



Town of
Southbury
Connecticut



2023 TOWN OF SOUTHBURY COMMUNITY TOWN POOL ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

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Prepared for:

The Town of Southbury

Prepared by:

The Center for Research & Public Policy, Inc.



STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND OWNERSHIP

All of the analyses, findings and recommendations contained within this report are the exclusive property of the Town of Southbury.

As required by the Code of Ethics of the National Council on Public Polls and the United States Privacy Act of 1974, The Center for Research and Public Policy maintains the anonymity of respondents to surveys the firm conducts. No information will be released that might, in any way, reveal the identity of the respondent.

Moreover, no information regarding these findings will be released without the written consent of an authorized representative of the Town of Southbury.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Center for Research & Public Policy (CRPP) is pleased to present the results to a 2023 Southbury, Connecticut Community Online Survey regarding the future of the town pool at Ballantine Park. The survey was conducted to collect Southbury property taxpayer and renter input regarding potential options and upgrades for the town pool.

The online research study included 996 completed online and hardcopy survey responses from Southbury, Connecticut adult property taxpayers and renters.

The survey was conducted January 10th – 26th, 2023.

The survey included the following areas for investigation:

- History with and awareness of the town pool;
- Awareness of potential pool options for upgrades;
- General support or opposition for upgrading the town pool;
- Importance of several pool features;
- Support or opposition of pool upgrades with tax implications in mind; and
- Purchase of Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club as an option.

Section 2 of this report discusses the Methodology used in the study, while Section 3 includes Highlights derived from an analysis of the quantitative research. Section 4 is a Summary of Findings from the survey. Section 5 is an Appendix to the report containing the composite aggregate data, cross tabulations and the survey instrument employed.

METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative research design, CRPP received 996 completed survey responses among Southbury adult property taxpayers and renters. There were 980 online surveys submitted and 16 hard copies received and entered manually.

Survey input was provided by the Town of Southbury. This survey varied slightly from the phone survey conducted at the same time due to the inclusion of renters in the survey.

Survey design is a careful, deliberative process to ensure fair, objective and balanced surveys. Staff members, with years of survey design experience, edit out any bias. Further, all scales used by CRPP (either numeric, such as one through ten, or wording such as strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree) are balanced evenly. Additionally, placement of questions is carefully accomplished so that order has minimal impact.

All facets of the study were completed and managed by CRPP's senior staff and researchers. These aspects included: survey design, sample plan design, pretest, computer programming, fielding, coding, editing, verification, validation and logic checks, computer analysis, analysis, and report writing.

Southbury leadership handled the logistics of announcing the commencement of the survey through town meetings, press releases, community involvement (by way of online social networks and in-person conversations) and contacting town partners to encourage participation.

The survey was accessible via a website link that was located on the Town of Southbury website and circulated through press coverage, community forums and social media networks. Hardcopies were also made available at the Southbury Public Library (100 Poverty Road), the Tax Office (501 Main St S #204) and the Southbury Community Center (561 Main St S).

Results throughout this report are presented for composite results – all 996 cases.

Cross tabulations of data were developed and are included with this report.

Readers of this report should note that any survey is analogous to a snapshot in time and results are only reflective of the time in which the survey was undertaken. Should concerted public relations or information campaigns be undertaken during or shortly after the fielding of the survey, the results contained herein may be expected to change and should be, therefore, carefully interpreted and extrapolated.

Each qualified taxpayer or renter who lives in Southbury had an equal chance for participating in the study. Statistical random error, however, can never be eliminated but may be significantly reduced by increasing sample size.

HIGHLIGHTS

ON AWARENESS OF AND HISTORY WITH THE TOWN POOL

There exists a strong awareness of the town pool at Ballantine Park with a majority of respondents, 88.9%, indicating they were either very or somewhat aware of the pool and its features and facilities.

Over one-half of respondents, 56.4%, reported to use the pool anywhere between very frequently or very lightly while two-fifths, 42.9% reported they are not pool users.

Of respondents that use the town pool, over one-half, 52.8%, indicated the pool meets the expectations at least always or most of the time.

