



# 2020 | Quebec Student Budget Consultations

**Final Report –**  
June 5 2020

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# Introduction and Methodology

The Student Budget Consultation led by CIVIX-Quebec is a unique opportunity for students to learn more about the provincial government's budgetary process, discuss current economic and political issues, and to express their ideas ahead of the next provincial budget.

This **final report** by Ipsos and CIVIX-Quebec aims to provide a detailed overview of the perceptions and priorities of Quebec's next generation.



## Online survey

Field dates: February 13 to April 17, 2020



## 349 students

from 16 high schools and CEGEPS.

*Please note that the outbreak of COVID-19 and the subsequent closure of schools had a significant impact on this year's participation rate.*



Due to rounding, numbers may not always sum up to 100%





# Executive Summary

# The Environment

## Today's students...

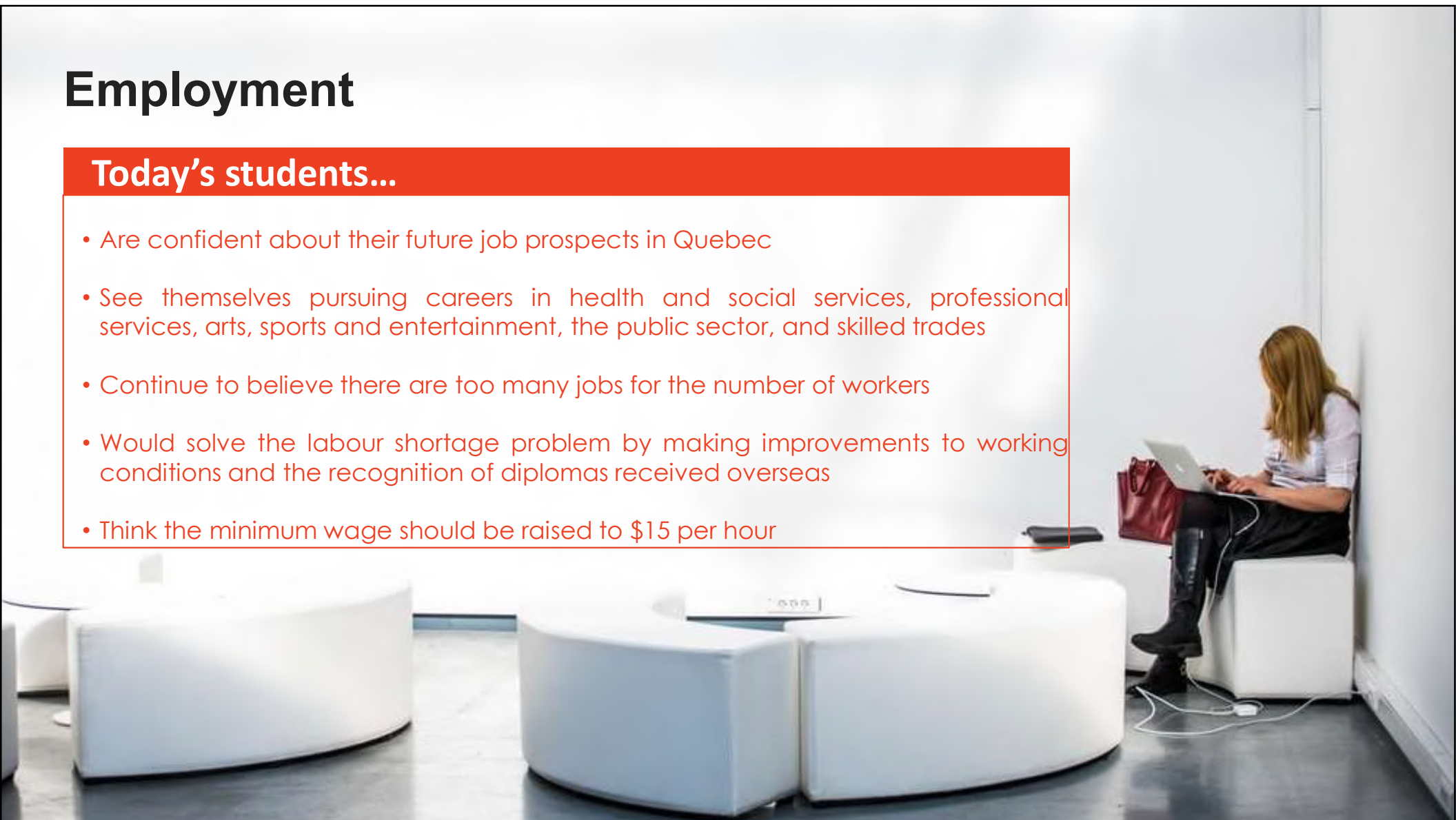
- Are less concerned about the environment than a year ago, but the issue remains critical for most
- Continue to list the environment as a top priority and think the government should do more, even if it means higher costs
- Put protecting the environment ahead of economic development
- Would like to see stricter environmental regulations (though this opinion has declined significantly since last year), even if it results in higher prices for consumers
- Are in favour of offering tax credits to businesses that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, but also support a law against food waste, promoting the purchase of electric cars, and investing more in public transit



# Employment

## Today's students...

- Are confident about their future job prospects in Quebec
- See themselves pursuing careers in health and social services, professional services, arts, sports and entertainment, the public sector, and skilled trades
- Continue to believe there are too many jobs for the number of workers
- Would solve the labour shortage problem by making improvements to working conditions and the recognition of diplomas received overseas
- Think the minimum wage should be raised to \$15 per hour



# The Economy

## Today's students...

- Are in favour of financial support for struggling private enterprises if their difficulties put jobs in Quebec at risk
- Are divided on whether the government should set money aside to use in the event of an economic slowdown
- Support more investment to strengthen the economy in different regions of the province
- Favour more government services, though support has declined since last year
- Lean towards thinking a tax on very high-income individuals would be an advantage for the province





# Education

## Today's students

- Still see education as a priority, though a smaller proportion than last year rate it as being an important issue
- Are in favour of free education
- Want the government to increase spending on education and improve working conditions for teachers
- Continue to feel it's a priority to increase support for students with learning difficulties or mental health issues
- Think that a ban on wearing religious symbols would have a negative impact on the education sector
- Are more likely to talk about politics in an educational context than spontaneously among friends



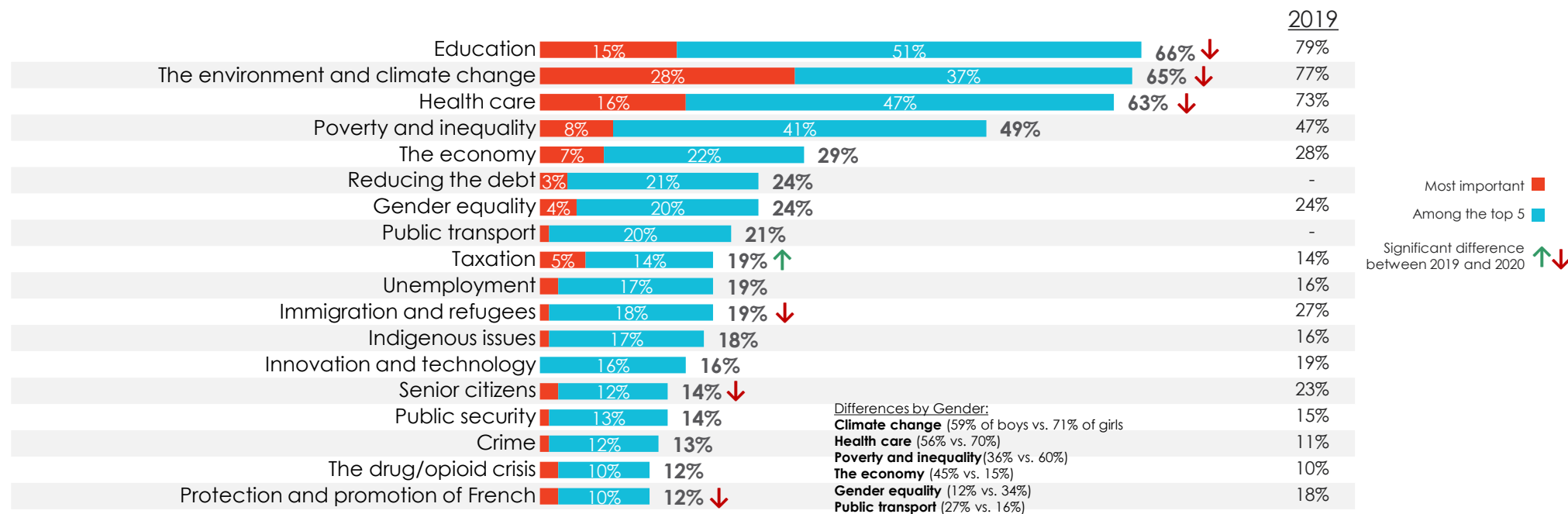


# Government Priorities



# Government Priorities

Students think that the government should focus on three essential sectors: education, the environment/climate change, and health care. The environment stands out when looking at the proportion of first mentions, with 28% of students having chosen this issue as the most important. Conversely, crime and the opioid crisis rank toward the bottom of their list of priorities. Girls are more likely to prioritize issues like climate change, health care, poverty, and gender equality, while boys are more likely to prioritize the economy and public transit.



**Bolded** percentages represent the sum of all mentions

Numbers below 3% not shown in chart

**Q7.** Which issues do you think the government should focus on? From the list below, please choose the 5 options you feel are the most urgent for the government to address. (Select a maximum of 5.)

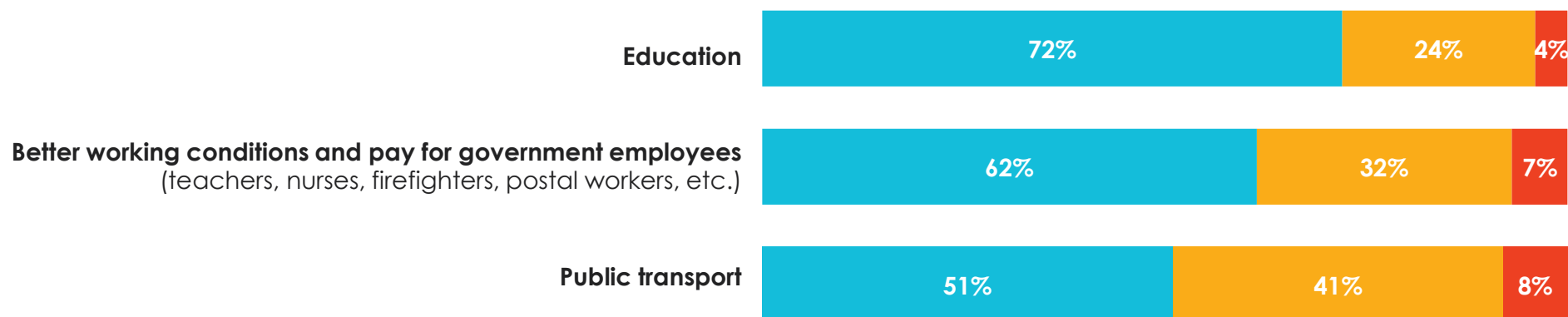
Please rank your top 5 choices in order of importance. *Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884).*

## Level of Spending (new sectors)

A majority of students think the government should increase spending on education, as well as ensuring better working conditions for government employees and public transport. As seen last year, these preferences align with student perceptions about which issues the government should focus on as a priority.

10

■ Spending should be increased      ■ Spending should stay the same  
■ Spending should be decreased



**Q6.** Please indicate whether you think the government should increase or decrease spending on the following items in the next provincial budget. *(Select only one response per row)*

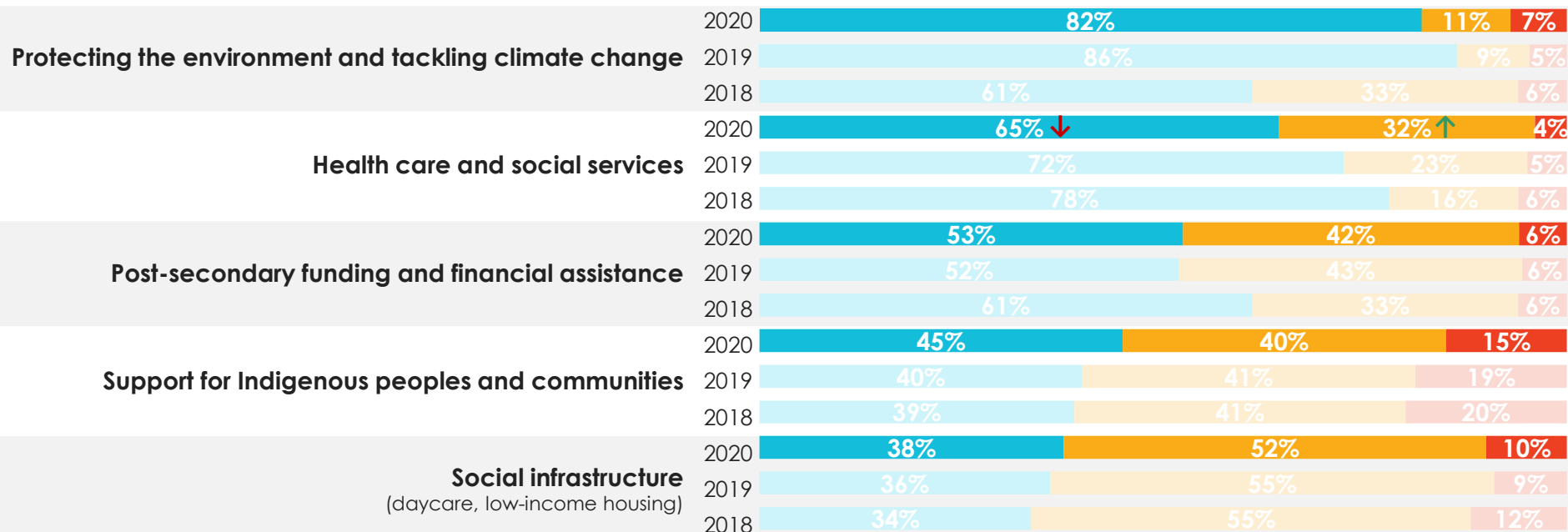
*Base: All respondents (n=349), 2019 (n=884), 2018 (n=1220). Data excludes the "Don't know" answer option.*

# Level of Spending

While health care and social services remain among the sectors where students would most like to see spending increased in the next provincial budget, the number of students in favour of a rise in spending has declined (down 13 percentage points since 2018).

