New York Voter Views of Transportation and Climate Issues

Key Findings from a Survey of New York State Voters
Commissioned by the Nature Conservancy in New York
Conducted November 19-26, 2018

FM3 RESEARCH | OPINION RESEARCH & STRATEGY

AMERICAN VIEWPOINT®

220-5197

Research Approach

- 801 interviews with likely November 2020 voters in New York State
- Conducted November 19-21 and 25-26, 2018, via landline and cell phones
- Margin of sampling error of +/-3.5% at the 95% confidence interval
- Due to rounding, some percentages do not add up to 100%
- Selected comparisons to prior research on this topic in New York state
- Bipartisan research team of FM3 Research (D) and American Viewpoint (R)

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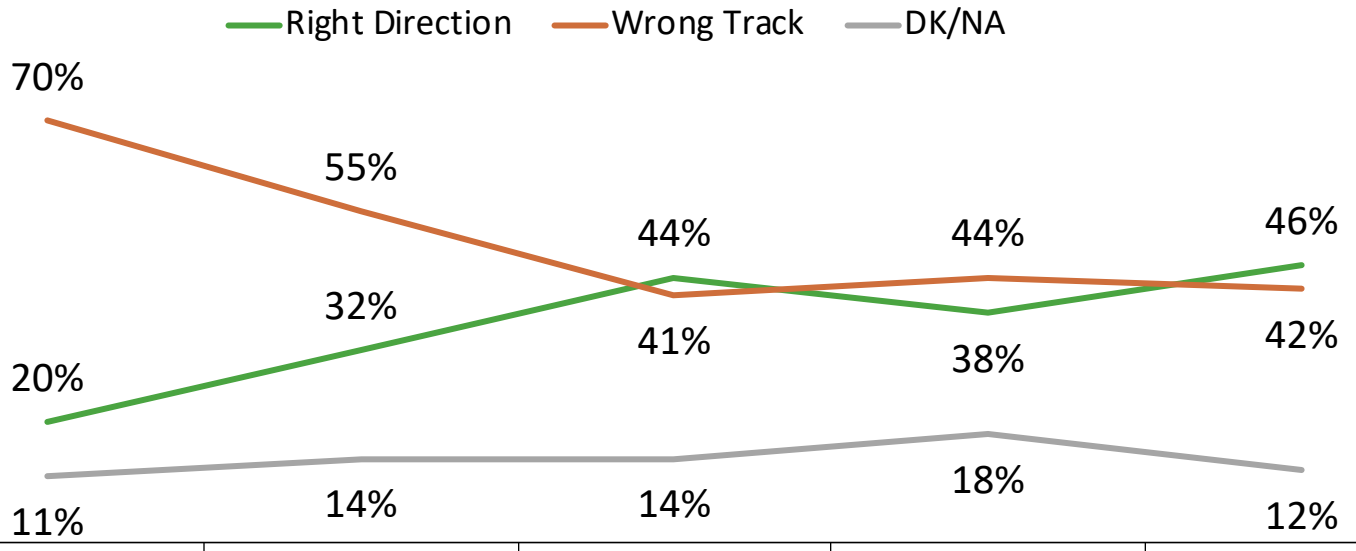
Issue Context

New York voters remain divided on the direction of the state overall.

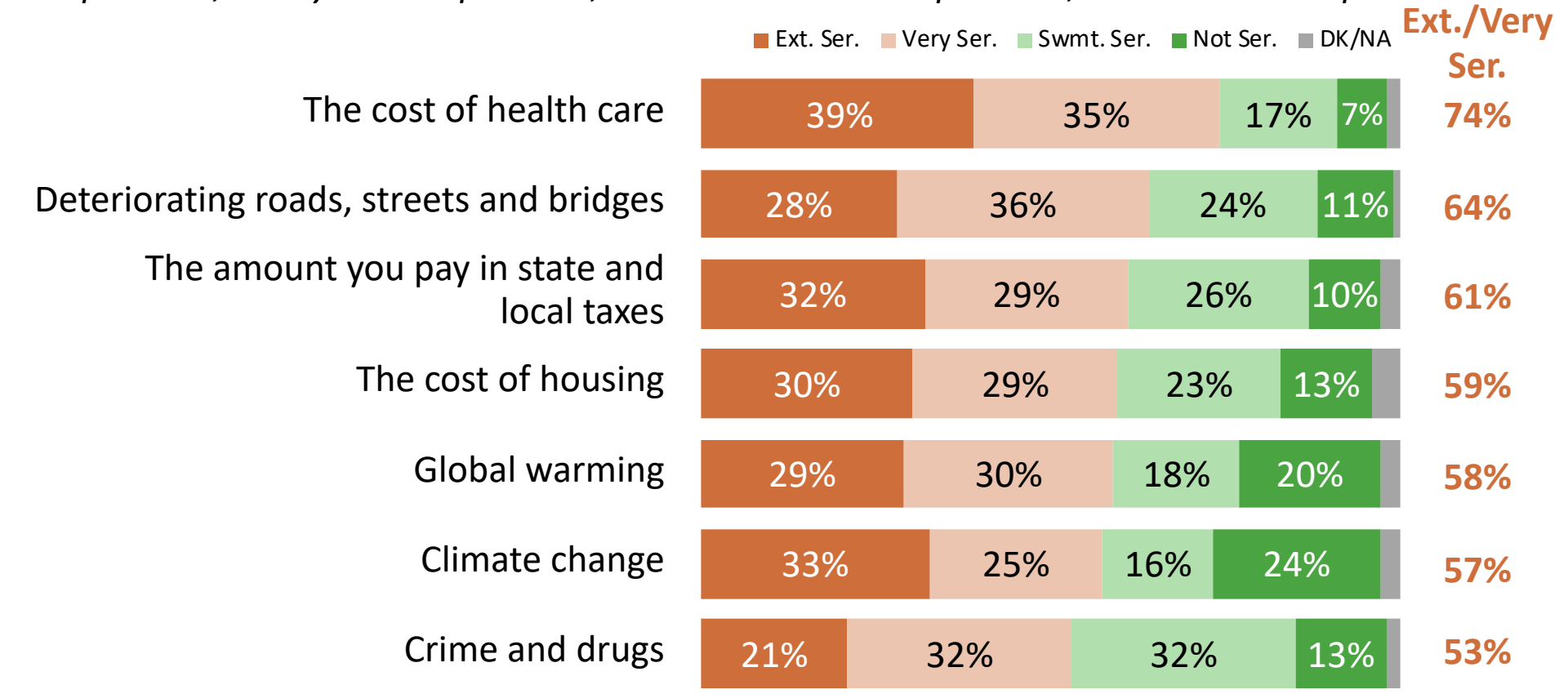
Would you say that things in the State of New York are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?



	2009	2011	2014	2015	2018
Right Direction	20%	32%	44%	38%	46%
Wrong Track	70%	55%	41%	44%	42%
DK/NA	11%	14%	14%	18%	12%

Cost of healthcare is the most intense concern, followed by deteriorating infrastructure and taxes.

I'm going to read you a list of issues, and I'd like you to tell me how serious a problem you think each one is in your community. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a serious problem.



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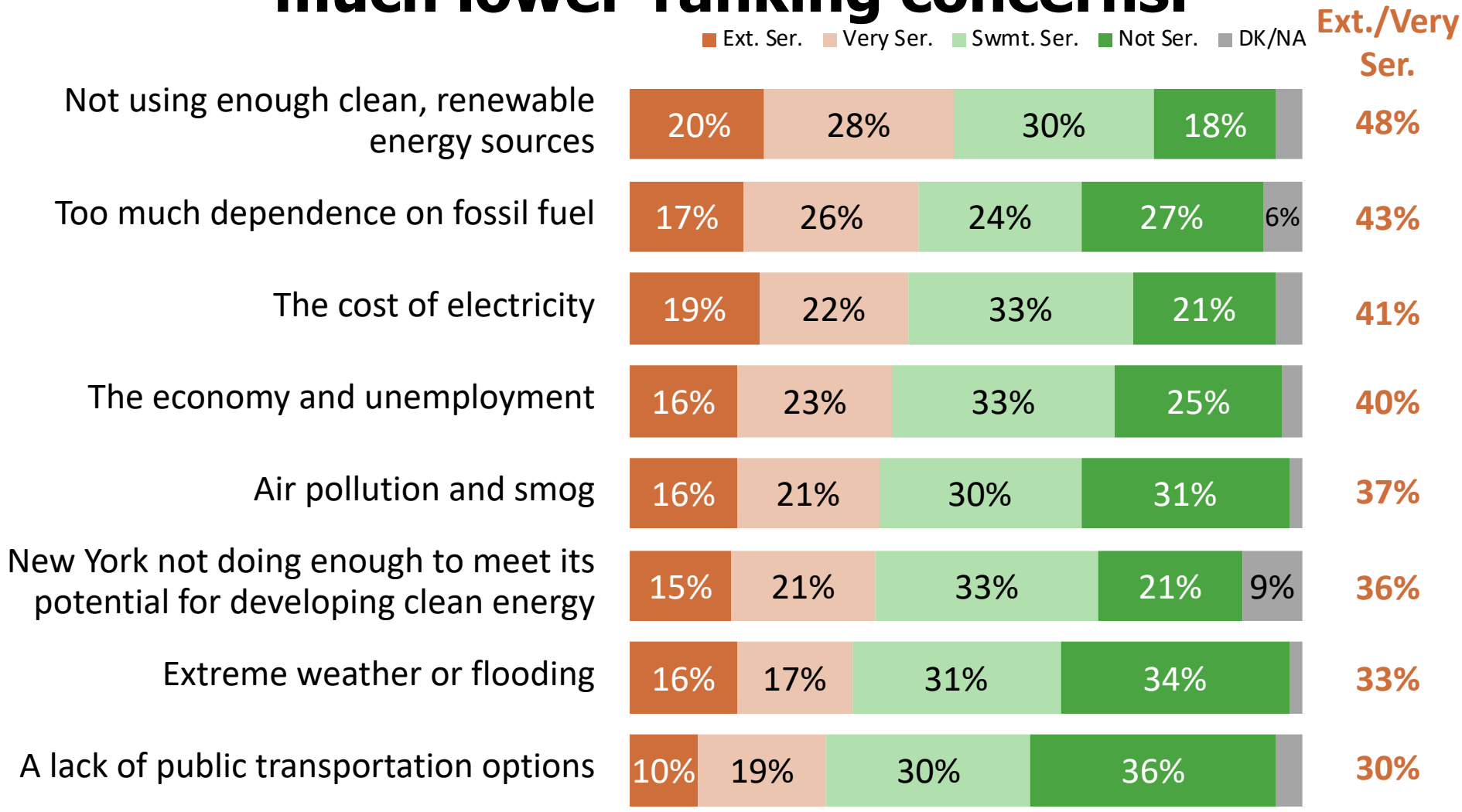
Q2. Split Sample

Lack of public transportation options, extreme weather and clean energy development are much lower-ranking concerns.



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Q2. I'm going to read you a list of issues, and I'd like you to tell me how serious a problem you think each one is in your community. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a serious problem. Split Sample

Intensity of concern about climate change and renewable energy has increased.

(Extremely/Very Serious Problem)

Issues	2009	2015	2016	2018	Difference 2016 to 2018
Climate change	43%	50%	48%	57%	+9%
Not using enough clean, renewable energy sources	--	--	41%	48%	+7%
Too much dependence on fossil fuel	--	--	38%	43%	+5%
Global warming	53%	57%	53%	58%	+5%
Air pollution and smog	*58%	*48%	33%	37%	+4%
The cost of electricity	--	--	38%	41%	+3%
The cost of health care	83%	75%	75%	74%	-1%
New York not doing enough to meet its potential for developing clean energy	--	--	39%	36%	-3%
Crime and drugs	--	--	57%	53%	-4%
The economy and unemployment	91%	68%	69%	40%	-29%

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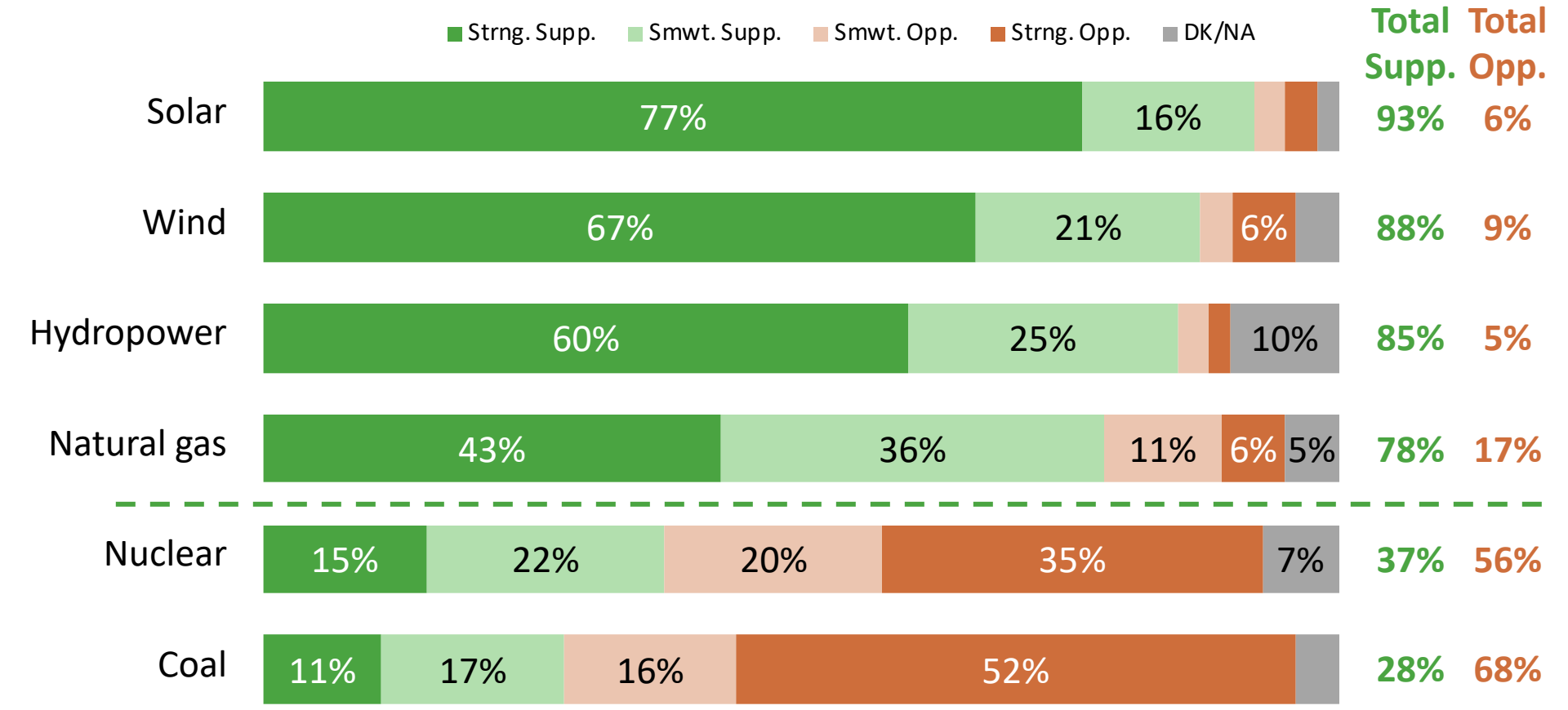
*Q2. I'm going to read you a list of issues, and I'd like you to tell me how serious a problem you think each one is in your community. Please tell me whether you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a serious problem. Split Sample *Slight Difference in Wording*

Broad majorities support more use of solar, wind, hydro, and to a lesser degree, natural gas.

Here is a list of specific sources of energy. Please tell me whether you would support or oppose increasing the use of that source of energy to meet New York State's future needs.



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Q5.

These patterns of support have changed very little in the last two years.

(Total Support)

Source of Energy	2016	2018	Difference
Natural gas	77%	78%	+1%
Nuclear	36%	37%	+1%
Solar	94%	93%	-1%
Coal	29%	28%	-1%
Wind	89%	88%	-1%
Hydropower	88%	85%	-3%

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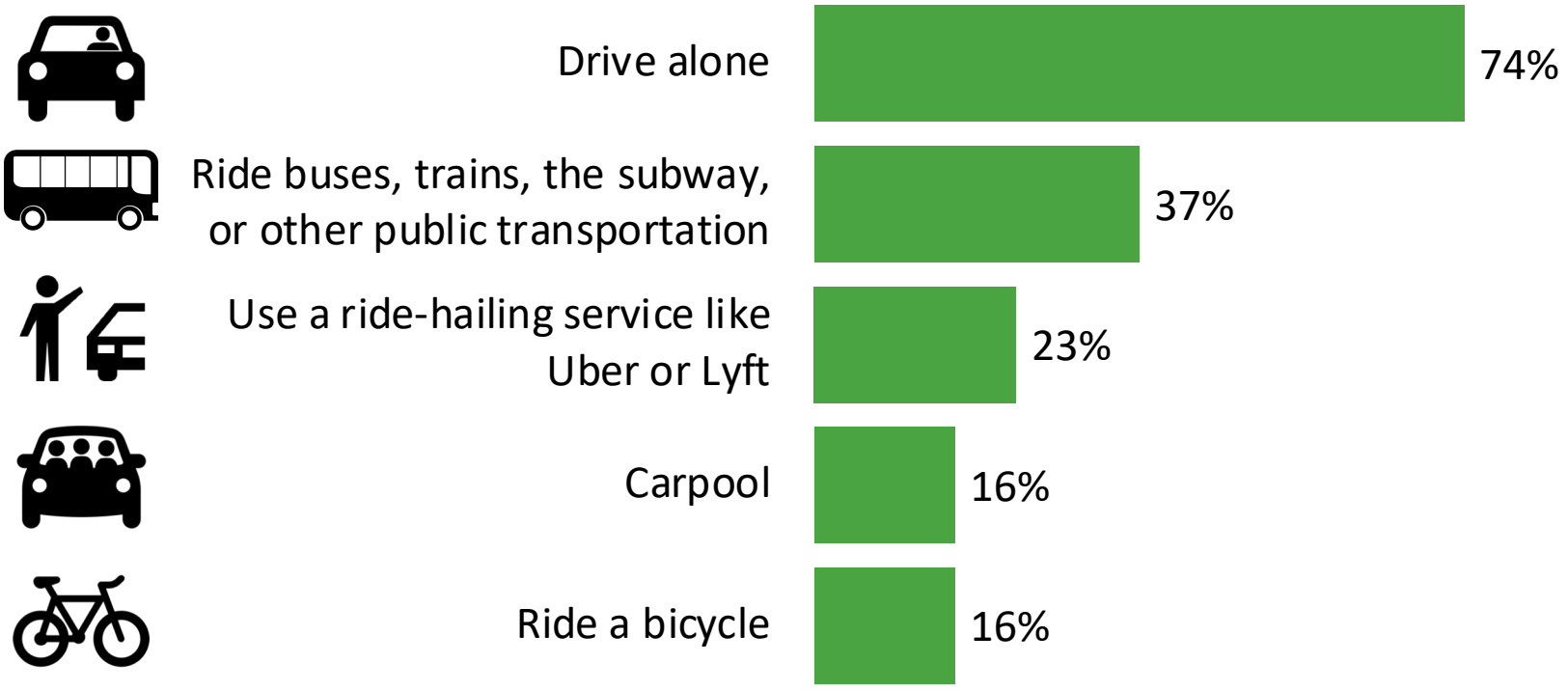
Q5. Here is a list of specific sources of energy. Please tell me whether you would support or oppose increasing the use of that source of energy to meet New York State's future needs.

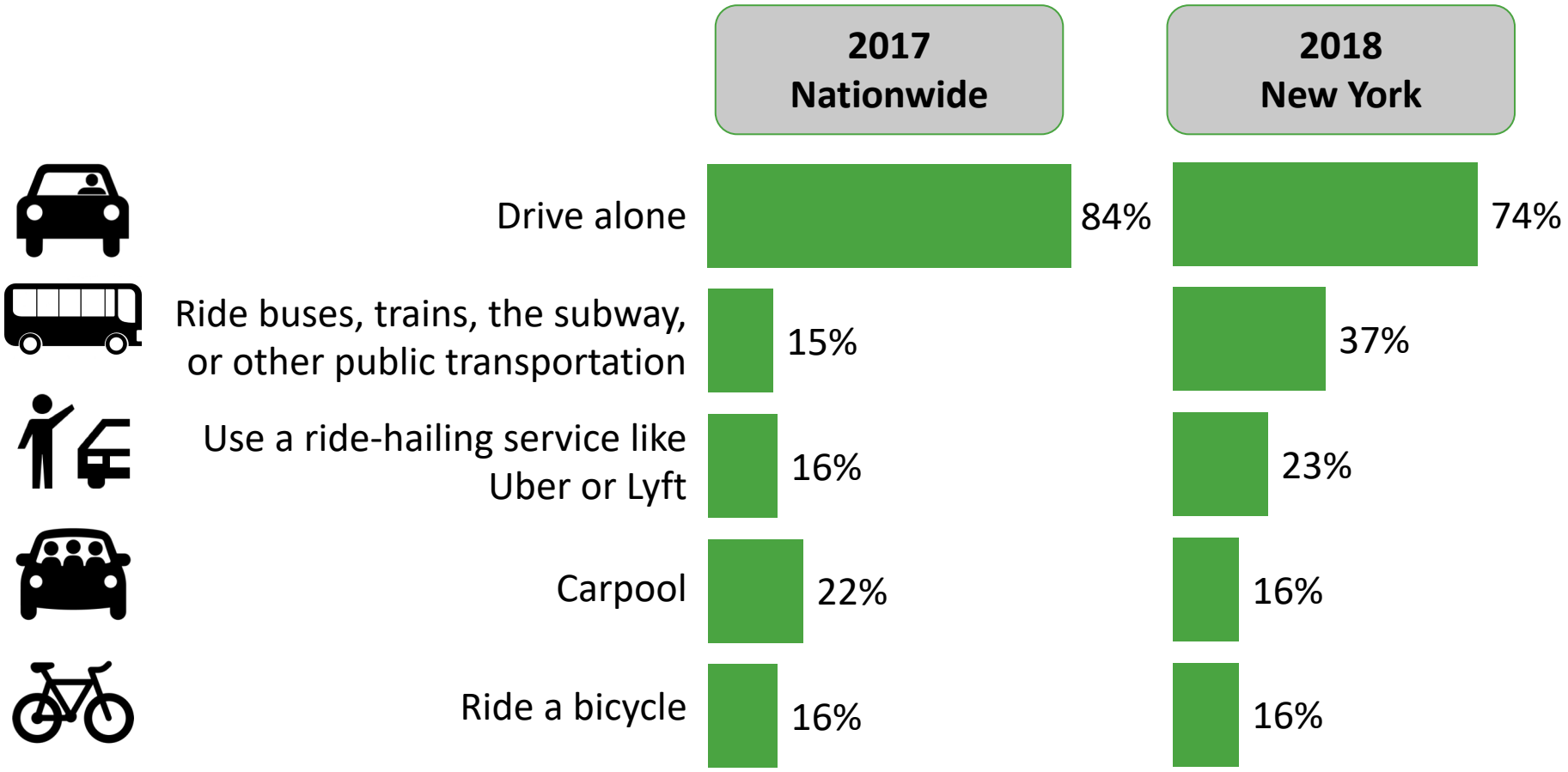
Transportation Habits

Nearly three-quarters of New York state voters drive alone regularly.

