



Understanding Connecticut Consumers

Attitudes and Behaviors Regarding Energy Issues and Electrification

April 2022



Background

- The march towards “electrify everything” continues with a vengeance. Federal legislation is focused on accelerating electrification. Some states – like Connecticut – are battling legislation that bans new oil and gas in new construction or retrofits. Other states are aggressively incentivizing homeowners to convert to electric heat pumps. Regulatory action at the federal and state level is ramping up.
- Climate change is seen as a serious threat by most homeowners in the Northeast, fueling broad-based sentiment at the grassroots level to “do something.”
- Recent energy price runups as a result of global events are pushing more people to want to “get off fossil fuels.”
- Our industry’s solutions to achieving net-zero emissions are little-known and little-understood outside our industry.
- The battle in Connecticut is being waged right now. And the future of the industry hangs in the balance.

Background

- The National Energy and Fuels Institute (NEFI) is leading the charge to develop an industry-wide response to the electrification crisis and to support each state association's efforts to defend itself at the state level.
- There are two phases to NEFI's response; Phase I is the execution of consumer research to help us understand how consumers think, act and behave on issues related to energy and electrification. Phase II is the development of a robust legislative, communication and outreach strategy to activate homeowners and influence legislators.
- The Consumer Research Study has been a true collaboration, as NEFI provided the resources for 70% of the project and CEMA committed to funding the remaining 30%. This commitment ensured the study would be statistically significant.

Methodology and Objectives

- Warm Thoughts conducted an online representative survey of **400 registered voters, ages 25+ in Connecticut** between February 20-March 16, 2022.
- **The Connecticut representative survey was one part of a nine-part (3,600 respondent) survey conducted across every New England State, Pennsylvania and both upstate and downstate New York.**
- The confidence interval on the overall sample is +/-4.9%.
- **The goals of this research were to:**
 - Understand the issue context in which the energy transition plans are being promoted.
 - Measure support for the plan and its components overall and among sub-groups.
 - Guide communications and legislative strategy, including aiding in the development of messaging to advance campaigns, outreach and political engagement about the issues.

Demographics of Age 25+ Registered Voters

Gender

Female	53
Male	44
Non-binary/Third gender	2
Prefer to self-describe	1
Prefer not to say	1

Age

25-44 year olds	39
45-64 year olds	29
65+	33

Party ID

Democrat	41
Independent	33
Republican	23

Education

High School or Less	17
Some College	27
College Graduate	55

Own/Rent

Own	67
Rent	28

Region

New York Media Market	29
Hartford Media Market	71

Heat Source (any)

Home heating oil	41
Natural gas	28
Electric resistance baseboard	20
Propane	10
Wood products	9
Heat pumps (air-source)	8
Heat pumps (geothermal)	3

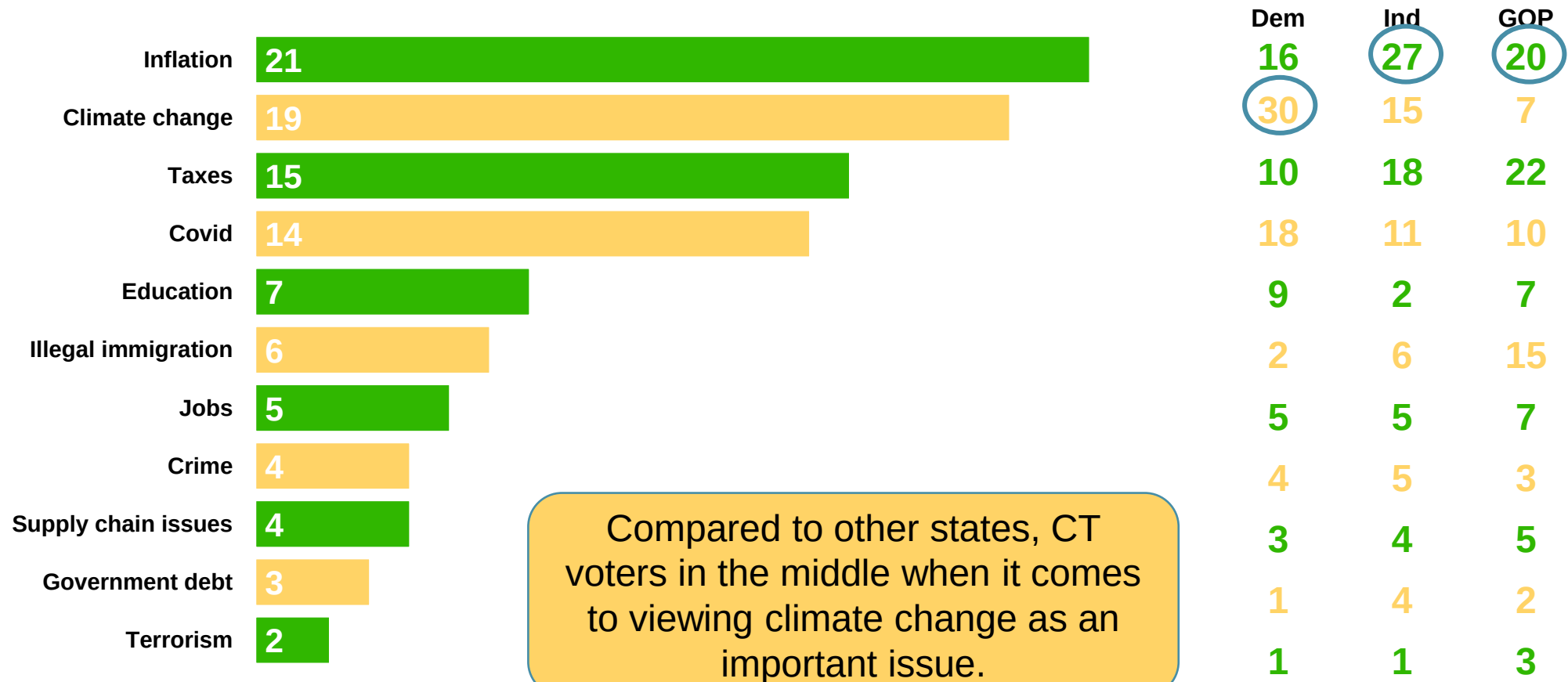
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Landscape



