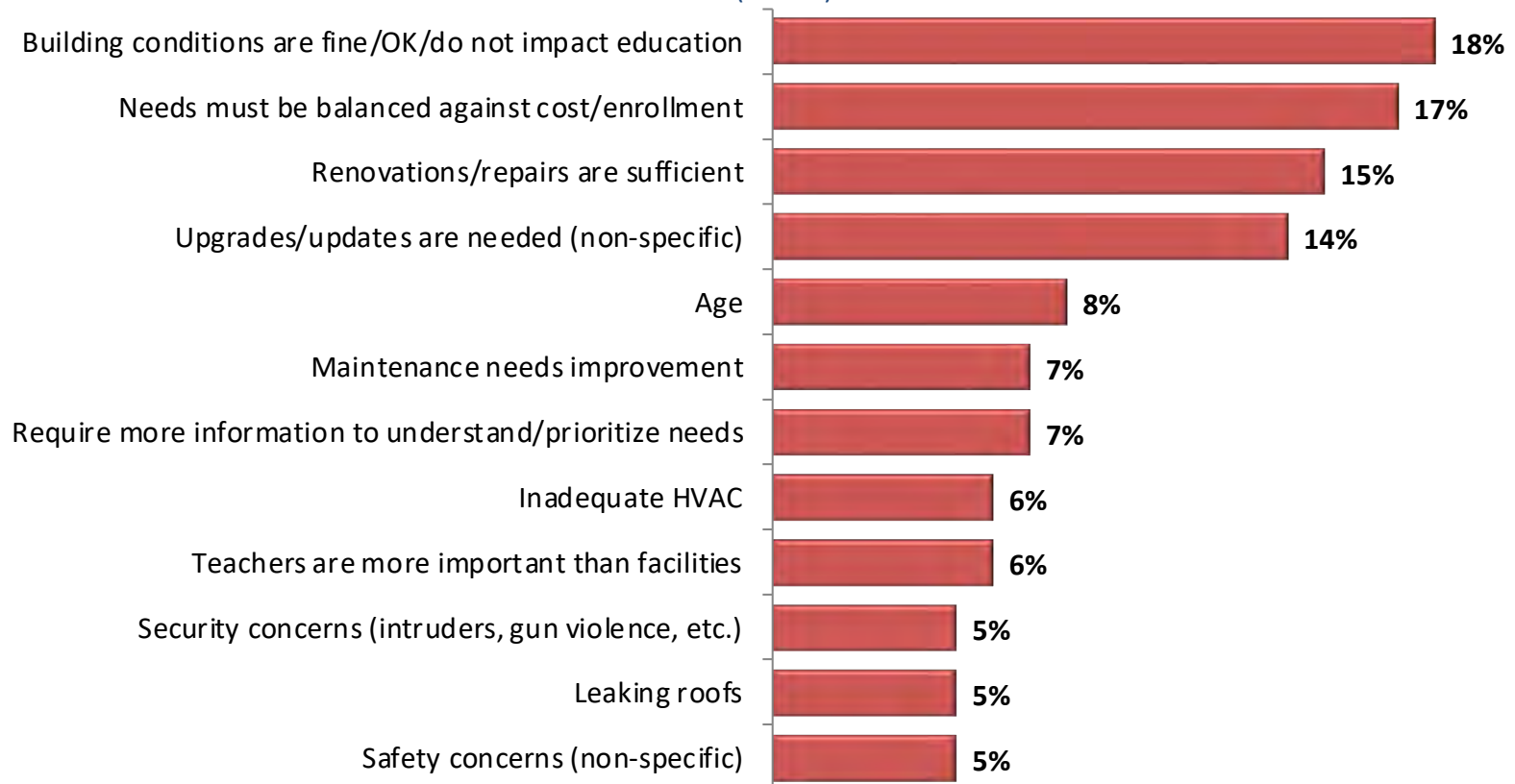
➤ Q6. Please explain your rating of not being concerned or being concerned about the current condition of the school buildings. (Unaided, multiple responses)

Reasons for Level of Concern About Condition of Buildings (cont'd)

Reasons for Level of Concern About Condition of Buildings:

Mixed

Base: Those who provided mixed ratings for physical structure and functionality and provided a response
(n=500)