11

■ Spending should be increased    ■ Spending should stay the same    ■ Spending should be decreased



**Q6.** Please indicate whether you think the government should increase or decrease spending on the following items in the next provincial budget. (Select only one response per row)

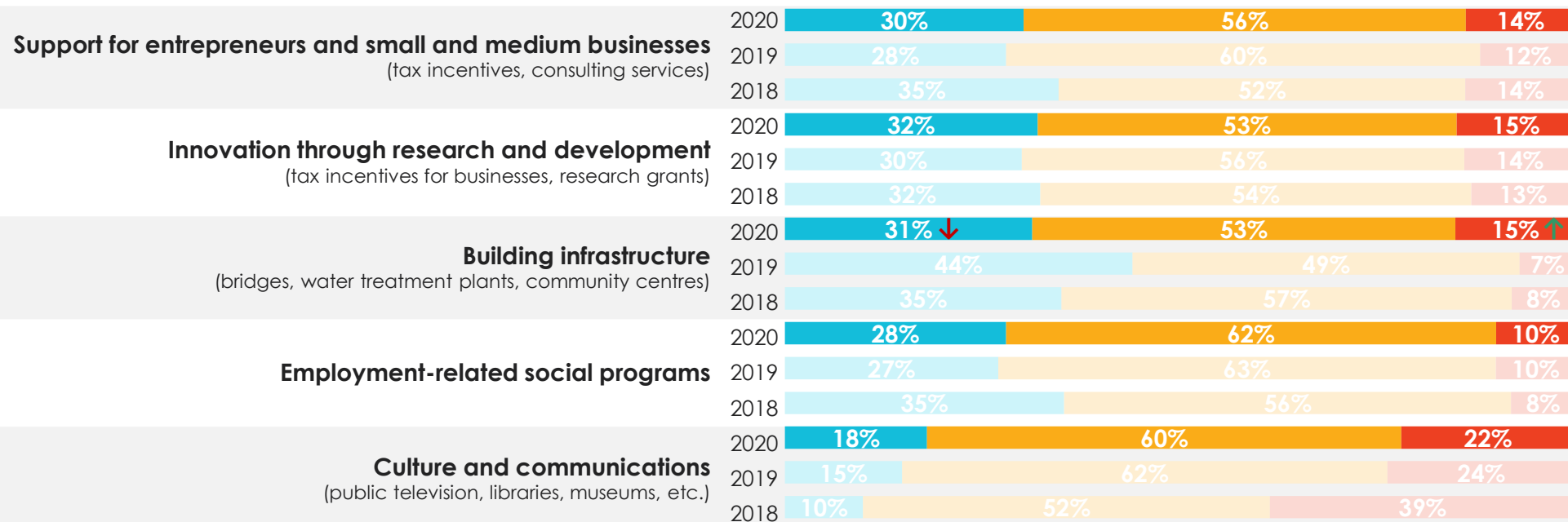
Base: All respondents (n=349), 2019 (n=884), 2018 (n=1220). Data excludes the "Don't know" answer option.



# Level of Spending

Students are more likely to think the government should decrease spending on culture and communications. Compared to last year, more students think that budgetary spending on building infrastructure should be decreased.

■ Spending should be increased    ■ Spending should stay the same    ■ Spending should be decreased

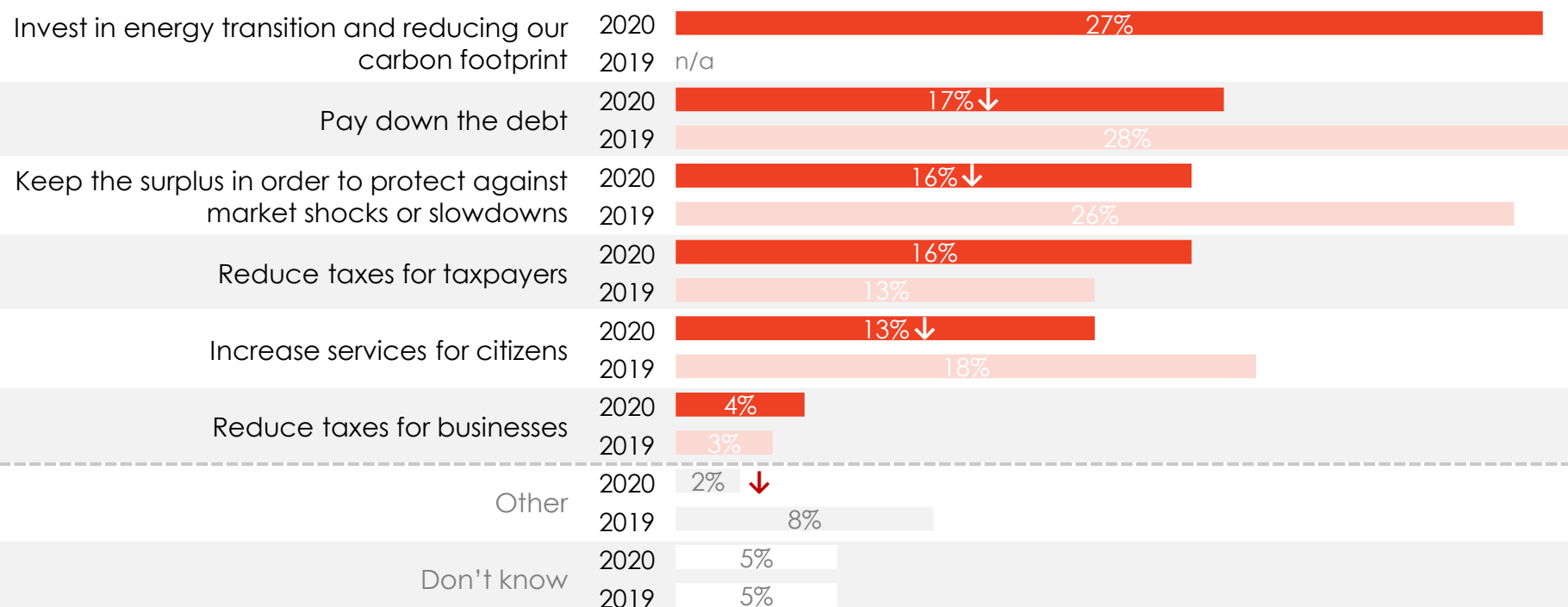


**Q6.** Please indicate whether you think the government should increase or decrease spending on the following items in the next provincial budget. (Select only one response per row)

Base: All respondents (n=349), 2019 (n=884), 2018 (n=1220). Data excludes the "Don't know" answer option.

# What to Do with a Budget Surplus?

True to their environmental beliefs, students are more likely to want a potential budget surplus to be invested in the energy transition. The environment aside, students would prefer to see the surplus go toward paying down the debt, be put aside in order to protect against market shocks or slowdowns, or help reduce taxes for taxpayers.

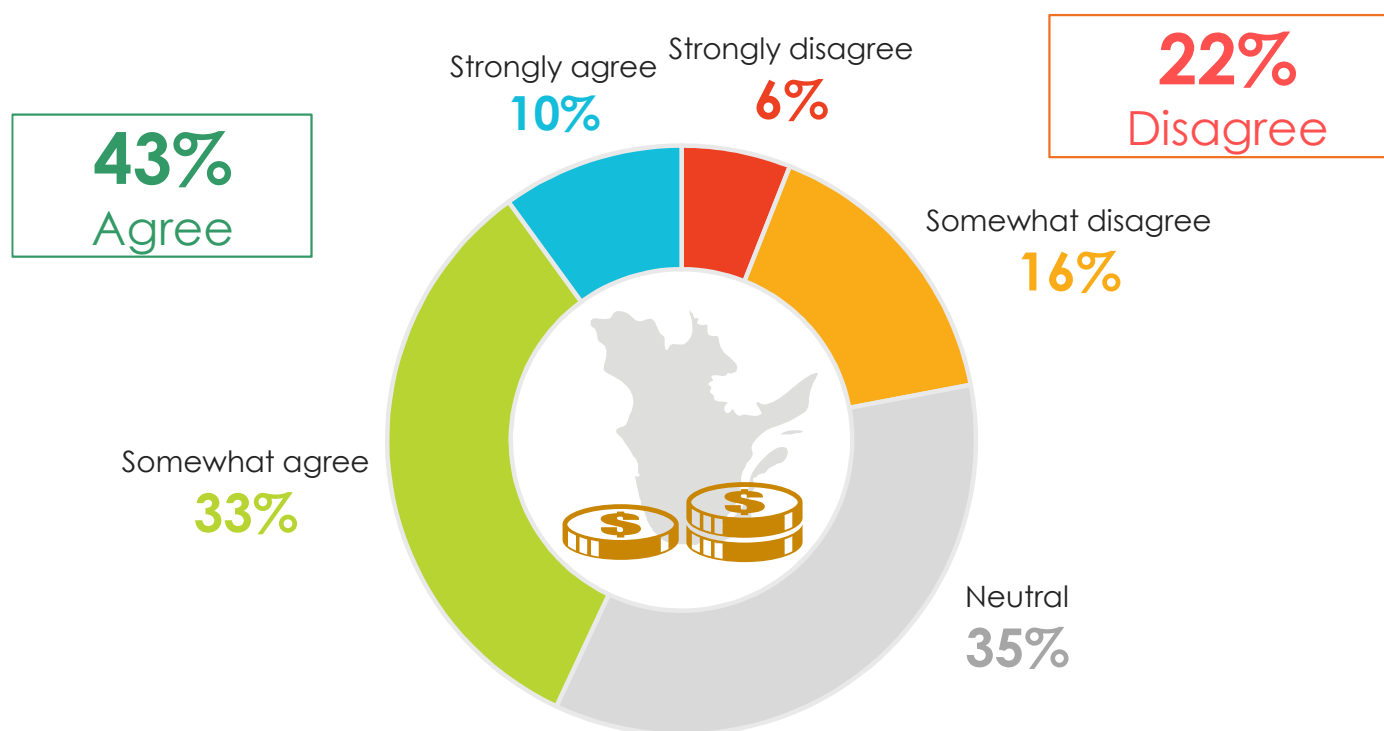


Q8. In the event of a budget surplus, what should the government do with the surplus? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884)

# Creating a Contingency Fund

Quebec students are divided over the question of whether or not the government should establish a contingency fund. About 4 in 10 respondents agree with the idea while 2 in 10 disagree. An important proportion remain neutral.



