

Independent Voter Project

Wave 12 Findings



Altria

Altria Client Services

Background & Research Objective

- Independents are a critical voting bloc in American politics. About one-third of registered voters identify as independents, so swings among this group towards one party or another often determine election outcomes. Significant attitudinal differences exist, however, within the independent bloc. Grouping them together misses important patterns and potential opportunities for both political parties.
- To better understand the political landscape of the country, this effort builds on previous waves of research to track the political attitudes and views of registered voters, particularly Independent and unaffiliated voters. Wave 12 includes modules testing voter opinions on the general election.
- The following presentation is commissioned and prepared by Altria Client Services and contains data from 12 waves of public opinion surveys conducted on the political landscape and the attitudes of self-identified independent voters.

Methodology

- Trained interviewers at Voter / Consumer Research's (V/CR) phone center in Houston, Texas conducted this survey of n=1,367 registered voters nationwide between October 7th and 14th, 2012. The total sample consists of a base sample of n=800 registered voters plus an oversample of 567 self-identified independent voters to reach a total of n=1,367. The margin of error for the base and independent sample is +/- 3.5% at the 95% confidence interval. This increases to +/- 4.9% for split samples (n~400), and to +/- 4.4% for pure independents (n=500).
- V/CR selected respondents randomly from a registered voter sample including both cell phone (19%) and landline (81%) telephone numbers. All respondents confirmed that they are registered to vote. Quotas were set for gender, age, race and census region to ensure consistency with previous waves and national demographic trends. Party identification for the base sample of registered voters is 36% Democrat, 29% independent, and 32% Republican, and is weighted to align with national party identification for consistency with previous waves. The independent oversample was weighted to align with the average age in previous waves.

Executive Summary

Data show a political environment more favorable to President Obama than in previous waves. However, improvement on fundamentals does not translate to improvement in the President's ballot position (46% Obama, 47% Romney). A closer look wave 12 data offers some explanation for this:

- The plurality of the electorate remains intensely negative on key measures. Negative intensity on the direction of the country trumps positive intensity (47% strongly wrong track / 28% strongly right direction). The same goes for President Obama's overall approval rating (42% strongly disapprove/34% strongly approve), and approval on specific issues including:
 - Economy (41% strongly disapprove / 31% strongly approve)
 - Jobs (43% strongly disapprove / 23% strongly approve)
 - Government spending and debt (55% strongly disapprove / 17% strongly approve)
 - Health care (48% strongly disapprove / 33% strongly approve)
- Romney's strong performance in the first presidential debate likely stymied the slight ballot momentum Obama gained in the weeks prior.
 - A plurality of voters (44%) say they were more likely to vote for Romney after watching the debate, while only 22% say what they saw made them more likely to vote for Obama.
 - This is even more apparent among pure independents who watched the debates, almost half (49%) of whom say they were more likely to vote for Romney, while only 13% said the debates made them more likely to vote for Obama. Perhaps, this explains why Romney picked up 7-points on the ballot among pure independents to lead Obama (45% to 37%)

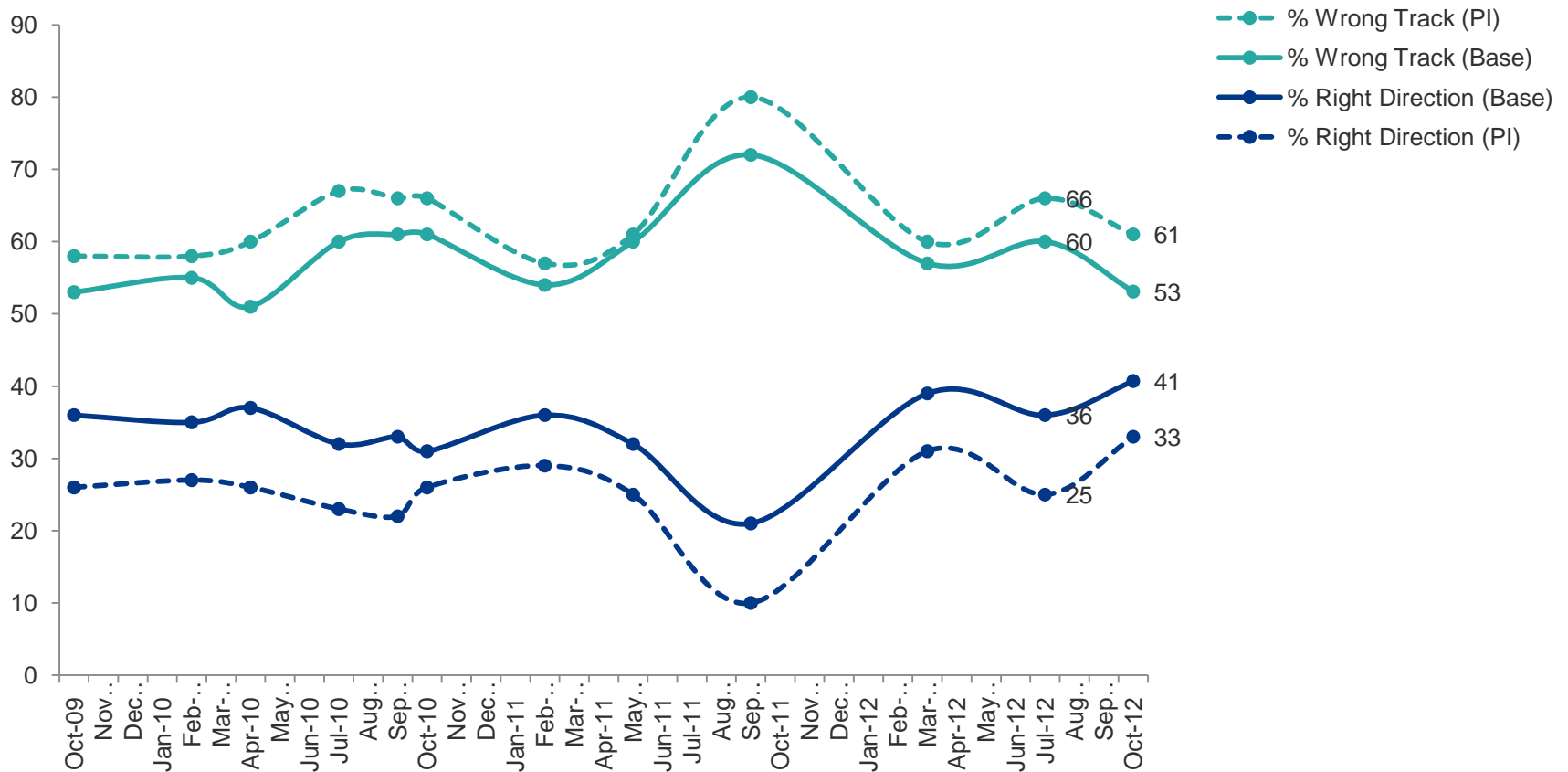
Executive Summary

Data from wave 12 finds Congressional Republicans in a precarious position, if not for the election, then beyond.

- Approval of Congress remains low. Since our tracking of the 112th Congress began, approval for Republicans averages a mere 30%, while approval for Democratic members averages 36%. Among pure independents, both parties in Congress have fared even worse (Republicans 21%, Democrats 25%).
- The generic Republican and the generic Democrat now tie at 44% on the congressional ballot. This represents a 3-point increase for the generic Democrat and a 2-point decrease in support for the generic Republican since July.
- Data suggests that the widely held view that Congress is ineffective drives voter discontent with Congress overall, and the Republican majority specifically.
 - When asked why Congress is not able to effectively address the issues facing the country, almost half (46%) of voters cite “partisanship and/or lack of compromise,” unprompted. The second-most cited verbatim response is “Republicans” at 12%.
- Most voters call for Republicans to overcome partisanship and compromise to take care of salient issues facing the country. Important voting blocs including pure independents, women, Hispanics and seniors are even more likely than the electorate overall to favor Republican compromise on important issues.

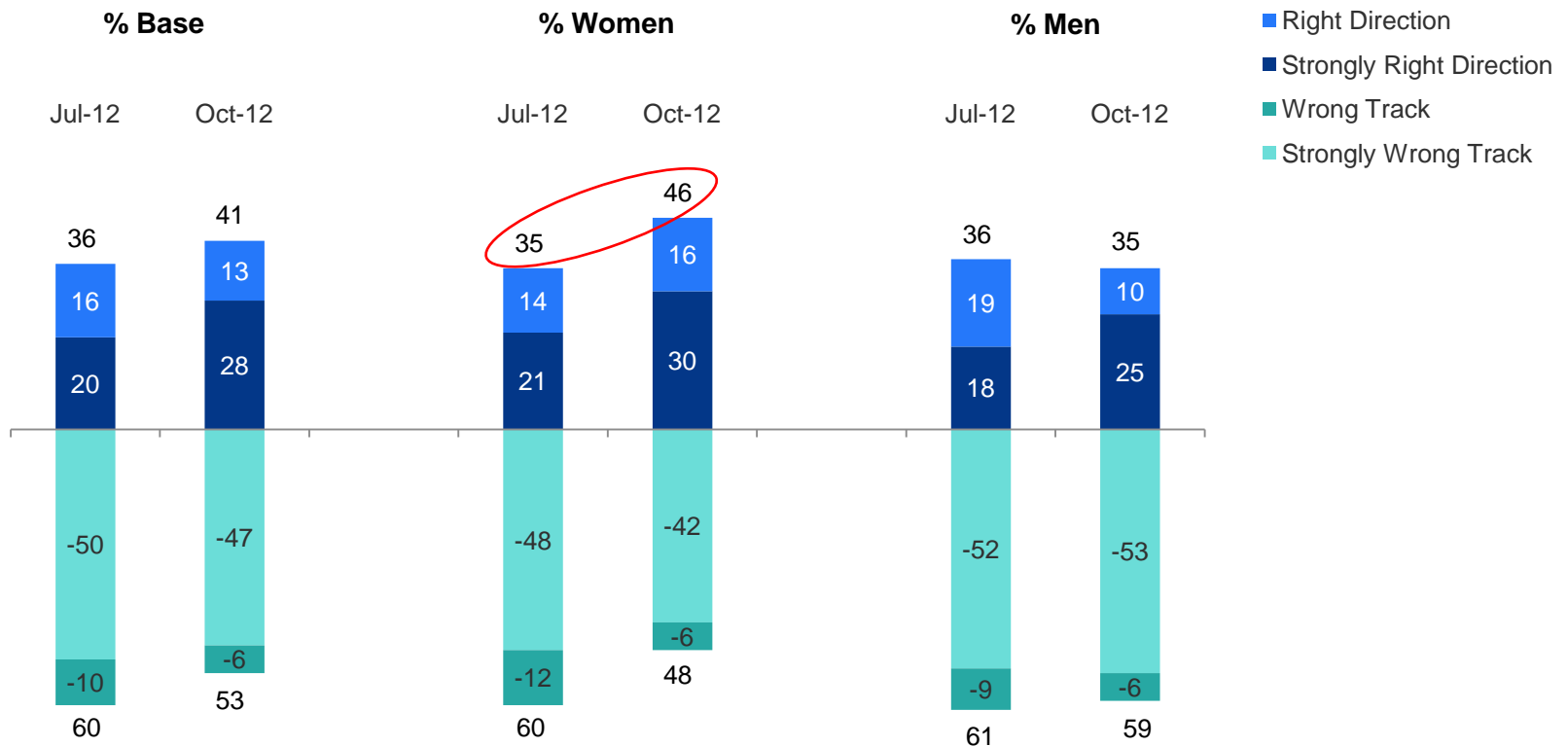
Direction of the Country

Now thinking more generally about the direction of the country, would you say things in this country are [ROTATE] heading in the right direction ...or... off on the wrong track?



