



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES



Key findings from a survey of 400 residents in the Eagle County Schools District conducted March 23-27, 2014.

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METHODOLOGY



- Public Opinion Strategies is pleased to present the key findings of a telephone survey in the Eagle County Schools District.
- The survey was completed March 23-27, 2014 among 400 community residents reached on cell and landline phones. The sample was distributed proportionally throughout the district and is representative of the year-round population.
- The sample has an overall margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$; margin of error for sub-groups will be higher and varies with the specific population.
- Lori Weigel was the principal researcher on this project. Jenn Nunes was the project director with Brian Fraser providing analytical assistance.



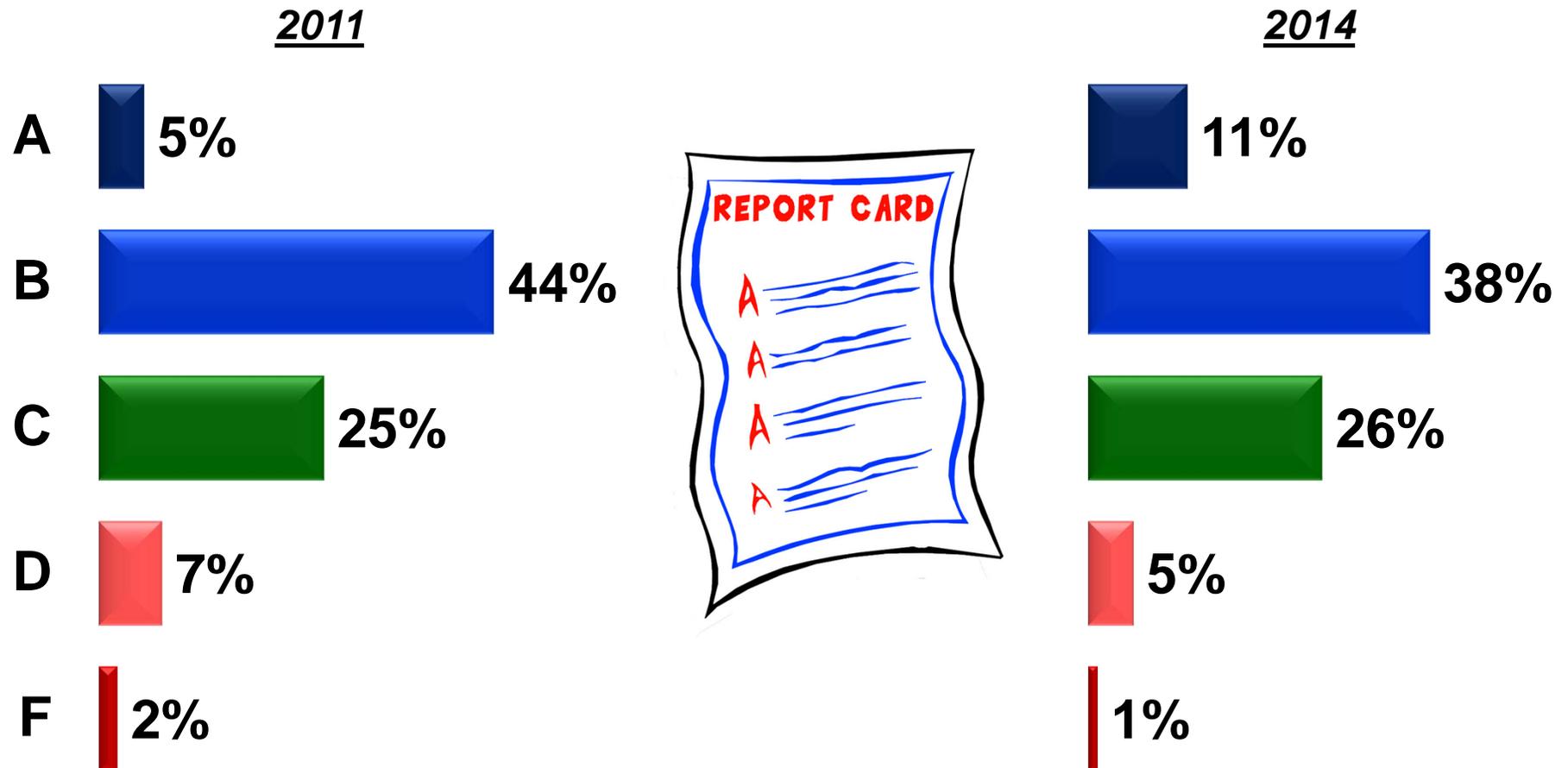
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KEY FINDINGS

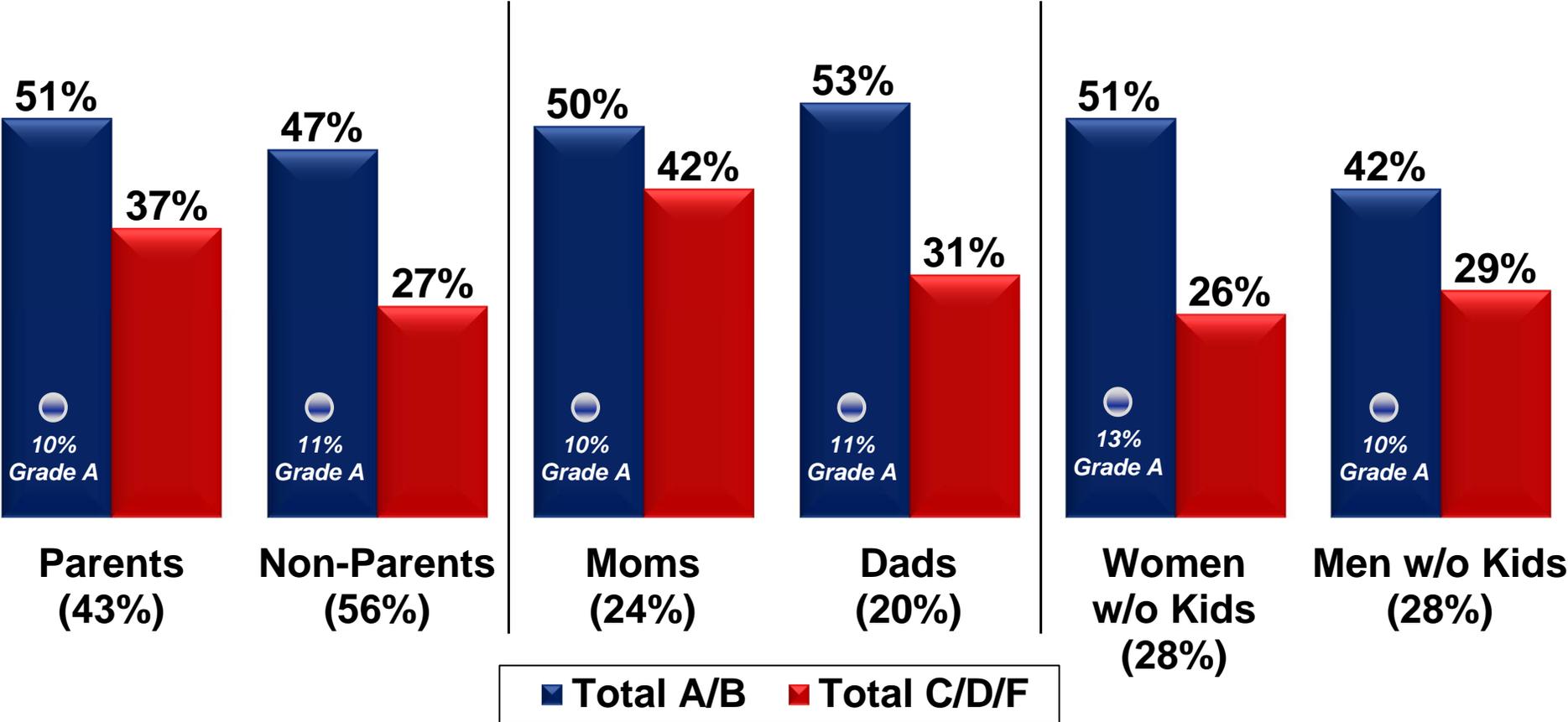
A near majority give the school district an "A" or B" grade, with a boost in "A" grades.

Eagle County Schools Grade Breakdown Trend



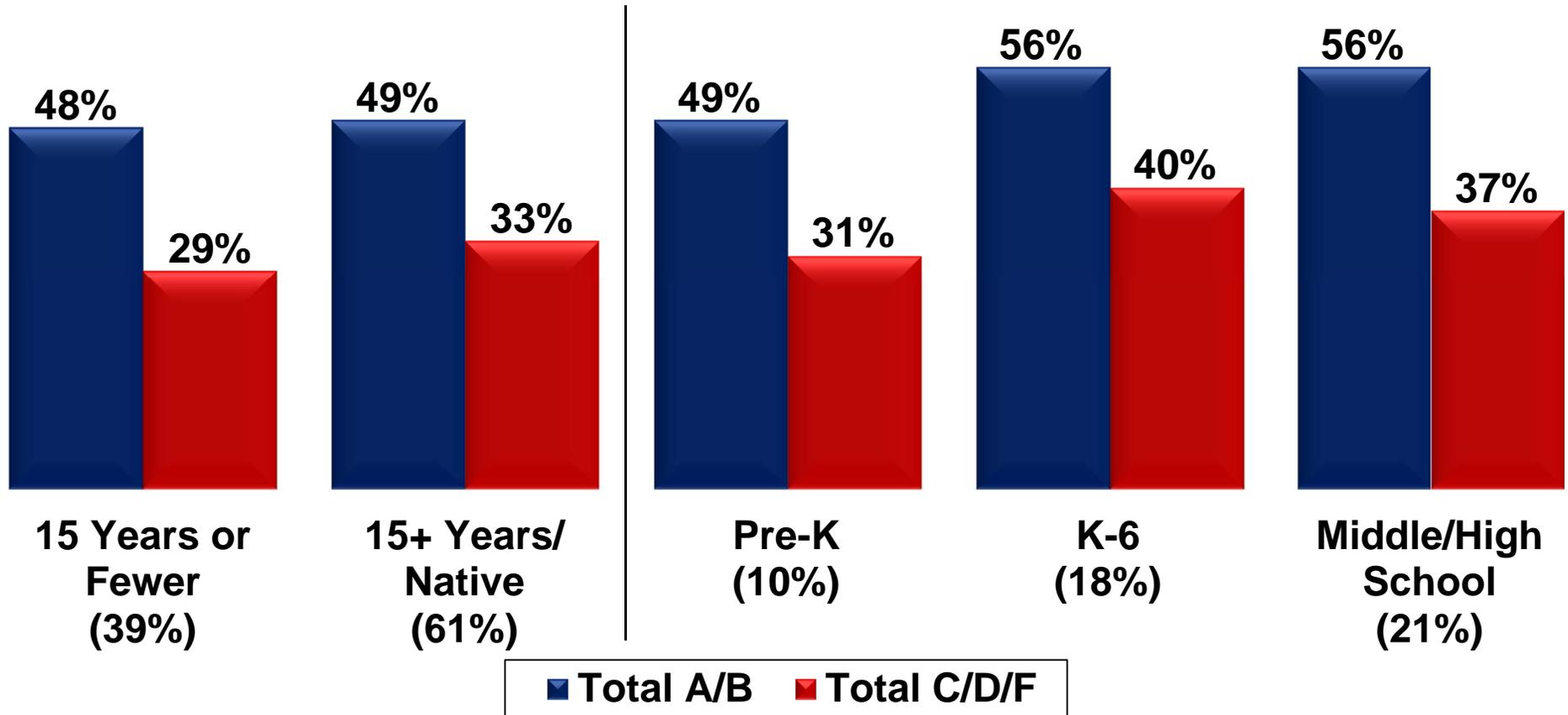
The view of Eagle County Schools is generally positive across key sub-groups.

