

**2023 Virginia
Aquarium Funding
and Ownership
Model Resident
Survey**

Findings Report

Presented to the City of Virginia Beach

November, 2023



ETC
INSTITUTE

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Executive Summary



Purpose and Methodology

The City of Virginia Beach conducted a Virginia Aquarium Funding and Ownership Model Resident Survey during the fall of 2023. The purpose of the survey was to assess resident support for funding the Virginia Aquarium's needs and alternative ownership and operational models for the Virginia Aquarium.

The two-page survey, cover letter and postage paid return envelope were mailed to a random sample of households in the City of Virginia Beach. The cover letter explained the purpose of the survey and encouraged residents to either return their survey by mail or complete the survey online. At the end of the online survey, residents were asked to enter their home address, this was done to ensure that only responses from residents who were part of the random sample were included in the final survey database.

After the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute followed up with residents to encourage participation. To prevent people who were not residents of Virginia Beach from participating, everyone who completed the survey on-line was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. ETC Institute then matched the addresses that were entered on-line with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey completed on-line did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the on-line survey was not counted.

The goal was to obtain completed surveys from at least 500 residents. This goal was exceeded, with a total of 507 residents completing the survey. The overall results for the sample of 507 households have a precision of at least +/-4.4% at the 95% level of confidence.

This report contains:

- A summary of the methodology for administering the survey and major findings
- Charts showing the overall results for the 2023 survey (Section 1)
- Tabular data showing the overall results for all questions on the survey (Section 2)
- A copy of the cover letter and survey instrument (Section 3)

The major findings of the survey are summarized on the following pages.



Funding and Ownership of Virginia Aquarium

The survey results reveal support for the funding of the Virginia Aquarium. When asked about funding, Sixty-five percent (64.8%) of surveyed residents who expressed an opinion indicated that they were either "very supportive" or "somewhat supportive" of the City of Virginia Beach allocating an additional \$200-\$300 million to address repair, maintenance needs, and expansion opportunities for the Virginia Aquarium.

In terms of ownership and financial responsibility, fifty-four percent (54.3%) of those surveyed, who had an opinion, were either "very supportive" or "somewhat supportive" of a private nonprofit or corporation assuming financial and programming responsibility for the operations of the Virginia Aquarium. However, the level of support decreased when it came to complete ownership transfer, with only forty-one percent (41.4%) indicating they were "very supportive" or "somewhat supportive" of a private nonprofit or corporation taking over both the operations and ownership of the Virginia Aquarium.

Virginia Aquarium Programs and Tourism

The survey results underscore the significant importance of the Virginia Aquarium in Virginia Beach's programs and tourism. Ninety-one percent (91.4%) of the residents surveyed, who had an opinion, either "strongly agree" or "agree" that Virginia Aquarium's stranding response program for sick and injured animals is important.

Similarly, ninety percent (90.4%) of the residents surveyed, who had an opinion, either "strongly agree" or "agree" that Virginia Aquarium provides important educational programs and eighty-four percent (84.1%) of the residents surveyed, who had an opinion, either "strongly agree" or "agree" that Virginia Aquarium is an important tourism driver for the City of Virginia Beach.

Additional Findings

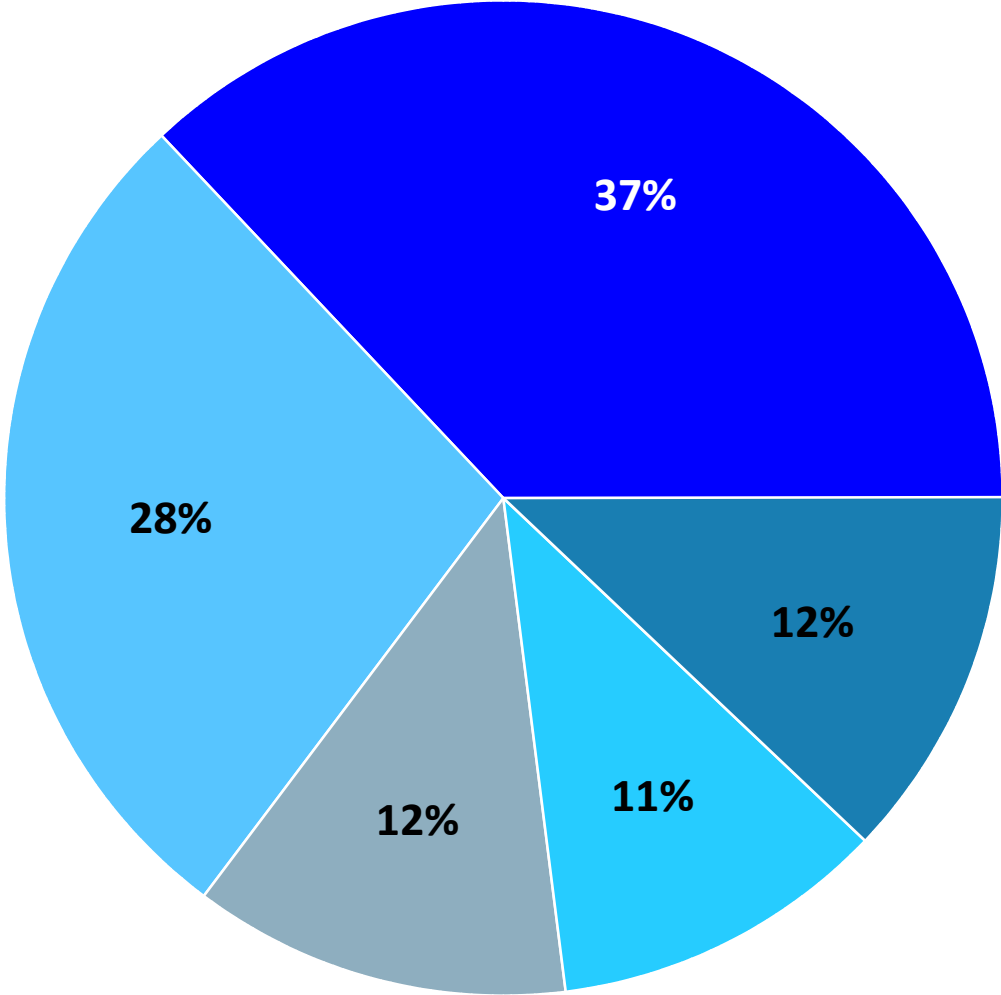
- A significant ninety-four percent (93.9%) of the respondents surveyed have visited the Virginia Aquarium since its opening, demonstrating a strong history of engagement.
- Within the past year, Forty-three percent (42.6%) of respondents have made at least one visit to the Virginia Aquarium, indicating ongoing interest.
- In contrast, only ten percent (9.5%) of those surveyed are currently members of the Virginia Aquarium.
- Streets & roads, stormwater/flooding, school buildings and Virginia Aquarium infrastructure are the infrastructure projects that should be the top priority for improvement according to respondents.



Charts and Graphs

Q1-1. How supportive would you be of the City of Virginia Beach funding an additional \$200-\$300 million for repair and maintenance needs & expansion opportunities?

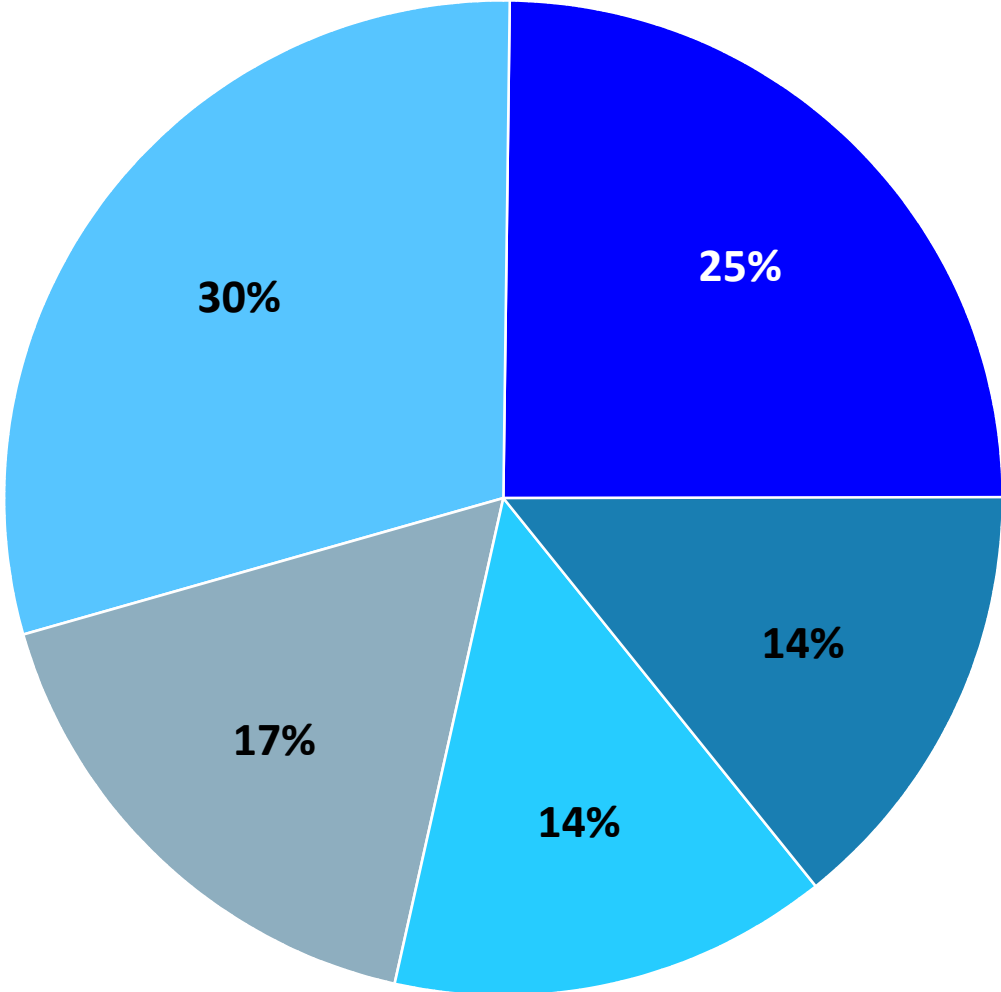
by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



■ Very supportive ■ Somewhat supportive ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat oppose ■ Strongly oppose

Q1-2. How supportive would you be of a private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial & programming responsibility for operations?

