



College Sports at a Crossroads: Insights from Division I Campus Leaders



Knight Commission
On Intercollegiate Athletics
A PROJECT OF THE JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION



ELON
UNIVERSITY

Elon University
Poll

October 9, 2025



**AMY
PRIVETTE PERKO**



**JASON
HUSSER**



**PETER
ROBY**



**BETH
BROOKE**

DIVISION I LEADERS SURVEY RESULTS PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION



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Overview

1. Methodology
2. Overarching findings
 - a. Direction of college sports
 - b. Financial concerns
 - c. Academic mission and standards
3. Athlete experience, transfer policies, *House* impact
4. Impact of *House* on Olympic and women's sports
5. Findings on solutions, including federal legislation and different structures



NCAA Division I leaders survey

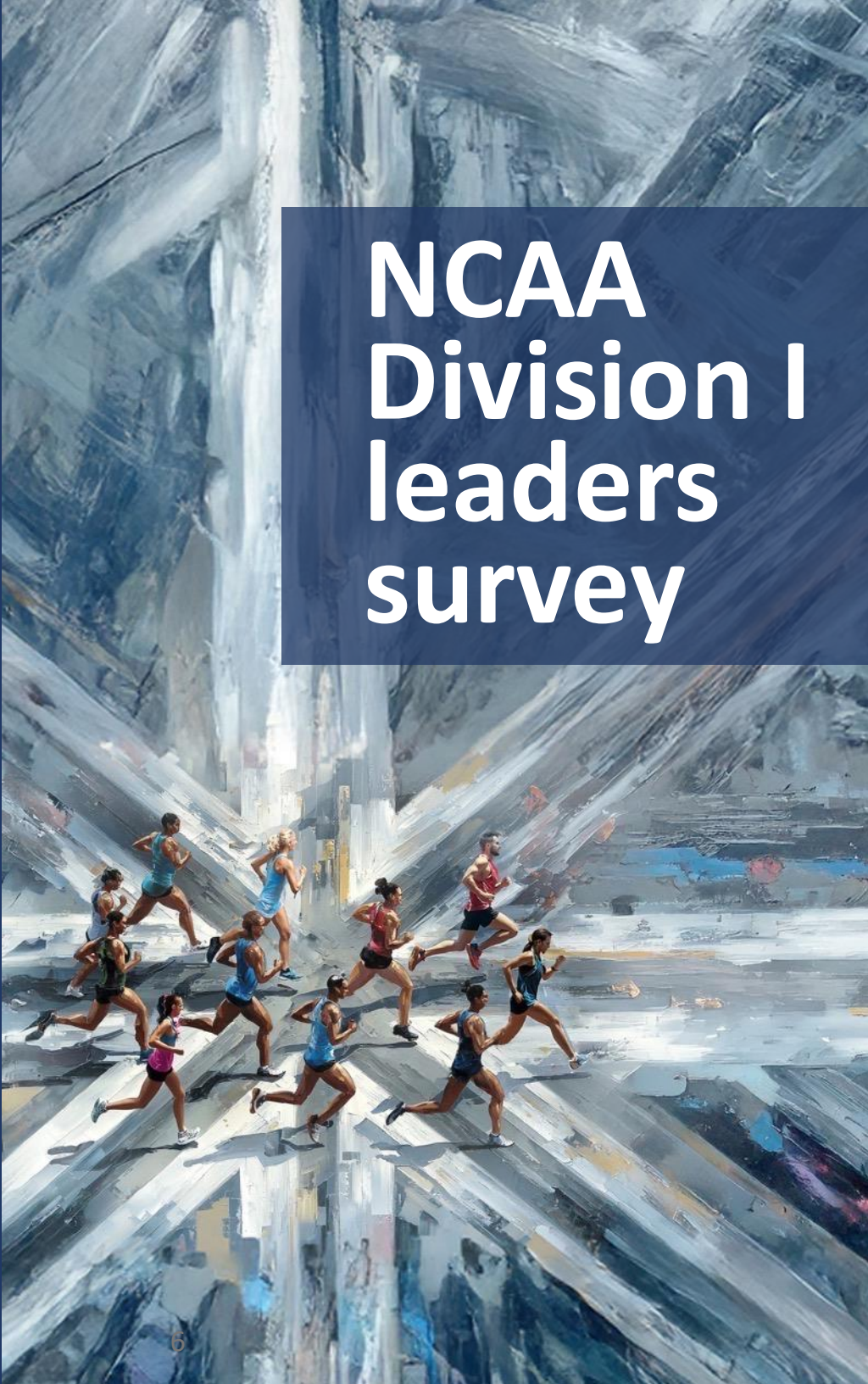
376 Total respondents - 26% response rate

- University or College presidents and chancellors
- Athletics directors (ADs)
- Senior woman administrators (SWAs)
- Faculty athletics representatives (FARs)

Overall margin of error: +/- 4.4%

(with larger margins of error for each smaller subgroup)

**Responses are representative of
Division I as a whole**



NCAA Division I leaders survey

Institution type

63% Public institutions

37% Private institutions

NCAA Division I football classification (2025-2026)

14% Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) Autonomy/Power 4
conferences

22% FBS Group of Six conferences and FBS Independents

34% Football Championship Subdivision

30% Division I basketball centric (no football)



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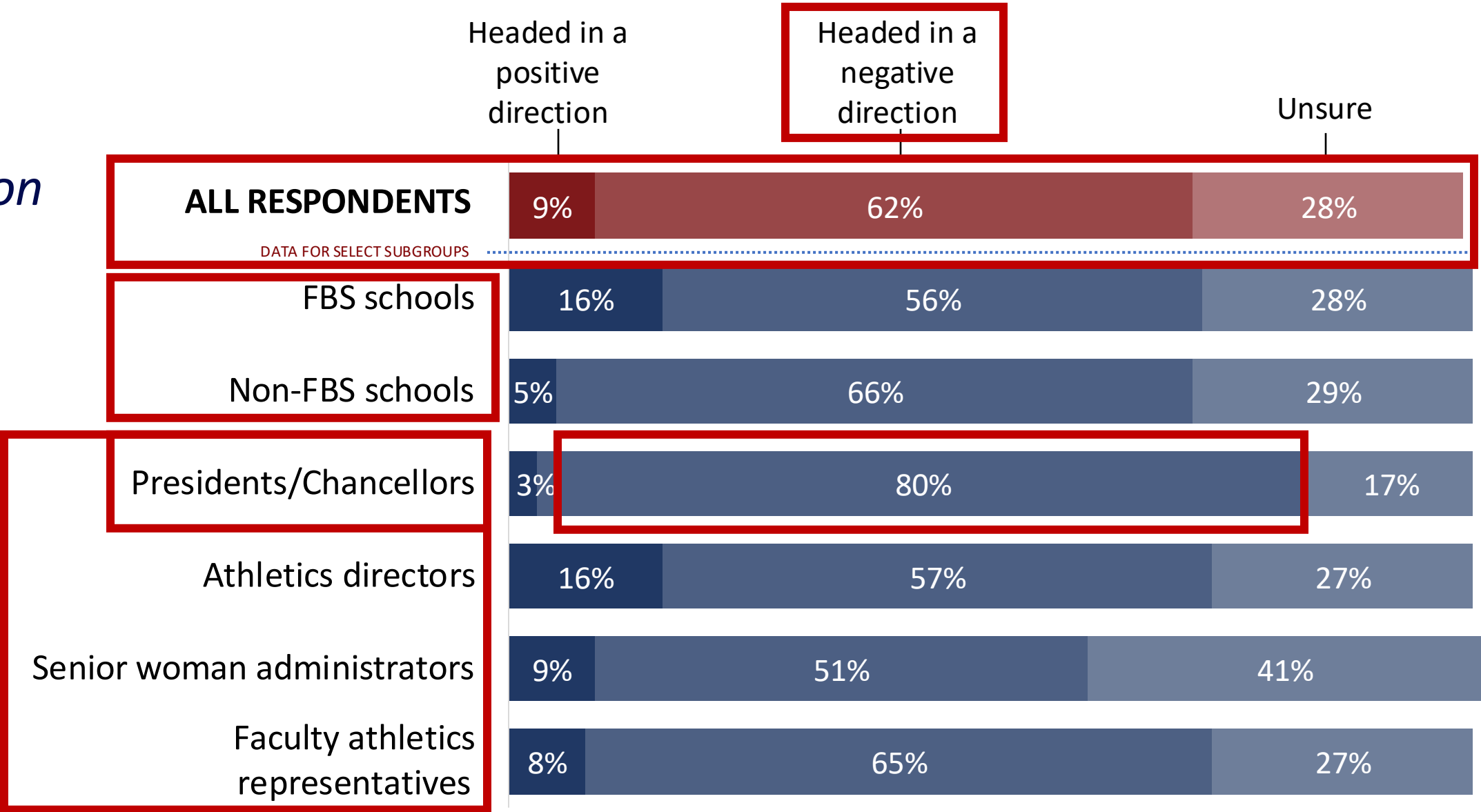
October 9, 2025



