Barr Foundation – Massachusetts Clean Energy Survey

May 2022

Barr Foundation

GSG
GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP

Key Insights

Key Insights

Massachusetts voters think climate change is serious problem and support a move towards renewable energy.

An overwhelming majority of Massachusetts voters see climate change as a serious problem and a majority support a proposal to transition towards generating heating and electricity from entirely renewable energy sources. Moreover, voters believe such a proposal is a realistic goal that would improve community safety and benefit the state's economy.

Massachusetts voters support a wide range of clean energy initiatives but are most supportive of initiatives that create clean energy jobs and provide incentives directly to them.

When asked both about the use of federal stimulus funds and Massachusetts state government initiatives, proposals to create clean energy jobs and provide incentives for people and homeowners to transition to clean energy were most supported.

Massachusetts voters prioritize electricity that is "reliable," "safe," and "affordable" – but messaging increases the importance given to "healthy" and "clean" energy too.

Messaging increased the share of voters who said "healthy" and "clean" aspects of electricity were very important 8 and 12 points respectfully, however, voters still found electricity that is "reliable," "safe," and "affordable" most important overall.

Key Insights (continued)

Messages related to climate, air pollution, price volatility and the economy / jobs are most convincing to Massachusetts voters.

Top-testing messages overall focused on the impact of climate change and dangerous pollutants and toxic chemicals from burning gas. Voters of color were especially convinced by messaging that focused on the volatility of gas prices.

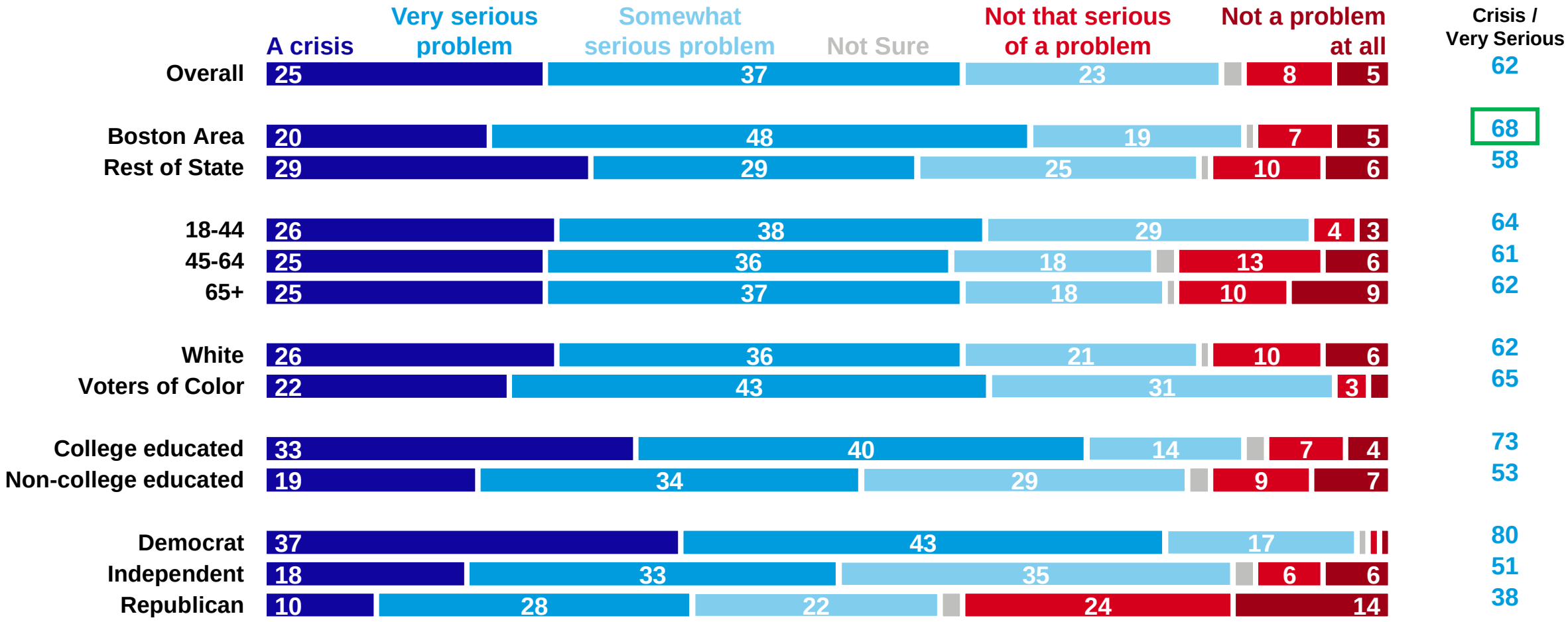
Women are one of the most important targets for communication and are persuaded by messaging.

44% of women are swing voters and 20% of women are in our soft base (supporting the plan for renewable energy somewhat and / or strongly, but not always strongly.). Messaging increases support for the renewable energy proposal 19-points among women.

Issue Landscape

Six in ten Massachusetts voters say climate change is a crisis or very serious problem

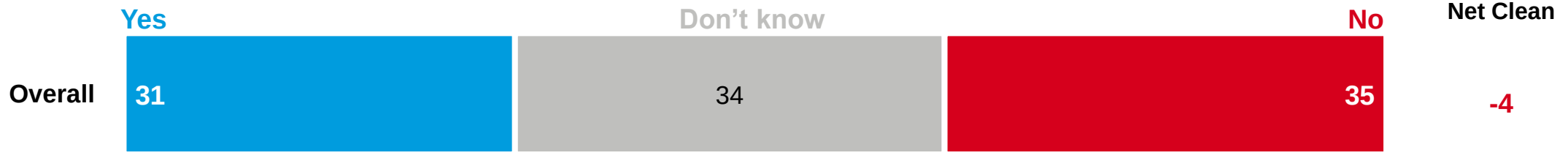
How much of a problem do you consider climate change to be – a crisis, a problem, or not a problem?



Gas is viewed as safe for heating and cooking, but Massachusetts voters are mixed on whether it is a clean form of energy

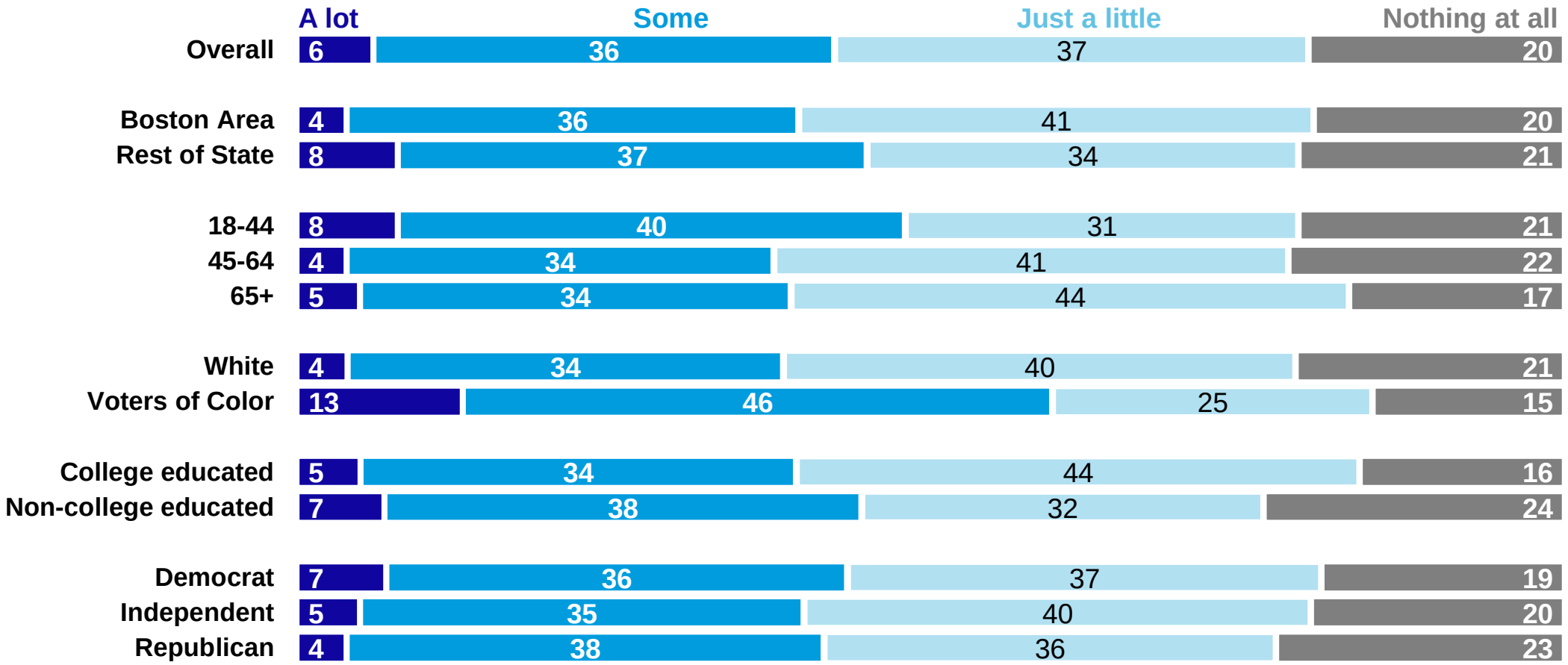
Do you consider gas to be a safe form of energy for heating and cooking, or not?

