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Wednesday, May 31st, 2023

Perceptions of Incumbents and Default by District Type

IMPACT RESEARCH

Methodology

Impact Research conducted a survey of N=1500 likely 2024 general election voters in 61 battleground congressional districts.

74% of interviews were conducted by text-to-web and 26% were via online panel.

Interviews were conducted between April 20-27, 2023.

The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 2.5 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

IMPACT RESEARCH
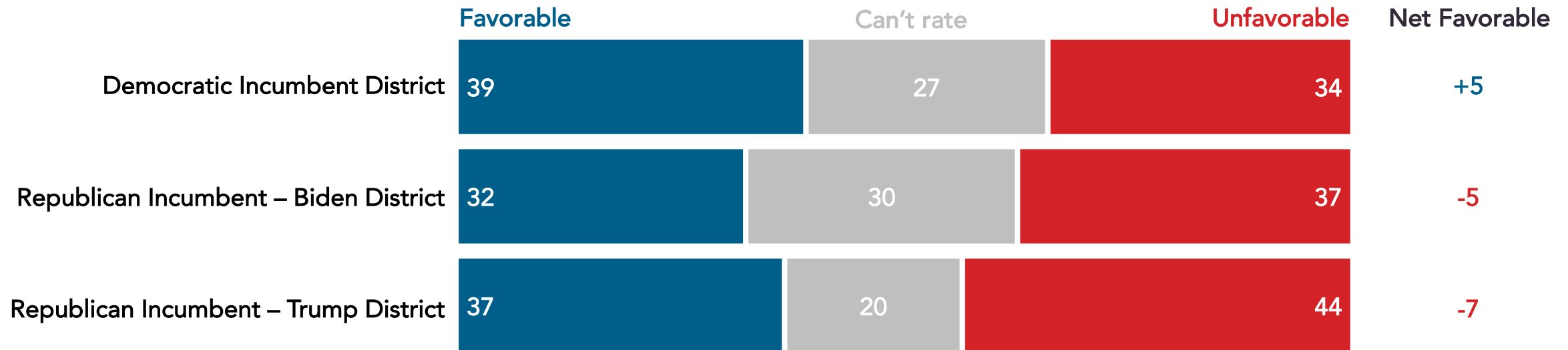
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Key Takeaways

- **Democratic incumbents are viewed favorably both personally and for the job they're doing, while Republican incumbents are underwater on both metrics.** Battleground constituents in all district types are sour on the job their member of Congress is doing on the economy.

- **Across the battleground, voters think Republicans are prioritizing the wrong things and focusing on non-economic issues.** This sentiment is highest in Republican-held districts that Trump won in 2020.

- **Republican incumbents are not associated with positive economic traits or values statements.** They are viewed as prioritizing other issues over the economy and standing with big corporations over regular people, and not seen as fighting to lower costs.

- **Across the battleground, there is a strong preference for Congress to address the deficit by raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations.** This approach is favored significantly more than cutting programs like Social Security, Medicare, or national defense.

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Democratic Incumbents Have Net Positive Favorability Ratings, While Republicans Incumbents Are Underwater

Democratic incumbents are narrowly net favorable (+5), while Republican incumbents in both Biden-won districts (-5) and Trump-won districts (-7) have net negative favorability ratings.

On the following screens are some names of people and groups. Please indicate whether you have a very favorable view, somewhat favorable view, somewhat unfavorable view, or very unfavorable view. If you have never heard of them, or cannot rate them, please indicate that.

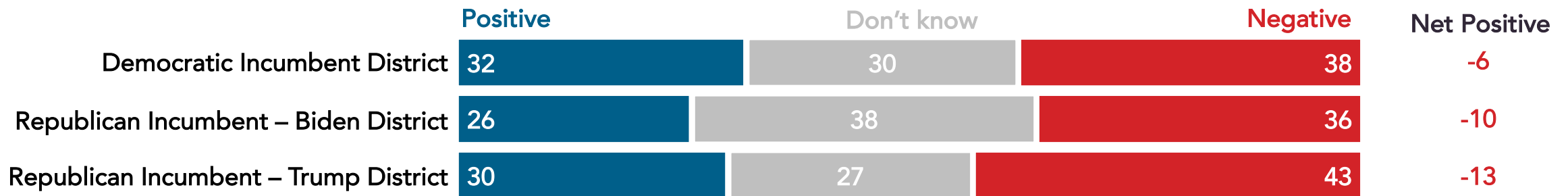|	Favorable	Can't rate	Unfavorable	Net Favorable
Democratic Incumbent District	39	27	34	+5
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	32	30	37	-5
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	37	20	44	-7

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Democrats Have Positive Approval Ratings in Their Districts, While Republican Members are Underwater in Their Districts

Both Democratic and Republican members of Congress get a negative approval rating on the economy.

