



A New Vision for
Western New York's
Economy

**Regional Economic
Development Councils**
Putting New York Back to Work



Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
Lieutenant Governor Robert J. Duffy



A Preliminary Report On
REDC public Forums

**Listening to our
communities**

September 8, 12-15, 29 2011



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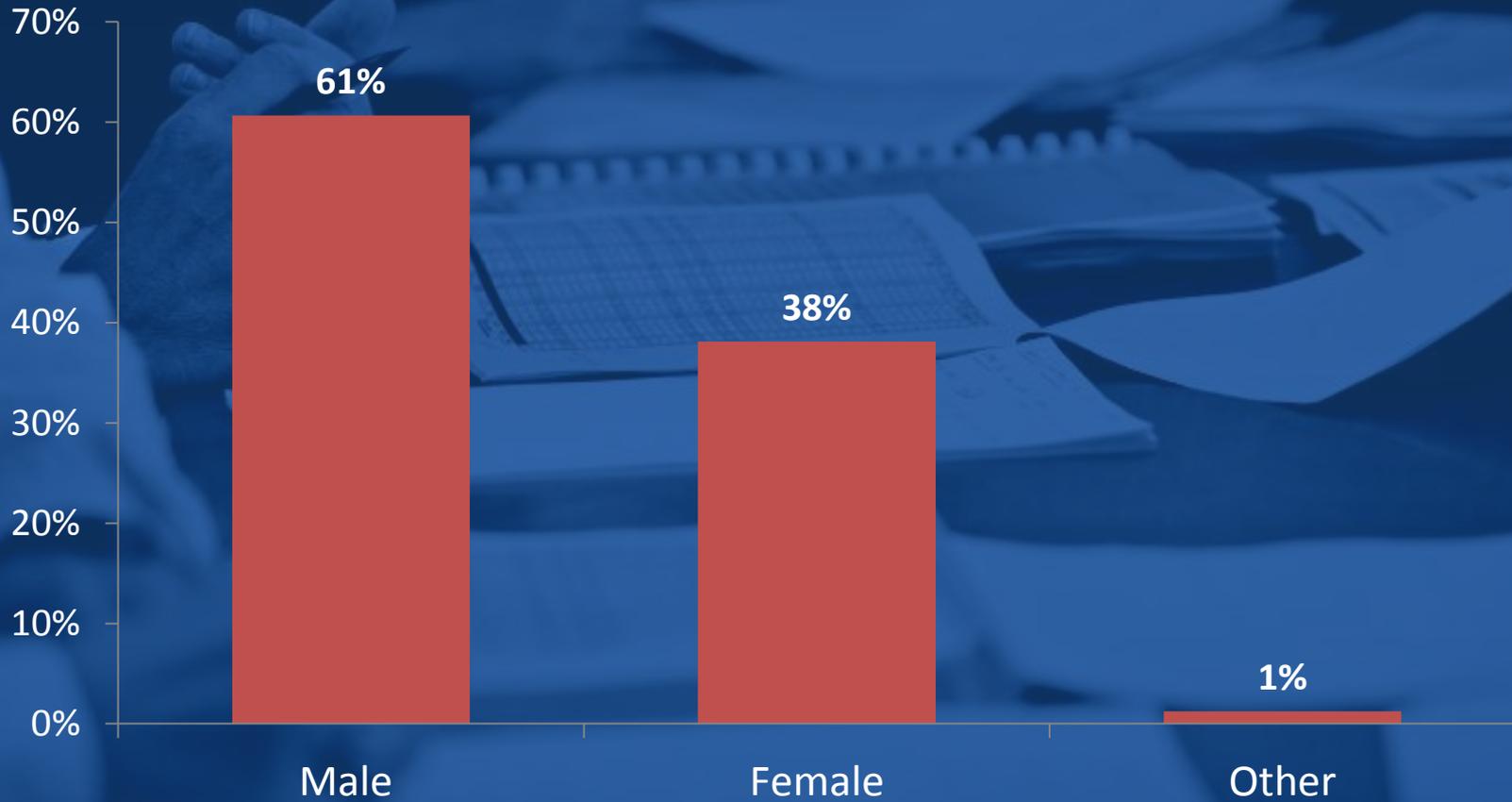
A community-driven, bottom-up process

- A series of interactive public meetings throughout the region
 - Allegany County, Thursday, September 8
 - Cattaraugus County, Monday, September 12
 - Chautauqua County, Tuesday, September 13
 - Erie County, Wednesday, September 14
 - Niagara County, Thursday, September 15
 - Erie County, Thursday, September 29

