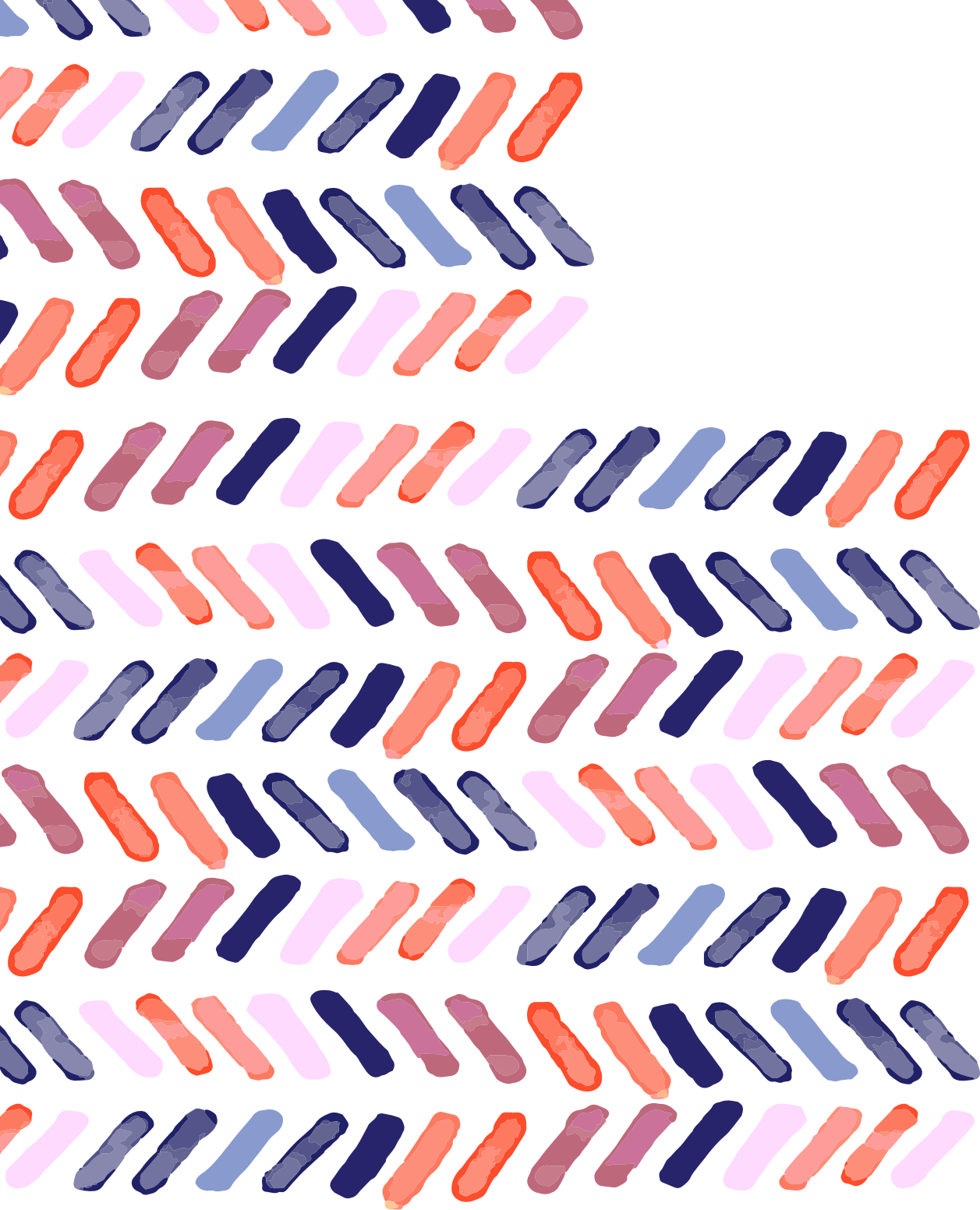


PUBLIC SUPPORT for PUBLIC EDUCATION: Public Opinion on Post-Secondary Education in Nova Scotia

February 2018 | Nova Scotia Post-Secondary Education Coalition



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Post-Secondary Education in Nova Scotia:

10 years of public support

Post-Secondary Education Coalition is comprised of the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT), the Canadian Federation of Students-Nova Scotia (CFSNS), and the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU). The Coalition brings together faculty, students, and staff concerned with the current state of post-secondary education in the province.

In February 2005, the Coalition commissioned its first poll of 800 Nova Scotians to find out their views on post-secondary education, accessibility, and student debt. The poll's key findings included significant support for lower tuition fees, recognition that student debt loads were becoming unmanageable, and a belief that government funding for post-secondary education should be increased.

Since then we have commissioned further public opinion polls in 2007, 2010, 2013 and 2017 which represents 10 years of the public's opinion on post-secondary education. Each poll has shown sustained or growing support for increased funding to our universities and

colleges, replacing provincial student loans with non-repayable student grants, and reducing tuition fees.

This document includes results from a commissioned poll of 800 Nova Scotians conducted by Opinion Search Research from November 6 - 21. It shows that the public continues to have serious concerns regarding the affordability and accessibility of post-secondary education, and that government funding of post-secondary education continues to decline. It also shows strong public support for measures to improve the accountability of universities and stronger supports for students on campus.

This brief illustrates Nova Scotians' consistent support for a high quality, well funded post-secondary education system over 10 years and three different governments. It lays out a clear mandate to reverse the damage done by government underfunding to our universities, and to finally deliver accessible higher education to students and their families.

