

**GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER** RESEARCH

# Money in Politics is a Ballot Box Issue

## Voters up for grabs for reform candidates

May 9, 2012



DEMOCRACY CORPS

CARVILLE ♦ GREENBERG

 PUBLIC  
CAMPAIGN  
ACTION FUND  
OF, BY, AND FOR THE PEOPLE.

# Methodology and Overview

**This presentation is based on a national survey conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for Democracy Corps and Public Campaign Action Fund.**

**1000 likely 2012 voters (1000 weighted) were interviewed from April 28 – May 1, 2012.**

**Unless otherwise noted, margin of error= +/- 3.1 percentage points at 95% confidence.**

# Unhappy with the status quo but room for change

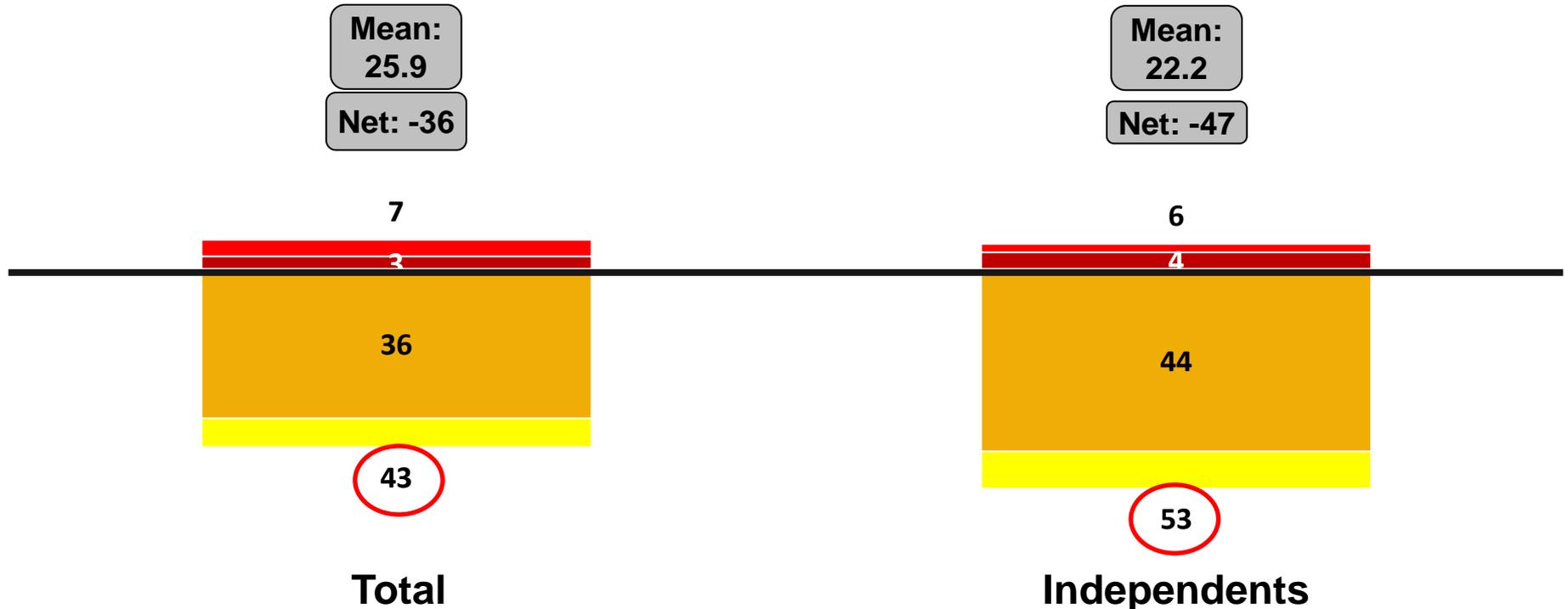
- Voters unhappy with the status quo in Washington and don't think either party is seriously addressing money in politics
- But don't misread – voters overwhelmingly want to clean up government, not dismantle it
- Majorities say reducing the influence of money in politics plays an important role in candidate selection
- Reducing big money influence is particularly important to key swing groups that neither party can afford to ignore: independents, seniors, younger women and blue-collar voters

# Voters spurn big money: super PACs receive dismal favorable ratings; among independents, even worse

Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that person or organization. If you have no opinion or never heard of that person or organization, please say so.

## Super PACs

■ Very warm (75-100) ■ Very cool (0-25)



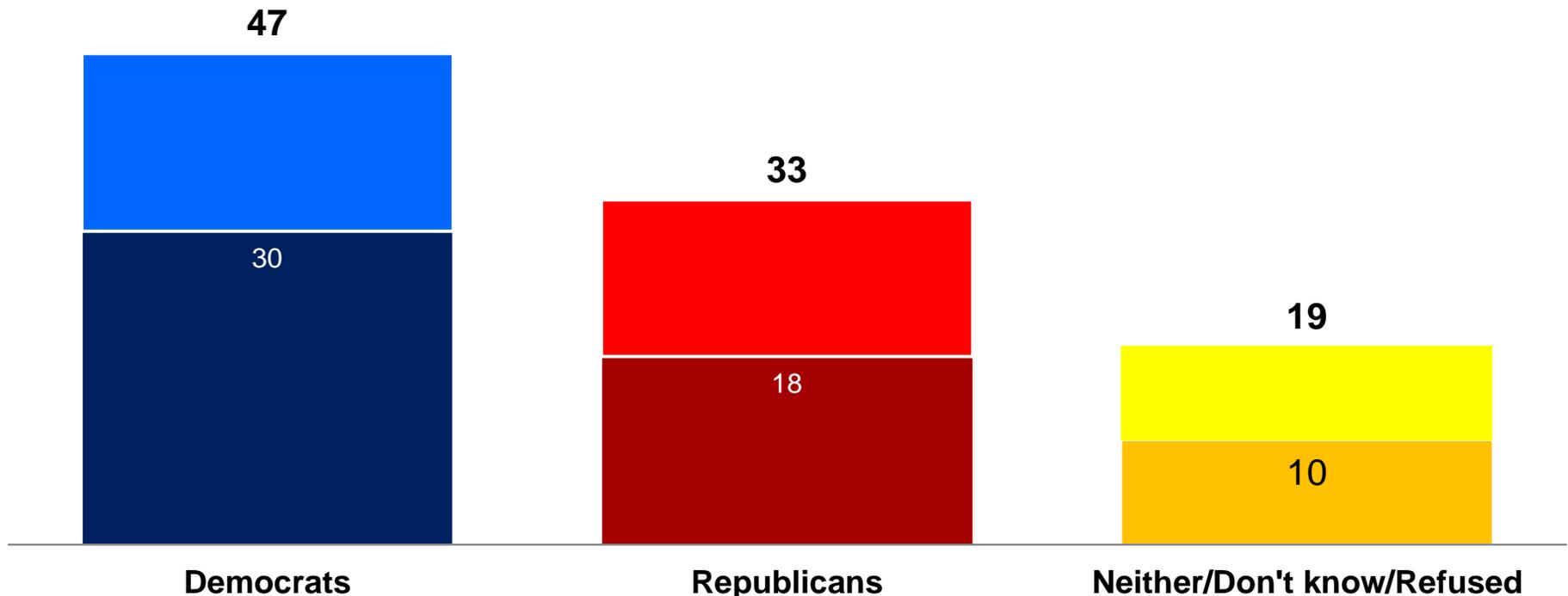
# Democrats start with advantage in “putting the needs of everyday Americans before special interests”

Now I am going to ask you something different. I am going to read a list of issues and I want you to tell me whether, overall, you think the Democrats or the Republicans would do a better job with this issue... **Putting the needs of everyday Americans before special interests.**

## Putting the needs of everyday Americans before special interests

■ Democrats much better ■ Republicans much better ■ Neither

+14



# Independents side with Democrats, but over one-third aren't sure

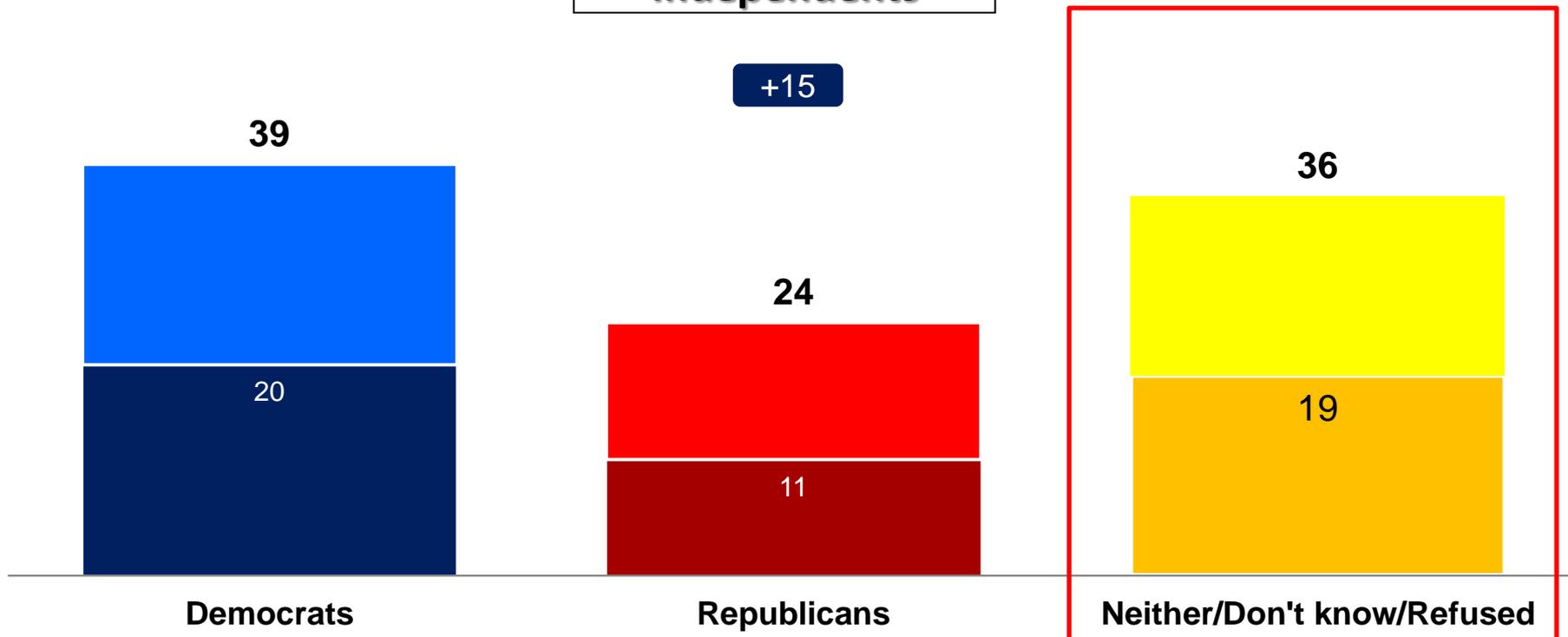
Now I am going to ask you something different. I am going to read a list of issues and I want you to tell me whether, overall, you think the Democrats or the Republicans would do a better job with this issue... **Putting the needs of everyday Americans before special interests.**

