



# National Swing Women Voters Executive Summary

**2022–2023**

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# What We Did:

**Funded by Horizon Strategies and directed entirely by the two companies, we took an in-depth look at two small, but consequential groups in the electorate: Republican women who did not vote straight party in 2022 and Independent women who voted for candidates of both parties.**

## **Two Focus Groups in Phoenix, AZ**

- Unaffiliated/Independent women ages 25-65 who voted for a mix of Republican and Democratic candidates in the 2022 election.
- Republican women ages 25-65 who either voted for at least one Democratic candidate, voted for the Libertarian candidate in the U.S. Senate race, or left at least one race blank.

## **Two Focus Groups in Bucks County, PA**

- Unaffiliated/Independent women ages 25-65 who voted for a mix of Republican and Democratic candidates in the 2022 election.
- Republican women ages 25-65 who either voted for at least one Democratic candidate, voted for at least one third party candidate, or left at least one race blank.

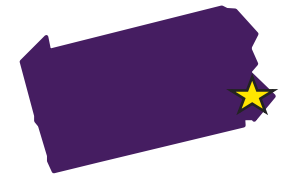
## **National Survey**

- N=200 Republican Swing Women
- N=200 Independent Swing Women

**December 12, 2022**



**January 11, 2023**




**January–February 2023**



**In this deck we also reference a Public Opinion Strategies post-election survey conducted via telephone among N=1600 actual voters nationwide.**

**The survey was conducted on November 8, 2022, and is comprised of 27% landlines and 73% cell phones.**

**The margin of error for a survey of N=1600 is  $\pm 2.45\%$ .**

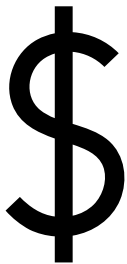
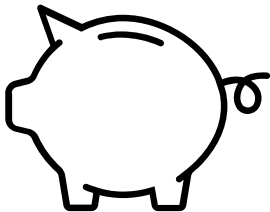


# Looking back at the 2022 Election

1

Yes, the economy and high costs  
mattered to women voters.

Asked to rate a list of 18 issues and their importance (1-10) to their vote in 2022, economic issues were at the very top of the list for Republican and Independent swing women:



<i>Mean – Ranked By Voted GOP</i>	Voted GOP in 2022 (49%)	Voted Dem in 2022 (26%)
The economy	9.1	8.9
Cost of living	9.0	8.9
Government spending	8.8	7.8
Health care affordability	8.7	8.7
Access to health care	8.5	8.7
Taxes	8.3	8.1
Border security	8.3	7.3
Security and integrity of our elections	8.2	7.5
Mental health	8.2	8.3
K-12 education	8.1	7.7
Crime in your community	7.9	7.6
Protecting 2 <sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights	7.9	6.0
Gun violence	7.8	8.4
Political divisiveness	7.2	7.3
Race relations	6.6	7.3
Climate change	6.5	7.8
Keeping abortion legal	6.3	7.9
Cancel culture and woke politics	5.3	5.5

Not Important At All

Neutral

Very Important

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10



2

These women respondents did not feel that either party was responsive in 2022 to their economic concerns.

Independents do not believe Republican candidates had better economic ideas in 2022.

*“Thinking about the 2022 election, which candidates had better ideas to help the nation’s economy?”*





	Independent Swing Women (50%)
<i>Republican Candidates</i>	17%
<i>Democratic Candidates</i>	15%
<i>Mix/Depends on the Race</i>	39%
<i>Neither</i>	29%






For Independent women, no GOP advantage on economic handling.

*“Which political party do you trust to do a better job of handing the economy?”*

		GOP Swing Women (50%)	Independent Swing Women (50%)
	<b><i>Republican Party</i></b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>16%</b>
	<b><i>Democratic Party</i></b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>12%</b>
	<b><i>Trust Both Equally</i></b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>
	<b><i>Neither</i></b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>57%</b>

## *What do women say about Republicans and their handling of the economy in 2022?*



*“They [Republicans] played the blame game instead of how they would correct the problem. No plan or guidance on how to correct it.”  
– Pennsylvania Republican*

*“I don’t really remember what Republicans said about inflation.”  
– Pennsylvania Republican*

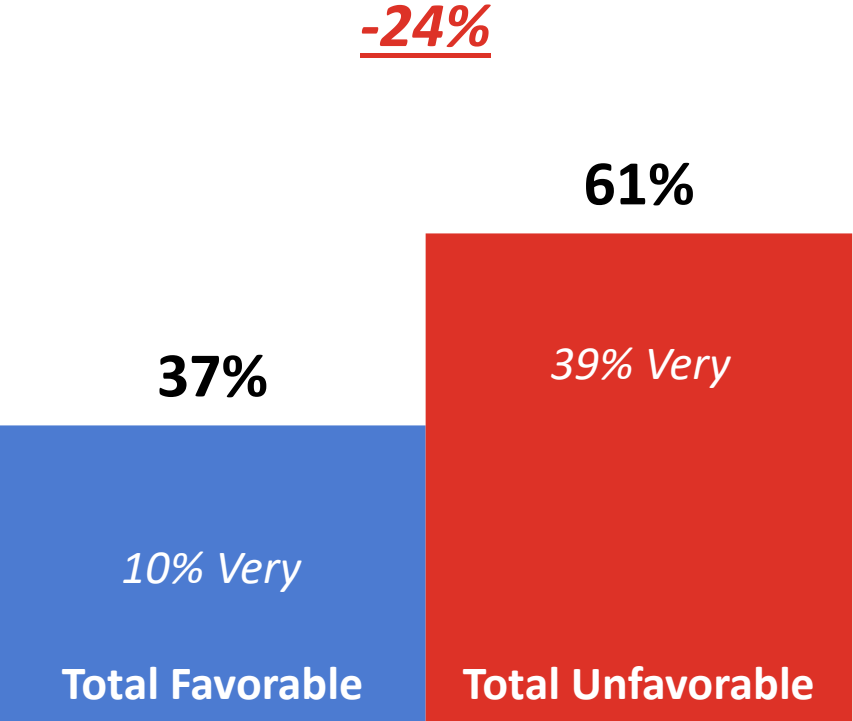
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Trump was an unwelcome figure  
for these women in 2022.

