

The State of Education in Illinois 2023-2024 Report

March 5, 2024



ILLINOIS
EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION



Overview



- **Good schools remain a top priority for Illinois and most continue to think:**
 - Every child deserves a quality education
 - Teachers are hard-working and underpaid
 - Schools in their community are pretty good
- **But school is harder than it used to be, in almost every way.**
- **The public supports solutions**
 - More funding for schools, teachers, and paraprofessionals
 - Ensuring fair benefits for retirement
 - Investment in mental health and making schools safer
 - Students with special needs having the resources they need to succeed
 - Teachers and parents leading in the classroom without input from politicians

Poll details



Conducted by:

- Jill Normington of Normington Petts
- Pat Brady of Next Generation Strategies

Sample:

- 1,000 adults (not just voters) in Illinois

Dates:

- January 22-25, 2024 (2023-2024 school year)

Margin of error:

- +/- 3.1% with 95% confidence

Data weighted:

- U.S. Census data for Illinois

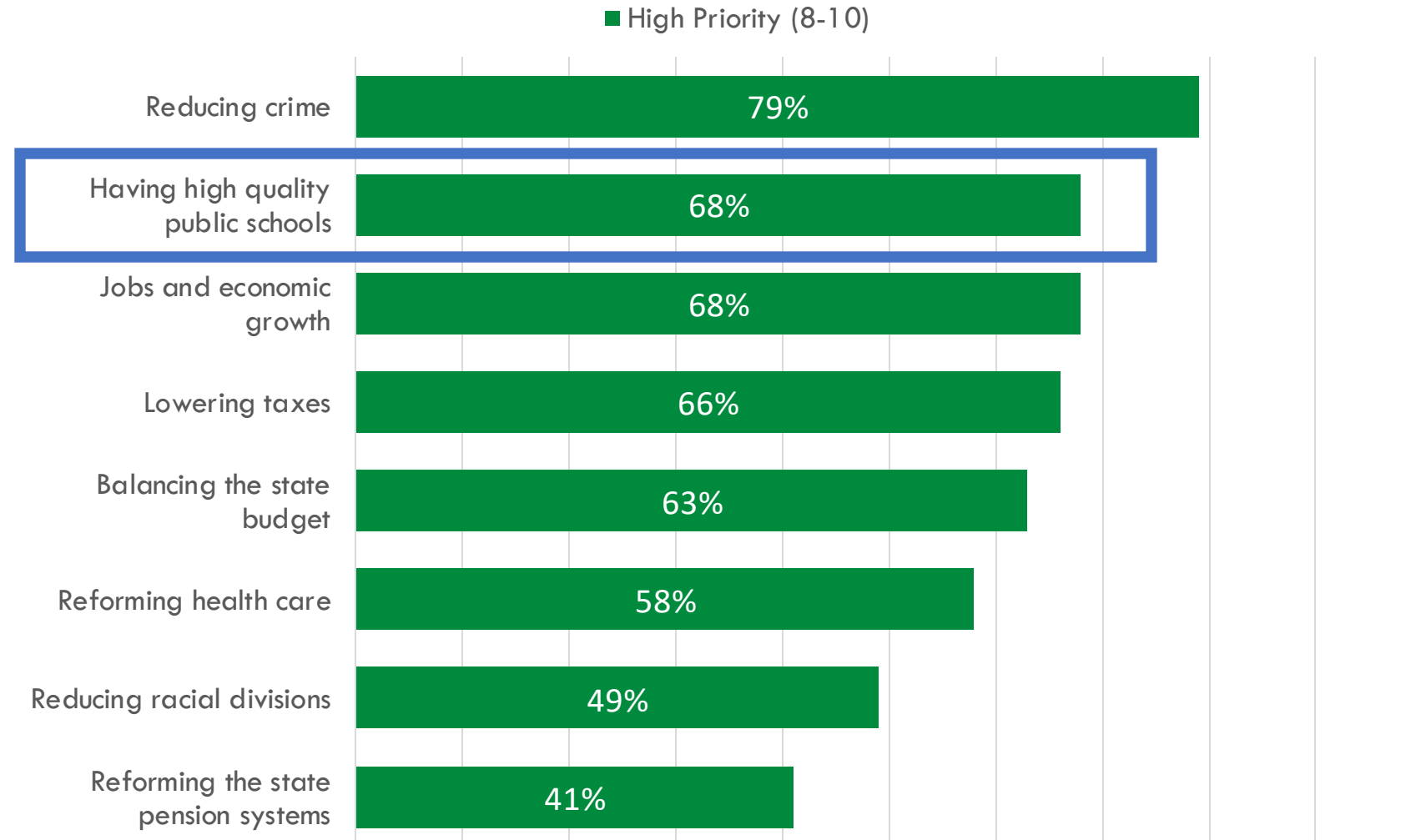
Previous waves were:

- 2018-2019 school year
- 2019-2020 school year
- 2020-2021 school year
- 2021-2022 school year
- 2022-2023 school year

High quality schools
are more important
to the public than
balancing the state's
budget,
jobs and
economic growth



“Now, I am going to read you a list of priorities for Illinois. Please tell me how important each one is to you, personally, on a scale of zero to ten where a zero means not a priority at all and ten means it is your top priority.”



Illinoisans' grades for local schools have improved and continue to outpace statewide and national equivalents



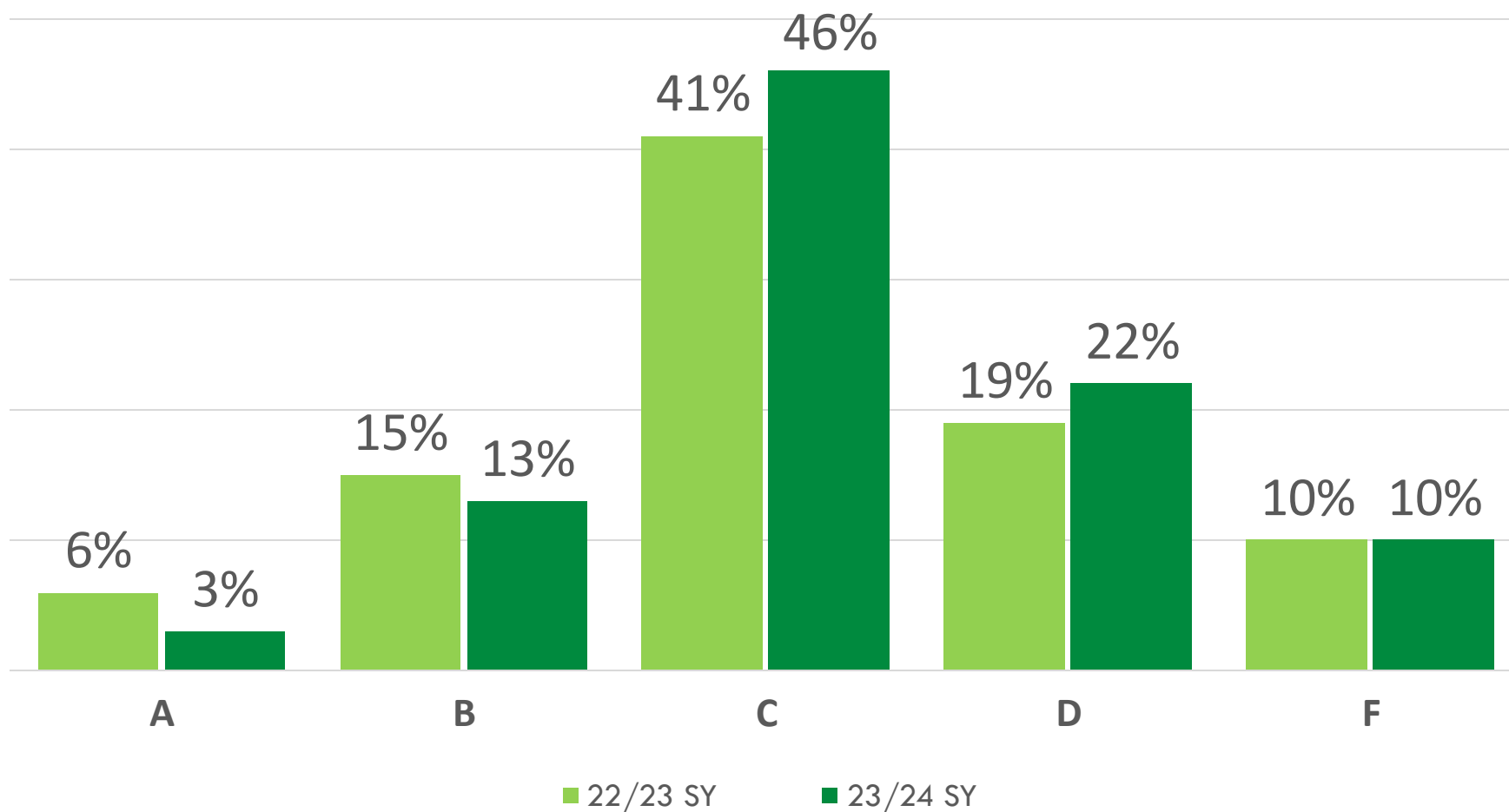
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Illinoisans give poor grades to public schools nationally



"What grade would you give the public schools in the nation as a whole?"



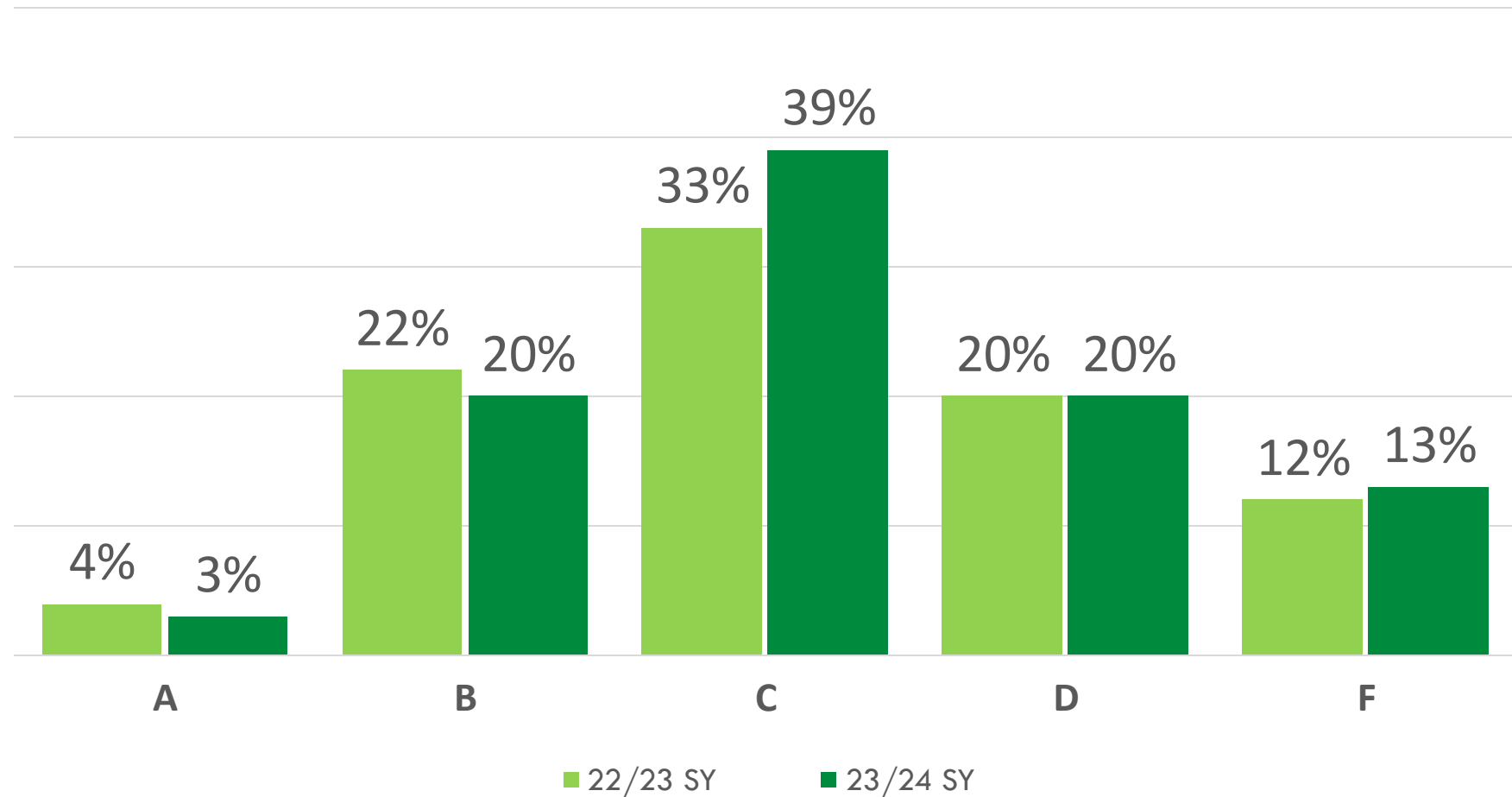
Previous GPA: **1.87**

Current GPA: **1.75**

Illinois public schools are graded similarly to public schools nationally



"What grade would you give the public schools in Illinois as a whole?"