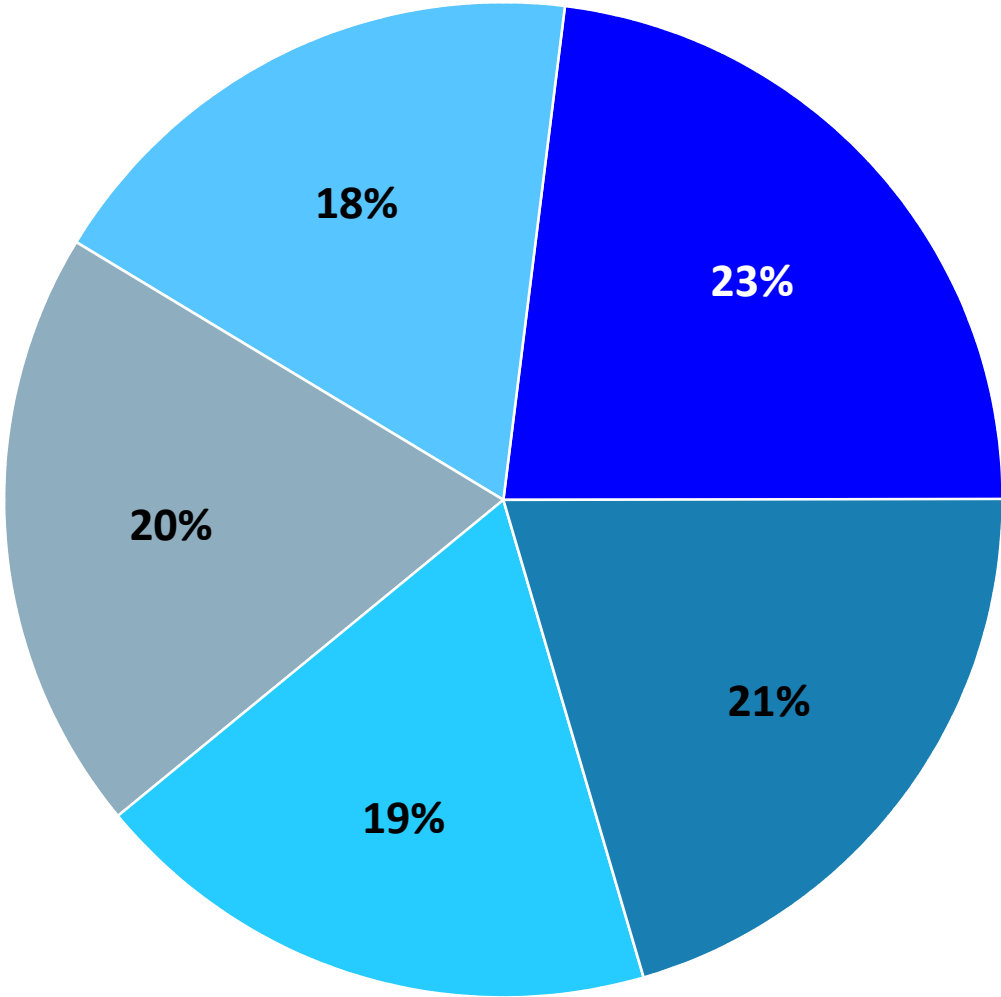
by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



Very supportive Somewhat supportive Neutral Somewhat oppose Strongly oppose

Q1-3. How supportive would you be of a private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial & programming responsibility for both operations & ownership?

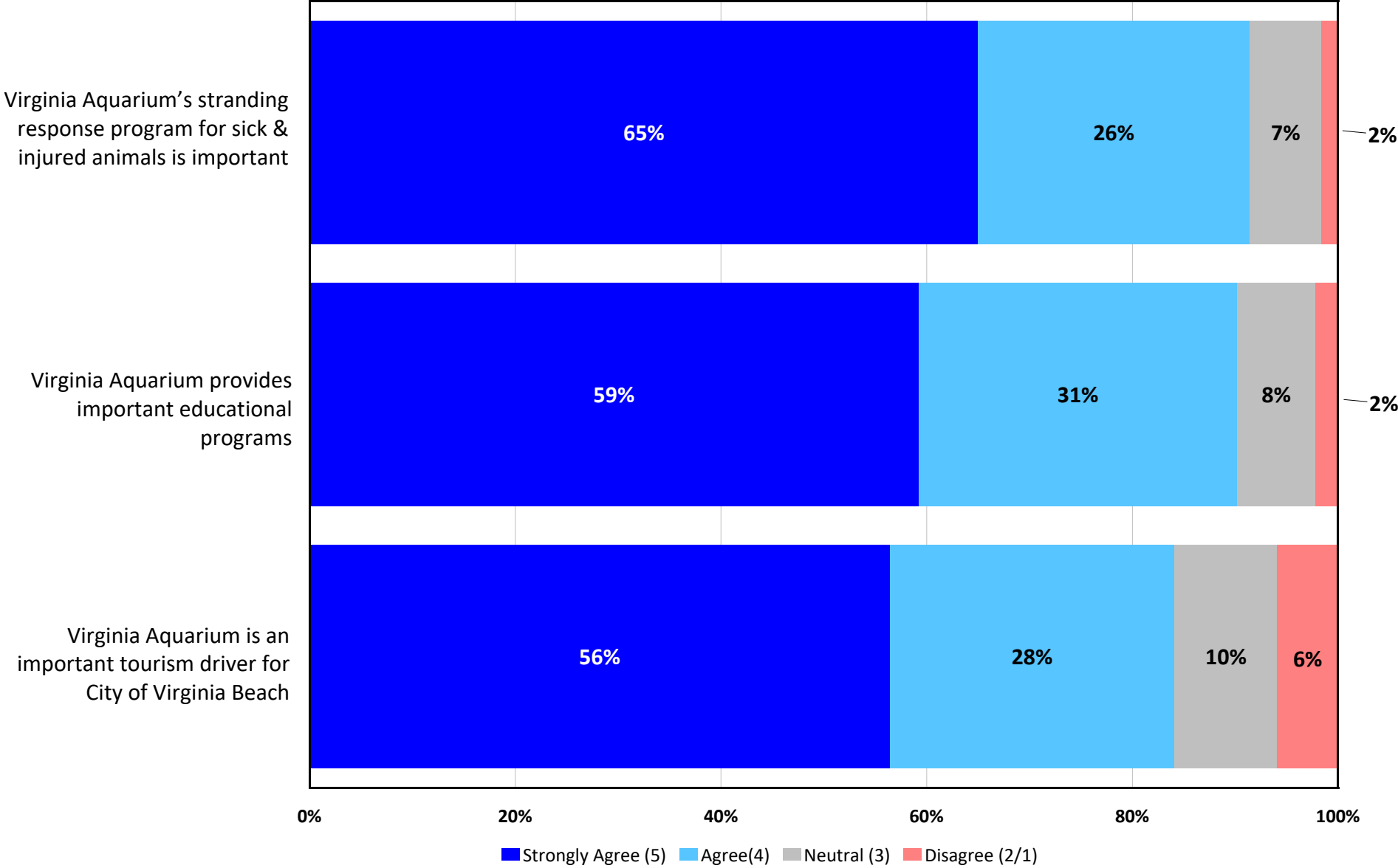
by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



■ Very supportive ■ Somewhat supportive ■ Neutral ■ Somewhat oppose ■ Strongly oppose

