

# FCCCP

## The 2010 Midterm Elections

***BRINGING TOGETHER  
GRANTMAKERS COMMITTED  
TO DEMOCRATIC  
PARTICIPATION IN ALL  
ASPECTS OF CIVIC LIFE***

Celinda Lake – Lake Research Partners  
Washington, DC | Berkeley, CA | New York, NY  
[www.lakeresearch.com](http://www.lakeresearch.com)  
202.776.9066



## Lessons from 2010

- For the third election in a row, voters sought change, and for the second election in a row voters were focused on the economy and jobs. Nearly two-thirds of voters were focused on the economy and jobs and the same share believes the country was off on the wrong track. The economy and jobs were key mobilizing issues this cycle, and progressives lost the voters concerned about the economy, especially blue-collar voters.
- The 2010 election was a referendum on Obama and Congress. Obama's job performance polarized the electorate and a majority disapproved of the job he was doing and voted solidly Republican. Candidates ran against Congress.
- The implications at the state level and for redistricting are profound, as Republicans picked up 680 seats in state legislatures—the most in the modern era—according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. To put this number in perspective, in 1994, Republicans picked up 472 seats. The previous record was in the post-Watergate election of 1974, when Democrats picked up 628 seats. Republicans gained majorities in at least 14 state house chambers and have control of both chambers in 26 state legislatures, and in 15 states Republicans hold the redistricting trifecta, meaning they have control of both chambers of the state legislature and the governorship.
- Voting groups that favored Obama in 2008 such as women, younger voters, African Americans, independents, unmarried voters, and suburban voters either turned out at lower rates this year or voted for a Republican candidate. The biggest shift was among independent voters who supported Democrats by 18 points in both 2006 and 2008, but supported the Republican by 18 points in 2010 for a shift of 36 points.
- The Tea Party Movement played a role in the 2010 elections. Forty-percent of voters said they support the Tea Party Movement, and 23% said their vote for the House was an indication of their support. The Tea Party was more popular than either political party, and may have increased the number of conservative voters. Forty-one percent of voters identified themselves as conservative which is the highest since exit polling began in the early 70's.
- At the same time, there was no mandate for conservative policies. Unlike 2006 and 1994, both parties are unpopular. The imperative for progressives is to broadly define and economic narrative.

## The Political Context

Voters are frustrated with Washington. These attitudes brought about the third consecutive change-oriented election that twice before helped Democrats, and this time helped Republicans.



Republicans took control of the House, and Democrats maintained control of the Senate. This is the first time in eight decades that the House changed hands without the Senate following suit. The Republican House gains in 2010 outpaced the 54 seats they won in the similar wave of 1994 – when they also took the Senate.

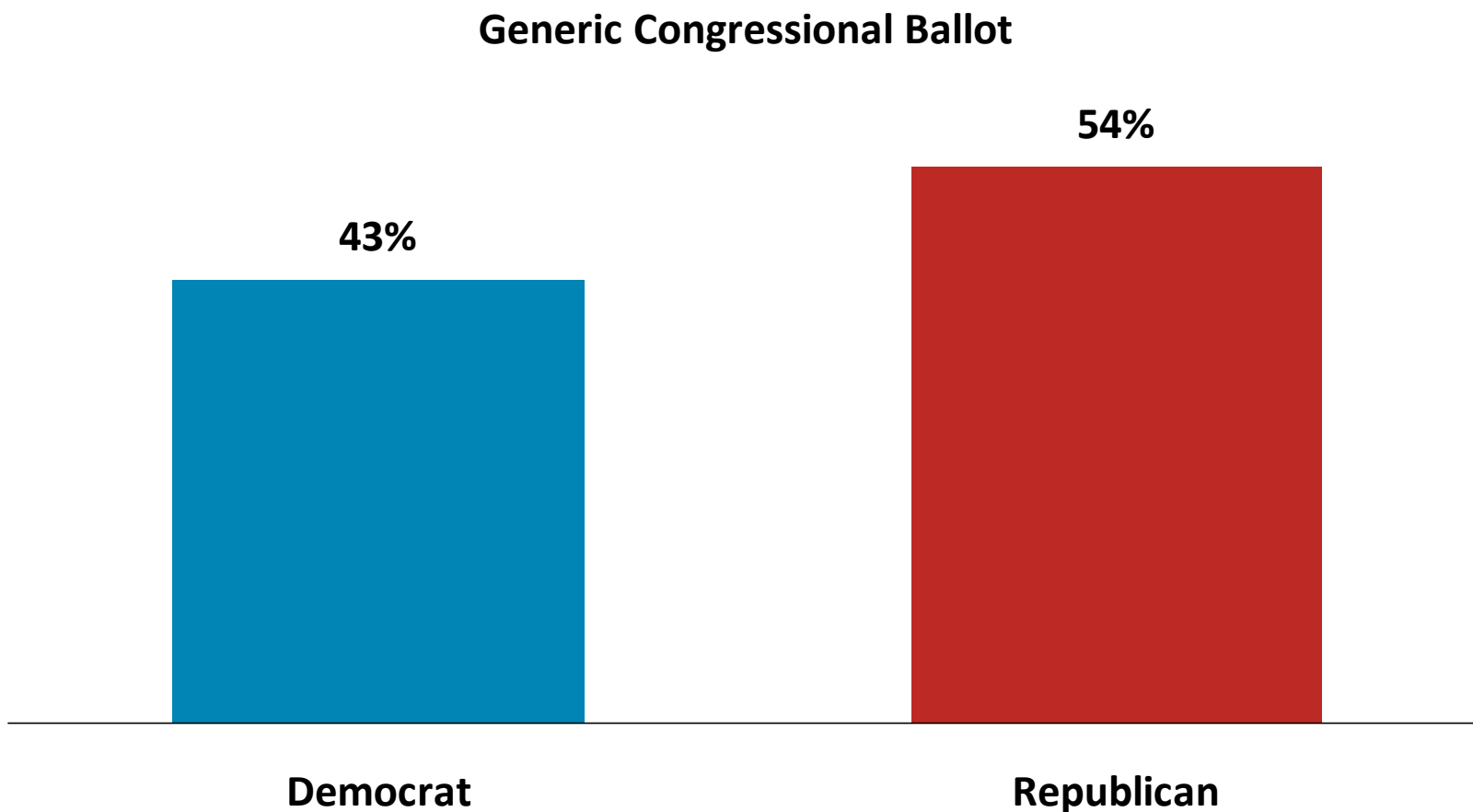
Senate	2010 Gain/Loss	Total Seats in 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress	1994 Gain/Loss	Total Seats in 104 <sup>th</sup> Congress
Democrats	-6	53	-8	48
Republicans	+6	47	+8	52
Independents*	0	0	0	0

House**	2010 Gain/Loss	Total Seats in 112 <sup>th</sup> Congress	1994 Gain/Loss	Total Seats in 104 <sup>th</sup> Congress
Democrats	-60	188	-54	230
Republicans	+60	239	+54	204
Independents	0	0	0	1

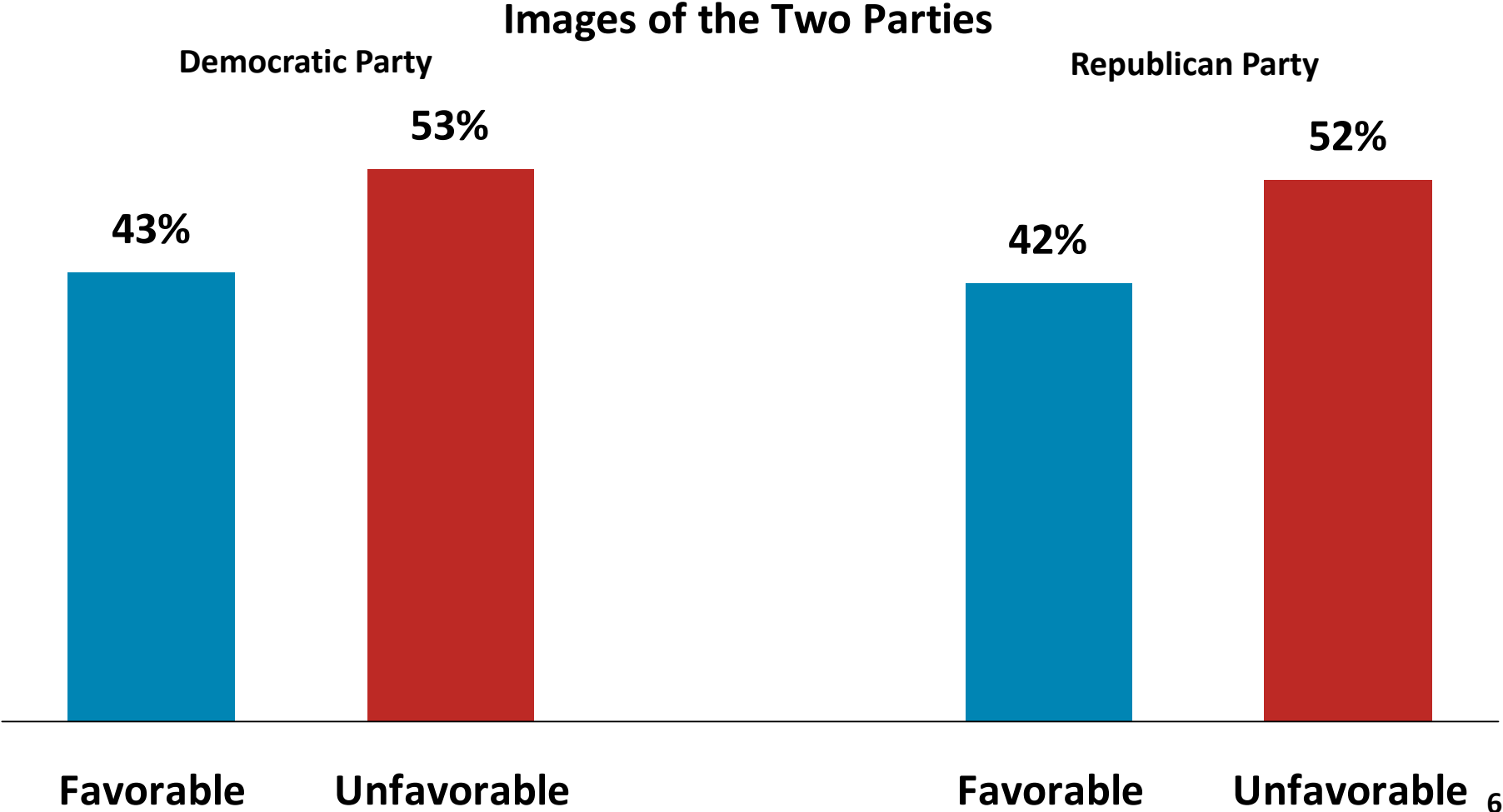
\*Both Lieberman (ID-CT) and Sanders (I-VT) are listed as Democrats.

\*\*Several House races are still too close to call.

In the generic Congressional ballot, Republicans led by 11 points.



Voters view both parties unfavorably.



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010



This political environment in which both parties were viewed negatively led both Democrats and Republicans to run against or away from Washington.



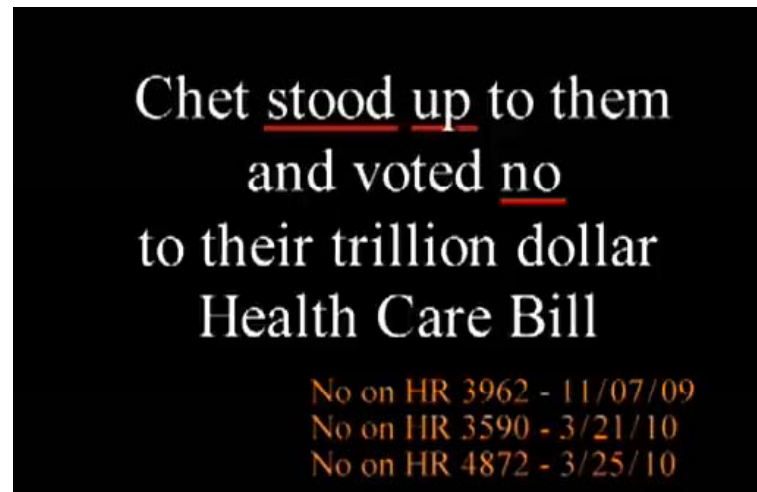
NRC: "Supports Pelosi's Agenda"



Lee Fisher: "Outsourcer"



DCCC: "More of the Same in Washington"



Chet Edwards "Stand"



Voters continue to believe the country is off on the wrong track. However, they are not as pessimistic as they were in 2008 when three-quarters thought the country was off on the wrong track.

### Direction of the Country

**2008:**

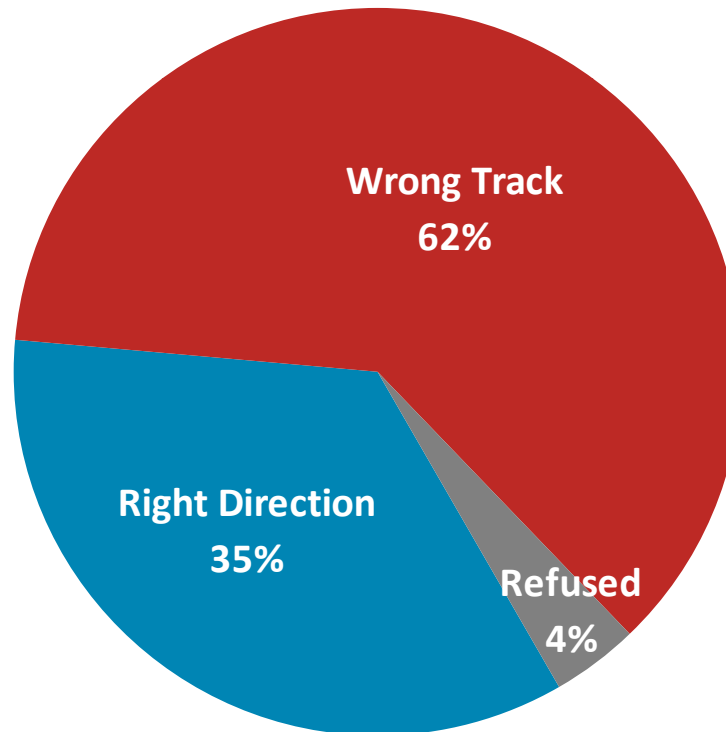
Right direction: 20%

Wrong track: 75%

**2006:**

Yes, going in right direction: 41%

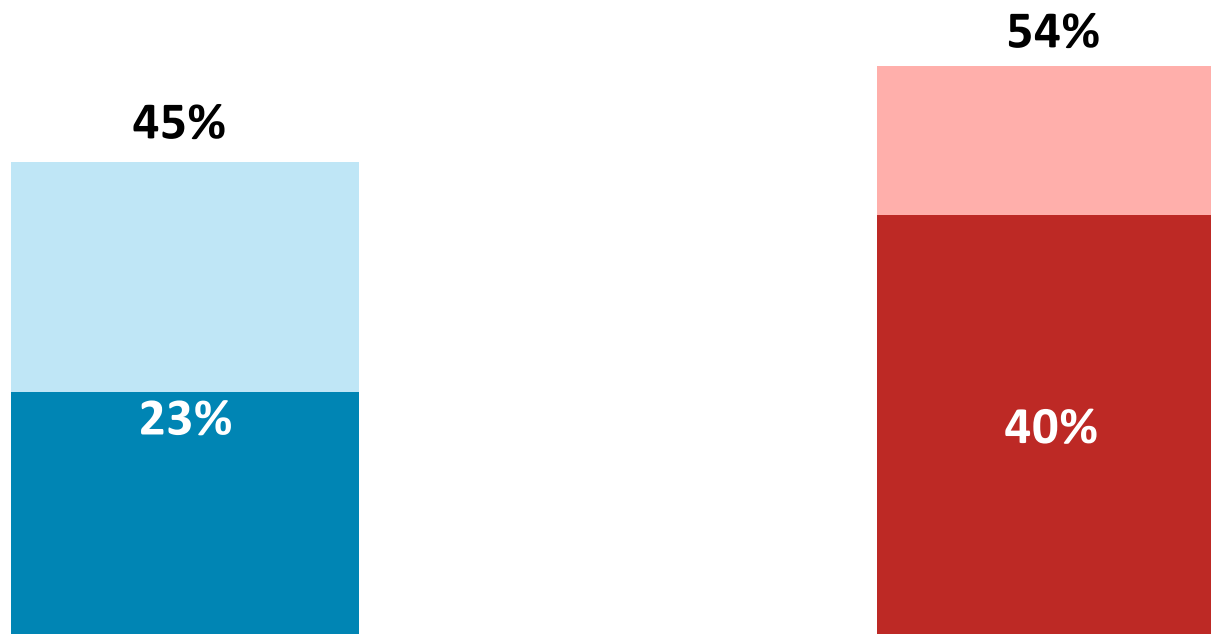
No, not going in right direction: 55%





In many ways the midterm elections were a referendum on President Obama's job performance. A majority of voters disapprove of the job Obama is doing with four in ten showing intense disapproval.

