

# **The 2011 OCUFA/CFS Study on Post-Secondary Education Ontario Results**

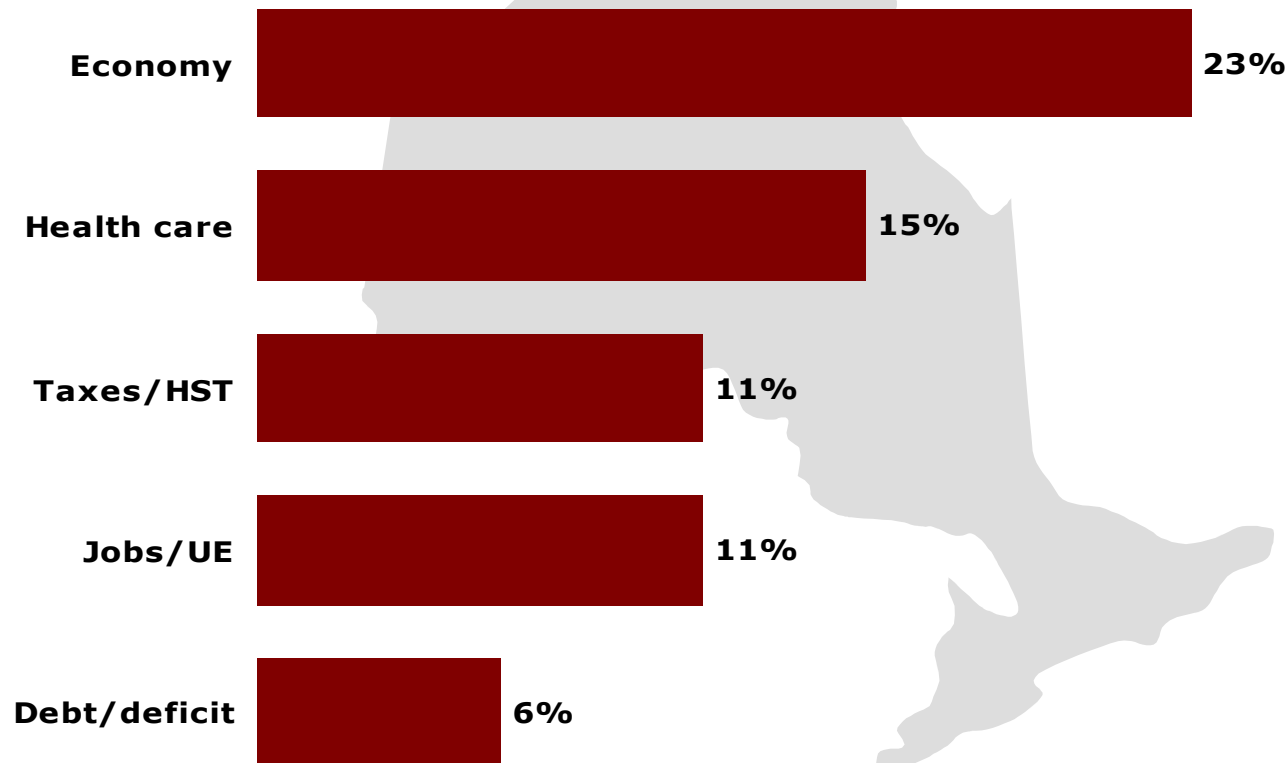


# The Public Opinion Environment



# Most Important Issue in Ontario

- Ontarians were most likely to identify “the economy” as the most important issue currently facing the provincial government. By contrast, only 4% of respondents identified “education” in this context.



Question: “What is the most important issue facing the Ontario provincial government today?”

# Important Issues: Level of Concern

- “Quality of health care” rated highest, on average, as an issue of concern to Ontarians. “Affordability of post-secondary education” did not rank far behind, however, with an average rating of 7.72 indicating a moderately high level of concern.



Question: “On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is “not at all concerned and 10 is “very concerned” how concerned are you about the following issues...?”

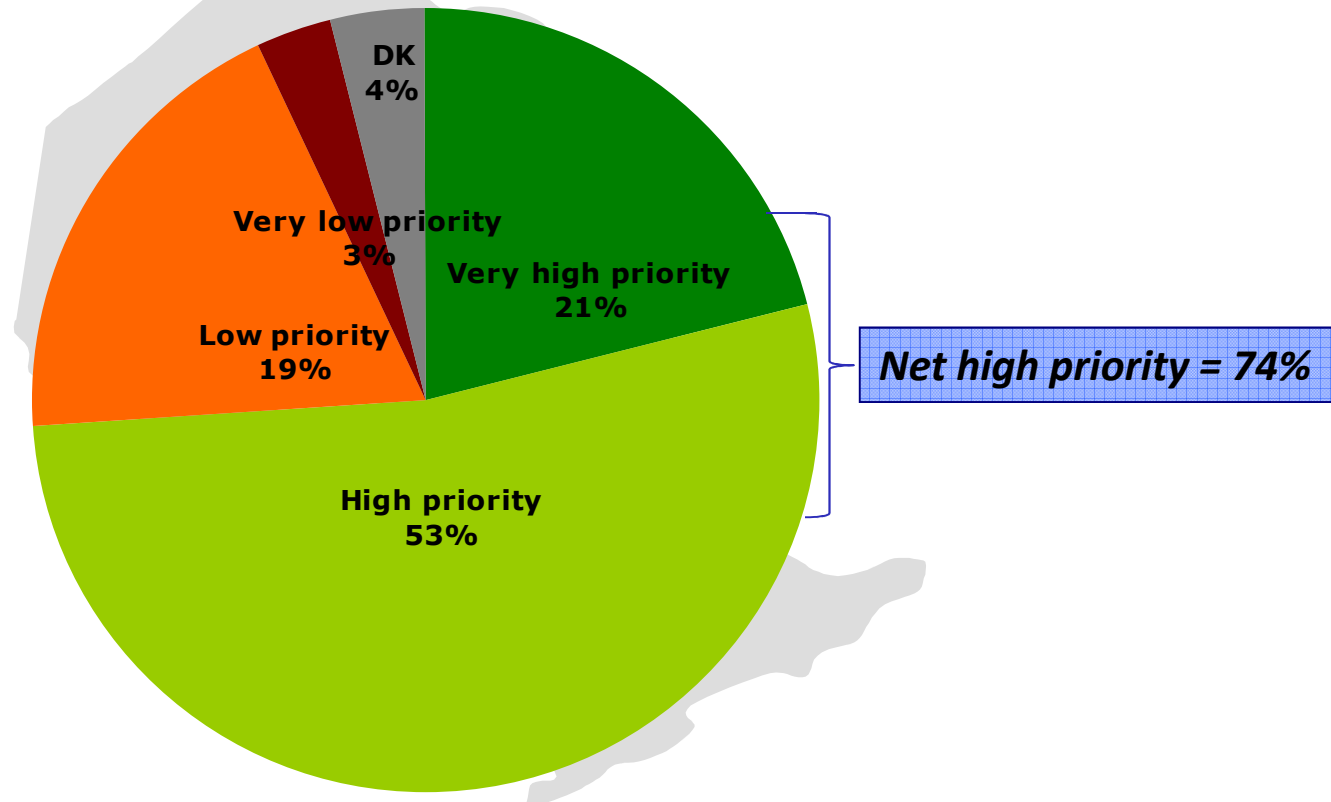
# Concern Toward Affordability of PSE: Socio-Demographic Breakdowns

- Socio-demographic groups for whom the issue “affordability of post-secondary education” is of greatest concern include:
  - **individuals aged 18-24 (9.23**, compared to 7.19 among persons aged 50-64);
  - **Women (8.13**, compared to 7.29 among men);
  - **Individuals with high school or less education (7.93**, versus 7.39 among individuals with an undergraduate degree);
  - **Individuals with household incomes of <\$20K per year (7.92**, versus 7.50 among individuals who earn between \$50K-\$80K);
  - **Parents with kids currently attending a university (7.83)**

Question: “On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is “not at all concerned and 10 is “very concerned” how concerned are you about the following issues...?”

# Post-Secondary Education: A Government Priority?

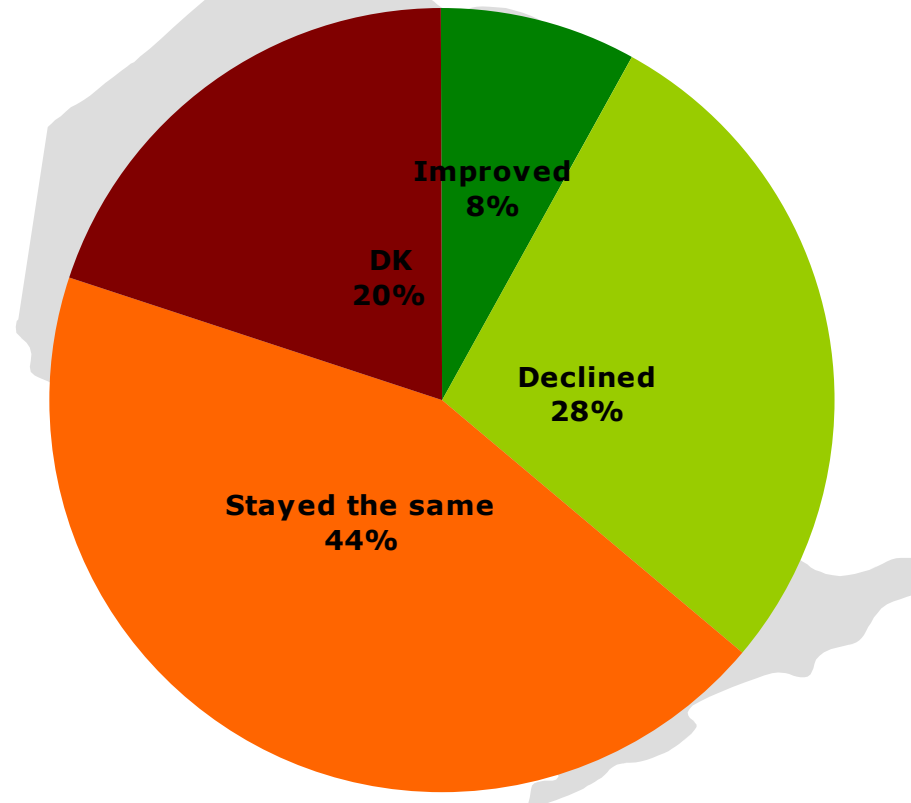
- Almost three-quarters of respondents believe that post-secondary education should be viewed as an issue of “high priority” by the Ontario government.



Question: “For you personally, should post-secondary education be a very high priority, a high priority, a low priority or a very low priority for the Ontario government?”

# Quality of Post-Secondary Education: How Has It Changed?

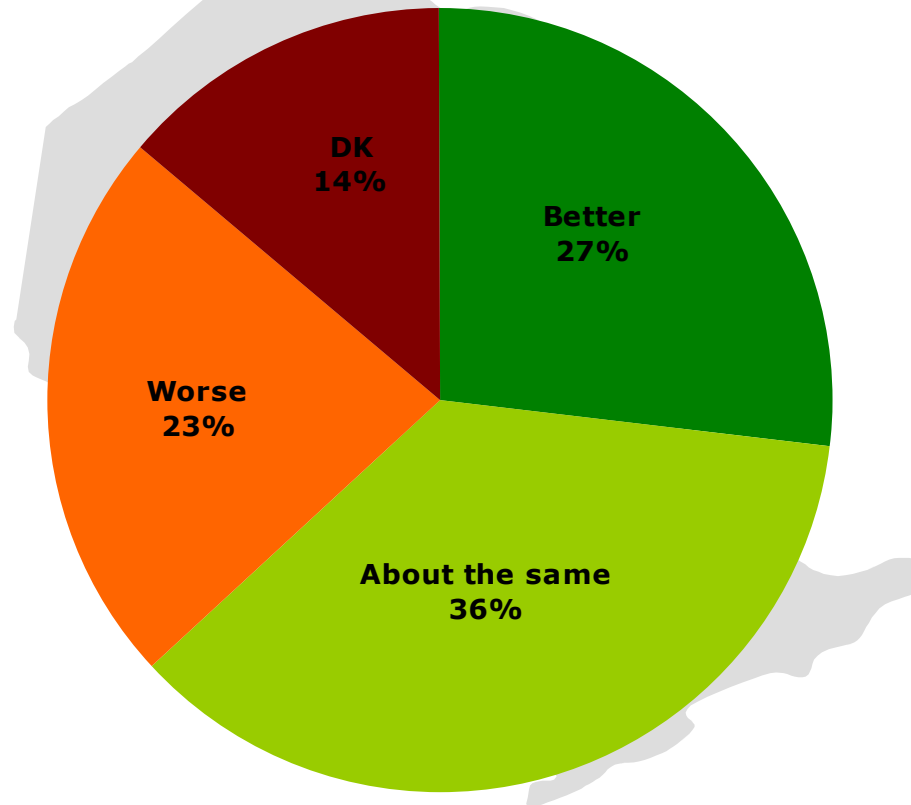
- When asked to comment on the quality of post-secondary education in Ontario over the course of the McGuinty administration, respondents were most likely to say that it has “stayed the same” during this period.



Question: “Based on what you know, do you think the quality of post-secondary education has improved, declined or stayed the same since Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government first took power?”

# McGuinty Liberals vs. Harris PCs: Performance on Post-Secondary Education

- Respondents were most likely to evaluate the performance of the current McGuinty administration on post-secondary education as “about the same” as that of the former PC government under Mike Harris.



Question: “Do you think Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal government has performed better, worse or about the same as Mike Harris’s Progressive Conservative government when it comes to post-secondary education in Ontario?”



# Evaluation from Parents with Kids in University

- Some 77% of Parents with Kids currently attending a university think Post-Secondary Education should be a High Priority
- Only 8% of parents with kids in university feel that the quality of post-secondary education has improved over the course of the McGuinty administration (51% think it has stayed the same and 31% feel it has declined).
- Parents with kids in high school – hence, about to consider post-secondary education – are even more critical of the performance of the McGuinty government. Only 4% feel the quality of post-secondary education has improved under McGuinty, while 43% say it has stayed the same, 36% believe it has declined while 16% do not know.

# Evaluation from Parents with Kids in University

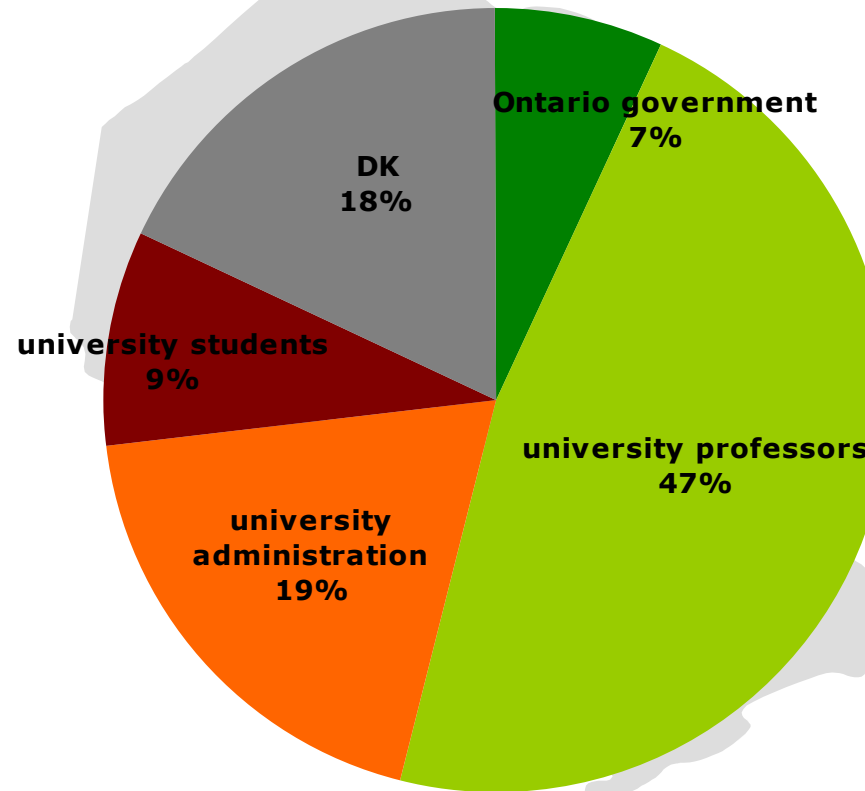
- About 3 in 10 parents with kids in university (29%) feel that the performance of the current McGuinty administration on post-secondary education was better than that of the former PC government under Mike Harris while 59% feel it has worsened (28%) or stayed the same (31%).