Division I leaders survey

House settlement reactions and the future of Division I

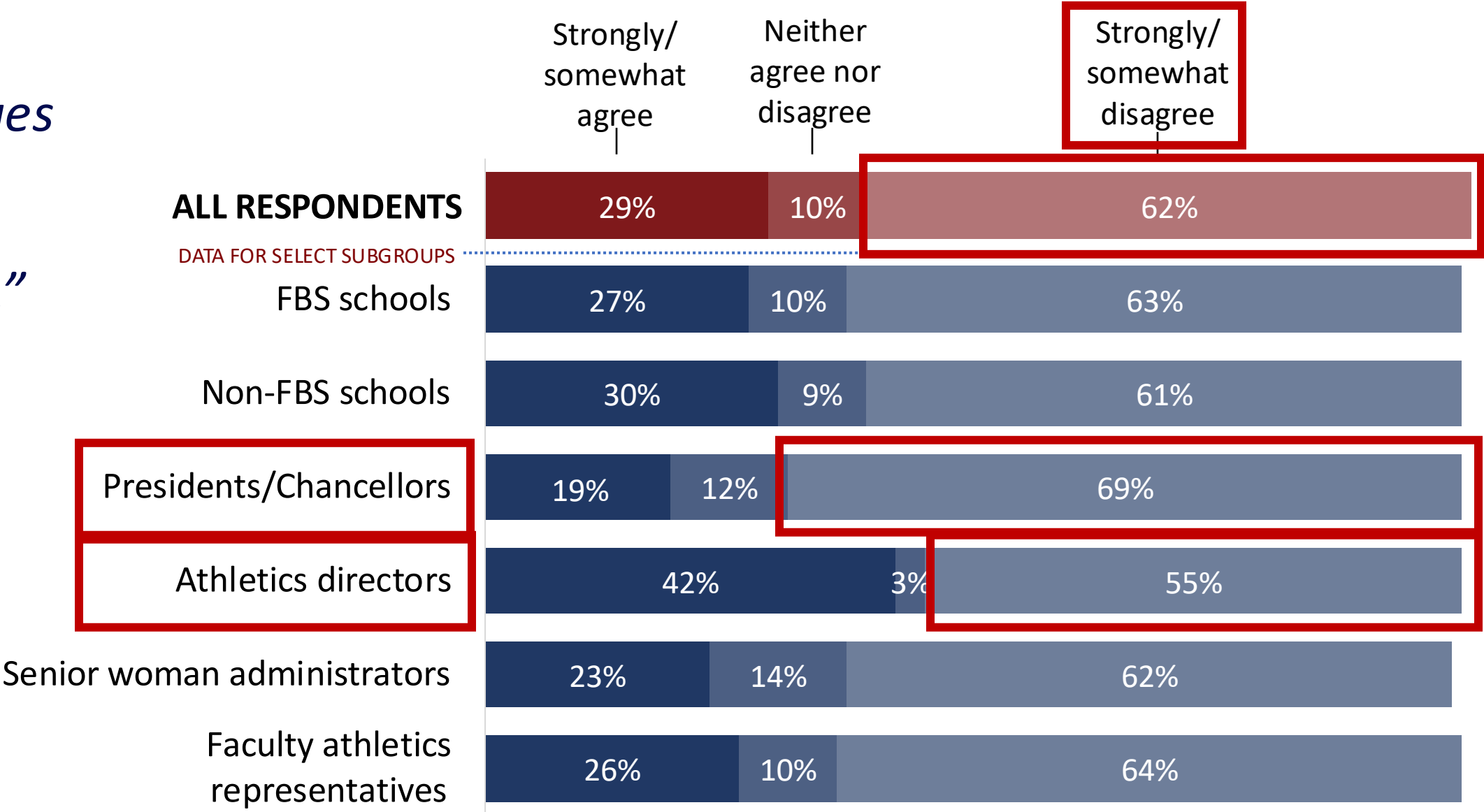
*Is Division I
headed in a
positive direction
or a negative
direction?*



Division I leaders survey

College sports governance and structure

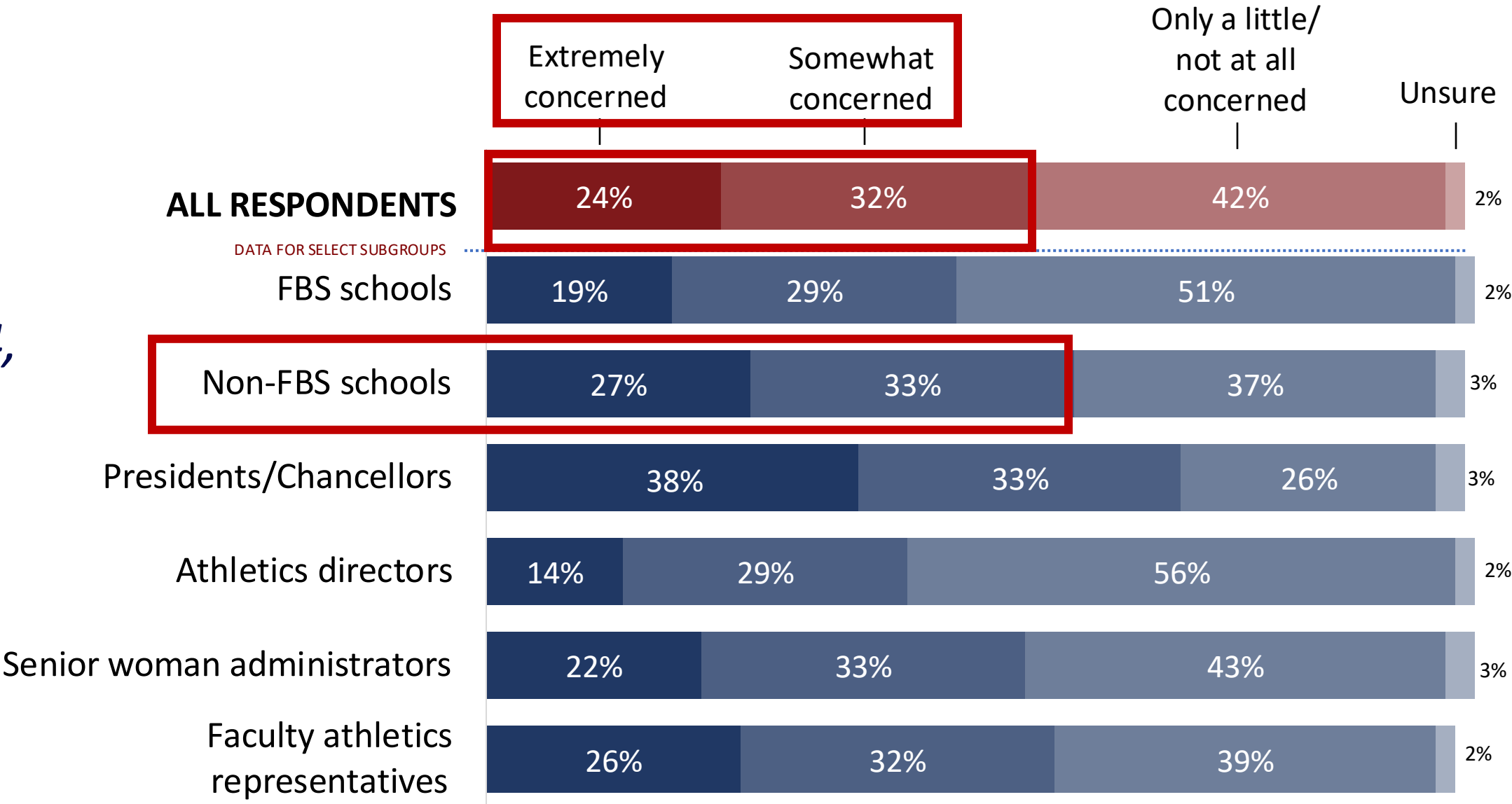
“The Division I structure continues to be viable as a single division within the NCAA.”