Do you regularly, that is, at least two or three times per week, use each of the following modes of transportation? By that, I mean for any purpose, including commuting to school or work, running errands, or recreation.



New York state voters are much more likely to ride transit than are voters nationwide.



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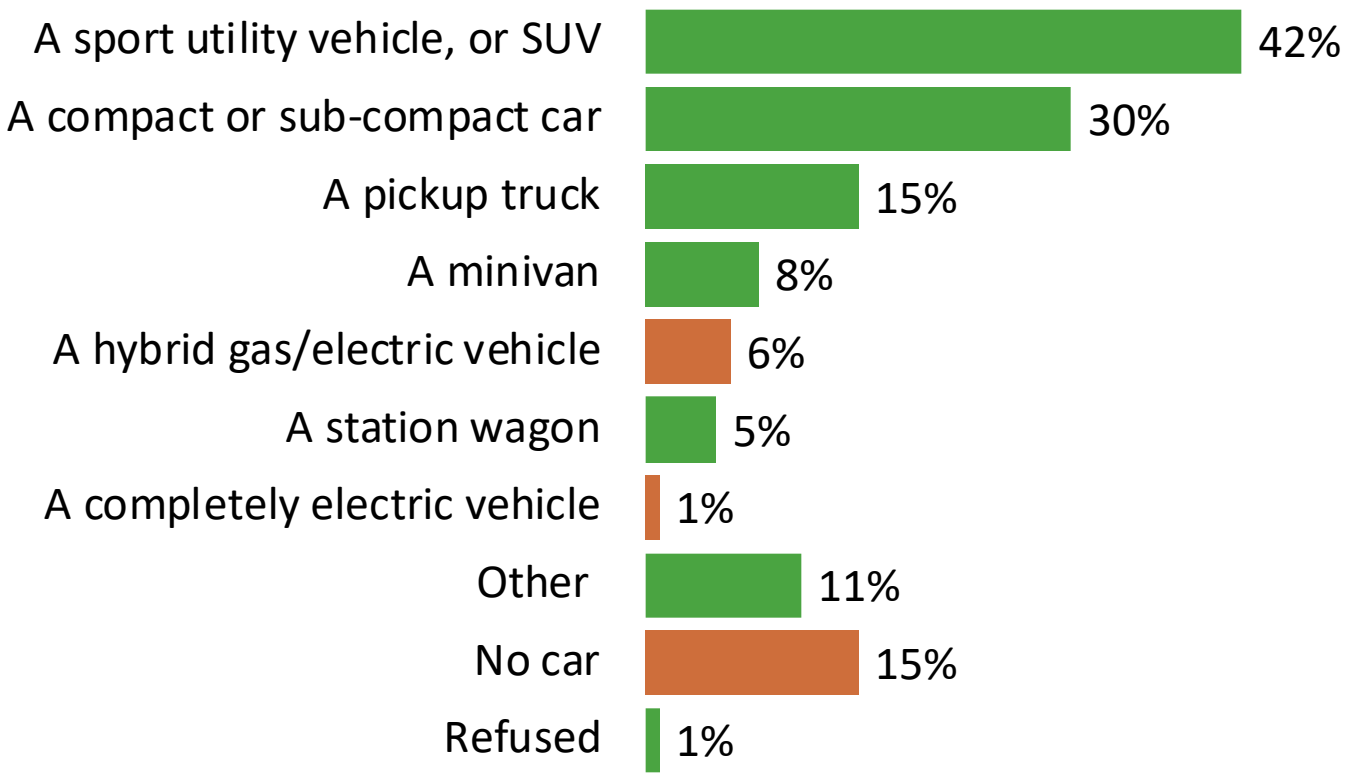
Q3. Do you regularly, that is, at least two or three times per week, use each of the following modes of transportation? By that, I mean for any purpose, including commuting to school or work, running errands, or recreation.

Seven percent of New York voters own a hybrid or electric vehicle, while nearly one in six do not own a car at all.

Which of the following types of vehicles, if any, does someone in your household own?



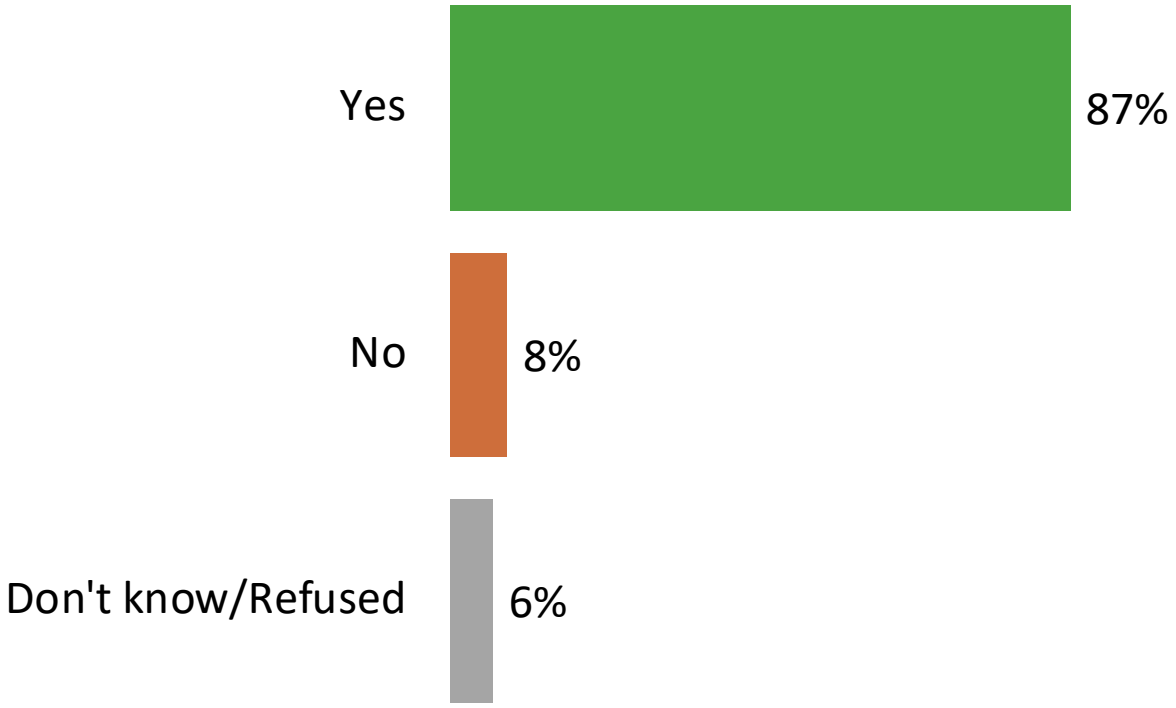
Hybrid and electric vehicle ownership is in line with national figures, while New York state voters are much more likely to have no car.

Which of the following types of vehicles, if any, does someone in your household own?

	2017 Nationwide	2018 New York
A sport utility vehicle, or SUV	38%	42%
A compact or sub-compact car	40%	30%
A pickup truck	30%	15%
A minivan	12%	8%
A hybrid gas/electric vehicle	8%	6%
A station wagon	3%	5%
A completely electric vehicle	1%	1%
Other	6%	11%
No Car	4%	15%
Refused	6%	1%

Nearly nine in ten voters in New York state say they have access to fast, reliable internet.

Do you have access to fast, reliable internet on a regular basis?



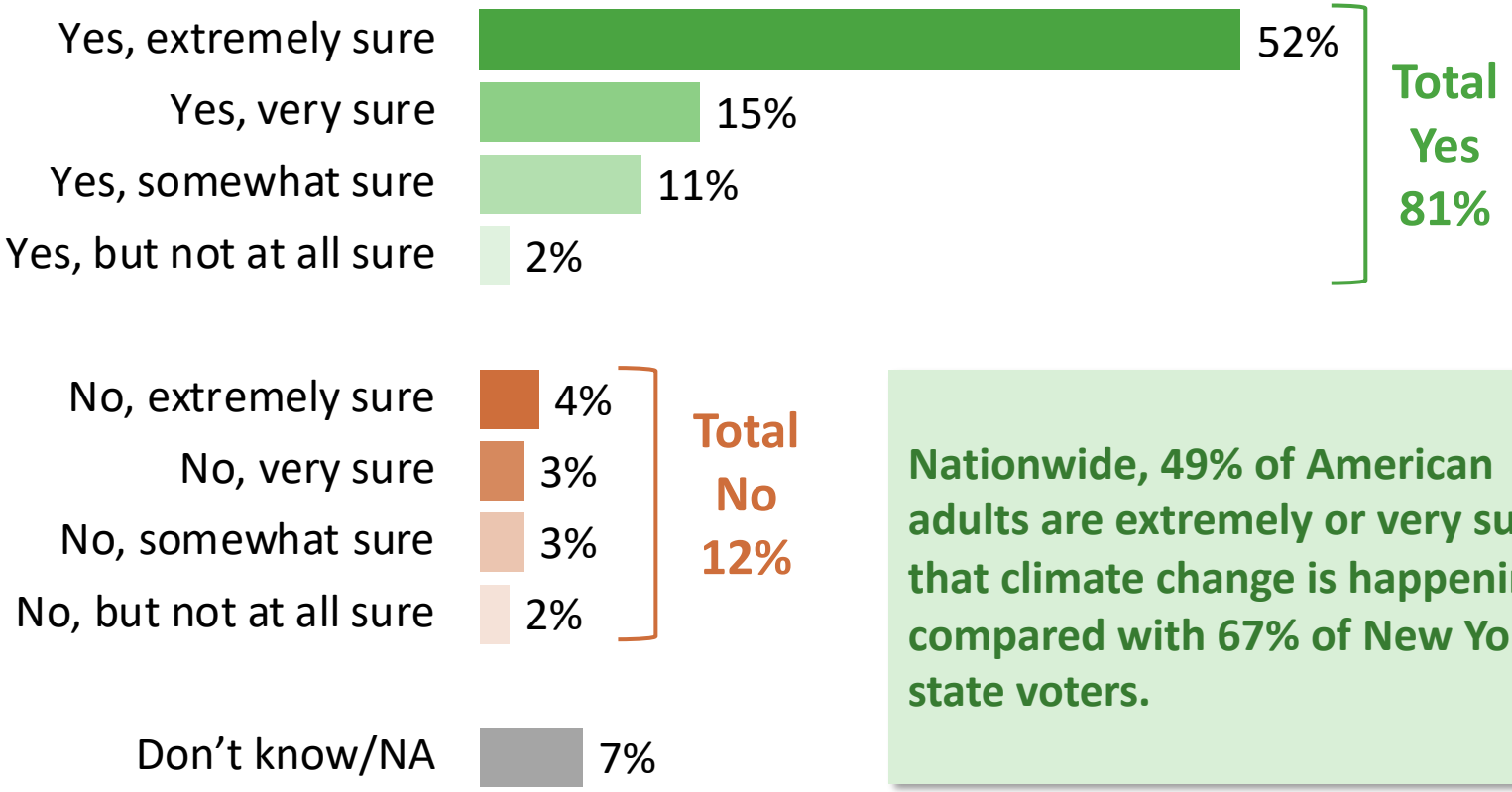
Most Likely to Lack Access:

- Household income less than $30,000
- High-school education
- Voters ages 75+
- Non-college educated women
- EV/hybrid vehicle owners
- Women ages 50+
- Conservatives

Views of Climate Change

New York voters are much more likely to say they are sure climate change is happening than voters nationwide.

Do you think climate change is happening?



Nationwide, 49% of American adults are extremely or very sure that climate change is happening, compared with 67% of New York state voters.

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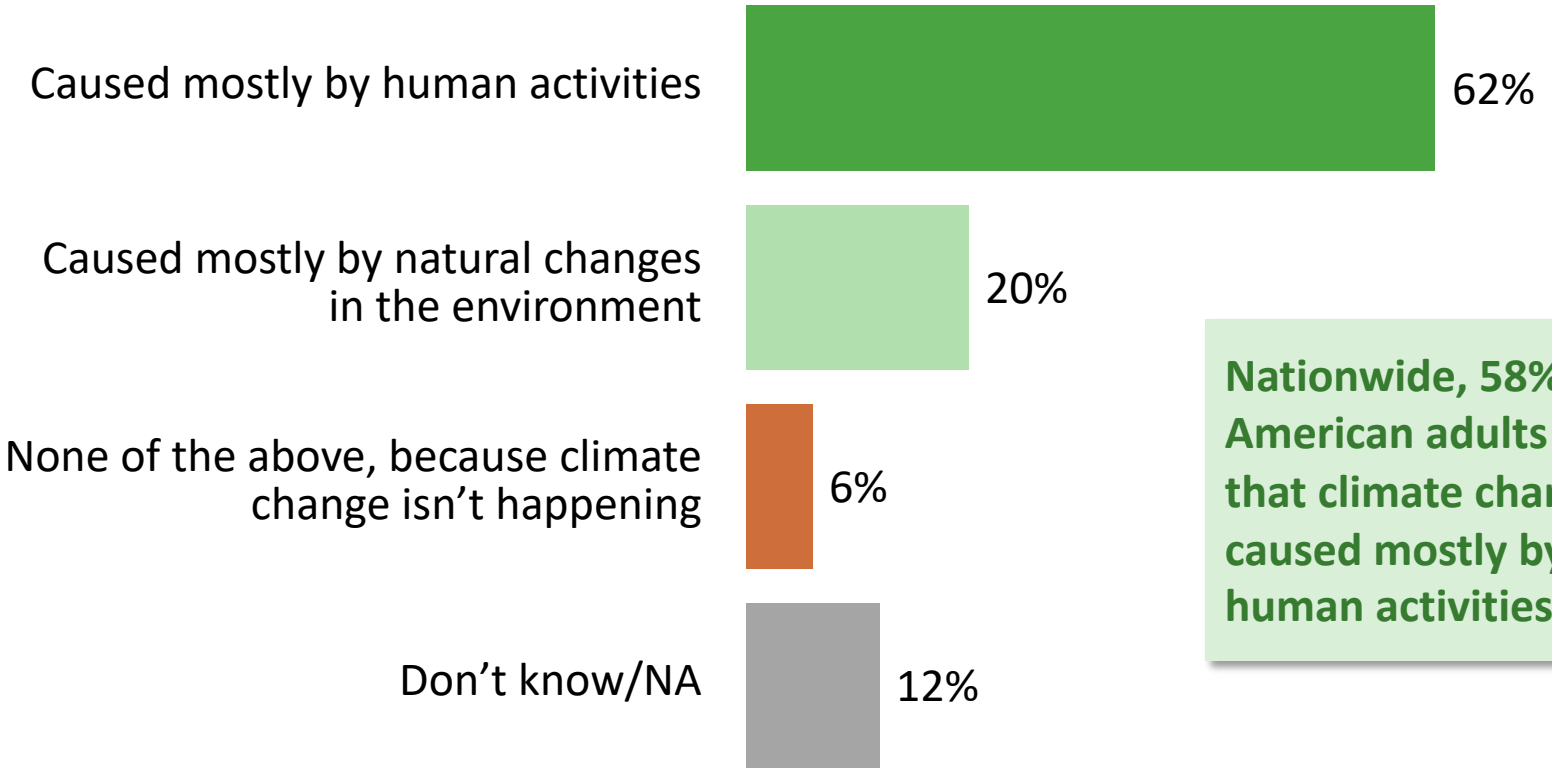
Q18.

New York voters are about as likely as Americans overall to believe that climate change is caused by human activities.

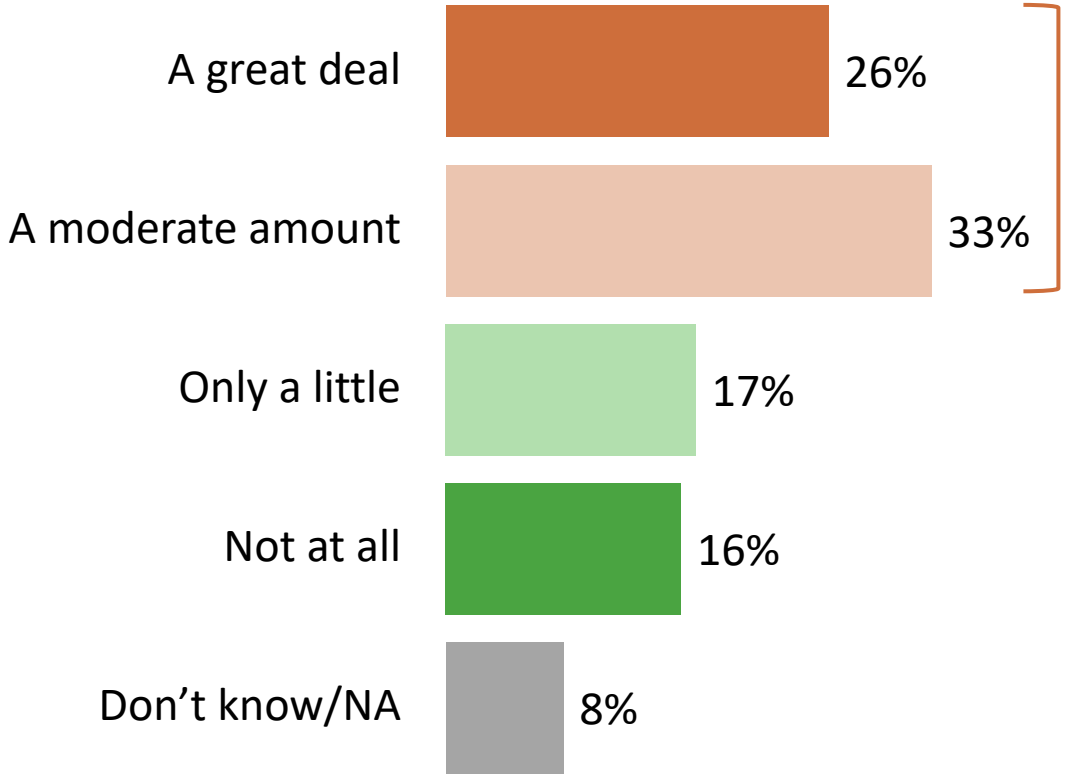
Assuming that climate change is happening, do you think it is …



Nationwide, 58% of American adults think that climate change is caused mostly by human activities.

Only 16% of New York state voters believe they will not be harmed by climate change.

How much do you think climate change will harm you personally?



A Moderate Amount/ A Great Deal 59%

Nationwide, 42% of American adults see a great deal or moderate amount of harm from climate change.

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Q20.

Testing Policies

- Next, we tested two potential policies: a carbon pollution fee and a clean transportation fund.
- All voters were asked about initial support for each proposal (though the order they heard them in was rotated).
- Voters then heard messaging in support of and critical of one of the two policies, with half the sample assigned to each.

