

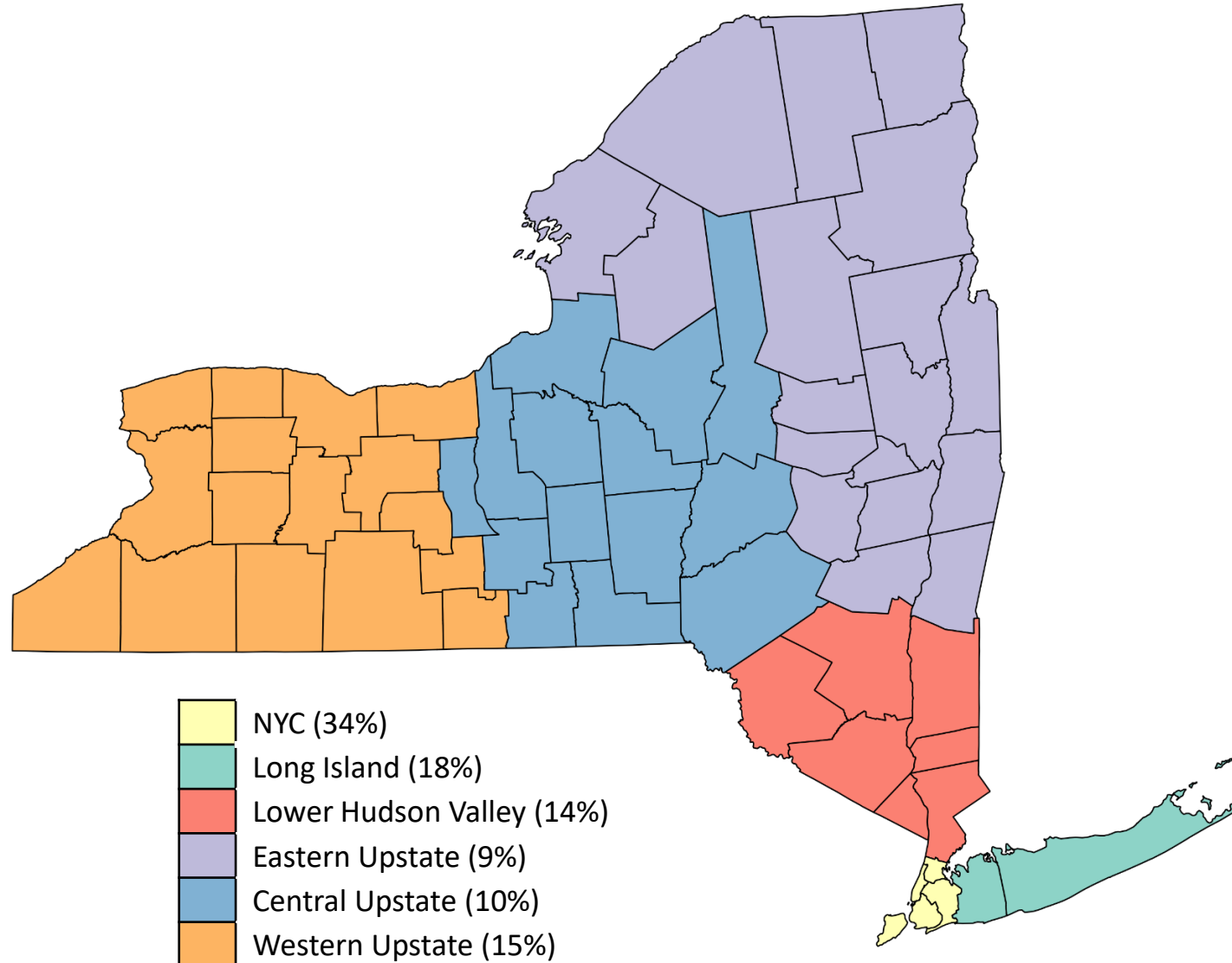


**Common Cause New York  
Statewide Unaffiliated Voter Survey**  
*September 2023*

- ▶ Survey of Unaffiliated voters in New York State
- ▶ Multimodal telephone and email- and text-to-web methodology:
  - Telephone interviews were conducted by trained, professional interviewers; landlines and mobile phones included
  - Text and email invitations were sent with a link to the web survey
    - The quality of the New York State voter file is a challenge. Our initial estimate was that we would find around a 60% incidence rate, but final incidence was 19%.
- ▶ Conducted August 15 – 24, 2023
- ▶ 600 collected responses, including an oversample of high propensity voters
  - Overall data weighted to n450; Margin of error  $\pm 4.62$  percentage points
  - High propensity voters n287; Margin of error  $\pm 5.74$  percentage points

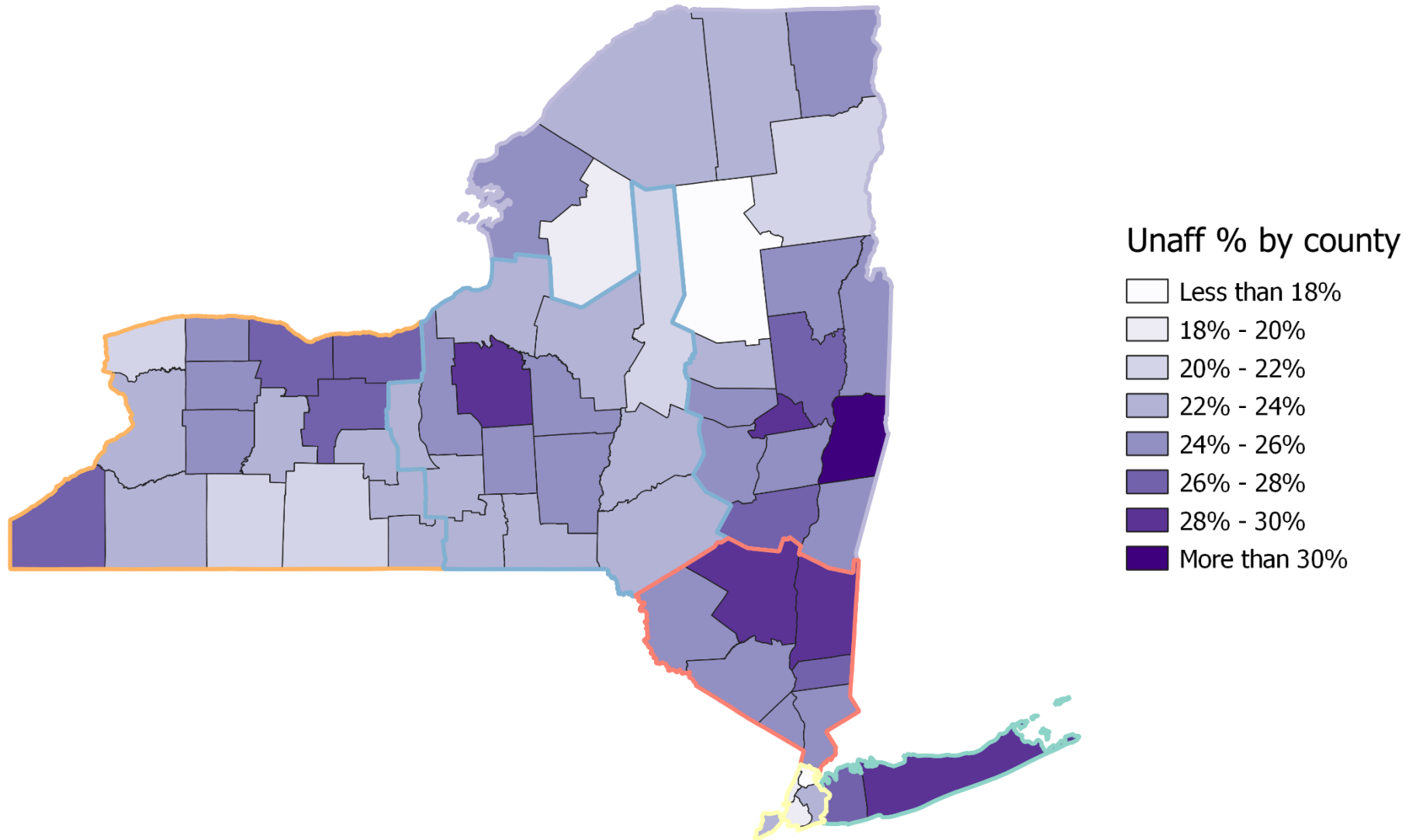
Please note that due to rounding, some percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.

# Regions



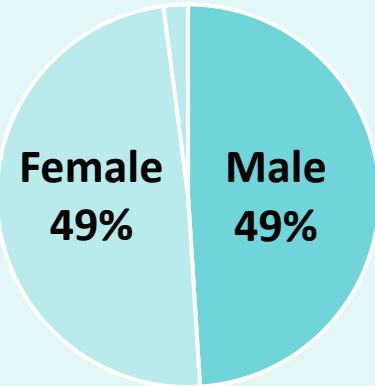


# Unaffiliated Voters by County

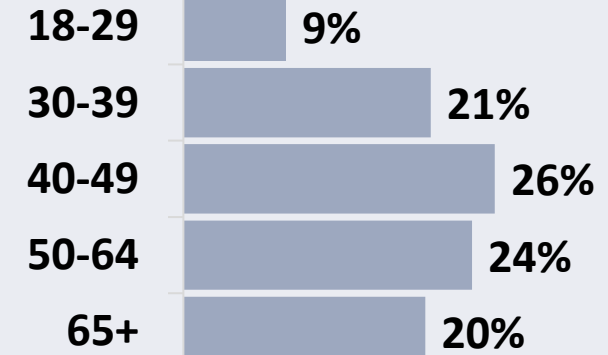
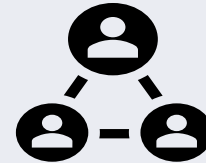


# Profile of Unaffiliated Voters

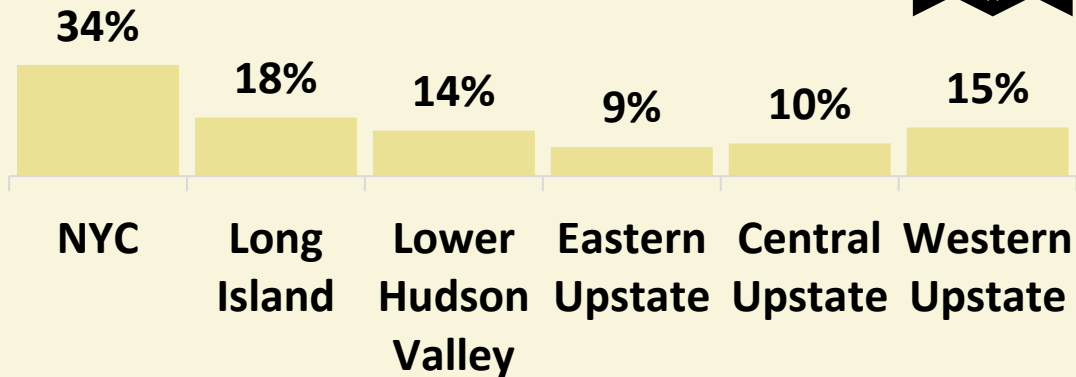
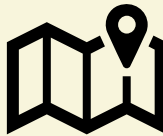
## Gender



