



HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
**INSTITUTE OF POLITICS**

# Executive Summary

Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward  
Politics and Public Service  
28th Edition

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## Harvard Public Opinion Project

Presented by:

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# INTRODUCTION

Conceived by two Harvard undergraduate students during the winter of 1999, Harvard University's Institute of Politics Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes toward Politics and Public Service began in 2000 as a national survey of 18- to 24- year old college undergraduates. Over the last 15 years, this research project has grown in scope and mission, as this report now includes an analysis of 18- to 29- year olds on a broad set of longitudinal and current events issues.

The first survey of N=800 college undergraduates was completed in the Spring of 2000 and all interviews were conducted over the telephone; since that time, 24 subsequent surveys have been released. Over this period, a number of modifications have been made to the scope and methodology in order to ensure that sampling methods most accurately capture the view of the population of young adults in a manner that will be useful to both the Institute of Politics and the broader research and political communities.

- In 2001, the survey was expanded from N=800 to N=1,200 college students in order to capture a more robust sample of the undergraduate population.
- In 2006, the survey expanded to N=2,400 interviews, as we began interviewing members of the 18- to 24- year-old cohort who were not currently attending a four-year college or university. In addition, because of changing uses of technology among younger Americans, in 2006 the survey moved from a telephone poll to a survey that was administered online.
- In 2009, we expanded our scope a third time to include the population of young adults aged 18 to 29. While we will continue to report on the attitudes and opinions of U.S. college students, this change in our research subject was made to allow for better and more direct comparisons to the broader set of election and general public opinion research tracking data, which tends to track the 18- to 29-year-old demographic group. Our fall political tracking surveys will include samples of N=2,000, while the spring semester's research will be more in-depth and include N=3,000 interviews. All of our interviews are conducted in English and Spanish. Using GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks) as our research partner, IOP surveys use RDD and Address-Based Sampling (ABS) frames and are administered online (see Appendix).

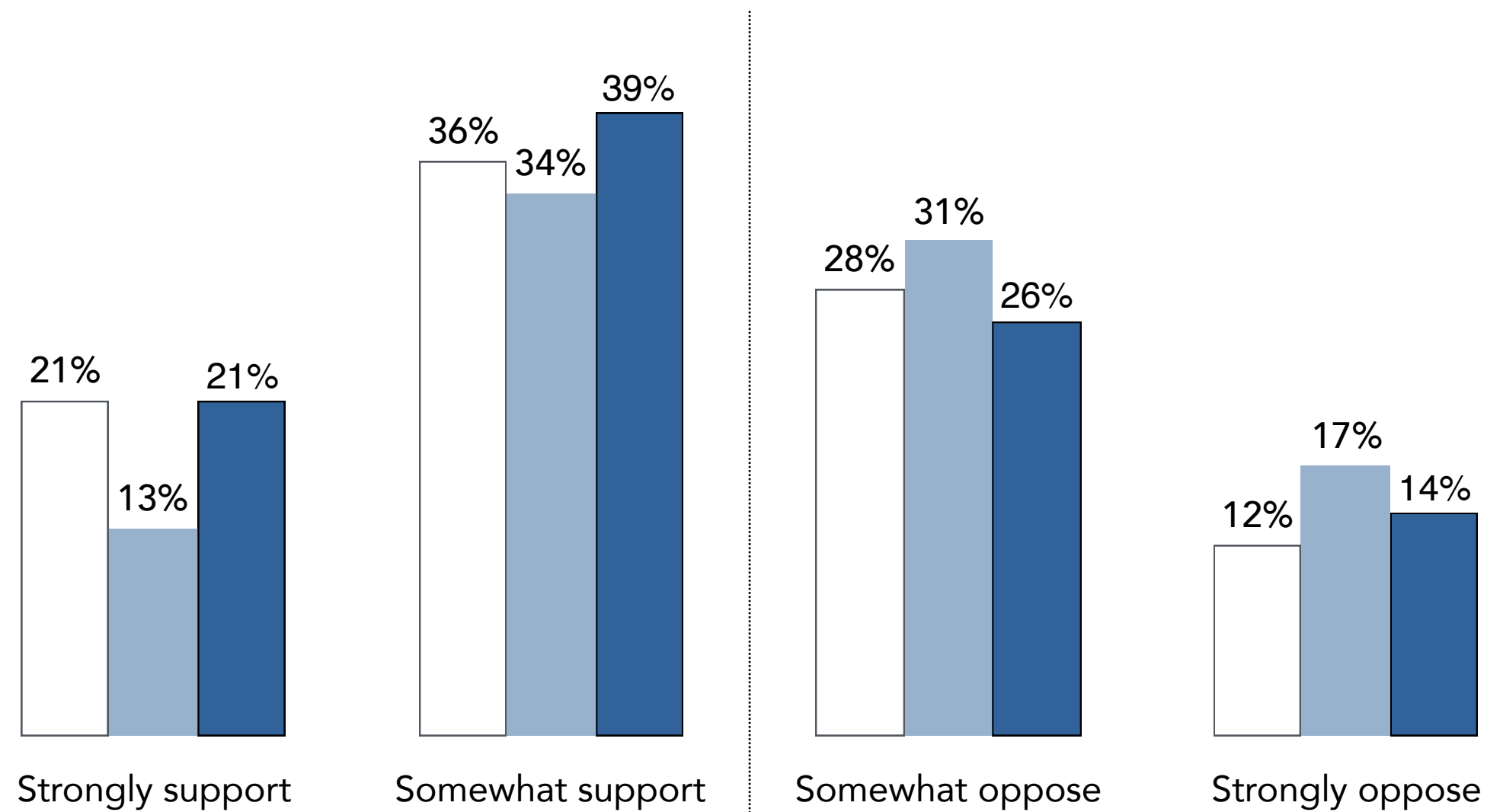
The interviewing period for this survey of N=2,011 18- to 29- year olds was October 30 to November 9, 2015. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 2.8 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. During the interviewing period, major media stories included the downing of a Russian passenger jet in the Sinai Peninsula, reports that Senator Marco Rubio misused official credit cards, Ben Carson's claims that the pyramids were used to store grain and he was offered a West Point scholarship, President Obama's rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline and Donald Trump hosting of Saturday Night Live. The terrorist attacks on Paris occurred four days after the interviewing was completed.

Harvard IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe supervised the survey group of undergraduates. As always, the IOP survey group would like to thank IOP Director Maggie Williams, Executive Director Catherine McLaughlin, Communications and Marketing Director Esten Perez for their insight and support over the course of this and all IOP projects.

# 10 KEY FINDINGS

# #1: SOLID MAJORITY SUPPORT SENDING GROUND TROOPS TO COMBAT ISIS, LESS THAN 20% INCLINED TO SERVE IF NEEDED

Do you support or oppose the United States sending ground troops to participate in a military campaign against the Islamic State (IS/ISIS/ISIL)?



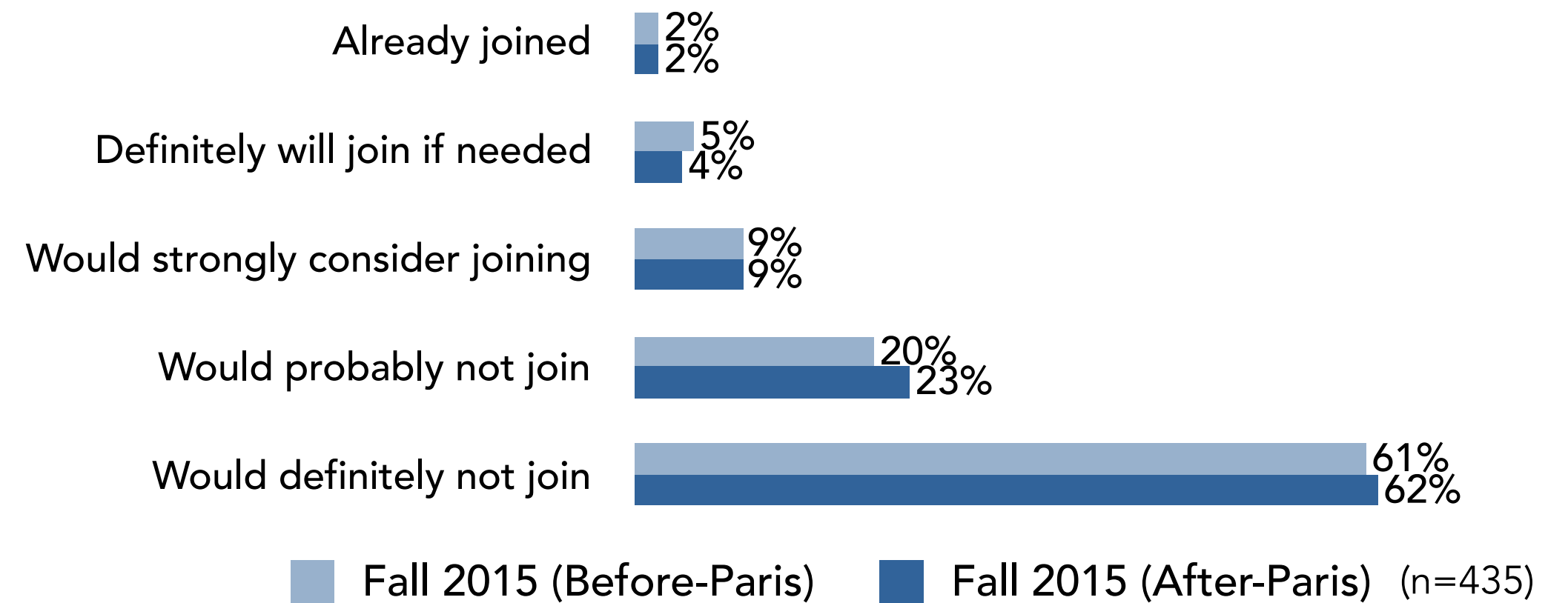
Spring 2015
  Fall 2015 (Before-Paris Attacks)
  Fall 2015 (After-Paris Attacks) (n=435)



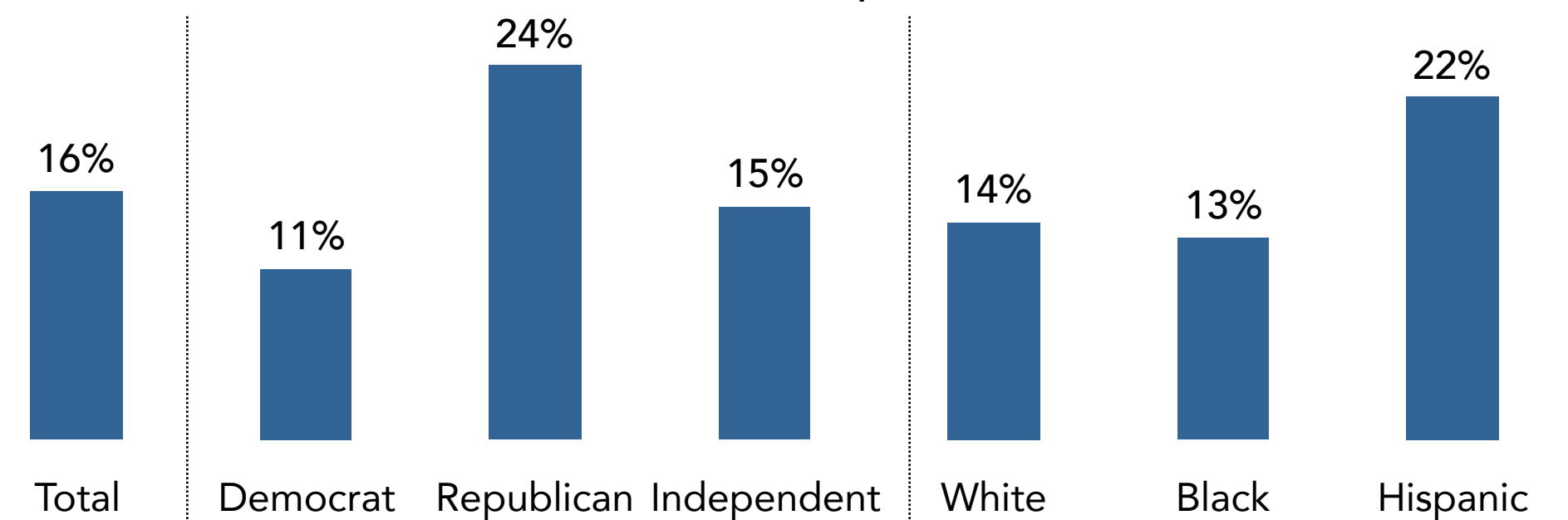
**Immediately Before-Paris Attacks:**  
47% Support - 48% Oppose

**\*Immediately After-Paris Attacks:**  
60% Support - 40% Oppose

If the United States needed additional troops to combat the Islamic State (IS/ISIS/ISIL), how likely would you be to serve?



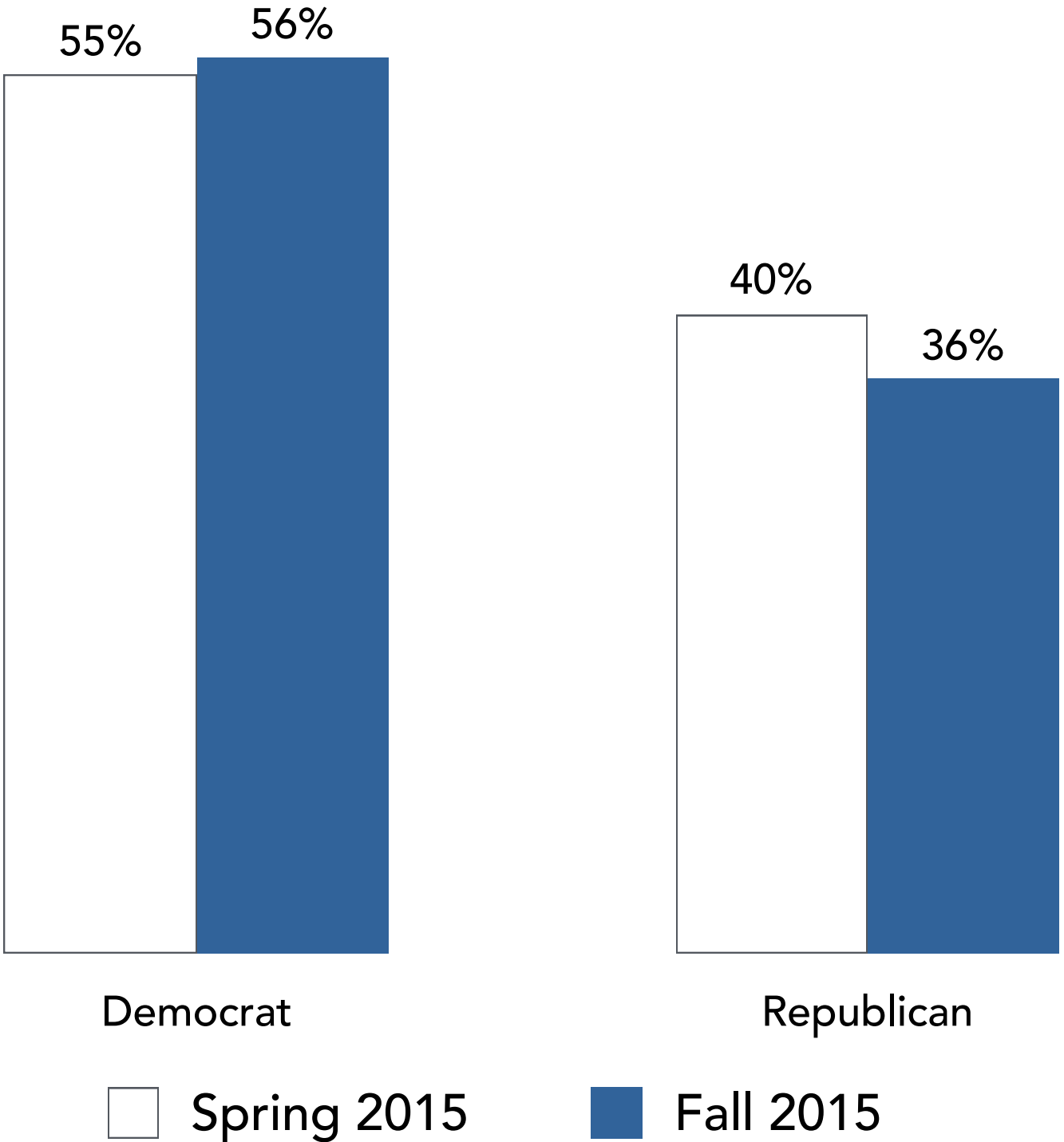
Already joined + Definitely + Strongly Consider by Subgroup