Opinions of a Carbon Pollution Fee

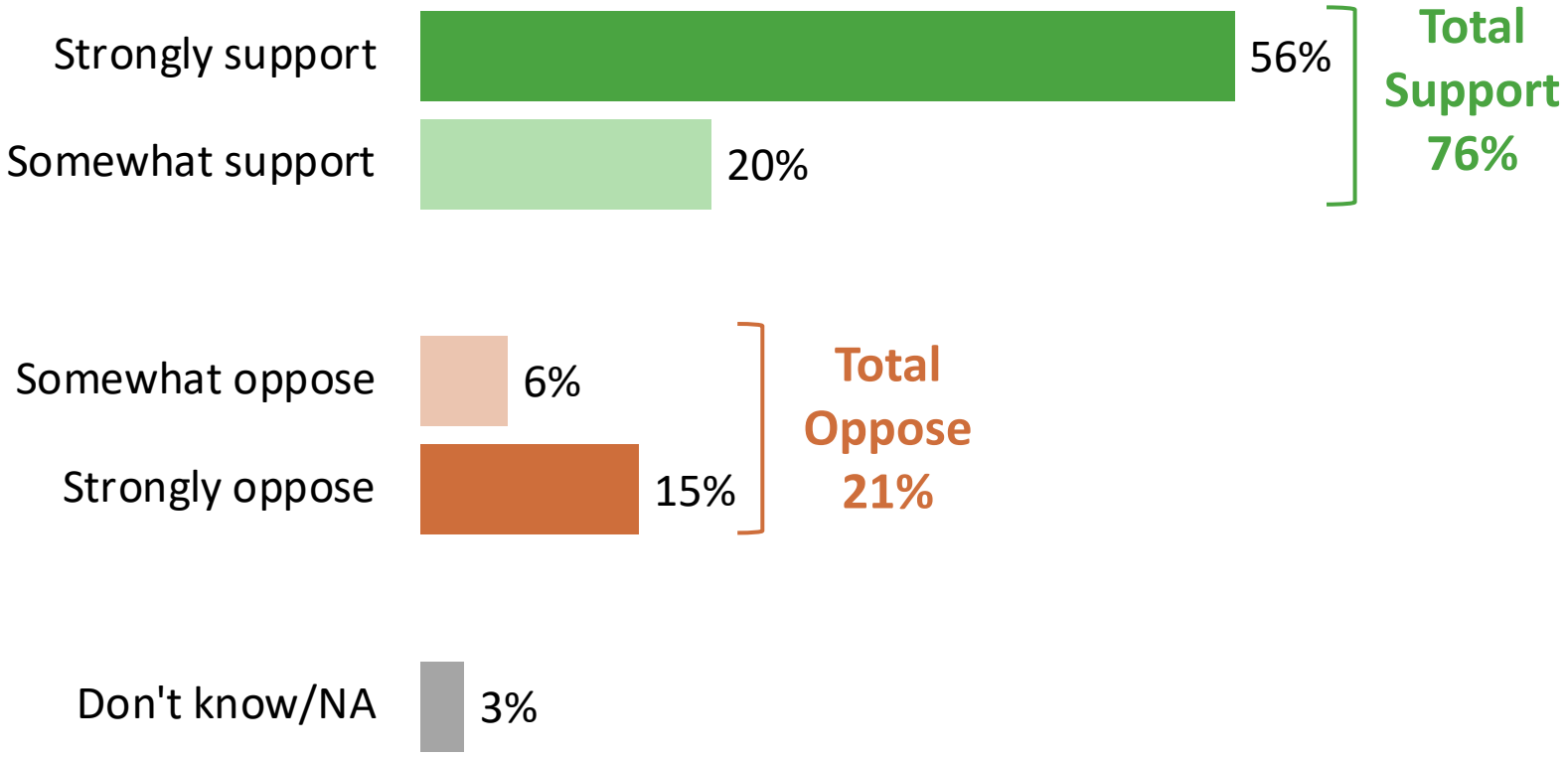
Voters first heard a brief description of a carbon pollution fee proposal.

The **FIRST/SECOND** policy is called a carbon pollution fee. It would limit the amount of carbon pollution released into the air, and require major polluters like oil, natural gas, and energy companies in New York State to pay a fee for each ton of carbon pollution they emit from their activities here. The revenue would fund:

- clean energy, like solar and wind;
- cleaner transportation options like public transit, and cleaner fuels;
- helping low-income communities and communities of color disproportionately impacted by pollution;
- ensuring our forests are healthy; preventing and cleaning up pollution from our rivers and lakes, and increasing sustainable supplies of drinking water.

Three-quarters support the proposal, with more than half strongly in favor.

Does this proposed carbon pollution fee sound like something you would support or oppose?



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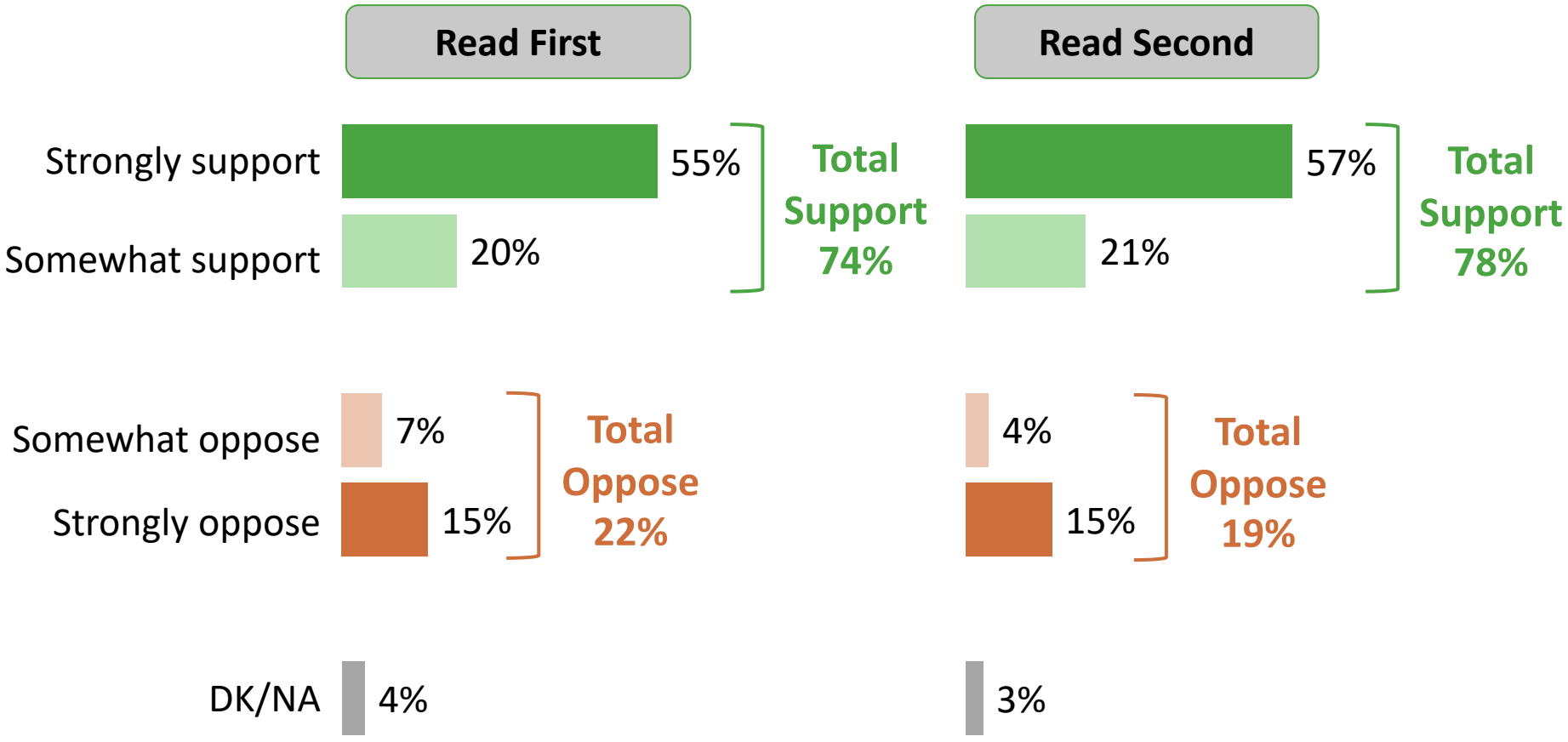
Q6.

It made little difference whether voters heard this policy first or second.



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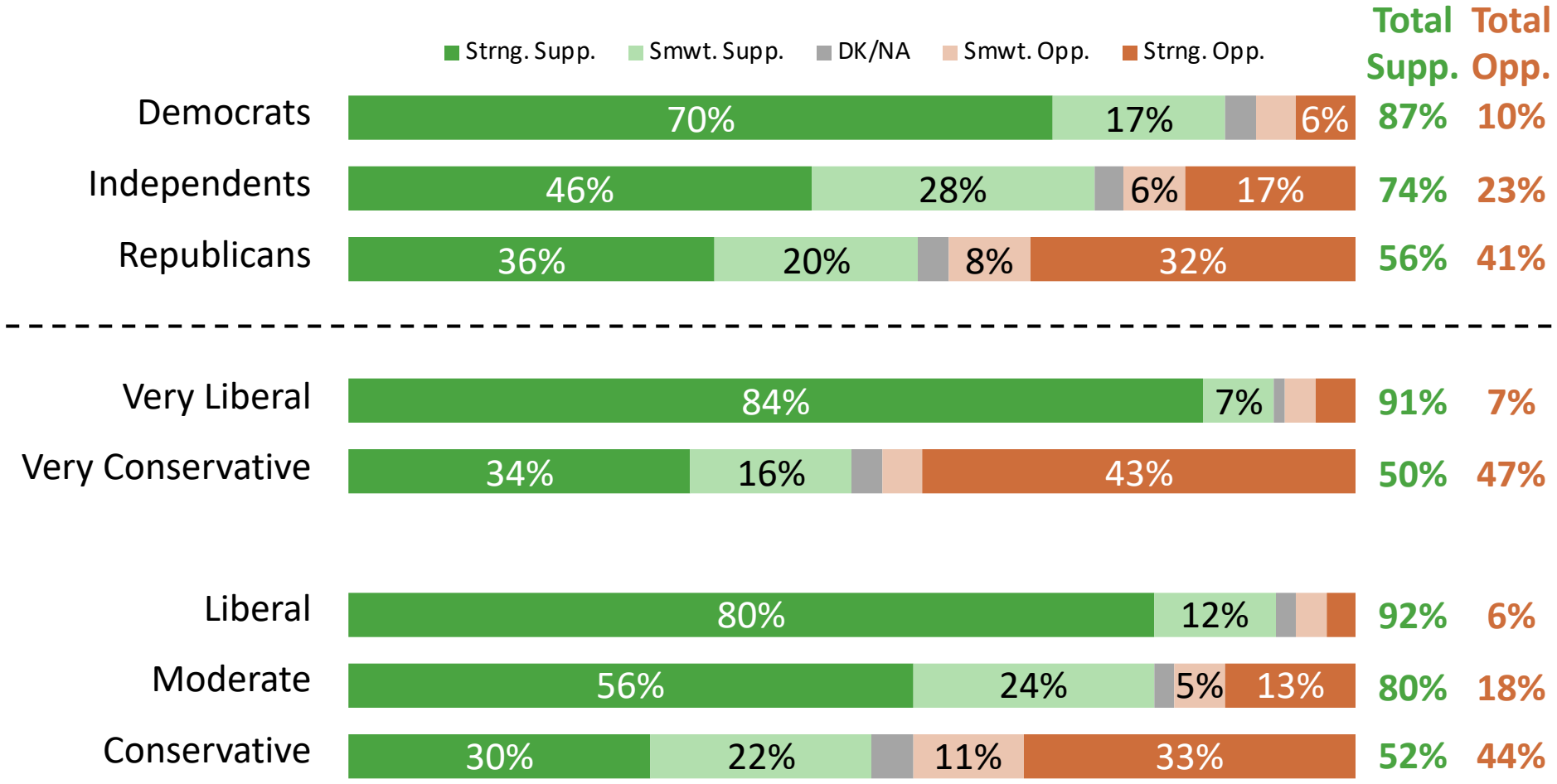
Q6 Split A & Split B. Does this proposed carbon pollution fee sound like something you would support or oppose?

Both Republicans and conservatives support the proposal, as do nearly three-quarters of independent voters.

Initial Support for Carbon Pollution Fee By Party & Ideology



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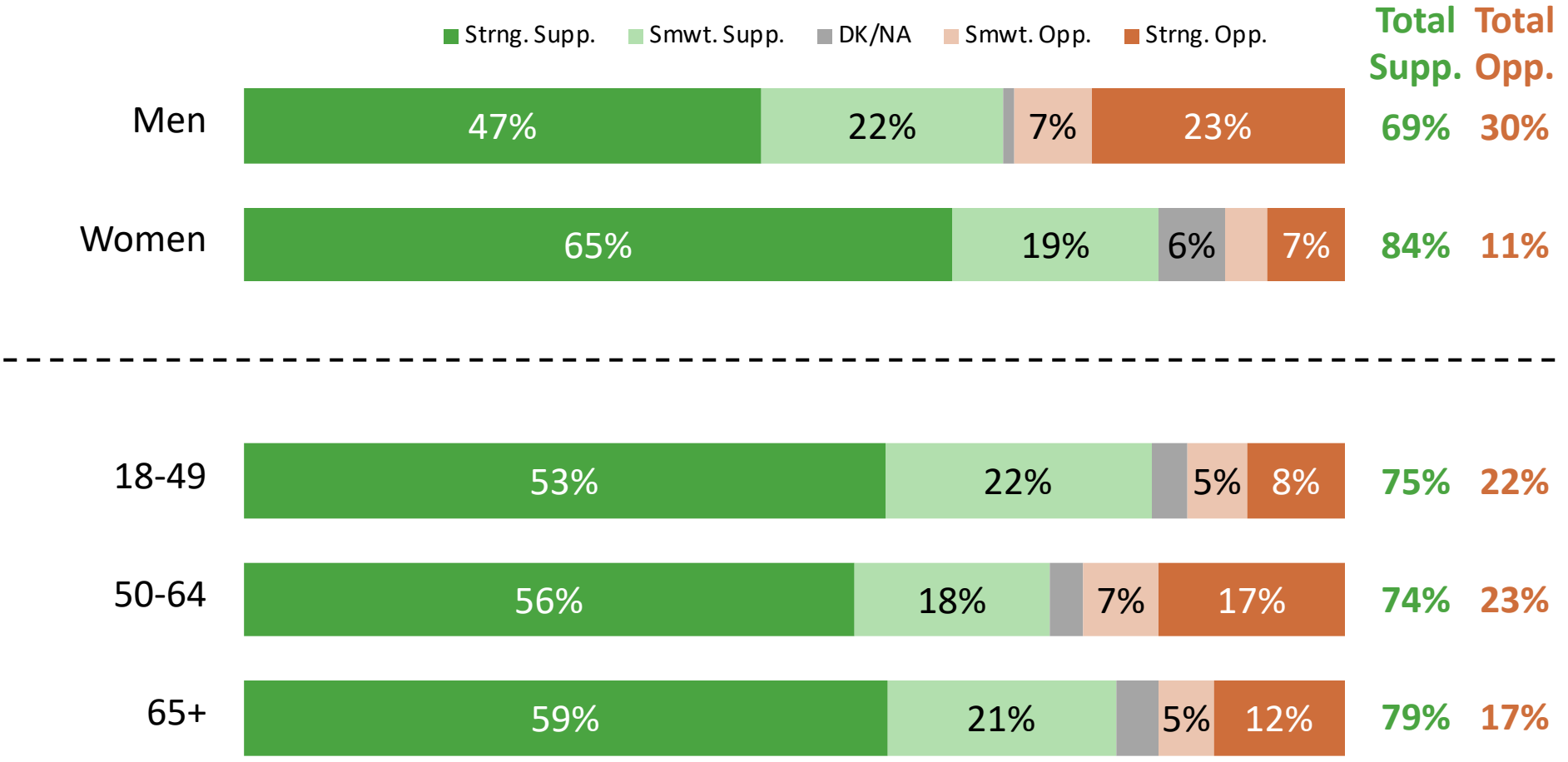
Q6 Total. Does this proposed carbon pollution fee sound like something you would support or oppose?

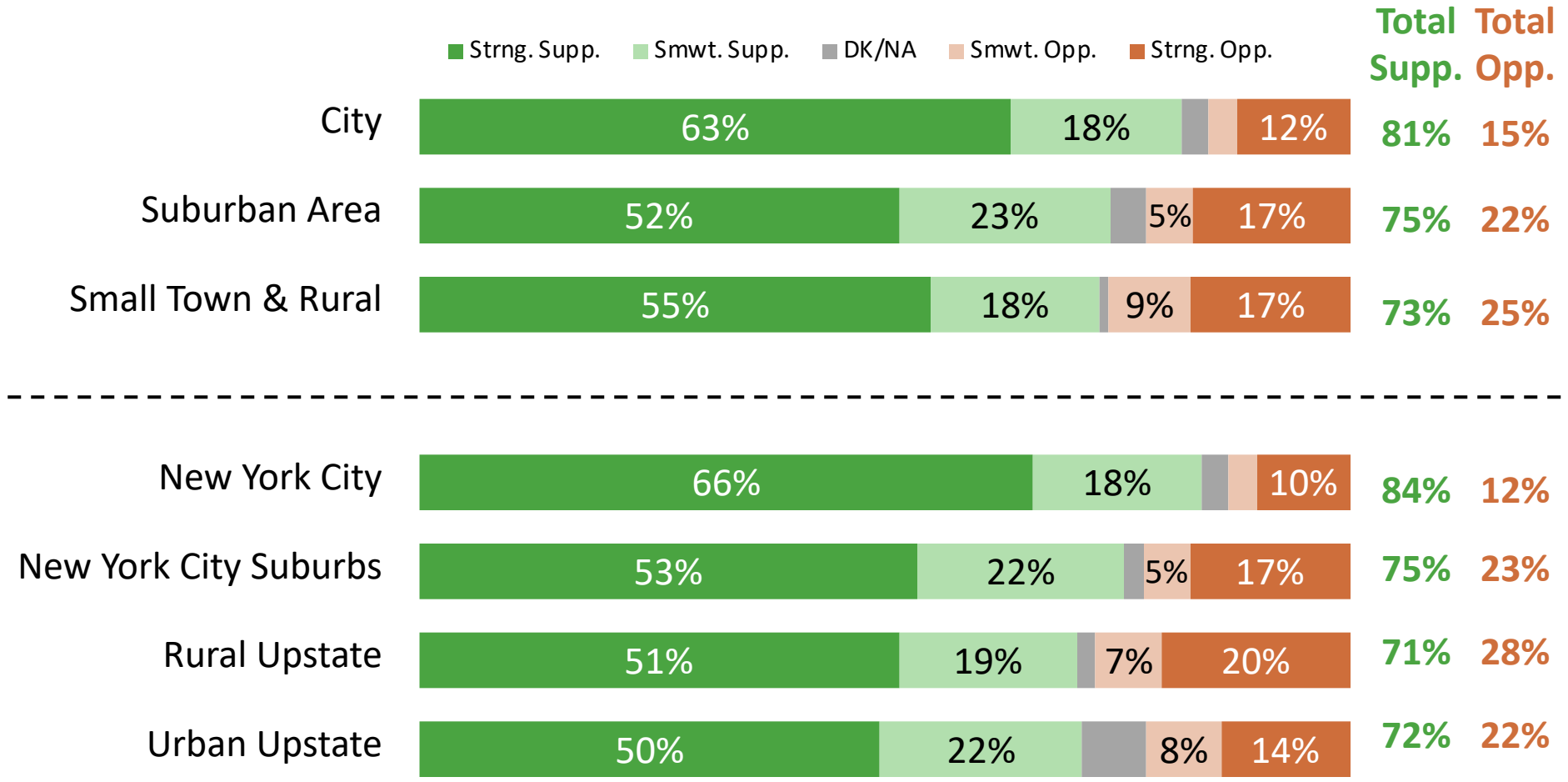
Women are especially strong supporters, though majorities back it regardless of gender or age.

Initial Support for Carbon Pollution Fee By Gender & Age



More than four in five New York City voters support it, as do seven in ten small town and rural voters.

Initial Support for Carbon Pollution Fee By Type of Area & Region



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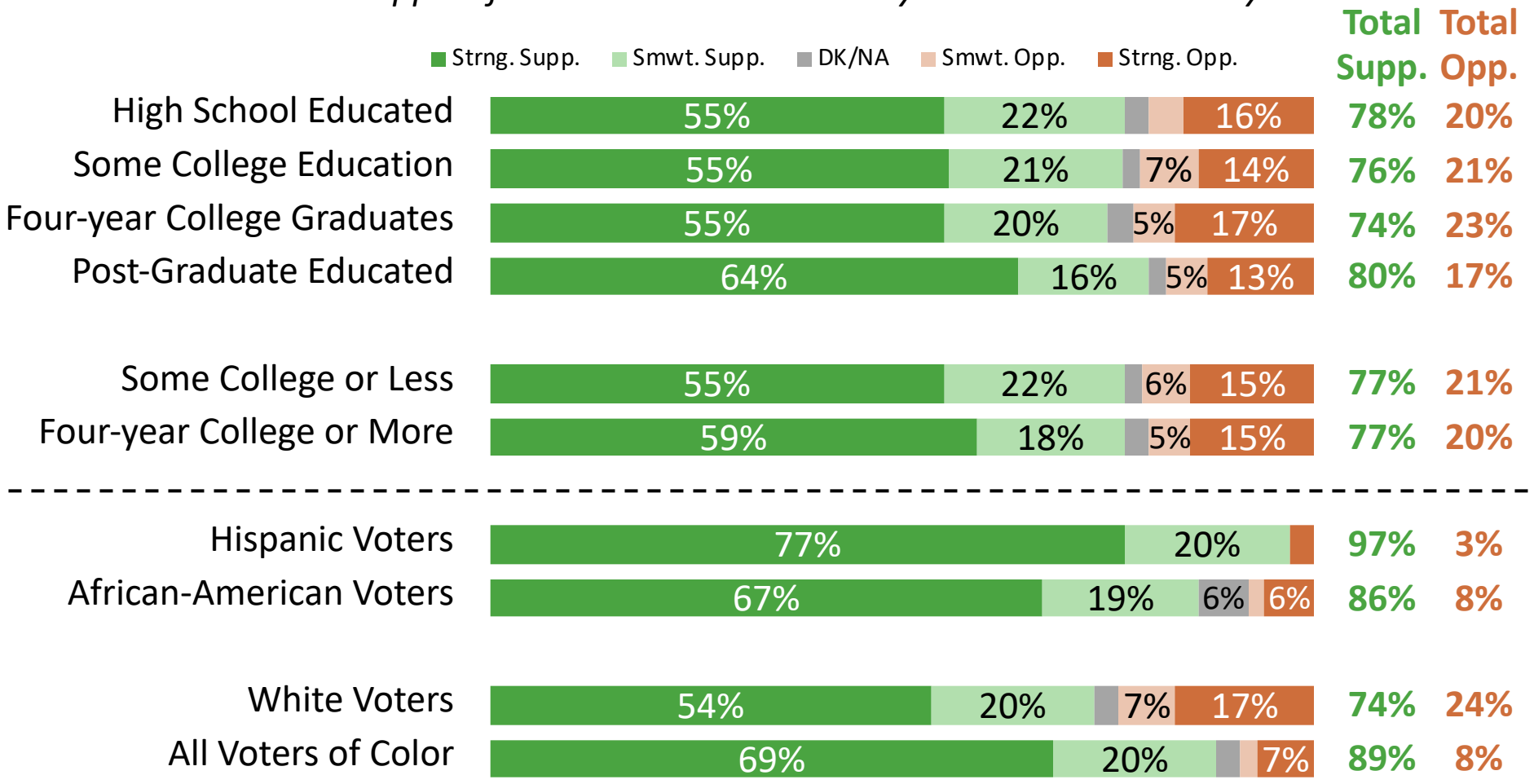
Q6 Total. Does this proposed carbon pollution fee sound like something you would support or oppose?

