

Conservation in a New Era



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

Lori Weigel



We the People

The structure of American society has changed markedly over five decades.

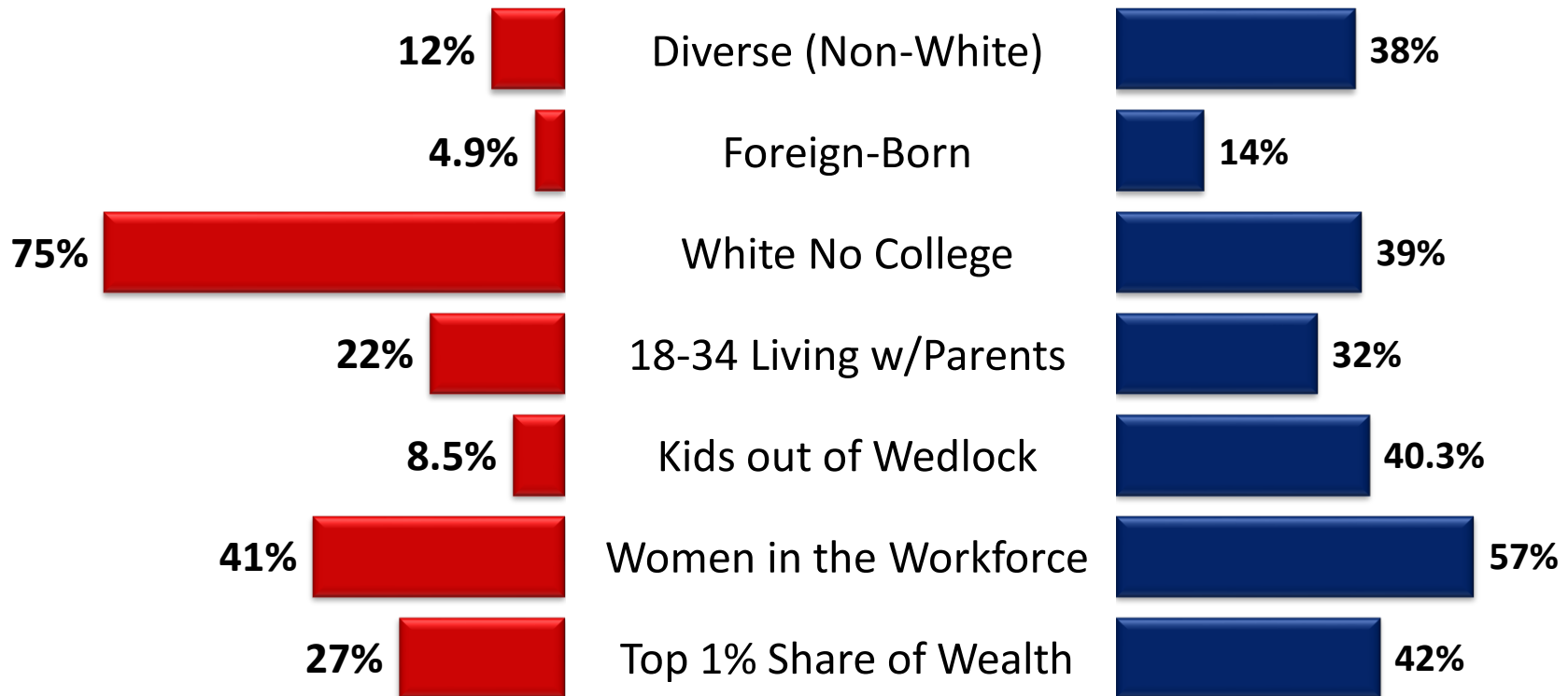


FATHER KNOWS BEST

1967



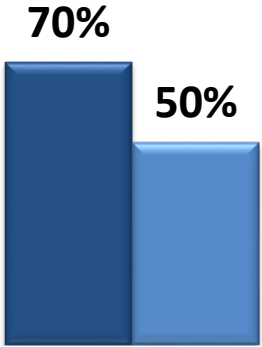
2017



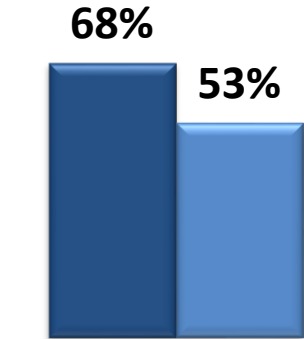
Source: Census, Pew, CDC ChildTrends, US Dept. of Labor, T. Pikety

Our connections with many key institutions in society have declined.

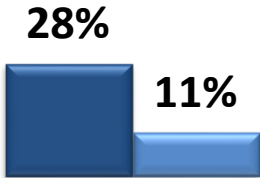
■ 1967 ■ 2017



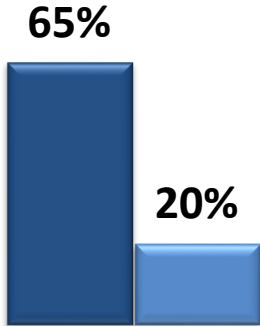
Married



Religion
"Very Important"



Union
Member



Trust Government to
Do Right Thing



Source: Pew, Gallup, Cornell U.

Participation in social and civic activities has declined in the last 25 years.

- ✓ Attending club meetings: **58%** drop
- ✓ Regular family dinners: **43%** drop
- ✓ Having friends over: **35%** drop



What has gone up? National Park visitation is setting records: 331 million in 2016, a 13% increase in two years alone.



Americans tell us they visit national public lands.

	All Americans
Once or twice	32%
3-5 Times	25%
6-10 Times	11%
11-20 Times	6%
More than 20 Times	4%
Total Visited	78%

And over the past year, how many times do you think you have visited public lands managed by one of the national agencies I mentioned before, such as national parks, national forests, national monuments, national wildlife refuges, or other national public lands?

And that they engage in outdoor recreation.



Western States	National
59%	40%
52%	32%
31%	28%
22%	25%
20%	14%
20%	11%

Which of the following types of outdoor recreation do you participate in regularly?

Including hunting and fishing.



Hunters



Anglers

Western States

27%

National

21%

34%

25%

"Do you consider yourself a hunter, an angler or both?"

But, only 2% of 2016 voters volunteered an environmental issue as most important in their Presidential vote.

	2016
The Economy/Jobs	30%
Health Care	10%
National/Homeland Security	10%
Immigration/Illegal Immigration	9%
Foreign Policy	8%
Education	7%
Abortion—Pro-Life	6%
Supreme Court Judges	6%
Moral Issues/Values	5%
Taxes	4%
Environment	2%

And, putting aside character or other personal issues for the presidential campaign, what one or two ISSUES were most important to you when deciding to vote for President?

Elections have consequences: first time environmental concerns have been named a top ten fear of Americans.

(% Afraid or Very Afraid)



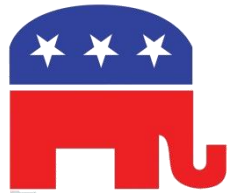
Source: Chapman University Survey of American Fears



Sportsmen

81%

of sportsmen consider themselves a conservationist, including sportsmen across party lines...



83%

80%

81%

Hunters and anglers worry that outdoor opportunities are being lost for the next generation.

I worry that our outdoor traditions and recreation opportunities are being lost for the next generation.

Strongly Agree

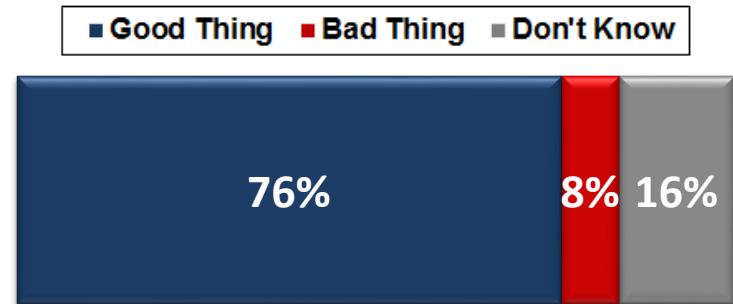
52%

Total Agree

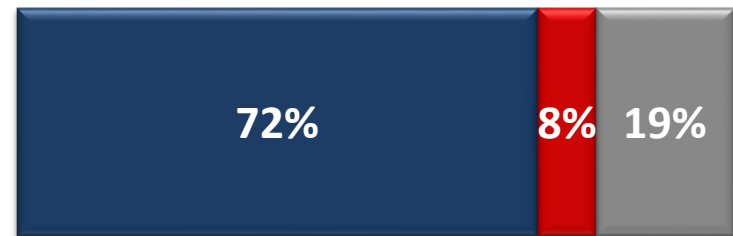
85%

Past laws to protect the environment are overwhelmingly seen as positives by sportsmen.