# Accountability and Trust

# University Professors Most Trusted with PSE Curriculum

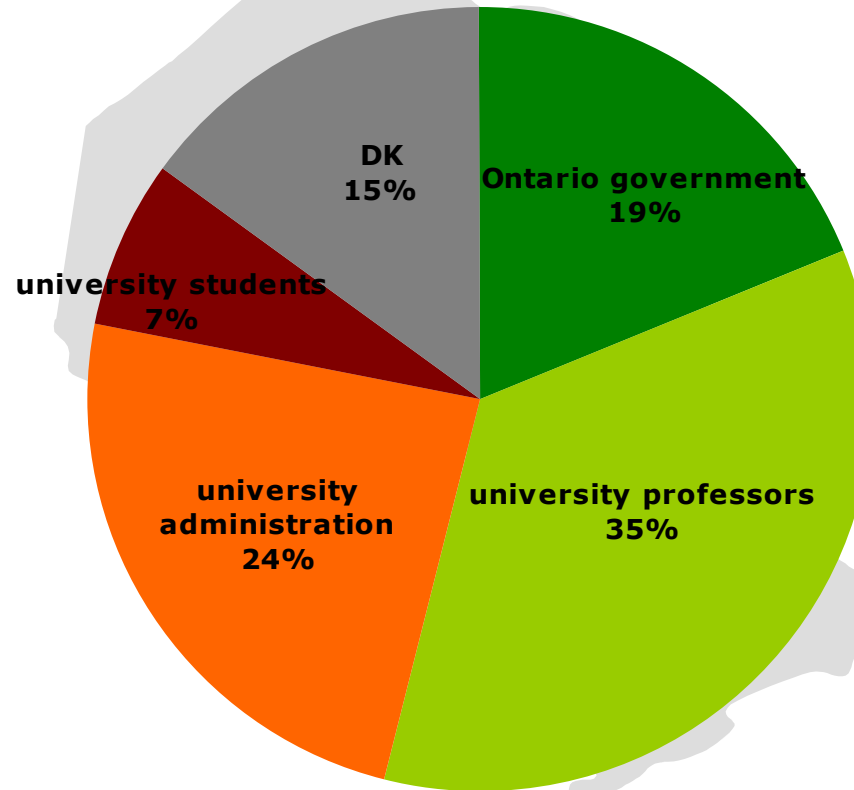
- Nearly half of Ontarians said that they most trust university professors with developing a high-quality post-secondary curriculum. Only 7% indicated they would most trust the Ontario government with this charge.



Question: "Who do you trust most to develop a high-quality post-secondary curriculum?"

# Most Trusted with PSE Standards

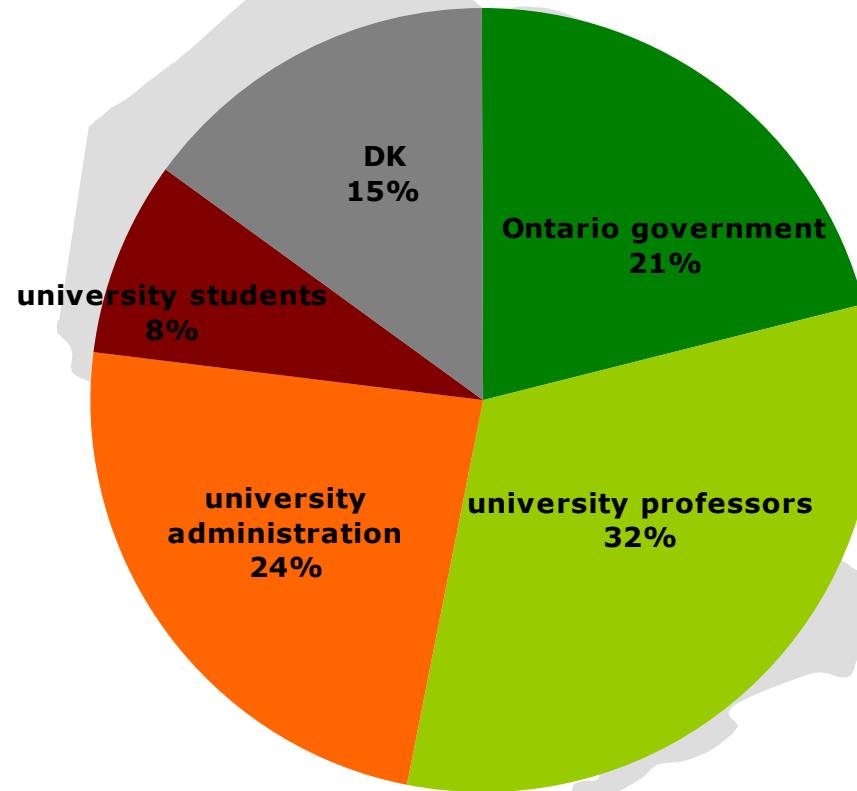
- A majority (59%) of Ontarians most trust university personnel – either administration or faculty – to develop standards in post-secondary education. A far lower percentage indicated they would most trust the Ontario government in this context.



Question: "Who do you trust most to develop standards in post-secondary education?"

# Most Trusted with PSE Quality

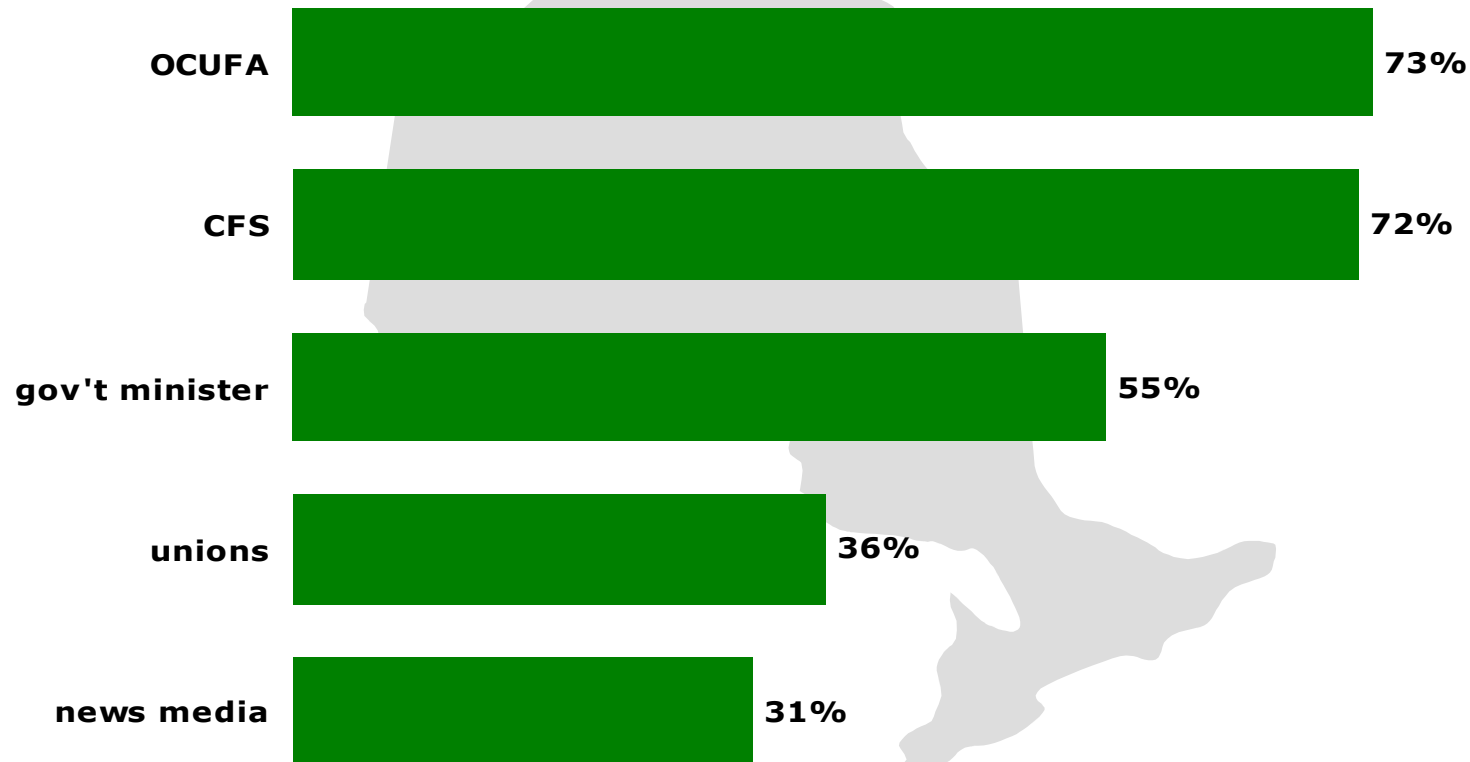
- Over half (56%) of Ontarians most trust university personnel to develop standards in post-secondary education. A far lower percentage indicated they would most trust the Ontario government in this context.



Question: "Who do you trust most to ensure a high-quality post-secondary education overall?"

# Government Policy on PSE: Most Trusted Institutions

- Nearly three-quarters of Ontarians said they trust “OCUFA” to influence government policy on post-secondary education. A similar proportion trust “the Canadian Federation of Students and other student representatives” well ahead of others.



Question: “When making up your mind about government policy on universities and colleges, would you say you have a lot of trust, some trust, little or no trust at all in each of the following...[A LOT/SOME TRUST ONLY]?”

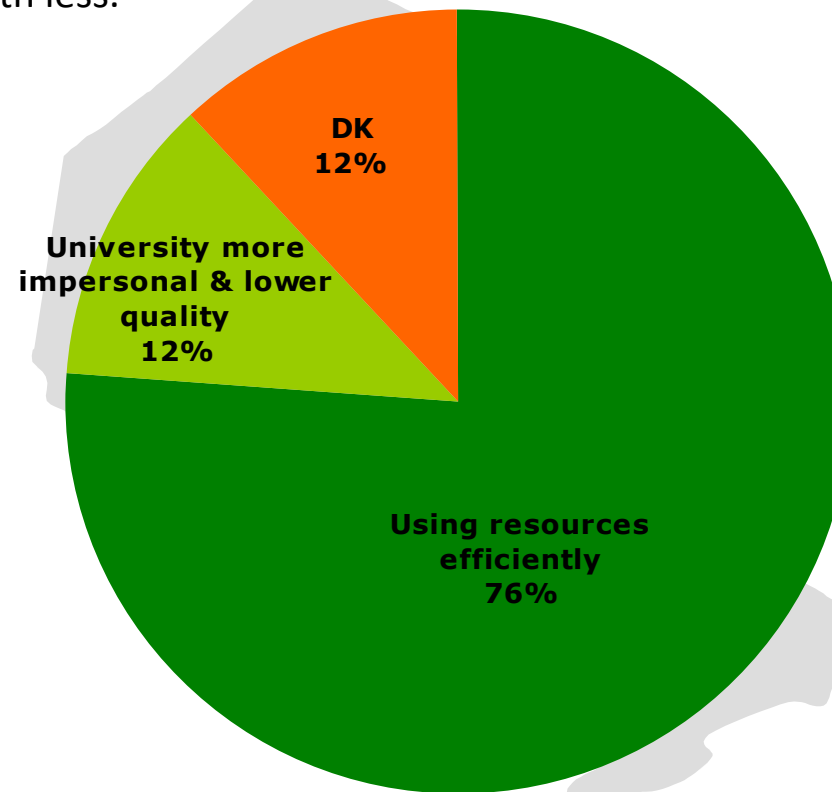


# Diverse Issues



# Student-Faculty Ratio

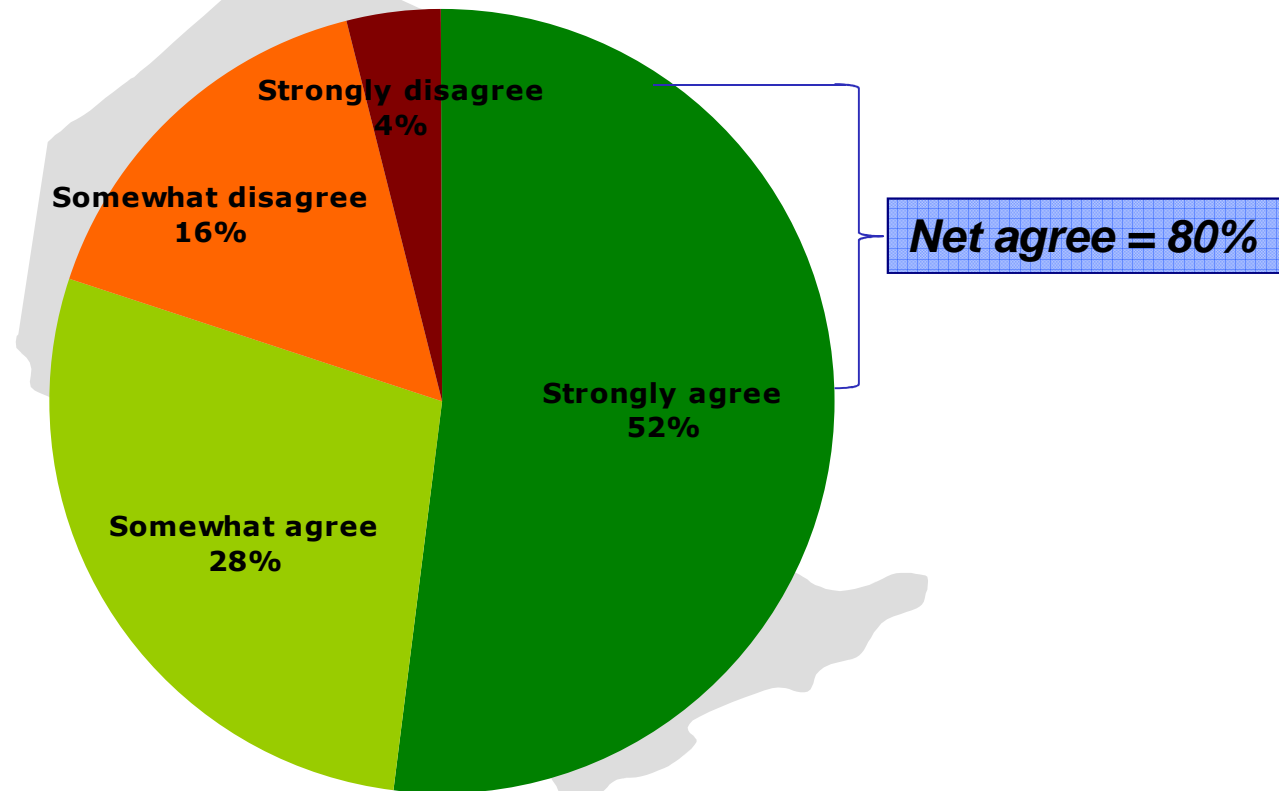
- Three-quarters of Ontario residents are impressed by the growing student-faculty ratios at universities in the province as an indication that “universities are using resources efficiently and doing more with less.”



Question: “As you may know, in recent years the number of students in Ontario universities has increased, while the number of professors has declined. Some people say that having more students per professor means that universities are using resources efficiently and doing more with less. Others say that having more students per professor means that university education is becoming more impersonal and lower in quality. Which of the two arguments is closer to your own view?”

# Post-Secondary Education: Impact on Future Employment

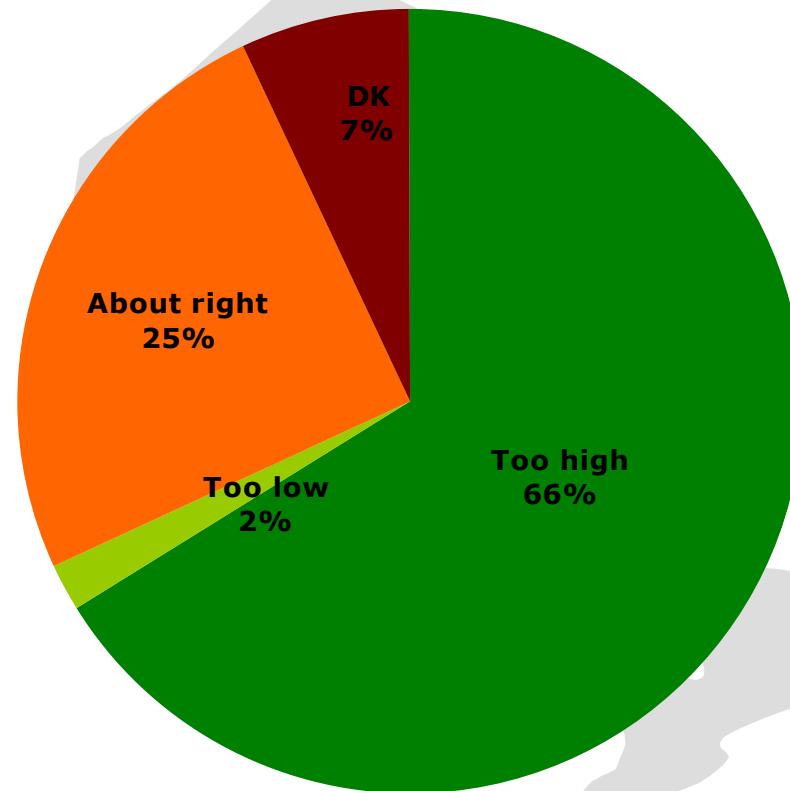
- Of those respondents who are currently enrolled in a post-secondary education program in Ontario, eight in ten agree that their learning is directly applicable to their future employment.



[FOR THOSE CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY] Question: Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: "What I am currently learning in school will be directly applicable to my future employment."

# Student Tuition Fees

- A large majority of Ontarians think that current university tuition fees are “too high.” By contrast, only one-quarter of respondents believe that these fees are reasonable – i.e., “about right.”