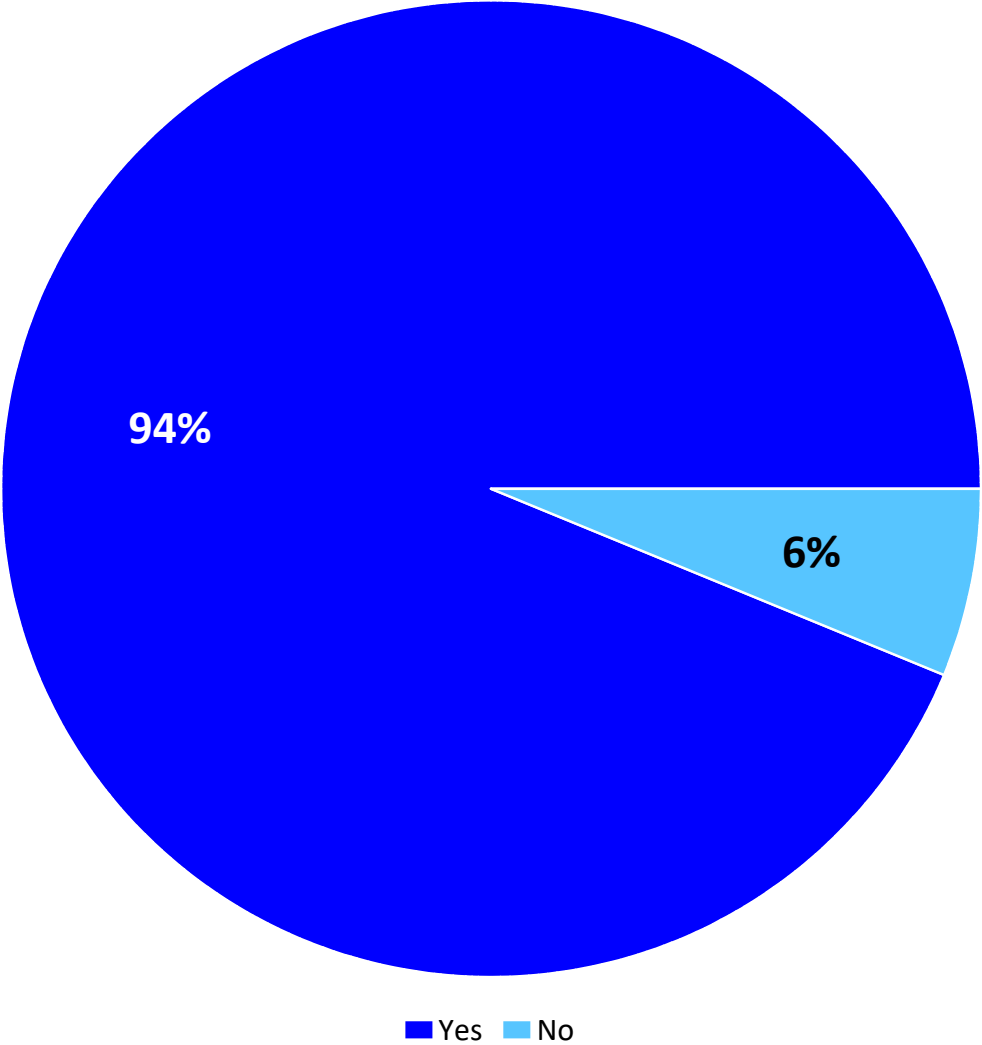
Q2. Level of Agreement with the following statements

by percentage of respondents (excluding don't knows)



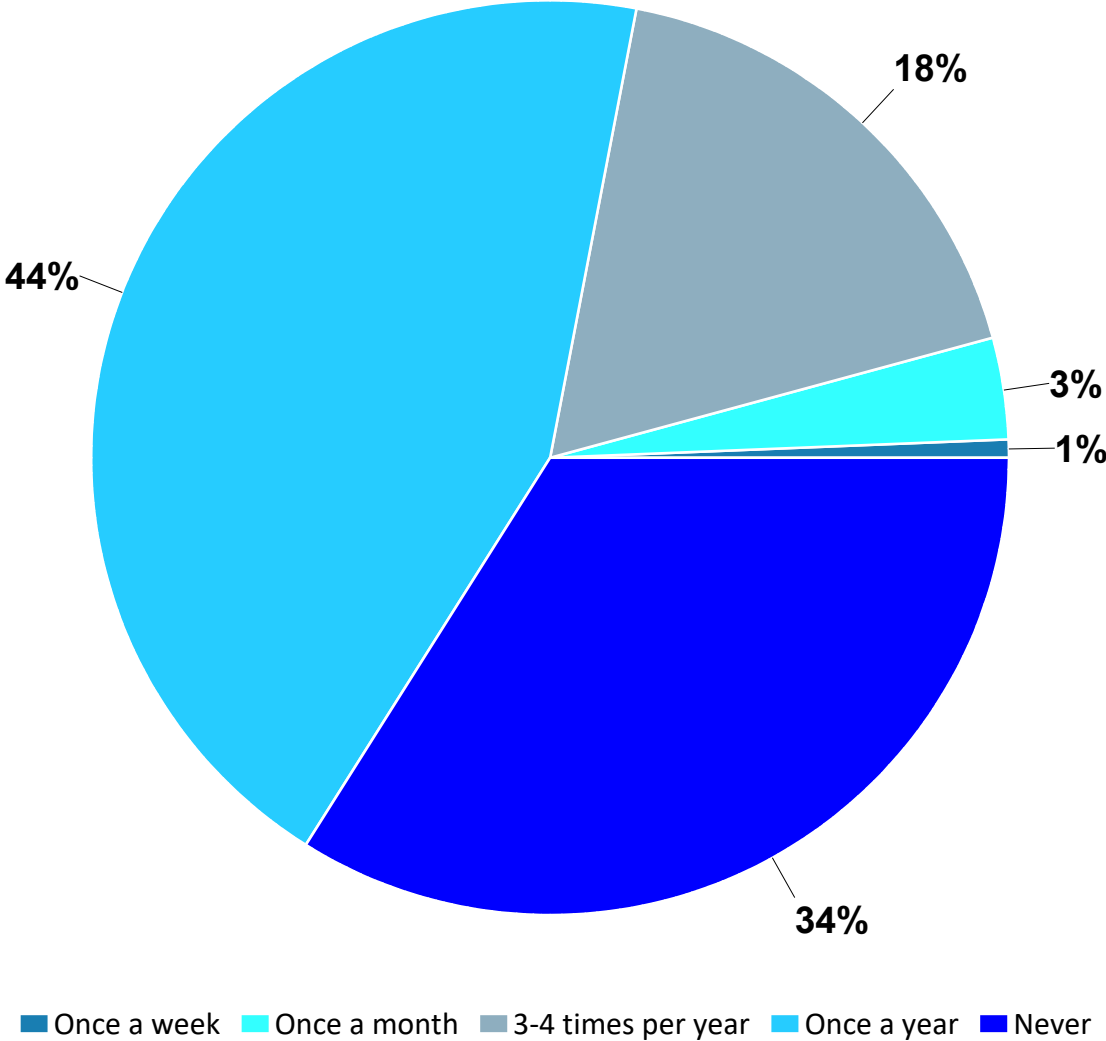
Q3. Have you or a member of your household ever visited the Virginia Aquarium?

by percentage of respondents



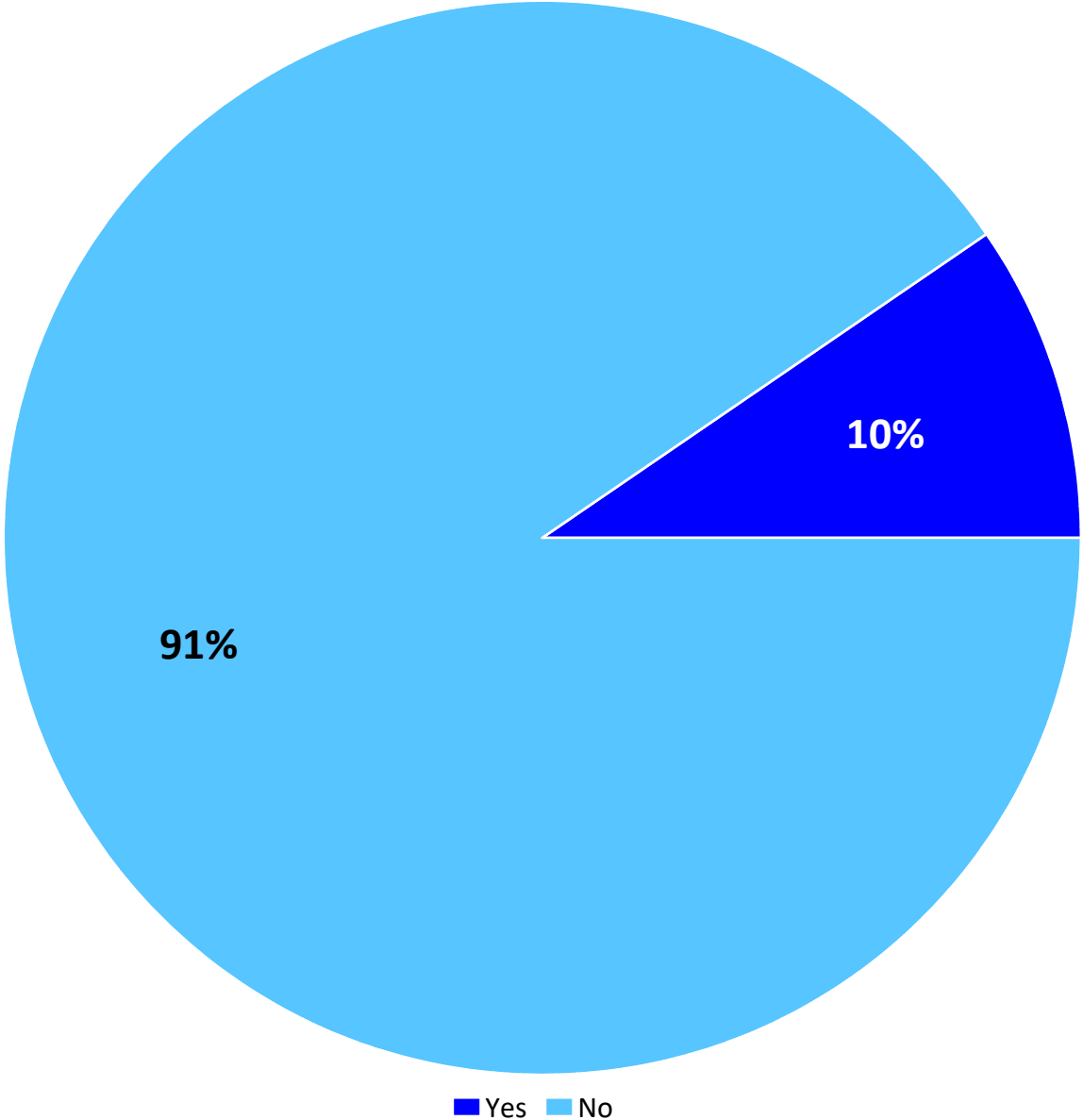
Q4. In the past year, how often did you or a member of your household visit the Virginia Aquarium?

