

# Regulating North Carolina's Carbon Pollution

## Research Findings Prepared by Global Strategy Group for EDF Action



EDF  
ACTION

# Methodology

## Likely voters

Global Strategy Group conducted a voter file-matched online survey from September 10 to 15, 2019 among **918 likely 2020 voters in North Carolina**.

Questions about the proposal to place a limit on carbon emissions from power plants were asked of a half sample of 459 likely voters. The other half sample of 459 likely voters were asked questions about the economy-wide carbon limit proposal.

Respondents were selected via online panels or texted a link to complete the survey on their mobile phones. Respondents from both modes were matched back to the North Carolina voter file.



**Online Panel**

**486 interviews**



**Text-to-Web (T2W)**

**432 interviews**

Care has been taken to ensure the political, geographical, and demographic divisions of the expected electorate are properly represented based on historical turnout.

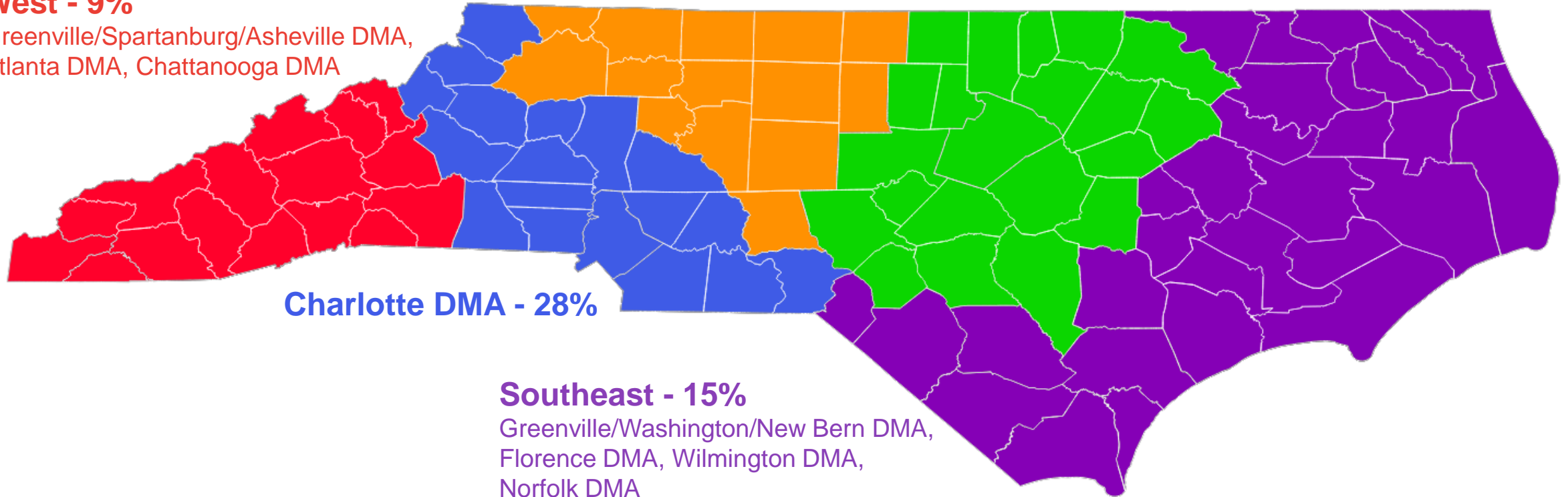
# Likely 2020 Electorate

## West - 9%

Greenville/Spartanburg/Asheville DMA,  
Atlanta DMA, Chattanooga DMA

Greensboro DMA - 17%

Raleigh-Durham DMA - 31%

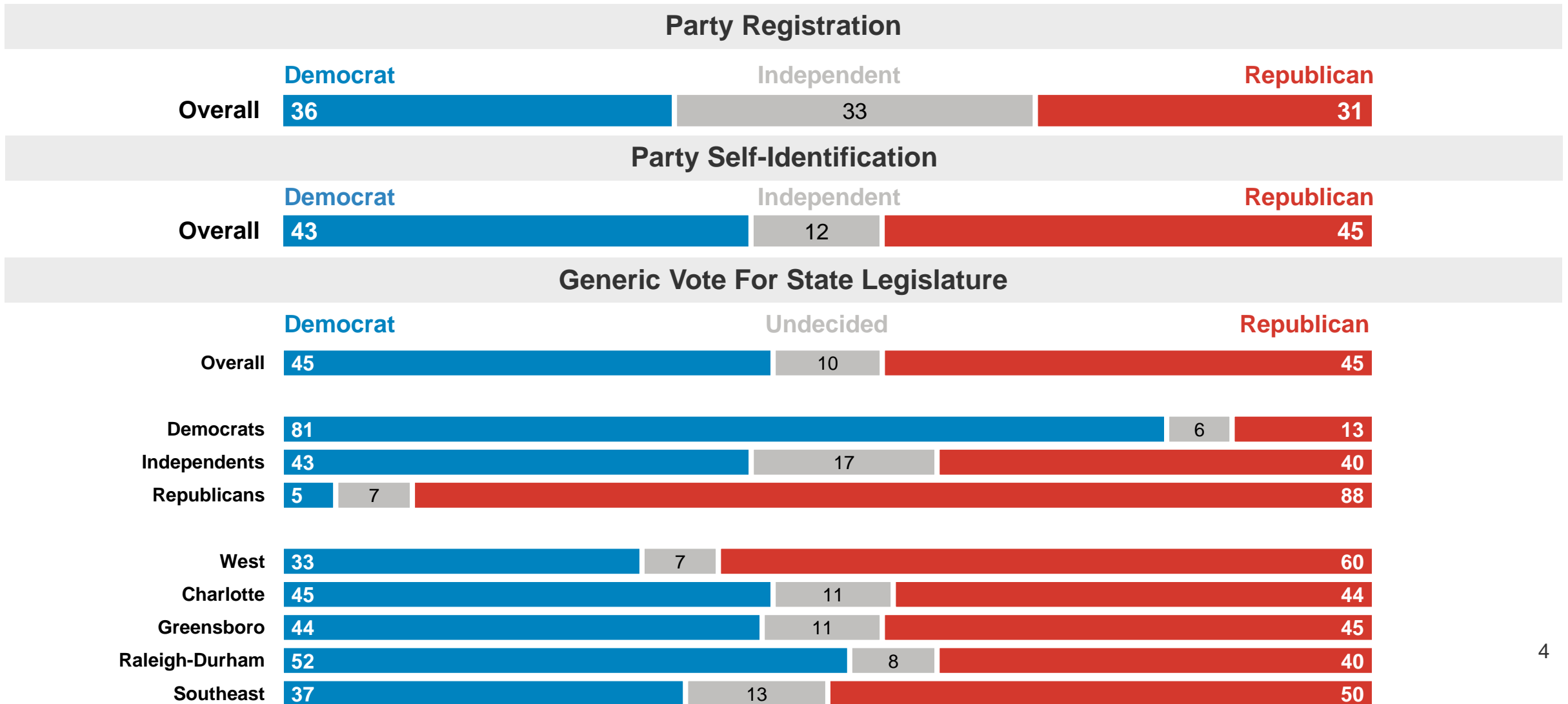


Charlotte DMA - 28%

## Southeast - 15%

Greenville/Washington/New Bern DMA,  
Florence DMA, Wilmington DMA,  
Norfolk DMA