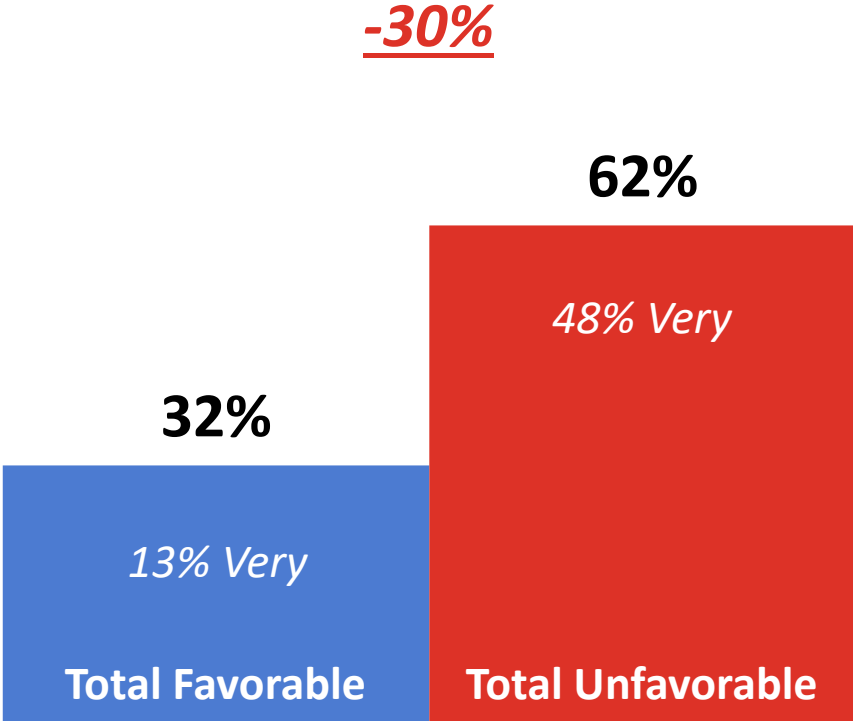
# Trump Image: Poorly perceived among these women.



Donald Trump Image



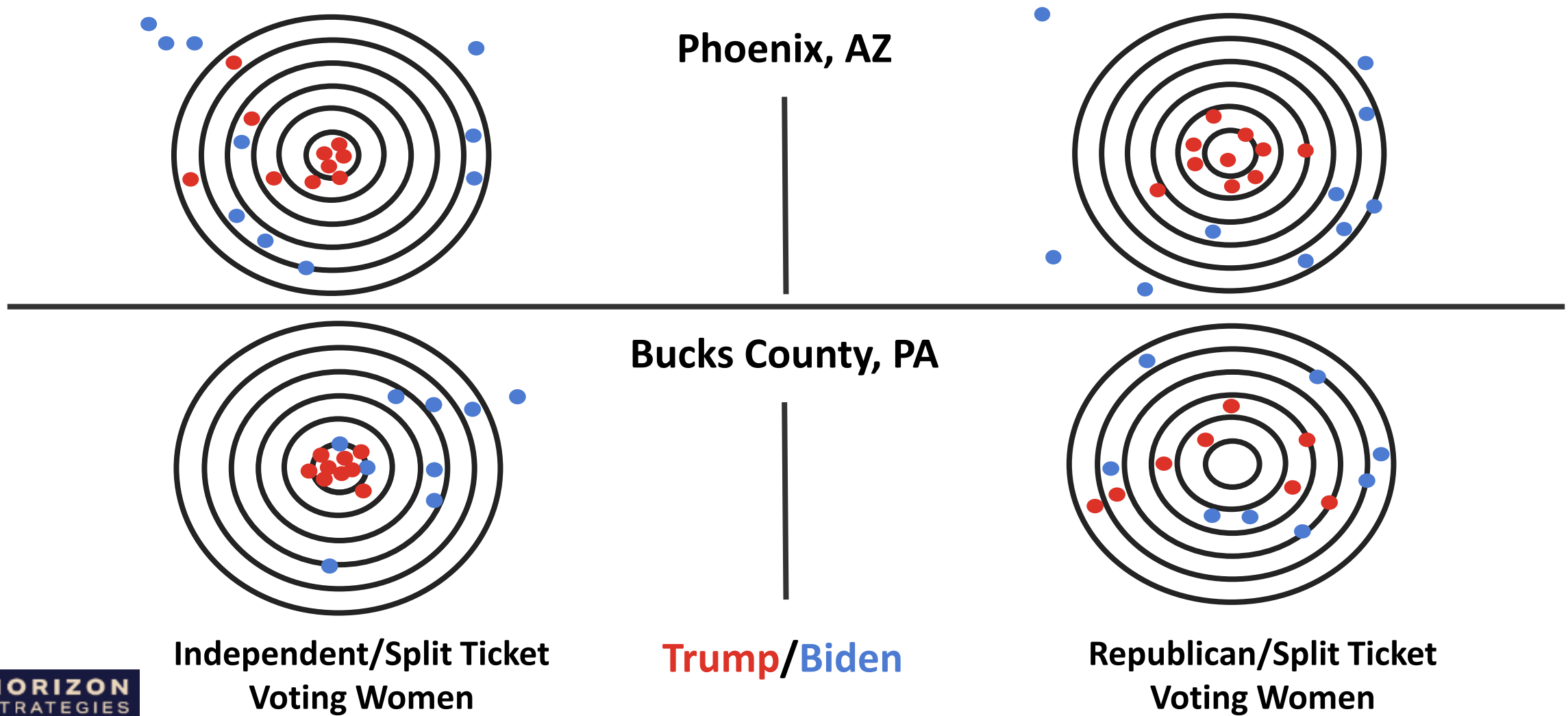
**Republican Swing Women (50%)**



**Independent Swing Women (50%)**

Bullseye Focus Group Exercise: Trump was at the heart of women’s decision making in who to vote for in 2022, much more relevant than Biden.

*“How important was each one of these presidents in deciding how you were going to vote this year?”*



*Dots closer to the bullseye indicate importance to their vote.*



## What women in the focus groups said about Trump

*"Trump was more important. He's scary. He incites things. People that support him are like a cult."*

*– Pennsylvania Independent*

*"He is the single greatest threat to democracy. He wants to be a dictator."*

*– Pennsylvania Independent*

*"I was disappointed that Republicans campaigned on Trump instead of issues."*

*– Arizona Republican*

*"When he [Trump] backs a candidate, it's a no-go for me. It's sad because I don't align with a lot of what the Democratic candidates say, but I don't align with a lot of what the Trumpers say either. It puts me in a bad position as a voter and a woman."*