Division I leaders survey

College sports governance and structure

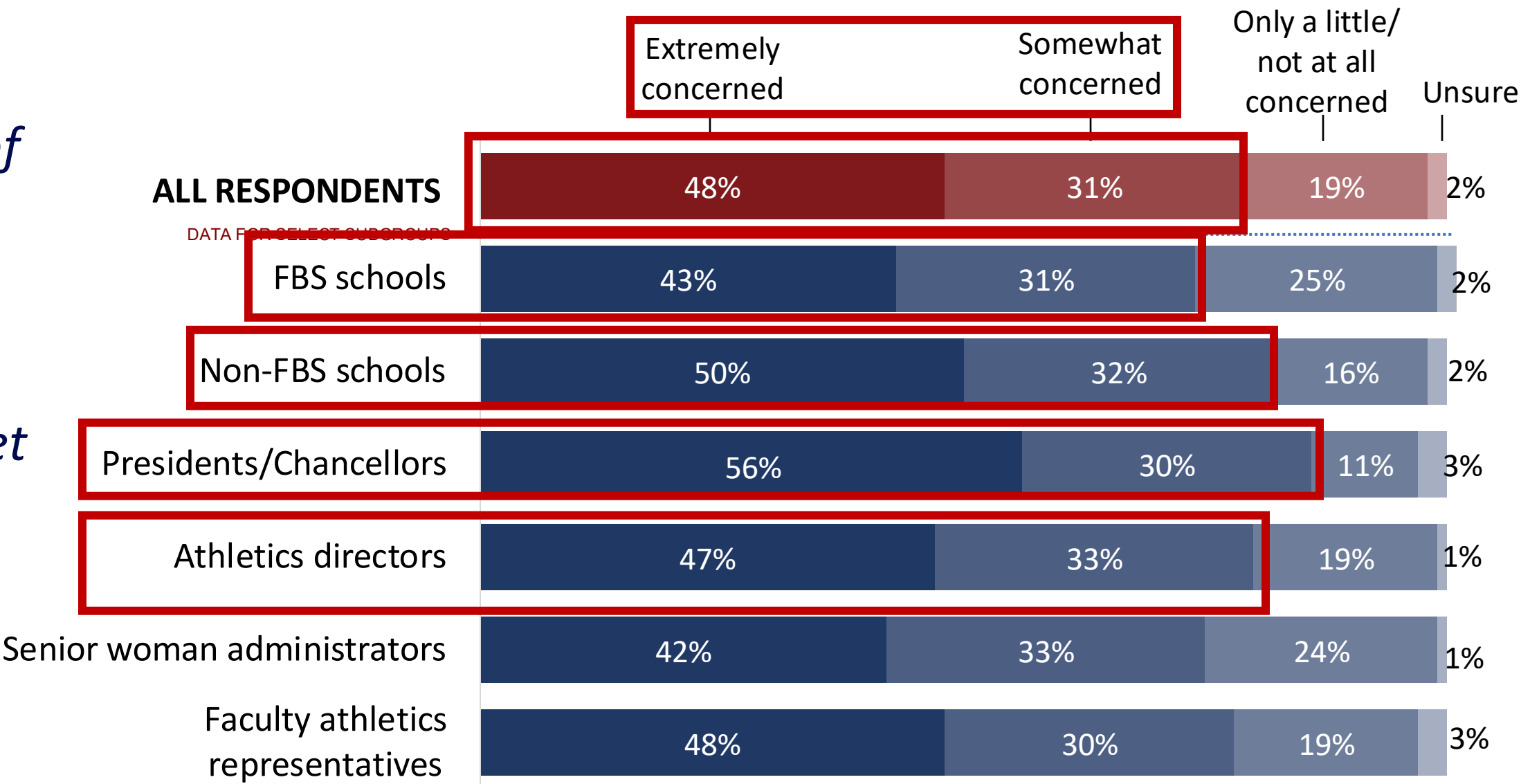
Concern about sustaining current competitive classification level (e.g., A4/P4, FBS-G6, FCS, DI basketball-centric)



Division I leaders survey

Finances and operations of college athletics

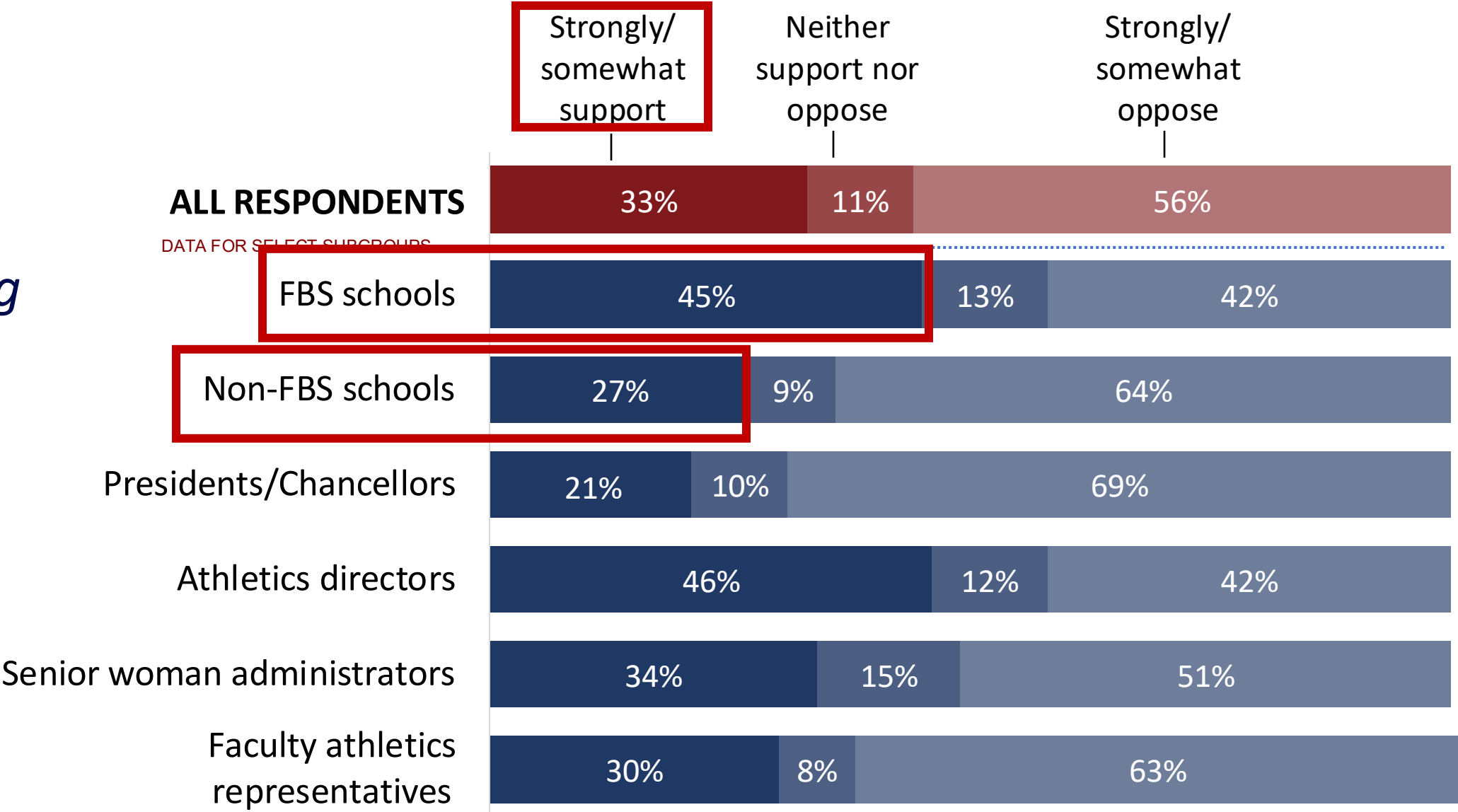
Concern about your athletics program's level of reliance on institutional funding and student fees to balance its budget



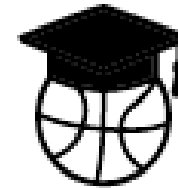
Division I leaders survey

Finances and operations of college athletics

Allowing universities to provide compensation to athletes for playing their sport, separate from NIL payments



Importance of academics



98% Important for athletes to be enrolled full-time and taking classes

99% Important for athletes to graduate

95% Important for teams to graduate at least half of athletes to be eligible for postseason competition

