



# LOCAL TAXES & SERVICE LEVELS

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*TallahasseeVoices* is a pro bono internet survey panel sponsored by ***Kerr & Downs Research*** and the ***Tallahassee Democrat***.

- This survey was conducted in July 2008.
- 750 of the 3,000 panel members responded.
- Panel results have been weighted to reflect the demographics of Leon County and results are representative of all local residents who have access to the internet at home, work, or school ( >90% of all residents).

Go to our website at [www.tallahasseevoices.com](http://www.tallahasseevoices.com) to join our panel and let your voice be heard!



## Headlines

6 in 10 residents want City and County taxes and fees to decrease or remain the same, i.e., no increase.

Local government services/programs citizens want cut **first:**

1. Golf course ownership and maintenance
2. Number of vehicles owned and maintained
3. Number of administrative and management staff
4. Sell property and buildings owned by local governments
5. Reduce local government sponsorship of cultural events
6. Repair and repave streets less often
7. Cut back on money given to social service agencies
8. Close facilities that require financial subsidies to operate
9. Reduce efforts to develop special areas such as downtown, the southside, etc.
10. Cut programs where law enforcement interacts at schools, Neighborhood Crime Watch, etc.



## *Headlines*

Local government services/programs that citizens do **NOT** want cut:

1. Emergency medical services
2. Time it takes to respond to electrical outages
3. Number & location of fire stations and fire personnel
4. Drainage programs
5. Emergency management services (hurricanes)
6. Time it takes to respond to sewer leaks
7. Local school funding
8. Programs for seniors
9. Judicial system
10. Public health services



## ***Headlines***

6 in 10 residents do not know what additional services have been provided from the above average increases in City and County budgets over the past 5 years.

4% of residents want City and County governments to continue to increase budgets as they have in the past 5 years.

54% of residents disagree that City and County officials have been honest and forthright in explaining the relationship between tax levels and services that may need to be cut.



Residents were given some historic facts about City and County budgets – figures provided by the City of Tallahassee and Leon County governments:

**City of Tallahassee's Operating Budget:**

Increased \$14.4 million per year from 1998 to 2003 – 3.6% per year

Increased \$38.2 million per year from 2003 to 2008 – 7.1% per year

**Leon County's Operating Budget:**

Increased \$ 2.9 million per year from 1998 to 2003 – 2.3% per year

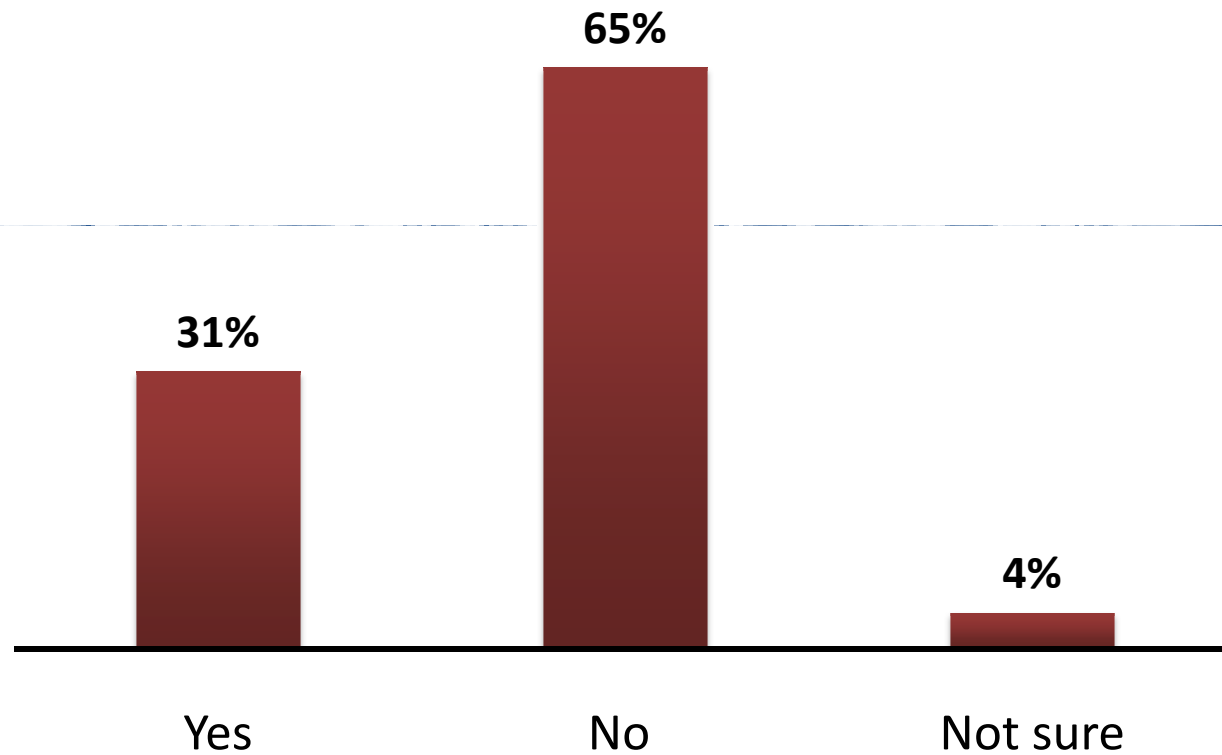
Increased \$12.1 million per year from 2003 to 2008 – 8.6% per year

Population increase from 1998 to 2008 in Leon County has been about 2% per year. The consumer price index rose approximately 3% per year from 1998 to 2007.

