

# Tax Increase?

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

This survey was conducted in July 2013.

504 citizens responded to the survey.

Results were weighted to reflect the demographics of the 90%+ local residents who have access to the Internet at home, work, or school.

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# Motivation for Survey

The City of Tallahassee has been seeking methods of closing a \$5.3 million shortfall in its projected budget. TallahasseeVoices is designed to provide opinions on critical issues such as budgeting from a broad, representative set of residents.

While the City believes it is facing a budget shortfall, the graph on the following page tells a different story. Since 2003, the City spent \$1.3 billion more than it would have spent if it had followed the rate of annual increase it established from 1990 to 2003, namely 4% increase per year.

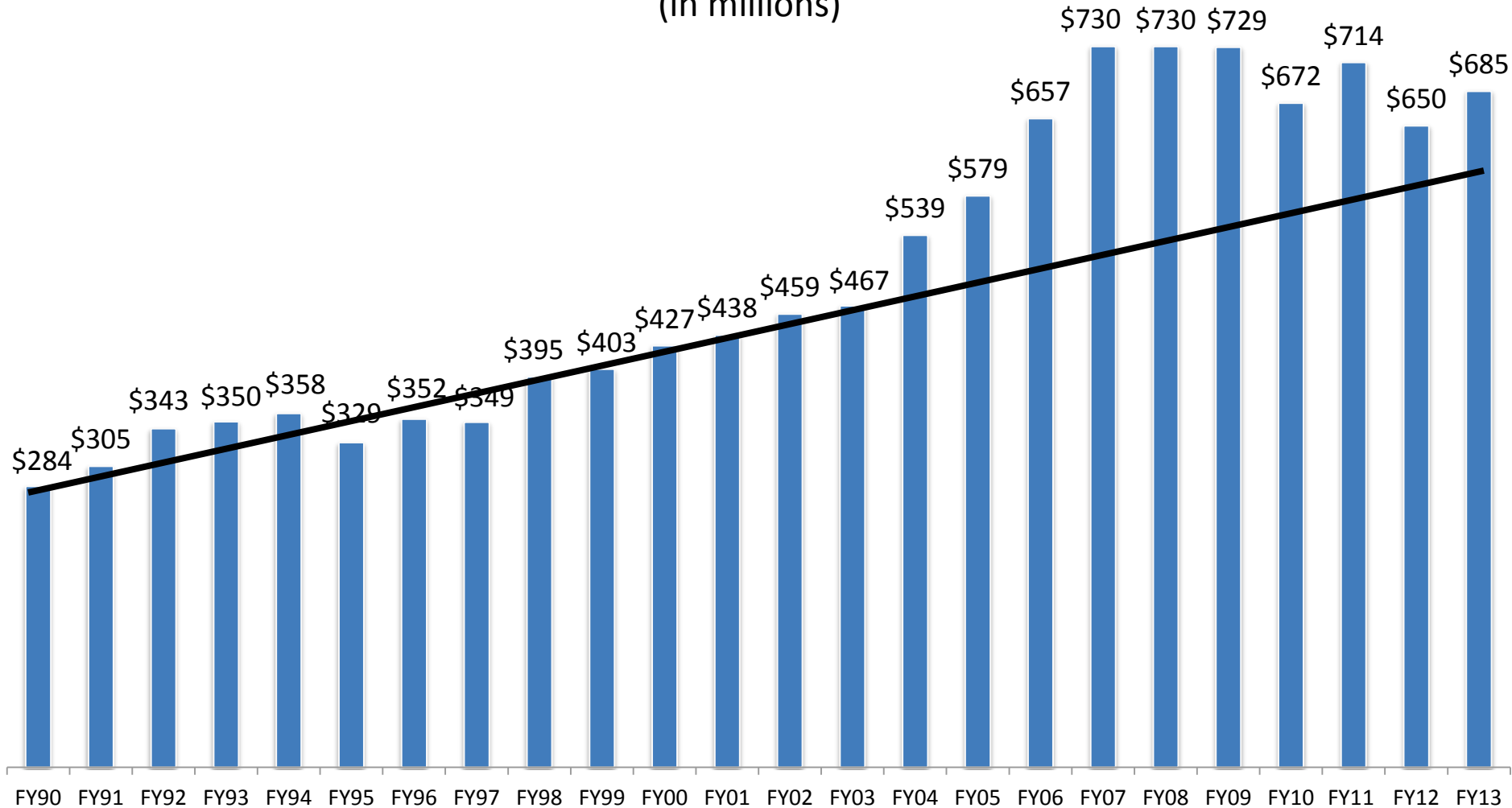
City budget excesses since 2003 have cost each 4-person household \$27,200.

If the City had increased its budget 4% per year from 2003 to 2013, next year's budget would be less than \$600 million rather than \$685 million.

Budgets in the past several years have stabilized, yet budget excesses in 2003 to 2007 have yet to be digested.

# City of Tallahassee Operating Budget

(in millions)



Trend line drawn to match budget years 1990 through 2003, which averaged 4% increase per year.

From 2004 - 2013, the City's budget exceeded the 4% per year increase by a total of \$1.3 billion or \$130 million per year.

Total excess spending from 2004 to 2013 was \$6,800 for each woman, man, and child; \$27,200 for a family of 4.