by percentage of respondents (excluding don't know)



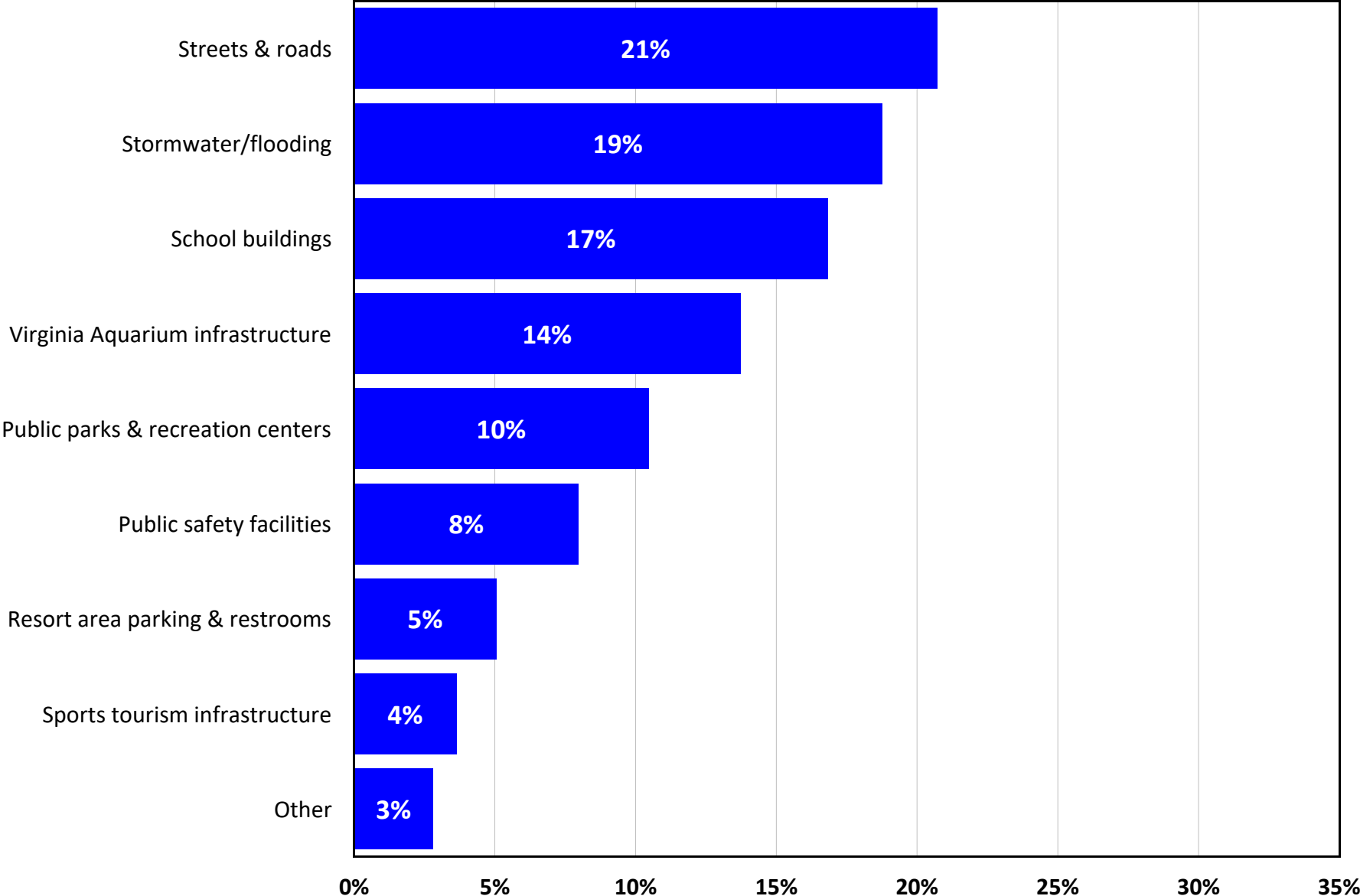
Q5. Are you a member of the Virginia Aquarium?

by percentage of respondents



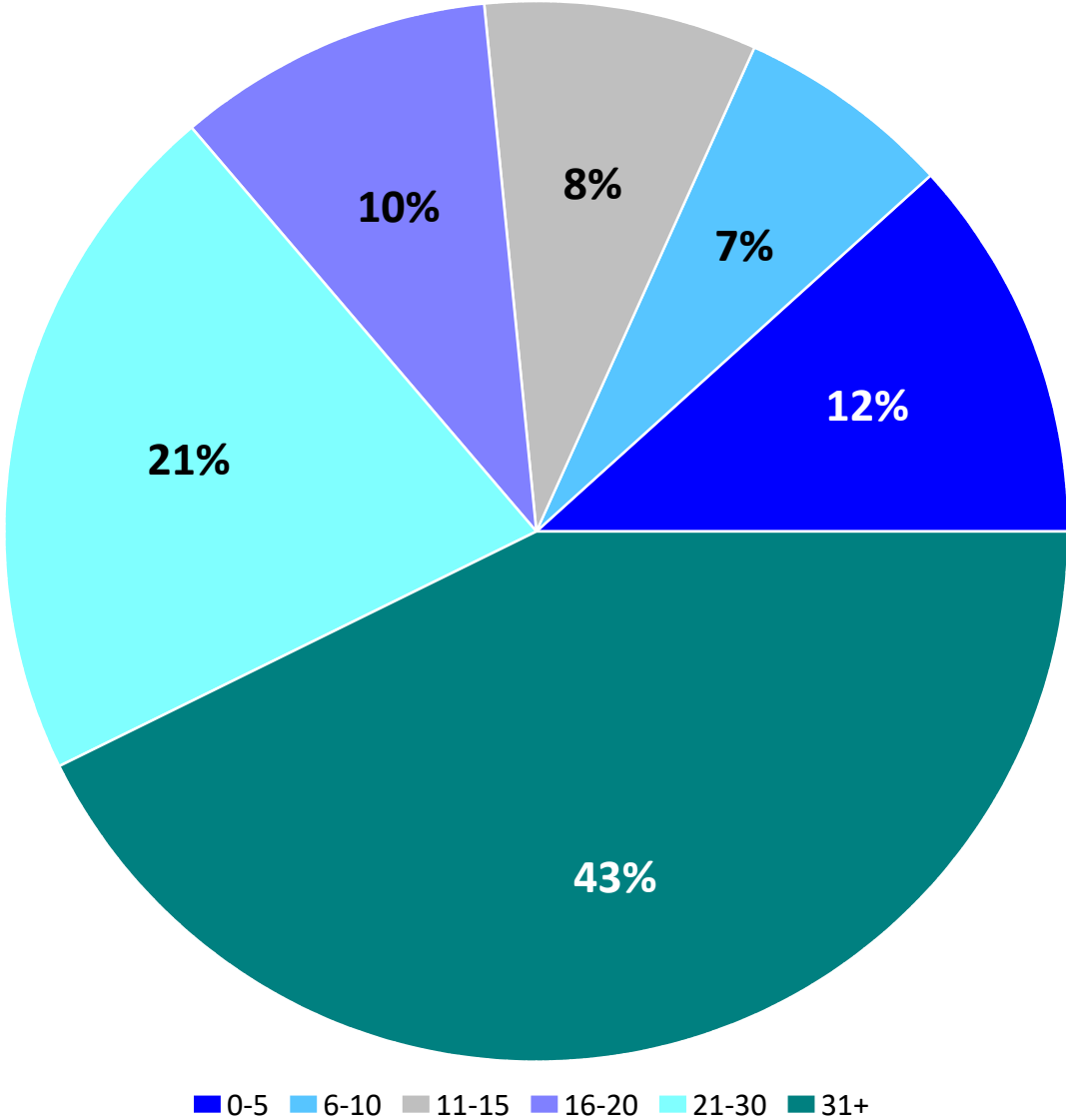
Q6. If you had \$100, how would you spend it across the infrastructure projects below?