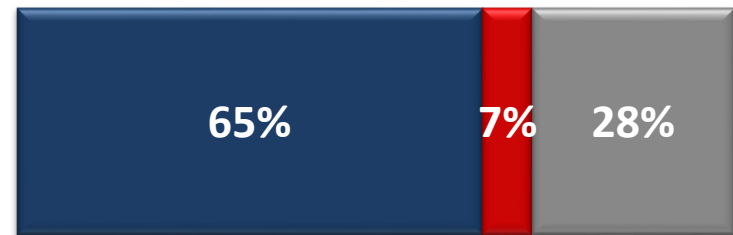
The Clean Water Act, which reduced polluted runoff and prevented destruction of wetlands, rivers, streams, and lakes



The Endangered Species Act, which seeks to recover threatened species from potentially being extinct



The National Environmental Policy Act, which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions and include public input before making decisions



Thinking about some laws passed previously – For each one, please indicate if you think that has ended up being (ROTATE) -- more of a good thing, more of a bad thing – OR whether you do not know enough to say one way or the other.

Moving forward, sportsmen offer this advice for their Member of Congress...



If you were going to give some advice to your Member of Congress in how they should address issues of concern to sportsmen like you regarding fish and wildlife habitat, public lands and water quality of lakes, rivers and streams, what would you tell him or her?

There is intense and overwhelming support for policies to keep in stream flows, LWCF funding and national monuments.

Actions Ranked by % Strongly Support

	Strongly Support	Total Support
Assist states and local communities in <u>improving water conservation</u> efforts to ensure adequate water in rivers and streams for fish	56%	83%
Continuing to <u>keep the number and size of</u> existing national monuments created by presidents over the past thirty years that have <u>protected lands available for hunting and fishing</u>	51%	77%
<u>Use</u> some of the <u>money from fees charged to oil and gas companies</u> that drill offshore for conservation of natural areas and clean water, and <u>to ensure access to outdoor recreation</u>	50%	79%

Next thinking about several actions that Congress or the Administration could take. For each one, please indicate whether you would support that action, oppose that action - or feel neutral about it.

Similarly, three-quarters or more support conservation funding for agriculture and maintaining Forest Service funding.

Actions Ranked by % Strongly Support

	Strongly Support	Total Support
<u>Allow the US Forest Service to treat the largest and most expensive wildfires as natural disasters</u> in order to have access to emergency disaster funding, like the government handles other natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes	46%	79%
<u>Provide financial incentives for farmers and ranchers</u> to conserve land for habitat and clean water, allow for public access, and practice sustainable farming and ranching methods, such as the Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and Walk-in Access Programs	46%	75%

Next thinking about several actions that Congress or the Administration could take. For each one, please indicate whether you would support that action, oppose that action - or feel neutral about it.

There is solid majority support among sportsmen across the partisan spectrum for these policies.

Proposals – Total Support by Party



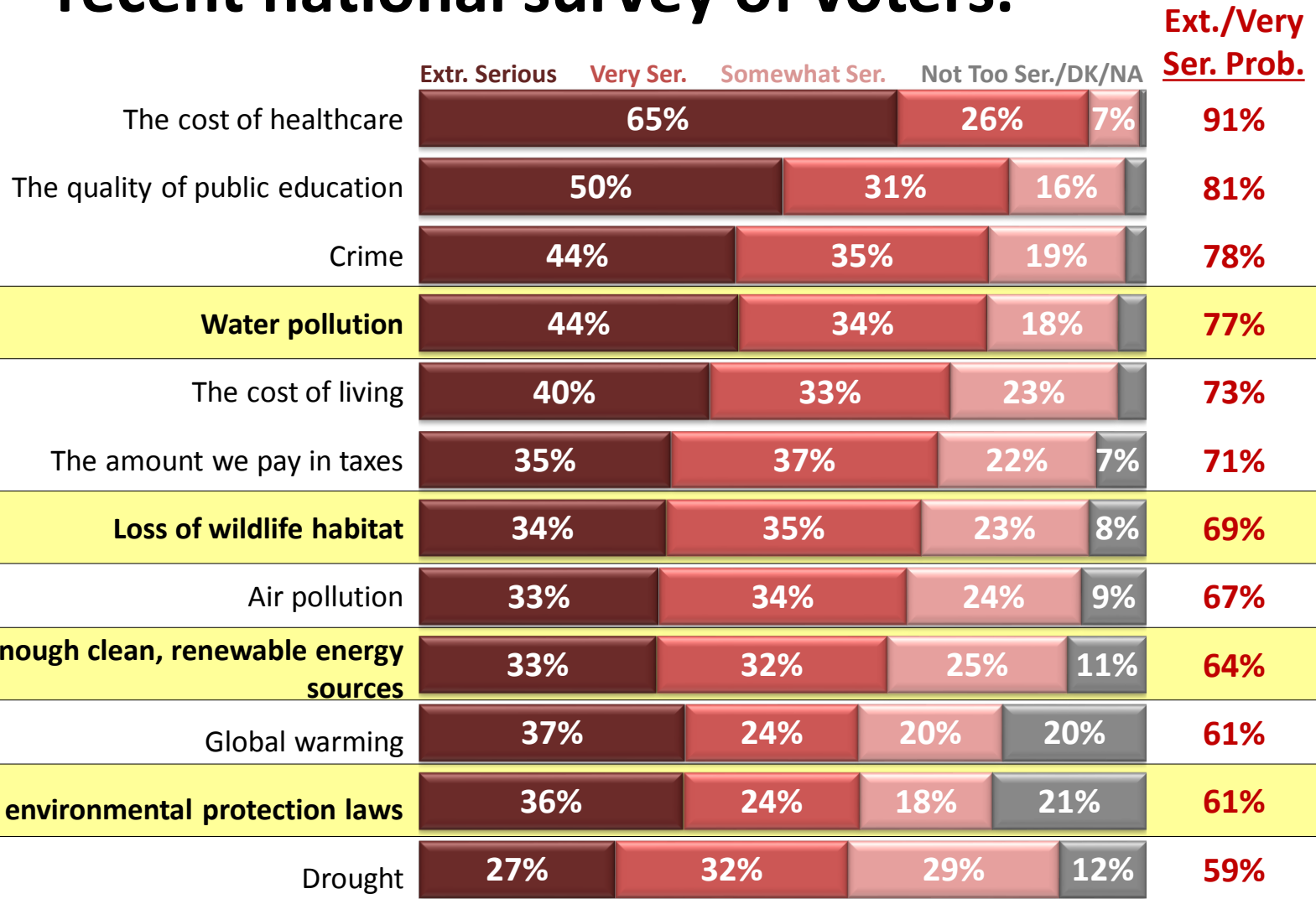
Proposals	Republican	Independent	Democrat
Improve water conservation for in-stream flows	80%	83%	85%
Keep the number and size of national monuments	77%	75%	80%
Use fees charged to oil and gas companies to ensure access to outdoor recreation	80%	81%	77%
Allow the US Forest Service to treat the largest and most expensive wildfires as natural disasters	76%	79%	82%
Provide financial incentives for farmers and ranchers for conservation	71%	73%	82%

Next thinking about several actions that Congress or the Administration could take. For each one, please indicate whether you would support that action, oppose that action - or feel neutral about it.

American voters prioritize water.



Water quality was the top conservation concern in a recent national survey of voters.



Here are some issues that people have mentioned they would like to see addressed. Please indicate whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not too serious a problem. (Split Sample)

