



# Education Message Testing Survey Draft Report

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# Key Findings

## Views on Manitoba's Education System

- Seven in ten Manitoba adults express some degree of satisfaction with the current public K-12 education system, with three in ten dissatisfied to some extent. Nearly one-third feel Manitoba's education system is worse than those of other provinces, with only one-in-ten saying it is better. A plurality think it is similar to the school systems in other jurisdictions, while almost one in five have no opinion on this.
- More than three in ten believe a major overhaul of Manitoba's education system is required, with nearly six in ten saying only minor improvements are required at this time.

## Views on Education Reform

- While more than eight in ten agree the education system needs an update, only about three in ten strongly believe this. Meanwhile, three-quarters say addressing poverty is the real solution to improving the education system. Seven in ten Manitobans agree school divisions spend too much on administration.
- Manitobans have somewhat mixed views on increasing parental involvement in the school system. While about six in ten agree parents should have direct input into the system, a very similar proportion of Manitobans agree giving parents the opportunity to provide more input through enhanced school councils will lead them to meddle in areas that are best left to those with professional pedagogical expertise.
- Slightly fewer than six in ten Manitobans believe children in Manitoba are falling behind those in other provinces, although similar numbers feel the system does a good job of preparing children for the future. More than one-half agree that those arguing against reform have a personal interest in keeping things as they are, while slightly fewer than one-half agree Manitoba has way too many school divisions. Only one-third agree every child in the province receives the same quality of education.
  - Those with children in the public school system hold similar views to other Manitobans regarding the education system, with these parents slightly less likely to agree there are too many school divisions.

# Key Findings (cont'd)

## Awareness/Support for Bill 64

- Overall awareness of Bill 64 is high, with two thirds saying they have definitely heard about this and an additional one in five saying they may have heard about this issue. Four in ten Manitobans are aware this piece of legislation will eliminate school boards and create a single education authority. Others, meanwhile, simply recognize the name of the bill and recall seeing lawn signs and out-of-home advertising against this legislation.
- One in ten Manitoba adults – including one in three Manitobans who work in the education system or have someone else in their household who does so – say they currently have one of the many different types of lawn signs opposing Bill 64 visible at their home.
- Slightly fewer than four in ten Manitobans express support for the proposed changes to the education system outlined in Bill 64, with six in ten opposed. Opposition is strongest among women, educators and those with higher levels of formal education. More than seven in ten Manitobans are not confident these changes will lead to improvements in the education system.
- When it comes to the governance-related changes contemplated in Bill 64, the only one that Manitobans support in significant numbers is the idea of providing funding equitably to students. Manitobans are nearly evenly split on reducing the number of school divisions and are fairly divided on the notion of giving parents more input through parent councils and spots on a provincial advisory council. However, the majority oppose eliminating school divisions, getting rid of elected school board trustees and putting government-appointed representatives in charge of an education authority.
  - While parents of school-aged children are more supportive of being able to provide input into the governance of the education system, Winnipeg residents and women are more likely to oppose many of these governance-related reforms.



# Key Findings (cont'd)

## Awareness/Support for Bill 64 (cont'd)

- In terms of classroom-related changes, Manitobans overwhelmingly support providing more help for students with learning disabilities, and about eight in ten are in favour of updating the curriculum to focus more on math and literacy. Slightly more than one-half, meanwhile, are in favour of having schools inform parents when information about human sexuality is taught to students, as well as publishing assessment scores for individual public schools.
- When Manitobans are presented with arguments for and against education reform, they are most likely to become more supportive of these changes if it leads to an equal amount of funding for students across Manitoba, no matter where they live. More than one-half say they are also more supportive of these changes if it means there are more opportunities for teachers to access professional support and of having \$40 million in administrative cost savings redirected to the classroom.
  - Rural Manitobans are more likely to be swayed by the equitable funding argument and that no schools will close, with rural residents and parents more supportive of the idea once learning they can have more input into the programs and operation at their children's school.





# Key Findings (cont'd)

## Driver Analysis

- A driver analysis measuring the relationship between support for education reform and arguments in favour of it finds:
  - The notion that Manitoba currently has too many school divisions is perhaps the most persuasive argument for the provincial government to put forward when it discusses education reform.
  - The argument that opponents of reform are only interested in preserving the status quo – and are not interested in reform because they stand to lose personally – is also closely related to support for education reform.
  - Although it is less of an overall driver, the notion that parents can have more input into how the education system works has resonance for those who have children currently in public schools.
  - The strongest counter-argument to the provincial government's current plans for education changes is that reform will lead to funding reductions. This is the strongest driver of opposition to Bill 64, especially among the broader public (and less so among parents). The notion that the government needs to address poverty to improve education outcomes is also a secondary consideration.

## Views on Stakeholders

- When it comes to education reform, Manitobans are most likely to put stock in the perspectives of professional educators, including professors who teach at university education faculties throughout the province and the organization that represents teachers, the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS). Seven in ten trust parent groups when they speak about this issue, with slightly smaller proportions (yet still a majority) trusting school trustees, other public sector unions and business organizations.
  - Only about one-quarter of Manitobans trust the education minister on this issue, with more than one-half expressing distrust.



# Observations and Advice

On September 1, 2021 – just after this data was collected – Bill 64 was withdrawn from the Manitoba Legislature order paper. If and when a new education reform bill is presented, the results from this survey (and the accompanying qualitative concept testing) provide the following guidance:

- **Making the case for structural reform starts with pointing out how many school divisions there are in Manitoba.** The driver analysis reveals that if the government consistently points out there are 36 school divisions in the province – far more than other comparable jurisdictions – this should increase support for making some degree of change to the education system. The accompanying secondary argument about higher administration costs should also increase support for reform to some degree, as both this survey and the qualitative research found that Manitobans like the idea of administrative spending being redirected to front-line classroom activities.
- **At the same time, the provincial government needs to clearly demonstrate that any changes to the education system will not lead to reductions in funding.** As the driver analysis shows, this is the strongest counterargument that drives opposition to education reform. If Manitobans can be convinced that efforts to change how education is governed and delivered are not purely driven by the need for austerity, they may be open to other arguments in favour of streamlining the administrative structure of the education system.
- Manitobans also strongly support the idea of providing equitable funding to students in all areas of the province, as well as increasing support for students with learning disabilities. If these messages are also front and centre, it may help counter the narrative that education reform is purely a cost-cutting exercise.



## Observations and Advice (cont'd)



- **Emphasize parental involvement – to a point.** Parental support for education reform is also driven by the idea of parents having direct input into how education is delivered, both at their local school and at a system-wide level. For parents, the idea of having more say in their children's education is appealing, so the government may wish to emphasize this when communicating directly with parents. However, many Manitobans also hold the view that more parental involvement could lead to meddling in areas best left to educators.
  - While the government can certainly highlight in any high-level communications that there will be more opportunity for parental input, it should also emphasize to some degree that teachers and school administrators will continue to make decisions based on their expertise.
- **Educators are best placed to validate the need for reform.** The results of the trust question empirically show that Manitobans are most likely to place the highest degree of stock in the opinions of educational experts who teach at Manitoba universities and the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), followed by parent councils, local trustees and public sector unions. With Bill 64 scrapped, there is a potential opportunity to seek buy-in from these groups for whatever form change takes in the next iteration of education reform. While this may be a significant challenge depending on what changes are contemplated and how they might affect these groups, having them speak in favour of any proposed change – or indeed, not fully criticize them – is likely the key to achieving buy-in for education reform among the broader public.





# Methodology

## Research Objectives

Communication Services Manitoba (CSM) commissioned Probe Research to conduct a survey among Manitobans regarding their attitudes and perceptions of proposed changes to the province's education system (Bill 64).

## Methodology

This survey was conducted using a hybrid methodology, including Probe Research's online panel, a national online panel and a targeted telephone survey of Manitoba parents. A total of N=1,298 interviews were completed between August 10 and 23, 2021, including an oversample of N=514 parents with children under 18 years old in the household. This includes N=160 interviews completed via telephone, with the remainder conducted online.

As an online survey is a sample of convenience, no margin-of-error can be ascribed. However, a random and representative non-convenience sample of N=1,298 adults would have a margin of error of  $\pm 2.7$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Minor statistical weighting by age, gender and region was applied to the sample to ensure it reflected the known characteristics of Manitoba's population based on 2016 Census data.

Please note that totals in this report may not add to exactly 100% due to rounding. Results of <2% are also not shown in the graphs.

# Profile of Respondents

(Unweighted) (Weighted)	Total (N=1,298) (N=1,298) (%)	Children in public school (n=420) (n=394) (%)	Children not in public school (n=94)* (n=104) (%)	No children at home/in school (n=775) (n=790) (%)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	48	50	42	48
Female	51	50	58	51
Other gender identity	<1	<1	-	1
<b>Region</b>				
Winnipeg	61	56	63	63
Rural/Northern Manitoba	39	44	37	37
<b>Age</b>				
18-34	33	26	55	34
35-54	37	66	42	22
55+	29	8	3	44
<b>Household Income</b>				
<\$50K	22	14	19	26
\$50K-\$99K	41	35	41	44
\$100K+	38	51	40	30