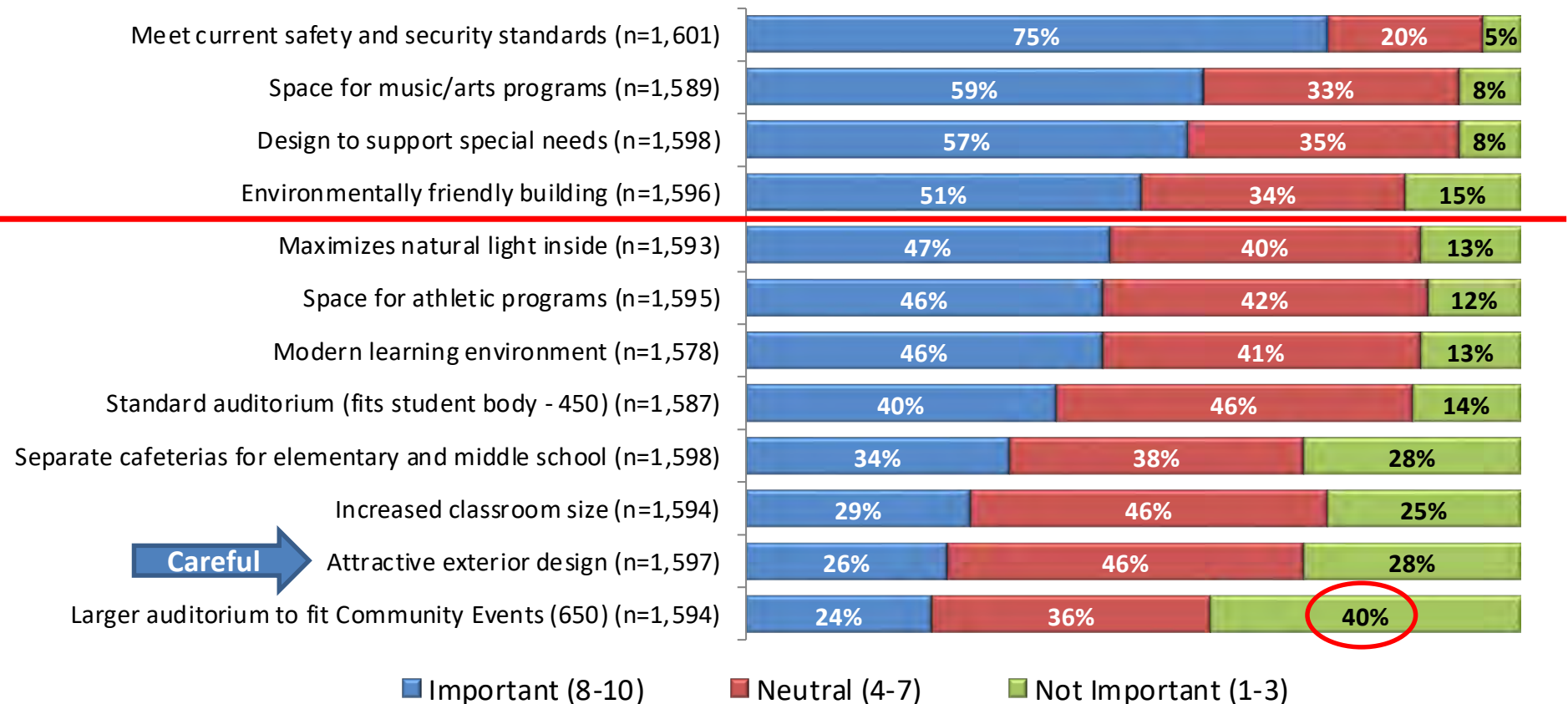


➤ Q6. Please explain your rating of not being concerned or being concerned about the current condition of the school buildings. (Unaided, multiple responses)

Importance of Building Features

Importance of Building Features

Base: Those who provided a response

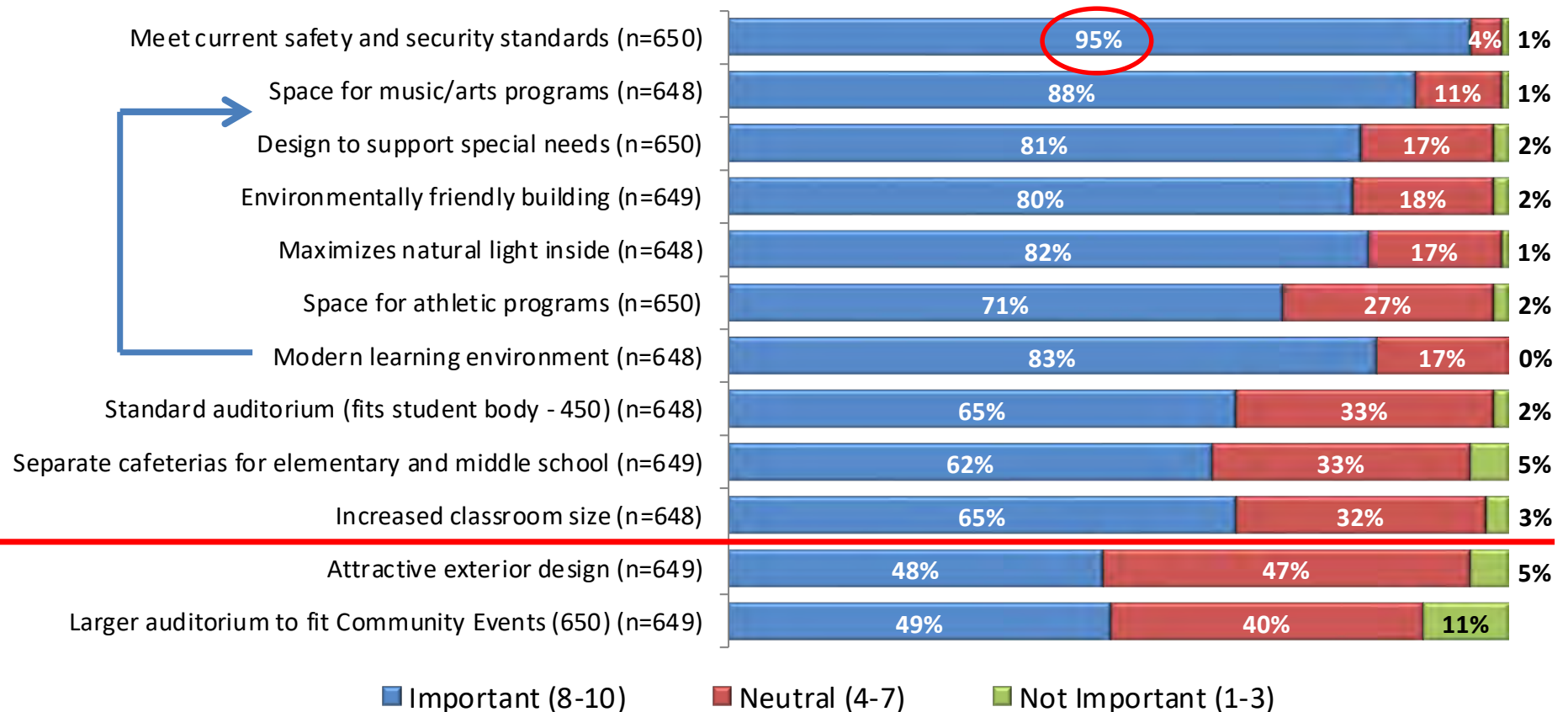


➤ Q7. Considering various options, please rate how not important or important you feel it is that the elementary and middle school buildings offer the following features. (Ten-point scale: 1="Not at All Important"; 10="Very Important")

Importance of Building Features (cont'd)