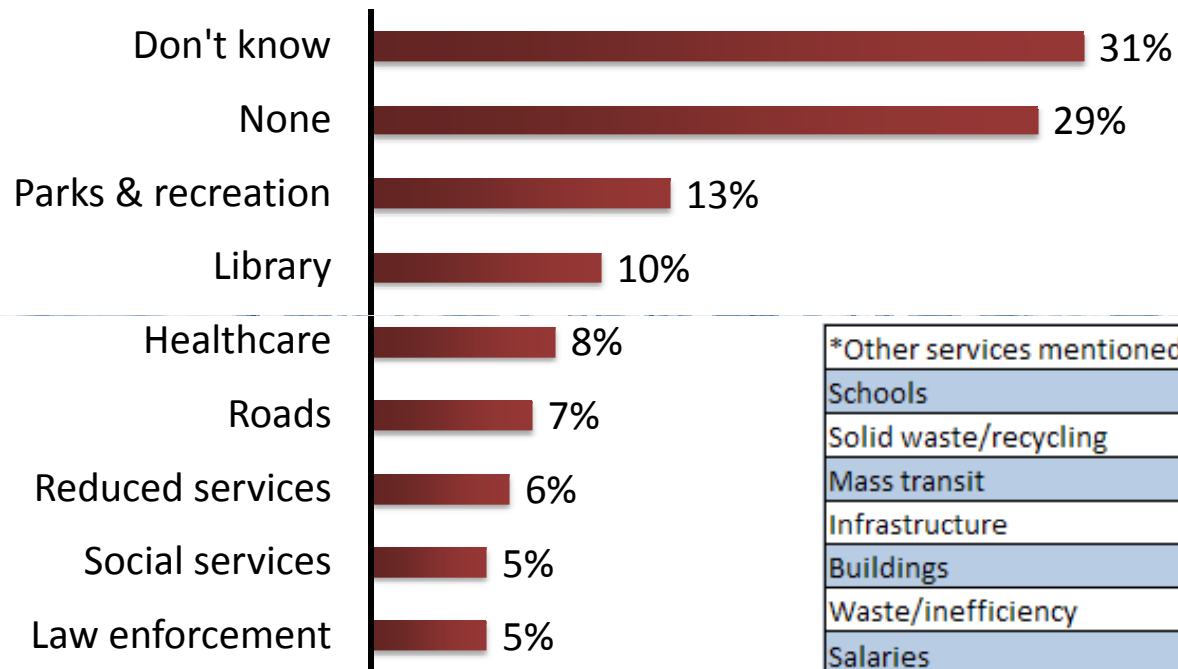


DID YOU KNOW THAT CITY AND COUNTY BUDGETS GREW DURING 2003 TO 2008  
AT ABOUT TWICE THE RATE THEY HAD GROWN FROM 1998 TO 2003?

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## WHAT EXTRA SERVICES HAVE CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS PROVIDED TO THE PUBLIC WITH THE MONEY GENERATED FROM HIGHER THAN AVERAGE BUDGET INCREASES FROM 2003 TO 2008?

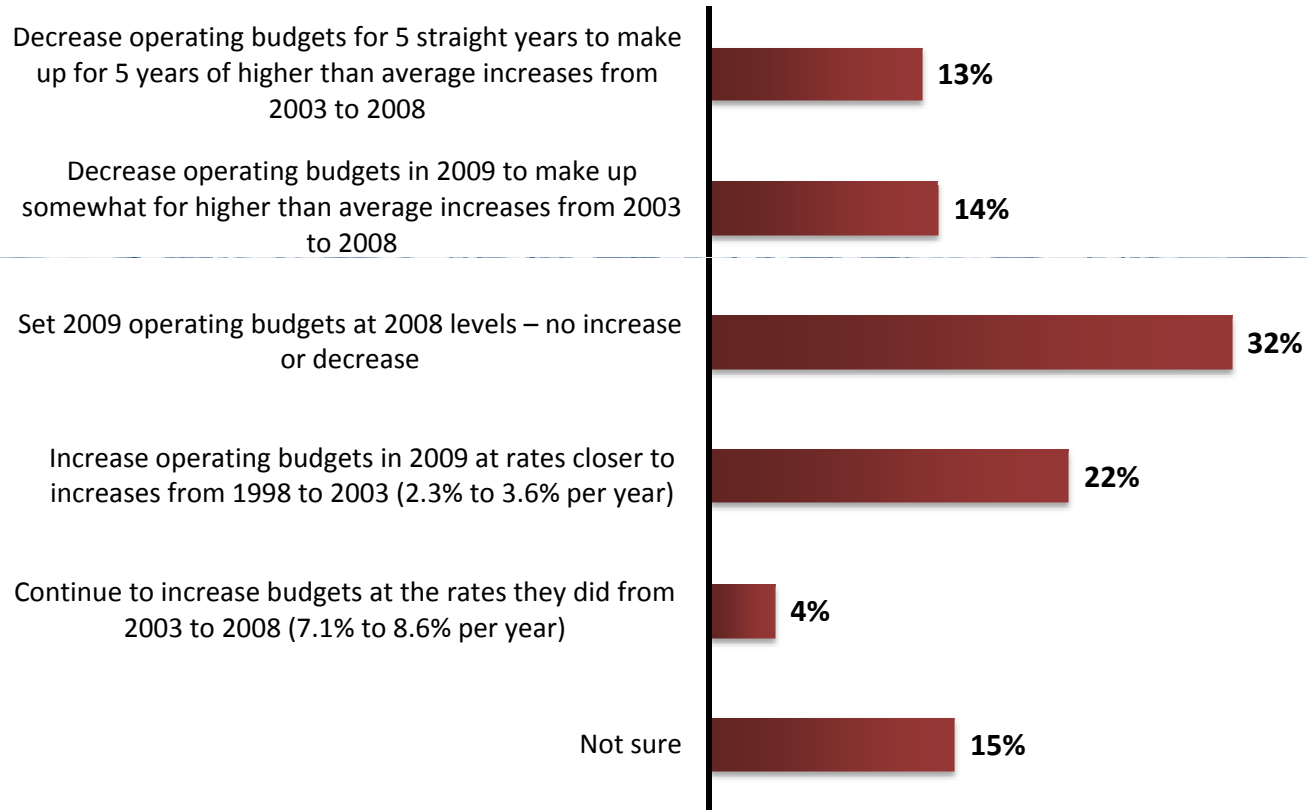


*Other services mentioned include:	
Schools	4%
Solid waste/recycling	3%
Mass transit	3%
Infrastructure	3%
Buildings	3%
Waste/inefficiency	3%
Salaries	2%
Federal/state mandates	2%
Traffic lights	2%
Sidewalks/bike paths	2%
Celebrations/events	2%
Communications/PR	2%
Cover rising costs	2%
Cultural activities	2%
Economic development	2%

