



Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute



2024 National Defense Survey



Prepared by Beacon Research and Shaw & Company Research, November 2024



About the Survey

Mode	Combined telephone (n=1,008) and online panel (n=1,502) survey. Telephone interviews conducted by trained professionals calling landlines (49%) and cellphones (51%).
Sample	2,510 US Adults.
Dates	November 8 – 14, 2024.
Weights	Slight weights were applied to ensure the sample accurately reflects the demographic profile of the US population.
Margin of Error	$\pm 2\%$ at the 95% confidence level for the entire sample. Most questions were split sampled (n \approx 1,250, $\pm 2.8\%$). The margin of error for subgroups is higher.
Research Partnership	 
Note	Some data may not add to 100% due to rounding.



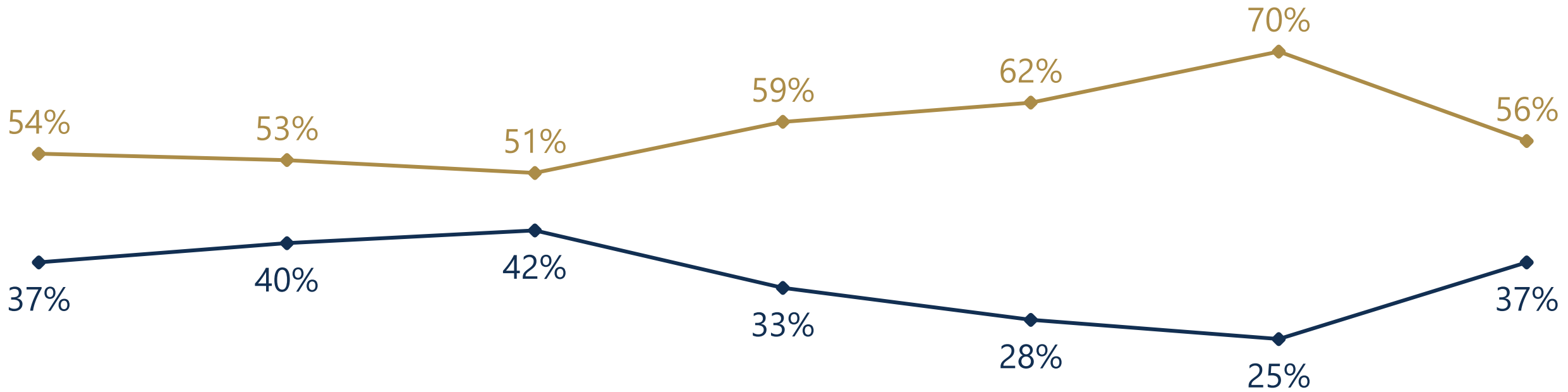
POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT





National mood: still negative, but improving.

◆ Right direction ◆ Wrong track



Nov '18 Oct '19 Feb '21 Nov '21 Nov '22 Nov '23 Nov '24

Note: Remainder Don't know

Q2. Would you say things in the United States today are:

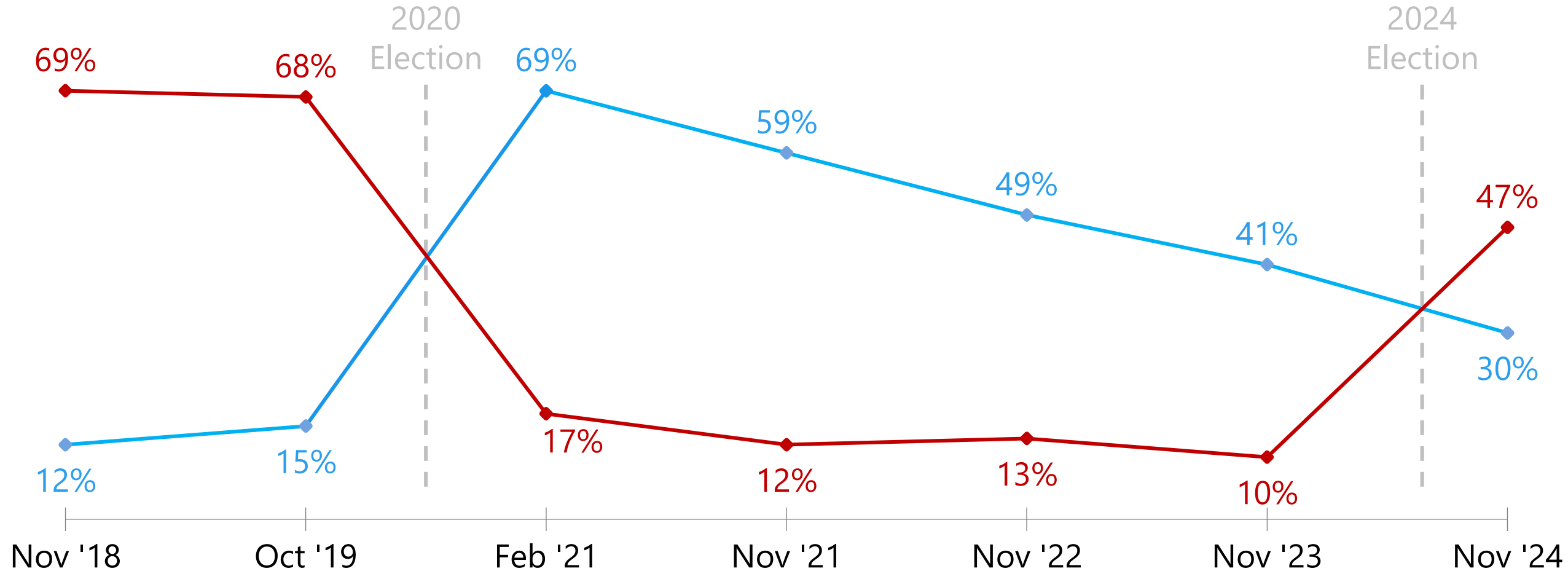


Increase in optimism driven by Republicans after the election.

Right Direction

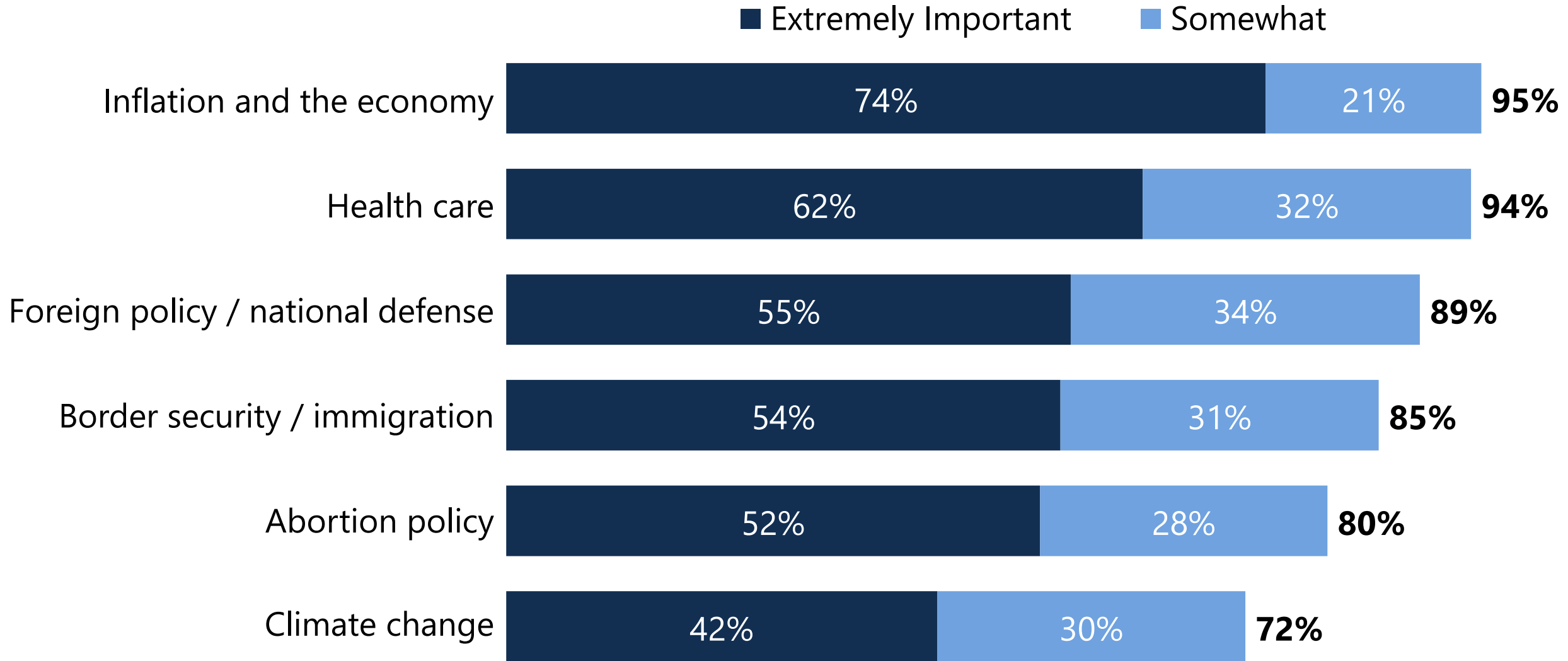
— Democrat

— Republican



Q2. Would you say things in the United States today are:

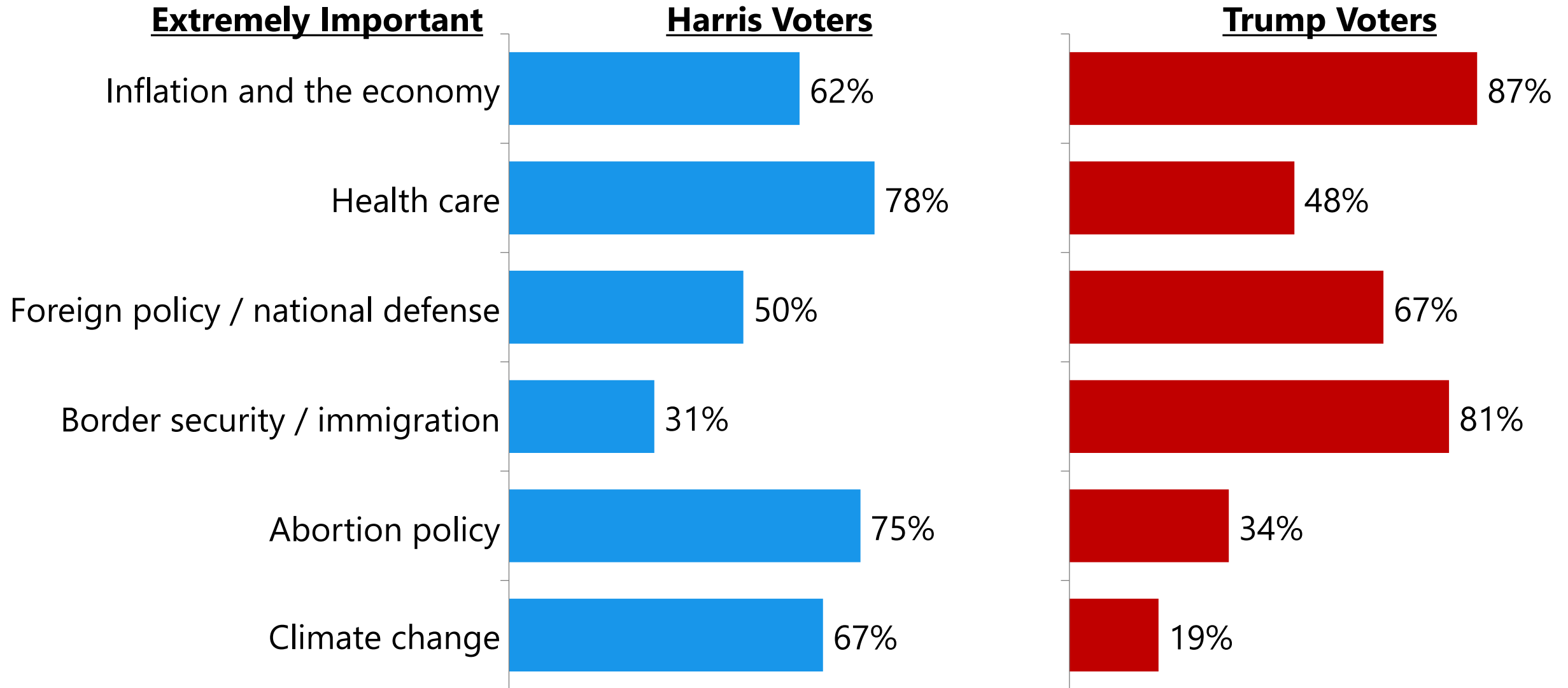
Economic issues are dominant, but defense is *highly* relevant.



Q3-8. How important are each of the following issues facing the country today?



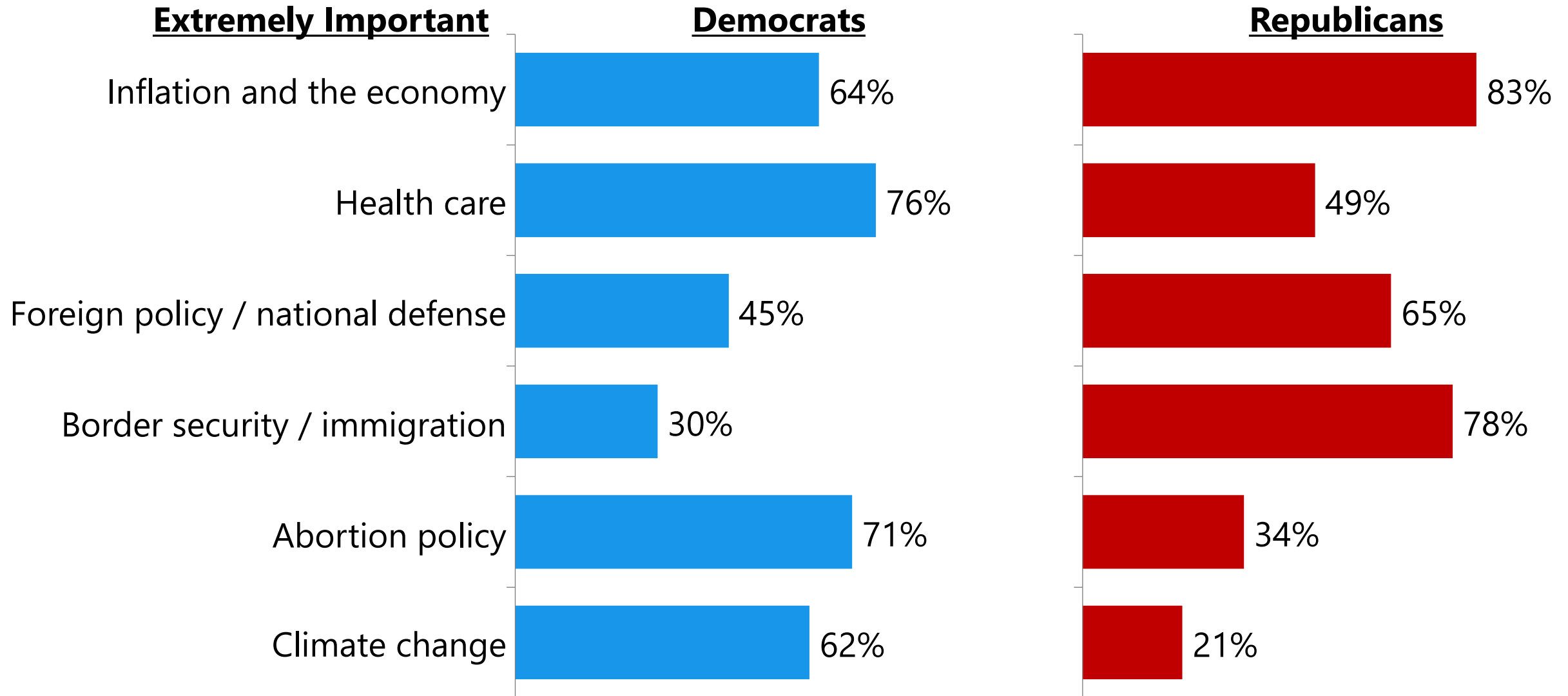
Harris, Trump voters have dramatically different views of the issue landscape.



Q3-8. How important are each of the following issues facing the country today?

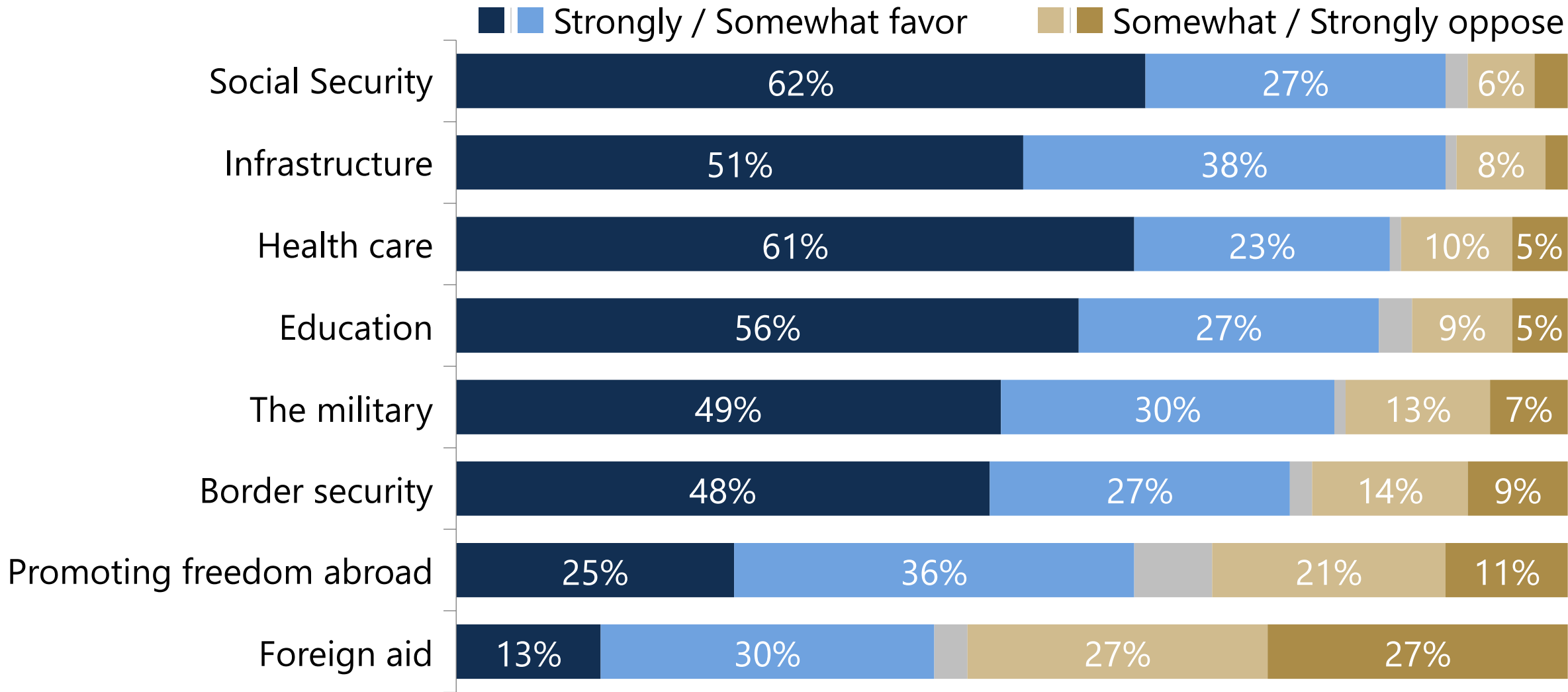


Partisans have dramatically different views of the issue landscape.



Q3-8. How important are each of the following issues facing the country today?

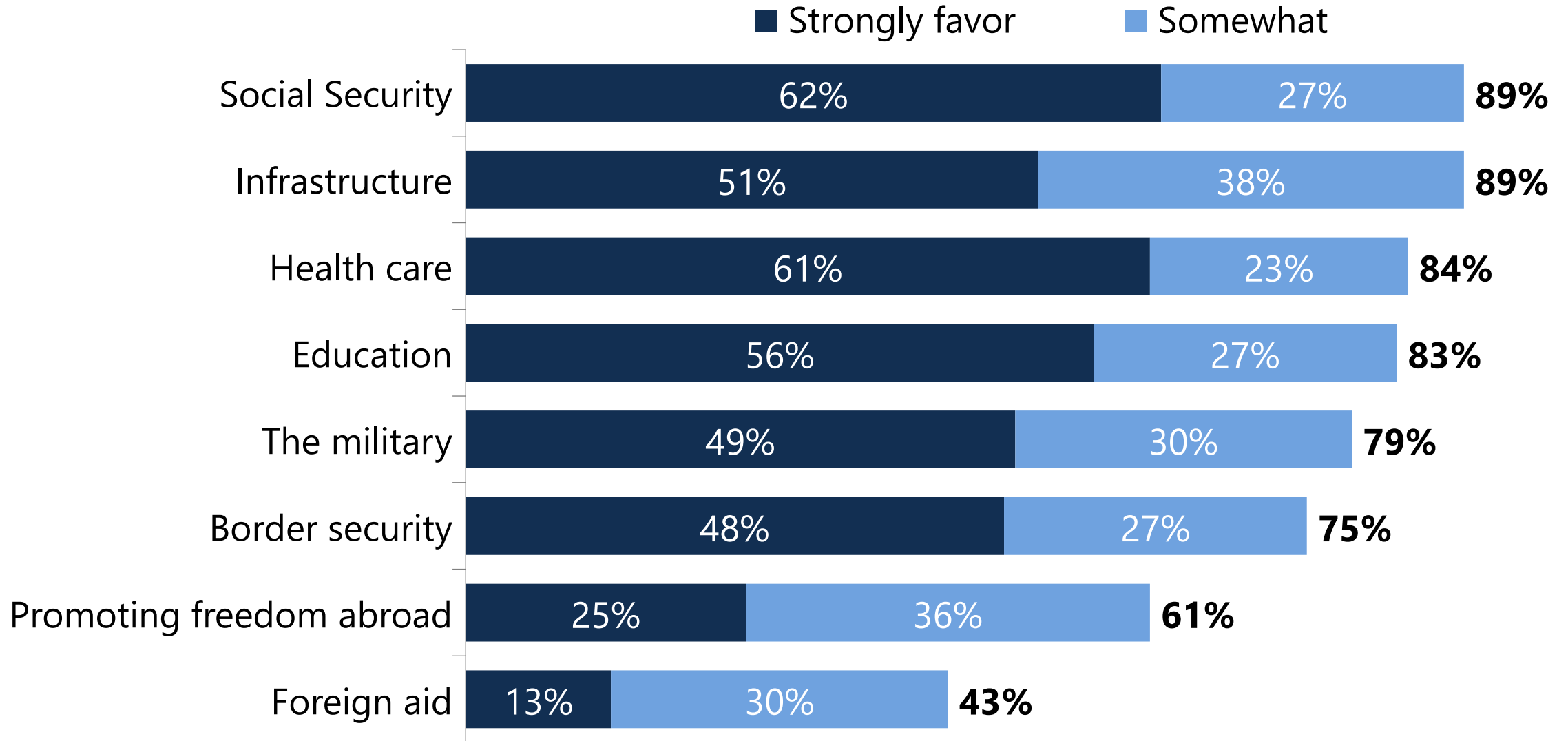
Most favor increased military spending, but plenty of competition from domestic priorities.



Q16-23. Please tell me if you favor or oppose increasing government spending in each of the following areas.

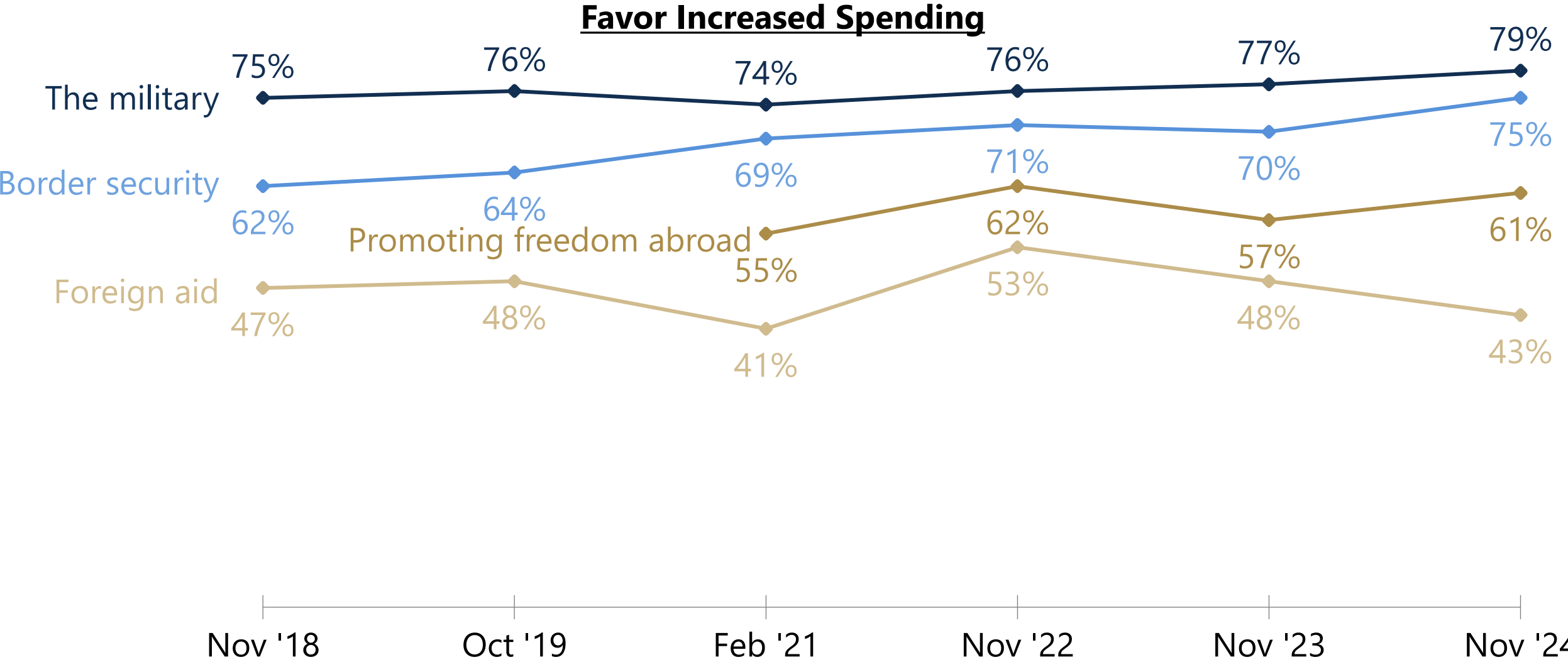


Most favor increased military spending, but plenty of competition from domestic priorities.



Q16-23. Please tell me if you favor or oppose increasing government spending in each of the following areas.

Steady support for military spending, declining support for foreign aid.

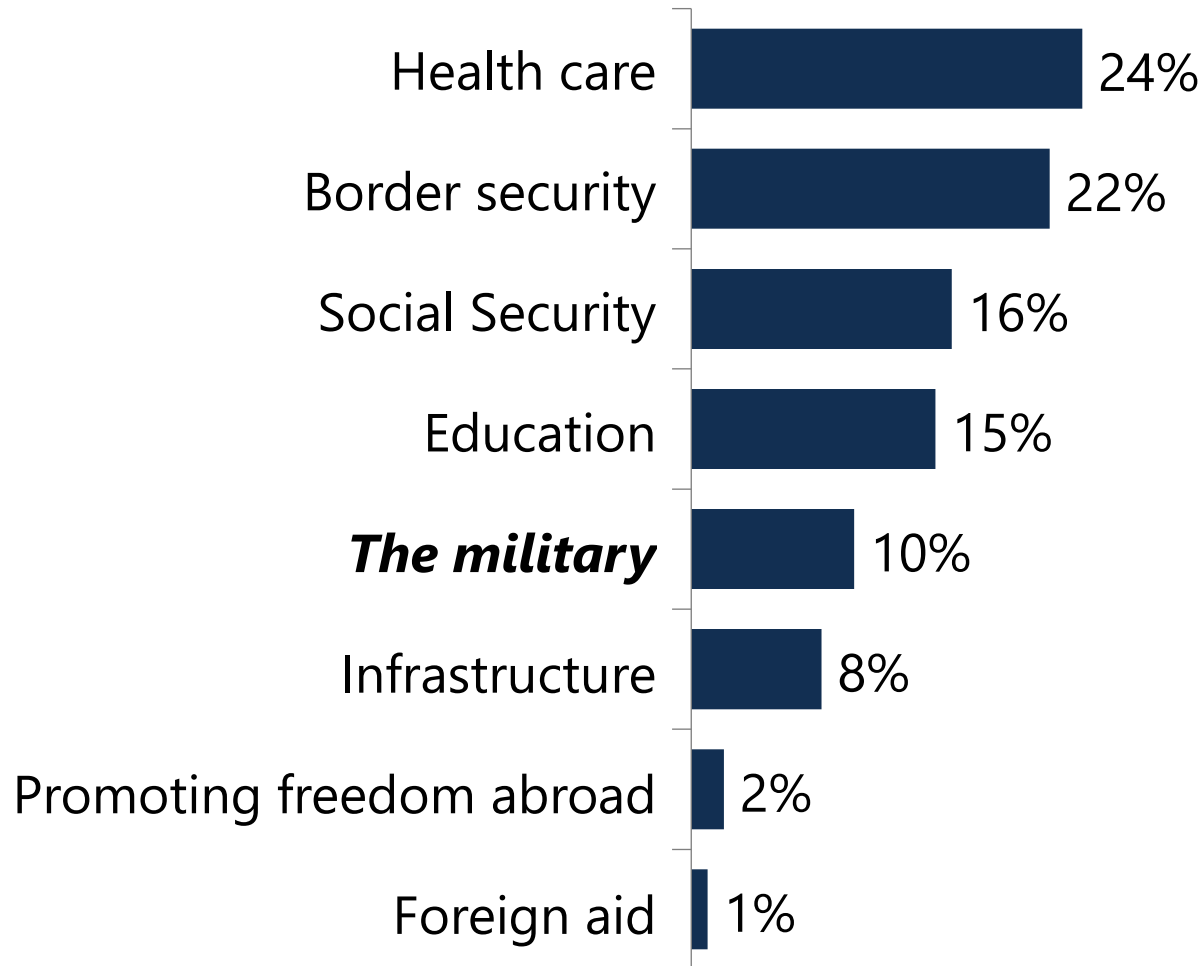


Q16-19. Please tell me if you favor or oppose increasing government spending in each of the following areas.



Health care, border security are top funding priorities.

Top priority for funding

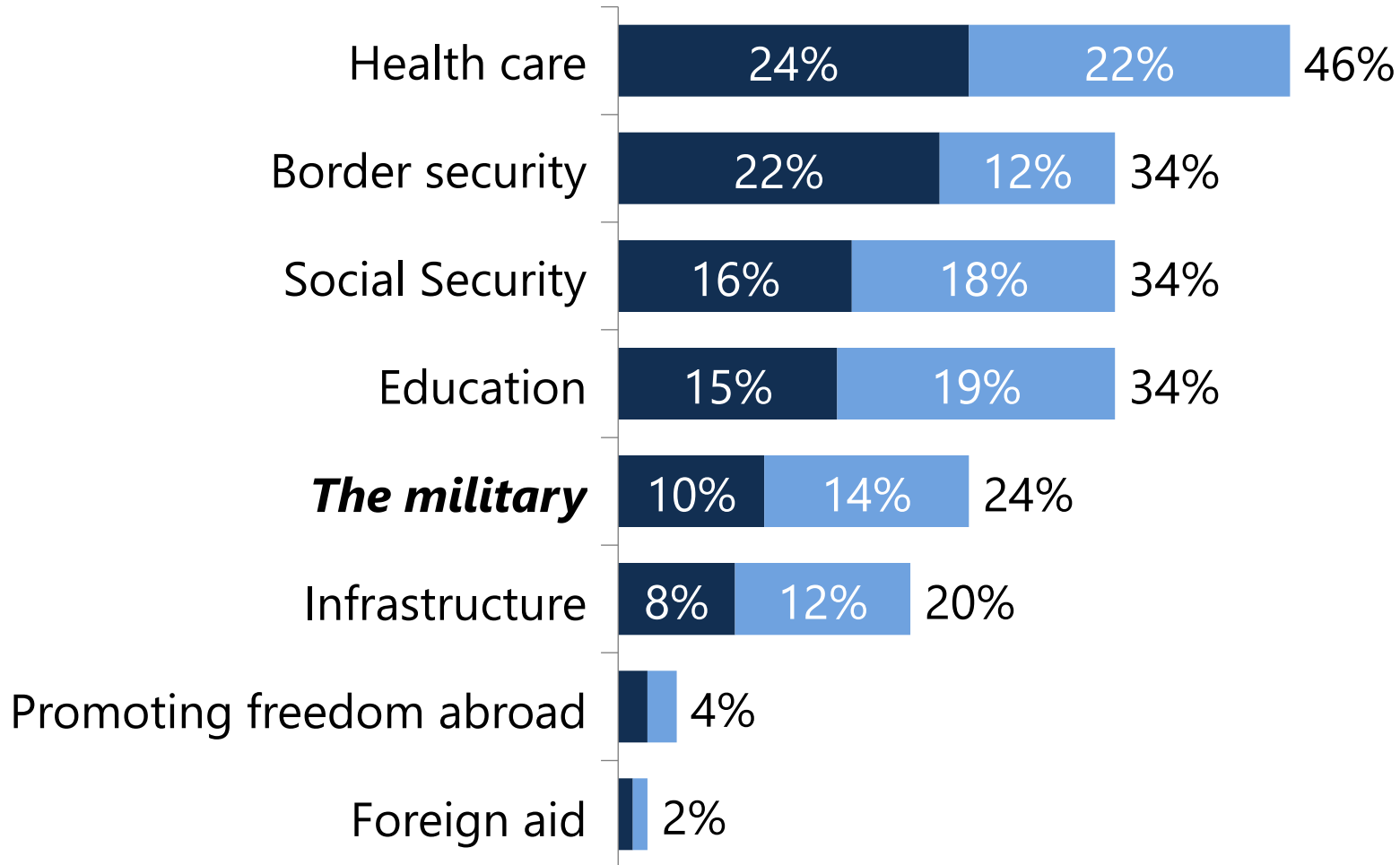


Q24. Of all the areas I just mentioned, which one should be the highest priority for increased funding?



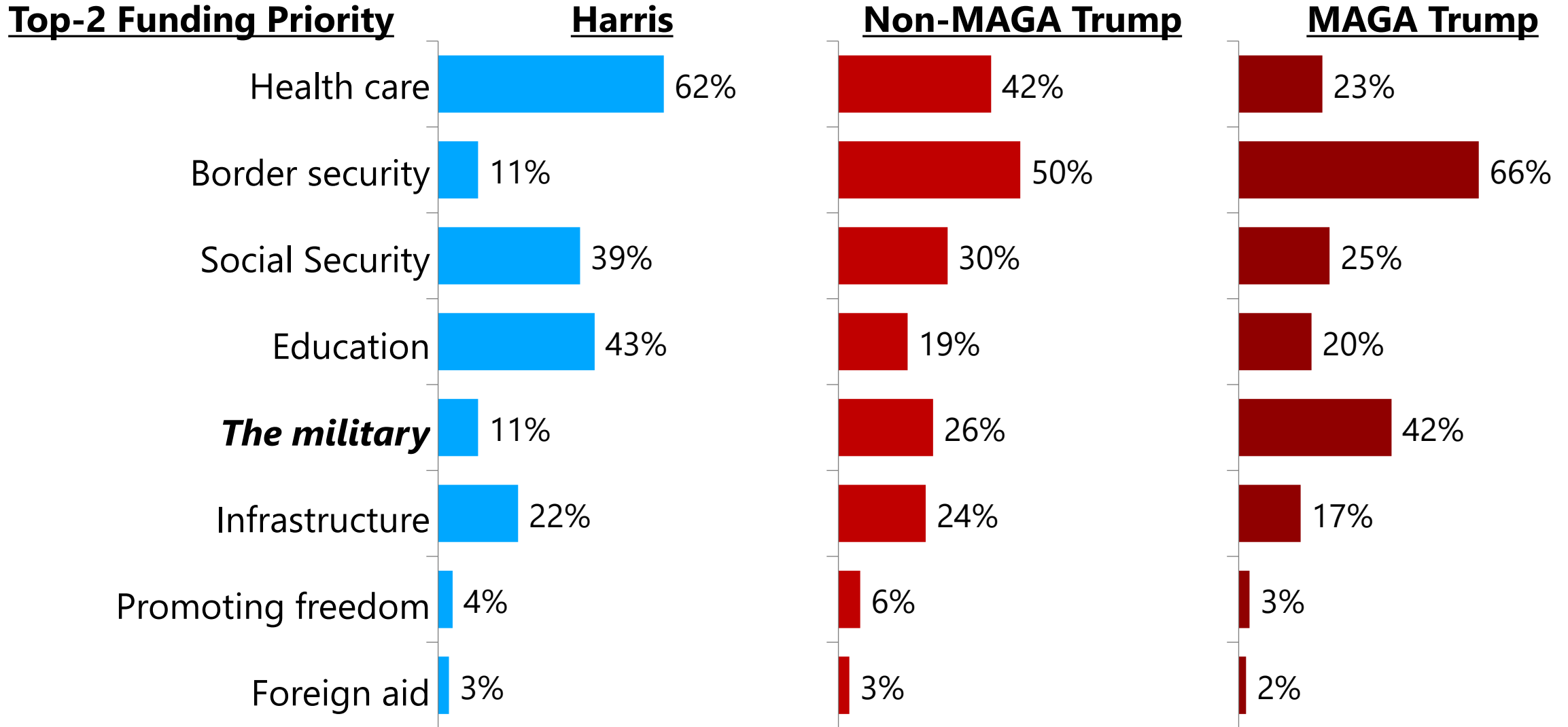
One-quarter thinks military should be a top-2 target for increased funding.

Top / 2nd priority for funding



Q24-25. Of all the areas I just mentioned, which one should be the highest priority for increased funding? And which should be the next-highest priority?

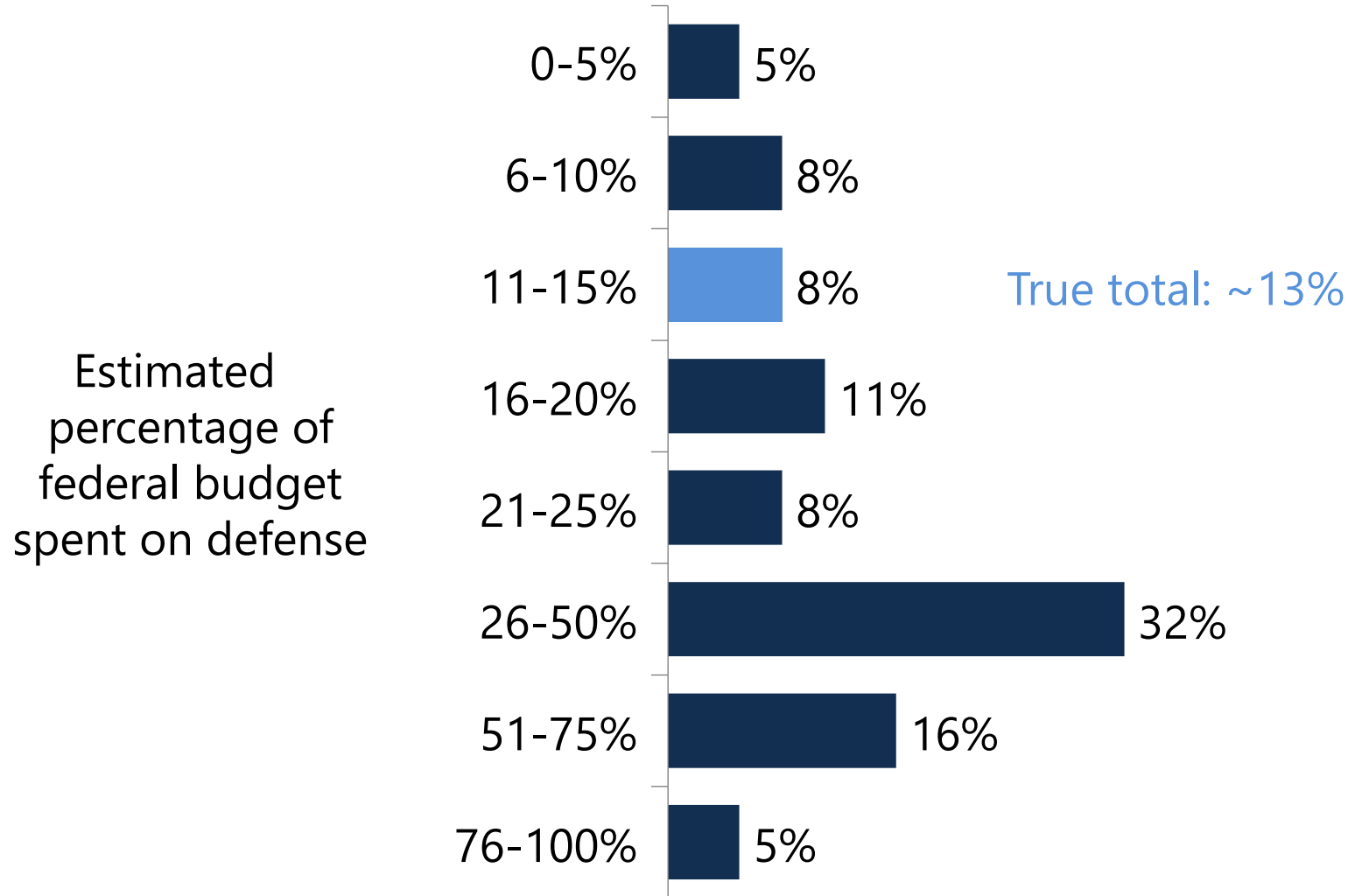
Border security and the military are top funding targets for MAGA Trump voters.



Q24-25. Of all the areas I just mentioned, which one should be the highest priority for increased funding? And which should be the next-highest priority?

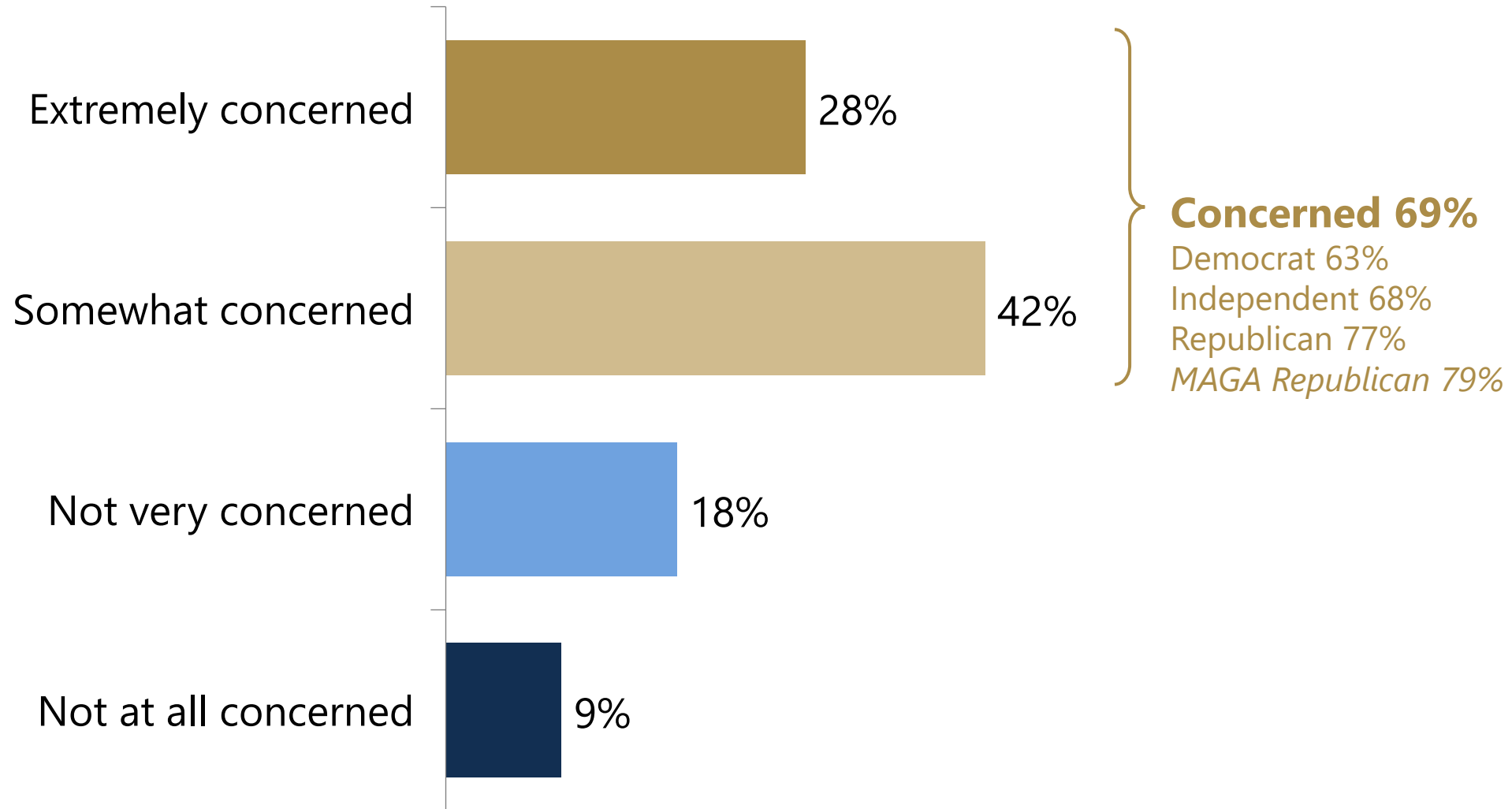


Most overestimate US defense spending.





