

**Post-Secondary Education in
Ontario: Managing Challenges
in an Age of Austerity –
Southwestern Ontario Results
February 2013**

Methodology

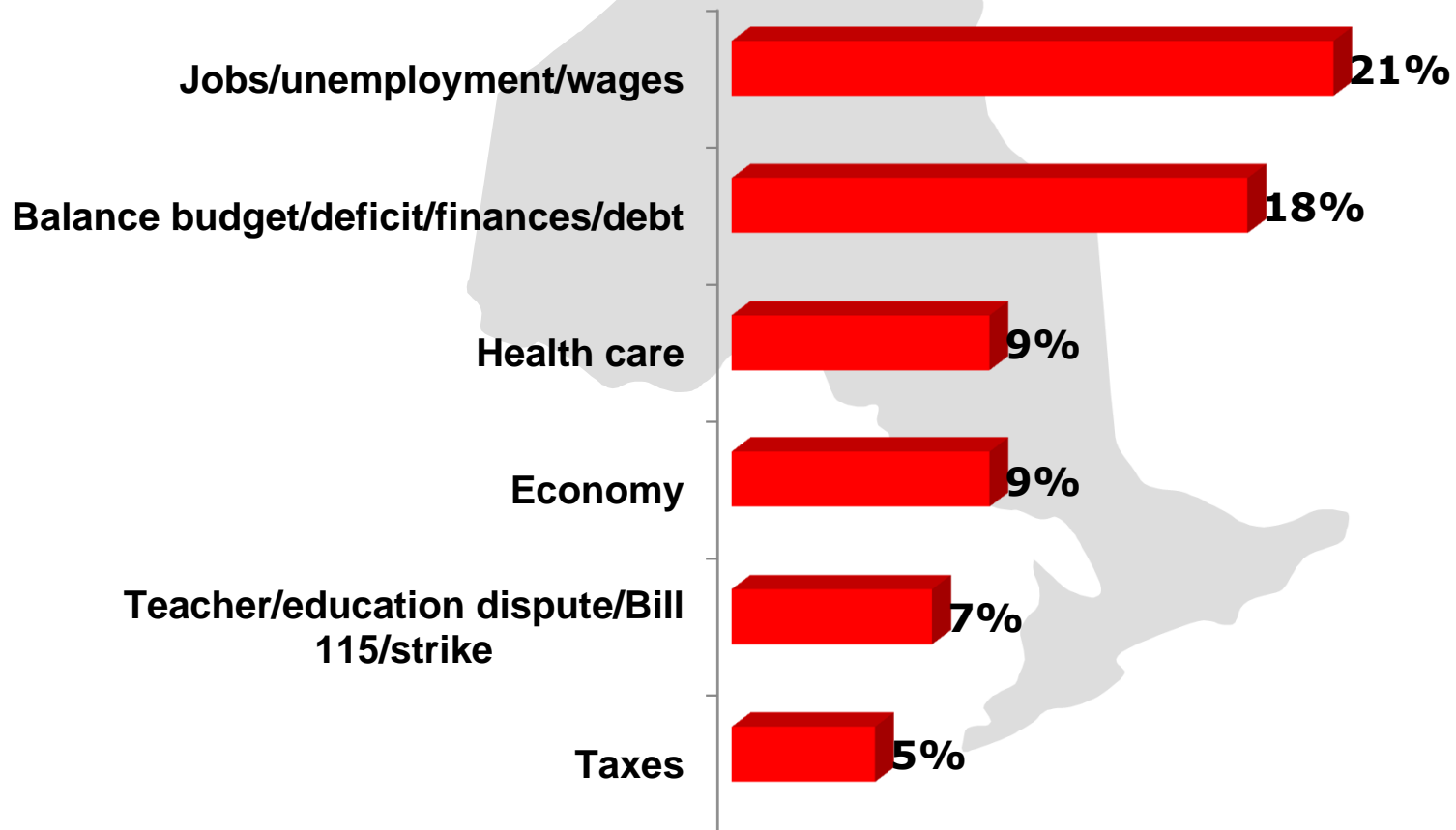
- **A total of 1,518 on-line interviews were conducted for the study between December 10th and 14th, 2012.**
- **The margin of error for a representative sample of this size is 2.5 percentage points within a 95% confidence interval. The margin of error is greater when looking at sub-segments of the population.**
- **The total sample for the Southwestern region of Ontario comprised 376 respondents. Margin of error for a subsample of this size is +/- 4.9 percentage points**
- **The sample was designed to mirror the socio-demographic characteristics of the general Ontario adult population according to the latest census data.**
- **Detailed findings are outlined on the OCUFA website.**