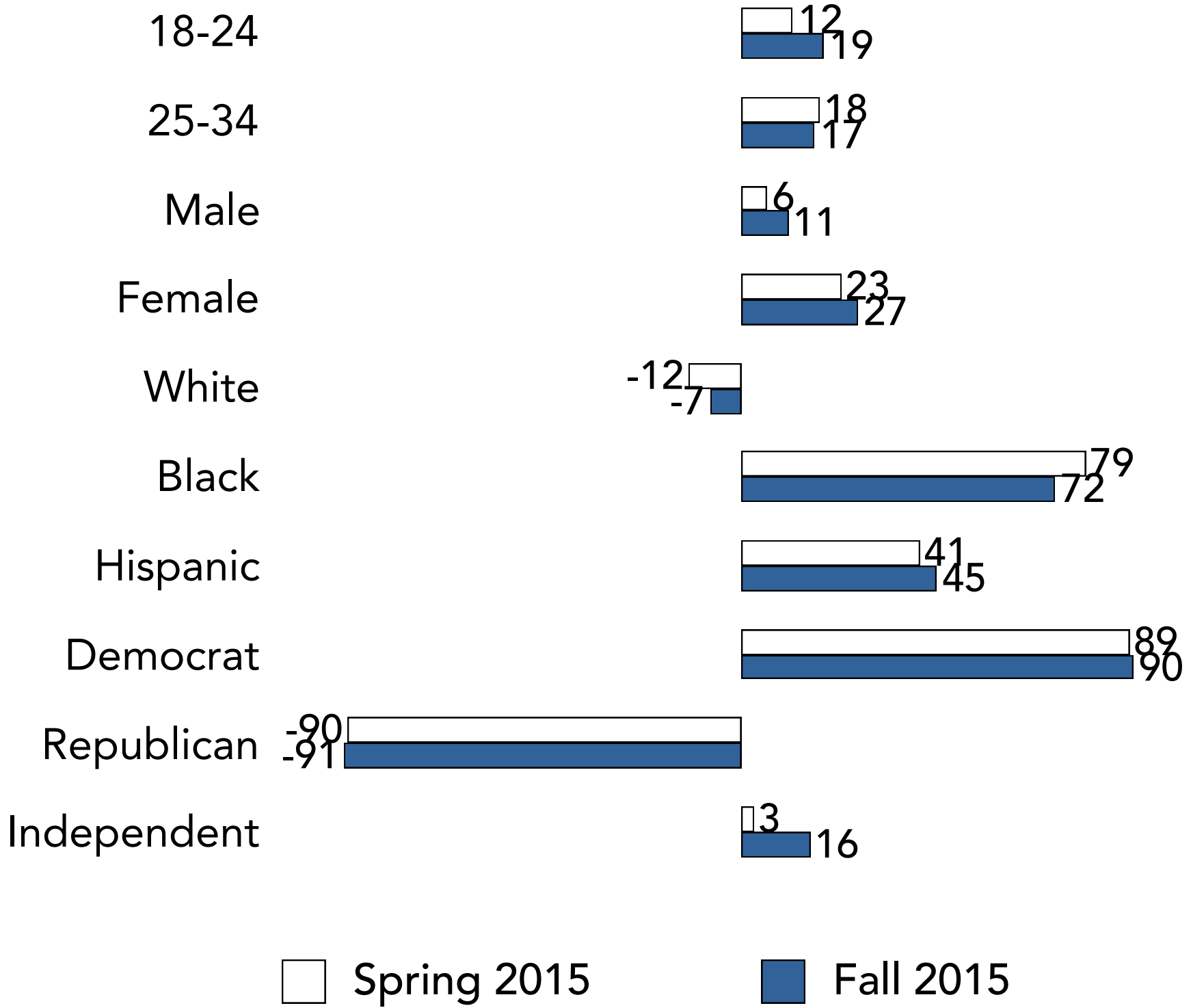
\* After the Paris attacks, we re-asked n=435 respondents their opinions related to military campaign against ISIS and likelihood to serve.

# #2: 18-29 YEAR OLDS PREFER DEMOCRATS MAINTAIN CONTROL OF WHITE HOUSE BY 20 POINTS; 5 POINT INCREASE SINCE SPRING

Which party do you prefer win the 2016 campaign for president?

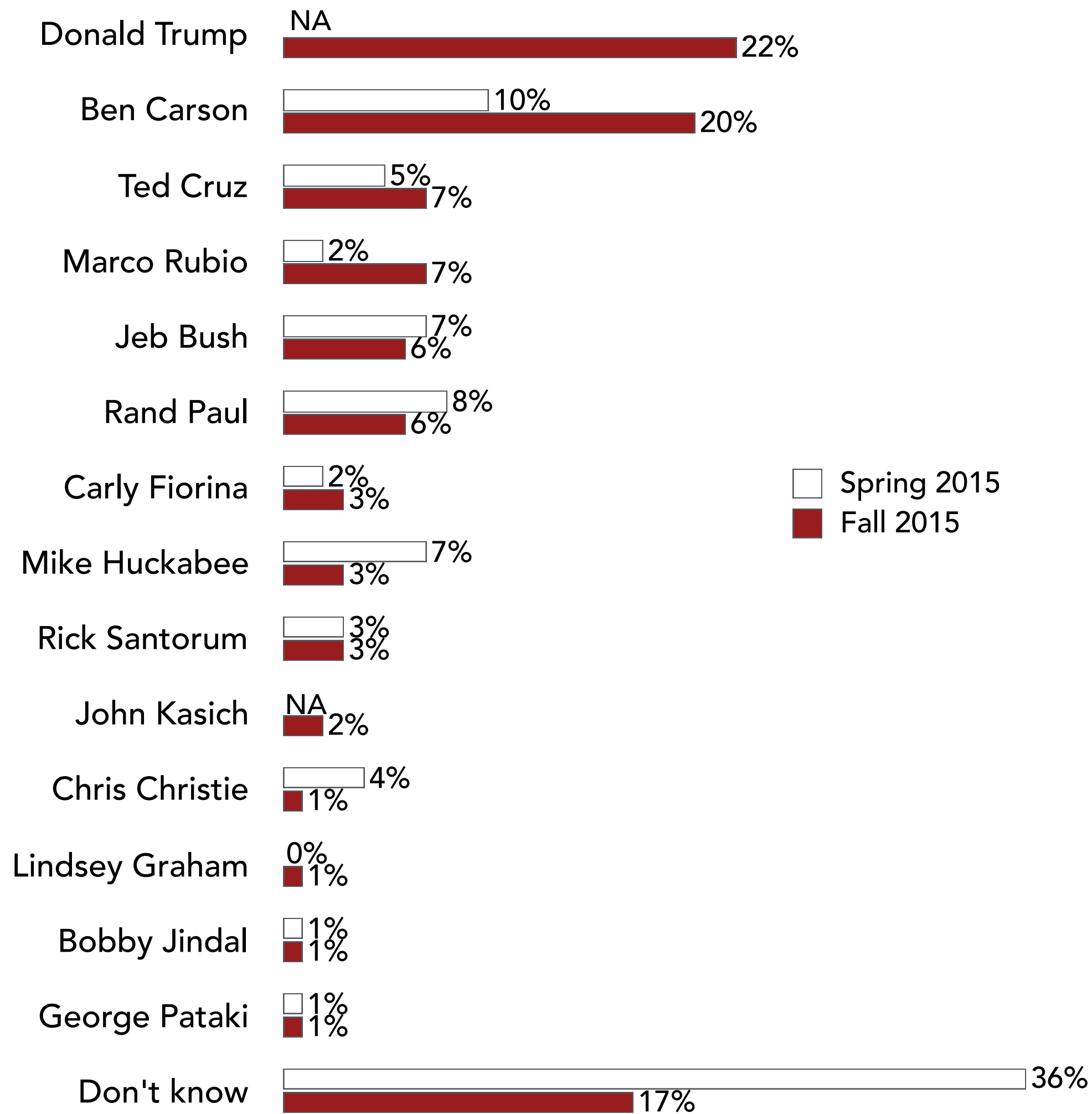


Which party do you prefer win the 2016 campaign for president? (Democrat-Republican Advantage by Subgroup)

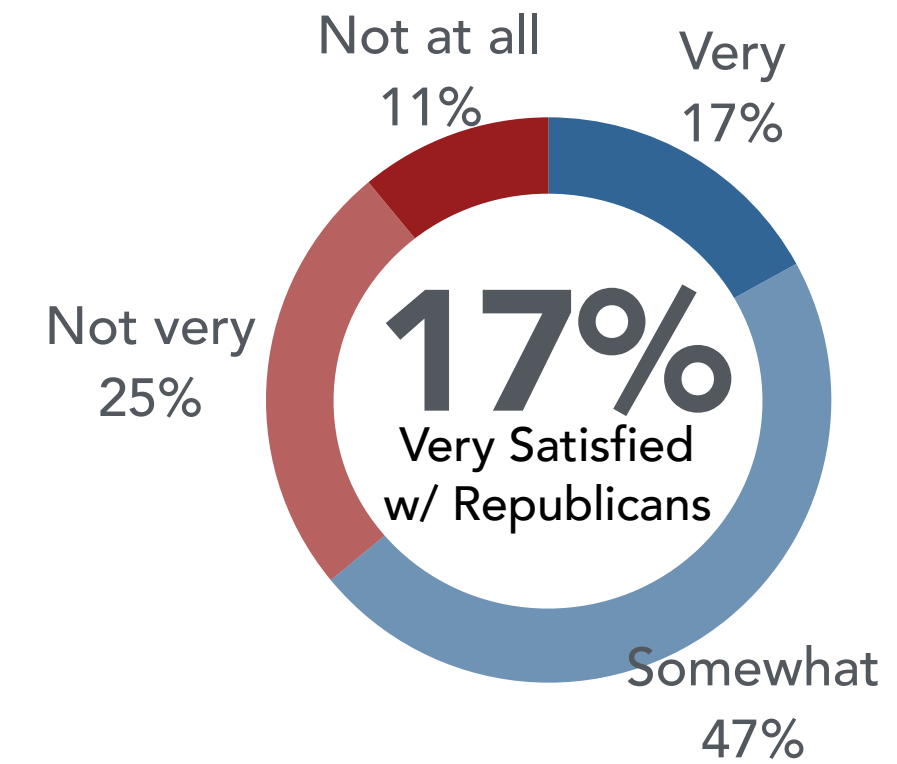


# #3: TRUMP, CARSON CURRENTLY LEAD REPUBLICAN PRIMARY; LESS THAN HALF OF REPUBLICAN VOTERS BELIEVE TRUMP IS QUALIFIED

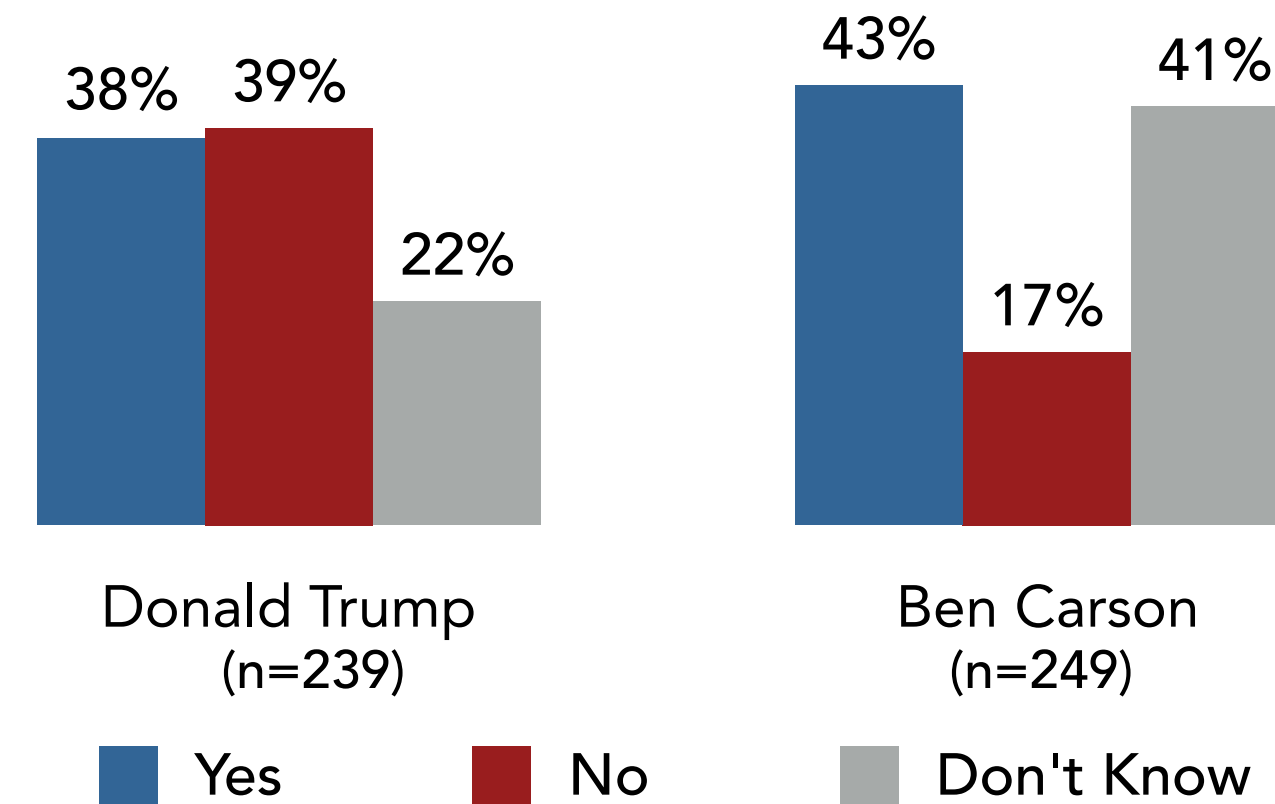
If the Republican primary for President were held today, which one of the following candidates would be your first choice? (n=472)



Overall, how satisfied are you with the Republican candidates for president this year? (n=472)