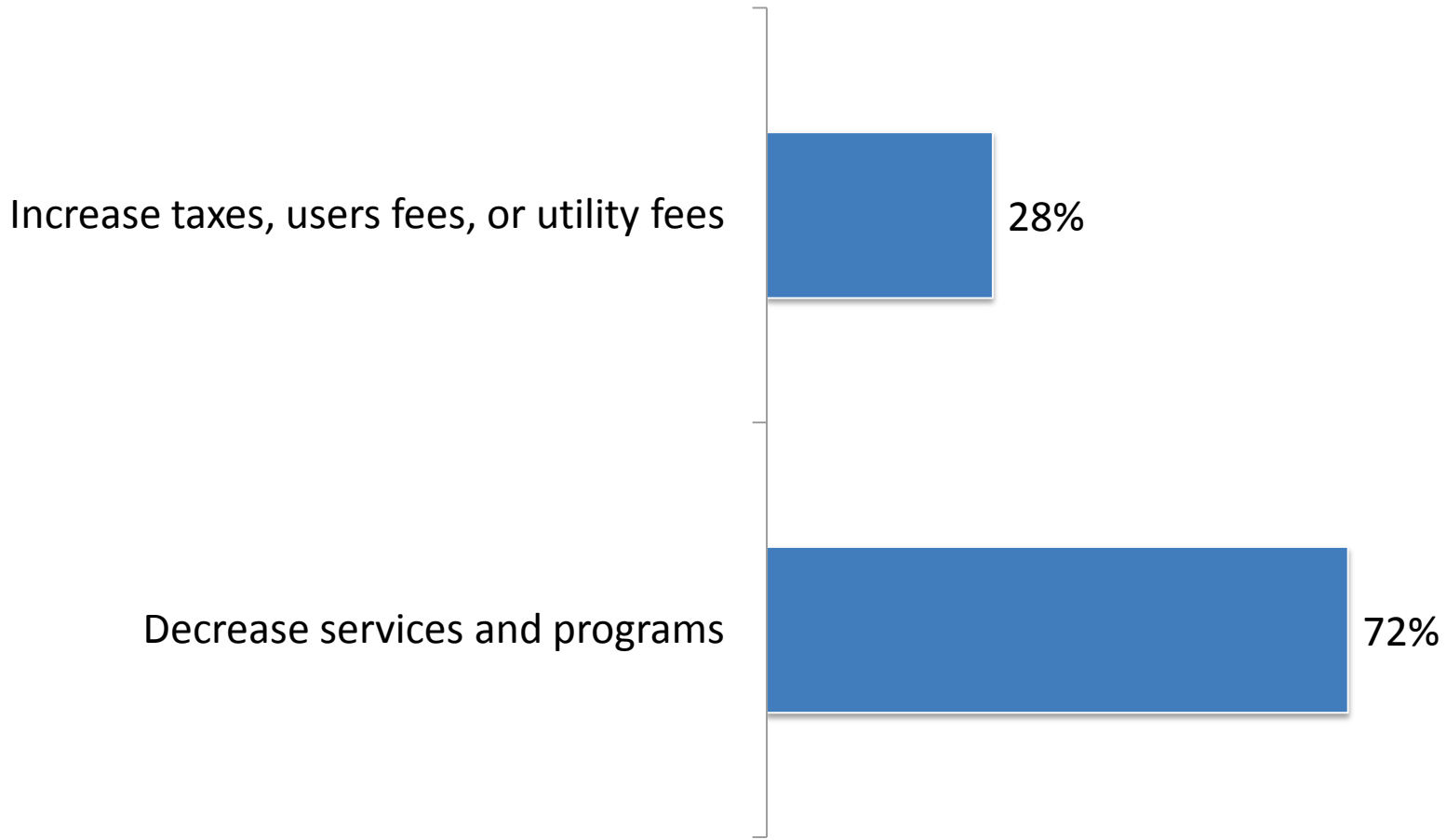
# Citizens' Opinions

- 72% of citizens prefer decreases in City services and programs
  - 28% of citizens prefer increases in local taxes, user fees, utility fees, etc.
- 75% of citizens oppose a 5.4% increase in property taxes (\$3.70/thousand to \$3.90/thousand)
- 76% of citizens oppose a 5¢/gallon gas tax increase
- 89% of citizens oppose taking more money from City utilities to run other departments if the end result is higher utility fees
- 65% of citizens oppose adding 28 new employees as shown in the City's proposed budget
- 60% of citizens oppose adding 6 new police officers as shown in the City's proposed budget