# North Carolina likely voters are split on partisanship heading into 2020.

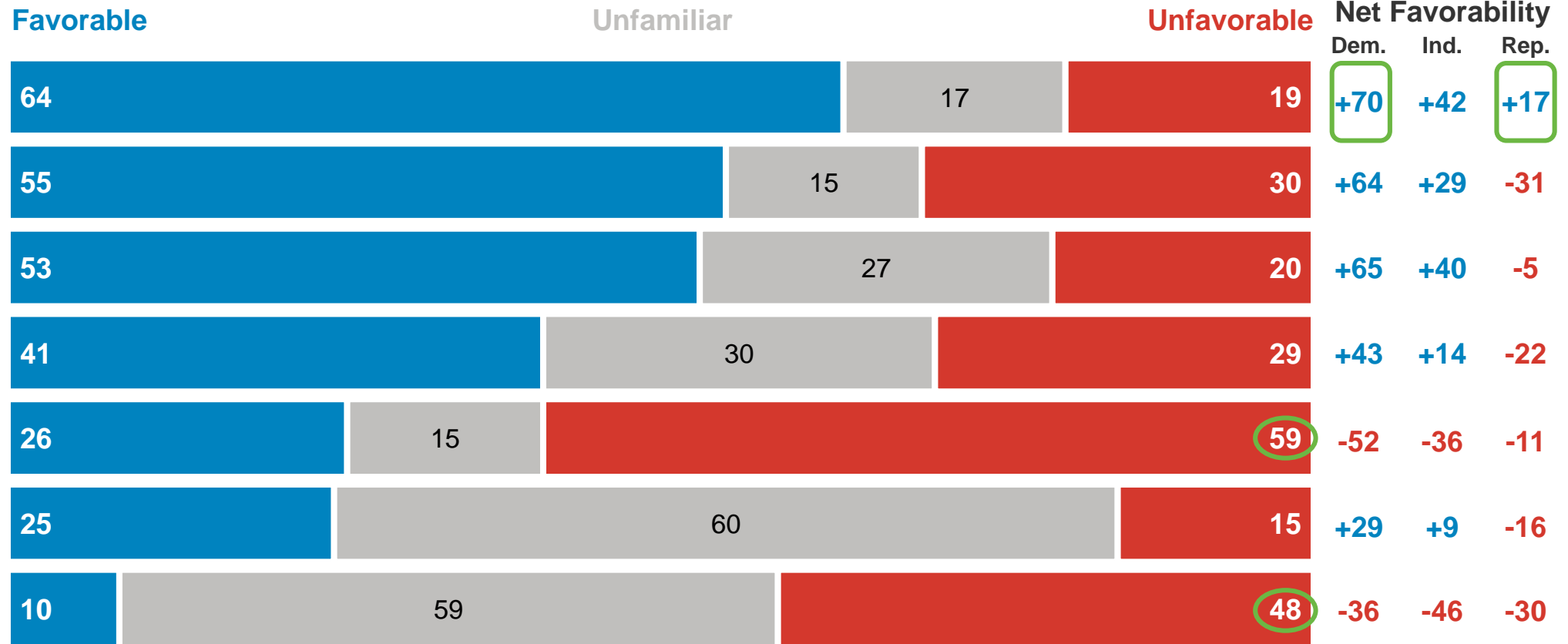


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# Carbon Limits

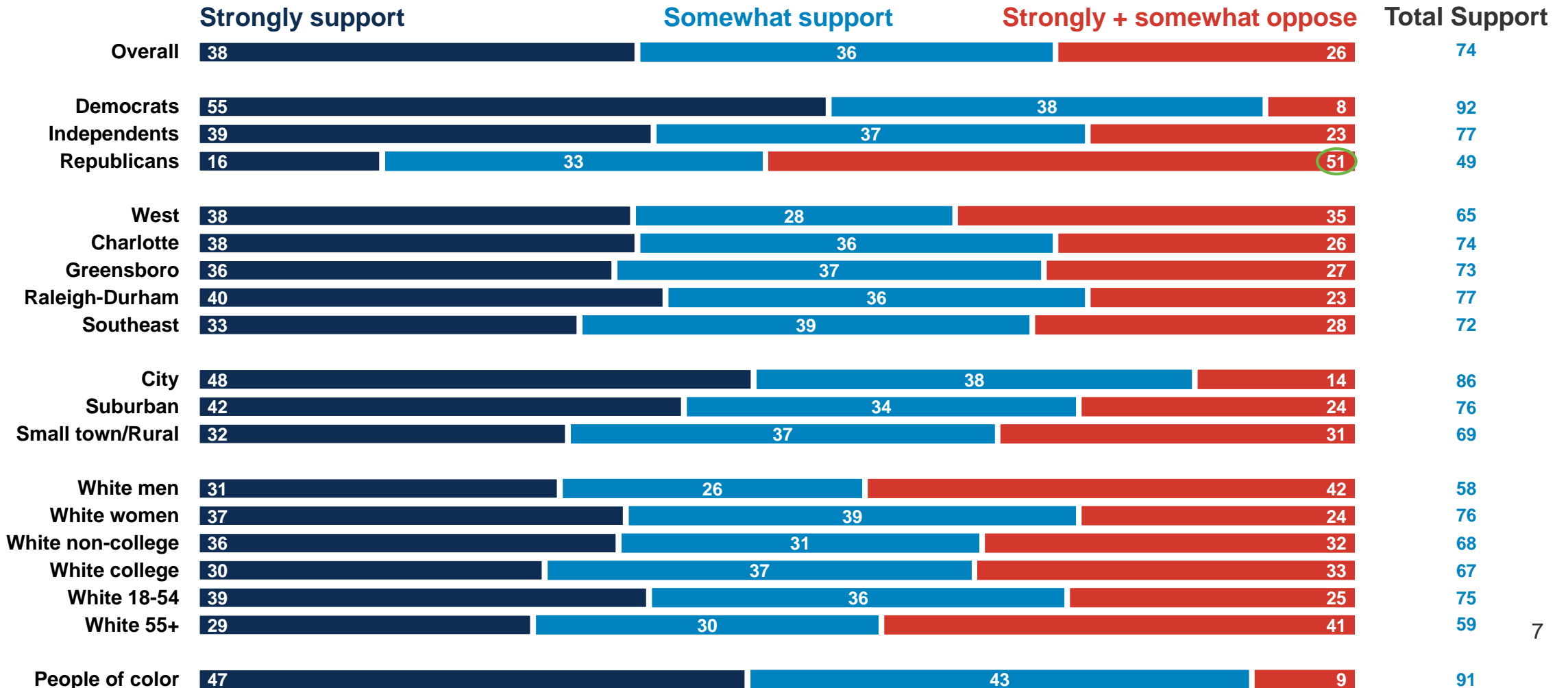
Voters of all political parties like regulations to reduce carbon emissions. Voters overall also like lawmakers who support strong action to combat climate change.