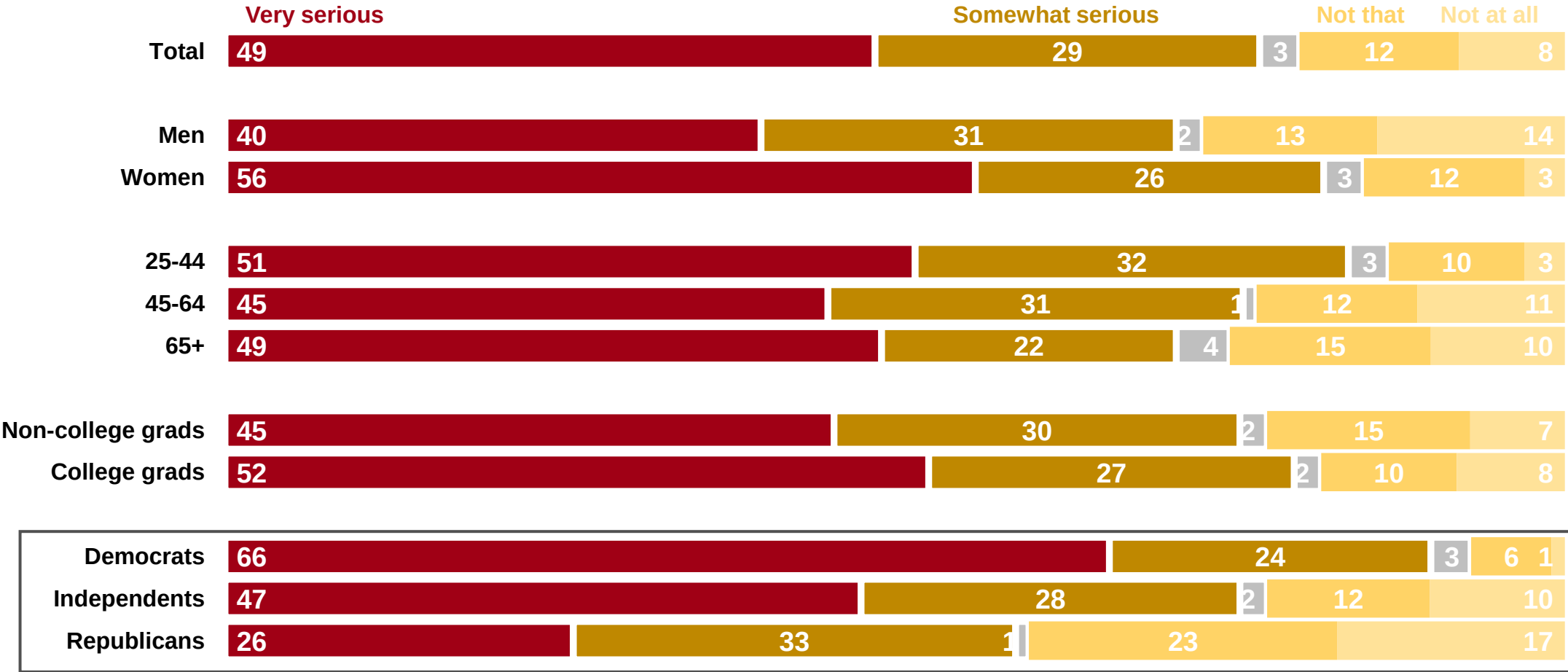
Inflation and climate change top the list of issues of importance, with independents and Republicans more likely to cite inflation than Democrats, who are more focused on climate change.

Please identify and rank the 3 issues that are most important to you. (Top choice shown)



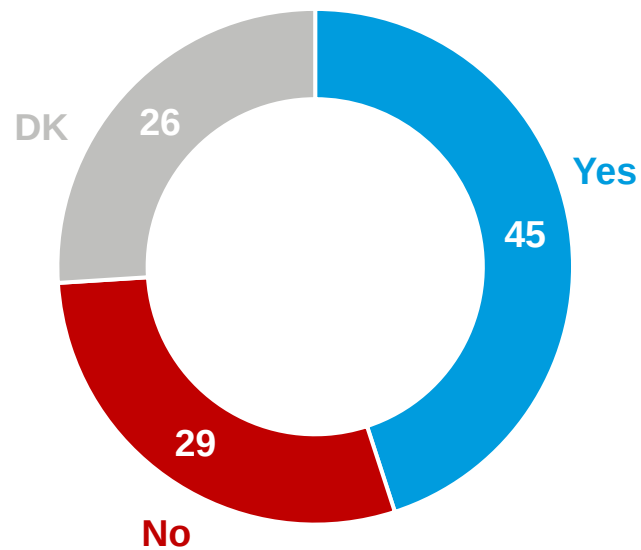
78% of voters say climate change is a serious threat. Almost two-thirds of Democrats say it is very serious, and nearly 60% say it's very or somewhat serious.

How serious of a threat would you say climate change is?



45% of voters say low-income households are disproportionately affected by climate change, with liberals and urban voters among those most likely to agree.

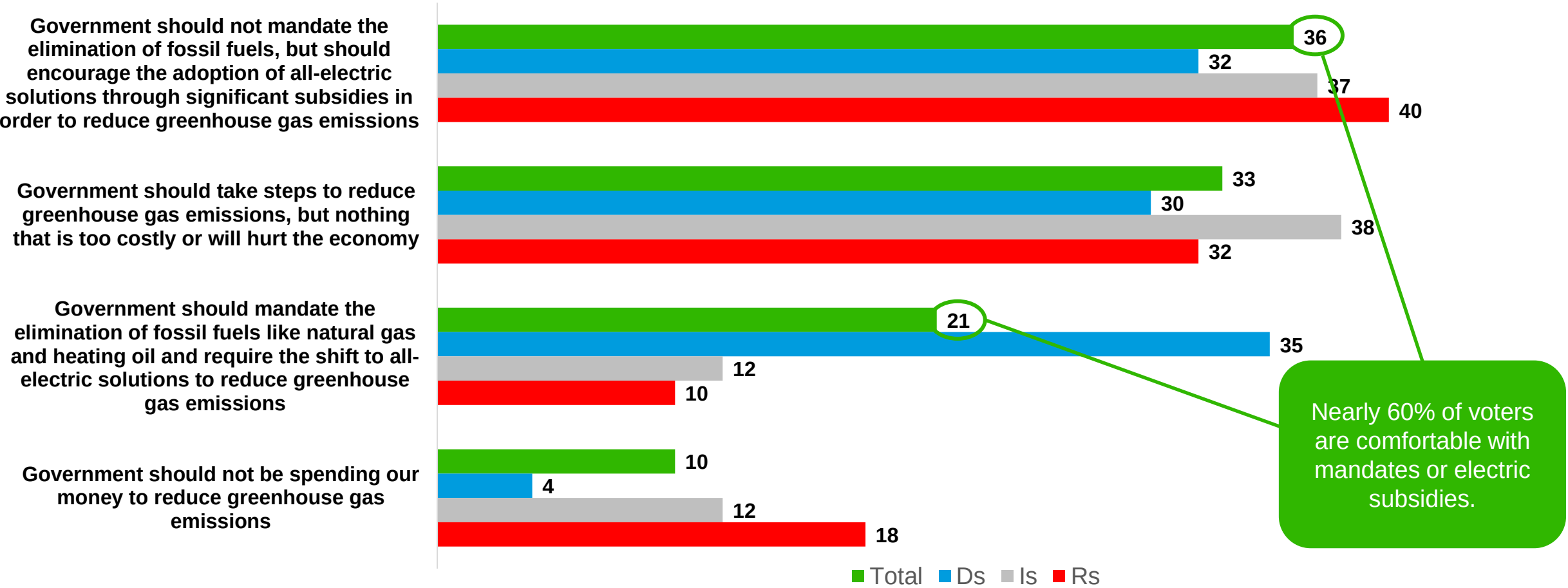
Do you feel low-income households are disproportionately affected by climate change?



Most Likely to Say Yes	
Liberals	67%
Urban voters	63%
Renters	61%
Democrats	60%
Women 25-54 years of age	59%
College women	53%

21% of voters support mandating the elimination of fossil fuels. 43% of voters prefer less intrusive government involvement in reducing GMG emissions.

Which of the following statements most accurately reflect your feelings about government action related to greenhouse gas emissions?