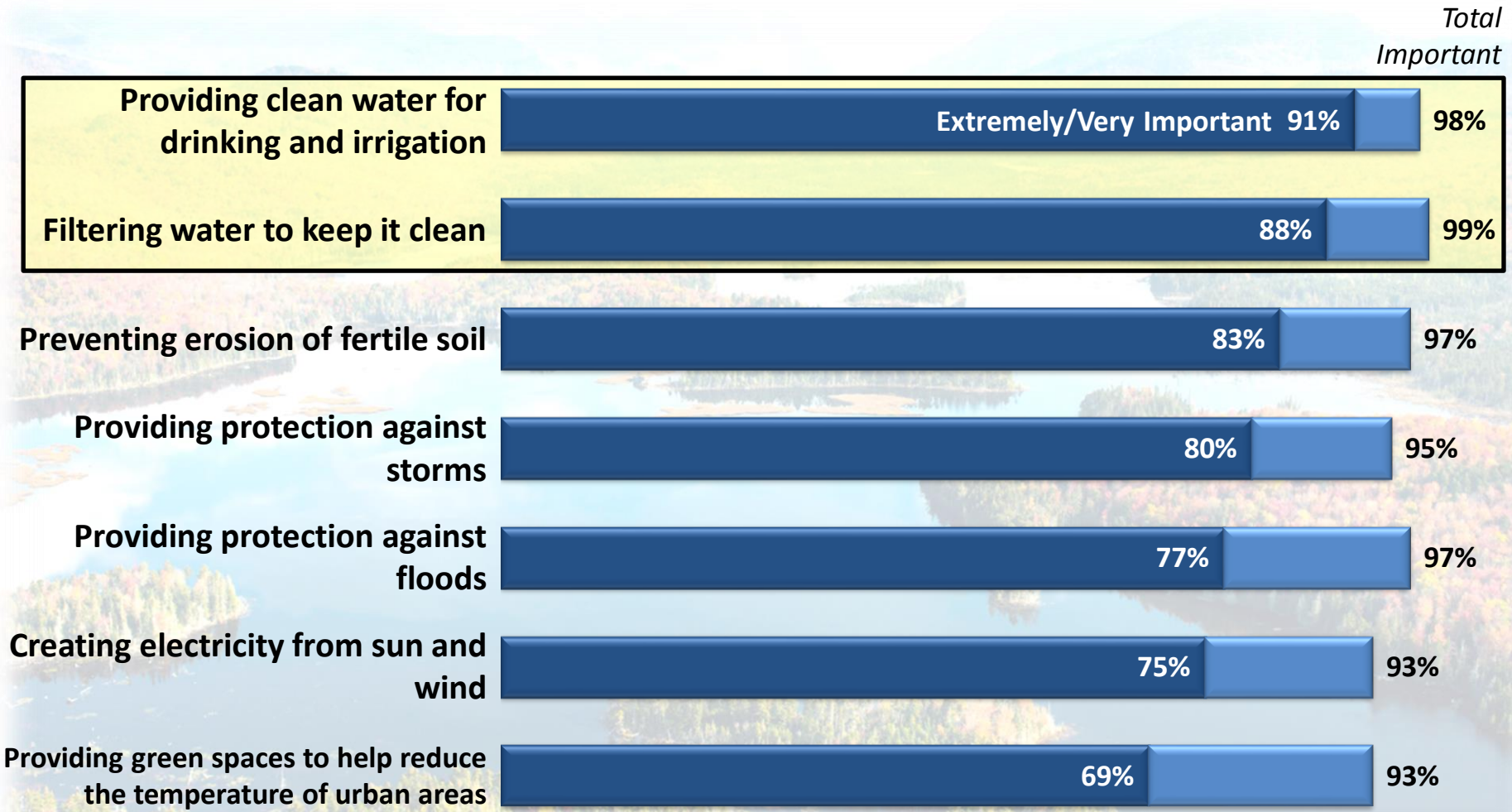
And that was true in every type of community.

(Total % Ext./Very Serious)

Issues	All Voters	Big City	Suburban	Small Town/ Rural
The cost of healthcare	91%	89%	91%	93%
The quality of public education	81%	85%	77%	83%
Crime	78%	83%	74%	80%
Water pollution	77%	83%	75%	77%
The cost of living	73%	79%	70%	74%
The amount we pay in taxes	71%	71%	71%	71%
Loss of wildlife habitat	69%	73%	66%	70%
Air pollution	67%	82%	66%	58%
Not using enough clean, renewable energy sources	64%	75%	62%	61%
Global warming	61%	68%	60%	58%
Rollbacks of environmental protection laws	61%	70%	61%	55%
Drought	59%	65%	57%	59%

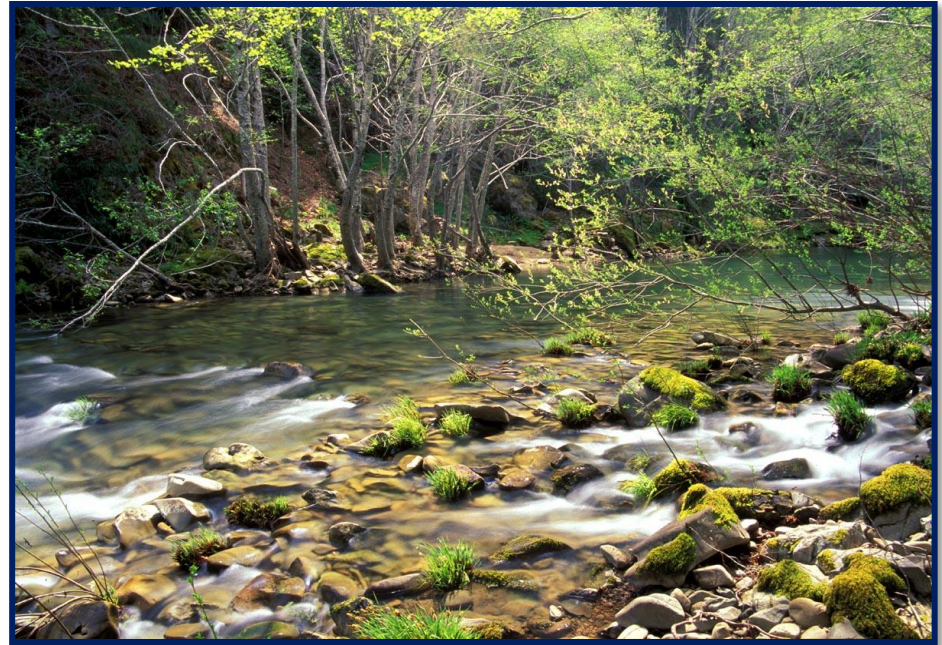
Clean water tends to rise to the fore as a benefit of nature.

Benefits of Natural Resources Ranked by Voters %Extremely/Very Important



The following is a list of some specific benefits that natural resources like land and water provide to people and communities. Please indicate how important you think each item is as a benefit of natural resources like land and water.

People are far more likely to find a connection with images and language that includes water. This is true of voters in every state and every type of topography.



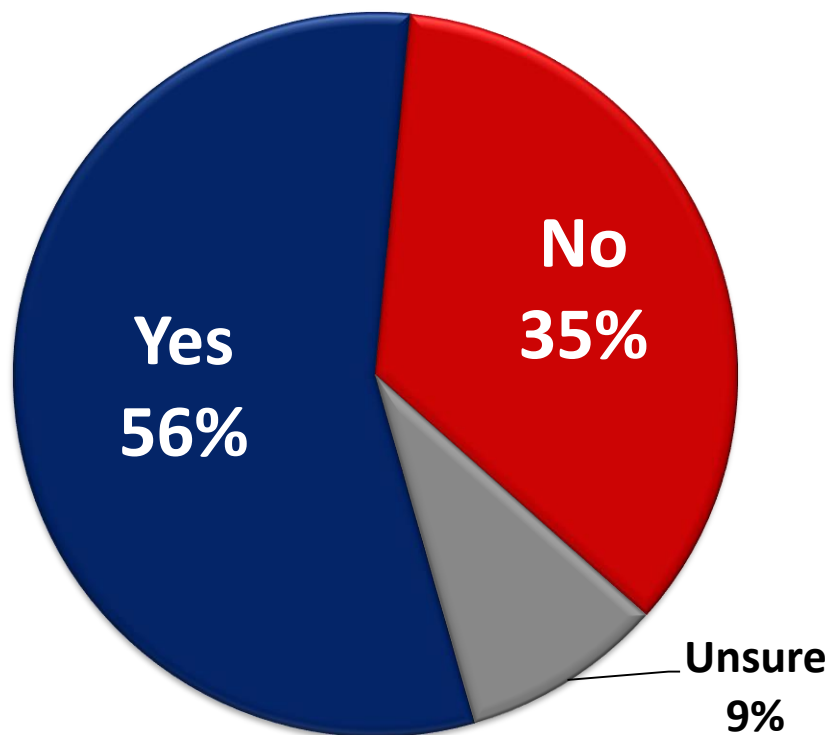
When applicable, protecting “drinking water” implies an important connection to public health.