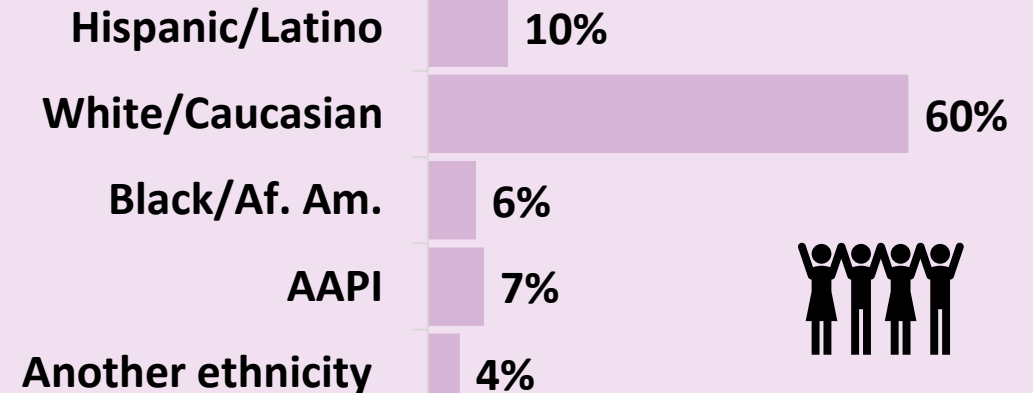
## Age



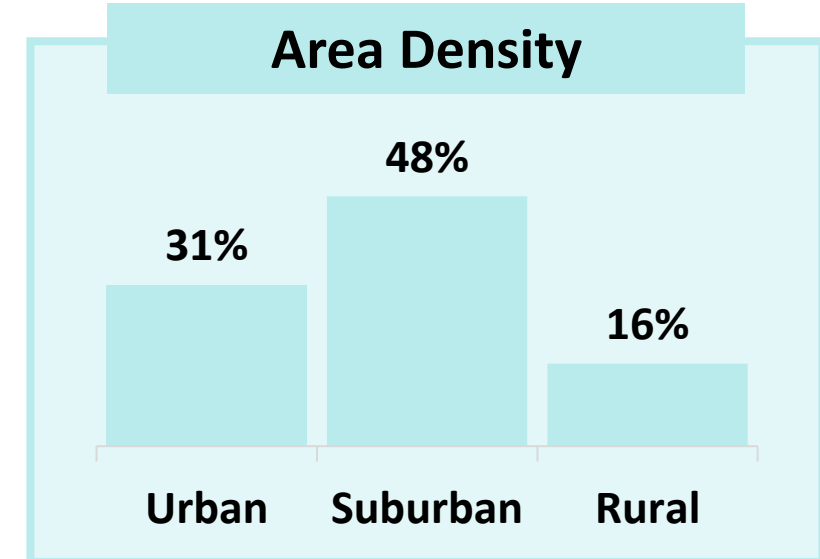
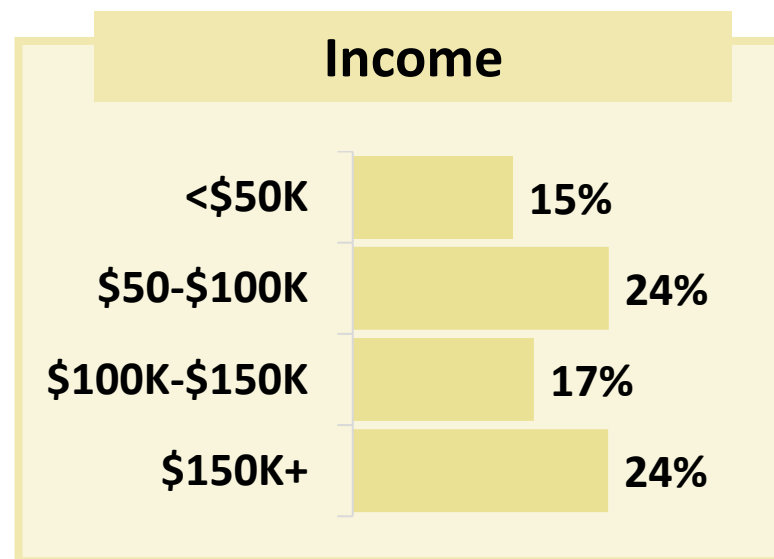
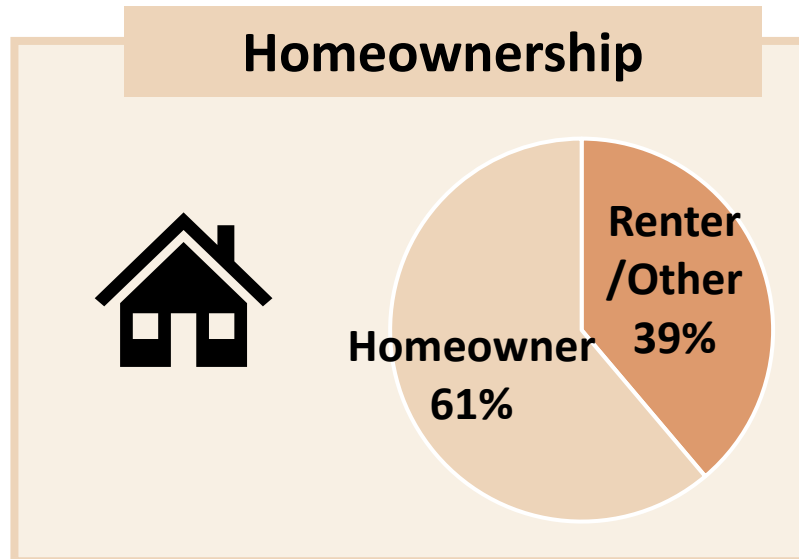
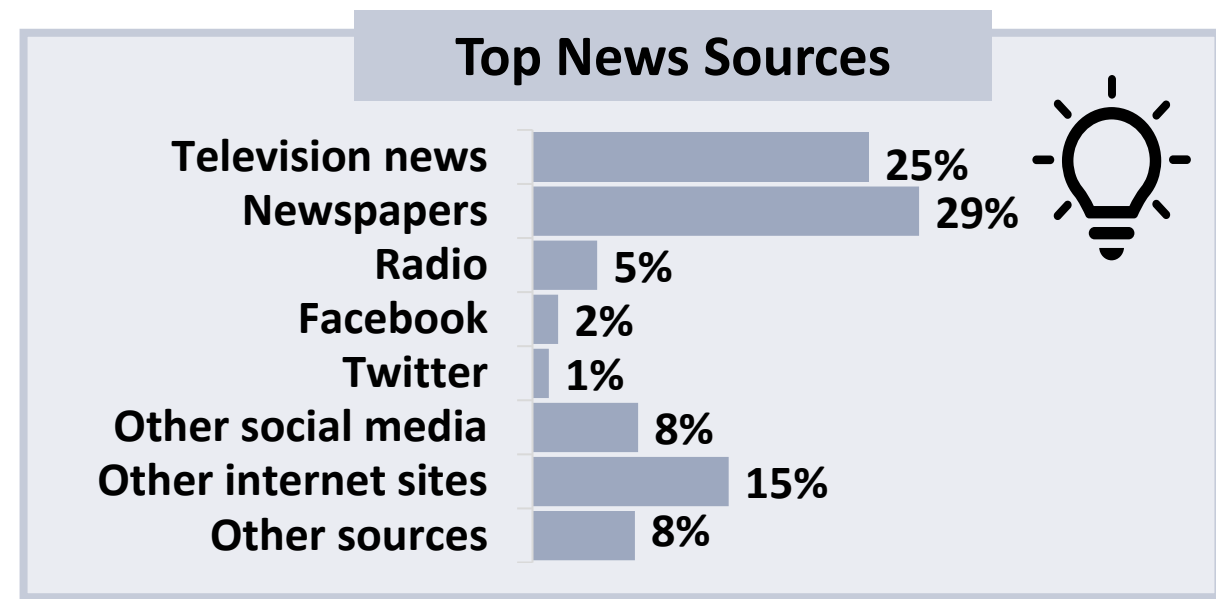
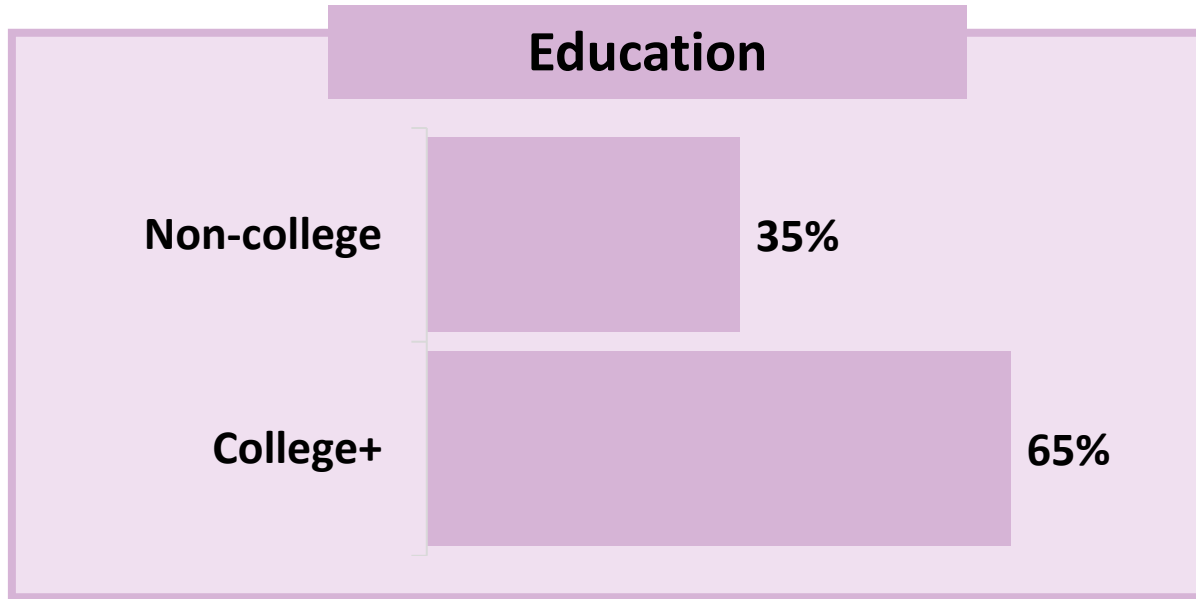
## Region



## Ethnicity



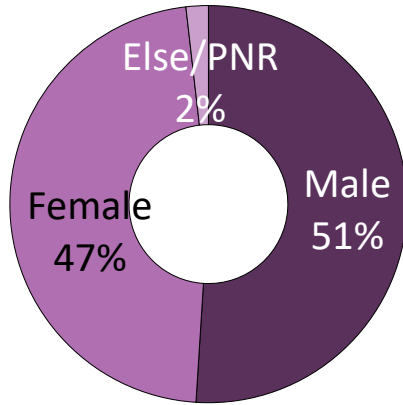
# Profile of Unaffiliated Voters, Continued



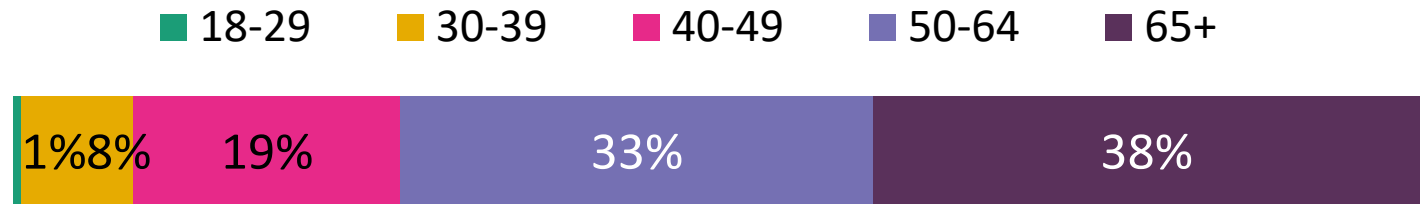
# High Propensity Voters (31%)