Direction of the Country: Gender Gap

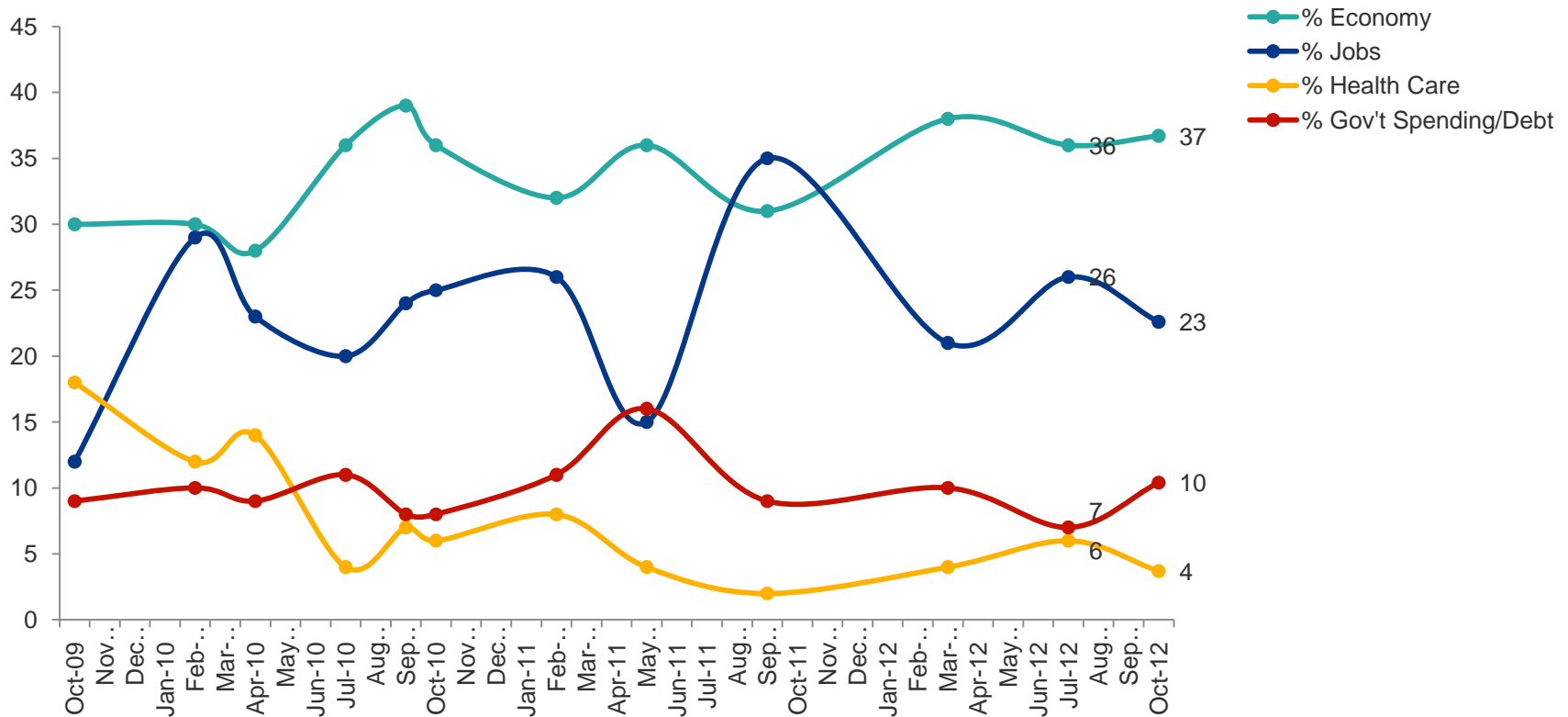
Women drive improvement on this measure, while men remain strongly negative.



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

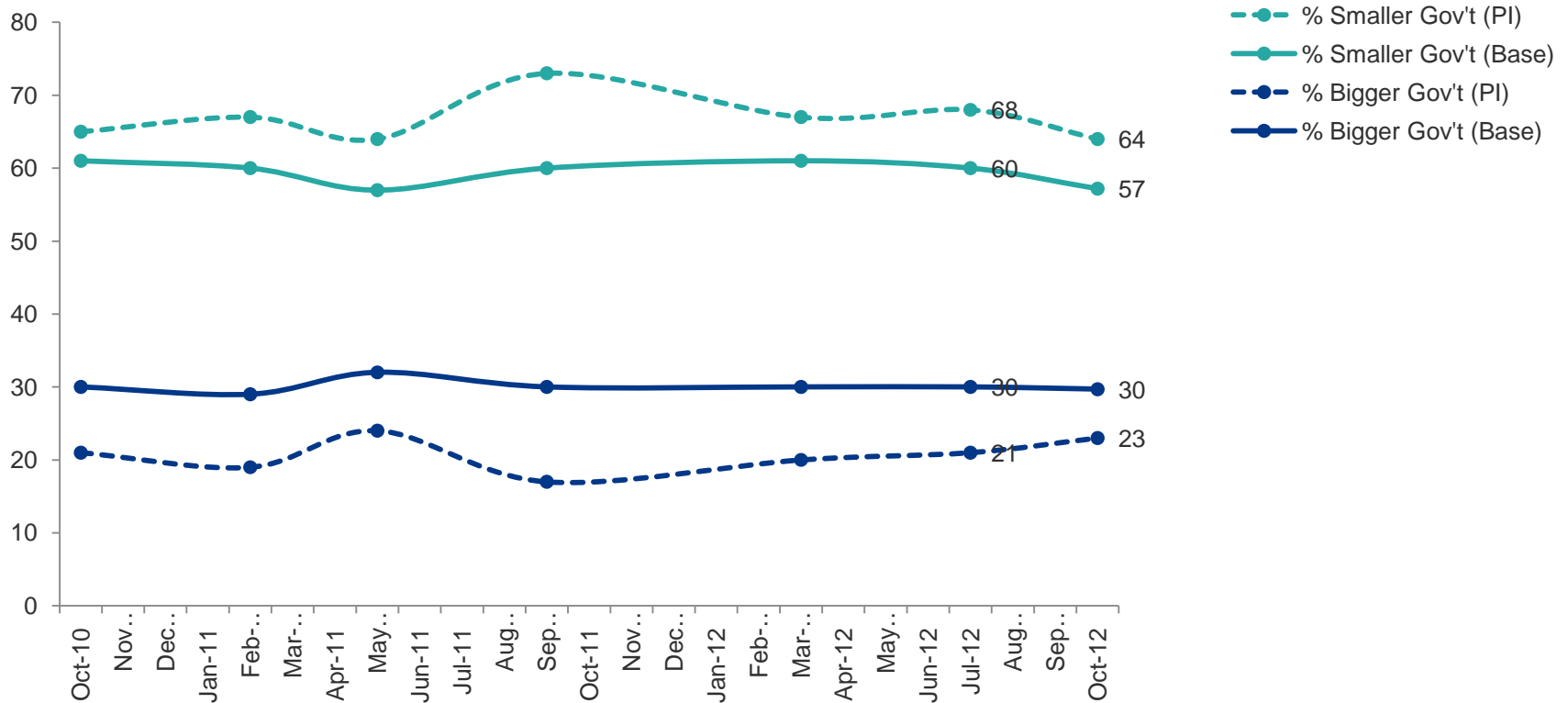
Most Important Problem

What would you say is the single most important problem facing the nation [OPEN-ENDED]?



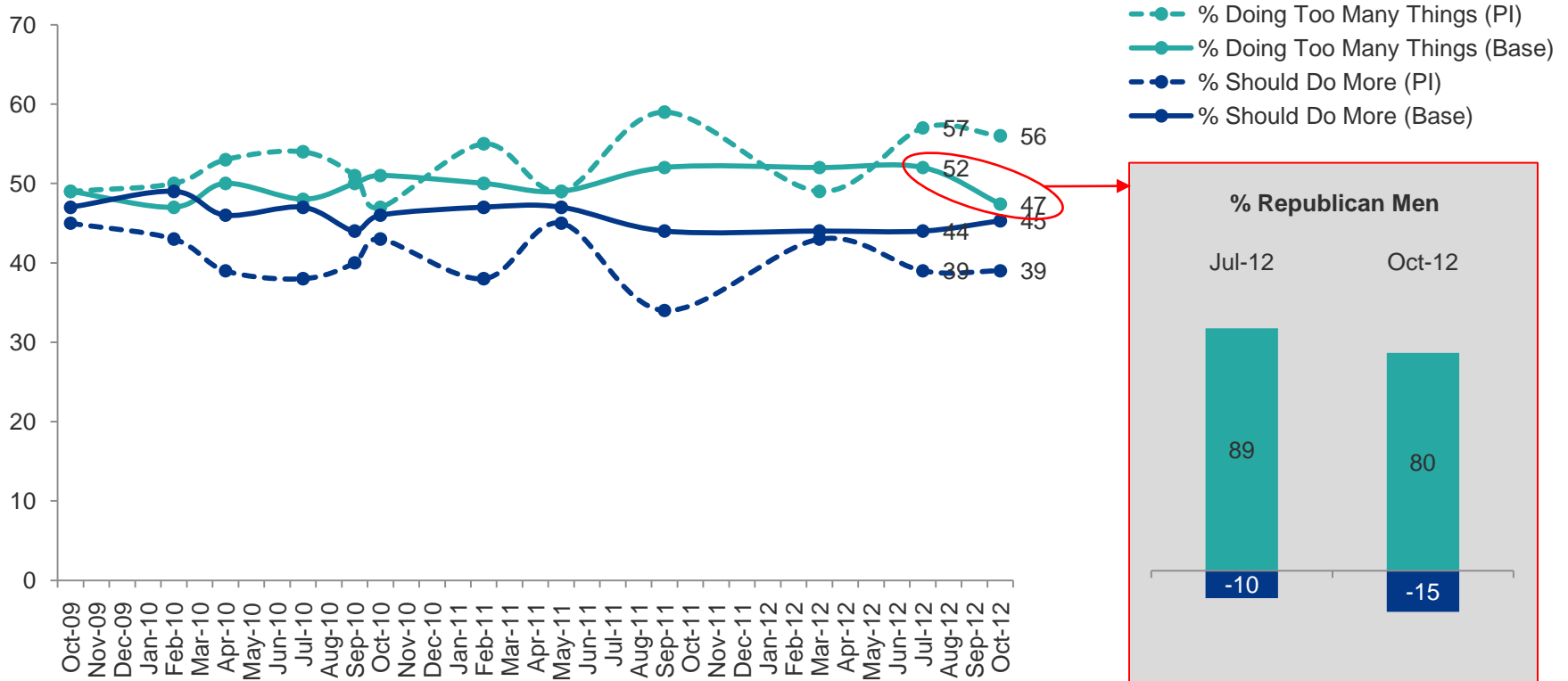
Preference for Government Size

In general, do you prefer [ROTATE]: Bigger government with more services; OR Smaller government with fewer services?