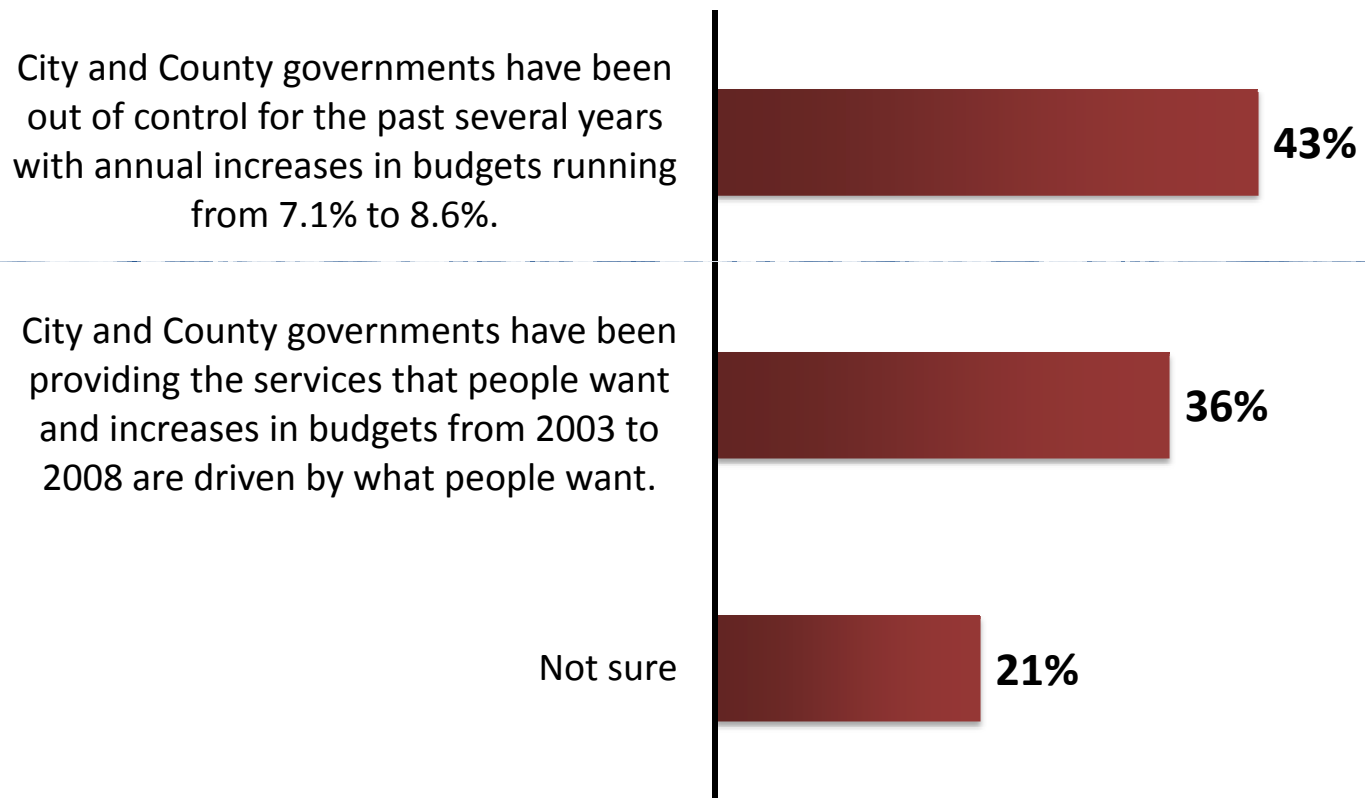




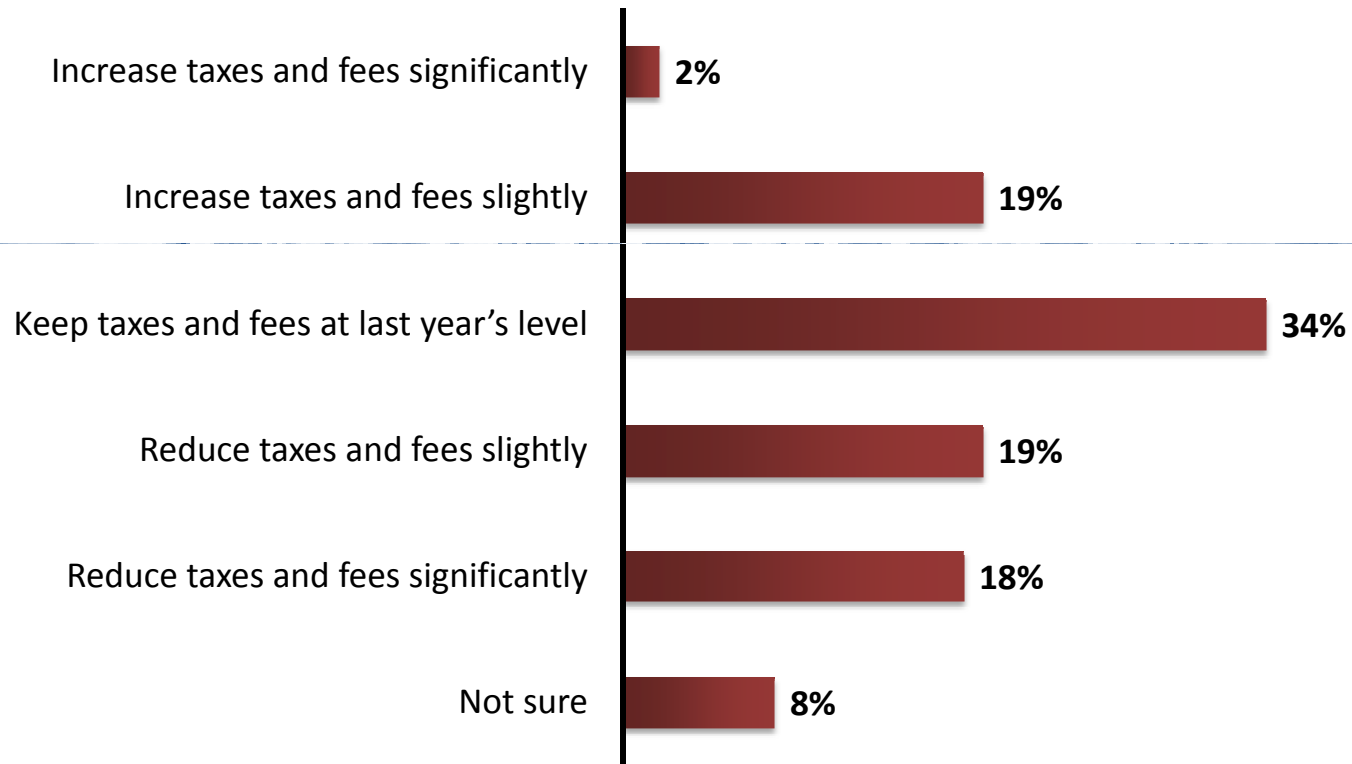
# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU PREFER FOR 2009 OPERATING BUDGETS FOR CITY & COUNTY GOVERNMENTS?



