

**THE  
PROJECT  
ON  
STUDENT  
DEBT**

**NATIONAL SURVEY OF  
COLLEGE PRESIDENTS**

**2005**

# COLLEGE PRESIDENT SURVEY SUMMARY

*A national survey of 200 college and university presidents, conducted in June 2005, found widespread concern about student debt. The survey also explored their views about how rising costs over the past five to ten years have affected students, and what kinds of policy changes would help make college more affordable and limit student debt. Here is a summary of the survey's key findings, with accompanying charts and methodology.*

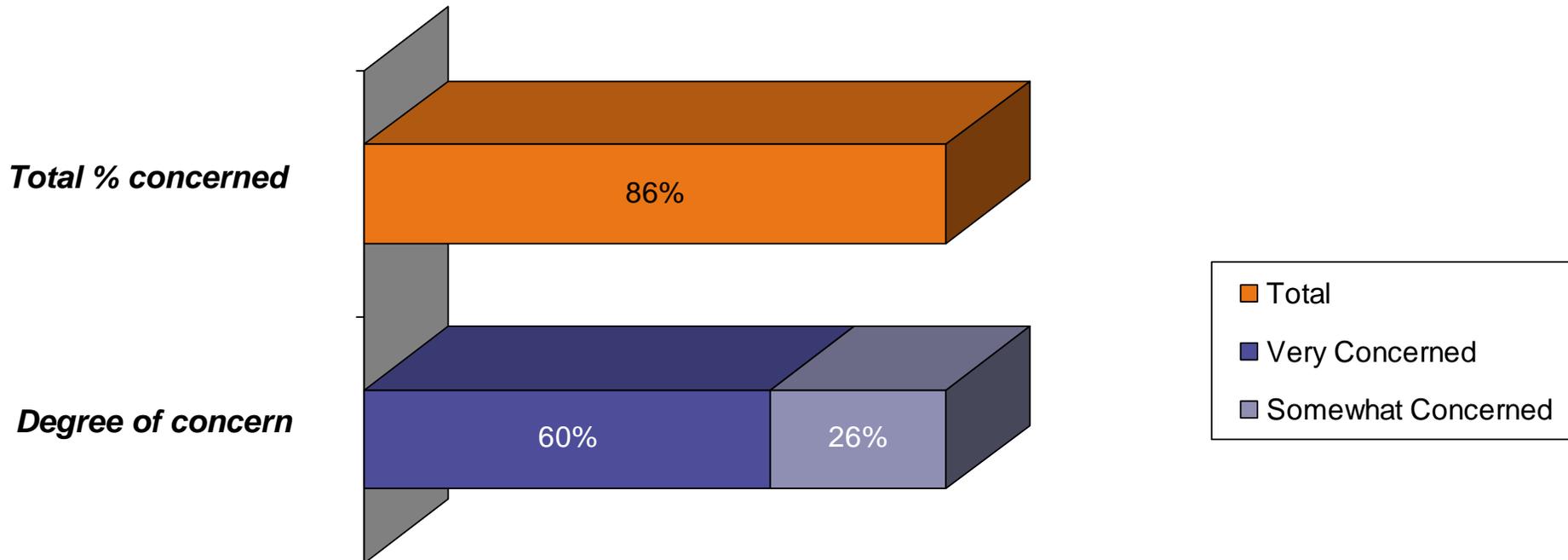
- **College Presidents are Concerned about Student Debt:** Most college presidents (86%) are concerned about the amount of debt students are taking on to pay for their education. More than half (60%) are very concerned.
- **Presidents Say Rising Costs Limit Opportunity for Students:** Large majorities of college presidents believe the increasing cost of higher education leads to obstacles to college access and success, such as: “excessive debt” for graduates, lower income youth believing they can’t afford to go to college, and students leaving school before they get a degree.
- **Presidents See Many Ways to Make College More Affordable:** Most college presidents believe that a range of policy changes would help make college more affordable for students. These changes range from more grants for lower income students and partial loan forgiveness for some graduates, to expanded tax credits and work study opportunities, to lower interest rates and higher borrowing limits.
- **Overwhelming Support for Higher Pell Grants:** To help limit student debt, 96% of college presidents support increasing the maximum federal Pell grant for low-income students by up to \$1,000. A full 87% express very strong support.
- **Presidents Choose Pell Grant Increase Over General Loan Assistance:** If Congress had to choose between increasing the Pell Grant and limiting student loan payments for all borrowers, 75% of college presidents favor increasing the Pell grant.
- **Three in Four Want Loan System Savings to Fund More Student Aid:** Seventy-two percent of college presidents agree that “Congress should try to improve the efficiency of the student loan system in order to increase federal funding for student aid.” Nearly half (48%) *strongly* agree.

