



# **OCUFA Annual Public Opinion Analysis**

**February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

# Methodology

- **Feedback Research was commissioned by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) to review the current state of public opinion in Ontario with regards to post-secondary education. More specifically, this study addresses:**
  - Voter preference of Ontario political parties.
  - The most salient issues facing the Ontario government and how post-secondary policy ranks in comparison.
  - Attitudes and opinions about the McGuinty government's handling of post-secondary issues.

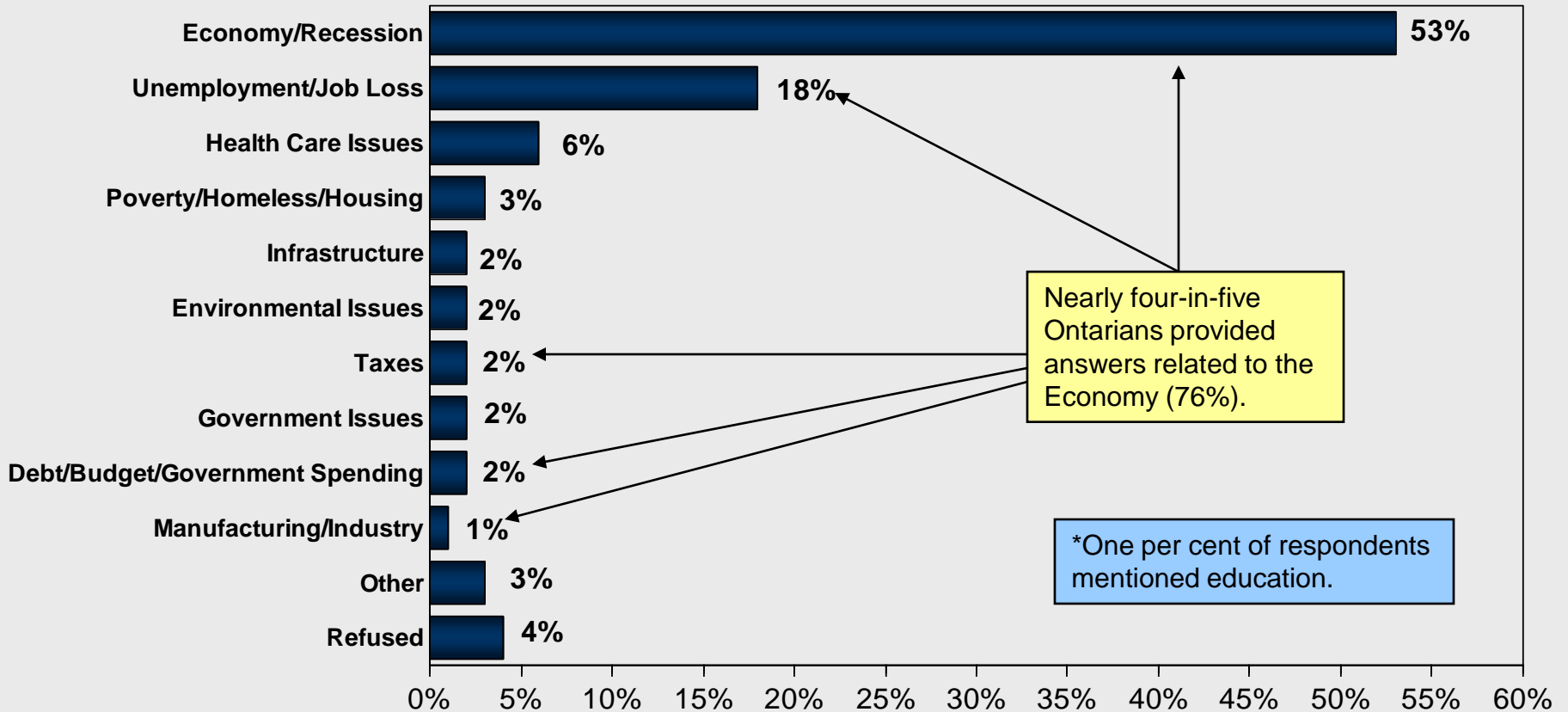
The study focuses on:

- Attitudes and opinions regarding the current state of post-secondary education overall.
  - Attitudes and opinions for improving post-secondary education overall.
  - Attitudes and opinions about accessibility to Ontario's post-secondary institutions.
  - Attitudes and opinions about the future mandate of post-secondary education.
  - Attitudes and opinions towards funding post-secondary education, in particular government versus heightened student tuition fees sources.
  - Attitudes and opinions towards current university management and administration.
- **A total of 600 Ontarians were contacted using a CATI telephone instrument between January 29<sup>th</sup> and February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Overall, results are considered accurate within  $\pm$  4.0 percentage points, within a 95% confidence interval.**

# **Issues Currently Facing Ontario**

# Most Important Issue Facing Ontario's Government

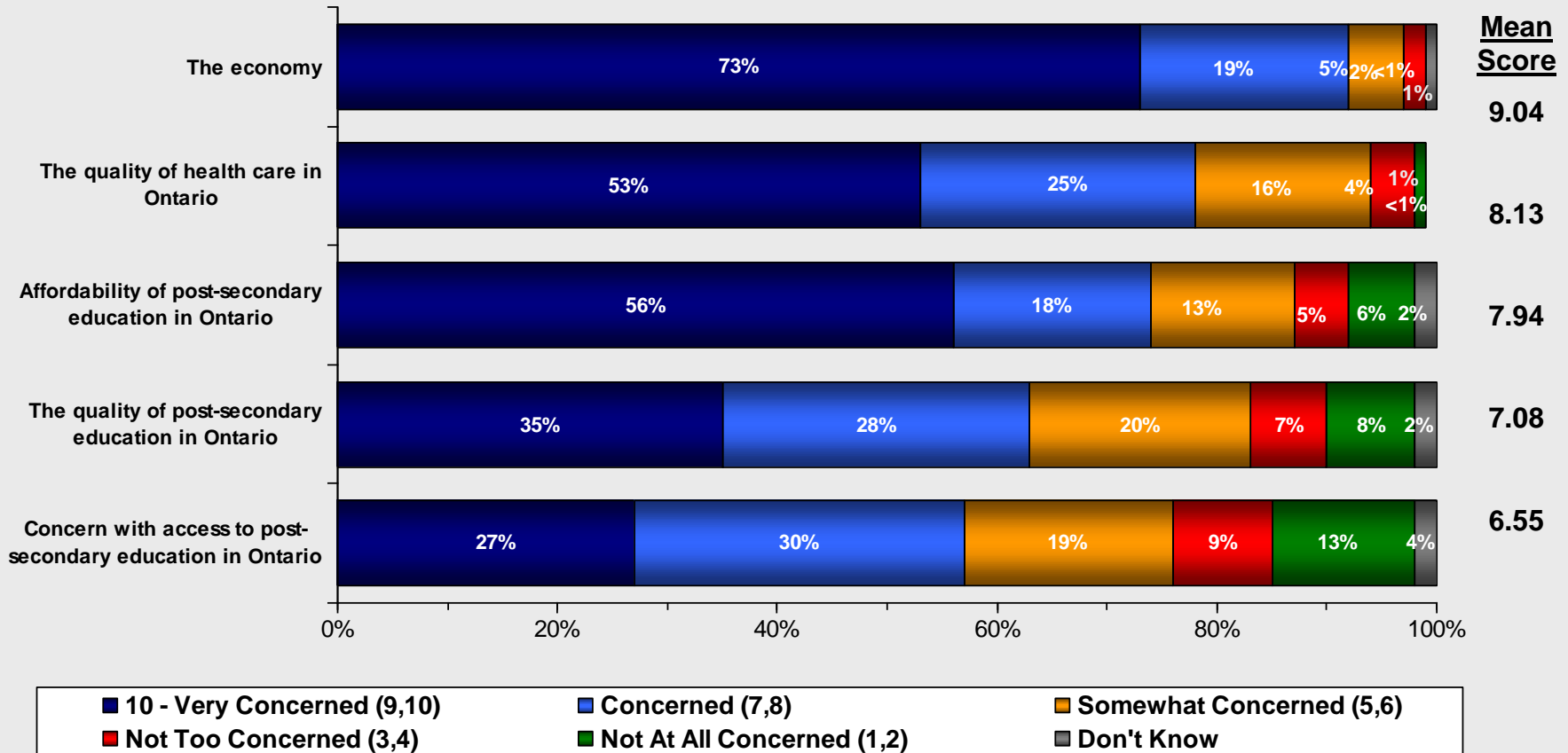
Whether generally or more specifically, respondents agree the most important issues facing the Ontario government have to do with the economy. When asked, a majority of Ontarians said the most pressing issue is the Economy/Recession, with one-in-five pointing to Unemployment (53% and 18%, respectively).



Q3. What is the most important issue facing the Ontario provincial government today?

# Very Concerned/Not At All Concerned: Issues

Overall, Ontarians are very concerned about economic and personal financial issues, with three-in-four respondents very concerned about the Economy (73%). Further, when asked about education related issues, a notable majority said they were very concerned with the affordability of post-secondary education (56%).



Q5+Q4+Q20+Q6+Q15. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is "not at all concerned" and 10 is "very concerned," how concerned are you with each of the following issues...

# Very Concerned Respondents by Age, Gender and Vote Intent Potential

•Female respondents are much more likely to be concerned about post-secondary education issues than male respondents.

•NDP supporters are also more likely to be concerned about post secondary issues than any of the other four parties.

	Economy (9,10)	Health Care (9,10)	Affordable Post- Secondary Education (9,10)	Quality Post- Secondary Education (9,10)	Accessible Post- Secondary Education (9,10)
<b>Total</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>18-24</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>25-44</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Liberals</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>PCs</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>NDP</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>The Green Party</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>27%</b>

# Very Concerned Respondents by Family Composition and Income

The following “Very Concerned” responses are compared by:

Q28. - Children in Household 18 or Under.