## WITH WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE?

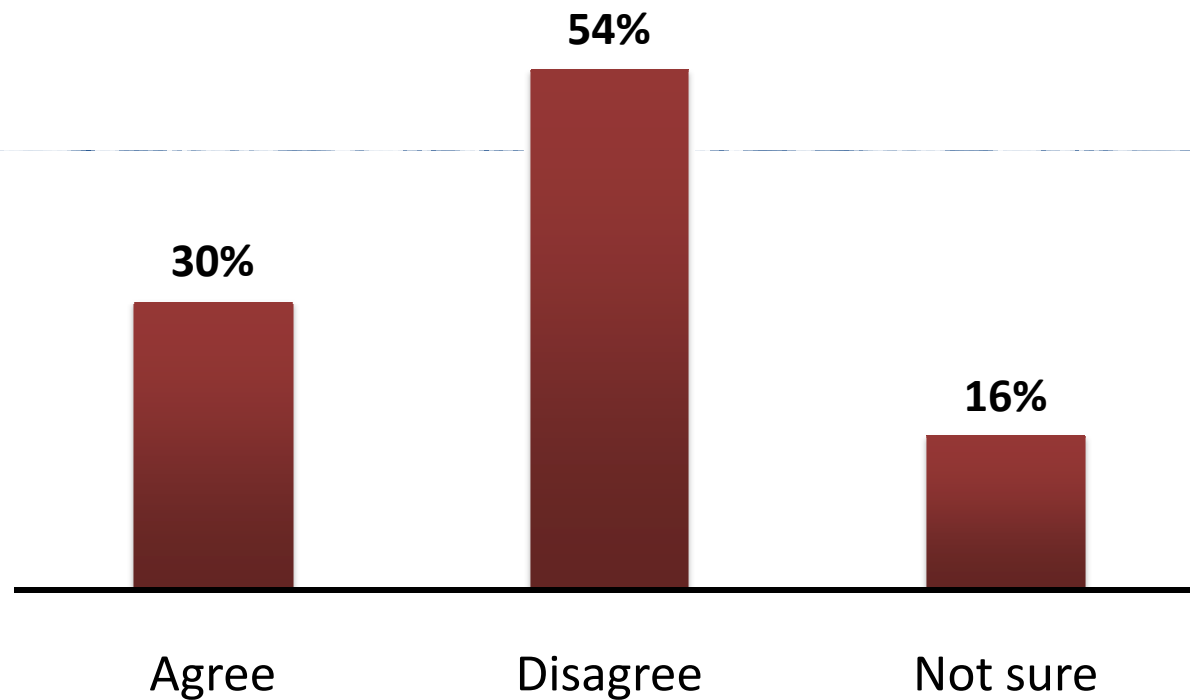


# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU RECOMMEND TO CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS:



Based on the fact that City and County budgets have increased 7.1% & 8.6% per year for the past 5 years, City and County officials have been **forthright** and **honest** with the public by saying that critical services must be cut if taxes and fees cannot be increased in 2009.

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## LEON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

On July 9th, Leon County Commission gave preliminary approval to a hike in property taxes from a 7.213 millage rate to a 8.38 millage rate (plus a 0.5 millage tax for emergency services). Because of a state-mandated increase in the homestead exemption from \$25,000 to \$50,000, the impact of this millage rate increase of 16.2% varies based on property value as shown below.

*Figures below are only for Leon County property taxes and do not include other elements of your total property tax bill.*

### Homeowners

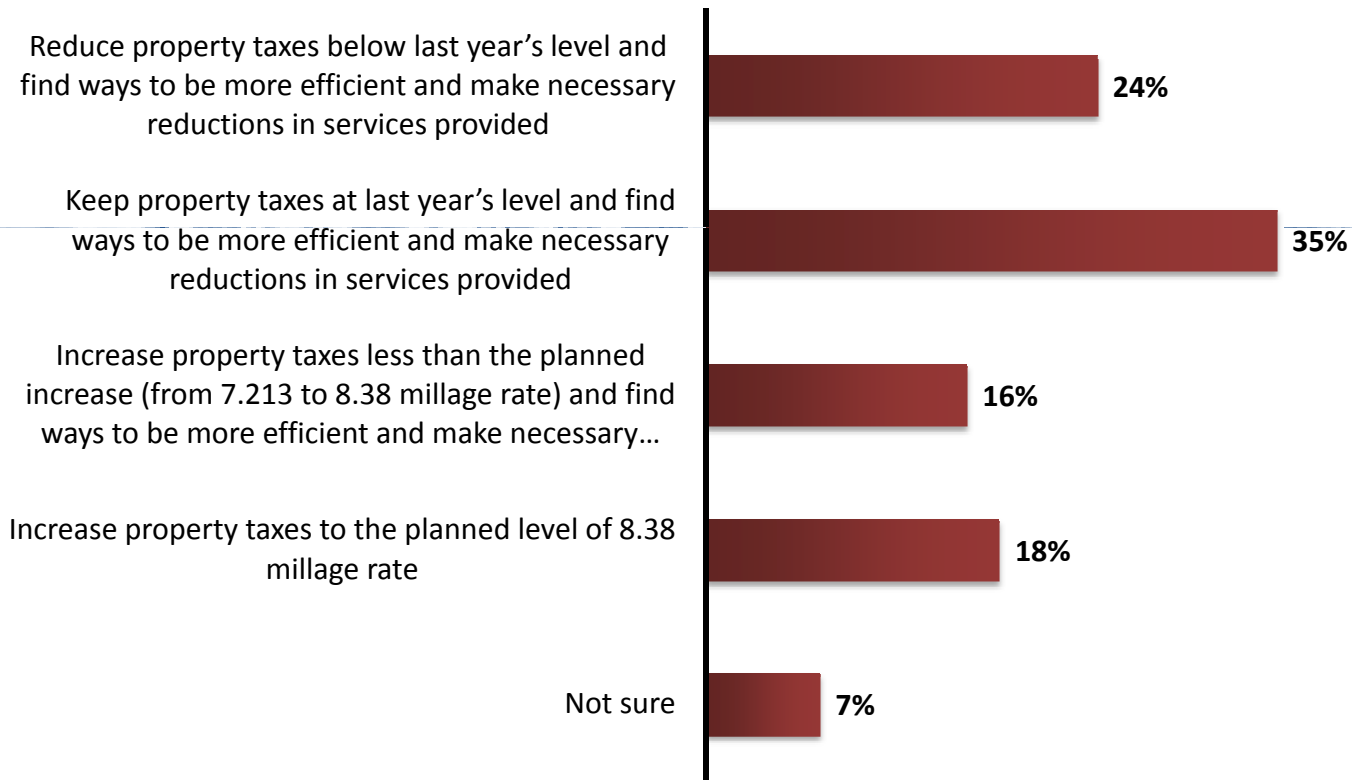
<i>Home value</i>	<i>Tax bill Now</i>	<i>Tax bill Proposed</i>	<i>Increase (decrease)</i>
\$100,000	\$ 541	\$ 419	(22.6%)
\$200,000	\$1,262	\$1,257	0.0%
\$300,000	\$1,984	\$2,095	5.6%
\$400,000	\$2,705	\$2,933	8.4%
\$500,000	\$3,426	\$3,771	10.1%
\$750,000	\$5,229	\$5,866	12.2%