Do you consider gas for generating electricity and heating to be a form of clean energy or not?



Few believe they know “a lot” about Massachusetts’ electrical grid and energy system, but 7 in 10 say they know at least a little or some

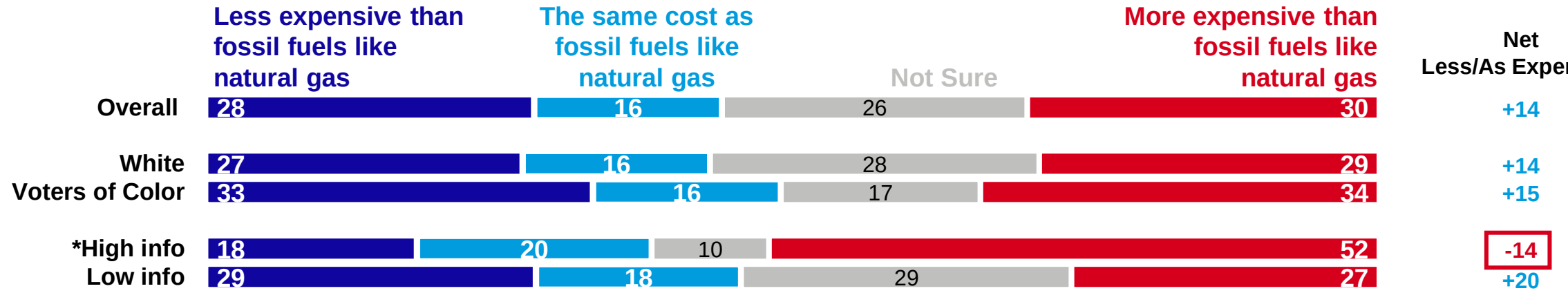
How much would you say you know about the electrical grid and energy system in Massachusetts?



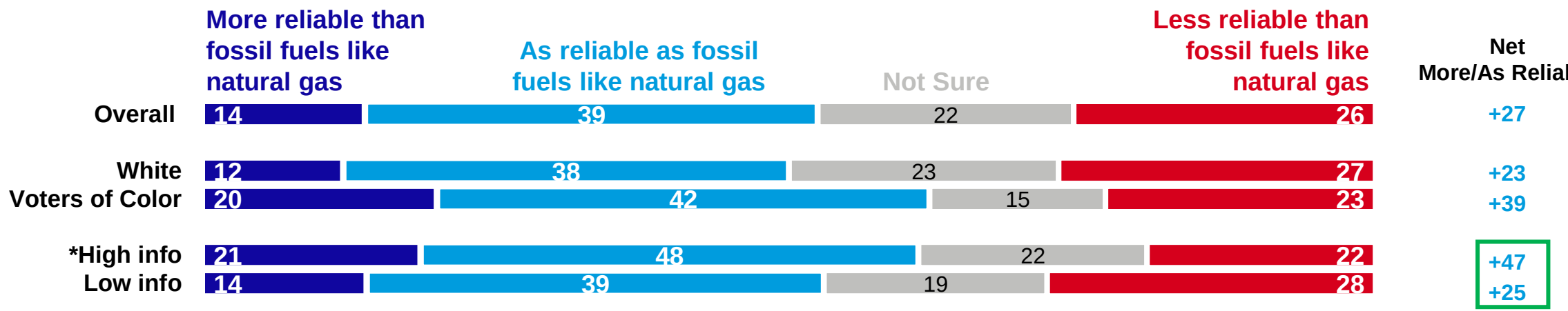
For analysis purposes on other questions, voters who said “a lot” were categorized as high information voters, voters who said “some” or “just a little” were categorized as low information voters, and voters who said “nothing at all” were categorized as none.

A plurality of Massachusetts voters believe renewable energy is more expensive than fossil fuels, and that view is more likely to be held by high information voters

Just based on what you know, is renewable energy such as wind, solar, and hydropower…



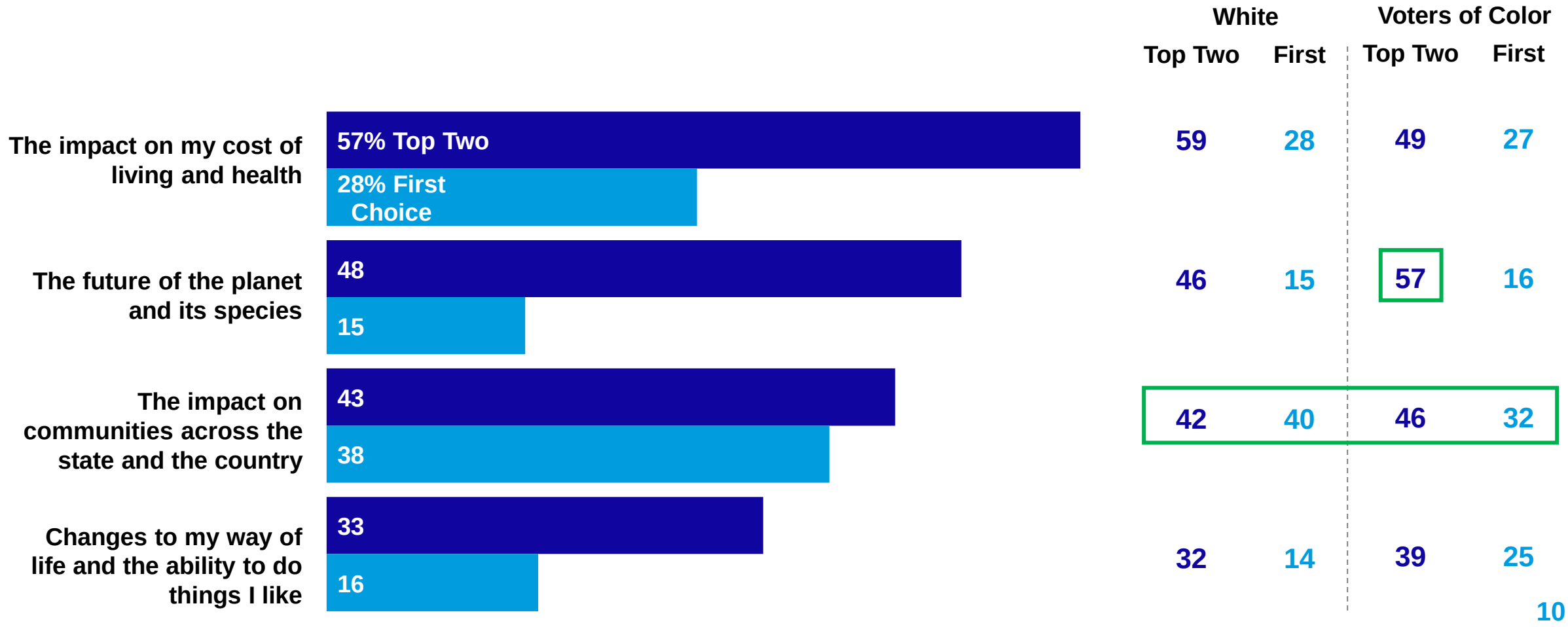
Just based on what you know, is renewable energy such as wind, solar, and hydropower…