### Obama's Job Approval

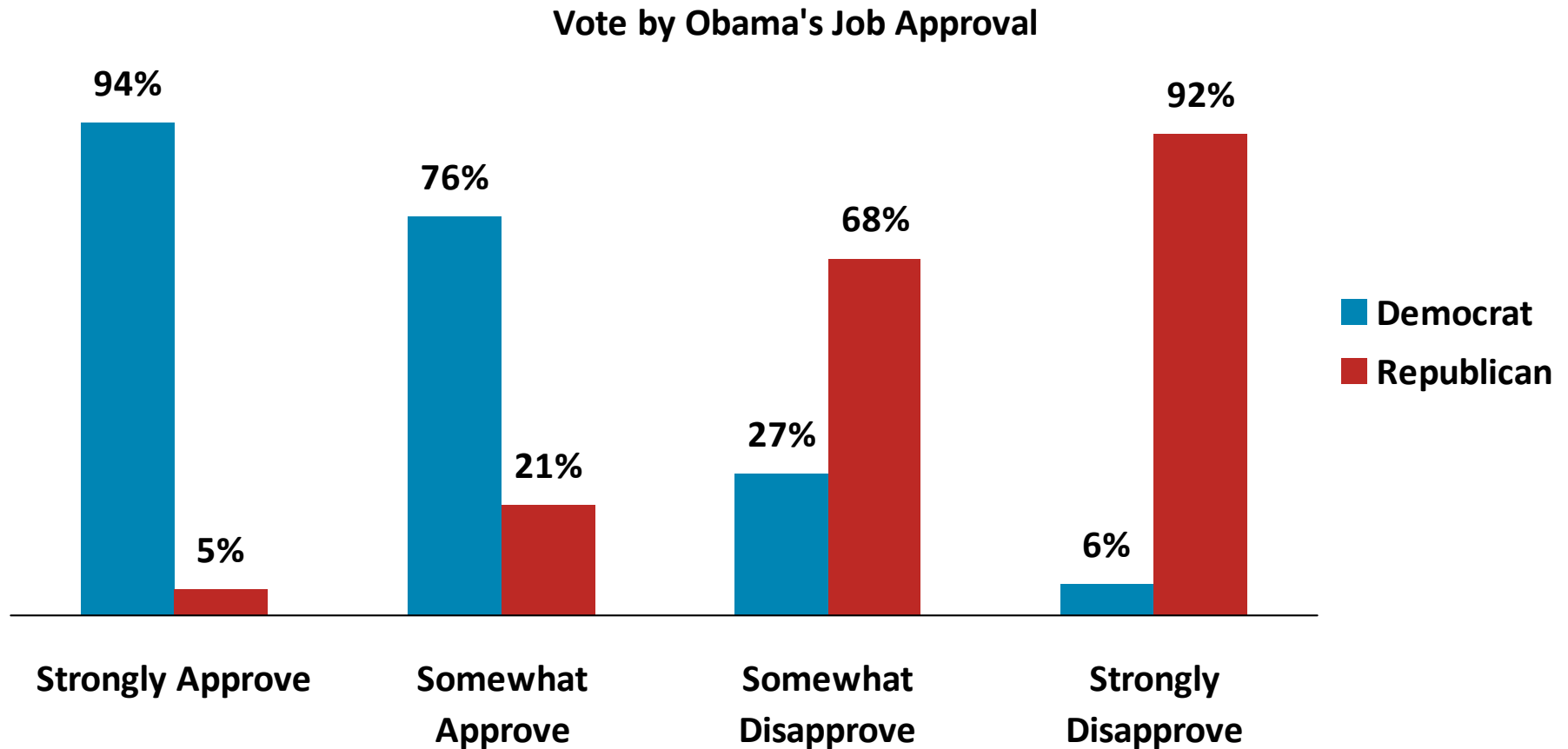


Approve

Disapprove

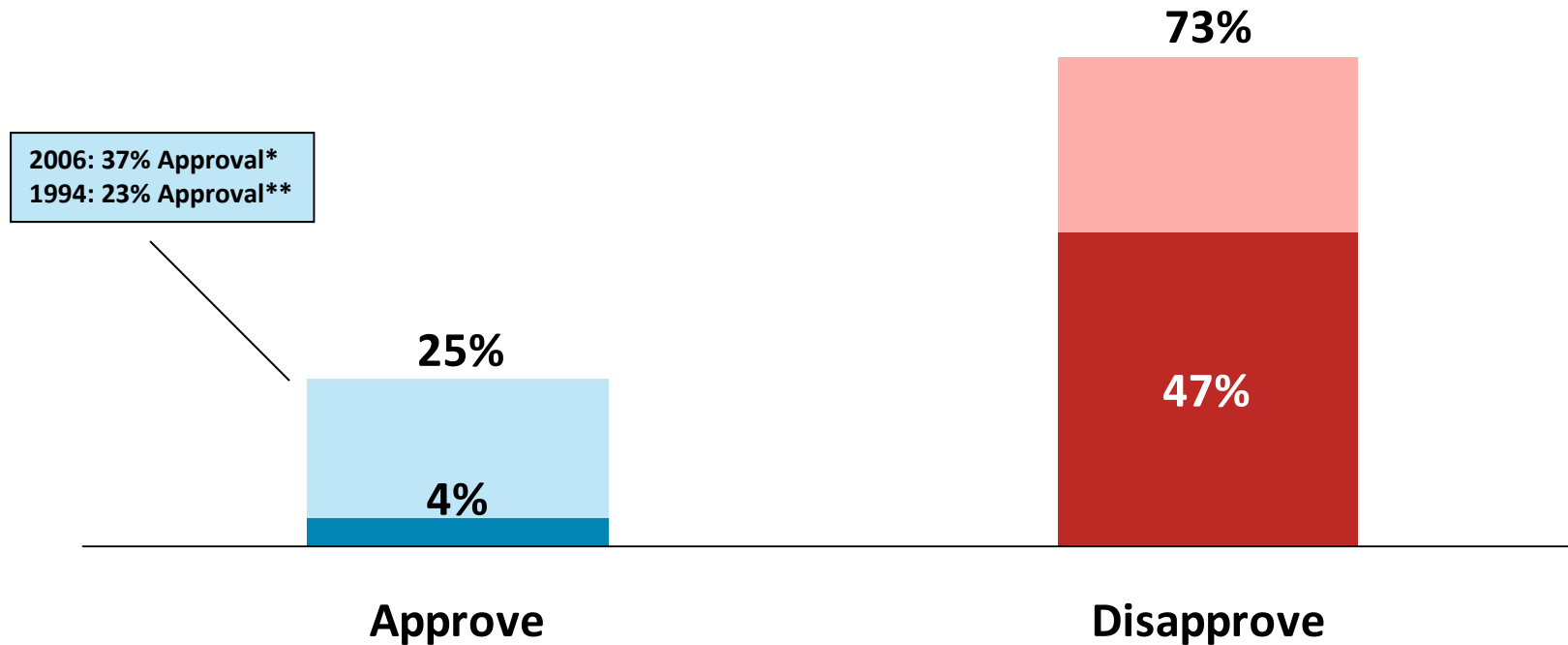
In 1994, President Clinton also had a negative job approval rating (43% approve, 48% disapprove).

The electorate was polarized by Obama's job approval.



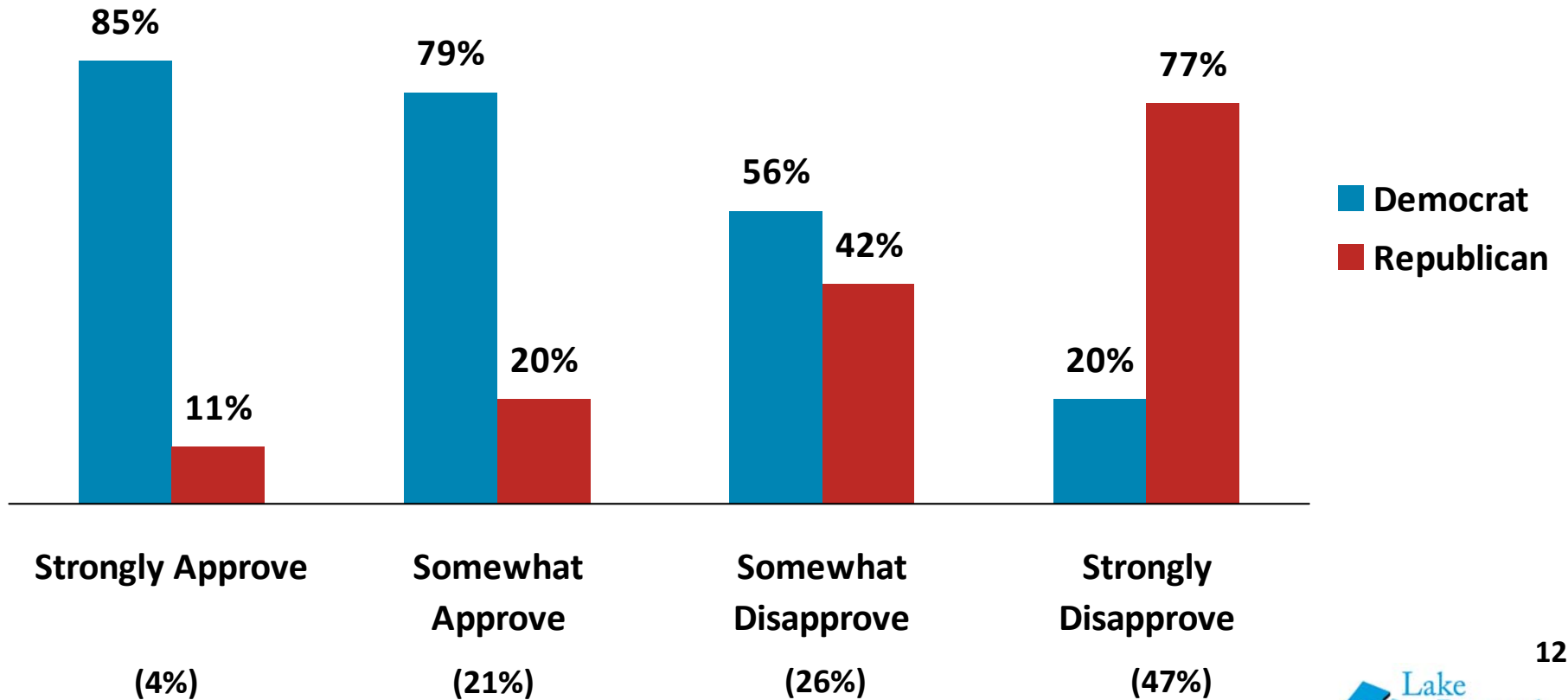
Congress's job performance was damaging as three-quarters of voters disapprove of the job Congress has done with nearly half strongly disapproving. This brought about an anti-incumbent environment which further hurt Democrats.

### Congressional Job Approval



The quarter of voters who somewhat disapproved of Congress’s job performance supported the Democratic Congressional candidate. However, nearly half of voters strongly disapprove of Congress’s job performance and over three-quarters of them voted for a Republican.

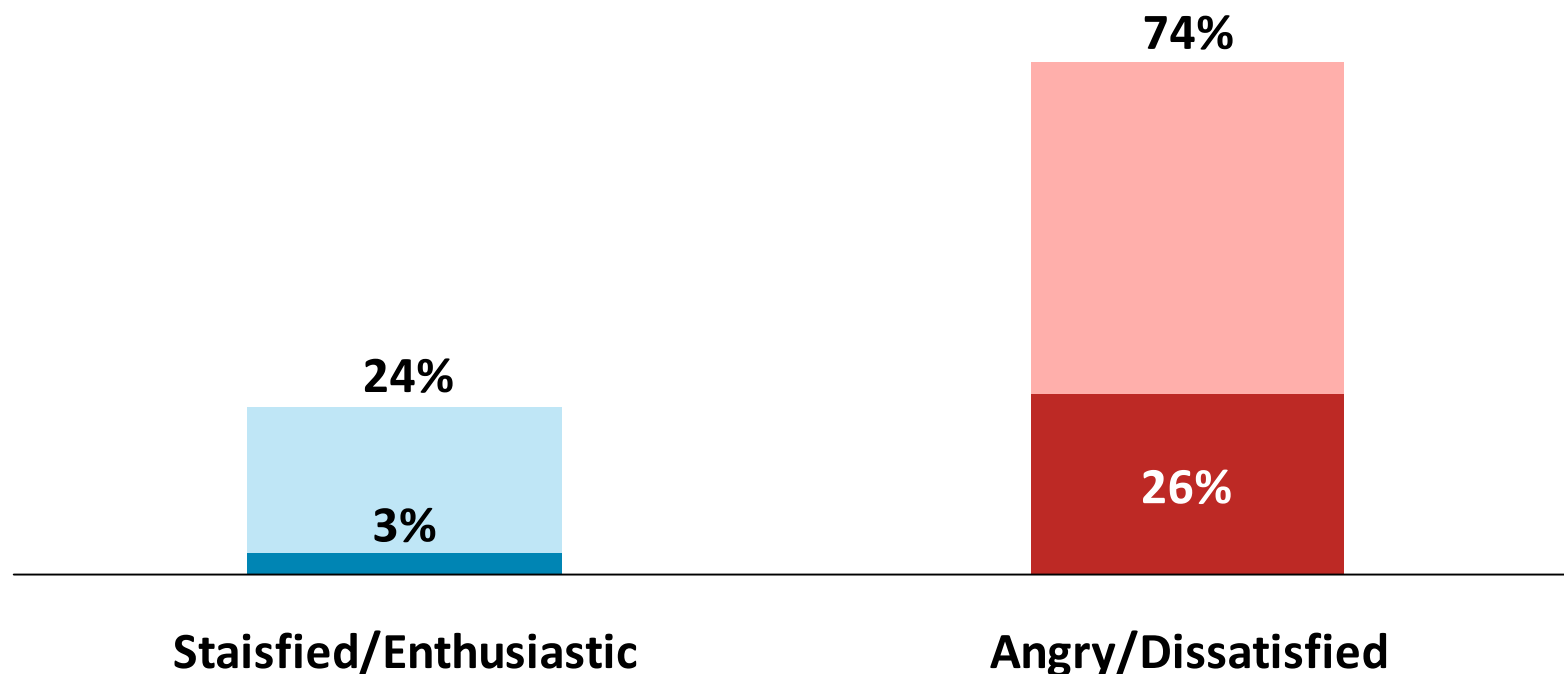
**House Vote by Congressional Job Approval**



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

Like we see with Congressional job approval, three-quarters of voters are dissatisfied with the federal government.