*Compared to the overall, high propensity voters are more likely to be over the age of 50, white, and living outside of NYC.*

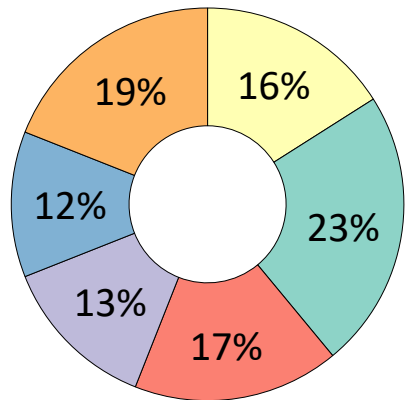
## Gender



## Age

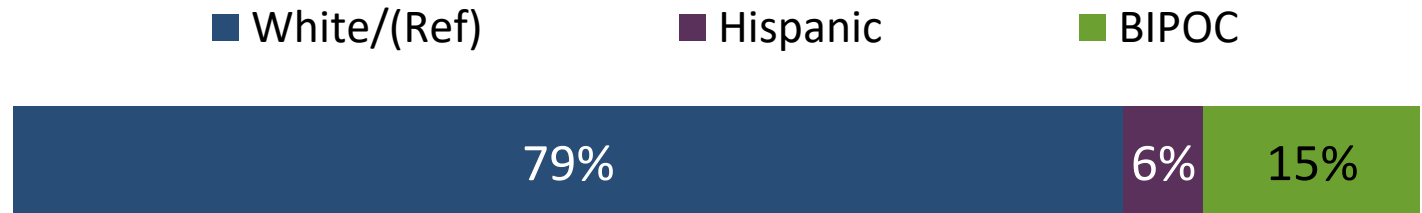


## Region



- NYC
- Long Island
- Lower Hudson Valley
- Eastern Upstate
- Central Upstate
- Western Upstate

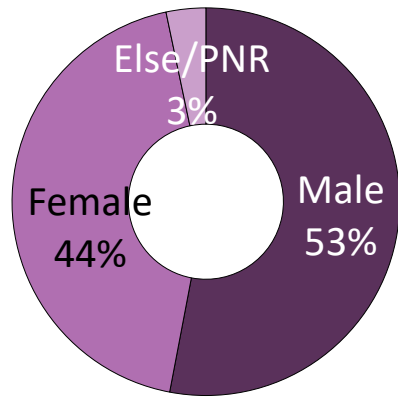
## Ethnicity



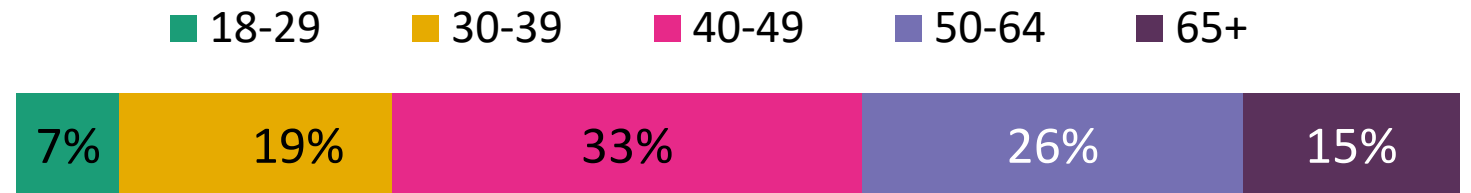
# Mid Propensity Voters (29%)

*Compared to the overall, mid propensity voters are more likely to be men, white, and in NYC.*

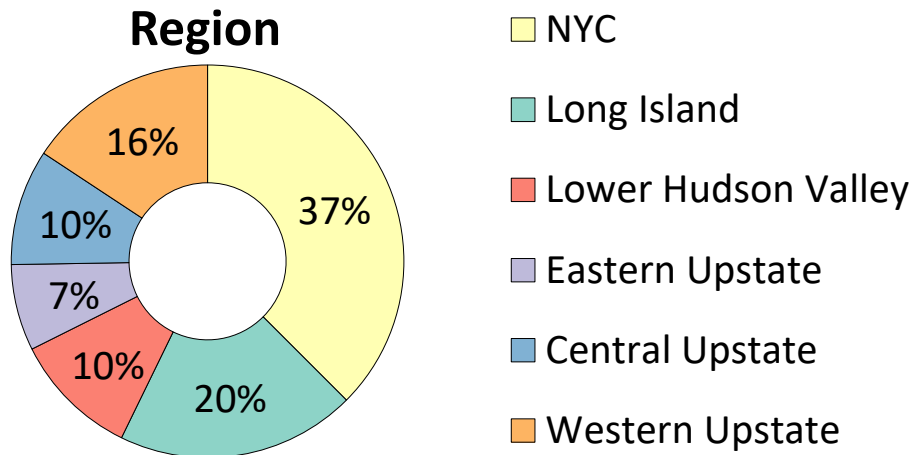
## Gender



## Age



## Region



## Ethnicity

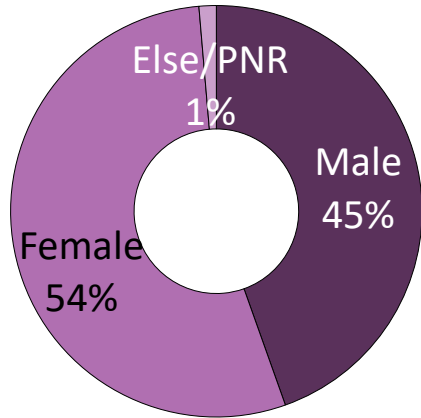




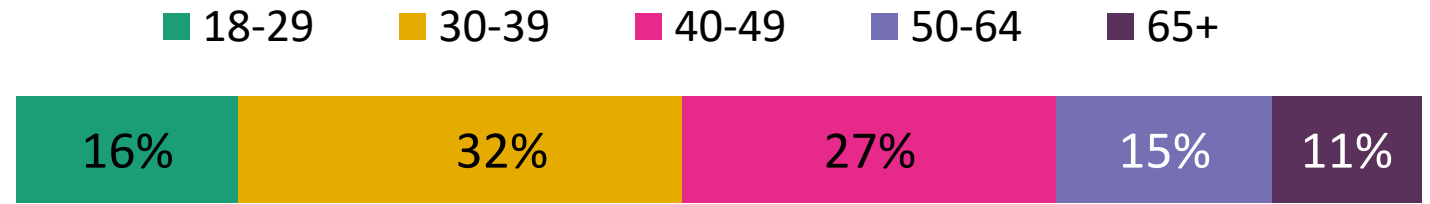
# Low Propensity Voters (40%)

Compared to the overall, low propensity voters are more likely to be women, under the age of 40, in NYC, and Hispanic.

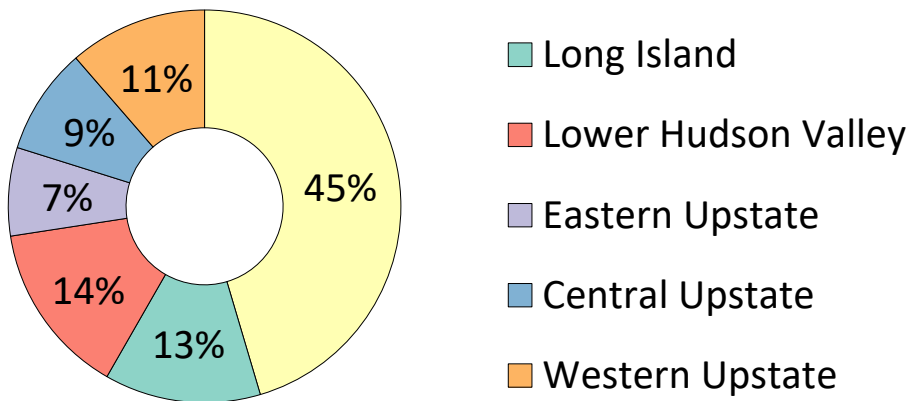
## Gender



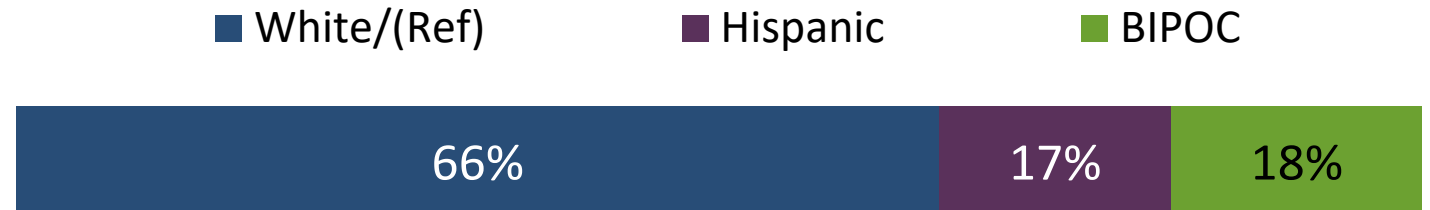
## Age



## Region



## Ethnicity



# Key Findings

- ▶ Unaffiliated voters tend to be white, college-educated, and one-third live in New York City.
  - These voters make up larger shares of the electorate in the Lower Hudson Valley, around Albany, and on Long Island
  - These voters are pessimistic, with more than three-in-four voters indicating New York is heading off on the wrong track, and one-fifth of voters saying politicians or political division is the most important issue for them.
- ▶ Overall, Unaffiliated voters are engaged in politics and think voting is important. Unaffiliated voters report that they believe it's their civic duty to vote and that they want to have a voice.
- ▶ A significant majority stated they are likely to vote in primaries if they could and are engaged down the ballot with local elections, as well.
  - A majority supported all the policies that would allow them to vote in primaries, though temporarily registering as a party enjoyed the least support of the policies tested.
- ▶ These voters say they registered as Unaffiliated because they dislike the parties, and being Unaffiliated means to them that they are independent and have freedom of choice.



# Unaffiliated Voter Attitudes

# Voter Registration – General Motivations

*Civic duty, democracy, and having a voice are top reasons for registering to vote.*

Response	%
Civic duty	25%
Democracy/Have a voice	22%
Change/Policies	13%
Turned 18/Voting Age	9%
In school/at the DMV	4%
Anti-Democrat/Pro-Republicans	4%
General positive	4%
Rights/Freedom/Civil rights	3%
Family/Parents/Friends	3%
Other	7%
Don't Know/Unsure	2%
None/Nothing	1%
Refused	2%

**Thinking about when you initially registered in New York to vote, what influenced your decision to register?**

“It is a privilege people in other countries don't always have.”

“Being politically engaged is important.”

“I wanted to have my vote count toward improving freedoms, equality, and women's issues in our country.”

“I always believed people have a civic duty to vote.”

“I wanted to make sure my values are represented.”

# Unaffiliated Voter Motivation

*Just over a third indicated disliking partisanship/parties as the reason they registered unaffiliated.*

Response	%
Dislike partisanship/both parties	36%
Centrist/Moderate/Independent/Non-partisan	18%
Vote for best candidate/person	15%
Beliefs/Views/Values/Vote by issue	7%
Freedom/Personal choice/Rights	7%
Anti-Democrat/Pro-Republican	3%
Trust nobody/Trust myself	2%
Uninformed/Low information voter	2%
Other	4%
Don't Know/Unsure	1%
None/Nothing	1%
Refused	4%

**And what influenced your decision to register as unaffiliated or without party affiliation?**

“I don't want a target on my back if I went one way or the other.”

“I only vote for the quality of the candidate.”

“I like to leave my options open.”

“My political views don't always fit into one party.”

“Both parties are one in the same, crooked.”



