

Exit Survey **Report** for Guilderland Central School District

Prepared by:

Erin Drescher, Public Information Specialist

Conner Dickson, APR, Assistant Program Manager

Capital Region BOCES Engagement & Development Services

900 Watervliet-Shaker Road, Albany, NY 12205 | (518) 464-3960

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Introduction

The Guilderland Central School District conducted an exit survey during the district's annual school budget vote on Tuesday, May 19, 2026. The purpose was to collect demographic data about who voted on the budget proposal and information about why voters voted the way they did.

The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Surveys were made available, both electronically and in paper form, to voters at the polling sites for anyone who chose to fill one out after voting. While these results do not represent the opinions of all voters, they do provide many residents' perceptions about the district and the budget proposal.

The following data was compiled by the Capital Region BOCES Engagement & Development Services in cooperation with the BOCES public information specialist assigned to Guilderland, Courtney Barker.

Note: Percentages, where provided, are out of the number of survey participants who responded to that particular question, and not out of the total number of survey participants. For some questions, total percentages may add up to more than 100% because participants were able to select more than one answer choice or as a result of rounding to the nearest whole number. Where possible, data has been compared to prior exit surveys conducted by the district.

Survey Analysis

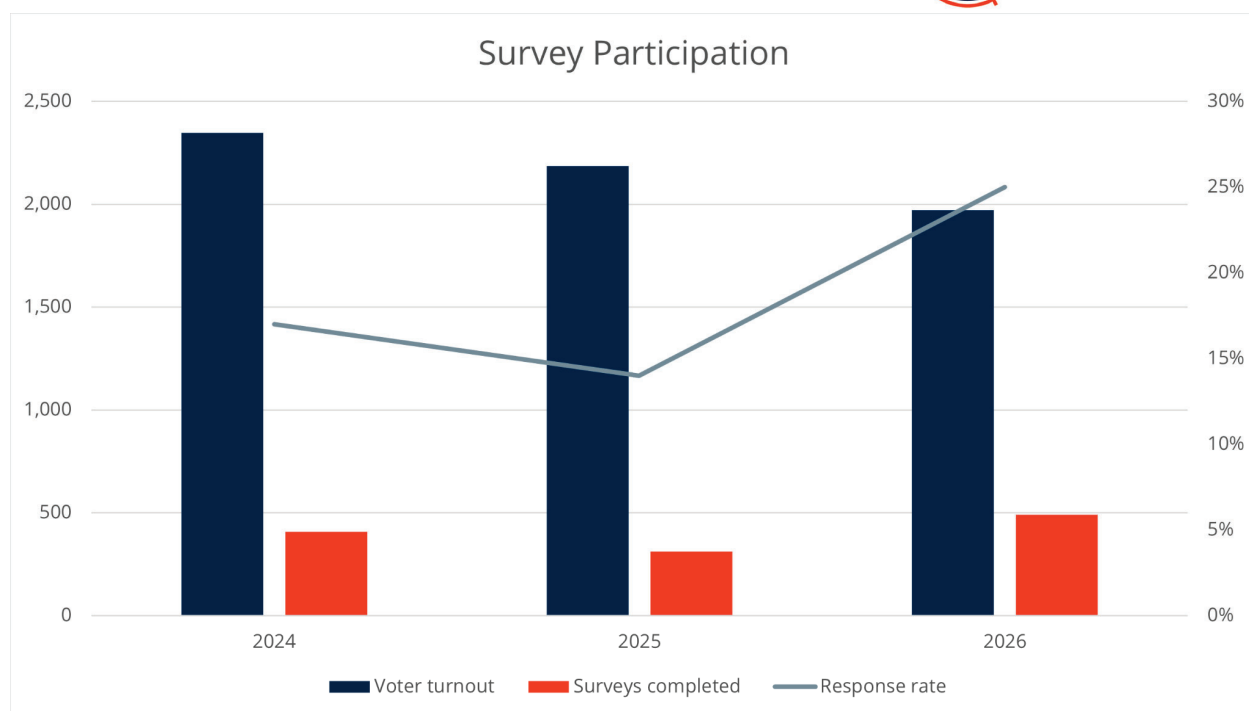
Voter Turnout and Survey Participation

On May 19, 1,972 Guilderland Central School District residents cast ballots on the budget proposal, with 1,355 (69%) voting yes, and 617 (31%) voting no. This is a lower than average turnout over the last three years.