There is a strong sense of advocacy for the pool with almost four-fifths of respondents, 79.5% stating they would strongly or somewhat agree with the statement: “I am an advocate of the town pool and am talking positively about it within my community.”

A good majority of respondents, 85.8%, felt that it was very or somewhat important that their community has a town pool available for its residents.

Just about two-fifths of respondents, 39.8%, indicated they had access to a private pool.

ON AWARENESS OF POTENTIAL POOL OPTIONS

Just over three-quarters of respondents, 77.3%, were very or somewhat aware of the Town of Southbury’s options for pool updates and renovations. Few, 12.4% were not at all aware of the options.

ON GENERAL SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

Prior to receiving any specific plans or tax implications regarding upgrades to the town pool to respondents, about four-fifths of respondents, 79.8%, suggested they would definitely or probably support the upgrades.

ON IMPORTANCE OF POOL FEATURES

Respondents were presented with several possible features and upgrades to the town pool and were asked to rate them from 1 to 10 where 1 is very important and 10 is not at all important.

Features and upgrades with a higher importance rating (1-4 rating) included:

- Bring facility up to ADA compliance and add additional ADA lift and ADA kiddie pool ramp – **74.9%**
- New pool deck – **62.8%**
- Pool heating element – **61.5%**
- Splash Pad – which typically sprays water and has kids features – **56.2%**
- Zero entry into pool – no stairs, just a gradual beach-like walk-in – **55.1%**

Features and upgrades with a lower importance rating (1-4 rating) included:

- New six-lane pool – **45.2%**
- Snack bar – including a full commercial kitchen – **44.3%**
- Updated exterior finishes – such as soffits and fascia – **44.1%**
- New eight-lane pool – **30.5%**
- Spectator amphitheater seating – for watching pool and swim meets – **29.5%**

ON SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION TO TAX IMPLICATIONS

When presented with three options for pool renovations and upgrades and their associated tax implications (based on the type of home they indicated they pay taxes on), support for the packages were:

Condo taxpayers:

- Package One (\$10.00 avg. tax increase annually): **84.6%** definitely or probably support
- Package Two (\$12.00 avg. tax increase annually): **80.8%** definitely or probably support
- Package Three (\$16.00 avg. tax increase annually): **60.8%** definitely or probably support

Single-family home taxpayers (or both condo and single-family home taxpayers):

- Package One (\$27.00 avg. tax increase annually): **85.3%** definitely or probably support
- Package Two (\$31.00 avg. tax increase annually): **78.5%** definitely or probably support
- Package Three (\$42.00 avg. tax increase annually): **62.0%** definitely or probably support

Renters (Non-taxpayers):

- Package One (\$20.00 avg. tax increase annually): **78.9%** definitely or probably support
- Package Two (\$23.00 avg. tax increase annually): **78.9%** definitely or probably support
- Package Three (\$30.00 avg. tax increase annually): **76.3%** definitely or probably support

ON EDGEWOOD BATH AND TENNIS CLUB

Knowing Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club was currently not on the market, support for purchasing the facility instead of town pool upgrades and renovations was generally low:

Condo taxpayers:

- Edgewood purchase (\$8.00 avg. tax increase annually): **20.4%** definitely or probably support

Single-family home taxpayers (or both condo and single-family home taxpayers):

- Edgewood purchase (\$21.00 avg. tax increase annually): **35.8%** definitely or probably support

Renters (Non-taxpayers):

- Edgewood purchase (\$16.00 avg. tax increase annually): **21.1%** definitely or probably support

4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Readers are reminded that the narrative throughout this report refers to composite aggregate data – **996 respondents**. Text, tables and graphs throughout this report present these composite results.

Prior to providing any responses, respondents were notified the survey would focus on the Southbury Town Pool in Ballantine Park located on Old Field Road.

RESPONDENT TAXPAYERS AND HOUSING

Respondents were asked a few questions to help distinguish that they were either a property tax payer or a renter; and, if they were a property taxpayer, which type of house they currently pay taxes on. These questions were used to later provide the respondent with a more accurate tax implication associated with specific pool upgrades.

