



City And Town of Cedarburg

Community Survey Report

January 9, 2024





Our mission is to help community leaders gather, organize, and use data to make strategic decisions.

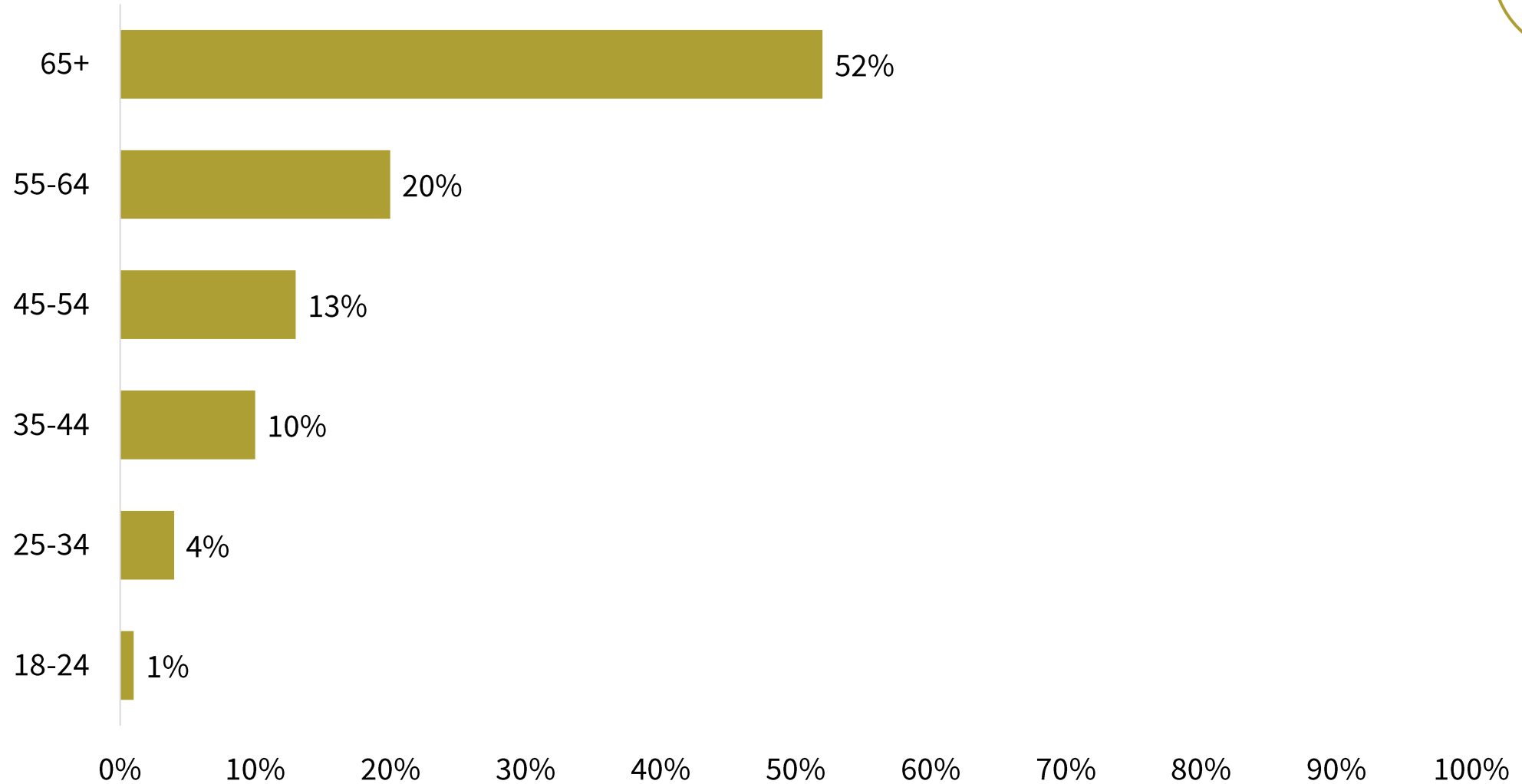
- ✓ Founded in **2002** to provide independent research
- ✓ Helped more than **900** communities navigate the strategic planning and referendum planning process