*small n-size

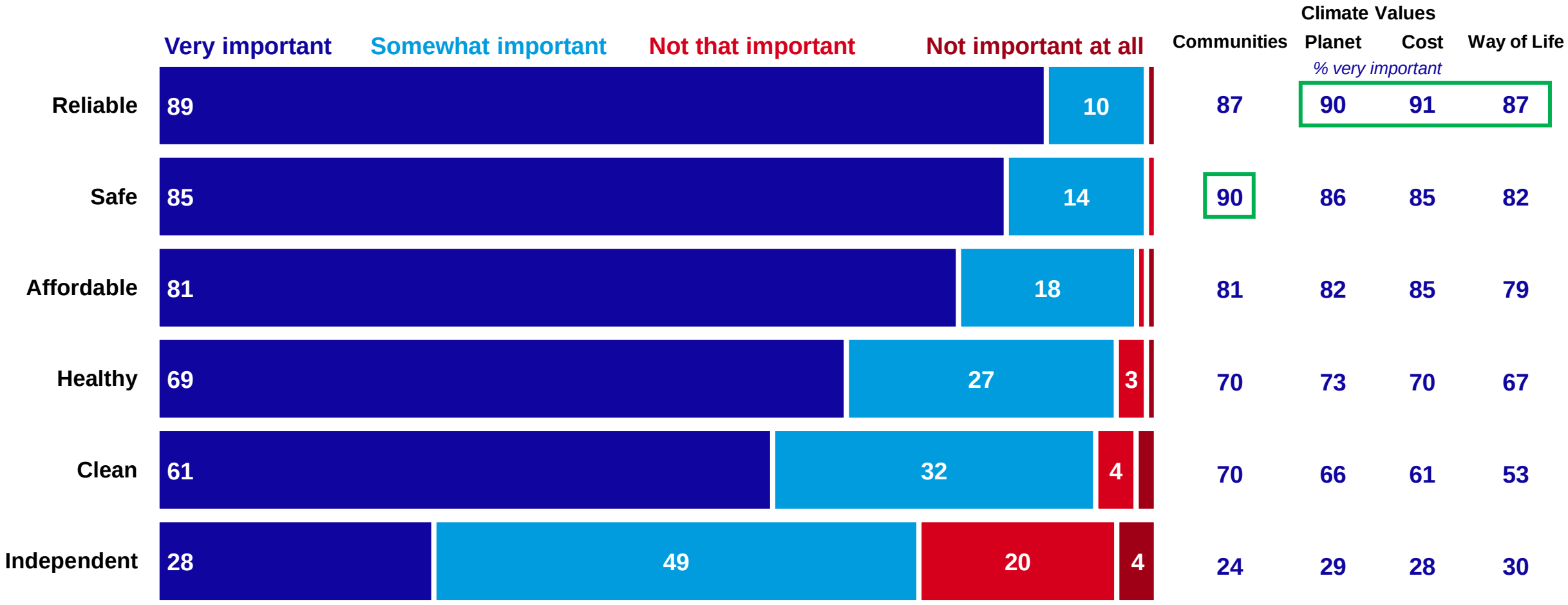
Massachusetts voters overall are most concerned about how climate change will impact their cost of living and health, but voters of color are more likely to be concerned with the future of the planet and its species

When it comes to climate change, what concerns you the most? And what concerns you next most?



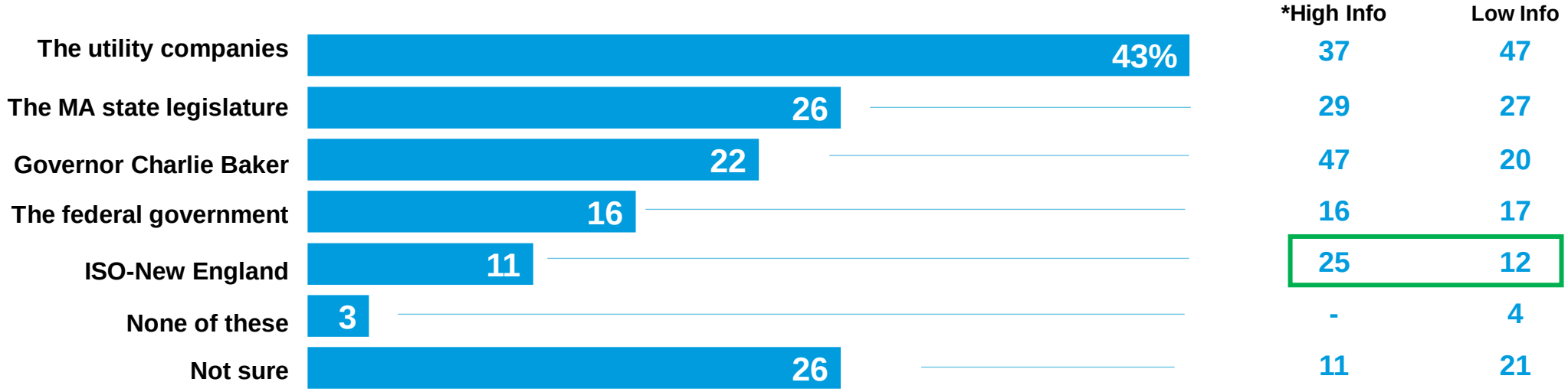
Massachusetts voters prioritize electricity that is reliable, safe, and affordable

Please indicate how important each [ITEM] is when it comes to your electricity in Massachusetts

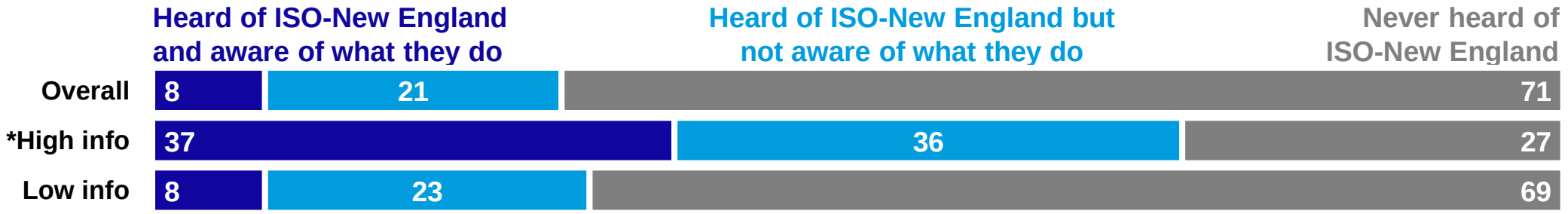


Four in ten believe utility companies coordinate the state's electricity, but "high" information voters are more likely to recognize ISO-New England's role

Just based on what you know, when it comes to electricity in Massachusetts, which person or organization do you think has the responsibility for coordinating and directing the distribution of electricity over the region's high-voltage transmission system? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]



