

# Public Perspectives on GMO Development

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# Focus Group Interviews

- Reactions to the idea of using genetically modified organisms as a biocontrol for aquatic invasive species
- Genetic biocontrol - release of genetically manipulated organisms designed to disrupt the survival or reproduction of a targeted invasive species

# Focus Group Interviews

- Allow stakeholders who will be using or affected by the technology to influence its development
- Results will
  - Influence discussions at this symposium
  - Influence development of the technology

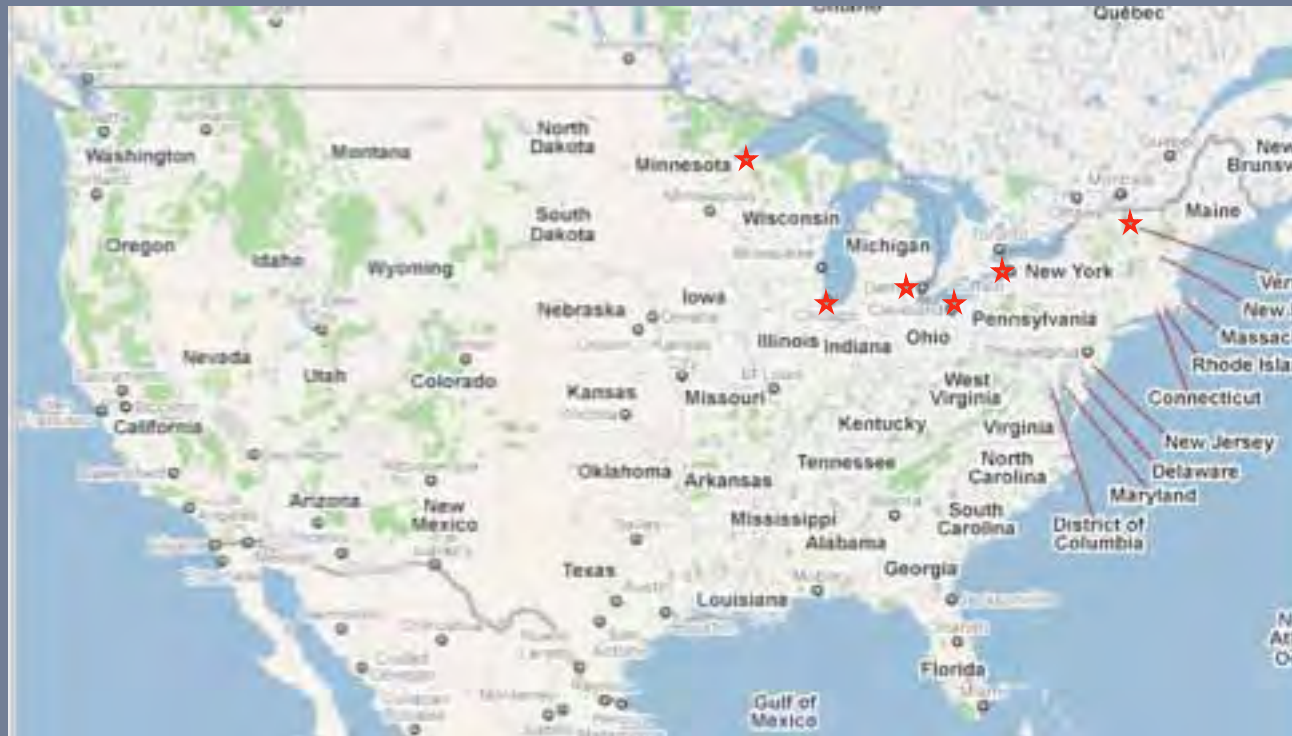


# Focus Group Methods

- Focused discussions exploring participants' feelings/opinions on a topic
- Particularly useful for topics where little is known
- Goal is a full and frank exploration of the topic

# Focus Group Interviews

- 8 focus groups held around the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain



# Focus Group Interviews

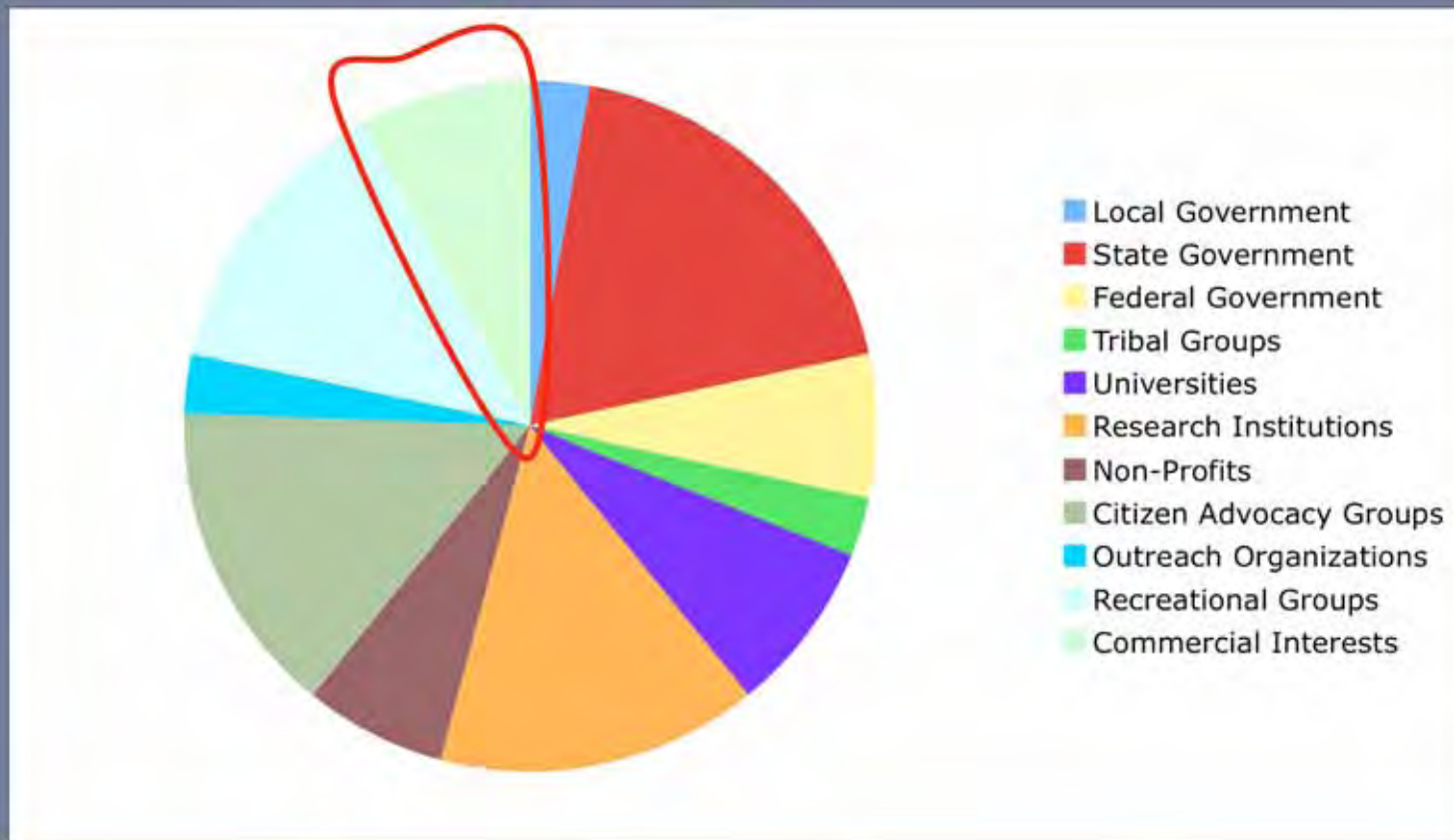
- Group size ranged from 4 to 16 participants (61 total)
- Participants were potentially interested and affected parties, NOT the general public
- Participants knowledge of the technology varied widely