2007, 2010,
2014 & 2017:
Nova Scotians
have
consistently
wanted to see
PSE as a high
priority for
the province.

***Between 2007-2017 over
80% of Nova Scotians
have consistently
supported reducing
tuition fees.***

***10 years of
public support
for public
education***

Since 2010,
3 out of 5
Nova
Scotians
said they
would pay
**higher
taxes**
to make
PSE more
affordable.

***Nova Scotians #1 concern
about young people not
being able to access PSE has
continued to be that it's too
expensive.***

2017 results at a glance

95% of Nova Scotians think PSE should be a high government priority.

Nova Scotians are more concerned about PSE than crime or unemployment.

90% of Nova Scotians want to see more accountability from our university administrations.

88% of Nova Scotians are concerned people are leaving the province to pay off their student debt.

Government Priorities

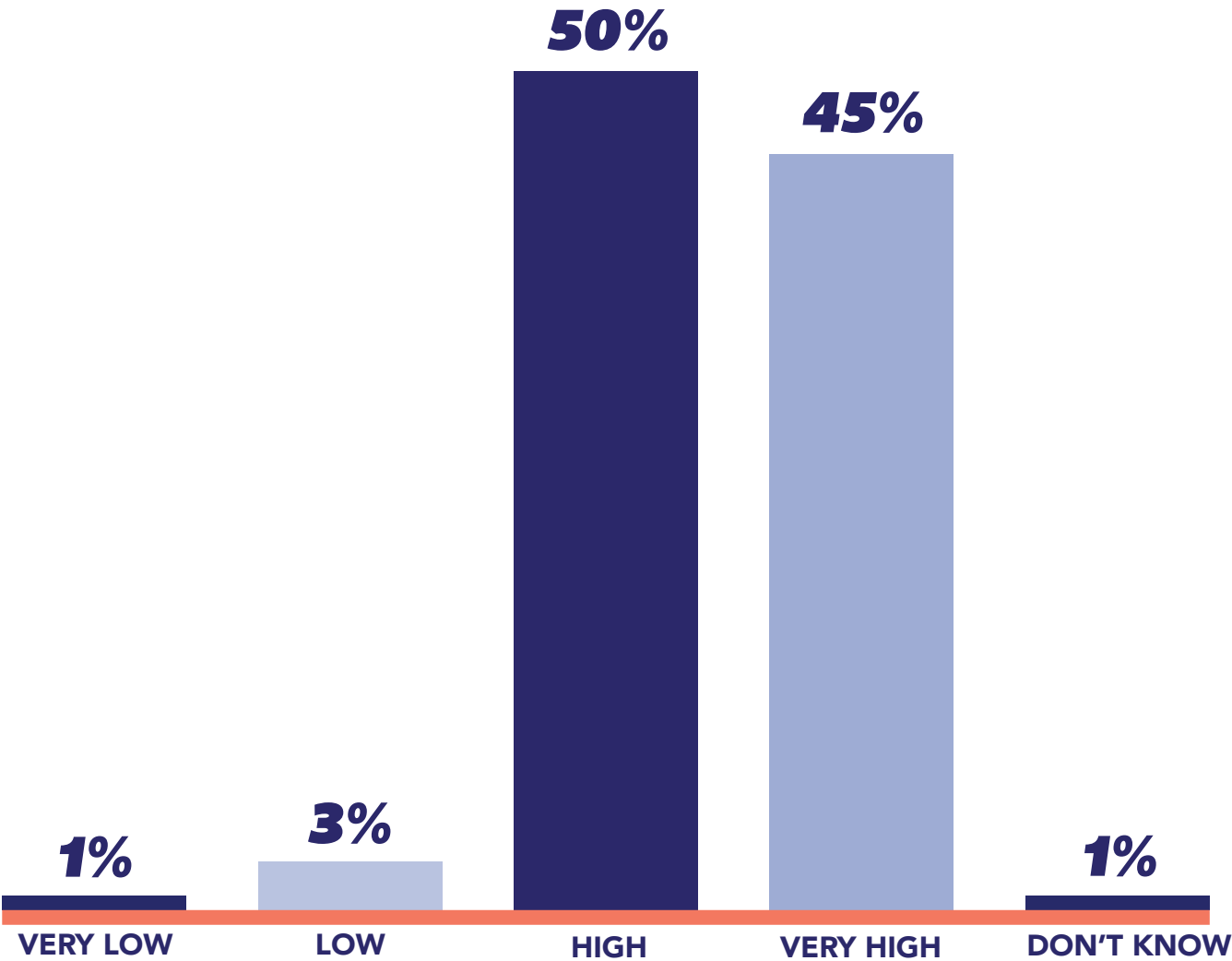
More Nova Scotians are concerned about the affordability of post-secondary education than crime, unemployment and the job market.

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:

(% of Nova Scotians surveyed who answered 8 or higher)

Unemployment and the job market:	52%
The affordability of post-secondary education:	62%
The quality of health care in Nova Scotia:	70%
The level of taxation in Nova Scotia:	63%
The quality of primary and secondary education:	56%
The level of crime in your community:	22%

How high a priority should post-secondary education be for the government of Nova Scotia?



95% of Nova Scotians think post-secondary education should be a high priority.

Access to PSE

75% of Nova Scotians are concerned that university and college is too expensive.

