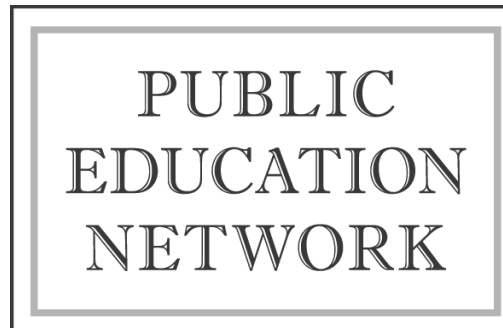


# The West Virginia Civic Index Report

Wednesday, October 4, 2006  
Embassy Suites Hotel  
Charleston, West Virginia

*The Release of the First State Civic Index on Quality  
Public Education in the Nation*



# ***What is the Civic Index?***

- **Is currently a pilot and West Virginia is one of four states/communities to receive the MetLife National Civic Index Award. West Virginia is the first state in the nation to release its results**
- **Consists of 10 categories of civic behaviors identified by the public through five years of polling to be critical to creating and sustaining quality public schools**
- **Tool designed to help states and local communities gauge or measure how the public believes their state or community matches up against the index categories**
- **Index is not the end product, but a means for engaging communities in understanding how to increase civic capacity to deal with critical education reform and change issues**
- **Means of strengthening the civic responsibility that EVERYONE has to improve and strengthen their public schools**

# *What Are the Ten Categories?*

- Took five years to test and develop
- West Virginia is one of 4 states/communities to receive the MetLife National Civic Index Award, and the first state in the nation to release its Civic Index results
- Consists of ten categories of civic behaviors identified by the public through five years of polling to be critical to creating and sustaining quality public schools
- Tool designed to help states and local communities gauge or measure how the public believes their state or community matches up against the index categories
- Not the end product, but a means for engaging communities in understanding how to increase civic capacity to deal with critical education reform and change issues
- Means of strengthening the civic responsibility that EVERYONE has to improve and strengthen their public schools

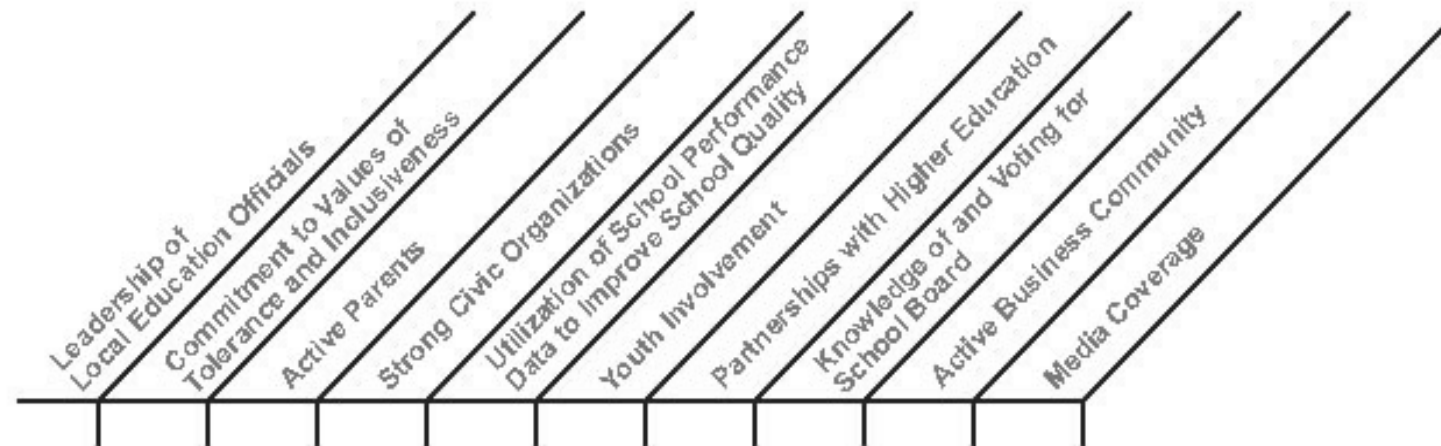
# Index categories based on public opinion.....

## Accomplishment

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Index categories were developed by asking the public what they deemed crucial for a community in order to have a quality public education.

National Civic Index for Quality Public Education



Based on Public Education Network/Education Week's 2001-2003 opinion polls, cited by the public as civic behaviors most important to ensure quality public education for all children.

# Civic Index Categories



- Education Leadership of Elected Officials
- Tolerance and Inclusiveness
- Active Parents
- Strong Civic Organizations
- Performance Data About the School/District
- Partnerships with Higher Education
- Knowledge of and Voting for School Board
- Active Business Community
- Youth Involvement
- Media Coverage

LAKE RESEARCH PARTNERS

# *The West Virginia Civic Index Report*

PUBLIC  
EDUCATION  
NETWORK

*The*  *Education*  
**alliance**  
*Business and Community for Public Schools*



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# ***Key Findings***

- **West Virginia performs higher than the nation and higher than other test sites on key factors communities think are important in improving public schools. The purpose of the Index is not to compare states, but rather to measure each community and state to see where improvements can be made. Saying that, it is still important to acknowledge the areas where West Virginia excels. First, West Virginians offers some of the highest ratings for business involvement. The state also sets the standard for residents who say their community takes responsibility for public education – despite having a smaller base of education voters from which to pull.**
- **The ratings for local business involvement are by far the highest we have seen. The Education Alliance has clearly been successful thus far in building a bridge between local businesses and public schools, and community residents are aware of this.**
- **There is some concern, however, with youth involvement. West Virginians clearly value youth in their communities but say schools need to give students more skills needed to participate in our democracy and in decision-making when it comes to their school system.**
- **Residents turn to the news media first and foremost for information on public schools and what candidates say about public schools, and the media receives high ratings on these categories. Still, residents want more context to the information they receive so they can become better users of the information.**
- **Finally, West Virginia has a smaller base of education voters than other test sites. This does not mean residents value their public schools any less, but it does mean they have competing issue priorities and that they are cross-pressured. Education advocates need to continue linking public schools and giving children a good public education to an improving economy and a brighter future for the state.**



# ***What's Unique about WV?***

- **West Virginia has an older population. Public education is pushed down on the priority list and health care rises. Voters here are focused on the economy and health care.**
- **Fewer education voters results in distinct response patterns. People with more distance between themselves and public education (e.g. older, no children) offer higher ratings for schools and their community, while those closer to schools (e.g. younger, parents) offer more critical views. Still, even with a lower share of education voters/fewer children, the focus on public education is high.**
- **This environment creates a unique coalition of education-oriented people. This coalition includes traditional demographic groups, such as younger voters, college graduates and mothers, but also broadens to include Republican women. Keeping this coalition as broad as it is now is a major potential growth area for the advocates.**
- **There are more geographic differences than demographic differences—except for age.**
- **Index rank order is similar to national: tolerance first. Yet residents rate community higher than other LEFs on almost all categories. The older population pushes voting behavior (e.g. school board issues) higher as well.**

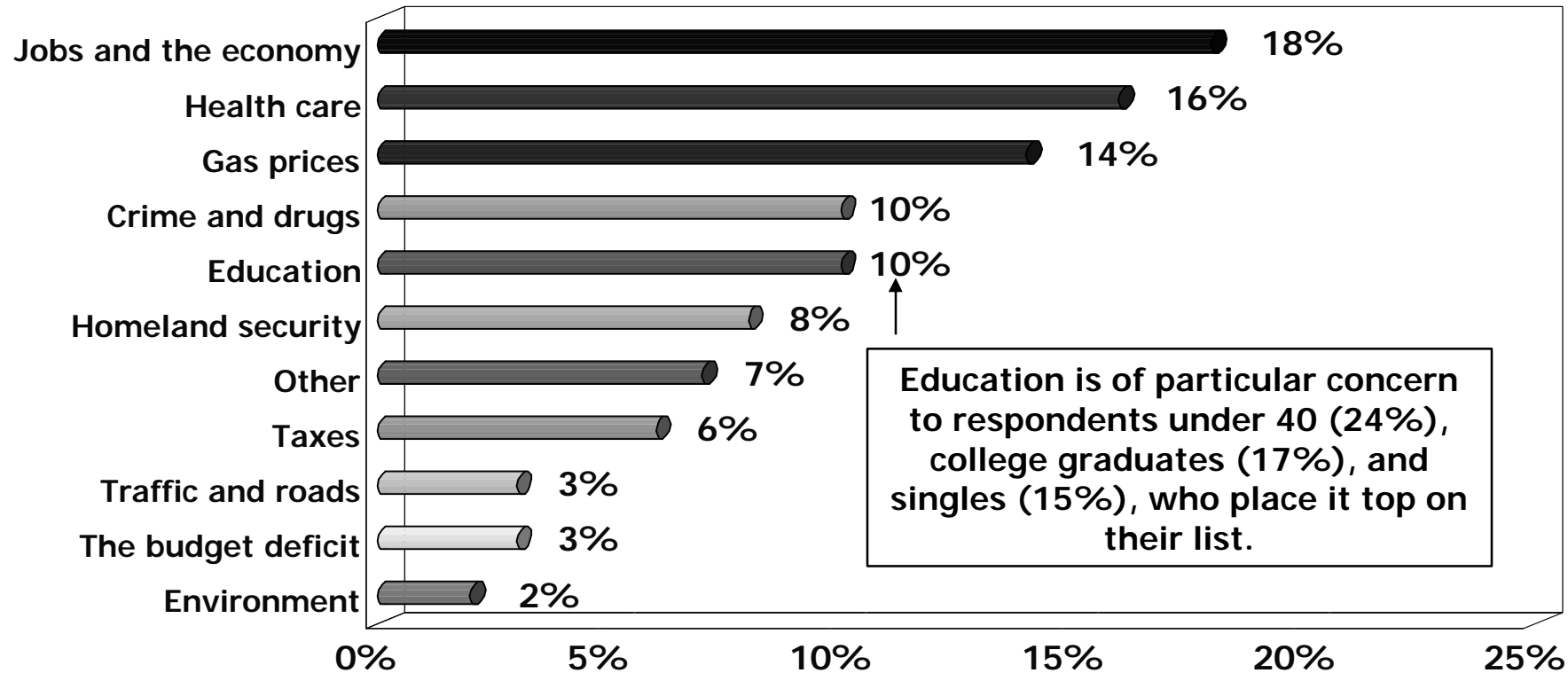
# ***The Perception of Public Education***

***West Virginia has fewer  
education-focused residents,  
likely because the population is  
older than other areas.***

Respondents rate jobs and the economy and health care as the top concerns for local leaders to address. Education rates as a second tier issue but has strength with younger residents.

