

The Nature
Conservancy



Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

NATIONAL SURVEY



**Key findings from a survey of 800 registered voters
conducted June 16-19, 2012**



PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

LORI WEIGEL

PARTNER

12555



DAVE METZ

PARTNER

METHODOLOGY



- ☐ **800 telephone interviews with registered voters throughout the nation.**
- ☐ **Statistically valid sample with margin of sampling error \pm 3.46% at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample.**
- ☐ **Interviews conducted June 16-19, 2012.**
- ☐ **Interviews were conducted on traditional land lines and on cell phones.**
- ☐ **Bi-partisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates.**
- ☐ **Some comparisons made to similarly conducted surveys from 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2010.**



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Red or Blue:
Green = Patriotic

Four-in-five American voters say that conservation of our natural resources is patriotic.

"For each of the following, please tell me if you agree or disagree with that particular statement."

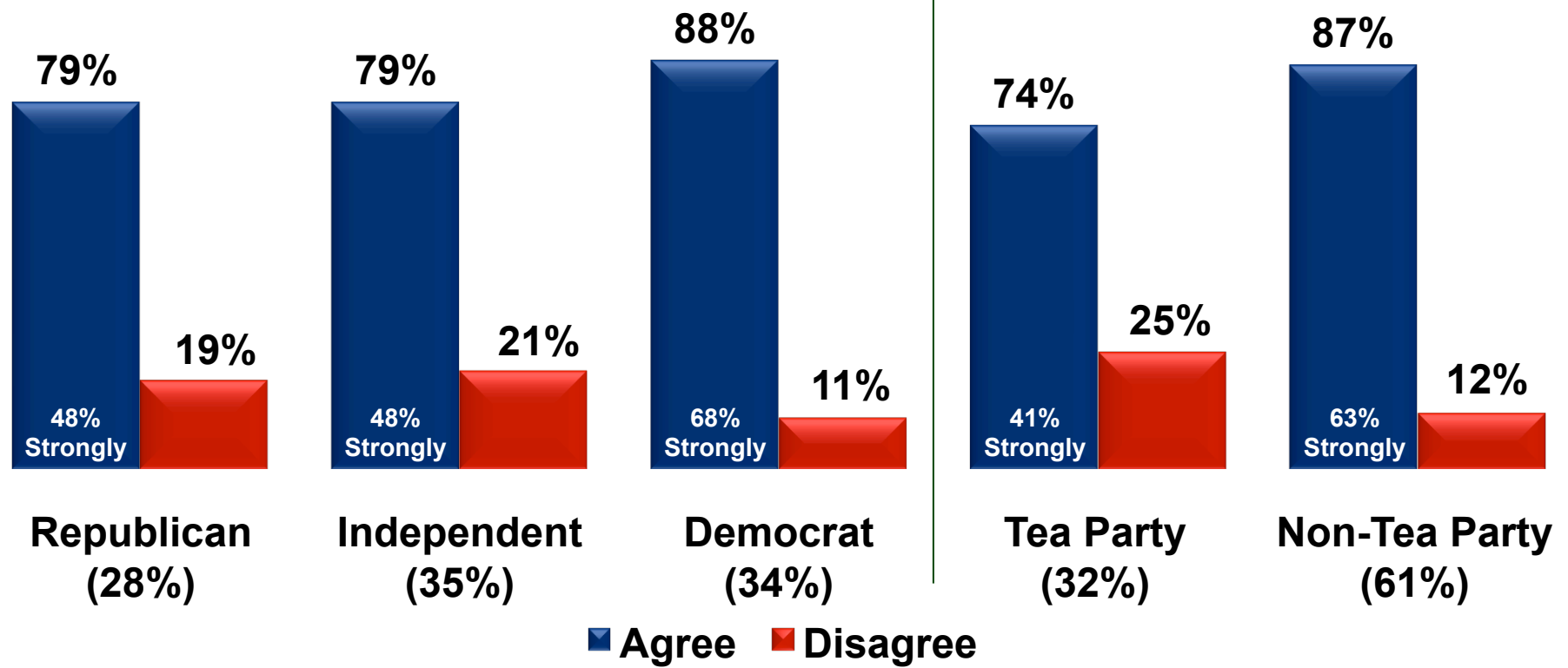


Conserving our country's natural resources - our land, air and water - is patriotic.



This view is widely held across the political spectrum.

Conservation is Patriotic By Party and Tea Party



In fact, three-quarters say that stewardship of public lands is one of the things our government does best.

One of the things our government does best is to protect and preserve our national history and natural beauty through national parks, forests, and other public lands.

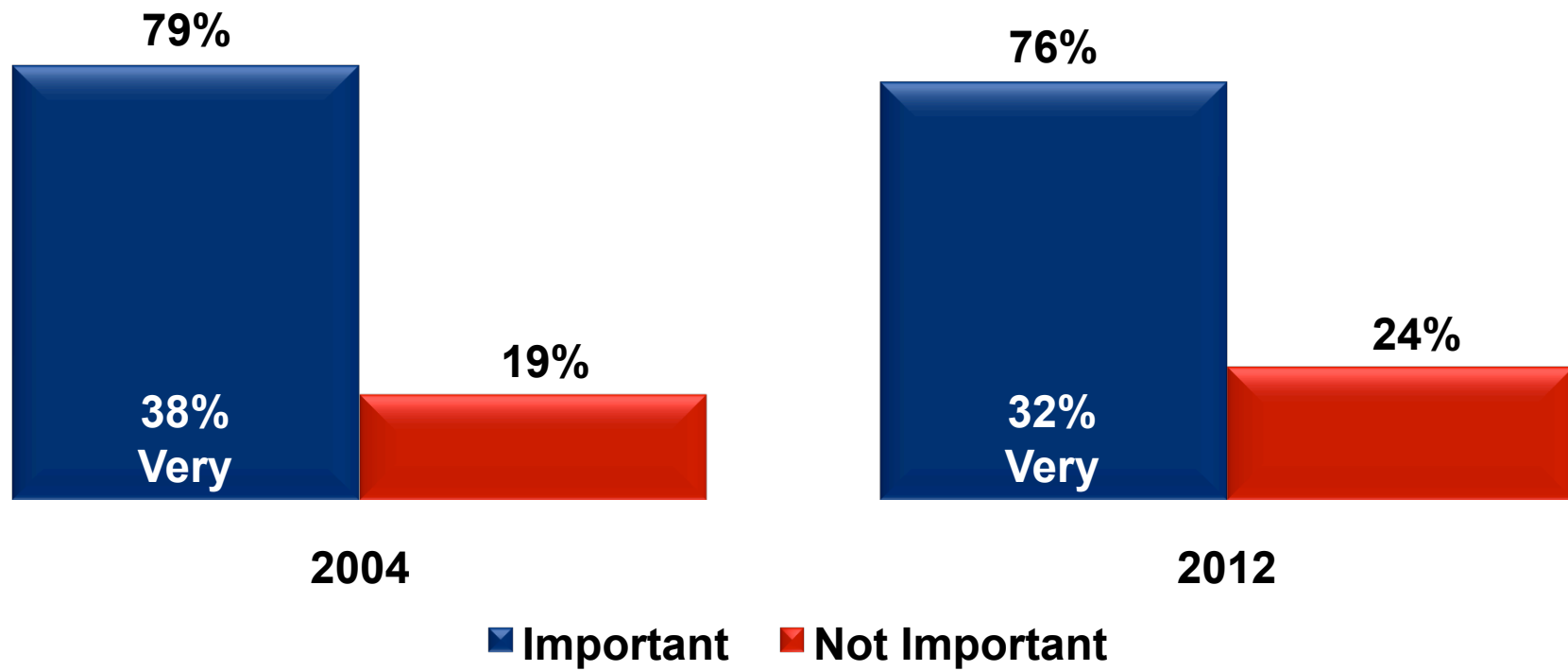
Agree

Disagree

77% **20%**

Over three-quarters of voters continue to say that “conservation” is important in their voting decision.

