



How Energy Costs Are Helping Build Support for Democrats

Key findings from a survey across 51 battleground congressional districts

May 2026

**CLIMATE
POWER**

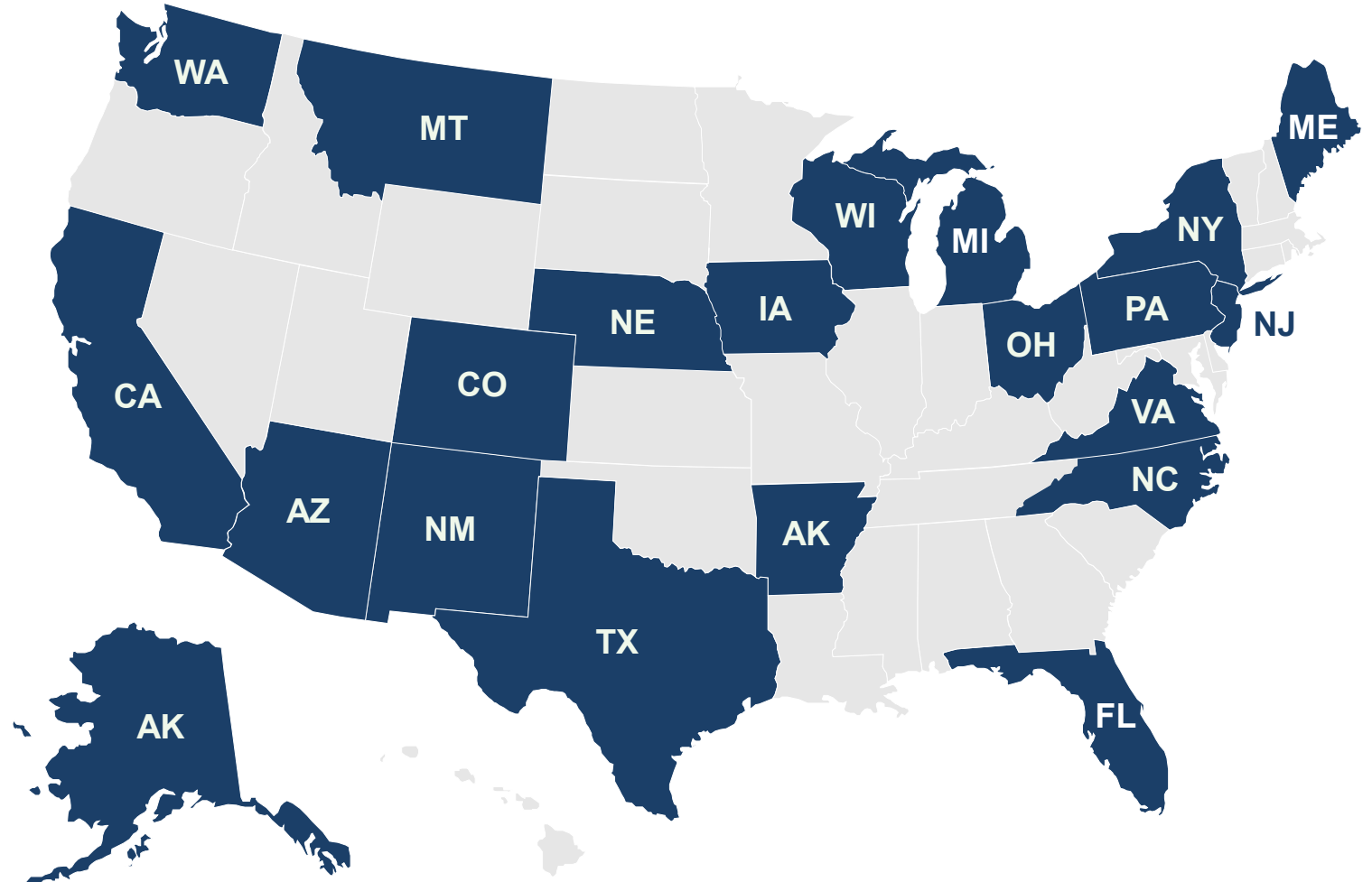


**NRDC
ACTION
FUND**



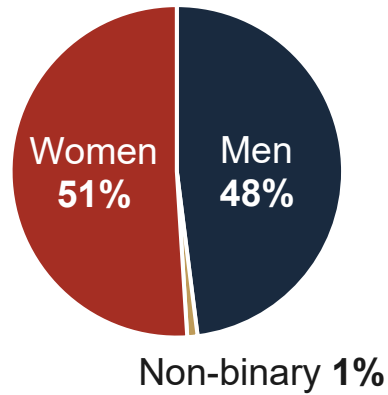
Methodology

- Sample of n=1,286 voters across 51 House districts
- Districts rated Lean Democrat (12), Toss Up (18), Lean Republican (5), or Likely Republican (17) by *The Cook Political Report*
- Interviews conducted online and matched to the voter file
- Survey fielded May 20-28, 2026
- Credibility interval of ± 3.1 percentage points for the full sample, higher for subgroups