## Putting the needs of everyday Americans before special interests

■ Democrats much better    ■ Republicans much better    ■ Neither

### Independents

+15



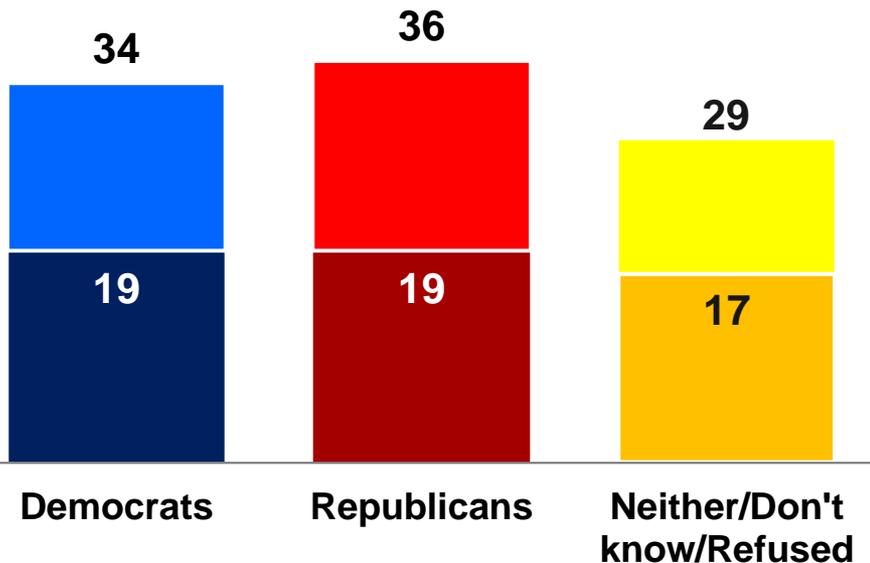
# Voters don't trust either party to clean up the mess – a potential opening

Now I am going to ask you something different. I am going to read a list of issues and I want you to tell me whether, overall, you think the Democrats or the Republicans would do a better job with this issue.

## Cleaning up the mess in Washington and Wall Street

■ Neither ■ Republicans much better ■ Democrats much better

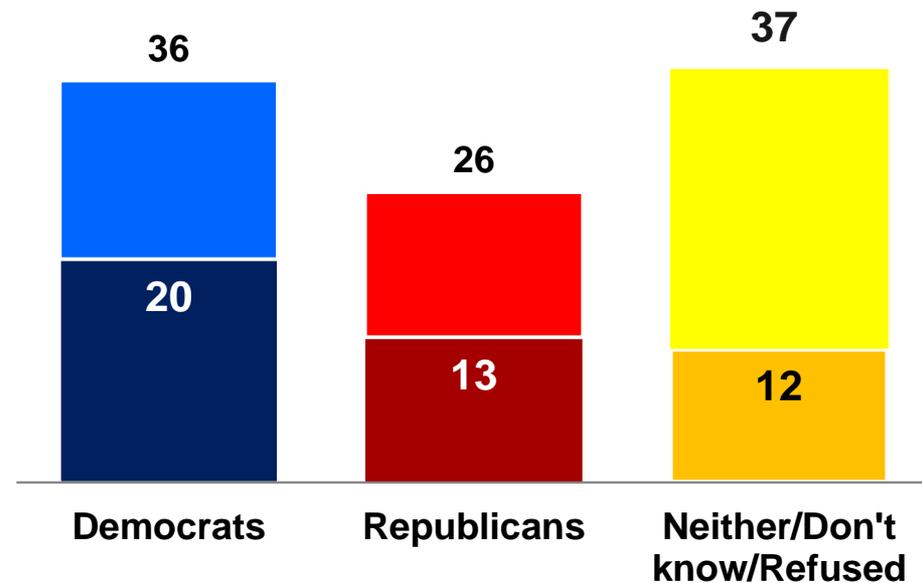
+2



## Cleaning up how we pay for elections

■ Neither ■ Republicans much better ■ Democrats much better

+10



# Independents waiting for someone to make this a priority

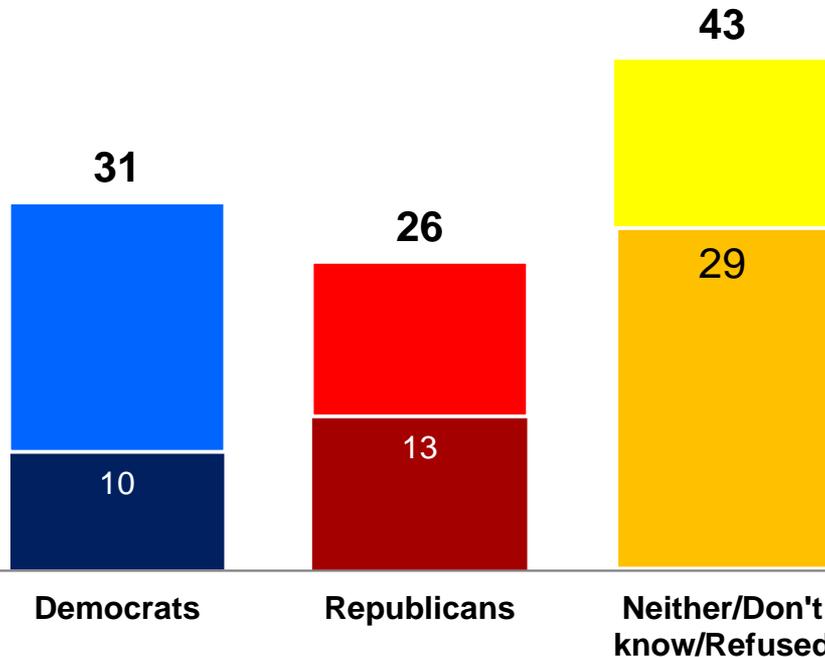
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## Independents

