Minnesota Statewide Clean Energy Online Survey

Key findings from a statewide survey of 600 registered voters in Minnesota, conducted August 16-24, 2022.

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PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES
turning questions into answers

Project #220496

Methodology

Public Opinion Strategies is pleased to present the key findings of an online survey conducted in Minnesota. The survey was completed August 16-24, 2022, among 600 registered voters, and has a credibility interval of ±4.56%.

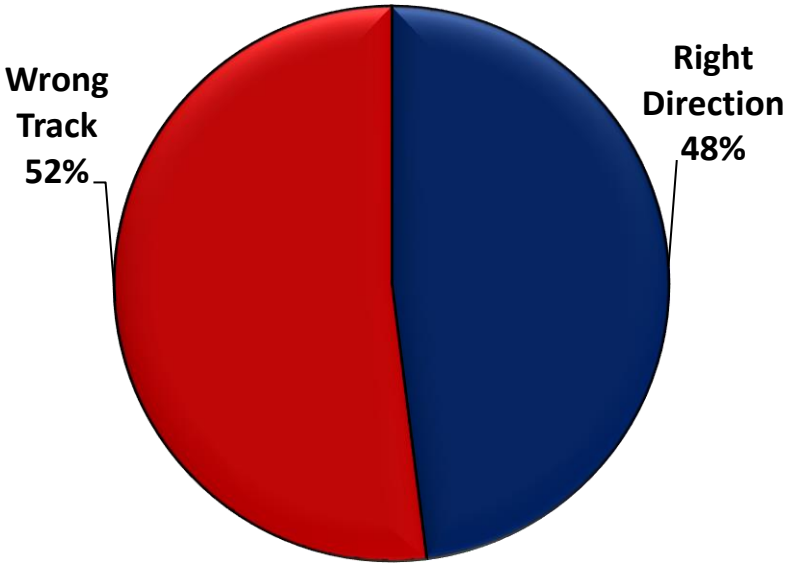
Glen Bolger was the principal researcher on this project. Torie Bolger was the project director, and Katie Connolly provided analytical support.

Political Environment

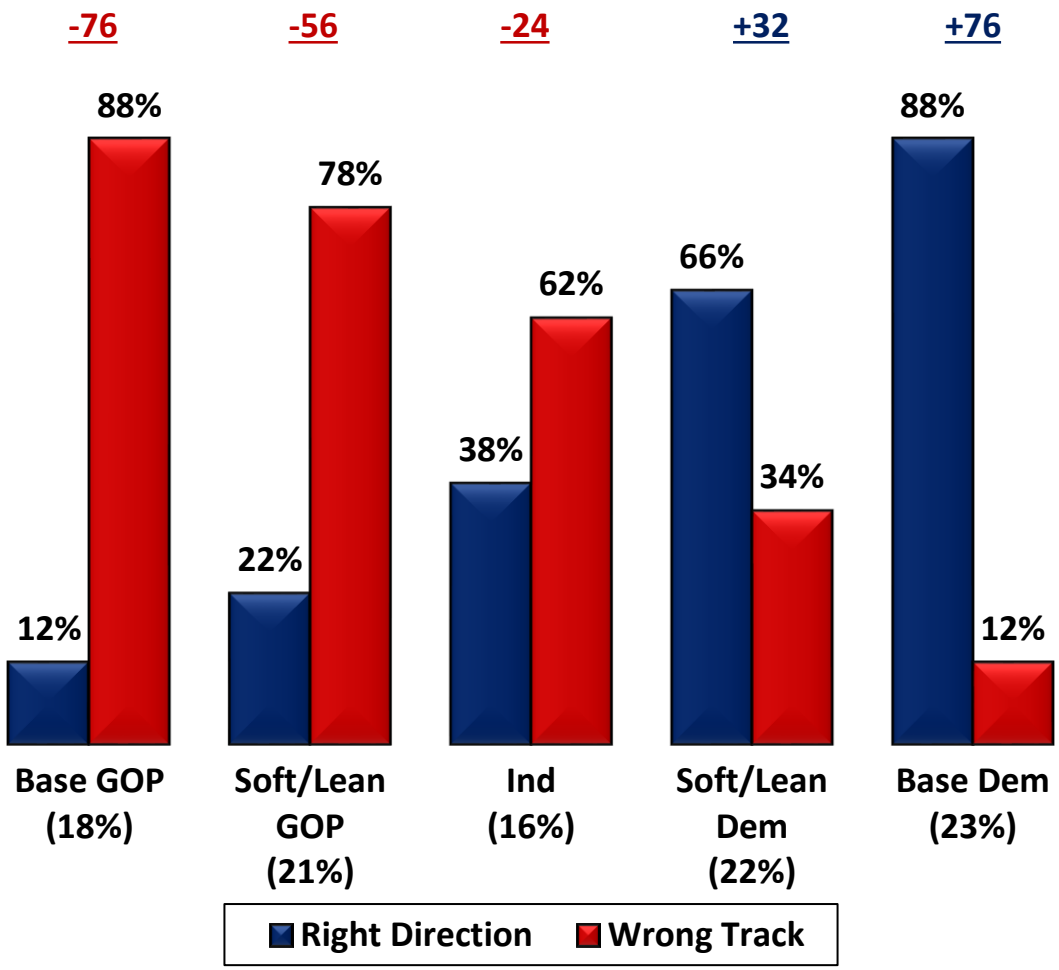
Voters are split on the direction of Minnesota, but GOPers and Inds believe things have gotten off on the wrong track.

"Generally speaking, would you say that things in Minnesota are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?"

Overall



By Party

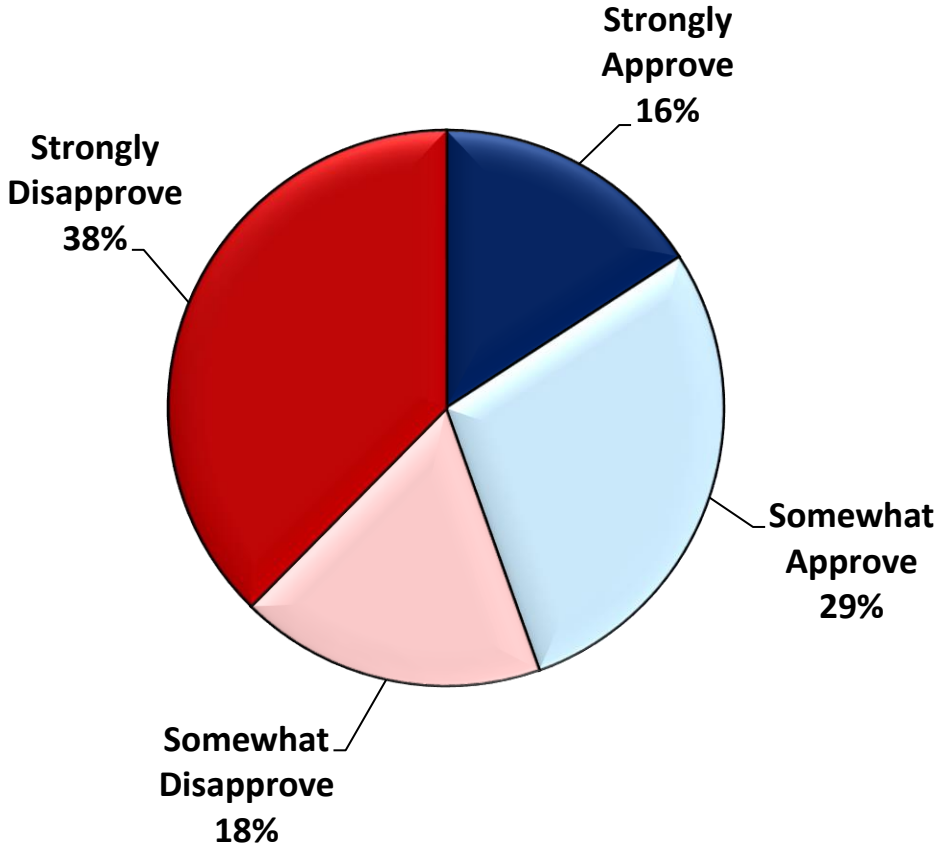


Joe Biden is twelve points underwater in the state, and a whopping 46 points negative among Independent voters.

"Do you approve or disapprove of the job Joe Biden is doing as President?"

Overall

Total Approve	44%*
Total Disapprove	56%



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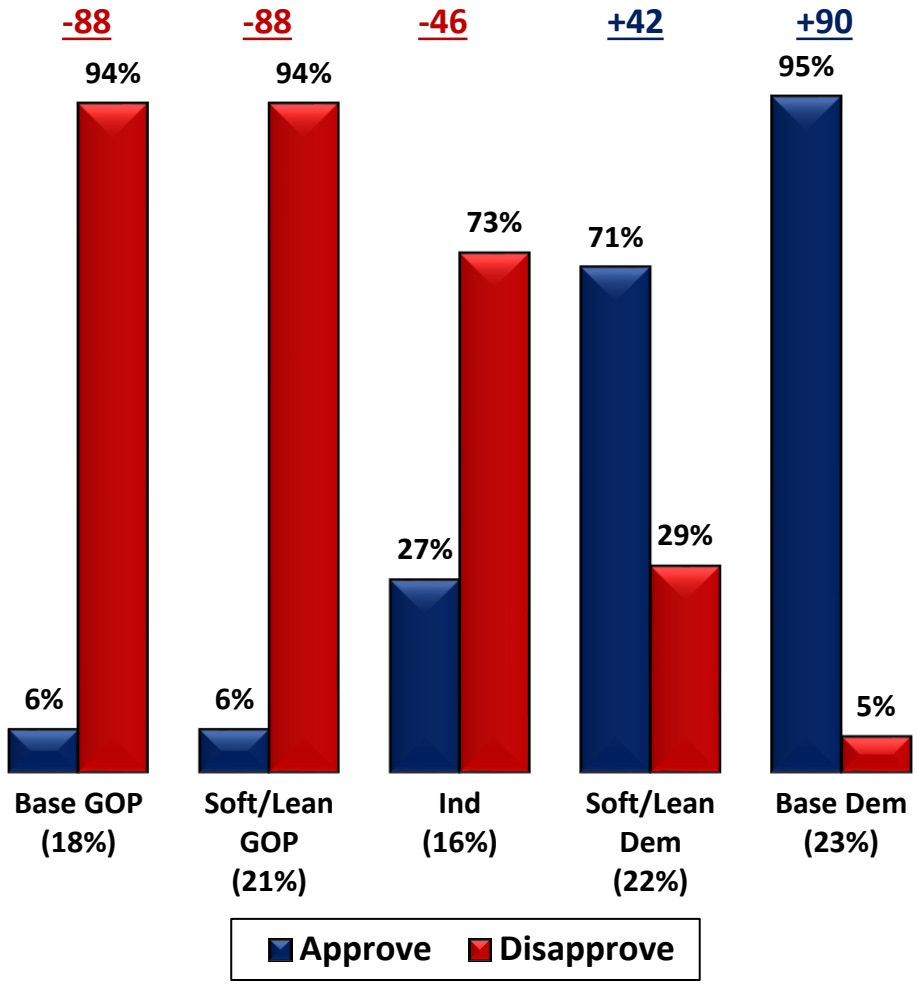
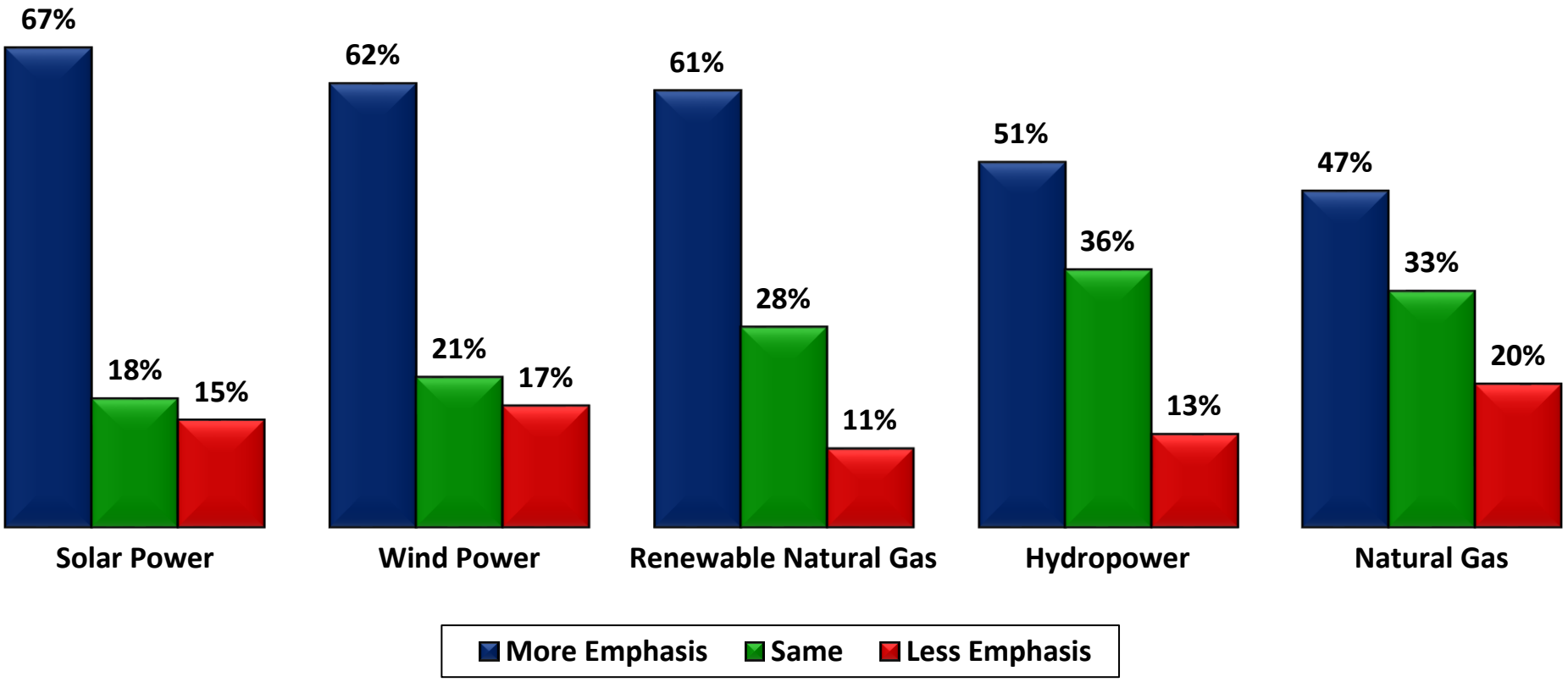


*Denotes Rounding.

Domestic Energy

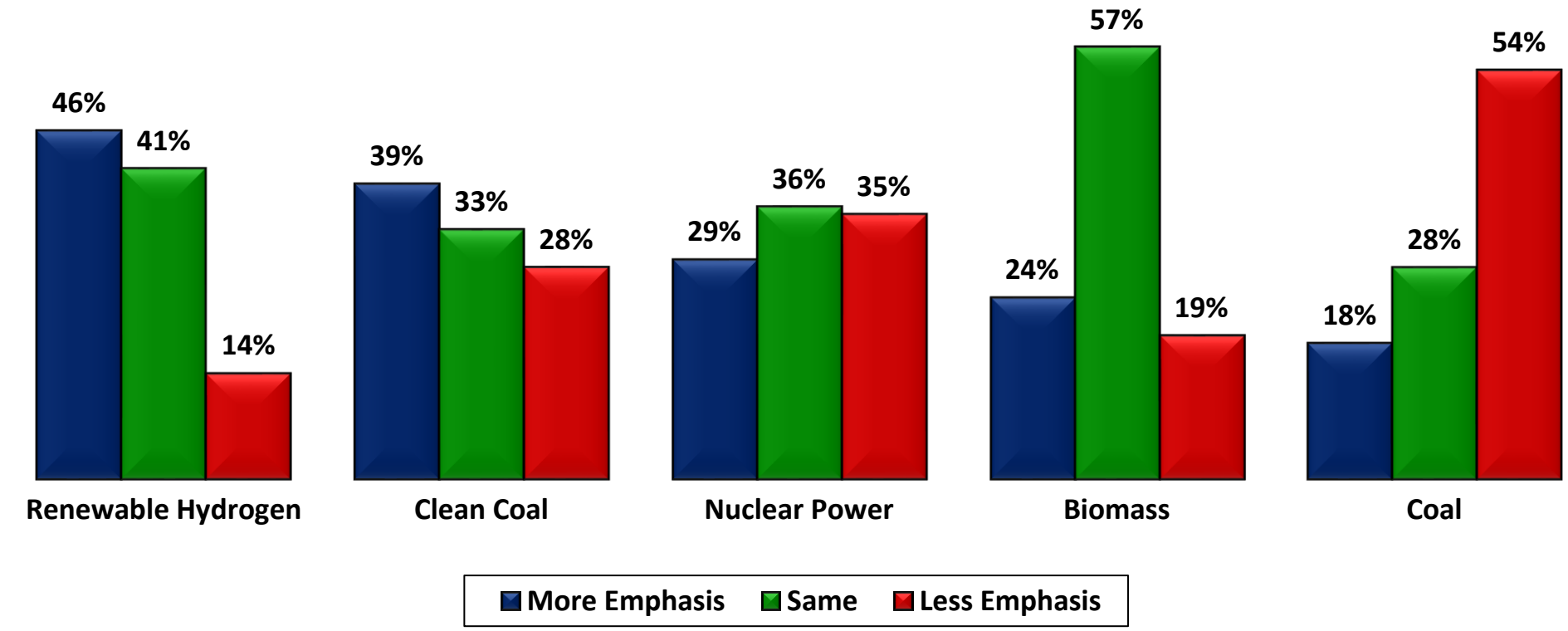
Voters believe MN should put more emphasis on a variety of sources, especially solar power, wind power, and renewable natural gas.

"Do you think that, as a state, Minnesota should put more emphasis, less emphasis, or about the same emphasis as it does now on producing domestic energy from each of the following sources."