# Focus Group Participants



- Local Government
- State Government
- Federal Government
- Tribal Groups
- Universities
- Research Institutions
- Non-Profits
- Citizen Advocacy Groups
- Outreach Organizations
- Recreational Groups
- Commercial Interests

# Focus Group Participants



# Focus Group Questions

- 3 phases of the focus group discussion
  - General questions about their initial impressions
  - More focused questions about their reactions to the technology
  - Concluding questions on their preferences and recommendations for the technology's development

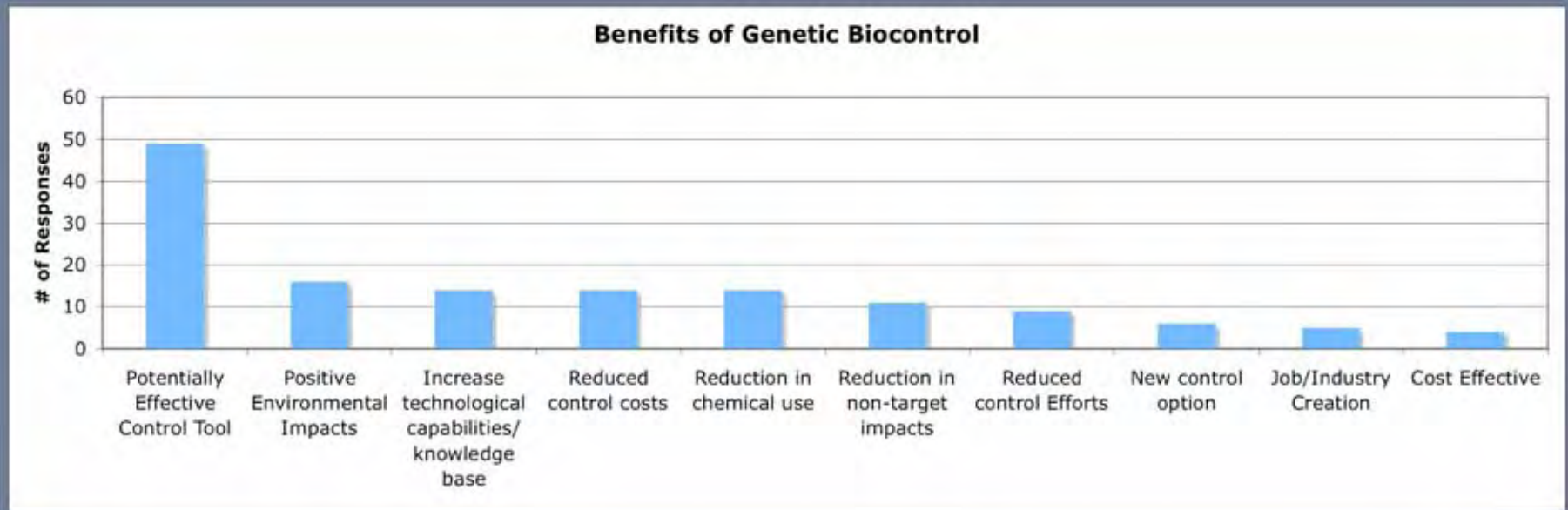
# Initial Reactions to GMOs

“Just gut reaction,  
[a] mad scientist  
sitting in a lab  
cooking up  
something evil with  
weird parts.”