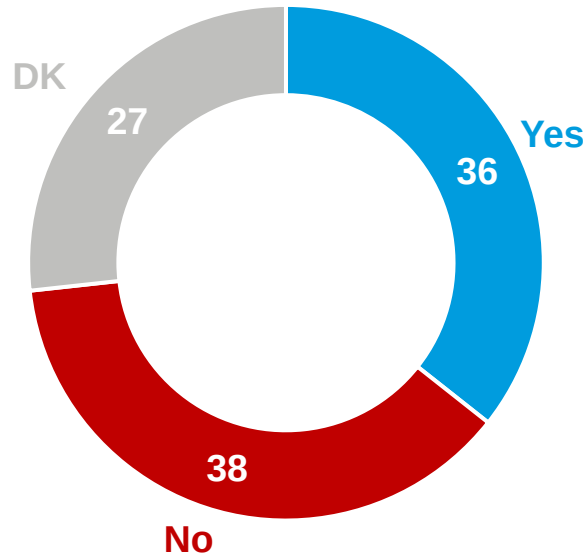
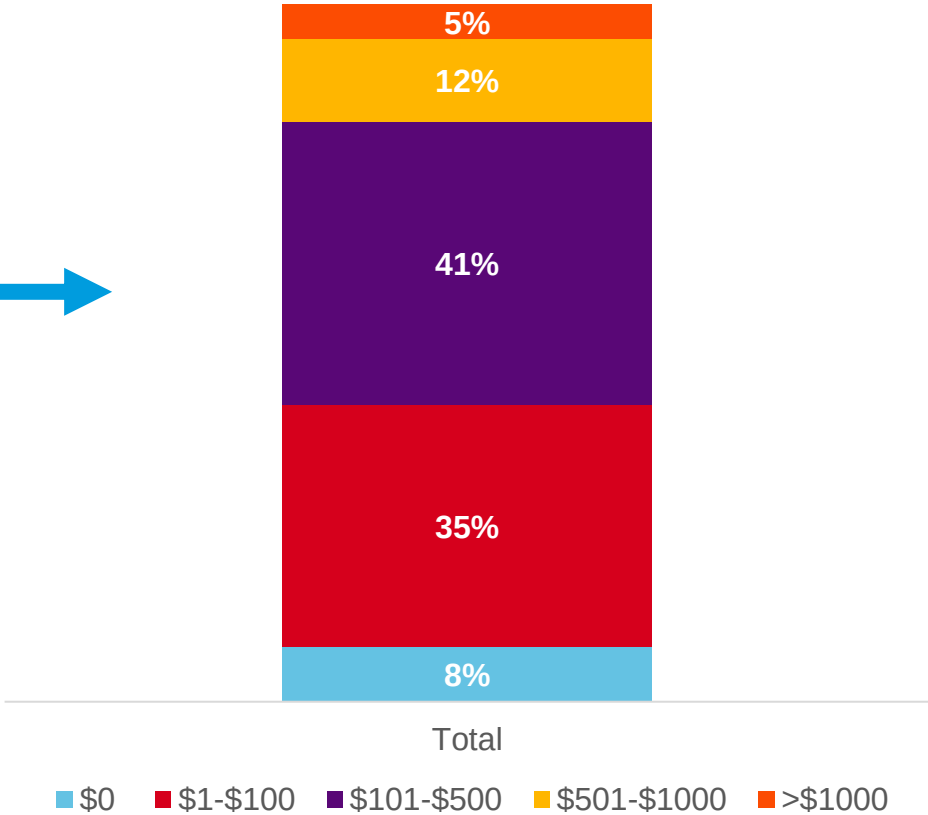
Only 36% say they support taxpayer funding to subsidize consumers who convert to electric heat pumps. 84% of those who support it say they would only be willing to see increases of \$500 or less per year.

Do you support using taxpayer funding to subsidize consumers who convert their home energy to electric heat pumps?

(IF YES, N=144) How much would you be willing to pay, through tax increases or other means, so that electric heat pump subsidies could be made available?

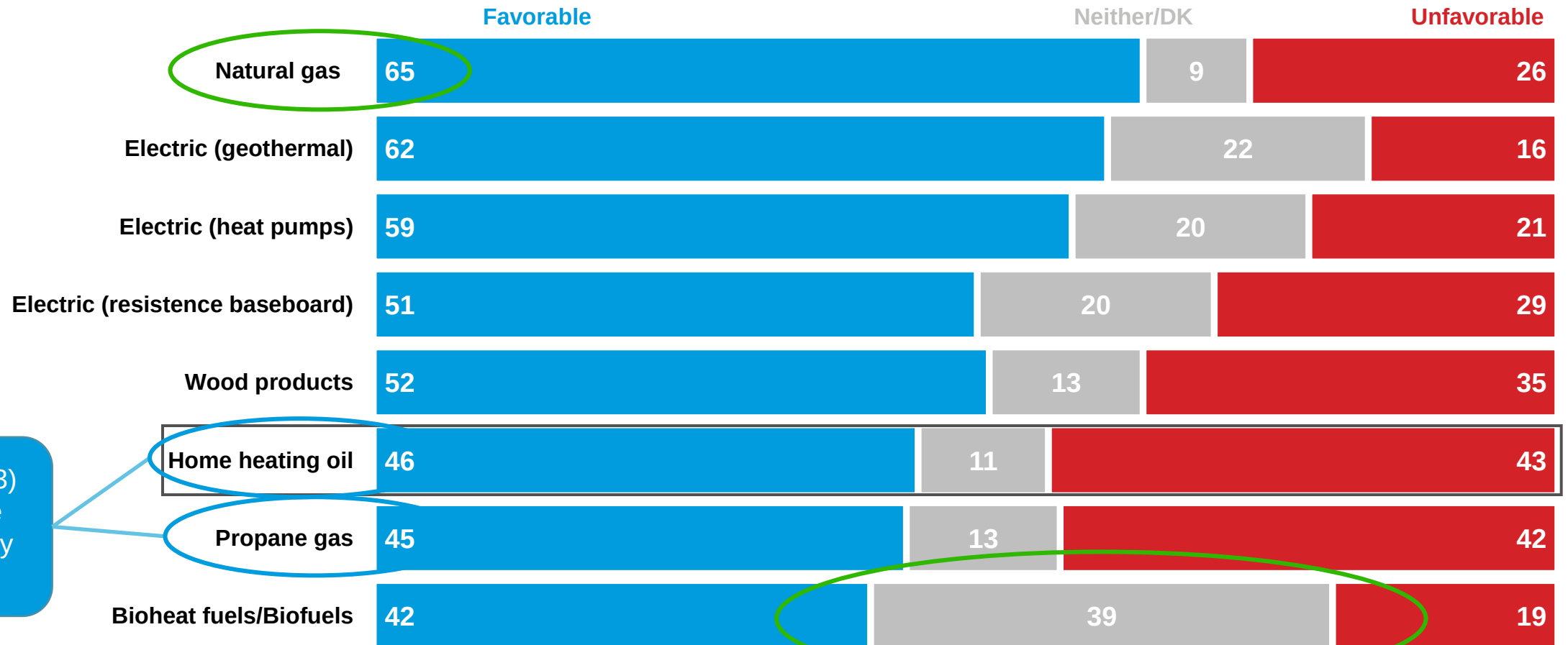
Most Likely to Say Yes

Baseboard electric	52%
Liberals	52%
Men 25-54	51%
Democrats	51%
Non-college men	47%
Urban voters	44%
Employed	43%



