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[CE SBAC] Survey for SBAC

1 message

Jennifer Bodenrader <joplinfan69@hotmail.com>

Thu, Feb 29, 2024 at 1:23 PM

To: "cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org" <cesbac@capeelizabethschools.org>, "cesb@capeelizabethschools.org" <cesb@capeelizabethschools.org>, "cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org" <cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org>

Dear Cape Elizabeth SBAC, Town Council and School Board,

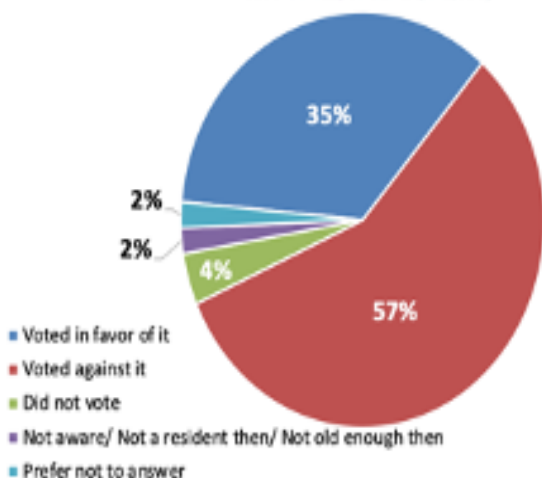
The below data provided by Portland Research Group from the September 2023 survey is a very important slide. What they are showing you here is that the population that reported voting Yes/No in the survey is very close to the actual vote. This is to show you, to provide evidence, that the survey results are representative, generalizable, reliable, and therefore valid. This data provides good evidence of a representative sample- BECAUSE the TWO points of data taken at different times are close.

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election

- The survey response has been weighted such that the data aligns with the proportion of respondents who voted for the school buildings bond proposal (38%) versus those who voted against the proposal (62%).
 - Note: 35% + 57% = 92%. 35% is 38% of 92% and 57% is 62% of 92%.
 - With a respondent base inclusive of residents who did not vote in the November 2022 election (4%); were not aware of the vote, not a resident then, or not old enough then (2%); or preferred not to answer (2%); just under three-fifths (57%) voted against the proposal, while about one-third (35%) voted in favor of the proposal.

Vote on Proposal in November 2022 Election

Base: All respondents (n=1,652)



November 2022 Vote

- In Favor: 38%
- Opposed: 62%



Actual Survey Responses

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

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) Weighting factors: In Favor (0.875), Opposed (1.092), Other (1.000).

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Cape Elizabeth SBAC Survey
September 2023



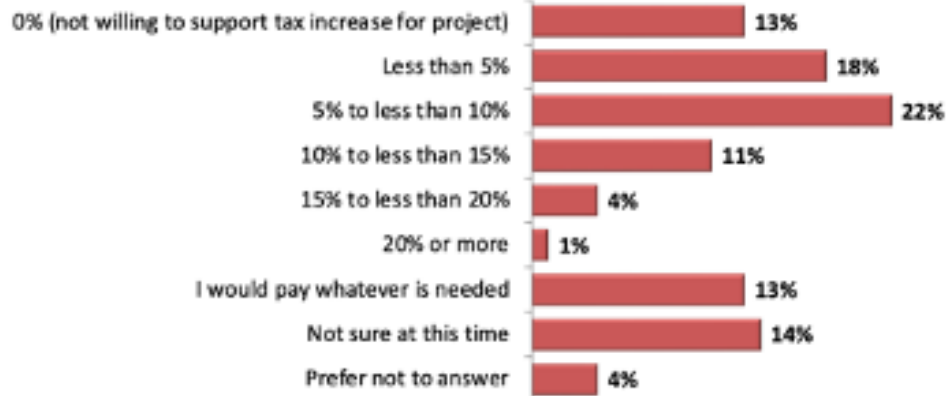
The objective of question #16 was to measure the level of property tax increase, if any, residents would support for the needs of the Cape Elizabeth school buildings. Below are the results.

Level of Property Tax Increase Supported for School Buildings

- Similar percentages of respondents—about one in seven each—indicated that they are not willing to support a tax increase for a school buildings project (13%), would pay whatever is needed (13%), and are not sure at this time (14%).
- Over one-fifth (22%) would support an increase of 5% to less than 10%, the most broadly supported range, while smaller percentages would support increases of less than 5% (18%) or 10% to less than 15% (11%).
- Few respondents would support an increase of 15% to less than 20% (4%) or 20% or more (1%).

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)

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Results from question #16:

14% would support increase of 20% or higher
68% would support increase 19% or lower

Actual Voter Behavior:

38% voted for tax increase up to 22%. **DIFFERENCE OF 14%**
62% voted against tax increase. **DIFFERENCE OF 6%**

Just like the first slide that showed consistency between voter behavior and the survey respondents answer, when you compare voter behavior with the response to this question you see the inconsistency.

Results from this question provides **failed** evidence of validity and reliability. BECAUSE the TWO points of data taken at different times are significantly different. This means that the evidence shows the resulting data of your question DOES NOT REFLECT VOTING

BEHAVIOR. The results of this question may have meaning, but you have no evidence as to what it means. Make your best guess -as to what it actually means.

