



The Nature Conservancy
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH



WILDLIFE NATIONAL Survey



Key findings from a national survey of 1,000 voters conducted May 23-25, 2005 & a survey of 6,348 wildlife advocates conducted October 28, 2005 – January 4, 2006.



LORI WEIGEL
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Opinion Research & Public Policy Analysis

Santa Monica - Oakland - Madison, WI - Mexico City



METHODOLOGY

Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin and Associates are pleased to present the key findings of a national telephone survey. The interviews were conducted May 23-25, 2005 among 1,000 registered voters. The survey has a margin of error of $\pm 3.1\%$.

In April and May, POS and FMMA conducted a series of focus groups in Nashville, TN among urban and suburban voters, Appleton, WI among rural and small town voters and Scottsdale, AZ among suburban and exurban voters.



METHODOLOGY

As a complement to the nationwide voter survey, FMMA and POS designed an Internet survey to gauge attitudes of "wildlife advocates" across the country. Starting in late October, TNC and IAFWA invited partners in the Teaming With Wildlife Coalition to ask their members to visit a website at which they could anonymously complete a 24-question survey about issues relating to wildlife conservation. While many of the questions paralleled those in the voter survey, others were added or modified to reflect the greater knowledge base of participants in the Internet survey. A total of 6,348 people completed the survey. Though not a random sample, the survey does provide a general sense of "wildlife advocates" views on these issues.



Data reflects respondents who participated via invitation of:

The American Fisheries Society

**The American Zoo and Aquarium
Association**

Defenders of Wildlife

Ducks Unlimited

The Izaak Walton League of America

The League of Conservation Voters

The National Audubon Society

The National Wild Turkey Federation

The Nature Conservancy

The Sierra Club

**The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation
Partnership**

Trout Unlimited

The Trust for Public Land

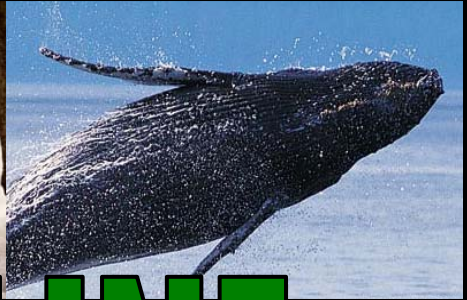
The Wildlife Conservation Society

The Wildlife Management Institute

The Wildlife Society

The World Wildlife Fund

**State and Local Conservation
Organizations**



THE BOTTOM LINE



THE BOTTOM LINE

- **The bulk of this presentation deals with communicating to the general electorate. When relevant or notable, comparisons are drawn to the Internet survey of wildlife advocates, which does indicate some key differences between the general public and these more active audiences.**
- **Most voters do not feel well informed about wildlife in their state, while advocates are much more engaged and feel more informed. Voters tend to assume all is “OK” due to this limited knowledge – otherwise they would have heard there was a problem.**
- **Voters’ views of wildlife are very place-based. Both advocates and voters view loss of habitat as the greatest threat to wildlife.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

- **A plurality of voters and overwhelming majority of advocates say their state should do more to help wildlife, should spend more to implement the state action plans, and are willing to pay more in taxes once they know federal funds will not cover all the needs. Advocates already recognize the shortfall in funding.**
- **While voters support more funding for wildlife conservation in the abstract, the focus groups – and our experience – indicate that support for specific funding mechanisms will be lower and vary greatly by state.**
- **A solid majority of voters support the state action plans in concept, and the pro-active nature of the plans resonates very well. Advocates are interested in taking some actions on behalf of the plans.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

- **Across both surveys, the defining distinction tends to be between sportsmen and non-sportsmen. Those who have had a hunting or fishing license in the last three years feel better informed about wildlife, are more likely to have heard of the state action plans, and have some distinct attitudes (eg. Greater focus on invasive species as a threat for example). The area which demonstrates the LEAST distinction between sportsmen and non-sportsmen is on how to communicate about the action plans. The rank order of messages is nearly the same.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

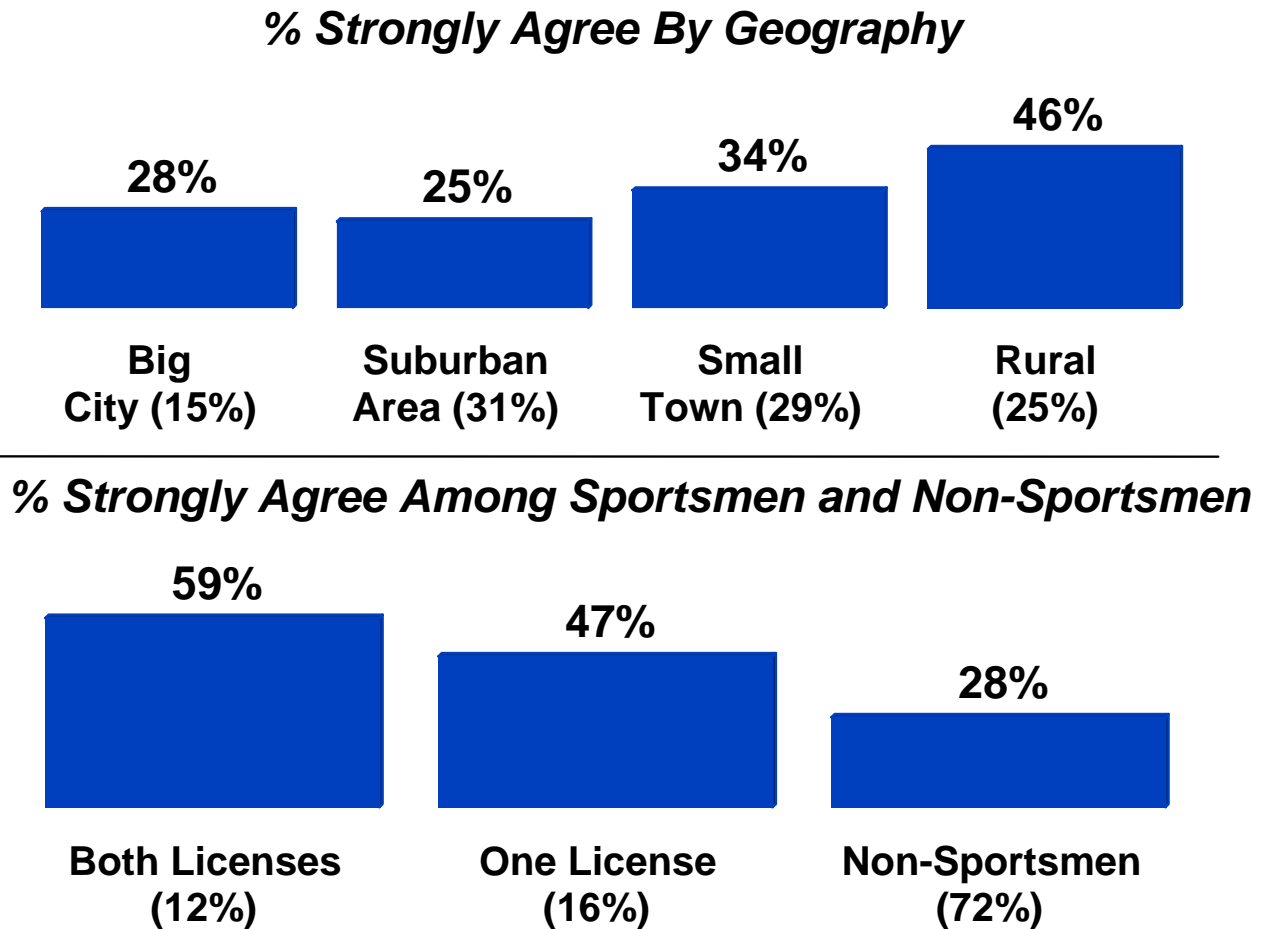
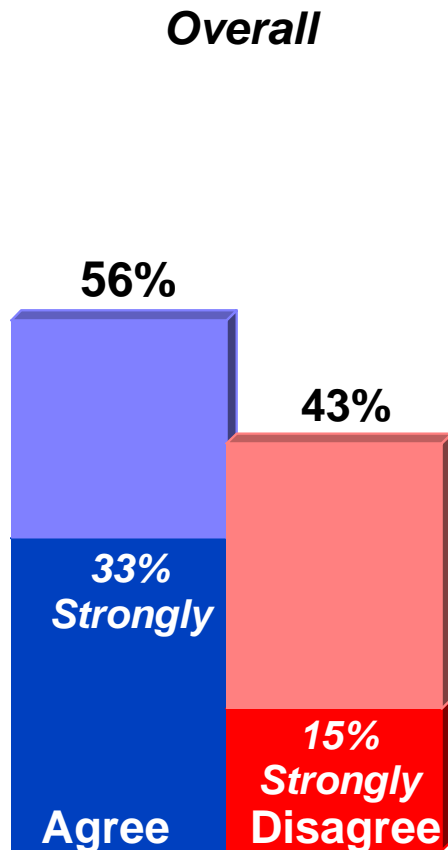
- **Despite greater knowledge and connection to wildlife among advocates, it is striking how similarly voters and advocates react to messages in favor of conserving wildlife.**
- **By far the most persuasive message among BOTH voters and advocates in favor of conserving wildlife is that the things that keep wildlife healthy – like clean air and clean water – will keep people healthy as well. While we are certainly not advocating specific tactics to be employed in the action plans – we'll leave that to the experts – it is clear that connecting the benefits to wildlife with benefits to people is compelling.**



PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRENT STATE & NEEDS OF WILDLIFE

Two factors are more important than ANY other in determining a voters' connection to wildlife.

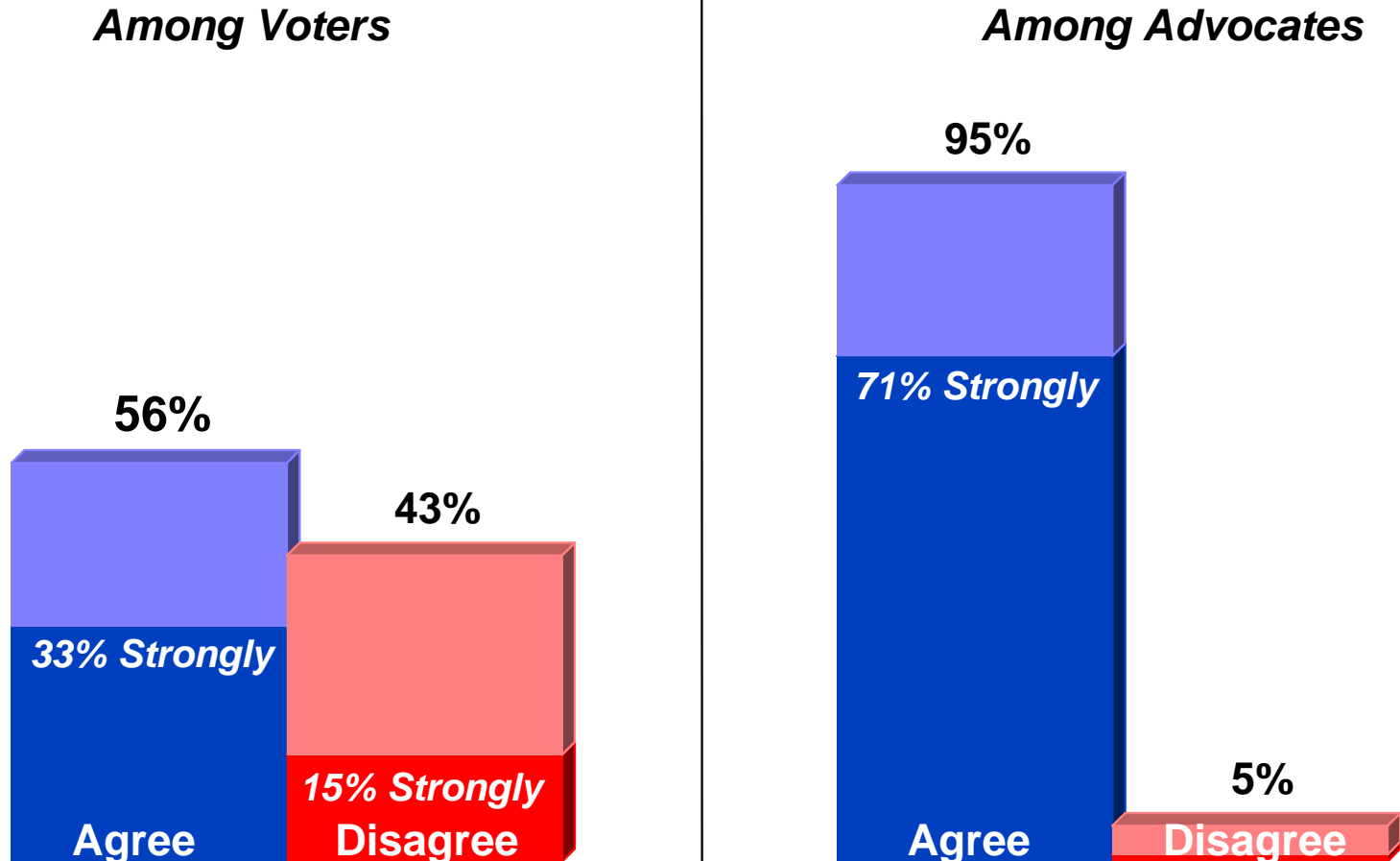
"Wildlife are an important part of my daily life."