# College Presidents Are Concerned About Student Debt

– % Very/Somewhat Concerned –

## Survey Question:

According to the latest government data, two-thirds of all students at four-year colleges have student loans, and their average debt upon graduation is nearly \$20,000. How concerned are you about the amount of debt students in general are taking on to pay for their education?

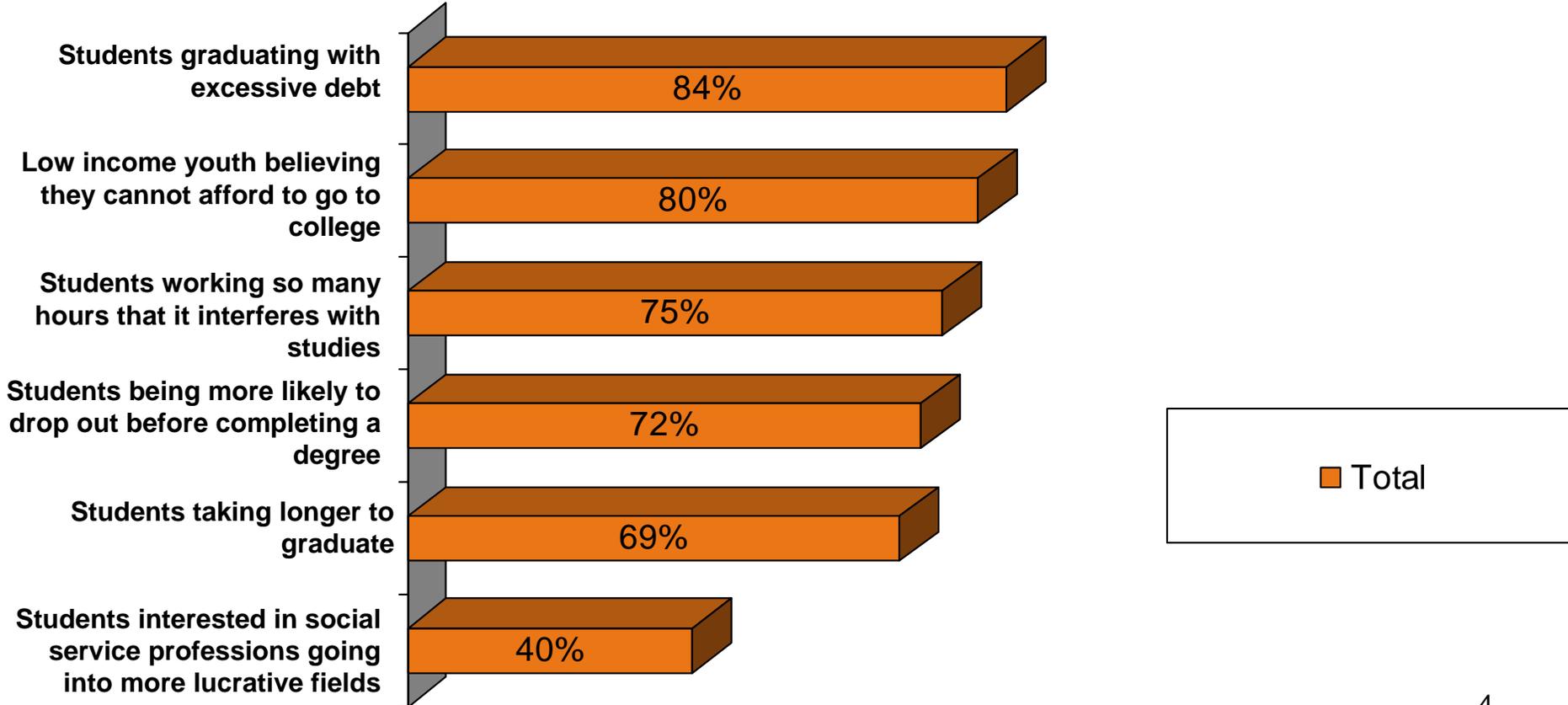


# Presidents Say Rising Costs Limit Opportunity for Students

– % Extremely/Very Important –

## Survey Question:

I am going to read you some ways students may respond to college costs and for each, please tell me if you think rising costs have contributed to these conditions. Please tell me how important you think rising costs have been in contributing to...at schools like yours over the past five to ten years?