How would you rate the job [NAMED INCUMBENT] is doing as a member of Congress?

	Positive	Don't know	Negative	Net Positive
Democratic Incumbent District	39	28	33	+6
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	30	35	35	-5
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	34	23	43	-9
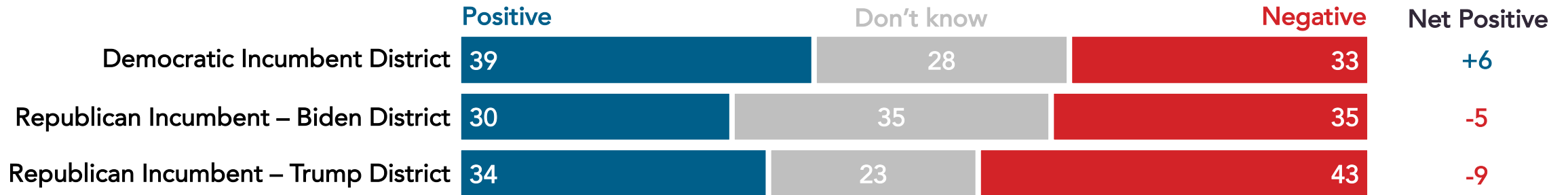
How would you rate the job [NAMED INCUMBENT] is doing on the economy?

	Positive	Don't know	Negative	Net Positive
Democratic Incumbent District	32	30	38	-6
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	26	38	36	-10
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	30	27	43	-13

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Across Battleground Districts, Most Think Republicans are Prioritizing the Wrong Things & Focused on Non-Economic Issues

Constituents in Trump-won Republican districts are marginally more likely to say those things about Republicans.

As you may know, Republicans took control of the U.S. House of Representatives in January 2023. Since taking control, have Republicans in Congress:

	Prioritized the right things	Don't know	Prioritized the wrong things	Net Right Things
Overall	34	13	53	-19
Democratic Incumbent District	34	15	51	-17
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	35	12	54	-19
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	35	9	56	-21

Which of the following comes closer to your view? Since taking control, Republicans in Congress have:

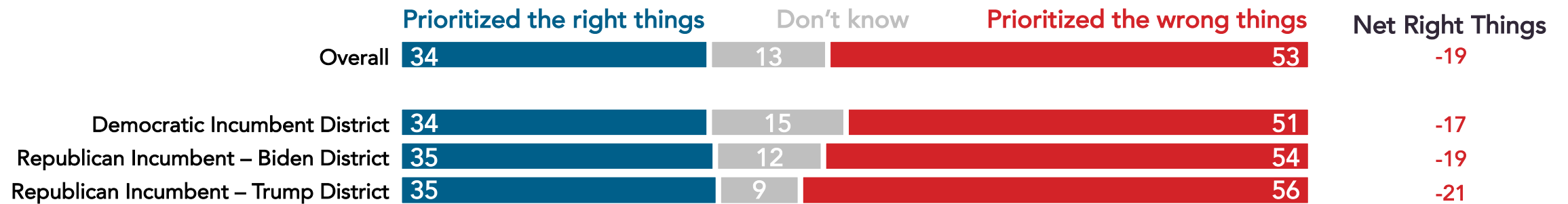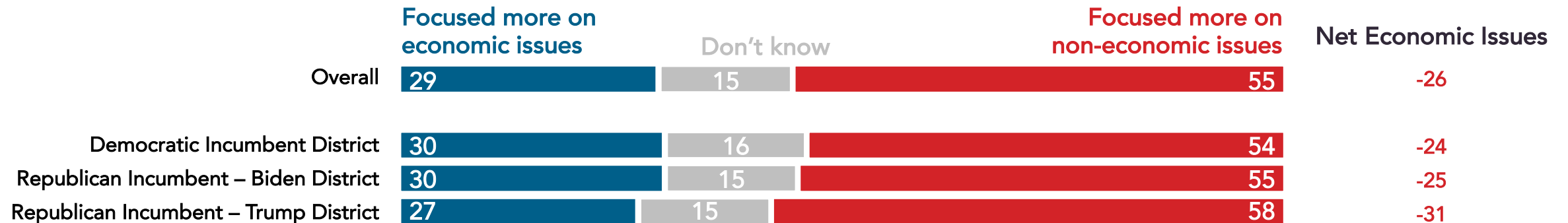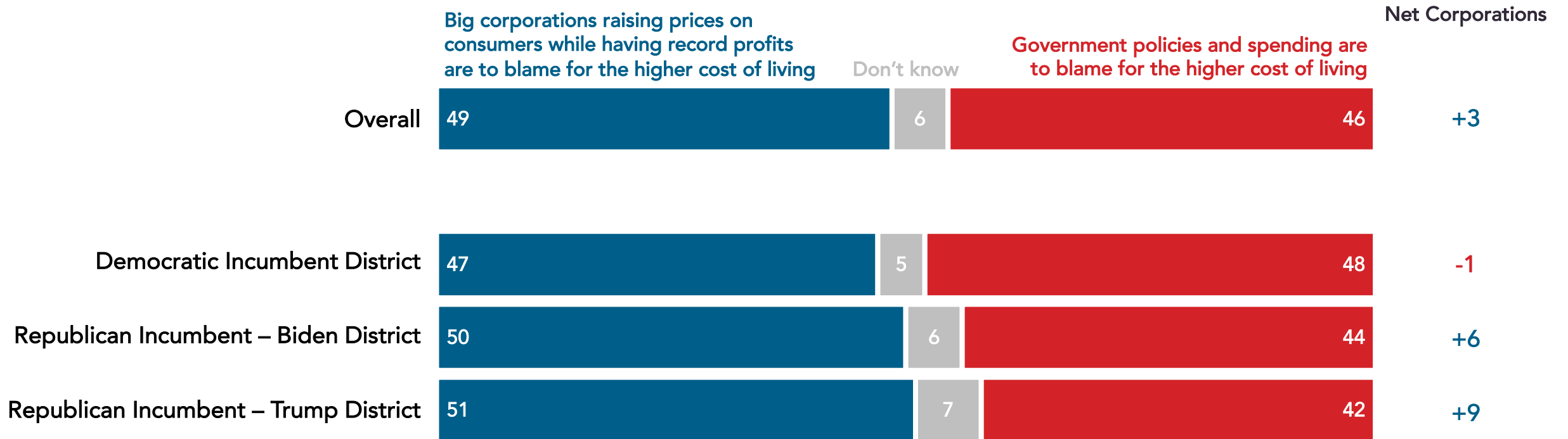|	Focused more on economic issues	Don't know	Focused more on non-economic issues	Net Economic Issues
Overall	29	15	55	-26
Democratic Incumbent District	30	16	54	-24
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	30	15	55	-25
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	27	15	58	-31