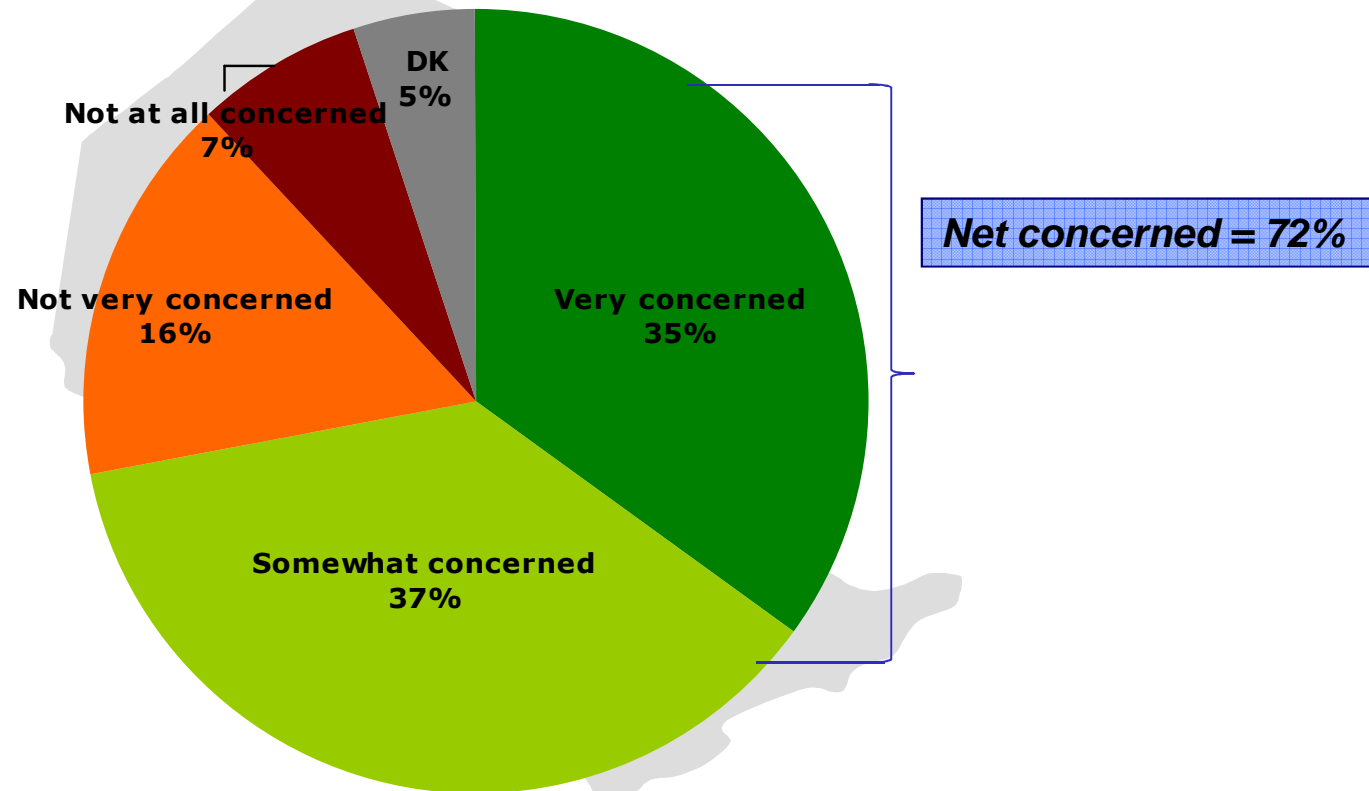
**Socio-demographic groups most likely to think that university tuition is “too high” include:**

- respondents aged 18-24 (87%, compared to 57% of individuals aged 50-64);
- women (73%, compared to 59% of men);
- individuals with household income of <\$20K per annum (80%, versus 58% of those with household incomes of >\$80K).

Question: “Based on what you know, do you think current student tuition fees at Ontario's public universities are too high, too low or about right?”

# Young Ontarians Access to University: Are You Concerned?

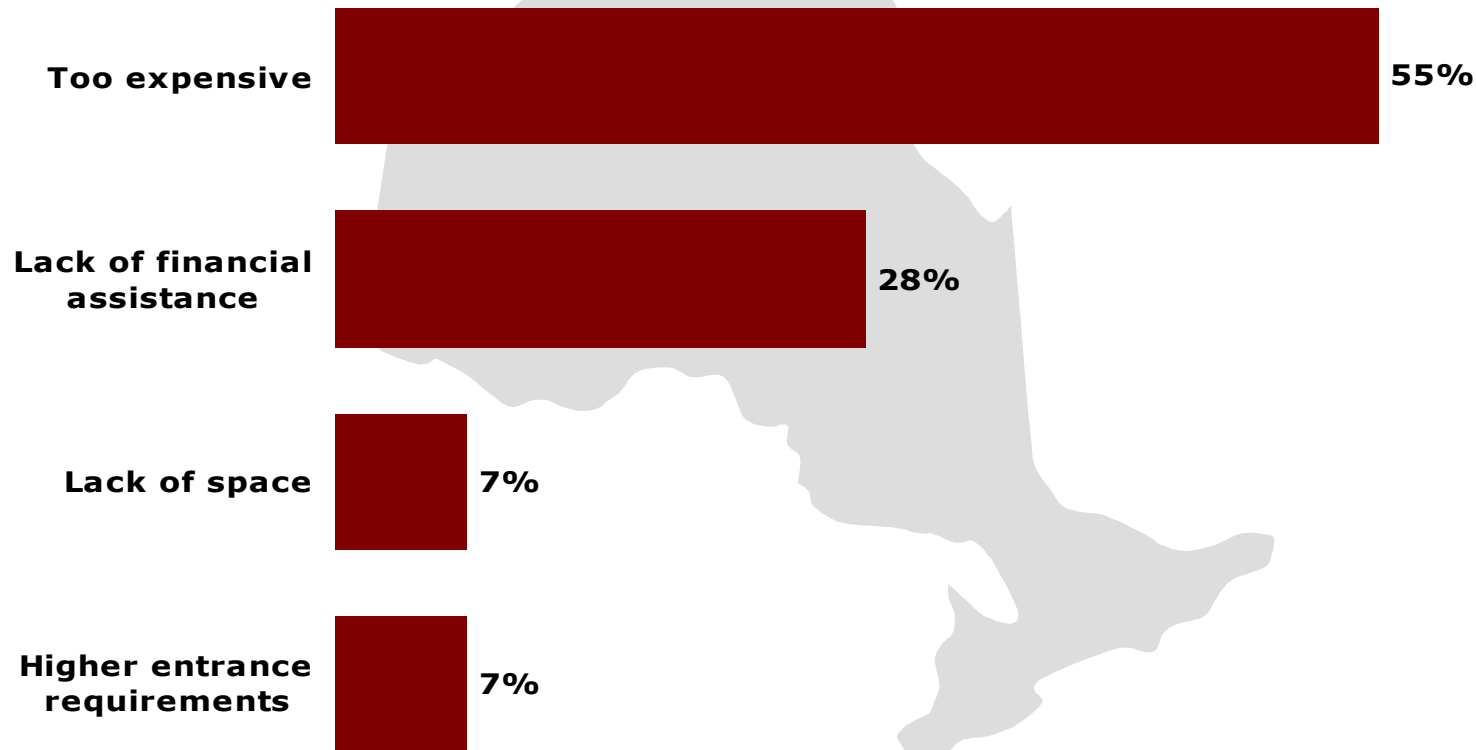
- Greater than seven in ten respondents expressed concern regarding the ability of young Ontarians to attend university in the province.



Question: Would you say you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned or not at all concerned that young Ontarians will be able to attend a publicly-funded university in Ontario, if they are qualified and choose to do so?

# Young Ontarians Access to University: Main Reason For Concern

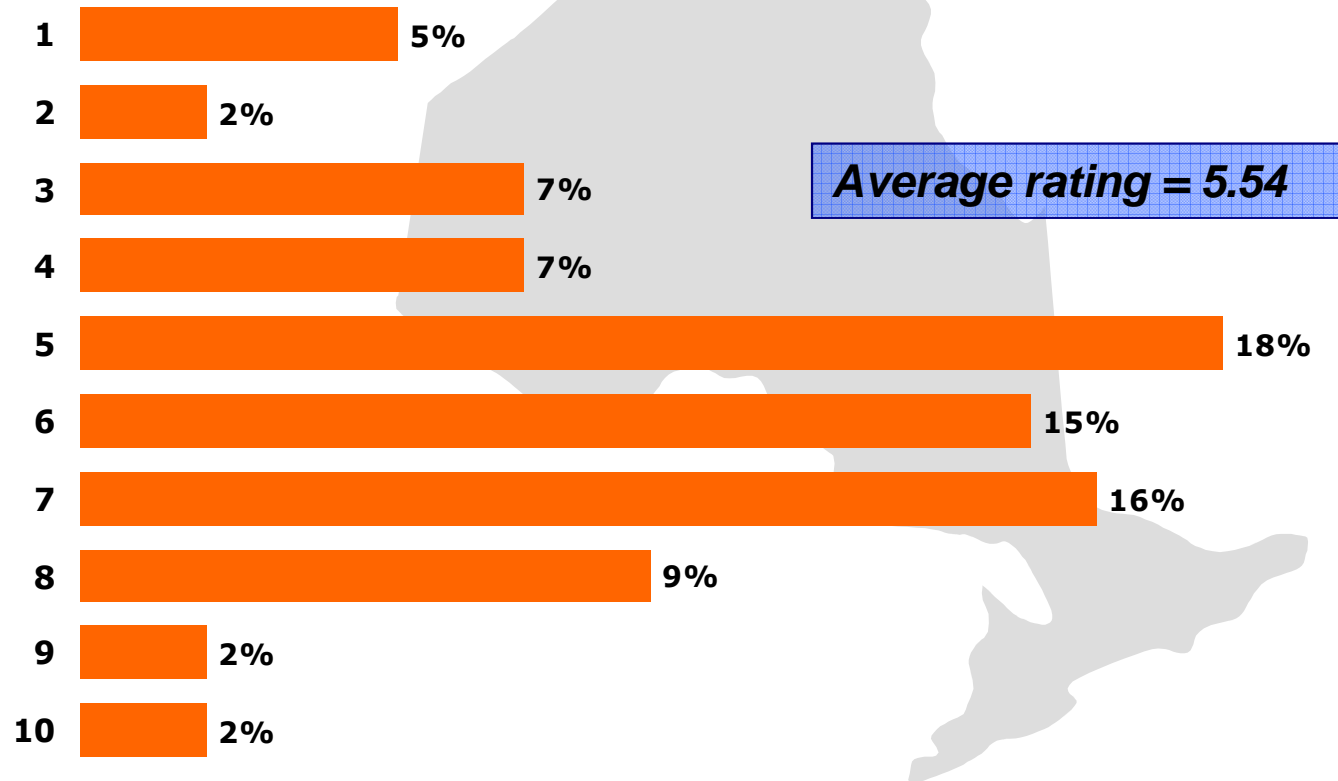
- Respondents were most likely to identify the expense of student tuition as the reason they are concerned that young Ontarians may be prevented from attending a publicly-funded university in the province.



[IF VERY OR SOMEWHAT CONCERNED] Question: Which of the following four issues best reflect the reason you are concerned about young Ontarians not being able to attend a publicly-funded university in Ontario? [READ AND ROTATE, ONE MENTION ONLY]

# Management of Ontario Universities

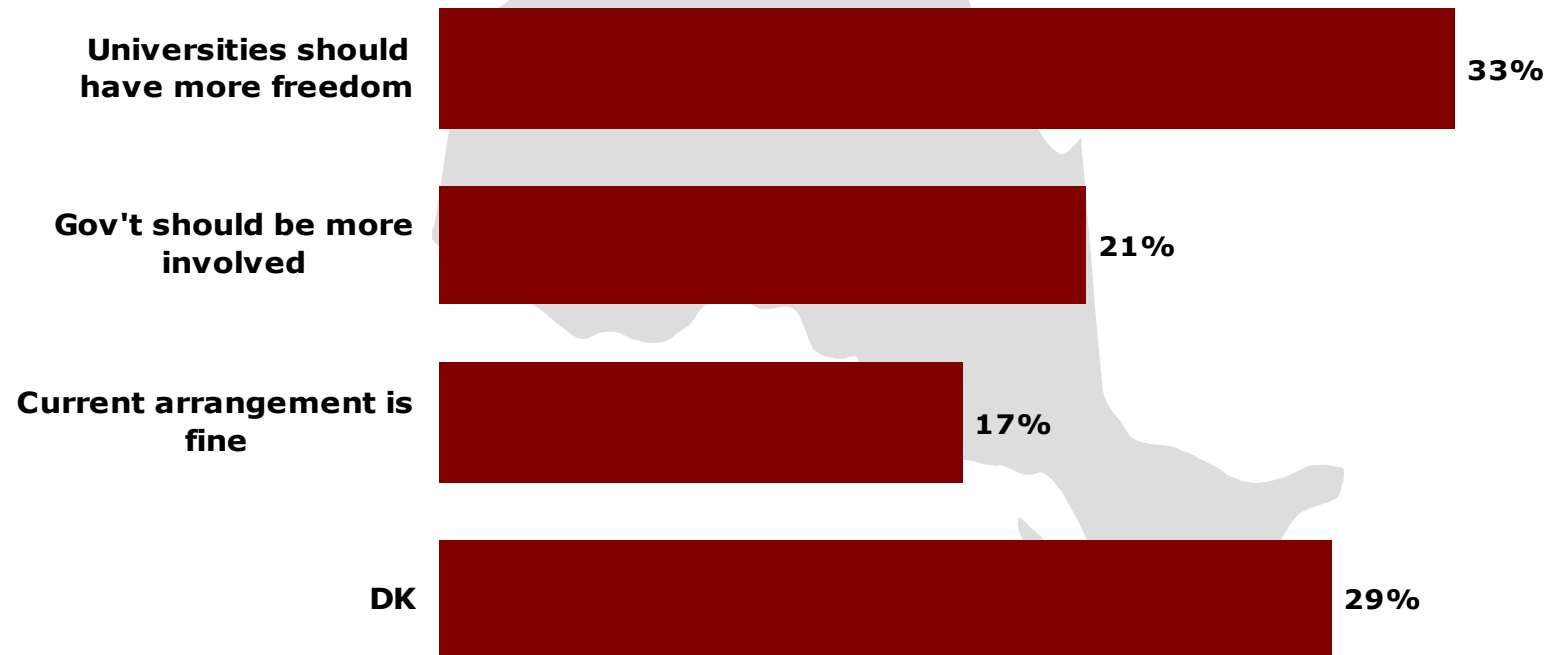
- The management of Ontario's universities received a moderate to moderately low rating (5,6,7) from almost half of respondents (49%). The average concern-rating was 5.54.



Question: "On a scale from one to 10, where one is "poorly managed" and 10 is "well- managed", how would you rate the management of Ontario's universities?"

# Management of Ontario Universities: Preferences

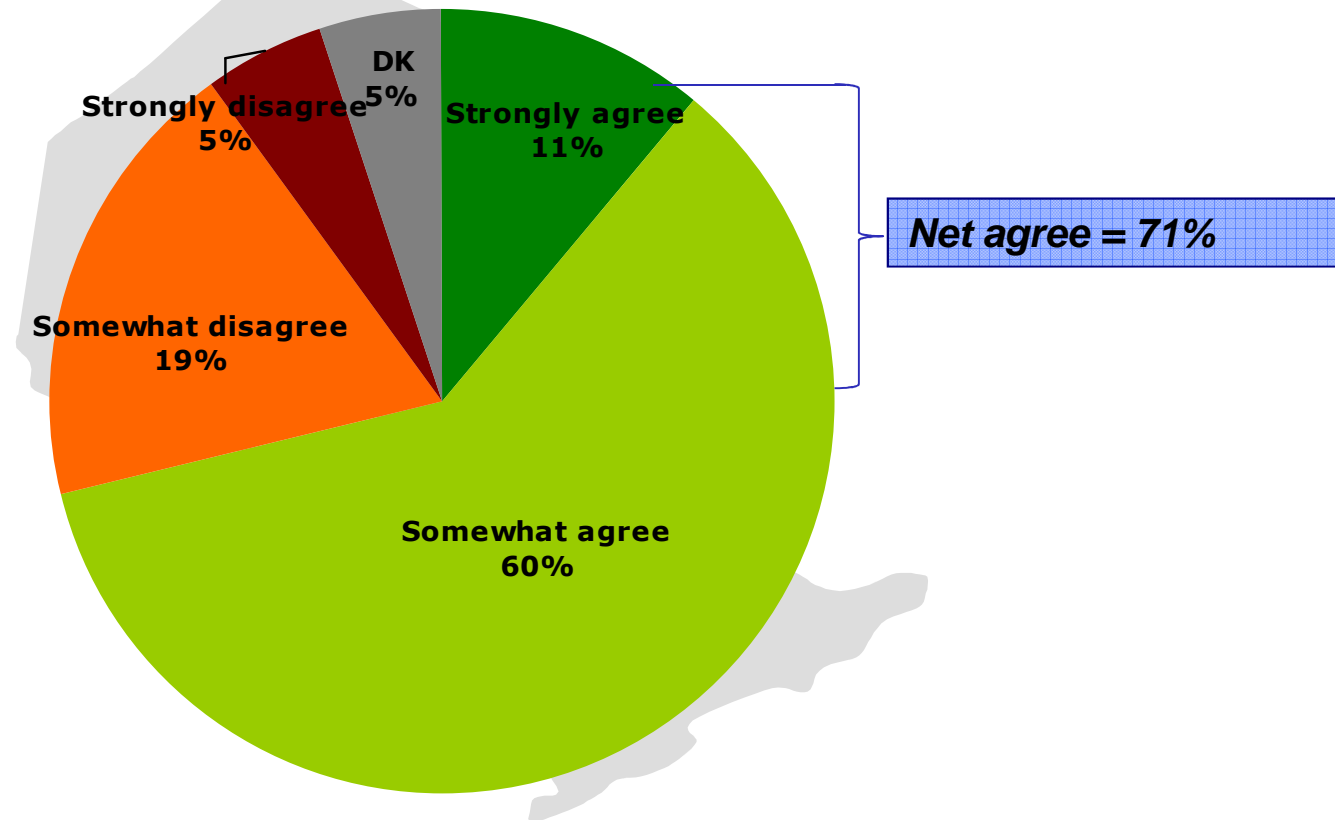
- One-third of Ontarians would prefer that universities have “more freedom” in managing themselves. By contrast, only one in five respondents would prefer that the government be “more involved.”