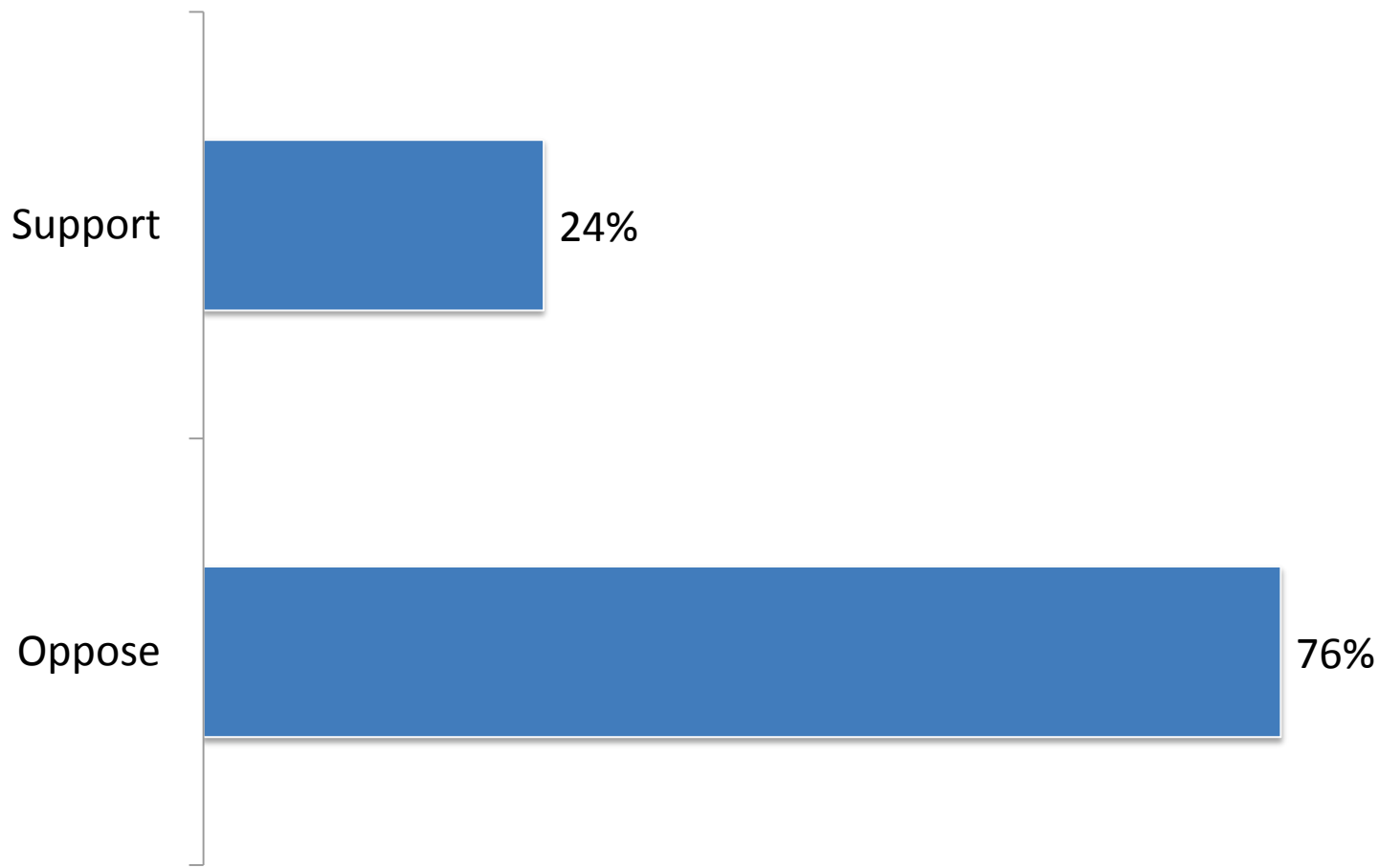
# Historic Perspective

- July 2013 28% of citizens prefer increases in local taxes, user fees, utility fees
- Aug 2012 27% of citizens support a county property tax increase
- Aug 2012 28% of citizens prefer a 5% increase in local taxes, fees, etc.
- Feb 2011 26% of citizens believe perceived increases in City services justify City budget increases since 2000
- Feb 2011 28% of citizens believe City's budget has increased at the right pace since 2011
- July 2008 21% of citizens want City & County to increase taxes and fees
- July 2008 60% of citizens have no idea what increased/improved services they received from much higher than average increases in local government budgets from 2003 to 2008

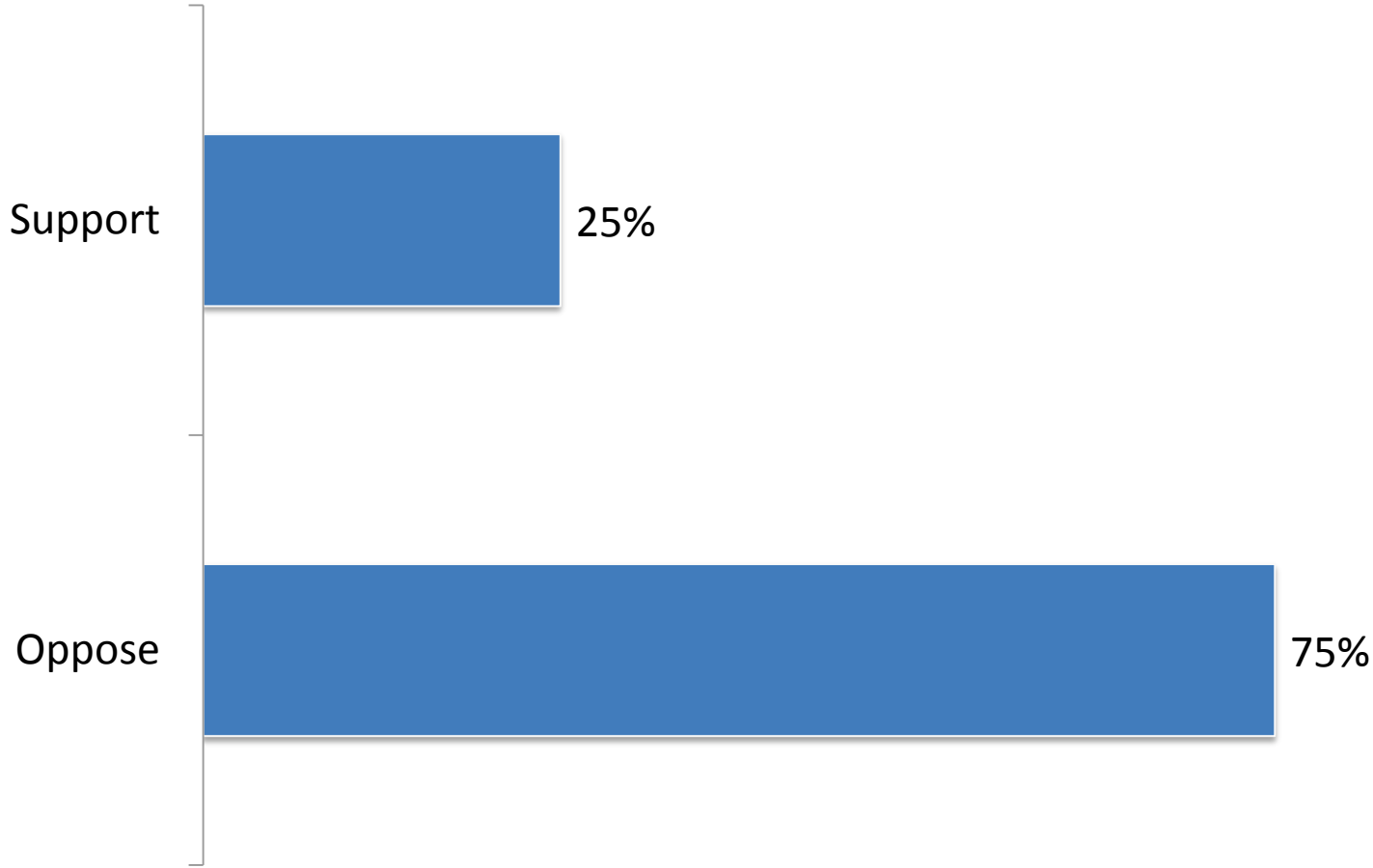
The City of Tallahassee is facing a \$5.3 million shortfall in its projected 2014 budget. To close the budget gap, which of the following do you prefer?



Some City staff and commissioners favor a 5 cent per gallon increase in gas taxes to close the budget gap. Do you support or oppose a 5 cent per gallon increase in gas taxes to close the budget gap?