Eagle County Schools Grade By Parent Status

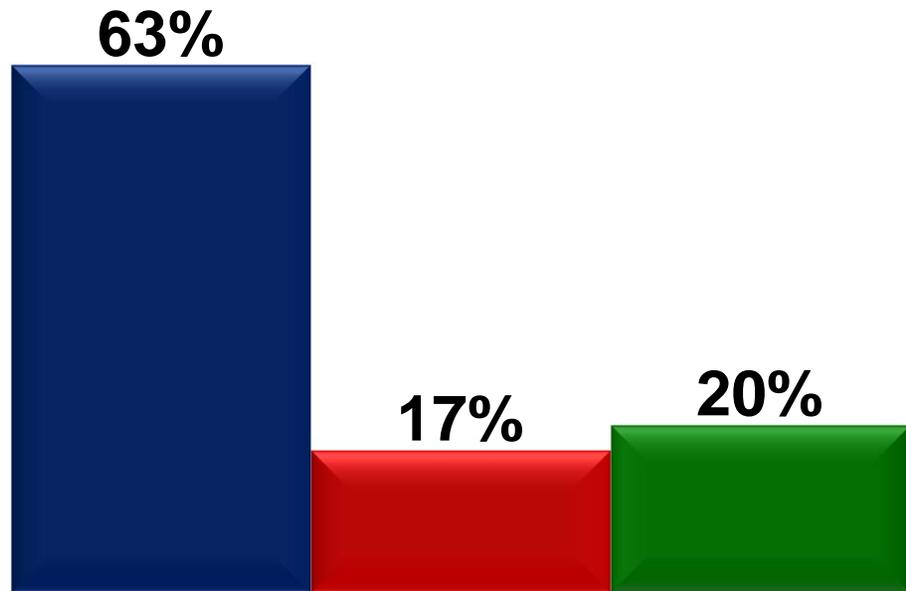


Those with children of school age give the district better marks, while length of residency has little relationship to views.

Eagle County Schools Grade By Residency and Children Ages



Almost two-thirds of residents believe the schools are headed in the right direction.



<i>Right Direction (63%)</i>	
North/West Parents	71%
Dads	70%
Children in K-6	70%
Moderate/Liberal Independent	70%
Children in Middle/High School	69%
All Parents	68%
Newer Residents	68%

■ Right Direction
 ■ Wrong Direction
 ■ Don't Know

Would you say things in the Eagle County Schools are generally going in the right direction or wrong direction?

*What are the two or three reasons you think that things are generally going in the **RIGHT** direction?*

Right Direction Themes

New superintendent

Good teachers

Testing performance and graduation rates

New school construction

School choice

Class sizes

Better standards

"I really like the new superintendent, Doctor Glass. He has a great open communication policy and is much more approachable. I think that we are going to get more funding that we need, more funding is available. I think that the state standards are a good thing to start to settle into."

- Independent Female

"Student test scores are doing well. The quality of education. I have personal experience that my kids are doing well in school. The quality of the teachers is pretty high. The leadership in the upper administration."

- Republican Male

"There's a new Superintendent. He seems to be very proactive with reaching out to the community. That's my primary reason."

- Republican Female

"I think quality teachers, small class sizes, and the dual language program."

- Democratic Female

*What are the two or three reasons you think that things are generally going in the **WRONG** direction?*

Wrong Direction Themes

Wasteful spending

Changing curriculum

School funding

Teaching to tests

Students that speak English
as a second language

Drug use

"It's hard to narrow it down. I would say teaching for testing. Dual teaching, Spanish/English teaching. It kind of takes half their learning away. I don't know how to explain it, but the new ways of not teaching old school. The foundations are not being taught like they should be."

- Republican Female

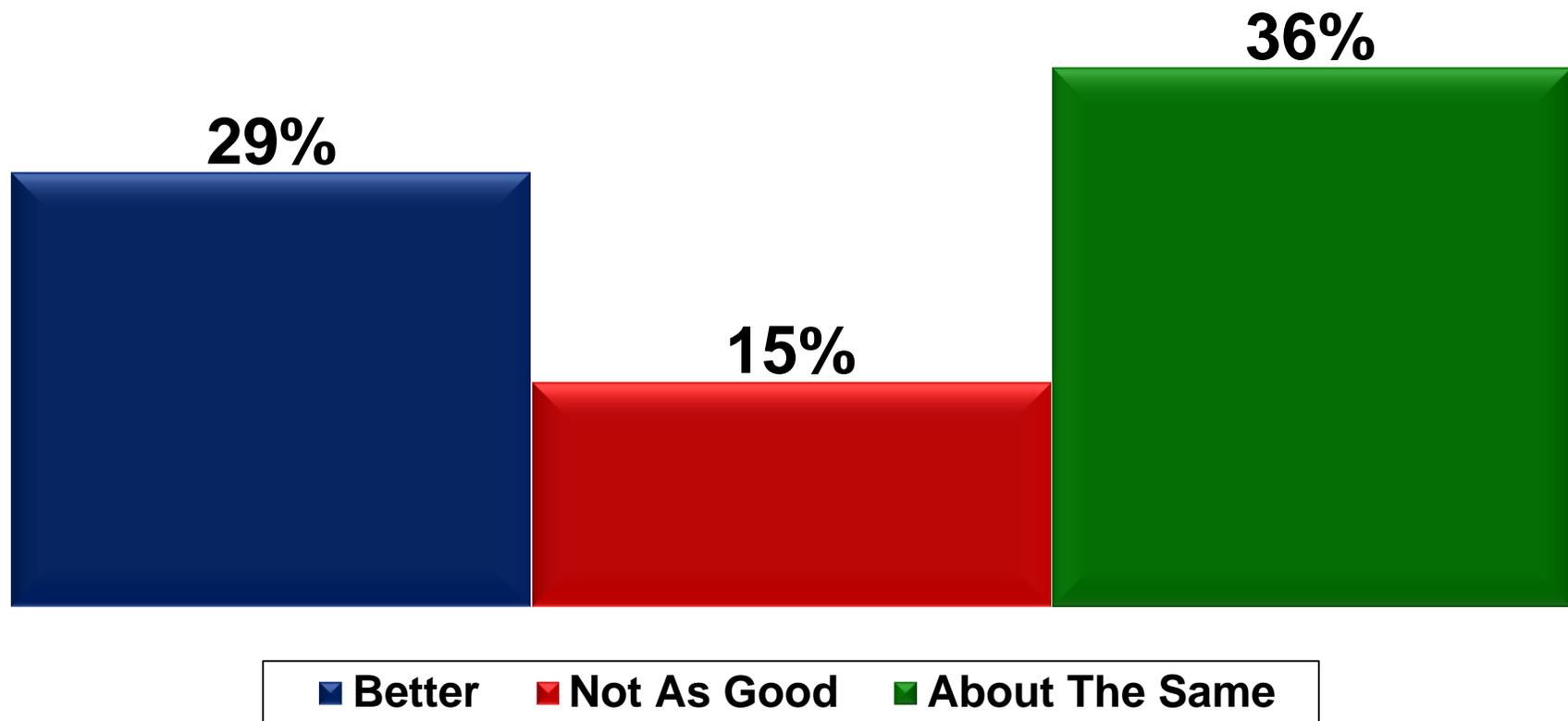
"I think they're making the classrooms bigger, and making the faculty smaller. I think the upper management is over paid, and the people actually doing all the work, the teachers, are being under paid."

- Independent Male

"The administration whines about fees instead of saying here's what we have and what are we going to do to fix it? Salaries and benefits to administration and teachers. All I know is that they're getting paid huge amounts of money, but it's all gone. I'm guessing that all the money is going to people that pay themselves, there's nothing left for students. Administration is there for themselves, not for students."

- Democratic Female

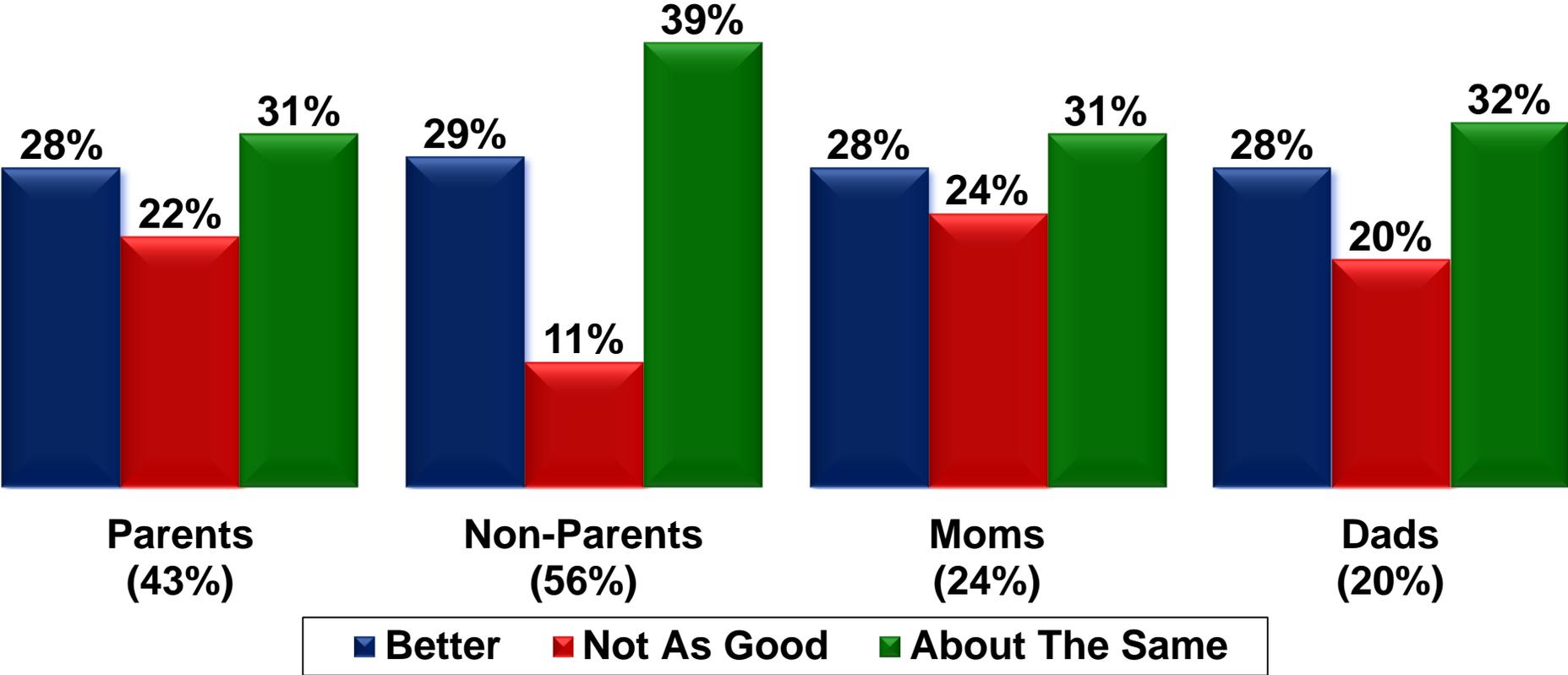
Two-thirds of residents think that their schools are on par or above the rest of the state.



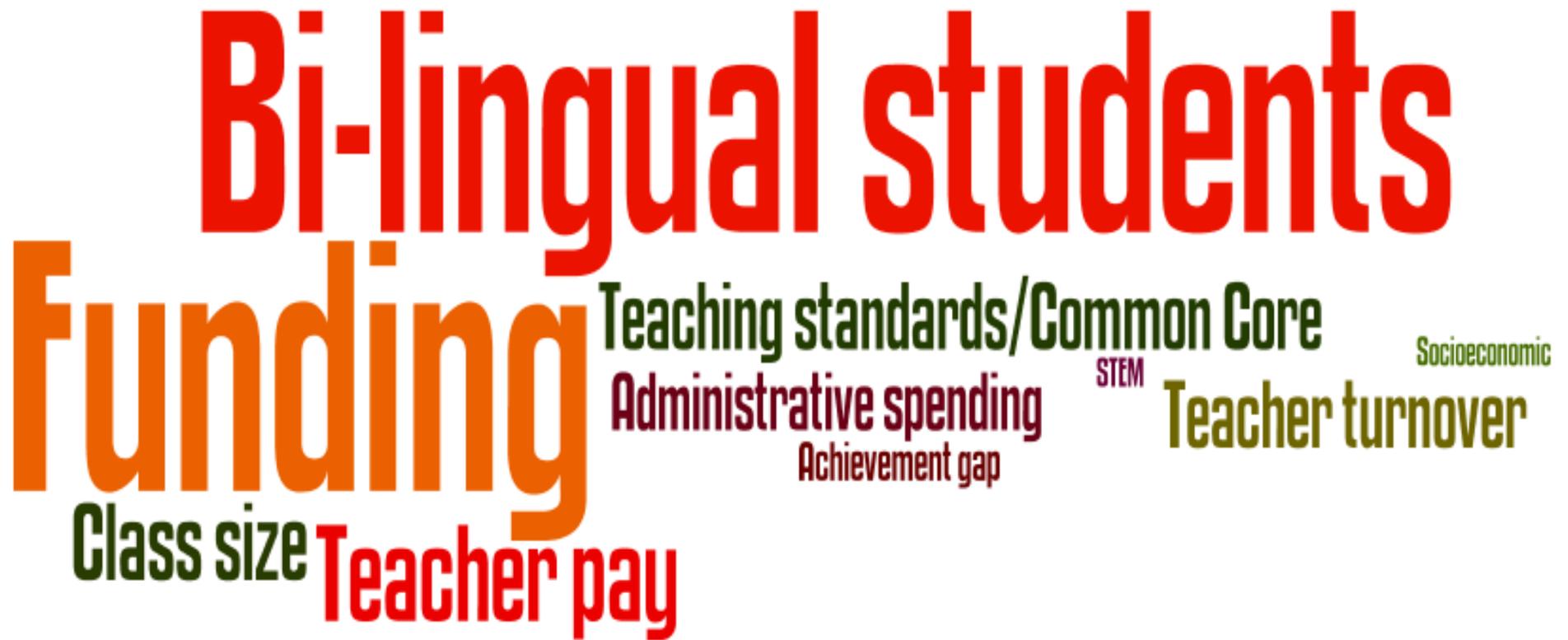
Do you think Eagle County Schools are better, about the same, or not as good as public schools in other parts of the state?

