



# Niagara Region – 2024 Budget Consultation

December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

# Background and Methodology

In planning for Regional budgets, Niagara Region wanted to consult with residents and business leaders to understand their priorities when it comes to the services offered by the Region. To do this, a multi-step research project was conducted. The steps are as follows:

- **A quantitative survey was conducted among Regional residents.** The purpose of this survey was to get a quantitative read on a list of Region priorities to understand if residents believed the services should be increased - with an increase to taxes, maintained – with an increase of taxes at the cost of living, reduced – by maintaining taxes, or cut - reducing taxes. This survey was on the Region’s website and was supported through advertising and social media efforts. This survey was open to all residents. In total, 980 residents completed this survey. While this is a statistically reliable base size, the results are not representative of the Region as a whole.
- **A set of five qualitative focus groups were conducted:** four with residents of the Region and one with business leaders (with contacts provided by the Region). The purpose of this phase of research was to get a more in-depth understanding how residents/ business leaders feel about each issue area and the role it should take in the budget.

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# Results in Detail

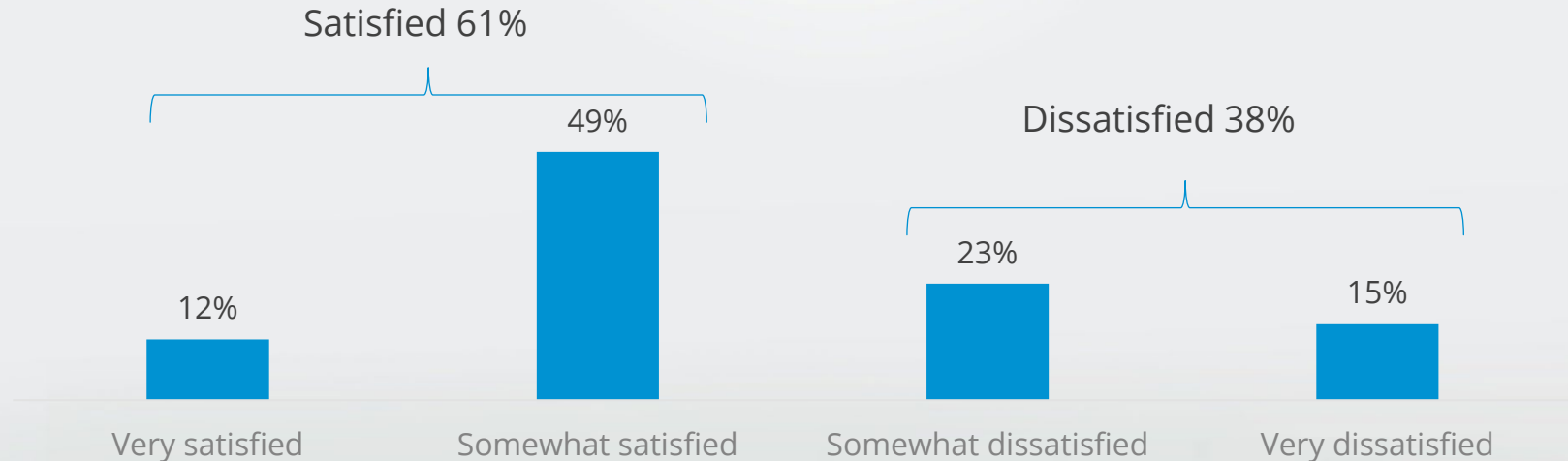
## Budget Considerations

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# Residents are satisfied with the services provided by the Region

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS:

- High satisfaction with Region overall.
- Budgetary prioritization was difficult – understand the importance of funding, but cannot pay a higher tax bill
- Need an option other than reduce service or increase taxes: need the Region to be efficient with spending, find cost savings and be creative to stretch current budgets.



