



**A SURVEY OF VOTER ATTITUDES
IN BUTLER COUNTY
REGARDING HOUSE BILL 920**

**CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF
THE BUTLER COUNTY EDUCATIONAL
SERVICES CENTER**

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BACKGROUND

Survey Methodology

- A total of 600 telephone interviews were completed with registered voters in Butler County.
- A sample of voters who voted at least once in the last four general elections was selected. Survey respondents were distributed across the county at the city and township level in proportion to the total number of registered voters.
- The sample was also stratified one-half male, one-half female.
- All telephone interviewing was completed between January 12 and 18, 2006.
- With a sample size of 600, the survey results have a margin of error of +/- 4% at the 95% confidence level.

Survey Purpose

The overall purpose of the survey was to examine voters' perceptions of House Bill 920, its effects on funding for local school districts and opinion of changing it. This included assessing

- Voters' opinions of their local school district and school spending
- Their attitudes toward taxes
- Awareness and opinion of HB920
- Opinion of possible modifications to HB920 and
- Support for some things local school districts could do to reduce spending.

For geographic analysis, we divided the county into four regions.

- The Lakota School District, which is Liberty and West Chester townships
- The Middletown and Monroe school districts combined
- House District 53 (most) includes Oxford and Trenton as well as Fairfield, Hanover, Madison, Milford, Morgan, Reilly and St. Clair townships. It does not include the part of the city of Middletown in HD53.
- House District 54 includes the cities of Fairfield and Hamilton and Ross Township.

Note to Reader

To aid in the analysis of the results we created a tax support variable using the responses to five tax-related questions asked in the survey. Four voter segments were created.

- One group of voters were basically Pro-Schools and Pro-Taxes. This group wants excellent schools even if it costs more, said they vote for almost all school tax increases, favor using property taxes now to fund the schools, favor changing HB920 and are not anti-tax. Just over a third of all voters falls in this Pro-Schools/Pro-Tax group (36%).
- At the other end of the spectrum, one-fourth of all voters are Anti-Tax (24%). They would rather have good schools that cost less, support school levies only occasionally, are opposed to using property taxes to fund the schools, oppose changing HB920 and most importantly, overwhelmingly agree that the time has come to vote against all tax increases.
- Another one-fourth of respondents are Anti Property Tax (25%). This group is not opposed to all taxes in general but is opposed to using property taxes to fund the schools. At the same time, they want excellent schools.
- The remaining 15% of voters fall in the Anti-Tax, Mixed group. This group is somewhat conflicted. They too tend to want excellent schools even if it costs more, are not opposed to using property taxes to fund the schools and are not anti-tax in general, but they are divided on changing HB920.

This new variable is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of the report.

Summary of Findings

Most voters in Butler County have positive opinions of their local school district.

More than four-fifths of voters in Butler County feel informed about their public school district (83%) and this was even higher among parents with children attending the public schools (96%).

About four-out-of-five voters also rated the quality of education in their public school district positively (79% excellent or good). Less than a fifth (16%) rated it only fair or poor. This too was higher among public school parents (91/9 positive/negative).

But even though most rated their school district positively, two-thirds said some districts in Butler County are better than others (67%). Only 20% think they are all about the same.

The schools' rating on using tax money is not as positive.

Less than half gave their district a positive job rating on spending the tax money it now receives (44%) while slightly more rated this negatively (49%). In addition, nearly half (47%) said there are things that their district could definitely spend a lot more or a lot less money on. Importantly, voters' perceptions of how their school does using its tax money impacts their willingness to change HB920 as well as using property taxes to fund the schools.

Also, over half agreed that their school district has asked for too much money over the past few years (55%) and 47% agreed that if property taxes in their community go any higher it will make homes in their community unaffordable.

Along with this, just 43% agreed that voters in their community believe what their school board tells them about school finances while half disagreed the community believes the board (51%).

However, most voters are not anti-tax since just 36% agreed that the time has come to vote against all tax increases while over half (61%) disagreed.

But a majority of voters in Butler County are opposed to using property tax increases to provide local tax money to the schools (57%) while only 38% favored this approach.

There is support for changing HB920 particularly if it includes some limits.

Only 37% were aware that there is a state law that freezes the amount of money school districts get each year from locally voted property taxes. After being told about it, a majority (59%) think it is a bad idea that this law causes the amount of money a school district gets to stay the same from year-to-year regardless of inflation. Only 24% said this is a good idea. Those aware of the state law were more likely to say it is bad (63%) than those who aren't aware of HB920 (57%).

Initially, just half (51%) favored changing the state law to allow the amount of property taxes to increase each year when they were told that every year a school district's costs for things like teachers' salaries, textbooks and heat go up, but the schools don't get any more money from their levies. Here too, those aware of HB920 were more likely to favor changing it (63%) than those who weren't aware (52%). Informing more voters that because of HB920 the schools do not get any additional money from their levies to keep up with inflation and other normal operating costs may help to increase support for levies and/or support for modifying HB920.

Support for changing the state law increased ...

- If a cap was set so property taxes could only rise by a limited amount each year (57% favor).
- If elderly adults who receive the Homestead Exemption were exempted from paying the yearly increase based on inflation (60% more likely to support changing the law).
- Knowing school districts would not have to put levies on the ballot very often (55% more likely).
- Knowing most people would be paying about the same amount in taxes if property taxes had been allowed to increase with inflation over the last 20 years (55% more likely).

However, support for changing the state law dropped to 27% when told that their property taxes could increase with inflation even if they had no additional income and they couldn't vote to stop it.

There is support for changing HB920, but it is much more acceptable if it included certain controls, such as capping the amount of the increase, exempting low income seniors and possibly giving voters a means to reduce the amount of the increase. We should also caution that if voters couldn't vote to stop the increase, changing the law could be seen as taking away their right to vote which might make it difficult to pass any subsequent school levies or bond issues if needed.

Also, support for modifying HB920 is highest among public school parents and younger respondents. Thus, while they support this change now, they may not be in favor of it once their children graduate just as those who don't have children in the schools now are less supportive of school taxes.

There is also a strong correlation between voters' willingness to change HB 920 as well as paying more taxes for their local school district and their school district's use of tax money. That is, the more positive they rate their school district on its use of money, the more likely they are to favor using property tax increases to fund the schools and to change HB920 to allow it to increase with inflation.

We also see that some voters are inconsistent or perhaps lack information about important issues that impact school funding.

- At first, 48% favored funding school districts through state approved taxes rather than locally voted levies (31%). But when asked which they would prefer if they had to pay \$100 more in school taxes, only 35% favored an increase in state taxes while 46% would prefer to pay the \$100 through a local levy.
- Over half said it is bad that school districts have to ask voters for a tax increase every three to five years (56%), but only 34% think having to ask for more money so frequently hurts the quality of education (34%). Most say asking for more money every three to five years doesn't make a difference in the quality (44%) or it helps (16%).
- Well over half of the voters (62%) said it is more important to them to have excellent schools even if it means they have to pay higher taxes. But in a later question, only 44% said they usually support most school levies while a fifth (21%) support some levies.
- 44% think an income tax would be a better option for the schools until told that businesses don't pay a school income tax so most residents would have to pay more to raise the same amount of money (43% less likely to favor an income tax for schools).

It seems that although voters are opposed to more property taxes for schools, they may not realize that it would likely require a state increase in taxes to replace the money raised by local schools levies. It also seems that some voters may think the schools already have enough money to provide a quality education or having more money may not be needed to maintain or improve quality. And of course some voters are aware that the money the schools get each year from the local levies does not increase with inflation. These are all areas where more communication may help change voter attitudes.

Voters favor some of the ways school districts could cut spending.

A large majority of voters are in favor of local school districts

- Joining with other districts to buy supplies in larger quantities to reduce the price (90%)
- Sharing some non-teaching services such as psychologists and school bus maintenance with other districts (79%) and
- Sharing certain teaching specialties like foreign language teachers (72%).

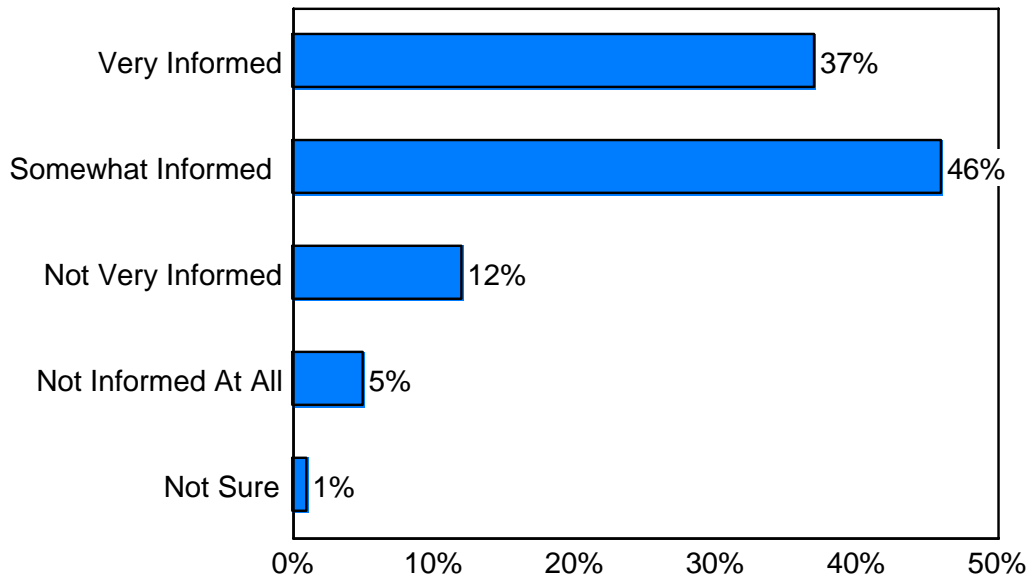
But only 39% favored combining their school district with a neighboring district to cut administrative expenses while a majority (56%) opposed this.

I. Basic Attitudes toward Schools

Most feel informed about their local public schools.