### Cleaning up the mess in Washington and Wall Street

■ Neither ■ Republicans much better ■ Democrats much better

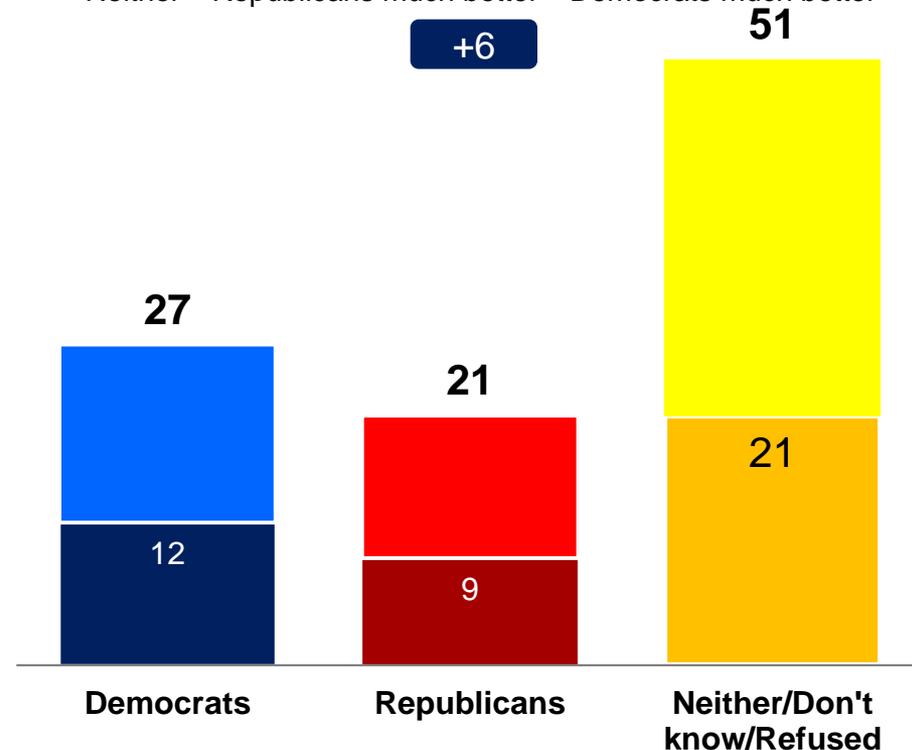
+5



### Cleaning up how we pay for elections

■ Neither ■ Republicans much better ■ Democrats much better

+6



# Seniors are split: disconnect between the nexus of Washington/Wall Street and how elections are funded

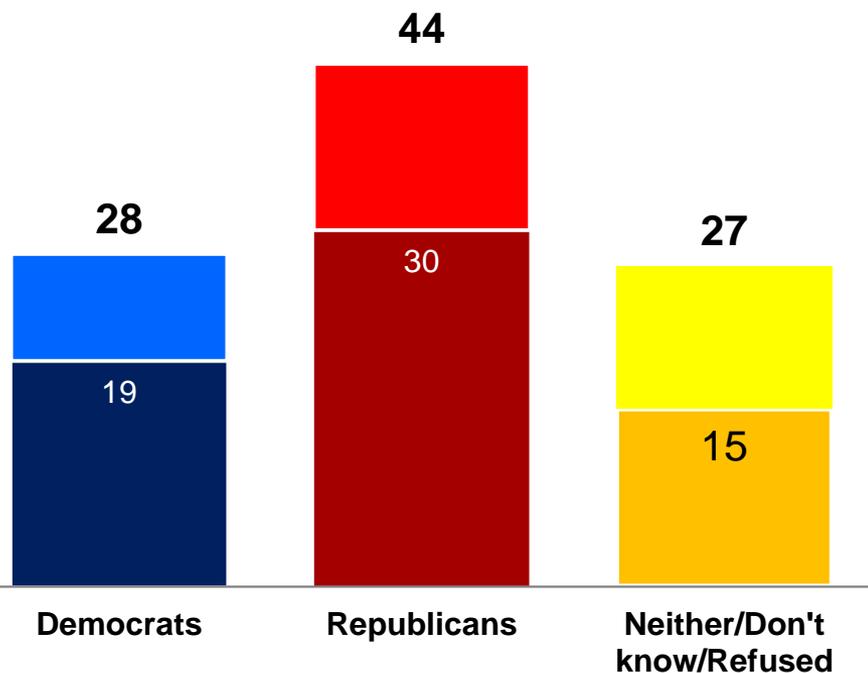
Now I am going to ask you something different. I am going to read a list of issues and I want you to tell me whether, overall, you think the Democrats or the Republicans would do a better job with this issue.

## Seniors

### Cleaning up the mess in Washington and Wall Street

■ Neither ■ Republicans much better ■ Democrats much better

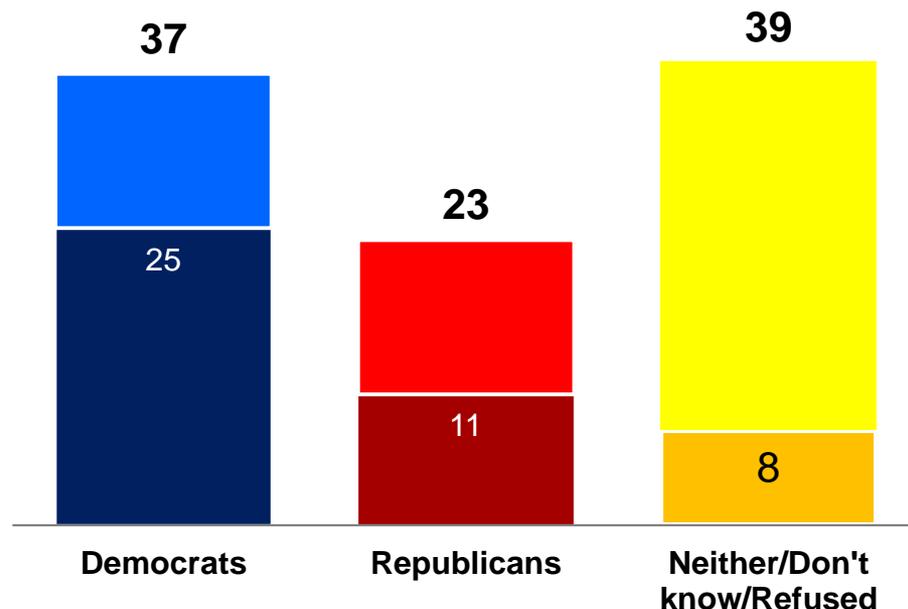
+16



### Cleaning up how we pay for elections

■ Neither ■ Republicans much better ■ Democrats much better

+14



# Half say they won't vote for a candidate who won't commit to reducing money in politics; two-to-one advantage on intensity

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

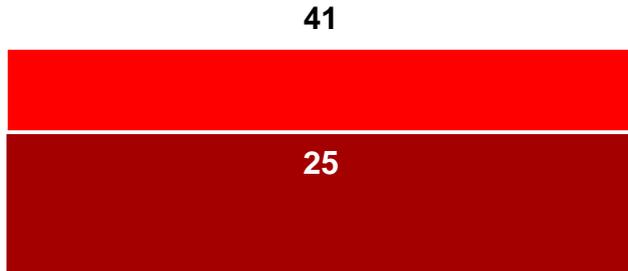
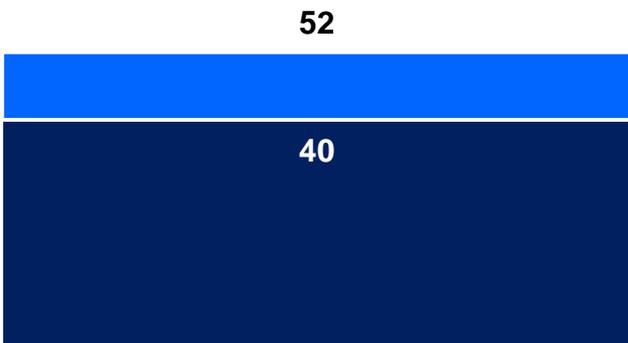
**STATEMENT 1:** Politics is so dominated by big money contributions that I won't vote for a candidate unless they commit to reduce the role of money in politics and get government to listen to people.

**STATEMENT 2:** Reducing the influence of money in politics is not as important as other issues for me in deciding for whom to vote.

■ Won't vote strongly

■ Other issues strongly

+11



Won't vote for candidate unless they commit to reducing role of money in politics

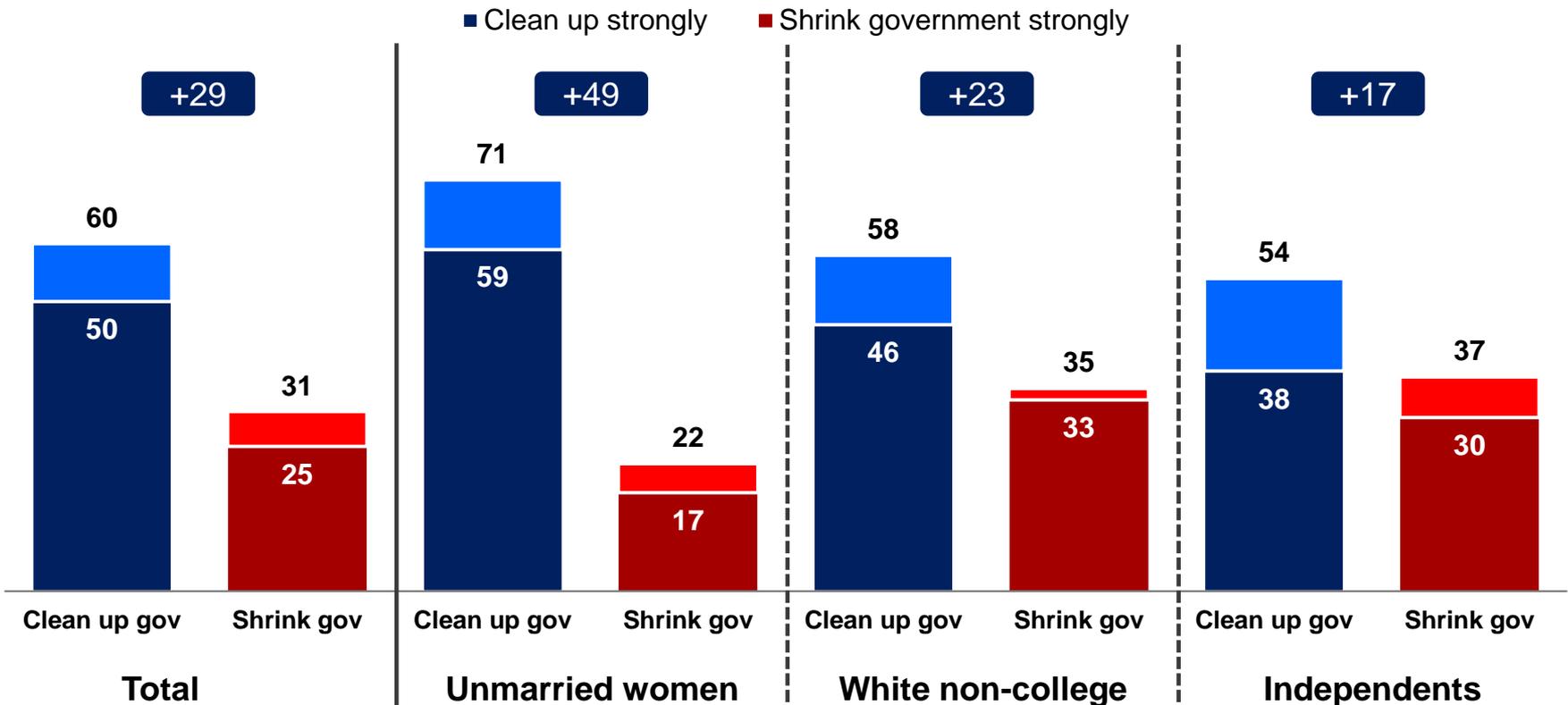
Money in politics is not as important as other issues