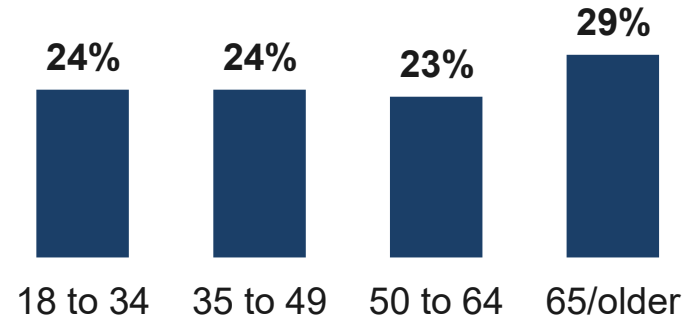


Profile of the Sample

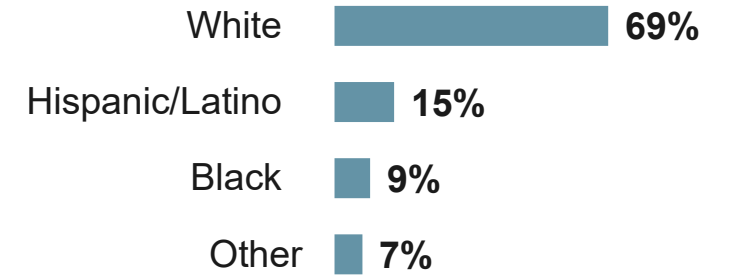
Gender



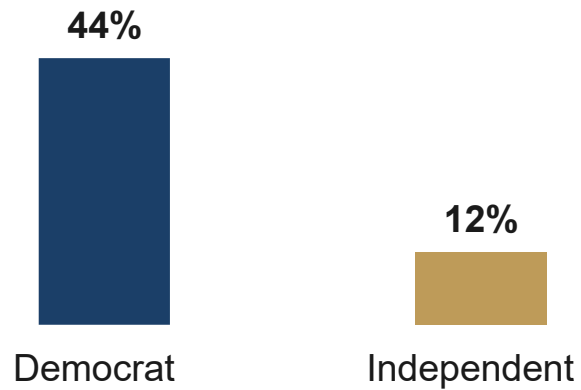
Age



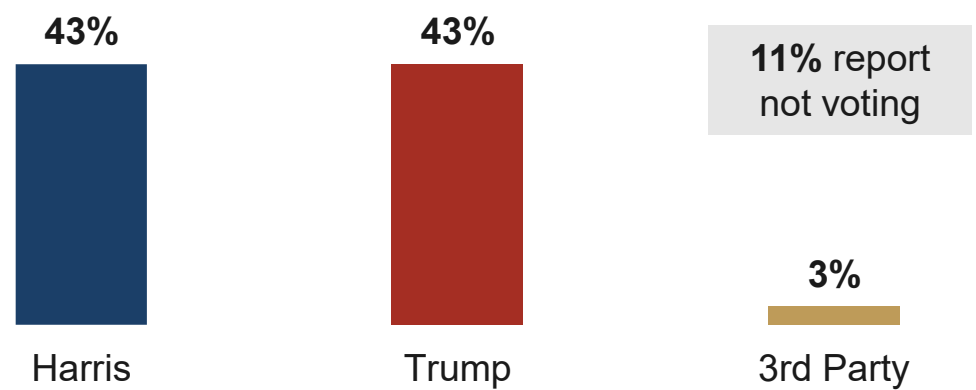
Race



Party ID



2024 Vote



Important Movement in the Past Five Months

1

Trump's and congressional Republicans' images have taken a substantial hit.

2

Democrats' margin on the generic ballot has improved and they are now leading across district types and with the most motivated voters.

3

Concern about various costs of living have shot up, especially regarding gas prices. Gas and utility bills are on par with healthcare as a voting issue.

4

Solid majorities now say that Trump *and* congressional Republicans are making energy prices worse for consumers.

5

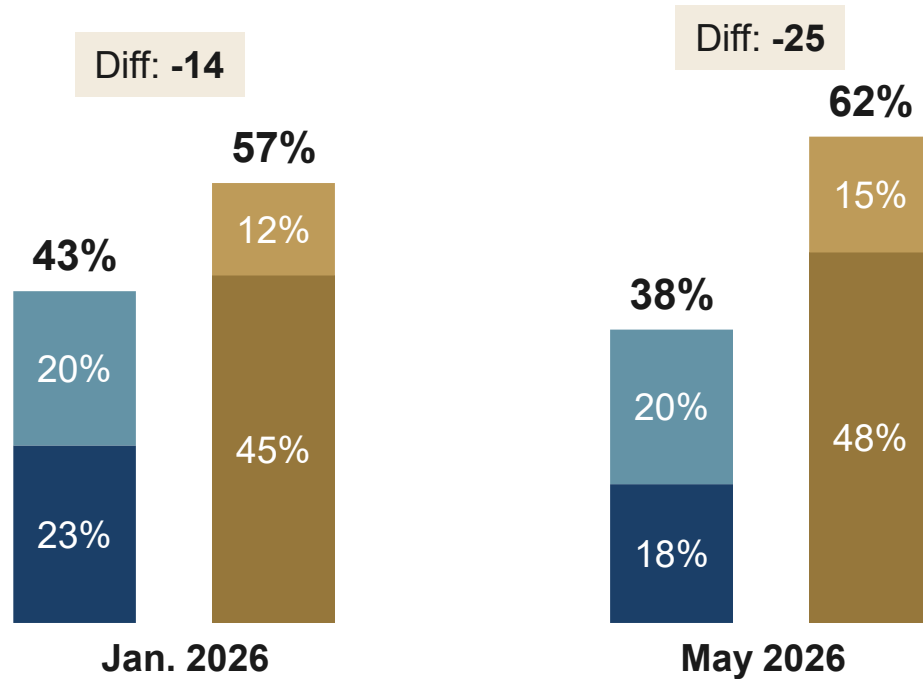
Democrats are now more trusted than Republicans across nearly every energy issue, but there is still room to grow the advantage on lowering costs.

Lay of the Land

Trump's negatives are growing, and Republicans in Congress are more unpopular than Democrats.

Trump Approval

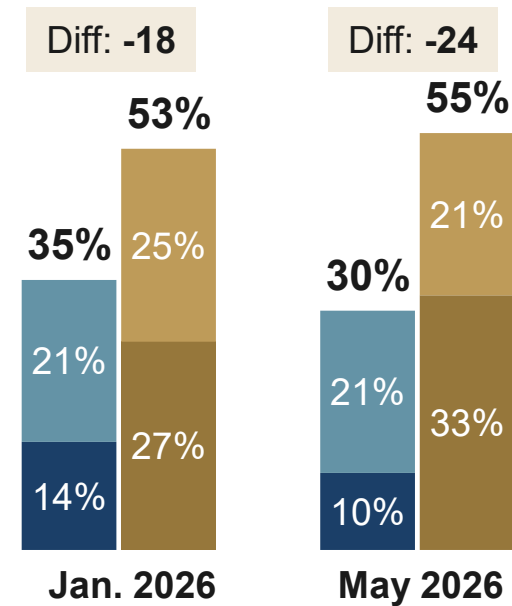
■ Strongly app. ■ Somewhat app. ■ Somewhat disapp. ■ Strongly disapp.