The results are quite similar irrespective of parent status.

ECS Comparison By Parent Status



Residents believe that funding is the top problem. Following closely is the perception that non-English speaking students are affecting classroom learning.



What is the number one problem facing Eagle County Schools today?

Top Problems Facing Eagle County Schools Examples

"Illegal immigrants and over population. It's a problem because it takes away from teachers spending time on kids that are English speaking. That is the major problem they have to develop two different curriculums for different kids. There is not enough focus on English speaking students."

- Democratic Male

"Lack of funding. In the last five years we have taken so many decreases in salaries we had to let some really good teachers go. We've seen the class sizes go from an average of about twenty-two kids per class up to thirty and thirty-three kids per class."

- Republican Female

"Not enough money. My youngest is in High school and they can't afford to buy text books for his classes. So he has no text books. I think sometimes in the lower grades at some of the schools the classes are too high in numbers. Too many students per classroom in the lower grades. I would say they don't have enough money to hire highly competent math teachers. I don't think there is enough money to provide adequate special education services."

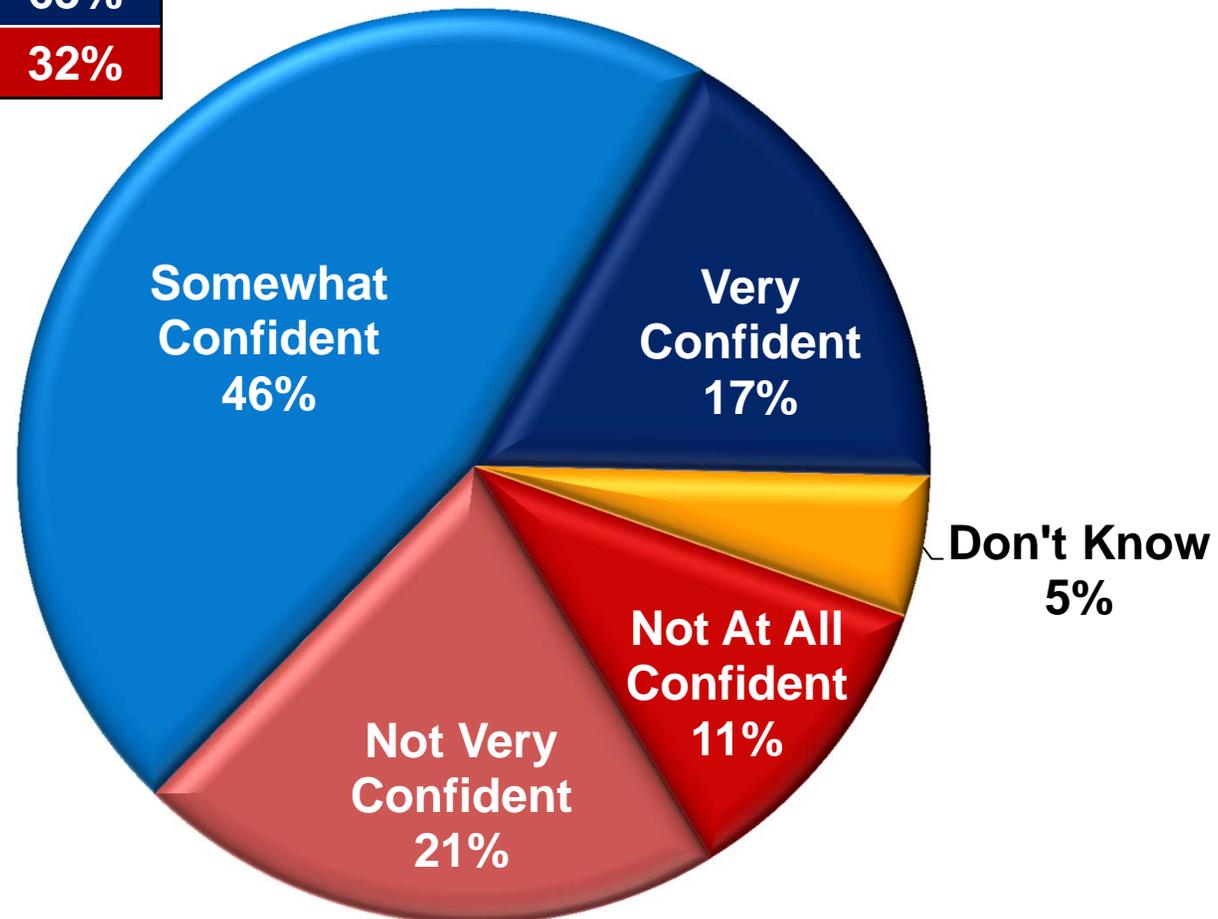
- Independent Female

"One problem that I've heard from the teachers I know is that we do have so many integrated students that come in and don't speak English fluently and those kids come in and hold other students back."

- Independent Female

Two-thirds say that Eagle County Schools spends taxpayer money wisely.

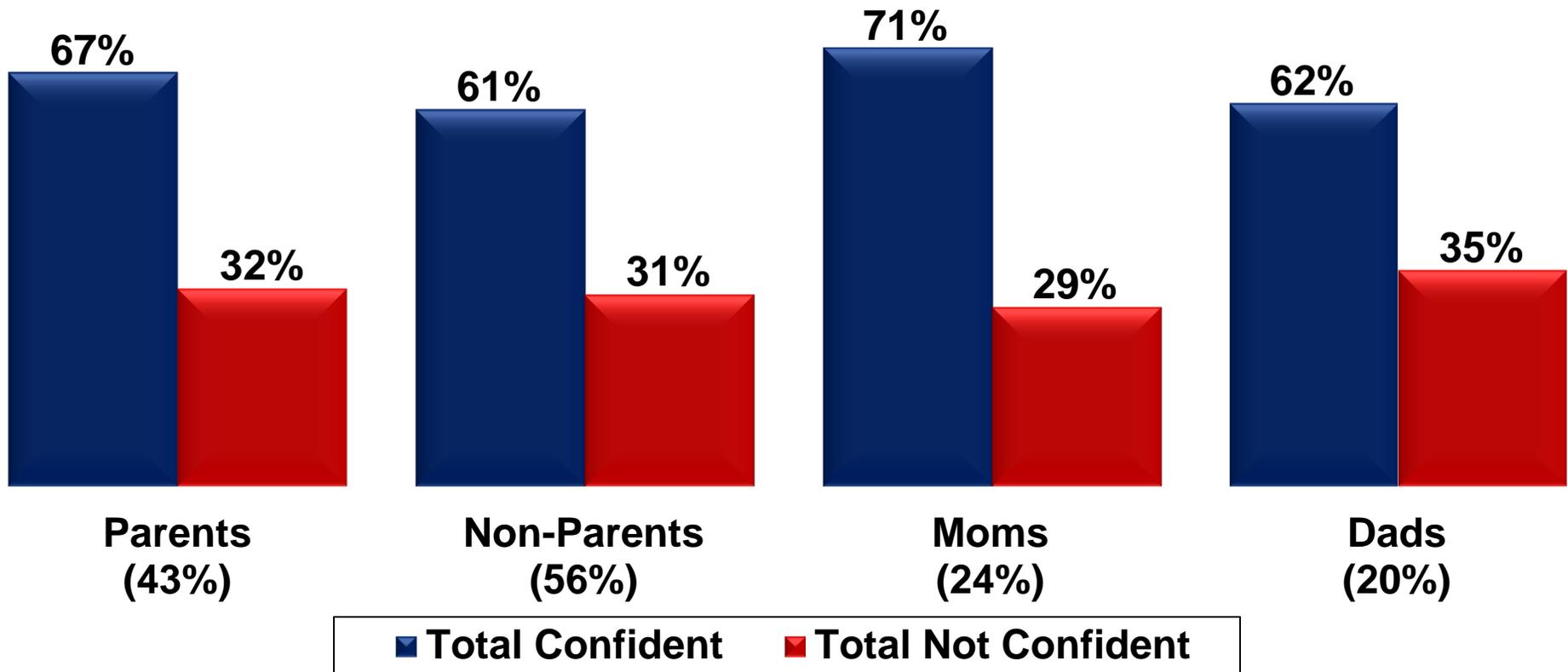
Total Confident	63%
Total Not Confident	32%



*How confident would you say you are that the Eagle County Schools handles taxpayer money wisely?
Would you say you are...*

Parents, especially mothers, have the most confidence in the district's spending.

Confidence That ECS Handles Taxpayer Money Wisely By Parent Status





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PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT



WHAT WE DID

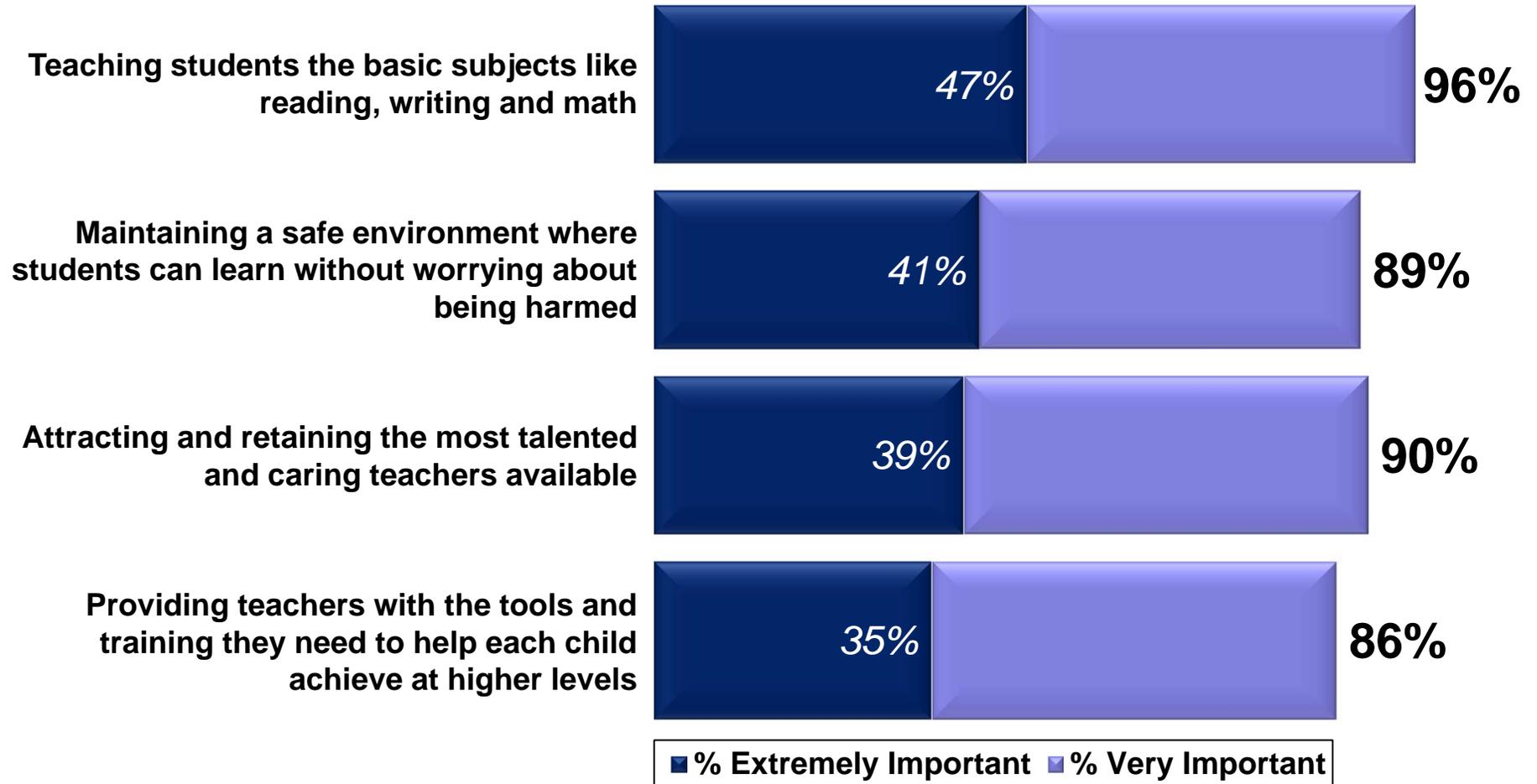


In order to determine where residents' priorities lie, we asked respondents the importance of funding 16 school related areas.