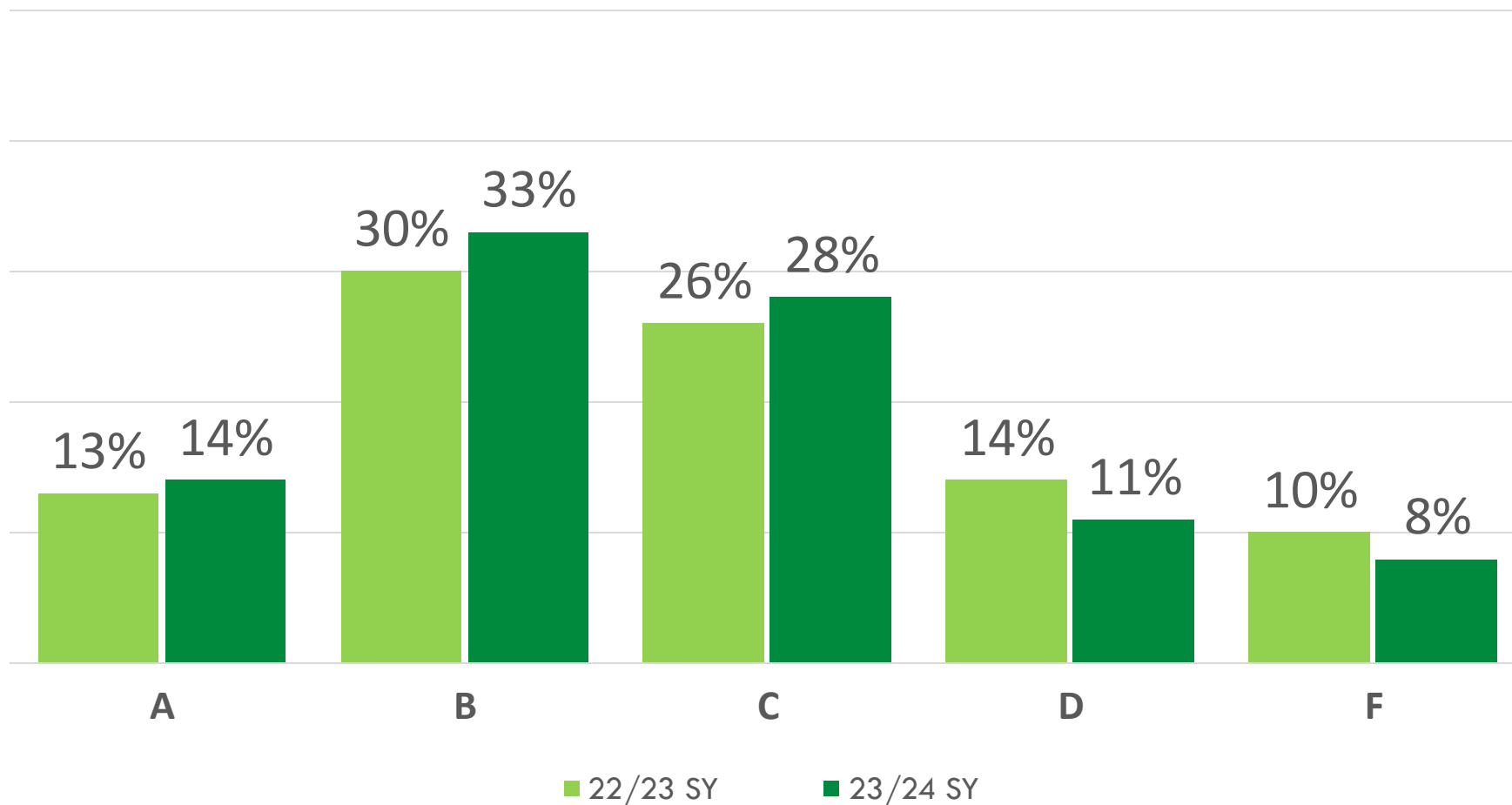
Previous GPA: **1.85**

Current GPA: **1.77**

Local schools get higher grades



"What grade would you give the public schools in your local community?"



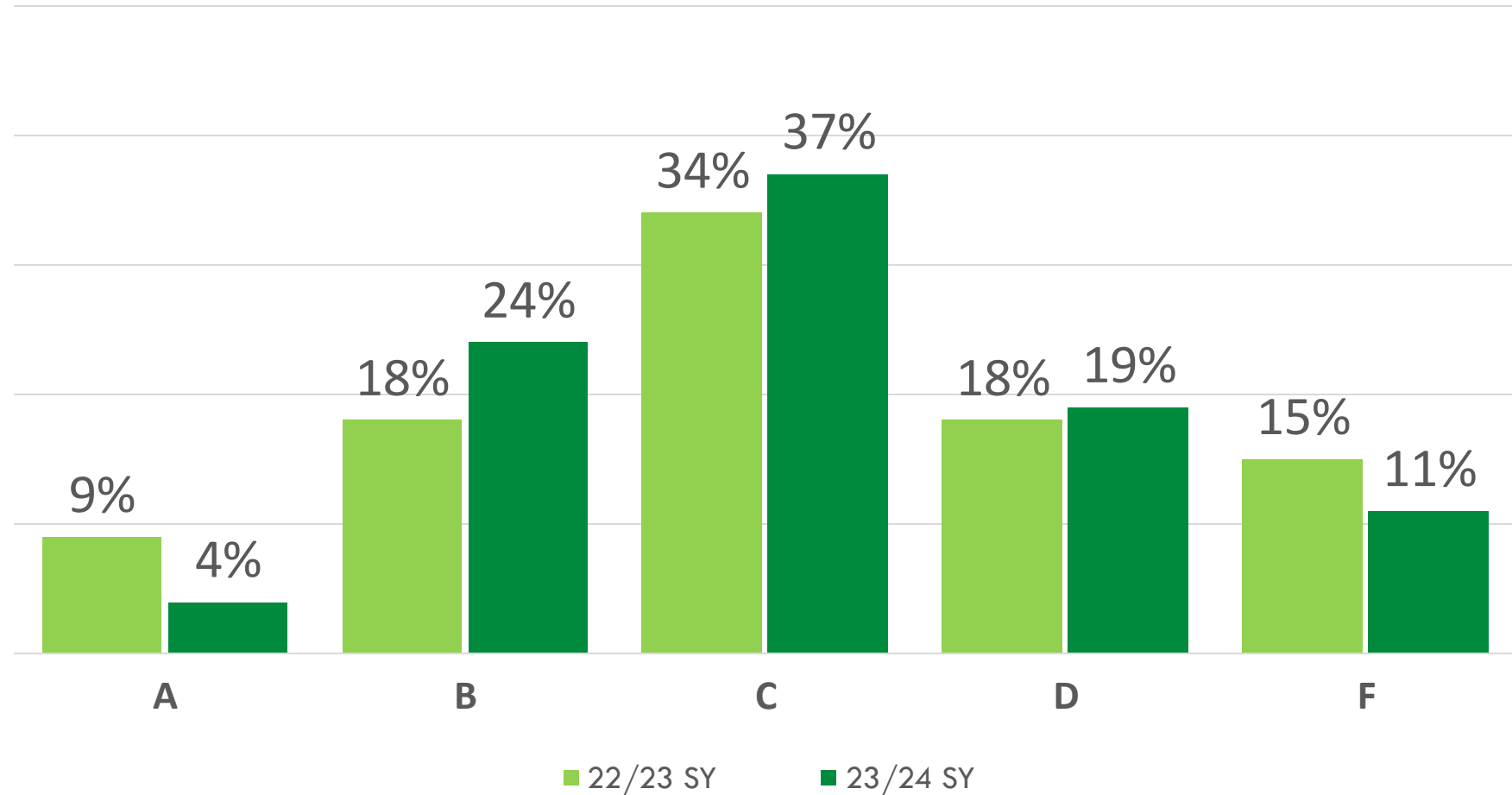
Previous GPA: **2.25**

Current GPA: **2.36**

Illinoisans give public schools better ratings for preparing students to succeed



"How would you grade Illinois public schools on preparing students with the skills they need to succeed after graduating?"



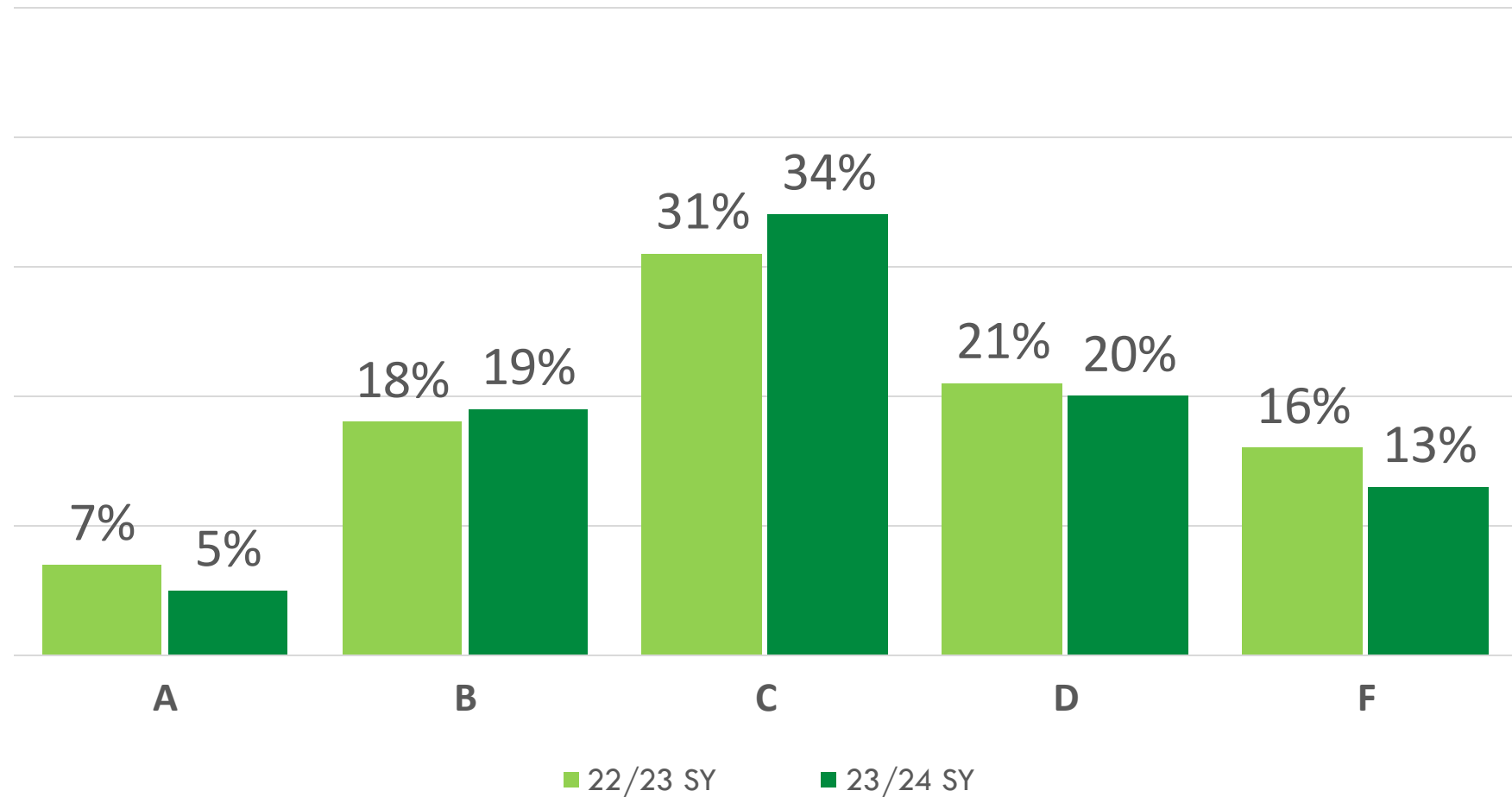
Previous GPA: **2.79**

Current GPA: **2.86**

They give similar
grades to
meeting the
needs of students



"How would you grade Illinois public schools on meeting the social and emotional needs of students?"



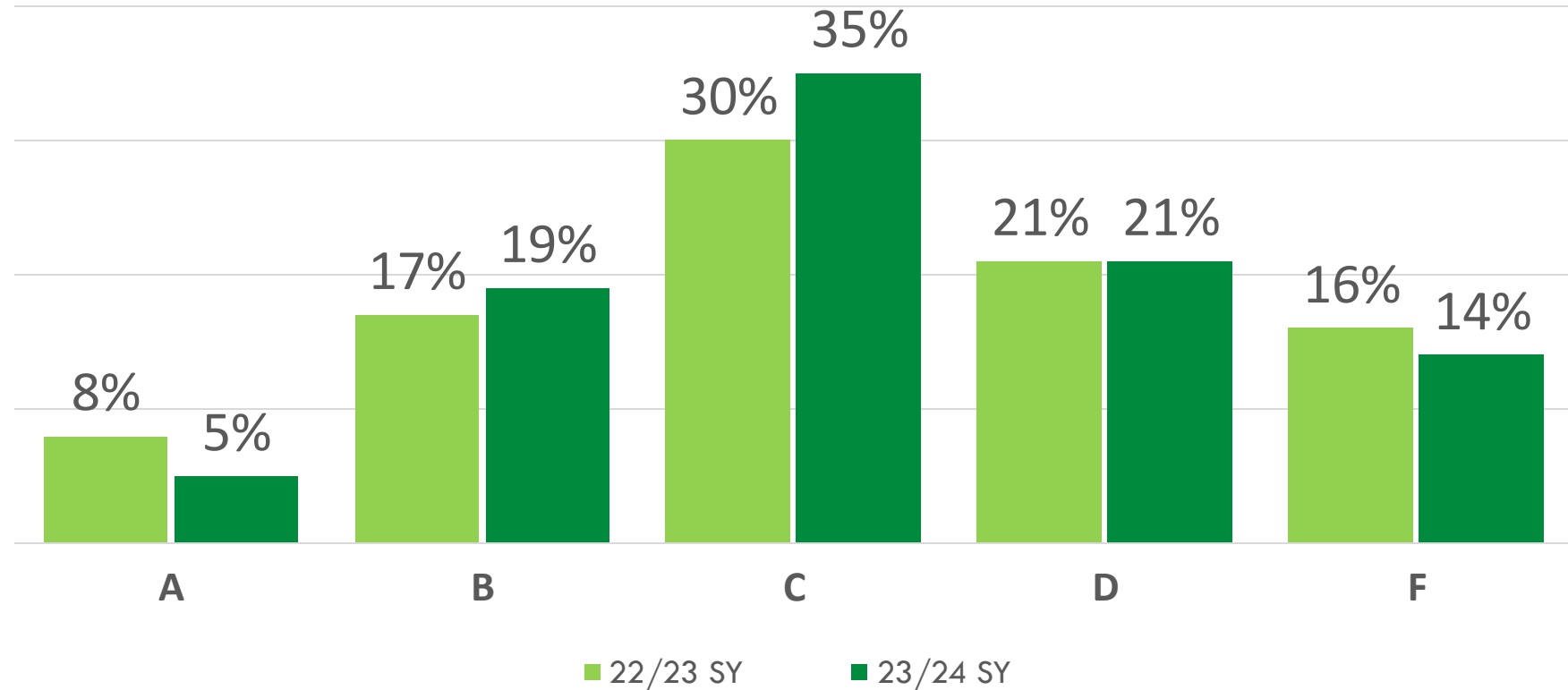
Previous GPA: **2.85**

Current GPA: **2.88**

Illinoisans believe public schools are doing a slightly better job at attracting and retaining the best educators.