**Q9a.** Should the government set money aside to use in the event of an economic slowdown, even if this means tax increases or a decrease in government services? (Select only one response)

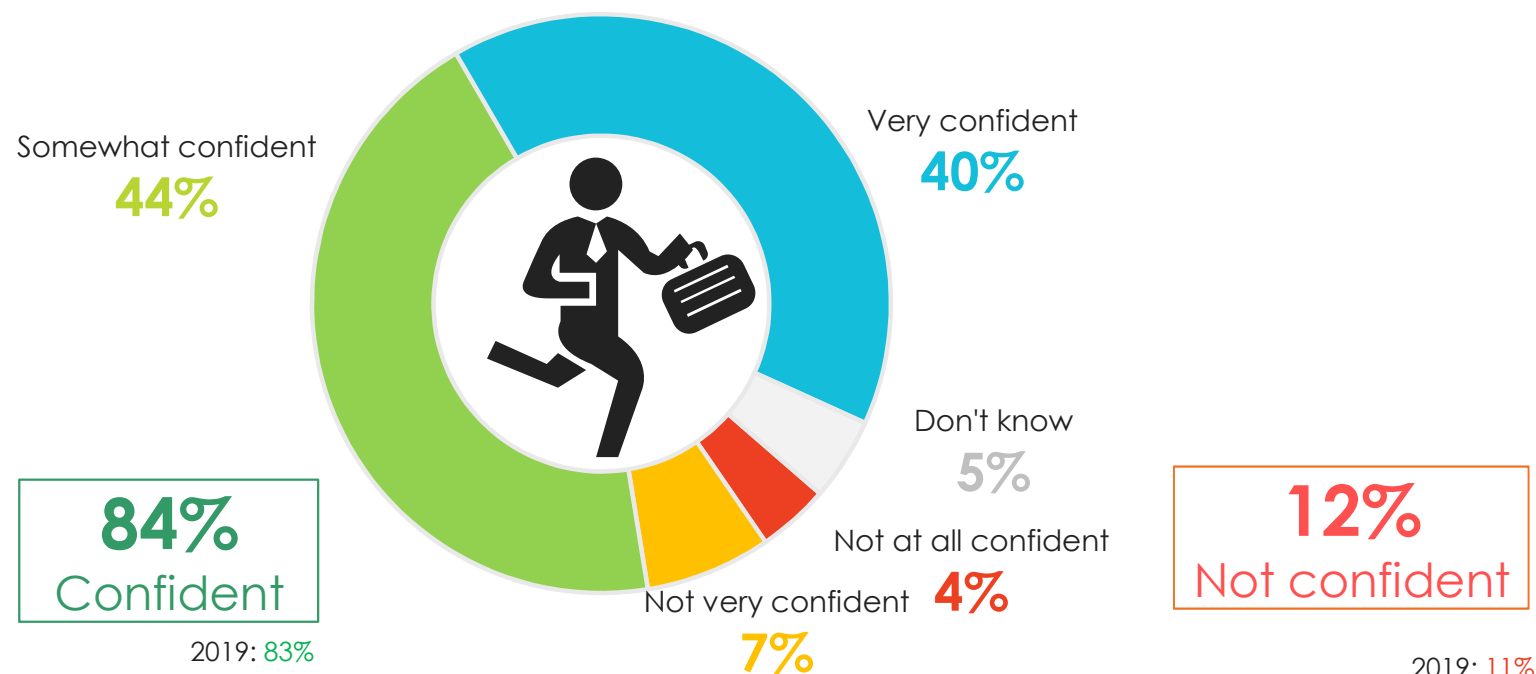
Base: All respondents; 2020 (n=349).



# The Quebec Economy

# Job Prospects in Quebec After Graduation

Quebec students are confident in their ability to find work in the province once their studies are completed, with more than 8 in 10 respondents who say they will be able to find a job that interests them. Some 12% are not convinced they can find a job in Quebec once their studies are done, and it is important to note that disabled respondents and visible minorities tend to be less confident about their job prospects.

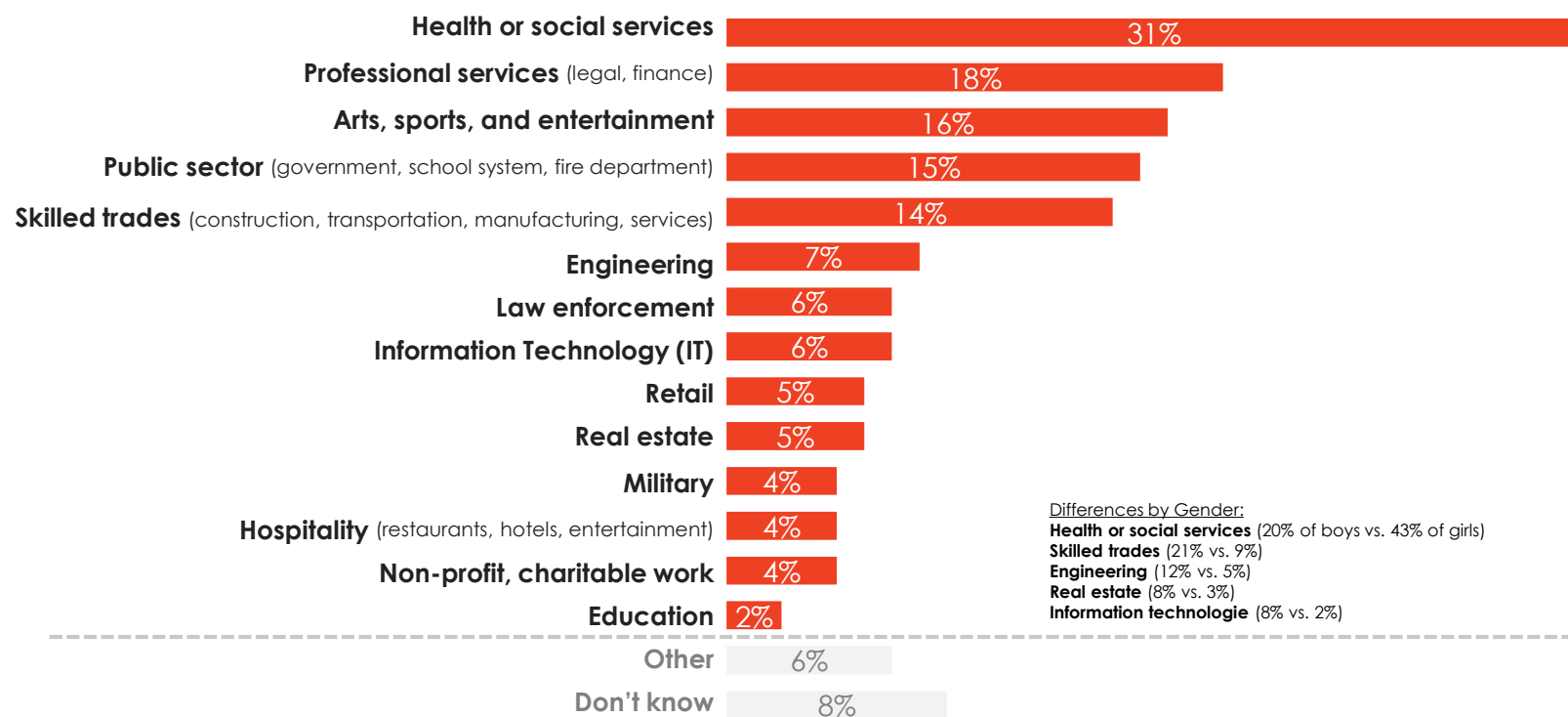


**Q2.** When you finish your schooling, how confident are you that you will find a job that interests you in Quebec? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Career Options Considered

In line with last year, health and social services is the sector cited most often by students when they think about their future career. Other sectors like professional services, arts, sports and entertainment, the public sector and skilled trades are also among the options preferred by students. Girls are more likely than boys to pick health care as their field of choice.



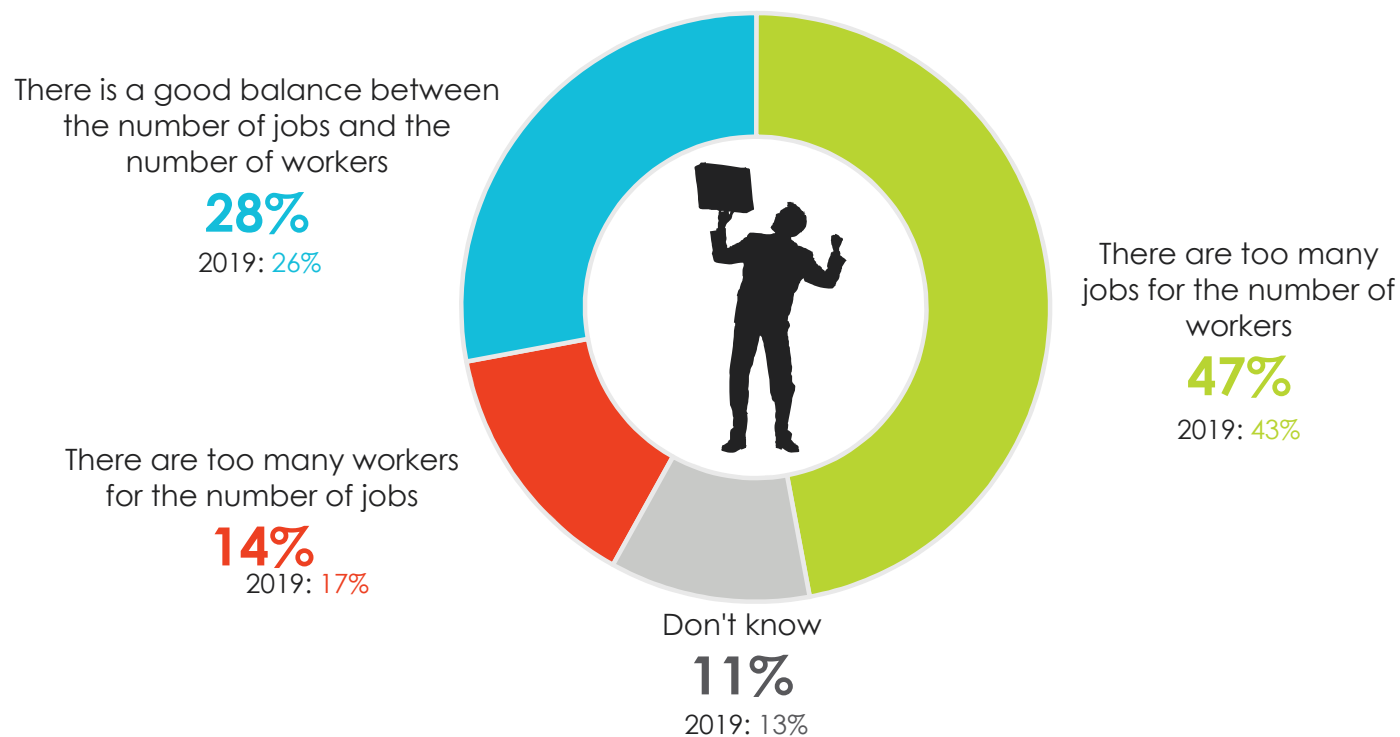
Q3. In which sector(s) are you considering a career? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)



# Employment Rate Among Young Quebecers

About half (47%) of respondents think there is a labour shortage in the province, with too many jobs for the number of workers. Less than 2 in 10 respondents think there are too many workers for the number of jobs.



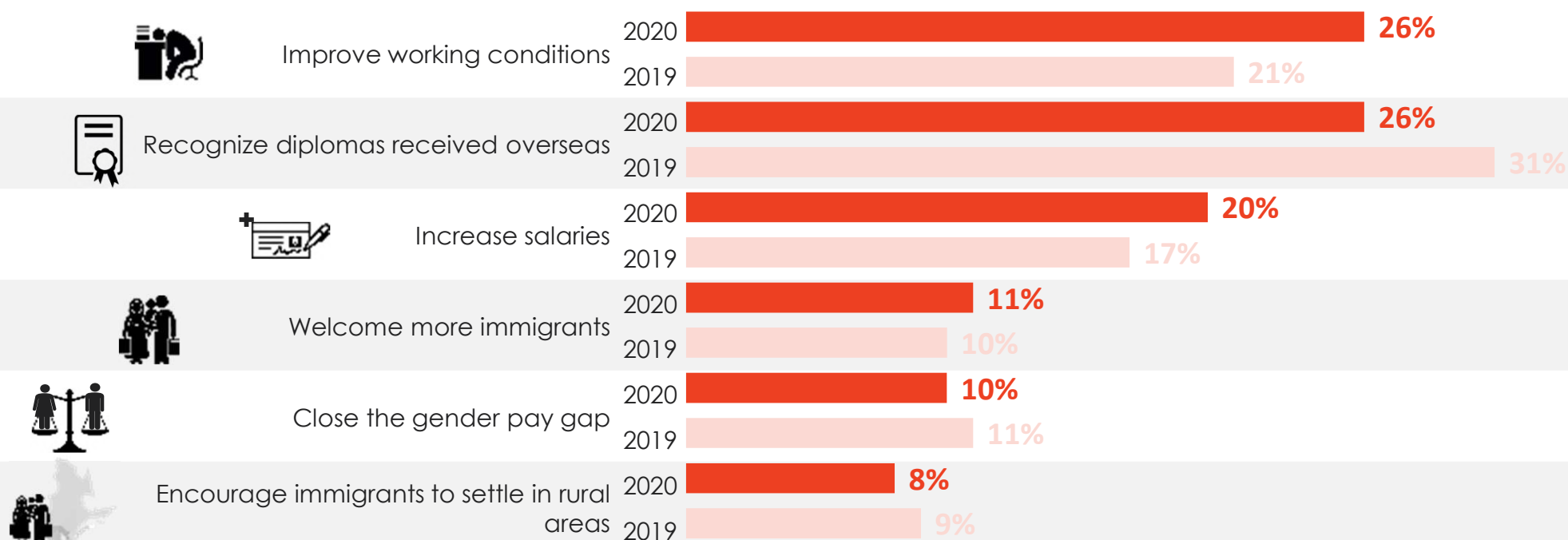
**Q4.** Thinking about the employment rate among young people in Quebec, do you think that ... (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# How to Fill Vacant Job Postings in Quebec

When students are asked how vacant job postings in Quebec should be filled, the most popular solutions are to improve working conditions and recognize diplomas received overseas.