Question: Thinking about the way universities are managed, which of the following would be preferable for you personally?

# Conduct of Ontario Universities (1)

- Seven in ten Ontarians agree with the statement "I trust Ontario universities to conduct their affairs in a fair and ethical manner."

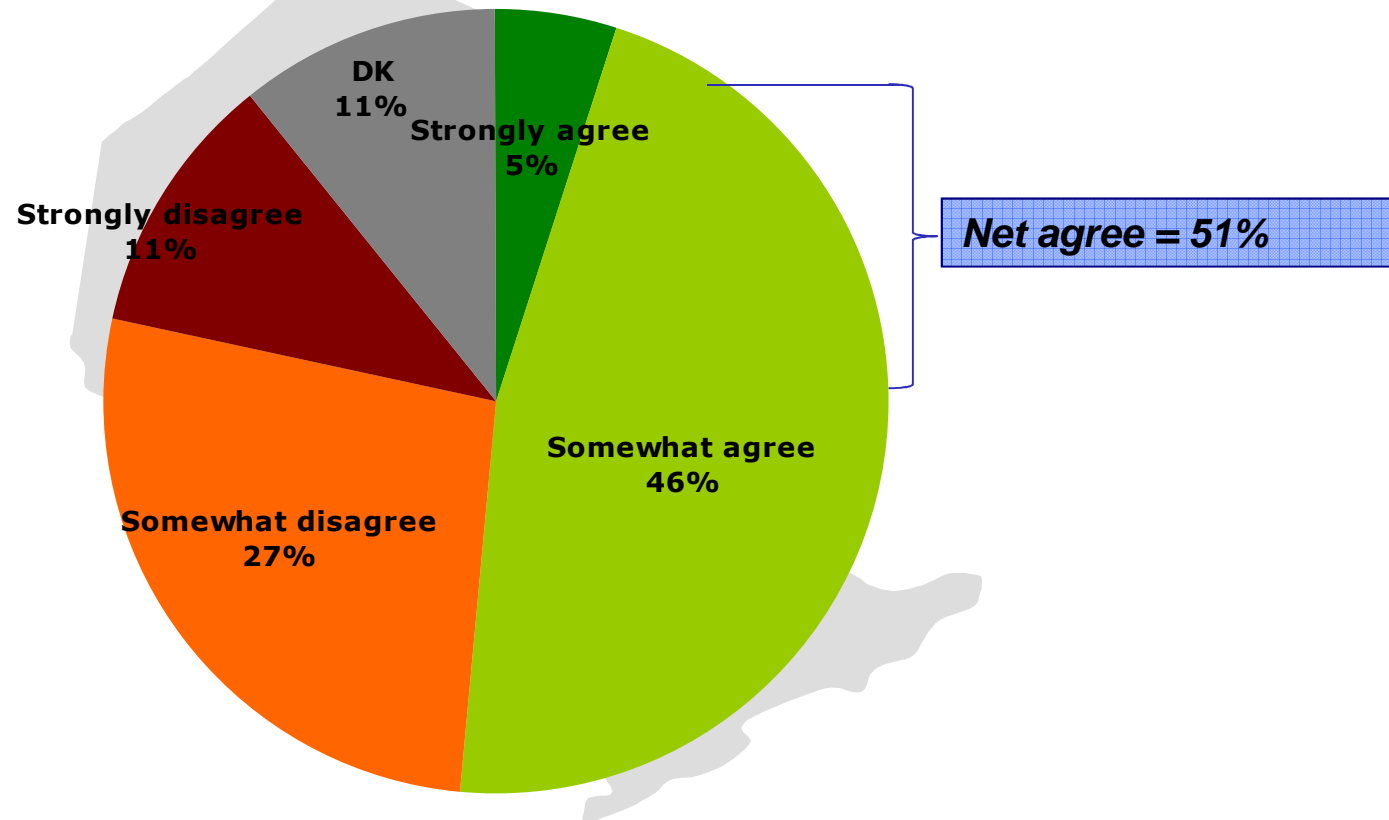


Question: "Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "I trust Ontario universities to conduct their affairs in a fair and ethical manner?"



# Conduct of Ontario Universities (2)

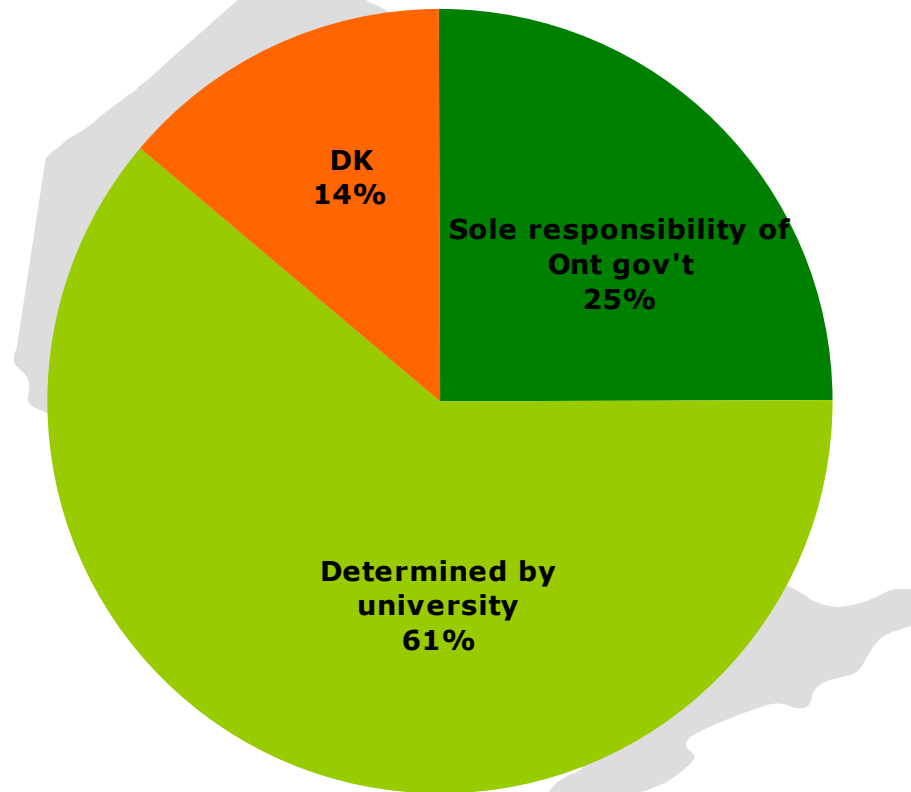
- Half of Ontarians agree with the statement, “I am confident that Ontario universities manage their finances in a competent manner.”



Question: “Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: "I am confident that Ontario universities manage their finances in a competent manner“?

# Salaries of Faculty and Staff

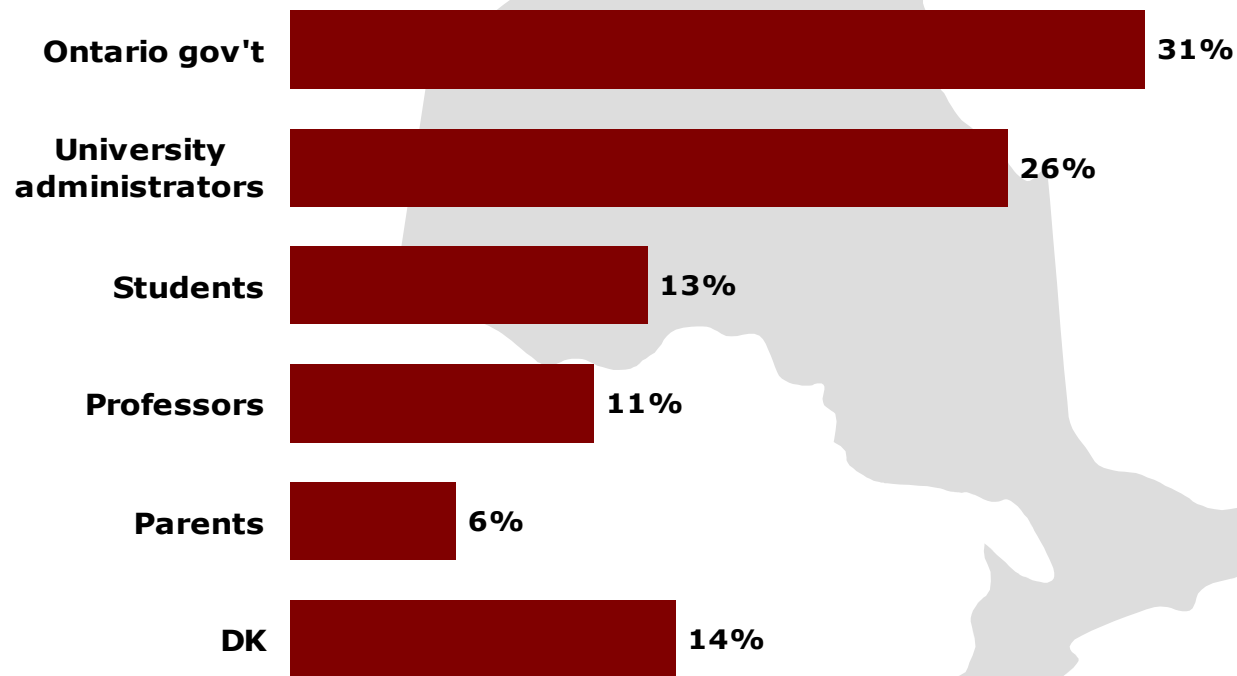
- Three in five Ontarians believe that the salaries of faculty and staff at Ontario universities should be determined primarily by each individual post-secondary institution.



Question: "Thinking about who should be responsible for determining the salaries of professors and staff in Ontario universities, which of the following two statements best reflect your view...the salaries of professors and staff in Ontario universities should be the sole responsibility of the Ontario government OR salaries of professors and staff in Ontario universities should be determined by each university?"

# Ensuring Accountability in PSE: Key Players

- Nearly a third of respondents think the Ontario government is best equipped to ensure accountability in post-secondary education across the province. A slightly lower proportion think that university administrators would perform best in this context.

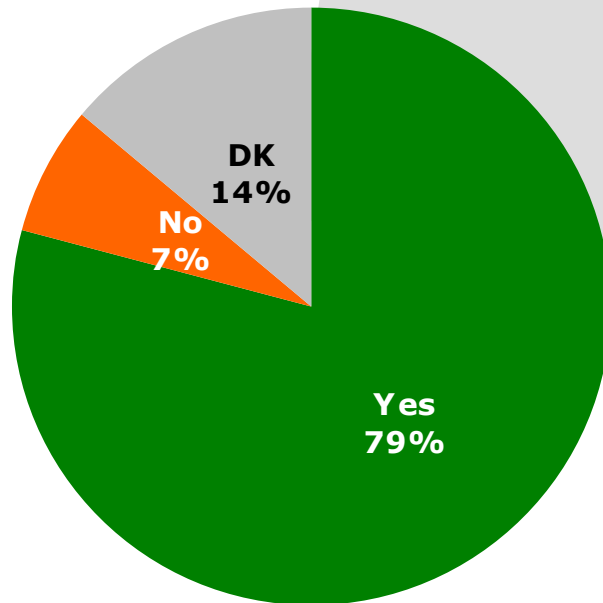


Question: Which of the following groups do you think would be best to ensure accountability in post-secondary education...?

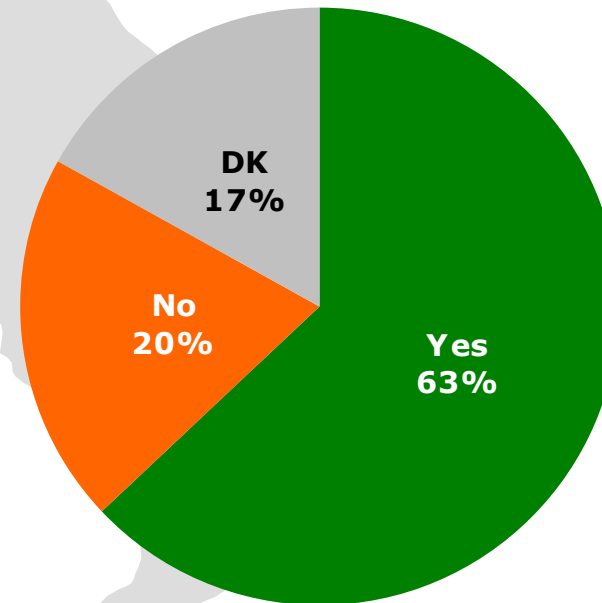
# Penalties for Universities

- Nearly eight in ten Ontarians believe penalties should be imposed on universities that fail to meet provincial standards of accountability. However, when queried directly about the imposition of financial penalties, the percentage of respondents who agree with this tactic falls to 63%.

**Penalties – general**



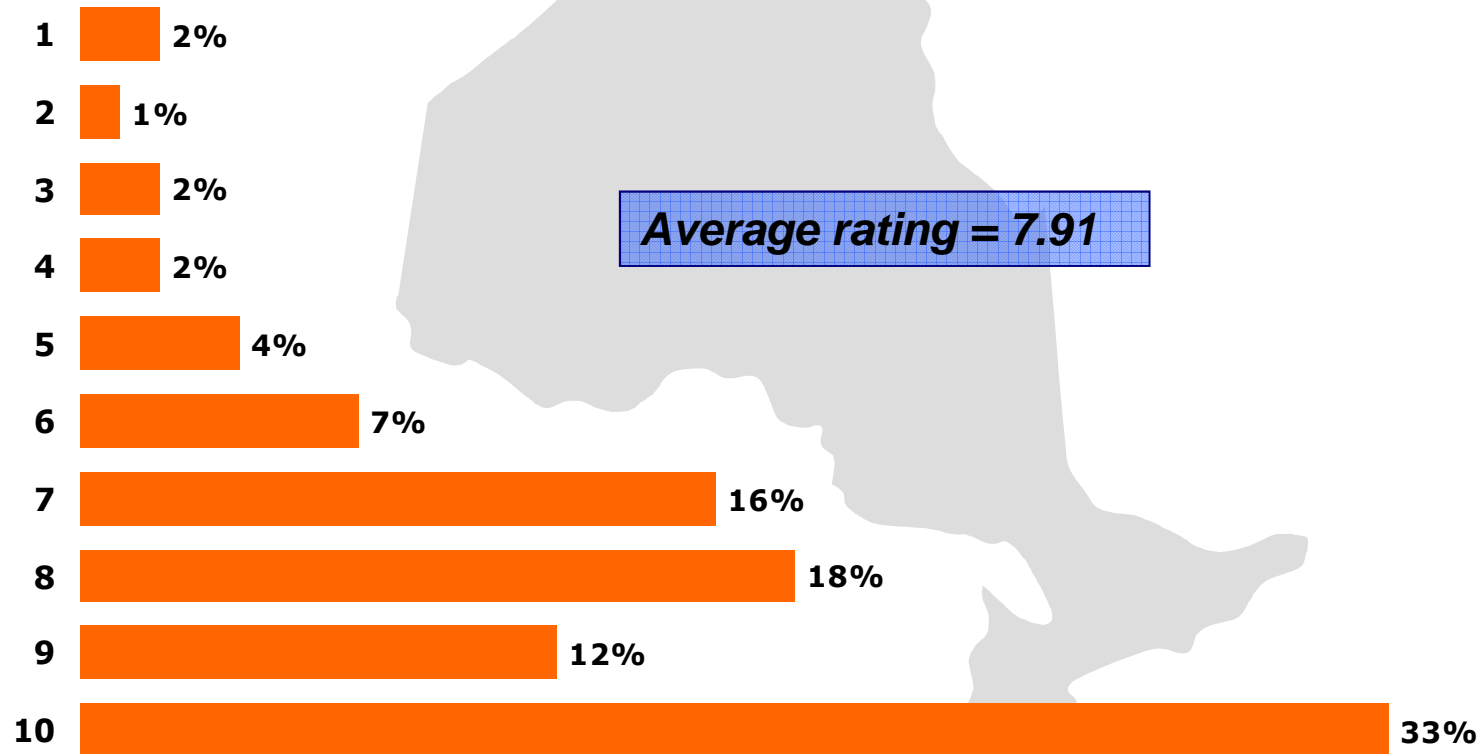
**Penalties – financial**



Question 1): “Do you think penalties should be imposed on universities that fail to meet Ontario’s standards for accountability?;  
Question 2): “ Do you think FINANCIAL penalties should be imposed on universities that fail to meet Ontario’s standards for accountability?”