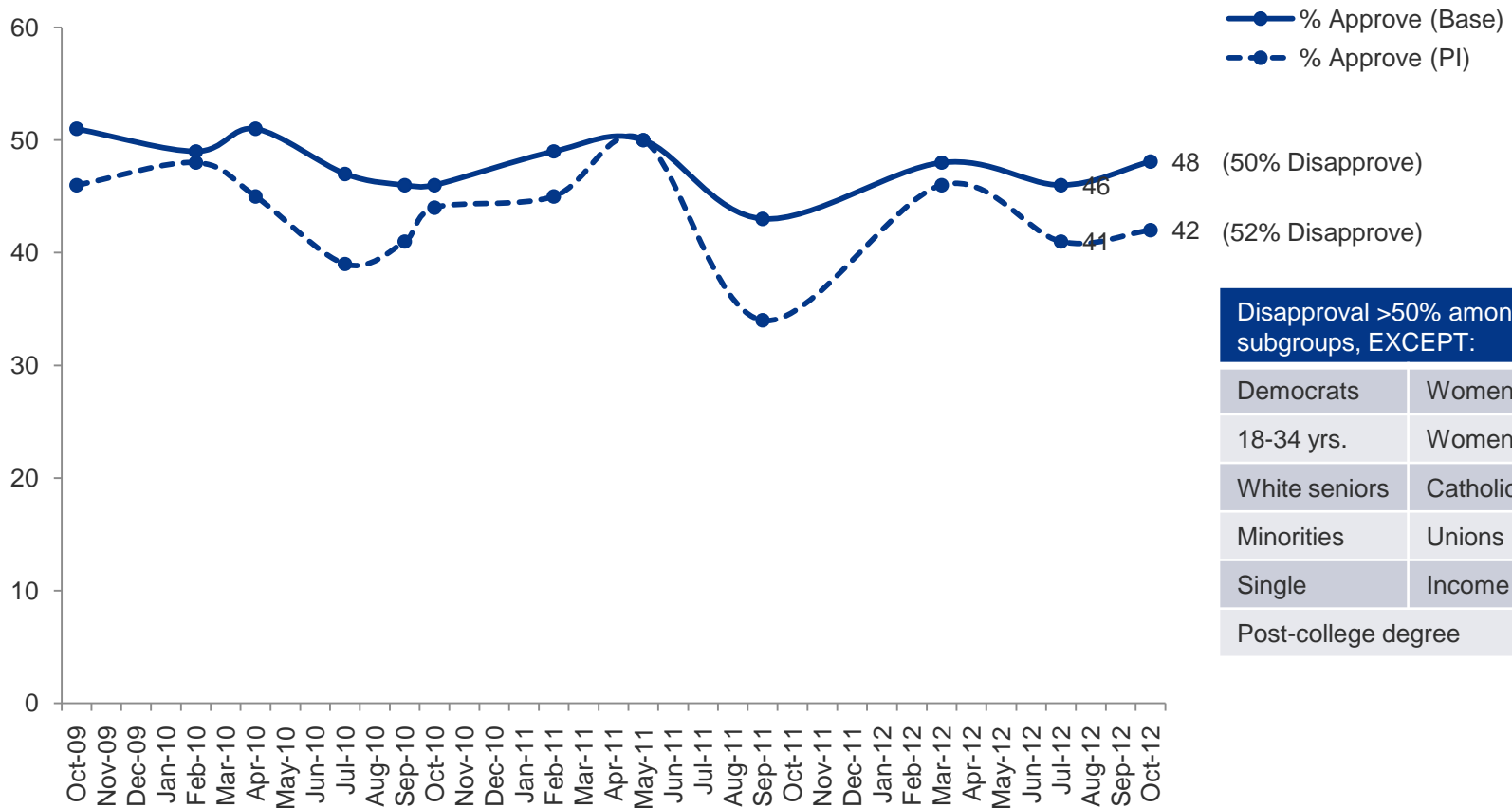
Preference for Government Role

Which statement comes closer to your point of view: [ROTATE:] Government should do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people; OR Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals?



Job Approval: President Obama

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?



Disapproval >50% among all subgroups, EXCEPT:

Democrats	Women
18-34 yrs.	Women <45 yrs.
White seniors	Catholic women
Minorities	Unions
Single	Income <\$75K
Post-college degree	

Obama Approval on the Issues

And thinking about how President Obama is handling national issues...I'm going to read several issues. Please listen and tell me, for each one, if you approve or disapprove of the job President Obama is doing on the issue. Here's the first one: (n~400, m.o.e. +/- 4.9%)

- Majority approval (50%+) demarcation line from the last wave (7/12)
- Majority approval (50%+) demarcation line from the current wave (10/12)

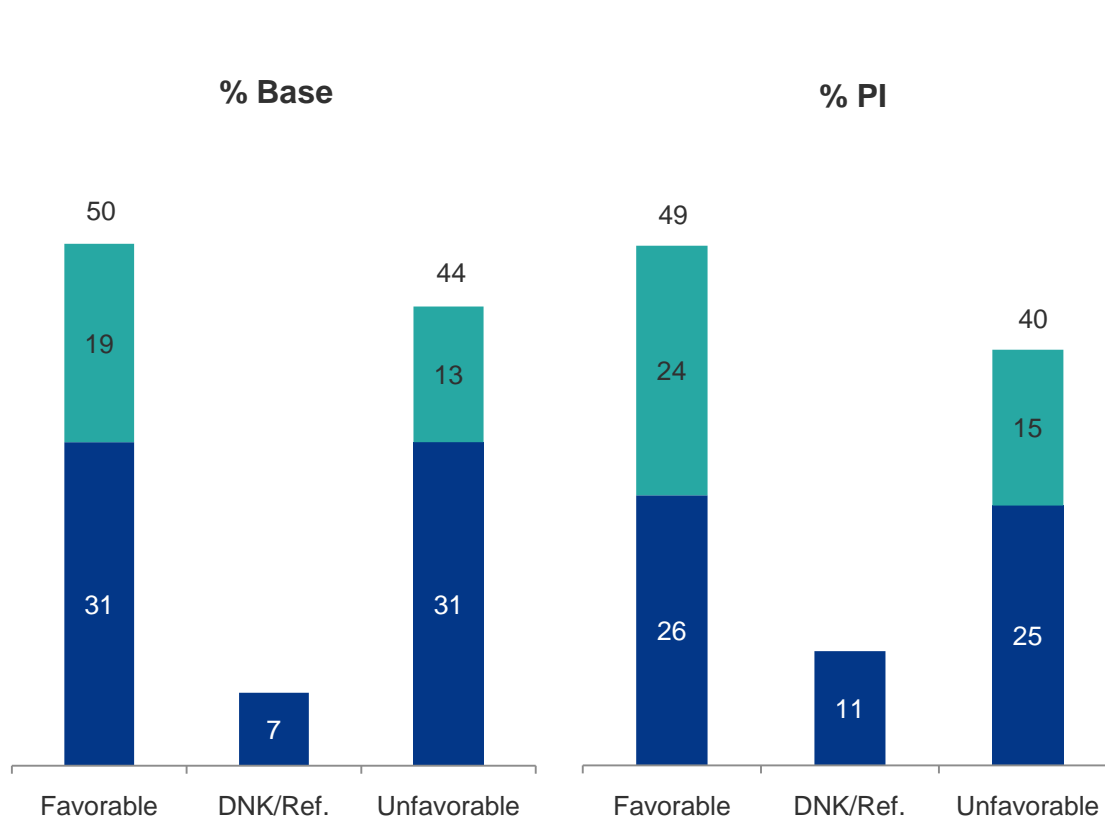
Issue	% Base Approval	Change from 7/12
Foreign policy	55	+3
Social Security and Medicare	54	+5*
Standing up for the middle class	51	+3
The economy	50	+7*
Tax reform	50	+7*
Health care	44	+2
Jobs	43	+2
The federal budget deficit/spending	32	-2

Issue	% All IND Approval	Change from 7/12
Standing up for the middle class	55	+4
Foreign policy	46	-6*
Social Security and Medicare	46	+2
Jobs	43	+5*
Health care	43	+2
The economy	40	+1
Tax reform	36	-5*
The federal budget deficit/spending	26	+1

*Significant change from previous wave.

Impression of Romney

Do you have a favorable or an unfavorable impression of Mitt Romney? [IF FAVORABLE OR UNFAVORABLE, ASK:]
Would that be a strongly [favorable/unfavorable] impression or just a somewhat [favorable/unfavorable] impression?



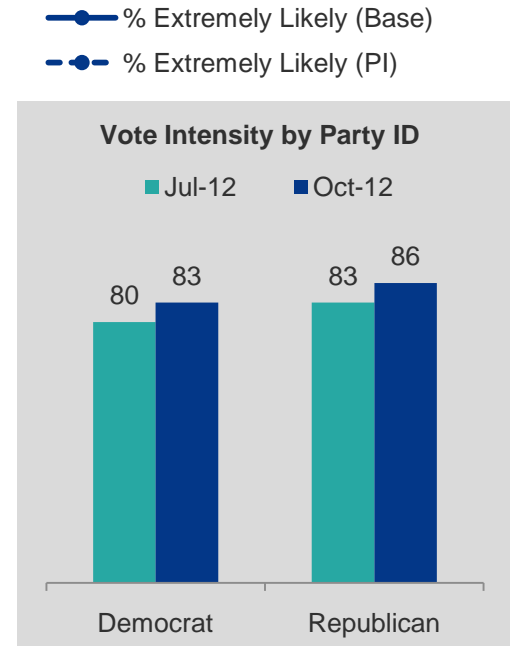
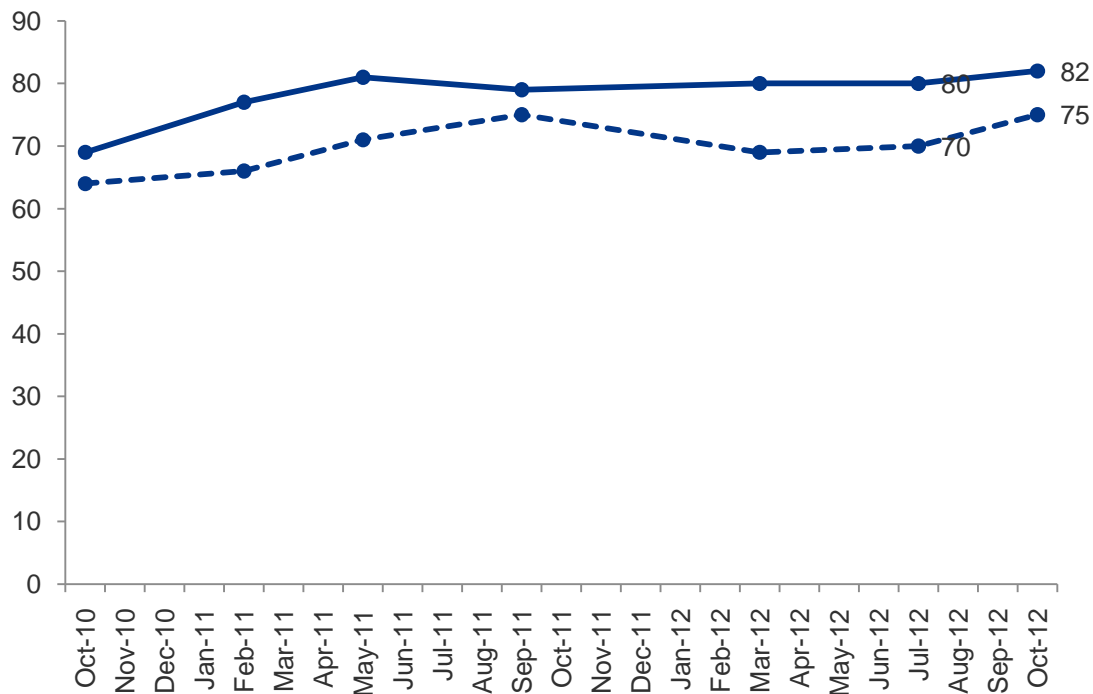
■ % Somewhat
■ % Strongly