Voters of color are a strong base of support for the carbon pollution fee proposal.

Initial Support for Carbon Pollution Fee By Education & Ethnicity



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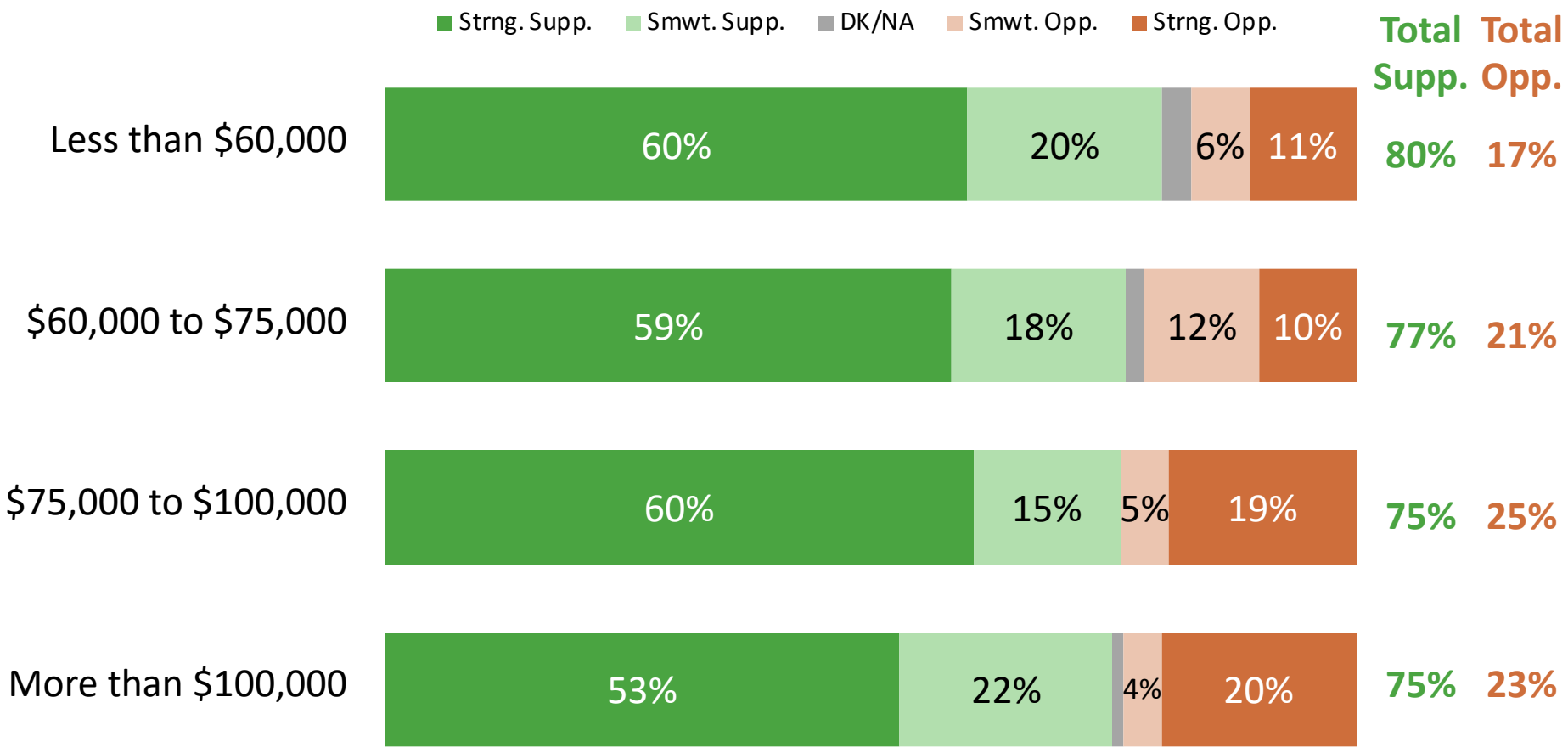
Q6 Total. Does this proposed carbon pollution fee sound like something you would support or oppose?

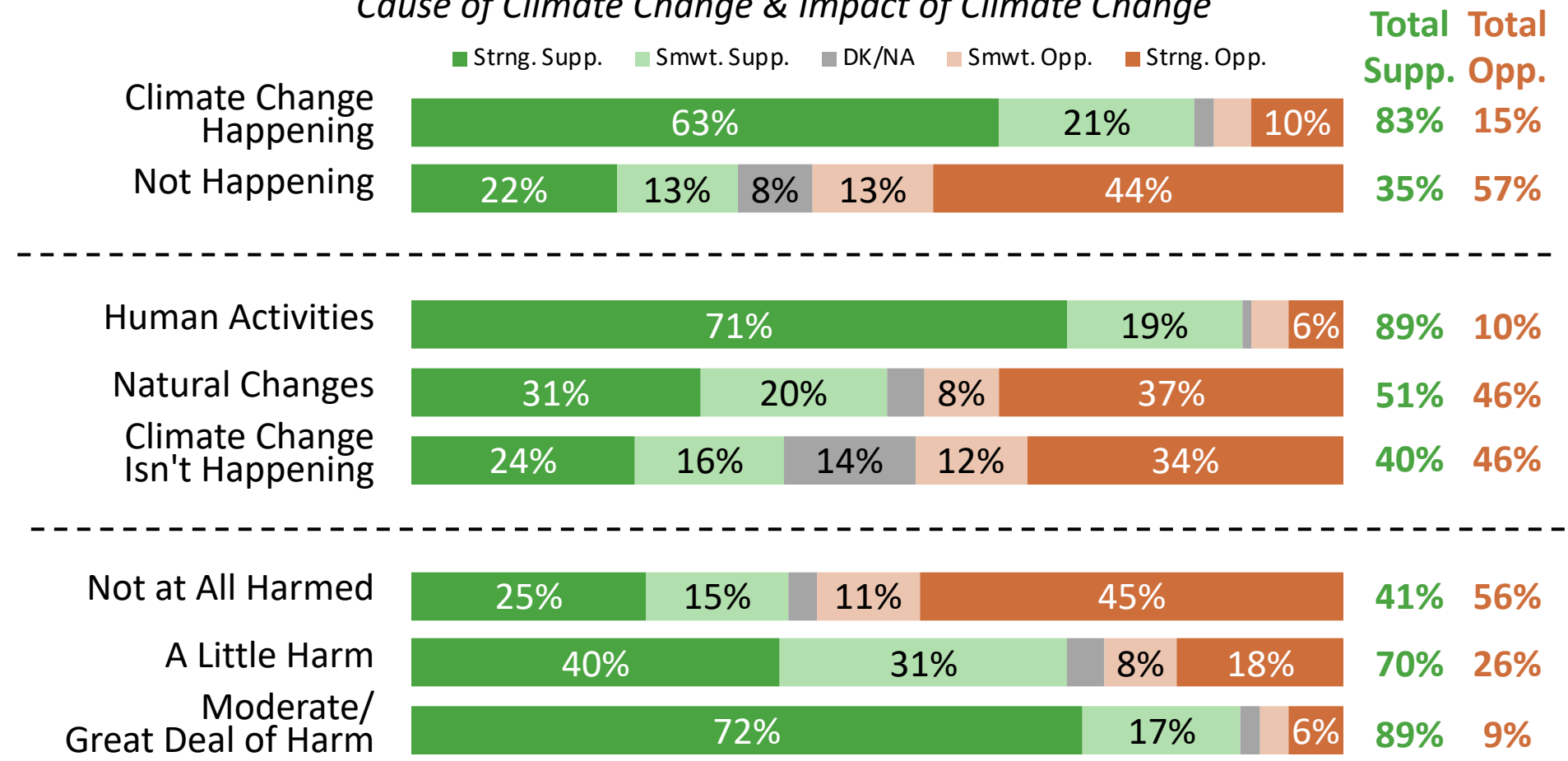
Support for the policy is especially high among low- and moderate-income voters.

Initial Support for Carbon Pollution Fee By Income



Those who believe climate change is occurring and feel directly threatened are overwhelmingly supportive of the fee.

Initial Support for Carbon Pollution Fee By Climate Change Happening, Cause of Climate Change & Impact of Climate Change



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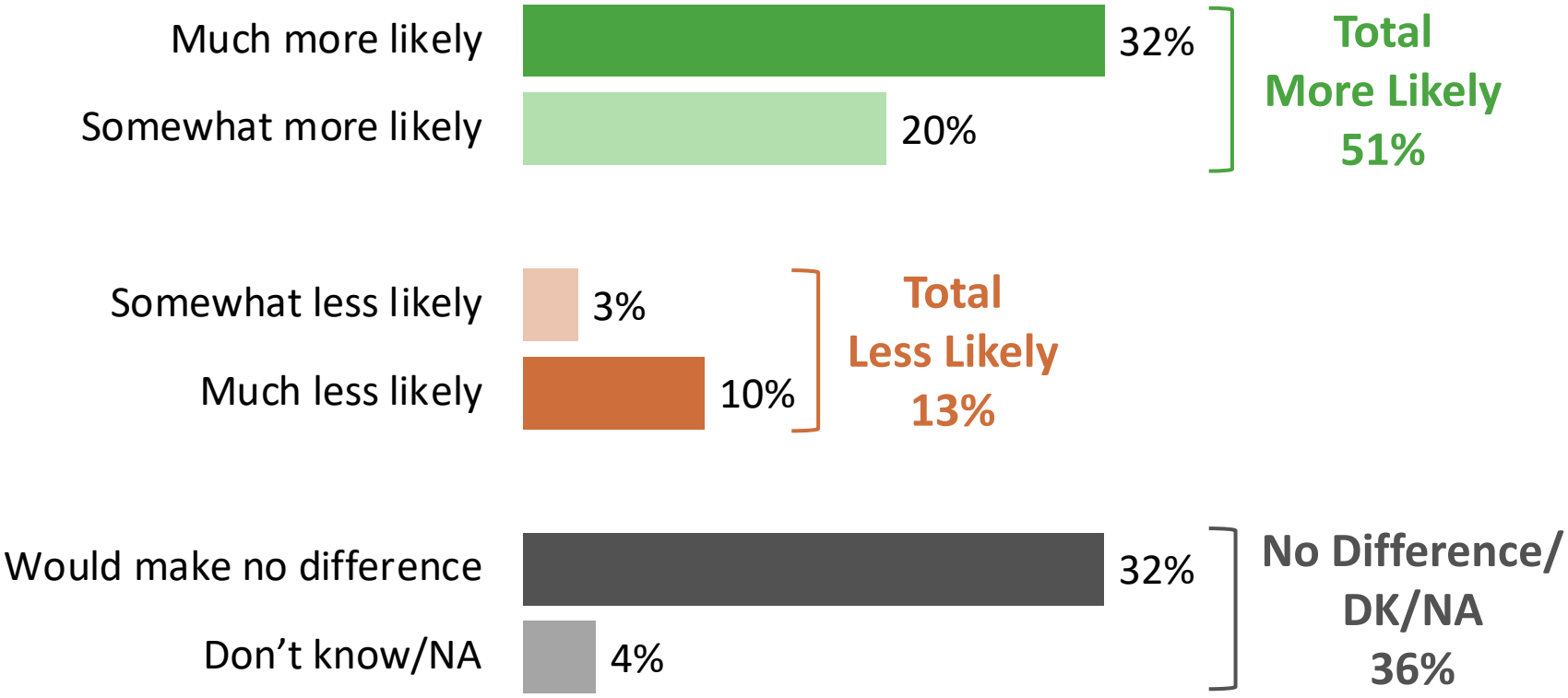
Q6 Total. Does this proposed carbon pollution fee sound like something you would support or oppose?

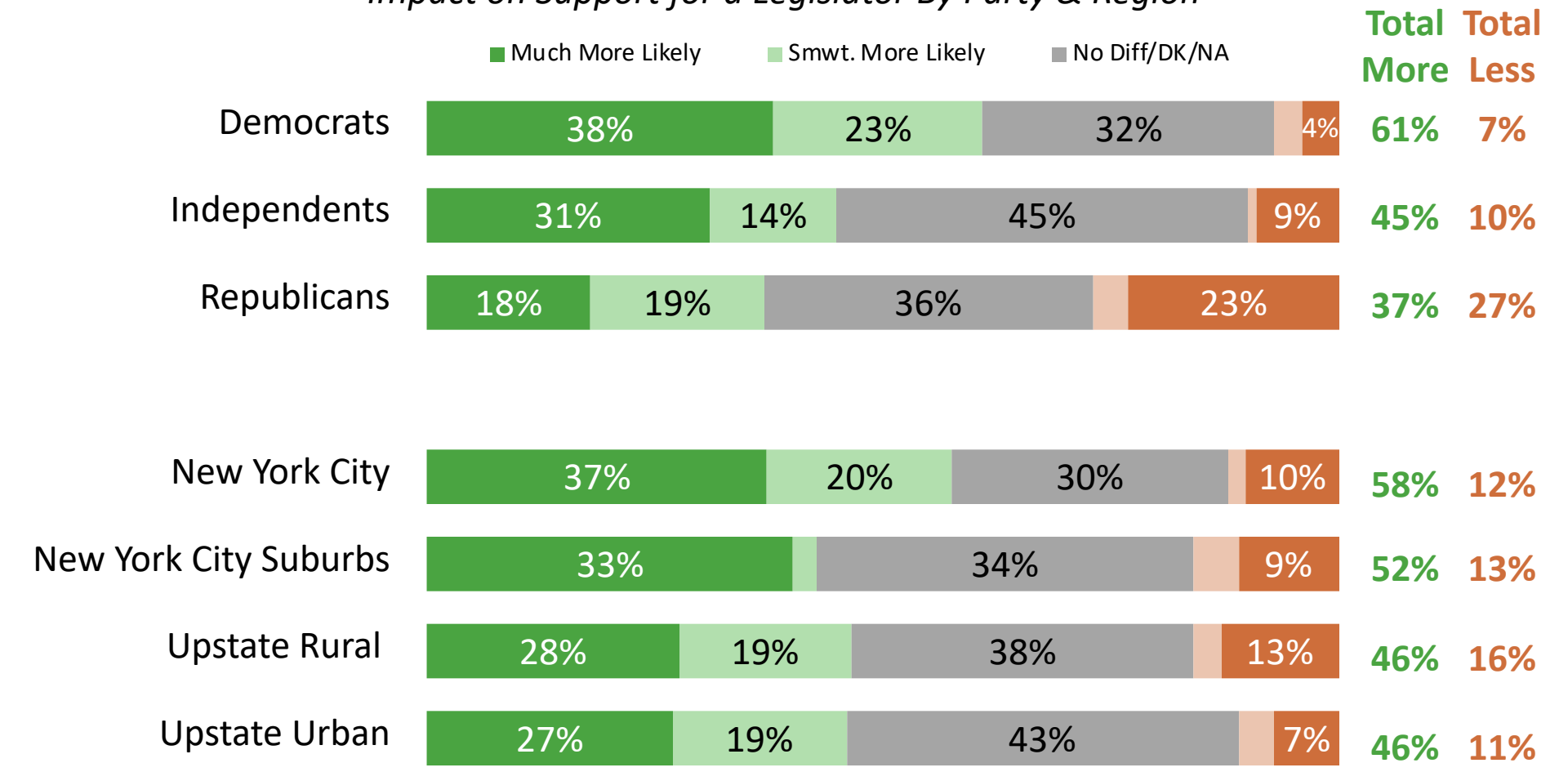
A majority of New York voters say they would be more likely to support a legislator who backed such a proposal.

Suppose your state legislator voted for this proposal in the next legislative session. Would that make you more likely to vote for them, less likely to vote for them, or would it make no difference in your attitude toward them?



Pluralities across party and region are more likely to vote for a legislator who backed the proposal.

Impact on Support for a Legislator By Party & Region



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Q11 Split A.

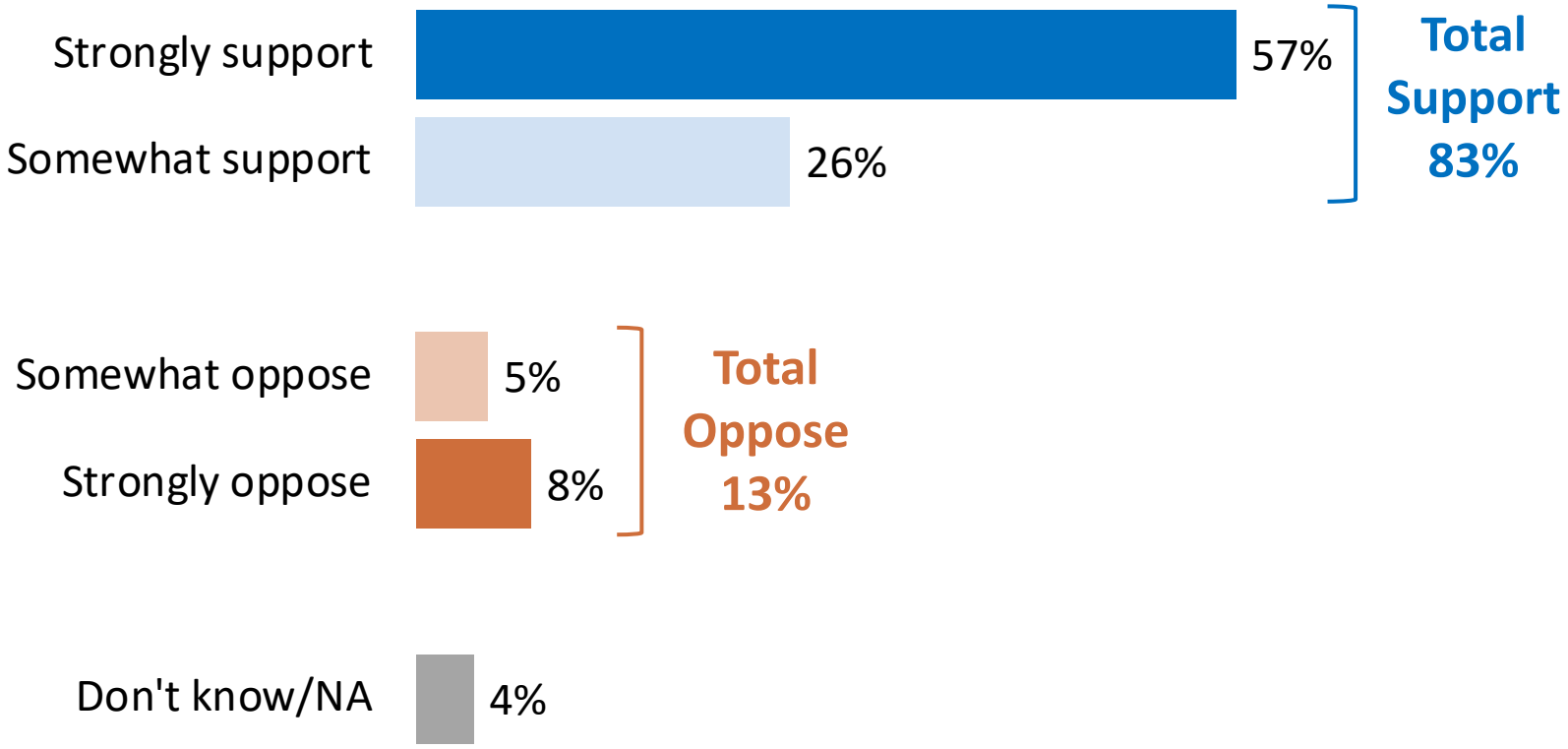
Opinions of a Clean Transportation Fund

Voters also heard a brief description of a clean transportation fund.

The **FIRST/SECOND** policy is called a clean transportation fund. The state of New York would invest in transportation choices that reduce pollution, including expanding public transportation and creating infrastructure for electric vehicles and safe ways for people to walk and bike, all across New York.

More than four in five support the proposal, nearly three in five strongly.

Does this proposal sound like something you would support or oppose?