Now I would like to read you a few statements about wildlife. For each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement...

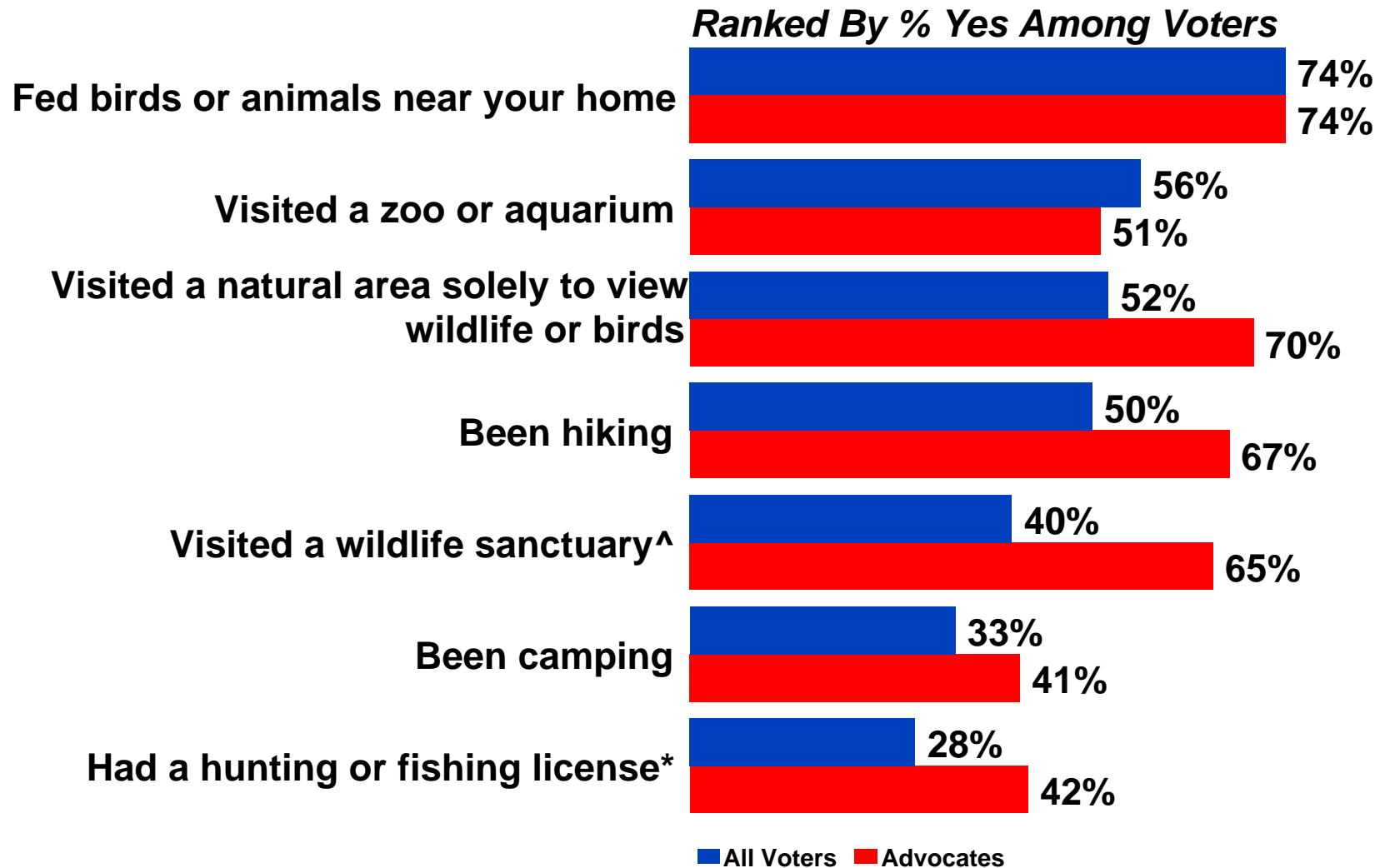
The “connection” to wildlife is significantly stronger among the advocates interviewed.

"Wildlife are an important part of my daily life."



Now I would like to read you a few statements about wildlife. For each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement...

The vast majority have had some wildlife experience.



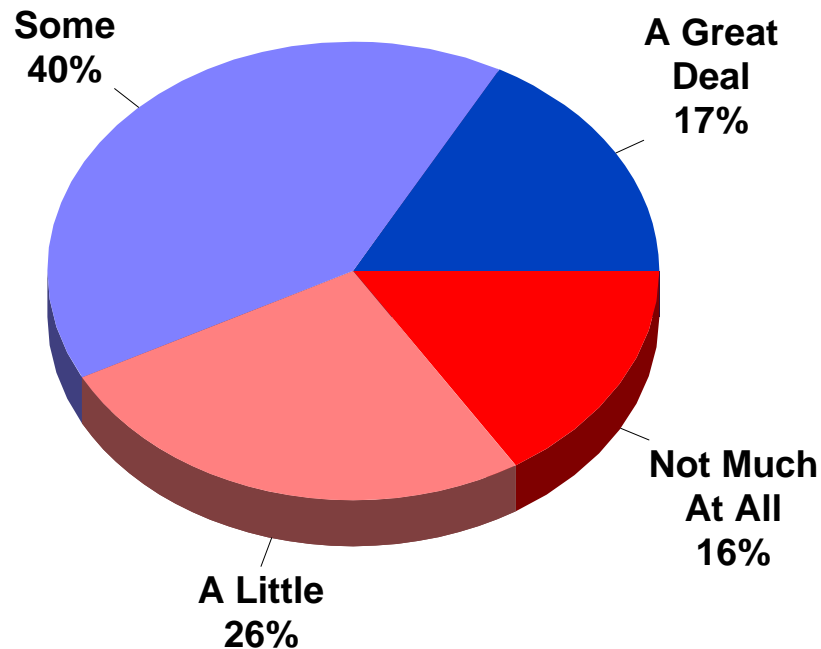
** In past three years ^ Among activists, asked as "Visited a wildlife refuge"*

Some people we have talked to this evening have done some of the following activities, while others have not. So, in the last year have you...

Predictably, advocates feel much better informed about wildlife in their state than do voters overall.

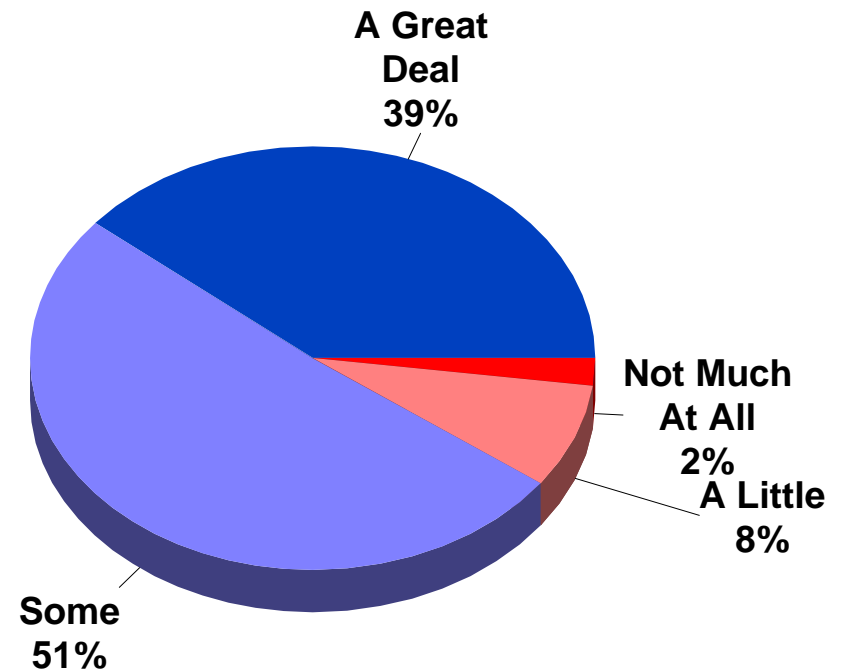
Among Voters

Total Great Deal/Some 57%
Total Little/Not Much 42%



Among Advocates

Total Great Deal/Some 90%
Total Little/Not Much 10%

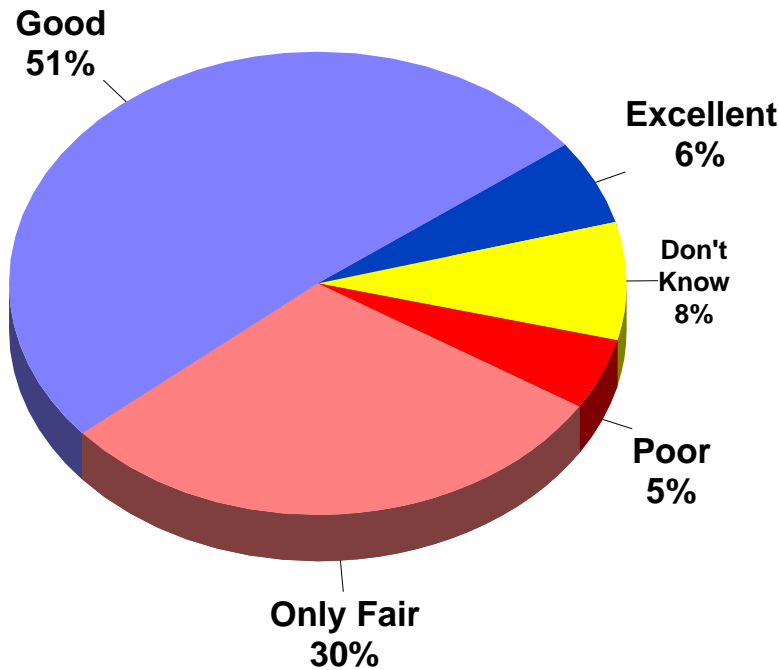


How much would you say you know about wildlife in your state – a great deal, some, only a little or not much at all?

This data indicates that voters' inclination is to say wildlife are doing "OK" based on their limited knowledge.