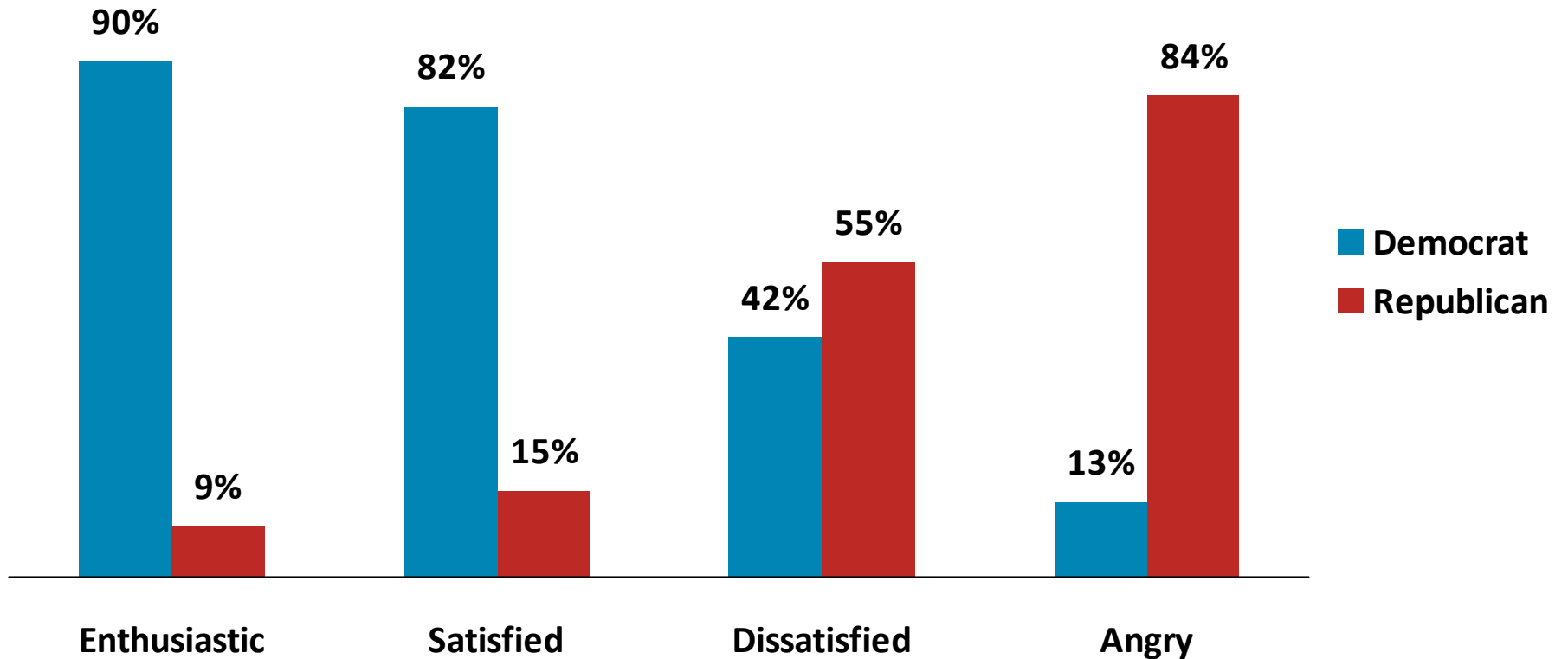
### Opinions of the Federal Government



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

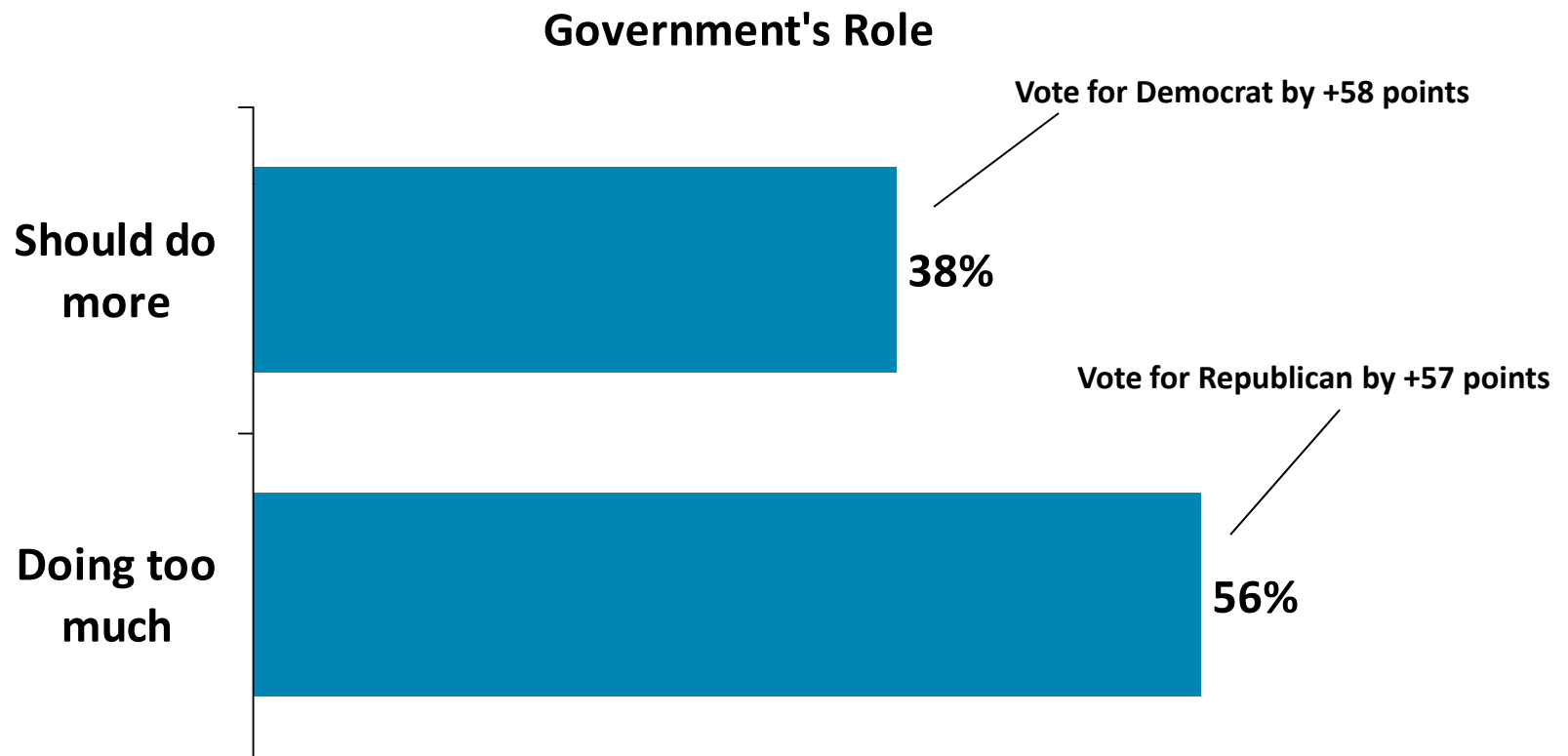
The 2010 election was not only a referendum on Obama, but also a referendum on the job of the federal government. The vote was also polarized by voters opinions of the federal government.

### House Vote by Opinions of the Federal Government



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

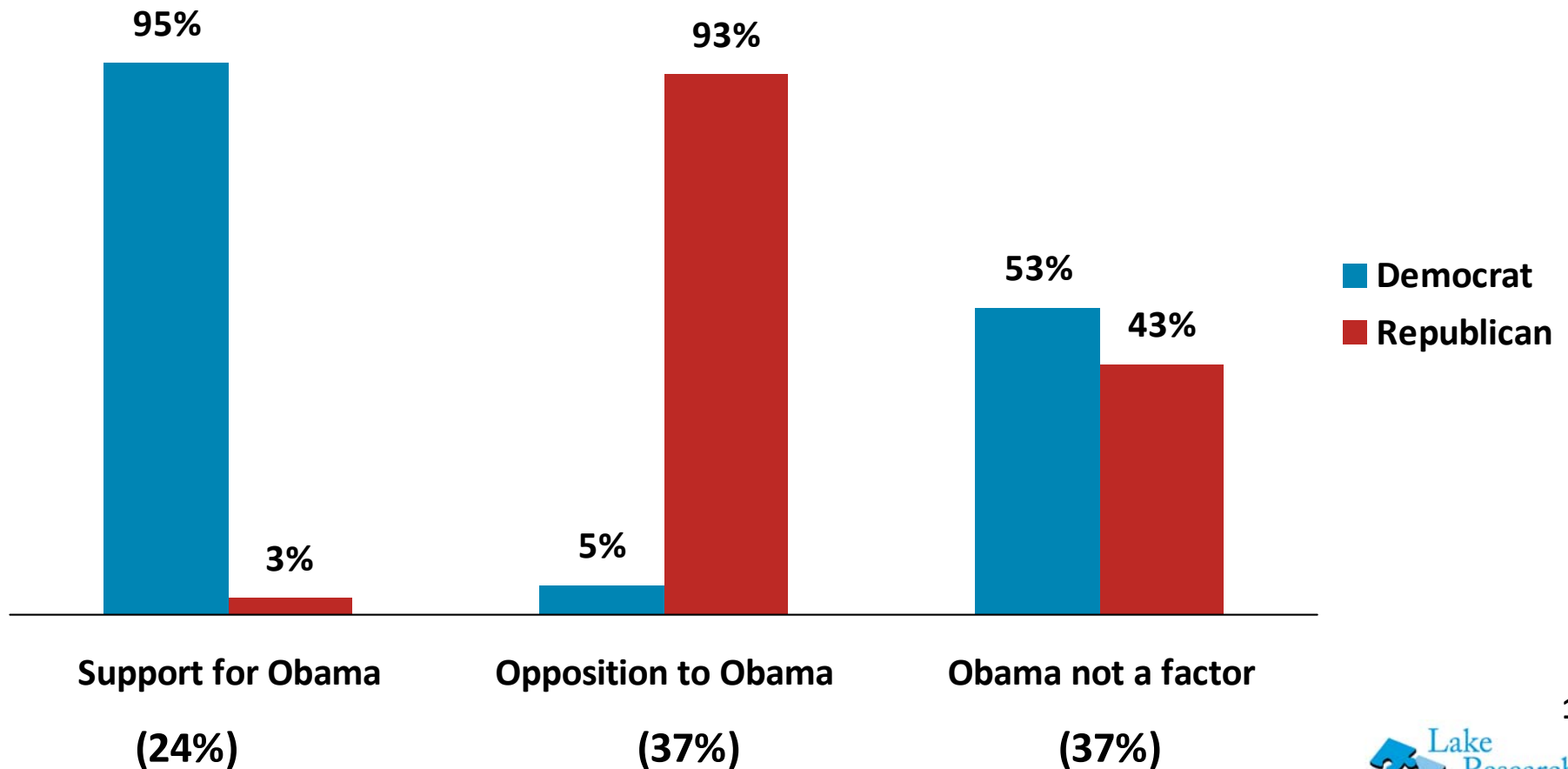
A solid majority of voters believe the government is doing too much. This leads to frustration with big government and spending, fueling much of the conservative and Tea Party rhetoric.



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

Equal numbers of voters say their vote was in opposition to Obama or Obama was not a factor in their vote. Voters who said Obama was not a factor in their vote supported the Congressional Democrat by 10 points.