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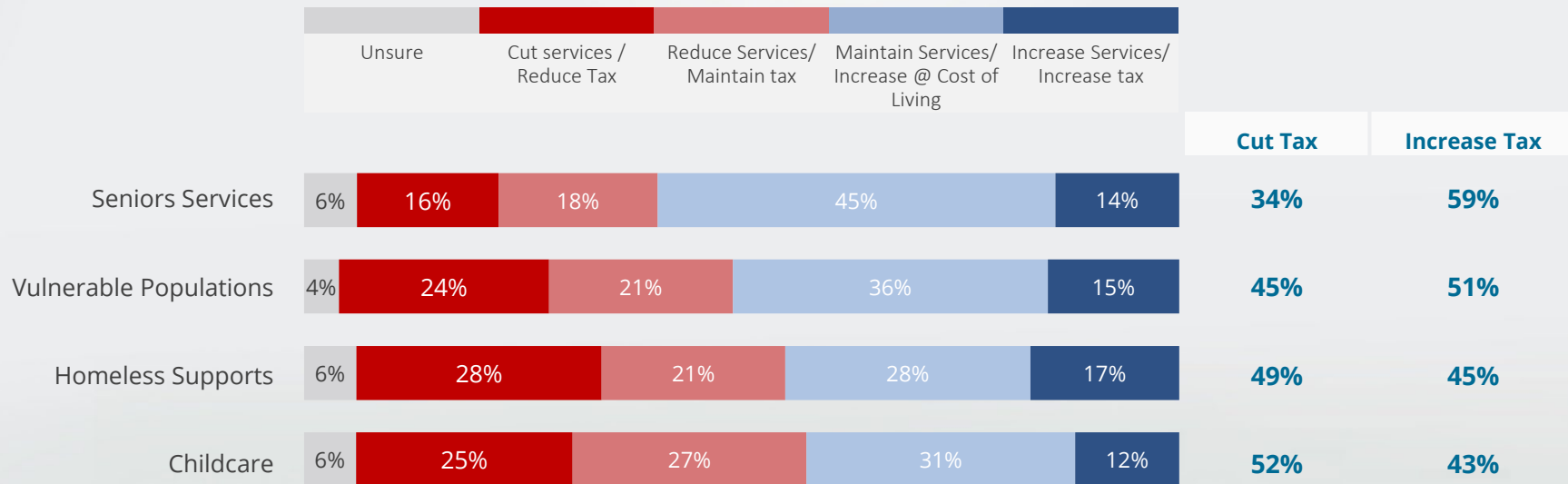
# Areas of Highest Priority

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# Support for seniors and vulnerable populations are a priority to residents

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: HOMELESS SUPPORTS

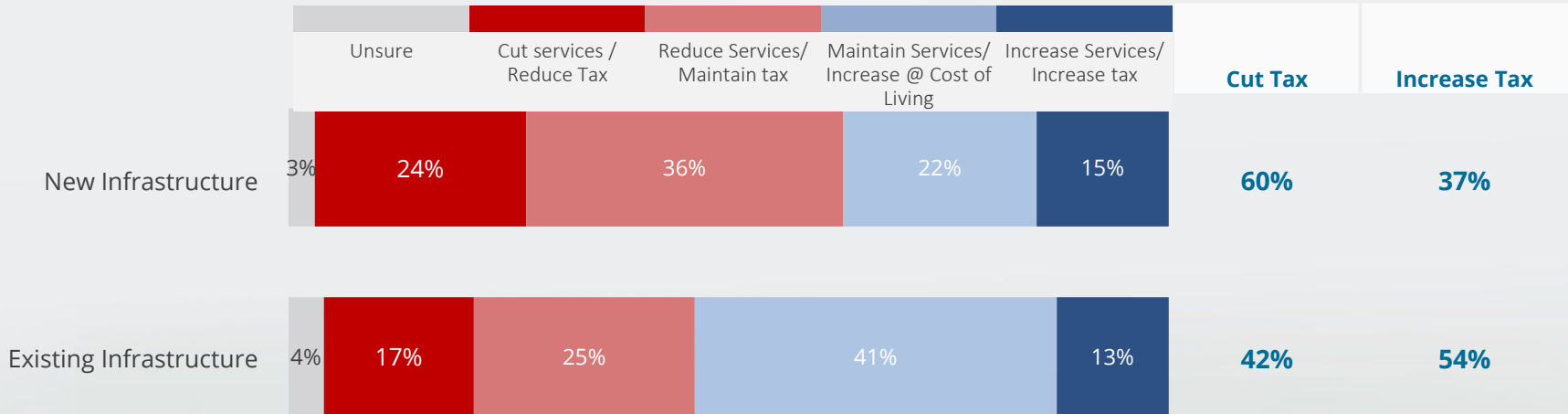
- Services should be **maintained or increased**.
- There is a perception that the problem is growing.
- Residents and Business Leaders believe the Region should rely on organizations with expertise in this area to help with the problem.