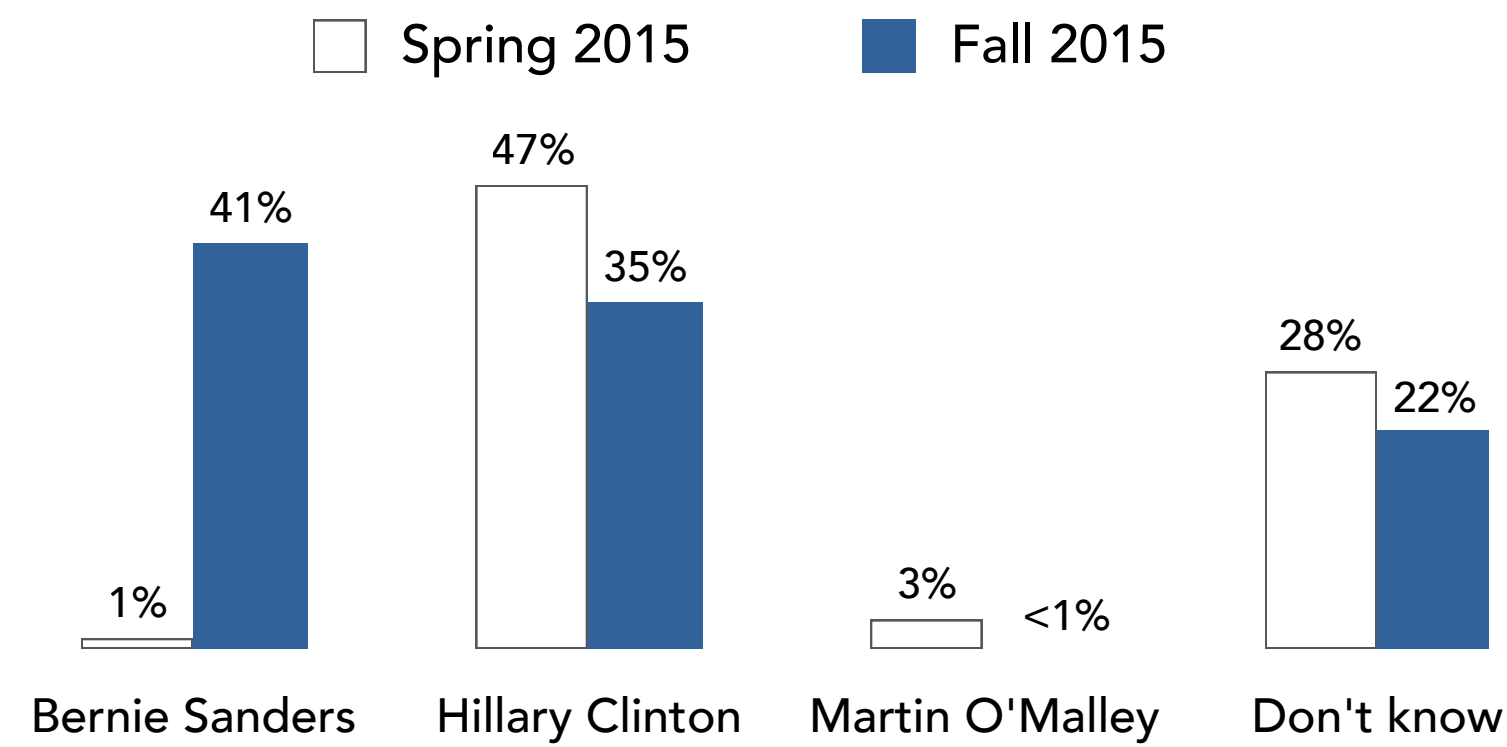


Regardless of whom you intend to vote for, do you believe [SPLIT SAMPLE] Ben Carson / Donald Trump is qualified to be president? (Republican Voters Only)

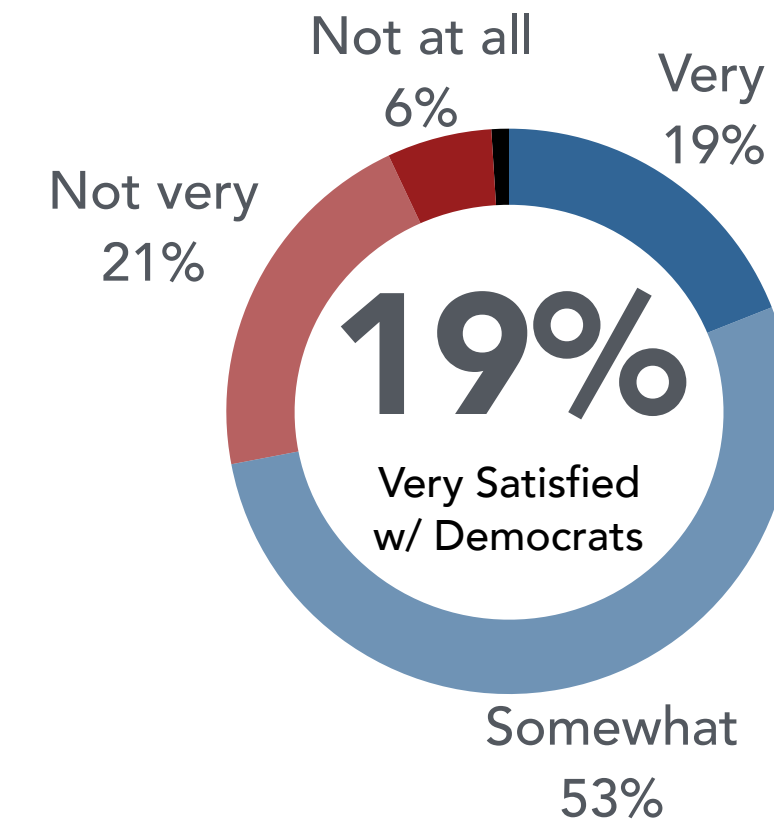


# #4: STARTING AT 1% IN SPRING, SANDERS NOW AT 41% & LEADING CLINTON BY 6; MOST DON'T BELIEVE SOCIALIST LABEL MAKES DIFFERENCE

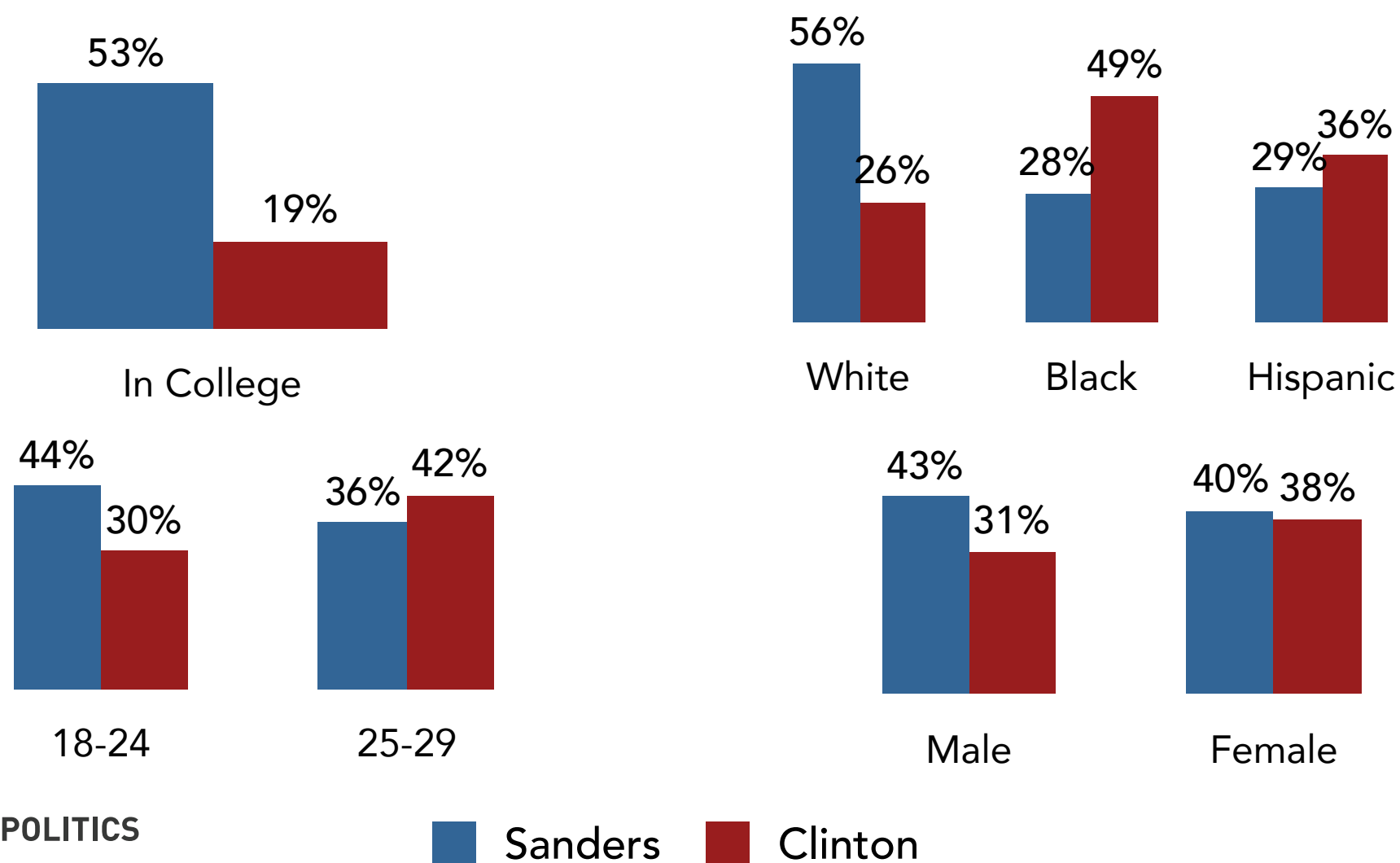
If the Democratic primary for President were held today, which one of the following candidates would be your first choice? (n=751)



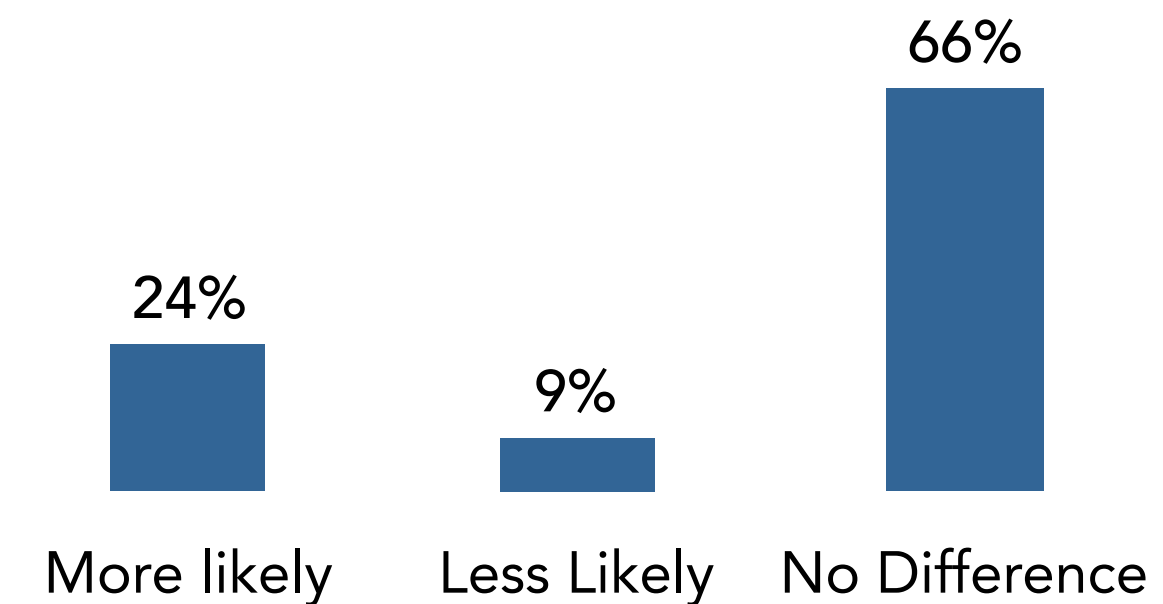
Overall, how satisfied are you with the Democratic candidates for president this year?



Democratic Primary by Subgroup

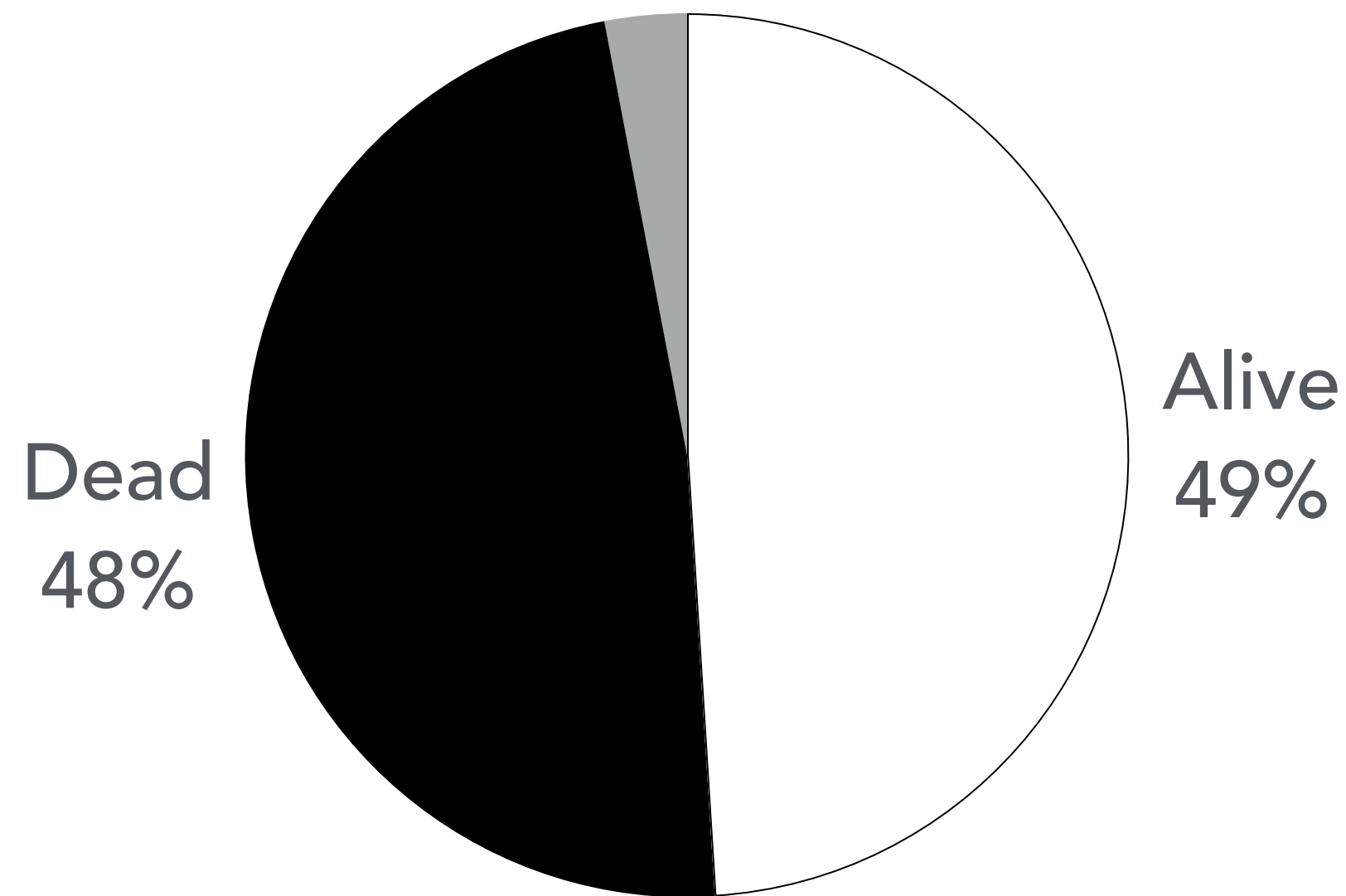


Does the fact that Bernie Sanders is a self-described Democratic Socialist make you more likely to vote for him, less likely to vote for him – or does it not make a difference either way? (n=751)

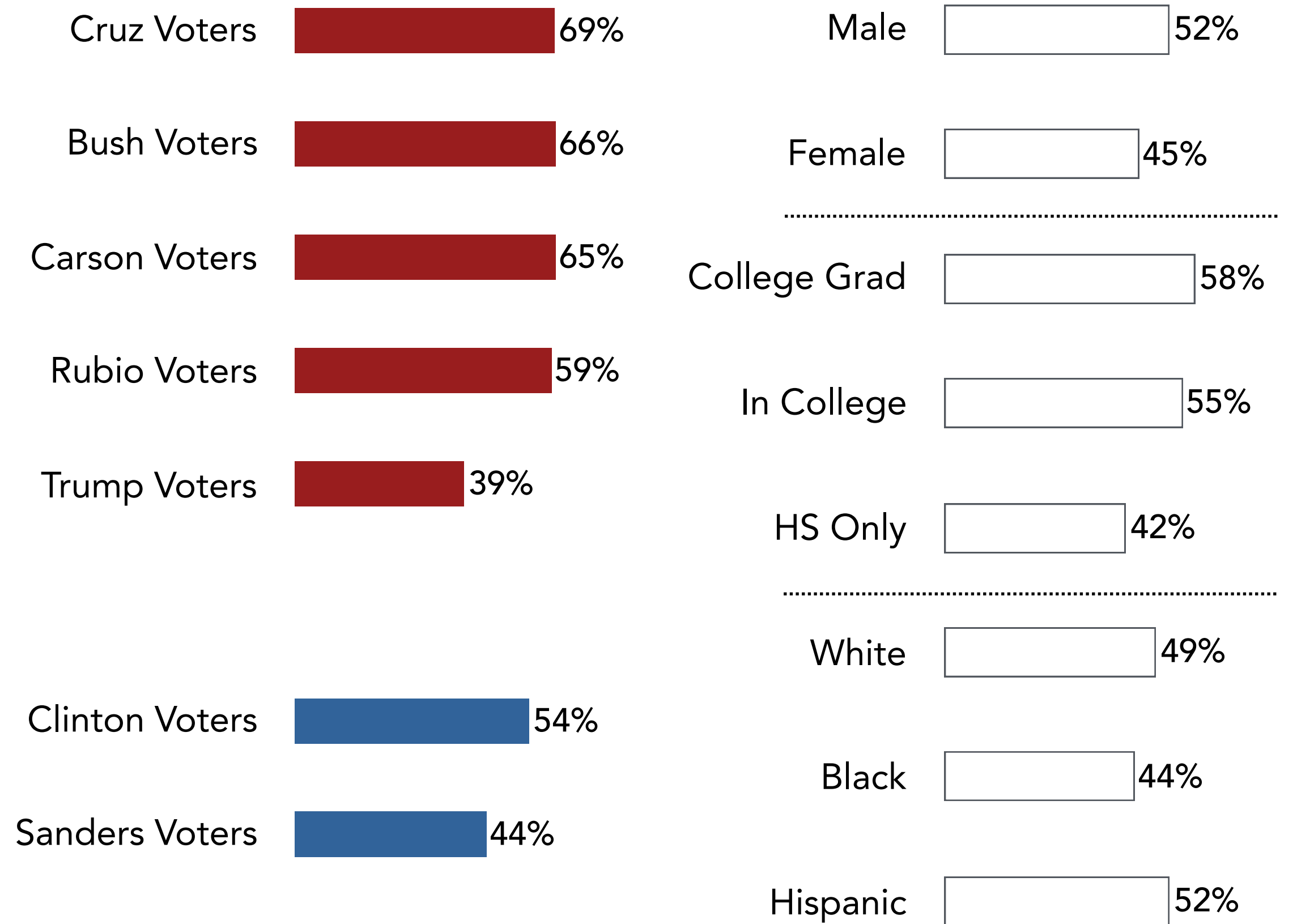


# #5: YOUNG AMERICANS SPLIT ON WHETHER AMERICAN DREAM IS ALIVE; MAJORITY OF TRUMP AND SANDERS VOTERS SAY ITS DEAD FOR THEM

For you personally, is the idea of the American Dream alive or dead?