### Business owners, owners of rental property, owners of 2<sup>nd</sup> homes, etc.

<i>Property value</i>	<i>Tax bill Now</i>	<i>Tax bill Proposed</i>	<i>Increase</i>
\$100,000	\$ 721	\$ 838	16.2%
\$200,000	\$1,443	\$1,676	16.2%
\$300,000	\$2,164	\$2,514	16.2%
\$400,000	\$2,885	\$3,352	16.2%
\$500,000	\$3,607	\$4,190	16.2%
\$750,000	\$5,410	\$6,285	16.2%



# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU RECOMMEND TO LEON COUNTY GOVERNMENT?



## CITY OF TALLAHASSEE GOVERNMENT

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, Tallahassee City Commission gave preliminary approval to a hike in property taxes from 3.1686 millage rate to 3.2115 millage rate. Because of a state-mandated increase in the homestead exemption from \$25,000 to \$50,000, the impact of this millage rate increase of 1.35% varies based on property value as shown below.

*Figures below are only for City of Tallahassee property taxes and do not include other elements of your total property tax bill.*

### Homeowners

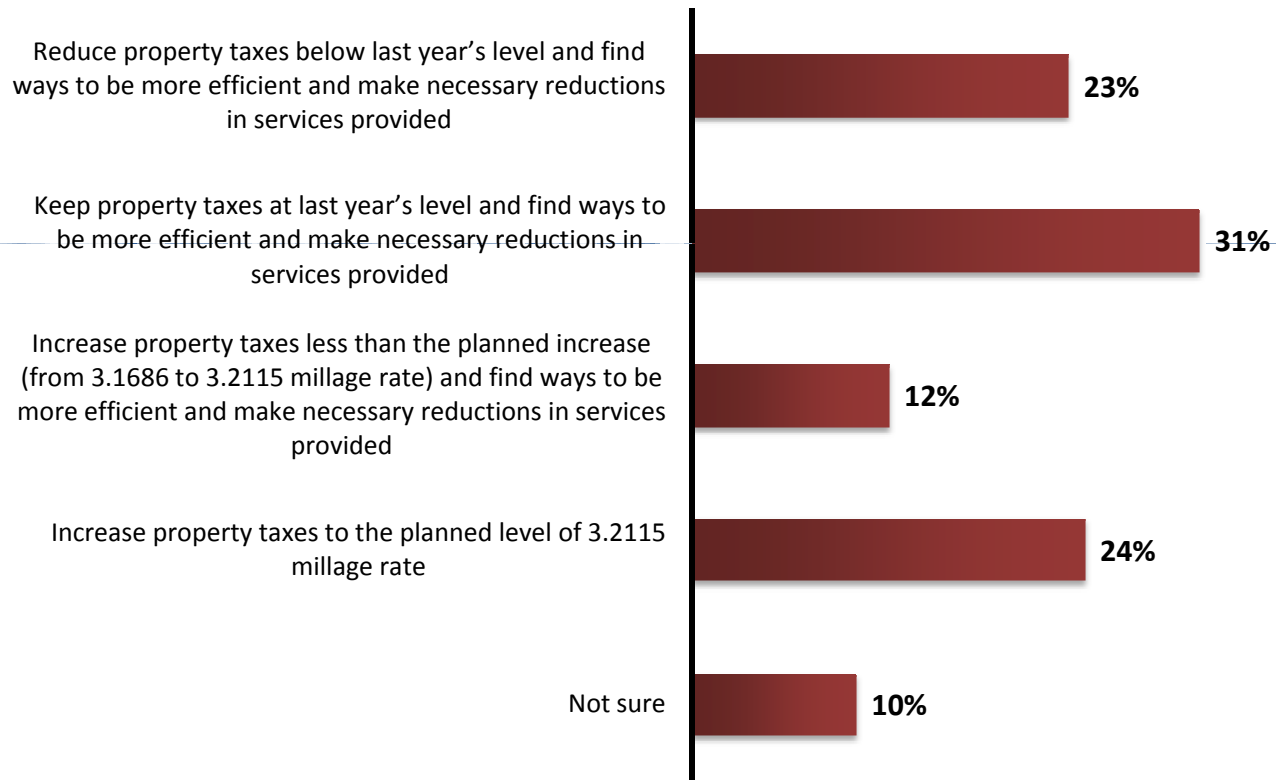
<i>Home value</i>	<i>Tax bill Now</i>	<i>Tax bill Proposed</i>	<i>Increase (decrease)</i>
\$100,000	\$ 238	\$ 161	(32.4%)
\$200,000	\$ 555	\$ 482	(13.2%)
\$300,000	\$ 871	\$ 803	( 7.8%)
\$400,000	\$1,188	\$1,124	( 5.4%)
\$500,000	\$1,505	\$1,445	( 4.0%)
\$750,000	\$2,297	\$2,248	( 2.1%)

### Business owners & owners of rental property & owners of 2<sup>nd</sup> homes

<i>Property value</i>	<i>Tax bill Now</i>	<i>Tax bill Proposed</i>	<i>Increase</i>
\$100,000	\$ 317	\$ 321	1.35%
\$200,000	\$ 634	\$ 642	1.35%
\$300,000	\$ 951	\$ 963	1.35%
\$400,000	\$1,267	\$1,285	1.35%
\$500,000	\$1,584	\$1,606	1.35%
\$750,000	\$2,376	\$2,409	1.35%



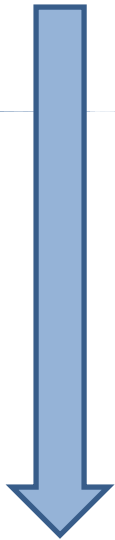
# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU RECOMMEND TO THE CITY OF TALLAHASSEE?





# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD THE COUNTY AND CITY DO TO REDUCE BUDGETS?