DK/NA Removed; totals may not add up to exactly 100%

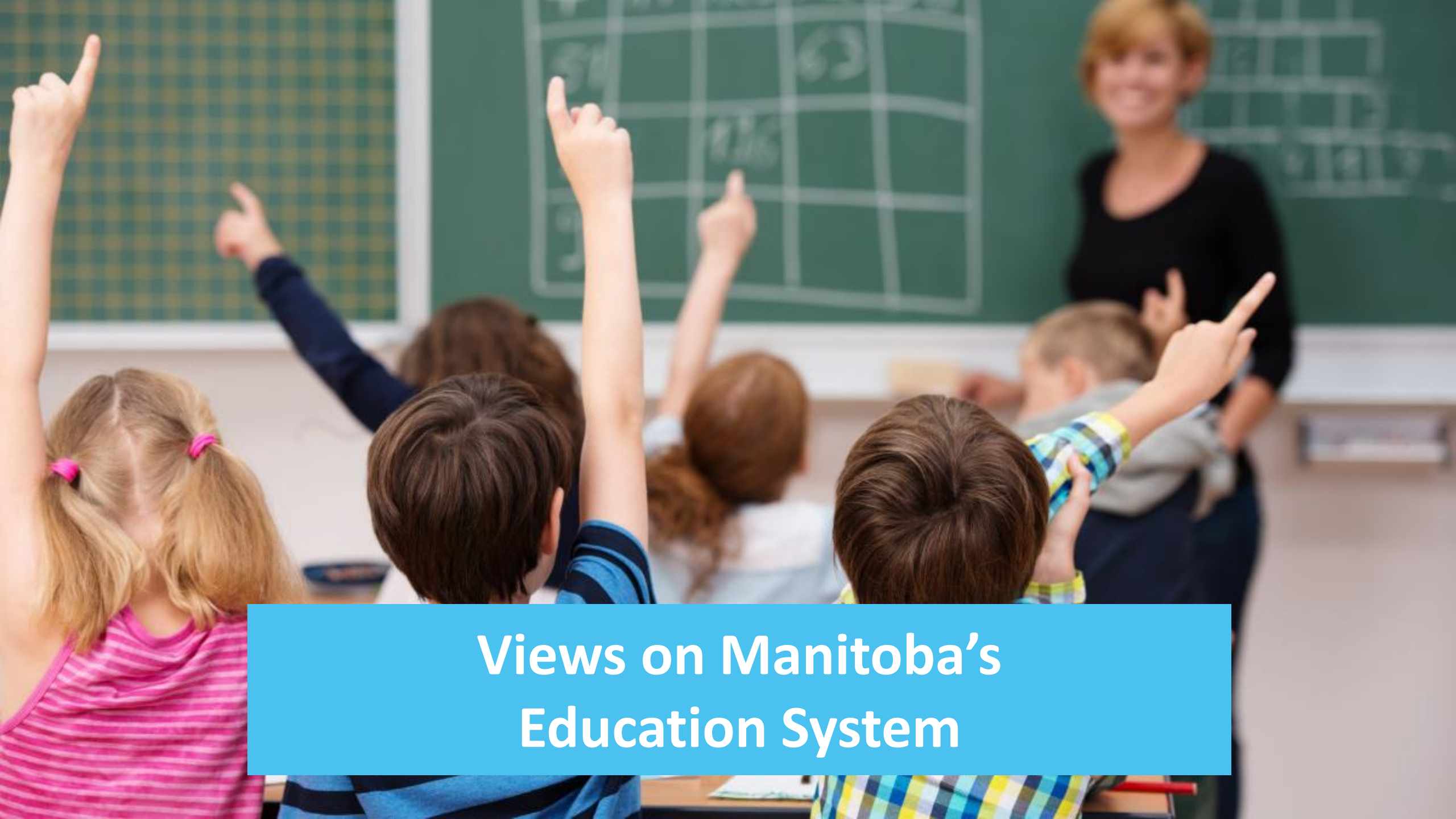
\*Caution: small base size

# Profile of Respondents

(Unweighted) (Weighted)	Total (N=1,298) (N=1,298) (%)	Children in public school (n=420) (n=394) (%)	Children not in public school (n=94)* (n=104) (%)	No children at home/in school (n=775) (n=790) (%)
<b>Education</b>				
High school or less	14	12	19	15
College/some post-secondary	39	41	36	38
University graduate	47	47	45	47
<b>BIPOC</b>				
Indigenous	10	15	11	7
Person of colour/visible minority	8	12	15	6
Non-BIPOC	82	73	74	87
<b>Children at Home/in School (multiple mentions, totals will exceed 100%)</b>				
Children in public K-12 system	30	100	-	-
Children in private/home school	3	1	27	-
Children in pre-school/day care	3	5	23	-
Other (e.g. in university/college)	4	-	46	-
No children at home/in school	61	-	-	100
<b>Work in Public Education System (multiple mentions, totals will exceed 100%)</b>				
Self	9	12	7	8
Other person in household	6	9	6	4
No	86	81	88	88

DK/NA Removed; totals may  
not add up to exactly 100%

\*Caution: small base size

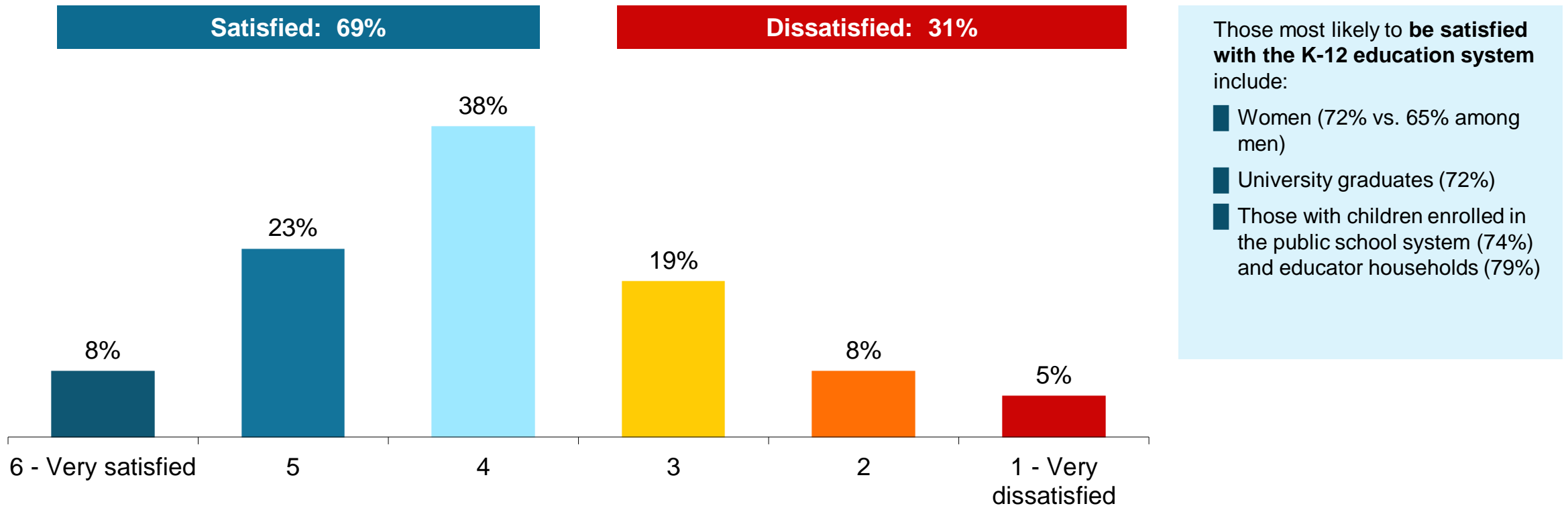


## Views on Manitoba's Education System



# Public's Views on Current Public K-12 Education System

Seven in ten Manitobans express some satisfaction with the current system

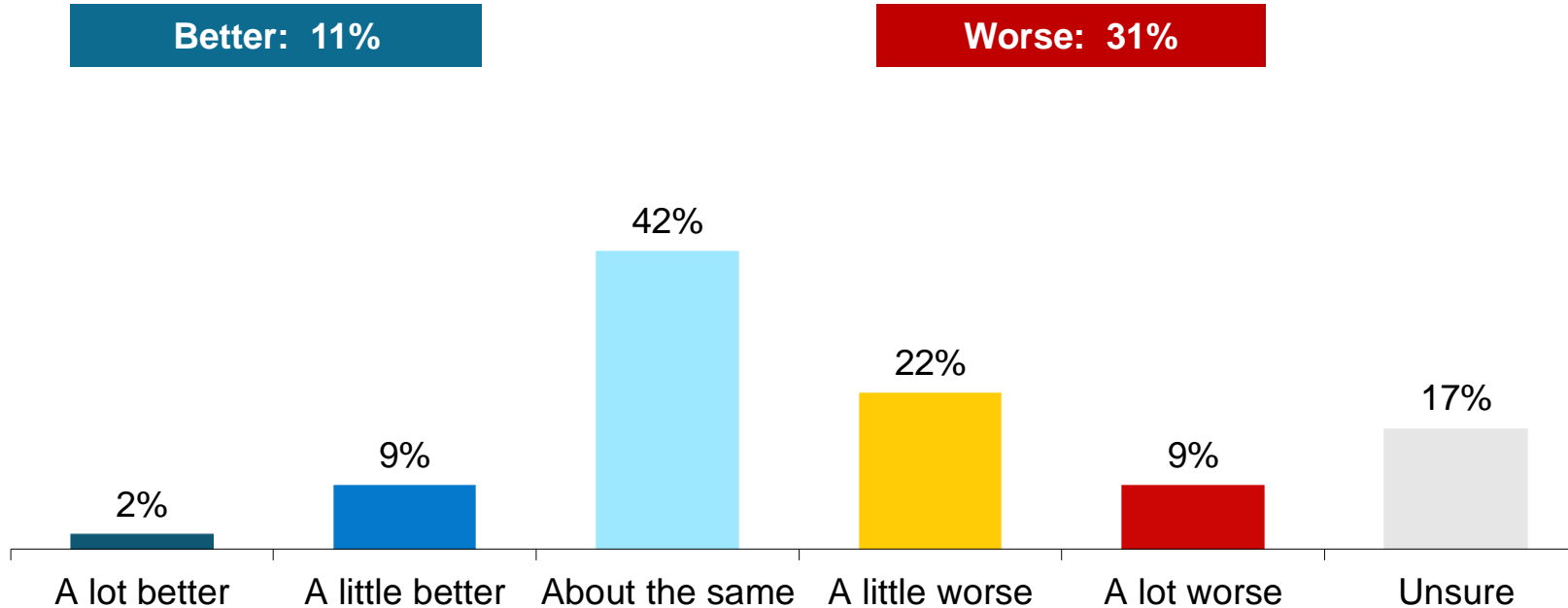


1. Thinking about everything you know about the public K-12 education system in Manitoba, how satisfied are you with it? Please use the following 1-6 scale where a 1 means you are very dissatisfied and a 6 means you are very satisfied.