Nationwide survey of 1,500 likely 2024 general election voters across 61 battleground districts conducted April 20-April 27, 2023.
For more info, visit navigatorresearch.org/battleground.

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Constituents in Republican-Held Districts Blame Corporations More Than Government Spending for Higher Cost of Living

Democratic-held battleground districts are more evenly split between blaming government spending or big corporations.

Which of the following comes closer to your view?

Net Corporations

	Big corporations raising prices on consumers while having record profits are to blame for the higher cost of living	Don't know	Government policies and spending are to blame for the higher cost of living	Net Corporations
Overall	49	6	46	+3
Democratic Incumbent District	47	5	48	-1
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	50	6	44	+6
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	51	7	42	+9

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Constituents are More Critical of Republican Incumbents on Economic Values and Priorities Than Democratic Incumbents

Democratic incumbents are described as looking out for seniors and working to make health care and prescription drugs more affordable; they are not associated with standing with the wealthy and big corporations over regular people.

Please indicate whether that word or phrase describes [NAMED INCUMBENT] very well, pretty well, not too well, or not well at all.

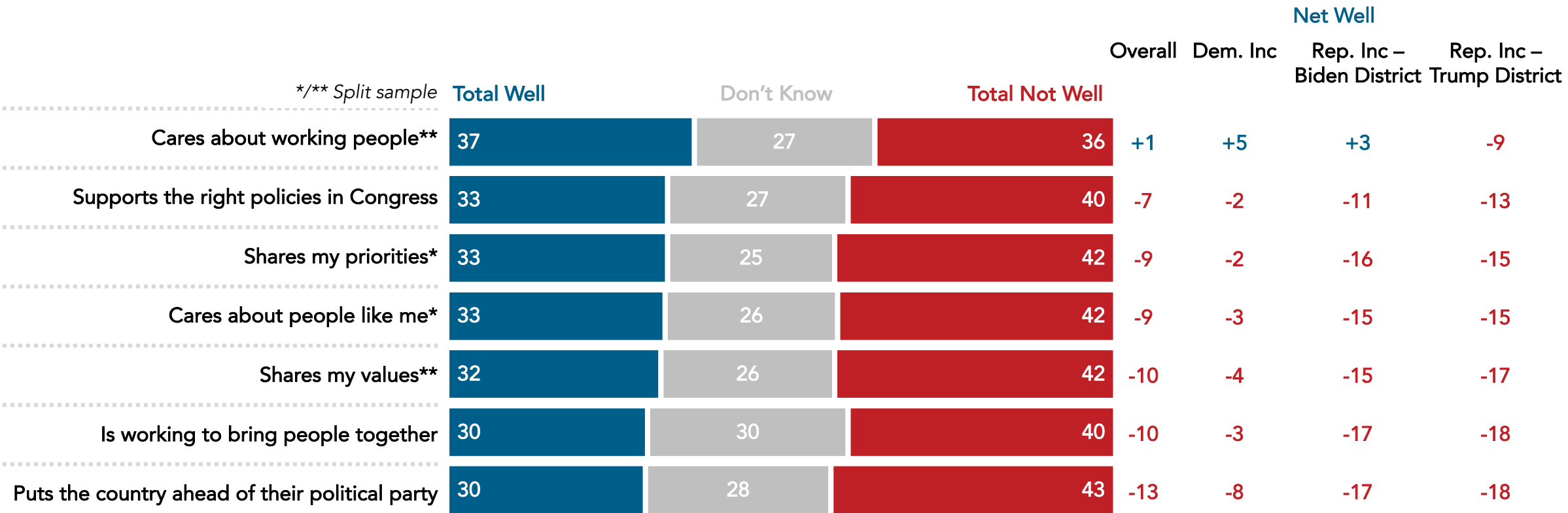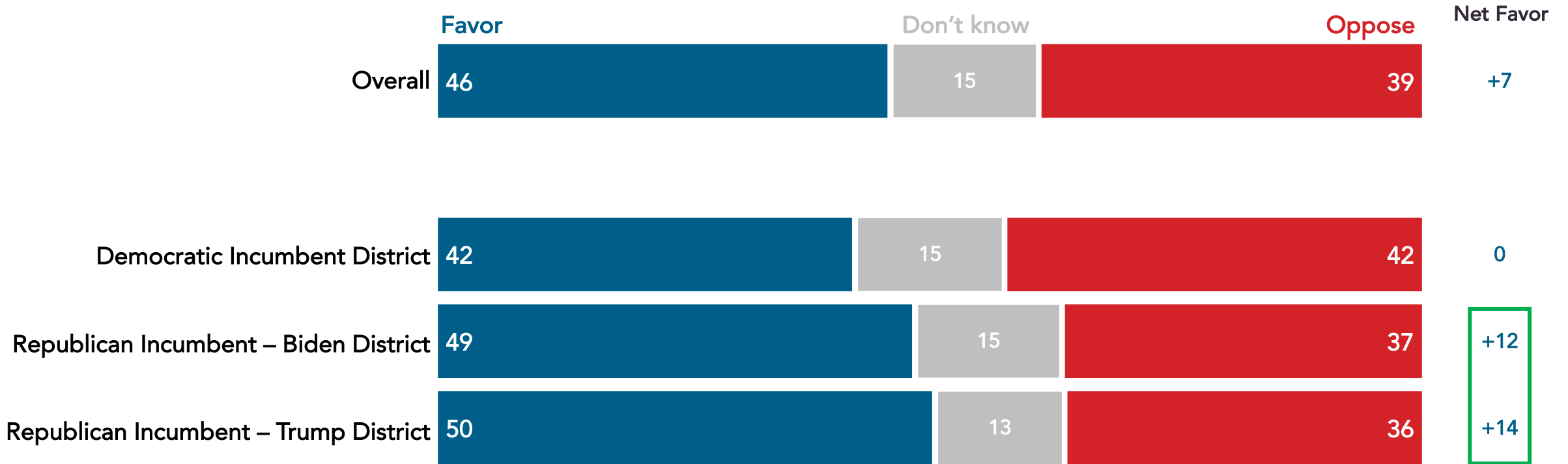|	Total well	Don't know	Total not well	Overall	Net Well Dem. Inc	Rep. Inc – Biden District	Rep. Inc – Trump District
Prioritizes other issues over the economy	34	41	25	+9	+12	+3	+11
Stands with the wealthy and big corporations over people like me	35	33	32	+3	-9	+15	+16
Looks out for seniors	29	38	34	-5	+2	-10	-13
Is working to make health care and prescription drugs more affordable	29	36	35	-6	+5	-14	-16
Is working to build an economy that rewards hard work	30	33	37	-7	-7	-6	-9
Has an economic agenda that is good for people like me	30	31	39	-9	-6	-9	-14
Is fighting to reduce day-to-day costs	27	34	39	-12	-11	-10	-19