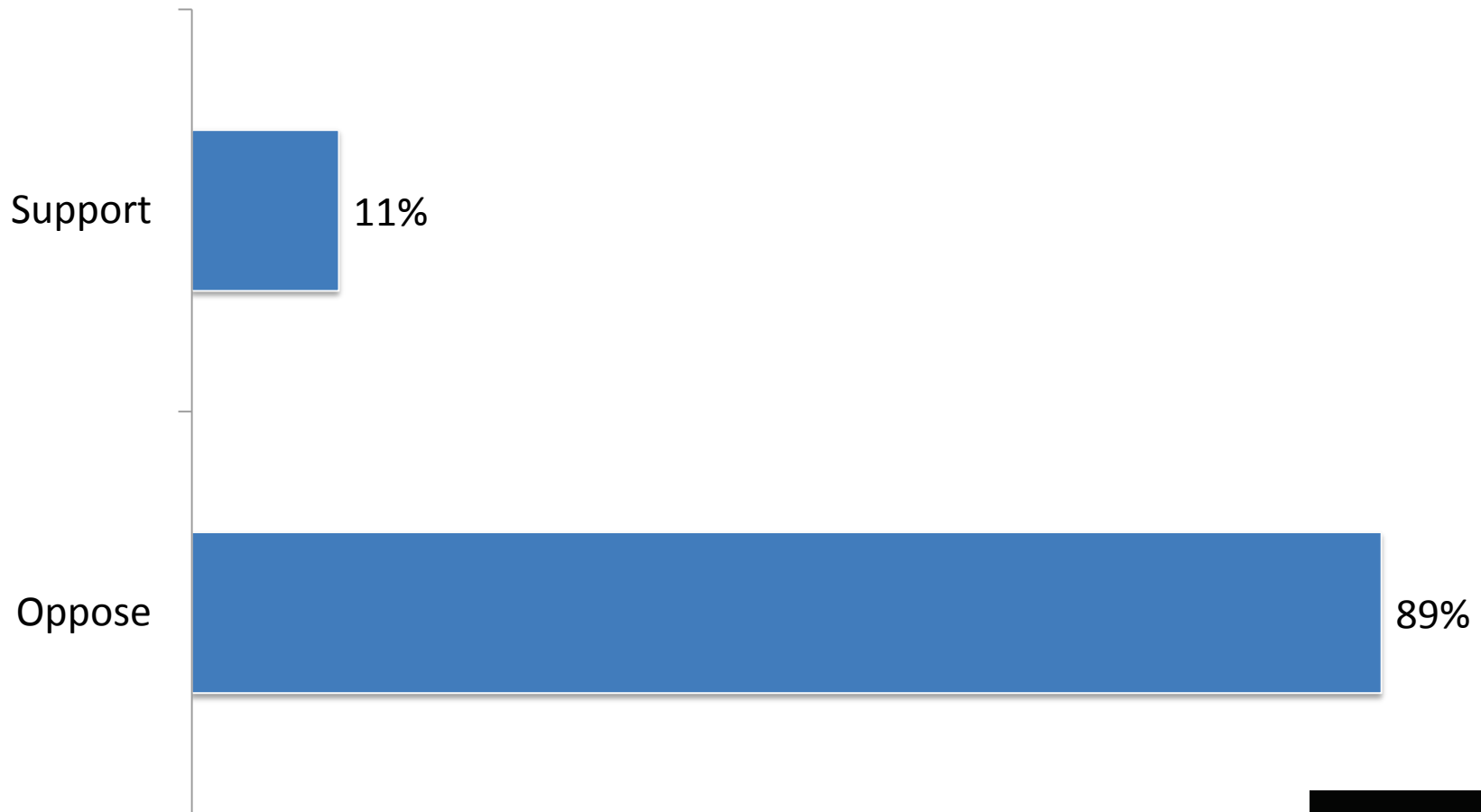


Some City staff and commissioners favor a 5.4% increase in property taxes to close the budget gap. Do you support or oppose a 5.4% increase in property taxes to close the City's budget gap?