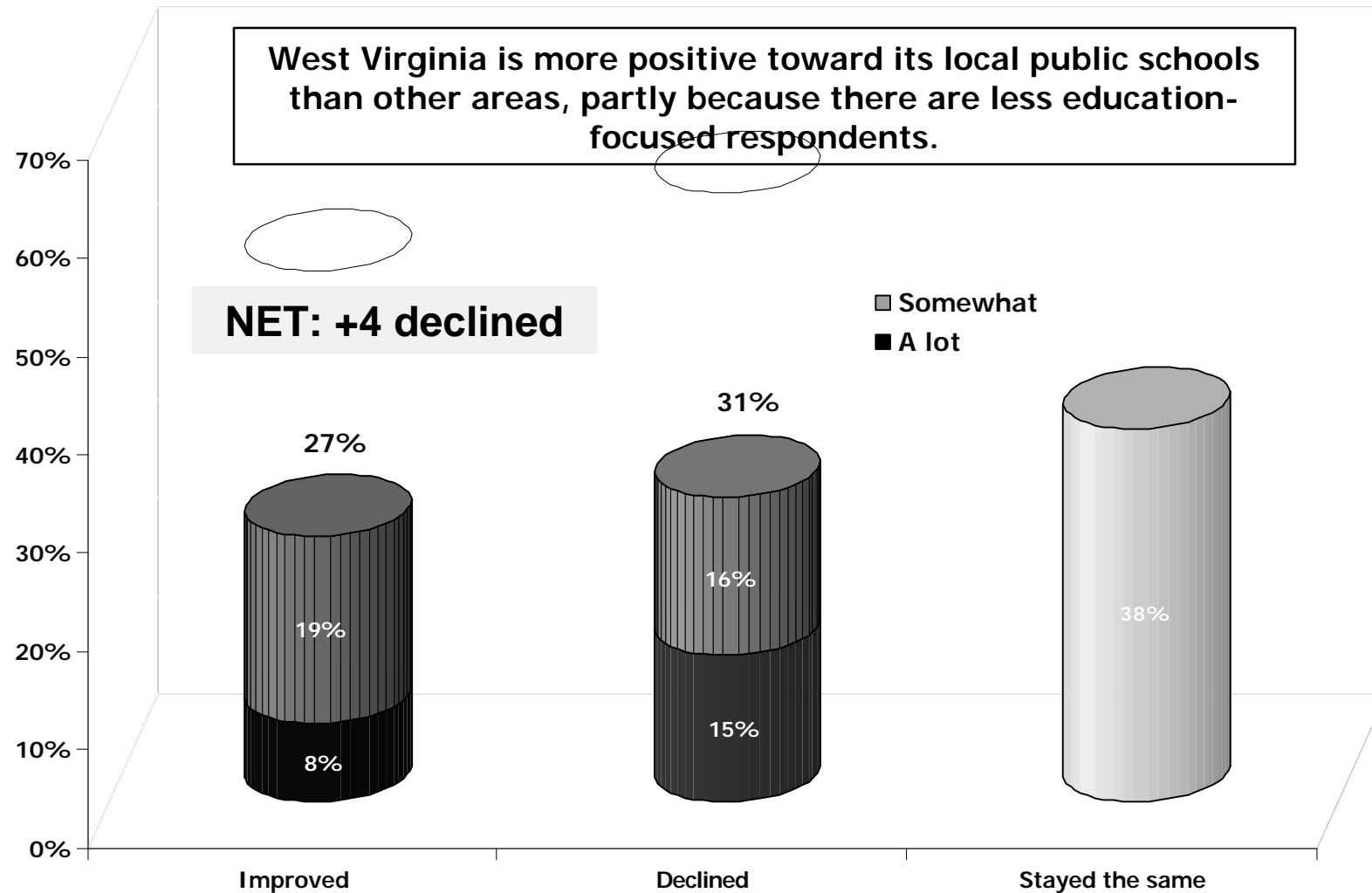
*Q3: Now, I am going to read you a list of concerns that some people in this area have mentioned. Please tell me which one you personally most want your LOCAL leaders to do something about ?*

To the extent we tie education to other issues (the economy, crime/drugs) the more relevancy we give it.



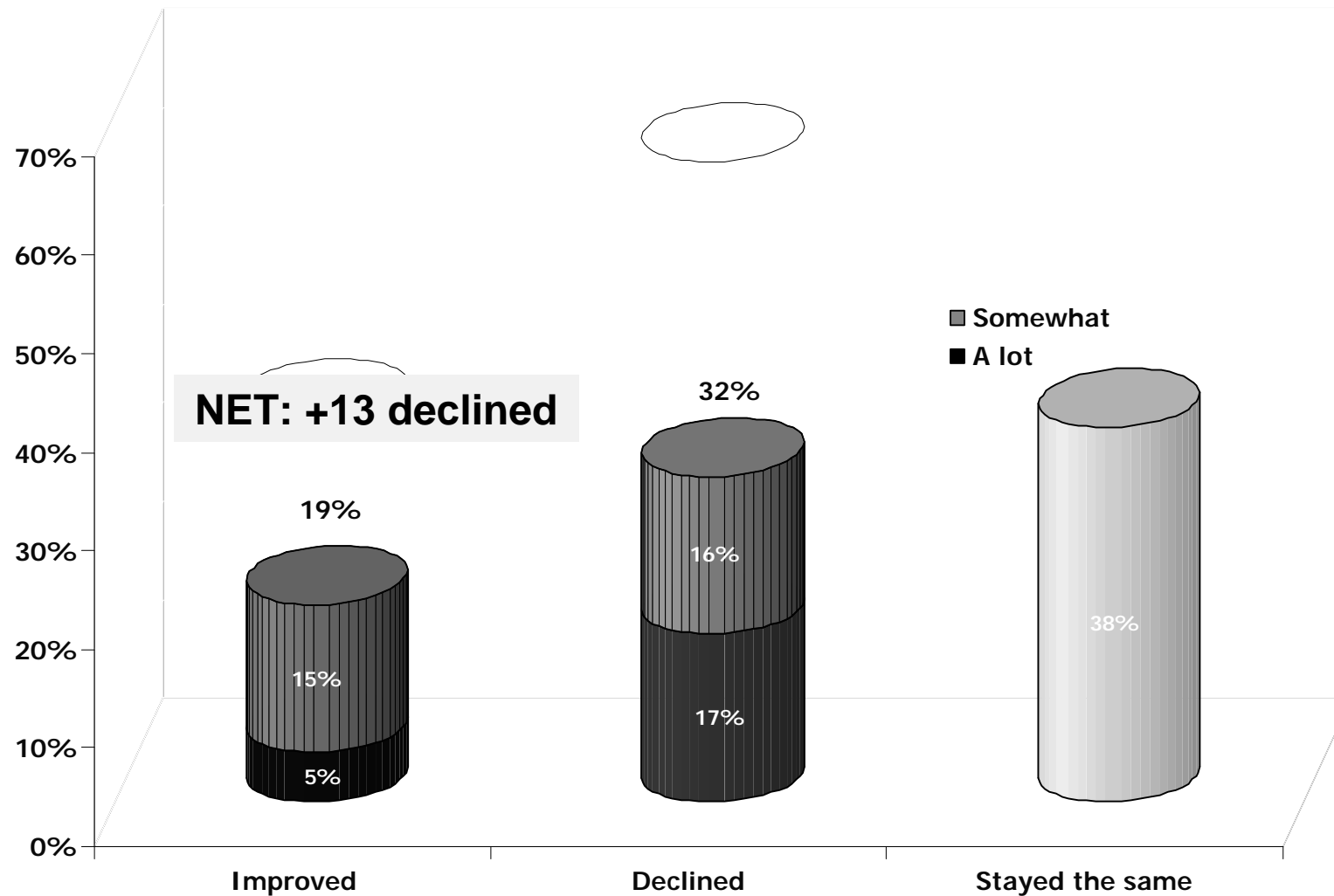
# People in West Virginia are tough judges of their local schools, as less than three in 10 say their local schools are improving.

Q4: Over the last five years do you think public schools in your community have improved, declined, or stayed about the same?



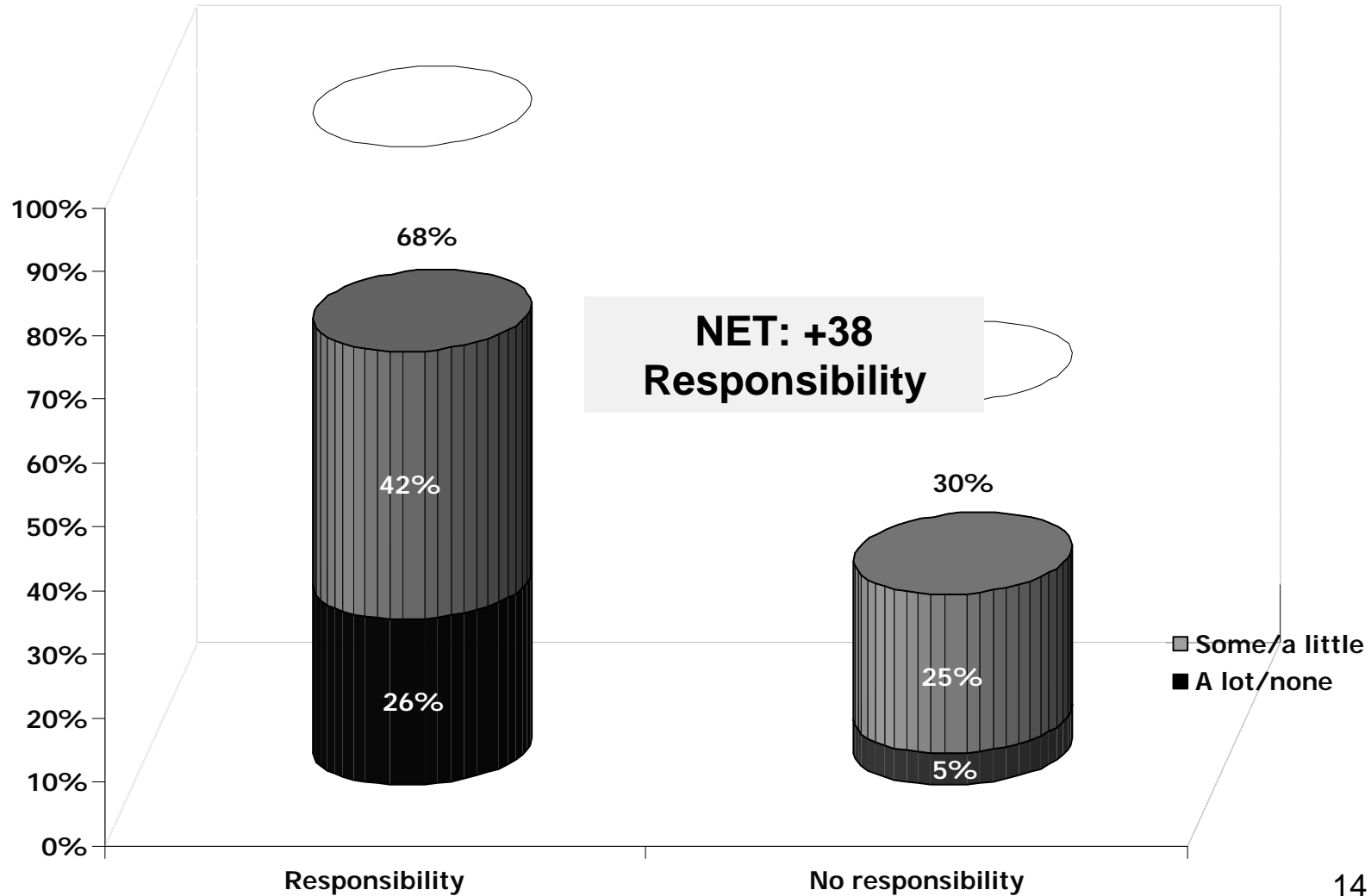
**Respondents are more upset about the direction of schools nationally. Nearly one in three say schools have declined, while less than two in 10 say they have improved.**