At the polling sites, 490 voters elected to complete the voluntary exit survey — a **response rate of about 25%**. The survey response rate this year was higher compared to 2024 (17%) and 2025 (14%). **A copy of the complete survey results can be found in the [APPENDIX](#) of this document.**

The district has offered an exit survey at the annual school budget vote and board of education elections for more than a decade. Over the last 10 years, survey participation has been steadily declining, with the exception of an uptick this year. The district promoted survey participation through the district website and ParentSquare messages. To increase the survey response rate, the district may consider adding information about the exit survey to the budget newsletter, budget presentations and press releases, as well as increase volunteers at the exit survey station to encourage participation.

A benchmark survey response rate of 30% ensures validity of results. Nationally, it's typical for voting exit surveys to have lower response rates, around 15%. This is lower than the 25% response rate on Guilderland's survey this year. The surveys were available to voters both digitally on district devices, through QR codes on personal devices, and on paper to be completed by hand. Volunteers at the polling site also encouraged voters to complete the survey after voting.



Where voters live and vote

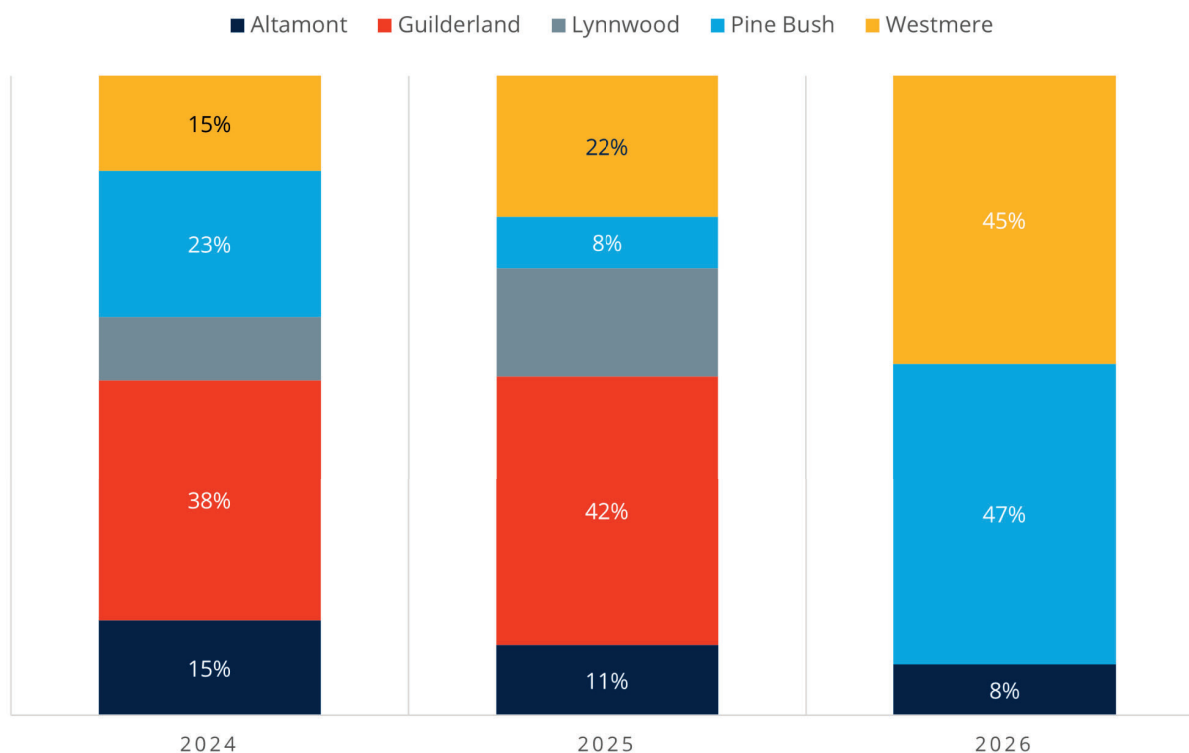
Voters were asked to indicate where they live and where they cast their ballots. As in previous years, nearly all respondents (92%) indicated they live in Guilderland. Fewer than 7% were Bethlehem residents. Knox and New Scotland both had five or less respondents answer the survey.