A community-driven, bottom-up process

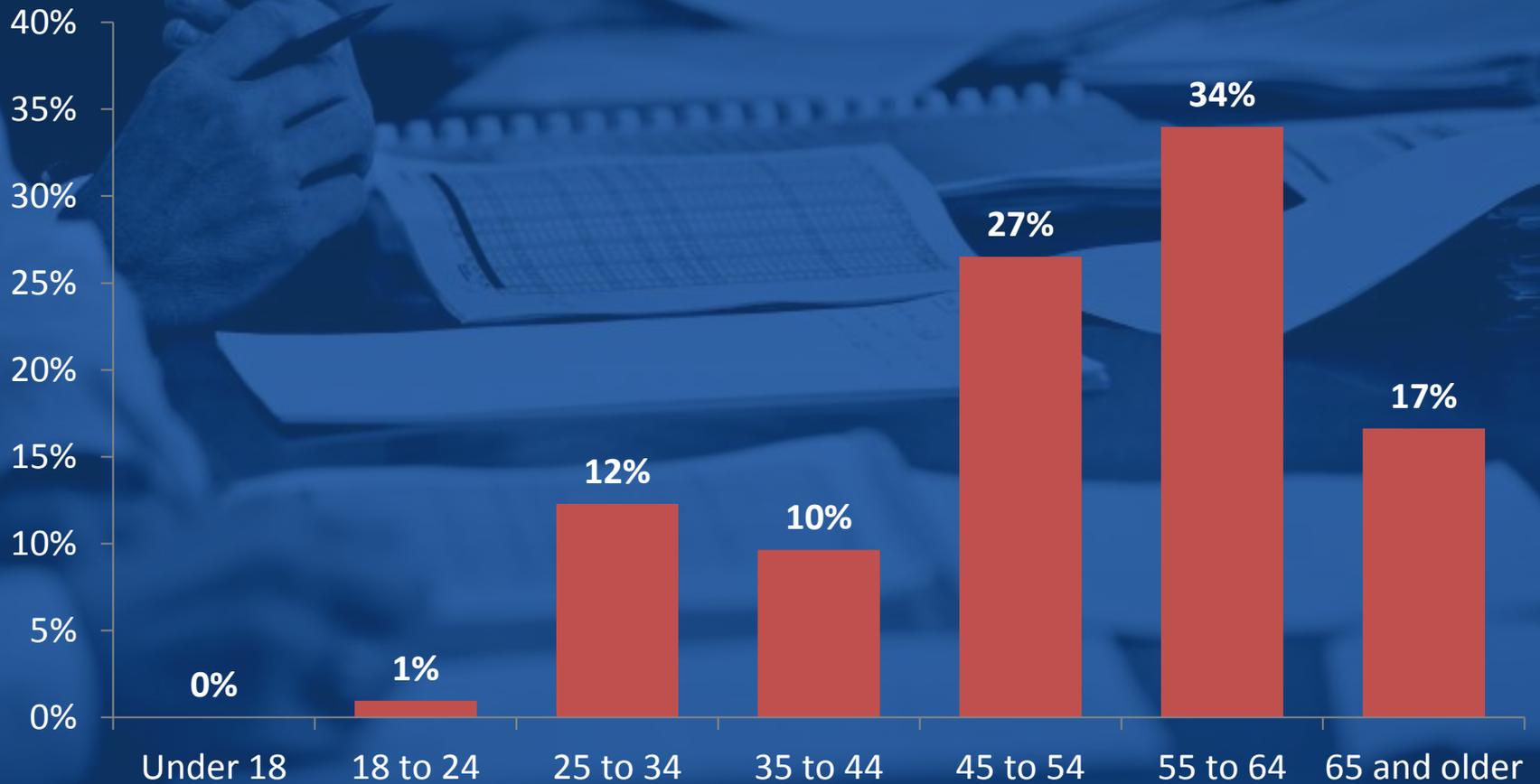
- Interactive public meetings across the region
- More than 520 people participated
- A rich conversation, reflecting on the preliminary work
- Commentary from almost 300 online and paper survey participants

Who was there? By gender



Who was there?