Most desired actions to  
reduce budgets

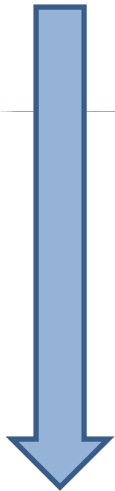


**\* 59% of citizens recommend reducing the number of golf courses operated by local governments.**



# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD THE COUNTY AND CITY DO TO REDUCE BUDGETS?

Top 1/3  
desired actions to  
reduce budgets



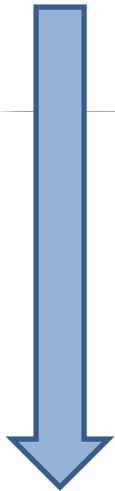
Reduce the number of golf courses it operates	59%*
Reduce the number of vehicles owned and maintained by local governments	57%
Reduce number of staff in administrative and management positions	52%
Sell some local government owned buildings and property	48%
Reduce the number of City-sponsored cultural events and activities	44%
Repair and repave streets and replace street lights less often	44%
Cut back on money given to social service agencies that are not part of local government	39%
Close facilities that require significant financial subsidies	38%
Reduce efforts to develop/redevelop special areas such as downtown, the southside, Frenchtown, etc.	38%
Cut programs where police interact with students at schools, cut Neighborhood Crime Watch	35%
Don't cut anything – keep raising taxes and fees	33%
Reduce efforts to bring tourists to this community	31%
Cut programs to attract new businesses and promote existing businesses	29%
Reduce the number of police/sheriff, patrol hours, and patrol cars on the streets	25%
Reduce efforts to communicate with citizens about what the City/County are doing	22%

**\* 59% of citizens recommend reducing the number of golf courses operated by local governments.**



# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD THE COUNTY AND CITY DO TO REDUCE BUDGETS?

Middle 1/3  
desired actions to  
reduce budgets



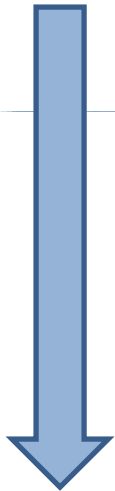
Cut back on road building, road widening, adding turn lanes	22%*
Reduce funding for the airport and airport services	19%
Reduce efforts to remove junked cars, keep vacant lots tidy, keep houses in good repair	18%
Reduce efforts to provide affordable housing	18%
Cut programs that show citizens how to conserve energy	18%
Reduce the number of parks, park hours, lighting, and programs	16%
Reduce the number of community centers that house a range of programs and services for citizens	15%
Reduce planning and growth management efforts	13%
Cut other law enforcement auxiliary services	11%
Layoff rank and file employees	11%
Increase the time it takes to get building permits, zoning requests, licenses, site reviews	11%
Have fewer people dealing with utility customers' complaints and information requests	10%
Reduce efforts to protect trees, habitat, and water bodies	10%
Reduce programs for disadvantaged and low-income individuals	10%
Reduce public transportation services (cut StarMetro routes)	10%

\* 22% of citizens recommend cutting back on road building, widening, and additional turn lanes.



# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD THE COUNTY AND CITY DO TO REDUCE BUDGETS?

Bottom 1/3  
desired actions to  
reduce budgets



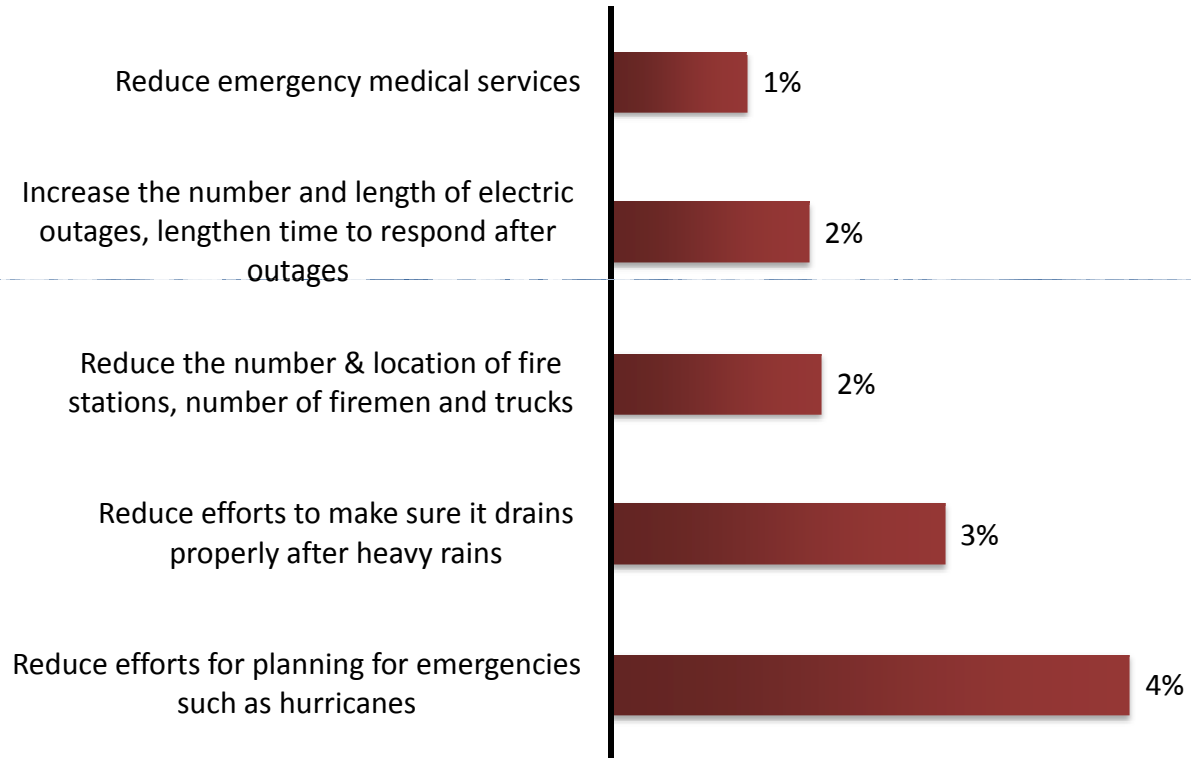
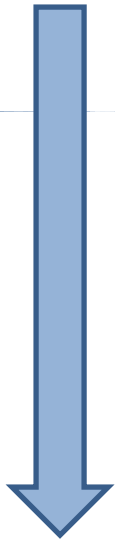
Reduce mosquito spraying	9%*
Reduce efforts to control traffic such as traffic light synchronization turn lanes, speed bumps, wider streets, bike paths, etc.	9%
Reduce frequency of garbage or yard waste pick-ups	9%
Reduce the number and hours of operation of public health facilities	9%
Reduce funding for local judicial and court system	9%
Reduce programs for seniors	8%
Reduce funding for local schools	5%
Increase the time it takes to respond to sewer leaks	4%
Reduce efforts for planning for emergencies such as hurricanes	4%
Reduce efforts to make sure it drains properly after heavy rains	3%
Reduce the number & location of fire stations, number of firemen and trucks	2%
Increase the number and length of electric outages, lengthen time to respond after outages	2%
Reduce emergency medical services	1%