### Favorability of Topics, Proposals, and Groups



# Three-quarters of voters across the state support a plan to move the country to 100% clean energy by 2050.

Support for “a plan that would transition the United States to 100% clean energy like wind and solar by the year 2050”

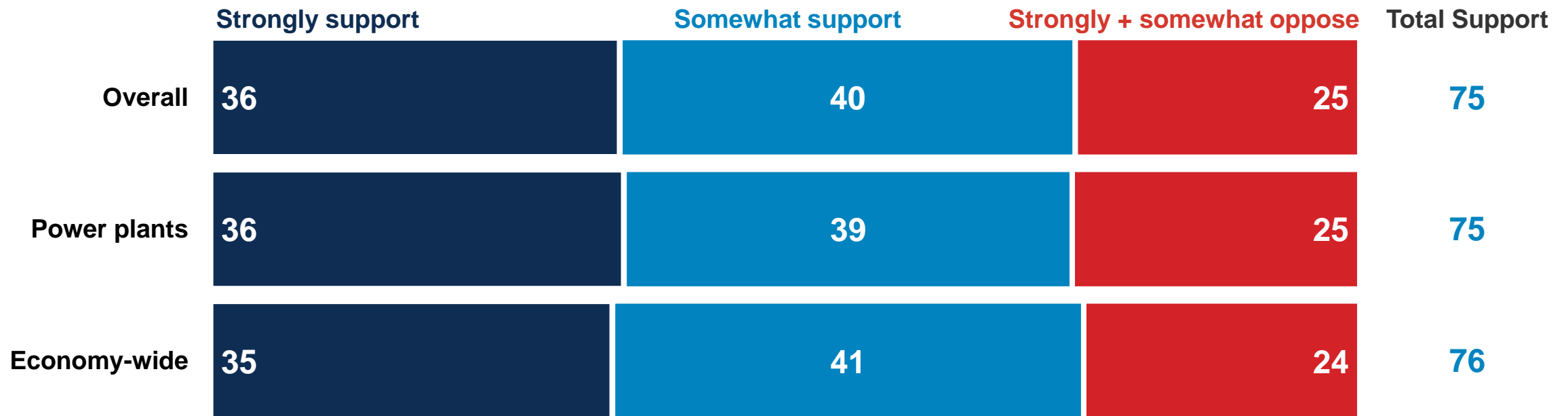


# Proposals to limit carbon emissions are just as popular, with no difference between power plant and economy-wide versions.

## Initial Support for Carbon Limit Proposal

**Power plants:** The proposal would create regulations to place a limit on carbon emissions from North Carolina power plants that would decline over time reaching zero emissions by 2040.

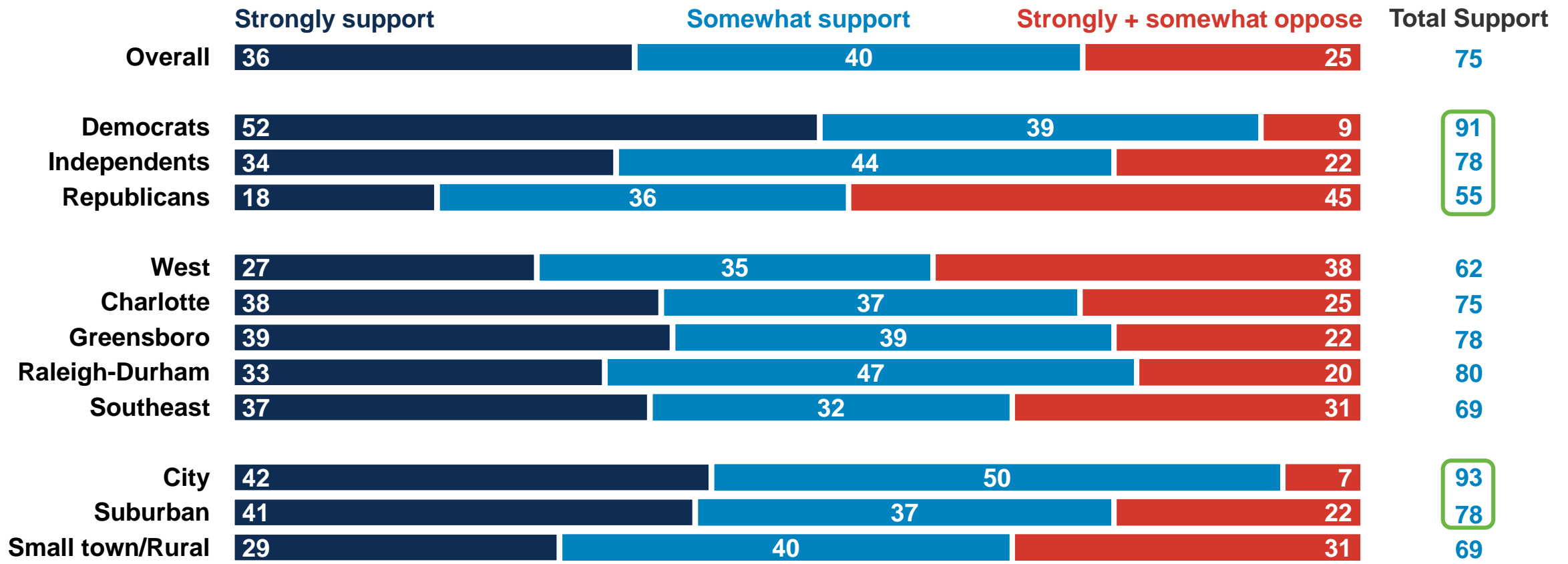
**Economy-wide:** The proposal would create regulations to place a limit on the total carbon emissions in North Carolina - including emissions from power plants, factories, and transportation fuels - that would decline over time, reaching net zero emissions by 2050.





