



Pierce County
Finance Department

2024-25 Biennial Budget Community Engagement Survey

September 28, 2023
Committee of the Whole

Julie Demuth

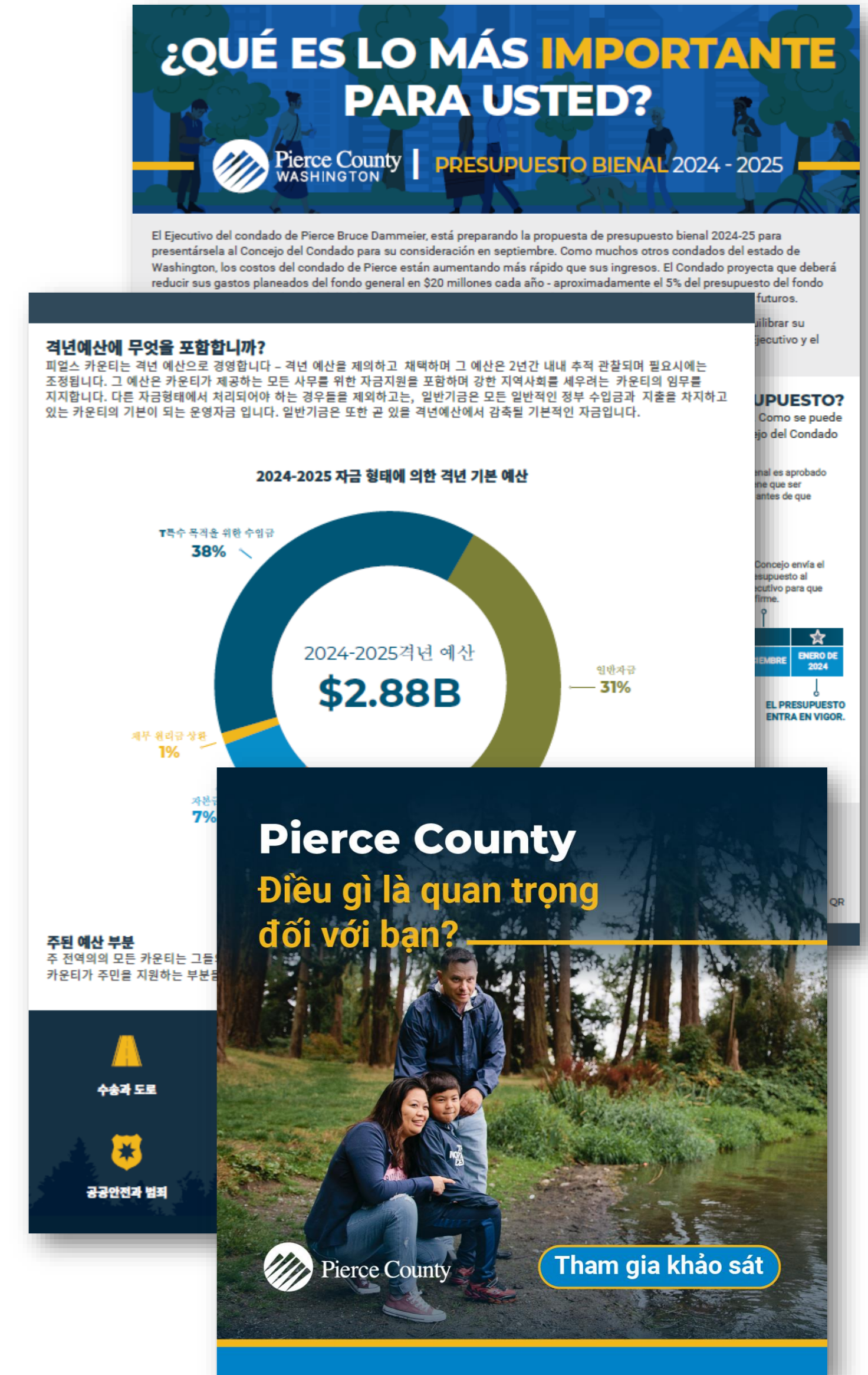
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Community Engagement Strategy

Pierce County contracted with a communications firm to create an online open house and collect community feedback on budget priorities through a multi-language survey.

- The open house and survey were active from mid-May through late June 2023.
- Community members were informed through several mechanisms.
 - County Website
 - Executive Blog
 - Eight Community Navigators
 - Facebook
 - Printed Flyers
 - Instagram
 - Council Listservs
 - TikTok
 - Board and Commission Listservs
 - NextDoor



The survey was available in English, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

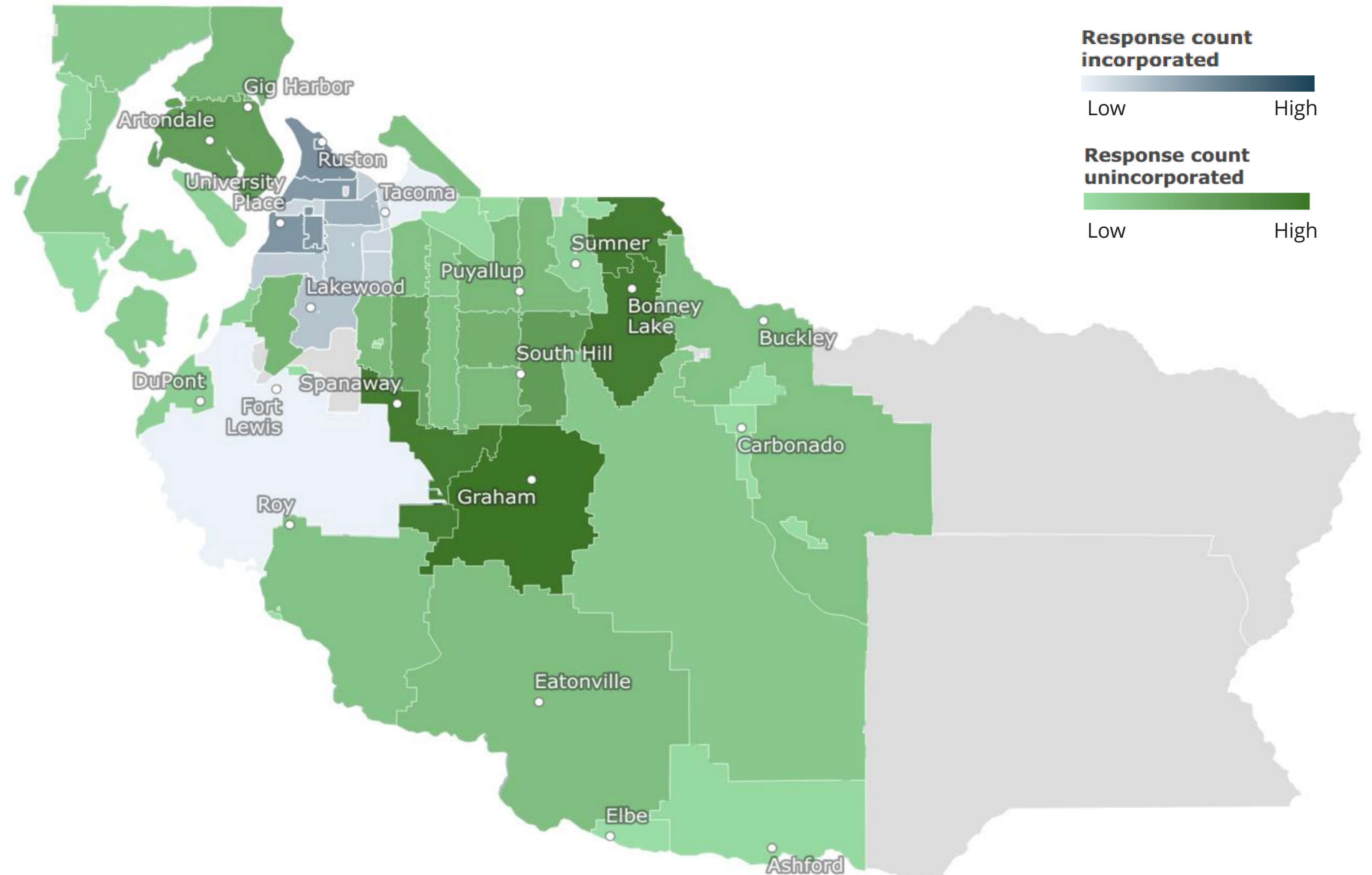
Survey Respondent Geography

2,577 individuals living and working in Pierce County responded to the survey.

Engagement strategies prioritized outreach to residents in unincorporated Pierce County.

- More than 3 out of every 4 responses were from individuals in unincorporated areas.

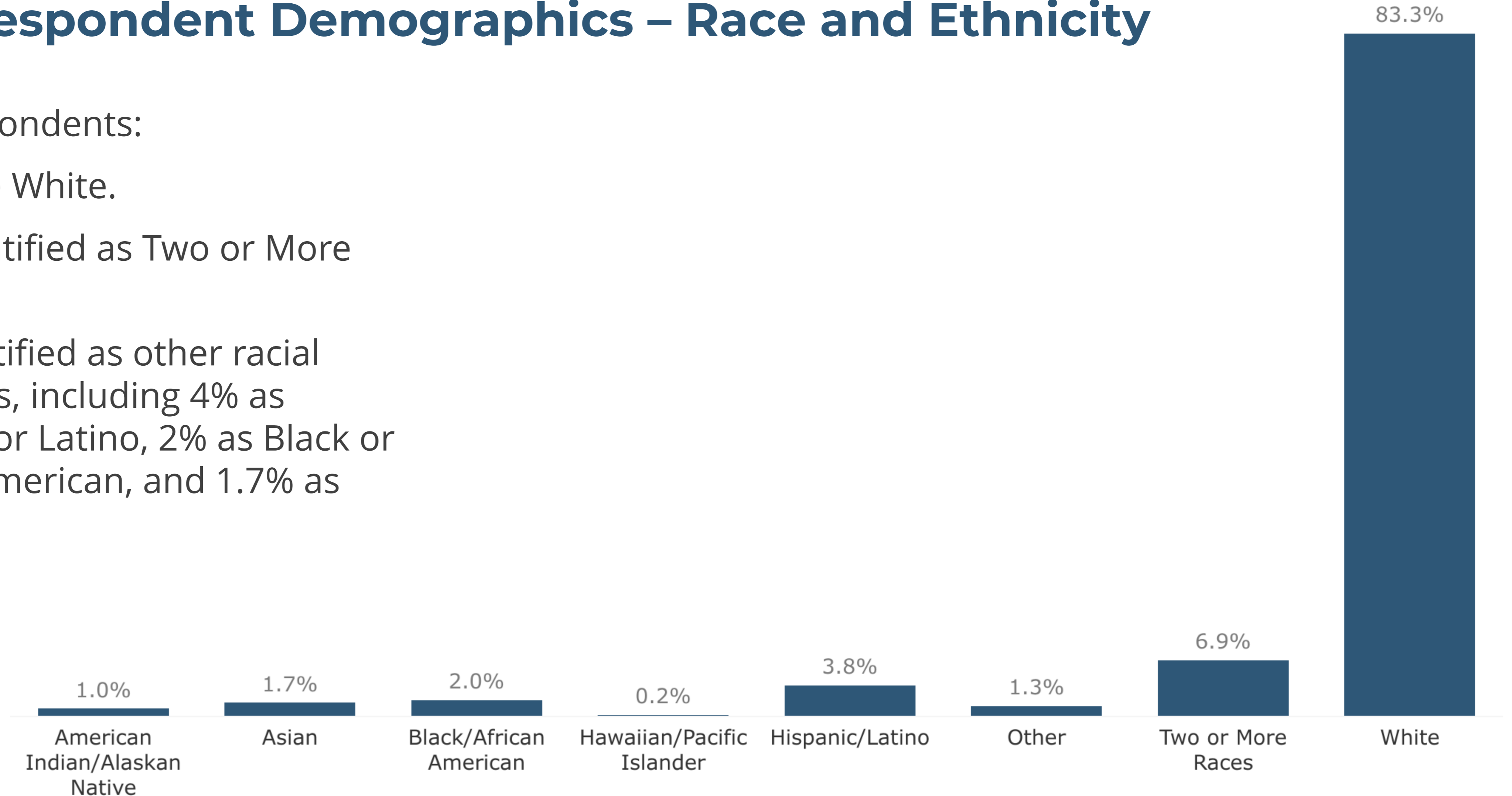
Survey responses by zip code.



