

**GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER** RESEARCH

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May 13, 2008

# California Business for Education Excellence

Presentation of Results from Benchmark Survey

Presented by

Ron Eckstein, Analyst

## Survey Methodology

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- The California survey reached 1,000 registered voters
- Interviews were conducted February 4-10, 2008
- The survey has a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percent

## Key Findings

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- Voters believe California's public schools are **getting worse**, not better
- Voters believe too many school resources are wasted on bureaucracy and administrative costs. More believe the problems in California's education system are due to a **lack of accountability** than believe the problems come from a lack of funding
- Voters are aware of an "achievement gap" between students of different ethnicities and economic backgrounds and see it as a serious problem that must be addressed.
  - They are optimistic, however, that the achievement gap can be closed

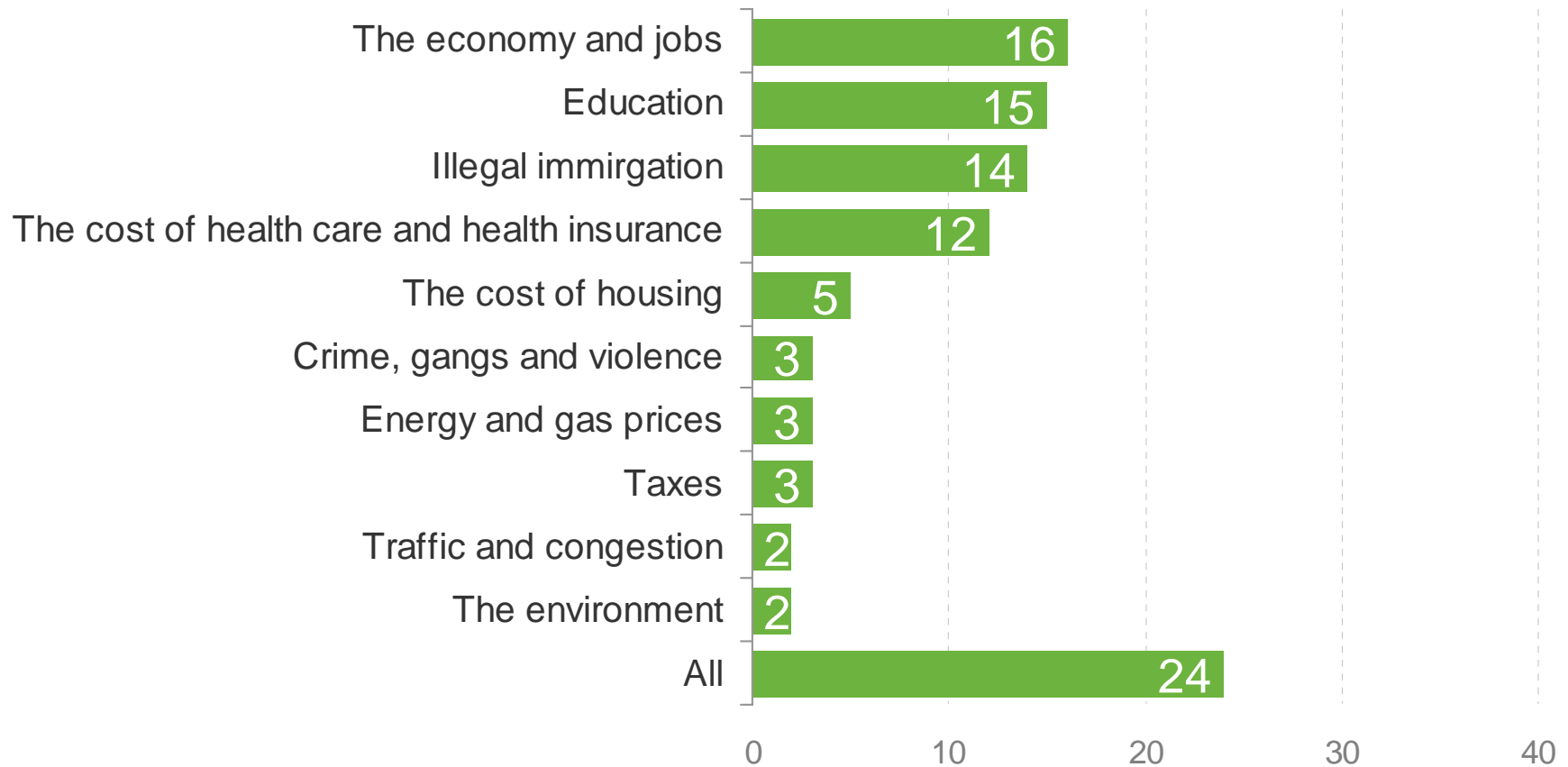
## Key Findings (continued)

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- Voters want clear-cut ways to evaluate the success or failure of schools, and they want **parents to have more information** available to them about school performance, so **parents can make informed decisions** for their children and also hold schools accountable when students do not perform at grade level
  
- Voters see testing as a valuable tool in evaluating the performance of students, teachers and administrators
  
- Voters strongly support a number of CBEE's recommendations for improving K-12 public education in California, including:
  - Making school performance data understandable and available to the public
  - Setting grade-level proficiency expectations for every school

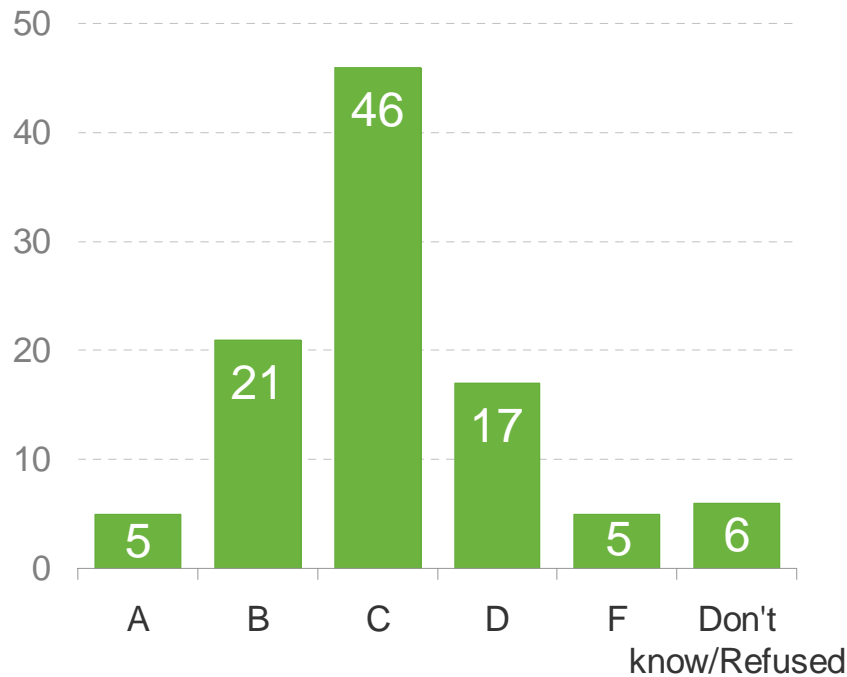
# Education Seen as an Important Problem

Now I am going to read you a list of issues facing California. Please tell me which issue is the most important problem facing our state.