**\* 9% of citizens recommend cutting back on mosquito spraying.**



# WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SHOULD THE COUNTY AND CITY DO TO REDUCE BUDGETS?

Least desired actions  
to reduce budgets

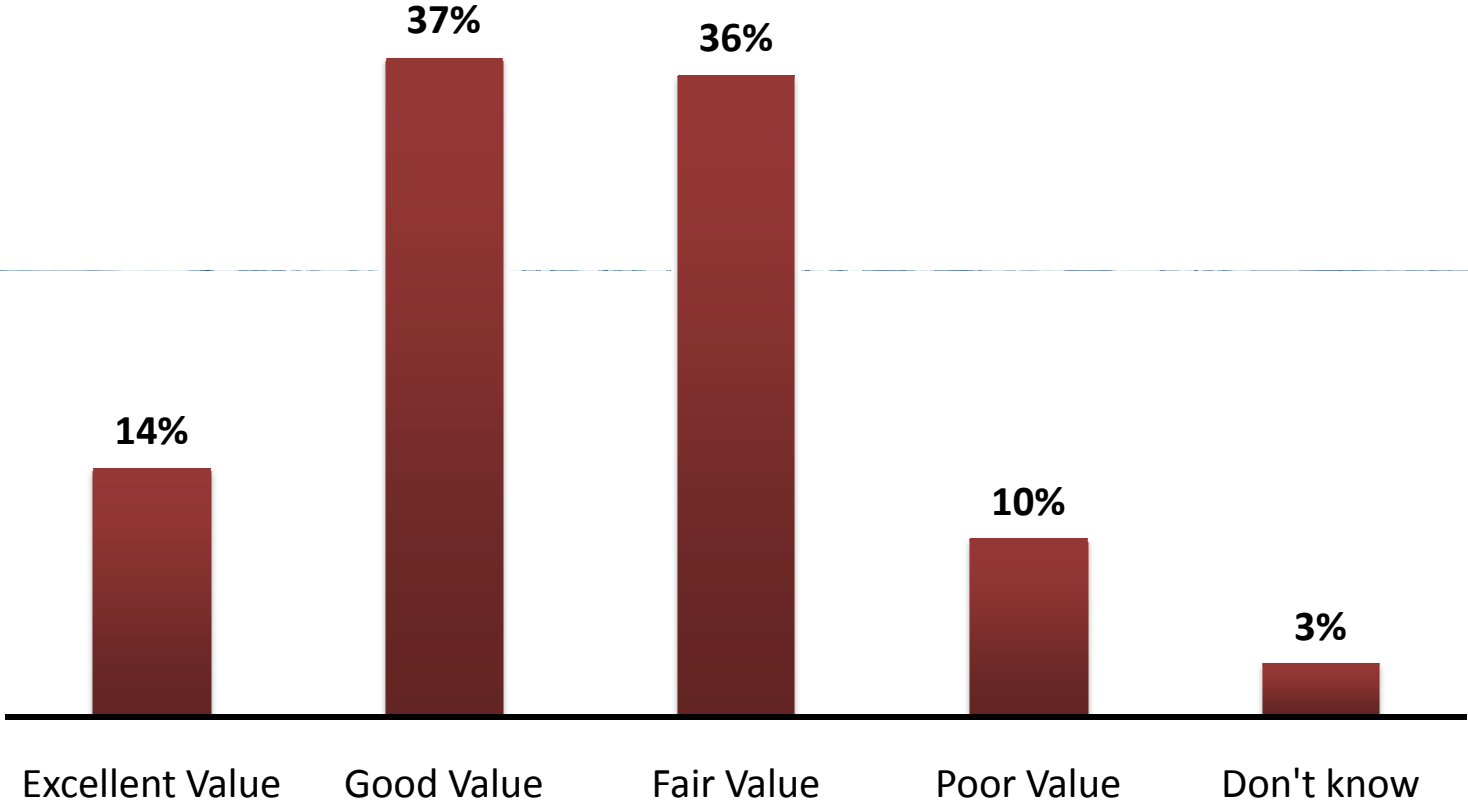


**\* 1% of citizens recommend reducing emergency medical services.**



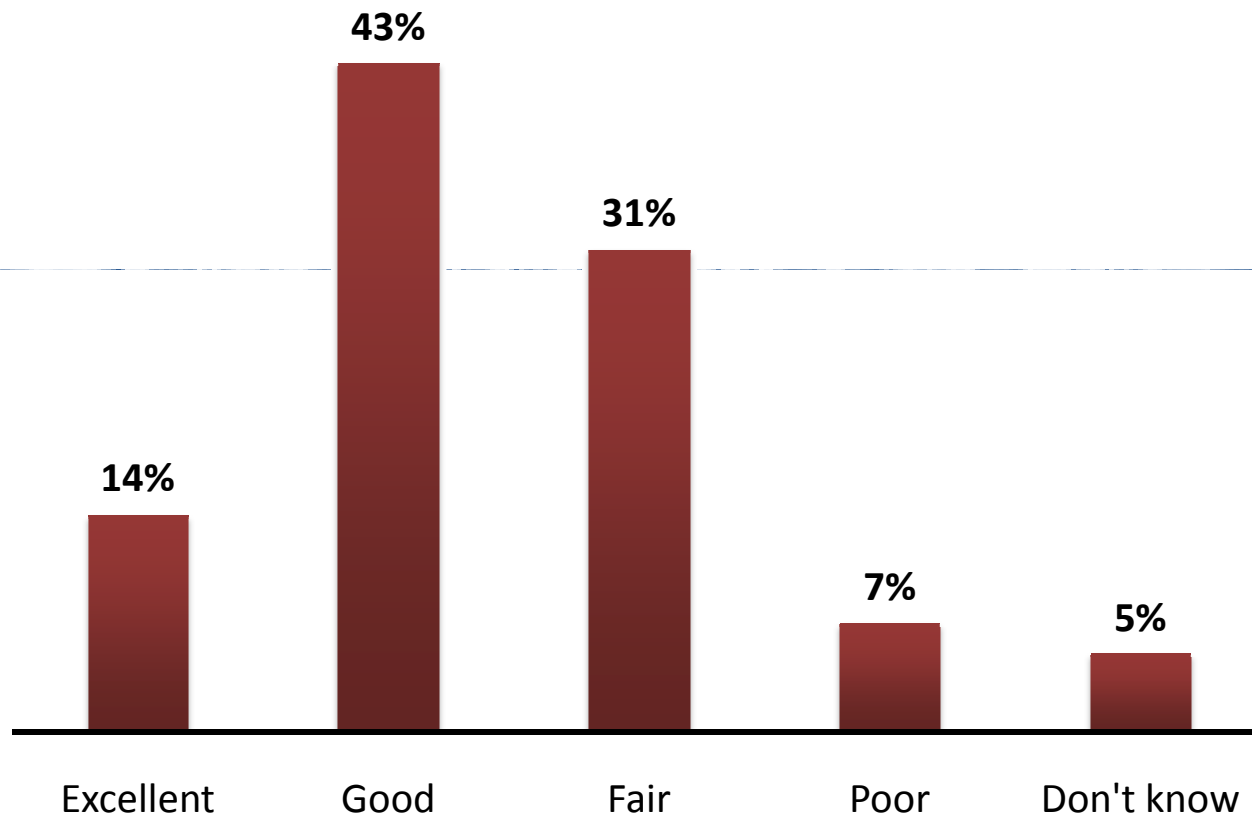
GIVEN WHAT YOU PAY IN TAXES AND FEES TO CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE **VALUE OF THE SERVICES** YOU RECEIVE?