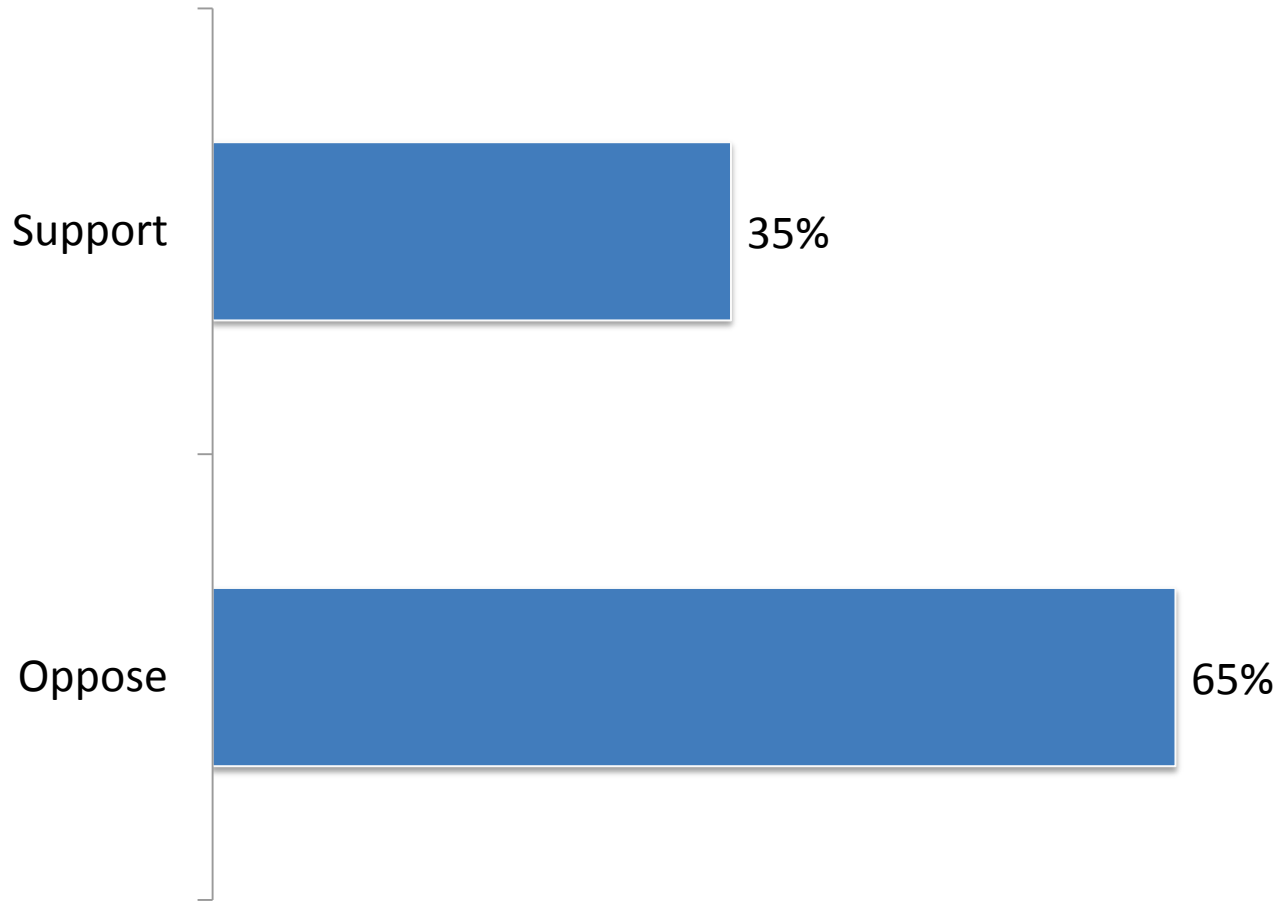




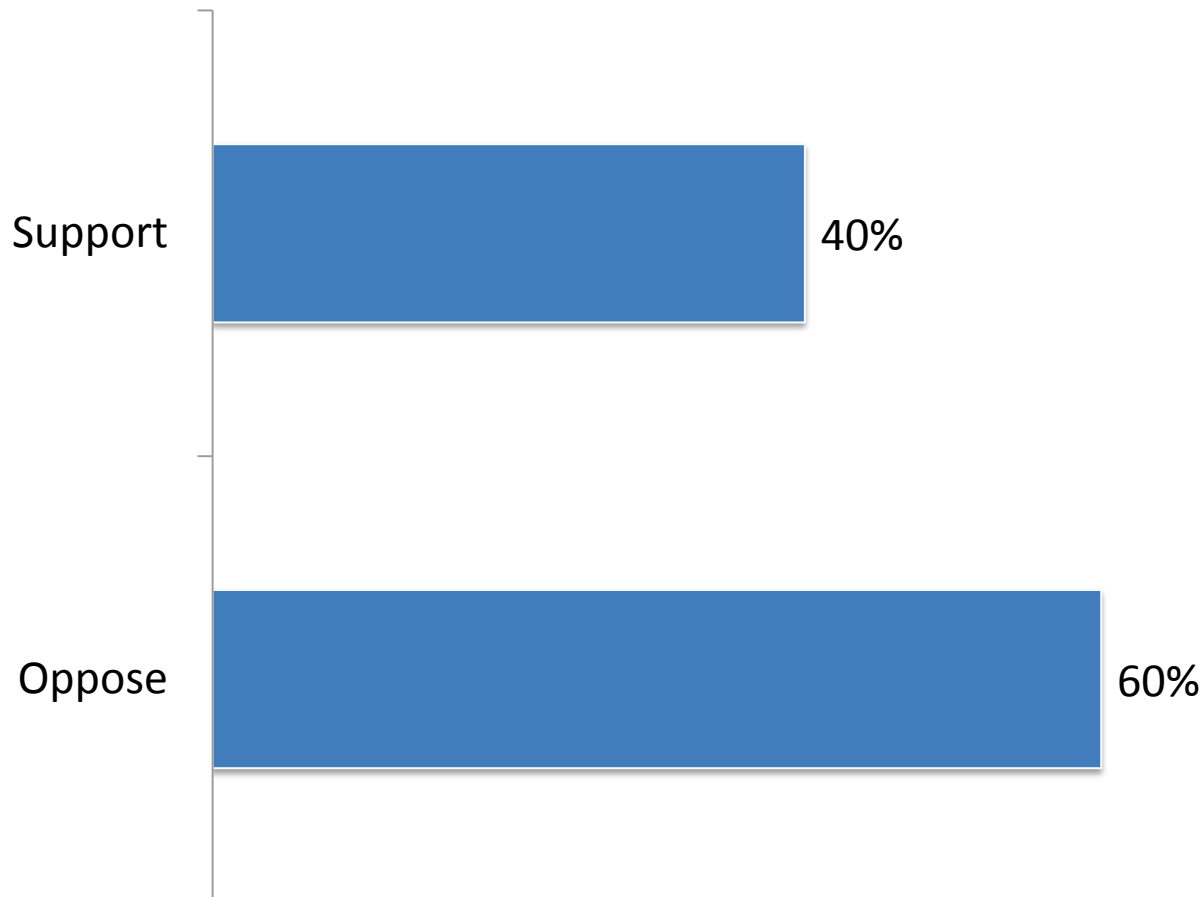
Some City staff and commissioners favor taking more money from the money you pay for City utilities to run other government departments to close the budget gap. This ultimately would lead to higher utility bills for residents and businesses. Do you support or oppose taking more money from the money you pay for City utilities to run other government departments to close the budget gap?