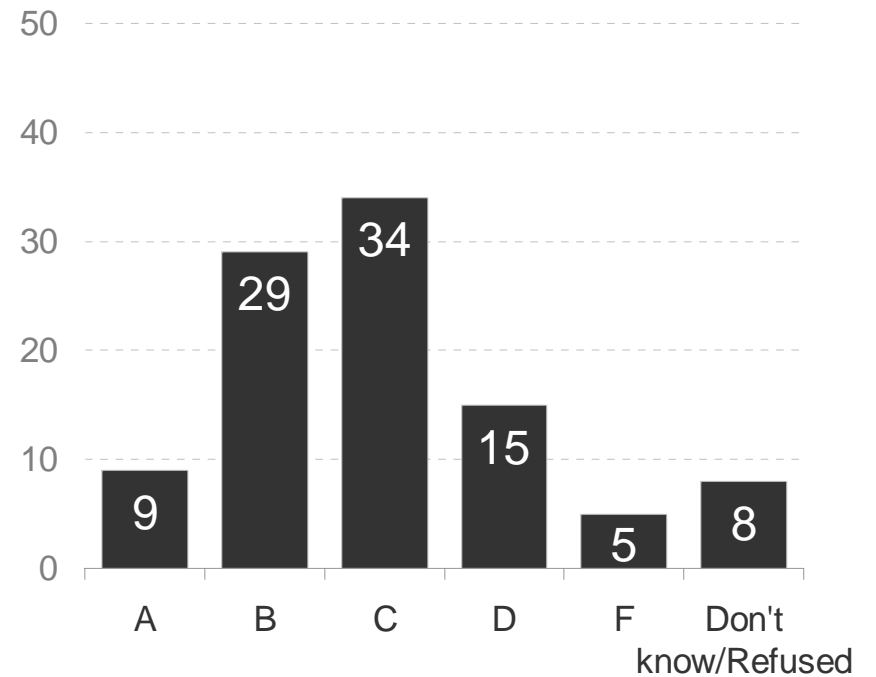


# California's Schools Get a "C"

### California Public Schools

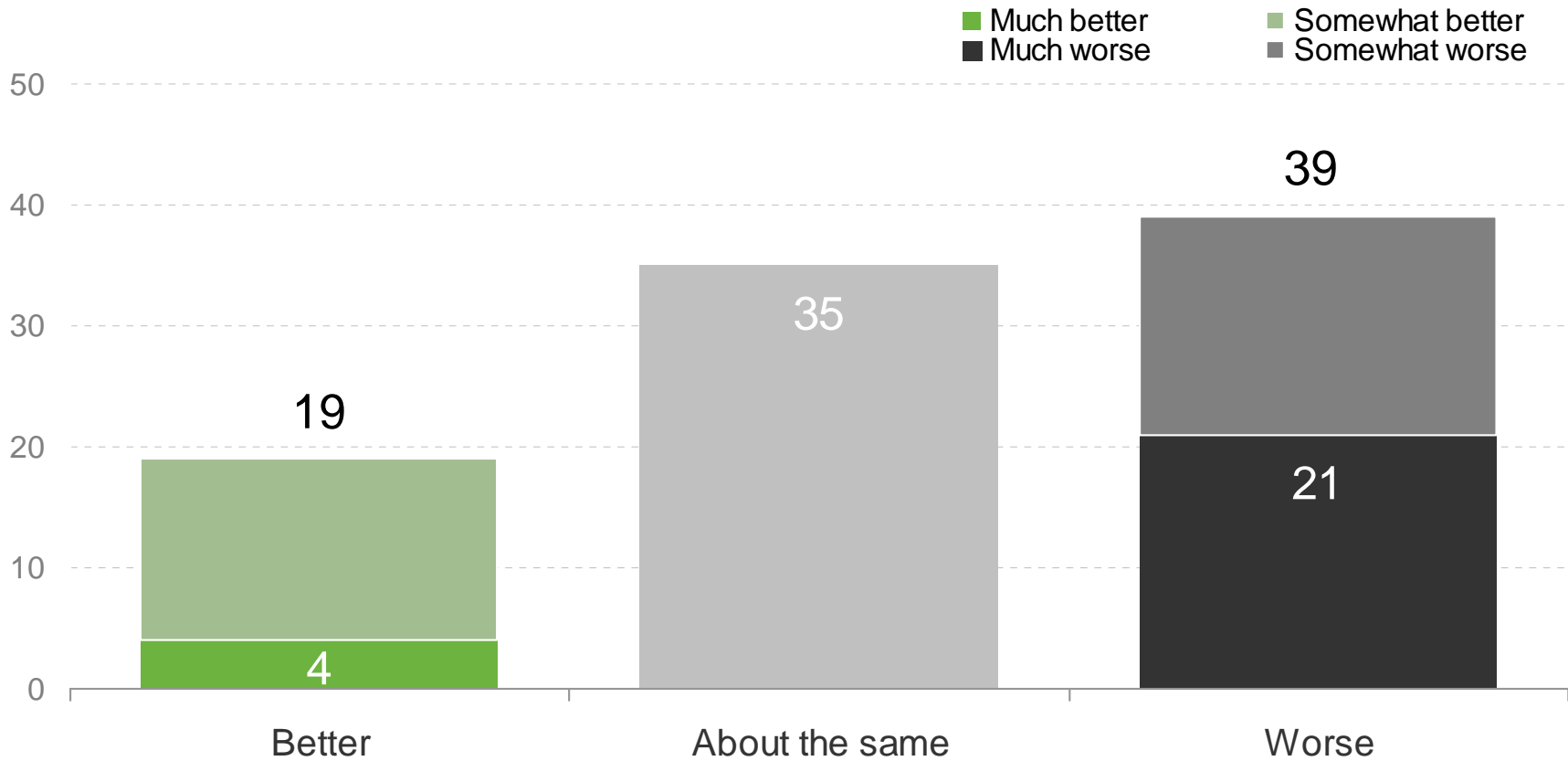


### Your Local Public Schools



# Direction of Public Schools

*In the past few years, have California's public schools gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?*