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Comparison of Manitoba's K-12 Education System

Only one-third think Manitoba's education system is worse than elsewhere



2. Compared to other provinces, would you say Manitoba's K-12 education system is...

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

Those most likely to say **Manitoba's K-12 education system is better** include:

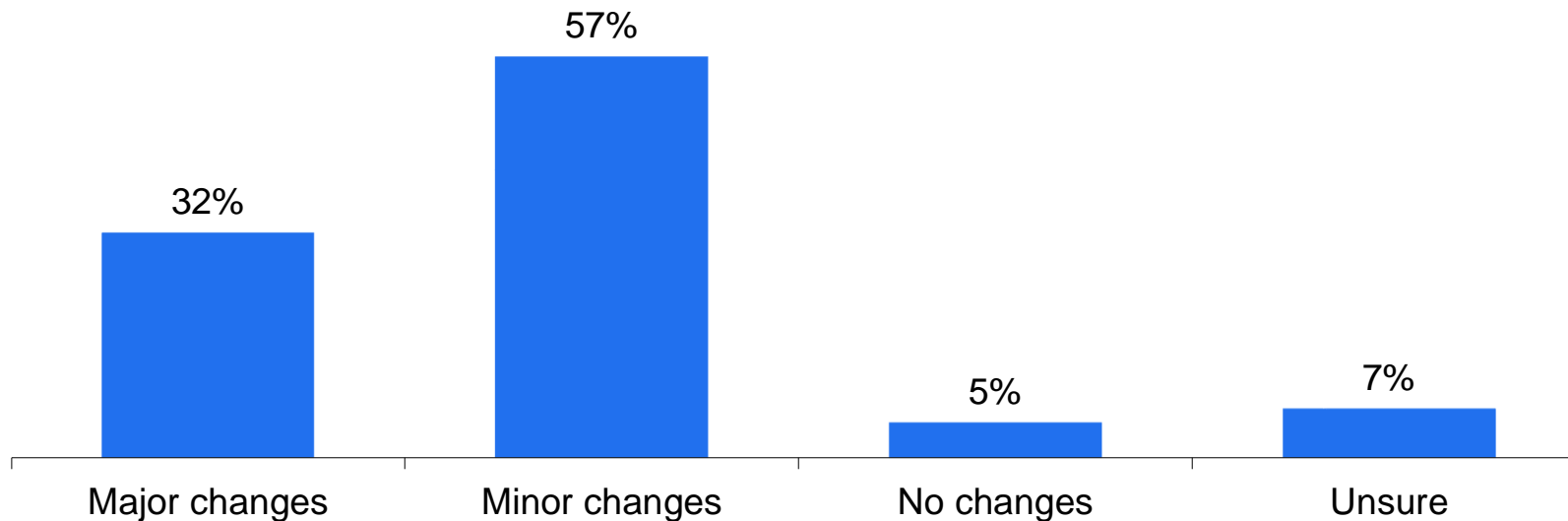
- Those who identify as either Indigenous or persons of colour (16% vs. 9% among the non-BIPOC population)
- Those with an anti-Bill 64 lawn sign (18%)
- Those who are satisfied with the current education system (15%)

Those most likely to **say Manitoba's education system is worse** include:

- University graduates (32%) and those with college or partial post-secondary education (33%)
- Those with higher household incomes (35% among those earning \$100K+)
- Those aware of changes to the education system (34% vs. 21% among those not aware)

# Views on Overhauling the Education System

More than one-half feel minor improvements are required, with three in ten wanting big changes



Those most likely to say **major changes are required** include:

- Those with higher levels of education and household income
- Those who support Bill 64 (40% vs. 27% among opponents)

The views of parents with children in the public K-12 education system are fairly consistent compared to non-parents.

3. Overall, do you think Manitoba's education system requires....

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

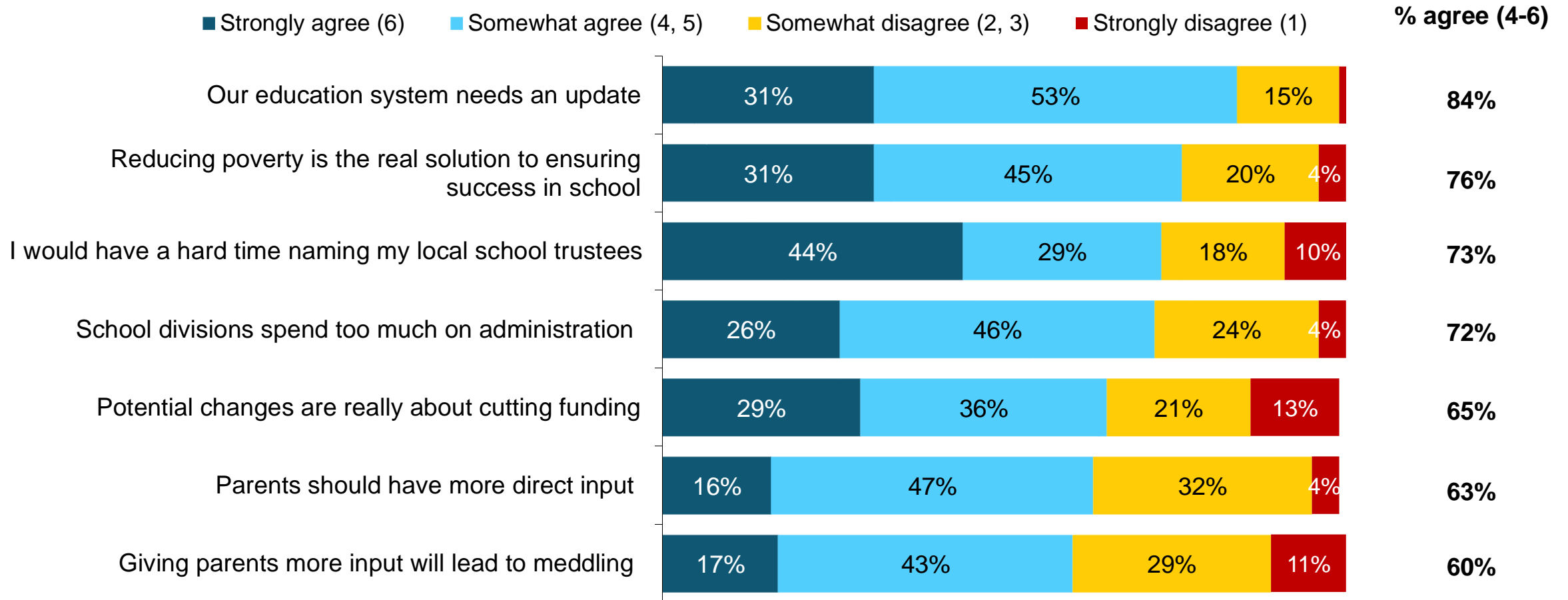


## Attitudes Regarding Education Reform



# Views on Education Reform: Higher Levels of Agreement

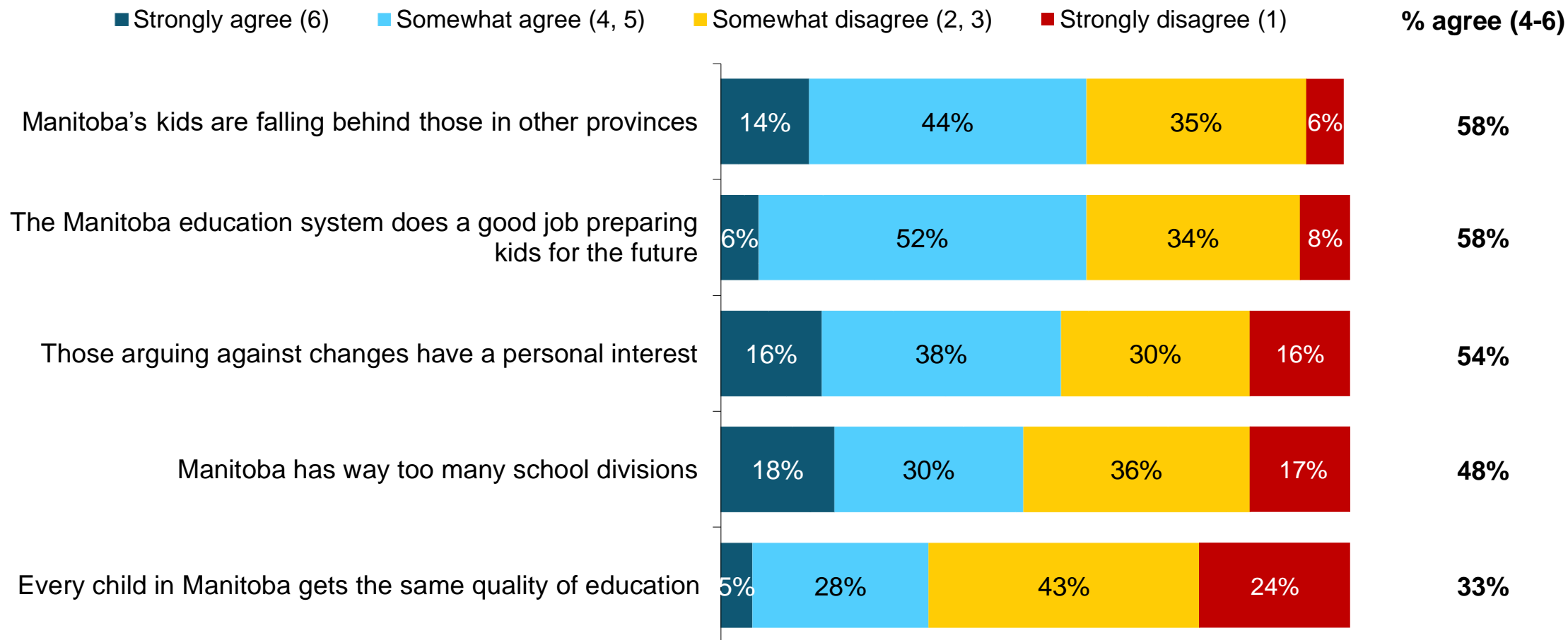
Nearly one-half strongly agree they would have difficulty naming their school trustee



5. For each of the following statements, please indicate if you agree or disagree using a 1-6 scale, where a 1 means you strongly disagree and a 6 means you strongly agree:

# Views on Education Reform: Lower Levels of Agreement

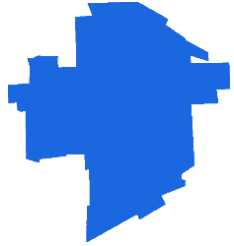
Only one-third agree every child in Manitoba receives the same quality of education



5. For each of the following statements, please indicate if you agree or disagree using a 1-6 scale, where a 1 means you strongly disagree and a 6 means you strongly agree:

# Views on Education Reform: Variations by Sub-Group

## Winnipeggers more likely to agree the school system is top-heavy



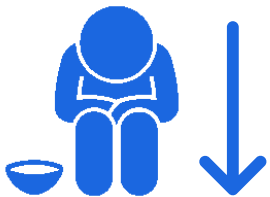
Winnipeg residents are more likely than rural/northern Manitobans to agree with **governance-related statements**, including:

- That they would have difficulty naming their local school trustee (77% vs. 65%)
- That divisions spend too much on administration (74% vs. 67%)
- That Manitoba has too many school divisions (53% vs. 39%)



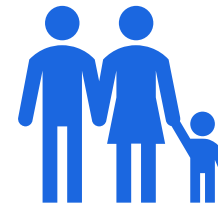
Those who are most likely to agree **potential changes to education are really about cutting funding** include:

- Women (71% vs. 60% among men)
- Older adults aged 55+ (72% vs. 58% among those 18-34)
- University graduates (68%)
- Educator households (76%) and Bill 64 opponents (75%)



Those who are most likely to agree **reducing poverty is the solution to ensuring success in school** include:

- Winnipeg residents (80% vs. 70% among those in rural Manitoba)
- Women (81% vs. 70% among men)
- Those from educator households (84%)



Those with children in the public school system are less likely to agree **Manitoba has too many school divisions** (40% vs. 50% among those with no children at home).