*"You were inundated with Trump stuff."*  
*– Arizona Independent*

★★★★★  
**SAVE  
AMERICA**

PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

TEXT PENNSYLVANIA TO 88022

LATROBE, PENNSYLVANIA

4

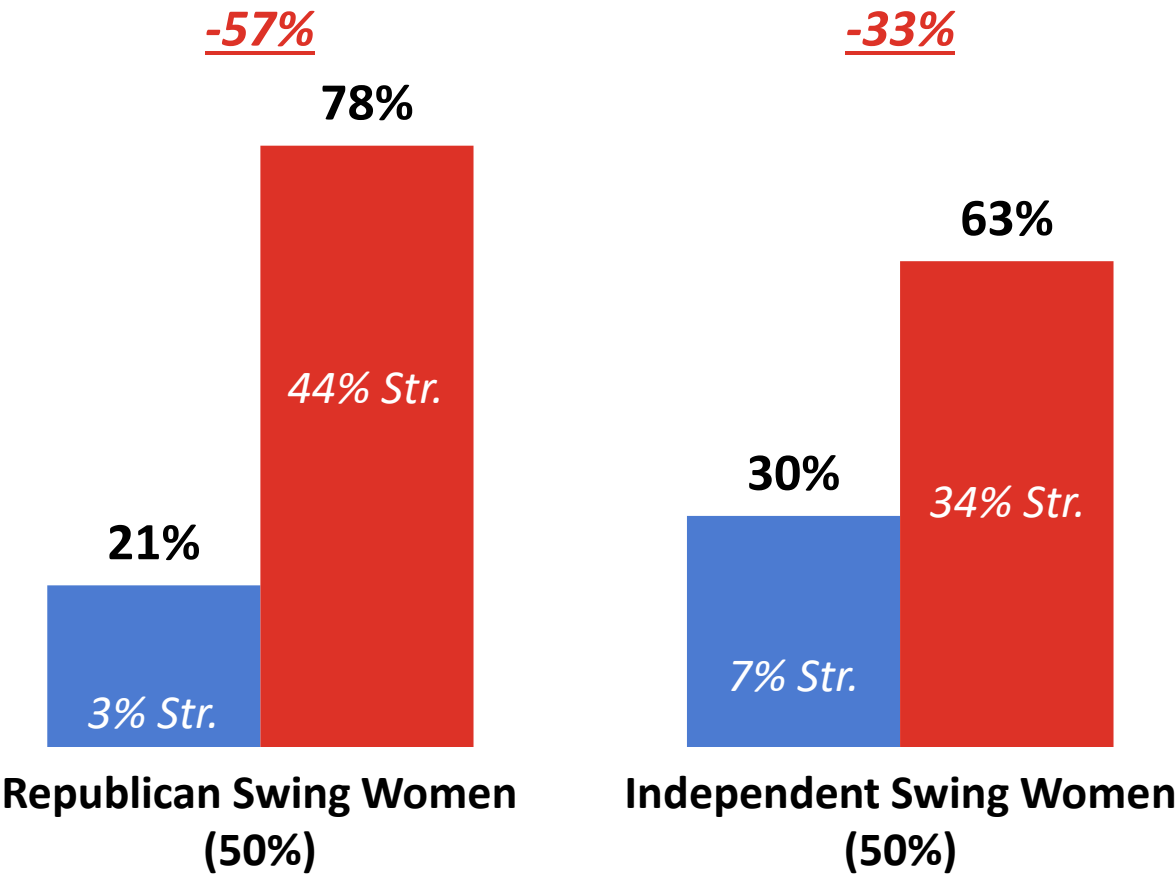
Biden was unpopular but far less relevant in this election.



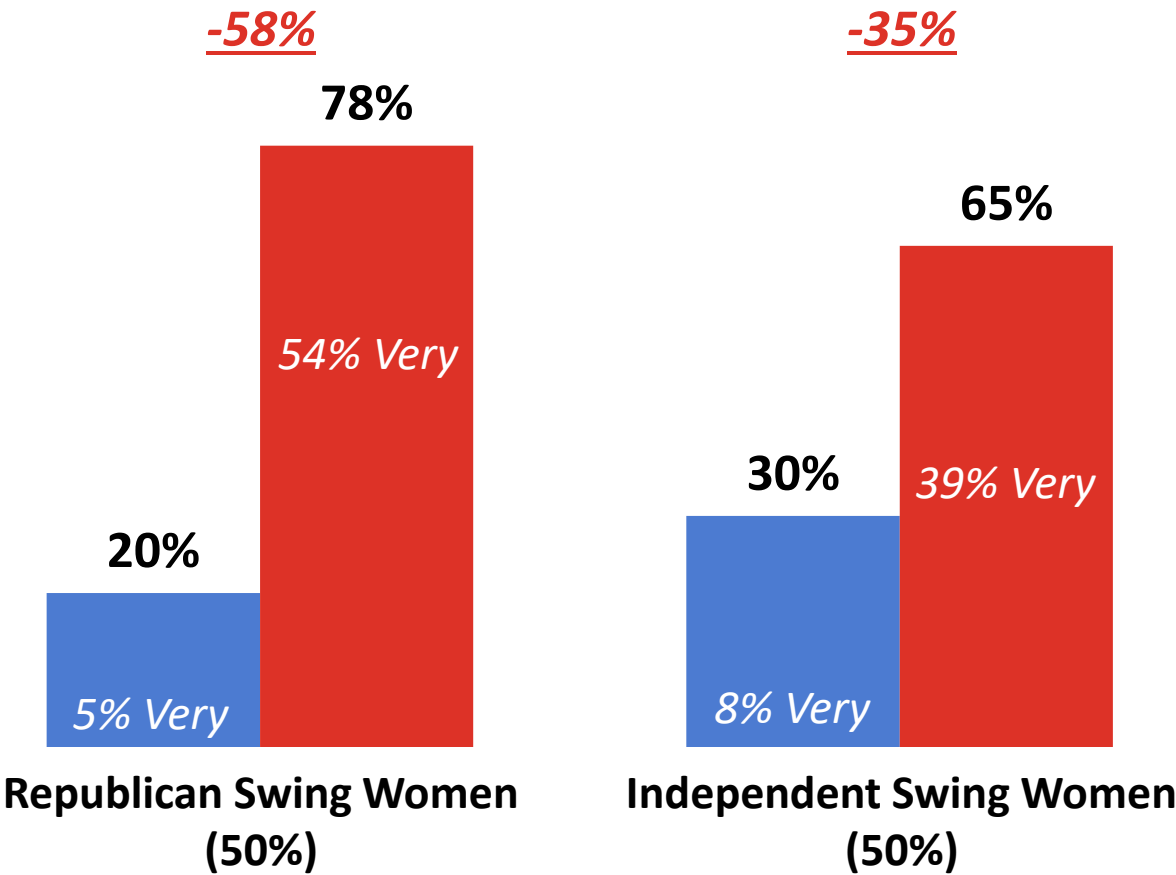
Low approval and image ratings = weak and ineffective.