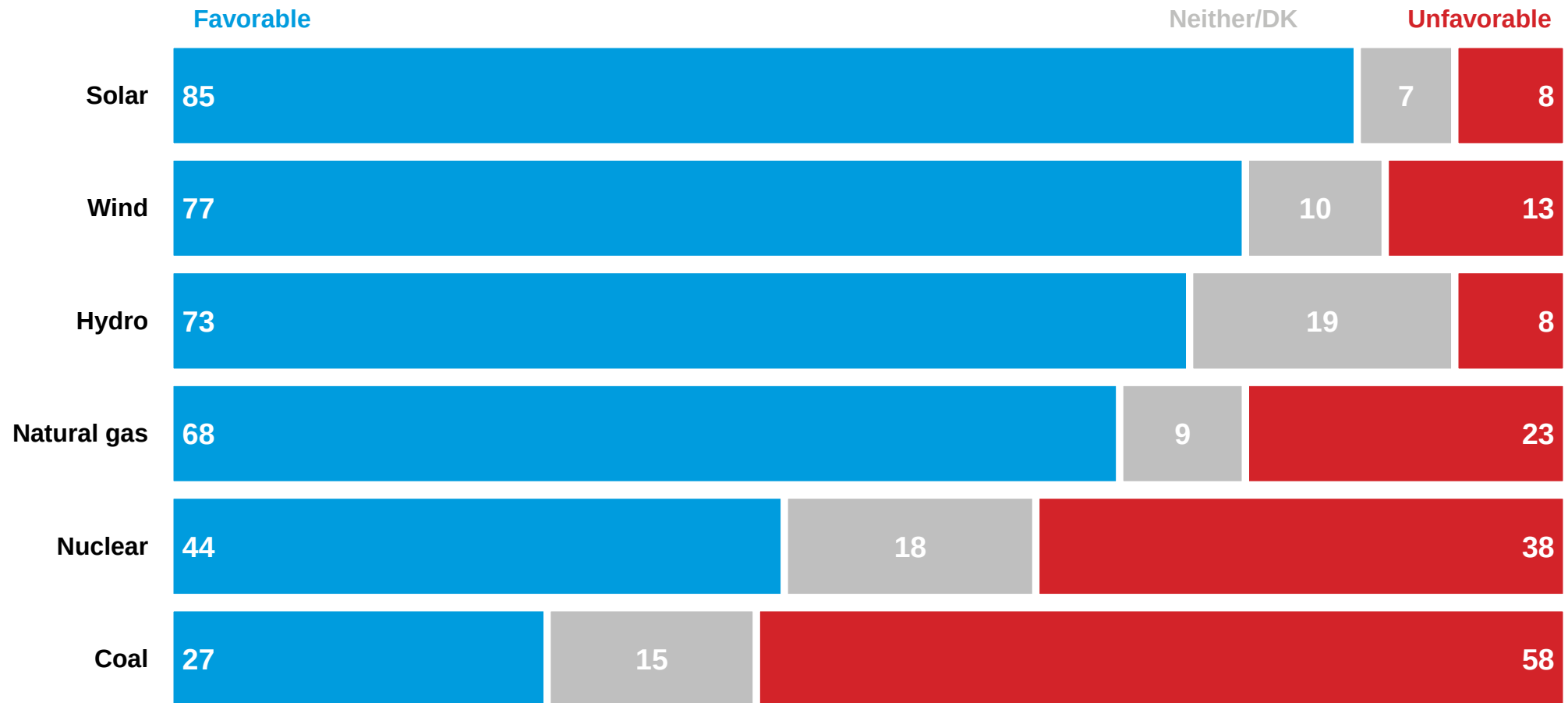
Natural gas and electric sources of heat are viewed far more favorably than unfavorably, while there is more of a split for home heating oil and propane gas.

For each of the following sources of energy that might be used in homes, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of it.



Renewable sources of electricity are the most popular, with natural gas close behind. Nuclear and coal power are more problematic for many Connecticut voters.

For the following sources of energy that might be used to generate electricity, please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of it.



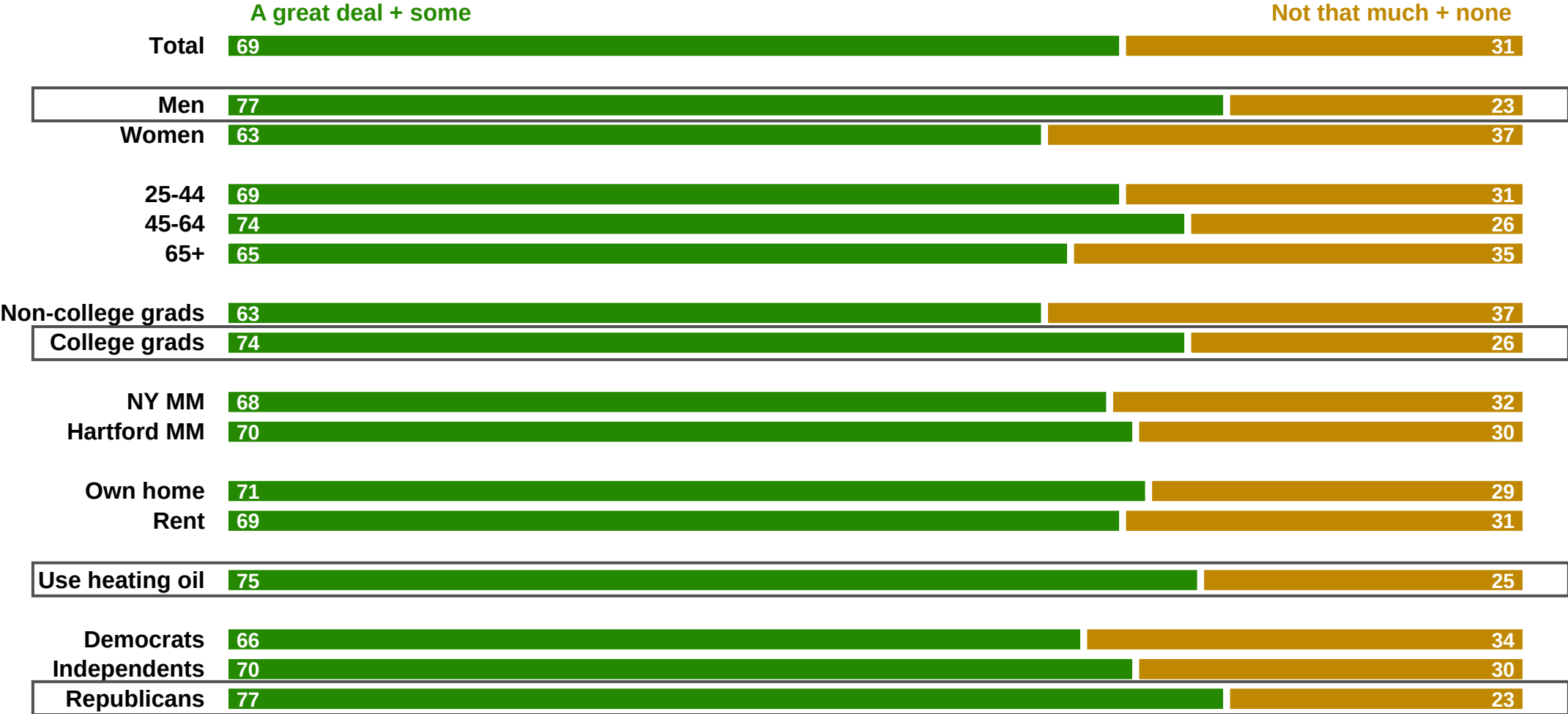
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All-electric Transition



Nearly seven in ten CT voters say they've heard a great deal or something about the movement to transition to all-electric solutions, with men, college-educated and Republican voters among those most likely to say they are familiar.