# Unaffiliated Voter Associations

*Just over a third indicated being independent/having no party association as what being unaffiliated means to them.*

Response	%
Independent/No party association	36%
Freedom/Options	19%
Voting for best candidate	16%
Vote by values/views	8%
Can't vote in primaries/My vote doesn't count much	4%
General negative/Oppose	3%
Remain neutral/Not biased	3%
No harassment for contributions/votes	2%
Other	2%
Don't Know/Unsure	0%
None/Nothing	4%
Refused	3%

**What does being an unaffiliated voter or registering as unaffiliated mean to you?**

“It means voting for the person I want irrespective of party.”

“I can't vote in primaries.”

“I can change my mind and vote for middle of the road candidates from either party.”

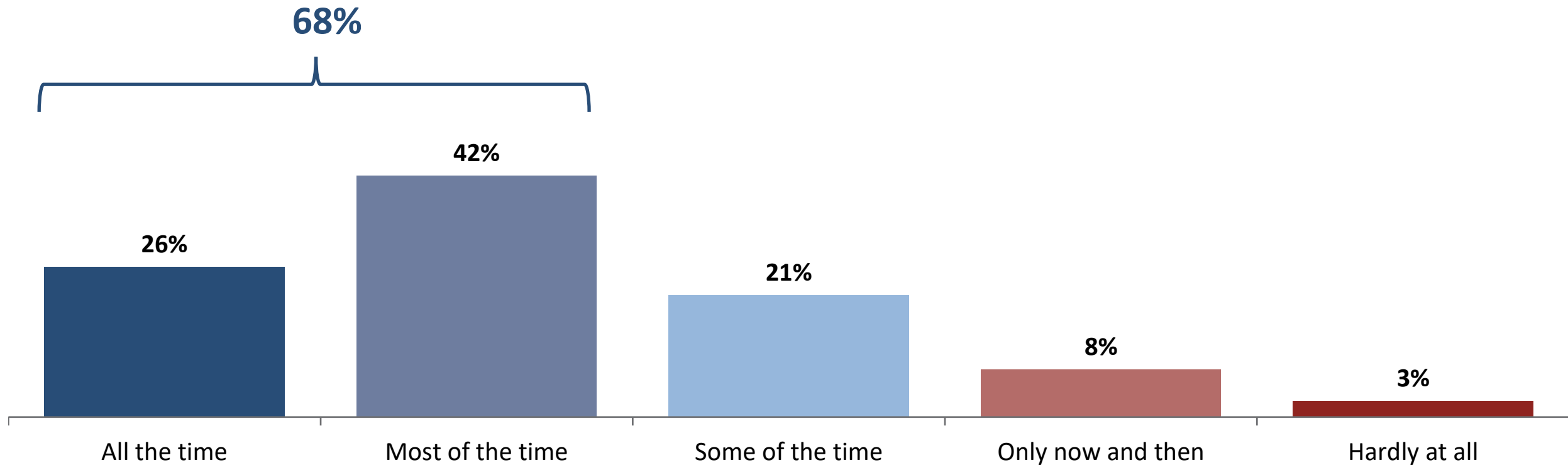
“It means I wish we had viable alternative leftwing parties, but since we don't, I refuse to sign up with the offensive major parties we do have.”

“I can think for myself.”

# Political Attentiveness

*A significant majority indicate they follow government and politics at least most of the time.*

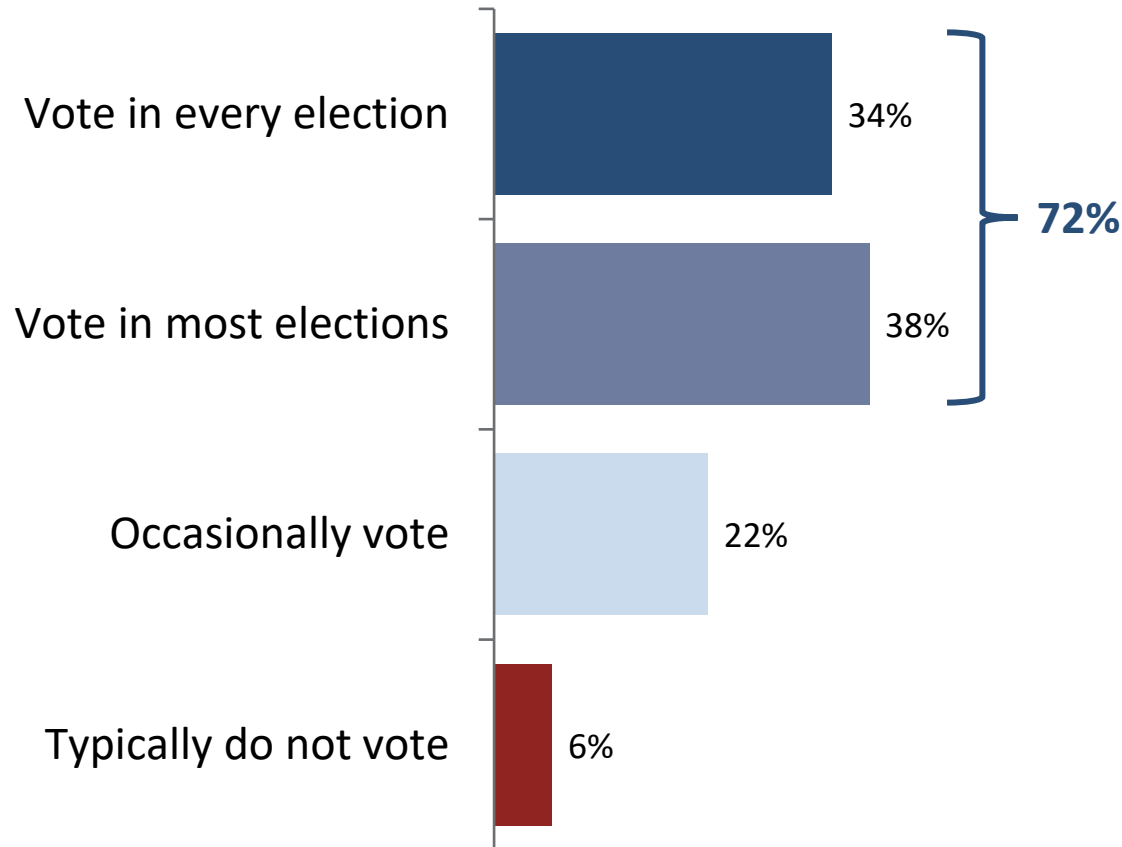
Do you follow what's going on in government and politics...



# Vote Propensity - Frequency

*A strong majority of unaffiliated voters participate in at least most elections.*

Thinking about elections for local offices and measures, do you...

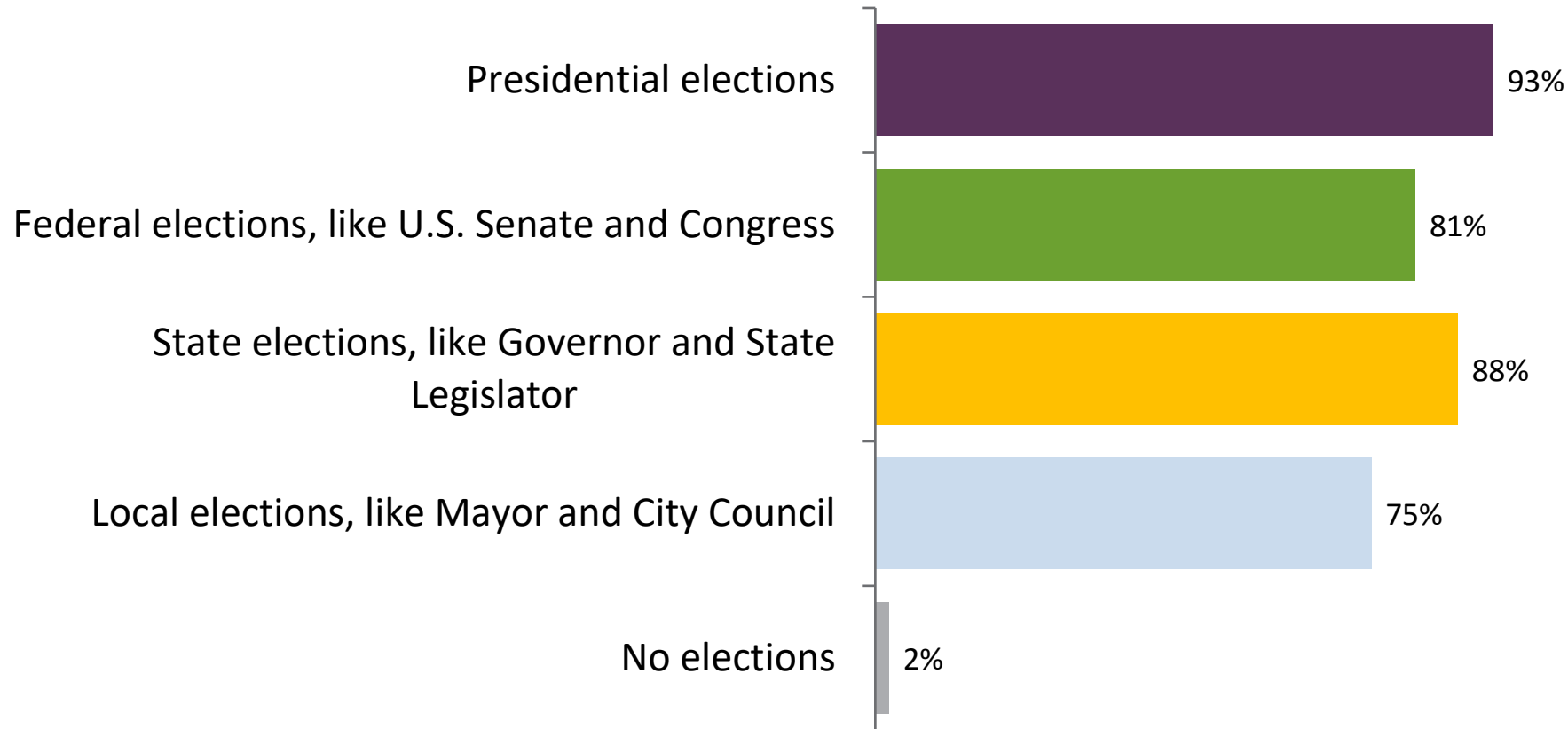


Among high propensity voters (n=287)	%
Every election	55%
Most elections	40%
Occasionally vote	5%
Do not vote	1%

# Vote Propensity – Election Types

*All elections are considered a priority.*

**You're going to hear a list of elections some people might vote in. Please tell me which elections you think are a priority to vote in. (Multiple responses accepted)**