## Specific Concerns

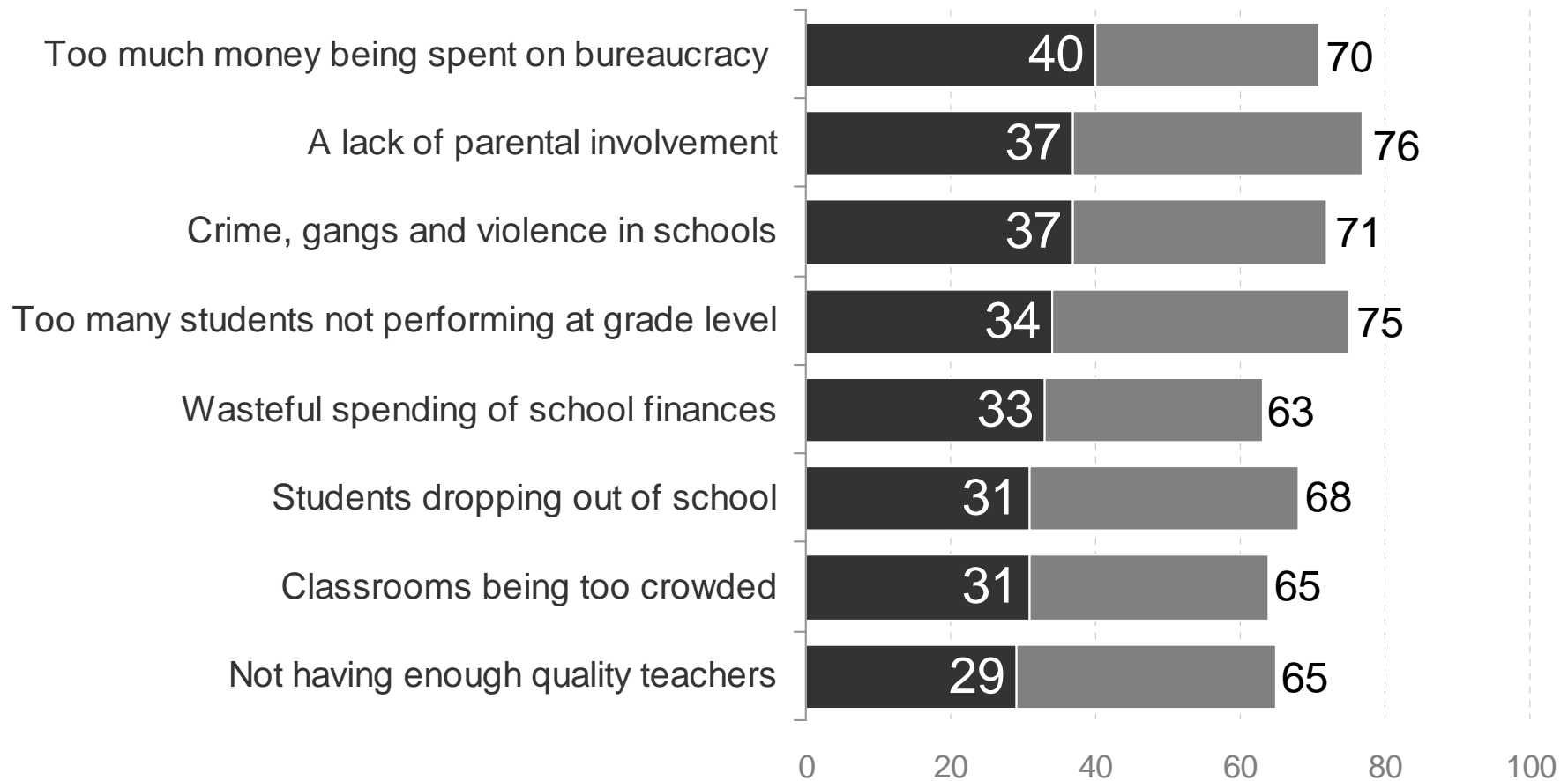
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- Within the general concern California voters have about the status of public education in the state, a couple of themes emerged in the results of the survey:
  1. Voters are concerned about the way schools use their resources
  2. Voters are troubled about students not performing at grade-level
  3. Voters want to make sure parents are more involved in their children's education

## Specific Concerns

Now I'm going to read you a list of problems facing California's education system. After I read each item, please tell me whether you think this is an extremely serious, a very serious, a somewhat serious, or a not too serious problem.

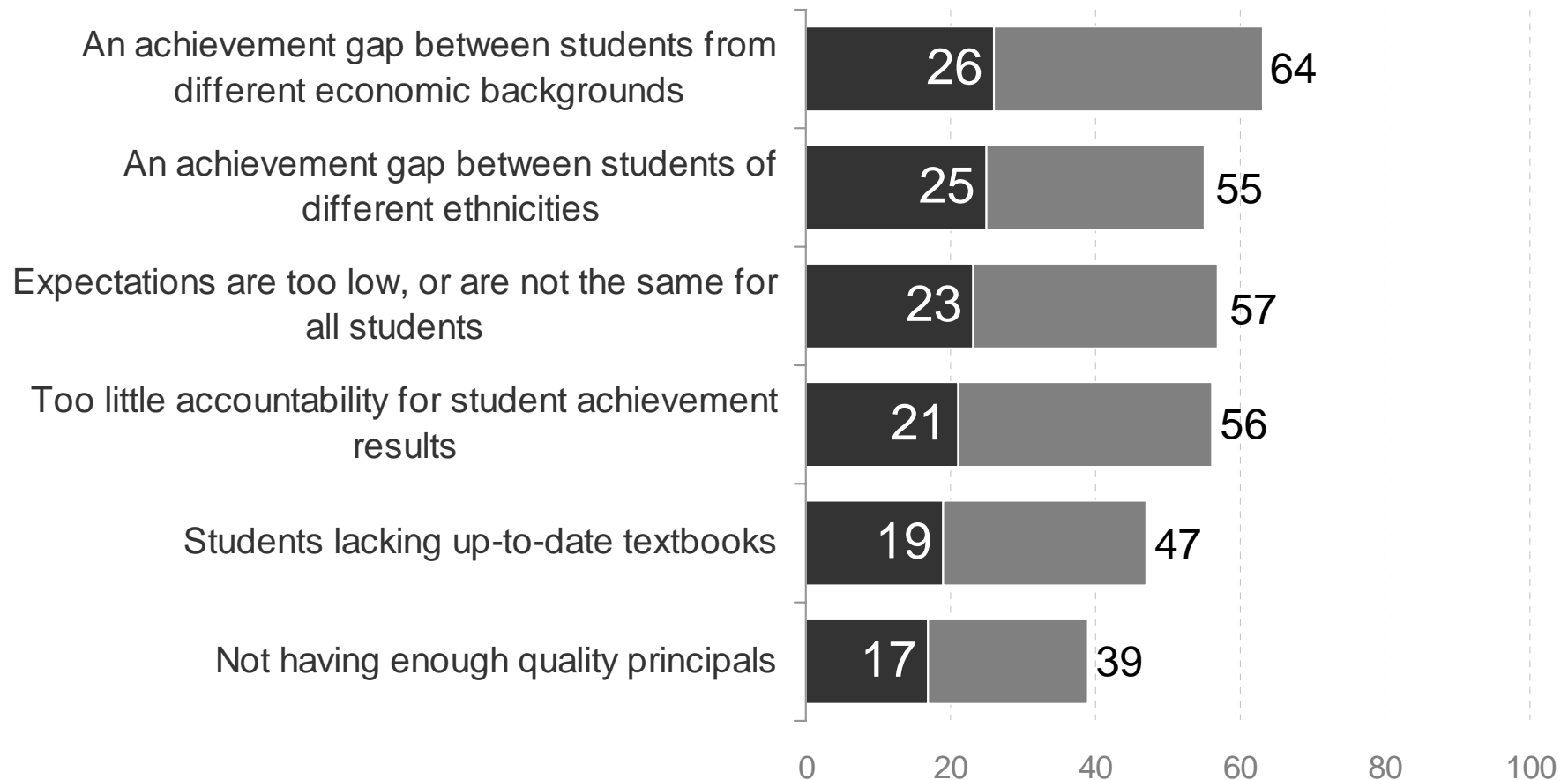
■ Extremely serious ■ Very serious



## Specific Concerns (continued)

Now I'm going to read you a list of problems facing California's education system. After I read each item, please tell me whether you think this is an extremely serious, a very serious, a somewhat serious, or a not too serious problem.