TAXPAYER STATUS	PERCENT YES	PERCENT NO	PERCENT Unsure
I pay property taxes to the town of Southbury.	96.2	3.6	0.2
I rent in Southbury, and do not pay property taxes to the Town of Southbury.	4.5	95.3	0.2

Respondents that indicated they pay property taxes to the town of Southbury were asked, using their best guess, which best described the house they currently pay property taxes on in Southbury: a multi-family structure such as a duplex, condo and townhome **or** a single-family home.

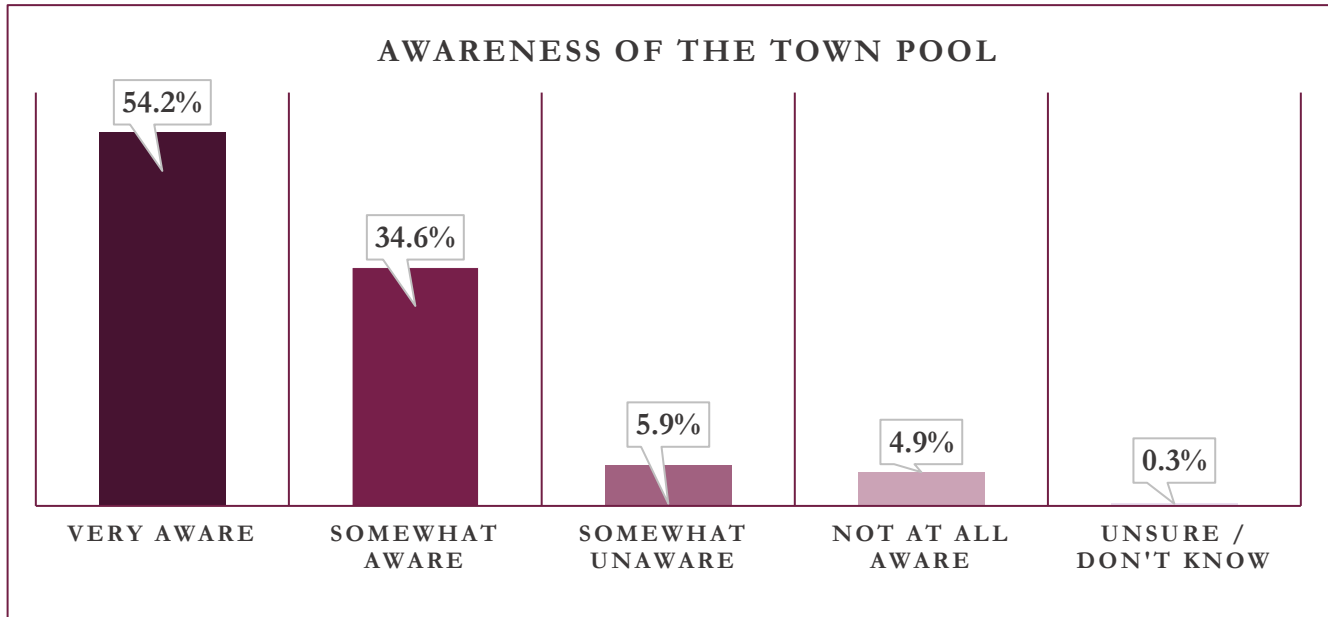
TYPE OF HOUSING	PERCENT
Condo, duplex, townhouse	19.0
Single-family home	79.6
Both a condo, duplex, townhouse and a single-family home	1.4

HISTORY: AWARENESS AND USE

Respondents were reminded that in the survey, the interviewer would be referring to the Southbury Town Pool at Ballantine Park specifically as the “town pool”.

Respondents were asked, overall, how aware they were of the town pool and its features and facilities. A strong majority, 88.9%, indicated they were very (54.2%) or somewhat (34.6%) aware of the pool.

Results are displayed in the chart below.



Respondents were asked to describe the level to which they, or members of their family/household, used the town pool in an average, non-pandemic year. Over one-half of respondents, 56.4%, reported using the pool (anywhere between very frequently and very lightly), while over two-fifths of respondents, 42.9%, reported they are not users.

Results are displayed in the table below.