Q29. - Children Attending High School.

Q30. - Children Attending Community College.

Q31. - Income Groups.

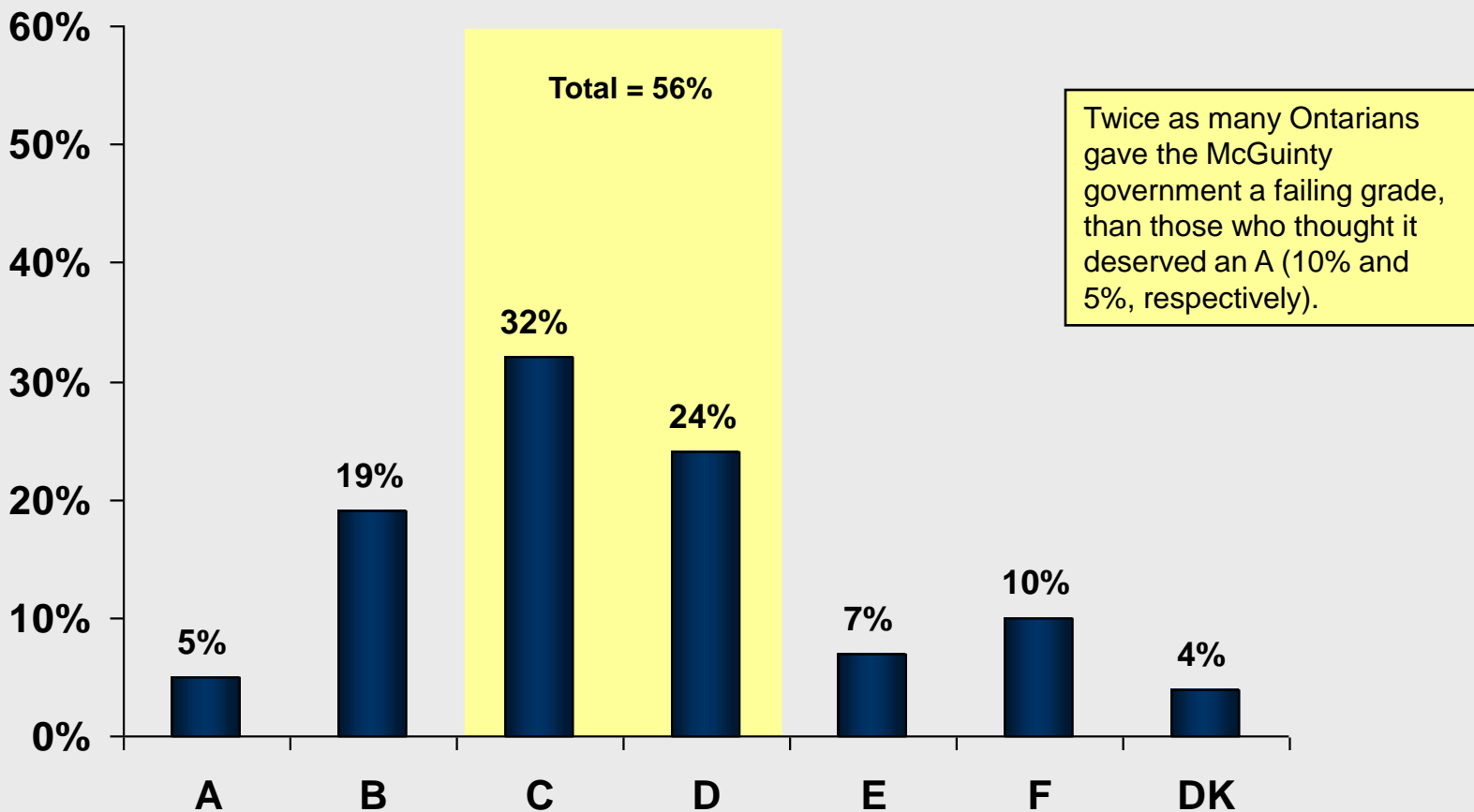


	Economy (9,10)	Health Care (9,10)	Affordable Post-Secondary Education (9,10)	Quality Post-Secondary Education (9,10)	Accessible Post-Secondary Education (9,10)
<b>Total</b>	73%	53%	56%	35%	27%
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>Yes</u>	72%	51%	61%	41%	28%
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>No</u>	74%	54%	54%	33%	26%
Children Attending High School – <u>Yes</u>	75%	44%	62%	37%	30%
Children Attending High School - <u>No</u>	73%	54%	55%	35%	26%
Children Attending Community College – <u>Yes</u>	79%	53%	64%	35%	36%
Children Attending Community College - <u>No</u>	72%	53%	55%	35%	26%
Less Than \$20,000	74%	65%	70%	56%	44%
Between \$20,000 And \$50,000	75%	56%	64%	43%	28%
Between \$50,000 And \$80,000	73%	52%	60%	31%	29%
More Than \$80,000	69%	40%	42%	20%	22%

**Attitudes & Opinions About the Ontario  
Government's Handling of Post-Secondary  
Education Issues**

# Grading Government Performance: Overall

Although, the government receives overall passing marks Ontarians do not appear completely satisfied with its performance. One-in-three Ontarians issued a letter “C” grade, with a quarter of respondents giving the McGuinty government’s performance a next-to-fail “D” (32% and 24%, respectively).



Q11. Using letter grades like in school, that is A B C D E or F for failing grade, how would you evaluate the general performance of the McGuinty government since being re-elected in October 2007? Would you give the McGuinty government an overall grade of A B C D E or F?

# Grading Government Performance: Overall by Family Composition and Income

*The following Q11 responses are compared by:*

**Q28. - Children in Household 18 or Under.**

**Q29. - Children Attending High School.**

**Q30. - Children Attending Community College.**

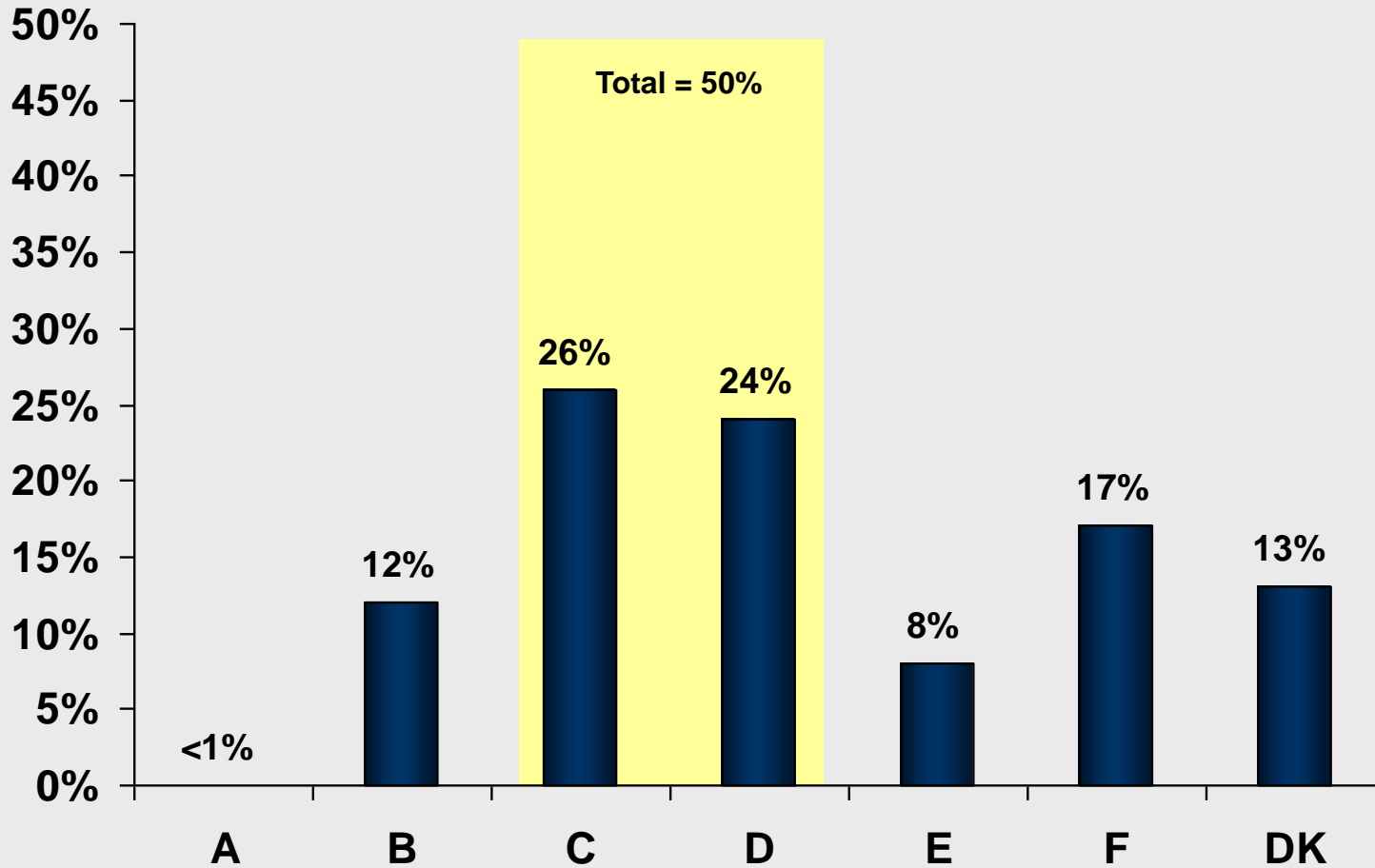


<b>Q31. - Income Groups.</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>Total</b>	5%	19%	32%	24%	7%	10%	4%
<b>Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>Yes</u></b>	3%	15%	35%	25%	7%	11%	5%
<b>Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>No</u></b>	6%	20%	31%	23%	7%	9%	4%
<b>Children Attending High School – <u>Yes</u></b>	1%	24%	35%	15%	10%	13%	2%
<b>Children Attending High School - <u>No</u></b>	5%	18%	32%	25%	6%	9%	5%
<b>Children Attending Community College – <u>Yes</u></b>	3%	17%	34%	19%	10%	15%	2%
<b>Children Attending Community College - <u>No</u></b>	5%	19%	32%	24%	6%	9%	5%
<b>Less Than \$20,000</b>	3%	10%	45%	19%	6%	11%	6%
<b>Between \$20,000 And \$50,000</b>	2%	15%	25%	30%	10%	11%	6%
<b>Between \$50,000 And \$80,000</b>	1%	26%	32%	22%	5%	9%	4%
<b>More Than \$80,000</b>	3%	24%	42%	15%	3%	11%	1%

*Q11. Using letter grades like in school, that is A B C D E or F for failing grade, how would you evaluate the general performance of the McGuinty government since being re-elected in October 2007? Would you give the McGuinty government an overall grade of A B C D E or F?*

# Grading Government Performance: Post-Secondary Education Issues

When asked about the McGuinty government's performance concerning issues related to post-secondary education, half of all respondents gave the government a letter grade of either "C" or "D" combined (26% and 24%, respectively). Approximately one-in-five think the McGuinty government has failed (17%), with less than one per cent who think it deserves top marks with a letter "A" grade.