■ Extremely serious ■ Very serious



## Top Three Concerns by Ethnicity

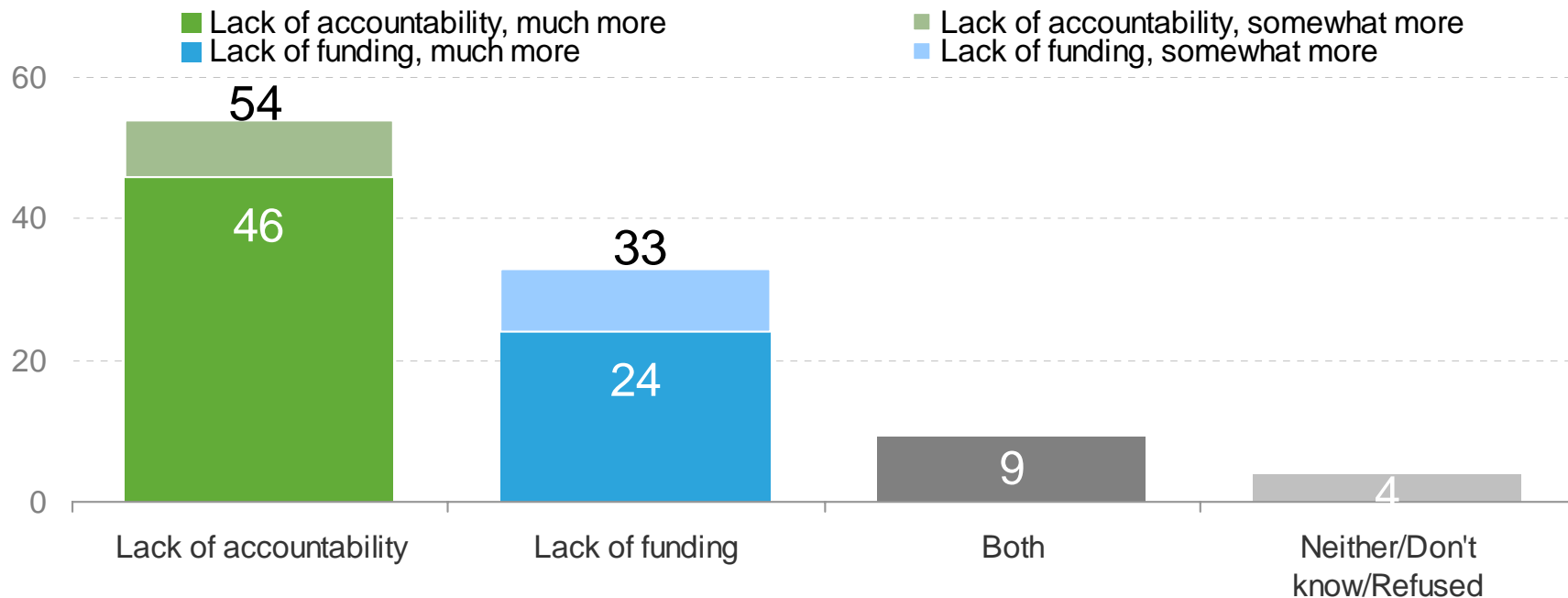
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- Whites
  1. Too much money being spent on bureaucracy and administration
  2. Crime, gangs and violence in schools
  3. A lack of parental involvement
- Latinos
  1. A lack of parental involvement
  2. Crime, gangs and violence in schools
  3. Too many students not performing at grade level
- African-Americans
  1. Too many students not performing at grade level
  2. Classrooms being too crowded
  3. A lack of parental involvement
- Asians
  1. An achievement gap between students of different economic backgrounds
  2. Not having enough quality teachers
  3. Wasteful spending of school finances

# Accountability vs. Funding

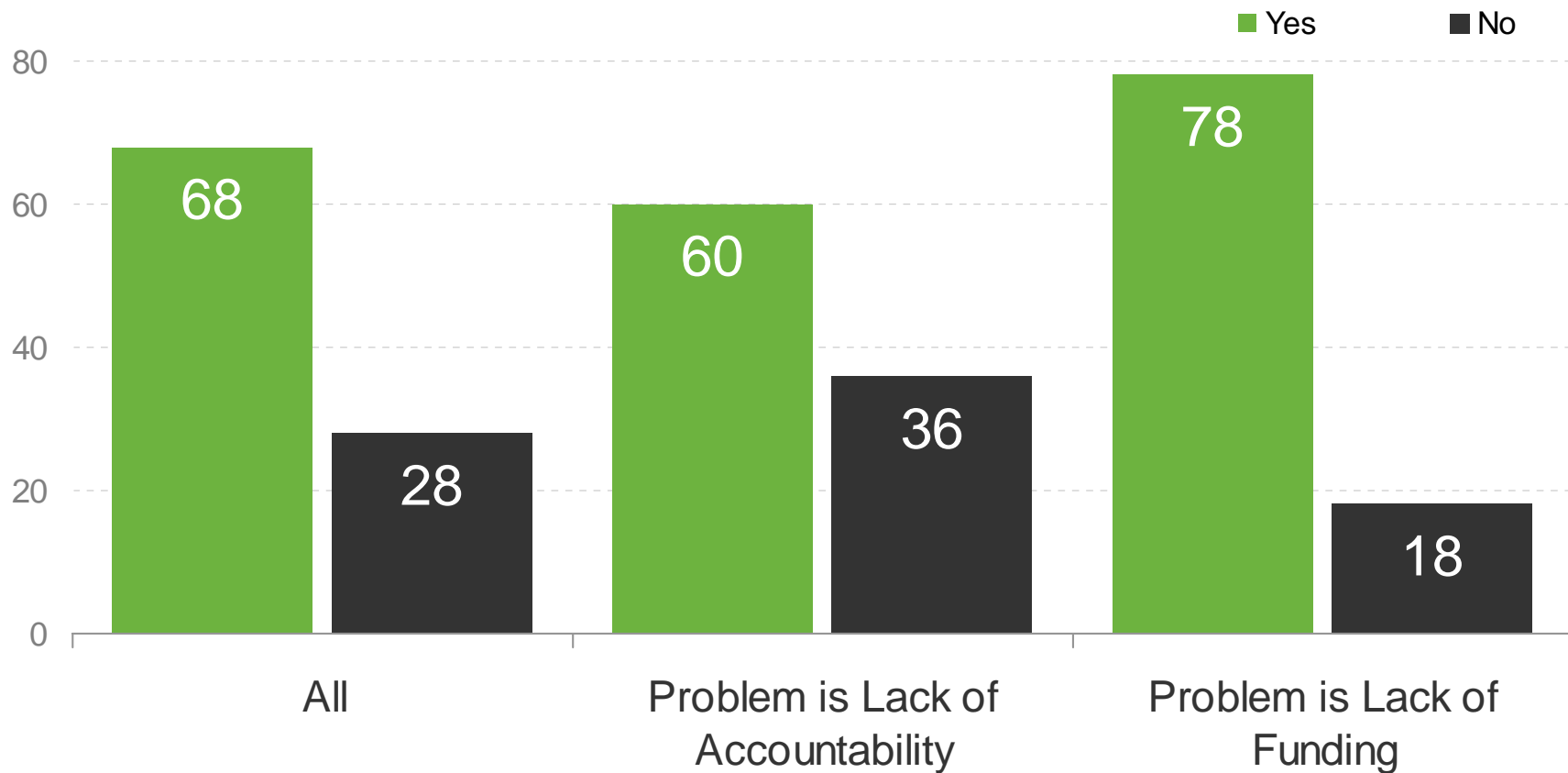
Some people say the main problem with our schools is the **lack of accountability**. There is adequate funding for education, but there is too much underperformance and inefficiency in the system. California already spends 67 billion dollars a year on education, but too much goes towards efforts and programs that don't help prepare students achieve academic success.