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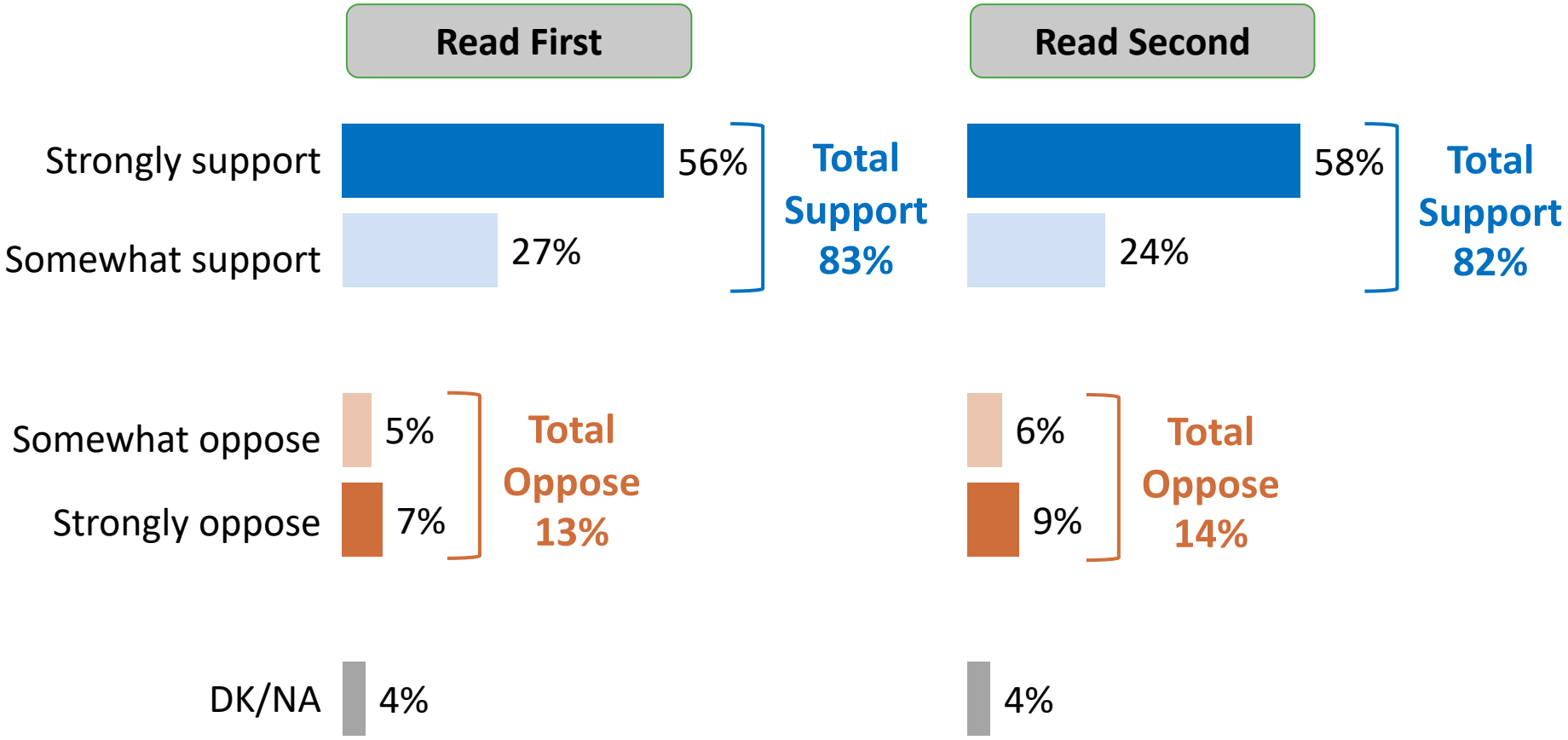
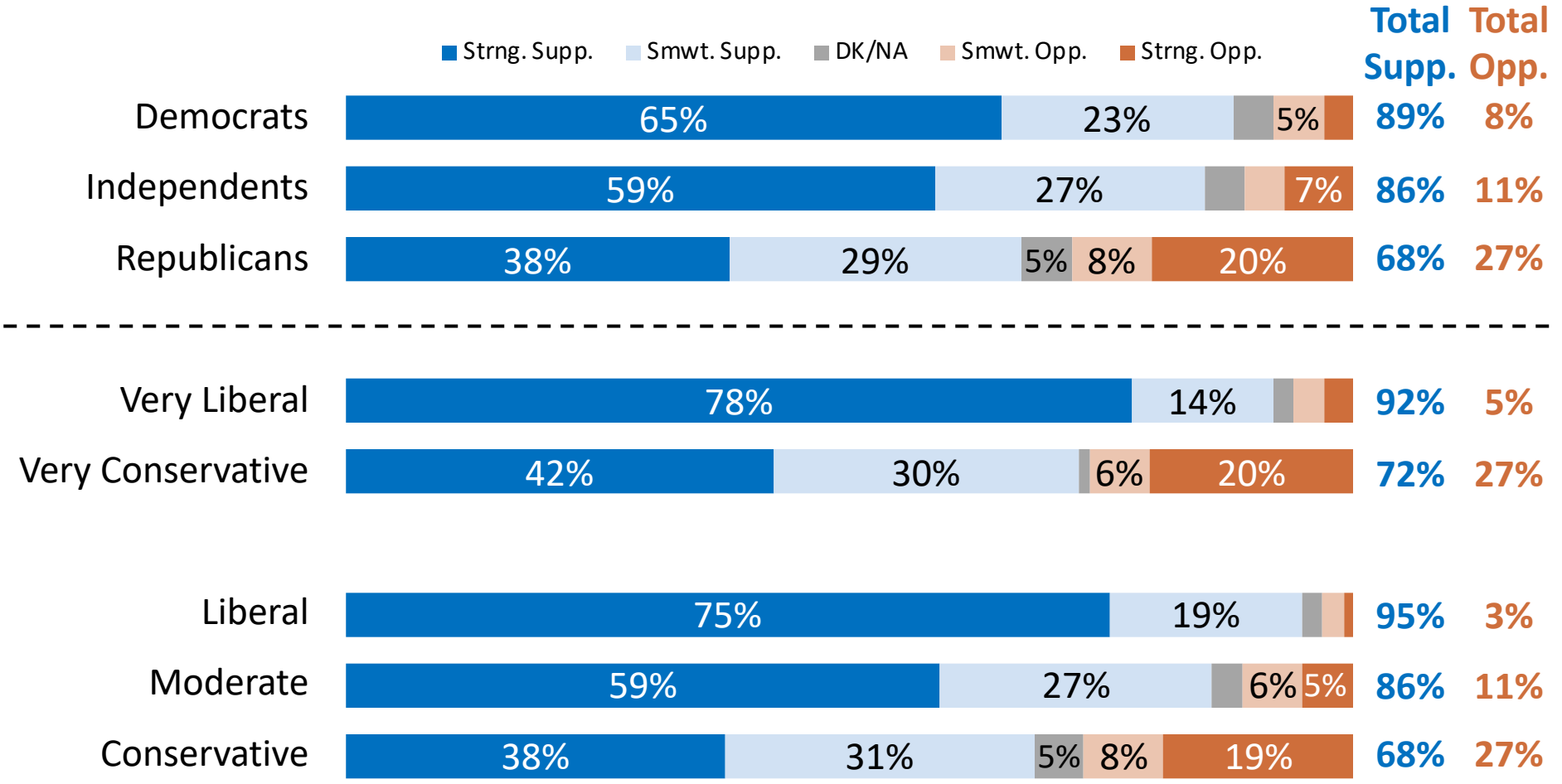
Q7.

Again, it made no difference whether voters heard this proposal before or after the carbon fee.



More than two-thirds of Republicans back the proposal, as do nearly nine in ten Democrats.

Initial Support for Clean Transportation Fund By Party & Ideology



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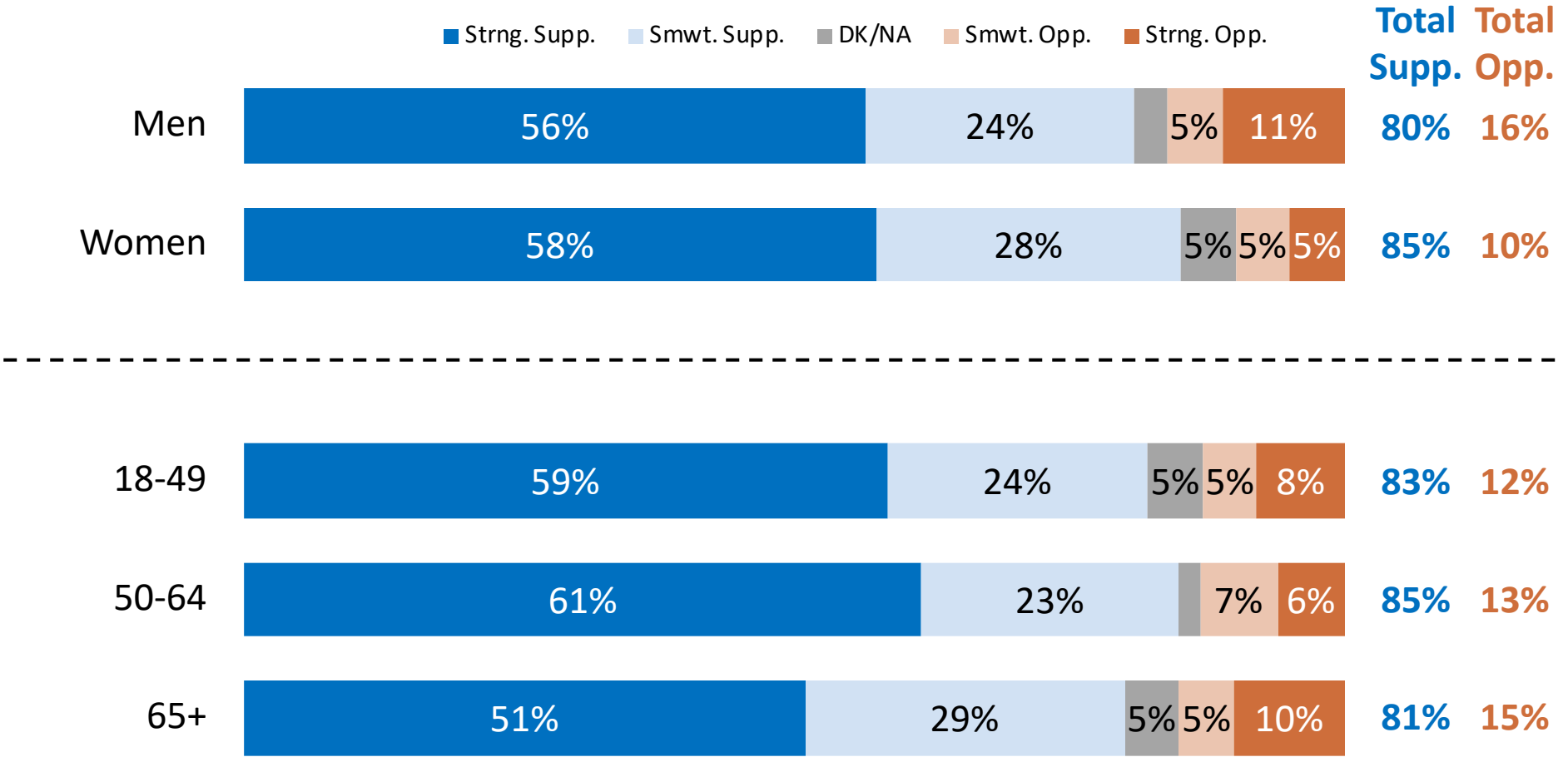
Q7 Total. Does this proposal sound like something you would support or oppose?

Support for the clean transportation fund is substantial across gender and age groups.

Initial Support for Clean Transportation Fund By Gender & Age



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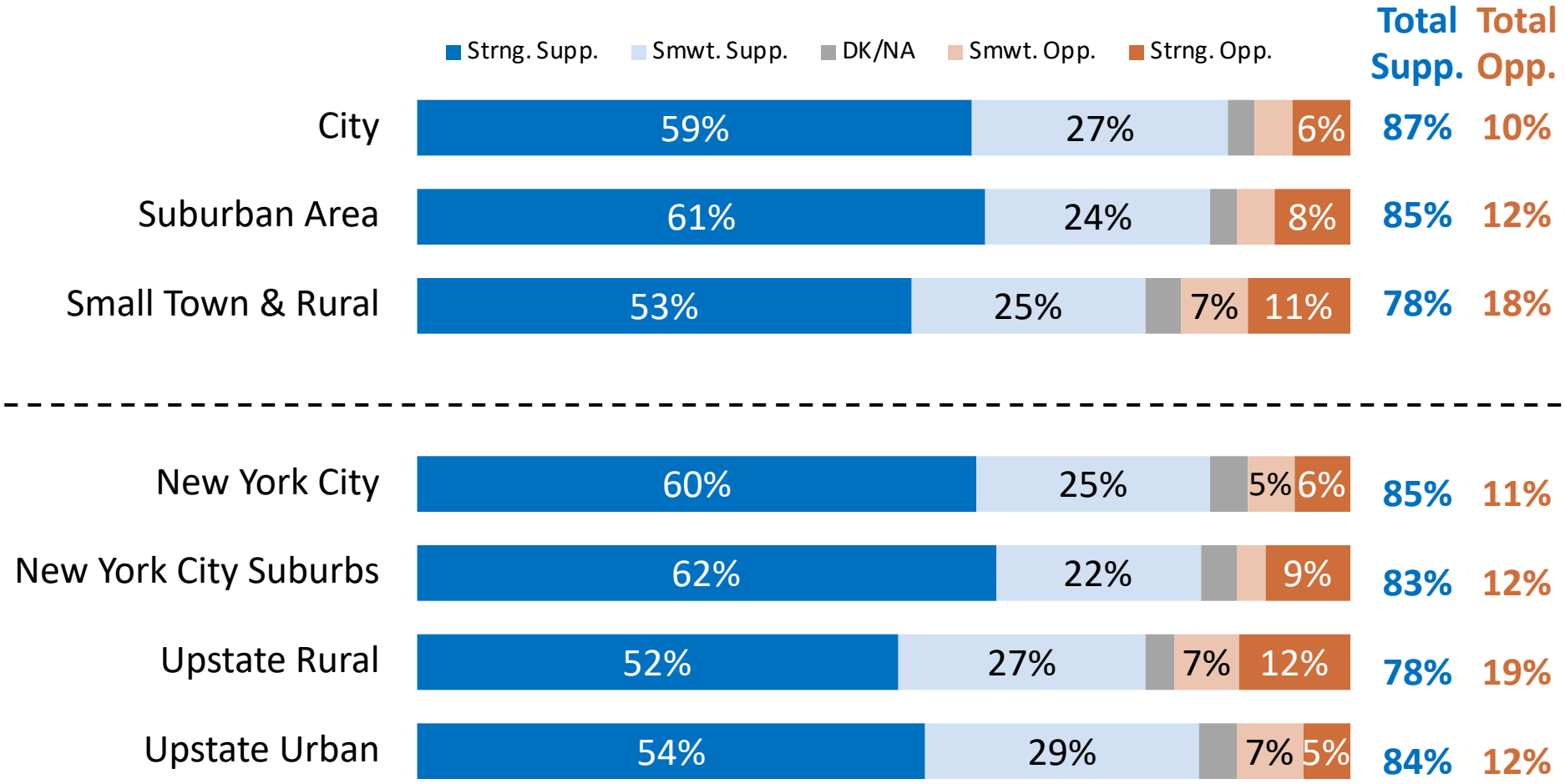
Q7 Total. Does this proposal sound like something you would support or oppose?

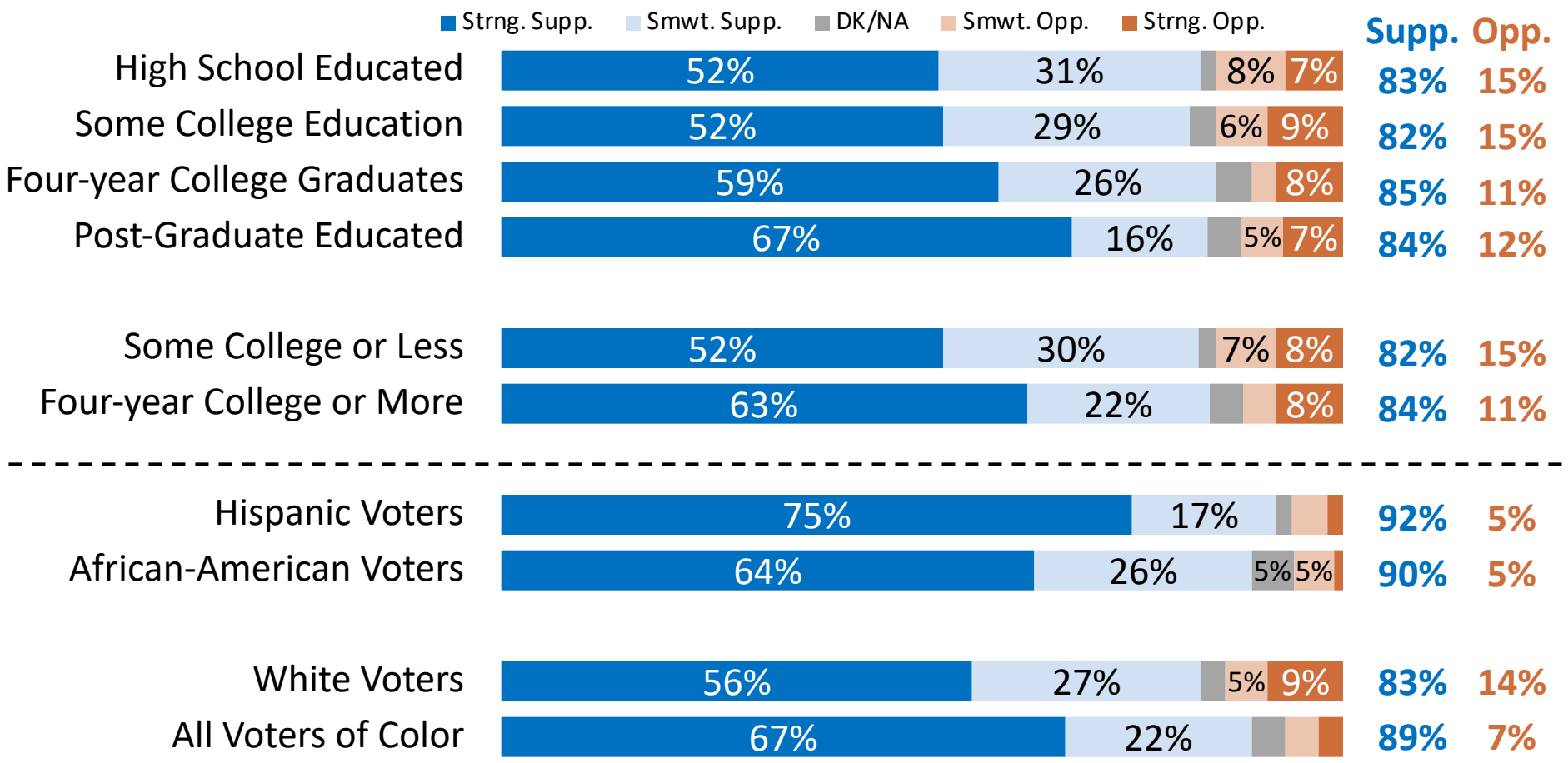
More than three-quarters support the fund in every region of the state.

Initial Support for Clean Transportation Fund By Type of Area & Region



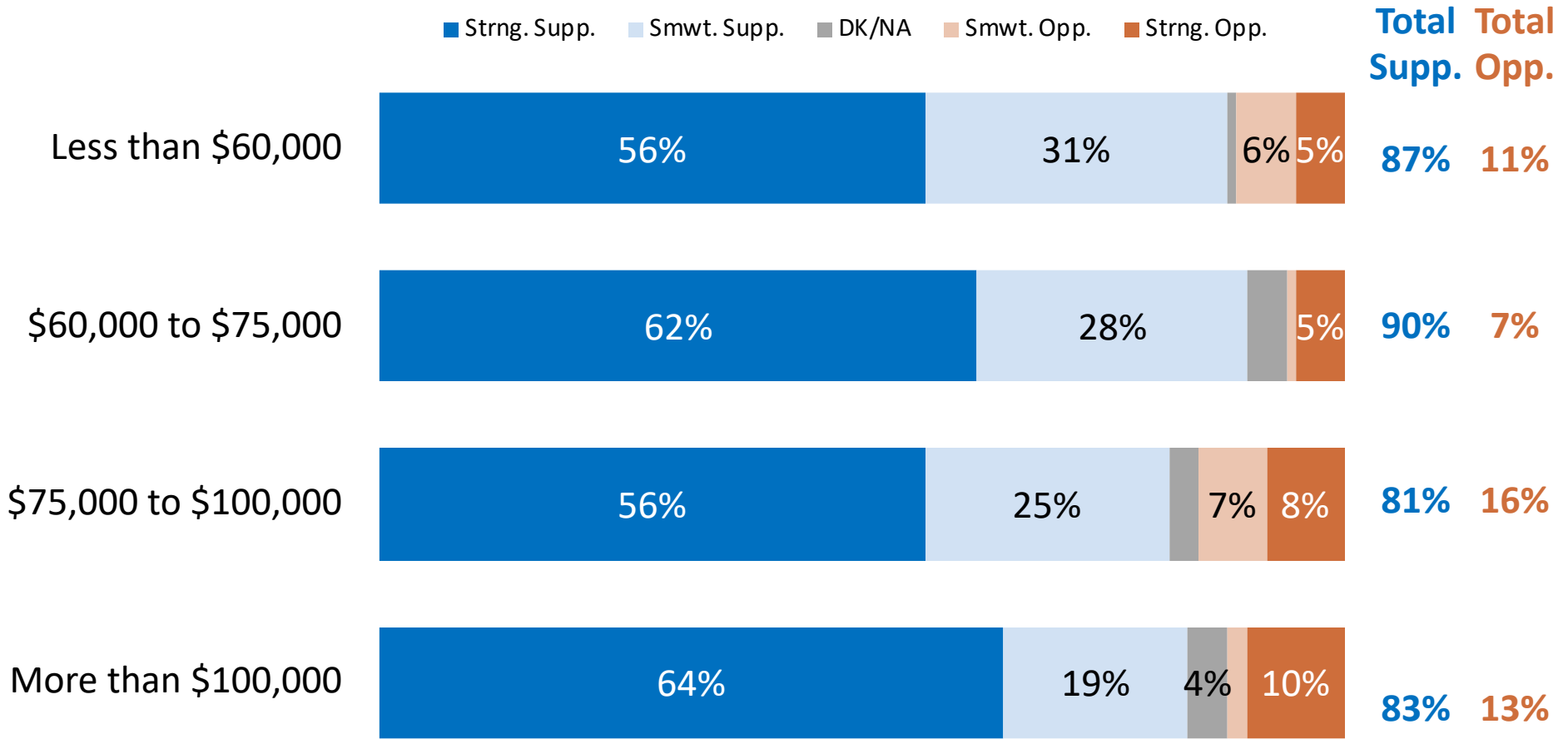
Support is strong across educational attainment and ethnicity.