Q12. More specifically, still using letter grades A B C D E or F for failing grade, how would you evaluate the general performance of the McGuinty government in dealing with post-secondary education in Ontario since being re-elected in October 2007? Would you give the McGuinty government a grade of A B C D E or F?

# Grading Government Performance: Post-Secondary Education Issues by Family Composition and Income

*The following Q12 responses are compared by:*

**Q28. - Children in Household 18 or Under.**

**Q29. - Children Attending High School.**

**Q30. - Children Attending Community College.**

**Q31. - Income Groups.**



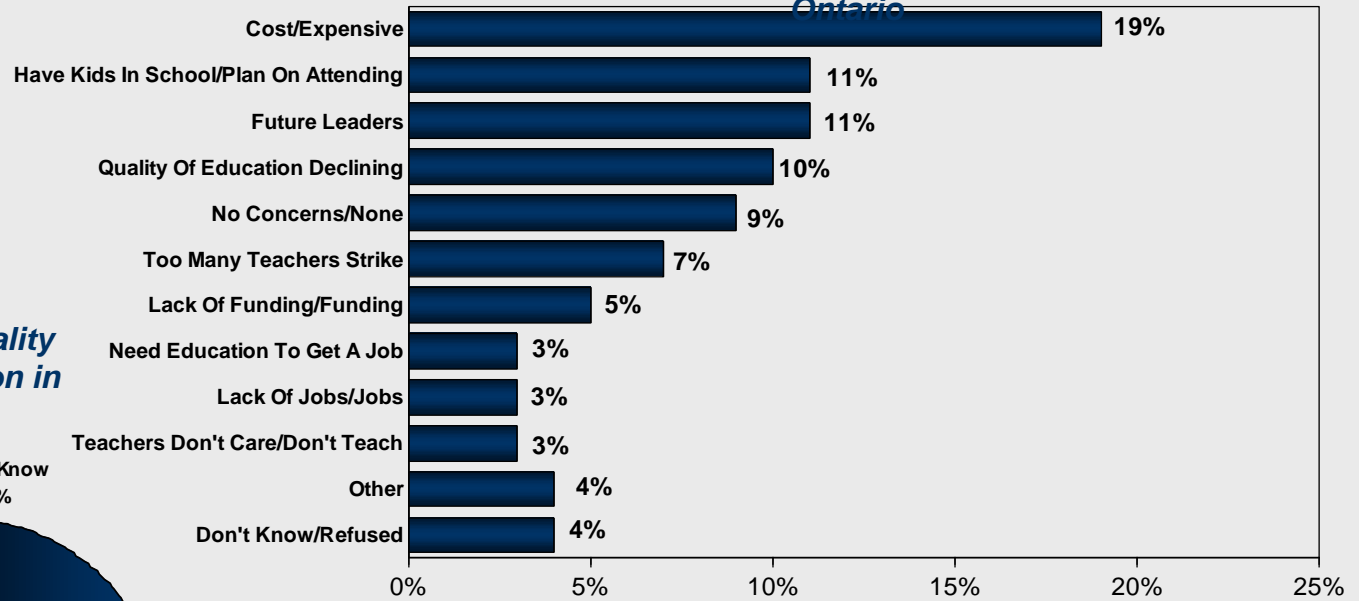
	A	B	C	D	E	F	Don't Know
<b>Total</b>	<1%	12%	26%	24%	8%	17%	13%
<b>Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>Yes</u></b>	1%	9%	34%	17%	12%	19%	9%
<b>Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>No</u></b>	<1%	13%	22%	27%	7%	16%	15%
<b>Children Attending High School – <u>Yes</u></b>	2%	9%	40%	14%	8%	23%	4%
<b>Children Attending High School - <u>No</u></b>	<1%	12%	24%	25%	8%	16%	14%
<b>Children Attending Community College – <u>Yes</u></b>	<1%	11%	28%	20%	14%	20%	6%
<b>Children Attending Community College - <u>No</u></b>	1%	12%	26%	24%	8%	16%	14%
<b>Less Than \$20,000</b>	<1%	6%	21%	20%	10%	25%	18%
<b>Between \$20,000 And \$50,000</b>	1%	8%	23%	25%	12%	18%	11%
<b>Between \$50,000 And \$80,000</b>	<1%	14%	27%	21%	7%	16%	15%
<b>More Than \$80,000</b>	<1%	11%	36%	22%	5%	15%	11%

Q12. More specifically, still using letter grades A B C D E or F for failing grade, how would you evaluate the general performance of the McGuinty government in dealing with post-secondary education in Ontario since being re-elected in October 2007? Would you give the McGuinty government a grade of A B C D E or F?

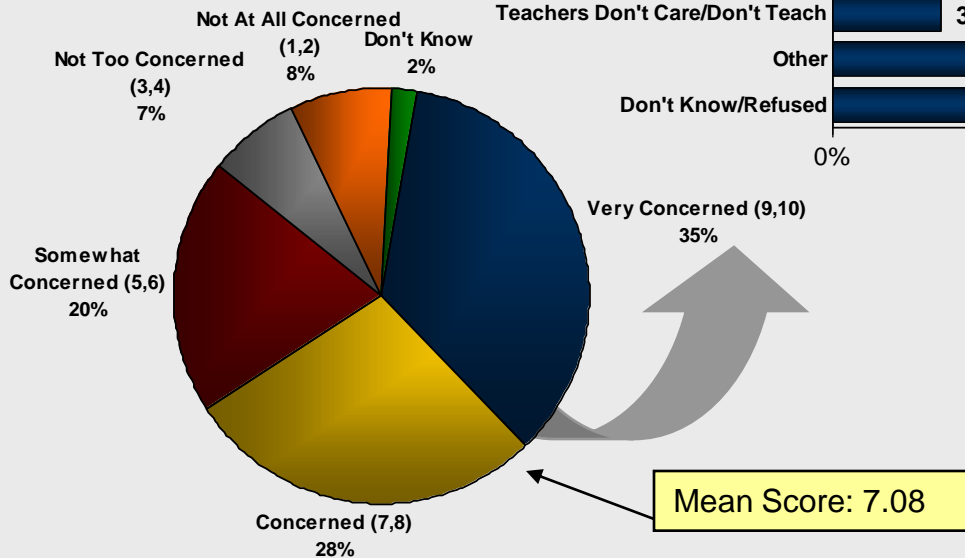
# Post-Secondary Education Concerns

Overall, one-in-three Ontarians are very concerned about the quality of post-secondary education (35%). In relation to our samples ongoing reservations about the state of the economy and economic issues generally, one-in-five respondents cited costs and expenses as the main reasons why they are so concerned about post-secondary education (19%).