*Q5: Over the last five years do you think public schools nationally have improved, declined, or stayed about the same?*



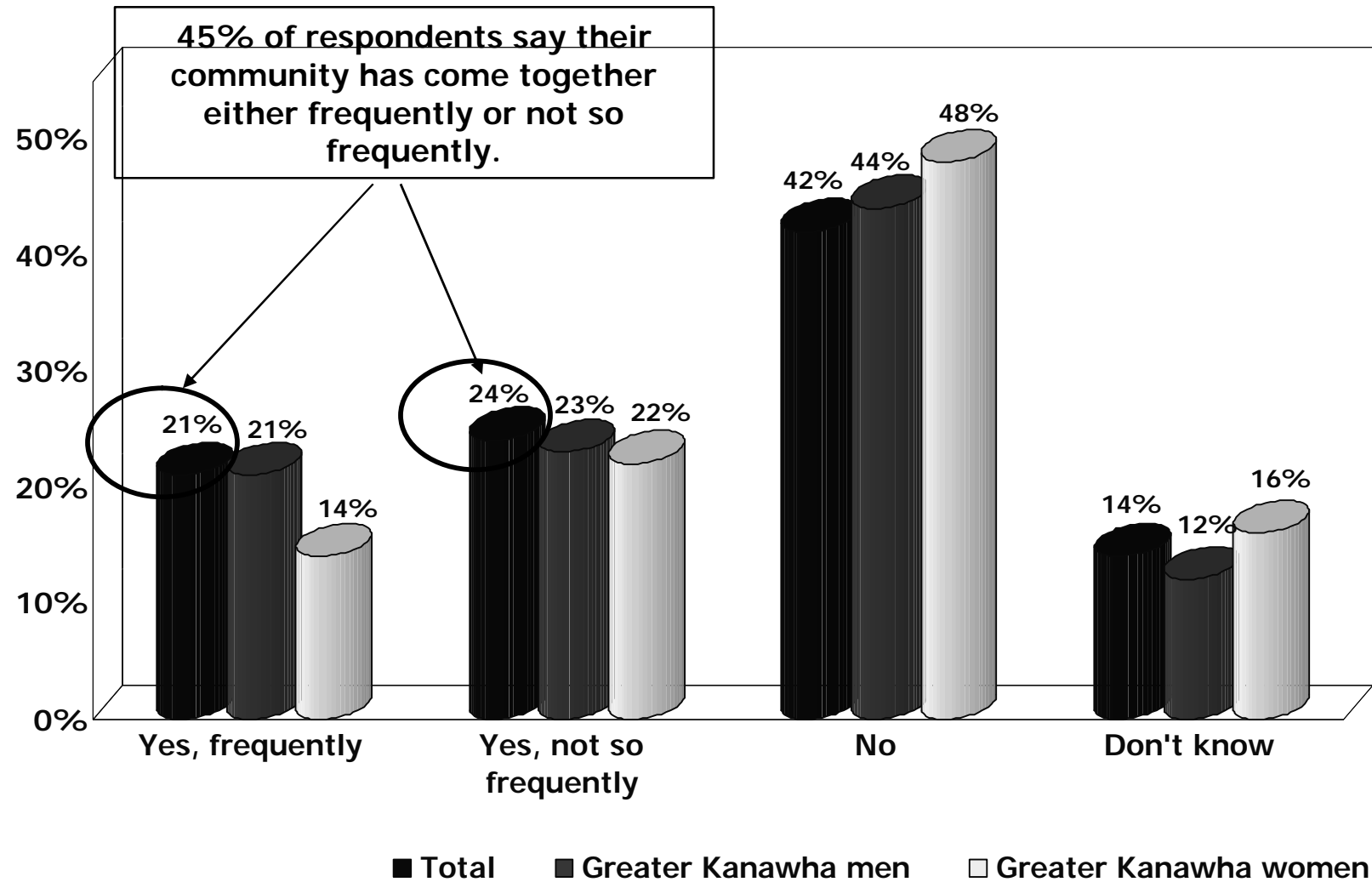
Respondents believe their community takes responsibility for ensuring quality public schools. Intensity is on the positive side by a 5-to-1 margin. West Virginia ranks the highest on responsibility among all other areas tested.

*Q6: How much responsibility do you think people in your community take for ensuring there are quality public schools in your community – a lot, some, a little, or none at all?*



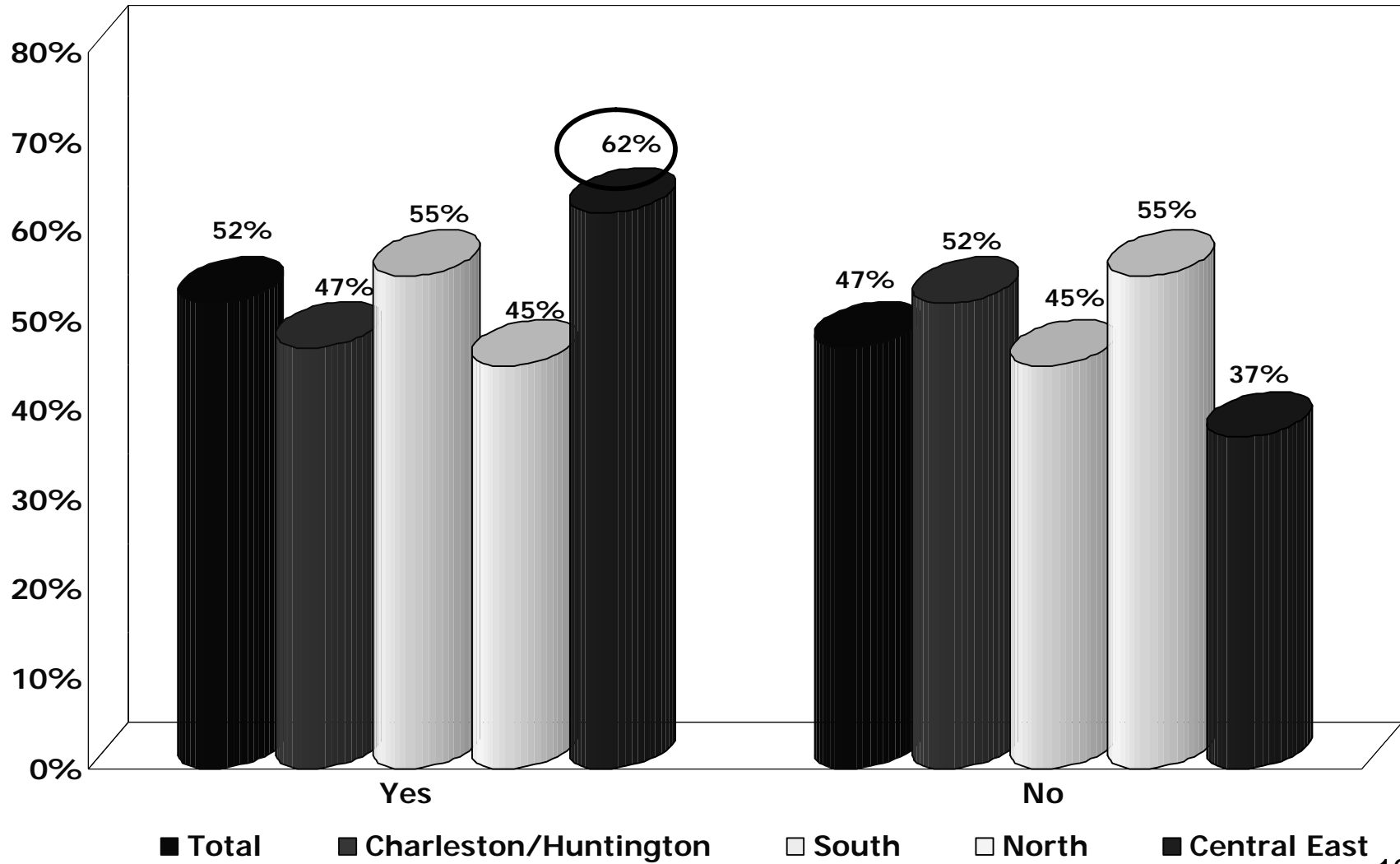
Four in 10 respondents say their community has come together, lower than some other areas. Greater Kanawha women are least likely to say their community has come together.

*Q7: Has your community ever come together to work on a public education problem or has your community not come together to work on a public education problem?*



Residents of Central East say they are much more supportive of public schools than any other area, with residents of Charleston/Huntington and the North less likely to have personally done something for their public schools.