Initial Support for Clean Transportation Fund By Education & Ethnicity



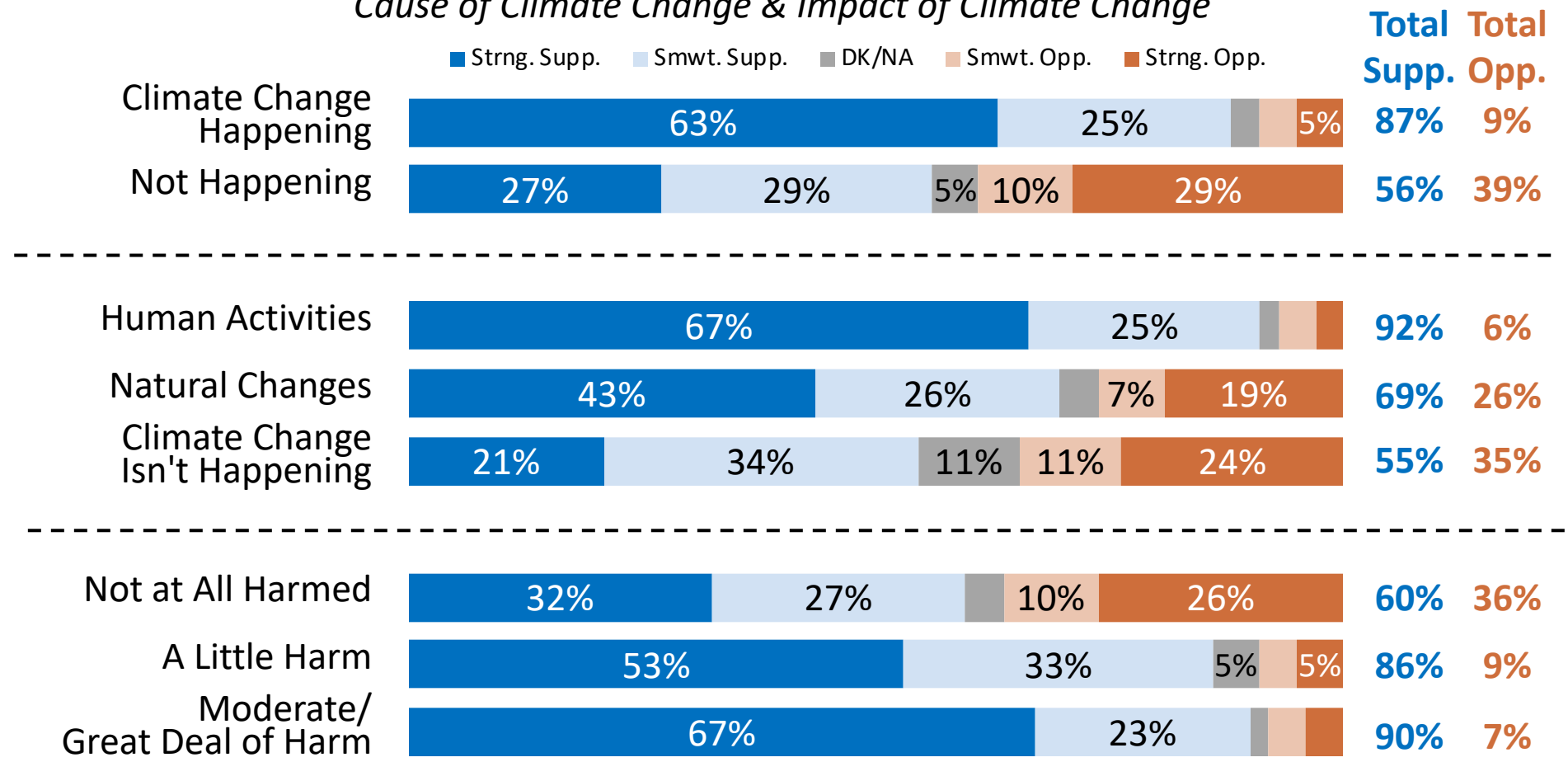
Support is broad across income categories as well.

Initial Support for Clean Transportation Fund By Income



Even a majority of those who think climate change isn't happening support the fund.

Initial Support for Clean Transportation Fund By Climate Change Happening, Cause of Climate Change & Impact of Climate Change



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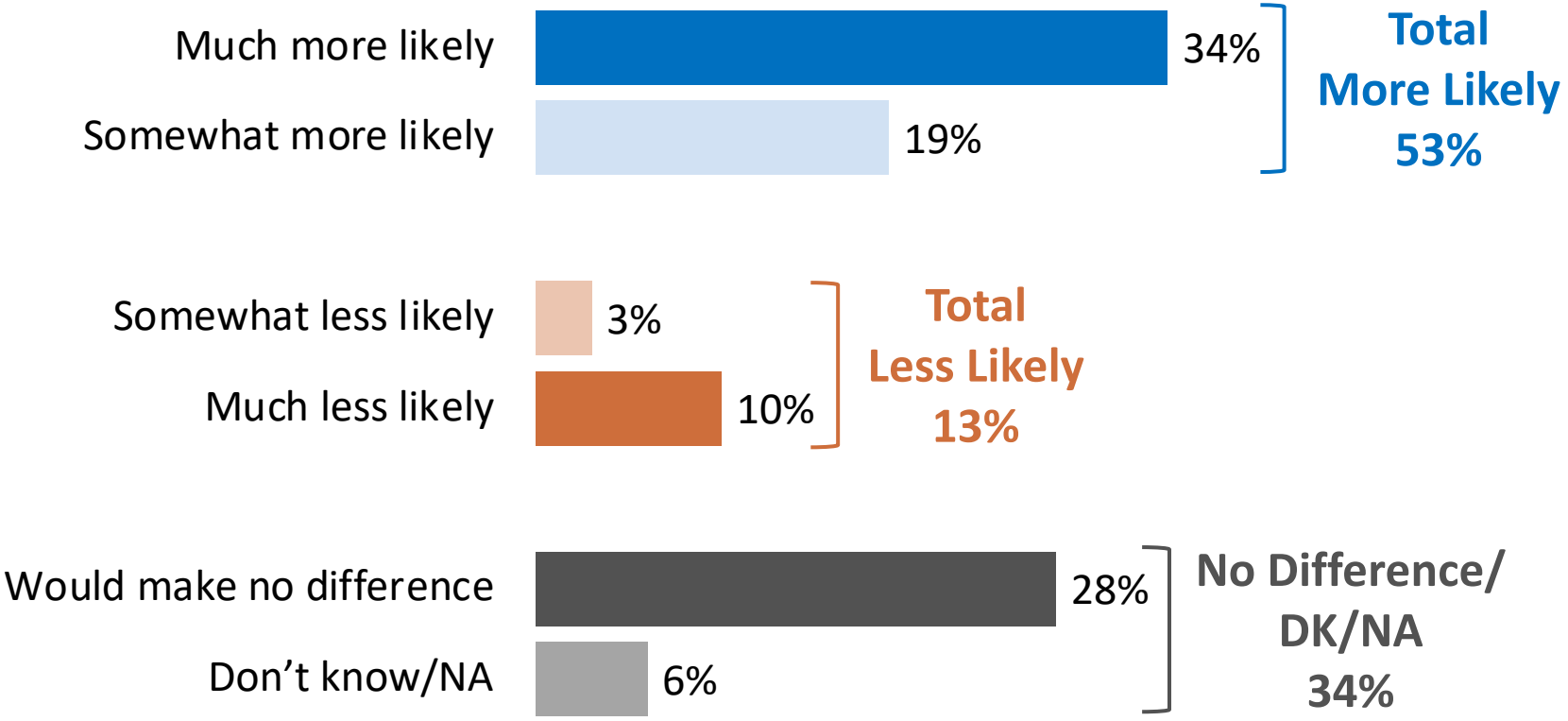
Q7 Total. Does this proposal sound like something you would support or oppose?

A majority of New York voters say they would be more likely to support a legislator who backed such a proposal.

Suppose your state legislator voted for this proposal in the next legislative session. Would that make you more likely to vote for them, less likely to vote for them, or would it make no difference in your attitude toward them?



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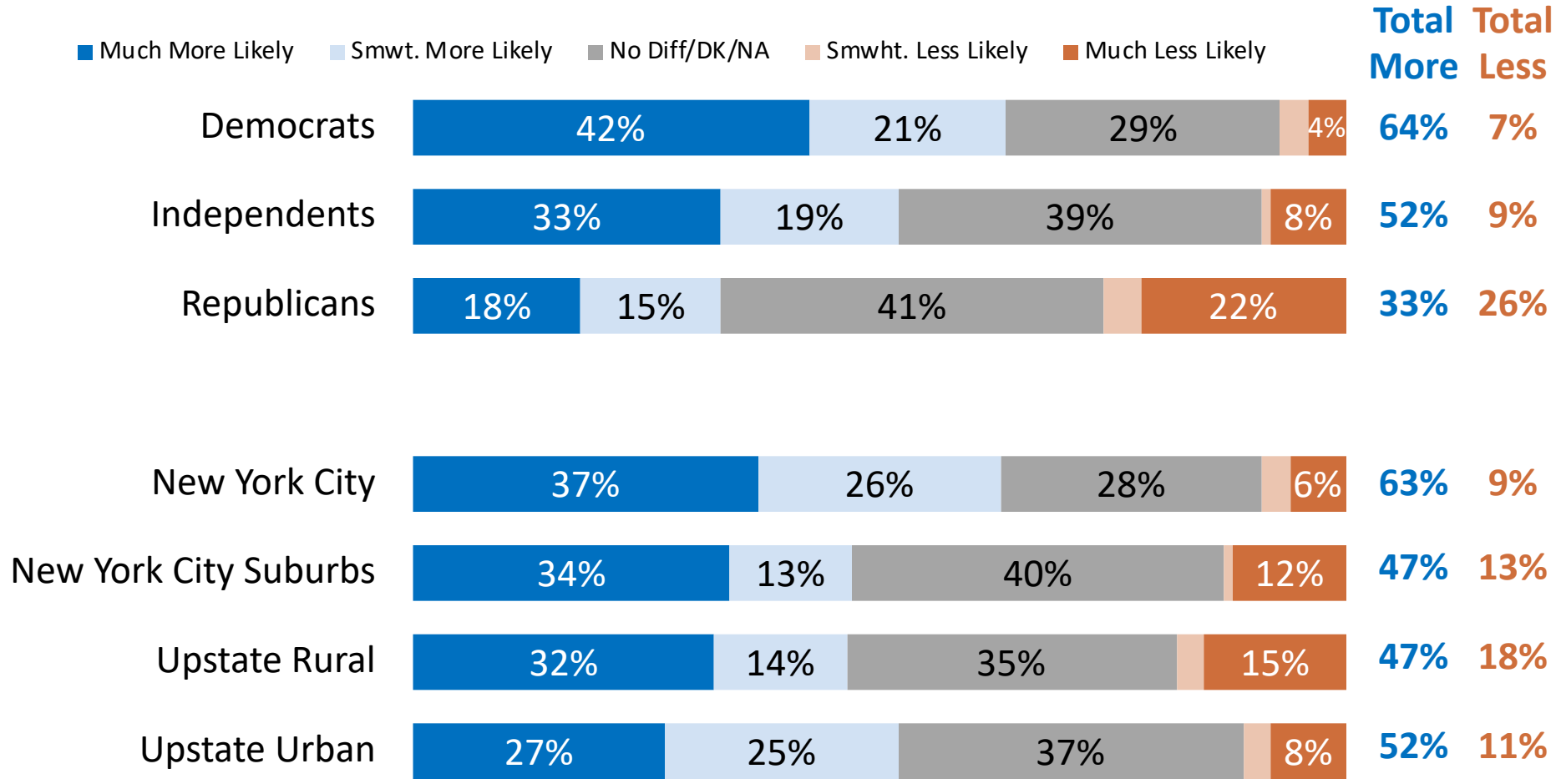
Q11 Split B.

Pluralities in every party and region are more likely to vote for a legislator backing a clean transportation fund.

Impact on Support for a Legislator By Party & Region



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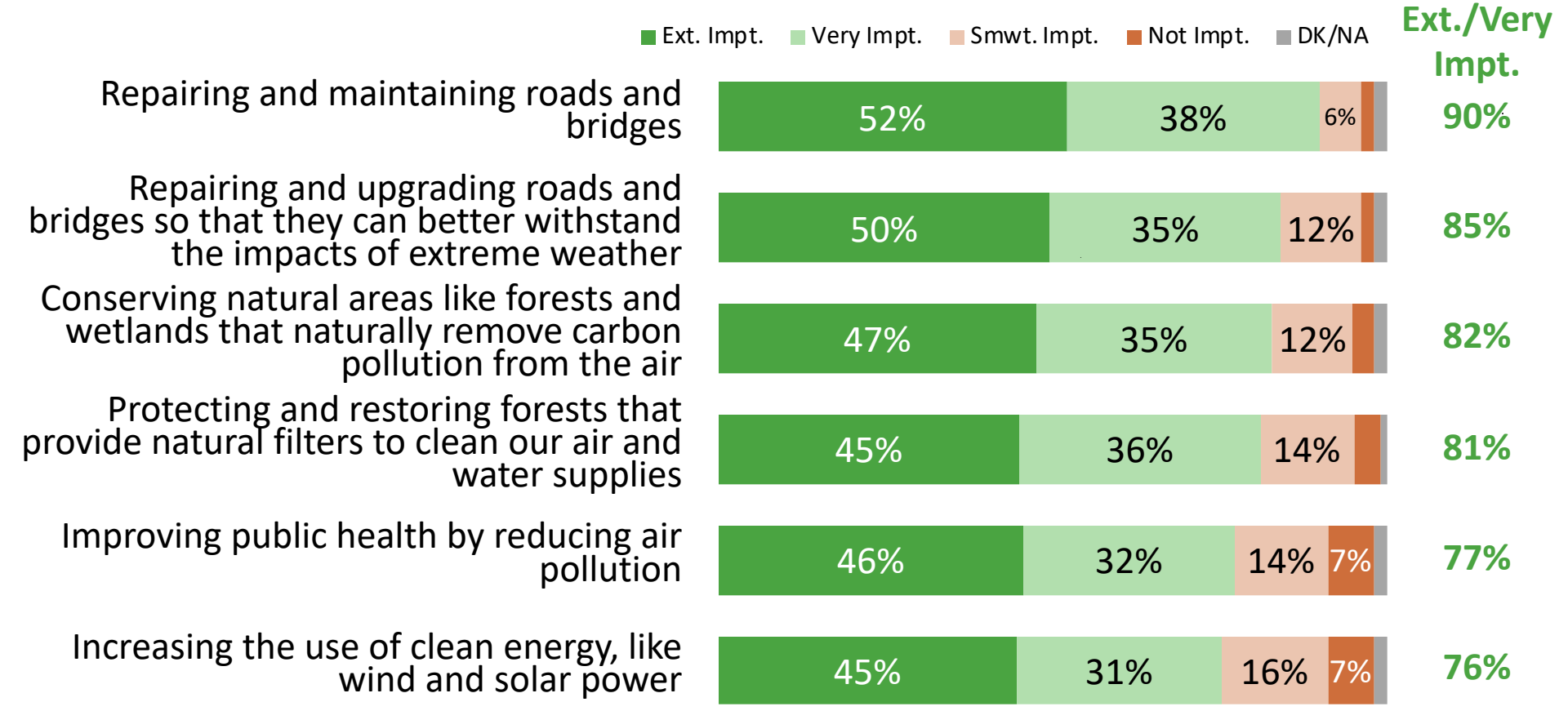
Q11 split B.

Investment Priorities and Willingness to Pay

Infrastructure repairs and natural area conservation are top priorities.

*I am going to read you a list of potential ways funding raised by this **(SPLIT SAMPLE A:** carbon pollution fee) **(SPLIT SAMPLE B:** clean transportation fund**)** could be spent in New York State. Please tell me how important each of these potential uses is to you.*



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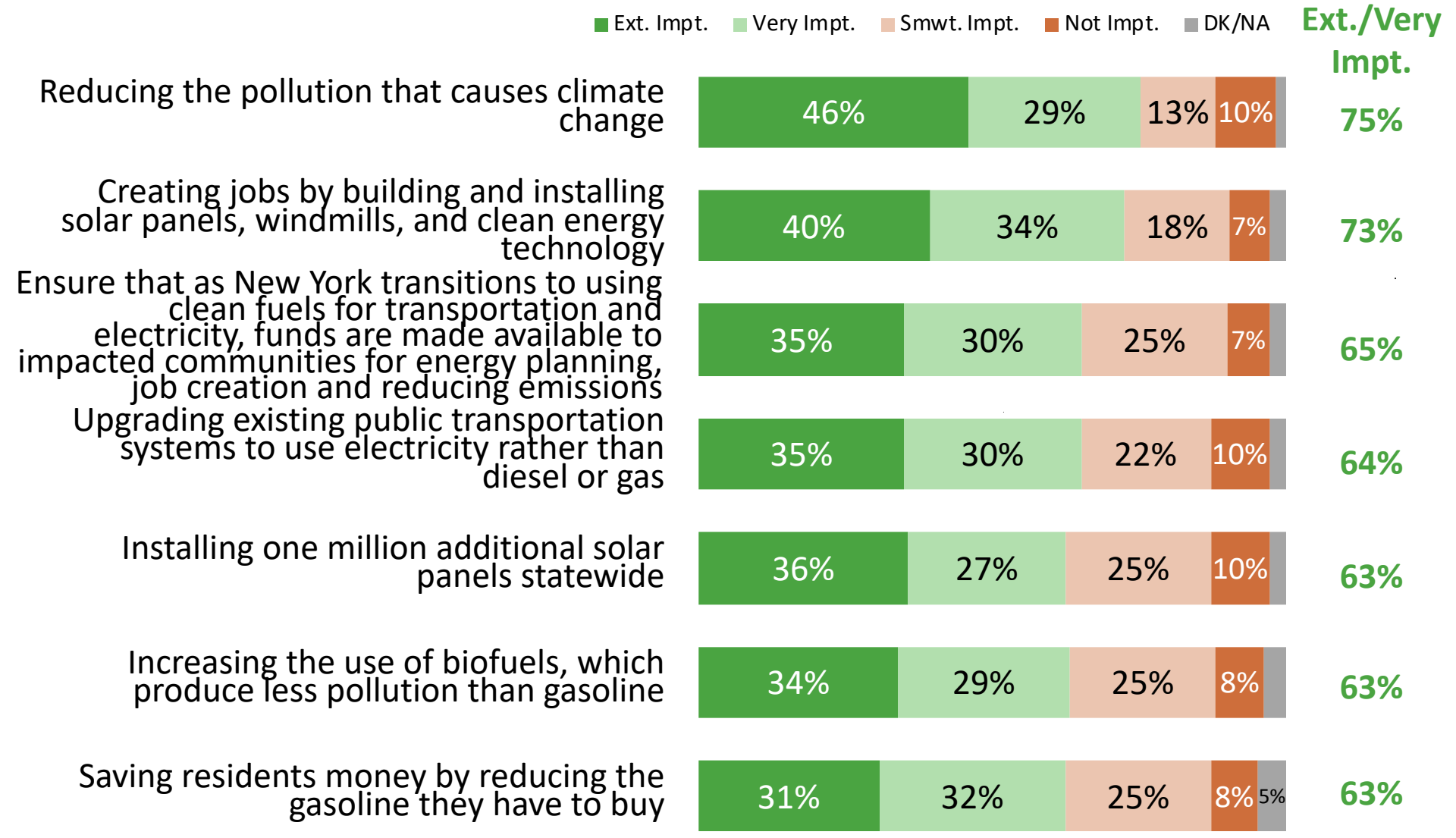
Q9.

Majorities also value clean energy investments and pollution reduction.