"How would you grade Illinois public schools on attracting and retaining the best educators?"



Previous GPA: **2.84**

Current GPA: **2.91**

**The public supports policies that support
school employees.**



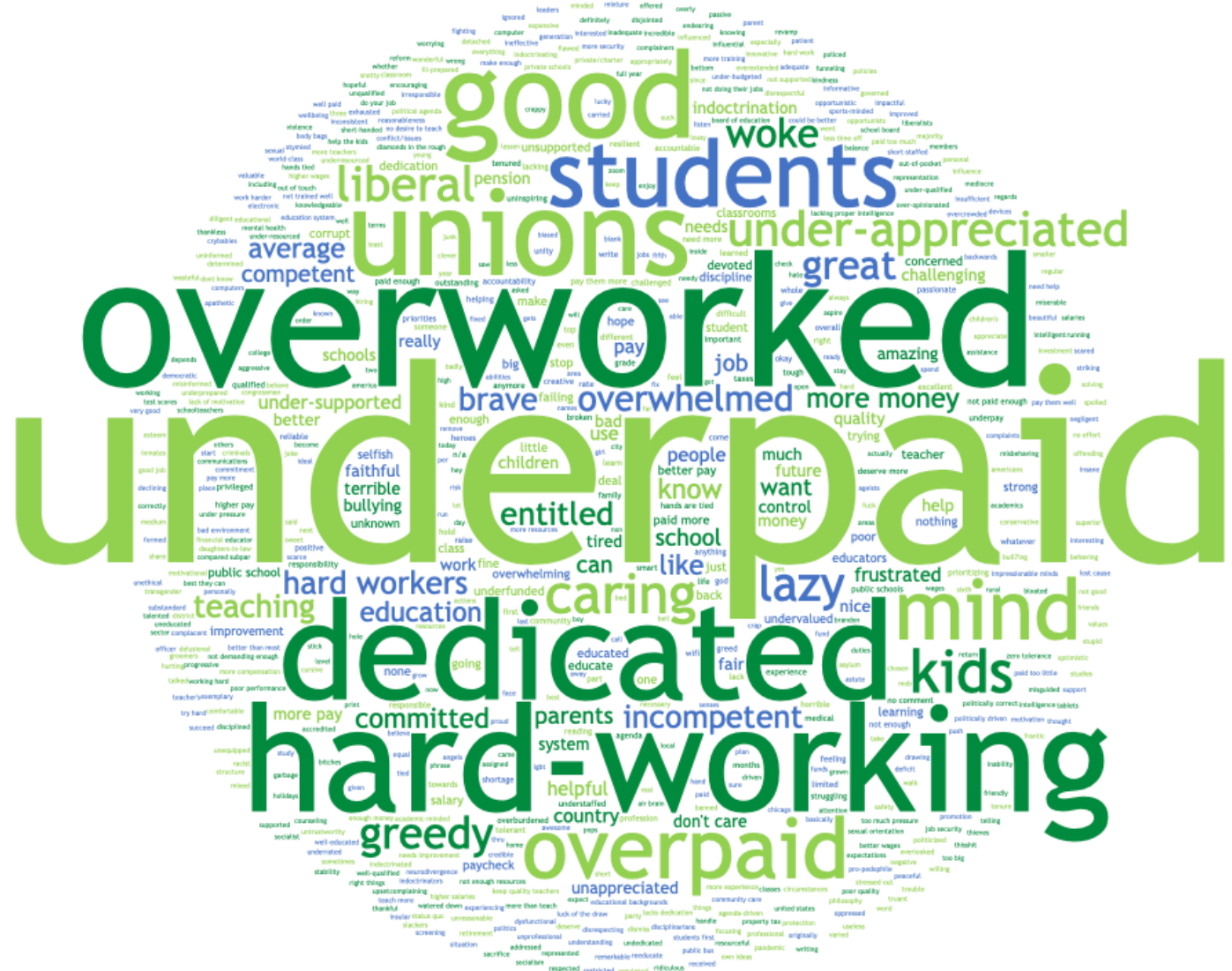
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Illinois residents
believe that
teachers are
overworked,
underpaid, and
hard-working



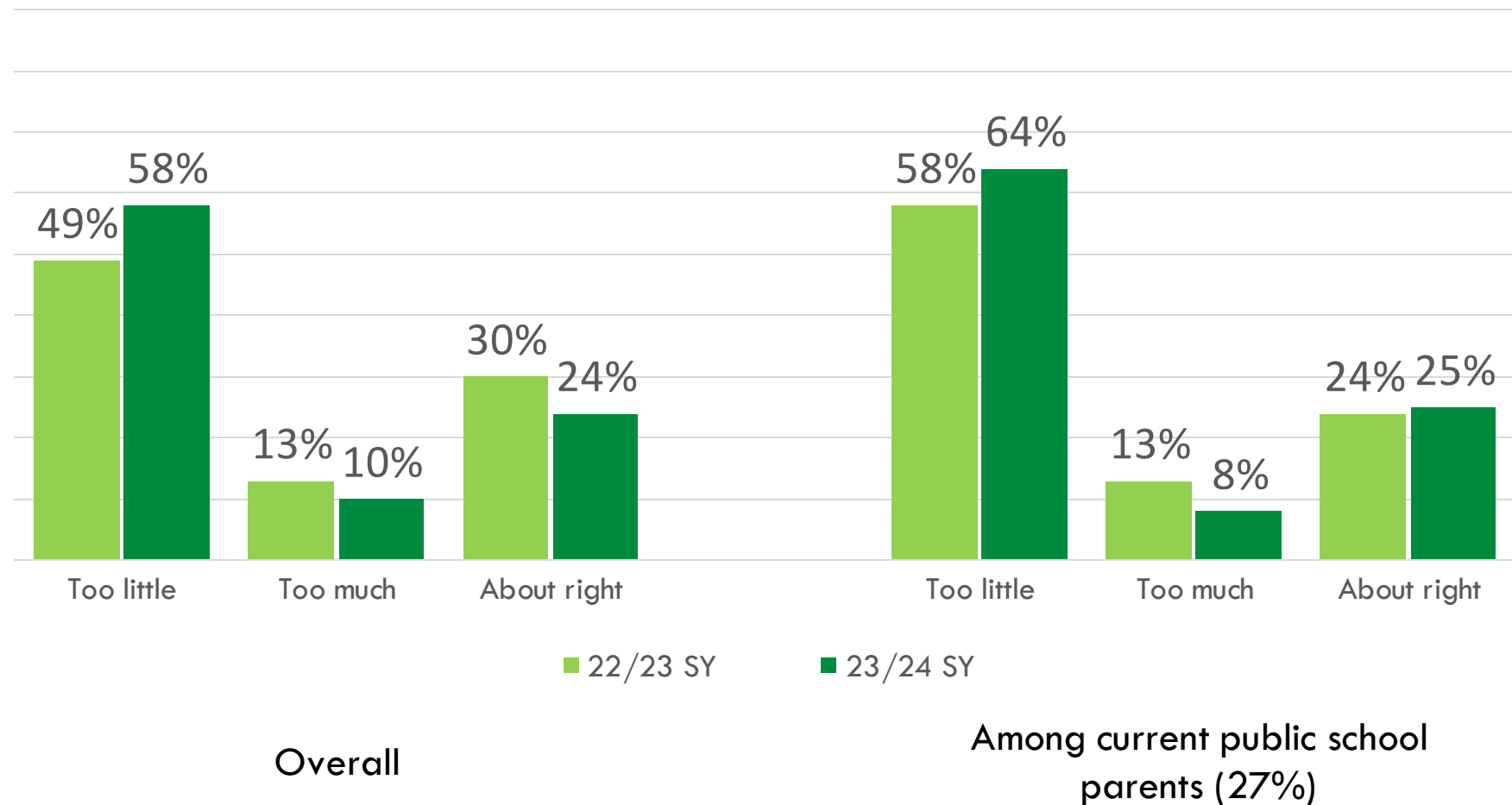
“I want you to think about Illinois public school teachers and tell me the one word or phrase that first comes to mind.”



The public thinks teachers are underpaid. Public school parents are even more emphatic



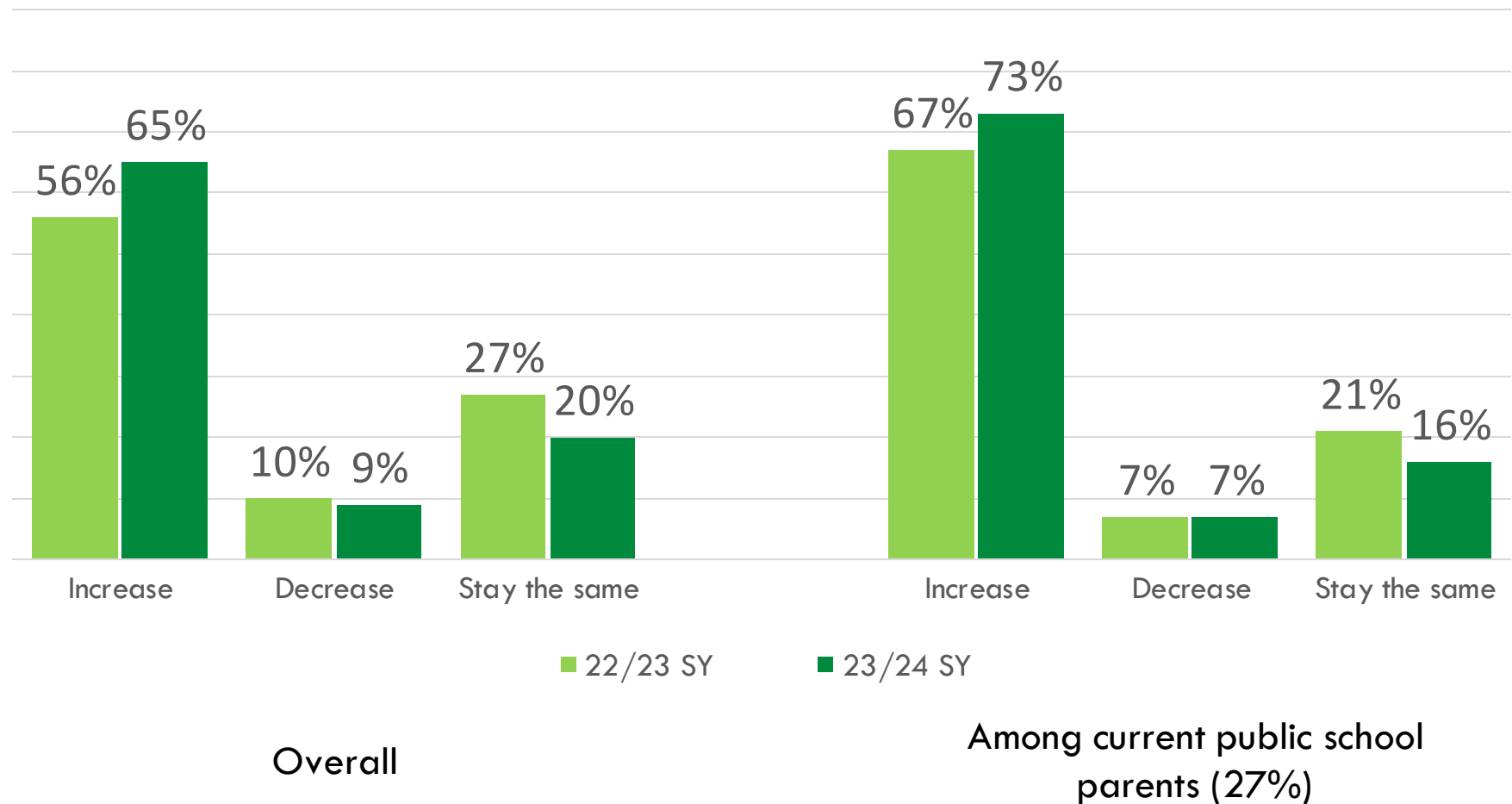
“Do you think that public school teachers in your community are paid too little, too much, or about right?”



Public support for increases in education spending persists and continues to grow



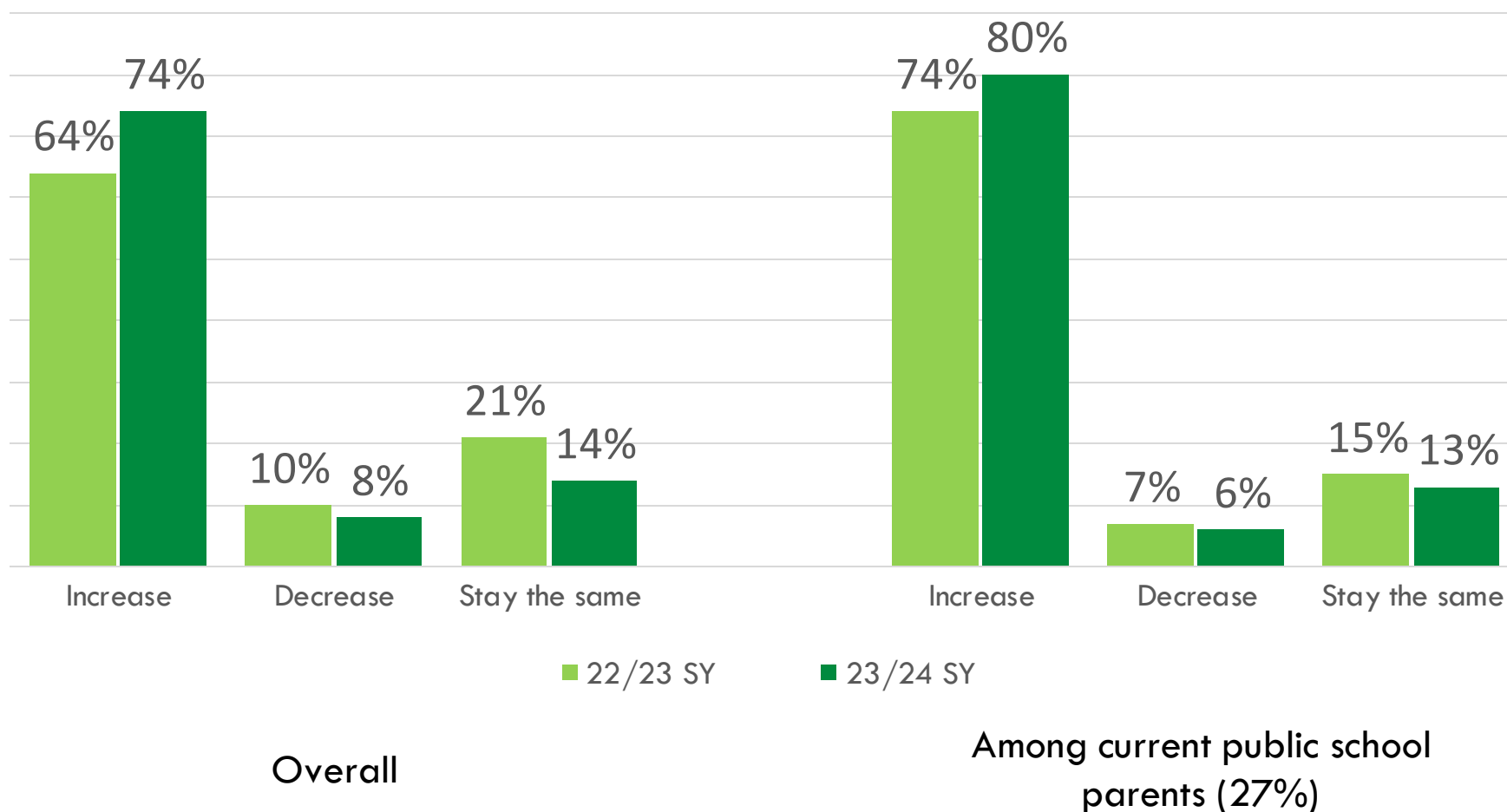
"Do you think funding for public schools in Illinois should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?"