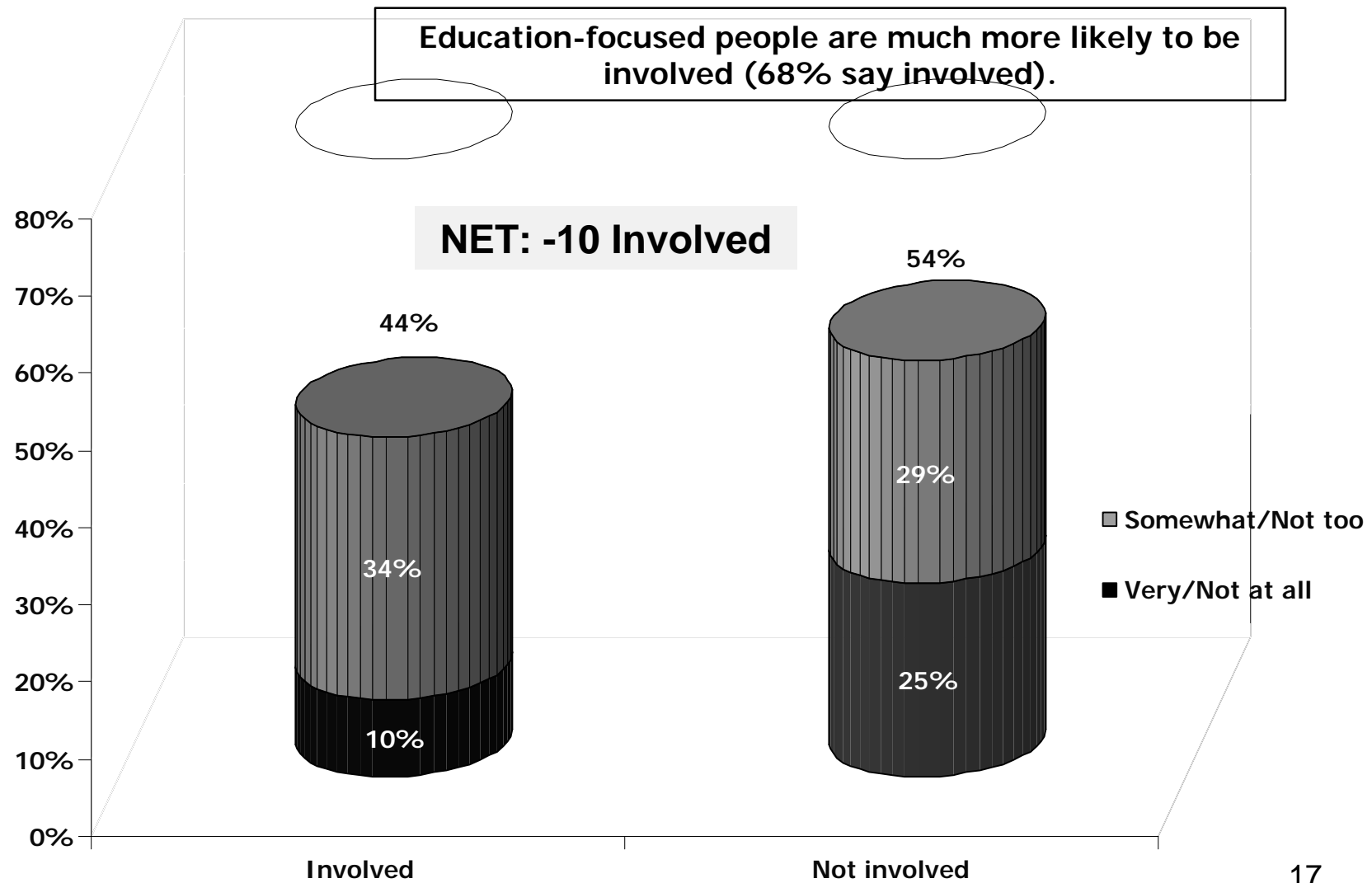
*Q8: In the last year, have YOU personally done anything to support your public schools in your local area?*





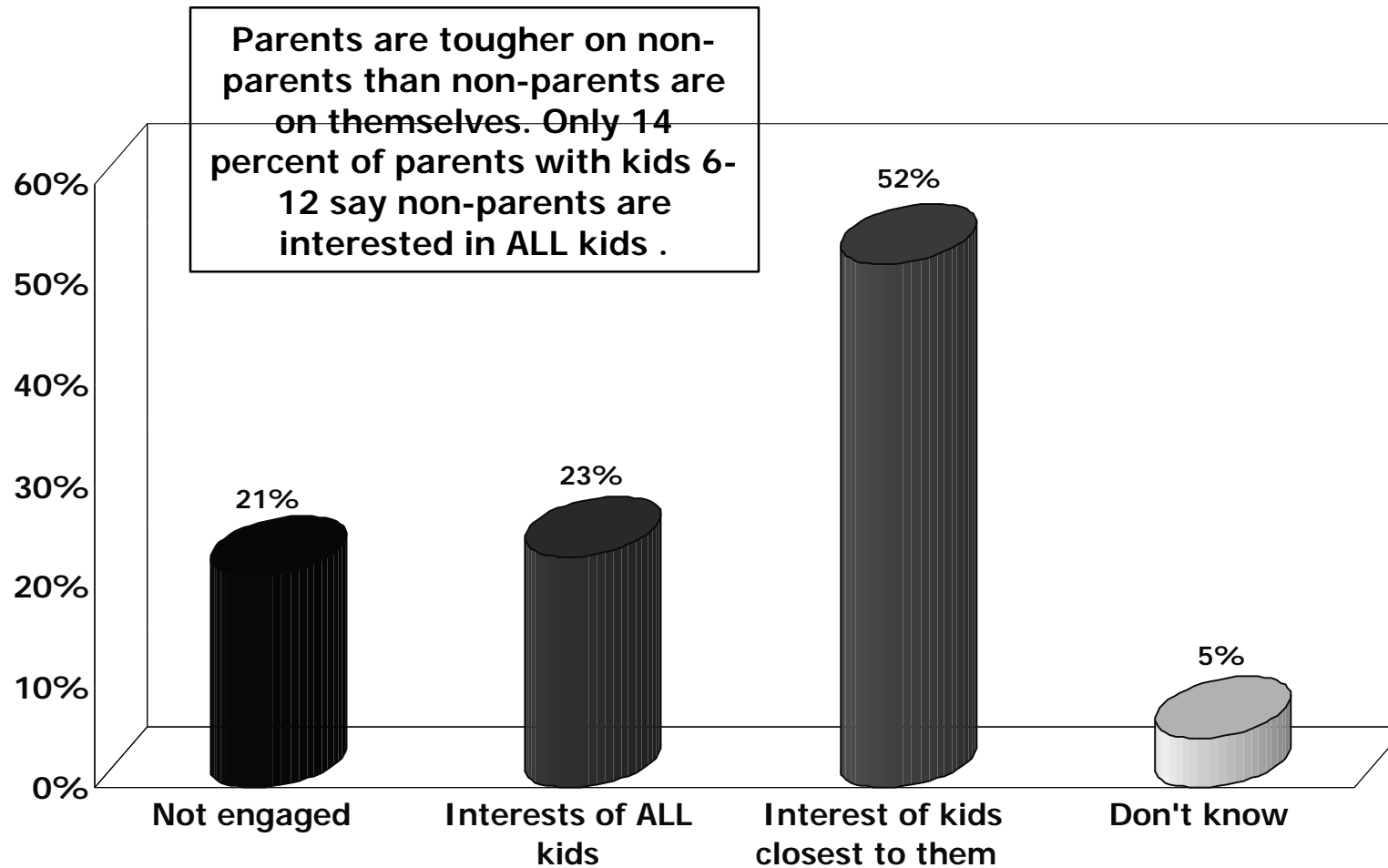
Residents make careful distinctions on support and involvement. Fewer residents say they are involved in their local schools, compared to supporting their local public schools.

Q9: Honestly, how involved would you say you are in helping to make public schools better – very involved, somewhat involved, not too involved, or not involved at all?



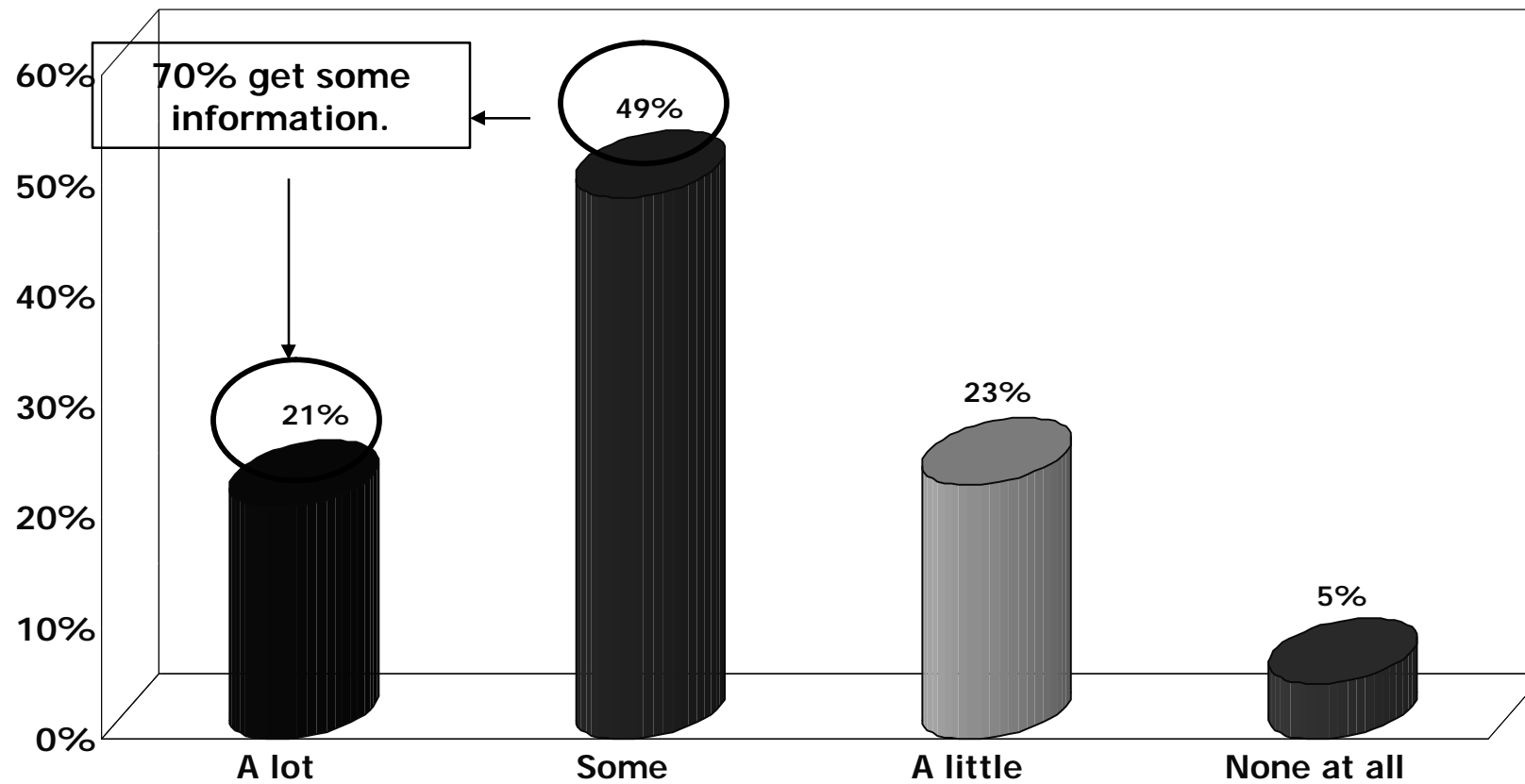
**Only one in four residents say non-parents are interested in ALL kids. Fully seven in 10 say non-parents are either not engaged or only interested in the kids closest to them.**