# Don't misread distrust of government: key groups agree that we should clean up government, not shrink it

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

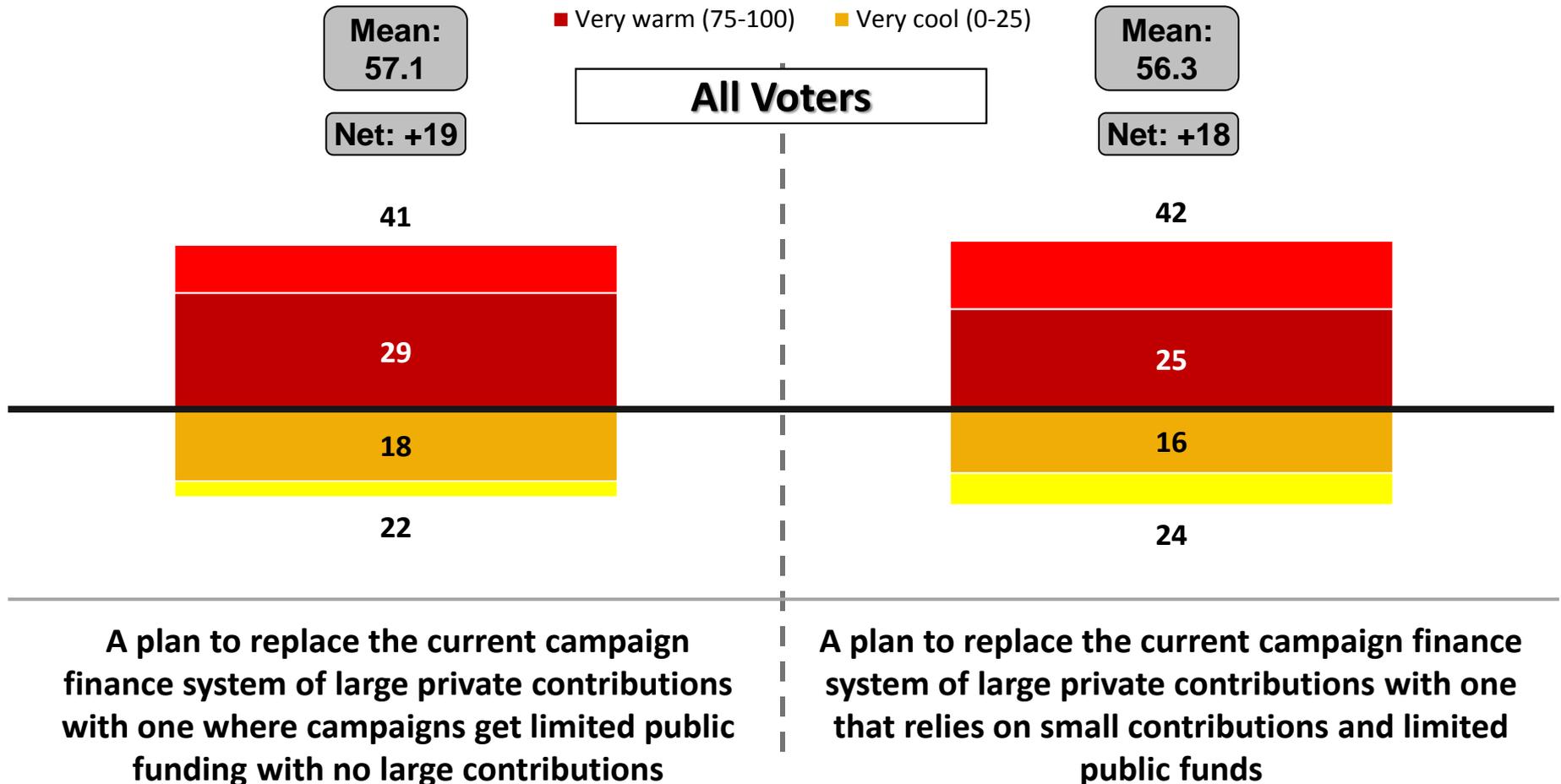
**STATEMENT 1:** Washington is corrupted by big banks, big donors and corporate lobbyists so we need to enforce new rules and clean up government to make it work for the middle class again.

**STATEMENT 2:** Washington is corrupted by big banks, big donors and corporate lobbyists so we need to shrink the size of government so that there's less for them to influence.



# Voters open to public funding and embrace both small donations and prohibiting large private contributions

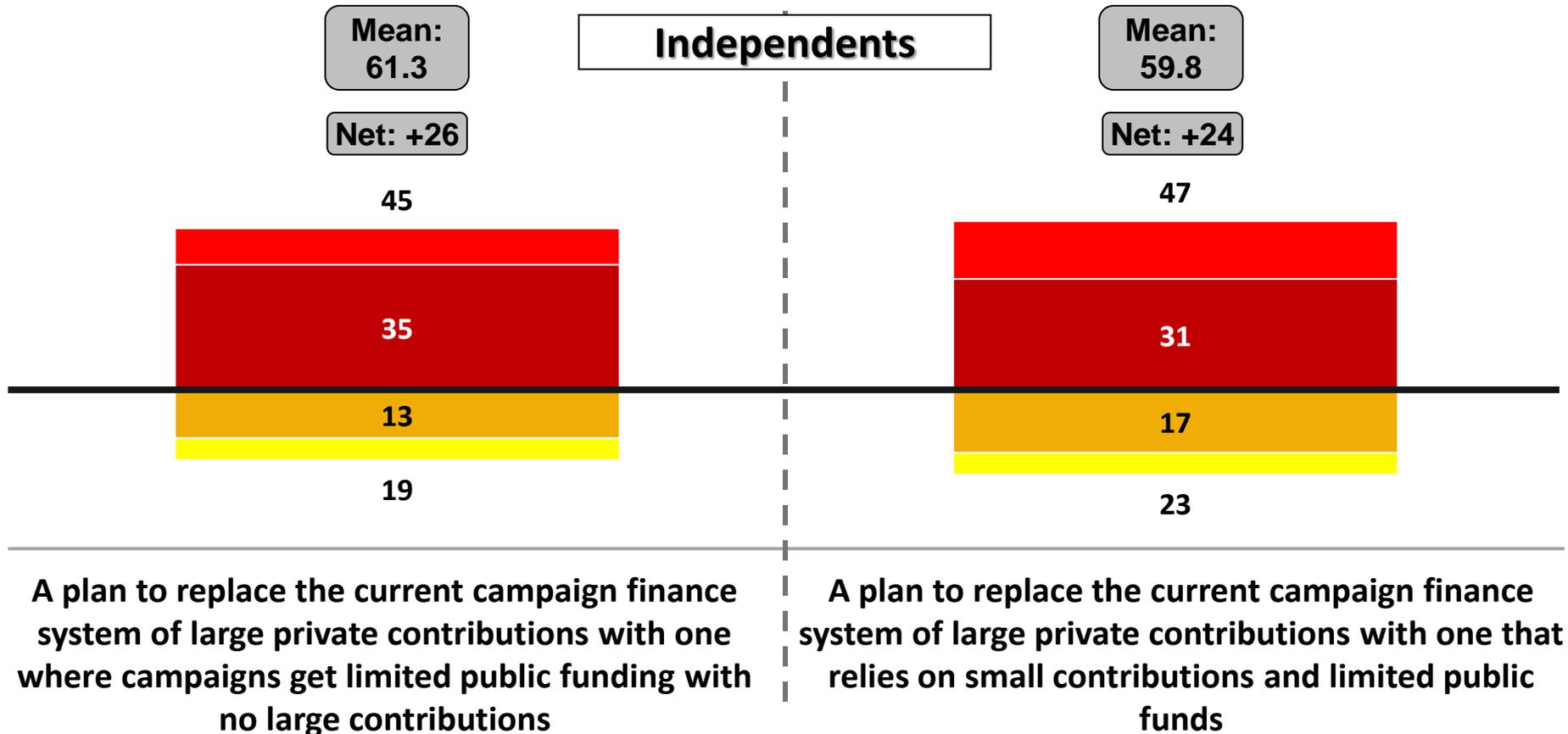
Now, I'd like to rate your feelings toward some people and organizations, with one hundred meaning a VERY WARM, FAVORABLE feeling; zero meaning a VERY COLD, UNFAVORABLE feeling; and fifty meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to one hundred, the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that person or organization. If you have no opinion or never heard of that person or organization, please say so.