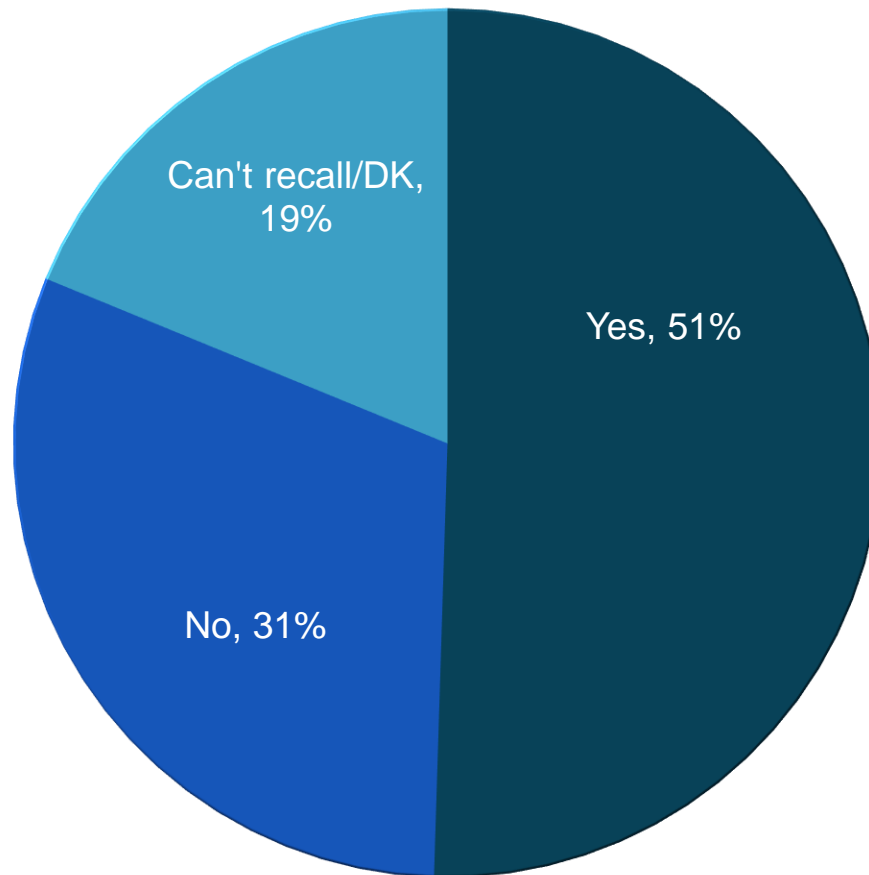
Otherwise, their views on these statements are fairly similar to those who do not have current, direct experience with the public school system.

5. For each of the following statements, please indicate if you agree or disagree using a 1-6 scale, where a 1 means you strongly disagree and a 6 means you strongly agree:

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Incidence of Voting for Local School Trustee

One-half say they voted for their school trustee in the last municipal election



Those most likely to say they **voted for their local school trustee** in the 2018 municipal elections include:

- Winnipeg residents (56% vs. 41% in rural/northern Manitoba)
- Older adults aged 55+ (65% vs. 55% among those 35-54 and just 33% among those 18-34)
- Non-BIPOC Manitobans (54% vs. 23% among those who identify as a person of colour and 41% who identify as Indigenous)
- Those who work (or have a household member who works) in the public education system (61%)
- Those who oppose Bill 64 (55% vs. 43% among supporters)
- Those with higher levels of household income (64%) and education (57%)
- Those with a higher degree of awareness about the reforms to education (63%)

4. Did you vote for your school trustee in the last municipal election in Manitoba, which was held in October 2018?

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

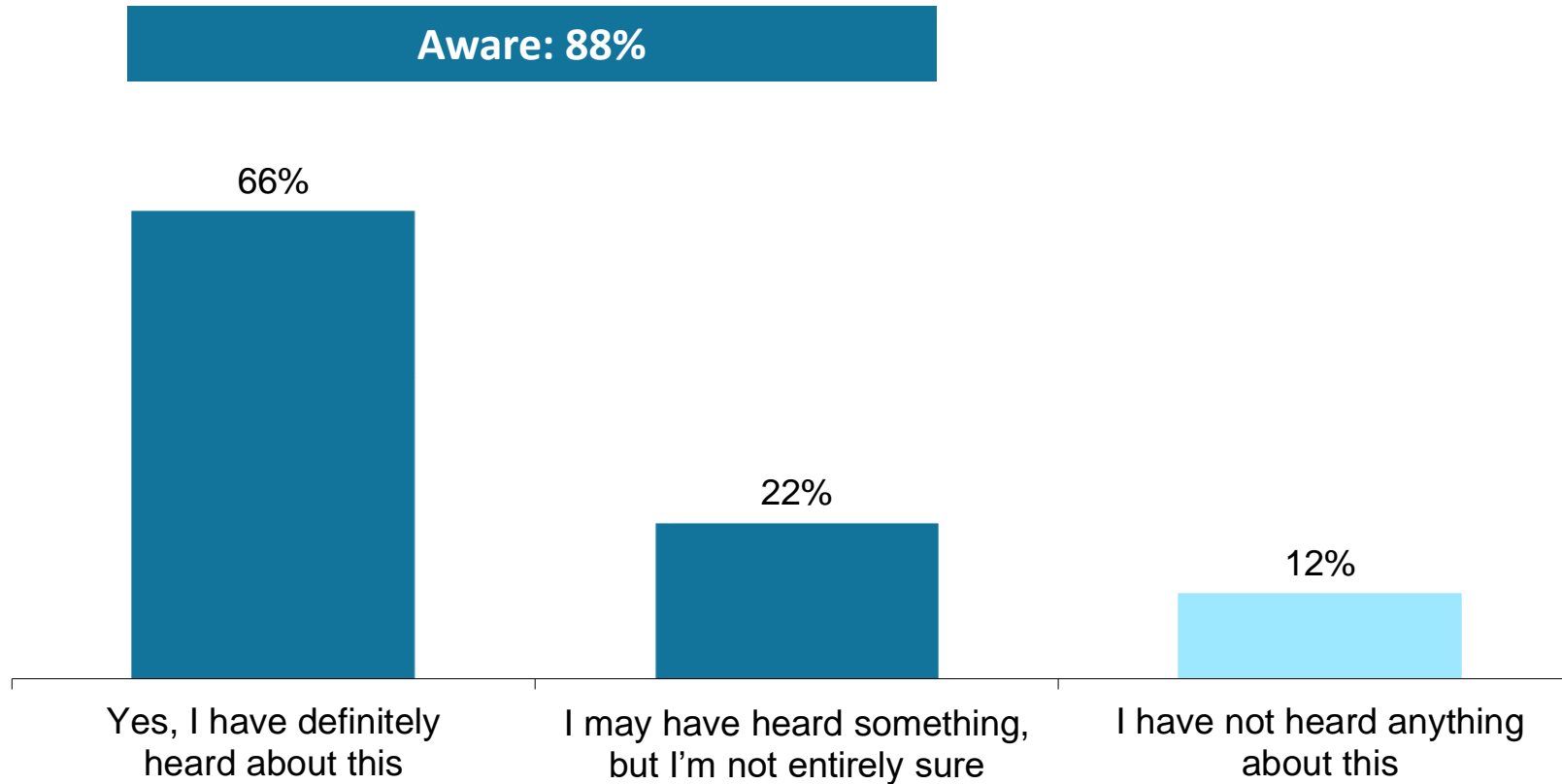




**Awareness and Support for Bill 64**

# Awareness of Proposed Changes to the K-12 Education System

Most Manitobans are at least somewhat familiar with potential changes to education



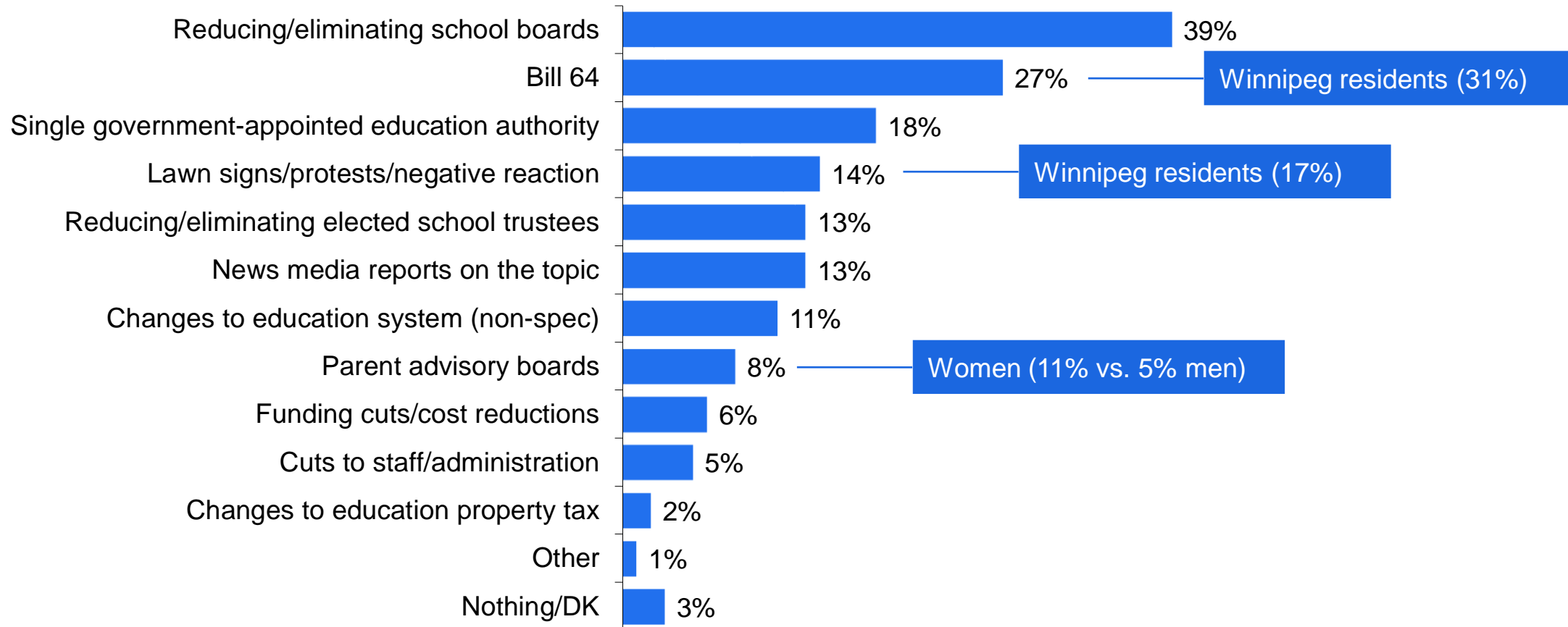
Those most likely to have **definitely heard about proposed changes to the education system** include:

- Women (70% vs. 62% among men)
- Older adults (81% among those 55+)
- Those with children in the public K-12 system (70% vs. 58% among those with children not currently enrolled in public K-12)
- Those with higher levels of education and household income (80% each)
- Non-BIPOC Manitobans (70%)