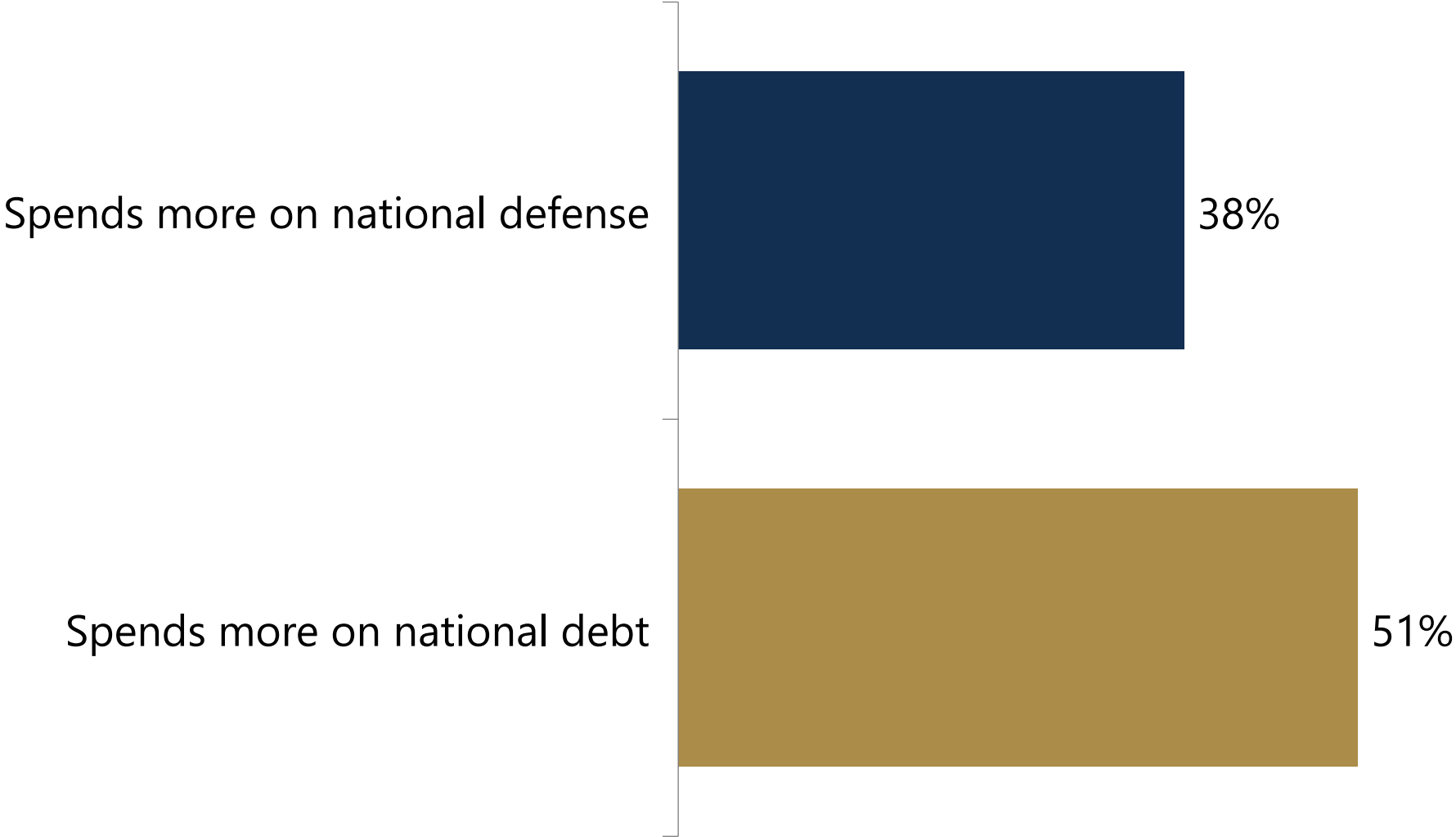
Significant, bipartisan concern that debt costs will force defense cuts.



Q27. How concerned are you that the cost of the national debt will force cuts to national defense programs?



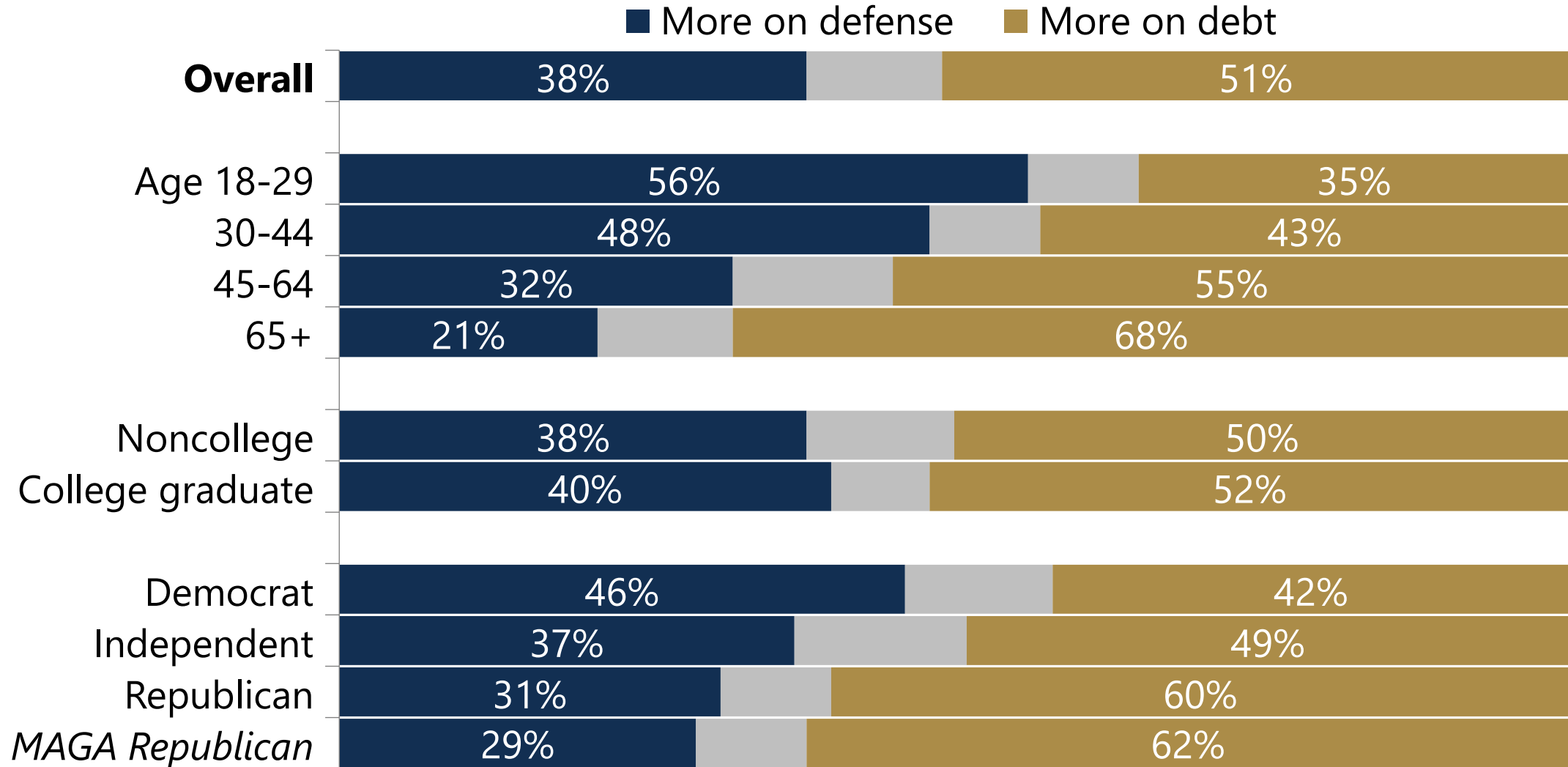
Half aware US spends more on debt than defense.



Q28. To the best of your knowledge, does the US spend more each year on national defense or interest payments on the national debt?



Defense vs. debt spending, by subgroup.



Q28. To the best of your knowledge, does the US spend more each year on national defense or interest payments on the national debt?

Notable increase in concern after education on debt payments.



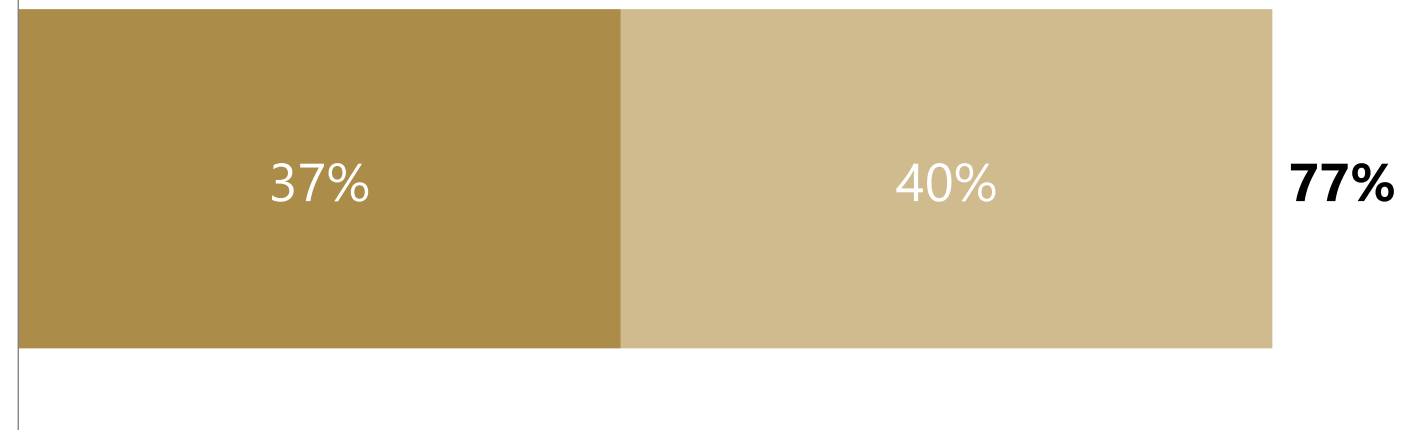
Extremely / Somewhat Concerned

Initial concern

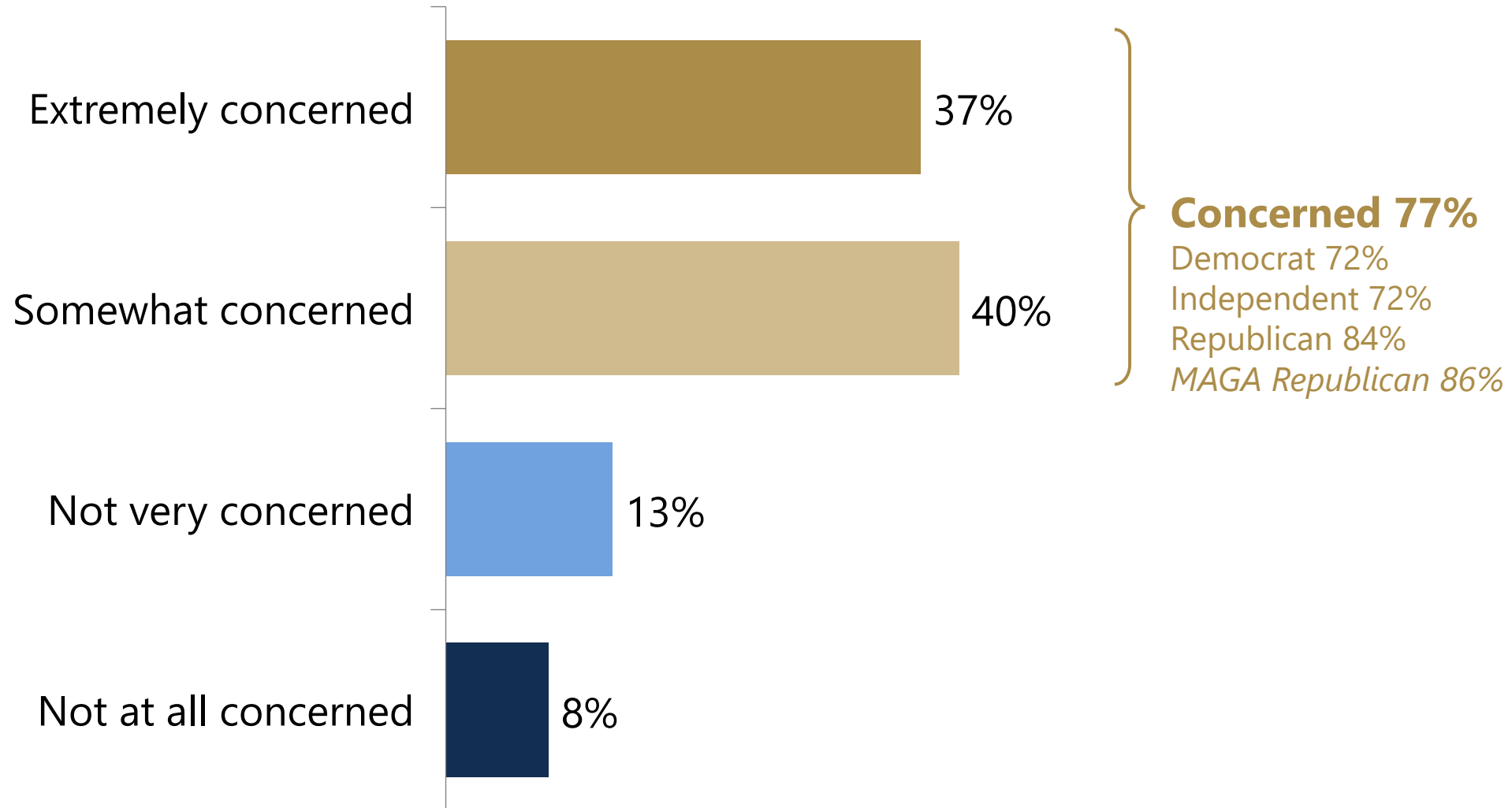


In fact, the US spends more on interest payments on the national debt each year than it does on all military programs combined.

After education



Notable increase in concern after education on debt payments.



Q29. In fact, the US spends more on interest payments on the national debt each year than it does on all military programs combined. Knowing this, how concerned are you that the cost of the national debt will force cuts to national defense programs?

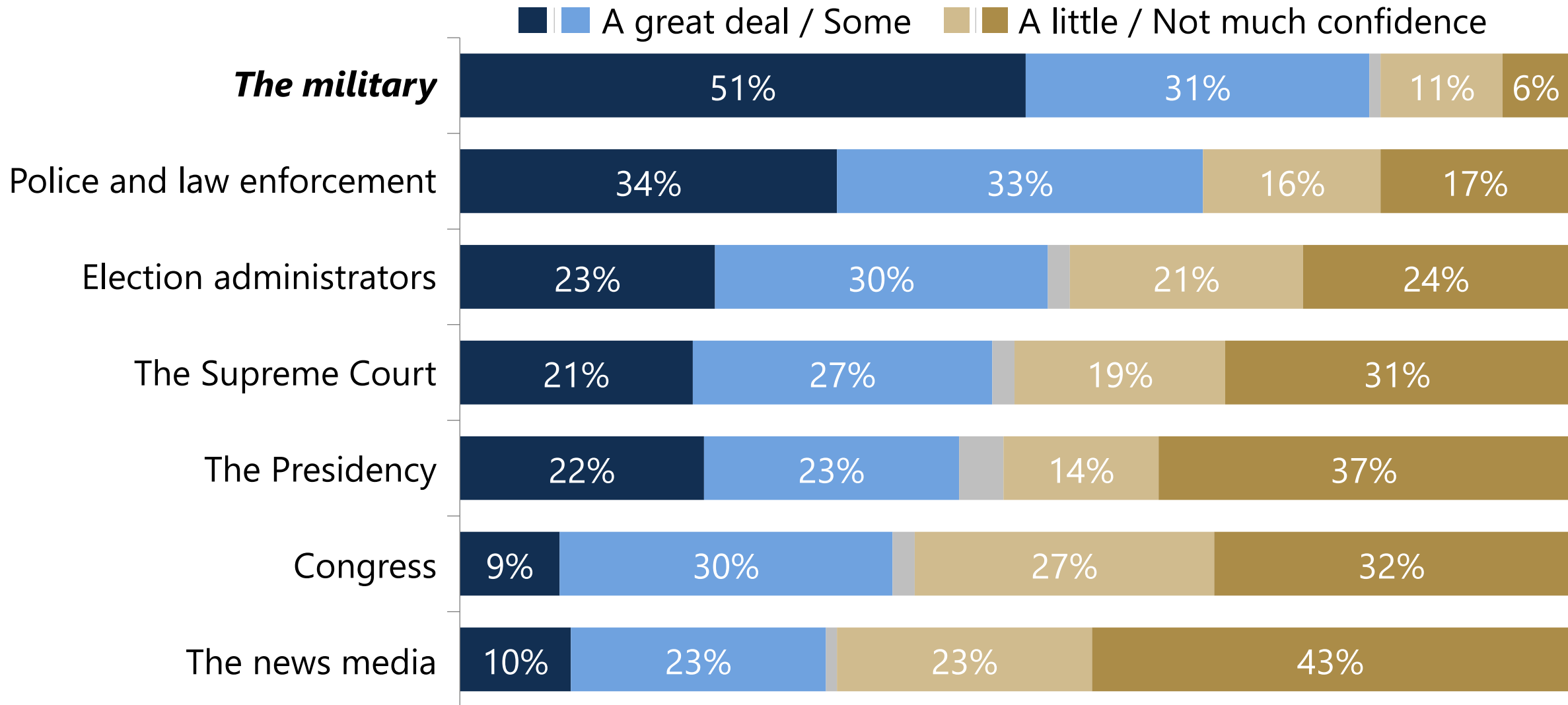


CONFIDENCE IN THE MILITARY





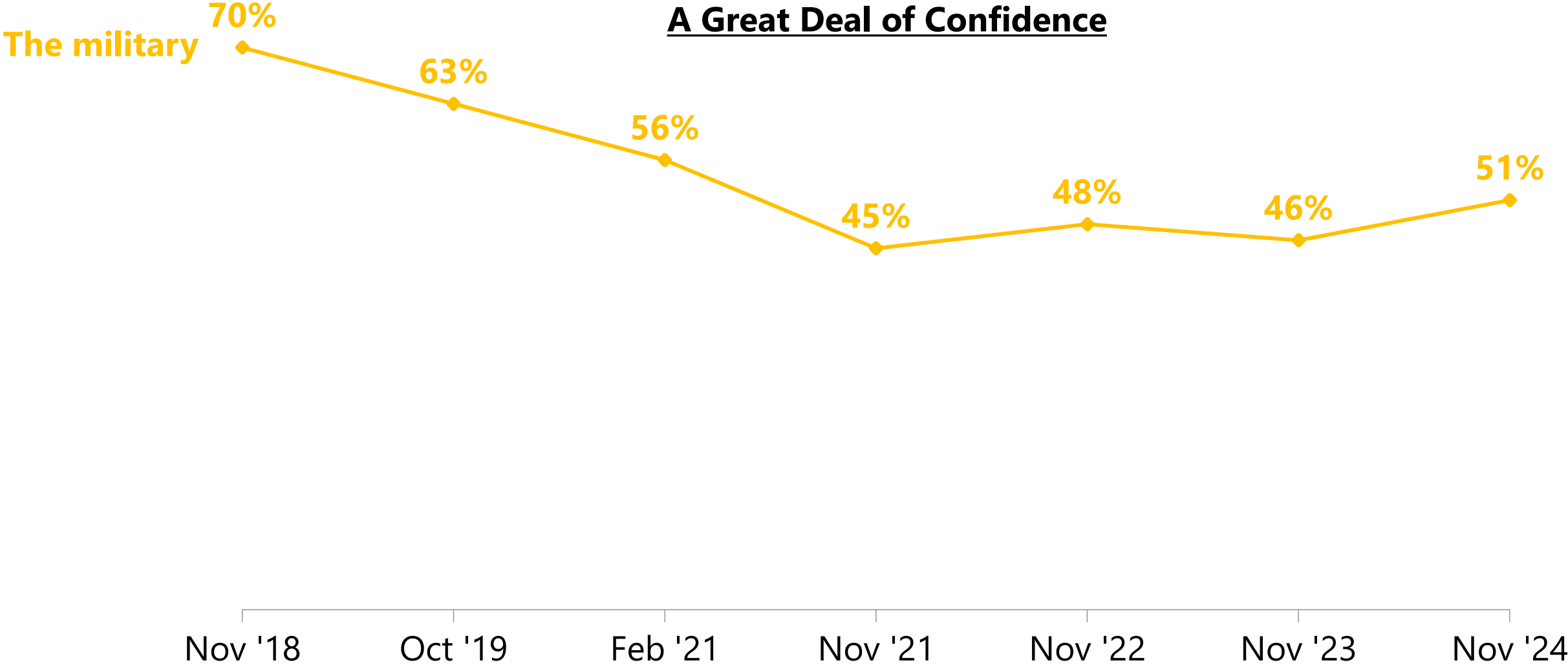
The military remains the most trusted US institution.



Q9-15. Please tell us how much trust and confidence you have in each of the following.



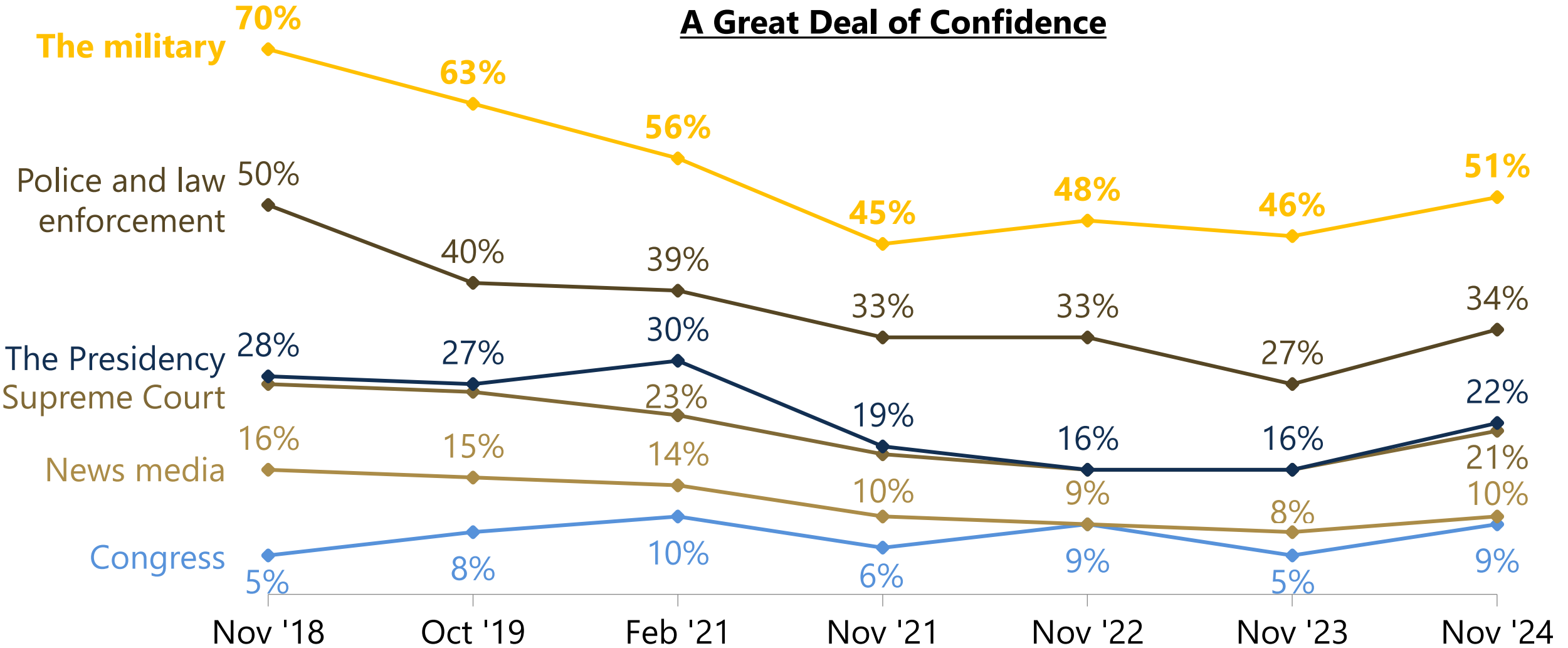
Confidence in military rises after hitting a floor.



Q9. Please tell us how much trust and confidence you have in each of the following.



Confidence in police, presidency, SCOTUS also up somewhat.

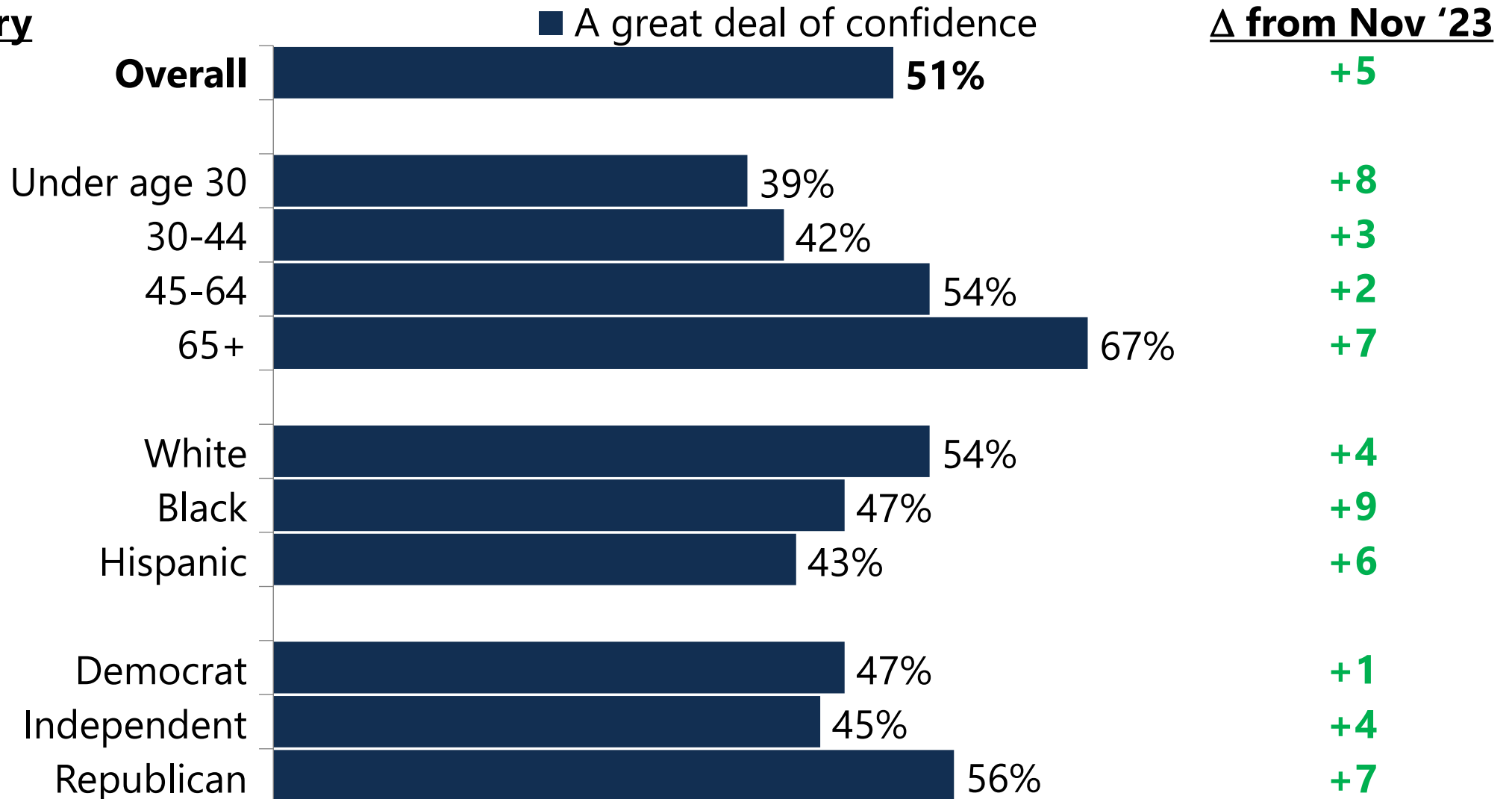


Q9-14. Please tell us how much trust and confidence you have in each of the following.



Broad-based increase in confidence in military.

The military

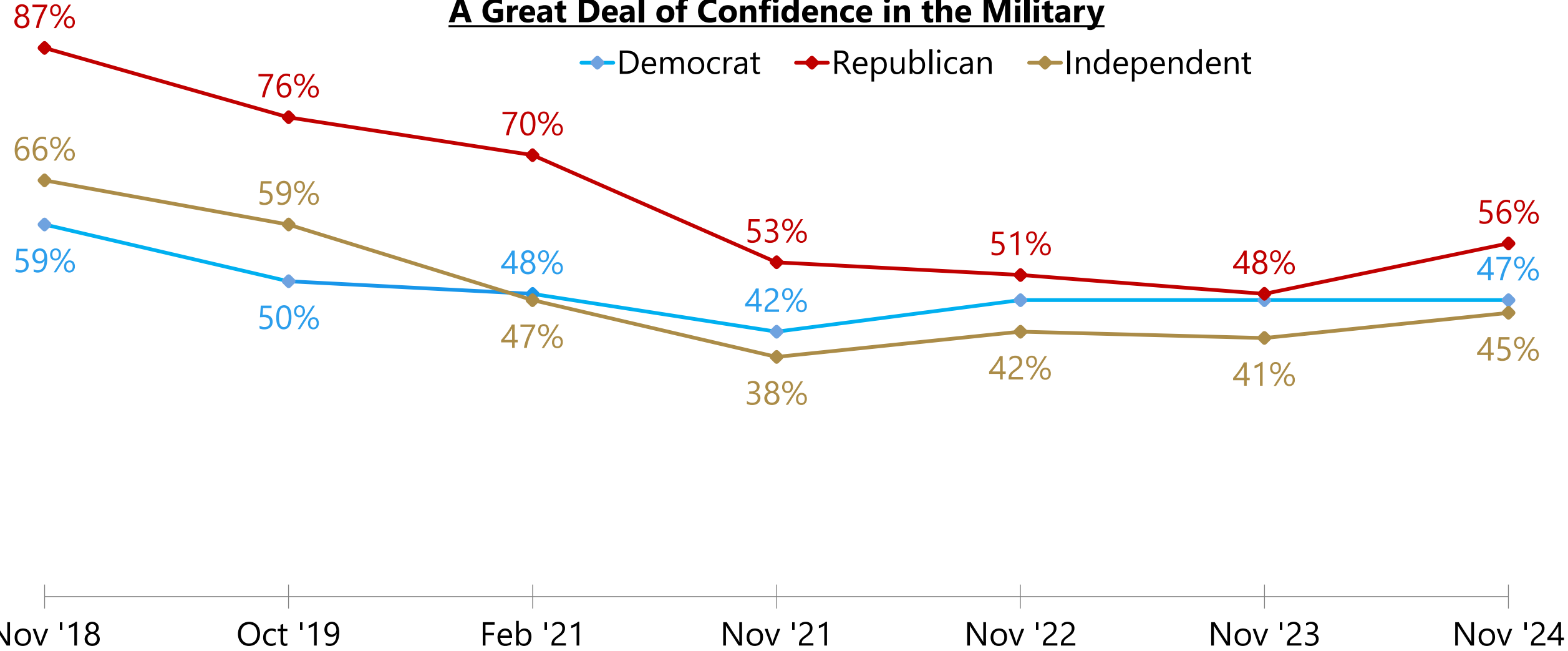


Q9. Please tell us how much trust and confidence you have in: The military

Rebound in confidence driven by Republicans and independents.



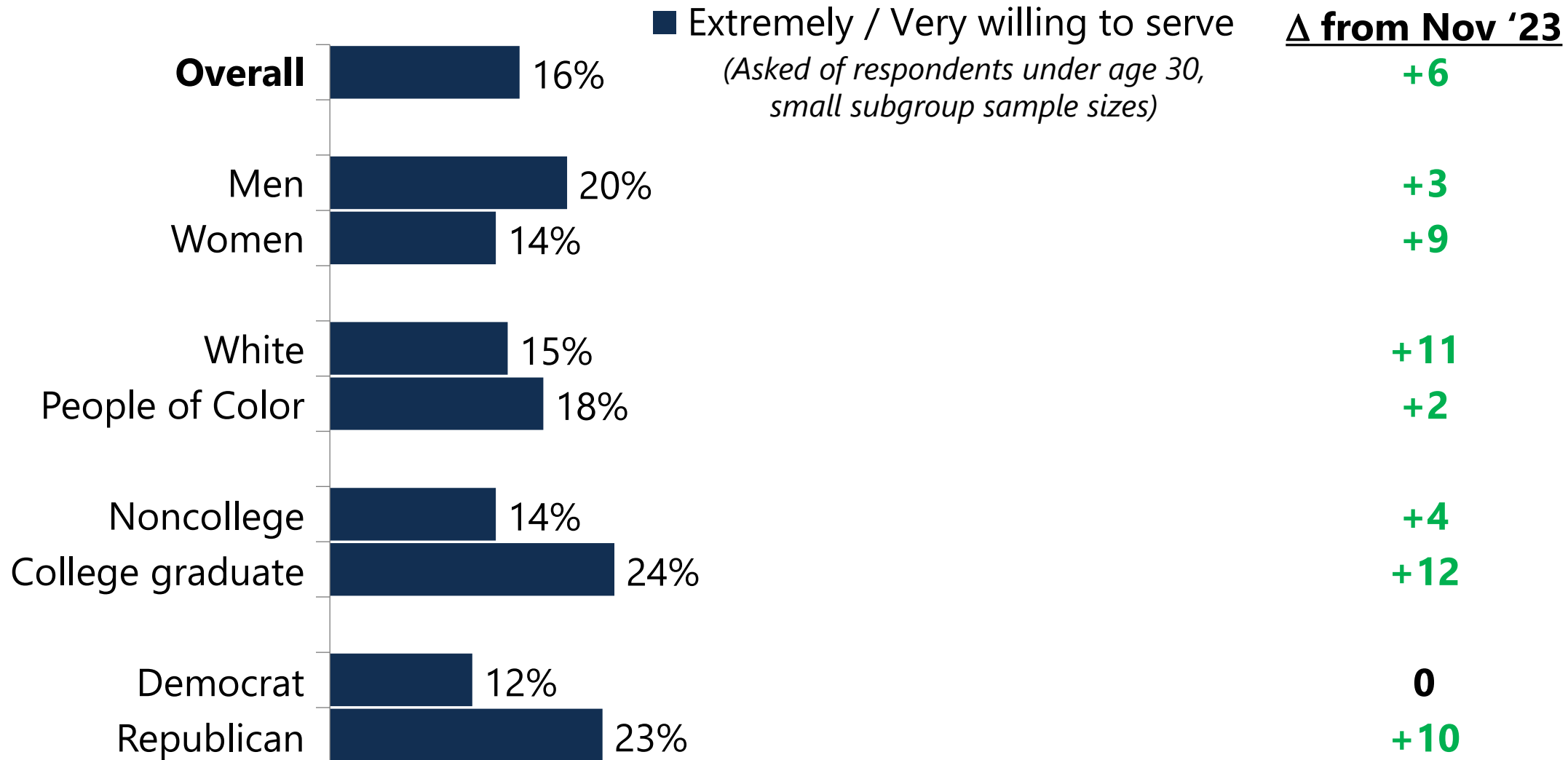
A Great Deal of Confidence in the Military



Q9. Please tell us how much trust and confidence you have in: The military



Increasing number of adults under 30 willing to serve.



[IF AGE 18-29 AND NOT SERVICE MEMBER OR VETERAN] Q154. How willing would you, personally, be to serve in the US military?



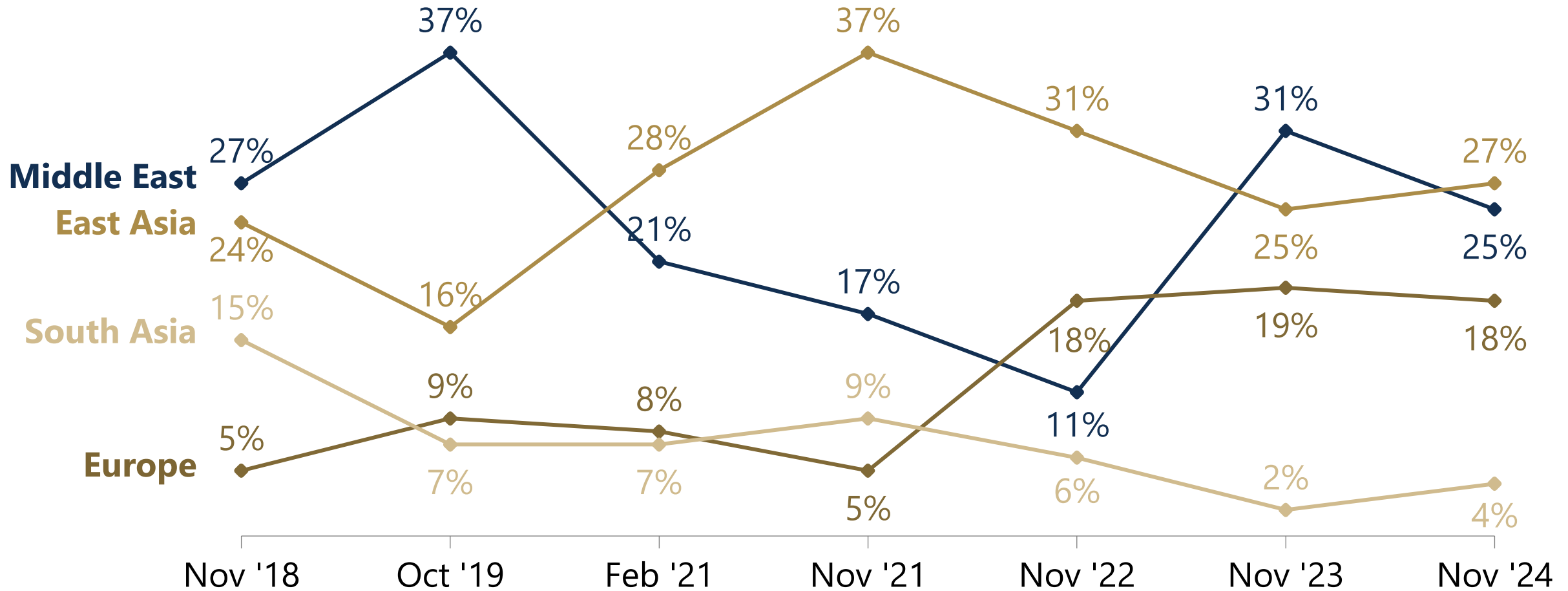
DEFENSE / FOREIGN POLICY POSTURE





East Asia, Middle East seen as top theaters of focus.

US Military Focus

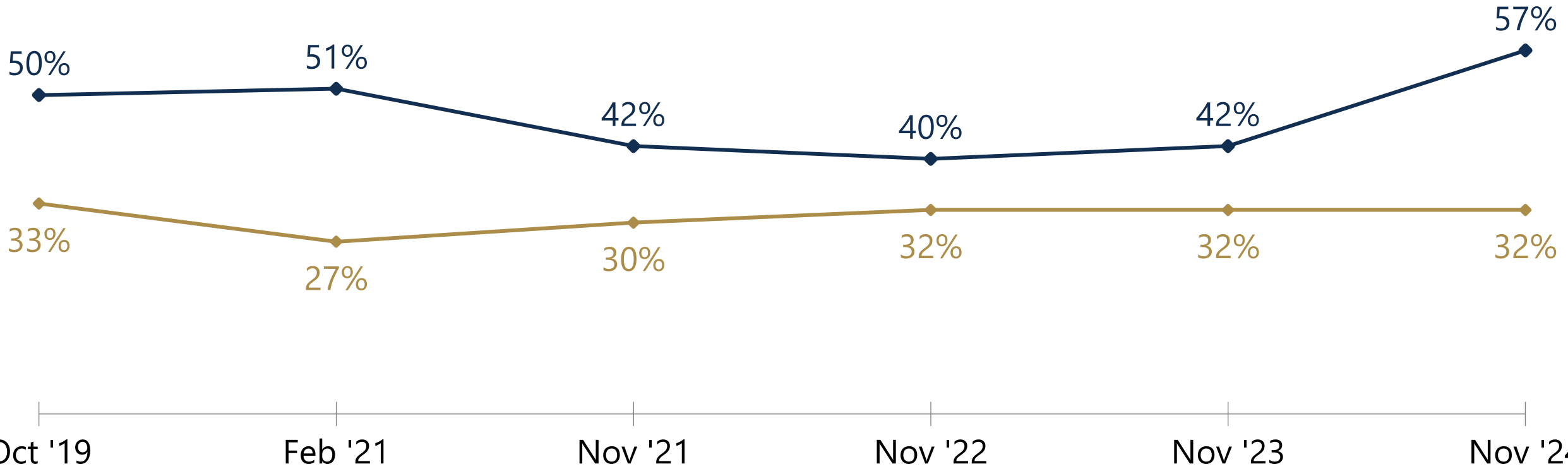


Q31. Thinking about American interests and the threats that exist in the world today, where do you think the US should focus its military forces?

Notable increase in support for a more engaged foreign policy.