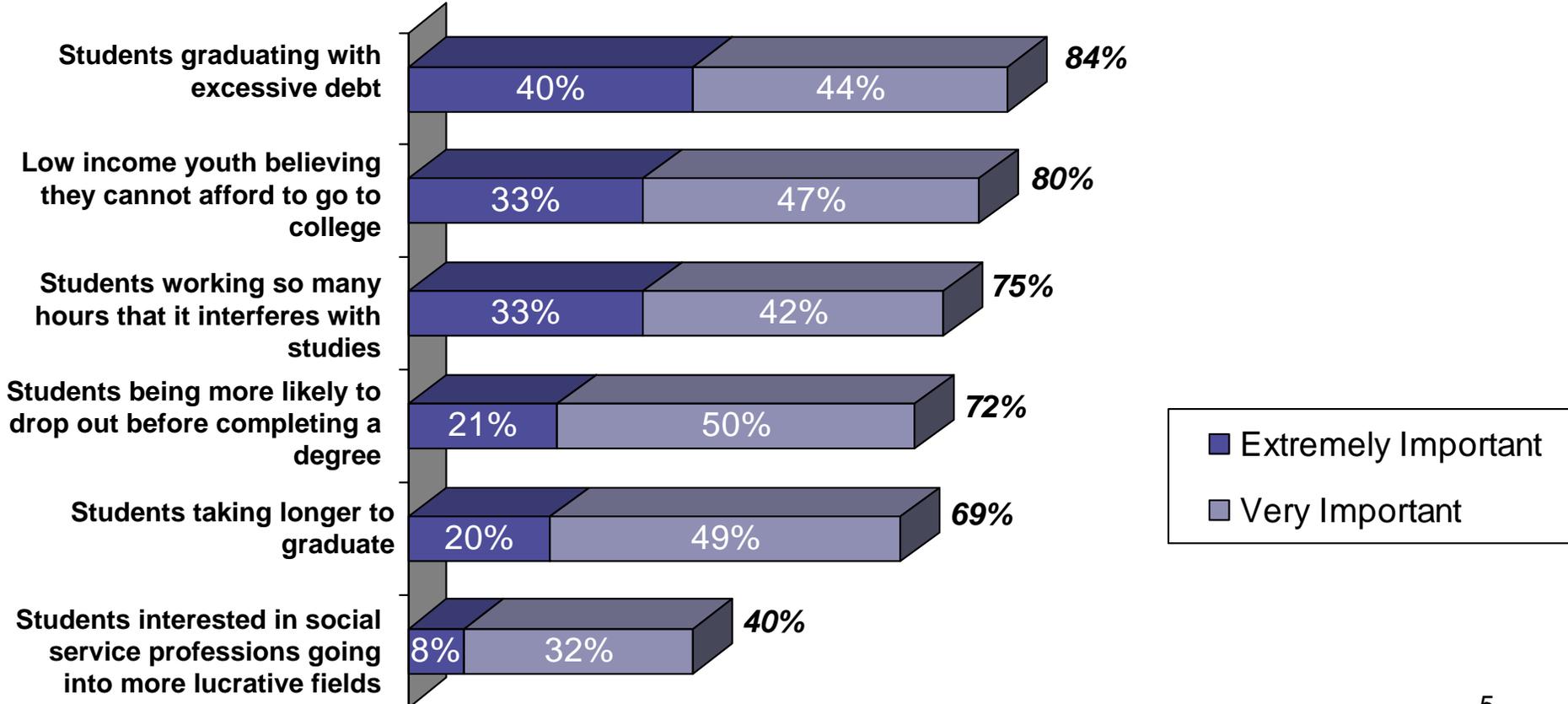


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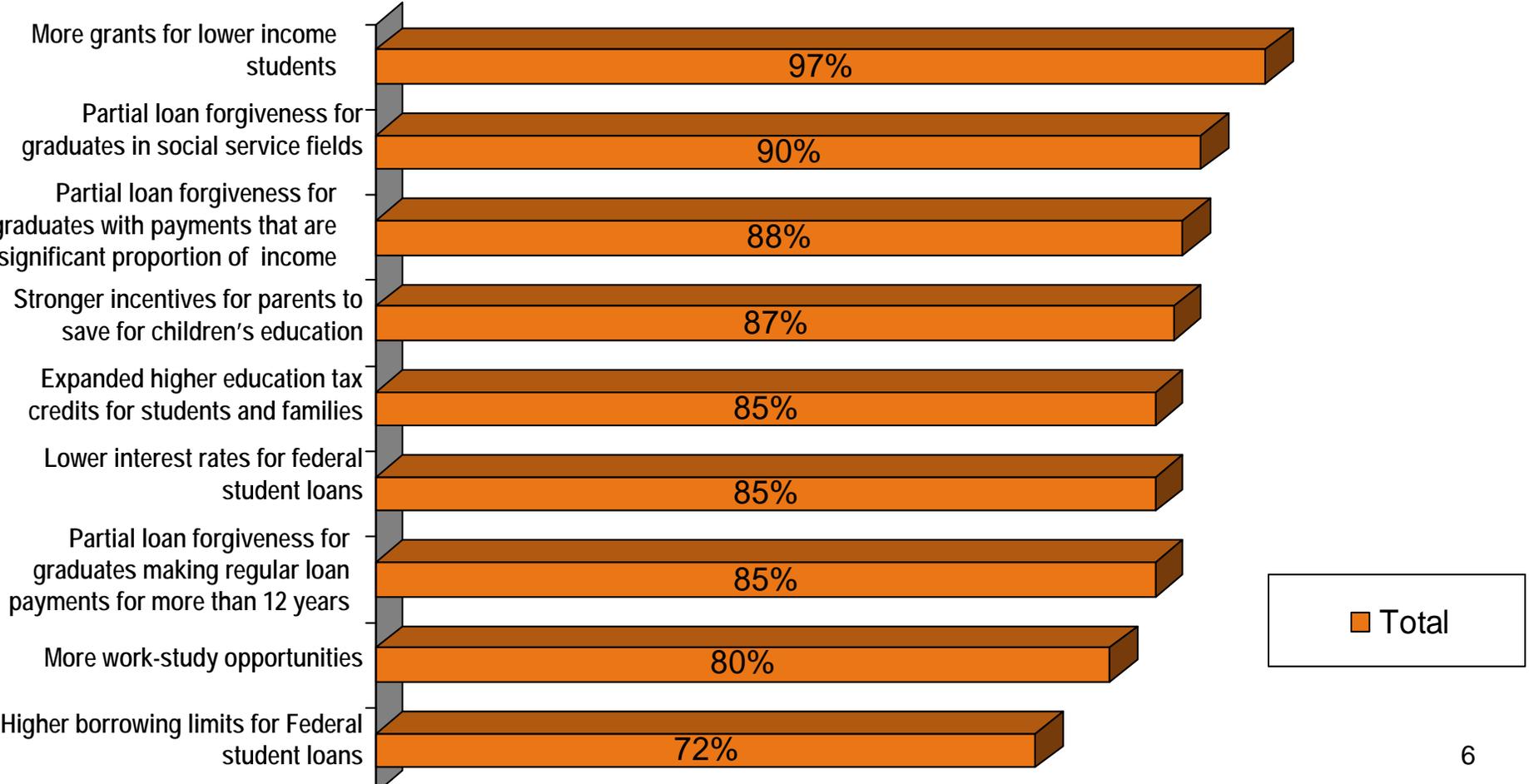


# Presidents See Many Ways to Make College More Affordable

– % Very/Somewhat Helpful –

**Survey Question:**

For each of the following policies, please tell me if you think it would be very helpful, somewhat helpful, not very helpful or not at all helpful in making college more affordable for students in general.