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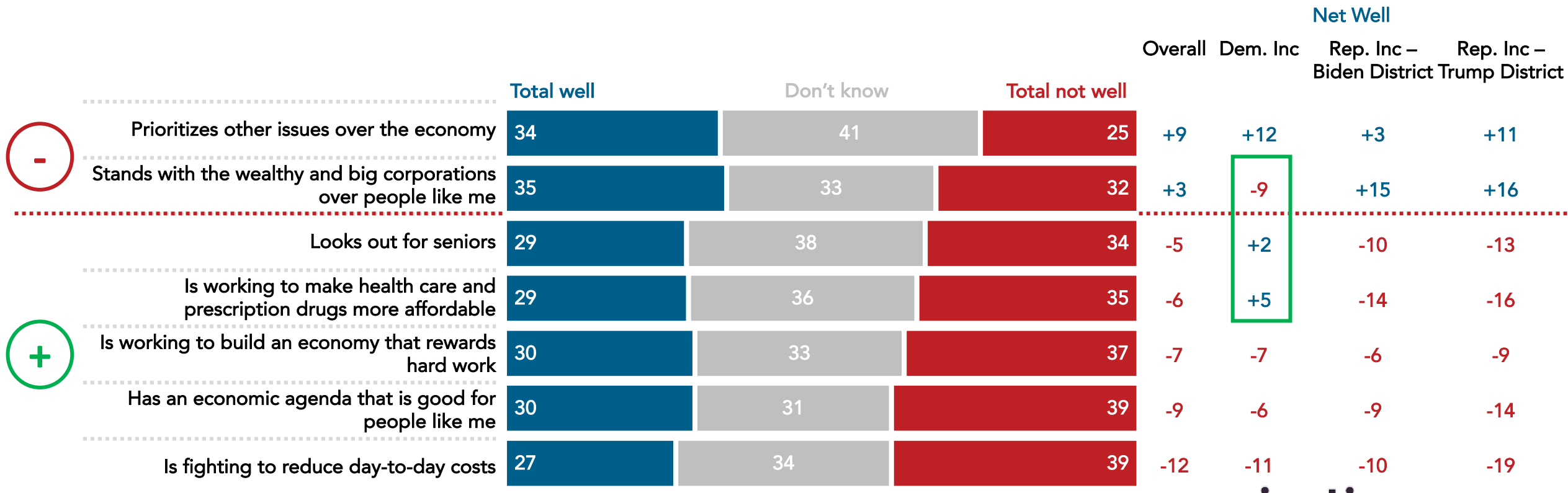
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Constituents Reject That Republican Incumbents Care About People Like Them, Share Their Values, or Put the Country First

Voters are split on whether values statement describe Democratic incumbents, while Republican incumbents are much more underwater.

Please indicate whether that word or phrase describes [NAMED INCUMBENT] very well, pretty well, not too well, or not well at all.

	Total Well	Don't Know	Total Not Well	Net Well Overall	Net Well Dem. Inc	Net Well Rep. Inc – Biden District	Net Well Rep. Inc – Trump District
*/** Split sample							
Cares about working people**	37	27	36	+1	+5	+3	-9
Supports the right policies in Congress	33	27	40	-7	-2	-11	-13
Shares my priorities*	33	25	42	-9	-2	-16	-15
Cares about people like me*	33	26	42	-9	-3	-15	-15
Shares my values**	32	26	42	-10	-4	-15	-17
Is working to bring people together	30	30	40	-10	-3	-17	-18
Puts the country ahead of their political party	30	28	43	-13	-8	-17	-18

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Battleground Constituents Support Raising the Debt Limit to Avoid the U.S. Defaulting on its Debts

Framing the debt limit debate around avoiding default increases support, especially in districts held by Republicans.

From what you know, do you favor or oppose raising the federal debt limit to avoid the U.S. defaulting on its debts?

	Favor	Don't know	Oppose	Net Favor
Overall	46	15	39	+7
Democratic Incumbent District	42	15	42	0
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	49	15	37	+12
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	50	13	36	+14

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In Both Democratic- and Republican-Held Districts, Voters Prefer Congress to Pay its Bills and Not Let the U.S. Default