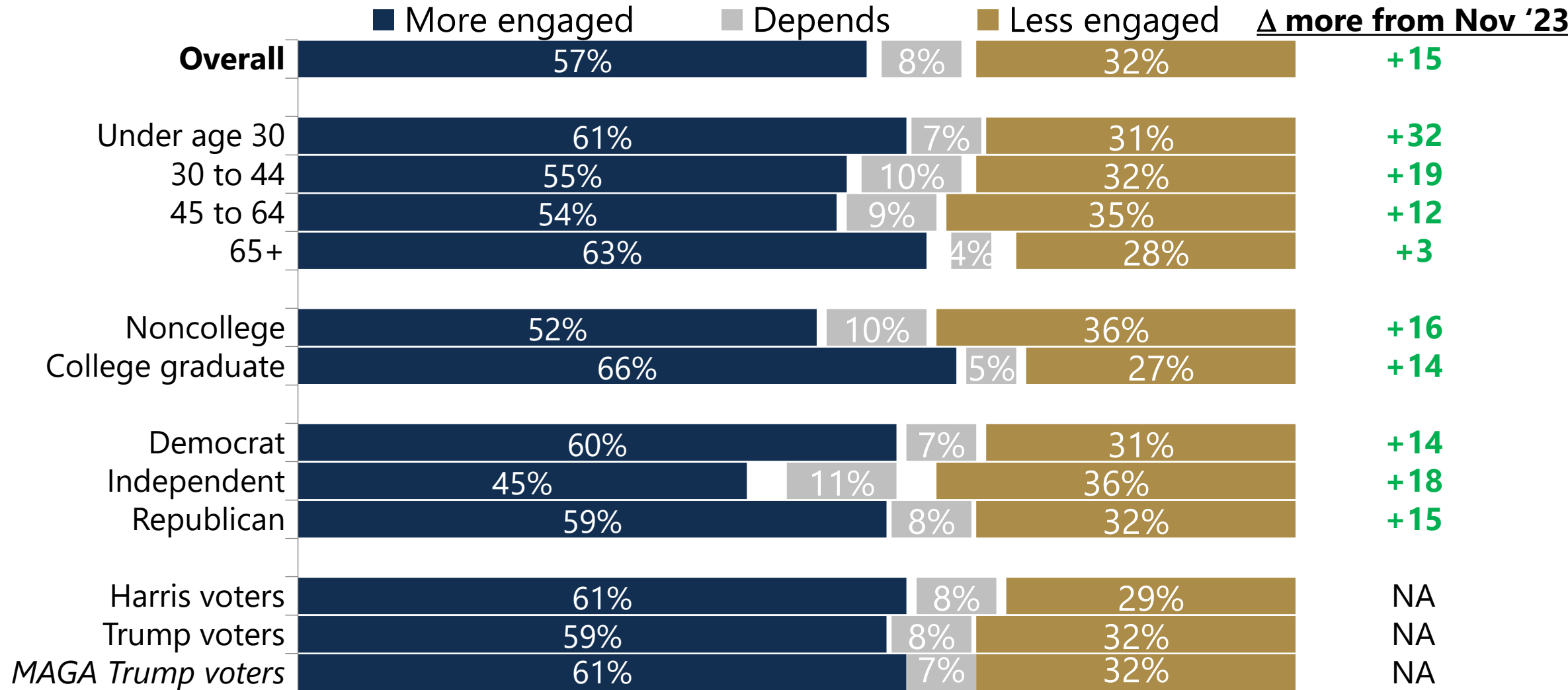
◆ More engaged and take the lead ◆ Less engaged and react to events



Q32. When it comes to international events, do you think it is better for the United States to be more engaged and take the lead, or to be less engaged and react to events?



Preferred foreign policy posture, by subgroup.

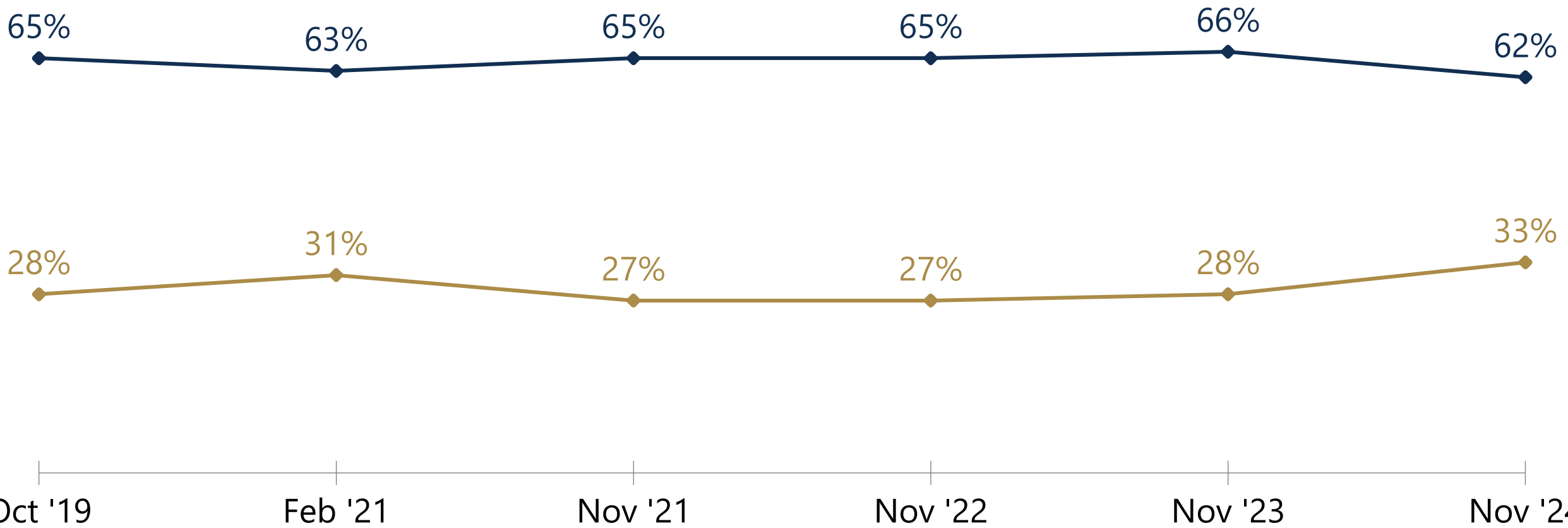


Q32. When it comes to international events, do you think it is better for the United States to be more engaged and take the lead, or to be less engaged and react to events?

Modest decline in preference for maintaining bases overseas.



◆ Maintain bases ◆ Reduce presence overseas

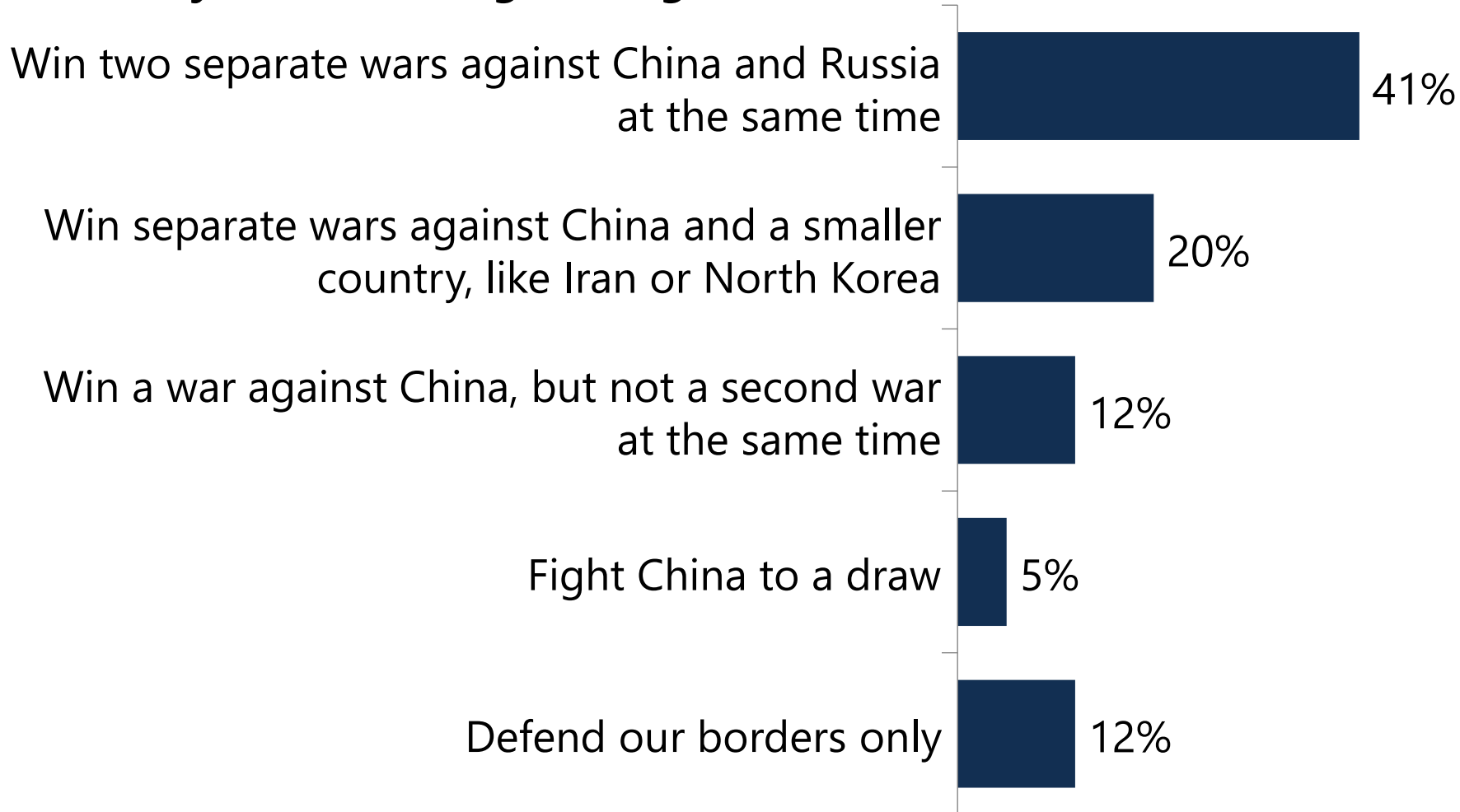


Q33. In general, do you think it is better for the US to maintain military bases around the world to deter attacks and respond quickly if something happens, or do you think the US should reduce our military presence overseas and only deploy troops in response to aggression?



Plurality would size military to win simultaneous great power wars.

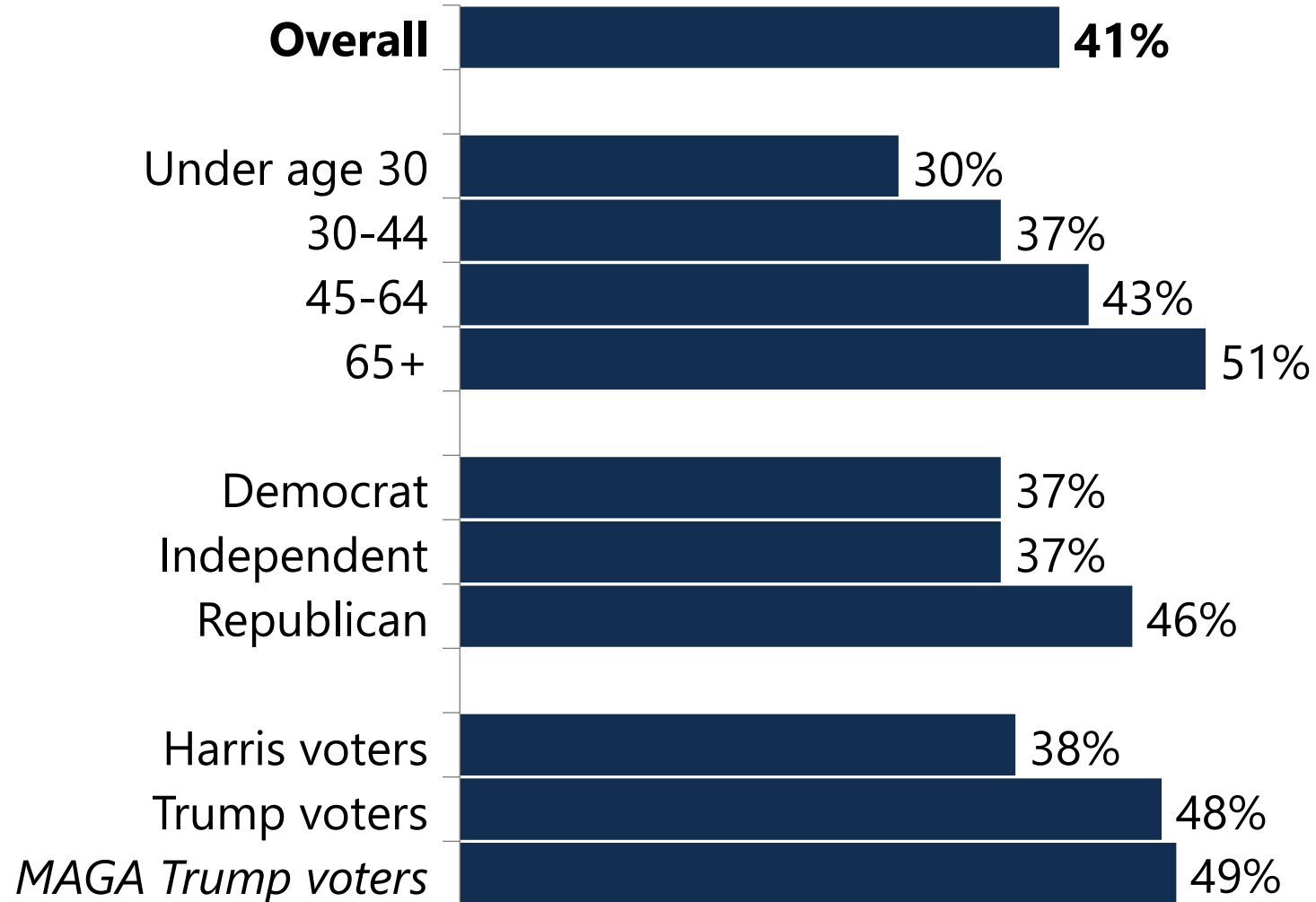
Military should be large enough to...





Military sizing varies by age, partisanship.

Large enough to win two wars against China and Russia

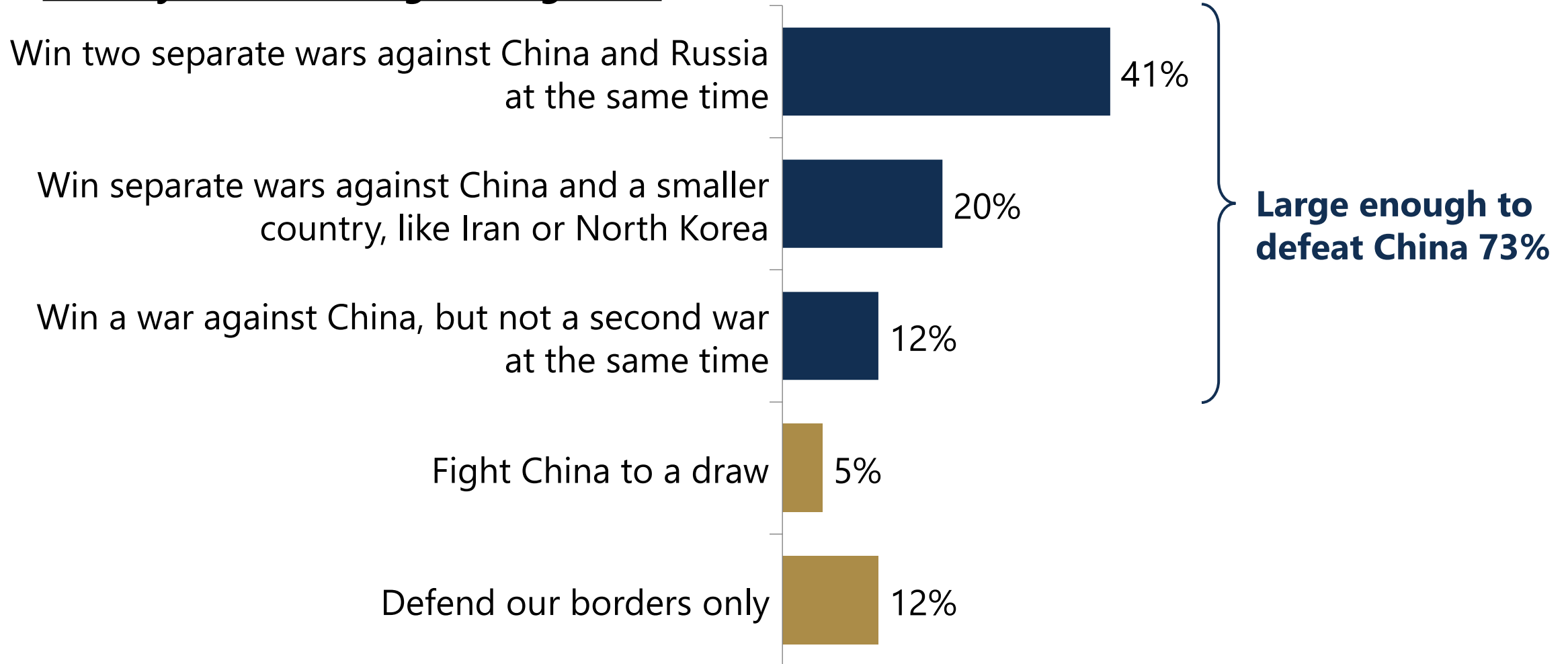


Q34. How large do you think the US military should be?



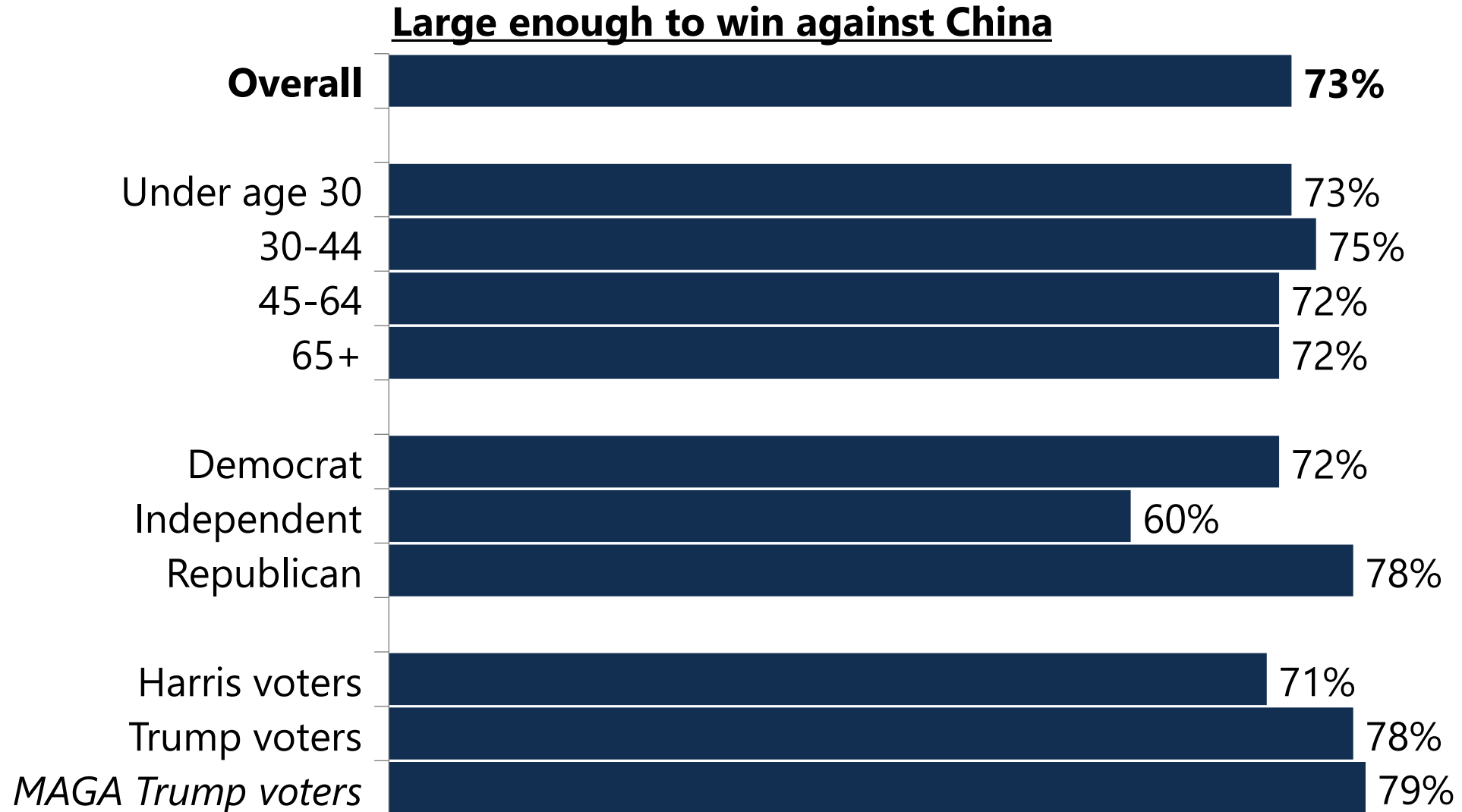
Three-quarters would size military to be large enough to win against China.

Military should be large enough to...



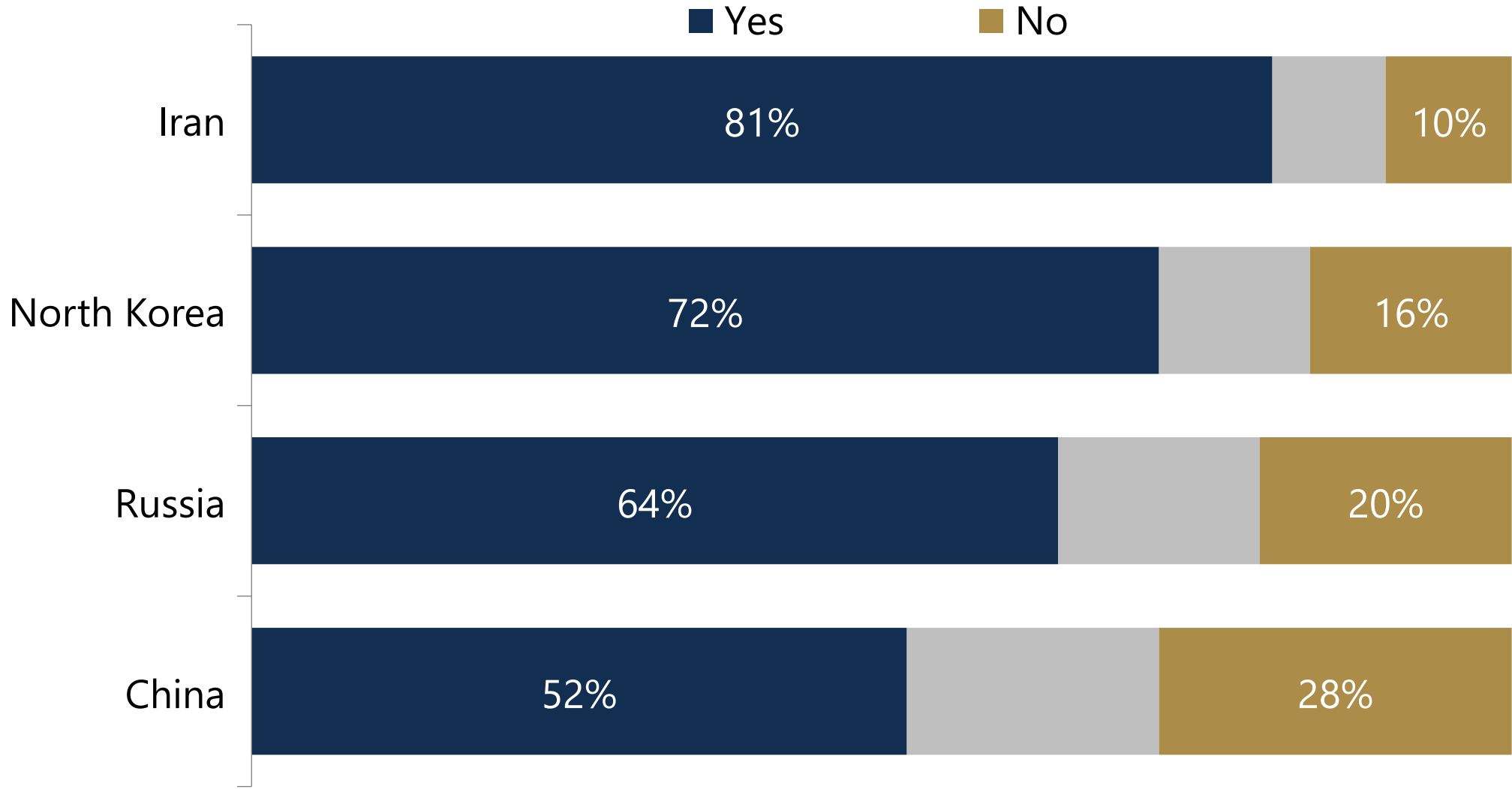


Most subgroups think military should be large enough to win against China.



Q34. How large do you think the US military should be?

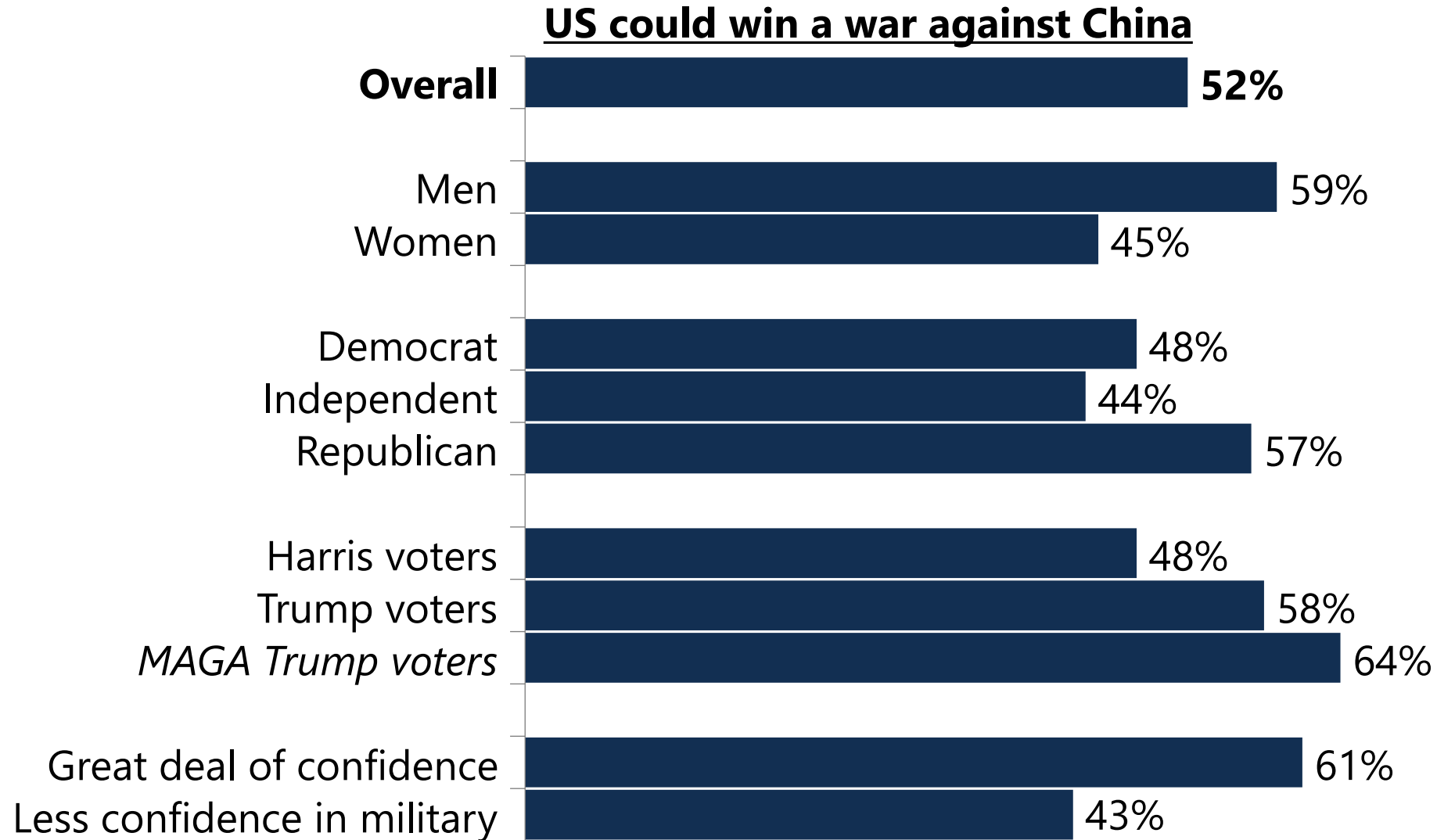
Most think US military could beat Iran; only half think it could defeat China.



Q35-38. Do you think the US military would win a war against each of the following?



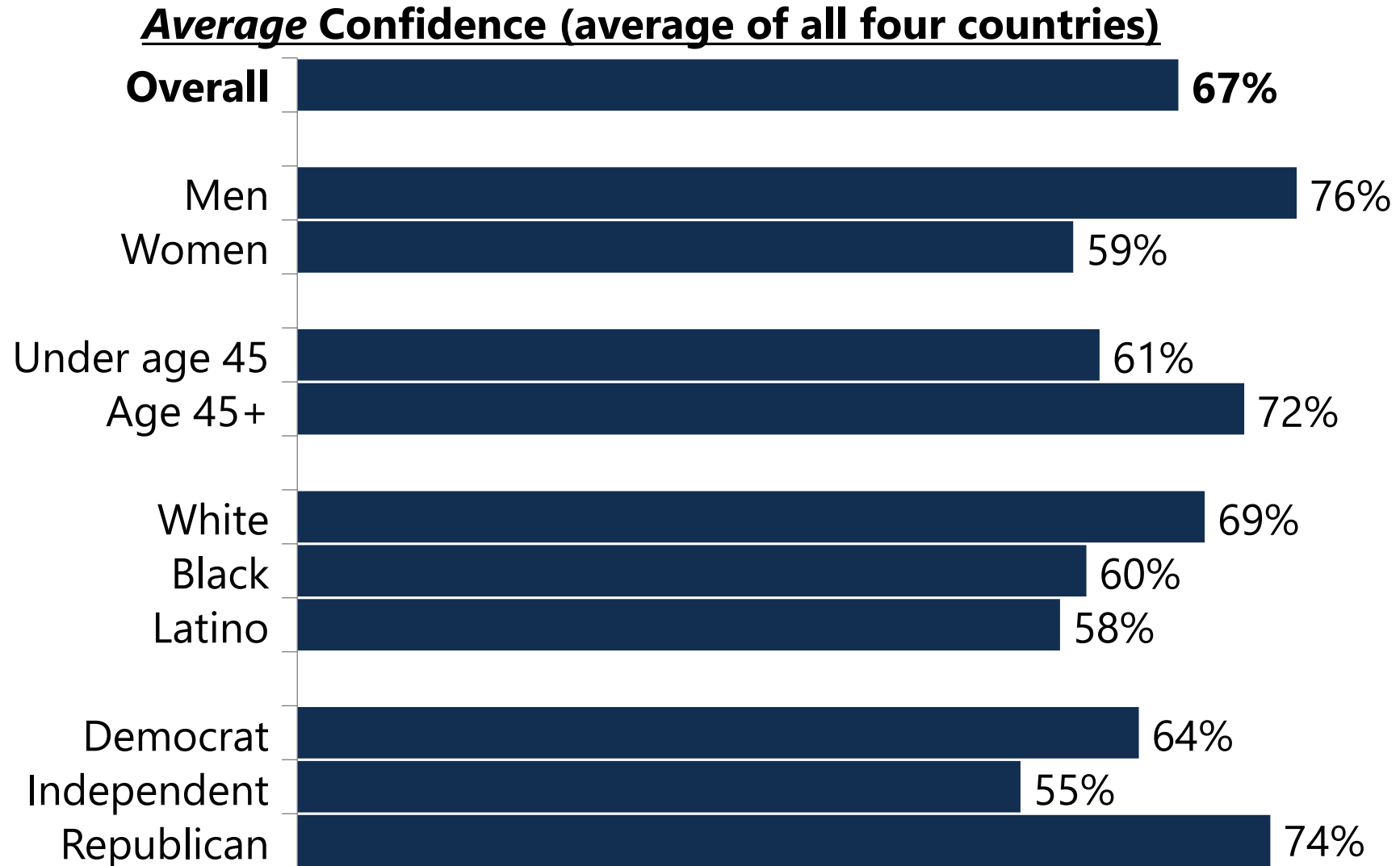
Belief in US victory vs. China, by subgroup.



Q35. Do you think the US military would win a war against China?



Belief in US victory vs. enemies, by subgroup.



Q35-38. Do you think the US military would win a war against each of the following?

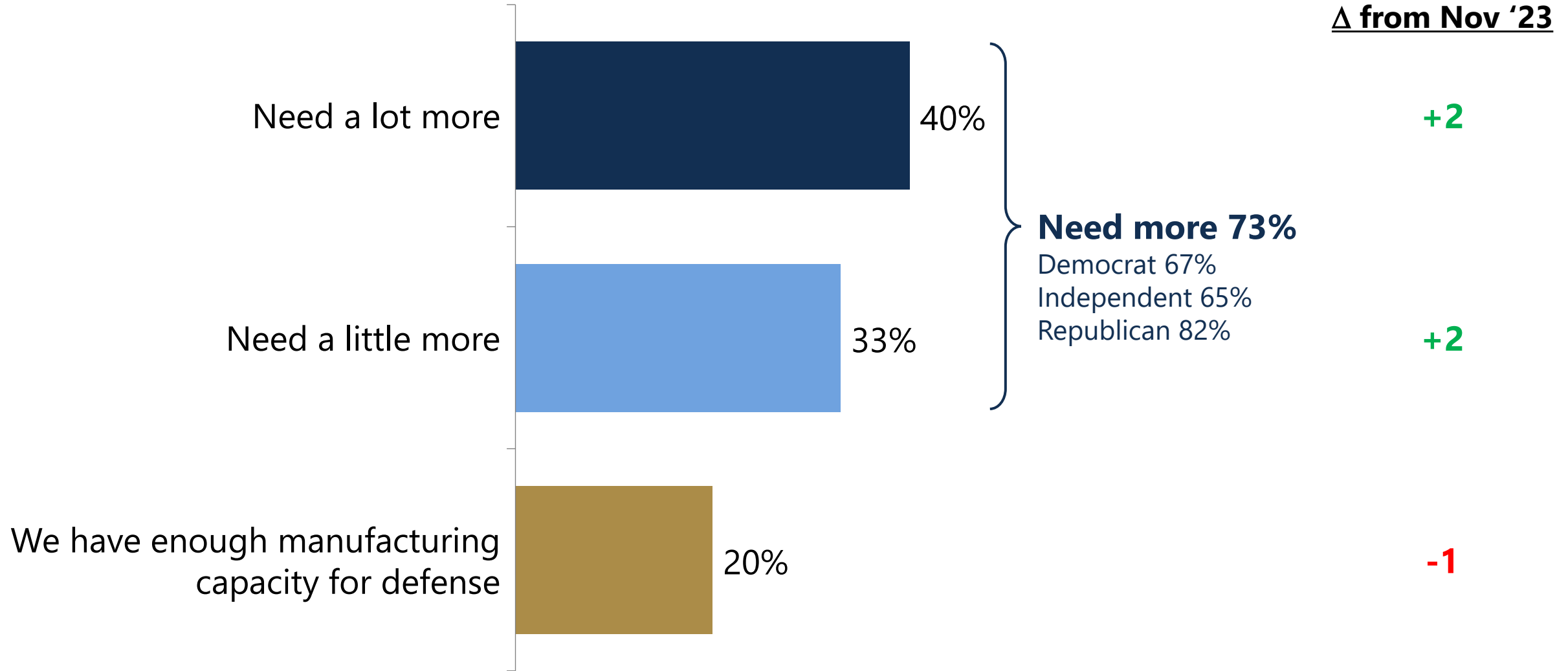


DEFENSE PRODUCTION





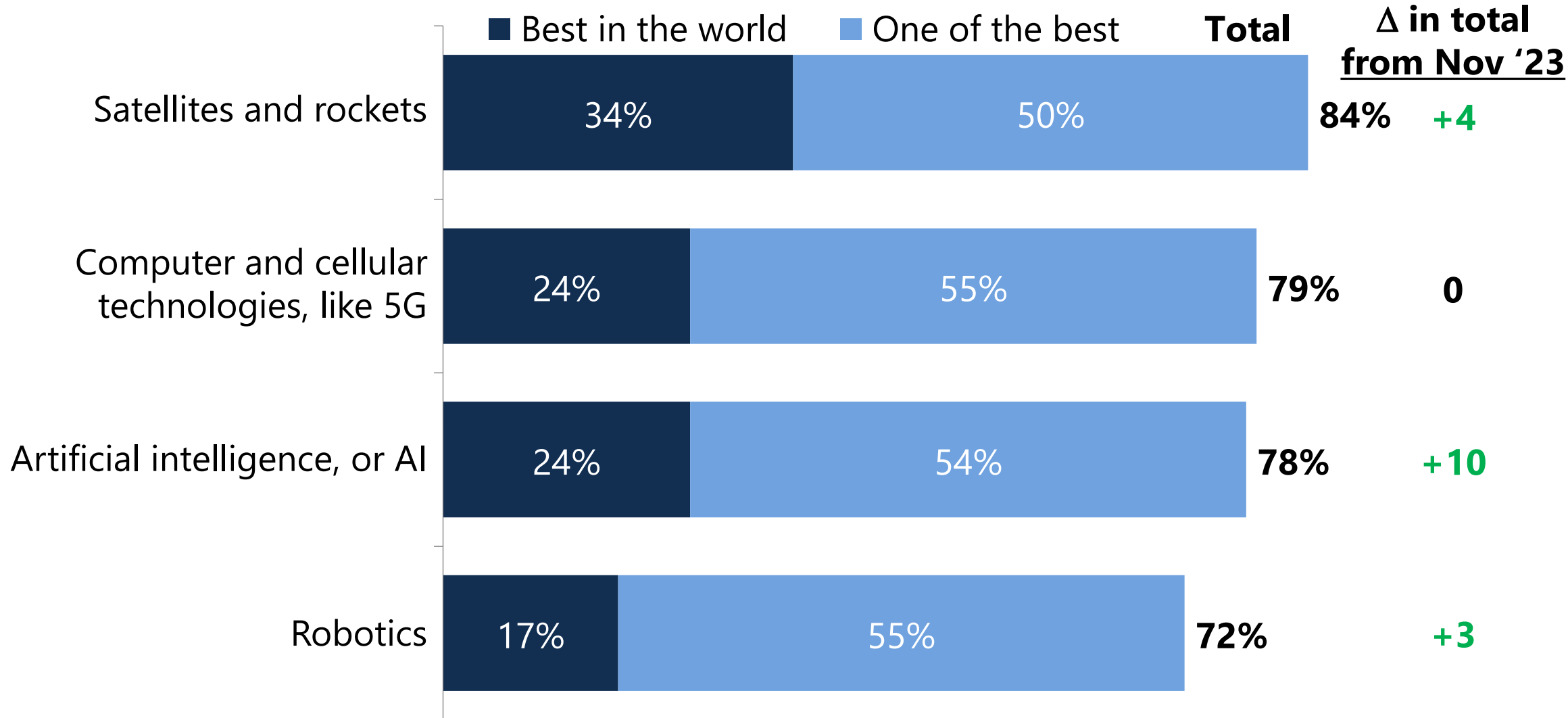
Nearly three-quarters think US needs more defense production capacity.



Q39. Do you think the US currently has enough domestic manufacturing capacity to produce the materials, equipment, and weapons needed for national defense, or do we need more manufacturing capacity?



Most think US is *one of the best* at advanced defense technologies, with a notable increase on AI.



Q40-43. Thinking specifically about materials and technologies that are important for national security – how do you think the US is doing when it comes to developing and producing each of the following? Is the US the best in the world, one of the best, or not one of the best?



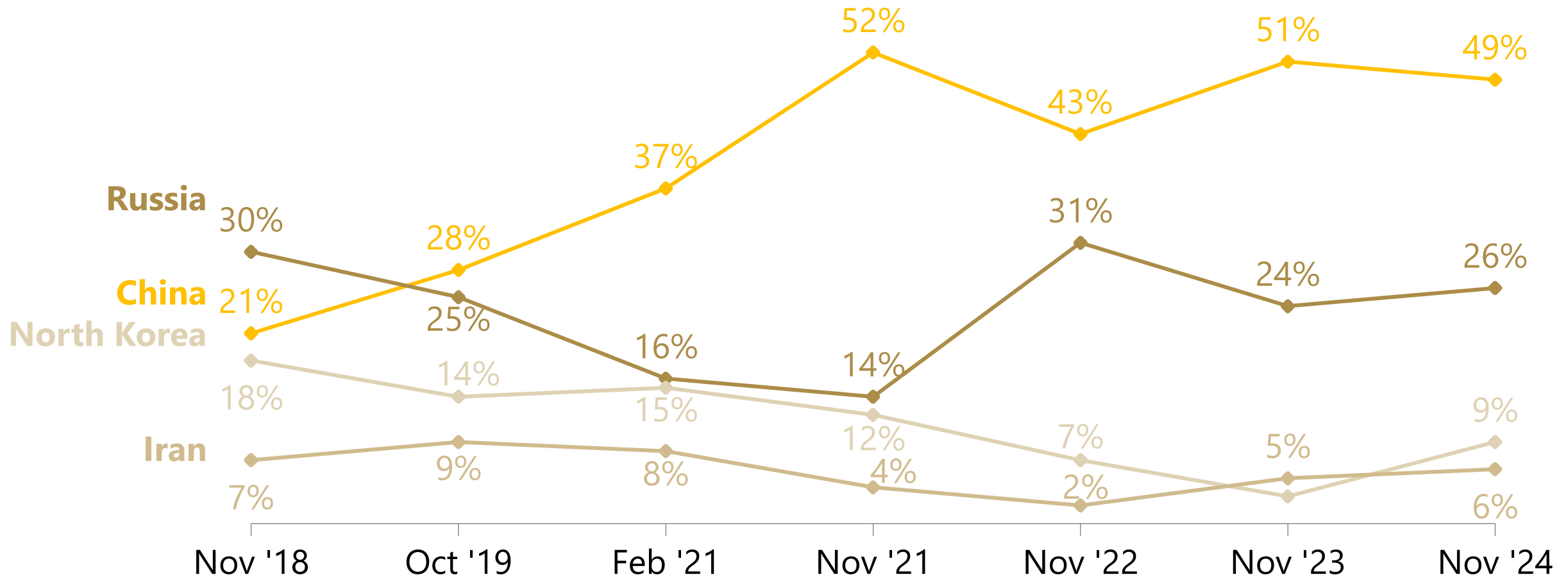
ALLIES AND ENEMIES





Half see China as the greatest threat; one-quarter think the same of Russia.

Greatest threat to US



Note: Top 4 countries shown

Q44. Which country do you see as the greatest threat to the US? [RECORD VERBATIM]

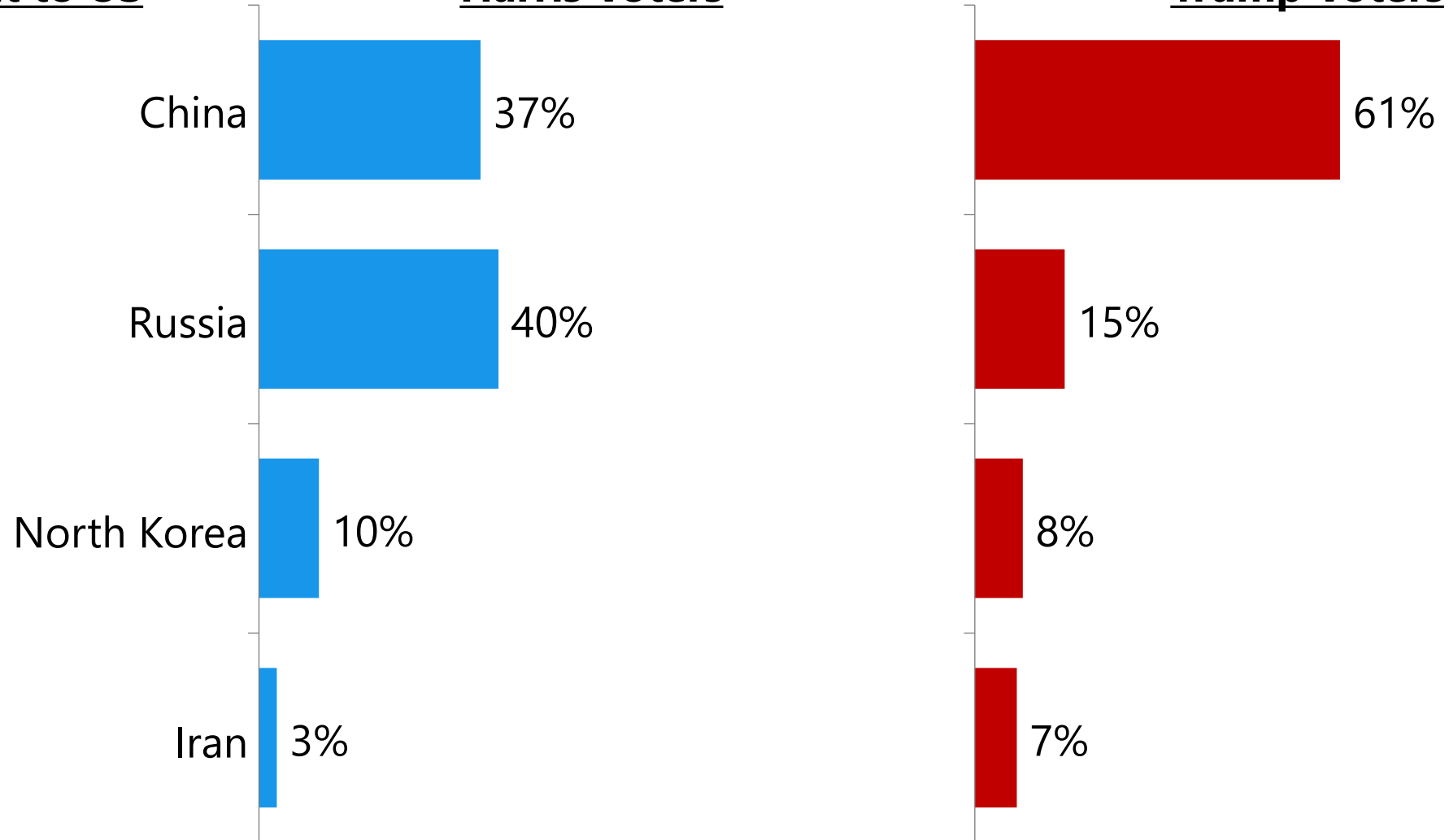


Trump voters much more focused on threat from China than Harris voters.