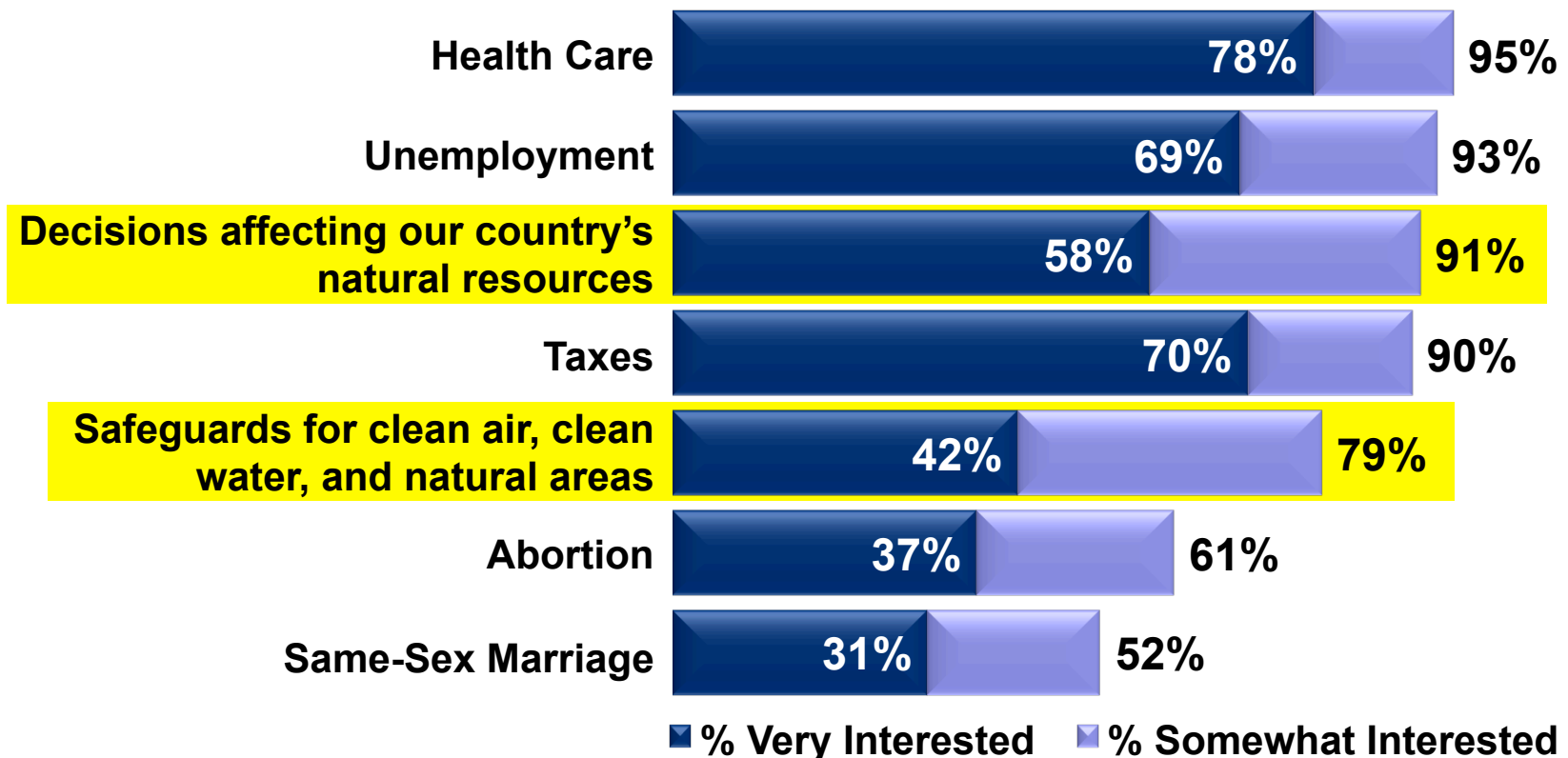
“In making a voting decision, how important are issues involving water quality; natural areas; lakes, rivers, or beaches; neighborhood parks; and wildlife habitat for you in deciding how to vote? Are they...”



But, as a campaign issue amidst other headline-grabbing ones, conservation tends to be mid-tier.

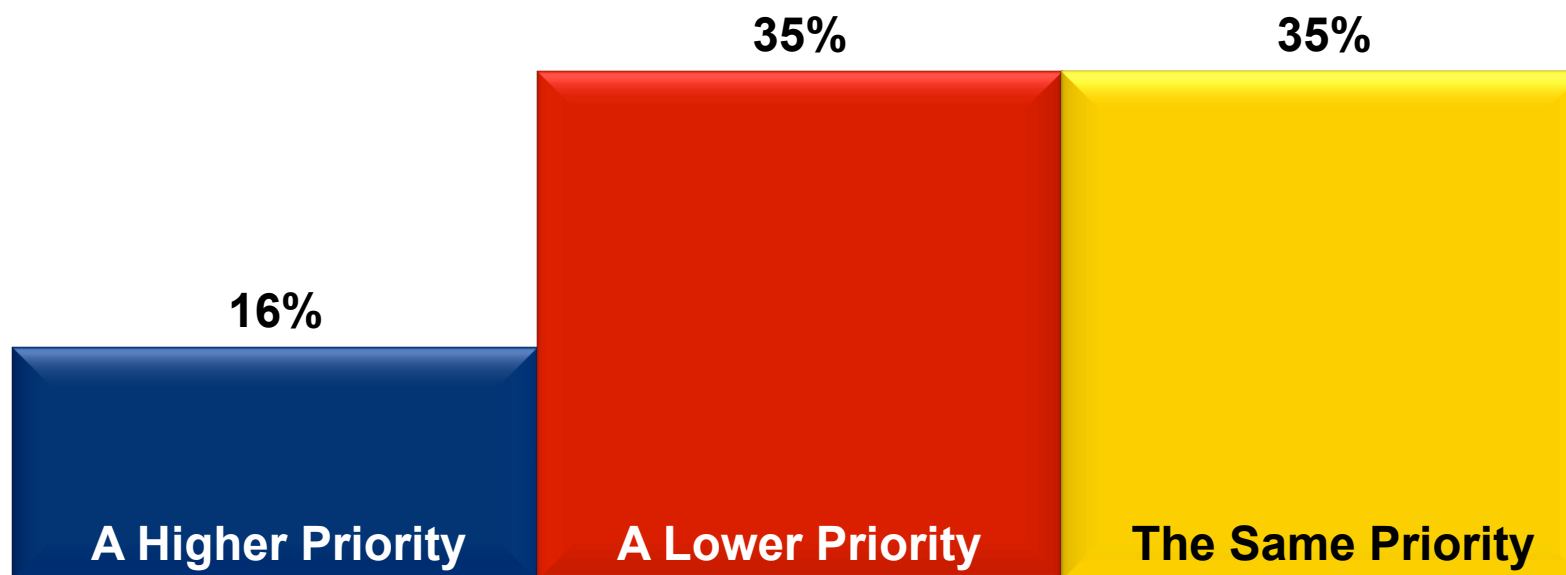
“Thinking now about how you will decide for whom to vote in November for offices like President and Congress -- I'm going to read you some different issues candidates may take stands on, and please tell me for each one how interested you are in hearing more about the candidates' positions on that issue? Are you...”

Ranked By Total Interest



One-in-three say their Member of Congress places a lower priority on conservation than they do.

“Would you say that your Member of Congress probably places _____ on protecting land, air and water than you do?”



When ranked against core fiscal issues, voters express lower levels of concern about conservation.

<i>Issues Ranked By Extremely/Very Serious</i>	% Extremely/ Very Serious	% Total Serious
The economy and unemployment	80%	97%
The federal budget deficit	76%	93%
Too much government spending	65%	82%
Kids not spending enough time outdoors and in nature	50%	82%
Pollution of rivers, lakes and streams	42%	76%
Pollution of oceans	40%	66%
Loss of property rights	39%	65%
After-effects of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico on wildlife and natural areas	39%	62%
Global warming	36%	60%
More frequent droughts	35%	62%
Not enough planning by local governments trying to direct how and where growth occurs in their communities	34%	67%
Loss of habitat for fish and wildlife	34%	63%

However, they are even less concerned about the amount or management of public lands.

<i>Issues Ranked By Extremely/Very Serious</i>	% Extremely/ Very Serious	% Total Serious
Inadequate water supplies	32%	54%
Too much planning by local governments trying to direct how and where growth occurs in their communities	31%	57%
Loss of wildlife habitat along the coasts	28%	58%
Loss of coastal lands, wetlands and marshes	27%	56%
More storms and extreme weather	26%	59%
Management of public lands	24%	58%
Adults not spending enough time outdoors and in nature	21%	57%
Not enough undeveloped, natural areas in cities, such as green spaces with trees	19%	46%
Not enough opportunities for people in cities to experience nature	18%	45%
Lack of access to public lands	12%	38%
Too much land set aside as public	9%	23%



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Loving the Outdoors, Not the “Environment”

Voters are twice as likely to say they prefer to spend time outdoors as inside.

"In general, when you have free time, do you prefer to spend it doing something ...?"