Among Voters

Total Excellent/Good 58%*
Total Fair/Poor 35%

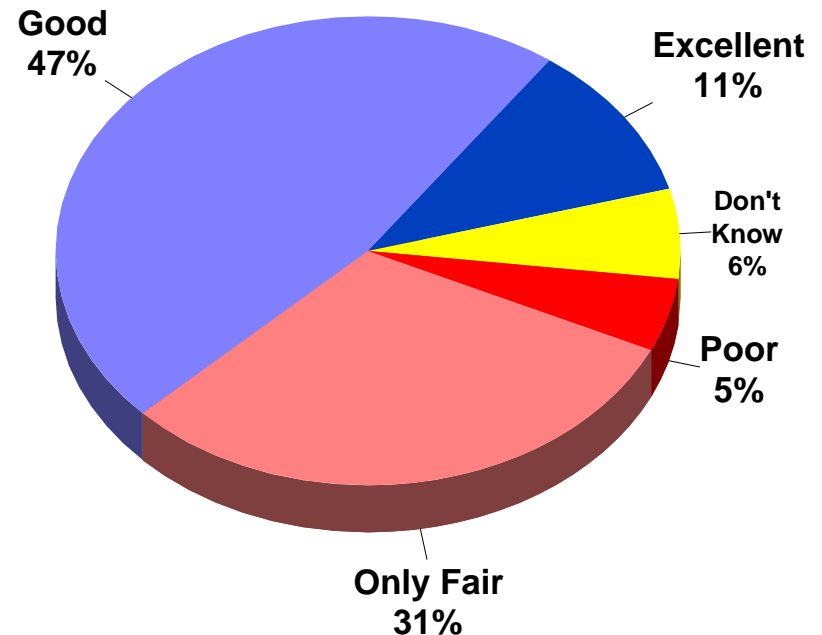


* Denotes Rounding

(N=504)

Generally speaking, in terms of the **HEALTH** of wildlife in your state, would you describe the condition of wildlife as ...

Total Excellent/Good 58%
Total Fair/Poor 36%

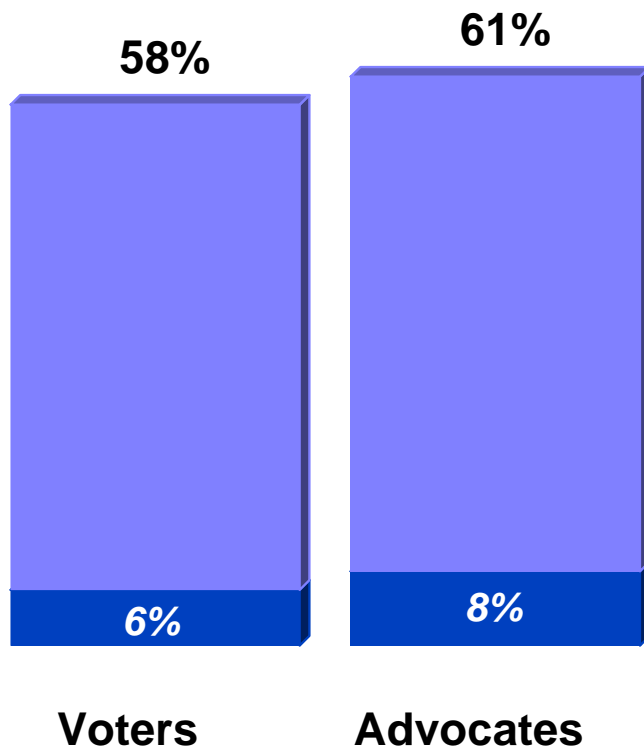


(N=496)

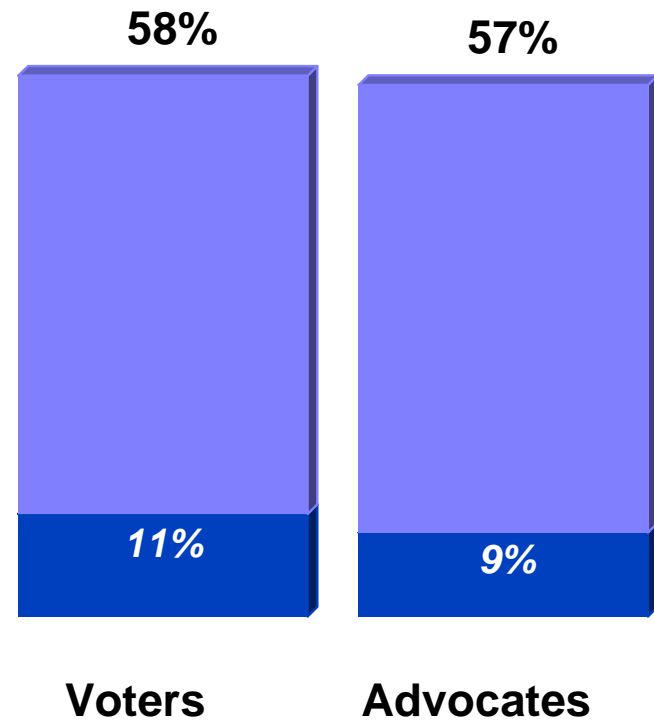
Generally speaking, in terms of the **NUMBER** of wildlife in your state, would you describe the condition of wildlife as ...

Advocates are just as likely to view wildlife as faring well today.

Health Of Wildlife



Number of Wildlife



■ Excellent ■ Good

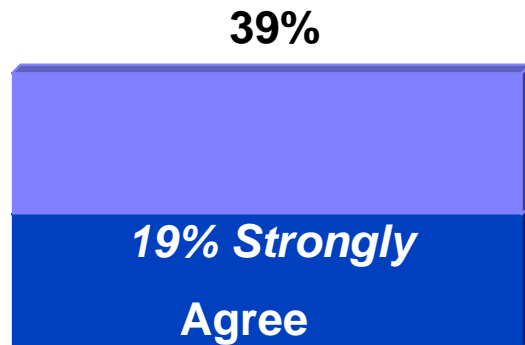
Generally speaking, in terms of the **HEALTH** of wildlife in your state, would you describe the condition of wildlife as ...

Generally speaking, in terms of the **NUMBER** of wildlife in your state, would you describe the condition of wildlife as ...

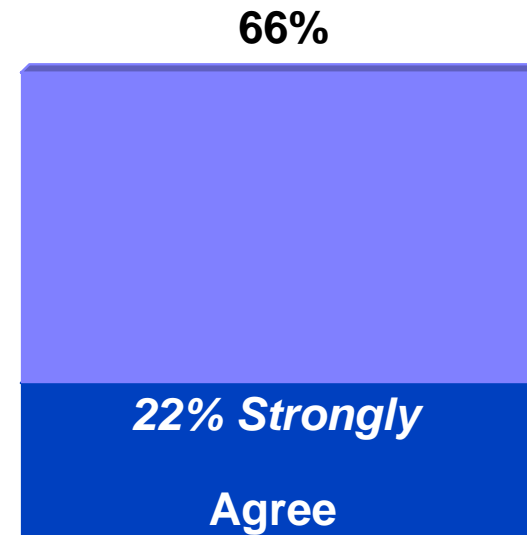
But, advocates are much more likely to view wildlife as in “crisis” in their state.

"Wildlife are in crisis in my state."

Among Voters



Among Advocates

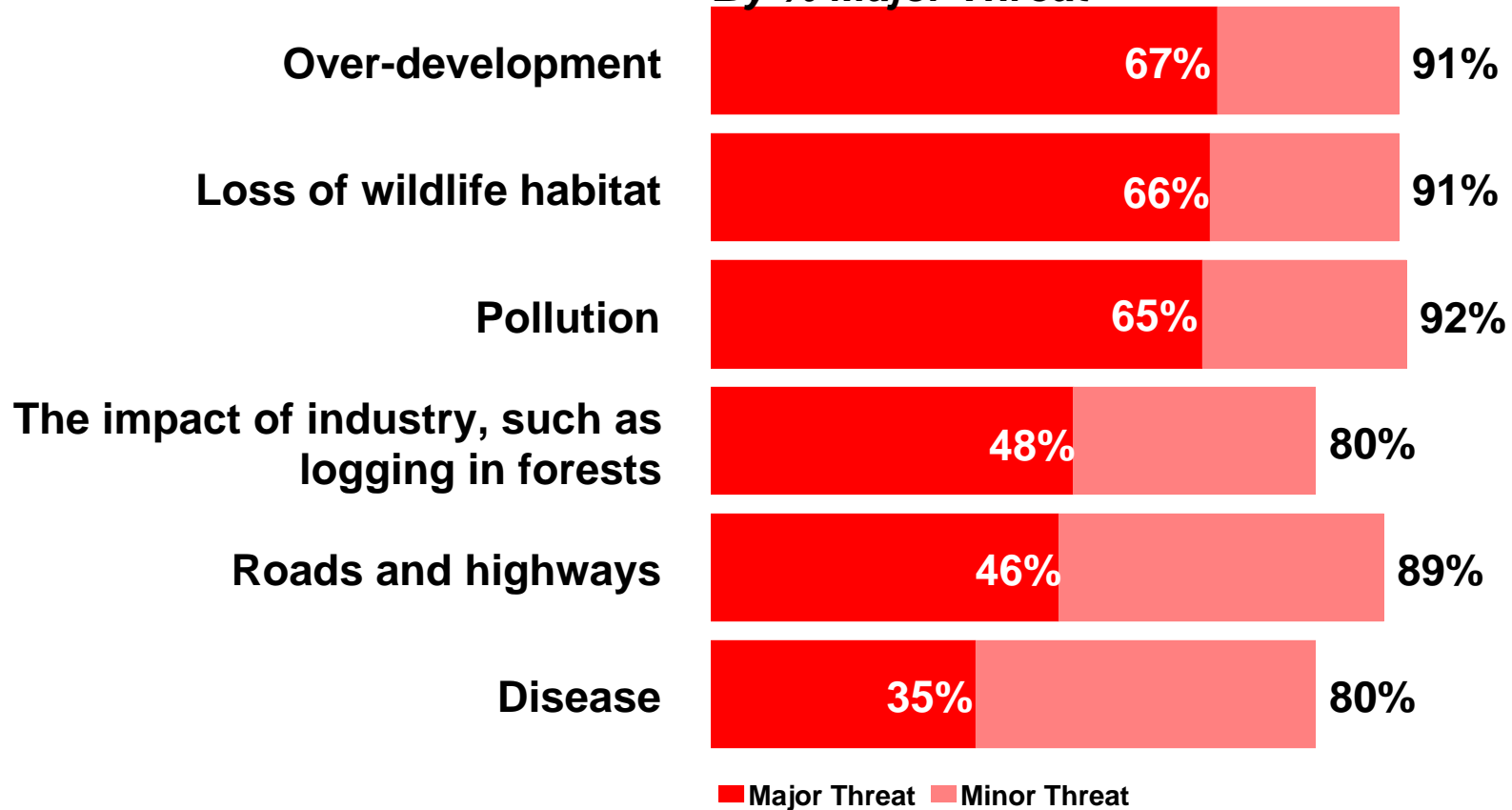


Now I would like to read you a few statements about wildlife. For each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement...

Still, voters perceive a number of threats to wildlife in their state...