Greatest Threat to US

Harris Voters

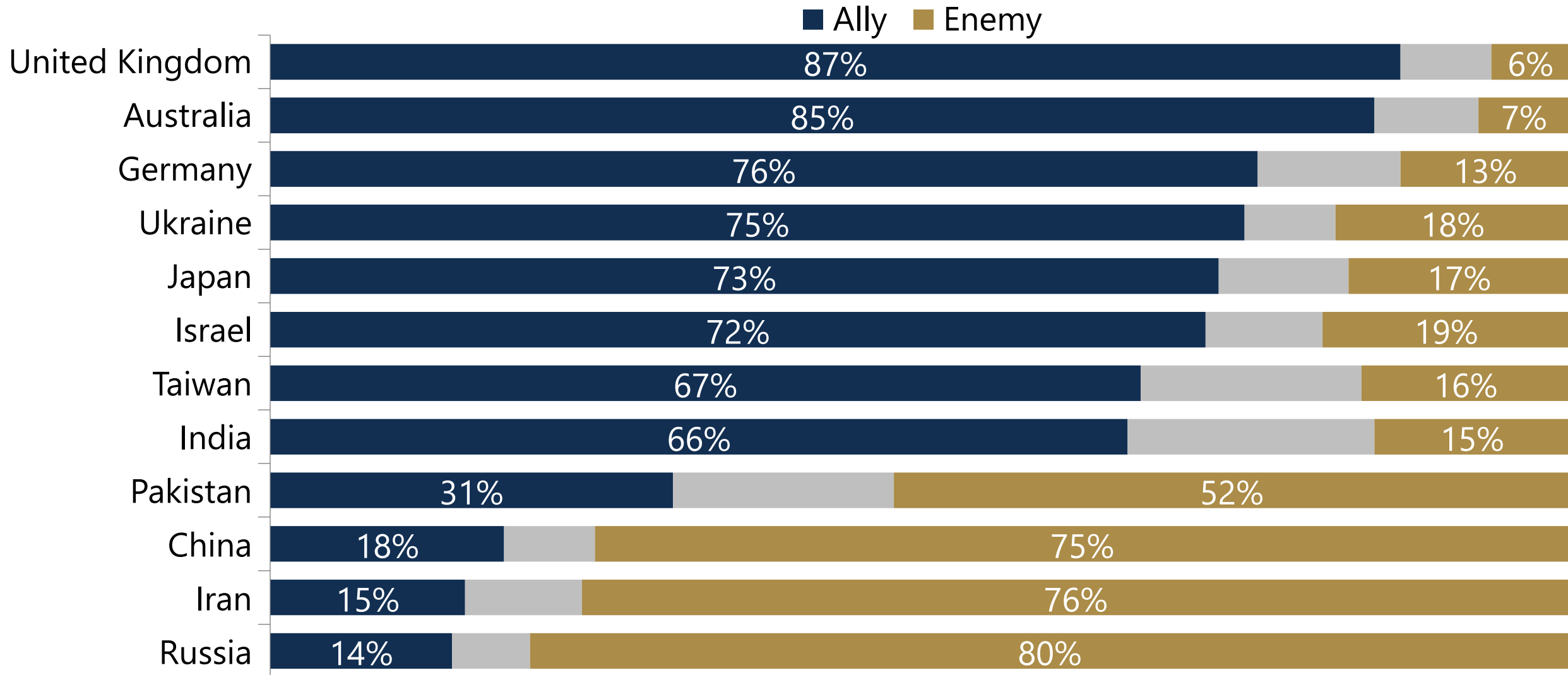
Trump Voters



Q44. Which country do you see as the greatest threat to the US? [RECORD VERBATIM]



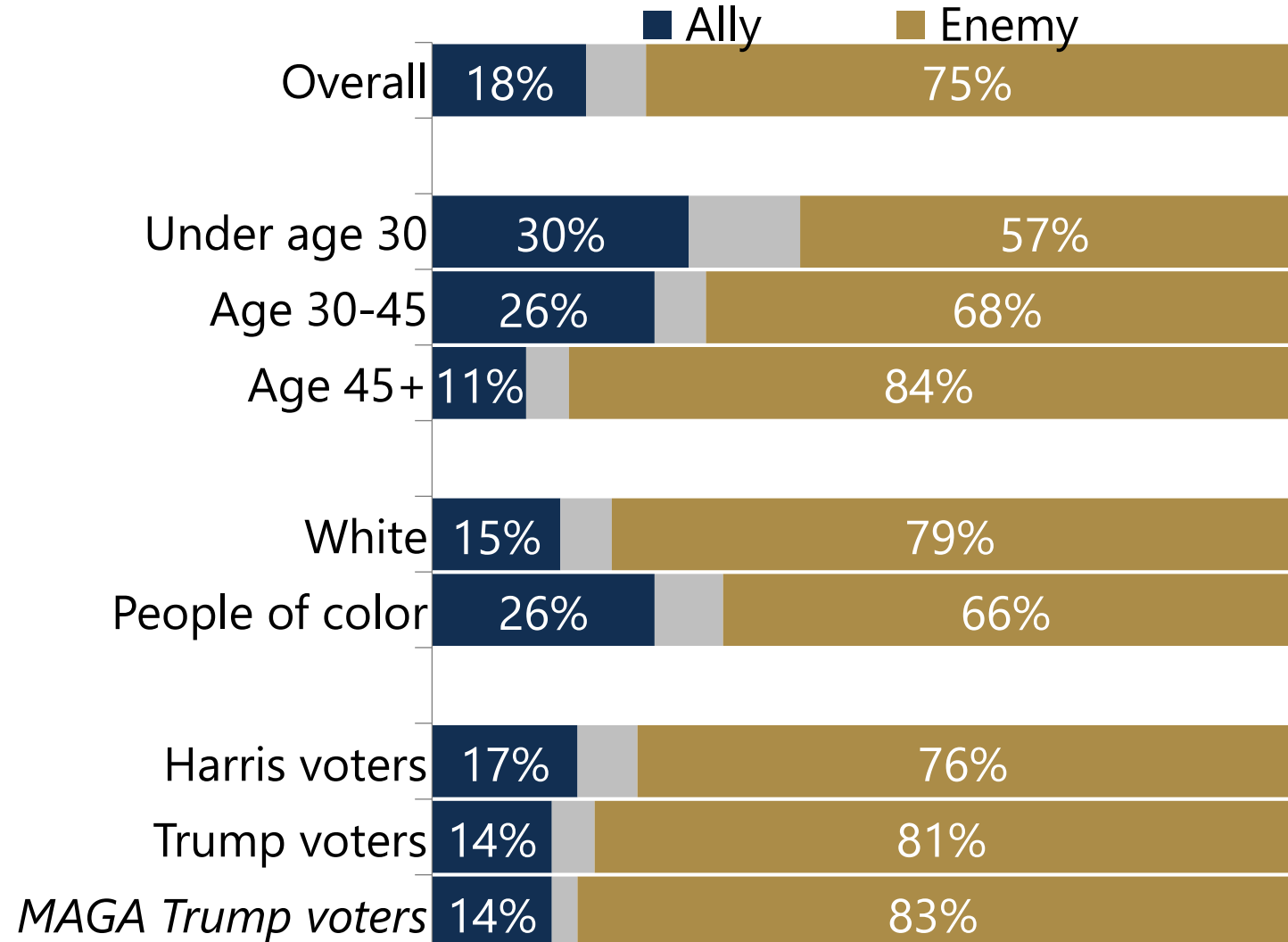
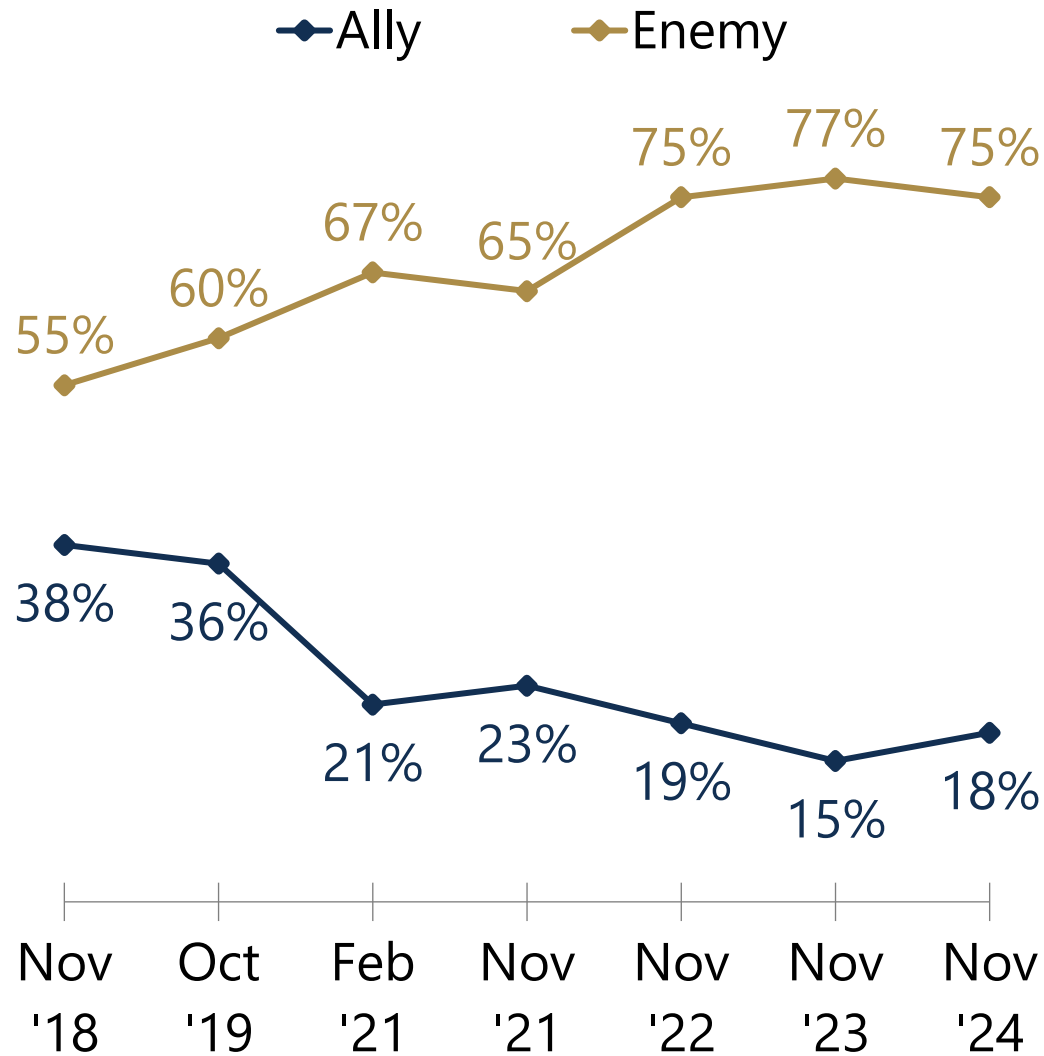
Overview of Allies and Enemies



Q45-56. Do you see each of the following countries as a strong ally, something of an ally, something of an enemy, or a strong enemy?



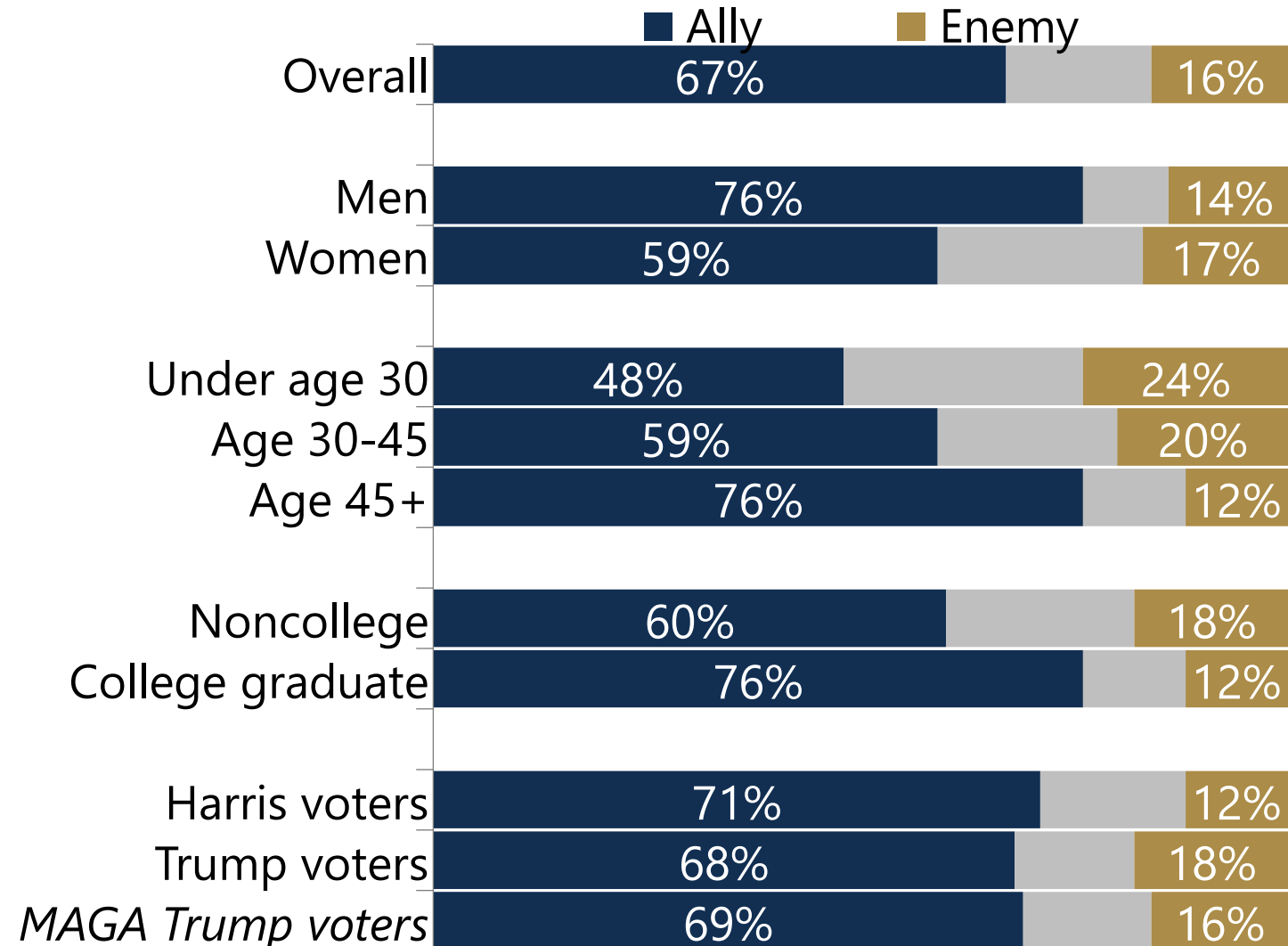
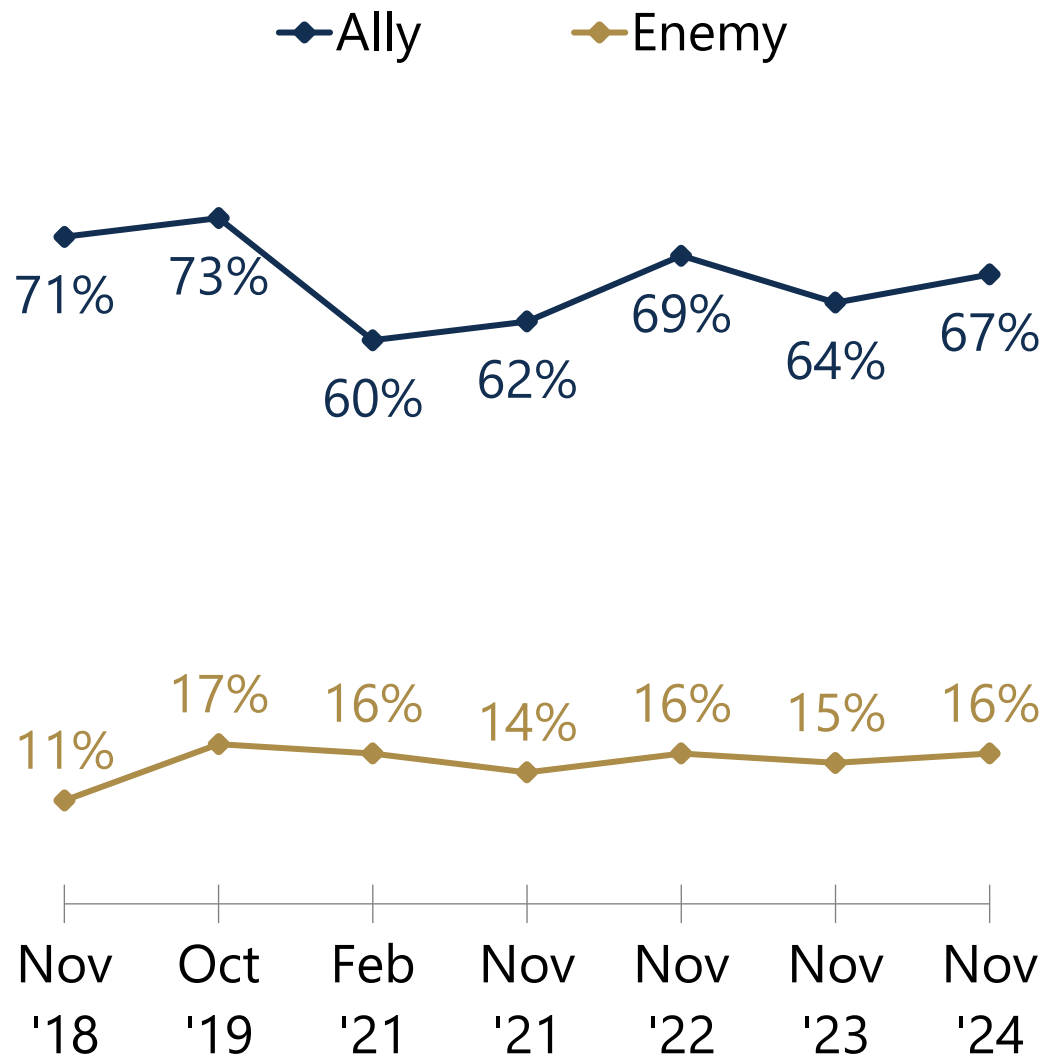
Ally/Enemy Profile: China



Q45-56. Do you see each of the following countries as a strong ally, something of an ally, something of an enemy, or a strong enemy?



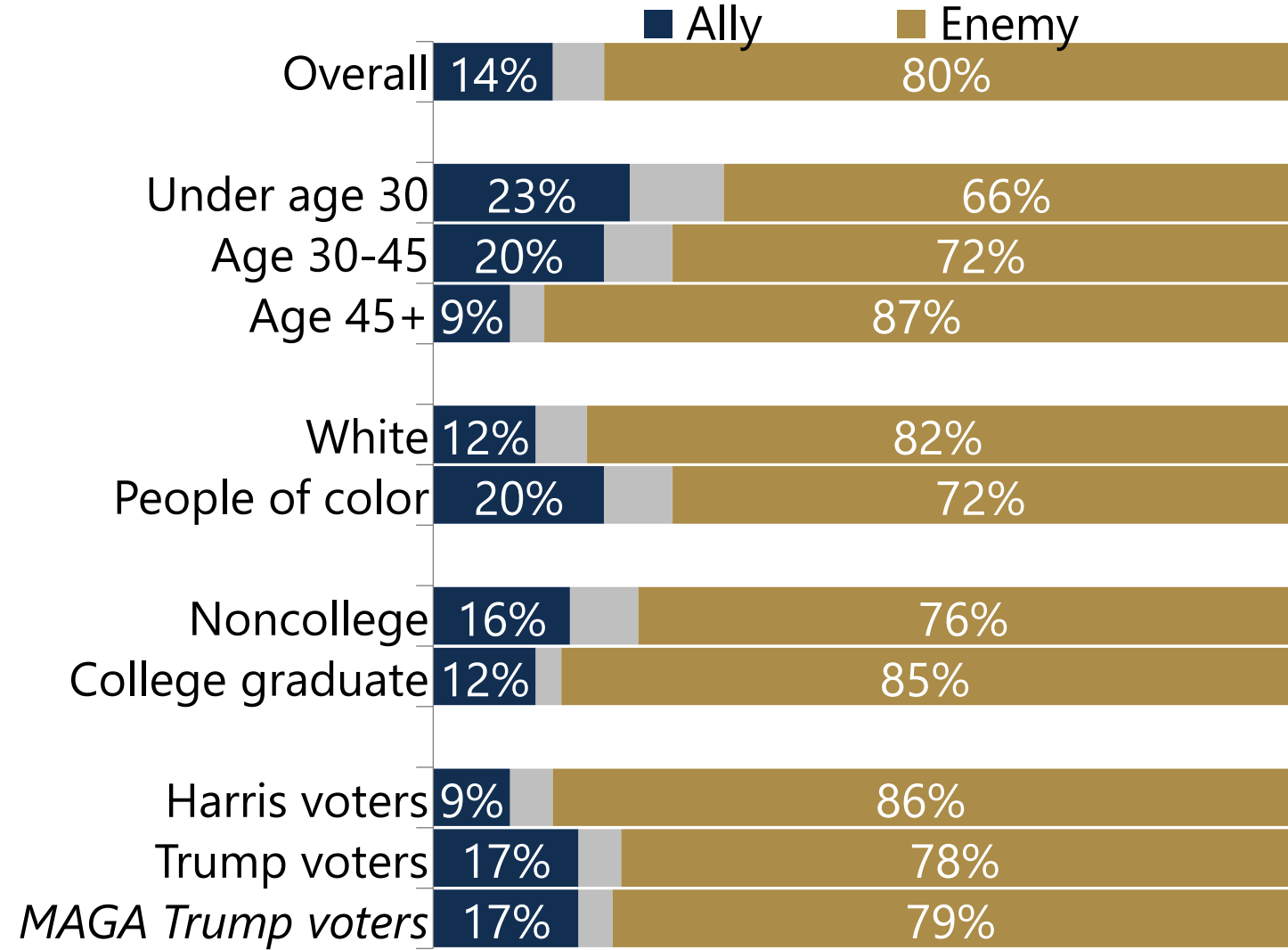
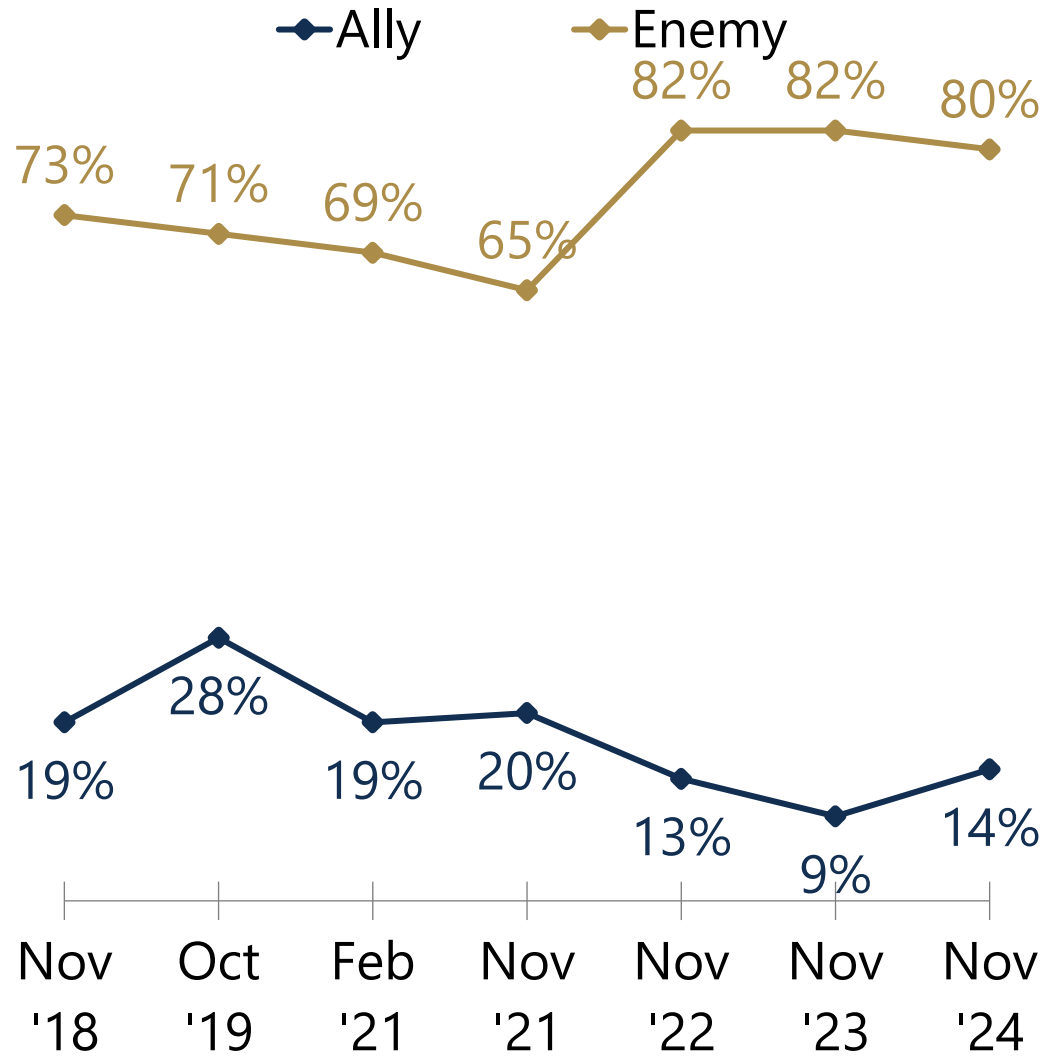
Ally/Enemy Profile: Taiwan



Q45-56. Do you see each of the following countries as a strong ally, something of an ally, something of an enemy, or a strong enemy?



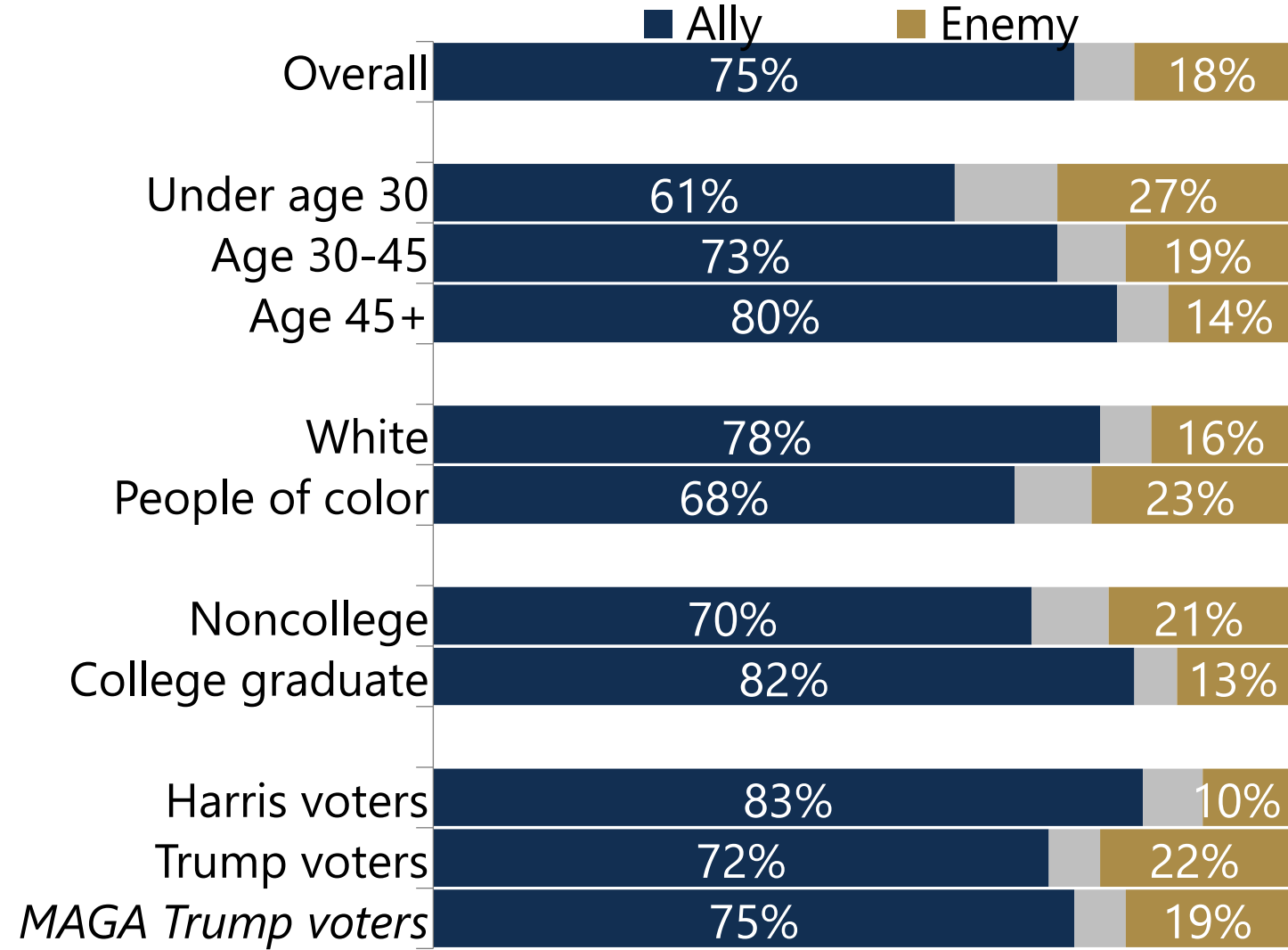
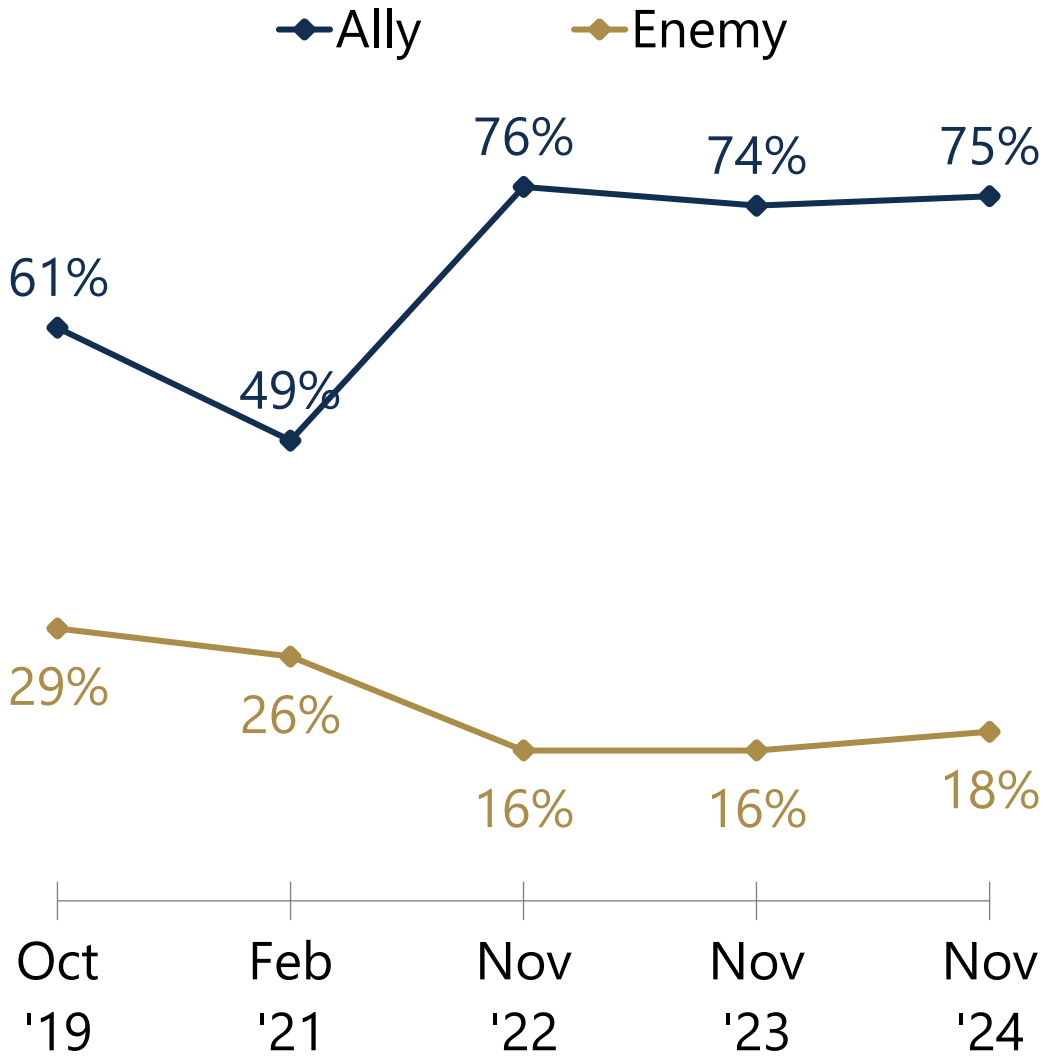
Ally/Enemy Profile: Russia



Q45-56. Do you see each of the following countries as a strong ally, something of an ally, something of an enemy, or a strong enemy?



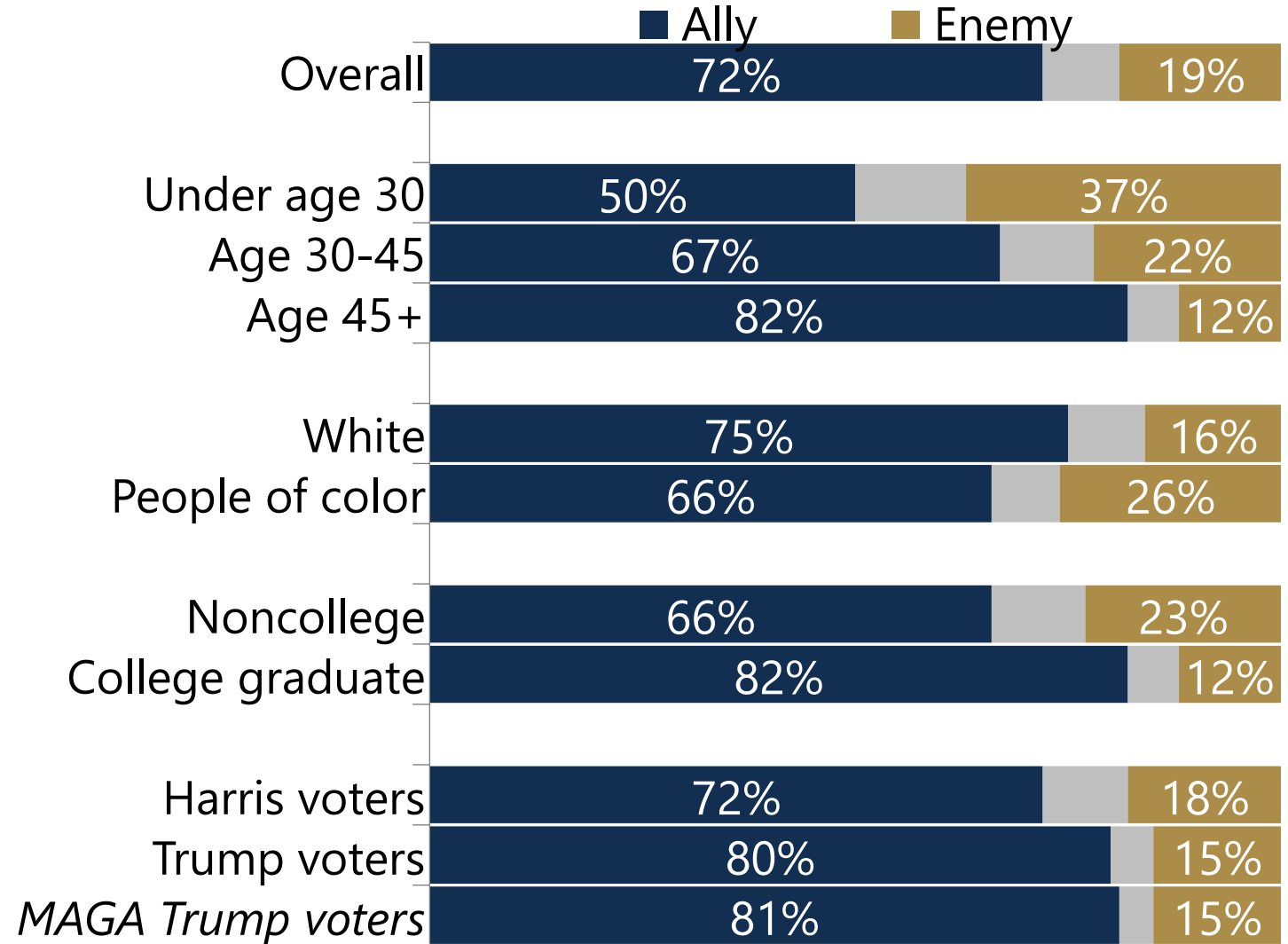
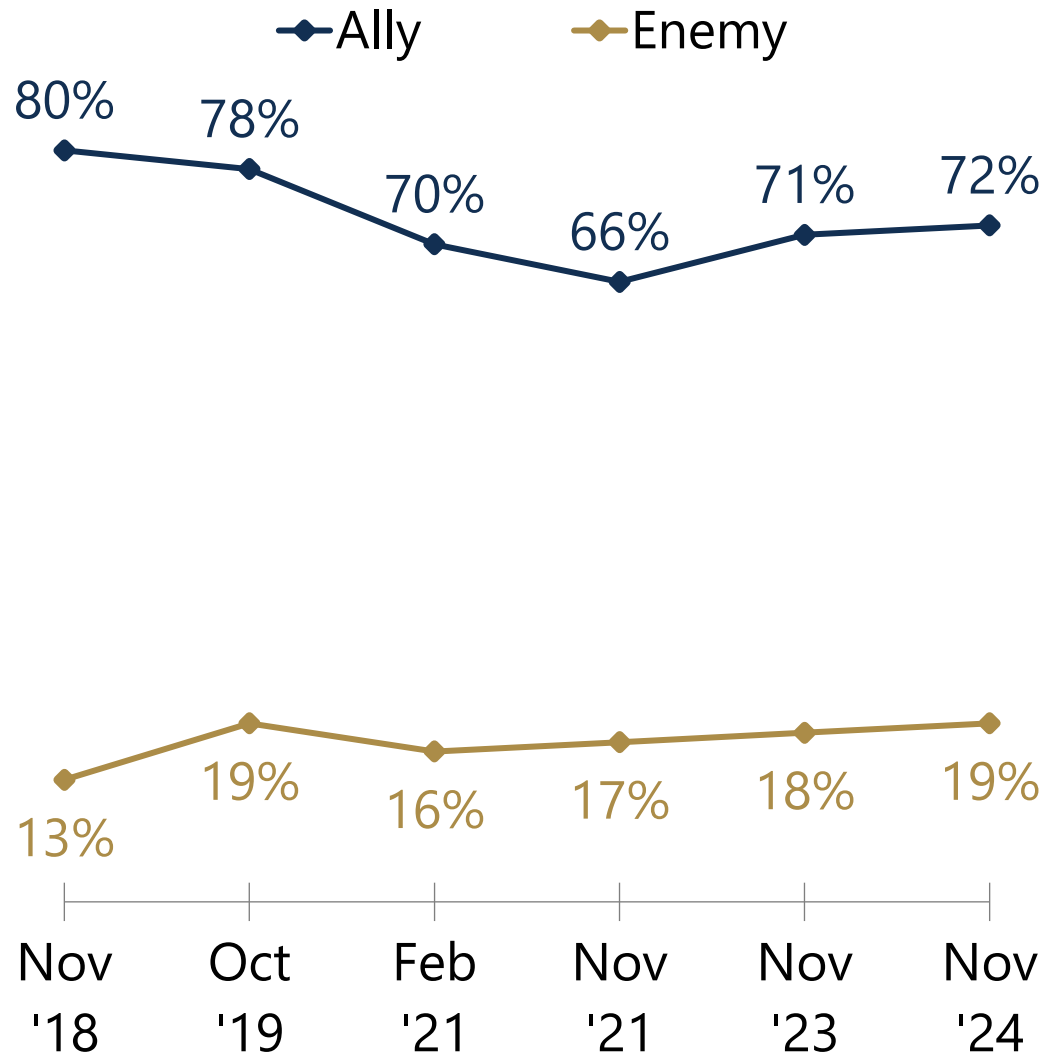
Ally/Enemy Profile: Ukraine



Q45-56. Do you see each of the following countries as a strong ally, something of an ally, something of an enemy, or a strong enemy?