Outdoors
60%

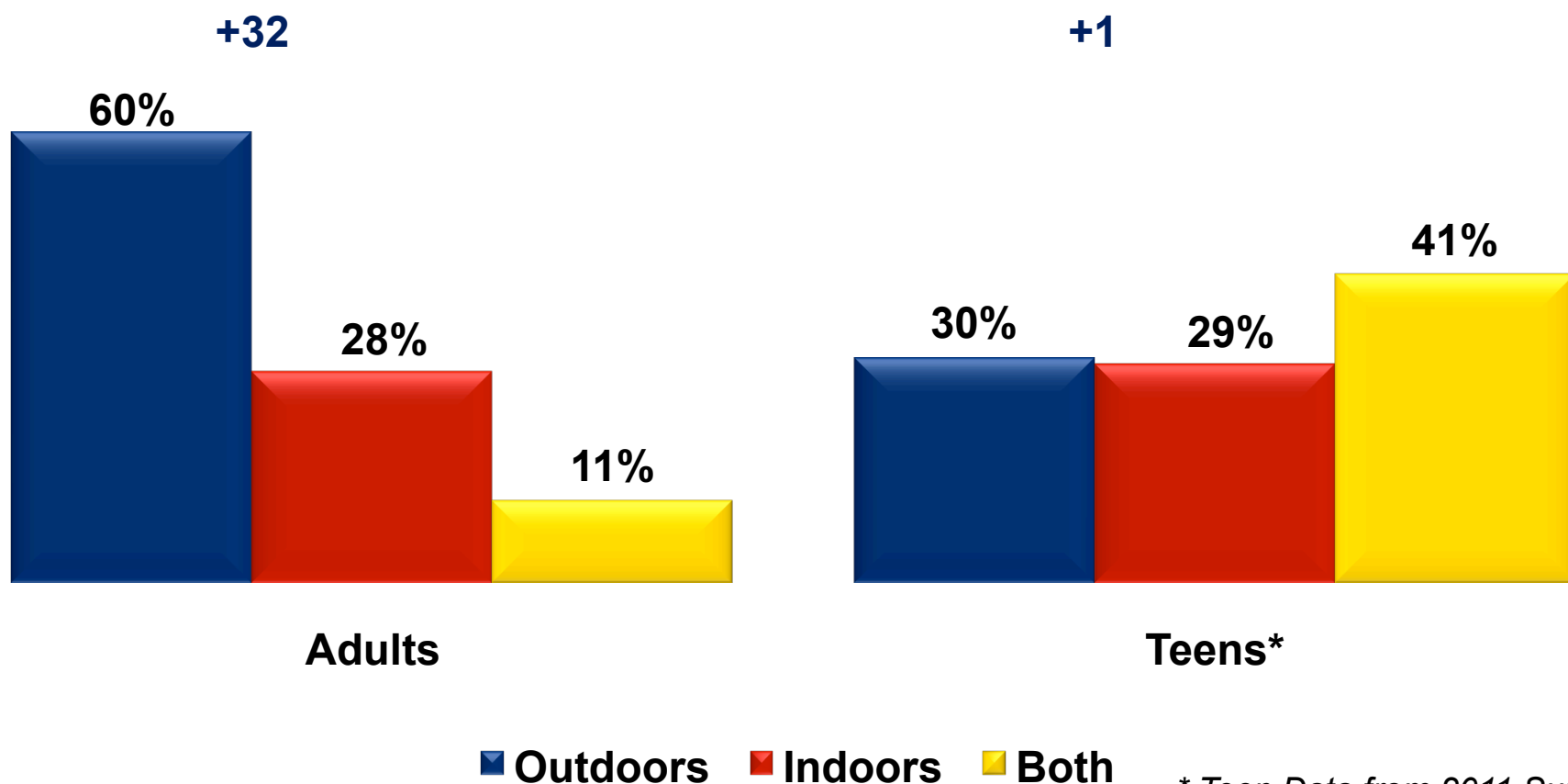


Indoors
28%



While in a separate survey asked somewhat differently, it is still interesting to note that teens were much more divided over where they prefer to spend free time.

Free Time Preferences By Adults and Teens



* Teen Data from 2011 Survey

Many people see “nature deficit disorder” as a problem for children – but not adults.

Not spending enough time outdoors and in nature...



Children

% Extremely/Very Serious

50%

% Total Serious

82%



Adults

21%

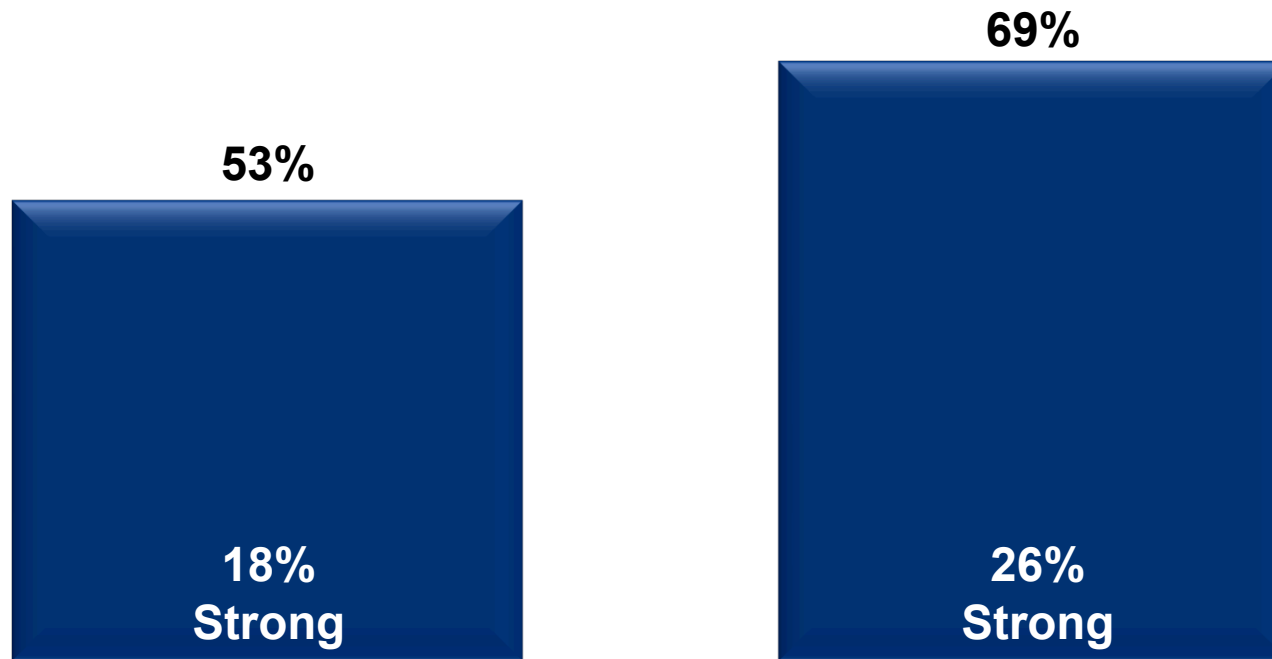
57%

More voters consider themselves a conservationist than label themselves an environmentalist.

“Do you consider yourself an...?”

Environmentalist

Conservationist

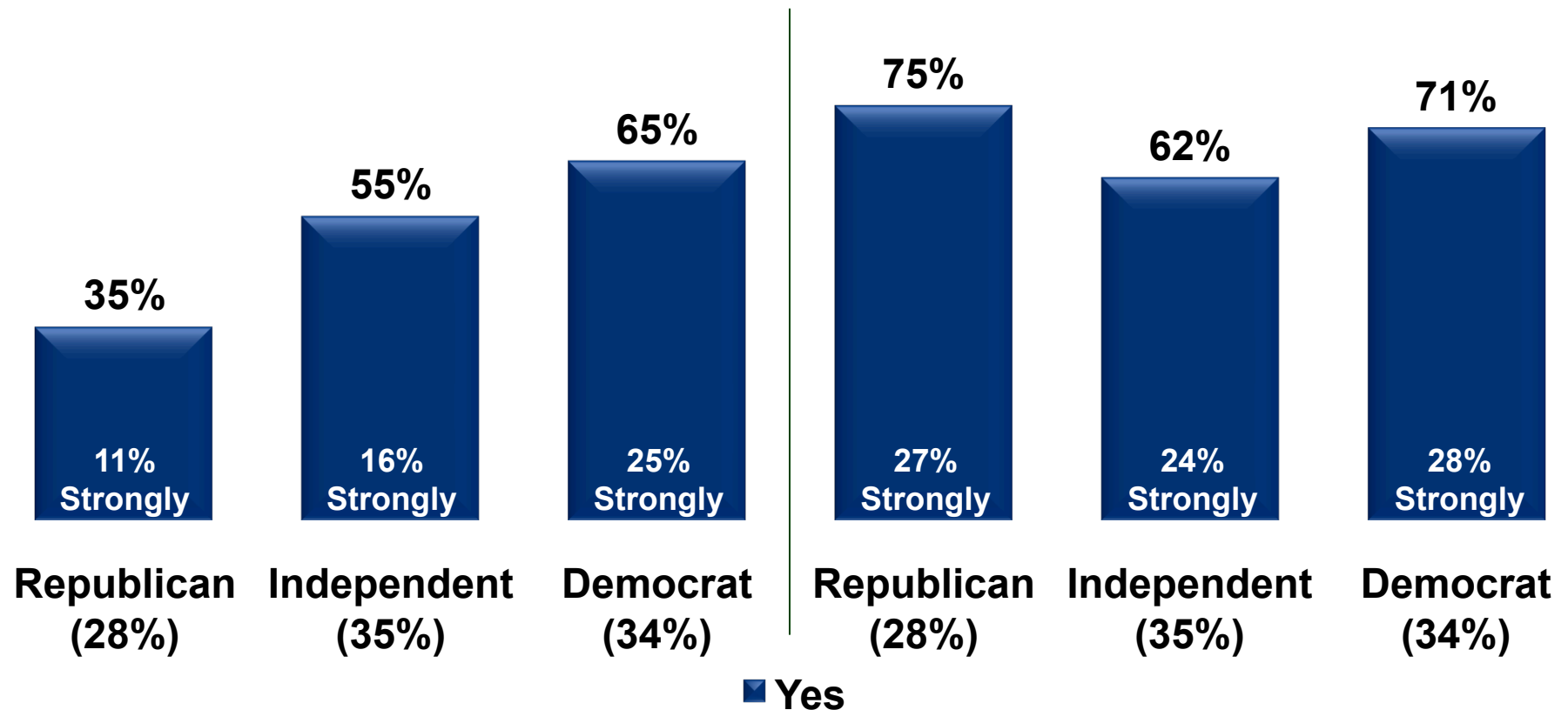


■ Yes

There is a strong relationship between party and identification as an “environmentalist” – GOP most likely to say they are a “conservationist.”