FREQUENCY OF TOWN POOL USE	PERCENT
Very frequent users	6.9
Frequent users	10.4
Moderate users	14.9
Light users	11.0
Very light users	13.2
You and household members are not users	42.9
Unsure/Don't know	0.7

Respondents that indicated they were very frequent, frequent, moderate, light or very light users of the town pool were asked how often the pool meets their expectations. Over one-half of respondents, 52.8%, of users suggested the town pool met expectations always (13.2%) or most of the time (39.7%).

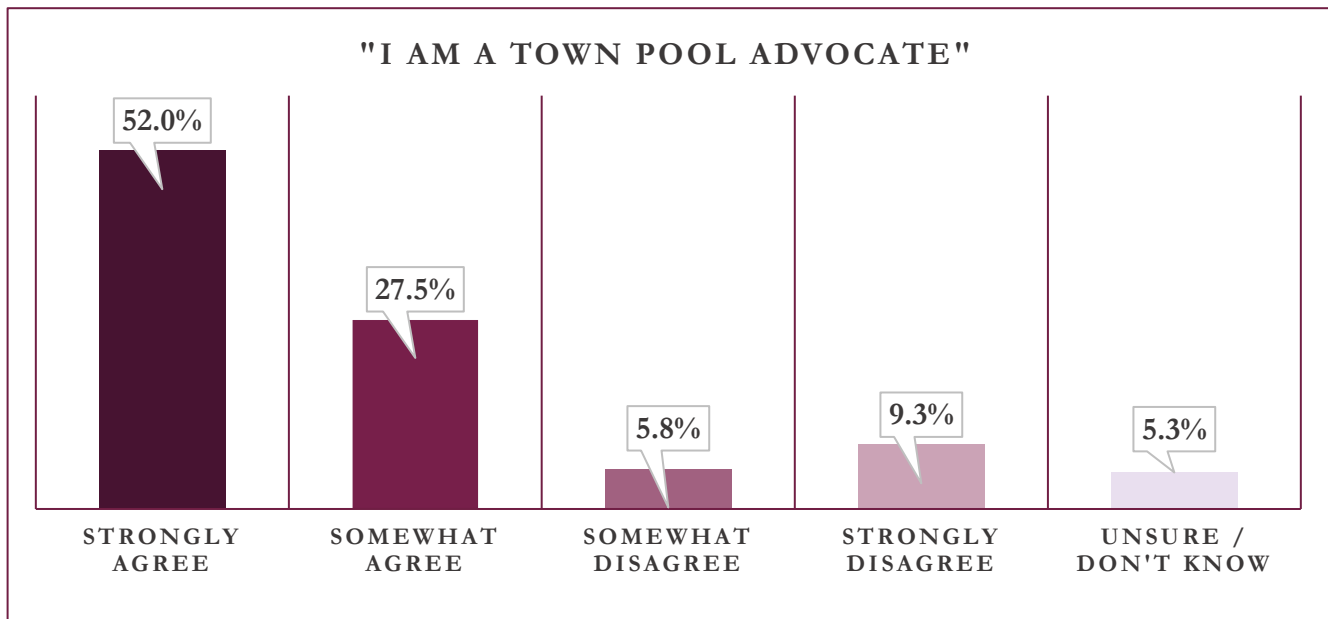
Results are displayed in the table below.

THE TOWN POOL MEETS EXPECTATIONS...	PERCENT (N=562)
Always	13.2
Most of the time	39.7
Sometimes	26.9
Seldom	11.7
Never	4.6
Unsure	3.9

Regardless of frequency of town pool use, respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: **“I am an advocate of the town pool and am talking positively about it within my community.”**