When they know that more than 4 in 5 Illinois schools are underfunded, support for more money goes way up



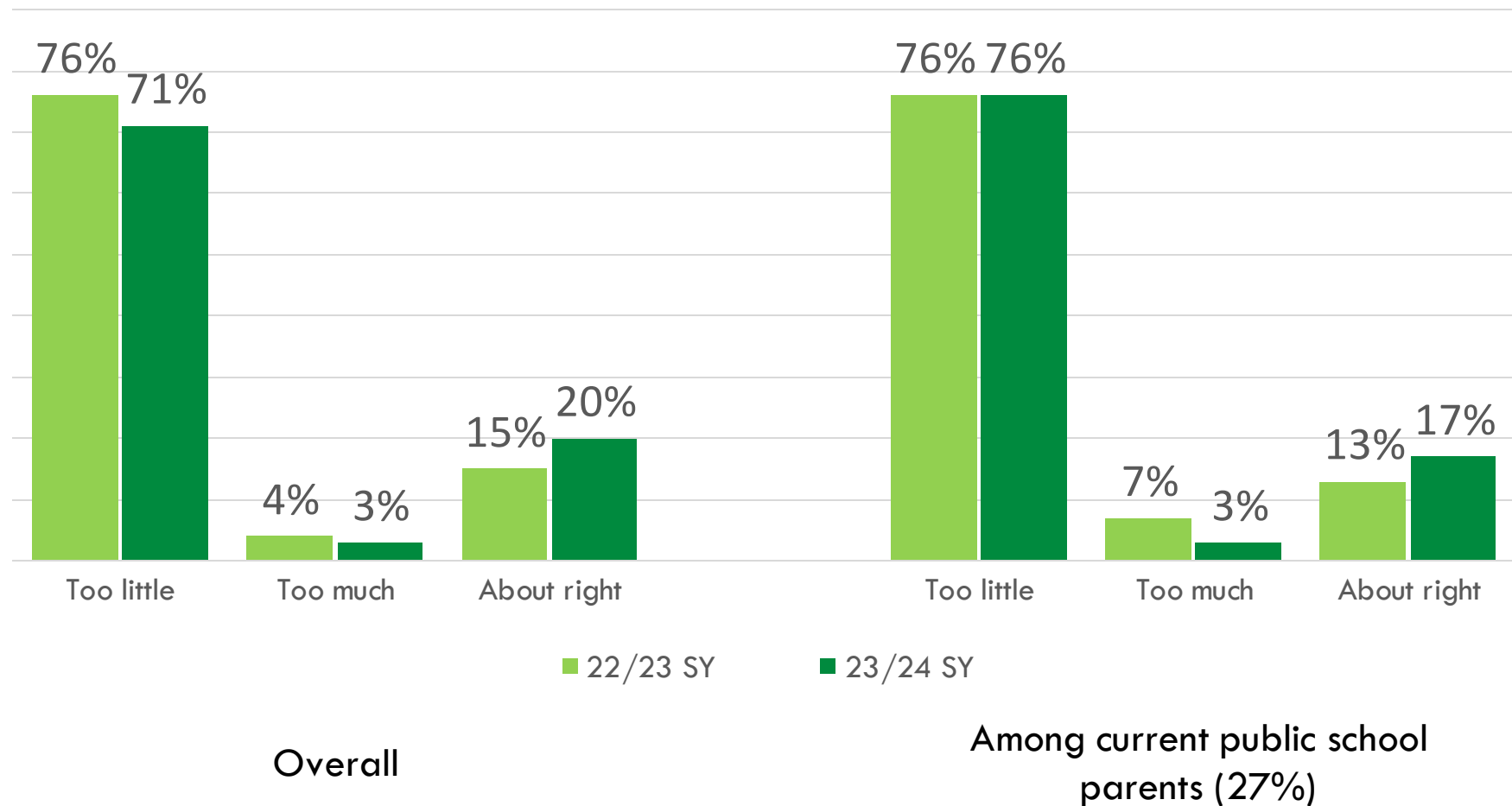
"As you may know, 80% of Illinois public schools are not funded at the level required by the evidence-based model. This funding model was designed to prioritize state funding for students with the most need and school districts with the lowest local funding, allocating resources based on research-based best practices in education. Right now, just 20% of schools are fully funded. Having heard that, do you think funding for public schools in Illinois should increase, decrease, or stay about the same?"



Almost all believe
in increasing pay
for support staff,
too



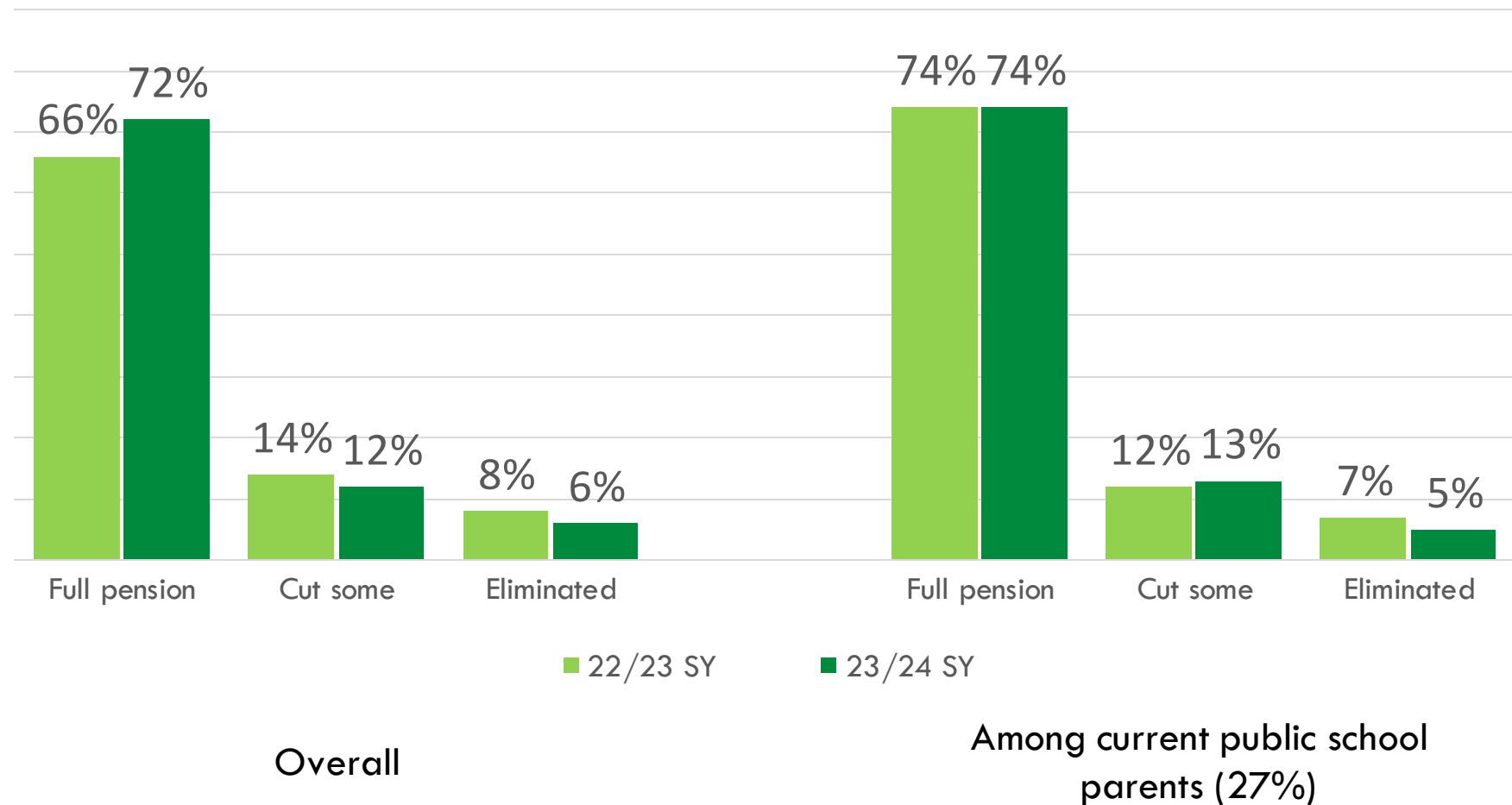
“As you may know, public schools in Illinois have support staff in classrooms called paraprofessionals. These paraprofessionals work with students with disabilities and behavior challenges. They get paid an average of \$15 an hour. Do you think that paraprofessionals in your community are paid too little, too much, or about right?”



There continues to be near-universal belief that teachers should keep their full pensions



“As you may know, teachers in Illinois do not pay into Social Security and therefore do not collect when they retire. Do you think that Illinois teachers should receive their full pension, see their pensions cut some, or see their pensions eliminated?”

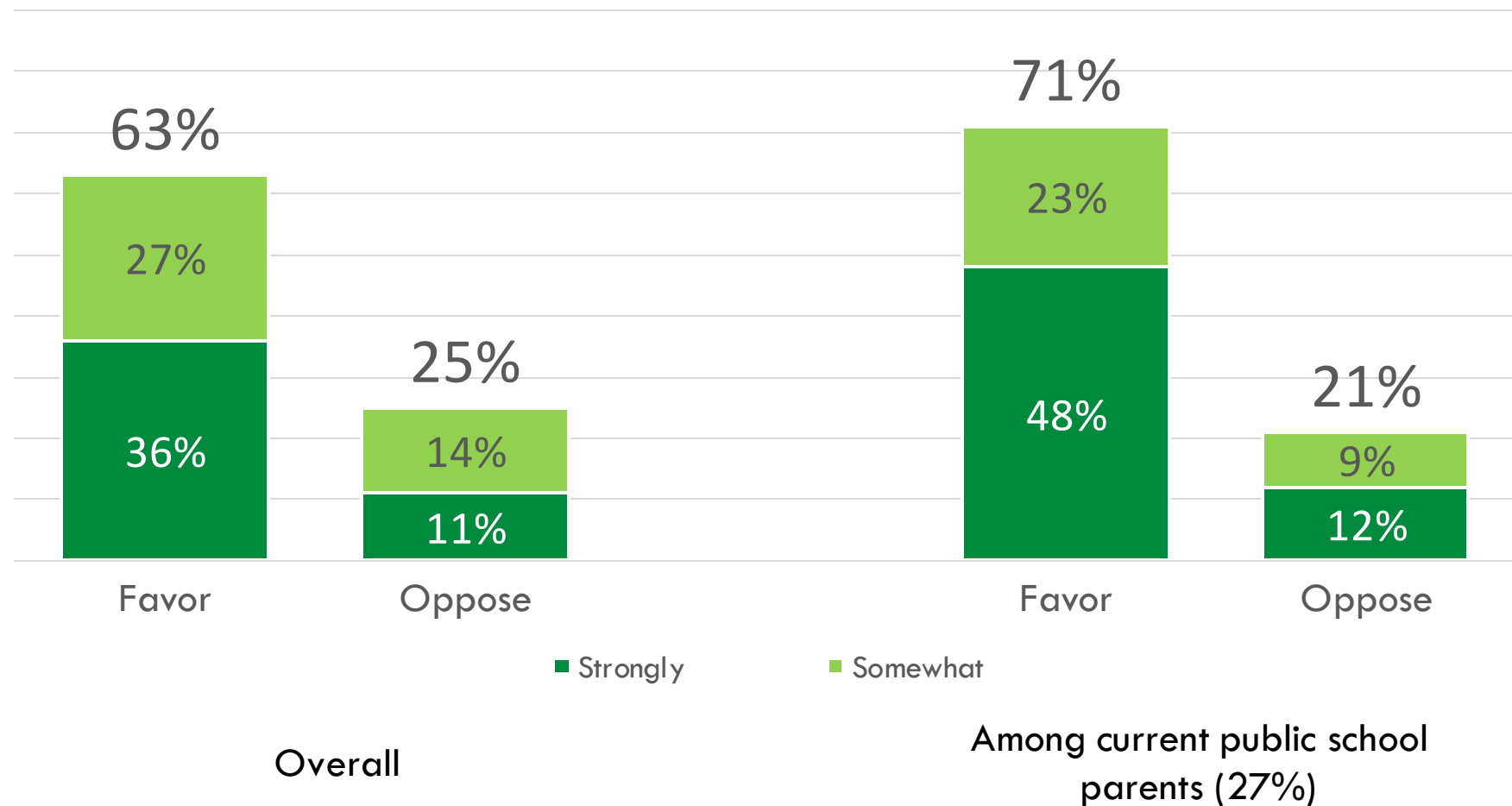


**They support
changes to the
current pension
system to make it
fairer for those
hired since 2010**



“Right now, the teacher pension system in Illinois is divided into two tiers. Tier One is for teachers hired before 2011 and Tier Two is for those who began working as teachers in 2011 or more recently. Tier One teachers are eligible for their full pension at age 60 or at age 55 if they have been teachers for 35 years. Tier Two teachers are required to work until the age of 67 to get their full pension benefits.