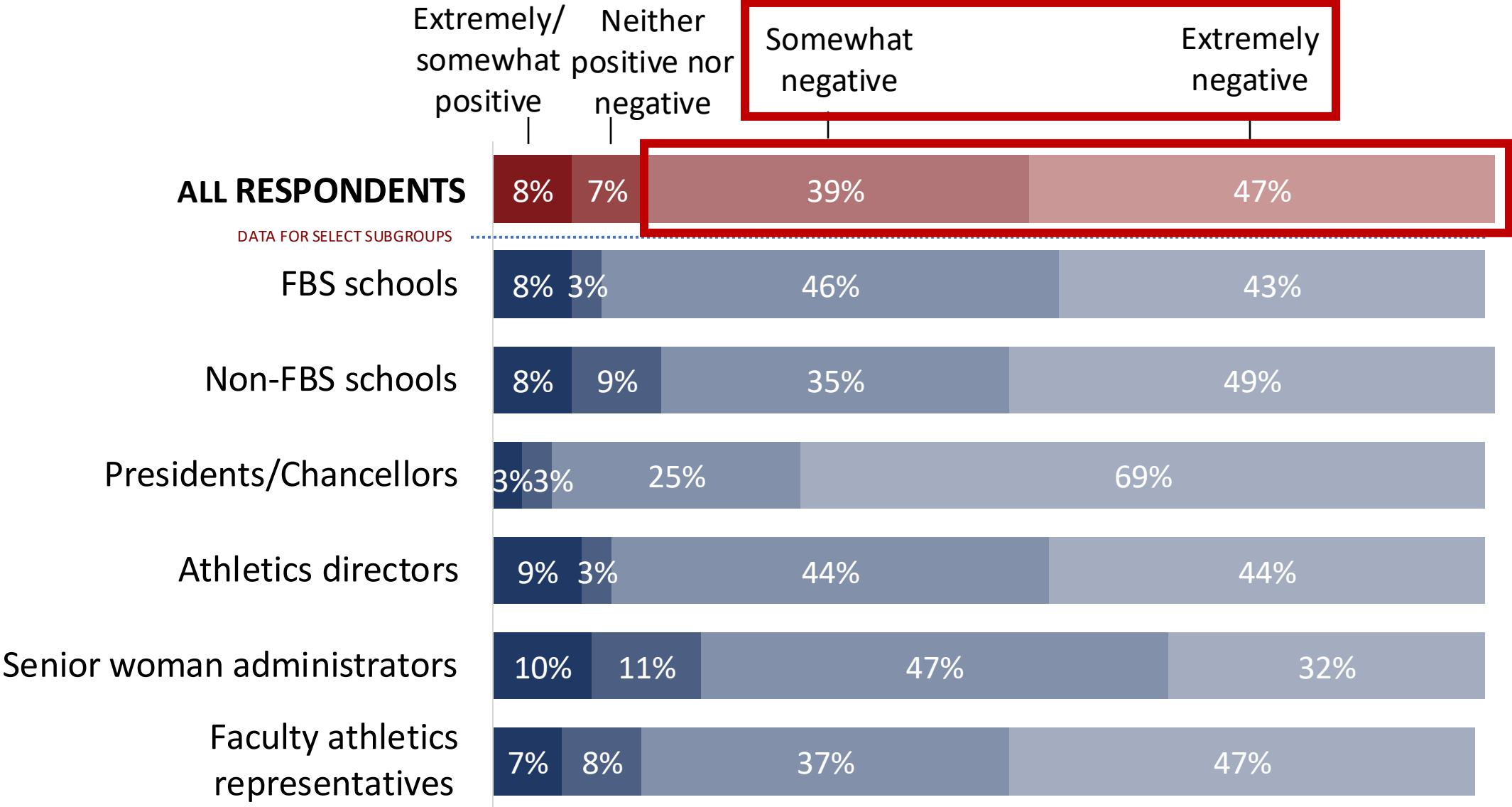
NOTE: Strong consensus on the importance of the Academic Mission and Standards in the Public Opinion Poll (August 2025)



Division I leaders survey

Athlete eligibility and the importance of academics

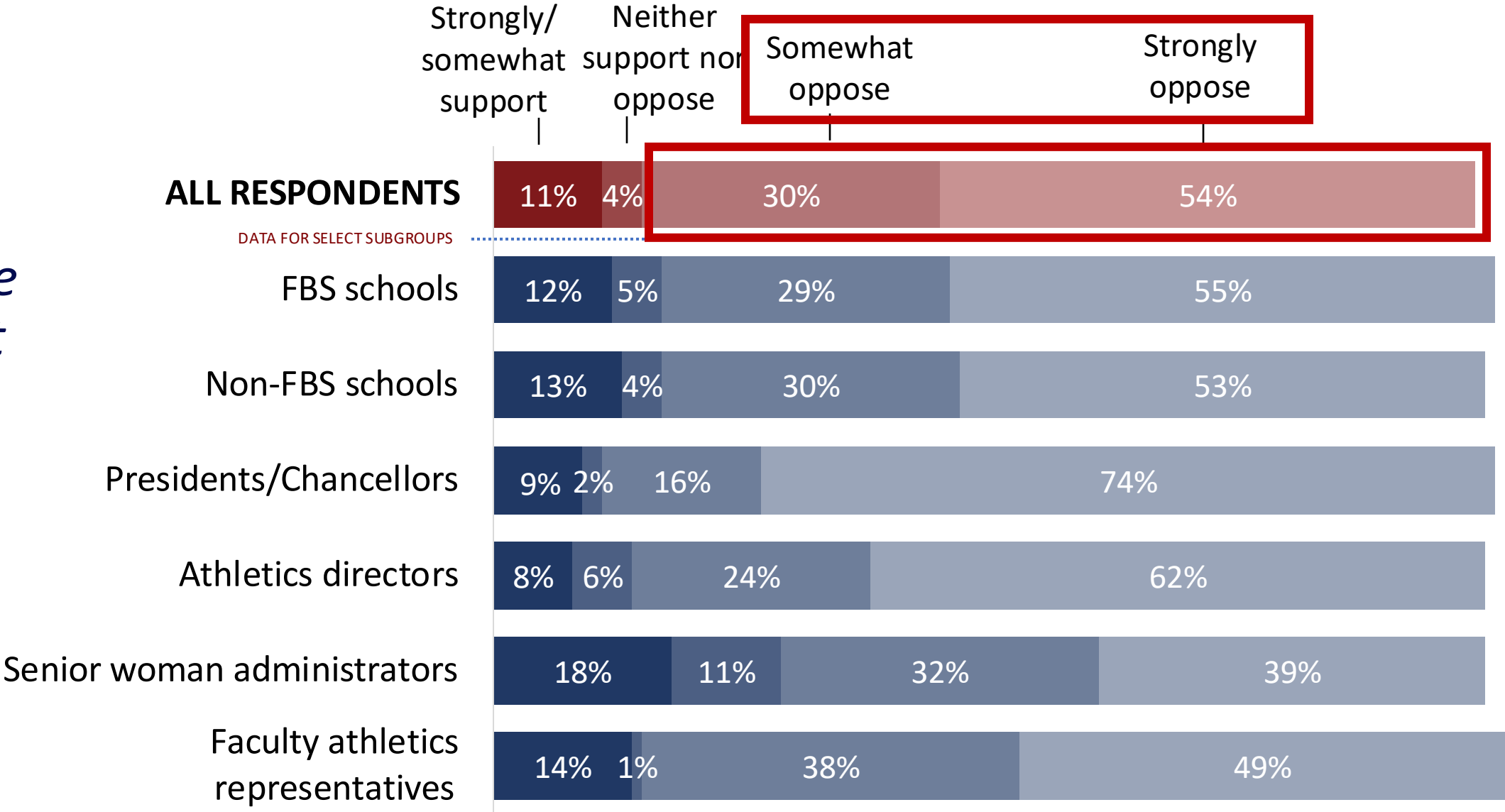
The impact of the transfer portal on Division I college sports



Division I leaders survey

Athlete eligibility and the importance of academics

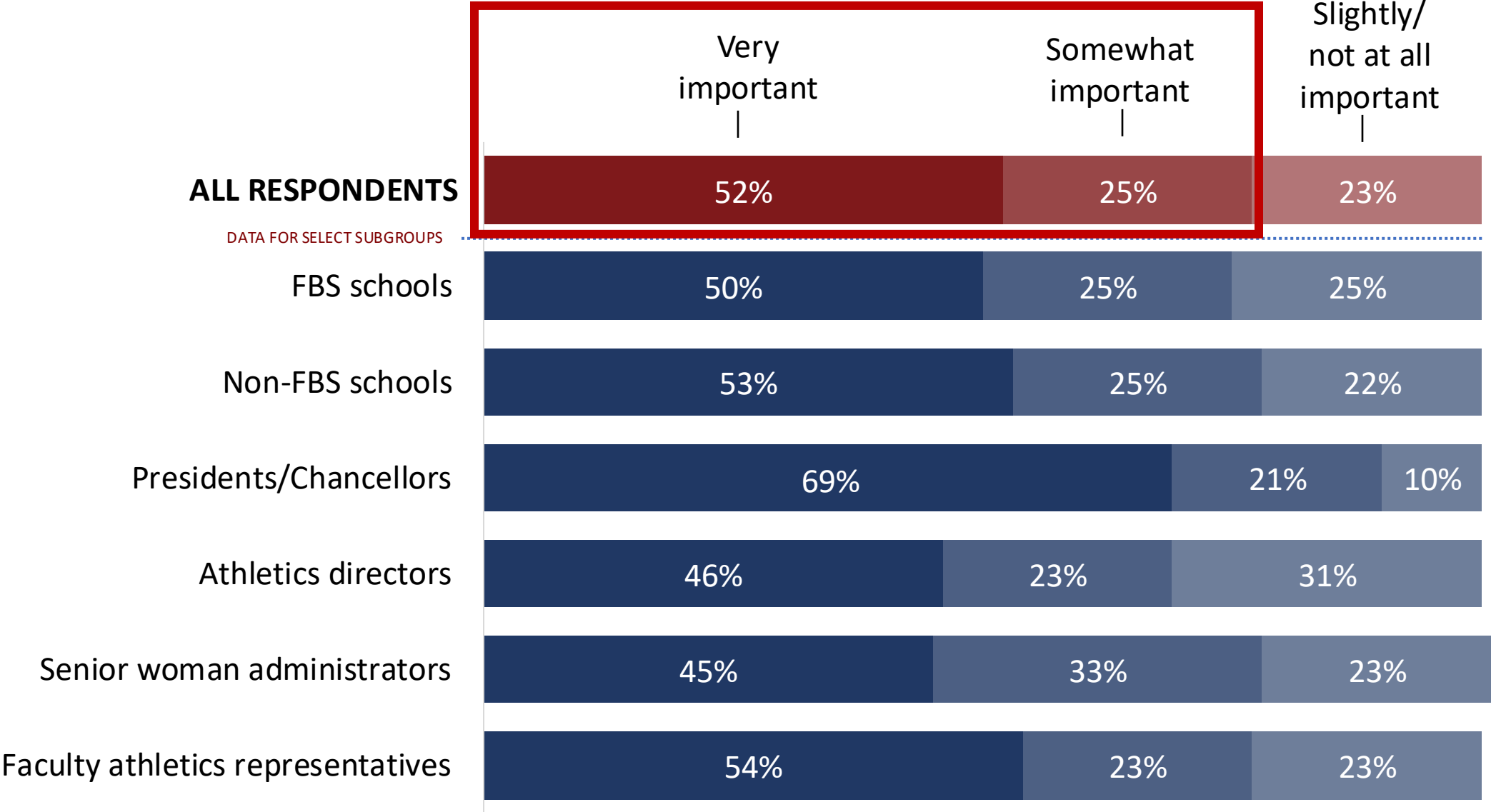
Current rules that allow athletes to transfer as often as they choose and be immediately eligible to compete without penalty