*Q12: I want you to think about the adults in your community WHO DON'T HAVE SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN. When you think of these people, which best describes them:*



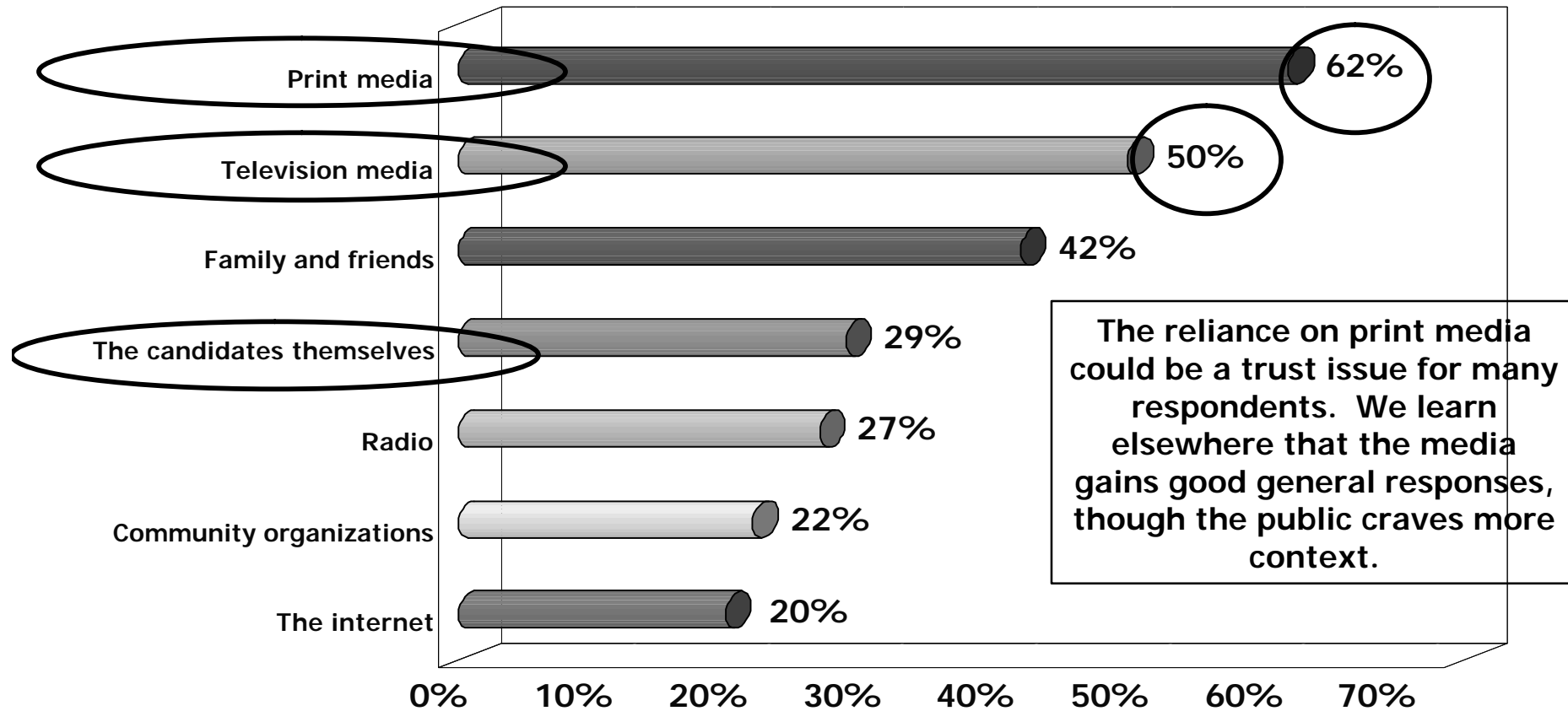
# Most respondents say they are able to learn some, if not a lot, of information about candidates' stances on public education.

*Q29: When candidates run for public office how much are you able to learn about their stances on public education?*



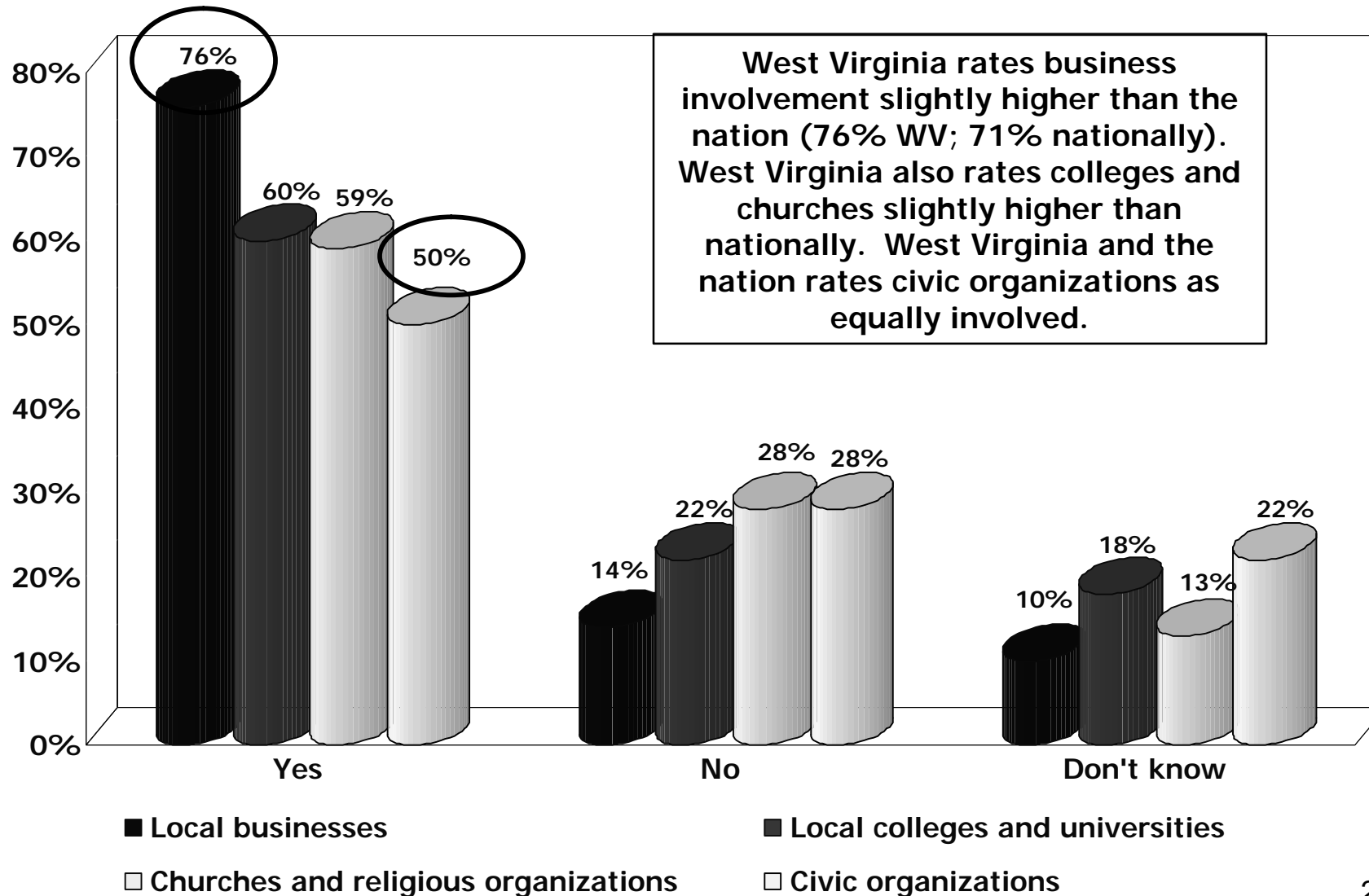
Residents do not hear from the candidates themselves. Print media is by far the most common source of information about candidates. Television and family and friends are the next most common sources.