Environmentalist By Party

Conservationist By Party

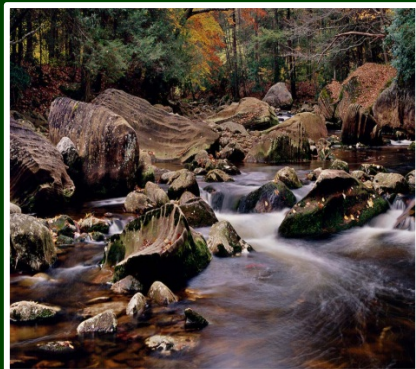




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The Economic Case for Conservation

We continue to see that voters overwhelmingly reject the idea that protecting land and water is at odds with a strong economy.

“Which of the following comes closer to your opinion?”

We can protect land and water and have a strong economy with good jobs for Americans at the same time, without having to choose one over the other.

Sometimes protections for land and water and a strong economy are in conflict and we must choose one over the other.

2009

2012

76% 79%

19% 16%

In fact, more voters say environmental protections have a positive impact than a negative one on jobs.

“And when you think about protections for land, air, water and wildlife, do you think those have a positive impact, a negative impact, or little impact at all on jobs?”

Positive Impact

44%

Negative Impact

17%

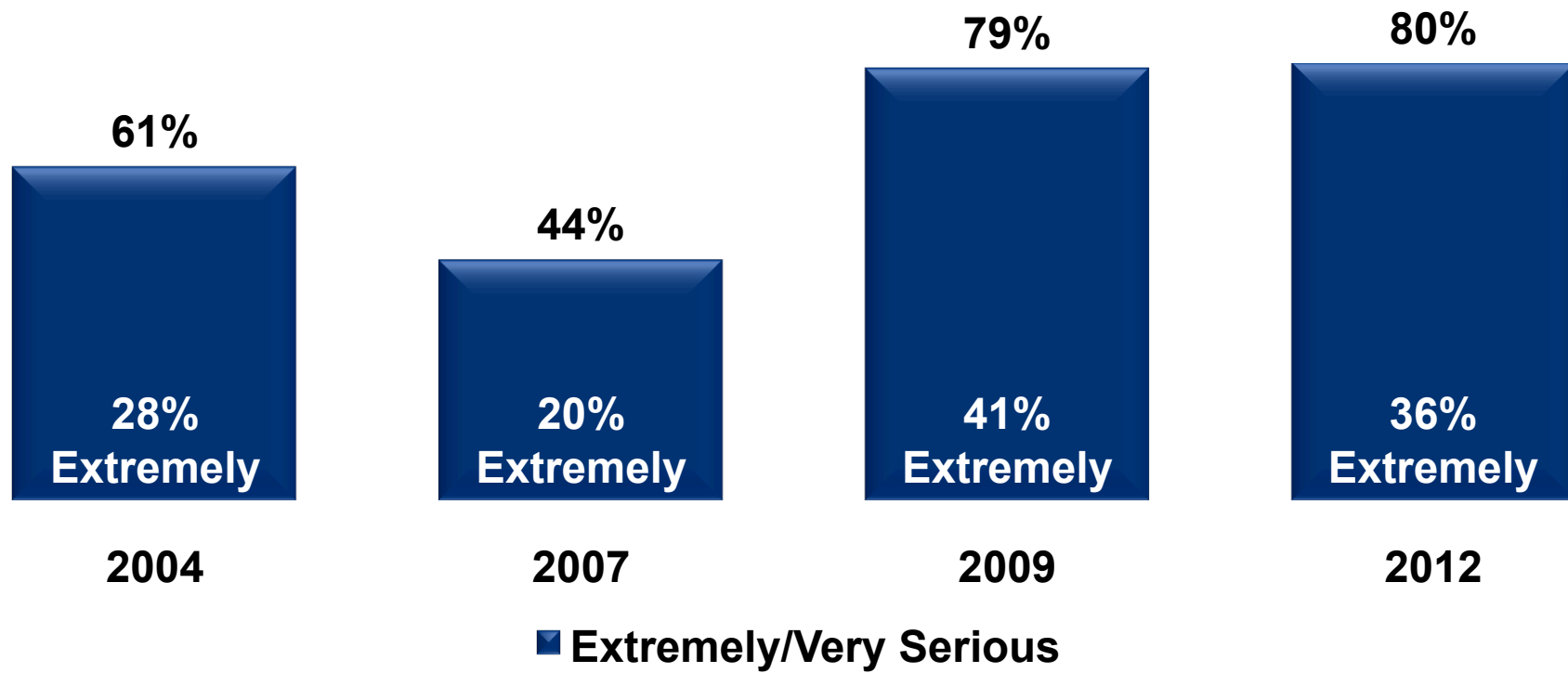
Little Impact At All

33%

That's good, because the economy is just as big a deal today as three years ago.

"I am going to read you a list of issues, and I'd like you to tell me how serious a problem you think each one is in your area. After I read each one, please tell me if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a serious problem in your area."

The Economy and Unemployment



Seven-in-ten voters say that public lands are essential to their state's economy.

"Please tell me if you agree or disagree with that particular statement."

Our state and national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas are an essential part of my state's economy.

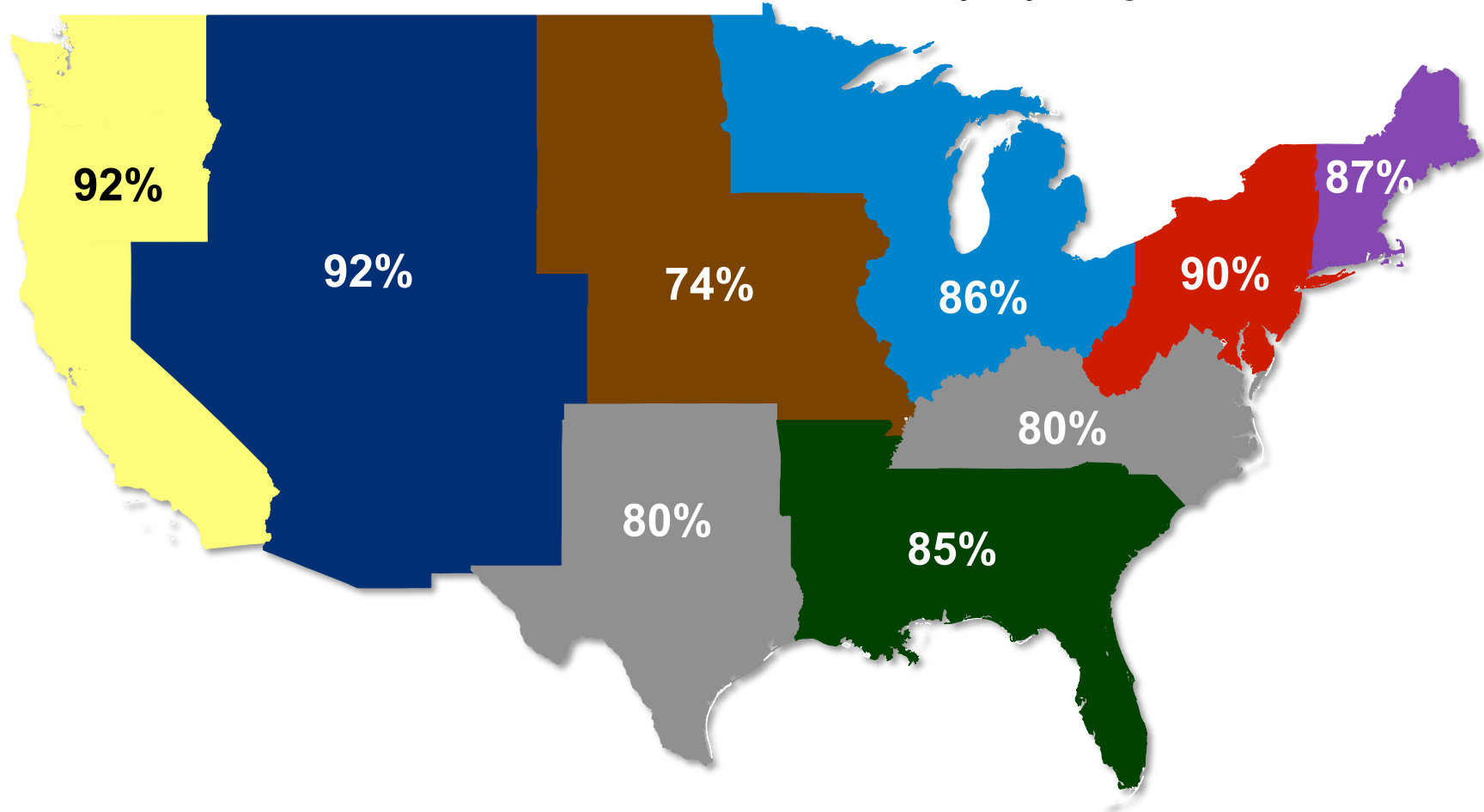
Agree

Disagree

70% 24%

Mid-Atlantic and Mountain states voters are most likely to say public lands are “essential” to their state’s economy.

Public Lands Essential to Economy By Region



For voters, the connection between public lands and quality of life is even stronger than the connection to the economy.

Our state and national parks, forests, monuments, and wildlife areas are an essential part of my state's quality of life.

Agree **87%** Disagree **12%**

In fact, voters are increasingly saying they want a “people link” to conservation.

“Please tell me which of these two statements you agree with most, even if neither fits your opinion exactly.”