### What was your vote meant to express?

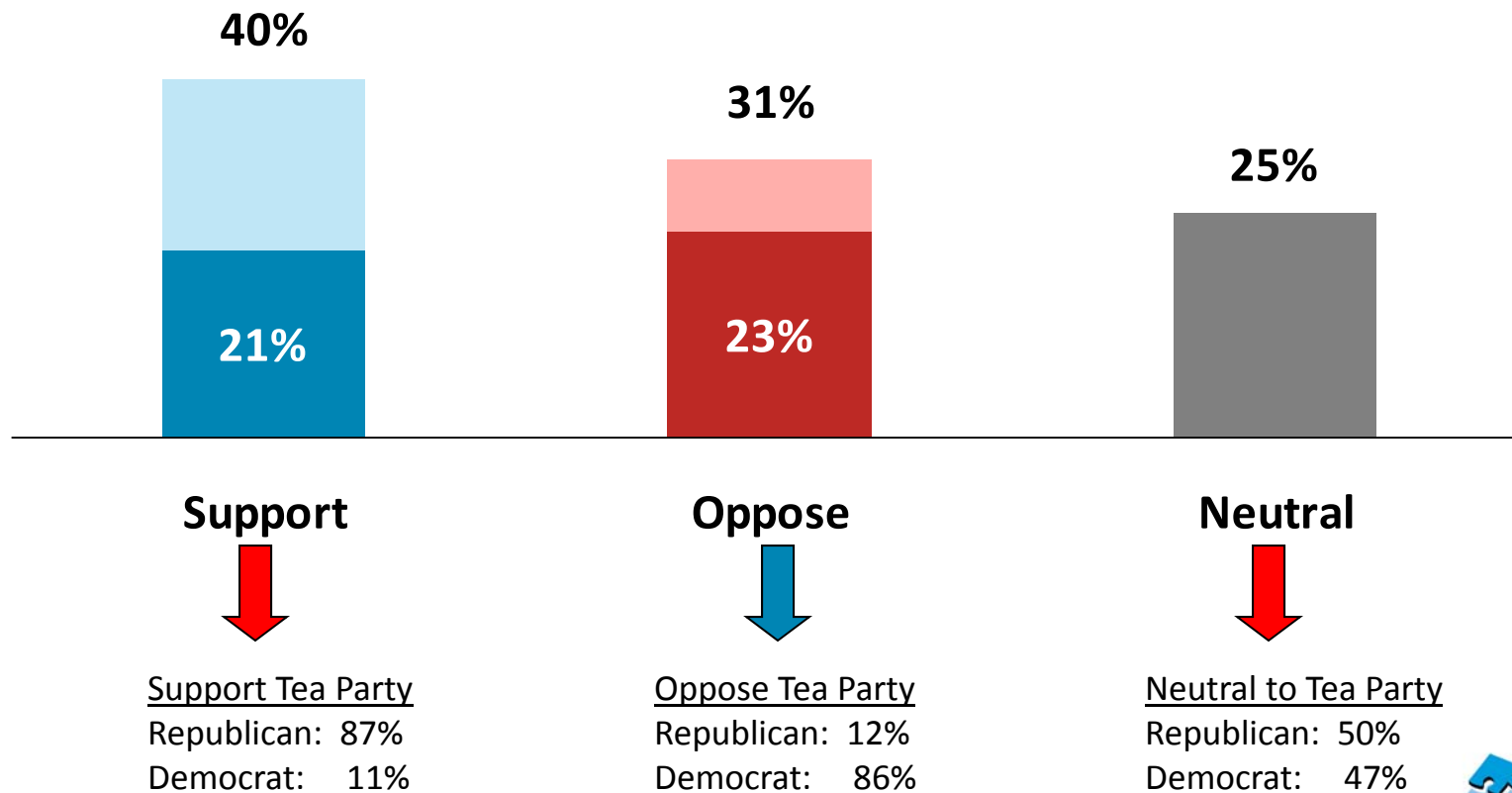


Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010



A plurality of voters say they support the opinions of the Tea Party Movement. Voters who supported the opinions of the Tea Party voted overwhelmingly Republican while those who opposed the Tea Party voted solidly Democratic. Voters with a neutral view of the Tea Party split their vote.

### Opinions of the Tea Party Movement



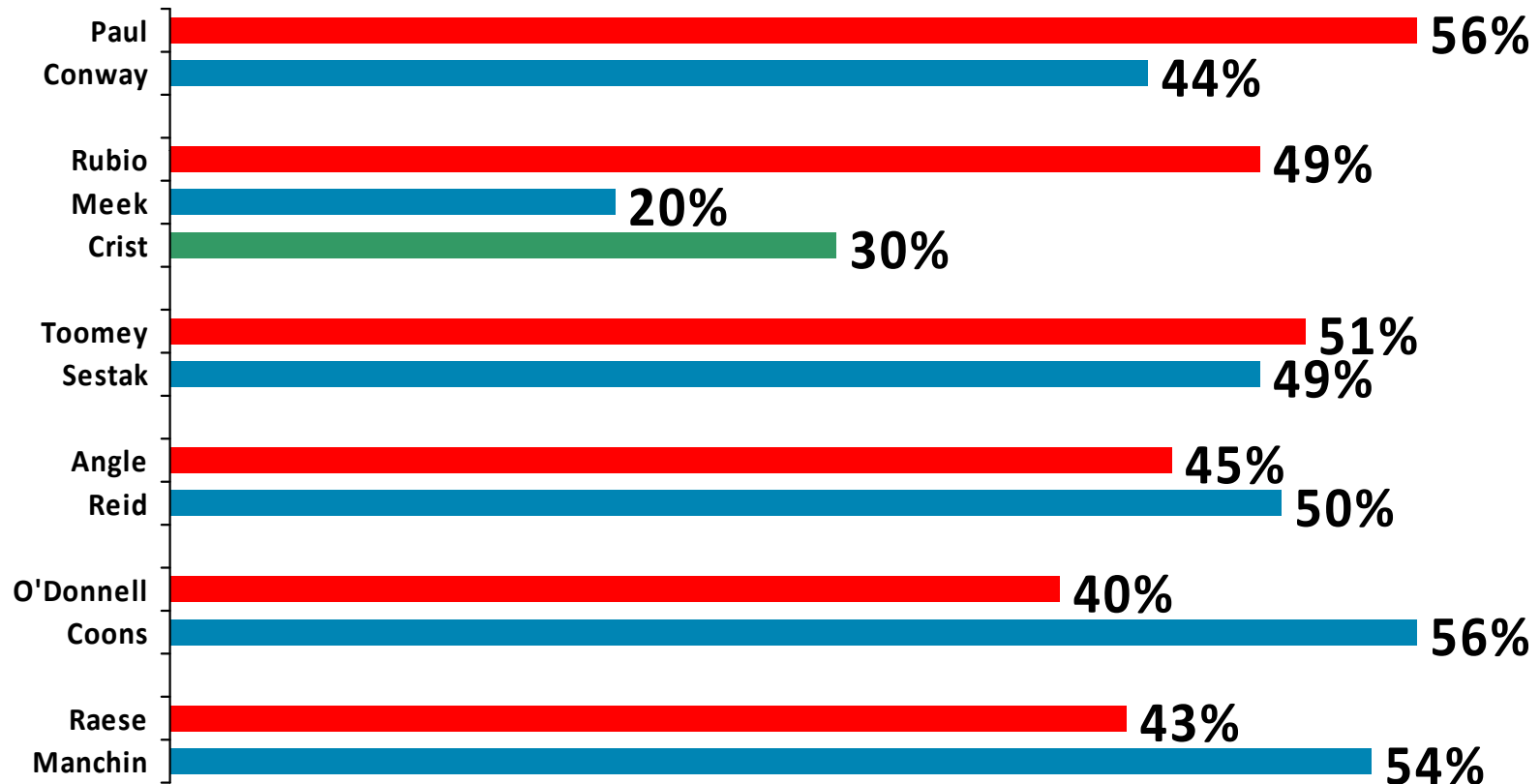
Support Tea Party  
Republican: 87%  
Democrat: 11%

Oppose Tea Party  
Republican: 12%  
Democrat: 86%

Neutral to Tea Party  
Republican: 50%  
Democrat: 47%

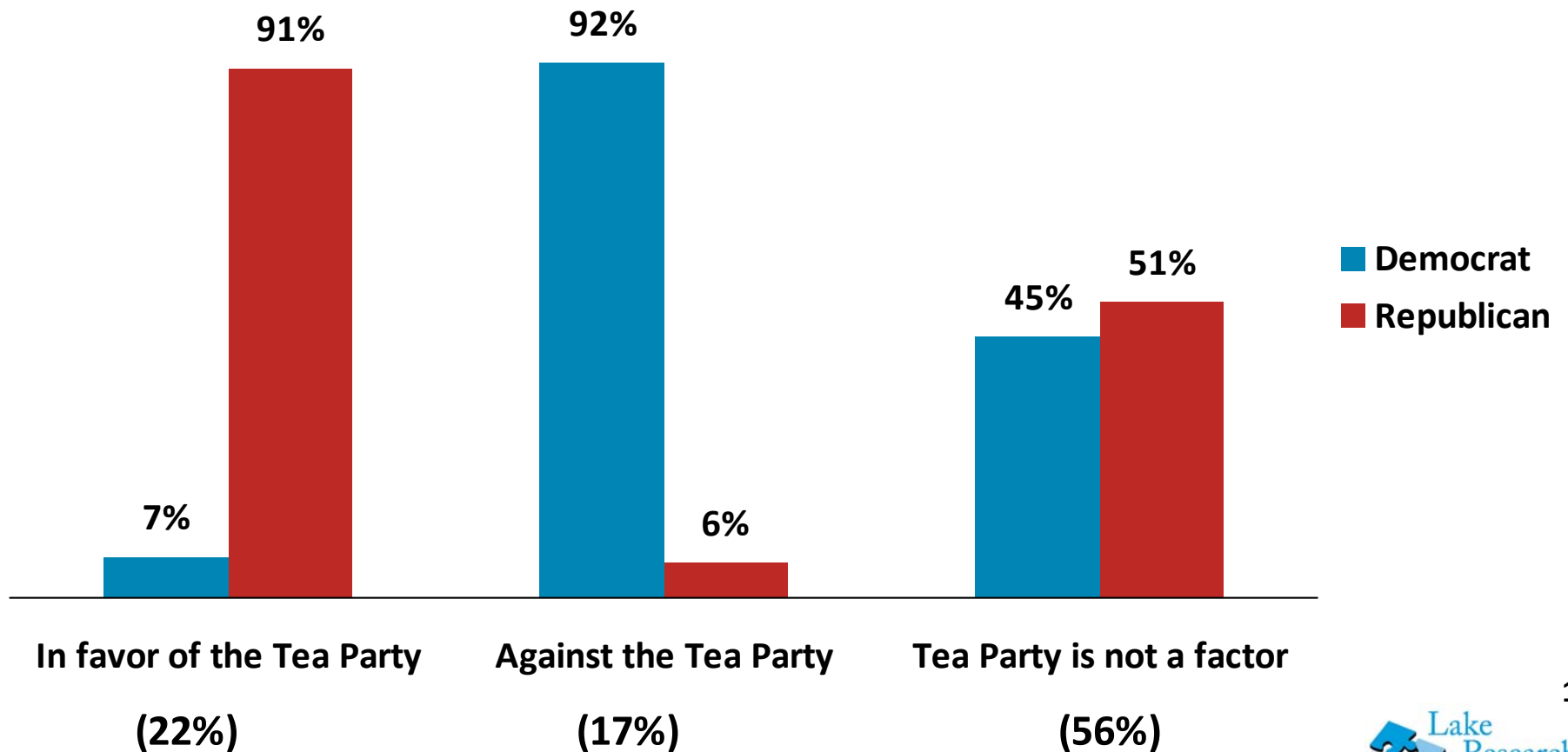
The Tea Party celebrated several victories on Election Day solidifying their stature as a powerful political force—though their efforts came up noticeably short in places like Nevada, Delaware, and West Virginia.

### Senate Tea Party Races



One-fifth of voters say their Congressional vote was an indication of their support of the Tea Party. Among those over nine in ten voted Republican. More than half say the Tea Party was not a factor, but they leaned toward the Republican candidate by 6-points.

**What was your vote meant to express?**



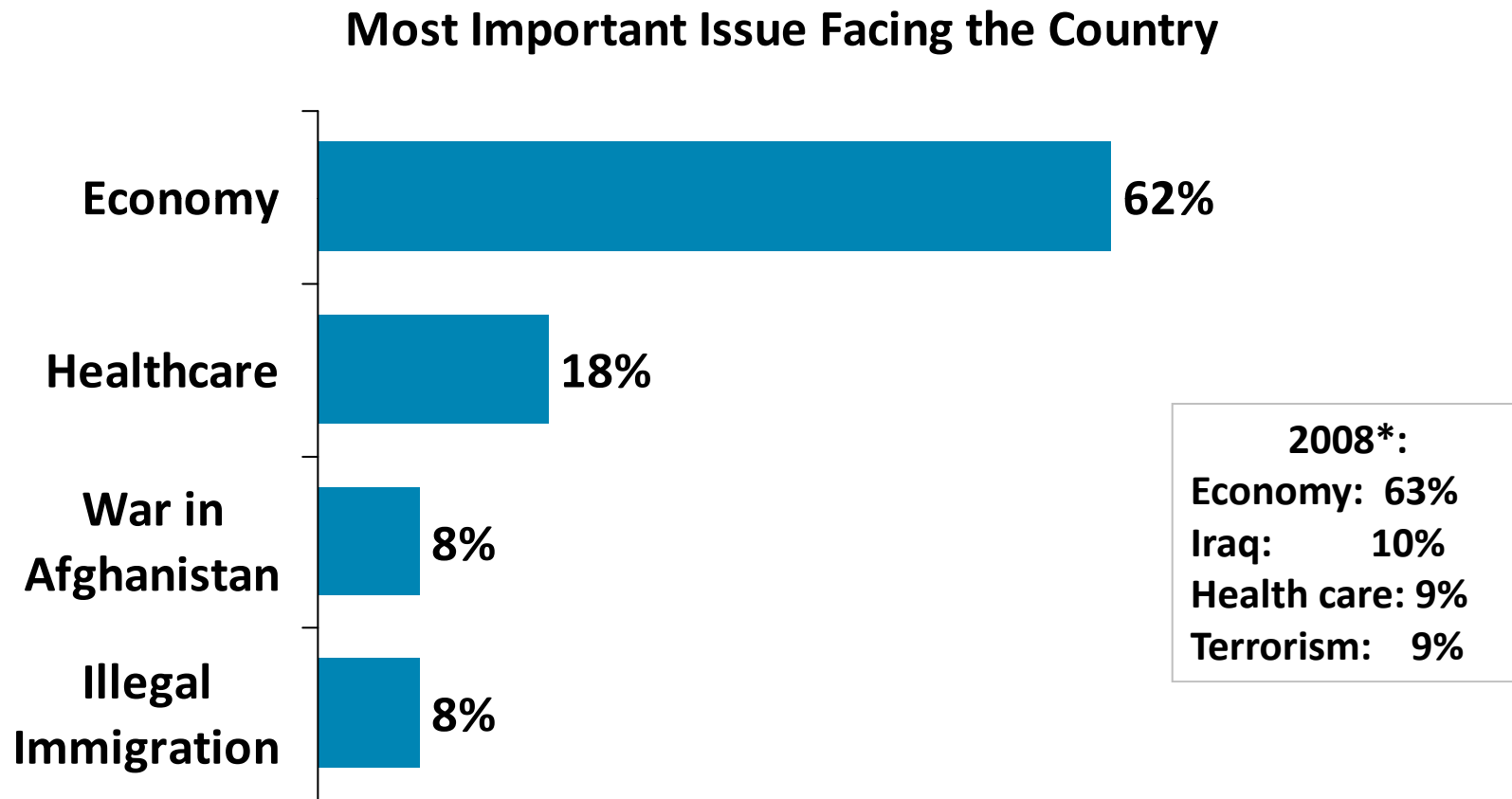
Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

## Issues

The economy and jobs were the dominant issues this year and helped mobilize the vote. Spending and deficits and debt were also important, but voters were most concerned with keeping and finding work.



The economy dominated the issue agenda and has since 2008. However, since then, health care has doubled in importance.