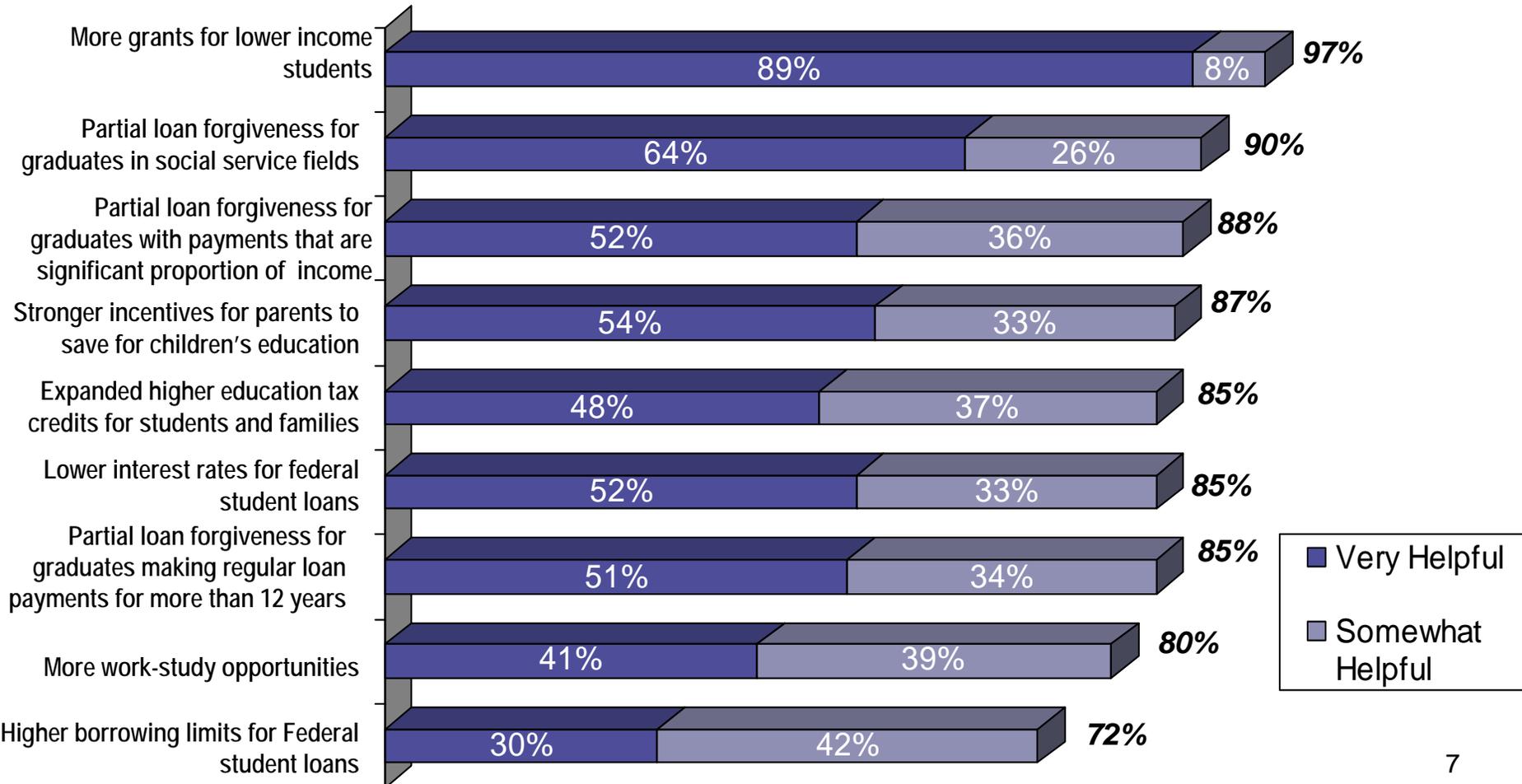


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