Survey Respondent Demographics – Race and Ethnicity

Among respondents:

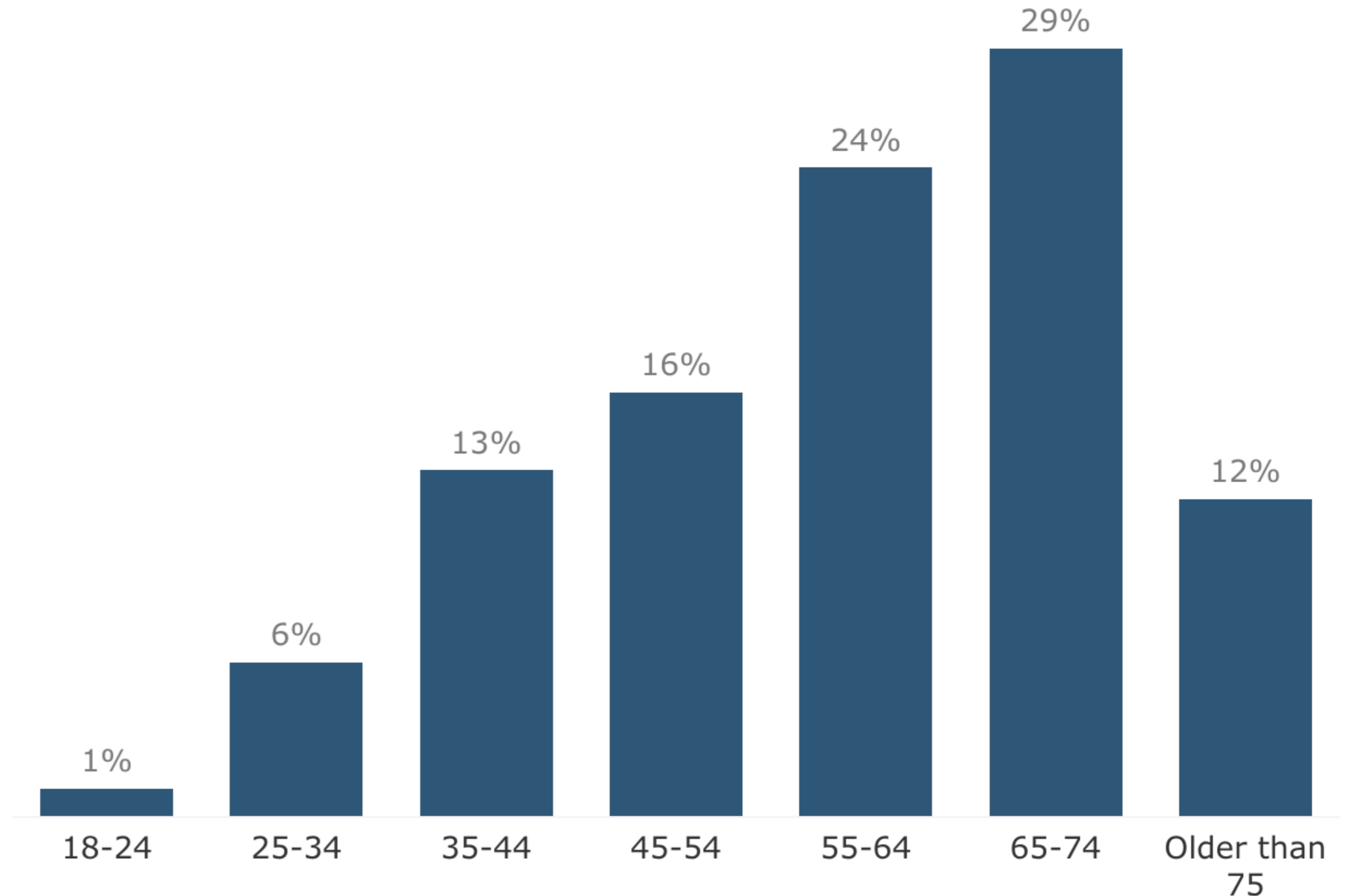
- 83% were White.
- 6.9% identified as Two or More Races
- 10% identified as other racial categories, including 4% as Hispanic or Latino, 2% as Black or African American, and 1.7% as Asian.



Survey Respondent Demographics – Age

Among respondents:

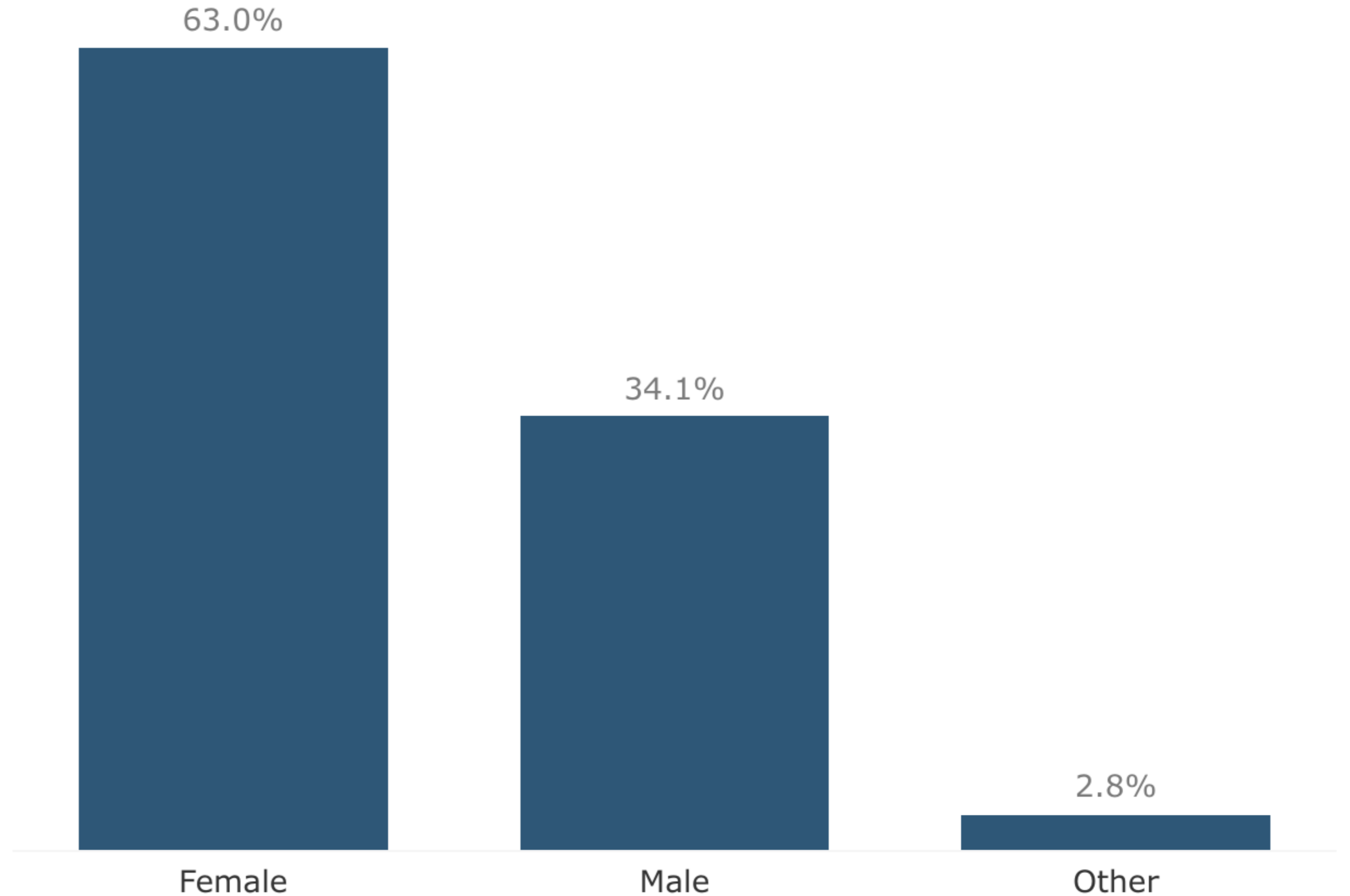
- 65% were aged 55 and older, while 7% were under the age of 35.
- 32% were between the ages of 35 and 54.



Survey Respondent Demographics – Gender

Among respondents:

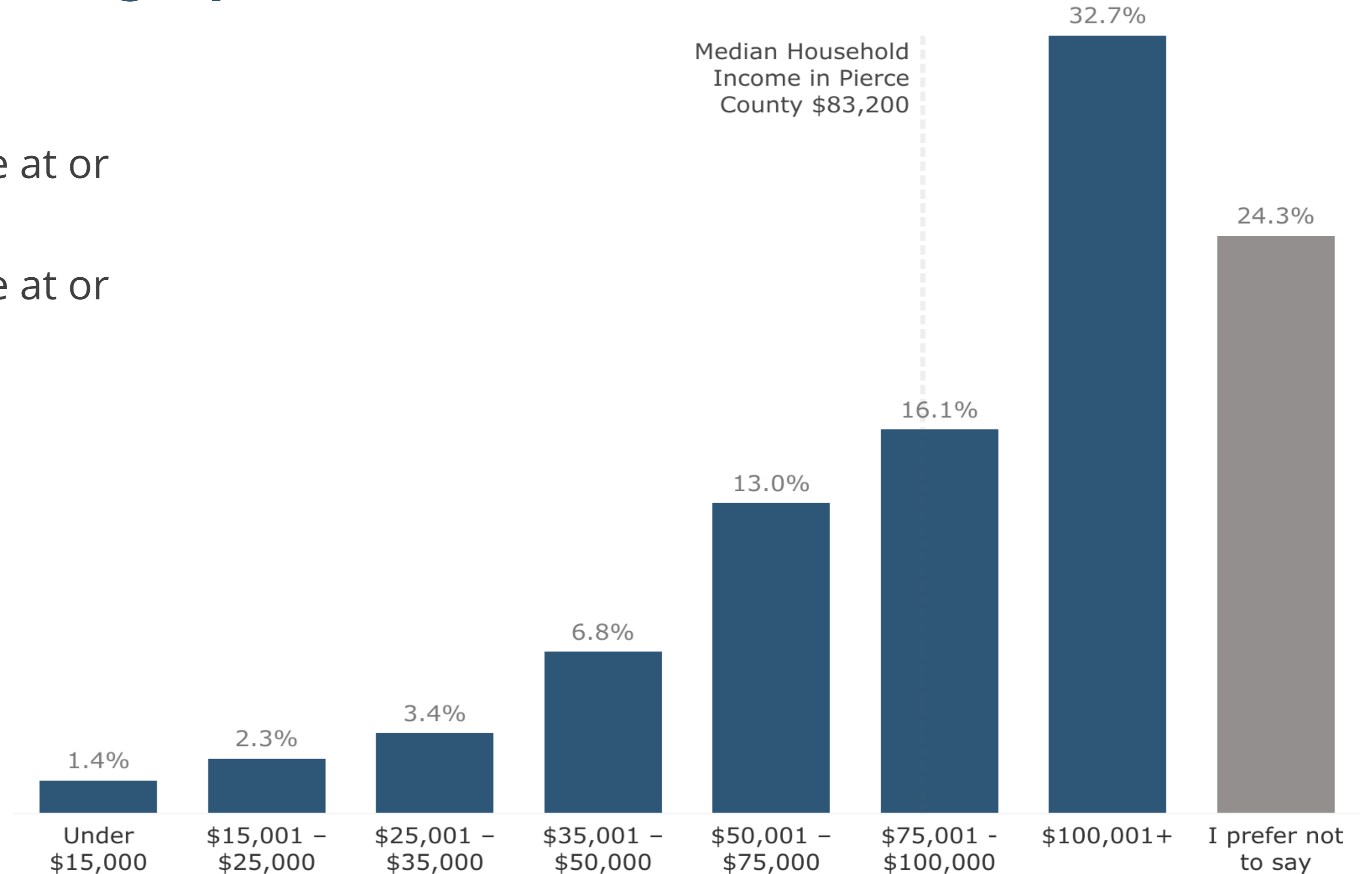
- 63% were female, 34% male, and 2.8% identified as Other.