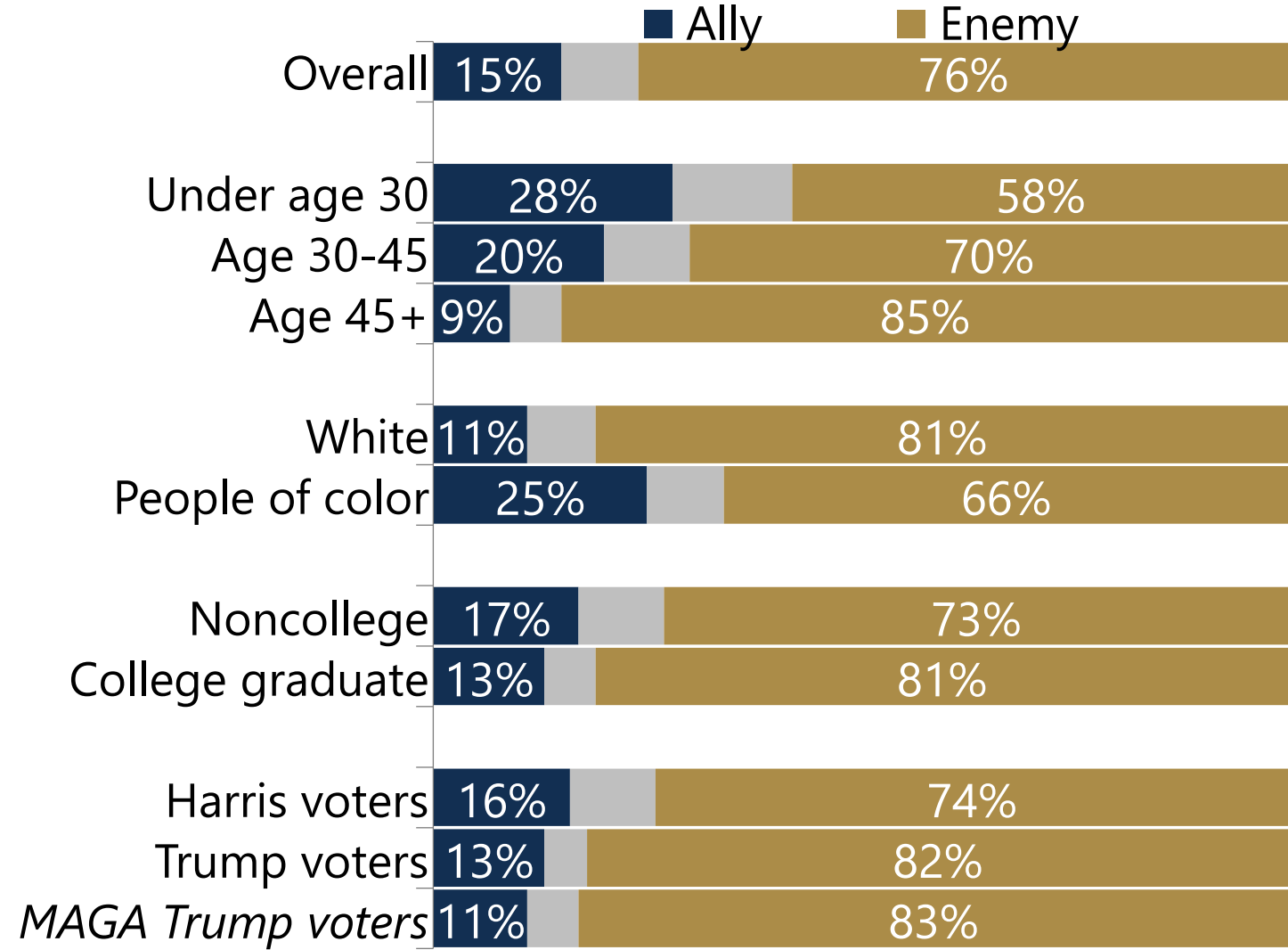
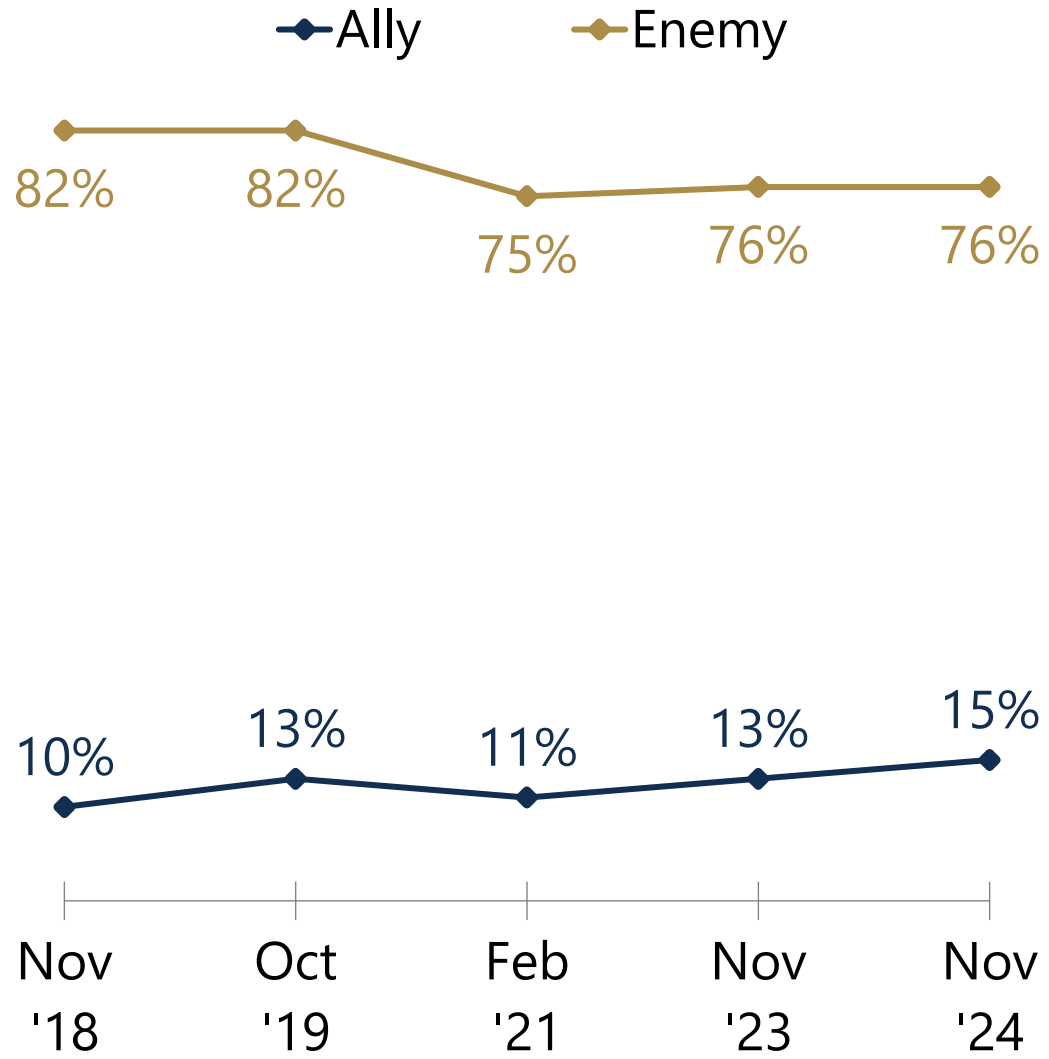
Ally/Enemy Profile: Israel



Q45-56. Do you see each of the following countries as a strong ally, something of an ally, something of an enemy, or a strong enemy?



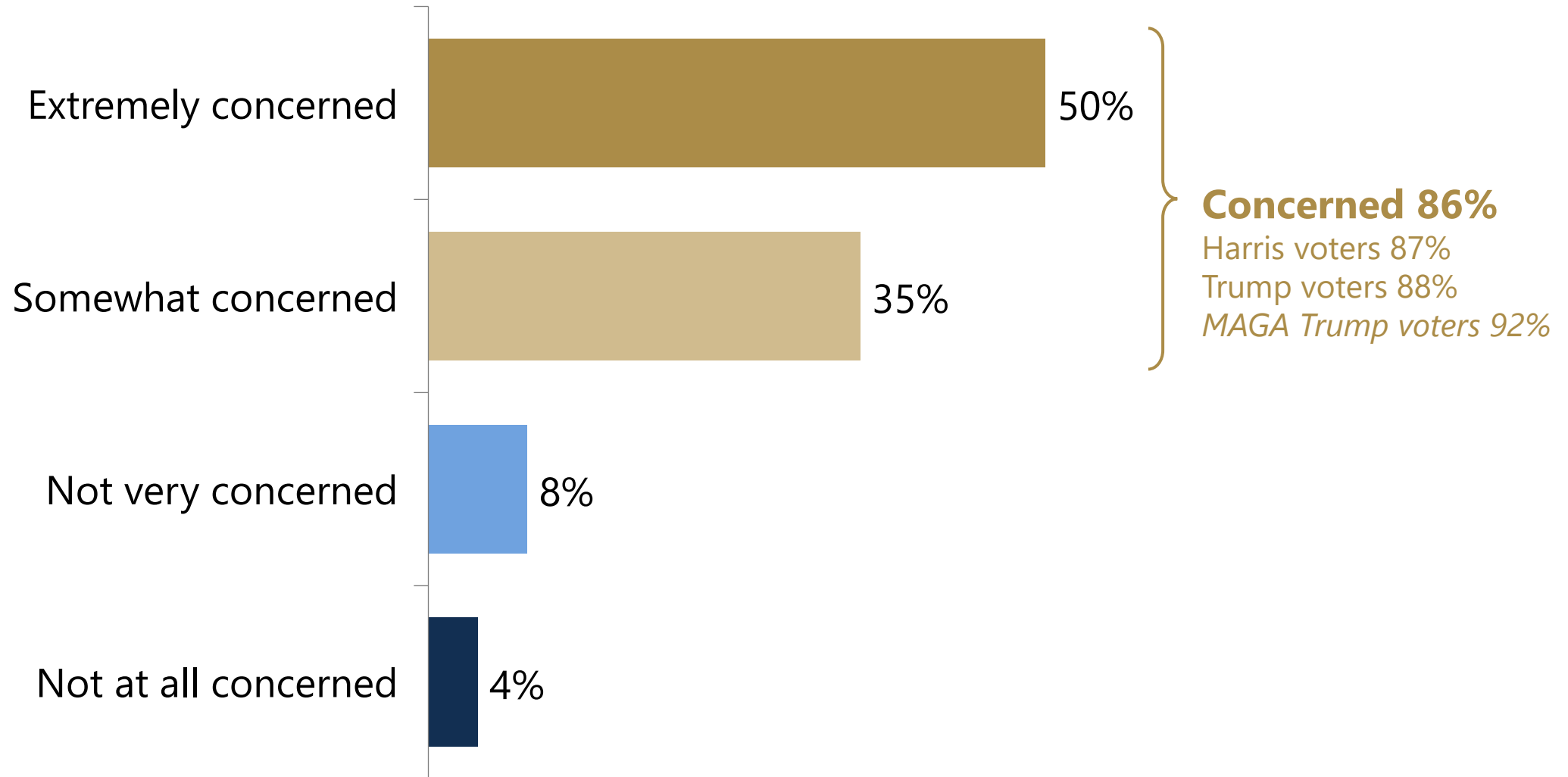
Ally/Enemy Profile: Iran



Q45-56. Do you see each of the following countries as a strong ally, something of an ally, something of an enemy, or a strong enemy?



Nearly nine-in-ten are concerned about cooperation between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.



Q57. How concerned are you about increased cooperation between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea?



Additional information about adversaries' cooperation is not needed—Americans are already concerned.

HALF SAMPLE: *How concerned are you about increased cooperation between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea?*



HALF SAMPLE: *As you may know, China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have recently increased their military and economic cooperation. That includes weapons sales, joint military training exercises, cooperating to evade economic sanctions, and more...*

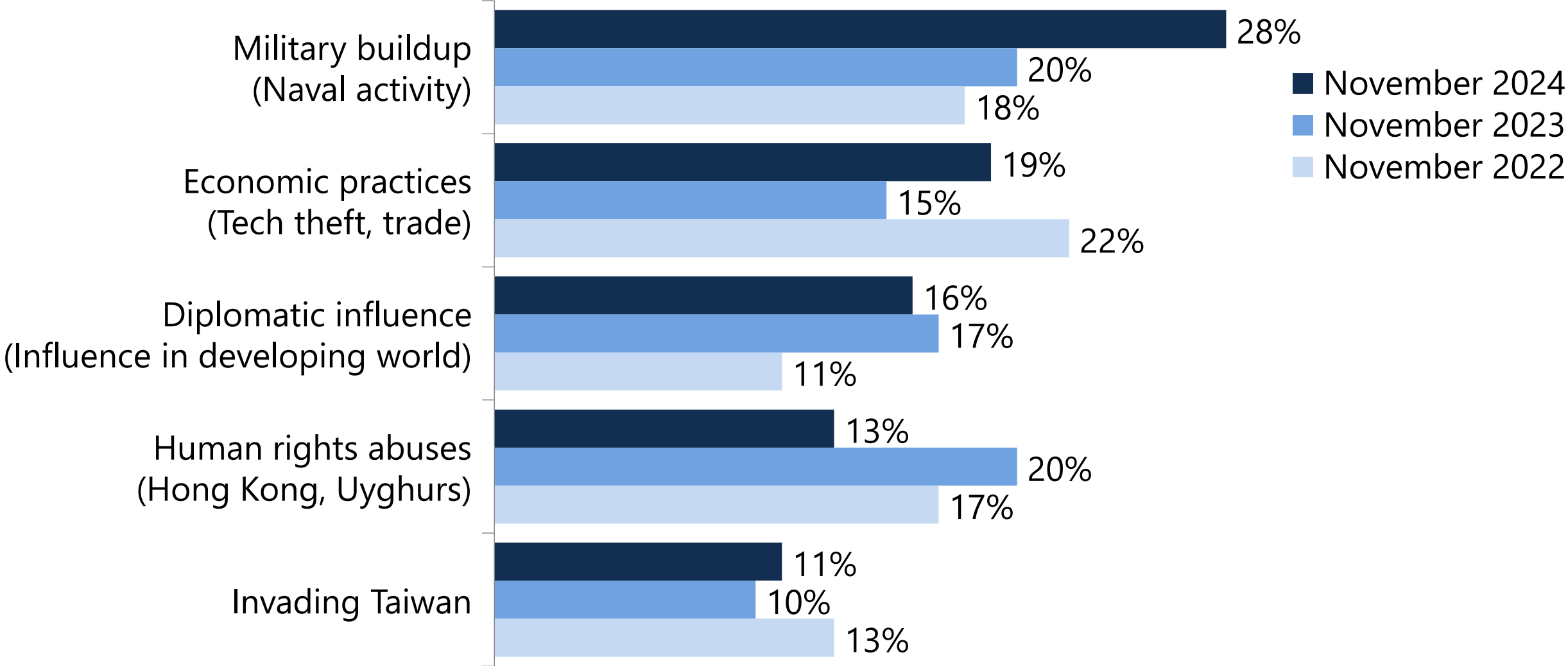




CHINA



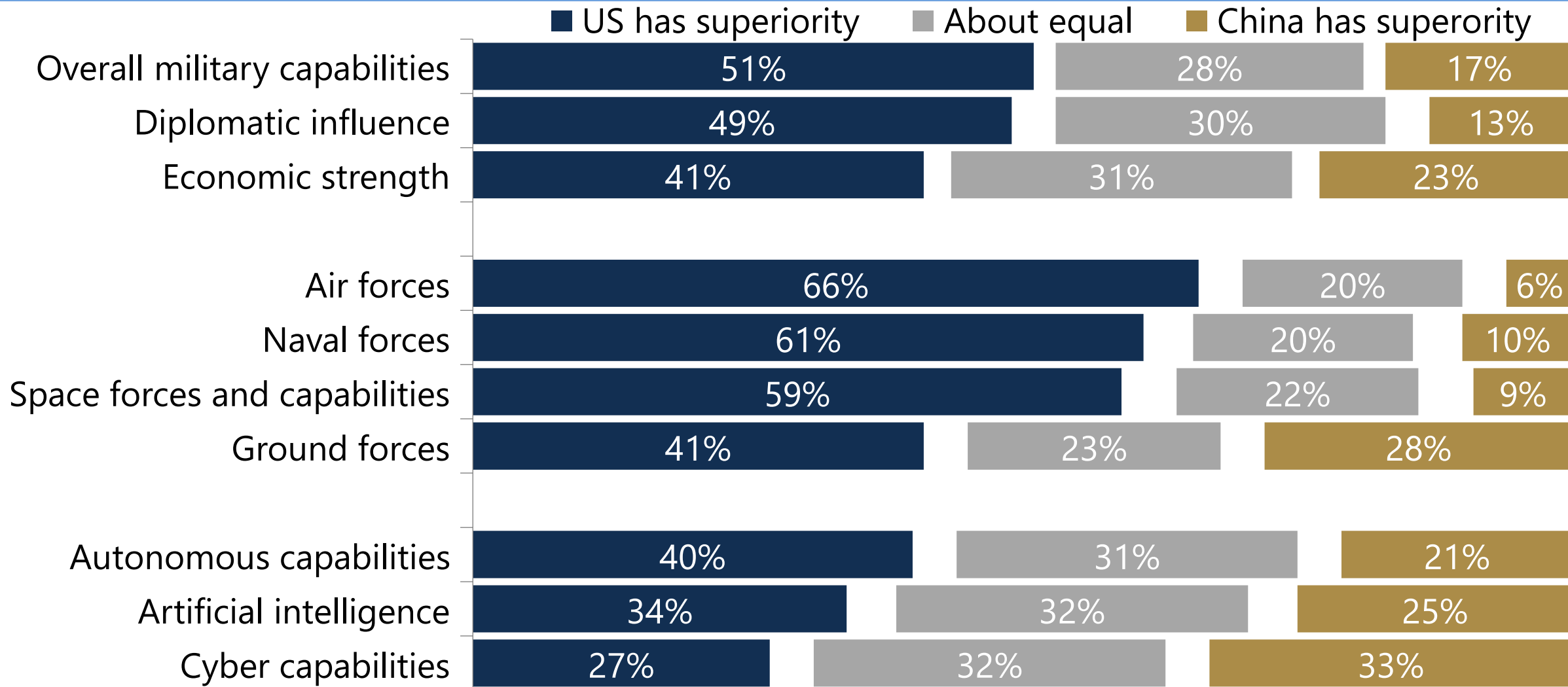
Increasing concern about Chinese military buildup; decreasing concern with human rights abuses.



Q59. Which of the following most concerns you about China?



US seen as superior to China on all measures except for cyber capabilities.

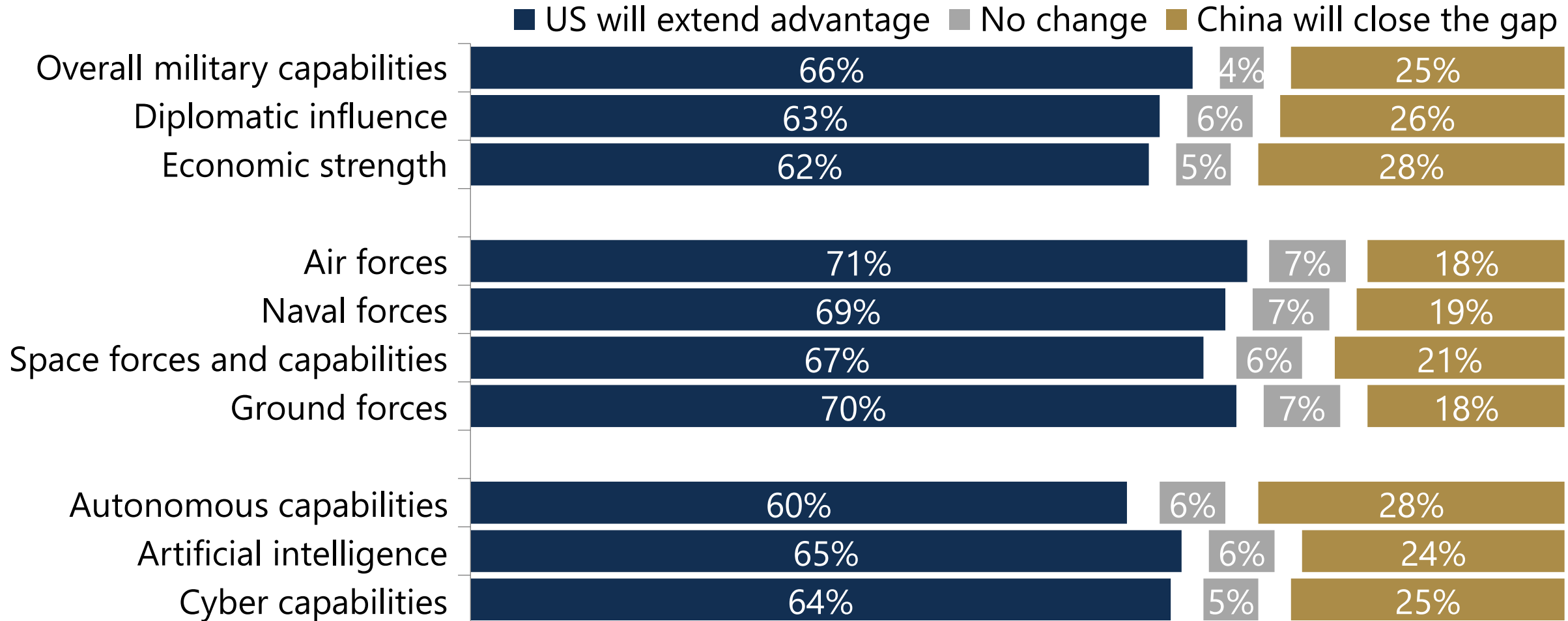


Q60-69. Do you think the US has superiority, are the two countries about equal, or does China have superiority?



Those who think US has superiority largely think those advantages will increase over the next 5 years.

Among those who think US has superiority

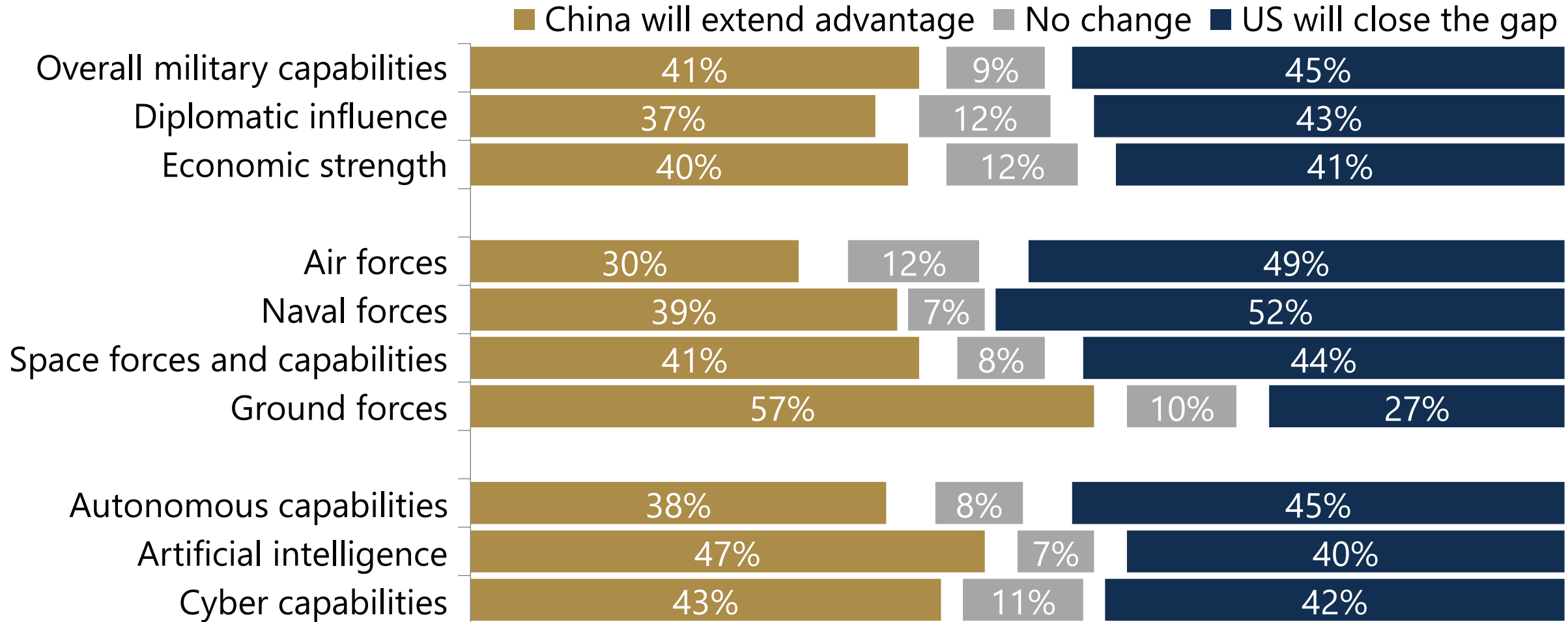


Q70-79. In the next five years, do you think the US will extend its advantage or will China close the gap?



Those who think China has superiority largely see a split decision over the next 5 years.

Among those who think China has superiority

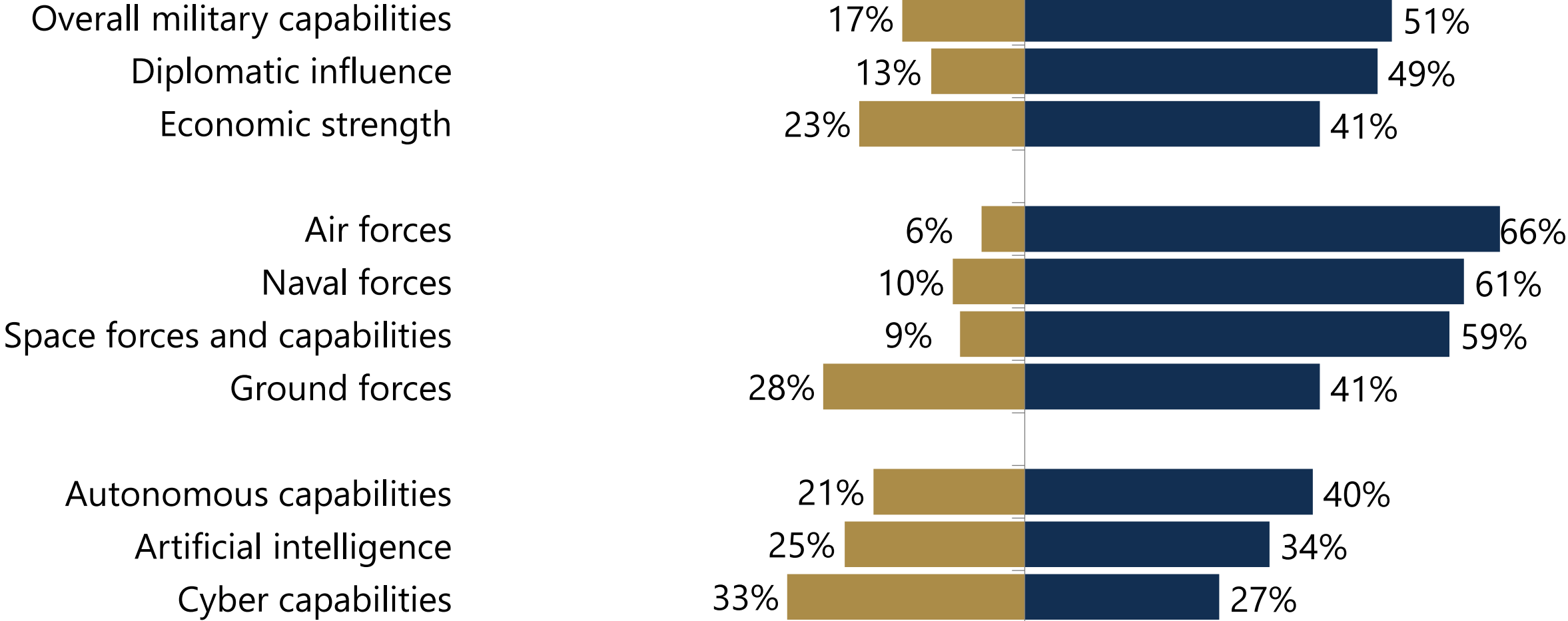


Q80-89. In the next five years, do you think China will extend its advantage or will the US close the gap?

US seen as superior to China on all measures except for cyber capabilities.



■ China has superiority ■ US has superiority



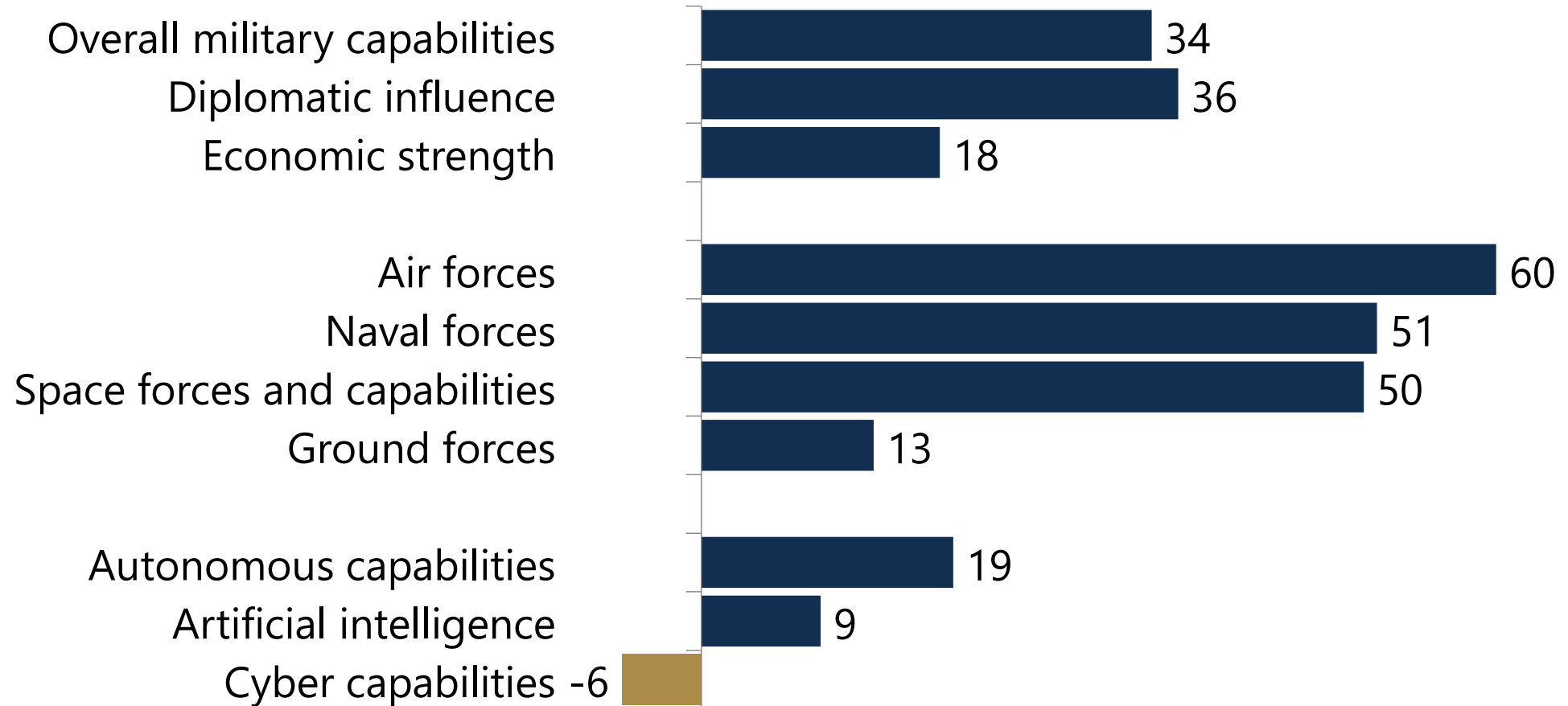
Q60-69. Do you think the US has superiority, are the two countries about equal, or does China have superiority?



US seen as militarily superior to China—though a relatively small gap in ground forces.

Net Evaluation (US minus China superiority)

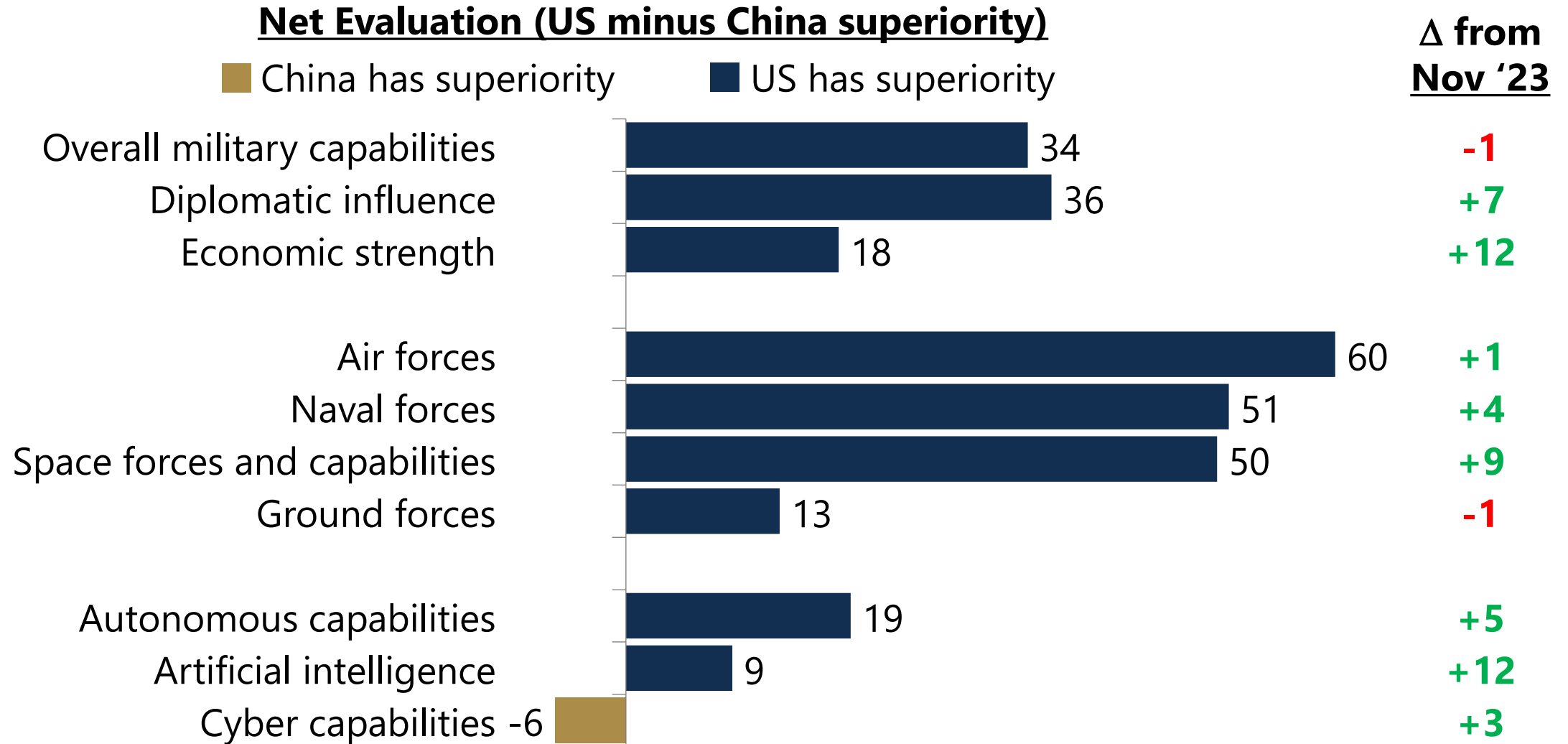
■ China has superiority ■ US has superiority



Q60-69. Do you think the US has superiority, are the two countries about equal, or does China have superiority?



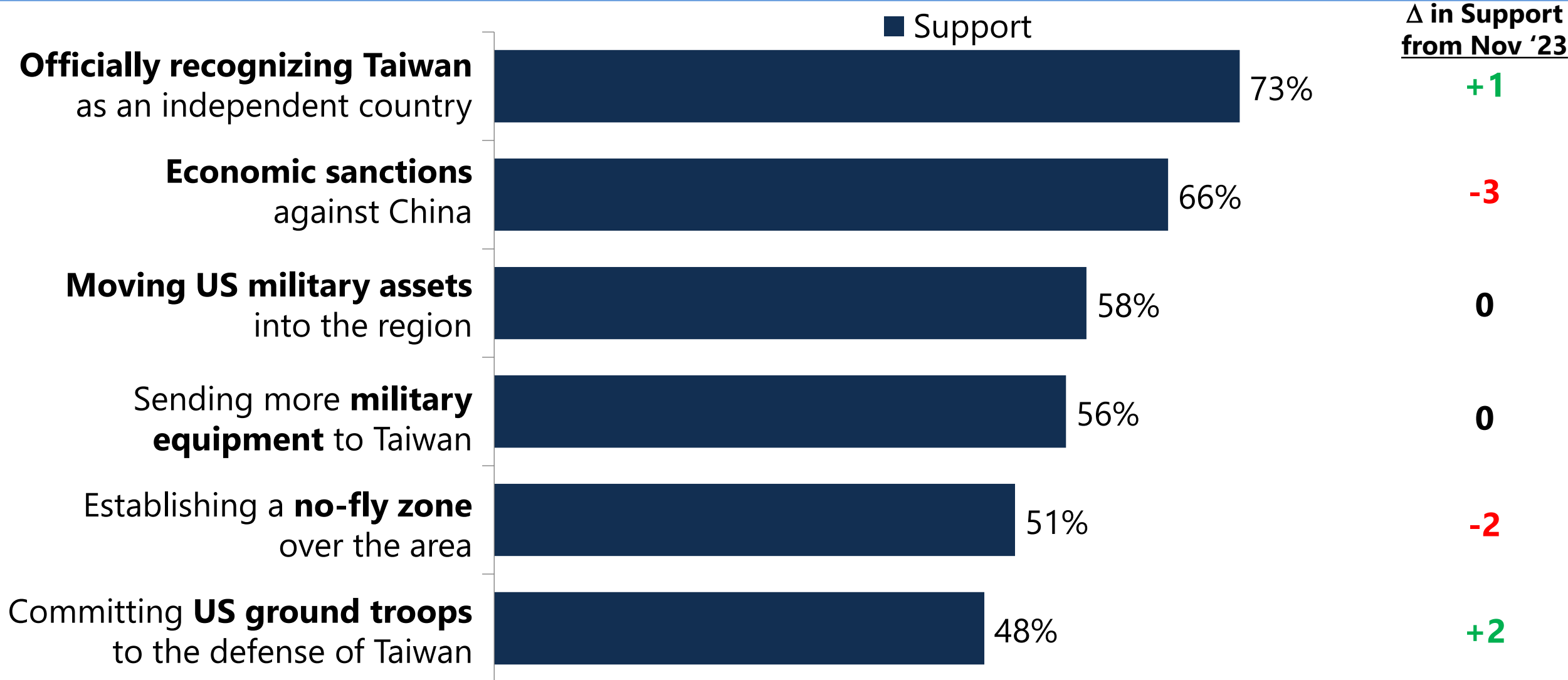
Americans think US has gained ground on most measures since last year.



Q60-69. Do you think the US has superiority, are the two countries about equal, or does China have superiority?



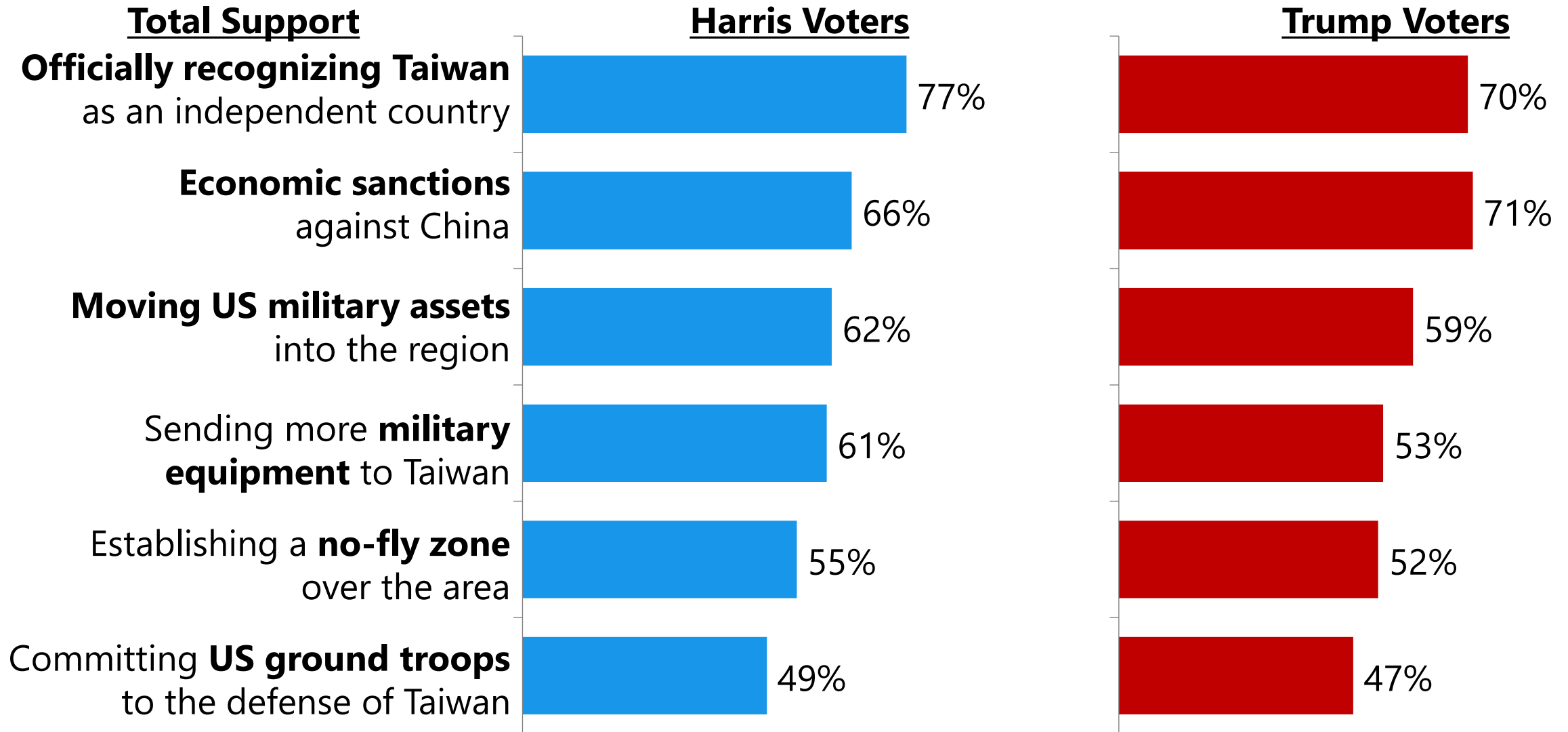
Steady support for a range of measures if China invades Taiwan.



Q90-95. Although official Chinese policy is that Taiwan is part of China, Taiwan has operated relatively independently for decades. If China invaded Taiwan, would you support or oppose the United States defending Taiwan by...



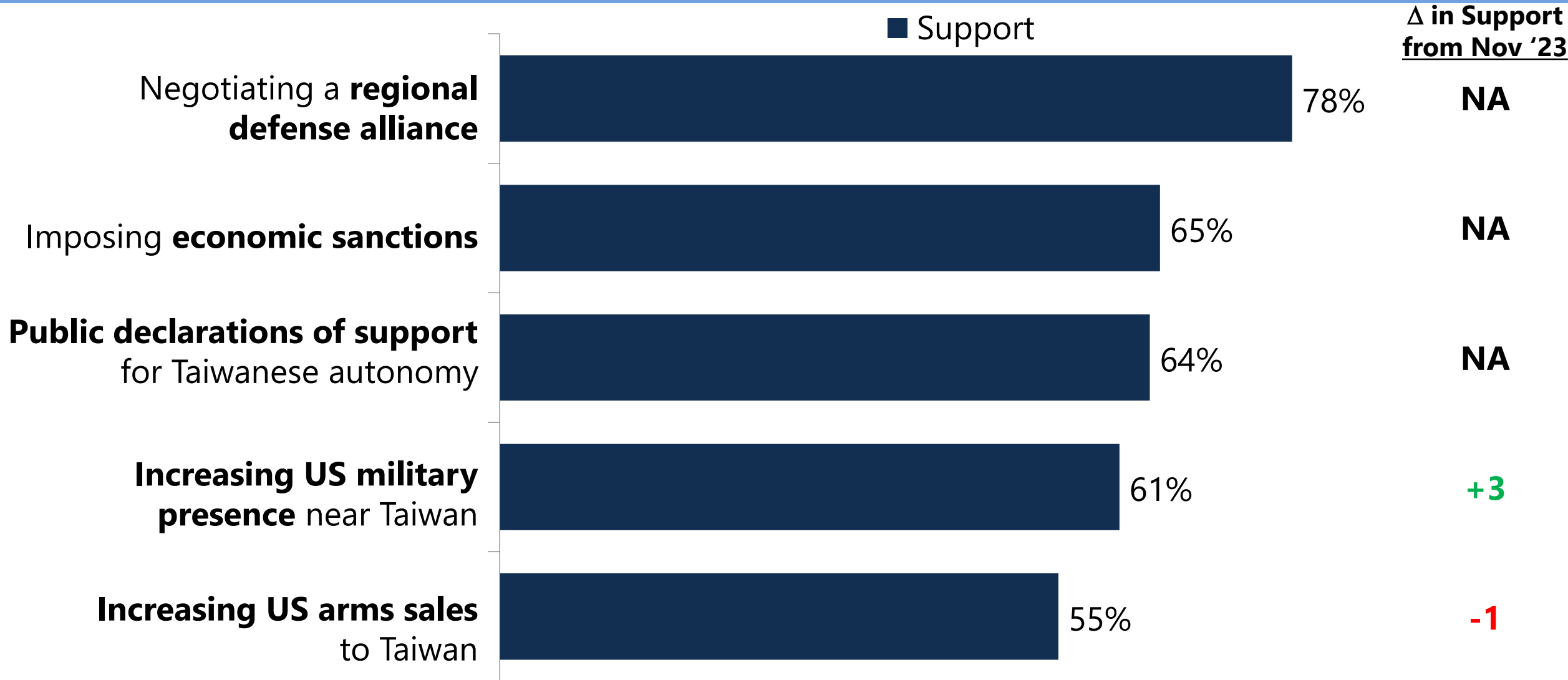
Harris, Trump voters largely aligned on response if China invades Taiwan.