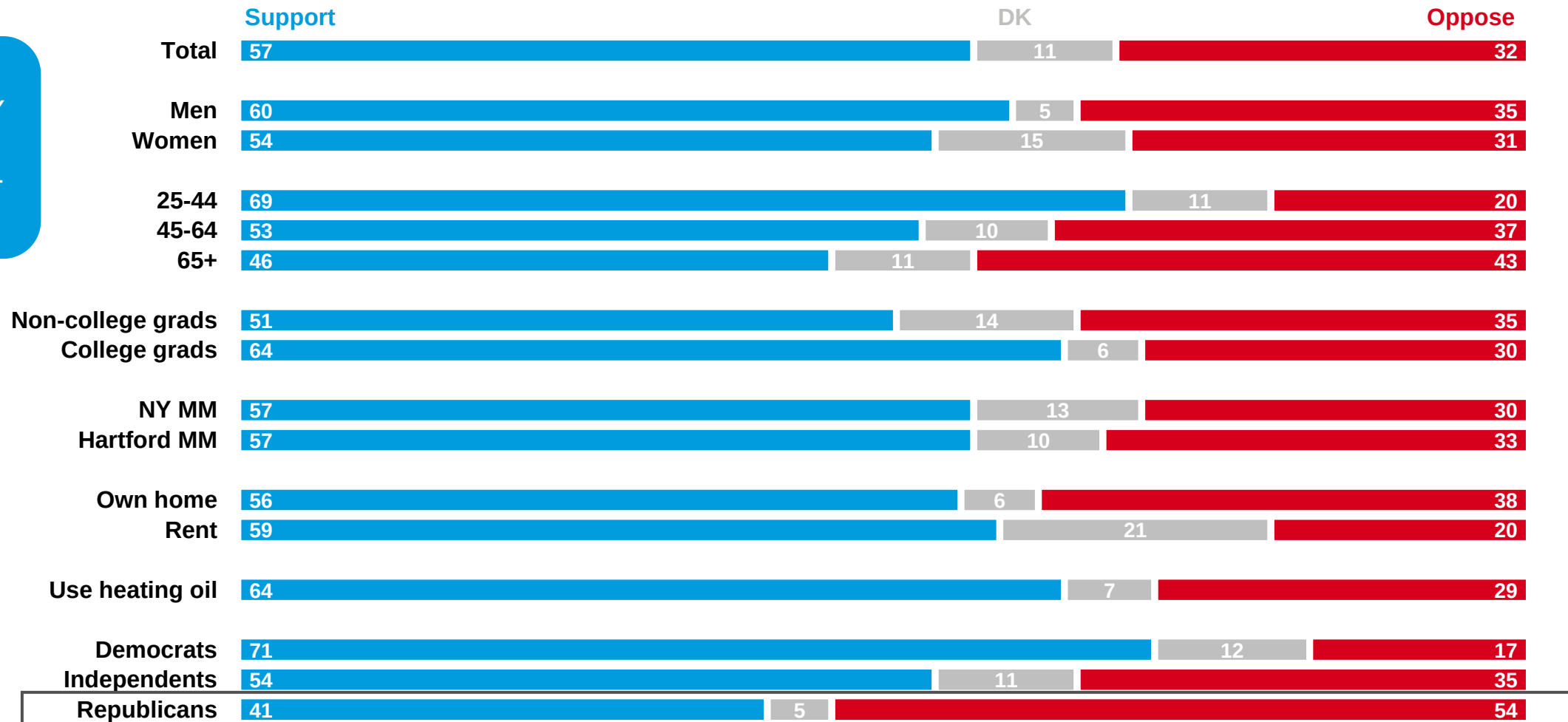
How much have you seen, read or heard about the movement in our country to transition our entire economy over to all-electric solutions?



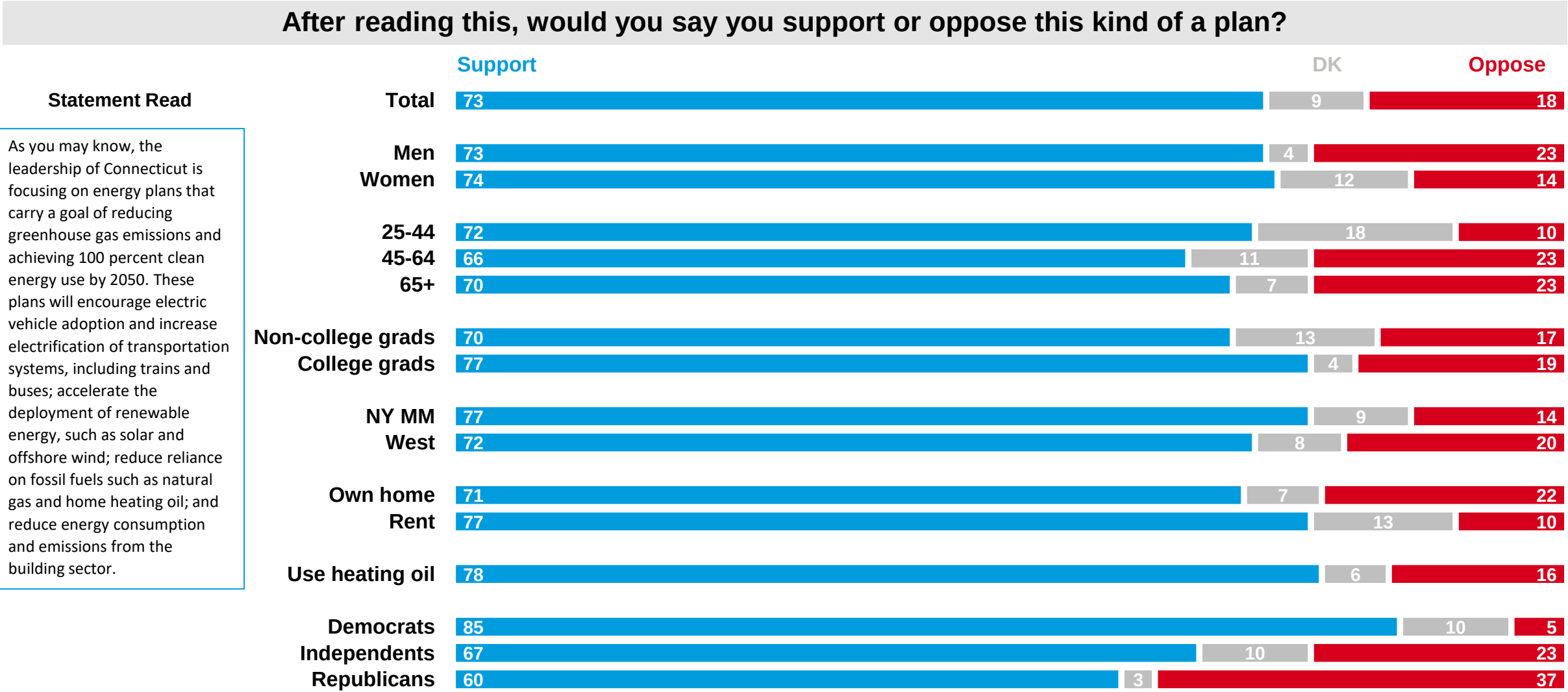
Initial support for all-electric solutions for heating and transportation is 25 points higher than opposition.