More than four-fifths of the voters in Butler County (83%) said they are either **very well informed** (37%) or **somewhat well informed** (46%) about the public school district where they live. Less than one-fifth (17%) said they are not very well informed (12%) or not well informed at all (5%) about their public school district.

Q1 HOW INFORMED ABOUT YOUR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

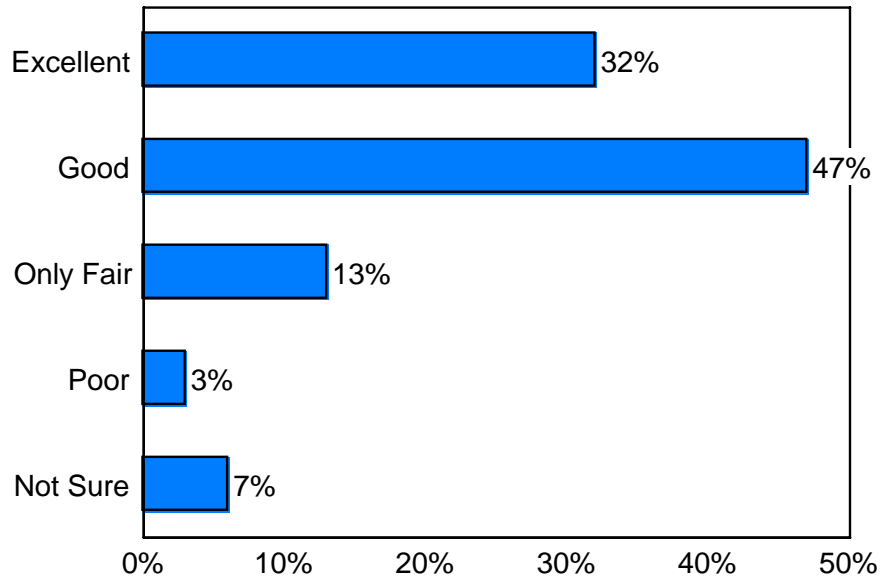


A large majority of respondents in every demographic group said they are very or somewhat informed about their public school district. Not surprisingly, parents with children in the public schools were most likely to be very informed (49%). However, it is somewhat surprising that 50 to 64 year olds were more apt to feel very informed about the schools (47%) than 35 to 49 year olds (37%), which is typically the age group more likely to have school-aged children. The percent very informed also increased with education.

About four-fifths rated the quality of education in their school district positively.

A third (32%) rated the quality of education in their school district **excellent** while nearly half (47%) rated the quality **good**. Less than a fifth (16%) rated it **only fair** (13%) or **poor** (3%).

Q2 OVERALL QUALITY OF EDUCATION RATING FOR YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT



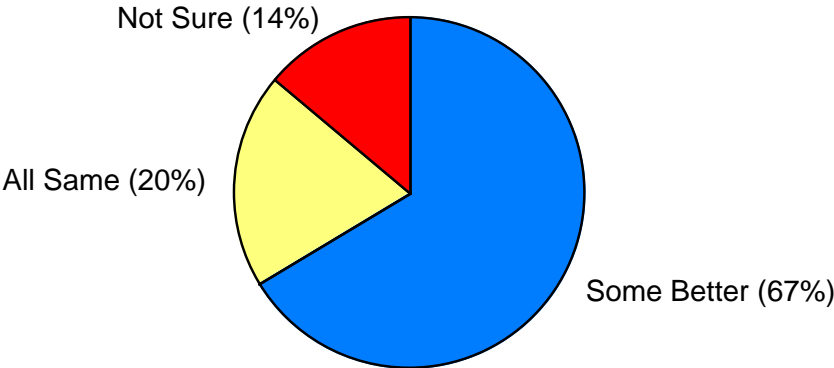
Here too a large majority of every subgroup rated the quality of education in their school district positively. And importantly, 45% of parents of children in the public schools rated the quality of their school district **excellent**.

Also, 58% of those in the Lakota School District rated their district excellent compared to about a fourth of those in HD53 and HD54 (23% and 27%) while only 15% of those in the Middletown and Monroe districts rated their schools excellent.

A majority of voters think the school districts in Butler County vary in quality.

Two-thirds of voters think that some school districts in Butler County are better than others (67%) while only 20% think they are all about the same. The remaining 14% weren't sure.

Q3 WOULD YOU SAY SOME SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN BUTLER COUNTY ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS OR ARE THEY PRETTY MUCH ALL ABOUT THE SAME

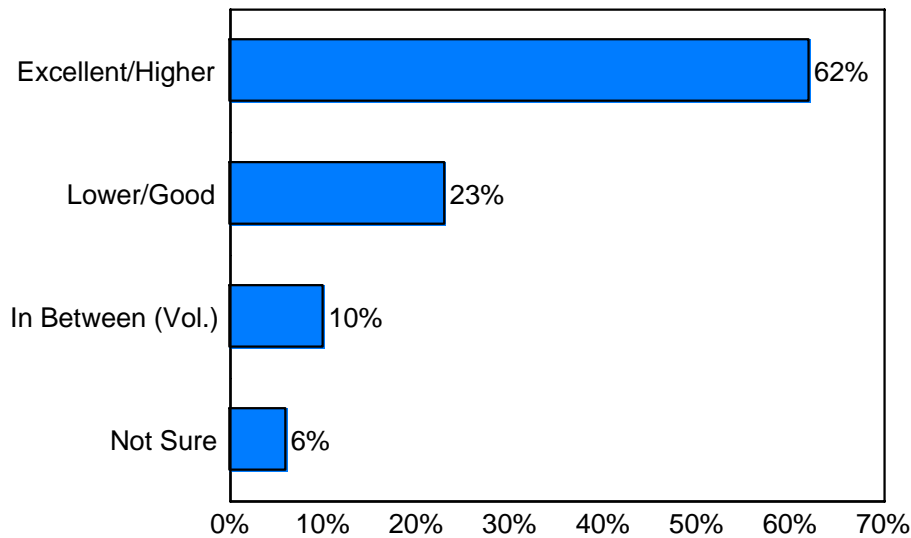


Over half of every group said some school districts in Butler County are better than others, and this was particularly true of voters in the Middletown and Monroe districts (78%), college graduates (76%) and public school parents (72%). In contrast, only 56% of voters in the Lakota School District said the districts vary in quality.

Well over half prefer having an excellent school system even though it costs more.

By a margin of almost three-to-one, voters said it is more important to them to have an excellent school system even if it means they have to pay higher taxes (62%) than said it is more important to pay less in taxes even if it means their local schools are good, but not excellent (23%). A tenth voluntarily said they want something in between (10%) and 6% weren't sure.

Q7 IS IT MORE IMPORTANT TO HAVE AN EXCELLENT SCHOOL SYSTEM AND HIGHER TAXES OR LOWER TAXES AND GOOD SCHOOLS



Over half of most groups would prefer to have an excellent school district even if it means higher taxes. But this decreased with age (down from 81% among 18 to 34 year olds to 47% among those 65 and over) and increased with education (up from 48% among high school graduates to 72% among college graduates). Also, over half of those who usually vote for most (86%) or some (58%) school levies want excellent schools, but this decreased to 31% among voters who only occasionally vote for school levies.

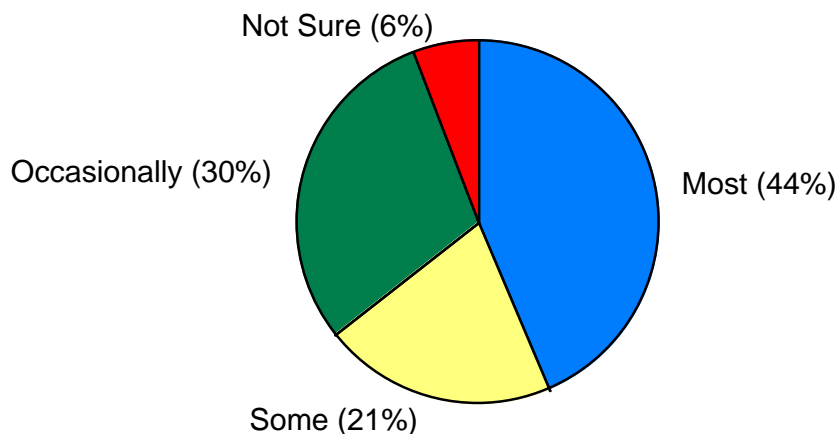
Regardless of the perceived quality now, over half of every group prefer excellent schools even if it costs more. It was highest among those who rated their district excellent (79%), followed by those who rated it good (62%). But a majority of those who rated their district fair (53%) or poor (54%) also want excellent schools even if it costs more.

This question was part of the new tax support variable and 95% of those in the Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax group said they want excellent schools even if it costs more as did well over half of the voters in the Anti Tax, Mixed group (66%) and the Anti-Property Tax group (60%). But only 10% of voters in the Anti-Tax group want excellent schools while 58% of them would rather have good schools that cost less.

But less than half say they vote for most school levies.

When asked how often they vote for school levies, just 44% of all voters said they vote for **most** school levies. Another 21% said they vote for **some** levies. Nearly a third (30%) **only occasionally** vote for the levy when their school district is on the ballot. Thus, even though many voters say they want excellent schools, this may not translate into support for every school levy.

Q25 DO YOU VOTE FOR MOST LEVIES WHEN YOUR DISTRICT HAS PROPERTY TAX LEVIES ON THE BALLOT



Public school parents (59%), college graduates (58%), 35 to 49 year olds (51%) and Democrats (50%) were the only groups in which half or more said they vote for most school levies.

Two-thirds of those who want excellent schools said they support most school levies (66%) while 20% support some. But 65% of those wanting good schools that cost less only occasionally support the levies. Those wanting something in between were divided with 29% saying they support most, 22% support some and 49% only occasionally support school levies.