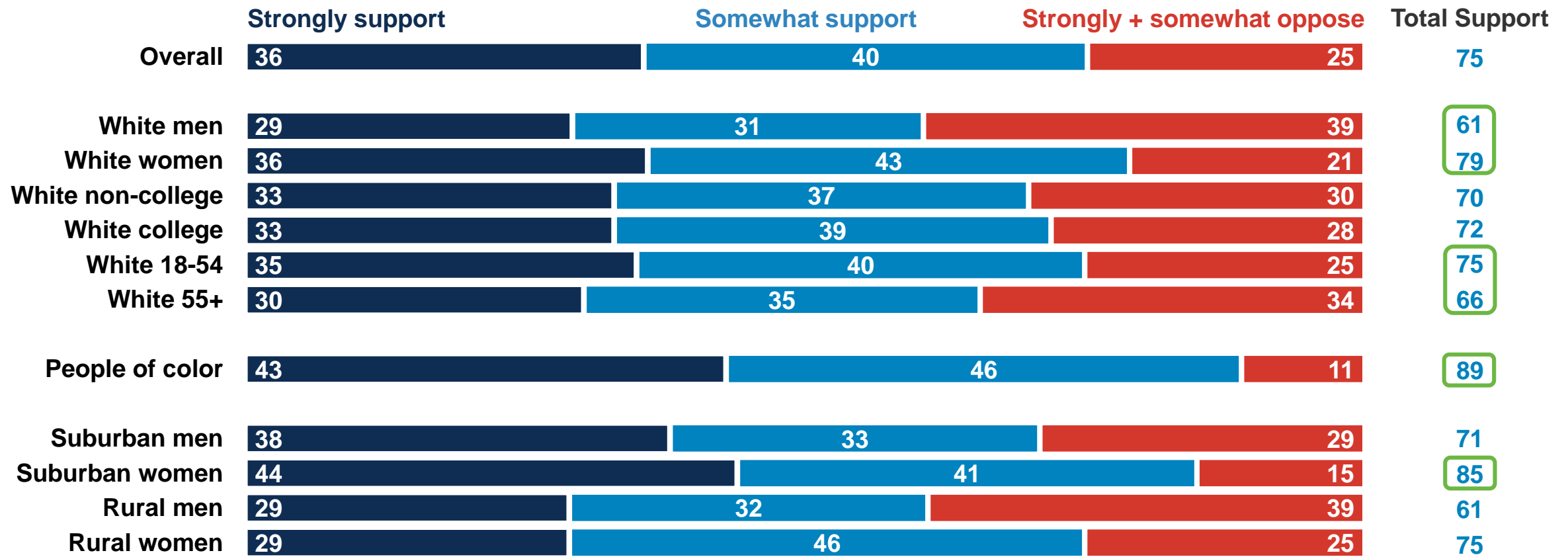
Nearly all Democrats and urban voters support the proposal. Independents and suburban voters are overwhelmingly supportive. A majority of Republicans also support it.

Initial Support for Carbon Limit Proposal (Combined Data)



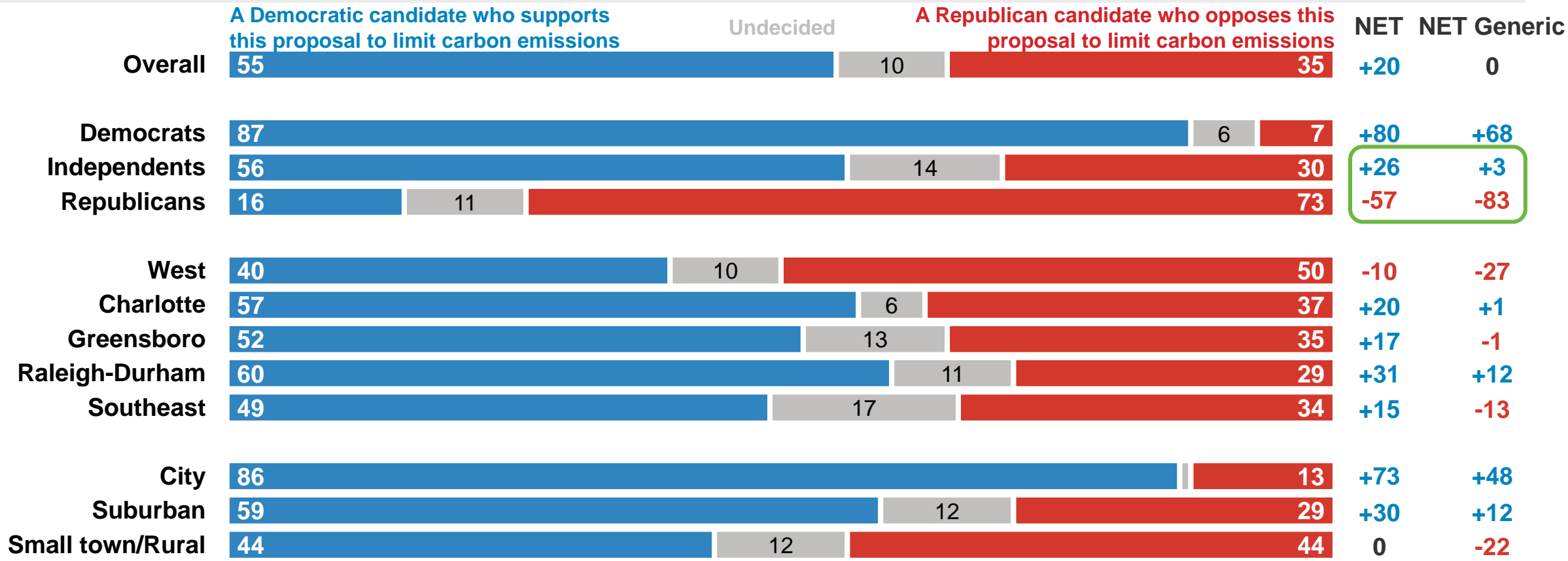
All groups support a carbon proposal at or above 60%. Support is nearly universal among voters of color, and there is strong support with white and suburban women.