# University-Based Research: Perceived Importance

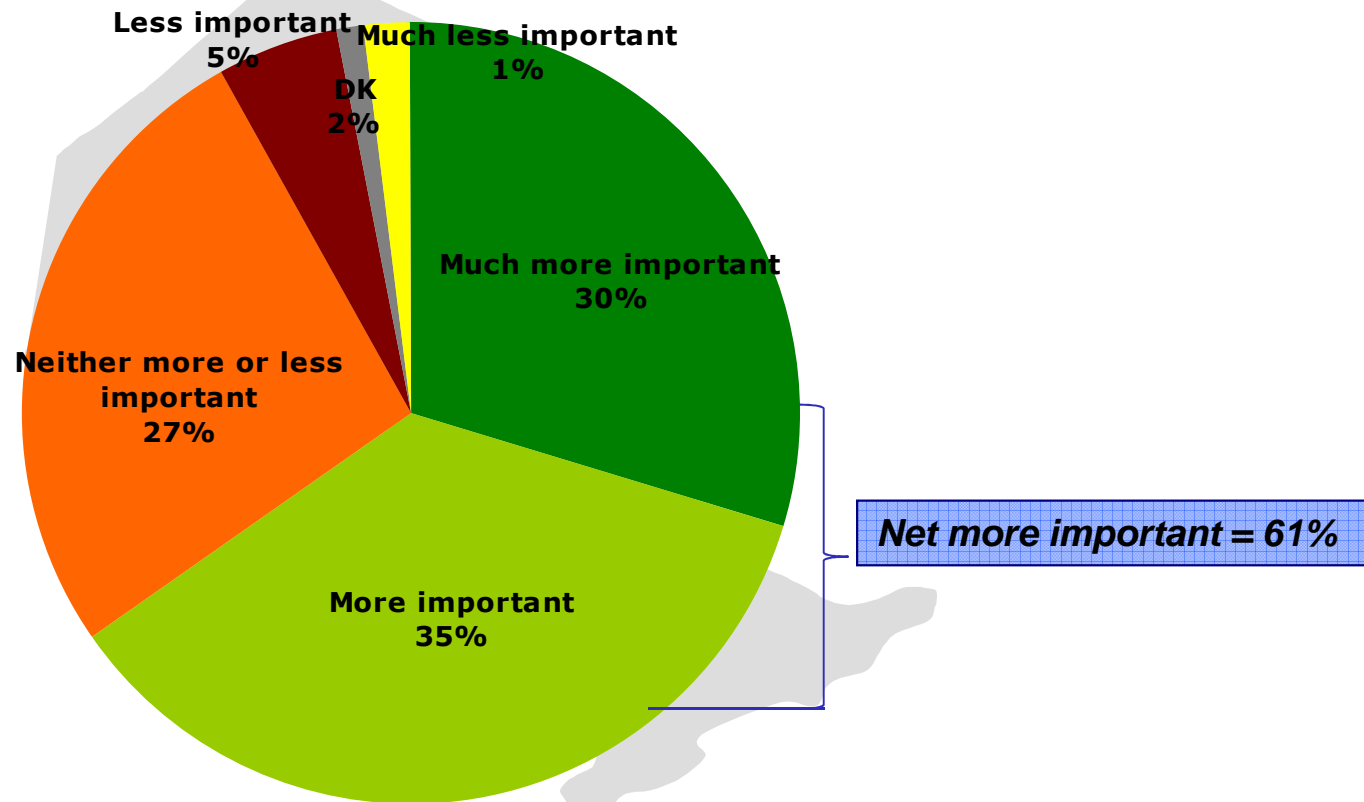
- A substantial majority (63%) of Ontarians place a high level of importance (8,9,10) on the ability of universities to conduct research in addition to teaching students. The average importance-rating was 7.91.



Question: "On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "not at all important" and 10 is "very important," how important do you think it is for universities to conduct research in addition to teaching students?"

# Future Importance of University Degrees

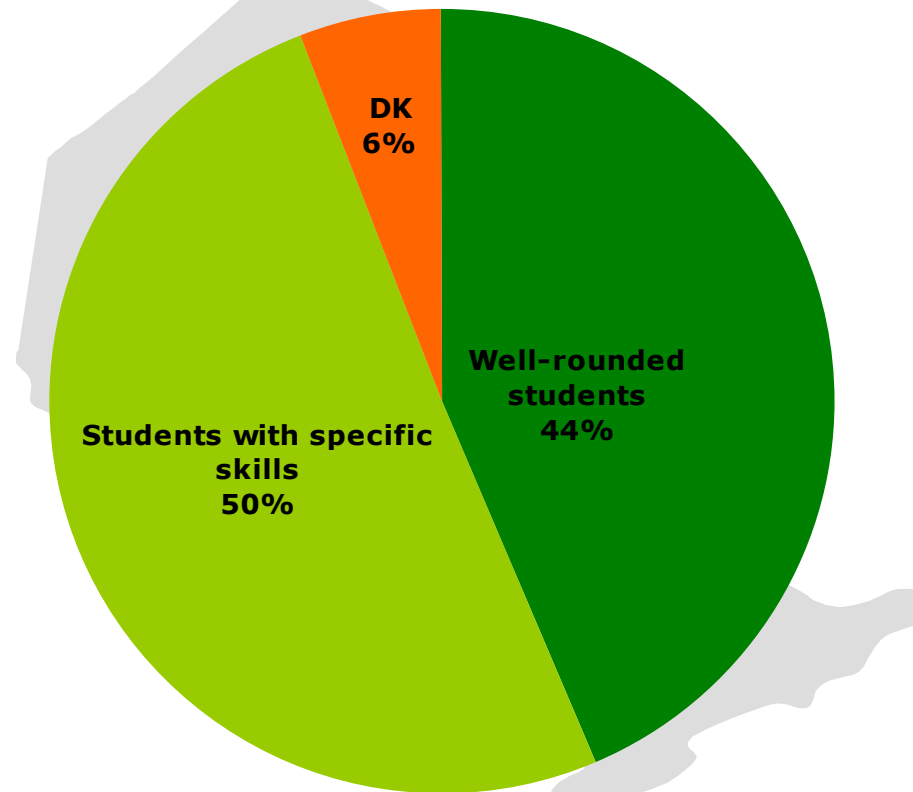
- Most Ontarians believe that having a university degree will become increasingly important in the future.



Question: Thinking about 10 years from now, how important do you think it will be to have a university degree. Would you say it will be much more important than today, more important, neither more nor less important, less important or much less important than today?"

# The Future of Post-Secondary Education: Marketable Skills

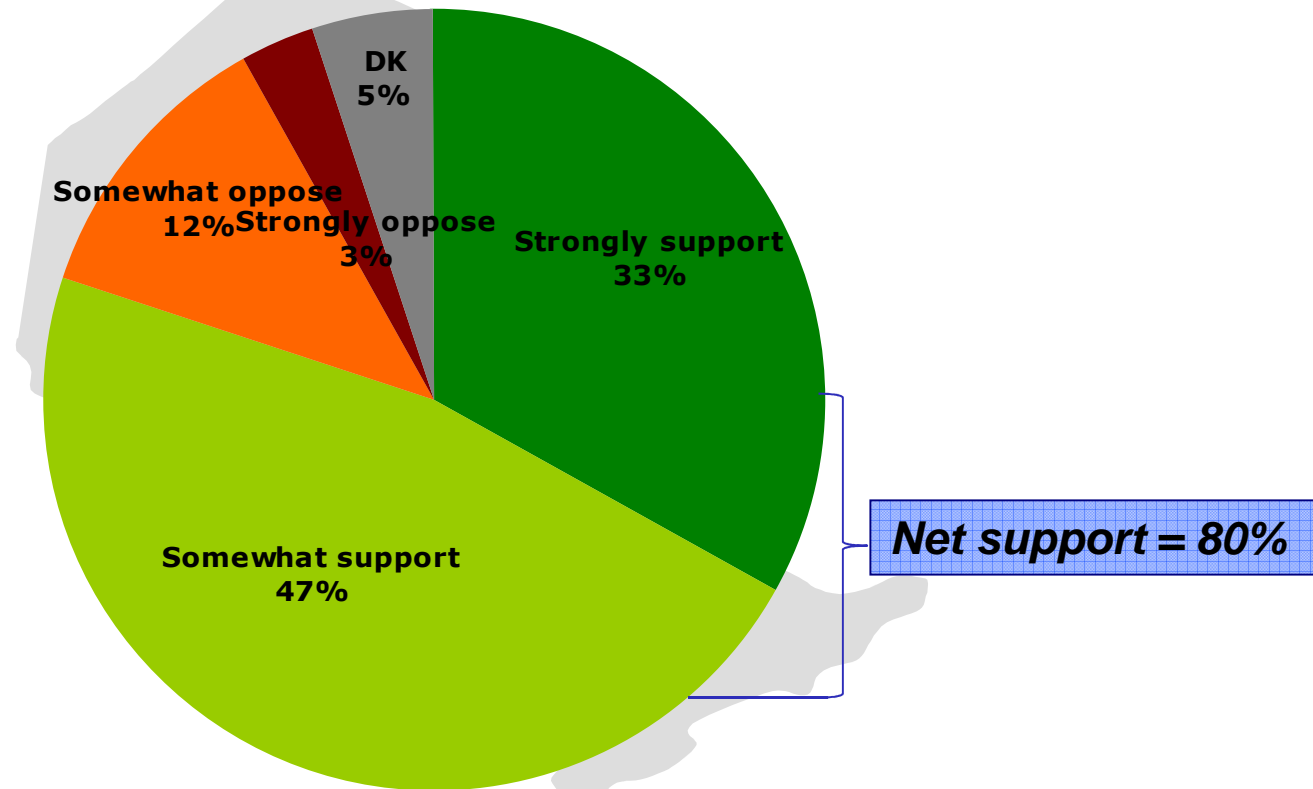
- Half of Ontarians believe it is becoming more important for post-secondary education to focus on endowing students with specific skills and expertise rather than a broad knowledge base.



Question: "Thinking of the kind of education that will be important in the future, do you think the role of post-secondary education will be to develop well-rounded students with broad knowledge or to concentrate on developing students with considerable expertise in specific skills?"

# Online University Courses

- An overwhelming proportion of Ontarians – fully eight in ten – support offering university courses online. By contrast, just 15% say they are opposed this initiative.

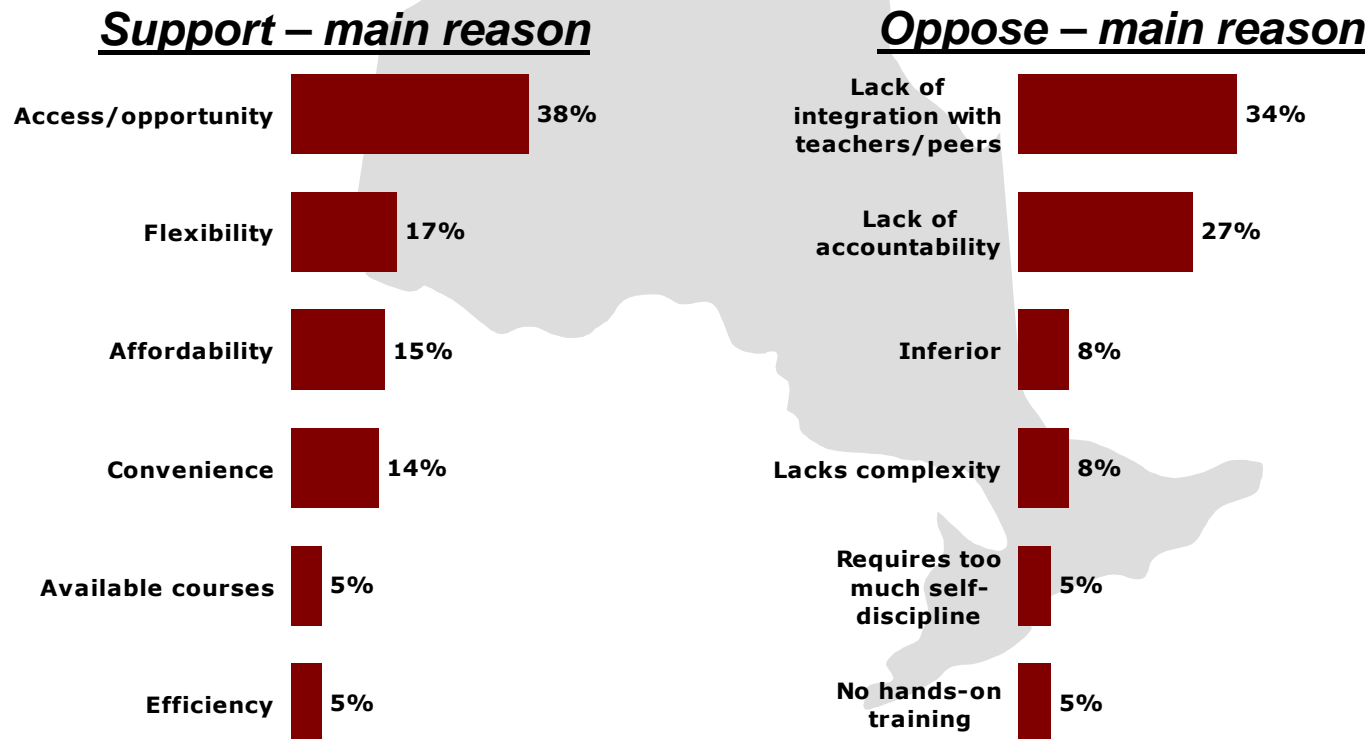


Question: "What do you think about universities offering courses on line? Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose on-line courses?"



# Support or Oppose Online Courses: Main Reason

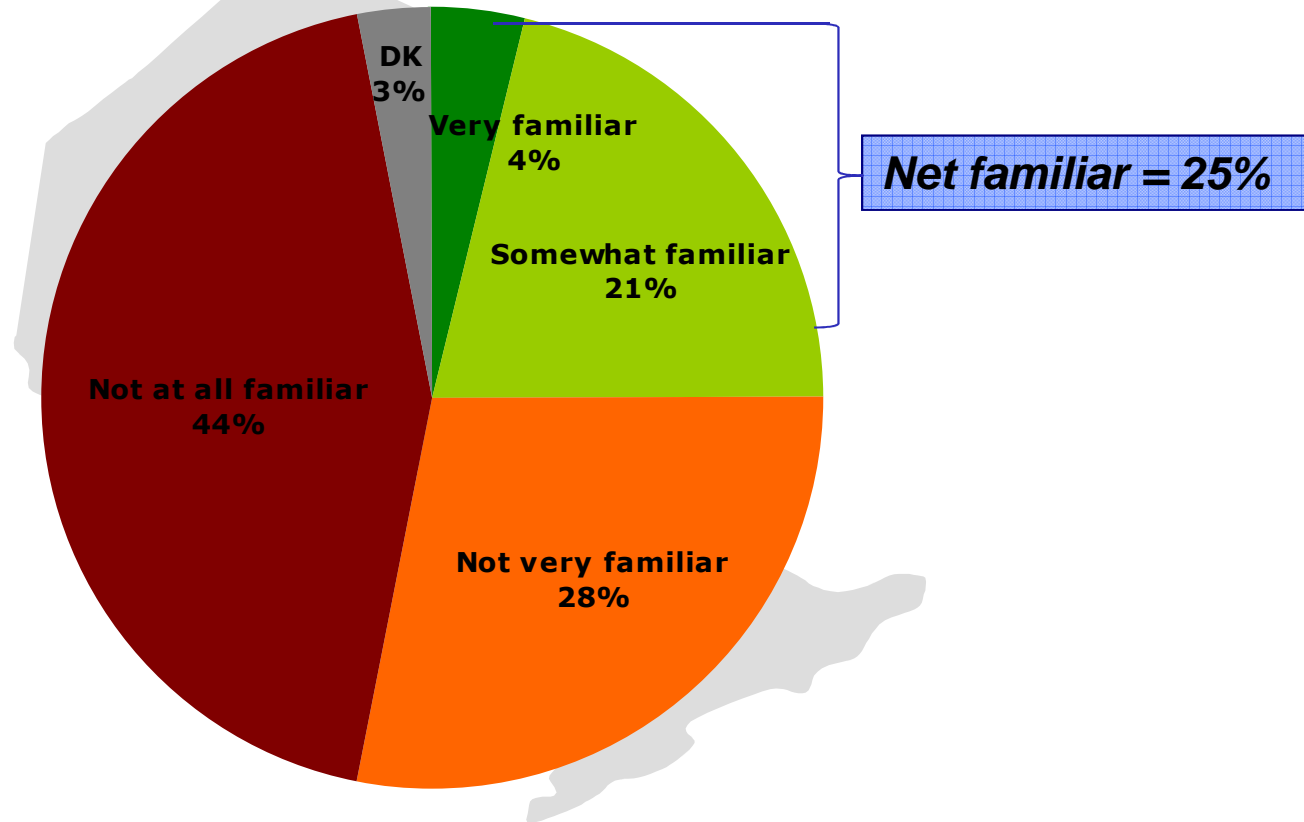
- Supporters of online courses are most likely to say the main reason they favour this method of instruction is due to the “accessibility” and/or “equal opportunity” it provides. Individuals who oppose this initiative, on the other hand, most often cite the “lack of integration” with teachers or peers the primary reason.