*Q30: From which of the following sources are you able to learn information about a candidates stance on public education?*



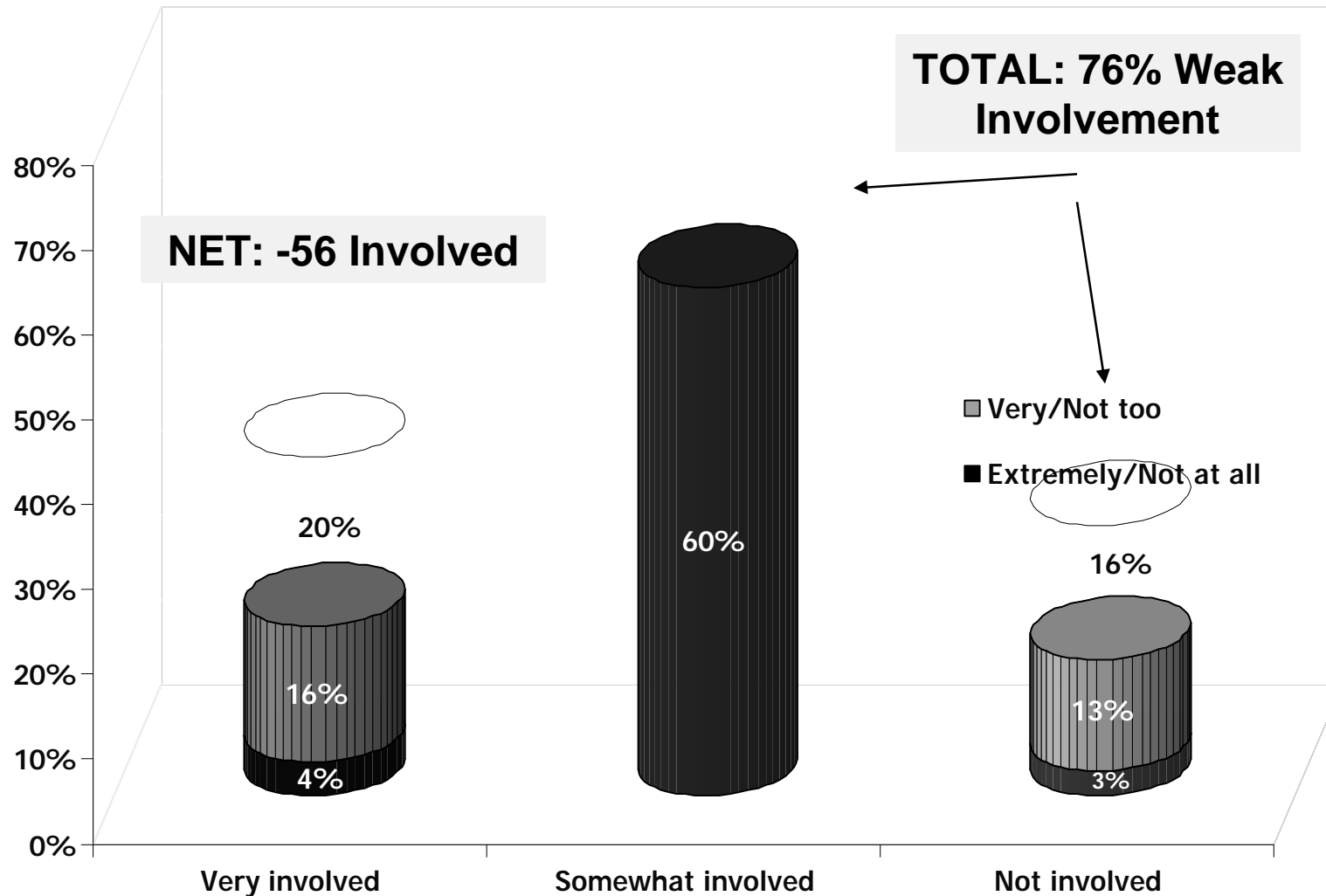
# Local businesses are seen as the most involved by residents, while civic organizations are seen as the least involved.

Q47-50: Please tell me if any of the following organizations are involved in your local public schools?



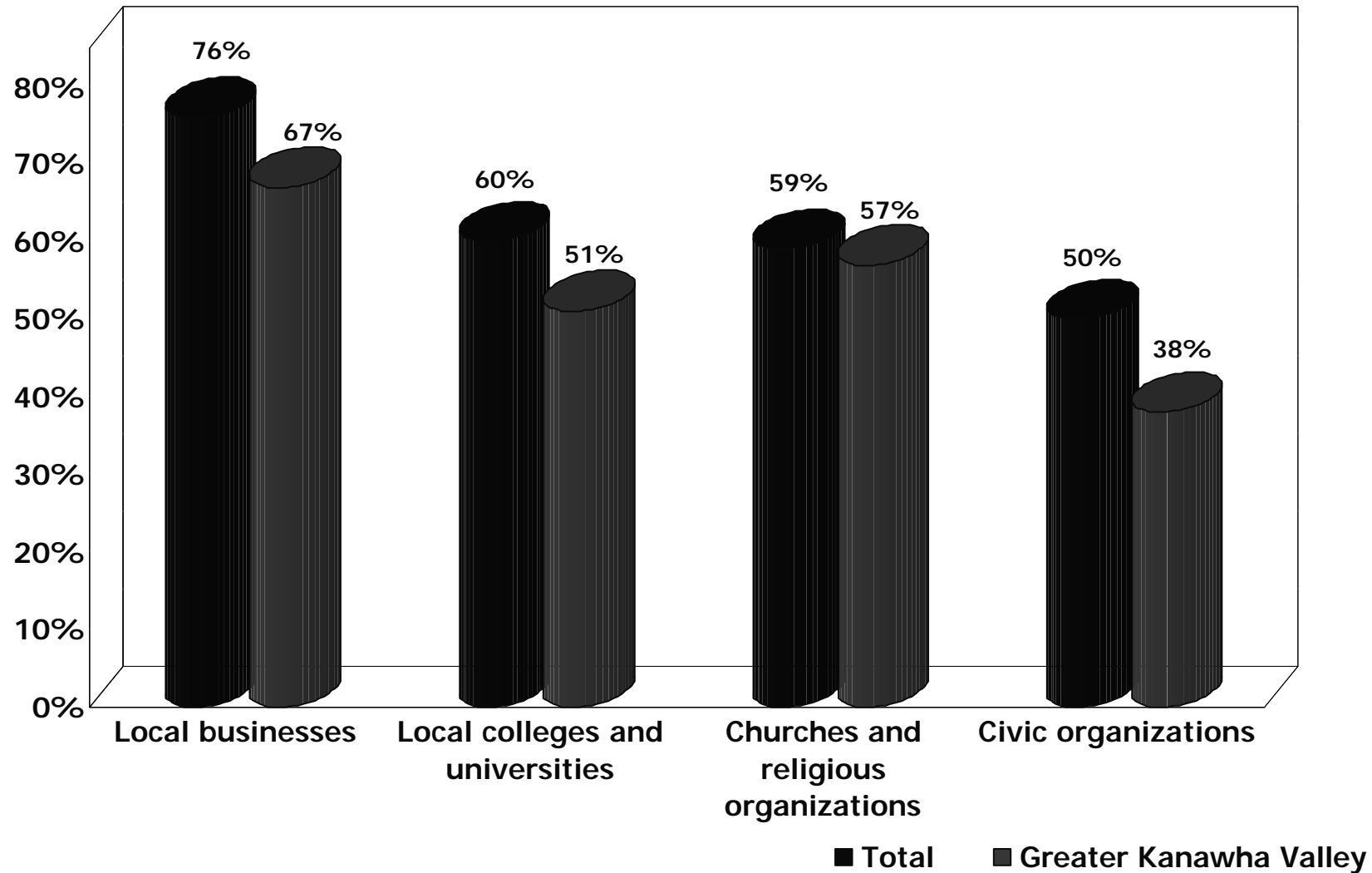
Civic organizations are not perceived as particularly involved in the local public schools. Fully six in 10 respondents say they are only somewhat involved, meaning there is little intensity on either side.

Q46: When it comes to being involved with local public schools, would you say organizations in your community are extremely involved, very involved, somewhat involved, not too involved, or not involved at all?



**With the exception of churches and religious organizations, the Greater Kanawha Valley rates these organizations lower than the rest of the state.**

*Q47-50: Please tell me if any of the following organizations are involved in your local public schools?*



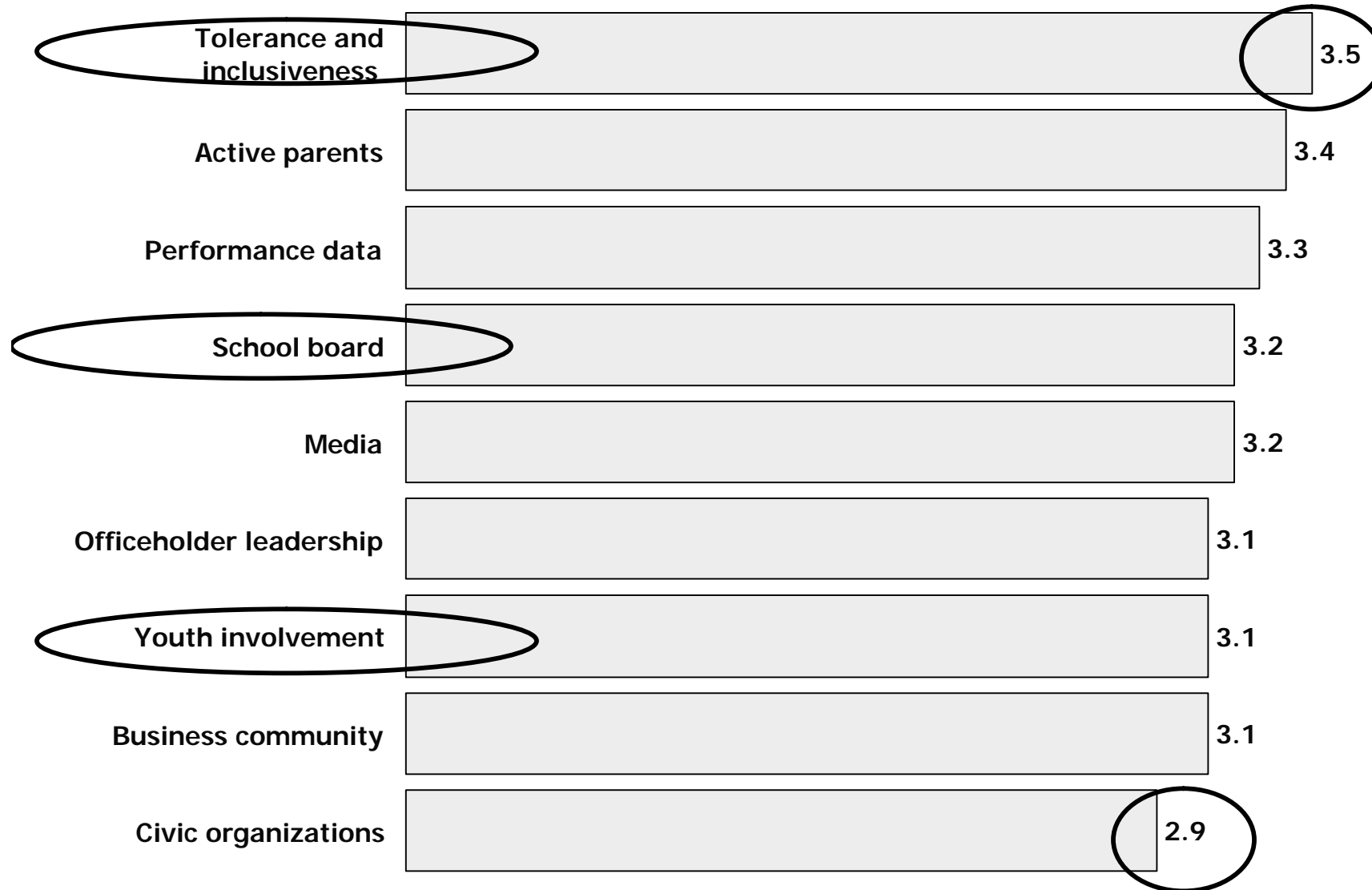
# ***Index Ratings***

***Index responses varied heavily,  
with tolerance and inclusiveness  
performing well and civic  
organizations performing less well.***