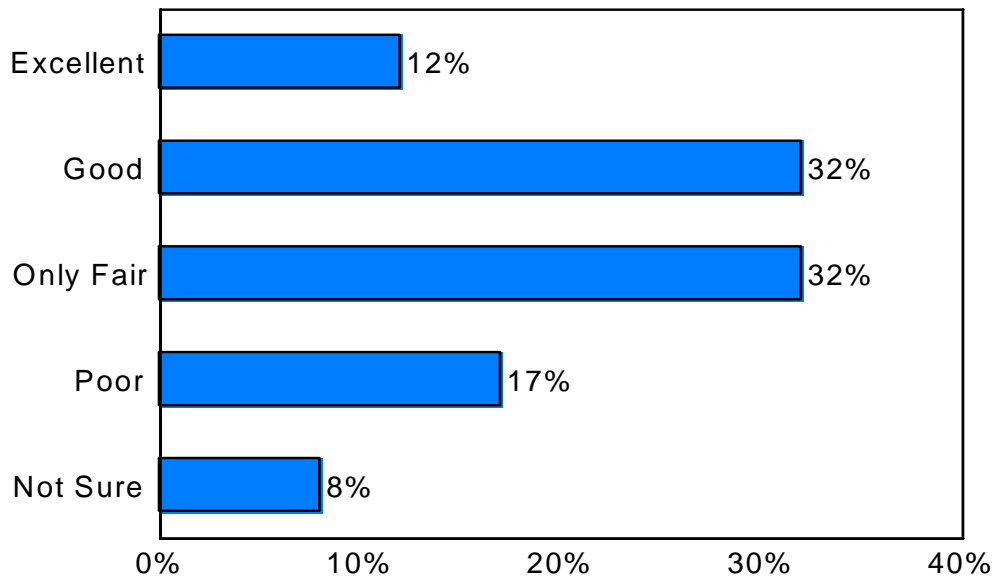
This too was part of the new tax support variable and 87% of the Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax group vote for most school levies. However, voters in the Anti-Tax, Mixed group were more apt to say they support some levies (43%) than most (26%). Voters in the Anti-Property Tax group were divided (34% most, 32% some). Only 13% of those in the Anti-Tax group vote for most or some school levies while 70% only occasionally support the schools.

II. Attitudes toward School Spending

Less than half rated their school district positively on the way it spends its tax money.

In contrast to the rating of their school district's quality, just 44% said their school district does an excellent or good job of spending the tax money it now receives. Slightly more (49%) rated their school district only fair or poor on spending local tax money.

Q4 RATING THE JOB YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT DOES OF SPENDING THE TAX MONEY IT NOW RECEIVES



Public school parents (55%), college graduates (54%), those who vote for most school levies (67%) and those who are Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax (71%) were the only groups in which over half gave their school district a positive job rating on spending its tax money.

Most other groups were divided. However, a majority of seniors rated their school district negatively (34/52) as did voters in HD53 (36/57).

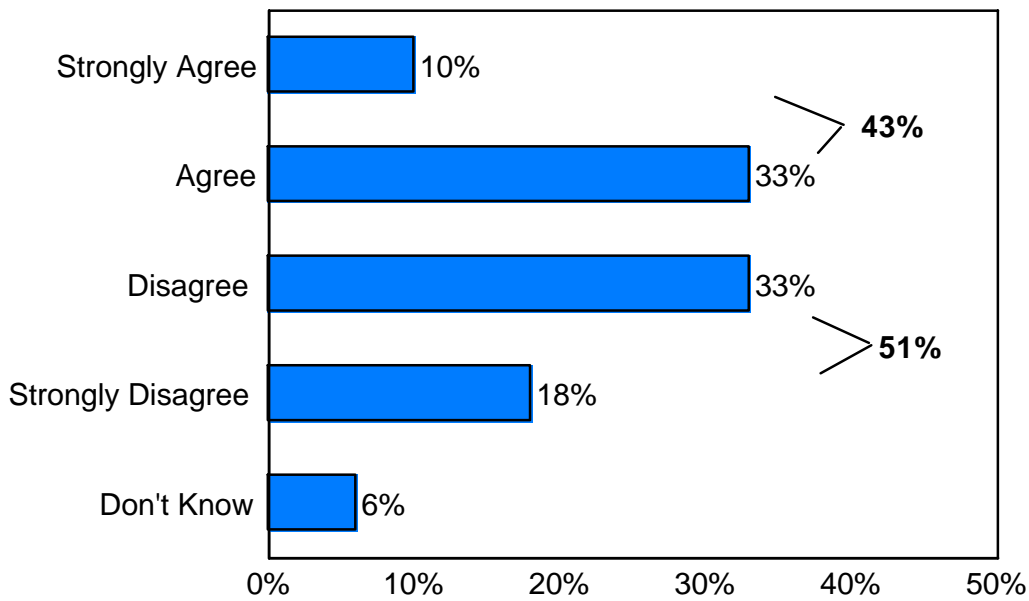
There was also some correlation with how they rated the quality of education in their district. That is, 63% of those who rated the overall quality of education positively also rated their school district's use of money positively. Those who rated the quality good were divided in their rating on school spending (44/49 positive/negative). But a large majority of those who rated quality fair or poor also rated their district's use of money fair or poor (75% and 81%).

Over half of voters in the Anti-Tax, Mixed (35/57), Anti-Property Tax (39/53) and Anti-Tax (12/81) groups also gave this a negative rating. Thus, we can see that how a district is perceived in terms of using its tax money now impacts voters' attitudes with regard to school funding.

Voters were also divided on whether they believe what their school board tells them about finances.

Later in the survey, just 43% of voters agreed that ‘voters in my community can believe what our school district tells them about school finances’ while half (51%) disagreed that their community believes what the district says about school finances.

Q24b AGREE/DISAGREE THAT VOTERS IN MY COMMUNITY BELIEVE WHAT OUR SCHOOL BOARD TELLS THEM ABOUT SCHOOL FINANCES



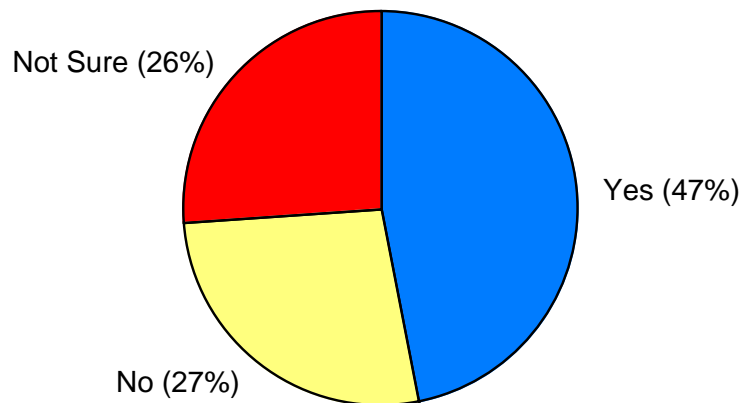
Most demographic subgroups either tended to disagree that voters believe what their school board says about school finances or were closely divided.

There was some correlation between this question and how respondents rated the job their school district is doing of spending money.

Furthermore, nearly half said there are some things their school district could definitely spend a lot more or a lot less money on.

Overall, 47% said there are people and things that their school district should definitely spend a lot more money on or a lot less money on than they are spending now. Just 27% said there is not and another fourth (26%) weren't sure.

Q5 ARE THERE PEOPLE OR THINGS THAT YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT SHOULD SPEND A LOT MORE MONEY OR A LOT LESS MONEY ON THAN THEY ARE SPENDING NOW



Between two-fifths and just over half of most groups think there are things their school district could definitely spend a lot more or less money on. Voters in the Anti-Tax group were most likely to say their district could spend differently (58%).

Also, over half who said their district is doing a fair (54%) or poor (78%) job of spending current tax money said there are things the district could spend more or less money on compared to only 26% of those who rated their district excellent on using its money and 36% of those who rated it good.

Some voters think their school district should spend more money on teachers, students and materials.

These respondents were then asked what sorts of people and things their district should spend more or less money on. Looking first at the list of things they said their district should spend more money on, we see that 20% said better teachers or better/competitive salaries for teachers.

Q6a WHAT SORTS OF PEOPLE AND THINGS SHOULD YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT SPEND A LOT MORE MONEY ON	
	All Respondents
	%
Better teachers, better salaries	20
Programs for gifted, special needs, at risk, low income students, intervention, tutoring programs, meet individual needs	14
Computer technology, equipment/supplies for classrooms	13
More, better, up-to-date books and materials, up-to-date library	13
Better education, basic education, better curriculum	12
More foreign language, music, arts, performing arts	10
Improve buildings already have, upkeep of buildings, additional classrooms, expand	8
Extracurricular activities and programs (sports, band, arts, field trips)	6
New schools, smaller classes	3
Transportation, more buses	2
Other	9
Don't think they need to spend more money	11
Don't know, nothing, can't think of anything	12

In addition, 14% said their district should spend more on certain student groups including gifted, special needs, low income, at risk, students who need tutoring, etc. while 12% said the schools should spend more just on basic education. Also, 13% each said the school should spend more money on computers and other equipment as well as up-to-date textbooks.

A tenth would like to see more money spent on class offerings such as foreign language, music or arts (10%), while 6% said their district should spend more on extracurricular activities. And 8% said their district should take care of their existing buildings while 3% said new schools are needed.

We also see that a fourth (23%) don't think their district should spend more money on anything (11%) or said they don't know (12%).

The administration, buildings and sports led the list of things their school district should spend less on.

As shown below, a fifth of those asked think their school district should spend a lot less money on administrative staff, including the superintendent (21%) and another 8% said their district should spend less on administrative and operational costs, including travel.

Q6b WHAT SORTS OF PEOPLE AND THINGS SHOULD YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT SPEND A LOT LESS MONEY ON	
	All Respondents
	%
Administrators, superintendents, assistants, non teaching personnel, upper management, salaries	21
New buildings too extravagant, unnecessary frills and furnishings, less on land	19
Sports and sports facilities	17
Administrative costs, travel, operation costs	8
Teachers' salaries, personnel and staff salaries, counselors	6
Extracurricular activities field trips, school functions, dances	5
Transportation, busing, private bus companies	2
Proficiency testing, less time teaching to tests	1
Other	5
None, nothing	11
Don't know, can't think of anything	21

Nearly a fifth also said their school district should spend a lot less money on new buildings which some thought were too extravagant (19%) as well as sports and sports facilities (17%).