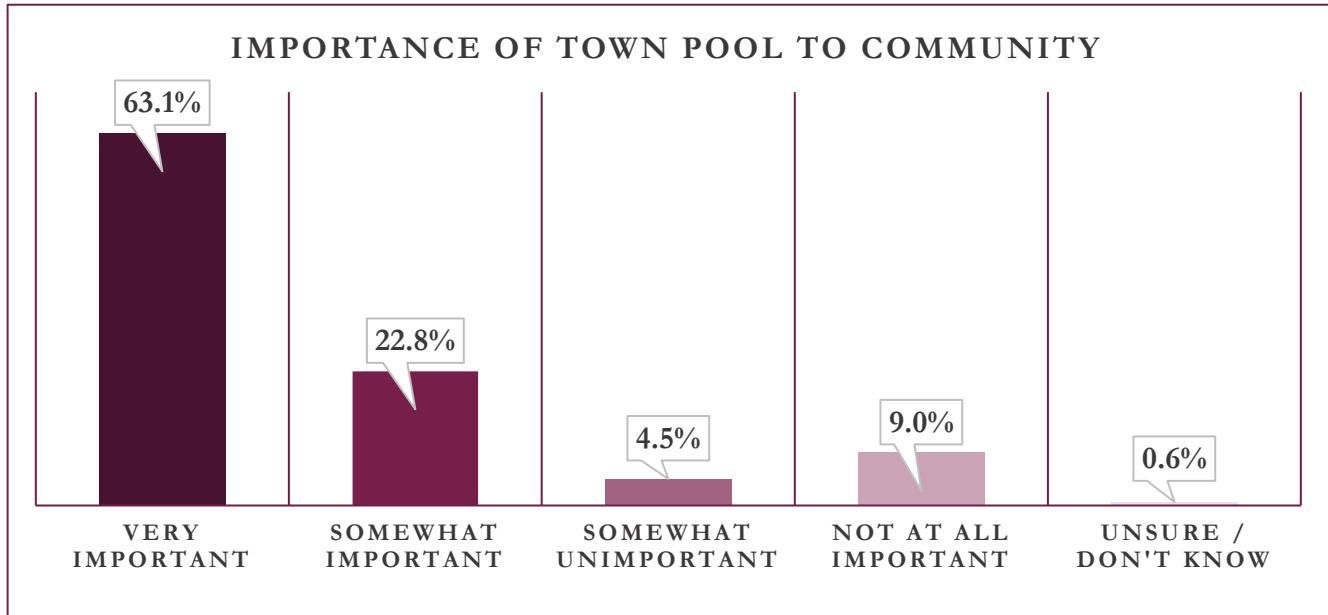
Almost four-fifths of respondents, 79.5%, indicated they strongly (52.0%) or somewhat agree (27.5%) with the statement.

Results are displayed in the following chart.



In response to how important it is to the respondent, and members of their household, that their community has a town pool available for its residents, over four-fifths of respondents, 85.8%, indicated that the availability of a pool is very (63.1%) or somewhat important (22.8%).

Results are displayed in the chart below.



In addition, respondents were asked if they, or members of their household, have access to a private pool such as a household pool or condo complex pool. About two-fifths of respondents, 39.8%, indicated they have access to a private pool.

Results are displayed in the following table.

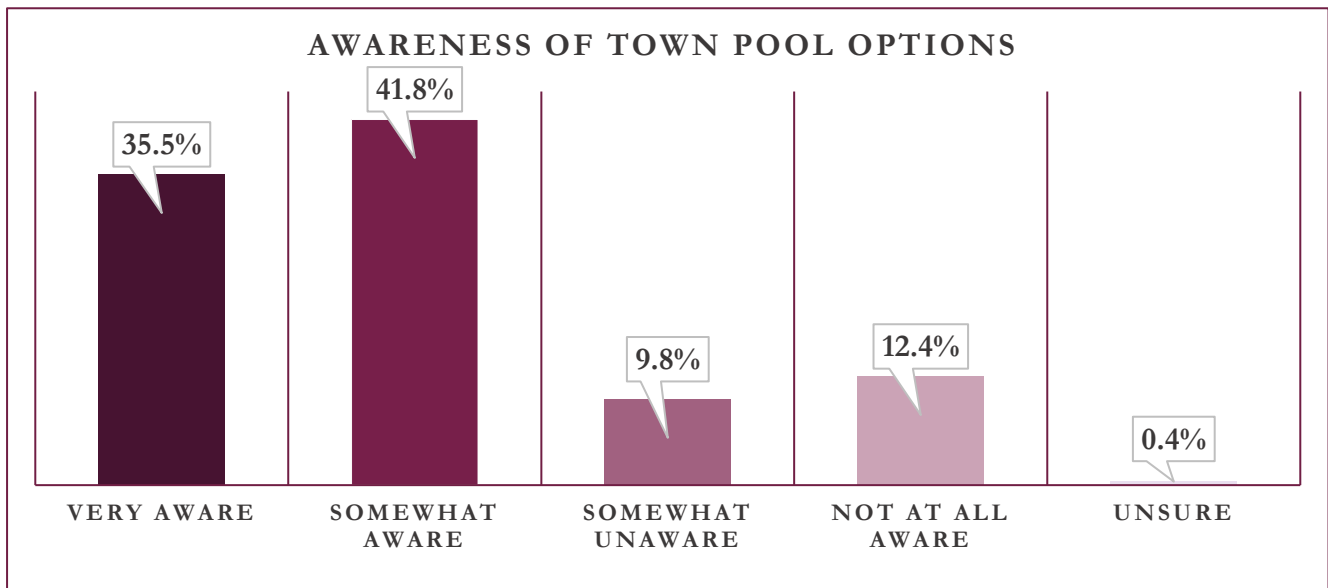
ACCESS TO PRIVATE POOL?	PERCENT
Yes	39.8
No	60.1
Unsure	0.1