The Political Environment

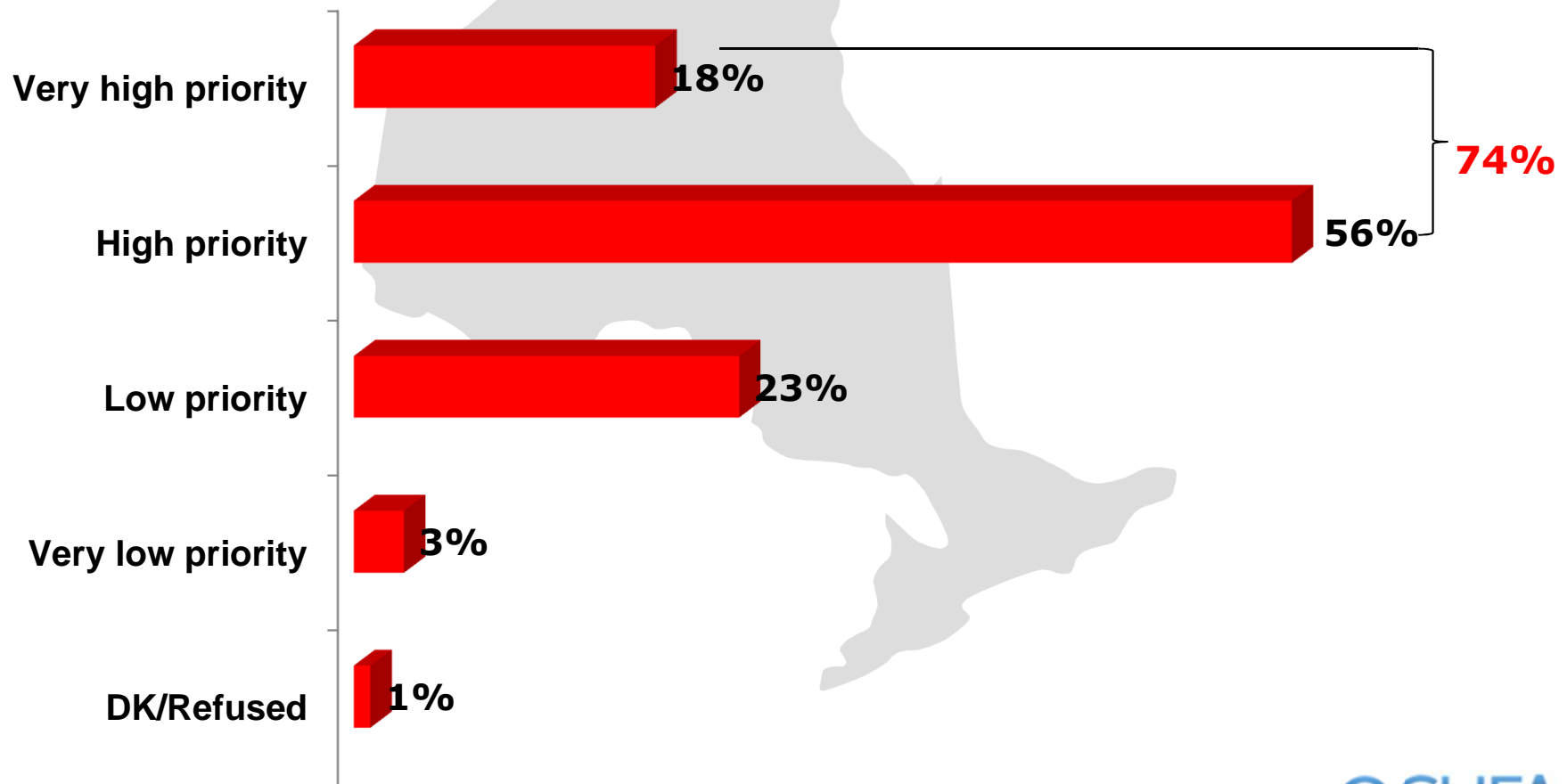
Most Important Issue in Ontario

- Residents of Southwestern Ontario are most likely to identify **“jobs/unemployment/wages”** as the most important issue currently facing the Ontario government.



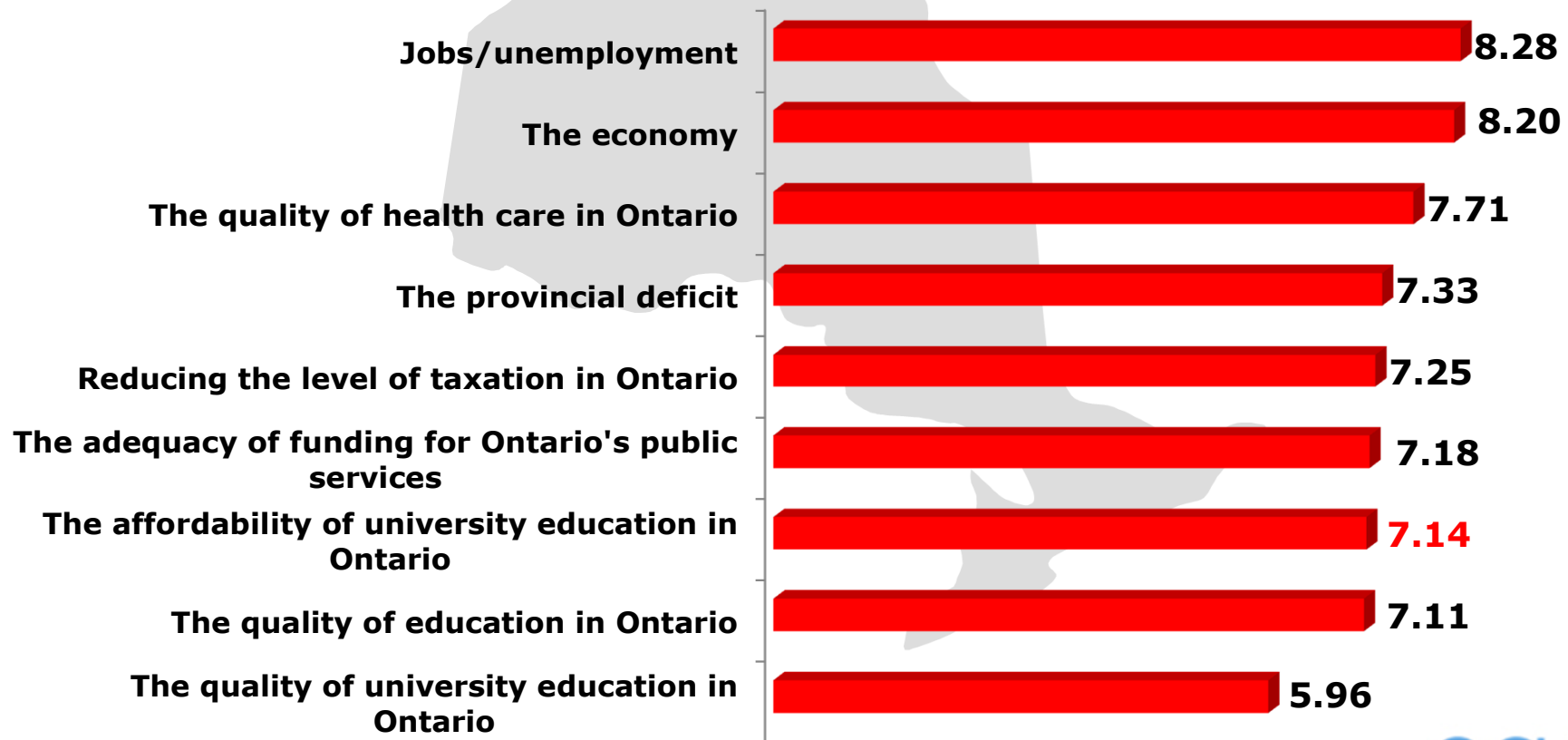
University Education: Level of Priority for Ontario Government

- Three in four Southwestern Ontario residents think that university education should be considered a **"high priority"** by the provincial government.