In contrast to what they would spend more money on, only 6% thought their district should spend less on teachers' salaries and 5% think their district should spend less on extracurricular activities.

Here a third (32%) said there is nothing their district should spend less money on (11%) or they can't think of anything (21%).

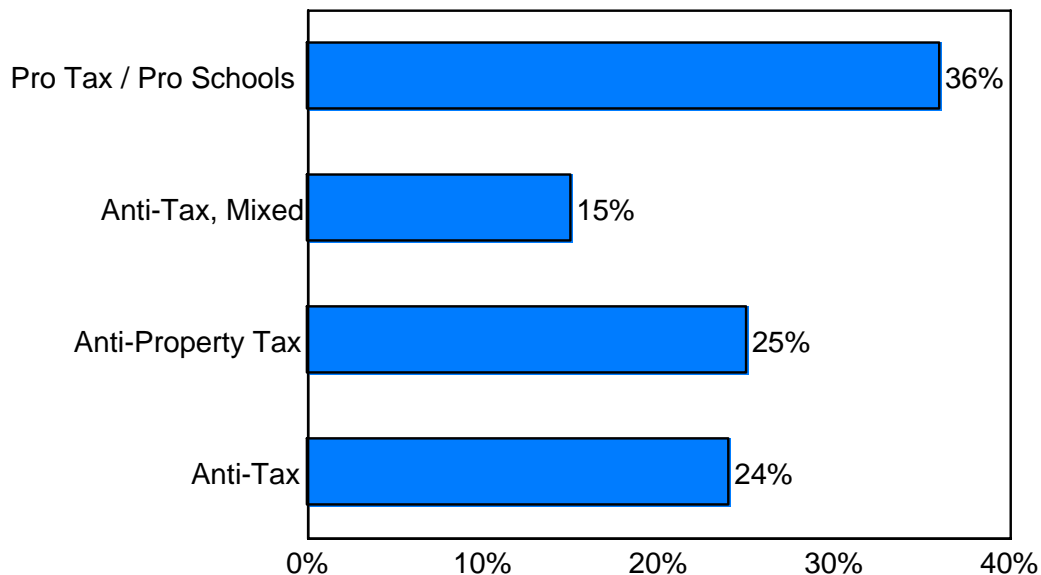
III. Taxes and Schools

Just over a third of voters are pro-tax and pro-schools.

Taking a closer look at the new variable, we see below that 36% of all voters in Butler County are Pro-Tax, Pro-Schools. They disagreed the time has come to vote against all tax increases (100%), favor using property taxes to fund the schools (99%), want excellent schools even if it costs more (97%), vote for most school levies (89%), and favor changing the state law (84%).

Demographically, they are more likely to be 35 to 49 (46%), have children in the public schools (56%) and graduated from college (48%). They are also slightly more likely to reside in the Middletown/ Monroe (40%) and Lakota (45%) school districts.

COMBINED TAX SUPPORT



Opposite this group, a fourth of the voters (24%) are consistently Anti-Tax. They agree the time has come to vote against all tax increases (100%), they oppose using property taxes for schools (99%), they only occasionally vote for school levies (84%), they prefer good schools with lower taxes (67%) and they oppose changing HB920 (71%).

Another fourth (25%) fall in the Anti-Property Tax group. They *disagreed* the time has come to vote against all tax increases (94%), but they are opposed to using property taxes for schools (99% opposed) and they tend to oppose changing HB920 (43% favor, 57% oppose).

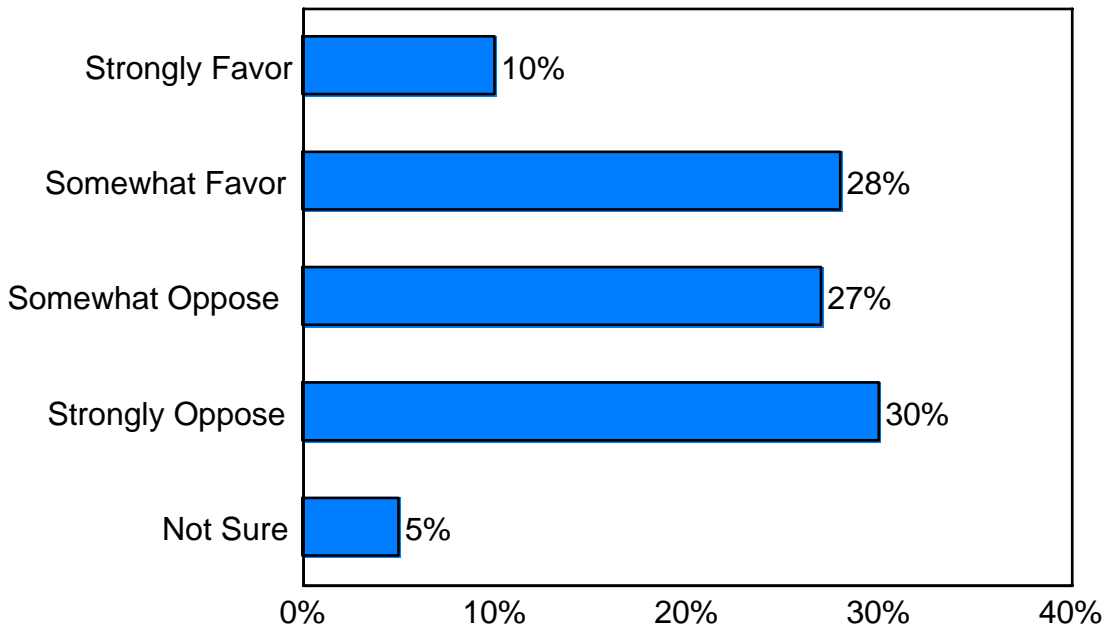
The remaining 15% of voters are anti-tax in general (79%) but are mixed on using property taxes for schools (64% favor). However, they tend to want excellent schools even if it means larger tax increases (68%) and lean slightly in favor of changing HB920 (53/47).

Combined, the Anti-Tax and Anti-Property Tax voters tend to be older (54% among those 50 and over), residents for more than 20 years (54%), don't have school-aged children (54%) and live in HD 53 (57%).

Overall, a majority of Butler County voters are opposed to using property tax increases to pay for local schools.

Voters were told that right now almost all of the local tax money school districts in Butler County get comes from property tax levies. When asked their opinion of using property tax increases as a way to provide local tax money to the schools, 38% **avored** it, while 57% **opposed** it. We also see below that only 10% **strongly favored** using property taxes to help pay for the schools while 30% **strongly opposed** using property taxes. Thus, there is more intensity in the opposition to using property taxes to fund the schools than there is in support of this approach.

Q8 FAVOR OR OPPOSE USING PROPERTY TAX INCREASES AS A WAY TO PROVIDE LOCAL TAX MONEY TO THE SCHOOLS



With the exception of public school parents (52%), 35 to 49 year olds (50%) and those who support most school levies (56%), a majority of all other groups opposed using property taxes to provide local tax support for the schools.

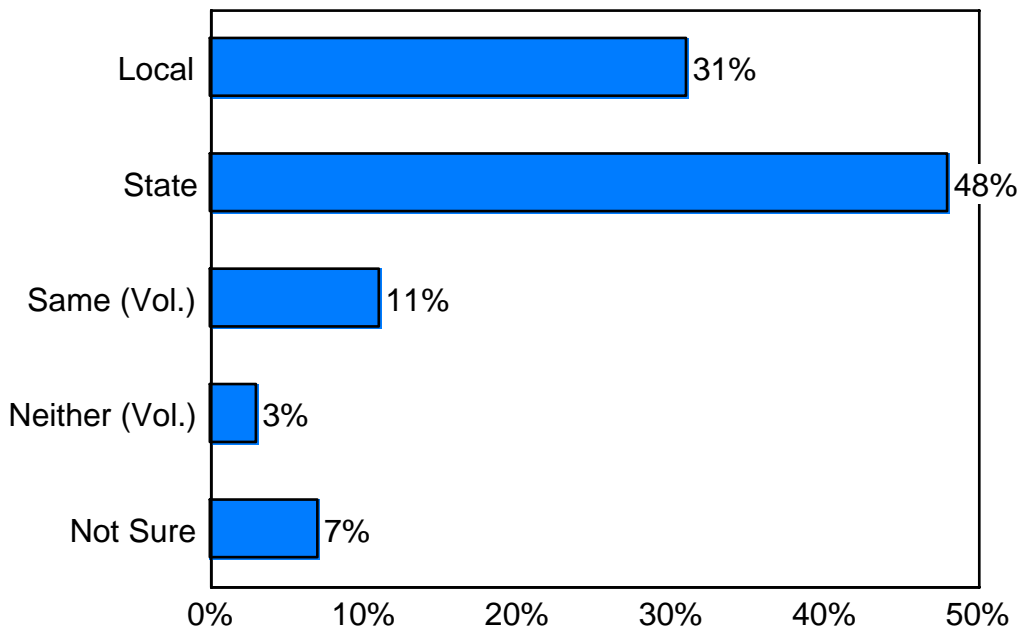
A majority of those in the Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax (75%) and Anti-Tax, Mixed (71%) groups favored using property taxes to fund the schools, but those in the Anti-Property Tax and Anti-Tax groups overwhelmingly opposed using property taxes (94% and 97%).

Also, there was a strong correlation between this question and how they rated their school district on its use of money. That is, 52% of those who rated their school district positively on their use of money favored using property tax increases to fund the schools (52%), but support for using property taxes dropped to 30% among those who rated their district fair and only 17% of those who rated their district poor favored using property taxes to fund schools. This indicates that voter perception of their district's use of money is a big driver in their support for additional property tax levies. Repeated communication aimed at convincing voters that their money is being used wisely and that taxes do not keep up with inflation or normal cost of living expenses may help increase support for local levies.