Majorities across district types prefer Congress votes to pay its bills now to avoid default.
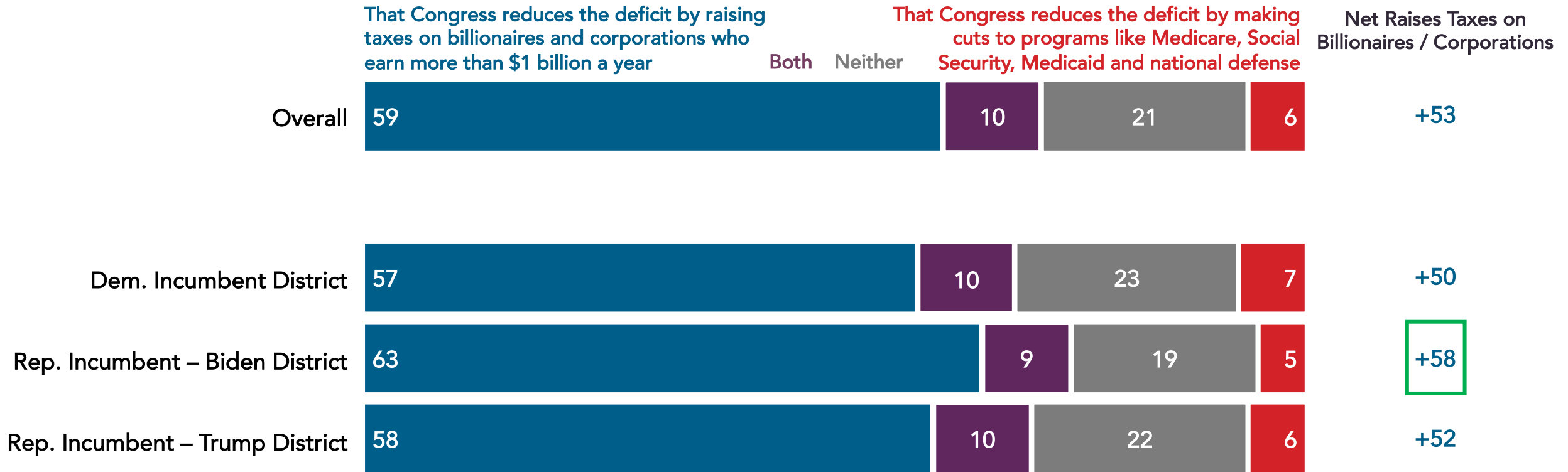
Which of the following do you prefer:
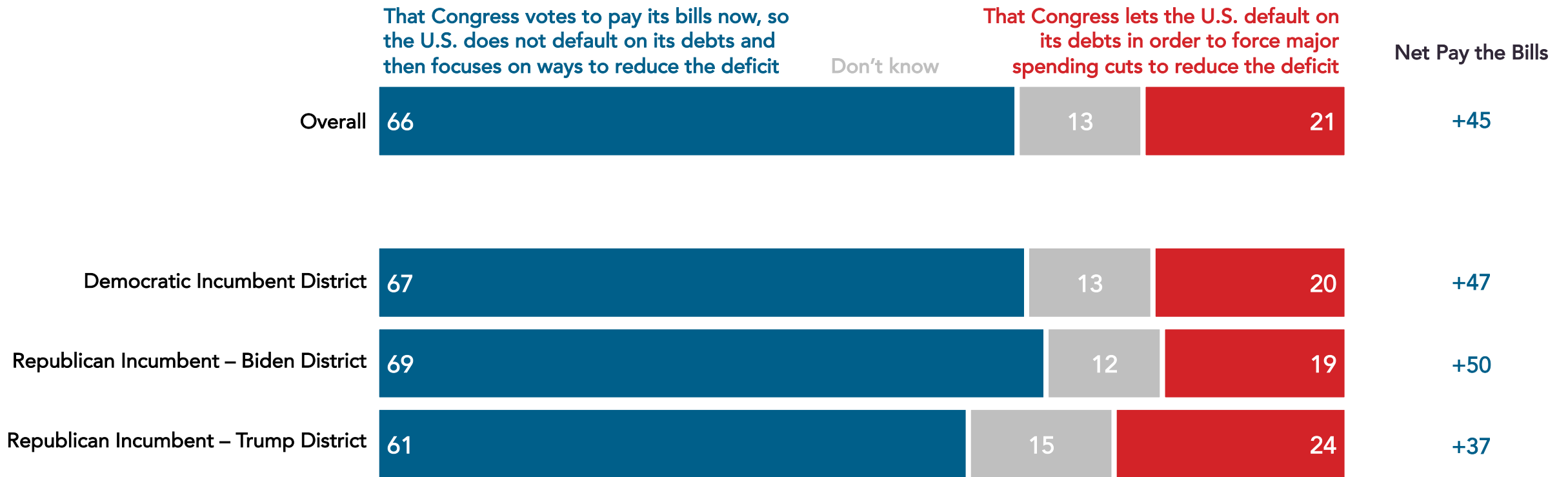
That Congress votes to pay its bills now, so the U.S. does not default on its debts and then focuses on ways to reduce the deficit

Don't know

That Congress lets the U.S. default on its debts in order to force major spending cuts to reduce the deficit

Net Pay the Bills

District	Pay bills now	Don't know	Let default	Net Pay the Bills
Overall	66	13	21	+45
Democratic Incumbent District	67	13	20	+47
Republican Incumbent – Biden District	69	12	19	+50
Republican Incumbent – Trump District	61	15	24	+37

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Battleground Constituents Want Congress to Reduce the Deficit by Raising Taxes on the Wealthy Over Cutting Programs

Constituents in Biden-won Republican districts are most likely to prefer Congress raising taxes on billionaires and corporations.