Positive/Neutral Image among all subgroups, EXCEPT:

- Democrats
- Women
- Working women
- 18-34, 55-64 yrs.
- Catholic women
- Urban, Northeast, Blue states
- Minorities
- <High school
- Income <\$50K
- Unions
- Single, no children

Vote Intensity

As you may know, there will be a general election for president and U.S. Congress this November. I know it's still a ways off, but would you say you are extremely likely to vote, very likely to vote but not extremely likely, somewhat likely to vote, or not too likely to vote in the November election? (*Question in 10/10 wave: "...there will be a general election for U.S. Congress in November 2010. I know it's still a ways off, but would you say you are...")

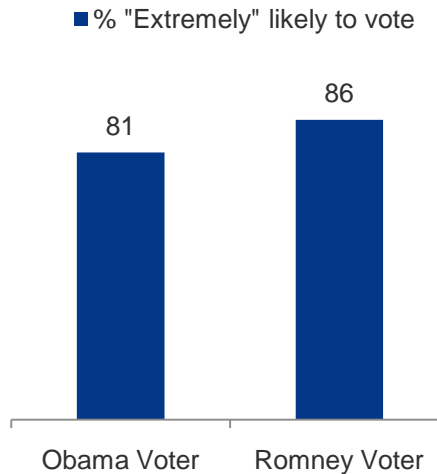


Vote Intensity

Subgroups of women, Republicans and Republican-leaning subgroups are significantly more intense about voting than the overall electorate.

Vote Intensity by Presidential Vote

Subgroups of Women % "Extremely" likely to vote	
Democrat women	87
Republican women	89
Women >45 yrs.	88
White women	86
Working women	86
Married women	88



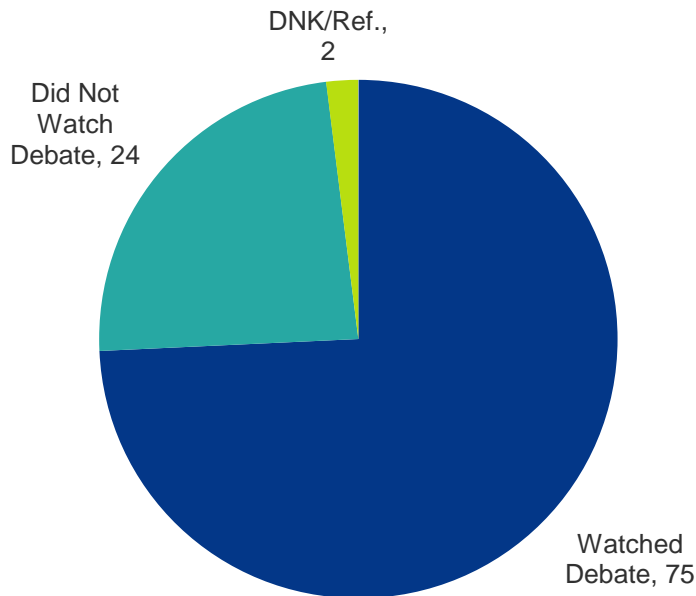
Republican/ Republican-leaning Subgroups % "Extremely" likely to vote	
Republican	86
45-64 yrs.	87
Married with children	86
Very conservative	88
Fiscally conservative	86
Red states	86

First Presidential Debate

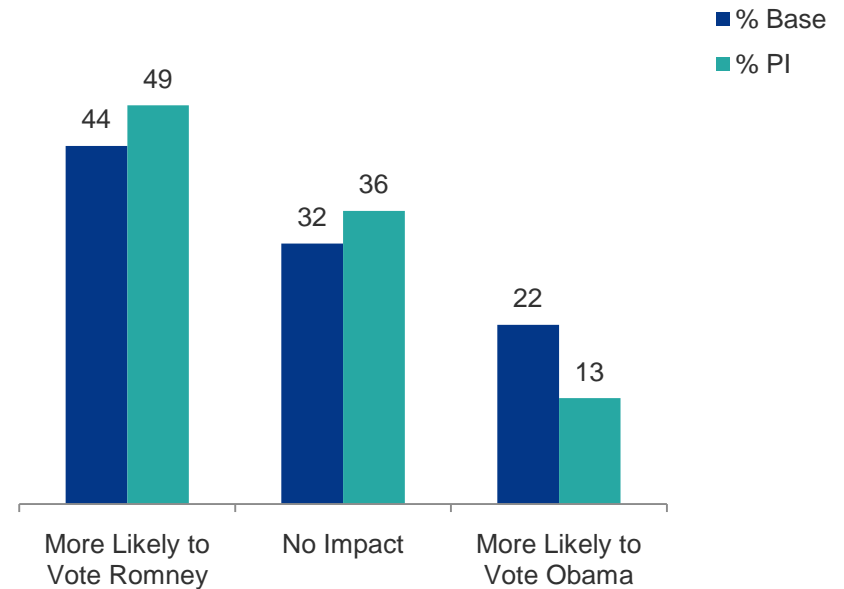
On Wednesday, October 3, President Obama and Mitt Romney participated in this year's first presidential debate on domestic policy. Thinking back, did you watch any of this debate, or were you not able to watch the debate? If you don't know, just say so.

[IF "WATCHED DEBATE", ASK:] And, still thinking about the presidential debate...did what you watch of the debate make you more likely to vote for [ROTATE:] President Obama...or...Mitt Romney? If the debate had no impact on your voting decision, just say so.