“The district is continually making decisions about how to focus its time, energy and resources to best ensure a quality education for all students. In doing so, some people say that certain things may be more important than others, so I’d like to read you some different goals which the district has set. Keeping in mind that it is difficult for everything to be equally important, please tell me how important each one of these is to you personally. Is it extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not very important to meet that goal?”

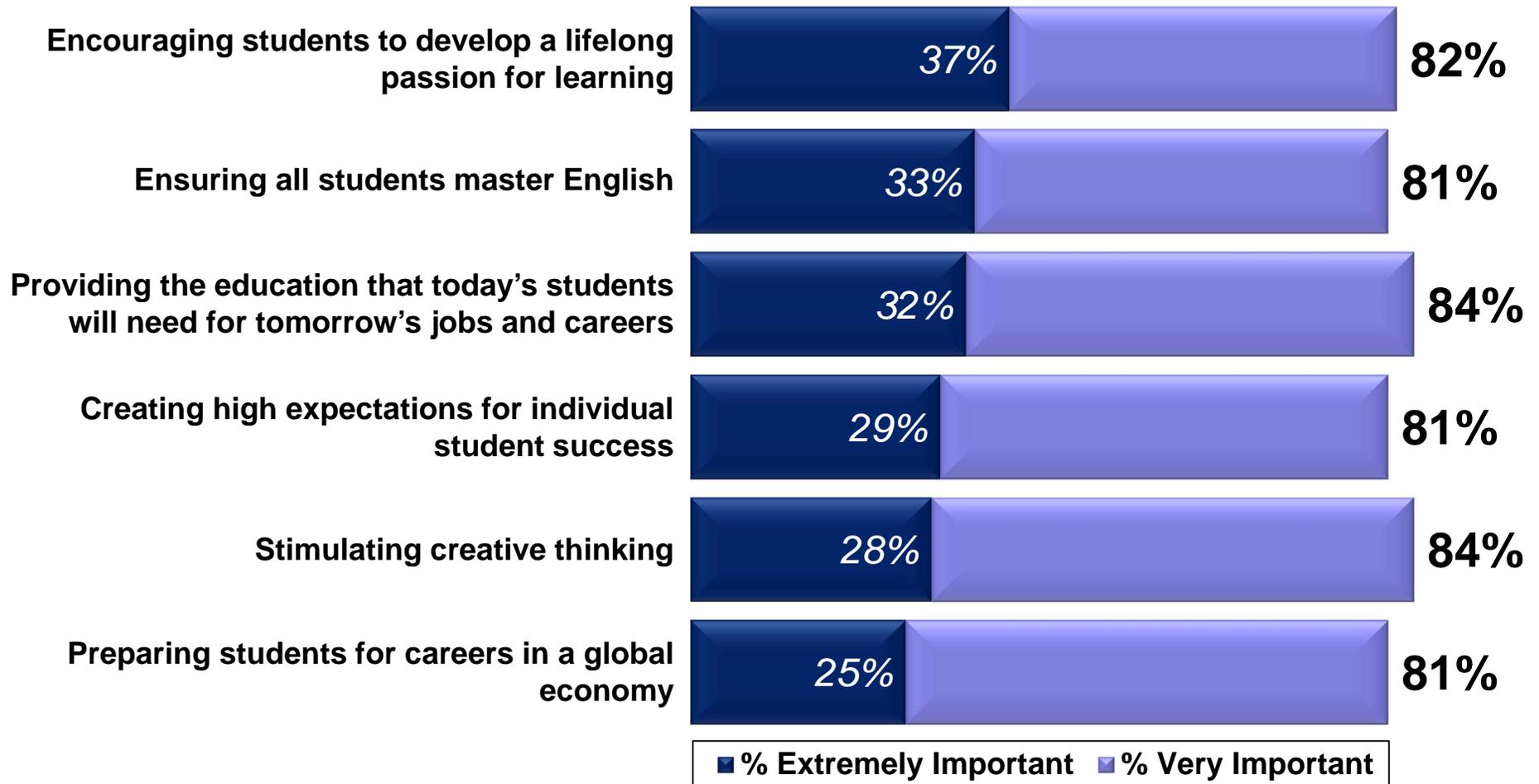
Top Priorities

Funding Priorities Ranked By % Extremely Important



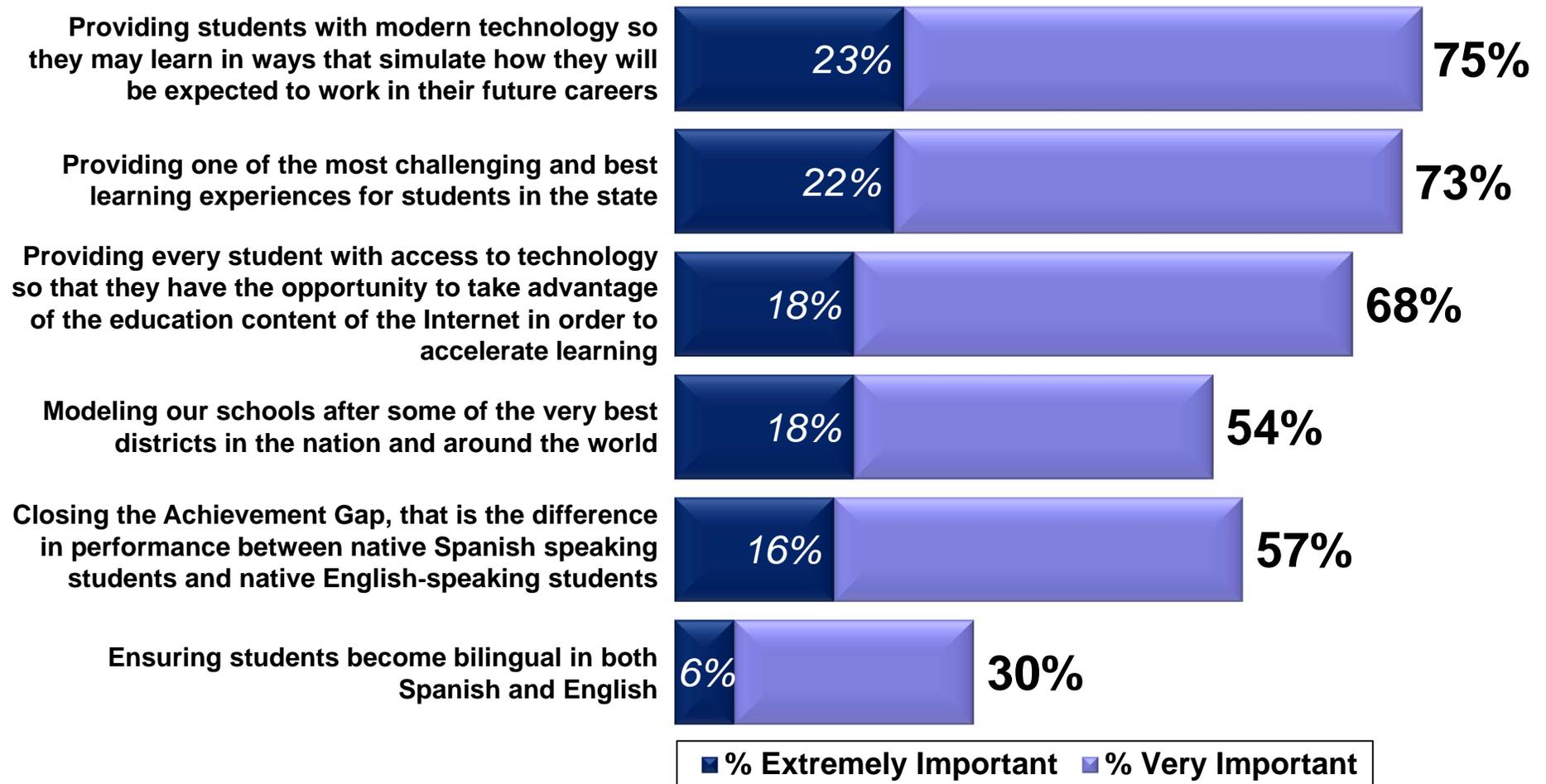
2nd Tier Priorities

Funding Priorities Ranked By % Extremely Important



Lower Priorities

Funding Priorities Ranked By % Extremely Important



Top Funding Priorities By Parent Status

% Extremely Important

<u>Parents</u>	<u>Non-Parents</u>	<u>Dads</u>	<u>Moms</u>
Teaching students the basic subjects like reading, writing and math 47%	Teaching students the basic subjects like reading, writing and math 47%	Attracting/retaining the most talented/caring teachers 55%	Maintaining a safe environment where students can learn without worrying about being harmed 42%
Attracting/retaining the most talented/caring teachers 47%	Encouraging students to develop a lifelong passion for learning 39%	Teaching students the basic subjects like reading, writing and math 54%	Teaching students the basic subjects like reading, writing and math 39%
Maintaining a safe environment where students can learn without worrying about being harmed 46%	Maintaining a safe environment where students can learn without worrying about being harmed 37%	Maintaining a safe environment where students can learn without worrying about being harmed 49%	Attracting/retaining the most talented/caring teachers 37%
Creating high expectations for individual student Success 40%	Ensuring all students master English 34%	Providing teachers with the tools and training they need 48%	Stimulating creative thinking 36%



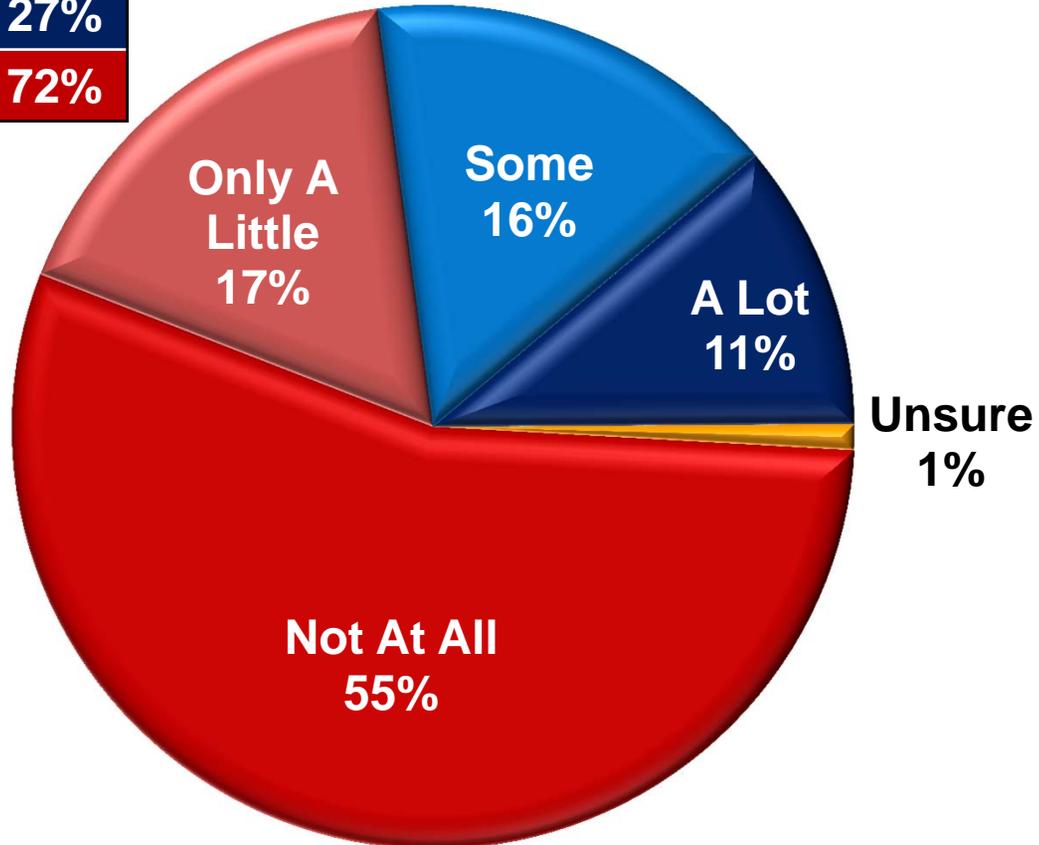
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UNPARALLELED ALTITUDE

One-in-four residents say they have heard something about the Altitude Report.