# Independents even more favorable towards a new system

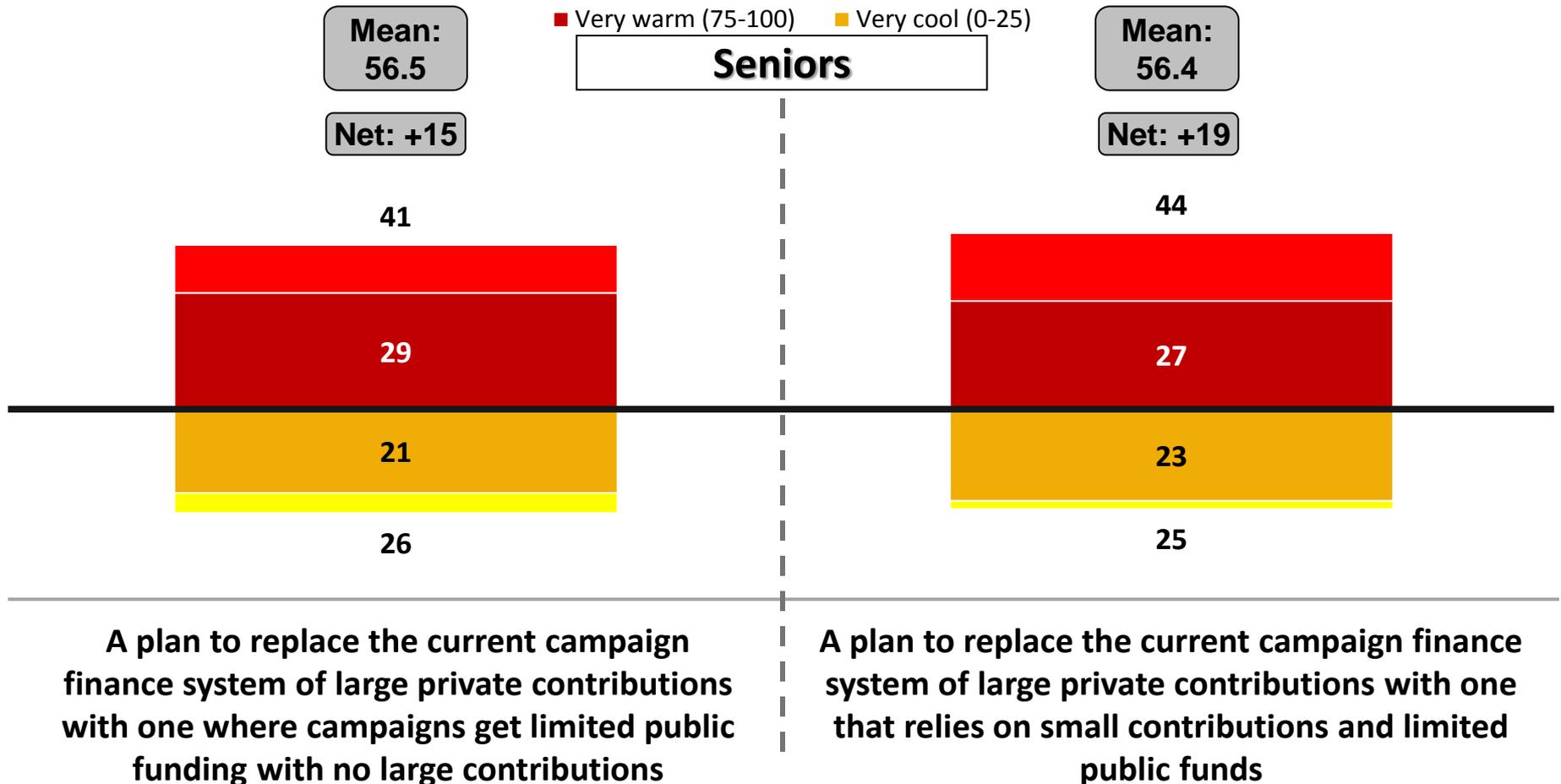
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■ Very warm (75-100) ■ Very cool (0-25)



# Seniors also

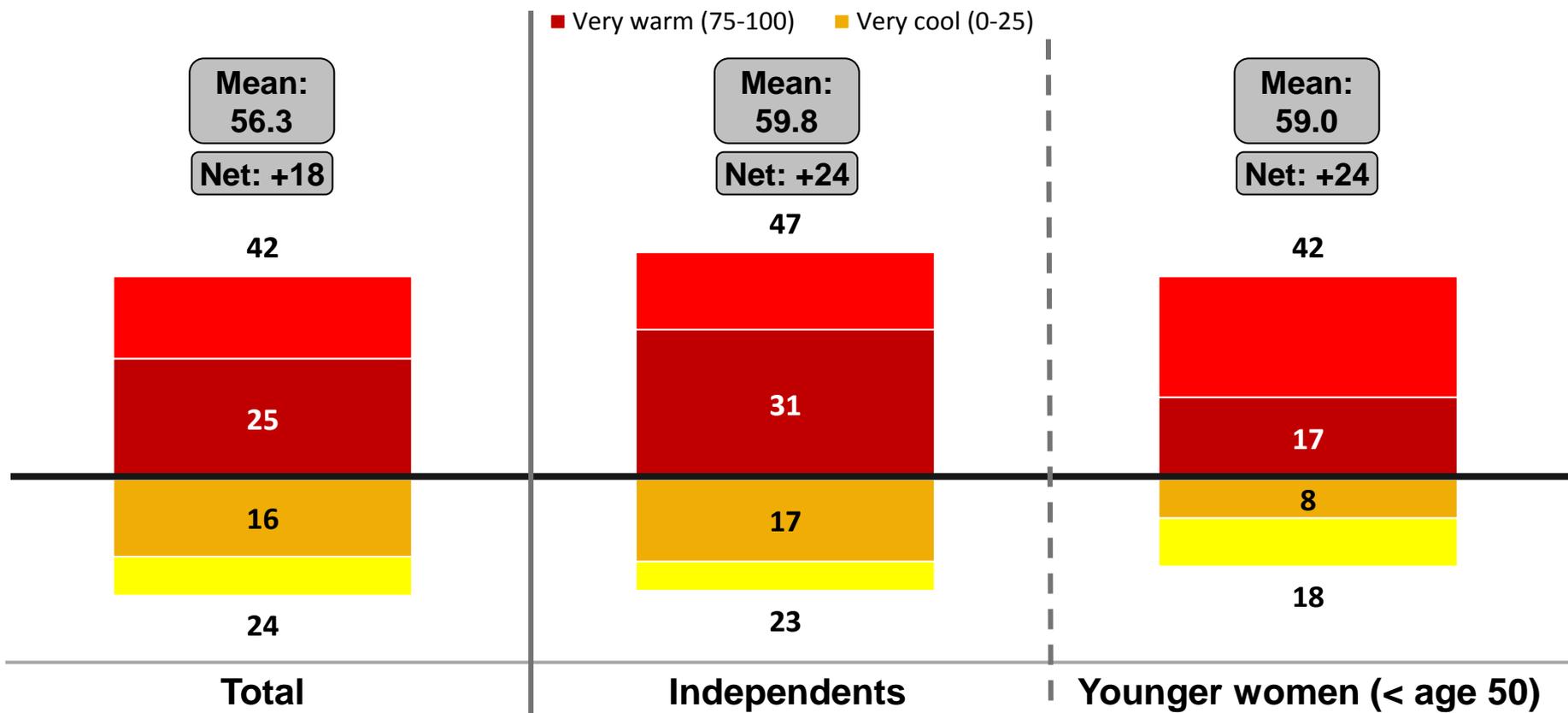
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# And voters embrace plans to get rid of system of large private contributions and open to limited public funding

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## A plan to replace the current campaign finance system of large private contributions with one that relies on small contributions and limited public funds

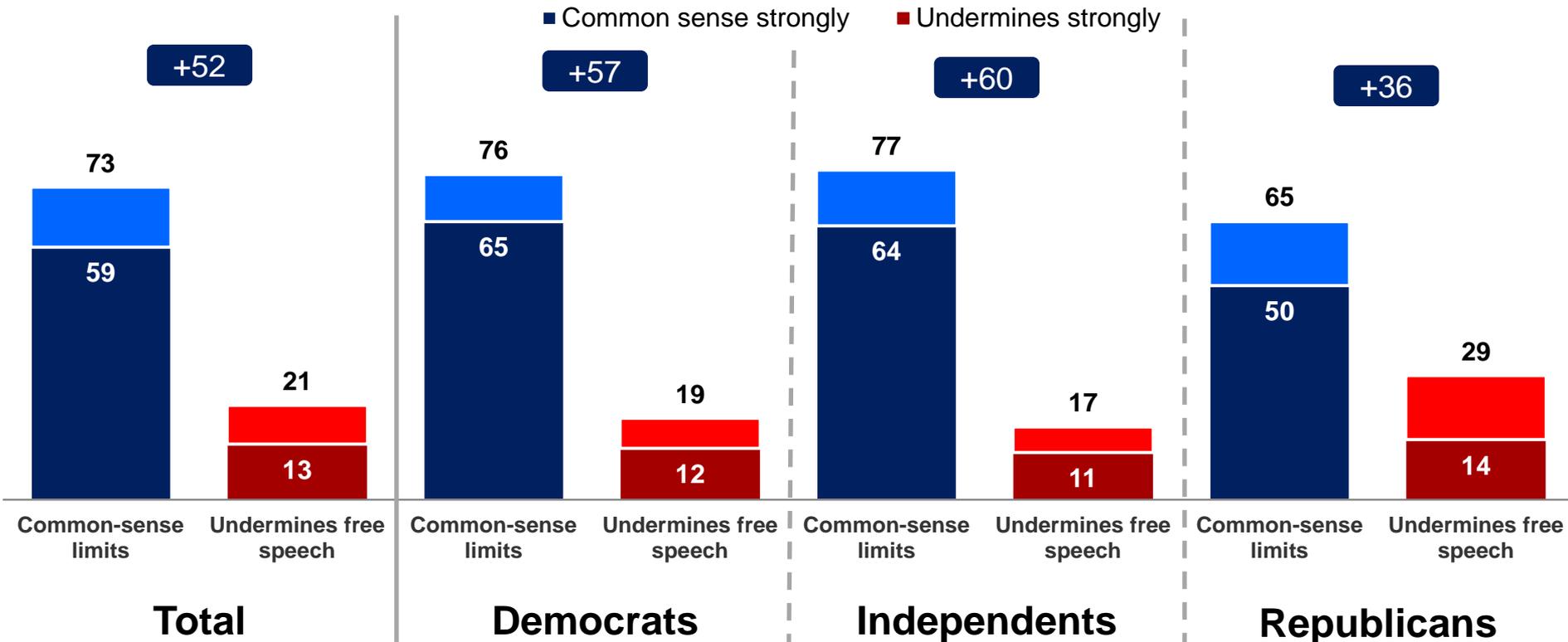


# Get rid of big donors: having “common sense limits” very popular and transcends party lines

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

**STATEMENT 1:** I'm more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who says we should have common-sense limits on the amount of money people can contribute to political campaigns because there is too much money in politics.