Division I leaders survey

Athlete eligibility and the importance of academics

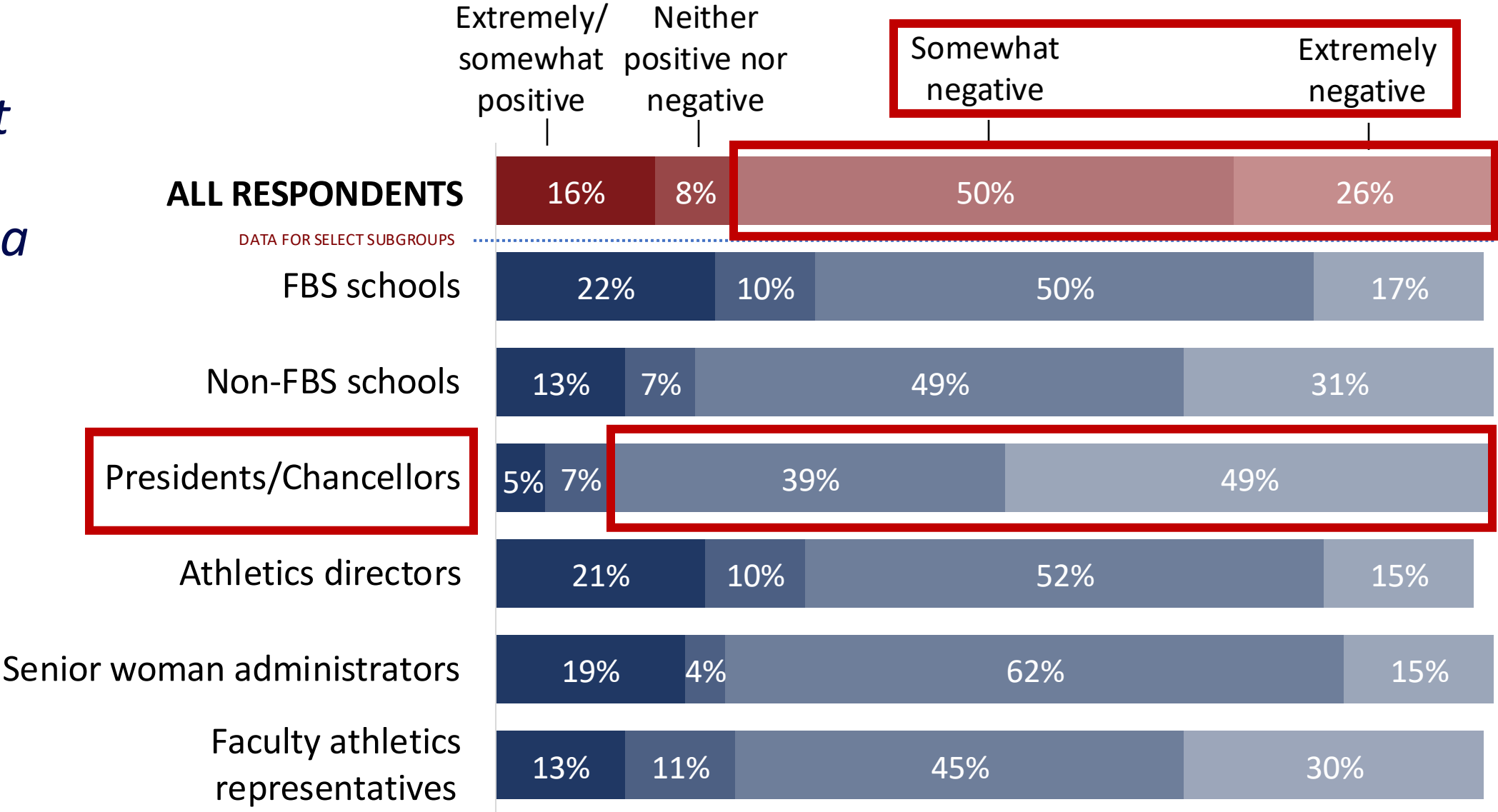
How important is it to limit college athletes to four full seasons of competition eligibility?



Division I leaders survey

House settlement reactions and the future of Division I

Impact of the House settlement on Division I college sports as a whole



Impact of the *House* settlement on the overall experience of Division I athletes in these sports:

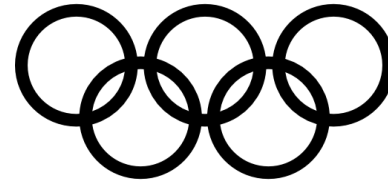


Athletics Directors Responses only

FBS football	75% POSITIVE	15% negative
Men's basketball	63% POSITIVE	25% negative
Women's basketball	50% POSITIVE	33% negative
All other women's sports	7% positive	72% NEGATIVE
All other men's sports	5% positive	73% NEGATIVE



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NOTE: The United States does not provide direct federal funding for Olympic sport development of TEAM USA.

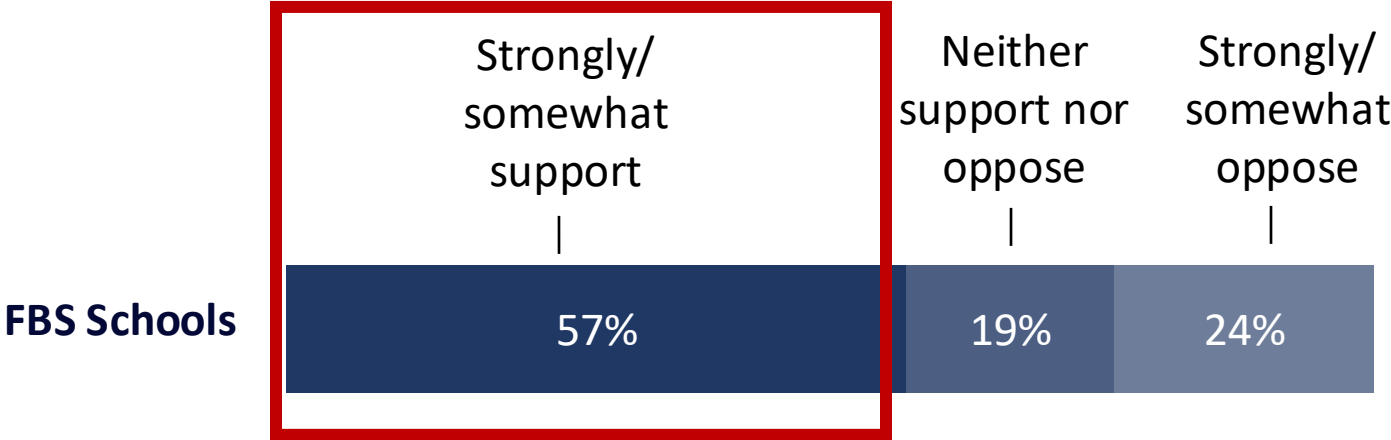
- 93%** Important for universities to offer non-revenue sports
- 92%** Collegiate Olympic sports are important to the success of Team USA
- 73%** Favor federal funds to support collegiate Olympic sports programs
- 82%** Favor federal tax or fees on sports gambling operators to support collegiate Olympic sports programs

Division I leaders survey

Collegiate Olympic sports

A new fund being created through a portion of the College Football Playoff revenues to reward CFP/FBS sports programs for developing USA Olympic national team members and offering broad-based sports opportunities