% Who Believe American Dream is Alive for Them by Subgroup





# #6: INTEGRITY, LEVEL-HEADEDNESS AND AUTHENTICITY — NOT EXPERIENCE — ARE MOST VALUED ATTRIBUTES IN FUTURE PRESIDENT

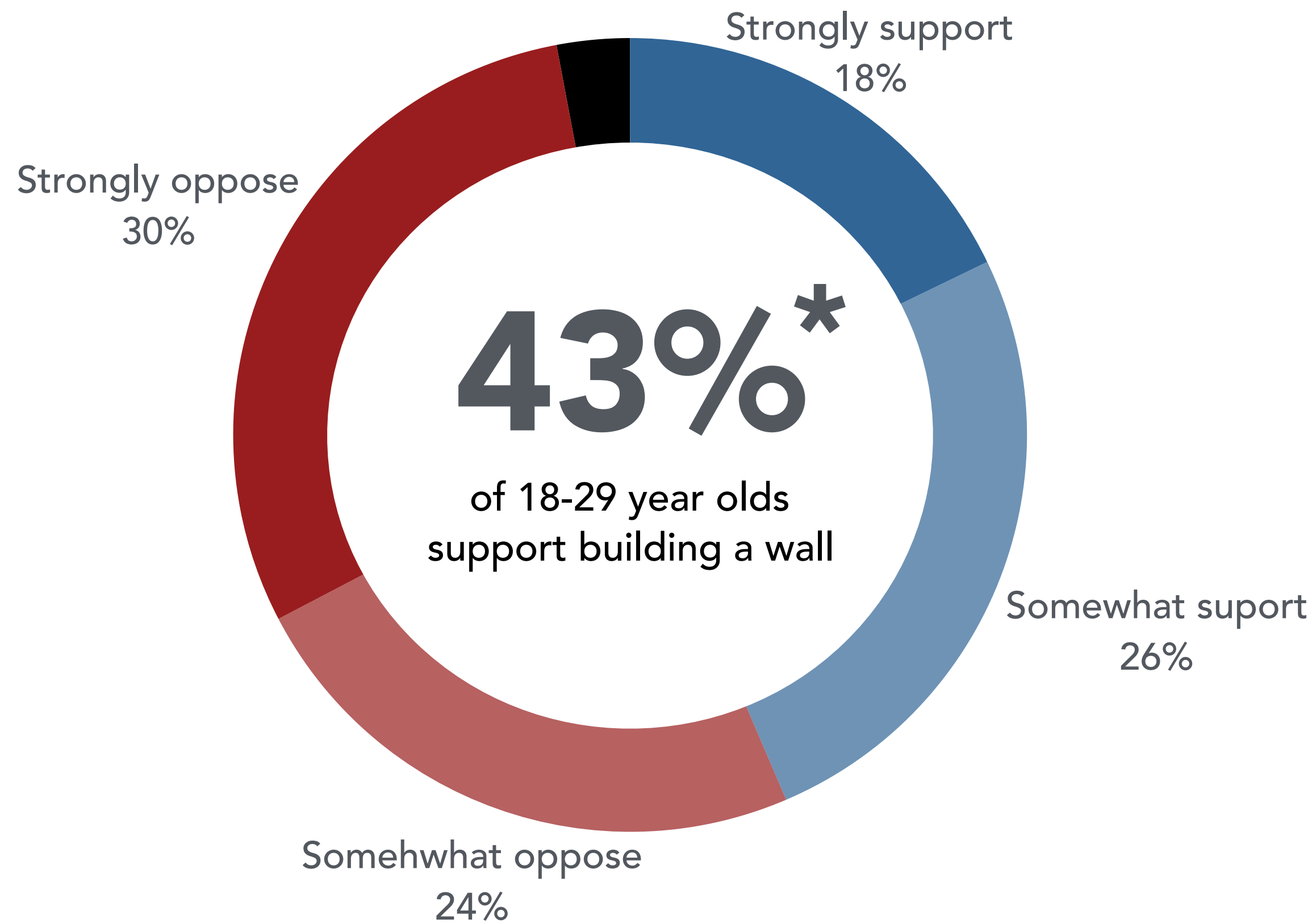
Which of the following attributes do you value most in a presidential candidate? [Select 3]



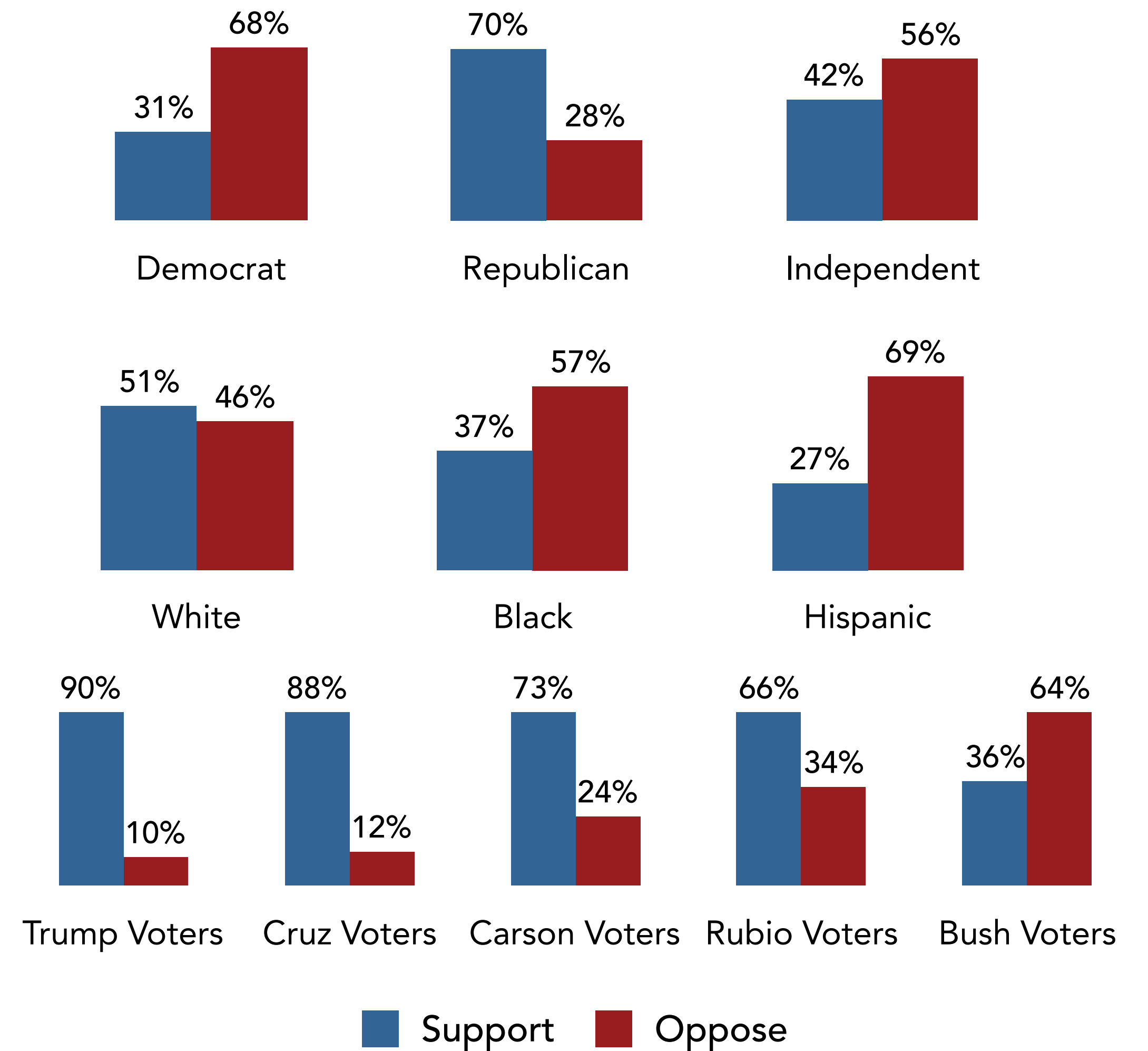
Attributes in **red** indicate that Republicans are more likely to value this attribute, **blue** indicates Democrats value more; gray means there is no statistical difference in the way parties view the attributes.

# #7: 70% OF 18-29 YEAR OLD REPUBLICANS, 31% OF DEMOCRATS SUPPORT BUILDING A WALL ON THE BORDER OF THE US AND MEXICO

Do you support or oppose building a wall on the border of the United States and Mexico?

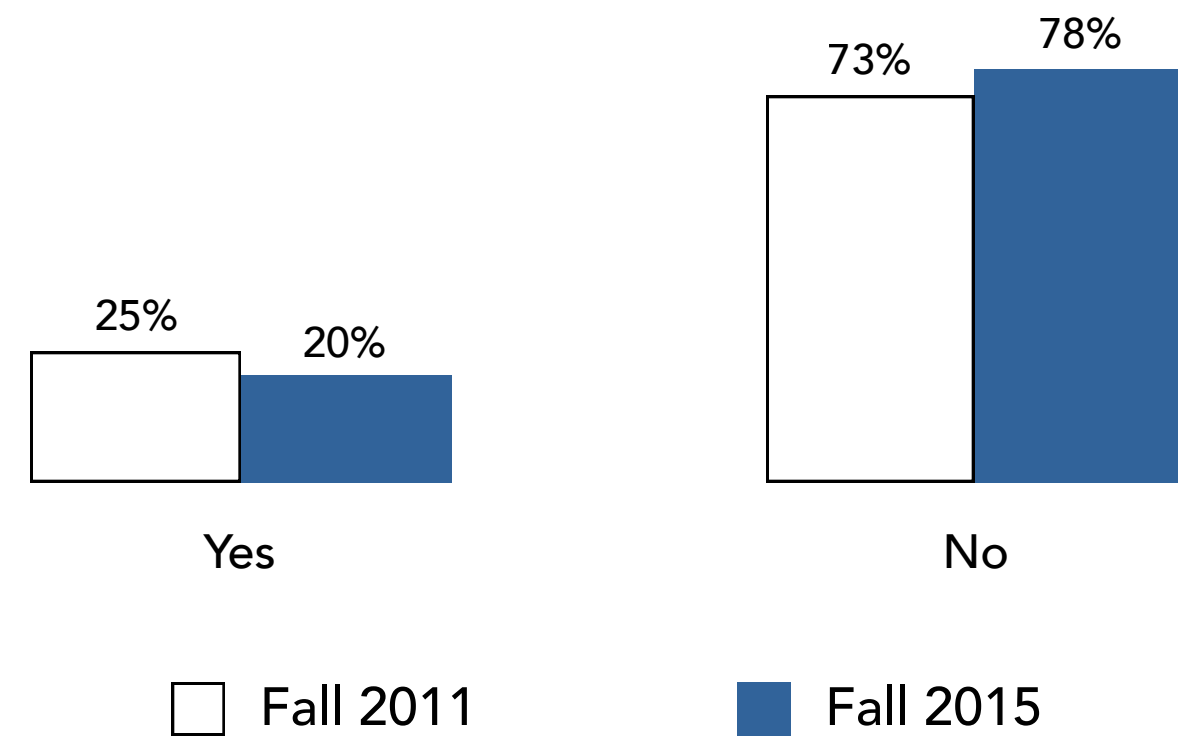


Do you support or oppose building a wall on the border of the United States and Mexico?  
(by Subgroup)

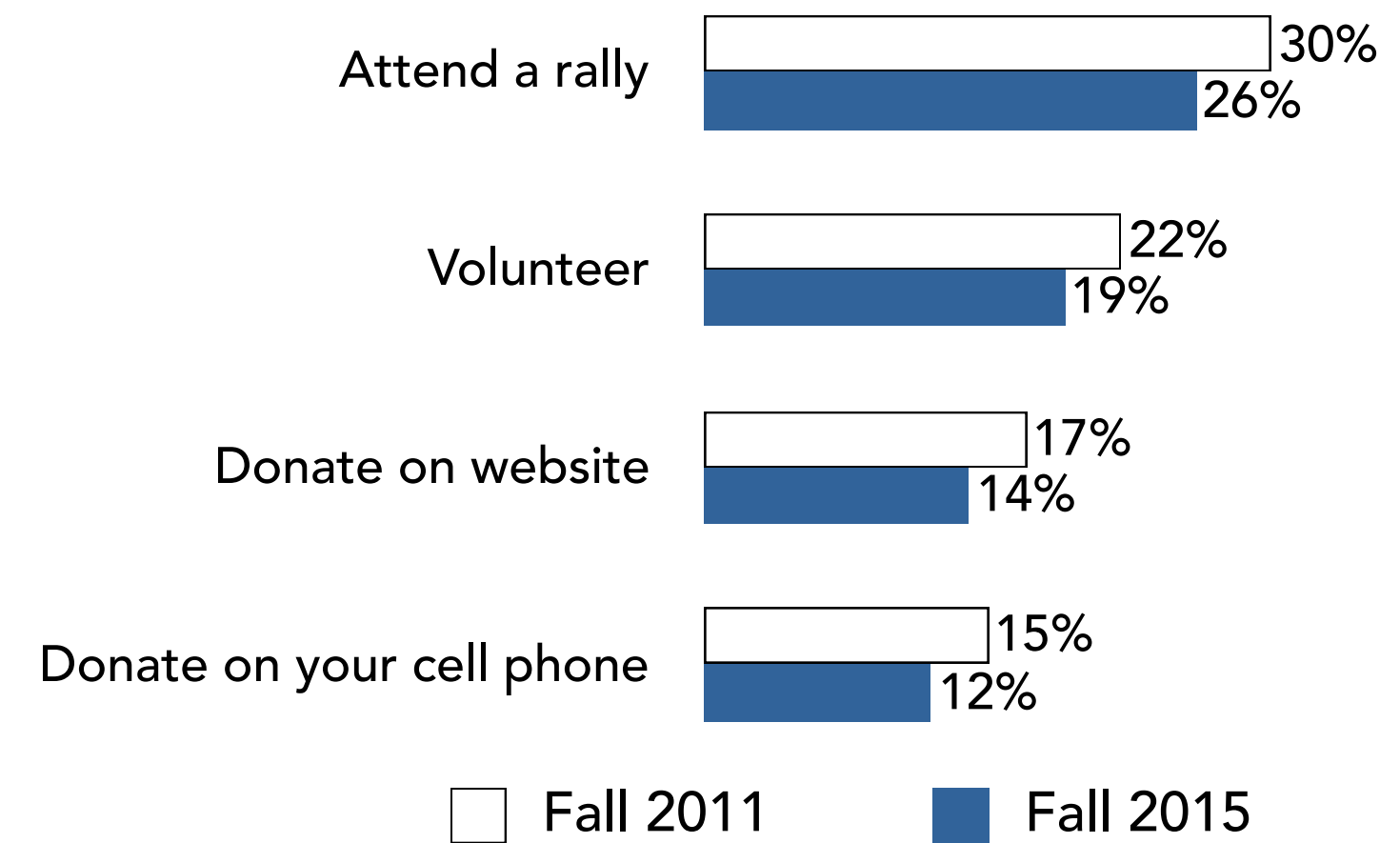


# #8: ENGAGEMENT SLIPPING SINCE 2011: 20% OF 18-29 YEAR OLDS SAY THEY'RE POLITICALLY ENGAGED; LESS THAN HALF FOLLOWING CAMPAIGN