Survey Information

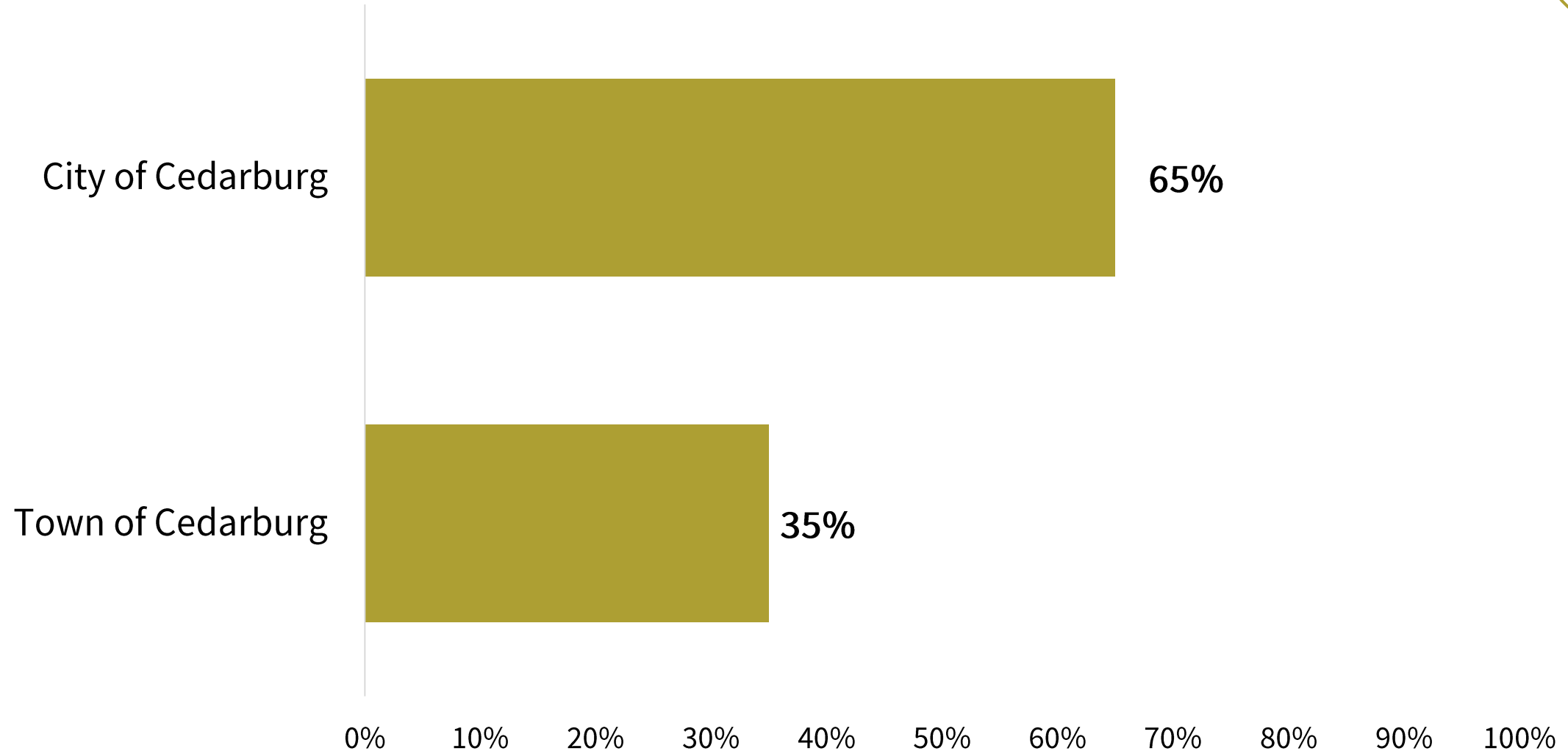


- Survey deadline **December 20, 2023**
- **1,973** total respondents (709 paper)
- **24%** response rate
- Statistical margin of error **+/- 2.25%**

What is your age?



In which municipality do you live?





Fire Department Services

The Cedarburg Fire Department (CFD) staffs and operates two fire stations, serving more than 18,000 residents in a 30-square-mile area covering the Town and City of Cedarburg. CFD provides:

- ✓ Emergency Medical Services
- ✓ Fire Suppression
- ✓ Fire Inspection
- ✓ Rescue Services



What are Cedarburg Fire Department's challenges?