*President Biden Approval*



*President Biden Image*

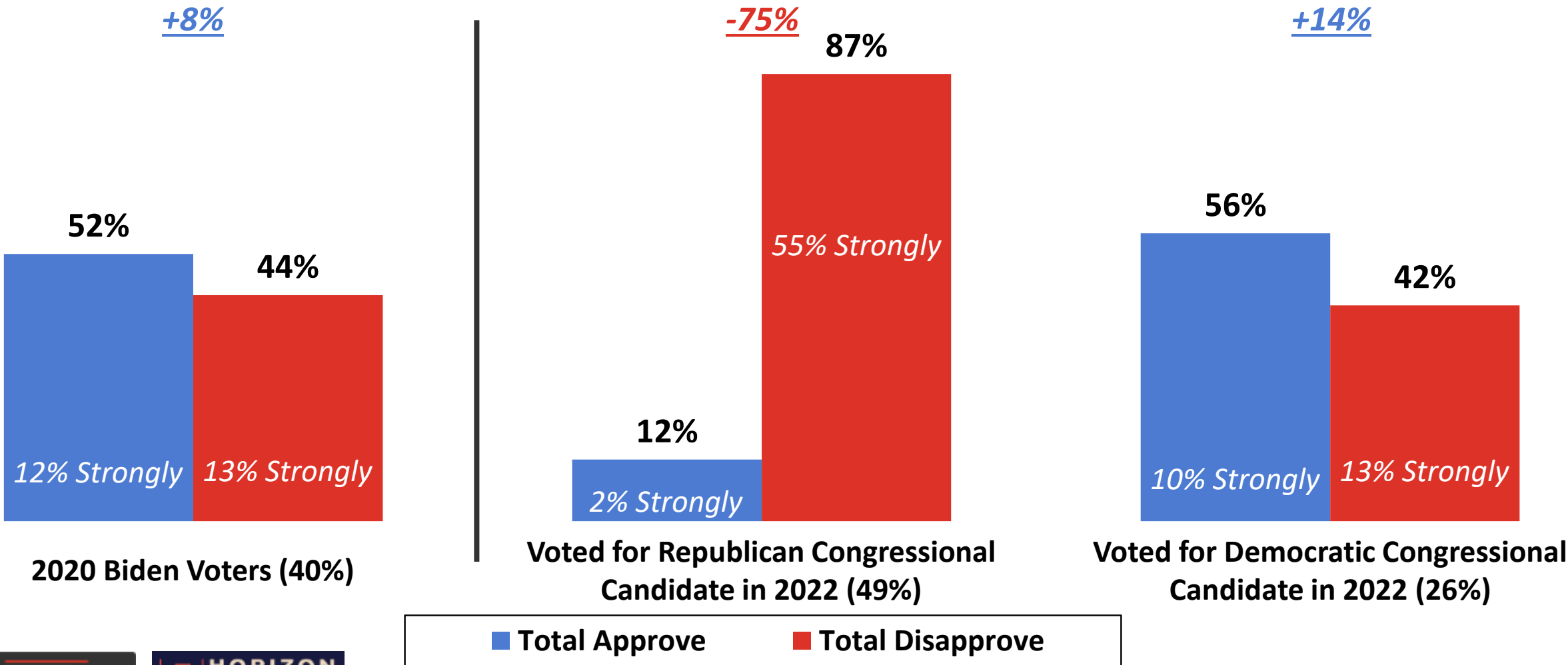


■ Total Approve ■ Total Disapprove

■ Total Favorable ■ Total Unfavorable

More than 4 in 10 Biden voters disapprove of his job performance; similar number did not approve of Biden but still voted Dem in 2022.

*“Do you approve or disapprove of the job Joe Biden is doing as President?”*



## What women in the focus groups said about Biden

*"I just don't see him, like ever. I don't ever see him talking about anything, even like important things when you would naturally see them talking ... Then weird little random stories." – Arizona Independent*

*"We voted for a President, and we got a puppet." – Pennsylvania Independent*

*"The problem [border] has been going on for too many years to just blame on one individual." – Arizona Independent*

*"I like someone who is not rocking the boat in the wrong direction." – Arizona Republican*

*"Blaming him for inflation is just a narrative." – Arizona Independent*



5

Independent women want neither Biden nor Trump to run for President in 2024. Either one likely creates down-ballot pressure for candidates.

By a significant margin, independent women do not want to see Trump or Biden as 2024 nominees.

*“Do you believe Donald Trump should be the Republican nominee for President in 2024 or should Republicans nominate someone new? Which way do you lean?”*

*Among Independent Swing Women*



**VS.** Someone  
New

19%

63%

18% Undecided/Not Sure

*“Do you believe Joe Biden should be the Democratic nominee for President in 2024 or should Democrats nominate someone new? Which way do you lean?”*

*Among Independent Swing Women*



**VS.** Someone  
New

11%

66%

23% Undecided/Not Sure

Swing Republican women would like to see someone other than Trump in 2024.

*“Do you believe Donald Trump should be the Republican nominee for President in 2024 or should Republicans nominate someone new? Which way do you lean?”*