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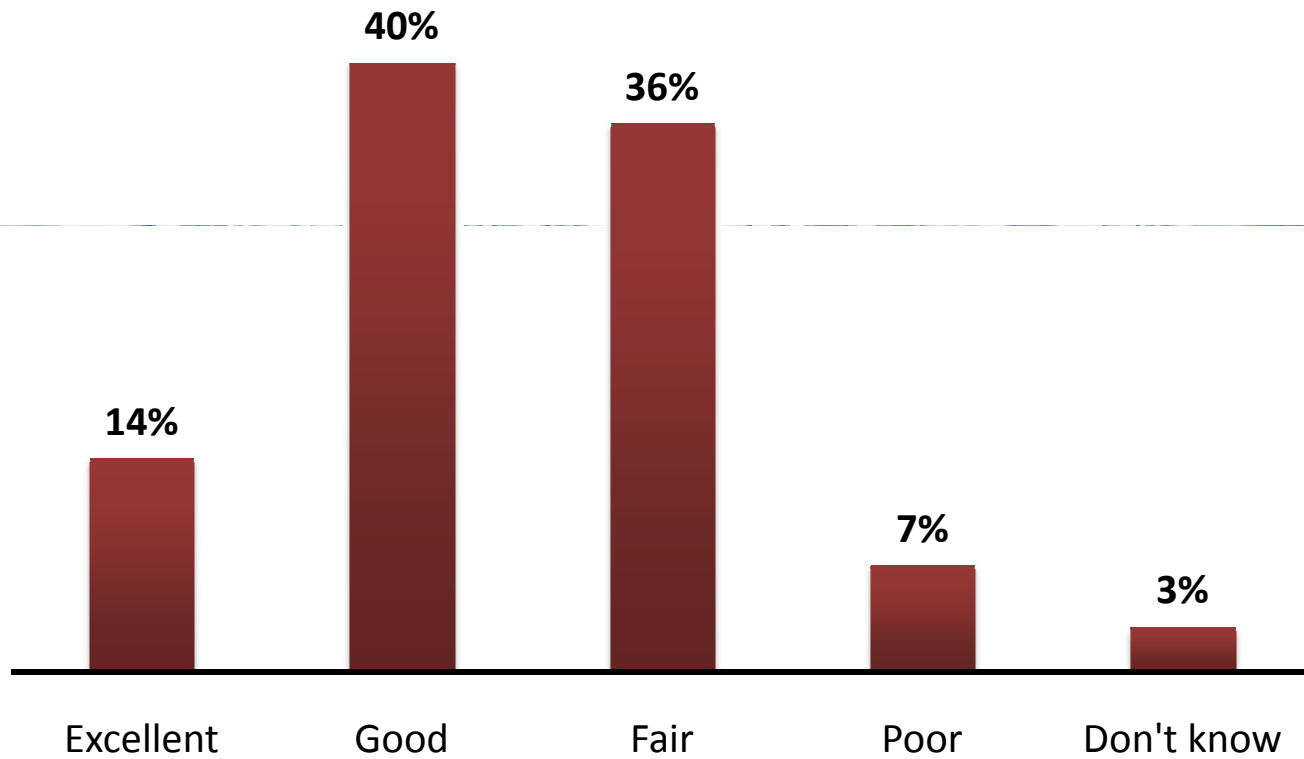
OVERALL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE **QUALITY OF SERVICES** PERFORMED OR PROVIDED BY THE **CITY OF TALLAHASSEE** GOVERNMENT?

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OVERALL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE **QUALITY OF SERVICES** PERFORMED OR PROVIDED BY **LEON COUNTY** GOVERNMENT?

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## TALLAHASSEEVOICES METHODOLOGY

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All residents of Leon County 18 and older who have access to a computer at home, work, or school may participate in *TallahasseeVoices* by going to [www.tallahasseevoices.com](http://www.tallahasseevoices.com) and completing a short demographic profile. The panel now has over 3,000 participants.

*Validity of TallahasseeVoices' surveys.* Since over 90% of Leon County residents have access to computers at home, work, or school, the sampling frame available to *TallahasseeVoices* is greater than the sampling frame available to the more traditional random digit dialing telephone methodology that has been the standard of the survey research industry for 30 years. Presently, 88% of Americans have land-based telephones. Given Leon County's young population, the figure is lower locally.

TallahasseeVoices does not use probability sampling techniques – anyone with access to a computer can join. As a pro bono project, we depend on media coverage and word-of-mouth to grow the size of our panel. Our hope is to have all local citizens participate – that would truly be democracy in action.

*Predictive validity.* One critical measure of the validity of a survey is its predictive validity, i. e., can survey results predict how people will act. *TallahasseeVoices* surveys have accurately predicted results of local elections including the coal plant referendum , the vote to move City elections to the fall, the recent vote on property tax reform, and many local political races.

For further information on *TallahasseeVoices*, please contact Phillip Downs, Ph.D., at [pd@kerr-downs.com](mailto:pd@kerr-downs.com).