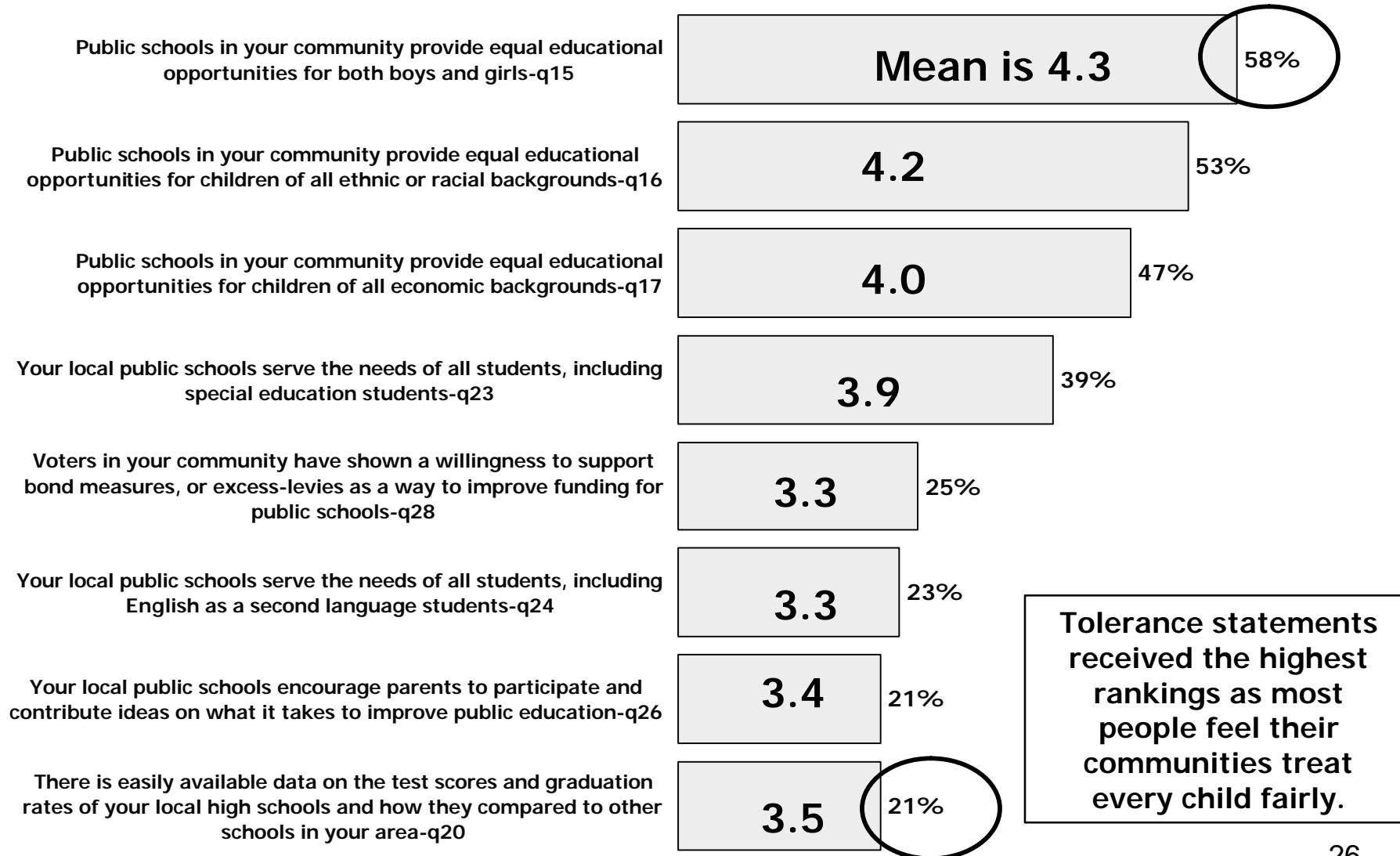
Tolerance and inclusiveness is the strongest index, with civic organizations ranked as the lowest. There is a log jam of indices in the 3.1 mean range. West Virginia uniquely raises the school board to top-5 status.

*Index Categories West Virginia – Ranked by Mean*



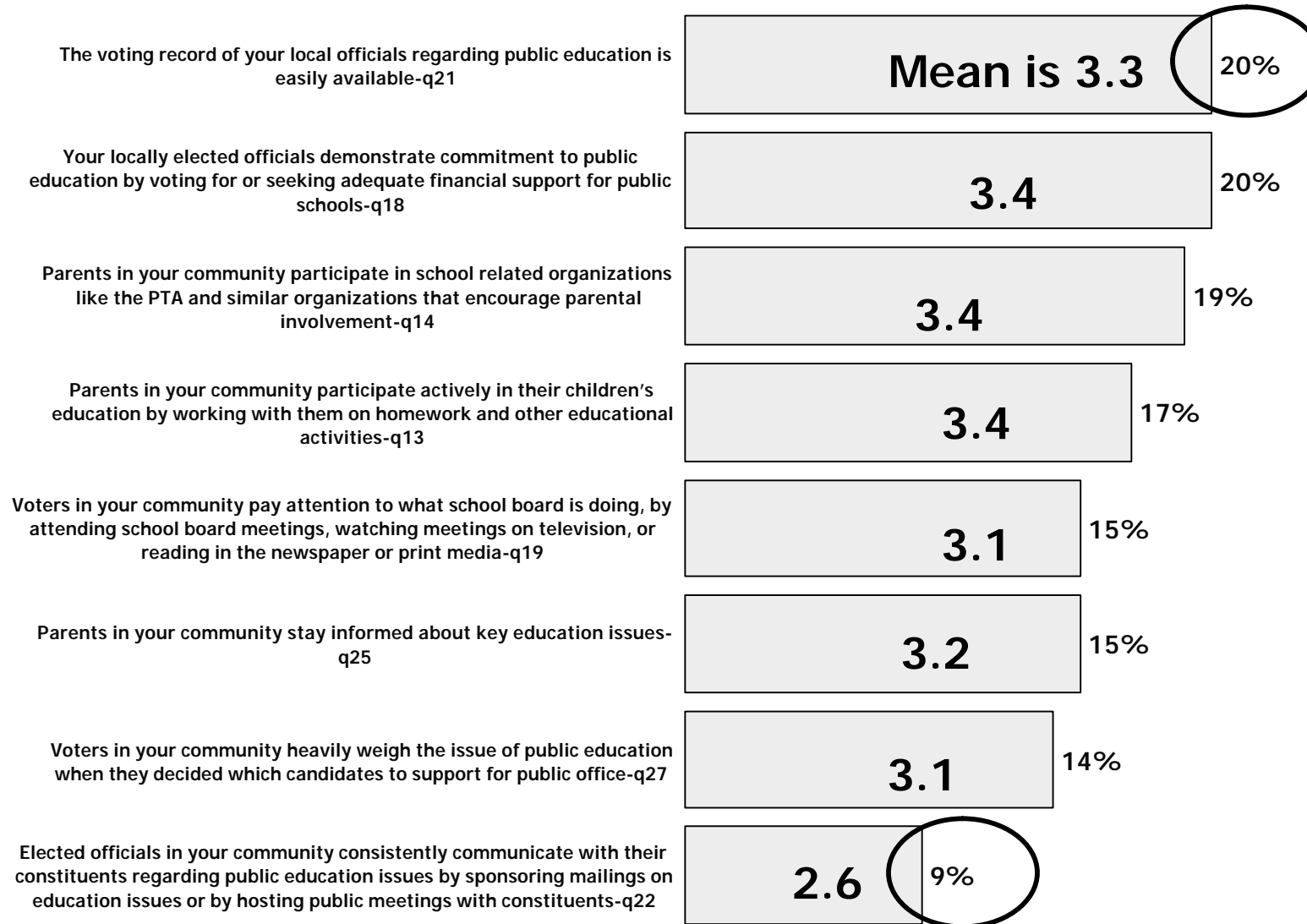
Gender and racial equality are the highest ranked statements, while accessibility of test scores and graduation rates also rates fairly high. People make clear distinctions, with more than half saying their school achieves gender equity, but only two in 10 say public schools encourage parental involvement.