More voters initially say it is better if the state funds local school districts.

When asked if it is better to fund the schools through locally voted tax levies or through state approved taxes, nearly half (48%) said using state approved taxes is better, while 31% think using locally funded levies is better. The remaining fifth said they're the same (11%), neither is better (3%) or not sure (7%).

Q9 IS IT BETTER TO FUND SCHOOL DISTRICTS THROUGH LOCALLY VOTED LEVIES OR STATE APPROVED TAXES

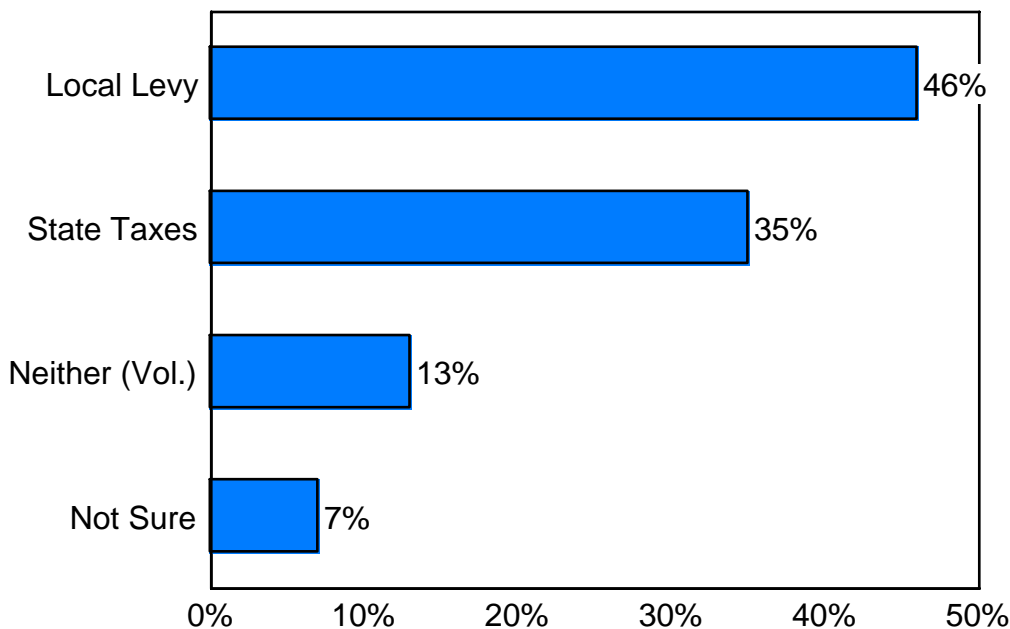


Nearly all subgroups tended to think using state taxes to fund the schools is better. One notable exception was voters in the Middletown and Monroe districts who tended to favored using local levies (43% local, 32% state). Those who are Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax were evenly divided (40/41; local/state) as were those who support some school levies (40/42).

But if they had to pay \$100 more for the schools, more would prefer to pay it locally.

In the follow-up question, 46% indicated that if they had to pay \$100 a more in school taxes, they would prefer to pay that money through a local levy. Just over a third (35%) would prefer to pay it through an increase in their state taxes. Of the remainder, 13% did not want either option and 7% weren't sure.

Q10 IF YOU HAD TO PAY A HUNDRED DOLLARS MORE IN SCHOOL TAXES WOULD YOU PREFER TO PAY THROUGH A LOCAL LEVY OR AN INCREASE IN STATE TAXES



If they had to pay \$100 more in school taxes, most groups would prefer to pay it locally. This was particularly true of the Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax (58%) and Anti-Tax Mixed (52%) groups.

The only groups in which more said they would prefer to pay more in state taxes were those who are Anti-Tax (26/36; local/state), 18 to 34 year olds (42/48) and those who only occasionally vote for school levies (34/38). Democrats were evenly divided (41/41).

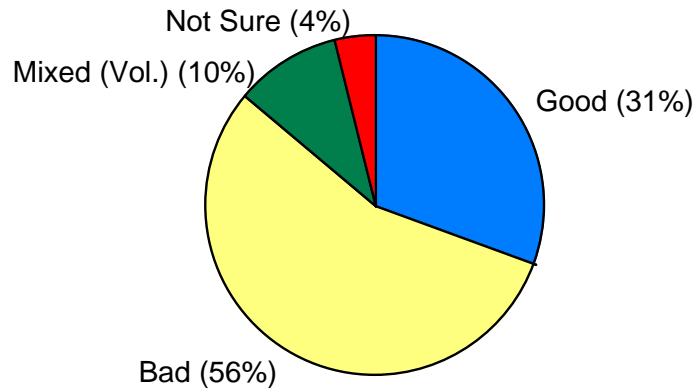
A fourth of those who initially said state taxes would be a better way to fund the schools switched to preferring a local levy if they had to pay \$100 more for the schools (25%). Also, over half of those who initially said the two options were the same changed and indicated that if they had to pay \$100 more, they would prefer to pay it through a local school levy (57%).

The change in opinion if they had to pay \$100 more suggests that some voters don't realize that regardless of how schools are funded, it will likely require more taxpayer money either through local levies or state approved funding.

A majority also think it is bad that schools have to ask voters for a tax increase so often.

Overall, 56% said it is a **bad thing** that school districts have to ask the voters for a tax increase every three to five years. Just a third (31%) think it is a **good thing**.

Q18 GOOD OR BAD THAT SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVE TO ASK VOTERS FOR A TAX INCREASE EVERY THREE TO FIVE YEARS

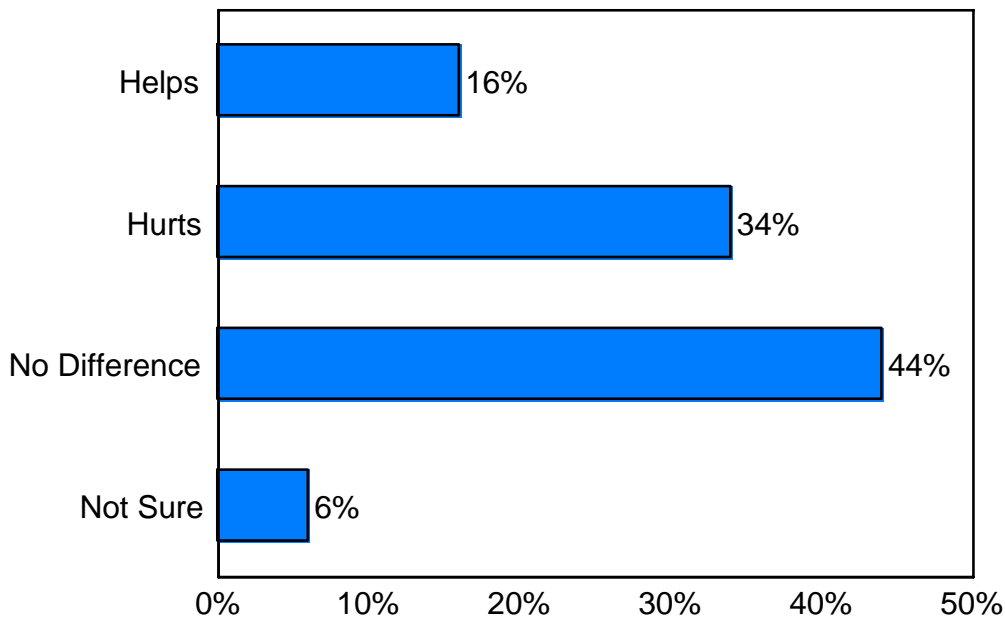


Interestingly, looking at the tax support variable, those who are Anti-Tax were most likely to say having to ask for a tax increase every 3 to 5 years is a bad thing (69%) while those who are Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax were least likely to say it's a bad thing (48%).

But they don't necessarily think it is bad for the quality of education.

Just a third (34%) said having to ask for more school operating money every three to five years **hurts** the quality of education. There were 16% who said it **helps**, but a plurality (44%) said having to ask for more tax money so often **doesn't make any difference** to the quality of education.

Q19 DO YOU THINK ASKING VOTERS FOR MORE SCHOOL OPERATING MONEY EVERY THREE TO FIVE YEARS HELPS OR HURTS THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION



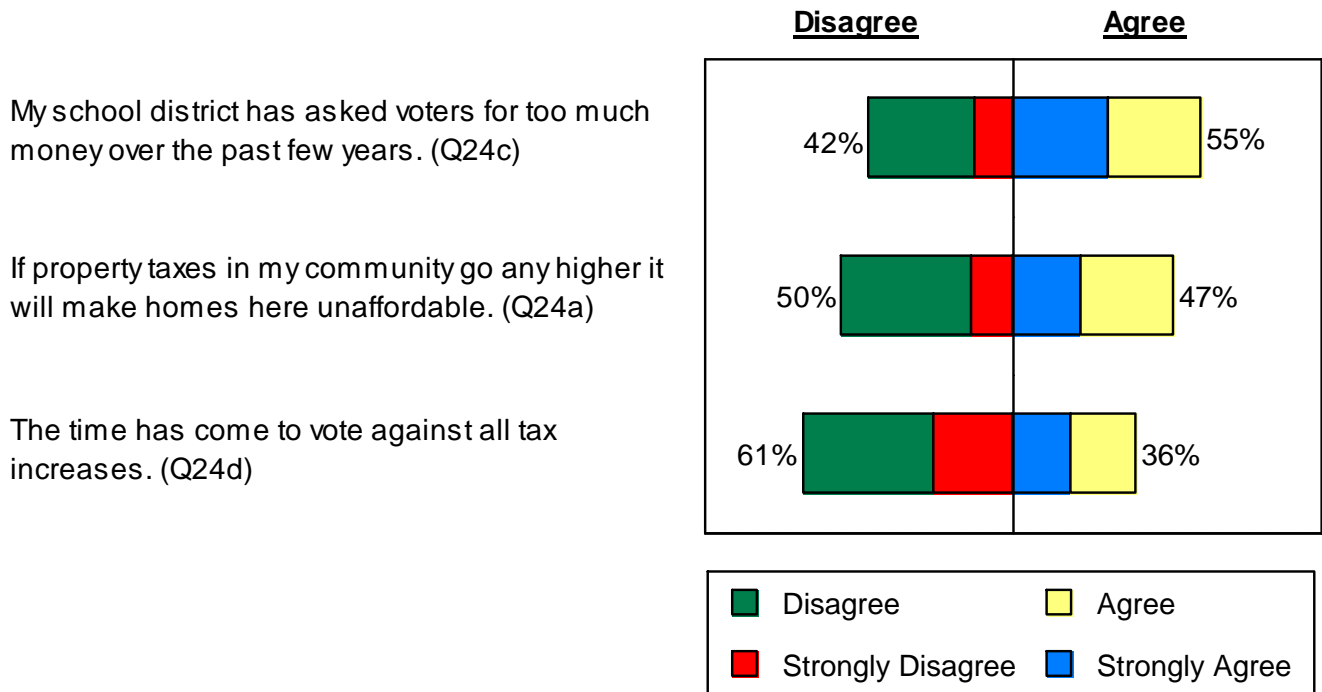
Most groups said having to ask taxpayers for more money every few years doesn't make any difference to the quality of education.

Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents who said it is bad that schools have to ask voters for more money every three to five years overwhelming said having to do so hurts the quality of education (81%). But two-thirds of those who think having to be on the ballot so often is a good idea also think this helps the quality of education (65%).

A majority think their district has asked for too much money in recent years, but most are not anti-tax.

As shown below, 55% agreed that their school district has asked for too much money over the past few years. But a significant minority (42%) disagreed with this statement.

AGREE/DISAGREE STATEMENTS



There was also some feeling that if property taxes in their community go any higher it will make homes there unaffordable as 47% agreed with this. Just half (50%) disagreed with this.

Over a third (36%) agreed that the time has come to vote against all tax increases while well over half (61%) disagreed with this. Thus, a majority of voters in Butler County are not anti-tax, but anti-tax sentiment in Ohio is higher today than it was two or three years ago.

A large majority of public school parents (67%), those who support most school levies (69%) and the Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax group (75%) **disagreed** that their school district has asked for too much money in the past few years. These groups were also more likely to disagree that increased property taxes will makes homes in their community unaffordable. Over half of younger voters (57%), newer residents (56%), and those in HD54 (56%) also do not think this is true.

Nearly all of those in the Anti-Tax group agreed the time has come to vote against all tax increases (97%) as did 77% of those in the Anti-Tax, Mixed group and 66% of those who only occasionally vote for school levies. Other groups more likely to agree were seniors (42%), those with a high school education (43%) and voters in HD53 (45%).

IV. Modifying HB920

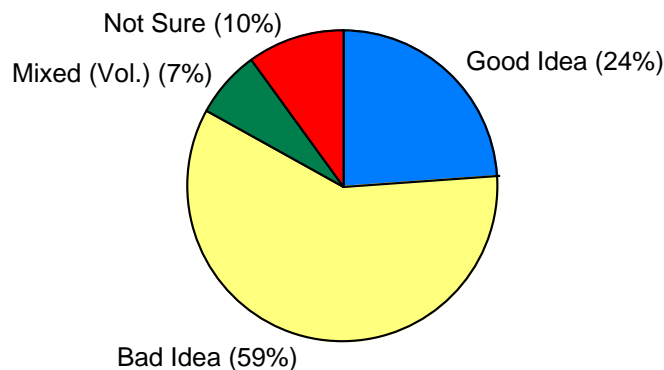
Less than half are aware of the effects of HB920, but over half think it is a bad idea.

Only 37% of voters in Butler County are aware that there is state law that freezes the amount of money that school districts get from each year from locally voted tax levies. A large majority (62%) are not aware of this state law which is HB920. Voters who are Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax and those who vote for most school levies were among those most likely to be aware of this law (47% each).

Q11 AWARE OF STATE LAW THAT FREEZES THE AMOUNT OF MONEY SCHOOL DISTRICTS GET EACH YEAR FROM LOCALLY VOTED PROPERTY TAXES	
	All Respondents
Yes	37%
No	62%
Not Sure	1%

But a majority (59%) think it is a bad idea that because of this law, the total amount of money each school district gets from property tax levies stays about the same from year-to-year regardless of inflation. Just a fourth (24%) said it is a good idea that the amount of money for school districts stays the same. The rest were mixed (7%) or unsure (10%).

Q12 IS IT A GOOD IDEA OR A BAD IDEA THAT THE AMOUNT OF MONEY EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT GETS FROM ITS PROPERTY TAX LEVIES STAYS ABOUT THE SAME FROM YEAR-TO-YEAR REGARDLESS OF INFLATION

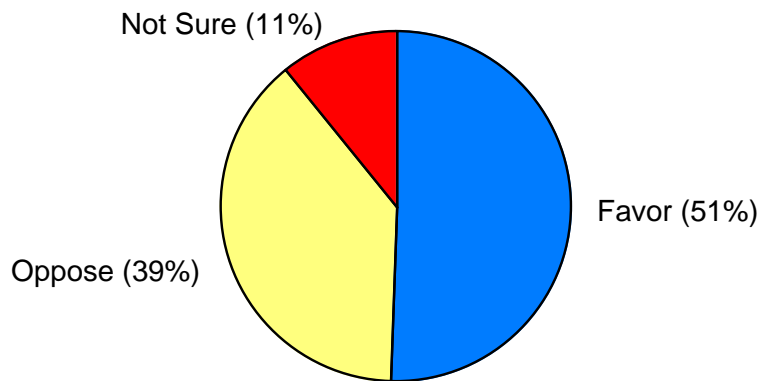


Every group was more likely to say this is a bad idea, including the Anti-Tax and Anti-Tax, Mixed groups (44% and 49%) as well as seniors (44%). Those aware of HB920 were more likely to say it is a bad idea (63%) than those who weren't aware of the state law (57%).

Half favor changing the law so property taxes increase each year with inflation.

We explained that every year a school district's costs for things like teachers' salaries, textbooks, and heat for buildings go up, but because the state law does not allow taxes to increase with inflation the schools don't get any more money from their levies. Just half (51%) favored changing the law to allow the property taxes they pay the schools to increase each year based on inflation. About two-fifths (39%) opposed this change while 11% weren't sure.

Q13 WOULD YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE CHANGING THE STATE LAW TO ALLOW THE AMOUNT OF PROPERTY TAXES PAID TO THE SCHOOLS TO INCREASE EACH YEAR BASED ON INFLATION



Most groups tended to favor changing the law to allow property taxes to increase with inflation, but a few groups were opposed or closely divided. They included:

- The Anti-Property Tax (38/51; favor/oppose) and Anti-Tax (26/62) groups
- Voters who occasionally support tax levies (32/56)
- Voters in HD53 (42/49)
- Those with some college or technical school (43/44)
- Seniors (42/40)
- Males (45/44) and
- Those who don't have school-aged children (46/43).

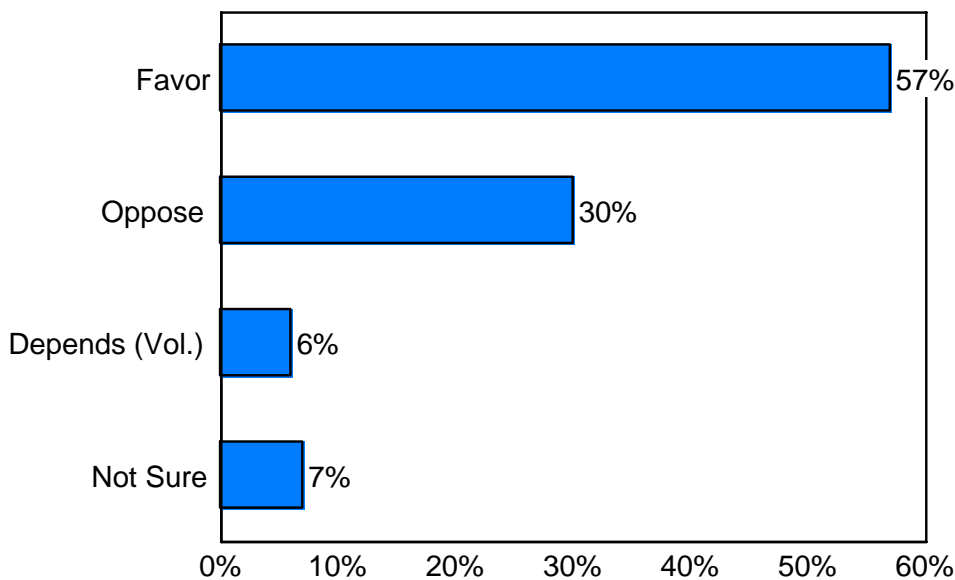
Here too those aware of the state law were much more supportive of changing it (62%) than those who aren't aware of the law (52%).

There is also a strong relationship between their opinion of changing HB920 and how they rated their school district's use of tax money. A large majority of voters who rated their district excellent (76%) or good (59%) on its use of money favor of changing the law compared to less than half of those who rated their district fair (49%) or poor (26%) on its use of current tax money. Thus some voters may think the schools have enough money already, the schools waste money or they could do more with what they have. Or they may not be aware that school funding does not increase with inflation which is one reason why they must be on the ballot every few years.

Support for change went up if a cap was set on the amount taxes could increase.

Over half (57%) said they would favor changing the state law if a cap was set so property taxes could only rise by a limited amount each year. About a third of the voters (30%) were still opposed to changing the law even if the increase was capped while 6% volunteered that it depends and 7% weren't sure.