Awareness of ISO-New England



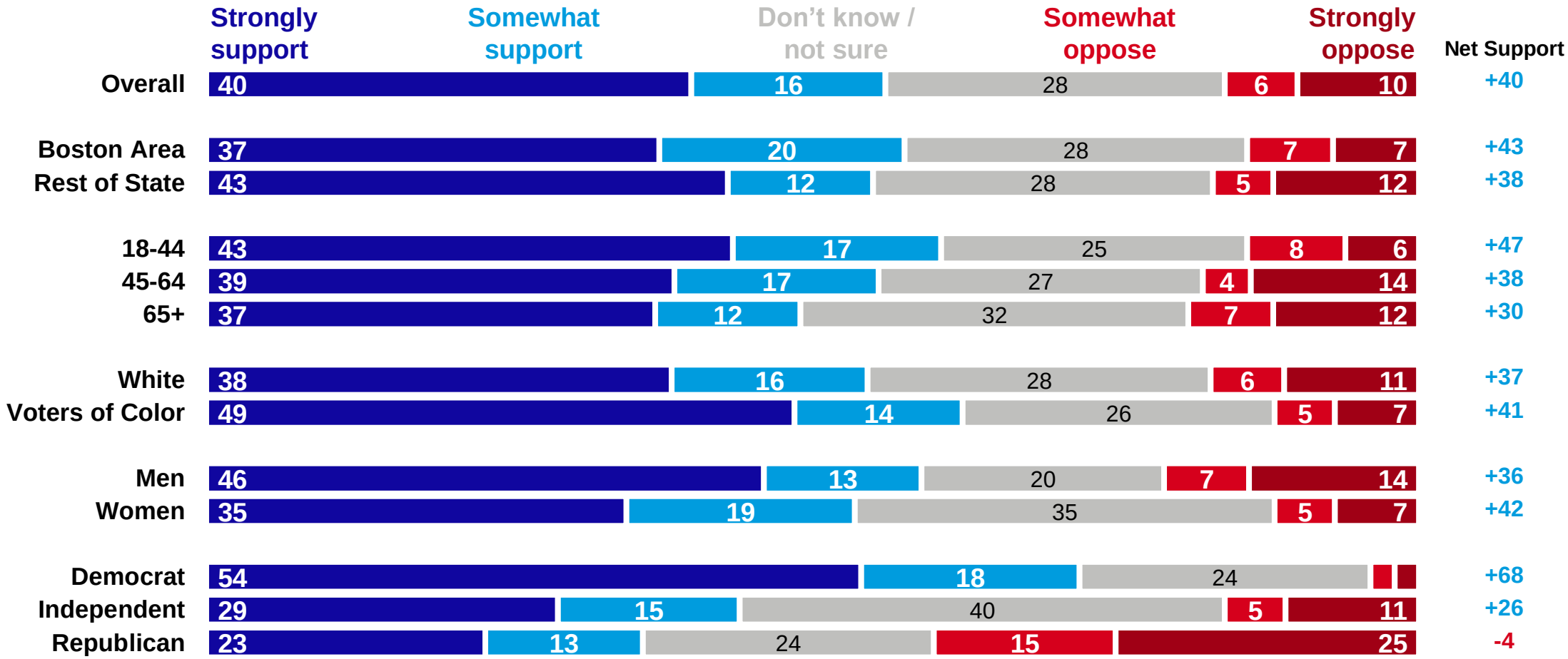
12

**small n-size*

Perception of Clean Energy Transition

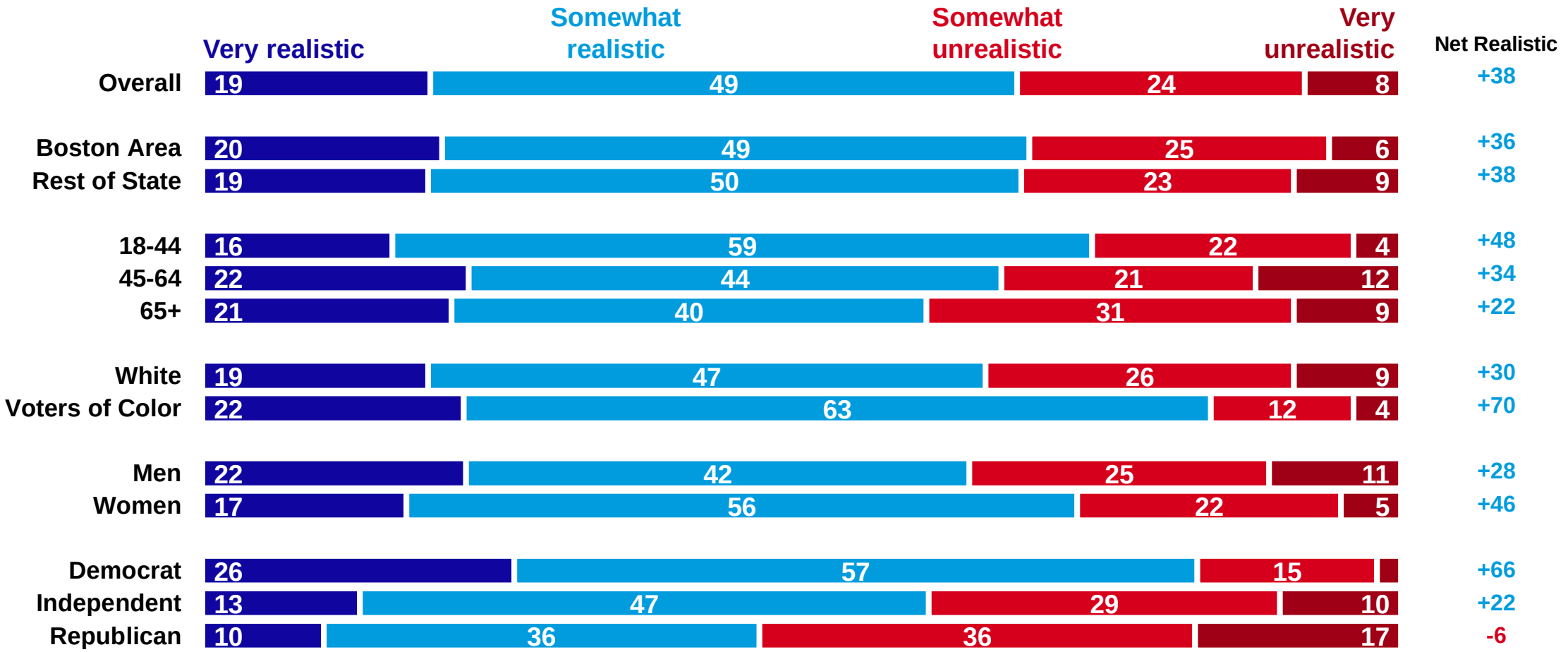
A majority of voters support a move towards renewable energy, with support highest among young voters, voters of color, and Democrats

[Initial Vote] As you may know, Massachusetts currently gets most of its heating and electricity from natural gas. Some have proposed that Massachusetts should instead transition away from natural gas and move toward generating heating and electricity from entirely renewable energy sources. Based on what you know, would you support or oppose such a goal?