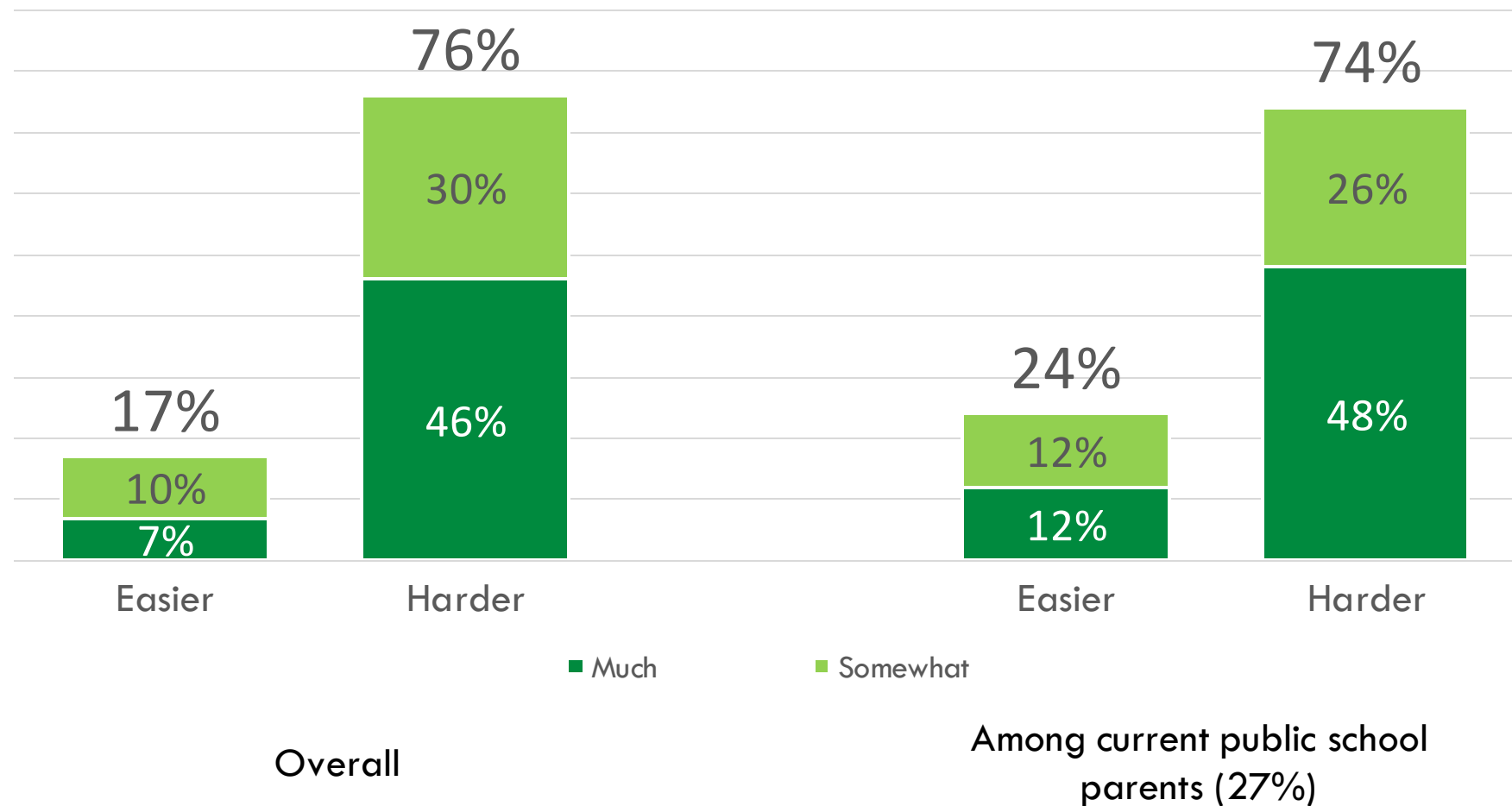
All teachers pay 9% of their salary into the pension system. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose changes to the teacher pension system that would allow Tier Two teachers to retire before age 67 and still receive their full benefits?”



A large majority
thinks teaching
has become
harder



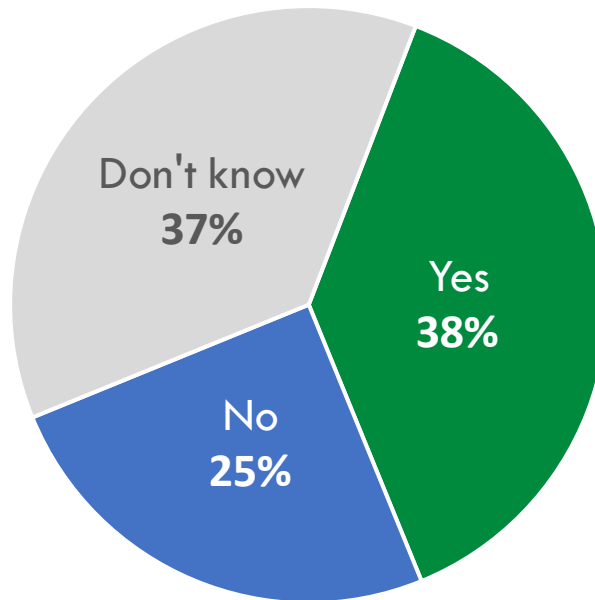
“Thinking about public school teachers in Illinois over the last few years or so, do you think that teaching has been much easier, somewhat easier, somewhat harder, or much harder for teachers compared to before that?”



Less than half are aware of teacher shortages, but those who are aware are very worried

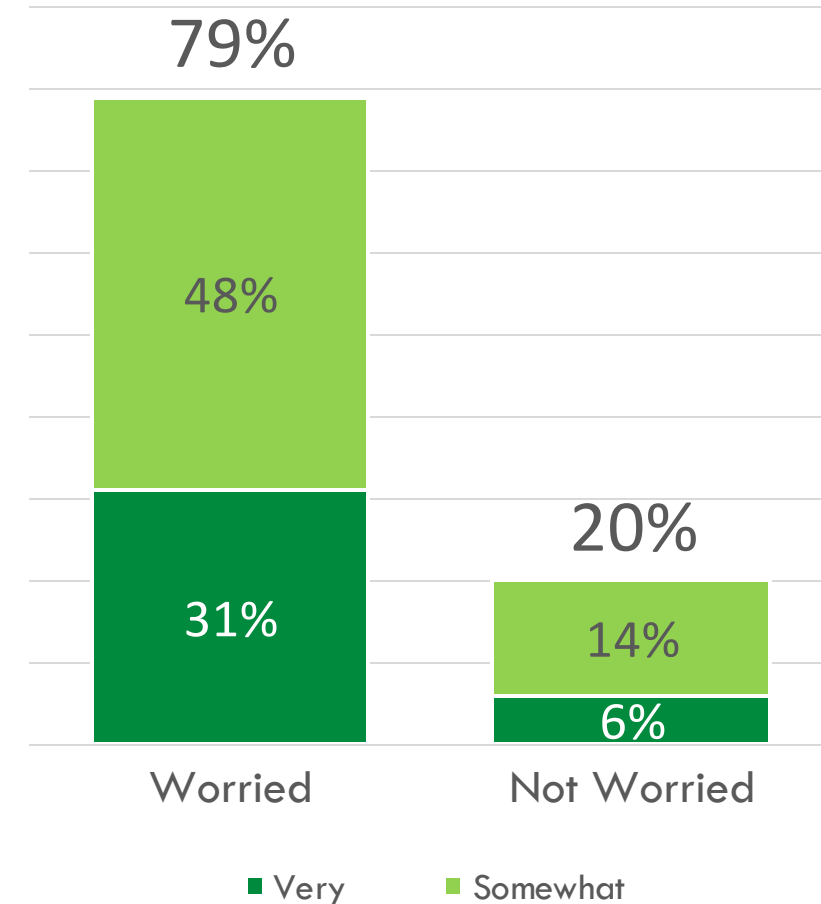


“As far as you know, is your community school district currently experiencing teacher shortages?”



n=380

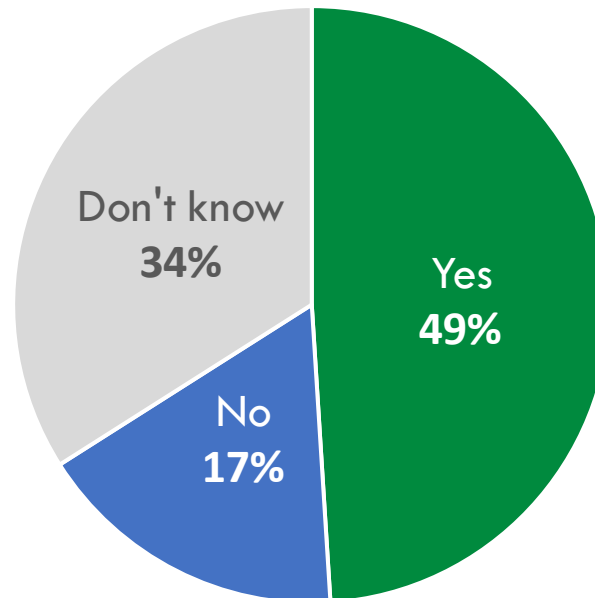
Among those saying Yes:
“How worried are you about these shortages?”



A similar sentiment exists for paraprofessional shortages



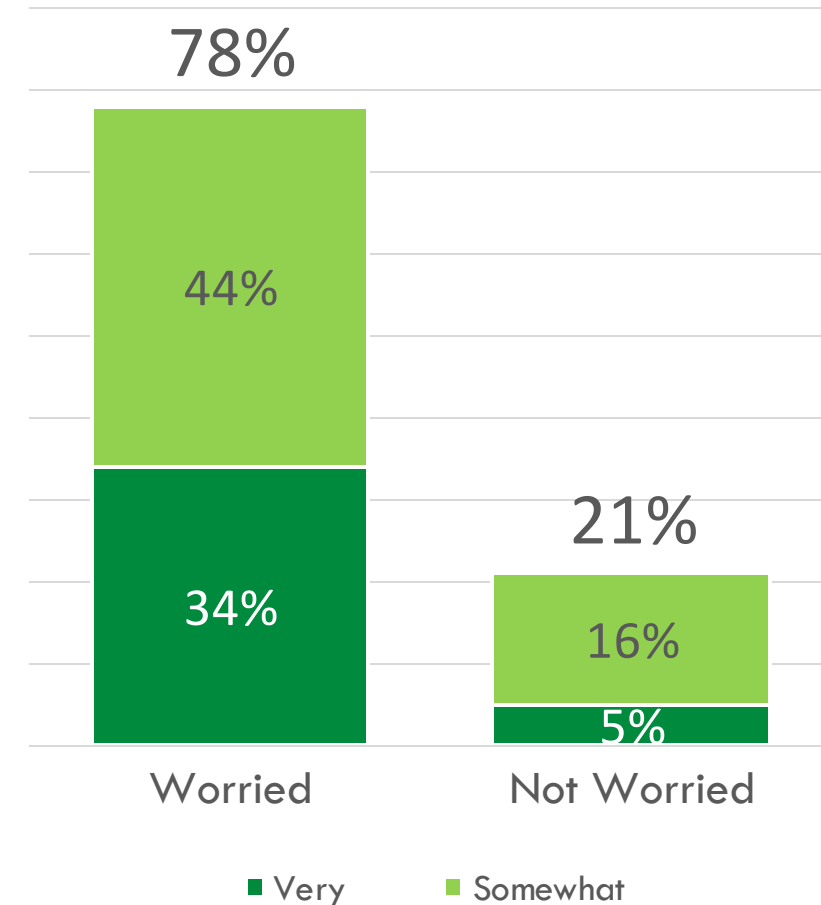
“As far as you know, is your community school district currently experiencing staffing shortages for support roles like paraprofessionals, bus drivers, nurses, librarians, and custodians?”



n=492

Among those saying Yes:

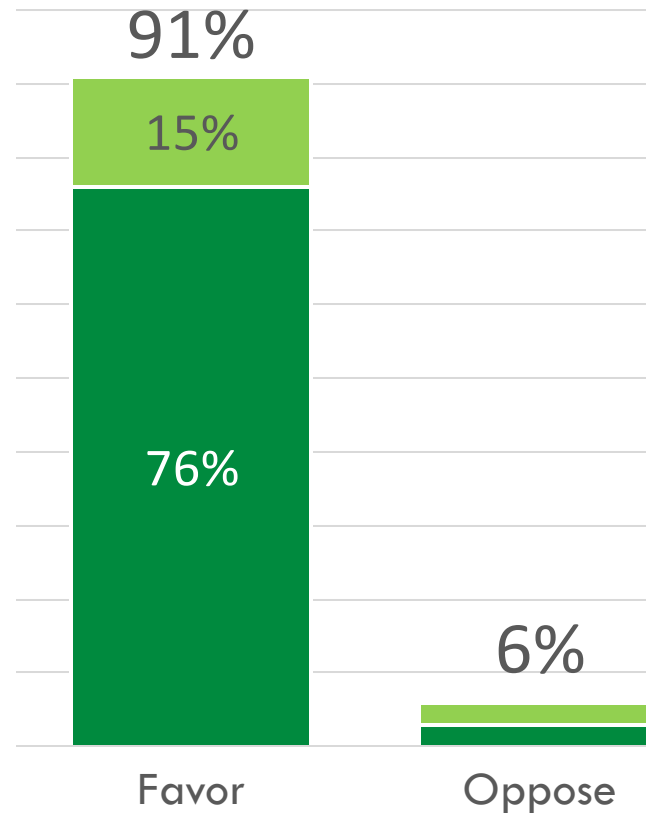
“How worried are you about these shortages?”