6. Have you recently seen, heard or read anything about proposed changes to Manitoba's public K-12 education system?

# Recall of Specific K-12 Education Changes

Manitobans most likely to know changes will lead to eliminating school boards

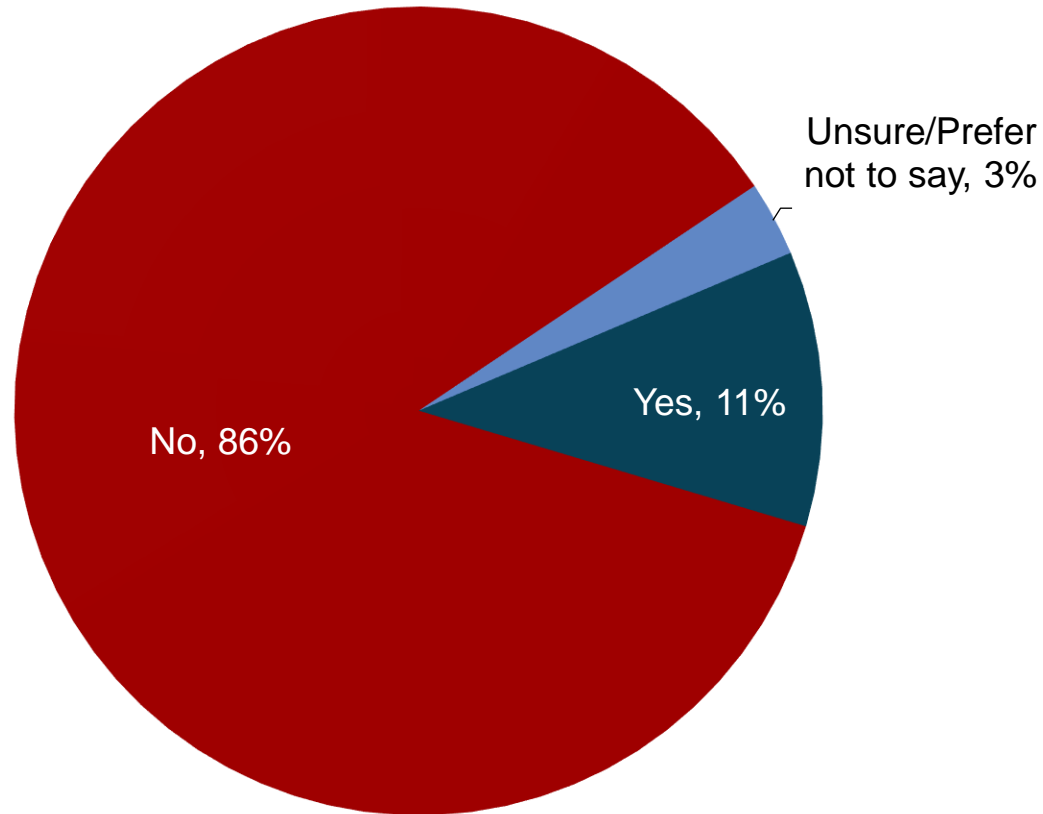


7. What have you recently seen, read or heard?

Base: Those definitely familiar or who may have heard something about proposed changes to Manitoba's K-12 education system (n=861)

# Visible Opposition to Bill 64

One in ten Manitobans say they have a lawn sign opposing Bill 64



■ One-third of educator households (34%) report having an anti-Bill 64 lawn sign.

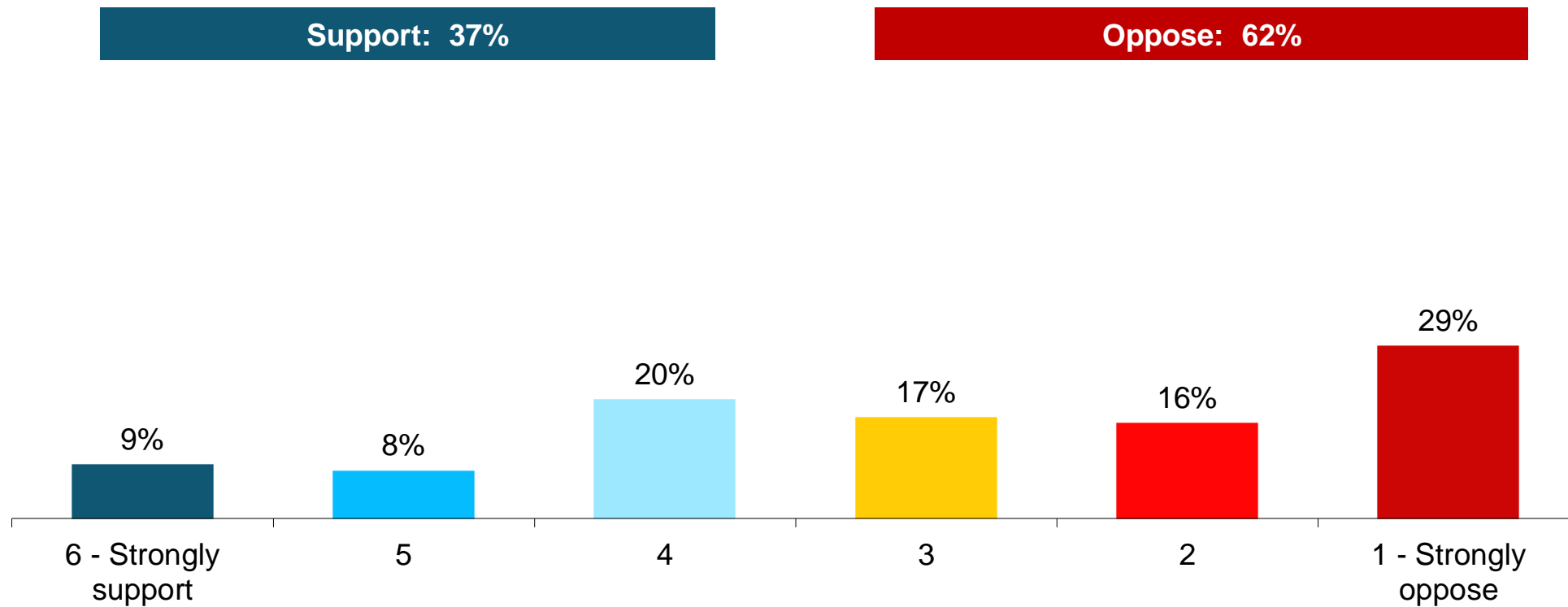
12. Several organizations have made lawn signs opposing Bill 64, the legislation to change the education system. Do you currently have one of these signs on your lawn or visible at your home?

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)



# Support for Changes to Manitoba's K-12 Education System

Six in ten Manitobans express opposition the proposed changes in Bill 64

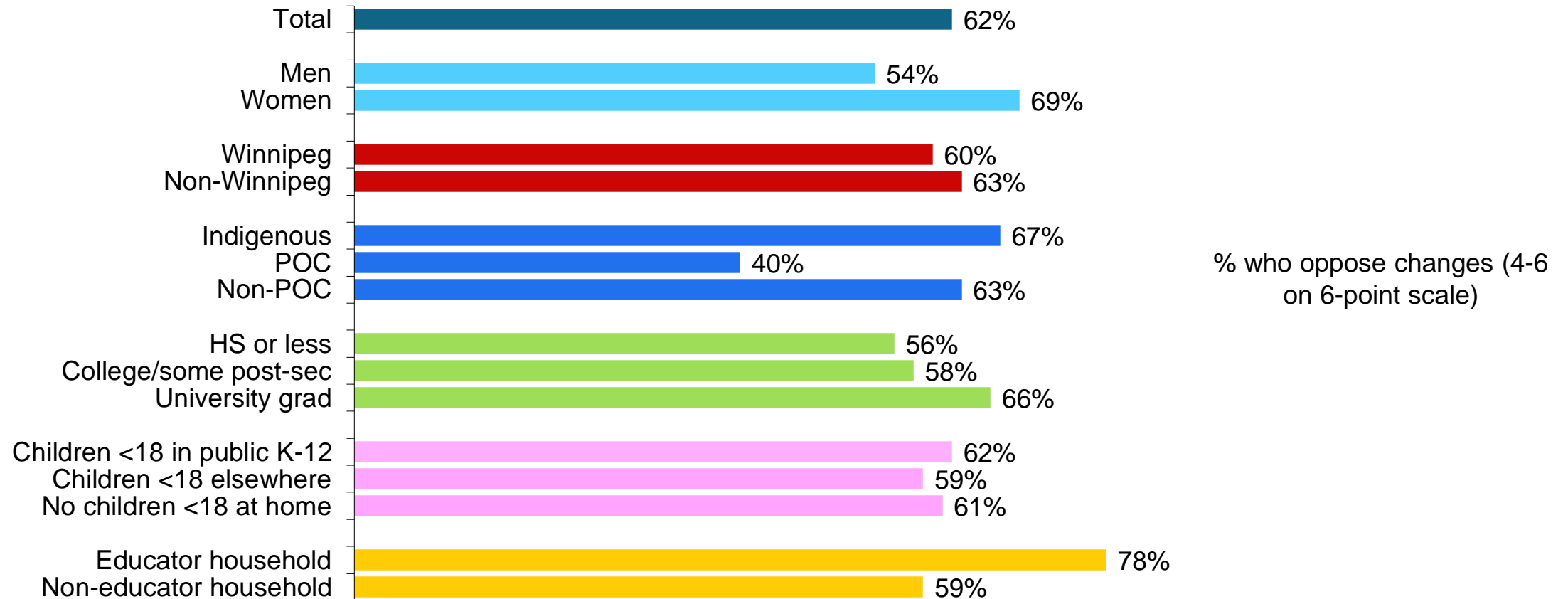


8. Based on what you know, do you support or oppose these changes to the public K-12 education system in Manitoba? Please use the following 1-6 scale where a 1 means you strongly oppose these efforts and a 6 means you strongly support them.