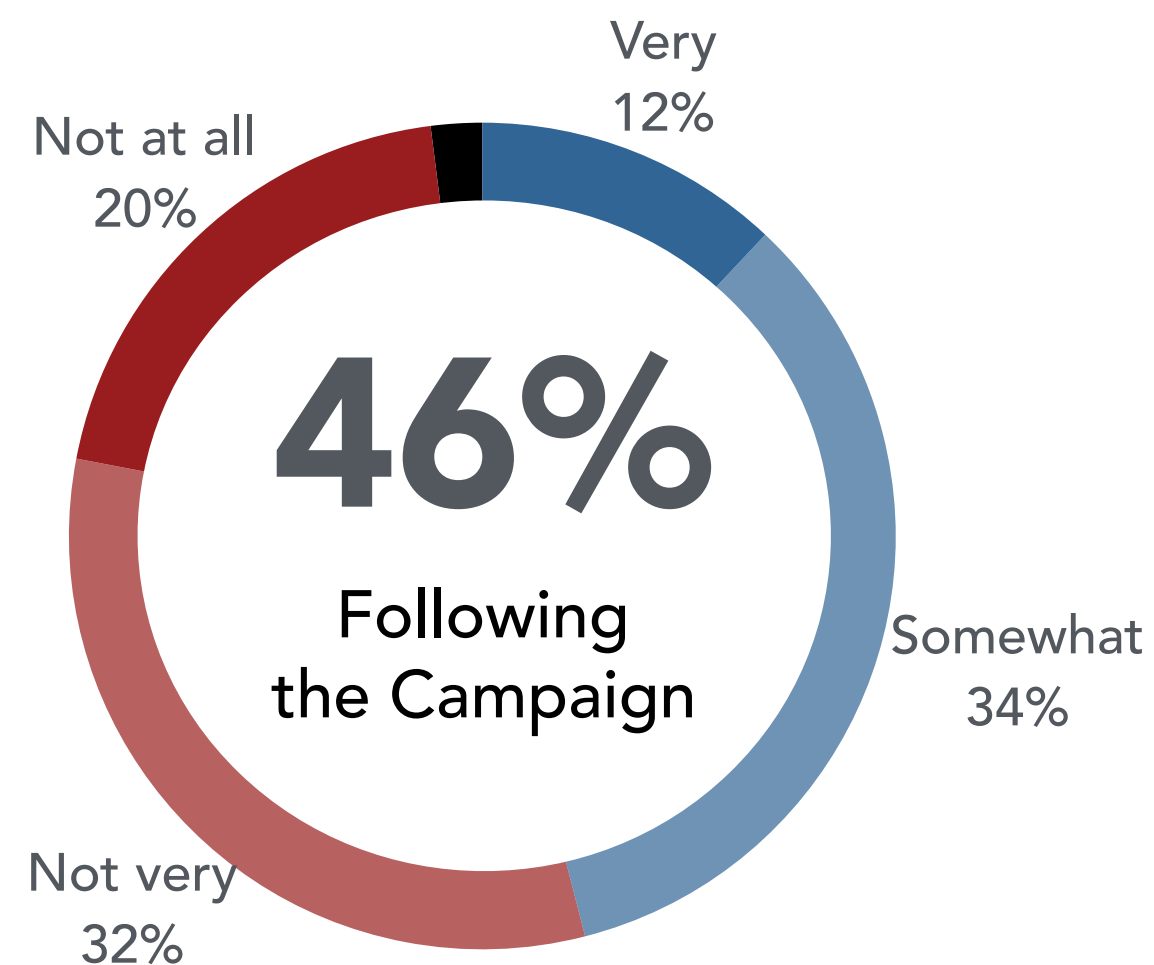
Do you consider yourself to be politically engaged or politically active?



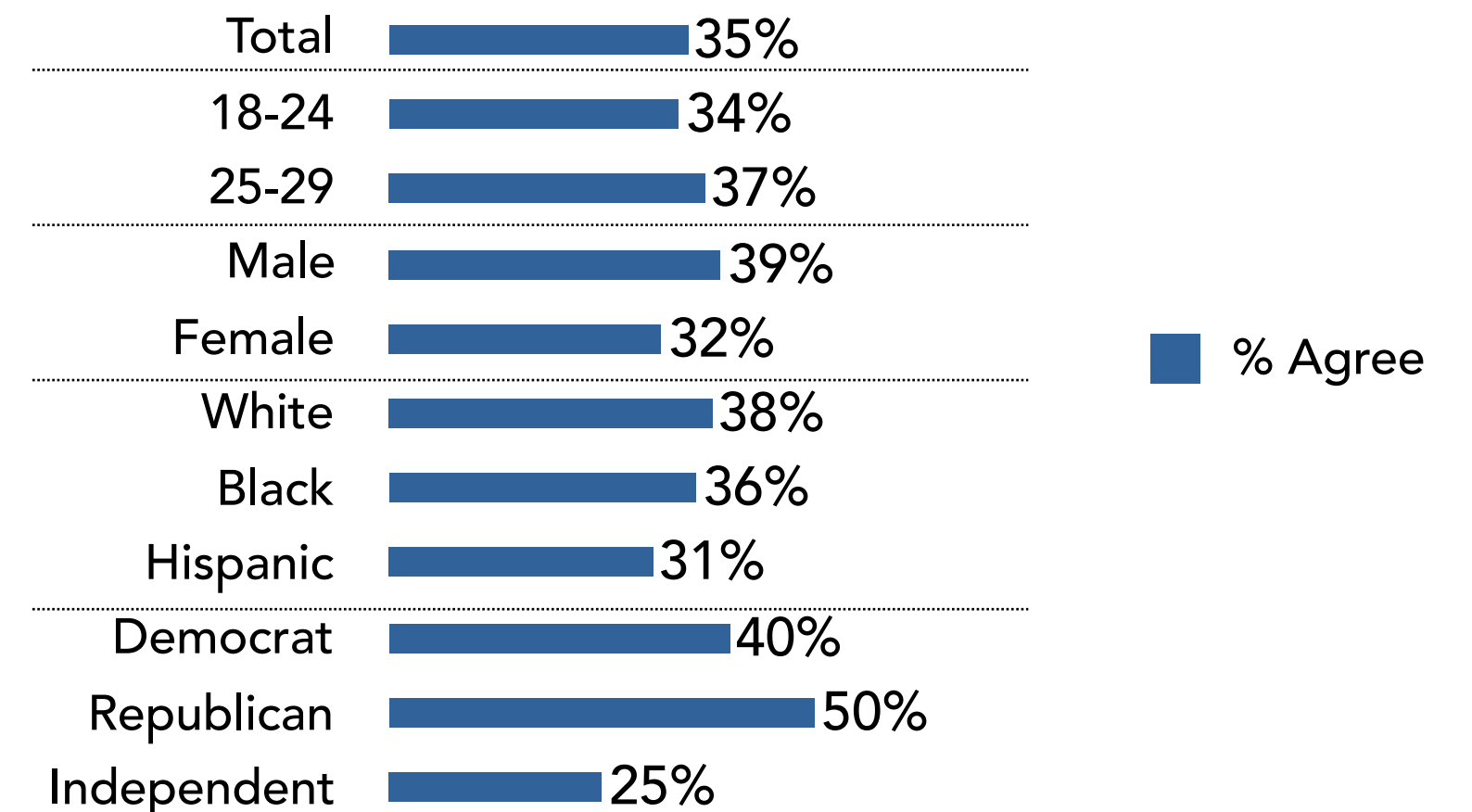
If the campaign you supported provided an opportunity for you to engage in some way, how likely would you be to participate in these activities?



How closely do you follow the 2016 presidential race?

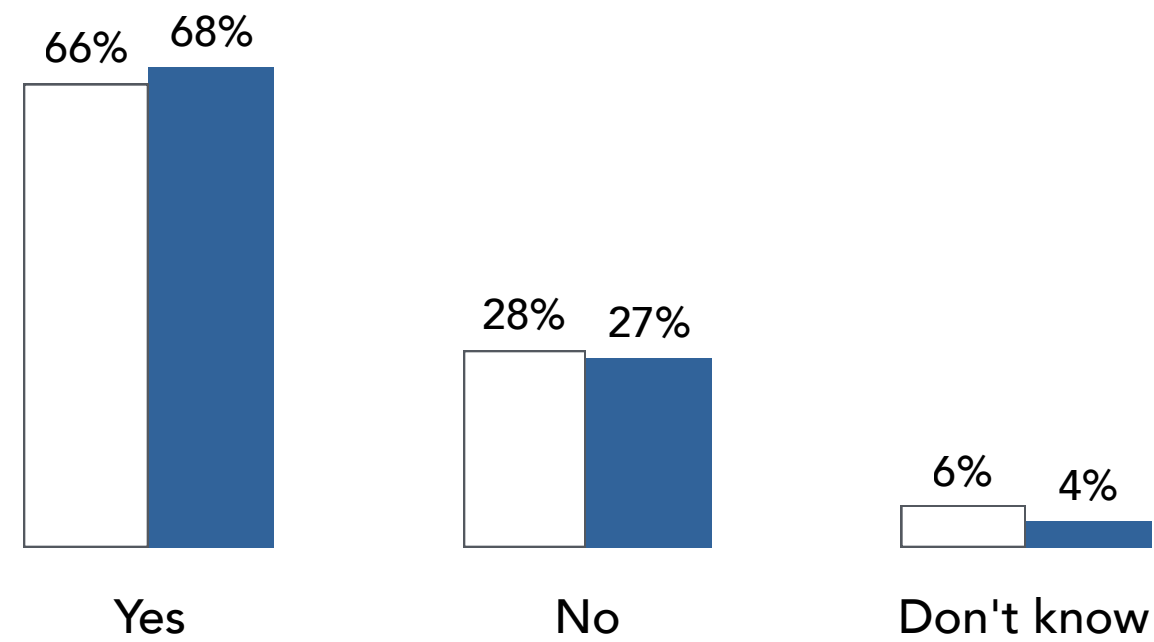


Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Voting is a part of who I am.

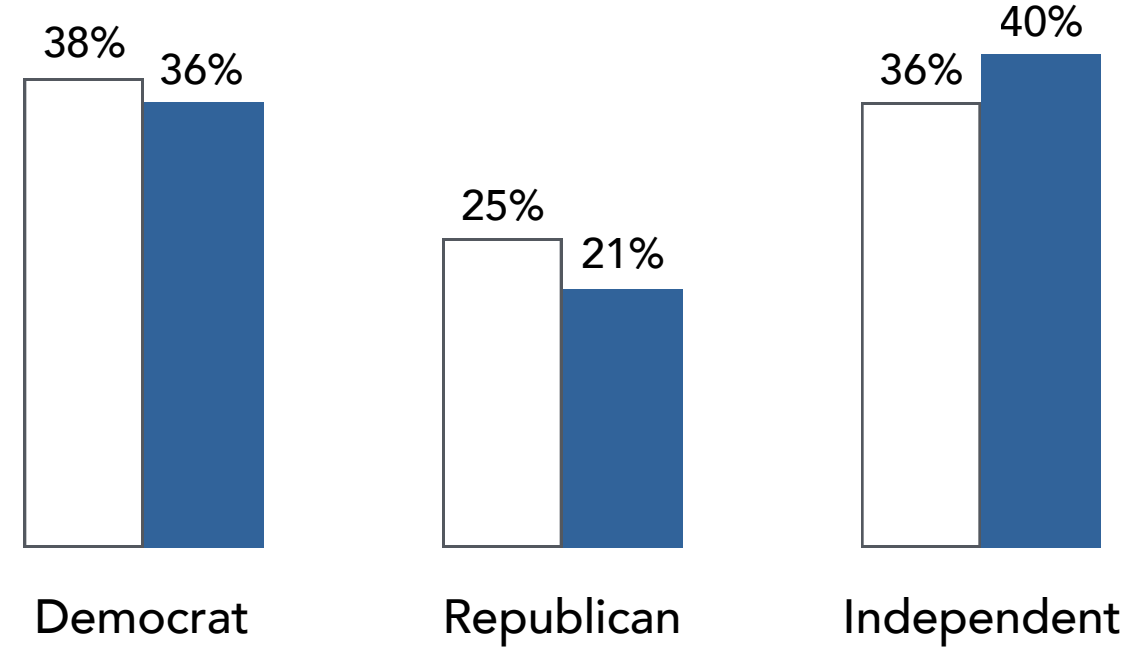


# #9: COMPARED TO 4 YEARS AGO, OBAMA, DEMOCRATS & RIGHT TRACK NUMBERS IMPROVE SLIGHTLY; NUMBER OF INDEPENDENTS RISE

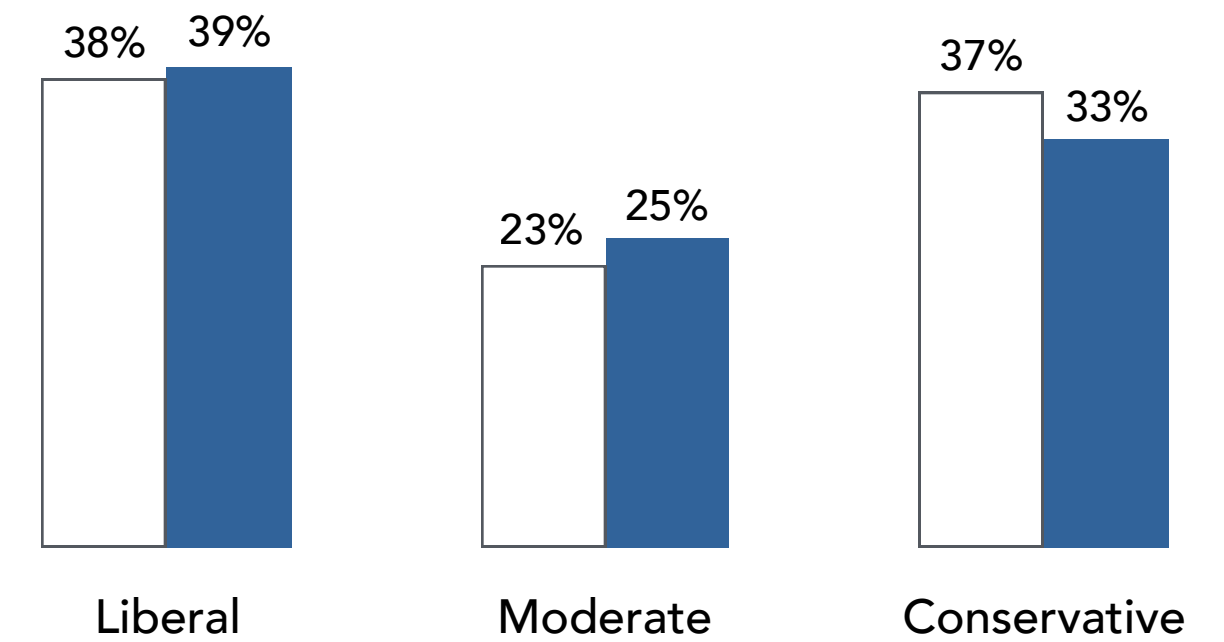
We understand that plenty of young people are not registered to vote, but we are wondering if you are registered to vote?