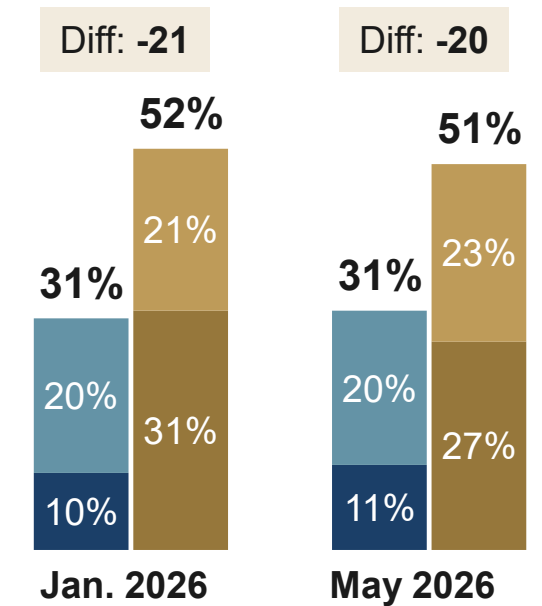
Feelings toward Parties

■ Very positive ■ Somewhat positive ■ Somewhat negative ■ Very negative

Republicans in Congress



Democrats in Congress



Trump and Republicans are most deeply underwater with younger women and voters of color; swing voters are negative to both parties.

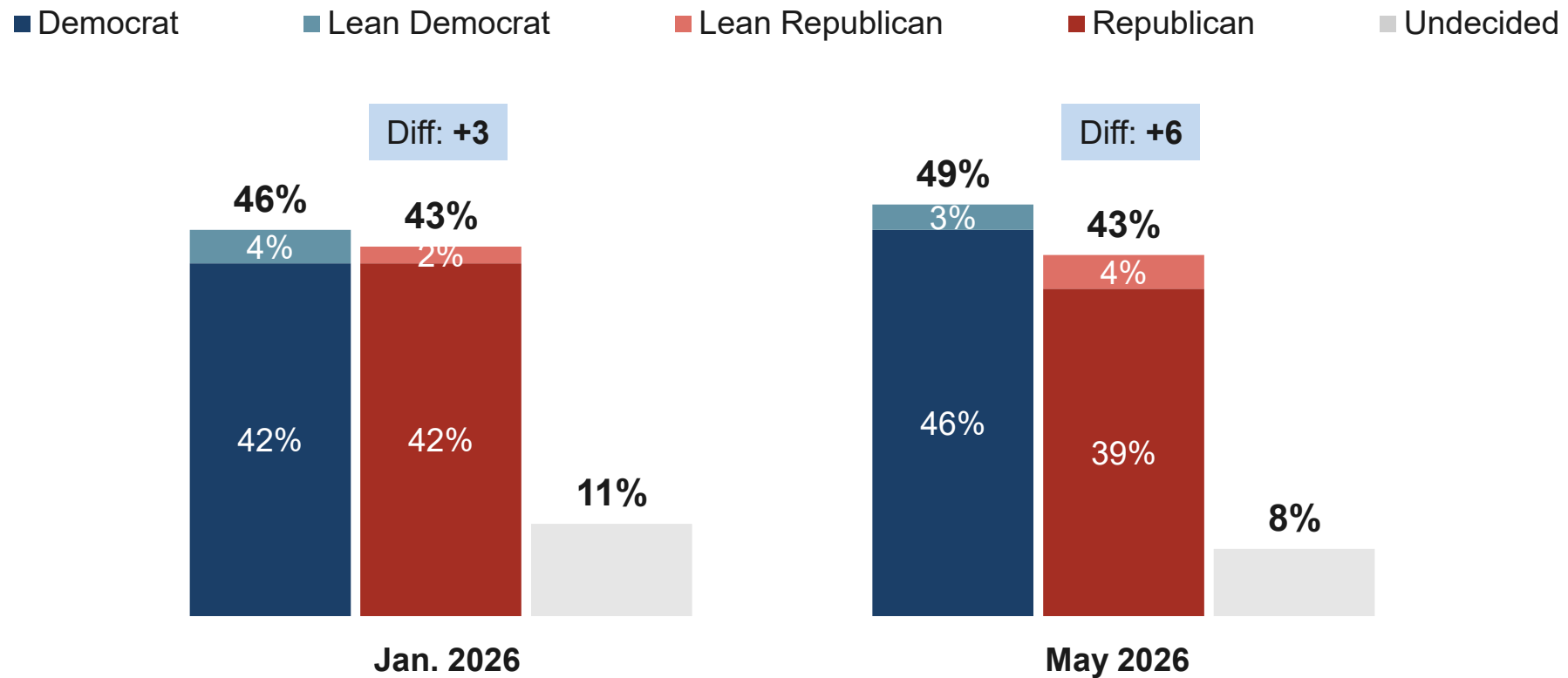
	Net Trump Approval	Net Feelings Republicans in Congress	Net Feelings Democrats in Congress
All voters	-25	-24	-20
Lean D districts	-24	-23	-28
Toss-up districts	-28	-25	-15
Lean/likely R districts	-22	-25	-18
Men/18-49	-22	-28	-27
Men/50+	-7	-13	-31
Women/18-49	-51	-42	-5
Women/50+	-20	-15	-16
All 18-34	-44	-42	-16
Men/18-34	-23	-30	-25
Women/18-34	-63	-51	-6
White	-15	-15	-30
Black	-70	-58	+28
Latino	-30	-36	-3
Urban	-34	-32	-16
Suburban	-24	-24	-21
Rural	-14	-15	-23
White non-college	-8	-6	-28
Independents	-65	-59	-42
Non-MAGA GOP	+11	+22	-64

44% disapprove



Democrats have widened their lead in the generic vote choice.

All else being equal, would you prefer that the next congressperson in your district be a Democrat or a Republican?