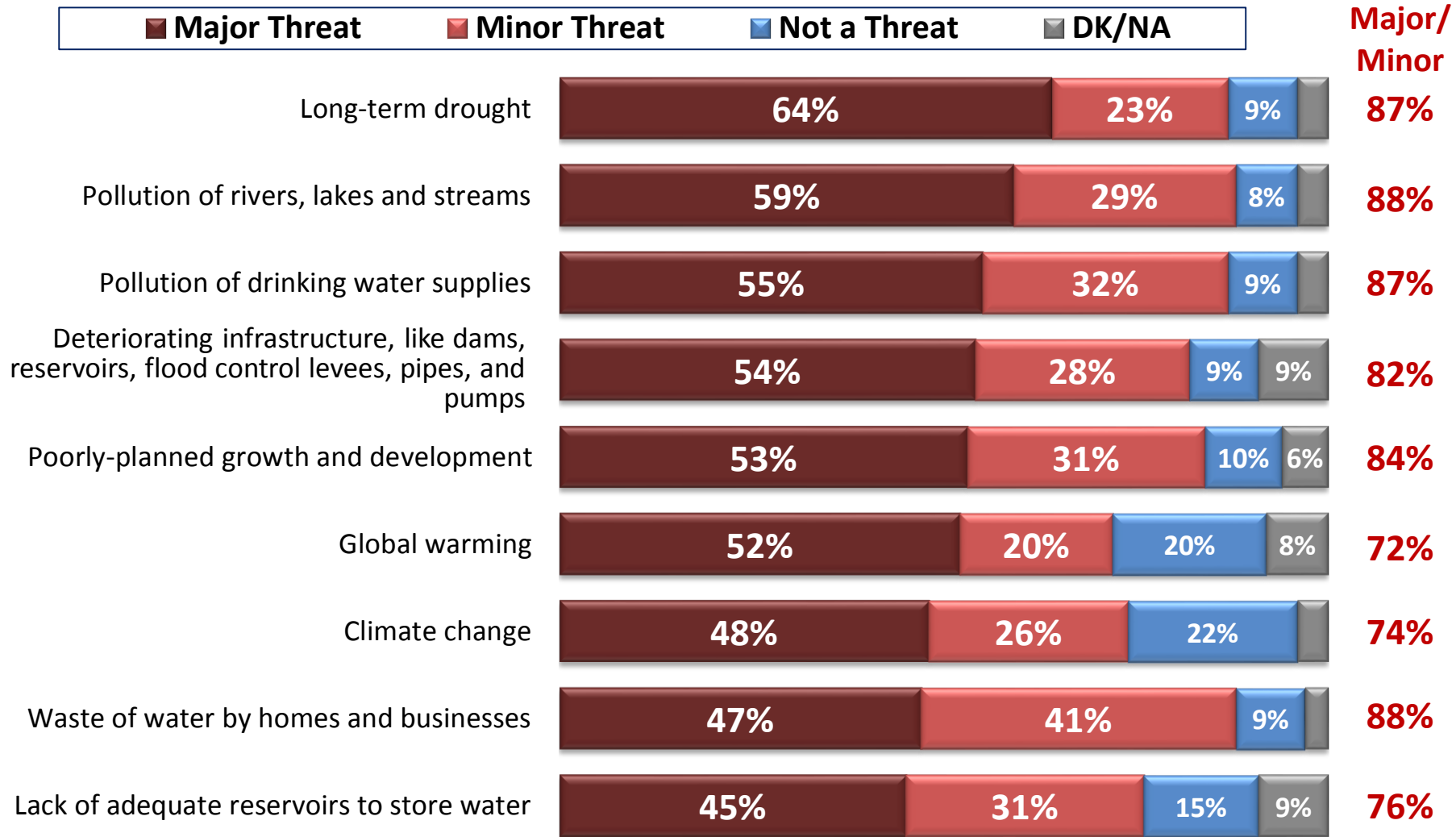
Importantly, American voters do NOT need to know from where their drinking water comes in order to want to protect it.

Which is good because many Westerners admitted to us that they don't know from where their water originates. (Plus, many may be wrong!)

Thinking about the water that you use at home, do you know what specific body of water or sources this water originally comes from?



Even in the West, pollution is seen as nearly as big a threat to water supplies as drought.



Major/
Minor

87%

88%

87%

82%

84%

72%

74%

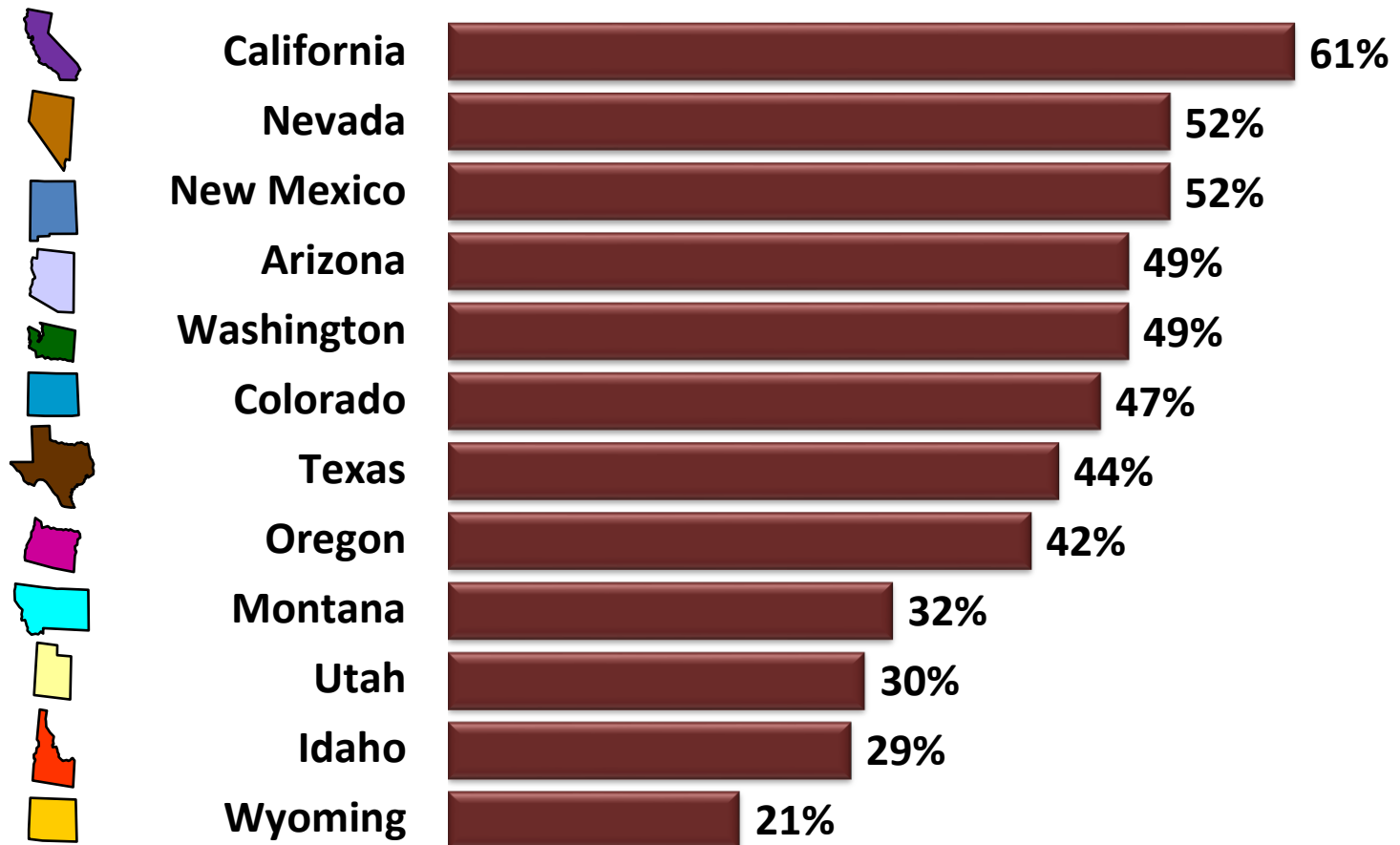
88%

76%

I am going to read you a list of items that may be threats to your state's ability to provide a reliable supply of clean water. Please tell me whether you think it is a major threat, minor threat, or not a threat to the reliability of your state's water supplies. (Split Sample)

Californians are the most concerned with the changing climate's impact on water supply.

% Seeing Global Warming/Climate Change as a "Major Threat" to Water, by State



I am going to read you a list of items that may be threats to your state's ability to provide a reliable supply of clean water. Please tell me whether you think it is a major threat, minor threat, or not a threat to the reliability of your state's water supplies. (Split Sample)



Nature-Based Solutions: Creating Prepared Communities

Flooding is seen as...

*An act of God and inevitable
– but one we must plan for*



Most voters are not familiar with the concept of a nature-based solution (Miami was exception with mangrove restoration). So, examples are important:

“Some communities are conserving forests in order to stabilize soils and hold back erosion, which means downstream dams will last longer. Others are restoring inland lakes and wetlands in order to naturally filter more water, and so levees and storm barriers can be smaller and less expensive. And some are protecting wetlands and reefs off the coast in order to provide natural protection against hurricanes.”



Voters want to understand how policies will help “communities” more than “nature” or “shorelines.”

Voters like language that implied an impact on people more than the land.