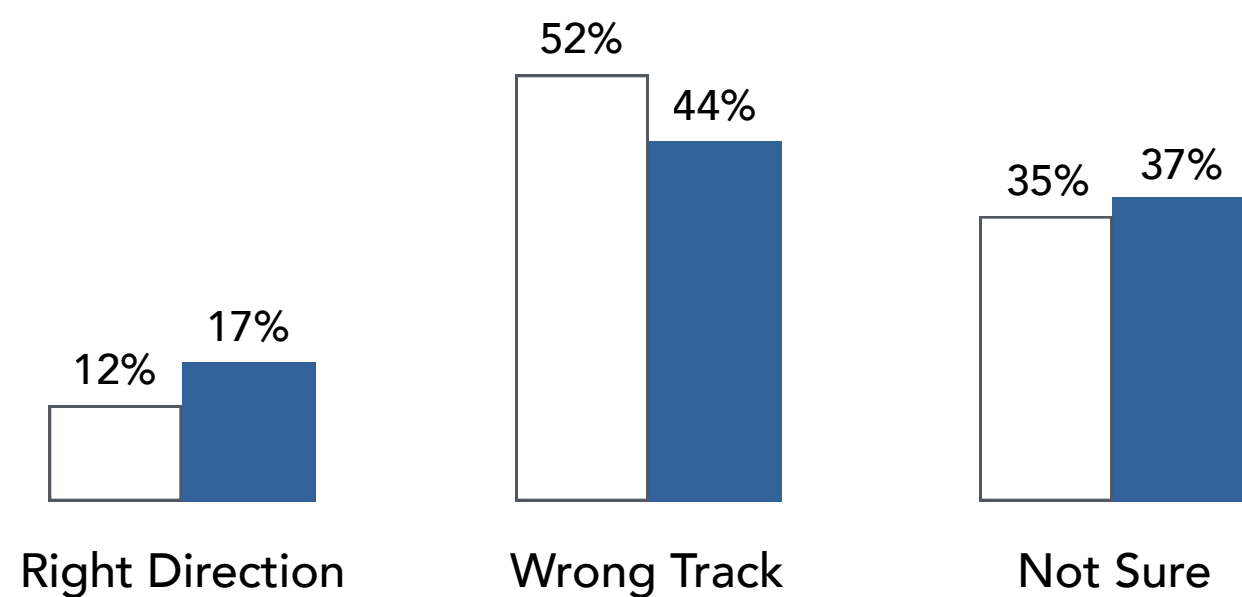
When it comes to voting, with which party do you consider yourself to be affiliated?



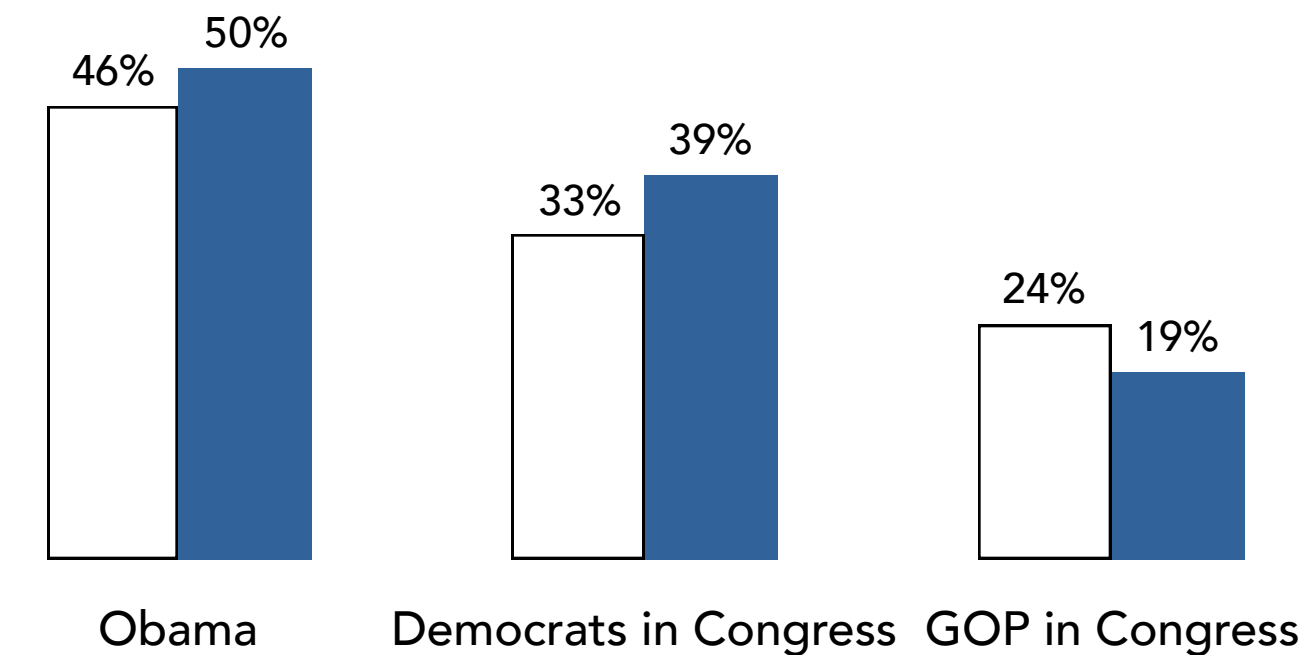
When it comes to most political issues, do you think of yourself as a...?



All in all, do you think things in the nation are ...?



In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of...



□ Fall 2011    ■ Fall 2015

# #10: IN DAYS BEFORE PARIS ATTACKS, DOMESTIC POLICIES SUCH AS HEALTH CARE, JOB CREATION AND EDUCATION TOP YOUTH AGENDA FOR 2016

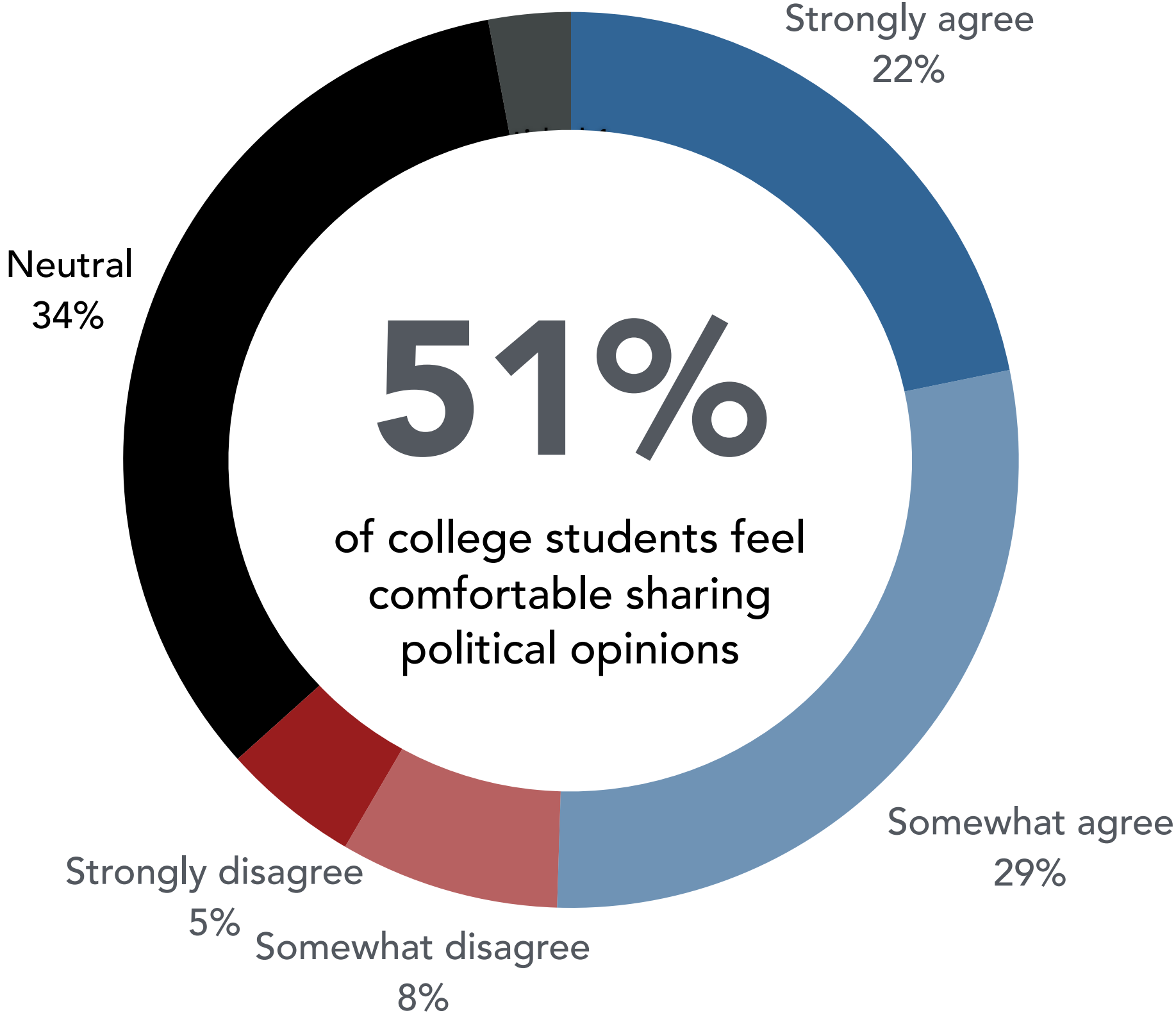
In thinking about who you will vote for in the 2016 election, which of the following two issues is more important?

	Winning Pct.	Immigration policy	Income inequality	Federal budget	Education policy	Job creation	Health care policy	Policy toward ISIS	Abortion	Same sex marriage	Campaign finance	Climate change	Race relations
Health care policy	68%	62%	58%	60%	62%	55%		68%	70%	83%	80%	74%	71%
Job creation	63%	60%	60%	61%	45%		42%	65%	81%	78%	74%	63%	70%
Education policy	63%	58%	51%	55%		54%	37%	61%	84%	85%	74%	62%	79%
Income inequality	56%	60%		64%	42%	39%	38%	45%	59%	78%	79%	55%	55%
Federal budget deficit	56%	56%	35%		44%	37%	38%	61%	73%	78%	73%	57%	65%
Immigration policy	52%		40%	43%	39%	37%	33%	44%	67%	72%	71%	64%	58%
Policy toward ISIS	52%	54%	53%	38%	35%	34%	31%		70%	79%	67%	62%	47%
Race relations	43%	40%	42%	31%	18%	28%	26%	52%	58%	69%	60%	45%	
Climate change	42%	36%	40%	41%	37%	33%	24%	36%	55%	58%	59%		53%
Abortion	34%	32%	38%	25%	14%	18%	28%	28%		59%	52%	43%	41%
Campaign finance reform	31%	24%	18%	23%	23%	23%	19%	31%	44%	60%		38%	37%
Same sex marriage	25%	24%	20%	20%	15%	20%	16%	18%	39%		38%	40%	27%

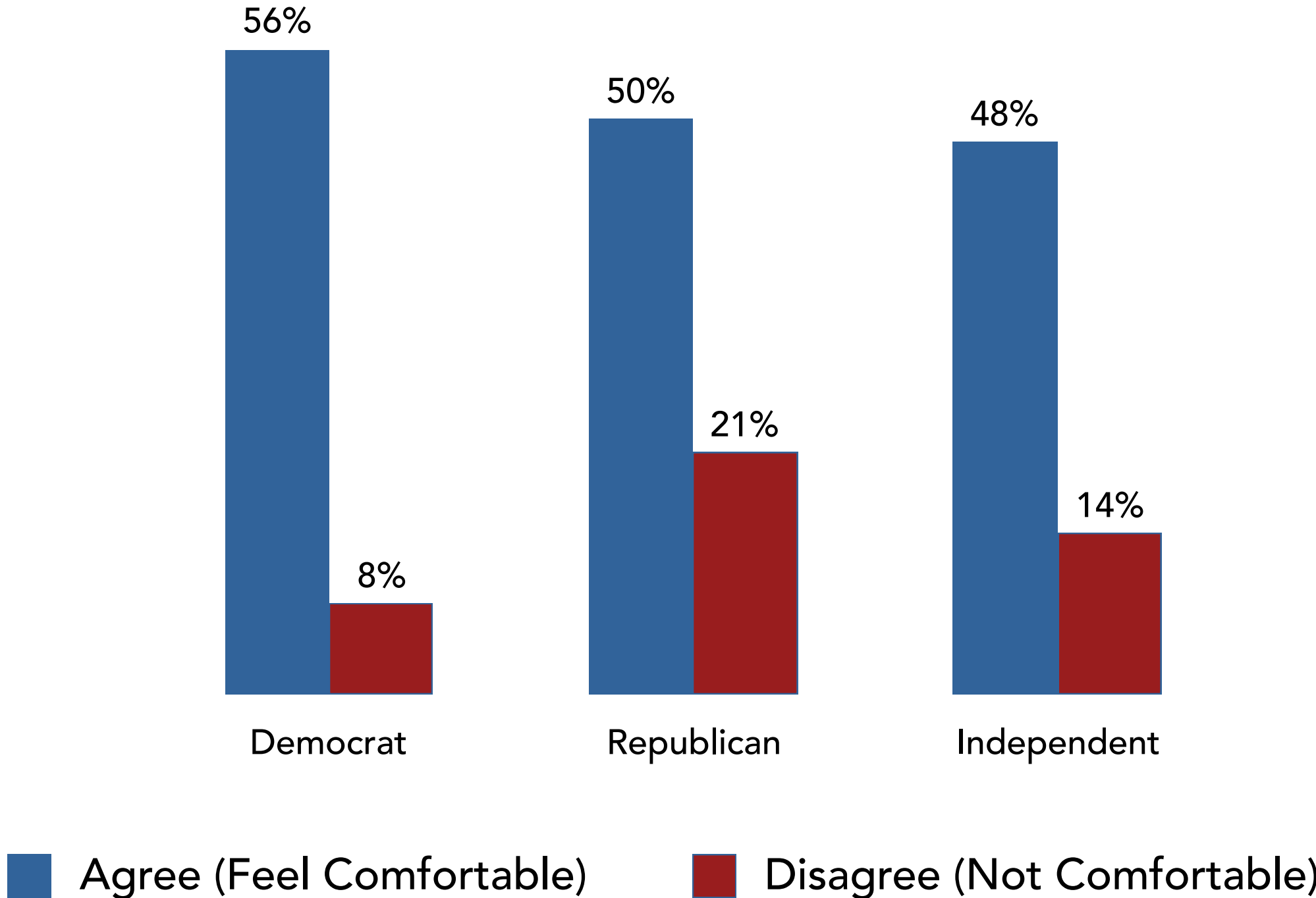
**ADDITIONAL  
FACTS, FIGURES & PERSPECTIVE FROM SURVEY**

# MOST COLLEGE STUDENTS FEEL COMFORTABLE SHARING POLITICAL OPINIONS ON CAMPUS; REPUBLICANS GENERALLY FEAR CENSORSHIP MORE

Agree/Disagree: I feel comfortable sharing my political opinions at my college without fear of censorship or negative repercussions. (n=647)