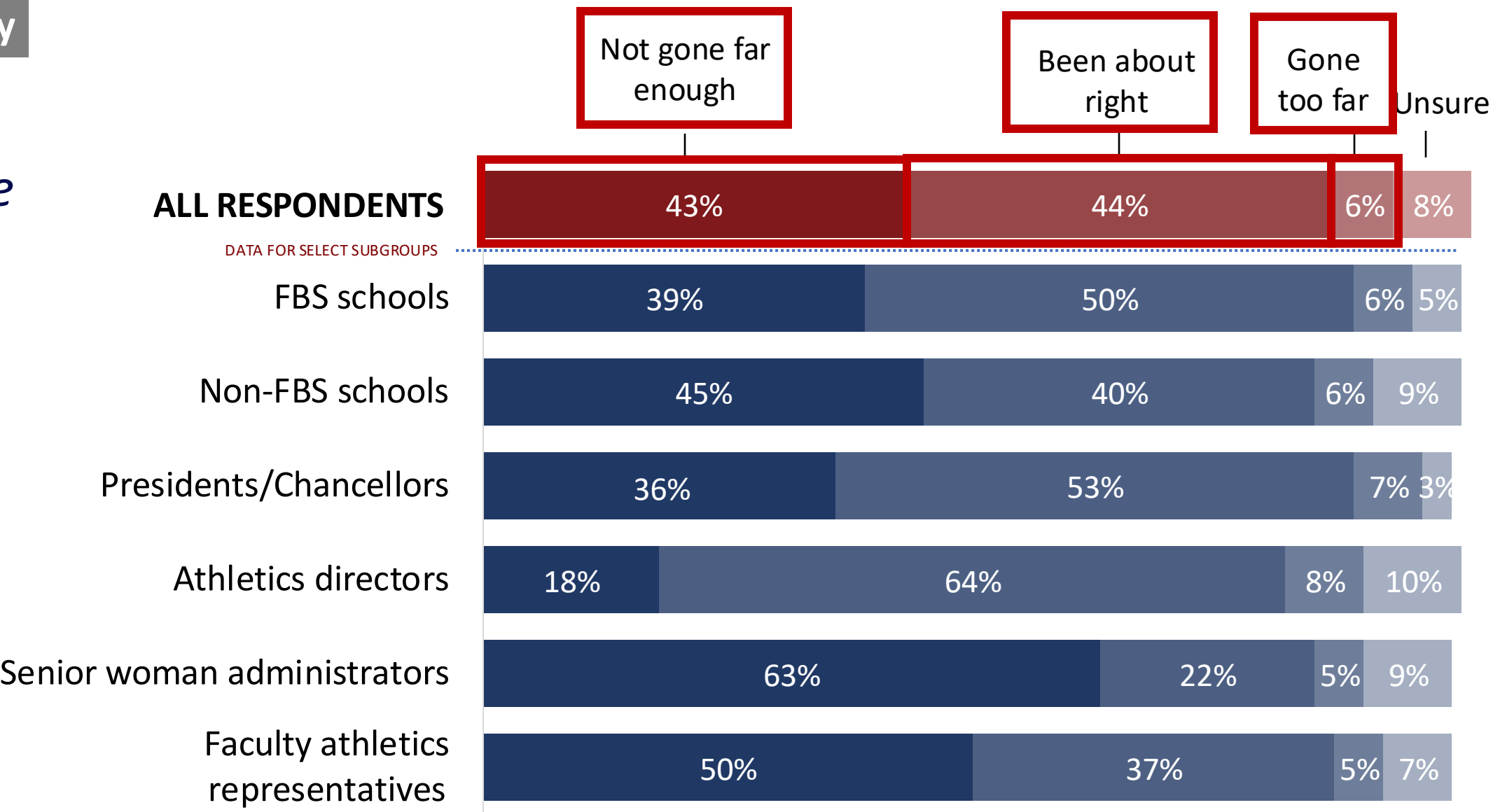
***Question asked to only FBS leaders**



Division I leaders survey

Title IX and gender equity

How have colleges and universities done when it comes to providing female athletes with equitable opportunities, financial assistance, and treatment compared to male athletes?



Division I leaders survey



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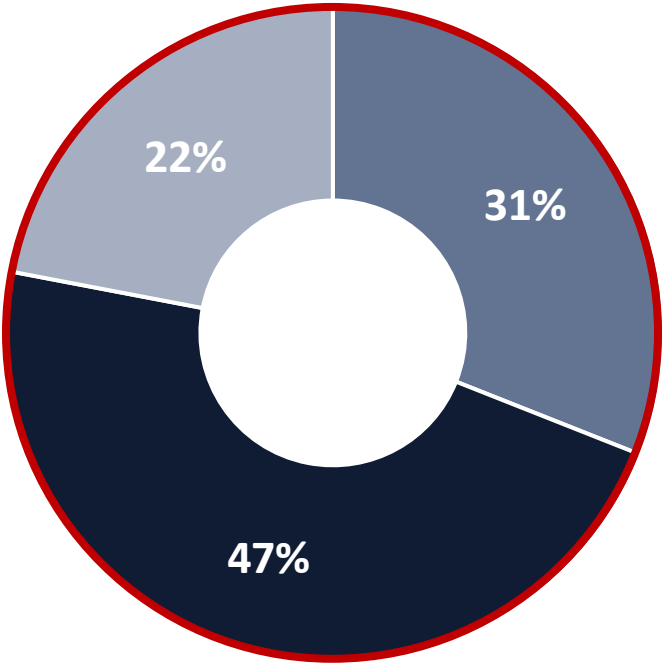


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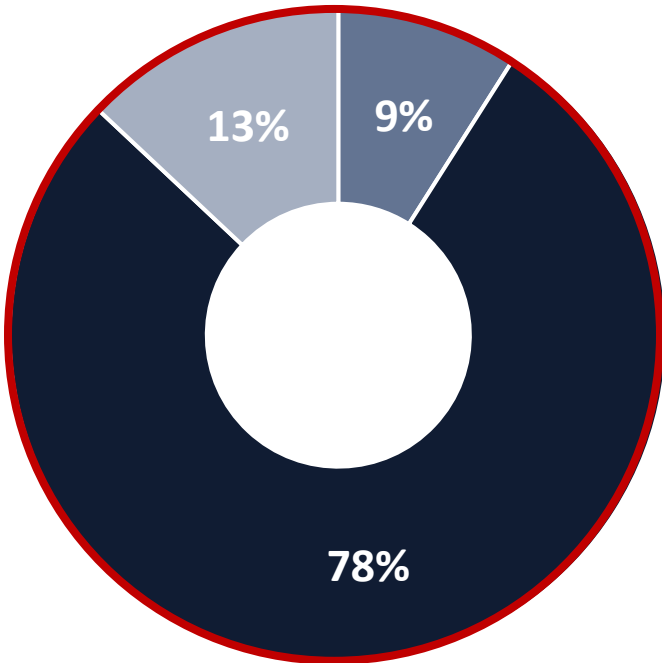
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Title IX and gender equity

Considering Title IX, how should Division I institutions allocate new types of payments to athletes—like name, image, and likeness (NIL) compensation and new “revenue-share” payments?



All respondents



Athletics directors



Should be considered separately from other institutional financial assistance and **distributed based on how much money an athlete's sport generates or an athlete's marketability**



Should be included in the total amount of all institutional financial assistance (e.g., athletics scholarships) and **distributed equitably to female and male athletes**