by percentage of respondents



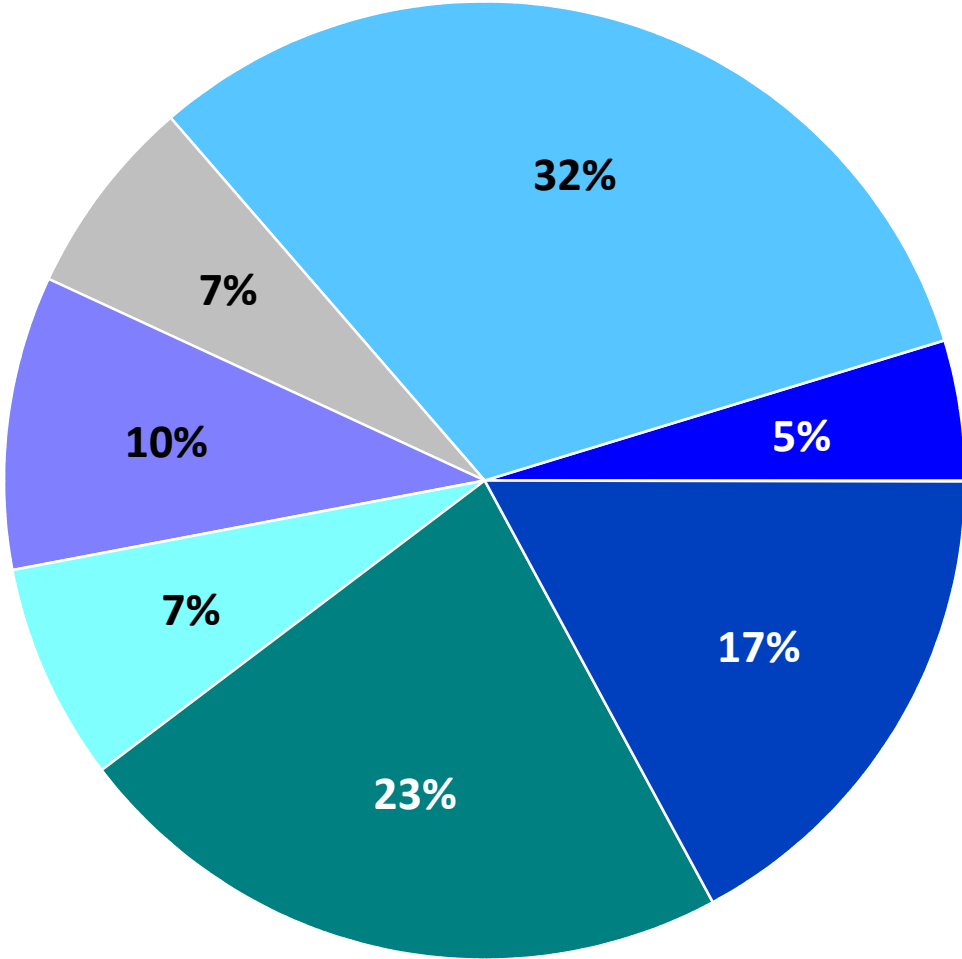
Q7. Demographics: About how long have you lived in Virginia Beach?

by percentage of respondents (excluding not provided)



Q8. Demographics: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

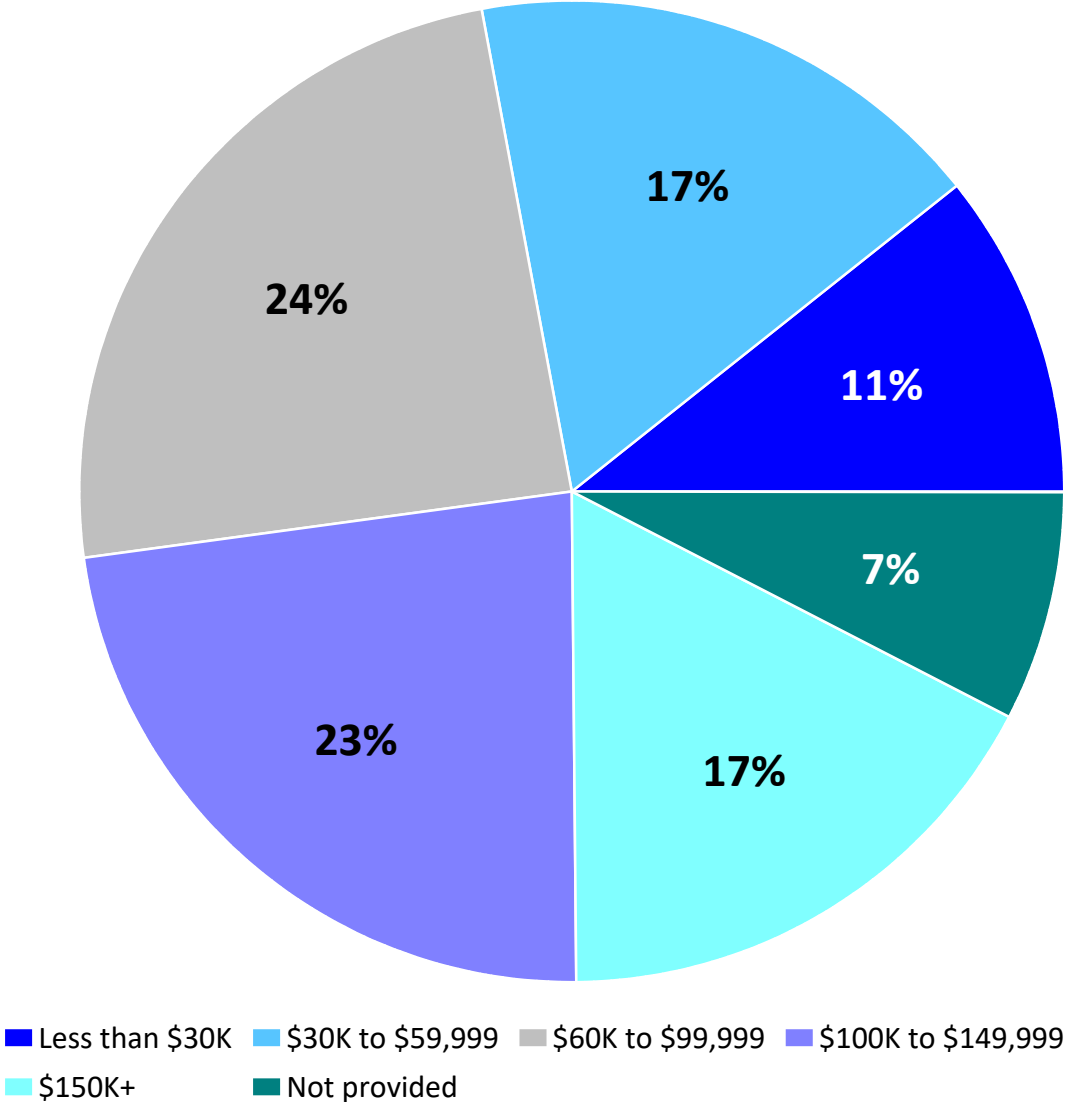
by percentage of respondents (excluding not provided)



- Less than high school graduate
- High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- Special/technical training
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate/professional degree

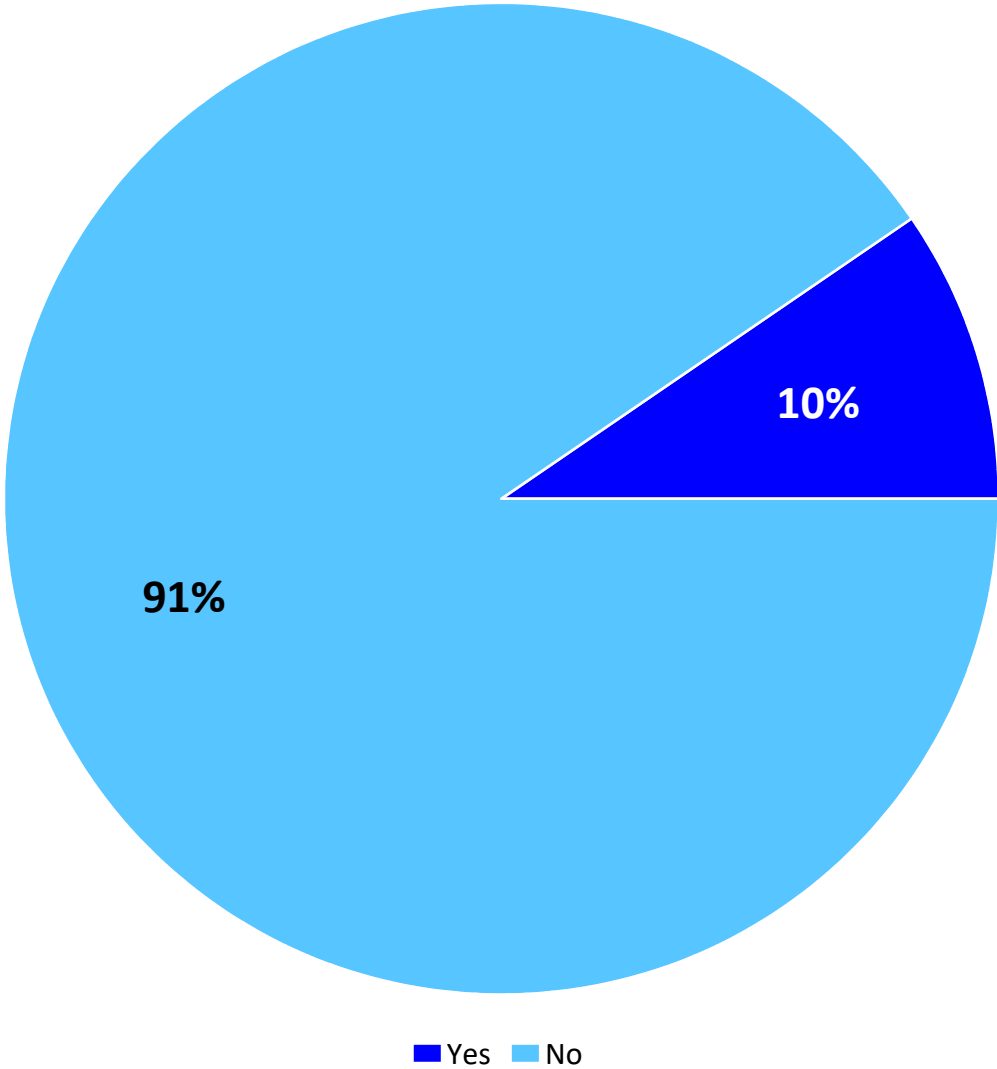
Q9. Demographics: Would you say your total annual household income is...

