

# **A Deliberative Poll on Education:**

**What provision do informed  
parents  
in Northern Ireland want?**

A collaborative project of  
Newcastle University, Stanford  
University and Queen's  
University Belfast

## The Basic Problem

- Democracy means 'rule by the people'
- But for the most part people have very little say
- Political disaffection, democratic deficit
- A failure of representative government?
- But why should politicians listen to the people when the people are often ill-informed or un-informed?

# Conventional Public Opinion Polling

- CPOP allows us to take the public's pulse on a regular basis
- But three main limitations:
  - (i) people do not think their views will matter
  - (ii) people tend to make up answers rather than answer "I don't know"
  - (iii) people tend to talk to people like themselves

# **The Deliberative Polling Alternative**

- Developed as a solution to both democratic deficit and limitations of conventional polls
- Over 50 polls to date, in very diverse contexts
- Unlike conventional polling, deliberative polling takes place in a series of steps or stages



# **Deliberative Polling Methodology**

- The generation of a random sample
- The pre-deliberation questionnaire
- Invitation to the deliberative event
- Incentives
- Balanced briefing materials
- On the day: small and large group discussions
- The post-deliberation poll

# What should we expect from a Deliberative Poll?

- The results: what should we expect to find?
  - (i) representativeness
  - (ii) increased knowledge, better knowledge
  - (iii) preference transformation (?)
  - (iv) moderation (?)
  - (v) consensus (?)