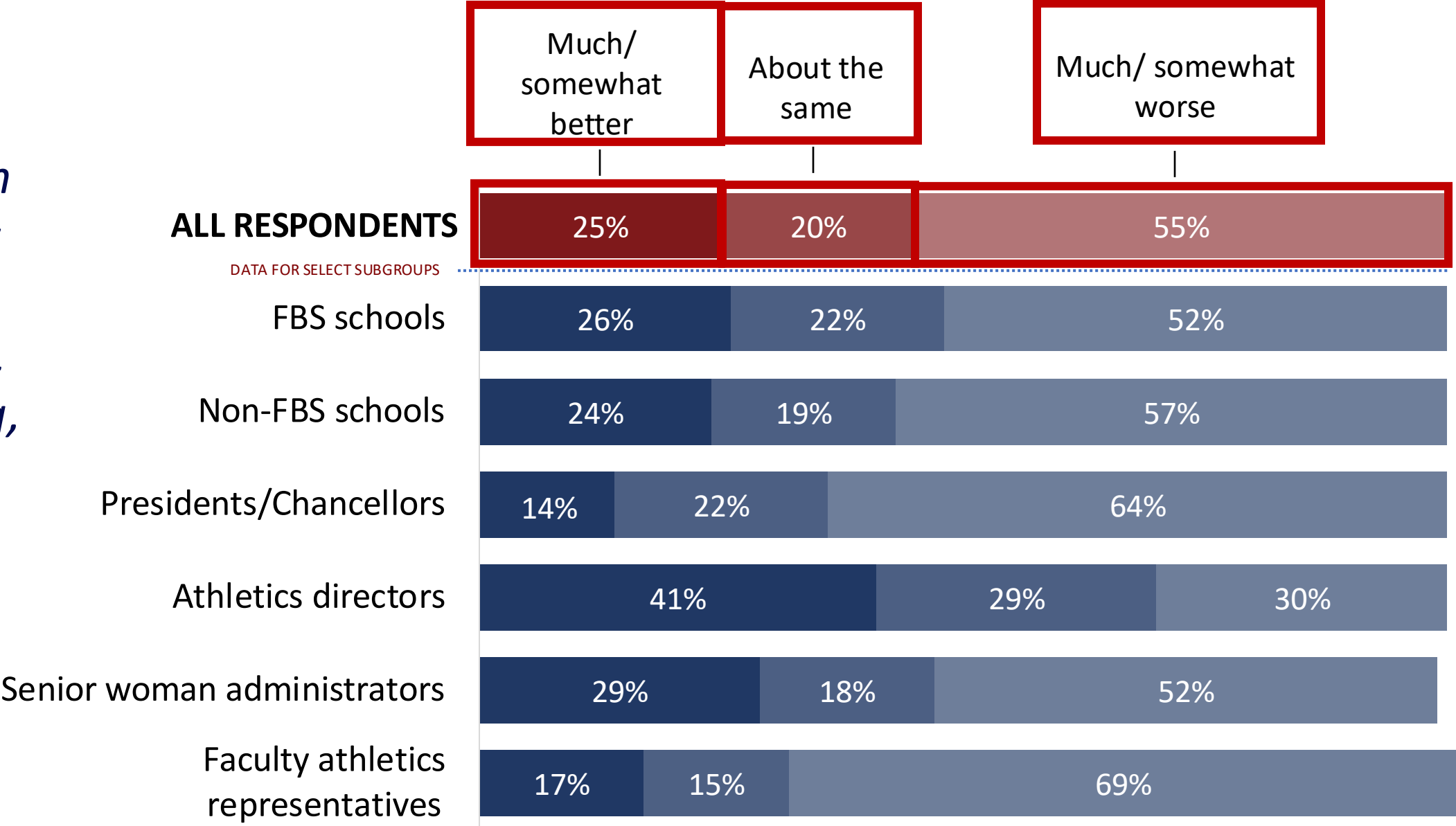


Unsure

Division I leaders survey

Title IX and gender equity

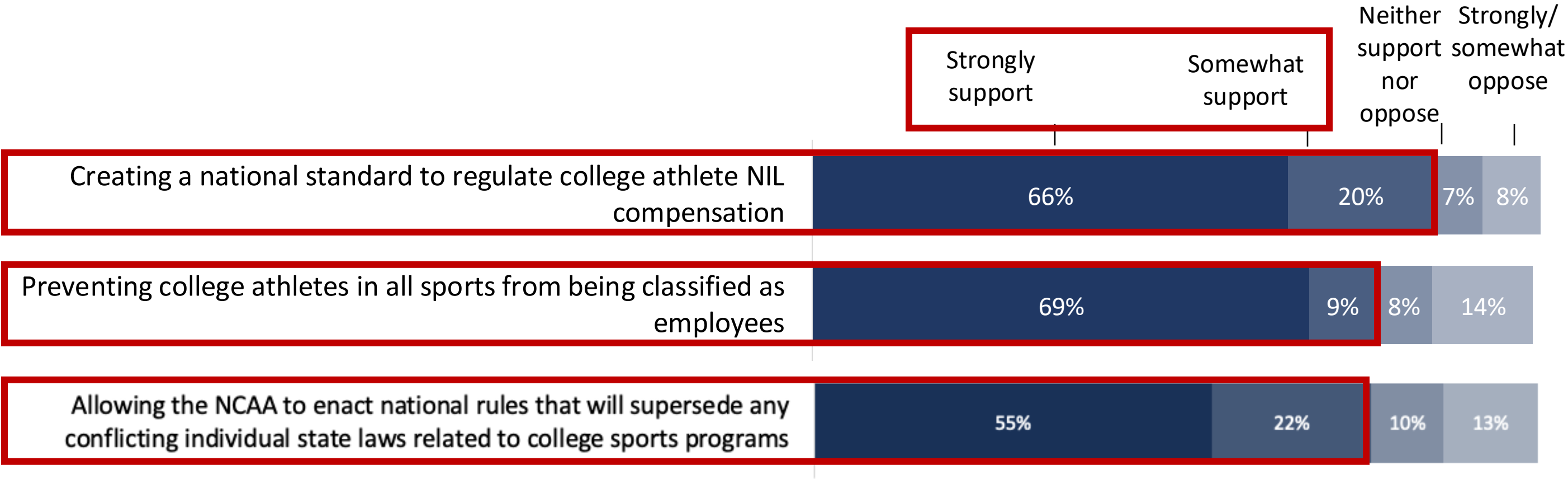
Will female athletes be in a worse or better situation from new rules that allow institutions to pay athletes through NIL and revenue-sharing, and increased athletics scholarships?





College sports governance and structure

Potential actions for federal legislation for Division I college sports.



Division I leaders survey

College sports governance and structure

“Create limits on how much each institution can spend on specific sports or budget categories. Spending limits might include caps on individual sport budgets, budgets on sport-specific coach/staff compensation, or sport operating expenses.”

Through federal legislation

69% strongly/somewhat support

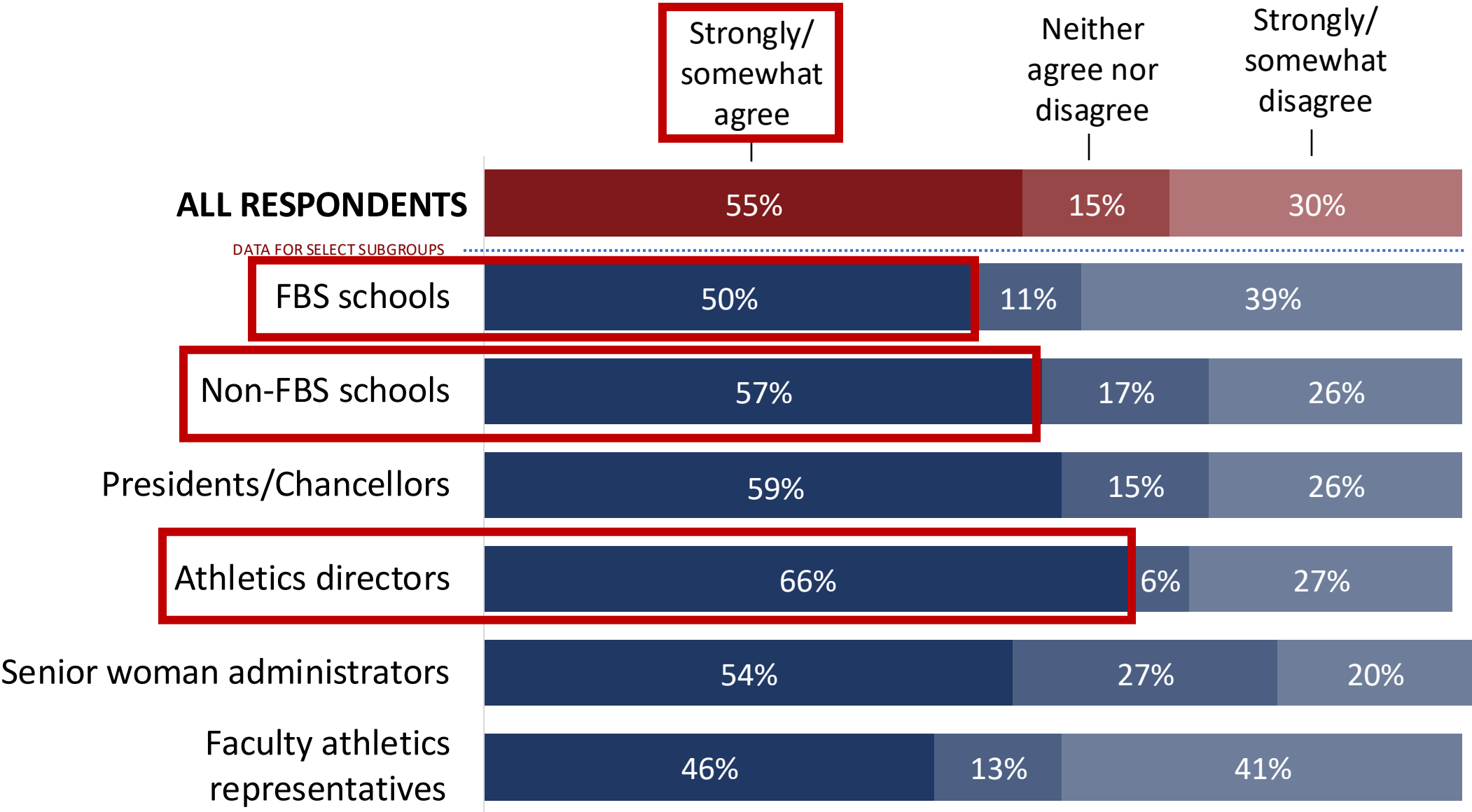
Without federal legislation, through
legally-defensible actions taken by
NCAA, conferences, or institutions

72% strongly/somewhat support

Division I leaders survey

College sports governance and structure

“A new governing entity should be created for Power 4 football teams that would operate separately from the NCAA.”