Among Voters

By % Major Threat

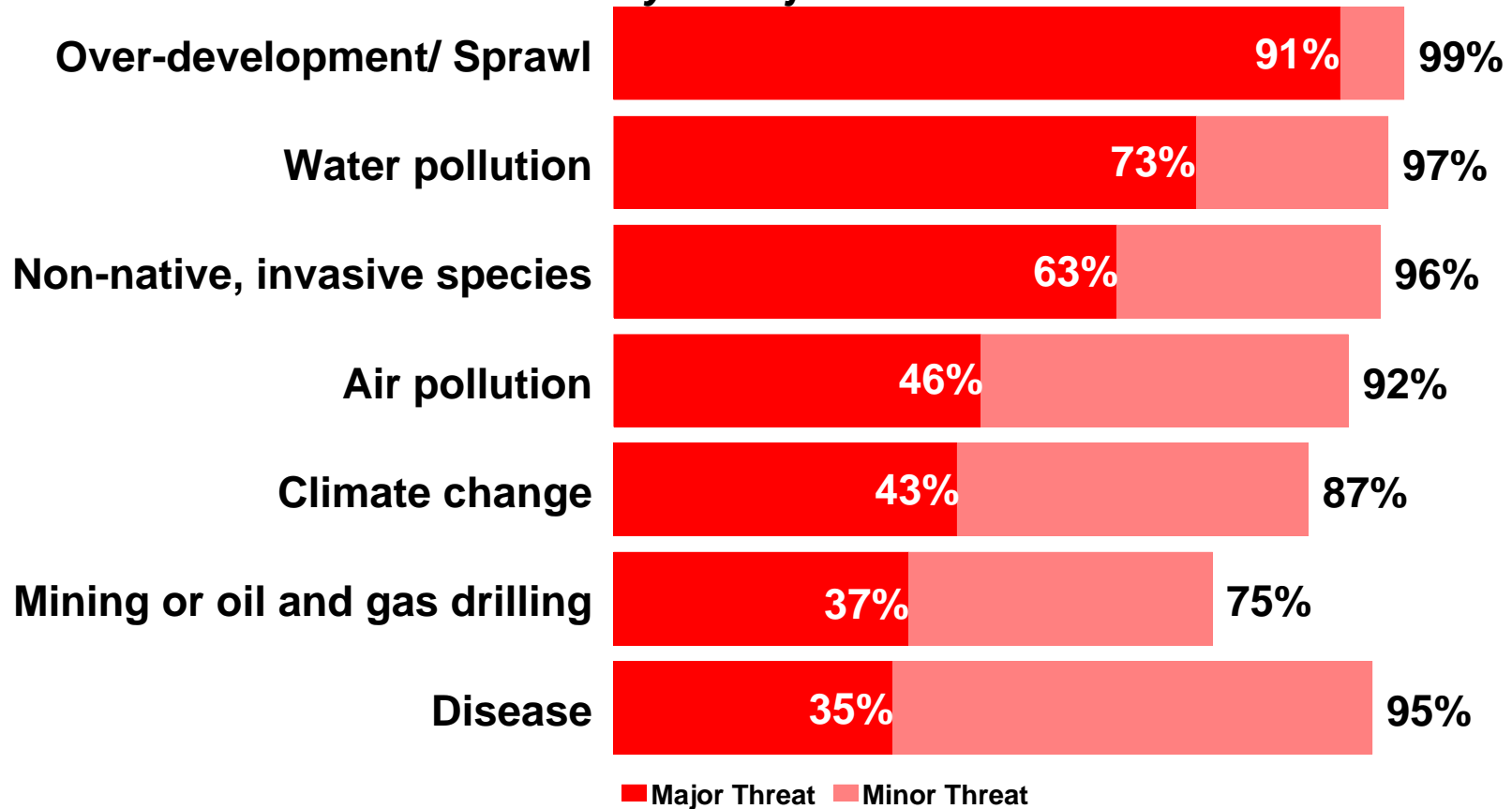


Now, thinking about some problems which may or may not affect wildlife. I would like to read you some things which might affect wildlife negatively, and please tell me for each one whether you think that is a major threat, a minor threat or not a threat to wildlife in your state...

As do advocates, who say a broader range of issues are negatively affecting wildlife.

Among Advocates

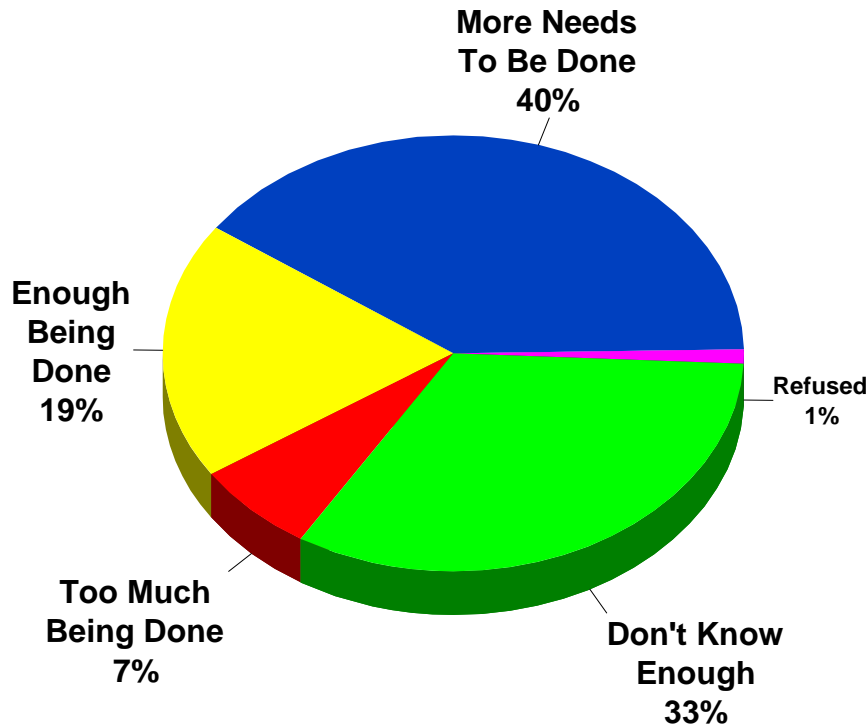
By % Major Threat



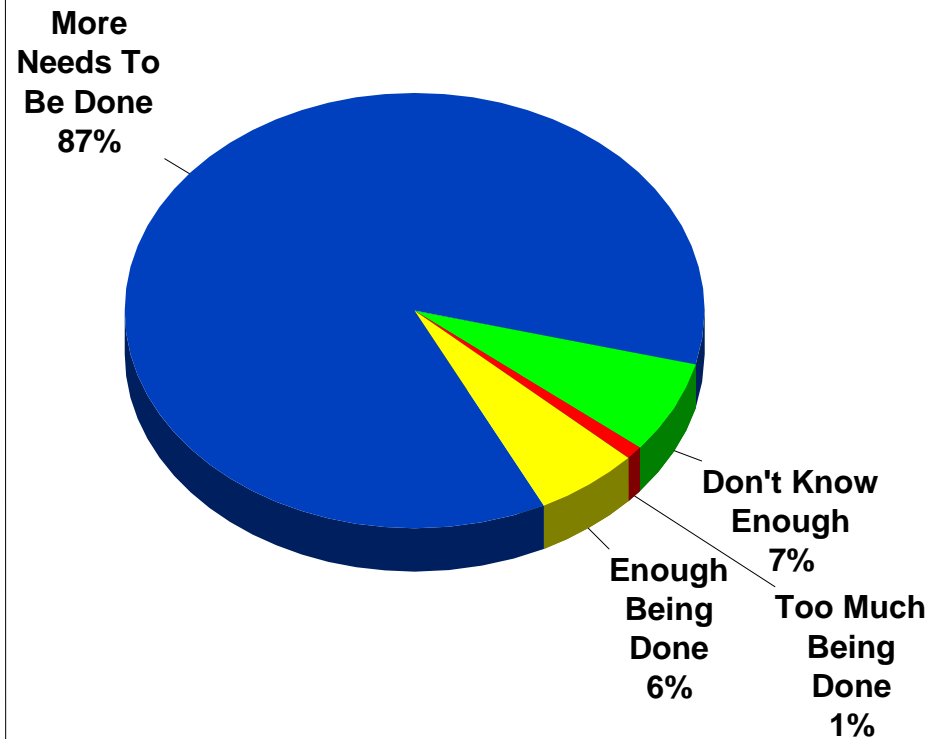
Now, thinking about some problems which may or may not affect wildlife. I would like to read you some things which might affect wildlife negatively, and please tell me for each one whether you think that is a major threat, a minor threat or not a threat to wildlife in your state...

Advocates feel better positioned to take a stand that more needs to be done to help wildlife in their state.

Among Voters



Among Advocates



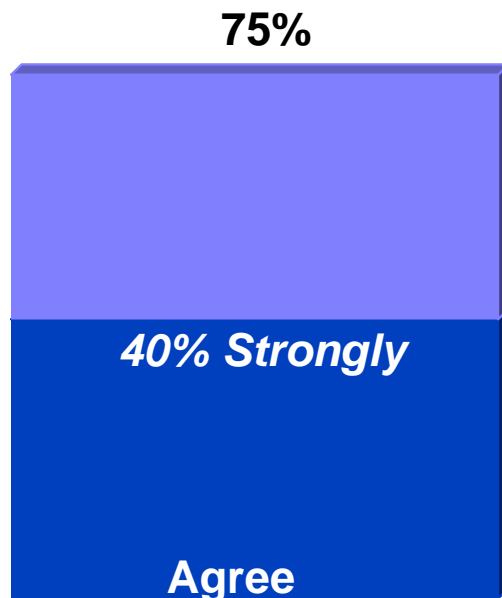
Voter Wording: And, would you say – more needs to be done to help wildlife in your state or enough is being done to help wildlife in your state – or do you not feel you know enough to say one way or the other?

Advocate Wording: And would you say that more needs to be done to help wildlife in your state, that enough is being done to help wildlife, that too much is being done, or that you do not know enough to say one way or the other?

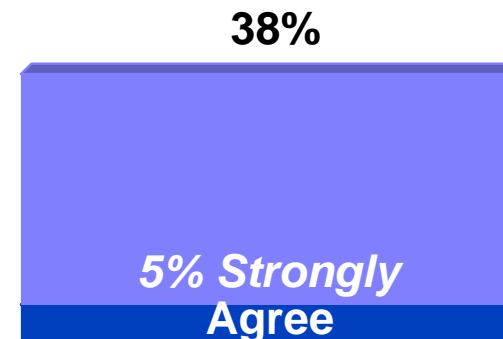
The real difference between voters and advocates is the willingness to prioritize wildlife among competing issues.

"Wildlife are important, but there are higher priorities in my state which need funding."

Among Voters



Among Advocates



Now I would like to read you a few statements about wildlife. For each one, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that statement...



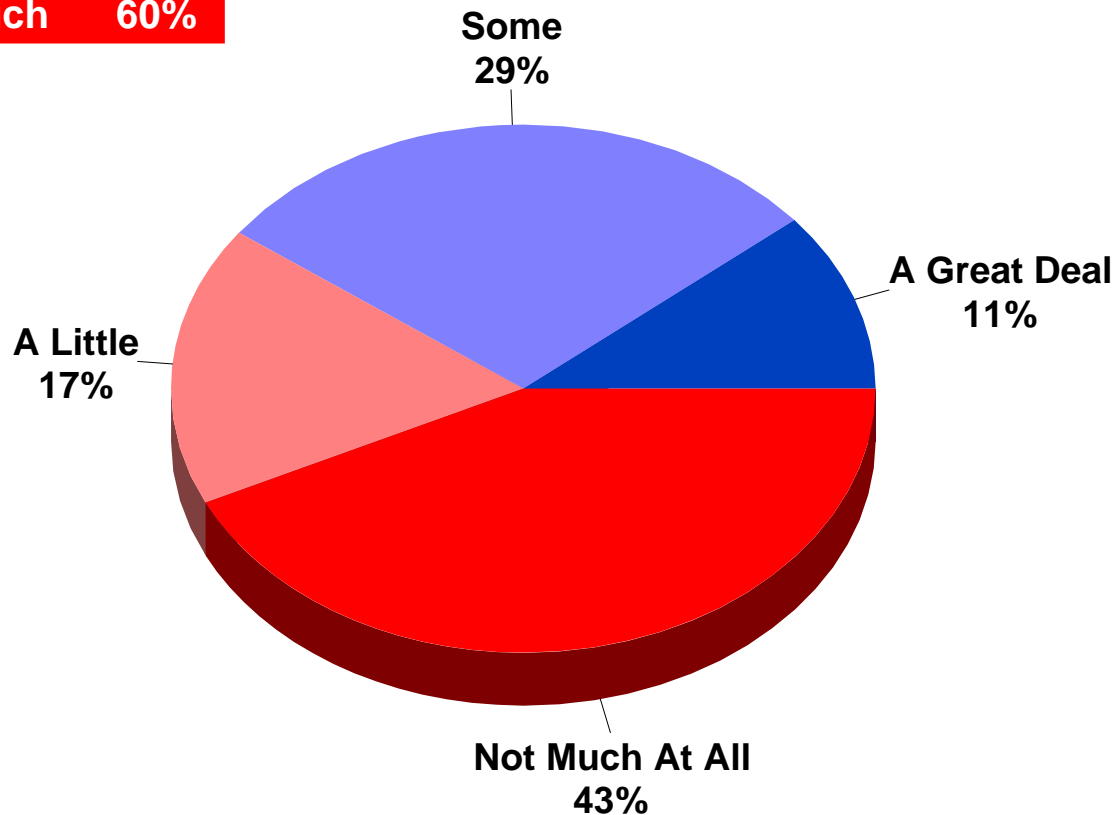
THE STATE ACTION PLANS



While voters in our focus groups had never heard of the state wildlife strategies, advocates are predictably better informed.