Which of the following do you prefer:

|	That Congress reduces the deficit by raising taxes on billionaires and corporations who earn more than $1 billion a year	Both	Neither	That Congress reduces the deficit by making cuts to programs like Medicare, Social Security, Medicaid and national defense	Net Raises Taxes on Billionaires / Corporations
Overall	59	10	21	6	+53
Dem. Incumbent District	57	10	23	7	+50
Rep. Incumbent – Biden District	63	9	19	5	+58
Rep. Incumbent – Trump District	58	10	22	6	+52

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Across Battleground Districts, Three in Four "Strongly Oppose" Cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid

Majorities in all the districts oppose cuts to national defense as well, but with less intensity.

Here are some proposals in Congress to reduce the federal debt. Please indicate whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of these.

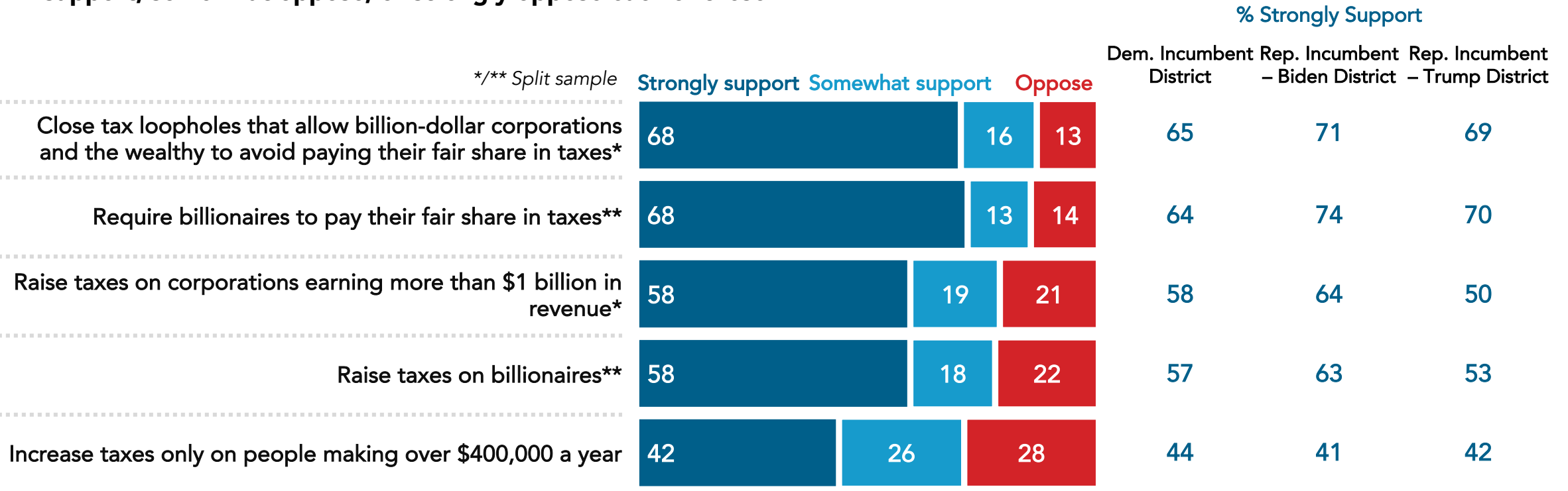|	Support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	% Strongly Oppose Dem. Incumbent District	Rep. Incumbent – Biden District	Rep. Incumbent – Trump District
Cut Social Security benefits for future retirees	8	13	76	76	74	79
Make cuts to Medicare and Medicaid	10	15	72	71	71	74
Reduce funding for national defense	34	21	40	41	41	38