19

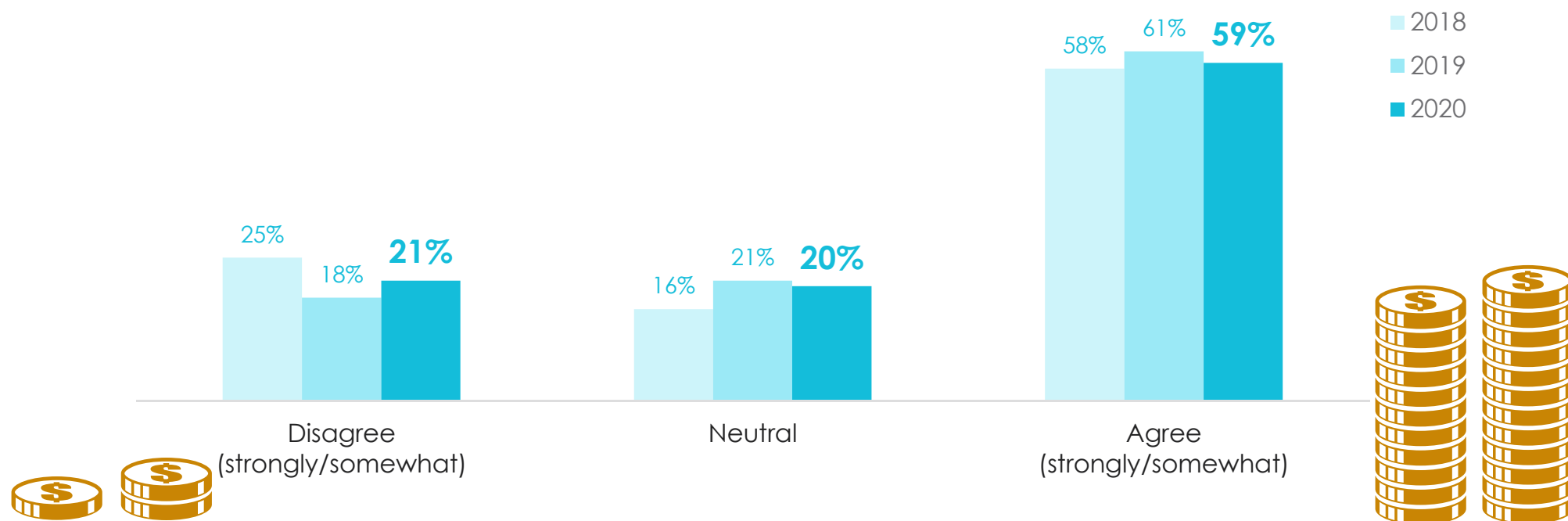


Q21. The most effective way to fill vacant job postings in Quebec is to .... (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884)

# Increasing the Minimum Wage

A majority (59%) are in favour of increasing the minimum wage from \$12.50 per hour to \$15 per hour. This opinion is more widespread among girls (67%) than boys (51%).



**Q9. [2020 version]** Currently, the minimum wage in Quebec is \$12.50 an hour. Should the Quebec government raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour? (Select only one response). **[2018-2019 version]** The Quebec government should raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. (Select only one response)

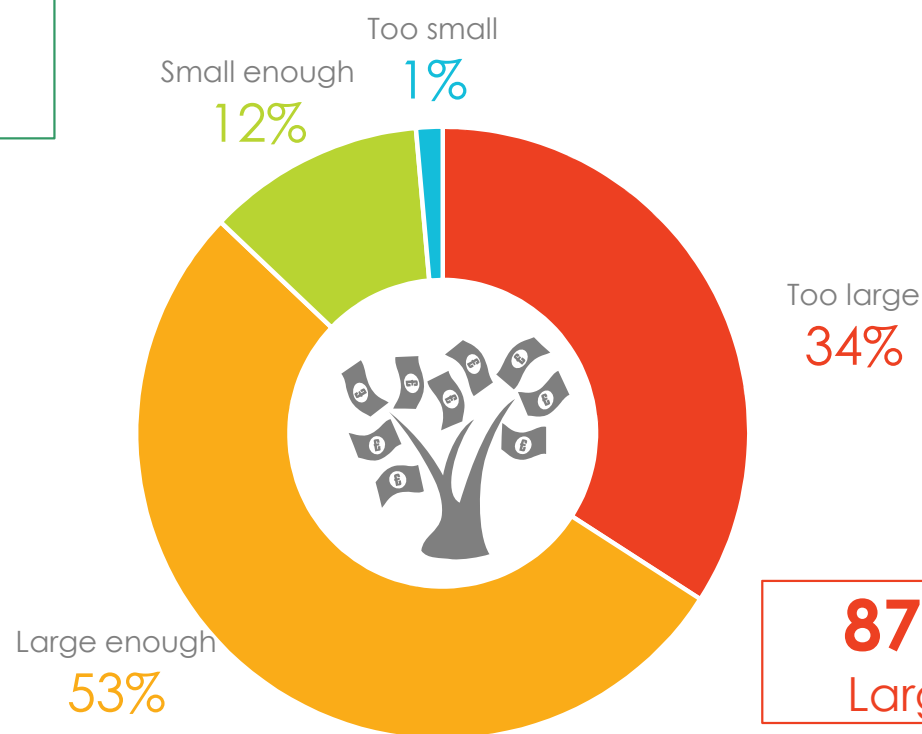
Base: All respondents; 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n= 884), 2018 (n= 1220).

# The Gap Between Rich and Poor

Nearly nine in ten students think there is a large gap between the rich and the poor – one in three say this gap is “too large”.

Girls and visible minorities are more likely to perceive a large gap between rich and poor.

**13%**  
Small



**87%**  
Large

Q13. In your opinion, is the gap between the rich and the poor... (Select only one response)

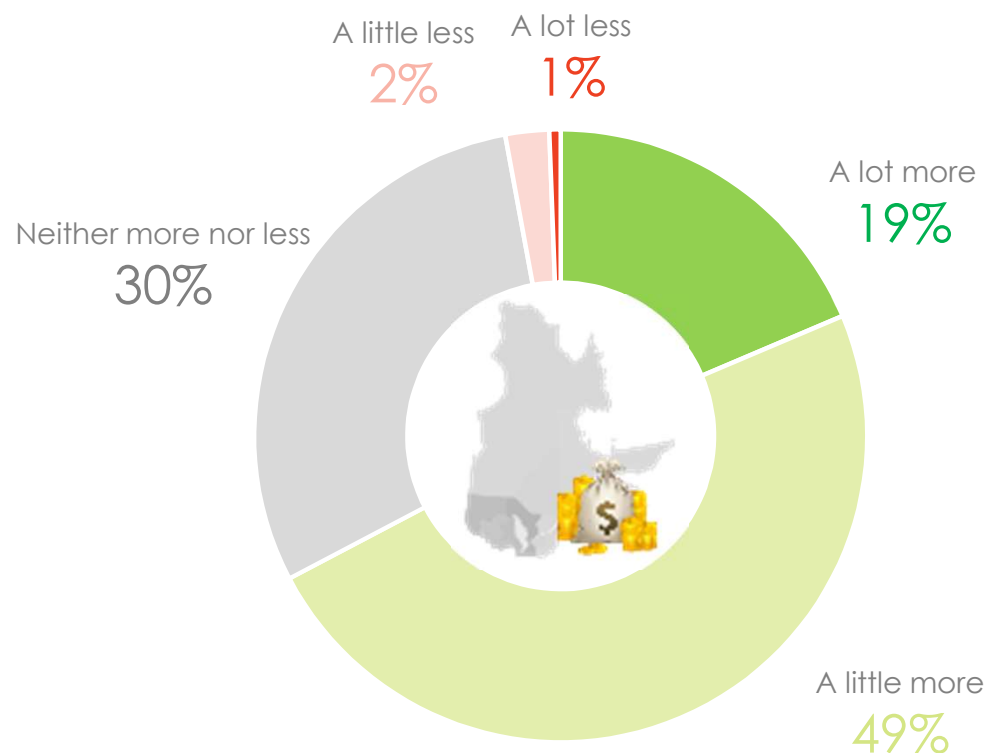
Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)



# Investing to Reduce the Disparity Between Regions

Two in three respondents think the Quebec government should invest at least a little more to strengthen the economy in different regions of the province and reduce the wealth gap between regions.

However, 30% of respondents think the Quebec government should invest neither more nor less in this area than it already does.



Q14. How much should the Quebec government do to strengthen the economy in different regions of the province and reduce the wealth gap between regions? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Taxes and Finance

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# Fewer Taxes or More Government Services?

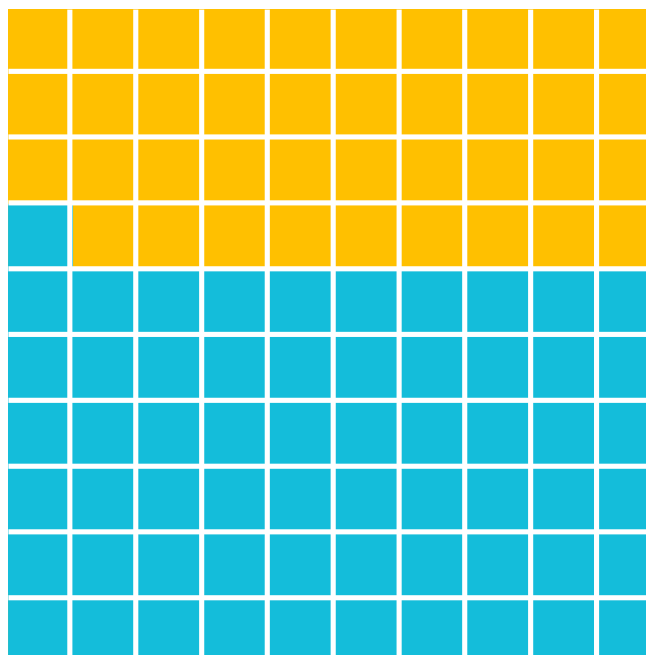
Though a majority of respondents (61%) say they would prefer to have higher taxes and more government services, this number is down since last year. Nearly four in ten respondents would prefer instead to have less taxes and fewer government services, up 10 points from 2019.



61%↓

Higher taxes and  
more government services

2019: 71%



39%↑

Less taxes and  
fewer government services

2019: 29%

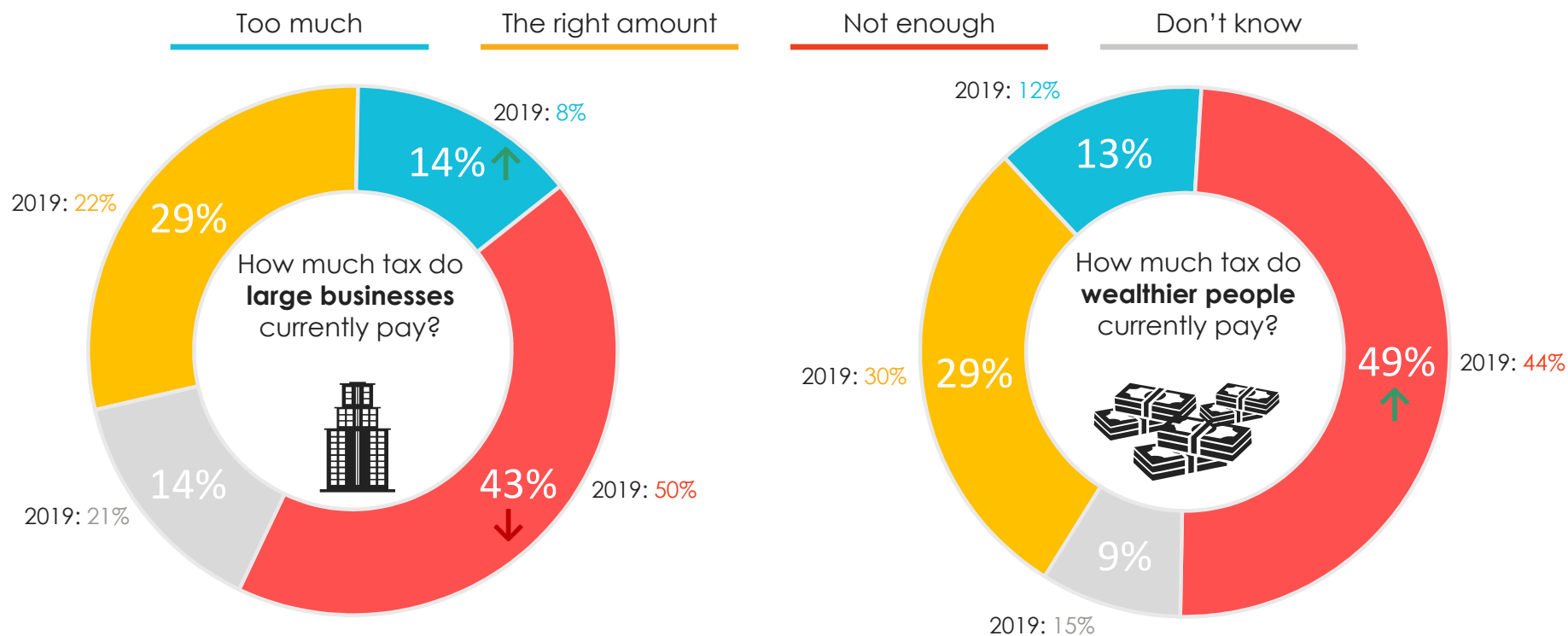


**Q25.** Which of the following options do you prefer? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884).

# Are They Paying Their Fair Share?

There is no majority-held opinion on taxes paid by large businesses and wealthier people. However, respondents tend to think that both aren't paying enough. This opinion is stronger than last year when it comes to the wealthy, but has declined with regard to large businesses.