Importance of Building Features – In Favor

Base: Those who provided a response

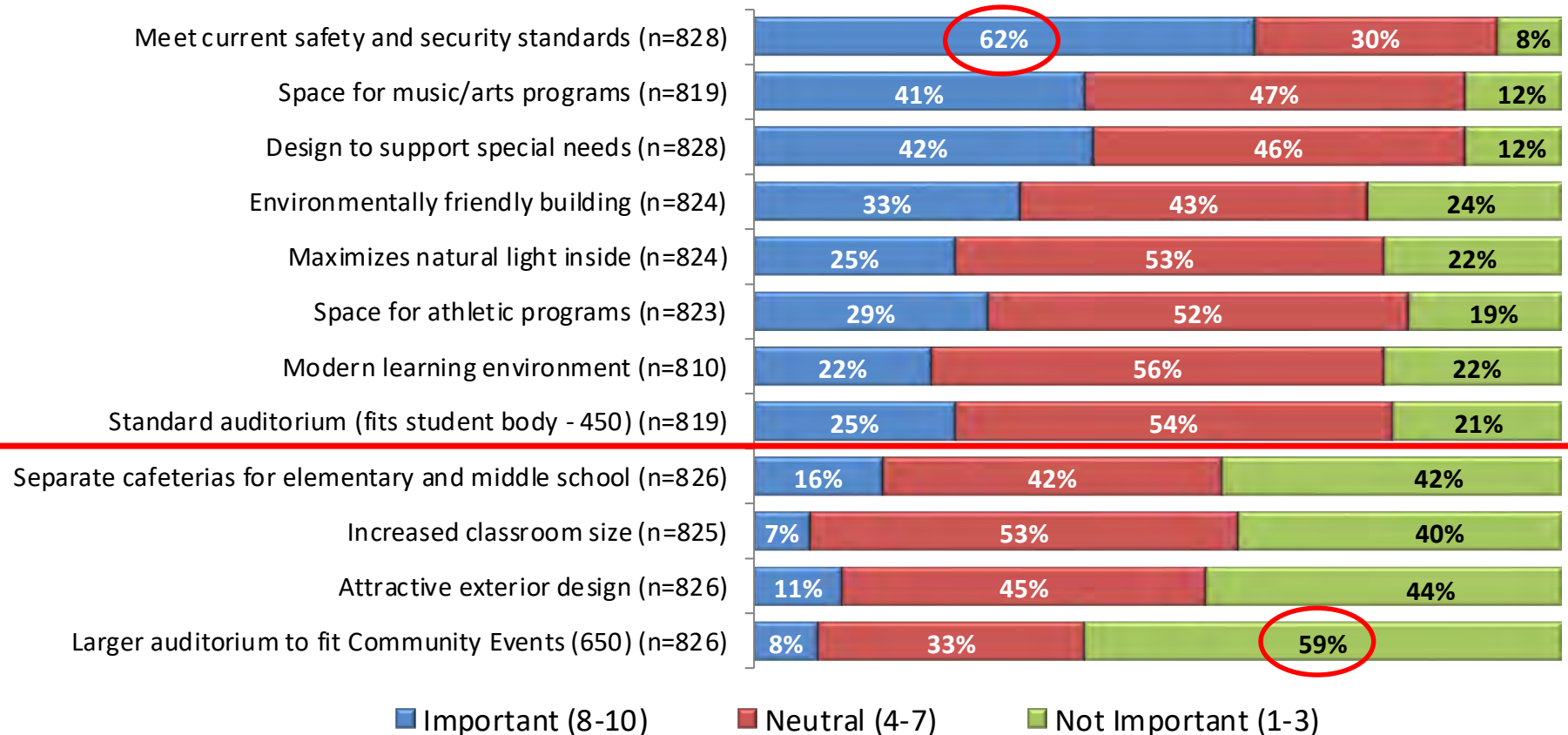


➤ Q7. Considering various options, please rate how not important or important you feel it is that the elementary and middle school buildings offer the following features. (Ten-point scale: 1="Not at All Important"; 10="Very Important")

Importance of Building Features (cont'd)

