



THIRD WAY

ALG|research

# Economic Trust Gap

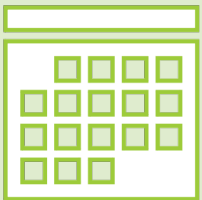
Findings and Recommendations from a Poll  
of Likely Voters 2022 voters

June 2021

# Survey Methodology



ALG Research conducted a multi-modal online and text-to-web survey of N=1000 likely 2022 General Election voters nationwide, with n=200 oversamples of Black and Latino likely voters, each.



Interviews were conducted June 2-8, 2021.



The margin of error for the sample is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

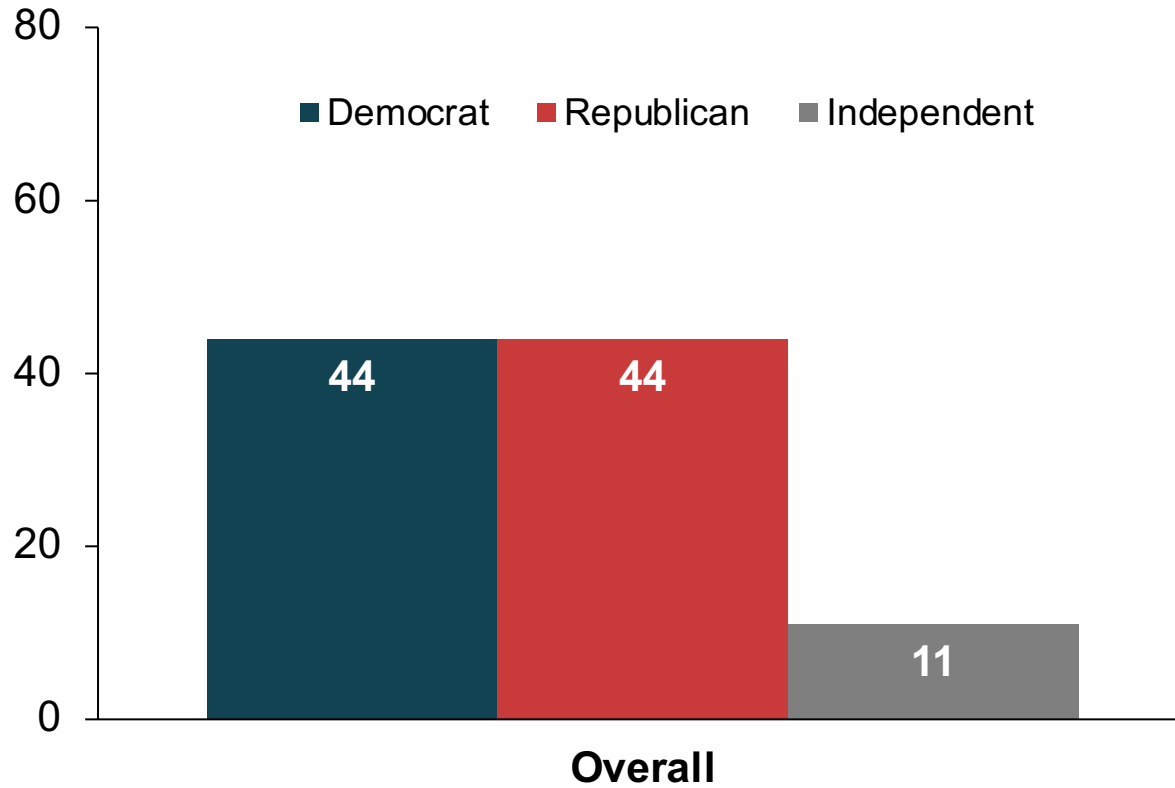
# POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

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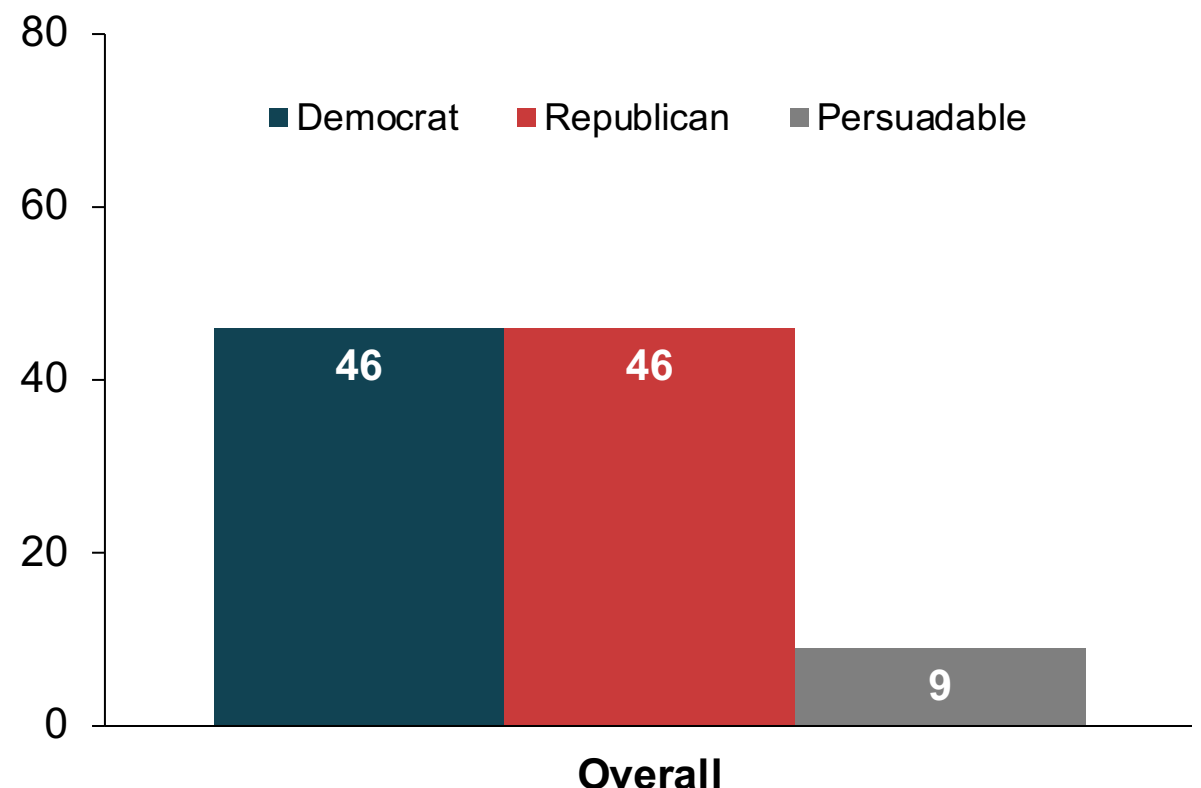
# The partisan environment is dead even, both in voters' self-identification and the generic Congressional ballot.

A plurality of Independents are persuadable today (44%), but the balance lean GOP (21-34).

Party ID



Generic Ballot



NET

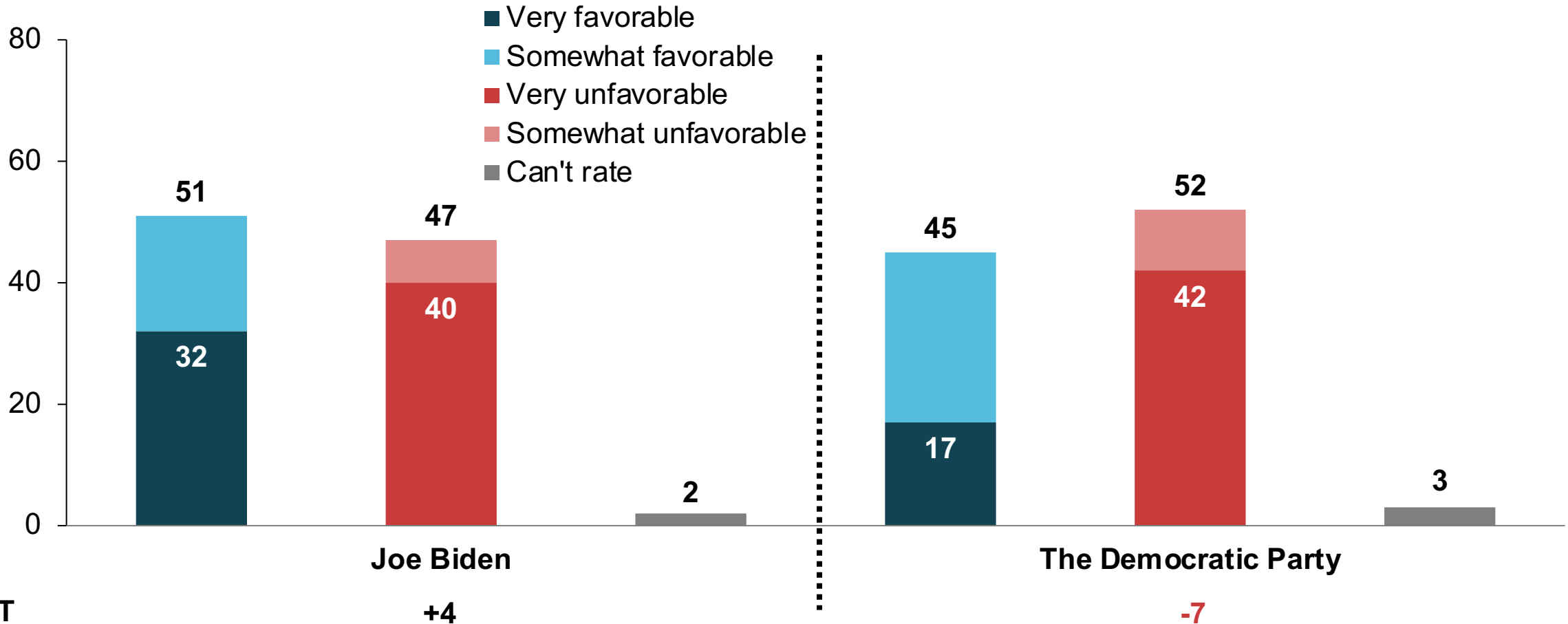
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# Biden is net popular, but the Democratic Party lags far behind him.