**Q23.** In your opinion, how much tax do large businesses currently pay? (Select only one response)

**Q24.** And what about wealthier people, how much tax do they currently pay, in your opinion? (Select only one response)

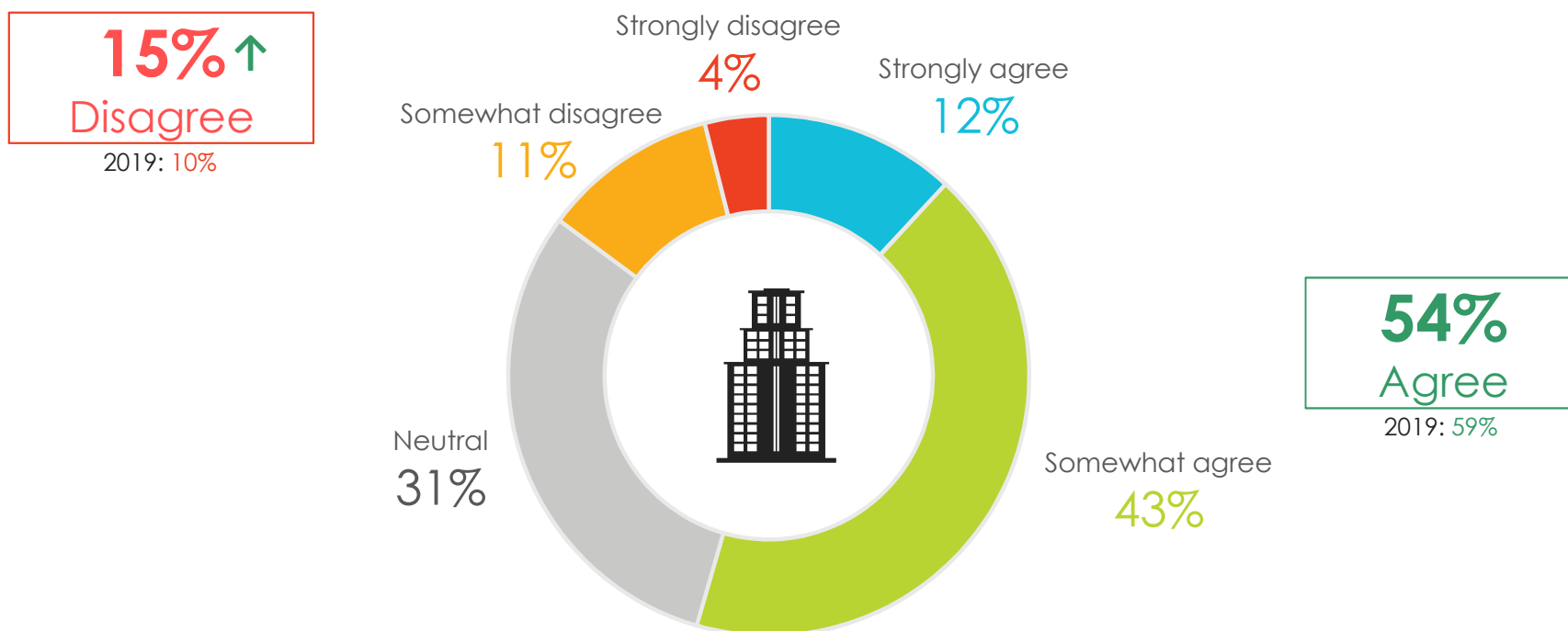
Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)



# Should the Government Help Struggling Businesses?

More than half of respondents agree that the government must be ready to provide financial support to struggling private enterprises if their difficulties put Quebec jobs at risk – a situation that became all too real shortly after this survey was held, when COVID-19 hit Quebec particularly hard.

26



**Q19.** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? [The government must be ready to provide financial support to struggling private enterprises if their difficulties put jobs in Quebec at risk] (Select only one response)

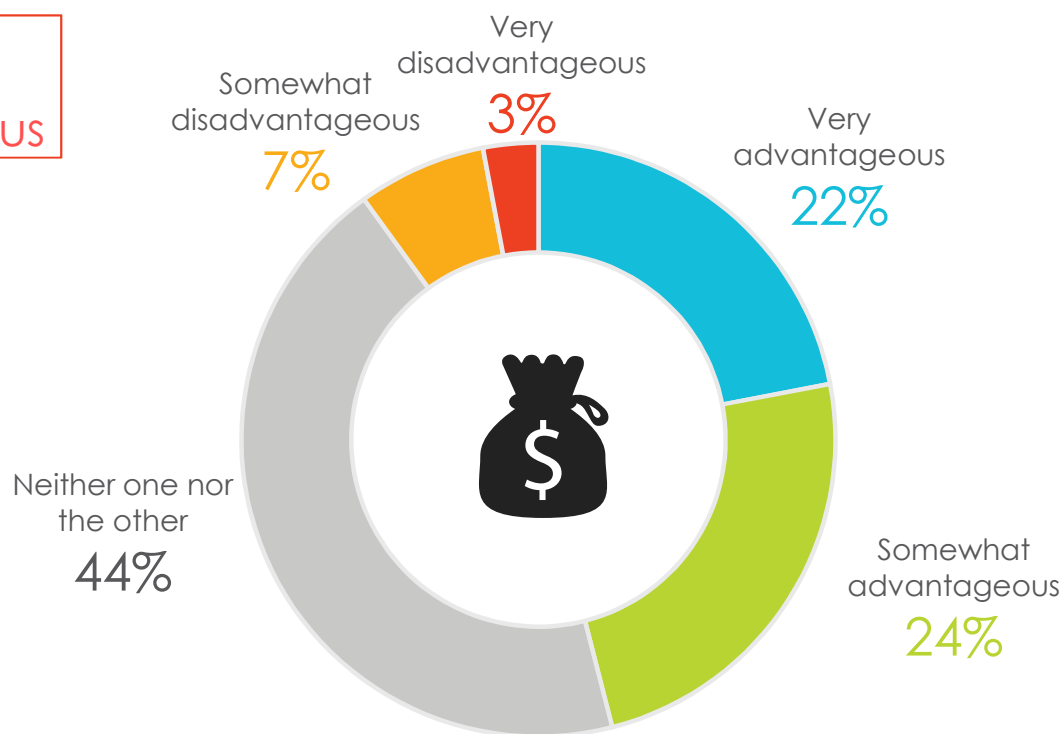
Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Wealth Tax

Opinions are mostly favourable or neutral on the question of whether to establish a wealth tax: slightly less than half think that creating a new tax bracket for those with an annual income of over \$500,000 would be advantageous for Quebec, though nearly as many say it wouldn't be an advantage or a disadvantage.

27

**10%**  
Disadvantageous



**46%**  
Advantageous

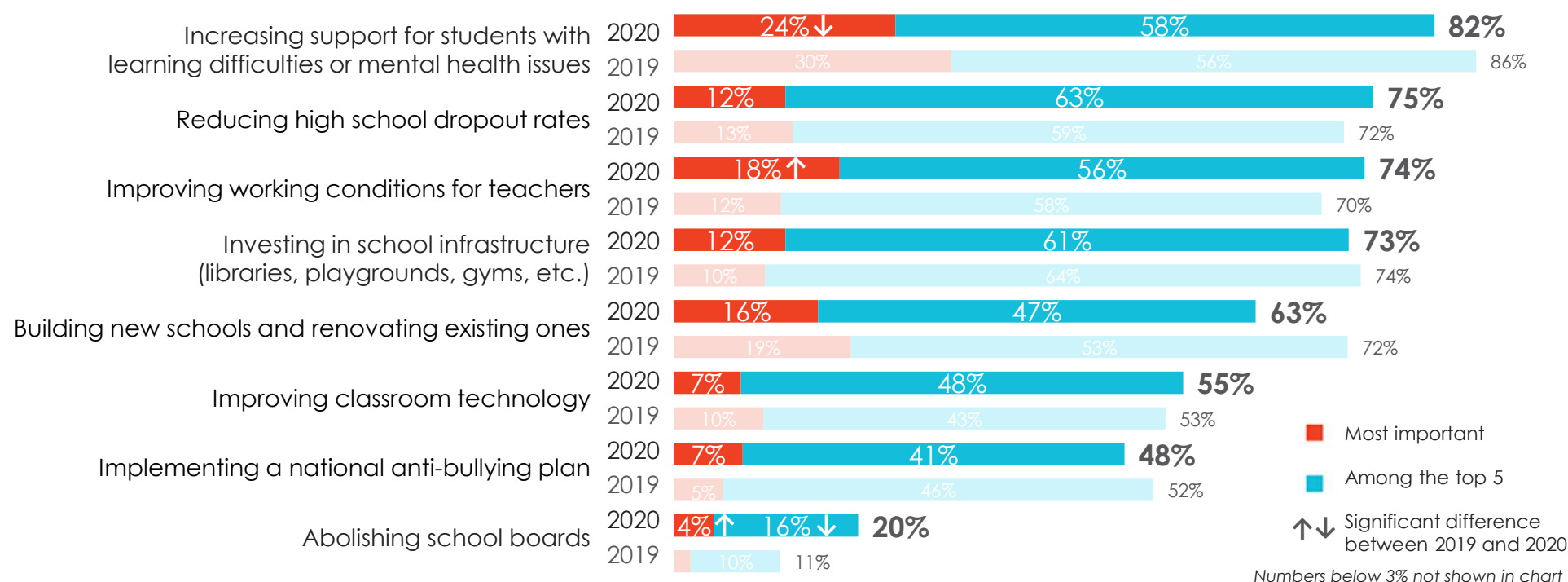
**Q22a.** Do you think that it would be an advantage or disadvantage for Quebec if it implemented a wealth tax that created a new tax bracket for those with an annual income of over \$500,000? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349).

# Education and Society

# Priorities for Education

Similar to last year, students are tuned in to the challenges that they or their peers face when it comes to learning disabilities, mental health, and dropping out. They also sympathize with their teachers, notably when it comes to their working conditions; three-quarters believe that the government should prioritize improving their working conditions, along with an increase in spending for school infrastructure.



**Bolded** percentages represent the sum of all mentions

**Q5.** From the following list of education issues, please choose 5 that you feel should be the most urgent for the government to address. (Select a maximum of 5.)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884).

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# Free Education

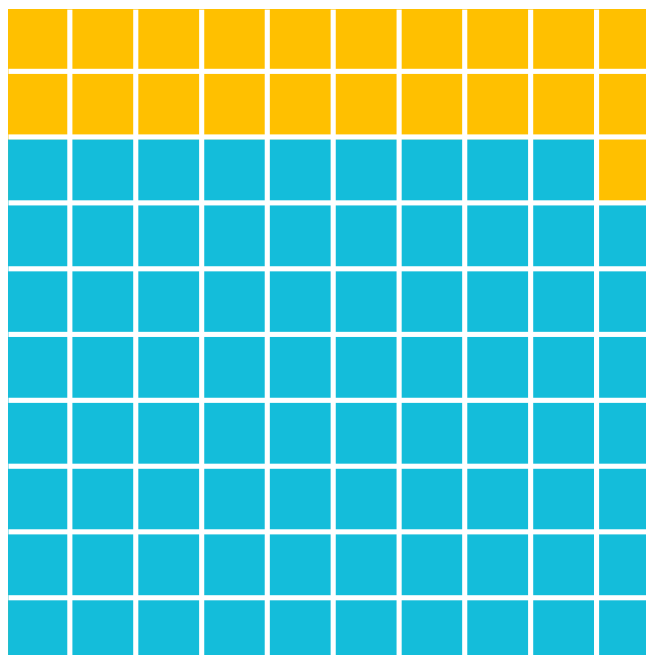
A large majority (eight in ten) believe that education should be free from kindergarten until the end of their undergraduate degree. The remaining two in ten believe that students or their families should shoulder the burden themselves.