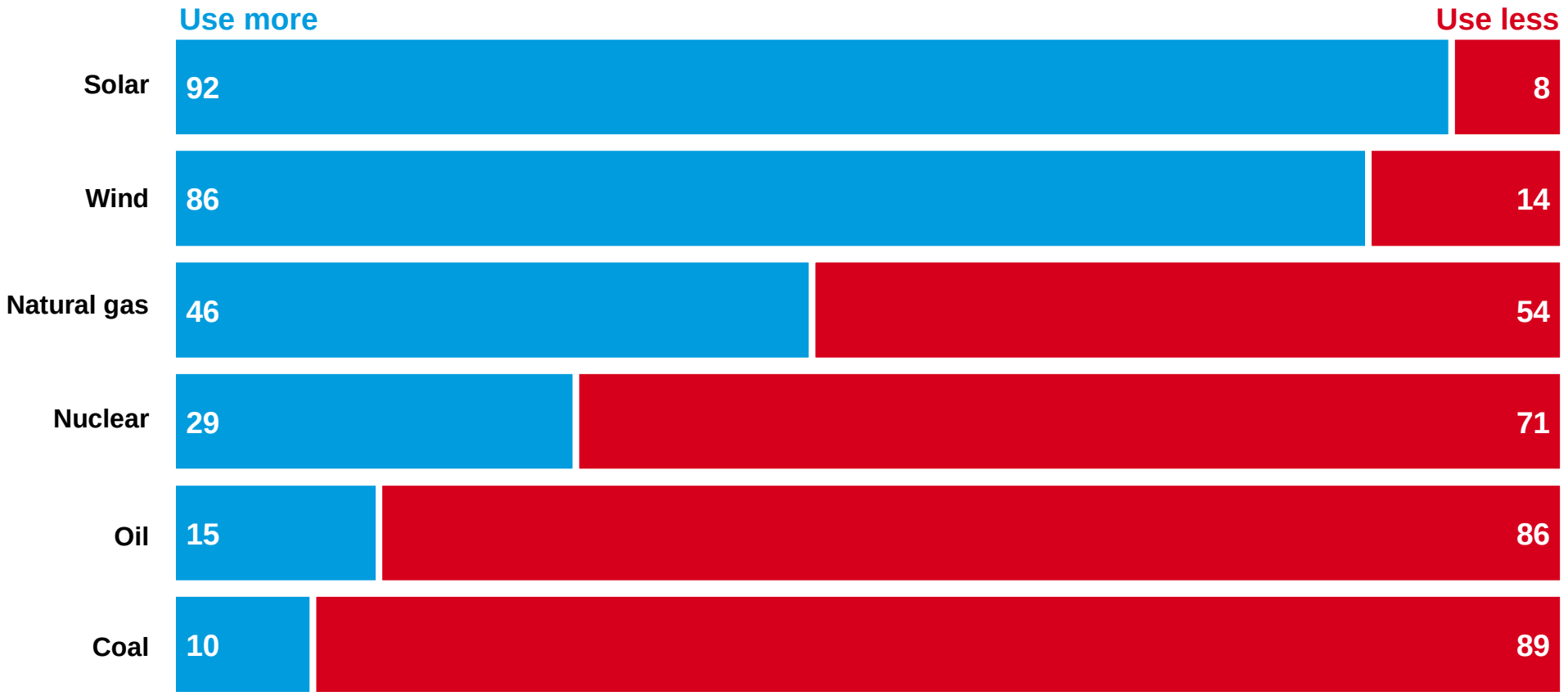
Two-thirds of voters say a move towards renewable energy is realistic

Thinking about the proposal for Massachusetts to transition away from natural gas and move toward generating heating and electricity from entirely renewable energy sources, would you say is this a realistic or unrealistic proposal?



Voters support moving towards solar and wind and away from non-renewable sources, though voters are divided on natural gas

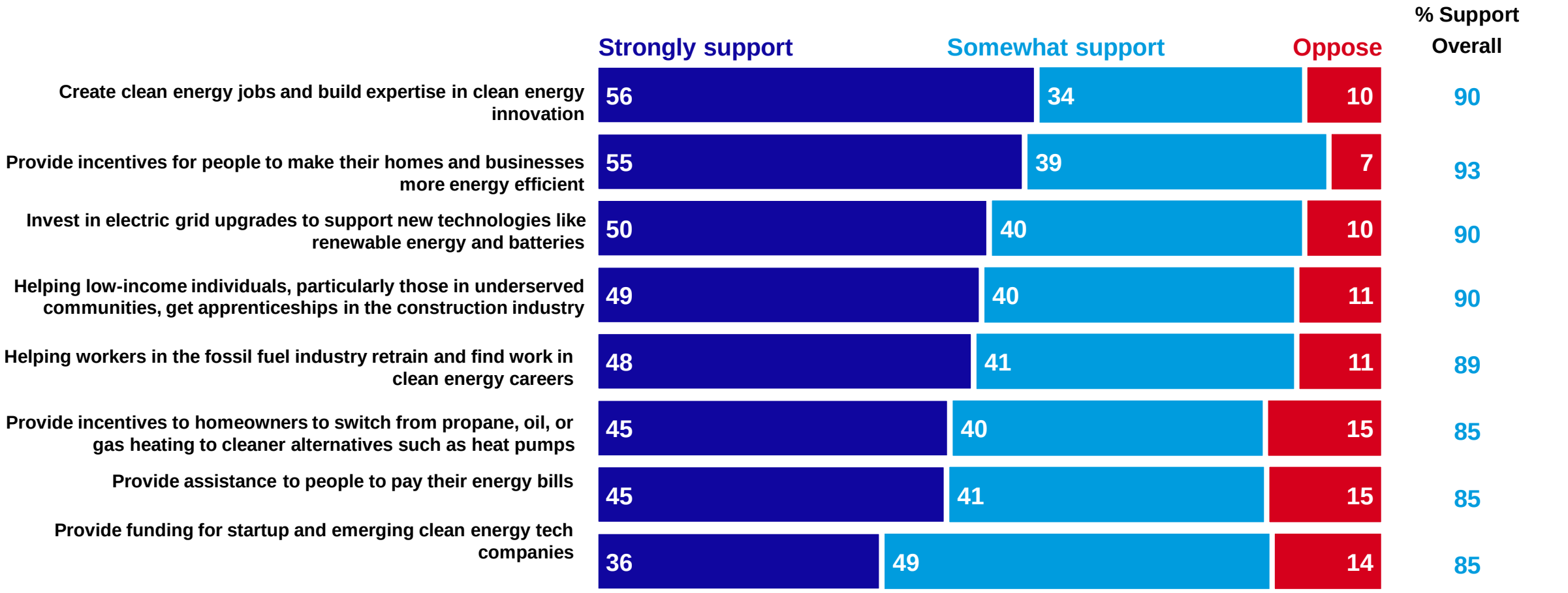
Please indicate whether we should use each of the following forms of energy more or less to generate electricity.



Policy Perceptions & Impact

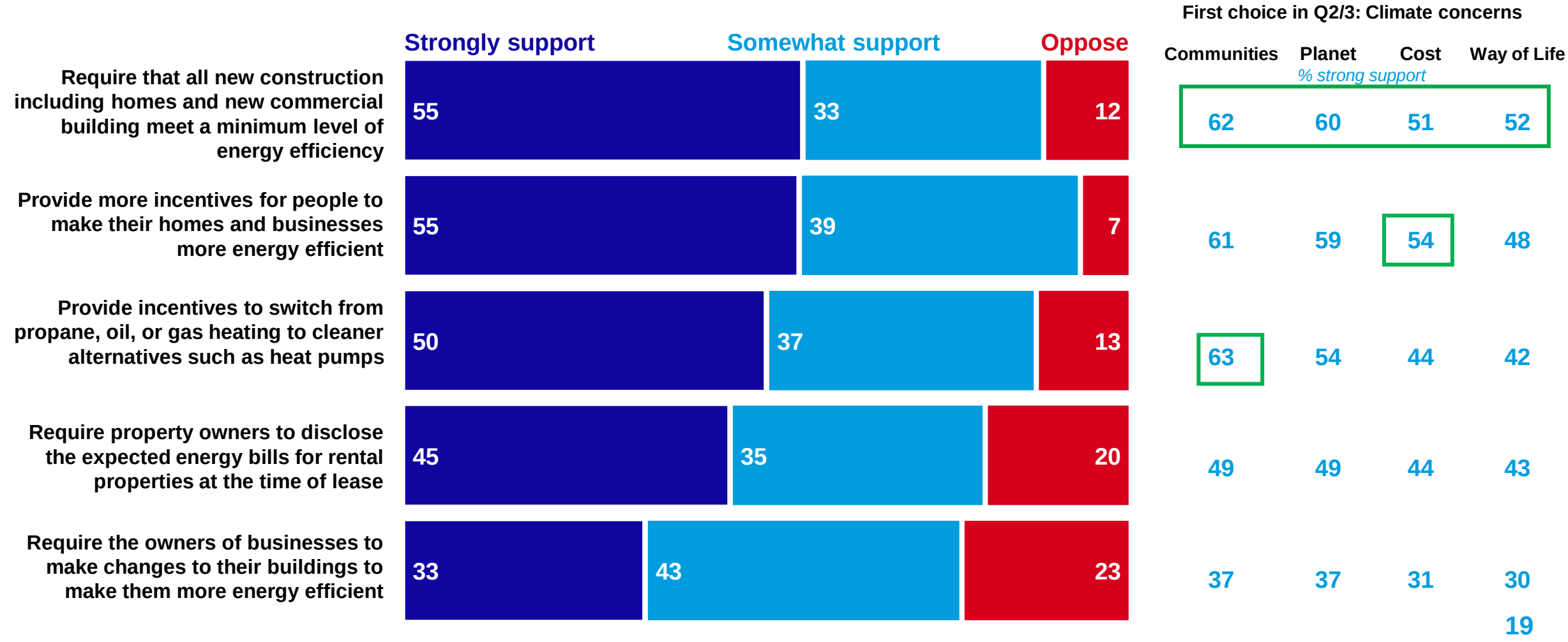
Massachusetts voters support investing in a range of clean energy initiatives