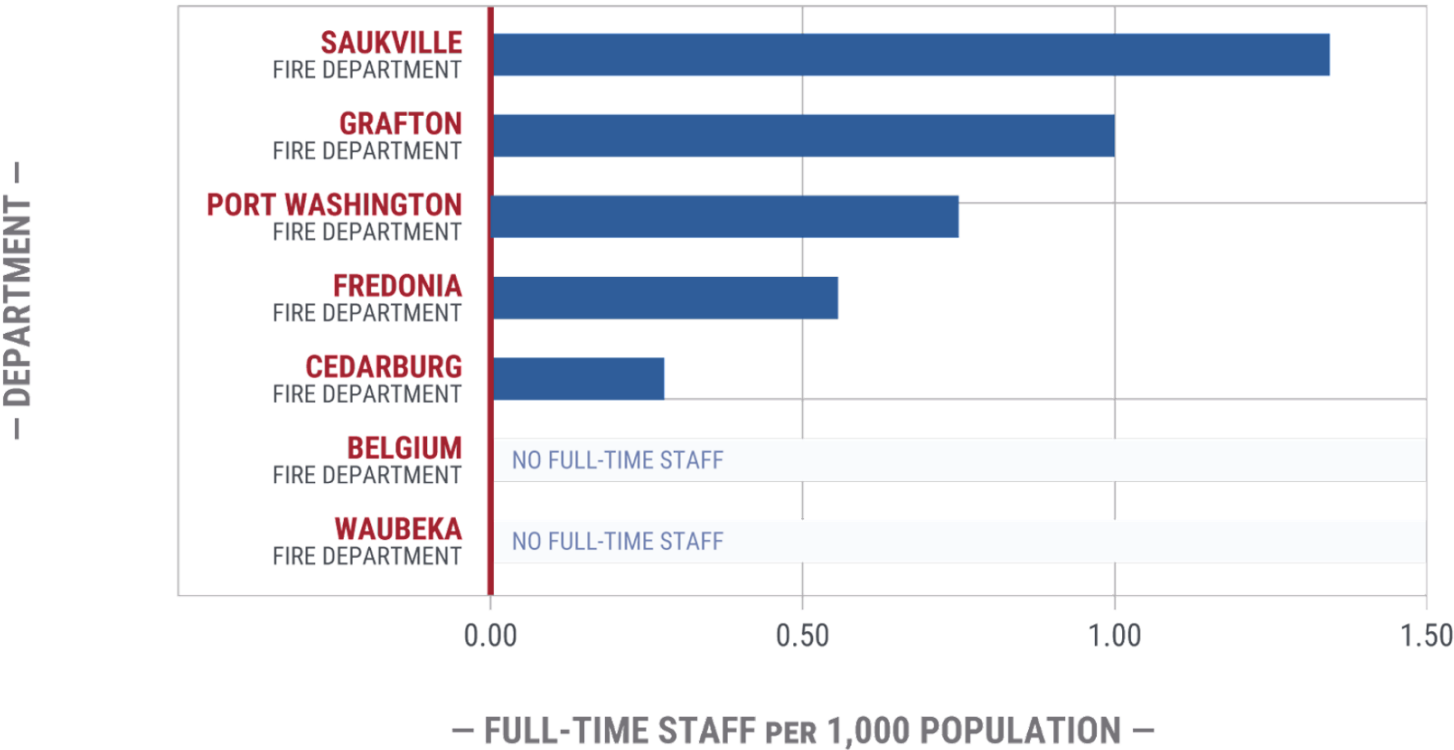
Relying on a volunteer model is becoming unsustainable for three primary reasons.

1) Decreasing Volunteer Availability

Volunteers are not stationed on-site. They travel to a fire station before responding to emergencies.

Much like the rest of the state, CFD saw a decline from more than 90 volunteers in 2002 to 64 in 2022. Compared to other Ozaukee County fire departments, CFD has a low level of full-time staffing.

OZAUKEE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT: FULL-TIME STAFF / 1,000 POPULATION



Funding Challenges (continued)

2) Increasing Calls for Service

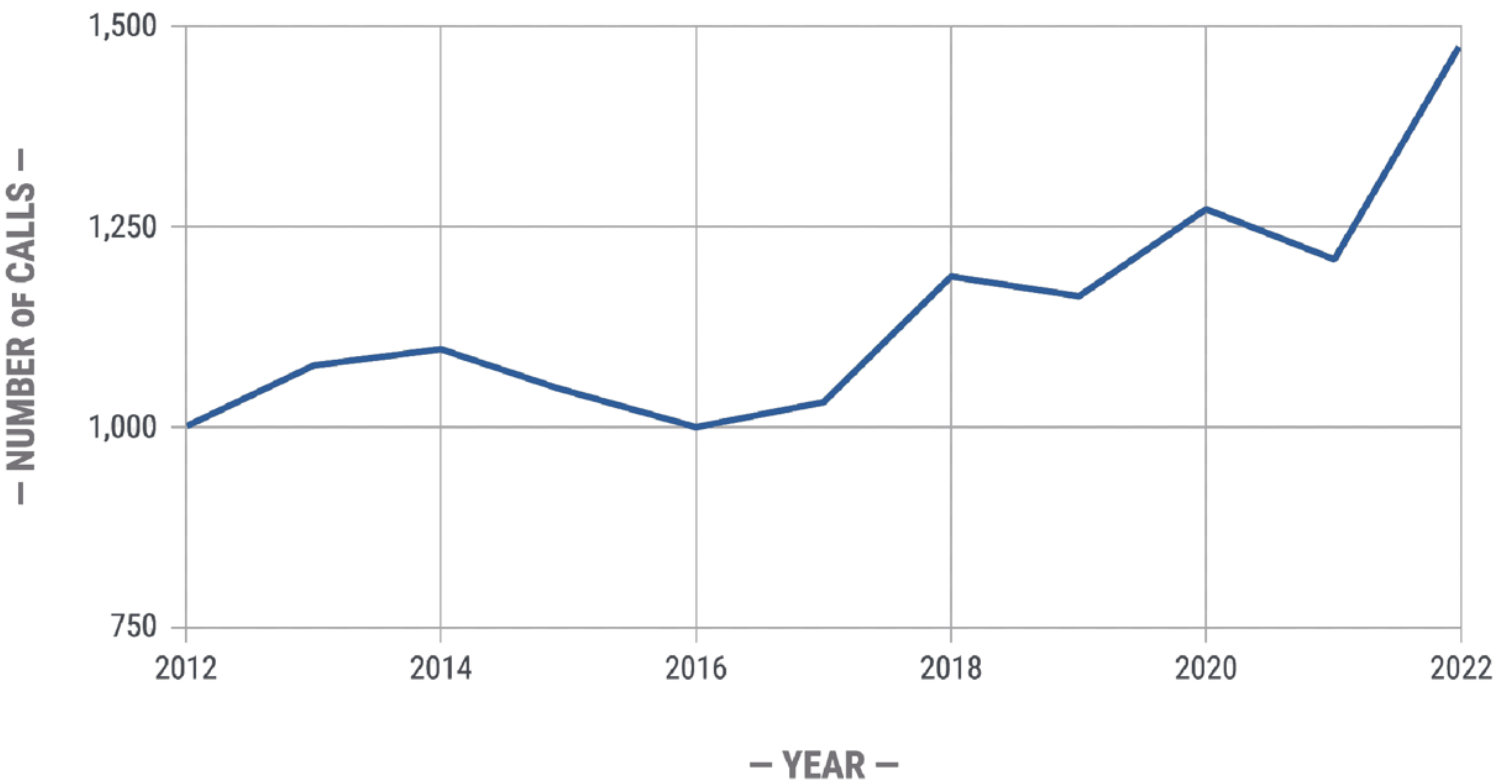
Between 2012 and 2022, CFD experienced a nearly 47% increase in calls for service.