Question: Which of the following groups do you think would be best to ensure accountability in post-secondary education...?

# Compensation Freeze: Familiarity with Initiative

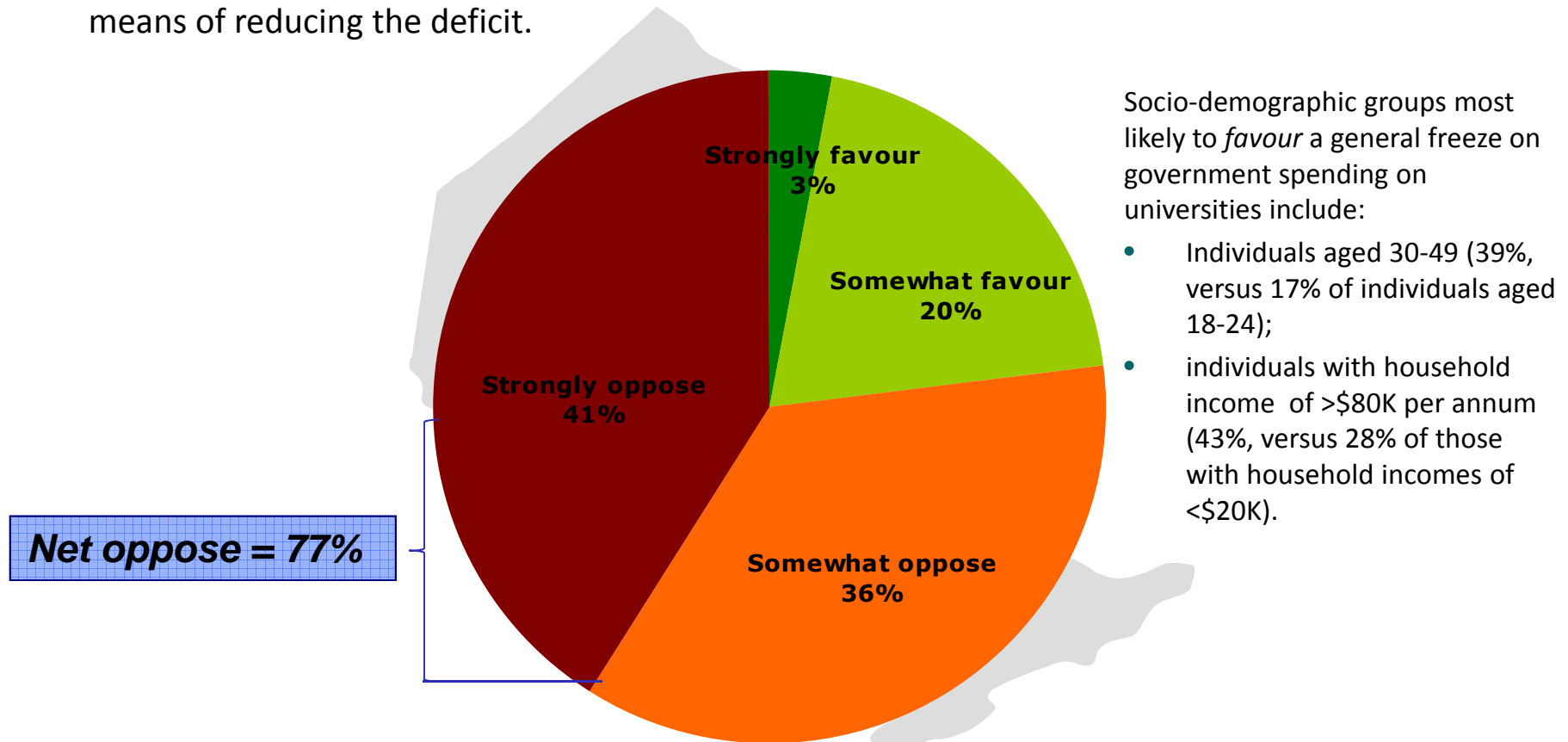
- Only one in four respondents is familiar with the Ontario government's plans to freeze the compensation of faculty and staff of universities in the province.



Question: "Are you very familiar, somewhat familiar, not very or not at all familiar with the Ontario government's plans to freeze staff compensation in universities?"

# Deficit Reduction Measures (1)

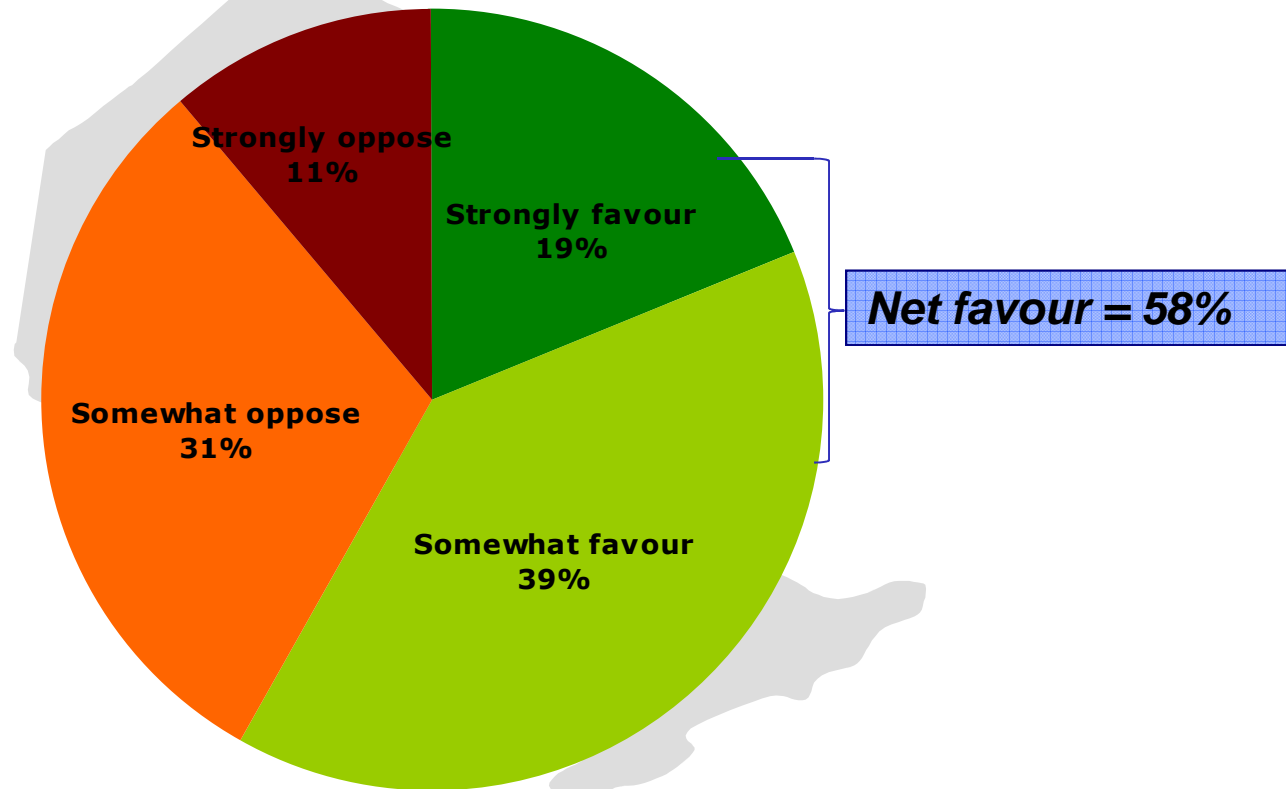
- Nearly four in five Ontarians oppose a freeze on government spending on universities as a means of reducing the deficit.



Question: “The Ontario government is considering a number of measures directed towards the public sector in general - including universities - as ways to reduce the provincial deficit. Based on what you know, do you strongly favour, somewhat favour, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the following potential measures directed toward Ontario Universities - A general freeze on government spending on universities?”

# Deficit Reduction Measures (2)

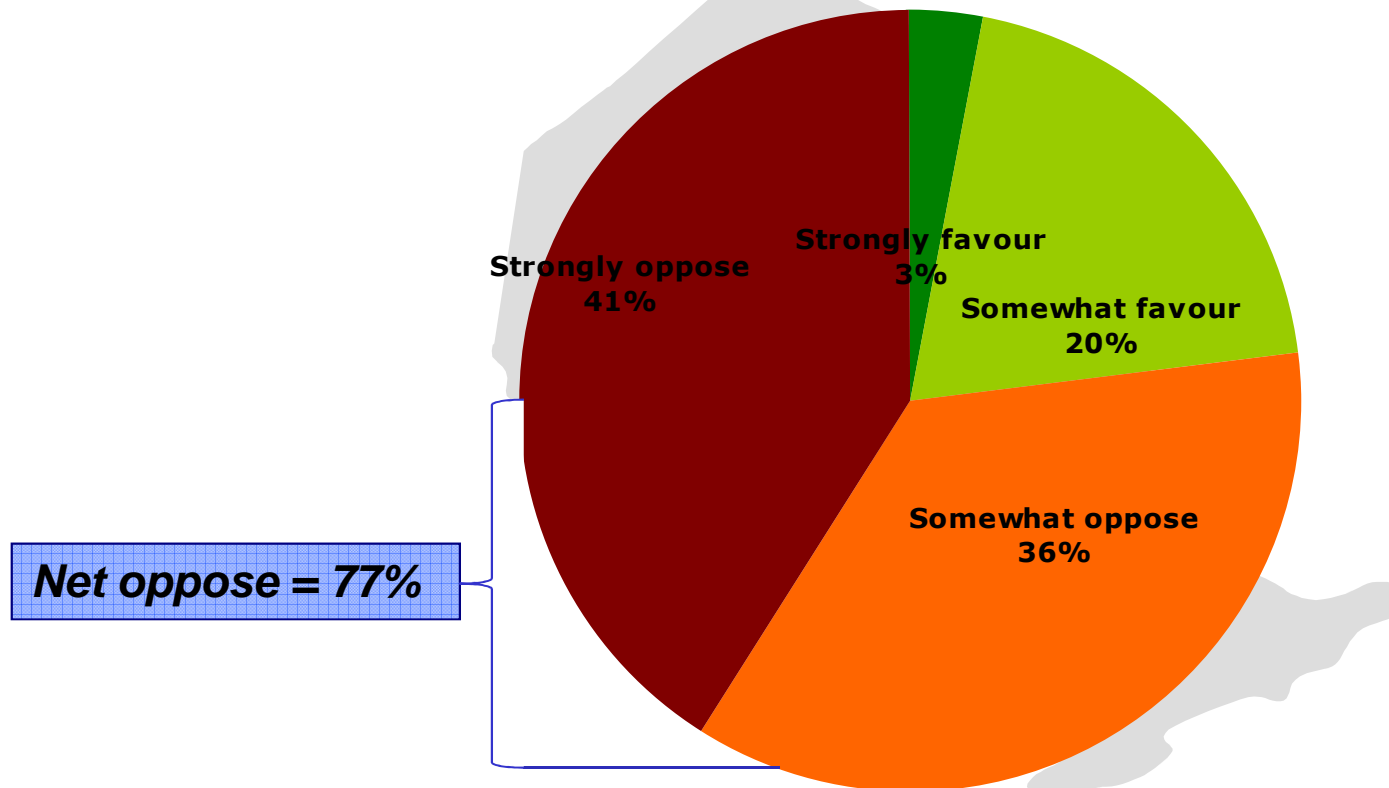
- Although most Ontarians oppose a general freeze on government funding for universities, a majority say they favour a freeze on salary increases of university professors and staff.



Question: “The Ontario government is considering a number of measures directed towards the public sector in general - including universities - as ways to reduce the provincial deficit. Based on what you know, do you strongly favour, somewhat favour, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the following potential measures directed toward Ontario Universities - A freeze on salaries of university professors and staff?”

# Potential Government Measures Affecting Universities (1)

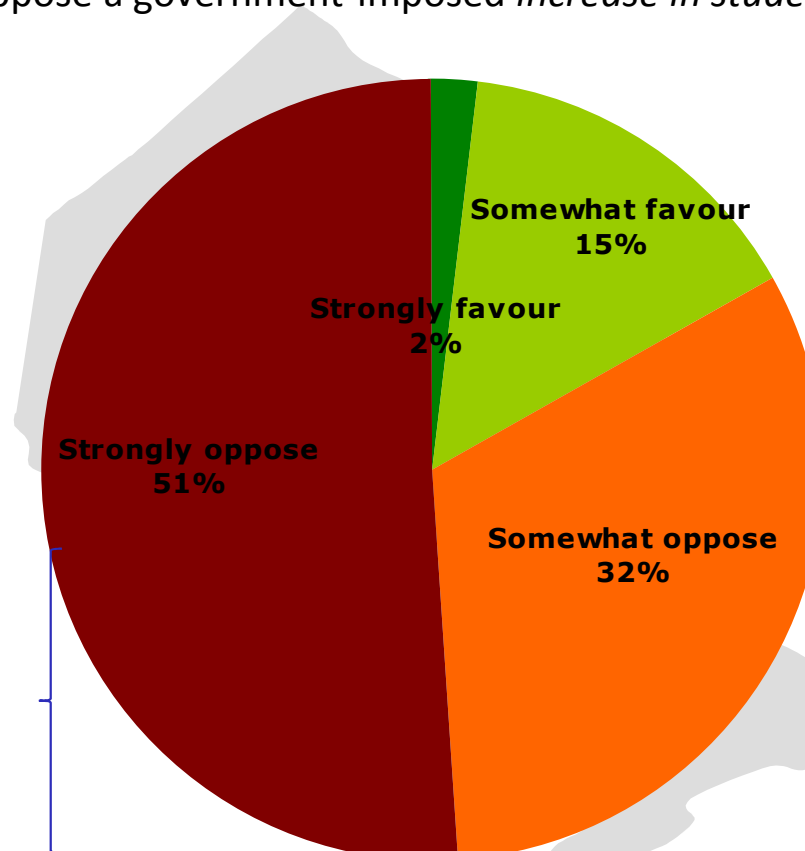
- The majority of Ontarians would oppose a proposed government measure to *decrease university enrollment*.



Question: “Based on what you know, do you strongly favour, somewhat favour, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the following potential measures directed toward Ontario Universities - Decreasing university enrolment?”

# Potential Government Measures Affecting Universities (2)

- Most Ontarians oppose a government-imposed *increase in student tuition fees*.



**Net oppose = 83%**

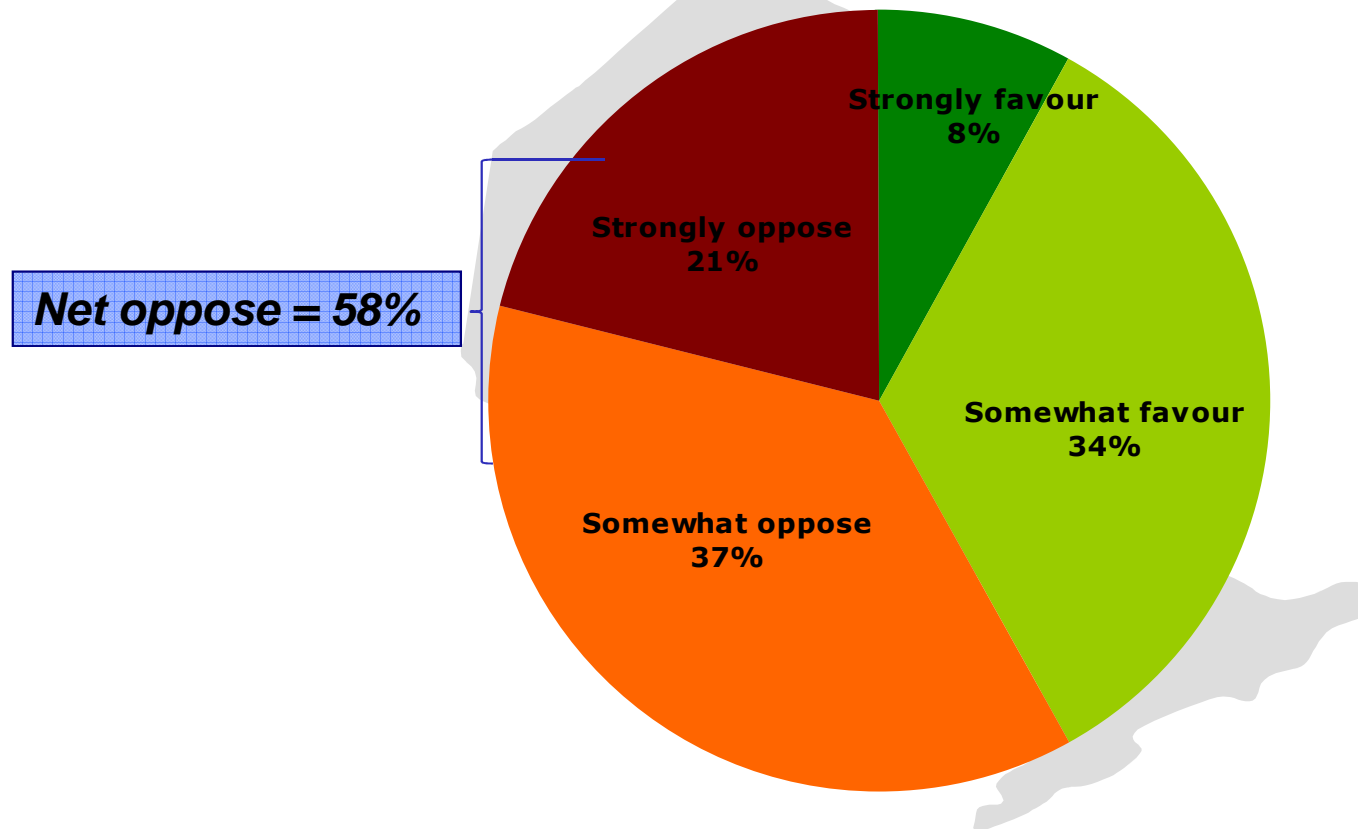
Socio-demographic groups most likely to *favour* an increase in student tuition fees include:

- individuals aged 25-29 (27%, compared to 0% of those aged 18-24);
- men (25%, compared to just 11% of women);
- individuals with a post-graduate degree (21%, versus 11% of individuals with high school or less education);
- individuals with household income of >\$80K per annum (23%, versus 16% of individuals with household incomes of <\$20K).