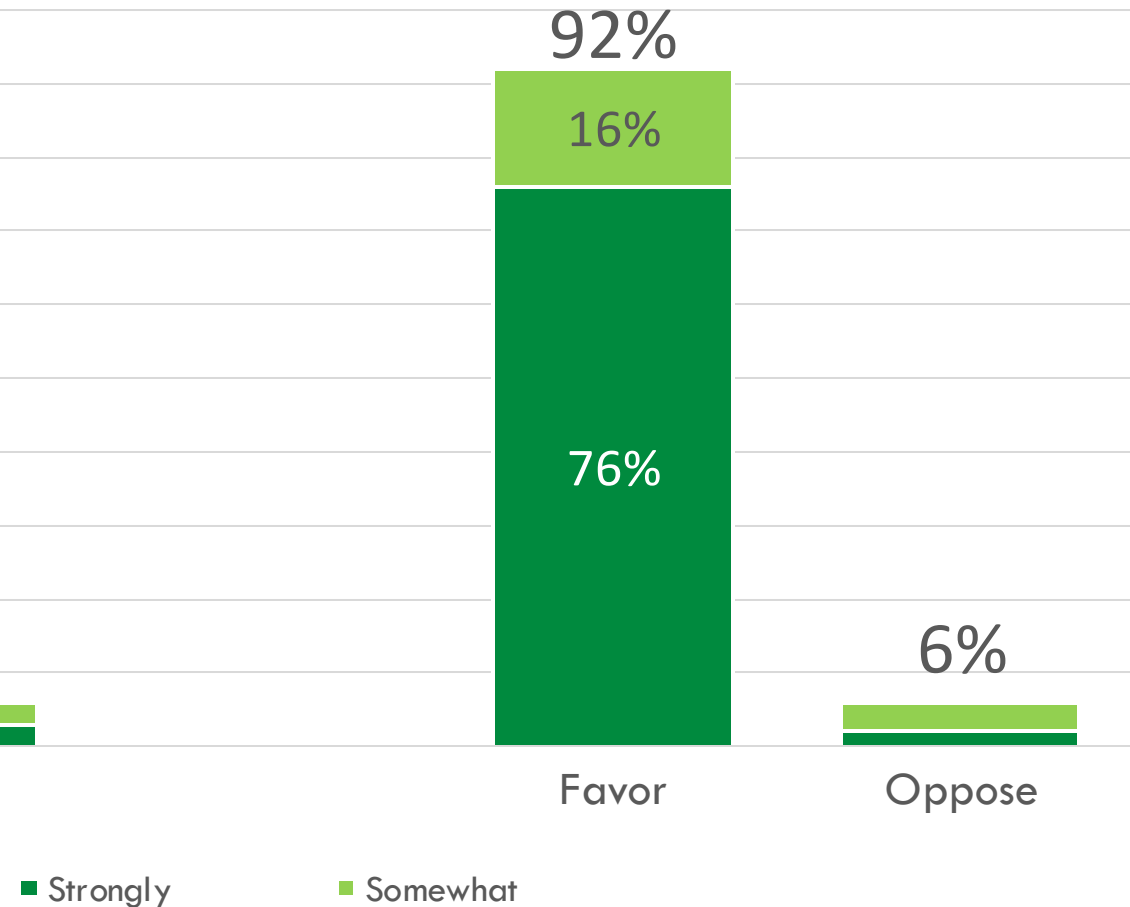
Illinoisans overwhelmingly agree that children, including those with disabilities, have a right to education



“Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement that every child in Illinois has the right to an education at a public school?”



“And do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement that every child **with a disability** in Illinois has the right to an education at a public school?”



Illinoisans have strong feelings about the challenges facing education and educators today.



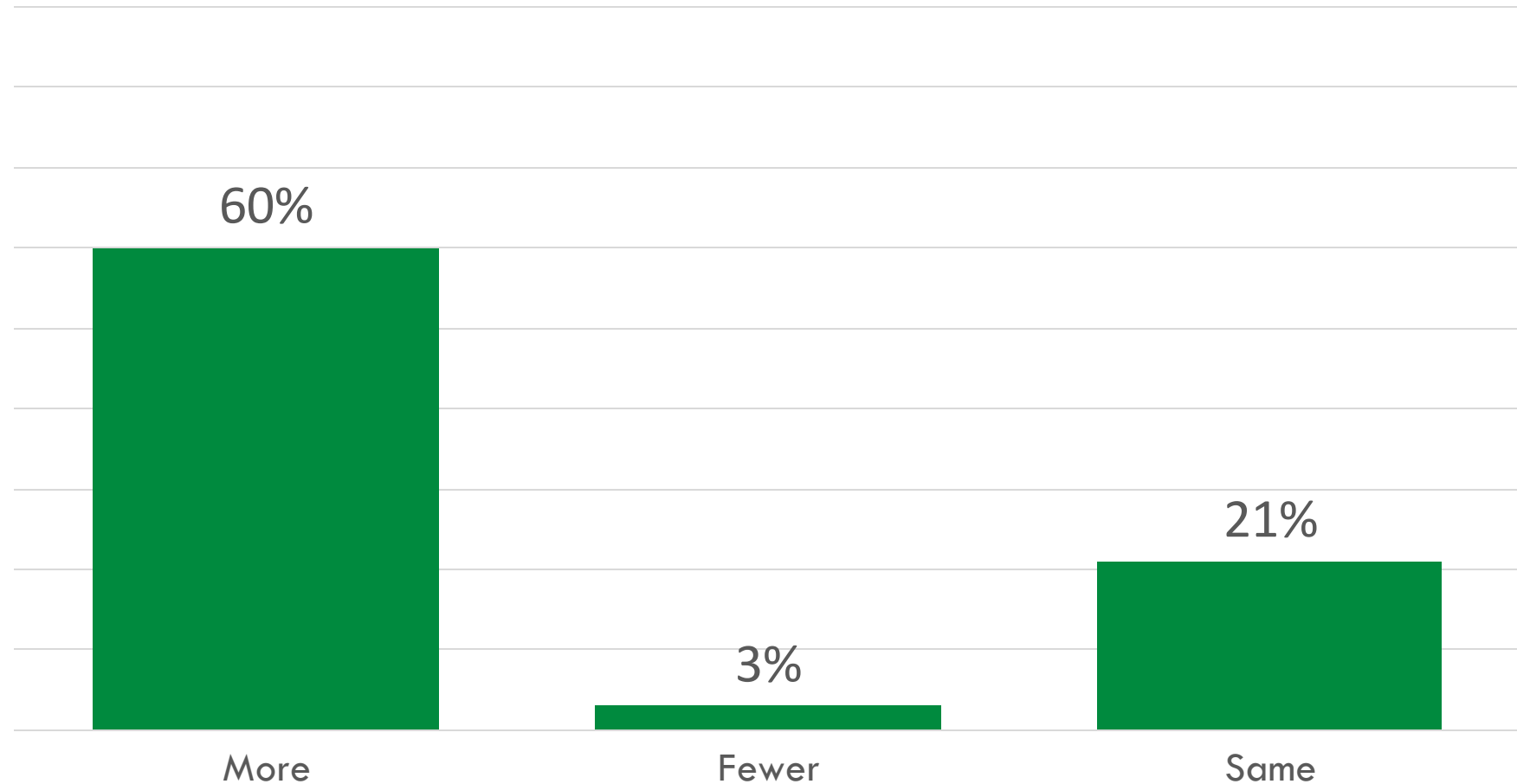
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Illinoisans believe mental health among college students is a concern



“As far as you know, are college students in Illinois currently experiencing more mental health problems lately, fewer problems lately, or about the same as always?”

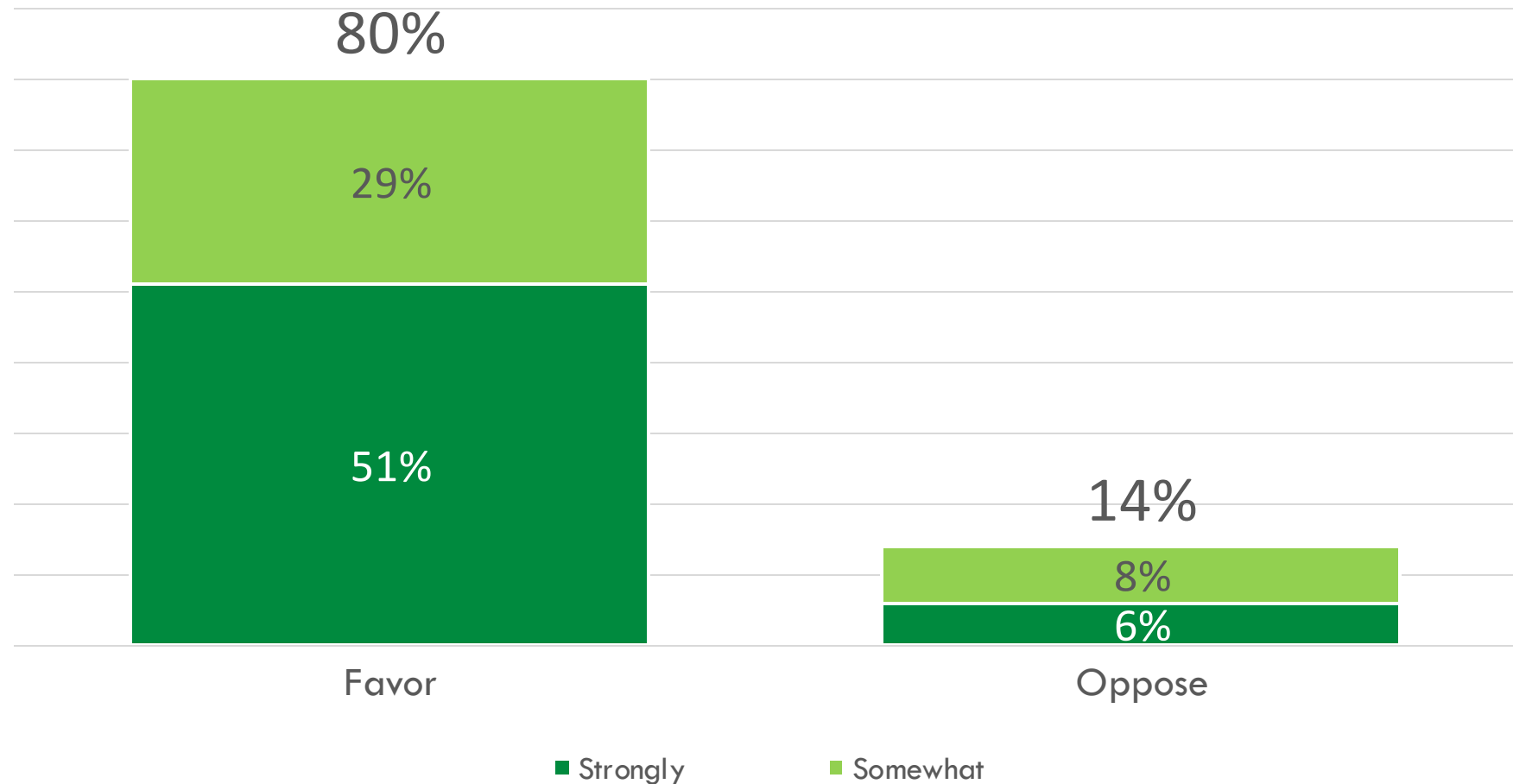


And they strongly support increasing mental health services.



“As you may know, the rate of higher education students seeking out mental health services is growing. There are not enough mental health workers to meet the demand.

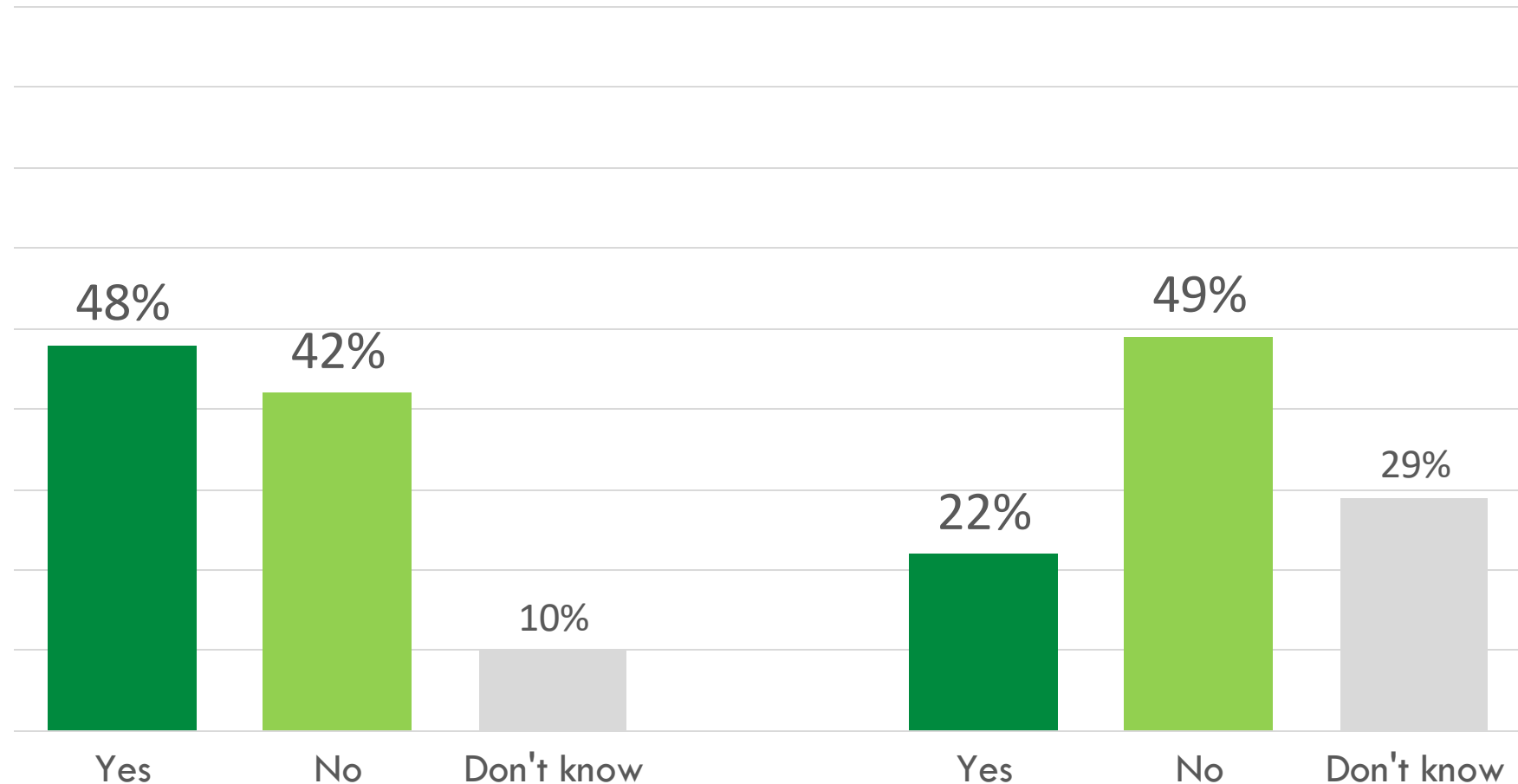
Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose more funding to hire mental health workers to address the demand for mental health services on college campuses?”