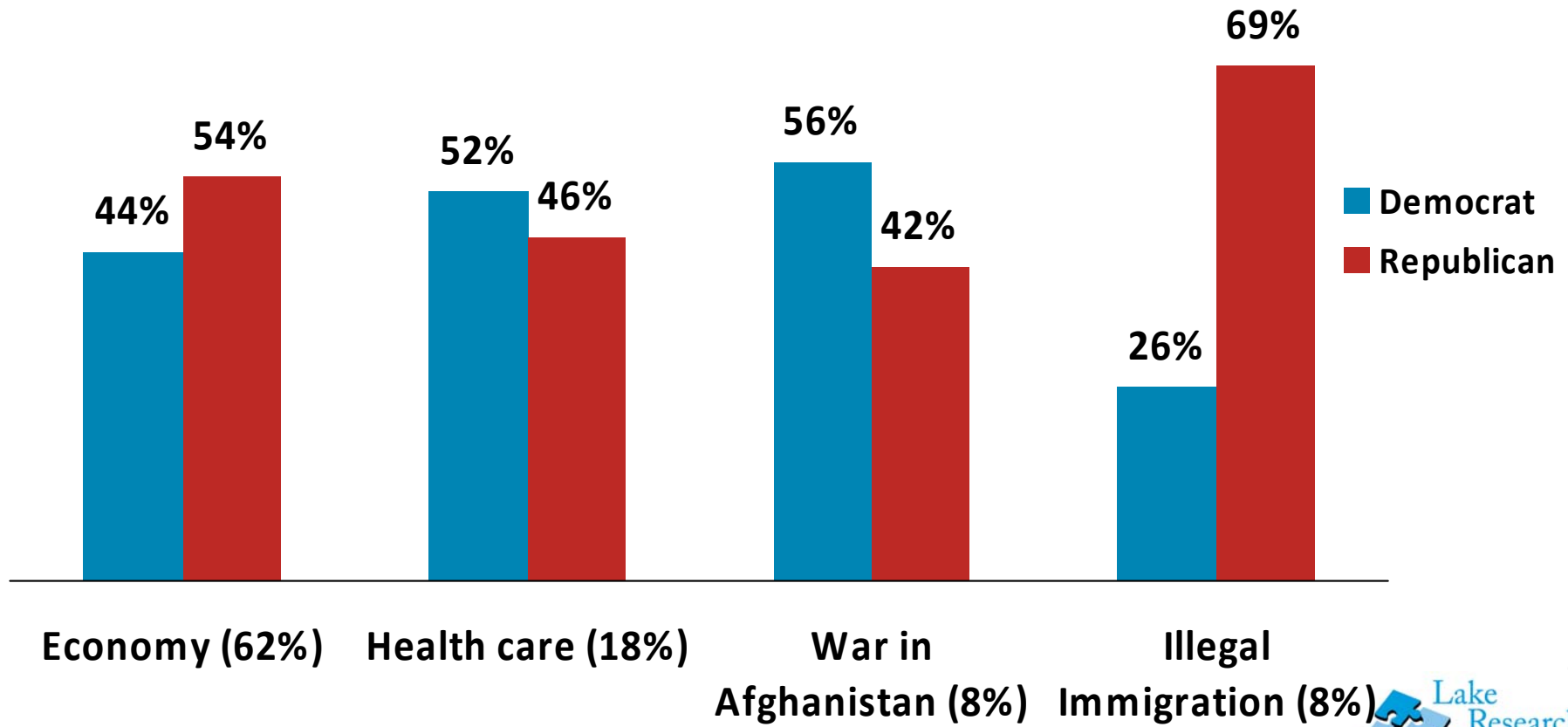


\*Illegal immigration was not asked in 2008.

Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

Democrats lost voters for whom the economy was the top issue by 10 points.

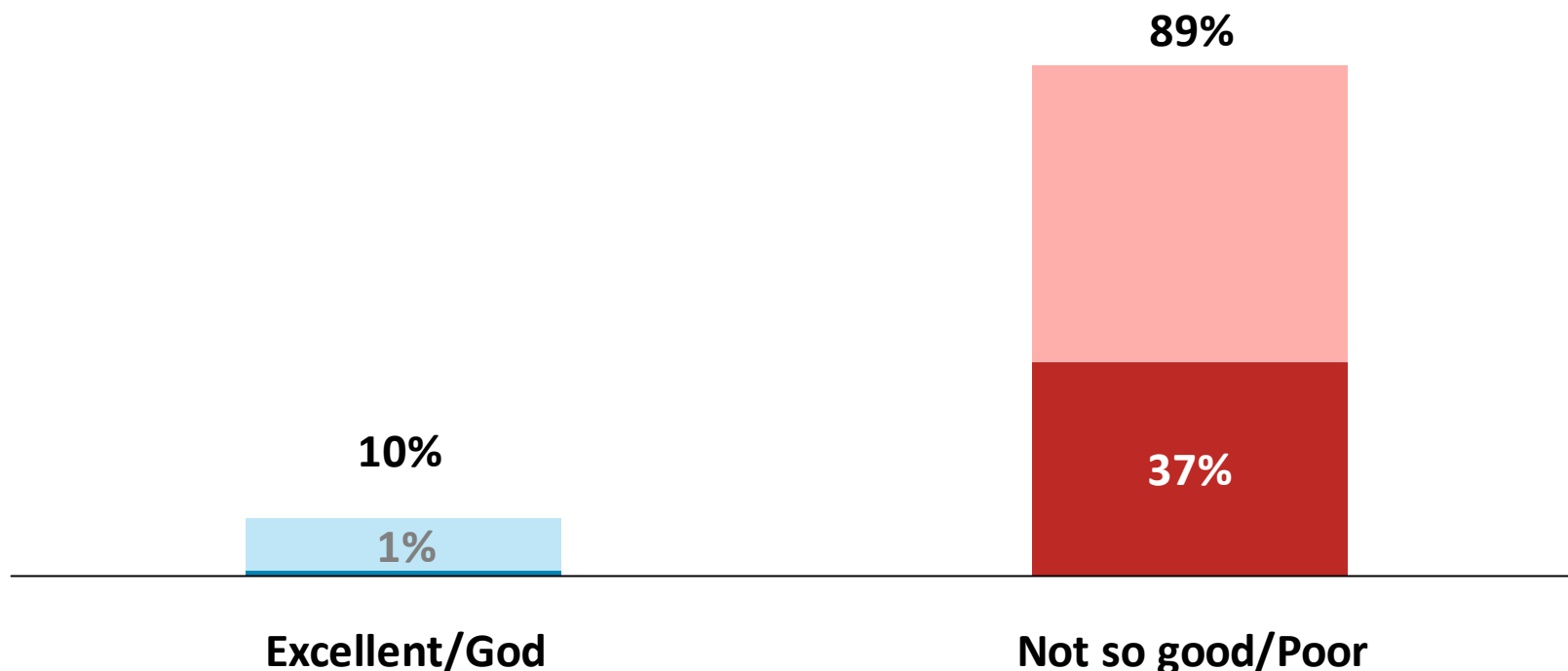
Vote By Top Issue



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

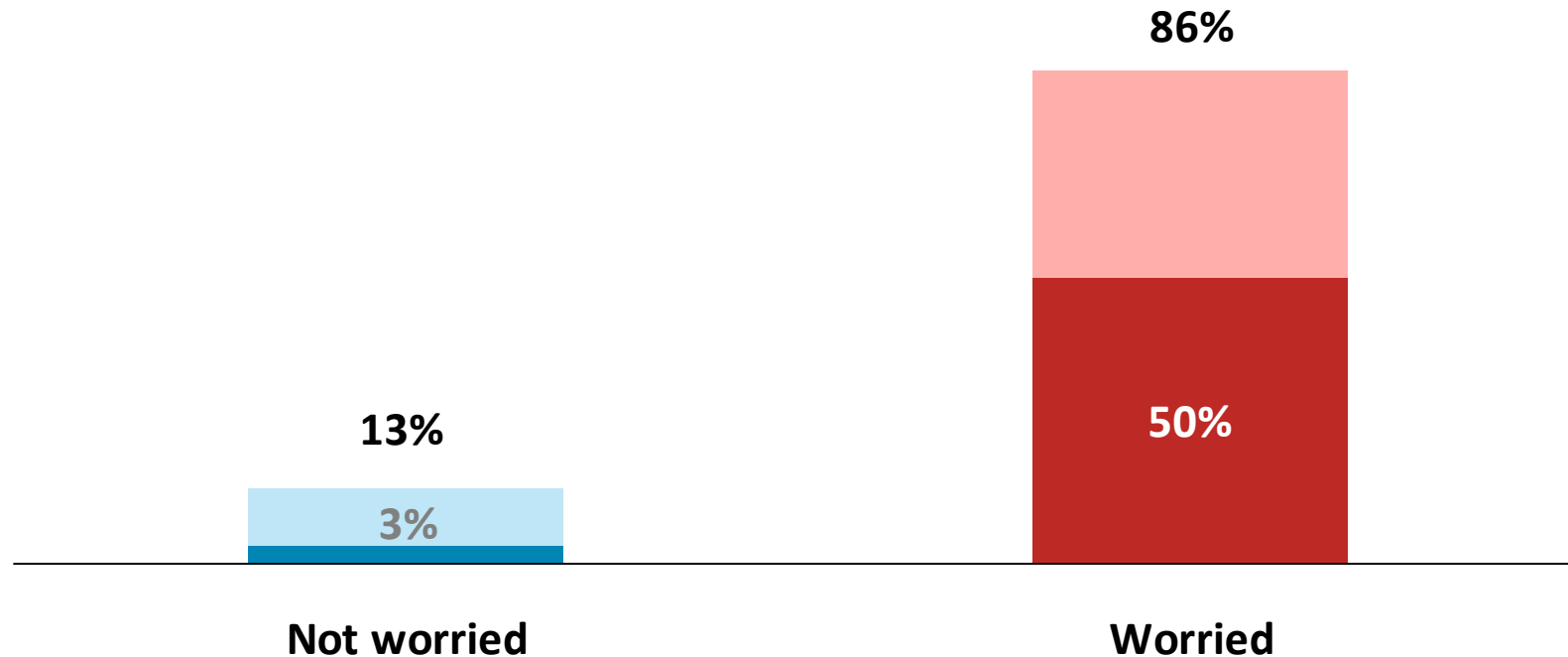
Showing the breadth of their concern with the economy, nine in ten voters think the economy is not so good or poor.

Do you think the condition of the nation's economy is:



Voters are not only concerned about the economy, they are also worried, with half of voters saying they are very worried. Seventy percent of voters most worried about the economy voted for the Republican.

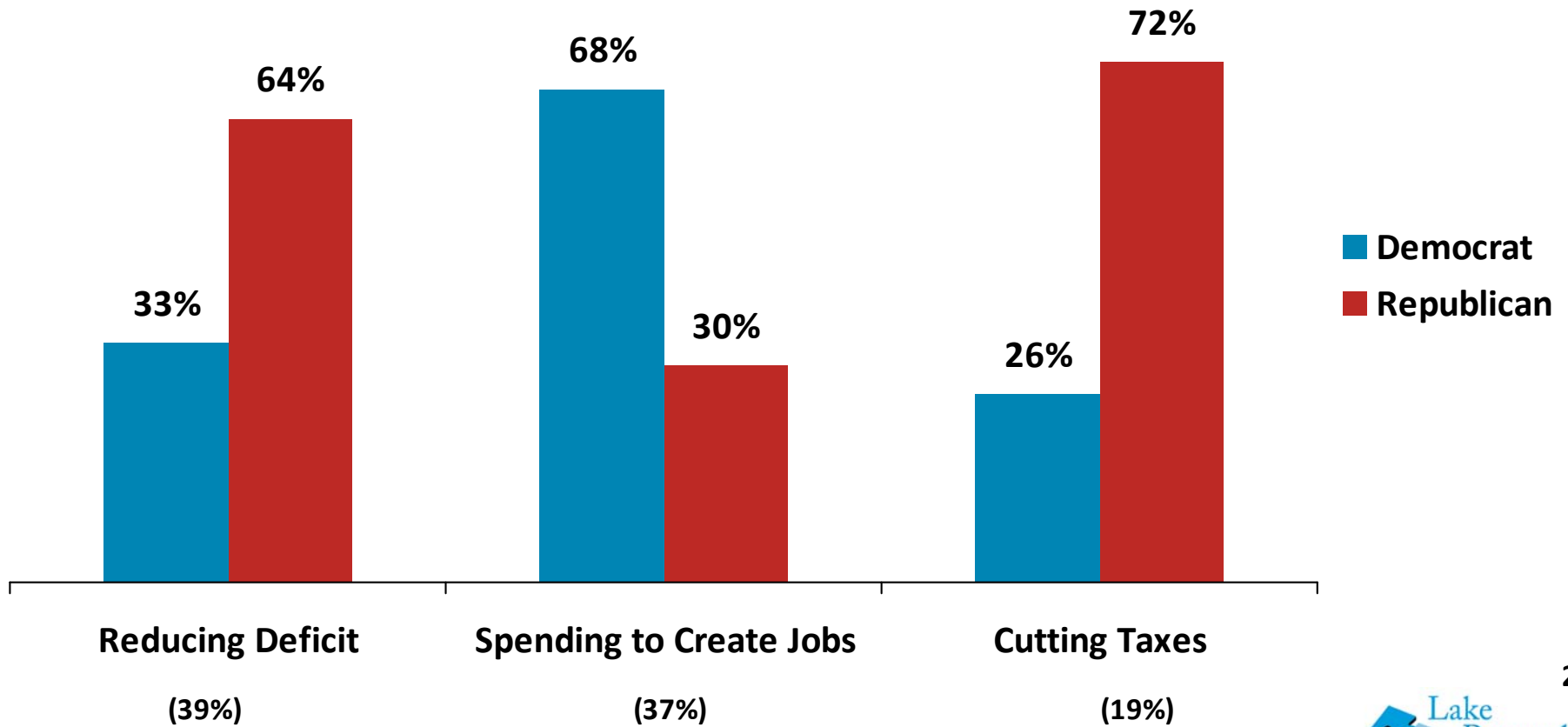
**How worried are you about the nation's economic conditions:**





A majority of Americans are pessimistic about the future generation. Democrats won among voters who want Congress to spend to create jobs, while Republicans won among those who want to reduce the deficit and cut taxes.