Just based on what you know or might assume, would you say you support or oppose all-electric solutions for home heating and transportation (like heat pumps and electric vehicles) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Only VT,
Downstate NY
and RI voters
voice stronger
support.



Support is high for energy plans aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving 100% clean energy by 2050.

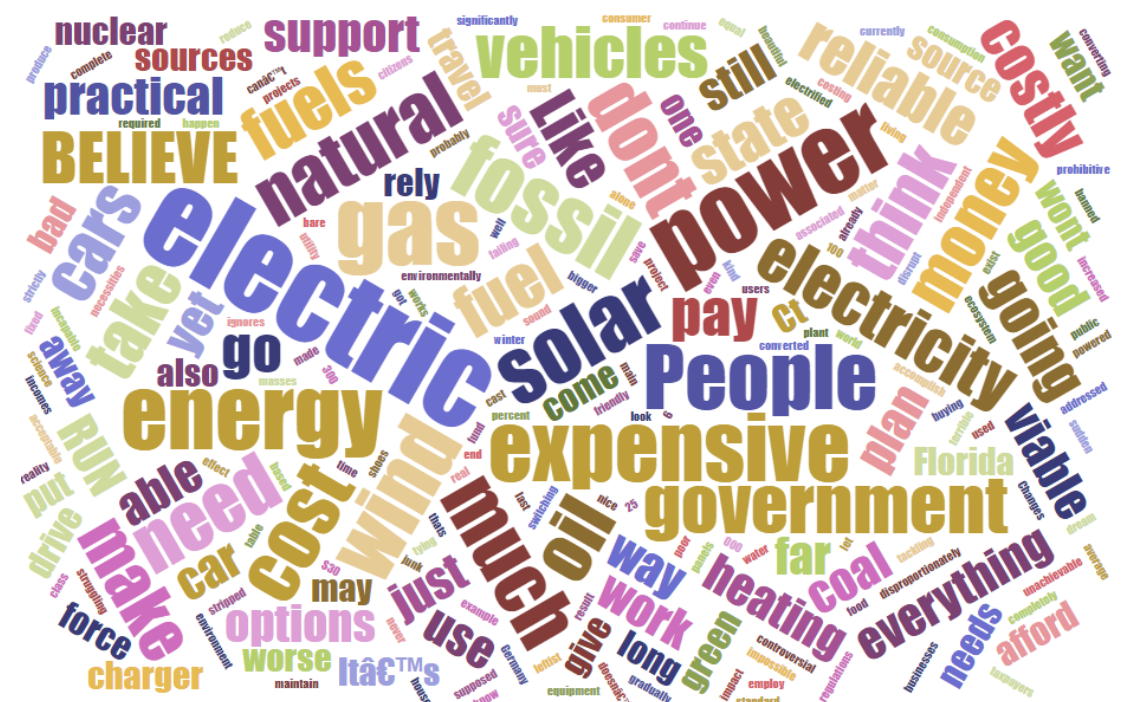


Supporters of the plan point to the benefits to the environment, the planet and to stop climate change, while opponents say they oppose it because of cost and a reluctance for government involvement, among a variety of reasons.

Why do you support the plan?



Why do you oppose the plan?



3

Messaging



Top messages against the plan include the weakness of the electric grid and the cost burdens it would impose on homeowners, in terms of increased electric prices, expensive conversion costs and increased costs as a result of new taxes or regulations.

Please indicate whether the following statements raise major doubts... in your mind about the part of the plan to switch homeowners from heating oil, propane and natural gas to electricity and heat pumps.

