



US Voting Behavior Exploration

Prepared for the Environmental Voter Project

October-November 2019

About the Survey



Methodological Notes



Mode	Online panel, with individually identifying information provided by respondents matched to the voter file to add information about actual voter behavior
Sample	1,514 U.S. registered voters
Dates	October 9-24, 2019
Weights	Slight weights were applied to ensure the sample accurately reflects the demographic profile of the national registered voter population
Margin of Error	±2.5% at the 95% confidence level for the entire sample and higher for subgroups
Note	Some data may not add to 100% due to rounding. Respondents from California were not matched due to that state's legal restrictions on use of the voter file.



Profile of the Sample

Category	Group	% of Sample
Gender	Male	43
	Female	56
Age	18-29	11
	30-44	20
	45-54	22
	55-64	22
	65+	25
Ethnicity	White	77
	Black	12
	Latino	8
Socioeconomic Status (self-reported class combined with education)	High SES	12
	Middle class, college	19
	Middle class, noncollege	24
	Low SES	44
Philosophy	Progressive	29
	Moderate	34
	Conservative	34

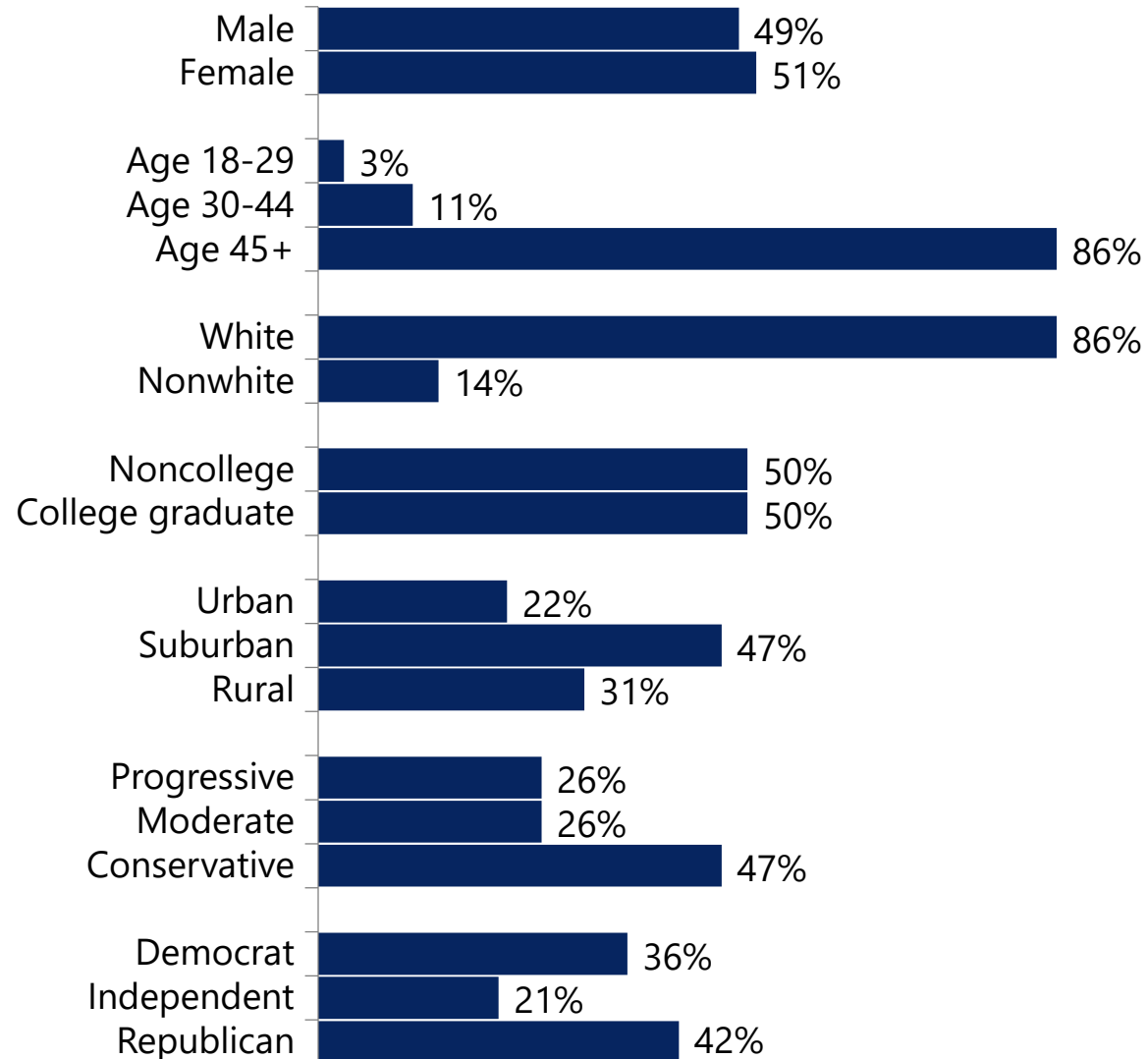
Category	Group	% of Sample
Party ID (self-identified)	Democrat	43
	Independent / Unenrolled	22
	Republican	35
Education	High school or less	28
	Some college	33
	College graduate	27
	Graduate degree	12
Area	Urban	25
	Suburban	43
	Rural	31
Vote frequency (of primary and general elections voter was eligible for, 2008-2018)	Frequent voters (75%+)	21
	Occasional voters (50-74%)	18
	Sporadic voters (26-49%)	25
	Infrequent voters (25% or less)	36



Frequent vs. Infrequent Voters – Definitions and Demographics

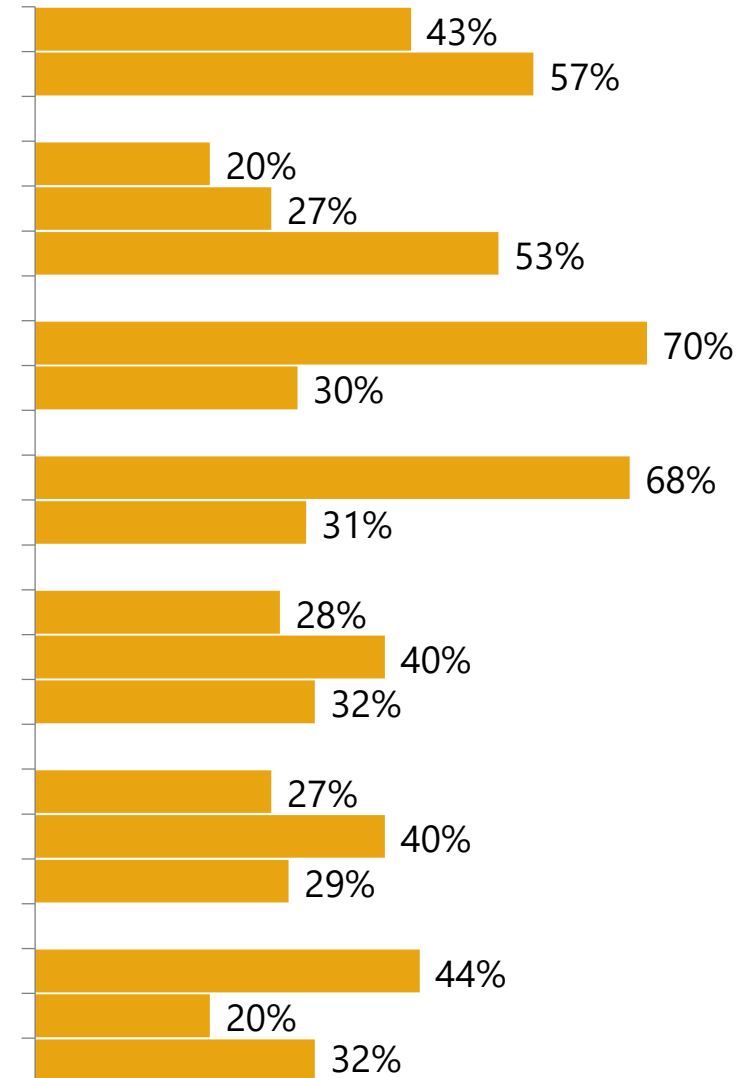
Frequent Voters – 21% of sample

Voted in more than 75% of the elections s/he was eligible for, going back to 2008.



Infrequent Voters – 36% of sample

Voted in 25% or less of the elections s/he was eligible for, going back to 2008. Includes those who have not voted at all since 2008.

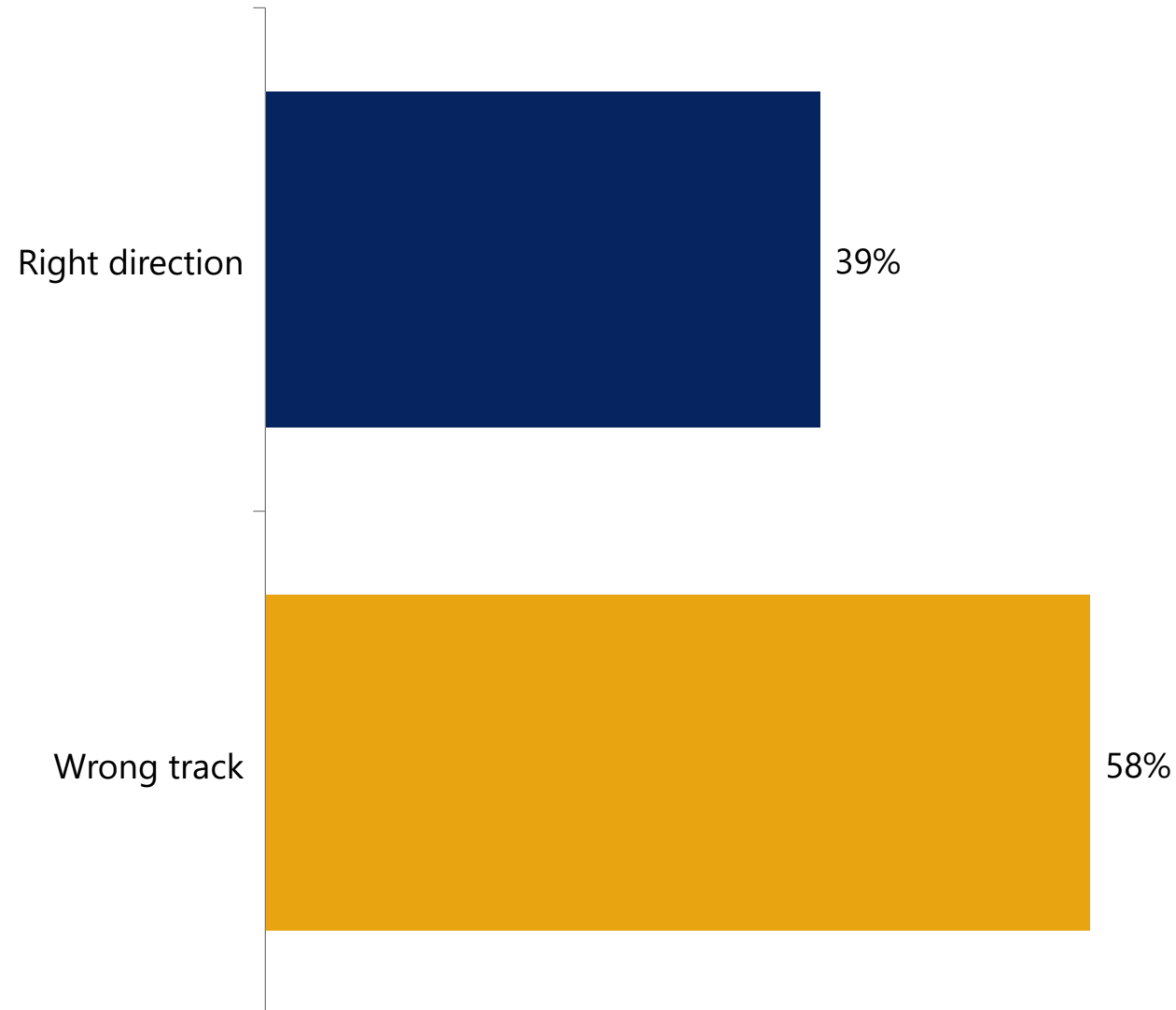


General Political Environment



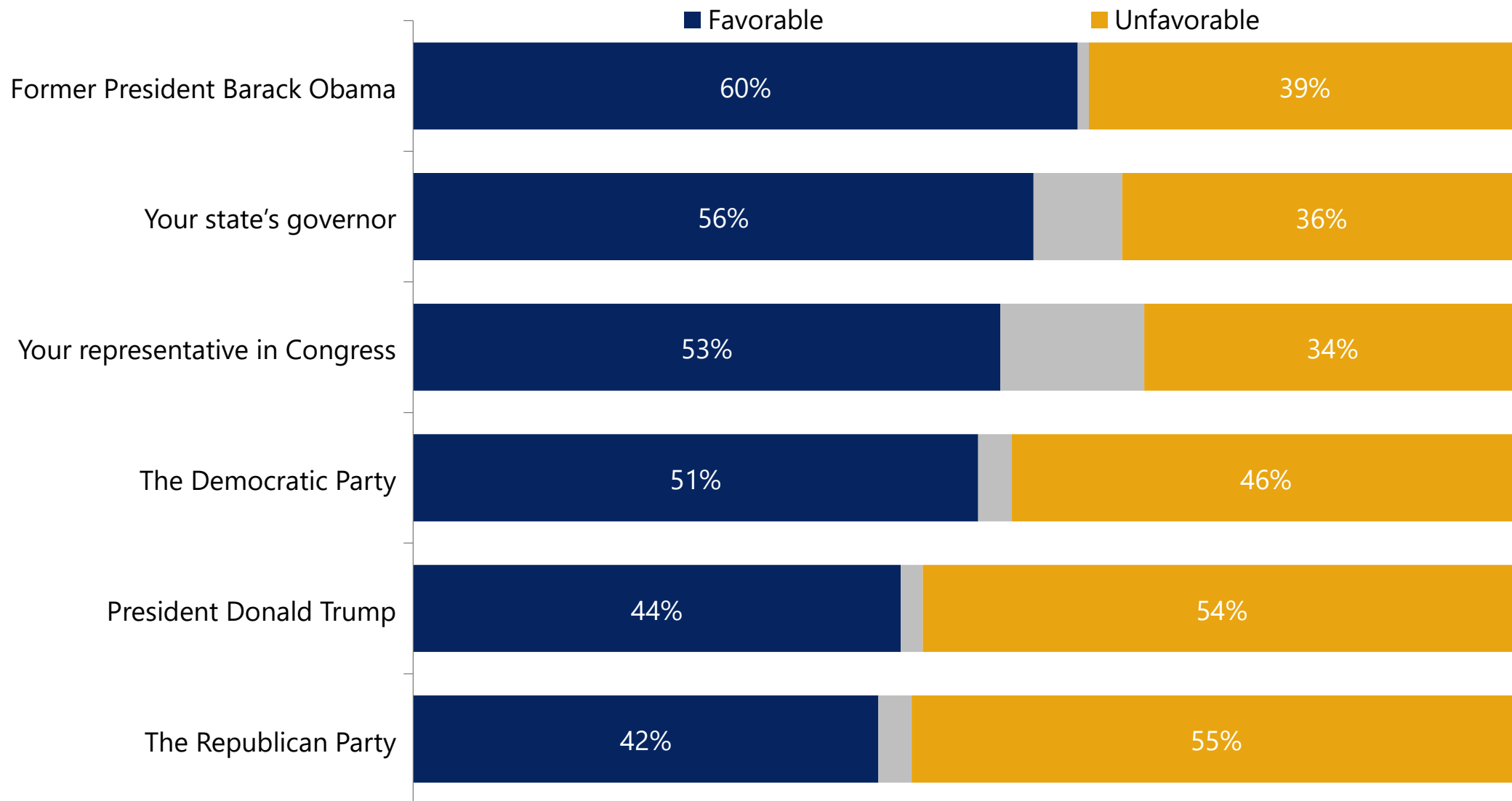


A majority of Americans believe the country is on the wrong track.



Note: Remainder Don't know

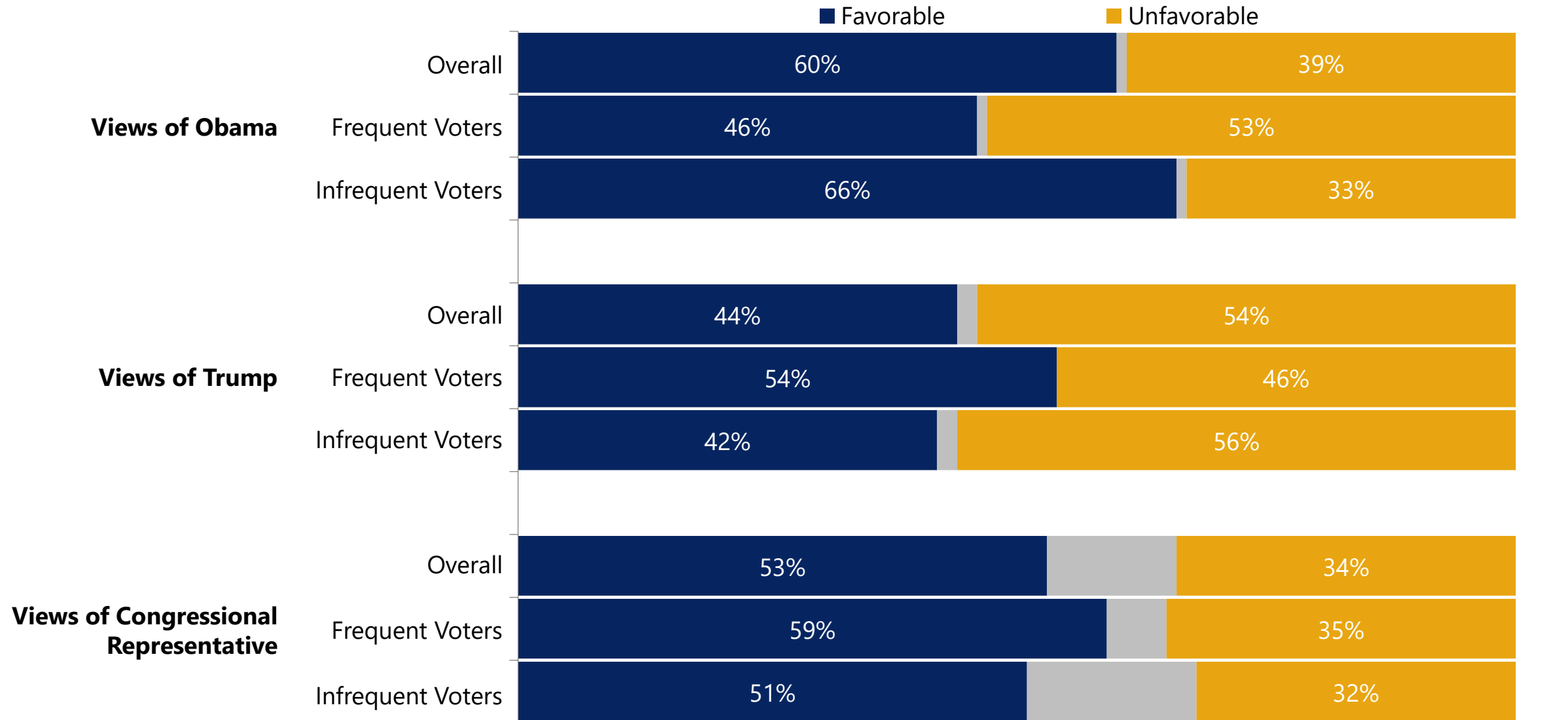
Voters hold net-favorable views of Obama, their governor, and their Congressional Representative; net-negative views of Trump.



Note: Remainder Don't know / Never heard of

Q15-20: Next, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about each of the following.
If you don't know enough about one to have an opinion, please select that option.