Sometimes, these calls for service overlap, meaning CFD is responding to multiple incidents at the same time, putting a strain on volunteers.

In some cases, this leaves CFD unable to respond to a call for service and instead rely on “mutual aid” (support) from nearby departments. This situation could happen more often if CFD maintains the current staffing.



**CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT:
CALLS FOR SERVICE OVER TIME**





Funding Challenges (continued)

3) Response Times

We are proud that CFD's average response time has steadily improved since 2017 (the year CFD hired its first full-time staff member). However, we do not meet industry standards of responding in 8 minutes or less in the Town of Cedarburg.

The greatest factor in response times is the time necessary for volunteers to get from their location to the station when a call comes in.

What is the proposed solution?



To help address this issue of having more calls for service with fewer volunteers, CFD leaders and municipal staff assessed the staffing levels needed to lower response times and improve emergency medical service. Recommendations include:

- ✓ **Compensating volunteers for responding to calls for service**
- ✓ **Funding 12 additional full-time emergency response positions (such as firefighter-paramedics)**
- ✓ **Transitioning the fire chief role into a full-time position**
- ✓ **Improving to a paramedic-level service (which allows staff to administer a wider range of medications and perform additional emergency procedures)**

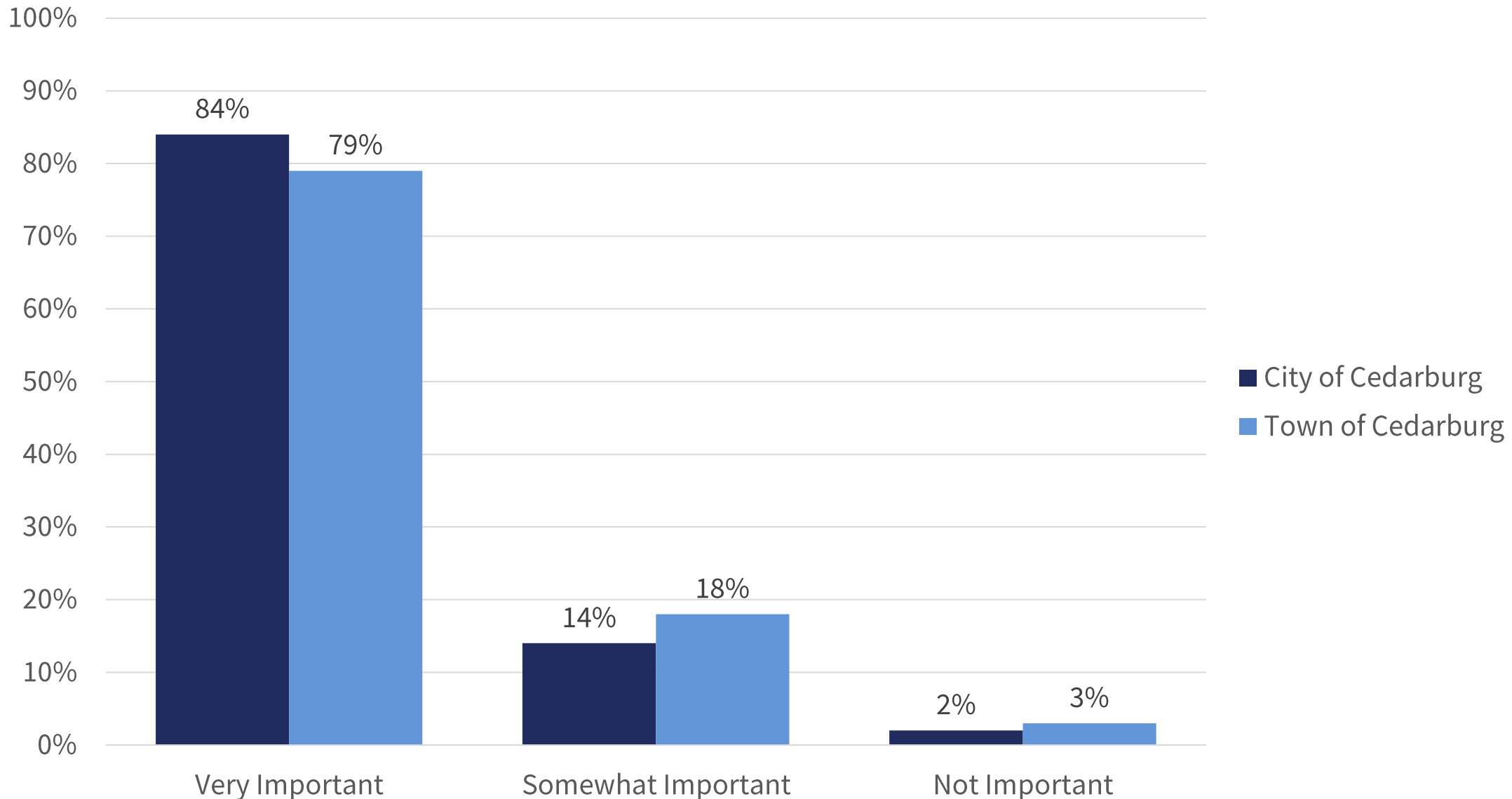
These changes require an additional \$2 million each year. The ad-hoc committee believes this is the right recommendation because it will allow CFD to recruit and retain members without requiring taxpayers to fund a full-time staffing model.