When asked where they had voted, the majority of respondents indicated they voted at Pine Bush Elementary School and Westmere Elementary School. About 8% of respondents reported voting at Altamont Elementary School.

RESPONDENTS	POLLING LOCATION
47%	Pine Bush
45%	Westmere
8%	Altamont

This was the first year the district held voting at three elementary schools instead of all five in the district. As a result, the percentage of residents who voted Pine Bush and Westmere increased dramatically from previous years. The number of voters indicating they voted at Altamont decreased this year compared to 2024 and 2025.

Survey Polling Locations



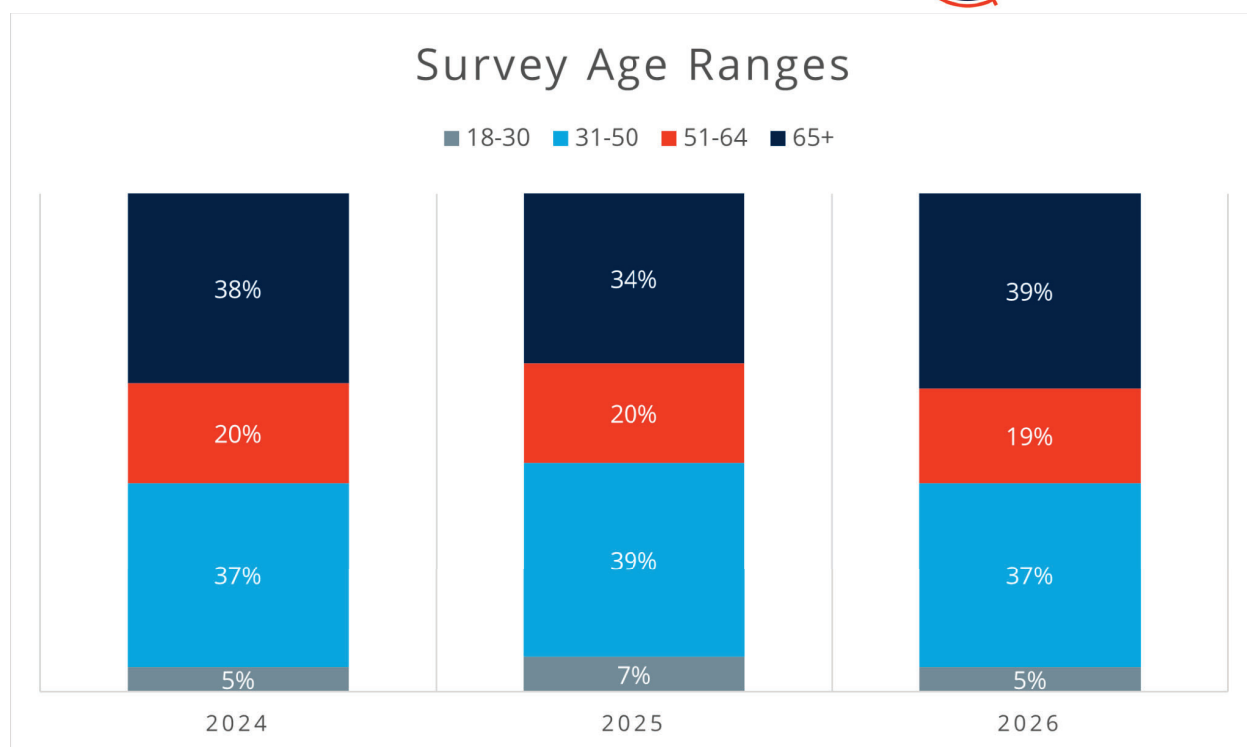
Voter demographics

Respondents were asked a number of additional demographic questions.

The largest category of respondents by age group were those ages 31-50+, who made up 39% of survey respondents. Those ages 65+ accounted for more than one-third of respondents (34%), and those ages 51-64 accounted for one-fifth (20%) of respondents. The remaining 7% of respondents were those ages 18-30.

RESPONDENTS	AGE RANGE
39%	65+
37%	31-50
19%	51-64
5%	18-30

These demographics have remained fairly consistent over the last three years.



For age distributions at polling locations, Altamont skewed older (44% of Altamont voters were 65+), while Pine Bush and Westmere had more balanced age distributions.