Other people say the **lack of funding** is a major reason for the poor quality of our schools. California ranks near the very bottom in the country in per student funding, along with states like Mississippi. Our schools cannot improve unless we increase the money we spend in the classroom.



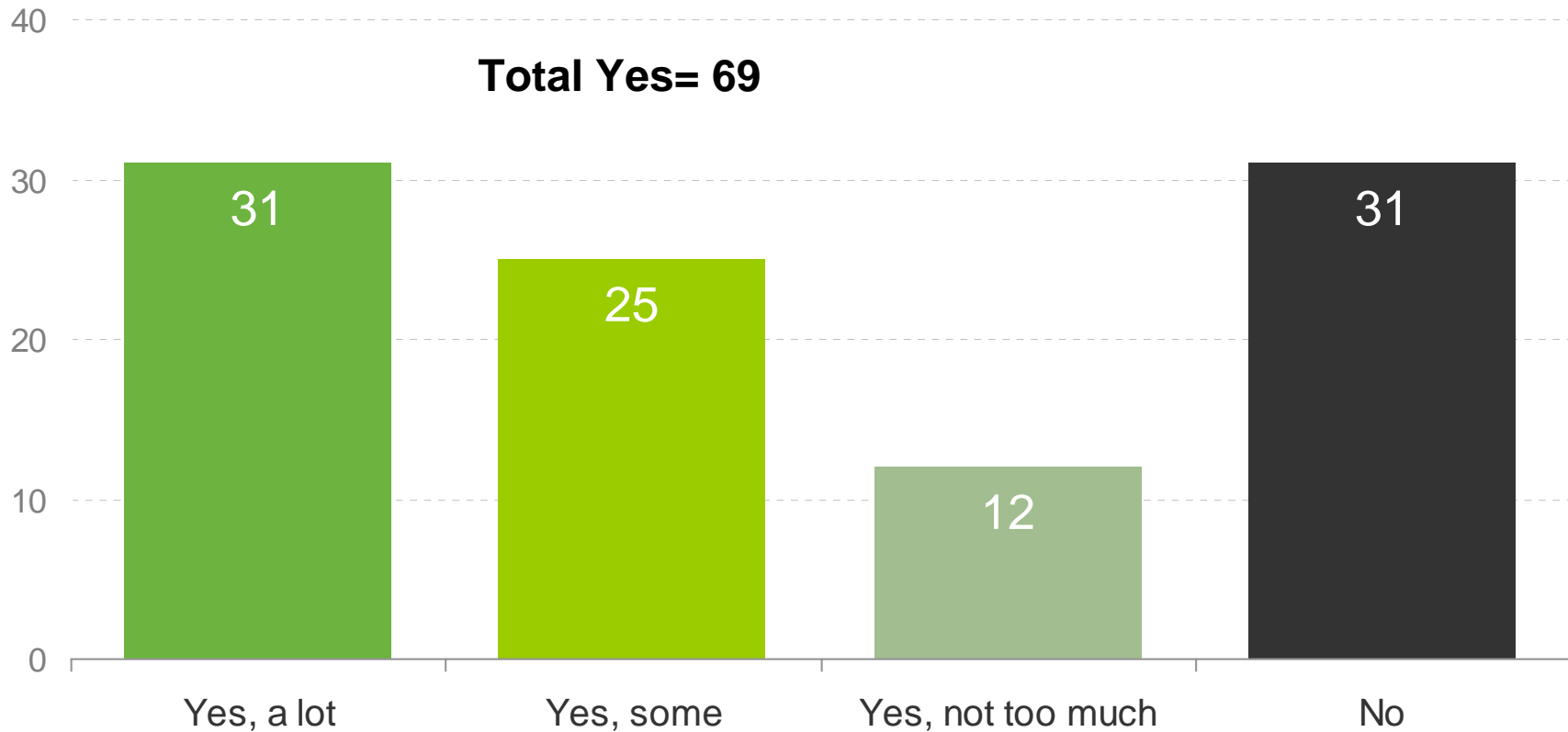
## Voters Want to Increase Funding WITH Accountability

*Would you support a tax increase to fund public education in California if the money is directly tied to improved students' academic performance?*



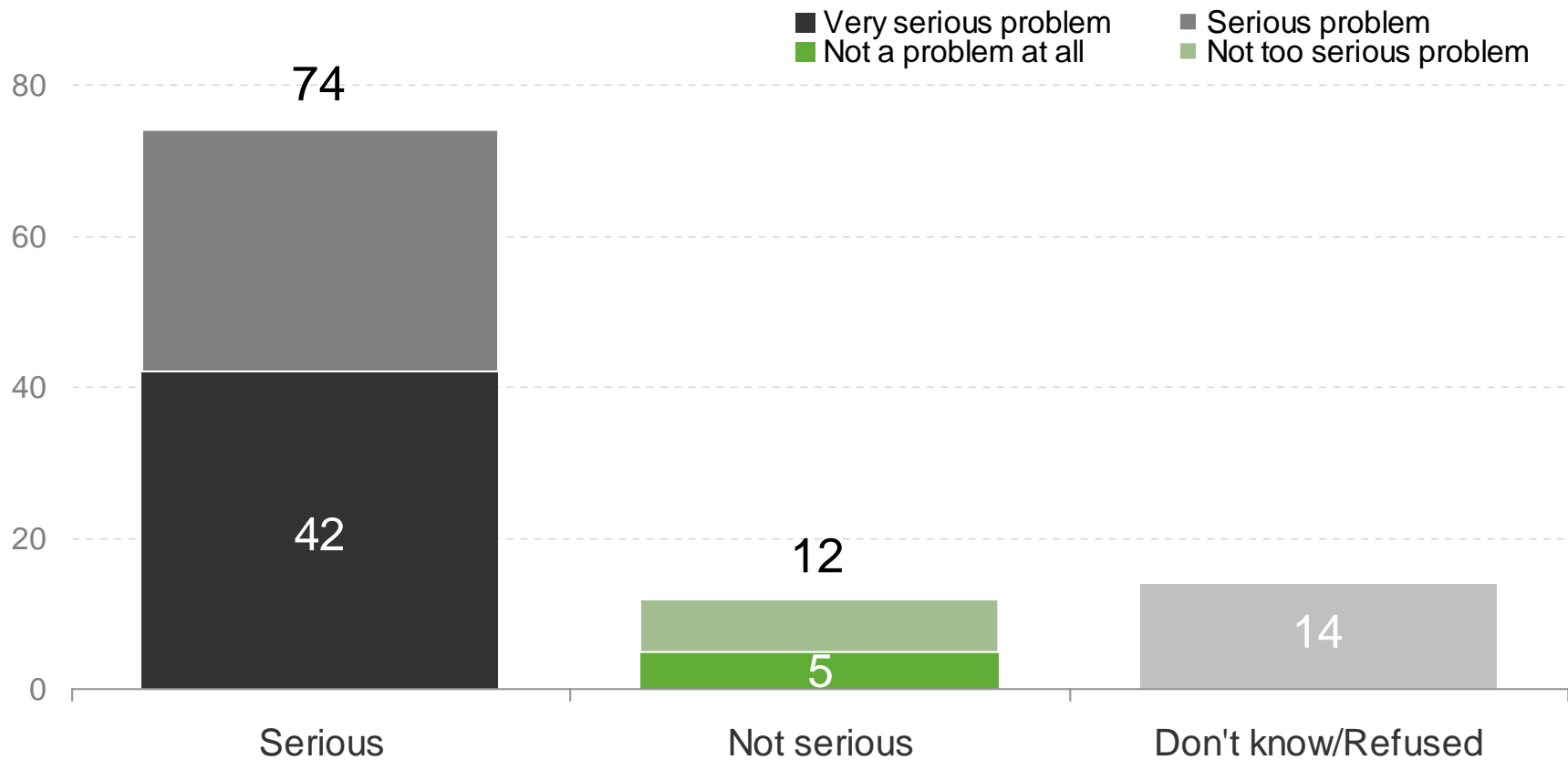
## Voters are Aware of the Achievement Gap