**Top Concerns About Quality Post-Secondary Education in Ontario**



**Top Concerns About Quality Post-Secondary Education in Ontario**



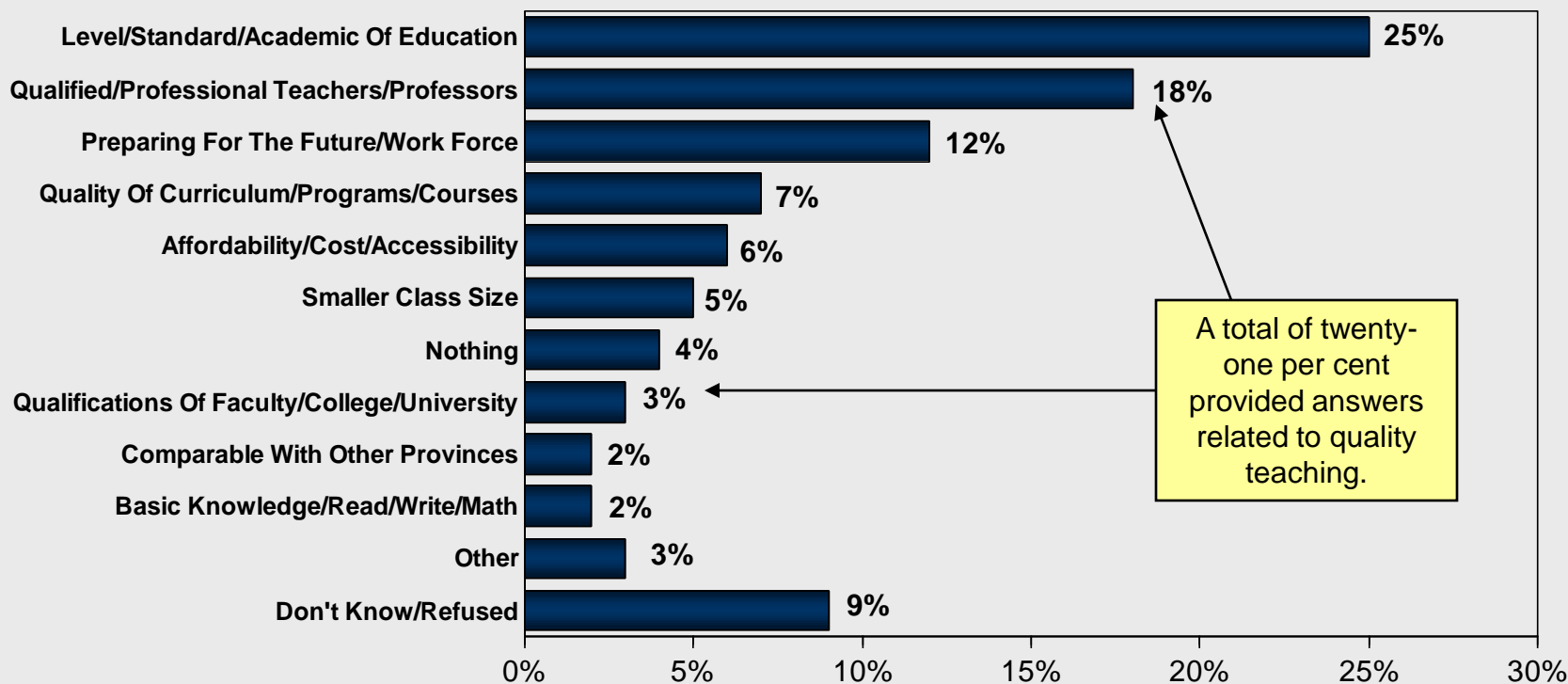
Q6. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is "not at all concerned" and 10 is "very concerned", how concerned are you with each of the following issues – The quality of post secondary education in Ontario?

Q6A. (If 5 or more at q.6, ask: ) What is the main reason you are currently so concerned about the quality of post-secondary education in Ontario? (OPEN-ENDED – ONE MENTION)

# **In Depth: Attitudes & Opinions About Post-Secondary Education in Ontario**

# Thoughts & Opinions About Post-Secondary Education

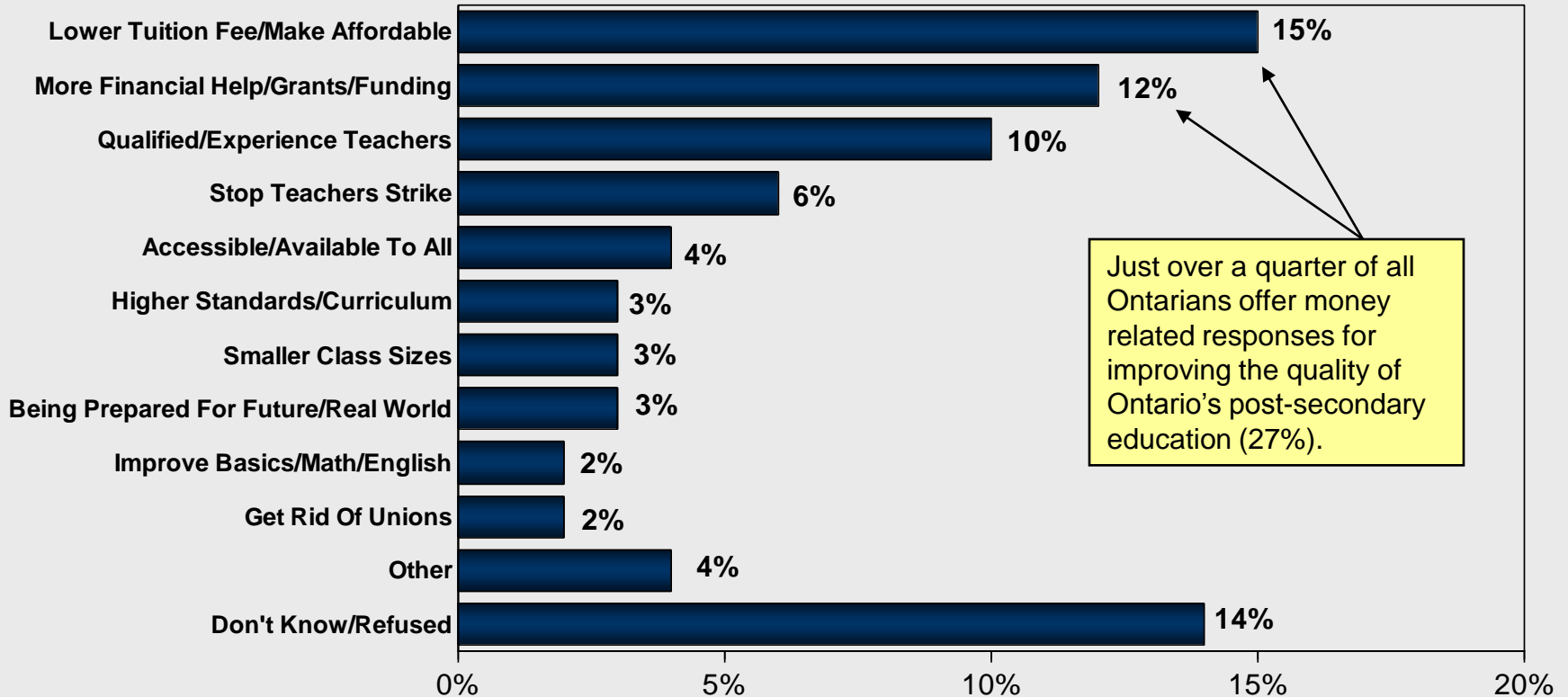
When Ontarians were asked to define quality post-secondary education, a quarter of all respondents provided an answer related to high academic standards (25%). One-in-five said that quality post-secondary education meant qualified and professional instructors (18%).



Q7. When we talk about the “quality” of post-secondary education in Ontario, what does it mean to you?  
[OPEN-ENDED – ONE MENTION]

# Thoughts & Opinions About Improving Post-Secondary Education

Respondents point to lower tuition fees and more financial assistance as the leading recommendations for improving post-secondary education in Ontario (15% and 12%, respectively).



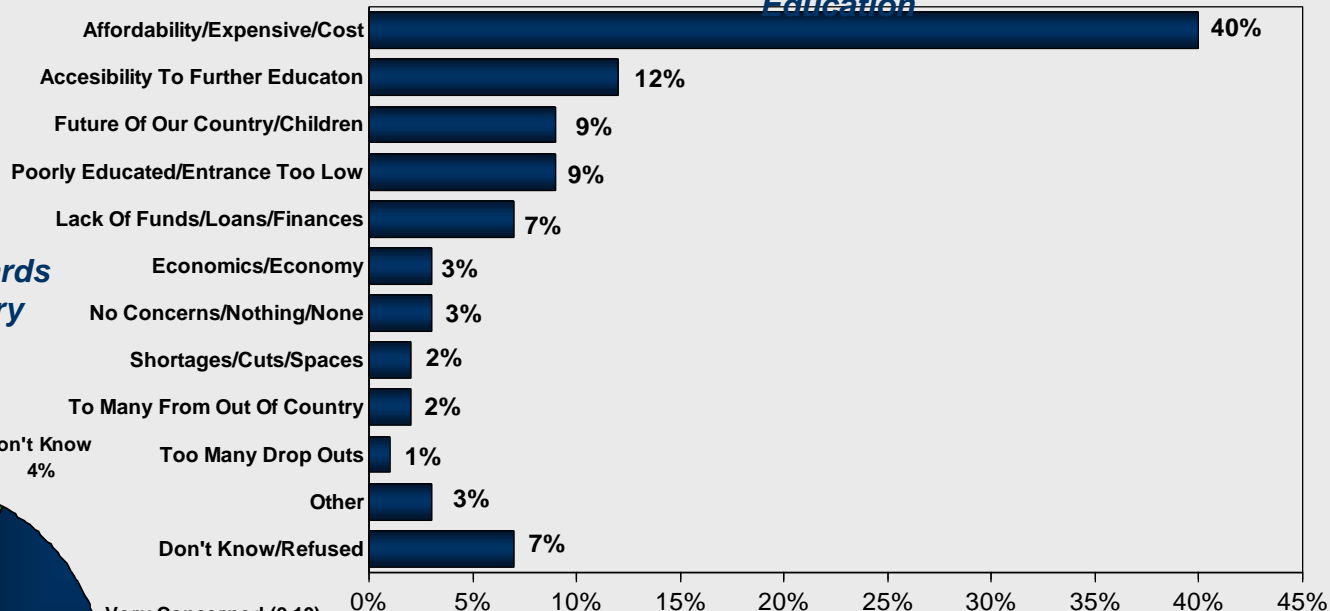
Just over a quarter of all Ontarians offer money related responses for improving the quality of Ontario's post-secondary education (27%).