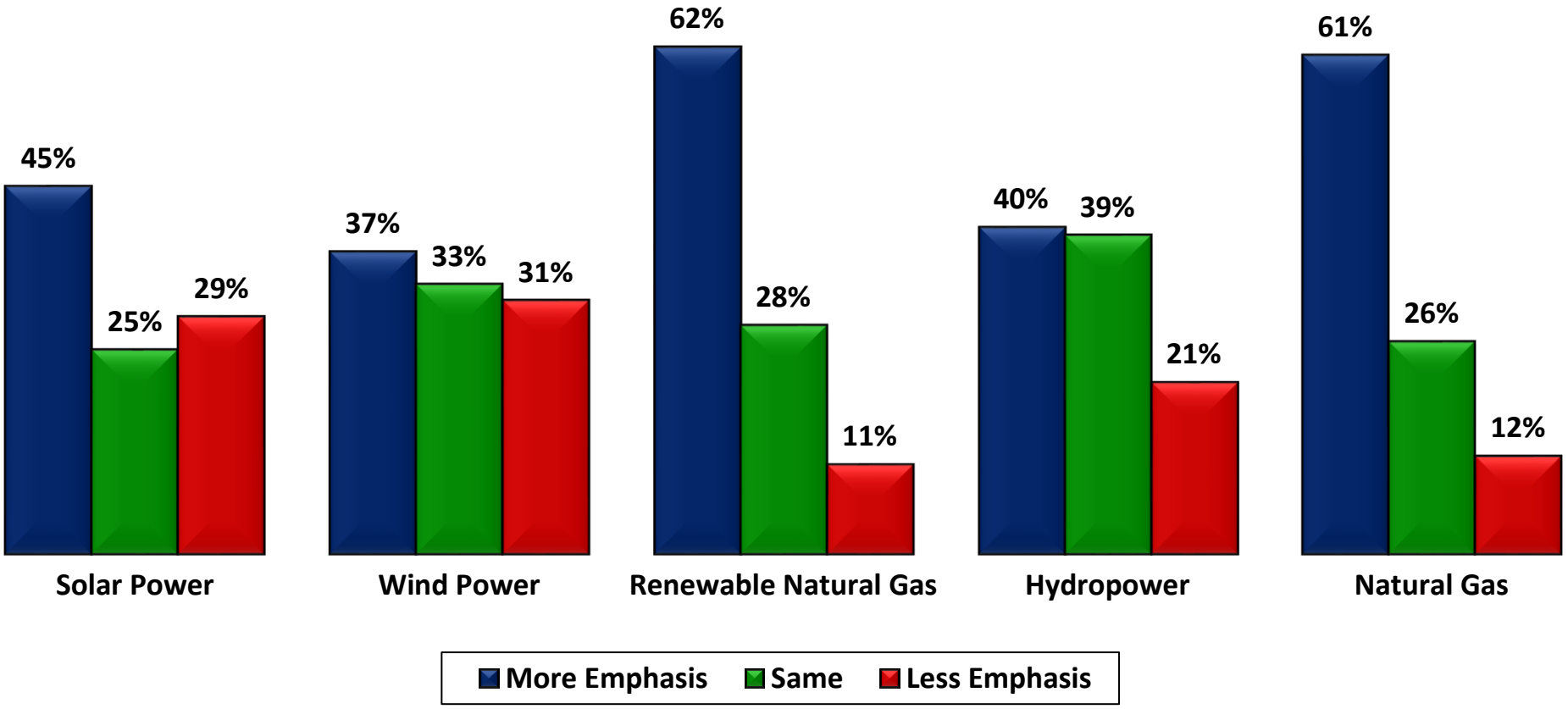
MN voters are divided on using clean coal and nuclear power but they are solidly against regular coal.

"Do you think that, as a state, Minnesota should put more emphasis, less emphasis, or about the same emphasis as it does now on producing domestic energy from each of the following sources."



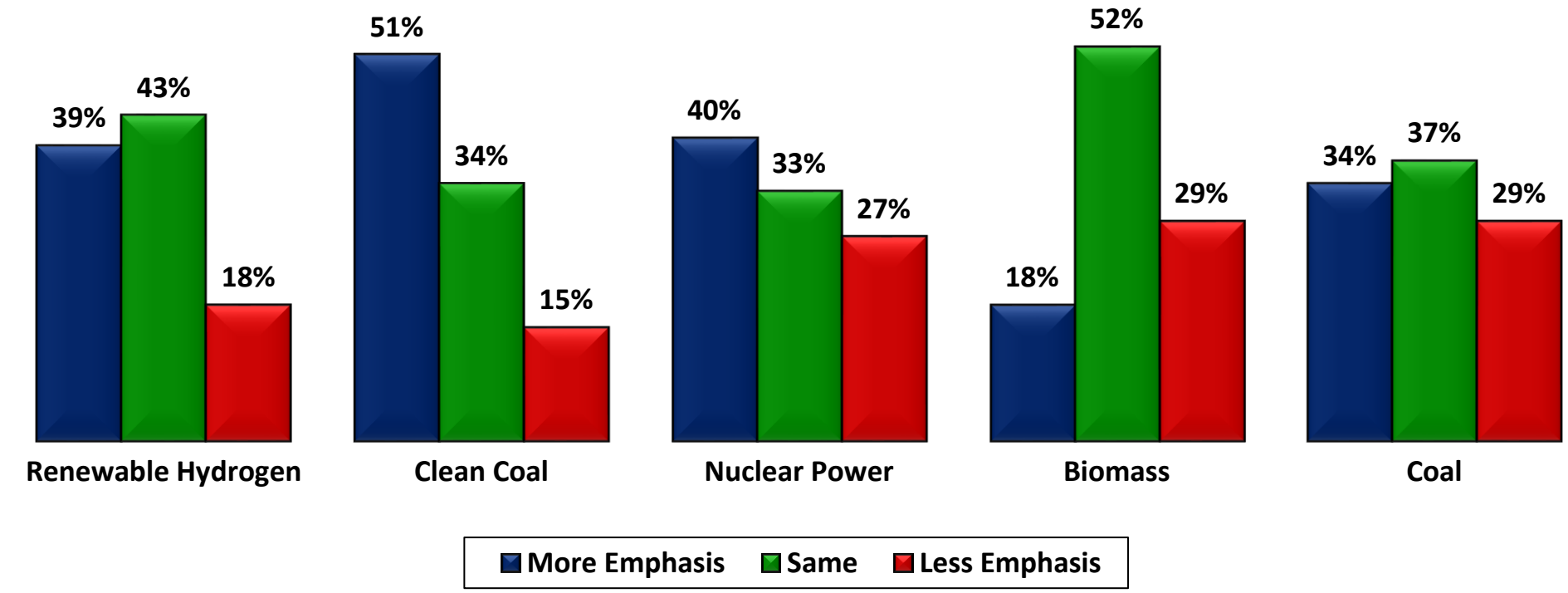
Republicans are most supportive of increasing production of renewable natural gas and natural gas.

Emphasis On Domestic Energy Among Republicans (38%)



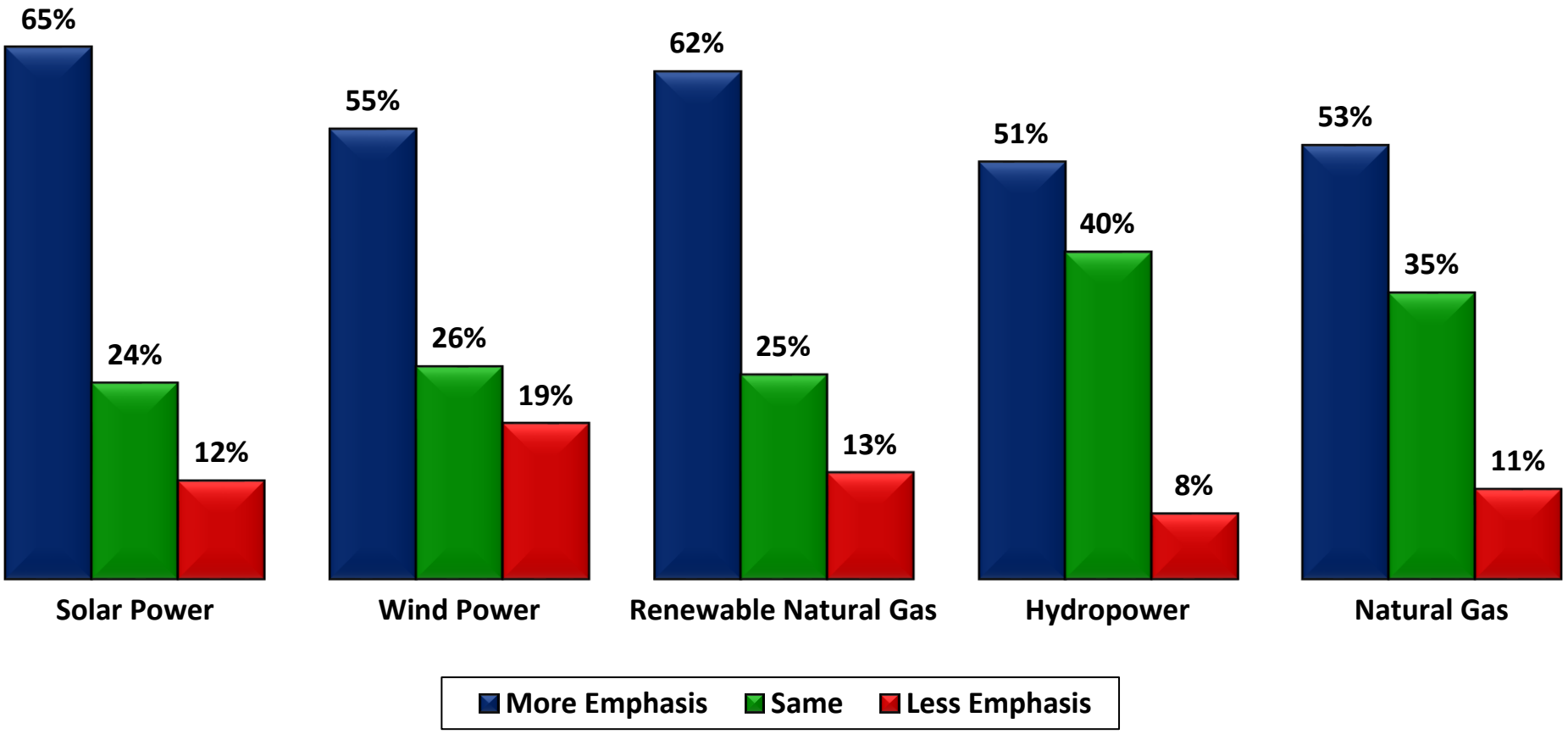
Republicans also support clean coal and 40% are in favor of putting more emphasis on nuclear power.

Emphasis On Domestic Energy Among Republicans (38%)



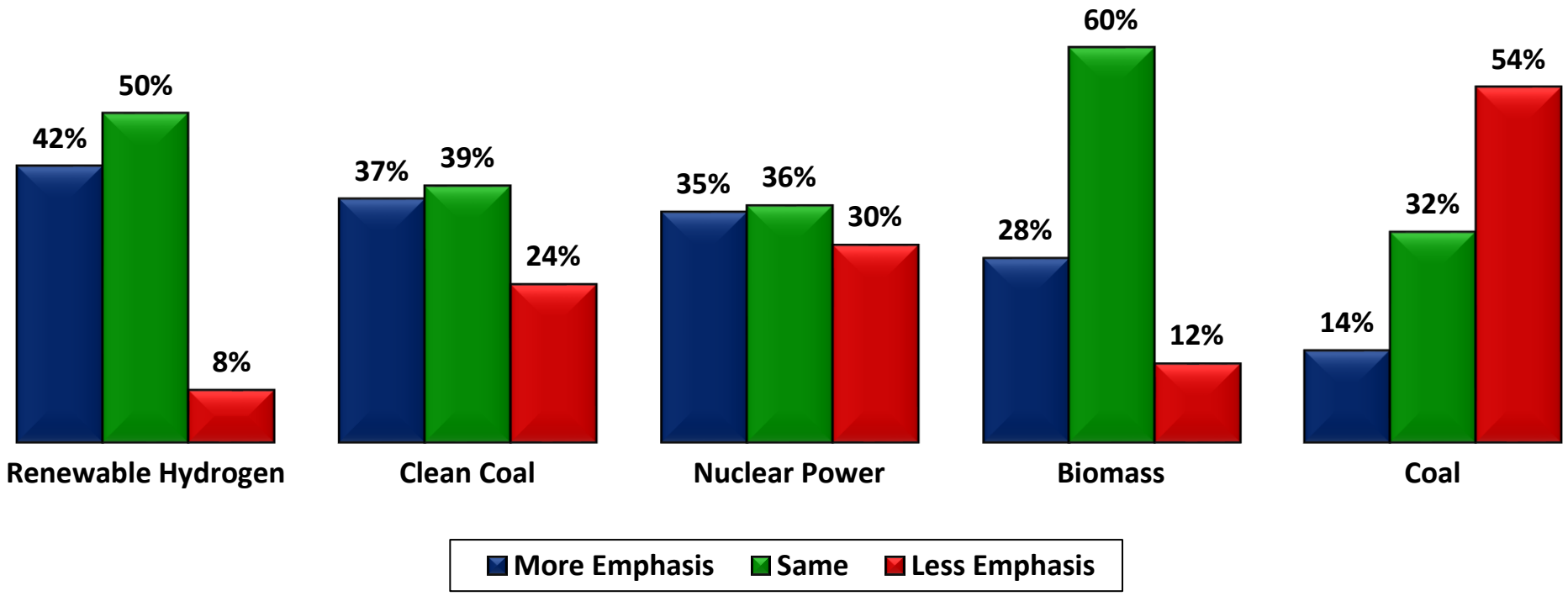
Majorities of Inds believe more emphasis should be put on all of these energy sources.

Emphasis On Domestic Energy Among Independents (16%)



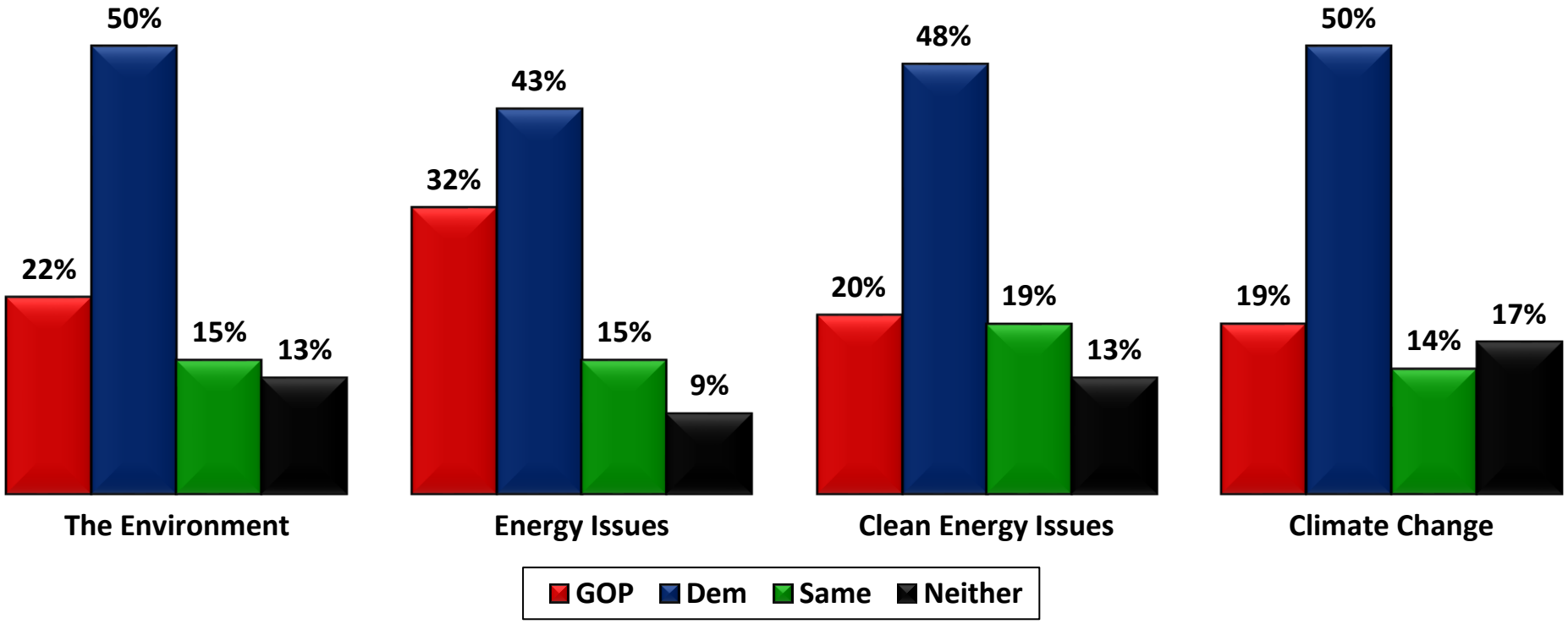
Despite support for other energy forms, Inds are split on nuclear power and are solidly against coal.

Emphasis On Domestic Energy Among Independents (16%)



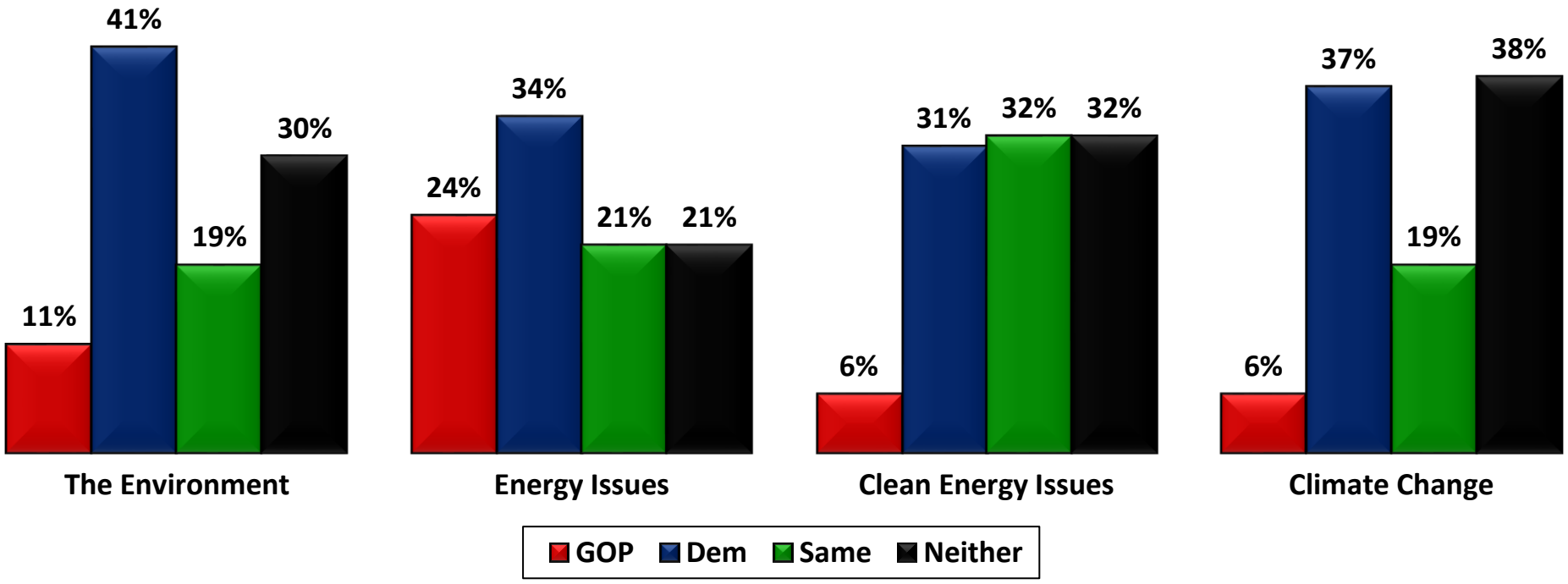
Minnesota voters are likely to believe the Dem party will do a better job handling these issues, but more than 30% say the GOP would best handle energy issues.