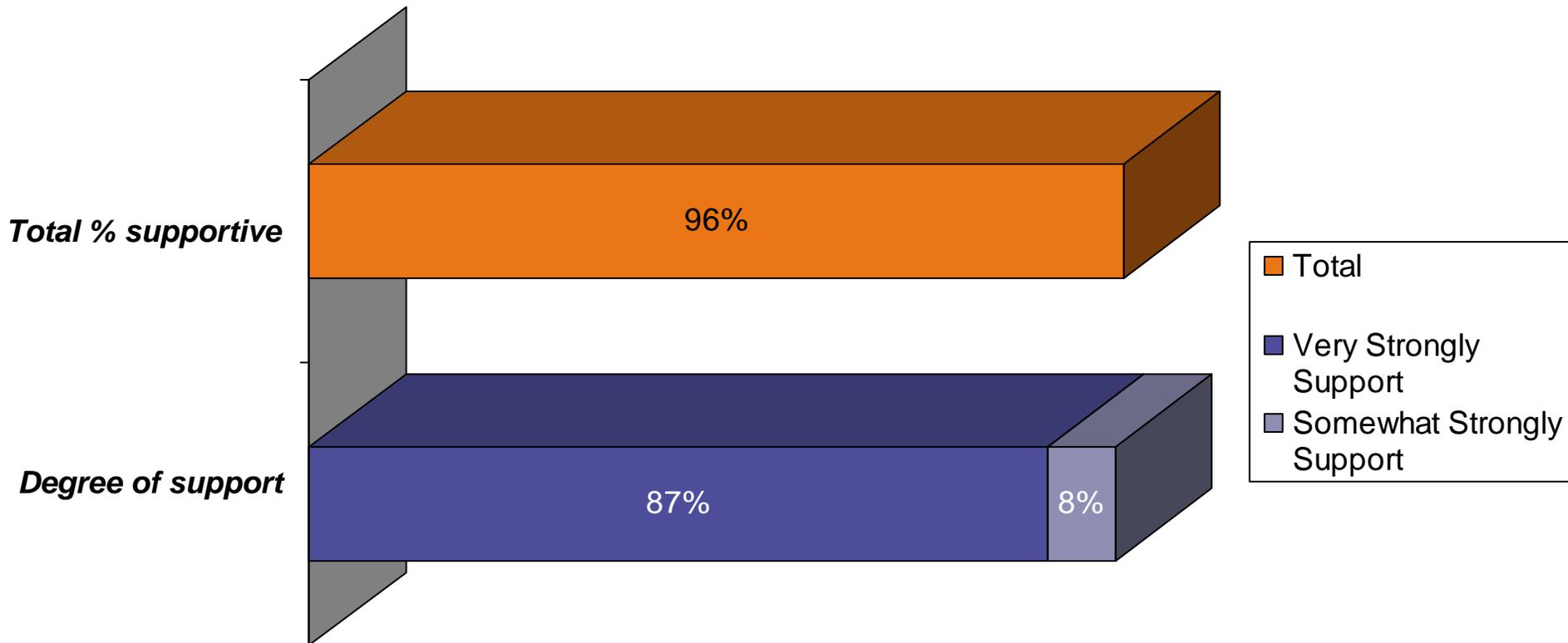