### Initial Support for Carbon Limit Proposal (Combined Data)



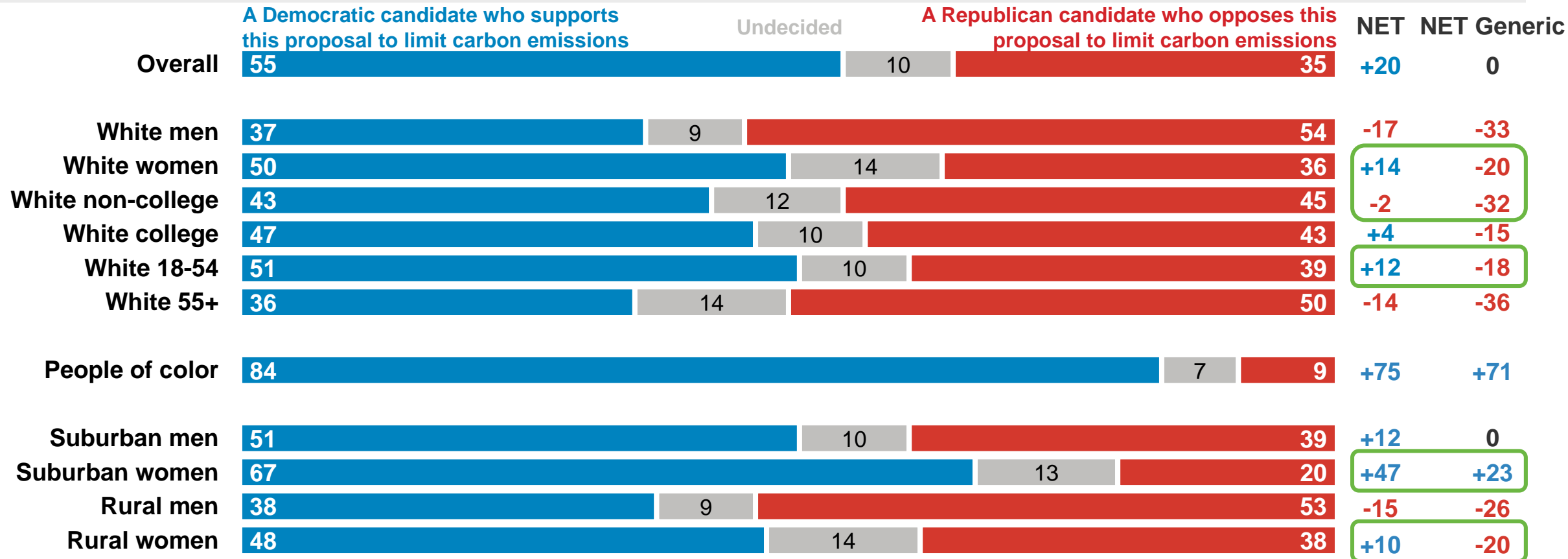
When the ballot is framed as a Democrat who supports the carbon limit proposal versus a Republican who opposes it, the proposal gives the supportive Democrat a big electoral lift among nearly all groups – particularly center-right voters.

Impact of Carbon Limit Proposal on Vote for State Legislature (Combined Data)



The proposal provides a huge lift with white, suburban, and rural women as well as younger and non-college white voters.

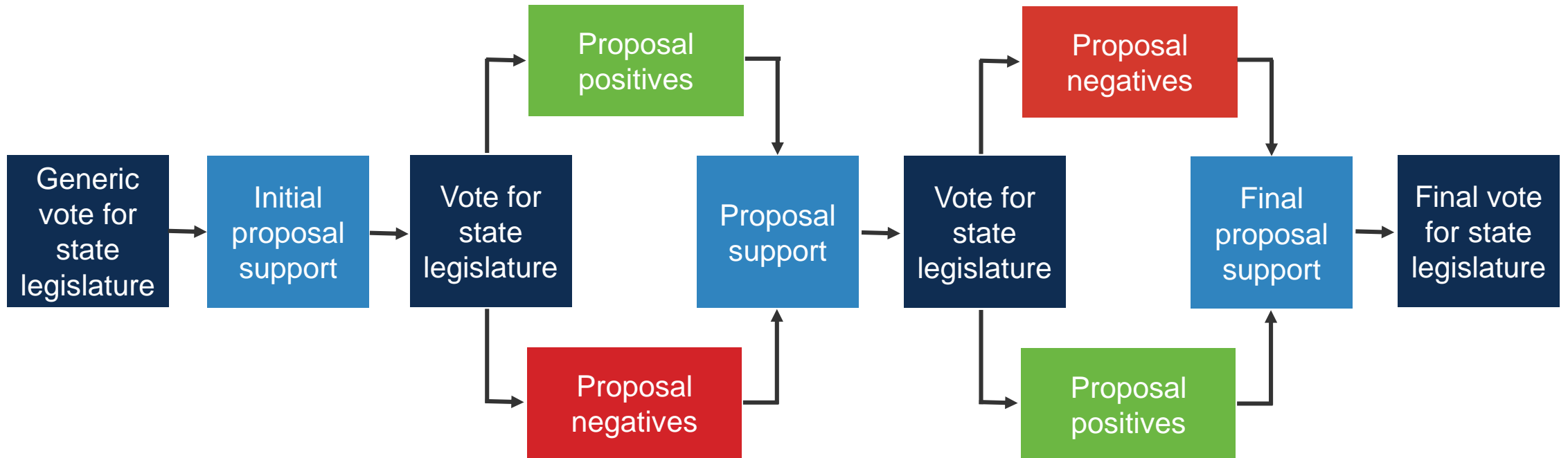
### Impact of Carbon Limit Proposal on Vote for State Legislature (Combined Data)



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Impact of the Debate

# Survey Structure



# Respondents reacted to a battery of five messages in favor of the proposal.

## Positive Messages

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [PUBLIC HEALTH AND AIR - PP]** By encouraging clean energy, this proposal will dramatically reduce the carbon, sulfur, and arsenic pollution that comes from burning dirty fuels like coal. Doctors say that it would reduce asthma, heart disease, lung disease, and even cancer – especially for children and seniors.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [PUBLIC HEALTH AND AIR - EW]** By encouraging clean energy and clean cars, this proposal will dramatically reduce the carbon, sulfur, and arsenic pollution that comes from burning dirty fuels like coal and oil. Doctors say that it would reduce asthma, heart disease, lung disease, and even cancer – especially for children and seniors.

**[LEGACY]** We have a basic responsibility to leave our kids and grandkids a healthy future, but climate change and unchecked air and water pollution from dirty energy sources is putting that at risk. This proposal will help us leave a better world to our children and grandchildren.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [LANDS AND WATER]** This proposal will protect North Carolina’s rivers and streams by encouraging investment in clean energy like wind and solar and reducing the coal ash pollution that contaminates our state’s water.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [CLIMATE]** The Department of Defense and NASA say that climate change poses an increasingly dangerous threat to the country, which we’re already seeing in the form of more severe flooding, droughts, wildfires, and hurricanes like Matthew, Florence, and Dorian. By reducing the carbon pollution that causes climate change, this proposal would help prevent the devastating impacts of climate change from getting even worse.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [COSTS - NC ELECTRICITY]** Renewable solar and wind energy is cheaper than ever before and is getting cheaper. This proposal will encourage a transition to these sources and save consumers money. In fact, a recent study by North Carolina economists shows that smart renewable energy policy has already saved North Carolina electricity customers \$2.4 billion.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [COSTS - STANFORD ELEC + HEALTH]** Renewable solar and wind energy is cheaper than ever before and is getting cheaper. This proposal will encourage a transition to these sources and save consumers money. In fact, Stanford University researchers say that moving to renewable energy will end up saving the average North Carolina family hundreds of dollars a year in electricity and health care costs.

**[ECONOMY/JOBS]** By encouraging the use of more wind and solar power, this proposal will drive clean energy business growth, solidifying North Carolina as a national leader and creating thousands of additional high-paying jobs that can’t be moved out of state for all kinds of people, from engineers, to factory workers, to administrative staff.