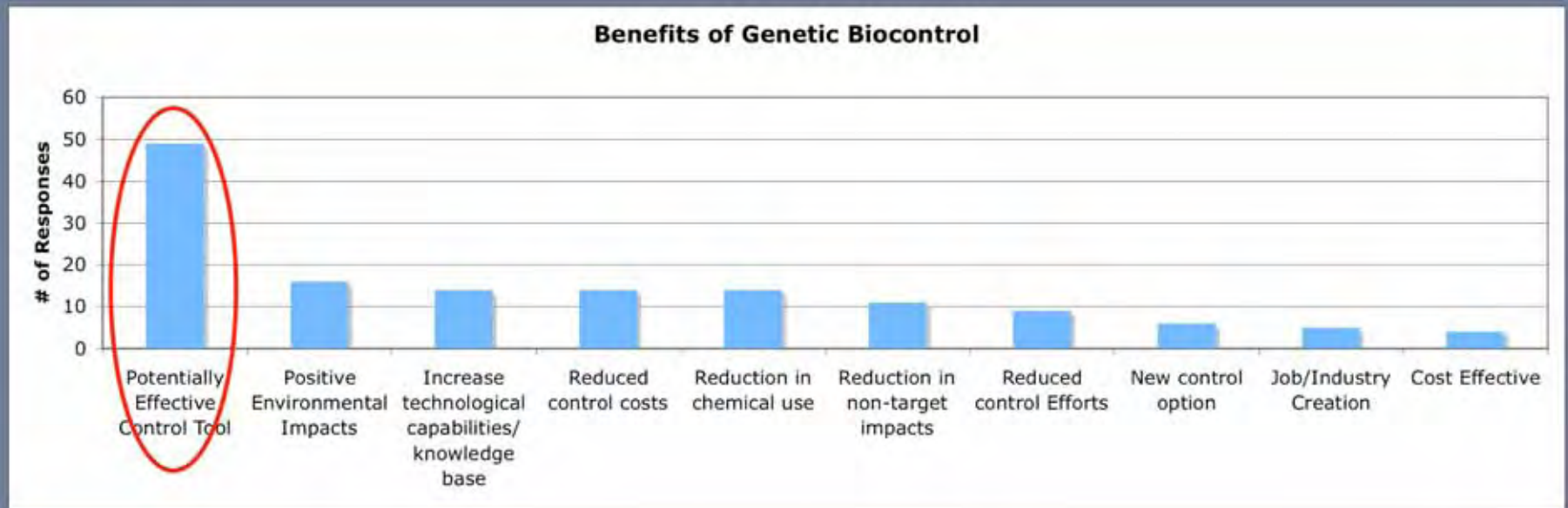


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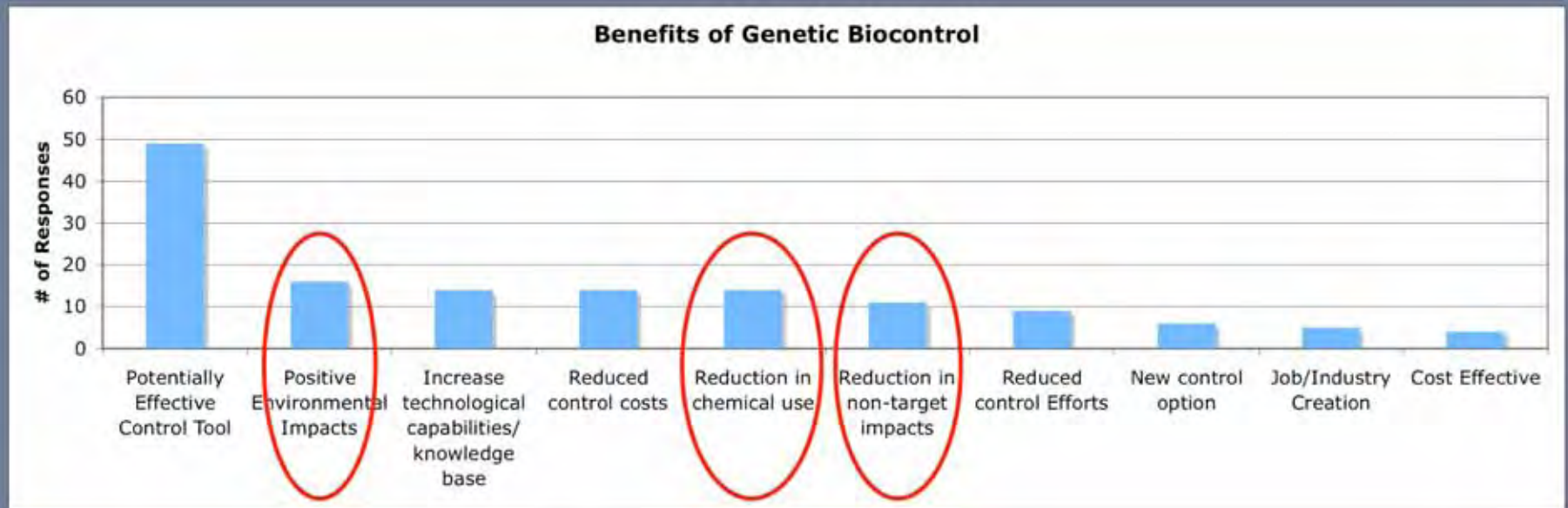
# Benefits of Genetic Biocontrol