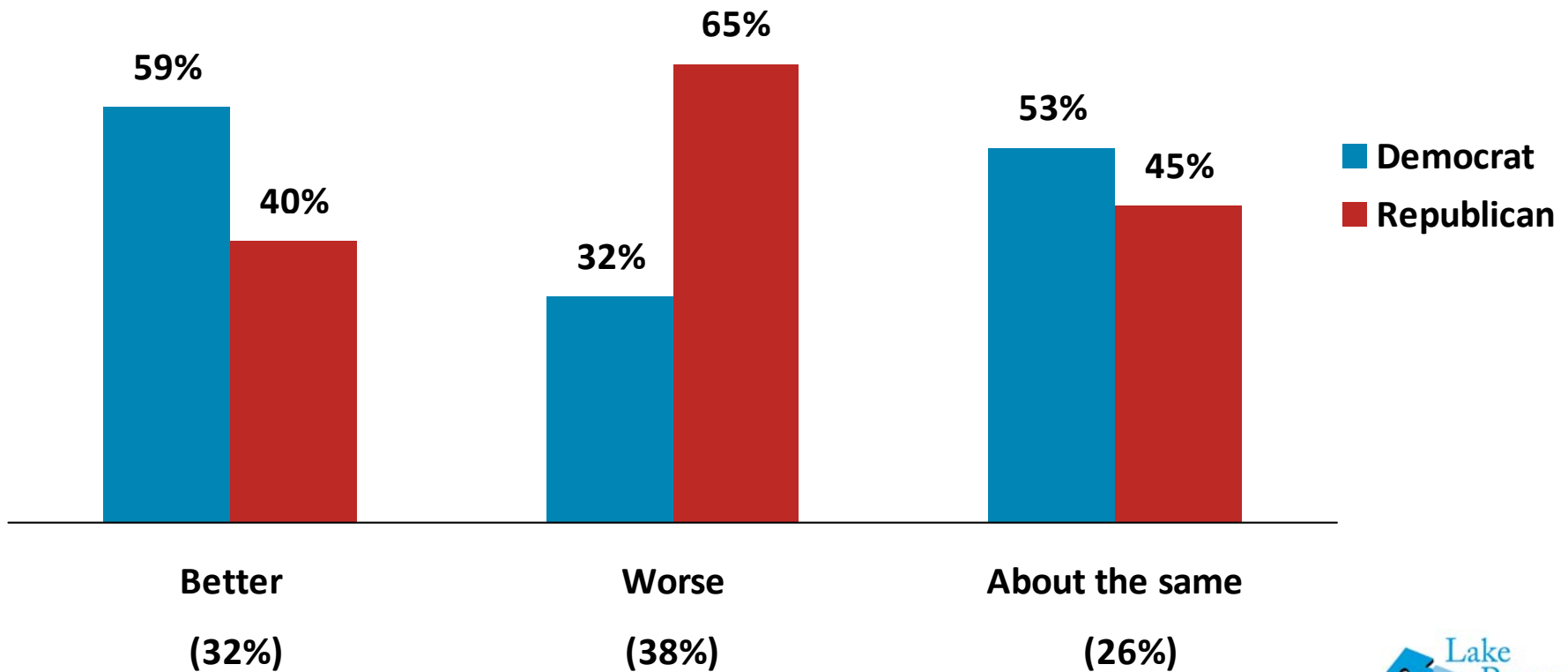
Vote by Top Priority for Next Congress



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

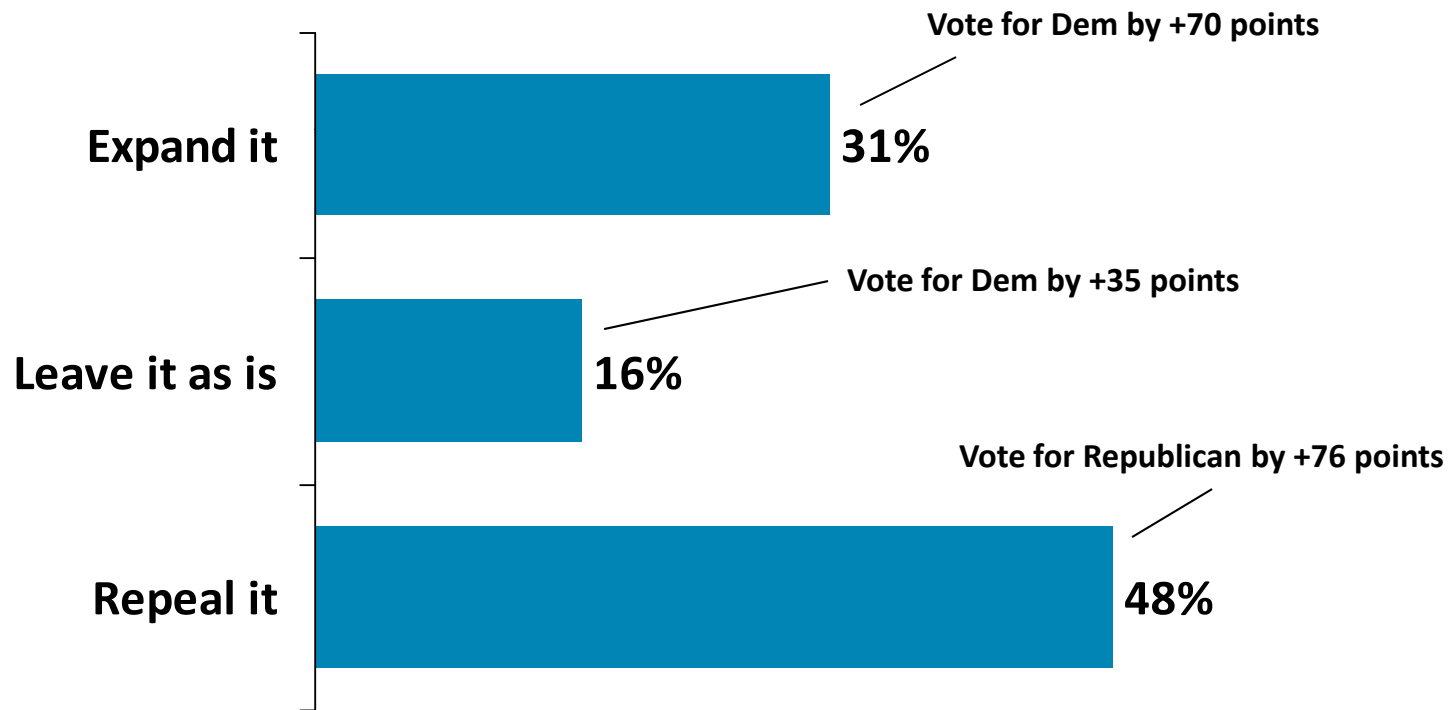
Voters who are optimistic about life for the next generation or feel it will be about the same voted Democratic. Voters who feel it will be worse voted Republican.

### Life for the Next Generation Will Be...



Voters are split on the health care plan.

### What should Congress do with the new Health Care Law?

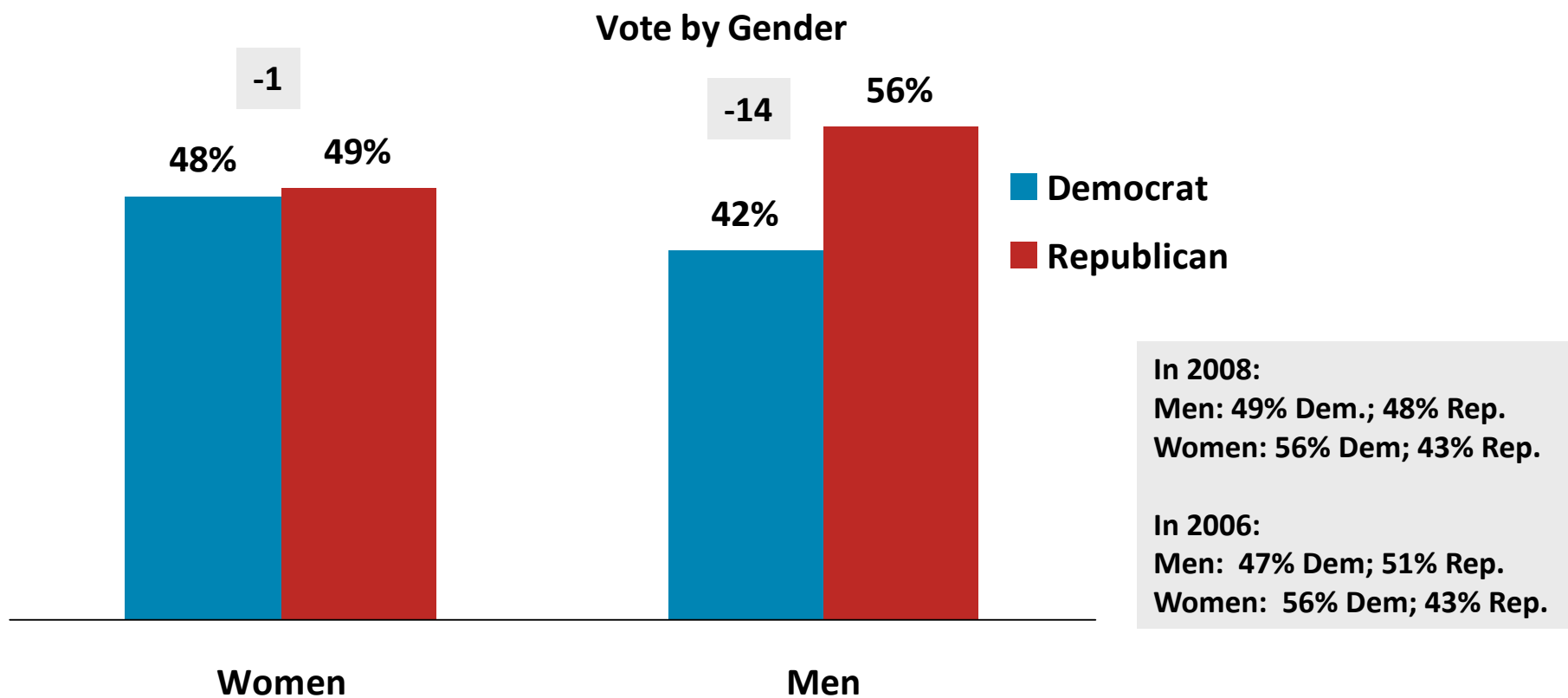


## Changing Coalitions

Key progressive voting blocs that Obama counted on in 2008 did not vote at the same rate as they did back then.



The gender gap existed but a significant number of women shifted Republican this year.



The gender gap played a key role in many contested Senate races. The biggest gaps were in Colorado, Delaware, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania.

**Key Senate Races (Democratic Margin)**

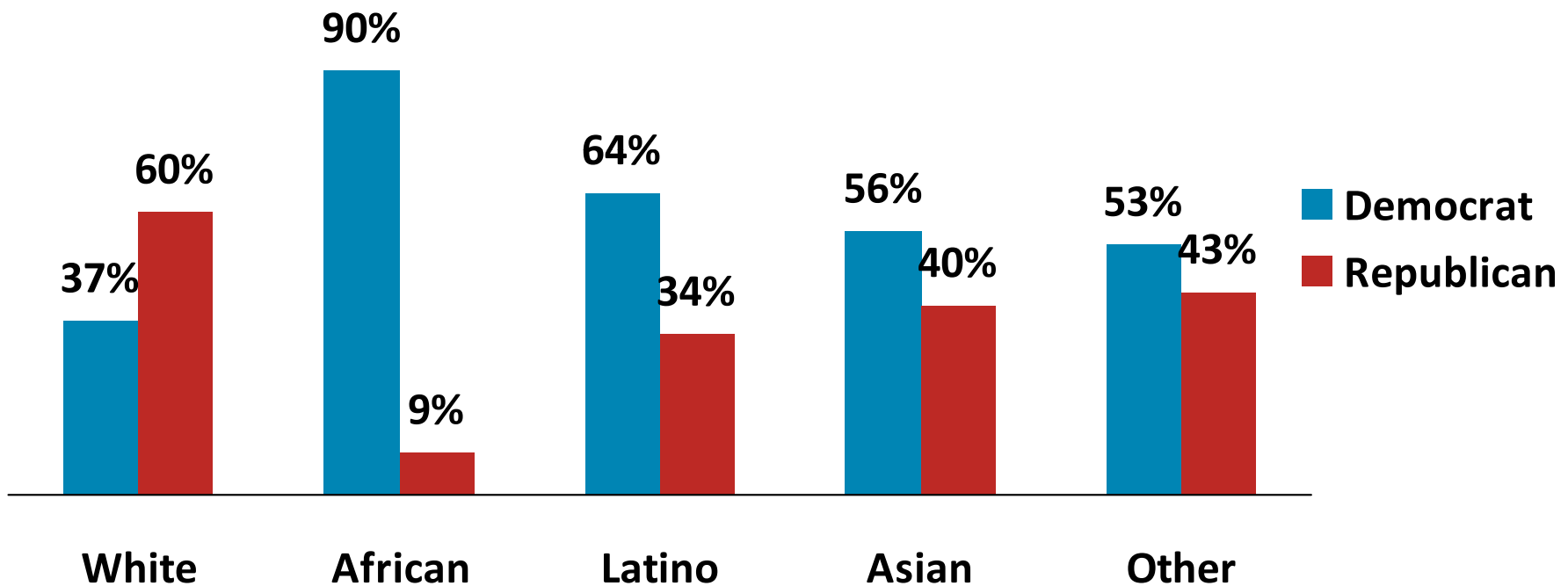
	Women	Men	Gender Gap
Arkansas*	-16	-27	11
California	+16	+3	13
Colorado	+17	-14	31
Connecticut	+21	+7	14
Delaware	+25	+6	19
Florida	-21	-36	15
Illinois*	+3	-5	8
Indiana*	-8	-21	13
Kentucky	-2	-21	19
Louisiana	-19	-19	0
Missouri	-5	-23	18
Nevada	+11	-2	13
New Hampshire	-12	-34	22
Ohio	-12	-25	13
Pennsylvania*	+8	-12	20
Washington	+11	-6	17
West Virginia	+15	+5	10
Wisconsin*	+4	-14	18

\*Republican pick-up

Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

African Americans voted Democratic, but their turnout was down three percent from 2008. Latinos voters supported the Democrat candidate by 30 points and their turnout held steady from 2008.