Below is a second important example. Of all the respondents who voted in favor of the 22% tax increase for the school bond (100%), 46% report supporting a tax increase for new school buildings BELOW 20% and 14% report “not sure at this time”. This shows – you are seeing a trend in your survey results, that the answers people are giving to these questions are VERY different then their voting behavior.

Level of Property Tax Increase Supported for School Buildings (cont'd)

- Respondents who feel a school buildings project should focus on new construction only tend to be significantly more likely than those who feel a project should also (or only) include renovation to support tax increases of 10% or more.
- Compared to respondents who have lived in Cape Elizabeth for less than 15 years, longer-tenured residents are significantly more likely not to be willing to support a tax increase or to support a tax increase of less than 5%.

Level of Property Tax Increase Supported for School Buildings										
Base: All respondents										
Level of Property Tax Increase Supported for School Buildings	Referendum Vote			Project Approach				Years Lived In Cape		
	In Favor (n=655) A	Oppose (n=861) B	Other (n=136) C	Both (n=820) D	New Only (n=389) E	Reno Only (n=296) F	No Opinion (n=99) G	<5 years (n=243) H	5 to <15 years (n=492) I	15+ years (n=855) J
0% (not willing to support tax increase for project)	---	20% _A	19% _A	5% _E	<1%	45% _{DEG}	20% _{DE}	5%	9%	16% _{JE}
Less than 5%	4%	28% _{AC}	15% _A	21% _E	3%	27% _{DEG}	17% _E	12%	14%	23% _{JE}
5% to less than 10%	17%	25% _A	20%	28% _{TFG}	15%	16%	16%	22%	20%	24%
10% to less than 15%	16% _B	8%	10%	12% _F	18% _{DEG}	2%	9% _F	14% _J	14% _J	8%
15% to less than 20%	9% _{BC}	1%	2%	4% _F	8% _{TFG}	<1%	2%	8% _J	5% _J	3%
20% or more	4% _{BC}	<1%	---	1%	4% _{DE}	---	2% _F	2% _J	3% _J	1%
I would pay whatever is needed	35% _{BC}	<1%	8% _B	8% _F	39% _{DEG}	---	7% _F	21% _J	17% _J	9%
Not sure at this time	14%	13%	18%	17% _{EF}	10%	7%	21% _{EF}	12%	15%	13%
Prefer not to answer	3%	4%	8% _{AB}	3%	3%	3%	6%	3%	3%	4%

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

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And your third example. Among all respondents to this question, only 15% report already

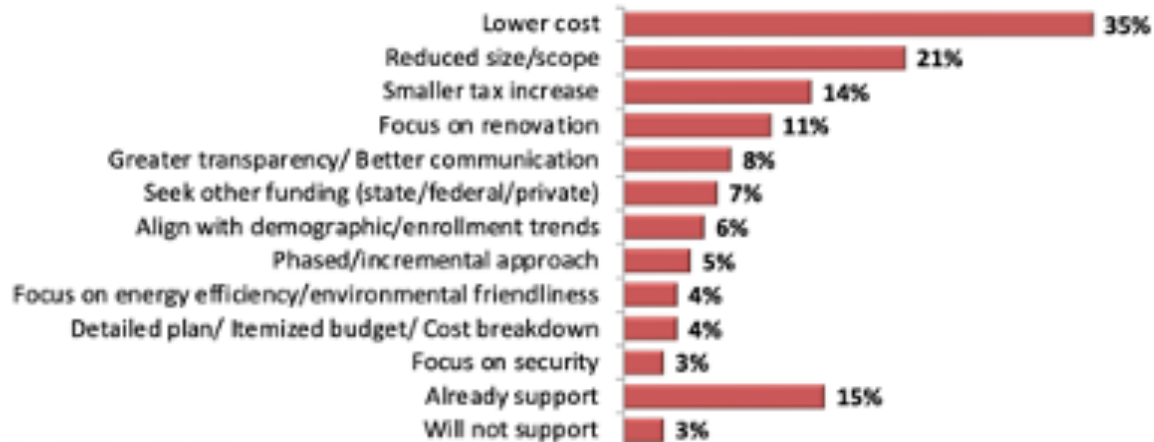
supporting the proposal. A significant contrast with 38% who voted in favor. Again, this question may have meaning but its data is clearly not a reliable or valid measure of voting behavior.

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal

- Among all respondents who provided an answer, one-third (35%) said a lower cost would increase their likelihood to support a revised school building proposal.
- One-fifth (21%) indicated reduced size/scope would increase their likelihood to support a proposal, while one in seven (14%) said a smaller tax increase would help.
- Additional suggestions include focus on renovation (11%), greater transparency/ better communication (8%), seek other funding (7%), align with enrollment trends (6%), and take a phased/incremental approach (5%).
- One in six (15%) respondents said the proposal already has their support.

Changes That Would Increase Likelihood to Support Proposal*

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



*Please see Appendix A for complete detail.