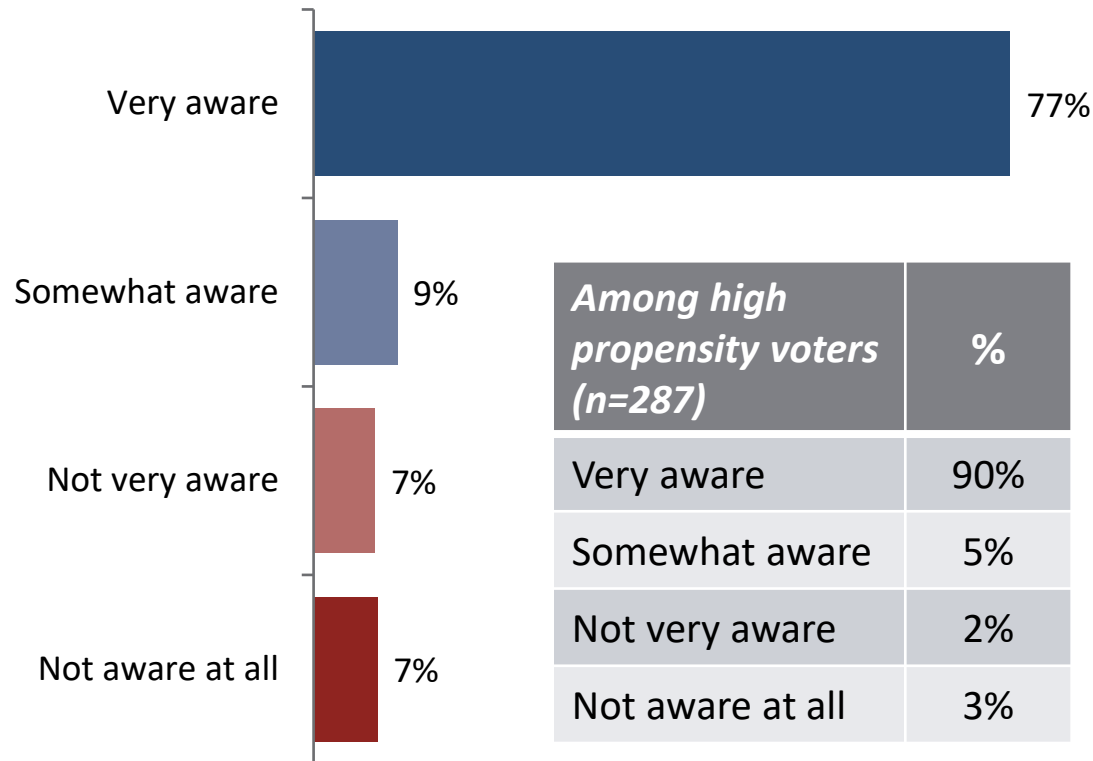


<i>Among high propensity voters (n=287)</i>	<b>%</b>
Presidential	97%
Federal	93%
State	95%
Local	83%

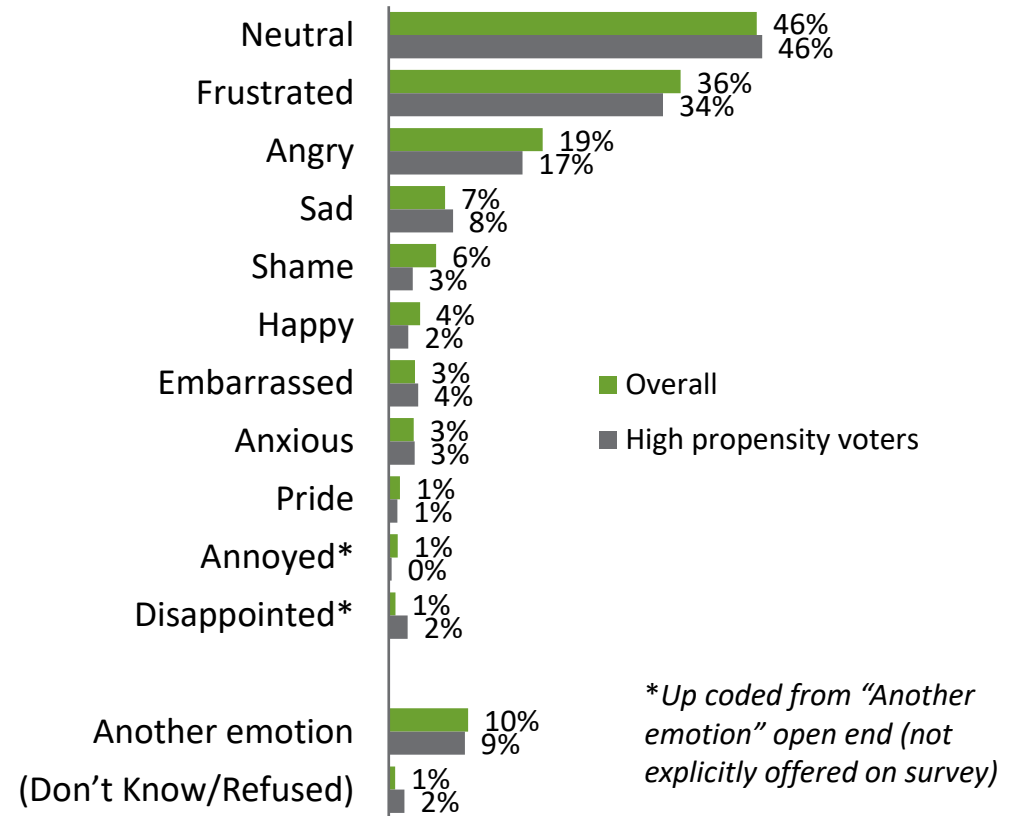
# Awareness with Open End

More than three-in-four voters are aware they cannot vote in primaries. Just under a majority feel neutral about it, and just over a third feel frustrated.

As you may know, New York is a closed primary state, meaning that unaffiliated voters are not able to vote in primary elections. How aware are you that unaffiliated voters such as yourself are unable to vote in primary elections in New York?



Which emotions do you feel about this information? (Multiple responses accepted)

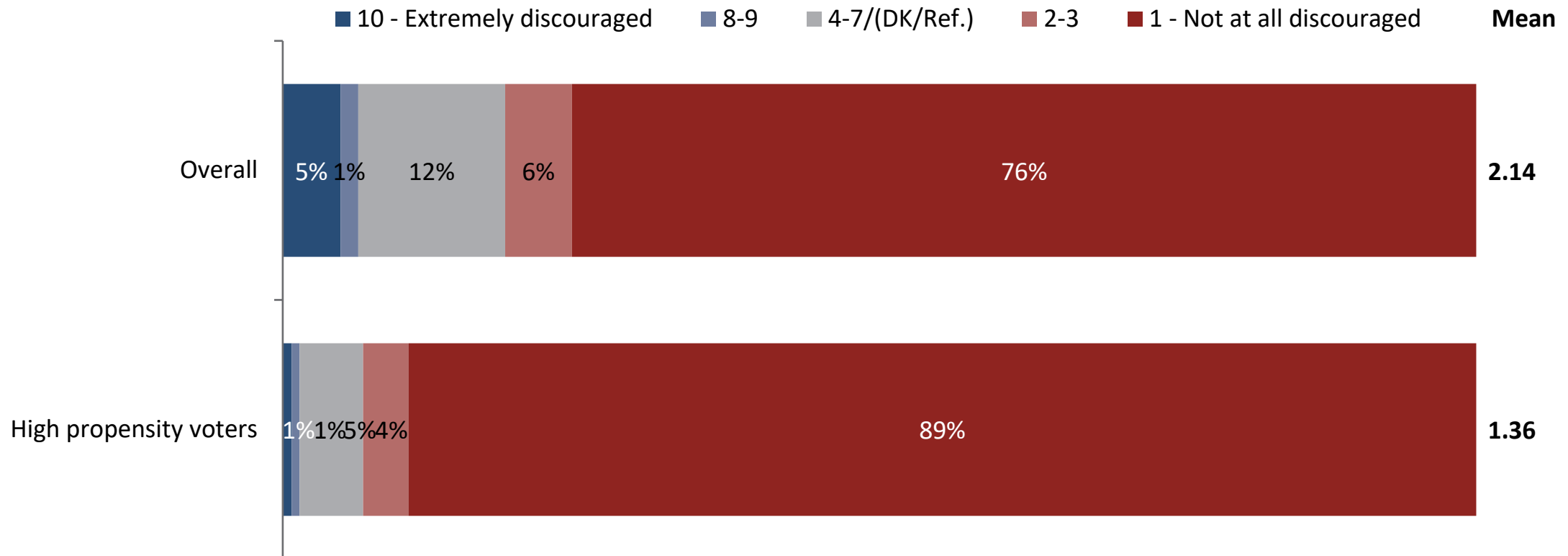




# General Election Vote Discouragement

More than three-quarters of voters are not at all discouraged from voting in general elections.

Since unaffiliated voters in New York are not able to vote in primary elections, how much does this discourage you from voting in general elections, using a scale from one to ten, with one meaning not at all discouraged and ten meaning extremely discouraged?

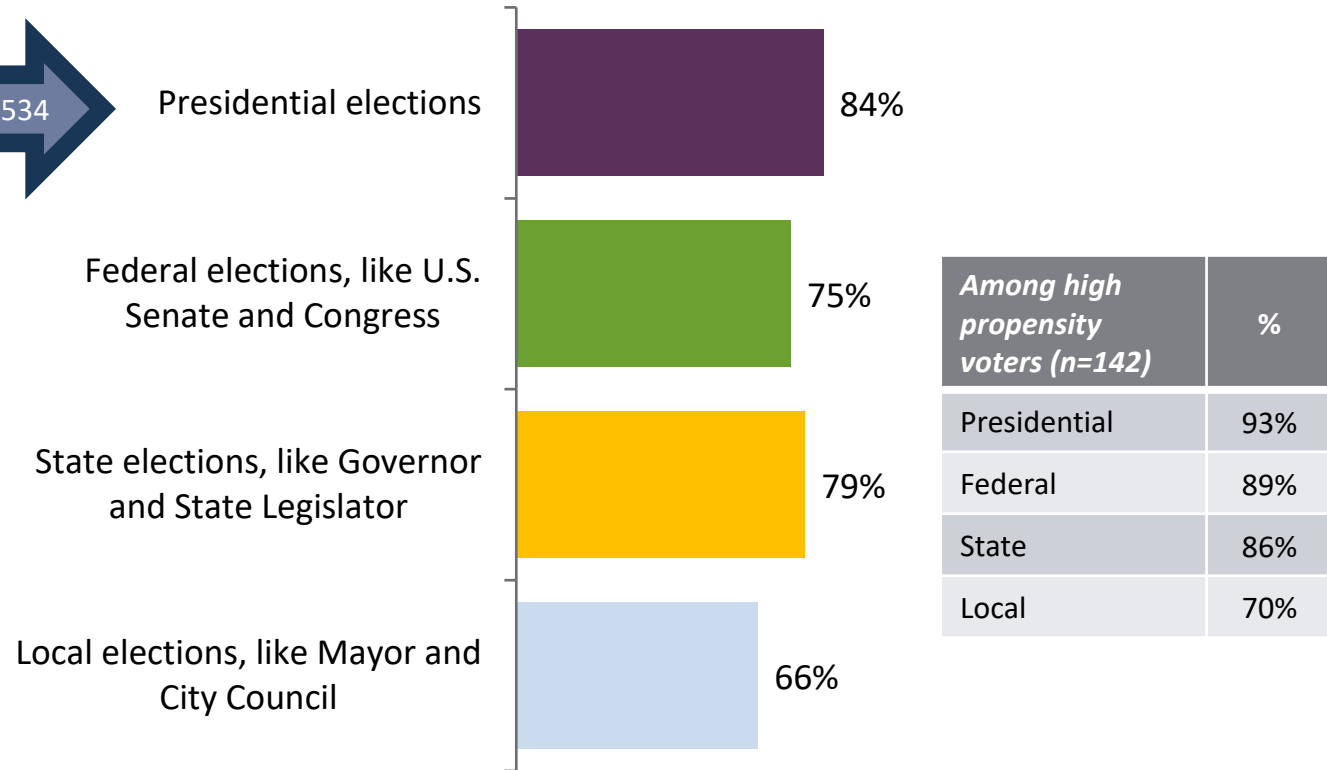
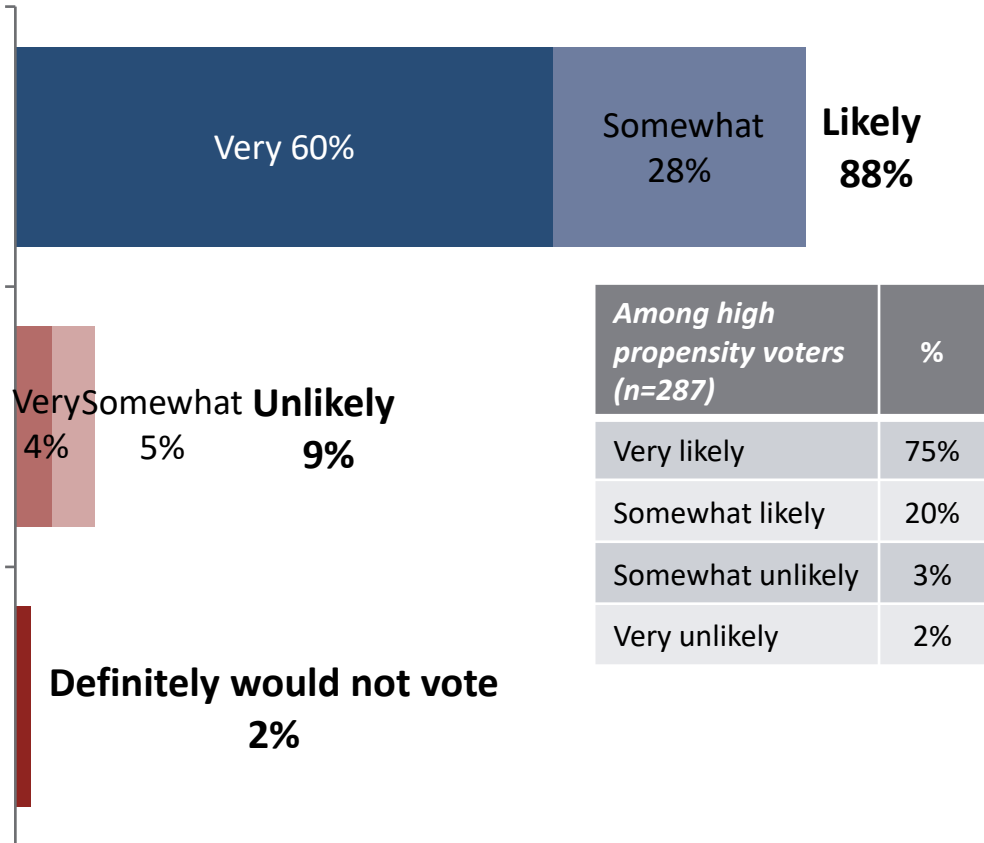