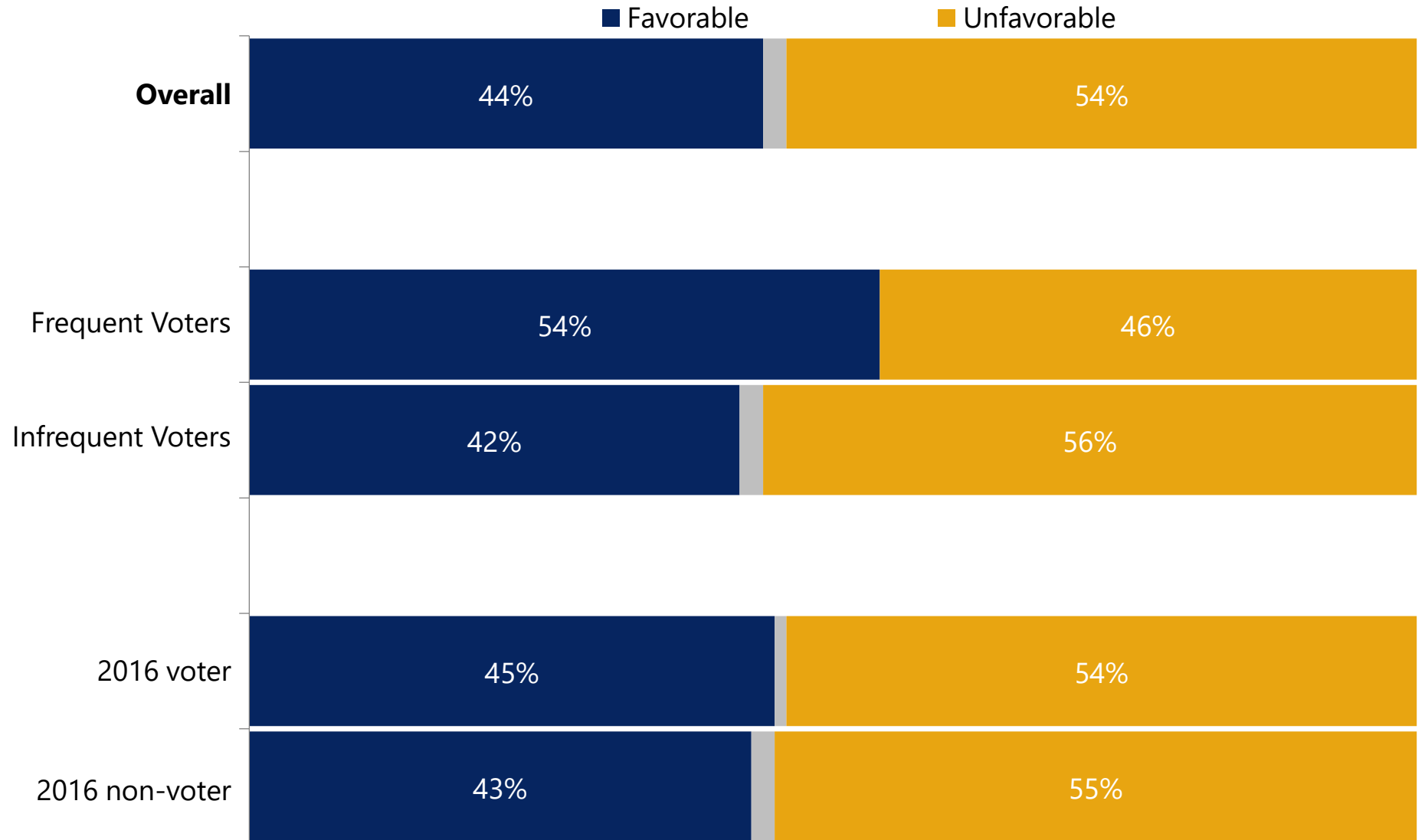
Infrequent voters are more favorable toward Obama, less favorable to Trump, and more likely to be unsure about their Representative.



Note: Remainder Don't know / Never heard of

Q15-20: Next, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about each of the following.
If you don't know enough about one to have an opinion, please select that option.

The most frequent voters have a notably more favorable view of Trump; little difference between 2016 voters and non-voters.

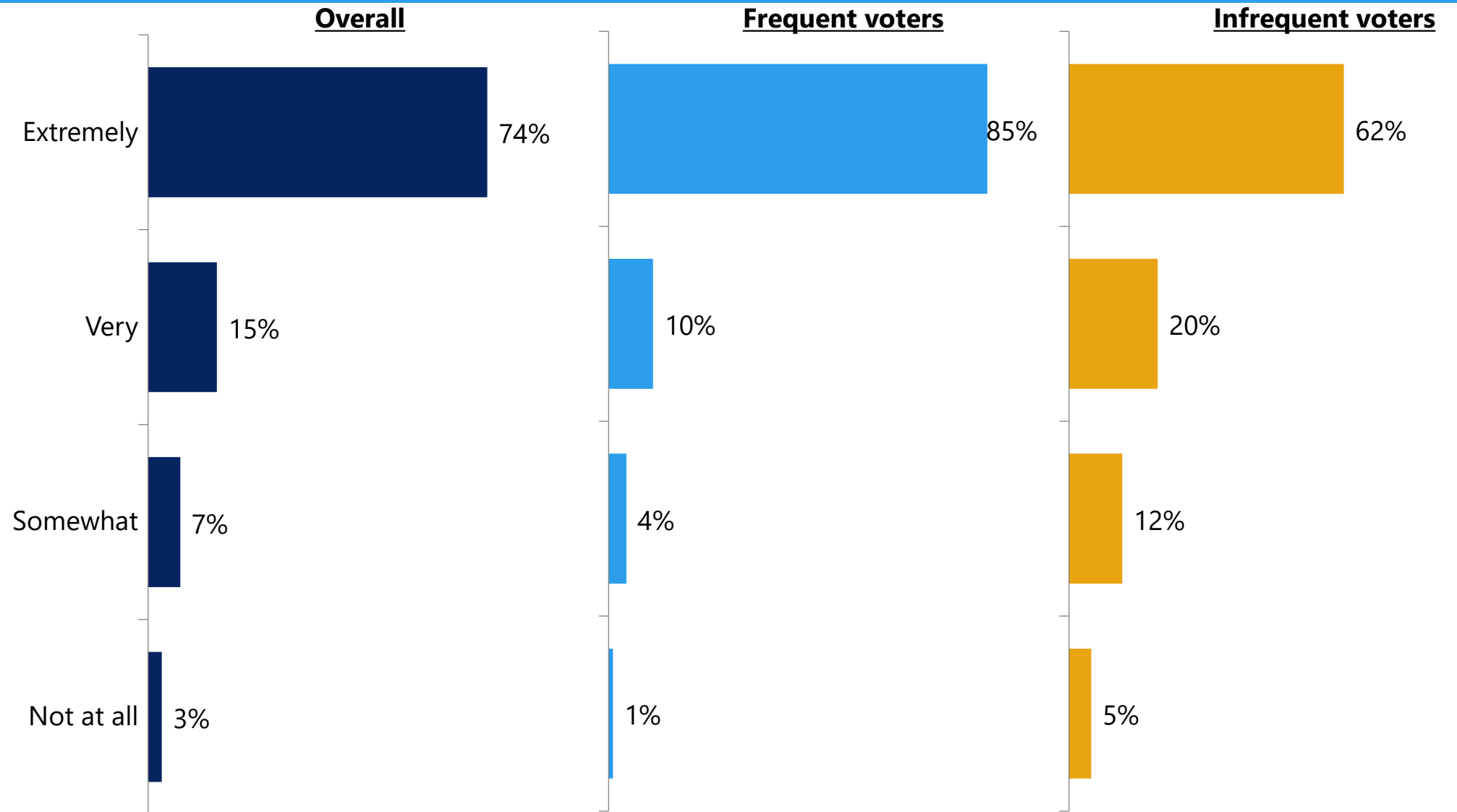


Note: Remainder Don't know / Never heard of

Q15: Next, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about each of the following.
If you don't know enough about one to have an opinion, please select that option. Donald Trump

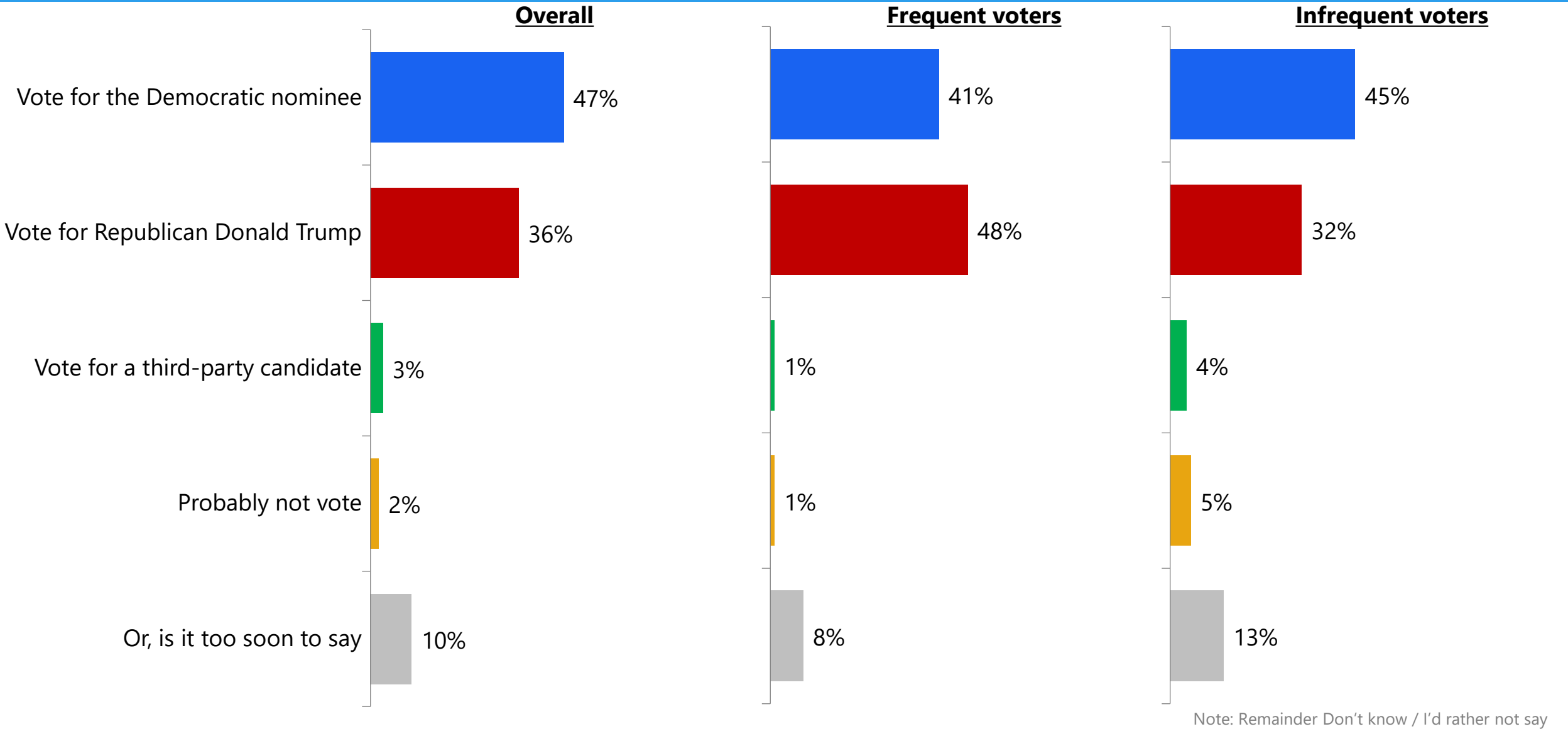


Infrequent voters are notably less motivated to participate in 2020.

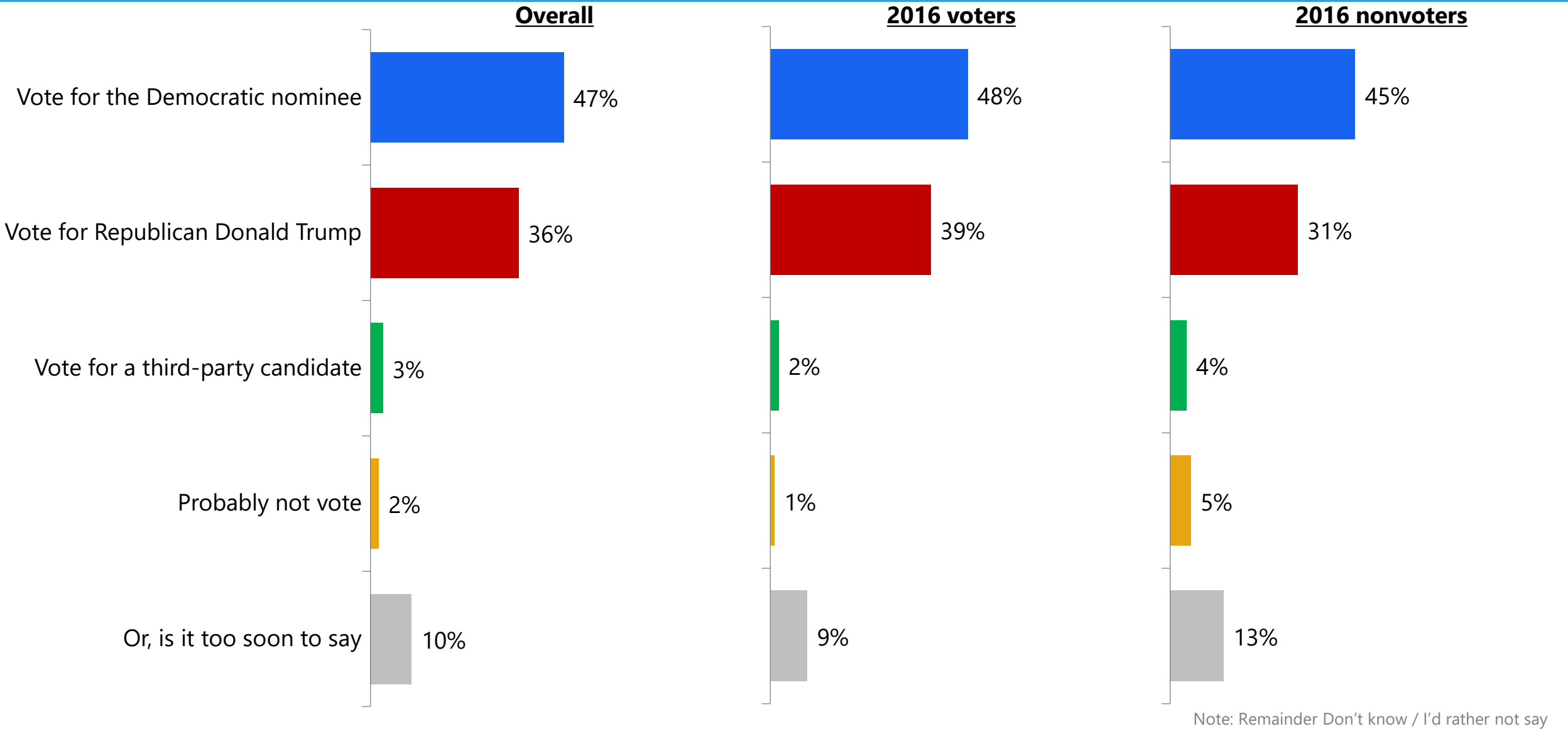


Note: Remainder Don't know

Trump holds an edge over a generic Democrat among the most frequent voters; infrequent voters lean heavily Democratic.



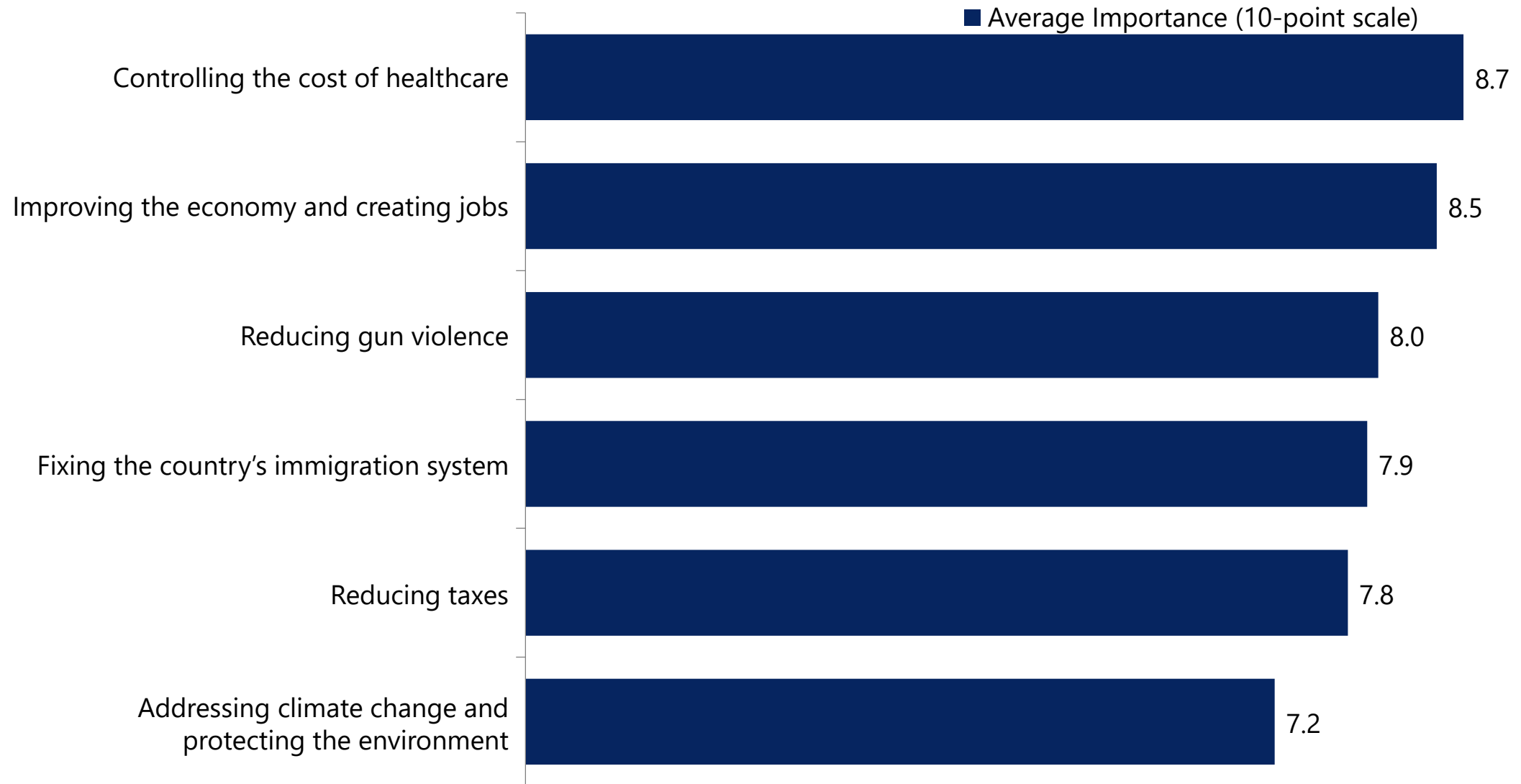
Those who did not vote in 2016 are less likely to vote for Trump if they turn out in 2020.



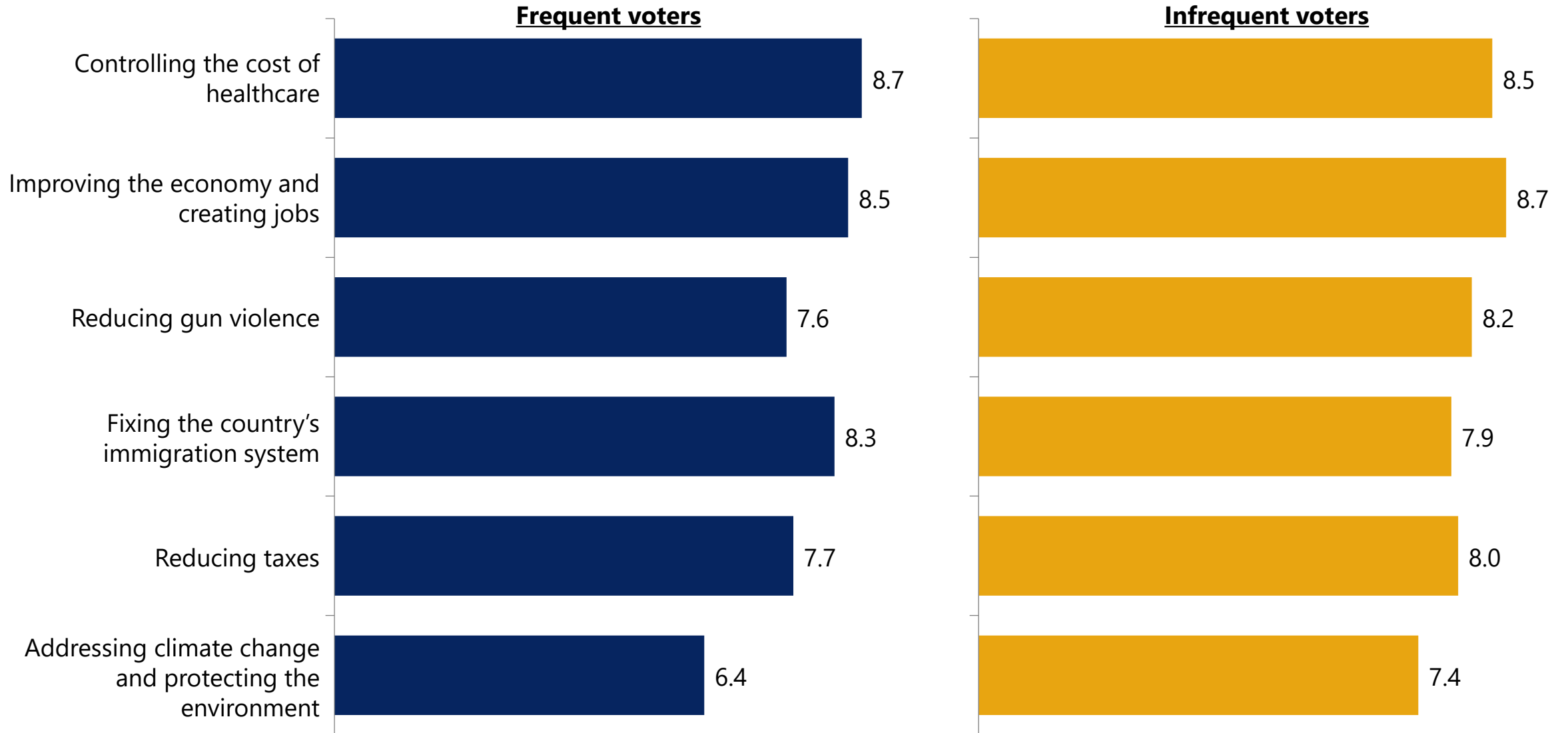
Most Important Issues



Voters' most important issues: controlling healthcare costs, improving the economy.