% of Base Sample

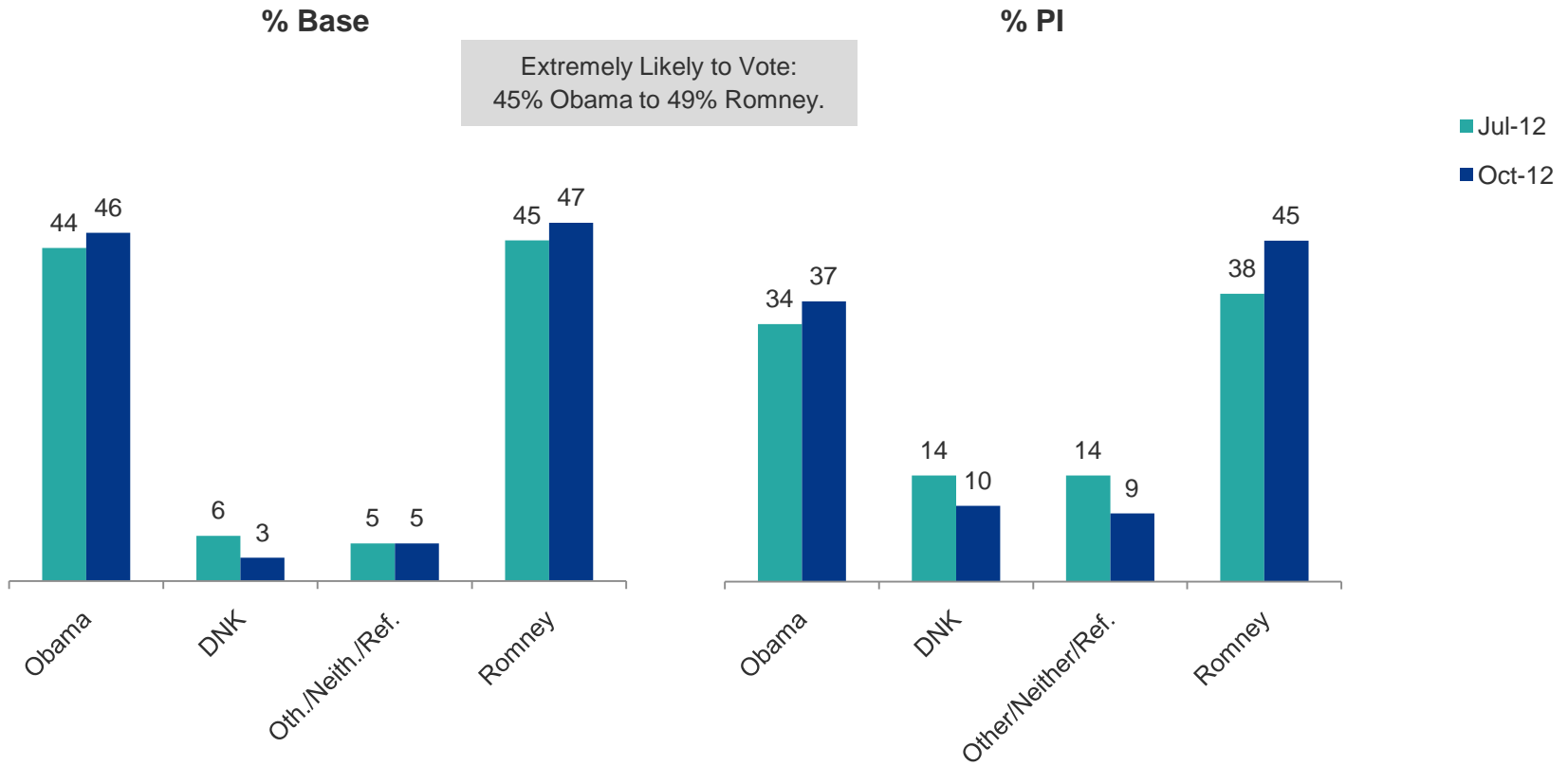


Of 75% (Base) and 68% (Pure Ind.) Who Watched the Debate



Presidential Ballot

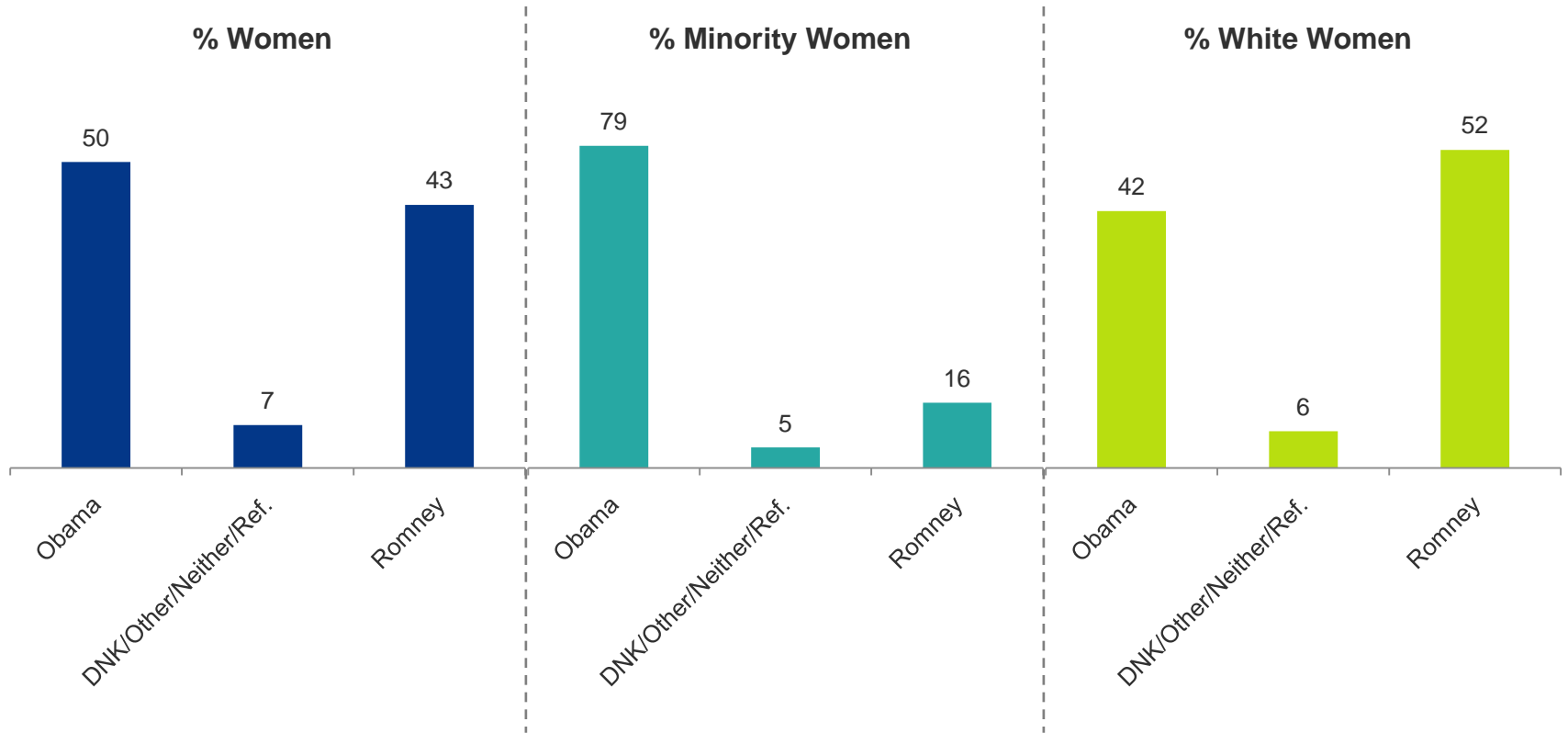
And, if the election for president were being held today and you had to make a choice, would you vote for [ROTATE] President Obama, the Democrat ...or...Mitt Romney, the Republican?



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Presidential Ballot: Women

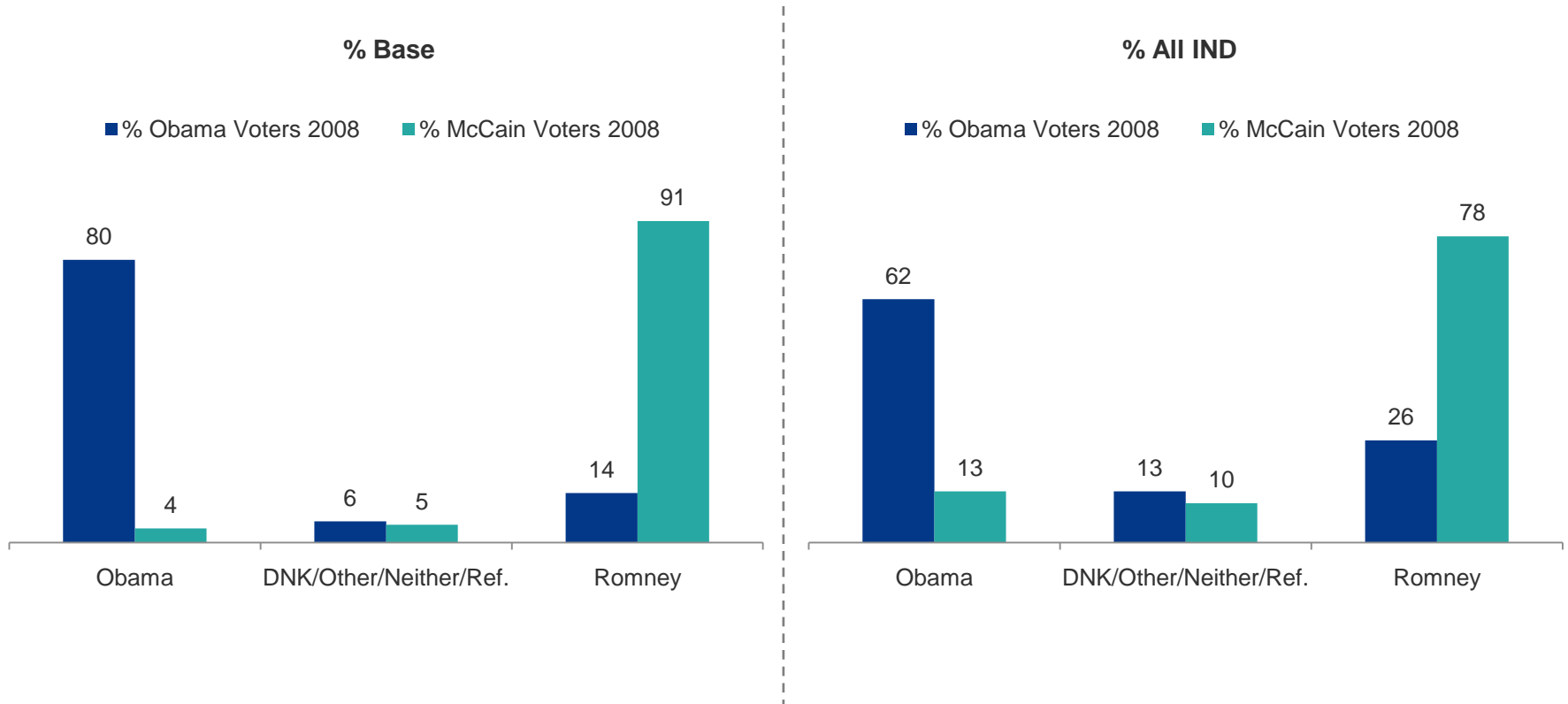
Among women, minorities drive President Obama's ballot margin. Romney wins among white women.



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Presidential Ballot: 2008 Vote

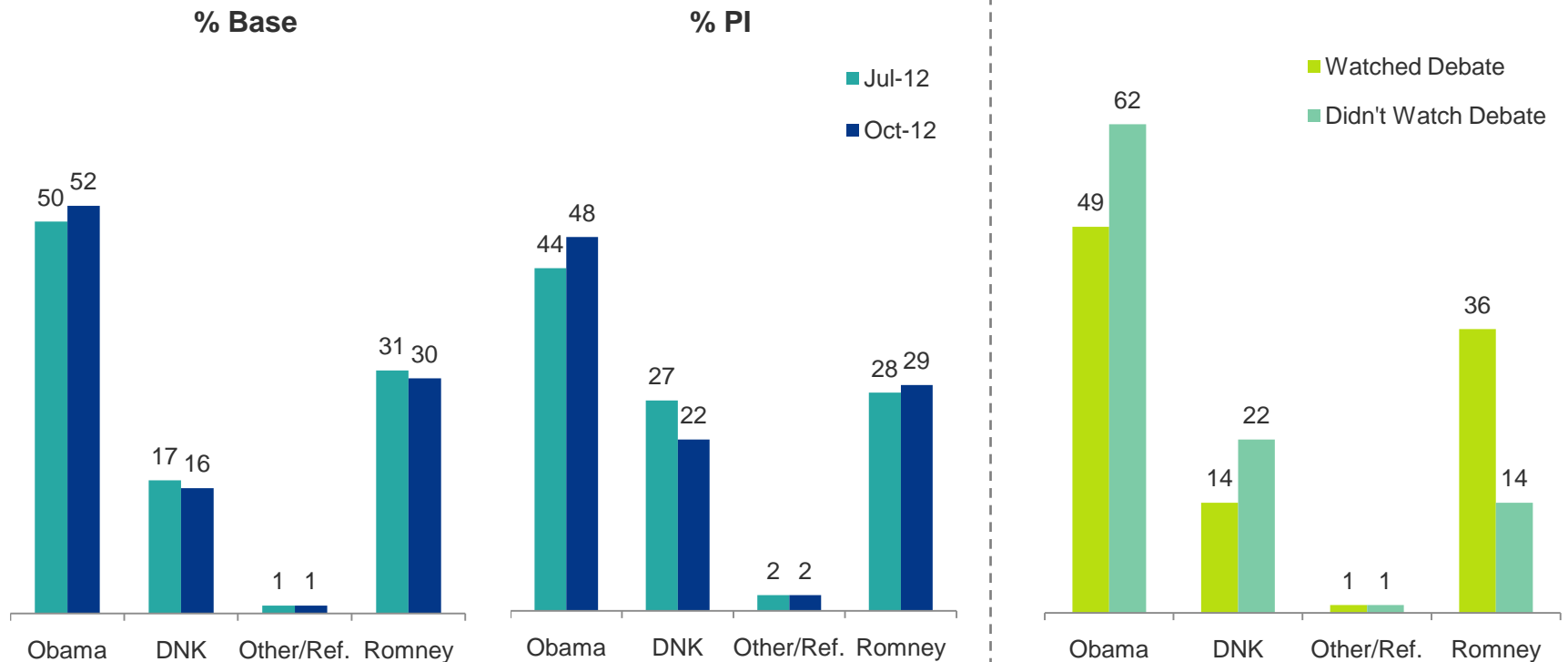
President Obama currently loses 20% of his 2008 supporters overall, and almost 40% of his previous independent vote.



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Presidential Election Prediction

Regardless of whom you support, and trying to be as objective as possible, who do you think will win the presidential election in November [ROTATE:] President Obama...or...Mitt Romney?