Importance of Building Features – Opposed

Base: Those who provided a response

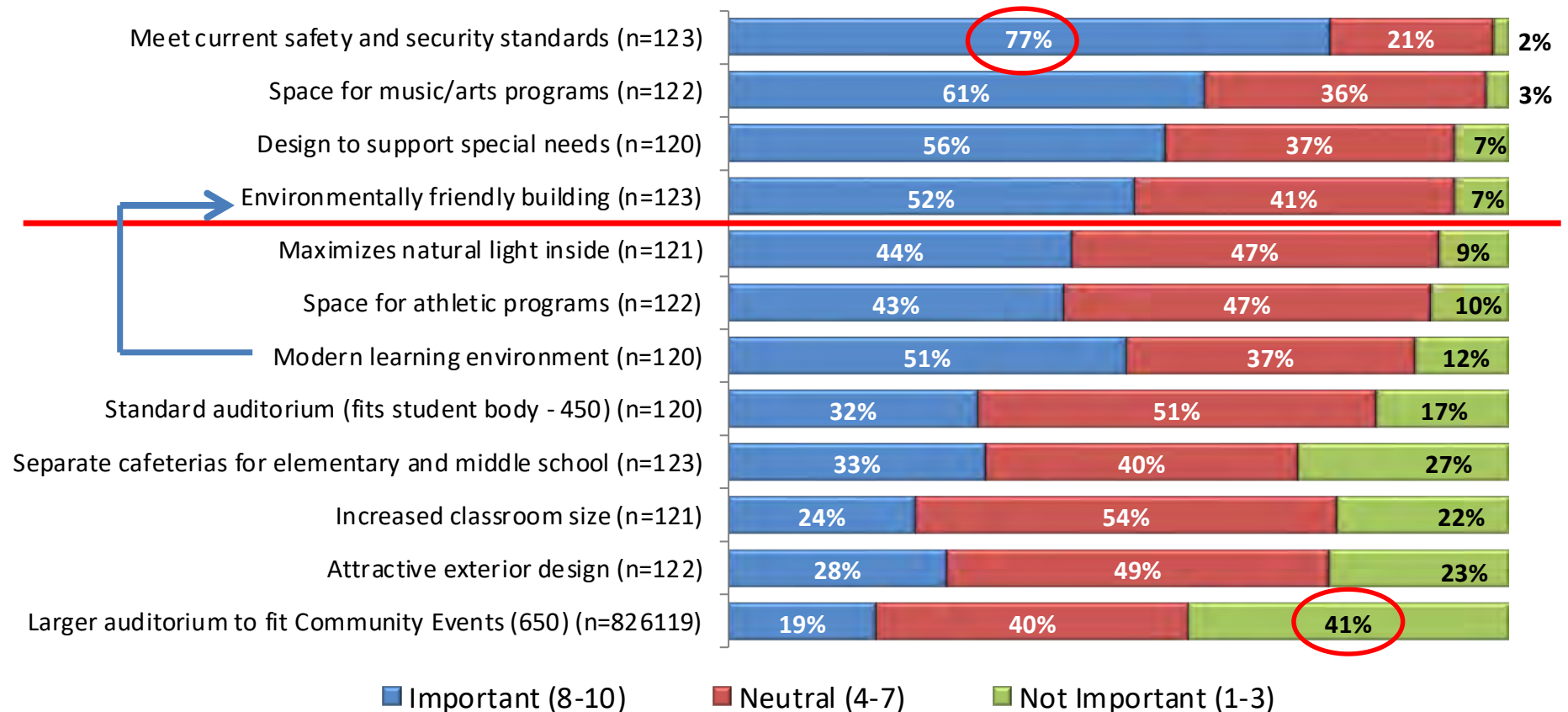


➤ Q7. Considering various options, please rate how not important or important you feel it is that the elementary and middle school buildings offer the following features. (Ten-point scale: 1="Not at All Important"; 10="Very Important")

Importance of Building Features (cont'd)

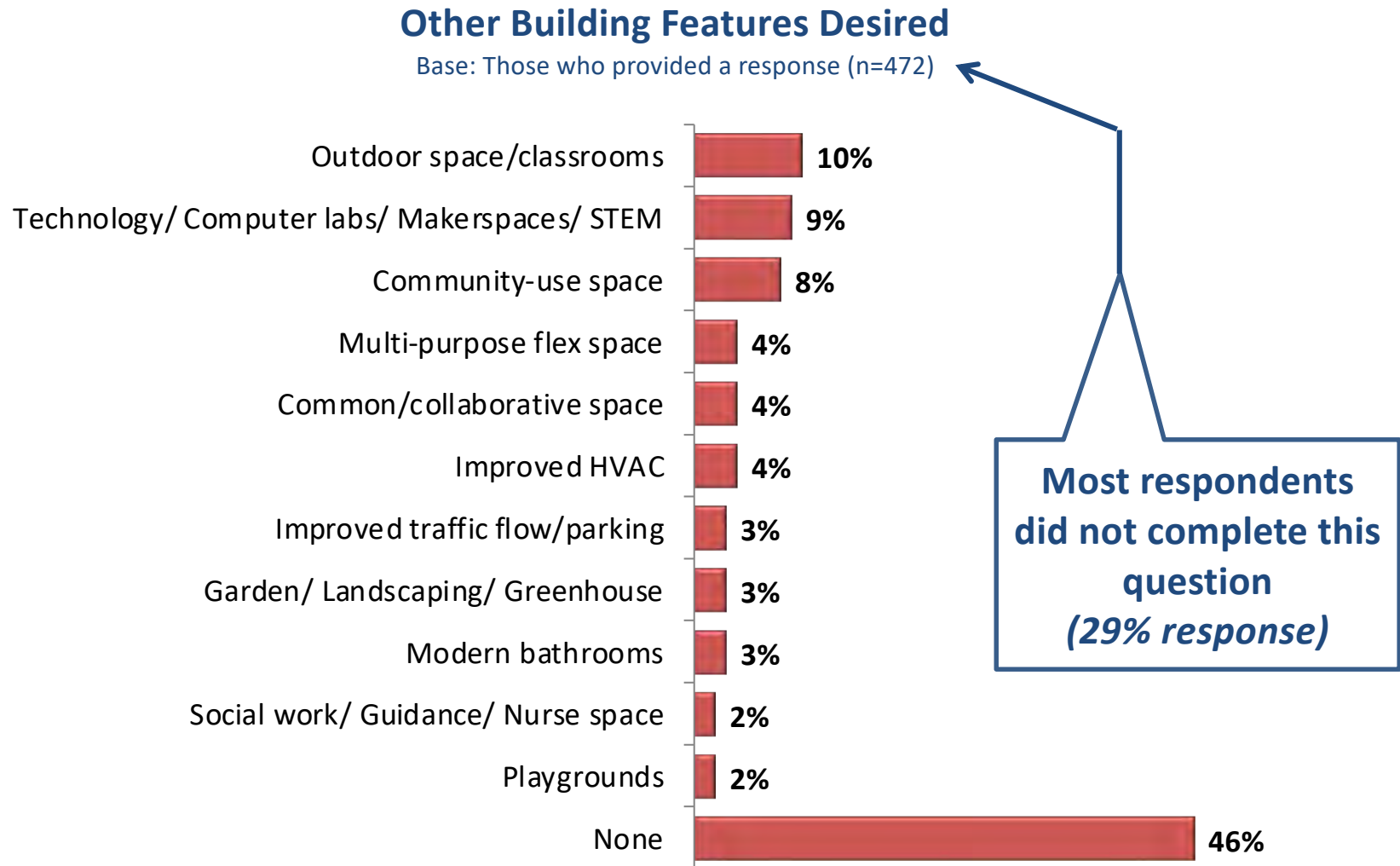
Importance of Building Features – Other

Base: Those who provided a response



➤ Q7. Considering various options, please rate how not important or important you feel it is that the elementary and middle school buildings offer the following features. (Ten-point scale: 1="Not at All Important"; 10="Very Important")