# Overwhelming Support For Higher Pell Grants

– % Very/Somewhat Strongly Support –

## Survey Question:

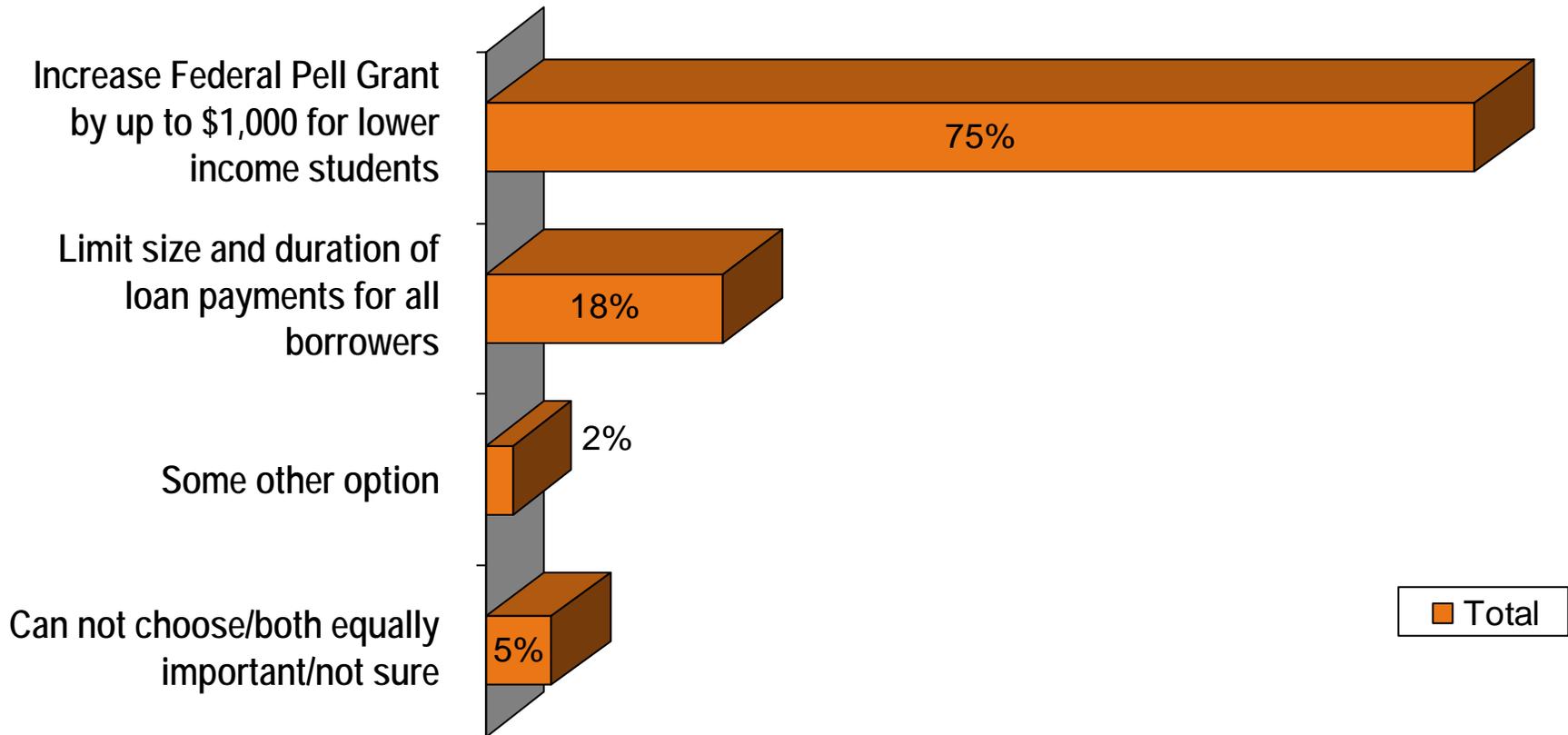
One possible approach to limiting student debt is providing larger grants to lower income students. How strongly would you support a proposal to increase the maximum federal Pell grant by up to \$1,000?



# Presidents Choose Pell Grant Increase Over General Loan Assistance

## Survey Question:

If policy makers interested in making college more affordable had to choose between helping to limit the size and duration of loan payments for all borrowers, or increasing the federal Pell Grant by up to \$1,000 for lower income students, which option do you think they should choose?