# They also read five messages against the proposal.

## Negative Messages

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [COSTS - PP]** This proposal amounts to a new energy tax. By forcing us to phase out less expensive energy sources, this proposal would not only drive up electricity bills for the average family by hundreds of dollars per year but also raise costs for North Carolina businesses. That means higher prices for groceries and everything else we buy.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [COSTS - EW]** This proposal amounts to a new energy and gas tax. By forcing us to phase out less expensive energy sources, this proposal would drive up electricity bills by hundreds of dollars per year and the cost of gas by 25 cents per gallon, while raising costs for North Carolina businesses. That means higher prices for groceries and everything else we buy.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [JOBS - PP]** This proposal will kill thousands of North Carolina jobs by raising electricity bills for North Carolina businesses by thousands of dollars, making it harder to start or maintain a business in our state. Companies will be forced to send good-paying jobs to other states and overseas where costs are lower, hurting North Carolina's economy.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [JOBS - EW]** This proposal will kill thousands of North Carolina jobs by raising electricity bills and gas prices for North Carolina businesses by thousands of dollars, making it harder to start or maintain a business in our state. Companies will be forced to send good-paying jobs to other states and overseas where costs are lower, hurting North Carolina's economy.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [WAR ON RURAL - PP]** By replacing farmland with solar fields, this proposal will decimate North Carolina's agricultural economy. Agriculture is North Carolina's largest economic contributor and provides many of the jobs in our state's rural communities.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [BUREAUCRATS - EW]** This proposal is a bureaucrat's dream. It will put government bureaucrats in Raleigh in charge of nearly every facet of your life, regulating what kind of car you can drive, when you can run your air conditioner, and how big of a house you're allowed to buy.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [TRADE SCHEME - PP]** This proposal would set up a complicated, overly bureaucratic and unfair cap and trade scheme that would let big corporations avoid requirements to reduce pollution and, instead, actually trade and profit off the right to pollute our air.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [UNTESTED - EW]** This proposal would be a huge, complicated, and untested change to North Carolina's entire economy, from power generation, to manufacturing, to transportation. Economists say it could drive up costs across the entire economy and have all sorts of unintended consequences on North Carolina families and businesses.

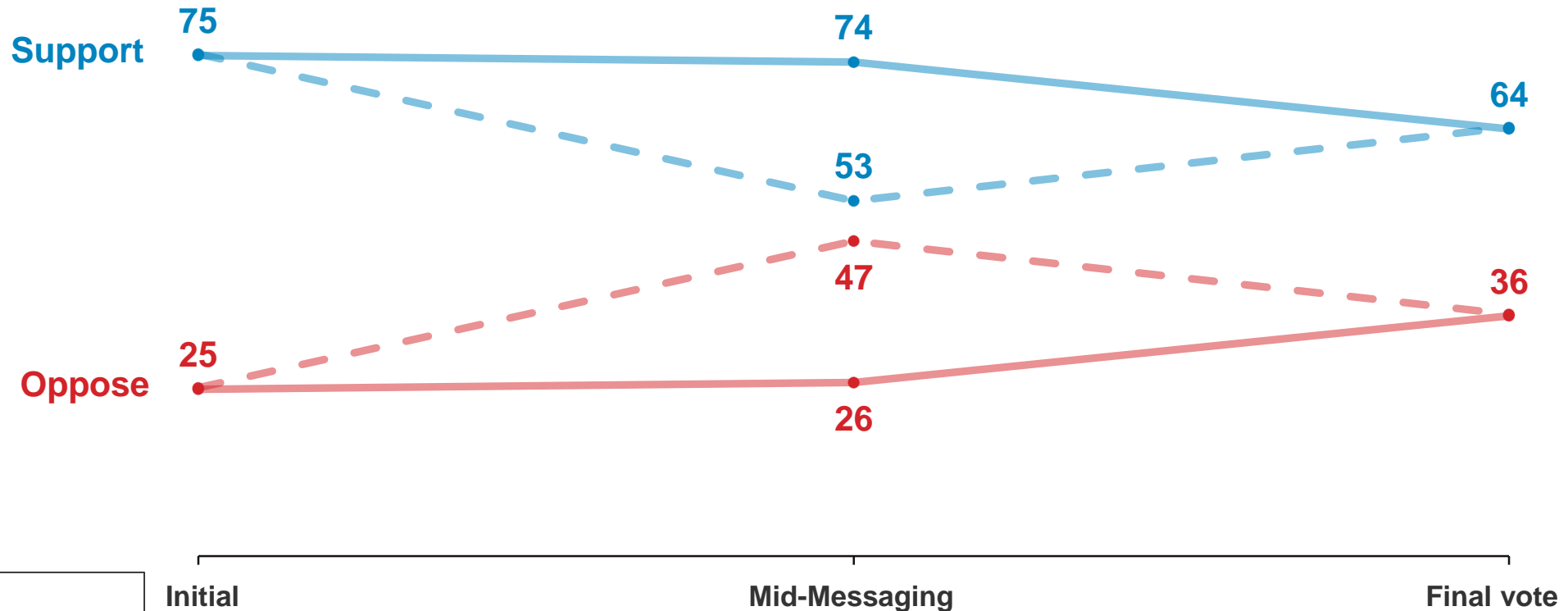
**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [SELF-INTEREST]** This proposal would force utilities to buy energy from the same corporations who are backing the proposal, even if it costs more. These companies have already received hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies. North Carolina families shouldn't have to pay higher electricity bills just so these companies can profit even more.

**[SPLIT SAMPLED] [REGRESSIVE]** This measure is unfair to low-income and minority communities because the higher energy prices it will cause will hurt them more than anyone else, without even shutting down the dirtiest polluters near low-income neighborhoods.



After a simulated debate, support remains robust at nearly two-thirds.