30



# 79%

Education should be free from kindergarten to the end of your undergraduate degree



# 21%

Students or their families should pay their own tuition fees



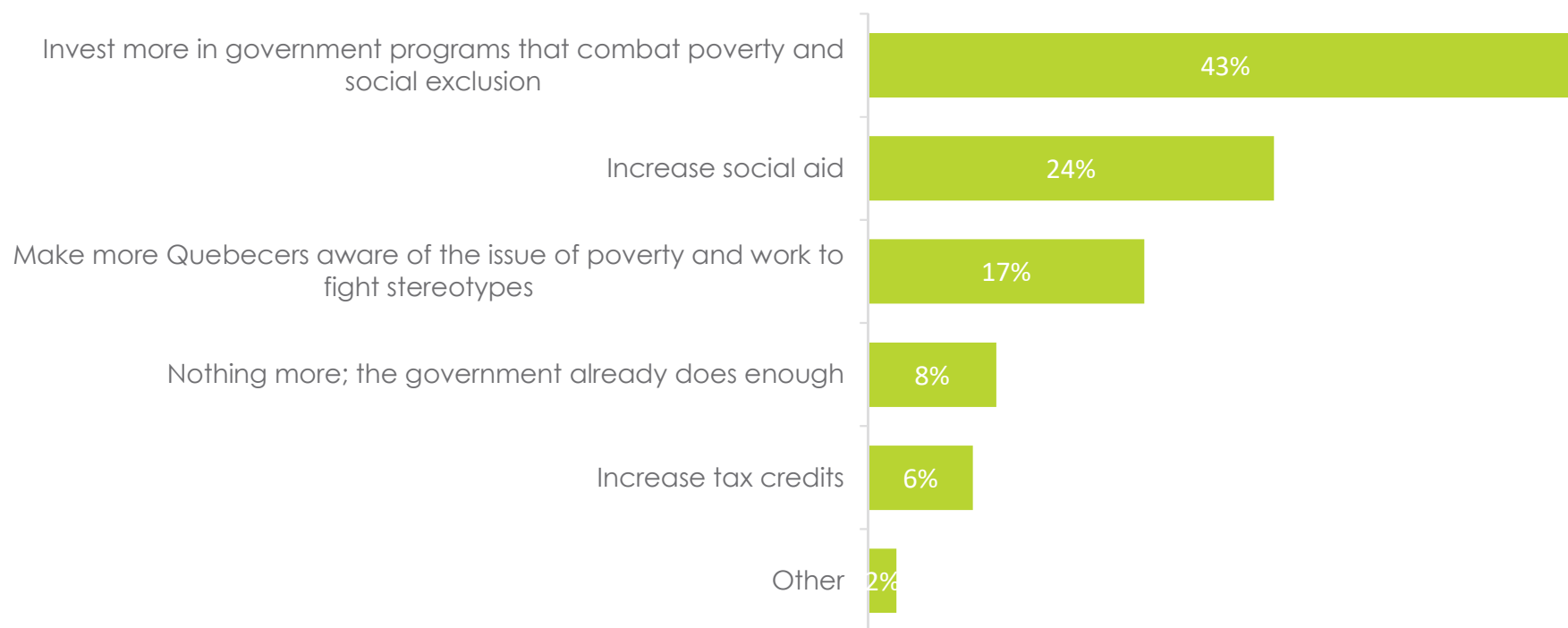
**Q11.** Some people say that education should be free from kindergarten until the end of your undergraduate degree. Others say that it's up to students and families to pay their own tuition fees. Which of these two opinions comes closer to your own? (Select only one response.)

Base: All respondents; 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n= 884), 2018 (n= 1220)



# The Fight Against Poverty

Government programs that fight poverty and social exclusion are clearly a priority for a plurality of students; more than four in ten believe that the Quebec government should make these programs a priority. Very few (8%) think that the government does enough already. Even fewer students believe that increasing tax credits would be the best solution.



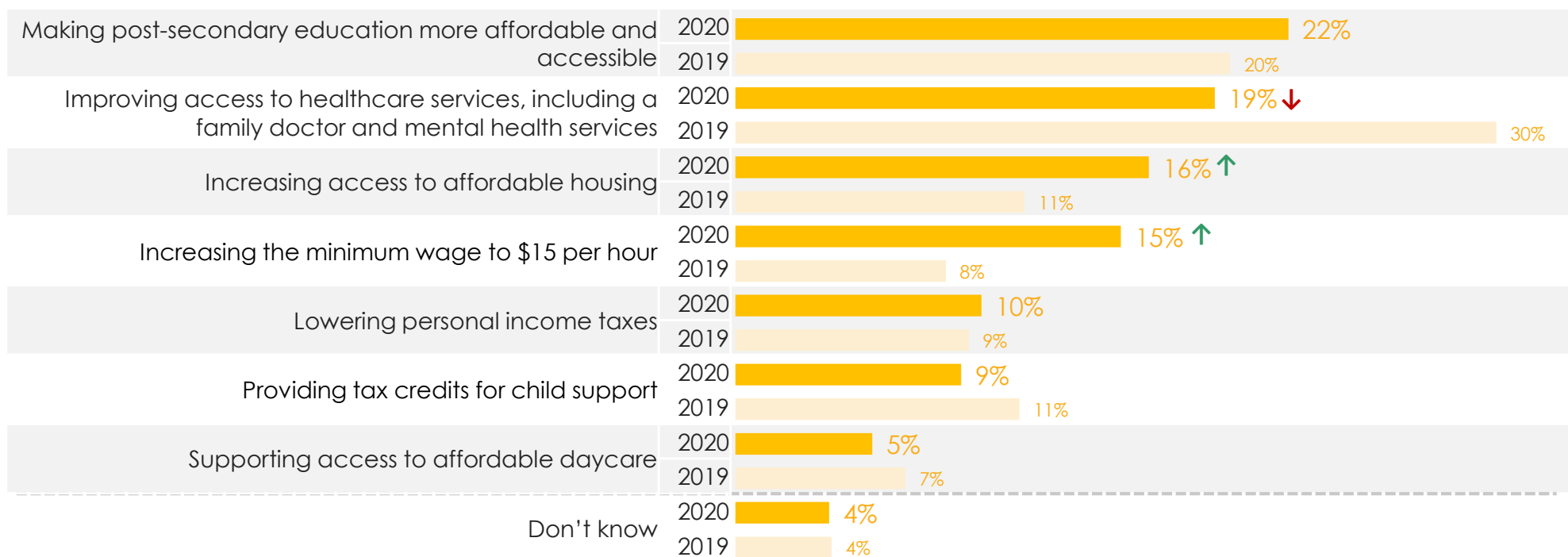
**Q14a.** Currently, about 14% of Quebecers are living below the poverty line. In your opinion, what is the biggest step the Quebec government can take to fight poverty? *(Select only one response)*

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Priorities for Helping Families

Understandably, one of the main concerns for students is education, and this is clear in their choice of priorities to help families. Two in ten believe that the most important step the government could take to help families is making post-secondary education more affordable and accessible. Simplifying access to health care remains one of the top priorities, and the number of students who would prioritize access to affordable housing and raising the minimum wage is on the rise.

32

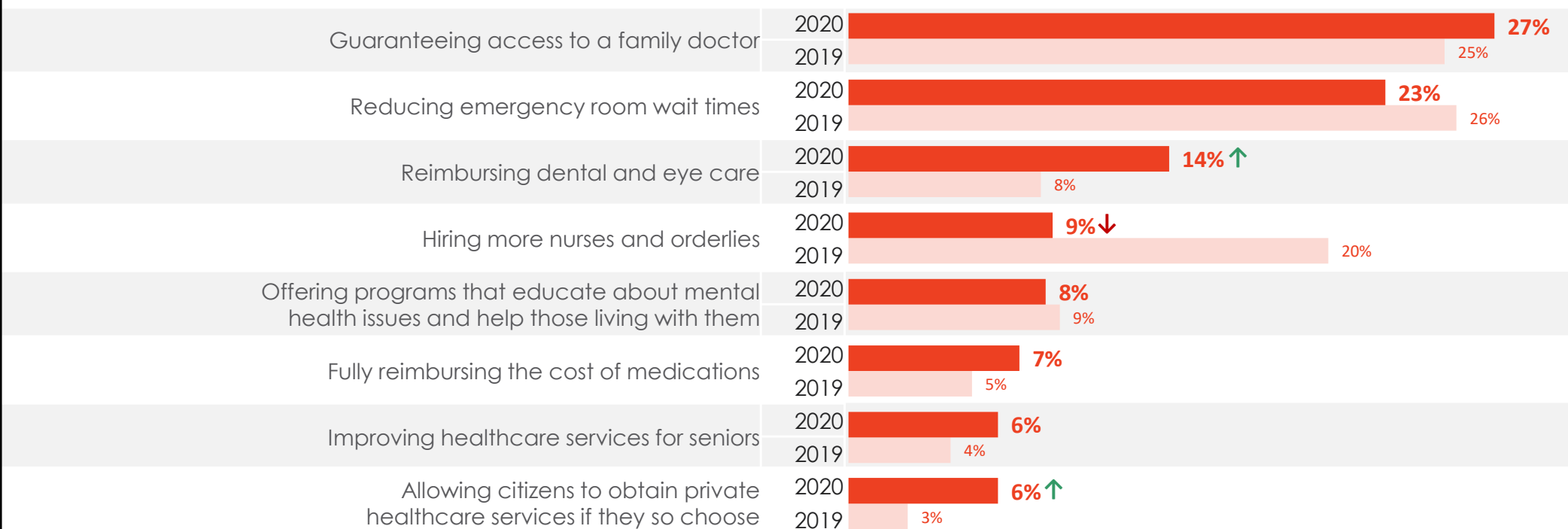


**Q15.** What is the most important step the government could take to help families? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Government Priorities in Healthcare

When it comes to healthcare, guaranteed access to a family doctor and a reduction in emergency room waiting times remain at the top of the list of most pressing issues for students. However, there has been a significant drop in those who believe that more nurses and orderlies should be hired.



**Q16.** Healthcare is a priority for the Quebec government. In your opinion, which of the following choices should be the main priority? (Select only one response)

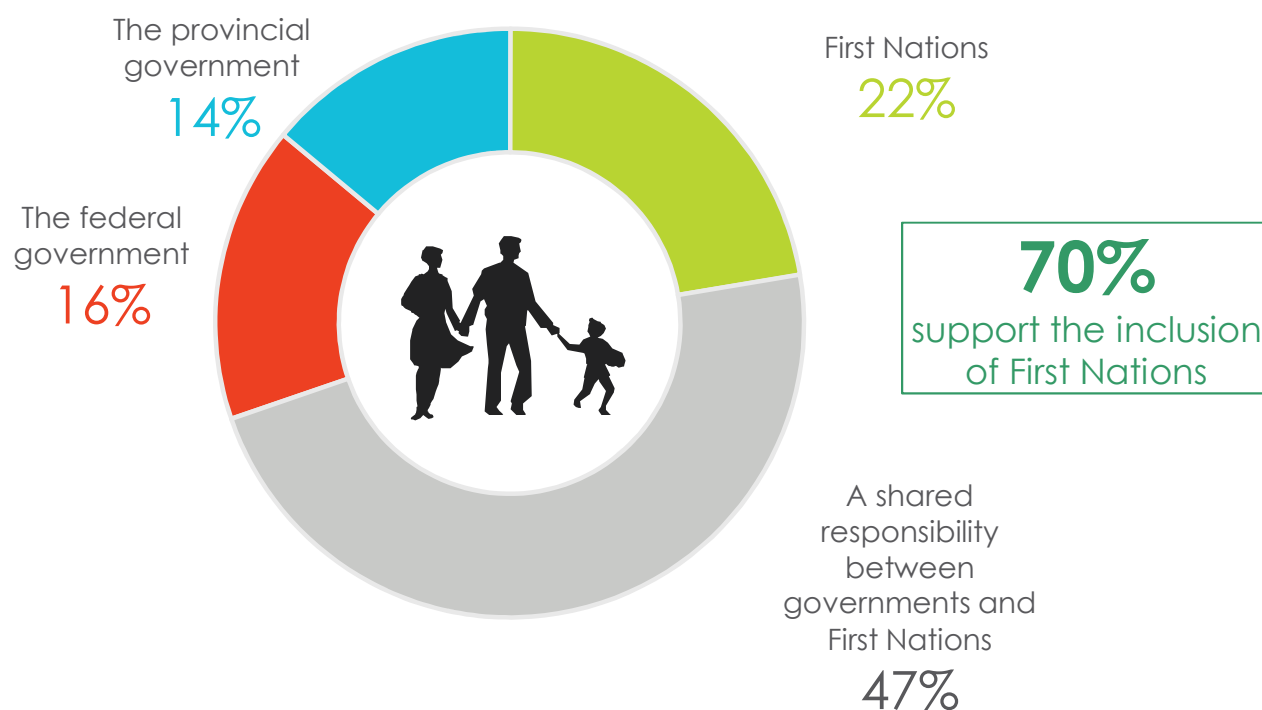
Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Responsibility for First Nations Child Protection Services

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A large majority - seven out of ten students - believe that First Nations should be responsible for all or part of the child welfare system within their own communities.