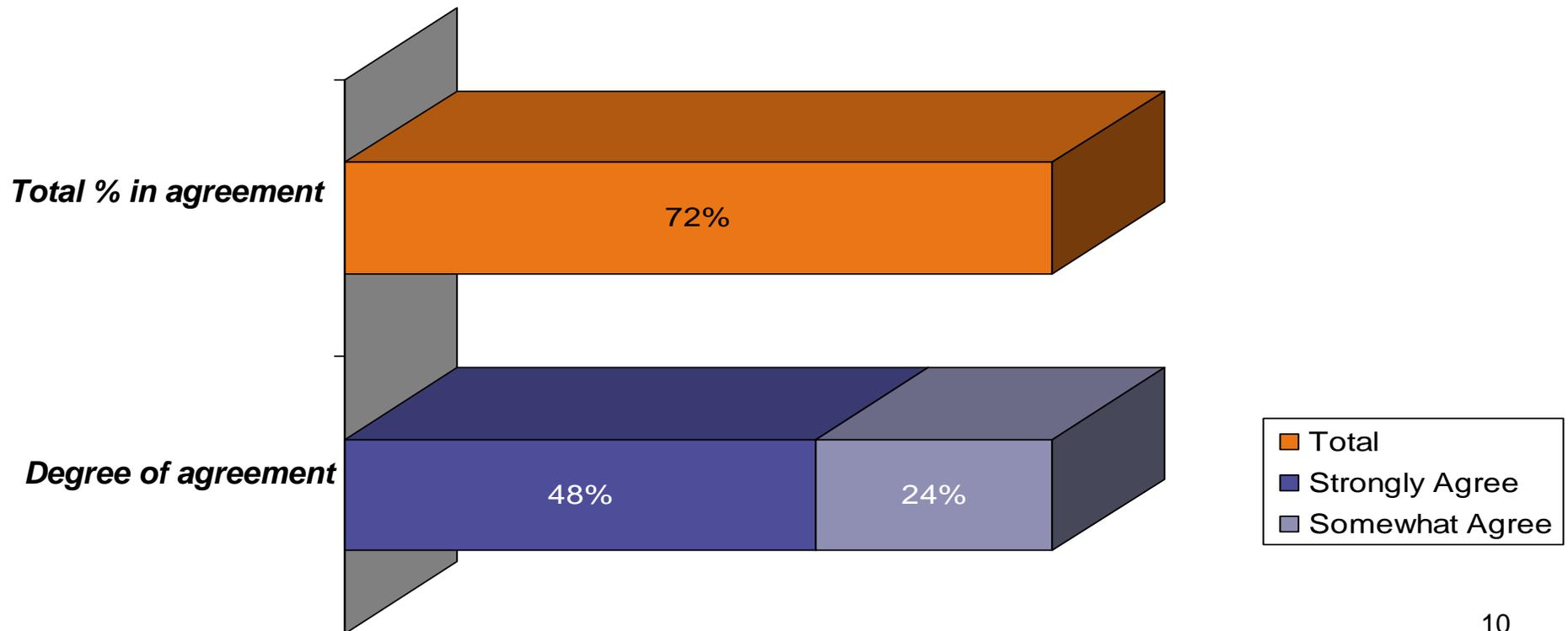


# Three in Four Want Loan System Savings to Fund Student Aid

– % Strongly/Somewhat Agree –

## Survey Question:

Some studies suggest that the federal government could save money by making the student loan system more efficient, without reducing the amount of loans available to students. The resulting savings could be used to expand student aid in various ways. How much do you agree or disagree that Congress should try to improve the efficiency of the student loan system in order to increase federal funding for student aid?



## Methodology Summary

These findings represent the views of college presidents and other high level leaders (vice presidents and provosts) at both public and private, two- and four-year schools across the United States. Ninety-one percent of the 200 survey respondents are college presidents; nine percent are in other senior executive positions. Half (48%) represent schools participating in the Federal Direct Loan Program (DL); the other half (52%) represent schools participating in Guaranteed Student Loan Program (FFEL). The survey was conducted by phone in June 2005 by ReedHaldyMacIntosh Associates, a Pennsylvania-based marketing research firm. The respondents were randomly dialed within each loan program category. The margin of error for the total sample is +/-7%. All differences between subgroups that are cited in the text of this summary are statistically significant at a 95% confidence interval.