The best reason to conserve nature is to preserve the benefits people can derive from it - for our economy, our health, and our enjoyment.

2010

45%

2012

53%

The best reason to conserve nature is for its own sake - to leave systems of plants and wildlife undisturbed to evolve, change and grow.

42%

39%



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Federal Funding for Conservation

Three-quarters of the electorate rejects cuts to current conservation funding, even when placed in the context of the budget deficit.

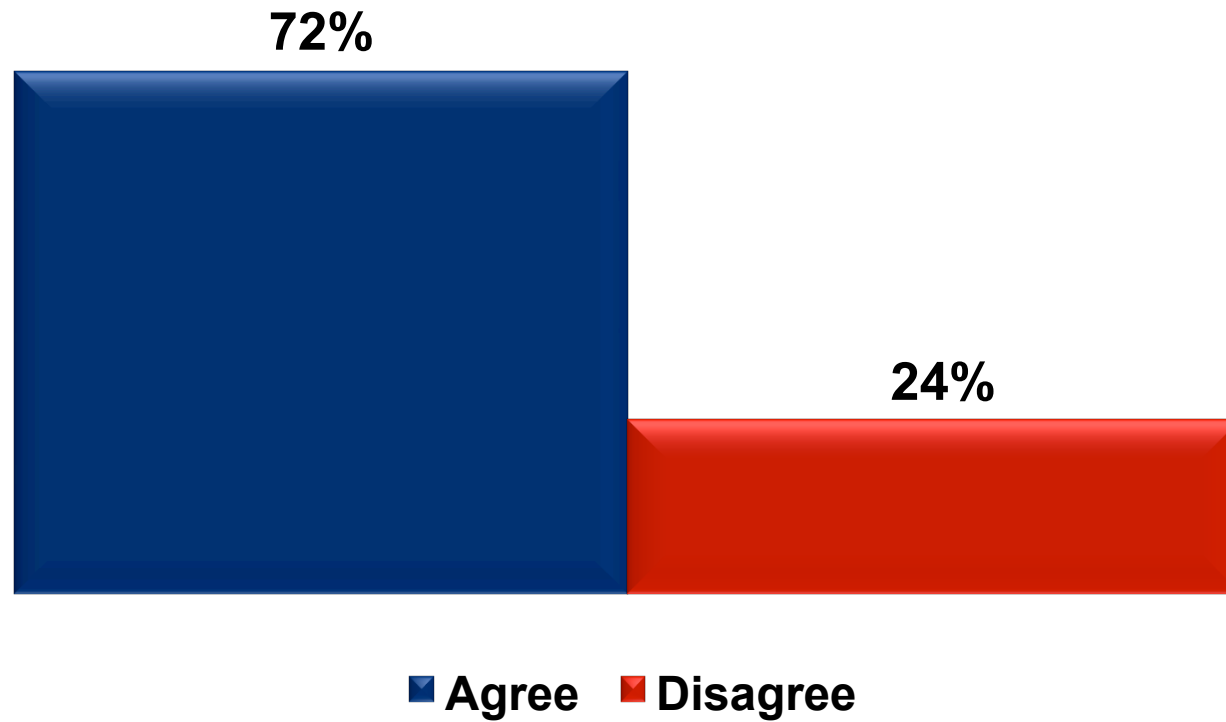
Even with federal budget problems, funding to safeguard land, air and water should not be cut.

Agree Disagree

74% **22%**

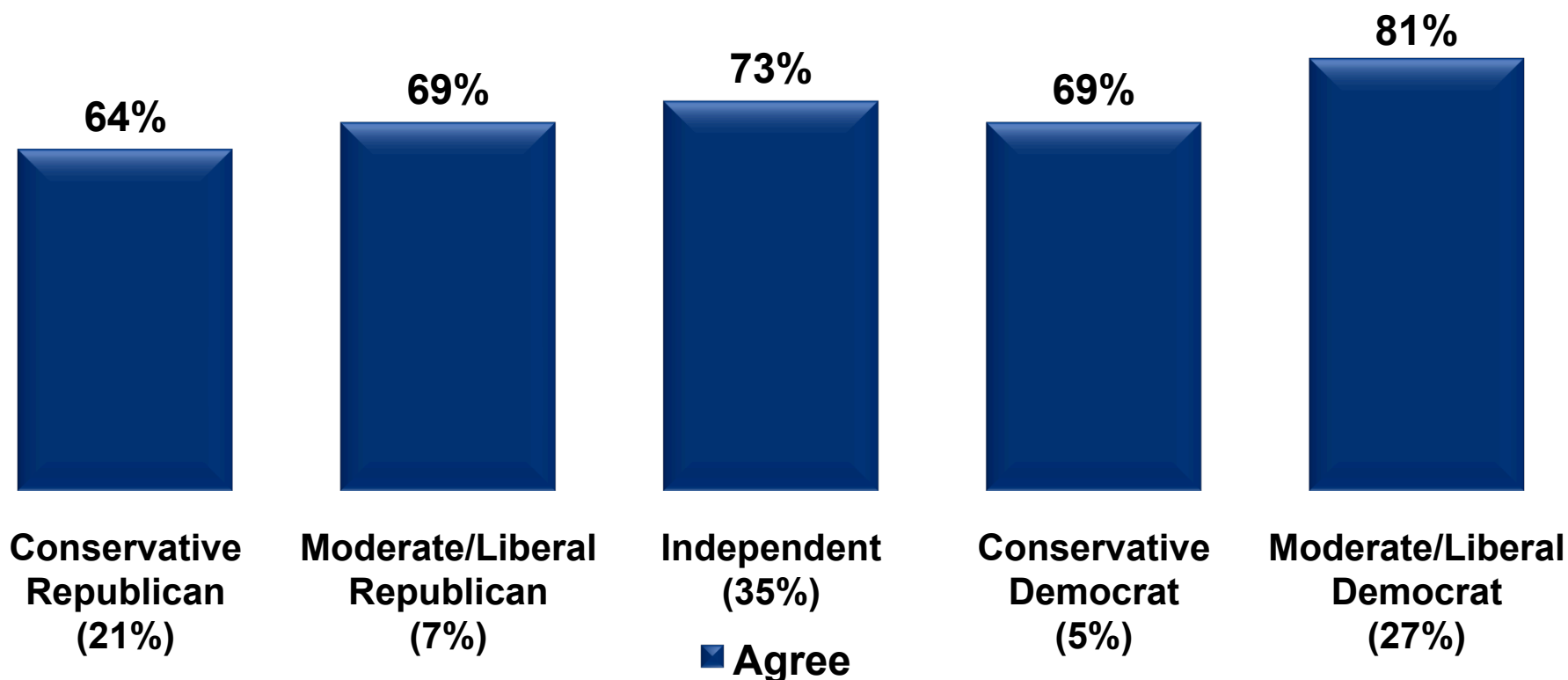
Most voters perceive a vital role for government in dealing with protections for land, water and wildlife.

In dealing with issues like how land and water are used or protected, government plays an essential role.



More than three in five voters, including conservative Republicans, believe there is an essential role for government in conservation.

Government Conservation Vital By Ideology/Party



This is particularly true when thinking about coordinating activities on a regional basis.

Mountain ranges, wildlife habitat, and rivers cross state borders, so it is important to have the federal government get everyone to work together in conserving our natural resources.

Agree Disagree

82% **16%**

And a mere nine percent say that too much public land being set aside is a “very serious” problem.

Too much land set aside as public land, such as national parks, national forests, monuments, or wildlife refuges

% Extremely/
Very Serious

% Total Serious

9% **23%**

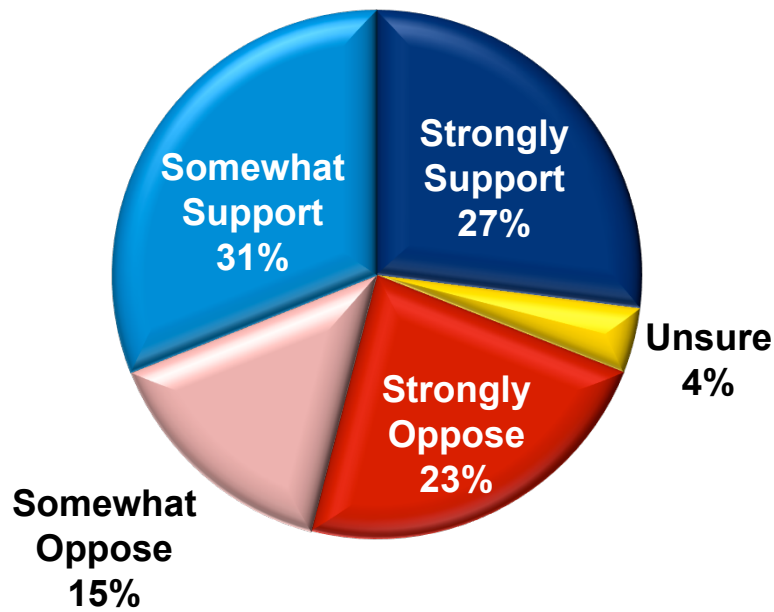


A majority of voters say they would support conservation efforts at various levels of government, even if it meant a tax increase.