*Have you heard about a, quote, "achievement gap" in California's public schools? That is, a difference in academic performance between students of different ethnicities and economic backgrounds?*



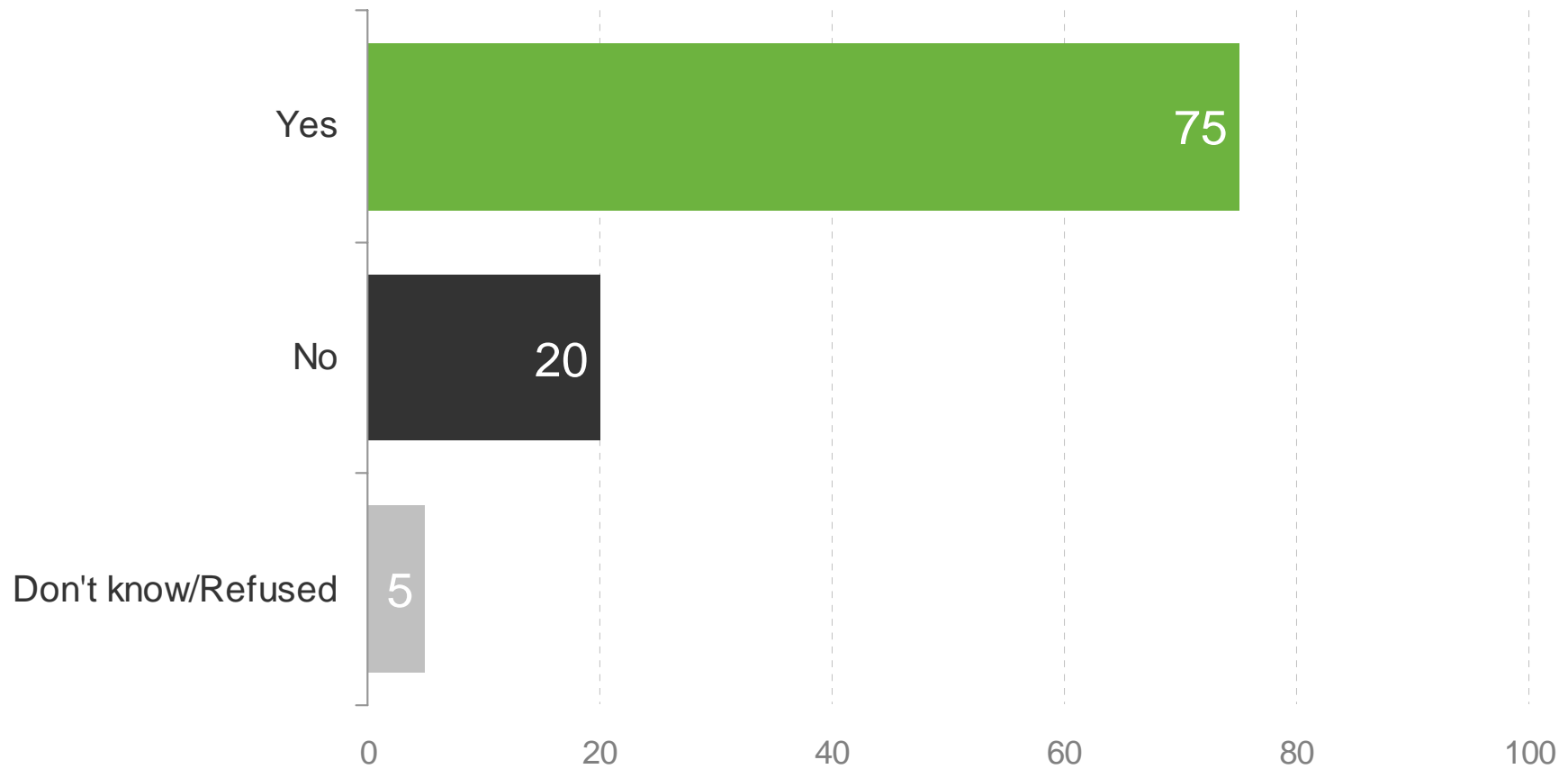
# Voters Believe the Achievement Gap is Serious

*How serious a problem is the achievement gap? Would you say it is a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, a not too serious problem, or not a problem at all?*