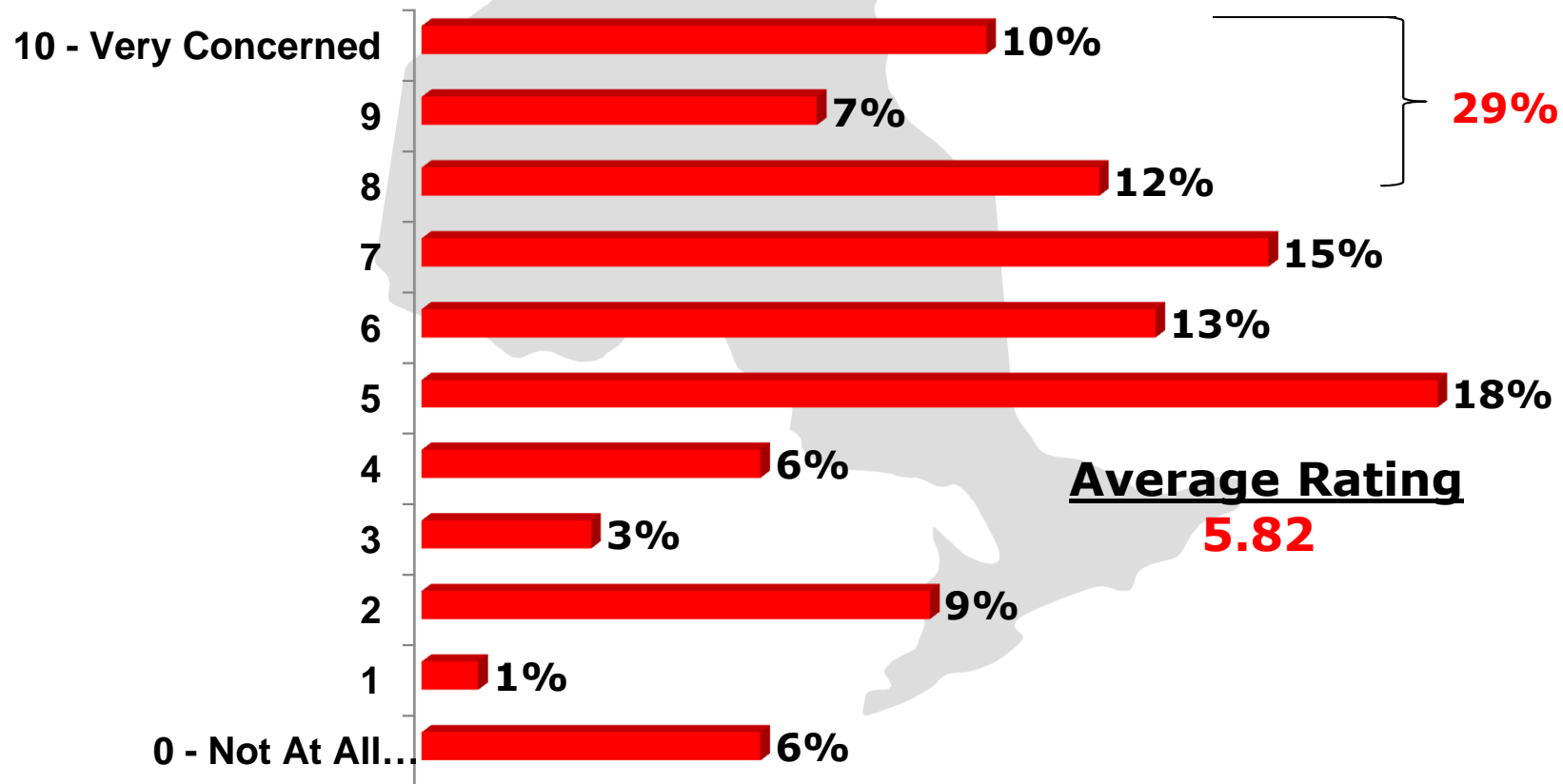
Provincial Issues: Present Level of Concern

- “Jobs/unemployment” and “the economy” are issues generating a high-level concern among Southwestern Ontario residents. The **affordability of university education** receives a moderately high concern-rating in this region.



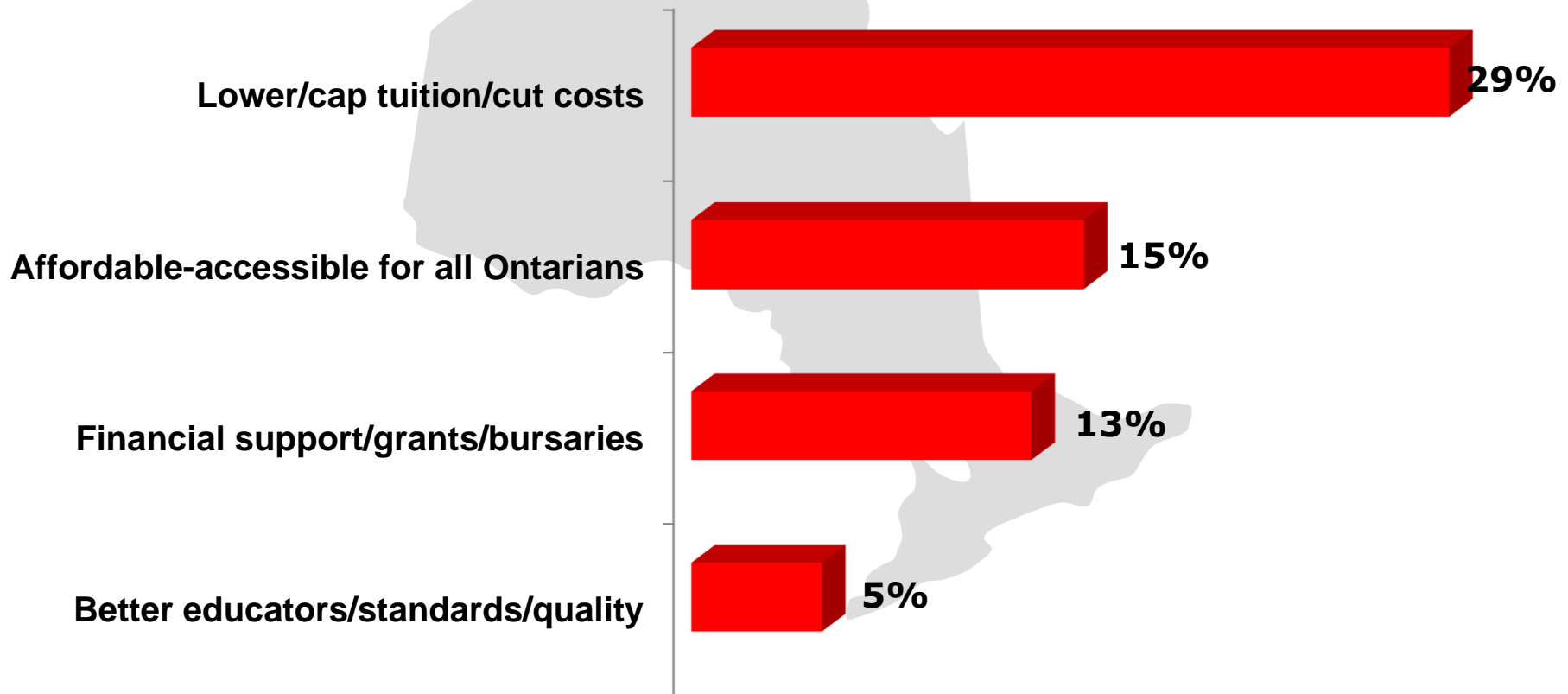
Quality of University Education in Ontario: Level of Concern

- Over one in four Southwestern Ontario residents are **highly concerned** about the quality of university education in Ontario (rating of 8,9 or 10). The average concern-rating in this region is moderate at 5.82.