This gap is fairly uniform across demographic groups, though higher with Independents.

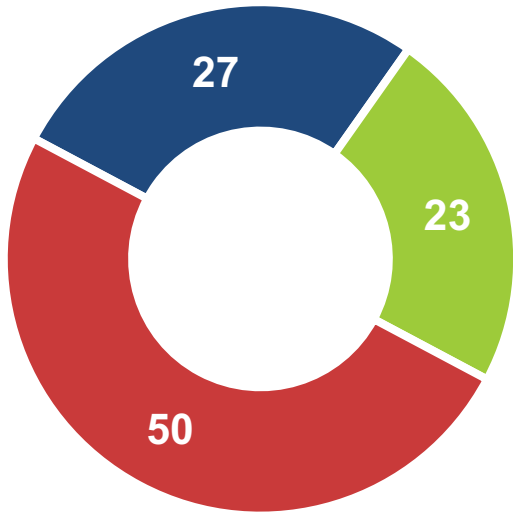
Popularity Ratings



# Most Americans are pessimistic about the state of the country.

Independents, Latinos, and those persuadable in a generic vote view things net negatively.

*Would you say things in the United States are going in the right direction or wrong direction?*



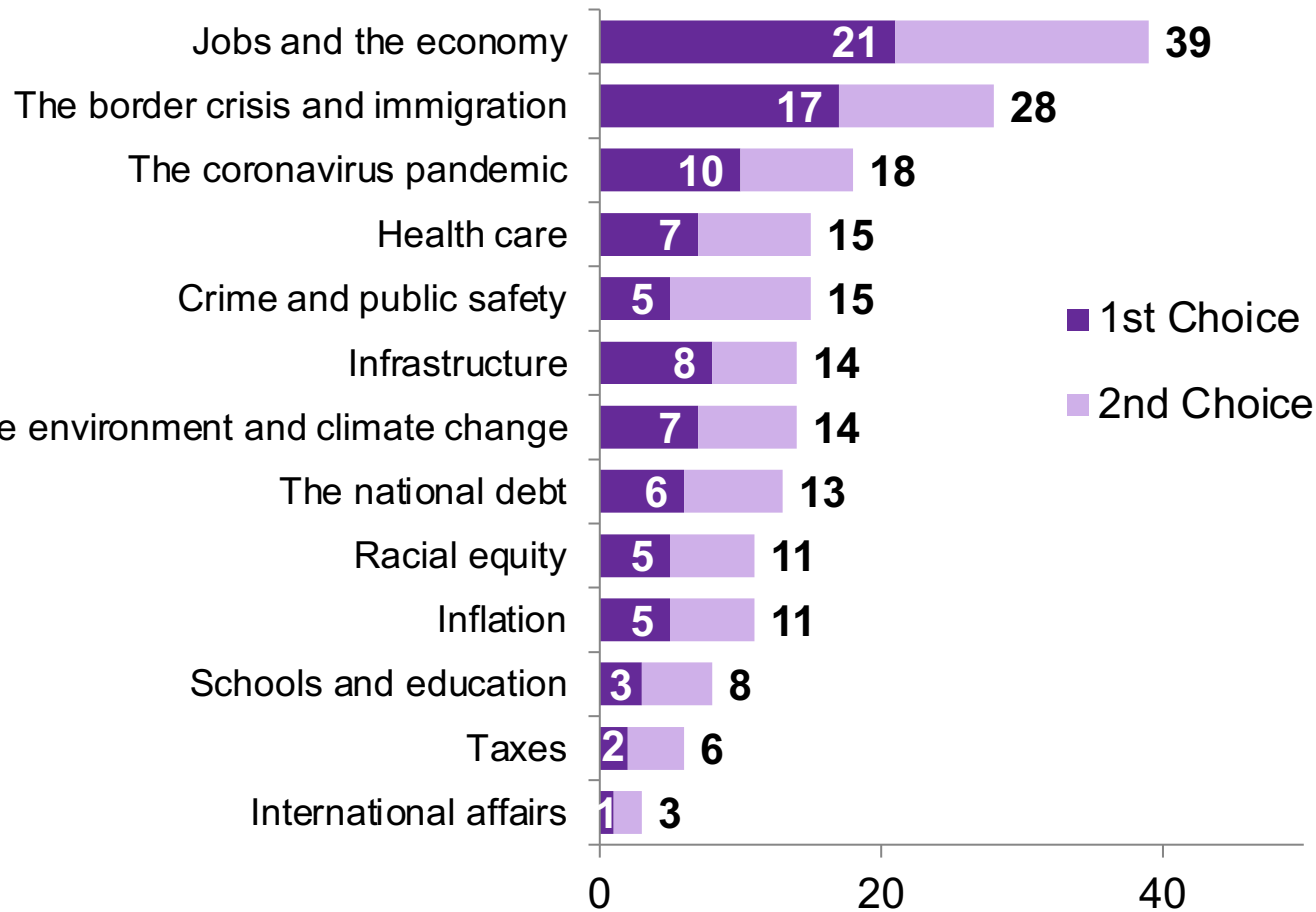
- Right direction
- Mixed
- Wrong direction

	Right	Wrong	Mixed	Net
Overall	27	50	23	-23
Democrats	53	13	33	+40
Republicans	5	85	10	-80
Independents	11	50	37	-39
Persuadable	12	46	40	-34
White	23	56	21	-33
Black	43	19	36	+24
Latino	32	39	29	-7

# “Jobs and the economy” is a top issue for voters.

More than a quarter call the economy + inflation their #1 issue, and a majority call one of the two a top-two issue.

*Which of the following would you say is the most important priority Congress and the President should focus on?*



Jobs and the Economy	Issue Ranking	1 <sup>st</sup> + 2 <sup>nd</sup> Choice (%)
Overall	1 <sup>st</sup>	39
Dem.	1 <sup>st</sup>	35
Rep.	2 <sup>nd</sup>	44
Ind.	1 <sup>st</sup>	32
Pers.	1 <sup>st</sup>	27
White College	1 <sup>st</sup>	36
White Non-College	1 <sup>st</sup>	41
Black	2 <sup>nd</sup>	35
Latino	1 <sup>st</sup>	43

# ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

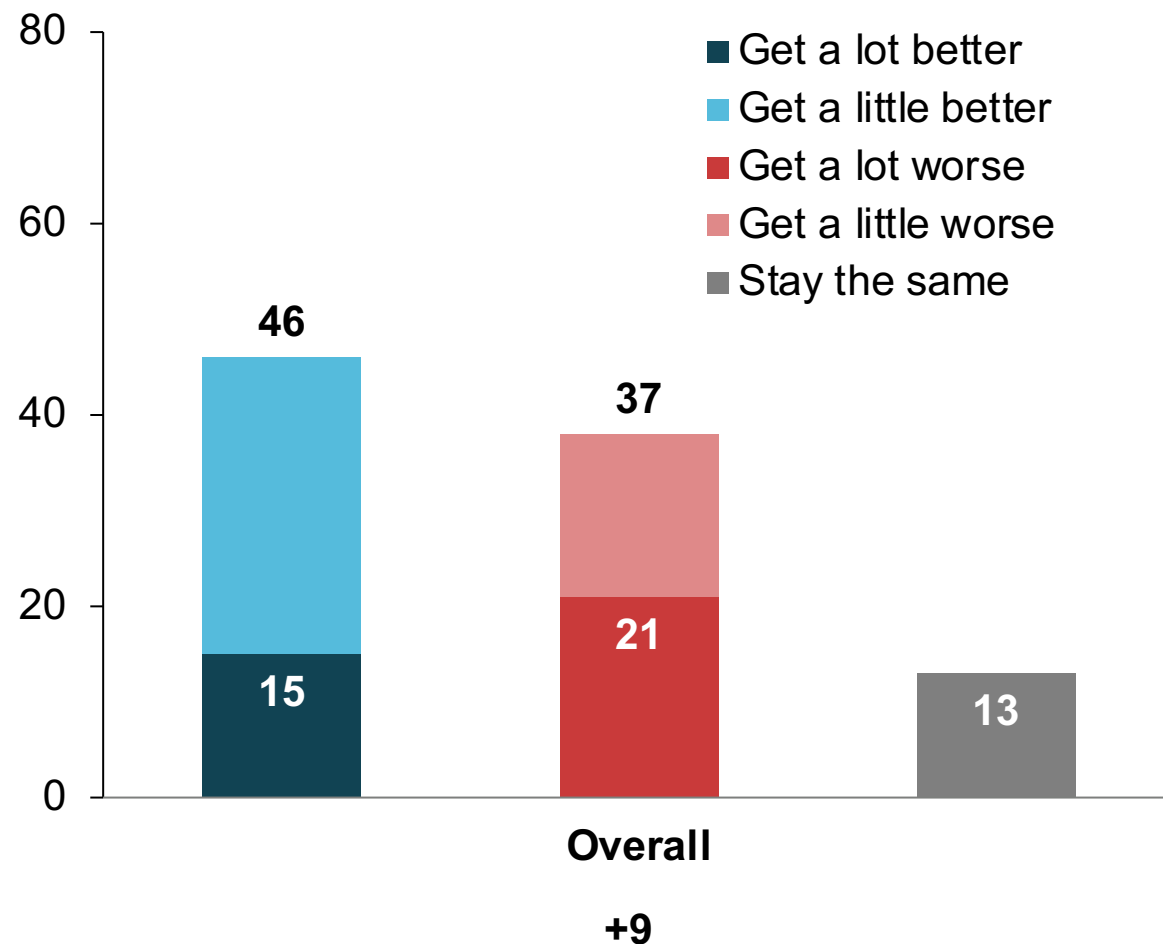
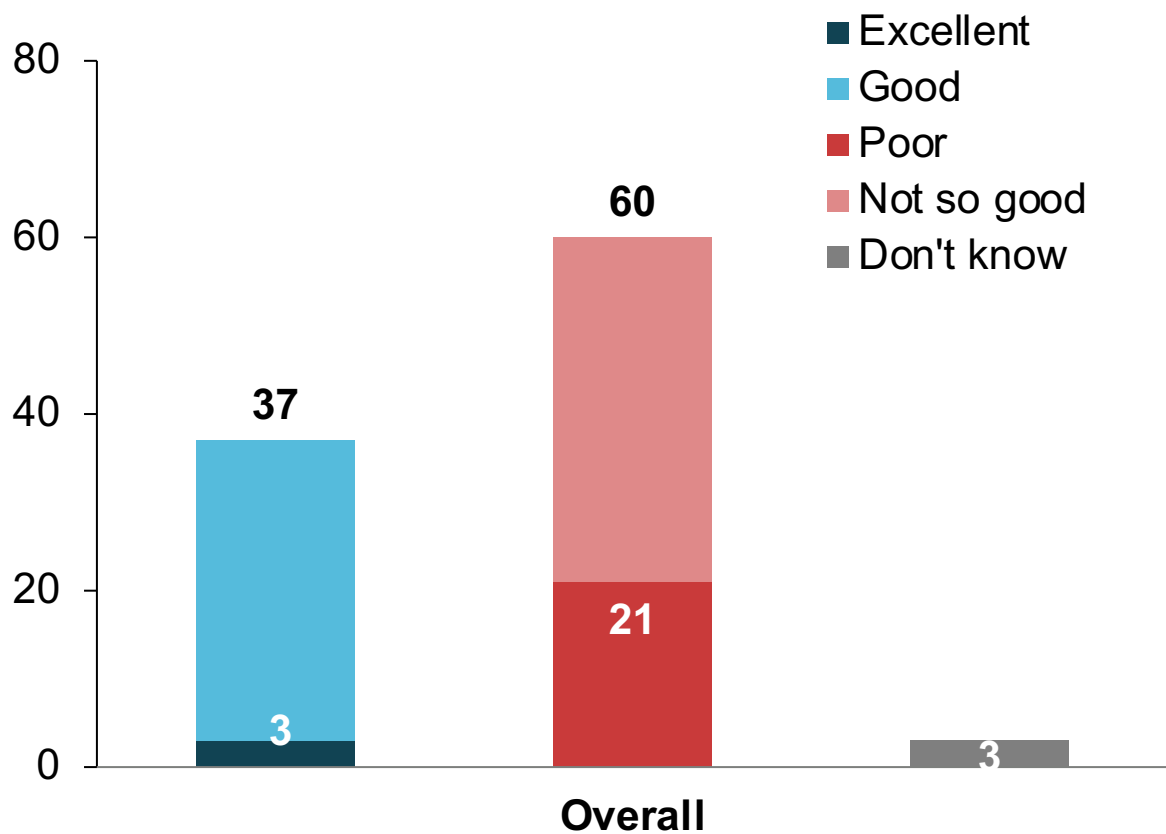


# Americans rate the economy poorly today, but most think it will improve in the next six months.

Democrats think it's good and getting better, Republicans think it's bad and getting worse, and Independents think it's bad but remain mixed on where it's going.