Survey Respondent Demographics – Household Income

Among respondents:

- 49% had a household income at or above the county median.
- 14% had a household income at or below \$50,000.
- 24% preferred not to say.

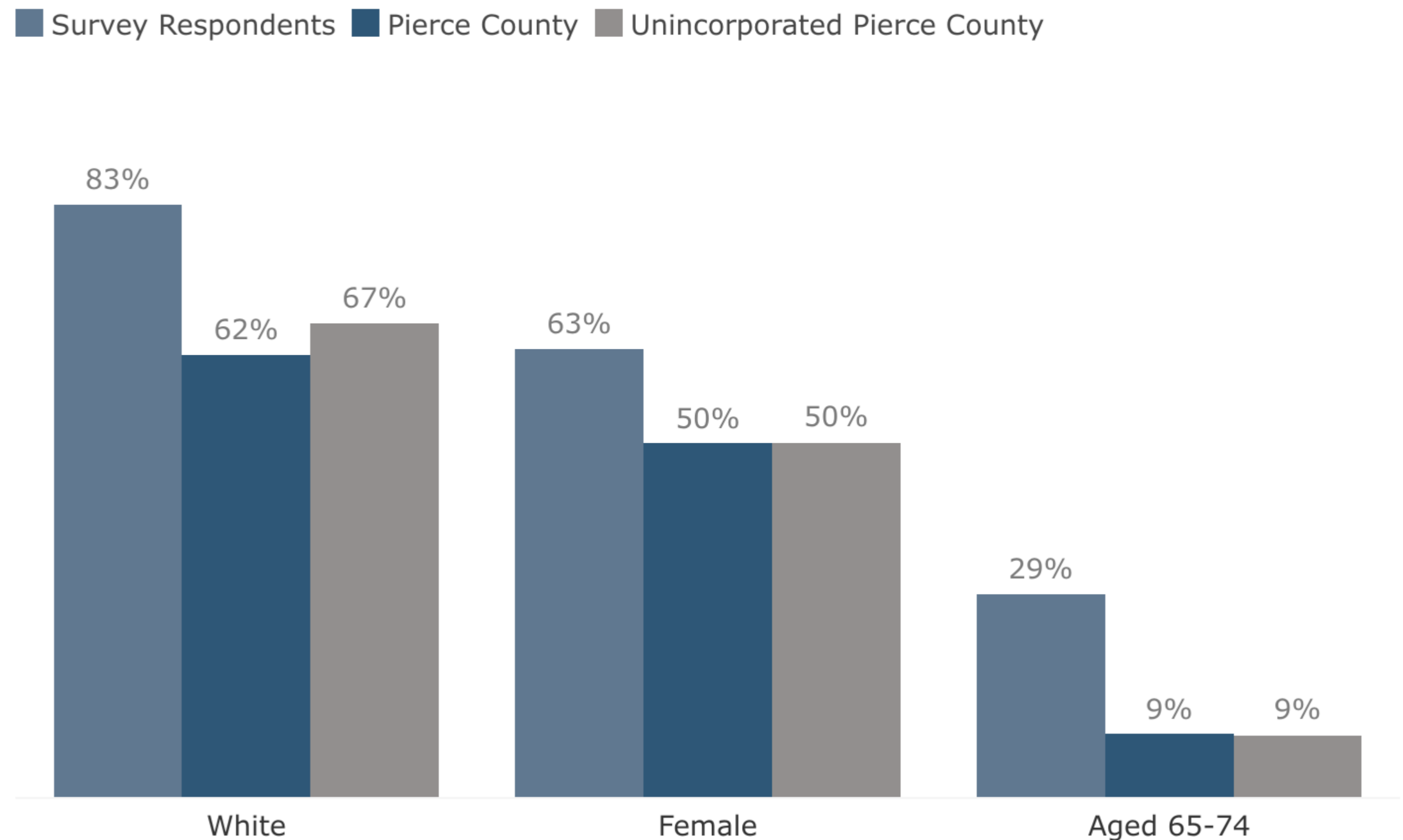


Survey Respondent Demographics

Among respondents, individuals identifying as white, female, and older than 65 years of age were overrepresented relative to their representation among Pierce County residents.

Pierce County utilized simple ranking – also known as random iterative method weighting – to adjust the sample populations to fit the demographic profile of the population analyzed.

Survey respondent demographics compared to residents.

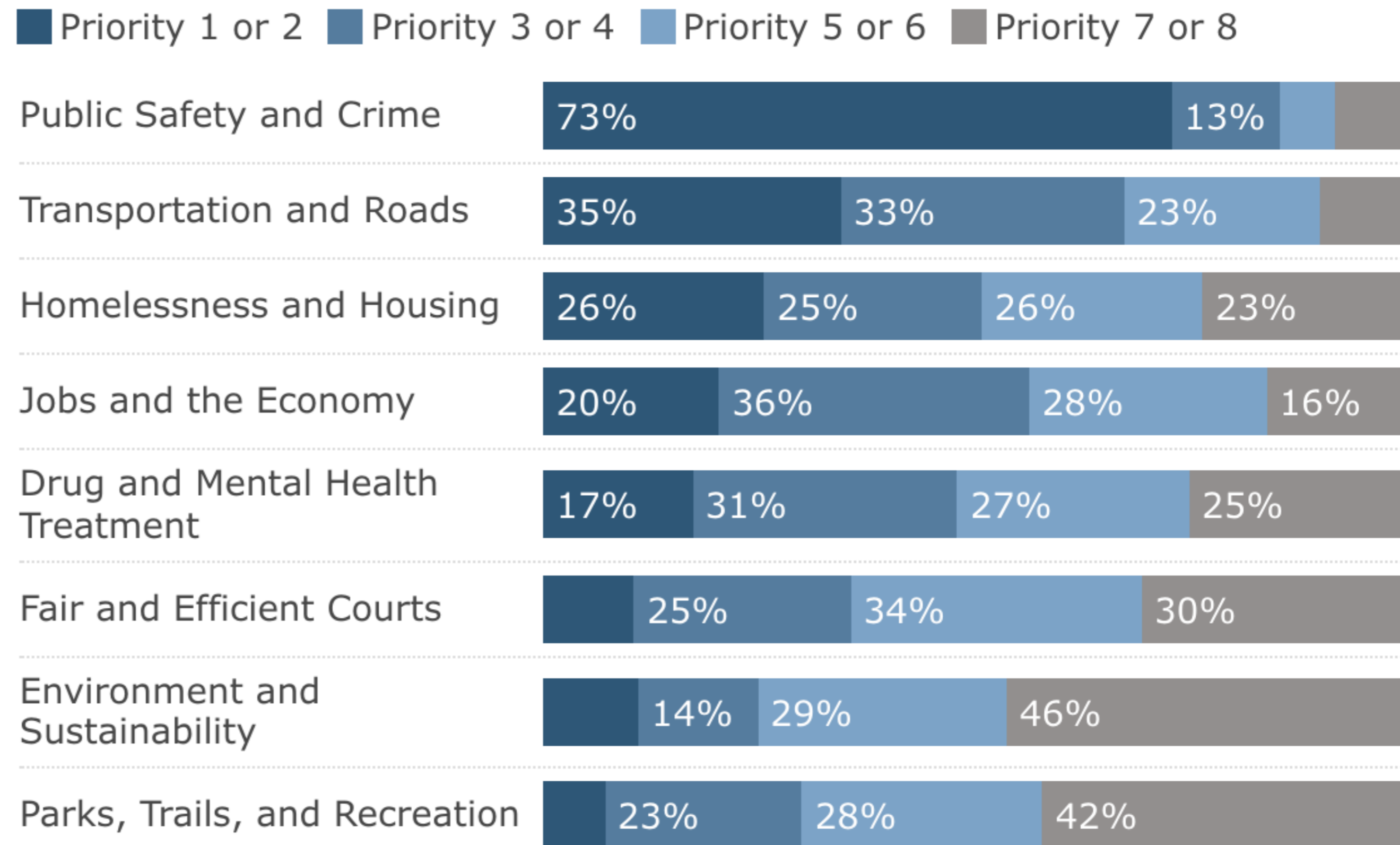


Key Findings

Community input indicated Pierce County should prioritize three categories in the 2024-25 biennial budget:

- 1) Public Safety and Crime
- 2) Transportation and Roads
- 3) Homelessness and Housing

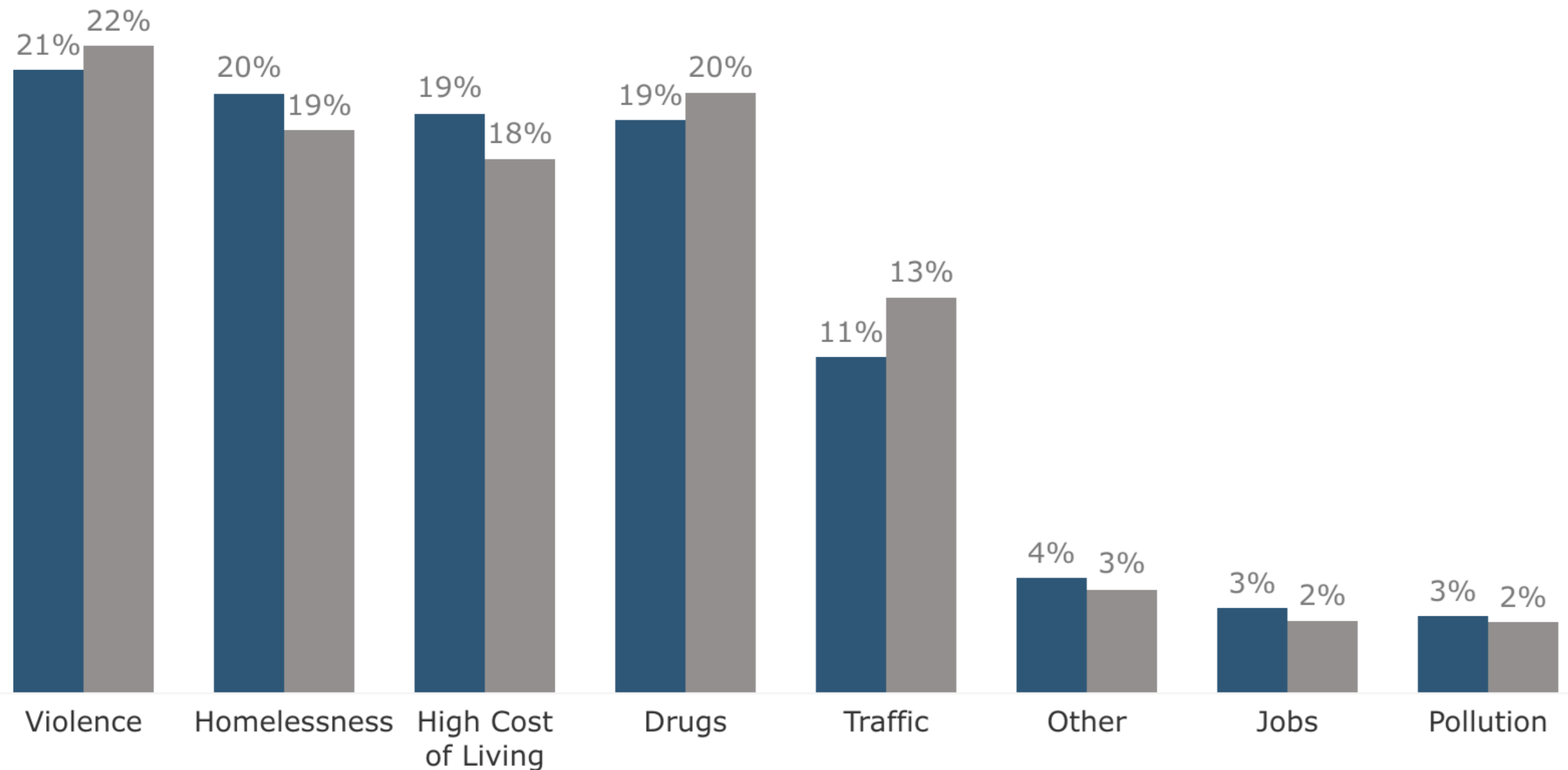
Proportion of survey respondents indicating each category's priority to them.