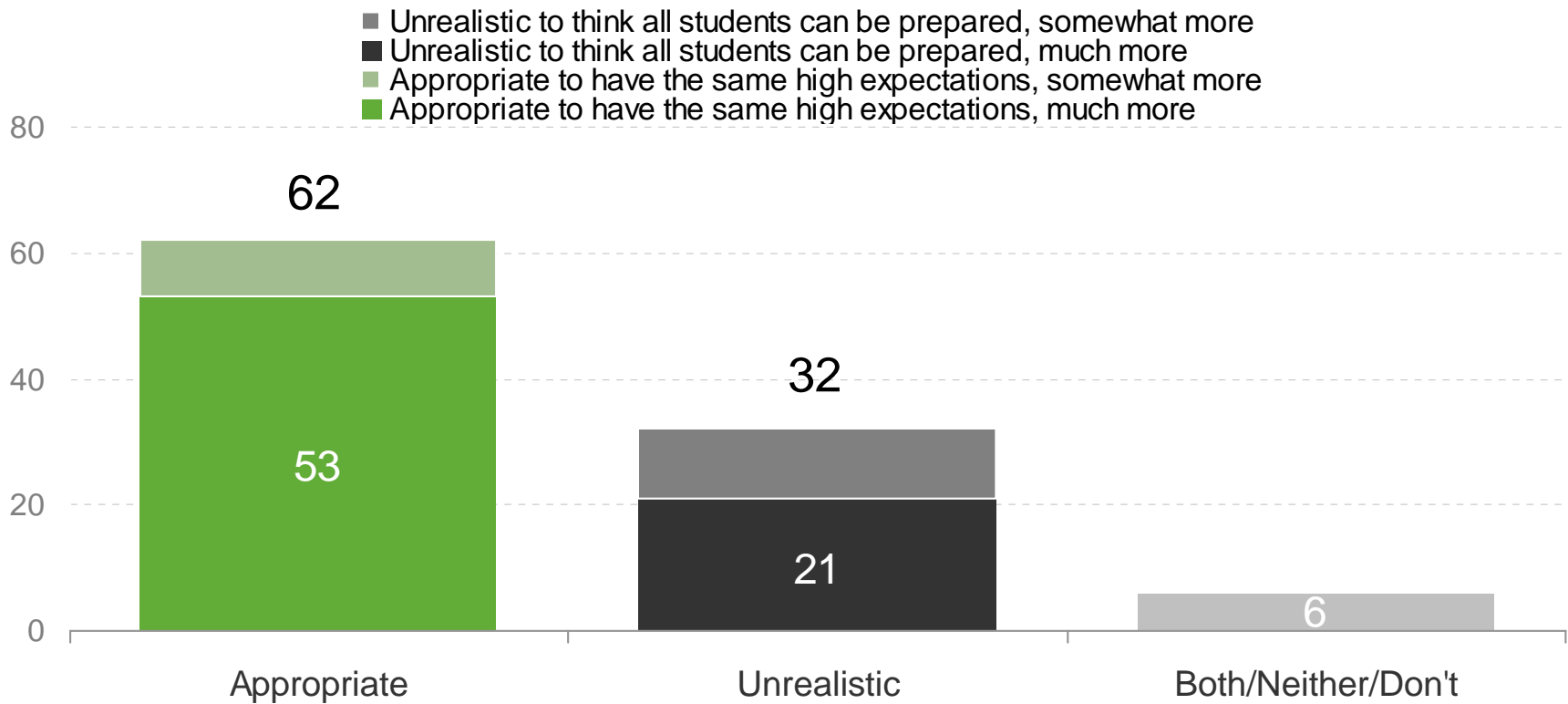
# Voters are Optimistic

*Do you believe that schools with high levels of poverty and large minority student populations can overcome this problem? (asked of voters who said the achievement gap is a very serious or serious problem)*



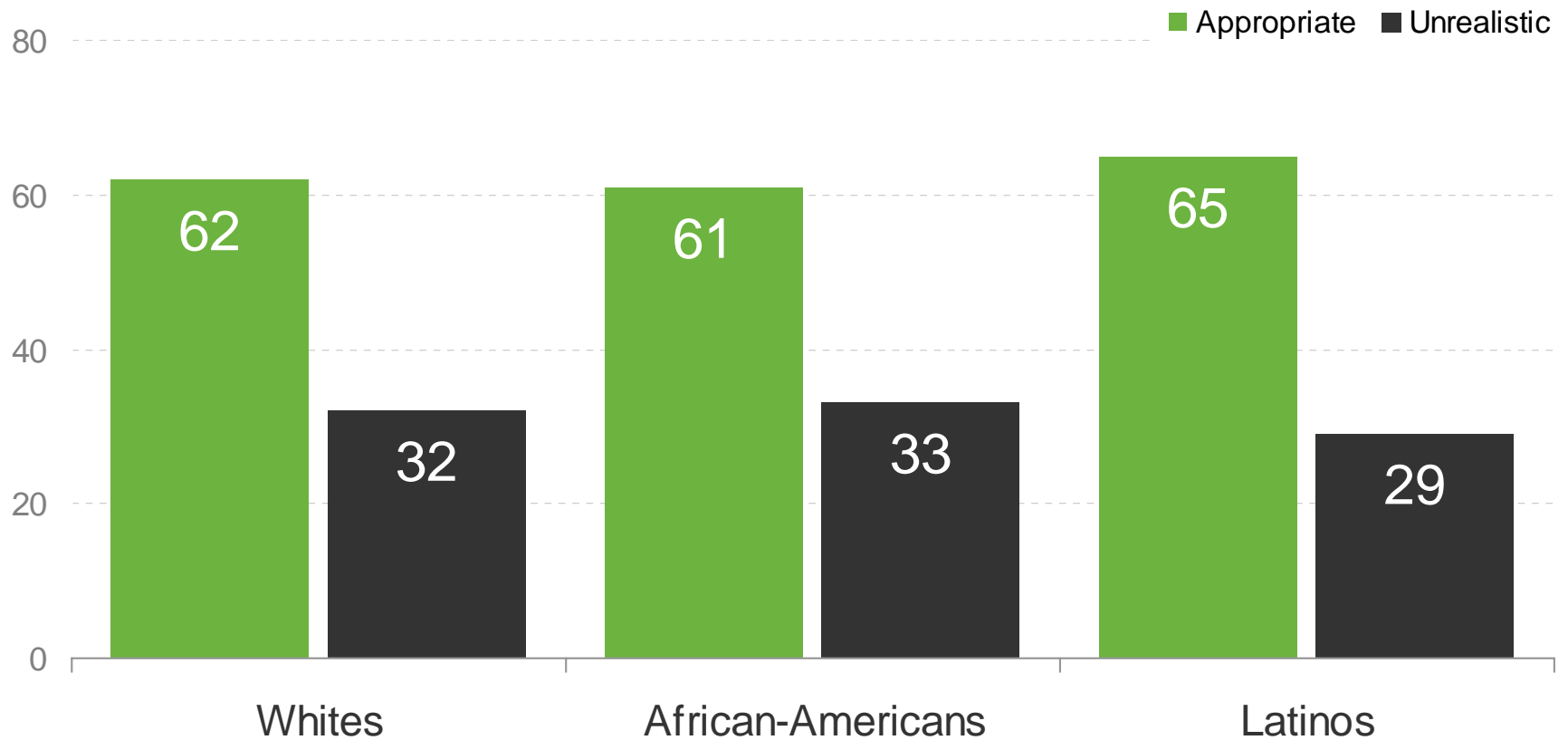
# One Set of Expectations

Which of these two statements comes closer your own point of view:  
 It is **appropriate** to have the same high expectations for students from all ethnic groups and economic backgrounds  
 It is **unrealistic** to think that the schools can prepare all students for college or the workplace, regardless of the student's background.