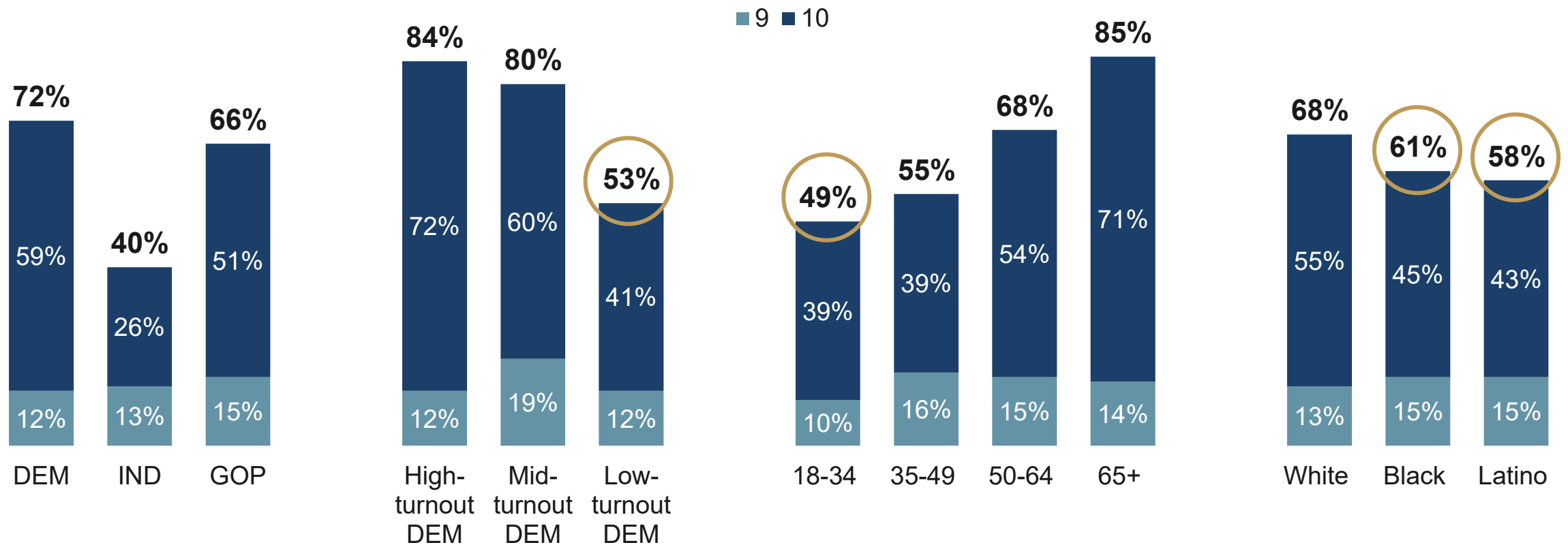
Democrats have the edge across district types and have the advantage with the most motivated voters.

Prefer that the next congressperson in your district be a Democrat or a Republican?

	Democrat	Republican	Net	
All voters	49	43	+6	
Lean D districts	49	43	+6	
Toss-up districts	49	42	+7	
Lean/likely R districts	49	44	+5	
Men	44	48	-4	→ January -10
Women	53	39	+15	→ January +13
18-34	55	36	+19	
35-49	51	38	+12	
50-64	47	45	+2	
65+	44	52	-7	
Men/18-34	47	45	+2	
Women/18-34	62	28	+34	
White	43	50	-7	
Black	78	17	+61	
Latino	58	35	+23	
White non-college	37	53	-16	
White college grads	51	44	+6	
Democrats	98	1	+97	
Independents	28	19	+9	
Republicans	6	91	-85	
Most motivated voters	54	43	+11	

While Democrats are more motivated than Republicans, there are turnout challenges with younger voters and voters of color.

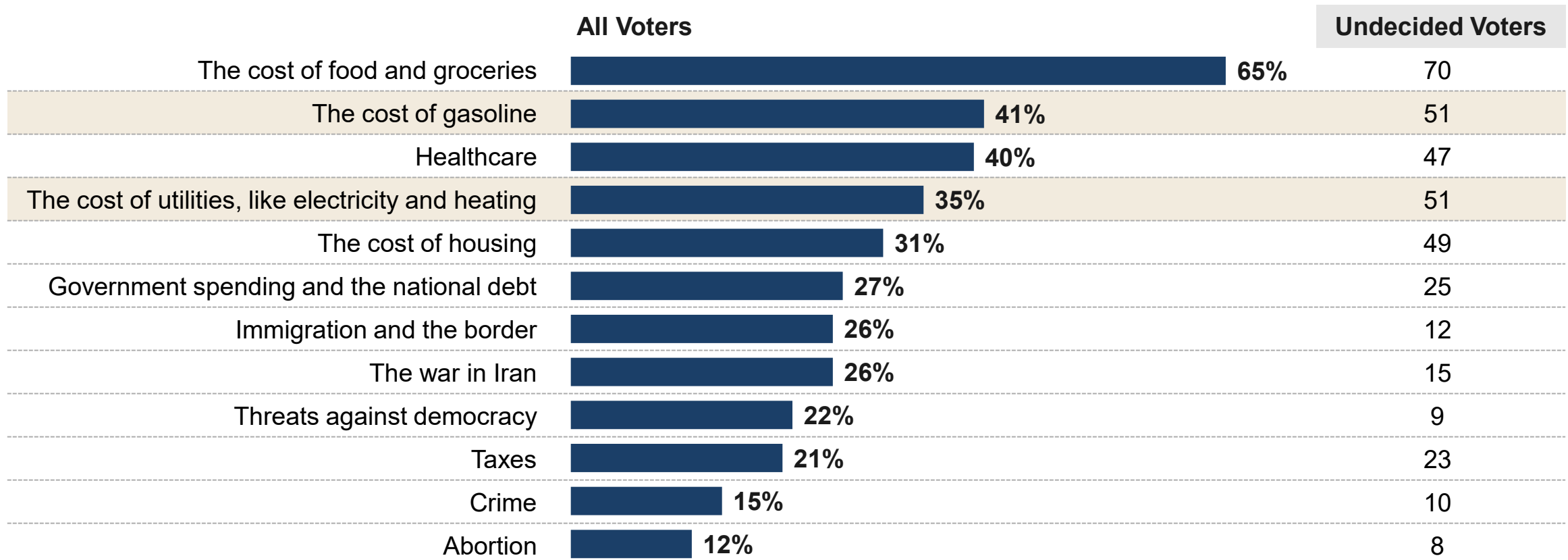
Voters who are highly motivated to vote (% saying 9 or 10)