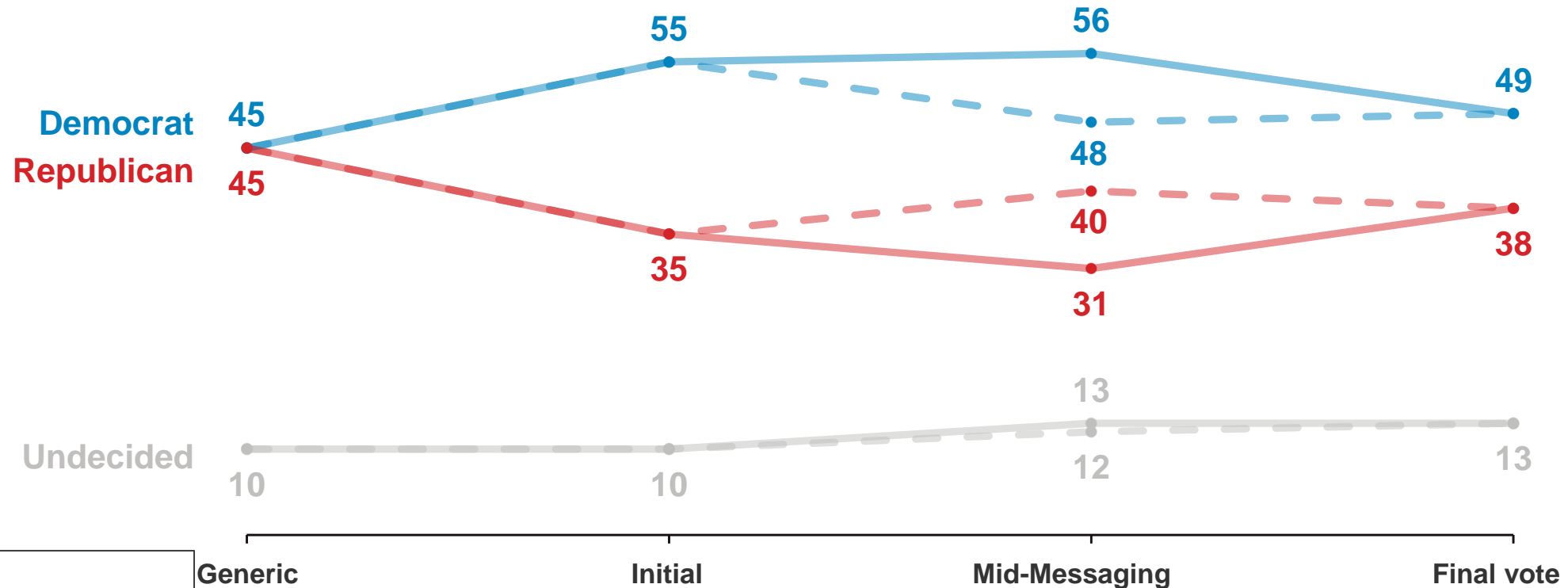
Support for Carbon Limit Proposal Movement (Combined Data)



**Key**  
—— Positive messaging first  
----- Negative messaging first

A Democrat who supports this proposal still receives a net 11-point boost after a simulated debate – and a net 8-point boost after *only* negatives.

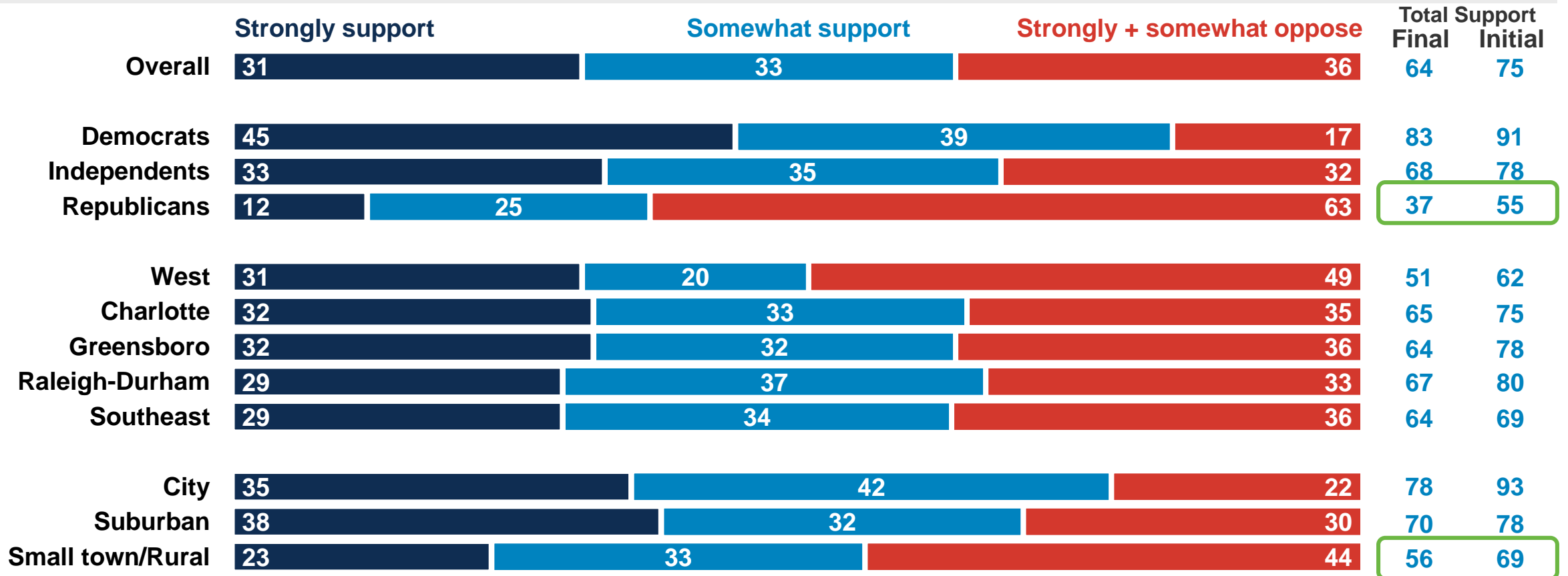
Vote for State Legislature Movement with Carbon Limit Proposal (Combined Data)



**Key**  
—— Positive messaging first  
----- Negative messaging first

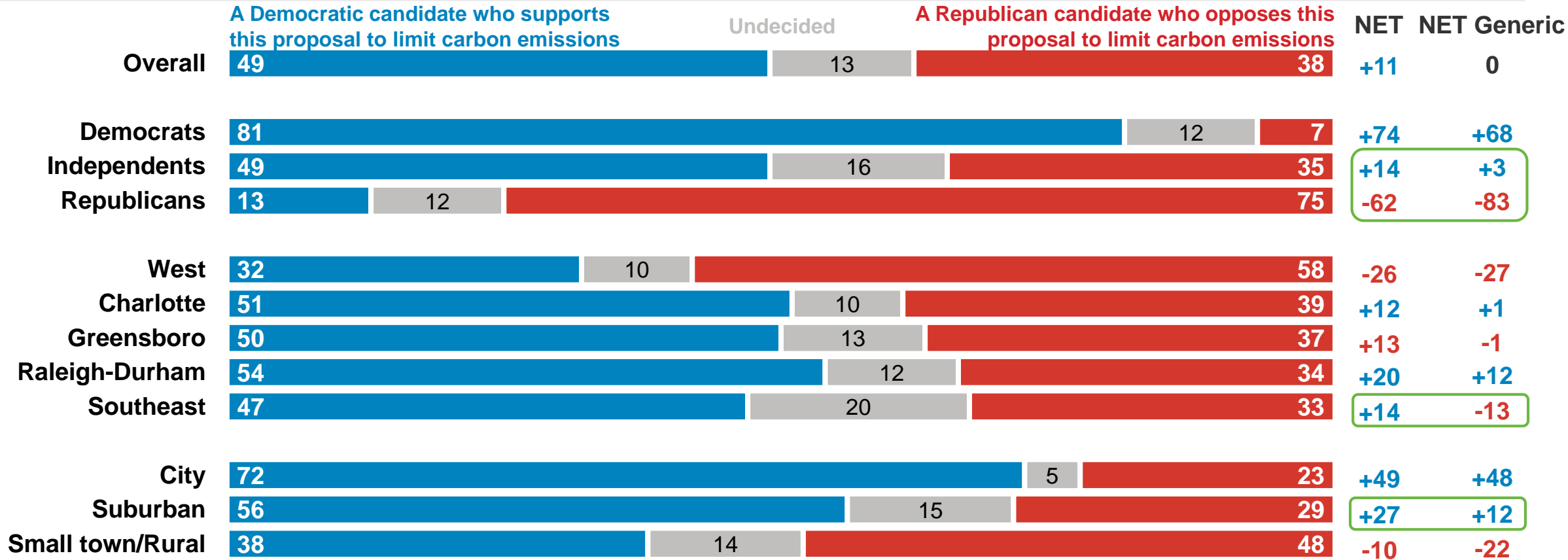
Support remains robust across nearly all demographics after a balanced debate, with Republicans and rural voters most likely to shift positions.