A Lot/Some	27%
Not Much/Nothing	72%



Eagle County Schools has published its vision for the future of the school district in the Altitude Report, officially titled, "Unparalleled Altitude: A globally inspired vision for Eagle County Schools." It has also been presented at community meetings and printed in the Vail Daily. How much have you seen, read or heard about the Altitude Report?

... and just one-in-six say that they have read it.

YES

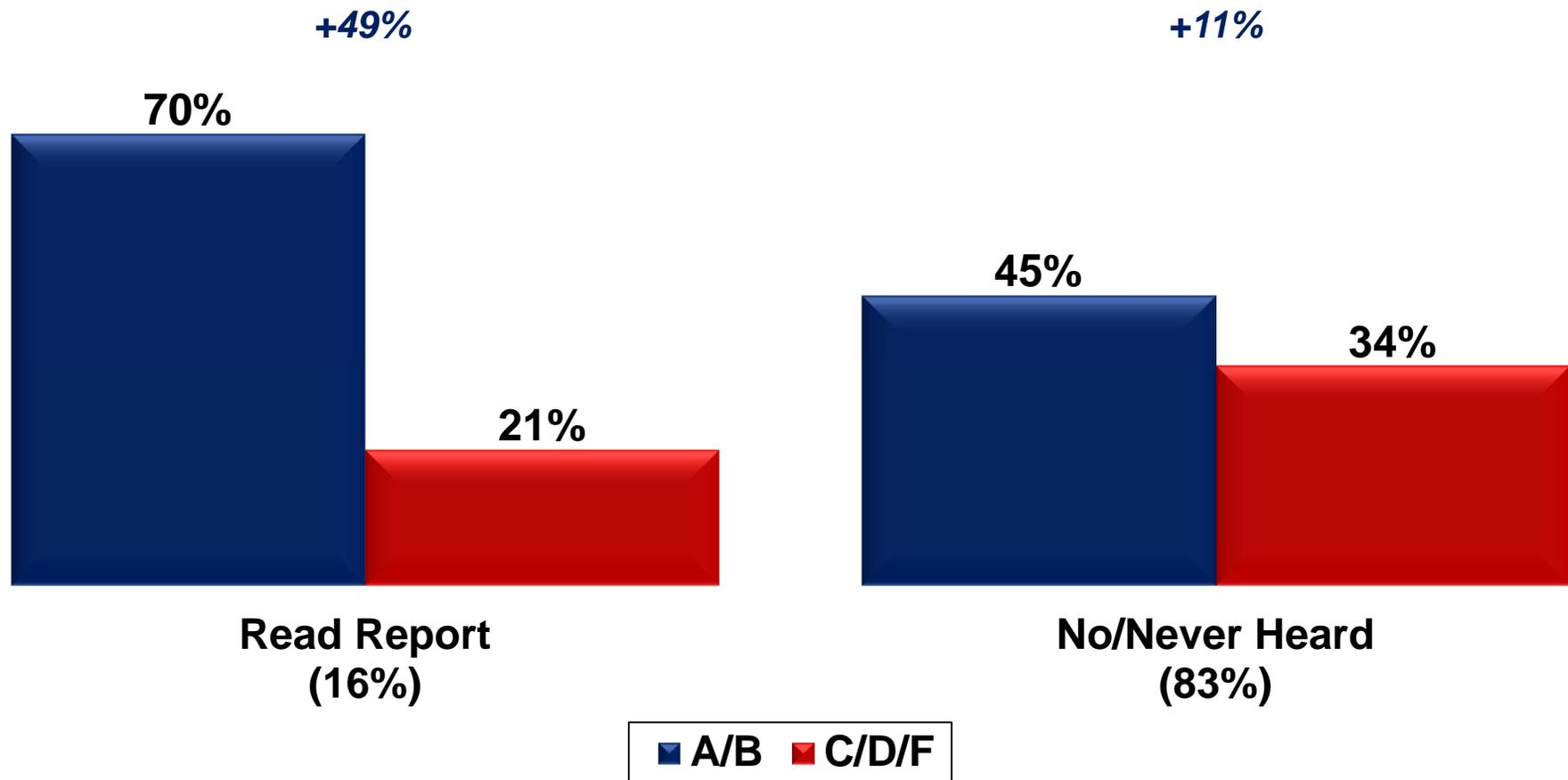
16%

Yes, Read (16%)	
K-6	29%
Ages 35-44	28%
Women Ages 18-44	28%
Moms	28%
North/West Parents	26%
Middle/High School	24%
ECS Grade: A/B	24%
North/West Women	23%
ECS Quality: Better	23%
Parents	22%
Women	21%
Walcott/Eagle	21%
Moderate/Liberal Republicans	21%

Did you happen to have a chance to read the report?

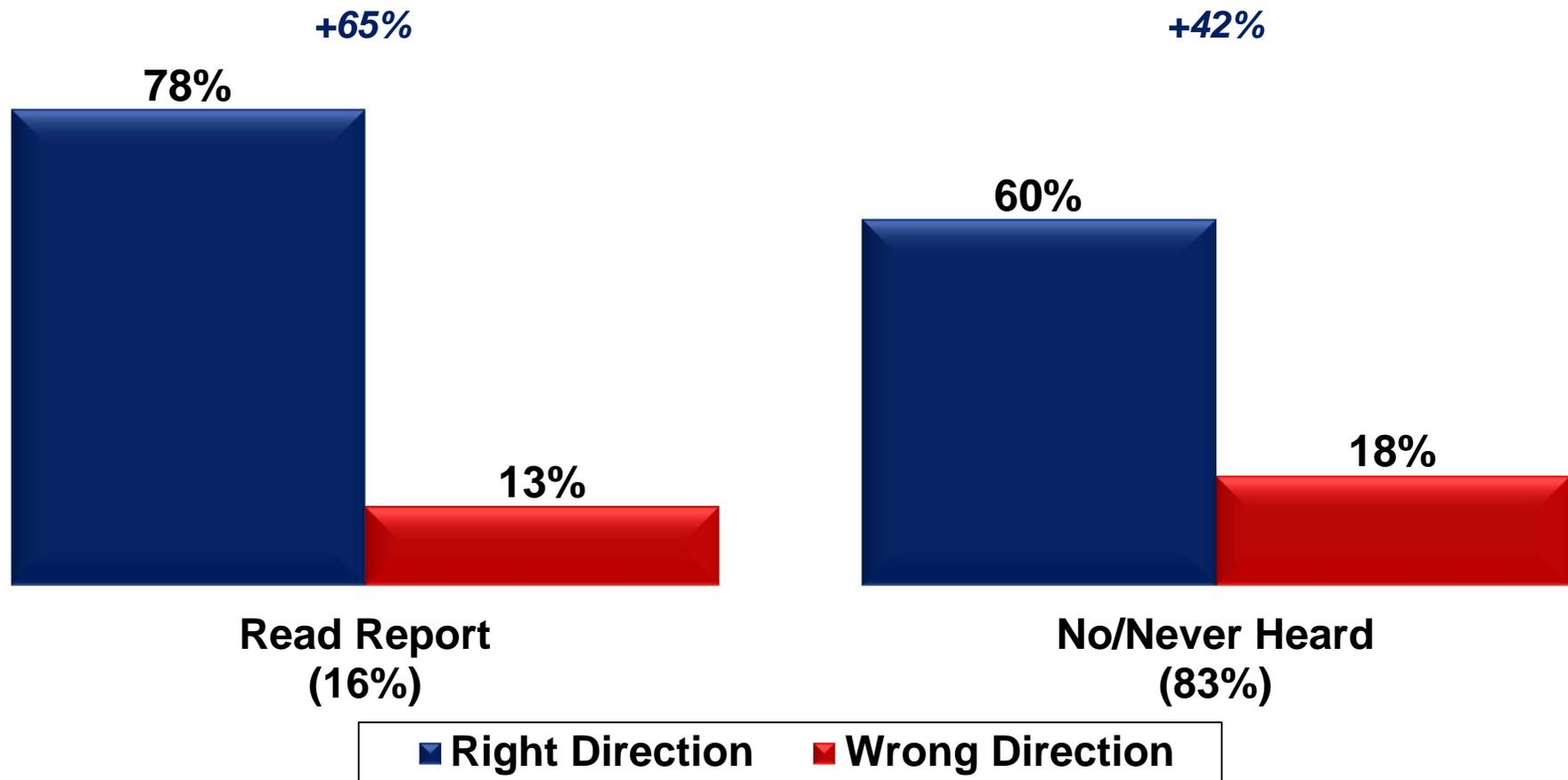
Those who have read the report are far more positive about the quality of the schools.

ECS Grade By Altitude Report



They are similarly more positive about the direction in which the schools are heading.

Direction of Schools By Altitude Report



Please note that it is impossible to say if residents who are more positive read the report, or reading the report makes them more positive.

THE OLD CHICKEN AND EGG PROBLEM ...





REPORT GOALS

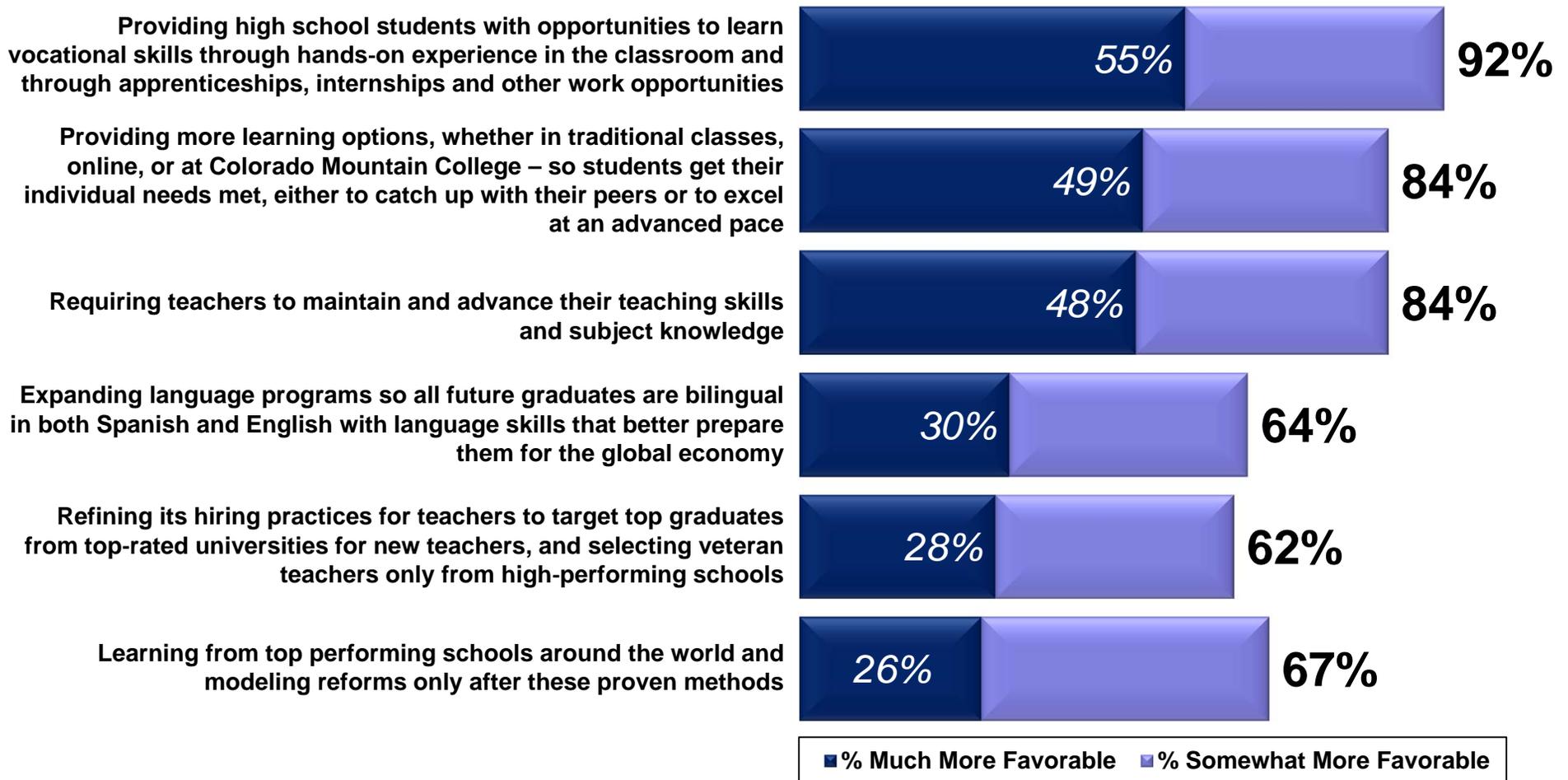


Residents were given six goals described in the Altitude Report and asked if knowing about that goal affects their impression of Eagle County Schools.