Among Republican Swing Women



**VS.**

**Someone  
New**

**20%**

**75%**

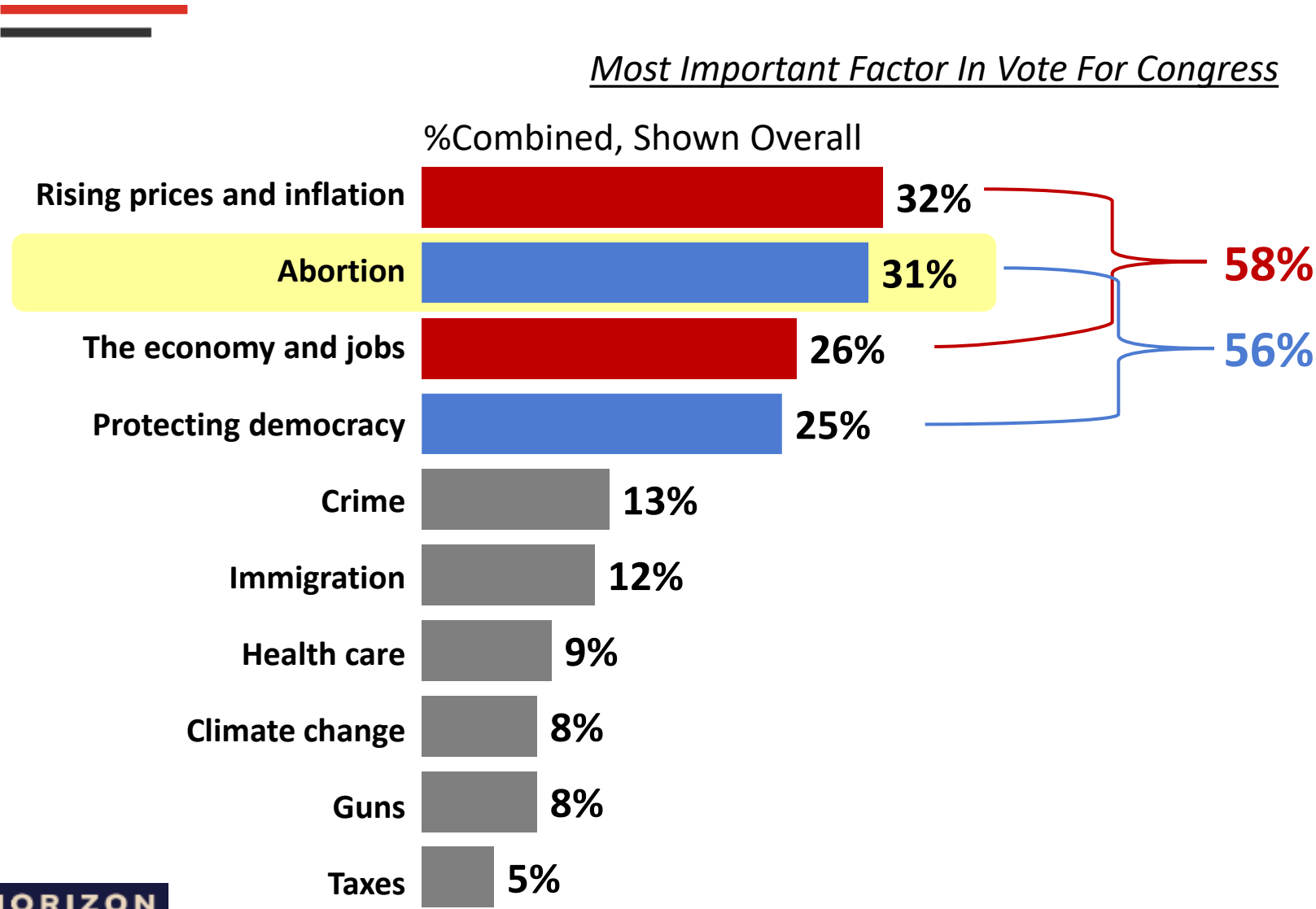
5% Undecided/Not Sure

6

The abortion debate had  
consequence in 2022.  
Democratic messaging  
was effective.



# Abortion was more of a factor than the pre-election polls indicated.



*“Roe v. Wade made me anxious. I voted for any candidate that was pro-choice.” – Pennsylvania Independent*

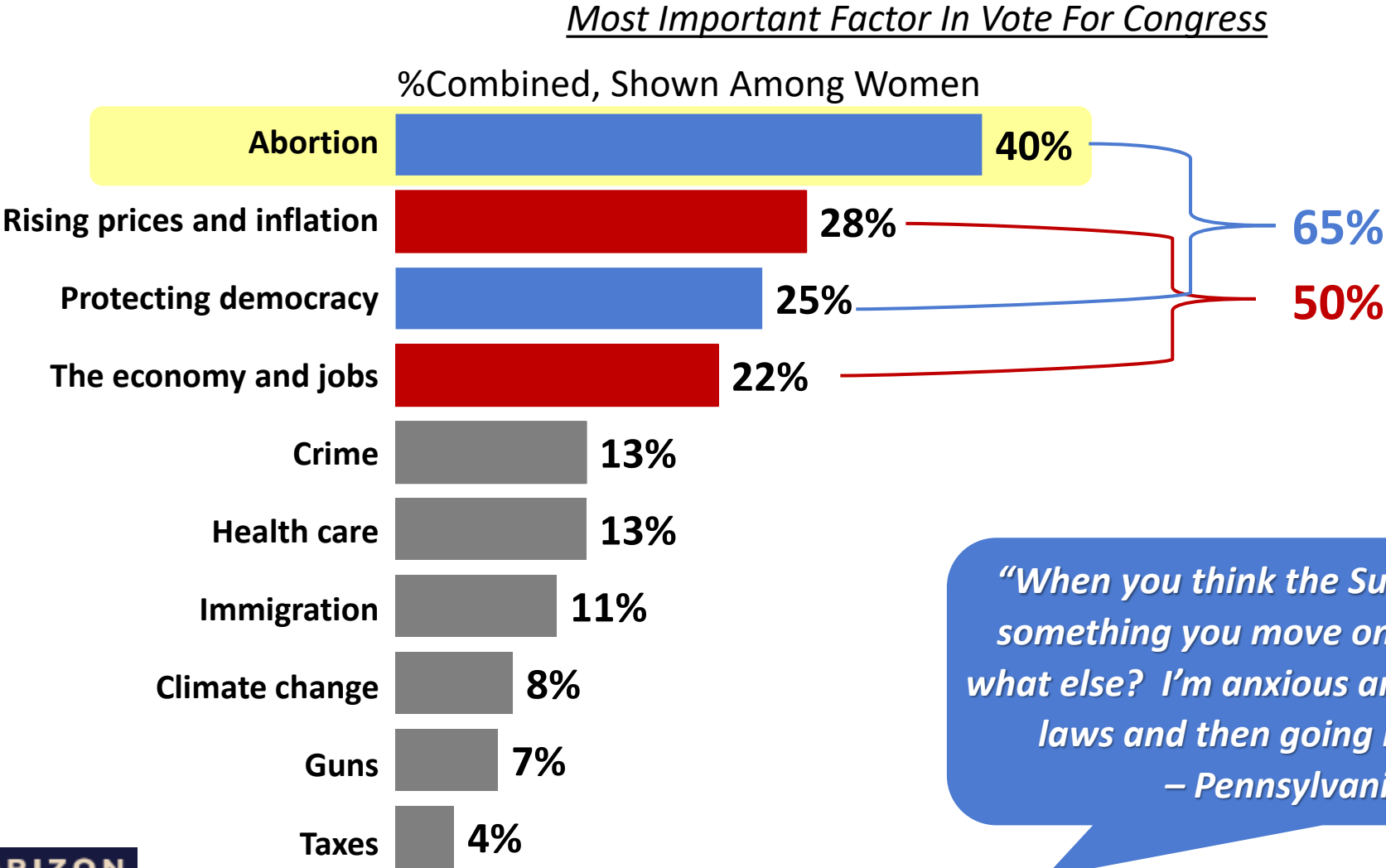


Demonstrators protest in Denver after Roe v. Wade was overturned.  
Photo Credit: Olivia Sun, The Colorado Sun via Report for America

*\*POS Post-Election Survey*

*Now, let me list some issues that may have factored into deciding your vote for Congress today. Please tell me which one or two of these items you think was the most important factor in deciding your vote. And, which of these issues was the second most important factor in deciding your vote?*

Our post-election survey demonstrated that abortion was THE top issue among women.