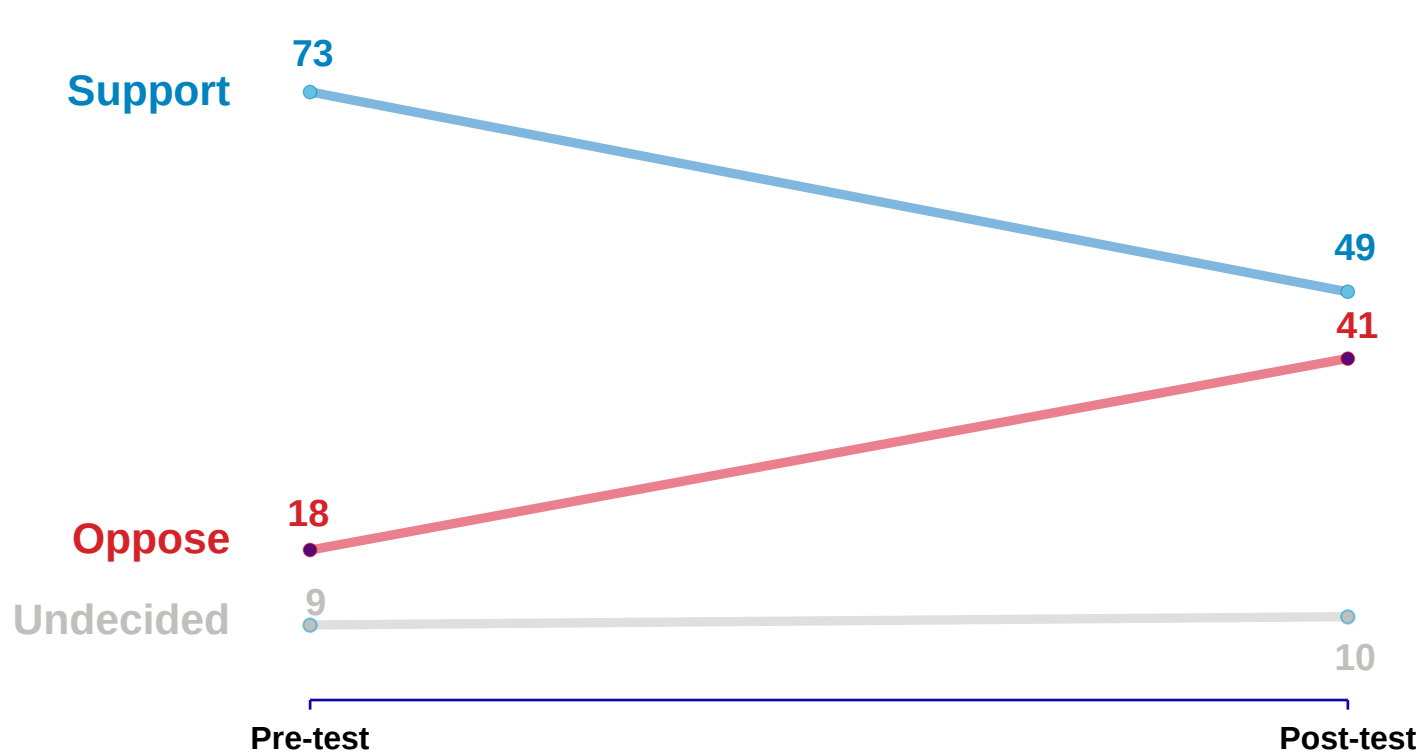
Total Swing

% raises major doubts

45	52	[ELECTRICITY USAGE - DISRUPTIONS] The electric grid in Connecticut is already fragile and has frequent power outages. Most recently, ISO-New England, the operator of New England's electric grid issued a warning that extended cold weather would be unsustainable for the region's electric grid. Switching so many homes, businesses and cars to electricity will increase power outages, especially in winter during the coldest days.
44	51	[ELECTRICITY USAGE - EXPENSIVE] By effectively forcing Connecticut homeowners to use electricity instead of propane gas, natural gas or heating oil, these plans will significantly increase electricity usage and require substantial investment in electric infrastructure, which will result in much higher electricity costs for homeowners, renters and businesses in Connecticut.
43	52	[COST] These kinds of plans will force homeowners who use propane, natural gas or home heating oil to switch to electric heat pumps, which could cost upwards of \$20,000 or more.
42	53	[OVERBURDENED] Connecticut residents are already overtaxed and overregulated. This would be another set of regulations and costly burdens that residents and businesses just can't afford.
39	47	[NATIONAL SECURITY] These plans would force more of Connecticut's energy usage to be provided by one source and would make Connecticut more vulnerable to power failures brought on by terrorist actions.
39	52	[INEQUITABLE] Forcing homeowners to spend thousands of dollars to convert to new heat sources will hit low-income families the hardest, as they will either pay as homeowners or through increases in rent if they are renters.
37	47	[INEQUITABLE - TRANSPORTATION] If the state bans the sale of new gas-powered vehicles in favor of electric vehicles only, this will disproportionately impact low-income families by forcing them to spend tens of thousands to buy new electric vehicles or buy used gas-powered vehicles, which will only increase in price as they become scarcer and harder to find.
37	49	[HEAVY HANDED] Connecticut government is interfering with the right of homeowners to make a personal choice about how to heat their own homes.

Messages that alert respondents to the downside of these plans succeed in decreasing support by 24 points and increasing opposition by 23 points.

Shift in Support/Oppose for the parts of these plans that focus on switching homeowners from heating oil, propane and natural gas to electricity and electric heat pumps.



**Swing Voters
(move based on messaging)**

- Over 55 years of age
- Conservative
- Republican
- Less than a college degree
- Women

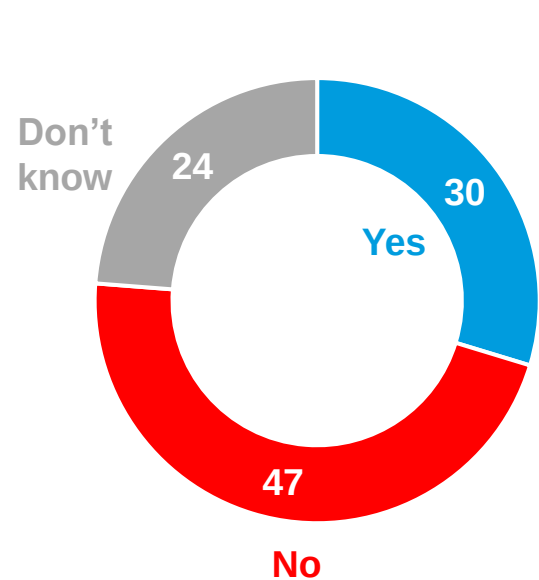
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Regulations, Electricity Rates & Electric Vehicles

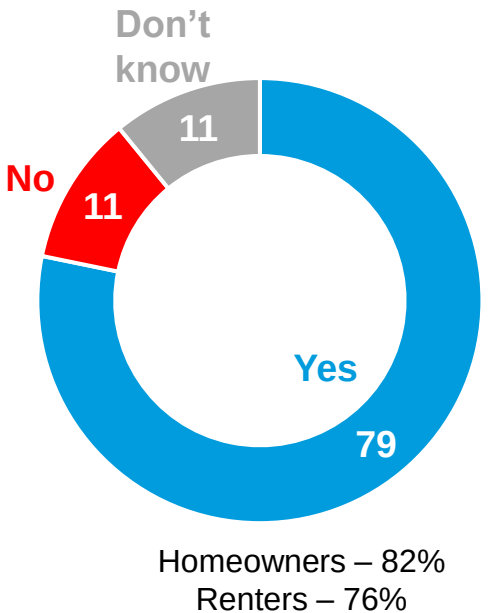


CT voters are more likely to oppose regulations preventing the installation of non-electric equipment. They overwhelmingly believe electricity prices are too high, and only 60% of voters trust their utility to keep the lights on.

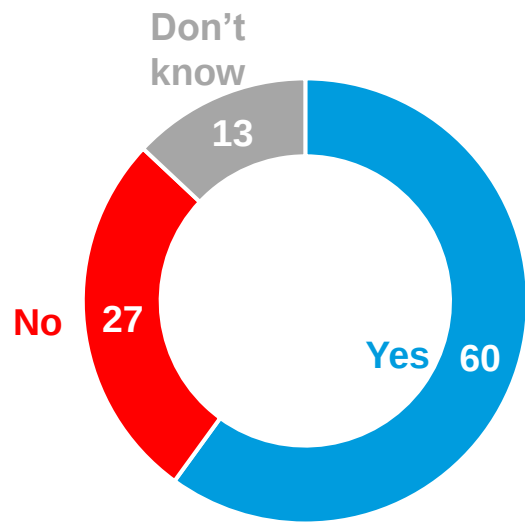
Would you support laws or regulations that would prevent the installation of heating oil, propane, and natural gas equipment?



Do you believe that electricity prices in Connecticut are too high?

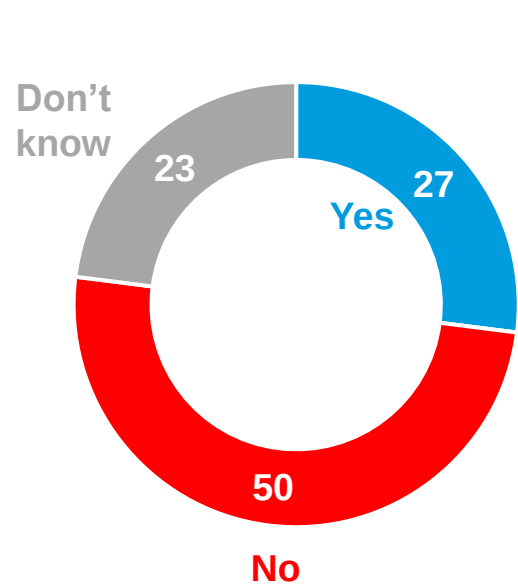


Do you trust your electric utility to keep the lights on?

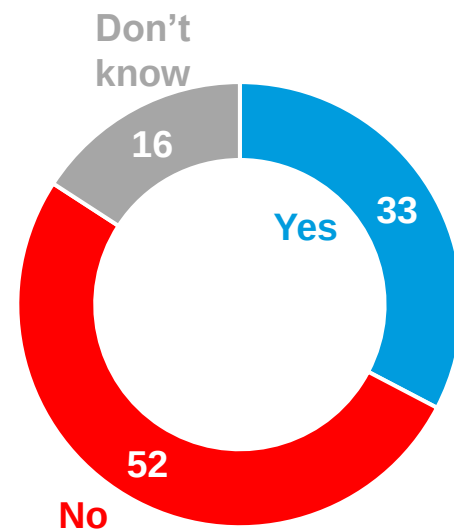


There is not much interest in rebate programs to encourage a shift to electric if they're funded by rate increases. Carbon taxes are also a non-starter, as even those who support them are unwilling to pay much to fund such a program.