# Primary Election Vote Propensity

A strong majority would vote in primaries if they could. And of those who are likely, a majority indicated all elections as elections they would vote in.

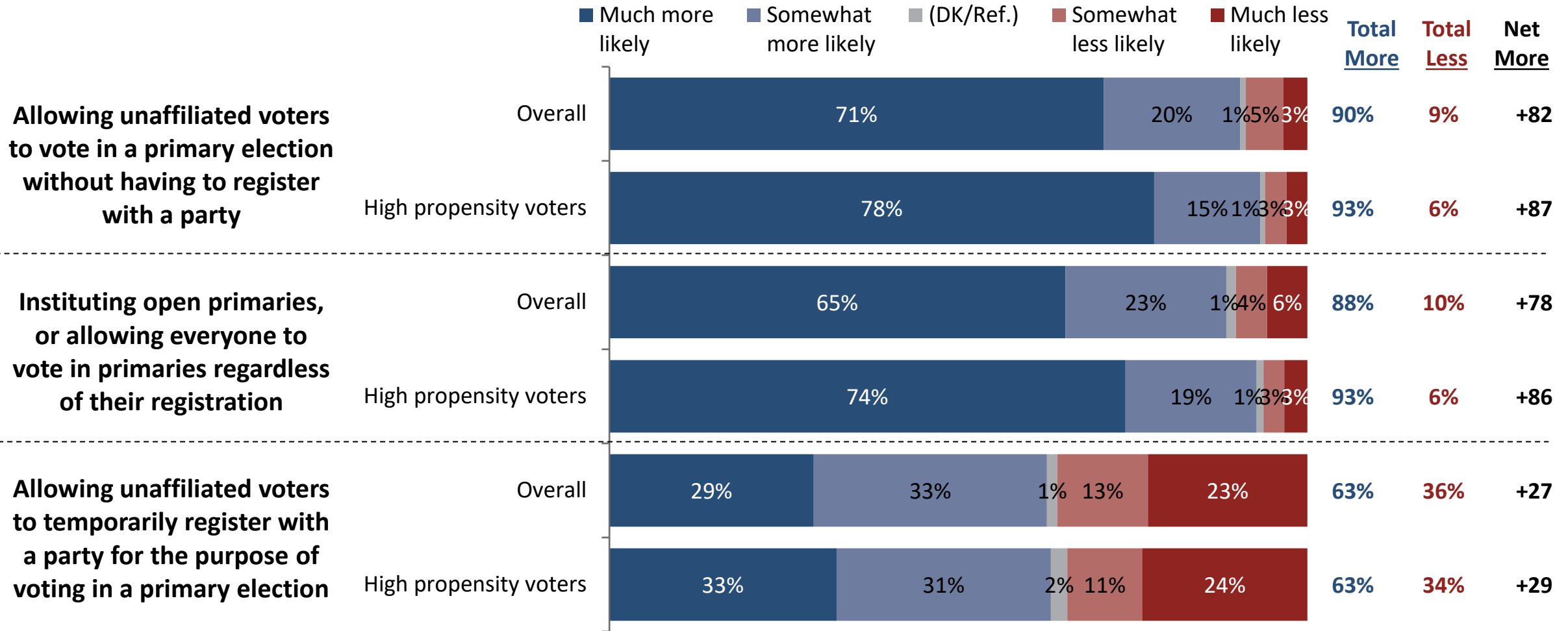
If unaffiliated voters were allowed to vote in primary elections, how likely would you be to vote in a primary election?

And which primary elections would you vote in? Please select all that apply. (Multiple responses accepted)



# Election Policy Outcomes

Voters are split on temporarily registering with a party for the purpose of voting in a primary.

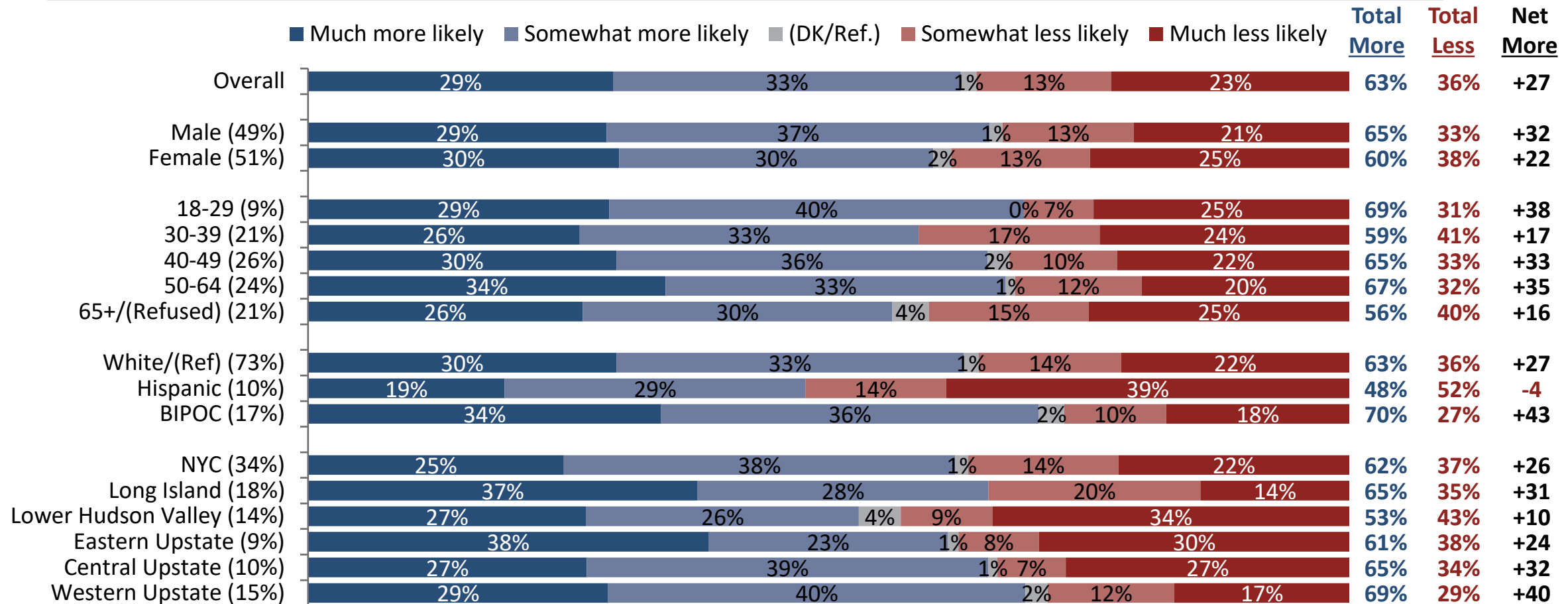


Q20-22. Next I will read you a list of election policies that could be considered in the state of New York. For each one, please tell me if that policy would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to vote in a primary election.

# Temporary Registration by Subgroups

*Hispanic voters, as well as those in Lower Hudson Valley would be less likely to vote in a primary if they had to temporarily register with a party.*

**...Allowing unaffiliated voters to temporarily register with a party for the purpose of voting in a primary election**

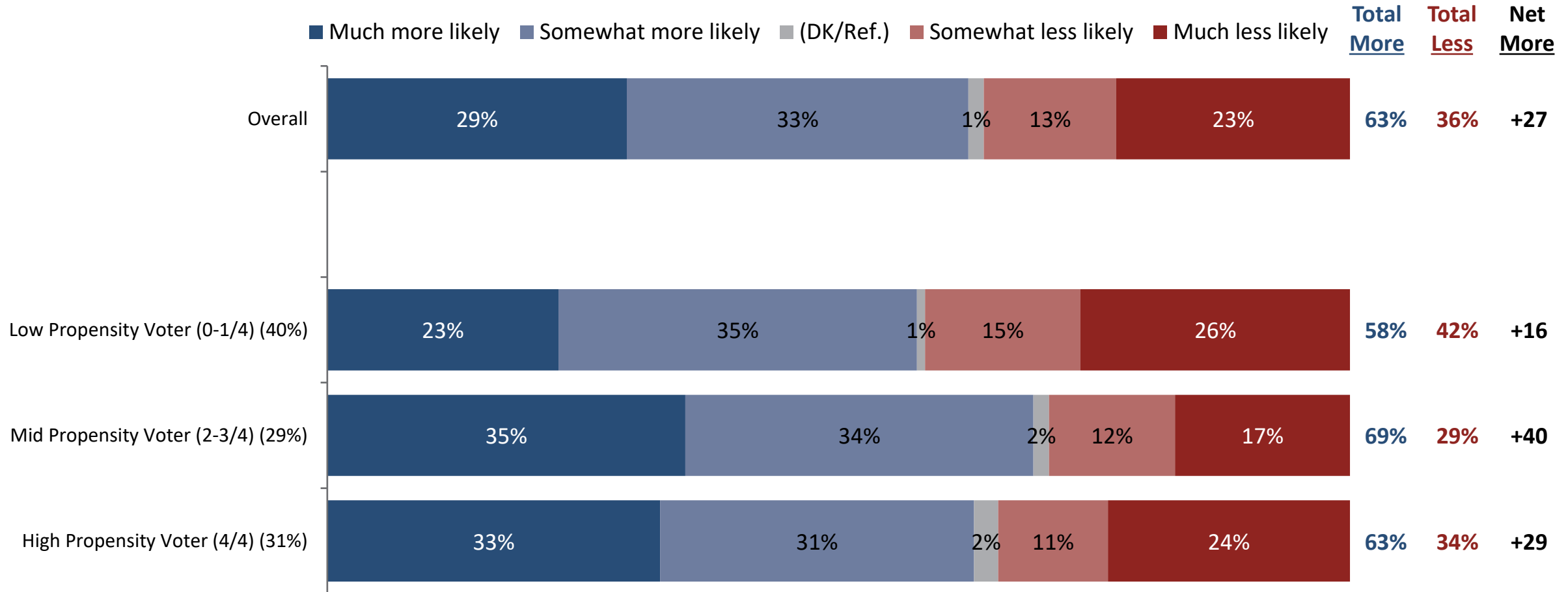


Q21. Next I will read you a list of election policies that could be considered in the state of New York. For each one, please tell me if that policy would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to vote in a primary election.