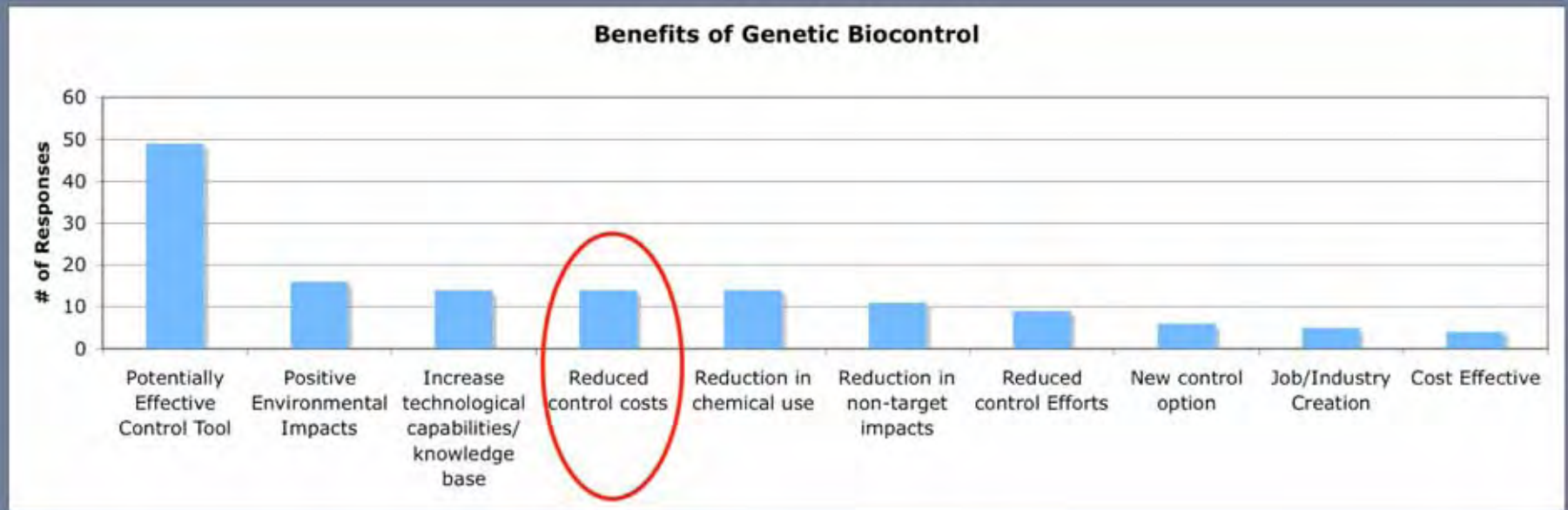
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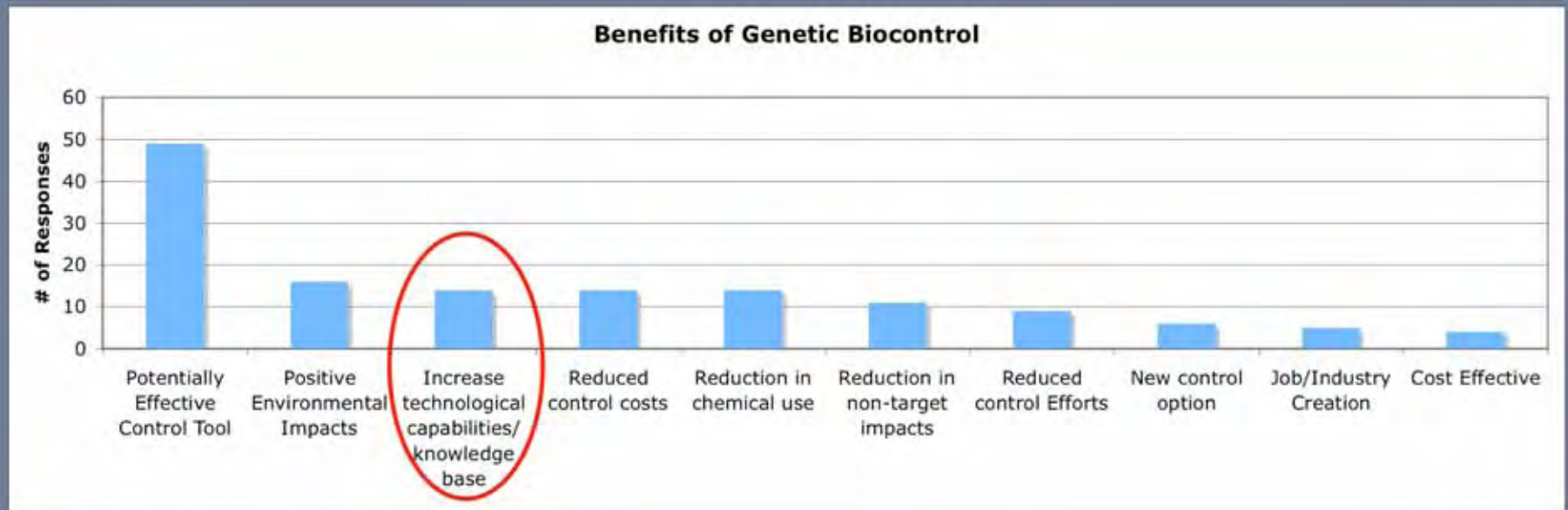
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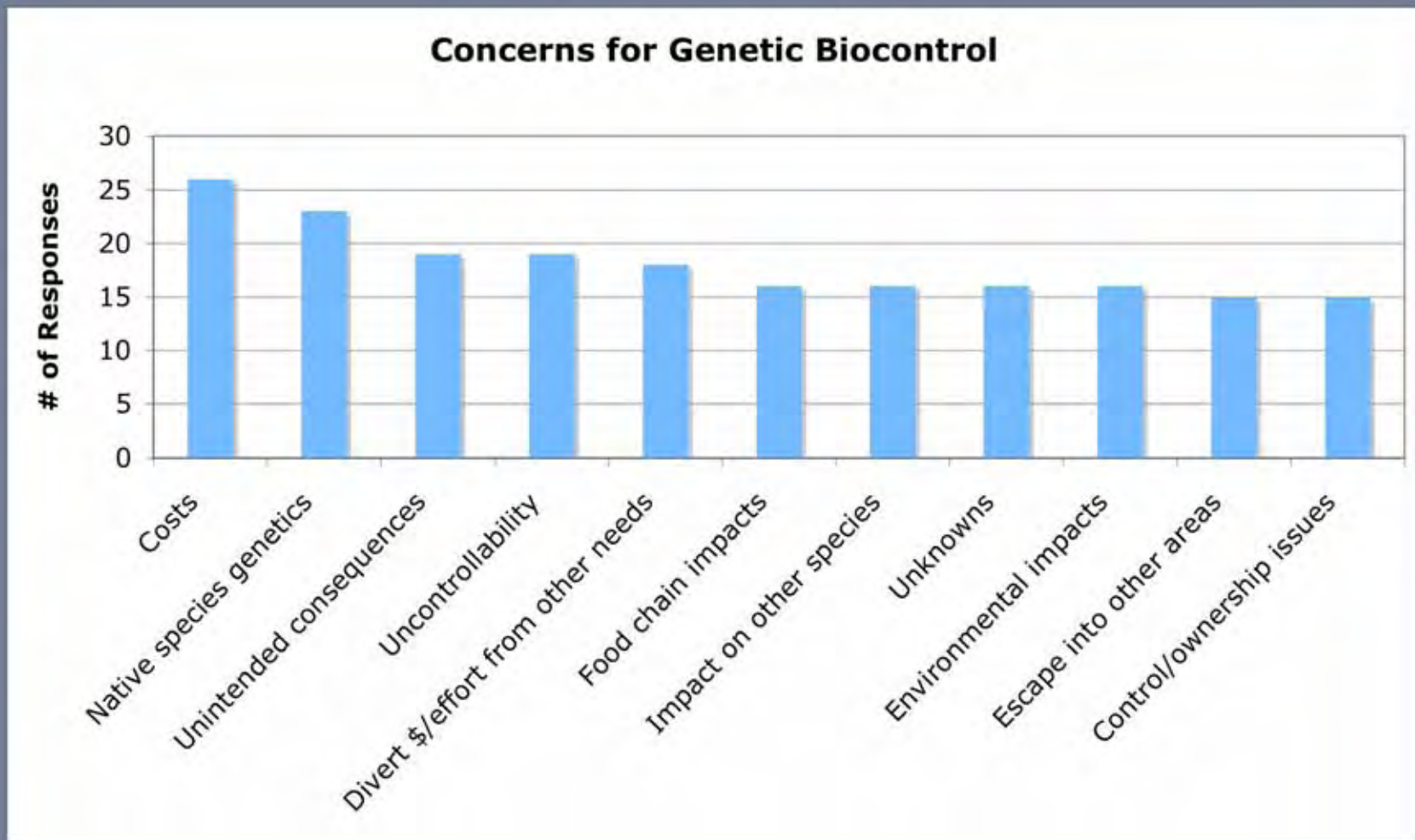
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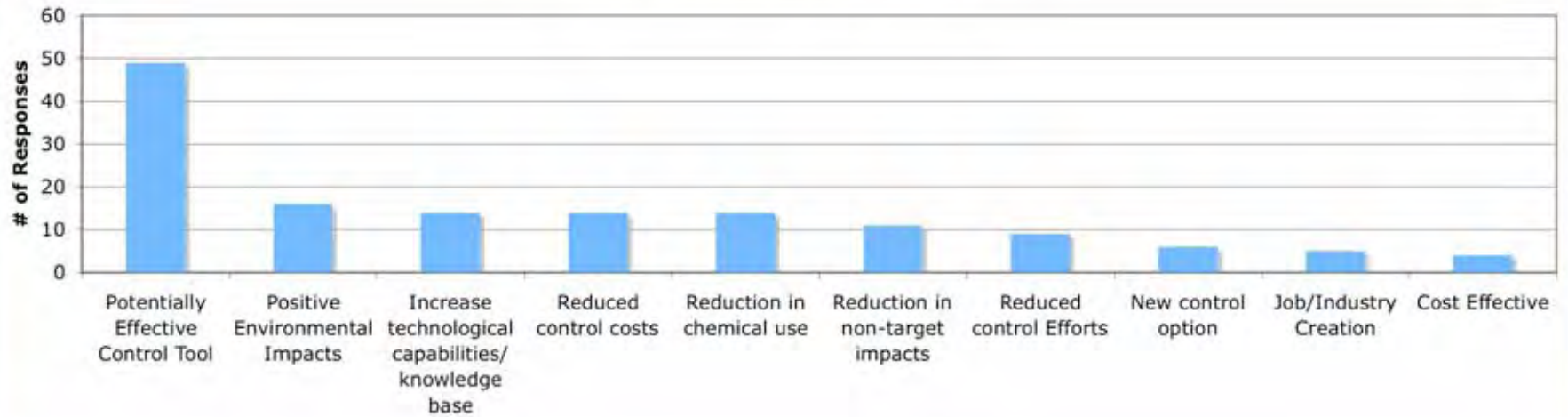
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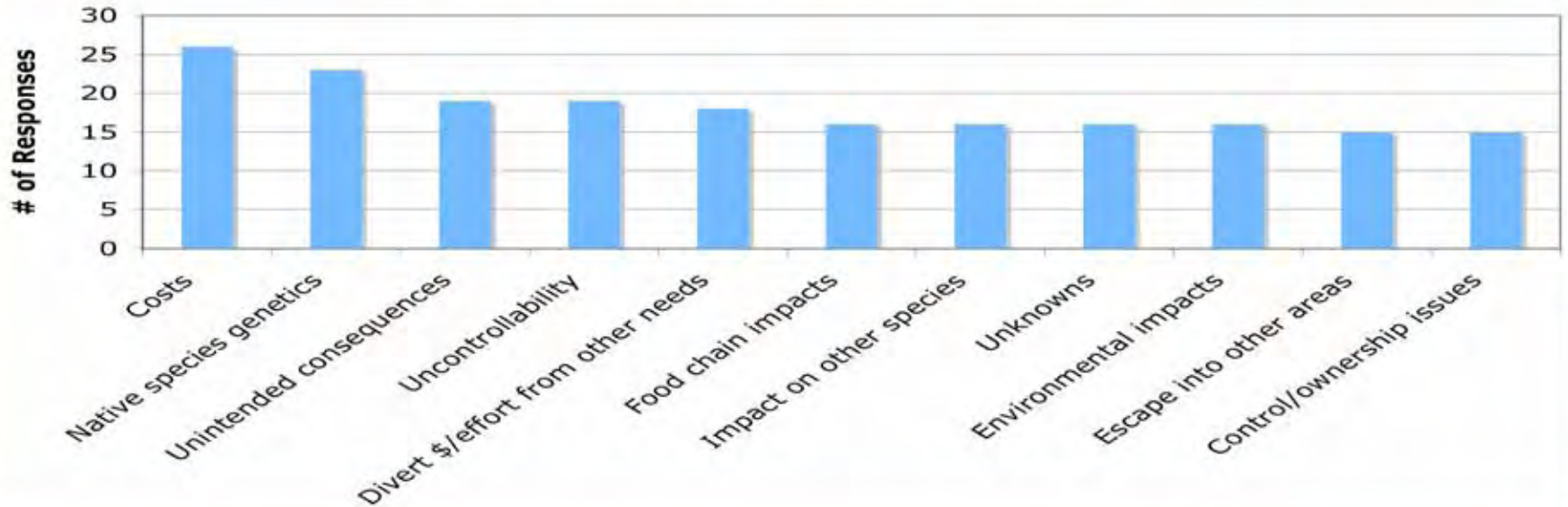
# Concerns for Genetic Biocontrol