**STATEMENT 2:** I'm more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who says we should not limit the amount of money people can contribute to political campaigns because that undermines free speech.

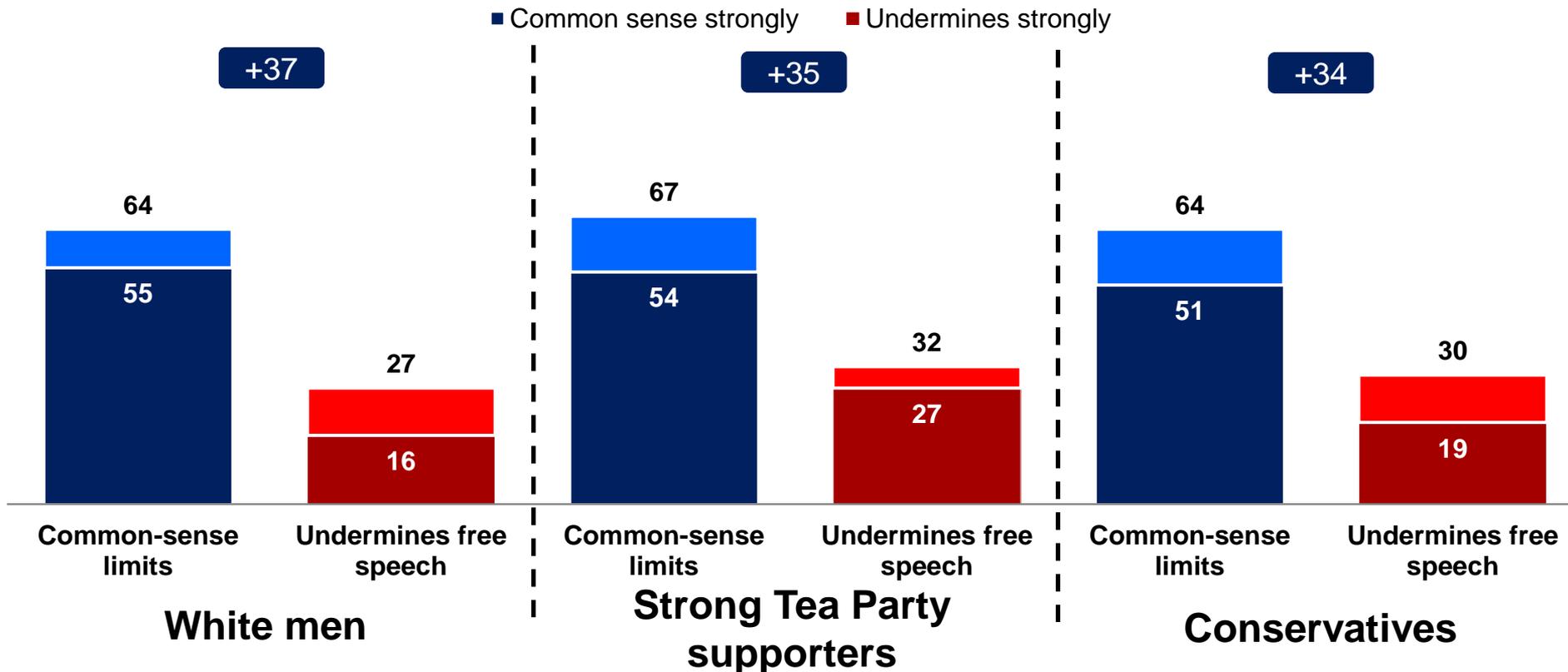


# Even conservative groups aren't buying free speech argument

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

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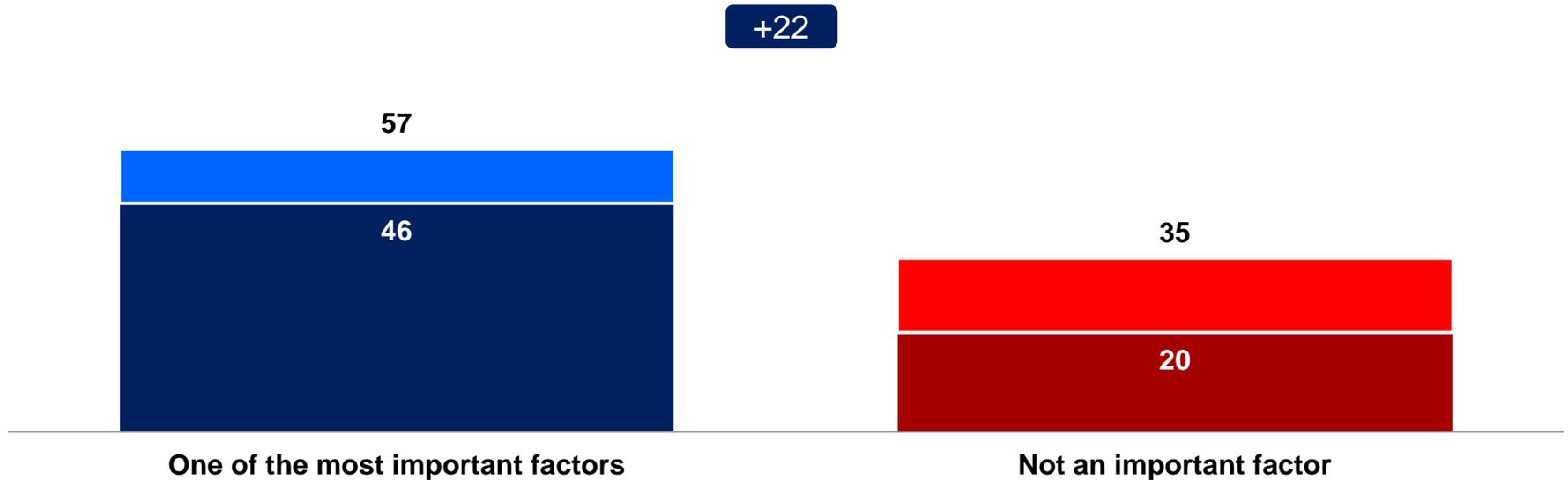
# An issue that can impact the election: nearly six in ten voters say reducing the influence of money in politics is one of the most important factors in their vote

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether the **FIRST** statement or the **SECOND** statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

**STATEMENT 1:** Reducing the influence of money in politics and special interest lobbyists is **one of the most important factors** in my vote.

**STATEMENT 2:** Reducing the influence of money in politics and special interest lobbyists is **not an important factor** in my vote.