# Existing infrastructure is a high priority, new infrastructure is less so

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Services should be **maintained or increased**.
- The issues with crumbling infrastructure and problems with delayed maintenance are understood.
- It is important that money be spent only on projects that really need it and that budgets be monitored to ensure they are efficient.



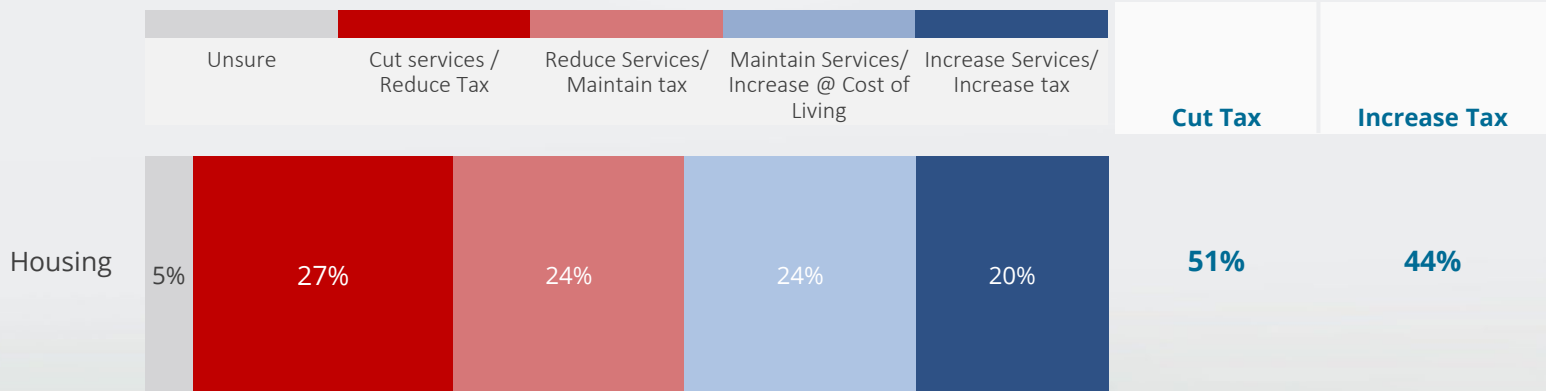
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# Residents have mixed impression on the importance of Housing

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: HOUSING

- Services should be **maintained or increased**
- The importance of this issue is understood.
- Some are concerned help is not going to the right people: “affordable” housing is not actually affordable.
- Business leaders want creative solutions including new ways to incentivize housing developers.