A slight majority of survey respondents (54%) indicated they have **lived in the district for more than 20 years**. Remaining respondents were close to evenly divided between those who have lived in the district for 10 years or less (22%) or 11-20 years (23%).

Only 19% of survey respondents indicated they were a graduate of the district.

Few of the survey respondents (6%, or 28 respondents) indicated that they are employed by the district. This represents less than 3% of the district's employees. Due to the small size of this sample among both voters and employees, this respondent group was not compared to other demographic categories in the analysis that follows.

More than half of respondents (63%) indicated that they do not have children currently attending Guilderland schools. Among these, 60% indicated their children attended in the past.

Among the 113 respondents who are parents of current Guilderland students, their children's grade levels were as follows (categories were not exclusive, meaning that totals add up to more than 100%):

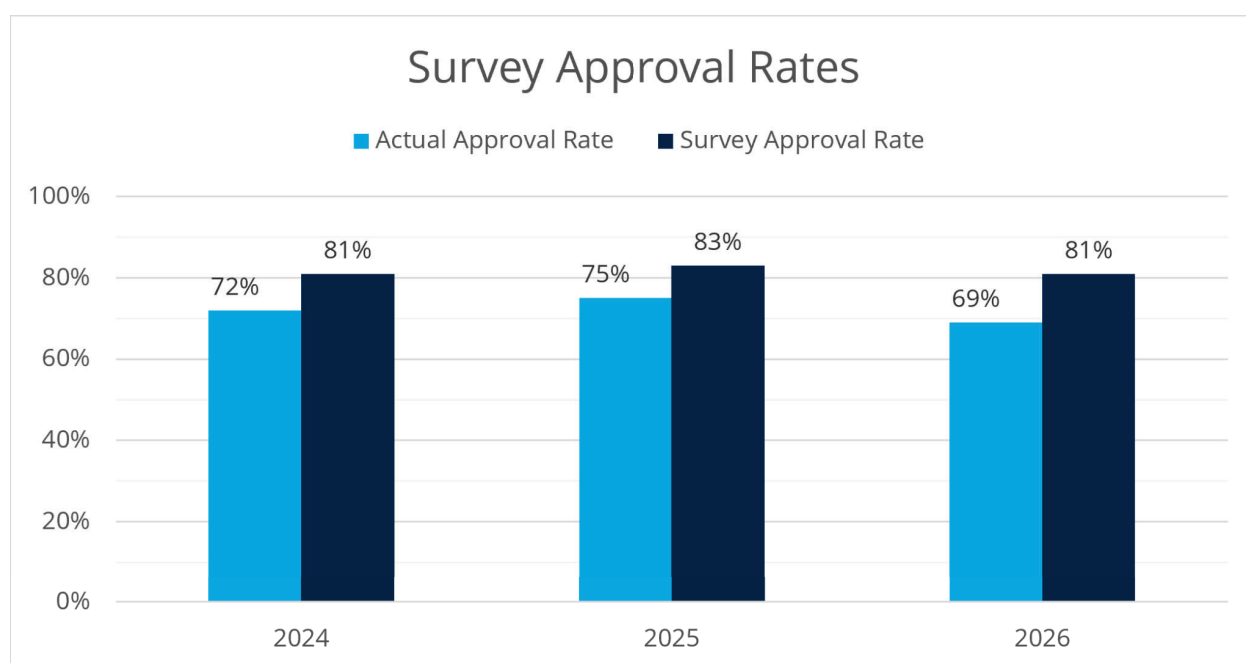
RESPONDENTS	GRADE LEVEL
52%	9-12

49%	K-5
44%	6-8

How and why did voters vote the way they did

Respondents were asked to indicate how they voted on the proposed \$133,900,025 budget, and to provide some information about what informed their vote.

81% of respondents indicated they voted “yes” on the budget proposal. This is higher than the actual approval rate of 68.71% for the proposition, which is not uncommon for exit survey results.



78% of respondents indicated they typically vote “yes” on the school budget, with about 5% indicating they typically vote “no” and about 11% stating their vote varies year to year. **Twenty-five respondents (5%) indicated they have not voted in the past.**

About 81% of respondents indicated they voted “yes” on the vehicle proposition, compared with the proposition's actual approval rate of 69%.