Q14 WOULD YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE CHANGING THE STATE LAW TO ALLOW THE AMOUNT OF PROPERTY TAXES PAID TO THE SCHOOLS TO INCREASE BASED ON INFLATION IF THERE WAS A CAP ON THE INCREASE



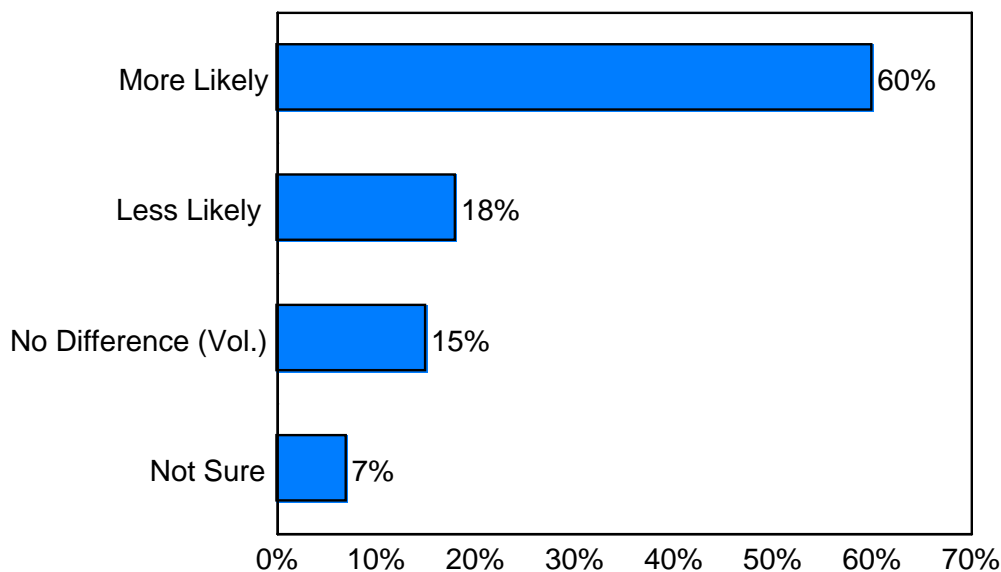
Half of those who are Anti-Tax still opposed changing the law to allow property taxes to increase with inflation (51%), but 56% of those who are Anti-Property Tax favored the change if a cap was set on the increase. With the exception of the Anti-Tax group along with seniors (47/37) and voters in HD53 (49/38), over half of all other subgroups favored changing the law if a cap on the increase was set.

Most of those initially in favor of changing the state law also supported making the change if a cap was set on the amount of the increase (79%). And a third of those initially opposed to changing the law like the idea if the amount of the increase was capped (33%).

Voters were even more supportive if exceptions are made to low income seniors.

Three-fifths (60%) were **more likely** to favor changing the state law if elderly adults who receive the Homestead Exemption did not have to pay the increase based on inflation. Only 18% said this would make them **less likely** to support changing the law while 15% said it makes no difference to them and 7% weren't sure.

Q15 LIKELIHOOD OF FAVORING ALLOWING SCHOOL PROPERTY TAXES TO INCREASE WITH INFLATION IF ELDERLY ADULTS WHO RECEIVED THE HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION DID NOT HAVE TO PAY THE INCREASE



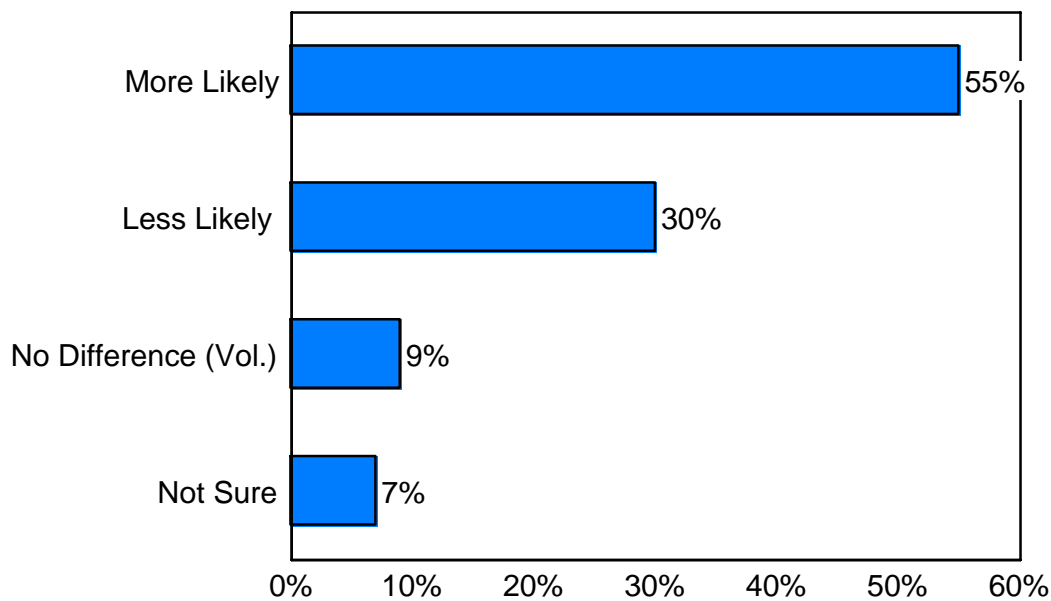
Over half of every group was more likely to support changing HB920 if elderly adults who qualify for the Homestead Exemption did not have to pay the increase. This included those who are Anti-Tax (53% more likely) as well as seniors (57%) and voters in HD53 (55%).

Here too, three-fourths of those who initially supported changing the state law also favored it if seniors who qualified for the Homestead Exemption did not have to pay the increase (75%), while 45% of the respondents initially opposed to the change would support this change if low income elderly residents were exempt from the increase.

Over half were also more likely to support changing the law knowing that school districts would not have to put levies on the ballot as often.

Here 55% said they would be **more likely** to support allowing the amount of property taxes to increase each year based on inflation if they knew that school district would not have to put new levies on the ballot as often. But 30% said this would make them **less likely** to support making this change.

Q16 LIKELIHOOD OF FAVORING ALLOWING SCHOOL PROPERTY TAXES TO INCREASE WITH INFLATION KNOWING SCHOOL DISTRICTS WOULD NOT HAVE TO PUT NEW TAX LEVIES ON THE BALLOT VERY OFTEN



This argument tended to have a negative impact on the Anti-Tax group (28/49; more likely/less likely) and seniors (38/36).

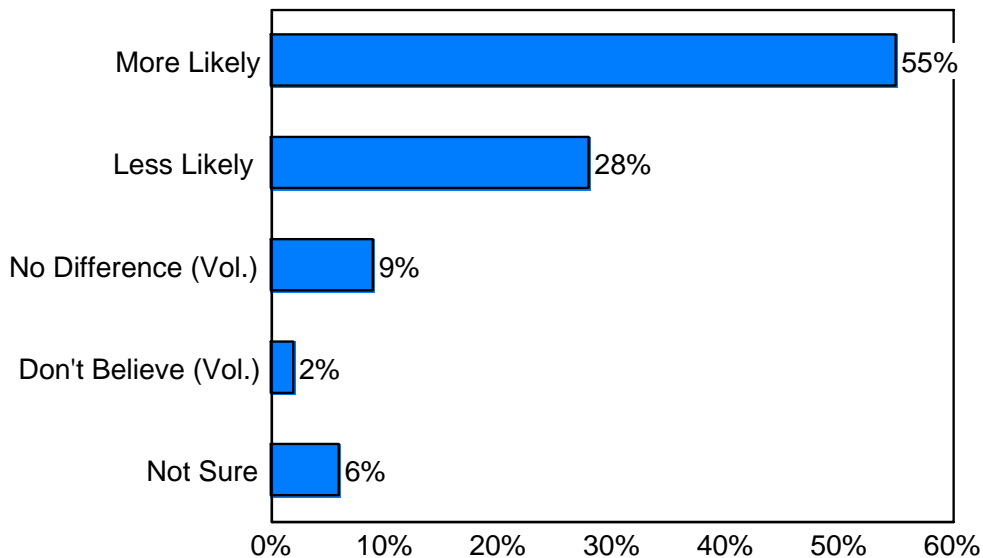
This argument is not as strong as setting a cap or exempting qualified senior citizens. This is probably because people do not think having to place a levy on the ballot every few years hurts the quality of education, or they may think the schools have enough money already.

Once again, three-fourths of those initially in favor of changing the state law would be more likely to support the change knowing school districts would not have to be on the ballot very often (76%). A third of those initially opposed were in favor of changing the law knowing schools would not need levies very often (33%).

Half were also more apt to support change knowing that they would have been paying about the same amount of taxes.

Here too 55% said they would be **more likely** to favor changing the law knowing that if property taxes had been allowed to increase with inflation over the last 20 years most people would be paying about the same amount of school taxes without so many levies on the ballot. About a third (28%) said this would make them **less likely** to support changing the law while 9% said it doesn't make any difference to them.

Q17 LIKELIHOOD OF FAVORING ALLOWING SCHOOL PROPERTY TAXES TO INCREASE WITH INFLATION KNOWING IF THEY HAD INCREASED WITH INFLATION OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS MOST PEOPLE WOULD BE PAYING ABOUT THE SAME AMOUNT WITHOUT SO MANY LEVIES ON THE BALLOT



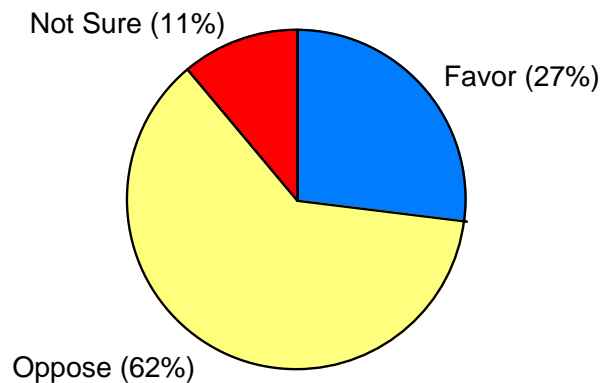
This too tended to have a negative impact on the Ant-Tax group (32/43; more likely/less likely) and was not as strong among seniors (42/38) and voters in HD53 (48/31). This may be because they think the schools already have enough or even too much money.