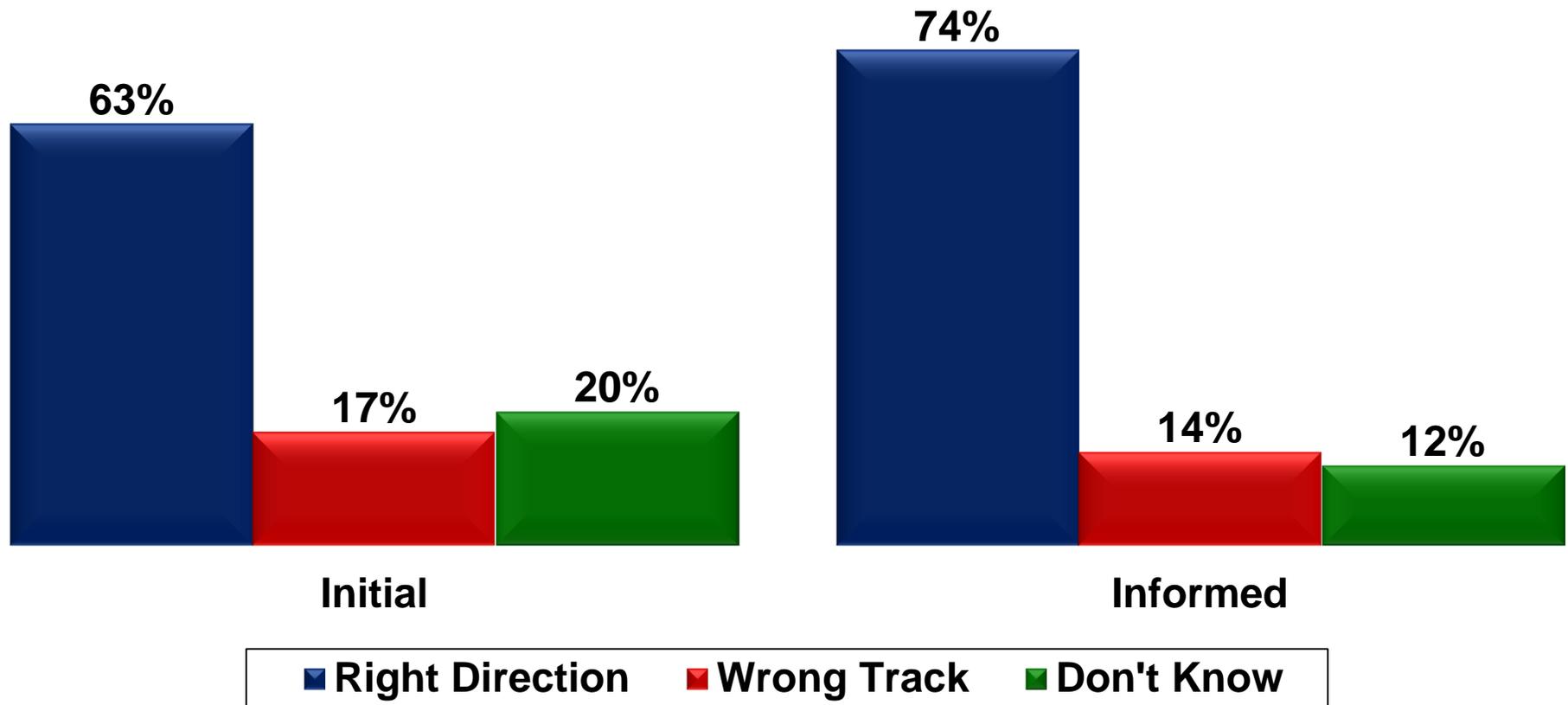
“I would like to read you some of the goals for the future of Eagle County Schools detailed in the Altitude Report. For each one I read, please tell me if pursuing that goal gives you a more favorable opinion of Eagle County Schools, or whether it really doesn’t have an impact on your opinion of Eagle County public schools.”

While all of these goals are positively received, there are clearly two tiers of reactions.

Altitude Report Goals Ranked By % Much More Favorable



After hearing more about the report and its goals, residents do become more positive in their assessment of Eagle County Schools.



Having heard this information, would you say things in the Eagle County Schools are generally going in the right direction or wrong direction?

Those who shifted their views were slightly more positive about these goals.

<i>Altitude Goals By Movers to Right Direction (Total More Favorable)</i>	Overall	Movers
Providing high school students with opportunities to learn vocational skills through hands-on experience in the classroom and through apprenticeships, internships and other work opportunities	92%	94%
Providing more learning options, whether in traditional classes, online, or at Colorado Mountain College - so students get their individual needs met, either to catch up with their peers or to excel at an advanced pace	84%	90%
Requiring teachers to maintain and advance their teaching skills and subject knowledge	84%	93%
Expanding language programs so all future graduates are bilingual in both Spanish and English with language skills that better prepare them for the global economy	67%	73%
Refining its hiring practices for teachers to target top graduates from top-rated universities for new teachers, and selecting veteran teachers only from high-performing schools	64%	60%
Learning from top performing schools around the world and modeling reforms only after these proven methods	62%	66%

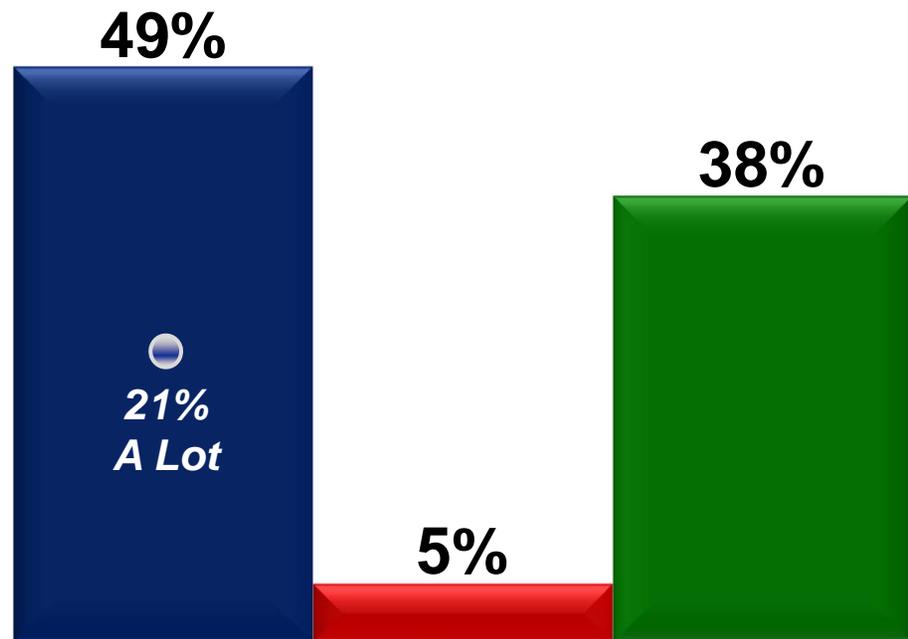


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BUDGET ISSUES

A near majority believe that funding for county schools should be increased.



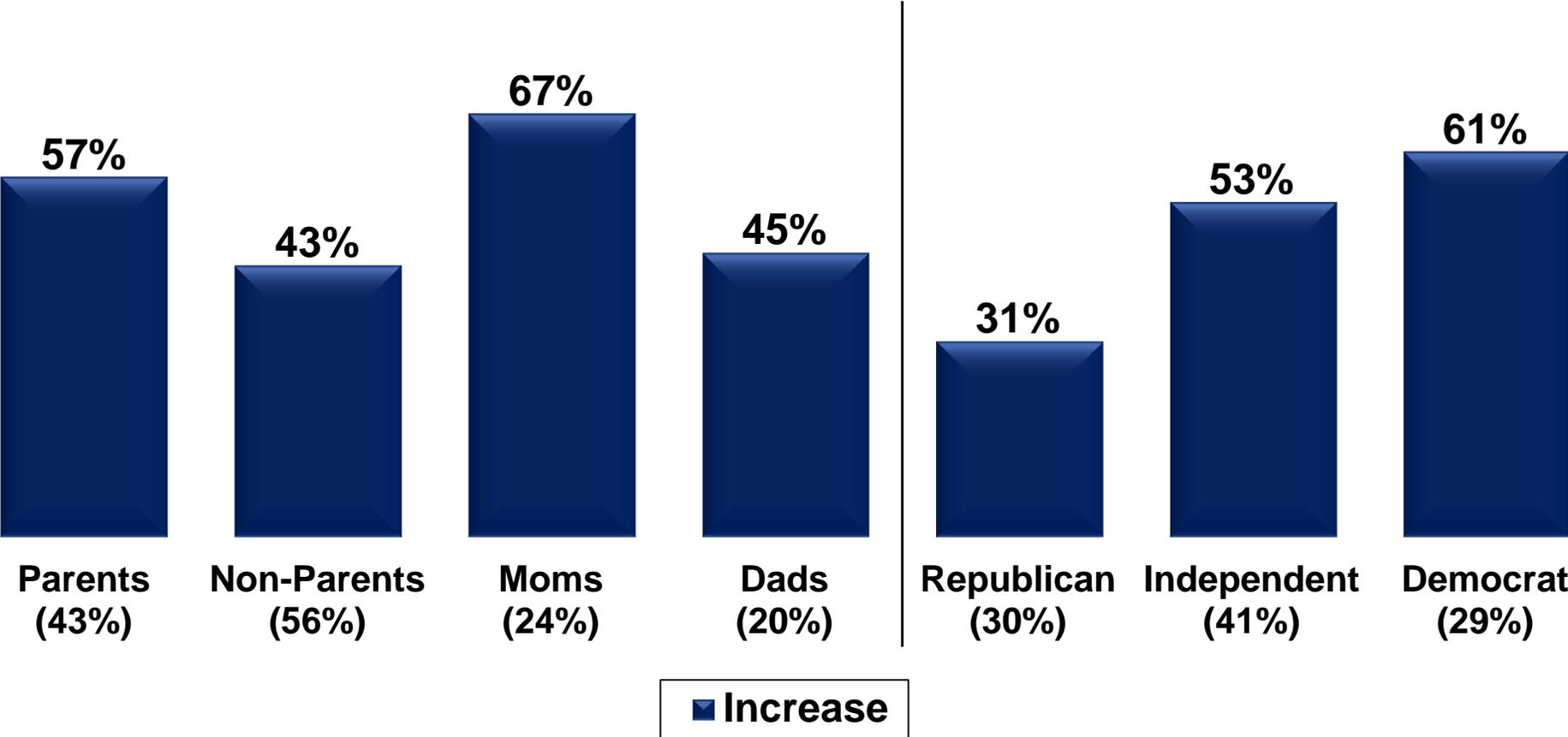
■ Increase
 ■ Decrease
 ■ Kept The Same

Increase (49%)	
Women Ages 18-44	69%
Moms	67%
Pre-K Parents	63%
Moderate/Liberal Democrats	63%
Democrats	61%
Liberals	61%
K-6 Parents	60%
East/Central Parents	60%
Moderate/Liberal Independents	59%
Ages 18-34	58%
Middle/High School	58%
East/Central Women	58%
Parents	57%
ECS Grade: A/B	57%

Do you think local funding for Eagle County Schools needs to be increased, decreased or should it be kept the same?