Survey results suggest violence, homelessness, cost of living, and drugs are biggest problems facing Pierce County.

What do you think are the biggest problems facing Pierce County in the next twelve months?

■ Pierce County ■ Unincorporated Pierce County



“All crime is a problem, not just **violence**. Personal property crimes, armed robbery, car theft...”

“Spending on **homelessness** is off the charts for very little gain because root causes are not being addressed.”

“Taxes are too high. **Cost of living** in WA is skyrocketing! Families are suffering. Price of food and gas are out of control in WA!”

“**Drugs** and crime around Tacoma in particular.”

Survey respondents did not have a clear consensus on taxes and the funding of County services.

In general, how do you feel about taxes and the funding of County services?

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I am in favor of reducing both taxes and County services.



I am willing to pay more taxes only if it will increase service levels.



I am in favor of keeping taxes at the same rate even if it means services must be reduced.



Other



I am willing to pay more taxes if necessary to keep existing service levels.



As illustrated in the quotes below, the demand for reduced taxes is prevalent among older individuals with limited incomes responding to the survey.

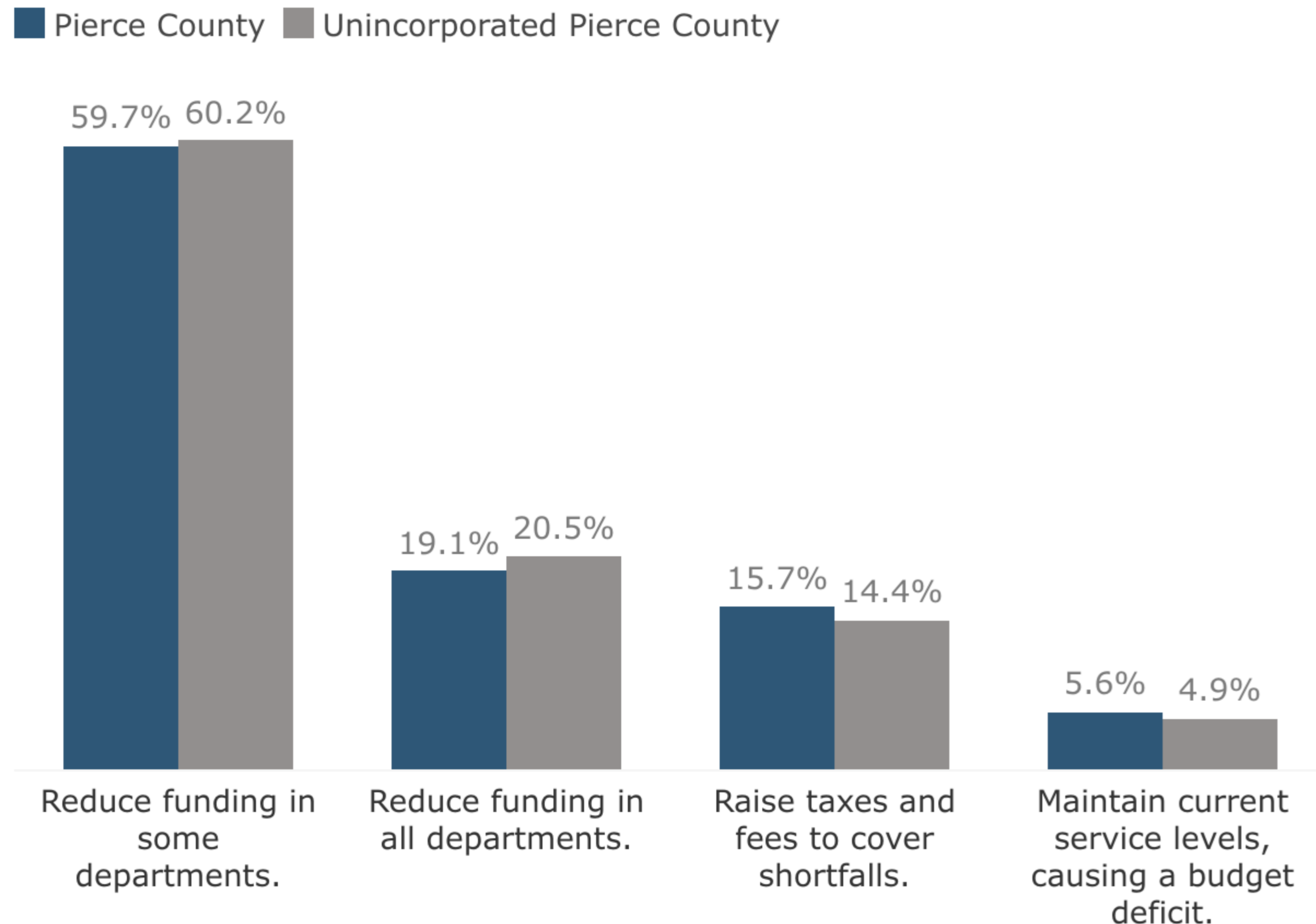
“My taxes are high and it is a financial burden for a senior, but yet I am not old enough for senior discounts.”

“Reduce the level that qualifies as a senior.”

“Taxes are ridiculous all around but I don’t see where any of the money is improving anything. Or even keeping it at an even keel.”

Over half of residents favor reduced funding in certain County departments.

Which of the following solutions most closely represents your opinion on addressing the budget?



When asked “Do you have specific services in mind that you would cut,” responses included:

“Reduce **residential building regulations** and roll back energy codes to 1990 levels. Allow people to live in RVs and in tiny homes as primary residences.”

“**Cut a little from all services.** Especially the services that didn't spend all of their budget from the previous year.”

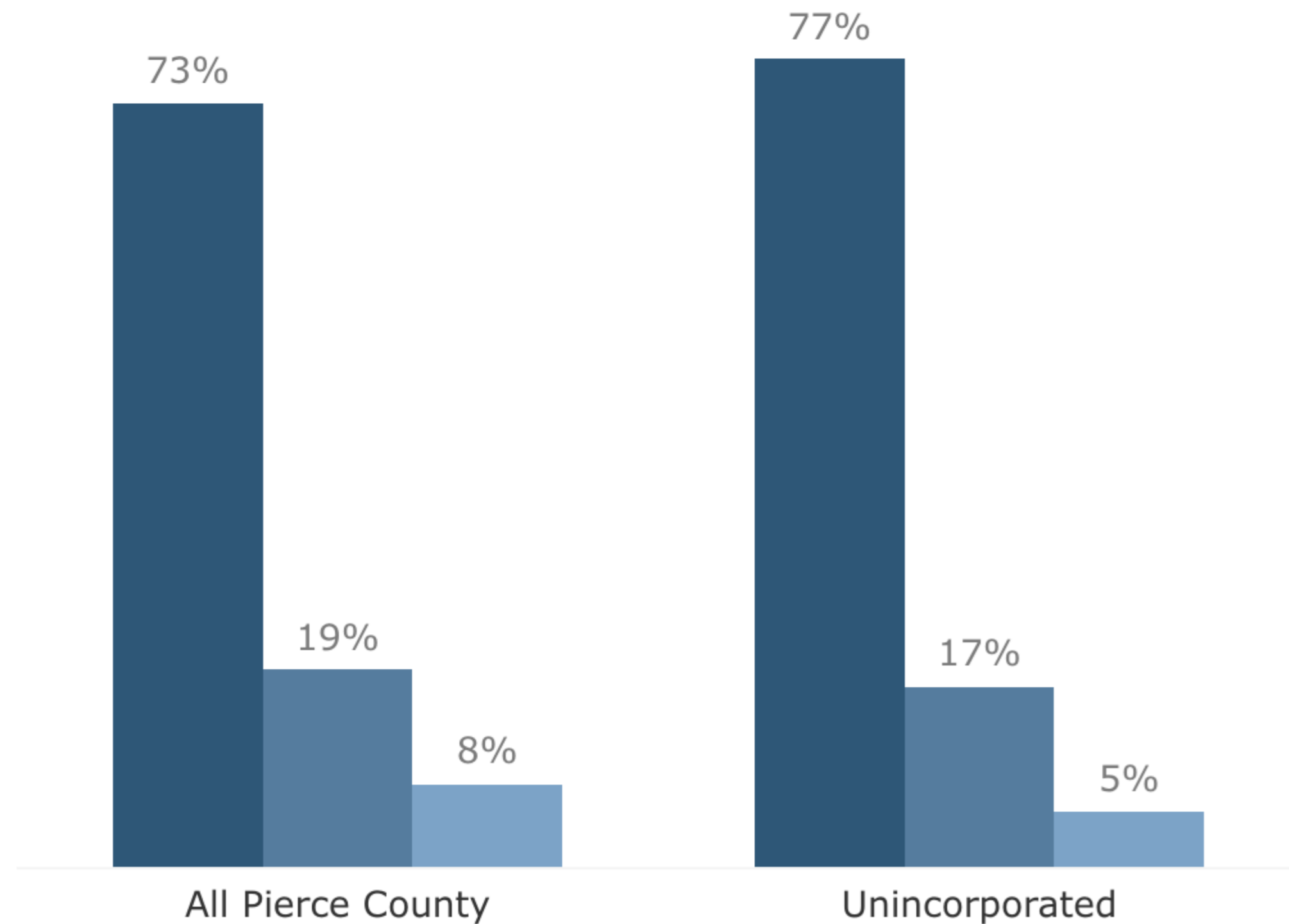
“I don't believe we need all the **"fancy" art projects** that happen with **road work**. Basic roads would work just as well.”

“**Environmental,** reduce regulations and associated rules.”

Public Safety and Crime

How important is public safety when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?

■ Most Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important

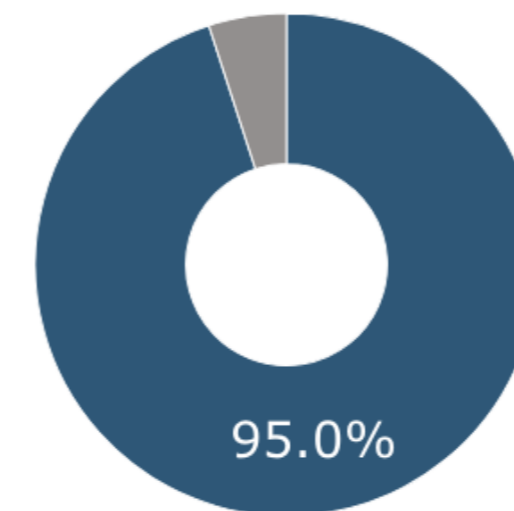


One out of every three respondents included crime when asked about what they liked least about Pierce County.

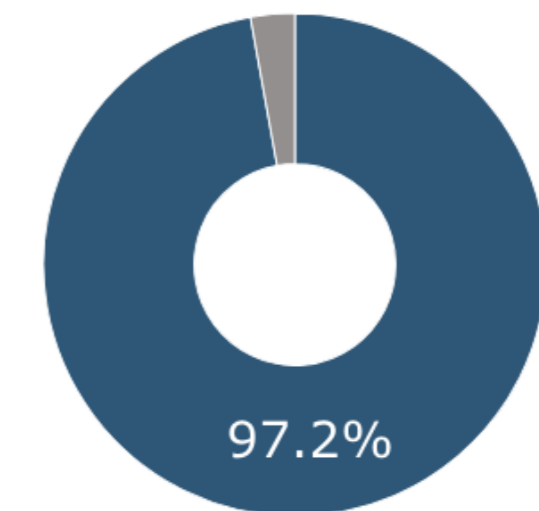
"I feel that public safety needs to be prioritized to ensure our economy and way of life/living is maintained and made better."