*“Women wouldn’t have access to abortion and choose those things. We saw the potential for things to change drastically...There was a lot on the table.”*  
– Pennsylvania Republican

*“When you think the Supreme Court has decided something you move on. Then you worry about, what else? I’m anxious and worried about really big laws and then going back decades is scary.”*  
– Pennsylvania Independent

*\*POS Post-Election Survey*

*Now, let me list some issues that may have factored into deciding your vote for Congress today. Please tell me which one or two of these items you think was the most important factor in deciding your vote. And, which of these issues was the second most important factor in deciding your vote?*



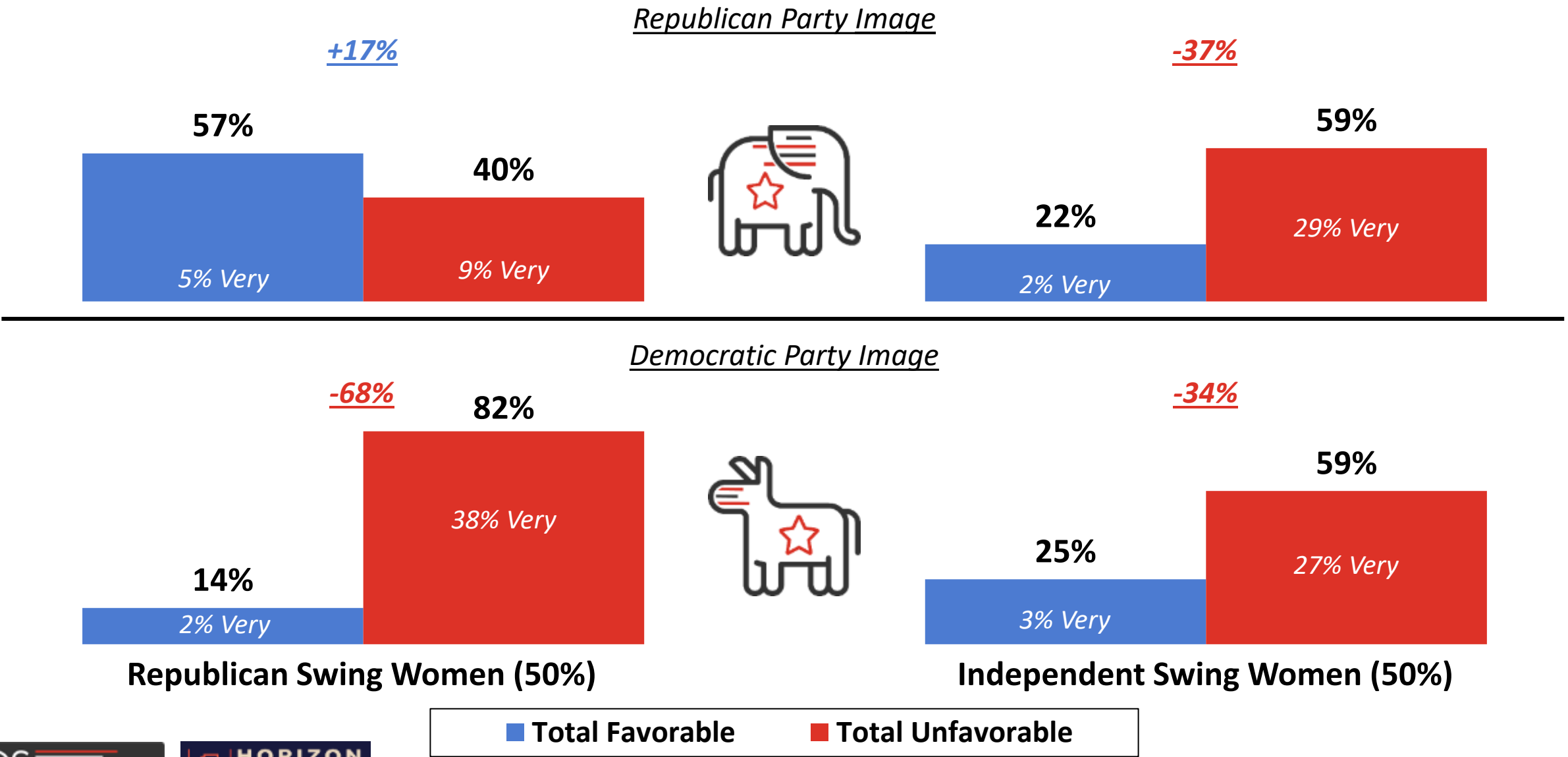
# Charting a Path Forward



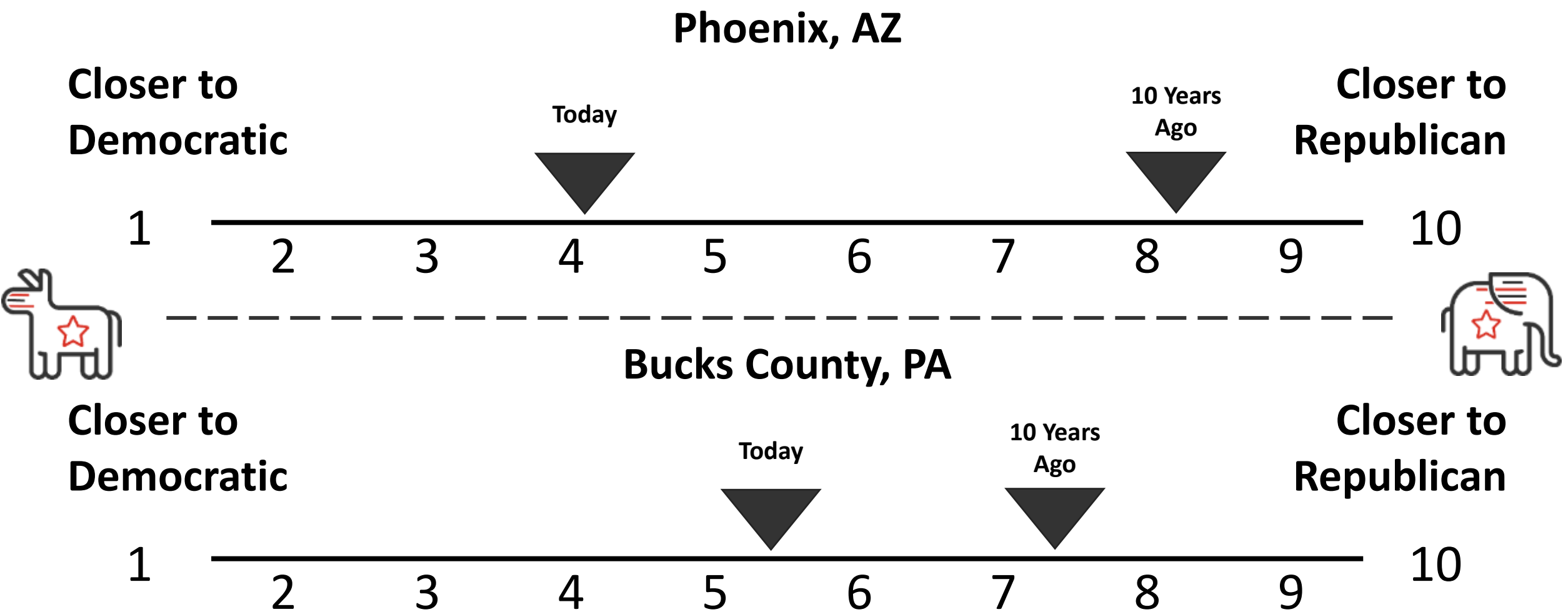


Perceptions of both parties are very low.

Republican swing women have some reservations about the party; Independent women do not like either.



Republican focus group participants demonstrate a “drift” away from the party over the last decade.



*Republican participants were asked to rate themselves 1-10 based on how close they felt to the Republican Party 10 years ago and how they feel today.*



*Trump has been a significant factor, but not addressing issues they care about and connect with also matters.*

*"I'm just tired of Trump and the drama."*

*– Pennsylvania Republican*

*"I felt like Republican presidents were like upstanding citizens and they made you feel safe in democracy and safe in America. Now, they're attacking America, like they're attacking democracy, they're attacking our voting system. They make you feel unsafe. And isn't that the opposite of what they're supposed to do? Even if it's not real, they're supposed to have that veneer of ... this is America, this is democracy, we're safe here.*

*Republican presidents used to have an air about them. Maybe it wasn't real, but they had a veneer of like we're safe, we're fiscally conservative... we're not controlling you." – Arizona Independent*