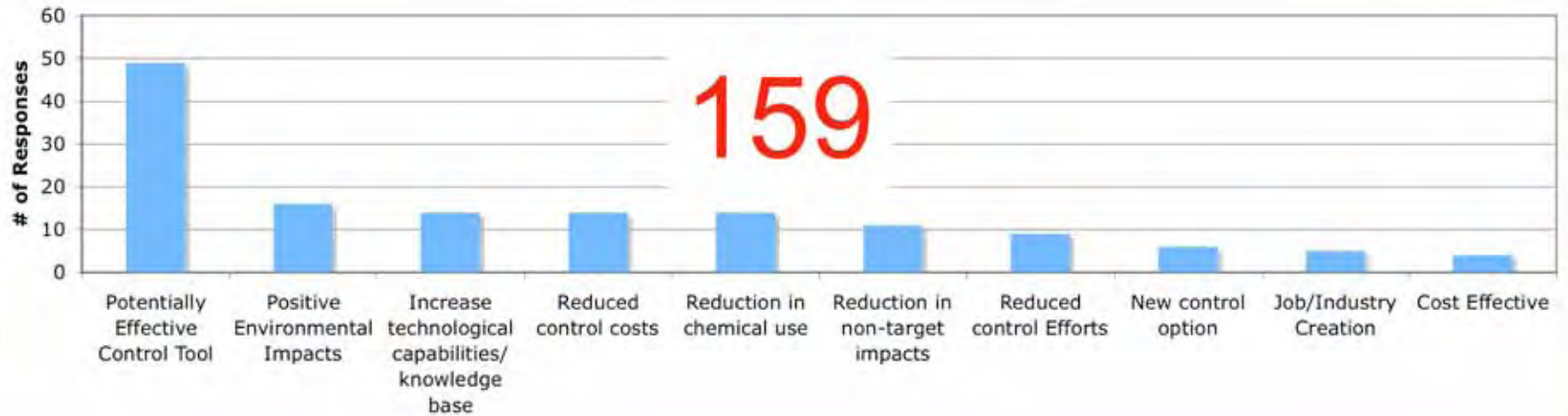
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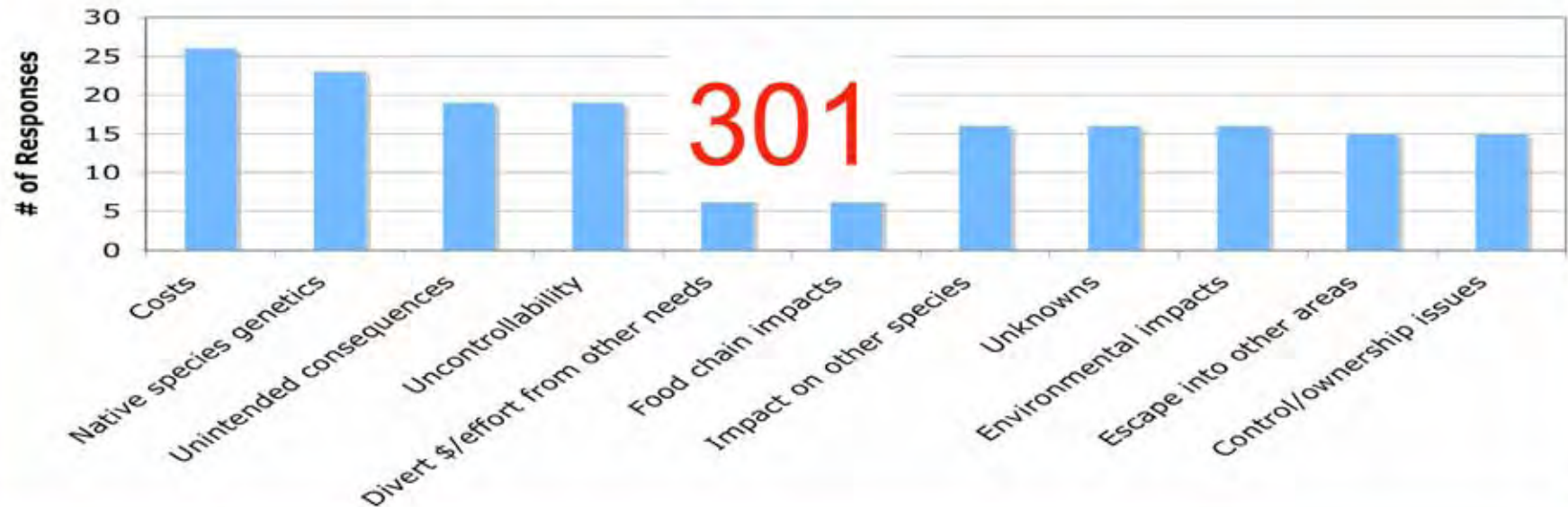
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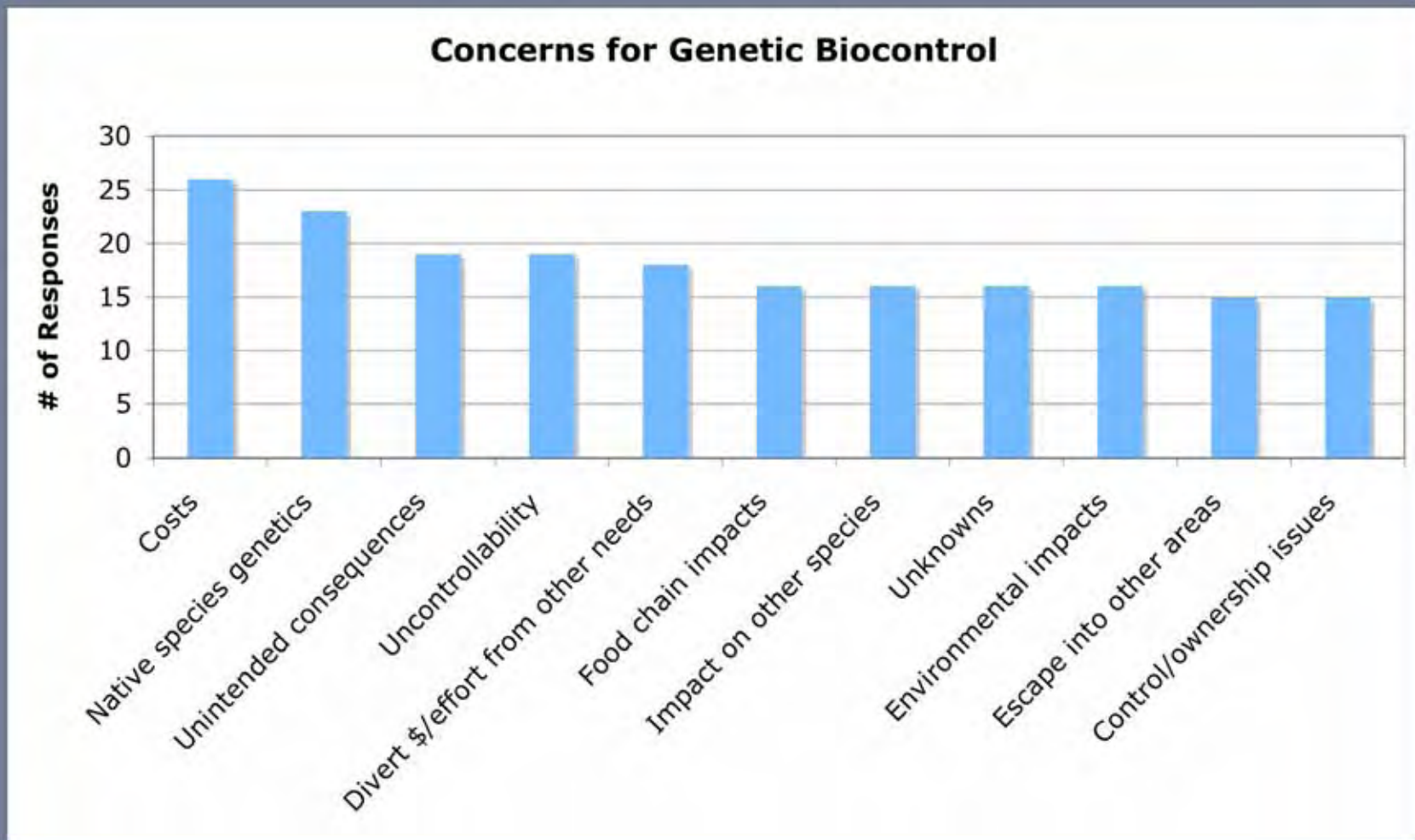