This investment would ensure four people are on duty in-station at any time, allowing immediate responses when an emergency call comes in – reducing response times and improving the quality of service.

The cost would be shared between the Town and City, per the existing shared service agreement.

	Share of the Increase
Town of Cedarburg	\$723,356
City of Cedarburg	\$1,292,302
Total	\$2,015,658

How important are high-quality emergency response services to you and your family?



What are the fire department's funding options?

If our community supports high-quality emergency response services, we could pay for the staffing with three options.

OPTION 1: Budget cuts and other service reductions

Instead of raising new revenue, the City and Town could remove or reduce other budget line items. Examples of services that may need to be cut from the City of Cedarburg's budget could include a combination of:

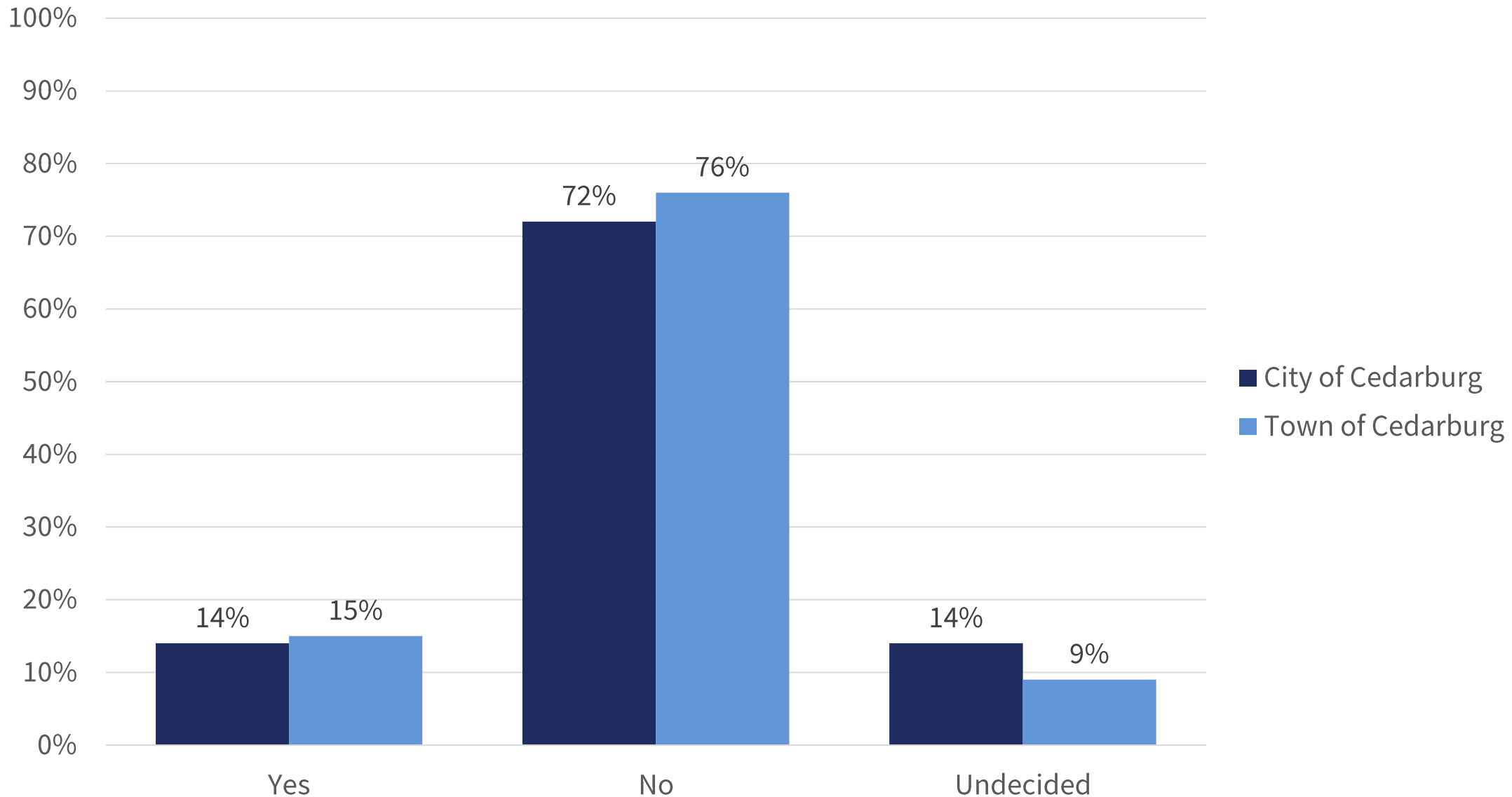
- Pause in forestry operations (including tree pruning, dead tree removal, stump grinding, and landscaping)
- Removal of overtime pay for Department of Public Works staff (impacting snow emergency responses and requiring policy changes for snow removal)
- Reductions in annual street repair
- Decrease in police services