Feelings about Energy Costs

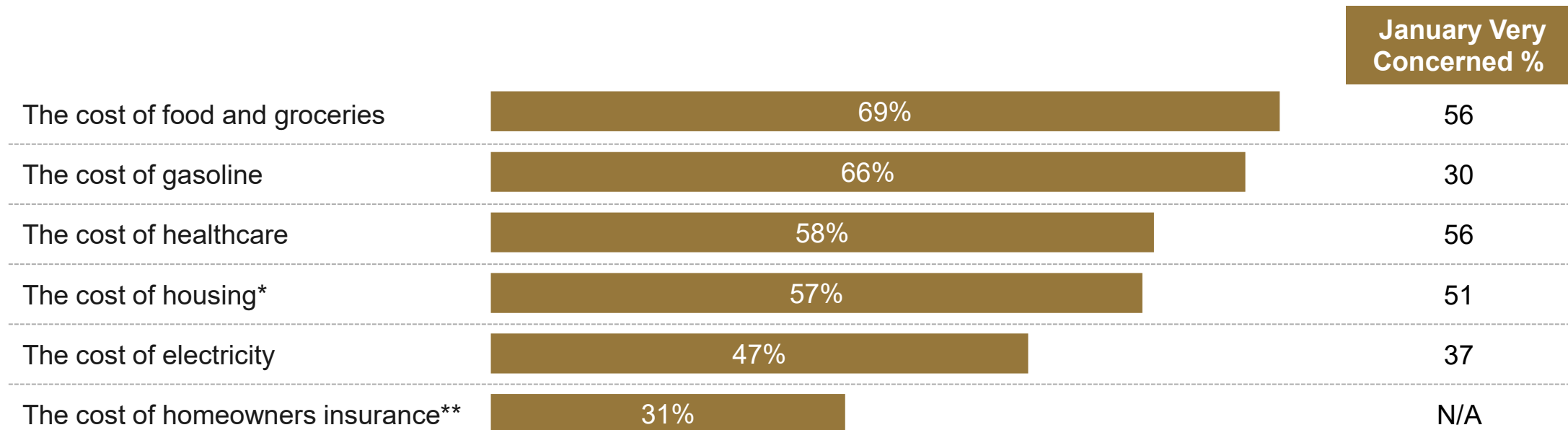
Voters are focused on the cost of living, including energy costs. Undecided voters are more likely than average to emphasize gas and utility costs.

Most important issues to decide congressional vote (3-4 chosen)



Concerns about costs have grown significantly since the start of the year, led by a more than doubling of strong concerns about gas prices.

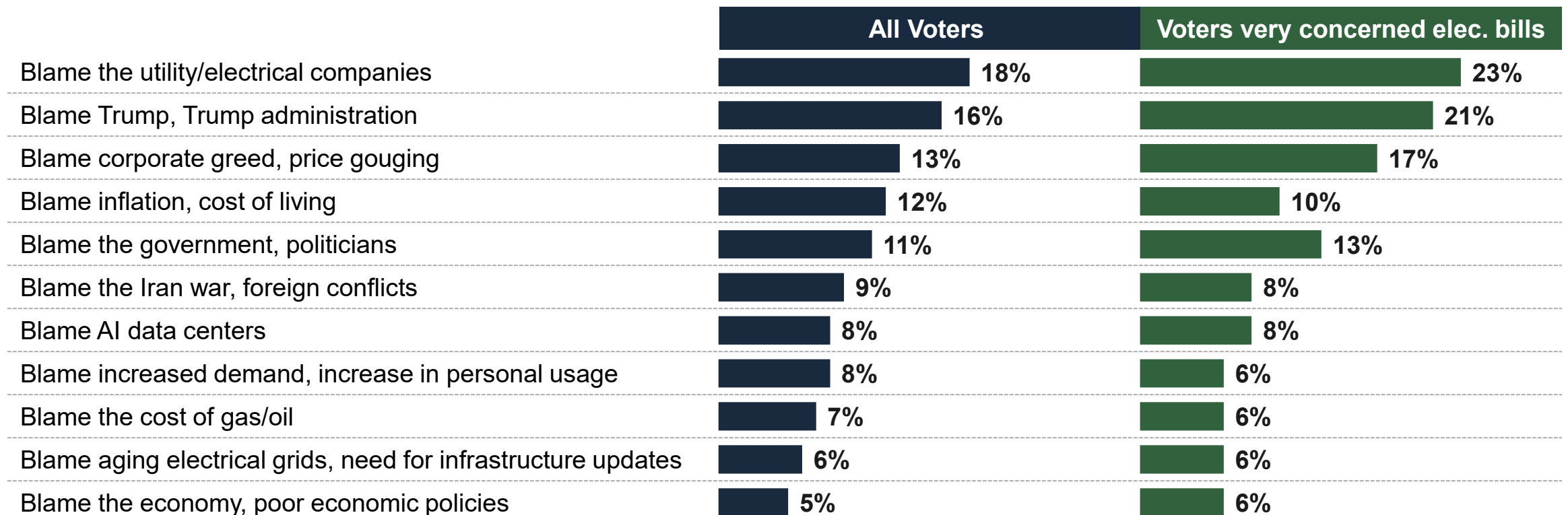
% who are very concerned about each of the following



Trump, utilities, and corporate greed are top-of-mind when voters cast blame for higher electricity bills.