Do you think funding for public safety should be reduced?

■ No ■ Yes



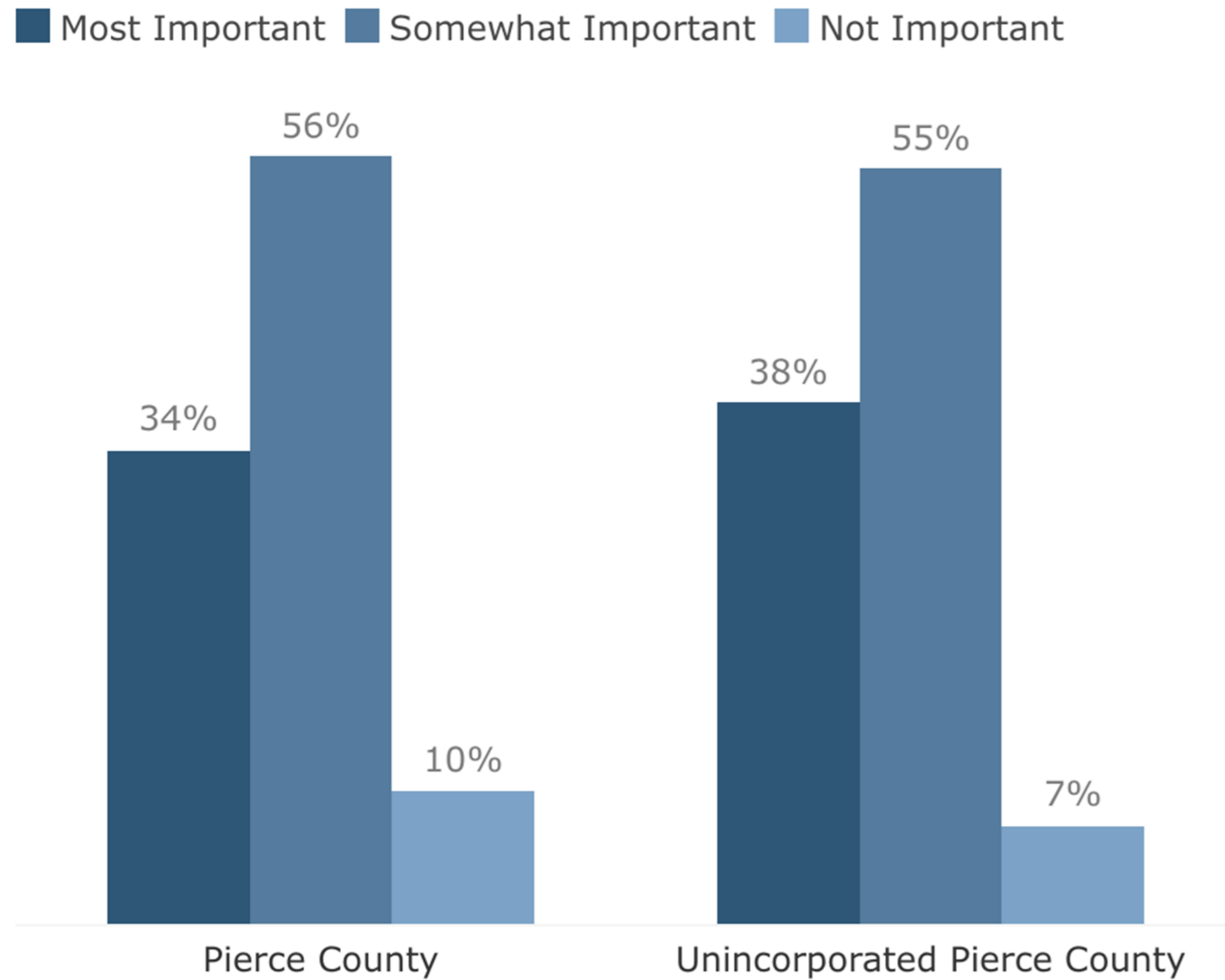
All Pierce County



Unincorporated

Transportation and Roads

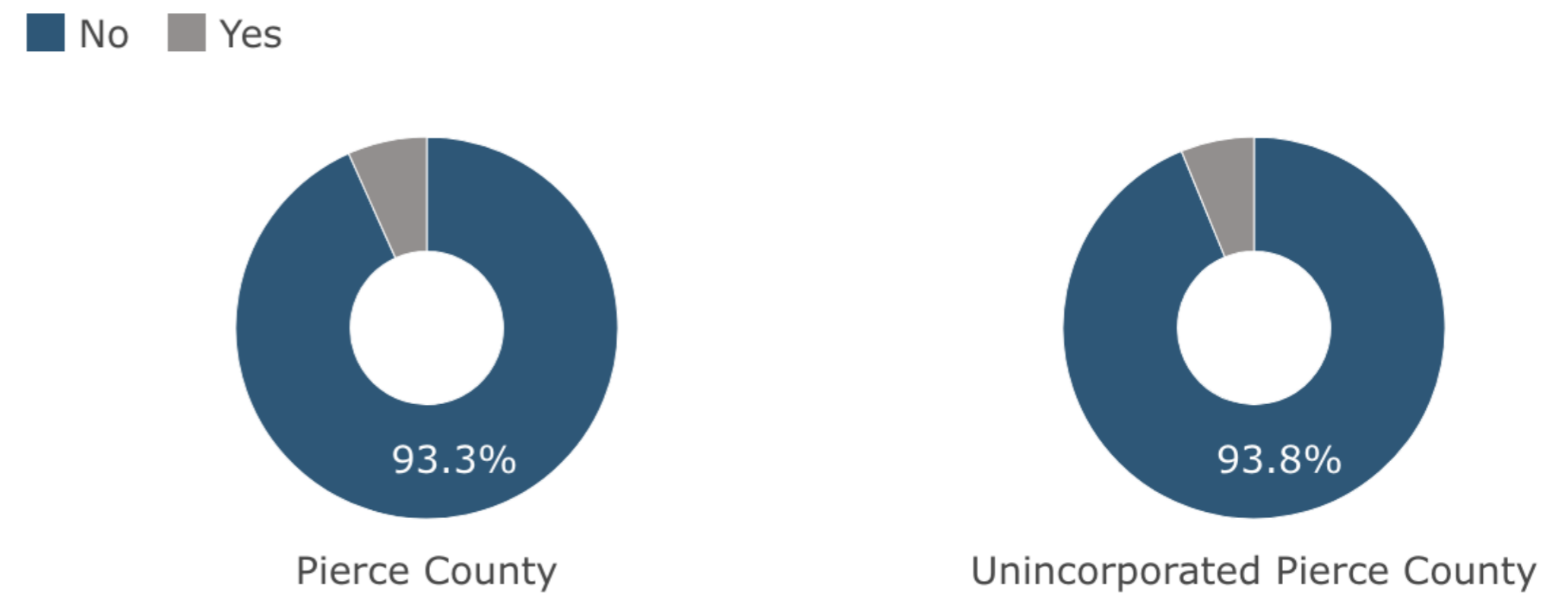
How important are transportation and roads when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?



One out of every seven respondents mentioned traffic and/or congestion when asked about what they liked least about Pierce County.

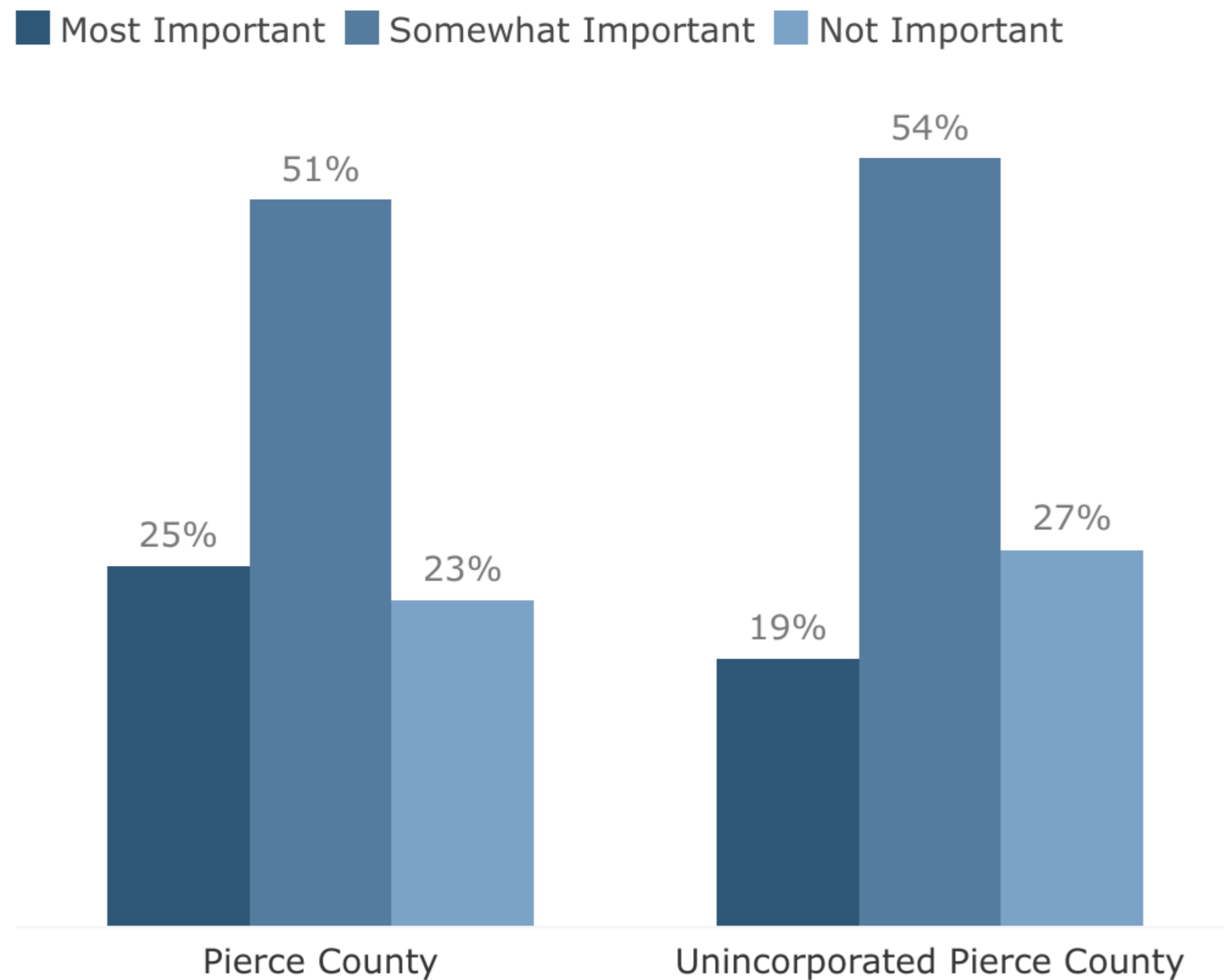
"Poor public infrastructure including public transit [and] traffic nightmares are what I like least about Pierce County."

Do you think funding for transportation and roads should be reduced?



Homelessness and Housing

How important are homelessness and housing when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?



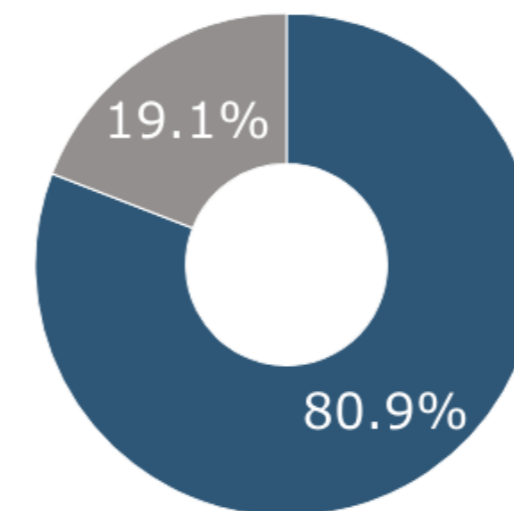
One out of every five respondents included homelessness in what they liked least about Pierce County.