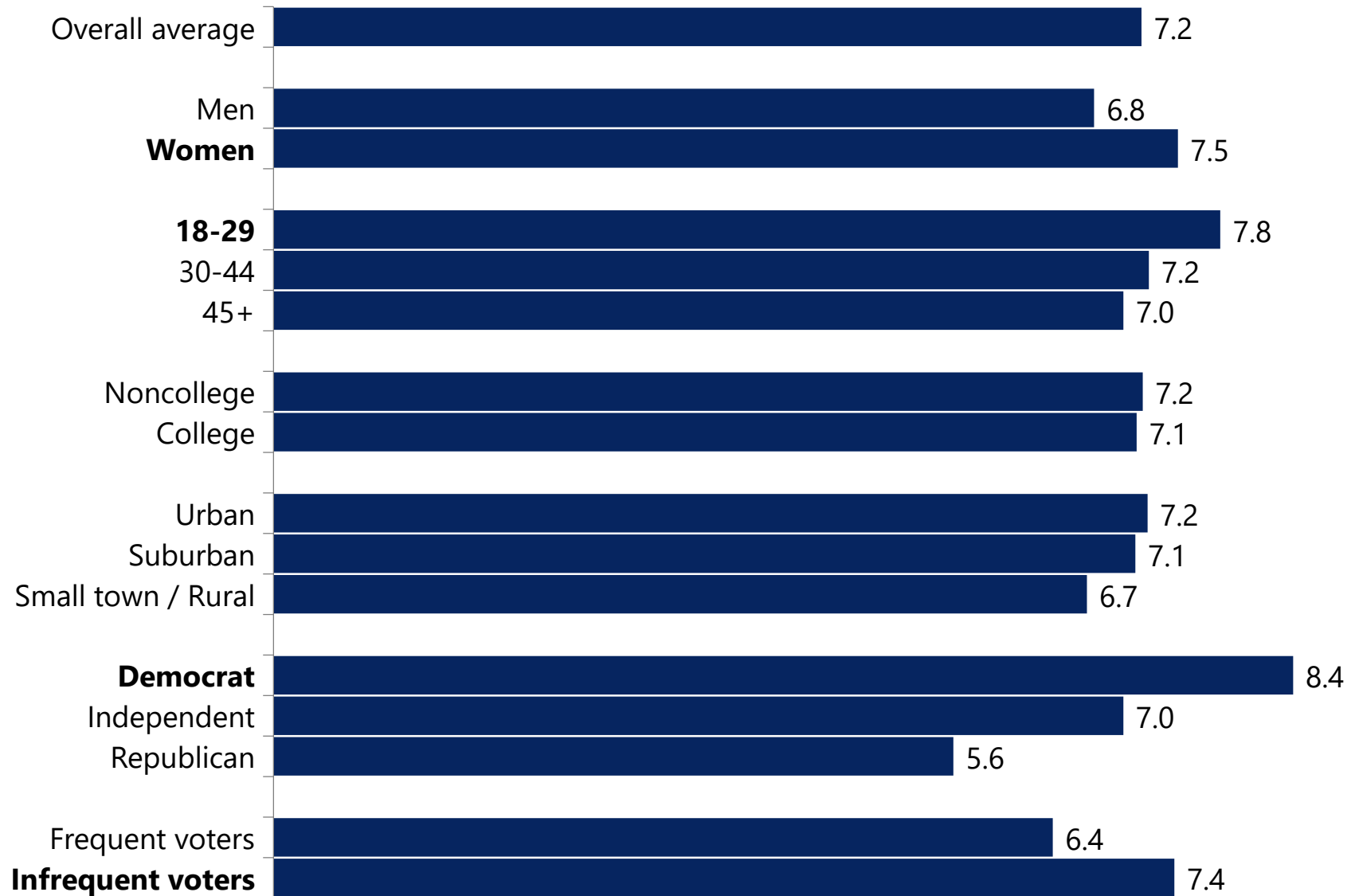
Frequent and infrequent voters are similar in the importance they assign to key issues – with the exception of climate change.



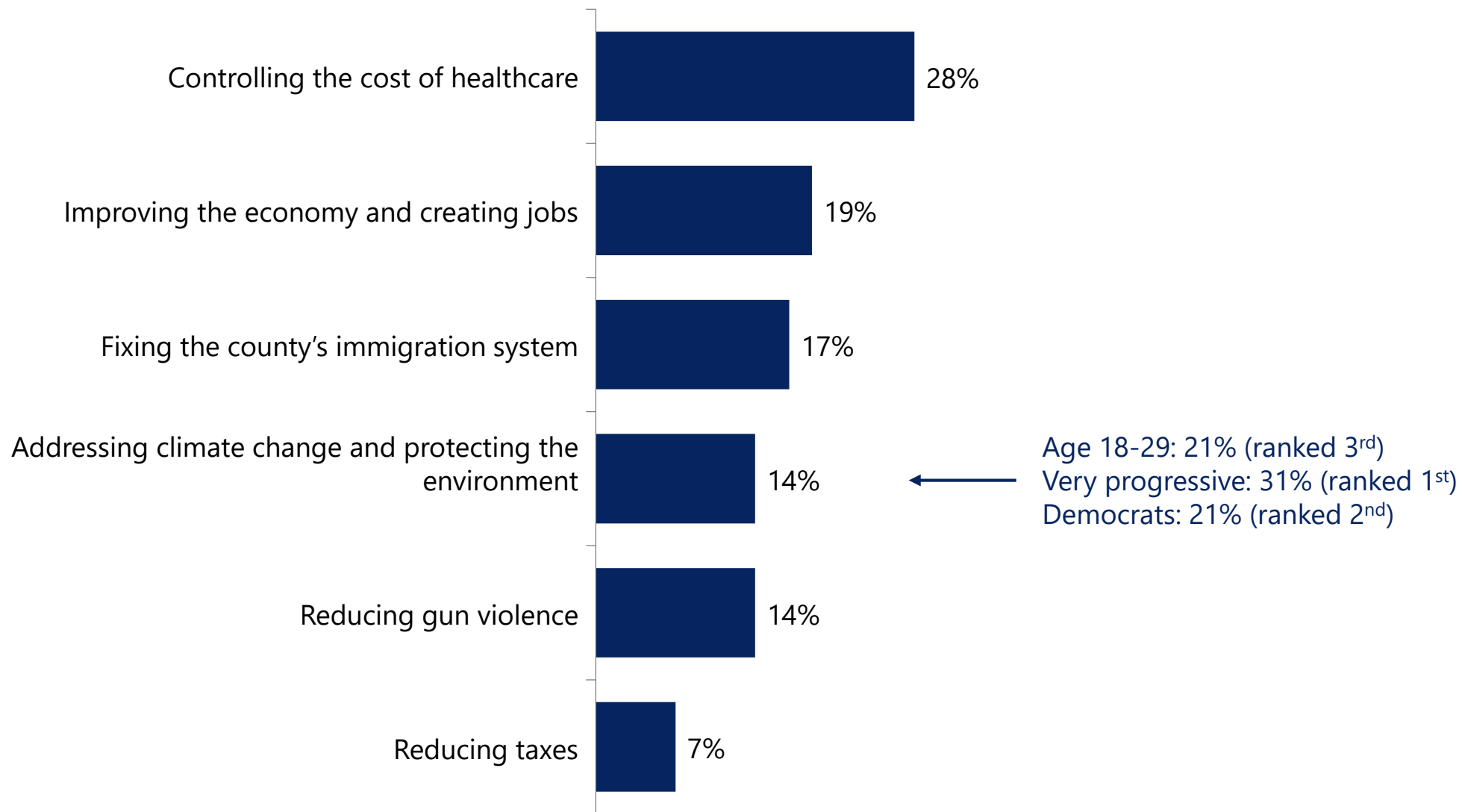
Note: Average importance (10-point scale)



Average importance of addressing climate change, by key subgroup



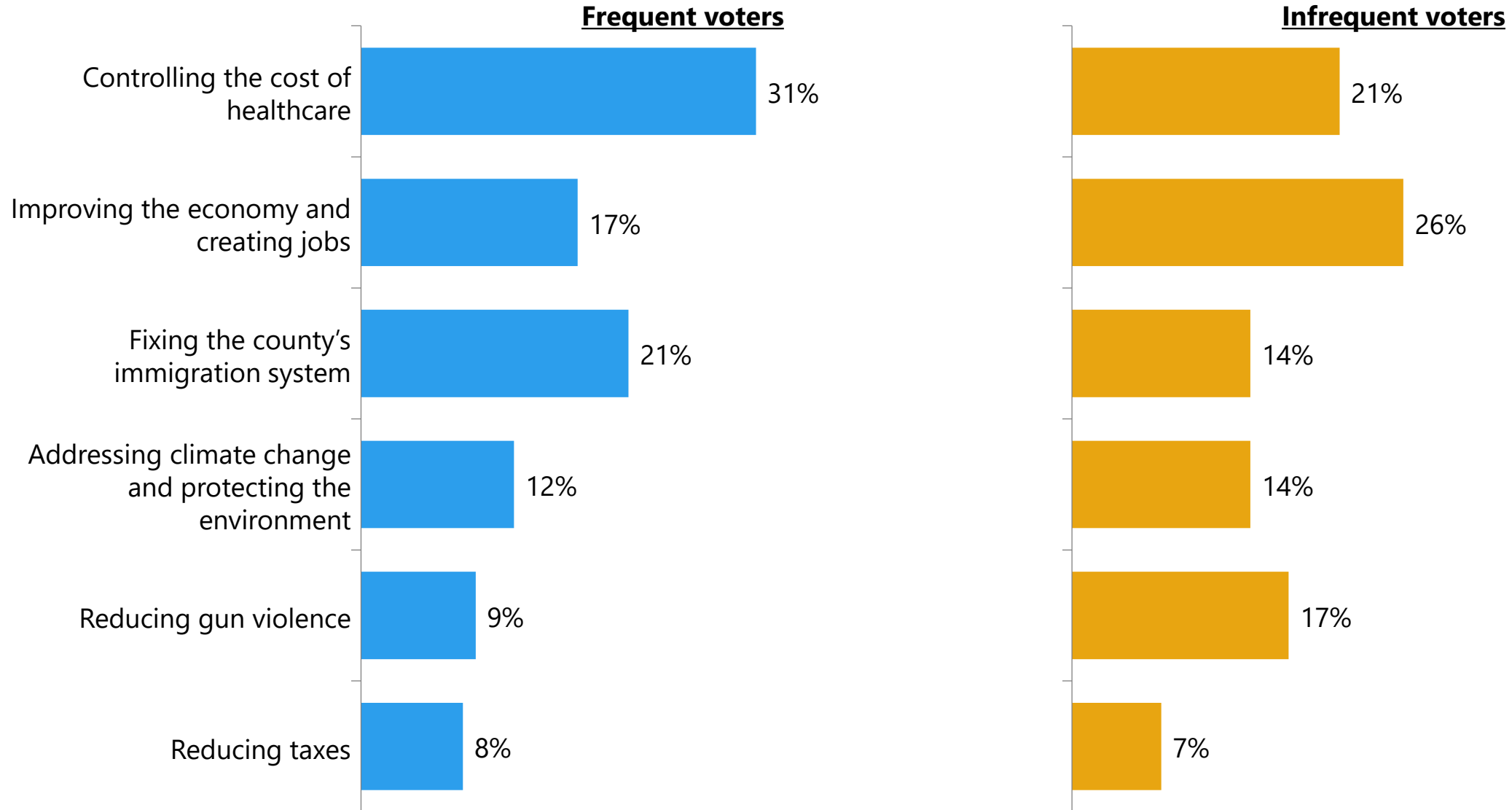
When forced to choose, healthcare tops voters' priority list; climate change far outpaces taxation.



Note: Remainder Don't know

Q27: And which of those issues is the single most important to you?

Frequent and infrequent voters have different views of the most important issue facing the country.



Note: Remainder Don't Know

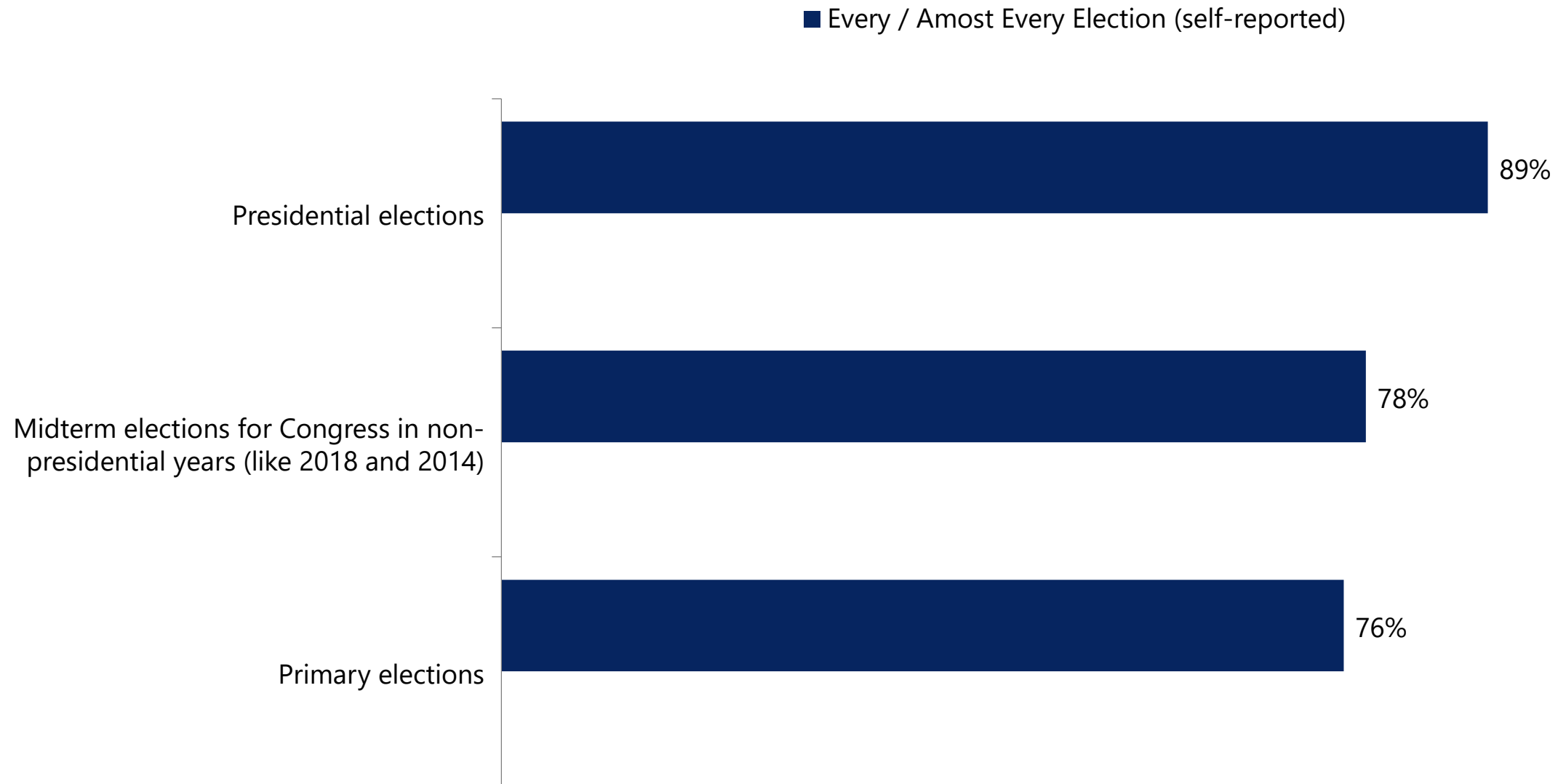
Q27: And which of those issues is the single most important to you?

Voter Turnout: Self-Reporting versus Reality

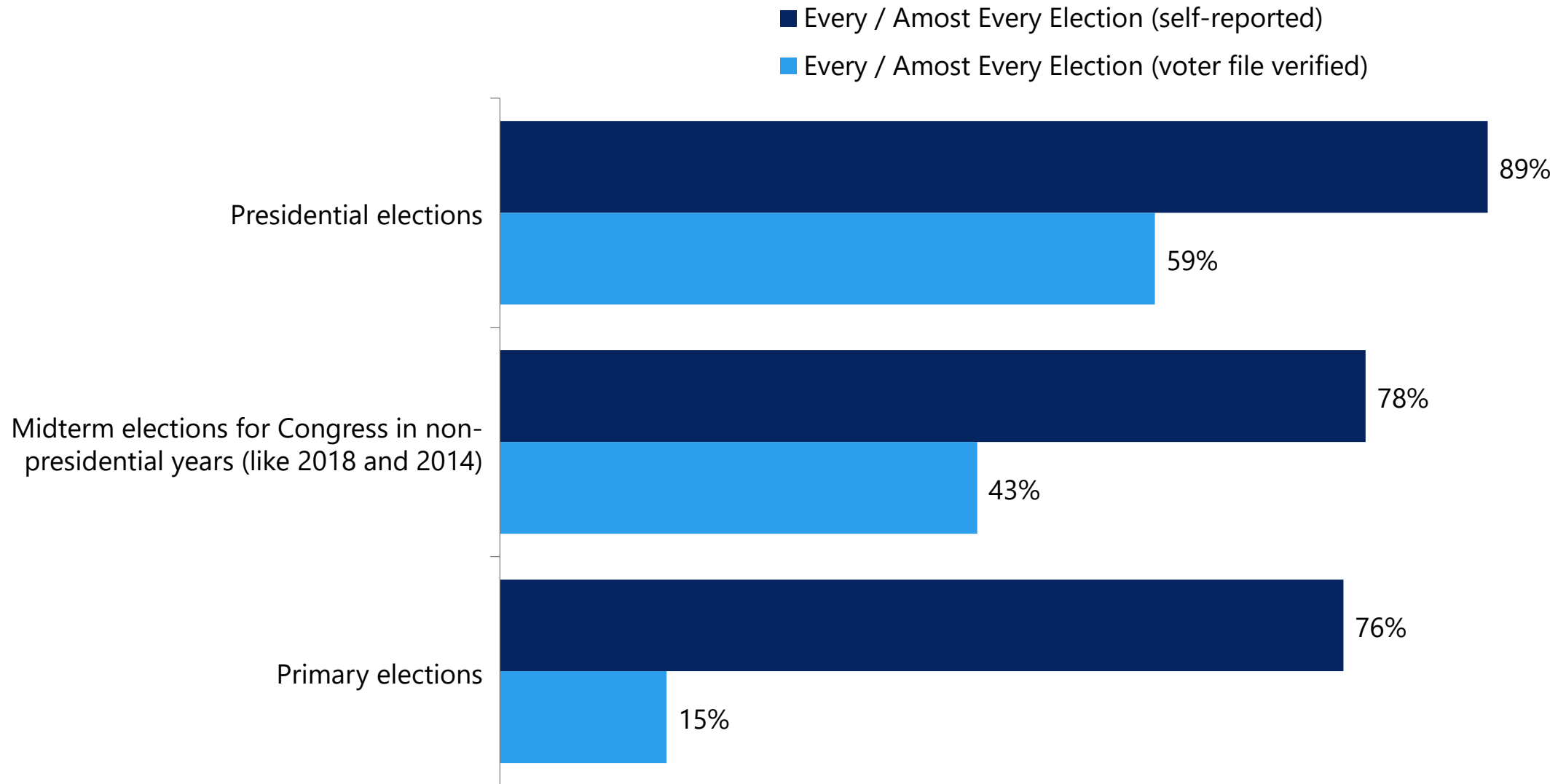




Most voters claim to vote in almost every election...



...But there is rampant over-reporting – particularly when it comes to midterms and primaries.



Top reasons for voting include duty, being counted, making one's voice heard...



Note: N=1,134

Q32: Why do you vote as often as you do – what is the main reason you vote?
[IF EVERY / ALMOST EVERY IN Q28 AND 29]

Those who say they don't vote often mostly cite a lack of compelling candidates, time constraints and a feeling their vote doesn't matter.