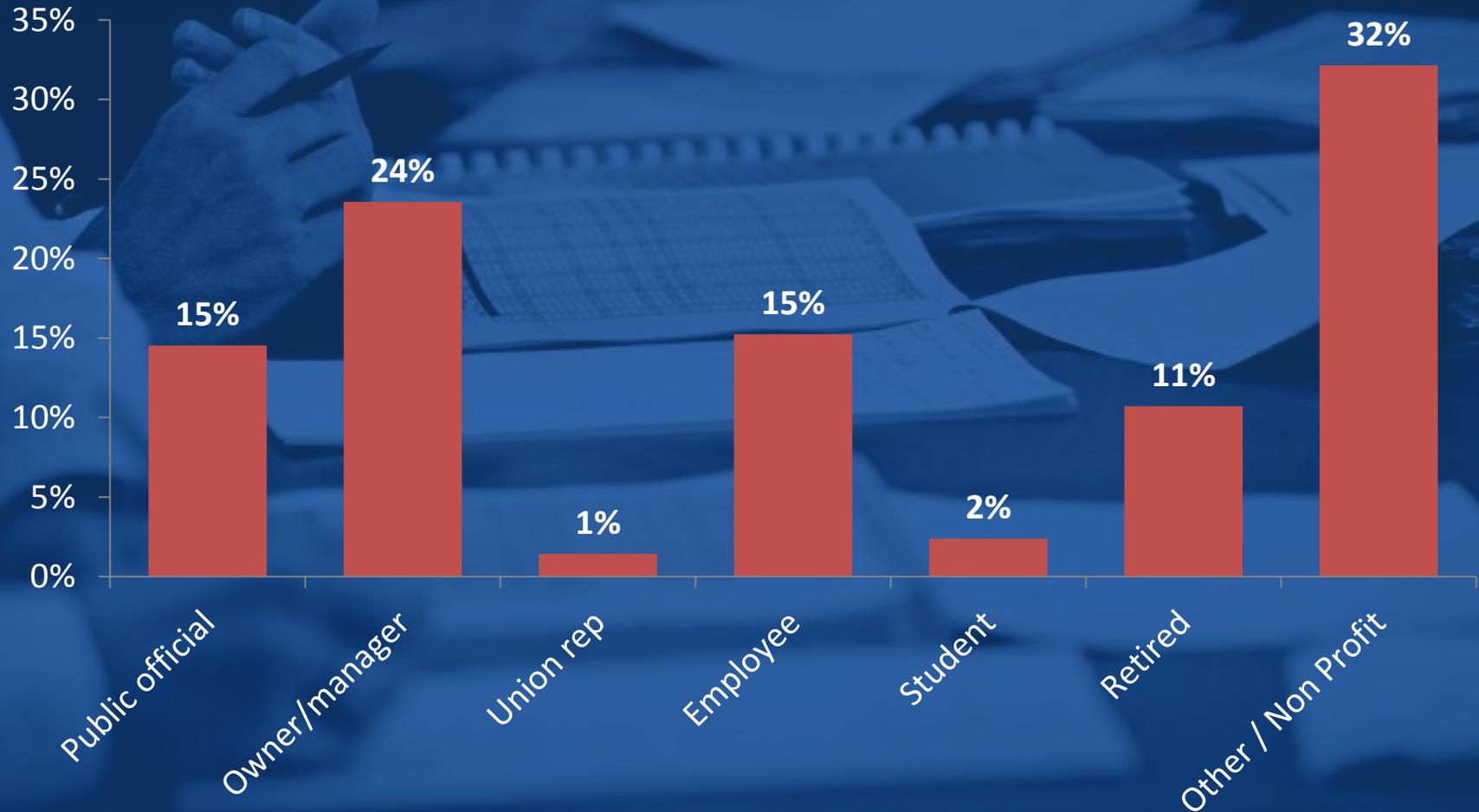
By age



Who was there? By race

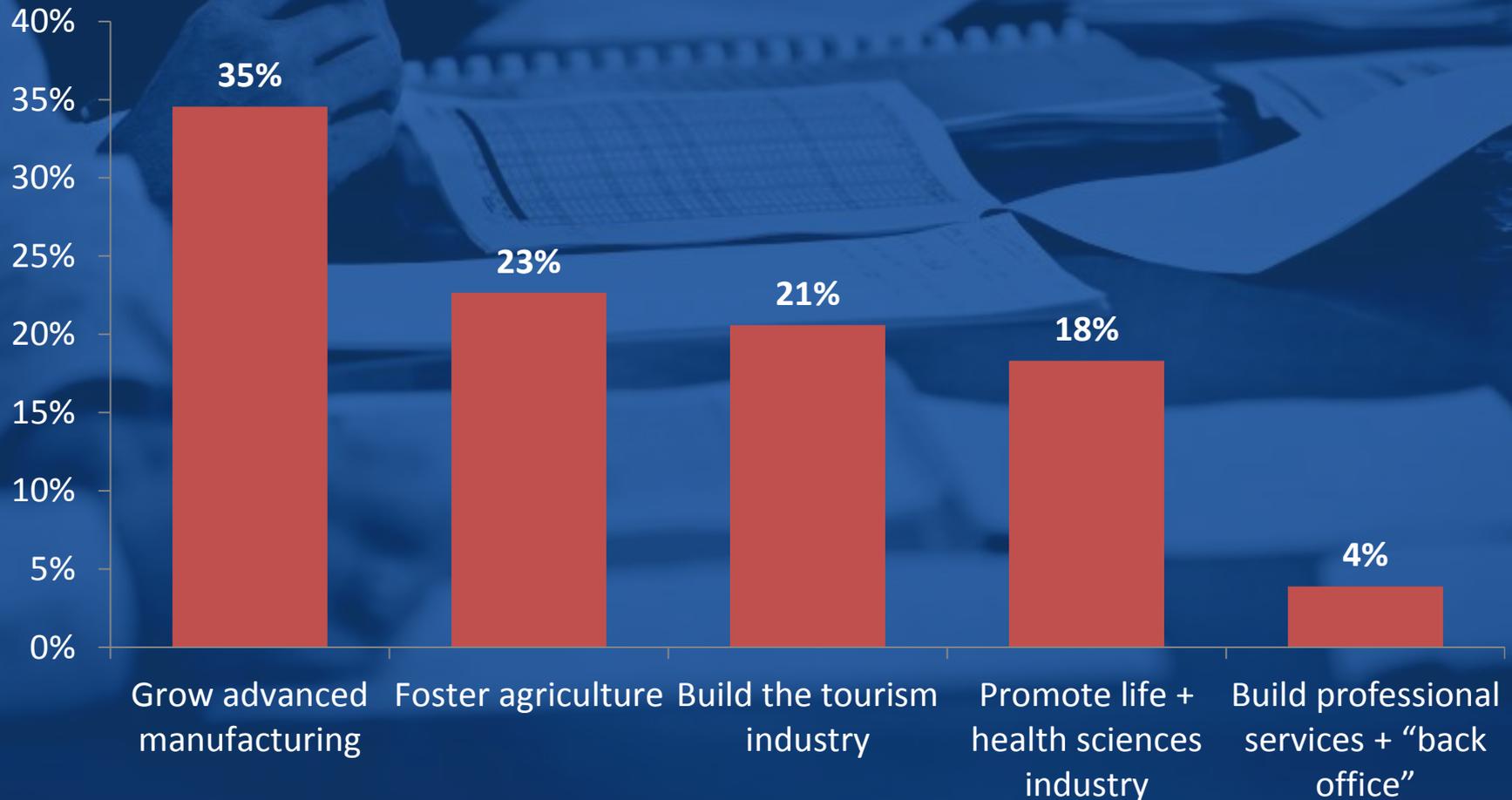


Who was there? By affiliation



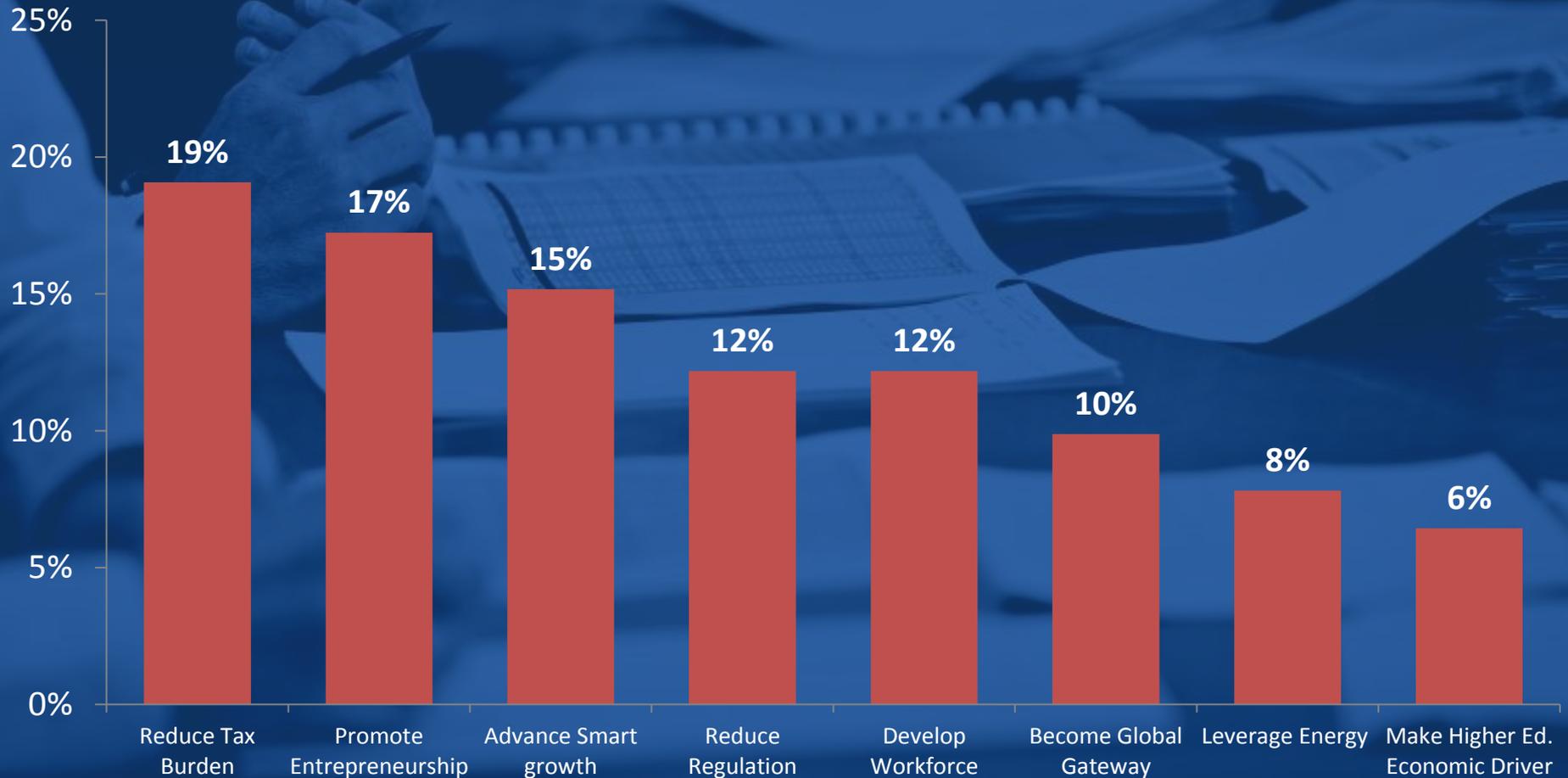
Some early analysis...

When asked which is the most important sector, people said...



Some early analysis...

When asked which is the most important enabler, people said...



Priorities across counties varied:

- Health + life sciences ranked high only in Erie and Cattaraugus
- Tourism ranked #1 only in Niagara
- Advanced manufacturing was strong across all
- The whole region understands agriculture is a key industry sector
- “Global gateway” was an Erie + Niagara priority

Priorities across counties varied:

- Reducing the tax burden ranked highest in all but Erie
- Reducing gov't regulation was important in Allegany, Cattaraugus, & Chautauqua
- Erie ranked smart growth highest
- Promoting entrepreneurship was a high priority in Erie & Chautauqua
- Developing the workforce ranked in Cattaraugus, Niagara and Chautauqua

This shouldn't be seen as a referendum