Which of the following issues best reflects the reason you are concerned about post-secondary education in Nova Scotia:

University and college is too expensive for too many people	75%
Family responsibilities make it difficult to go	8%
There are not enough programs available	3%
There are not enough university or college spaces for all qualified applicants	6%
I'm not concerned about post-secondary education	2%
Don't know	6%



Do you believe that currently, in Nova Scotia, most people who are qualified to go to university and college have the opportunity to do so, or do you think there are many people who are qualified to go but don't have the opportunity to do so?

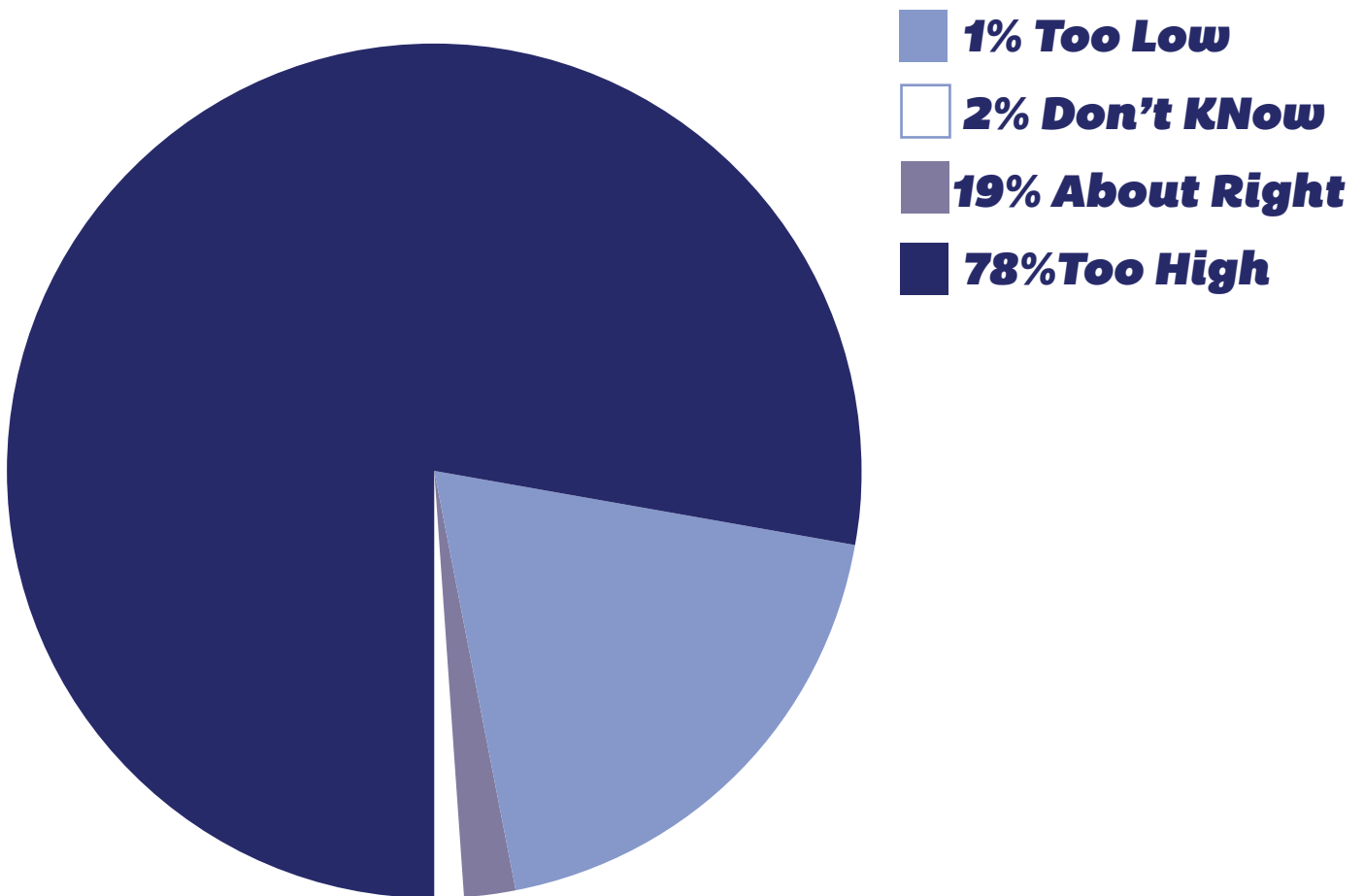


-  **5% Don't Know**
-  **29% Have Opportunity**
-  **66% Don't Have Opportunity**