Other Building Features Desired

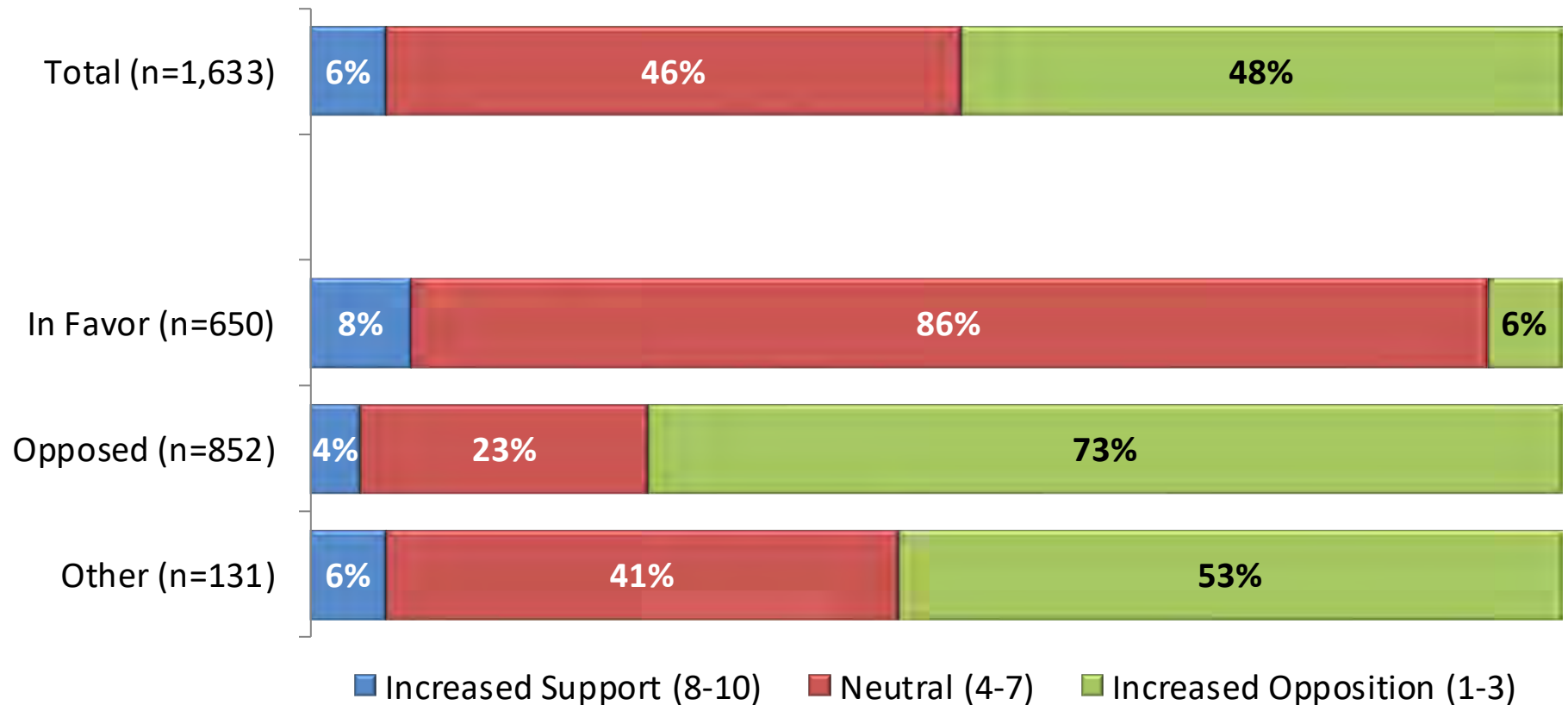


➤ Q8. What other features, not listed above in Question 7, if any, would you like our school buildings to provide? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Impact of Pending Property Tax Revaluation on Opinion of Project