"Now please read the list of issues below and indicate which party you think would do a better job the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, or both about the same? If you think that neither would do a good job, please indicate that below."



Independent voters aren't overly confident in either party.

Which Party Would Do A Better Job Among Independents (16%)



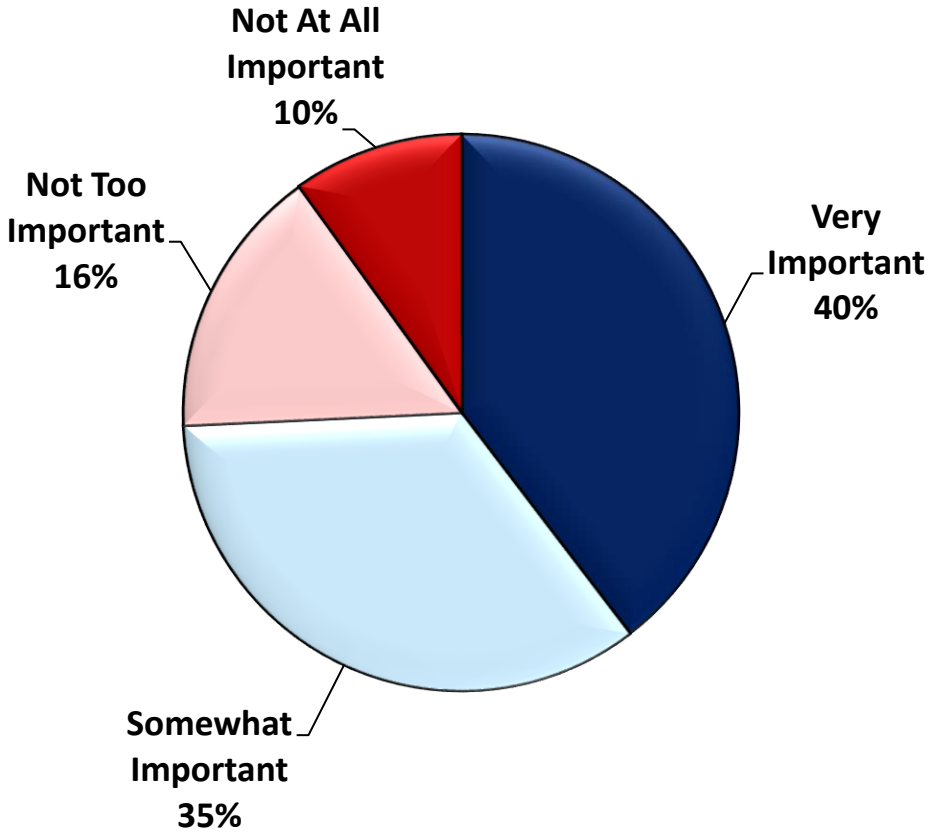
Candidates & Elections

By nearly 3:1, voters say it is important a candidate for political office supports clean energy initiatives.

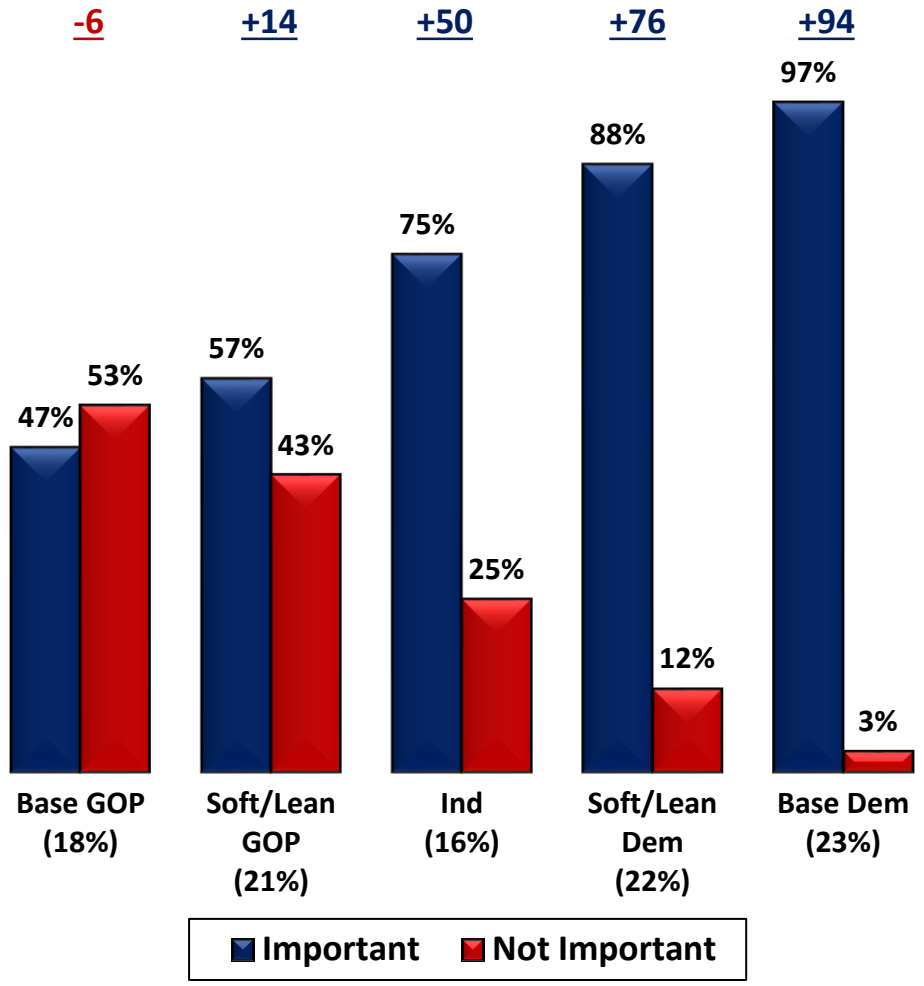
"How important is it to you that a candidate for political office supports clean energy initiatives? Is it…"

Overall

Total Important	74%*
Total Not Important	26%



By Party



*Denotes Rounding.

The candidate who promotes an all-of-the-above strategy is the clear favorite over the coal/natural gas candidate.

"And, for whom would you vote..."

71%

Candidate B says that Minnesota should focus on an all-of-the-above energy strategy that includes clean energy sources such as wind and solar power in addition to coal and natural gas. Candidate B says that by lowering our dependence on fossil fuels, we can help keep the air and water cleaner, and growing the clean energy industry in Minnesota will create thousands of jobs and help grow our economy as it has in other states.

…while…

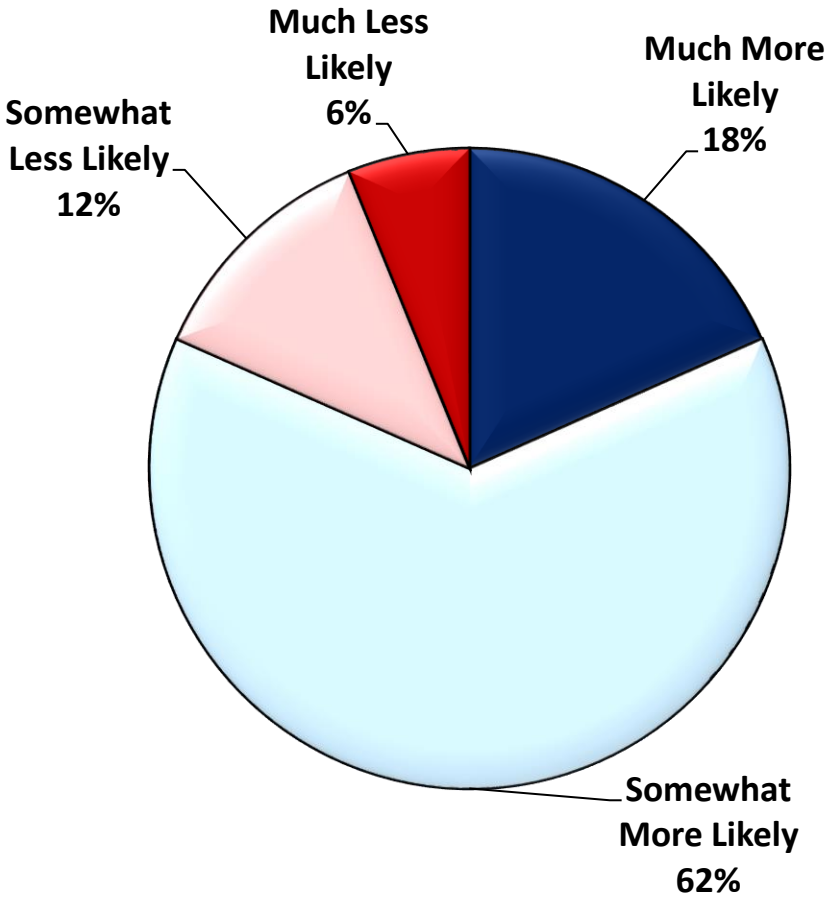
29%

Candidate A says that Minnesota should focus on having its energy needs met by coal and natural gas because it is less expensive than so-called clean energy sources. Candidate A says that coal and natural gas remain quite plentiful and have gotten cleaner and less expensive and that spending on clean energy is a waste of money.

Fully 8-in-10 voters would be more likely to support a GOP candidate who embraces an innovation-based approach to dealing with climate change, but support for the candidate is soft.

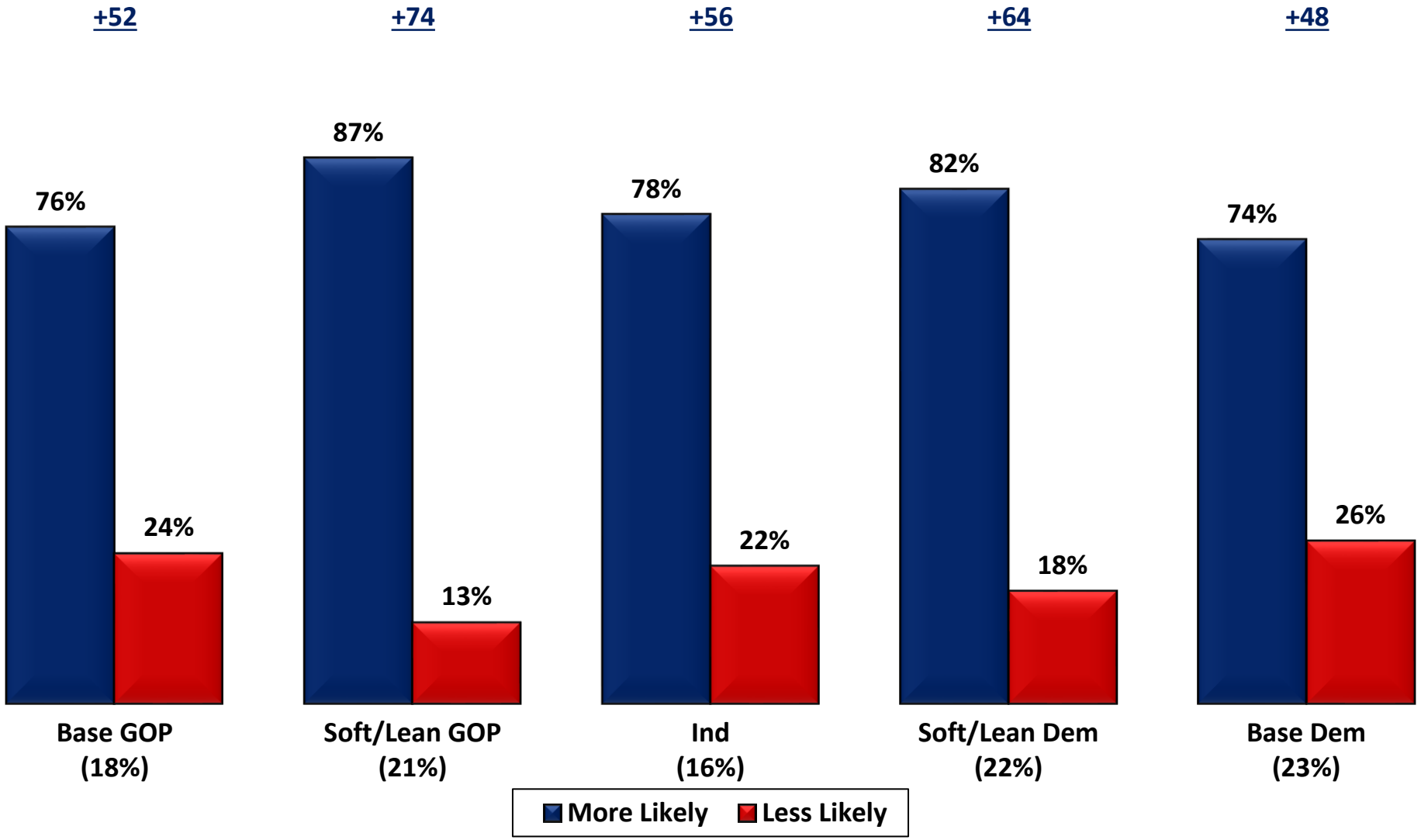
"Would you be more likely or less likely to support a Republican candidate who embraces an innovation-based approach to addressing climate change?"

Total More Likely	80%
Total Less Likely	20%



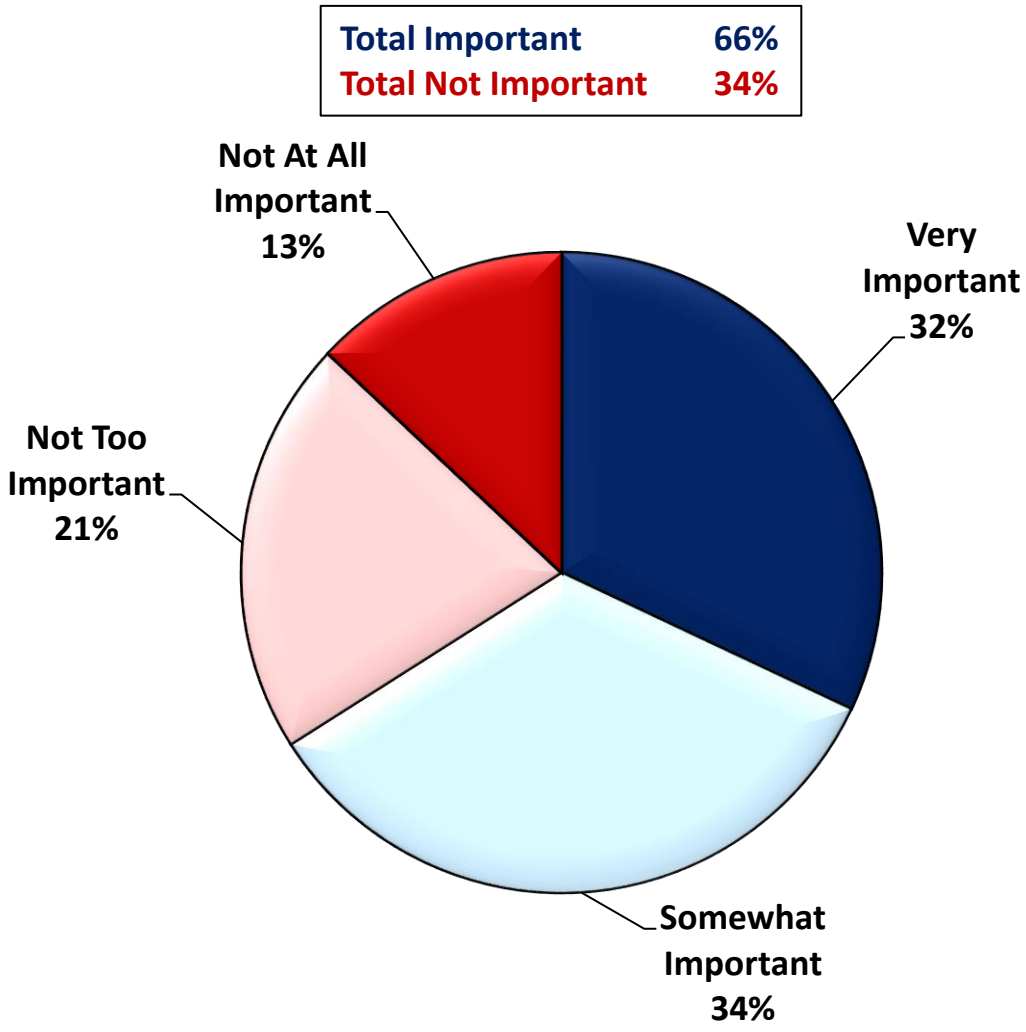
Soft GOPers are most likely to be interested in a GOP candidate who addresses climate change.

GOP Candidate Who Addresses Climate Change by Party



Two in three voters say climate change is important to their vote in the upcoming election.

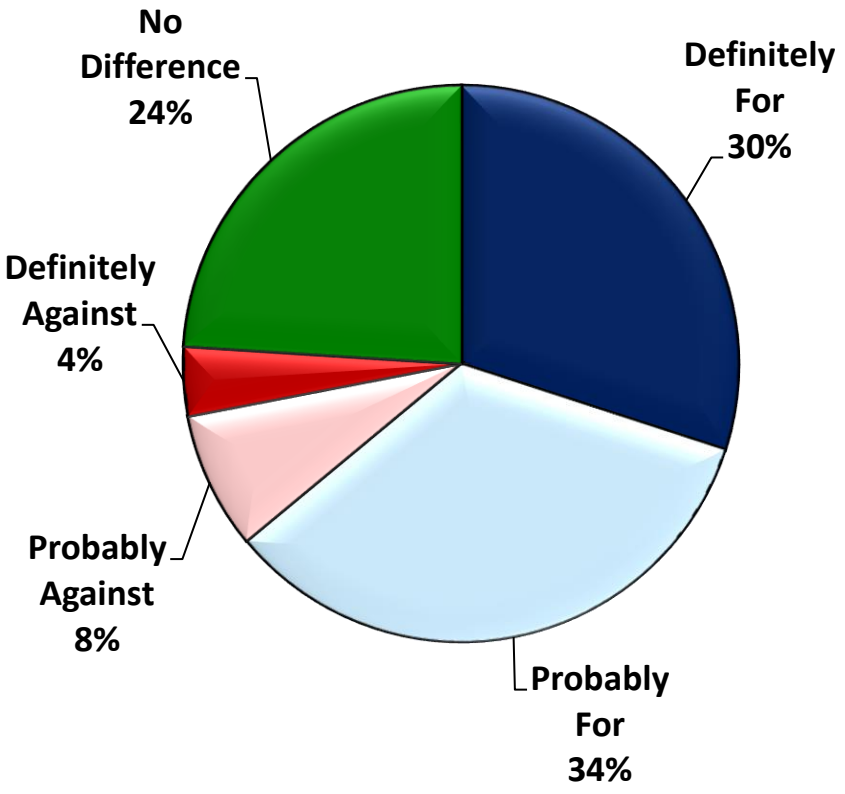
"How important is the issue of climate change to your vote in the November 2022 election?"



Voters support a candidate who is for clean energy development and believes human activity is contributing to climate change.