Among Advocates

Total Great Deal/Some 40%
Total Little/Not Much 60%



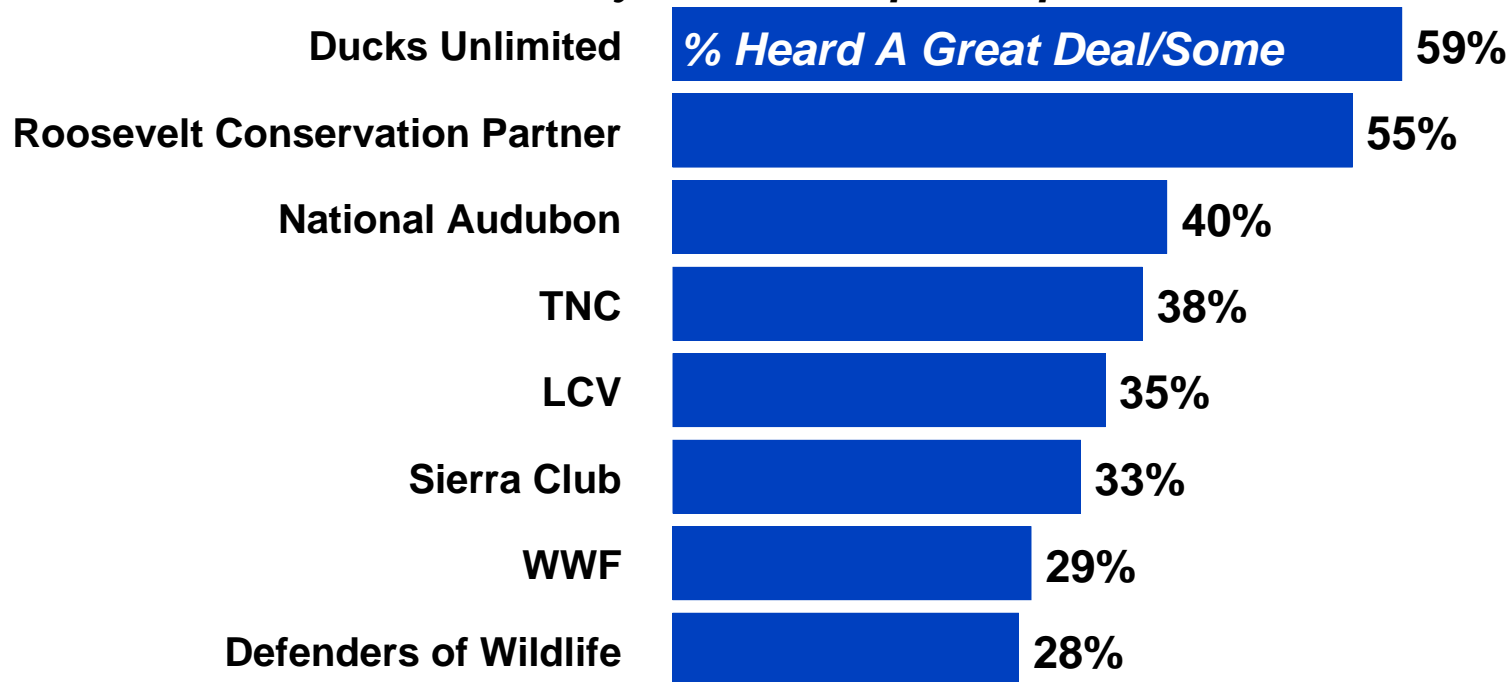
Next, how much, if anything, have you heard about your state fish and wildlife officials developing a state strategy or action plan to help wildlife?

Awareness of the action plans is MUCH higher among sportsmen and affiliated membership groups.

Among Sportsmen



By Membership Group



Next, how much, if anything, have you heard about your state fish and wildlife officials developing a state strategy or action plan to help wildlife?

Why call them **State Wildlife Action Plans** to the public?

Given voters' skepticism about government studies and reports, calling this an "action plan" implied very positive things to respondents that other terms did not.

- "You're going to do something." – Appleton man
- "Action plan means they are going to start to do something."
- "They're actually going to do it." – Appleton women
- "Action plan. . . . Somebody is ready to do something. We're getting ready to make progress to figure out a way to make the wildlife a better place. It just seems like you are fixing to do something." – Nashville woman

Why call them **State Wildlife Action Plans** to the public?

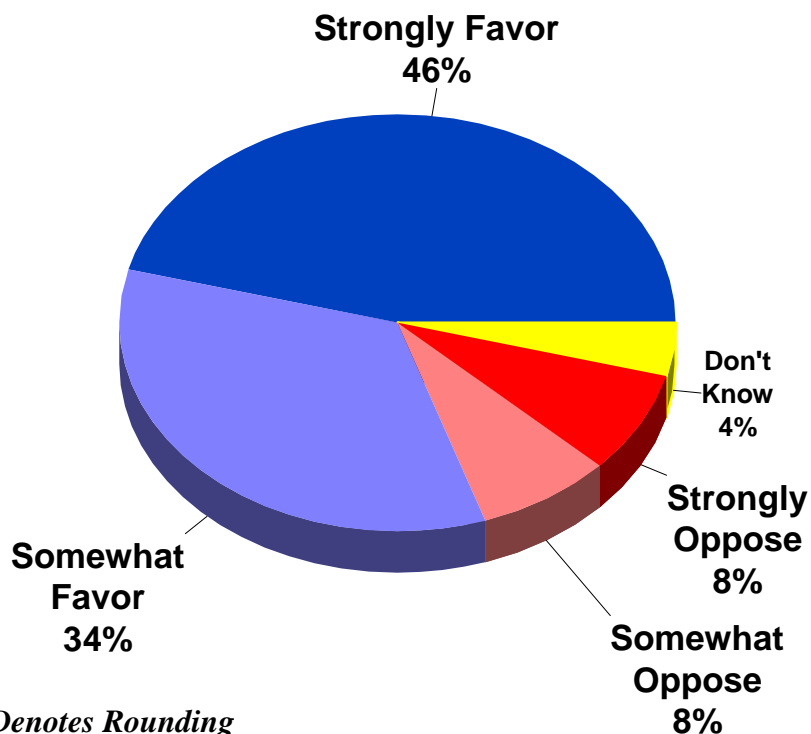
In contrast, other terms we tested implied inaction or even bureaucracy to voters, who are new to the process.

- “Because if it’s just a ‘vision,’ it doesn’t mean anything is going to actually take place.” –Nashville man responding to the term “vision”
- “It’s my general opinion that the more organized something becomes, the more crippled it becomes, and the more ... you get more layers of people trying to create jobs for friends or family members or something. It just starts sucking up the money. “Blueprint” sort of gives me that connotation. . .” – Nashville man responding to the term “blueprint”

There is strong support for the core concept of state action plans.

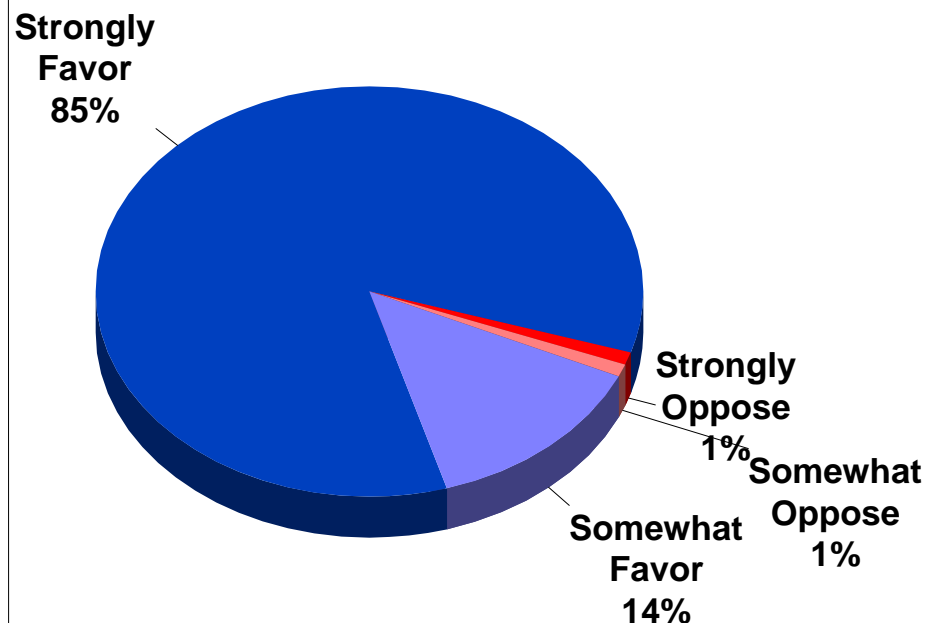
Among Voters

Total Favor	80%
Total Oppose	17%*



Among Advocates[^]

Total Favor	99%*
Total Oppose	2%*



* Denotes Rounding

Now, I'd like to read you a brief description of a project being undertaken in your state. State wildlife agencies in all fifty states are taking part in a major national project to conserve America's wildlife. Each state will examine the condition of its wildlife and create an action plan that outlines the full range of specific actions that need to be taken to help wildlife in that state. Knowing only this, do you favor or oppose creation of a state action plan to conserve wildlife?

[^] Advocates read slightly longer description of state action plans

The pro-active nature of the plans resonates well with voters.

Among Voters

By % Much More Favorable

The main goal of this effort is to come up with a plan to help wildlife BEFORE an animal becomes so rare that it is expensive or impossible to save it.



In each state, scientists, sportsmen, farmers, and conservationists are all working together to develop a wildlife action plan for their state.



Each state is required to hold public meetings and ensure that its citizens have input on the development of the state's wildlife action plan.



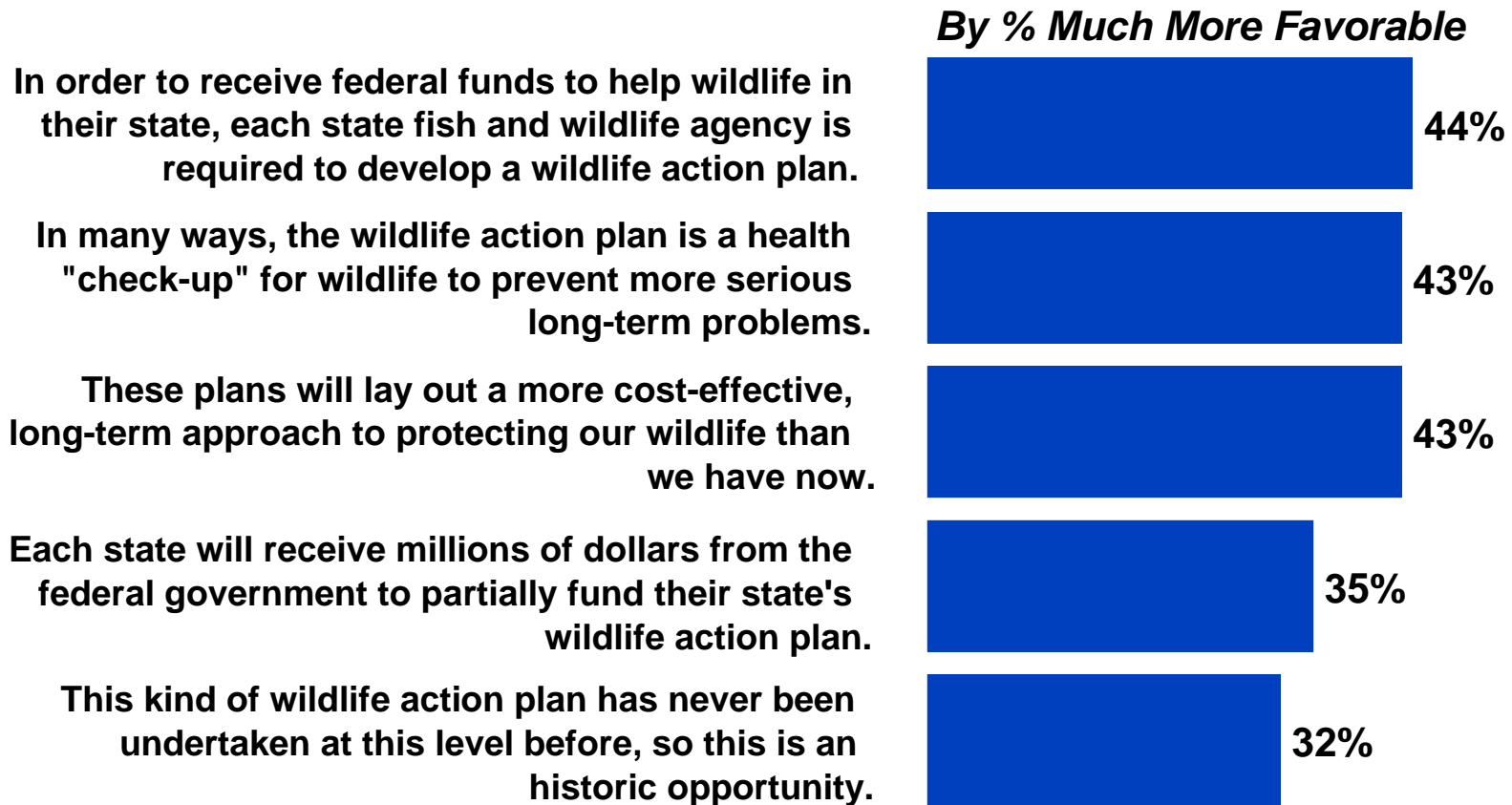
Each state will start by helping those animals that are most at risk, or those for whom they can do the most good, and then address other animals that need help.