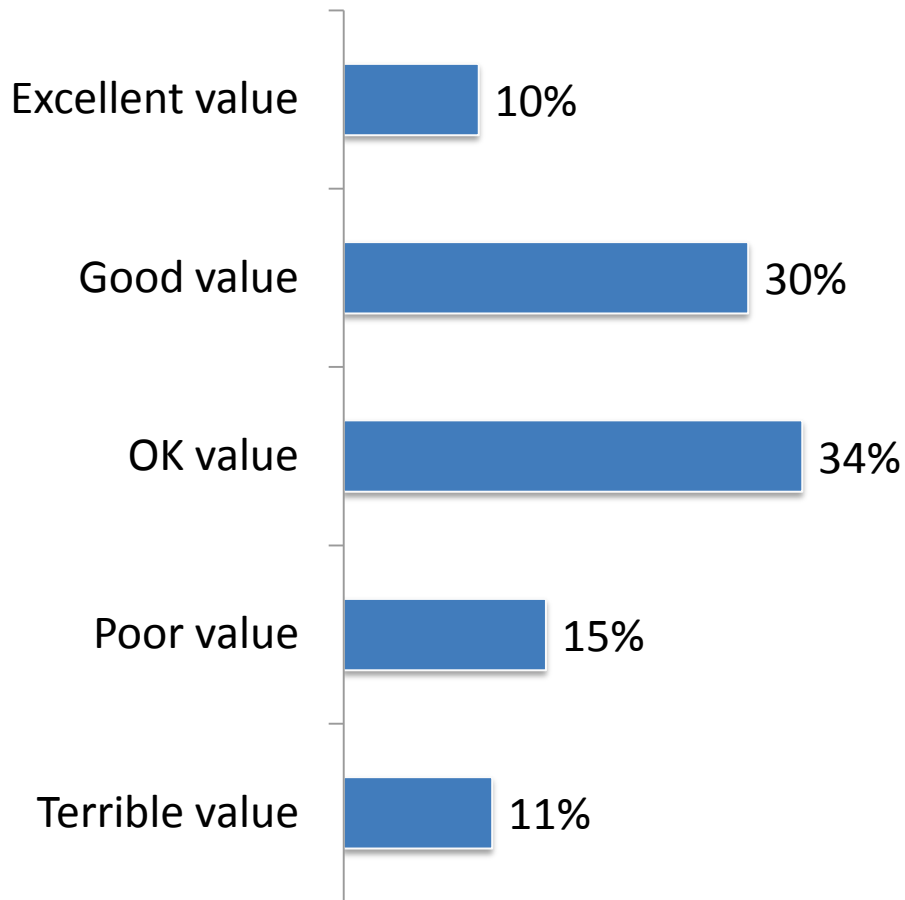
Part of the proposed budget of \$854.5 million includes adding 28 new employees. Do you support or oppose the City adding 28 new employees?



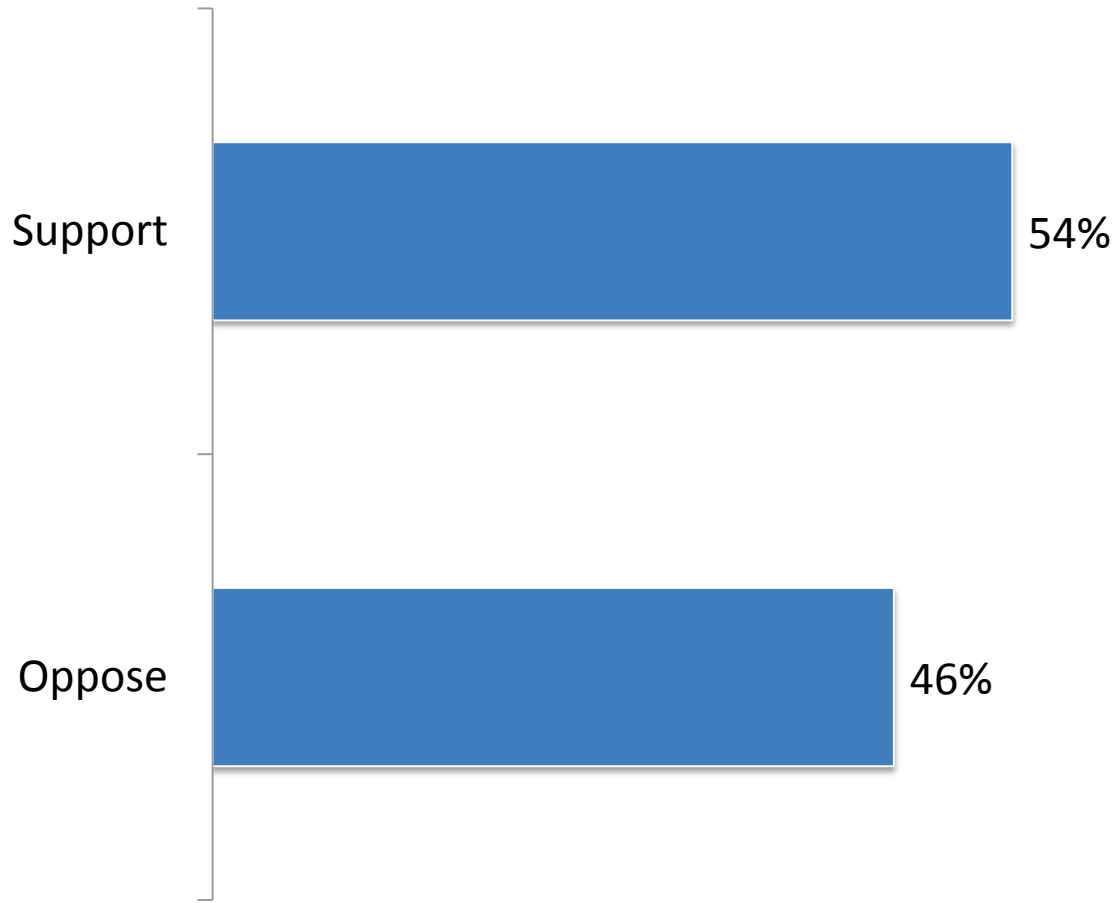
Part of the proposed budget of \$854.5 million includes adding 6 police officers who, along with vehicles and equipment, will cost \$810,000 during the 1<sup>st</sup> year and \$300,000 every year thereafter. Do you support or oppose the City adding 6 new police officers?