# Temporary Registration by Vote Propensity

Low propensity voters would be least likely to vote in a primary if they had to temporarily register with a party.

*...Allowing unaffiliated voters to temporarily register with a party for the purpose of voting in a primary election*

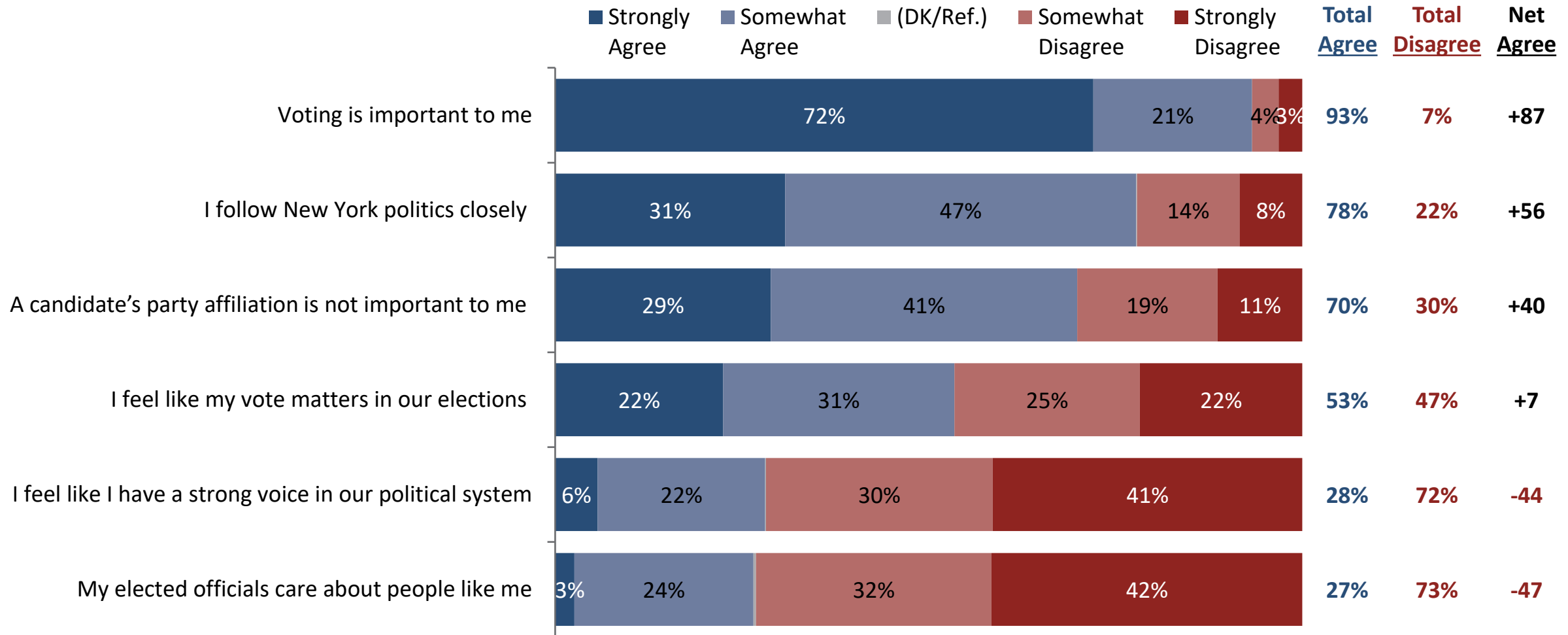


Q21. Next I will read you a list of election policies that could be considered in the state of New York. For each one, please tell me if that policy would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to vote in a primary election.



# Unaffiliated Voter Engagement

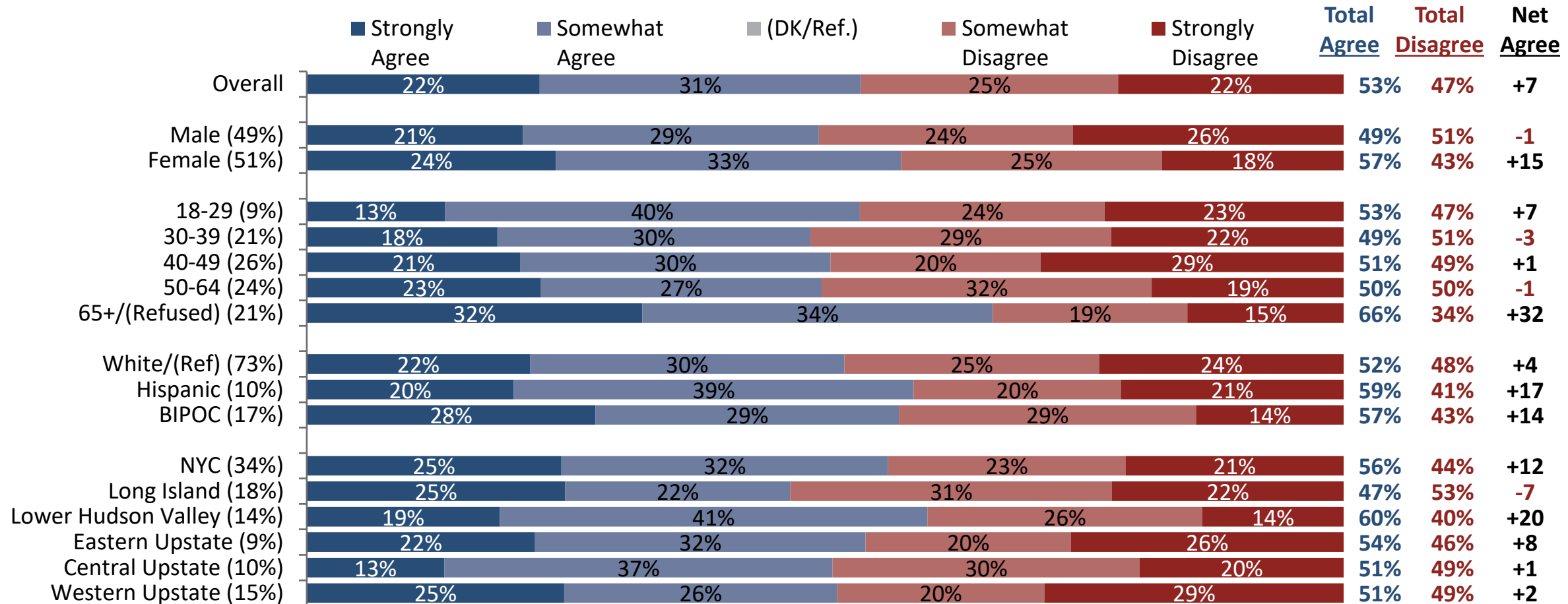
*Voting is important to these voters, but they don't believe they have a strong voice and that officials care about them.*



# Vote Impact Sentiment by Subgroups

Voters over the age of 65 and voters in Lower Hudson Valley are more likely to feel like their vote matters.

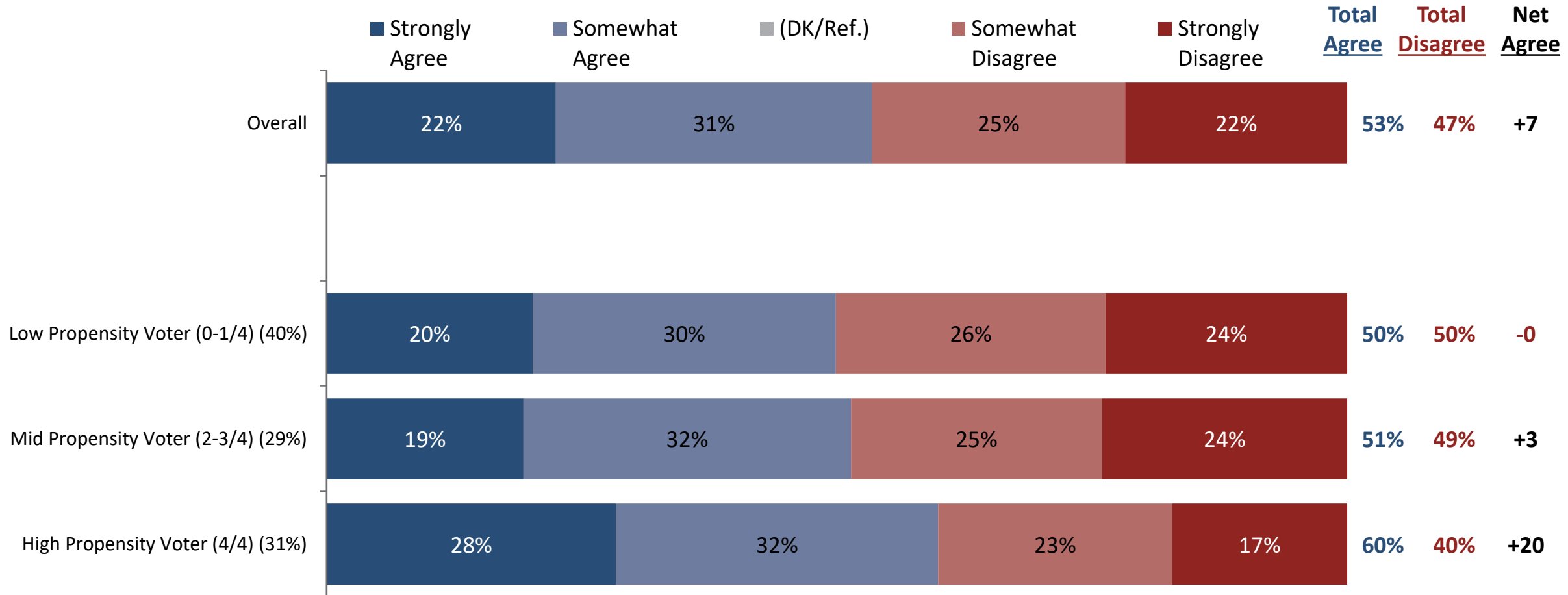
*...I feel like my vote matters in our elections*



# Vote Impact Sentiment by Vote Propensity

High propensity voters are more likely to feel like their vote matters.