Most Important Strategy for University Education in Ontario?

- More than one in four Southwestern Ontario residents identify **lowering or capping tuition fees** as the “single most important thing” the provincial government should do for university education in Ontario.

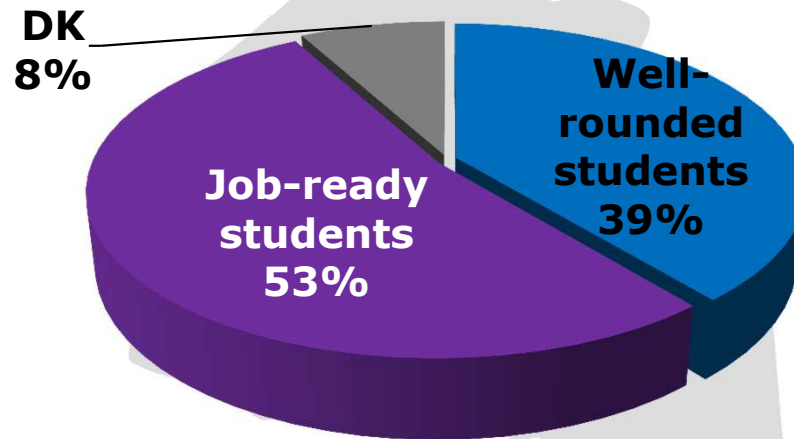




What Kind of University Education Do We Want?

Job-Ready or Well-Rounded Students?

- Southwestern Ontario residents are considerably more likely to identify “job-readiness” as the primary goal of university education.



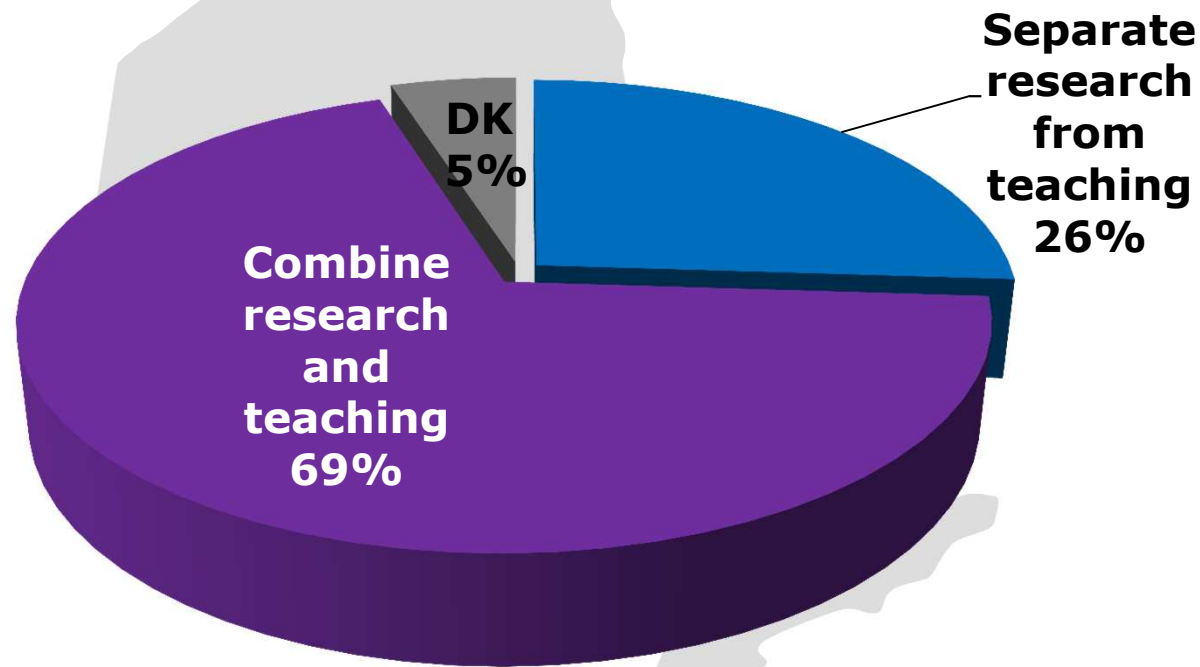
Tracking Results

Focus of university education should be...	2012 %	2011 %
Job-ready students*	53	50
Well-rounded students	39	46

*In 2011, this question used the phrase “students with specific skills.”

Best Model of Delivery?

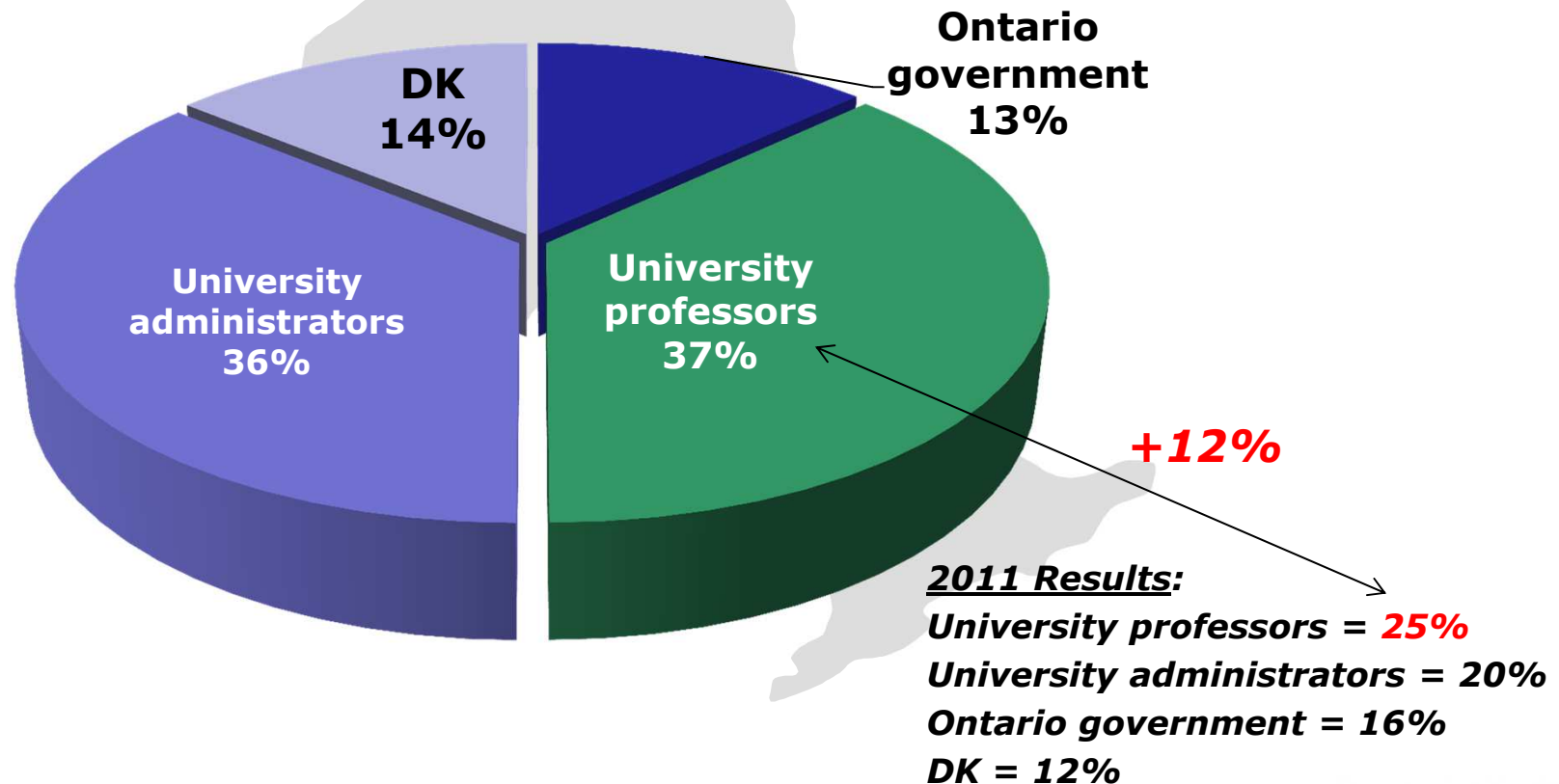
- Seven in ten Southwestern Ontarians believe that to fulfill their mandate universities must **combine research with teaching**.