For the Town of Cedarburg, this would mean eliminating all of the following:

- Garbage and recycling collection
- Salting roads during snowstorms
- Highway, drainage, ditch mowing, and equipment maintenance



Would you support budget cuts and service reductions to pay for fire department staffing?





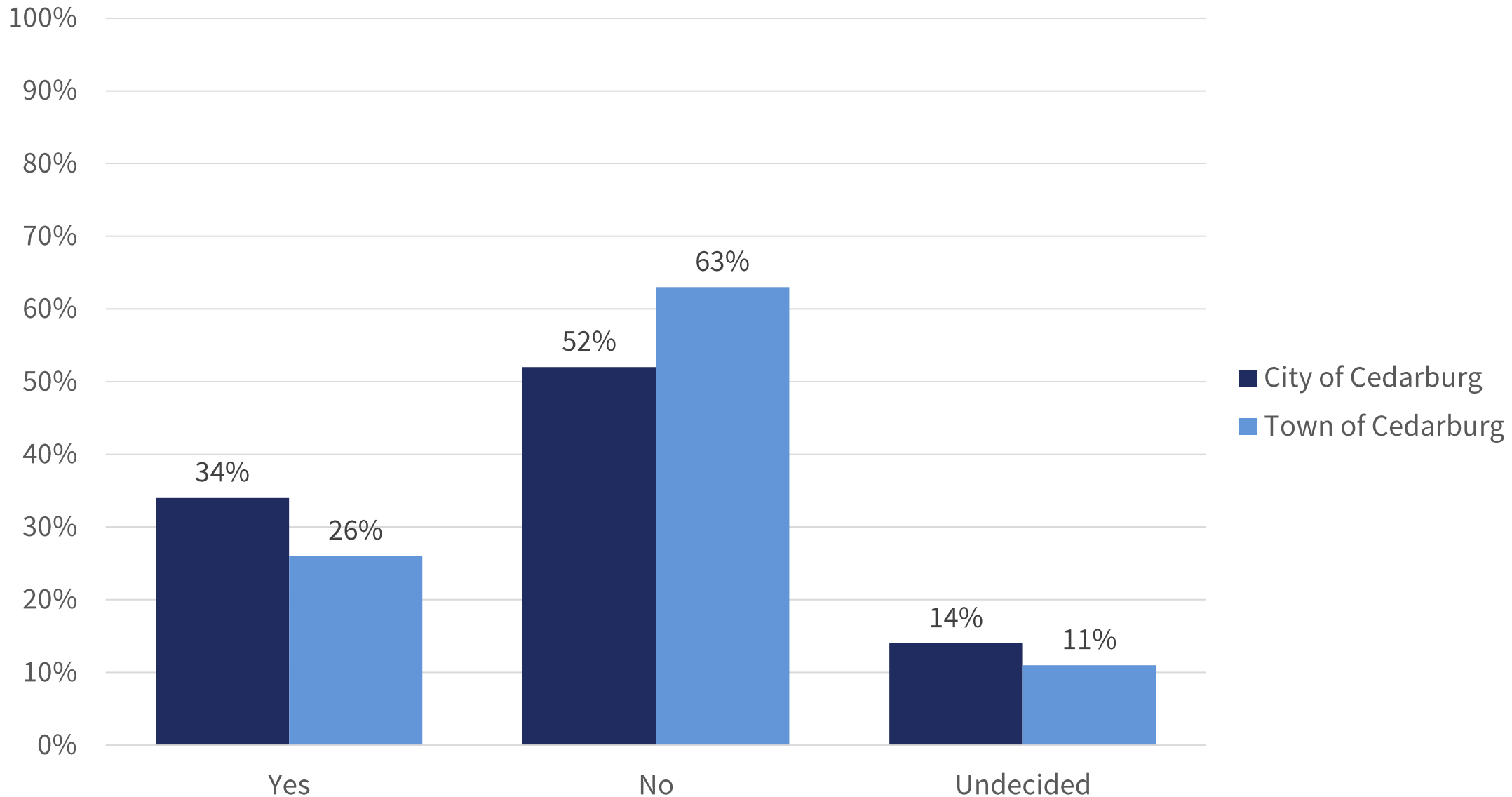
OPTION 2: Wheel tax

Wisconsin law allows municipalities to collect an annual vehicle registration fee (“wheel tax”) beyond the state’s annual fee. The fee would apply to vehicles registered in the City or Town of Cedarburg.