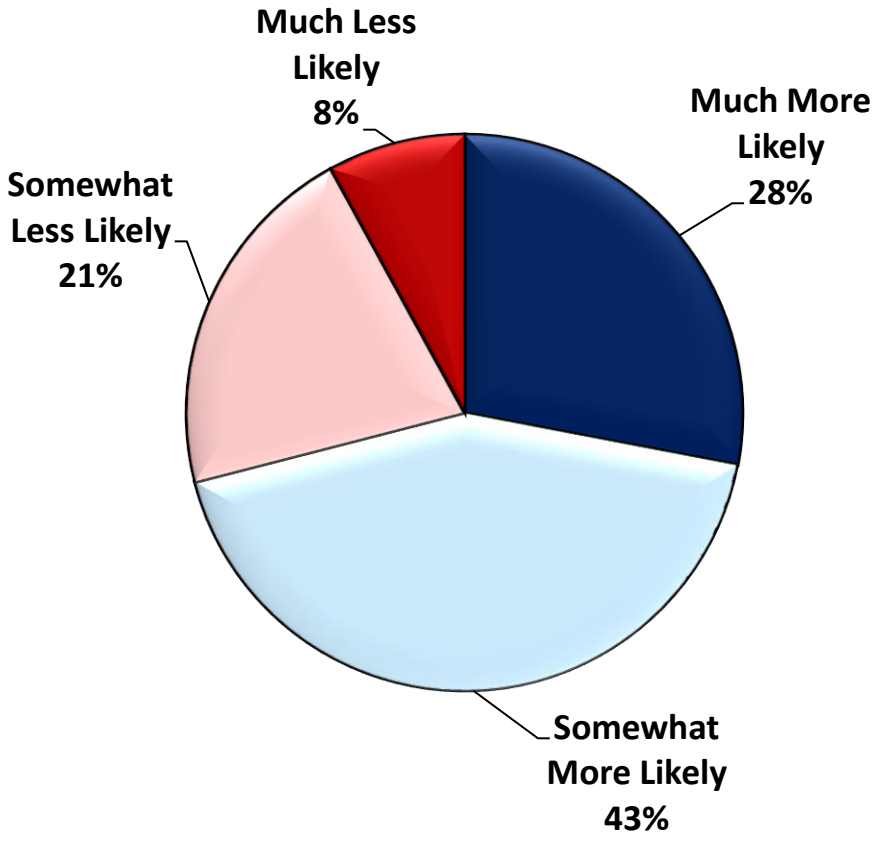
"Thinking ahead to future elections… would you vote for or against elected officials or candidates who support clean energy development like solar and wind, or would it make no difference to your vote?"

Total For	64%
Total Against	12%

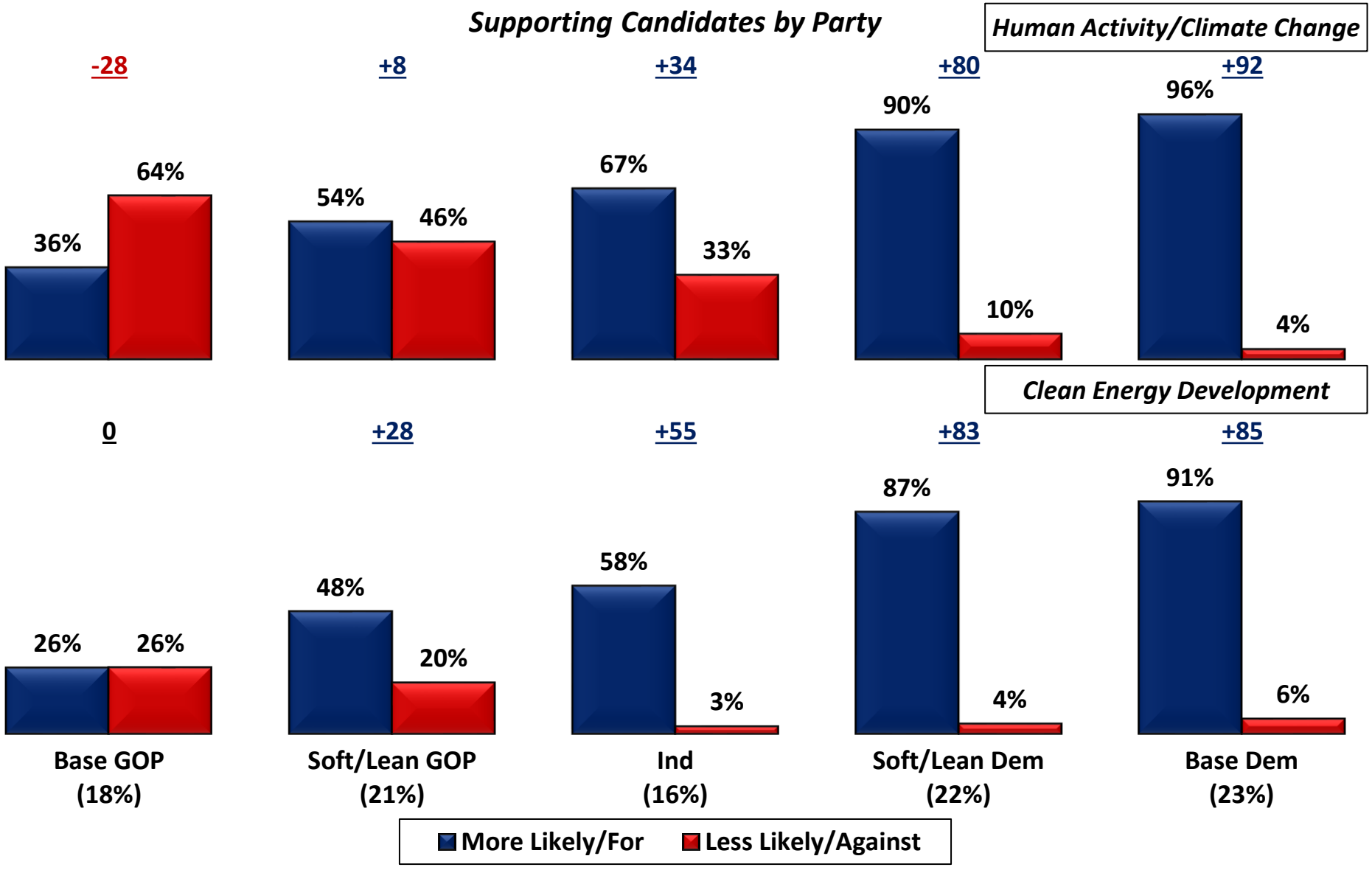


"Are you more likely or less likely to support a candidate for public office who believes human activity is contributing to climate change?"

Total More Likely	71%
Total Less Likely	29%



The correlation of human activity and climate change is more polarizing than clean energy development.



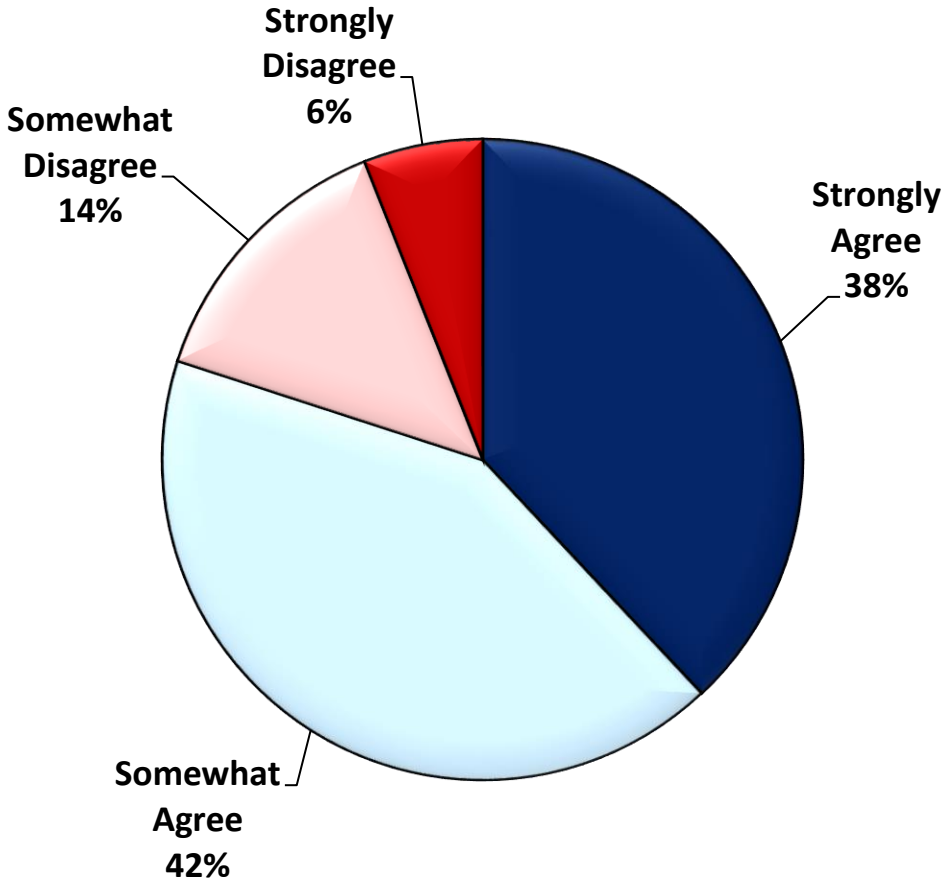
Energy Approaches

"Minnesota should pursue an all-of-the-above energy strategy, which means lowering our heavy dependence on fossil fuels over time and allowing an increase in electricity generation from renewable energy sources as well as more energy efficiency, and I support taking action to accelerate the development and use of clean energy in Minnesota."

Fully 80% of MN voters agree the state should pursue an all-of-the-above energy strategy.

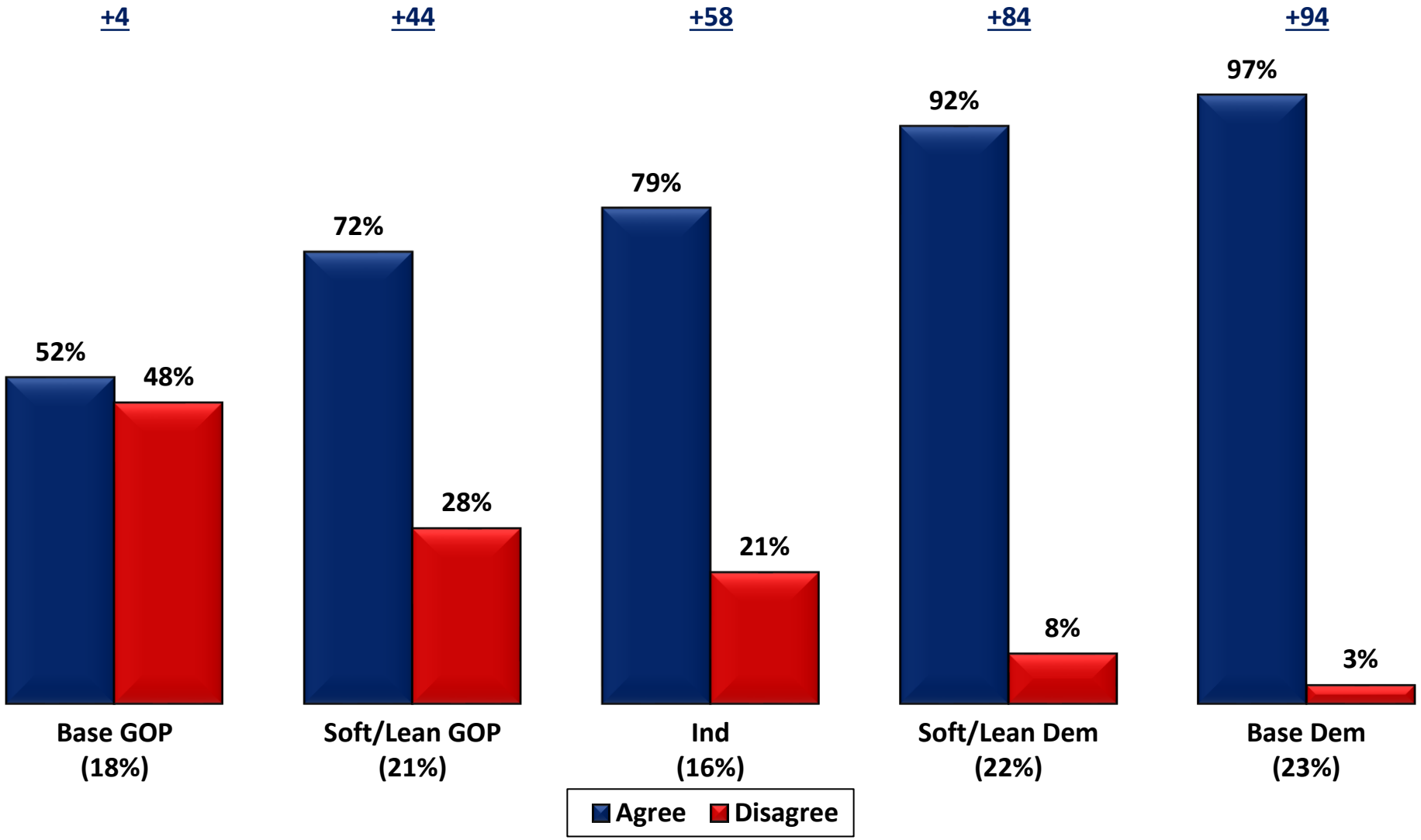
"Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with that statement."

Total Agree	80%
Total Disagree	20%



Support for the strategy is highest with Democrats, but majorities of Republicans support the approach, too.

MN Should Pursue An All-Of-The-Above Energy Strategy by Party



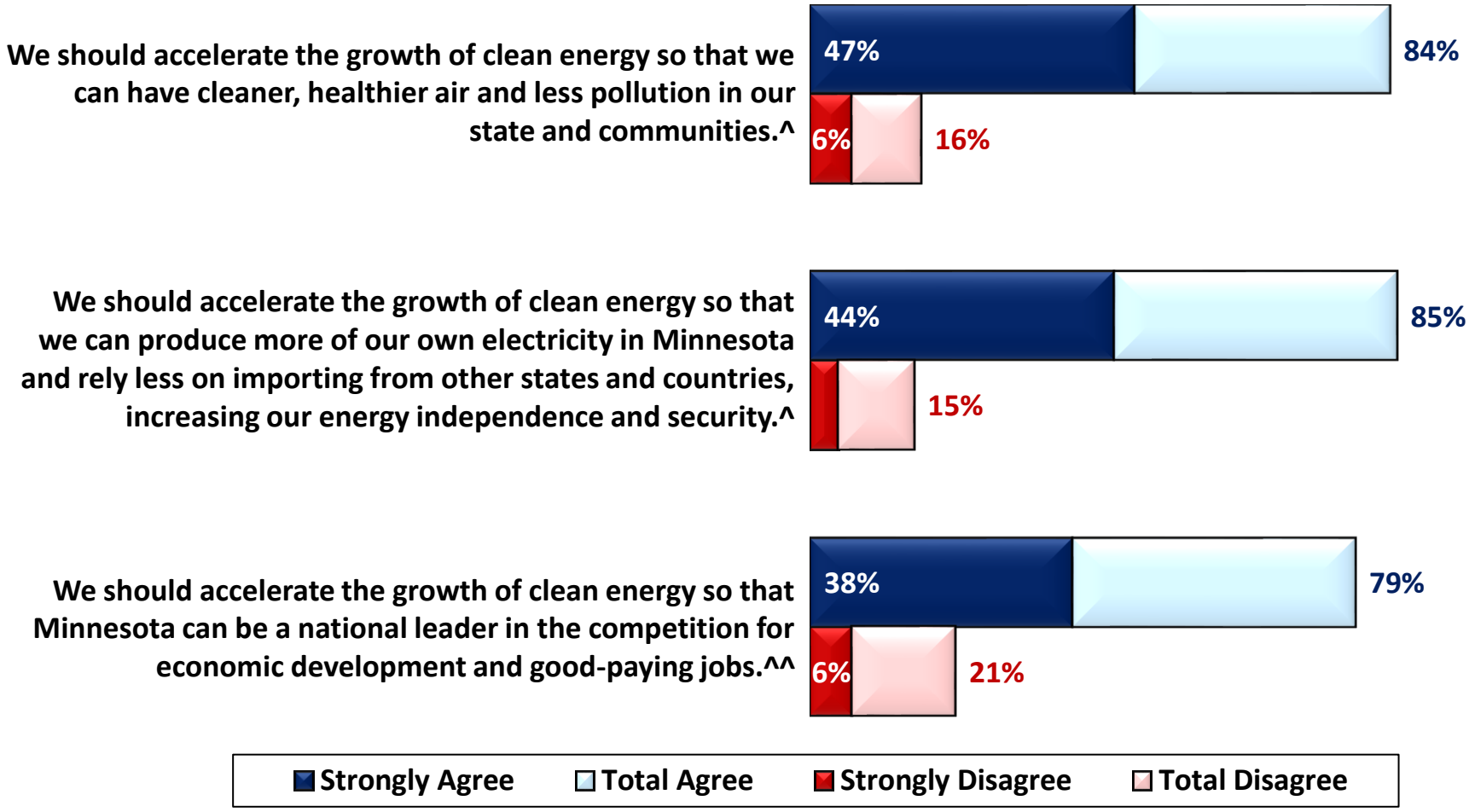
Voters would more than 3:1 want rooftop solar panels installed on their property if they could afford it.

"If you could afford to do it, would you want rooftop solar panels installed on your property to generate all or nearly all of your electricity?"

Voters most agree with accelerating clean energy so we can have cleaner/healthier air and rely less on other states/countries.

"Now please read a few statements about why some people want to accelerate the growth of clean energy, by speeding up the development of sources of renewable energy like wind and solar power. After you read each statement, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with that statement."