Question: “Based on what you know, do you strongly favour, somewhat favour, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the following potential measures directed toward Ontario Universities – Increasing student tuition fees?”

# Potential Government Measures Affecting Universities (3)

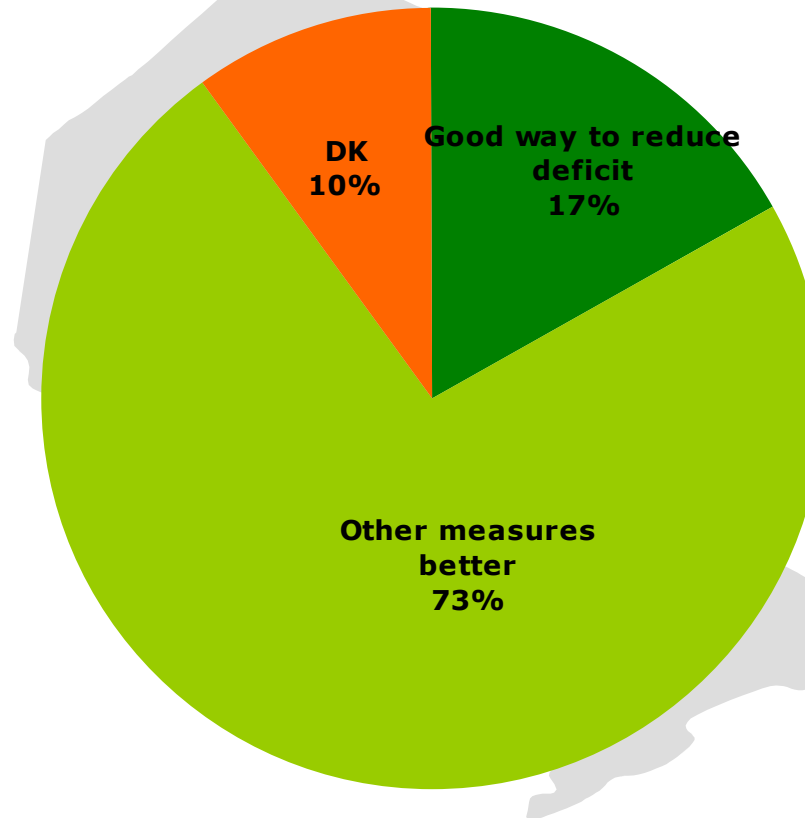
- A majority of Ontarians oppose the proposed government measure to *increase the student to faculty ratio in universities*.



Question: “Based on what you know, do you strongly favour, somewhat favour, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose the following potential measures directed toward Ontario Universities – Increasing the student to faculty ratio?”

# Spending Freeze: Useful for Deficit Reduction?

- More than seven in ten Ontarians believe that the provincial government should introduce “other measures” to manage the deficit prior to implementing general spending freeze on universities in the province.



Socio-demographic groups most likely to think that a general spending freeze on universities is a “good way” to reduce the deficit include:

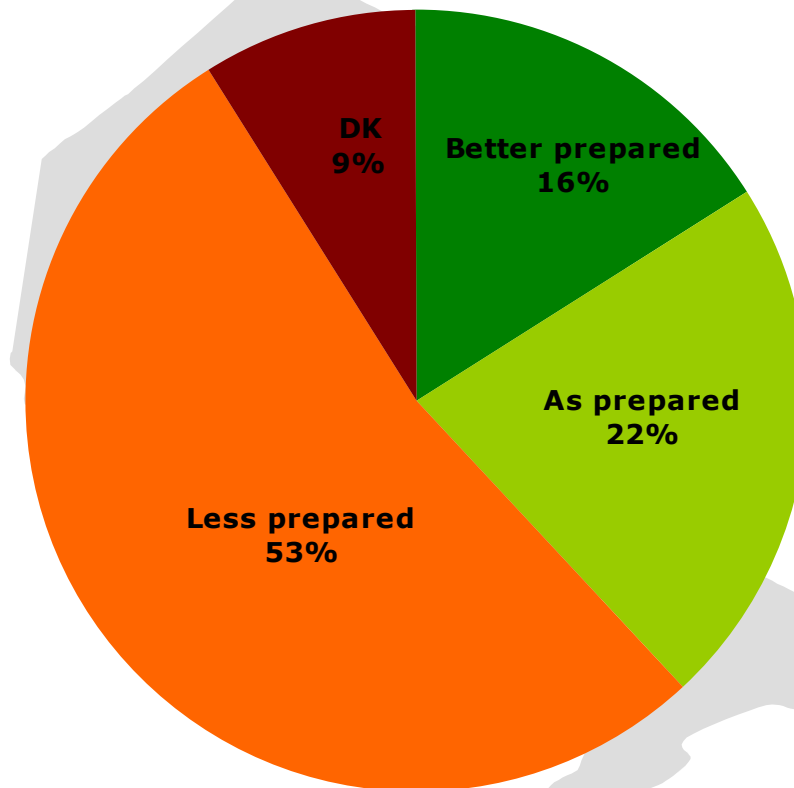
- individuals aged 25-29 (27%, compared to 11% of those aged 18-24);
- men (22%, compared to 12% of women);
- individuals with some post-secondary education (21%, versus 12% of individuals with high school or less education);
- Individuals whose household income is \$20K-\$50K per annum (23%, compared to 15% of respondents whose income is \$50K-\$80K).

Question: “Based on what you know, do you think a government spending freeze is a good way to reduce the deficit or do you think other measures would be better?”



# High School Students: How Prepared Are They?

- Over half of Ontarians believe that high school students are “less prepared” for university today than they were 15 years ago.



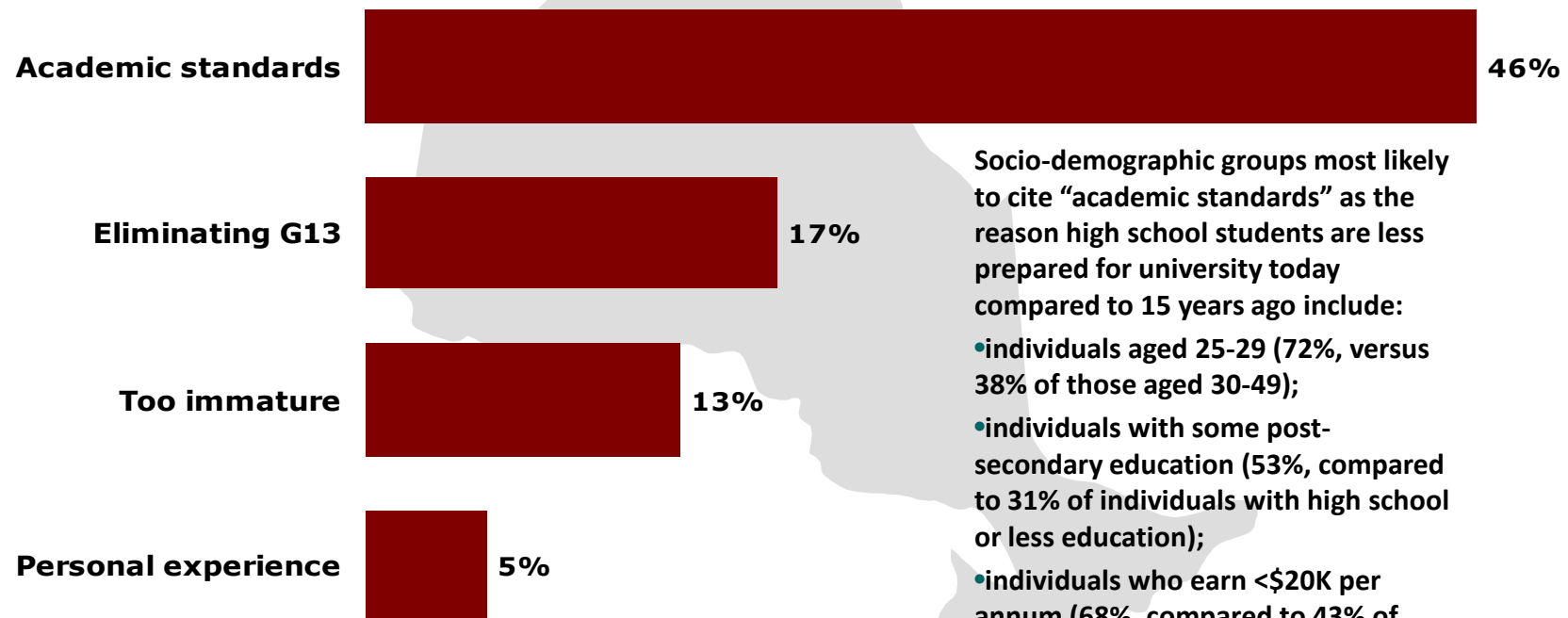
Socio-demographic groups most likely to think that high school students are “less prepared” than they were 15 years ago include:

- individuals aged 50-64 (62%, compared to 26% of persons aged 25-29).
- individuals with a post-graduate degree (61%, compared to 46% of individuals with an undergraduate degree);
- individuals whose household income is <\$20K per annum (65%, versus 46% of respondents who earn between \$50K-\$80K).

Question: “Based on what you know, do you think high school students going to university are better prepared, as prepared, or less prepared than high school students were about 15 years ago?”

# High School Students Less Prepared: Main Reason

- Nearly half of respondents cite the lack of “academic standards” as the main reason high school students are less prepared for university than they were 15 years ago.



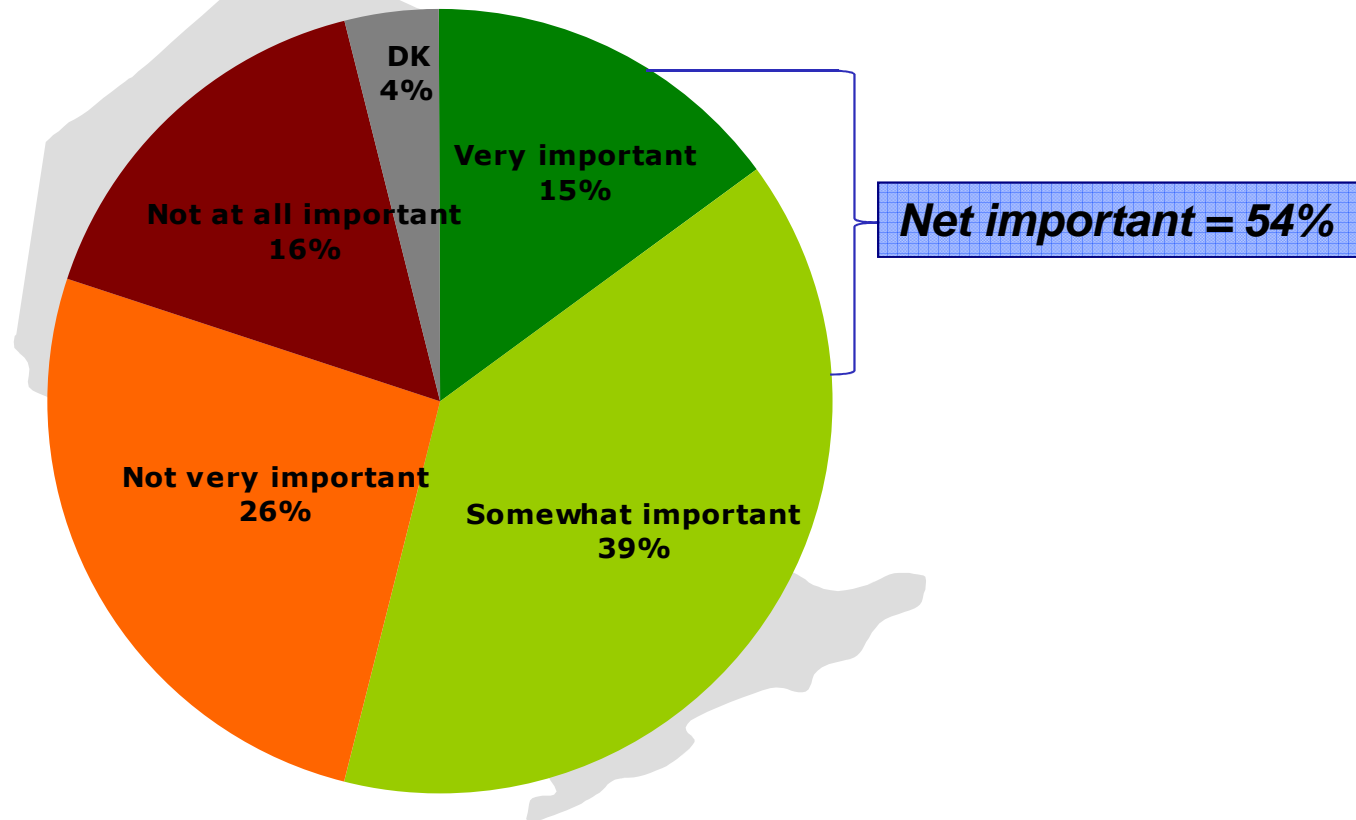
Socio-demographic groups most likely to cite “academic standards” as the reason high school students are less prepared for university today compared to 15 years ago include:

- individuals aged 25-29 (72%, versus 38% of those aged 30-49);
- individuals with some post-secondary education (53%, compared to 31% of individuals with high school or less education);
- individuals who earn <\$20K per annum (68%, compared to 43% of those who earn >\$80K).

[IF LESS PREPARED] Question: What is the main reason you say that?

# International Students: Perceived Importance

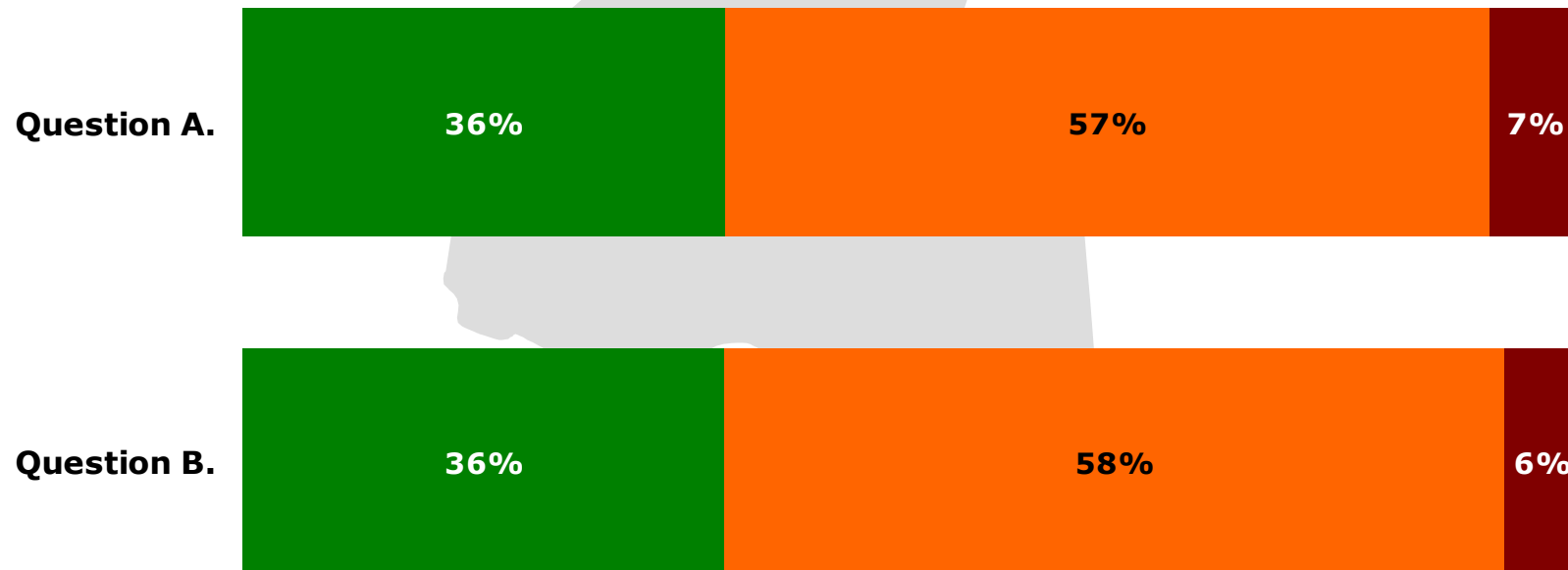
- Over half of Ontarians believe it is important for post-secondary institutions in the province to attract more students from abroad.