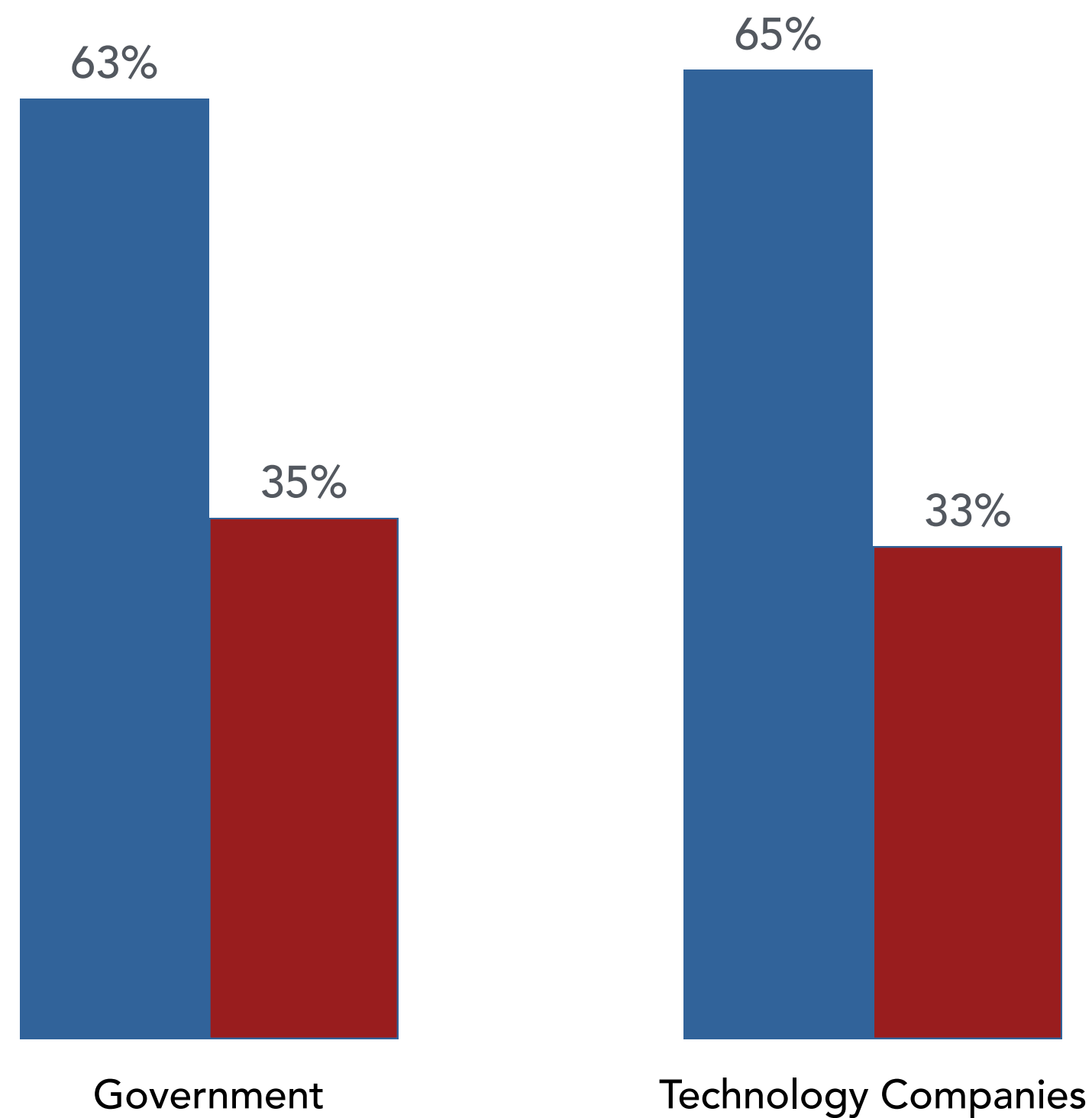


Agree/Disagree: I feel comfortable sharing my political opinions at my college without fear of censorship or negative repercussions. (by Party)



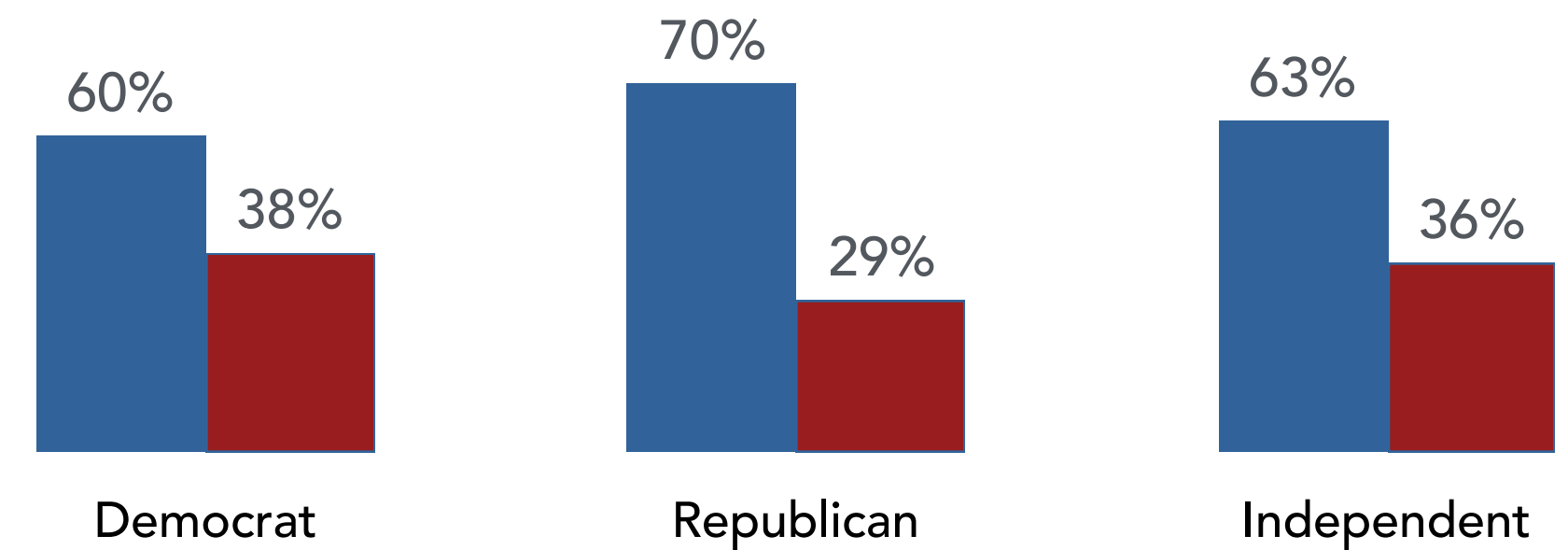
# NEARLY 2/3 OF YOUNG AMERICANS CONCERNED ABOUT COLLECTION OF DIGITAL INFORMATION FROM GOVERNMENT & TECH. COMPANIES

How concerned are you, if at all, about the [SPLIT SAMPLE: government/technology companies] collecting digital information from your computer or phone?

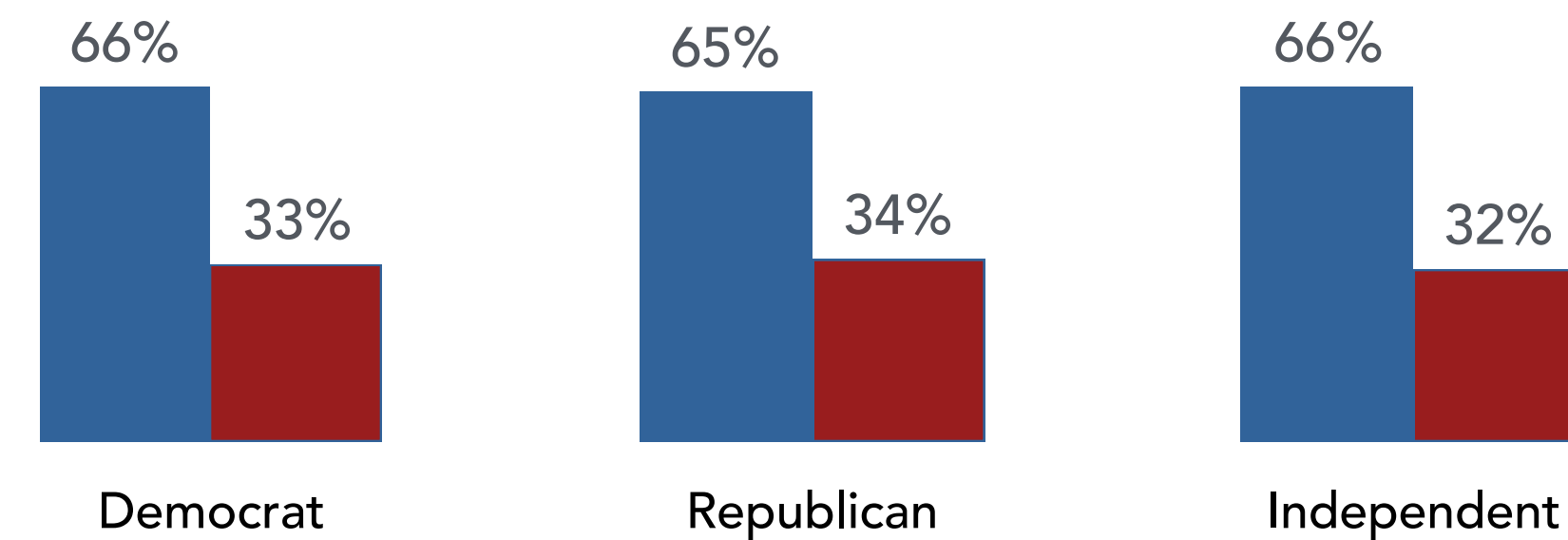


■ Concerned ■ Not concerned

How concerned are you, if at all, about the **government** collecting digital information from your computer or phone?



How concerned are you, if at all, about **technology companies** collecting digital information from your computer or phone?

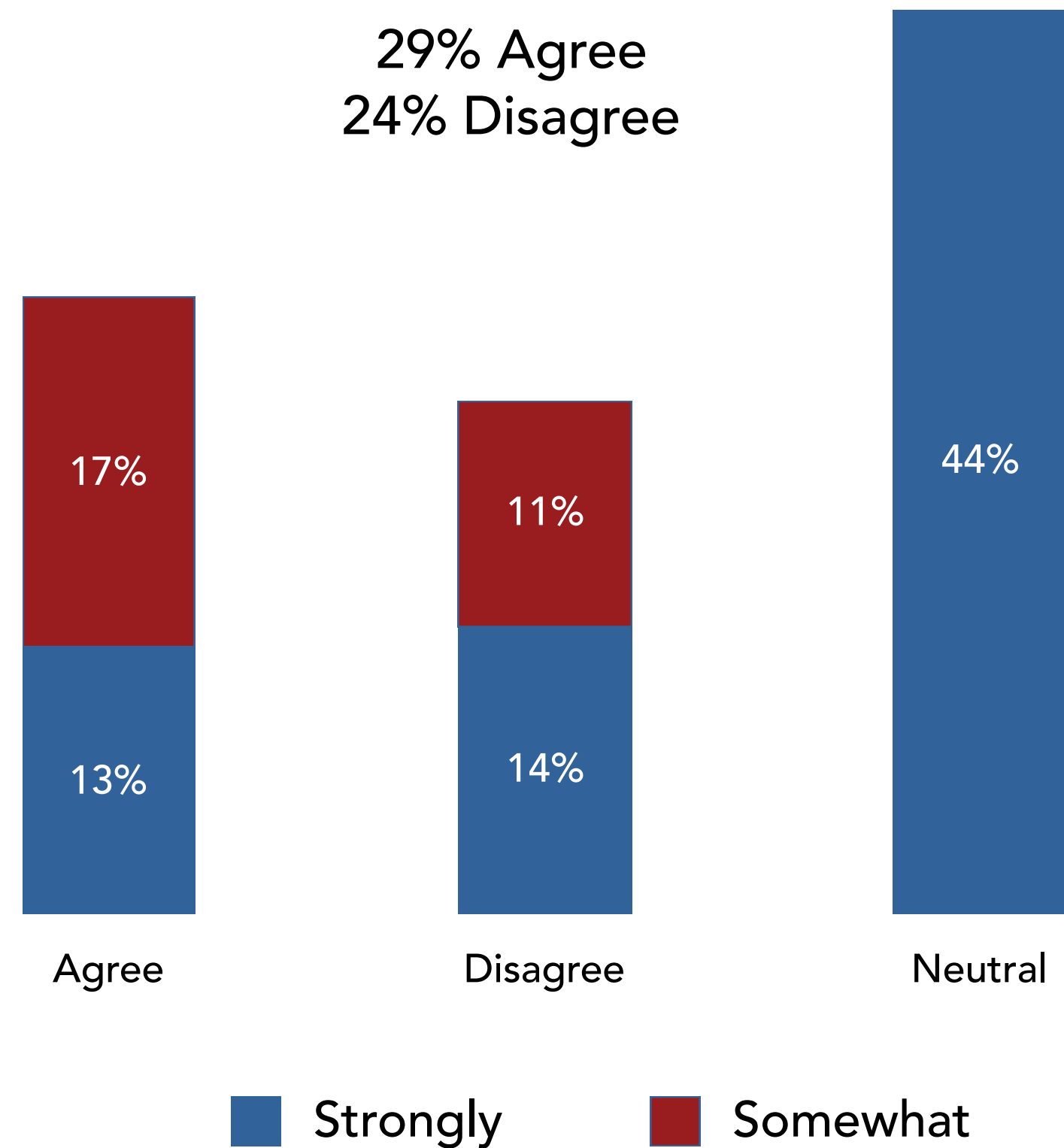


■ Concerned ■ Not concerned



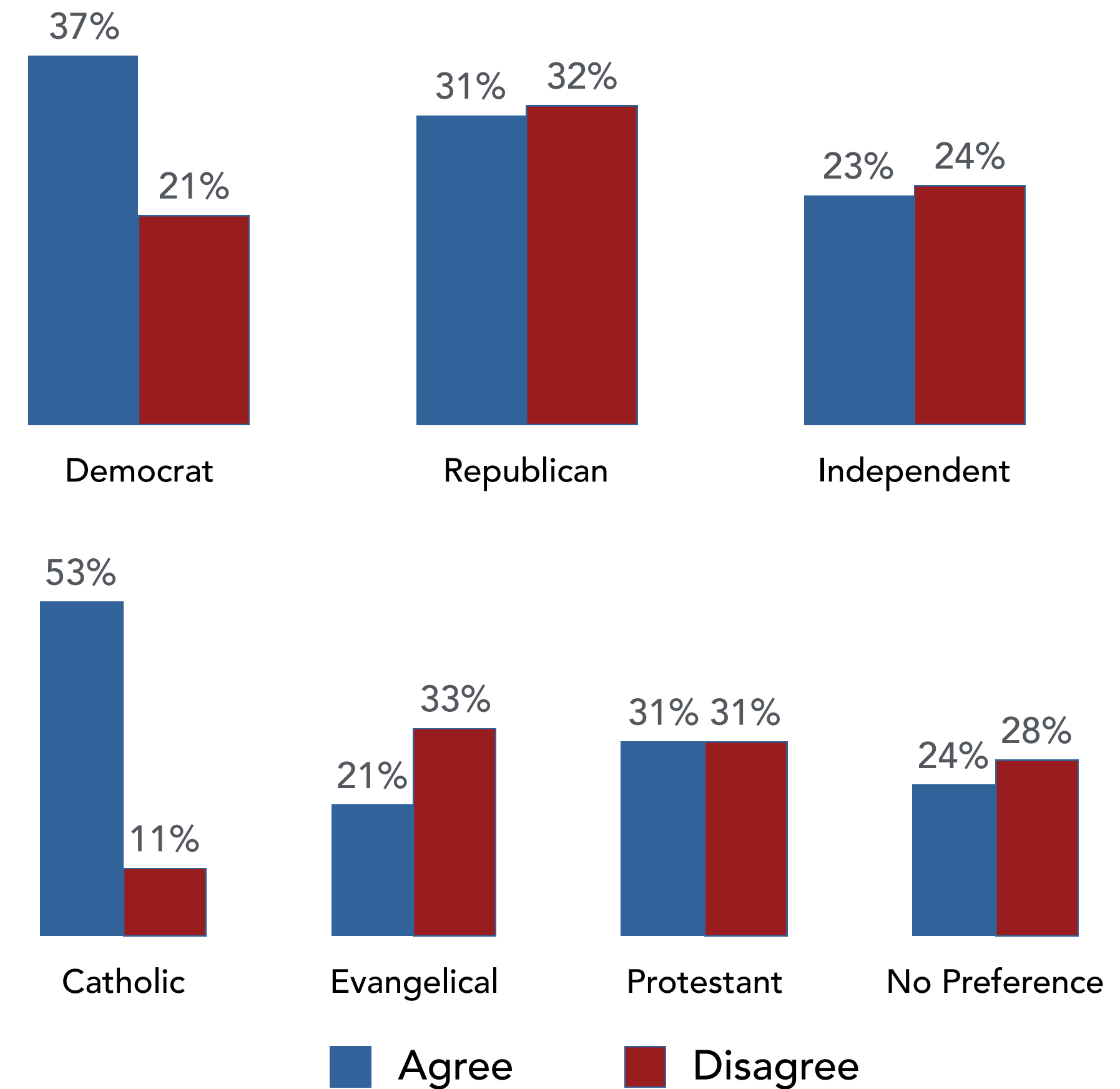
# BY ALMOST 2:1 MARGIN, YOUNG DEMOCRATS OPEN TO GUIDANCE FROM POPE FRANCIS ON NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL POLICY ISSUES

Agree/Disagree: I want Pope Francis to be a moral and humanitarian leader in national and international policy issues (such as immigration, climate change, poverty, etc.).