Strongest rationales in support of nature-based solutions like coastal land conservation or wetlands restoration focus on being proactive:

Rationales in Support of Nature-Based Solutions/Community Action

We spend billions every year to treat our drinking water. But it is more cost effective and simpler to prevent water pollution naturally – by protecting and restoring areas around sources of drinking water like wetlands -- than it is to treat water after it has been contaminated. (2015 national)

Smart investments made before a disaster strikes can help protect a community's quality of life, save lives, and reduce the cost to taxpayers. Yet, the government makes it easier for communities to receive funding to rebuild after a disaster and provides few resources to reduce risks before a disaster strikes. We need a proactive, practical approach to help communities be prepared for disasters. (2015 National)

An independent study found for every one dollar invested to reduce risk from disasters like floods before they occur, as much as four dollars is saved in emergency response and related costs. Requiring communities to proactively act to protect flood prone areas makes more sense than having the federal flood program pay to rebuild the same homes repeatedly. (2017 National)

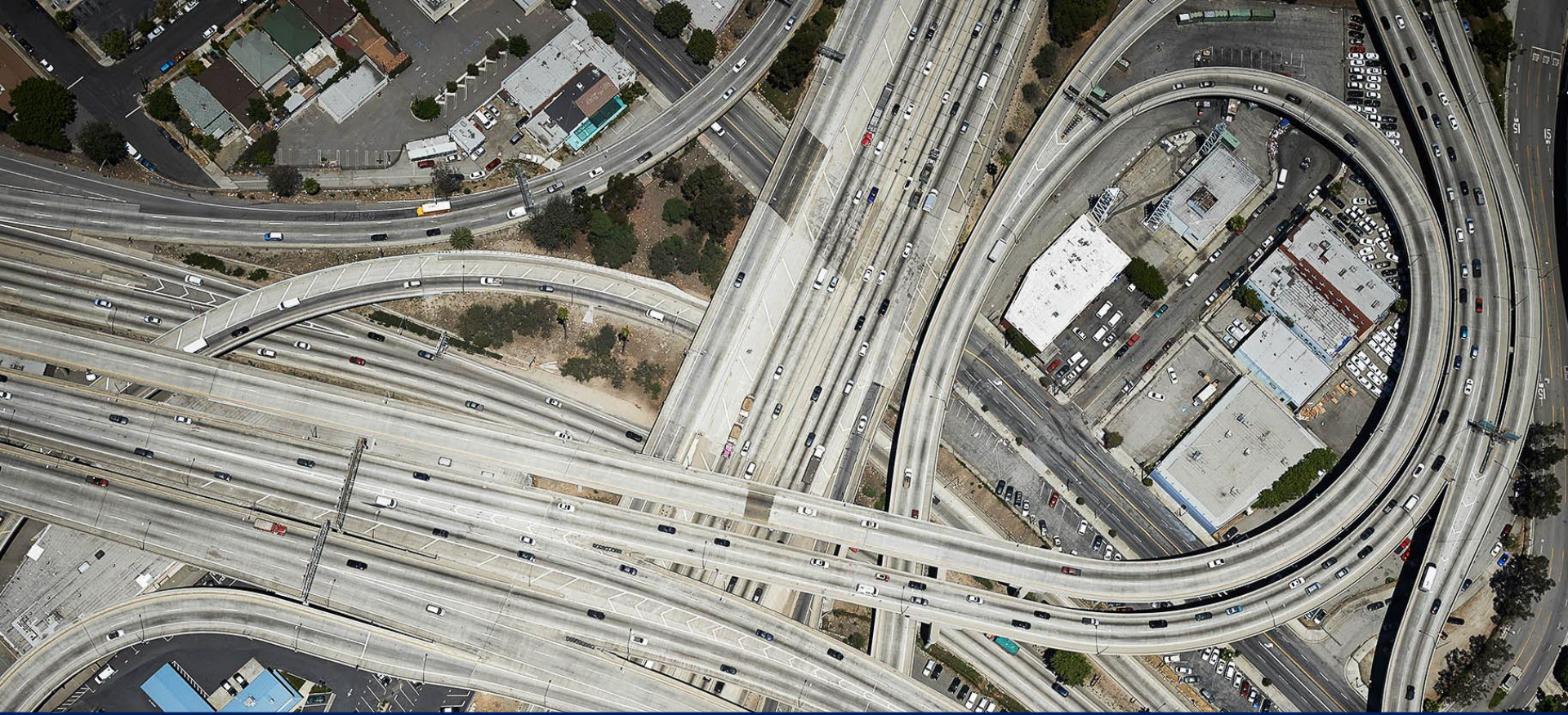
There are a number of reasons why some people say that communities should consider nature-based solutions as part of their response to related problems. Please rate each of the following statements as to how convincing they are as a reason to ensure communities consider nature-based solutions.

In a bit of a “false choice,” voters perceive a nature-based solution to be preferable in many ways to an approach that relies solely on engineered solutions.

Comparison of Nature-Based Solution to Engineered Solution

More Benefits	62%
More Safe	53%
Cost Less	48%
More Effective	47%

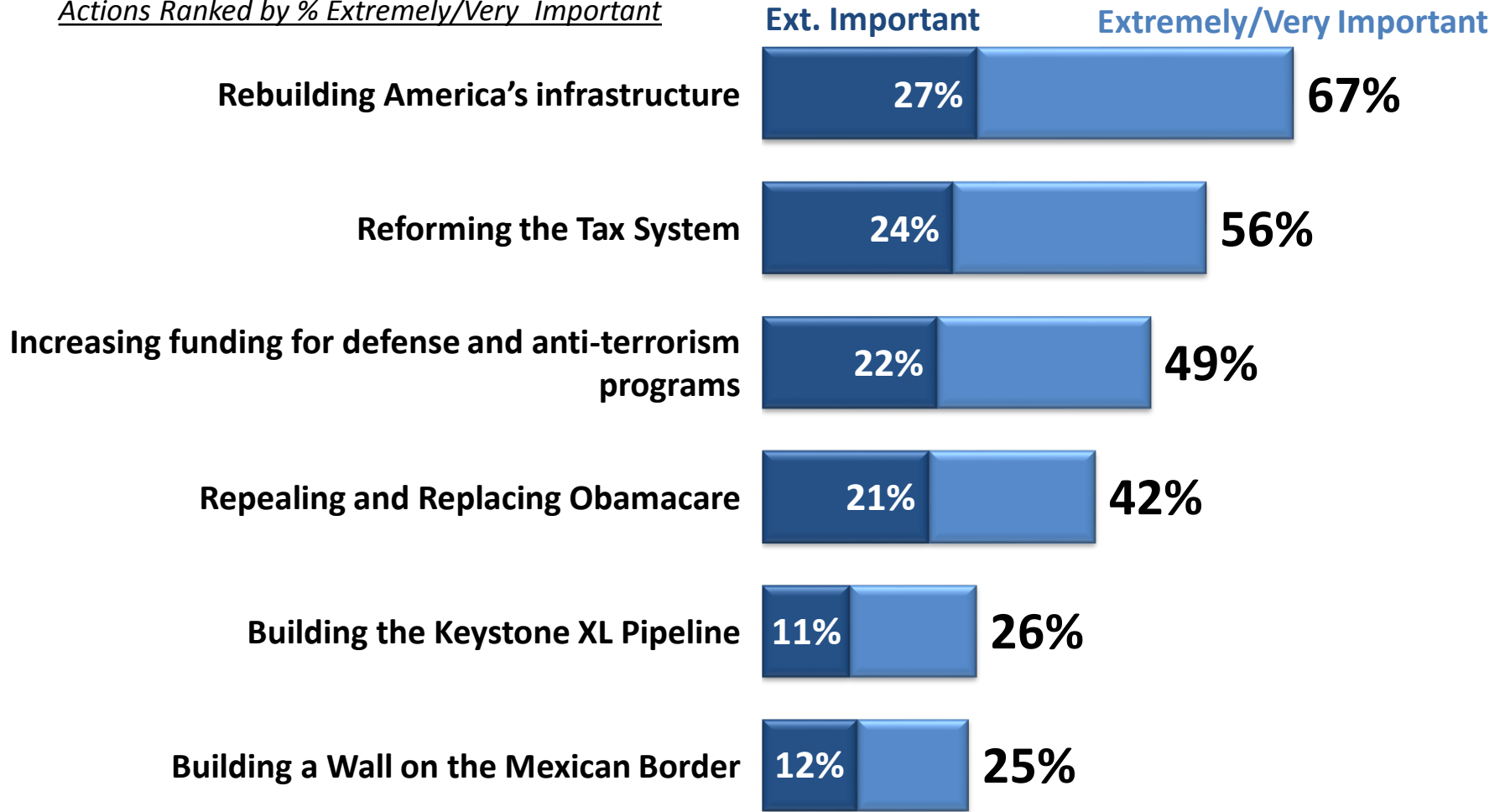
And how do you think a nature-based approach would compare to a man-made, engineering approach in terms of...



**Nature-based solutions –
not “green infrastructure”**

Voters do think that “infrastructure” is important – tops list for President and Congressional leaders to address this year.

Actions Ranked by % Extremely/Very Important



First, here are some issues that President Trump and leaders in Congress have said they may address this year. Please tell me how important you think it is for them to focus on each issue: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important?