Q90-95. Although official Chinese policy is that Taiwan is part of China, Taiwan has operated relatively independently for decades. If China invaded Taiwan, would you support or oppose the United States defending Taiwan by...



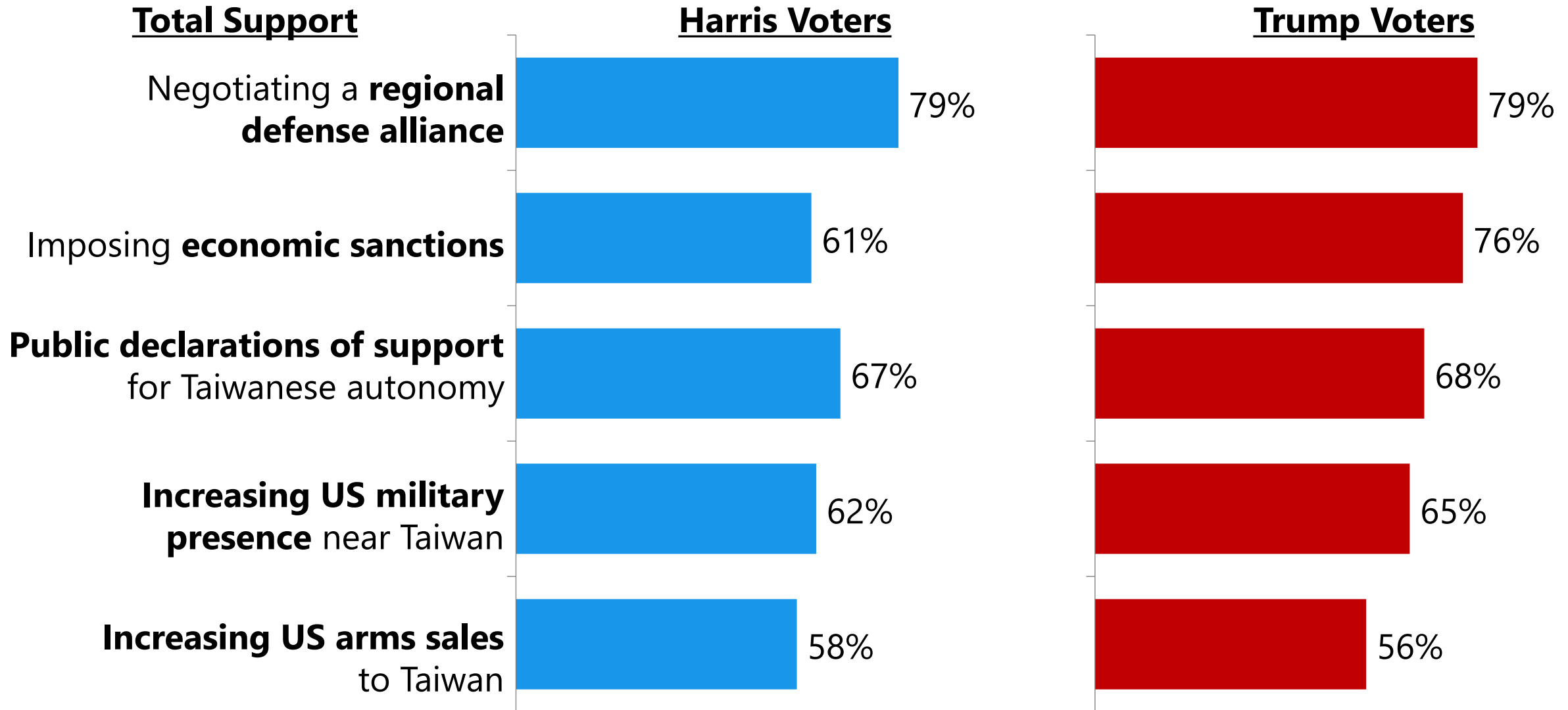
Majorities support deterrence measures on Taiwan.



Q96-100. In an attempt to discourage China from invading Taiwan, do you support or oppose each of the following?



Harris, Trump voters agree on deterrence policies, with more support for economic sanctions on the right.



Q96-100. In an attempt to discourage China from invading Taiwan, do you support or oppose each of the following?

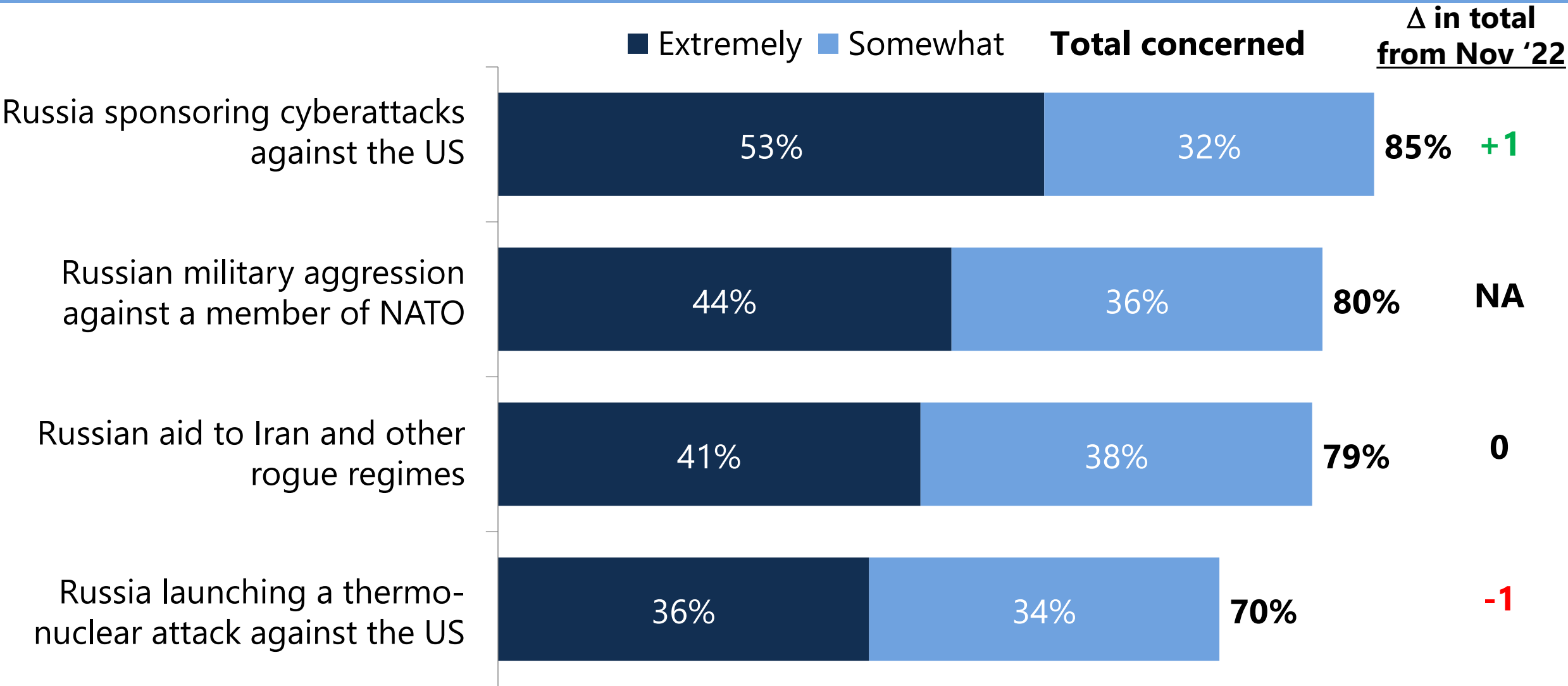


RUSSIA & UKRAINE





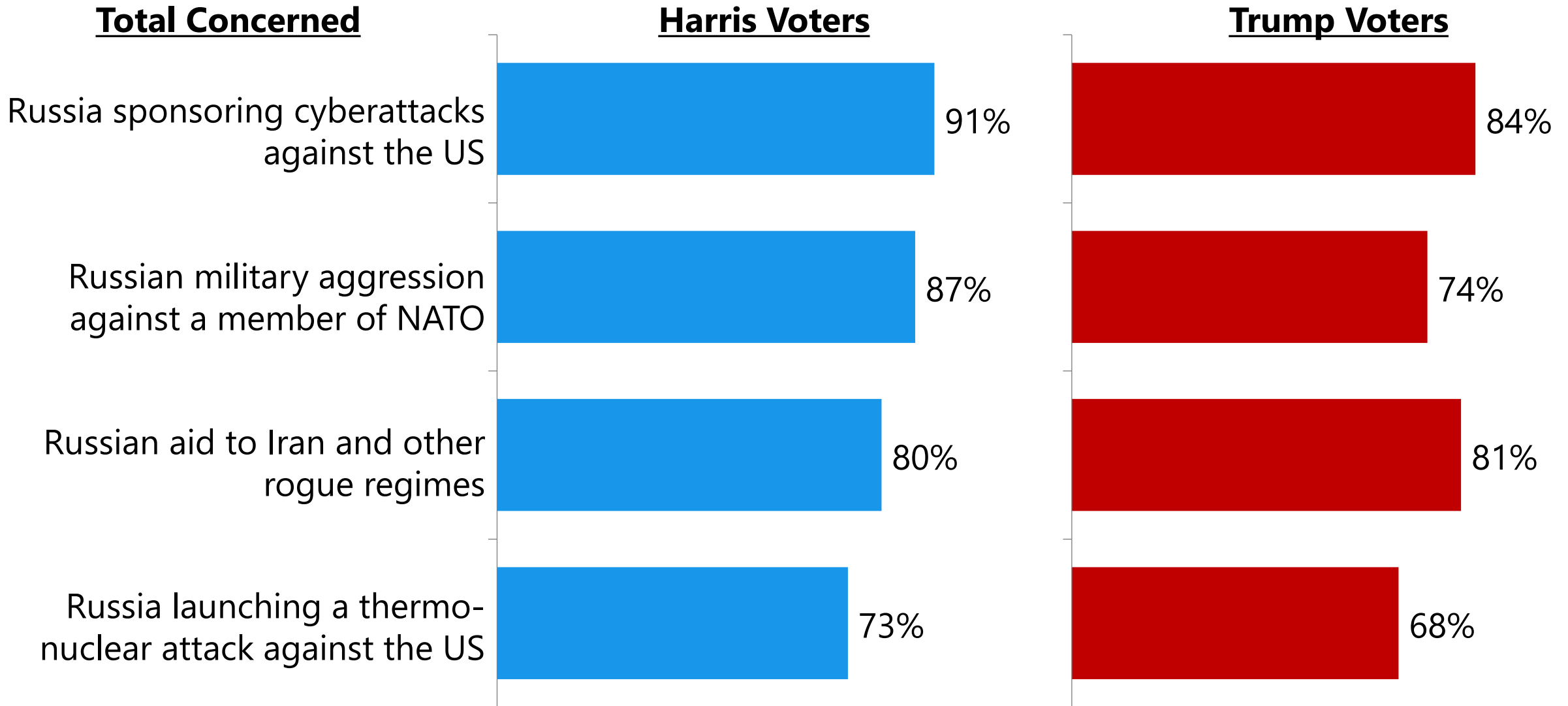
Significant concern about a variety of Russian activities.



Q101-104. Thinking specifically about Russia, how concerned are you about each of the following?

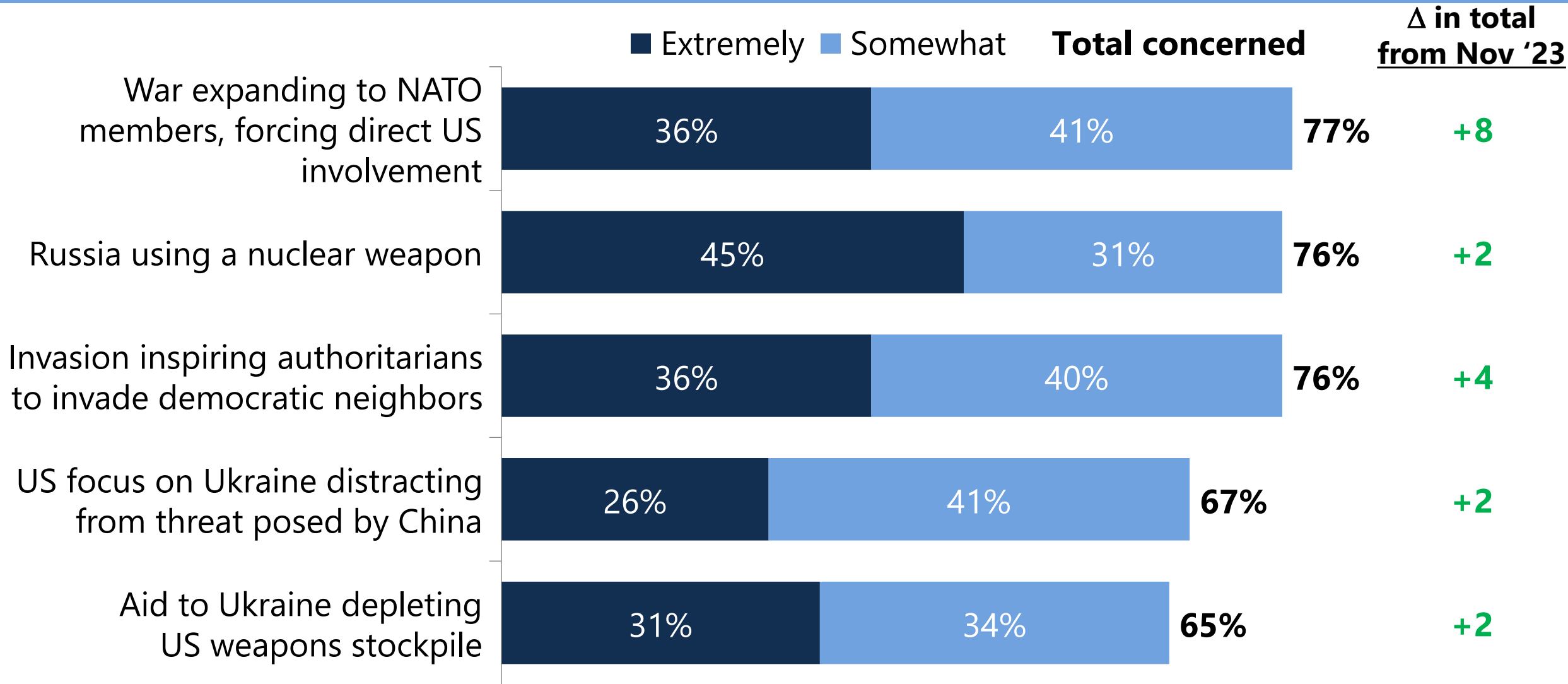


Slightly more concern about Russian activities among Harris voters than Trump voters.



Q101-104. Thinking specifically about Russia, how concerned are you about each of the following?

Growing concern about an array of risks of the war in Ukraine.

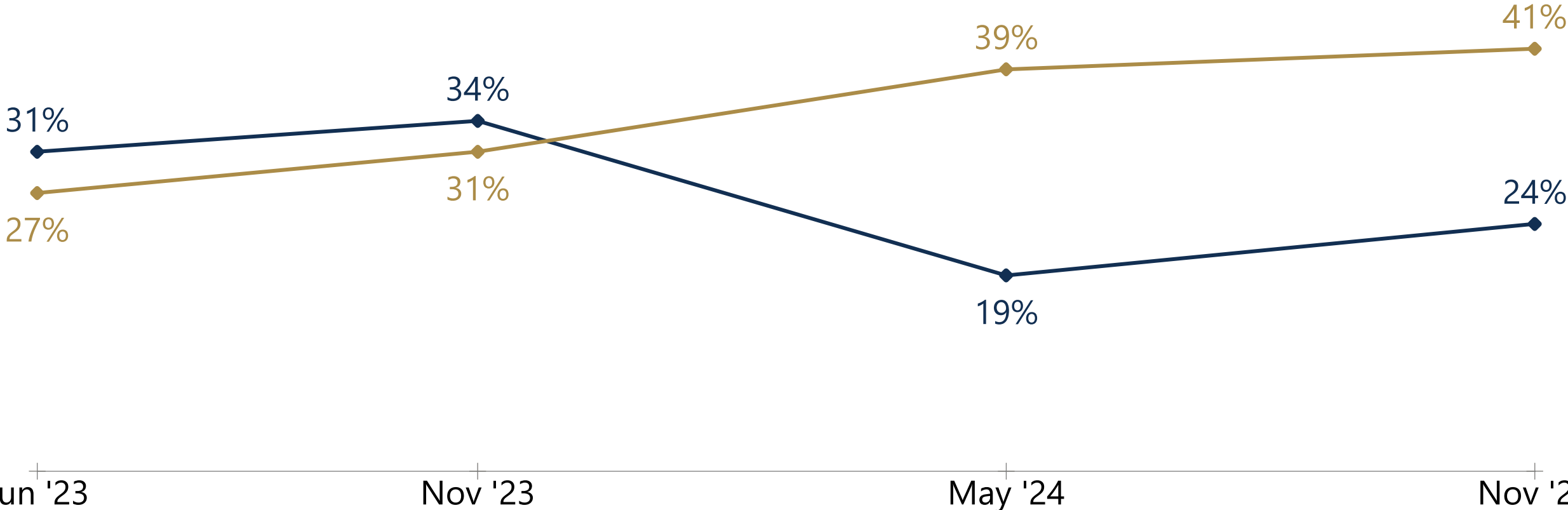


Q112-116. Regarding the war in Ukraine, how concerned are you about each of the following occurring?

Nearly twice as many think Russia is winning than think Ukraine is.

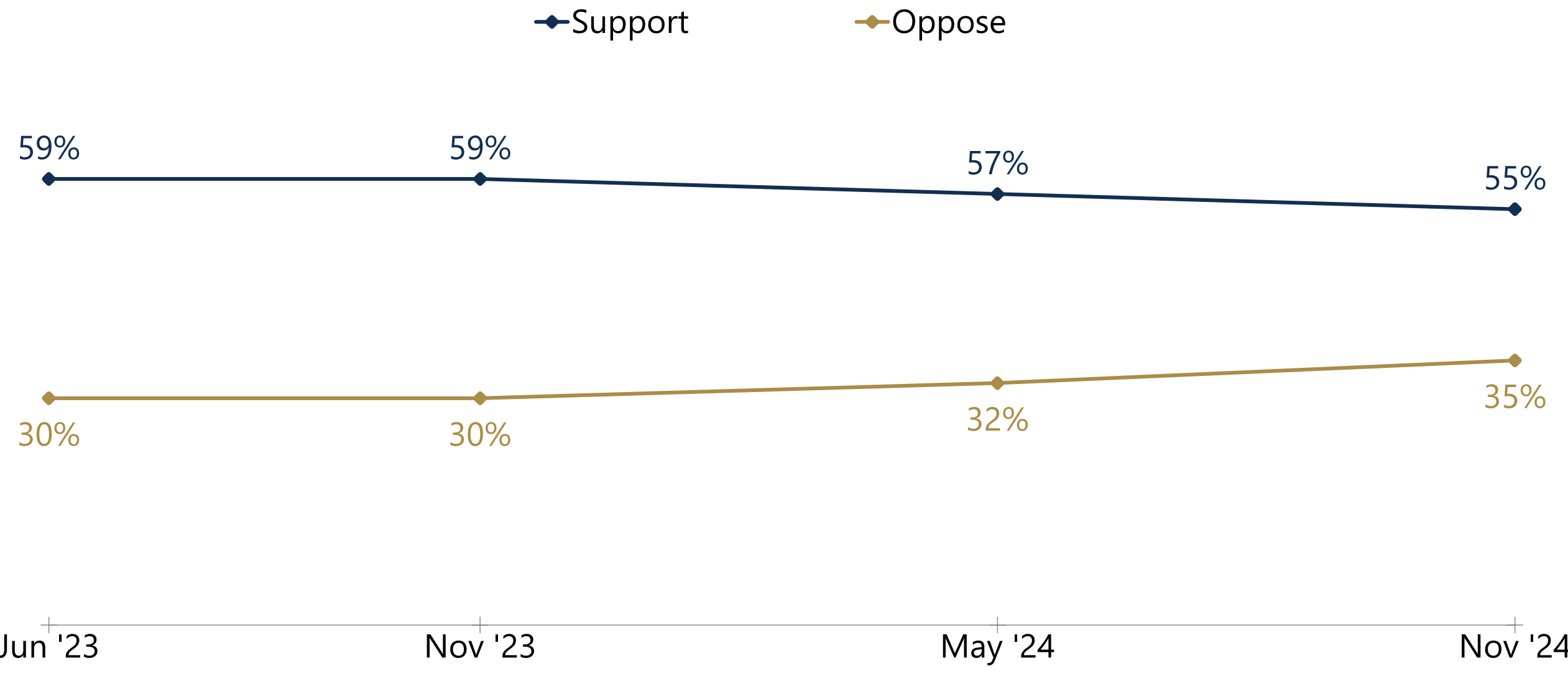


◆ Ukraine ◆ Russia



Q105. Who do you think is currently winning the war between Russia and Ukraine?

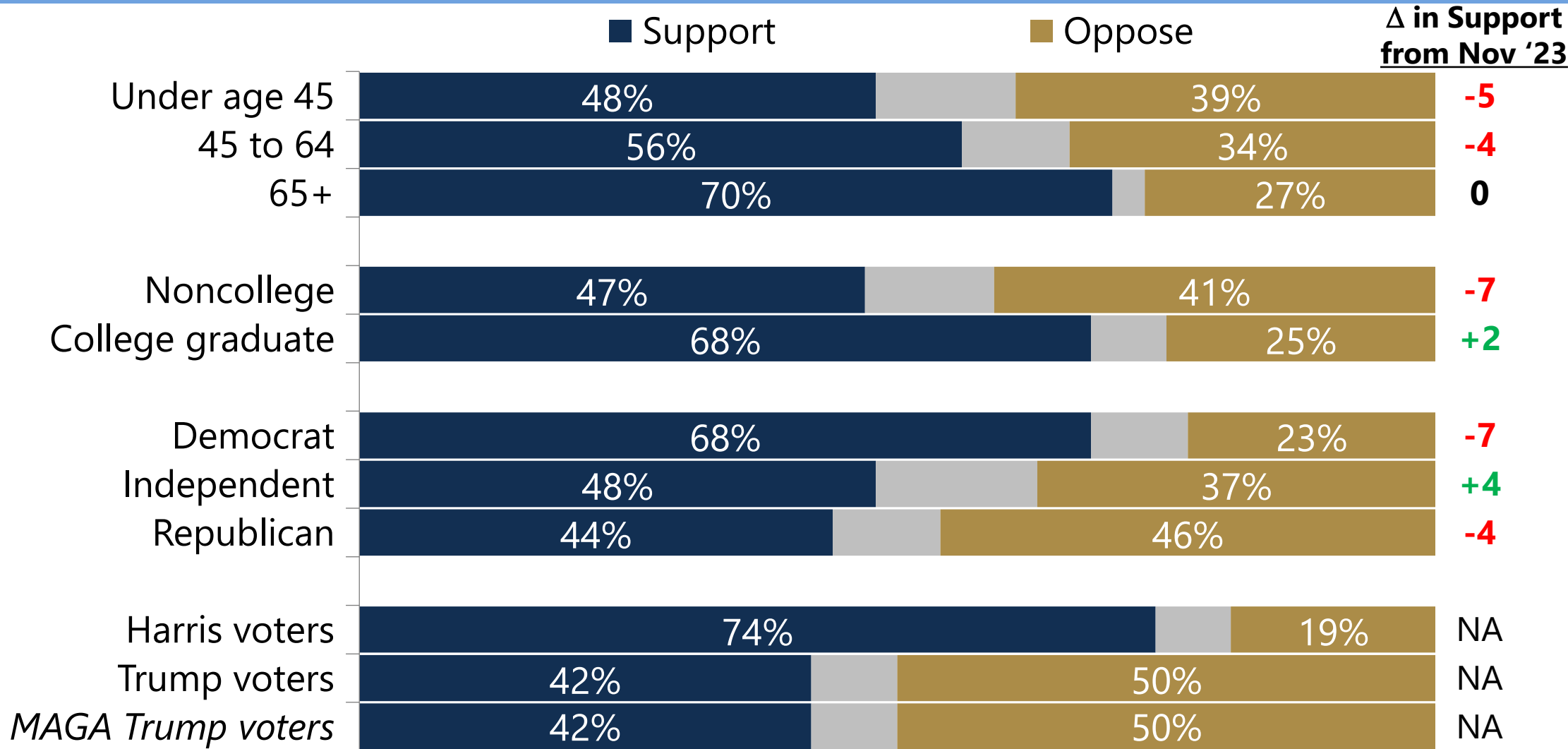
Americans favor military aid to Ukraine by 20 points; margin has narrowed in the past year.



Q106. Overall, do you support or oppose sending US weapons to Ukraine?



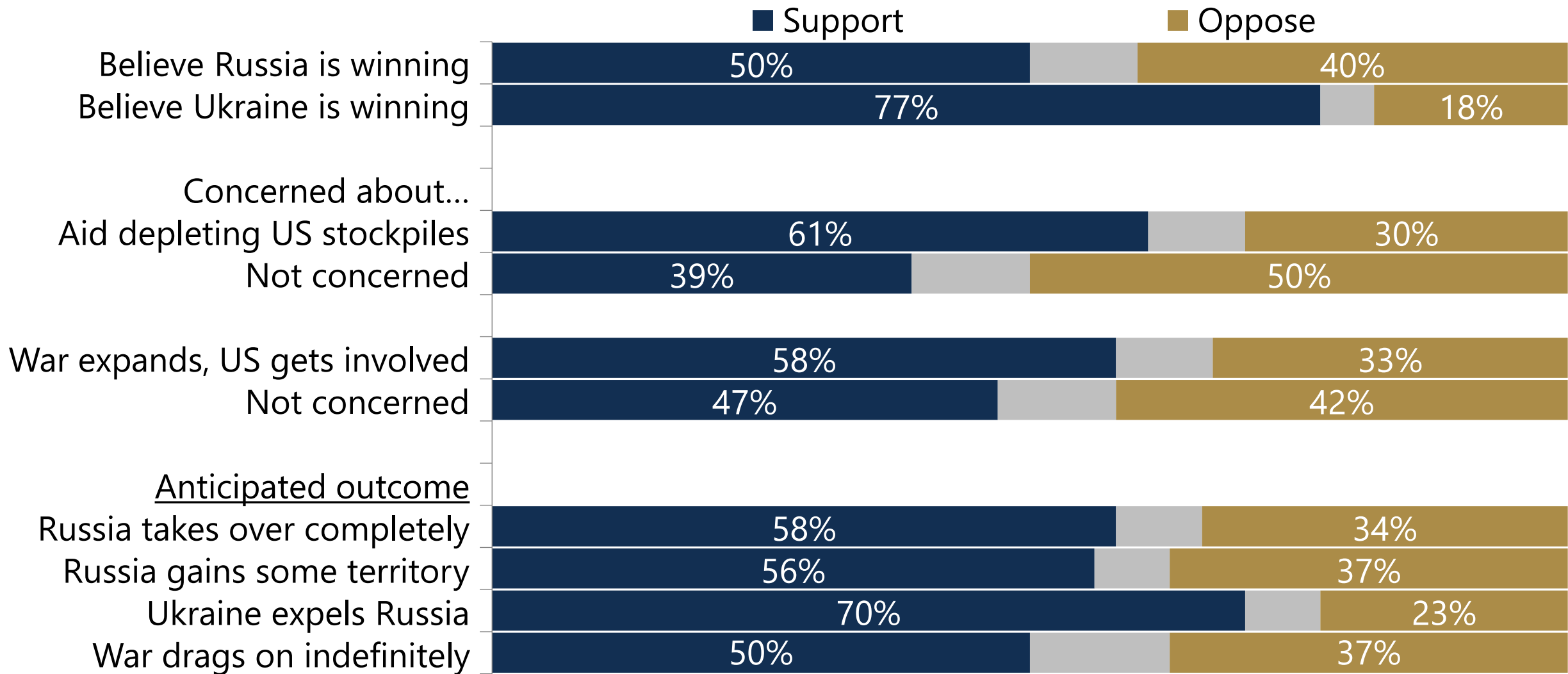
Support for aid to Ukraine, by subgroup.



Q106. Overall, do you support or oppose sending US weapons to Ukraine?



Support for aid to Ukraine, by belief about the war.

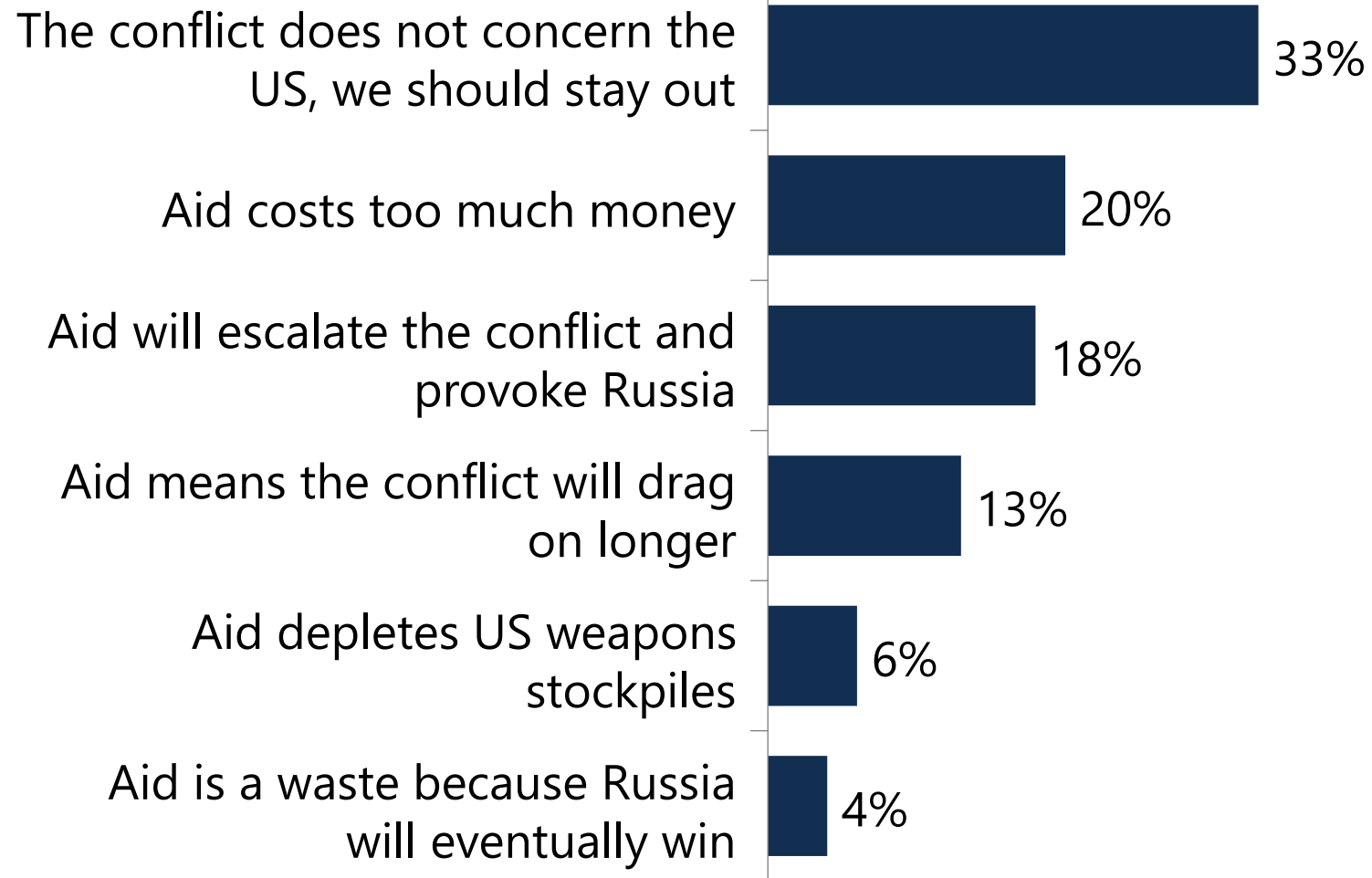


Q106. Overall, do you support or oppose sending US weapons to Ukraine?



Main reasons to oppose war: not in our interests, costs, provoking Russia.

Main reason to oppose aid to Ukraine

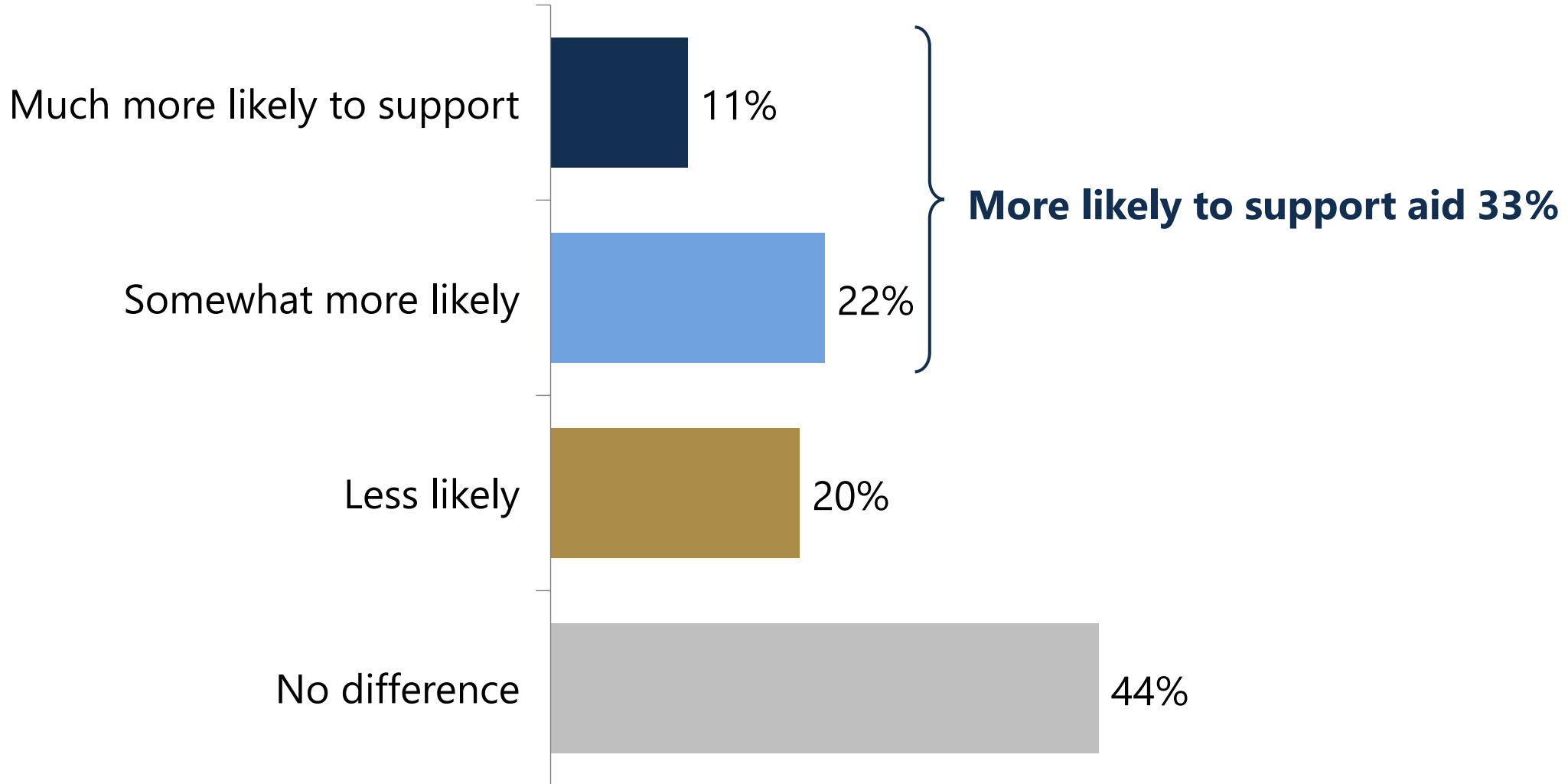


If Oppose in Q106. N=436

Q107. Which of the following is the biggest reason you oppose continued US military aid to Ukraine?



After directly addressing concerns, one-third say they are more likely to support aid.



If Oppose in Q106 and if code 1-6 in Q107. N=417

Q108. If you heard from someone you trust that [MESSAGE], would you be more likely to support sending US weapons to Ukraine, less likely, or would it make no difference to your opinion?



Effectiveness of persuasion messages, by main reason to oppose aid to Ukraine.

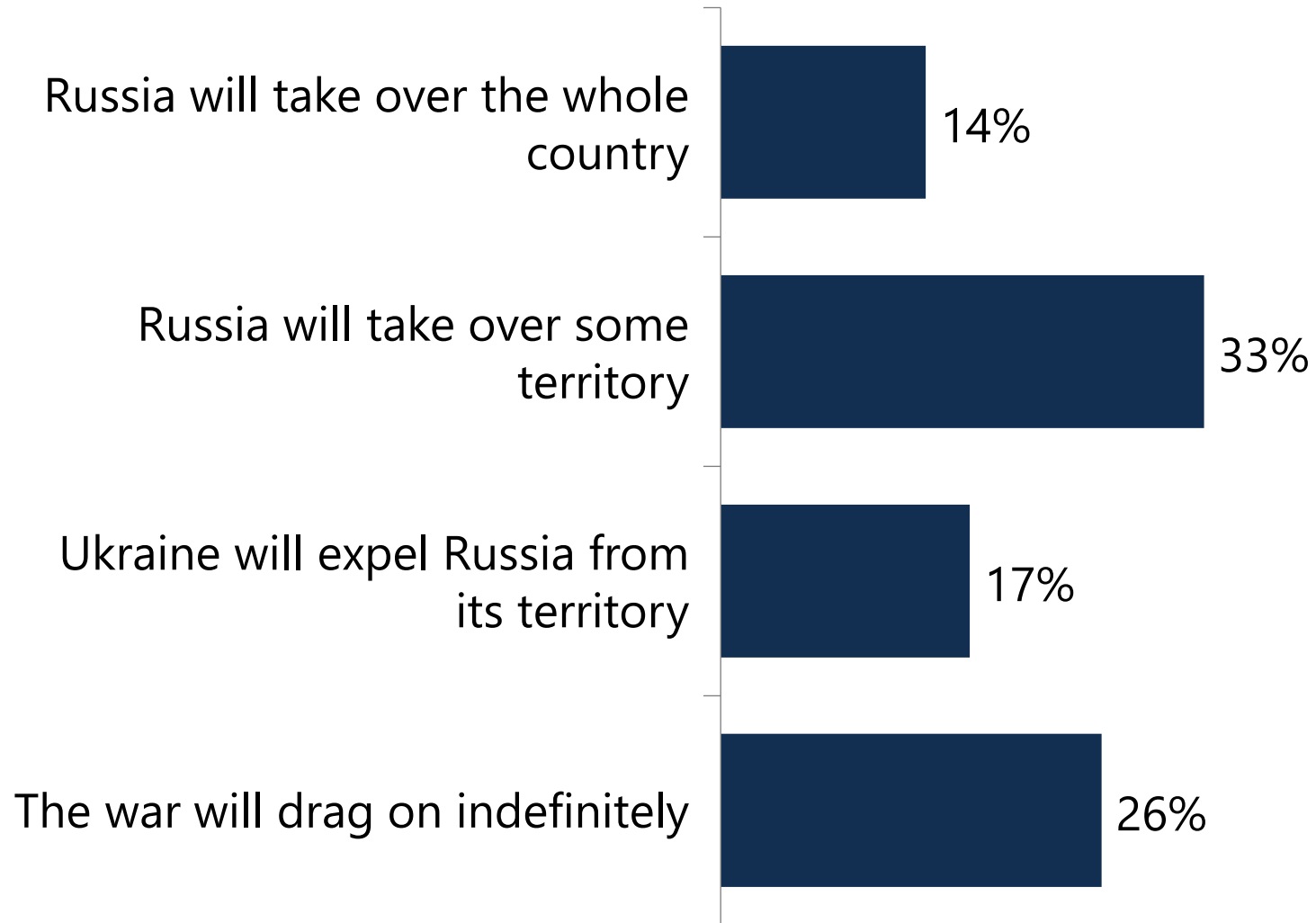
Main Reason to Oppose Aid	Size of Group	Persuasion Message	More likely to support
The conflict does not concern the US, we should stay out	33%	If Russia is not stopped, it could invade an ally and drag US into war	31%
Aid costs too much money	20%	Aid is less than 1% of the military's annual budget	24%
Aid will escalate the conflict and provoke Russia	18%	Aid is primarily defensive and designed to help Ukraine defend its territory	35%
Aid means the conflict will drag on longer	13%	Military leaders believe aid can give Ukraine enough strength that Russia will negotiate for peace	46%
Aid depletes US weapons stockpiles	6%	US military leaders are confident we can increase production to meet our needs	29%
Aid is a waste because Russia will eventually win	4%	Aid has turned the tide of the war in the past; Russia only makes gains when aid dries up	35%

Q107. Which of the following is the biggest reason you oppose continued US military aid to Ukraine?

If Oppose in Q106. N=436



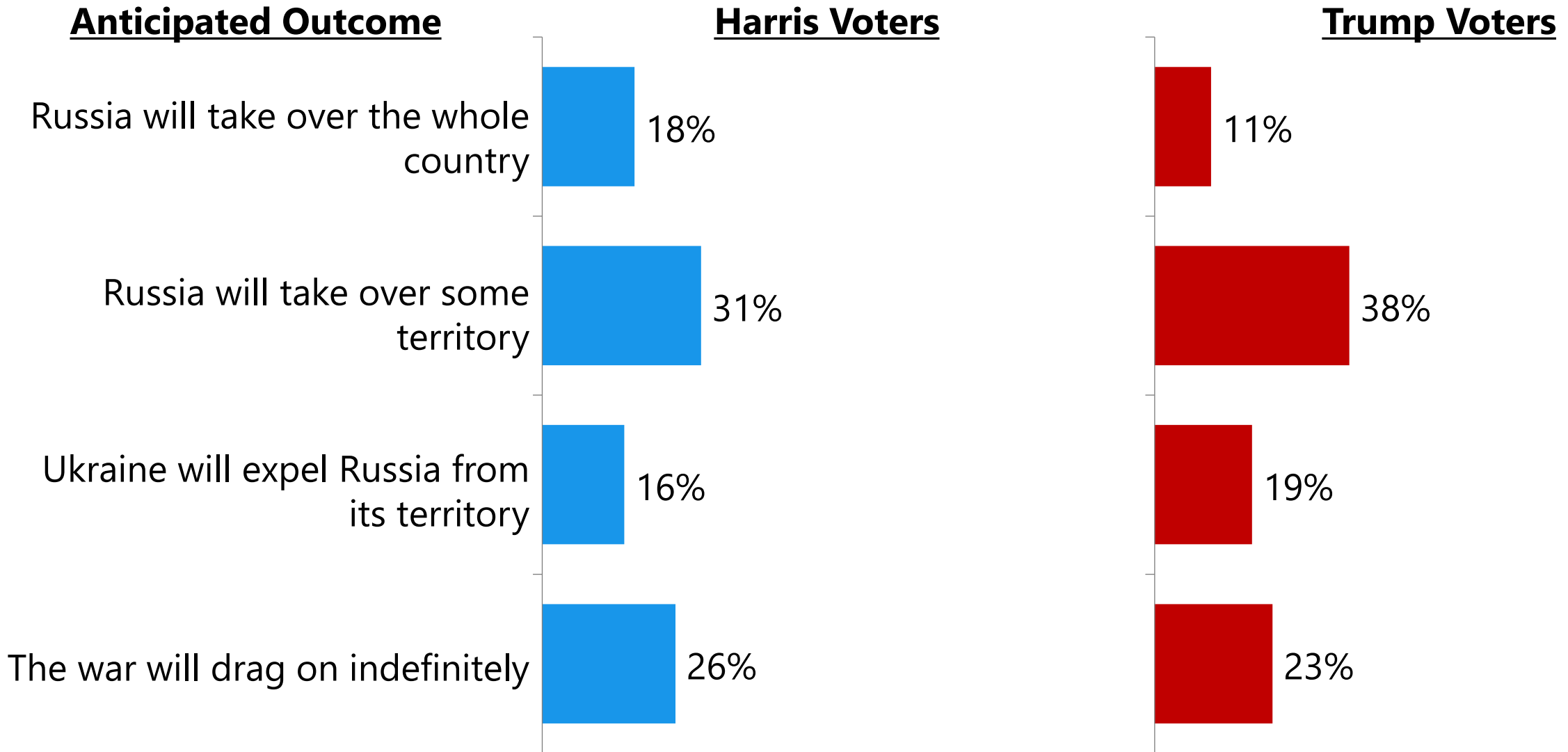
Half think the war will end with Russia in control of all or part of Ukraine.