"I deal with the homeless crisis every day, you should be ashamed to take our money... If we don't get anything in return, I shouldn't pay taxes."

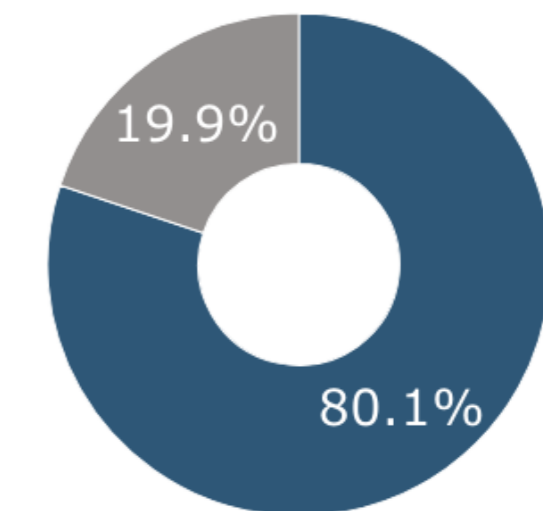
"They need permanent housing to stabilize their lives and get prepared for a job."

Do you think funding for homelessness and housing services should be reduced?

■ No ■ Yes



Pierce County

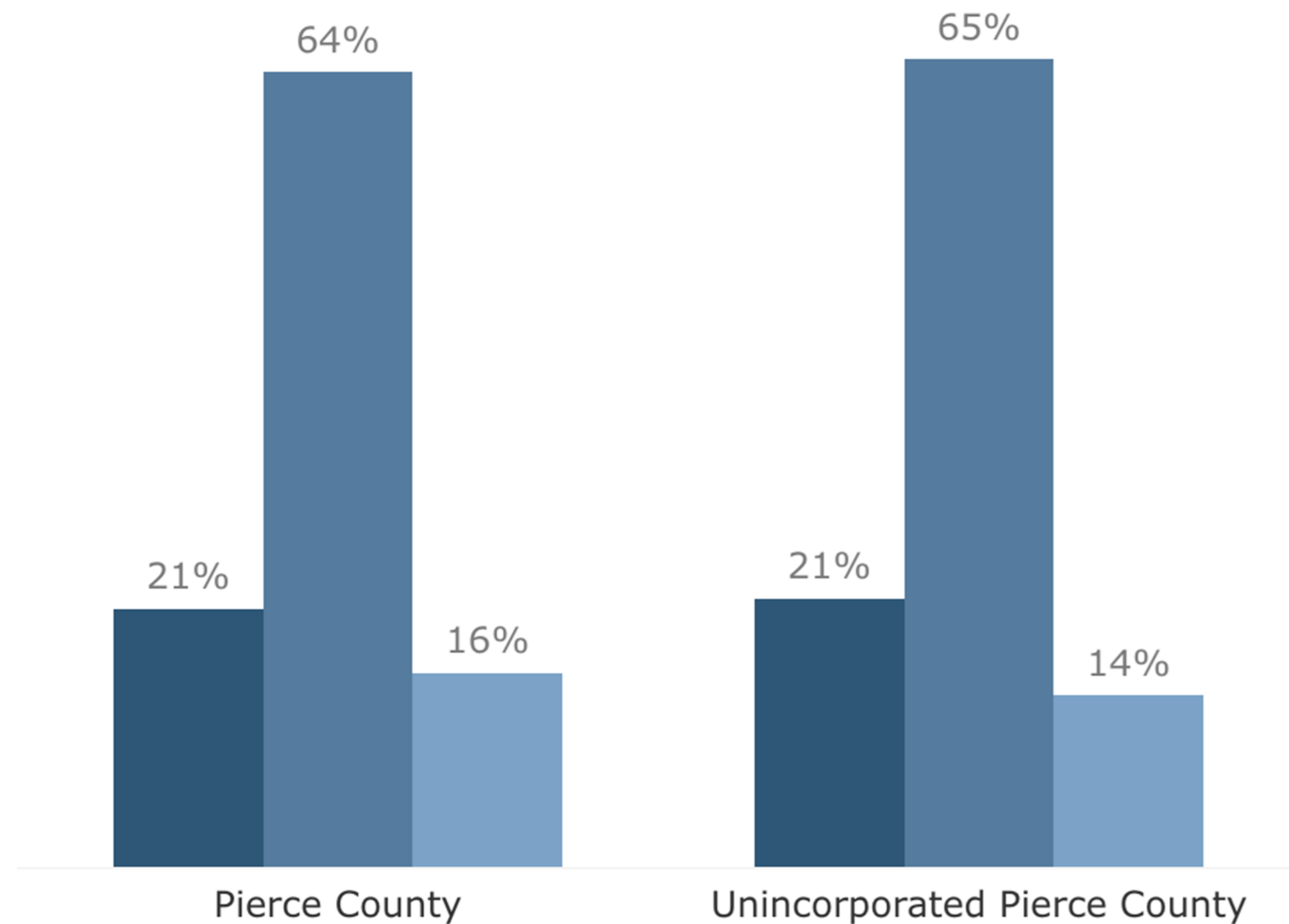


Unincorporated Pierce County

Jobs and the Economy

How important are jobs and the economy when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?

■ Most Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important

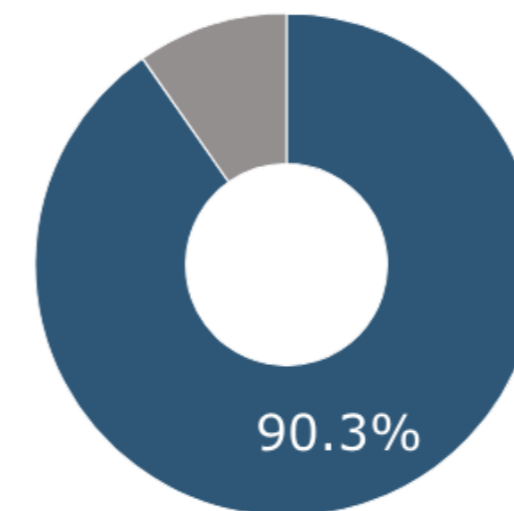


Three out of every 100 respondents said jobs were a problem for Pierce County.

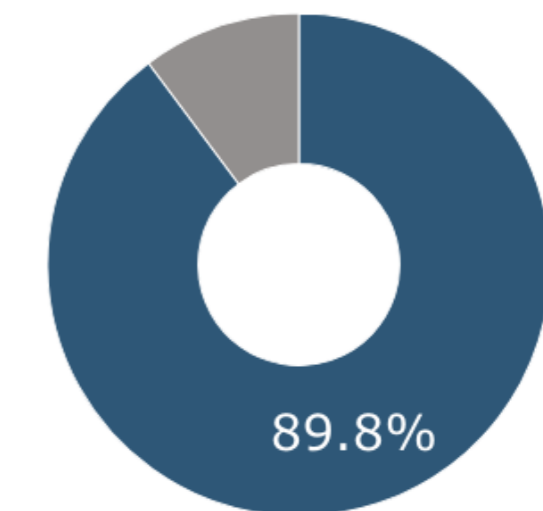
“Pierce County is growing in jobs and population, but the vision doesn’t seem to be keeping up. Generations, technology, priorities change and the county should too.”

Do you think funding for jobs and the economy should be reduced?

■ No ■ Yes



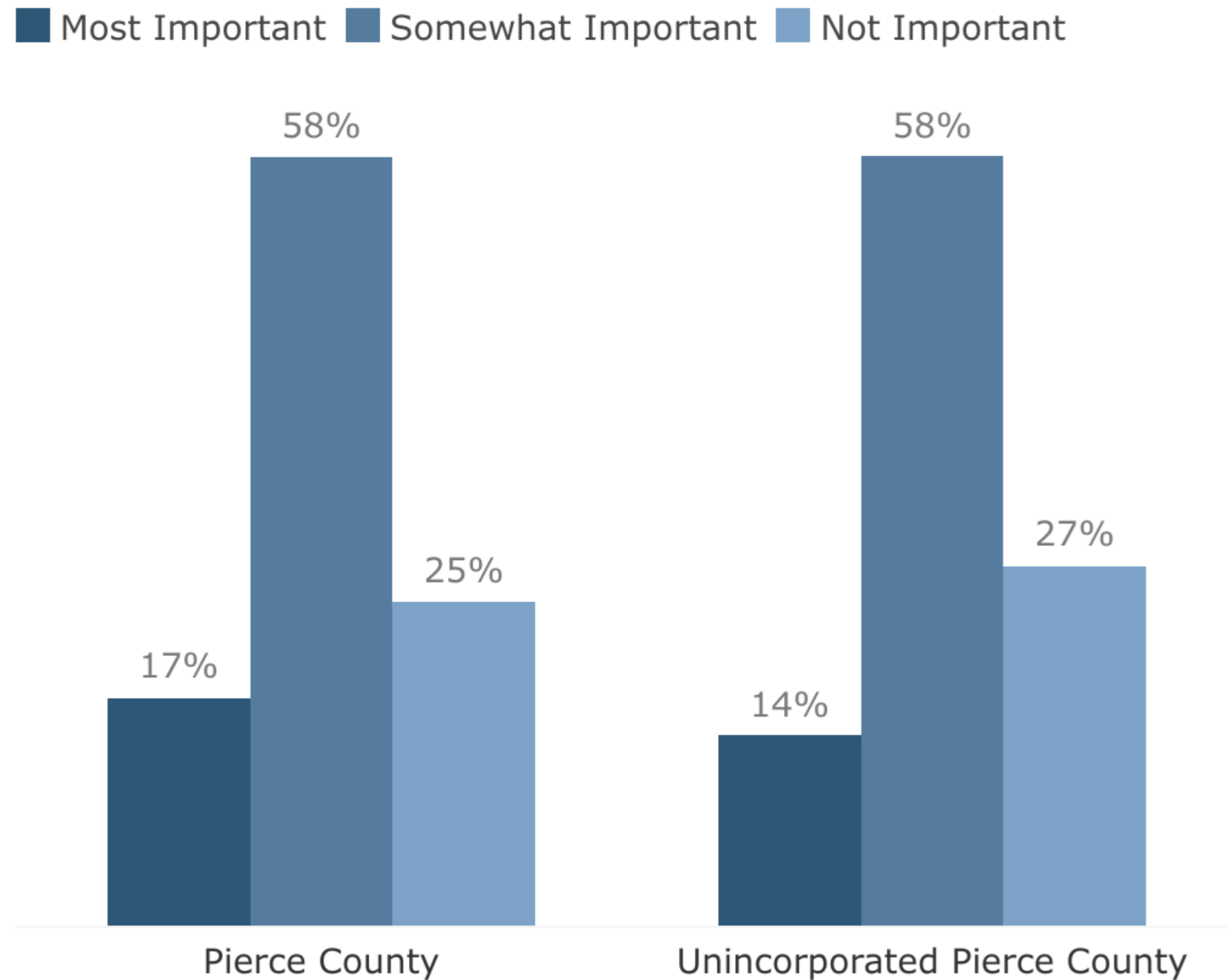
Pierce County



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Drugs and Mental Health Treatment

How important are Drugs and Mental Health Treatment when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?

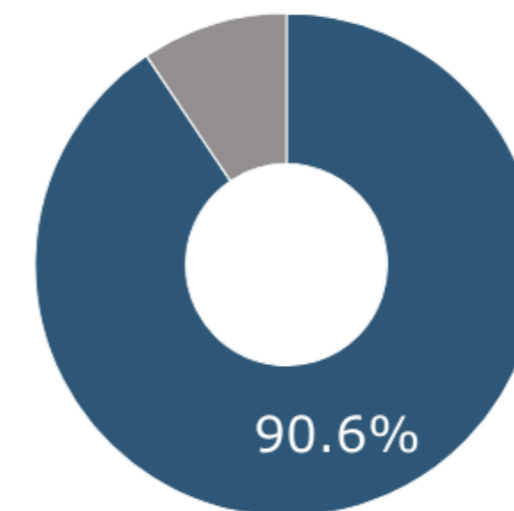


Nearly one out of every five respondents included drug use and/or mental health in what they liked least about Pierce County.