AWARENESS OF POOL OPTIONS

It was explained to respondents that the Town of Southbury has been exploring renovation and update options for the current town pool and the impact to the budget and taxpayers.

They were then asked how aware they currently were of the town’s options for renovations and updates to the current town pool. Over three-quarters of respondents, 77.3%, were very (35.5%) or somewhat aware (41.8%), while over one-fifth, 22.2%, stated that were somewhat unaware (9.8%) or not at all aware (12.4%) of the options.

Results are displayed in the following chart.



GENERAL SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

Without, yet, providing the respondents with the amount of money needed to complete one of the three proposed pool renovations and updates, they were asked how likely they were to support or oppose upgrades, in general, knowing there would be some impact on property taxes.

About four-fifths of respondents, 79.8%, suggested they would definitely support (44.6%) or probably support (35.2%) the upgrades without yet knowing the tax implications.

Results are displayed in the following table.

GENERAL SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION OF UPGRADES	PERCENT
Definitely support	44.6
Probably support	35.2
Probably oppose	6.7
Definitely oppose	8.4
Unsure	5.0

POOL FEATURES

Respondents were asked, regardless of how strongly they generally supported or opposed renovations to the current town pool, how important they felt several upgraded features may be for their community on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is very important and 10 is not at all important.

Results are displayed in the table below in declining order of importance (1-4 rating).

IMPORTANCE OF POOL UPGRADE FEATURES	PERCENT 1-4 (IMPORTANT)	PERCENT 5-6 (NEUTRAL)	PERCENT 7-10 (NOT IMPORTANT)	PERCENT UNSURE
Bring facility up to ADA compliance and add additional ADA lift and ADA kiddie pool ramp	74.9	10.3	12.8	1.9
New pool deck	62.8	15.7	16.0	5.4
Pool heating element – which would extend the pool season to May through September and weekends	61.5	14.0	22.6	1.8
Splash Pad – which typically sprays water and has kid’s features	56.2	17.6	24.2	1.9
Zero entry into pool – no stairs, just a gradual beach-like walk-in	55.1	18.0	24.0	2.9
New six-lane pool	45.2	21.4	27.8	5.5
Snack bar – including a full commercial kitchen	44.3	16.2	36.7	2.7
Updated exterior finishes – such as soffits and fascia	44.1	22.2	27.6	6.1
New eight-lane pool	30.5	18.7	44.3	6.4
Spectator amphitheater seating – for watching pool and swim meets	29.5	19.7	47.0	3.7

CONDO TAX IMPLICATIONS: SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

The survey presented those that indicated they pay taxes on a condo, duplex, or townhouse with three different tiers of pool upgrades and their associated tax implications. Respondents were told their household's share of the cost was put in terms of an average **condo or townhouse** valued at **\$90,000.00**. It was suggested that their share of the cost may be more or less depending on the value of their home.

The **first** town pool upgrade package includes bringing the facility, lift and kiddie-pool ramp to ADA compliance, new six lane pool, new pool deck, minor exterior updates, and chemical storage room ventilation and containment. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$10.00 annually** in taxes.