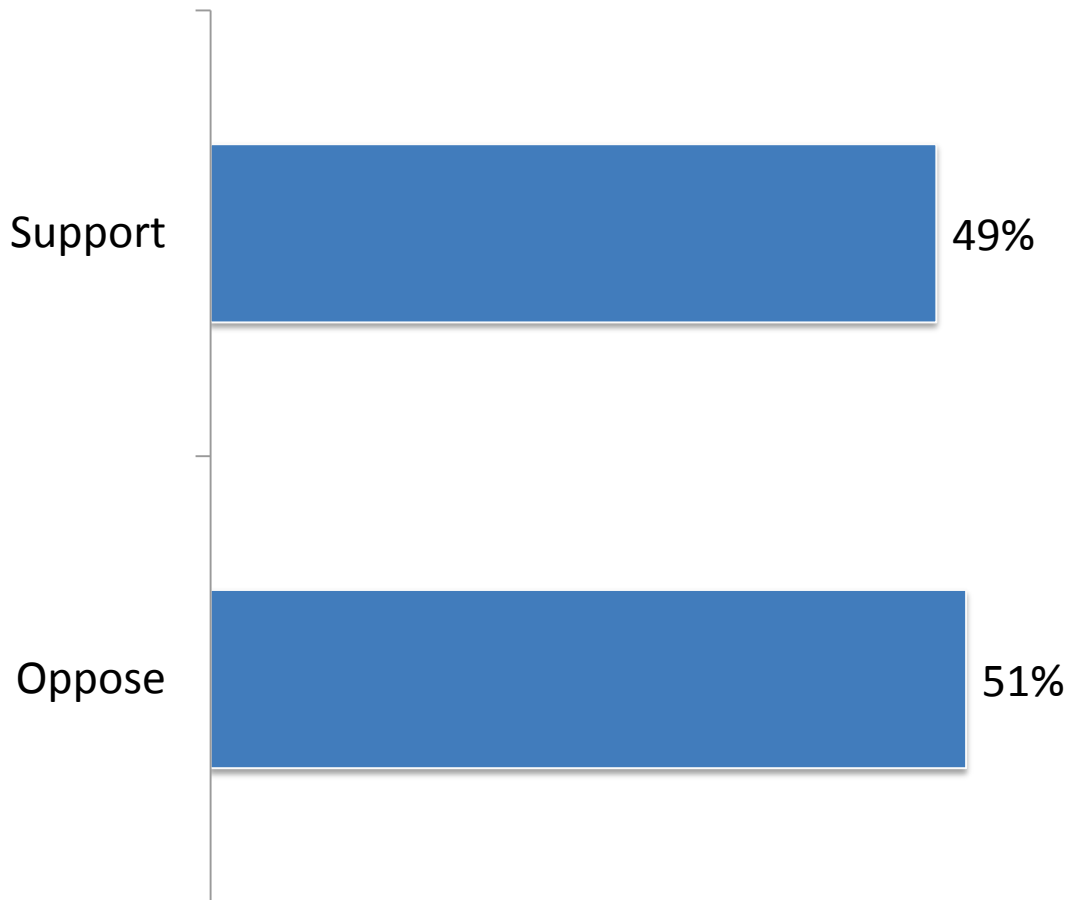
Based on what you pay through taxes, fees, utilities, etc., to the City of Tallahassee, and based on everything you receive from the City of Tallahassee, how would you rate the value you receive from the City?



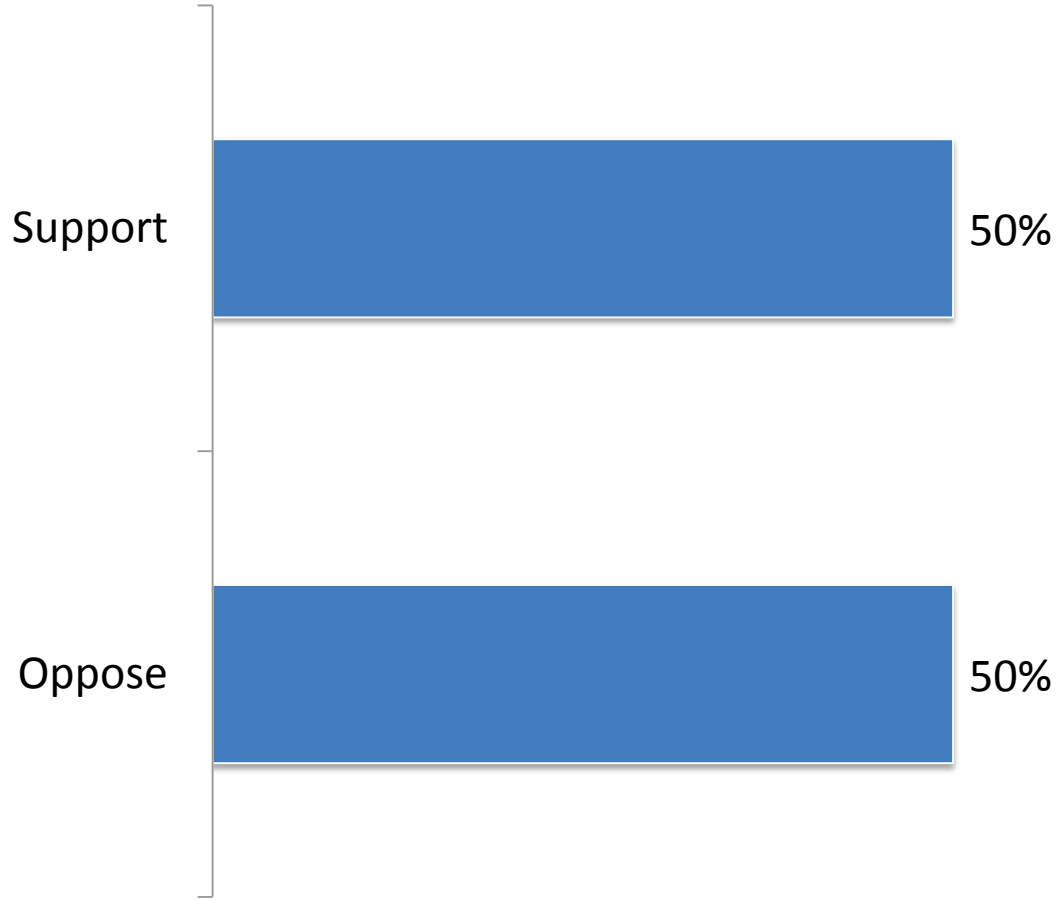
Some City staff and commissioners favor laying off employees and/or cutting programs and services to close the budget gap. Do you support or oppose laying off employees and/or cutting programs and services to close the budget gap?