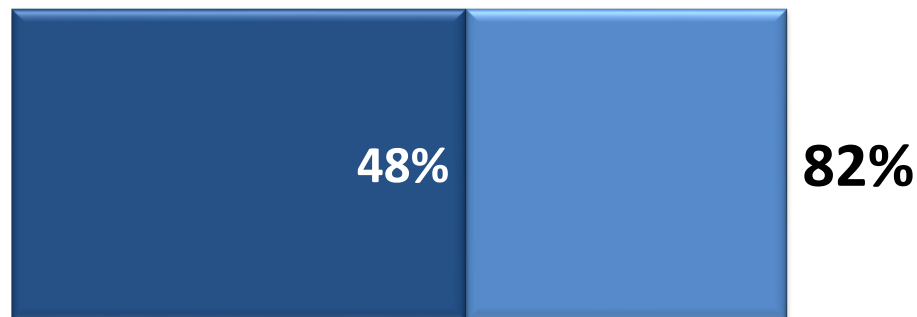
And water infrastructure is viewed as an even more important priority than infrastructure broadly.

Actions Ranked by % Extremely/Very Important

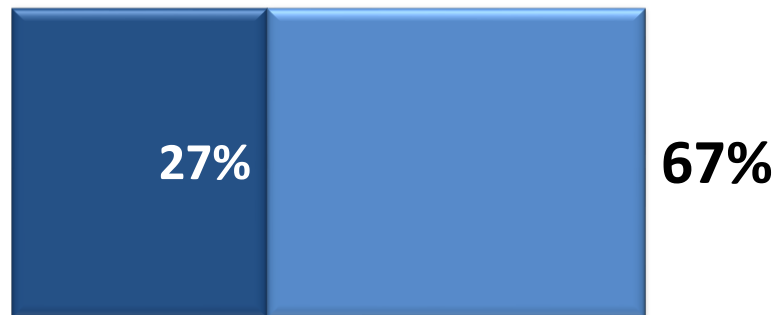
Ext. Important

Ext./Very Important

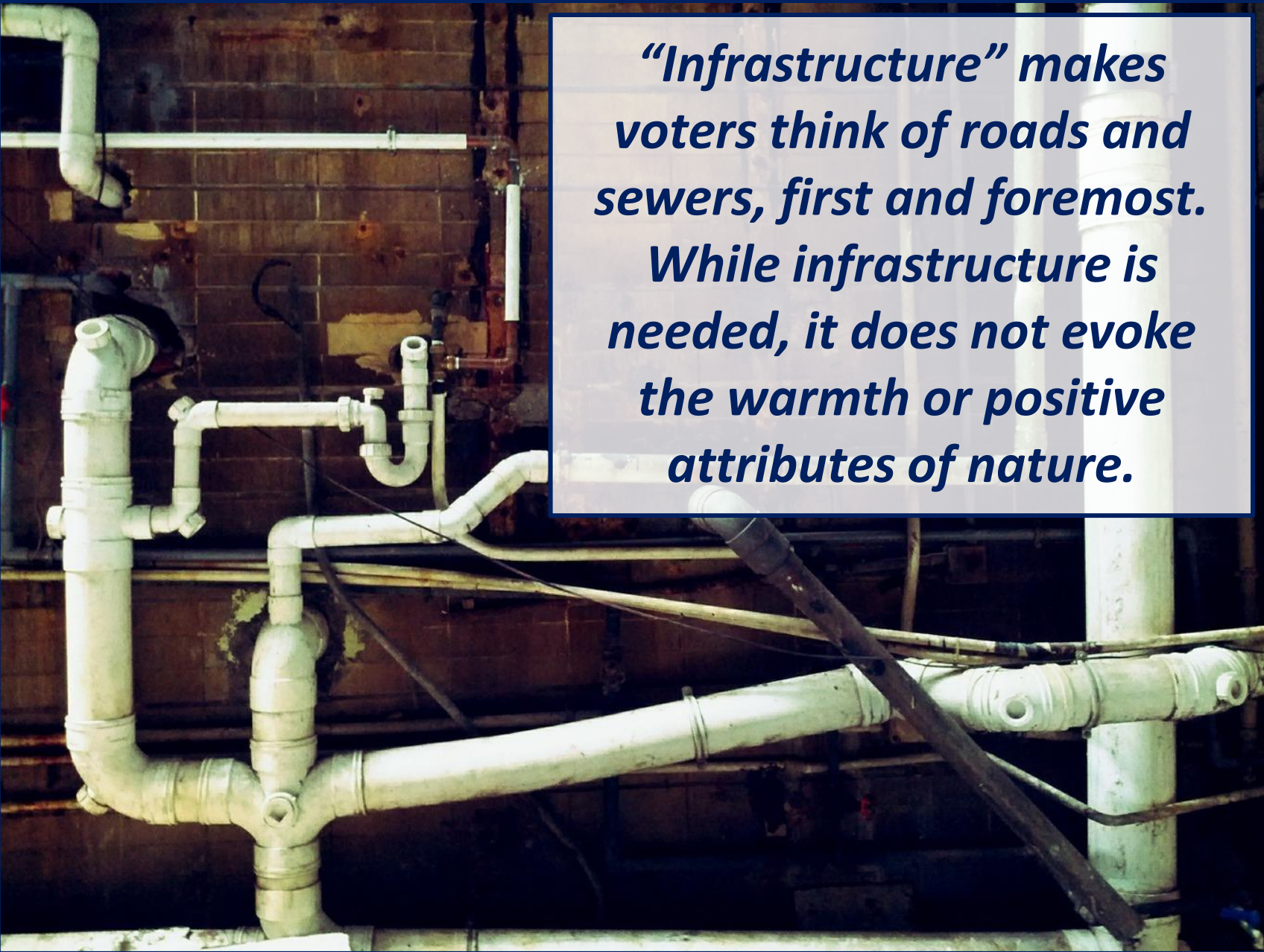
Rebuilding America's
water infrastructure



Rebuilding America's
infrastructure



Here are some issues that President Trump and leaders in Congress have said they may address this year. Please tell me how important you think it is for them to focus on each issue: extremely important, very important, somewhat important, or not too important?/We mentioned American's infrastructure in the last question. Specifically, how important do you think it is to rebuild our water infrastructure that brings clean drinking water to your home and removes and treats wastewater?



“Infrastructure” makes voters think of roads and sewers, first and foremost. While infrastructure is needed, it does not evoke the warmth or positive attributes of nature.

Moreover, we found that “green” is a turn-off and “infrastructure” in either phrase is confusing.

“(Green) is a bunch of baloney.”

– *St. Louis voter*

“Green is a marketing machine.”

– *Salt Lake City voter*

“How does the “natural” (infrastructure) affect what’s being built?”

– *Salt Lake City voter*

“Green is polarizing politically.”

– *St. Louis voter*

“Green is overused.”

– *Salt Lake City voter*

“(Natural and infrastructure) don’t go together.”

– *Miami voter*

In fact, environmental journalists were the main ones who liked the term “green.”

Of various alternatives, voters perceive “nature-based solutions” most positively AND as a better descriptor of this approach.

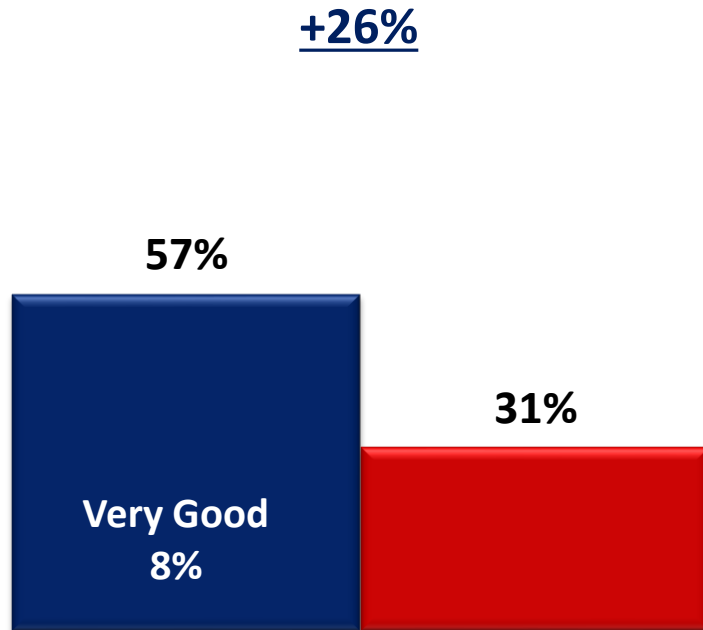
Best Description of Concept

Nature-based solutions	43%
Natural Defenses	21%
Natural Infrastructure	17%
Green Infrastructure	14%

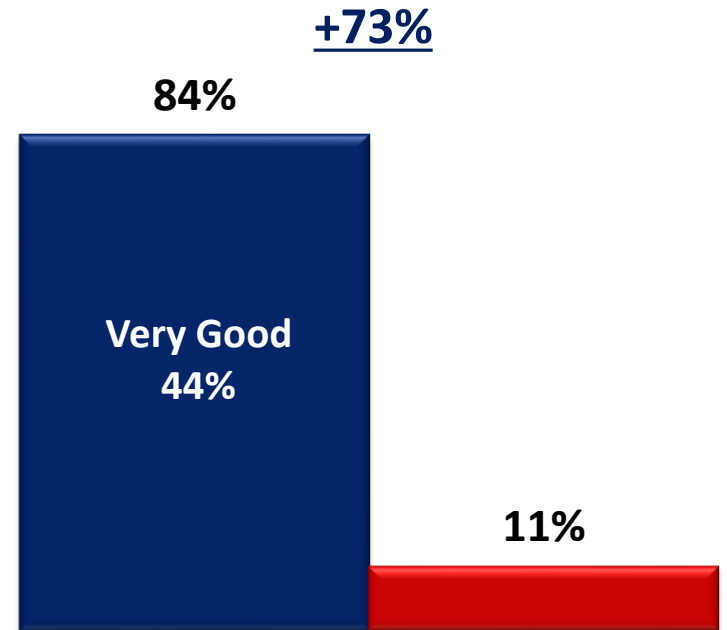
Which of these terms best describes this approach:

Interestingly, the vast majority think water infrastructure in their community is in good shape.