### Vote by Race/Ethnicity



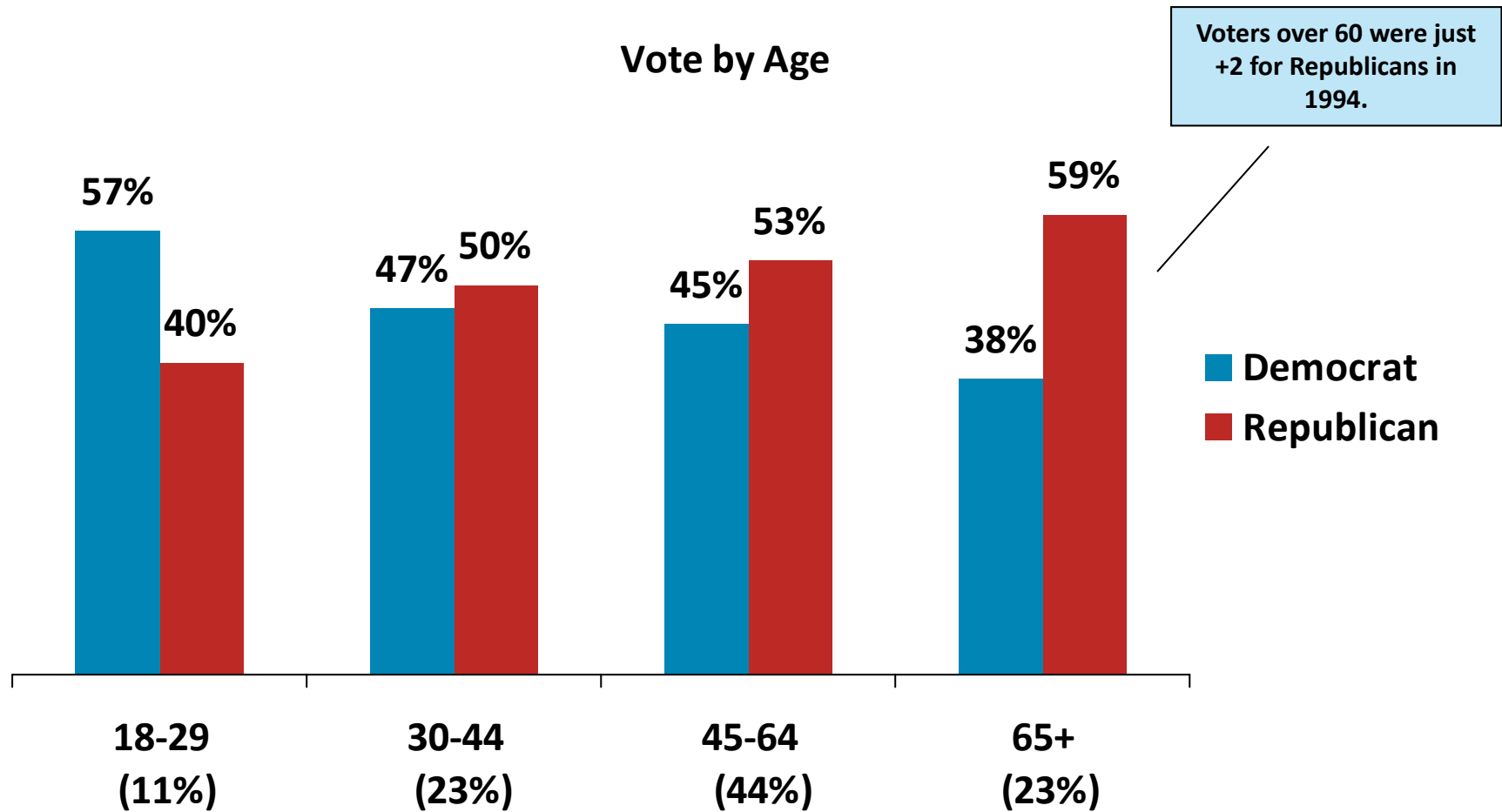
African Americans as % of Voters:  
 2008: 13%  
 2010: 10%

Latino as % of Voters:  
 2008: 9%  
 2010: 8%

Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

Young voters voted Democratic by 17-points. Their participation and enthusiasm was down dramatically this cycle. However, seniors voted Republican by 21 points—the largest margin in decades.

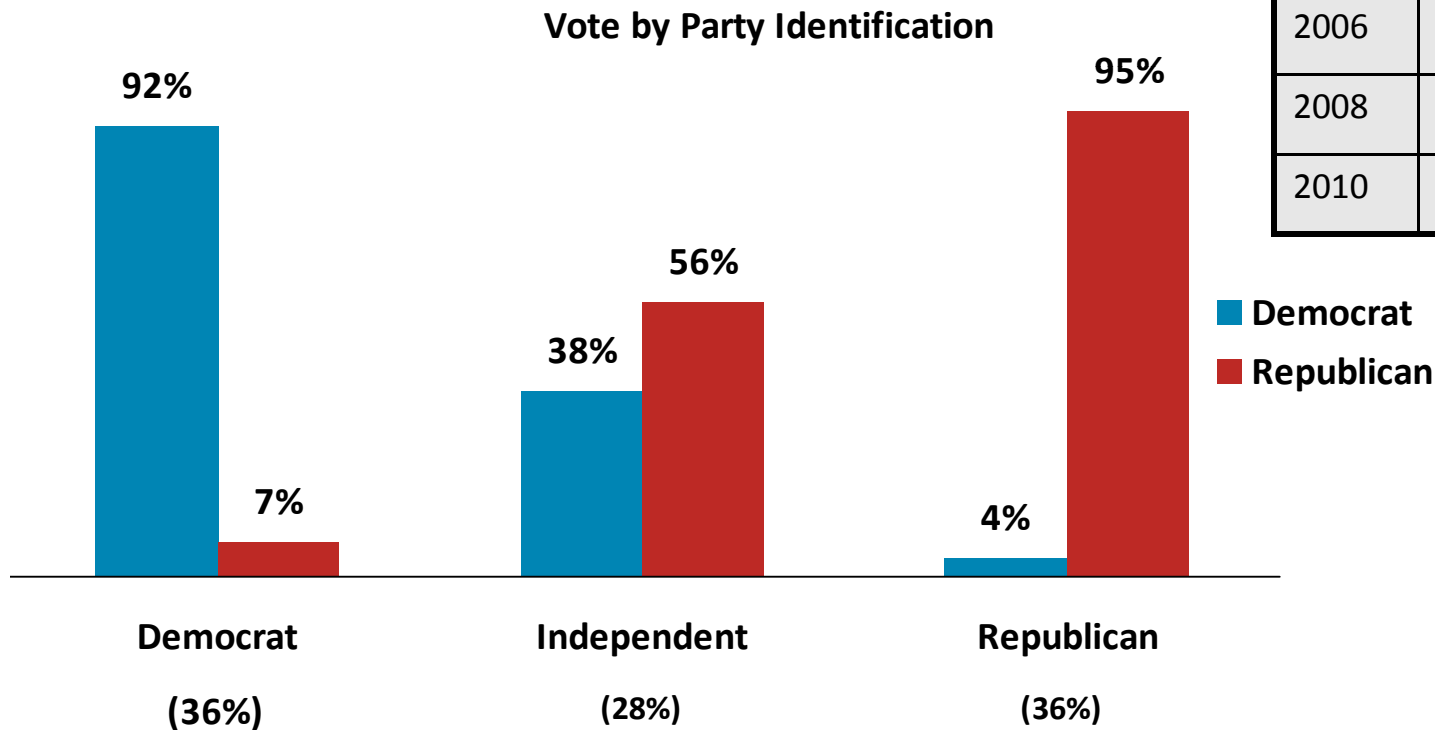
### Vote by Age



18-29 year olds in 2006:  
60% Democrat, 38% Republican



As we saw early in the cycle in New Jersey and Virginia last year and in Massachusetts in January, independents moved toward Republicans. Independents supported Democrats by 18 points in 2006, but Democrats lost them by 18 points in 2010 – a 36 point swing.



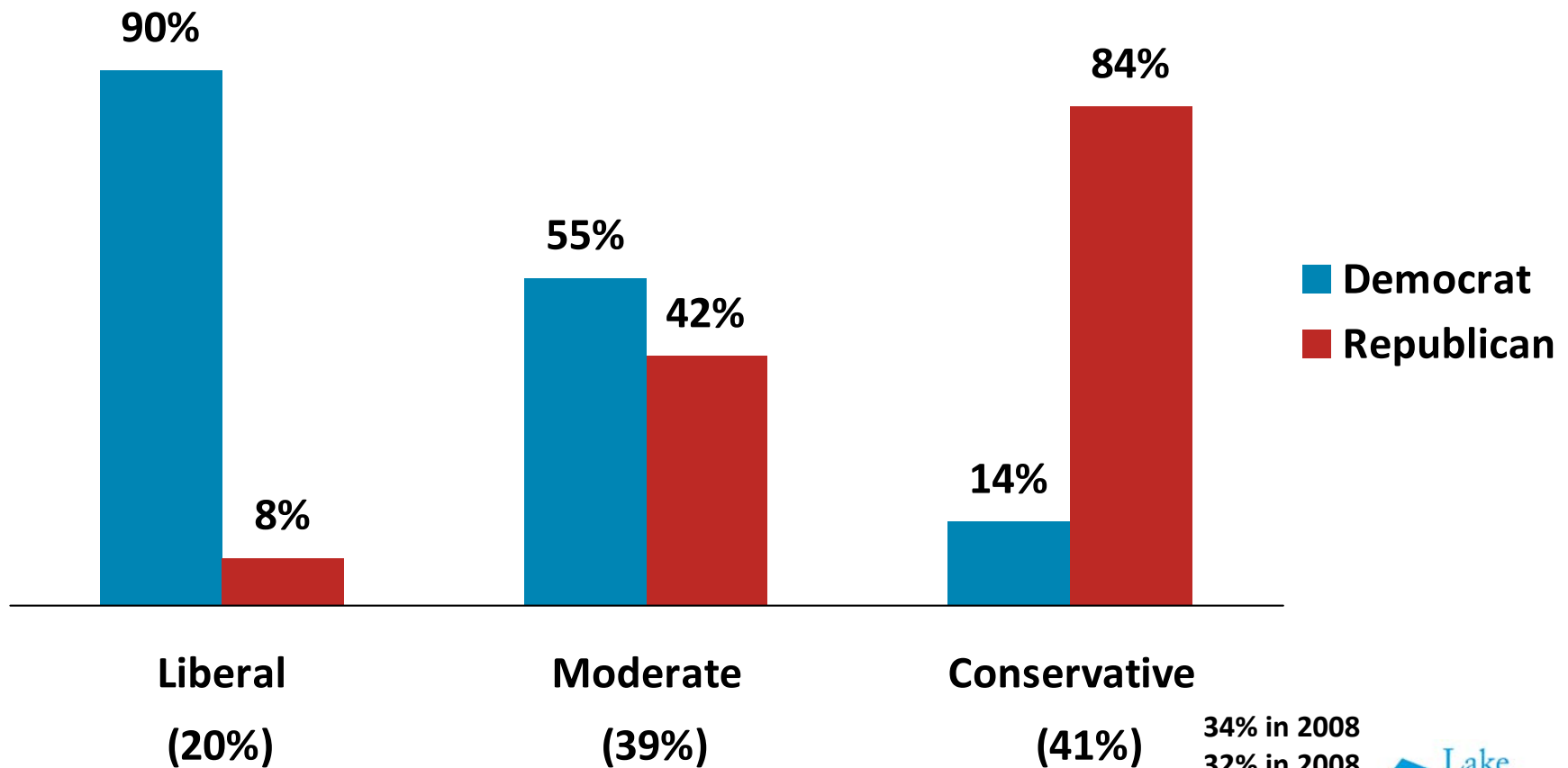
**Among Independents**

	Democrat	Republican
2006	57%	39%
2008	52%	44%
2010	38%	56%

■ Democrat  
■ Republican

Forty-one percent of voters identified themselves as conservative, which is the highest share reported since the start of exit polling in 1972.

### Vote by Ideology



34% in 2008  
32% in 2008

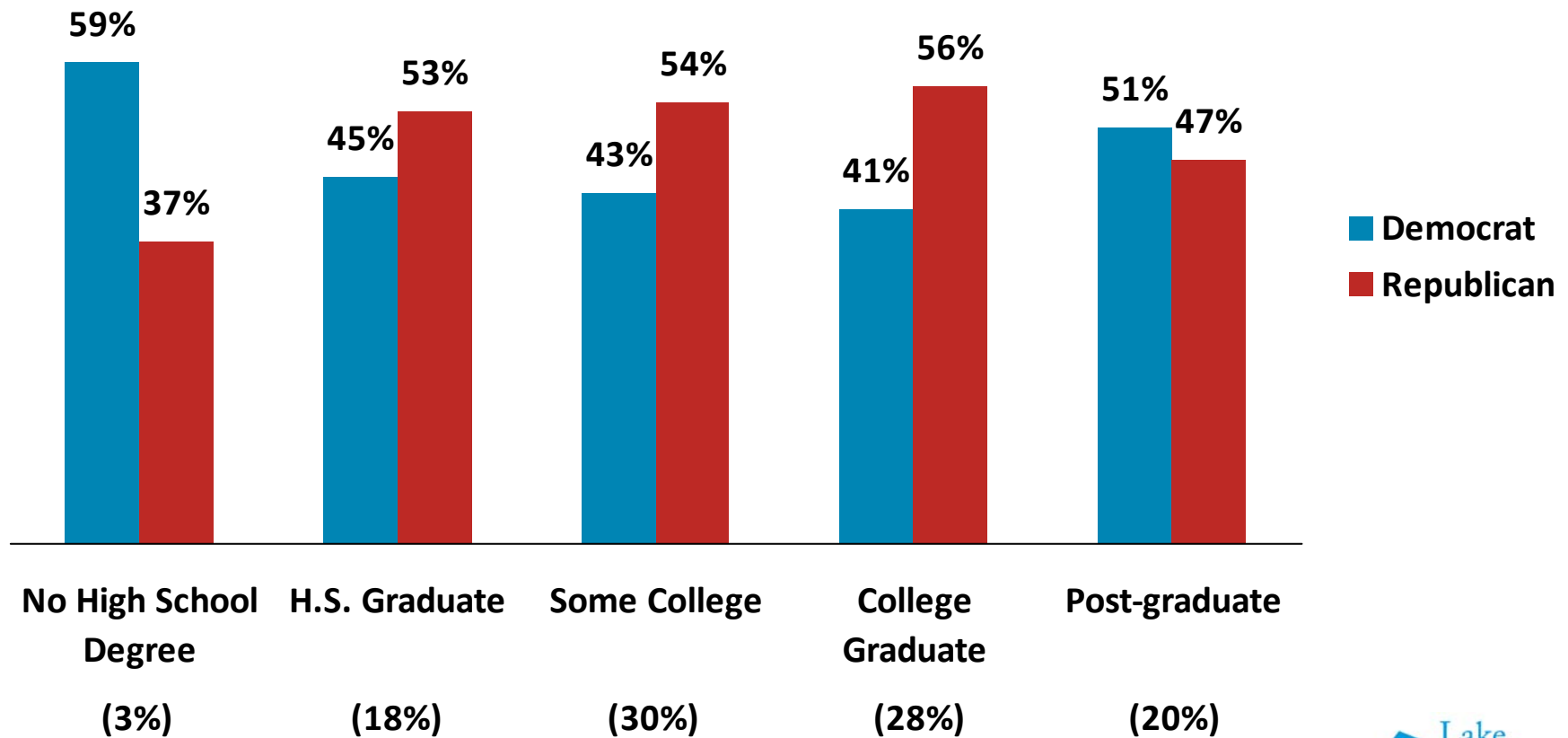
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Lake Snell Perry Mermin Meadow Gotoff Ulibarri