*"I don't care who drag queens read to. I care more about old people having enough food at the end of the month, not having to choose between medicine and rent." – Arizona Independent*

*"Trump did some good things for the country, but he blew it because he wouldn't shut up. He couldn't stop with the dumb stuff." – Pennsylvania Republican*





Democrats won in 2022 by disappearing. Their extreme candidates and positions were not part of the debate. Democrats used messaging to frame their opponents as “extremists.”  
Republicans need to turn the tables.

Democrats won by disappearing.



*"It seemed to boil down to Trump-supporting candidates and whatever Democrats were running." – Arizona Republican*

*"It was whackadoodle Republicans versus Democrats who were kind of non-entities." – Arizona Independent*

*"We needed to hear Katie Hobbs. Especially with everything that was going on with Kari Lake, and we didn't." – Arizona Independent*

*"They [Democrats] are keeping their mouth shut and that is their best strategy right now." – Arizona Republican*

*"He [Biden] didn't say anything. His party is running him." – Pennsylvania Independent*

*"Both parties have their share of crazy, but Republicans are just louder." – Arizona Independent*



# 9

Democrats successfully used abortion to paint GOP candidates as extreme. They will continue to use abortion. It will continue to work unless we re-set the debate.

# Six out of ten GOP and Independent swing women disapprove of Dobbs decision.

*“In June of last year, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, meaning there is not a constitutional guarantee to a right to an abortion. Each individual state will now decide whether abortion will be permitted and under what circumstances. Knowing this, do you approve or disapprove of the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe v. Wade?”*

	Republican Swing Women (50%)	Independent Swing Women (50%)
Total Approve	31%	25%
Total Disapprove	61%	65%

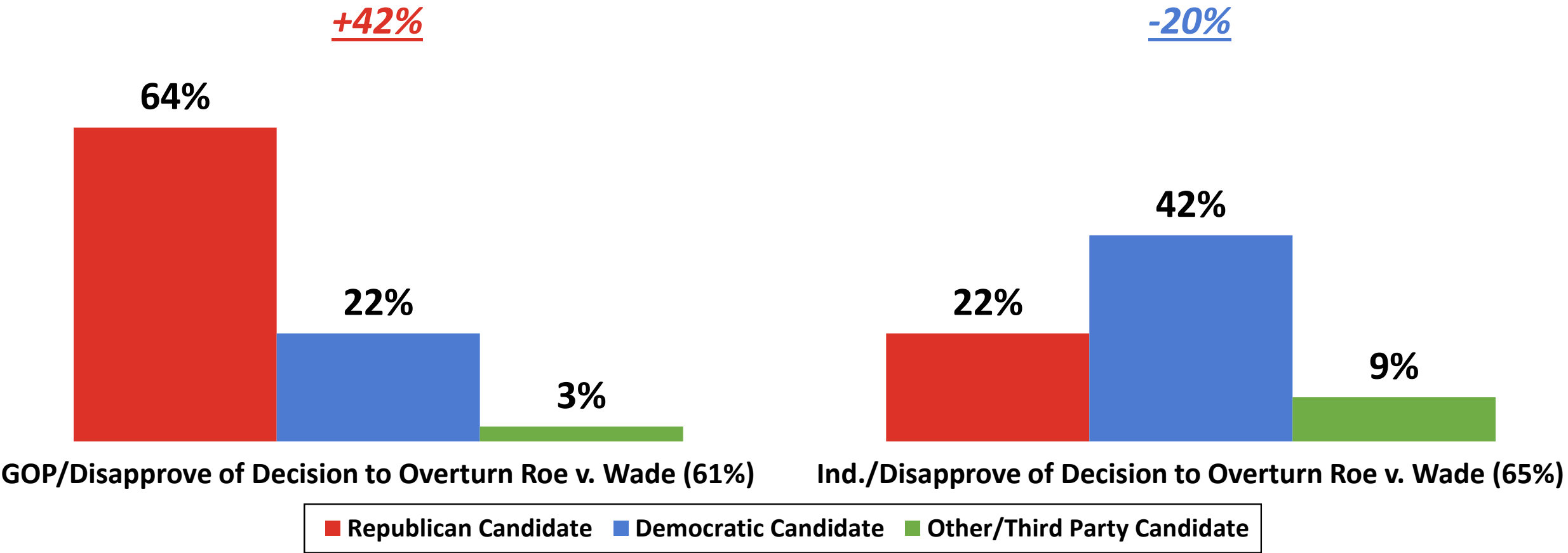


Protestors gather outside the Supreme Court Building in June 2022. Photo Credit: Eric Lee/Bloomberg



Independent swing women who disapproved of the Dobbs decision voted nearly 2-to-1 for the Democrat.