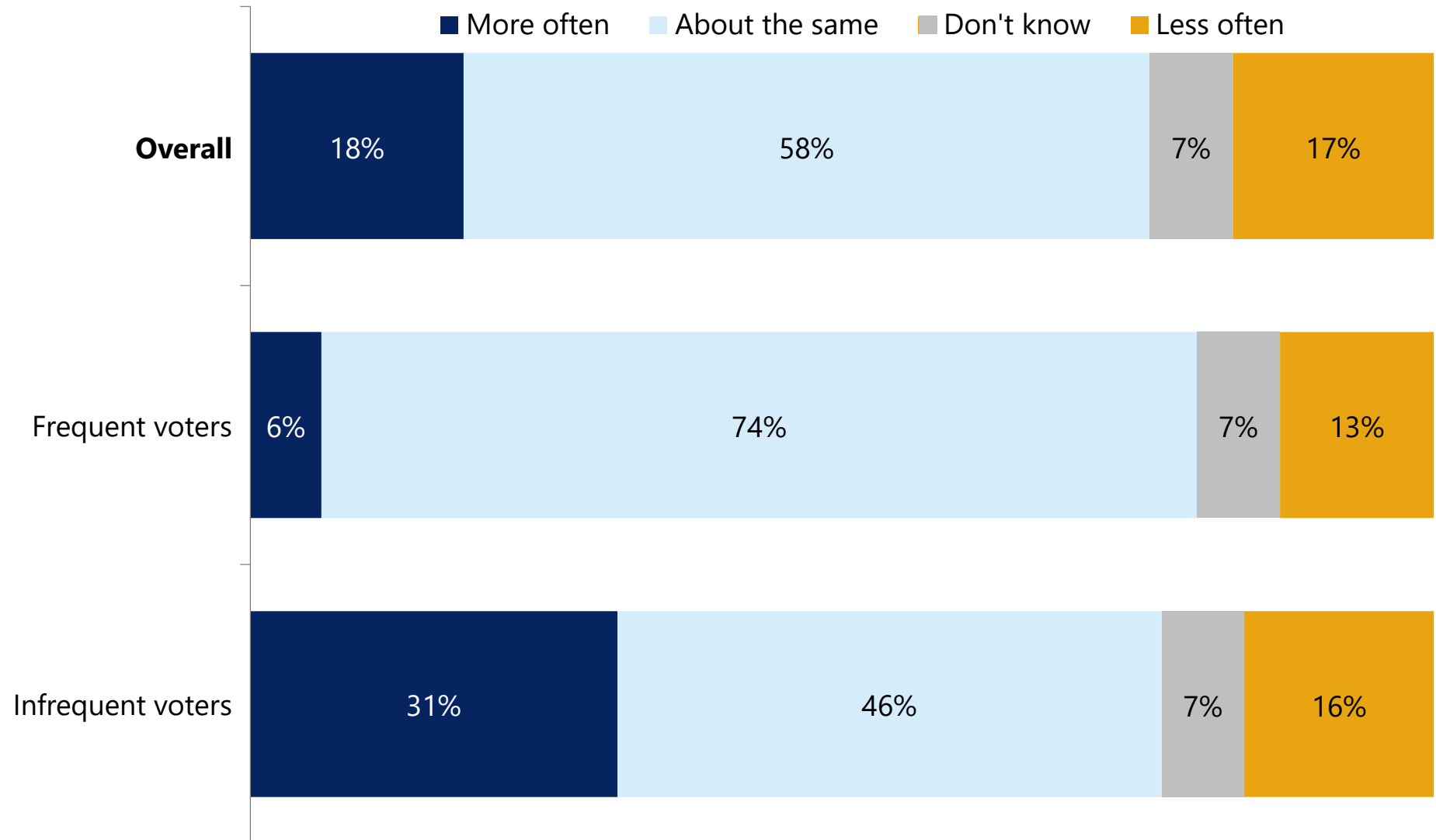
Work Don't care
Vote doesn't matter

Candidates
Doesn't make a difference
Time

Note: N=142

Q33: What is the main reason you don't vote more regularly?
[IF SOME / RARELY / NEVER IN Q28-29]

Frequent voters say they vote about as often as their family; infrequent voters are much more likely to say their family votes more often.





Reasons family members vote more/less often

Why family votes more often

Older Involved
 Don't know
 Always vote
Political
 Dedicated
 Interest
 Not sure
Time

Note: N=275

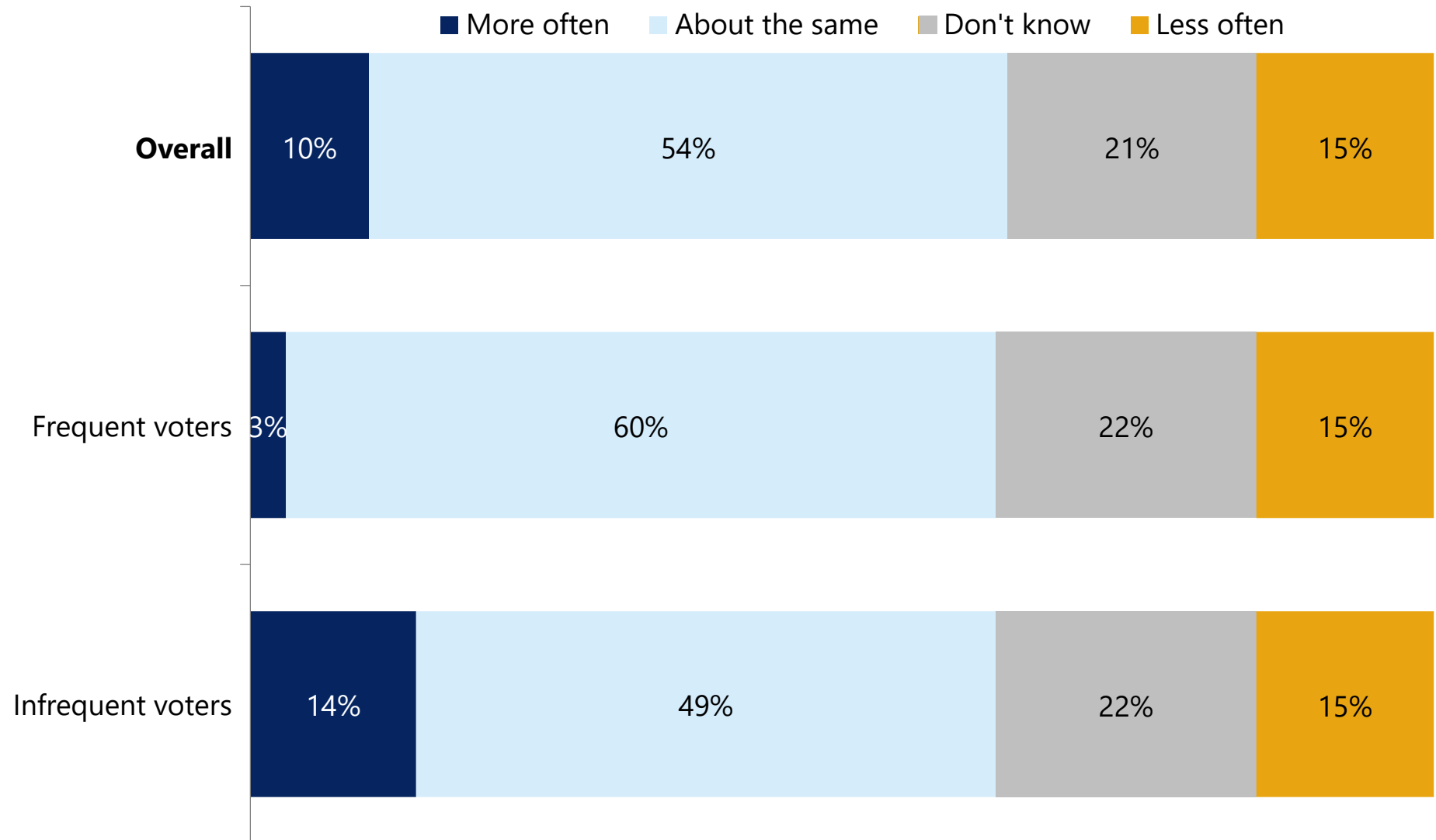
Why family votes less often

Less interest
 Younger
 No time
 Lazy
 Apathy
Don't care
 Doesn't matter
Don't know
 Work

Note: N=249

Q35: Why do you think your family votes more often than you? [IF MORE OFTEN IN Q34]
 AND Q36: Why do you think your family votes less often than you? [IF LESS OFTEN IN Q34]

One in five voters doesn't know how often their close friends vote; frequent voters are more likely to say their friends vote as often as they do.





Reasons friends vote more/less often

Why friends vote more often

Don't know
Interest
Access
More political
Care more Important
Beliefs
More time

Why friends vote less often

Not informed
Not interested
Apathy Too busy
Don't care
Vote won't count Lazy
Time **Don't know**
Less committed

Note: N=150

Note: N=216

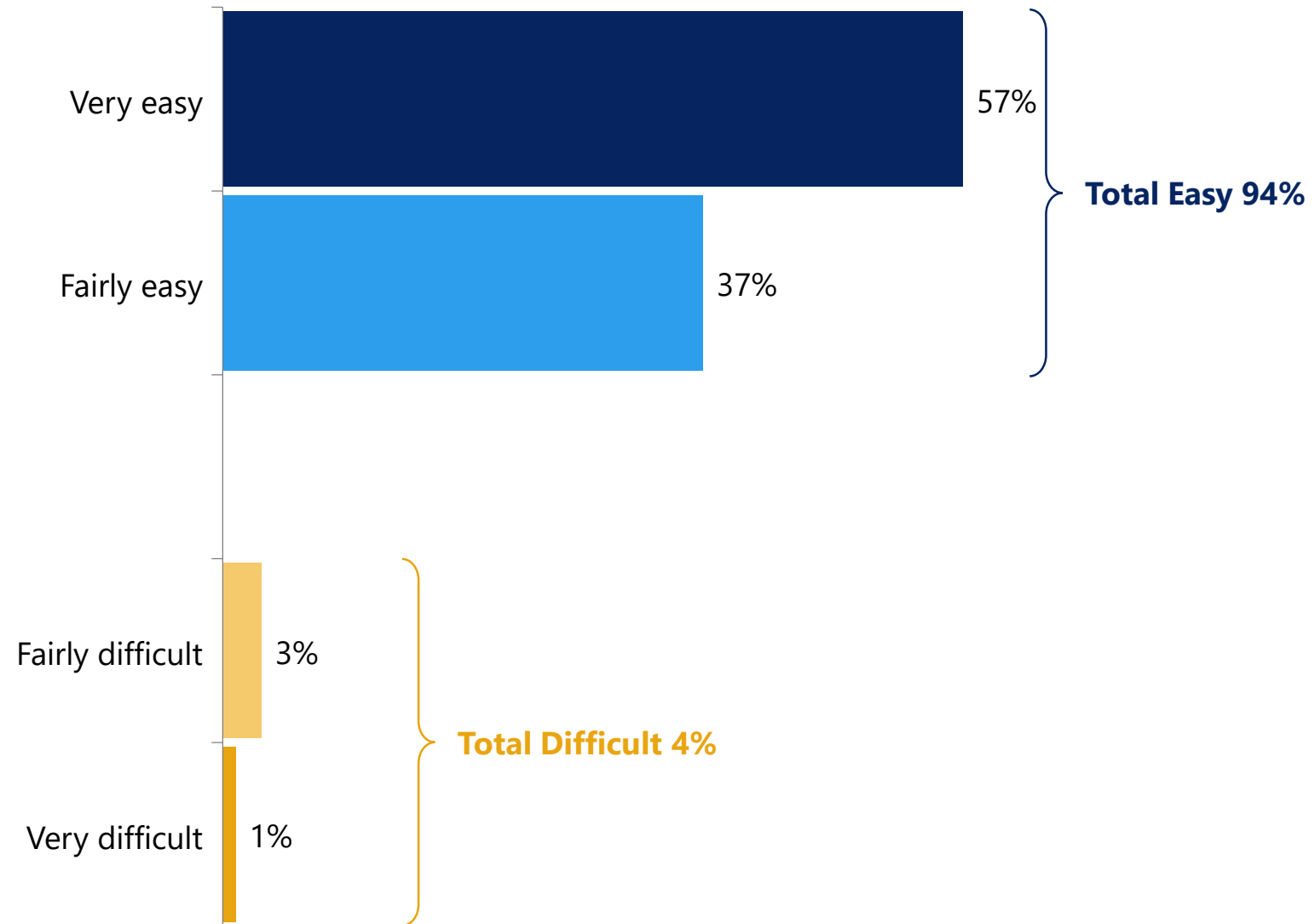
Q38: Why do you think your friends vote more often than you? [IF MORE OFTEN IN Q37]
AND Q39: Why do you think your friends vote less often than you? [IF LESS OFTEN IN Q37]

Perceived Difficulty of Voting





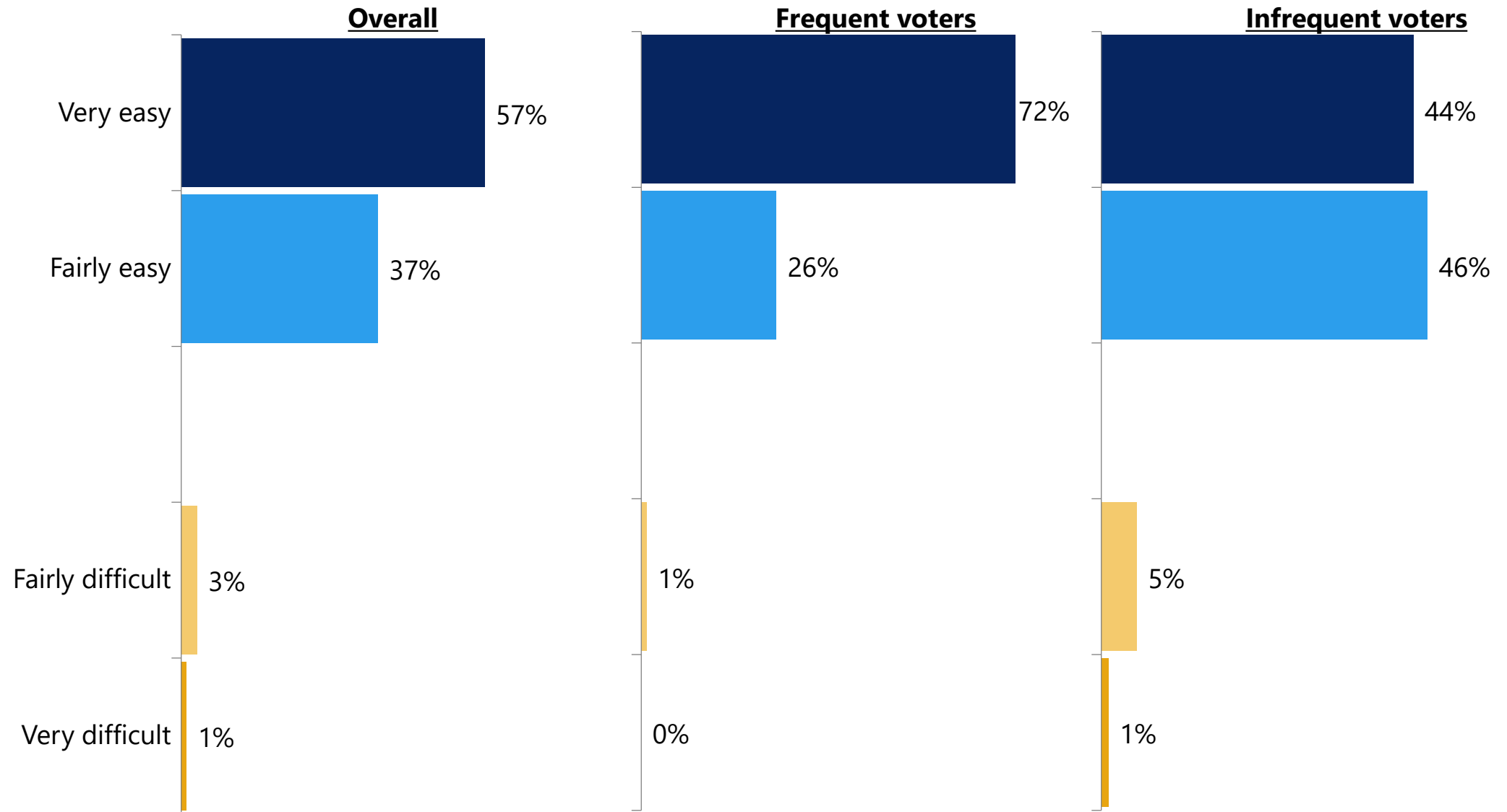
Very few voters think voting is difficult...



Note: Remainder Don't know

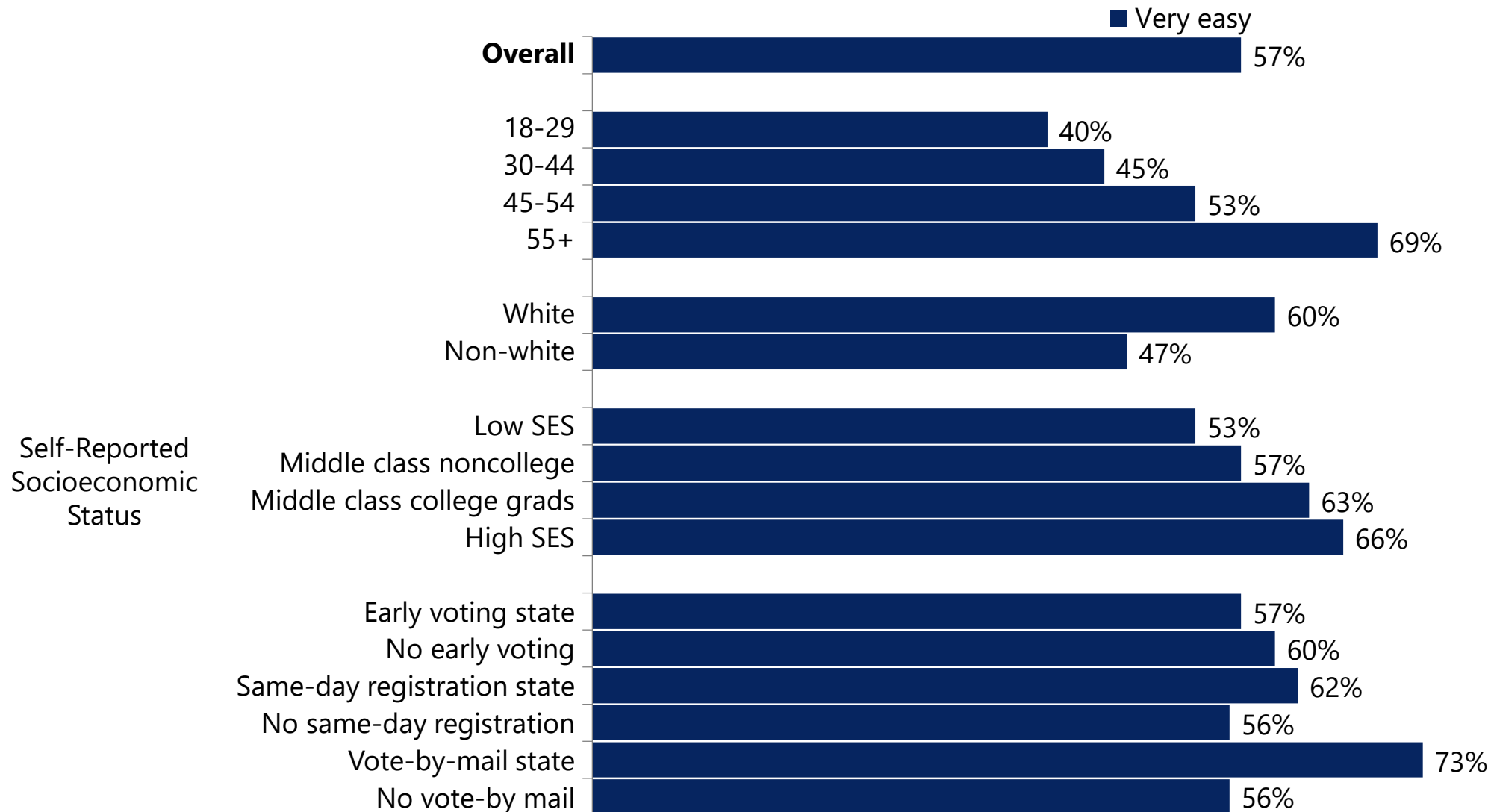


...But infrequent voters are much less likely to think voting is "very easy."



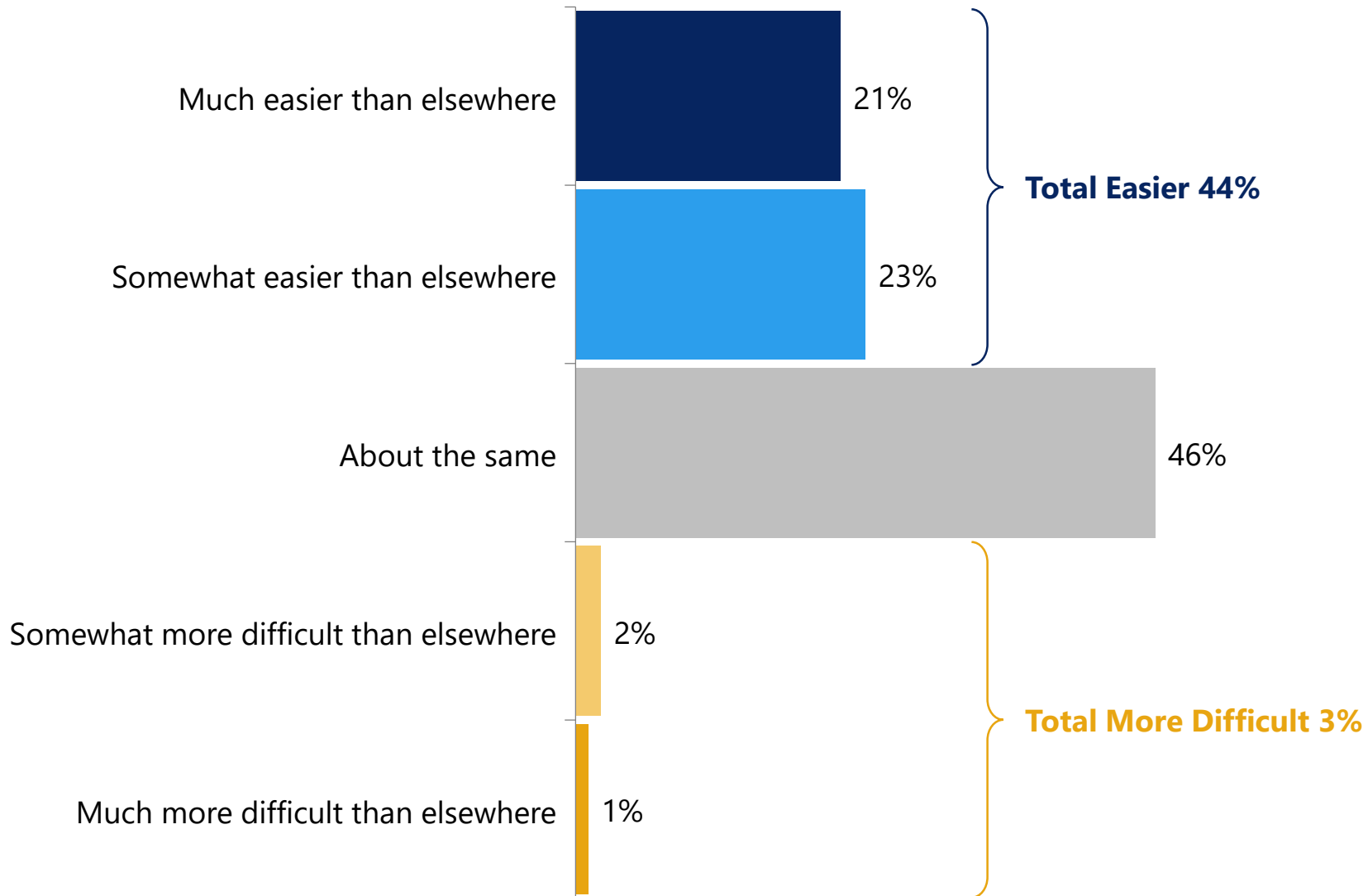
Note: Remainder Don't know

Older voters, whites, and those in higher socioeconomic strata think voting is easier – as do those in same-day registration and (especially) vote-by-mail states.