*Highly Ranked Individuals Statements (Ranked by 5's)*



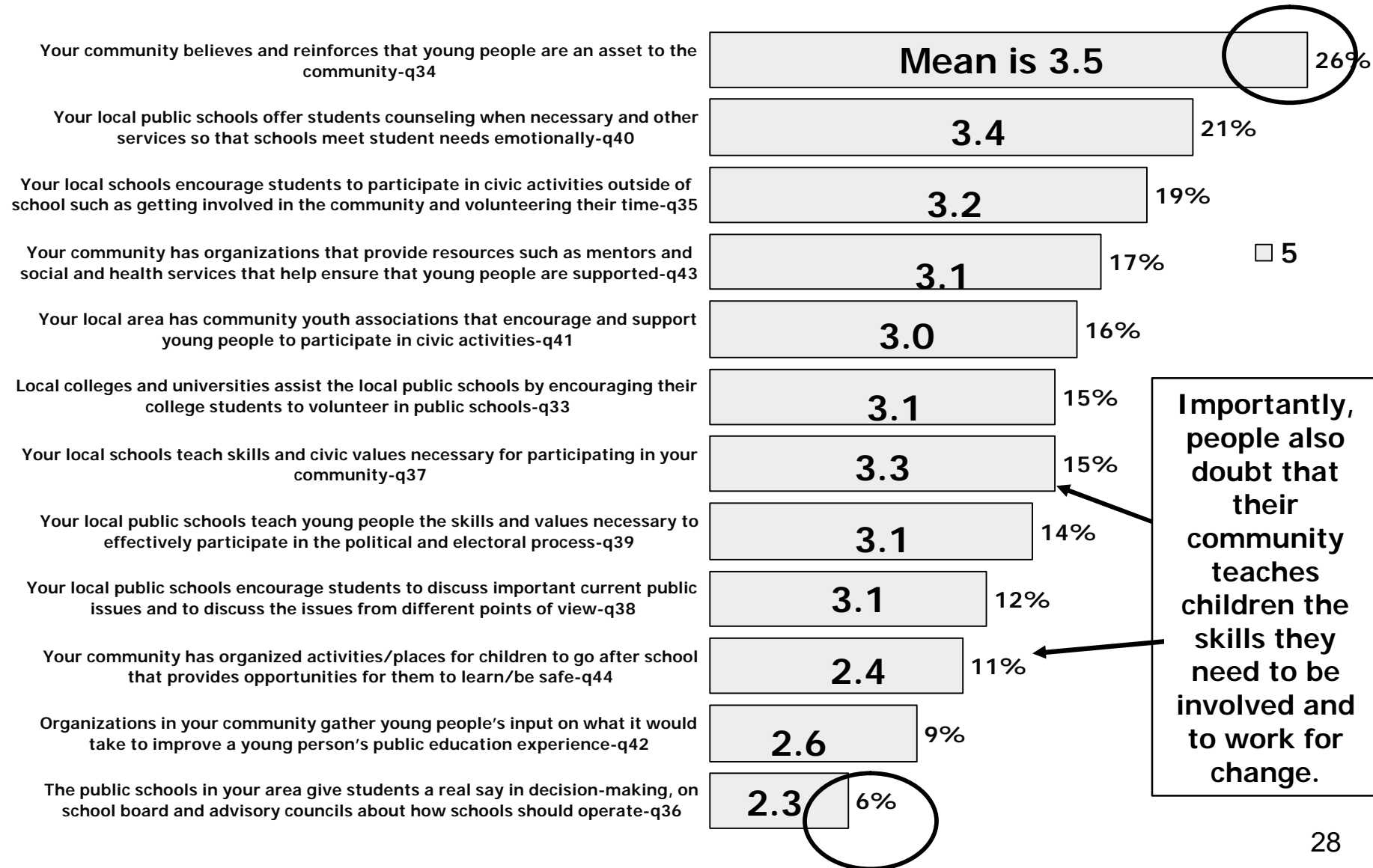
**Respondents have a lower opinion of elected officials and the importance that other residents place on education when deciding for whom to vote. Officeholder leadership is impacted by elected officials' lack of communication.**

*Lowest Ranked Individuals Statements (Ranked by 5's)*



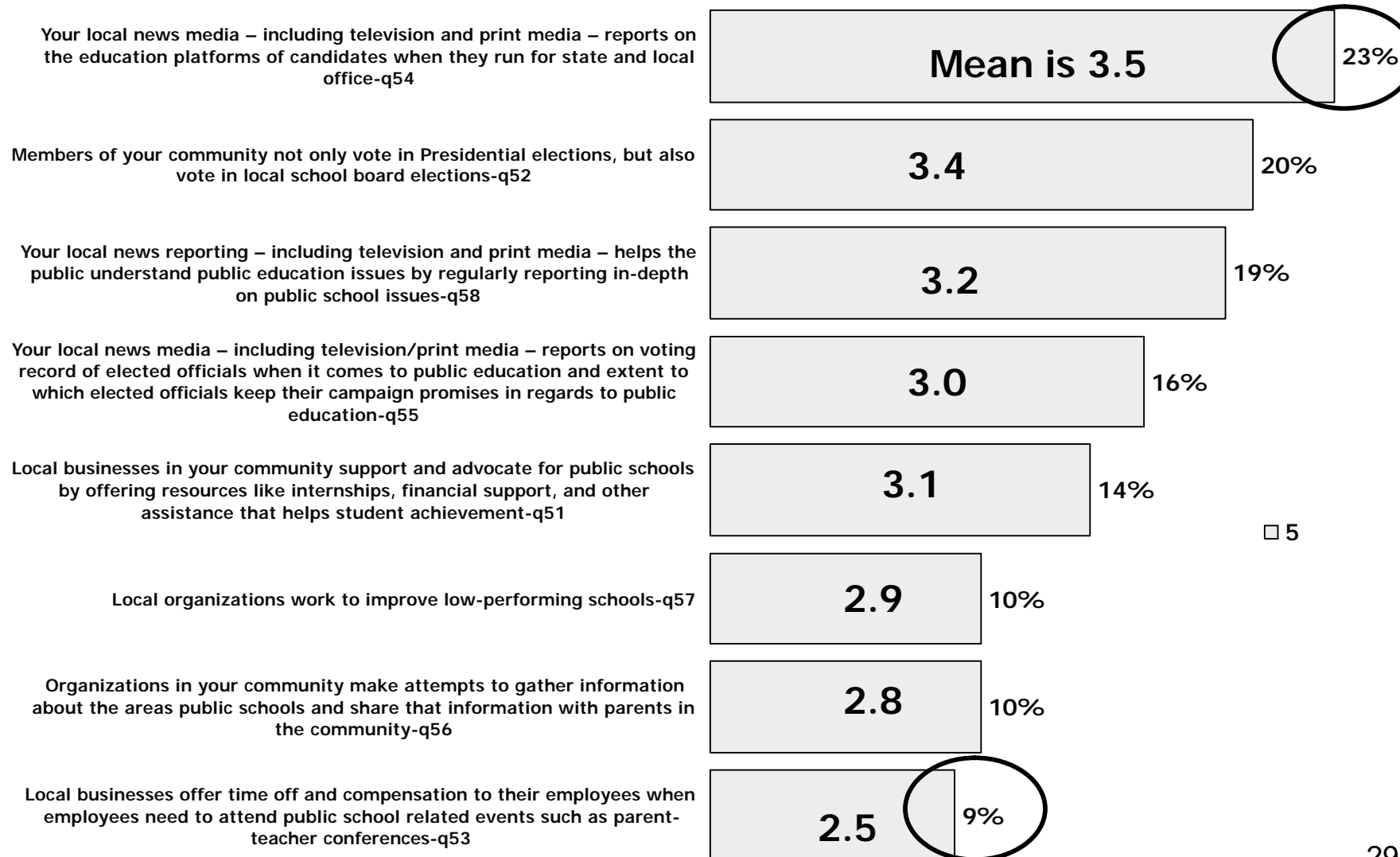
# Youth are viewed as an asset but are not given any real voice in managing their education.

*Youth Development Statements (Ranked by 5's)*



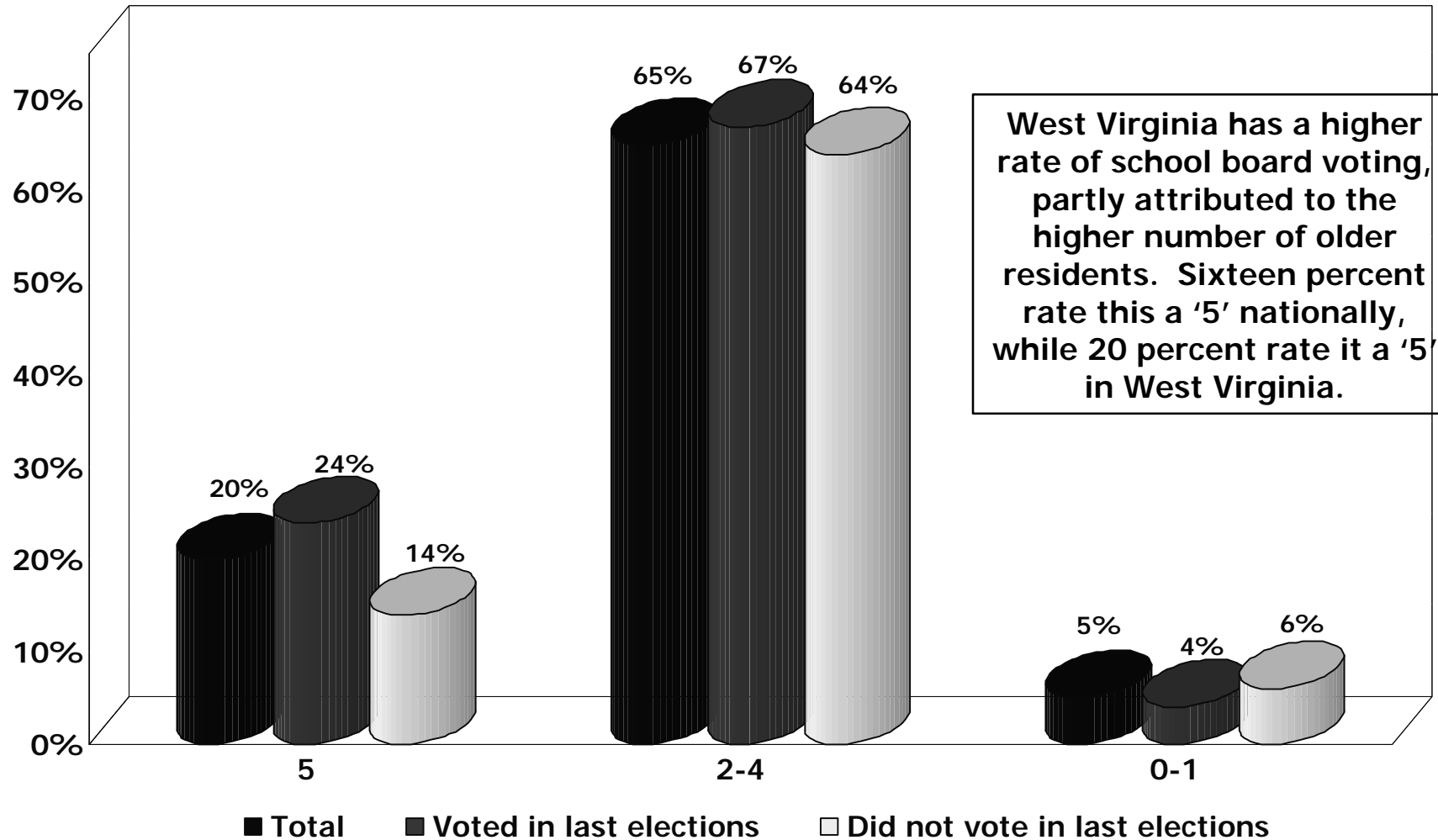
# Civic organizations are once again given a chilly reception by respondents, while the media and school board get fairly warm ratings.

*Organization and Business Involvement Statements (Ranked by 5's)*



# School board participation is perceived as mediocre, even by those who vote.

Q52: Members of your community not only vote in Presidential elections, but also vote in local school board elections.



## ***Summary Description of Methods***

- **Interview dates: February 23-March 13, 2006**
- **The survey reached 600 adults in West Virginia.**
- **The data were weighted slightly by age, education, region and marital status in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the demographic configuration of these populations.**
- **Margin of error for the survey is +/- 4.0%. The MOE is larger when quoting data for subgroups.**