However, only 22% believe that First Nations should solely have responsibility for child protection services. Almost half of students believe that protecting First Nations children should be a shared responsibility between the First Nations and the various levels of government.



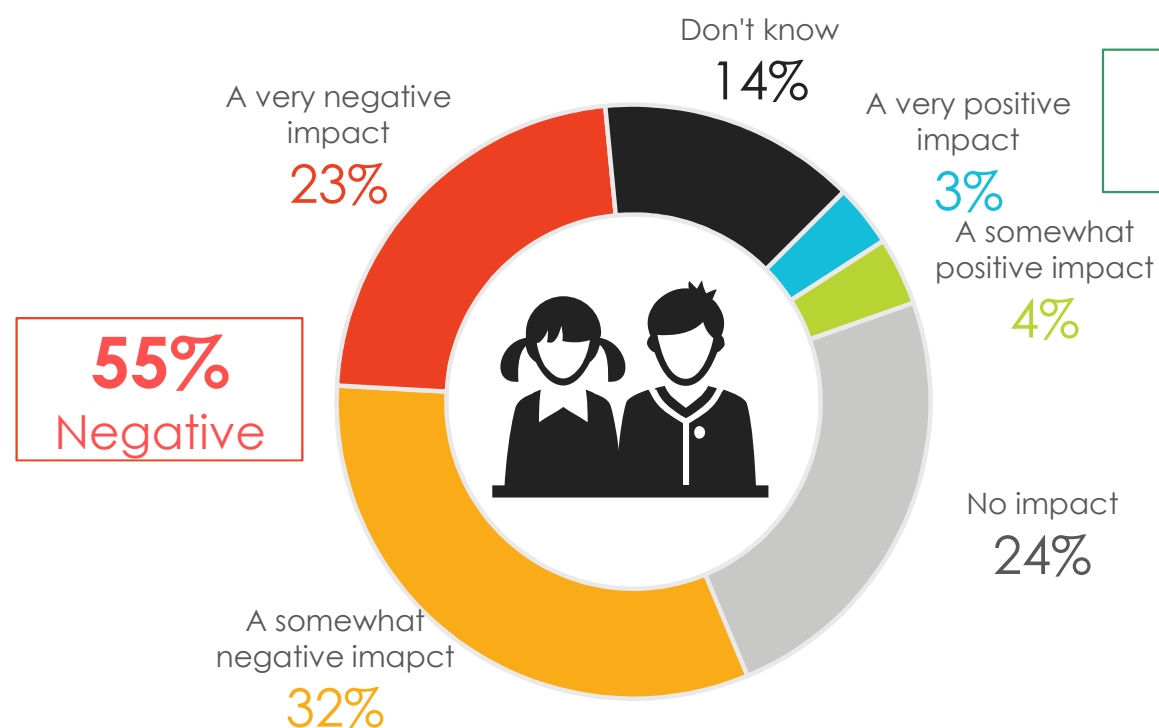
Q15a. Who should be responsible for First Nations child protection services? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Impact on the Education Sector of Ban on Wearing Religious Symbols

Slightly more than half (55%) believe that Bill 21 could have a negative impact on the government's efforts to address the labour shortage in the education sector. This proportion rises to 69% among students identifying themselves as a member of a visible minority.

For many (24%), the law will have no impact - a sentiment that is more common in men than women. More than one in ten are undecided, and very few (7%) see a positive impact.



**Q25a.** In your opinion, could Bill 21, which bans religious symbols being worn by state employees (judges, police officers, teachers) have an impact on the government's efforts to fill the labour shortage in the education sector?

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349).

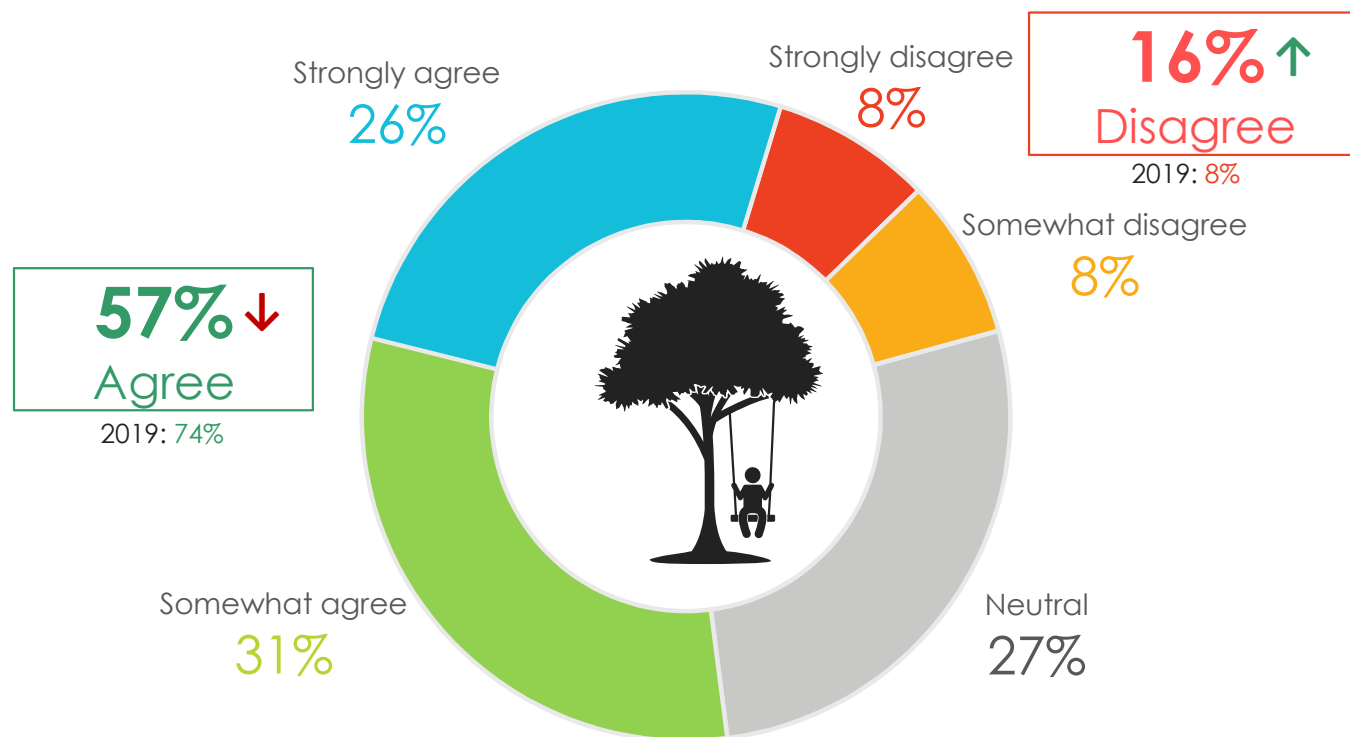


# The Environment

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# Should Environmental Regulations be Tightened?

There has been a significant drop in the proportion of students who would like to see stricter environmental standards, even if they lead to higher prices for consumers. Almost two in ten say they disagree, double the figure from last year. More than one in four is neutral in this regard.



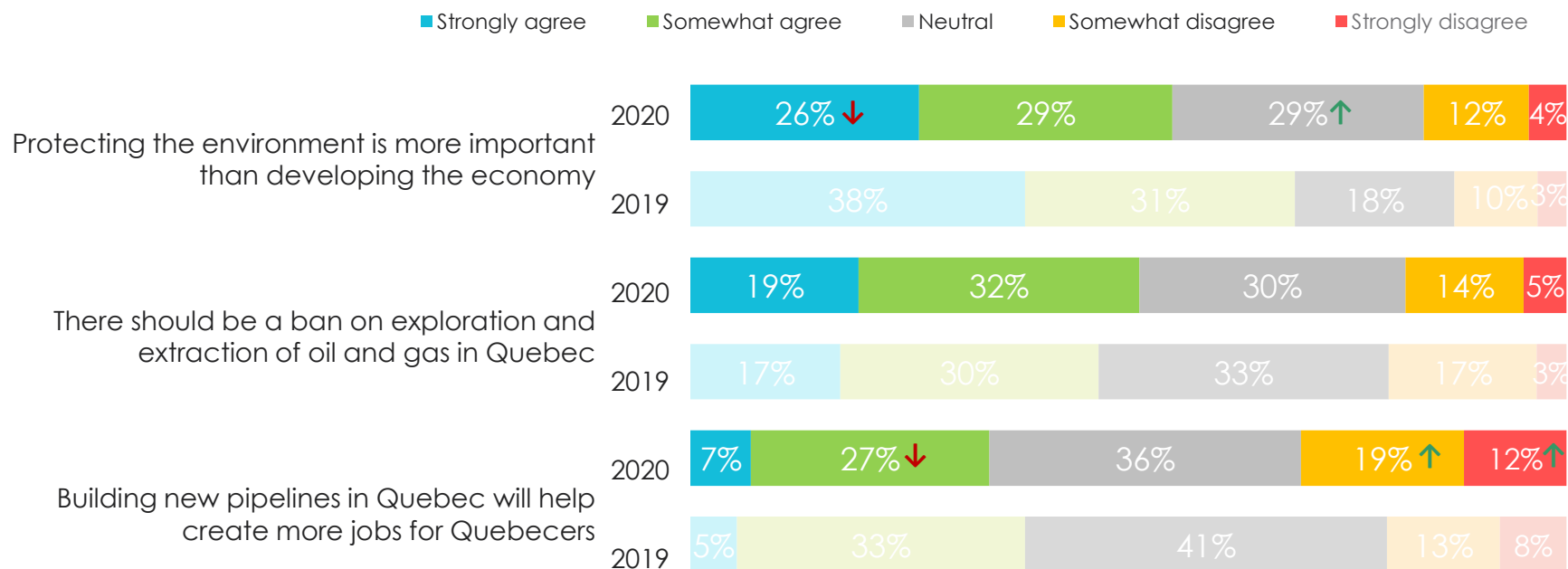
Q17. Environmental regulations should be stricter, even if it means higher prices for consumers. (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884)

# Pipelines and the Environment

Echoing this sentiment towards stricter environmental standards, fewer students now agree that protecting the environment is more important than developing the economy, while a larger proportion say they are neutral on the subject. However, this year there are more students who disagree with the idea that building new pipelines will help create jobs in Quebec.

38

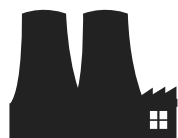


Q19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884).

# Priorities in Fighting Climate Change

How do students believe we should fight climate change? Three in ten students are still in favour of offering tax credits to companies to reduce their greenhouse gases, while fewer are in favour of a law against food waste. The latter is a priority for two in ten students, as is promoting the purchase of electric cars and investing more in public transit.



**31%** 2019: 28%

Offering tax credits to businesses that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by half



**21%** ↓ 2019: 29%

Establishing a law against food waste

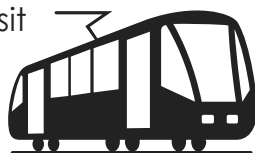


**20%** 2019: 18%

Promoting the purchase of electric cars

**17%** 2019: 16%

Investing more in public transit



**8%** 2019: 6%

Restricting urban sprawl



**3%** 2019: 3%

Other



**Q20.** Which of the following measures do you think is most important in the fight against climate change? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884)



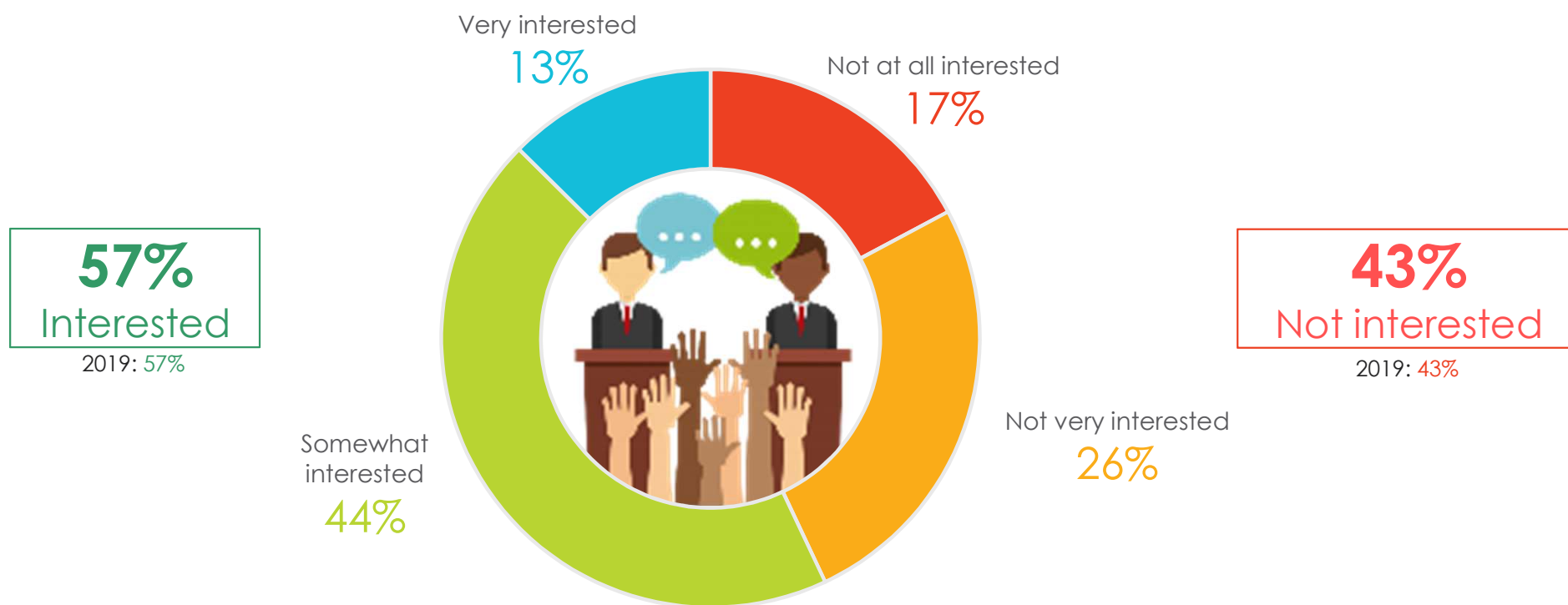


# Interest in Politics



# Interest in Politics

Like last year, more than half of the students said they were either 'very' or 'somewhat' interested in politics. Interest is more pronounced among boys than girls, and among those who say they follow the news.