Ranked by % Strongly Agree

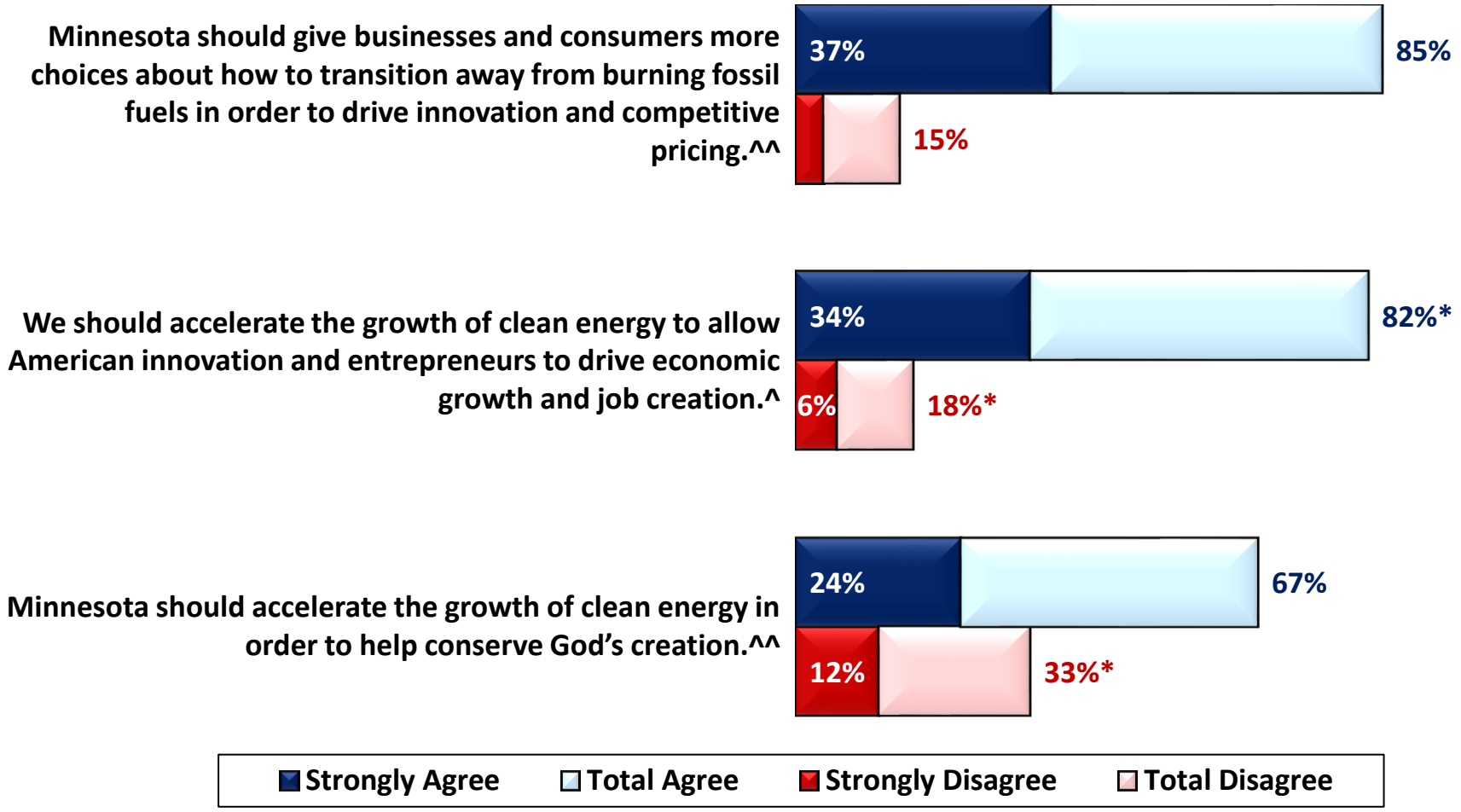


^Split Sample A, N=296; ^^Split Sample B, N=304.

MN voters are also receptive to messages on competition, innovation, and job creation.

"Now please read a few statements about why some people want to accelerate the growth of clean energy, by speeding up the development of sources of renewable energy like wind and solar power. After you read each statement, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with that statement."

Ranked by % Strongly Agree



**Denotes Rounding; ^Split Sample A, N=296; ^^Split Sample B, N=304.*

Voters clearly prefer competitive approaches over mandates or taxes when it comes to increasing clean energy.

"To increase clean energy production, would you prefer..."

71% *Approaches like competition that allow markets and businesses to provide more clean energy production*

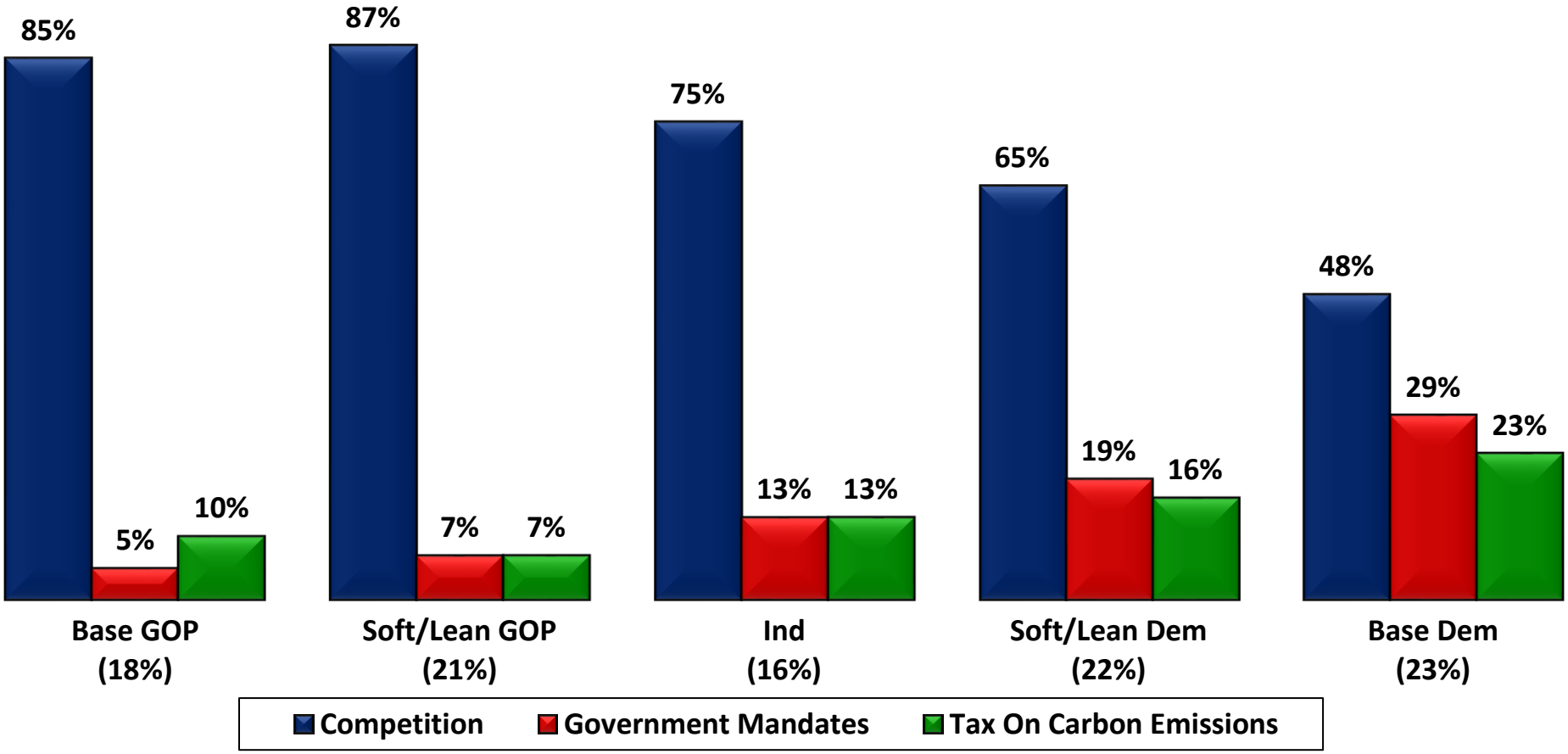
15% *Government mandates, subsidies, and quotas*

...or...

14% *A price or tax put on carbon emissions*

Even Democrats prefer competitive approaches.

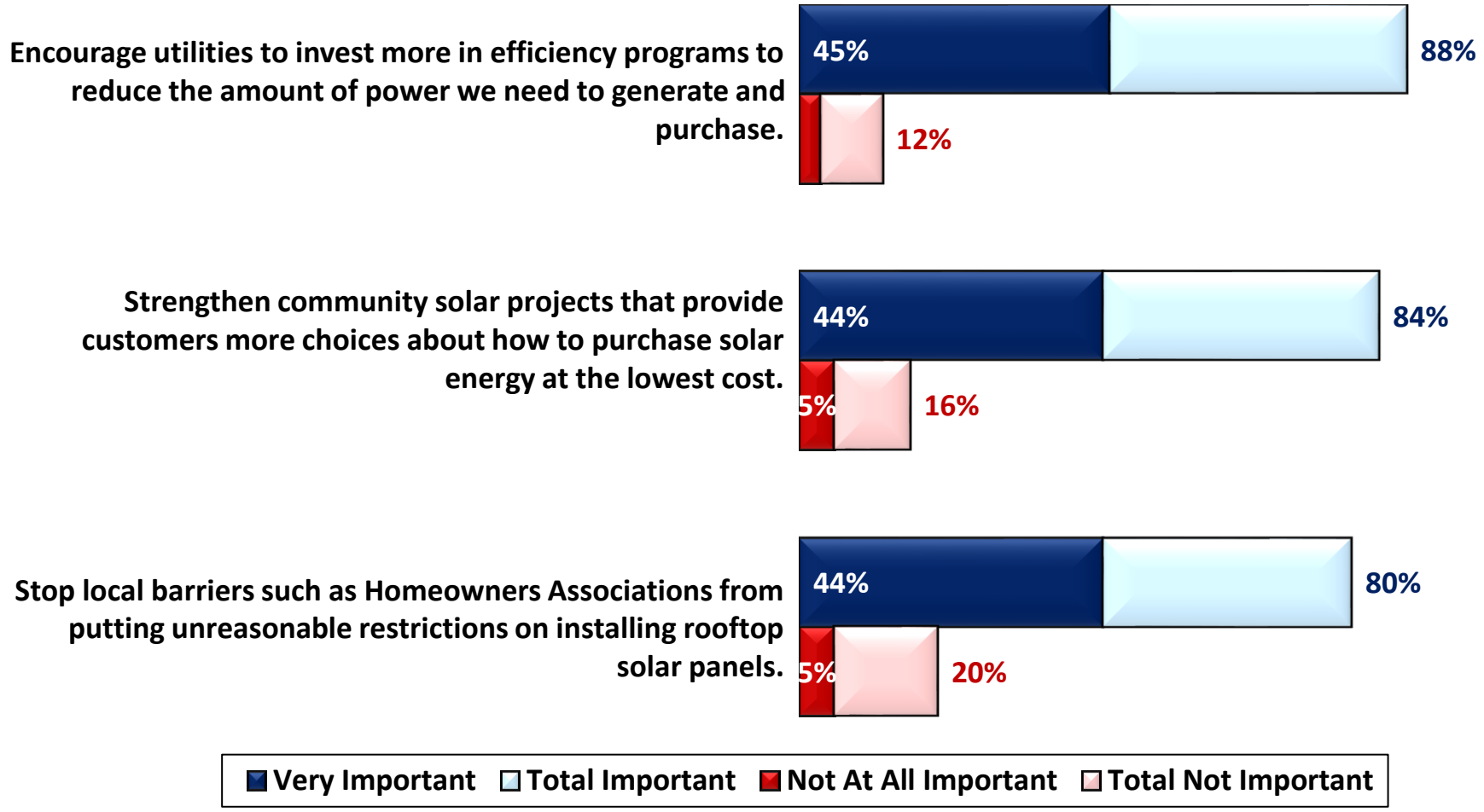
How To Increase Energy Production by Party



Voters say it is most important to invest in efficiency programs, strengthen community solar projects, and stop local barriers.

"Now please read a list of policies that advocates have prioritized to help expand Minnesota's commitment to clean energy. After you read each one, please indicate whether you think that policy is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all."

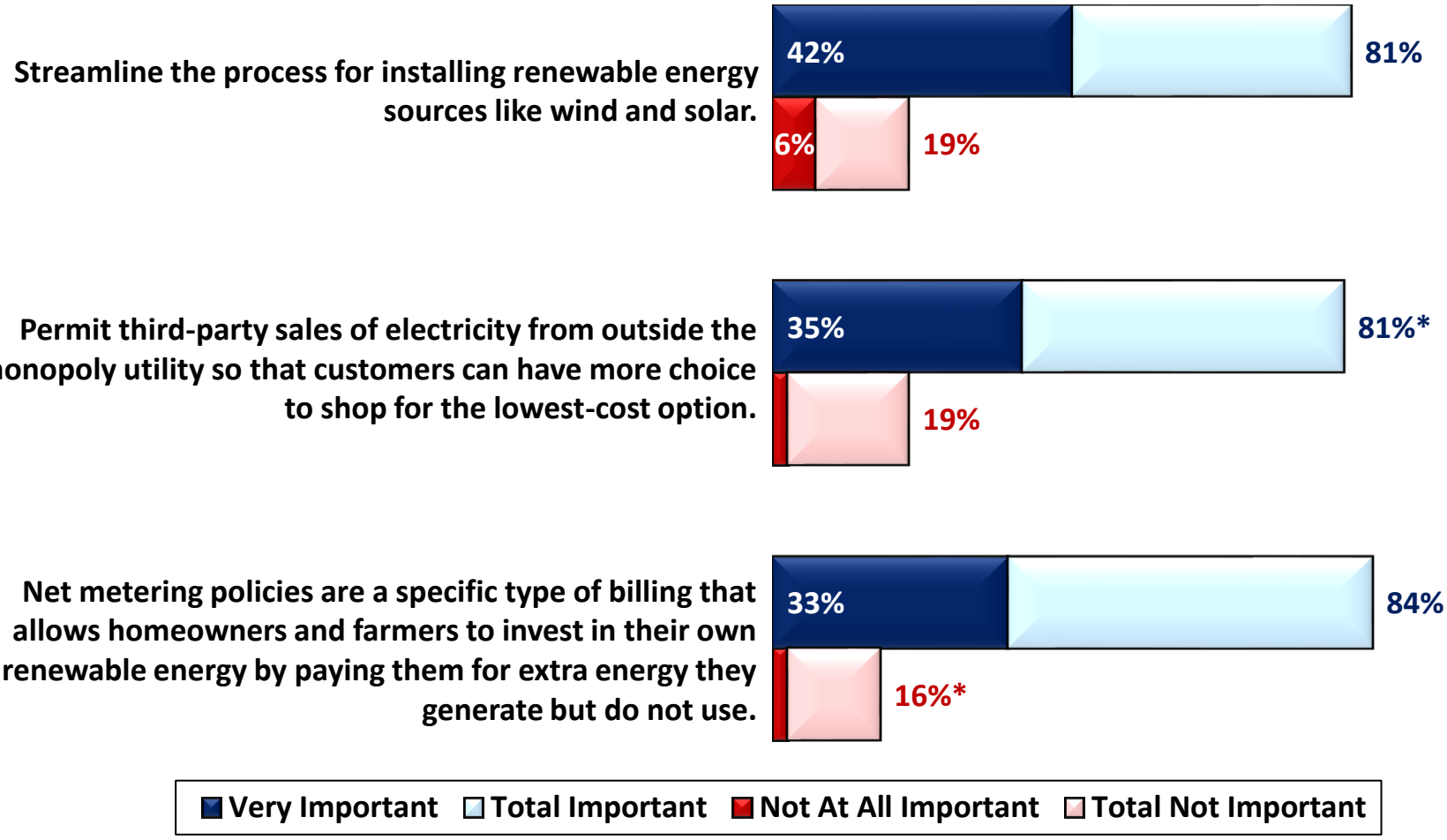
Ranked by % Very Important



More than 40% of voters also say it is very important to streamline the process for installing renewable energy sources.

"Now please read a list of policies that advocates have prioritized to help expand Minnesota's commitment to clean energy. After you read each one, please indicate whether you think that policy is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all."

Ranked by % Very Important



**Denotes Rounding.*

A small majority of voters would prefer to have additional options for electricity.

"And, are you satisfied with your options for electricity, or do you prefer to have additional options for getting electricity?"

47% ***Satisfied***

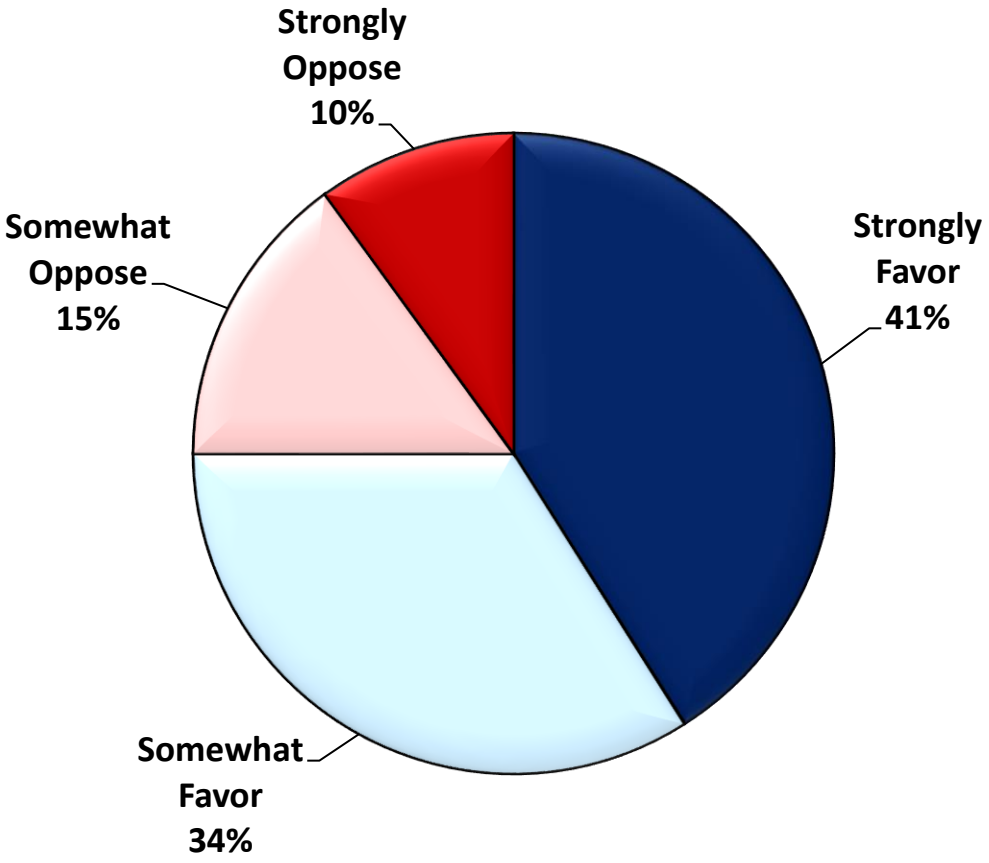
53% ***Prefer Additional Options***

Climate Change

By a three to one margin, voters favor the gov't taking steps to reduce emissions that cause global climate change.