Tuition Fees

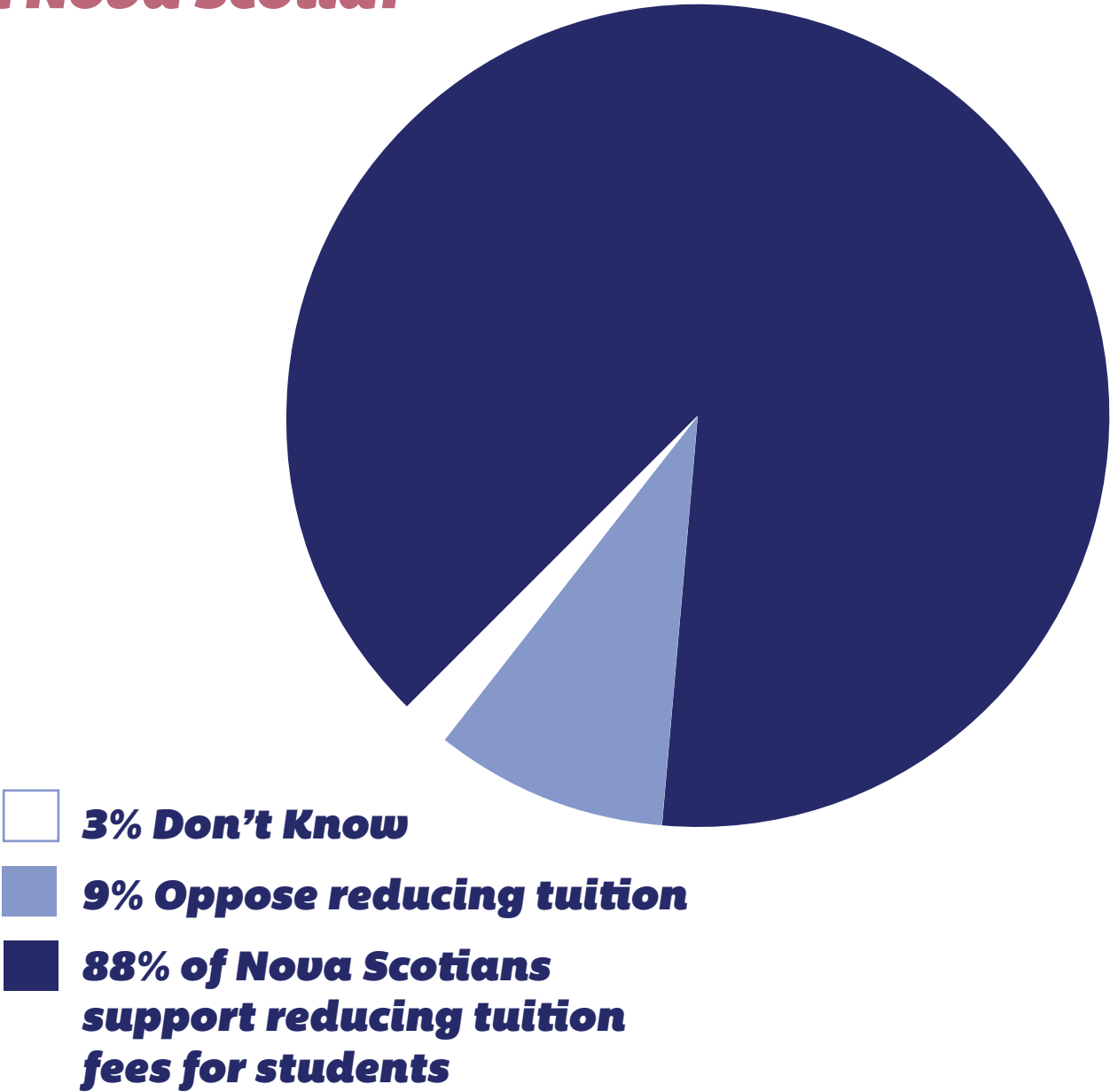
In your opinion is the level of fees too high, too low, or about right?



Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of Nova Scotians think tuition fees are too high.



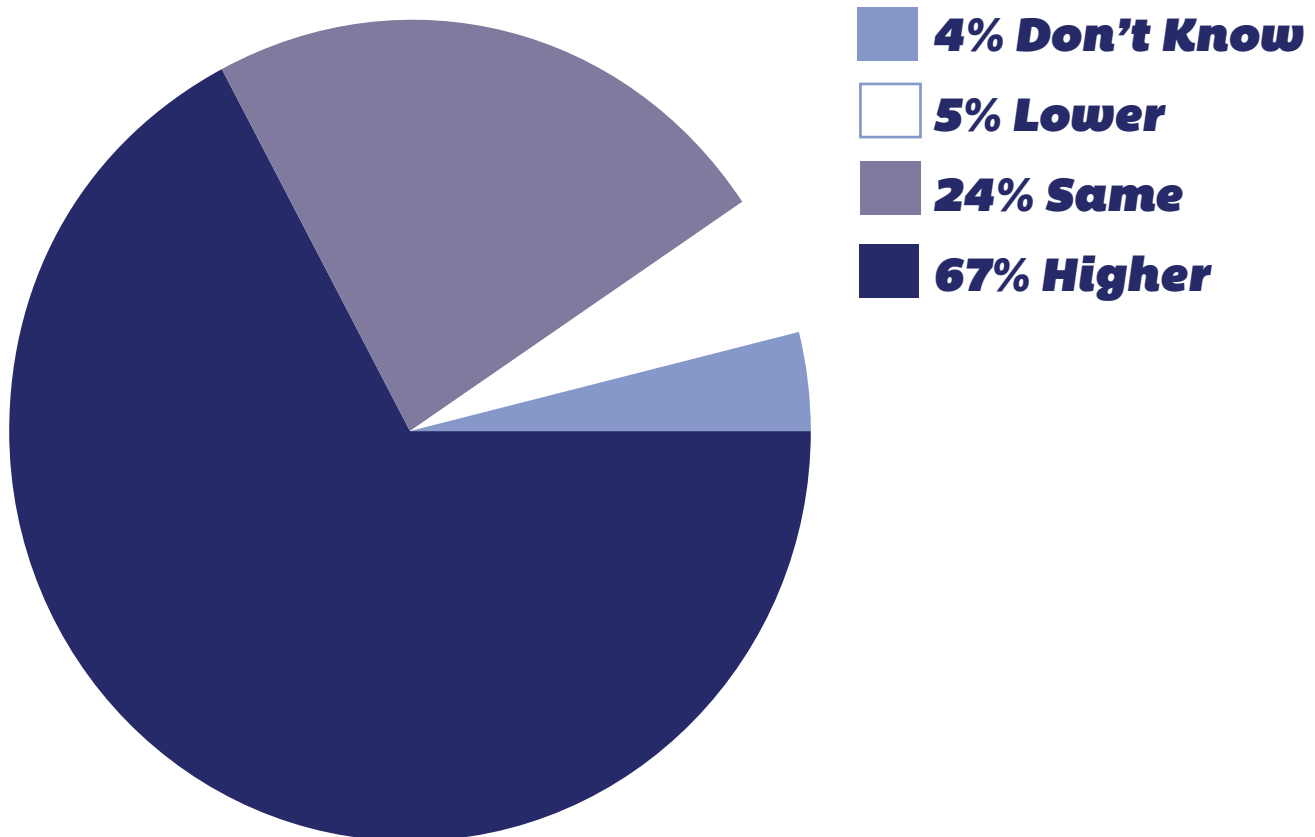
Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose reducing tuition fees for students in Nova Scotia?