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

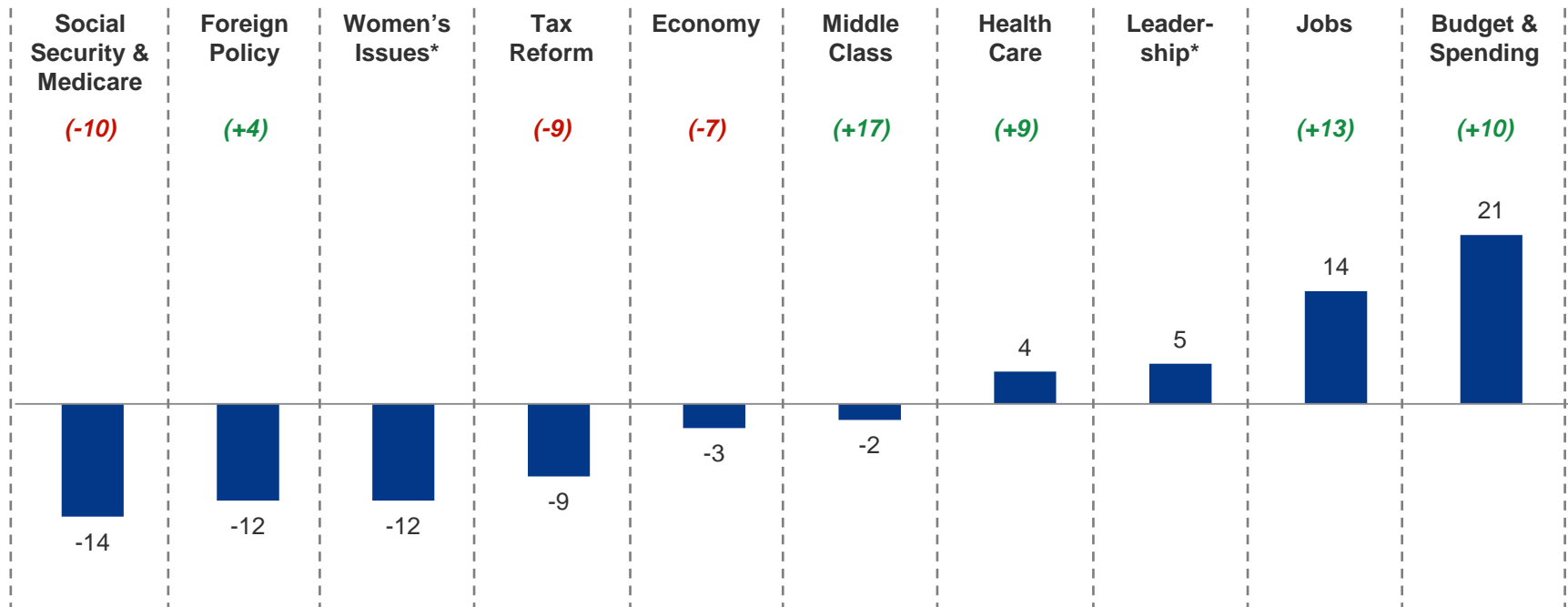
Romney Issue Handling Advantage

Now I would like to read another list of issues. Please listen and tell me, for each one, who you think will better handle this issue, [ROTATE] Mitt Romney... or...President Obama. Here is the first one:

Romney Percentage Point Advantage among Base (n=400, m.o.e. +/- 4.9)

(#) = Percentage Point Change from Jul-12

*Not Asked in Jul-12



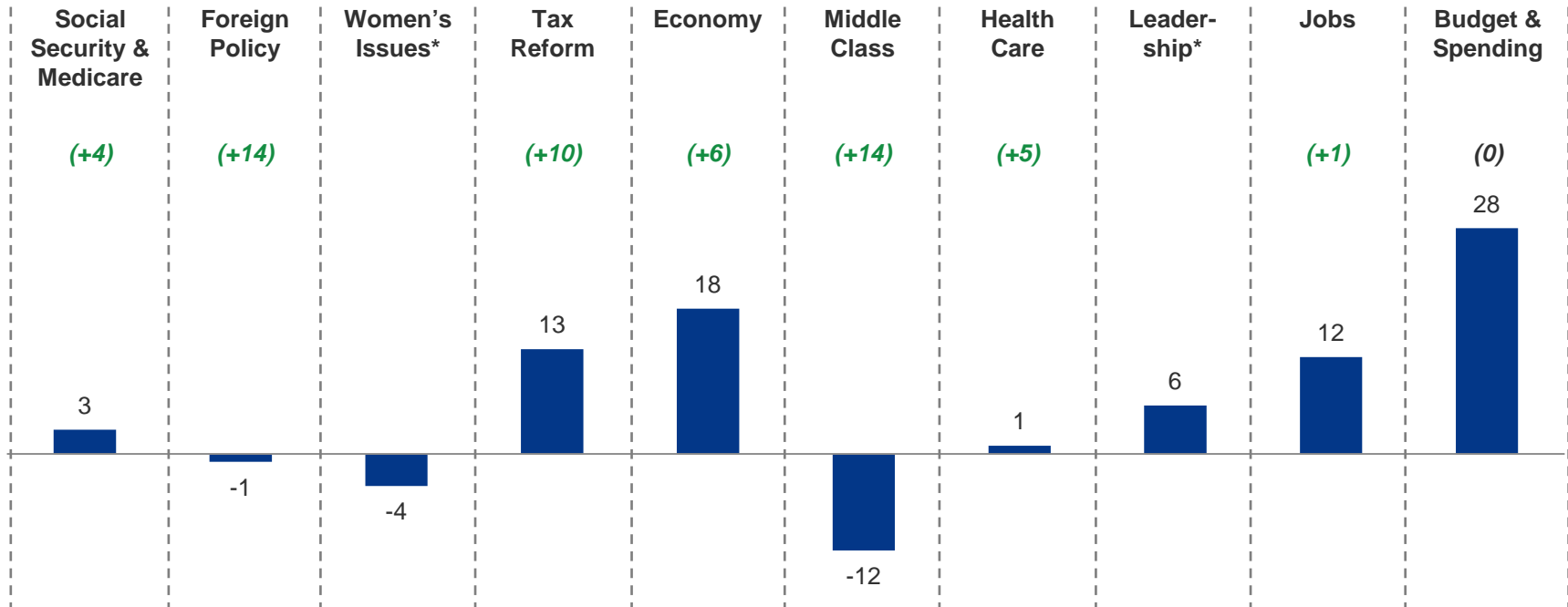
Romney Issue Handling Advantage

Now I would like to read another list of issues. Please listen and tell me, for each one, who you think will better handle this issue, [ROTATE] Mitt Romney... or...President Obama. Here is the first one:

Romney Percentage Point Advantage among All IND (n=400, m.o.e. +/- 4.9)

(#) = Percentage Point Change from Jul-12

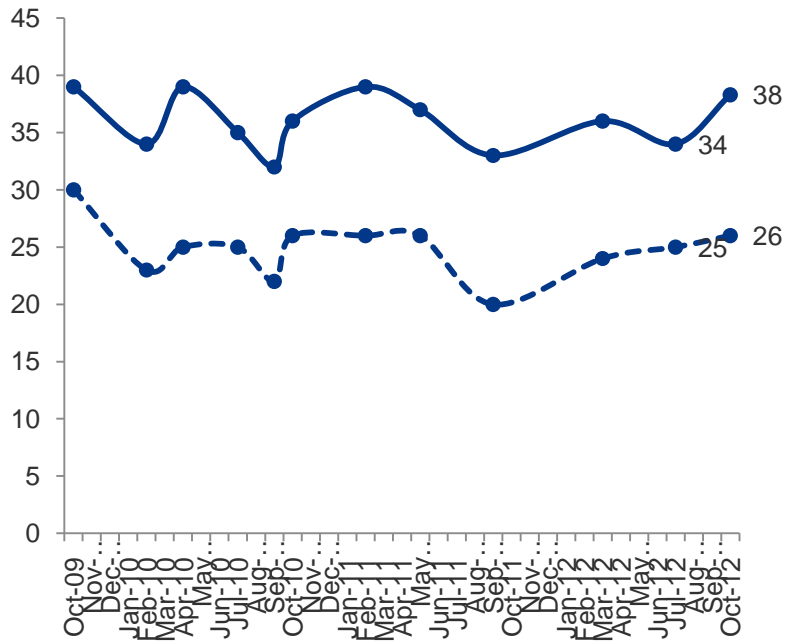
*Not Asked in Jul-12



Job Approval: Democrats and Republicans in Congress

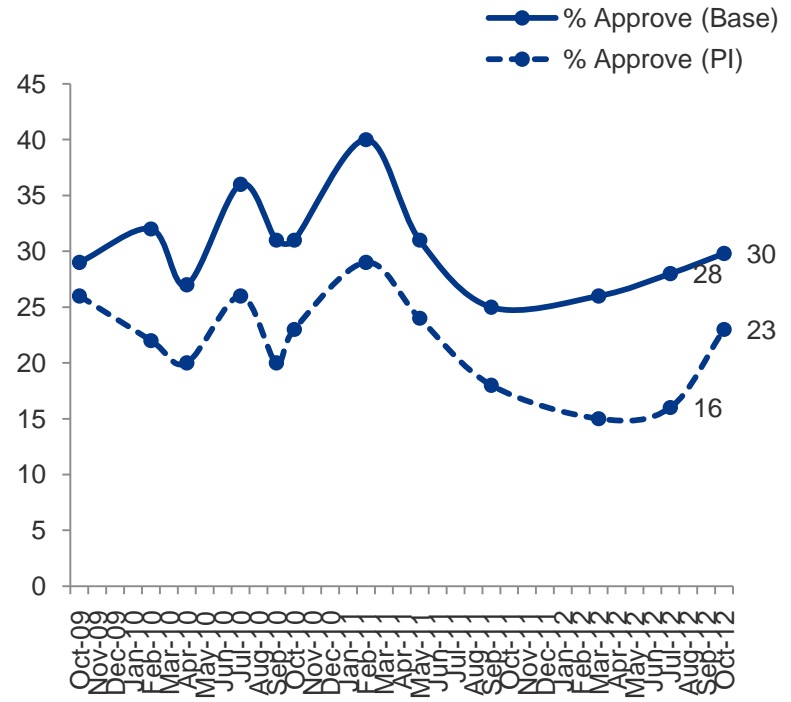
Do you approve or disapprove of the way Republicans/Democrats in the U.S. Congress are handling their job?