Now, I am going to read you a list of statements regarding your state developing a wildlife action plan, and after I read each statement, please tell me whether it makes you feel – MORE FAVORABLE or LESS FAVORABLE – toward the state wildlife action plan or does it not make much difference in your opinion one way or the other?

Funding and “historic opportunity” is much less important to communicate to the public.

Among Voters Action Plan Statements Continued



Now, I am going to read you a list of statements regarding your state developing a wildlife action plan, and after I read each statement, please tell me whether it makes you feel – MORE FAVORABLE or LESS FAVORABLE – toward the state wildlife action plan or does it not make much difference in your opinion one way or the other?



The quick check list for communicating to the public about the state wildlife action plans:

- ✓ **First, they are ACTION PLANS to CONSERVE wildlife. They are not a strategy, initiative, blueprint, etc.. In addition, “conserve” resonates more strongly than other terms like “protect” or “preserve.”**
- ✓ **It is PRO-ACTIVE - helping wildlife before they are too rare.**
- ✓ **Disparate groups are WORKING TOGETHER to create the action plans, with PUBLIC INPUT.**



continued

- ✓ **Each state will start by helping the animals most at risk before addressing other animals. NEVER convey the impression that the action plans prioritize certain animals to the exclusion of others.**
- ✓ **These plans are COST-EFFECTIVE and LONG-TERM, but should not be linked to millions of dollars in government funding as this can raise questions among some voter groups.**

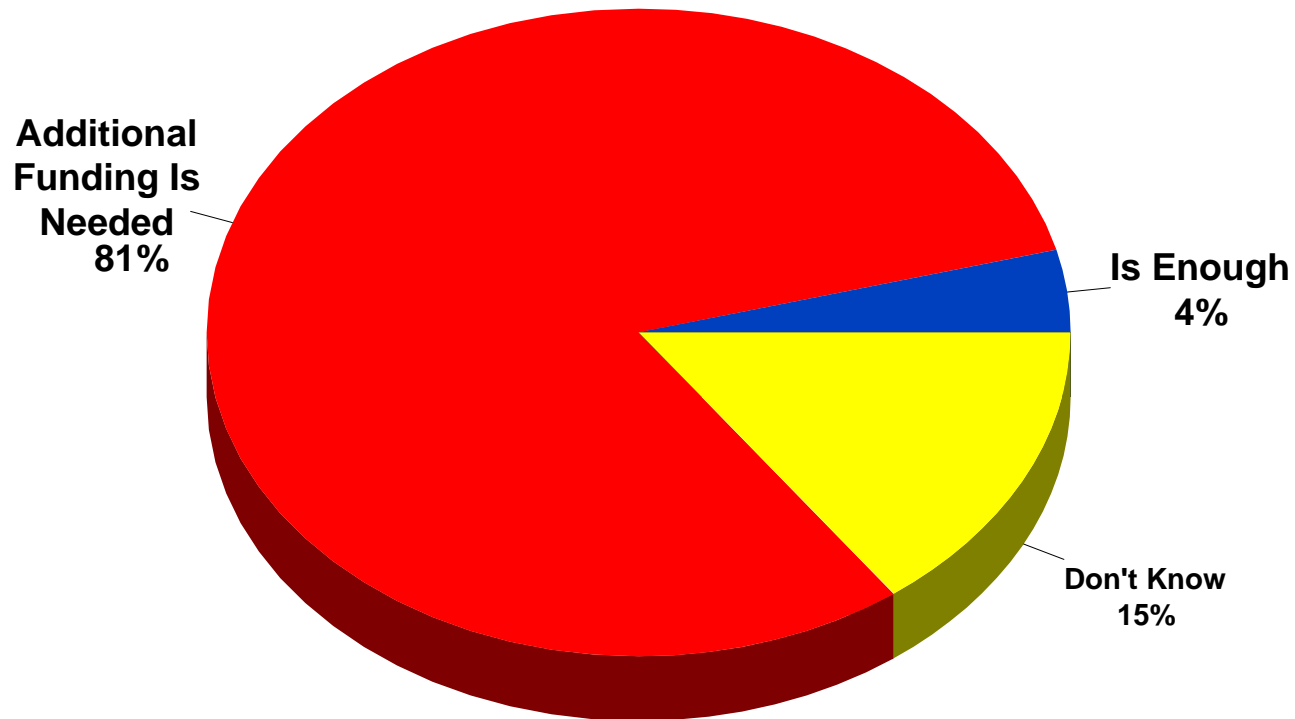


FUNDING THE ACTION PLANS



Advocates overwhelmingly recognize the funding situation facing the states to implement these action plans.

Among Advocates

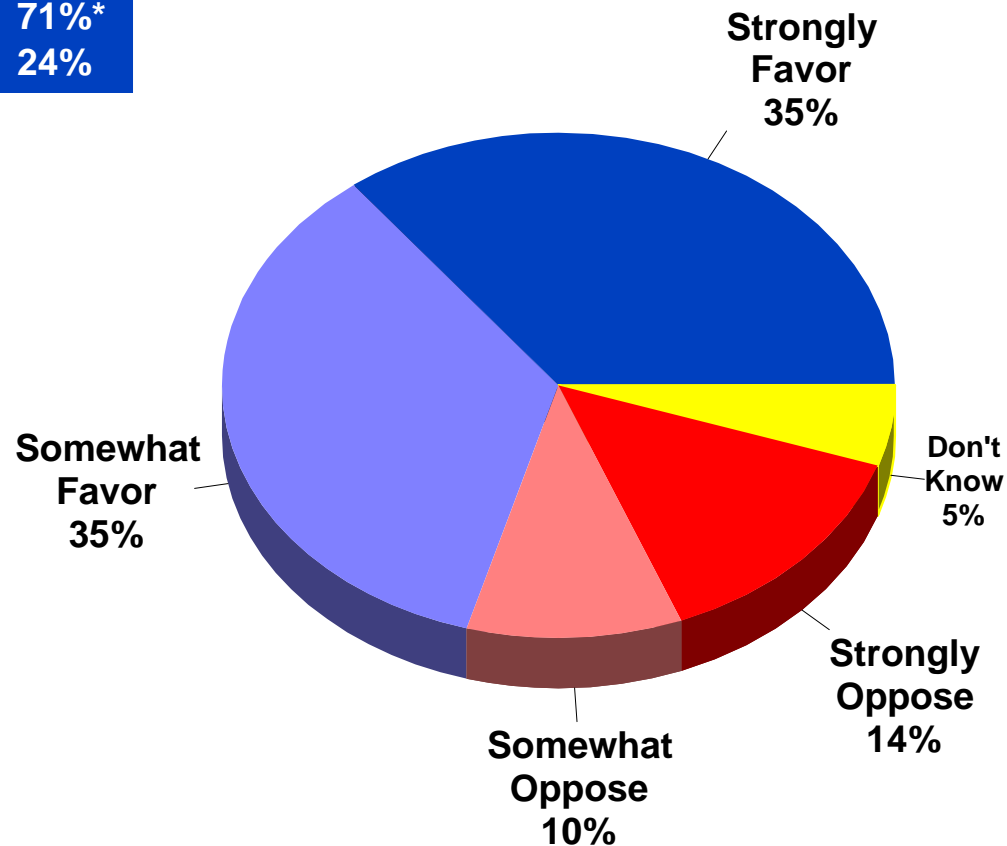


Do you think there is enough funding already available from the federal government to fund the wildlife action plans, or that additional funding is needed?

Seven-in-ten American voters say their state should spend more in order to implement the state wildlife action plans.

Among Voters

Total Favor	71%*
Total Oppose	24%



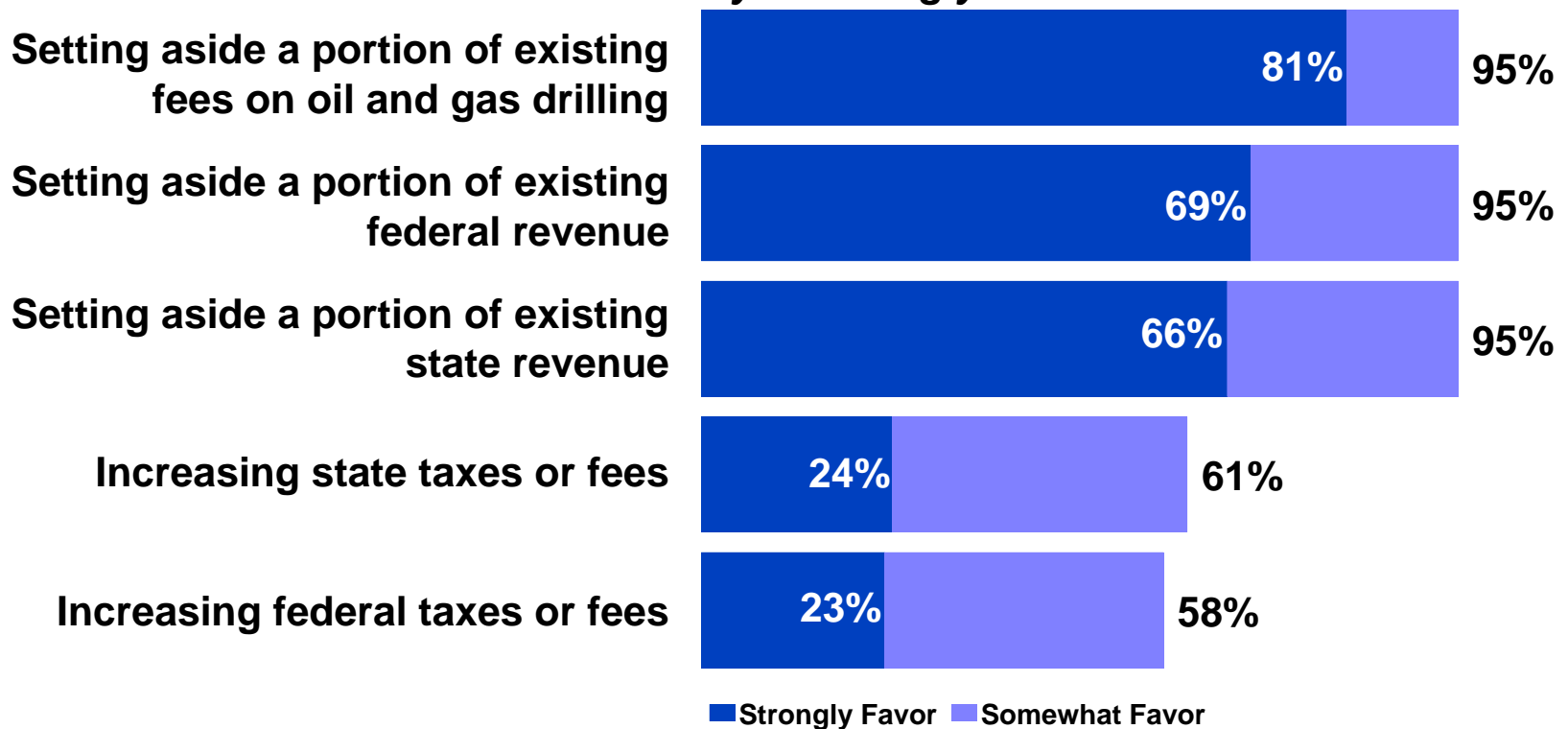
* Denotes Rounding

Do you favor or oppose your state government spending more to implement its action plan to conserve wildlife?