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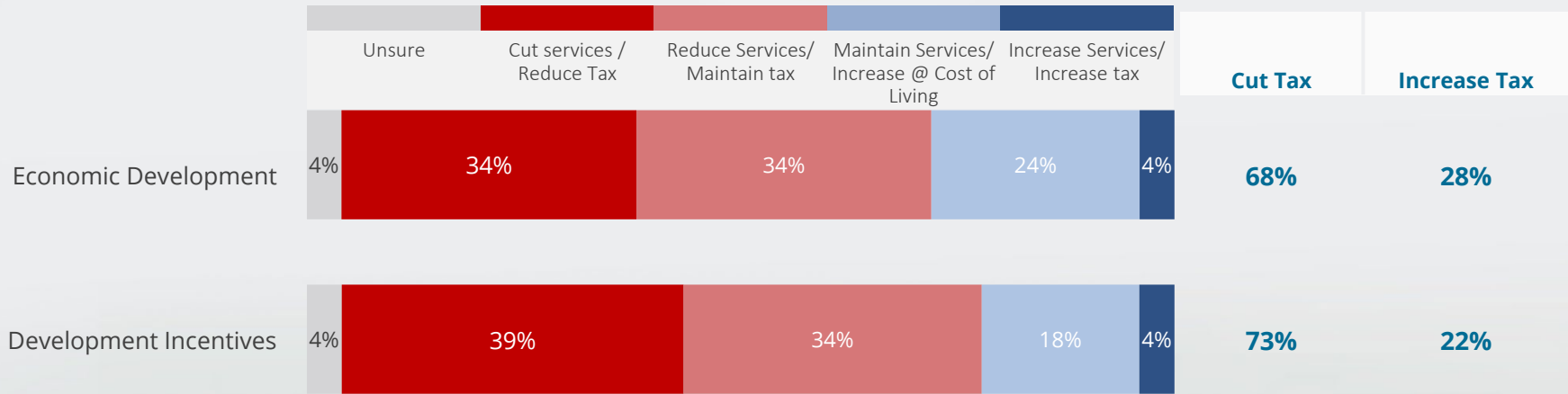
# Areas of Moderate Priority

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# While qualitative research shows a need for developmental incentives, this is less apparent in quantitative research

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: DEVELOPMENTAL INCENTIVE

- Most feel services should be **maintained**, a few think **increased**.
- Importance of bringing new business and jobs to Niagara is understood.
- Businesses who receive incentives should bring a diversity of jobs, particularly those that pay a living wage, not just tourism or seasonal work.



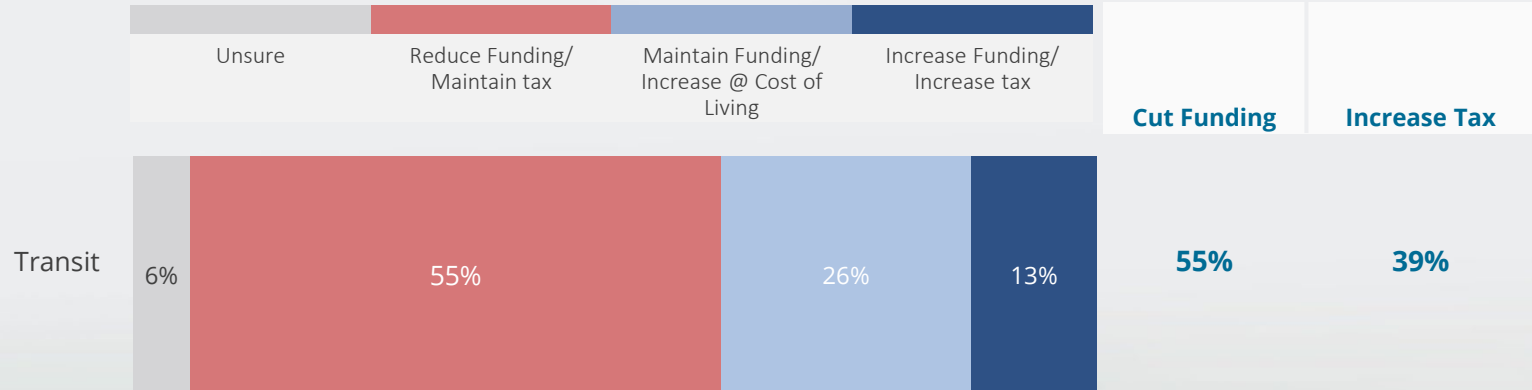
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# Qualitative research finds a need to at least maintain Transit funding, whereas quantitative research shows a reduction

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: TRANSIT

- Services should be **maintained**.
- Most respondents do not take transit but feel it is important for those who need it.
- Current system is not thought to be very good – will need to improve if more jobs, affordable housing, etc.
- Business leaders need better transit to allow them to fill part-time (student) jobs.