Question: “For you personally, would you say it is very important, somewhat important, not very or not at all important that Ontario universities reach out to the world and attract more international university students to come and study in the province?”

# International Programs

- A majority of Ontarians think that Canadian universities should focus on offering programs to Canadian students before investing in developing programs abroad. This view appears to transcend the potential benefit of additional revenue generated by international programs.



■ **Positive development**

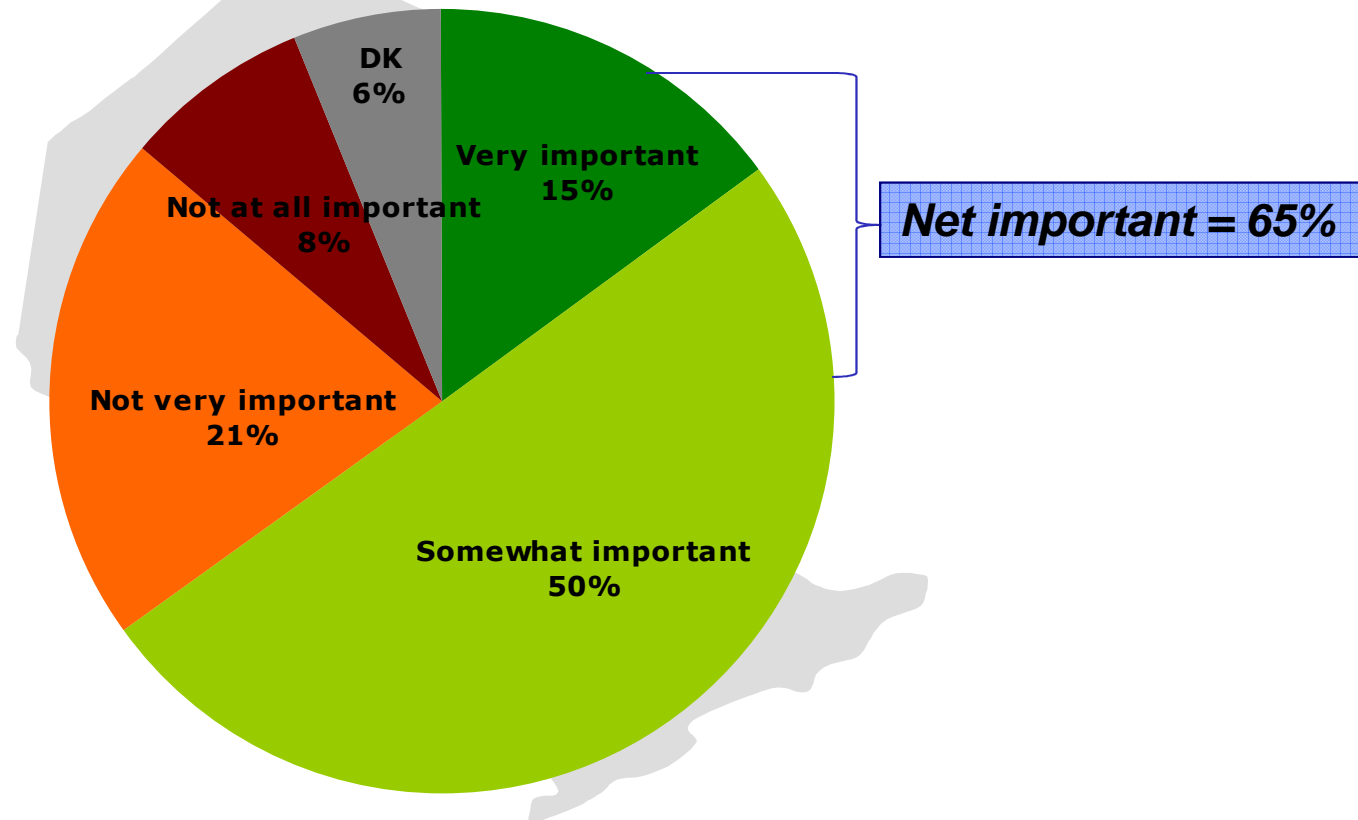
■ **Should focus on programs for Cdn students**

■ **DK**

[SPLIT SAMPLE] Question A. As you may know, *[in order to increase their revenues]*, Canadian universities are setting up programs and campuses in other countries. Do you think this new practice is a positive development or do you think Canadian universities should first focus on offering programs to students in Canada? Question B. Canadian universities are setting up programs and campuses in other countries. Do you think this is a positive development or do you think Canadian universities should first focus on...

# International Professors: Perceived Importance

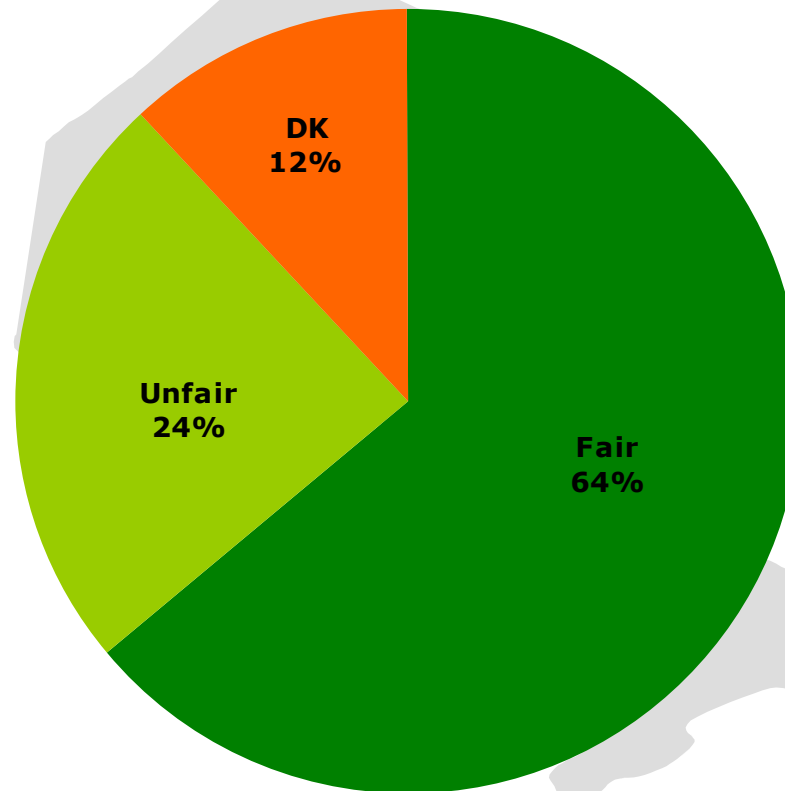
- More than three in five Ontarians believe it is important to attract internationally trained professors to teach in the province.



Question: "Would you say that it is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important that Ontario universities attract professors from other countries to come and teach in the province?"

# High Tuition for International Students: Fair or Unfair?

- Over three in five Ontarians believe that it is “fair” for international students to pay significantly higher tuition fees to attend a post-secondary institution in the province.



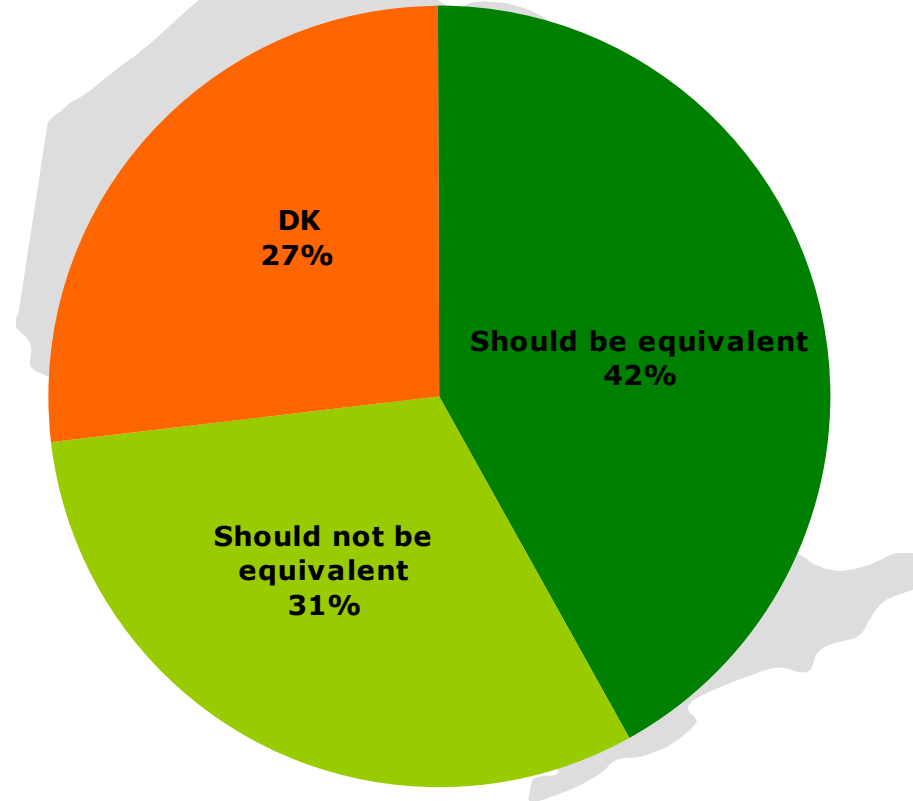
Socio-demographic groups most likely to think that it is “fair” to charge international students higher tuition fees include:

- Individuals aged 50-64 (74%, compared to 40% of individuals aged 18-24);
- men (72%, compared to 57% of women);
- individuals with an undergraduate degree (78%, versus 52% of individuals with high school or less);
- individuals with household income of >\$80K per annum (77%, versus 45% of those with household incomes of <\$20K).

Question: “Do you think it is fair or unfair to charge international students at least twice – or even three times – the tuition paid by a Canadian student to attend a university in Ontario?”

# Degree Equivalency

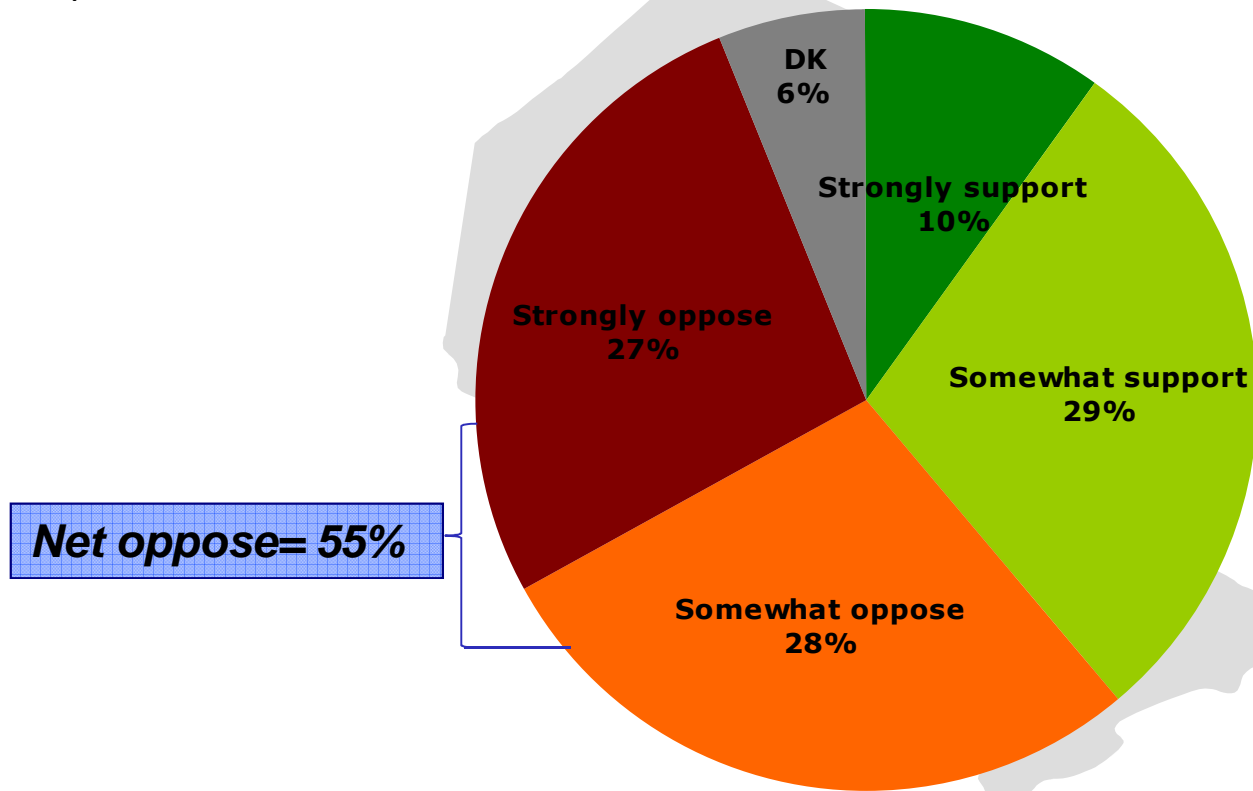
- A significantly higher proportion of Ontarians believe that university degrees earned abroad should be considered equivalent to degrees awarded in Canada compared to those who hold the contrary view.



Question: “Do you think university degrees from abroad should be recognized as equivalent to university degrees granted in Canada or not?”

# Scholarships for International PhD Students

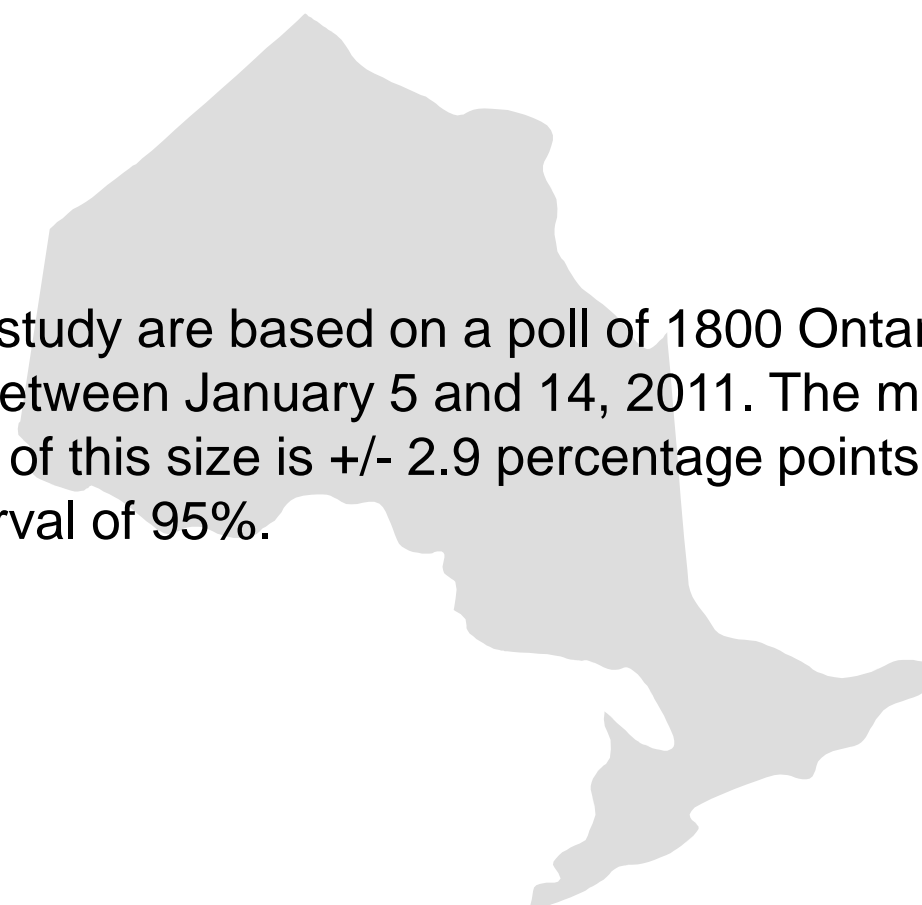
- The majority of Ontarians oppose the recent initiative to provide international PhD students enrolled in post-secondary programs in Ontario with large scholarships worth as much as \$40K per annum.



Question: "As you may know, the Ontario government recently announced 75 new scholarships worth as much as \$40,000 per year for International students taking PhD courses at Ontario universities. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose this new initiative?"



# Methodology



The results of this study are based on a poll of 1800 Ontarians over the age of 18 conducted between January 5 and 14, 2011. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 2.9 percentage points within a confidence interval of 95%.