Question: Earlier you indicated that university education should focus on producing [job-ready/well-rounded students]...which model of delivery of university education would best achieve this objective?

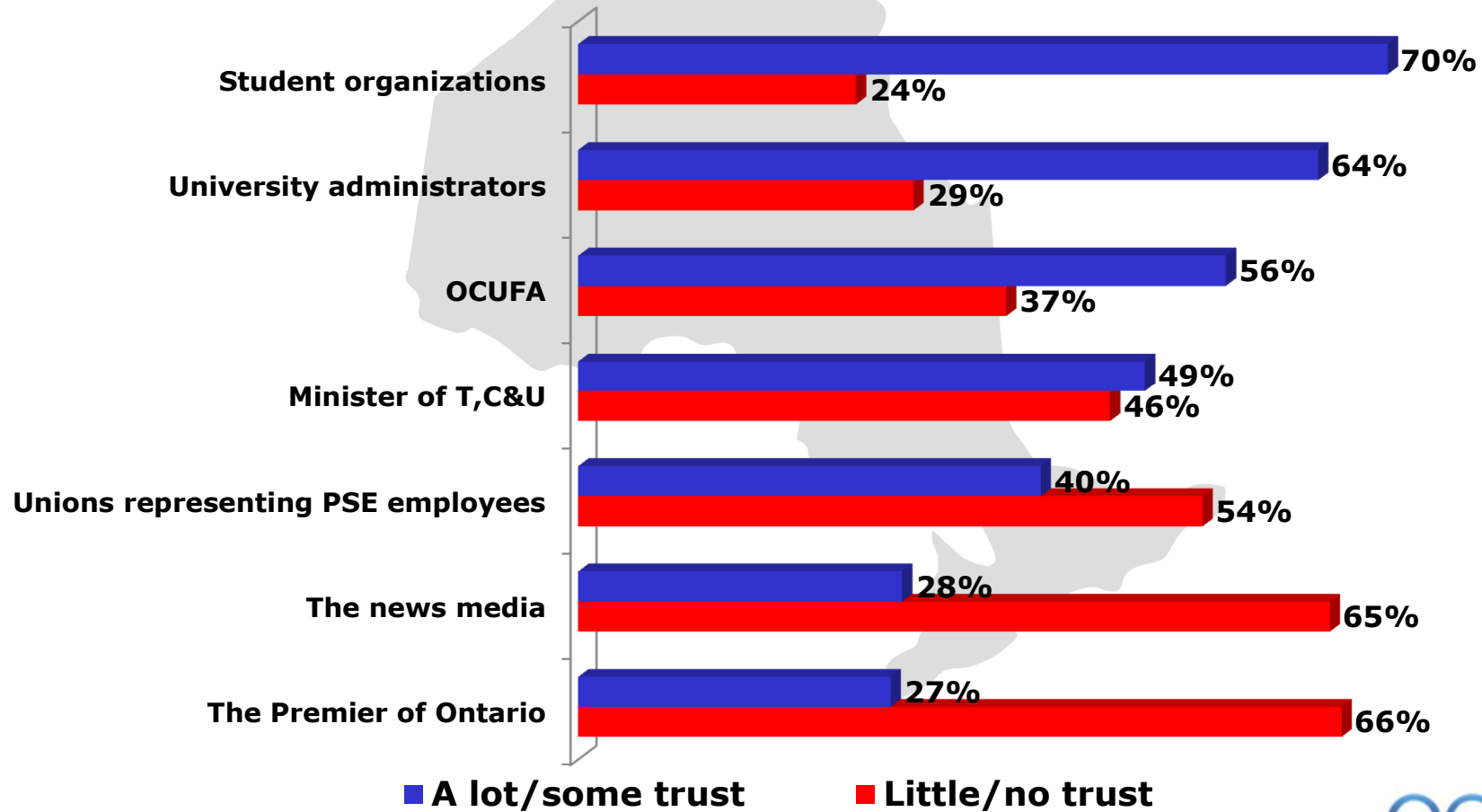
Ensuring A High Quality University Education: Who Do You Trust?

- Just over one-third of Southwestern Ontarians say they **trust university professors** most to ensure that students receive a high quality university education. A similar proportion say they **trust university administrators** most with this charge.