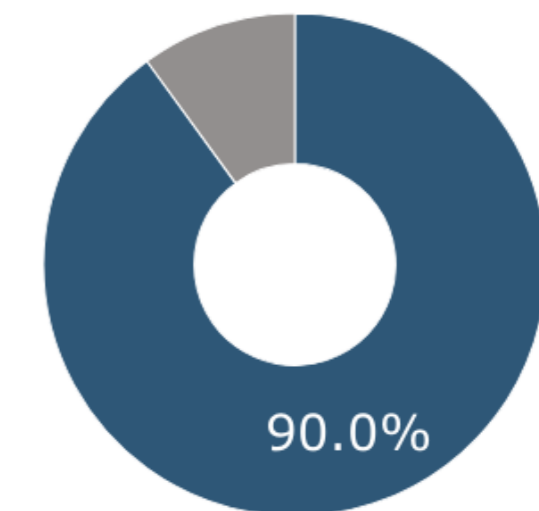
“Mental health needs to be better fund[ed] in order to adequately address ... the currently active behavioral health services which are dysfunctional and inadequate.”

Do you think funding for drugs and mental health treatment should be reduced?

■ No ■ Yes



All Pierce County

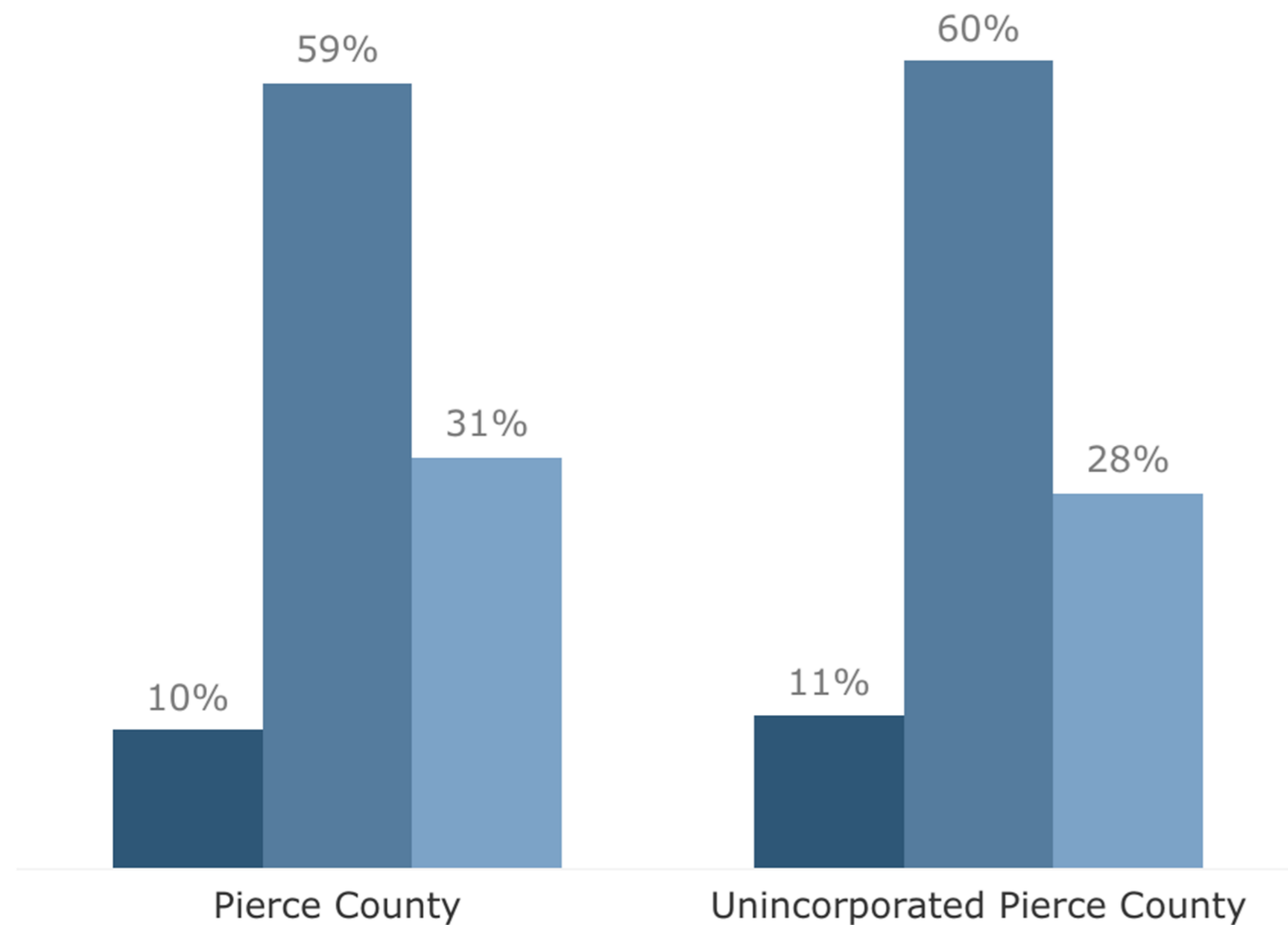


Unincorporated

Fair and Efficient Courts

How important are fair and efficient courts when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?

■ Most Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important



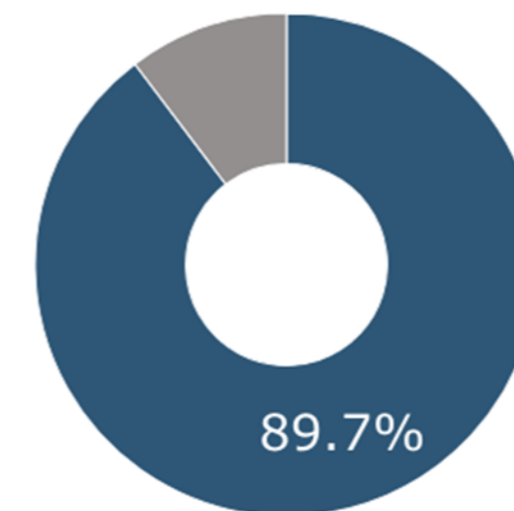
One out of every three residents* ranked fair and efficient courts as a low priority for Pierce County funding.

“Ineffective courts that quickly release dangerous people back into the community [are what I like least about Pierce County].”

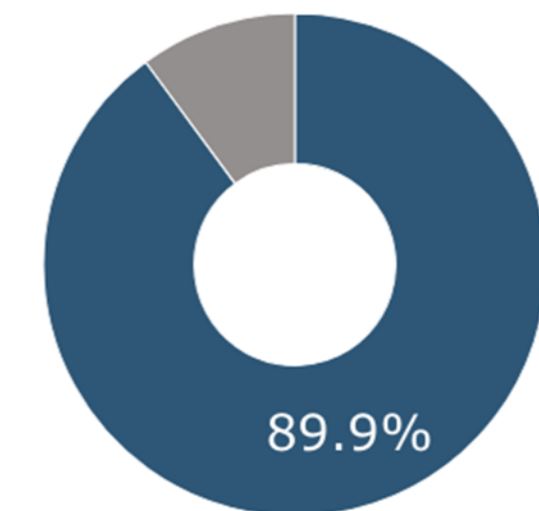
* Reflects weighted survey results

Do you think funding for fair and efficient courts should be reduced?

■ No ■ Yes



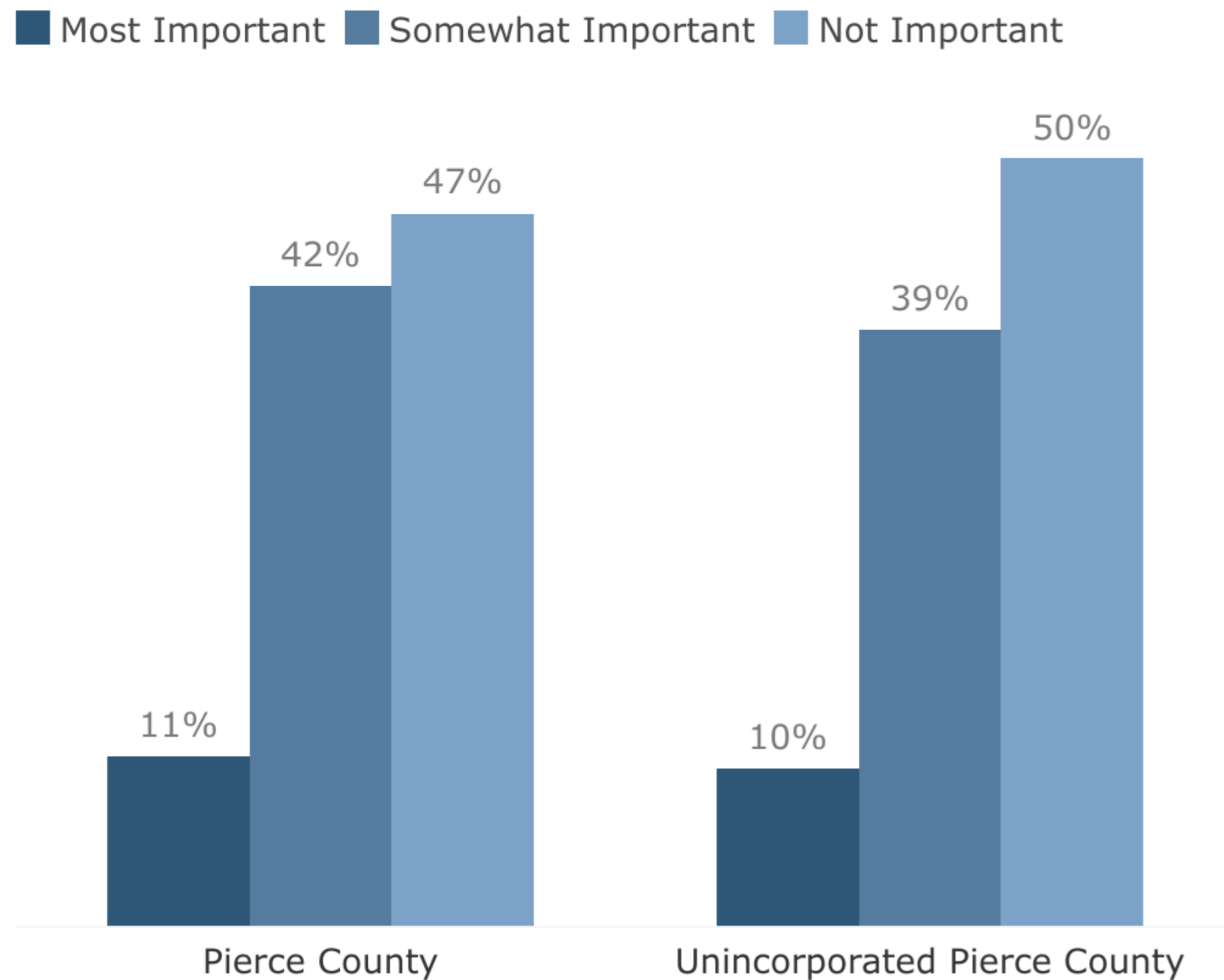
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Environment and Sustainability

How important are environment and sustainability when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?



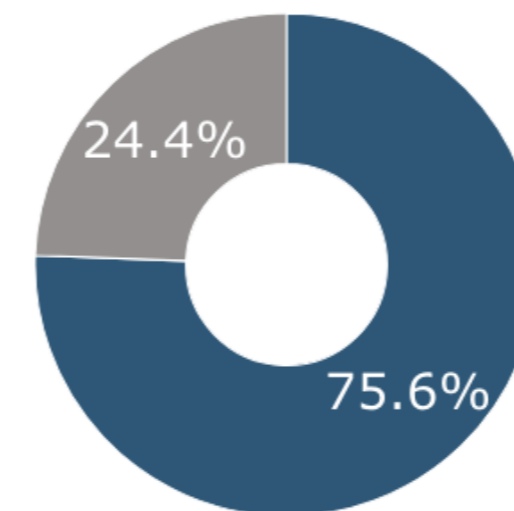
One out of every four residents* indicated environmental and sustainability programs should be reduced.