*How would you rate the current state of the U.S. economy?*

*In the next six months, do you think the economy will...*

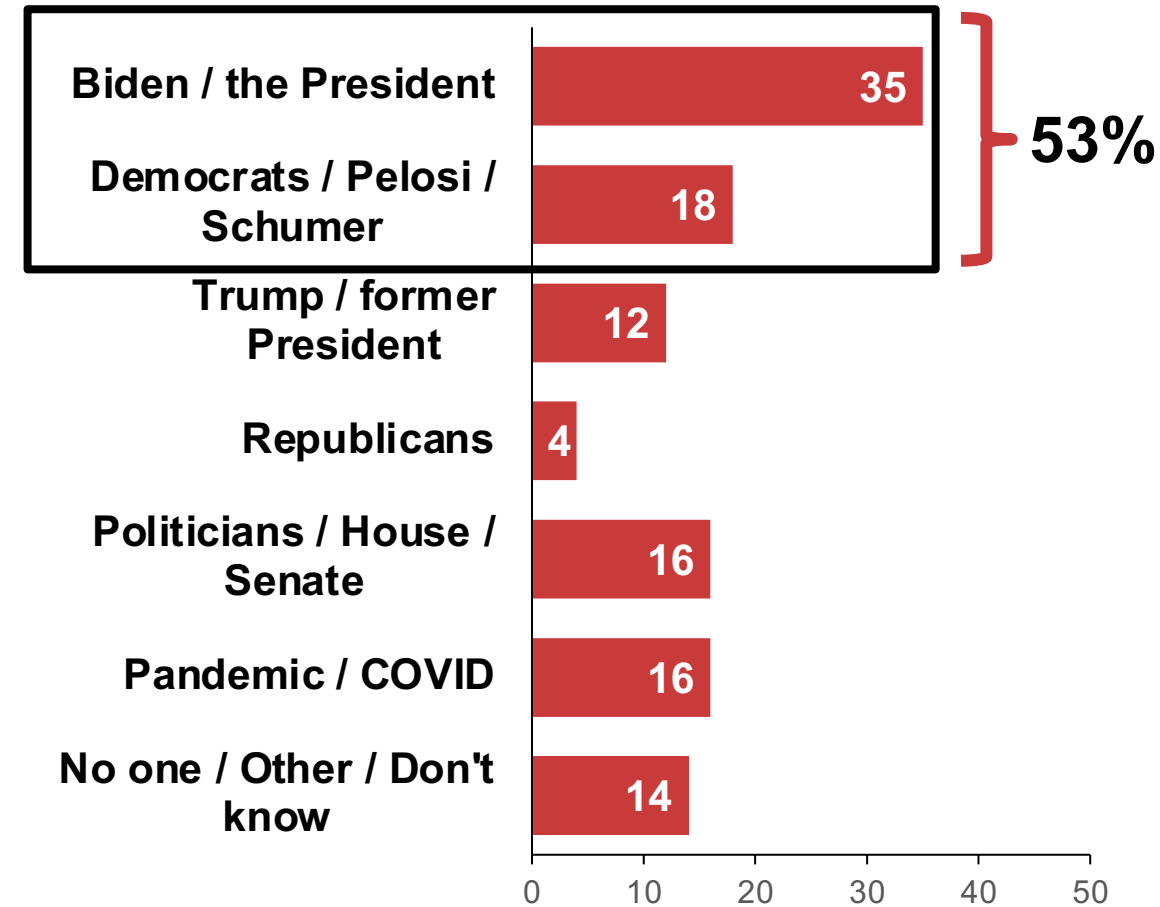
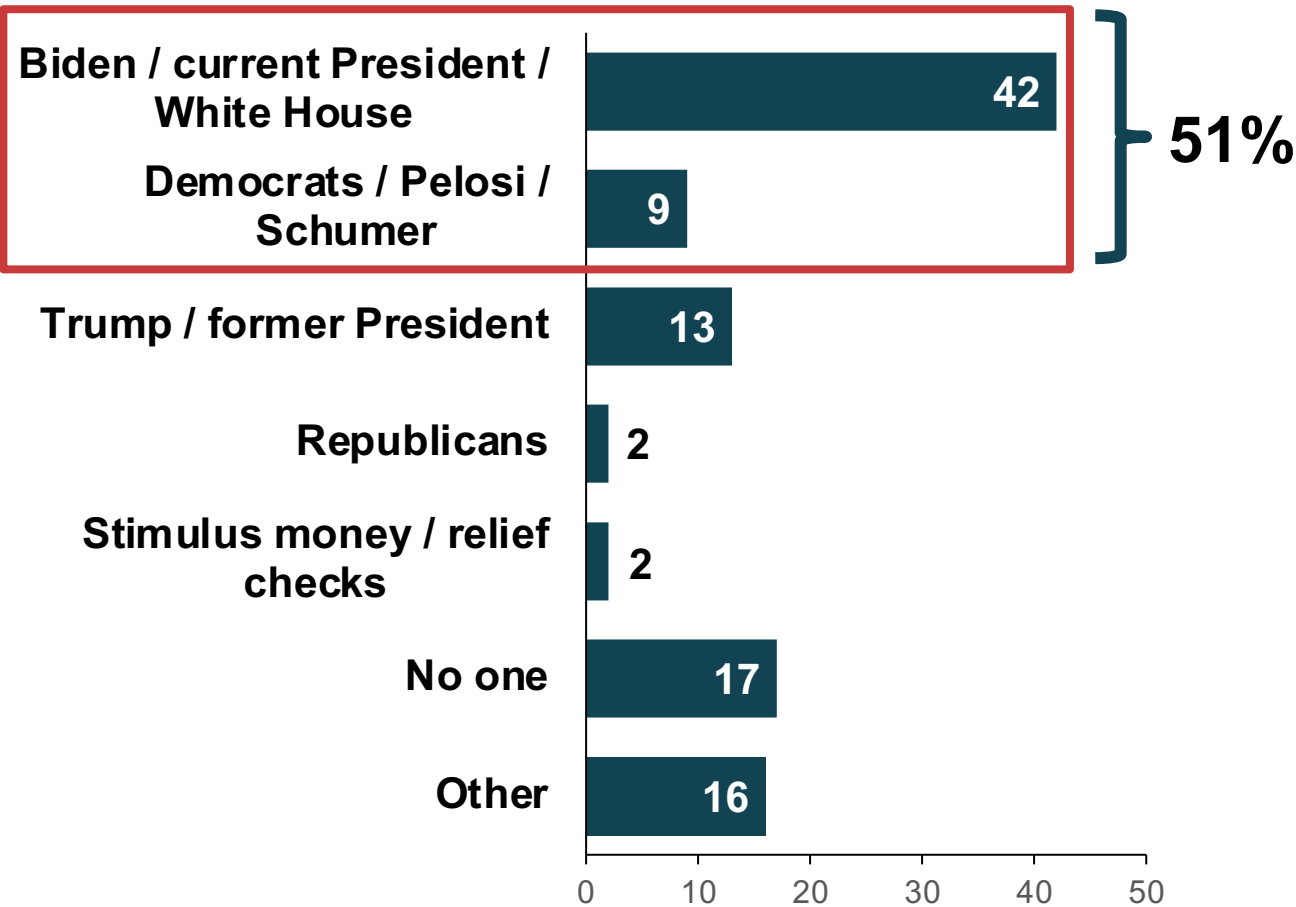


# It's Democrats' economy now, not Trump's.

Whether it's for credit or blame, people say Biden and Democrats own the current economy and not Trump.

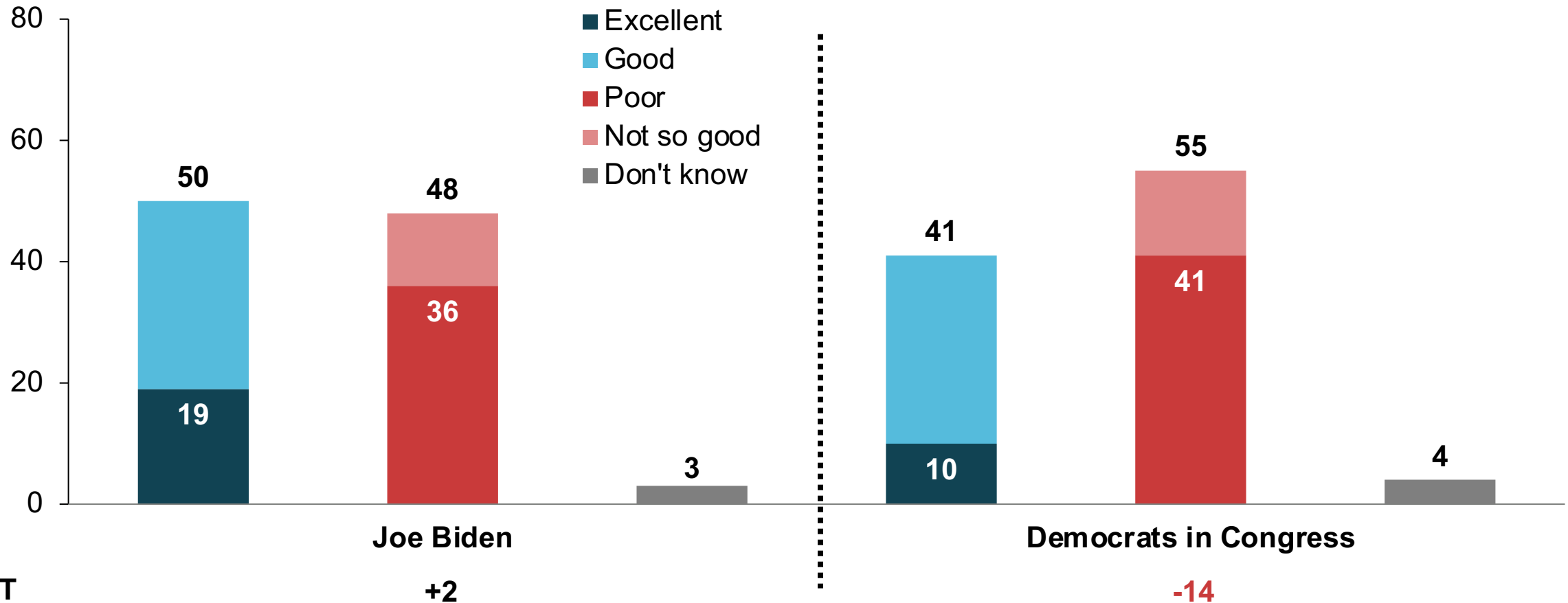
*Who do you credit for the good economy?  
[ONLY ASKED IF RATED ECONOMY POSITIVE]*

*Who do you blame for the bad economy?  
[ONLY ASKED IF RATED ECONOMY NEGATIVE]*



# The President gets a net positive rating on the economy, but voters do not extend that credit to Democrats writ large.

How would you rate the job \_\_\_\_\_ is doing handling the economy?