Q8. If you were to suggest one thing to improve the quality of post-secondary education in Ontario, what would it be? **[OPEN-ENDED – ONE MENTION]**

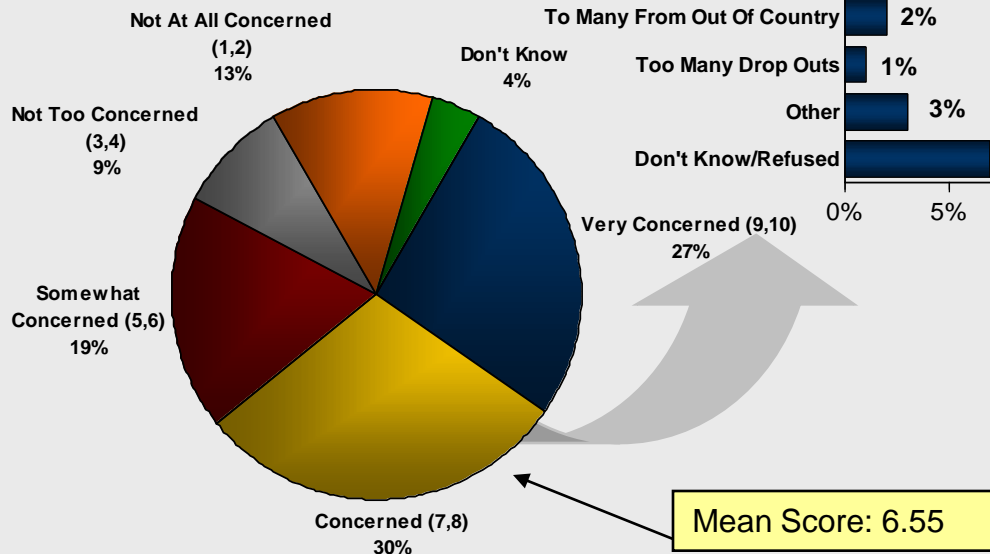
# Access to Post-Secondary Education

Nearly half of all Ontarians are very concerned about access to post-secondary education (48%). Two-in-five point to affordability issues as the leading reason why they feel this way (40%).

Top Concerns About Access to Post-Secondary Education



Attitudes & Opinions Towards Access to Post-Secondary Education

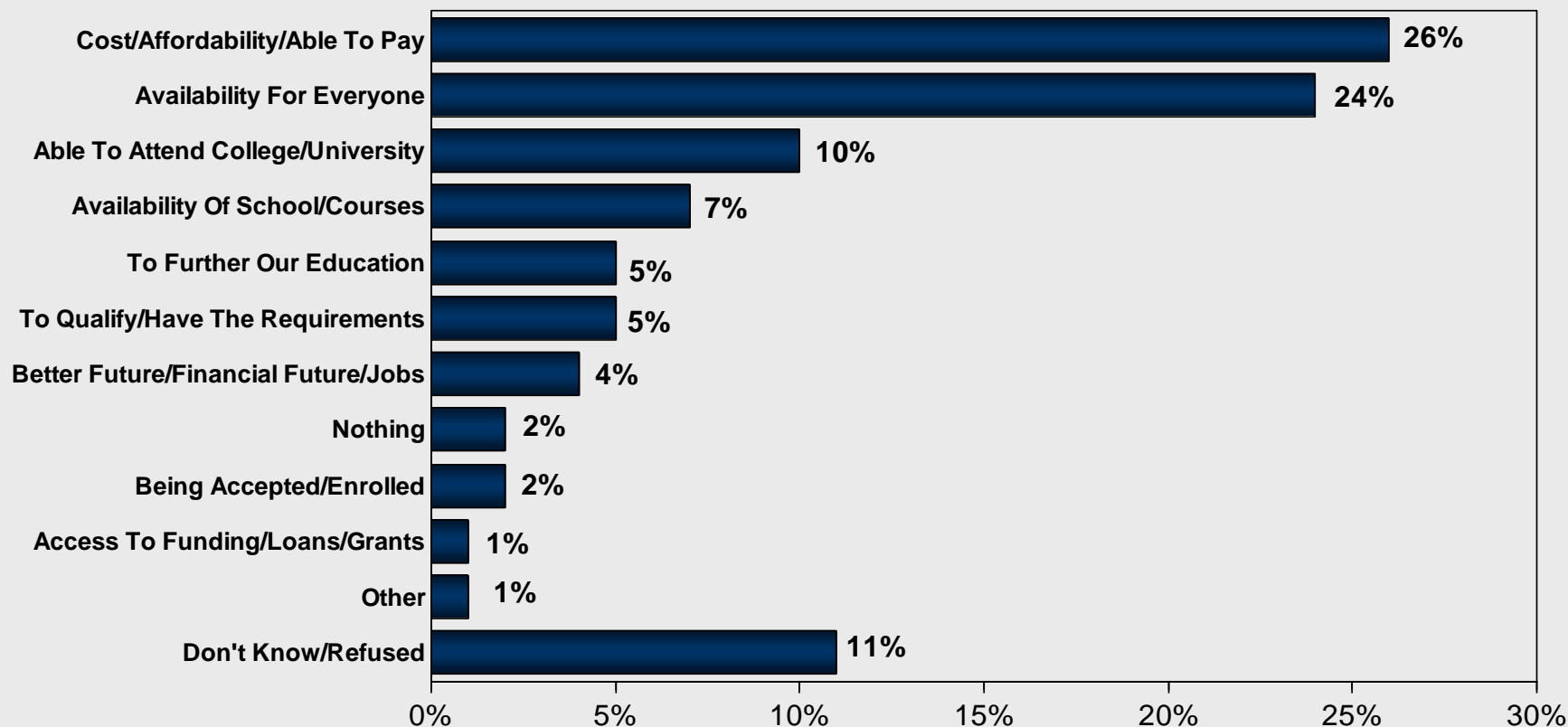


Q15. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "not at all concerned" and 10 is "very concerned," how concerned are you with access to post-secondary education in Ontario?

Q16. (IF 5 or more at q15, ASK: )What is the main reason you are concerned about access to post-secondary education?

# Access to Post-Secondary Education

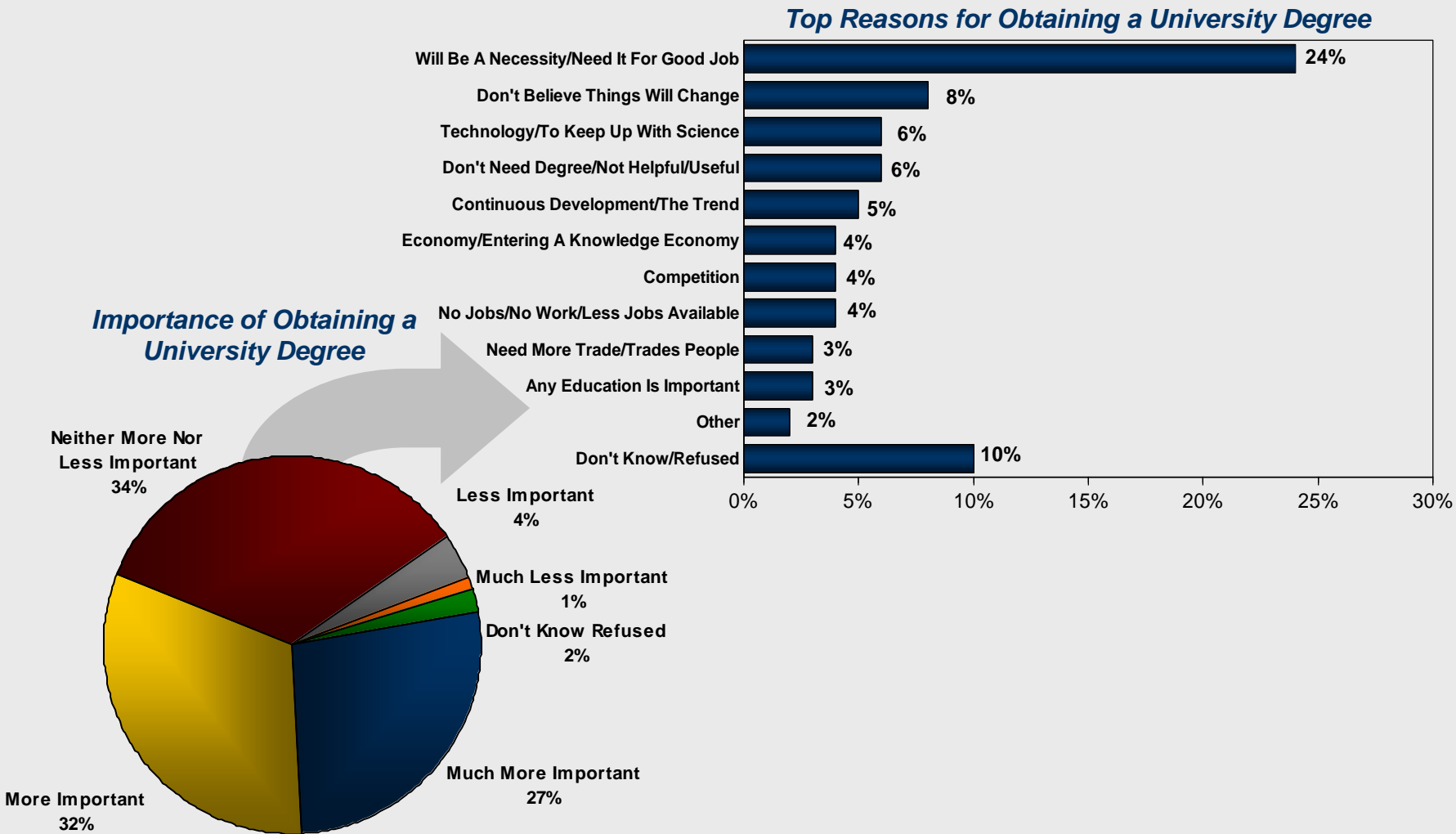
When asked to describe access to post-secondary education, one-in-four surveyed point to costs and affordability (26%). A further quarter of respondents said that access means ensuring post-secondary education is available to everyone (24%).



Q17. What does "access to post-secondary education" mean to you?

# Importance of Obtaining a University Degree: 10 Years From Now

Three-in-five respondents believe it will be important for people to hold a university degree 10 years from now (59%). When asked why, one-in-four respondents insist that a university degree will still be a necessity in helping people find a good job (24%).