	Registered Vehicles	Additional Wheel Tax Per Vehicle
Town of Cedarburg	5,190	\$139.55
City of Cedarburg	10,853	\$119.24
Note: Eligible vehicles include automobiles, trucks, and autocycles.		

Wheel taxes can only be used for transportation projects. However, revenue generated from this tax would free up other areas in municipal budgets, which would help pay for staffing. The table above shows the tax necessary to fund the proposed staffing levels. Note that, unlike property taxes, a wheel tax is not tax deductible for residents.

Would you support a wheel tax, which frees up other funding, to pay for fire department staffing?





OPTION 3: Voter-approved referendum

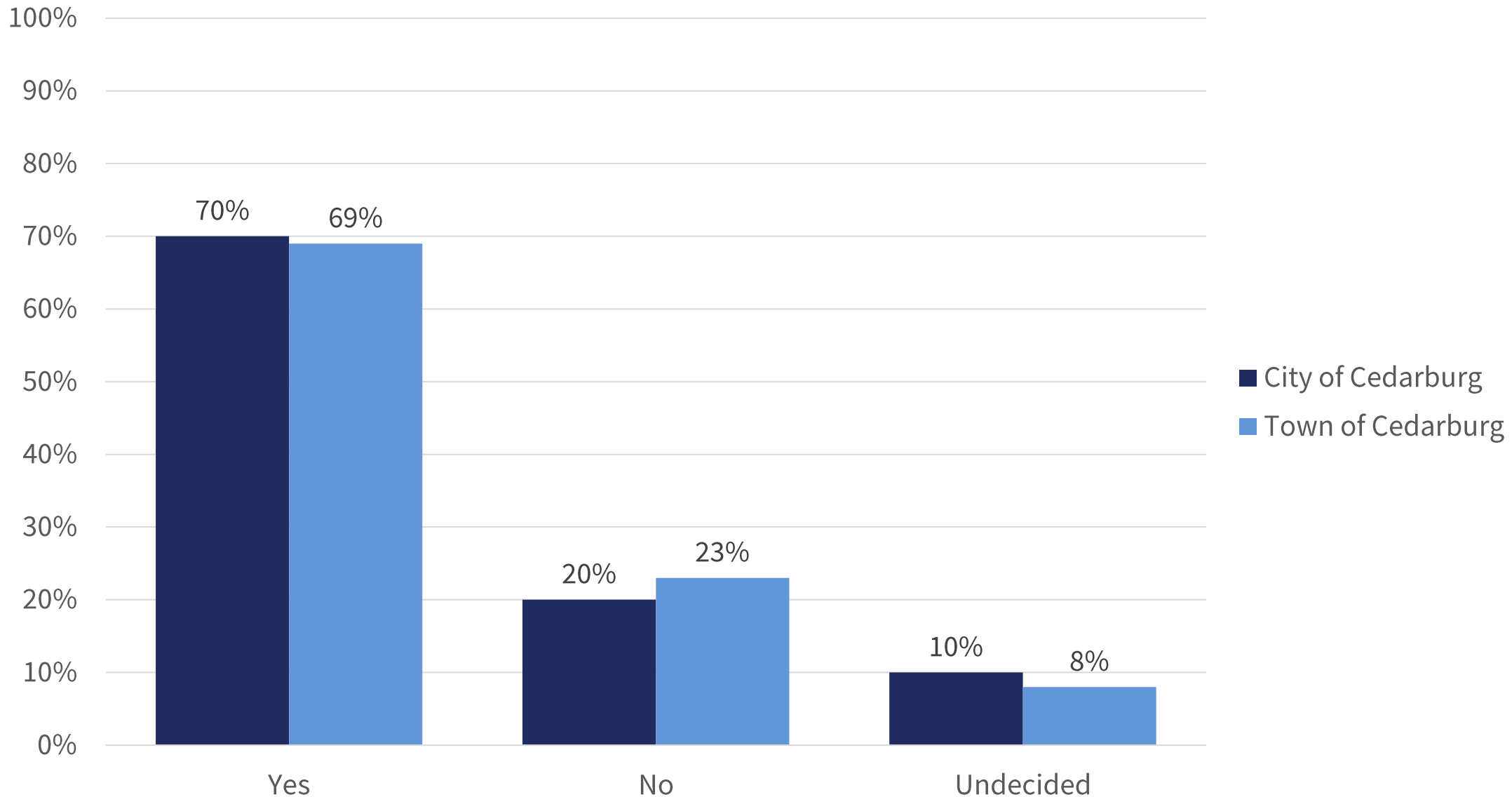
Wisconsin laws limit the amount of property taxes a municipality can collect each year. To exceed that limit, each municipality needs voter approval through a referendum.