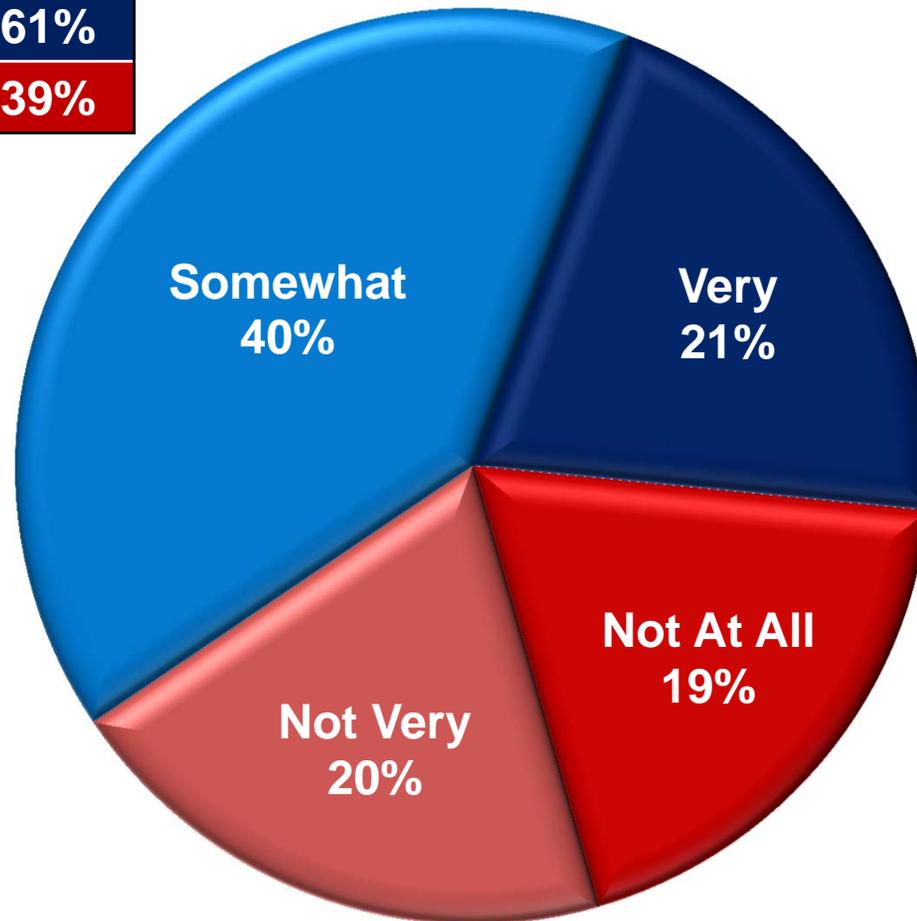
Party tends to bear the strongest relationship to views of funding for local schools.

Local Funding By Parent Status and Party



The budget situation is a topic that residents say they have followed over the years.

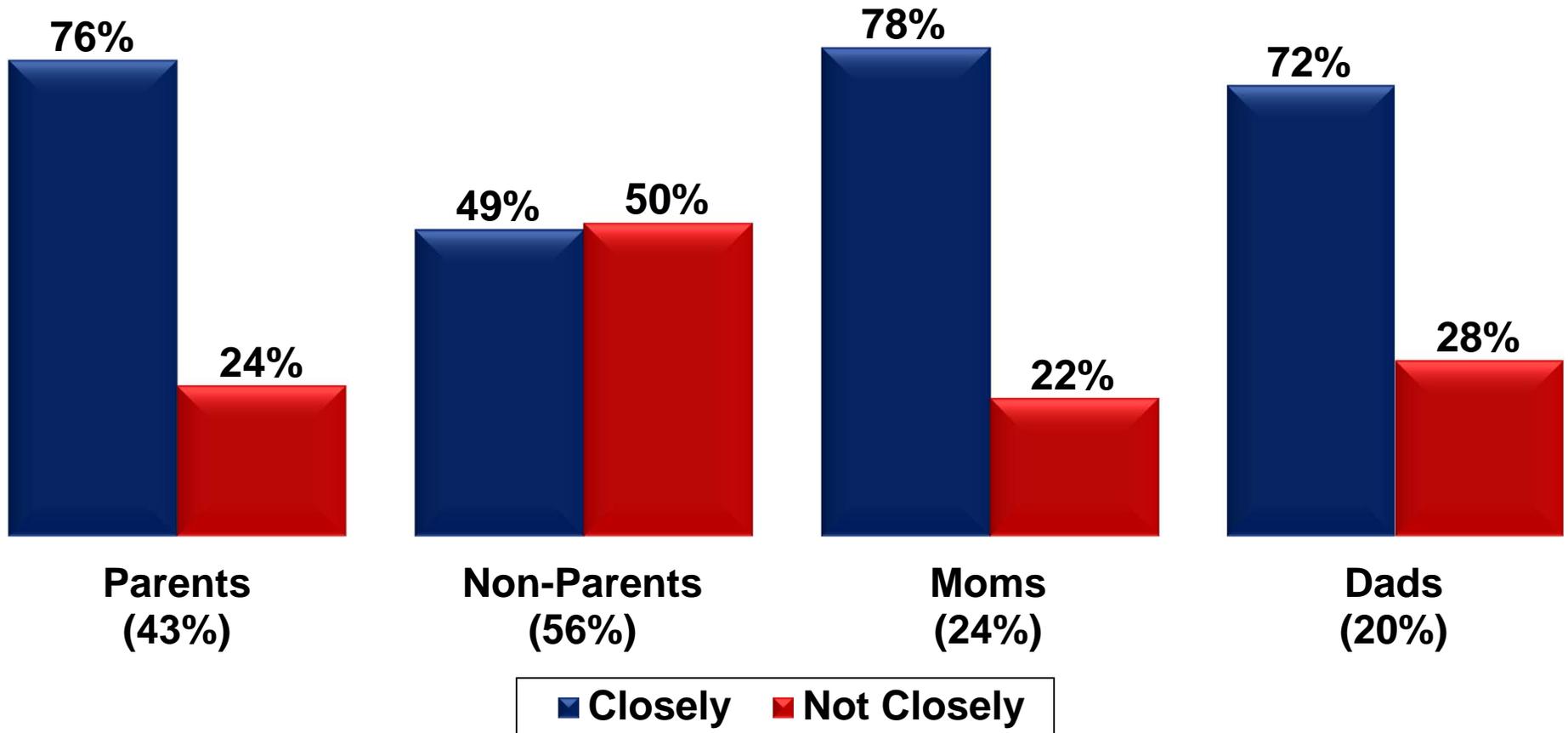
Total Closely	61%
Total Not Closely	39%



How closely have you been following the school district budget situation over the last two or three years?

Parents are predictably paying more attention to the budget issues.

Follow School Budget By Parent Status



Three-in-five residents say they are aware of state funding cuts for education.

YES

59%

NO

40%

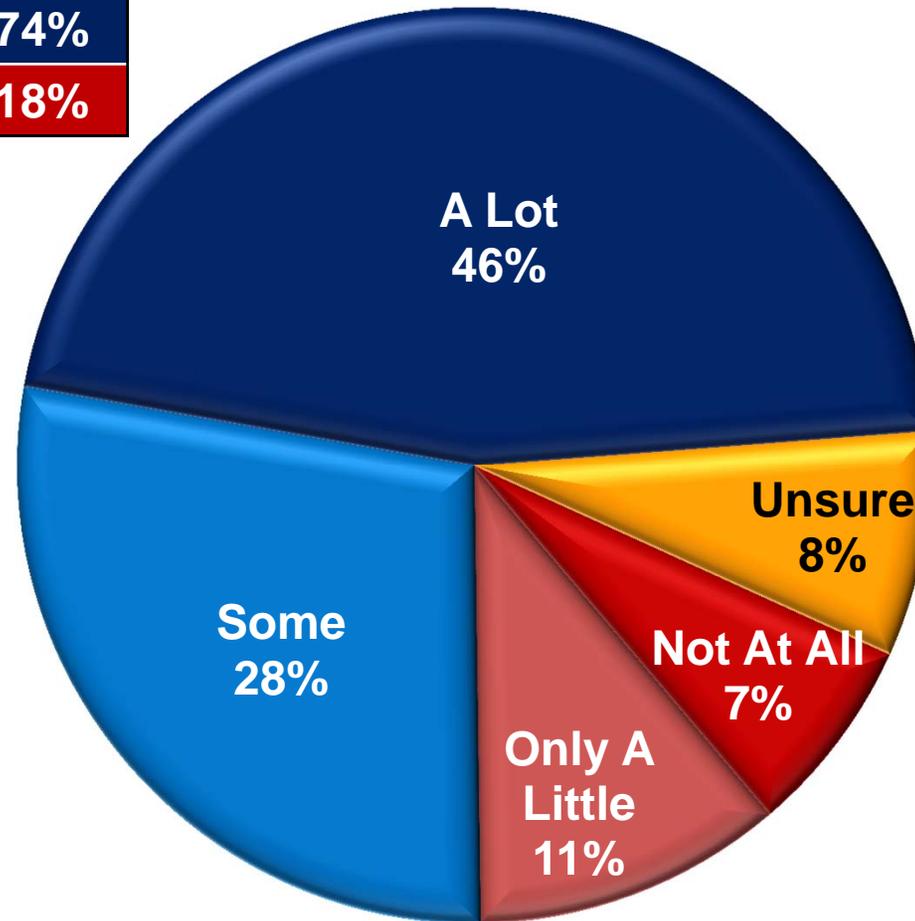
Have you seen or heard anything about the state of Colorado reducing funding for all public schools in the state, including Eagle County Schools?

Mothers, Vail/Minturn, and those with children in school are the most likely to indicate awareness of the reduced education funding.

<i>Awareness of Education Cuts (59%)</i>	
K-6 Parents	75%
East/Central Parents	73%
Moms	71%
Middle/High School	69%
East/Central Women	67%
Conservative Republicans	67%
Parents	66%
Democrats	66%
Ages 35-44	65%
Women Ages 45+	65%
Moderate/Liberal Democrats	65%
Women	64%
Central/Beaver Creek	64%
ECS Grade: A/B	64%

Three-quarters of residents believe state cuts have affected Eagle County schools.

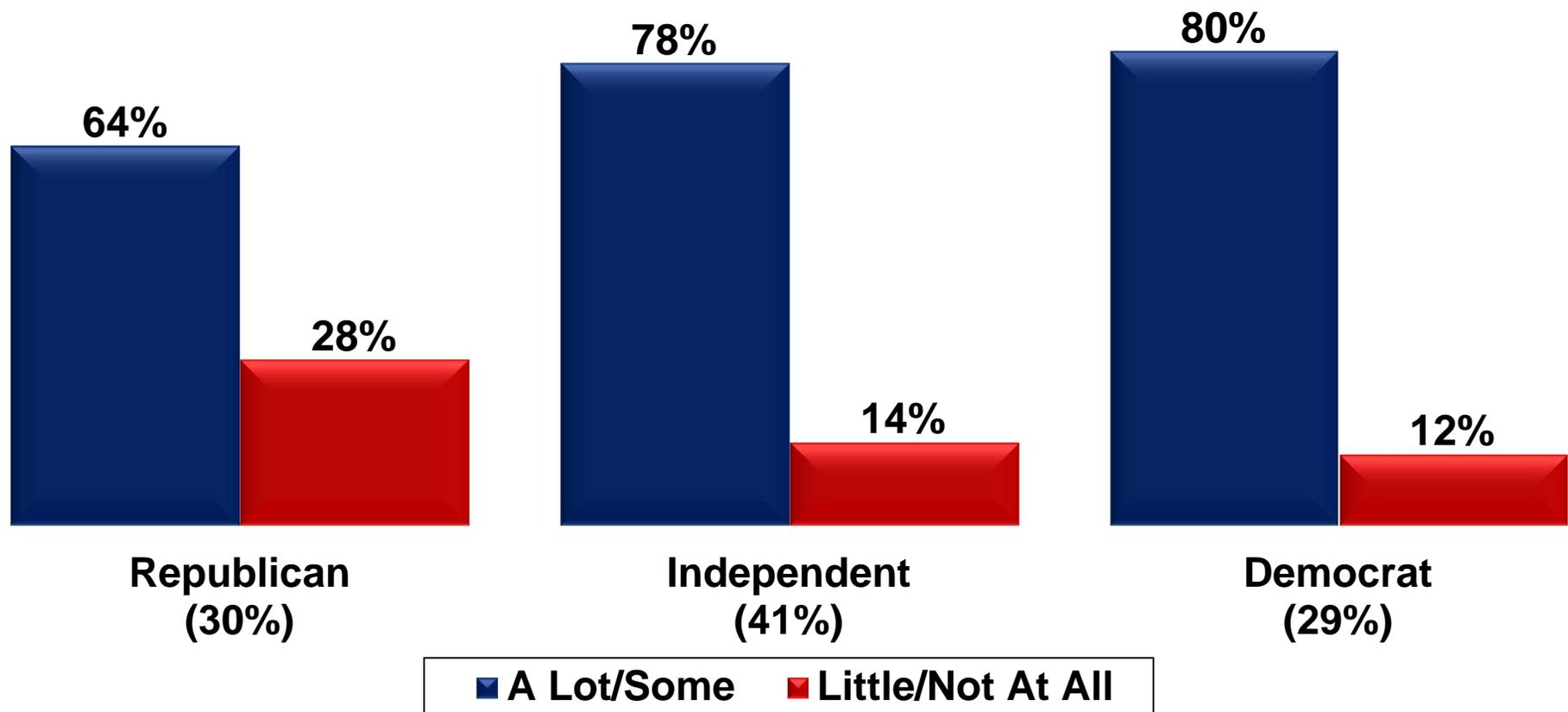
A Lot/Some	74%
Little/Not At All	18%



Do you think those cuts have affected Eagle County Schools ...