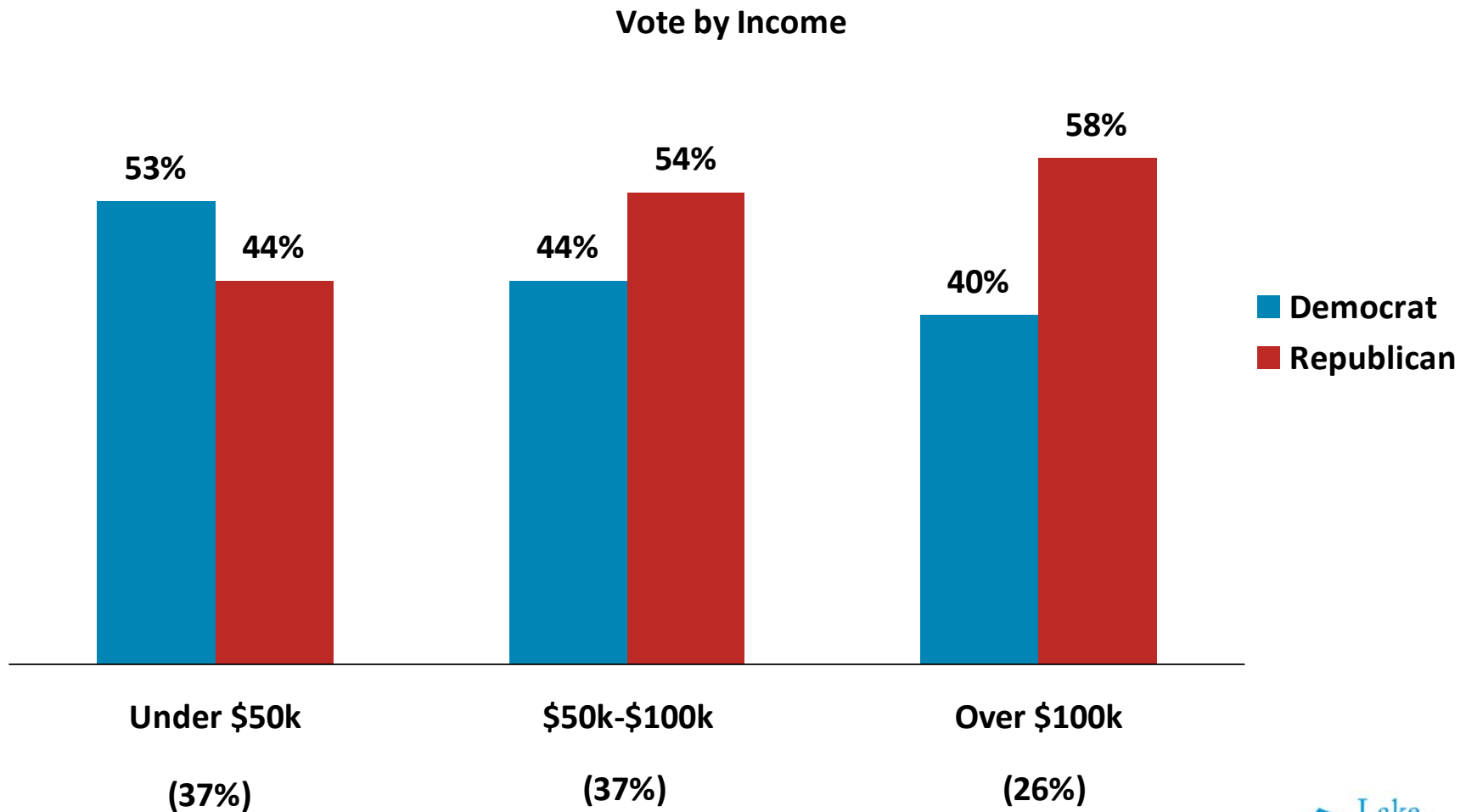
Overall, the race was closer among differing education levels. Democrats won among voters with the least (no high school diploma) and most education (post graduate), while Republicans won among voters who graduated high school, had some college education, or have graduated college.

**Vote by Education**



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

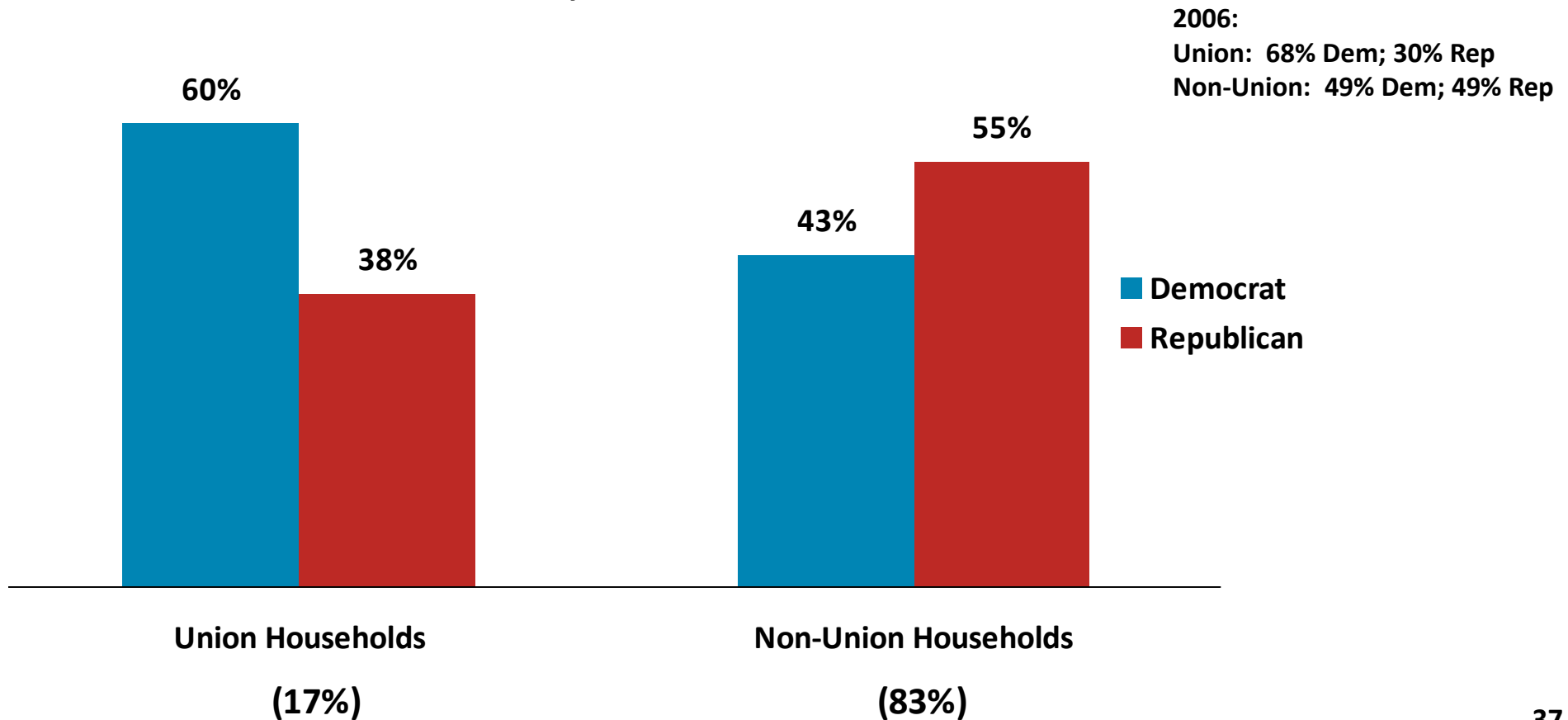
Income was not as strong of a predictor in 2010 as other elections.



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

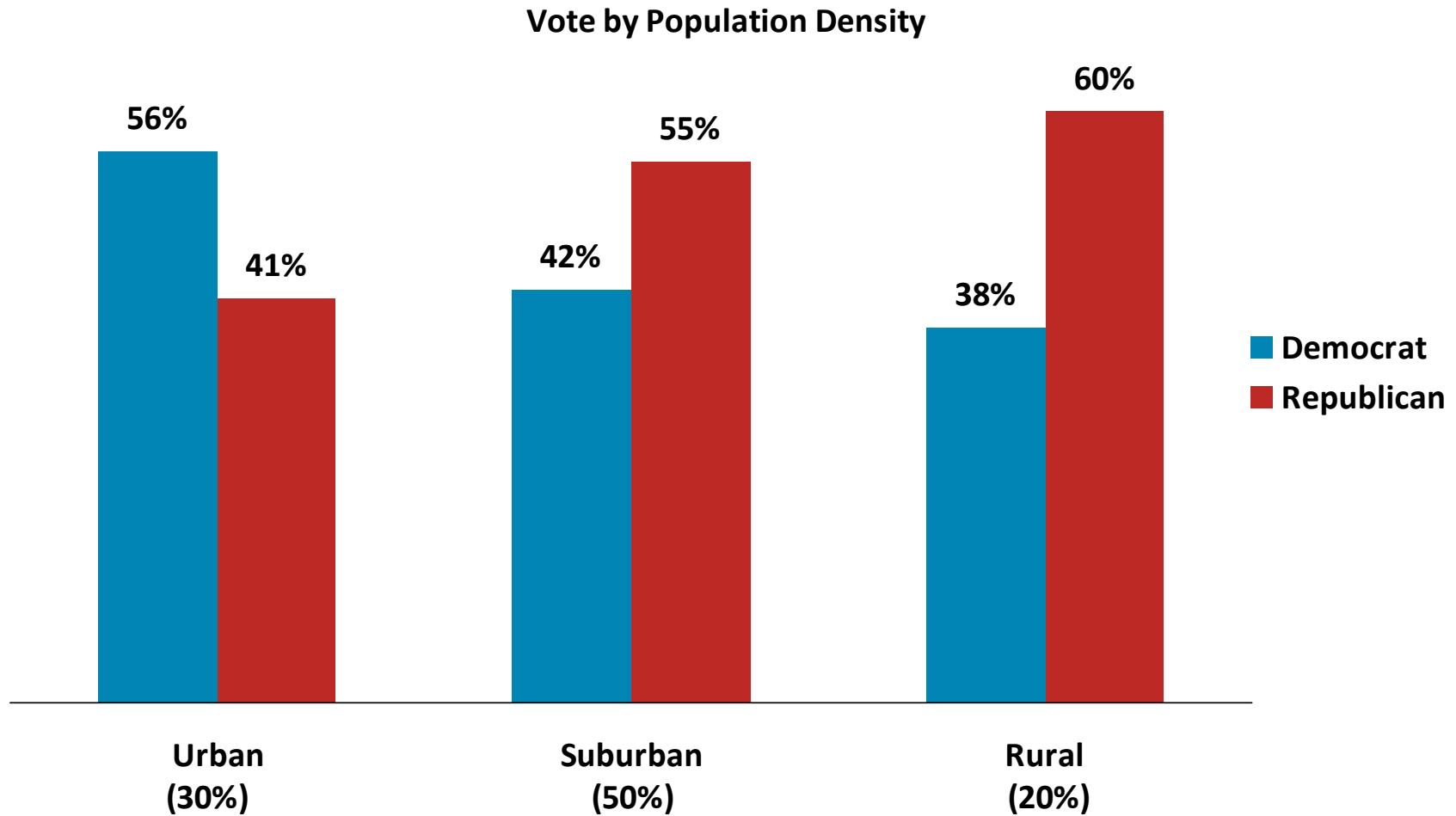
Democrats won 60% of the union vote a drop of 8-points from 2006. After splitting the non-union vote in 2006, Republicans won by 12-points in 2010. In key states, the union vote was stronger.

### Vote by Union Household Status



Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

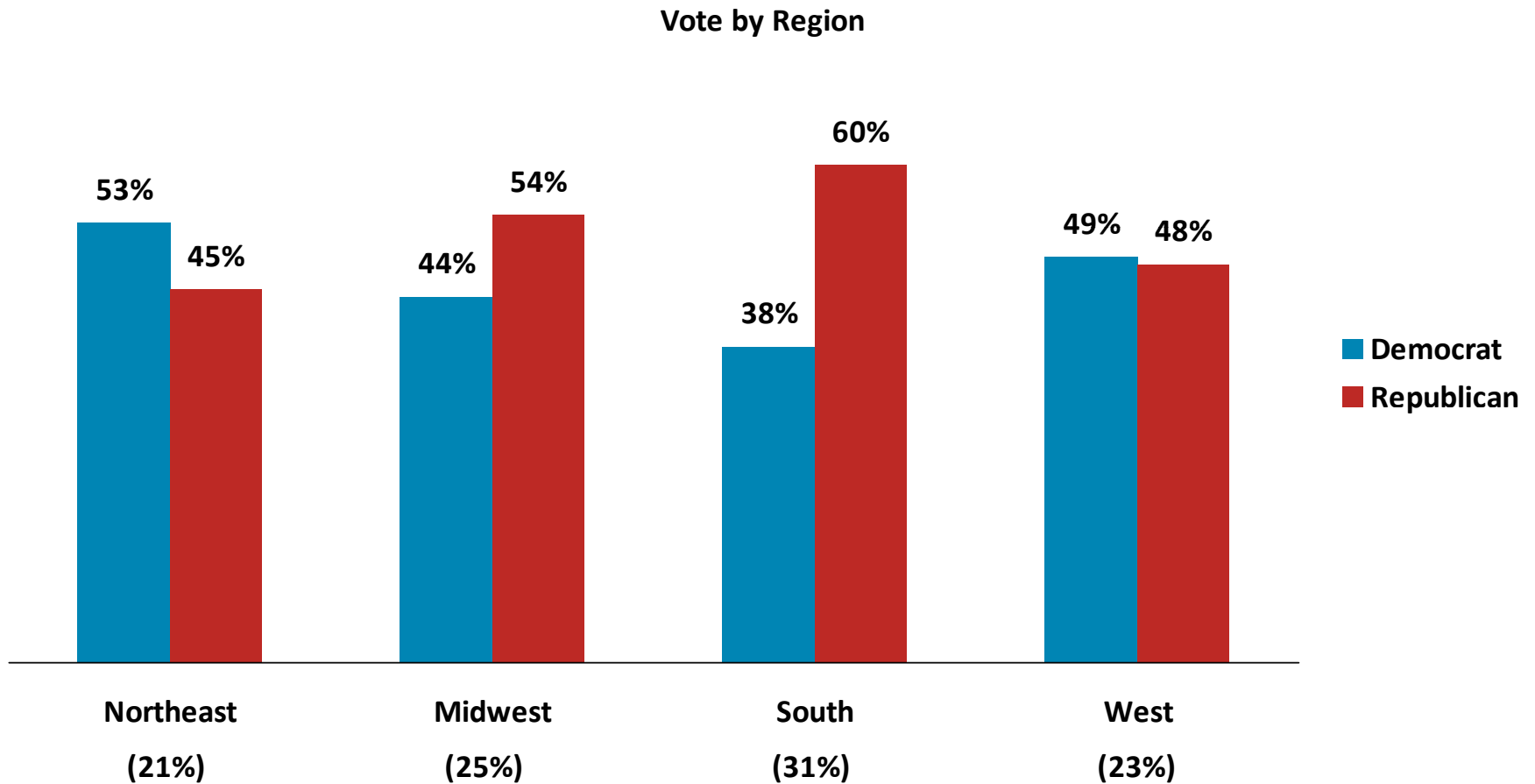
Republicans recaptured the suburban vote, showing a significant swing from 2006.



In 2006, Suburban voted:  
50% Democrat  
48% Republican

Source: National Election Pool Exit Poll, 2010

The Northeast was the only region to vote Democratic, while voters in the West split their vote. Voters in the Midwest, and especially those in the South, supported the Republican.



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