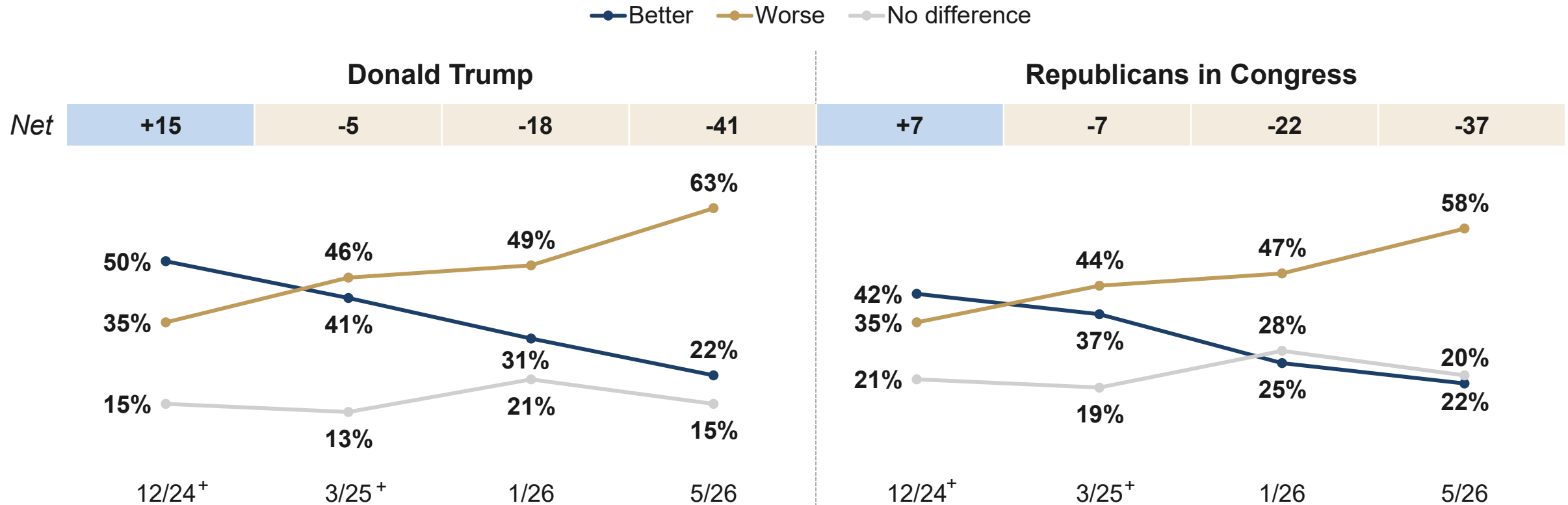
Who or what do you blame for the increase in electricity bills?

OPEN-ENDED



Large majorities now see Trump and Republican as making things worse for consumers on energy prices.

*Is each of the following making things better or worse for consumers when it comes to **energy prices**?*



Democrats in Congress are somewhere between negative and irrelevant—20% better, 37% no difference, 43% worse—with very little change over time

⁺ National data for comparison.

Blaming Trump and the GOP for High Energy Costs

Who or what do you blame for the increase in electricity bills?



“Trump's economy-destroying policies from tariffs to tax breaks, coupled with corporate greed and deregulation, and lack of emphasis on expanding renewables.”

“I blame Trump and all his slimy enabling thugs for cancelling renewable energy projects and driving up the cost of fossil fuels to fatten up his billionaire slugs even more than they already are.”

“Inflation is natural, but the current rate of inflation in the United States is unsustainable and is a direct result of the Republican government and Donald J. Trump. He promised to bring costs down and has not.”

“Donald Trump and his Republican cohorts in Congress that are raking in billions of tax dollars to screw the American public.”

Dems can hit Trump cancelling of clean energy projects but should also be champions for consumers against utilities' greed.

% saying each of the following is mostly to blame for rising *electricity bills and home energy costs*

January 2026 to May 2026

Elec.
concerned
voters May %

Utility companies raising rates on customers and making record profits	44% → 48%	62
State regulators that let utility companies charge customers high prices	33% → 43%	55
The decisions by the Trump administration and Republicans in Congress to cancel solar power and wind energy projects	35% → 40%	49
Increasing electricity demand from artificial intelligence (AI) and computer data centers	27% → 32%	40
Rising prices for natural gas--the leading fuel source for electric power plants	14% → 29%	37
Democrats in Congress mandating the increased use of clean energy	19% → 22%	21

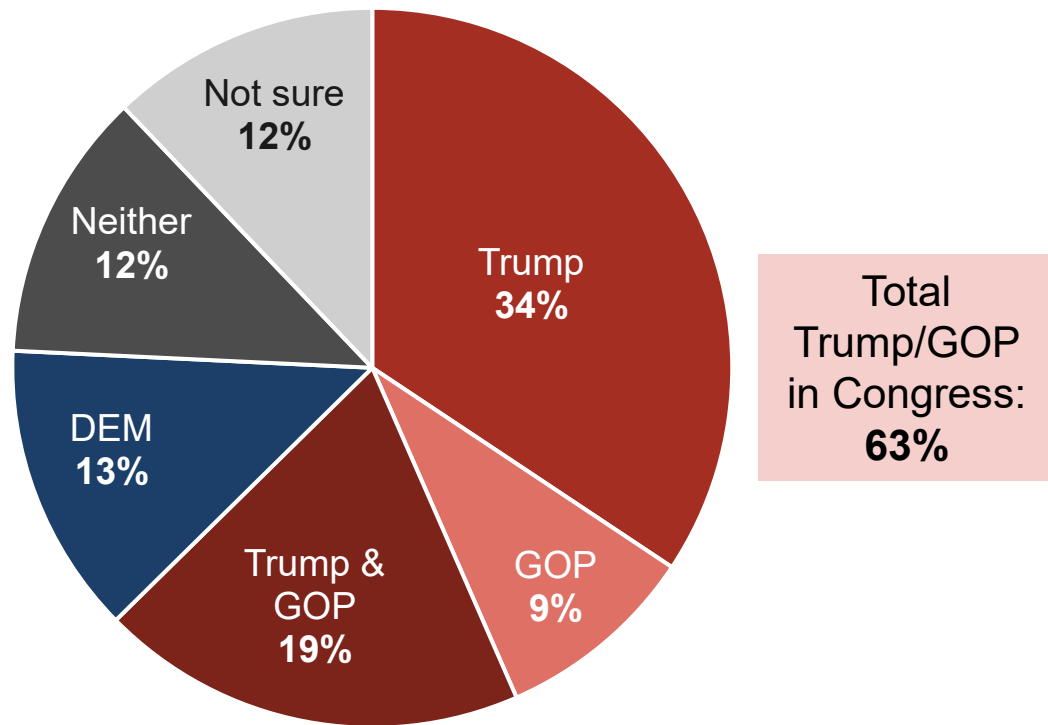


56% know the U.S. must generate more energy to meet our growing needs—up from 50% in January.