Younger respondents (18-30) were the most likely to vote in favor of the budget (85%), while support was also high among those aged 31-50 (86%). Support decreased among older age groups: 77% of those aged 51-64 and 78% of those 65+ voted in favor. **Older respondents were more likely to oppose the budget compared to younger groups, suggesting age was a factor in voting patterns.**

Respondents who do not have children currently attending Guilderland schools were less supportive of the budget than current parents. This year, **89% of respondents who are parents of current Guilderland students voted "yes," compared with 78% of respondents who are not current parents.**

Reasons for yes/no votes

Respondents were invited to indicate why they voted the way they did by selecting one or more statements. Responses were as follows:

I voted yes because:

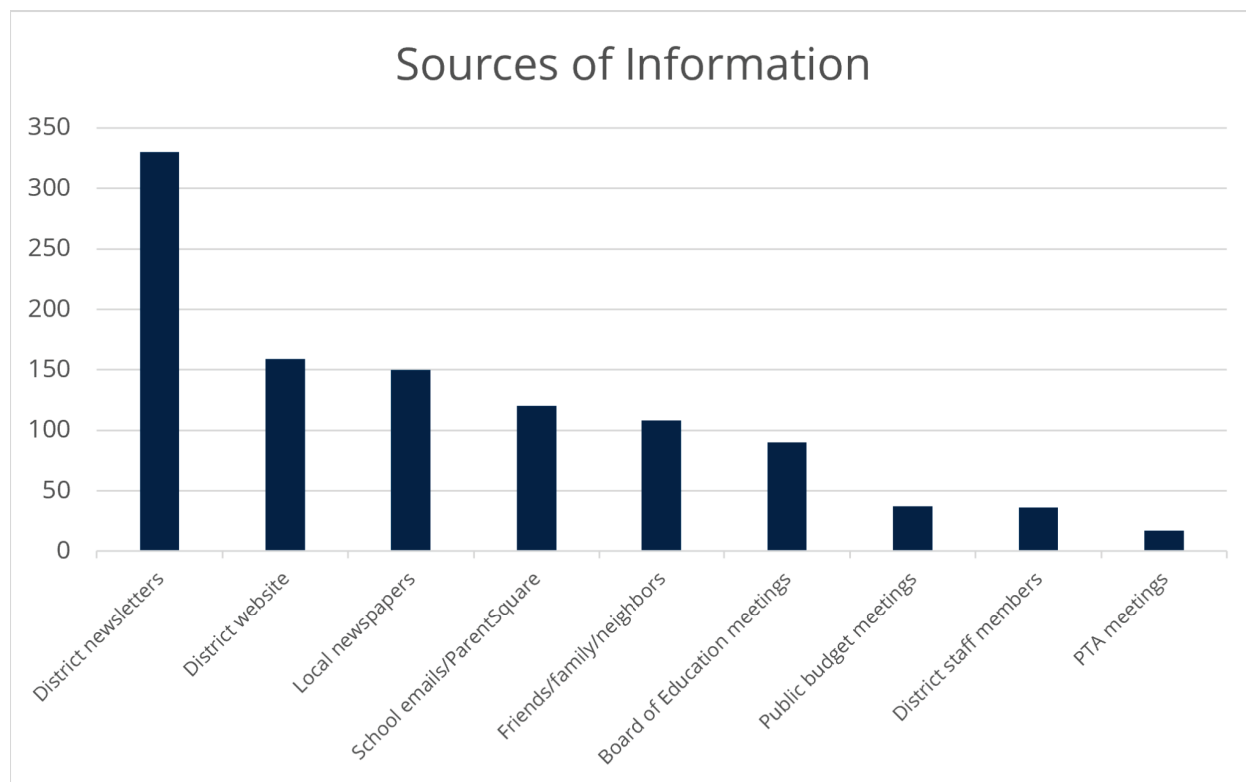
PERCENTAGE	STATEMENT
85%	I support investing in education
58%	The budget meets the needs of our students
55%	I am pleased with the quality of education provided by Guilderland schools
40%	I have children/grandchildren in the schools
39%	The spending/tax increase is reasonable

I voted no because:

PERCENTAGE	STATEMENT
62%	The spending/tax increase is not reasonable
39%	I am not pleased with the quality of education provided by Guilderland schools
38%	I support education but can't afford the cost
22%	I do not have children/grandchildren in the schools
22%	The budget does not meet the needs of our students

Information about the budget proposal

Respondents were asked to identify their **three best sources of information** about the budget proposal and the capital improvement project proposition. The following graph shows that the district newsletters, district website and local newspapers ranked highest among voters.