Q28. In general, how interested are you in politics (e.g. politics at the international, federal, provincial, or municipal level)? (Select only one response)

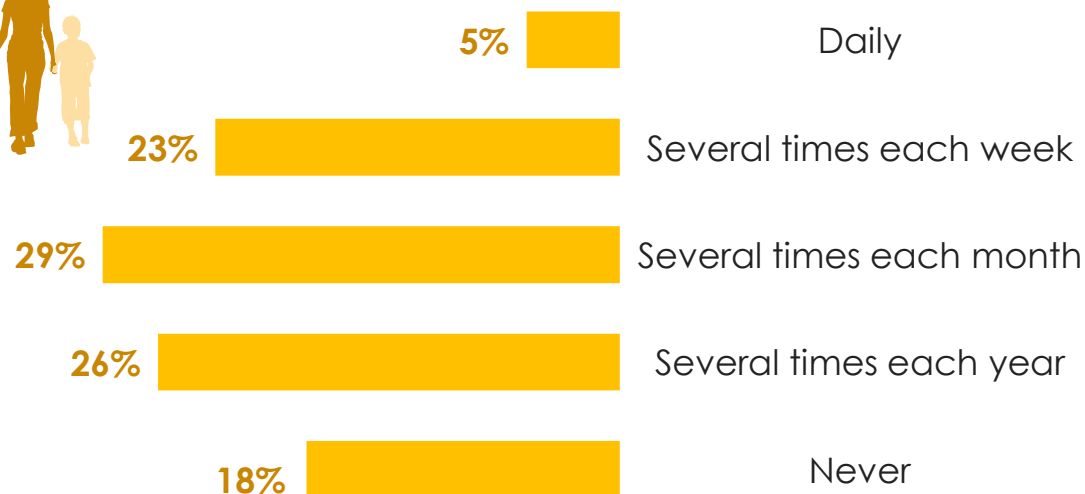
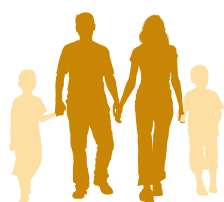
Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884)

# Talking about Politics

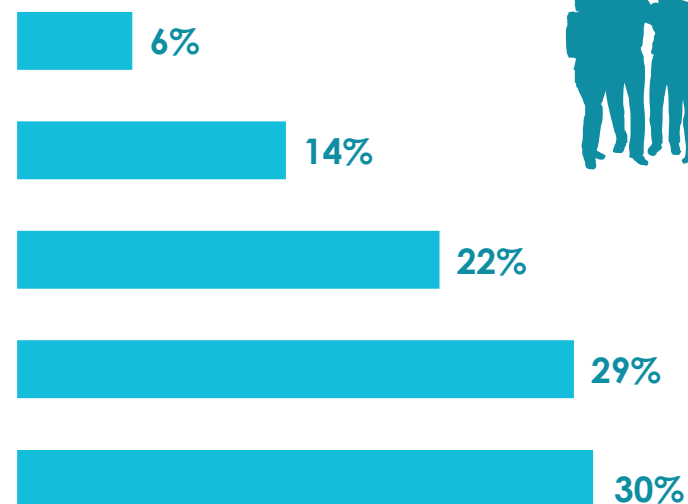
While a majority of students are still interested in politics, fewer are talking about it on a regular basis. When they do, it is more with their parents or guardians than with their friends, which suggests that they talk more about politics in school than in spontaneous conversations with friends.

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## With Parents or Legal Guardians



## With Friends



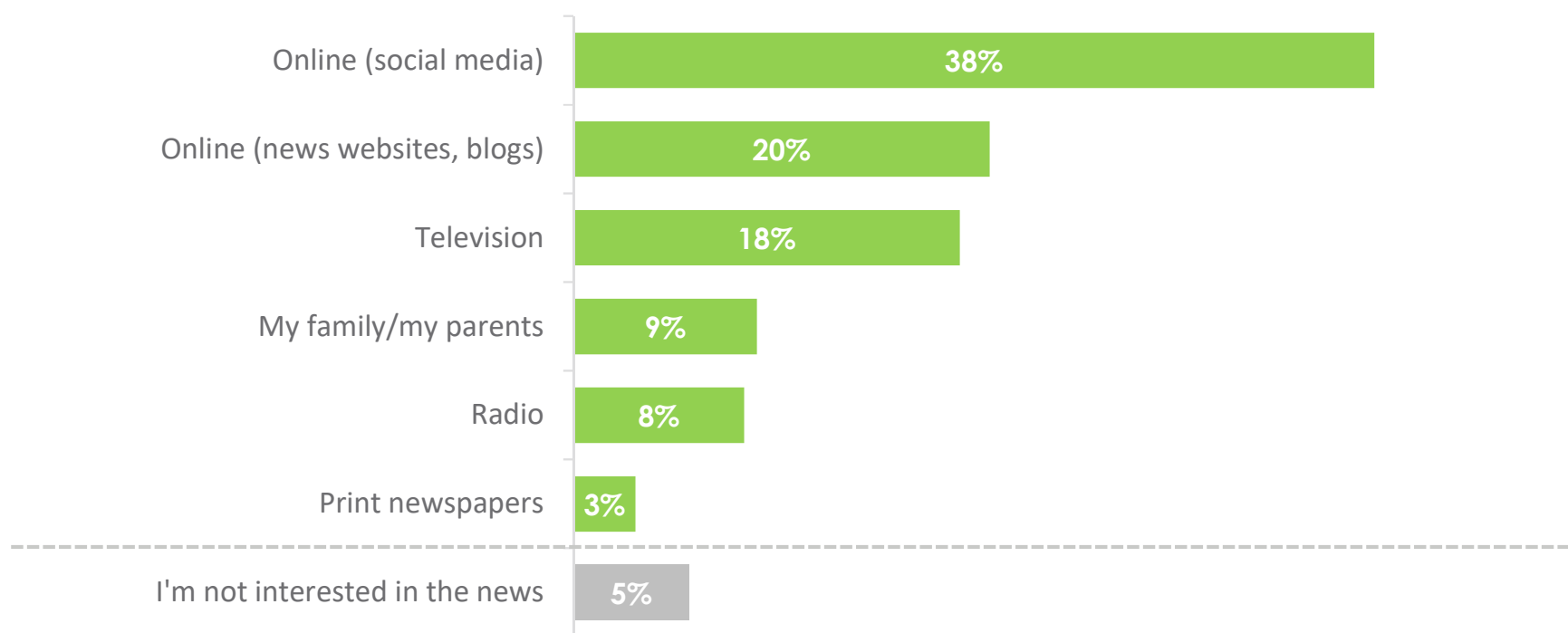
Q29. How frequently do you talk about politics or government affairs with your parents or legal guardians? (Select only one response)

Q30. And how frequently do you talk about politics or government affairs with your friends? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Main Source of News

Almost all of the students surveyed (95%) say they are interested in the news. Social media dominates as the primary source of information, followed by online news sites and television. Almost one in ten students prefer to keep up to date with the news either through their parents or by listening to the radio.



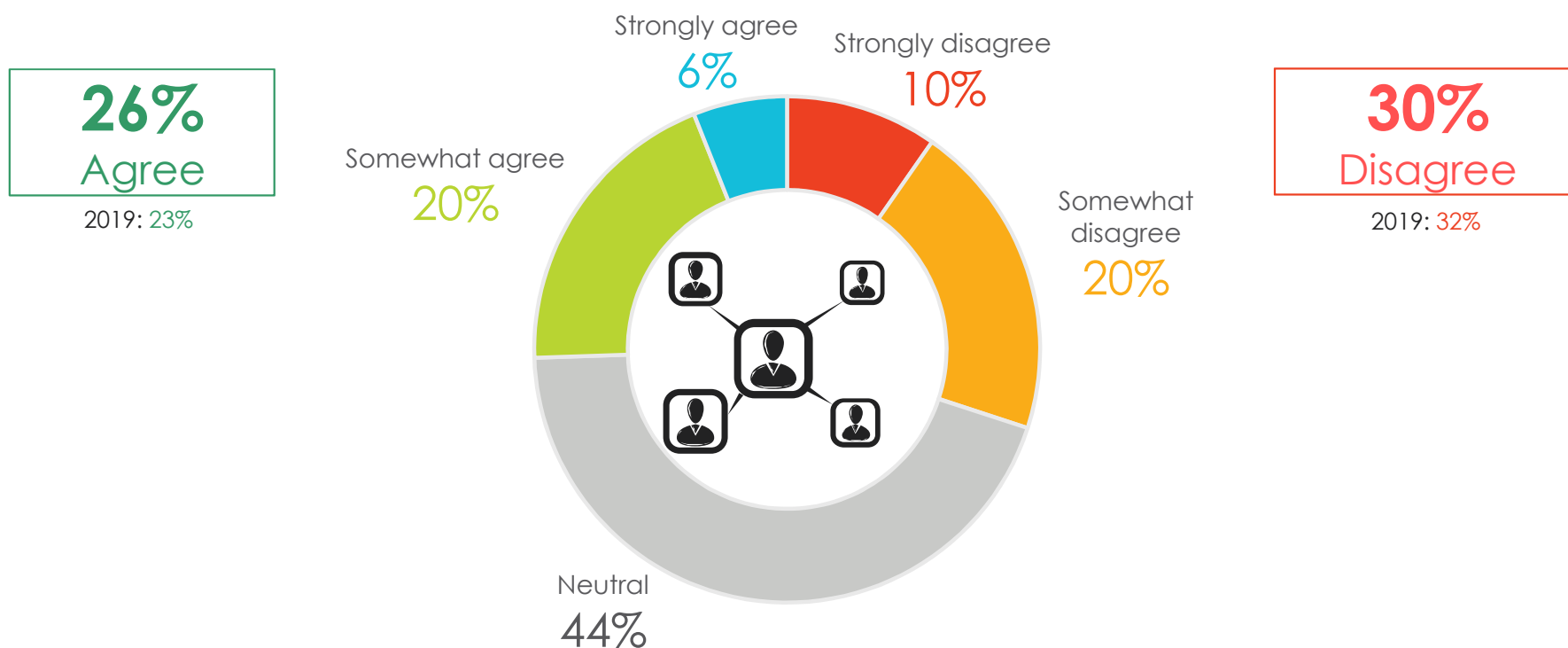
Q27. What main source of news do you use to stay informed about current affairs? (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349)

# Does Social Media Do More Harm than Good?

Students' opinions remain divided on whether social media does more harm than good to the province's democracy. Almost half of the respondents remain neutral. Those with more pronounced opinions are slightly more likely to disagree (30%) than to agree (26%).

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Q31. Social media does more harm than good to democracy in Quebec. (Select only one response)

Base: All respondents, 2020 (n=349), 2019 (n=884).

# Contacts

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### About Ipsos

Ipsos is an independent market research group, controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is a globally recognized research group with a strong presence in all key markets. Ipsos ranks third in the global research industry.

Ipsos is the largest research firm in Canada. It has a strong presence in 89 countries and employs 18,000 people. They have built a solid expertise around a multi-specialist positioning – branding, media and advertising research; client loyalty; marketing; public affairs research; and survey management.

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands and society. We deliver information and analysis that makes our complex world easier and faster to navigate and inspires our clients to make smarter decisions.



### About CIVIX-Québec

CIVIX-Québec is a non-profit organization dedicated to building active and engaged citizenship habits among young Quebecers. CIVIX-Québec offers experiential learning opportunities to help young Quebecers to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens and to connect with their democratic institutions.

CIVIX-Québec runs several classroom-based programs, in addition to the Student Budget Consultation. For a list of programs, please visit <https://civix.quebec/en/our-programs/>