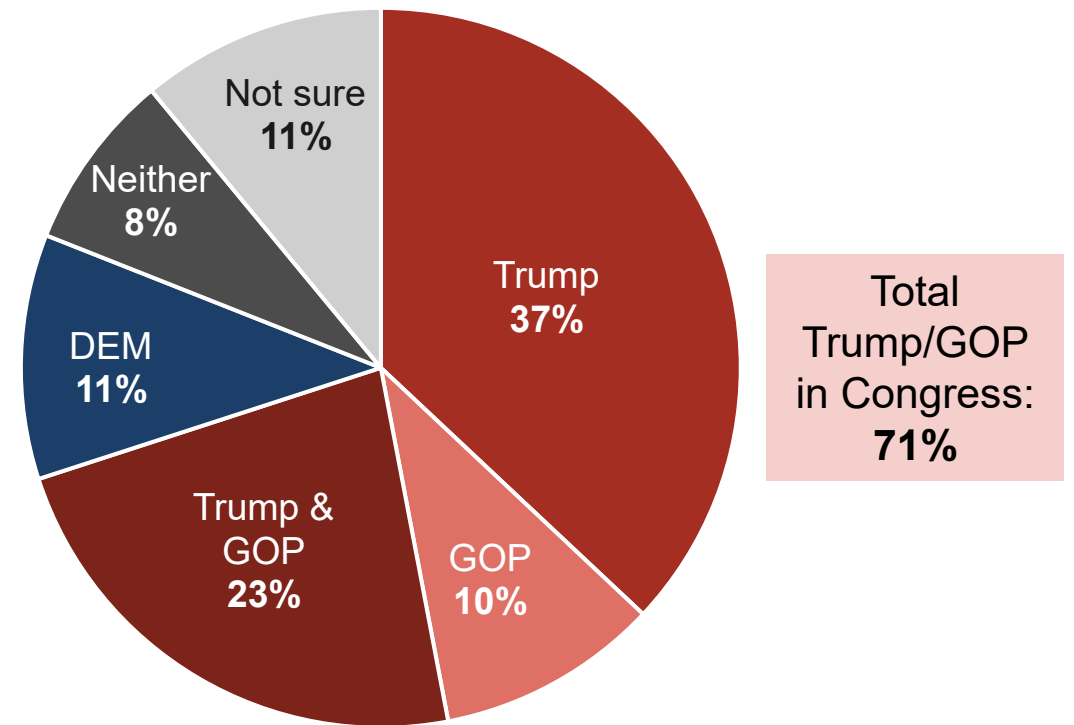
Trump and the GOP get the lion's share of blame for higher gas prices, but there is room to make congressional Republicans more prominent in that picture.

*Which of the following do you think deserves the blame for **high gas prices**?*

All Voters



Voters Very Concerned about Gas Prices



Republican advantages on energy issues have vanished, but Democrats can grow their advantages on lowering costs.

Who do you trust more to do each of the following?

■ Donald Trump and the Republicans in Congress ■ Both/Neither ■ The Democrats in Congress

	Jan 2026			DEM Adv.	May 2026			DEM Adv.
Hold corporations that pollute air and water accountable	N/A				23%		38%	+15
Lower monthly utility bills	30%		26%	-4	26%		36%	+9
Lower the cost of gasoline	N/A				30%		35%	+5
Upgrade and improve the reliability of the electric grid	35%		30%	-5	29%		33%	+5
Deal with the cost of electricity and home energy costs	35%		30%	-5	29%		32%	+4
Create good jobs in the energy industry	N/A				31%		35%	+3
Have a long-term plan to meet the country's energy needs	38%		27%	-11	30%		32%	+2
Make the United States energy-independent	43%		29%	-14	33%		31%	-2

Messaging on Energy Costs

There is no pushback to building clean energy into the Democratic argument. Holding Trump accountable *and* citing affordable clean energy, boosts the Democratic margin with important audiences.

All Respondents: A **Republican** who says we need to continue the progress that the country has had over the past year through stronger border security, lower taxes for working families, eliminating government waste and fraud, and making America energy dominant.

Respondent Group A: “Conventional” Democratic Argument
A **Democrat** who says we need to fight against Donald Trump's agenda that has made life so expensive for regular Americans. That means bringing down grocery and gas costs by canceling tariffs and ending the war in Iran.*

Respondent Group B: “Clean energy” Democratic Argument
A **Democrat** who says we need to fight against Donald Trump's agenda that has made life so expensive for regular Americans. That means bringing down grocery and gas costs by canceling tariffs, ending Trump's war in Iran, and building more affordable, American-made energy from wind and solar power.**



Voter Group	Clean Energy Democrat Margin Boost
All Voters	+4
Cook Likely R and Lean R districts	+19
18-34-year-olds	+17
Non-college white voters	+14
Moderate/low motivation voters	+12
Voters very concerned about gas prices	+9
Voters very concerned about electricity costs	+7

* Asked of half-sample A. | ** Asked of half-sample B.

In hitting GOP candidates, we should use Trump's words against him and force Republicans to own their full control of government.

Two messages stand out as reasons to be concerned about a Republican running for Congress.

DON'T CARE

Republicans have said that higher gas prices wouldn't affect people, or that they would come down again quickly, or that the war in Iran was worth having higher prices. **Trump admitted he doesn't 'think about Americans' financial situation even a little bit.'** Republicans are either totally ignoring Americans' struggles right now, or they just don't care.

PROMISES IGNORED

Republicans promised to immediately lower the cost of living if they were elected. **After more than a year of full control in Washington, electricity bills have spiked by 13%. Gas prices are up more than 40%.** And Republicans are making it worse by blocking cheaper energy from clean sources.

Over 50% of voters find each of these hits to be “very concerning”, and they are rated the two most concerning by every key voter subgroup:

- Swing voters
- Vote movers
- Voters most concerned about gas and electricity prices
- Moderate and low-turnout Democrats
- 18-34-year-olds
- Latino voters
- Non-college white voters

Democrats can make an affirmative case by tying lower energy bills to clean energy; hitting Trump activates Democratic audiences.

GENERAL CoL

Our number one priority is to make life affordable for people again. Energy costs are driving up the cost of everything else, from groceries to housing. We can bring down gas and utility costs by investing in much more energy, especially cheap clean energy.

- Broadest-base message: compelling to all demographics
- Strongest message by far with swing voters

ANTI-TRUMP ENERGY

Donald Trump's agenda has made life so expensive for regular Americans. We need to end his attacks on cheaper, cleaner energy from wind and solar, hold the oil and gas companies accountable when they gouge families, and get rid of the tariffs raising prices, so working people finally get a break on their bills.