*"In general, would you support or oppose programs through which **your STATE OR LOCAL / the FEDERAL government** would purchase land to protect water quality; natural areas; lakes, rivers or beaches; neighborhood parks; and wildlife habitat if it required a small increase in taxes?"*

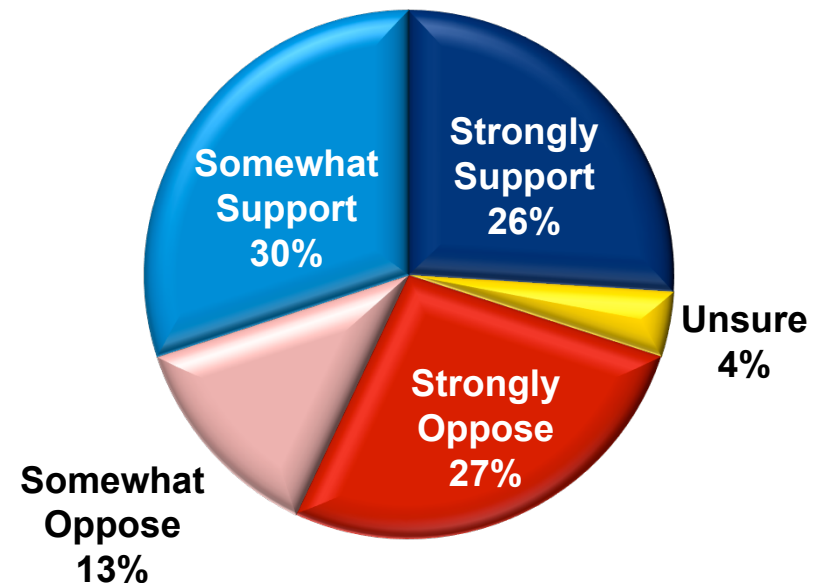
State/Local Government

Total Support	58%
Total Oppose	38%



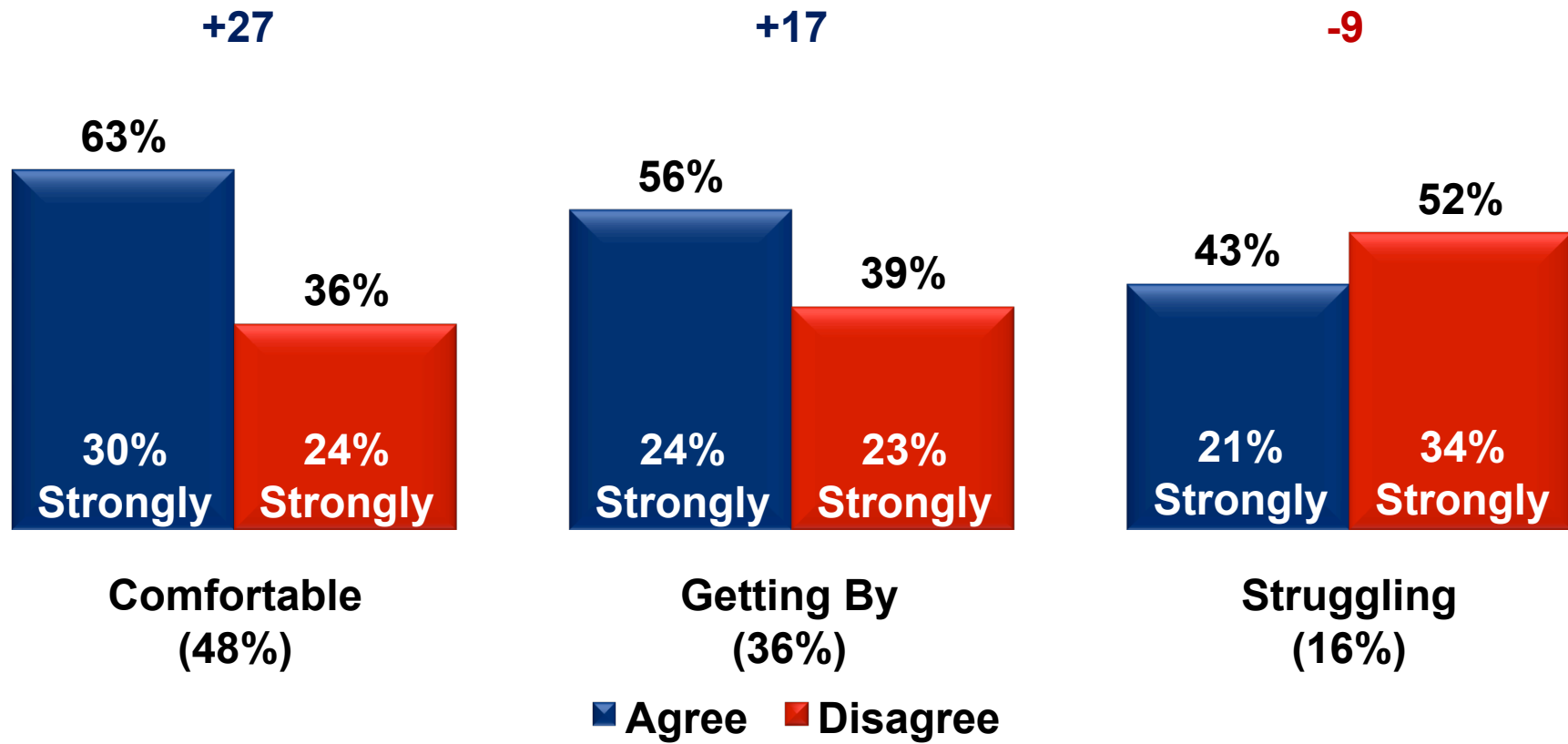
Federal Government

Total Support	56%
Total Oppose	40%



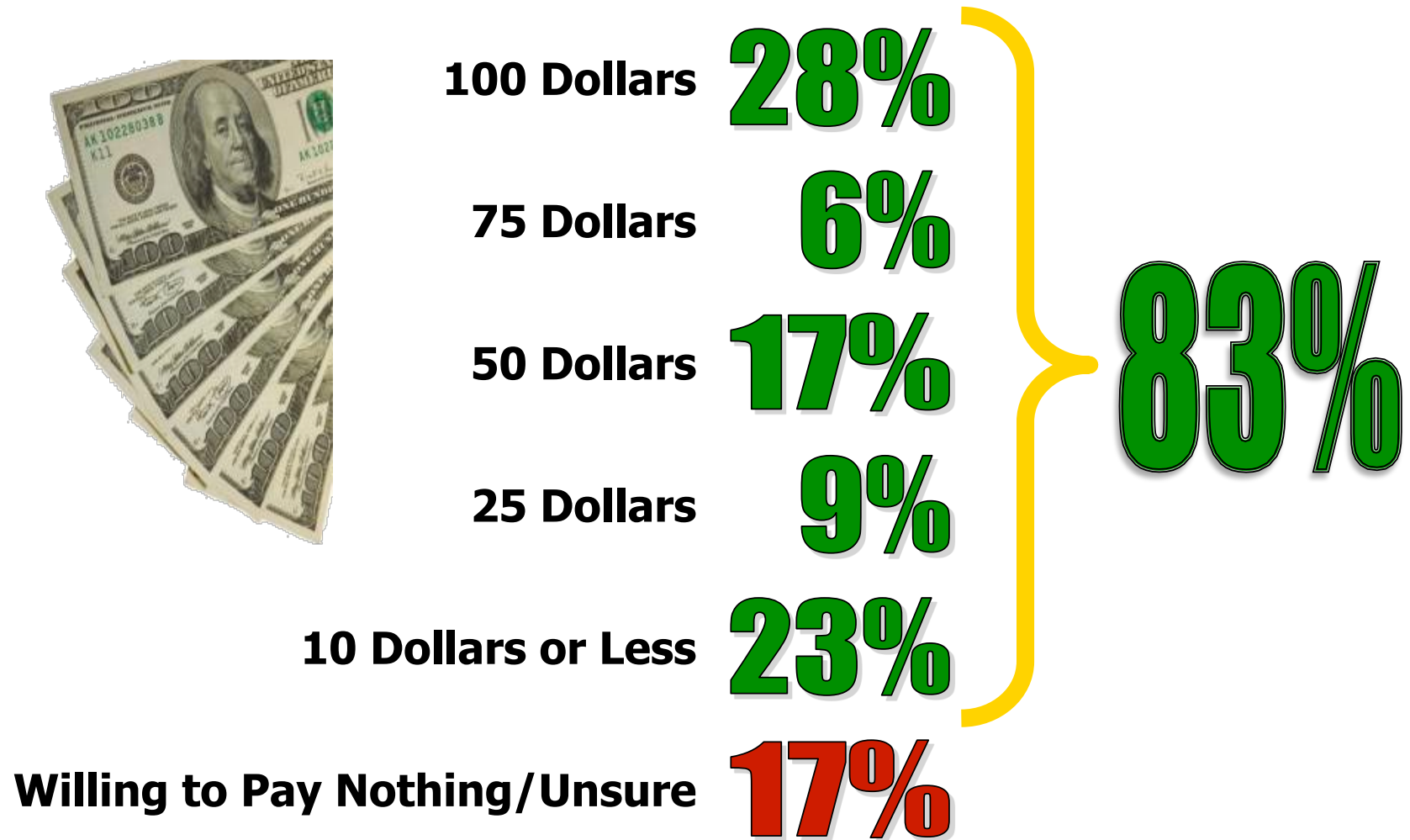
This is one of the first times we have seen financial situation bear a relationship to support for paying an increase in taxes for conservation programs.

State/Federal Tax Increases for Conservation By Financial Situation



When given specific amounts, most voters say they are willing to pay something more.