When advocates are given a range of funding options, they are much more supportive of using existing revenues than in tax or fee increases.

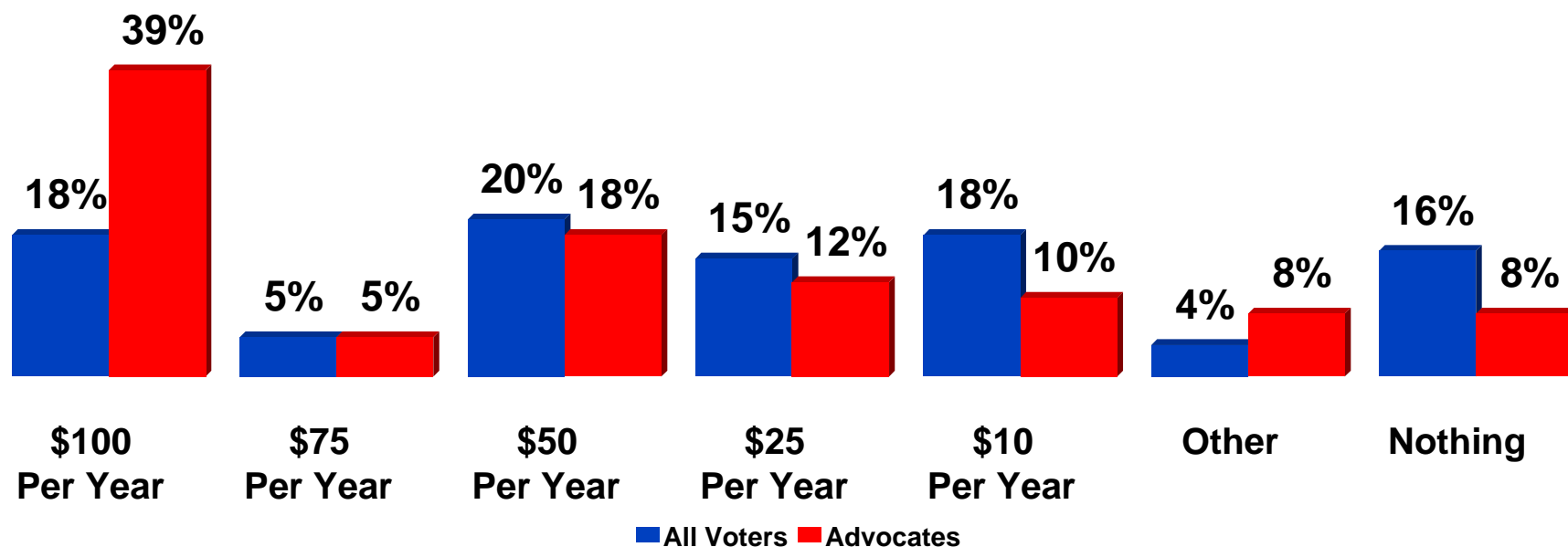
Among Advocates

By % Strongly Favor



In fact, implementing the state wildlife action plans will require additional funding. The following are a list of sources that additional funding might come from. For each, please indicate whether you would strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose using some money from that source to fund the state wildlife action plans.

Still, the vast majority of both advocates and voters say they would be willing to pay some additional taxes to help fund their state's action plan.



How much more would you be willing to pay in taxes, if anything, to specifically fund your state's action plan to conserve wildlife?



MESSAGES & DELIVERY OF MESSAGES



The top messages focus on self- benefit and children. Clean air and clean water is the top message with both voters and advocates.



Now, I am going to read you some statements some people have given as reasons to support increasing taxes in order to implement your state's action plan to conserve wildlife. After I read each one, please tell me whether you find this statement... very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing, ...or...not convincing at all as a reason to support increasing taxes in order to implement your state's action plan to conserve wildlife.

Other messages rate fairly closely to each other.

Messages Continued

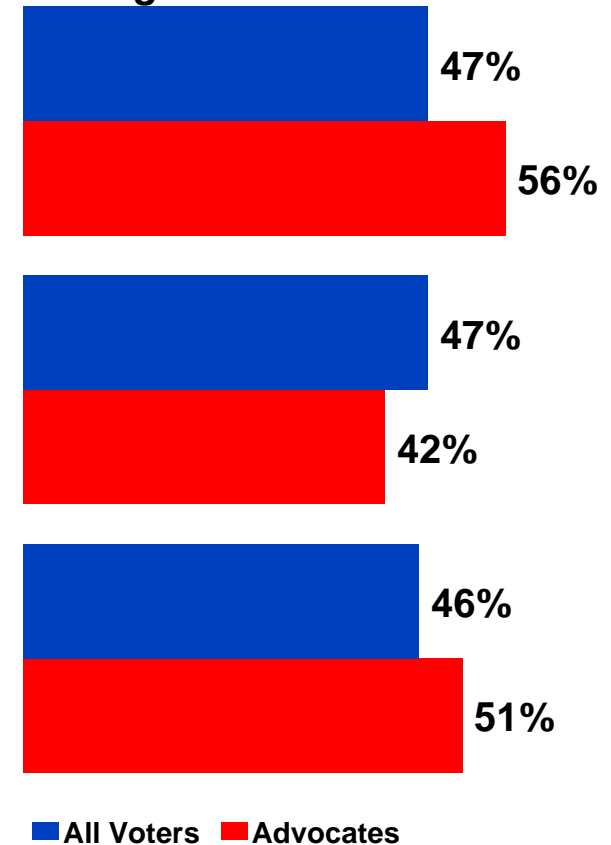
We know we can have success in helping wildlife. In the past few decades, investments in protecting once-threatened animals – like the wild turkey, white-tailed deer, and numerous fish – have brought them back from the brink of extinction to having thriving, healthy populations. We can do the same for other animals if we just make the effort and investment now.

There is nothing more beautiful than catching sight of a fawn in the woods, nothing more majestic than a soaring eagle, and nothing that sounds more lovely than a songbird in Spring.

The endangered species list includes over one thousand kinds of animals and continues to grow every year. This is a problem that is getting worse and should be addressed today.*

* Among advocates question worded “The federal endangered species list includes over five hundred kinds of animals...”

Ranked By % Very Convincing Among Voters



Now, I am going to read you some statements some people have given as reasons to support increasing taxes in order to implement your state's action plan to conserve wildlife. After I read each one, please tell me whether you find this statement... very convincing, somewhat convincing, not too convincing, ...or...not convincing at all as a reason to support increasing taxes in order to implement your state's action plan to conserve wildlife.

Sportsmen and non-sportsmen tend to have relatively the same response to most messages. However, the "endangered species" and "crisis" messages are far weaker among advocates who are sportsmen, and far stronger with non-sportsmen.

% Very Convincing Among Advocates

ENDANGERED SPECIES MESSAGE:
The federal endangered species list includes over five hundred kinds of animals and continues to grow every year. This is a problem that is getting worse and should be addressed today

CRISIS MESSAGE:
Wildlife are an important part of nature. We simply do not know the impact that losing an animal or habitat area could have on the natural balance in our state, and what impact it might have in a crisis or disaster.



SPORTSMEN



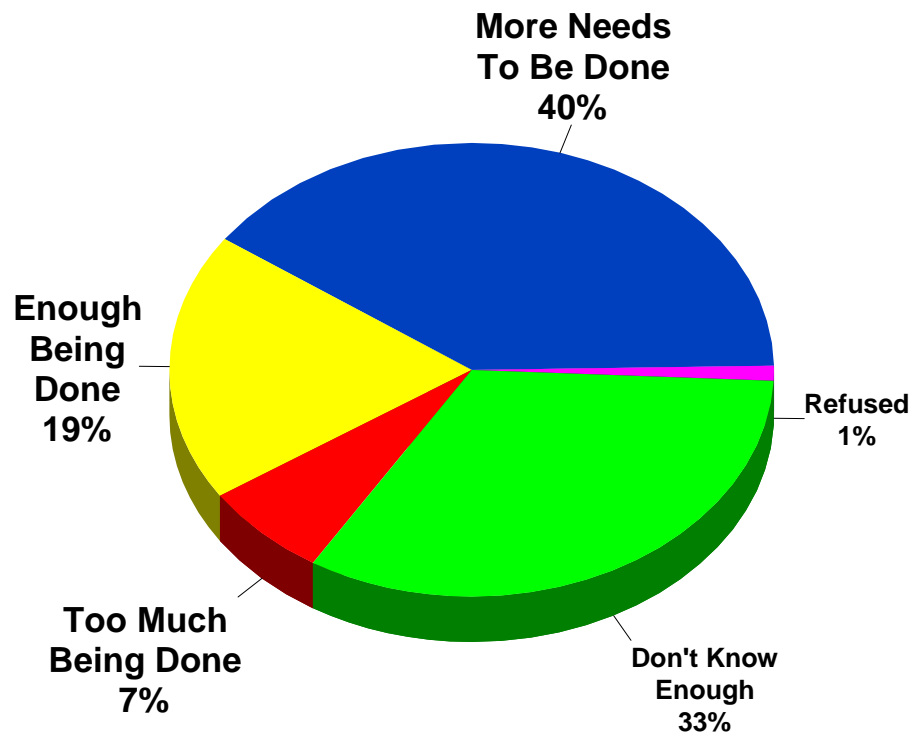
NON-SPORTSMEN



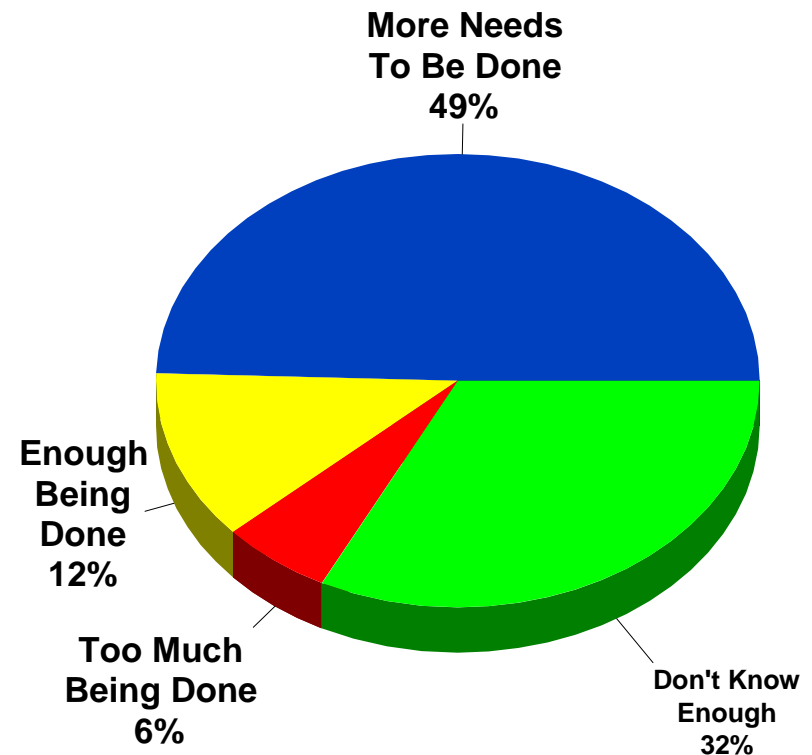
Providing voters with more information does increase the perception that more should be done.