Q109. What do you think is the most likely outcome of the war in Ukraine?

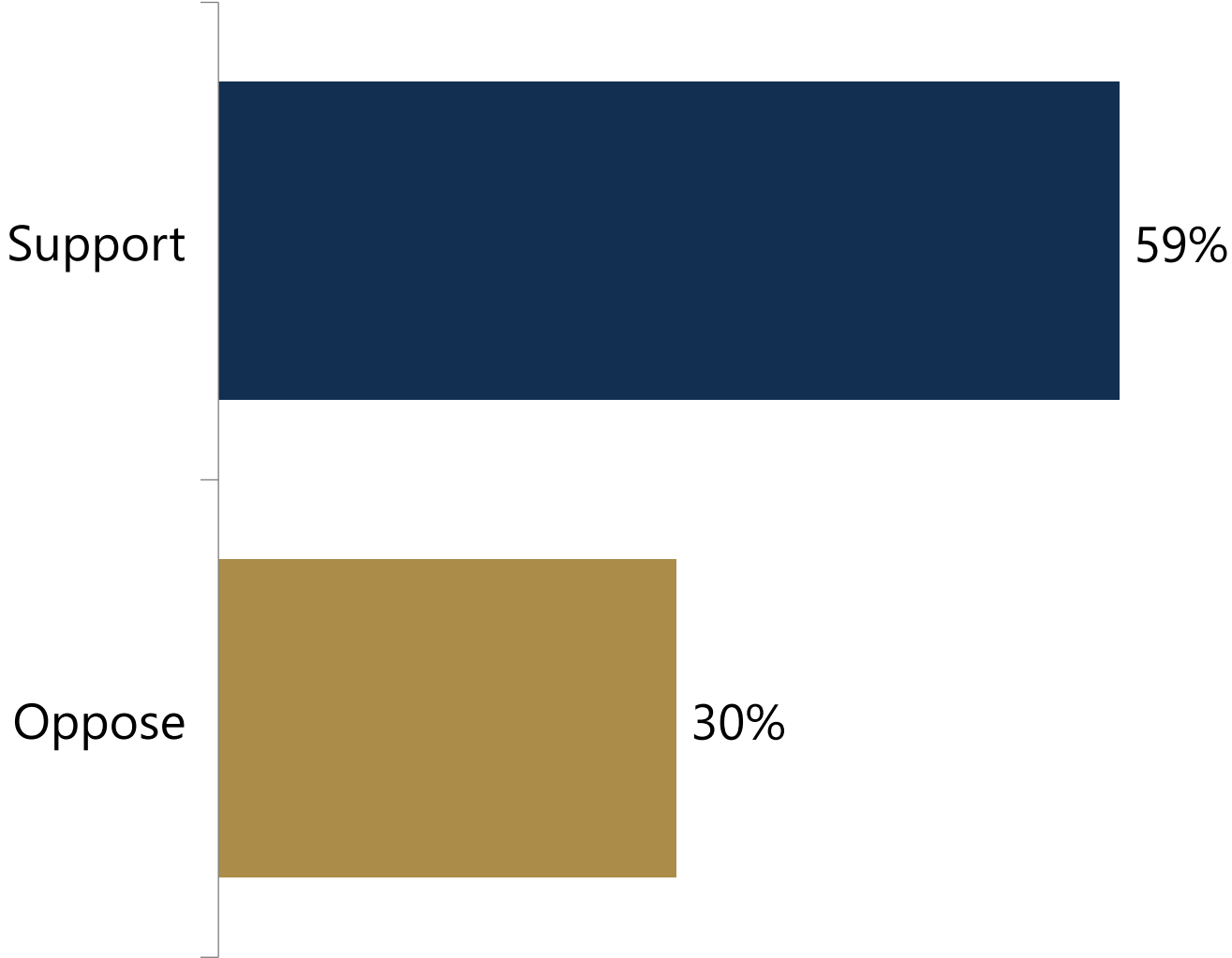


Trump, Harris voters have largely similar views about the likely outcome of the war.



Q109. What do you think is the most likely outcome of the war in Ukraine?

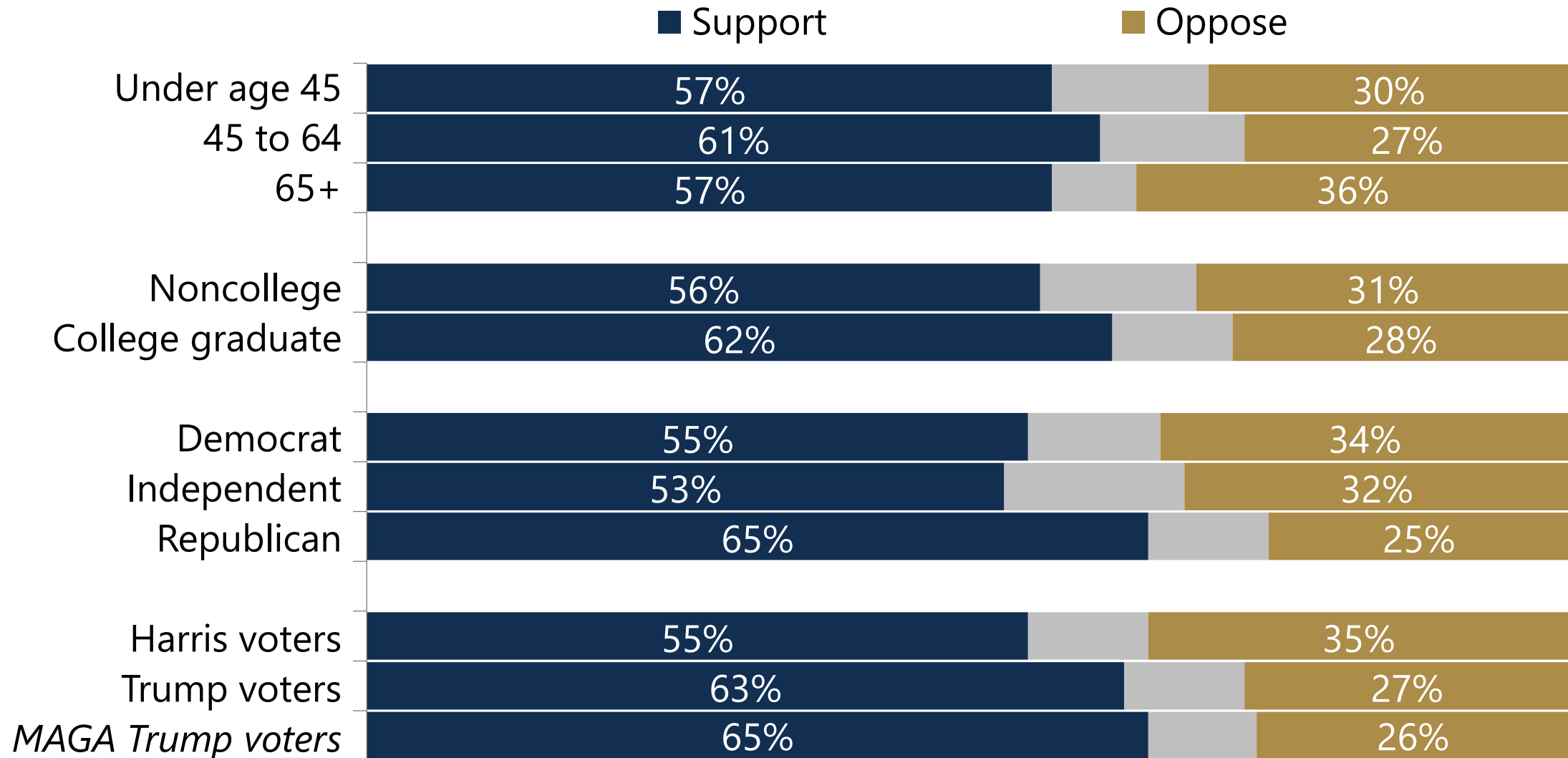
Sizable majority supports Ukraine giving up territory for peace.



Q111. Do you support or oppose: Ukraine negotiating for peace, even if it means giving up some territory to Russia



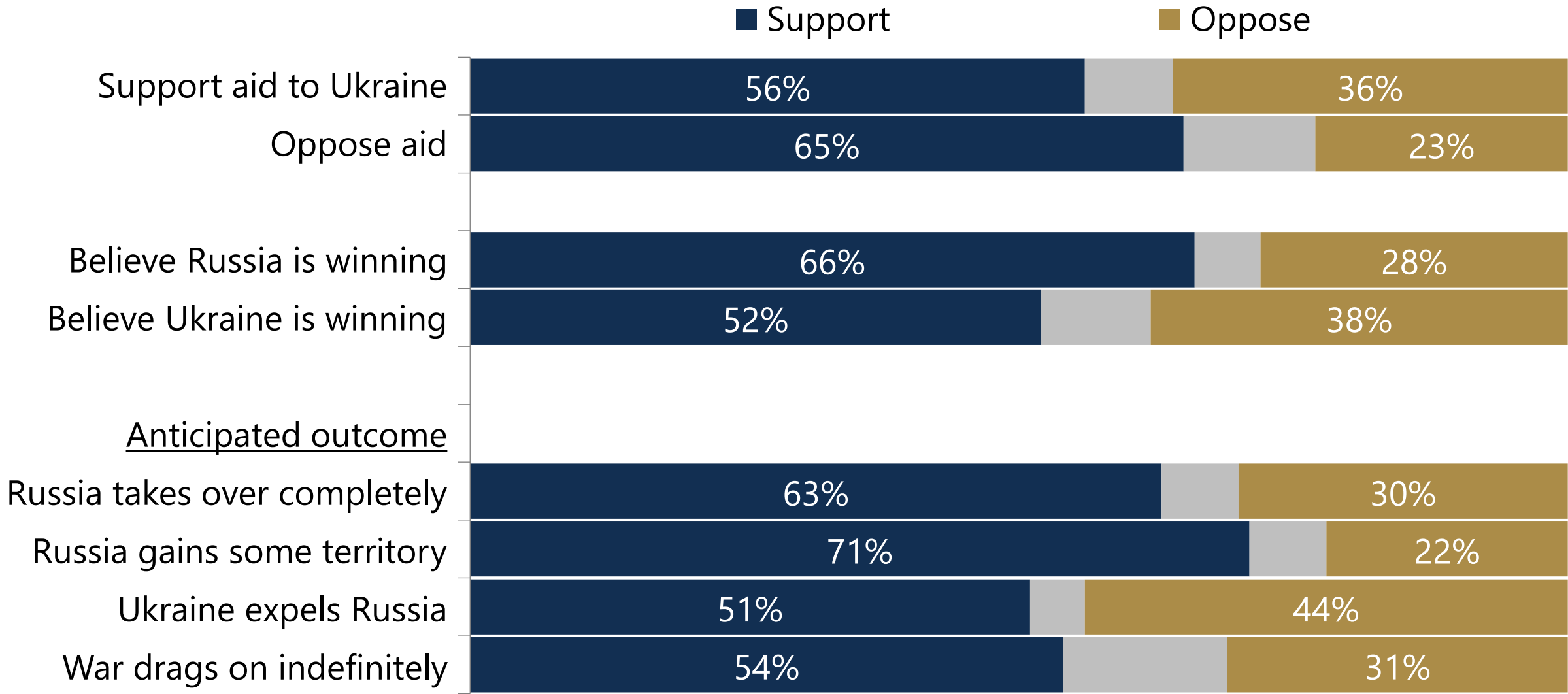
Support for land for peace, by subgroup.



Q111. Do you support or oppose: Ukraine negotiating for peace, even if it means giving up some territory to Russia



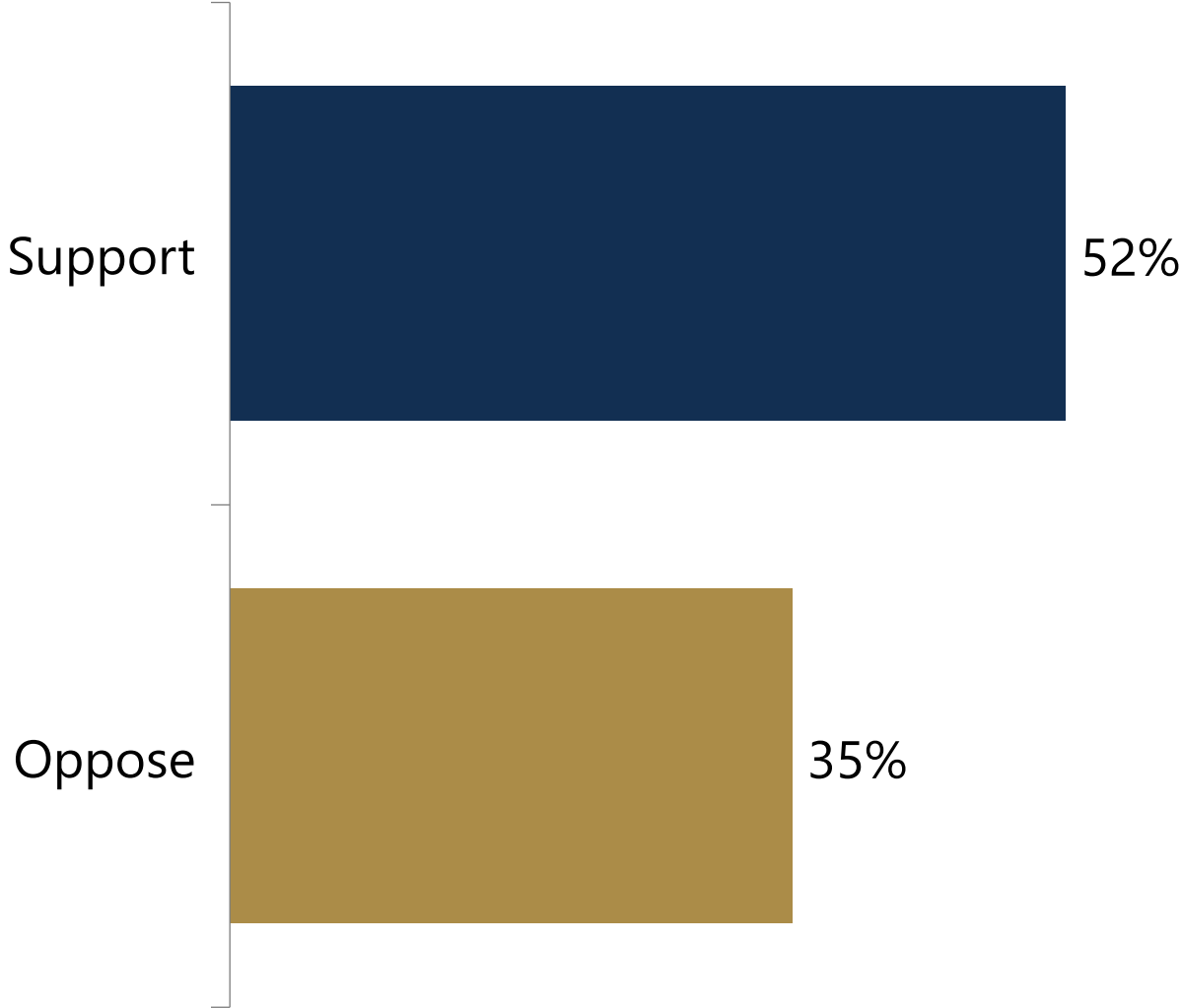
Support for land for peace, by belief about the war.



Q111. Do you support or oppose: Ukraine negotiating for peace, even if it means giving up some territory to Russia



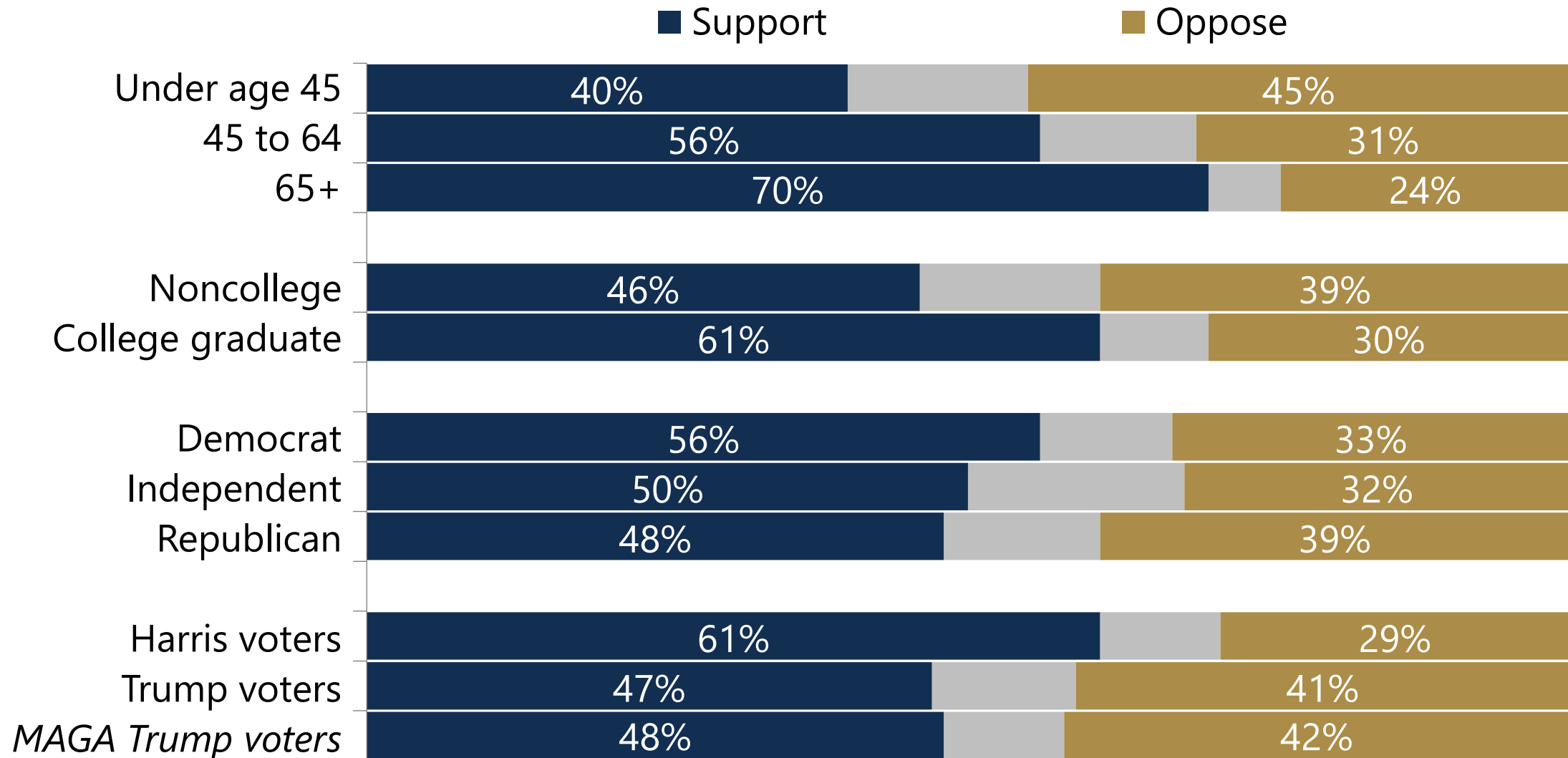
Half support Ukraine firing missiles at targets in Russia.



Q110. Do you support or oppose: Ukraine firing missiles at targets inside Russia



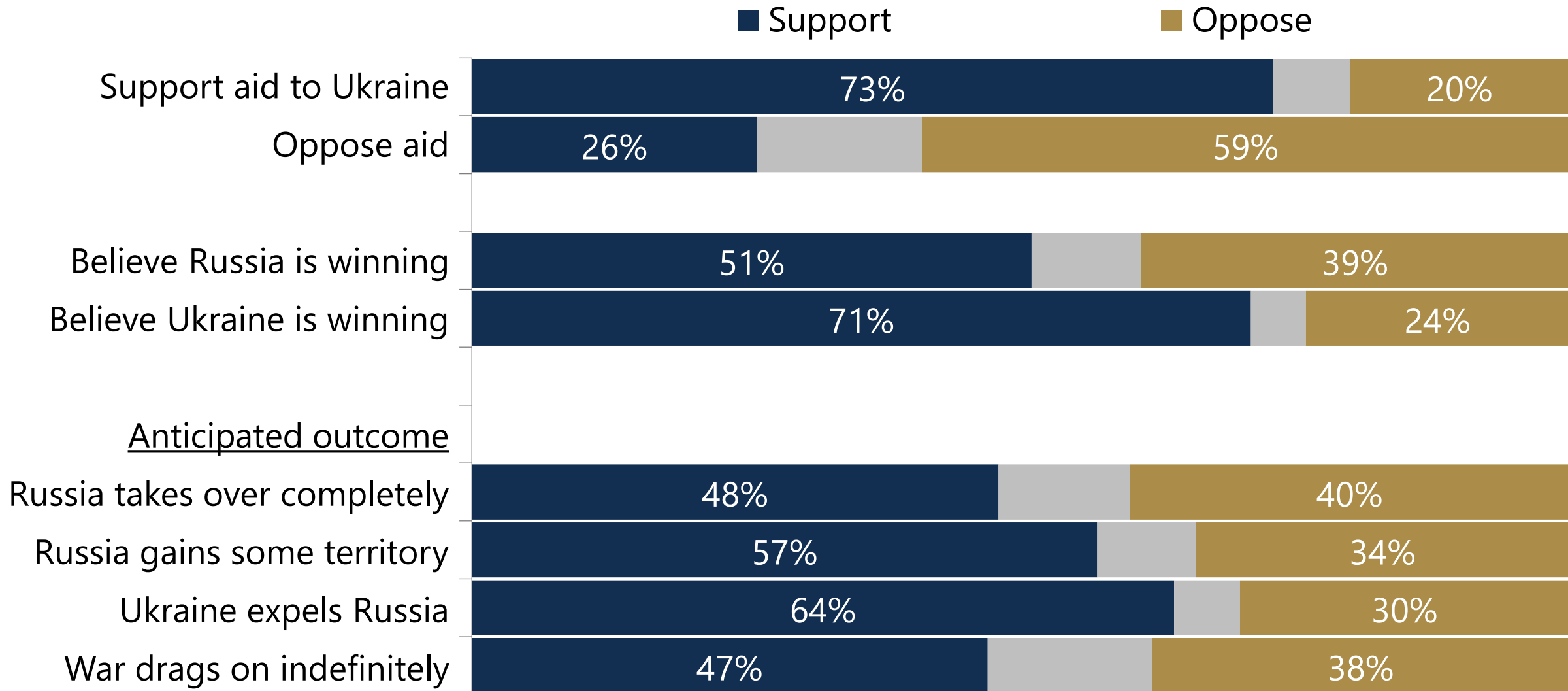
Support for firing at targets in Russia, by subgroup.



Q110. Do you support or oppose: Ukraine firing missiles at targets inside Russia



Support for firing at targets in Russia, by belief about the war.



Q110. Do you support or oppose: Ukraine firing missiles at targets inside Russia

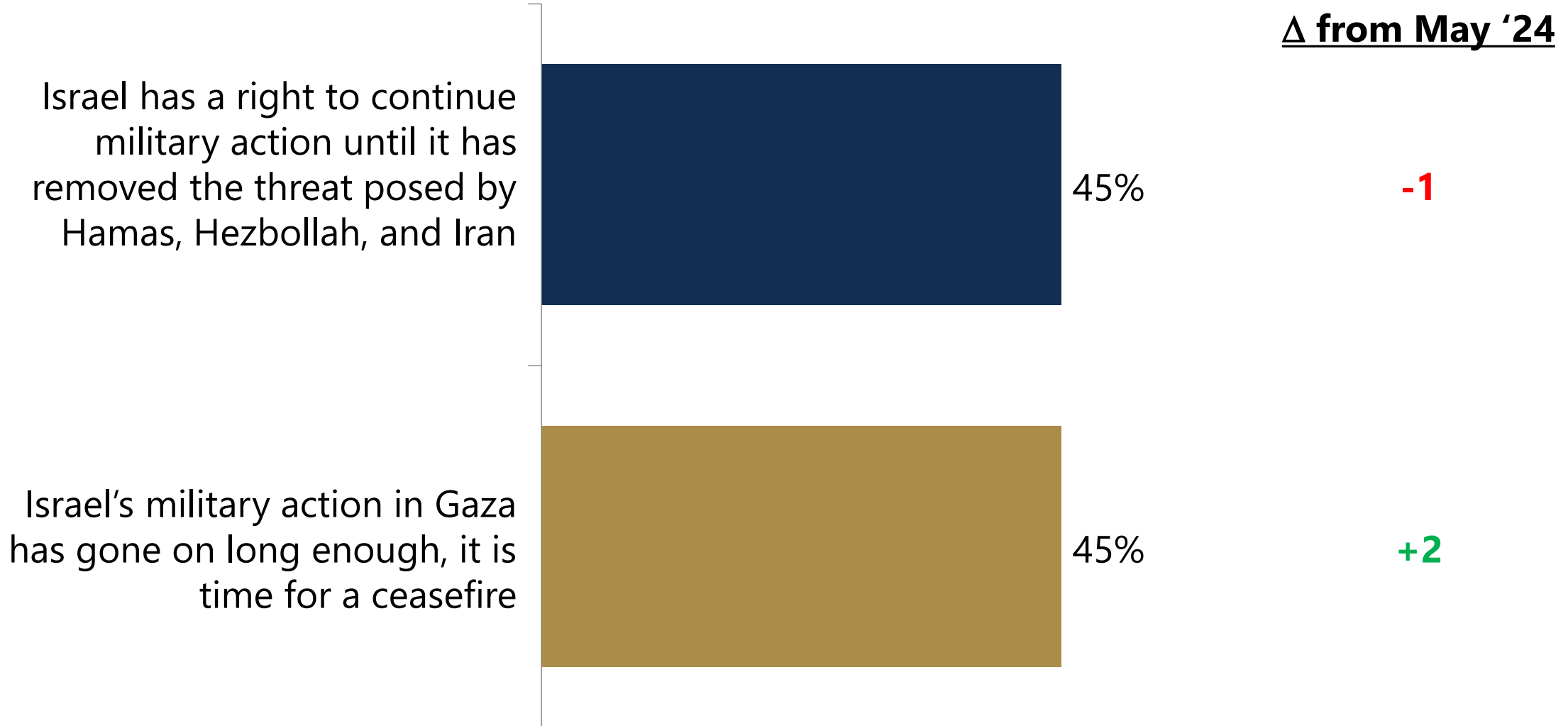


MIDDLE EAST





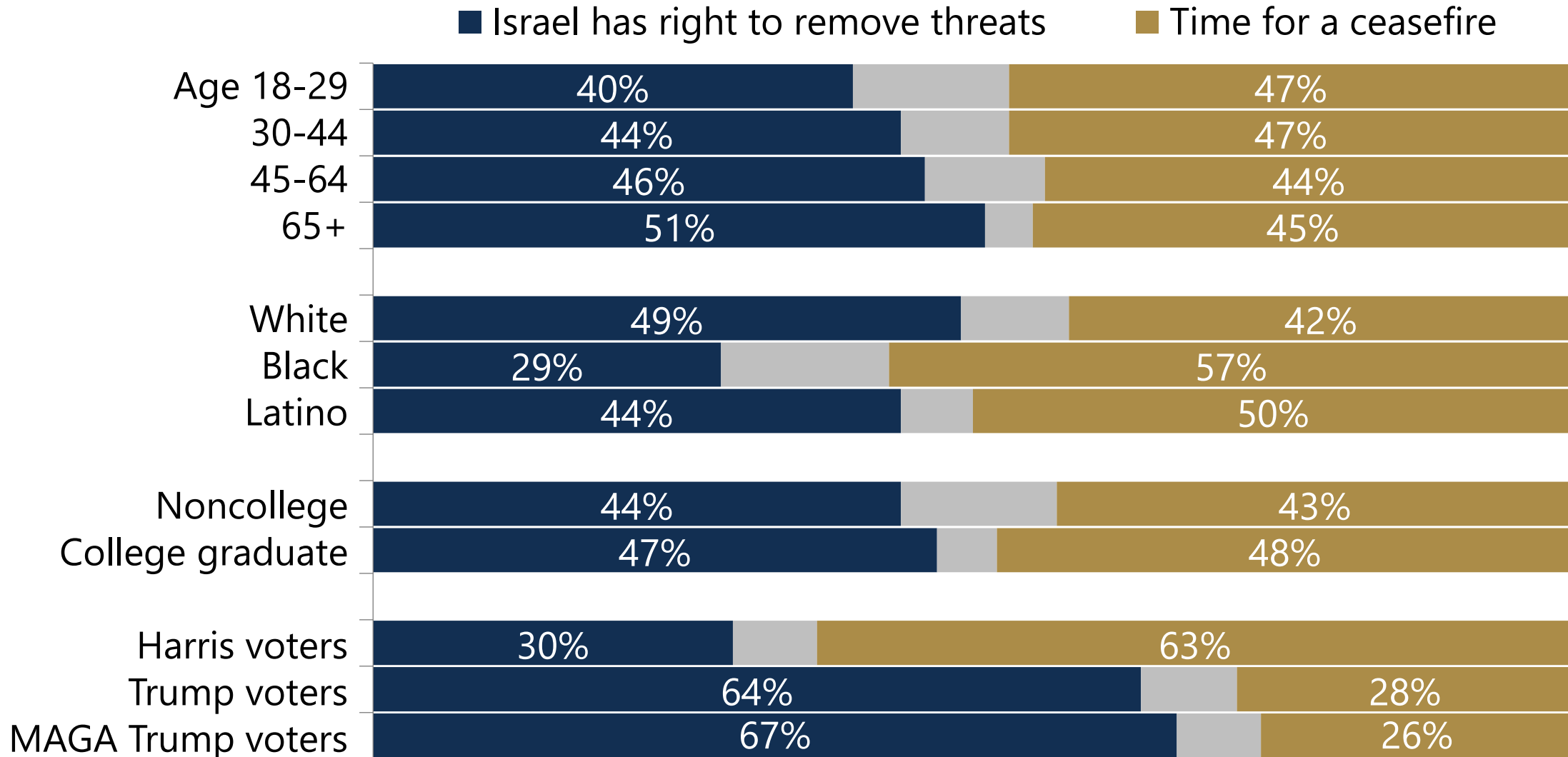
Americans are evenly divided between Israeli right to remove threats and a desire for a ceasefire.



Q117. Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? (May wording referenced Hamas only)



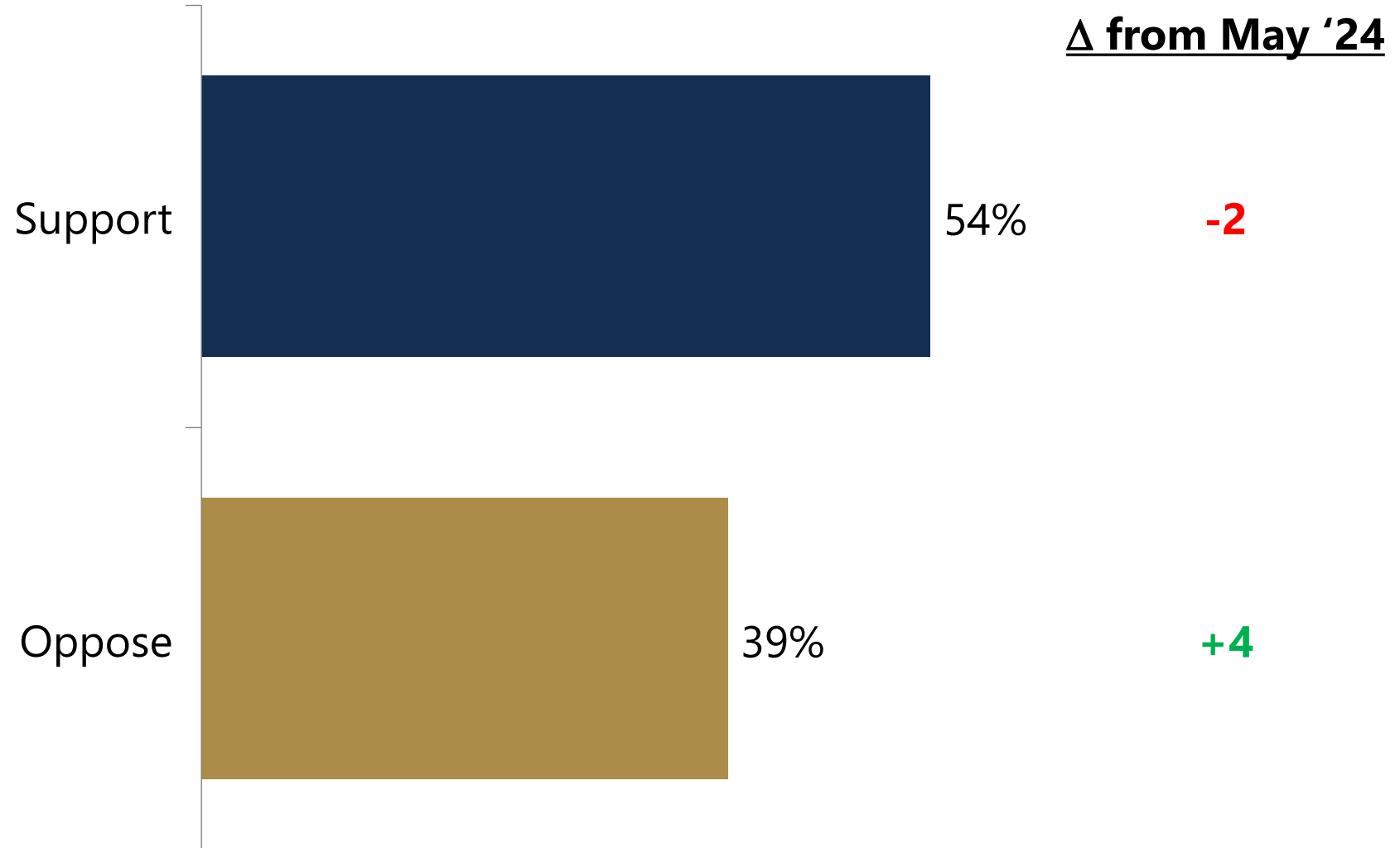
View of conflict, by subgroup.



Q117. Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? (May wording referenced Hamas only)



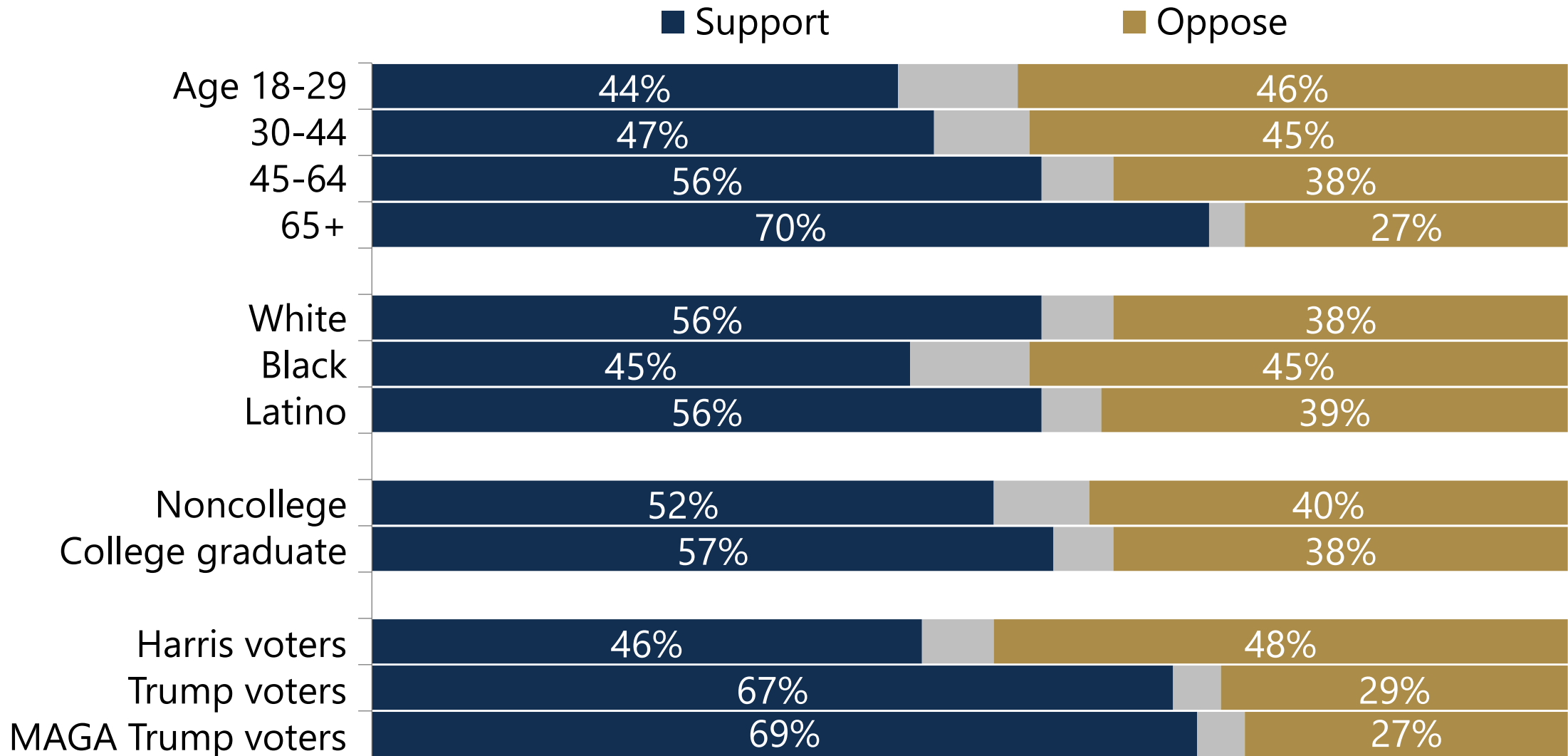
Slight decline in support for military aid to Israel since May.



Q118. Do you support or oppose the US sending weapons to Israel?



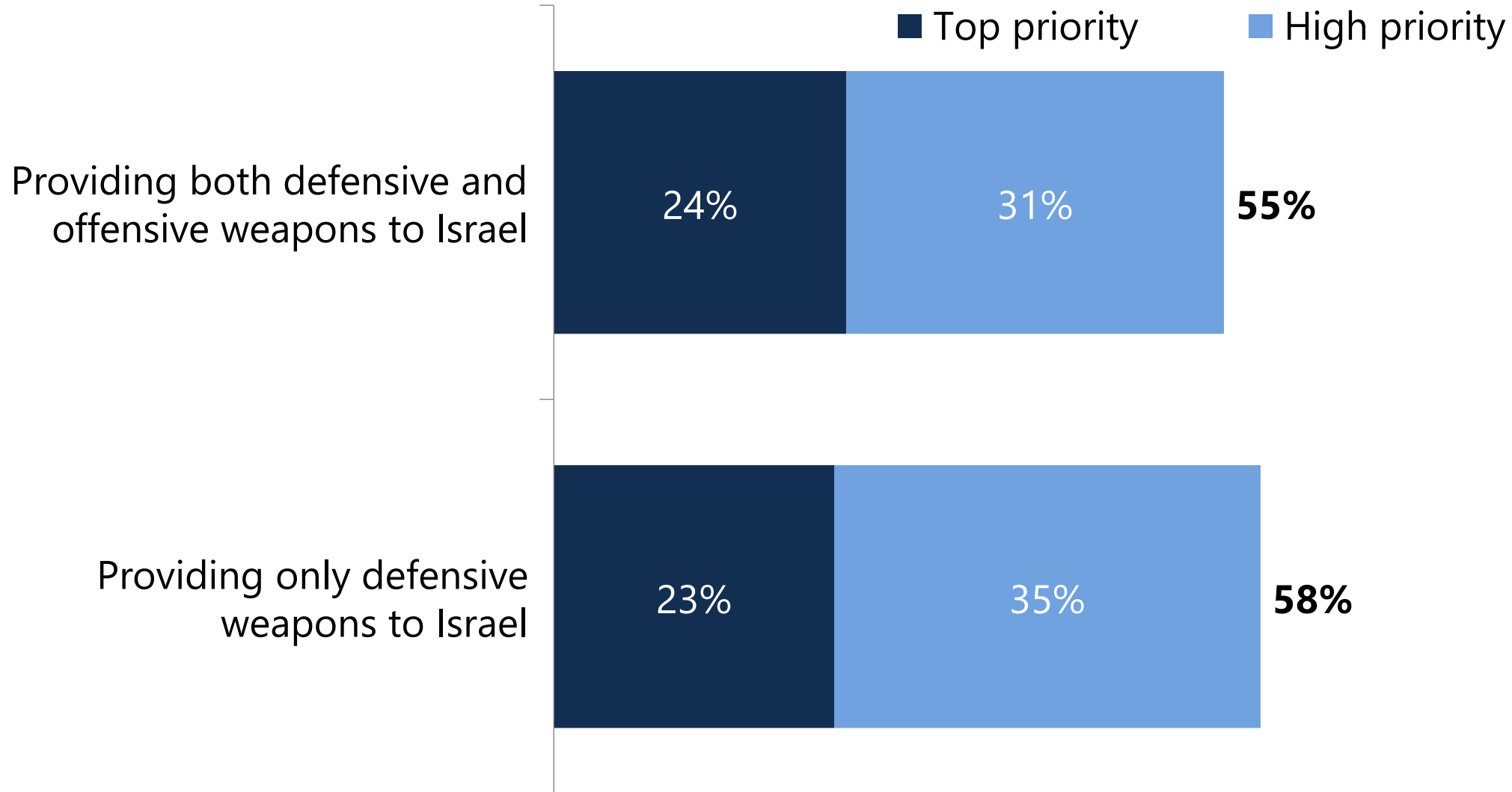
View of aid to Israel, by subgroup.



Q118. Do you support or oppose the US sending weapons to Israel?



Similar views on providing offensive and defensive weapons to Israel vs. defensive weapons only.