How would you rate the current condition of the nation's water infrastructure?



How would you rate the current condition of the water infrastructure in your local community?



■ Total Good ■ Total Bad

How would you rate the current condition of the nation's water infrastructure?/How would you rate the current condition of the water infrastructure in your local community?

It ain't over 'til it's over.

ROCKY BALBOA



Dump “Resilience”

(and other confusing terms)

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER PICTURES COLUMBIA PICTURES AND REVOLUTION STUDIOS PRESENT
A CHARTOFF WINKLER PRODUCTION A FILM BY SYLVESTER STALLONE "ROCKY BALBOA" SYLVESTER STALLONE BURT YOUNG ANTONIO TAVIER
COSTUME DESIGNER GRETCHEN BAYCH PRODUCTION DESIGNER CHRIS WHEELER EDITOR SEAM ALBERTSON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FRANCO GIACOMO CARONE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY CLARK MATHEIS
www.rocky.com

We have tested the concept of resilience in 20+ groups and it evokes confusion or is counter-productive.

“Texans are tough...we come back.”
– Galveston Focus Group

“I think resilient is about, I think it is more about people, like we’re a resilient people because we can get through things, I mean they say that about New Englanders anyway, they can survive.”
- Boston area Focus group

“Instead of being resilient it would be better if it didn't need to be resilient but instead made efforts at prevention of problems.”
– Independent woman in survey

“It is a bit confusing. Resilient to what?”
- Independent Woman in survey


Only Inside the Beltway elites have seen “resilience” as positive, as it is becoming a somewhat familiar term in elite circles.

Words to Use and Avoid

Bad Words to Avoid	Good Words to Use
Environment	Land, air and water
Ecosystems	Natural areas
Biodiversity / endangered species	Fish and wildlife
Regulations	Safeguards/protections
Riparian	Land along lakes, rivers and streams
Aquifer	Groundwater
Watershed	Land around rivers, lakes and streams
Environmental groups	Conservation groups / organizations protecting land, air, and water
Agricultural land	Working farms
Urban sprawl	Poorly planned growth/ development
Green jobs	Clean energy jobs / jobs protecting water quality / etc.
Ecosystem services	Nature's benefits
Landscape-scale conservation	Large, connected natural areas



Farm Bill Issues

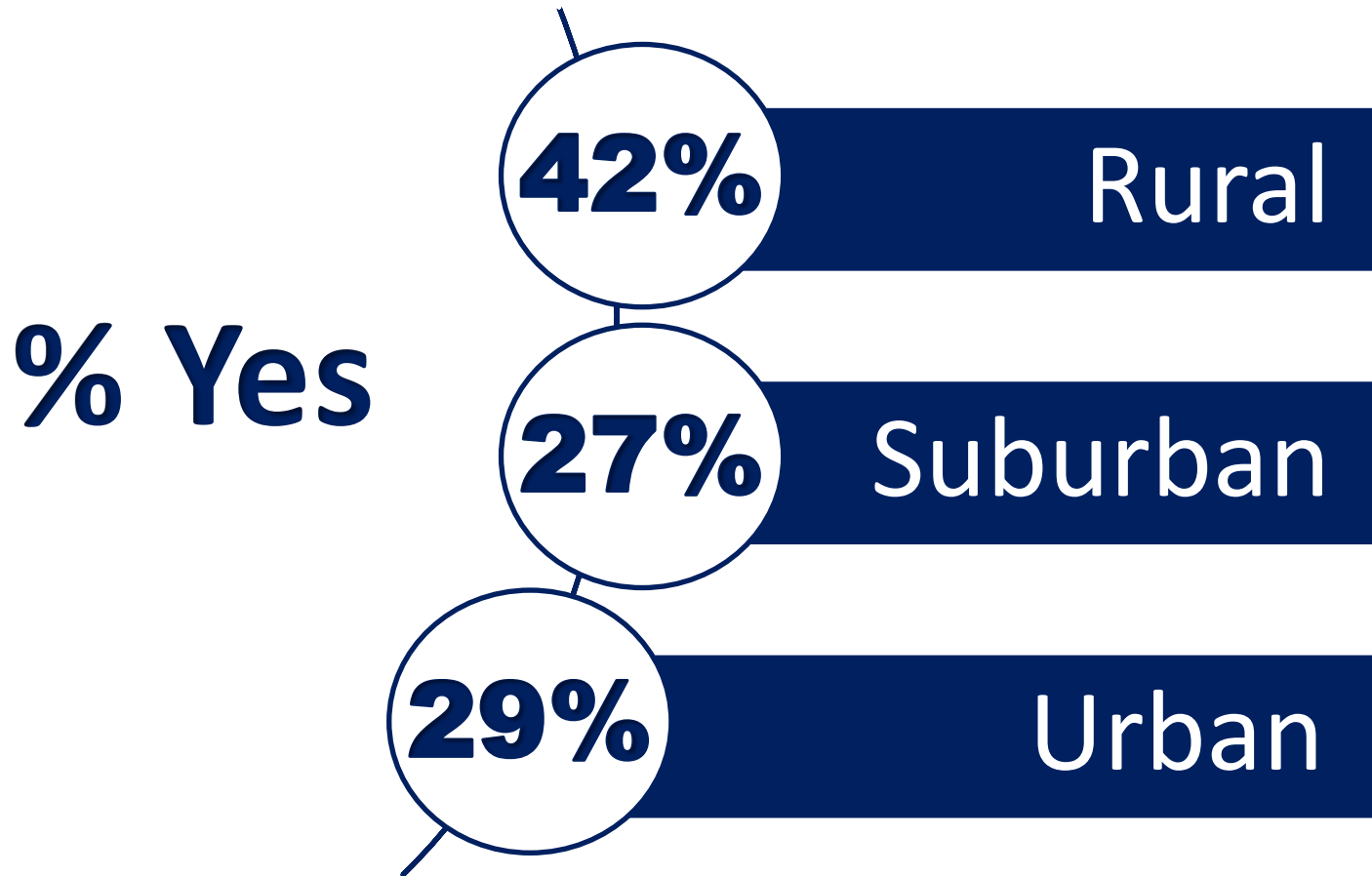


15% of U.S. voters characterize where they live as “rural.”

13% say they are “very dependent” on the farming economy for their livelihood.

Keep in mind, rural residents are different - Lack of economic opportunity is affecting many personally.

In the last few years, have any of your close friends or family members moved away from the area where you live because they couldn't find work nearby?



Rural residents do *not* see the government playing a helpful role, which has implications for our policies.

Do you think the federal government does more to help people in rural areas and small towns, more to help people living in and around large cities, or does it help both about equally?

	Rural	Suburban	Urban
More to help people living in and around large cities	56%	43%	40%
Help both about equally	37%	48%	49%
More to help people in rural areas and small towns	4%	4%	4%
Don't know/Refused	4%	5%	7%

This extends to the work of government agencies addressing natural resource issues.