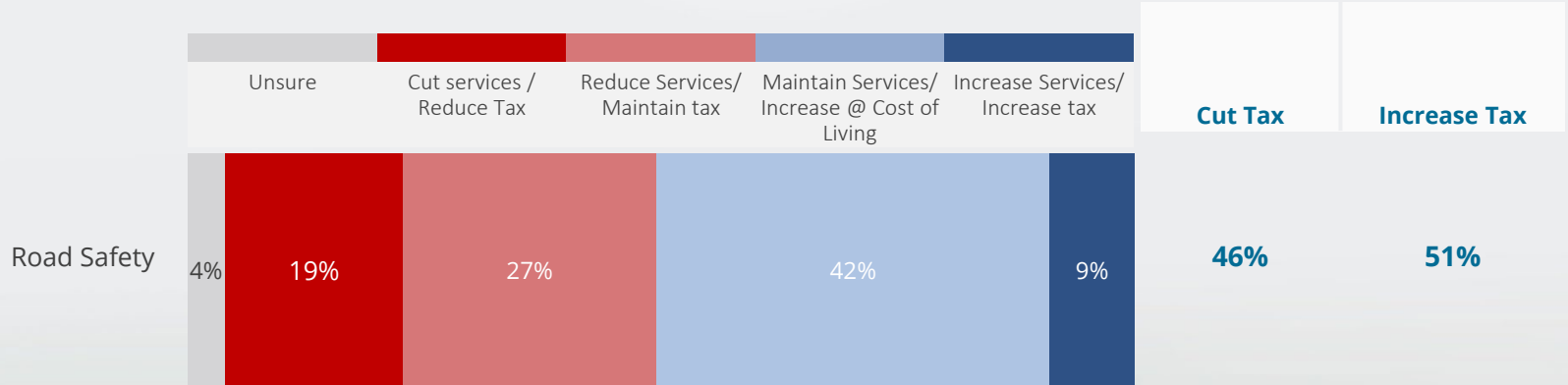
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# Residents believe road safety needs to be maintained.

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: ROAD SAFETY

- Services should be **maintained or reduced**.
- Understand it is important and satisfied with current level of service (except those living in more rural settings).
- Business leaders feel creativity needs to be used to ensure projects last and remain on budget.



Base Size: Total Answering n=908



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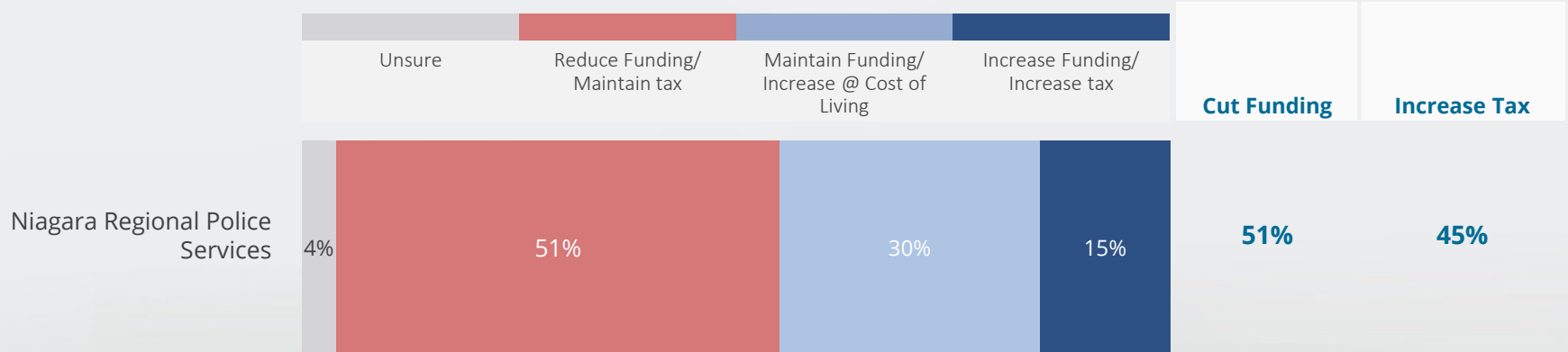
# Areas of Lower Priority