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Opposition for Changes to the Education System: By Sub-Group

Women, those with higher levels of education most likely to oppose proposed reforms

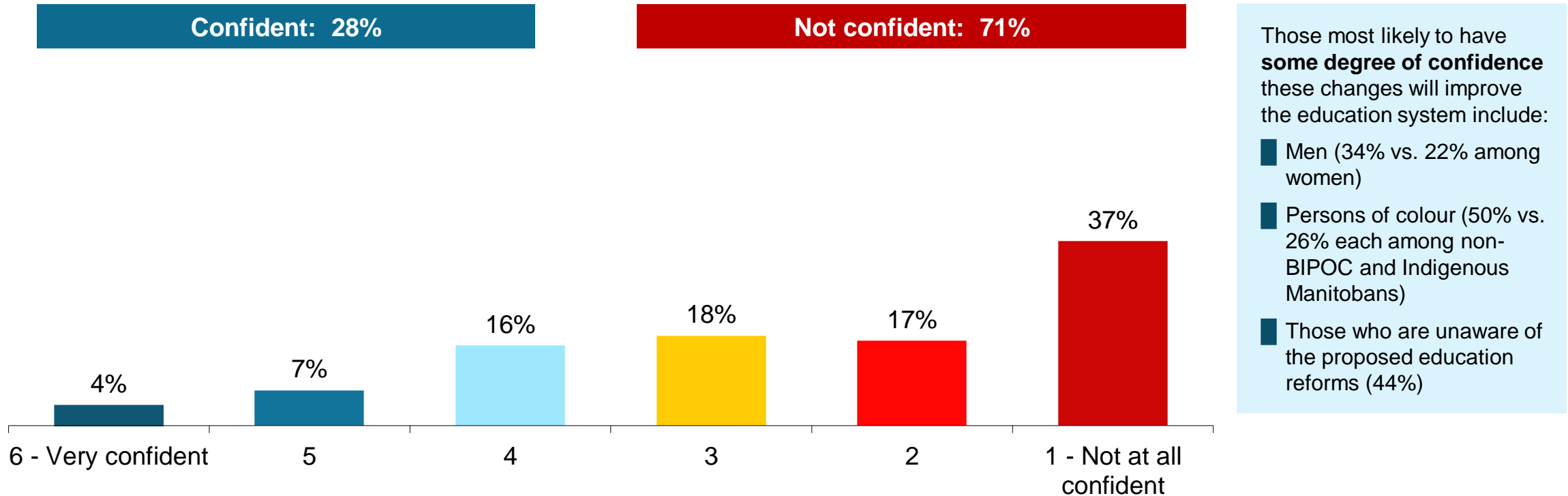


8. Based on what you know, do you support or oppose these changes to the public K-12 education system in Manitoba? Please use the following 1-6 scale where a 1 means you strongly oppose these efforts and a 6 means you strongly support them.

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Confidence in Outcome of Proposed Changes

Only one-quarter have some confidence suggested reforms will improve the education system

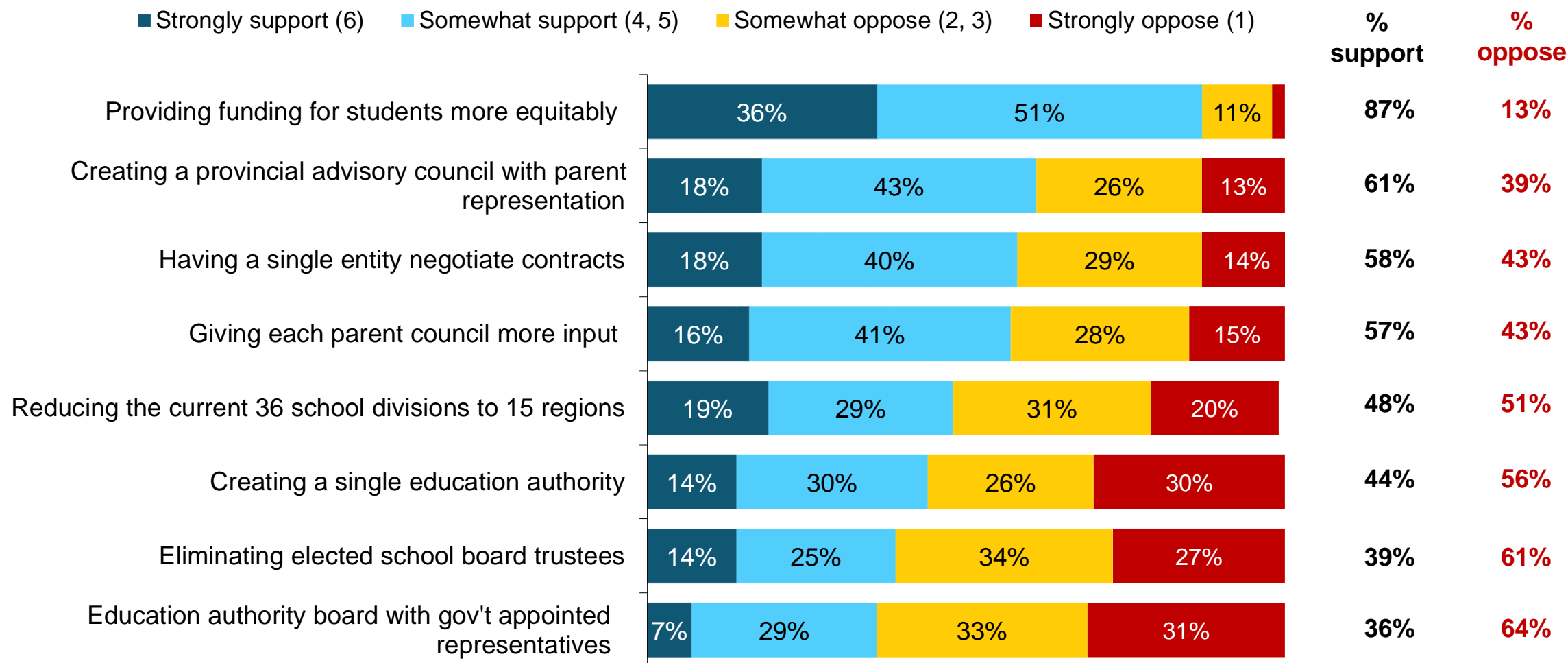


9. And how confident are you that these changes will improve the public K-12 education system? Let's use the same scale, but this time a 1 means you are not at all confident and a 6 means you are very confident:

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Views on Governance-Related Changes

Support highest for providing equitable funding, lowest for replacing trustees with appointed board



10. Several specific changes have been proposed for the public education system in Manitoba. To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following?

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Views on Governance Changes: Variations by Sub-Group

Parents of public school children welcome more input, but less likely to support eliminating trustees

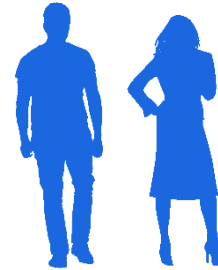


Winnipeg residents are more likely to support:

- Creating a single education authority for the province (48% vs. 38% among those outside the provincial capital)
- Replacing the current 36 divisions with 15 administrative regions (51% vs. 44%)



Rural Manitobans, on the other hand, are more likely to support the idea of providing parent councils with more input (61% vs. 54% among Winnipeggers).



Men are also more likely than women to support many of these governance-related changes, including:

- Reducing the number of divisions (54% vs. 43%)
- Creating a single education authority for the province (52% vs. 37%)
- Eliminating elected local trustees (44% vs. 35%) and having government-appointed members of a provincial education authority (43% vs. 29%)



Compared to those without children at home, parents of children in the public school system are more supportive of giving parent councils more input (61% vs. 54%).

However, parents of school-aged children are less likely to support other governance reforms, such as creating a single education authority or eliminating elected trustees.

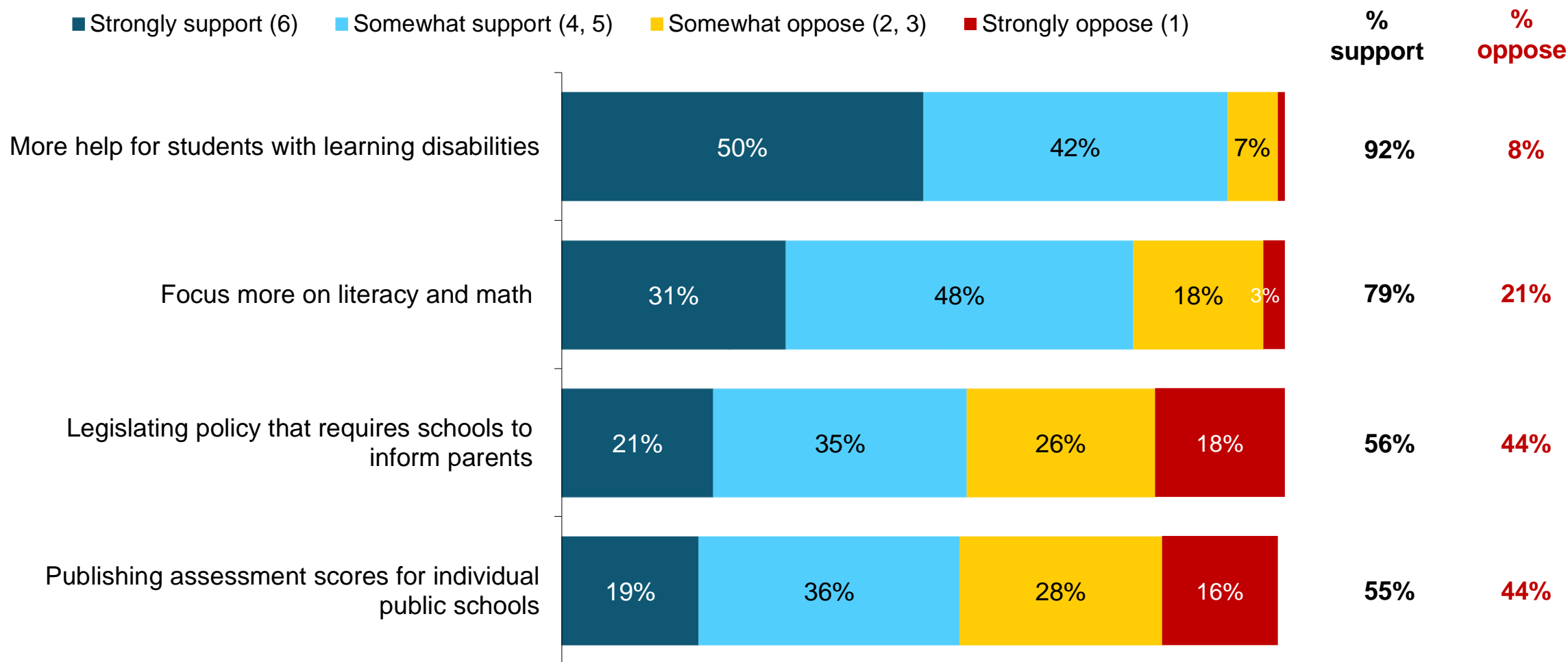
10. Several specific changes have been proposed for the public education system in Manitoba. To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following?

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)



# Views on Classroom-Related Changes

## Manitobans overwhelmingly want more support for students with learning disabilities

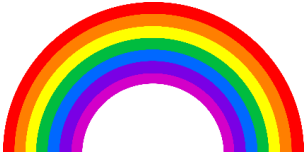


10. Several specific changes have been proposed for the public education system in Manitoba. To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following?