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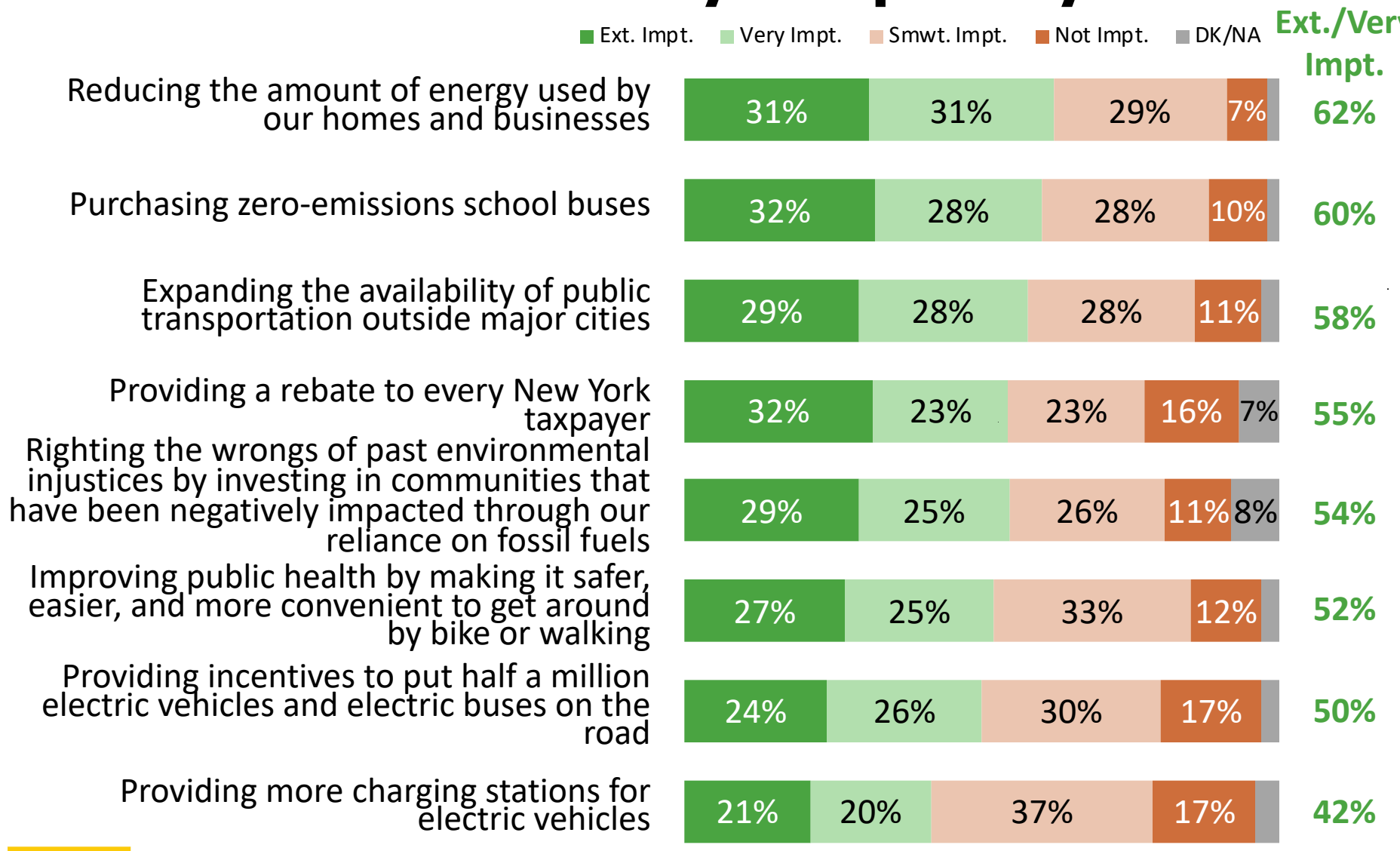
*Q9. I am going to read you a list of potential ways funding raised by this **(SPLIT SAMPLE A:** carbon pollution fee) **(SPLIT SAMPLE B:** clean transportation fund**)** could be spent in New York State. Please tell me how important each of these potential uses is to you. Split Sample*

Public funding of more EV stations is a relatively low priority.



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There is a bit more appetite for upgrading public transportation in the context of a clean transportation fund.

(Extremely/Very Important)

Source of Energy	Carbon Pollution Fee	Clean Transportation Fund	Difference
Upgrading existing public transportation systems to use electricity rather than diesel or gas	61%	67%	+6%
Expanding the availability of public transportation outside major cities	55%	60%	+5%
Repairing and maintaining roads and bridges	88%	92%	+4%
Increasing the use of clean energy, like wind and solar power	74%	78%	+4%
Improving public health by making it safer, easier, and more convenient to get around by bike or walking	50%	54%	+4%
Ensure that as New York transitions to using clean fuels for transportation and electricity, funds are made available to impacted communities for energy planning, job creation and reducing emissions	63%	66%	+3%
Reducing the amount of energy used by our homes and businesses	61%	64%	+3%
Repairing and upgrading roads and bridges so that they can better withstand the impacts of extreme weather	84%	86%	+2%
Improving public health by reducing air pollution	76%	78%	+2%
Providing incentives to put half a million electric vehicles and electric buses on the road	50%	51%	+1%

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*Q9 Split A & Split B. I am going to read you a list of potential ways funding raised by this **(SPLIT SAMPLE A:** carbon pollution fee) **(SPLIT SAMPLE B:** clean transportation fund**)** could be spent in New York State. Please tell me how important each of these potential uses is to you. Split Sample*

They are more likely to favor reducing carbon pollution in the context of a carbon fee.

(Extremely/Very Important)

Source of Energy	Carbon Pollution Fee	Clean Transportation Fund	Difference
Saving residents money by reducing the gasoline they have to buy	63%	63%	**0%**
Providing a rebate to every New York taxpayer	55%	55%	**0%**
Installing one million additional solar panels statewide	63%	62%	-1%
Creating jobs by building and installing solar panels, windmills, and clean energy technology	74%	72%	-2%
Righting the wrongs of past environmental injustices by investing in communities that have been negatively impacted through our reliance on fossil fuels	56%	53%	-3%
Conserving natural areas like forests and wetlands that naturally remove carbon pollution from the air	84%	80%	-4%
Protecting and restoring forests that provide natural filters to clean our air and water supplies	83%	79%	-4%
Increasing the use of biofuels, which produce less pollution than gasoline	65%	61%	-4%
Providing more charging stations for electric vehicles	44%	39%	-5%
Reducing the pollution that causes climate change	79%	71%	-8%
Purchasing zero-emissions school buses	65%	56%	-9%

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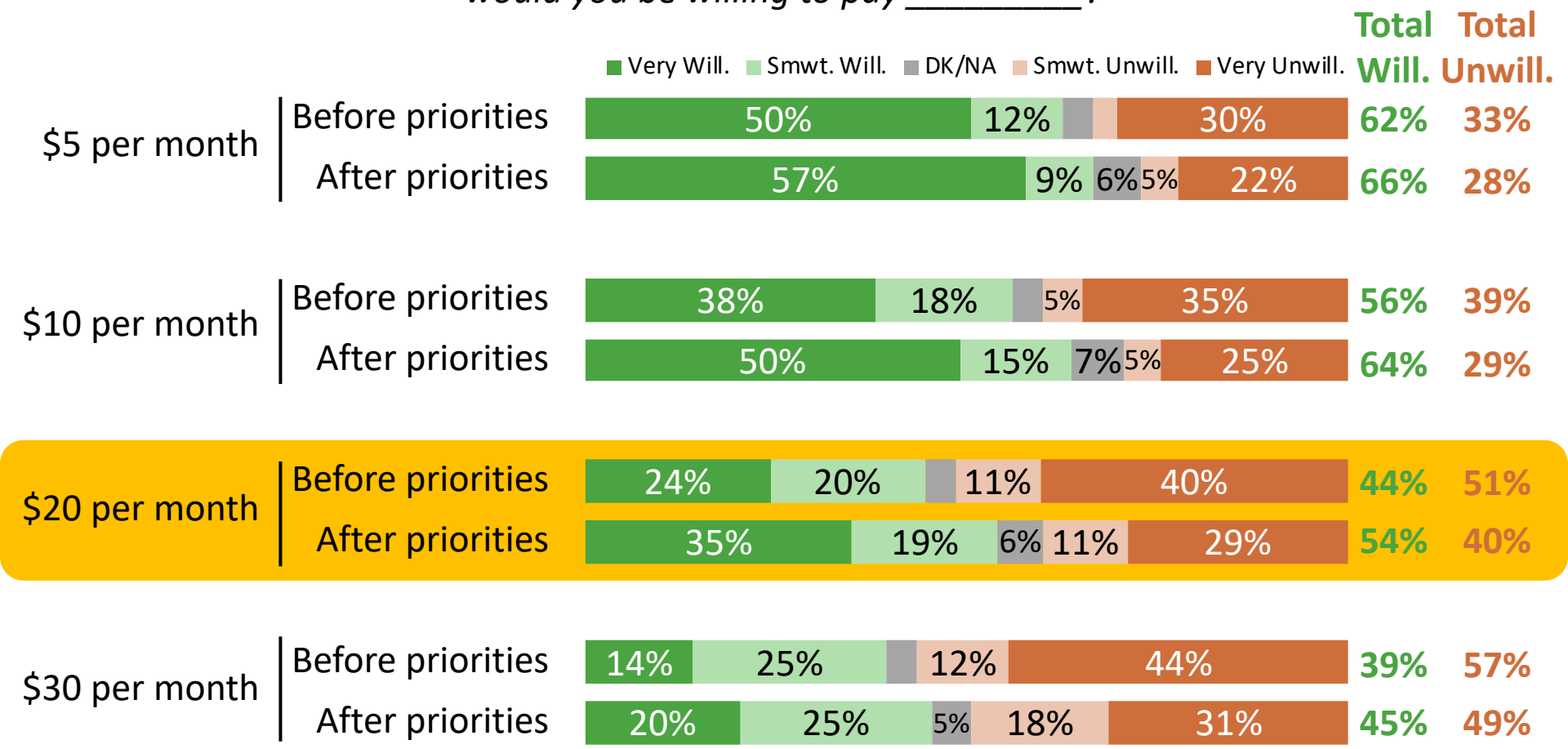
Willingness to Pay

- Voters were asked their willingness to pay the cost of these policies personally.
- Half were asked this before hearing about the various investments on the previous slides.
- The other half were asked after they had heard more about how the funding would be used.

Hearing about priorities for funding increases majority willingness to pay.

If some of the costs of such a policy were passed on to consumers, would you be willing to pay _____?



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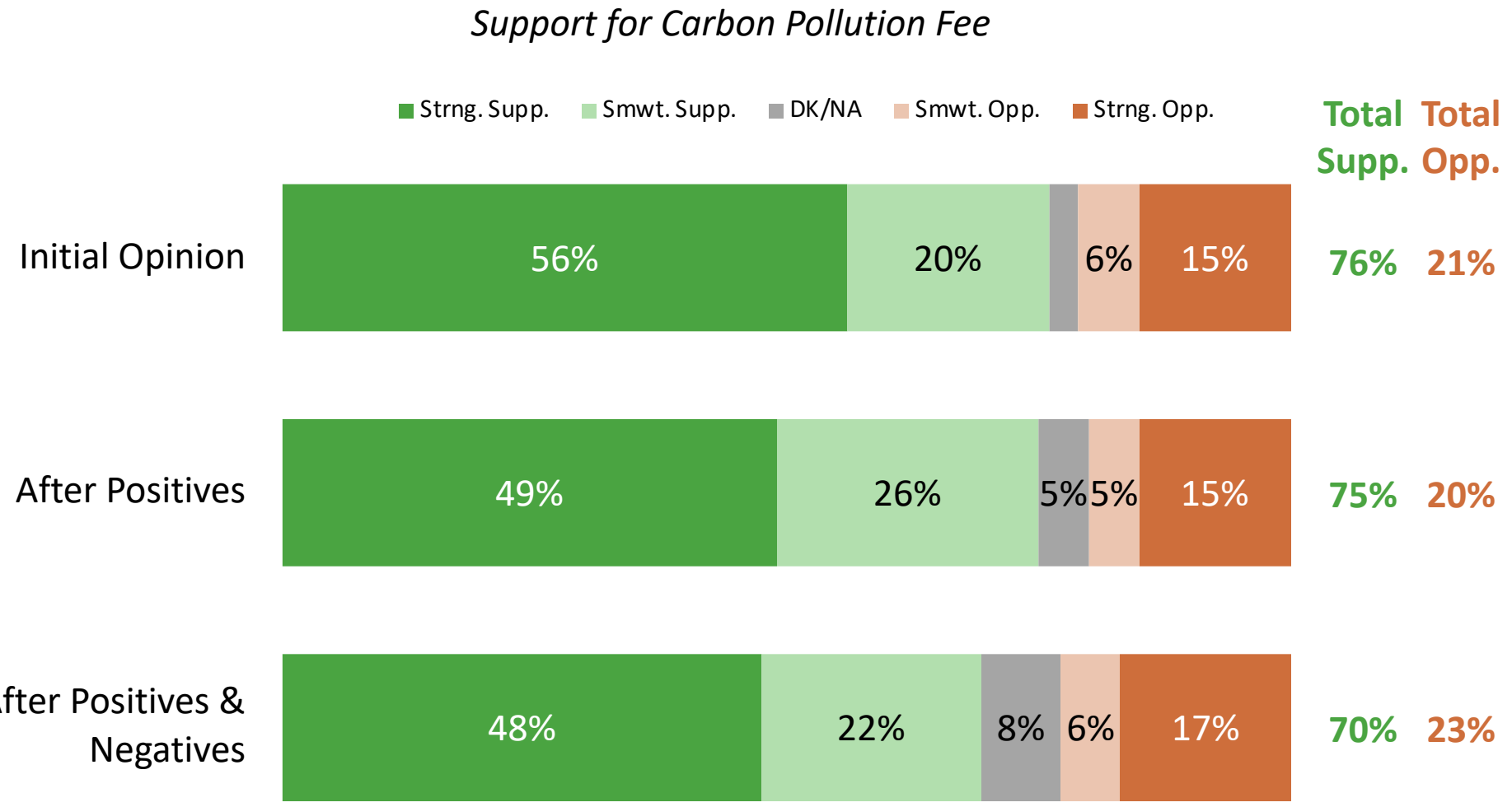
Q8 & Q10. Split Sample

Identifying Persuadable Voters

Support for the carbon pollution fee ends at seven in ten after positives and criticisms.



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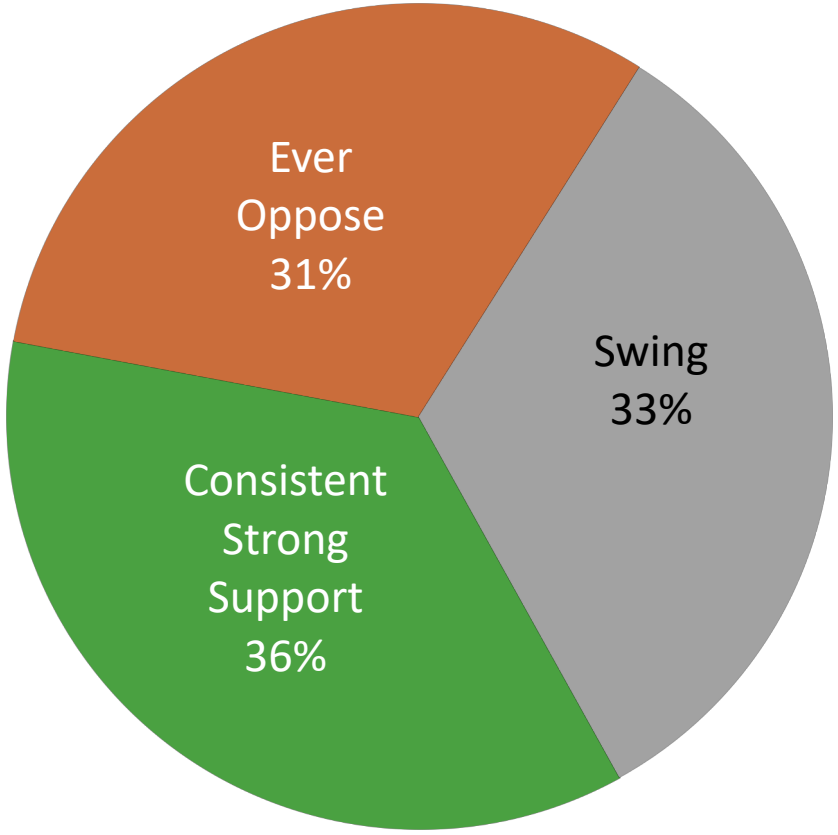
Q6, Q13 & Q16. Does this proposed carbon pollution fee sound like something you would support or oppose?

Nearly two-thirds consistently support the carbon pollution fee.

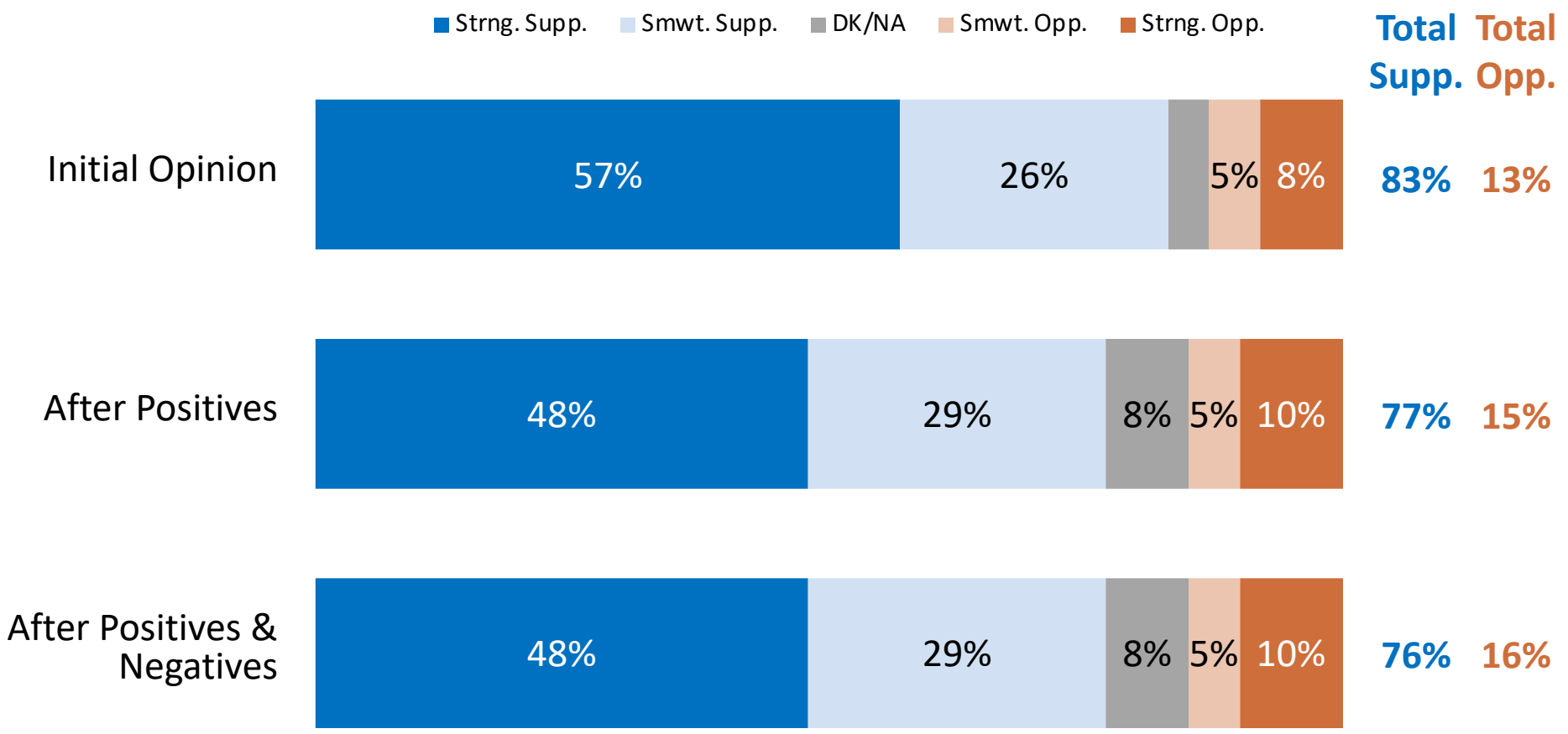
Carbon Pollution Fee

- **Consistent Strong Support:** Voters who consistently indicated they would "strongly support" the policy – largely liberals and Democrats, younger voters and voters of color.
- **Ever Oppose:** Voters who at any point indicated they would oppose the policy, especially Republican men.
- **Swing:** Voters who do not fall into any of the other categories – remaining consistently undecided or switching positions – disproportionately independent and under-50 women, low-income voters, and Hispanic voters.



Support for the clean transportation fund remains quite high after pros and cons.

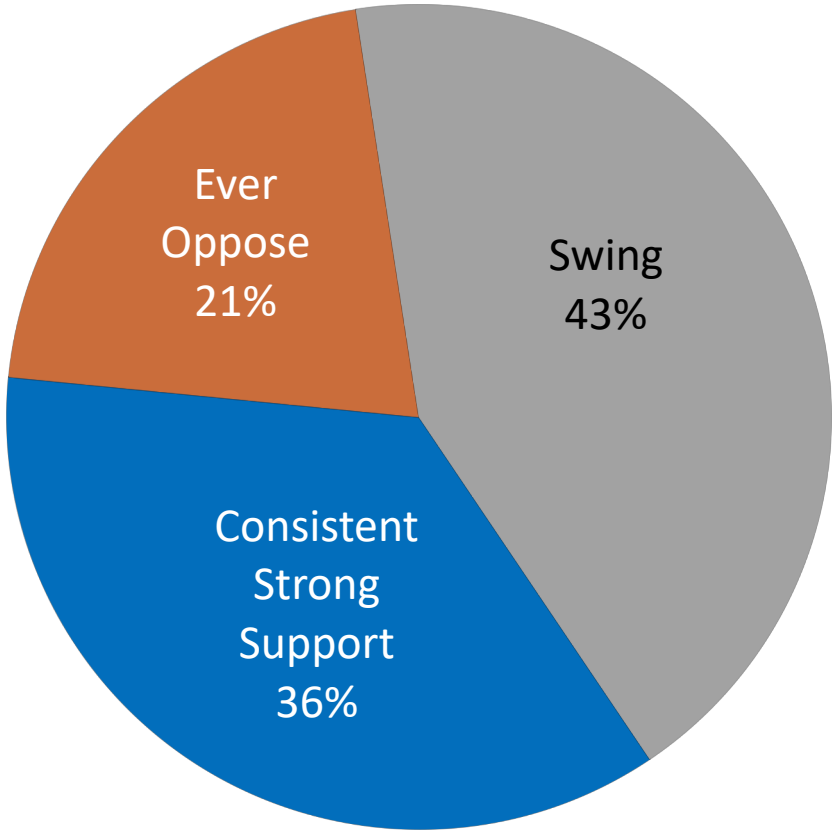
Support for Clean Transportation Fund



Seven in ten consistently support the fund.

Clean Transportation Fund

- **Consistent Strong Support:** Voters who consistently indicated they would "strongly support" the policy, disproportionately liberals, cyclists, and Democrats under 50.
- **Ever Oppose:** Voters who at any point indicated they would oppose the policy – especially conservative and Republican men.
- **Swing:** Voters who do not fall into any of the other categories – remaining consistently undecided or switching positions. This disproportionately comprises independents ages 50+, independent women, and African-American voters.