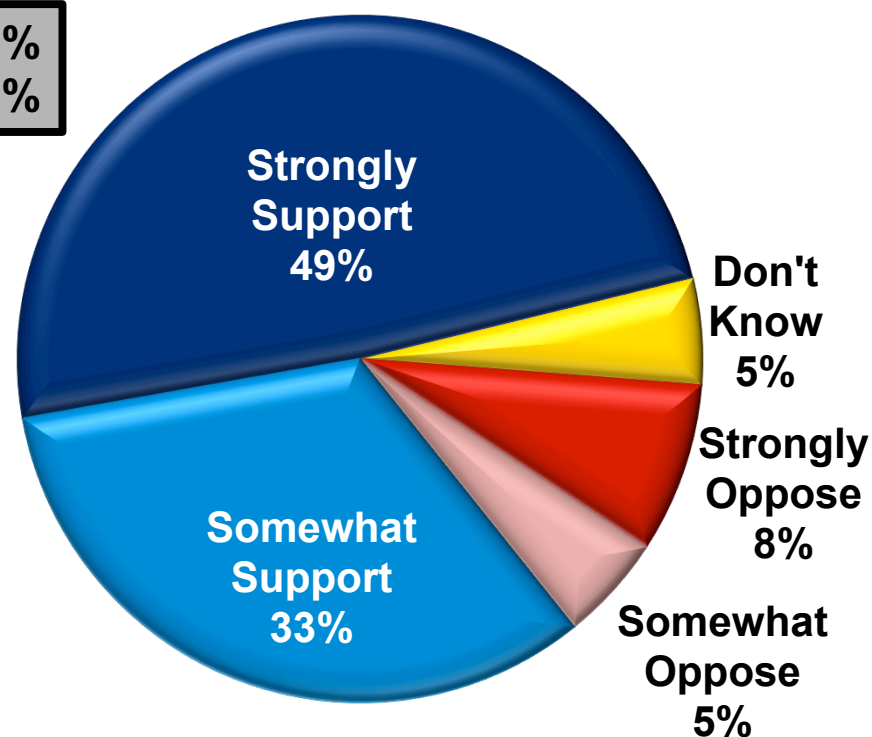
"How much would you be willing to pay in taxes to fund water quality; natural areas; lakes, rivers, or beaches; neighborhood parks; and wildlife habitat in your area per year?"



Voters are overwhelmingly supportive of other ways to increase funding, with four in five backing continued dedication of drilling fees to LWCF.

Ensure that the small portion of federal offshore drilling fees already being paid by oil and gas companies is dedicated to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created by Congress so that these fees could be used for conserving natural areas, wildlife, and clean water and providing access to outdoor recreation throughout the country.

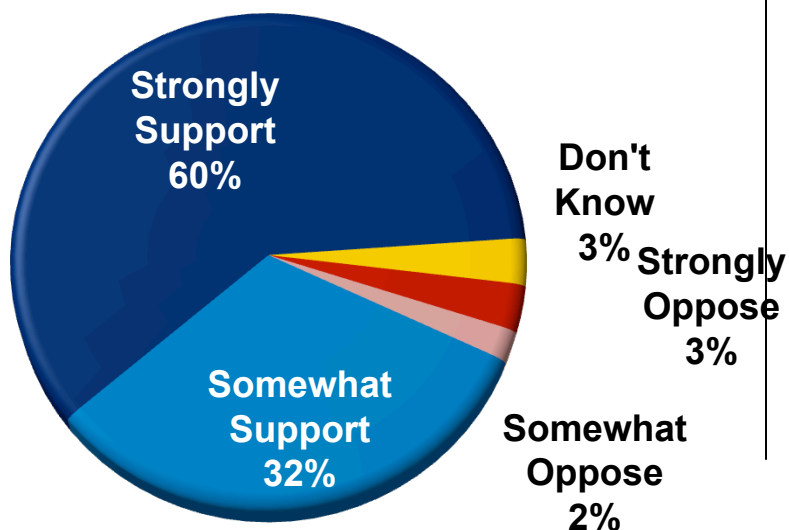
Total Support	82%
Total Oppose	13%



They also back dedicating some portion of visitor or resource extraction fees at public lands to conservation.

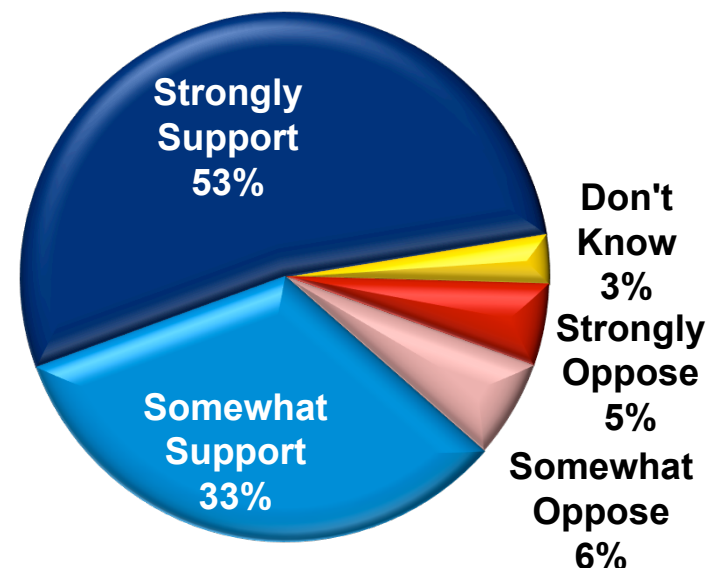
Ensure that a portion of the fees paid by visitors and those who use public lands, such as national parks, forests, or wildlife refuges, are dedicated to managing those lands and conserving natural areas, such as forests, land along rivers and streams and wildlife habitat

Total Support 92%
Total Oppose 5%



Ensure that a portion of the fees paid by timber, oil and gas, and other companies which extract resources on public lands are dedicated to managing those lands and conserving natural areas, such as forests, land along rivers and streams and wildlife habitat

Total Support 86%
Total Oppose 11%



Voters support dedicating existing funds to conservation, irrespective of party affiliation.

	GOP	IND	DEM	Tea Party	Non-Tea Party
Ensure that a portion of the fees paid by visitors and those who use public lands, such as national parks, forests, or wildlife refuges, are dedicated to managing those lands and conserving natural areas, such as forests, land along rivers and streams and wildlife habitat	89%	94%	92%	88%	95%
Ensure that a portion of the fees paid by timber, oil and gas, and other companies which extract resources on public lands are dedicated to managing those lands and conserving natural areas, such as forests, land along rivers and streams and wildlife habitat	82%	86%	93%	82%	89%
Ensure that the small portion of federal offshore drilling fees already being paid by oil and gas companies is dedicated to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was created by Congress so that these fees could be used for conserving natural areas, wildlife, and clean water and providing access to outdoor recreation throughout the country.	74%	77%	92%	72%	87%

This data is even more impressive given that two-thirds of voters rate government spending and the federal budget deficit as serious problems.

"I am going to read you a list of issues, and I'd like you to tell me how serious a problem you think each one is in your area. After I read each one, please tell me if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a serious problem in your area."

Ranked By Extremely/Very Serious

The federal budget deficit



Too much government spending



■ **Extremely Serious** ■ **Very Serious**



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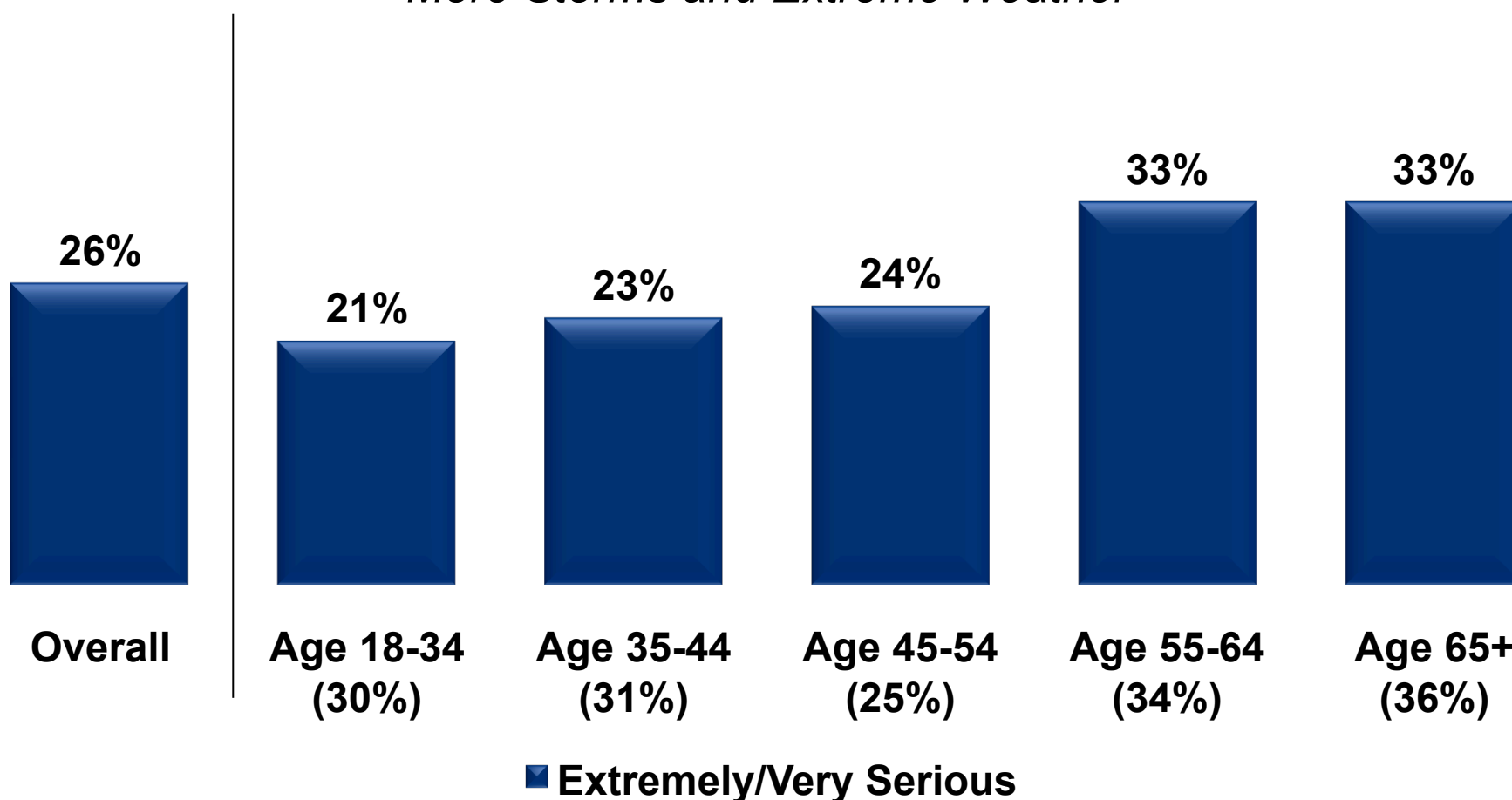
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Climate Change