Democrats in Congress



Partisan Base Approval: 71%

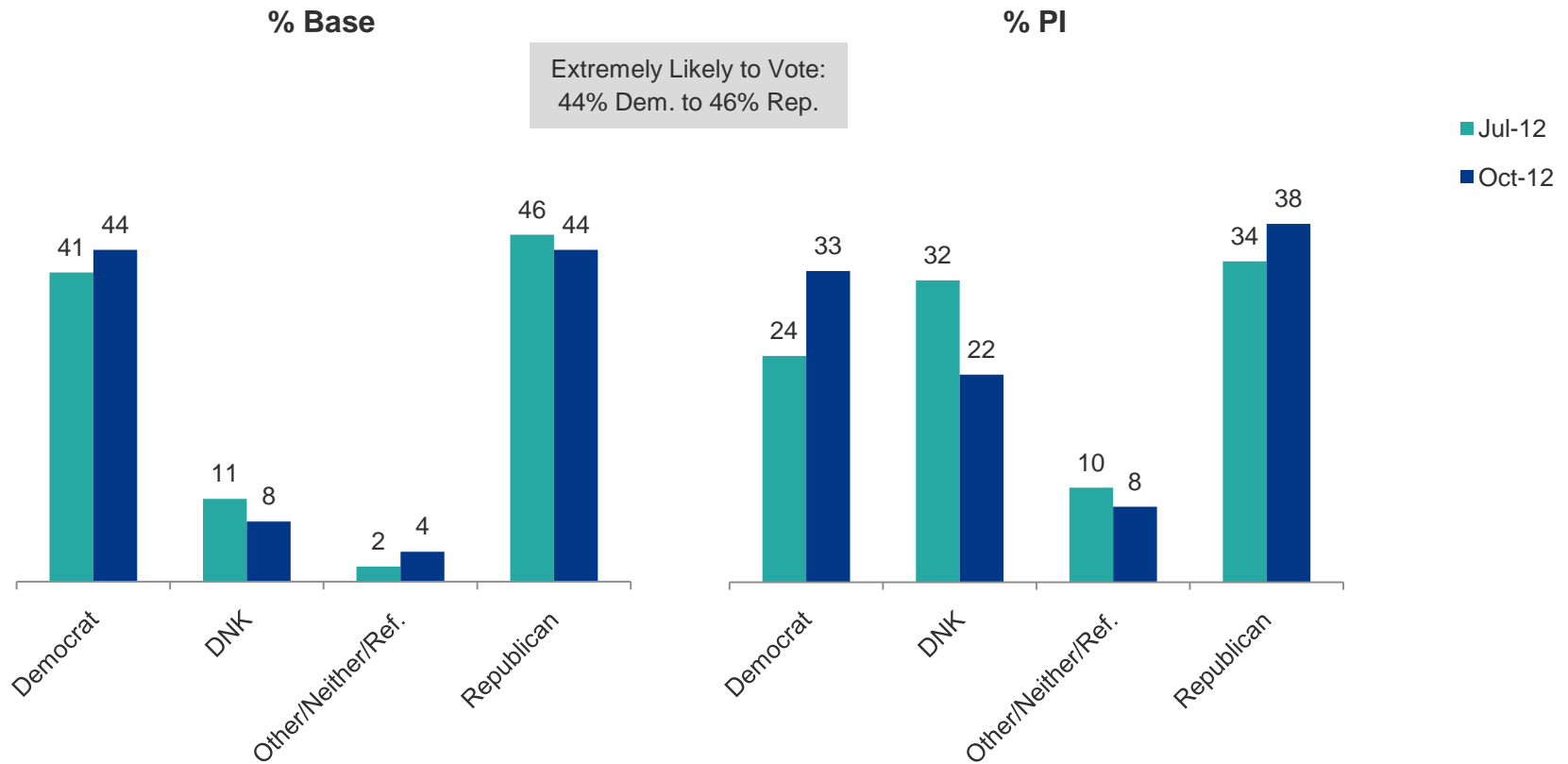
Republicans in Congress



Partisan Base Approval: 57%

Generic Congressional Ballot

And, if the elections for U.S. Congress were being held today, and you had to make a choice, would you vote for [ROTATE] the Republican candidate ...or... the Democratic candidate in your Congressional district?



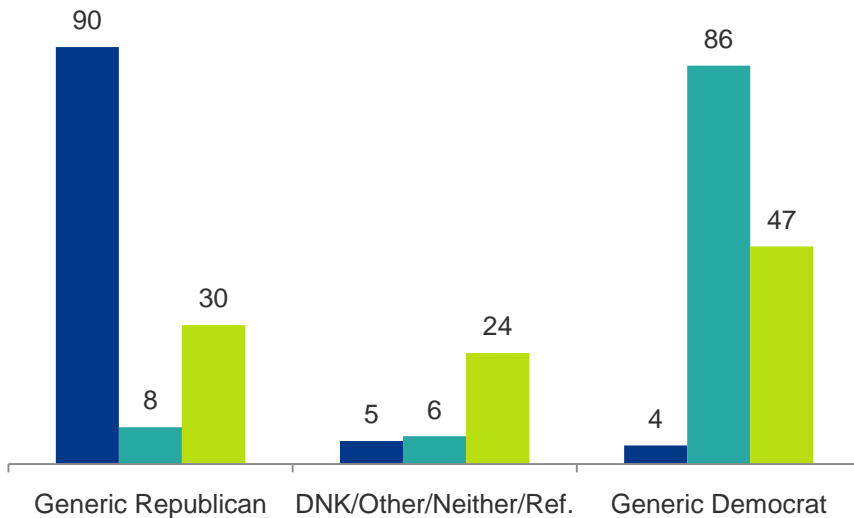
Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Generic Congressional Ballot: 2010 Vote

The generic Republican retains slightly more of its 2010 vote (overall and among independents) than the generic Democrat. However, those (overall) who didn't vote in 2010 are significantly more likely to vote for the Democrat than the Republican for Congress in 2012. This does not hold among independents. Those who didn't vote in 2010 split their 2012 vote evenly between the two generic candidates.

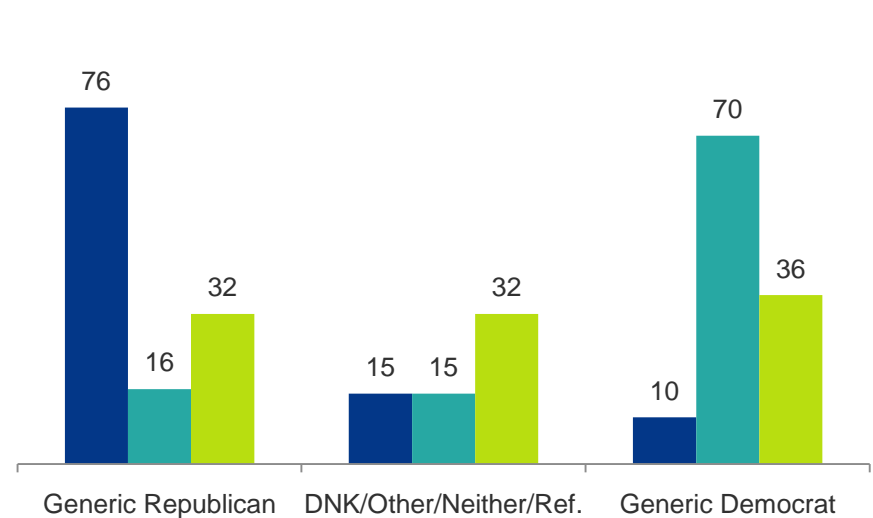
% Base

- % House Republican Voters 2010
- % House Democrat Voters 2010
- % Did Not Vote 2010



% All Ind.

- % House Republican Voters 2010
- % House Democrat Voters 2010
- % Did Not Vote 2010



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Generic Congressional Ballot: Subgroups

Subgroup	Generic Republican %	Generic Democrat %
Gender Gap		
Men	49	41
Women	40	48
White Women	53	36
Minority Women	14	80
Age Gap		
18-34	42	47
35-44	49	34
45-54	50	38
55-64	40	52
65+	40	51
Marriage Gap		
Married	52	38
Single	29	60
Partisan Gap		
Self-Identified Republicans	88	5
Self-Identified Democrats	5	89

Men give the Republican an 8-point advantage while women give the same advantage to the Democrat.

The gender gap is driven by minority women, who overwhelmingly support the generic Democrat.

The youngest and oldest voters support the generic Democrat.

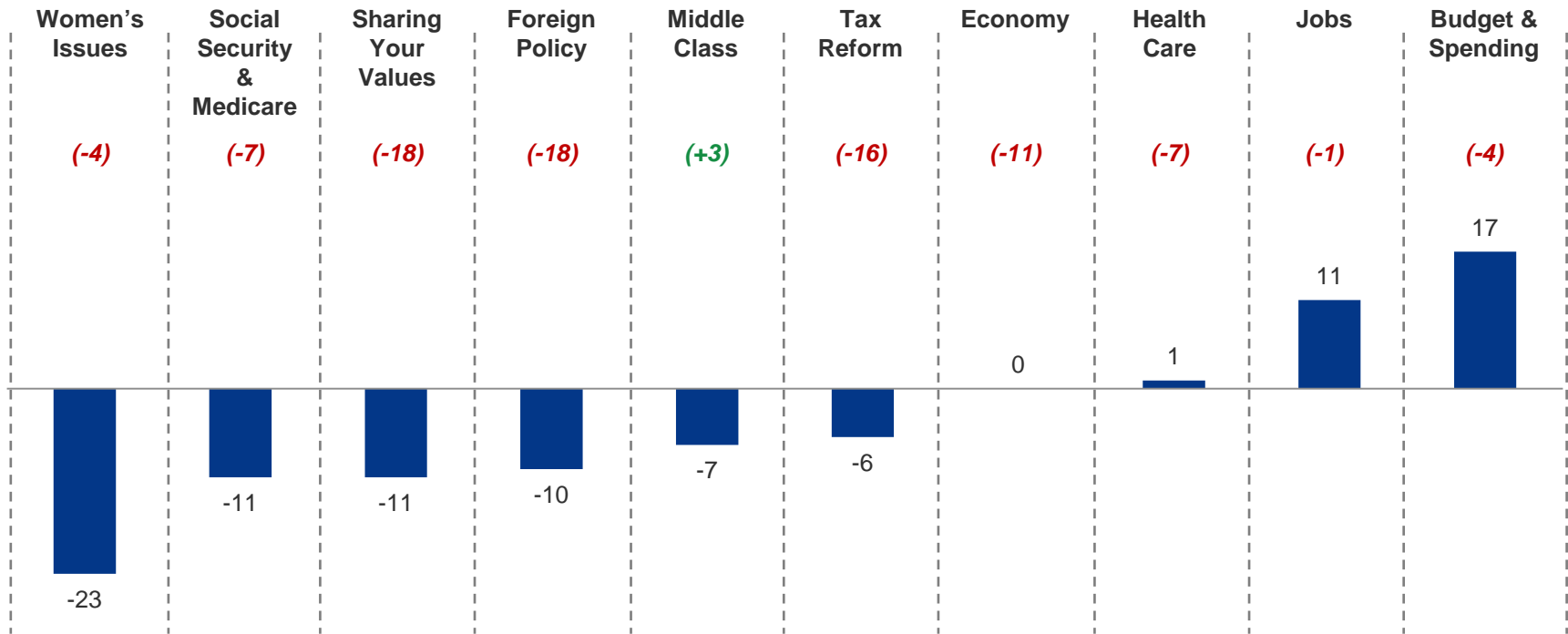
About 1 out of 2 married voters prefer the Republican candidate, while 3 in 5 single voters prefer the Democrat.

Both candidates receive roughly equal support from their partisan bases.