Impact of Pending Property Tax Revaluation on Opinion of Project

Base: Those who provided a response

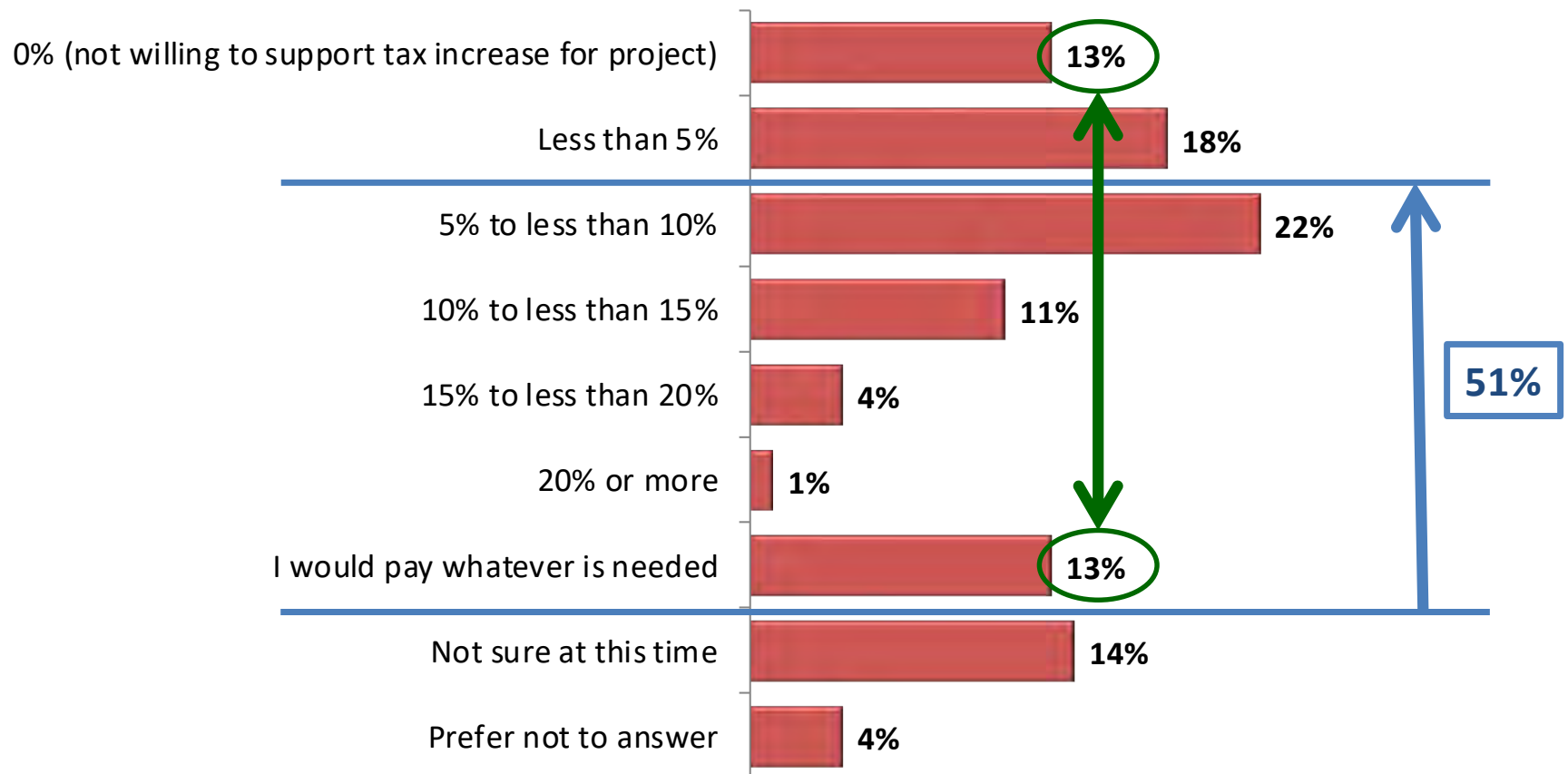


➤ Q14. To what extent did the pending property tax revaluation impact, if at all, your opinion about the school buildings project? (Ten-point scale: 1="Greatly Increased My Opposition"; 10="Greatly Increased My Support")

Level of Property Tax Increase Supported for School Buildings

Level of Property Tax Increase Supported for School Buildings

Base: All respondents (n=1,652)



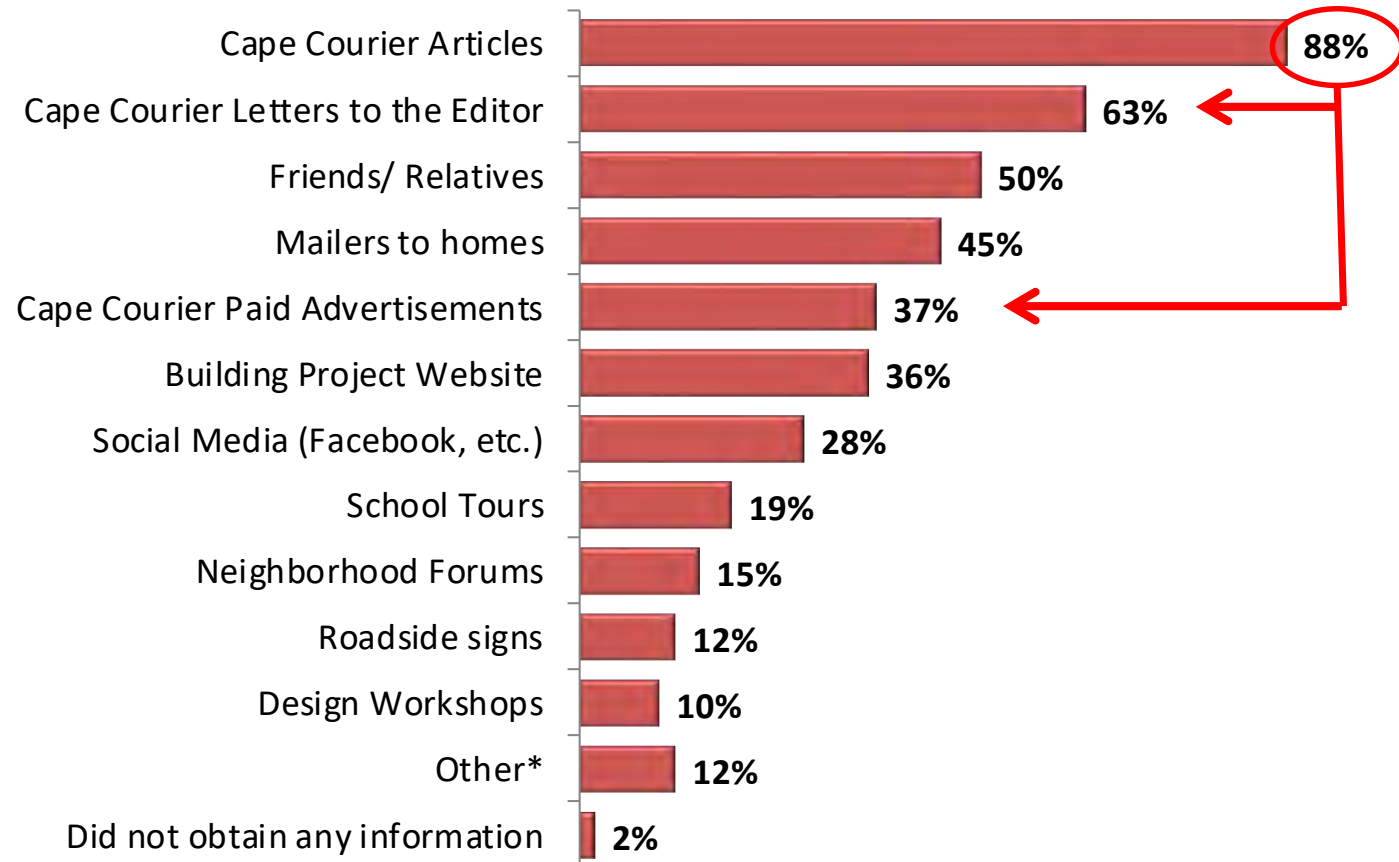
➤ Q16. Based on your understanding of the needs of the school buildings in Cape Elizabeth, what level of property tax increase, if any, would you support for these needs? (Aided, single response)