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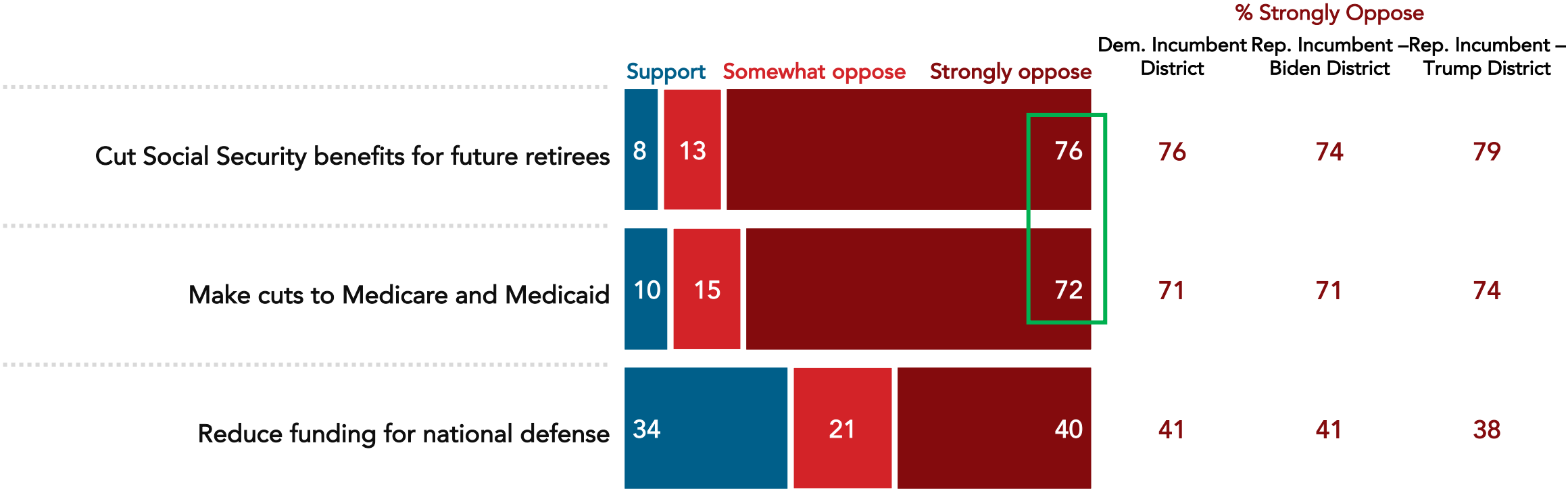
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Corporations and the Wealthy Paying Their Fair Share is Most Effective When Framing Revenue Increases to Reduce the Deficit

Majorities in all the districts oppose cuts to national defense as well, but with less intensity.

Here are some proposals in Congress to reduce the federal debt. Please indicate whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose each of these.

*/** Split sample

% Strongly Support

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Oppose	Dem. Incumbent District	Rep. Incumbent – Biden District	Rep. Incumbent – Trump District
Close tax loopholes that allow billion-dollar corporations and the wealthy to avoid paying their fair share in taxes*	68	16	13	65	71	69
Require billionaires to pay their fair share in taxes**	68	13	14	64	74	70
Raise taxes on corporations earning more than $1 billion in revenue*	58	19	21	58	64	50
Raise taxes on billionaires**	58	18	22	57	63	53
Increase taxes only on people making over $400,000 a year	42	26	28	44	41	42

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Appendix: Congressional Districts Included In Sample

Dem Incumbent			Rep Incumbent - Biden		Rep Incumbent - Trump	
AK-01	MN-02	OR-06	AZ-01	NY-04	CA-41	TX-15
CA-49	NC-01	PA-07	AZ-06	NY-17	CO-03	WI-01
CO-08	NC-13	PA-08	CA-13	NY-19	FL-07	WI-03
CT-05	NH-01	PA-17	CA-22	NY-22	FL-13	
IL-13	NM-02	VA-07	CA-27	OR-05	FL-27	
IL-17	NV-03	WA-03	CA-40	PA-01	IA-01	
IN-01	NV-04	WA-08	CA-45	VA-02	IA-02	
KS-03	NY-18		NE-02		IA-03	
ME-02	OH-01		NJ-07		MI-10	
MI-03	OH-09		NY-01		MT-01	
MI-08	OH-13		NY-03		NY-02	

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About Navigator and Navigating the Battleground

In a world where the news cycle is the length of a tweet, our leaders often lack the real-time public-sentiment analysis to shape the best approaches to talking about the issues that matter the most. Navigator is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, responsive tool to inform policy debates by conducting research and reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press. Navigating the Battleground is a project designed to understand messaging nuances in different types of battleground geographies, led by pollsters from Impact Research along with an advisory committee, including: Jessica Floyd, The Hub Project; Christina Reynolds, EMILY's List; Mike Podhorzer, AFL-CIO; Jesse Ferguson, progressive strategist; Navin Nayak, Center for American Progress Action Fund; Stephanie Valencia, EquisLabs; and Melanie Newman, Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

About the Study

Impact Research conducted public opinion surveys among a sample of 1,500 likely 2024 general election voters from April 20-April 27, 2023. The survey was conducted by a mix of text-to-web (74 percent) and an opt-in, online panel (26 percent). Respondents were verified against a voter file and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of the 61 congressional districts included in the sample across a variety of demographic variables. The margin of error for the full sample at the 95 percent level of confidence is +/- 2.5 percentage points. The margin for error for subgroups varies and is higher.