by percentage of respondents



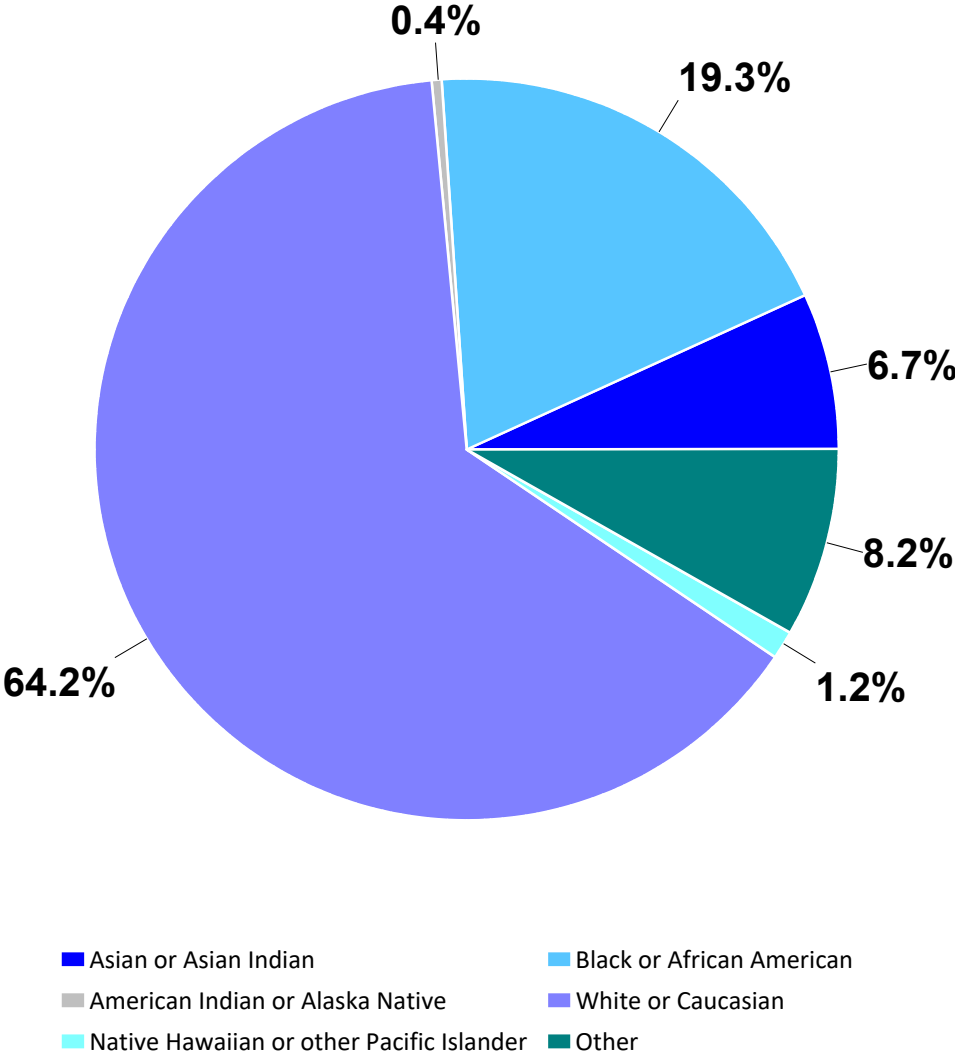
Q10. Demographics: Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino Ancestry?

by percentage of respondents (excluding not provided)



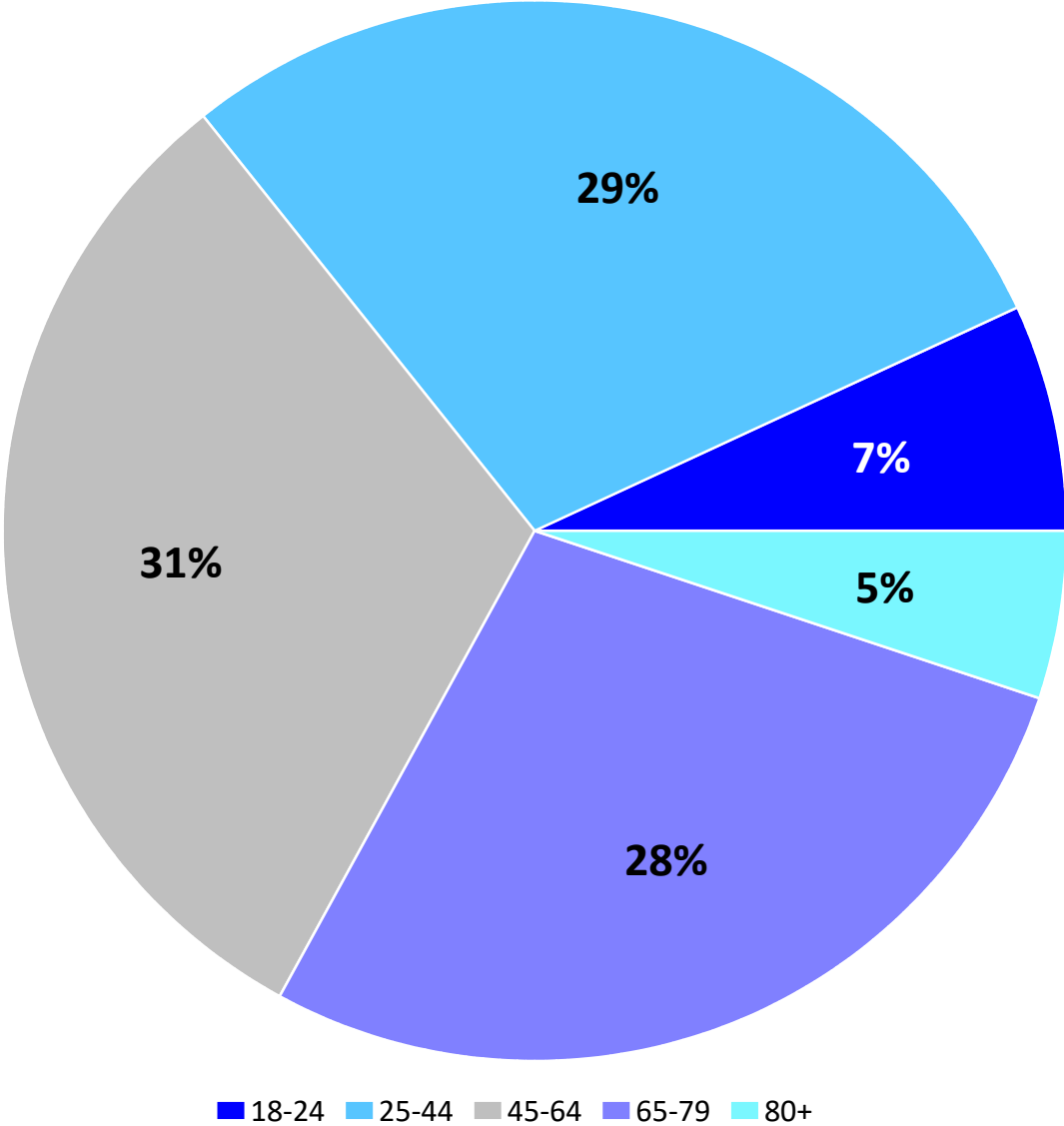
Q11. Demographics: Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity?

by percentage of respondents



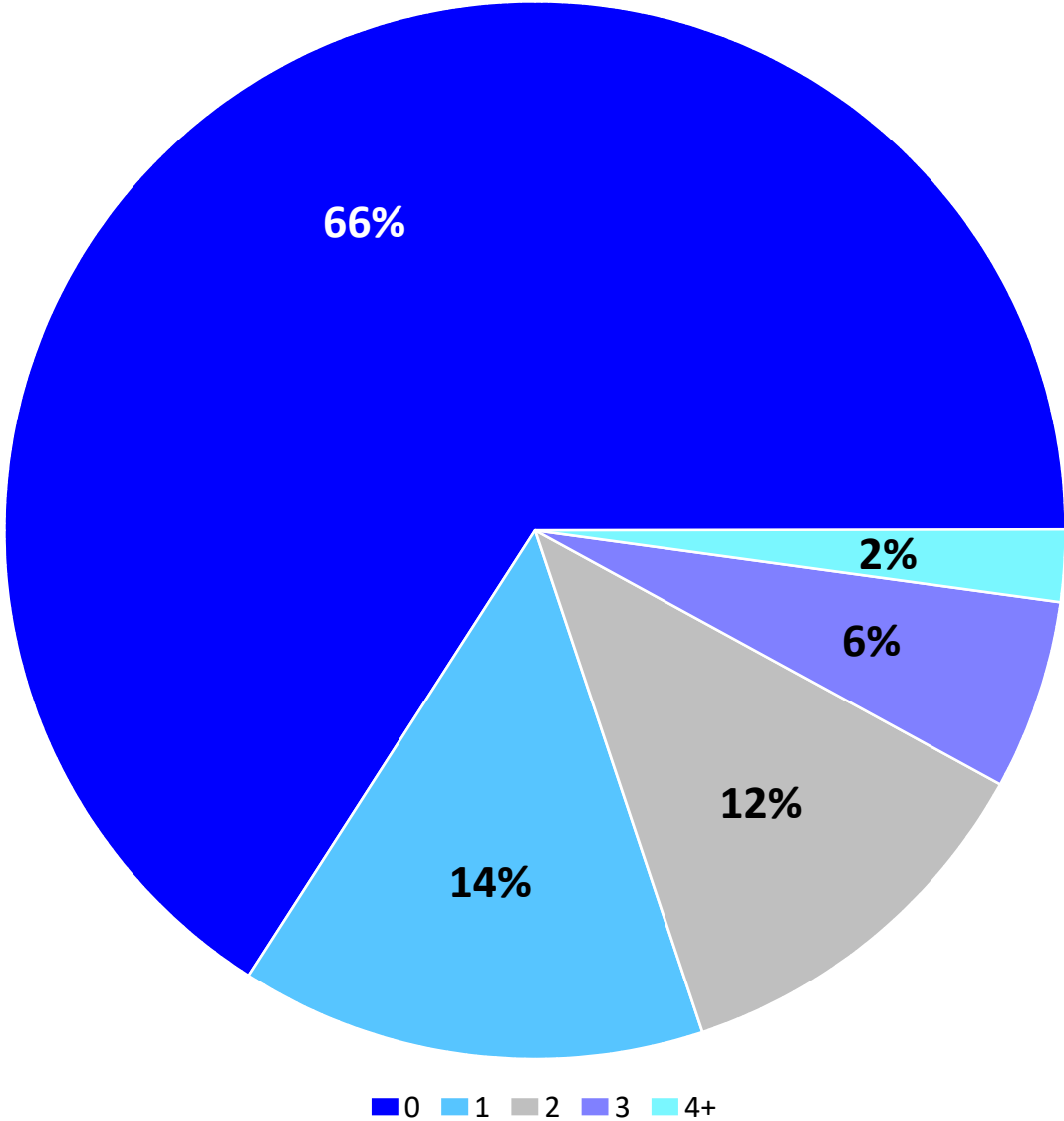
Q12. Demographics: What is your age?