Please indicate if you support or oppose the use of federal stimulus funds on the following:



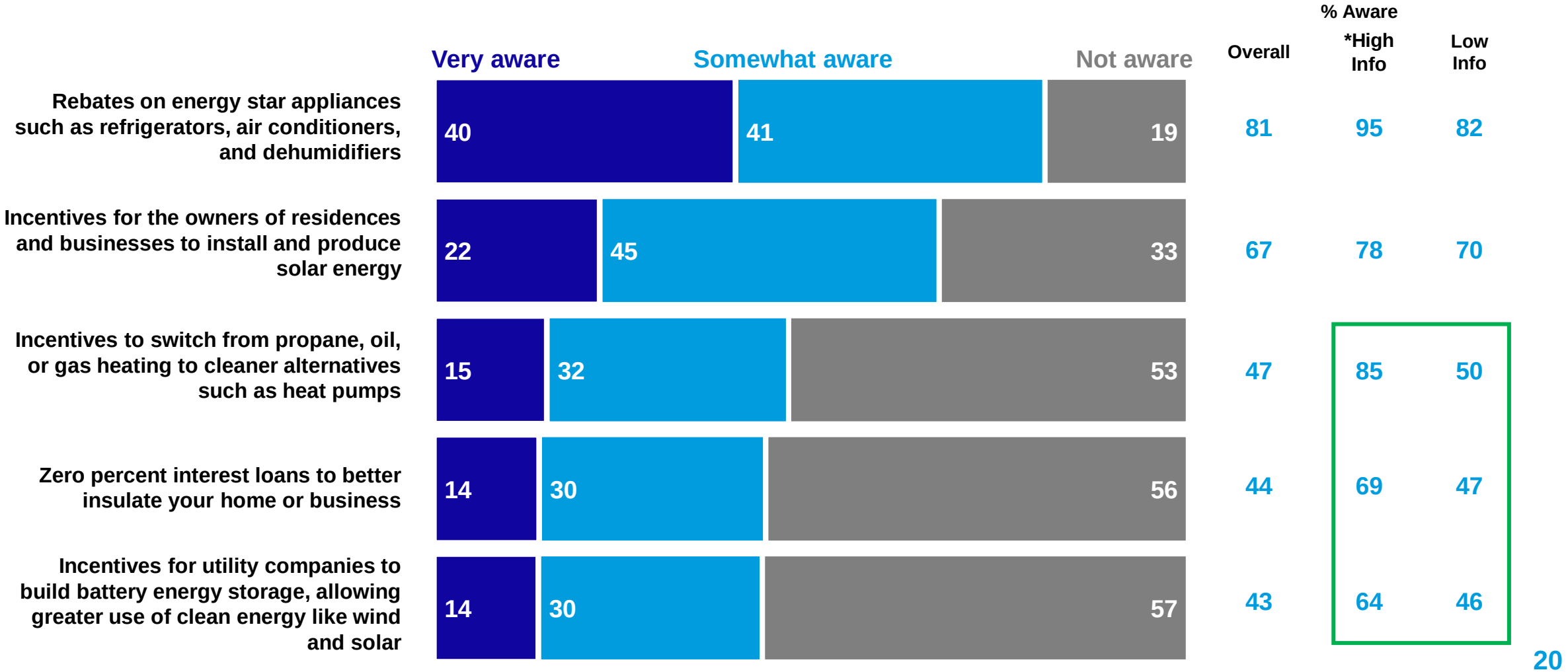
Voters also support state government providing more clean energy incentives and implementing various energy regulations

Now you will read a list of things the Massachusetts state government could do to address the threat of climate change. For each please indicate whether you would support or oppose that idea:



With the exception of consumer rebates and solar, voters are largely unaware of many energy initiatives, but higher info voters report greater awareness

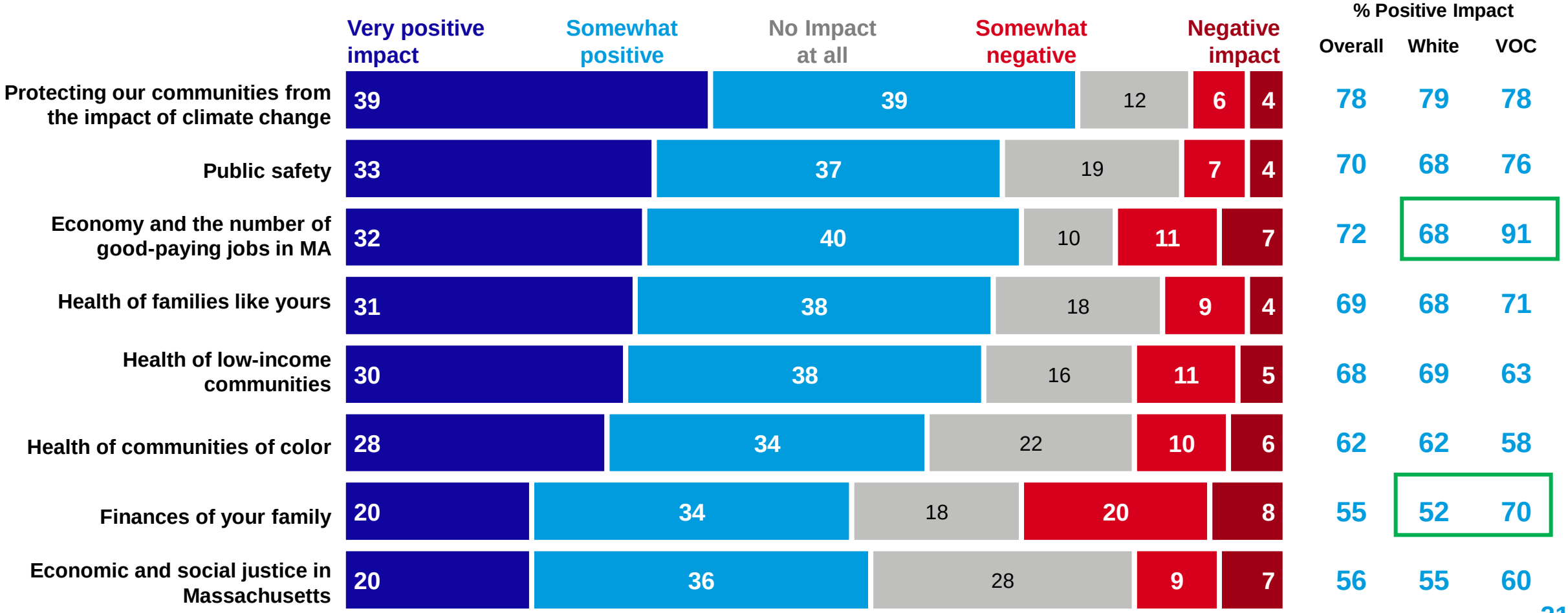
Now you will read a list of Massachusetts energy initiatives, For each, please indicate whether you are aware or not aware of this policy:



*small n-size

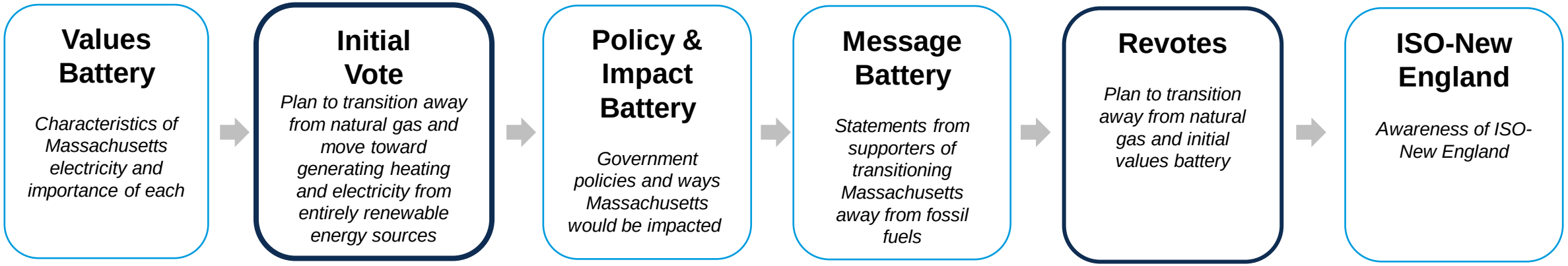
Most say a clean energy transition would protect communities from climate change, but voters of color are more likely to see economic benefits too

Please indicate if you believe phasing out gas and replacing it with clean energy in Massachusetts will have a positive or negative impact on the following:



Movement & Targeting

Survey Structure



Swing voters are more likely to be women, independents, and live in the Boston area

Targets

Base Combined (54)

Base – Strong

Always strongly supports plan to transition away from natural gas and move toward generating heating and electricity from entirely renewable energy sources.

- **Democrats** (50%)
- **Men** (42%)
  - **College men** (46%)
  - **Non-college Men** (38%)
- **Voter of Color** (42%)
- **Voters outside Boston Area** (37%)

Base - Soft

Always supports plan (somewhat and / or strongly), but not always strongly.

- **Independents** (20%)
- **Women** (20%)
- **VOC** (19%)
- **18-54** (21%)
- **Inner Boston Suburbs** (23%)
- **Northeast MA** (19%)

Swing

Neither base nor oppo

- **Independents** (48%)
- **Women** (44%)
  - **Women 18-54** (46%)
  - **Non-college Women** (48%)
  - **White Women** (44%)
- **VOC** (34%)
- **White** (35%)
  - **White non-college** (40%)
- **Voters in Boston Area** (42%)

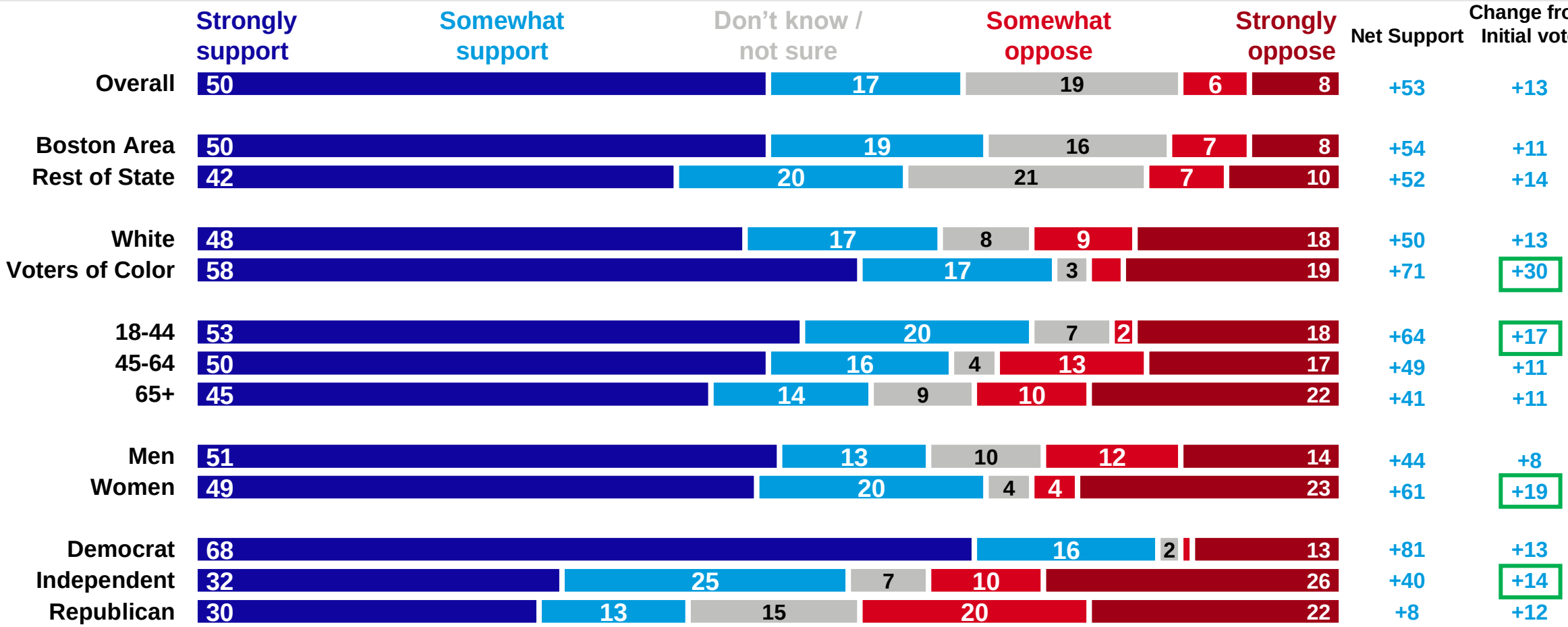
Oppo

Always opposes the plan

- **Republicans** (32%)
- **White Men** (21%)
- **White non-college** (15%)
- **Ages 55+** (17%)
- **Boston** (22%)
- **Union Household** (19%)

Support for the renewable energy initiative increases after messaging, particularly with women, voters of color, independents, & young adults

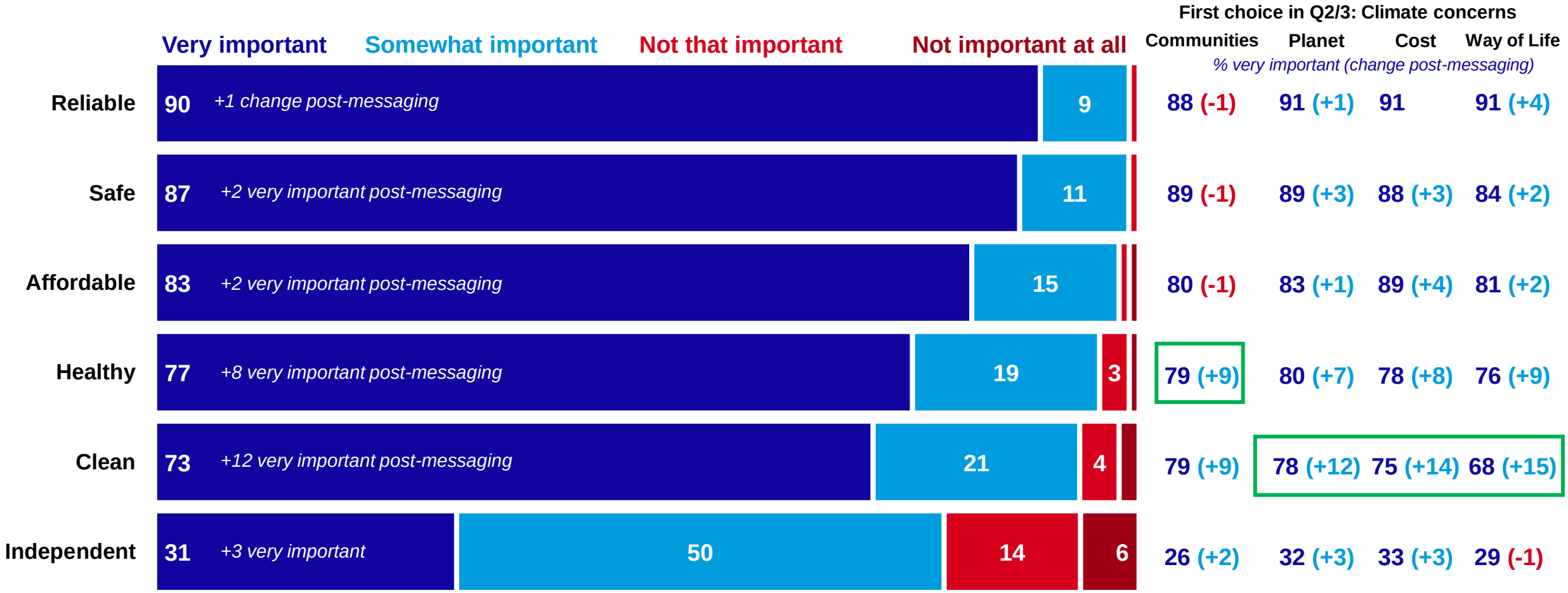
[Post-Messaging] Massachusetts currently gets most of its heating and electricity from natural gas. Some have proposed that Massachusetts should instead transition away from natural gas and move toward generating heating and electricity from entirely renewable energy sources. Based on what you know, would you support or oppose such a goal?