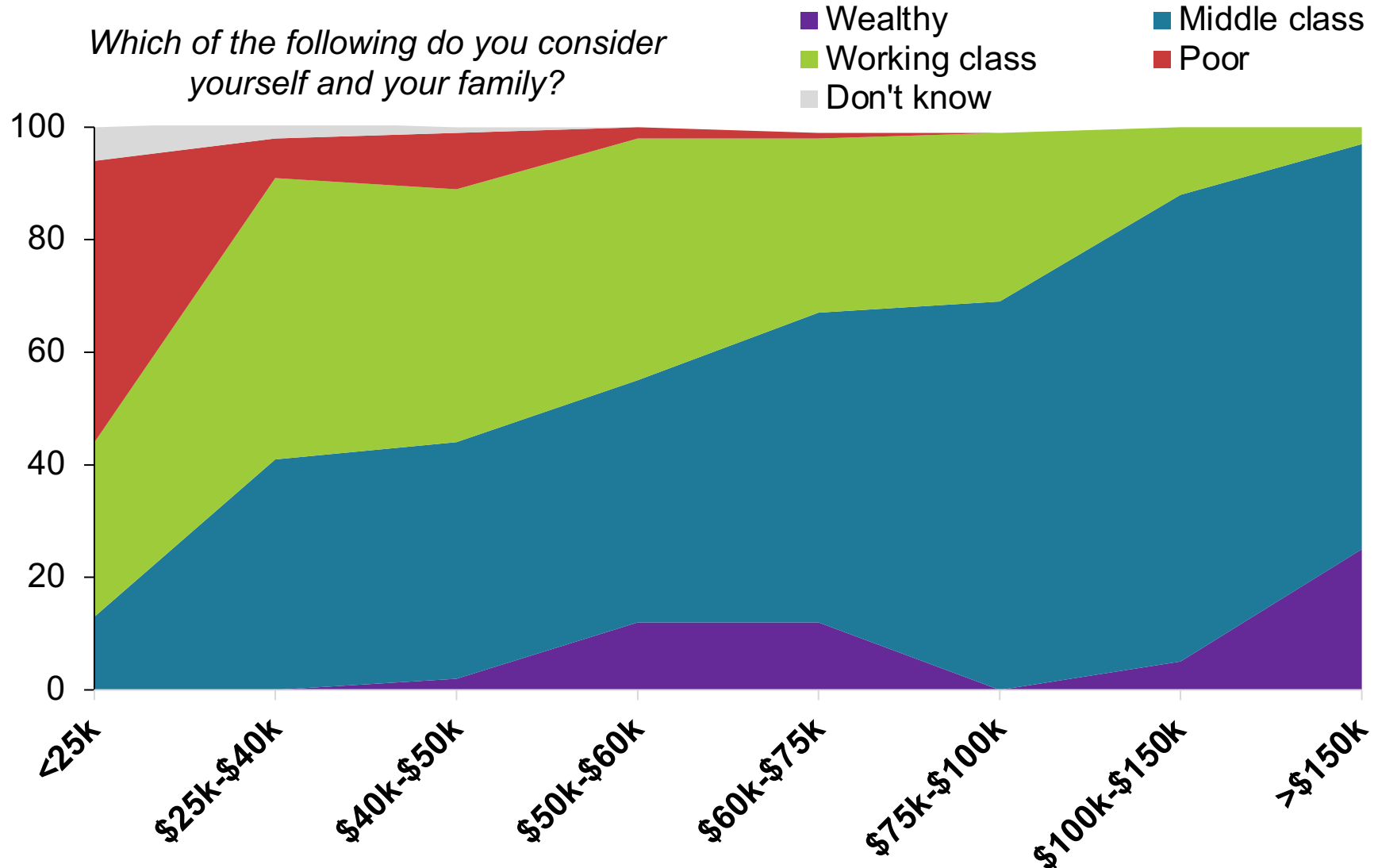
Democrats' underperformance versus Biden is driven by white moderates and Independents – but also lower-income and working-class people of color.

Economy Job Rating – NET	Biden	Dems	Gap
<b>Overall</b>	+2	-14	-16
Democrats	+87	+66	-21
Republicans	-76	-86	-10
Independents	-14	-46	-32
Persuadable	-7	-38	-31
<b>White</b>	-10	-25	-15
<i>Non-college</i>	-21	-33	-12
<i>College grad</i>	+5	-14	-19
<i>Moderate</i>	+9	-18	-27

Economy Job Rating NET	Biden	Dems	Gap
<b>Black (overall)</b>	<b>+72</b>	<b>+48</b>	<b>-24</b>
<i>Working class</i>	+73	+47	-26
<i>Blue collar</i>	+70	+47	-23
<i>Service industry</i>	+75	+42	-33
<\$50k/year	+82	+54	-28
<b>Latino (overall)</b>	<b>+15</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>-21</b>
<i>Working class</i>	+16	-10	-26
<i>Blue collar</i>	+2	-21	-23
<i>Service industry</i>	+2	-29	-31
<\$50k/year	+32	-6	-38

# Nearly all Americans think of themselves as middle/working class.

More than 80% describe themselves that way at every income level between \$25,000 and \$150,000, and only half making less than \$25,000 describe themselves as poor.



<b>Overall</b>	
<b>Poor</b>	6%
<b>Working class</b>	28%
<b>Middle class</b>	56%
<b>Wealthy</b>	7%
<b>Don't know</b>	2%

# A majority of Americans *currently experiencing financial distress* consider themselves middle or working class.

People who policy experts might think are poor do not feel Democrats' "helping the poor" language means help is coming for them.

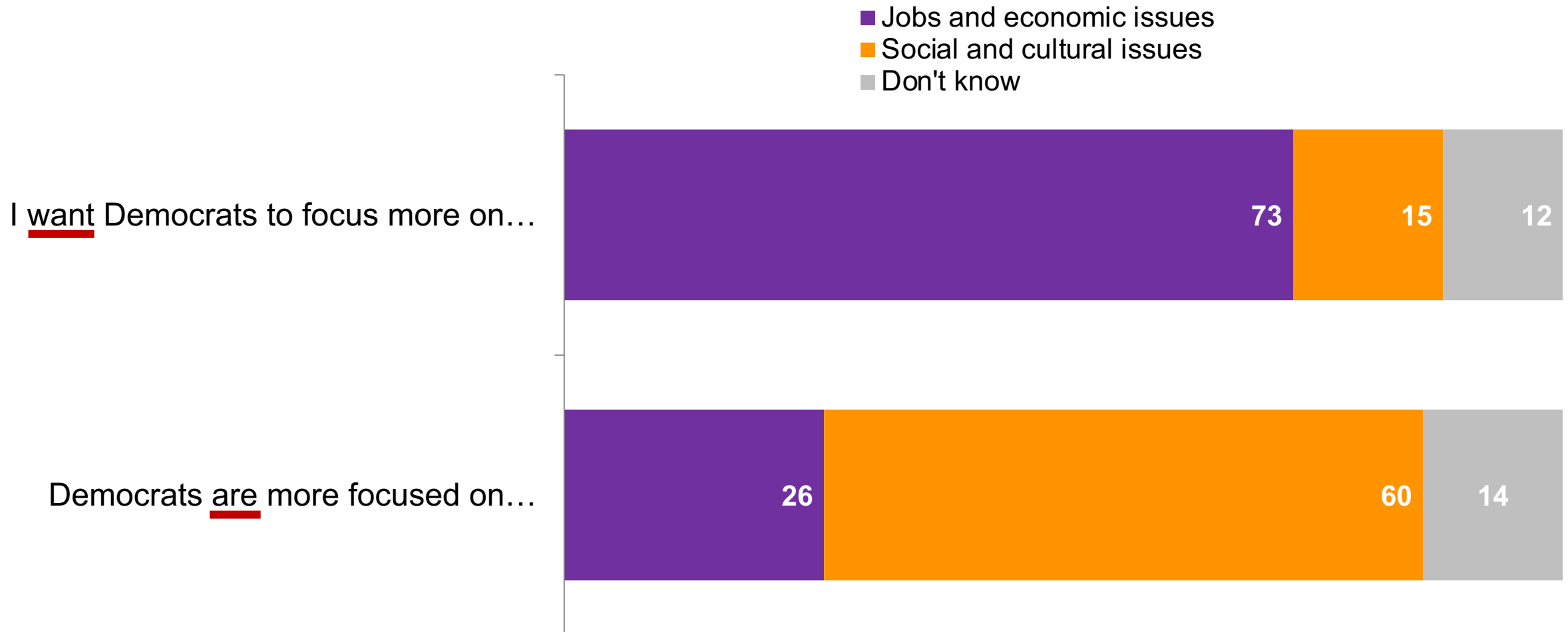
*How would you describe your current financial situation?*

	Living Comfortably	Meeting expenses with a little left over	Living paycheck-to-paycheck	Having trouble meeting expenses	Total in Financial Distress
Poor	1	3	12	37	21
Working class	8	32	62	44	55
Middle class	72	63	22	15	20
Wealthy	18	1	1	2	1

These four cells account for 18% of all Americans – nearly 1 in 5.

# THE ECONOMIC TRUST GAP

# Americans want Democrats to focus on the economy – but most think the party is prioritizing social and cultural issues.