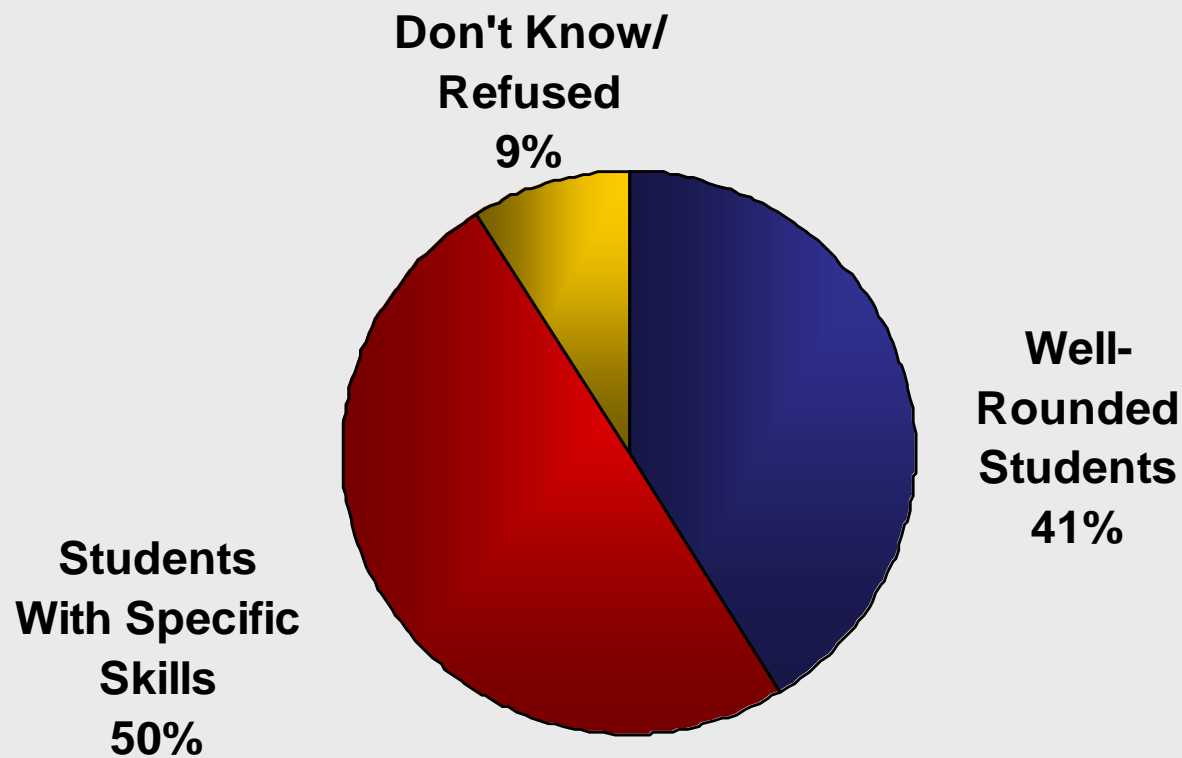


Q18. Thinking about 10 years from now, how important do you think it will be to have a university degree. Would you say it will be much more important than today, more important, neither more nor less important, less important or much less important than today?

Q18A. What is the main reason you say that?

# Future Role of Post-Secondary Education

*Half of all respondents believe the future role of post-secondary education should help students develop a set of considerable expertise and specific skills (50%).*



Q19. 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 concentrate on developing students with considerable expertise in specific skills?

# Future Role of Post-Secondary Education by Family Composition and Income

The following table is a comparison of Q19 responses by:

Q28. - Children in Household 18 or Under.

Q29. - Children Attending High School.

Q30. - Children Attending Community College.

Q31. - Income Groups.

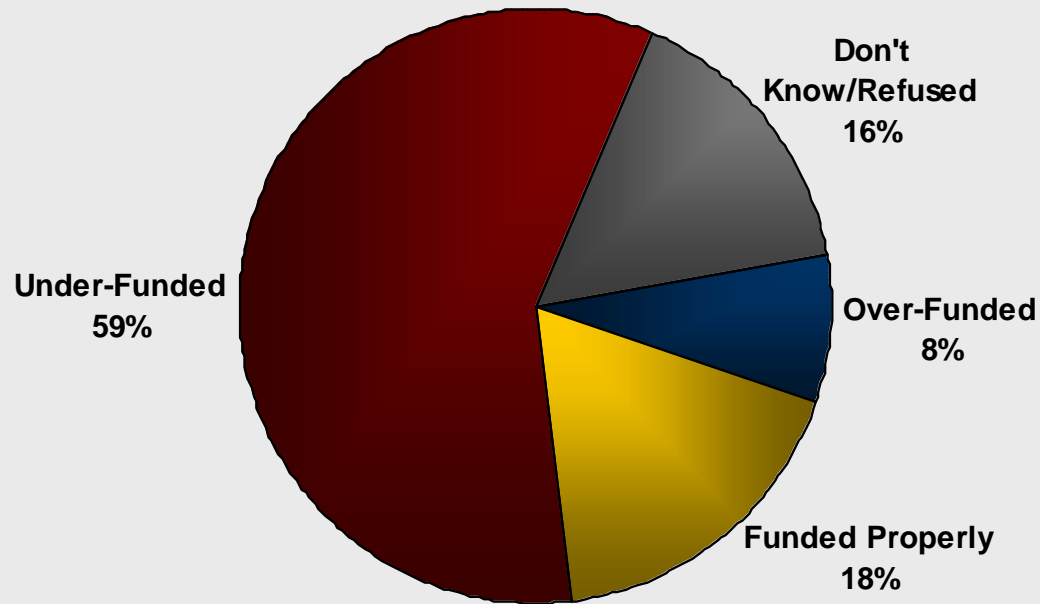


	Well-Rounded Students	Students With Special Skills	Don't Know/Refused
<b>Total</b>	41%	50%	9%
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>Yes</u>	42%	51%	6%
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>No</u>	40%	50%	10%
Children Attending High School – <u>Yes</u>	45%	53%	3%
Children Attending High School - <u>No</u>	40%	50%	10%
Children Attending Community College – <u>Yes</u>	48%	45%	7%
Children Attending Community College – <u>No</u>	39%	51%	10%
Less Than \$20,000	30%	58%	12%
Between \$20,000 And \$50,000	36%	57%	7%
Between \$50,000 And \$80,000	44%	48%	7%
More Than \$80,000	44%	51%	5%

Q19. 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 concentrate on developing students with considerable expertise in specific skills?

# Funding Ontario's Post-Secondary Institutions

*Three-in-five respondents think Ontario's post-secondary institutions are under-funded (59%).*



Q21. *Based on what you know, do you think that Ontario's post-secondary institutions are over-funded, under-funded or funded properly?*