# A Deliberate Poll on Education

**Why education?**

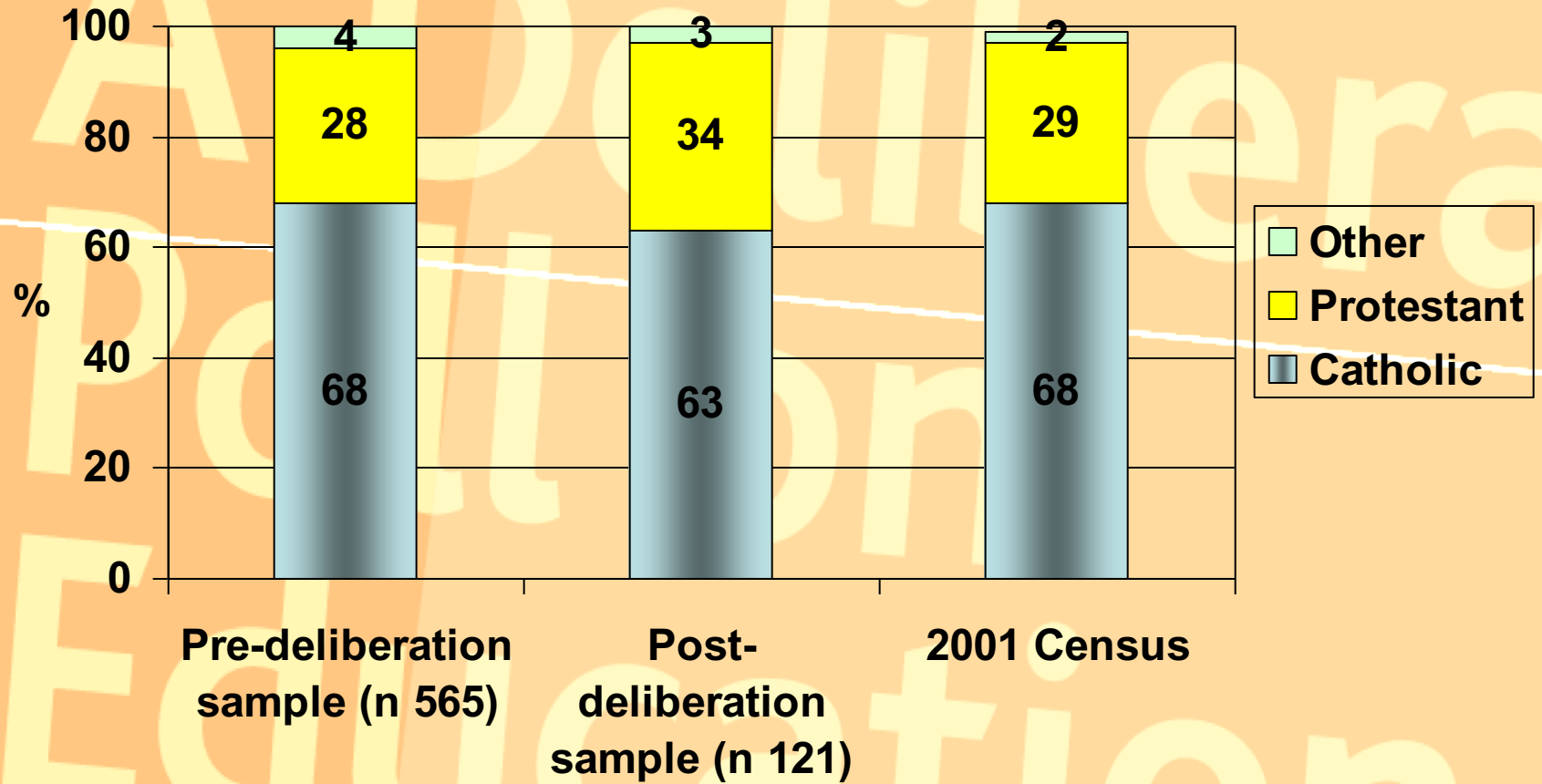
# A Deliberate Poll on Education

**Why Omagh?**

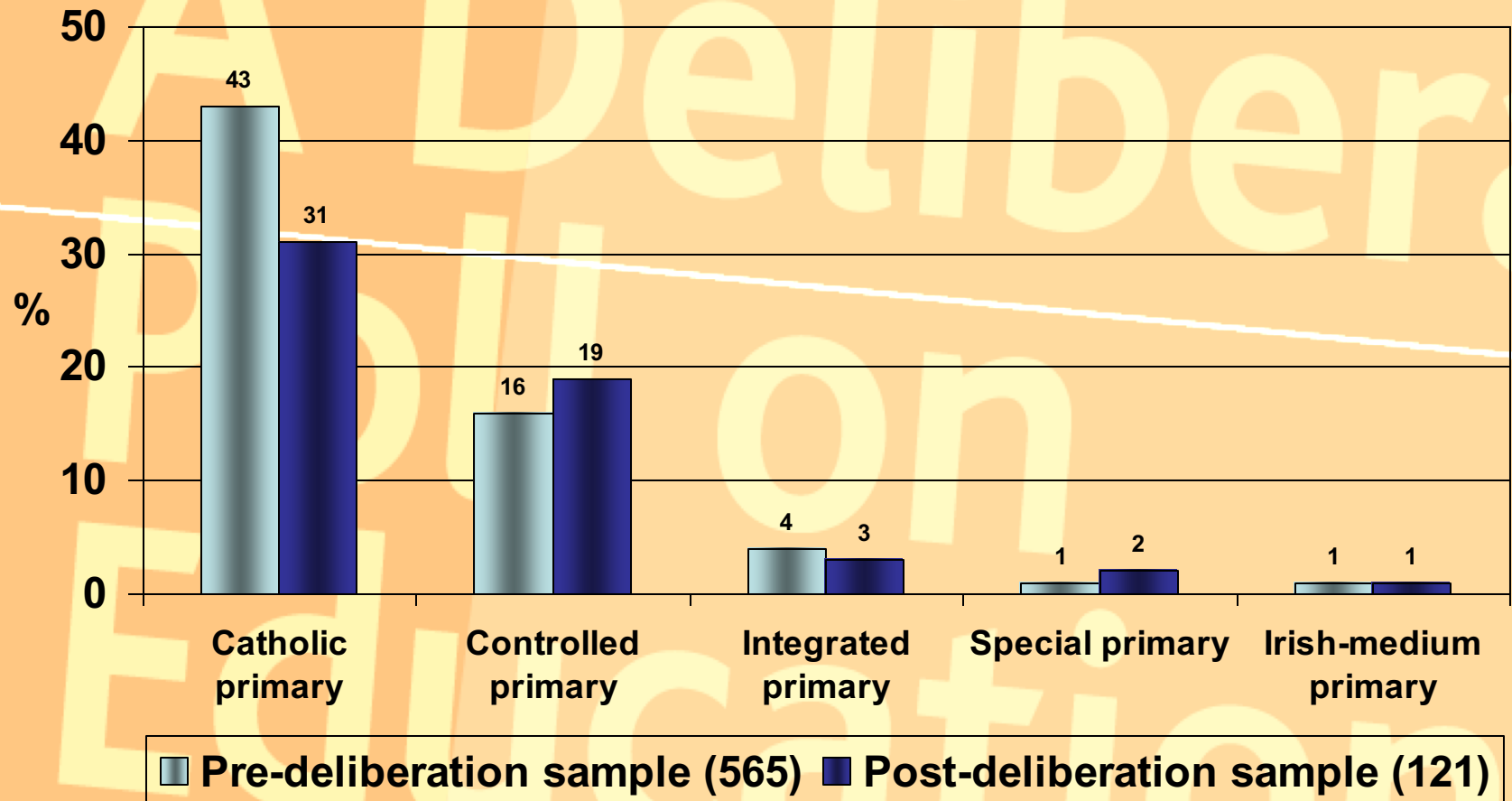
# A Deliberative Poll on Education

**Representativeness**

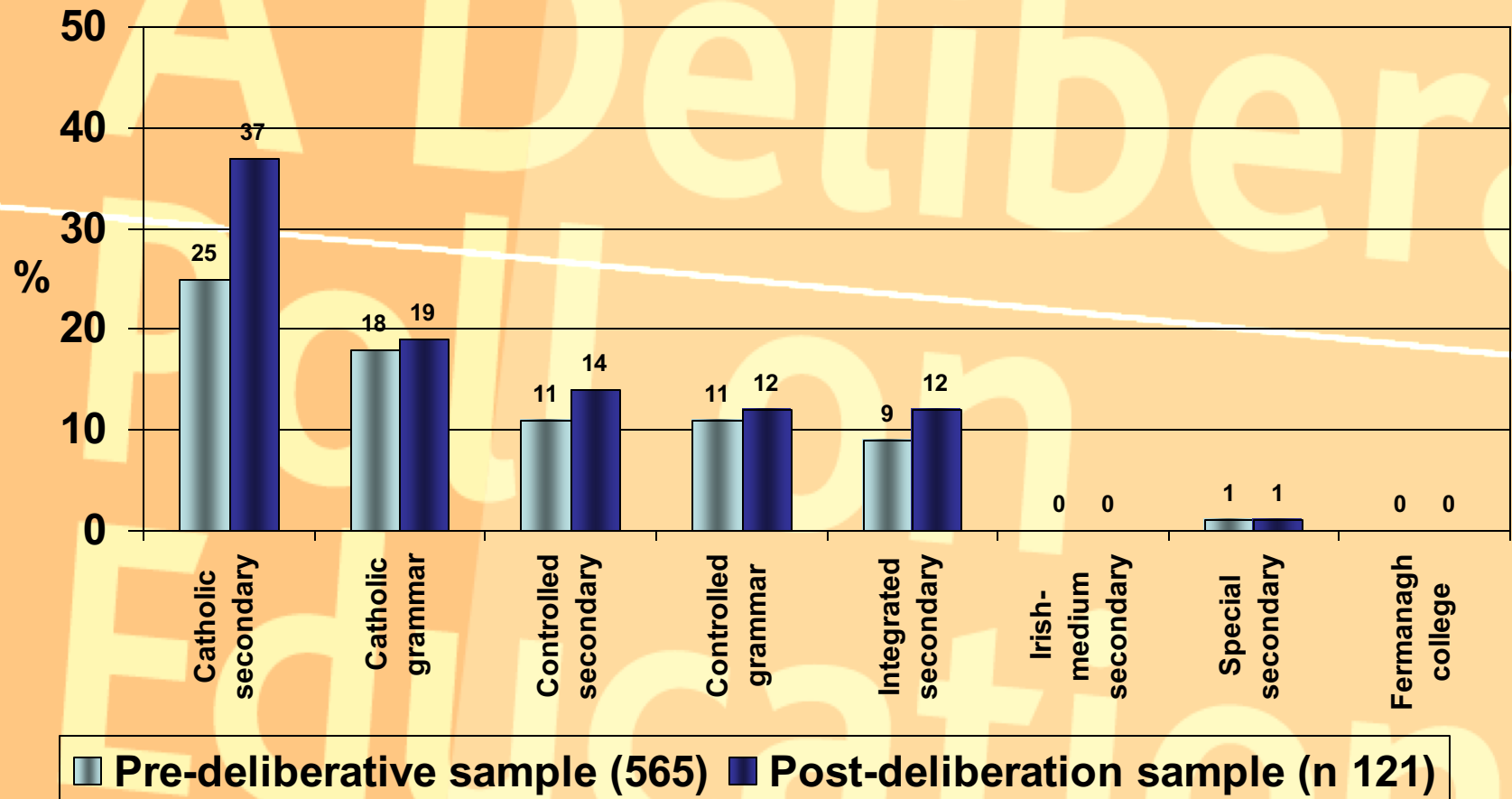
## Religion



# Parents with at least one child in a primary school by type



# Parents with at least one child in a post primary school by type





# The briefing materials

**Curriculum:** the curriculum, or range of subjects, which each school directly teaches.

**School collaboration:** the extent to which (and the ways in which) schools collaborate with other schools mainly to provide the 'entitlement framework'.

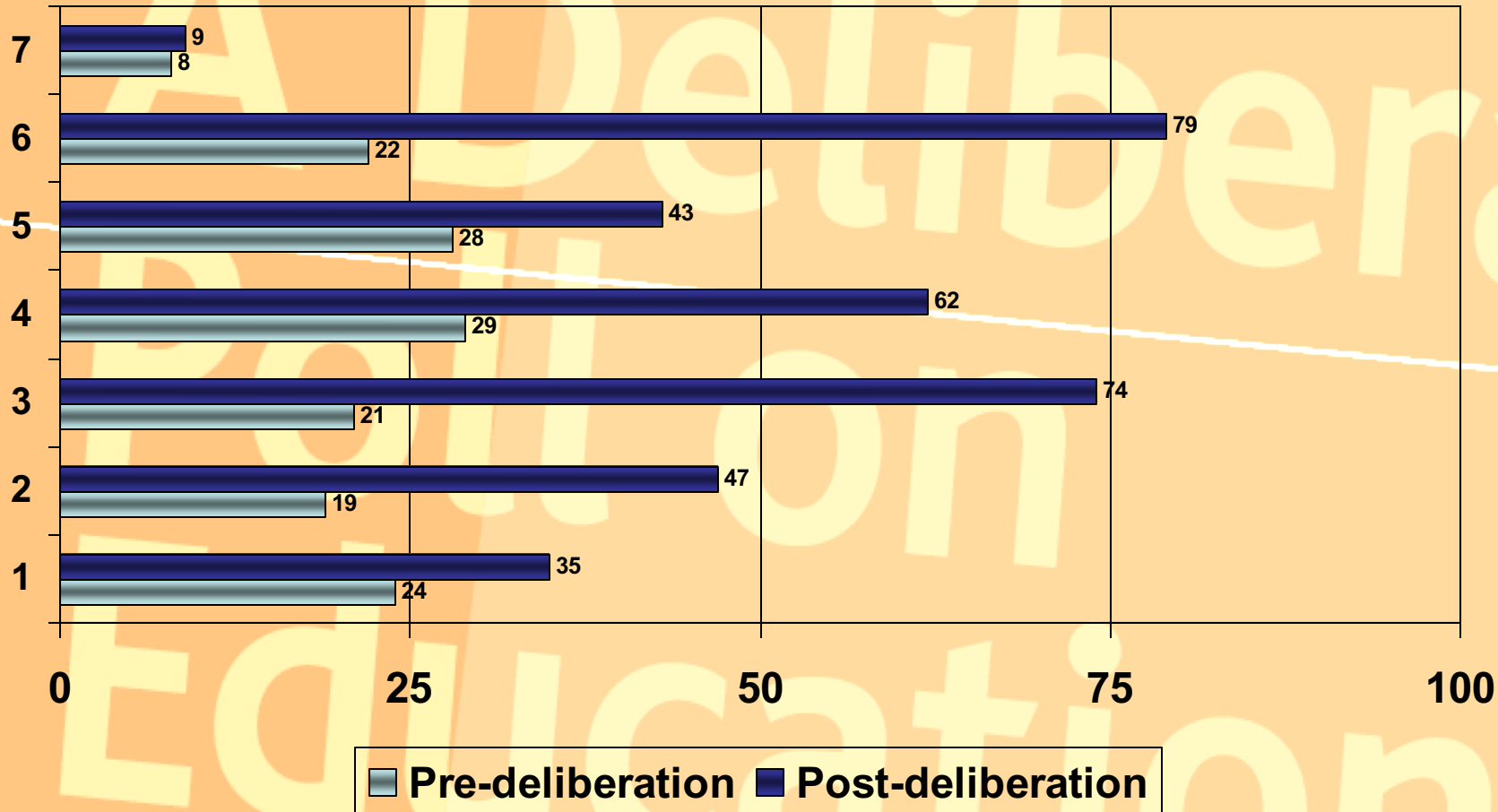
**Denominational collaboration:** the extent to which schools from different religious traditions work together.

**Age-grouping for schools:** the organisation of schools in relation to the age of the pupils that they take.

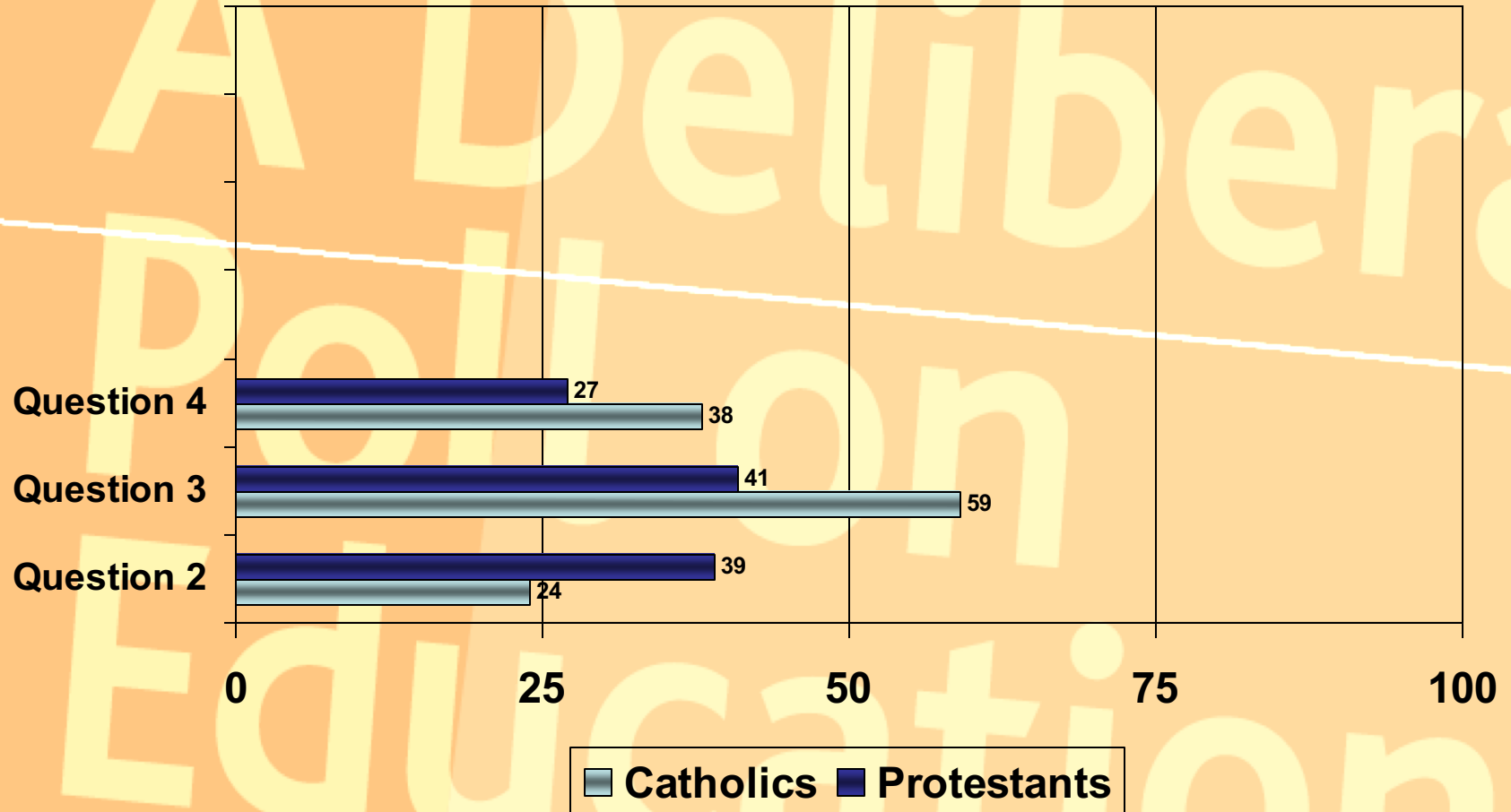
## Questions

1. % of majority Protestant or Catholic schools with at least 10% of the other religion in their enrolment
2. % change over past 5 years in number of children entering Omagh schools
3. Entitlement framework requires (providing choice of at least 24 subjects to all 14-year-olds)
4. Entitlement framework requires (that one third of all subjects offered must be applied)
5. What Northern Ireland pupils do after leaving school ( $\frac{3}{4}$  grammar school pupils attend university)
6. Current school funding (schools receive more funding for older pupils)
7. Employing authority (official employer for Voluntary Grammar teachers is Board of Governors)

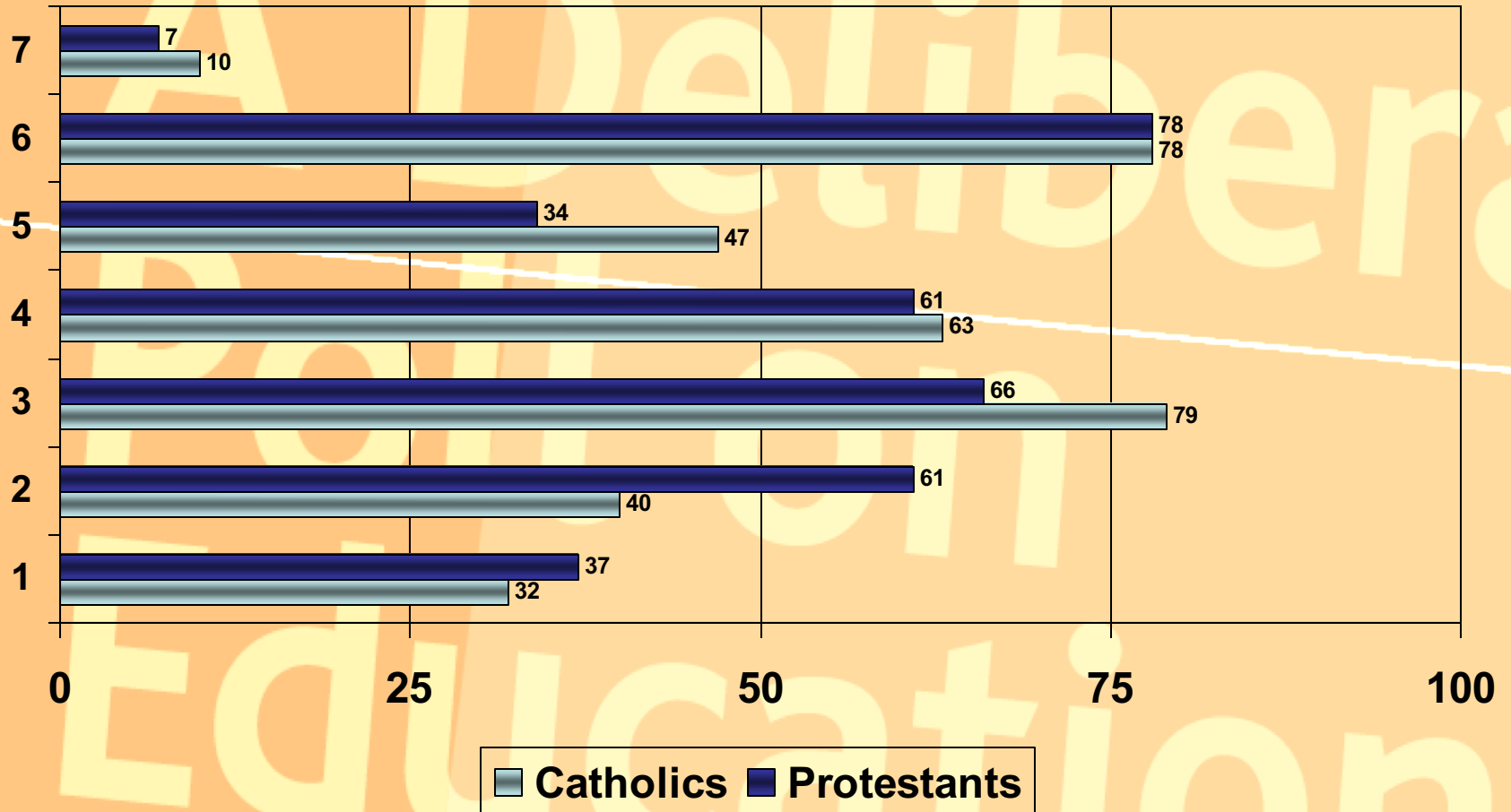
# Knowledge gains (participants only)



# Knowledge gains $T1 < T2$ (Catholic and Protestant: participants differences)

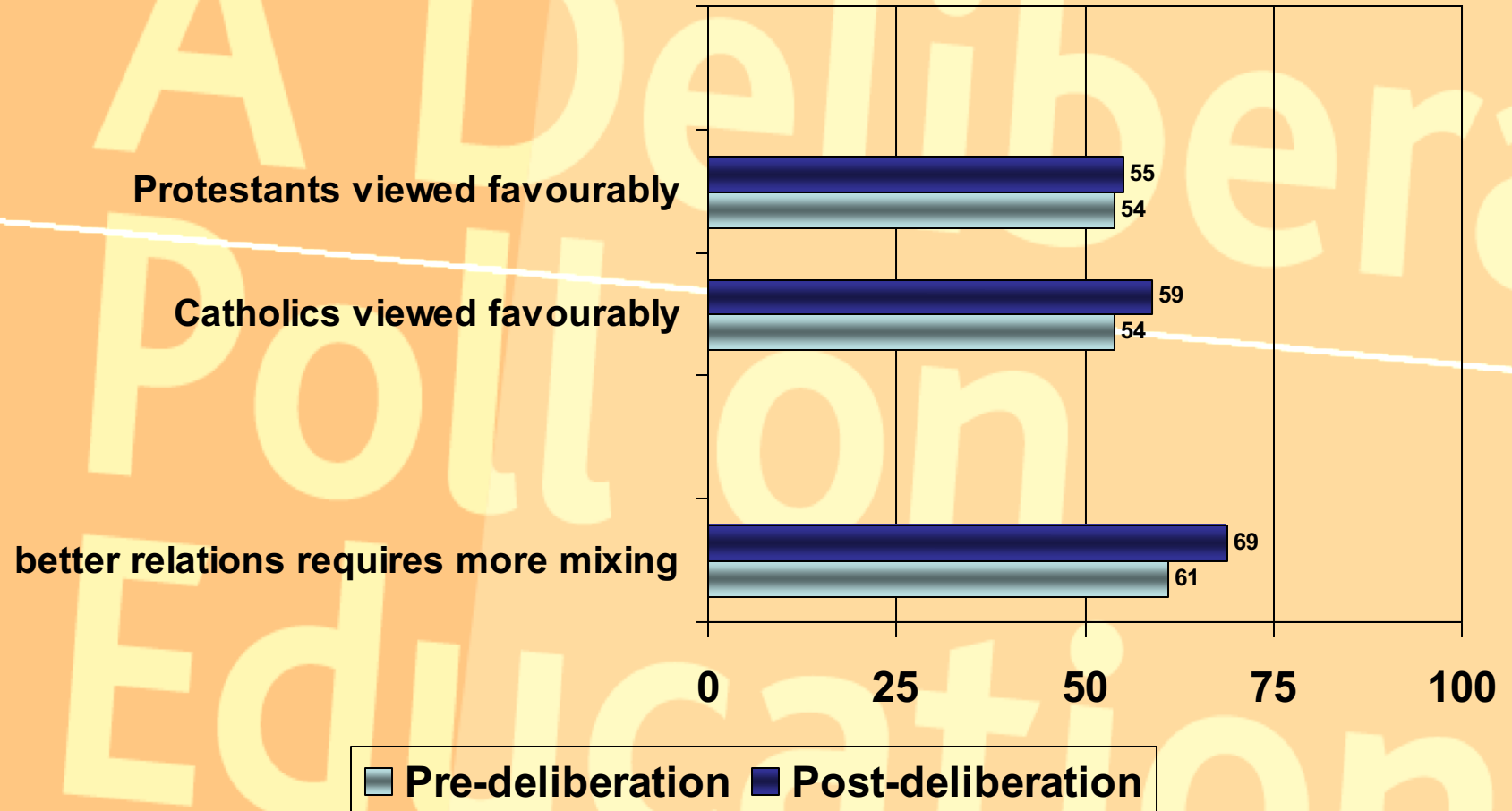


# Knowledge of Catholics and Protestants T2 (participants only)

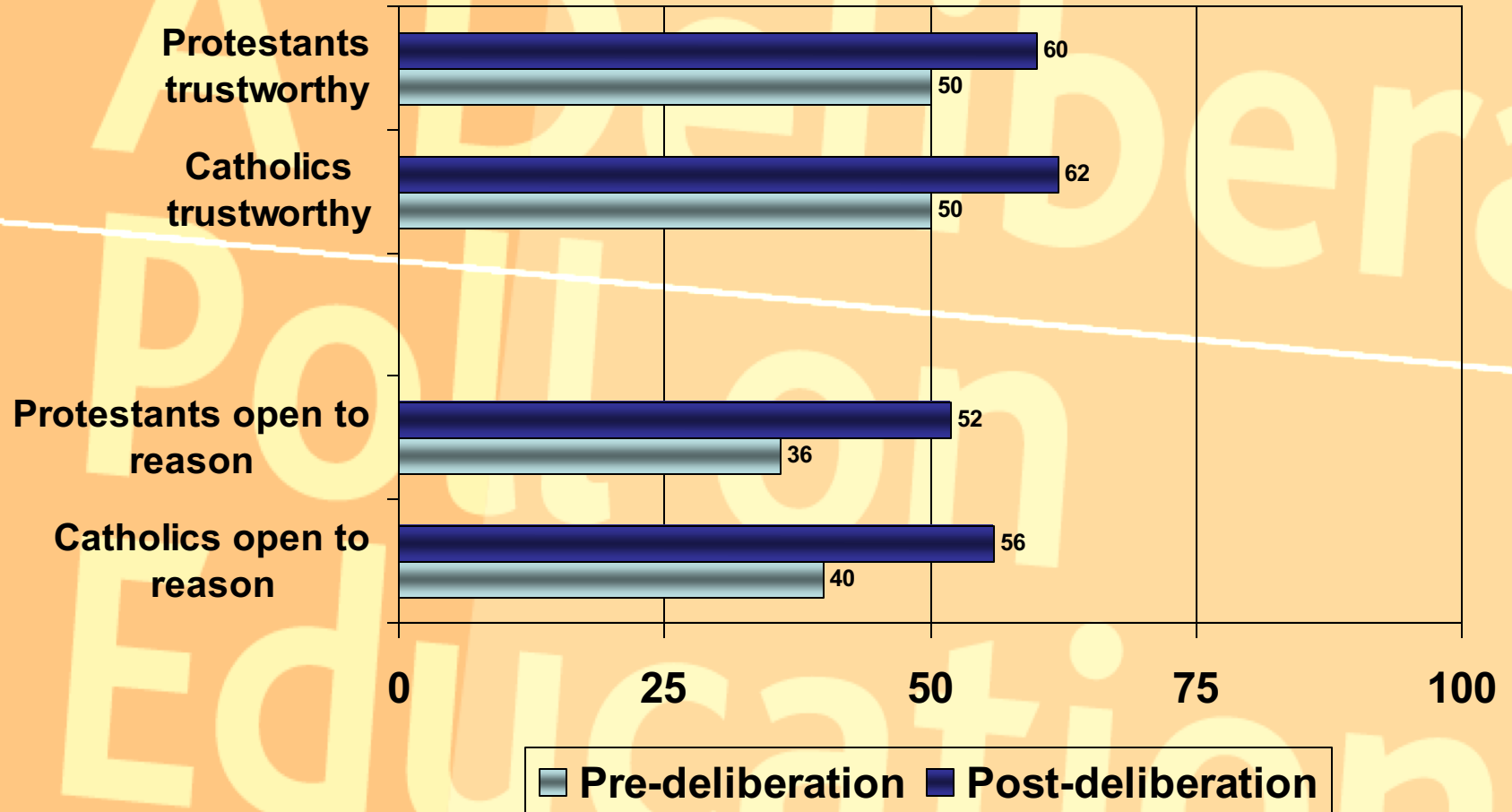


# **Community Relations**

## Good relations and favourableness

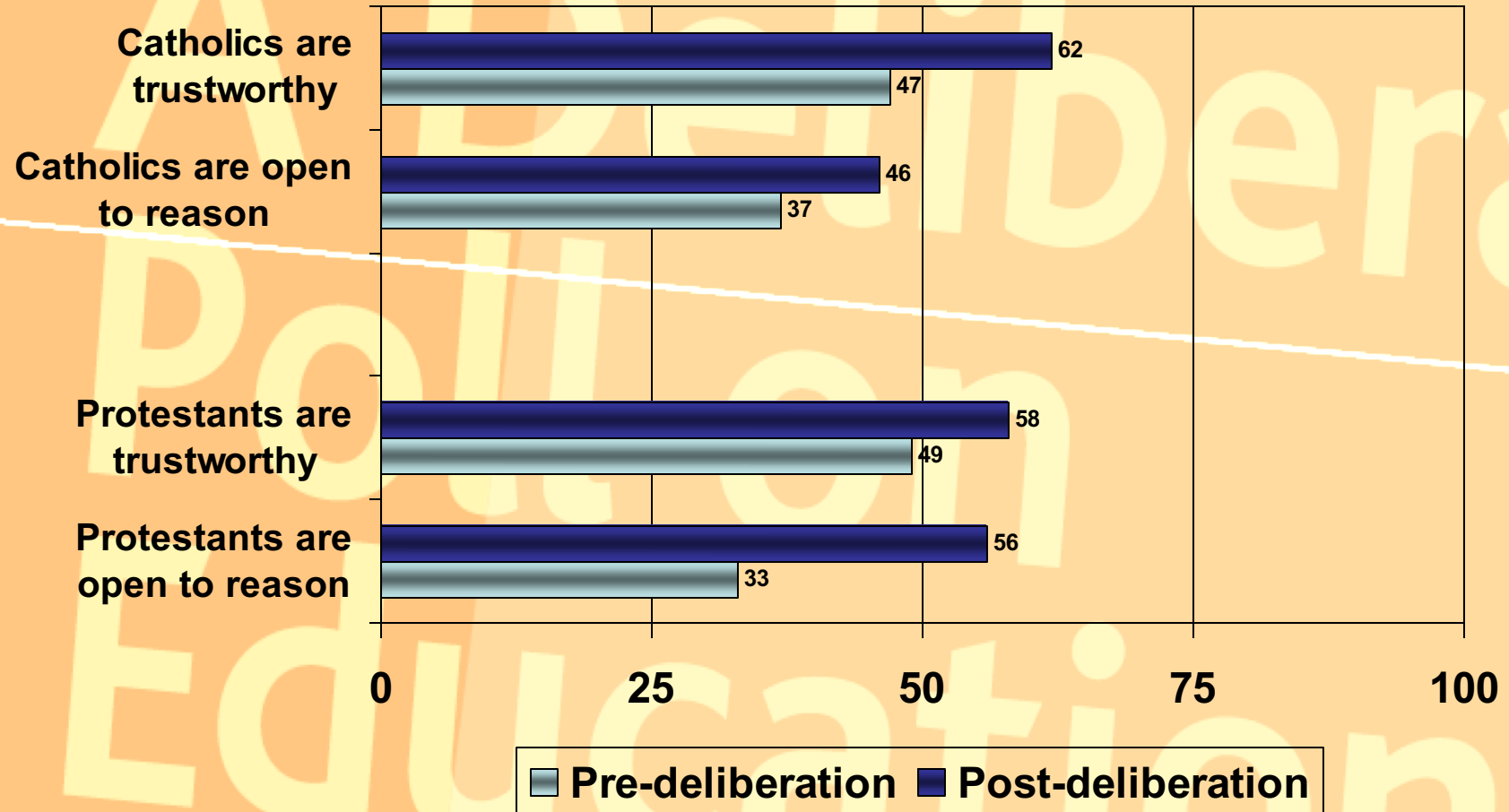


## Trust and reasonableness



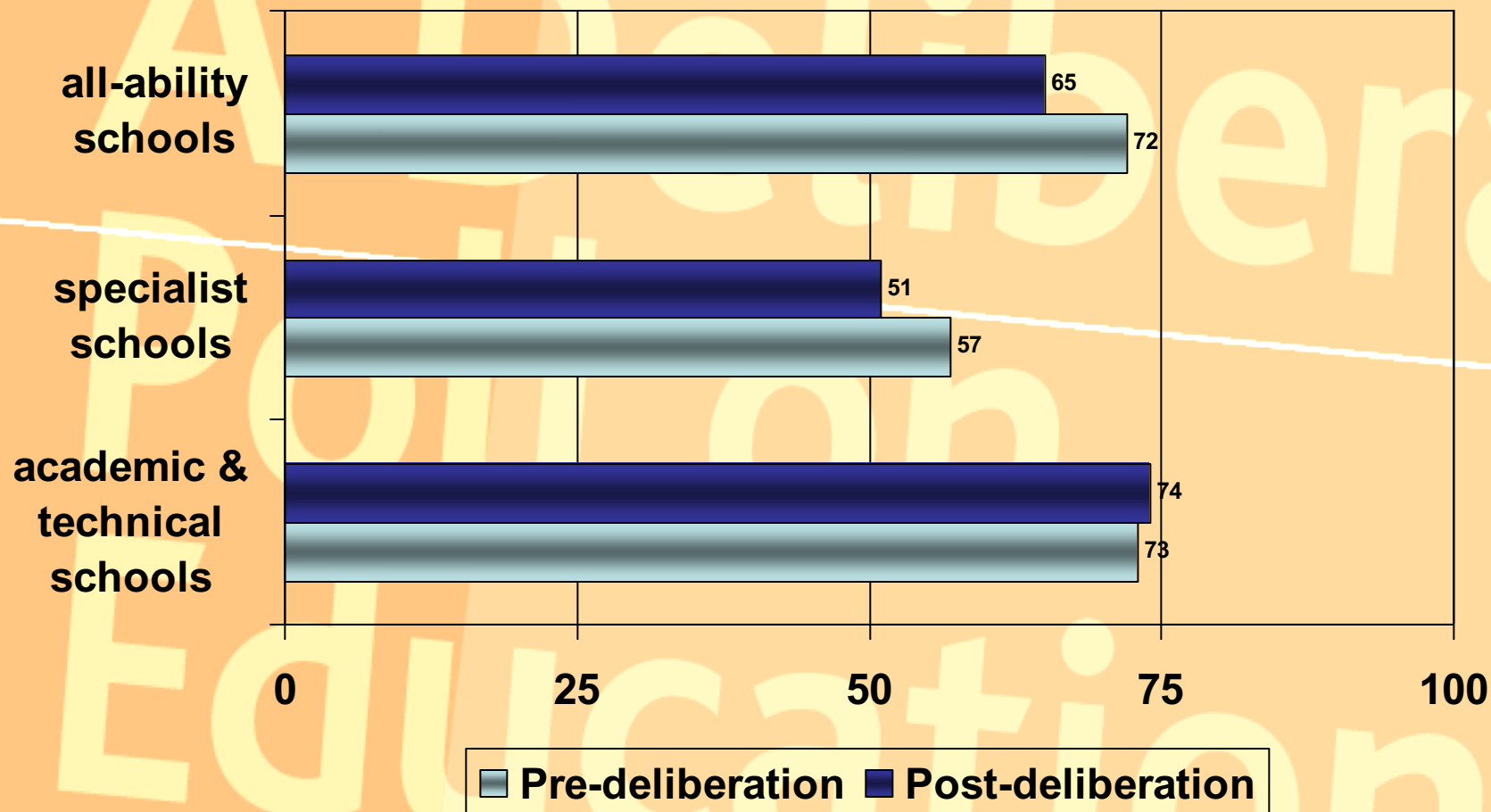


# Trust and reasonableness (Catholic and Protestants perceptions of the other)

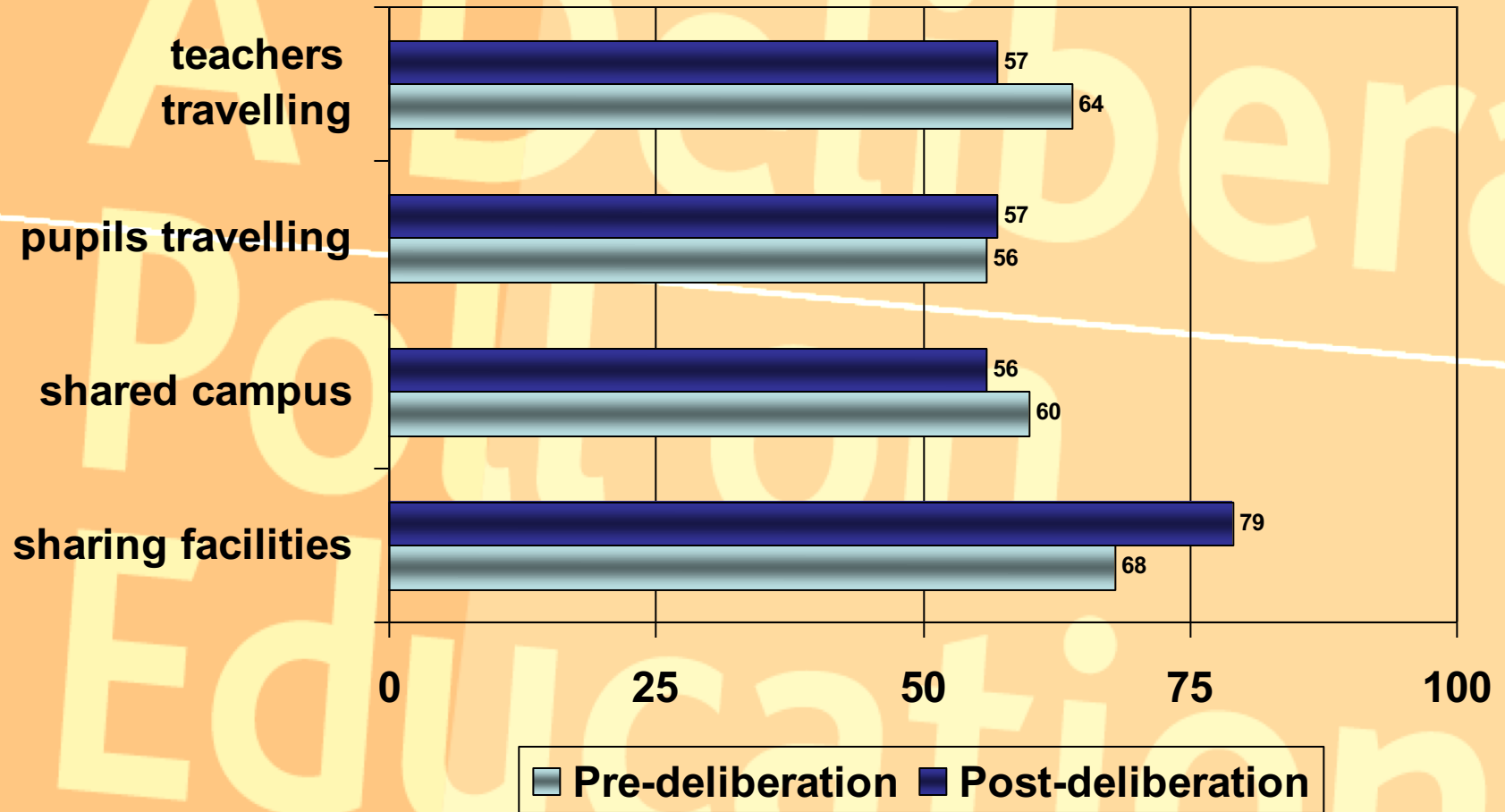


**Effects of deliberation: Attitude  
changes on policy options**

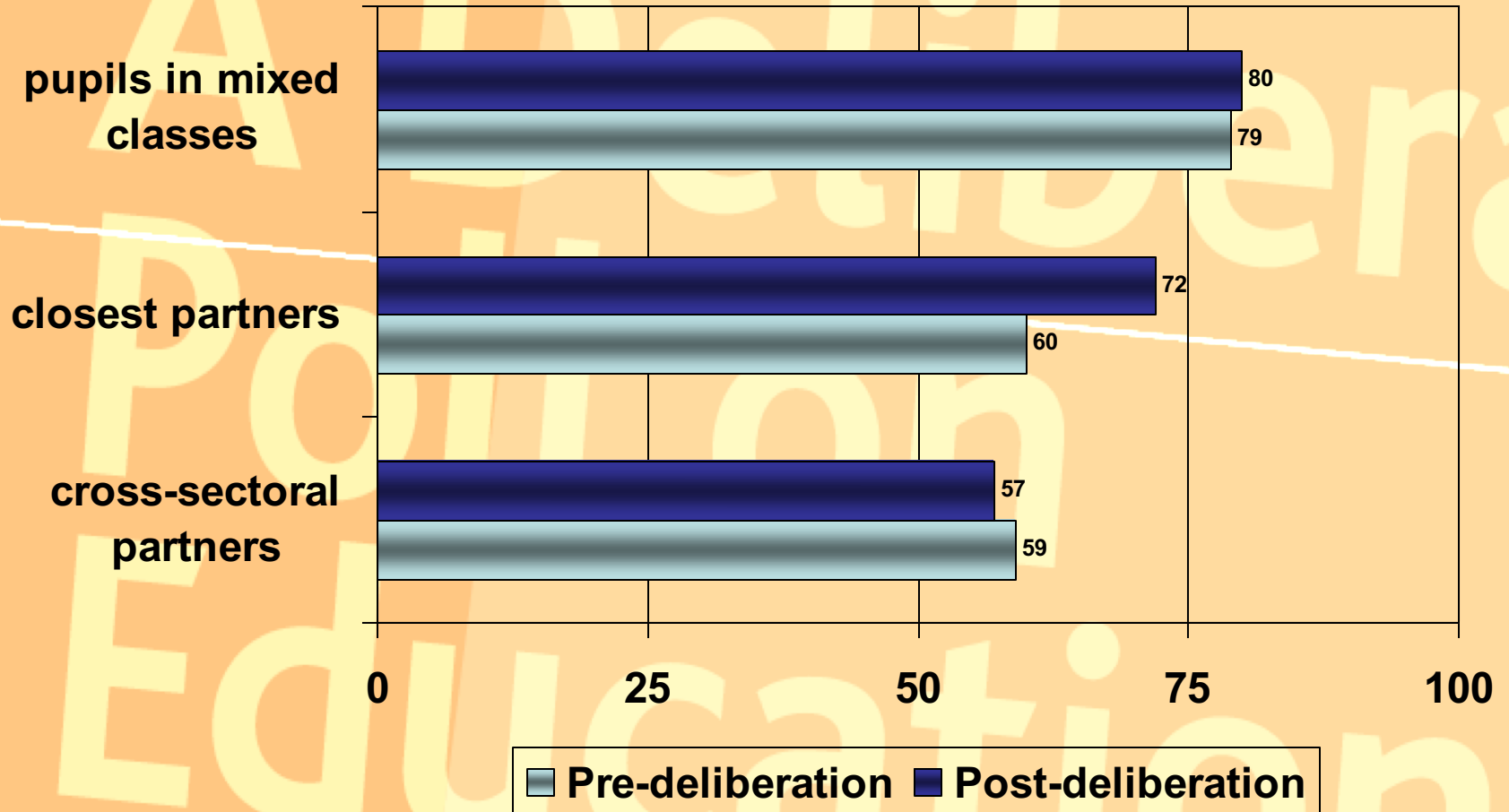
## Curriculum (% support)



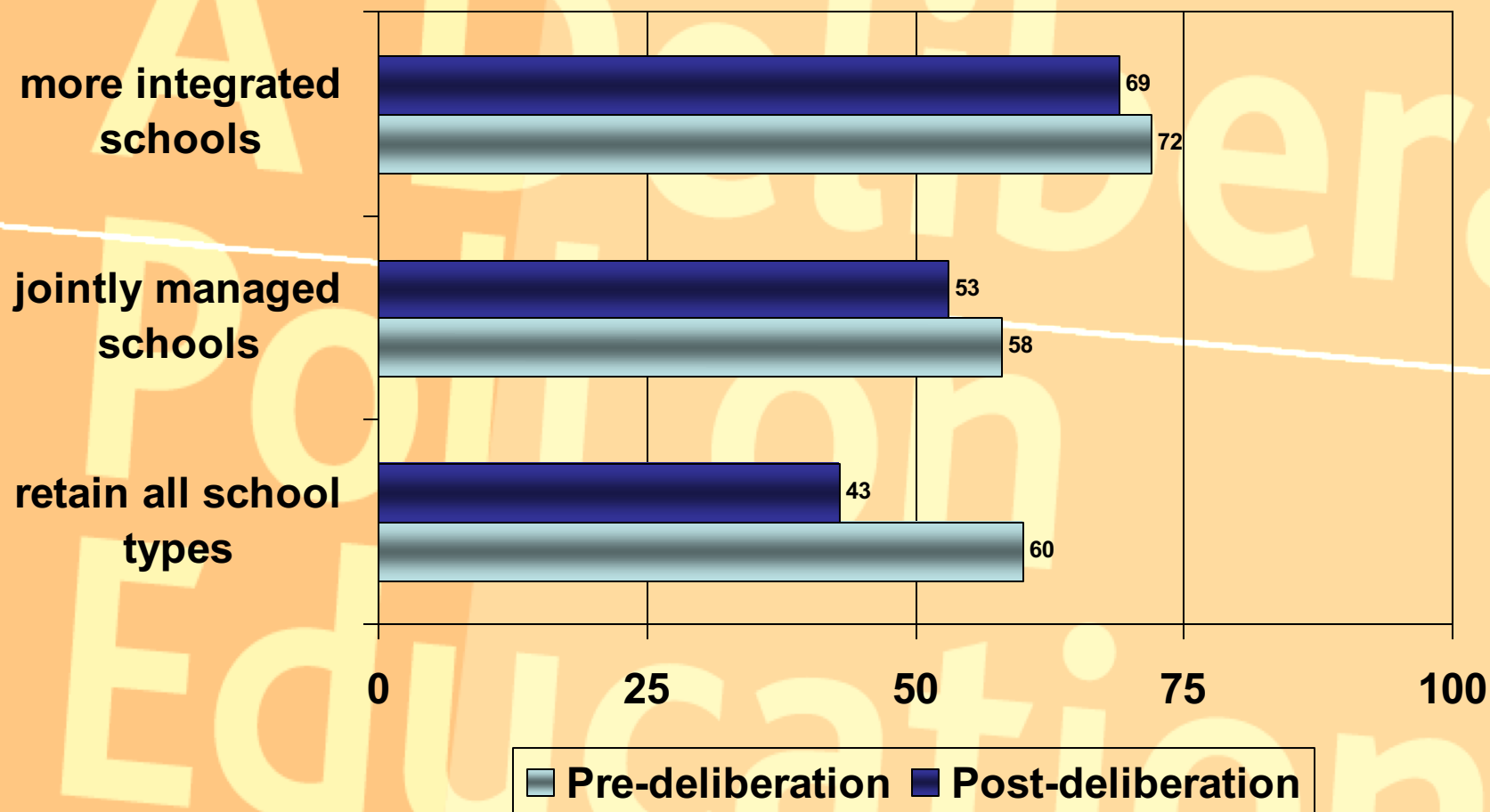
## School collaboration (% support)



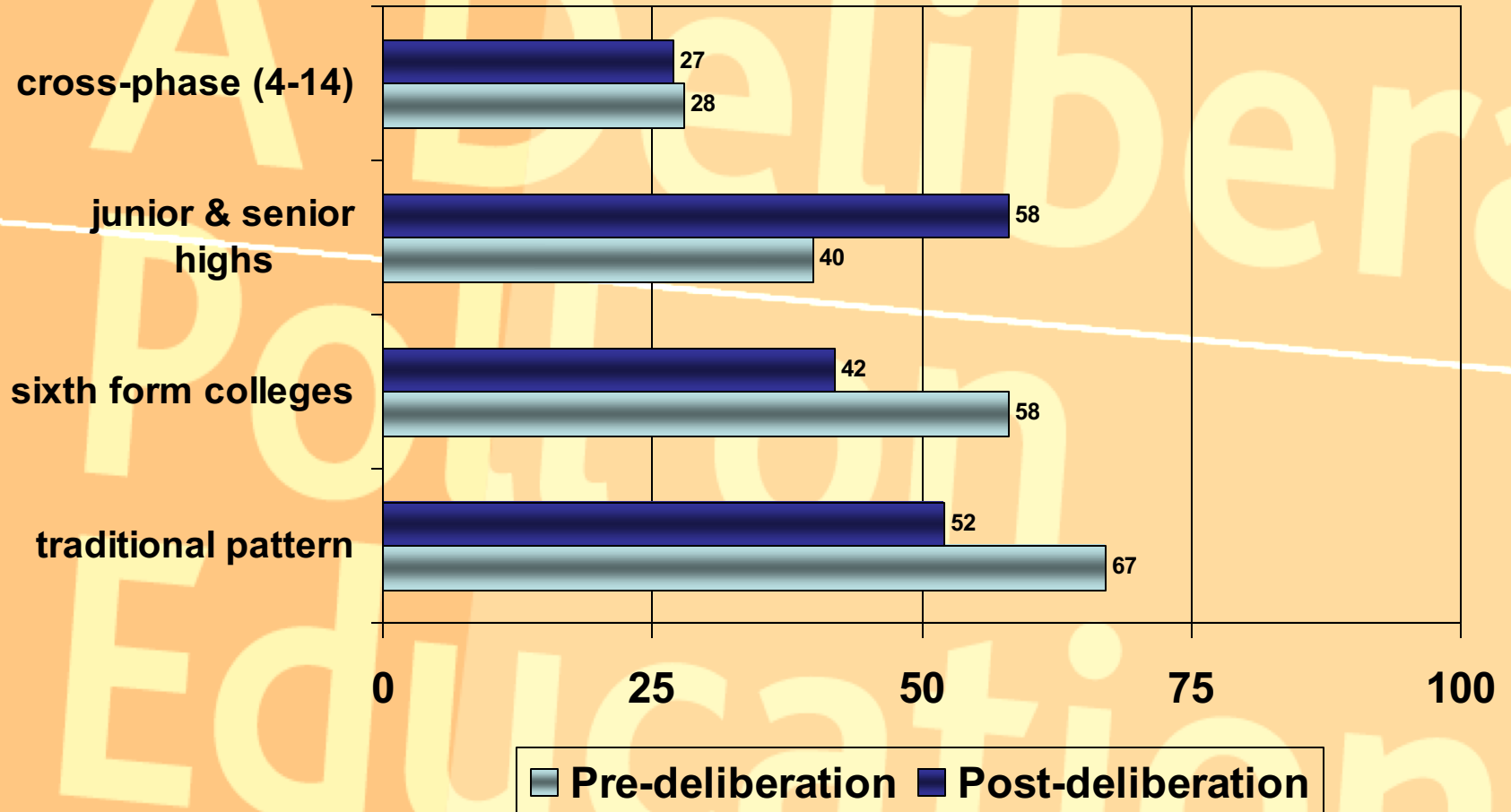
# Denominational collaboration (% support)



## School types (% support)



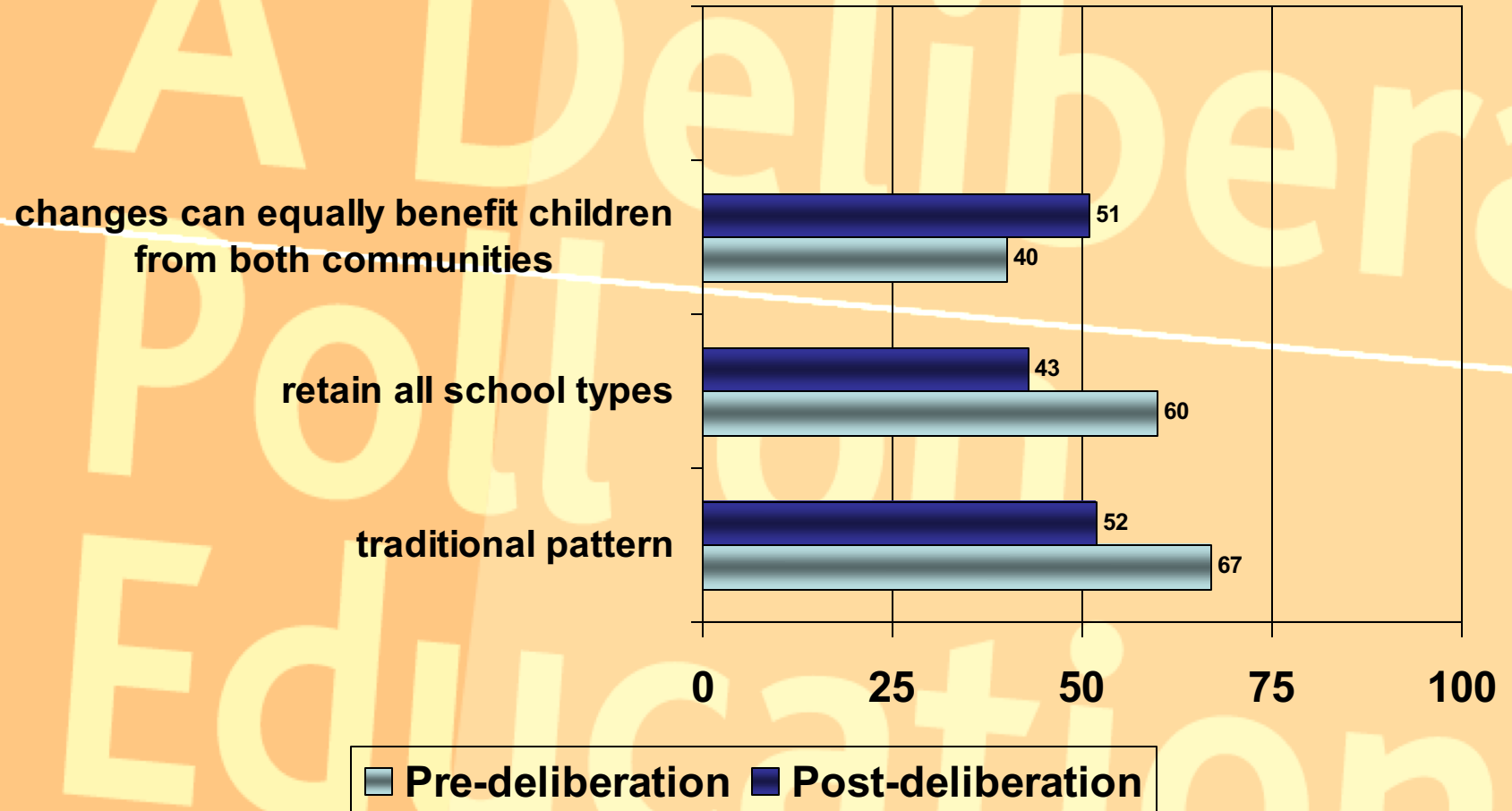
## Age groupings (% support)



**What do informed parents tell us?**



## Parents are open to change



## What do they want?

- Good sustainable schools, with the option of specialist schools
- Meaningful collaboration, with preference for sharing facilities
  - Partnering with closest schools
  - Pupils spending time in mixed classes
- Reduction in the number of school types
  - More integrated schools
  - Option of jointly managed schools
- Junior high (11-14) & Senior high schools (14-18)

# A Deliberate Poll on Education

... and what informed