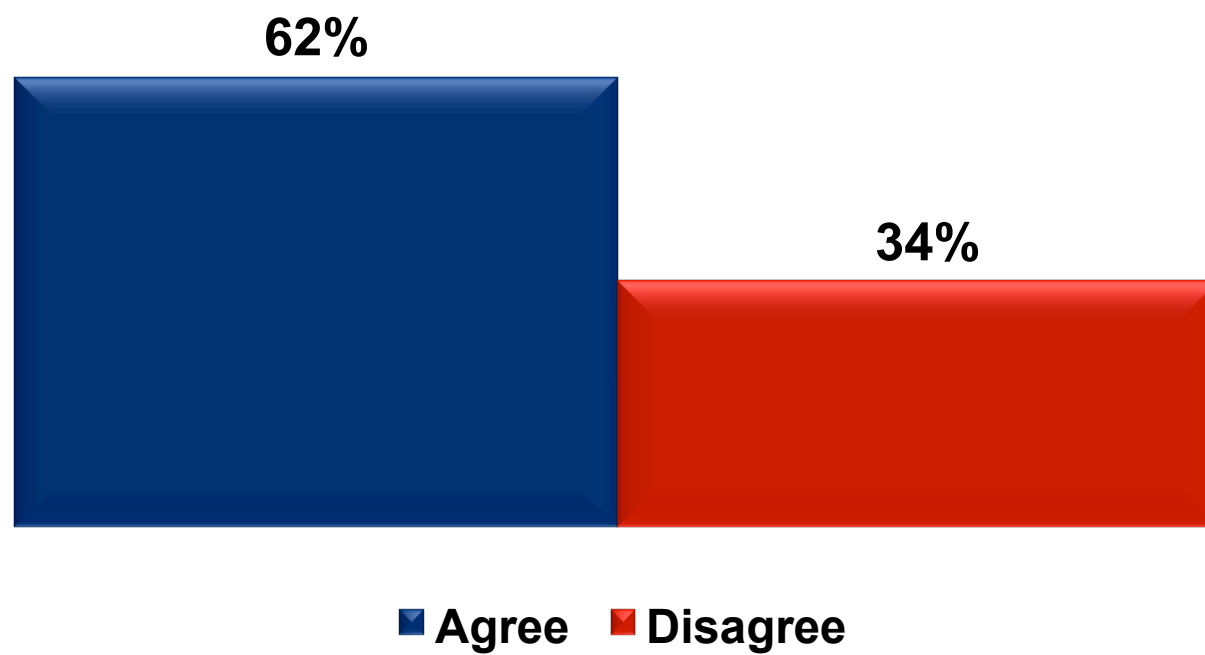
Just one-in-four voters say that extreme weather is a “very serious” problem, although older voters are more likely to register this concern.

More Storms and Extreme Weather



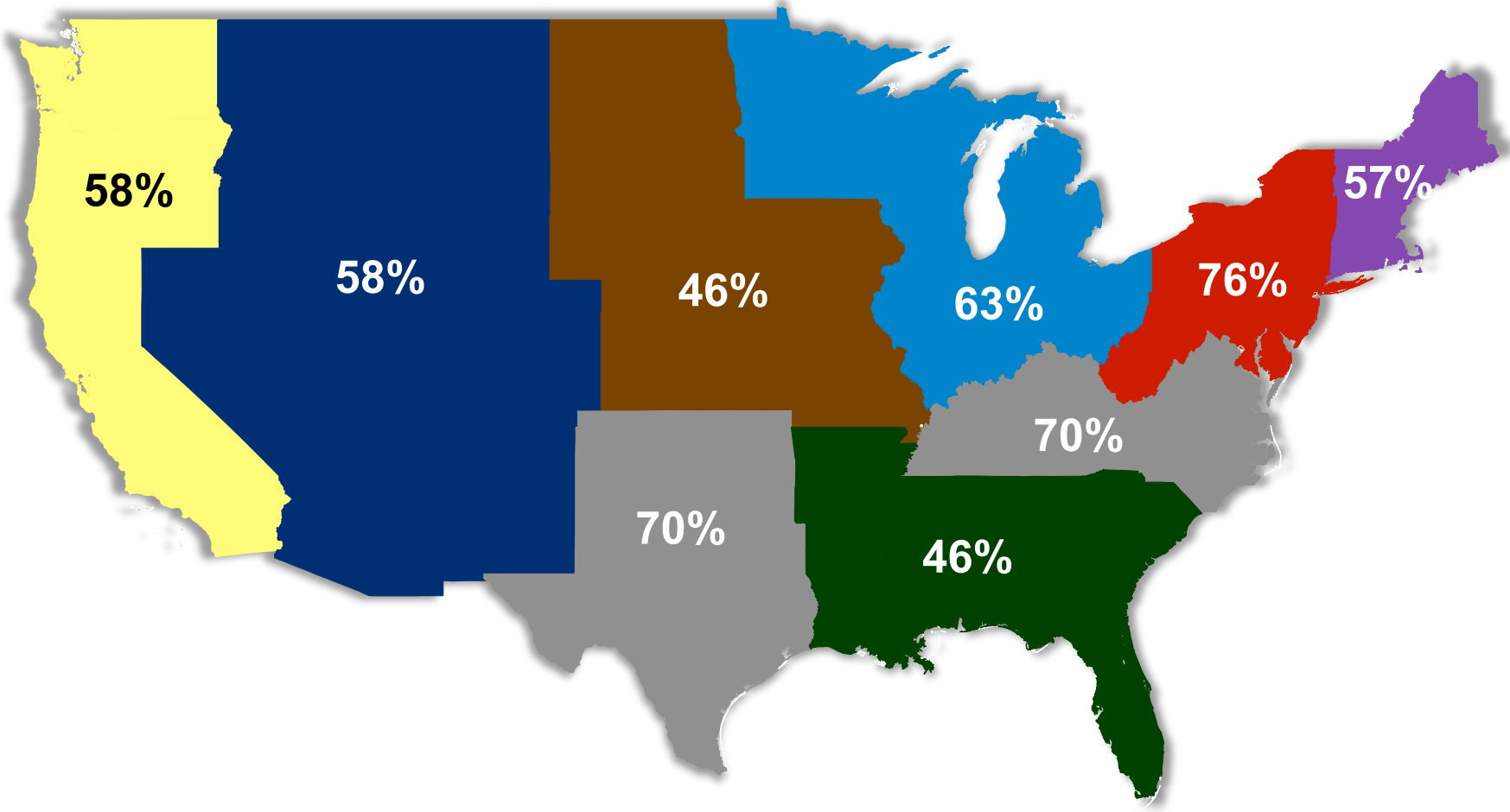
That said, three-in-five hold the view that “the climate” in their state has changed recently.

Over the last few years, the climate in my state has been changing.



There are some big geographic distinctions.

Climate Change in State is Changing By Region (% Total Agree)





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The Bottom Line

CONCLUSION



- ☐ **American voters view conservation as “patriotic” and believe government plays a prudent and essential role in it.**
- ☐ **There is consistent and strong support for public lands, and very few think we have too many of them. In fact, many say it is one of the best things that government does.**
- ☐ **Voters say they prefer the outdoors, and most think of themselves as engaging regularly in outdoor activities. A solid majority consider themselves to be conservationists, as well.**
- ☐ **There is overwhelming support for dedicating existing funds or creating “user fees” dedicated to conservation. A majority are willing to pay increased taxes for federal or state & local conservation efforts, with even more willing to commit when they hear a specific amount.**
- ☐ **Voters continue to reject an economy v. environment dynamic.**

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