Residents across the partisan spectrum do believe that state funding cuts have affected local schools.

Cuts Affected ECS By Party





FUNDING SCHOOLS

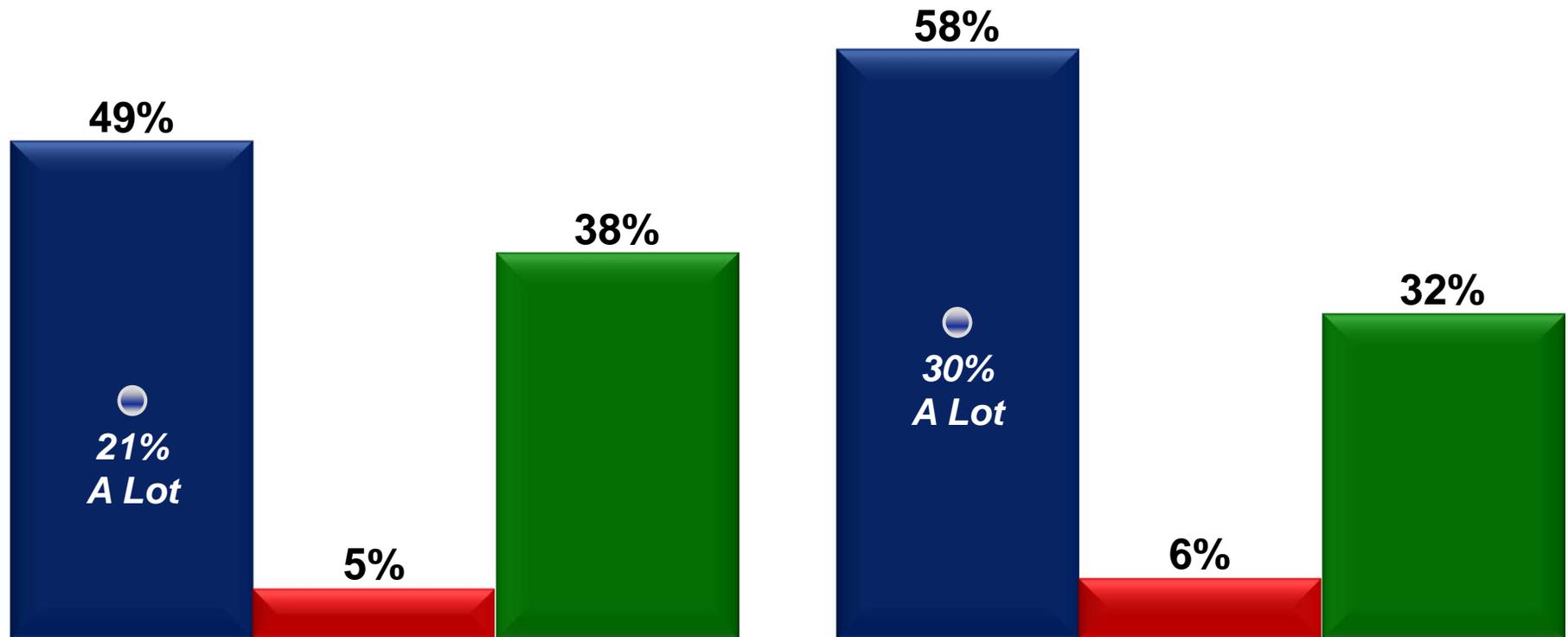


“The cuts to Eagle County Schools have resulted in increased class sizes, fewer class options, less bus service, and less ability to maintain buildings and keep up with technology. Having heard that, do you think local funding for Eagle County Schools needs to be increased, decreased or should it be kept the same?”

After hearing more information on the subject, a clear majority of residents agree that local funding for schools should be increased.

Initial Local Funding

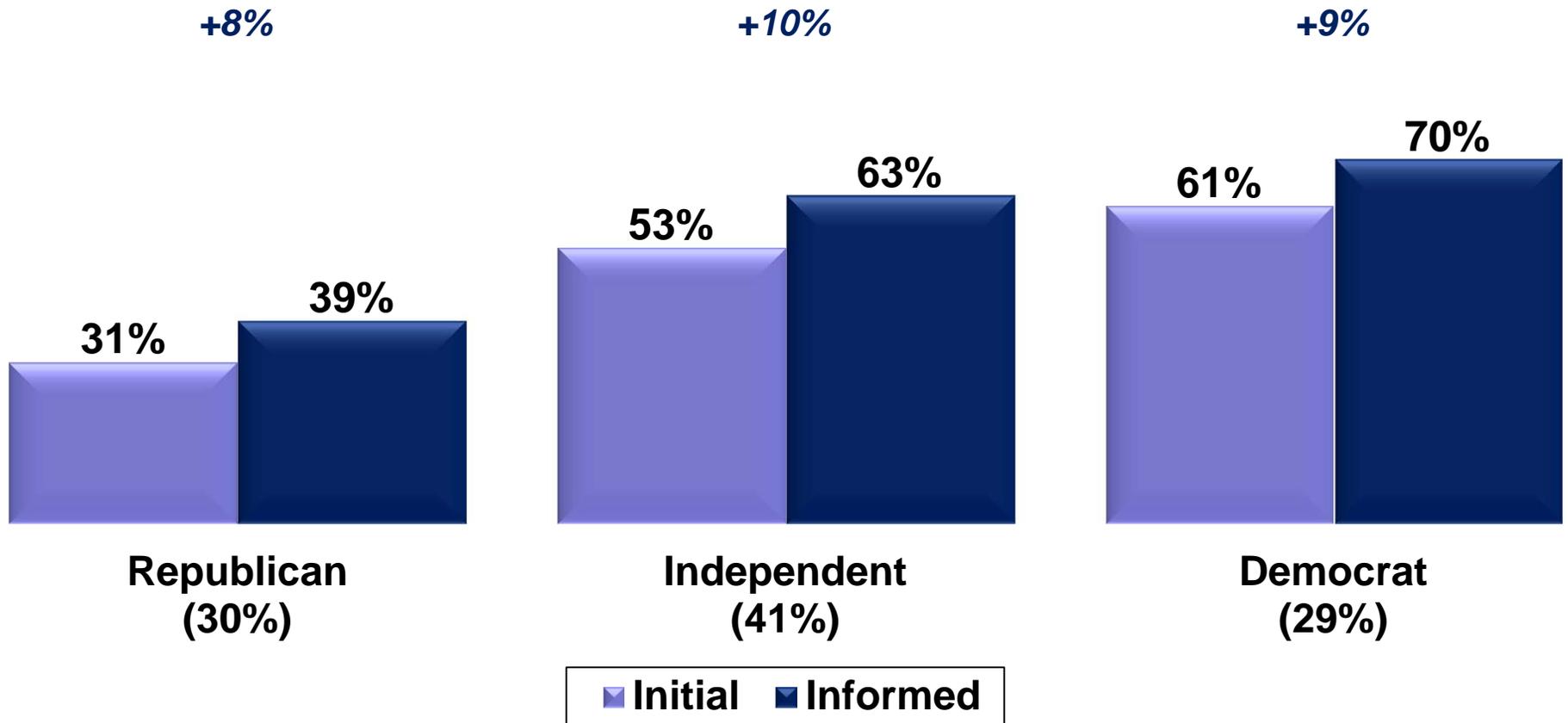
Informed Local Funding



■ Increase ■ Decrease ■ Kept The Same

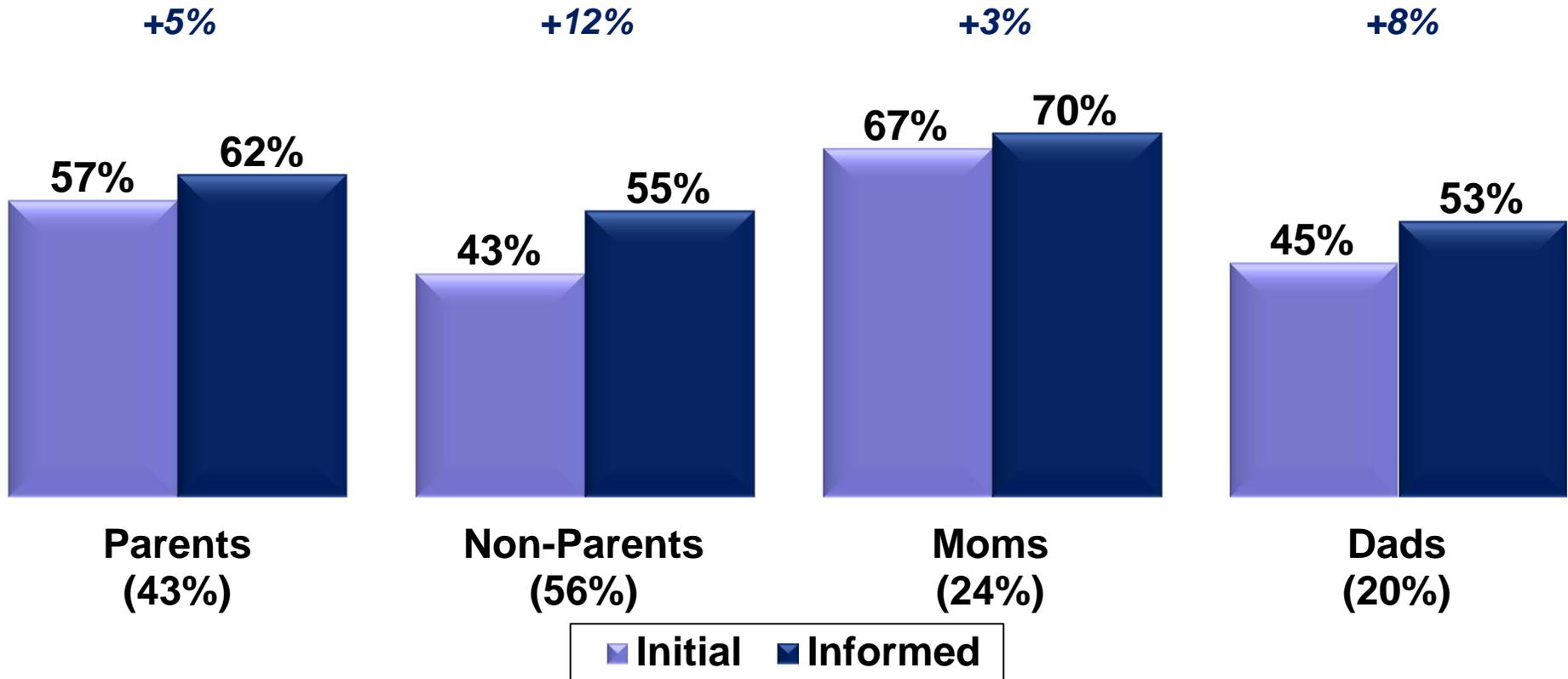
This sentiment still does not cut across party lines however.

Informed Local Funding By Party (% Increase)



Non-parents were the most influenced, with a majority now in favor of increasing local funding for schools.

Informed Local Funding By Parent Status (% Increase)





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THE BOTTOM LINE



THE BOTTOM LINE



- Eagle county residents clearly are detecting positive momentum in the schools – a solid majority say they are headed in the right direction.
- While few have read the Unparalleled Altitude report, many of the goals outlined therein receive a very positive reaction from residents.
- Keep in mind though that the priorities for residents center on what they deem the basics of an education – quality caring teachers who enable students to learn the basics in a safe environment.
- Residents are fairly mixed in their perceptions of increasing funding for the schools. They become more amenable after hearing just a little about the impact of state funding cuts and what the schools provide.