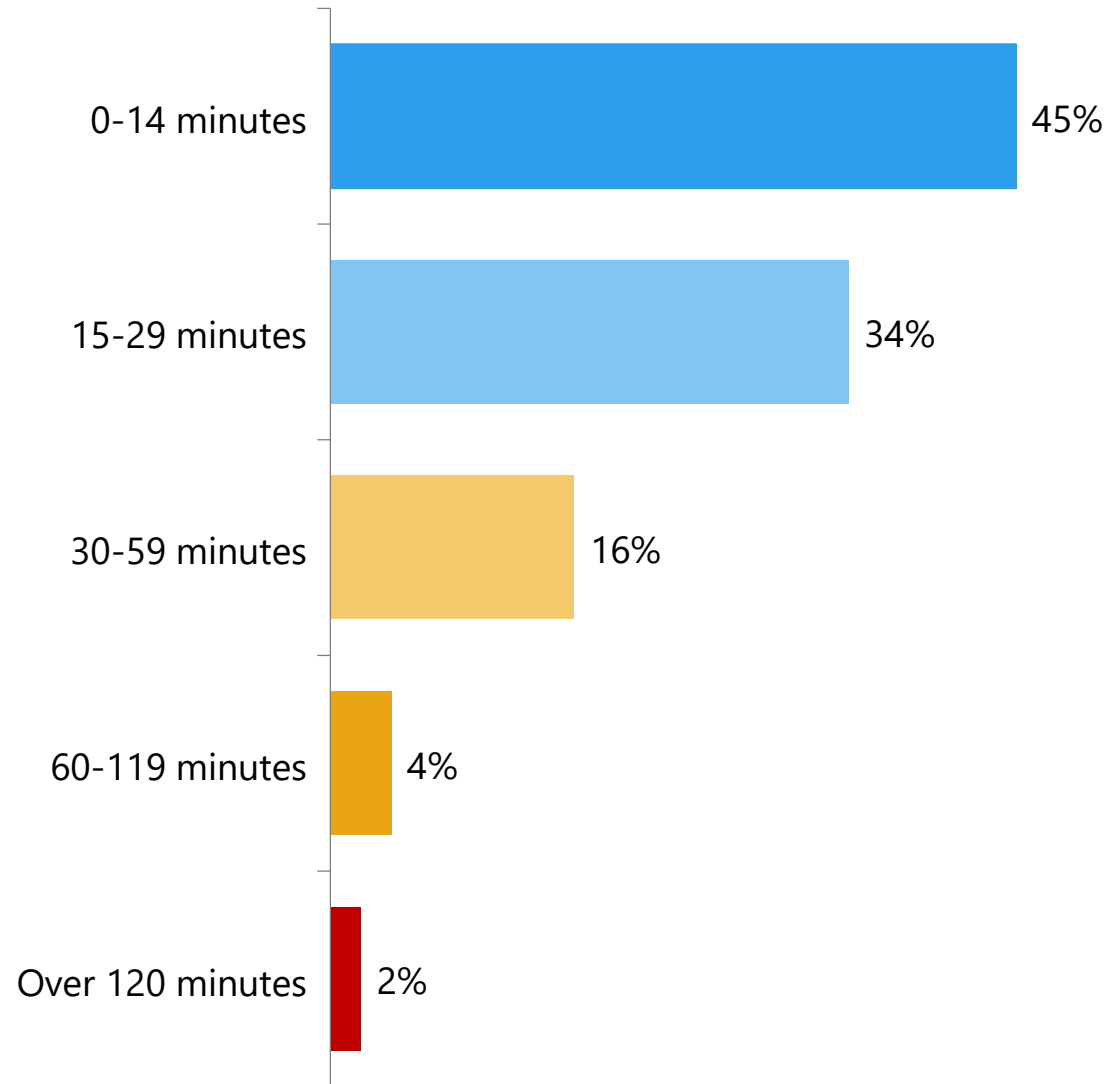
Q40: In general, do you think voting in your community is...

Most voters think voting in their community is easier than elsewhere in the country – or at least about the same.



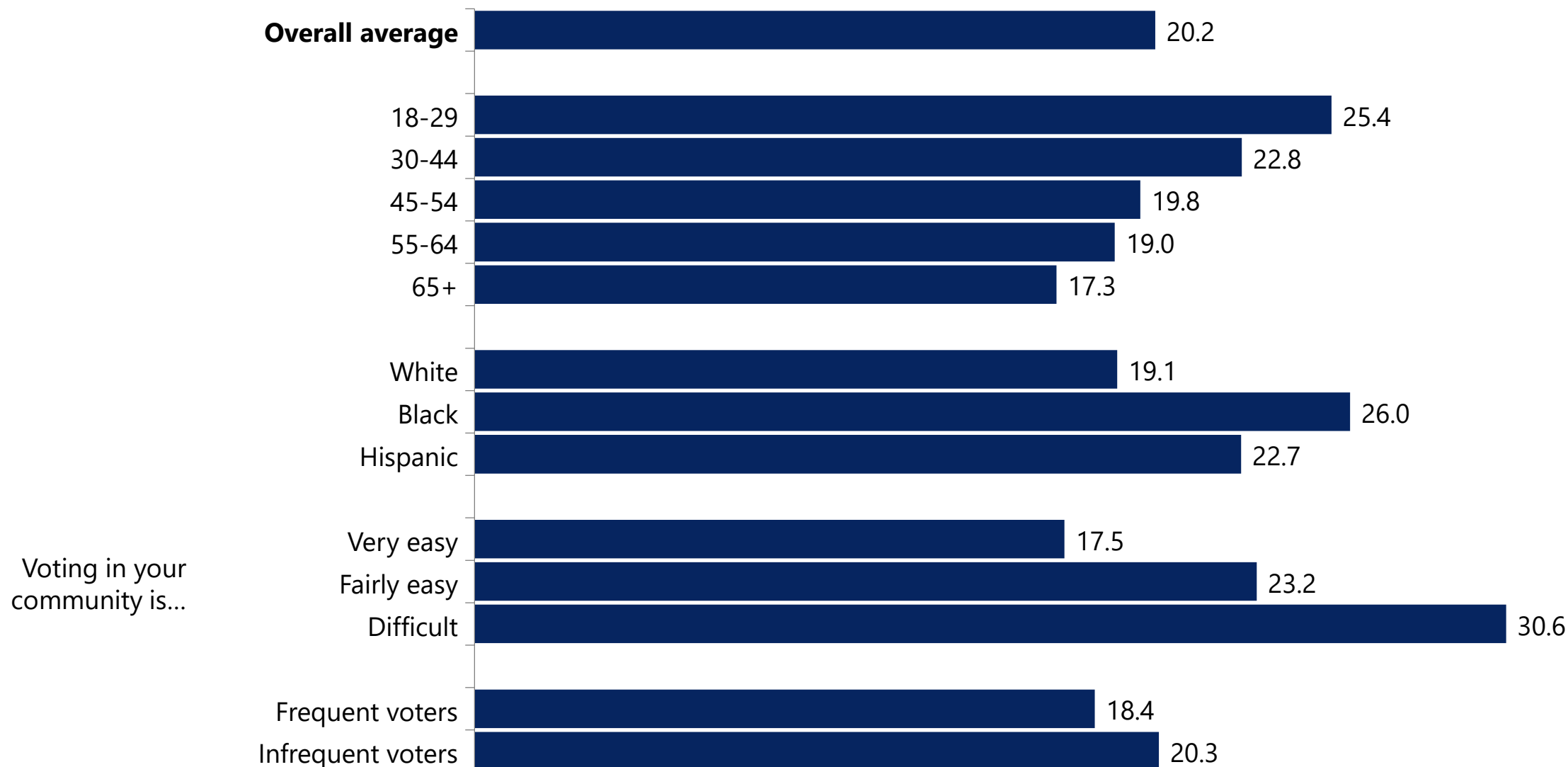
Note: Remainder Don't know

Nearly a quarter of voters think voting in a presidential election takes more than 30 minutes.



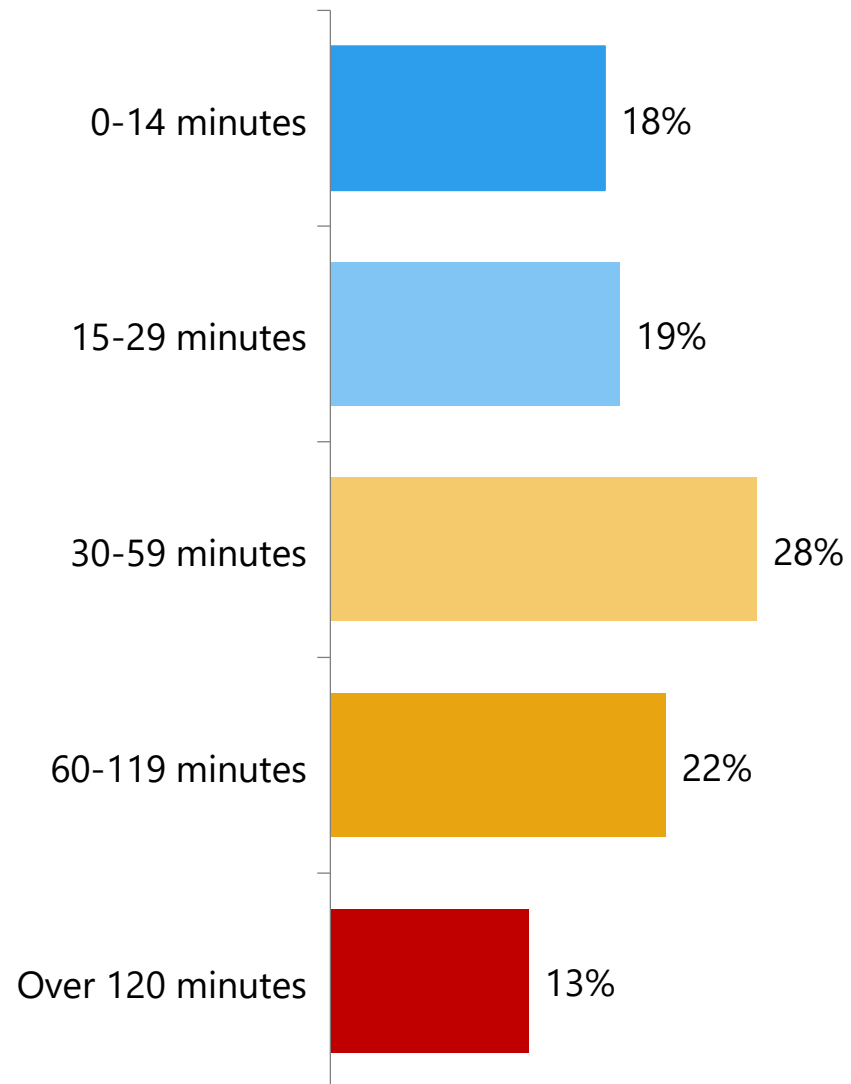
Q50: In minutes, how long do you think it typically takes to vote in presidential elections in your area?

Younger voters, non-white voters, and those who think voting is more difficult think it takes longer – as do infrequent voters.

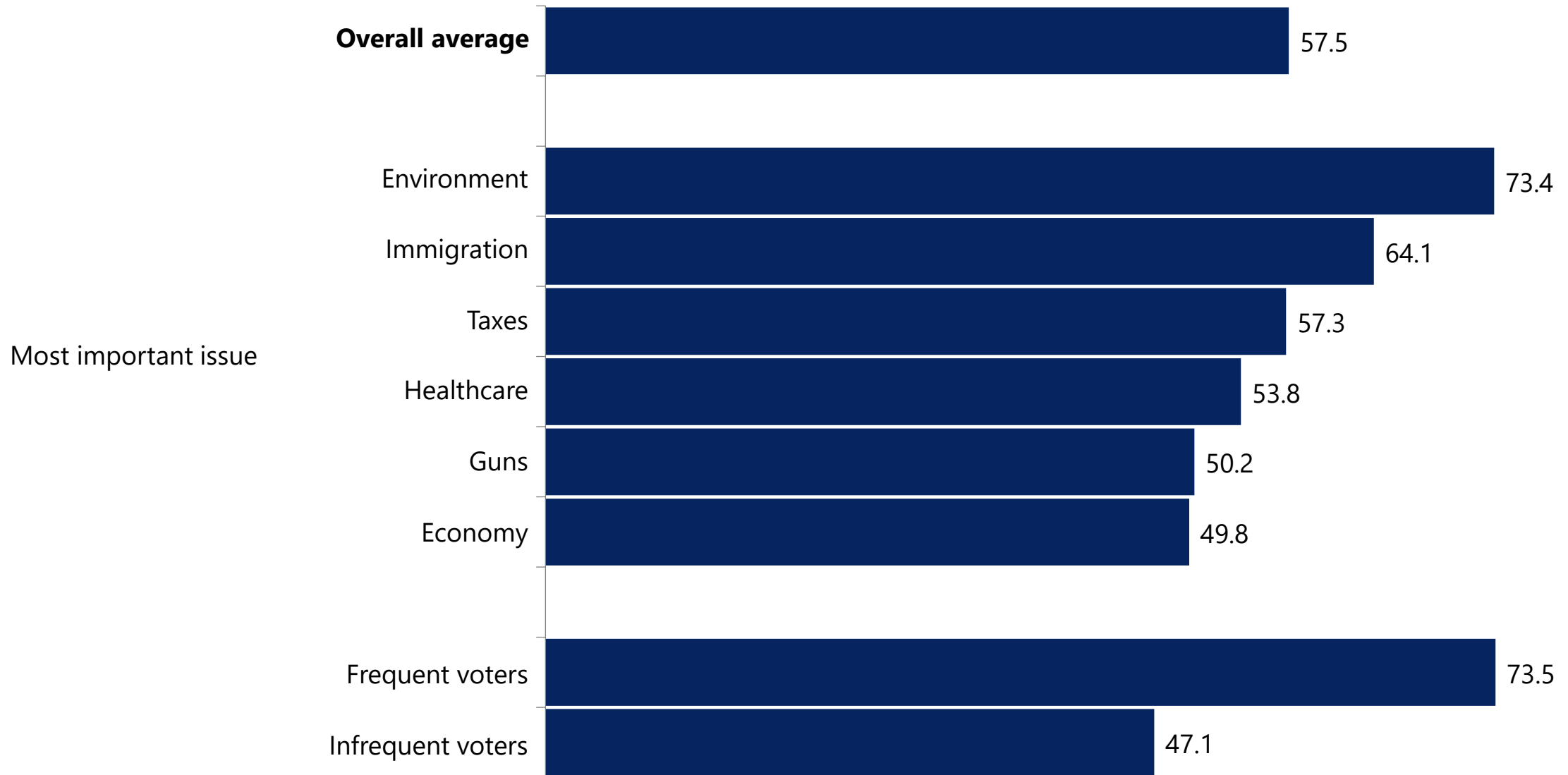




Voters say they would be willing to wait a long time to cast a vote.

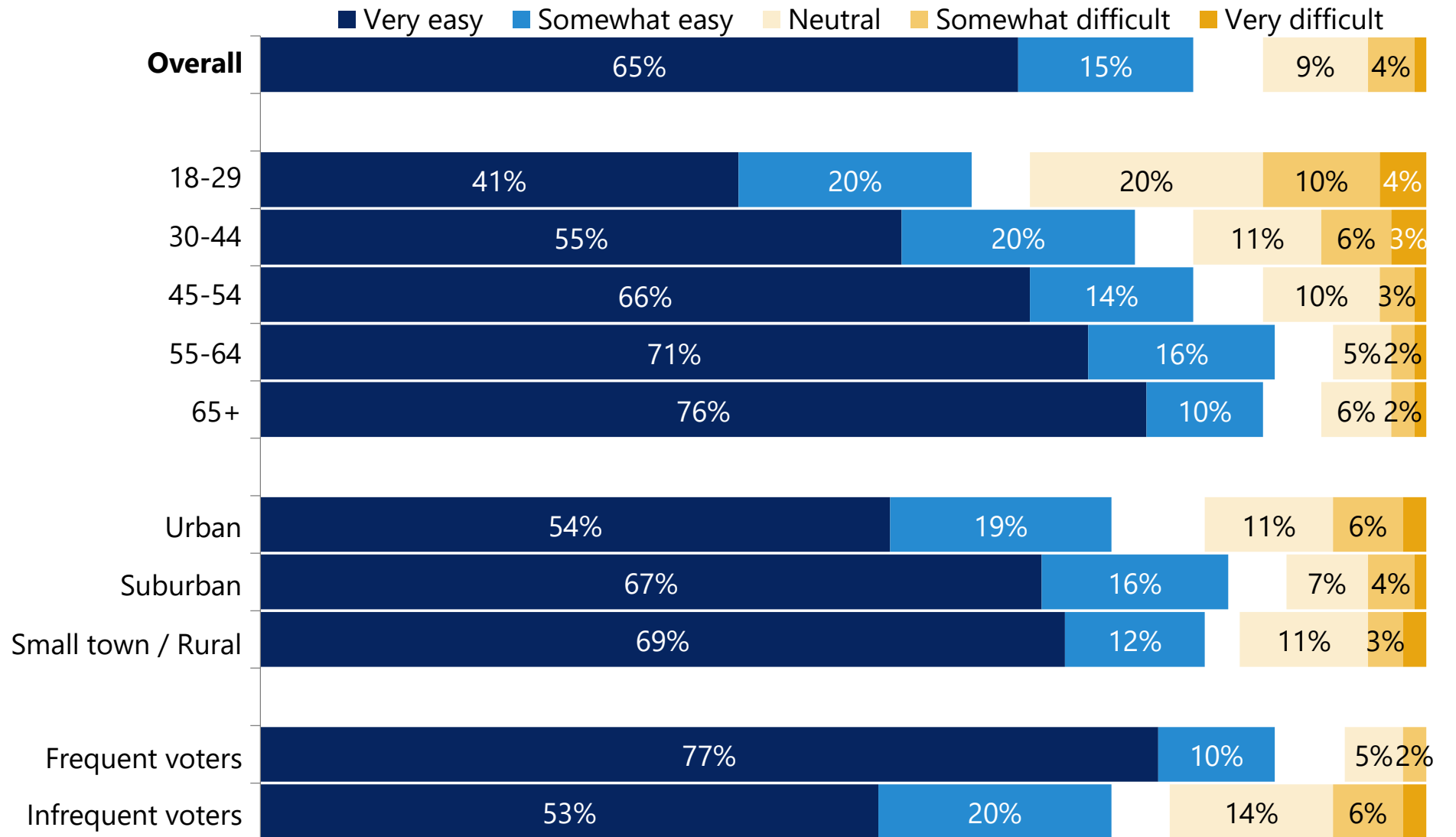


Environmental voters say they would be willing to wait the longest to vote; infrequent voters have much less tolerance for long waits.



Q51: In minutes, how long would you be willing to wait to cast a vote in the presidential election?

Voters mostly find it easy to get to their polling place – though younger voters, those in cities, and infrequent voters think it’s more difficult.