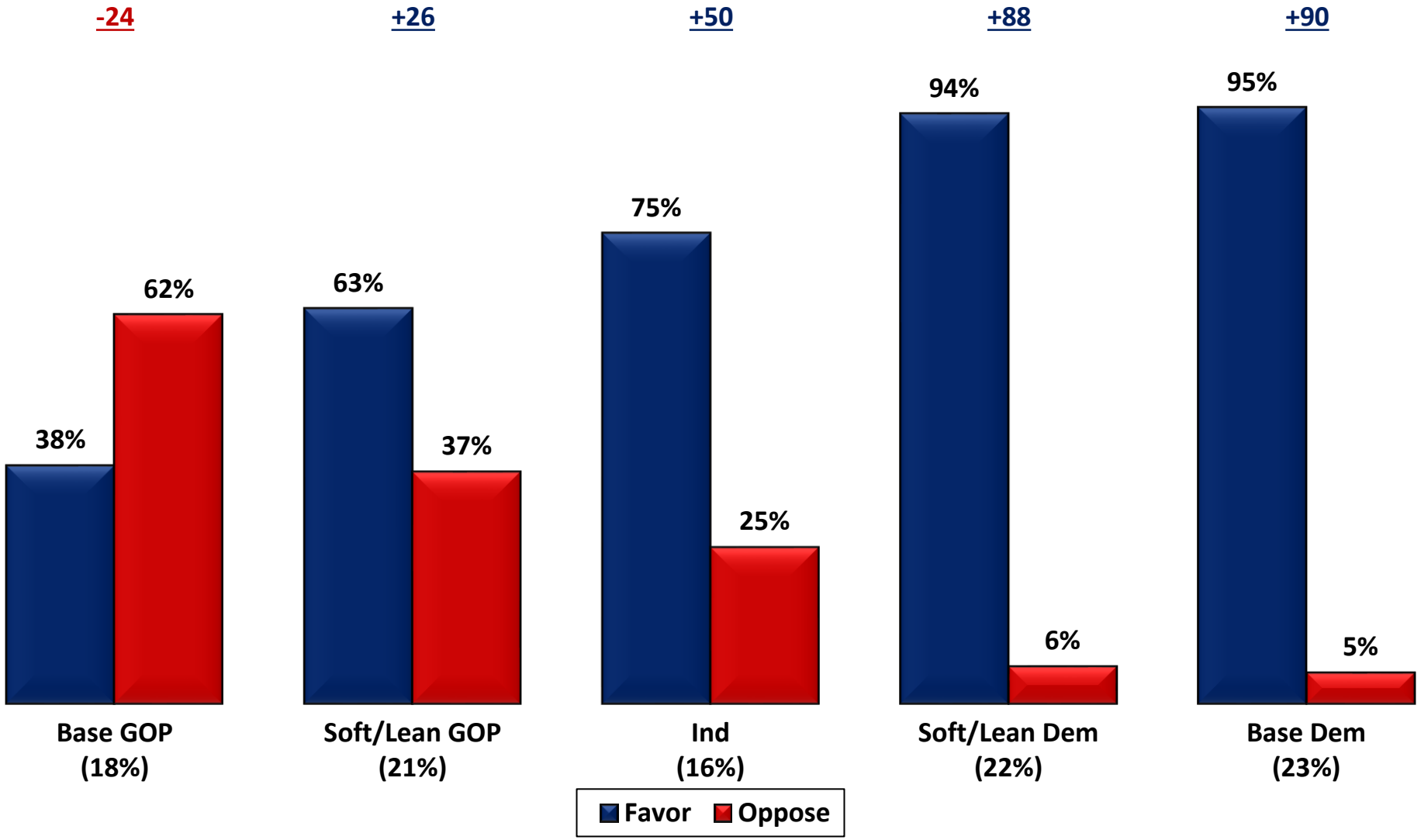
"Do you favor or oppose the government taking steps to reduce emissions of gases like carbon dioxide and methane emissions that cause global climate change?"

Total Favor	75%
Total Oppose	25%



More than 60% of soft GOPers and nearly 40% of base GOPers favor government action.

Gov't Taking Steps To Reduce Emissions by Party



A solid majority of voters believe climate change is a threat and more than 40% believe it is an extreme threat.

"Please read the following statements about the impact of climate change on society, and after you read each one, please indicate which statement is closest to your own opinion..."

43% *Climate change is an extreme threat.*

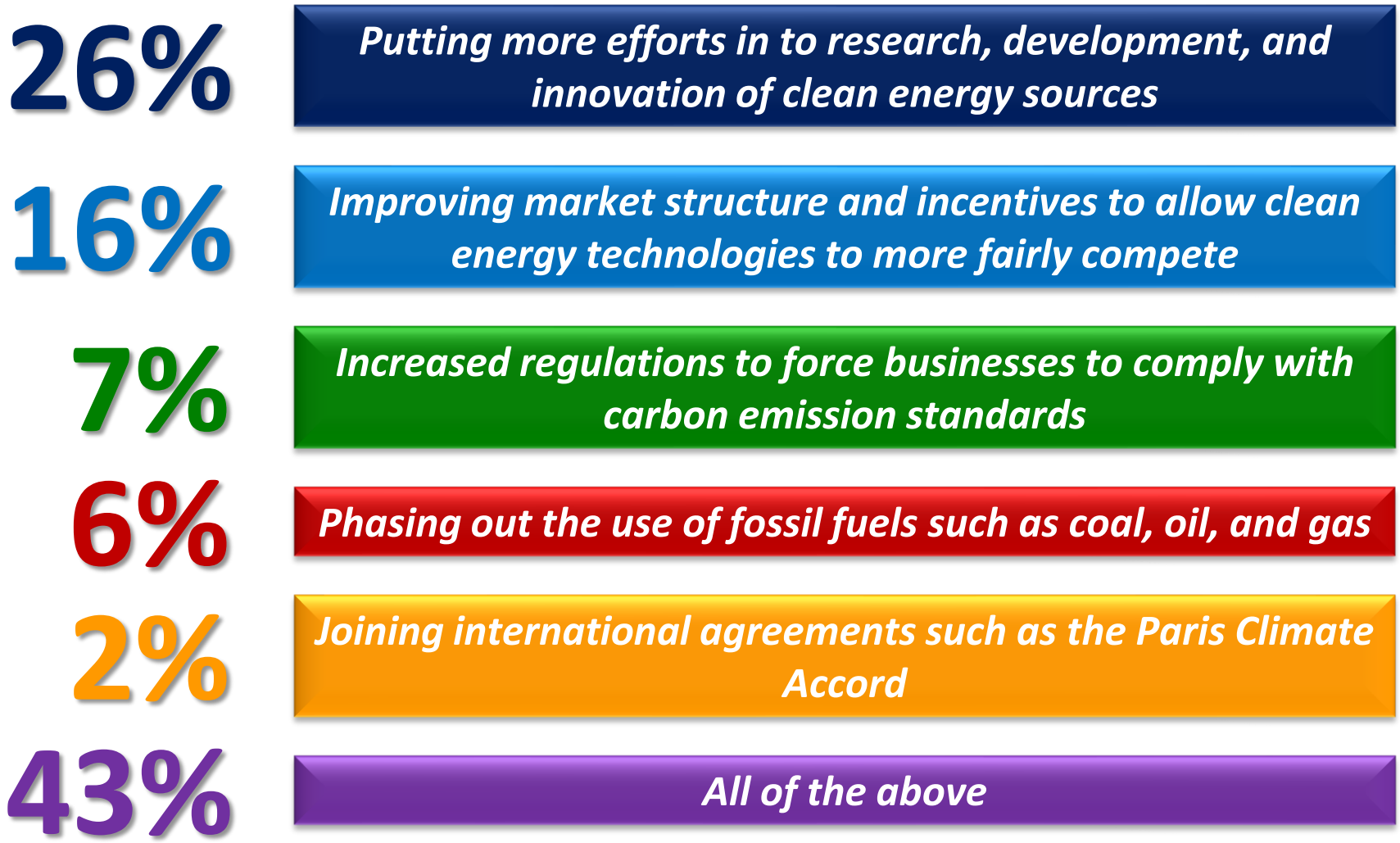
27% *Climate change is a threat to be considered.*

20% *Climate change is a minor threat.*

9% *Climate change is not at all a threat.*

Putting more efforts into research and development is the most popular approach to dealing with climate change.

"Assuming climate change is caused by humans, which do you think is the best way to deal with the issue…"

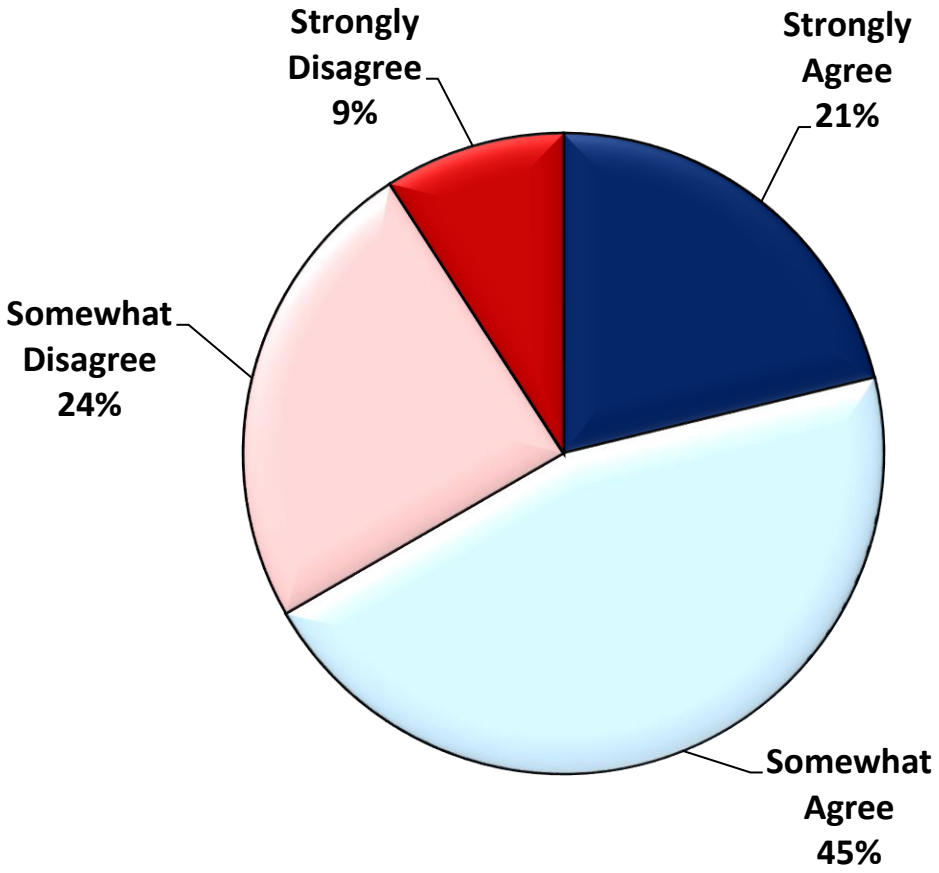


Nuclear Energy

Two-thirds of MN voters believe nuclear energy should be included as part of the state's clean energy mix.

"Please read the following statement and indicate whether you agree or disagree with that statement: Nuclear energy should be included and prioritized as part of Minnesota's clean energy mix."

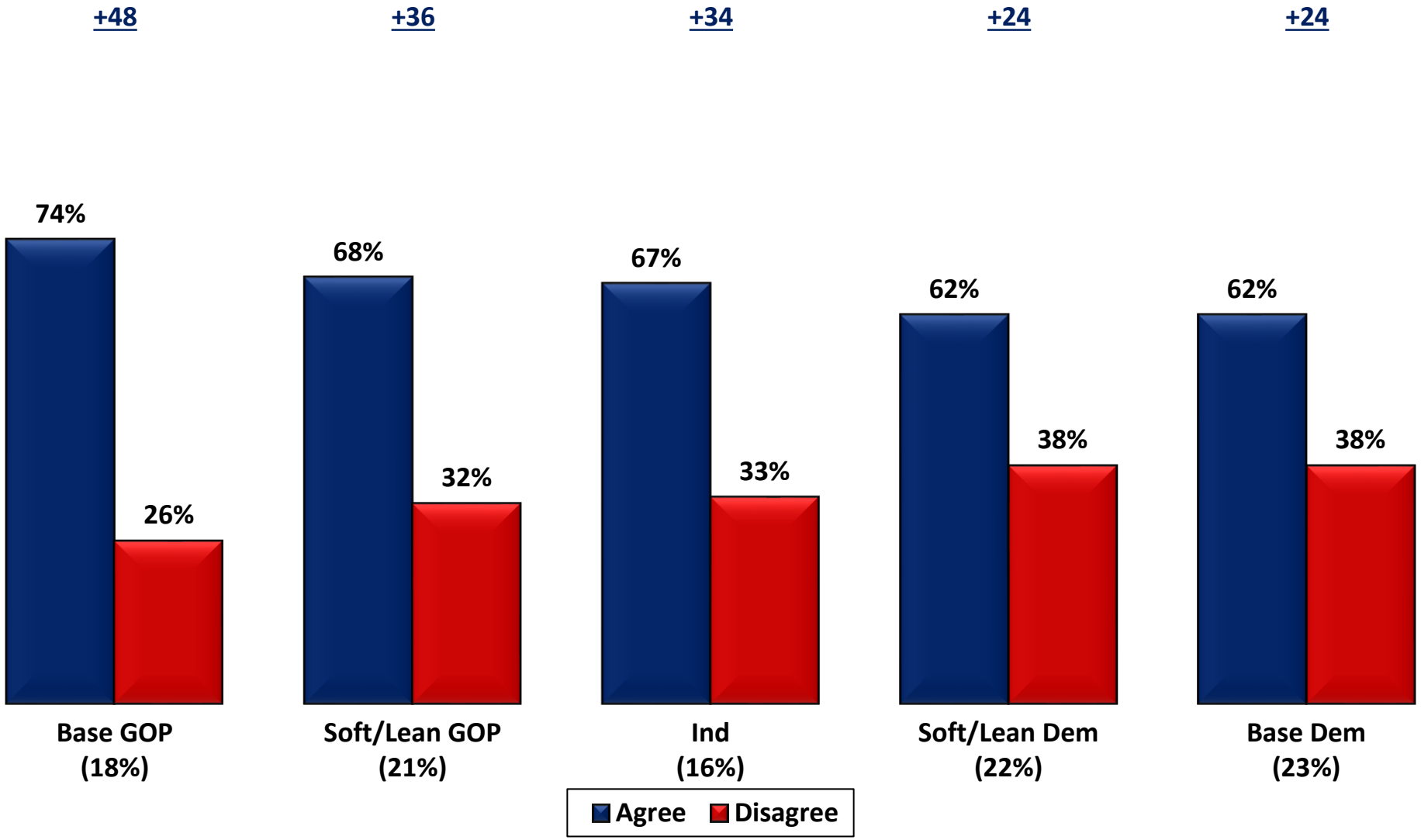
Total Agree	66%
Total Disagree	34%*



**Denotes Rounding.*

Including nuclear energy in the state's mix is a nonpartisan issue.

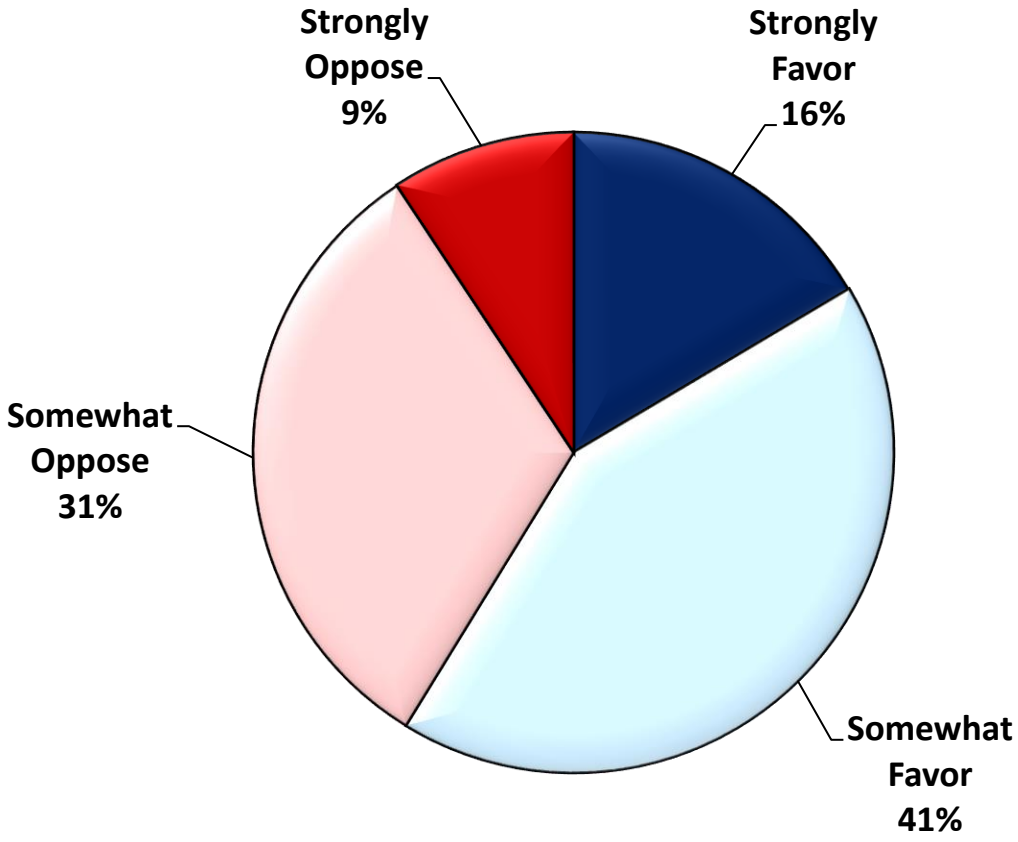
Nuclear Energy Should Be Included and Prioritized by Party



A majority of voters favor using more nuclear energy as a power source in Minnesota.

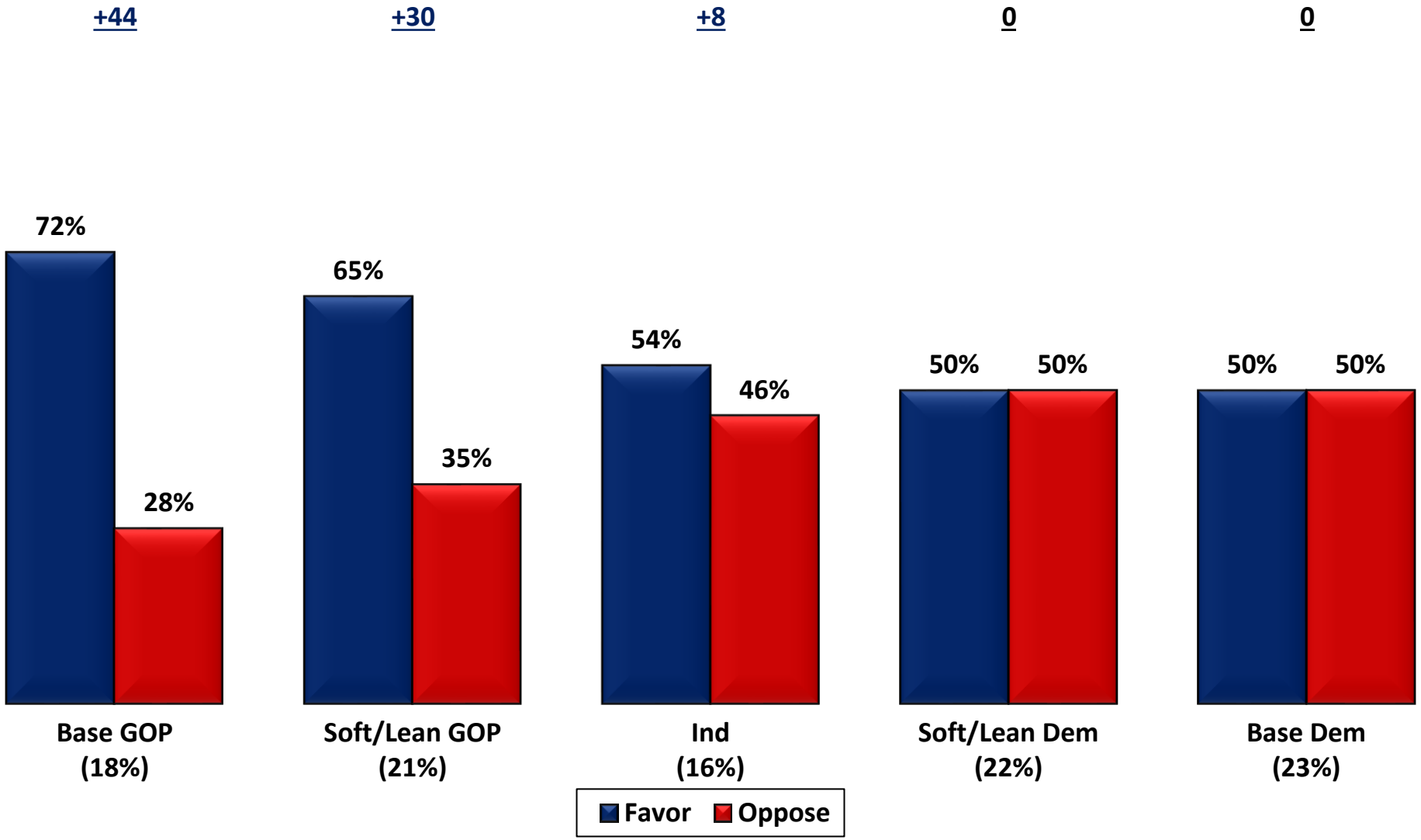
"Do you favor or oppose using more nuclear power as a source of energy in Minnesota?"