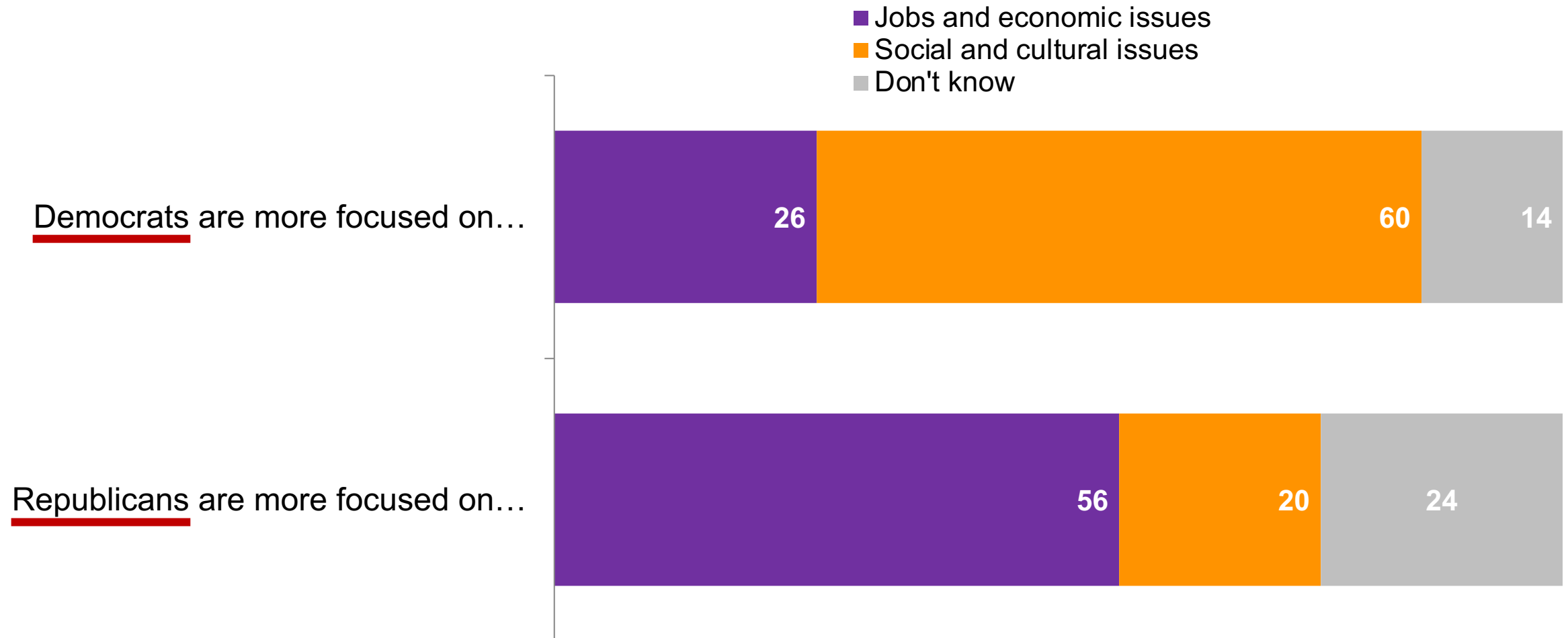


This gap is a serious problem that exists among every demographic group.

It reflects what we saw in earlier qualitative research, especially with Latino voters.

	<b>I <u>want</u></b> Democrats to focus on jobs and the economy	Democrats <b><u>are</u></b> focused on jobs and the economy	Gap
Overall	73	26	-47
White non-college	77	19	-58
White college graduate	72	26	-46
Black	58	52	-6
Latino	73	26	-47
Democrats	61	51	-10
Republicans	84	4	-80
Independents	69	13	-56
Persuadable	66	12	-54

In contrast, voters think Republicans ARE focused on the economy.



# Independents, Latinos, and Persuadable voters believe this by wide margins.

Black voters think Democrats are more focused on the economy, but not by nearly the 90-10 margins they often support Dem candidates.

	<b><u>Democrats</u></b> are focused on jobs and the economy	<b><u>Republicans</u></b> are focused on jobs and the economy	Gap
Overall	26	56	-30
White non-college	19	65	-46
White college graduate	26	55	-29
Black	52	29	+23
Latino	26	49	-23
Democrats	51	27	+24
Republicans	4	87	-83
Independents	13	44	-31
Persuadable	12	42	-30

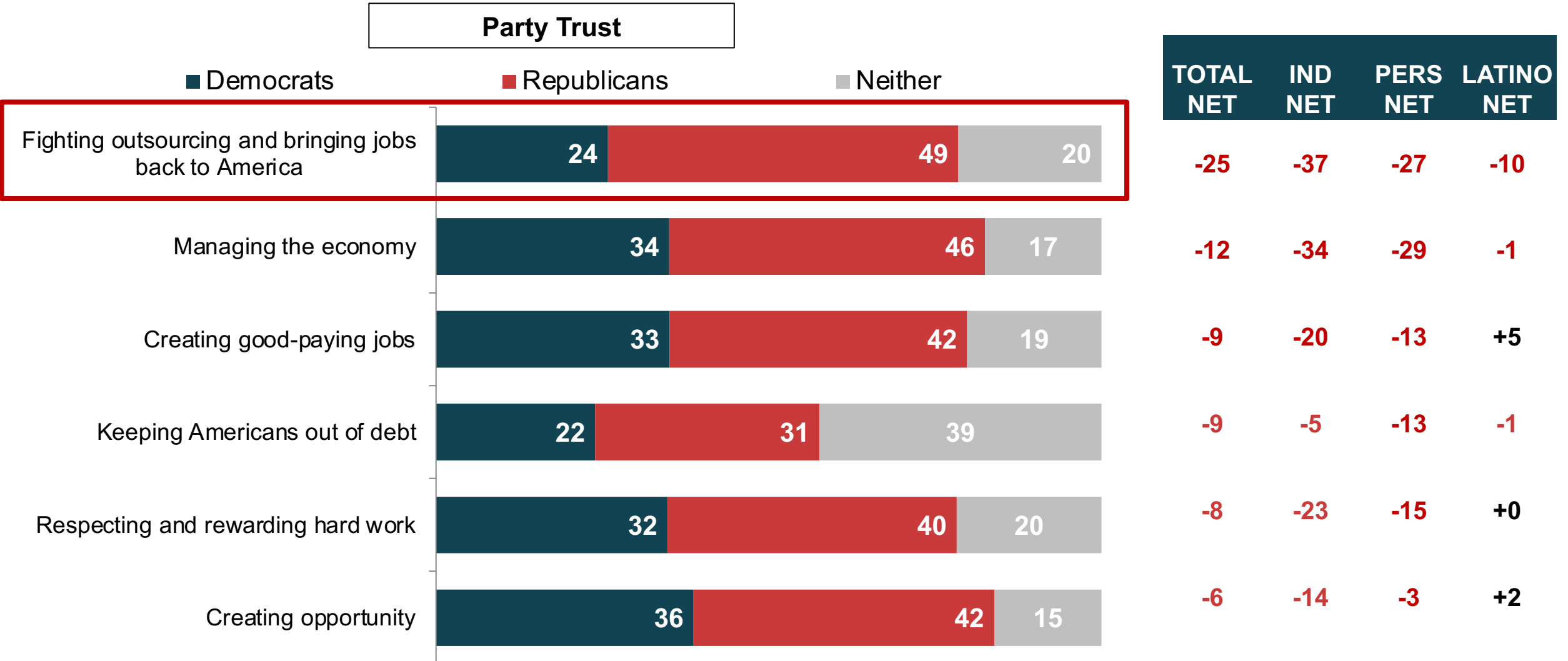
# The same pattern holds which party manages the economy better.

We are in trouble with Latinos, Independents, and white college grads on voters' top issue.

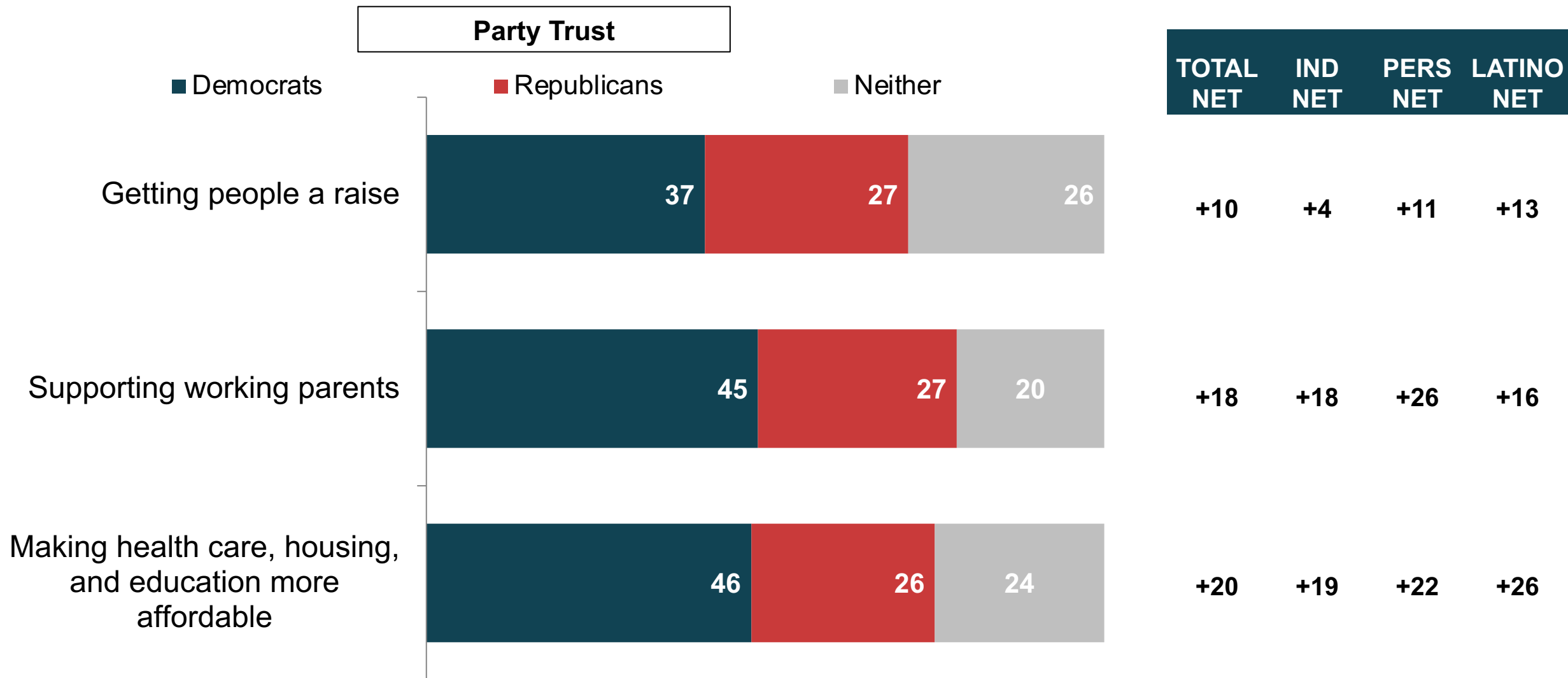
	<b><u>Dems</u></b> do a better job managing the economy	<b><u>Reps</u></b> do a better job managing the economy	Gap
Overall	34	46	-12
White non-college	25	55	-30
White college graduate	39	45	-6
Black	59	15	+44
Latino	37	38	-1
Democrats	73	6	+67
Republicans	2	85	-83
Independents	12	46	-34
Persuadable	8	37	-29

# On a range of economic issues, voters trust Republicans more.

We've completely lost the initiative with voters on who will bring and keep jobs here vs. who will send them overseas.



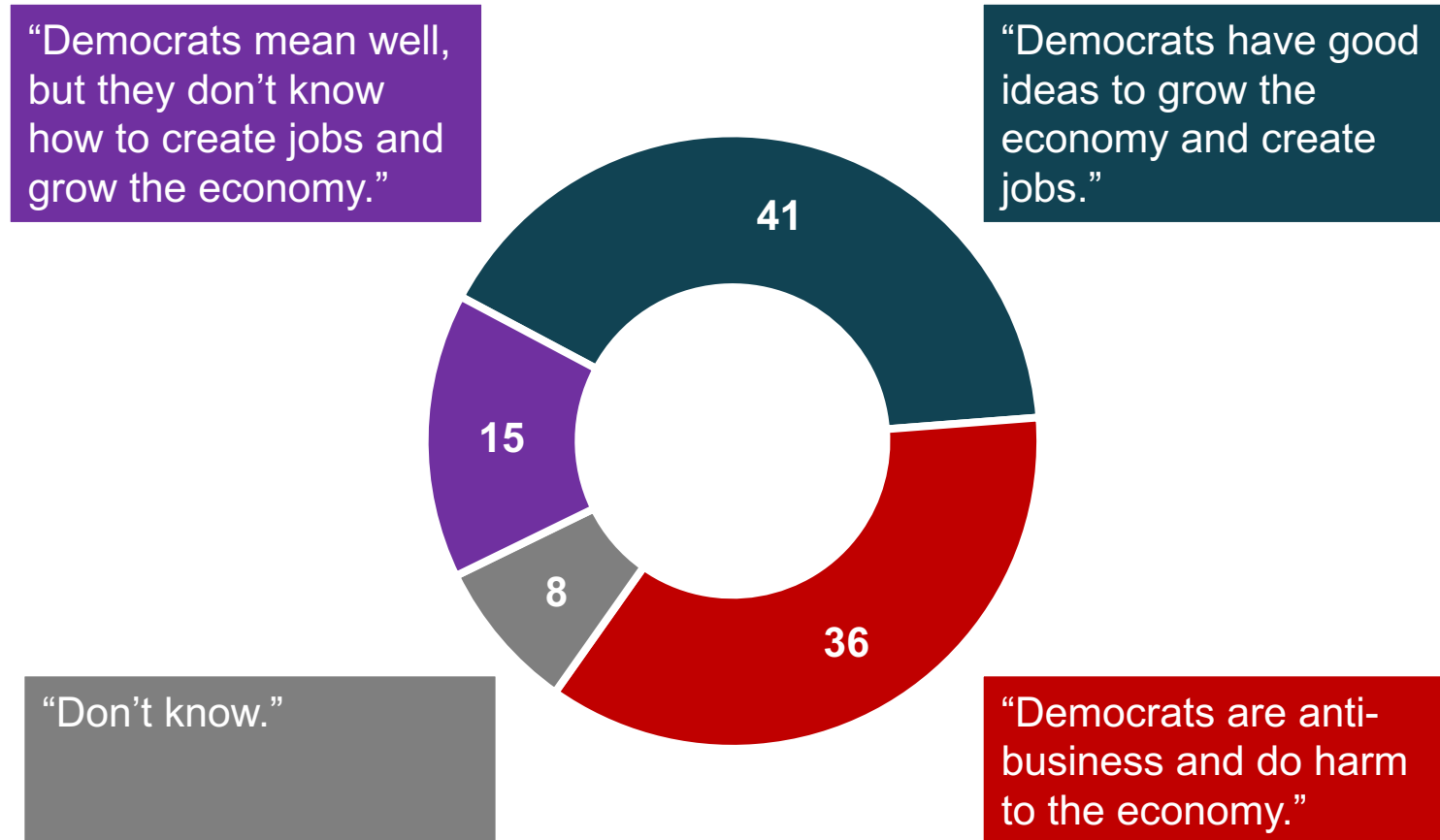
The areas people do trust Democrats more on are **kitchen table issues** like housing, health, child care/working parents and education. These do not align with voters' #1 concern—the economy and jobs.



# A crucial chunk of Americans are sympathetic to Democrats' goals but don't think the party knows how to run the economy.

That includes not only persuadable groups, but 9% of the Democratic base.

*Which of the following do you agree with most?*



Most likely to say "mean well, but don't know how..."	
<b>Overall</b>	<b>15</b>
Black, 18-34	39
Fav Biden / Unfav Dems	34
Persuadable	27
Black men	24
Independent	22
Asian	21

# MESSAGING AND MOVEMENT

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# We tested nine policy proposals in an experimental split-sample design:

Half of voters heard language about reducing poverty.

Half of voters heard language (for the same policies) about helping workers.

	“Poverty” Language	“Work” Language
<b>OUTSOURCING</b>	Bring manufacturing supply chains back to America to stop corporate outsourcers from profiting off sending blue-collar jobs overseas.	Bring manufacturing supply chains back to America to create more good-paying jobs for Americans who want to work hard.
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	Rebuild our infrastructure, so that we can take on climate change and help struggling communities most affected by it.	Rebuild our infrastructure to put people to work and make American businesses more competitive.
<b>HEALTH CARE</b>	A plan to limit and cap out-of-pocket health care costs so low-income families can finally afford health care.	A plan to limit and cap out-of-pocket health care costs so working families can finally afford health care.
<b>JOB TRAINING</b>	Increase job training programs and apprenticeships to help the poor who are trapped in low-wage jobs.	Increase job training programs and apprenticeships so that people who are willing to work hard can get the skills to get a raise or a good-paying job.
<b>COLLEGE</b>	Make four-year college cheap enough so that everyone can afford a degree.	Make four-year college cheap enough that students can afford to work part-time and pay all their bills.
<b>TAX THE RICH</b>	Raise taxes on big businesses and the rich, because they should start paying their fair share.	Raise taxes on big business and the rich, because they can afford to help us invest in better education, infrastructure, and health care.
<b>LOAN FORGIVENESS</b>	Forgive up to ten thousand dollars in student debt to help people trapped in poverty by college debt.	Forgive up to ten thousand dollars in student debt to help working young people buy homes and get loans to start new businesses.
<b>MIN. WAGE</b>	Increase the minimum wage to cut poverty.	Increase the minimum wage so no one has to work two jobs just to make ends meet.
<b>CHILD TAX REBATE</b>	A child tax rebate of \$300 per month that will cut child poverty in half.	A child tax rebate of \$300 per month to help working parents afford the cost of raising a child.

On most policies, the “work” focused language performs better – both in terms of overall support and in how many think it will benefit the working/middle class.