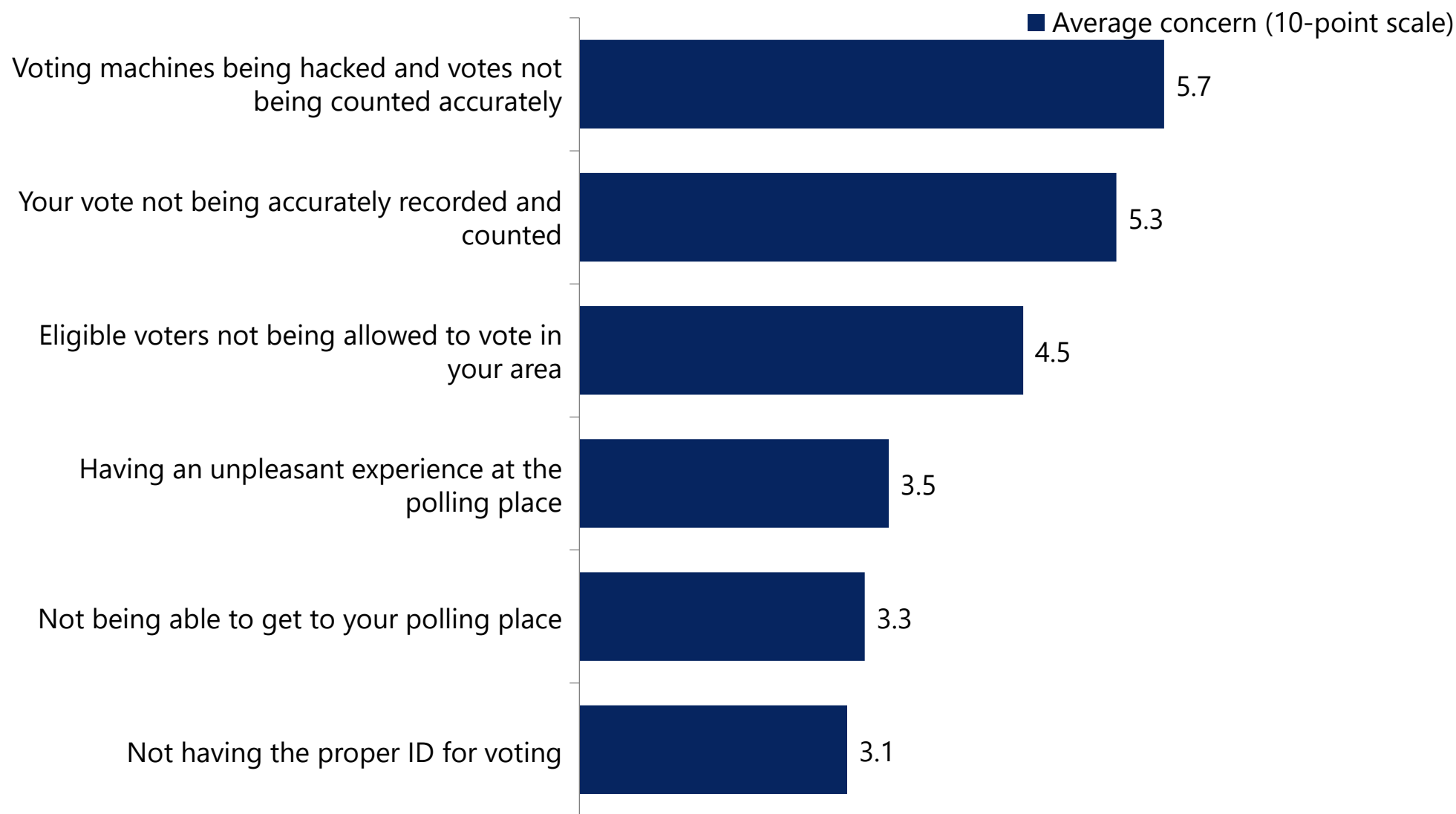
Note: Remainder Not sure

Q52. In your opinion, how easy or difficult is it to get to your polling place? (1-5 scale)

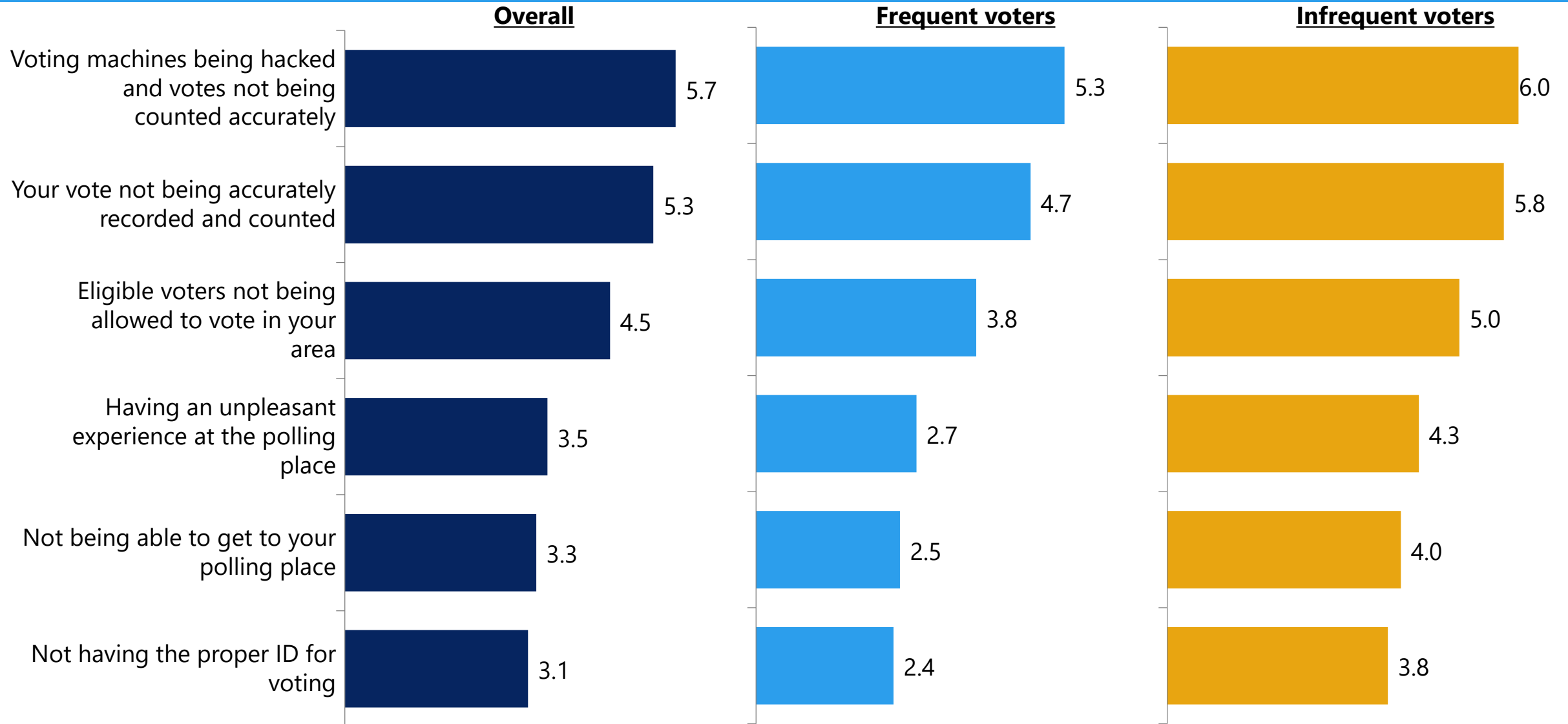
Voters' (and nonvoters') concerns



Voters are not particularly concerned with ID problems, difficulty getting to their polling place, or having a bad experience once there...



...But infrequent voters show much more concern than those who vote regularly.



Note: Average concern (on a 10-point scale)

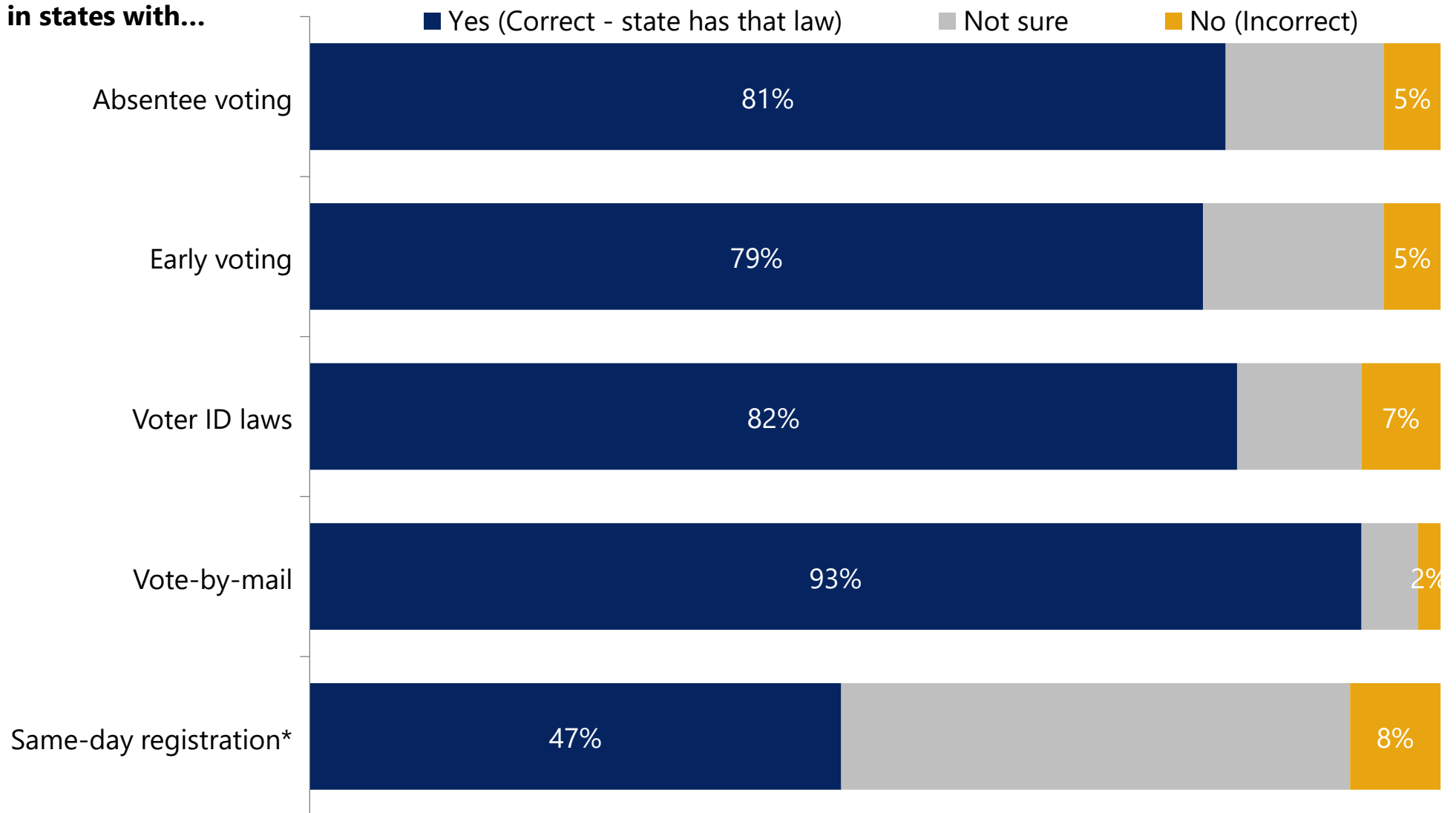
Perceptions of Voting Laws



Voters in states *with* voting laws are generally aware of them – except for those in states with same-day registration.

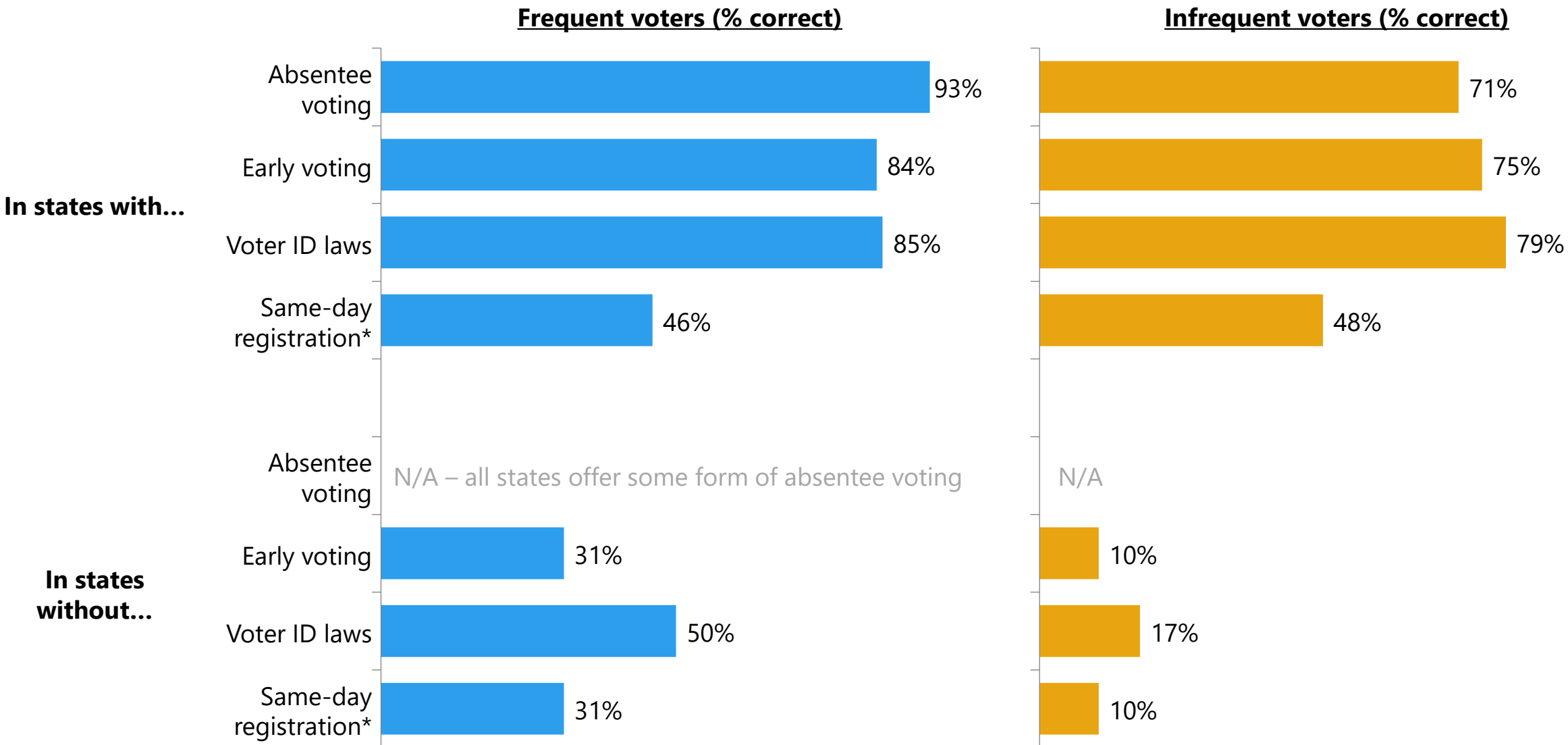


Among those who live in states with...



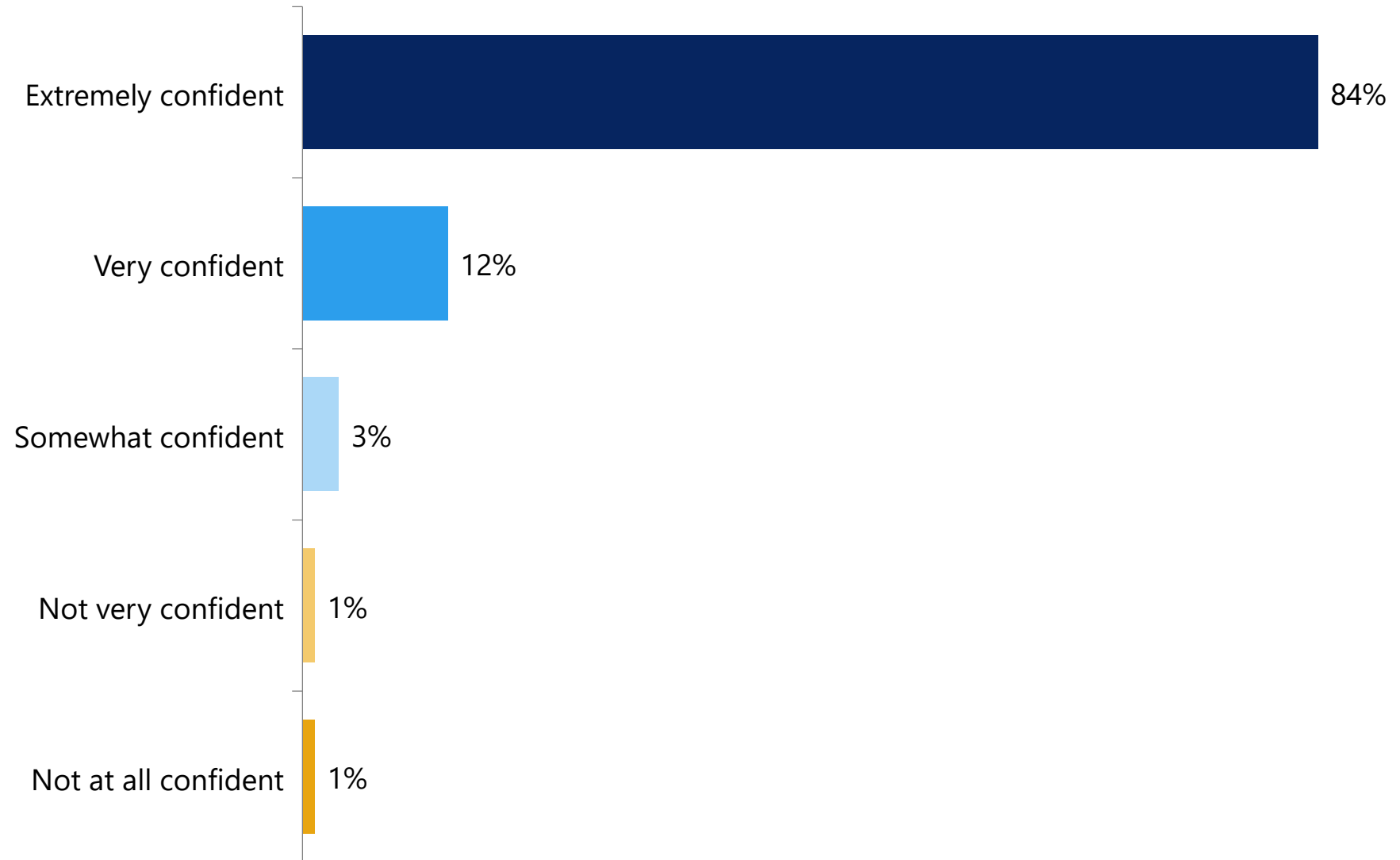
*Note: All respondents were registered voters and so may have lower awareness of same-day registration laws.

Frequent voters tend to have a more accurate understanding of their state's voting laws – especially with regard to voter ID laws.



*Note: All respondents were registered voters and so may have lower awareness of same-day registration laws.

Voters are near-universally confident that they would have the proper ID if they were to vote.