Total Favor	57%
Total Oppose	43%



Republicans are more likely to support using more nuclear power, while Dems are split.

Using More Nuclear Power by Party



MN voters are split on whether we need nuclear power to reduce carbon emissions.

"Do you believe or not believe the following statement: To reduce carbon emissions, we need nuclear power."

Overall

48% ***Yes, Believe***

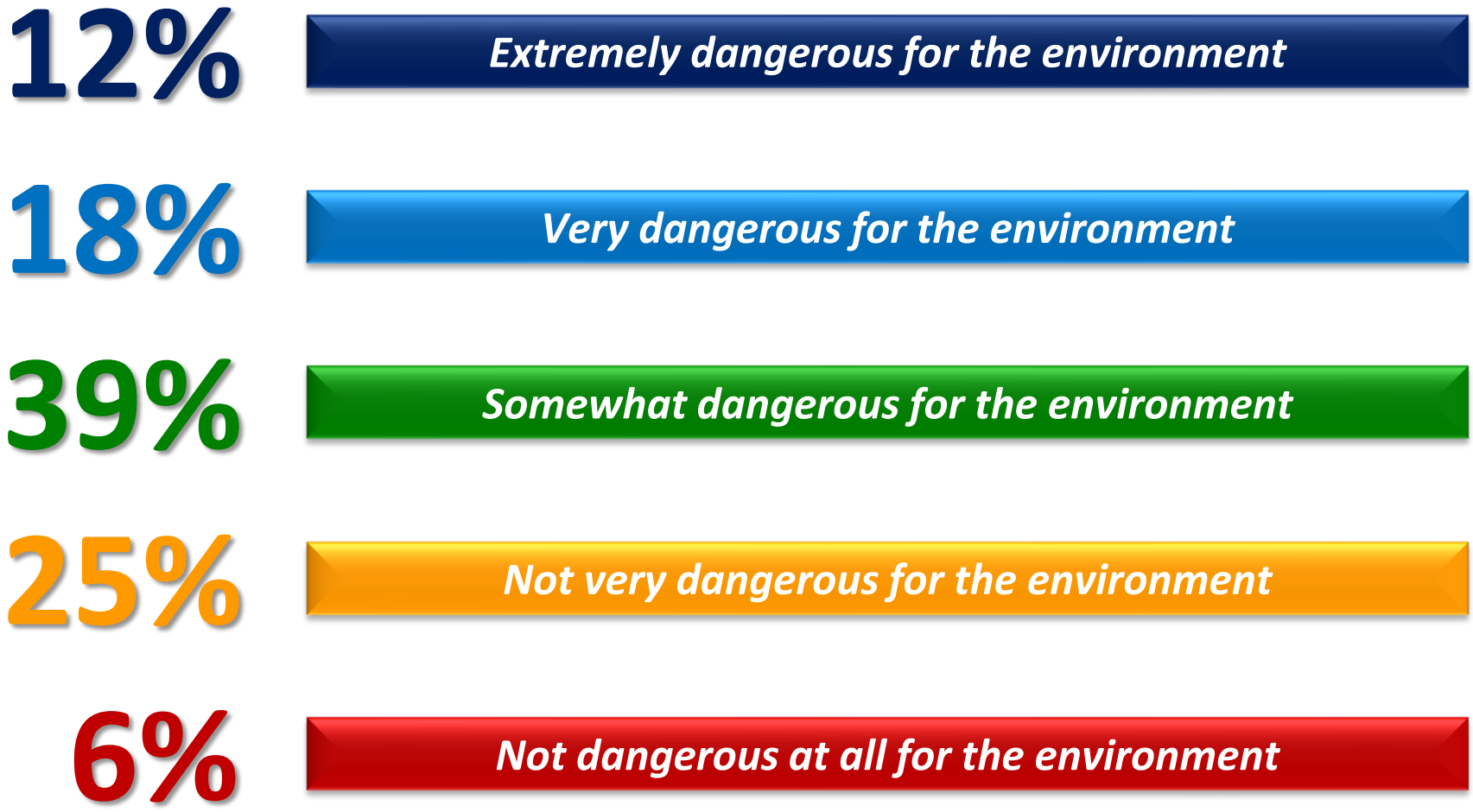
52% ***No, Do Not Believe***

Top Groups – Yes, Believe (48%)

Ind Men	70%
Men 18-54	63%
Men w/o Degrees	62%
Men	60%
GOP Men	60%
Very Conservative	58%
Men w/ Degrees	58%
Men 55+	57%
Northeast Region	56%
Base GOP	55%
Dem Men	55%
Ind	54%
Age 45-54	53%

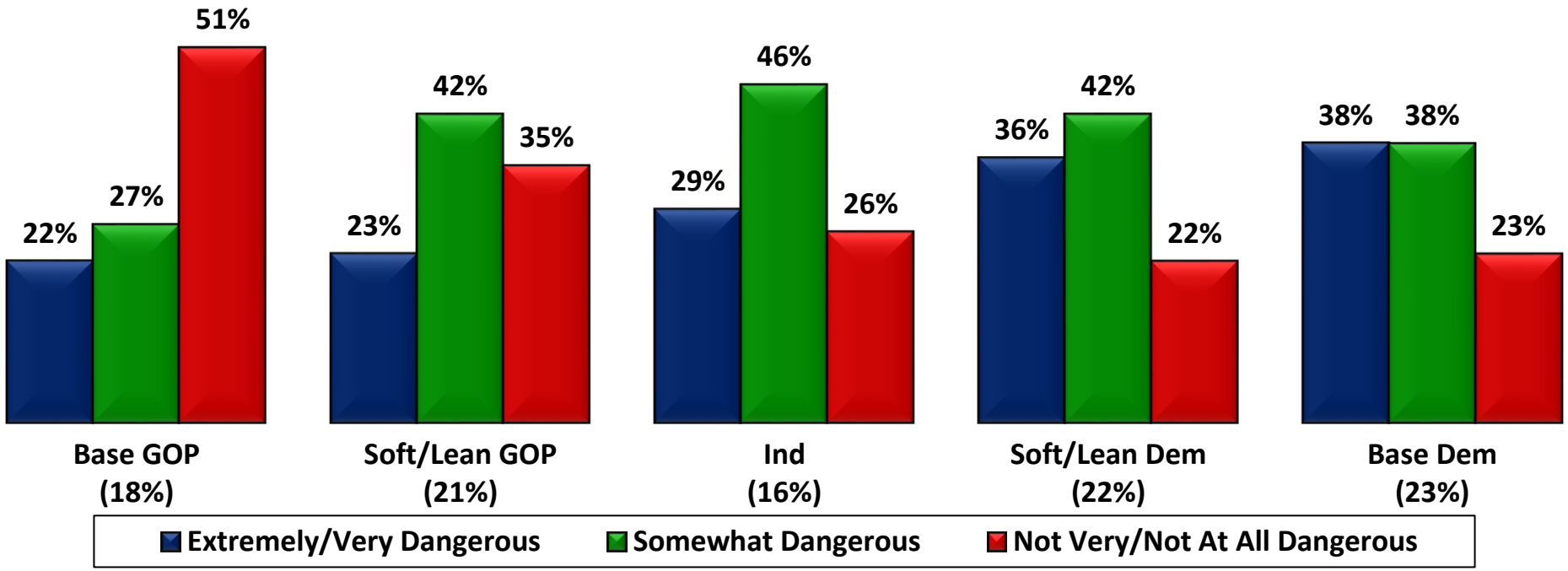
A plurality of voters believe that nuclear power stations are somewhat dangerous for the environment.

"In general, do you think that nuclear power stations are..."



Base Republicans are the most likely to say nuclear power stations are not dangerous.

Nuclear Power Stations Safety by Party

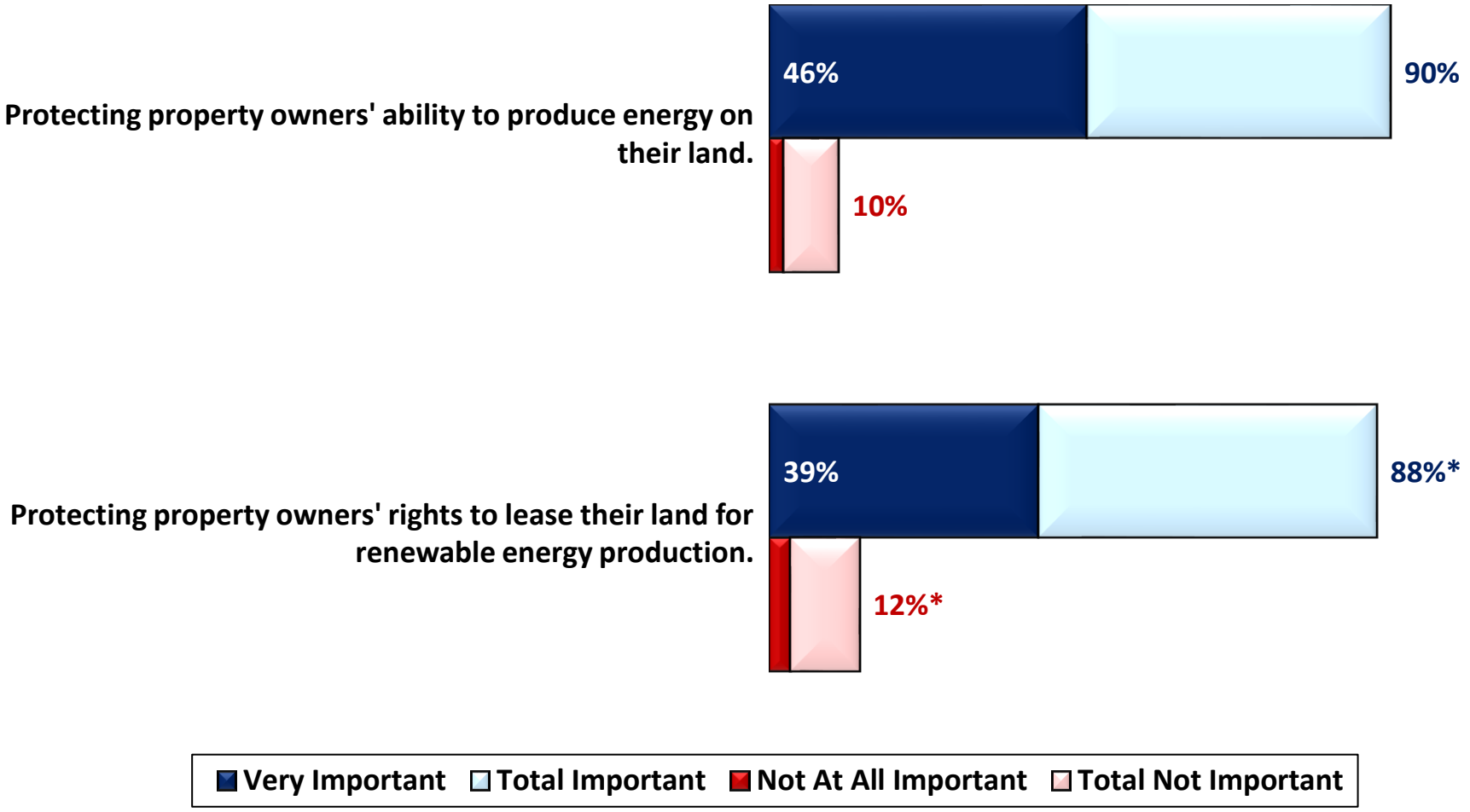


Clean Energy

Voters believe it is more important to protect property owners' ability to produce energy on their land than to protect their leasing rights.

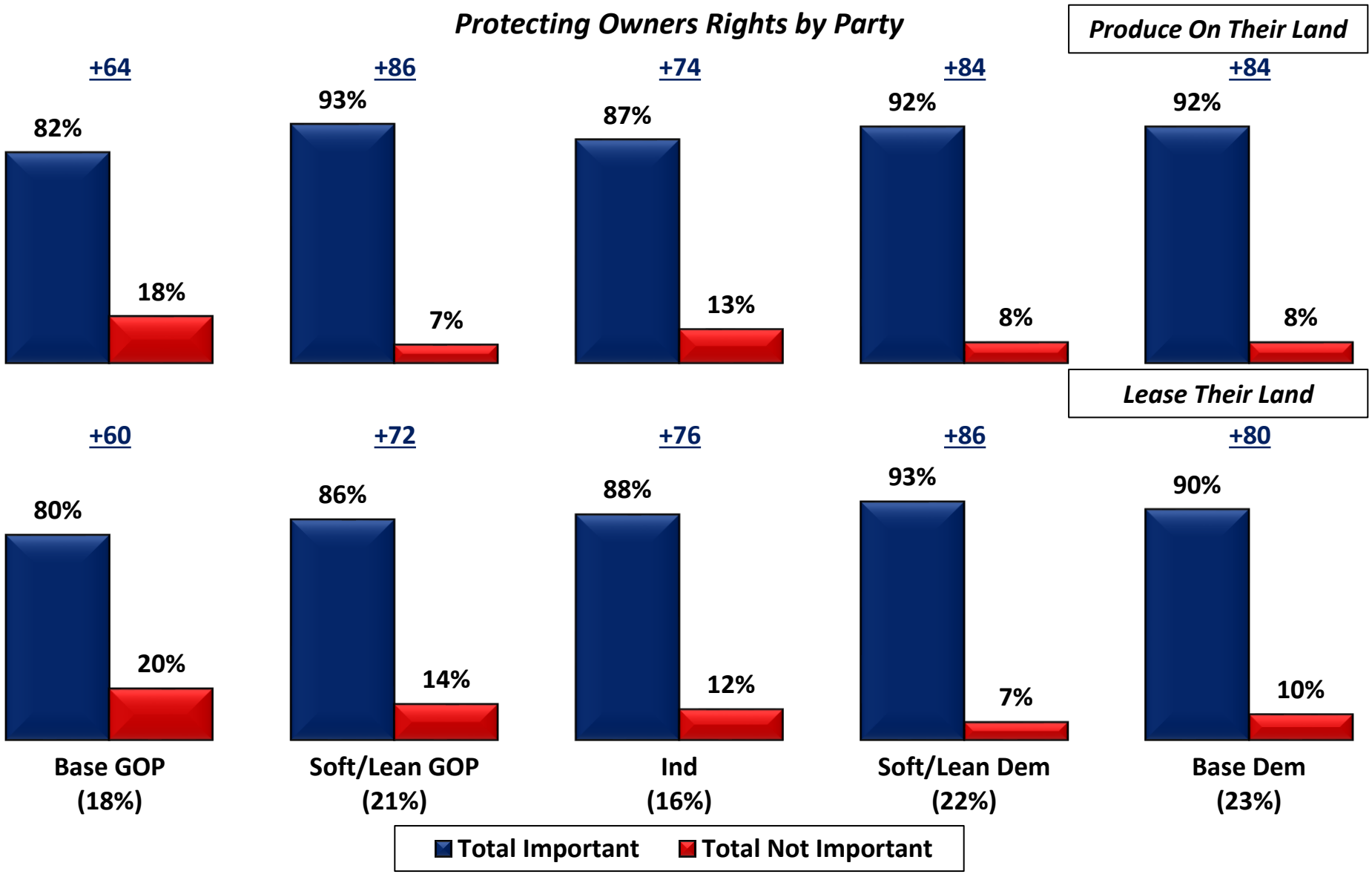
"Now, please read the list below of policies that supporters have proposed to help expand Minnesota's commitment to clean energy. After you read each one, please indicate whether you think that policy is... very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important."

Ranked by % Very Important



**Denotes Rounding.*

Protecting land use and land rights are nonpartisan issues.

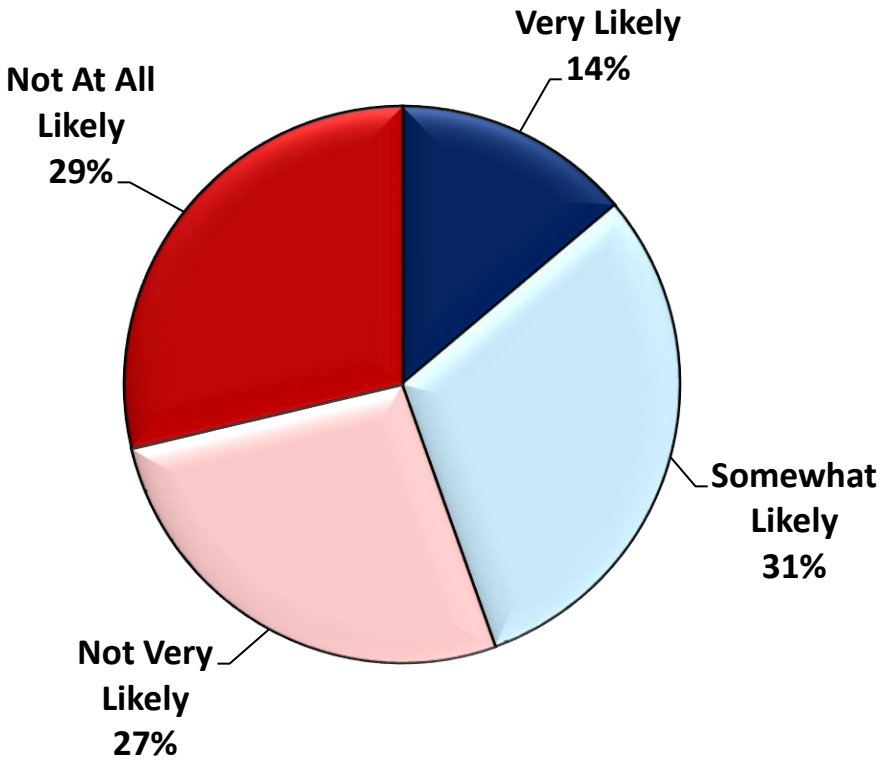


A majority of voters are not likely to consider an electric vehicle when they make their next vehicle purchase.