"Environmental services and red tape on permitting and building [should be reduced]."

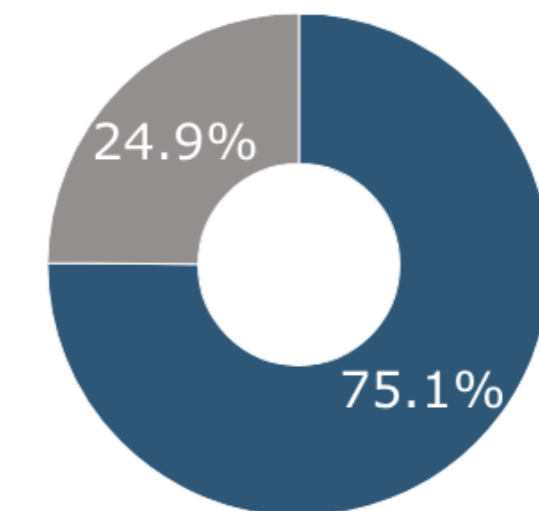
* Reflects weighted survey results

Do you think funding for environmental and sustainability should be reduced?

Legend: No (dark blue), Yes (grey)



Pierce County

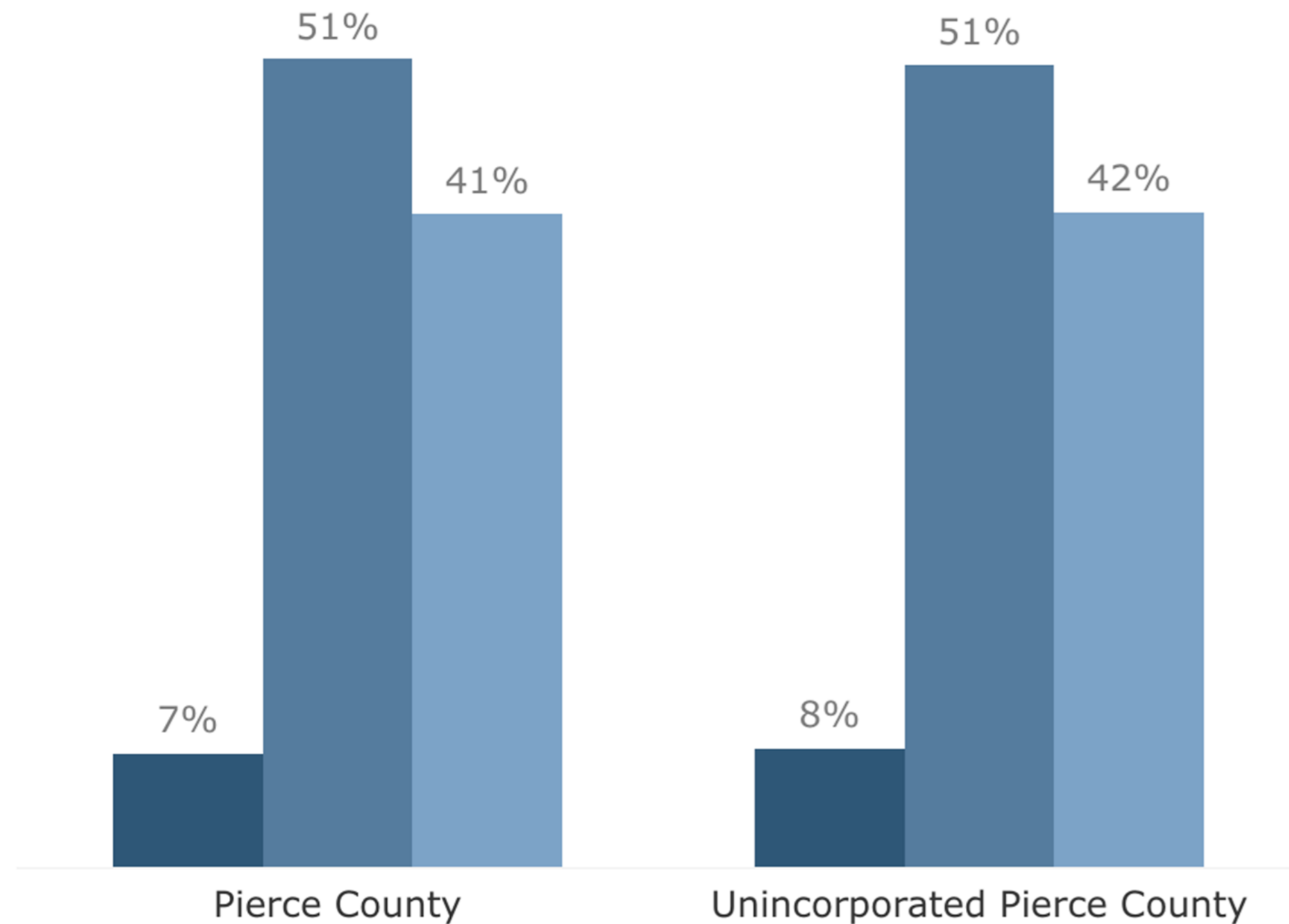


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Parks, Trails, and Recreation

How important are parks, trails, and recreation when determining where to allocate the County's limited resources?

■ Most Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important



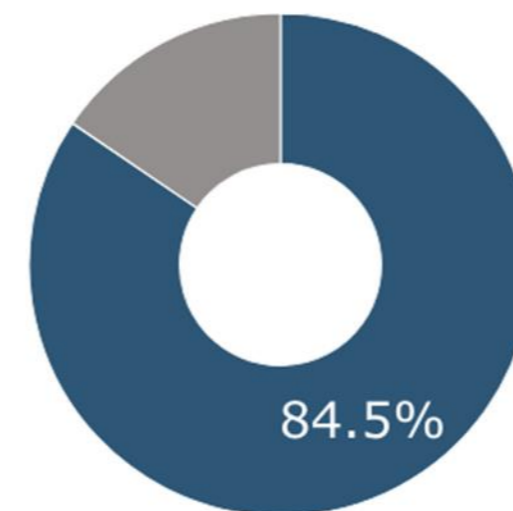
Two out of every five residents* indicated parks, trails, and recreation were not important when allocating funding.

"We've got great parks; maintain but don't add to them or create user fees for parks."

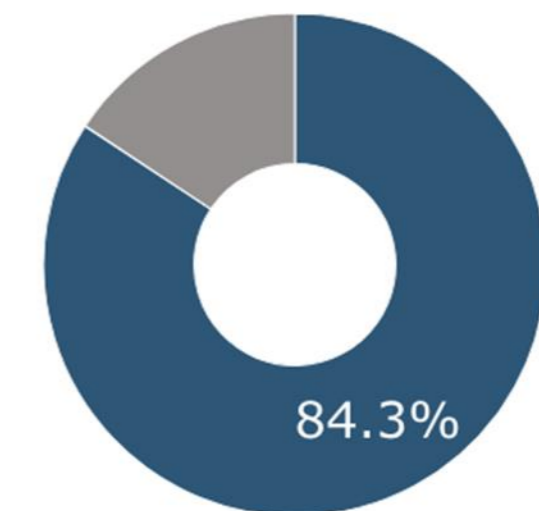
* Reflects weighted survey results

Do you think funding for parks, trails, and recreation should be reduced?

■ No ■ Yes



Pierce County

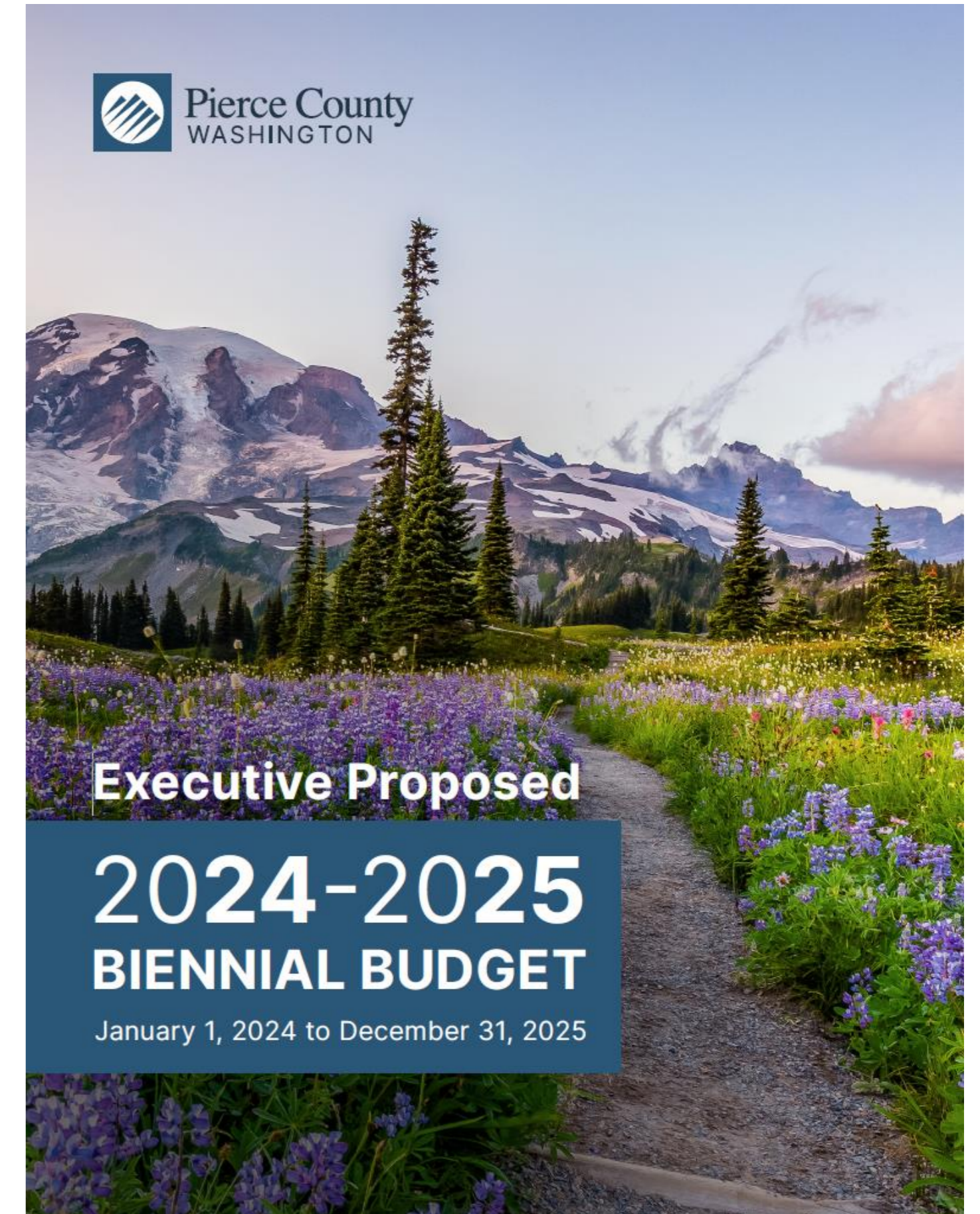


Unincorporated Pierce County

Executive Proposed 2024-25 Biennial Budget

The 2024-25 budget proposal reflects the community's input by:

- 1) Prioritizing public safety.** The General Fund budgets for Sheriff Law Enforcement and Corrections provide an overall 12%, \$39 million, increase.
- 2) Reducing funding in certain County departments.** Budget reductions were implemented in the General Fund to constrain expenditure growth and align costs with available revenues. Resources were reallocated from some department budgets to maintain public safety and legal and judicial services.
- 3) Continuing investments in the County's roads and transportation system and homelessness and housing.** The budget invests \$391 million for road preservation and capital construction and \$211 million for homelessness and affordable housing projects and services.



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