The **second** town pool upgrade package includes everything mentioned previously as well as a snack bar, pool heating, zero entry into pool (meaning no stairs, just a gradual beach-like walk-in), new equipment and chemical storage enclosure, removal of the kiddie pool, and interior building updates. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$12.00 annually** in taxes.

The **third** and last town pool upgrade package includes everything mentioned previously as well as additional interior finishes, a new eight-lane pool, a splash pad, and spectator amphitheater seating. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$16.00 annually** in taxes.

Support or opposition for each tier of packaged upgrades is displayed in the table below.

CONDO TAXPAYERS (N=181)	PACKAGE ONE: AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$10.00 ANNUALLY		PACKAGE TWO: AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$12.00 ANNUALLY		PACKAGE THREE: AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$16.00 ANNUALLY	
	Percent	Percent total support or opposition	Percent	Percent total support or opposition	Percent	Percent total support or opposition
Definitely support	63.2	84.6	49.5	80.8	36.5	60.8
Probably support	21.4		31.3		24.3	
Probably oppose	2.7	10.4	3.8	15.9	13.8	34.2
Definitely oppose	7.7		12.1		20.4	
Unsure	4.9		3.3		5.0	

Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club

Additionally, condo taxpayers were told that Southbury, in the past, has had the opportunity to purchase the Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club, a swimming and tennis facility located nearby in Middlebury, CT.

While Edgewood is currently not on the market, respondents were asked, if it were available, how strongly they would support or oppose purchasing the Edgewood facilities **instead** of renovating the existing town pool with an average property tax increase of about **\$8.00 dollars** annually?

Support or opposition for purchasing Edgewood is displayed in the table below.

CONDO TAXPAYERS (N=181)	<u>EDGEWOOD PURCHASE: AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$8.00 ANNUALLY</u>	
	Percent	Percent total support or opposition
Definitely support	11.6	20.4
Probably support	8.8	
Probably oppose	21.0	70.7
Definitely oppose	49.7	
Unsure	8.8	

SINGLE HOUSEHOLD TAX IMPLICATIONS: SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

The survey presented those that indicated they pay taxes on a single-family household (or both a condo, duplex, townhouse **and** a single-family home) with three different tiers of pool upgrades and their associated tax implications. Respondents were told their household’s share of the cost was put in terms of an average **single-family household** valued at **\$234,000.00**. It was suggested that their share of the cost may be more or less depending on the value of their home.

The **first** town pool upgrade package includes bringing the facility, lift and kiddie-pool ramp to ADA compliance, new six lane pool, new pool deck, minor exterior updates, and chemical storage room ventilation and containment. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$27.00 annually** in taxes.

The **second** town pool upgrade package includes everything mentioned previously as well as a snack bar, pool heating, zero entry into pool (meaning no stairs, just a gradual beach-like walk-in), new equipment and chemical storage enclosure, removal of the kiddie pool, and interior building updates. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$31.00 annually** in taxes.

The **third** and last town pool upgrade package includes everything mentioned previously as well as additional interior finishes, a new eight-lane pool, a splash pad, and spectator amphitheater seating. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$42.00 annually** in taxes.

Support or opposition for each tier of packaged upgrades is displayed in the table below.

SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSEHOLD TAXPAYERS (N=776)	AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$27.00 ANNUALLY		AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$31.00 ANNUALLY		AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$42.00 ANNUALLY	
	Percent	Percent total support or opposition	Percent	Percent total support or opposition	Percent	Percent total support or opposition
Definitely support	63.6	85.3	53.2	78.5	38.8	62.0
Probably support	21.7		25.3		23.2	
Probably oppose	5.5	13.0	8.5	19.5	15.9	34.8
Definitely oppose	7.5		11.0		18.9	
Unsure	1.7		2.1		3.2	

Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club

Additionally, single-family household taxpayers were told that Southbury, in the past, has had the opportunity to purchase the Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club, a swimming and tennis facility located nearby in Middlebury, CT.

While Edgewood is currently not on the market, respondents were asked, if it were available, how strongly they would support or oppose purchasing the Edgewood facilities **instead** of renovating the existing town pool with an average property tax increase of about **\$21.00 dollars** annually?

Support or opposition for purchasing Edgewood is displayed in the table below.

SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSEHOLD TAXPAYERS (N=776)	EDGEWOOD PURCHASE: AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$21.00 ANNUALLY	
	Percent	Percent total support or opposition
Definitely support	21.0	35.8
Probably support	14.8	
Probably oppose	14.9	58.3
Definitely oppose	43.4	
Unsure	5.8	

RENTER: SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION

The survey explained to those that indicated they rent in the Town of Southbury that **while they may not currently pay property taxes, they may someday and/or the increase in taxes may be passed down to them as a renter.**

These respondents were presented with three different tiers of pool upgrades and associated tax implications. Respondents were told that the average residence's share of the cost is put in terms of an average assessed **residence in Southbury** valued at **\$173,000.00**. The indirect impact to them may be more or less depending on the value of the home taxes are paid on.

The **first** town pool upgrade package includes bringing the facility, lift and kiddie-pool ramp to ADA compliance, new six lane pool, new pool deck, minor exterior updates, and chemical storage room ventilation and containment. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$20.00 annually** in taxes.

The **second** town pool upgrade package includes everything mentioned previously as well as a snack bar, pool heating, zero entry into pool (meaning no stairs, just a gradual beach-like walk-in), new equipment and chemical storage enclosure, removal of the kiddie pool, and interior building updates. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$23.00 annually** in taxes.

The **third** and last town pool upgrade package includes everything mentioned previously as well as additional interior finishes, a new eight-lane pool, a splash pad, and spectator amphitheater seating. This package upgrade was valued at about an additional **\$30.00 annually** in taxes.

Support or opposition for each tier of packaged upgrades is displayed in the table below.

RENTERS (N=38)	AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$20.00 ANNUALLY		AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$23.00 ANNUALLY		AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$30.00 ANNUALLY	
	Percent	Percent total support or opposition	Percent	Percent total support or opposition	Percent	Percent total support or opposition
Definitely support	71.1	78.9	65.8	78.9	57.9	76.3
Probably support	7.9		13.2		18.4	
Probably oppose	5.3	13.2	7.9	13.2	0.0	13.2
Definitely oppose	7.9		5.3		13.2	
Unsure	7.9		7.9		10.5	

Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club

Additionally, renters were told that Southbury, in the past, has had the opportunity to purchase the Edgewood Bath and Tennis Club, a swimming and tennis facility located nearby in Middlebury, CT.

While Edgewood is currently not on the market, respondents were asked, if it were available, how strongly would they support or oppose purchasing the Edgewood facilities **instead** of renovating the existing town pool with an average property tax increase of about **\$16.00 dollars** annually?

Support or opposition for purchasing Edgewood is displayed in the table below.

RENTERS (N=38)	EDGEWOOD PURCHASE: AVERAGE TAX INCREASE OF \$16.00 ANNUALLY	
	Percent	Percent total support or opposition
Definitely support	15.8	21.1
Probably support	5.3	
Probably oppose	18.4	71.0
Definitely oppose	52.6	
Unsure	7.9	

5 APPENDIX

INTERPRETATION OF AGGREGATE RESULTS

The computer processed data for this survey are presented in the following frequency distributions. It is important to note that the wordings of the variable labels and value labels in the computer-processed data are largely abbreviated descriptions of the questionnaire items and available response categories.

Each frequency distribution includes the absolute observed occurrence of each response (i.e. the total number of cases in each category). Immediately adjacent to the right of the column of absolute frequencies is the column of relative frequencies. These are the percentages of cases falling in each category response, including those cases designated as missing data. To the right of the relative frequency column is the adjusted frequency distribution column that contains the relative frequencies based on the legitimate (i.e. non-missing) cases. That is, the total base for the adjusted frequency distribution excludes the missing data. For many Questionnaire items, the relative frequencies and the adjusted frequencies will be nearly the same. However, some items that elicit a sizable number of missing data will produce quite substantial percentage differences between the two columns of frequencies. The careful analyst will cautiously consider both distributions.

The last column of data within the frequency distribution is the cumulative frequency distribution (Cum Freq.). This column is simply an adjusted frequency distribution of the sum of all previous categories of response and the current category of response. Its primary usefulness is to gauge some ordered or ranked meaning.