The public is split
in awareness of
violence.



“Have you or have you not heard anything about teachers and paraprofessionals **in Illinois** being physically assaulted at school?”

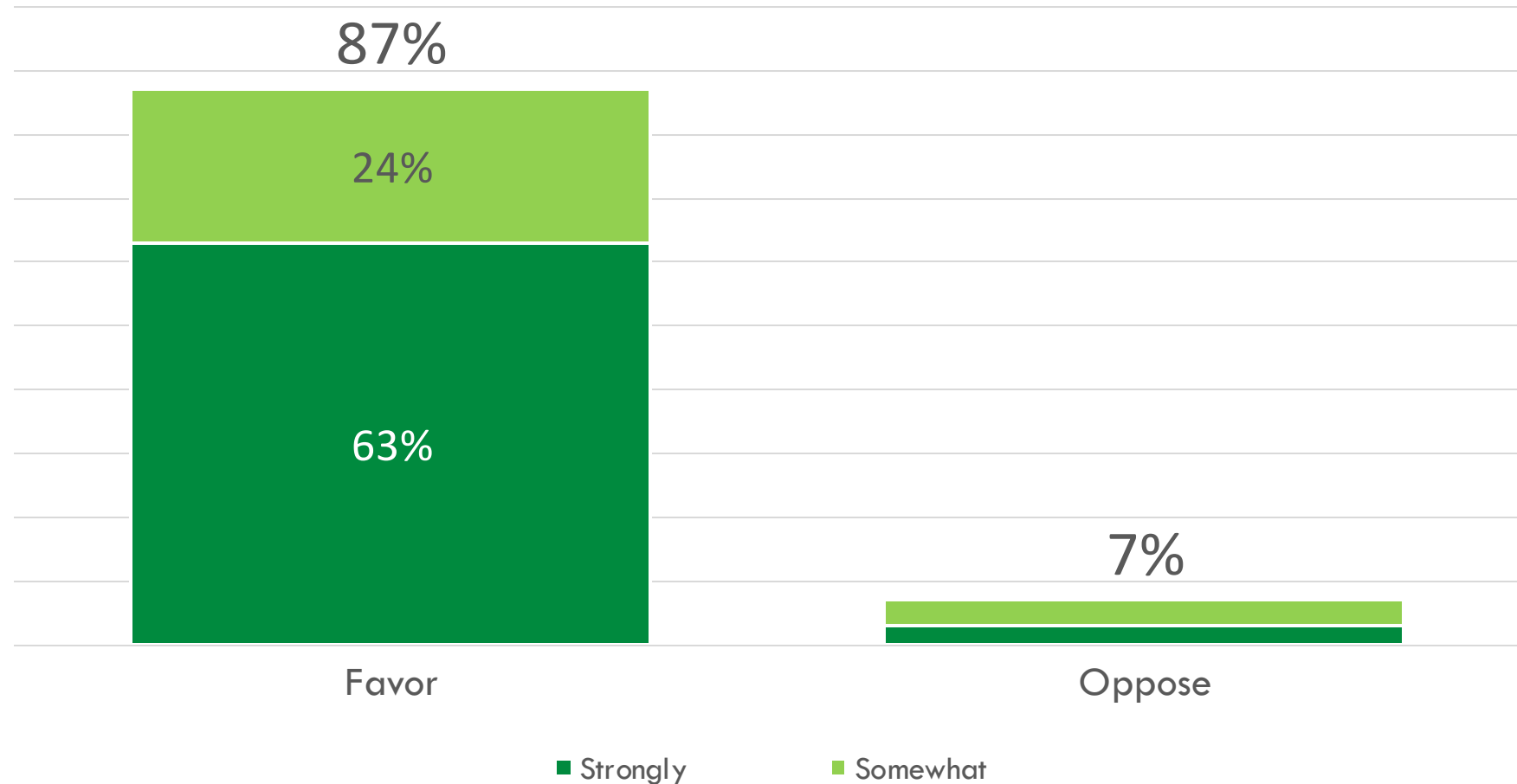


“To the best of your knowledge, has a teacher or paraprofessional been physically assaulted at school **in your community**?”

But, they overwhelmingly support legislation to keep school staff safe.



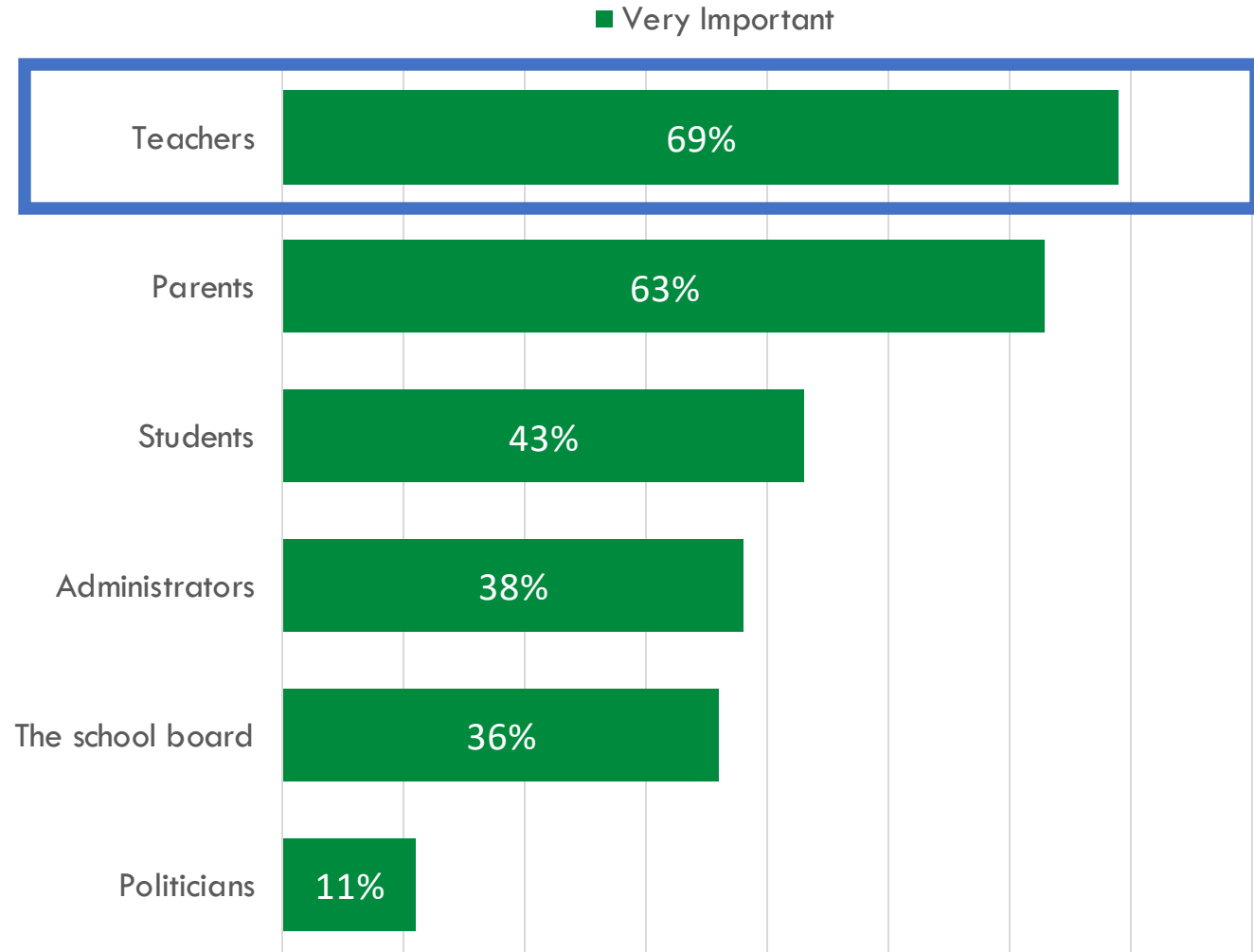
“In 2022, there were over two thousand reports of violence against school staff at Illinois public schools. Would you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose new legislation to stop the violence against teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school staff?”



Teachers' and parents' voices are still viewed as most important. Politicians rank last.



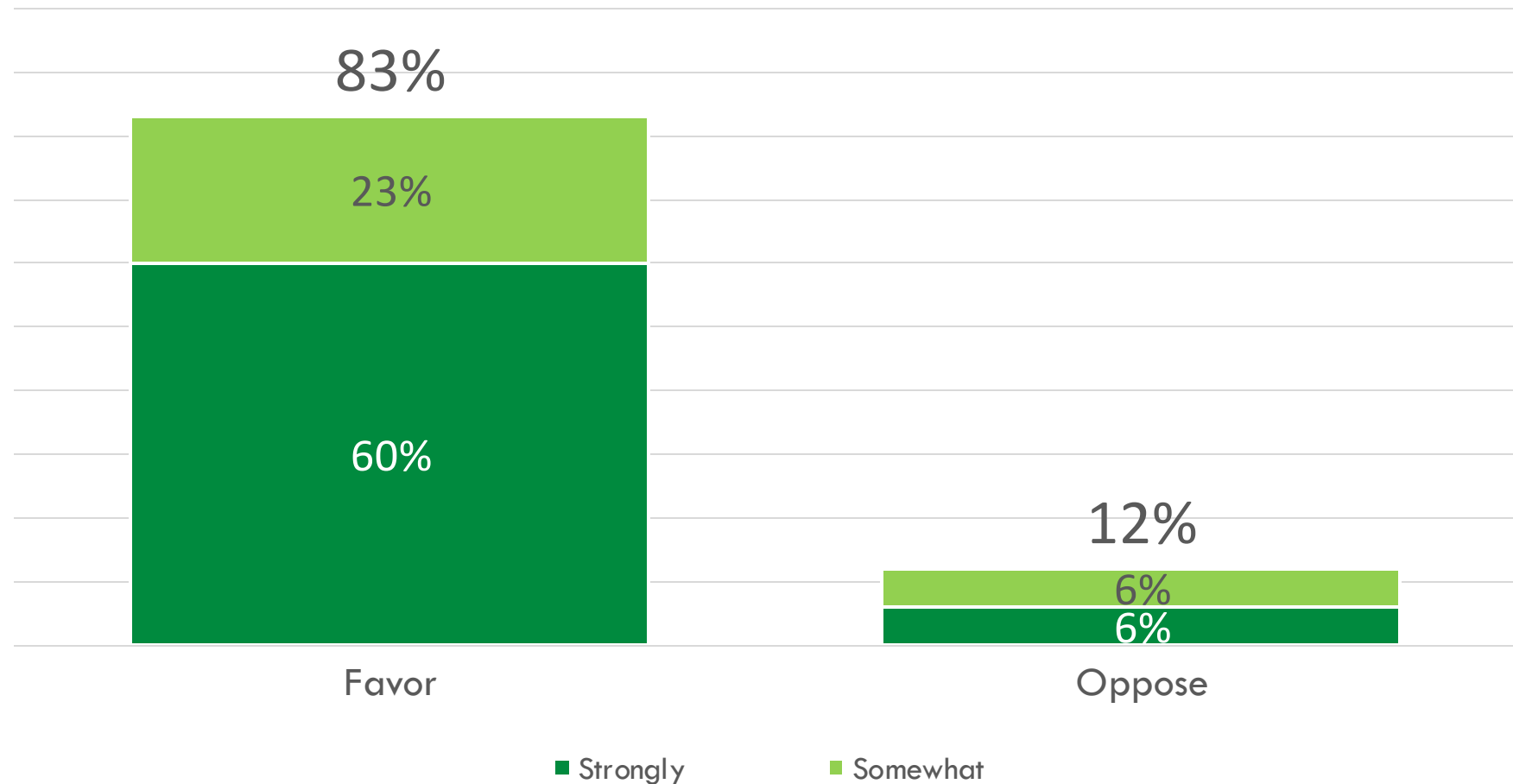
“Please say how important it is for each of these groups to have a strong voice in how public schools in Illinois are run. Is it very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all for them to have a strong voice in how public schools in Illinois are run?”