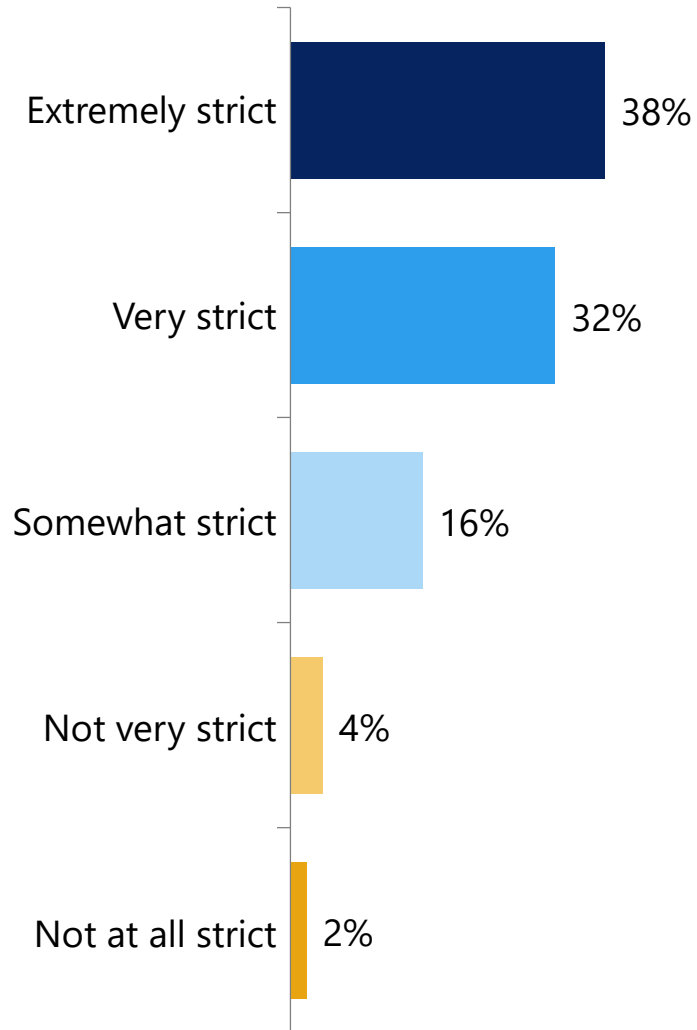
Note: Remainder Don't know

Q47: How confident are you that you would have the proper ID if you were to go vote?
[IF YES IN Q46]

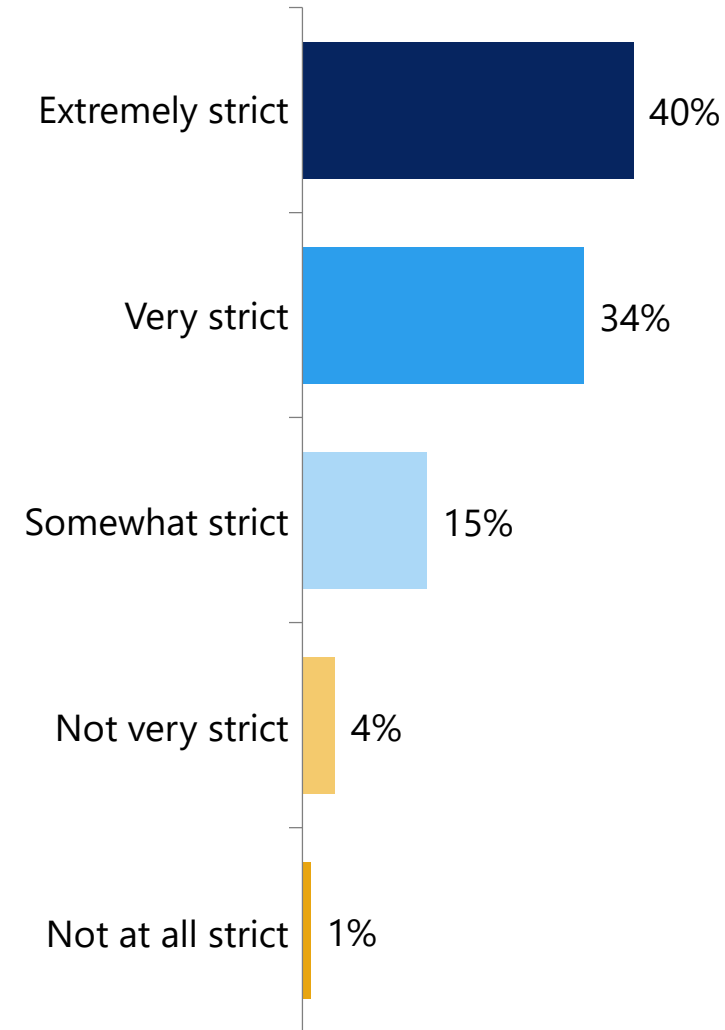
Voters generally don't feel as though "people like them" are subject to stricter enforcement of voter ID laws.



Overall enforcement of voter ID laws



Enforcement for "people like you"



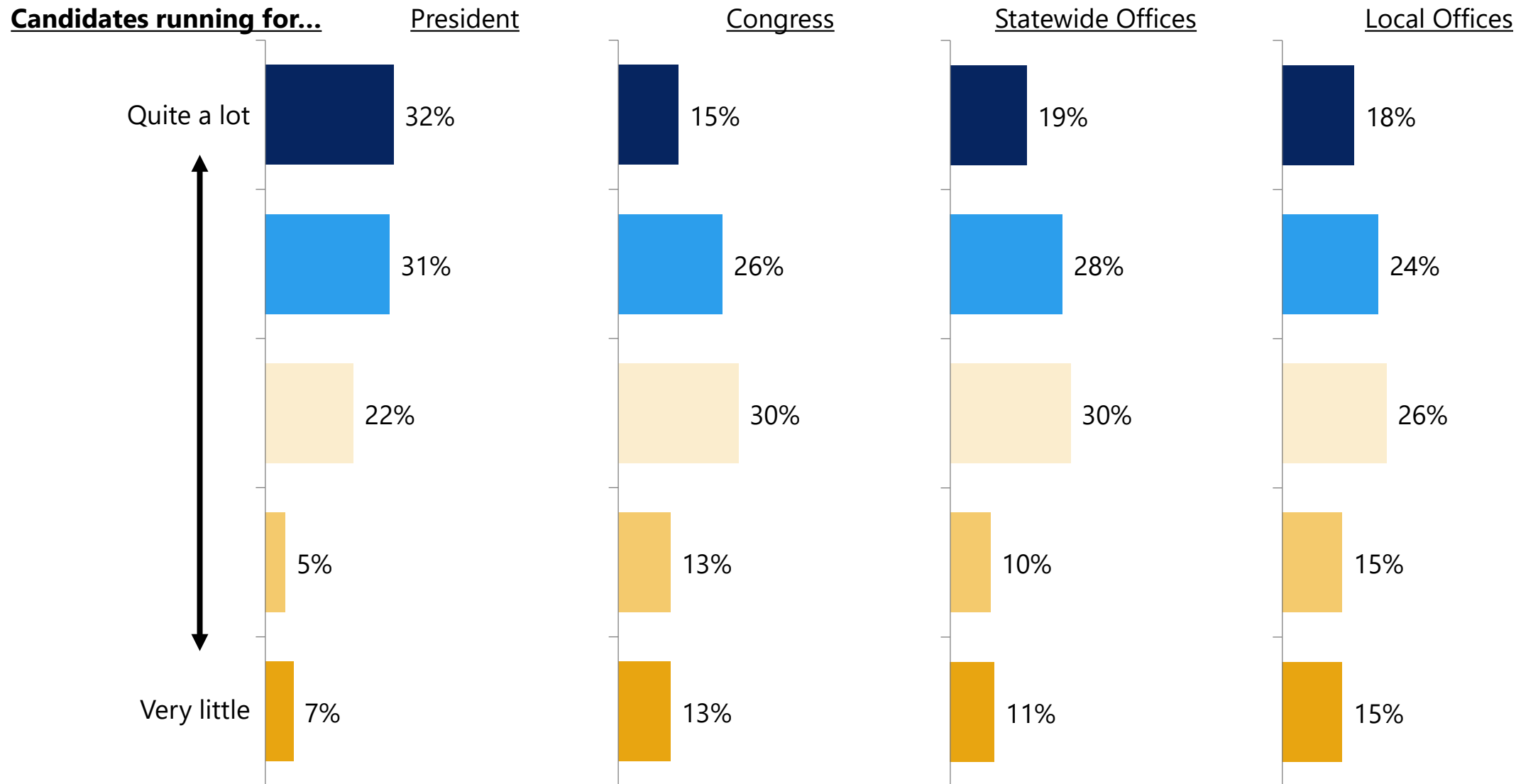
Note: Remainder Don't know

Q48: In general, how strictly do you think your state enforces its voter ID laws? AND Q49: How about when it comes to people like you voting – how strictly do you think your state enforces its voter ID laws for people like you? [IF YES IN Q46]

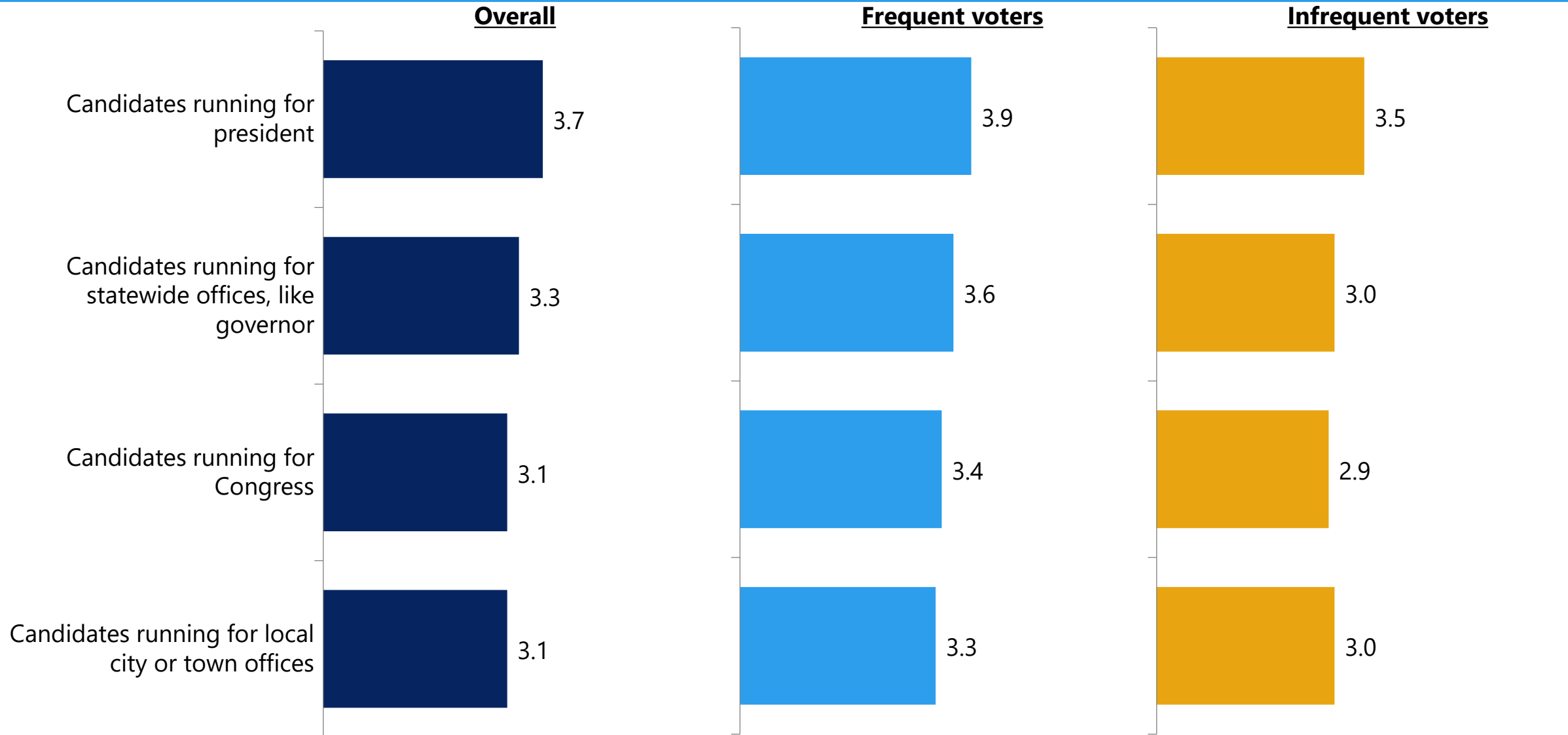
Knowledge of Candidates



Voters say they know a good deal about presidential candidates; far less for down-ballot races.



Infrequent voters' knowledge of candidates trails that of frequent voters for all types of candidates.



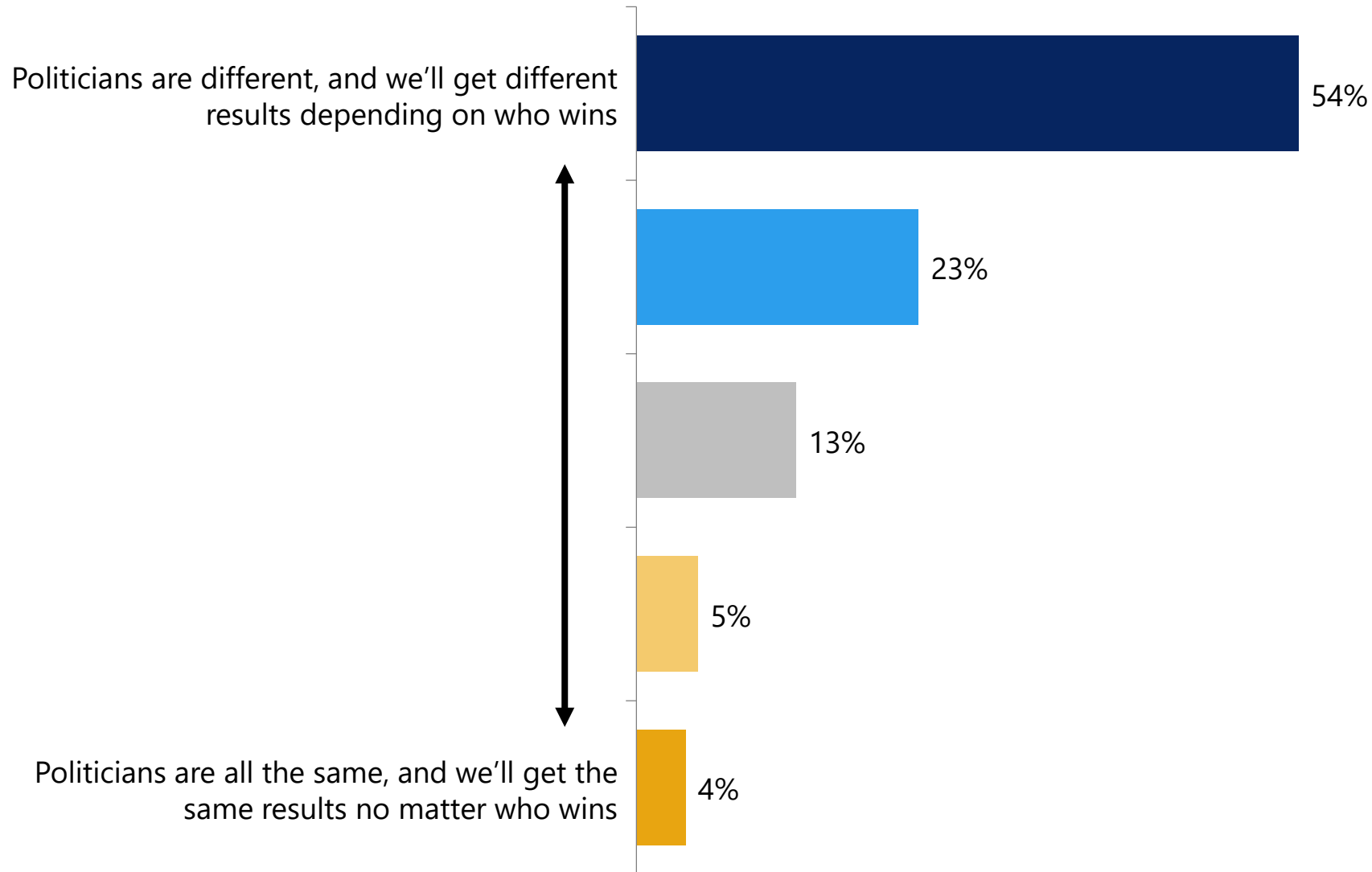
Note: Average score on a 5-point scale from 5 (quite a lot) to 1 (very little)

Attitudes toward Voting and Elections





Most Americans don't think politicians are all the same.

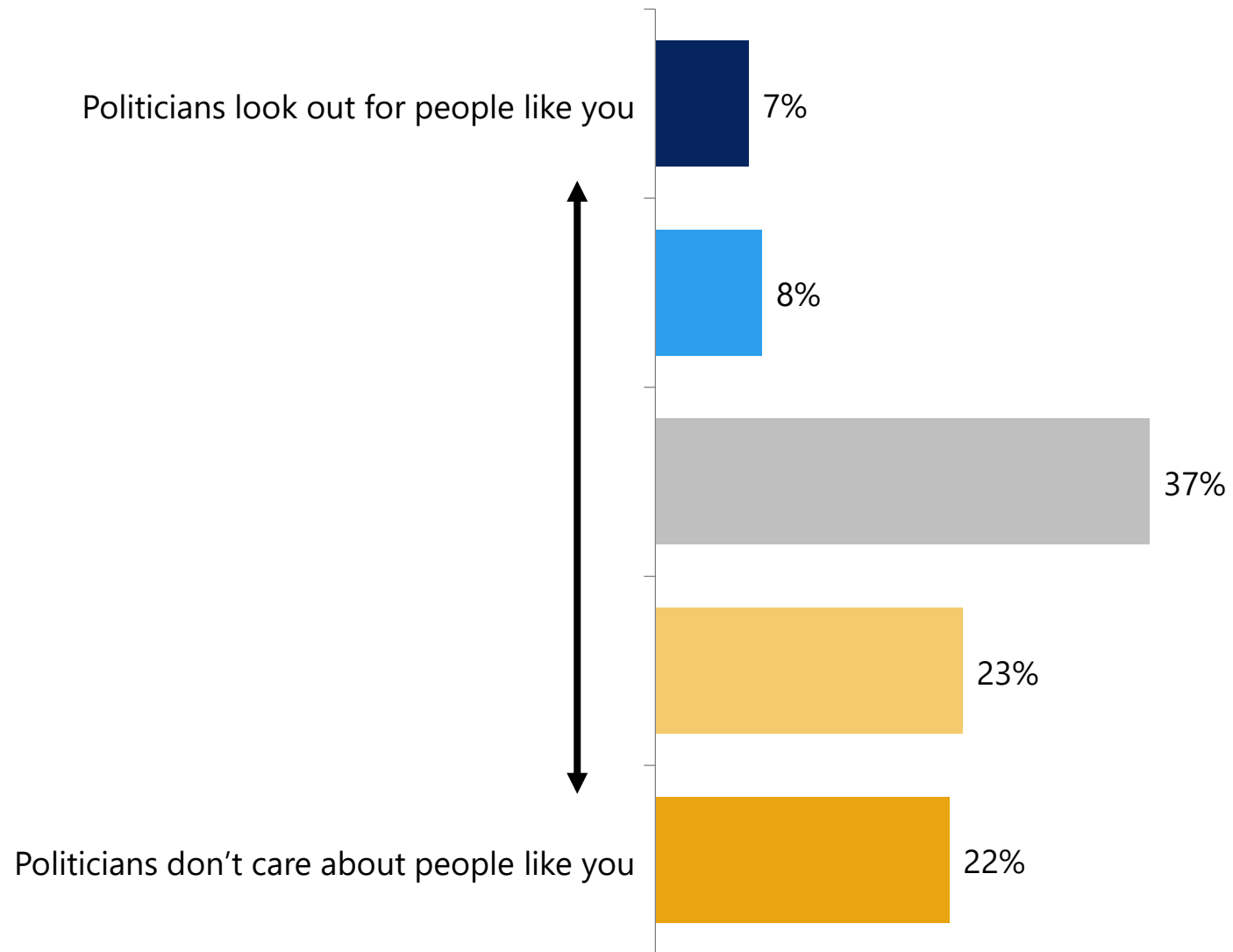


Note: Remainder Not sure

Q60. Which of the following comes closer to your view? (5-point scale, 5: politicians are all the same and we get the same results no matter who wins....1: politicians are different and we'll get different results depending who wins)

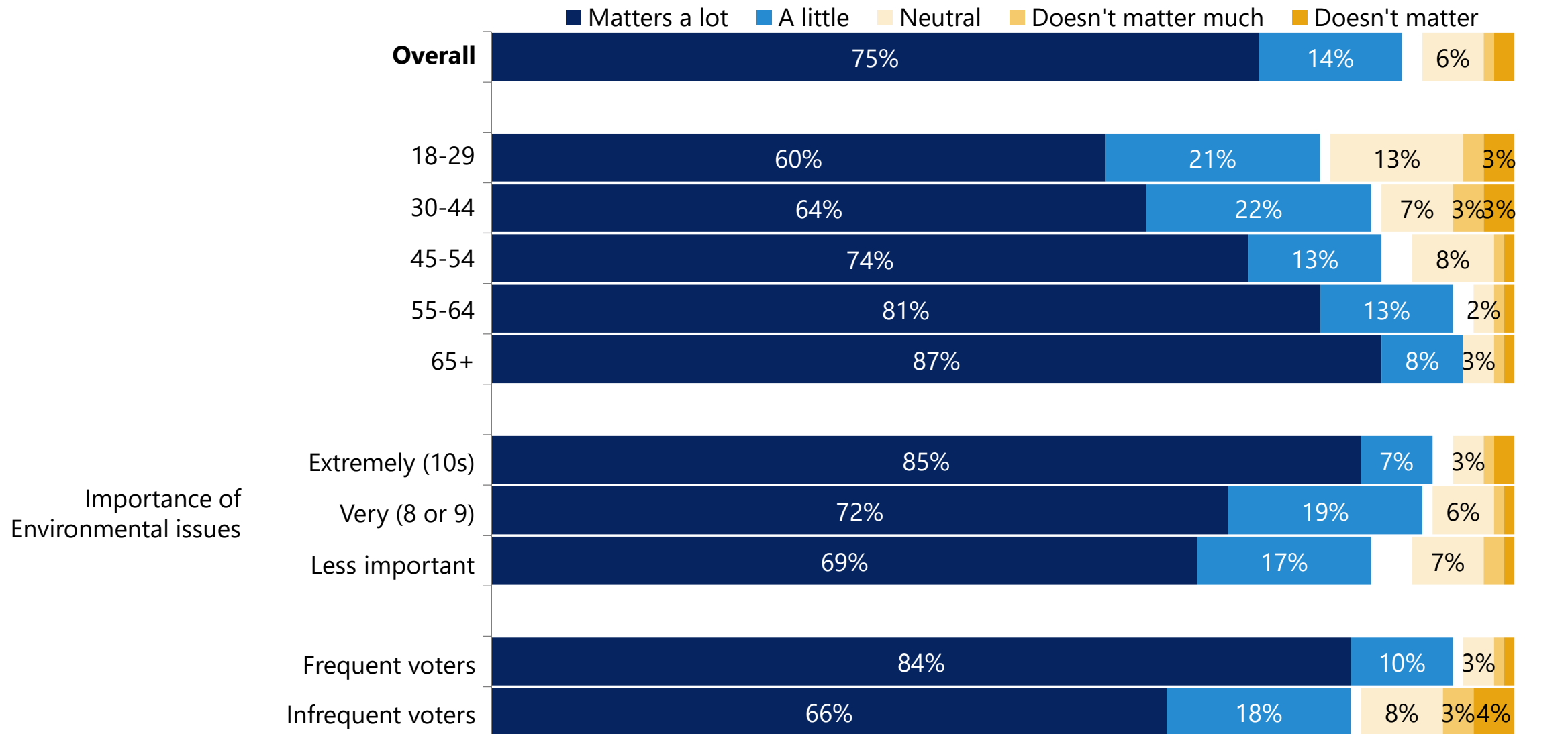


Very few Americans think politicians look out for people like them.