- Resonates strongly with Democrats (including low-turnout Dems)
- Equally compelling to CoL message with left-leaning audiences like Black and young voters

CONSUMER CONTROL

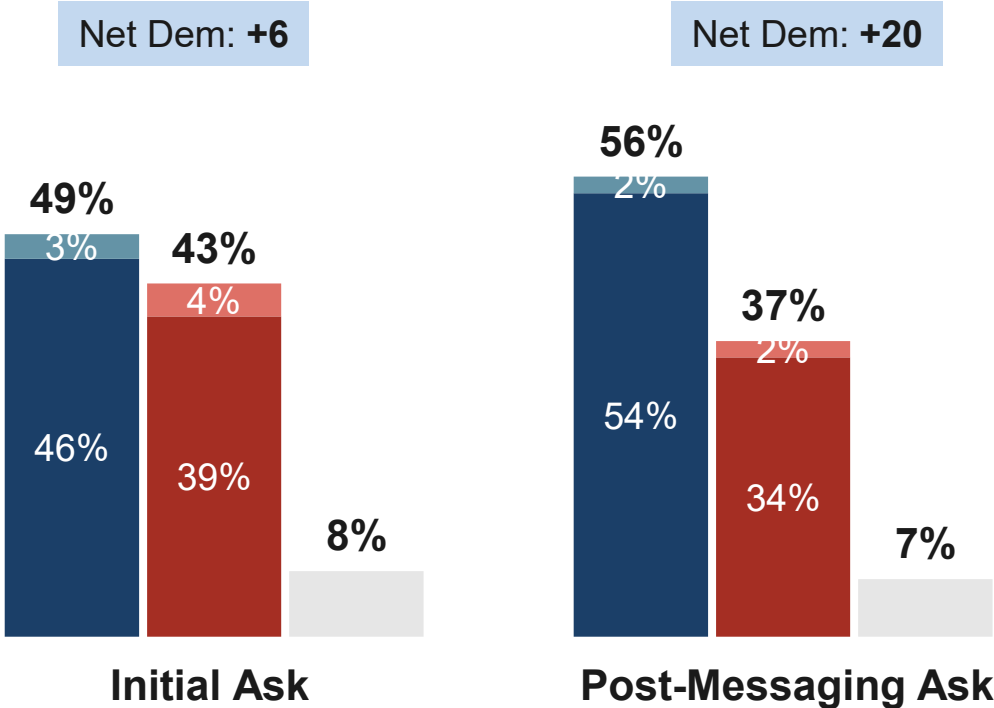
Electricity bills keep rising, and many families see jumps from month to month, sometimes by \$50 or \$150 or more. Bills are so unpredictable because global oil and gas prices swing wildly from week to week. The best way to give people control over their bills is to give everyone access to cheaper, cleaner, more stable wind and solar energy, made here in the United States.

- Strong second-tier message
- Especially with:
 - ✓ Vote movers
 - ✓ White non-college voters
 - ✓ Suburban voters
 - ✓ Rural voters

Cost and clean energy messaging drive strong ballot movement across the board, but especially from swing groups.

Generic Congressional Vote

■ DEM ■ Lean DEM ■ Lean GOP ■ GOP ■ Undecided



Biggest Movers

	Initial Dem advantage	Post-messaging Dem advantage	Net Shift
Independents	+9	+38	+29
Undecided voters	Even	+25	+25
Energy bill voters	+17	+37	+20
Women/18-34	+34	+54	+20
Men/18-34	+2	+14	+12
Latino voters	+23	+35	+12
White-non college voters	-16	+3	+19
Urban districts	+17	+30	+13
Suburban districts	+3	+18	+15
Rural districts	-4	+8	+12

Recommendations

1

Gas prices are powering much of voters' fury, but electricity bills remain a persistent, serious concern. Voters are already starting to equate congressional Republicans' inaction with Trump's failures in each arena; Democrats must continue driving that narrative.

2

Trump's and Republicans' **efforts to eliminate clean energy are a big weakness** that has not yet been fully exploited. Voters know we need more—and more affordable—energy, but Republicans are actively making things worse.

3

They have made the case for us: **we can use their own words, their own actions, and their full control of government against them.**

4

At the same time, Democratic candidates should position themselves as **being on the side of consumers:**

- ✓ Making all aspects of life more affordable by bringing energy costs down.
- ✓ Putting control of energy bills back in people's hands by leaning into cheaper, more stable clean energy.
- ✓ Standing against Trump's agenda and holding corporations accountable for their greed.

Appendix

Districts Included in Sample

THE COOK POLITICAL REPORT

WITH AMY WALTER

LEAN D (12) 10 Dem 2 Rep	TOSS UP (18) 4 Dem 14 Rep	LEAN R (5) 3 Dem 2 Rep	LIKELY R (16) 3 Dem 13 Rep
- CA-13 Gray - CA-45 Tran - CA-48 OPEN (Issa) - MI-08 McDonald Rivet - NE-02 OPEN (Bacon) - NM-02 Vasquez - NV-03 Lee - NY-03 Suozzi - NY-04 Gillen - NY-19 Riley - OH-01 Landsman - TX-28 Cuellar	- AZ-01 OPEN (Schweikert) - AZ-06 Ciscomani - CA-22 Valadao - CO-08 Evans - FL-25 Moskowitz - IA-01 Miller-Meeks - IA-03 Nunn - MI-07 Barrett - NJ-07 Kean Jr. - NY-17 Lawler - OH-09 Kaptur - PA-07 Mackenzie - PA-08 Bresnahan - PA-10 Perry - TX-34 Gonzalez - VA-02 Kiggans - WA-03 Perez - WI-03 Van Orden	- FL-14 Castor - FL-22 OPEN (Frankel) - MI-10 OPEN (James) - NC-01 Davis - VA-01 Wittman	- AK-AL Begich III - AZ-02 Crane - CO-05 Crank - FL-07 Mills - FL-09 Soto - FL-13 Luna - FL-27 Salazar - IA-02 OPEN (Hinson) - ME-02 OPEN (Golden) - MI-04 Huizenga - MT-01 OPEN (Zinke) - NC-11 Edwards - TX-15 De La Cruz - TX-23 VACANT - TX-35 OPEN (Casar) - WI-01 Steil