by percentage of respondents (excluding not provided)



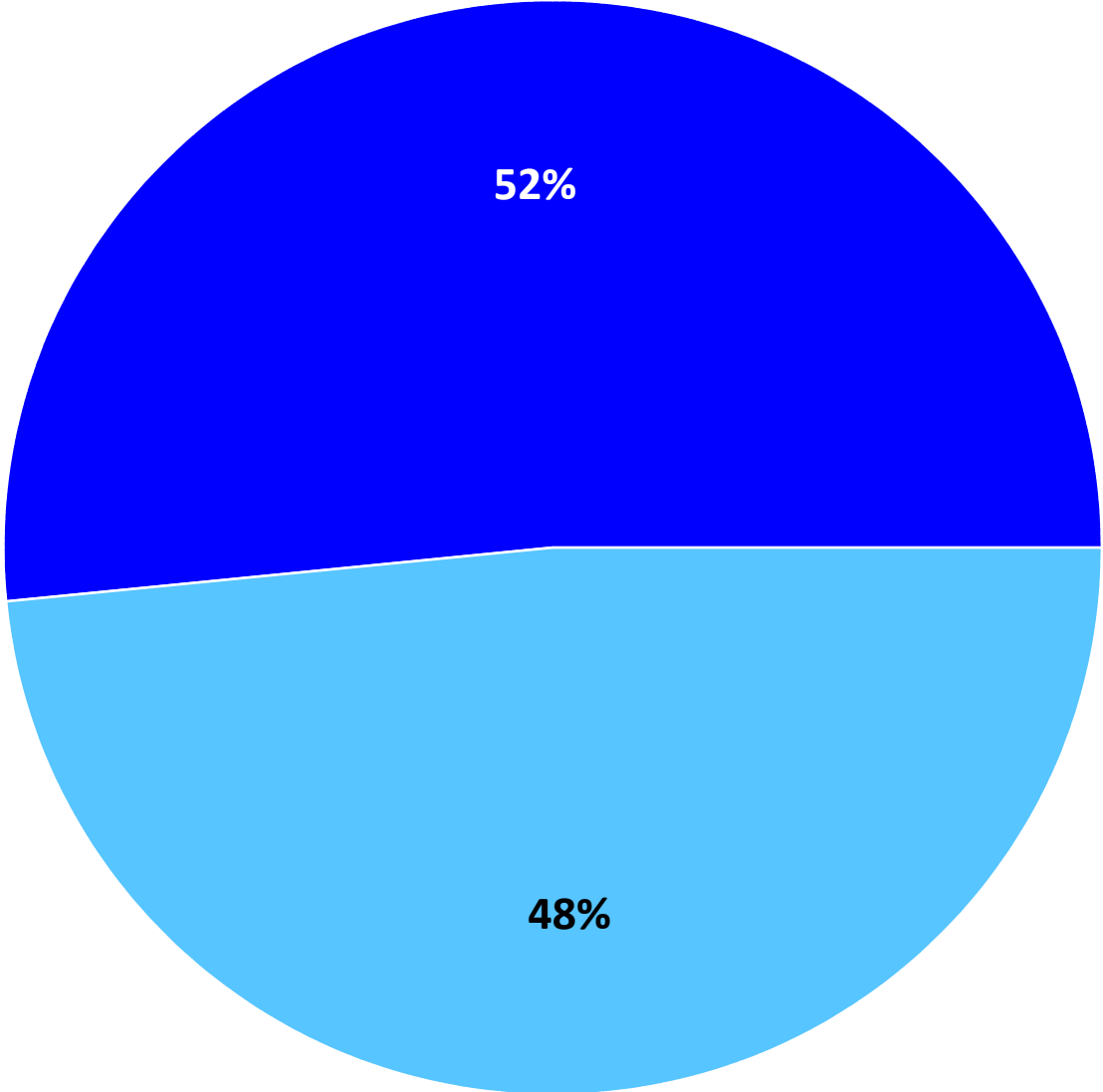
Q13. Demographics: How many people in your household are under the age of 18?

by percentage of respondents (excluding not provided)



Q14. Demographics: Gender

by percentage of respondents (excluding not provided)



■ Male ■ Female

*0.8% of respondents selected
"I prefer to self identify"*



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Tabular Data

Q1. Please indicate how supportive you would be of the following:

(N=507)

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Neutral	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't know
Q1-1. City of Virginia Beach funding an additional (approximately) \$200-\$300 million for repair & maintenance needs & expansion opportunities for Virginia Aquarium	35.7%	26.8%	11.6%	10.7%	11.6%	3.6%
Q1-2. A private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial & programming responsibility for operations of Virginia Aquarium	22.9%	27.2%	16.0%	13.0%	13.2%	7.7%
Q1-3. A private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial & programming responsibility for both operations & ownership of Virginia Aquarium	21.5%	17.0%	18.1%	17.2%	19.1%	7.1%

WITHOUT DON'T KNOW

Q1. Please indicate how supportive you would be of the following: (without "don't know")

(N=507)

	Very supportive	Somewhat supportive	Neutral	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose
Q1-1. City of Virginia Beach funding an additional (approximately) \$200-\$300 million for repair & maintenance needs & expansion opportunities for Virginia Aquarium	37.0%	27.8%	12.1%	11.0%	12.1%
Q1-2. A private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial & programming responsibility for operations of Virginia Aquarium	24.8%	29.5%	17.3%	14.1%	14.3%
Q1-3. A private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial & programming responsibility for both operations & ownership of Virginia Aquarium	23.1%	18.3%	19.5%	18.5%	20.6%

Q2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

(N=507)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Q2-1. Virginia Aquarium provides important educational programs	57.2%	30.0%	7.3%	1.4%	0.8%	3.4%
Q2-2. Virginia Aquarium's stranding response program for sick & injured animals is important	62.5%	25.4%	6.7%	1.0%	0.6%	3.7%
Q2-3. Virginia Aquarium is an important tourism driver for City of Virginia Beach	54.2%	26.6%	9.7%	4.1%	1.6%	3.7%

WITHOUT DON'T KNOW

Q2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: (without "don't know")

(N=507)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q2-1. Virginia Aquarium provides important educational programs	59.2%	31.0%	7.6%	1.4%	0.8%
Q2-2. Virginia Aquarium's stranding response program for sick & injured animals is important	65.0%	26.4%	7.0%	1.0%	0.6%
Q2-3. Virginia Aquarium is an important tourism driver for City of Virginia Beach	56.4%	27.7%	10.0%	4.3%	1.6%

Q3. Have you or a member of your household ever visited the Virginia Aquarium?

Q3. Have you or a member of your household ever visited Virginia Aquarium	Number	Percent
Yes	476	93.9 %
No	31	6.1 %
Total	507	100.0 %

Q4. In the past year, how often did you or a member of your household visit the Virginia Aquarium:

Q4. How often did your household visit Virginia Aquarium in past year	Number	Percent
Once a week	3	0.6 %
Once a month	17	3.4 %
3-4 times per year	88	17.4 %
Once a year	216	42.6 %
Never	166	32.7 %
Don't know	17	3.4 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT DON'T KNOW

Q4. In the past year, how often did you or a member of your household visit the Virginia Aquarium: (without "don't know")

Q4. How often did your household visit Virginia Aquarium in past year	Number	Percent
Once a week	3	0.6 %
Once a month	17	3.5 %
3-4 times per year	88	18.0 %
Once a year	216	44.1 %
Never	166	33.9 %
Total	490	100.0 %

Q5. Are you a member of the Virginia Aquarium?

<u>Q5. Are you a member of Virginia Aquarium</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	48	9.5 %
No	459	90.5 %
Total	507	100.0 %

Q6. If you had \$100, how would you spend it across the infrastructure projects below?