Information About Proposals

Sources of Information About Referendum Proposal

Sources of Information About Referendum Proposal

Base: Those who provided a response (n=1,623)



➤ Q9. Where did you obtain information about the school buildings proposal? (Aided, multiple responses)

Preferred Ways to Receive Information About SBAC Work

Preferred Ways to Receive Information About School Building Advisory Committee Work	
Base: Those who provided a response (n=1,264)	
Email	40%
<u>News media (NET)</u>	<u>35%</u>
<i>Cape Courier</i>	32%
<i>News (non-specific)</i>	2%
<i>Community TV</i>	1%
<i>Portland Press Herald</i>	1%
<i>Forecaster</i>	<1%
Mail	25%
<u>Online (NET)</u>	<u>22%</u>
<i>Town website</i>	9%
<i>Online/website (non-specific)</i>	9%
<i>Building project website</i>	5%
<i>School website</i>	1%
Meetings/ Forums (inc. minutes/recordings)	9%
<u>Social media (NET)</u>	<u>5%</u>
<i>Social media (non-specific)</i>	3%
<i>Facebook</i>	2%
<i>Cape POD</i>	1%

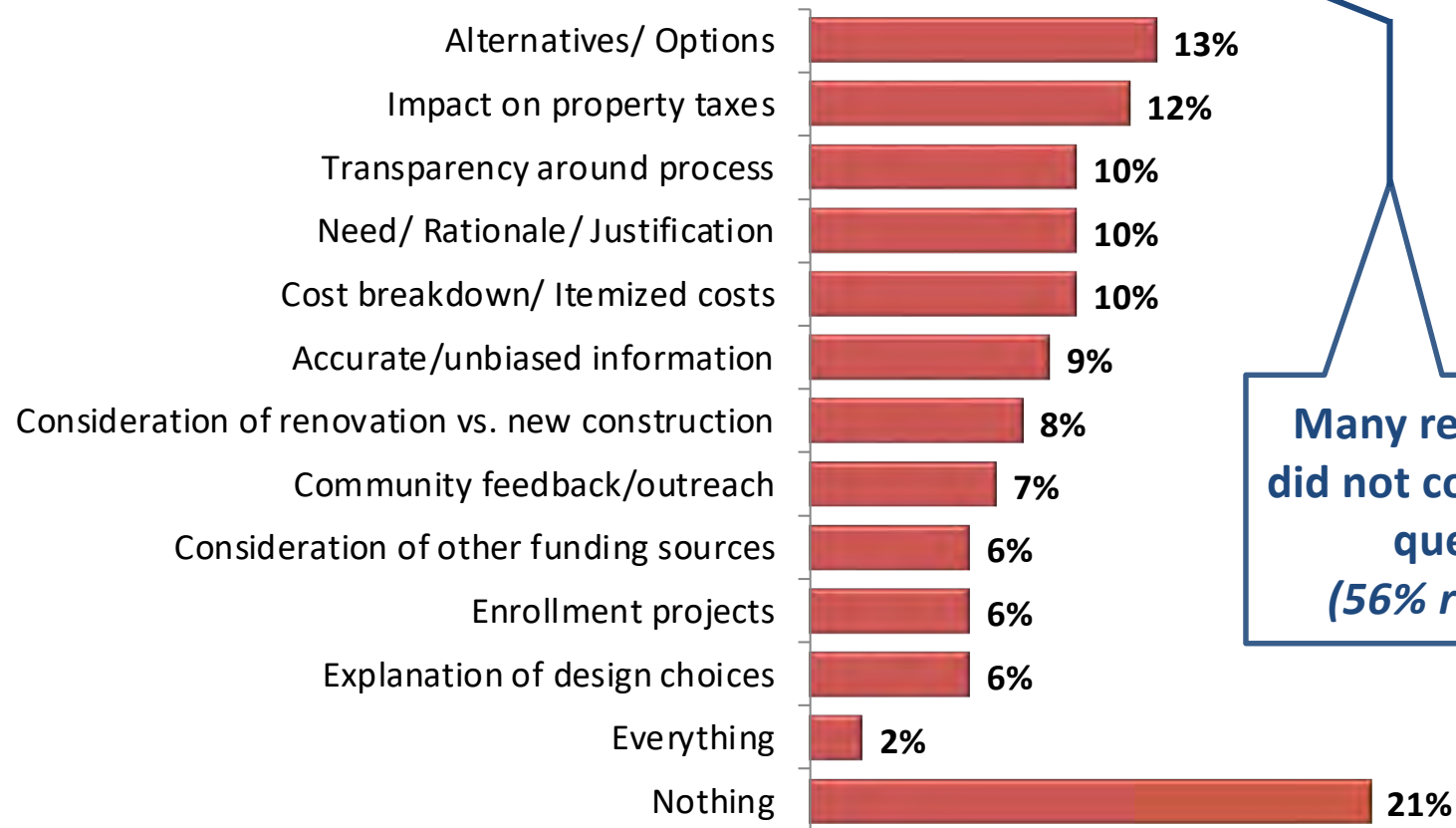


➤ Q10. How would you prefer to receive information about the work of the School Building Advisory Committee (SBAC)? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Information Missing at Time of November 2022 Referendum

Information Missing at Time of November 2022 Referendum

Base: Those who provided a response (n=932)



**Many respondents
did not complete this
question
(56% response)**

➤ Q11. What information about the school buildings proposal, if any, do you feel was missing at the time of the November 2022 referendum? (Unaided, multiple responses)