Final Support for Carbon Limit Proposal (Combined Data)



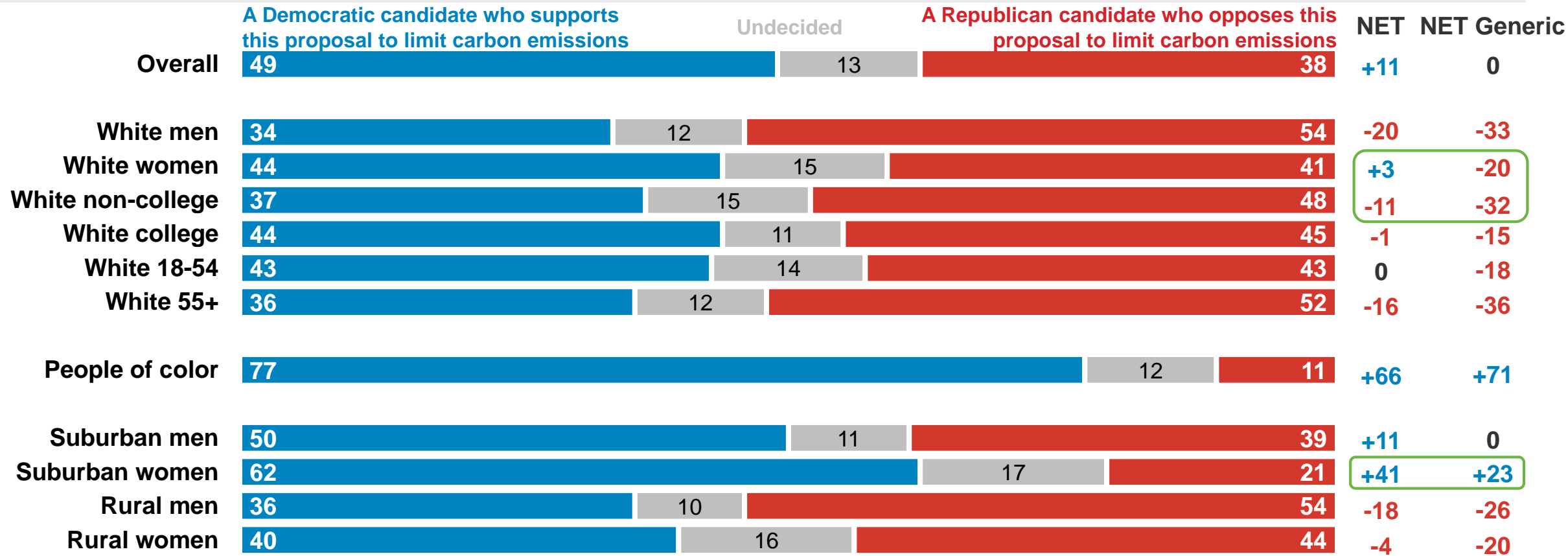
After a debate, the proposal continues to increase center-right and suburban support for a Democratic candidate who supports the proposal. Gains are shared across most of the state, especially in the southeast.

Final Vote for State Legislature with Carbon Limit Proposal (Combined Data)



After a debate, the proposal still boosts the Democrat who supports the proposal with white voters, particularly women – including suburban women.

### Final Vote for State Legislature with Carbon Limit Proposal (Combined Data)



There is support for both Cooper and DEQ taking action since the legislature has failed – but stronger support exists for DEQ action among both Democrats and Republicans.

Since the state legislature has failed to take action to limit carbon emissions, would you support or oppose Governor Cooper implementing this proposal to create regulations to place a limit on carbon emissions through executive action as he is allowed to do under North Carolina law?



Since the state legislature has failed to take action to limit carbon emissions, would you support or oppose the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality implementing this proposal to create regulations to place a limit on carbon emissions through administrative action as they are allowed to do under North Carolina law?



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Conclusions

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## **North Carolina voters broadly support climate action.**

- Voters like regulations to reduce carbon emissions.
- Overall, they are favorable to lawmakers who support strong action to combat climate change and are unfavorable to those who oppose it.
- Strong majorities support a plan to transition the U.S. to 100% clean energy by 2050.

## **Three quarters of voters support regulating carbon emissions, regardless of proposal specifics.**

- Both a power plant only and economy-wide carbon limit are popular and maintain strong majorities after a simulated debate.
- Neither proposal goes underwater after only negative messaging.
- There is strong initial support for the proposal across virtually all demographics and provides significant electoral lifts among independents and suburban and rural women.

## **When the ballot is framed as a Democrat who supports the carbon limit proposal versus a Republican who opposes it, the proposal improves the electoral chances of the supportive Democrat running for state legislature in 2020 – even after negative messaging.**

- The supportive Democrat benefits, and the opposed Republican is damaged, when the race is framed in a carbon debate – with both power plant and economy wide versions – moving the generic ballot from a tie to a +20 advantage for the Democratic candidate in support of a carbon limit.
- That positive impact holds after a simulated debate, and the supportive Democratic candidate still benefits by a net 8 points after ONLY negative messaging
- After a full debate, a Democrat who supports the proposal sees the biggest gains with center-right voters, suburban voters (especially women), and white women.

## **Voters would support executive action from both Cooper and the DEQ, but support is higher for the latter.**

## **Voter support is buoyed by concerns related to public health, lowering costs, and protecting land and water.**



# Thank You

## New York

215 Park Ave South  
15th Floor  
New York, NY 10003

## Washington, DC

1001 G Street NW  
6th Floor East  
Washington, DC 20001

## Hartford

185 Asylum St  
16th Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103

## Chicago

730 N. Franklin  
Suite 404  
Chicago, IL 60654

## Denver

3270 Spruce Street  
Denver, CO 80238

## Seattle

2608 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave  
#293  
Seattle, WA 98121