# Funding Ontario's Post-Secondary Institutions by Family Composition and Income


*The following table is a comparison of Q21 responses by:*

**Q28. - Children in Household 18 or Under.**

**Q29. - Children Attending High School.**

**Q30. - Children Attending Community College.**

**Q31. - Income Groups.**

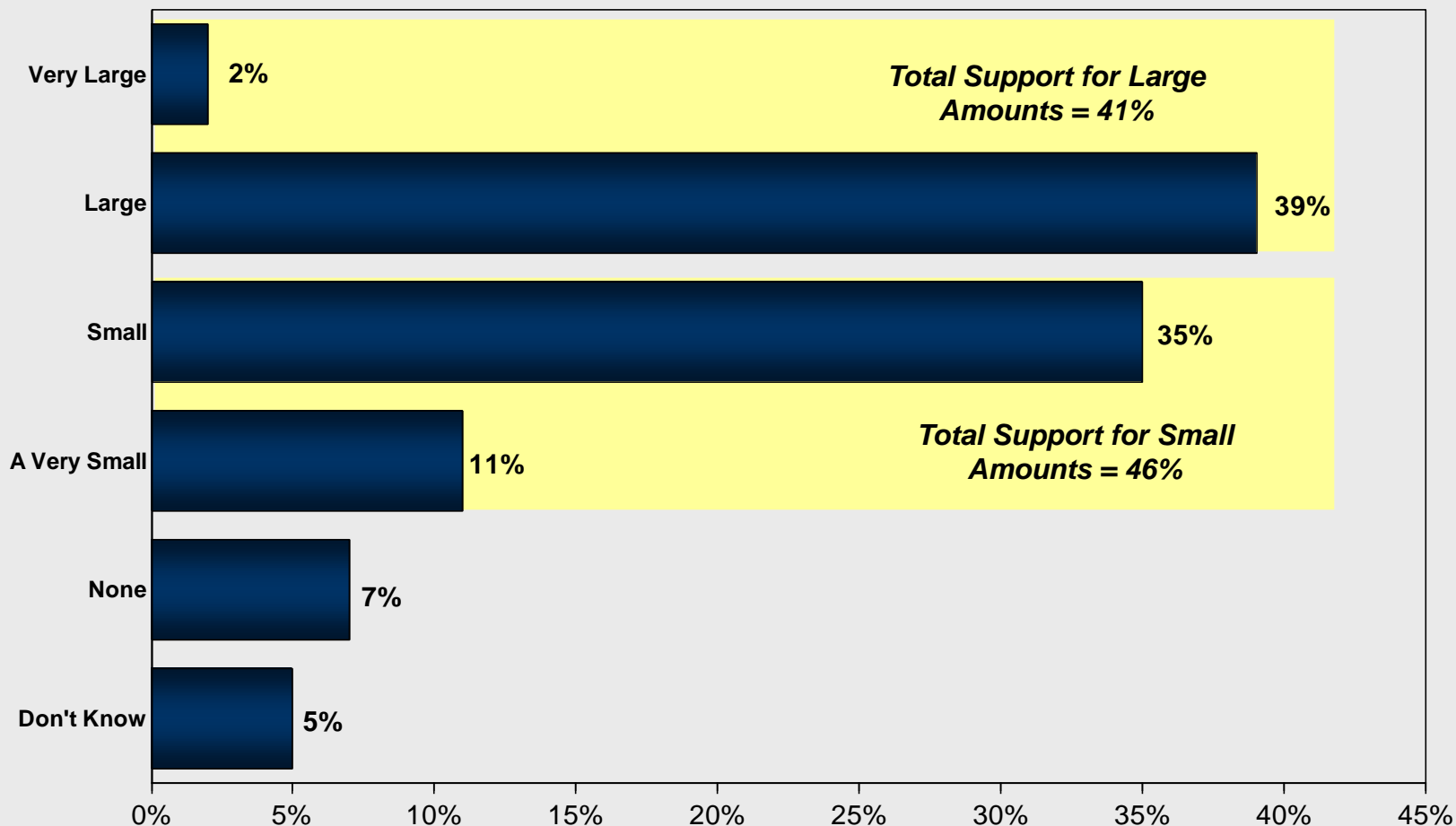


	Over-Funded	Funded Properly	Under-Funded	Don't Know/Refused
<b>Total</b>	8%	18%	59%	16%
<b>Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>Yes</u></b>	5%	18%	63%	14%
<b>Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>No</u></b>	9%	18%	57%	17%
<b>Children Attending High School – <u>Yes</u></b>	8%	16%	71%	4%
<b>Children Attending High School - <u>No</u></b>	8%	18%	57%	17%
<b>Children Attending Community College – <u>Yes</u></b>	11%	16%	67%	5%
<b>Children Attending Community College - <u>No</u></b>	7%	18%	58%	17%
<b>Less Than \$20,000</b>	5%	10%	65%	20%
<b>Between \$20,000 And \$50,000</b>	12%	12%	57%	20%
<b>Between \$50,000 And \$80,000</b>	7%	21%	56%	17%
<b>More Than \$80,000</b>	5%	29%	56%	10%

Q21. *Based on what you know, do you think that Ontario's post-secondary institutions are over-funded, under-funded or funded properly?*

# Post-Secondary Funding Sources: Government Stimulus

Respondents are nearly split when asked if Ontario universities should receive a portion of the government's new economic stimulus funding. Nearly half believe universities should be allocated small/very small amounts of funds, whereas two-in-five think they should receive large/very large portions (46% and 41%, respectively); a difference of five points.



Q14. As you know, the provincial government is currently trying to stimulate the economy through increased government spending. In your opinion, do you think Ontario universities should be getting a very large part of this new government spending, a large part, a small, a very small part, or none of this new government spending designed to stimulate Ontario's economy.

# Post-Secondary Funding Sources: Government Stimulus by Family Composition and Income

The following table is a comparison of Q14 responses by:

Q28. - Children in Household 18 or Under.

Q29. - Children Attending High School.

Q30. - Children Attending Community College.

Q31. - ~~Income Groups.~~

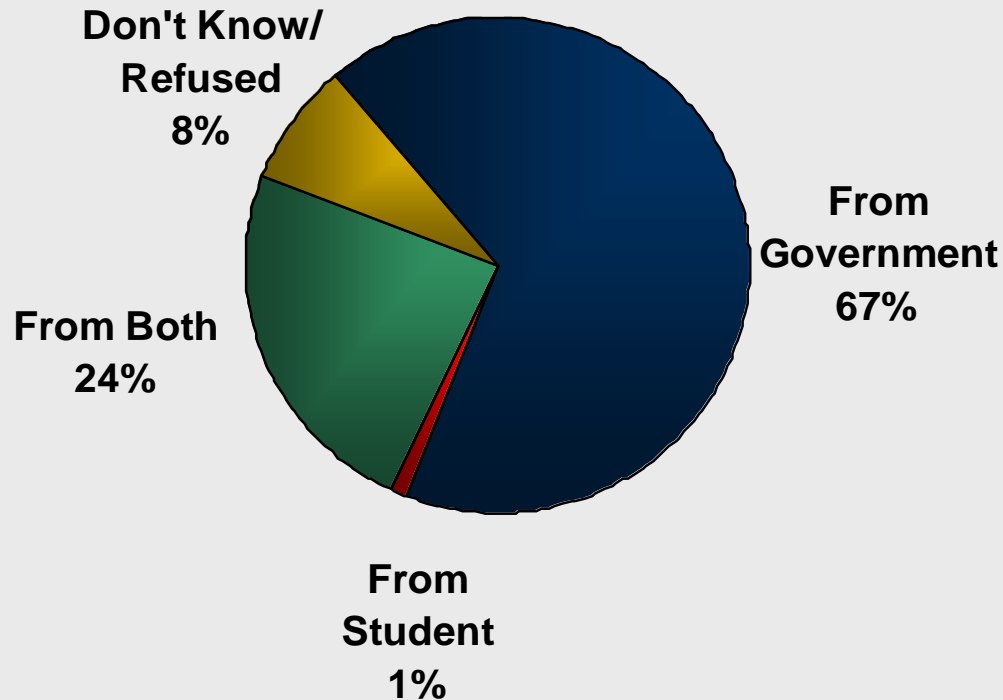


	Very Large	Large	Small	A Very Small	None	Don't Know
<b>Total</b>	2%	39%	35%	11%	7%	5%
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>Yes</u>	2%	38%	38%	13%	4%	4%
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>No</u>	2%	39%	34%	10%	8%	6%
Children Attending High School – <u>Yes</u>	4%	46%	34%	11%	3%	2%
Children Attending High School - <u>No</u>	2%	38%	36%	11%	8%	6%
Children Attending Community College – <u>Yes</u>	5%	48%	32%	8%	5%	2%
Children Attending Community College - <u>No</u>	2%	38%	36%	11%	7%	6%
Less Than \$20,000	11%	43%	29%	3%	5%	9%
Between \$20,000 And \$50,000	1%	40%	32%	14%	8%	5%
Between \$50,000 And \$80,000	1%	35%	40%	10%	9%	6%
More Than \$80,000	3%	34%	43%	13%	6%	2%

Q14. As you know, the provincial government is currently trying to stimulate the economy through increased government spending. In your opinion, do you think Ontario universities should be getting a very large part of this new government spending, a large part, a small, a very small part, or none of this new government spending designed to stimulate Ontario's economy.

# Post-Secondary Funding Sources: Government vs. Student Tuition

*Two-in-three respondents think additional post-secondary funding should come primarily from the government, compared to a quarter of Ontarians who think funding should be equally shared by the government and students (67% and 24%, respectively).*



Q22. Do you think more funding should come primarily from the government or from students in the form of higher tuition fees or both?

# Post-Secondary Funding Sources: Government vs. Student Tuition by Family Composition and Income

*The following table is a comparison of Q22 responses by:*

**Q28. - Children in Household 18 or Under.**

**Q29. - Children Attending High School.**

**Q30. - Children Attending Community College.**

**Q31. - Income Groups.**

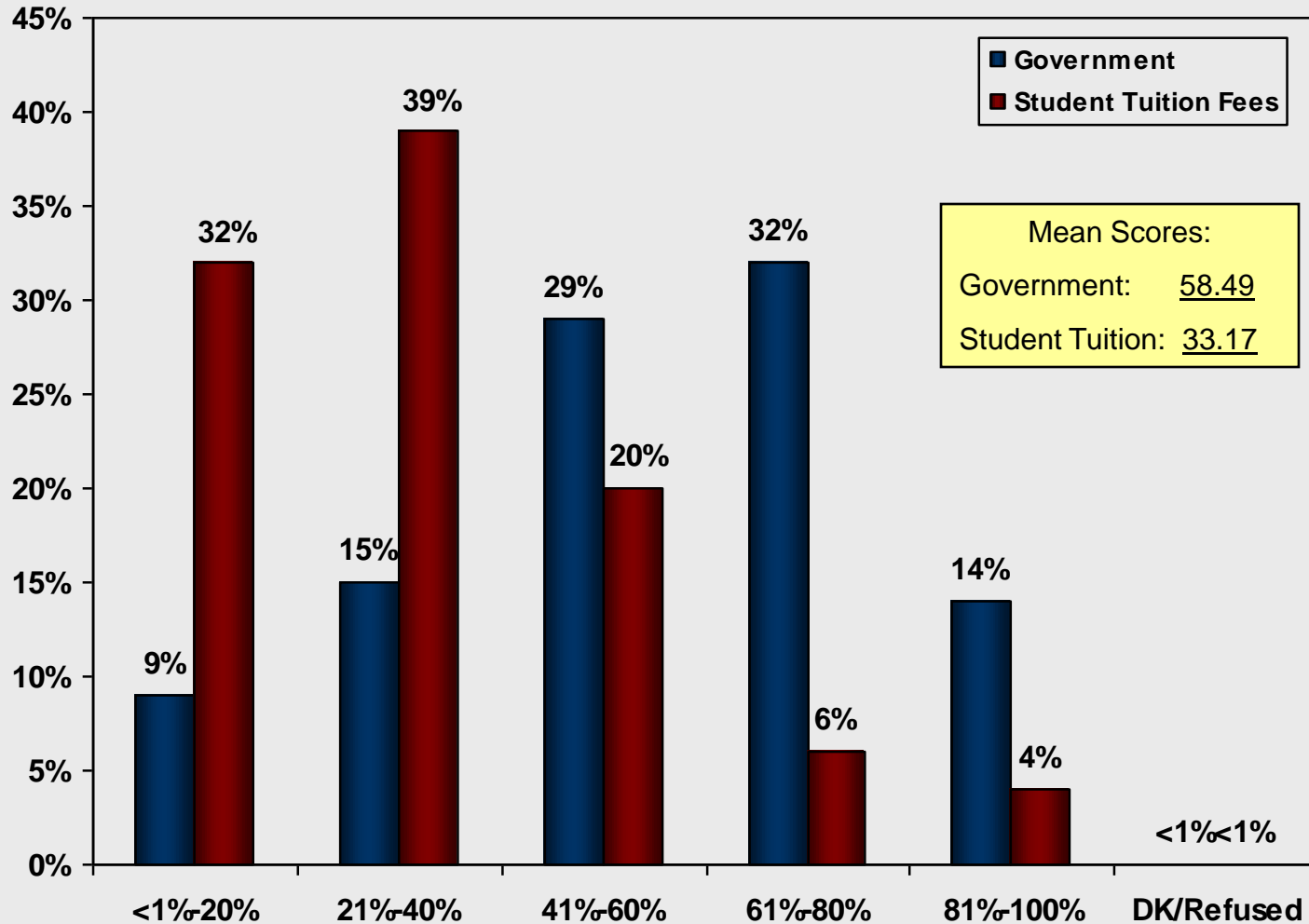


	From Government	From Students	From Both	Don't Know/Refused
<b>Total</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>Yes</u>	78%	2%	17%	3%
Children in Household 18 or Under – <u>No</u>	62%	1%	27%	9%
Children Attending High School – <u>Yes</u>	77%	4%	19%	<1%
Children Attending High School - <u>No</u>	66%	1%	25%	9%
Children Attending Community College – <u>Yes</u>	72%	4%	23%	1%
Children Attending Community College - <u>No</u>	67%	1%	24%	8%
Less Than \$20,000	72%	2%	18%	8%
Between \$20,000 And \$50,000	71%	<1%	23%	6%
Between \$50,000 And \$80,000	65%	6%	29%	1%
More Than \$80,000	64%	<1%	30%	6%