	<u>Mean</u>
Virginia Aquarium infrastructure	13.73
Stormwater/flooding	18.76
Streets & roads	20.73
Sports tourism infrastructure	3.64
School buildings	16.83
Resort area parking & restrooms	5.06
Public safety facilities	7.98
Public parks & recreation centers	10.46
Other	2.81

Q7. About how long have you lived in Virginia Beach?

Q7. How long have you lived in Virginia Beach	Number	Percent
0-5	58	11.4 %
6-10	33	6.5 %
11-15	40	7.9 %
16-20	48	9.5 %
21-30	104	20.5 %
31+	212	41.8 %
Not provided	12	2.4 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT NOT PROVIDED

Q7. About how long have you lived in Virginia Beach? (without "not provided")

Q7. How long have you lived in Virginia Beach	Number	Percent
0-5	58	11.7 %
6-10	33	6.7 %
11-15	40	8.1 %
16-20	48	9.7 %
21-30	104	21.0 %
31+	212	42.8 %
Total	495	100.0 %

Q8. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

<u>Q8. Highest level of education you have completed</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than high school graduate	22	4.3 %
High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	151	29.8 %
Special/technical training (not college)	33	6.5 %
Some college (no degree)	46	9.1 %
Associate's degree	35	6.9 %
Bachelor's degree	107	21.1 %
Graduate/professional degree (Master's, PhD, Juris Doctor, etc.)	82	16.2 %
Not provided	31	6.1 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT NOT PROVIDED

Q8. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (without "not provided")

<u>Q8. Highest level of education you have completed</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than high school graduate	22	4.6 %
High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	151	31.7 %
Special/technical training (not college)	33	6.9 %
Some college (no degree)	46	9.7 %
Associate's degree	35	7.4 %
Bachelor's degree	107	22.5 %
Graduate/professional degree (Master's, PhD, Juris Doctor, etc.)	82	17.2 %
Total	476	100.0 %

Q9. Would you say your total annual household income is...

<u>Q9. Your total annual household income</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than \$30K	54	10.7 %
\$30K to \$59,999	87	17.2 %
\$60K to \$99,999	123	24.3 %
\$100K to \$149,999	117	23.1 %
\$150K+	88	17.4 %
Not provided	38	7.5 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT NOT PROVIDED

Q9. Would you say your total annual household income is... (without "not provided")

<u>Q9. Your total annual household income</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than \$30K	54	11.5 %
\$30K to \$59,999	87	18.6 %
\$60K to \$99,999	123	26.2 %
\$100K to \$149,999	117	24.9 %
\$150K+	88	18.8 %
Total	469	100.0 %

Q10. Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino ancestry?

<u>Q10. Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino/a/x ancestry</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	48	9.5 %
No	456	89.9 %
Not provided	3	0.6 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT NOT PROVIDED

Q10. Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino ancestry? (without "not provided")

<u>Q10. Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino/a/x ancestry</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Yes	48	9.5 %
No	456	90.5 %
Total	504	100.0 %

Q11. Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity?

<u>Q11. Your race/ethnicity</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Asian or Asian Indian	33	6.5 %
Black or African American	95	18.7 %
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	0.4 %
White or Caucasian	315	62.1 %
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	6	1.2 %
Other	40	7.9 %
Total	491	

Q11-6. Self-describe your race/ethnicity:

<u>Q11-6. Self-describe your race/ethnicity</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Hispanic	26	65.0 %
Latino	7	17.5 %
Mixed	2	5.0 %
Swedish	1	2.5 %
Latin	1	2.5 %
Mexican	1	2.5 %
European	1	2.5 %
Multiple	1	2.5 %
Total	40	100.0 %

Q12. What is your age?

Q12. Your age	Number	Percent
18-24 years	34	6.7 %
25-44 years	145	28.6 %
45-64 years	158	31.2 %
65-79 years	140	27.6 %
80+ years	25	4.9 %
Not provided	5	1.0 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT NOT PROVIDED

Q12. What is your age? (without "not provided")

Q12. Your age	Number	Percent
18-24 years	34	6.8 %
25-44 years	145	28.9 %
45-64 years	158	31.5 %
65-79 years	140	27.9 %
80+ years	25	5.0 %
Total	502	100.0 %

Q13. How many people in your household are under age 18?

Q13. How many people in your household are under age 18	Number	Percent
0	317	62.5 %
1	67	13.2 %
2	58	11.4 %
3	28	5.5 %
4+	10	2.0 %
Not provided	27	5.3 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT NOT PROVIDED

Q13. How many people in your household are under age 18? (without "not provided")

Q13. How many people in your household are under age 18	Number	Percent
0	317	66.0 %
1	67	14.0 %
2	58	12.1 %
3	28	5.8 %
4+	10	2.1 %
Total	480	100.0 %

Q14. What is your gender?

Q14. Your gender	Number	Percent
Male	255	50.3 %
Female	240	47.3 %
Prefer to self-describe	4	0.8 %
Not provided	8	1.6 %
Total	507	100.0 %

WITHOUT NOT PROVIDED

Q14. What is your gender? (without "not provided")

Q14. Your gender	Number	Percent
Male	255	51.1 %
Female	240	48.1 %
Prefer to self-describe	4	0.8 %
Total	499	100.0 %

Q14-3. Self-describe your gender:

Q14-3. Self-describe your gender	Number	Percent
Non-Binary	2	50.0 %
Transmale	1	25.0 %
Gender fluid	1	25.0 %
Total	4	100.0 %



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Survey Instrument



2023 Virginia Aquarium Funding and Ownership Model Resident Survey

Your input is an important part of the City's evaluation of how best to meet the needs of the Virginia Aquarium while considering the many other City needs and services. As explained in the cover letter, the Virginia Aquarium is currently a partnership between the City of Virginia Beach municipal government and the private, non-profit Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation. Please have an adult (age 18 or older) take a few minutes to fill out this survey. You may send the completed survey back in the postage-paid envelope or complete the survey online at VABeachSurvey.org. Thank you for your time!

1. Please indicate how supportive you would be of the following:		Very Supportive	Somewhat Supportive	Neutral	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know
1.	The City of Virginia Beach funding an additional (approximately) \$200-\$300 million for repair and maintenance needs and expansion opportunities for the Virginia Aquarium.	5	4	3	2	1	9
2.	A private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial and programming responsibility for the operations of the Virginia Aquarium.	5	4	3	2	1	9
3.	A private nonprofit or corporation taking over financial and programming responsibility for both the operations and ownership of the Virginia Aquarium.	5	4	3	2	1	9

2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
1.	The Virginia Aquarium provides important educational programs.	5	4	3	2	1	9
2.	The Virginia Aquarium's stranding response program for sick and injured animals is important.	5	4	3	2	1	9
3.	The Virginia Aquarium is an important tourism driver for the City of Virginia Beach.	5	4	3	2	1	9

3. Have you or a member of your household ever visited the Virginia Aquarium?

___(1) Yes ___(2) No

4. In the past year, how often did you or a member of your household visit the Virginia Aquarium:

___(1) Once a week ___(3) 3-4 times per year ___(5) Never
 ___(2) Once a month ___(4) Once a year ___(9) Don't know

5. Are you a member of the Virginia Aquarium? ___(1) Yes ___(2) No

6. If you had \$100, how would you spend it across the infrastructure projects below? [Total cannot be more than \$100.]

- \$ _____ Virginia Aquarium infrastructure
- \$ _____ Stormwater/flooding
- \$ _____ Streets and roads
- \$ _____ Sports tourism infrastructure
- \$ _____ School buildings
- \$ _____ Resort area parking and restrooms
- \$ _____ Public safety facilities
- \$ _____ Public parks and recreation centers
- \$ _____ Other (please specify): _____

\$100 TOTAL

Our last questions are about you and your household. We ask these questions to ensure we reach all demographics in Virginia Beach and to see if ratings differ across groups. Your responses to this survey are completely confidential and will be reported in group form only.

7. **About how long have you lived in Virginia Beach?** *[Put "0" if eleven months or less.]* _____ years

8. **What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- ____(1) Less than high school graduate ____ (5) Associate's degree
____(2) High school diploma or equivalent (GED) ____ (6) Bachelor's degree
____(3) Special/Technical training (not college) ____ (7) Graduate/Professional degree (Master's, PhD, Juris Doctor, etc.)
____(4) Some college (no degree)

9. **Would you say your total annual household income is...**

- ____(01) Less than \$30,000 ____ (03) \$60,000 to \$99,999 ____ (05) \$150,000 or more
____(02) \$30,000 to \$59,999 ____ (04) \$100,000 to \$149,999

10. **Are you of Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino ancestry?** ____ (1) Yes ____ (2) No

11. **Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity?** *[Check all that apply.]*

- ____(01) Asian or Asian Indian ____ (04) White or Caucasian
____(02) Black or African American ____ (05) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
____(03) American Indian or Alaska Native ____ (99) Other: _____

12. **What is your age?**

- ____(1) 18-24 years ____ (2) 25-44 years ____ (3) 45-64 years ____ (4) 65-79 years ____ (5) 80+ years

13. **How many people in your household are under age 18?** _____ people

14. **What is your gender?** ____ (1) Male ____ (2) Female ____ (3) Prefer to self-describe: _____

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time!

Please return your survey in the postage-paid envelope addressed to:
ETC Institute, 725 W. Frontier Circle, Olathe, KS 66061

Your responses will remain completely confidential. The information shown to the right will ONLY be used to help ensure the survey results are statistically representative of residents in the area. Thank you.