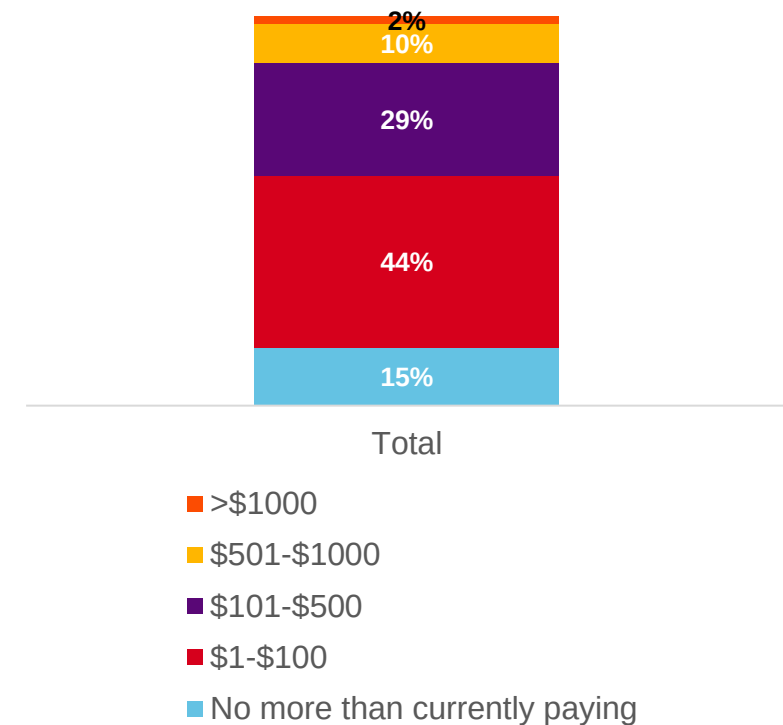
One potential pathway to encourage electric vehicle adoption and electric heat pump use is the introduction of rebate programs to lower the cost of these technologies. The rebate programs would be funded by electric rate increases which would disproportionately impact low and middle-income families. Do you support these kinds of rebate programs?



Do you support carbon taxes or programs that increase the cost of fossil fuels like gasoline, diesel, heating oil, propane, and natural gas to lower emissions?

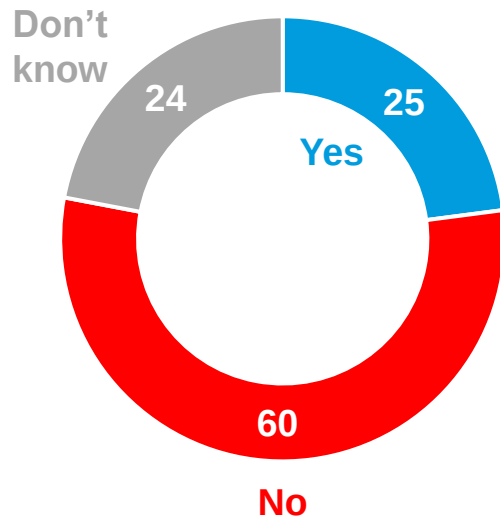


(IF YES, N=130) How much more would you be willing to pay in increased energy costs in order to lower emissions through a carbon tax or other similar program?

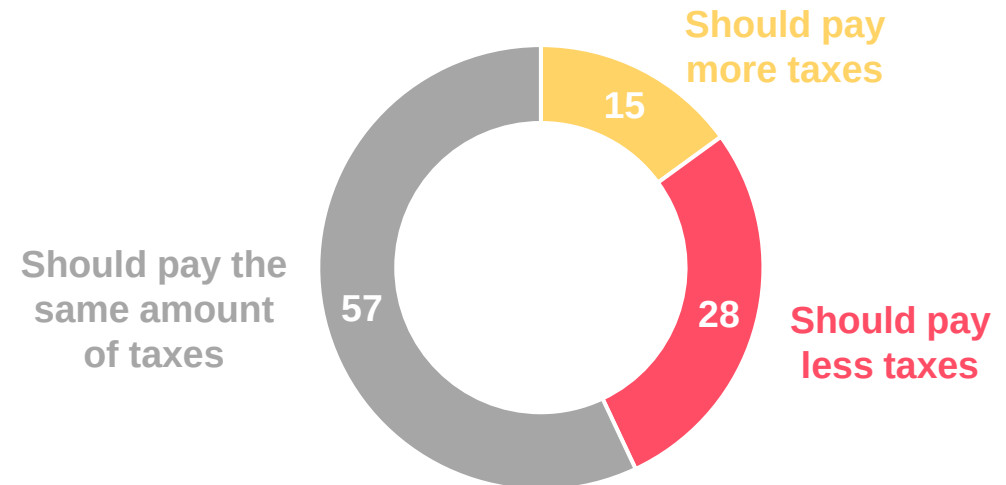


Only 25% of Connecticut voters support laws that would prohibit the sale of new gas-powered cars. And only 28% believe electric vehicle owners should pay less taxes for their electric vehicles.

Do you support laws that would prohibit the sale of new gasoline-powered cars?



Every person who owns a gasoline-powered vehicle is required to pay gasoline taxes. Do you believe that electric vehicle owners should pay more taxes, less taxes or the same amount of taxes for their electric vehicles?



Key Takeaways

- Climate change is the 2nd most important issue for Connecticut voters. 90% of Democrats and 59% of Republicans believe it is a serious threat. We cannot expect to win by bashing climate change or by messaging against it.
- Only 21% of Connecticut voters support all-electric mandates. And only 30% of voters would support laws that would prevent the installation of new fossil fuel equipment. This tells us that legislation like SB 292 is overshooting voter preferences and gives us an opportunity to push back HARD against it.
- While just 38% of Connecticut voters oppose tax increases to provide electric heat subsidies, 84% of those who support it will only tolerate increases of \$500 or less. There is a massive gap in understanding the true costs of all-electric adoption.
- Heating oil has highest unfavorables (propane is right behind). This remains a problem for the industry and requires increased communication to consumers.



Key Takeaways

- Bioheat® fuel remains little-known. While favorability is +23, nearly 40% of voters aren't familiar or don't know what Bioheat® fuel is. For all of the industry's efforts to promote and educate, this knowledge gap remains a challenge.
- Natural gas is viewed favorably (65% support/26% oppose). There are opportunities to leverage other fuel sources to our benefit. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."
- Support for Connecticut's energy plan to achieve specific carbon reduction goals by 2050 through the adoption of electrification is high. 73% of voters support it, with just 18% opposition. Introducing messages that explain the downsides moves the needle significantly in our favor. A battery of messaging drops support by 24 points, to 49% and increases opposition to 41%.
- The most effective messaging against these kinds of all-electric plans are the weakness of the electric grid and the costs it will impose on voters, in terms of increased electric prices, expensive conversion costs and increased costs as a result of new taxes or regulations.



Key Takeaways

- Nearly 80% of voters think electric rates are already too high. And only 60% trust their utility to keep the lights on. The cost and reliability factor regarding “electrify everything” cannot be underplayed in Connecticut.
- Only 33% of voters support carbon taxes or programs that increase the cost of fossil fuels to lower carbon emissions. And just 40% of those who support it would be willing to see their costs increase by more than \$100.
- Only 25% of voters support banning gas-powered vehicles and 28% believe there should be tax breaks/incentives for people who buy or drive EVs. Voters in Connecticut overwhelmingly prefer the freedom to choose what to drive (and how to heat their home).



Questions?

Thank You!



Rich Carrione
Vice President, Operations
rcarrione@warmthoughts.com
973-632-8793