*“For whom did you vote in the election for U.S. Congress in your district...the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate?”*



*For many women, the issue was about much more than abortion-the-procedure. It was about how we view and respect women in America. This sentiment is deeply felt and highly nuanced.*

*"If they are going to take it away, what else could they do?"*  
— Pennsylvania Republican

*"It's a slippery slope. It goes beyond abortion. Rights were taken [away] that in the past were there."*  
— Pennsylvania Republican

*"It's a slippery slope. If they are mandating control here, where does it end?"*  
— Arizona Republican

WHAT OTHER  
RIGHTS  
DOES THE  
SUPREME COURT  
WANT TO  
TAKE AWAY?

*"I feel like we're watching Handmaid's Tale."*  
— Pennsylvania Republican

*"It's about control, controlling women and suppression of women."*  
— Arizona Independent

Extreme GOP proposals continue to be a focal point and are likely unhelpful.

The logo for azcentral, with 'az' in blue and 'central' in dark grey, followed by a blue dot.

“What's the latest on abortion in Arizona? New restrictions debated at Capitol, courts consider bans”

**“Bills by Republican lawmakers this year run the spectrum: one threatens women with execution or imprisonment if they have an abortion, while another emphasizes flawed abortions. Others would give pregnant women expanded rights.”**

*“A bill by [a freshman Republican lawmaker would change] the definition of person in murder, manslaughter and assault charges to include ‘a living human unborn at every state of development from fertilization until birth.’”*



10

The pro-life and pro-choice labels put pro-life candidates at a disadvantage among these swing women voters.

The pro-life and pro-choice labels put us at a disadvantage. Voters have broad and varied interpretations of what the labels mean.

In open ended-responses, swing women tell us pro-life means “against abortion in all cases.”



Photo Credit: Drew Angerer/Getty Images



*“Republicans who are pro-life say you have to protect the fetus. That there’s no reason to abort even when raped.”  
– Pennsylvania Independent*

*“I am definitely pro-life. But there are instances when it’s acceptable. It’s scary to think that you wouldn’t have rights. When Kari Lake was leading in the polls, that was the first time I really felt scared.” – Arizona Republican*

*“Pro life: anti-abortion, no discussion, no gray areas.” – Pennsylvania Independent*

The limitations of the pro-life label are evident. A candidate who opposes abortion after 15 weeks is considered pro-choice by many swing women.

*“Would you consider a candidate who opposes abortion after fifteen weeks of pregnancy to be...”*

	Republican Swing Women (50%)	Independent Swing Women (50%)
 <i>Pro-Life</i>	38%	39%
 <i>Pro-Choice</i>	45%	32%
<i>Unsure</i>	16%	29%

Part of re-setting the debate is to credibly articulate and force Democrats to defend their true position on abortion. It is untenable to these women voters.

*Please review the following positions that a candidate for political office might take on the issue of abortion, and please indicate whether you find that position acceptable, that is, you would consider voting for a candidate with that position, or unacceptable, that is you would not consider voting for a candidate with that position.*

**“Abortions should be legal throughout a woman’s pregnancy”**

	Would Consider	Would Not Consider	Difference
Republican Swing Women (50%)	27%	73%	-46%
Independent Swing Women (50%)	41%	59%	-18%
Pro-Choice Swing Women	44%	56%	-12%

*The challenge ... the Democrat position is so extreme, women have a harder time believing it. And making the issue more broadly about women's rights and the ability of women to make their own decisions has worked.*

*"The word 'late-term abortion' is weaponized by Republicans. Take it with a grain of salt."  
– Pennsylvania Independent*



*"Republicans were coming up with extreme examples and it didn't seem reasonable. Who would support that?"  
– Pennsylvania Independent*

A confluence of factors have contributed to Republicans being labeled "extremist." Democrats have figured out how to navigate out of the mainstream positions in their party, or just don't draw attention to themselves.

11

Successful 2022 general  
election candidates watched  
their tone and got to work.

# Republicans Women in our Focus Groups Like and Respect...

Women in our focus groups could name Republicans they like and respect. Words they use to describe them:

- **Fair**
- **Matter-of-fact**
- **Reasonable**
- **Work for the people, not the party**
- **Not in-your-face**



**Rachel Mitchell**  
*Maricopa County Attorney*



**Kimberly Yee**  
*Arizona State Treasurer*



**Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick**  
*Pennsylvania CD-1*



# What's Next?

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**Research that highlights problems without solutions can be frustrating. We understand that. But the first step in our process is to draw attention to the problems so that we can work collectively on solutions.**



**Solutions will require more work. And we do not expect that the “solutions” will be the same for all candidates in all districts or states. We do believe there can be guidance that our candidates can utilize and adapt to their needs. We do believe that candidates and their campaigns should consider the issues raised herein and make thoughtful determinations.**

# Some additional thoughts and questions...

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- ✓ **Fill in the blanks for voters on abortion. Right now, voters are making assumptions about what it means to be pro-life that may not be entirely correct. These assumptions can be dangerous. Ambiguity can be helpful at times, but not in this circumstance with this issue.**
- ✓ **Republicans do not need to be pro-choice in order to win. By definition, many of these women were pro-life, but were uncomfortable with portrayals of Republicans as “my way or the highway” or more broadly dismissive of women and their rights. How can we articulate pro-life positions without alienating an entire class of voters? We need to be cognizant that there are times when we say something, and voters hear something else. This is one of those times.**
- ✓ **Challenge Democrats to embrace the positions of their extremists by getting them on the record. Voters seem to need to hear it in the Democrats’ own words before they will believe it.**
- ✓ **Our economic messaging this last cycle failed to land. We need to understand why, and how to do it better.**
- ✓ **Importantly, candidate quality still matters. It is even more important as party brands have been severely tarnished. It would seem both parties and their respective candidates stand to benefit from a change of party leadership and thoughtful messaging.**



# PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

turning questions into answers

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