And here too we find that three-fourths of those who initially favored changing the state law were more supportive knowing they would be paying about the same amount of money if this law was not in place (77%) while a third of those initially opposed (32%) were positively impacted by this argument.

But when told they would have no control to stop the increase, a majority opposed changing the law.

Three-out-of-five voters (62%) would oppose changing the law when told that if the law is changed their property taxes could go up even if they had no additional income and they couldn't vote to stop it. Just over a fourth (27%) favored changing the law knowing this.

Q20 FAVOR OR OPPOSE CHANGING THE STATE LAW SO PROPERTY TAXES COULD INCREASE WITH INFLATION EVEN IF YOU HAD NO ADDITIONAL INCOME AND YOU COULDN'T VOTE TO STOP IT



Well over half of every group opposed changing the law knowing that they could not stop the increase when they have no additional income. This included public school parents (38/55; favor/oppose). The only exceptions were the Pro-Schools, Pro-Tax group (50/35 favor/oppose) and those who vote for most school levies (43/44).

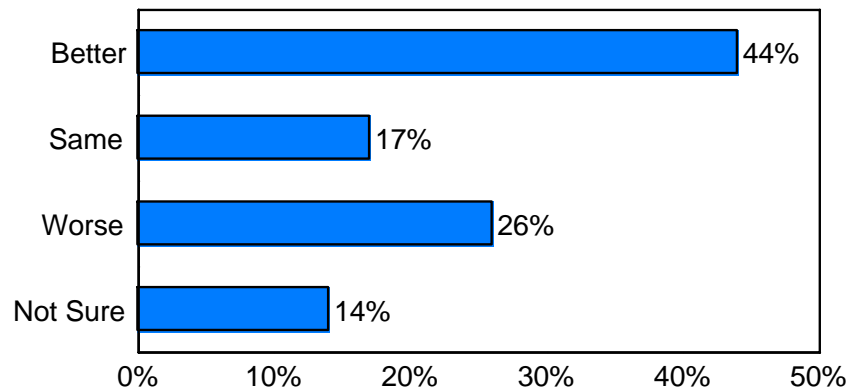
Also, just 42% of those initially in favor of changing the state law still favored it knowing they couldn't vote to stop the increase even if their income had not increased. Just 11% of those initially opposed favored changing the law knowing they couldn't vote to stop the increase even when they have no additional income.

V. Support for Possible Alternatives

Voters think a school income tax would be better until they find out most residents would pay more.

Initially, a plurality (44%) said an income tax would be a **better** way to provide local tax money to the schools than a property tax while 17% think it would be the **same**. Just 26% said an income tax would be a **worse** option than a property tax.

Q21 WOULD AN INCOME TAX BE A BETTER, SAME OR WORSE WAY TO PROVIDE LOCAL TAX MONEY TO THE SCHOOLS THAN A PROPERTY TAX

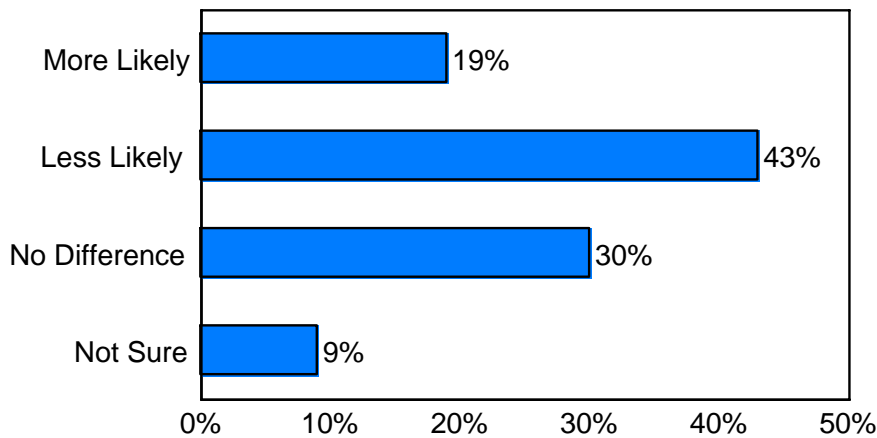


Most subgroups were initially more likely to say an income tax would be better than a property tax than said it would be worse.

A plurality were less likely to favor a school income tax when told businesses wouldn't pay it and it would cost residents more.

More than two-fifths (43%) were **less likely** to favor an income tax when told that businesses don't pay income taxes and that means that to raise the same amount of money for the schools, residents would have to pay more with an income tax than with a property tax. A fifth (19%) were **more likely** to favor an income tax for the schools knowing this while 30% said it makes no difference to them.

Q22 LIKELIHOOD OF FAVORING AN INCOME TAX FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS KNOWING BUSINESSES DON'T PAY INCOME TAXES SO RESIDENTS WOULD HAVE TO PAY MORE WITH AN INCOME TAX



All groups tended to be less likely to favor an income tax knowing they would have to pay more with this option than for a property tax because businesses don't pay the income tax. This included seniors (25/34; more likely/less likely).

A fourth of those who think paying an income tax would be a better way to fund the schools were less likely to favor this approach knowing it would cost most voters more (26%), but a third still said this would make them more likely to favor an income tax (32%).

Combined, half of the voters either said they would be less likely to favor an income tax knowing it might cost them more or said it would be a worse option initially.

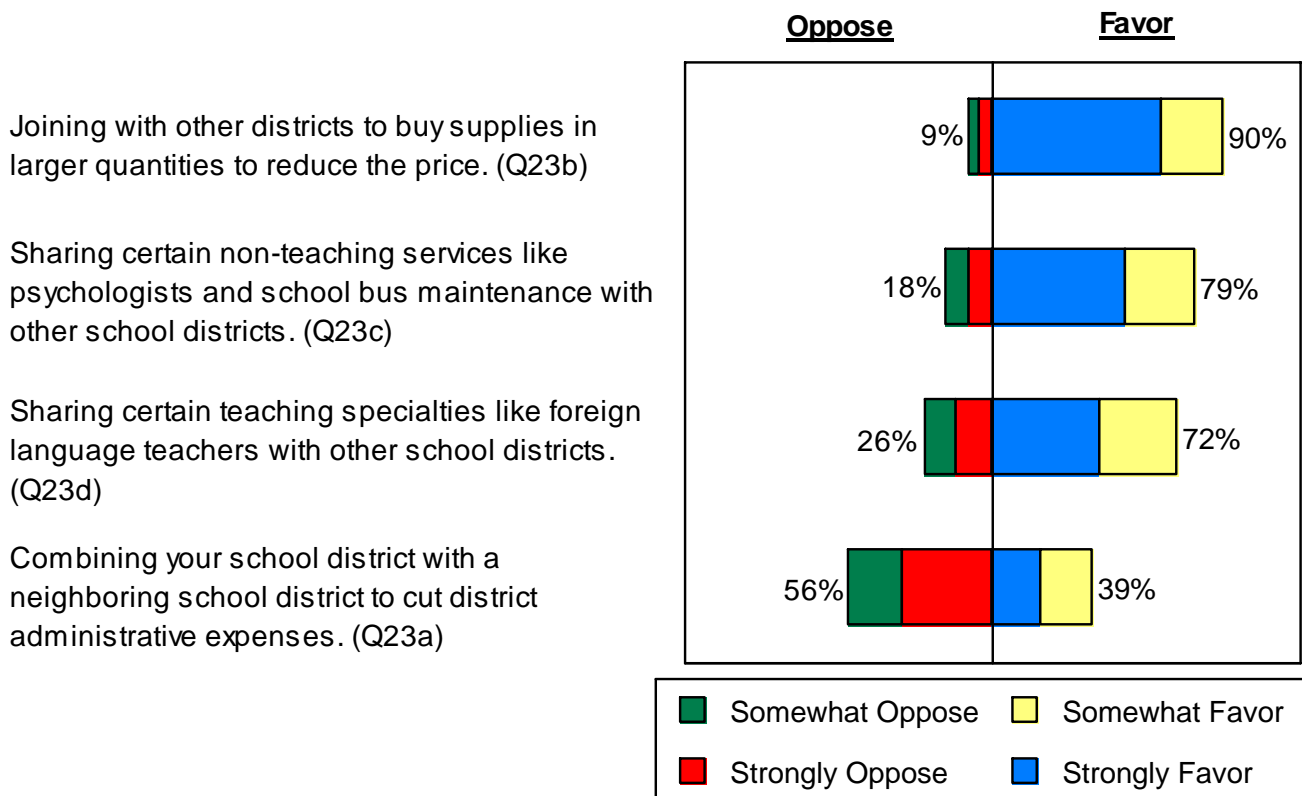
There was support for sharing resources among school districts.

Butler County voters were most likely to favor (90%) local school districts joining together to buy supplies in larger quantities to reduce the price (66% strongly and 24% somewhat favor).

About three-fourths also favored the districts sharing certain non-teaching services like psychologists and school bus maintenance (79%) and sharing certain teaching specialties like foreign language teachers (72%).

But most are not willing to combine their school district with a neighboring district to cut administrative expenses. Only 39% favored this suggestion while over half were opposed to it (56%). And twice as many **strongly opposed** merging school districts (35%) than **strongly favored** it (19%).

SUPPORT FOR WAYS THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS COULD CUT COSTS



Every group favored a group buying practice for area school districts with over half strongly in favor of this idea. Well over half also favored the districts sharing some non-teaching services and some teaching specialties. Opposition to sharing teaching specialties was a little higher among public school parents (30%), but two-thirds of them were still in favor (67%). The same was true of respondents in the Lakota School District (65/32; favor/oppose).

Those who are Anti-Tax were the only group where a majority favored combining their school district with another (57/36). Support was also slightly higher among seniors (45/45), voters with a high school education (48/44) and those who don't have school-aged children (44/50). Over half of voters in HD 53 (40/54), HD 54 (42/53) and Middletown/Monroe (43/51) opposed this idea, but opposition was much higher in the Lakota district (30/64).