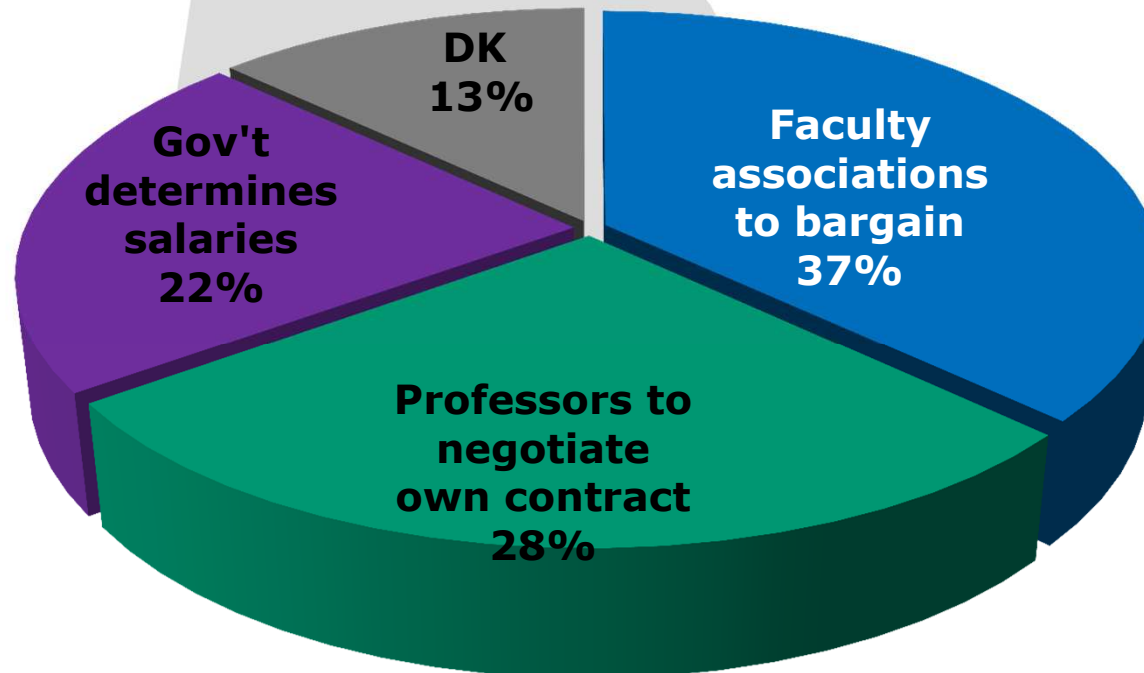
Sources of Information: Who Do You Trust?

- A majority of Southwestern Ontario residents consider **student organizations, university administrators, and OCUFA** trustworthy sources of information about Ontario's universities.



University Professors: Salaries & Working Conditions

- Over a third of Ontarians in the Southwestern region think the best way to determine the salaries and working conditions of university professors is to **continue to allow collective bargaining** between faculty associations and university administration.



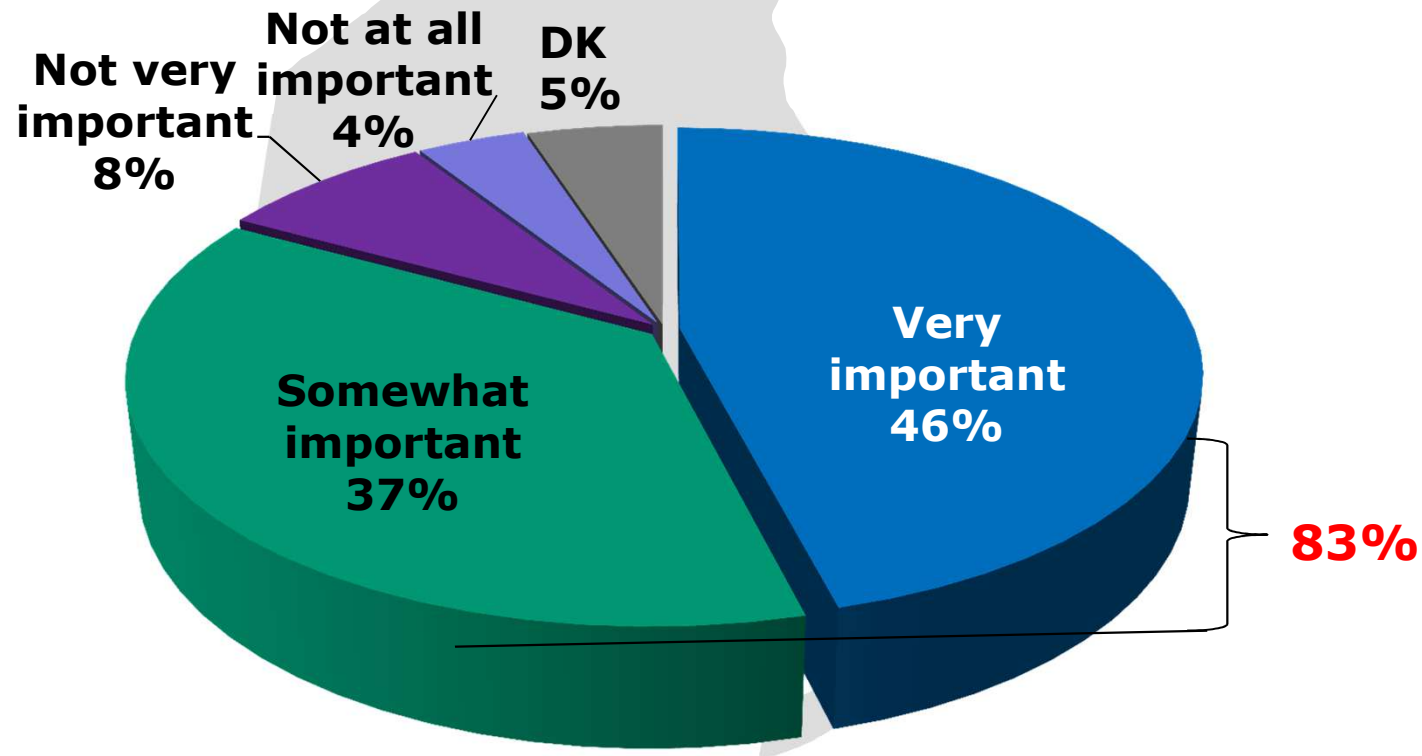


At What Cost?



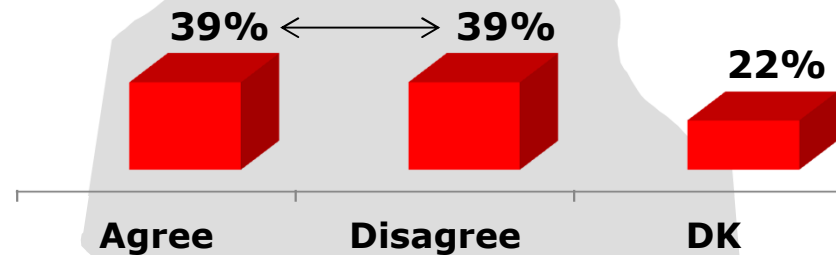
Importance of Provincial Deficit Reduction

- Over four in five Southwestern Ontarians believe it is important for the provincial government to reduce the provincial budget deficit.