*small n-size

Voters still prioritize electricity that is reliable, safe, and affordable post-messaging, but the importance of health and clean increases most

Please indicate how important each [ITEM] is when it comes to your electricity in Massachusetts



Messaging

Messages related to climate change and air pollution are most convincing overall; price volatility is most convincing to voters of color

Most Effective Messaging

Overall	Voters of Color	Swing	
	% very convincing		
51	49	36	**[CLIMATE]** 97% of scientists, NASA, and the Department of Defense all agree that climate change is a threat to our kids' future, and we are already seeing the impact of increasingly strange weather, extreme heat, and more severe storms, droughts, and wildfire. If we don't take action, the impact will only get worse.
47	41	29	**[AIR]** Burning gas puts dangerous pollutants and other toxic chemicals into our air. Doctors and scientists confirm that this pollution contributes to many kinds of health problems including asthma and heart and lung disease. In fact, according to a recent study from Harvard University, emissions from burning natural gas now lead to more deaths than coal in at least 19 states, including Massachusetts. Moving away from using gas for heating and electricity to offshore wind and solar would protect our communities from this dangerous air pollution.
46	54	32	**[PRICE VOLATILITY]** The price of gas changes all the time, especially in the winter when gas supplies are also needed for heating. This often drives up the price that families pay for their power. Meanwhile, the cost of wind and solar power is already cheaper than gas in most parts of the country, and it only continues to drop. At a time when families are struggling to make ends meet, moving away from gas would provide real savings.
42	41	29	**[ECONOMY / JOBS]** The clean energy industry is creating opportunity for Massachusetts residents. The clean energy industry contributes $28.2 billion to the Massachusetts economy. Since 2010, it has added 41,000 new jobs to our state's economy. These good paying clean energy jobs already outnumber the number of gas industry jobs in Massachusetts. By making the transition from gas to clean energy, we can create more economic opportunity in Massachusetts.

Less effective messaging focus on local sourcing and the rebranding of natural gas, but messages on safety and gas ranges resonate with voters of color and, to a lesser extent, swing

Less Effective Messaging

Overall	Voters of Color	Swing	
	% very convincing		
40	46	28	**[COOKING]** Burning natural gas from home appliances like stoves releases dangerous emissions that put our health at risk and contribute to climate change. According to a recent study from Stanford University, natural gas stoves emit methane, nitric oxide, and carbon monoxide into our living spaces, triggering asthma, coughing, and difficulty breathing. What's more, emissions from gas stoves in the U.S. contribute as much to climate change as 500,000 gasoline-powered cars.
39	34	26	**[LOCAL]** We have renewable energy sources, like offshore wind and solar, right here in Massachusetts. This means that consumers will pay lower prices than they would for imported gas. At a time when families are struggling to make ends meet, moving away from gas would provide real savings – after all, the wind and sun are free.
38	40	31	**[SAFETY]** Gas pipelines and distribution lines carry highly flammable gas across and under our communities, threatening nearby homes, schools, churches, and businesses with potentially deadly explosions. Dangerous pipeline accidents occur in the United States around once a month.
37	37	23	**[NOT NATURAL]** "Natural" gas isn't natural at all – it's a fossil fuel, just like oil and coal, and it is made up of methane and toxic chemicals that oil companies get from pumping chemicals into the earth. The big oil and gas companies have spent billions marketing gas and trying to claim that it is clean and safe. If we want to use truly clean and natural sources, we should be moving to wind and solar, not using more gas.
33	37	20	**[EQUITY]** Fossil fuel infrastructure, like power plants, compressor stations, and pipelines, generate air pollution that disproportionately harms communities of color and low-income communities where they are typically located. If we want to increase public health and equity, then we need to transition away from gas to cleaner energy sources.

Among “climate concerns” groups, the ranked effectiveness of messaging largely mirrors voters overall, though intensity differs

Messaging

	Overall	Communities	Planet	Cost	Way of life
	% very convincing				
[Climate]	51	58	57	52	48
[Air]	47	54	53	44	48
[Price Volatility]	46	53	49	45	46
[Economy / Jobs]	42	49	47	39	38
[Cooking]	40	48	43	39	39
[Local]	39	45	43	37	33
[Safety]	38	45	41	38	33
[Not Natural]	37	44	41	36	33
[Equity]	33	38	37	32	29

Movement Summary 2020 to 2022

How much of a problem do you consider climate change to be?						
	A crisis	A very serious problem	Somewhat serious problem	Not that serious a problem	Not a problem	Not sure
Sep 2020	35%	30%	16%	8%	9%	2%
May 2022	25%	37%	23%	8%	5%	1%
Change from ‘20 > ‘22	-10%	+7%	+7%	N/A	-4%	-1%

As you may know, Massachusetts currently gets most of its heating and electricity from natural gas. Some have proposed that Massachusetts should instead transition away from natural gas and move towards generating heating and electricity from entirely renewable energy sources. Based on what you know, would you support or oppose such a goal?					
	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Not sure
Sep 2020	44%	21%	8%	12%	15%
May 2022	40%	16%	6%	10%	28%
Change from ‘20 > ‘22	-4%	-5%	-2%	-2%	+13%

Thinking about the proposal for Massachusetts to transition away from natural gas and move toward generating heating and electricity from entirely renewable energy sources, would you say this is a realistic or unrealistic proposal?				
	Very realistic	Somewhat realistic	Somewhat unrealistic	Very unrealistic
Sep 2020	24%	33%	18%	20%
May 2022	19%	49%	24%	8%
Change from ‘20 > ‘22	-5%	+16%	+6%	-18%

Thank You

Methodology

Voters

Global Strategy Group conducted an online panel survey of **600 registered voters in Massachusetts** between May 12 – 15, 2022.

Please note: the methodology used for this survey differed from that of the survey conducted in September 2020 – which used a multi-channel (phone and online panel) approach. For that reason, we recommend caution when making direct comparisons.

Margin of error

The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 4.0%.

The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

Demographics of 2022 Massachusetts Registered Voters

Gender

Men	47
Women	53

Age

18-29 year olds	18
30-44 year olds	24
45-54 year olds	15
55-64 year olds	18
Seniors 65+	24

Race

White	83
People of Color	17

Education

High School or Less	22
Some College	32
4-year College Graduates	30
Post-Graduate	15

Region

Boston	9
Inner Boston Suburbs	14
North East	15
Outer Boston Suburbs	19
South East	20
West/Central	22

Party ID

Democrat (with leaners)	51
Independent	22
Republican (with leaners)	26