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Views on Classroom Changes: Variations by Sub-Group

Women, educators most likely to oppose publishing individual school assessment results



Those who are more likely to **support** having schools to inform parents when information about human sexuality is shared include:

- Those who identify as persons of colour (77% vs. 54% among non-BIPOC Manitobans)
- Those with lower levels of formal education (72%) and income (69%)
- Supporters of Bill 64 (77% vs. 43% among opponents)



Those most likely to **oppose** publishing assessment scores for individual schools include:

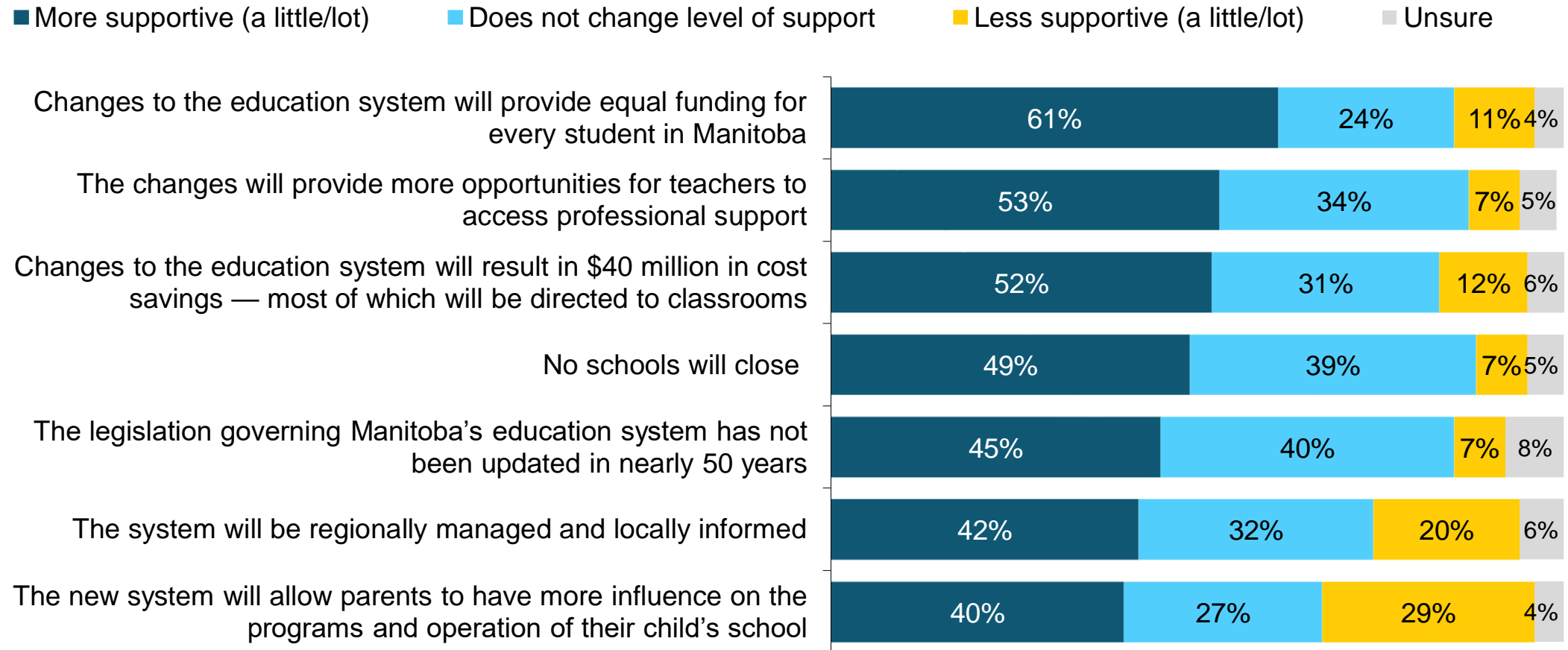
- Women (54% vs. 34% among men)
- Those who work in the education system or have someone in their household who does so (69%)
- University graduates (53%)
- Higher-income earners (50% among those earning \$100K+)

10. Several specific changes have been proposed for the public education system in Manitoba. To what extent do you support or oppose each of the following?

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Evolving Views Regarding Education Reform

## Equal funding for students most likely to make Manitobans support changes



13. Please read the following statements and for each one indicate if it makes you more or less supportive of the proposed changes to the education system in Manitoba – or if it does not change your level of support.

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Evolving Views on Education Reform: Variations by Sub-Group

## Rural Manitobans more likely to be swayed by equitable funding and no schools closing



Those living in rural and northern Manitoba are more supportive after learning that ...

- The changes will provide equitable funding for students across the province (66% vs. 58% among Winnipeg adults)
- No schools will close (55% vs. 45%)
- The new system will give parents more influence over decision-making in their children's school (47% vs. 35%)



Parents with children in the public K-12 education system are more supportive after learning that ...

- The new system will allow parents to have more input into their child's school (47% vs. 35% respectively)



Those who identify as a person of colour/visible minority are more likely to say these arguments make them more supportive of the proposed reforms to the education system.

13. Please read the following statements and for each one indicate if it makes you more or less supportive of the proposed changes to the education system in Manitoba – or if it does not change your level of support.

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)



# Driver Analysis





## How To Read a Driver Analysis

To better understand respondents' views, we conducted several driver analyses. A driver analysis (also known as a regression) tells us whether certain attitudes predict or drive another attitude. In this case, we are examining the extent to which agreement with selected statements regarding education reform (Q5) drive support for (or opposition to) the proposed changes to Manitoba's K-12 public school system (Q8).

This type of analysis helps us understand which specific arguments and messages underpin support for education reform, as CSM may wish to emphasize these in its social marketing and communications campaigns.

We used a type of driver analysis called multiple linear regression. It allows us to see, of a group of attitudes, which ones predict an outcome. The results on the following page show the driver analysis for the overall sample of adult Manitobans, as well as an analysis focusing specifically on parents with children in the household.



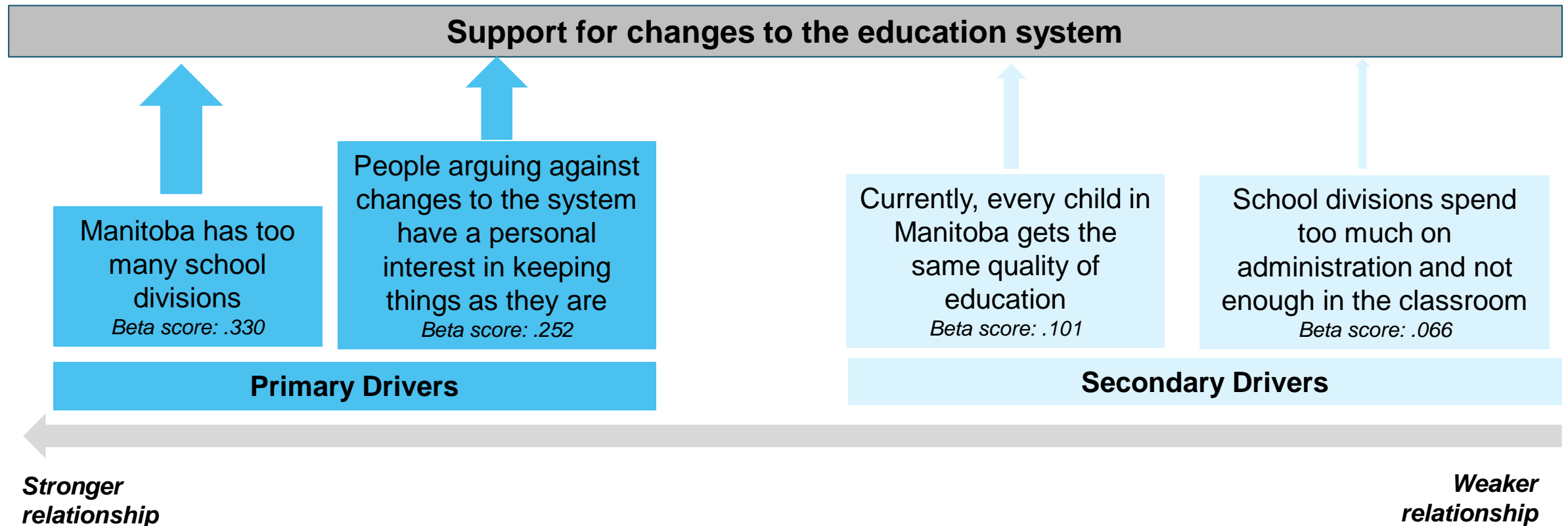
# Driver Analysis Summary

The results on the following pages show that:

- The main argument that drives support for education reform is that Manitoba currently has too many school divisions. This is perhaps the most persuasive argument for the provincial government to put forward when it discusses education reform.
- The argument that opponents of reform are only interested in preserving the status quo – and being fundamentally uninterested in reform because they have an interest in keeping things as they are presently – is also closely related to support for education reform.
- Although it is less of an overall driver, the notion that parents can have more input into how the education system works has resonance for those who have children.
- The strongest counterargument to the provincial government's current plans for education changes is that reform will lead to funding reductions. This is the strongest driver of opposition to Bill 64, especially among the broader public (and less so among parents). The notion that the government needs to address poverty to improve education outcomes is also a secondary consideration.

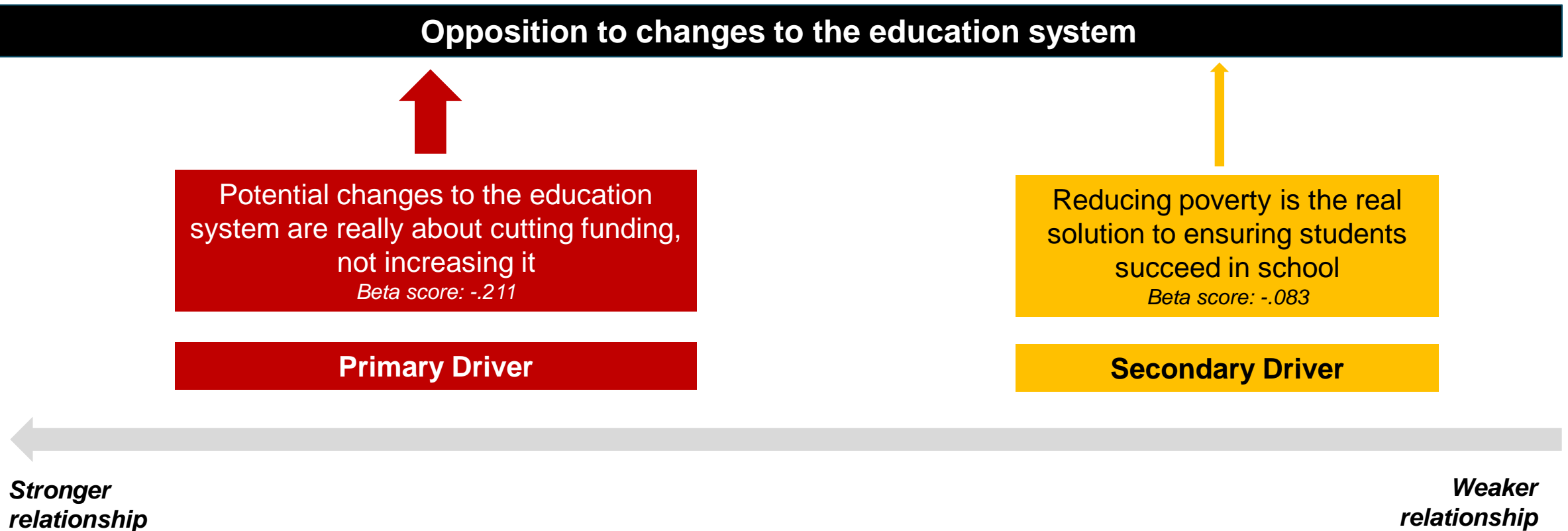
# Driver Analysis: All Manitobans

Reducing school divisions, fighting status quo are two arguments most likely to drive support