The referendum could appear on the April 2024 ballot, which, if approved, would provide additional funding starting with the 2025 budget.

The chart displays the tax increase property owners would see if the referendum passes.

	Tax Increase per \$100,000 of Assessed Property Value
Town of Cedarburg	\$57
City of Cedarburg	\$68
<i>Note: The tax increase on a median-value home (\$485,000) in the Town of Cedarburg would be \$277. The tax impact on a median-value home (\$390,000) in the City of Cedarburg would be \$265.</i>	

Would you support a referendum to pay for fire department staffing?

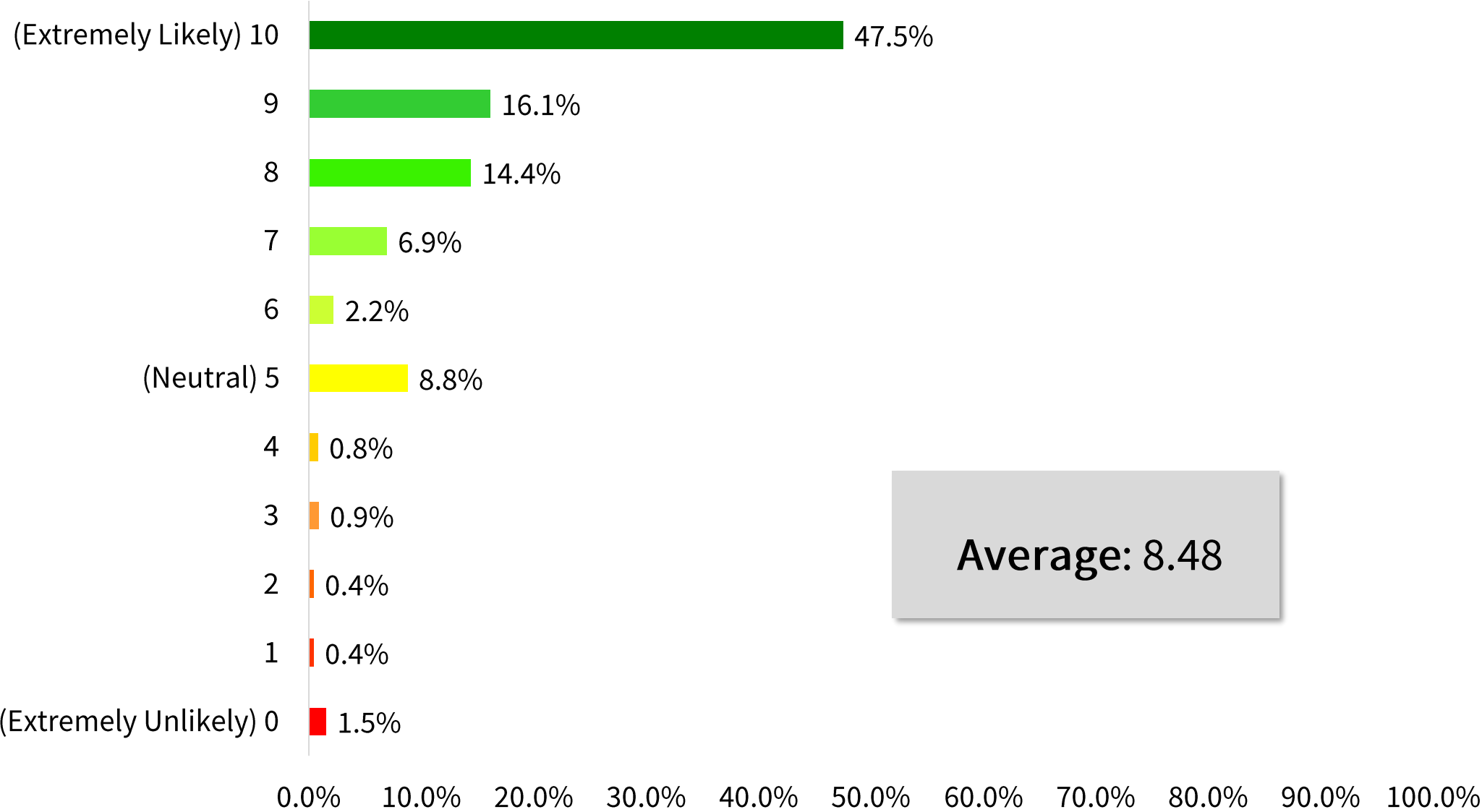


Which option would you support?



	City of Cedarburg	Town of Cedarburg
Option 1: Budget cuts and other service reductions	14%	15%
Option 2: Wheel tax	34%	26%
Option 3: Voter-approved referendum	70%	69%

On a scale of 0 – 10, On a scale of 0 - 10, how likely would you be to recommend living in our community to a friend or family member?



What did we learn?



- 82% of survey respondents scored high-quality emergency services as Very Important.
- A majority of respondents from both the City and Town of Cedarburg (70%/69%) favored pursuing a referendum to fund the proposed staffing plan.
- The other two options tested did not have majority support in either community.



Thank you!