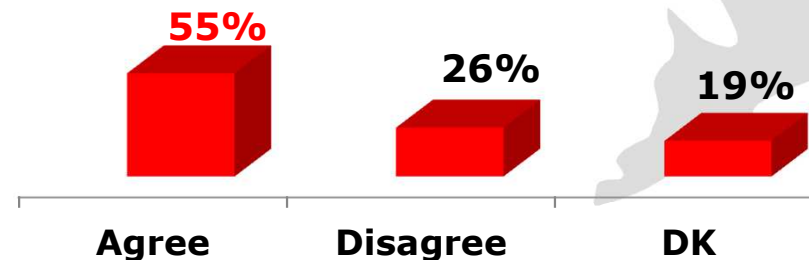


Deficit Reduction Strategies: Agree or Disagree?

- To meet deficit-reduction targets, government should override the collective bargaining rights of public sector workers.

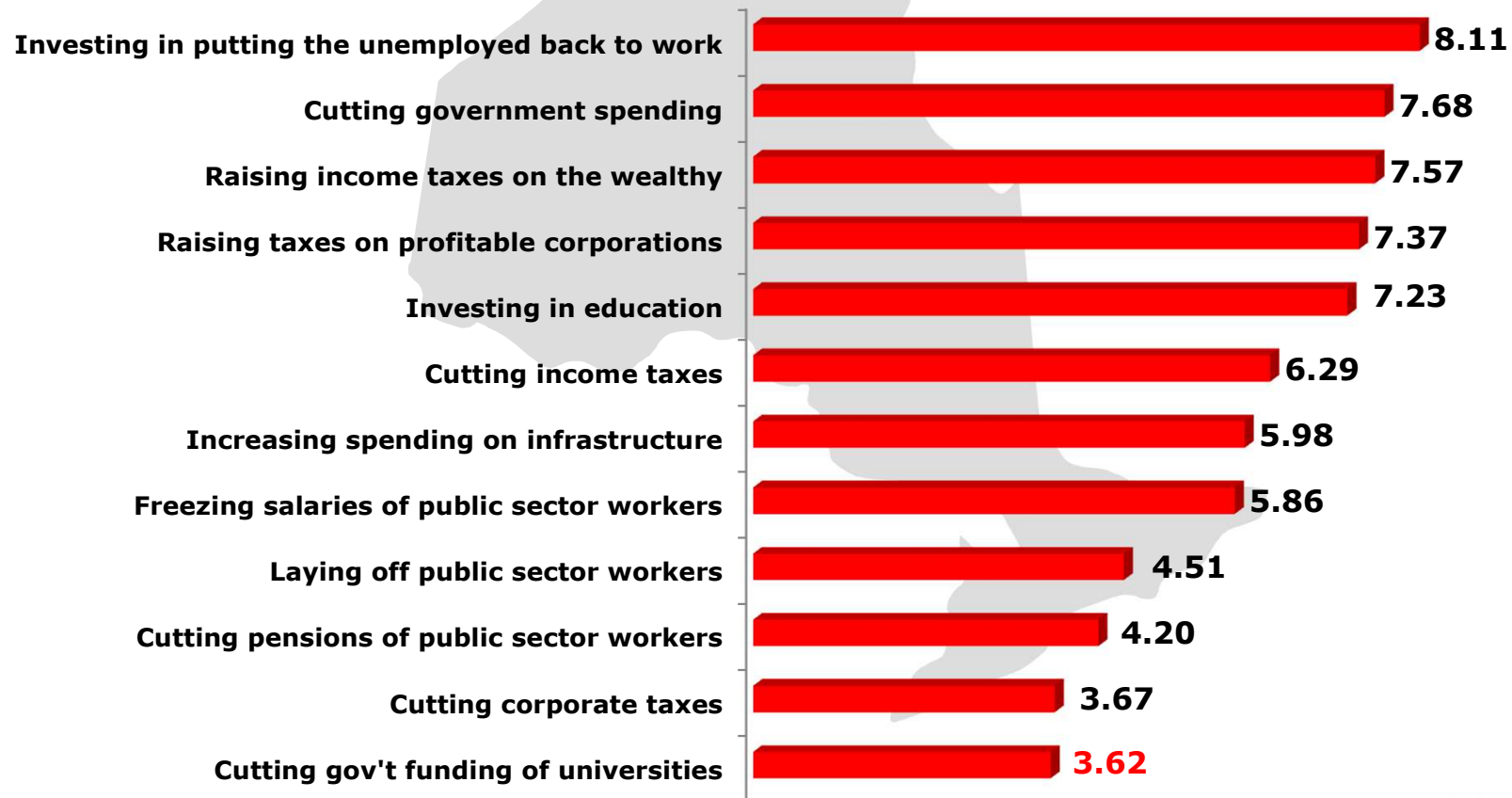


- Government should allow public sector workers to freely negotiate their working conditions and wages through a collective bargaining process.



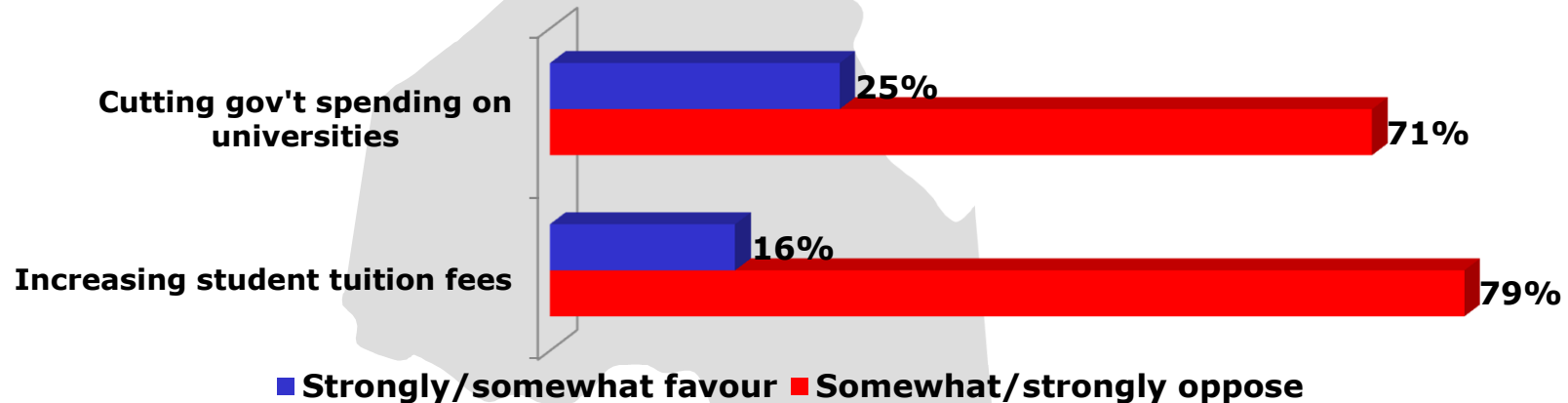
Strategies to Manage Fiscal Situation in Ontario: Level of Support

- A mix of stimulus and cost-cutting measures receive moderate to moderately-high levels of support from Southwestern Ontarians (i.e., a rating of 7 or greater). **Cutting funding for universities** received the lowest support-rating on average.