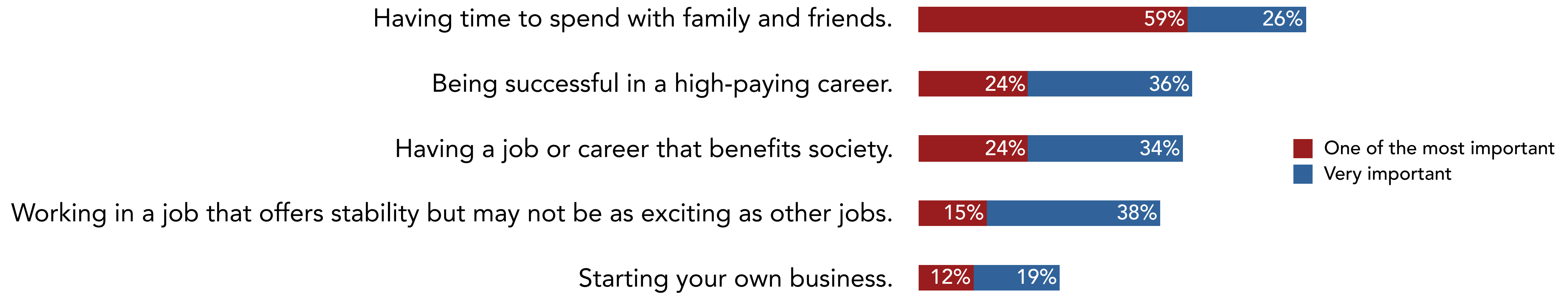
Agree/Disagree: I want Pope Francis to be a moral and humanitarian leader in national and international policy issues (such as immigration, climate change, poverty, etc.).

(by Subgroup)

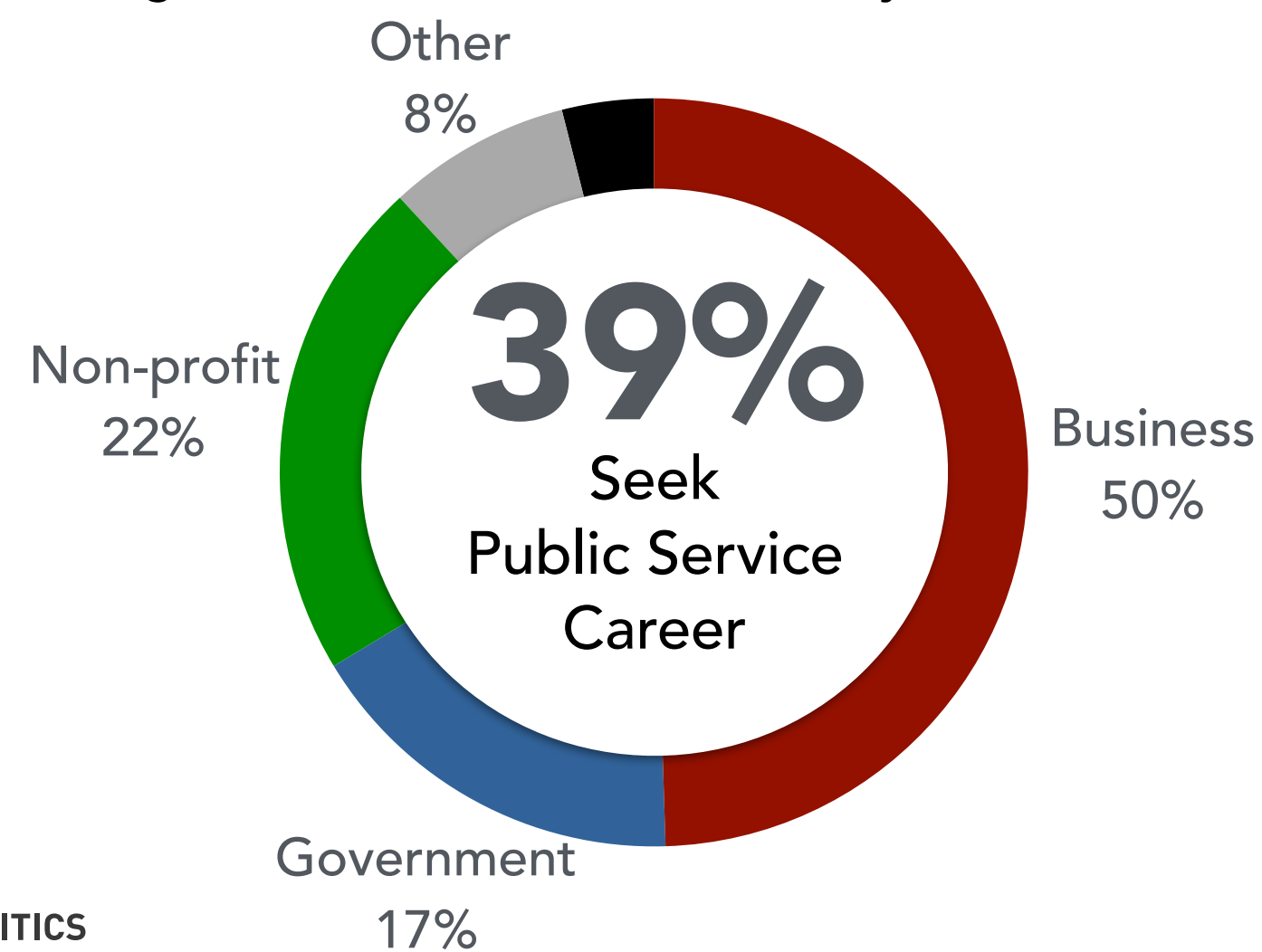


# FLEXIBILITY & OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT SOCIETY IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR MILLENNIALS IN THEIR WORK LIFE

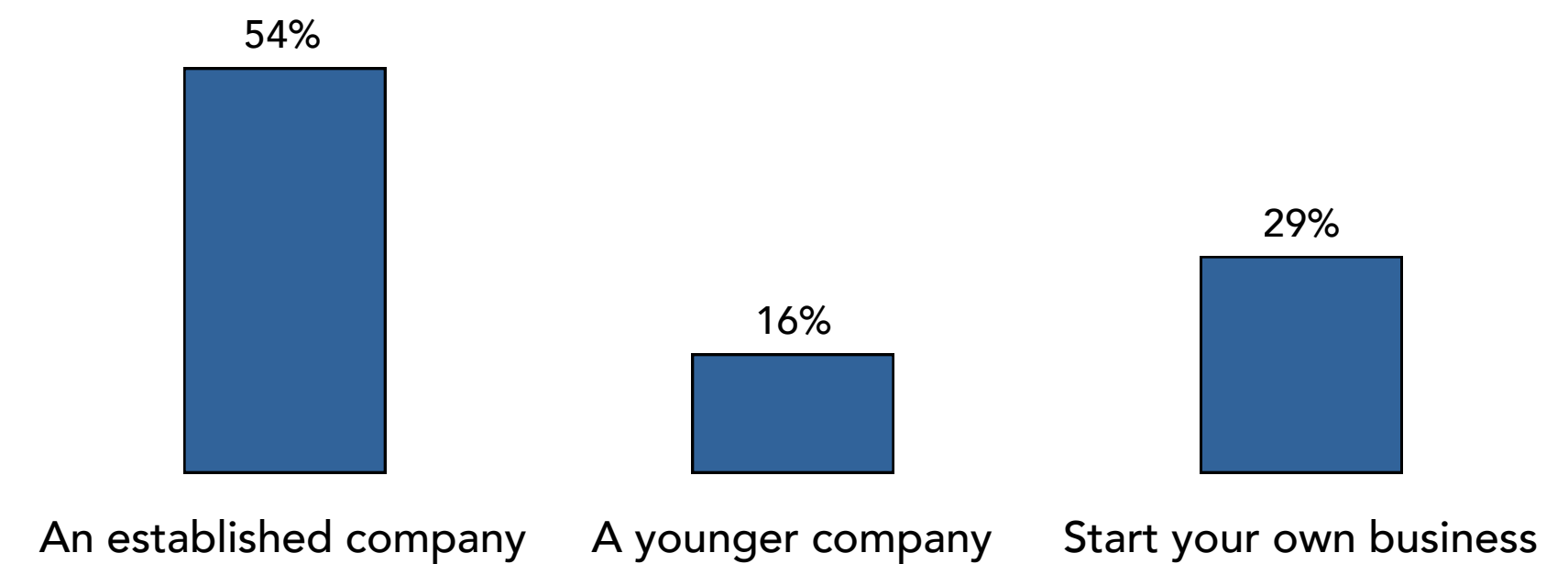
Here are some goals that people may or may not value in their work life. Please tell me how important each is to you personally.



Thinking about career choices, would you rather work for:



Would you rather build a career with... (n=997 who prefer to work in business)



# SNAPCHAT & INSTAGRAM GROWING QUICKLY; SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BY GENDER, RACE, PARTY EXIST ON USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

On which of the following platforms do you have an account?

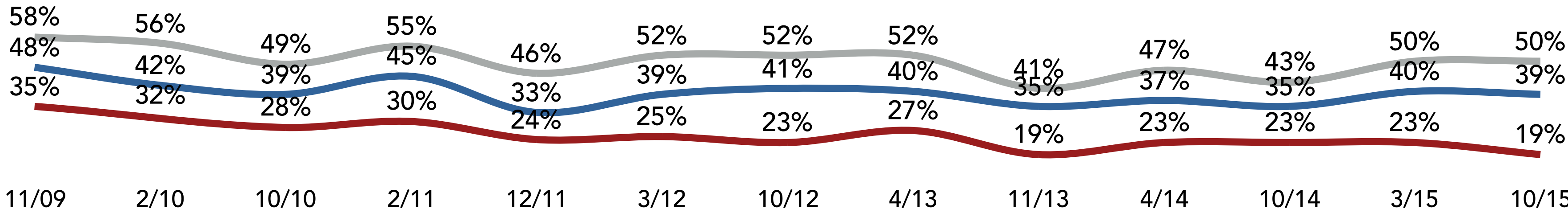


	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Snapchat	Pinterest	Tumblr
<b>ALL 18-29</b>	81%	46%	38%	36%	34%	14%
<b>Change Since Fall 2014</b>	+1	+7	0	+8	+4	+1
<b>18-24</b>	82%	50%	42%	46%	34%	19%
<b>25-29</b>	81%	39%	34%	24%	33%	8%
<b>College</b>	85%	58%	47%	53%	42%	20%
<b>Democrat</b>	81%	53%	44%	39%	34%	22%
<b>Republican</b>	82%	43%	37%	37%	38%	7%
<b>Independent</b>	84%	41%	35%	35%	33%	12%
<b>White</b>	83%	41%	38%	40%	38%	14%
<b>Black</b>	78%	55%	45%	25%	27%	11%
<b>Hispanic</b>	77%	49%	32%	34%	28%	15%
<b>Male</b>	79%	35%	37%	31%	12%	9%
<b>Female</b>	83%	56%	40%	42%	55%	19%
	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Snapchat</b>	<b>Pinterest</b>	<b>Tumblr</b>

# OBAMA APPROVAL RATING STEADY AT 50%; APPROVAL FOR REPUBLICANS IN CONGRESS SLIPS BELOW 20%

Approval Ratings

- Barack Obama
- Democrats in Congress
- Republicans in Congress



	NOV 2009	FEB 2010	OCT 2010	FEB 2011	DEC 2011	MAR 2012	OCT 2012	APR 2013	NOV 2013	APR 2014	OCT 2014	MAR 2015	OCT 2015	NET CHANGE
<b>ALL 18-29</b>	58%	56%	49%	55%	46%	52%	52%	52%	41%	47%	43%	50%	50%	-
<b>18-24</b>	60%	55%	48%	55%	44%	50%	50%	51%	39%	45%	42%	50%	52%	+2
<b>25-29</b>	56%	57%	52%	55%	47%	55%	55%	54%	43%	48%	44%	50%	46%	-4
<b>College</b>	57%	60%	51%	60%	48%	52%	49%	50%	39%	47%	42%	50%	53%	+3
<b>Democrat</b>	86%	84%	79%	81%	74%	81%	87%	86%	79%	79%	78%	83%	82%	-1
<b>Republican</b>	21%	21%	18%	17%	15%	18%	12%	10%	7%	12%	11%	12%	12%	-
<b>Independent</b>	49%	49%	42%	46%	39%	40%	46%	46%	31%	38%	33%	40%	42%	+2
<b>White</b>	48%	45%	37%	44%	35%	41%	40%	38%	28%	33%	31%	35%	36%	+1
<b>Black</b>	84%	83%	83%	83%	83%	82%	86%	84%	75%	83%	78%	87%	78%	-9
<b>Hispanic</b>	81%	69%	62%	68%	52%	66%	70%	71%	53%	60%	49%	65%	63%	-2
<b>Male</b>	56%	53%	47%	52%	44%	50%	51%	50%	41%	45%	41%	48%	47%	-1
<b>Female</b>	60%	59%	52%	57%	48%	54%	53%	55%	40%	48%	45%	52%	52%	+5

# HARVARD PUBLIC OPINION PROJECT

Harvard's Institute of Politics (IOP) was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy and aims to inspire undergraduates to consider careers in politics and public service. The Institute oversees the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum, one of the world's premier arenas for political speech, discussion, and debate, and runs a fellowship program offering a unique opportunity for political practitioners to spend semesters at Harvard and interact with students. The IOP also offers dozens of paid internships for eight to ten weeks during the summer; a nonpartisan, quarterly journal written and run entirely by undergraduates; and a unique, nationwide survey project of young adults' political views.

Students are offered wide-ranging opportunities, including internships and conferences intended to provide opportunities for interaction with the people who shape politics and public policy. The IOP does not offer formal courses or degree-granting programs; instead, it provides avenues for practical experience and encourages students to examine critically and think creatively about politics and public issues. For more information, including past results of these polls, please visit us online at [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu).

Harvard Institute of Politics team members who worked on this project include:

Maggie Williams  
Director, Institute of Politics

John Della Volpe  
Director of Polling, Institute of Politics

Catherine McLaughlin  
Executive Director, Institute of Politics

Esten Perez  
Director of Communications and Marketing, Institute of Politics

The Student Chair of the Harvard Public Opinion Project Committee is Ellen Robo '16.

Student members of the committee are: Dustin Chiang '19, Flavia Cuervo '18, Ali Dastjerdi '19, Kate Donahue '16, Jenny Gao '16, Sarah Graham '17, Melissa Hammer '17, Jake Hummer '17, Sonya Jacobs '18, Mariel Klein '17, Zachary Lustbader '16, Rhea Malik '17, Sally Marsh '18, Jeff Metzger '17, Margaret Panetta '17, Carlos Pena-Lobel '17, Sebastian Reyes '19, Andrew Rocca '18, Kevin Sani '17, Trey Sexton '19, Gillian Slee '16, Maximilian Ubinas '17 and Gabrielle Williams '18.



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