■ Important strongly   ■ Not important strongly

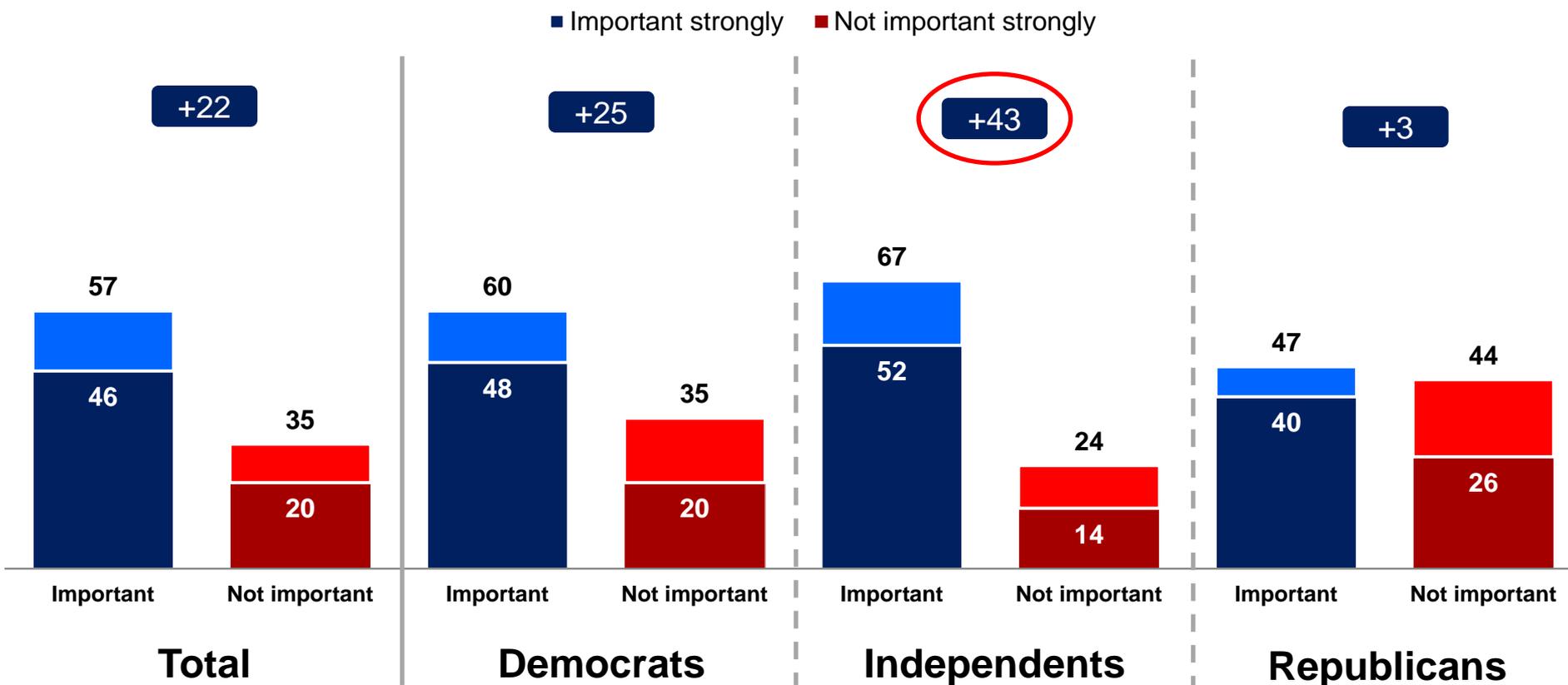


# And two-thirds of independents agree – more than half strongly

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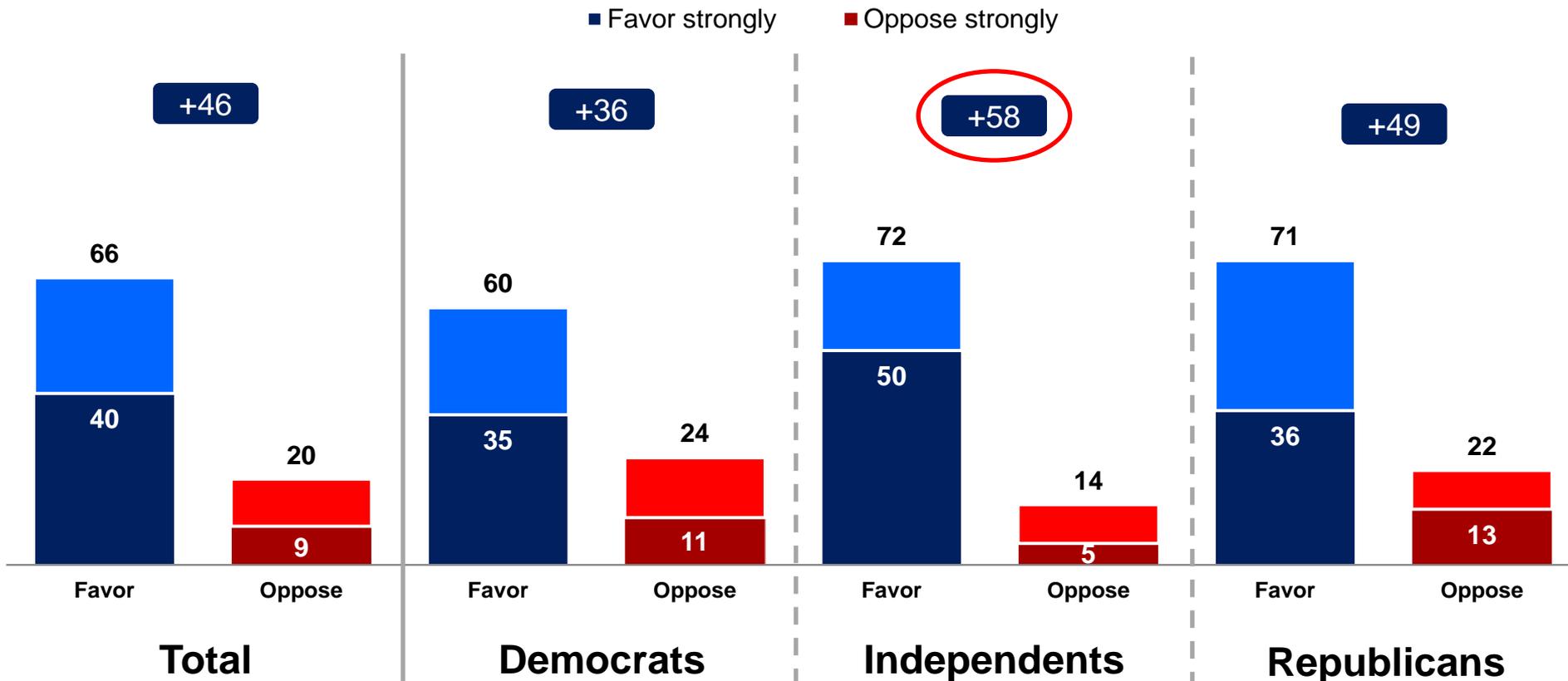
**STATEMENT 1:** Reducing the influence of money in politics and special interest lobbyists is **one of the most important factors** in my vote.

**STATEMENT 2:** Reducing the influence of money in politics and special interest lobbyists is **not an important factor** in my vote.



# Strong support for lobbying rules across the board, especially among independents

Now let me read you some information about a bill introduced in Congress last month. The bill prohibits the President, Vice President, members of Congress and other top-level appointed government officials from lobbying for any foreign government or corporation for ten years after leaving their government service. From what you know, would you favor or oppose this bill?

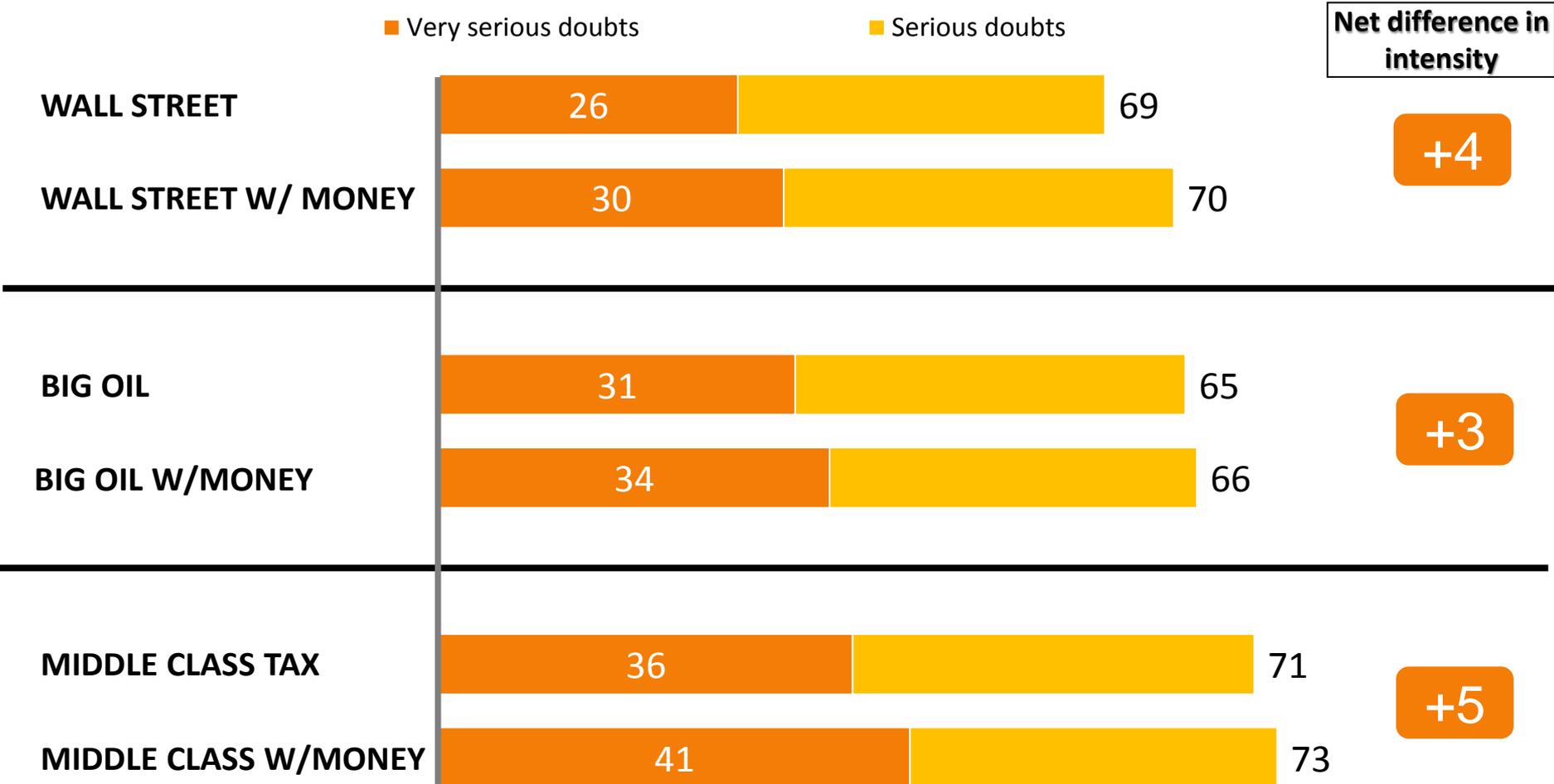


# Highlighting corruption increases message intensity

- **Attacking candidates for taking big donor contributions can be very powerful**
- **Highlighting corruption has intense resonance among key swing groups—including independents, weak partisans, seniors, younger women and white non-college-educated voters**
- **Adding corruption to progressive messages has added benefit, but no downsides; voters are ready to hear this message**

# Voters understand the nexus of Wall Street and Washington: attacking big campaign contributions increases intensity across all messages

Now I'm going to read you some statements some people may make about political candidates running for Congress. After I read each statement, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about this candidate running for Congress.



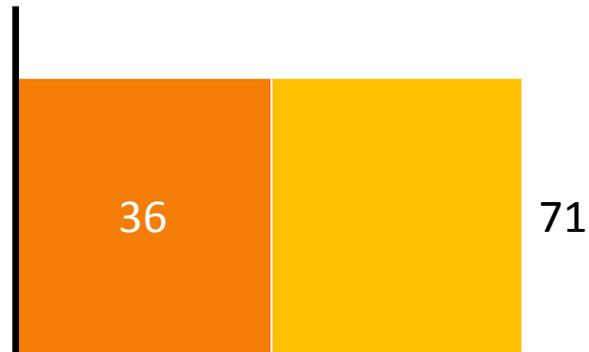
# Middle class strongest argument to start; adding money only builds intensity

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■ Very serious doubts ■ Serious doubts

**Net  
difference  
in intensity**

**(MIDDLE CLASS)** While the middle class has been smashed and regular Americans are working harder for less, this candidate voted to raise taxes on middle class families while giving even more tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthiest Americans.