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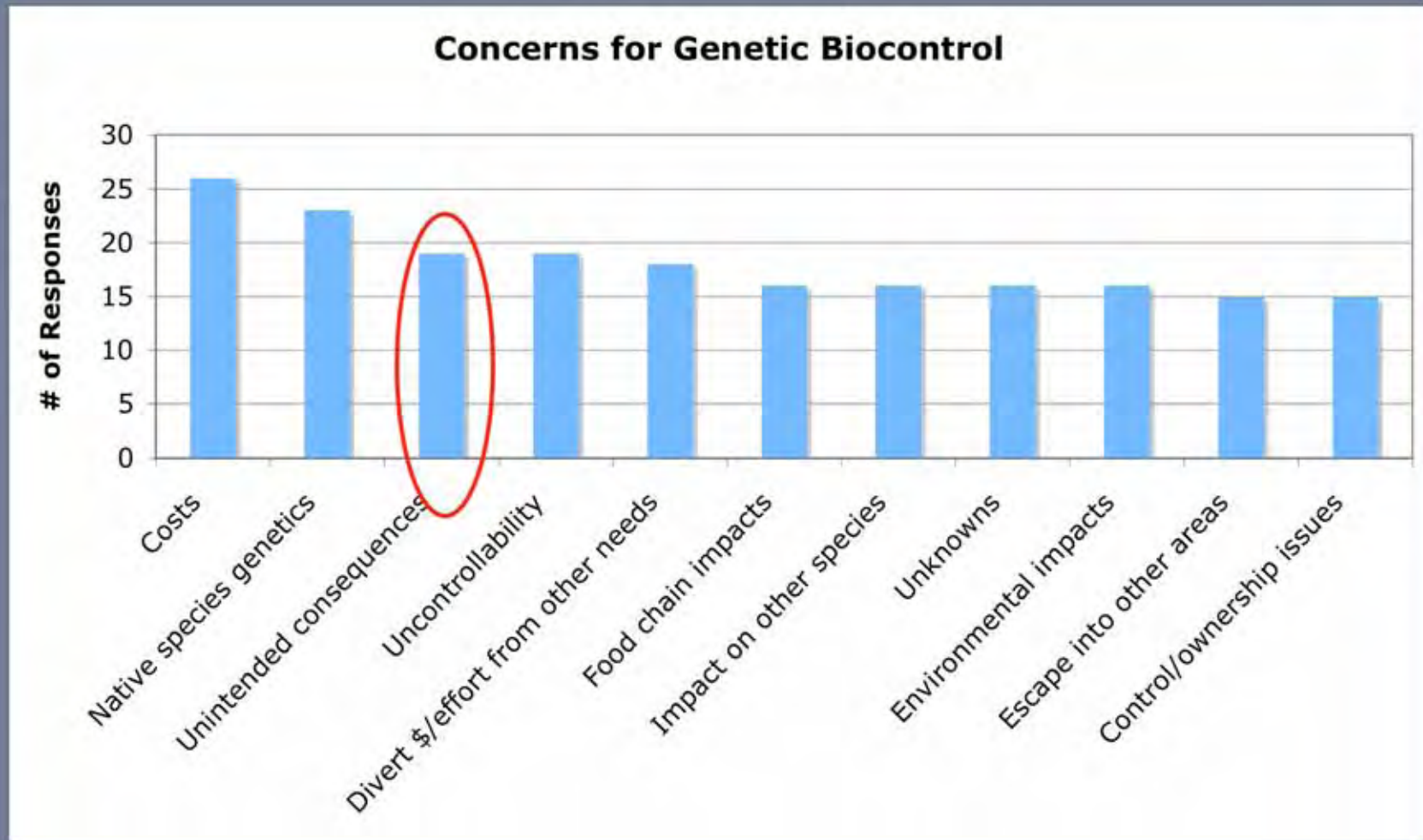
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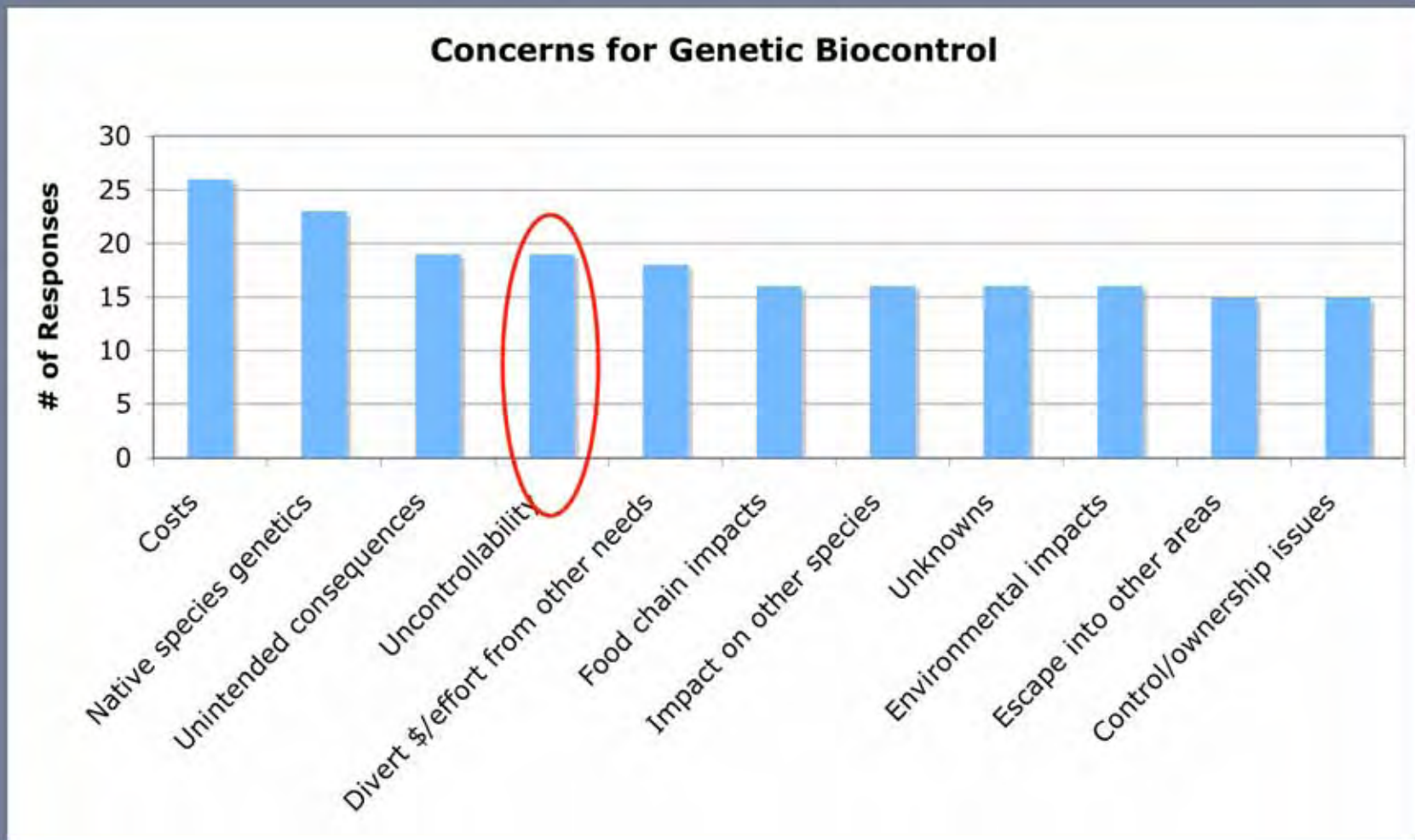