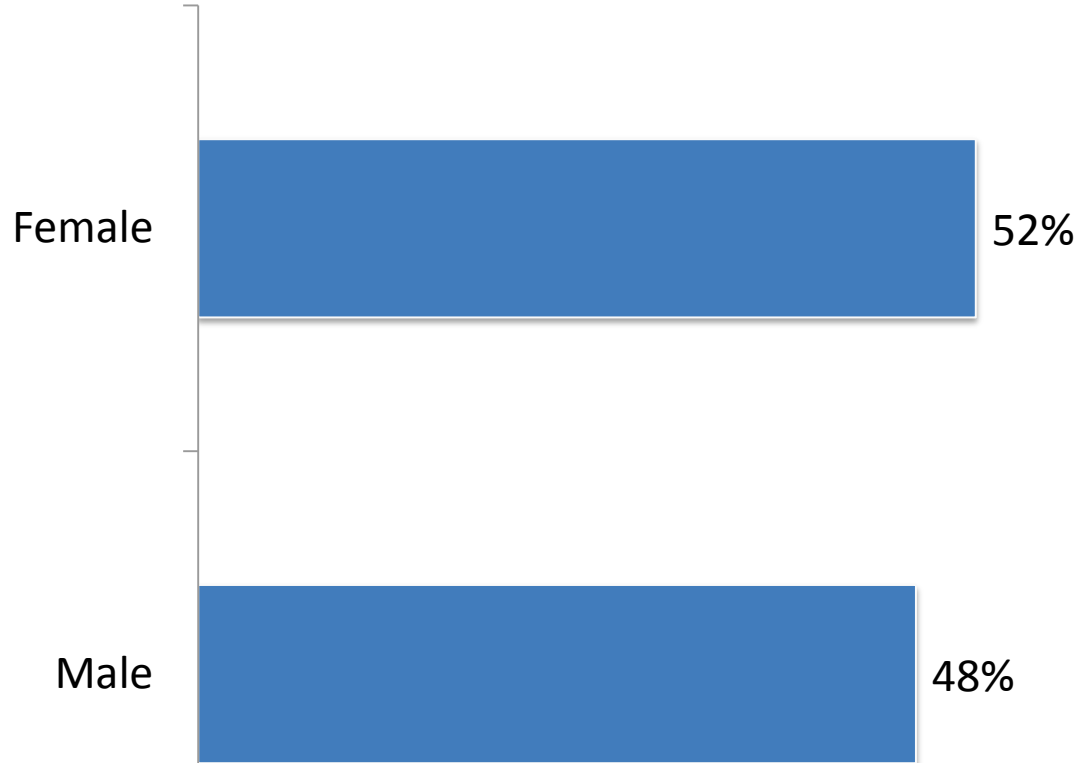
Some City staff and commissioners favor cutting \$4 million from the capital projects budget and reserves to close the budget gap. This would adversely affect the ability to fund new infrastructure projects such as sewer improvements, utility improvements, power plant improvements, road improvements, etc. Do you support or oppose cutting \$4 million from the capital projects budget and reserves to close the budget gap?



The City's proposed budget includes a 2.5% raise for the City's 2,300 employees. Do you oppose or support a raise for City employees?



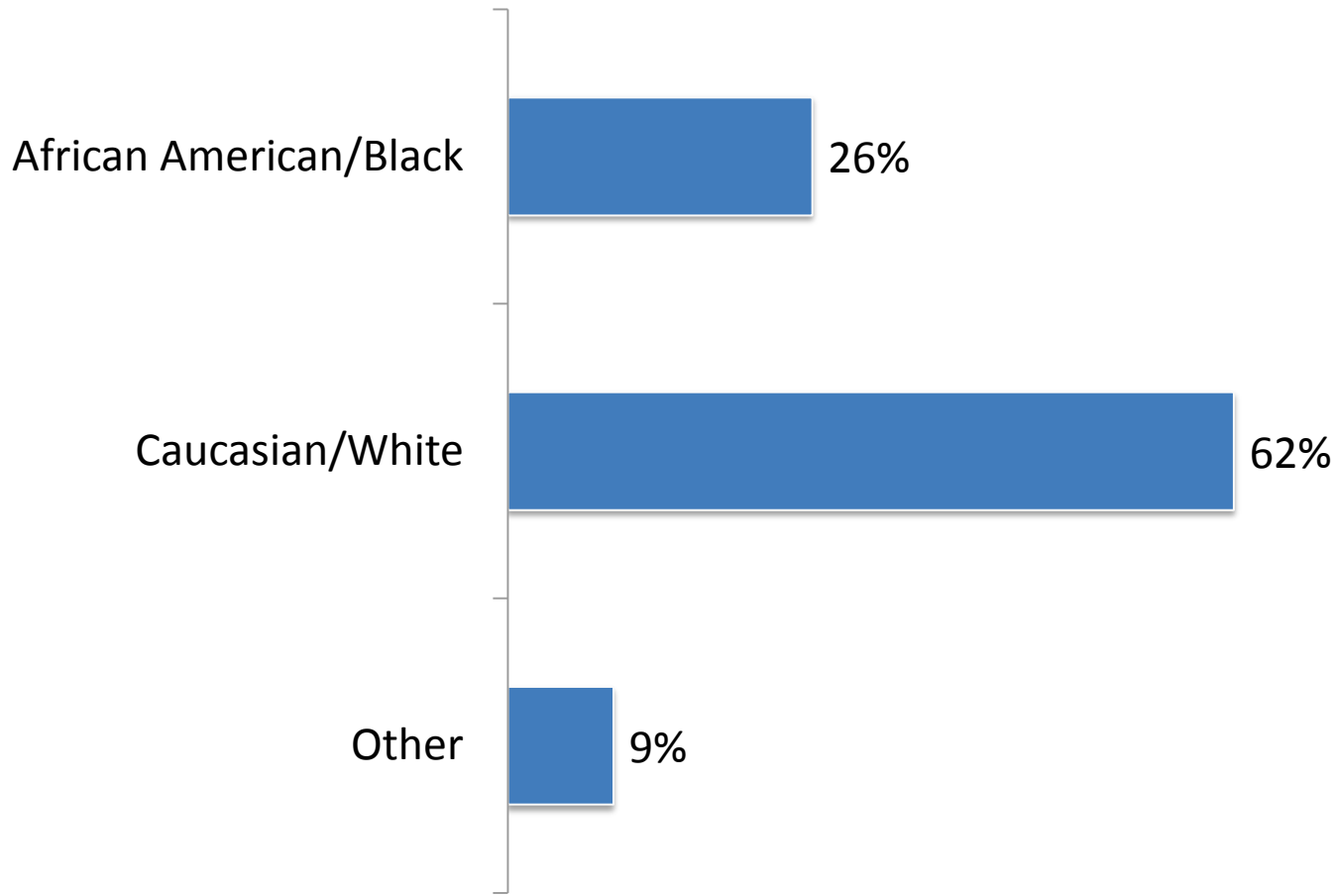
## Gender



TallahasseeVoices panelists responding to this study are representative of local residents in terms of gender, income and race/ethnicity.



## Race/ethnicity



## Income