*Q22. Do you think more funding should come primarily from the government or from students in the form of higher tuition fees or both?*

# Post-Secondary Funding: Government vs. Student Tuition

Respondents believe nearly 60 per cent of all university operating costs should come from the government, nearly double those who think it should be further funded through higher tuition fees. (mean: 58.49% and 33.17%, respectively).

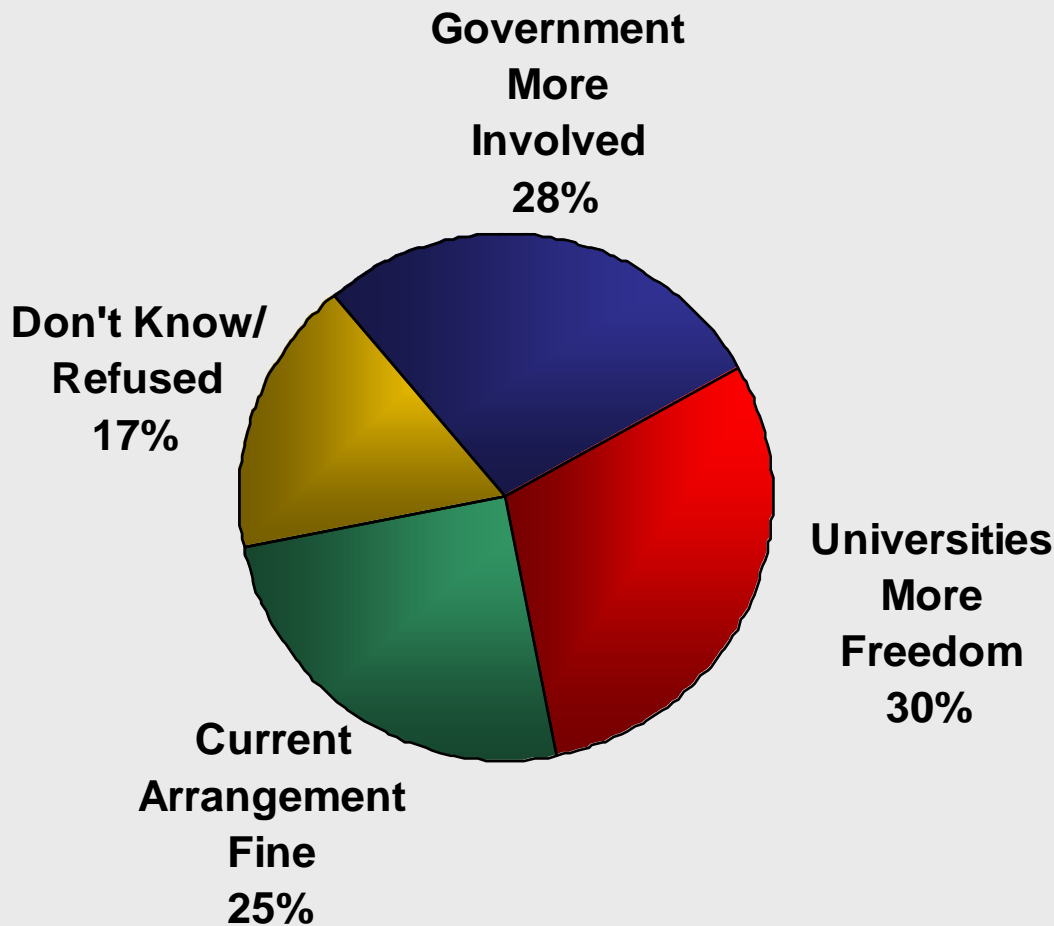


Q23. What percentage of university operating costs do you think should come from government?

Q24. And what percentage from students though tuition fees?

# University Management

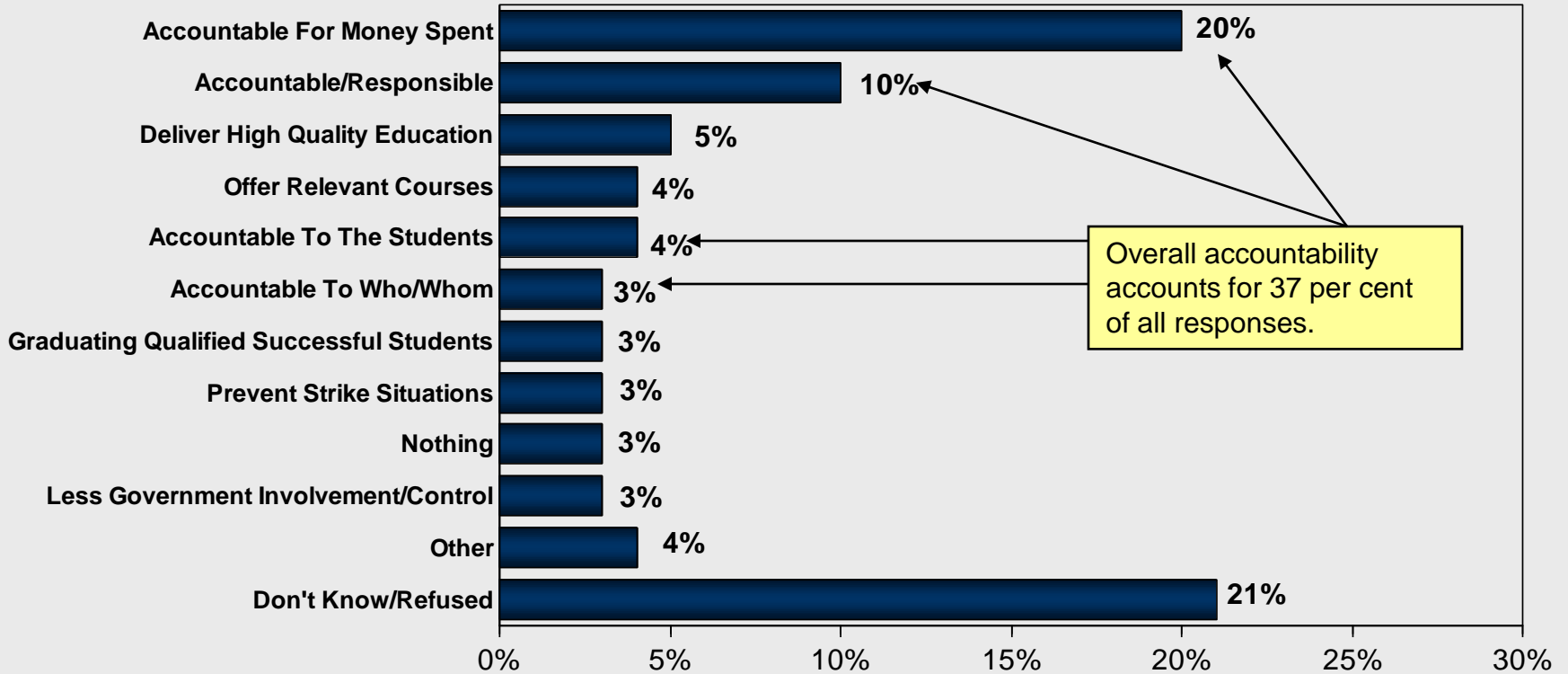
When asked about the way universities are managed, respondents are split. Nearly one-in-three would like to see universities have more freedom, followed closely by those who think the government should be more involved (30% and 28%, respectively). A quarter of all respondents believe the current arrangement is fine, with just under one-in-five who don't know (25% and 17%, respectively).



Q25. Thinking about the way universities are managed, which of the following would be preferable for you personally?

# University Accountability

*One-in-five respondents believe that making universities more accountable, means better oversight with the way funds are spent (20%). An additional 21 per cent of respondents could not answer or refused to provide one.*



Q26. When I say "making universities more accountable " what does it mean to you?

The background features a series of overlapping, semi-transparent white circles and curved lines on a light gray gradient. The lines are thin and radiate from various points, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

# ***Communication Imperatives***

# Communication Imperatives

- **Concerns over the economy is crowding out all other top-of-mind concerns. Every communication initiative must be presented in terms on its potential positive impact on the economy.**
- **While not top-of-mind concern, 56% of Ontarians are concerned about the affordability of post-secondary education (second only to economy at 73%). More importantly, 70% of low-income earners and 64% of household with kids in high school are concerned about the affordability of post-secondary education.**
- **The McGuinty government is getting a C grade for its performance – AND close to one-in-four (23%) parents with kids in high school give the McGuinty government a failing grade (F) in its dealing with post-secondary education.**