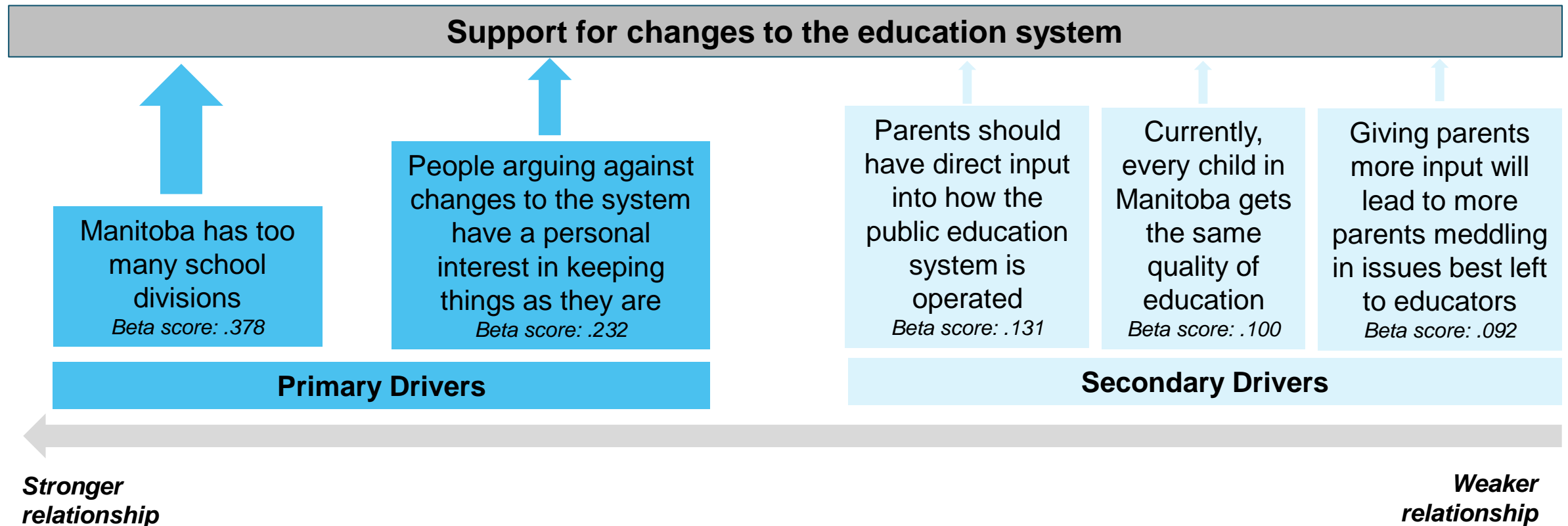
# Driver Analysis (cont'd): All Manitobans

The notion 'changes = cuts' most likely to drive opposition to proceeding with education reform



# Driver Analysis: Parents

Direct input into the education system is a potential driver of parent support

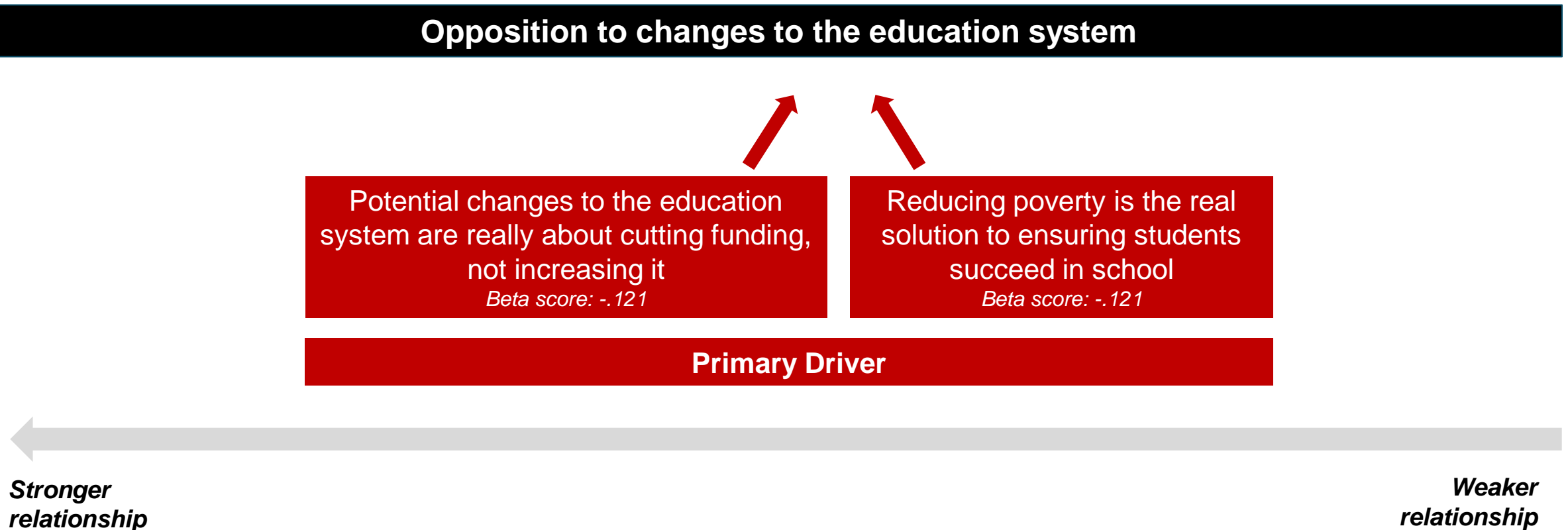


Adjusted  $R^2$ : .421; variables shown are statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  (95%) confidence level



## Driver Analysis (cont'd): Parents

The same two arguments drive opposition, but changes = cuts is less resonant among parents

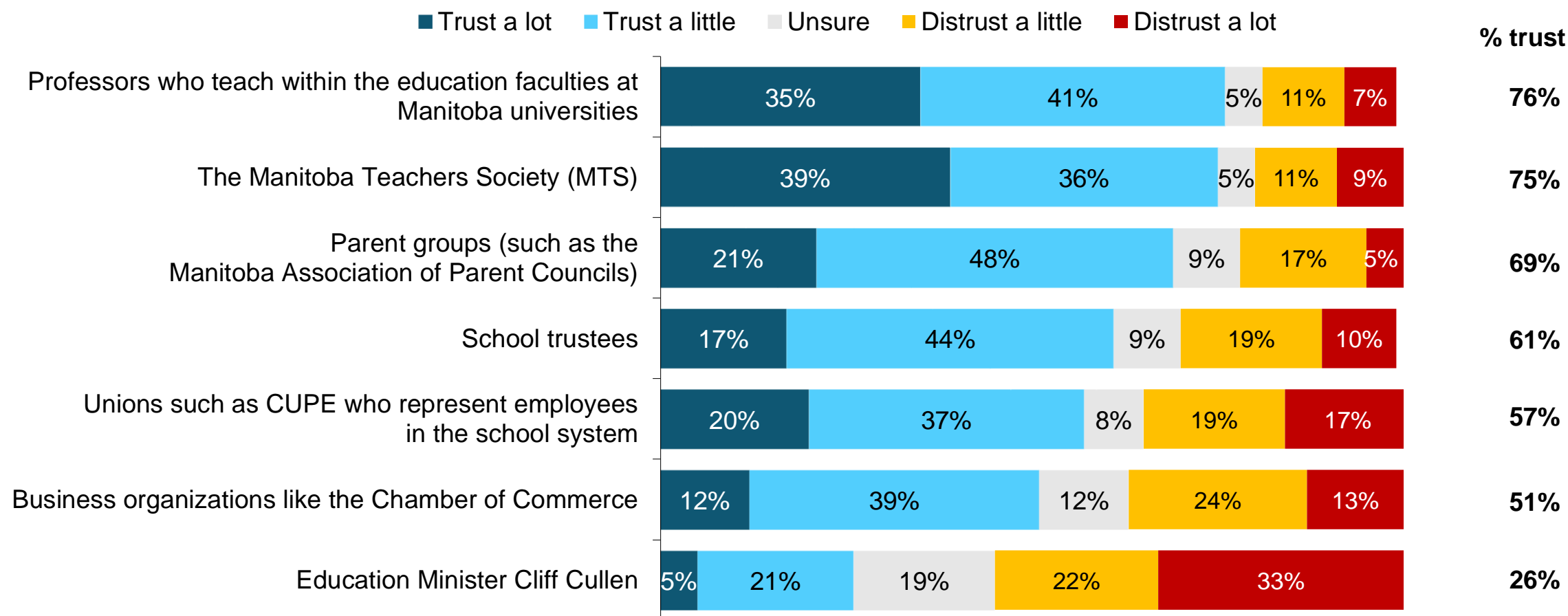




## Views on Stakeholders

# Trust in Stakeholders

Educators are most likely to be trusted by the Manitoba public on this issue

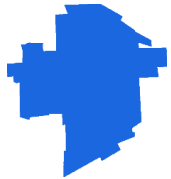


11. Several different individuals and groups have been speaking about the provincial government's proposed changes to education. For each, please indicate how much you trust these people or organizations when it comes to their views on changes to the education system:

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)

# Trust in Stakeholders: Variations by Sub-Group

Winnipeg residents, women and parents are more likely to trust educators, labour leaders



Winnipeg residents are more likely than rural and northern Manitobans to trust:

- Professors (80% vs. 72%)
- Unions (63% vs. 47%)



Those outside Winnipeg, on the other hand, are more likely to trust:

- School trustees (67% vs. 55% among Winnipeggers)



Women are more likely than men to trust most stakeholders in the education system, including:

- Professors (83% vs. 70%)
- The MTS (81% vs. 67%)
- Unions (65% vs. 47%)



Parents with children in the public education system are more likely to trust:

- The MTS (81%)
- Professors (80%)
- Parent groups (77%)
- School trustees (68%)
- Unions (63%)



Those who support Bill 64 are more likely to trust Education Minister Cliff Cullen (46% vs. 14% among Bill 64 opponents) and business organizations (61% vs. 44%)

11. Several different individuals and groups have been speaking about the provincial government's proposed changes to education. For each, please indicate how much you trust these people or organizations when it comes to their views on changes to the education system:

Base: All respondents (N=1,298)