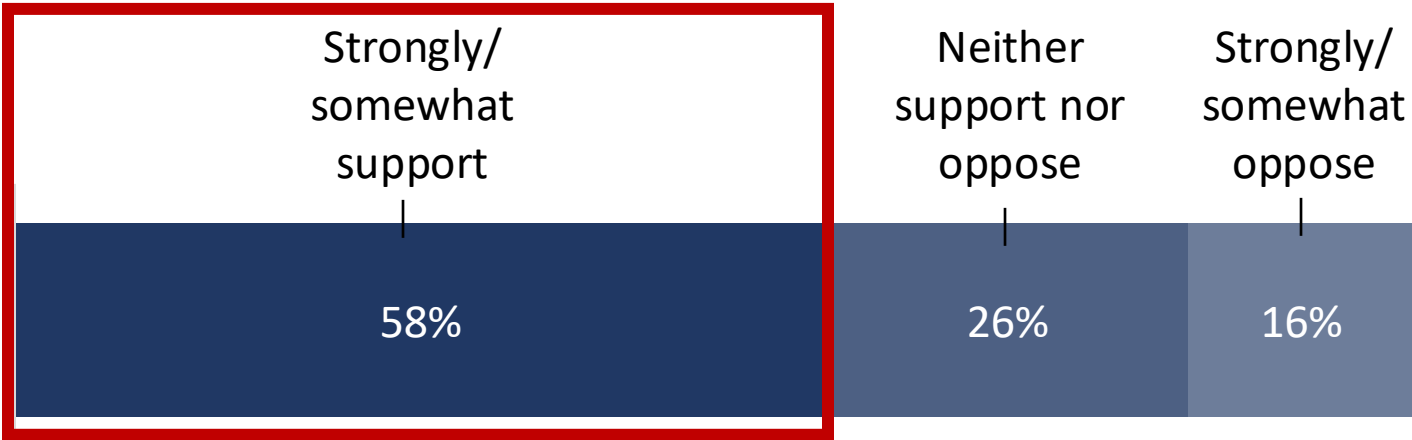


Division I leaders survey

College sports governance and structure

FBS football should have a single executive or commissioner to provide unified leadership for the sport, not just for its national championship (the CFP)?

FBS SCHOOLS

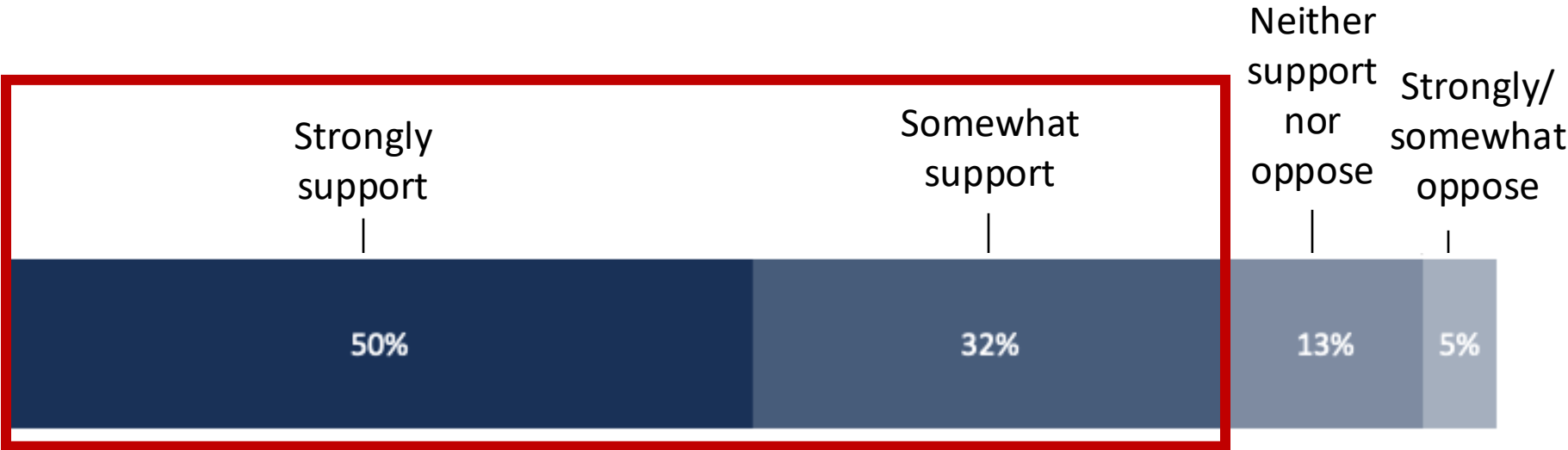


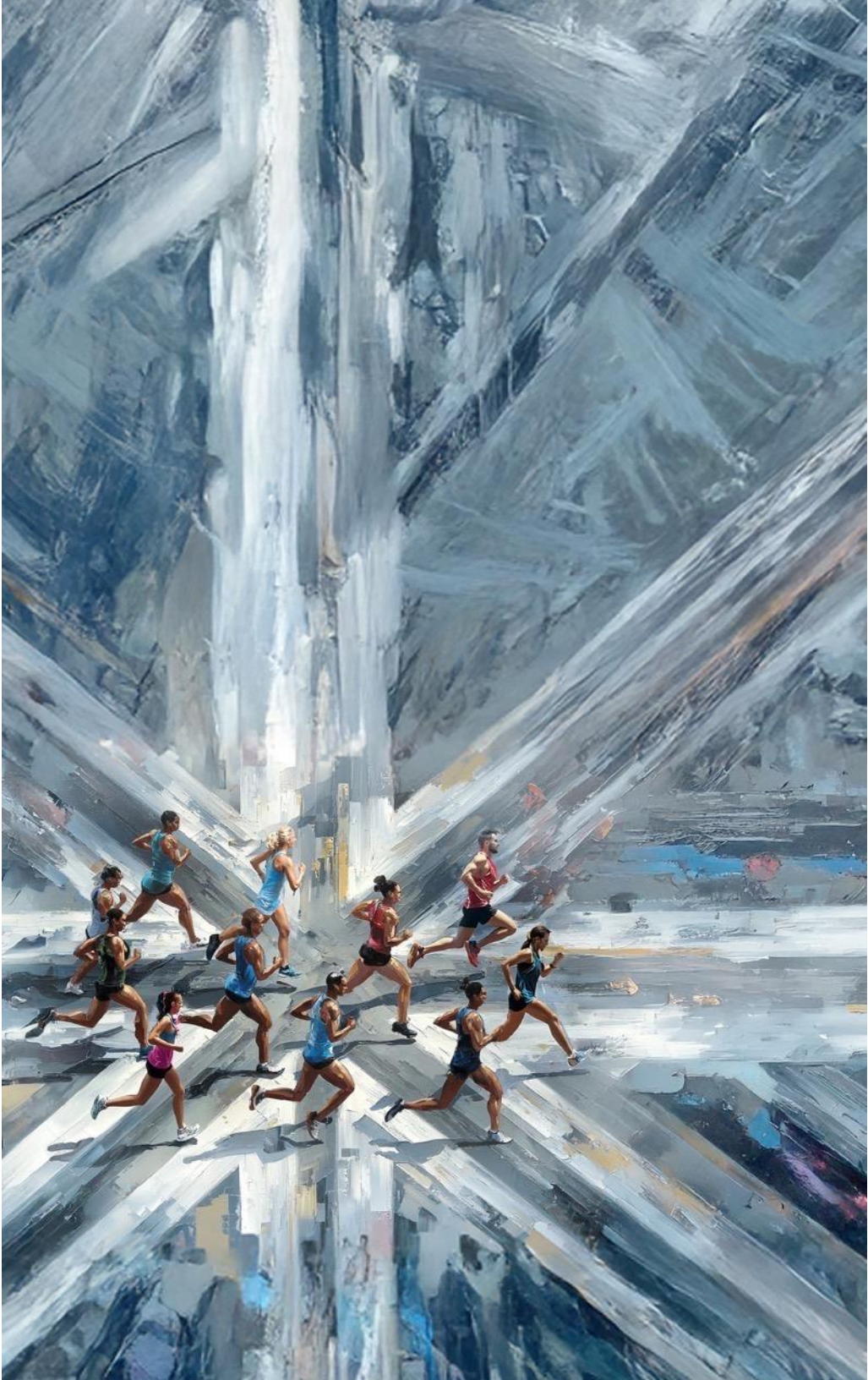
***Question asked to only FBS leaders**

College sports governance and structure

*A potential action that could be taken by NCAA, conferences, or institutions **without** federal legislation.*

In sports other than men’s and women’s basketball, loosen requirements for regular-season conference scheduling to allow greater flexibility for regional competitive alliances.





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