Messaging

Carbon Pollution Fee Support Messages
(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

(RESPONSIBILITY) We all have a shared responsibility to leave our kids and grandkids a healthy future. That's why we each take personal responsibility for reducing pollution -- we don't burn firewood when there are burn bans; and we have our car emissions checked. This proposal requires polluting businesses to show the same level of responsibility for cutting pollution that we do.

(FIGHT BACK) Oil companies have a stranglehold on our economy and our politics. By putting a price on carbon pollution, this proposal will allow us to fight back against the millions the oil companies spend in lobbying government and reduce their influence over our politics.

(OTHER STATES) Oregon and California already have laws nearly identical to this one, which have cut air pollution, sparked new clean energy jobs, while costing less than one-third of one penny per gallon of gas. It's time we pass one to protect clean air and create new jobs.

(POLLUTION) In New York, we still have many sources of the pollution that causes climate change. Our future depends on shifting to cleaner alternatives. This proposal will help us do that by putting a fee on existing sources of pollution and investing in new technologies, such as renewable energy and electric vehicles.

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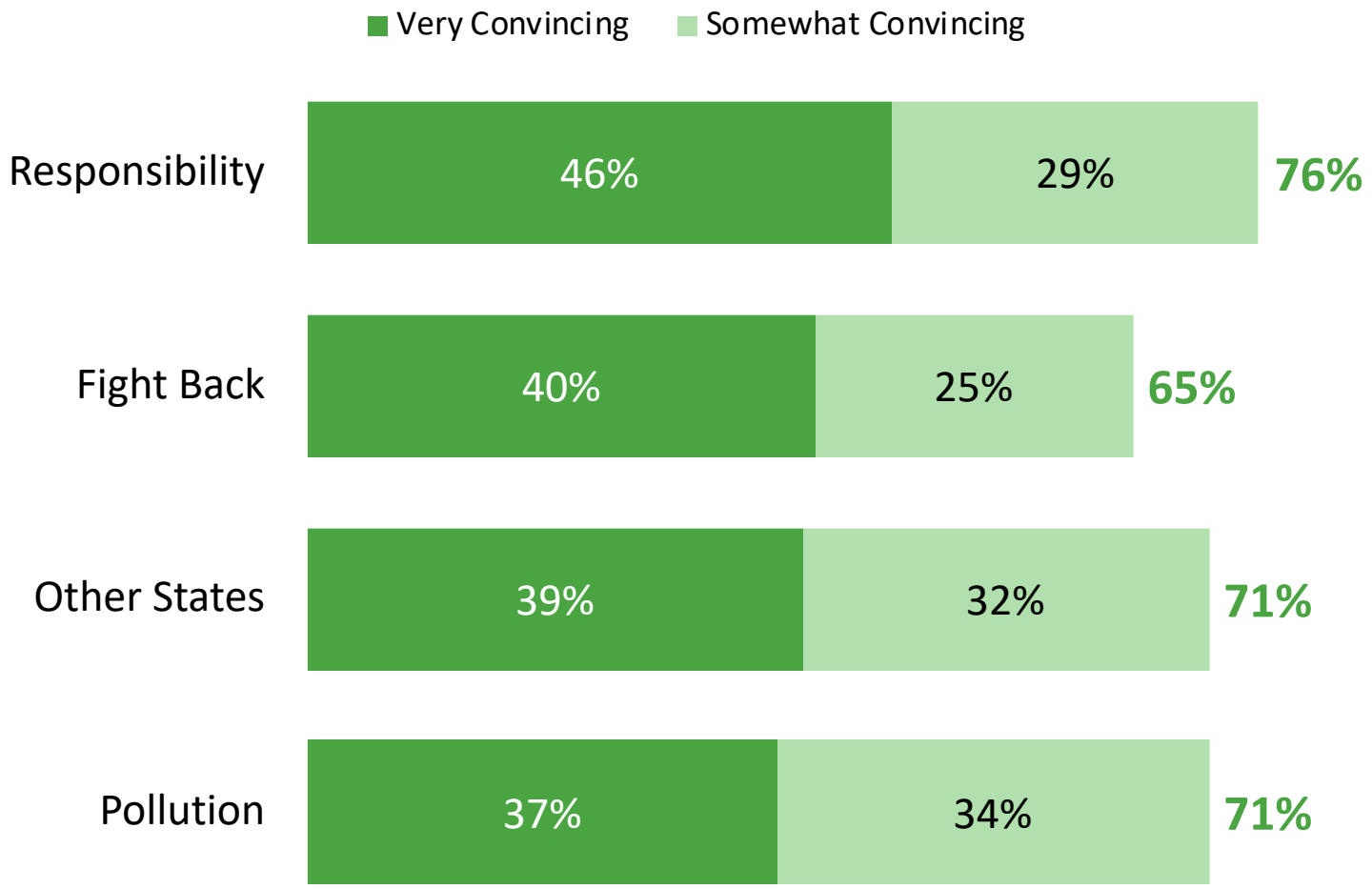
Q12 a-d. I am going to read you some statements from supporters of this carbon pollution fee. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing. Split Sample

The responsibility message is the most broadly appealing of a set of largely effective themes.



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Independents find the responsibility message very persuasive, while no theme really resonates with Republicans.

(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Party			Carbon Fee Targets		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Cons. Str. Support	Swing	Ever Oppose
Responsibility	**46%**	58%	40%	29%	69%	44%	22%
Fight Back	**40%**	54%	31%	19%	68%	33%	15%
Other States	**39%**	49%	39%	20%	69%	32%	13%
Pollution	**37%**	46%	36%	21%	62%	38%	8%

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Q12 a-d. I am going to read you some statements from supporters of this carbon pollution fee. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing. Split Sample

Carbon Pollution Fee Opposition Messages
(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

^**(URBAN)** We know that any investments in buses, trains and clean energy will be largely made in New York City, with nothing left over for the rest of the state despite the fact that those are the areas most likely to suffer job losses as a result of this policy.

(ENERGY TAX) This proposal is a hidden energy tax that will increase the price of gas and cost consumers and employers billions of dollars. It would force New Yorkers to pay hundreds of dollars extra each year to keep the lights on at home and put food on the table.

(JOBS) Western and Upstate New York have lost tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs in recent years and this policy will only kill more jobs and hurt our local economies. It would increase fuel costs, forcing large and small New York businesses to lay off workers or even shut down, putting us at a competitive disadvantage with other states.

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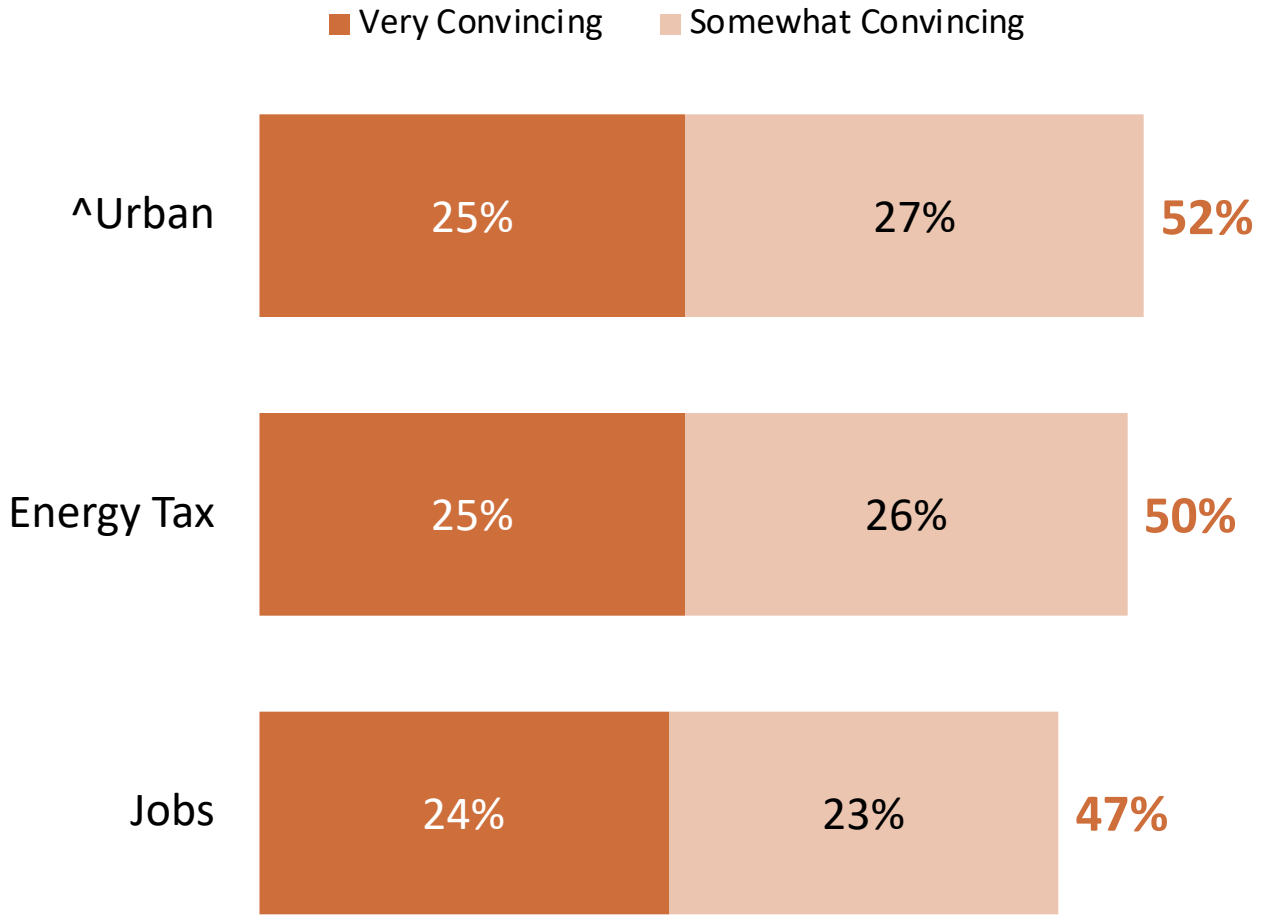
Q15 a-c. I am going to read you some statements from opponents of the carbon pollution fee. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing. ^Not Part of Split Sample

Majorities find each message somewhat convincing, but the "trust" frame inspires more intensity.



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Republicans find each rationale about equally compelling and see them as more convincing than proponents' arguments.

(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Party			Carbon Fee Targets		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Cons. Str. Support	Swing	Ever Oppose
^Urban	**25%**	15%	28%	43%	15%	22%	33%
Energy Tax	**25%**	15%	27%	43%	13%	17%	48%
Jobs	**24%**	15%	21%	44%	11%	17%	47%

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Clean Transportation Fund Support Messages
(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

(AIR) This proposal will dramatically reduce the carbon, sulfur, arsenic, and mercury pollution that comes from burning dirty fuels. Doctors, nurses, and scientists say it will also dramatically reduce the rates of asthma attacks, heart disease, lung disease, and cancer – especially for children and seniors.

(VULNERABLE) This proposal will expand and improve our transportation options to help New Yorkers without cars – often low-income residents – get to their jobs, school, doctor's appointments and the grocery store. Providing more transportation options for seniors and people with disabilities helps them live independent, dignified lives where they are able to stay in their own homes.

(ECONOMY) Investing in clean energy and clean transportation will strengthen New York's economy. It will directly create thousands of good-paying jobs for all kinds of people, from engineers to factory workers to electrical workers to secretaries. And having a strong transportation system that connects people to jobs will attract new businesses – generating millions of dollars in economic activity and creating good, family-supporting jobs close to home.

(CLIMATE CHANGE) In New York, transportation is the single largest source of the pollution that causes climate change. Our future depends on shifting to cleaner alternatives to oil and gasoline. This proposal will help us do that by investing in new technology, such as electric vehicles, and by reducing the need to drive with investments in public transportation and walkable neighborhoods.

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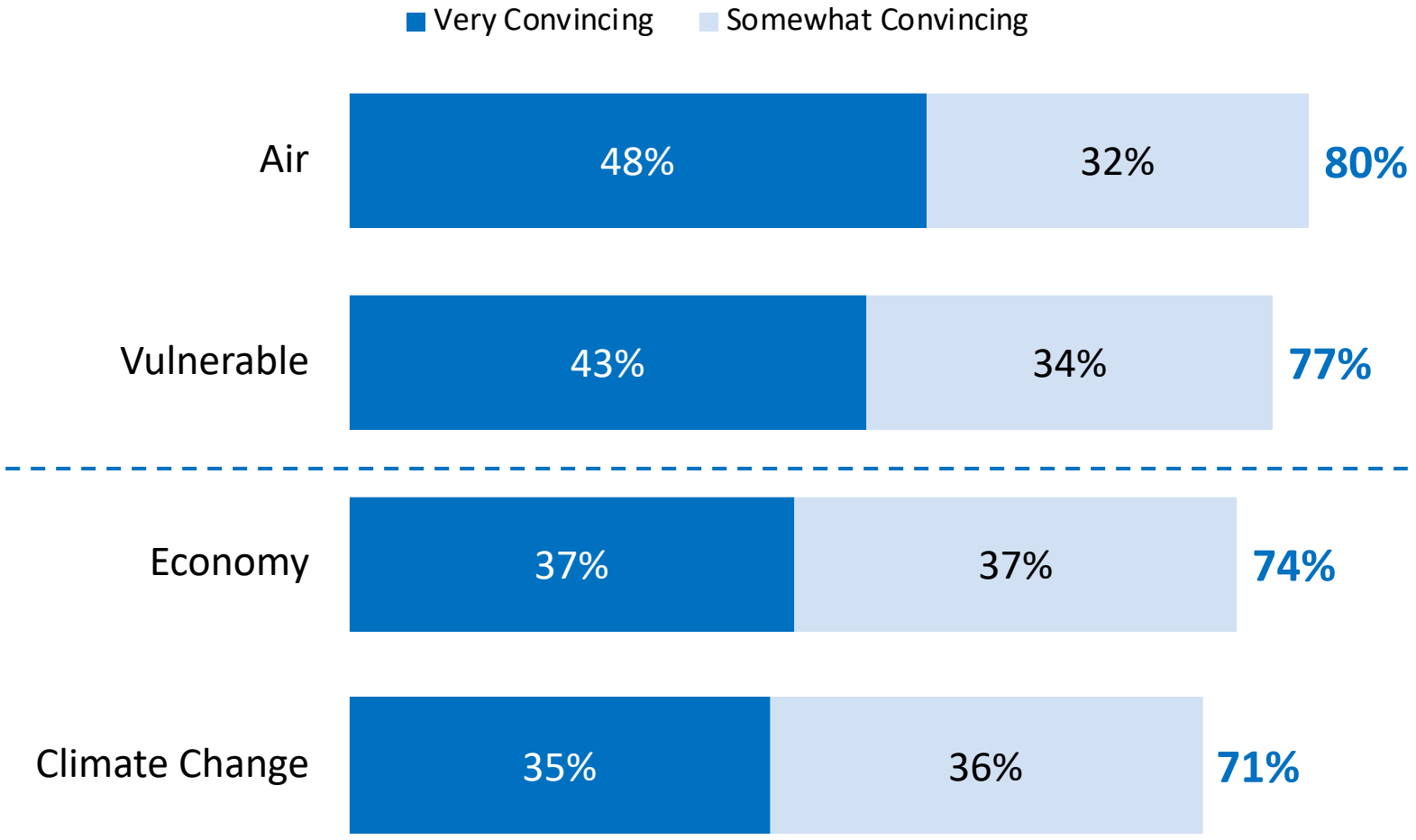
*Q12 e-h. I am going to read you some statements from supporters of this **(SPLIT SAMPLE A:** carbon pollution fee) **(SPLIT SAMPLE B:** clean transportation fund**)**. After hearing each statement, please tell me whether you find it very convincing, somewhat convincing, or not convincing. Split Sample*

Air quality and access for vulnerable populations are compelling rationales for the clean transportation fund.



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The air quality message resonates with a majority of independent voters.

(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Party			Clean Transportation Targets		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Cons. Str. Support	Swing	Ever Oppose
Air	**48%**	53%	51%	35%	70%	42%	22%
Vulnerable	**43%**	50%	45%	27%	69%	33%	15%
Economy	**37%**	45%	34%	23%	61%	28%	13%
Climate Change	**35%**	40%	42%	17%	58%	26%	8%

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Clean Transportation Fund Opposition Messages
(Ranked in Order of Effectiveness)

(TRUST) We just can't trust the promise from state government that they will invest the money in clean energy or clean transportation; we know the money will end up in a slush fund for legislators to use however they want.

^(URBAN) We know that any investments in buses, trains and clean energy will be largely made in New York City, with nothing left over for the rest of the state.

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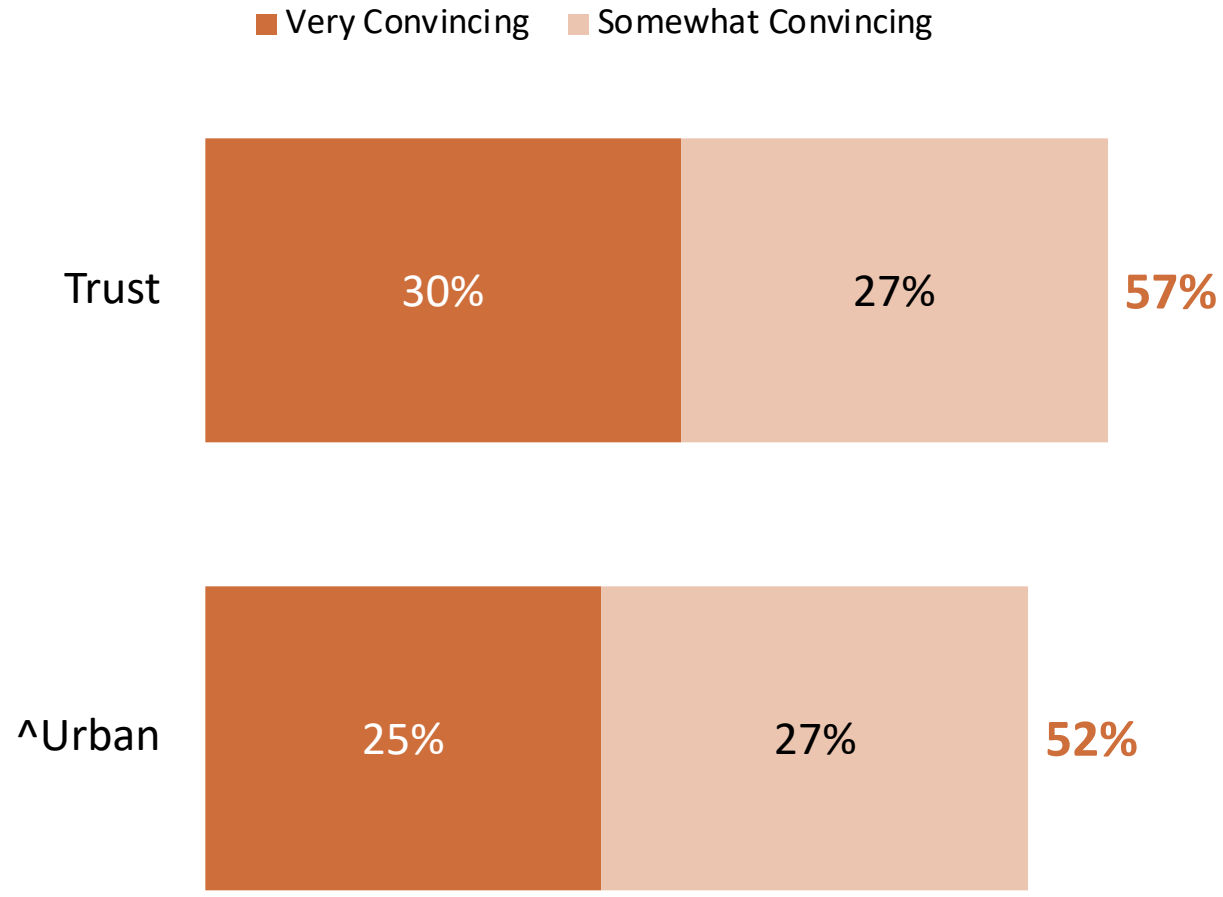
Majorities find each message somewhat convincing, but the "trust" frame inspires more intensity.



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The messages are most strongly persuasive among Republicans, who largely oppose the proposal.

(Very Convincing)

Statement	All Voters	Party			Clean Transportation Targets		
		Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Cons. Str. Support	Swing	Ever Oppose
Trust	30%	22%	25%	52%	20%	25%	60%
^Urban	25%	15%	28%	43%	19%	23%	48%

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Conclusions

Conclusions

- ✓ New York voters understand that climate change is occurring, and most feel they will be harmed by it personally.
- ✓ Climate change is among their top concerns, along with the cost of healthcare taxes, and deteriorating infrastructure.
- ✓ More than three-quarters support the broad outlines of a carbon pollution fee that would invest in clean energy and transportation and land and water conservation, including majorities in every major demographic and geographic subgroup.
- ✓ A clean transportation fund to expand transportation choices is also very broadly popular – though a funding mechanism was not specified.
- ✓ Majorities say they would be more likely to support a legislator who backed either proposal, with another one-third saying it makes no difference.
- ✓ Voters are willing to pay up to $10 additional per month to support either concept once they hear what it might fund. Their top-ranking projects include reducing air pollution, repairing infrastructure and conserving natural areas.
- ✓ A brief exchange of messaging leaves support for each proposal at or above seven in ten.
- ✓ While more research needs to be done to assess support for more specific proposals – especially with cost information and a fuller back-and-forth on messaging – the initial findings are encouraging.

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