Funding

University revenue comes from several sources, including government grants, tuition fees from students, and donations from private individuals and corporations. In 1978, government funding made up 80 per cent of revenue for universities in Nova Scotia. In 2008, government funding accounted for 46 per cent.

Do you think that government funding should make up a higher proportion, or should stay the same?



Would you be willing to pay a small increase in your income taxes if you knew that it would go to improving the affordability of the university or college in your area?

3% Don't Know

40% No

57% Yes

The majority of Nova Scotians would pay higher taxes to improve the affordability of colleges and universities.

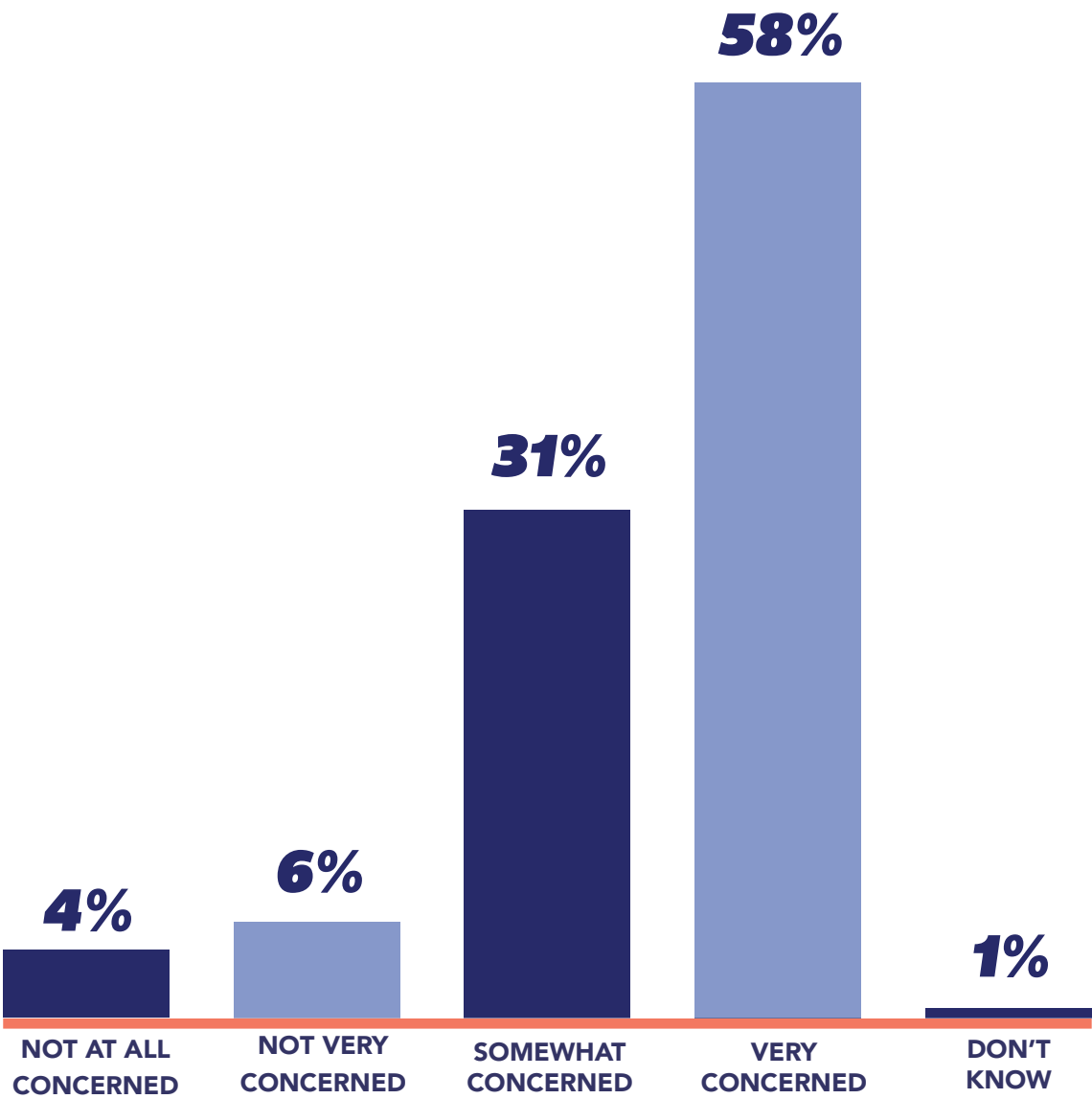
Student Debt

29% of Nova Scotians surveyed said that in the past year, they or someone in their family did not attend college or university because it would mean taking on too much debt.