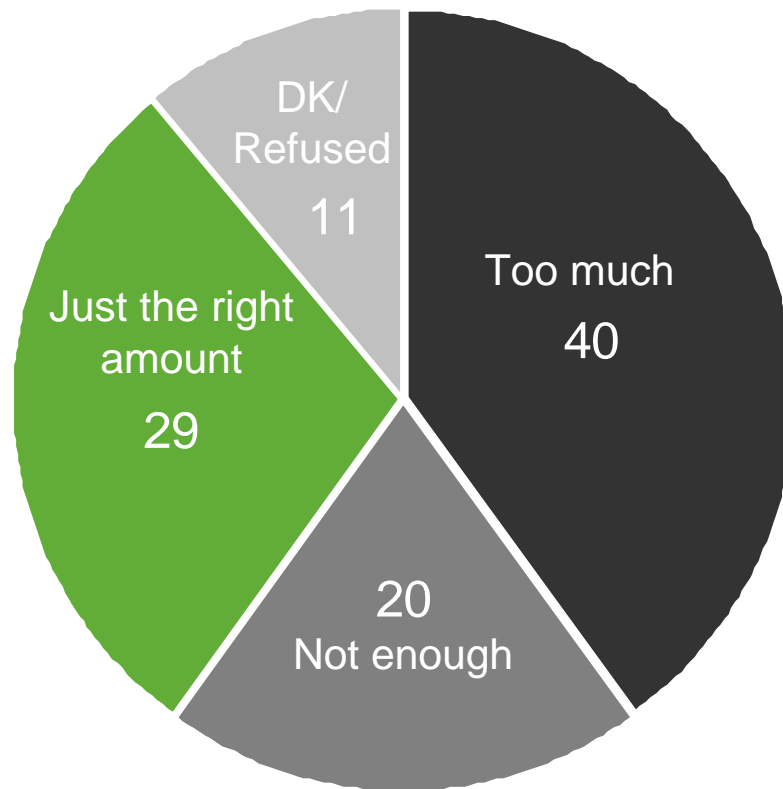
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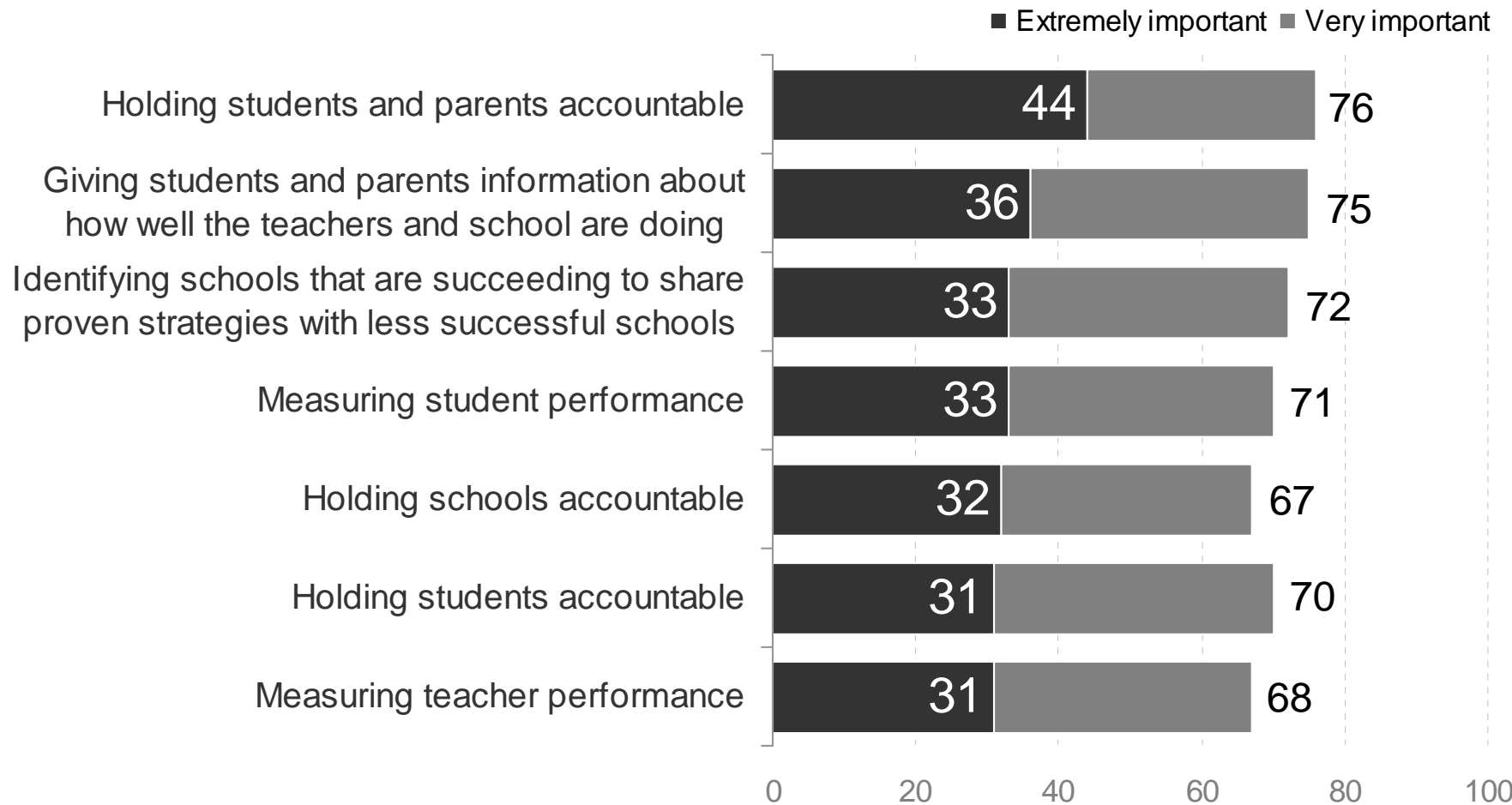
## Voters Mixed on Testing ...

*In thinking about standardized testing in K-through-12 public schools, do you think there is too much, not enough, or just the right amount of testing?*



## ...but See the Value of Testing

*How important is testing in doing each of the following - extremely, very, somewhat, or not too important?*



## Suggested Reforms

	Support	Oppose	Difference
Make school performance data, such as overall student assessment test scores and grade-level performance, available and understandable to the public, so parents can better understand what is happening within schools. Test scores of individual students would remain confidential.	91	6	85
Set the expectation for all schools to get all students to attain a minimum of grade-level proficiency.	91	7	84
Give parents clear options for when their local school is chronically low-performing, including easy to access tutoring services for their children, transfers to another school, and charter school options	86	11	75
Continue to provide additional money to low-performing schools that raise achievement as an incentive for further improvement, rather than taking the additional money away	82	13	69
Make kindergarten mandatory for every child in the state of California	84	15	68

## Suggested Reforms (continued)

	Support	Oppose	Difference
Provide additional pay for teachers and principals for hard to fill positions such as in math and science and in high poverty, low-performing schools.	83	14	68
Create and fund a system that quickly intervenes in low-performing schools by connecting them to high-performing schools in their geographic area in order to help them replicate what works.	82	13	68
Have the state quickly intervene in school districts that have been low performing for five or more years. This may include allowing students to transfer out of the district, changing staff, withholding money, or taking over the district.	71	23	47
Define "teacher quality" as a teacher's ability to get students to grade-level proficiency, and tie teacher performance evaluations to student Achievement.	71	24	47
Provide financial incentives for teachers and principals when they show increased student academic achievement.	72	26	46

## Preferred Reforms, by Race

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- Whites
  1. Make school performance data available and understandable
  2. Set the expectation for all schools to get all students to grade-level proficiency
  3. Give parents clear options when their local school is chronically low-performing
- Latinos
  1. Make school performance data available and understandable
  2. Set the expectation for all schools to get all students to grade-level proficiency
  3. Create and fund a system that quickly intervenes in low-performing schools
- African-Americans
  1. Set the expectation for all schools to get all students to grade-level proficiency
  2. Make kindergarten mandatory for every child
  3. Provide additional pay for teachers and principals for hard-to-fill positions
- Asians
  1. Set the expectation for all schools to get all students to grade-level proficiency
  2. Provide additional pay for teachers and principals for hard-to-fill positions
  3. Make school performance data available and understandable

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