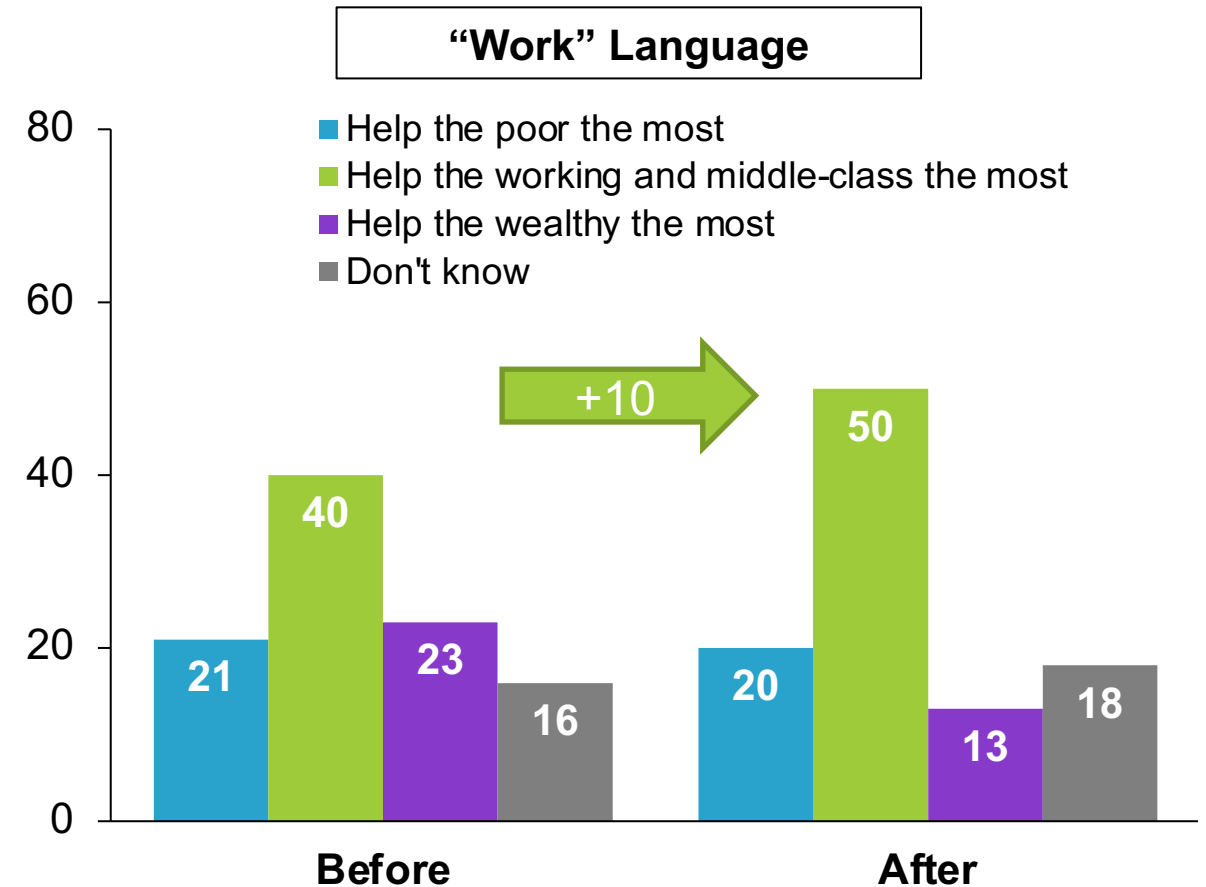
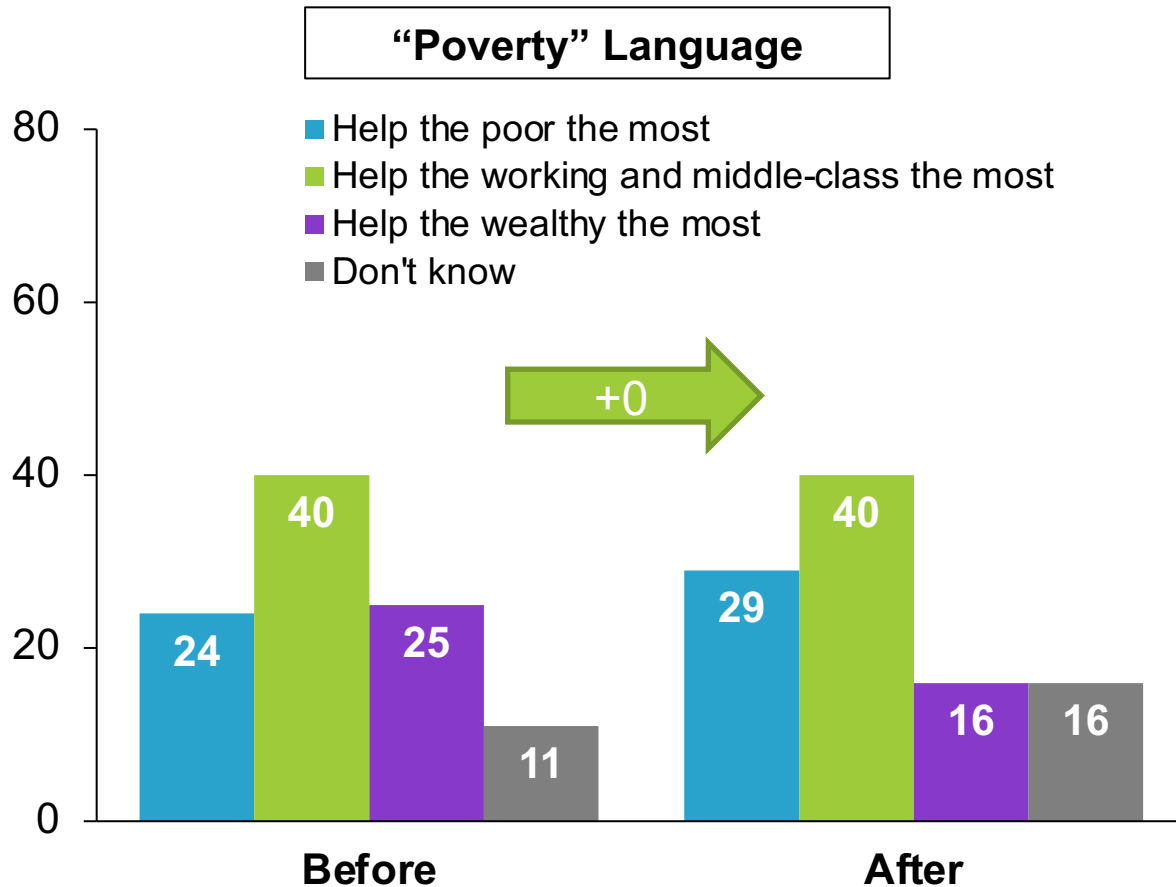
Again, these were the exact same policies for each policy idea, we just changed the rhetoric about who they would help. These results reflect that 84% consider themselves working or middle class.

	% Support policy			% who agree “This would help the middle or working class”		
	“Poverty” language	“Work” language	Difference	“Poverty” language	“Work” language	Net
<b>OUTSOURCING</b>	88	93	+5	69	68	-1
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	65	83	+18	41	63	+22
<b>HEALTH CARE</b>	72	80	+8	27	58	+31
<b>JOB TRAINING</b>	86	89	+3	24	42	+18
<b>COLLEGE</b>	69	75	+6	37	55	+18
<b>TAX THE RICH</b>	66	65	-1	38	43	+5
<b>LOAN FORGIVENESS</b>	49	54	+5	42	51	+9
<b>MIN. WAGE</b>	62	61	-1	16	24	+8
<b>CHILD TAX REBATE</b>	57	55	-2	17	35	+18

After people hear this policy agenda in its entirety, those that heard the “work” language are persuaded that Democrats would help working people.

The policies tied to poverty language persuade nobody that we’re helping working people. The policies tied to work language make many more voters think Democrats are trying to help the working and middle class.

*Who do you think Democratic policy ideas as a whole help most?*



We make middle partisan, middle-income (\$50-\$100k), white non-college, and Latino voters most think we care about workers by talking about work.

Most likely Gain on Generic Ballot	
<b>Overall</b>	<b>+2</b>
White wage earners	+8
Hispanic wage earners	+7
Independent	+7
White moderates	+6
Financially distressed	+5
Black wage earners	+5
Republican	+5

Most likely Gain “Helps middle class”	
<b>Overall</b>	<b>+5</b>
Somewhat conservative	+13
Heard “Work” Language	+10
Persuadable	+10
Income \$50k-\$100k	+9
Independent	+8
White non-college	+8
Hispanic	+7

# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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# Key Findings

- **Biden and Democrats own the economy.** Where the economy lands a year from now could be the determining factor in the midterms, but either way we won't be able to run away from it or blame Trump/COVID if it's bad.
- **Even in a split-partisan environment, we're losing on the economy to Republicans.** Voters give the GOP more credit on the economy as well as creating jobs, fostering opportunity, and fighting outsourcing,
  - Democrats are more trusted on kitchen-table issues like health care costs, college tuition, and housing – but voters don't necessarily equate these issues with management of the economy. Consequently, we trail on voters' top issue: the economy and jobs.
  - People think we care more about social and cultural issues but want us to focus more on the economy. Republicans do not have this problem—people think they focus on the economy.
- **Democrats on the ballot in 2022 could benefit from running as “Biden Democrats” on the economy.** A majority approve of President Biden on the economy (50–48%), while voters disapprove of Democrats in Congress by a 41–55% margin.
- **To convince people Democrats care about workers, we must talk about work.** As the true party of working people and the middle class, we need to connect with their value of hard work and not just assume they will digest our policy agenda and understand how it helps them.