"When you make your next vehicle purchase, how likely are you to consider purchasing an electric vehicle..."

Overall

Total Likely	45%
Total Not Likely	55%*



Top Groups – Very Likely (14%)

Biden Strongly Approve	30%
Base Dem	26%
Total Liberal	26%
Dem Women	22%
Total Dem	21%
Grad/Prof	21%
MN Right Direction	21%
Biden Total Approve	21%
Dem Men	20%
Women w/ Degrees	20%
Minneapolis/St. Paul	19%

**Denotes Rounding.*

Rare Metal Mining

"Thinking now about clean energy... As you may know, solar panels, wind turbines, and catalytic converters for hybrid cars require rare metals such as copper and nickel that currently are mined in countries like the Congo, China, and Russia, where children and underpaid workers are sometimes used to do the mining under dangerous conditions. Northeast Minnesota also has those metals, and mining those metals are supported by unions because in Minnesota the rare metals would be responsibly and safely mined by highly paid union workers."

Voters are twice as likely to agree mining should be done in the state than import rare metals from other countries.

"Please read the two statements below about mining for rare metals in Northeast Minnesota, and after you read each one, please indicate which one comes closest to your own opinion."

67%

Some people say the mining for rare metals such as copper and nickel should be done in Northeast Minnesota so that we are NOT dependent on children and underpaid adults working in dangerous conditions in countries that are hostile to the United States. They say that if we want to transition to clean energy, we should use rare metals safely mined in America, which would create good union jobs at high wages.

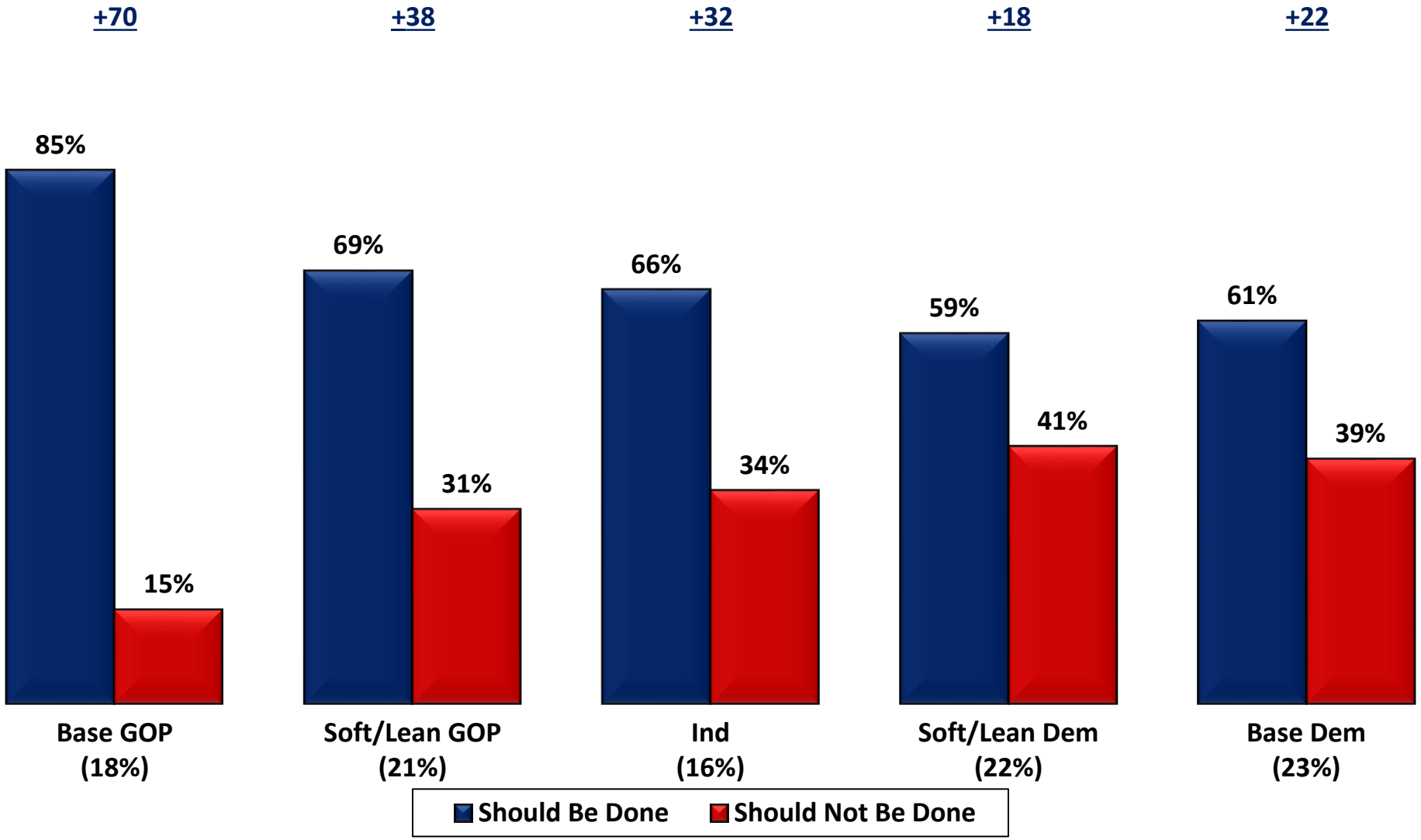
…or…

33%

Other people say the mining for rare metals such as copper and nickel should not be done in Northeast Minnesota because there is too much risk of pollution in our lakes and land. They say that even if it means slowing our transition to clean energy, the United States should continue to import rare metals from other countries.

Voters across party lines agree that mining for rare metals should be done in Minnesota.

Mining For Rare Metals by Party



Support for mining is highest in the Northeast.

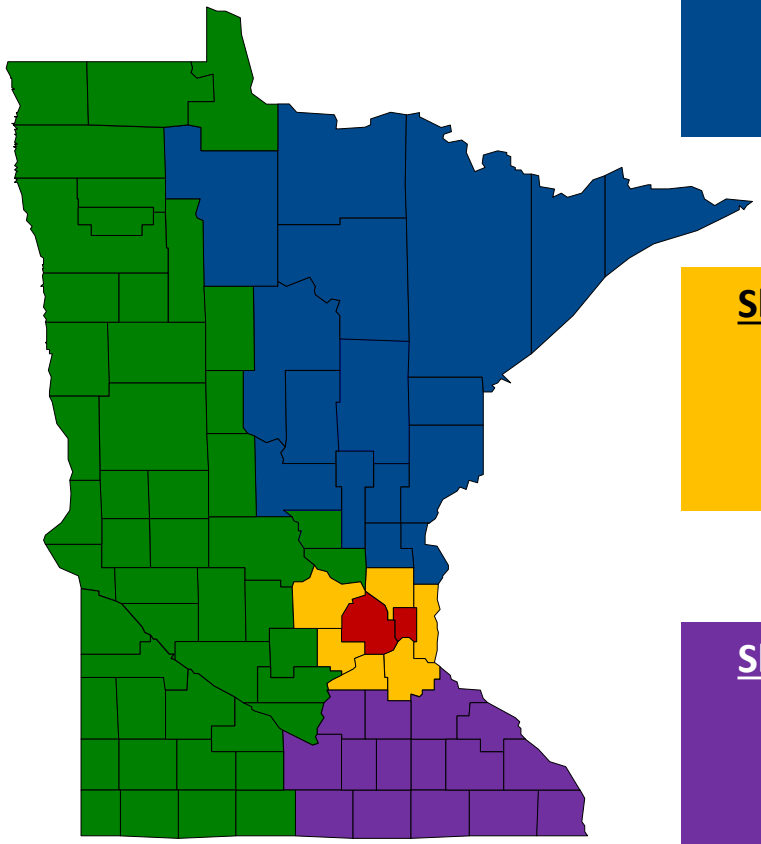
Mining For Rare Metals by Region

West/Northwest (18%)

Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
71%	29%

Northeast (12%)

Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
72%	28%



Collar Counties (27%)

Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
65%	35%

Minneapolis/St. Paul (31%)

Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
64%	36%

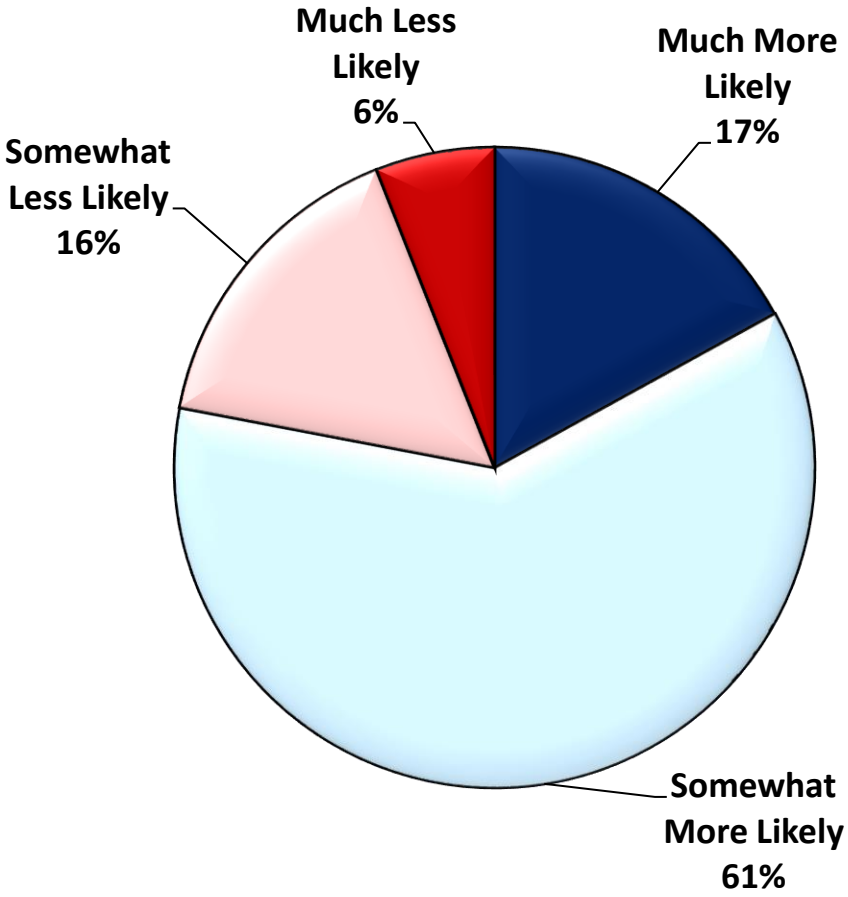
South (11%)

Should Be Done	Should Not Be Done
70%	30%

Nearly 80% of MN voters would be more likely to support clean energy if the Northeast became an important part of the supply chain.

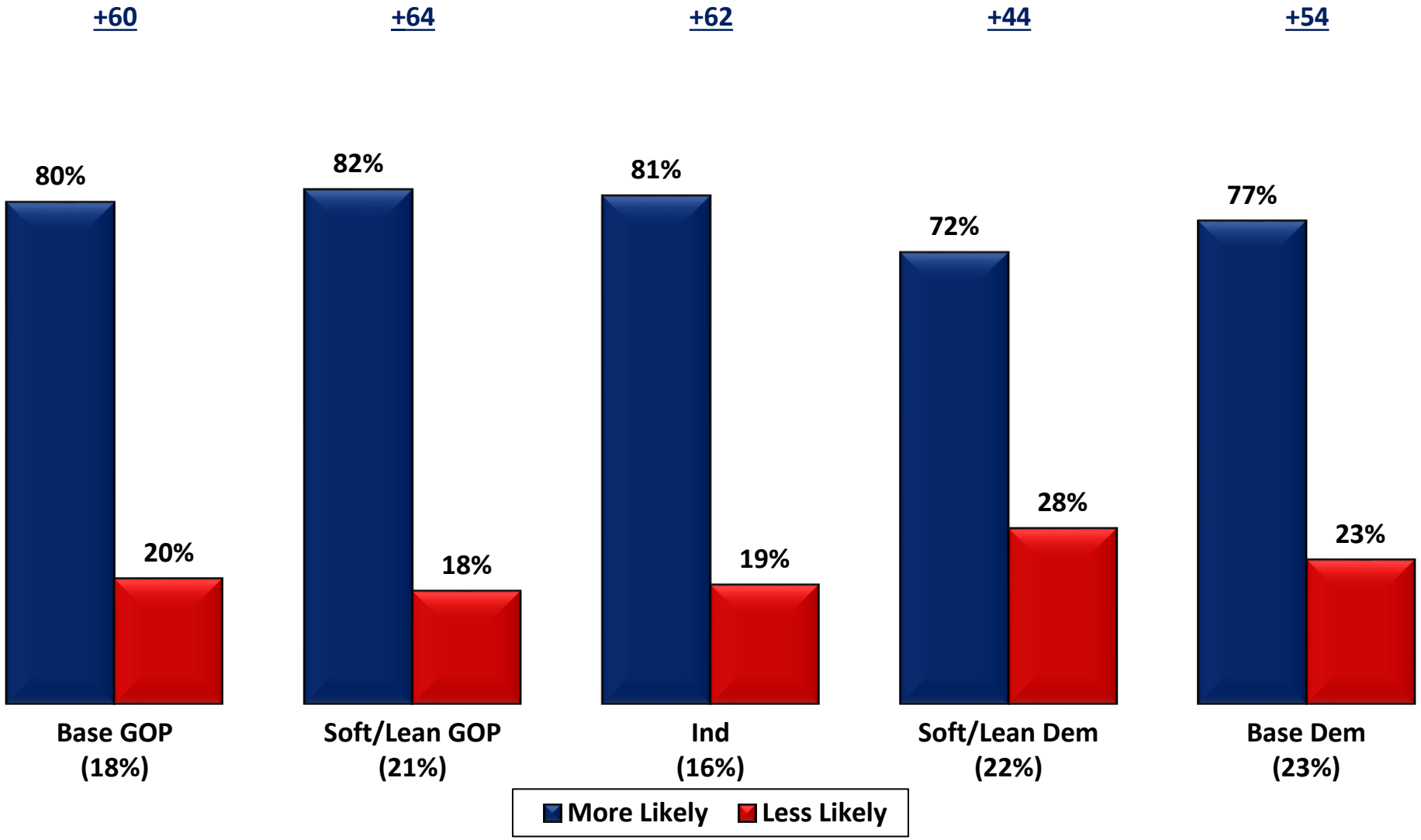
"Would you be more likely or less likely to supporting transitioning to clean energy if Northeast Minnesota became an important part of the supply chain for the mined rare metals such as copper and nickel that are used for wind turbines, solar panels, and catalytic converters?"

Total More Likely	78%
Total Less Likely	22%



Voters across party lines say they would be more supportive.

If Northeast MN Became An Important Part Of The Supply Chain by Party



Voters across the state are overwhelmingly supportive.

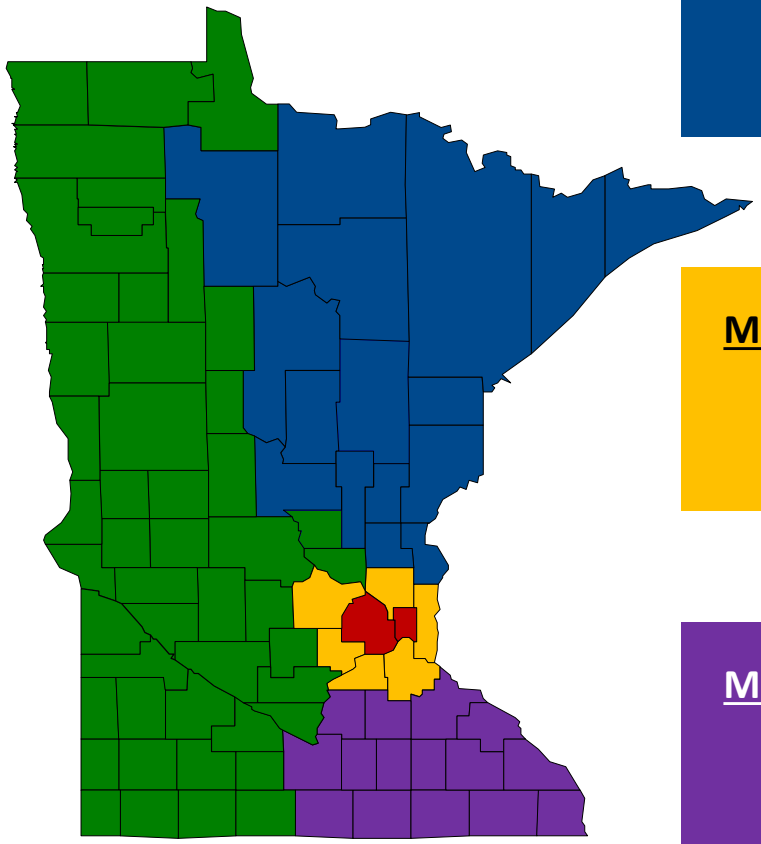
If Northeast MN Became An Important Part Of The Supply Chain by Region

West/Northwest (18%)

More Likely	Less Likely
82%	18%

Northeast (12%)

More Likely	Less Likely
81%	19%



Collar Counties (27%)

More Likely	Less Likely
78%	22%

Minneapolis/St. Paul (31%)

More Likely	Less Likely
76%	24%

South (11%)

More Likely	Less Likely
77%	23%

The Bottom Line

THE BOTTOM LINE

There is strong overall support for expanding the use of clean energy in Minnesota. The challenge facing these organizations is that base Republicans are still skeptical of clean energy policies.

For example, the three domestic energy options most popular with voters overall are solar power, wind power, and renewable natural gas. Among Republicans, however, it is renewable natural gas, natural gas, and clean coal. Independents rate solar, renewable natural gas, and wind the highest – far different than GOPers.

Independents are also more likely to look like Democrats than Republicans when asked how important it is that a candidate for office supports clean energy initiatives. These differences are replete throughout the survey.

The all of the above message polls great with soft GOPers and Independents, but not so much with base GOPers. Republicans DO respond well to the idea of competition driving more clean energy production.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Clean energy is not as controversial among base Republicans as climate change, however. Soft Republicans are much closer to Independents on most of these issues, including climate change, than they are to base GOPers.

Base GOPers do back including nuclear energy as part of the state's clean energy mix. Nuclear does relatively well across party lines, although it definitely polls better with GOPers.

Rare metal mining in Northeast Minnesota does well across party lines, with base GOPers particularly supportive. It also receives strong backing in the Northeast, though support is solid across the state.

For more information about this presentation or about Public Opinion Strategies, please give us a call.

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Turning Questions Into Answers

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