**(MIDDLE CLASS W/ MONEY)** While the middle class has been smashed and regular Americans are working harder for less, this candidate voted to raise taxes on middle class families and give even more tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthiest Americans, **while receiving millions of dollars in political donations from Big Oil, Wall Street CEOs and lobbyists.**



**+5**

# Voters overwhelmingly disapprove of Wall St; intensity increases when campaign money is added

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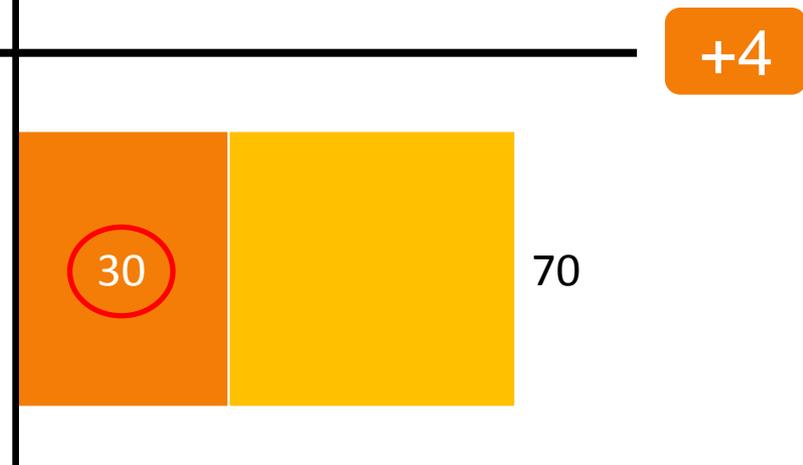
■ Very serious doubts ■ Serious doubts

**Net  
difference  
in intensity**

**(WALL STREET)** Wall Street banks got bailed out after destroying the economy and hurting the middle class. But when it came time to force the banks to lower interest rates on student loans, this candidate sided with Wall Street CEOs and not the families struggling to send their kids to college.

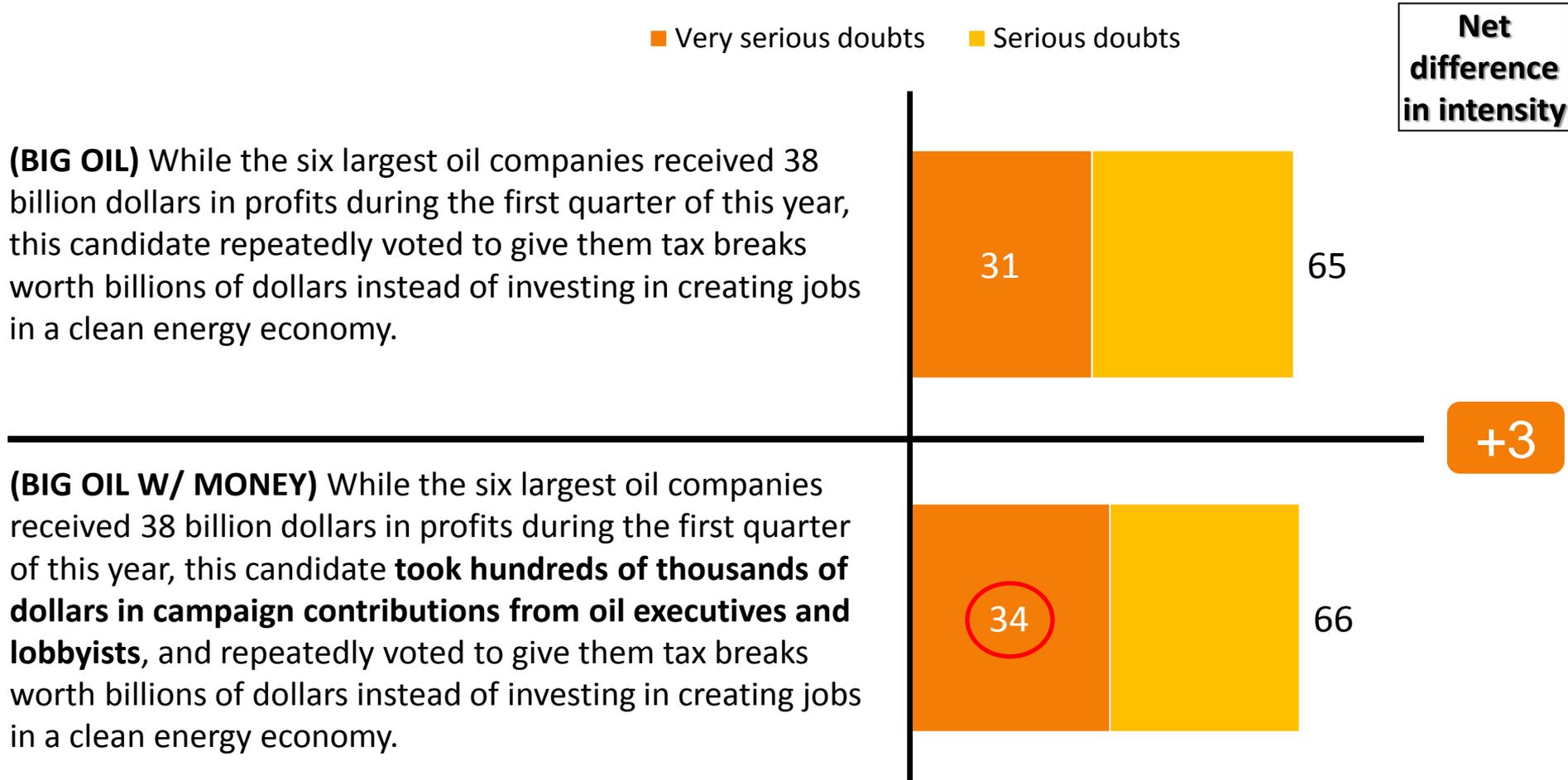


**(WALL STREET W/ MONEY)** Wall Street banks got bailed out after destroying the economy and hurting the middle class. But when it came time to force the banks to lower interest rates on student loans, this candidate sided with Wall Street CEOs **who gave them huge campaign contributions**, and not the families struggling to send their kids to college.



# Two thirds of voters disapprove of oil breaks; intensity climbs to a third with campaign money

Now I'm going to read you some statements some people may make about political candidates running for Congress. After I read each statement, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about this candidate running for Congress.



# Key groups express more serious doubts when big donors are exposed – seniors among them...

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## Among seniors

■ Very serious doubts ■ Serious doubts

Net difference in intensity

**(MIDDLE CLASS)** While the middle class has been smashed and regular Americans are working harder for less, this candidate voted to raise taxes on middle class families while giving even more tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthiest Americans.



**(MIDDLE CLASS W/ MONEY)** While the middle class has been smashed and regular Americans are working harder for less, this candidate voted to raise taxes on middle class families and give even more tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthiest Americans, while receiving millions of dollars in political donations from Big Oil, Wall Street CEOs and lobbyists.



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**(WALL STREET W/ MONEY)** Wall Street banks got bailed out after destroying the economy and hurting the middle class. But when it came time to force the banks to lower interest rates on student loans, this candidate sided with Wall Street CEOs who gave them huge campaign contributions, and not the families struggling to send their kids to college.



# ...and independents and weak partisans

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## Among independents/weak partisans

Very serious doubts Serious doubts

Net difference in intensity

**(MIDDLE CLASS)** While the middle class has been smashed and regular Americans are working harder for less, this candidate voted to raise taxes on middle class families while giving even more tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthiest Americans.



+3

**(MIDDLE CLASS W/ MONEY)** While the middle class has been smashed and regular Americans are working harder for less, this candidate voted to raise taxes on middle class families and give even more tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthiest Americans, while receiving millions of dollars in political donations from Big Oil, Wall Street CEOs and lobbyists.



**(BIG OIL)** While the six largest oil companies received 38 billion dollars in profits during the first quarter of this year, this candidate repeatedly voted to give them tax breaks worth billions of dollars instead of investing in creating jobs in a clean energy economy.



+5

**(BIG OIL W/ MONEY)** While the six largest oil companies received 38 billion dollars in profits during the first quarter of this year, this candidate took hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from oil executives and lobbyists, and repeatedly voted to give them tax breaks worth billions of dollars instead of investing in creating jobs in a clean energy economy.



# ...and white non-college-educated voters

Now I'm going to read you some statements some people may make about political candidates running for Congress. After I read each statement, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about this candidate running for Congress.

## Among white non-college

■ Very serious doubts ■ Serious doubts

Net  
difference  
in intensity

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+10

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+9

# And adding money factor influences even Republicans' intensity

Now I'm going to read you some statements some people may make about political candidates running for Congress. After I read each statement, please tell me whether this raises very serious doubts, serious doubts, minor doubts, or no real doubts in your own mind about this candidate running for Congress.

## Among Republicans

■ Very serious doubts ■ Serious doubts

Net difference in intensity

**(MIDDLE CLASS)** While the middle class has been smashed and regular Americans are working harder for less, this candidate voted to raise taxes on middle class families while giving even more tax breaks to big corporations and the wealthiest Americans.



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+9

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**(WALL STREET W/ MONEY)** Wall Street banks got bailed out after destroying the economy and hurting the middle class. But when it came time to force the banks to lower interest rates on student loans, this candidate sided with Wall Street CEOs who gave them huge campaign contributions, and not the families struggling to send their kids to college.



+10

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