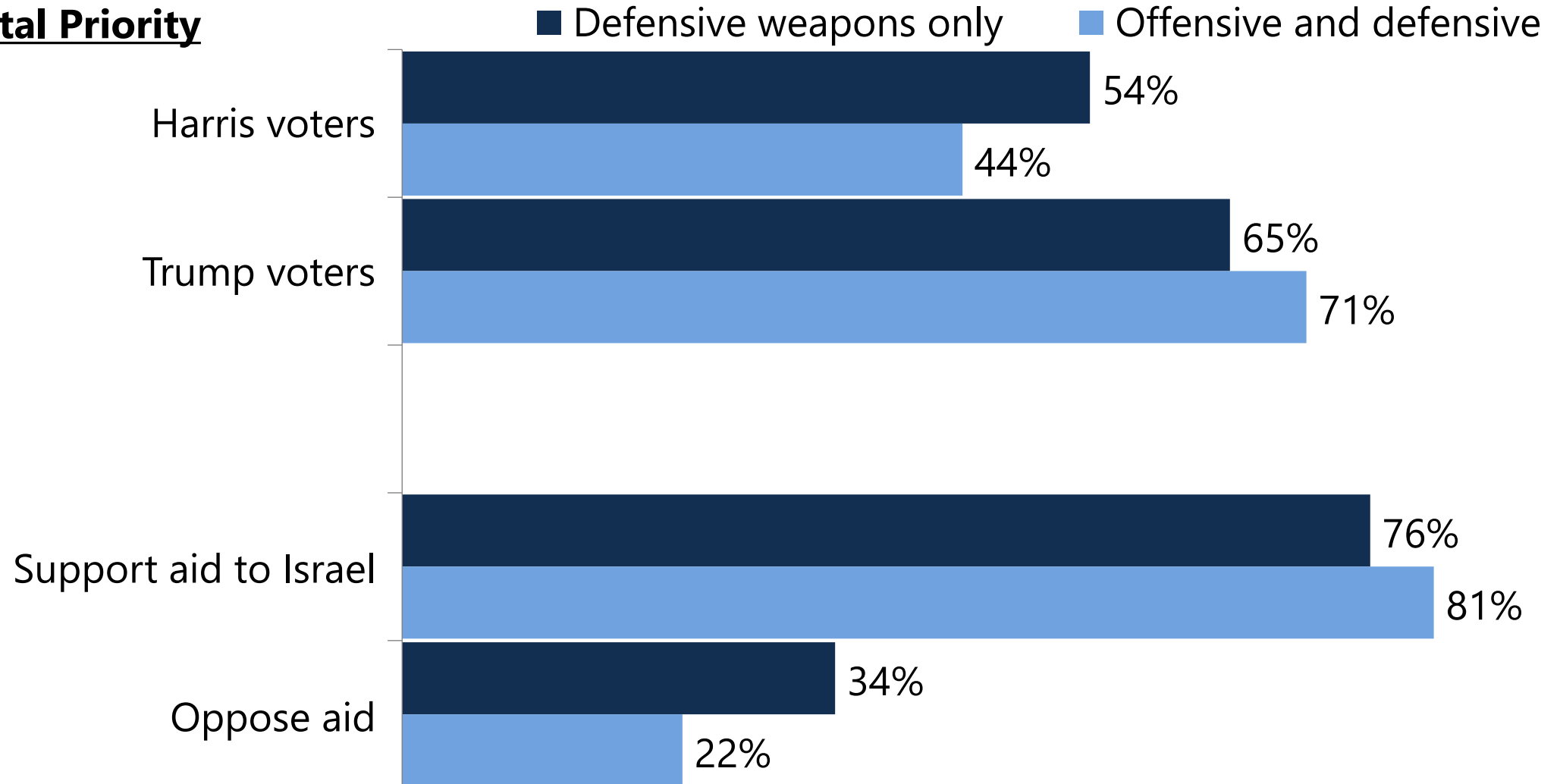


Q119-120. The US can play many roles in the Middle East conflict. How much of a priority would you place on each of the following?



Providing only defensive weapons increases support from aid opponents—but loses some supporters.

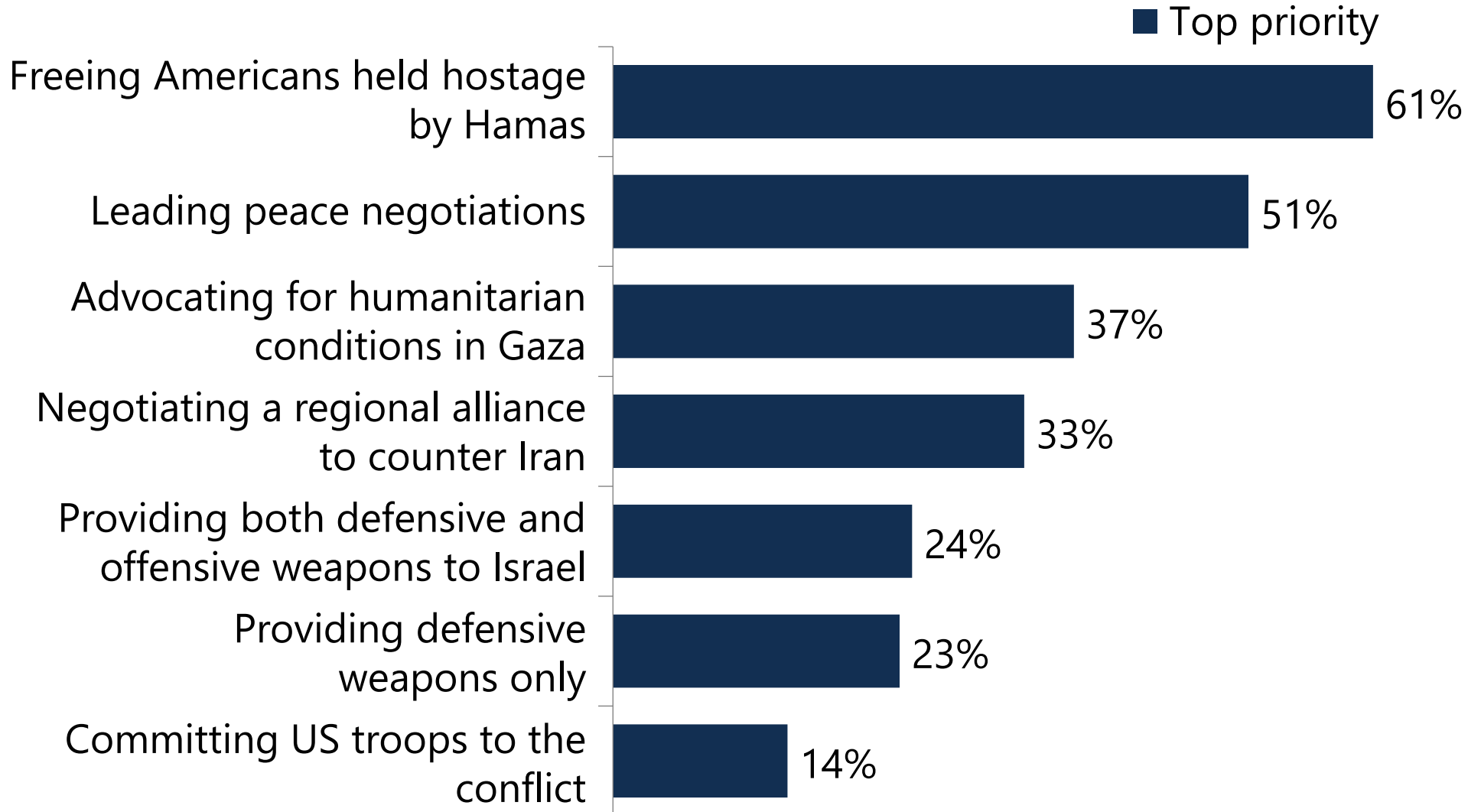
Total Priority



Q119-120. The US can play many roles in the Middle East conflict. How much of a priority would you place on each of the following?



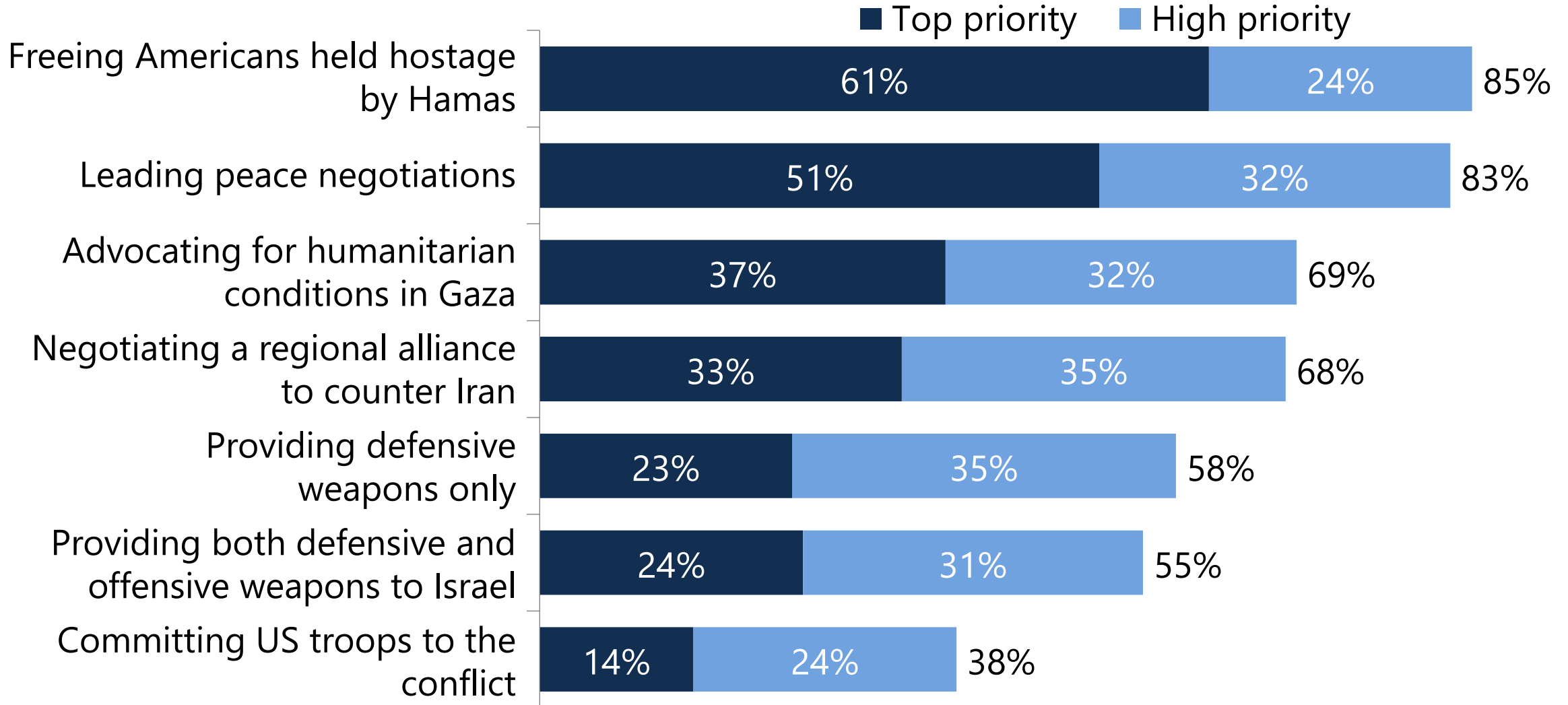
Top priorities for US role: freeing hostages, leading peace negotiations.



Q119-125. The US can play many roles in the Middle East conflict. How much of a priority would you place on each of the following?



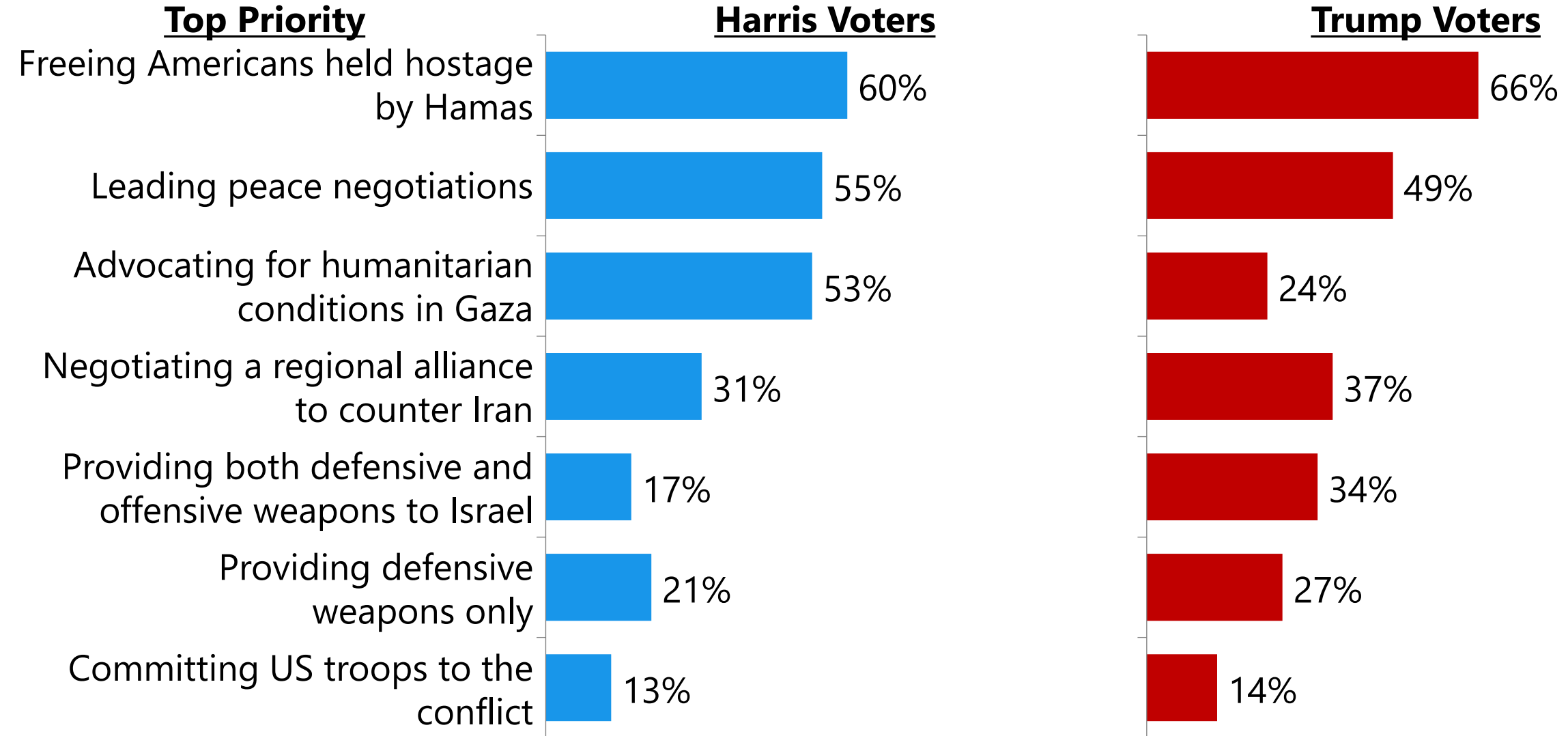
Top priorities for US role: freeing hostages, leading peace negotiations.



Q119-125. The US can play many roles in the Middle East conflict. How much of a priority would you place on each of the following?



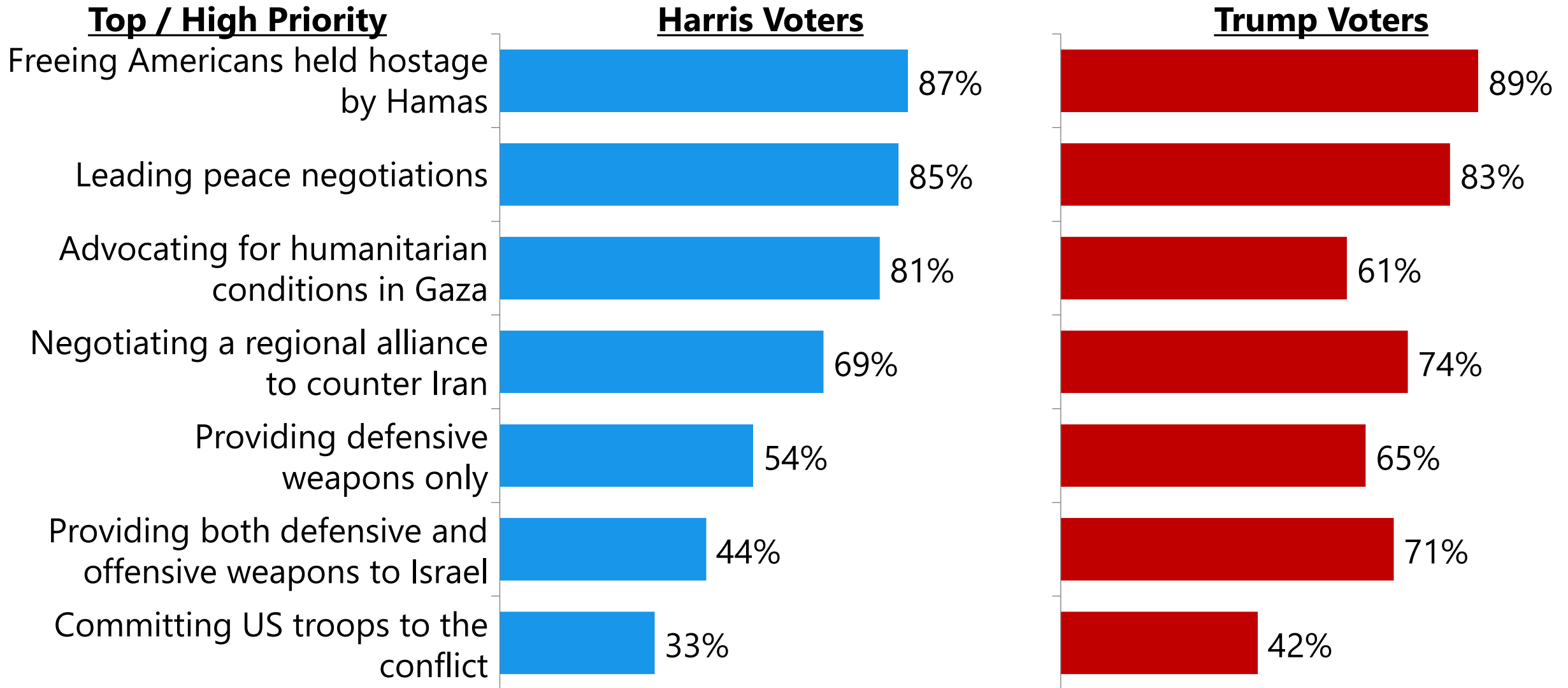
Harris, Trump voters disagree on humanitarian conditions, providing offensive weapons to Israel.



Q119-125. The US can play many roles in the Middle East conflict. How much of a priority would you place on each of the following?

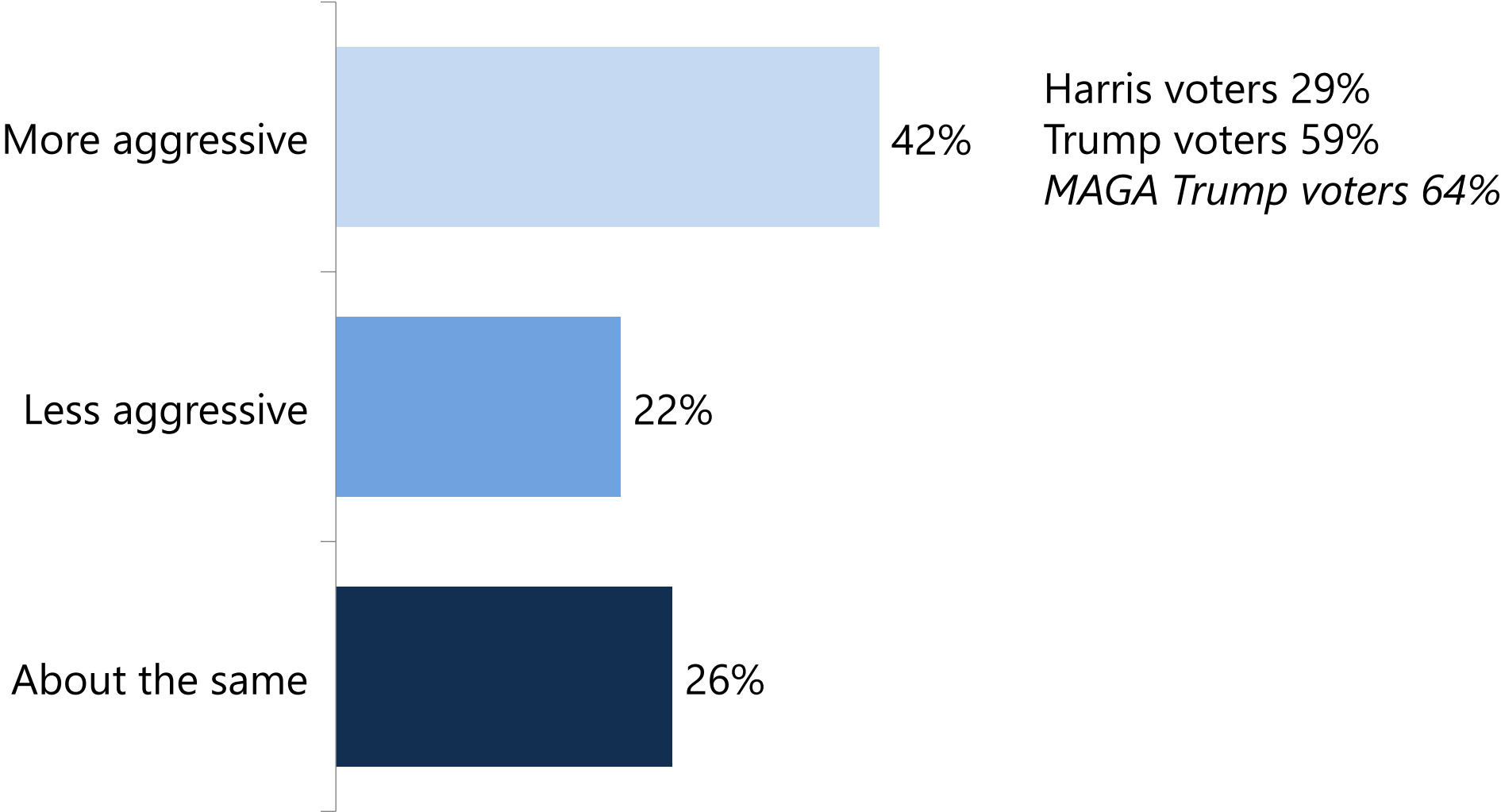


Harris, Trump voters disagree on humanitarian conditions, providing offensive weapons to Israel.



Q119-125. The US can play many roles in the Middle East conflict. How much of a priority would you place on each of the following?

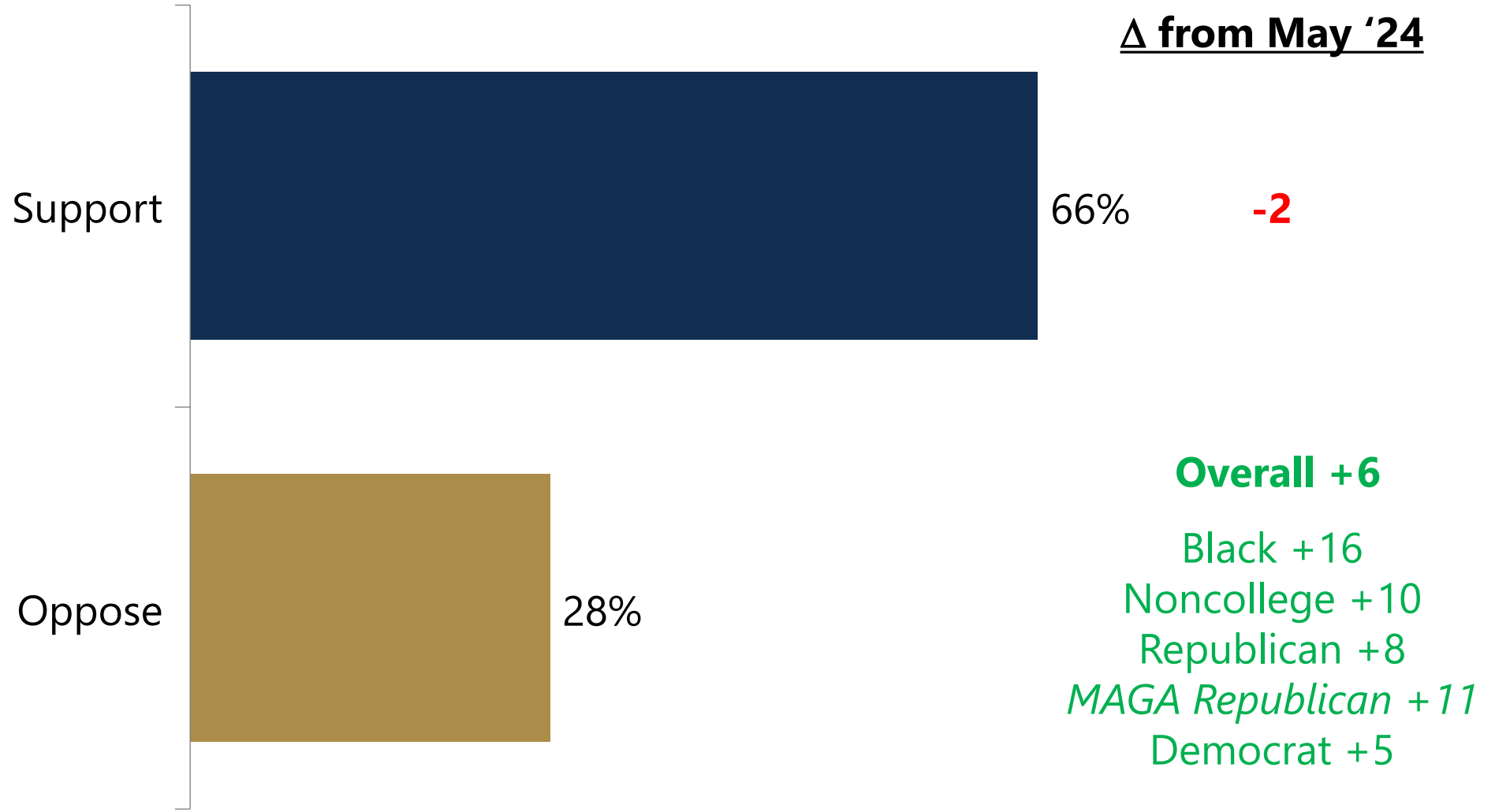
On balance, a preference for a more aggressive approach on Iran.



Q126. When it comes to Iran, would you prefer that the next administration be more aggressive, less aggressive, or keep things about the same?



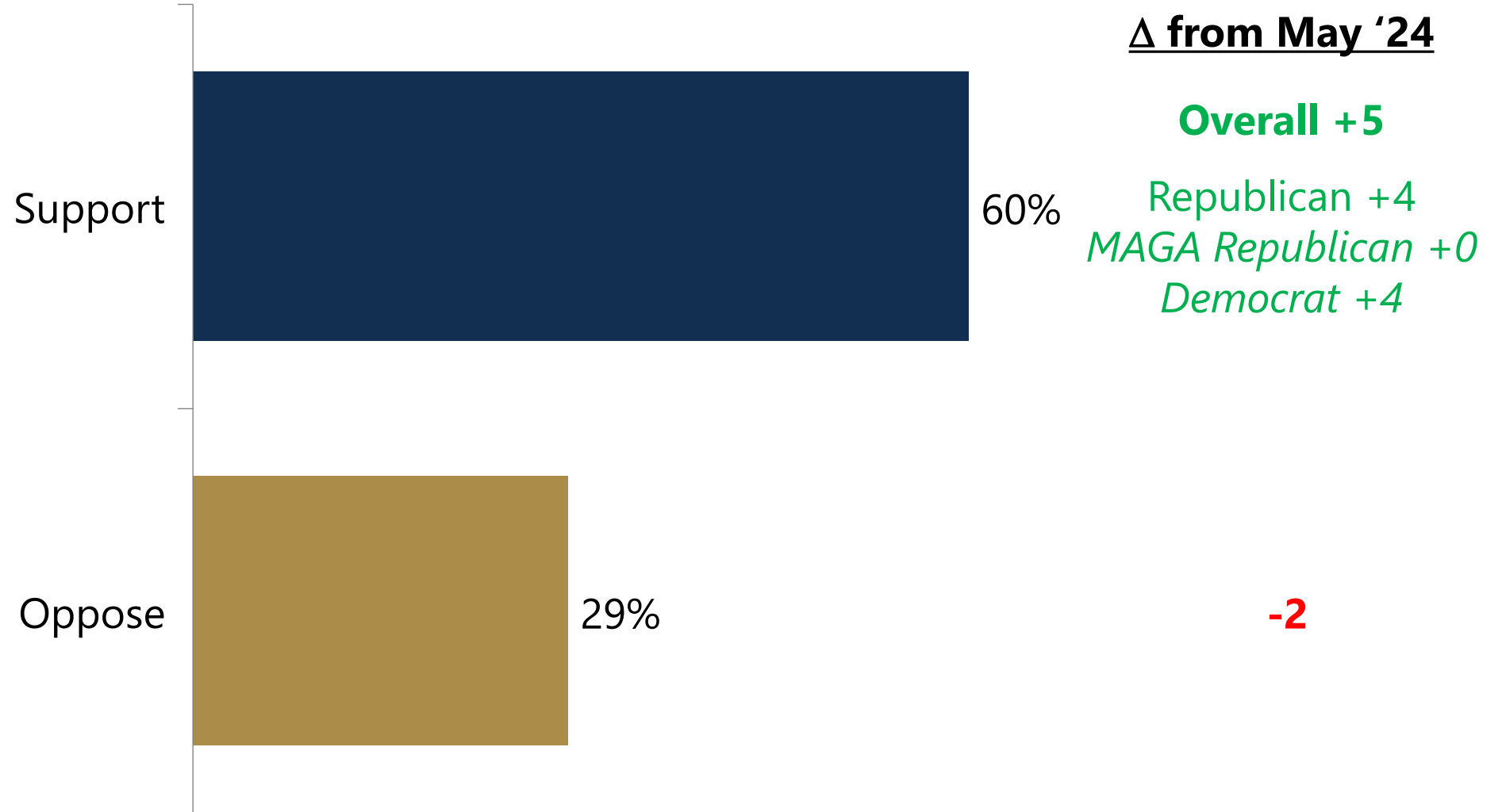
Two-thirds support sending missile defense systems to Israel, though opposition increased since May.



Q127. As you may know, Iran has launched multiple drone and missile attacks against Israel. Do you support or oppose the US sending missile defense systems to Israel to help it defend against these kinds of attacks?



Increasing support for Israeli counterattack against Iran.

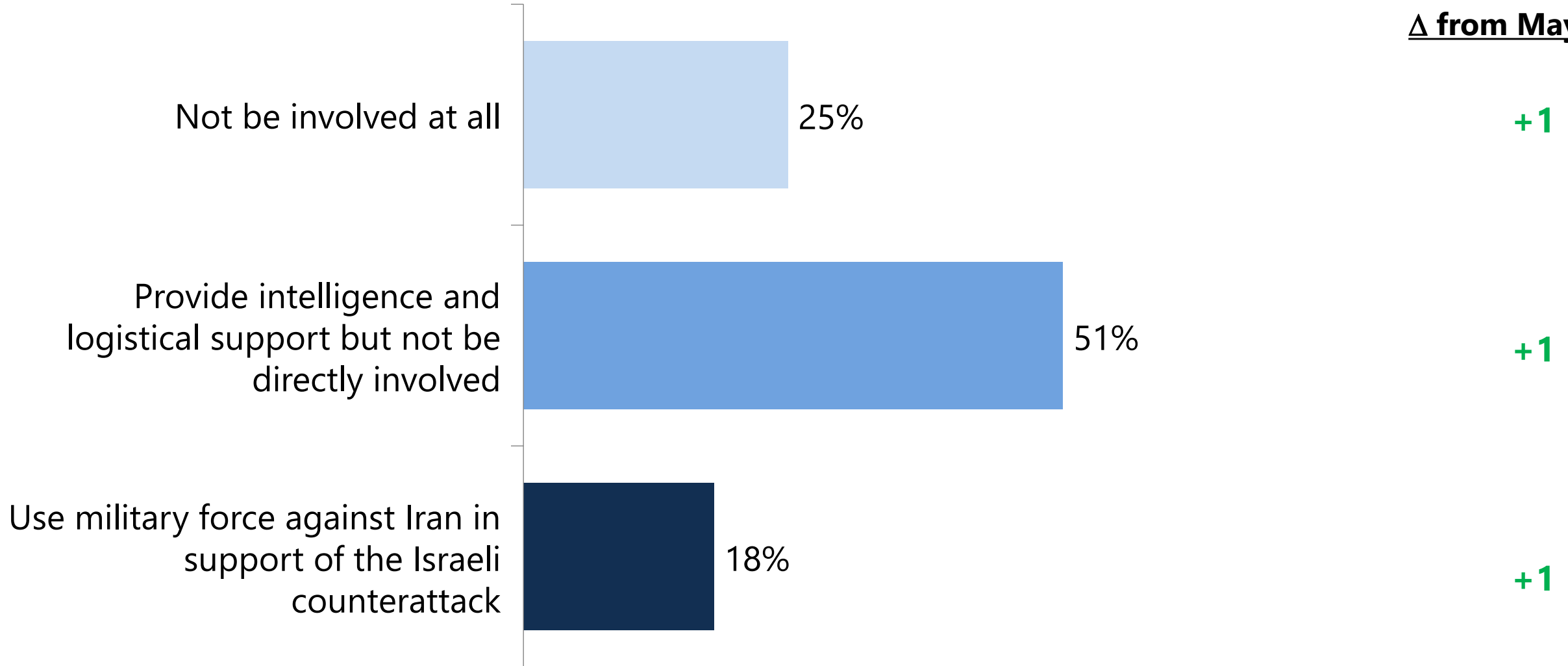


Q128. Would you support or oppose an Israeli counterattack against Iran in response to Iranian aggression?



Majority prefers logistical support to an Israeli counterattack; few want US directly involved.

Δ from May '24



Q129. If Israel did launch a counterattack in response to Iranian aggression, do you think the US should:

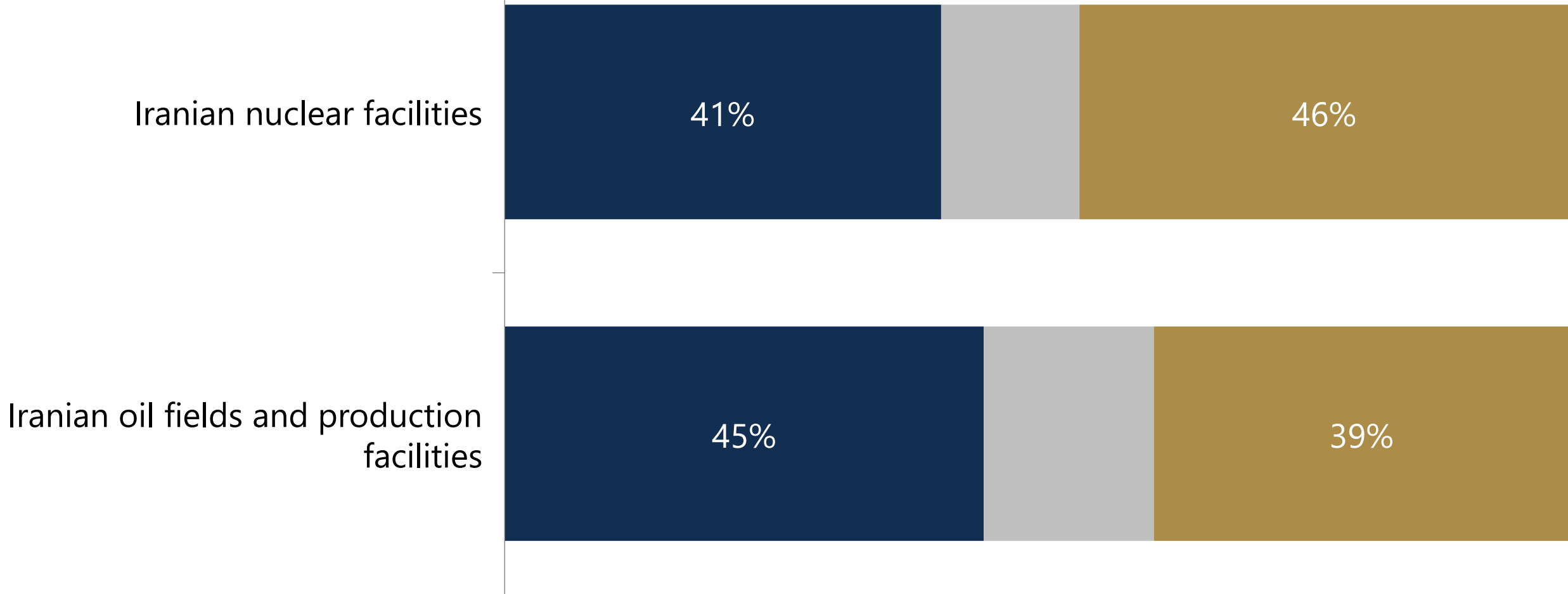
No consensus on potentially escalatory Israeli strikes inside Iran.



View of Israeli strikes on...

■ Favor

■ Oppose



Q130-131. An Israeli counterattack against Iran could include a variety of targets. Iran would likely view Israeli strikes against each of the following as a significant escalation of the conflict. Knowing this, would you support or oppose Israel targeting each of the following?

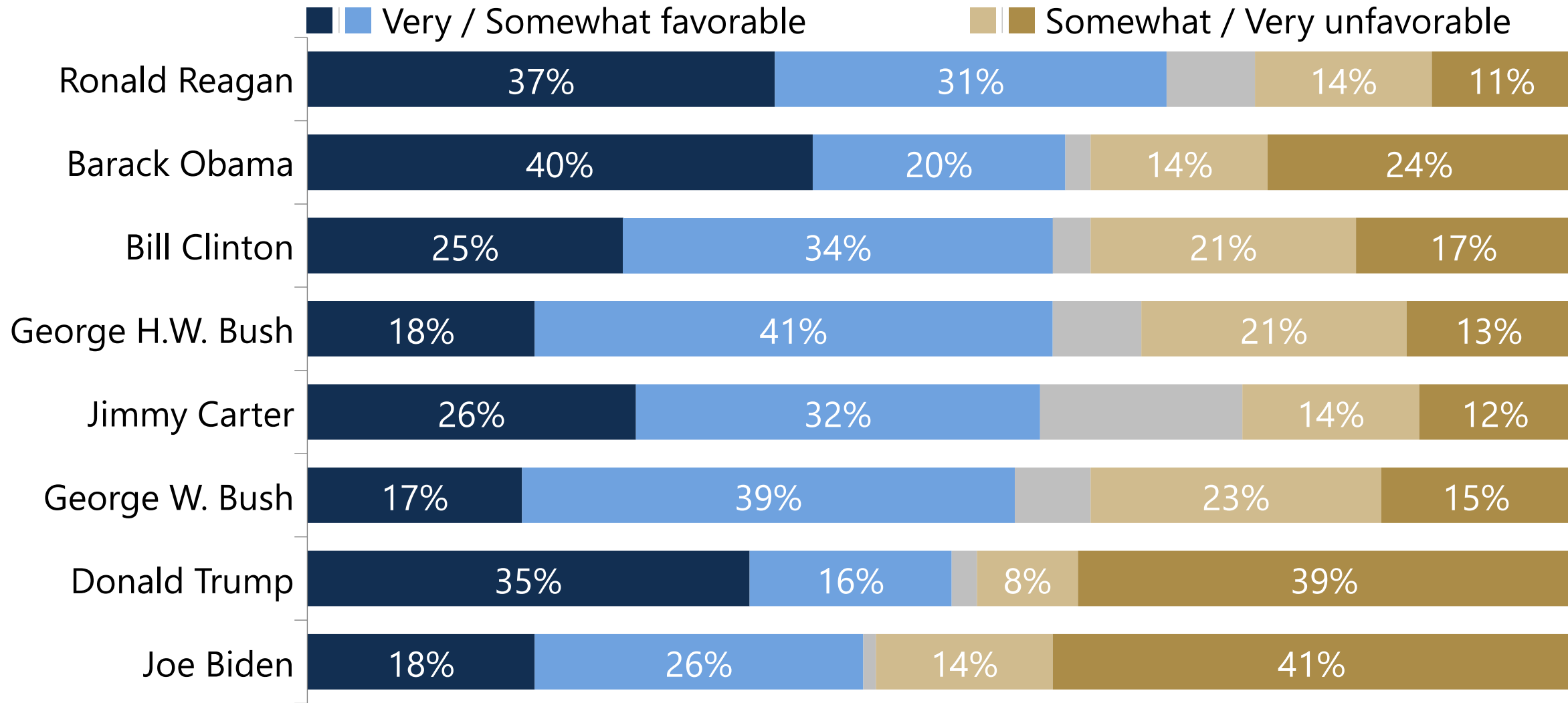


EVALUATIONS OF MODERN PRESIDENTS





Favorability Ratings of Past Presidents

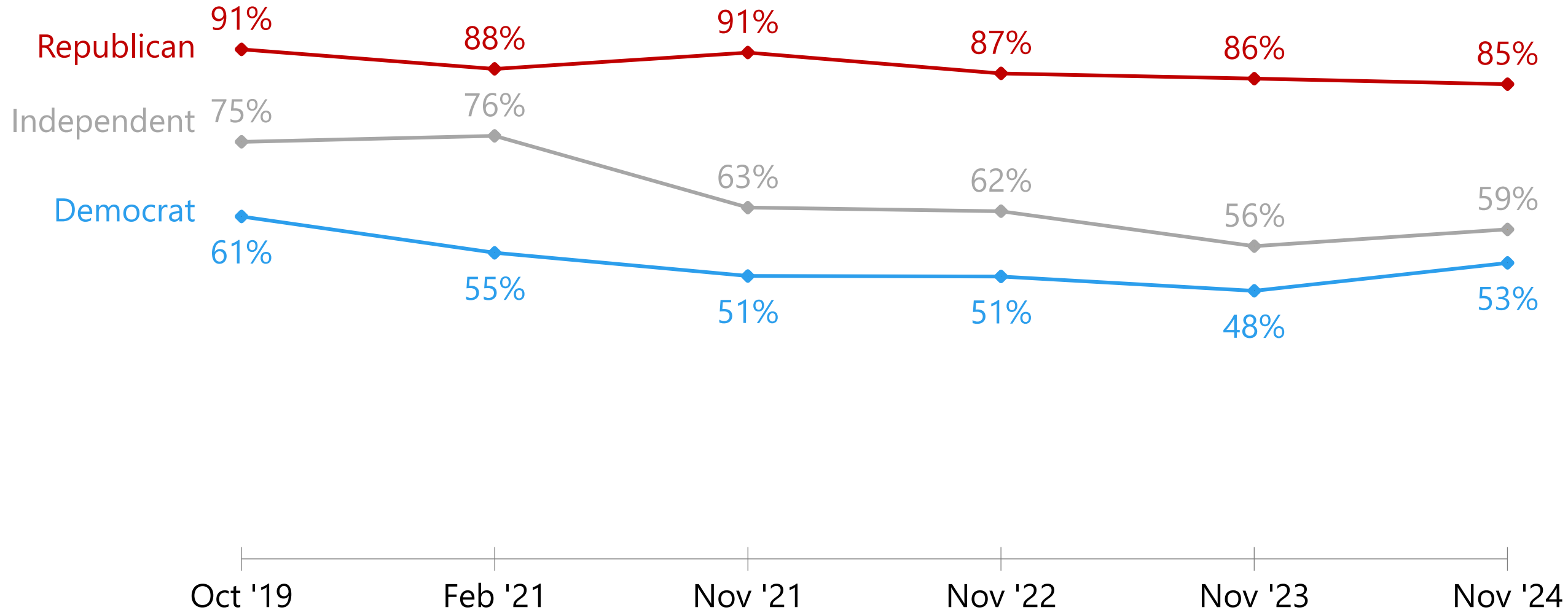


Q132-Q139. Thinking now about recent presidents, please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of each one I mention.



Reagan favorability by party identification.

Total Favorable



Q133. Thinking now about recent presidents, please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of: Ronald Reagan.

**FOR MORE
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Profile of the Sample

Category	Group	% of Sample
Sex	Male	47%
	Female	53
Age	18-29	17
	30-44	25
	45-64	37
	65+	19
Race	White	72
	Black, African-American	13
	Hispanic or Latino	8
	Asian or Asian-American	3
Education	High school degree or less	26
	Some / 2-year college degree	34
	4-year college degree	25
	Postgraduate degree	15

Category	Group	% of Sample
Region	East	18%
	Midwest	20
	South	37
	West	24
Party	Democrat	33
	Independent	35
	Republican	29
Philosophy	Liberal	27
	Moderate	35
	Conservative	34
Service	Service member	3
	Veteran	9
2024 vote	Trump	41
	Harris	39