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)

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The concern here is that you have **no evidentiary foundation for any financial questions reflective of actual voting behavior**. And you now want to do a second survey to measure what percent tax increase and which school option people will vote for. Based on what?

The tax questions you used in the first survey lacked the bare minimum of reliability and validity. The evidence you DO have shows that these questions are not ones you would ever want to ask again in reference to voting behavior. They are all measuring something else, but what else.... you can only make your best guess.

One consistently reported concern in the survey was not knowing the impact from the new **property tax evaluation**. Nothing has changed about that concern. Your respondents reported that this concern significantly influenced their vote. This variable confounds your financial and school option results (it influences their answers) and will **continue to confound your results** until something about it changes.

Portland Research Group and Mr. Benoit certainly knew enough to show you/accentuate evidence of the consistency between survey voting responses compared to actual voting behavior, to show you what a good survey this was.

Do they not understand that differences between voting behavior and survey responses show you evidence of the bad data you are getting from these questions? The data is bad because its results do not accurately measure the questions' objective, "to measure the level of property tax increase, if any, residents would support for the needs of the Cape Elizabeth school buildings". And to conclude that, "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". This "conclusion" is a failure of the most basic survey science.

On the Portland Research Group website, it identifies that President Bruce Lockwood has his B.S. in Operations Research and his M.B.A. Senior Research Analyst Kevin McPhee holds a B.A in English. I understand (please forgive if I am incorrect) that Mr. Benoit hold a B.A. in History and worked as a political consultant.

Maybe Portland Research Group and Mr. Benoit do not understand that **without measured evidence of validity and reliability in survey questions, the results are meaningless, even if a representative sample is captured.**

Your survey results do not tell you "how much", but they do tell you "how old". There are many indicators in the results that age is your strongest measure of support/lack of support for the previous school bond. You can use this, and other information from the September 2023 survey to target communications. A significant number of respondents reported low

levels or no concern about the school facilities and their impact on education, that enrollment will continue to decline, and plans greatly exceeded state size guidelines, etc. Target your communications for different audiences. Talk about what to include in your school tours, use the existing survey results as a general guide, and try to increase school tour turnout and messaging among older residents.

It's not that I am unsupportive of surveys, it's just very clear to me, it's not a good use of your time and money. You are not set up the way you need to be to ask good questions and receive reliable results. I can't imagine a competent way for you, or me, or anyone, to develop brand new questions about what people will support financially and which option they would choose, that would provide you with meaningful and accurate answers.

Again, here is a laypersons explanation of reliability and validity:

<https://www.voxco.com/blog/achieving-reliability-and-validity-in-survey-research/>

Thanks so much for reading!

Sincerely,
Jen

Jennifer Bodenrader Ph.D.
207.317.9863

From: Jennifer Bodenrader <joplinfan69@hotmail.com>

Sent: Friday, February 16, 2024 1:39 AM

To: cesbac@capeelizabetschools.org <cesbac@capeelizabetschools.org>;

cesb@capeelizabetschools.org <cesb@capeelizabetschools.org>; cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org <cetowncouncil@capeelizabeth.org>

Subject: Against another school options survey

Dear Cape Elizabeth SBAC, School Board and Town Council,

It is a trend these days to do one time surveys with questions created by well meaning people. It's also become a profitable pseudoscience.

Many are aware of the need for survey responses to be representative of the population in order to be able to generalize results. I have heard Mr. Benoit and Mr. Hussey express confidence that the SBAC survey results were generalizable because of the number of responses, demographics of respondents, and self reported votes.

However, in addition to generalizability is a more complicated, time consuming, vital process to ensure survey questions accurately elicit and measure the information they are designed to. The basics of ensuring survey reliability and validity require specific questions be based on a body of related peer reviewed research, be administered numerous times to measure internal consistency, and continuously improved while balancing trade offs.

Because the nature of school option questions are multifaceted they are not clear, concrete and simple/straightforward enough to accurately measure in a one time survey. Content validity relates to questions reflecting the subject we are asking about and making sure just the right amount and types of related information are included. SBAC will never know which questions to ask, which related subjects to include and how to include, or how to word or order questions. You can try for hours and do your best to develop questions but your results will have no scientific basis.

With respect, I believe by any measure, Mr. Benoit greatly over exaggerates the strength of findings from one question in the previous survey about a vote related to 5-10% tax increases. Being aware of personal biases and their influence on understanding survey results is research 101. Such misinterpreted findings and bias of all kinds are the exact things one must rigorously reduce and remove for surveys to have true meaning.

Here is a link to a quick laypersons overview of how to achieve a valid survey. I believe all aspects of our well meaning town government should increase the level of survey rigor related to town goals.

<https://www.voxco.com/blog/achieving-reliability-and-validity-in-survey-research/>

Thanks so much for reading,
Sincerely,
Jennifer Bodenrader P.h.D
Brentwood rd

Under Maine's Freedom of Access law, documents - including e-mail - about town/school department business are classified as public records and may be subject to disclosure.

To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to cesbac+unsubscribe@capeelizabethschools.org