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# Many feel NRPS funding should be reduced

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: NRPS

- Organization funding should be **maintained or reduced**.
- Understand it is important but do not know why it would need more funding.
- Some want funding moved to areas that may provide better public safety, such as mental health providers or intermediate officers.



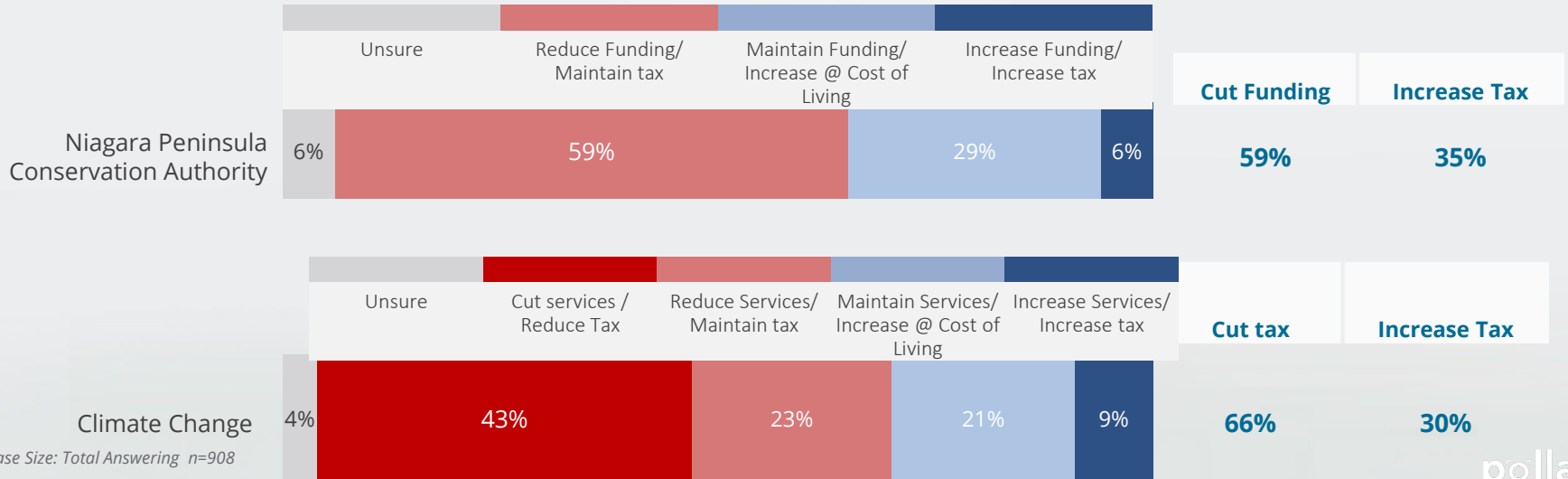
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# Many feel NPCA and climate change funding should be reduced

## QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: NPCA

- Organization funding should be **maintained or reduced**.
- Some do not understand the mandate of the organization.
- While green space is important, in this economic climate it can be cut.
- Those who feel it is involved in environmental protection see it as more important, but still do not think funding should increase.



Base Size: Total Answering n=908