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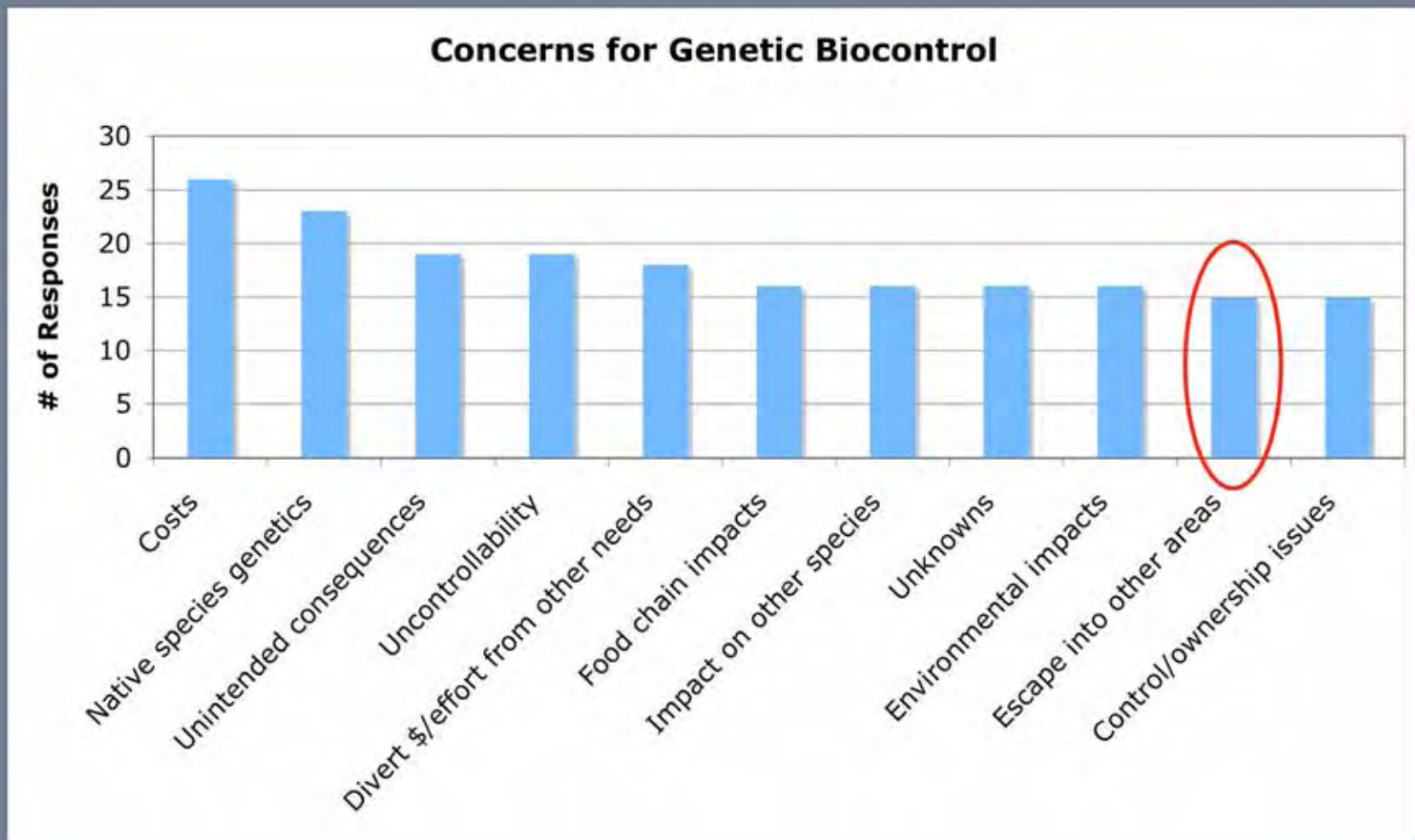
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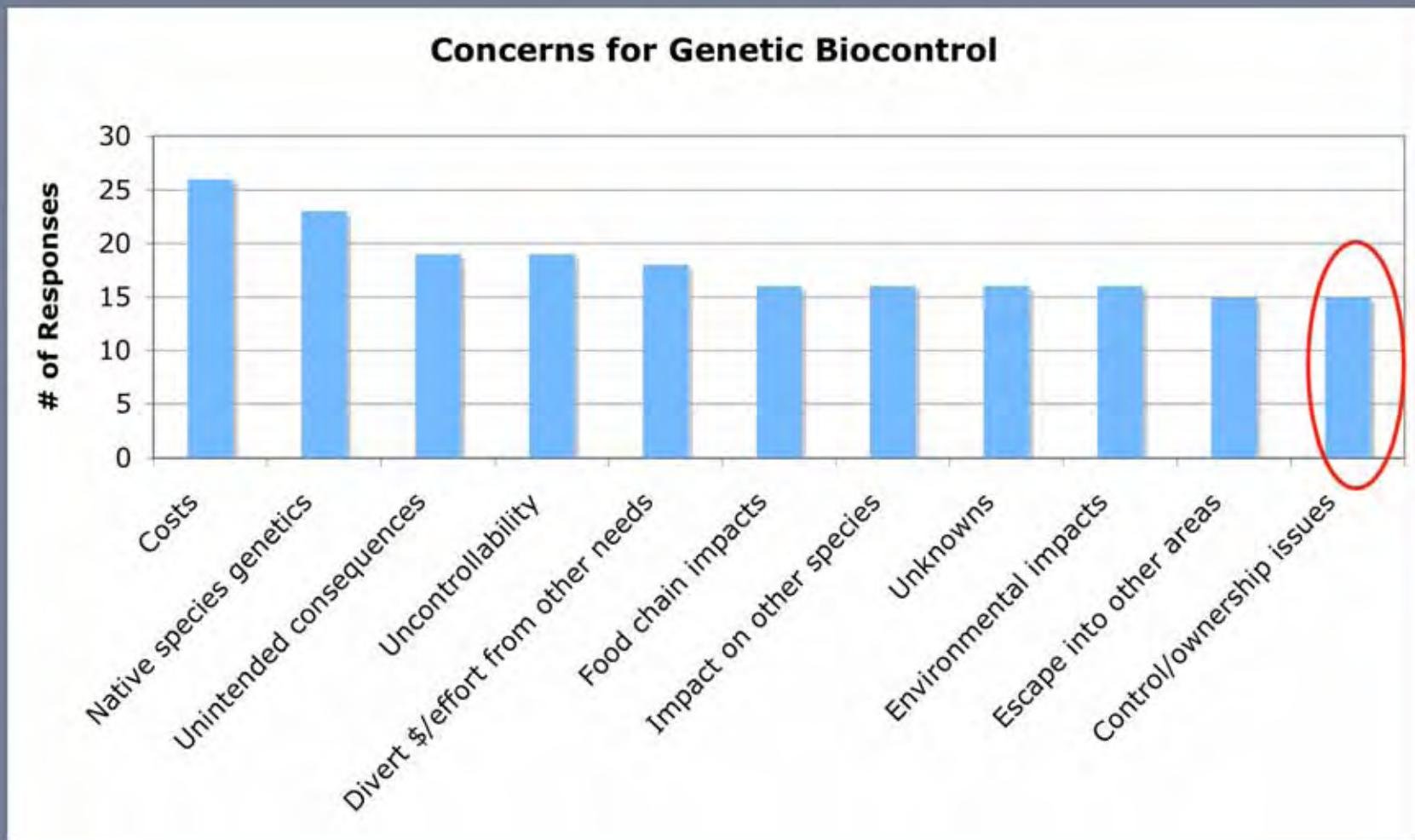
# Concerns for Genetic Biocontrol