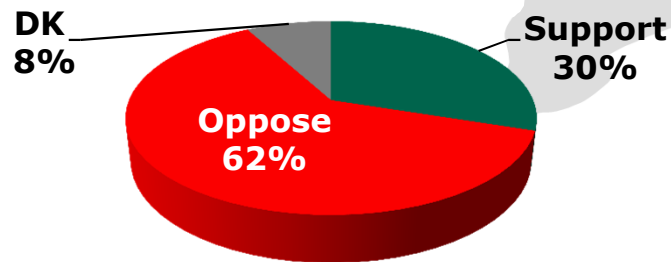


University Financing Strategies: Support for Government Investment

- Over seven in ten Southwestern Ontarians oppose **increasing student tuition** and **cutting government spending on universities** as strategies to reduce university costs.



- Over three in five Southwestern residents oppose the idea of **increasing student tuition** in programs expected to yield higher salaries after graduation.



Deficit Reduction in Context

- Most Southwestern Ontario residents disagree with government measures to reduce the deficit in the context of three specific circumstances: 1) reduced education quality; 2) increased costs of education for students and families; and, 3) higher personal taxes.

How much do you agree or disagree that the provincial government should pursue measures to <u>reduce the deficit</u> ...	Agree strongly/ somewhat (%)	Disagree somewhat/ strongly (%)
...even if these measures will <u>reduce the quality</u> of university education.	23	69
...even if these measures will <u>increase the cost</u> of university education for students and their families.	31	61
...even if that means I would personally have to <u>pay more in taxes</u> .	34	60

*Would you support or oppose cuts to public services if it meant a negative impact on employment and economic growth?

Support = 30%  Oppose = 70%

*This question was asked of a subsample of respondents (N=55).

Government Spending Freeze: Perceived Impact

- Over two in five Southwestern Ontarians believe that a **government spending freeze on universities** would have a negative impact on the quality of university education in the province.

Impact of the following on quality of university education:	Positive Impact (%)	Negative Impact (%)	No Impact (%)
Government spending freeze on universities	11 (+9)	44 (-26) ←	29 (+19)
Freeze on professors' salaries	12 (+5)	36 (-4)	39 (-4)

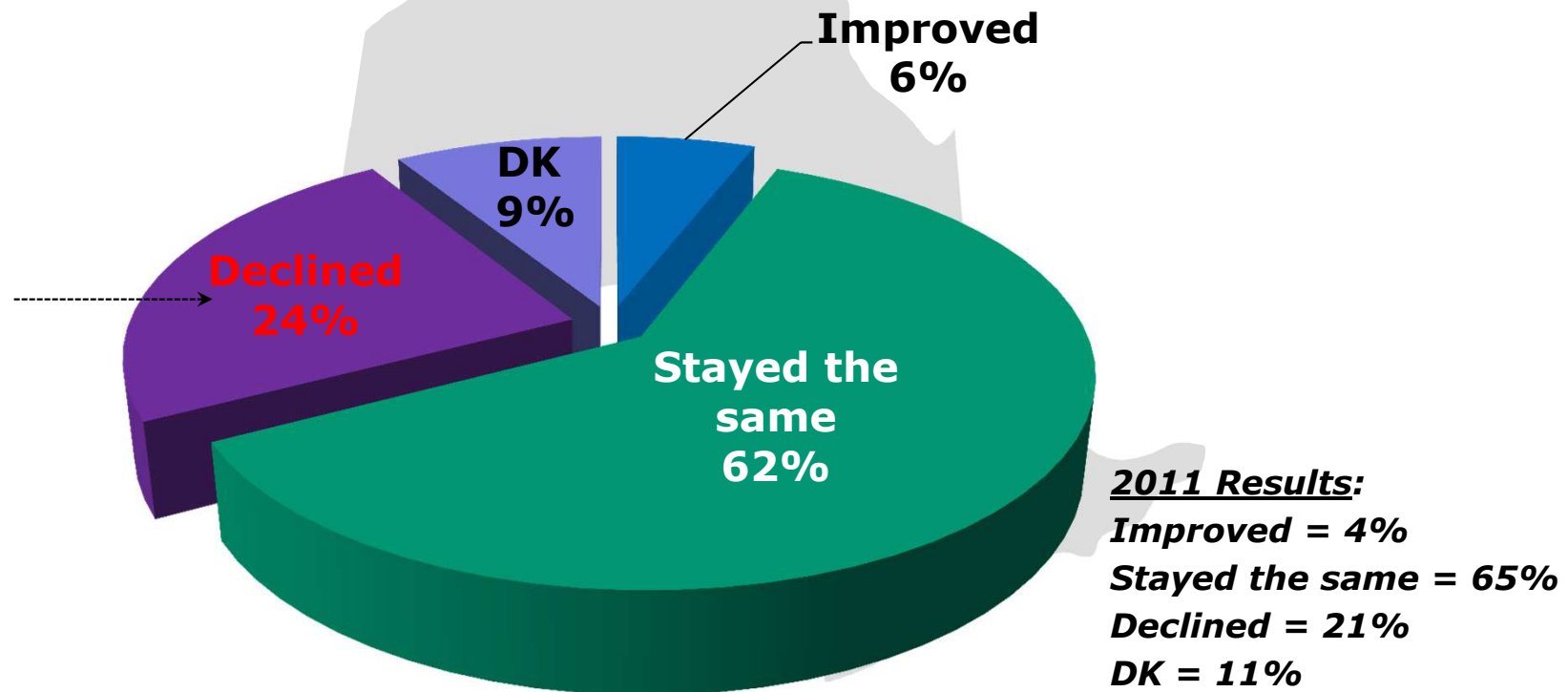
() Denotes percentage change since 2011.



Looking Ahead: Political Leadership

McGuinty Government: Impact on Quality of University Education

- One in four Southwestern Ontarians believe that the **quality of university education** has declined under the McGuinty government. By contrast, less than one in ten say that the quality of university education has improved during McGuinty's tenure.



Quality of University Education: Which Political Party Is Best?

- Over one in four residents of Southwestern Ontario consider the **NDP** the political party most likely to improve the quality of university education in Ontario.