Among Voters

Initial

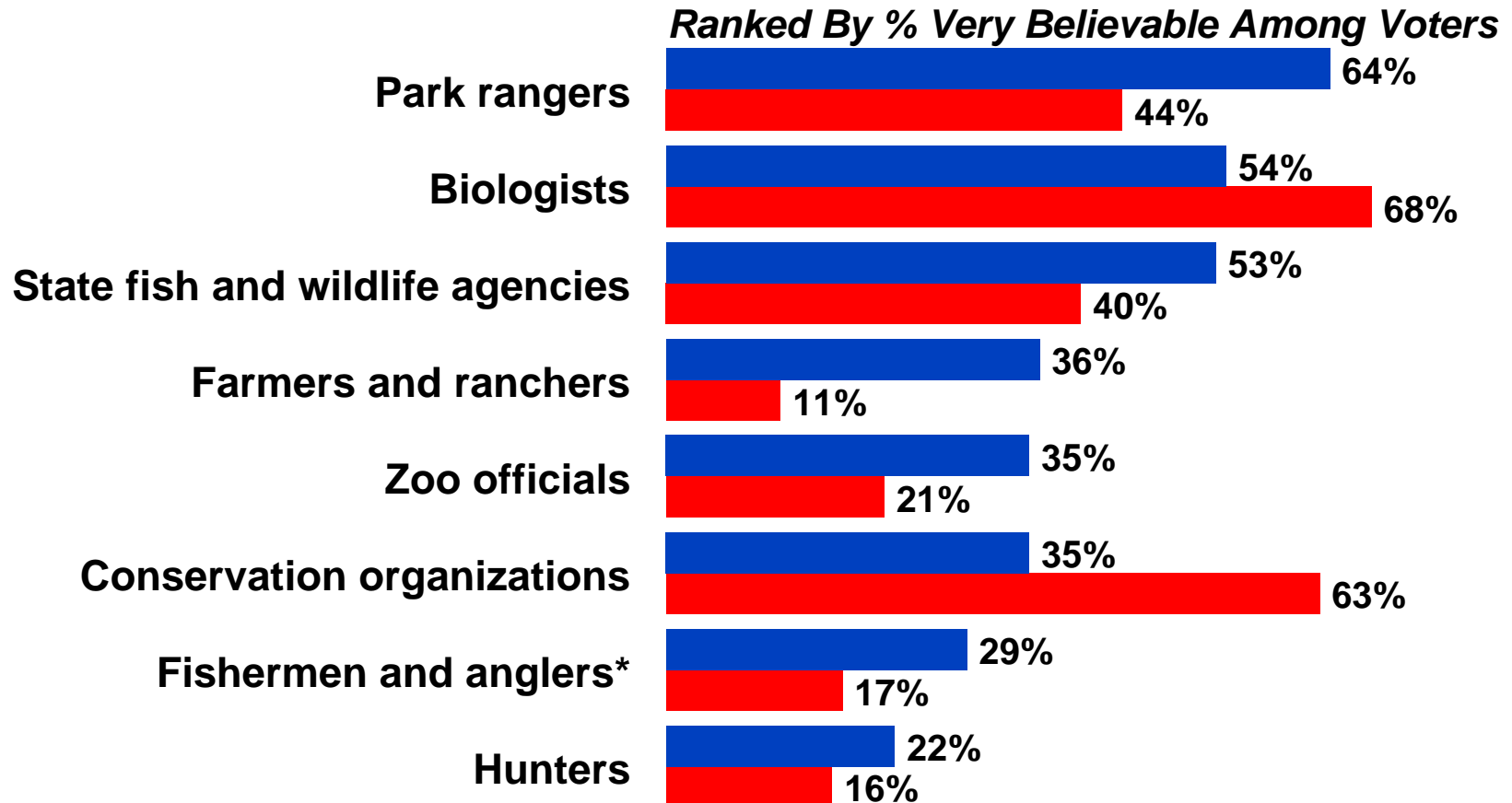


Informed



Having heard some more about this would you say – more needs to be done to help wildlife in your state... or... enough is being done to help wildlife in your state – or do you not feel you know enough to say one way or the other?

Finally, voters place the most credibility in those they perceive as not having a direct stake in wildlife.



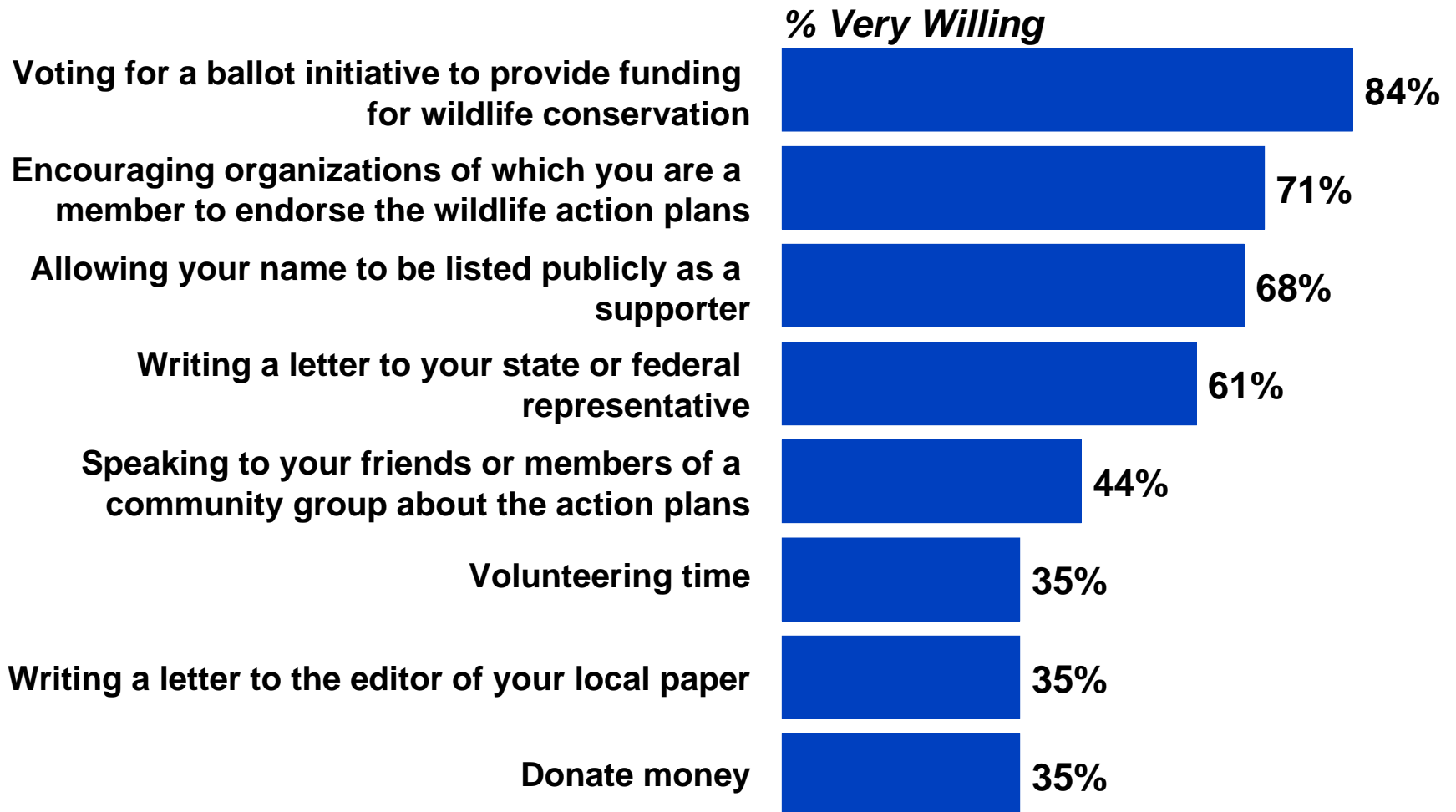
* Among advocates, asked as "Anglers"

■ All Voters ■ Advocates

Next, I'm going to read the names of some people and organizations that might speak out about issues related to wildlife. After each one, please tell me whether or not you would consider those people or that organization to be a believable source of information about wildlife. If you have never heard of the people or organization, or have no opinion about them, please tell me that too.

Advocates are willing to get involved to some extent.

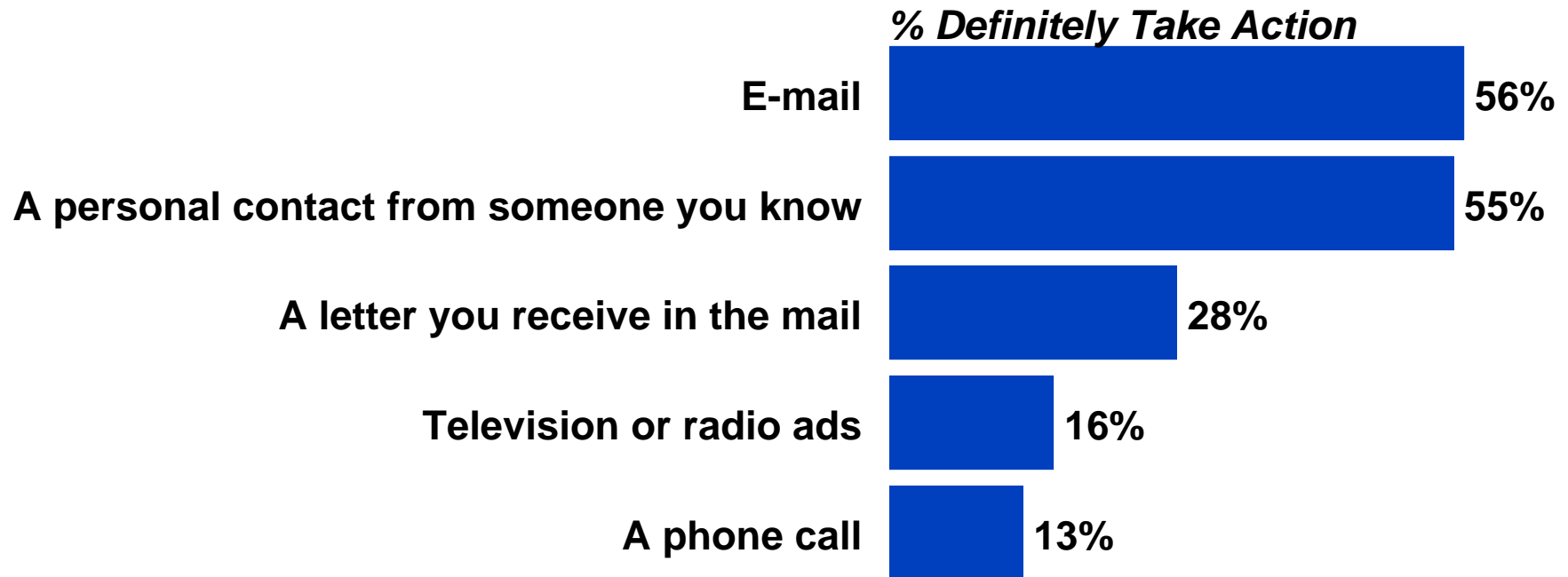
Among Advocates



Next, please indicate how willing you would be to participate in any of the following activities in support of the state wildlife action plans: very willing, somewhat willing, somewhat unwilling, or very unwilling.

Clearly, these advocates are comfortable with the Internet since this was a web-based survey. Still, the preference for email over other traditional call to action media is worth noting.

Among Advocates



The following are a list of ways that organizations might contact you to urge you to get involved in supporting the wildlife action plans. How likely would you be to take action on the wildlife action plans if you were contacted in each of these ways: would you definitely take action, maybe take action, or would you not take action if contacted in each of these ways?



PUBLIC OPINION
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