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# Recommendations for Proceeding with Development

- Unbiased testing by an objective, independent group
- Engage as many viewpoints as possible during development
- Transparency
- Clear go/no-go reasoning
- First, do no harm

# Response to the Focus Groups

“It is a good thing that those who are organizing the study have reached out. You know, practice as past, you may not necessarily have seen something like this where they just say, “Okay, we’re going to... do it.” And then maybe you don’t even know that it was going on... we don’t see the bill, so we don’t even know what happened [or] the time and energy that’s spent.

I’m glad that in the face of that that we’re getting an opportunity to provide that input. Hopefully, it will be given the weight that it truly does deserve from a very wide variety of perspectives and expertise in here.”

# Response to the Focus Groups

“Could you imagine if they had the discussion that we’re having right now before they brought the Asian carp in... That’s the part I’m getting out of this. At least we’re having a chance to discuss it before it happens.”

# Response to the Focus Groups

“Unfortunately, there’s another way of looking at it, and unfortunately, giving them this information about where the fears are also gives them the opportunity to say “Okay, now what do we have to do to massage those fears to get them to think the way we want them to think so that we can go forward with what we want to do.” You know, it’s a double edged sword is what it is. It feels good to be able to have your say and let them know. However, by letting them know, that also gives them the edge to come back at you from the other side and say, “Okay, this is how we fix everything you just said,” and make you feel... better about what they’re about to do [without actually fixing it.]”

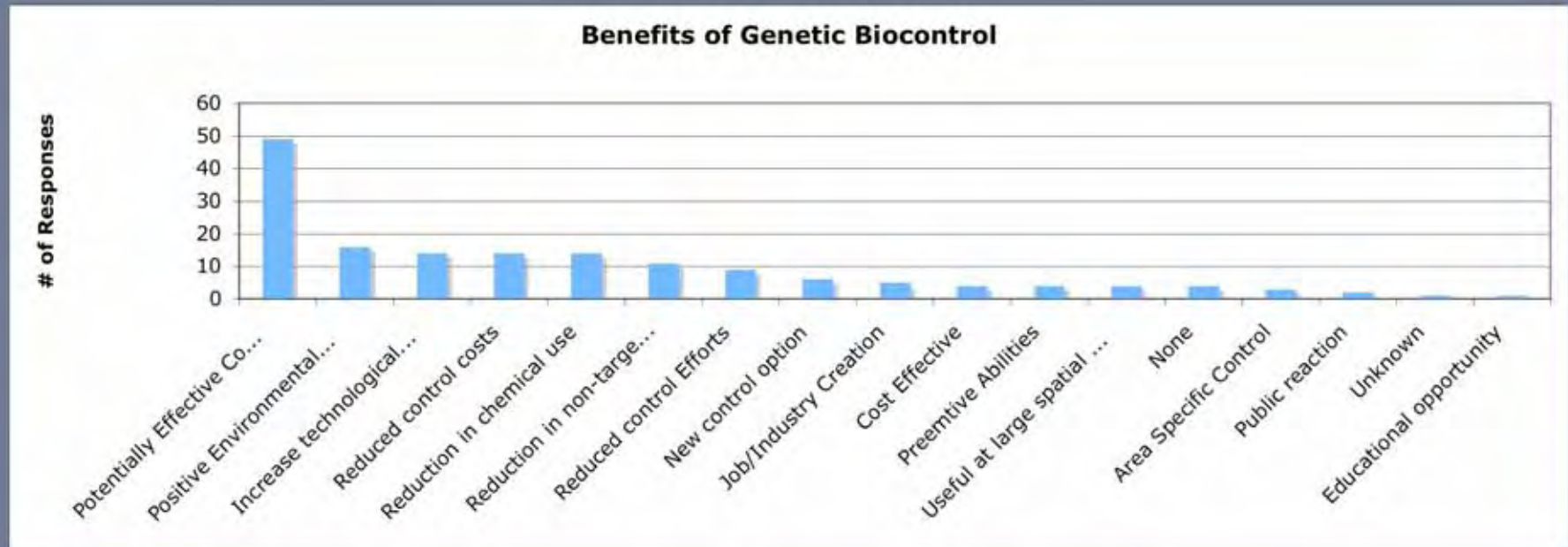
# Take Away Points

- Strong recommendation to include stakeholders throughout development process
- Use stakeholder input to identify the issues that concerned citizens and affected parties need addressed in a substantive ways in the risk assessment process and technology development
- If you develop this technology in a way that is open and credible people will be more likely to accept the decisions that are made



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# Benefits of Genetic Biocontrol



# Concerns for Genetic Biocontrol