"I simply couldn't afford to pay tuition fees and was defaulting on my student debt payments from my previous studies. The financial stress I was in took a toll on my mental health, and I realized there was no way I could complete the semester and ended up dropping out."

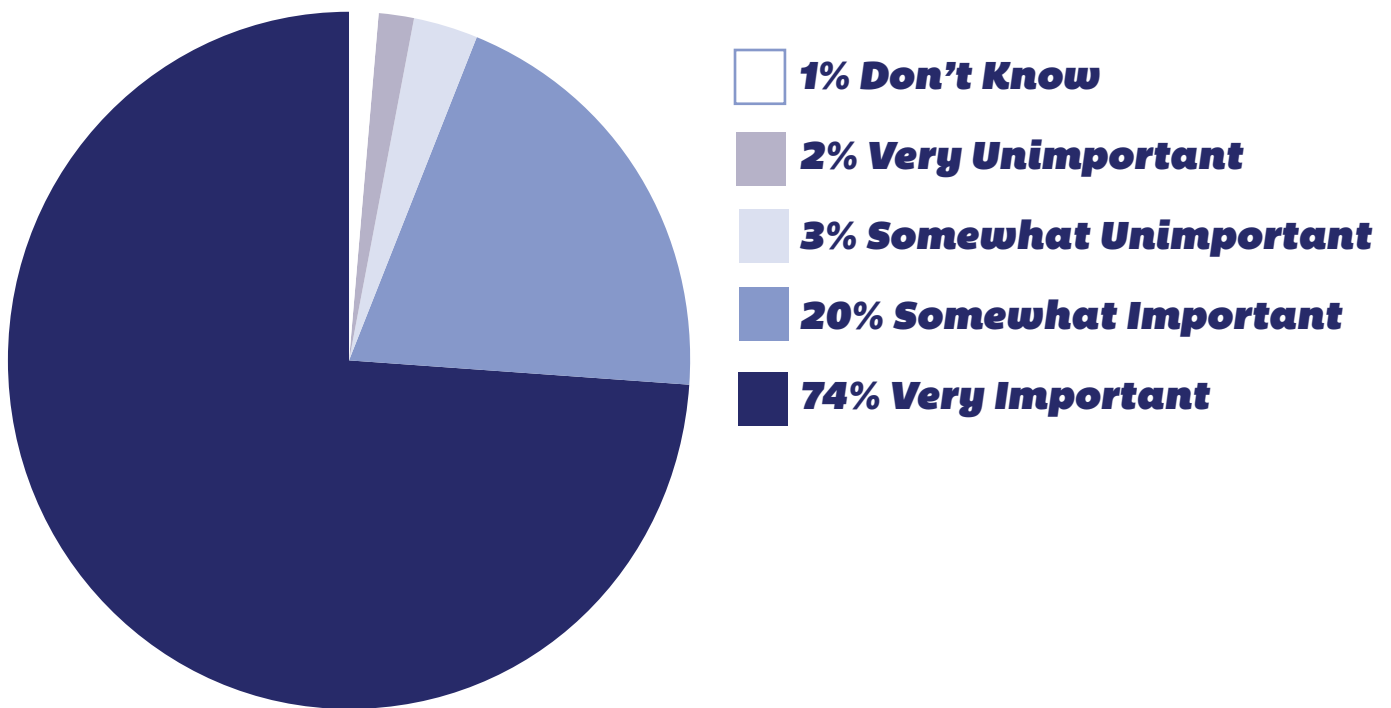
Former student, MSVU

How concerned are you that young Nova Scotians are leaving the province after graduation for higher wages in order to pay-off their student debt?



Student Services

How important do you think that support services for survivors of sexual assault on campus are in post-secondary education?

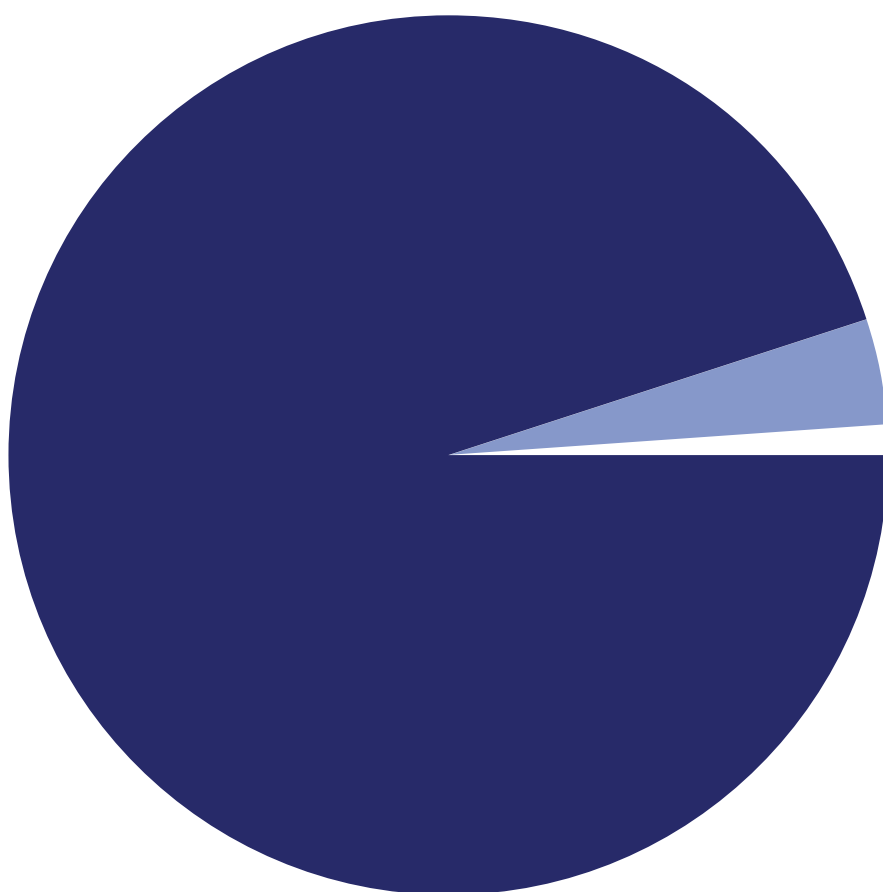


94% of Nova Scotians think it's important to have services on campus for survivors of sexual assault

"Mental health services and services for survivors are crucial, but are often lacking. Students have a right to feel safe and supported on campus."

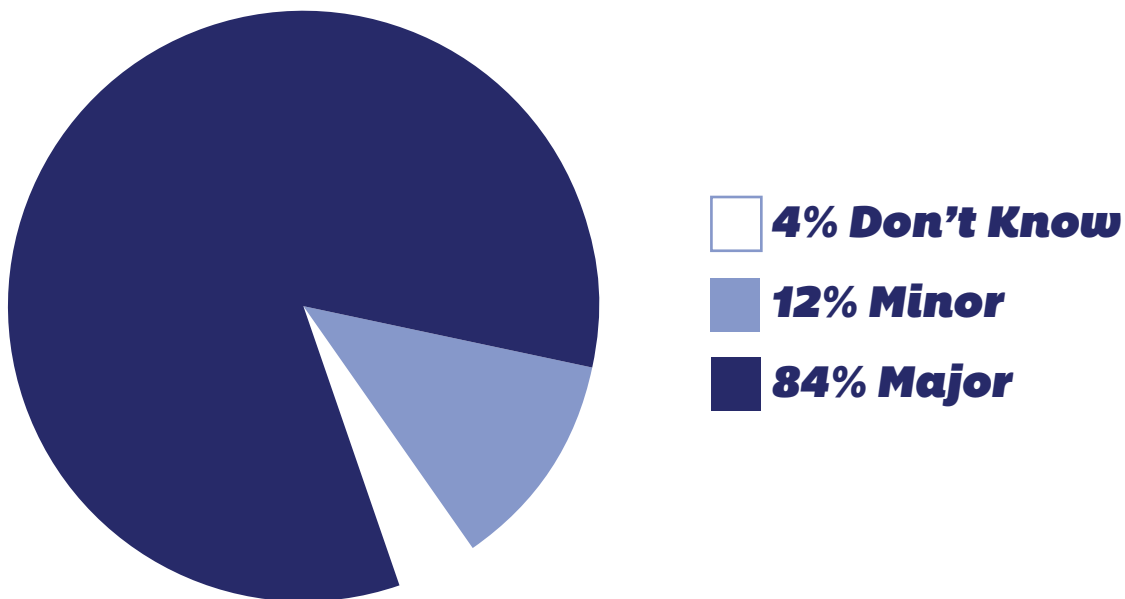
Current Student, Kings

How important do you think that health and mental health services are in post-secondary education?



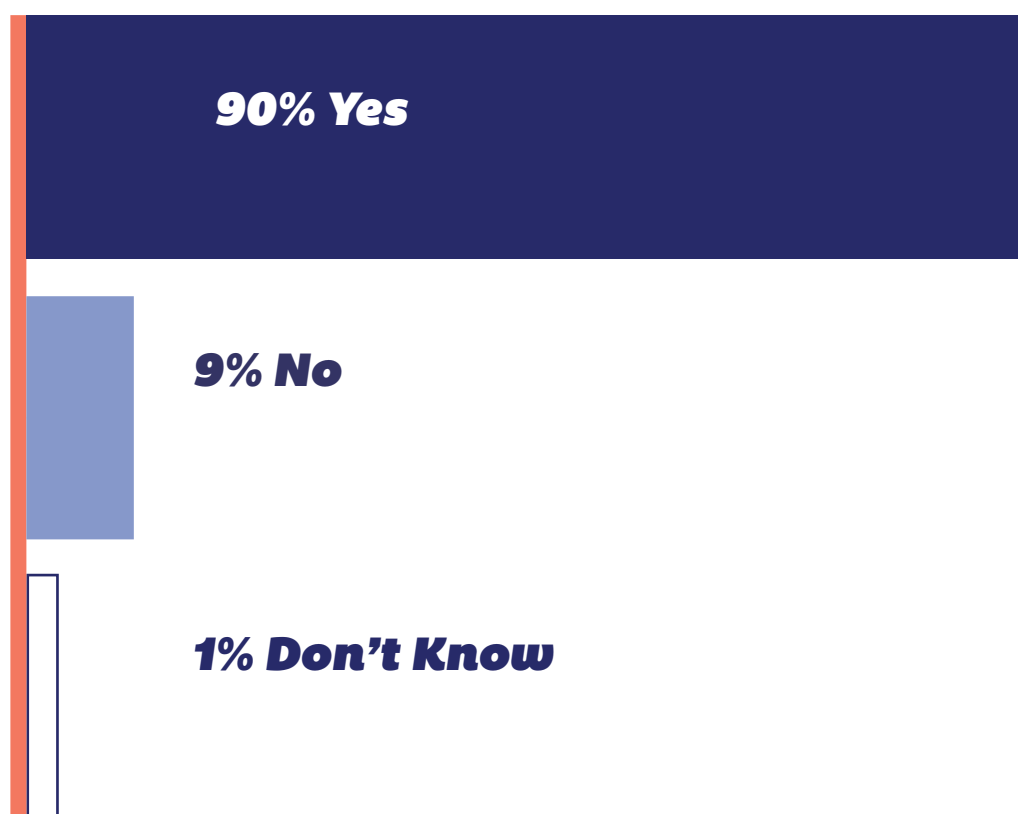
Governance & Accountability

What role should students, faculty, and staff play in decision-making at post-secondary institutions?



Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of Nova Scotians support a major role for students, faculty and staff at Nova Scotia's universities.

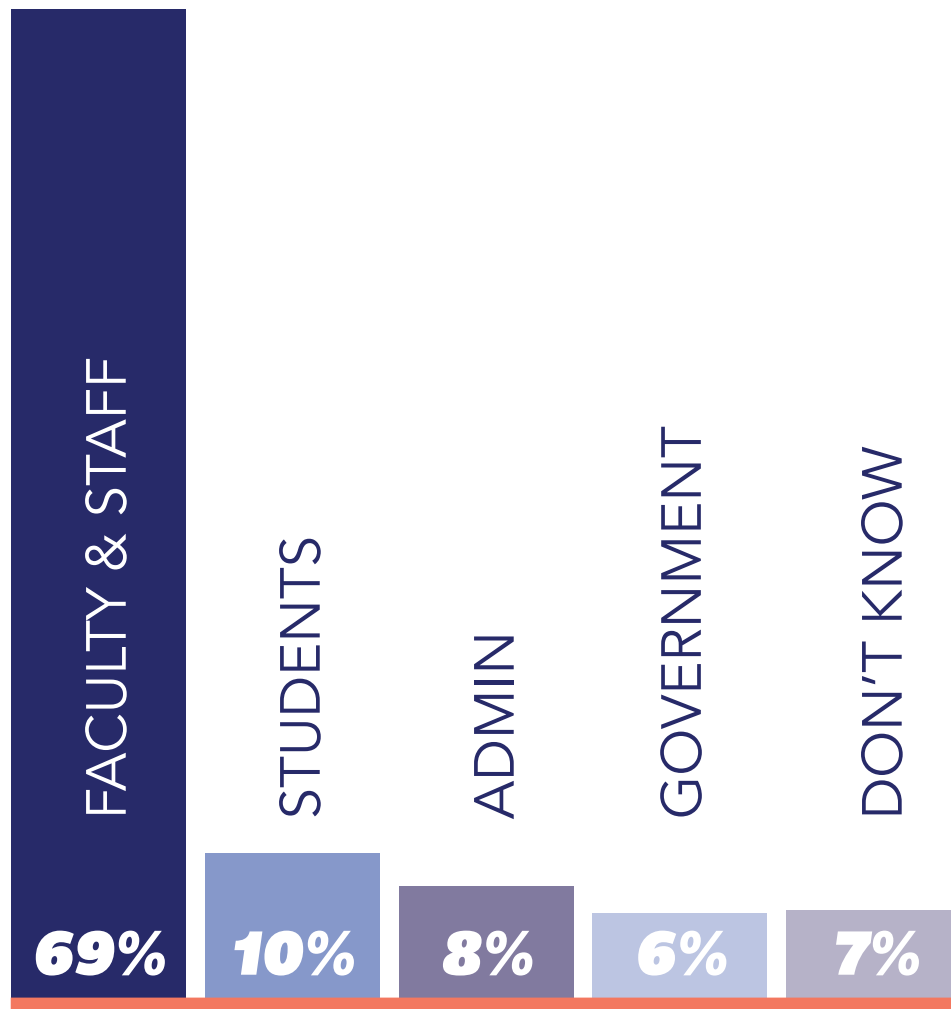
Should universities' Boards of Governors' meetings be open for students, faculty, staff, and members of the public to observe?



Nova Scotians overwhelmingly believe that increased accountability is needed from our universities.

"Teachers become deeply familiar with the intellectual, emotional and physical needs of their students. Social class, race, culture, gender are factors that impact educational success and, in turn, life chances. Teachers understand these complexities and their insights are vital when developing standards in our public education system."

- Associate Professor, Acadia University



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



800 Nova Scotians surveyed over 14 days in November 2017.

Margin of error: +/- 3%, 19 times out of 20.

Polling conducted by Nielson