- The public had some strong opinions
- But we have other insights
- A sector or a strategy might not have been highly ranked in these forums
- It doesn't mean we wouldn't want the jobs

There were some surprises:

- Higher education not well-understood as an economic driver
- But education – other than four-year degree – seen as key to job readiness
- Potential in energy development not clearly perceived
- Professional services not seen as a priority anywhere

Some lively discussion:

- What kind of jobs? Any jobs?
- In energy, hydrofracking was a hot topic
- Counties outside of Erie/Niagara are concerned they will get left behind
- Community health and health/life sciences are two different things

Words matter:

- Many people asked for further explanation of some terms
- For example,
 - What is included in advanced manufacturing?
 - Does higher education just mean 4-year and advanced degrees or does it include 2-year degrees and technical schools?
 - What kinds of energy are you talking about? Renewable? Natural gas?....

Survey says:

- Almost 300 people filled out surveys
- Some consistent themes in the survey work with additional insights and details

Top challenges which are unique to WNY, keep the regional economy from growing and could be solved in 5 years:

- High taxes
- Too many layers of government & overlapping agencies
- Lack of regional cooperation and planning



Top opportunities for economic growth which are unique to WNY and where you feel the region should focus efforts over the next 5 years:

- Develop renewable and sustainable energy
- Develop and promote the waterfront
- Promote the availability of affordable housing

Top assets which give WNY greatest opportunity for economic growth and represent economic advantages as compared to other regions in NY & the US:

- Fresh water
- Attractive living environment/quality of life
- Our location from a residential standpoint (historic neighborhoods, waterfront, architecture)

Informing the decision making process:

- The public appreciates the opportunity
- The process section of the plan sets the stage
- The public will have another opportunity to weigh in October 25th.