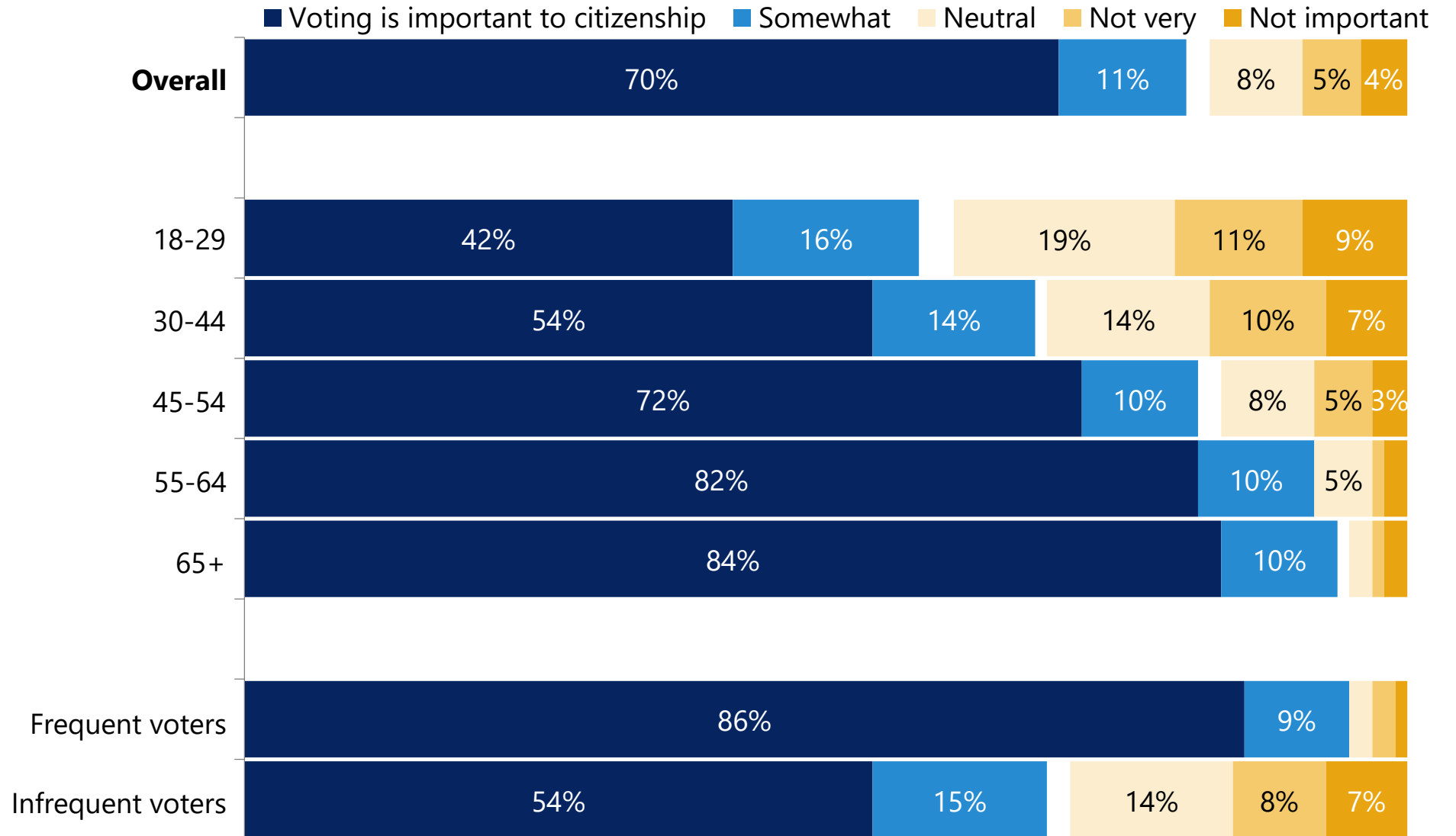
Note: Remainder Not sure

Most think who wins an election matters, but younger and less frequent voters are less convinced.



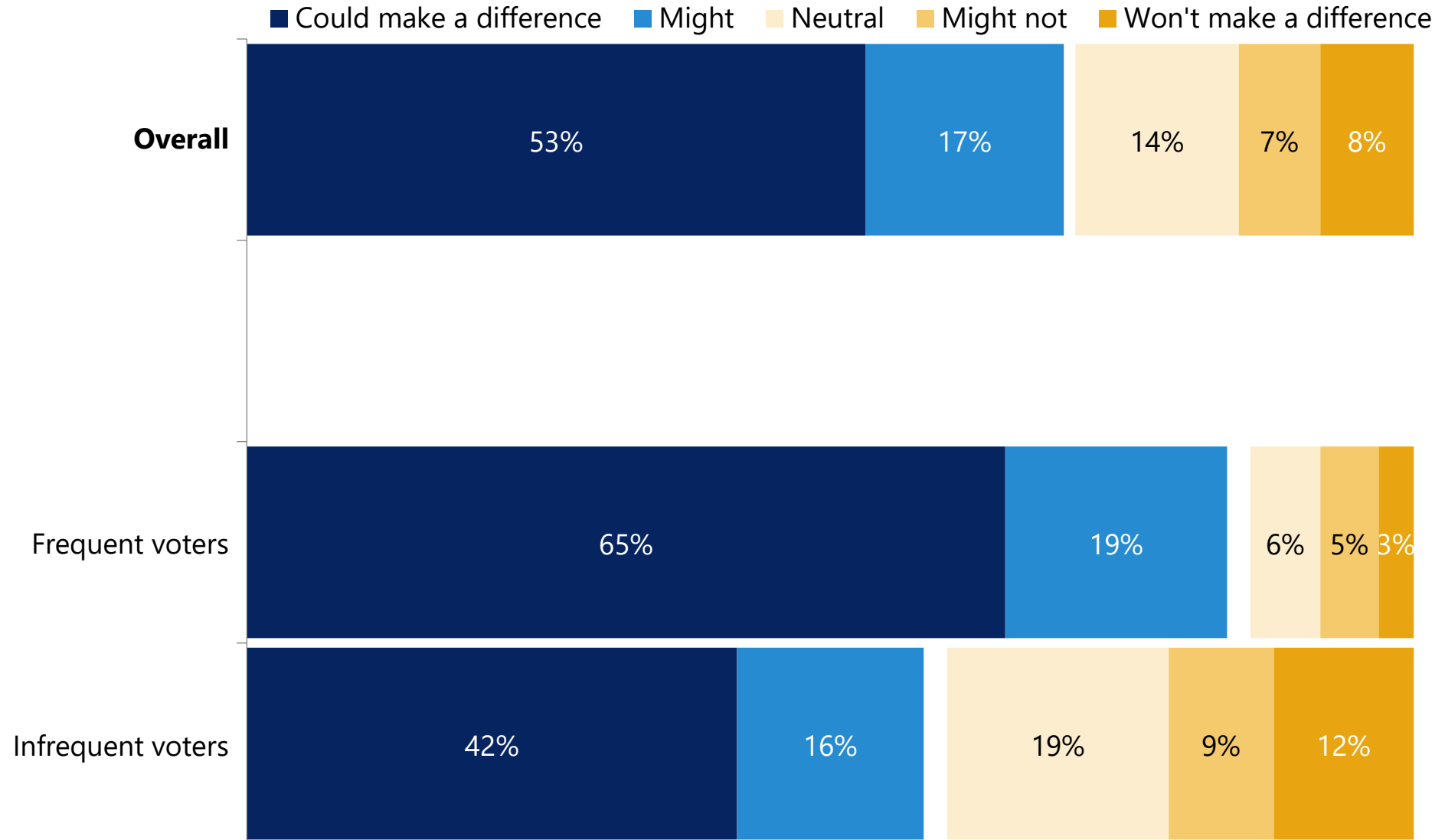
Note: Remainder Not sure

Younger Americans, infrequent voters are less convinced that voting is an important part of being a citizen.



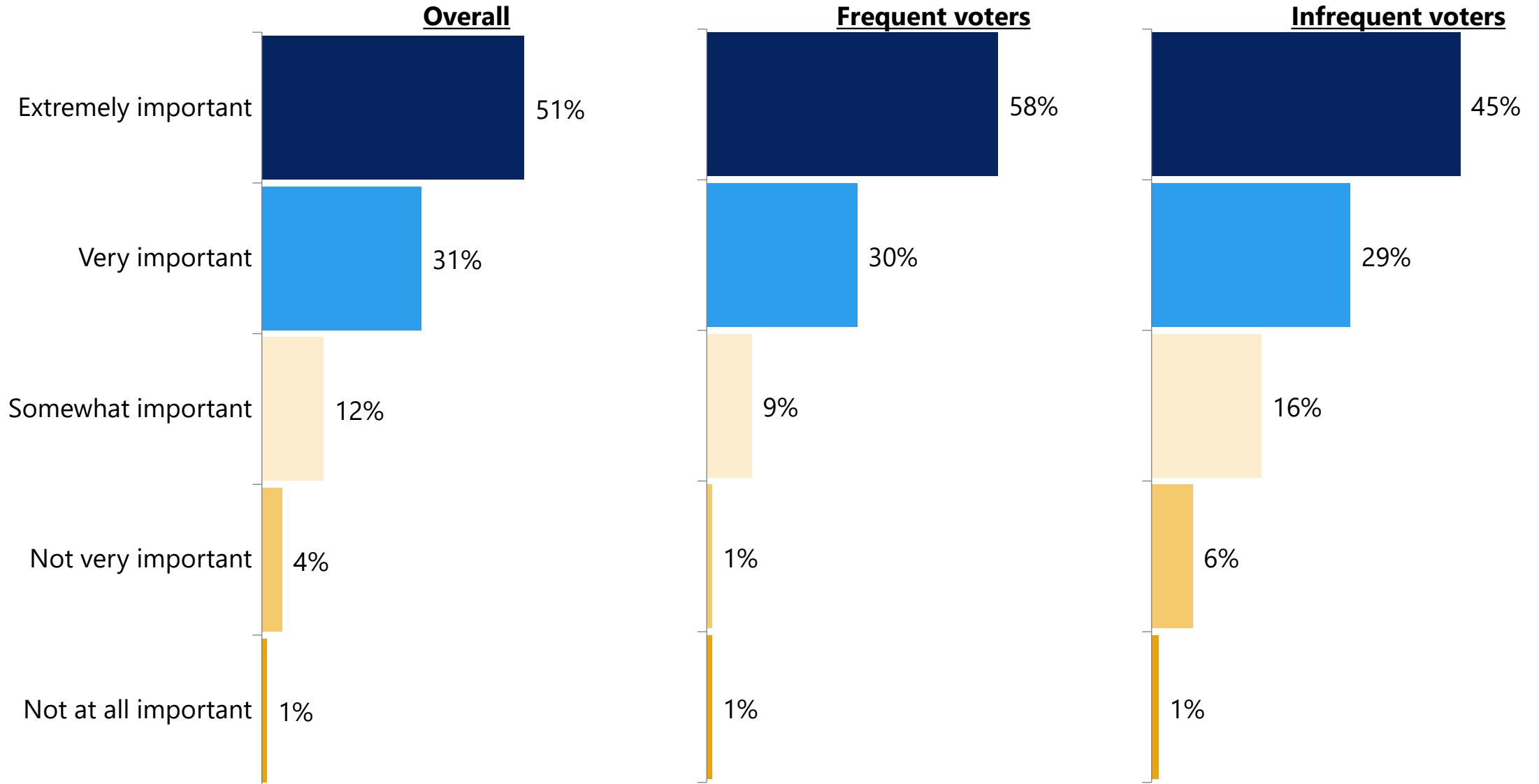
Note: Remainder Not sure

Infrequent voters are much less likely to think their vote could make a difference in local elections.



Note: Remainder Not sure

Infrequent voters are notably less likely to think elections are important when it comes to affecting policy outcomes.

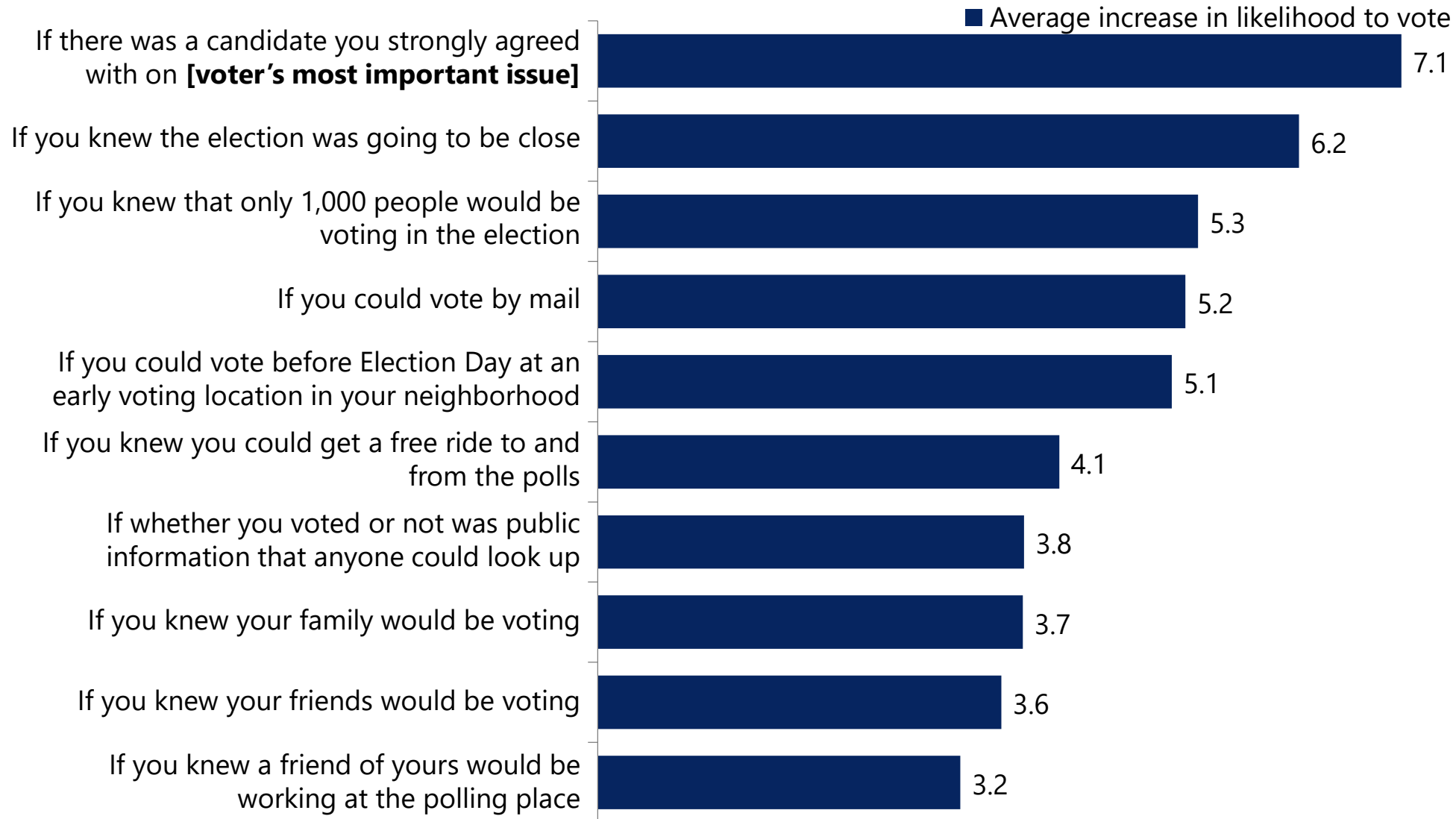


Note: Remainder Don't know

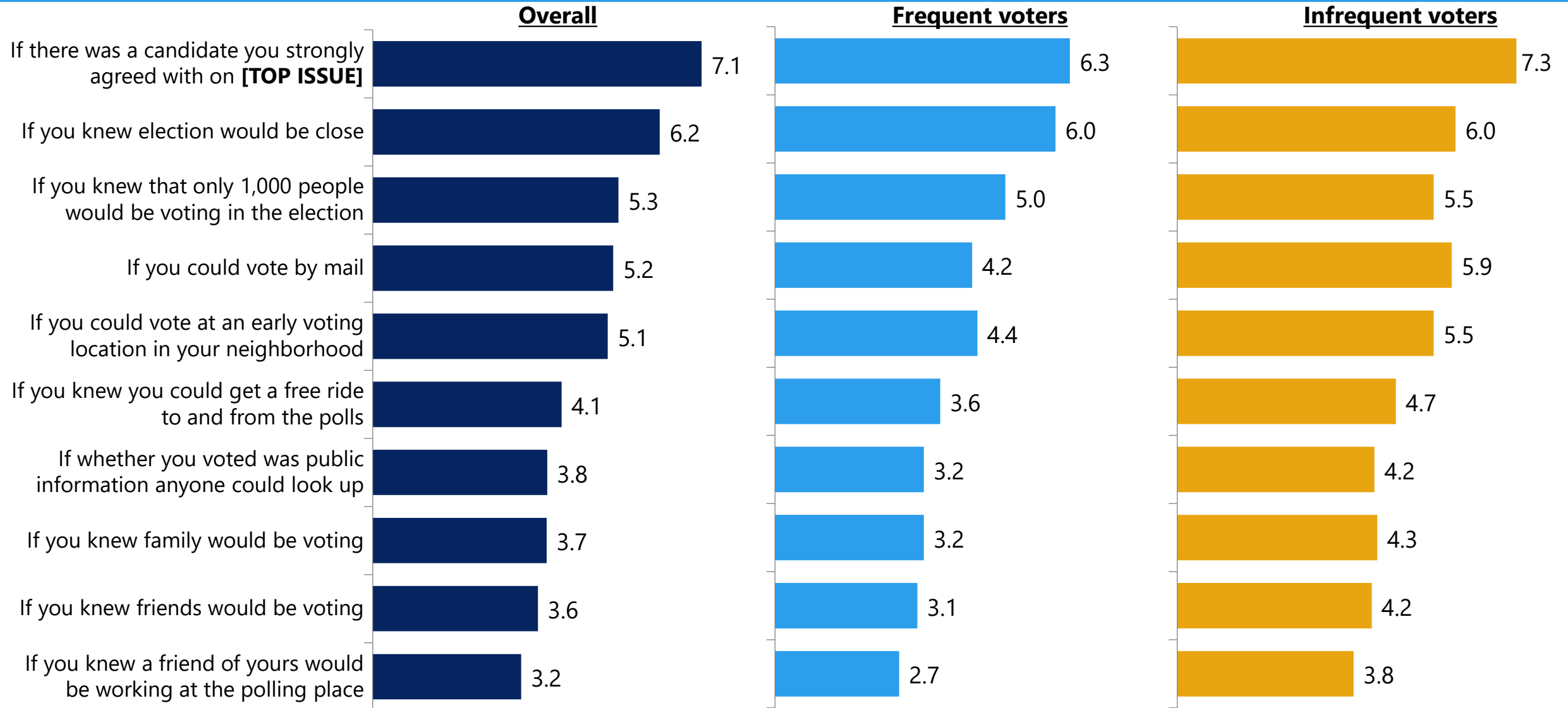
Increasing Turnout



Strongly agreeing with a candidate on their most important issue is most likely to increase a voter's likelihood to vote.



Agreeing with a candidate on their top issue is a particular turnout driver for infrequent voters; vote-by-mail is the top process reform.





Detailed Methodology

This study utilized a two-step process to produce a representative sample of 1,514 voter file-validated responses. The first step was a national online panel survey of 2,219 self-reported registered voters. The second step was a voter file verification process that successfully matched 68% of respondents to the voter file and appended vote history data to their responses. Analysis and reporting focused only on the 1,514 responses that were successfully matched to the voter file.

Initial Data Collection.

Beacon Research surveyed 2,219 registered voters (as well as individuals who said they had previously been registered) sourced from a variety of online panels. Surveys were completed between October 9th and 24th, 2019. Quotas based on age, gender, ethnicity, education, and geographic region were used to draw a representative sample of registered voters across the country. Minor weights were applied on these same variables after fielding to ensure the sample accurately reflected the demographic profile of the national registered voter population.

Matching to Voter File.

Respondents were asked to provide personally identifiable information (name and address) for study purposes only. This information was then matched to the TargetSmart voter file and the respondents' past electoral participation was appended. Just over two-thirds of respondents (68%) provided information that could be successfully matched. After matching, respondent PII was removed from the dataset and discarded to protect confidentiality. Respondents from California were not matched due to that state's legal restrictions on the use of the voter file. 1,514 records were successfully matched, for a margin of error of +/-2.5 percentage points. The margin of error is higher for subgroups. The data in this report is from those matched records only.



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