Congressional Republican Issue Handling Advantage

And thinking now about Congressional issue handling ...Please listen as I read another set of issues, and for each one tell me if you think [ROTATE:] the Republicans in Congress...or...the Democrats in Congress will better handle the issue. Here is the first one:

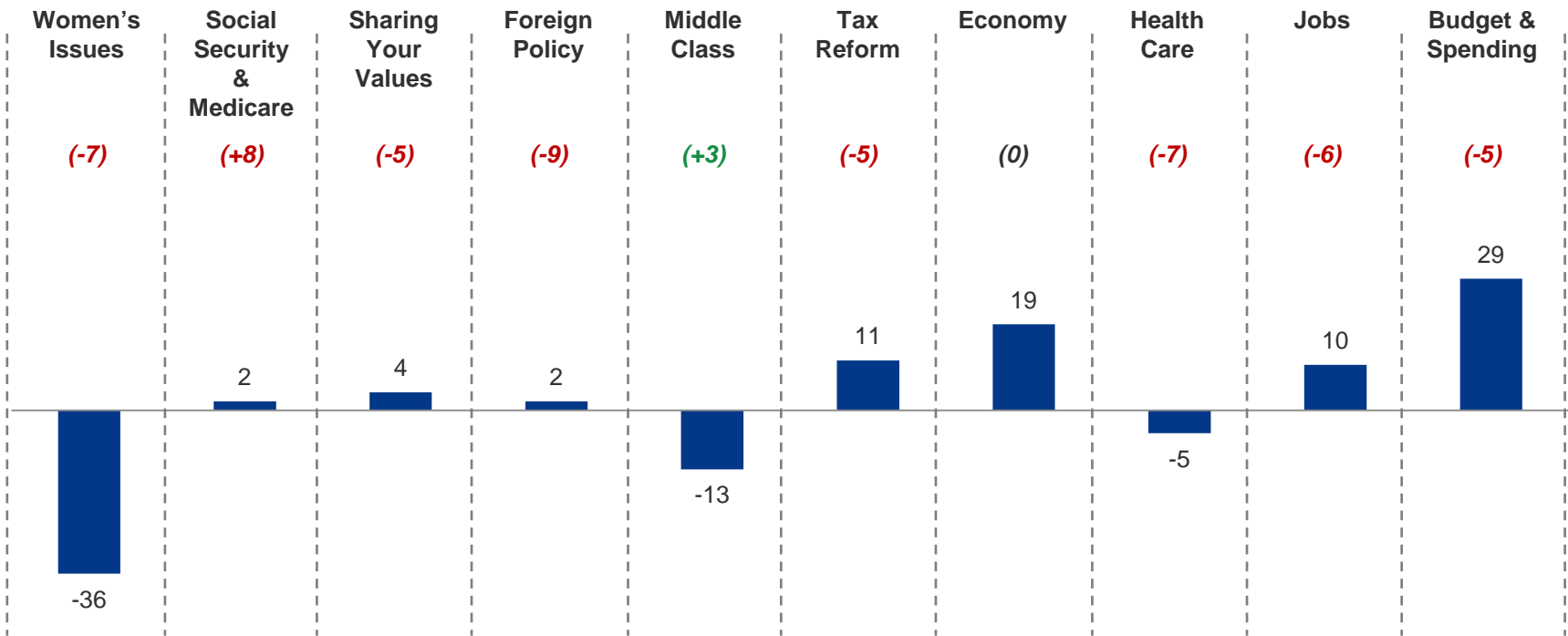
GOP Percentage Point Advantage among Base (n=400, m.o.e. +/- 4.9)
 (#) = Percentage Point Change from Jul-12



Congressional Republican Issue Handling Advantage

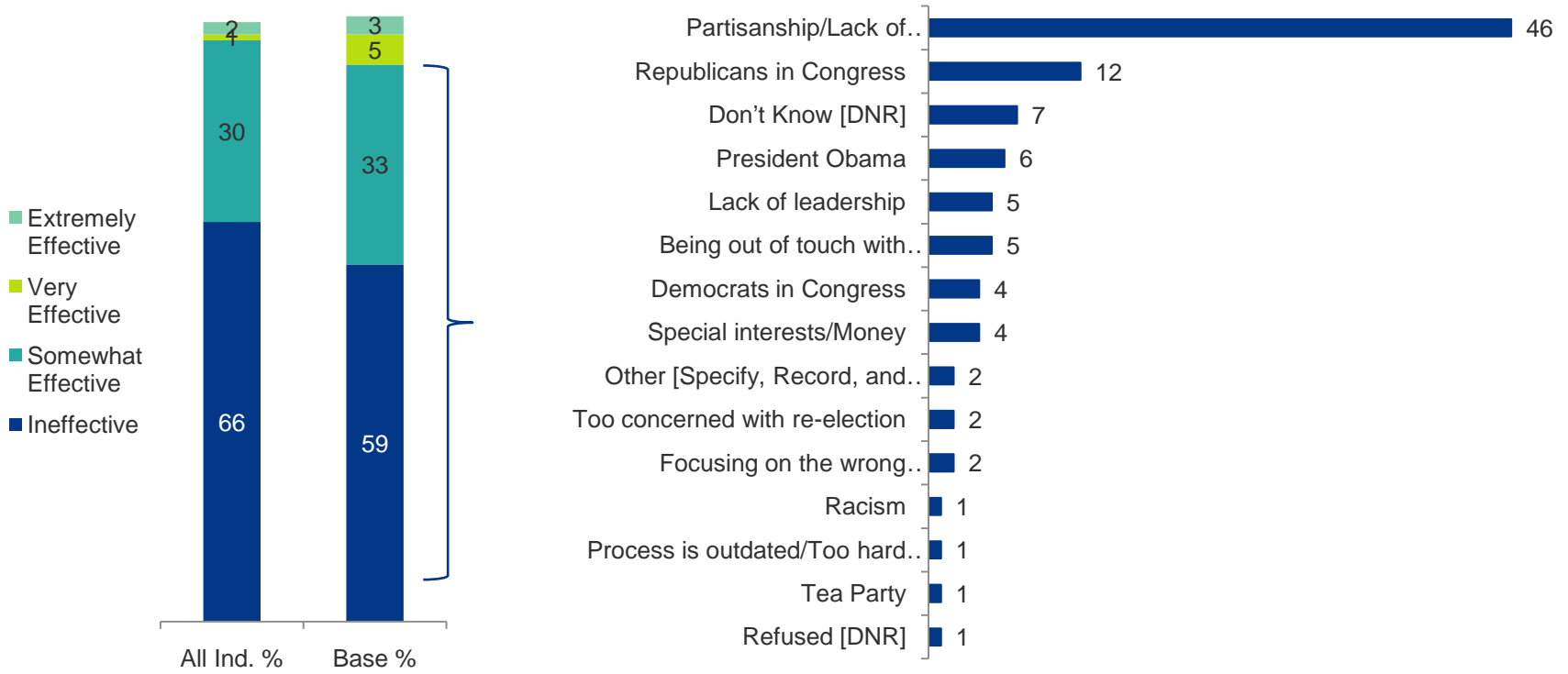
And thinking now about Congressional issue handling ... Please listen as I read another set of issues, and for each one tell me if you think [ROTATE:] the Republicans in Congress...or...the Democrats in Congress will better handle the issue. Here is the first one:

GOP Percentage Point Advantage among All IND (n=400, m.o.e. +/- 4.9)
 (#) = Percentage Point Change from Jul-12



Congressional Effectiveness

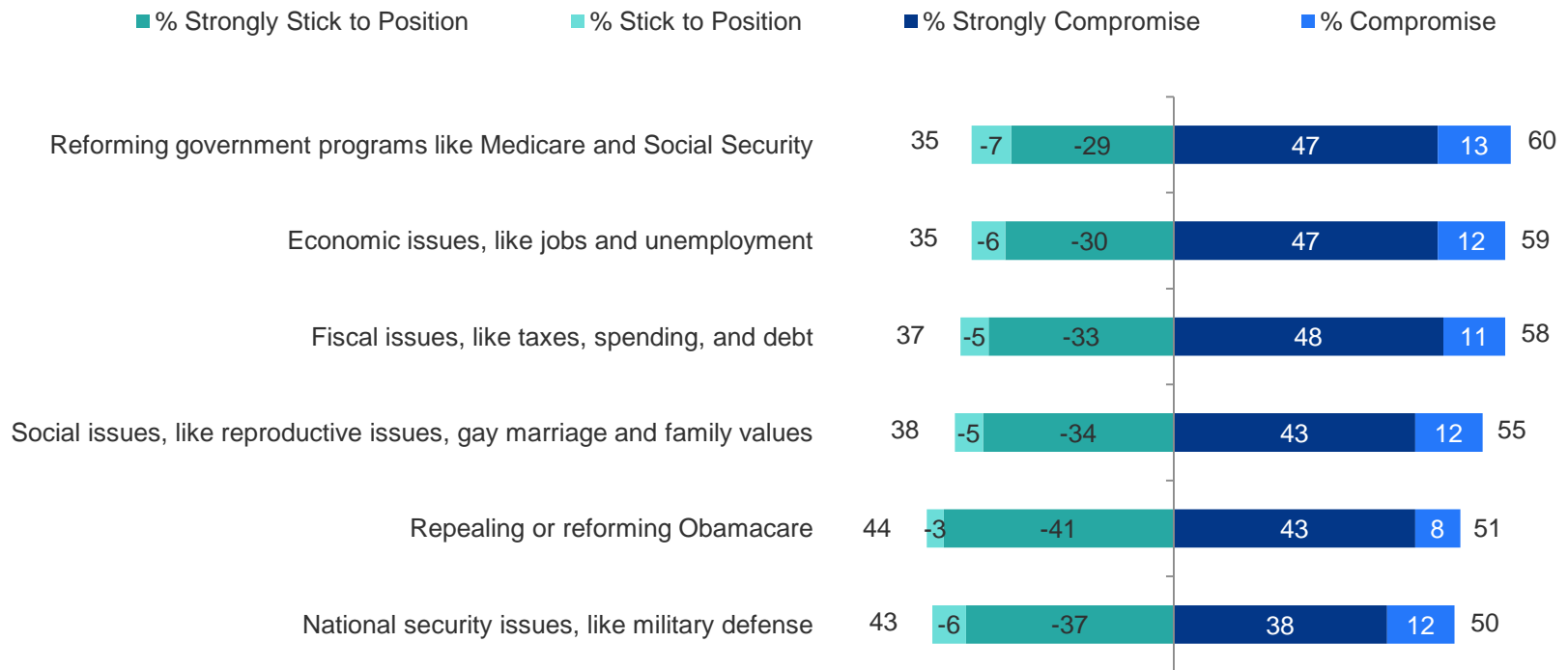
Overall, how effective do you think this Congress has been at addressing the issues facing the country: Extremely effective, Very effective, Somewhat effective, or Ineffective? [IF "SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE" OR "INEFFECTIVE," ASK:] In your own words, what do you think has prevented this Congress from effectively addressing the issues facing the country: [OPEN-END]



Republican Issue Positions

Now, I'm going to read you one last set of issues facing the country. After each, please tell me if you think Republicans in Congress should [ROTATE]: Compromise their position on the issue in order to get things done...or...Stick to their position on the issue even if it means not getting as much done? [IF CHOICE MADE ASK:] And do you feel strongly about that?

Among Base Sample



Note: Percentages may not total due to rounding.

Republican Issue Positions: Subgroups

% Saying “Republicans Should Compromise”

Subgroup	Reforming Gov't Programs	Economic Issues	Fiscal Issues	Social Issues	Obamacare	National Security Issues
Base	60	59	58	55	51	50
Republican	38	32	30	30	19	22
Democrat	80	84	86	74	77	77
Men	58	57	56	51	48	47
Women	63	61	60	58	53	53
Seniors	60	59	59	51	49	48
Hispanic*	69	57	56	54	52	52
Undecided on Cong. Ballot*	64	57	52	55	51	34
Pure Independent	63	62	61	61	53	48
Former GOP Independents	57	54	52	50	43	42
Independent Men	64	60	58	57	50	46
Independent Women	59	60	61	61	50	49
Independents undecided on Cong. Ballot	63	60	58	59	53	43

*n<100



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