Most notably, the three most-selected information sources ranked similarly across “yes” and “no” voters.

Respondents without children in the district generally favored paper sources of information such as the **district newsletter** (222 respondents, 80%) and the **local newspaper** (121 respondents, 44%).

In comparison, respondents who indicated they are current district parents favored official district communications: **school emails/ParentSquare** (108 respondents, 64%), **district newsletter** (104 respondents, 61%), and the **district website** (65 respondents, 38%).

The favored information sources of non-parents mirrored that of the 65+ age group, as both groups preferred the district newsletter (81%) and the local newspaper (43%) as their top sources of budget and capital improvement project information. **Friends/family/neighbors** was their third most preferred source of information (18%). Historically, this respondent demographic relies less on digital sources compared to other demographics.

Willingness to pay more to avoid cuts

Of the 457 responses, 238 (52%) are willing to pay more to avoid cuts to current programs.

59% of those who are willing to pay more are parents aged 31-50, newer to the district (0-10 years) and those with children currently attending Guilderland schools.

Interestingly, 40% of those who are willing to pay more are residents aged 65 and older who have lived in Guilderland for over 20 years and do not currently have children in the schools.

Areas to preserve/restore in future budgets

In addition to asking voters if they are willing to pay more in the future to avoid cuts, respondents also had the opportunity to indicate which areas they would most like to see preserved/restored in future budgets. A total of 224 respondents answered this question.

Commonly mentioned areas for preservation/restoration included the arts, classroom staffing, maintaining smaller class sizes, athletics and extracurricular activities, special education and student support services, and core academic programs.

Respondents also referenced district infrastructure and technology as important areas, both for preservation and for potential reduction. Some respondents indicated that DEI initiatives and administrative staffing were areas where they would support potential cuts, though DEI was also mentioned as an area to preserve by others.

District educational quality

Across all demographic groups, most respondents rate the district's educational quality as 'Excellent' or 'Good.'

Parents of current students, especially those aged 31-50, are most likely to rate quality as 'Excellent.' Long-term residents aged 65+ and those without children in the schools also tend to view quality positively, though a small portion rate it as 'Fair' or 'Poor.'

Overall, positive perceptions are strong among both parents and non-parents, with only a minority expressing dissatisfaction.

Respondent profiles

By comparing the demographic information about “yes” and “no” voters who completed the survey, the following profiles can be assumed.

Yes respondents:

- are between 31 and 50 years old;
- are newer to the district than “no” voters;
- are more likely to have children currently attending Guilderland schools;

- supported the proposal because they believe in investing in education (84%), they believe the proposed budget meets the needs of Guilderland students (58%), and they are satisfied with the quality of education (55%).

This is a group of respondents who are likely to be **strongly connected with the district** through both family ties and a commitment to educational investment.

No respondents:

- are older than 65 years old;
- have lived in the area for 20 years or more;
- are less likely to have children currently attending Guilderland schools;
- value district newsletters (81%), local newspapers (43%) and the district website (32%) for information about the budget;
- were more likely to be first-time voters or vary their vote from year-to-year; and
- concerned about fiscal responsibility and the belief that, while they support education, they cannot afford the cost.

This is a group of voters who may not feel strongly connected to the district through current family ties, but they do make a conscious effort to stay informed through official district sources.

It is worth noting that **both these voter groups cited the district newsletter as their top source** for information. This is especially important, considering the large group of non-parent respondents.

Additional feedback

Respondents were also invited to provide feedback to the district. Among the 101 comments submitted, the most common subject matter referenced was about district spending (40%). Many of these responses indicated concern over staffing and cuts, facilities and polling location. About 22% of the comments from voters were positive and more than 18% were negative. All comments are listed in the link to survey data on the next page.

APPENDIX:

Exit Survey Summary for Guilderland Central School District

Survey participants' responses to all questions

All data from the survey can be viewed at

https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-gV4C_2B1EpXWgEPwyv8czsrQ_3D_3D/. This is a shareable link that includes a summary of all question data and can be viewed by anyone with the URL. Additional cross-tabulated data is available upon request.