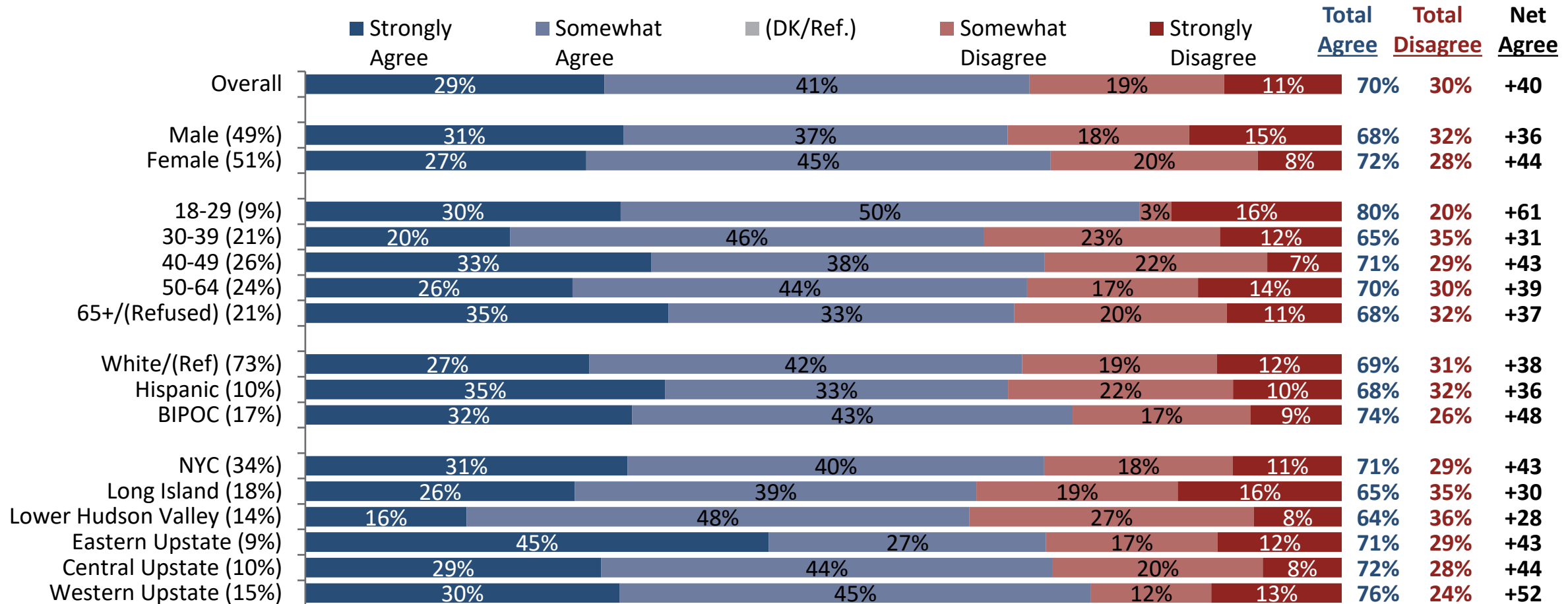
*...I feel like my vote matters in our elections*



# Candidate Party Affiliation Importance by Subgroups

A majority across subgroups agree a candidate's party affiliation does not matter to them.

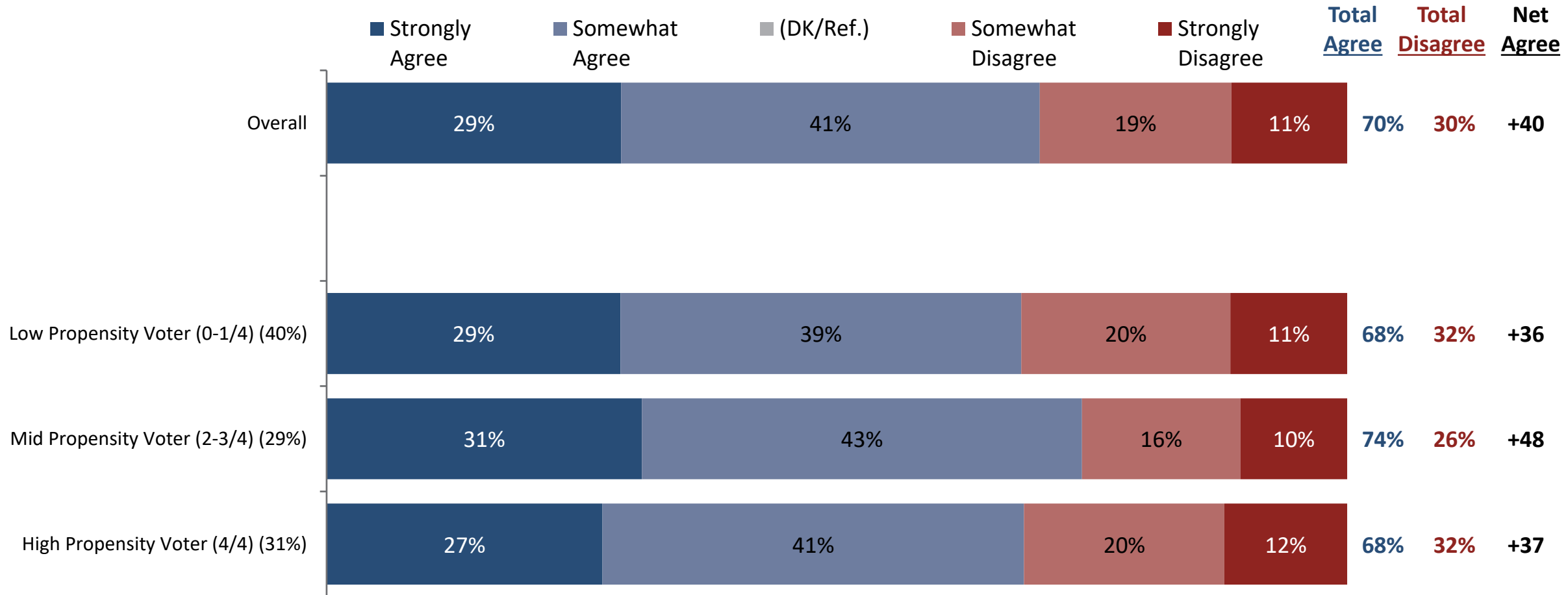
...A candidate's party affiliation is not important to me



# Candidate Party Affiliation Importance by Vote Propensity

*Mid propensity voters are more likely to agree with this.*

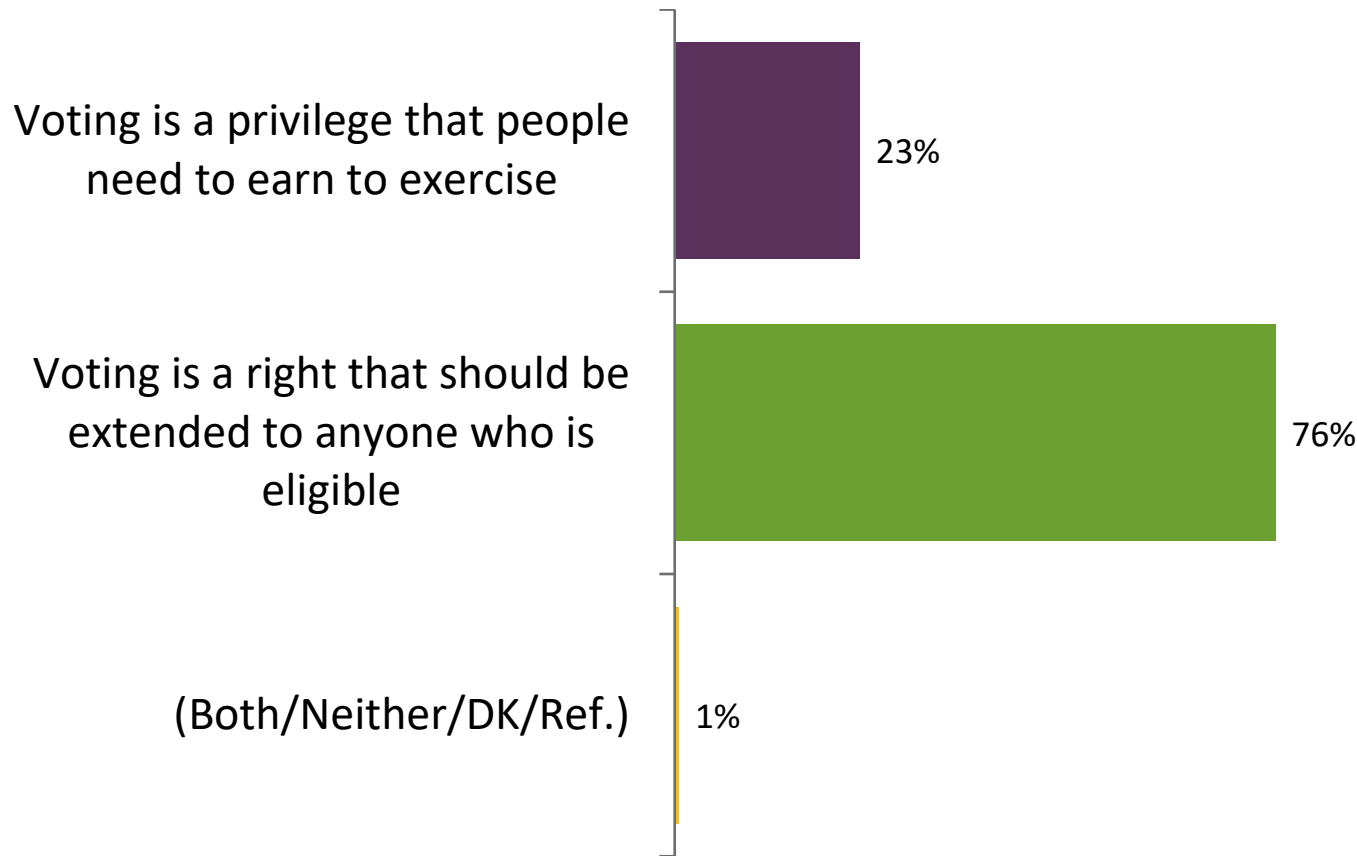
*...A candidate's party affiliation is not important to me*



# Voting: Right vs. Privilege

More than three-in-four voters believe voting is a right.

Next I'd like to read you a pair of statements. Please indicate which is closer to your opinion.



	Privilege	Right
Overall	23%	76%
Male (49%)	25%	73%
Female (51%)	21%	79%
18-29 (9%)	13%	87%
30-39 (21%)	22%	76%
40-49 (26%)	25%	75%
50-64 (24%)	30%	69%
65+/(Refused) (21%)	20%	80%
White/(Ref) (73%)	24%	75%
Hispanic (10%)	23%	77%
BIPOC (17%)	21%	79%
NYC (34%)	23%	77%
Long Island (18%)	26%	72%
Lower Hudson Valley (14%)	15%	85%
Eastern Upstate (9%)	23%	77%
Central Upstate (10%)	24%	75%
Western Upstate (15%)	29%	70%
Low Propensity Voter (0-1/4) (40%)	21%	78%
Mid Propensity Voter (2-3/4) (29%)	27%	72%
High Propensity Voter (4/4) (31%)	23%	77%

# Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ Unaffiliated voters are highly engaged and involved with politics but dissatisfied with the current environment. These are not lazy voters who are Unaffiliated through oversight or apathy. Most intentionally choose to be disaffiliated from either political party and see it as a point of pride to be free of party labels.
- ▶ While these voters report being frustrated with the party barrier to primary voting, it does not seem to inhibit them from voting in other elections. These voters are likely to vote in primaries if barriers were removed. Barriers that do not require them to affiliate with a party are likely to see better engagement.
- ▶ In addition to party fatigue, these voters indicate high levels of feeling disenfranchised by politicians and the government. They overwhelmingly feel that voting is a right, and for many it's a civic duty, but do not feel that they have a voice or that elected officials care about people like them.
- ▶ For the next stage of qualitative research, we recommend the following:
  - NYC Area: split by age
  - Long Island or Central Upstate Area: Split by Gender



**Jane Rayburn**

**jane@emcresearch.com**

**850.443.0799**

**Alexa DeJesus**

**alexa@emcresearch.com**

**202.849.6533**

**Heidi Comeau**

**heidi@emcresearch.com**

**202.849.6529**