Illinoisans want fact-based US history taught in high school



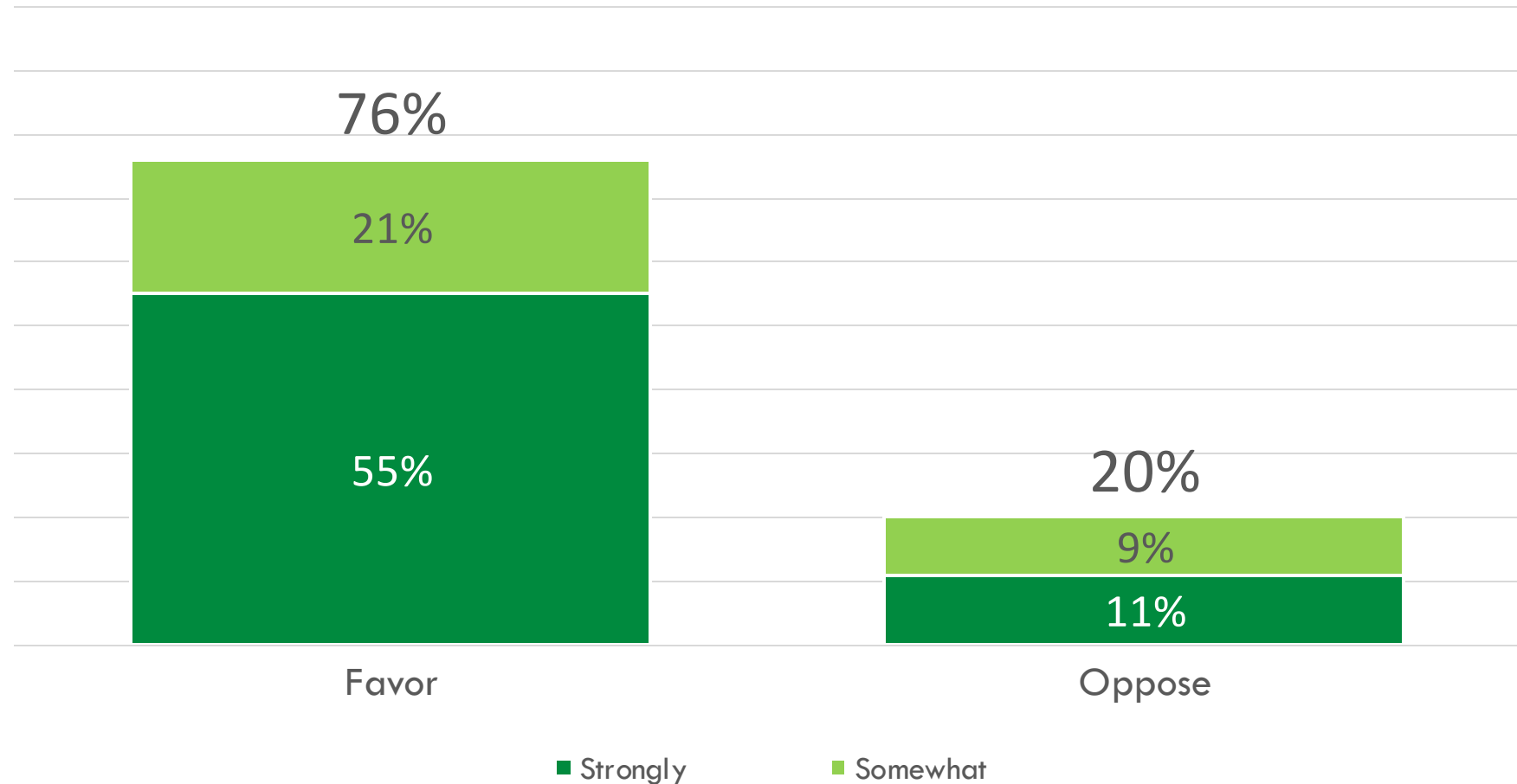
“Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose teaching Illinois high school students about slavery in the United States and its impacts?”



That includes
favoring teaching
about racism in
America



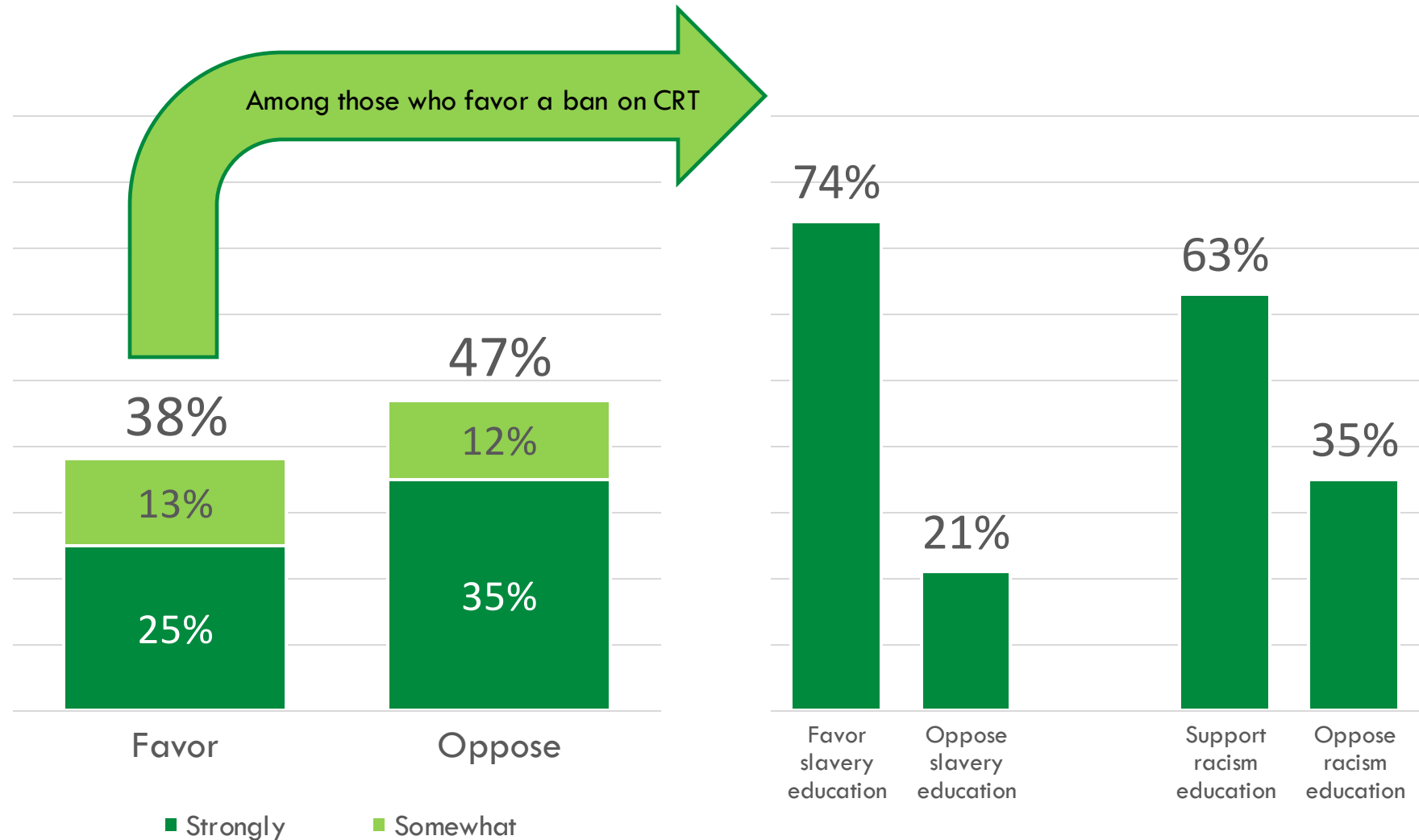
“Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose teaching Illinois high school students about racism and its impact in the United States?”



Those who want to ban CRT actually favor teaching about racism and slavery



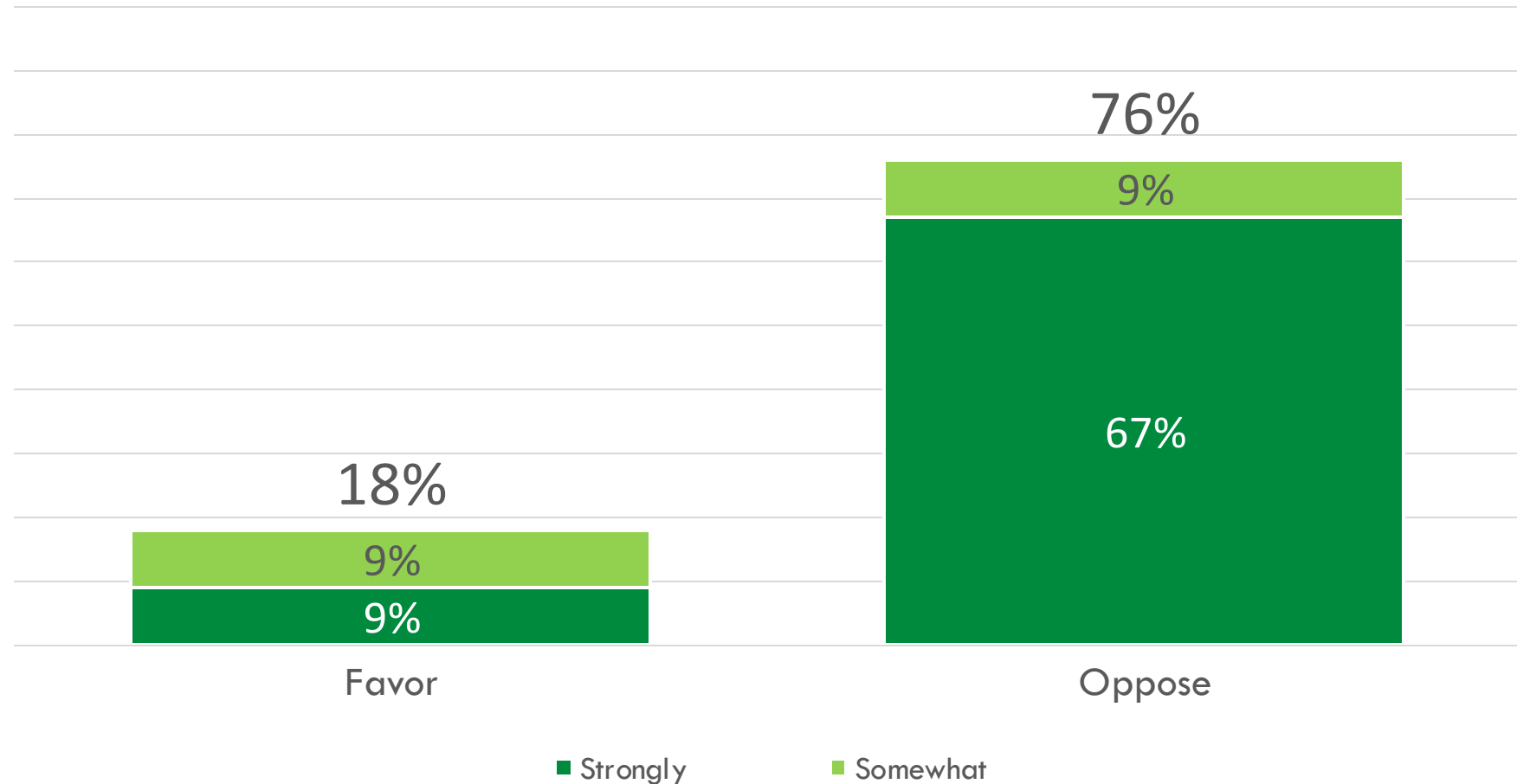
“Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose an Illinois state law that bans the teaching of critical race theory in public schools?”



And they also
strongly oppose
banning books in
Illinois public
schools



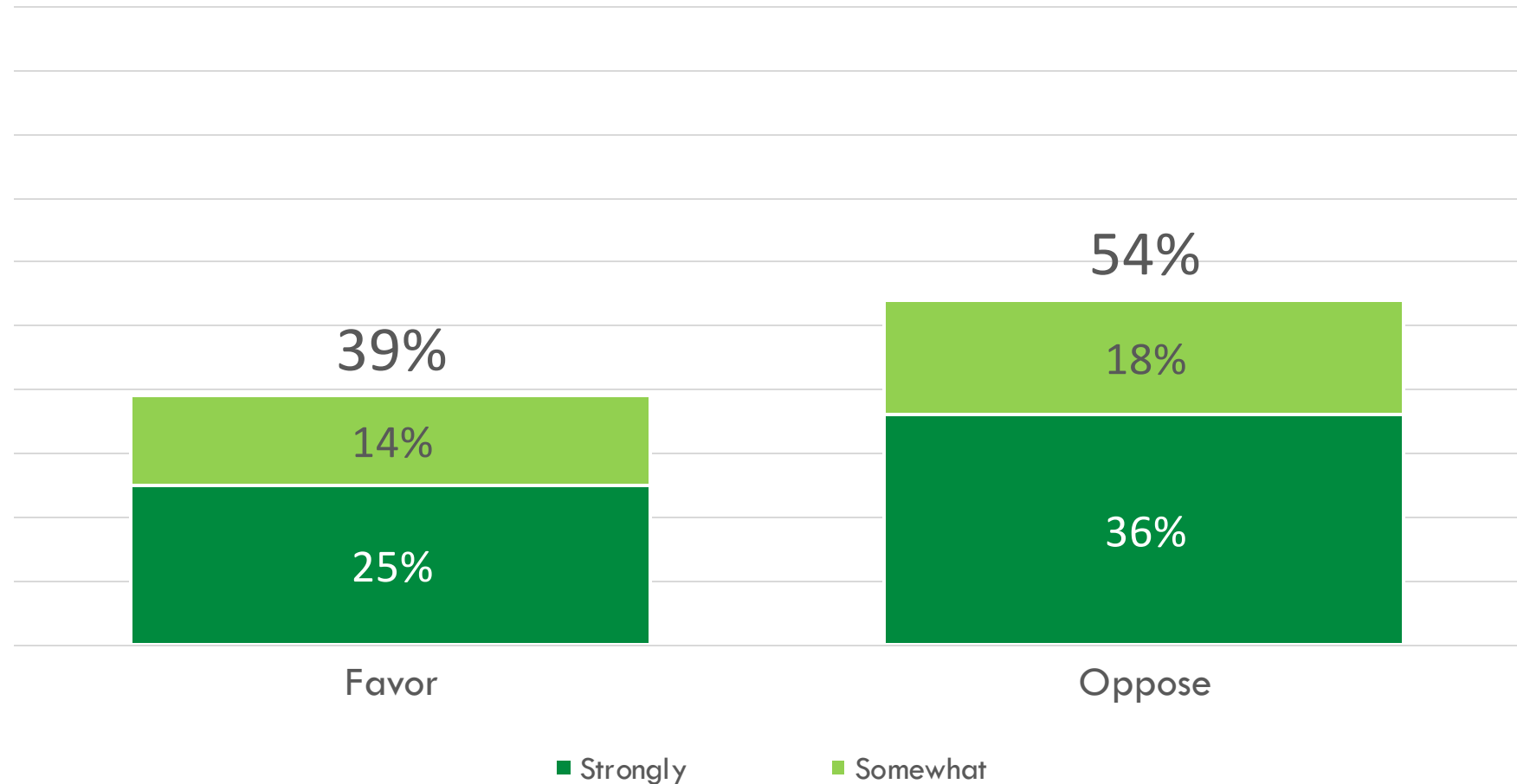
“Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose banning books from Illinois school libraries?”



A majority also
opposes banning
the teaching of
sexuality in
schools



“Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose banning teaching about sexuality in Illinois schools?”



The background is a solid blue color with a repeating pattern of white line-art icons. These icons represent various educational concepts: books, lightbulbs, target symbols, checkmarks, stars, human brains, graduation caps, and the letters 'IEA' with 'NEA' underneath. The icons are scattered across the entire background.

Questions?



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