Respondent Profile

Respondent Profile

Age	Total (n=1,652)
18 to 24	1%
25 to 34	1%
35 to 44	15%
45 to 54	19%
55 to 64	19%
65 to 74	23%
75 to 84	14%
85 or older	2%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Ages of Children in Household	Total (n=1,652)
Under 5 years old	8%
5 to under 10 years old	16%
10 to under 15 years old	16%
15 to under 19 years old	12%
19 years or older	10%
None	50%
Prefer not to answer	7%
Currently Have Students in Cape Elizabeth Schools	Total (n=1,623)
Elementary (Grades K – 4)	16%
Middle (Grades 5 – 8)	14%
High School (Grades 9 – 12)	15%
No	67%

Years Lived in Cape Elizabeth	Total (n=1,652)
Less than one year	1%
1 to less than 5 years	13%
5 to less than 10 years	15%
10 to less than 15 years	14%
15 to less than 20 years	6%
20 to less than 30 years	16%
30 years or more	31%
Prefer not to answer	4%
Average Months Per Year Live in Cape Elizabeth	Total (n=1,652)
Less than one month	<1%
1 to 3 months	1%
4 to 6 months	1%
7 to 9 months	3%
10 to 11 months	3%
12 months	88%
Prefer not to answer	3%
Gender	Total (n=1,652)
Female	52%
Male	36%
Non-binary	<1%
Prefer not to answer	12%

Respondent Profile (cont'd)

Current Employment Status	Total (n=1,652)
Employed full-time (30 hours+/week)	44%
Employed part-time (<30 hours/week)	10%
Unemployed	1%
Retired	35%
Military	<1%
Student	<1%
Stay at home parent	3%
Other	1%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Household Income	Total (n=1,652)
Less than \$50,000	6%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	8%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	10%
\$100,000 to less than \$150,000	15%
\$150,000 to less than \$200,000	11%
\$200,000 to less than \$250,000	8%
\$250,000 or more	18%
Prefer not to answer	24%

Total Annual Property Tax Bill	Total (n=1,652)
\$0.00 (I don't pay Cape Elizabeth taxes)	1%
\$1 to less than \$2,000	<1%
\$2,000 to less than \$4,000	4%
\$4,000 to less than \$6,000	18%
\$6,000 to less than \$8,000	21%
\$8,000 to less than \$10,000	15%
\$10,000 to less than \$15,000	19%
\$15,000 to less than \$20,000	6%
\$20,000 or more	5%
Prefer not to answer	11%

Conclusions

Conclusions

- Cape Elizabeth residents would like to be able to see and compare several options to resolving the school building needs.
 - Respondents feel this will bring more transparency to the process.
 - Residents would like to be able to more easily assess what “extras” cost and identify those they feel are affordable.
 - Large percentages of respondents expressed interest in varying approaches to a project: new construction only, new construction and renovation and renovation only. Seeing options for all three approaches will allow residents to compare the options.
 - Many respondents felt more than one proposal should have been offered or vetted before the November 2022 Referendum and they didn’t feel like that happened.
- The majority of respondents expressed concerns about the cost of the proposal presented in the November 2022 Referendum.
 - Two-thirds of those who voted against the November 2022 referendum cited cost and almost one-half mentioned property tax increase as the top reasons for their opposition.
 - The data suggests that the property tax increase can be no more than 5% to less than 10% to gain support from at least 50% of residents.
 - Some investigation into alternative sources of revenue to help pay for the project was encouraged by many respondents.

Conclusions (cont'd)

- New systems to minimize annual repair costs received the highest level of positive ratings among the eleven specific elements of the Referendum Proposal respondents rated.
 - The condition and structural integrity of the school buildings was most frequently cited as a reason to support the referendum.
 - Modernizing perceived outdated school buildings was the second most frequently reported reason for voting in favor of the referendum.
- Moving forward, meeting current safety and security standards received by far the highest percentage of “important” ratings .
 - Other features deemed important by a broad spectrum of respondents include space for music/arts programs, a design to support special needs and buildings that are environmentally friendly.
 - Garnering the lowest level of “important” ratings was a larger auditorium to fit Community Events (650). The “650” refers to the capacity of the larger auditorium.
 - Respondents were asked to rate their perceived importance of twelve features that could be offered in elementary and middle school buildings.

Conclusions (cont'd)

- The research revealed that a fairly substantial group of residents perceive student enrollment in the Cape Elizabeth School System has been declining.
 - Many respondents who voted against the November 2022 referendum proposal questioned the size, need for, and scope of the project given their perceptions of declining enrollment.
 - Linked to this is some concern that the project includes the flexibility to adjust to future changes in enrollment and the evolving needs of the school system.
- The pending property tax revaluation has created considerable apprehension among residents about a school buildings proposal.
 - Dispositions about the revaluation impacted many responses in the research causing some people to lessen their support for the project, remain undecided or oppose the project entirely until more is known about the revaluation.
 - Just under one-half indicated the revaluation increased their opposition of the school buildings project and an almost equal percentage were non-committal about how it impacted their opinion about a school building project. Only about one in sixteen indicated it increased their support.
 - Less than one in ten who voted in favor of the November 2022 Referendum indicated the tax revaluation increased their support.
 - Depending on the outcome of the revaluation and reactions to it, the entire current landscape of support and opposition for the project could change.

Conclusions (cont'd)

- Existing perceptions indicate that communications about school building proposals and the work of the SBAC could be improved.
 - *Cape Courier* Articles and Letters to the Editor were the most broadly sought after sources of information about the November 2022 proposal.
 - Mailers to homes, *Cape Courier* Paid Advertisements and the Building Project Website were also widely viewed sources of information.
 - Other sources of information such as school tours, neighborhood forums, design workshops, Town Council and SBAC Meetings, etc. were not nearly as broadly used.
 - Email and articles in the *Cape Courier* followed by mail are the preferred methods of receiving information about the work of the School Building Advisory Committee.

For More Information

Matthew Sturgis

Town Manager

Town of Cape Elizabeth

matthew.sturgis@capeelizabeth.org

Bruce M. Lockwood

President

Portland Research Group

blockwood@portlandresearch.com

Dr. Christopher Record

School Superintendent

Cape Elizabeth School Department

crecord@capeelizabethschools.org

Kevin McPhee

Senior Research Analyst

Portland Research Group

kmcphee@portlandresearch.com