79% Approve in Cities

67% Approve in Rural Areas



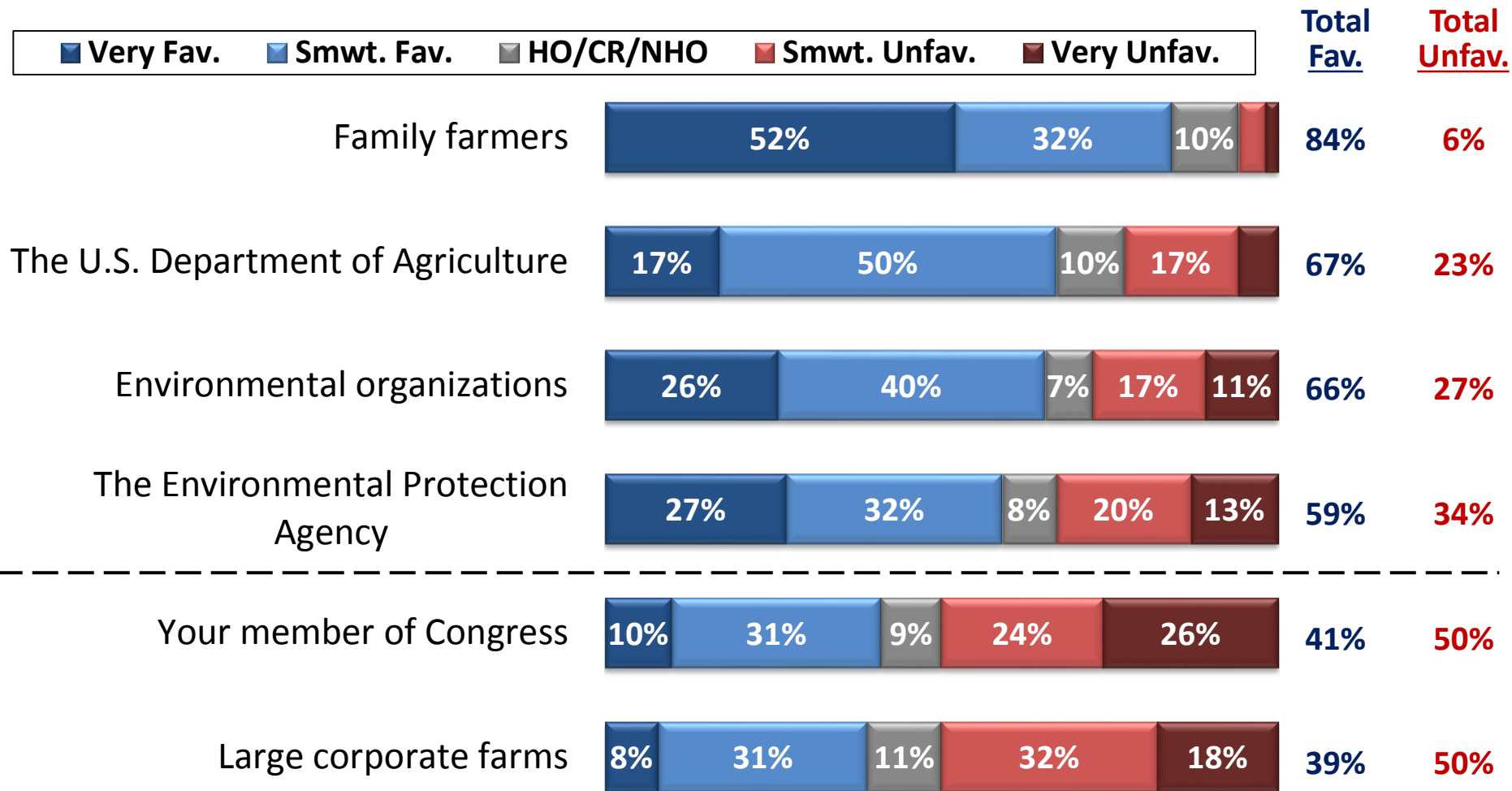
69% Approve in Cities

53% Approve in Rural Areas

“I won’t even fish anymore because the don’t know what they’re doing, and I don’t want to go out there ang get caught. As far as I’m concerned, the [Wisconsin] DNR thinks they’re God. You know? We drop half a quart of oil out there or break a little hose or whatever and you gotta spend six months cleaning it up. It’s good, but their good can go overboard. I can’t walk out into a federal forest and go behind a tree and take a leak....It’s that bad. Really.”

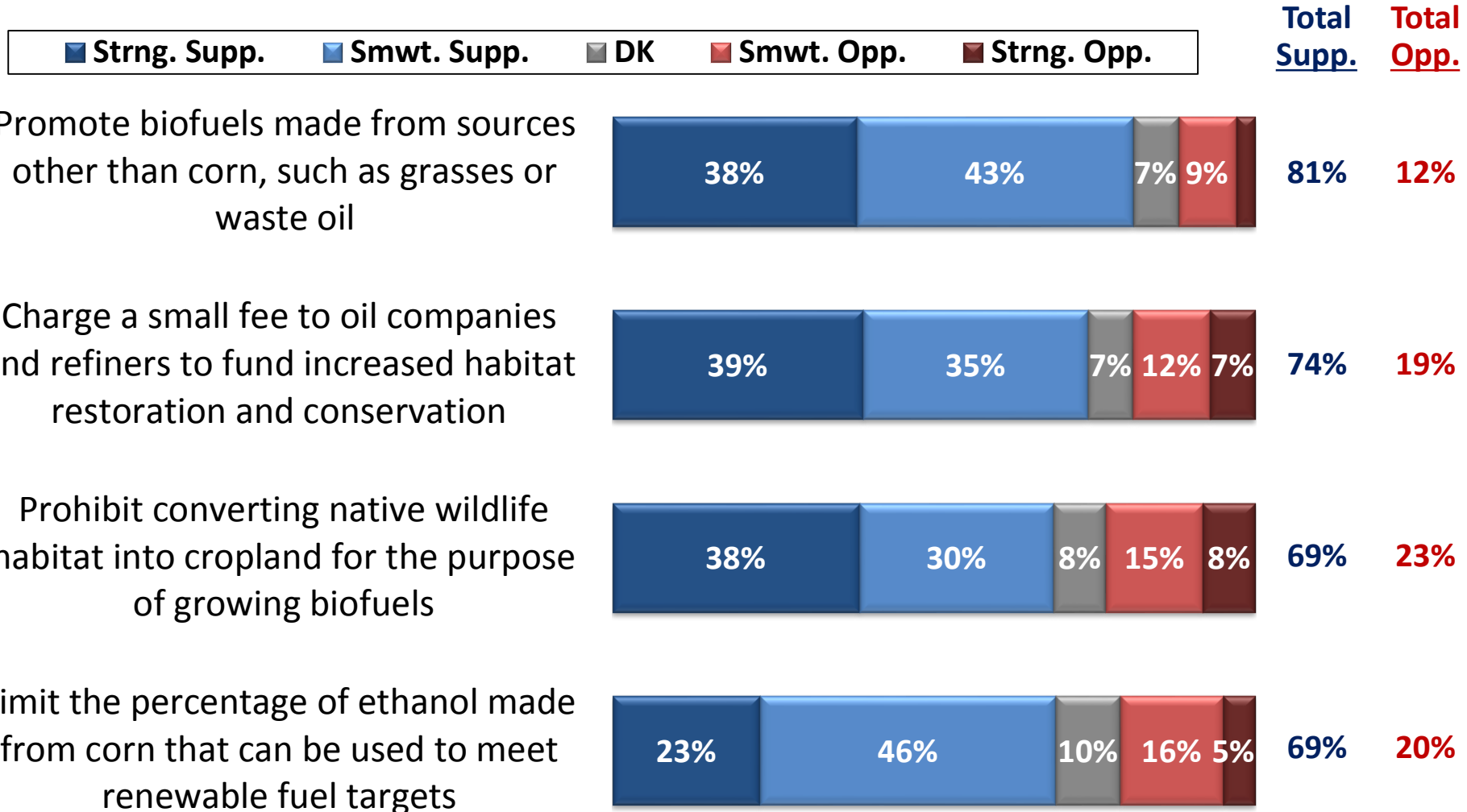
-Charlie, a Northwestern WI logger quoted in Politics of Resentment (Cramer)

Among U.S. voters, family farmers are predictably viewed much more favorably than “large corporate farms.”



Next are some questions about your general impressions of some different kinds of organizations that are active in public life. Please indicate whether your impression of that organization is generally favorable or unfavorable. If you have never heard of one, you can indicate that too.

Some reforms we tested to renewable fuel standard are instructive for broader policy.



Here is a list of specific proposals that have been made to reform the Renewable Fuel Standard. After you read each one, please indicate whether it sounds like something you would support or oppose.

The latest buzz? Butterflies and bees resonate with voters.



One of the top reasons that American voters – including GOP voters - said we should change policies that encourage conversion of wildlife habitat to cropland was to reduce the impact on pollinators like bees and monarch butterflies.

But we cannot just be about nature for nature's sake. We must evoke the impact on people.

The Gulf Coast's economy and way of life is entwined with the land and the water. Thousands of families along our coastal areas depend on natural areas, coastal waters and wetlands for their livelihood. Generations have worked as fishermen, oystermen, or in shipping or tourism. But if we don't act now to restore our coastal natural areas, those family-supporting jobs will be at risk. (Gulf)

The reason so many tourists and visitors come to our state is in large part for the beauty of our beaches and natural areas. Preserving those areas will help our economy in the long run. (Florida)

% Very Convincing

% Total Convincing

66% 94%

57% 86%

Questions?



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PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES