

# Texas Public Opinion and the Political Landscape of the 2022 Election

James Henson

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THE TEXAS POLITICS PROJECT  
TEXASPOLITICS.UTEXAS.EDU

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

# Road map

The national outlook as context.

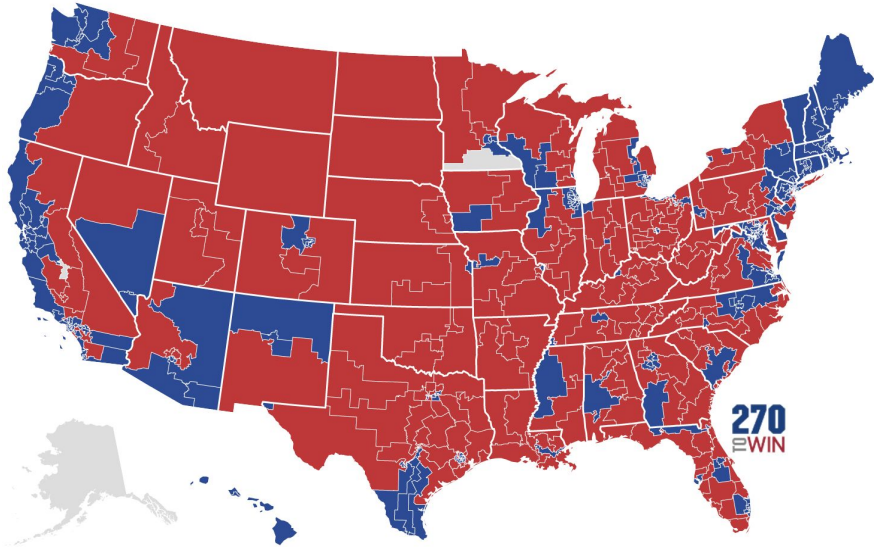
Public opinion and competition to set the election agenda in Texas.



# A quick consideration of the national outlook.



# Current balance in the U.S. House



**Democrats: 222 seats**

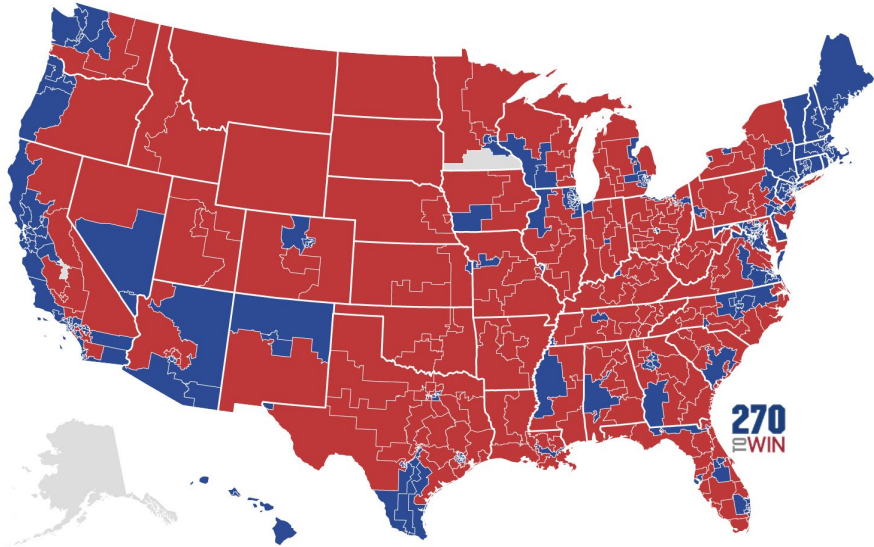
**Republicans: 210 seats**

# U.S. House district ratings (+/-)

Status	Current Dem	Current GOP	Total
Safe	139-148	145-151	284-299
Partisan likely	18-29	11-15	29-44
Partisan lean	10-14	6-18	16-32
Toss-up	13	1	18-20

Sources: Cook Political Report, Sabato Crystal Ball; totals don't include states with pending redistricting maps.

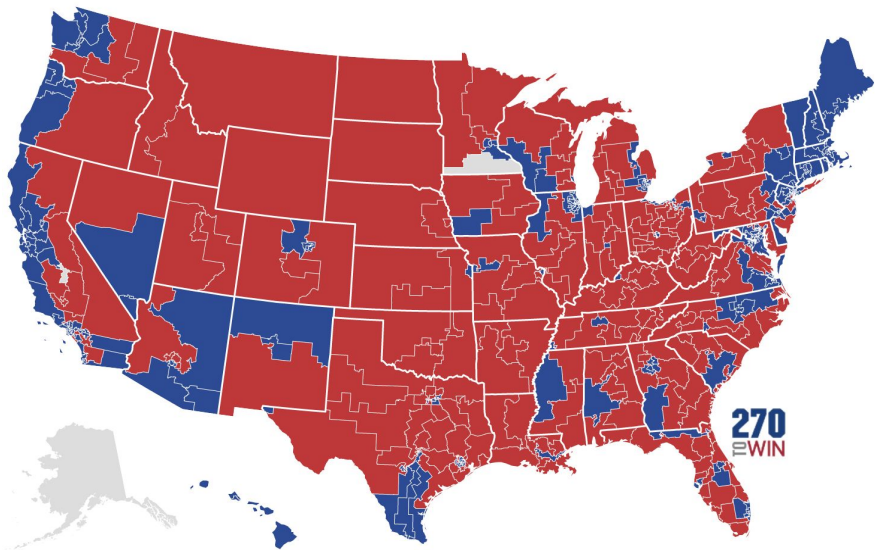
# Current balance in the U.S. Senate



**Democrats: 50 seats\***

**Republicans: 50 seats**

# Current balance in the U.S. Senate



**Democrats: 50 seats\***

**Republicans: 50 seats**

**35 seats up for re-election  
(21 GOP, 14 Dem)**

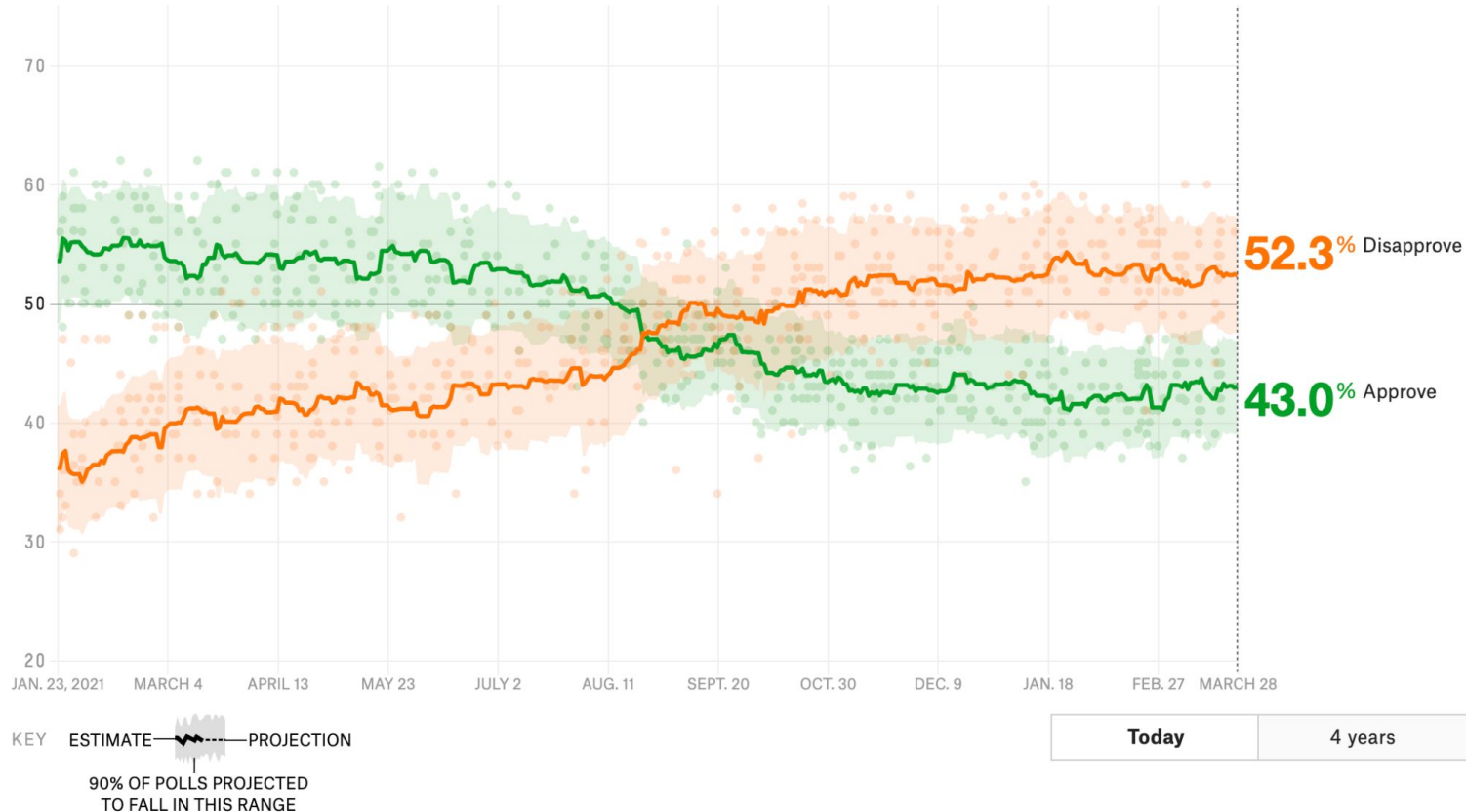
# U.S. Senate seat ratings (+/-)

Status	Current Dem	Current GOP	Total
Safe	8-9	15-16	23-25
Partisan likely	1-2	3	3-5
Partisan lean	1	2-3	3-4
Toss-up	3	1	4

Sources: Cook Political Report, Sabato Crystal Ball; totals don't include states with pending redistricting maps.

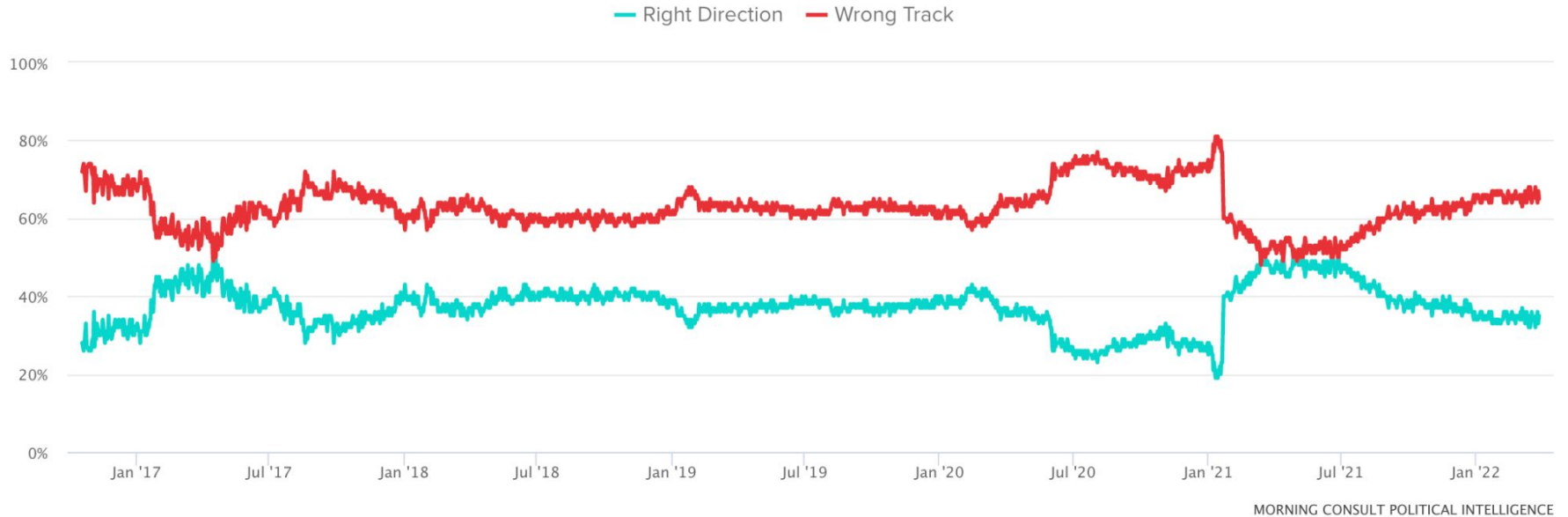


# Joe Biden national job approval ratings



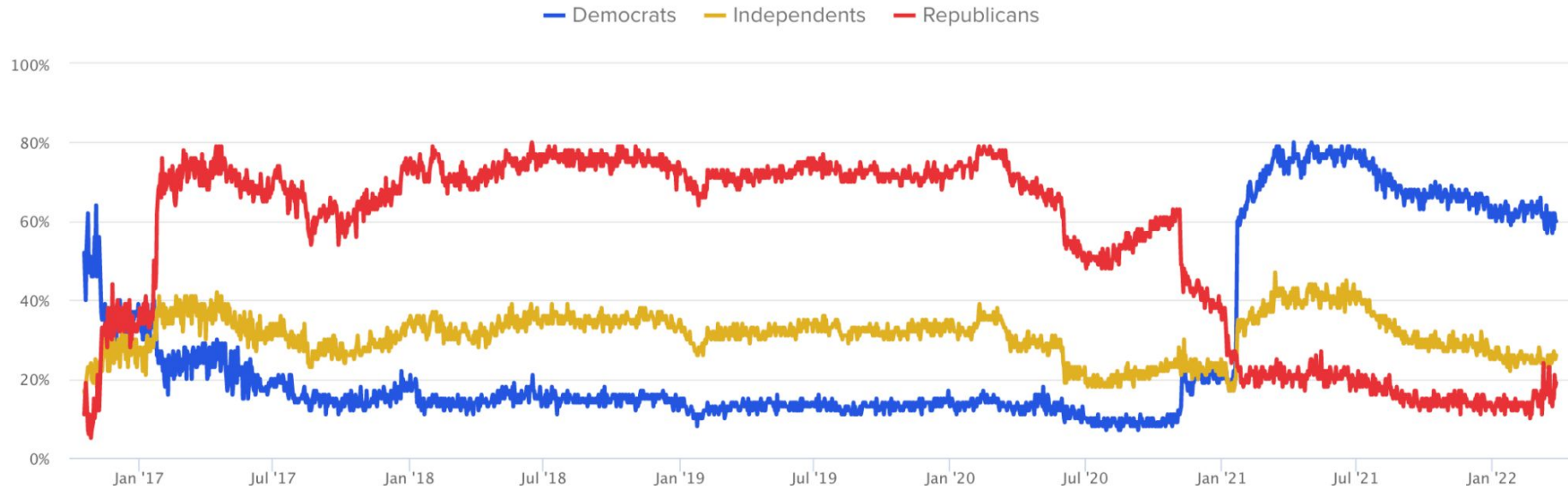
Source: Aggregated by 538.com, national polls of registered and likely voters.

# Trend in direction of the U.S.



Source: Morning Consult tracking

# Right direction by party identification



Source: Morning Consult tracking



# Election agenda setting: Gov. Abbott & Texas GOP candidates



# Likely Abbott/GOP campaign baseline vote strategy

Mobilize GOP voters and some share of  
persuadable voters without strong partisan  
attachments.

Demobilize and/or disincentivize Democratic  
voters.



# Likely Republican/Abbott campaign agenda

## The economy



# Likely Republican/Abbott campaign agenda

The economy

Immigration and border security



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Immigration and border security

Crime/policing/public safety





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**GOP turn to K-12 education**



# Likely Republican/Abbott campaign agenda

The economy

Immigration and border security

Crime/policing/public safety

GOP turn to K-12 education

**Biden, Biden, Biden**



# A few public opinion snapshots of GOP campaign items



# Texas Politics Project Poll data set

45+ surveys of registered voters in Texas (3-4 per year), most with media partner (The Texas Tribune) for public release.

N = 1200 since 2013, 800 before then.

Most recent: February, 2022.

Overall margin of error for today's data: +/- 2.83%

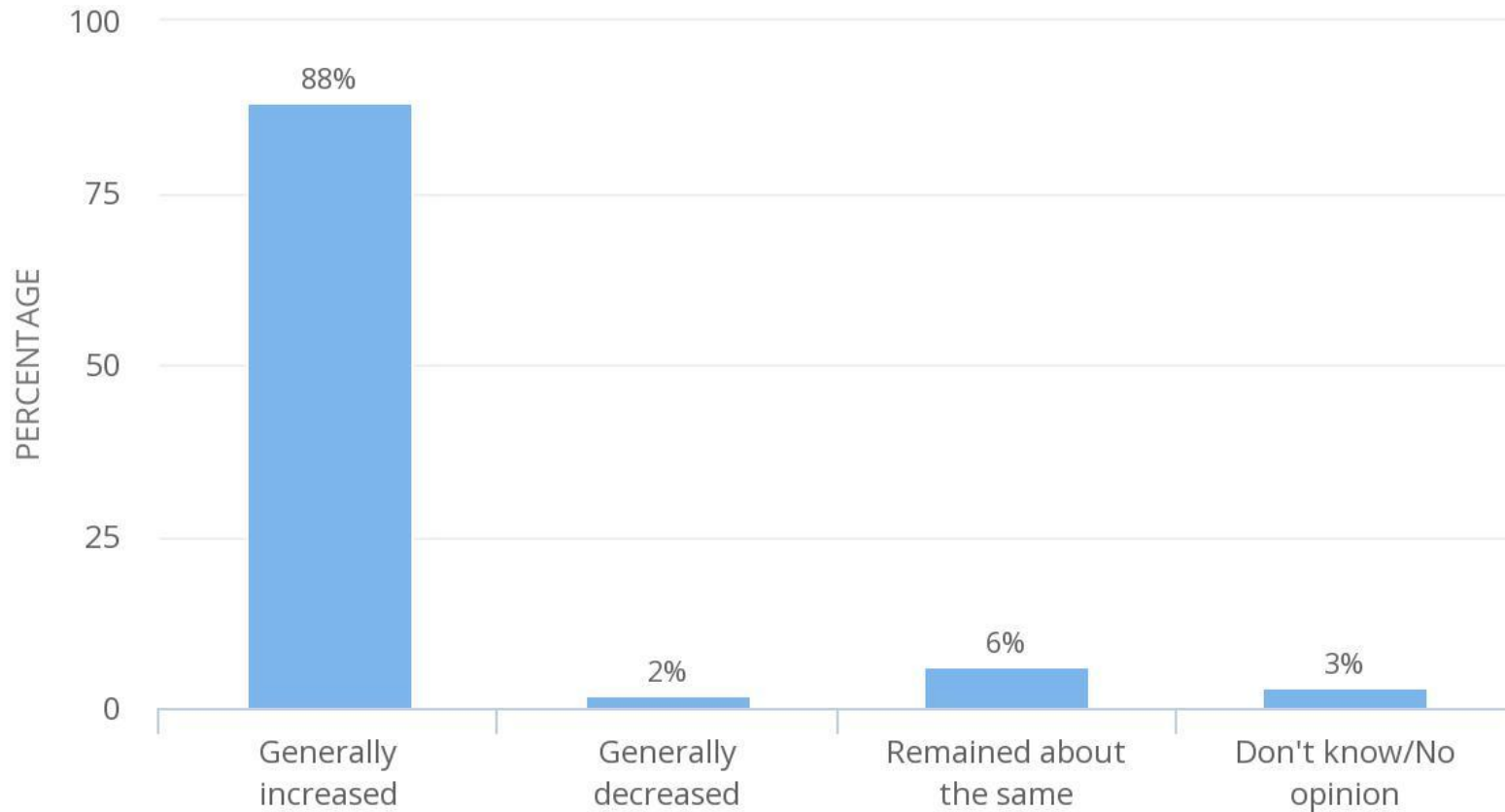
Collected by YouGov using matched sampling over the Internet.

Data, Codebook, Methodology Statements, Toplines & Crosstabs available at <https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/polling-data-archive>



BASED ON YOUR RECENT EXPERIENCE PURCHASING GOODS AND SERVICES, DO YOU THINK THAT PRICES HAVE...(FEBRUARY 2022)

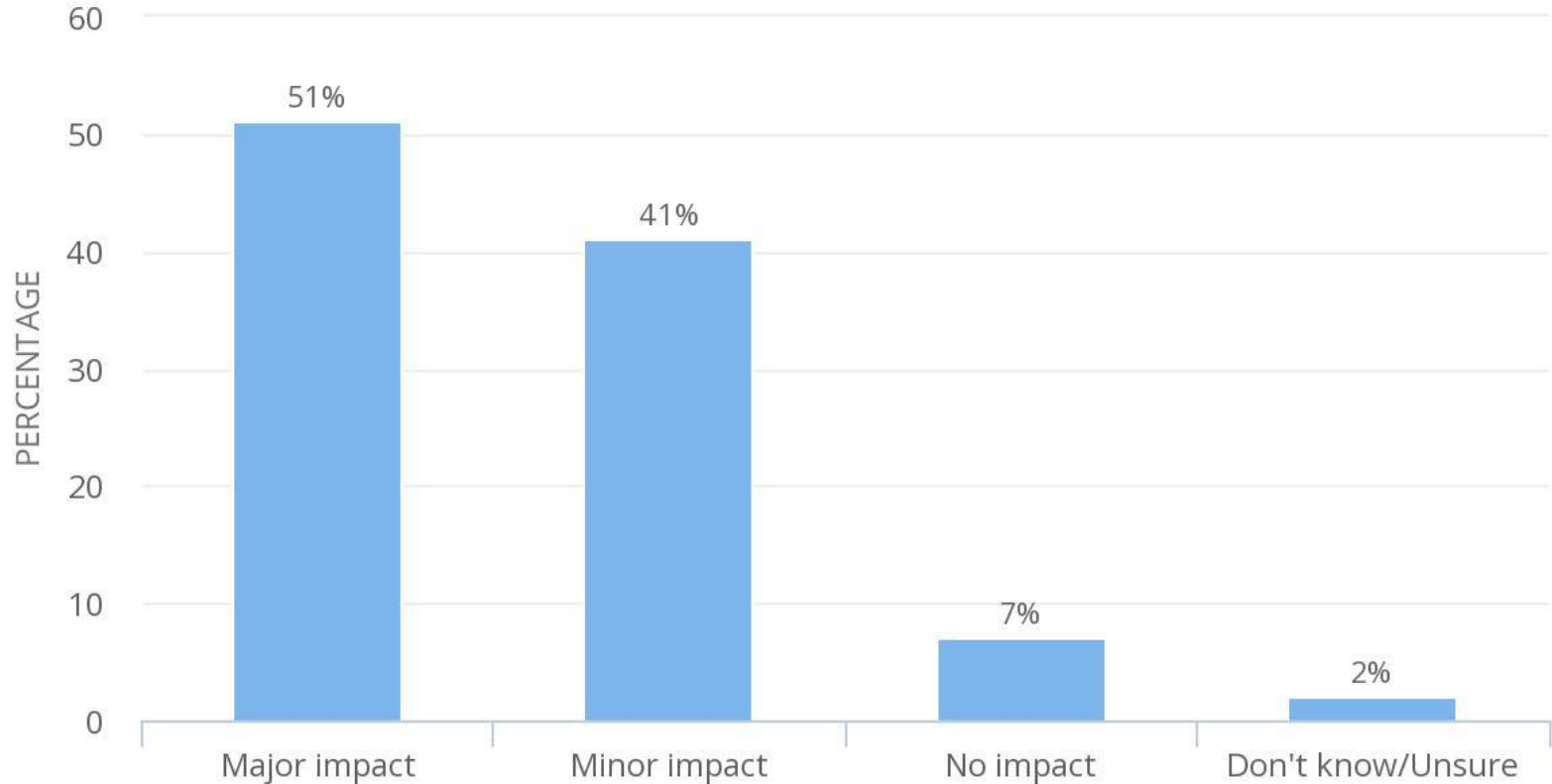
The Margin of Error for this Graphic is +/- 2.89%



Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

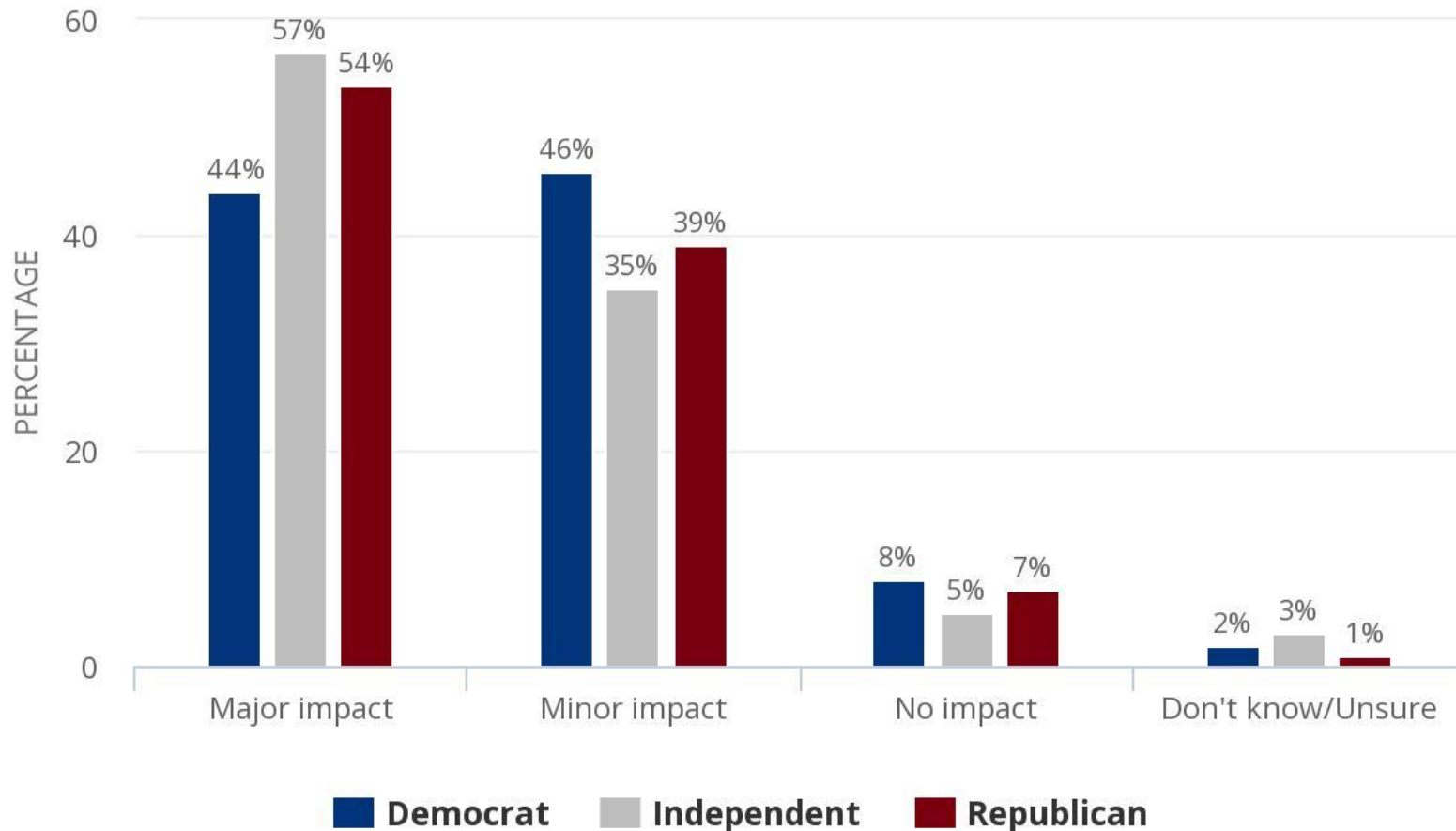
HAVE INCREASED PRICES HAD AN IMPACT ON YOUR CURRENT HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL SITUATION?  
(FEBRUARY 2022)

The Margin of Error for this Graphic is +/- 3.01%. Asked among those who said that prices have generally increased based on recent purchases.



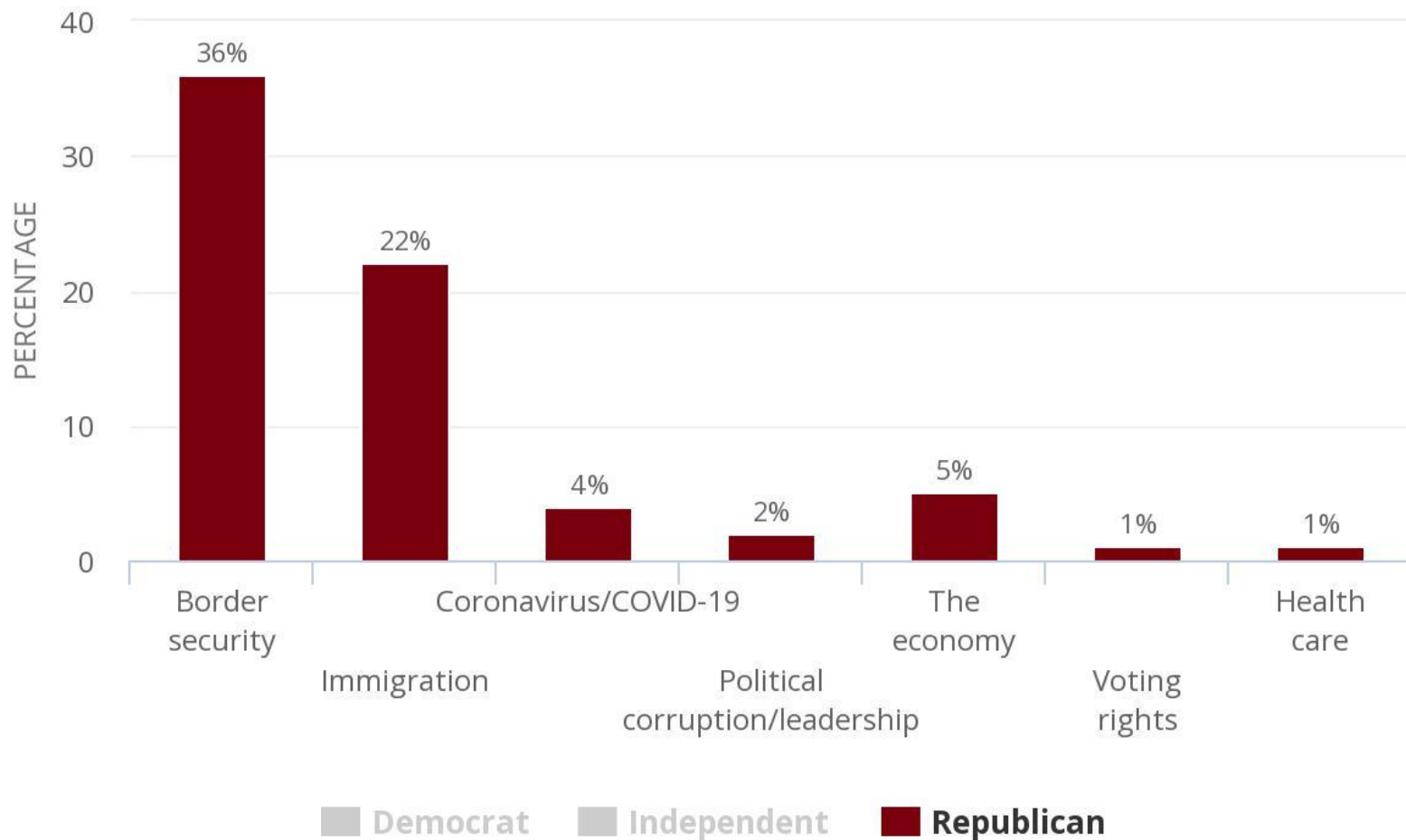
Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

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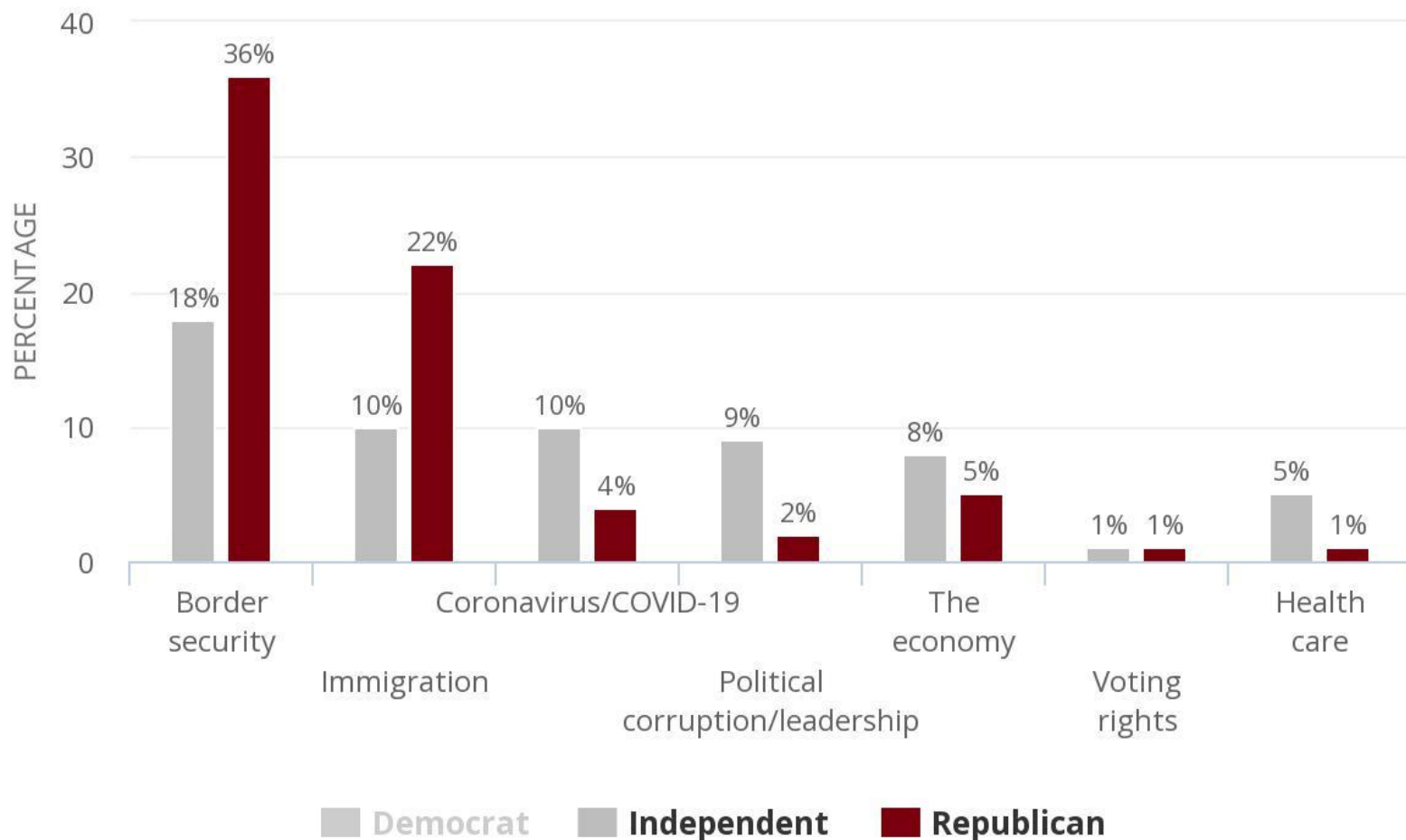
## MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FACING TEXAS (FEBRUARY 2022)



Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

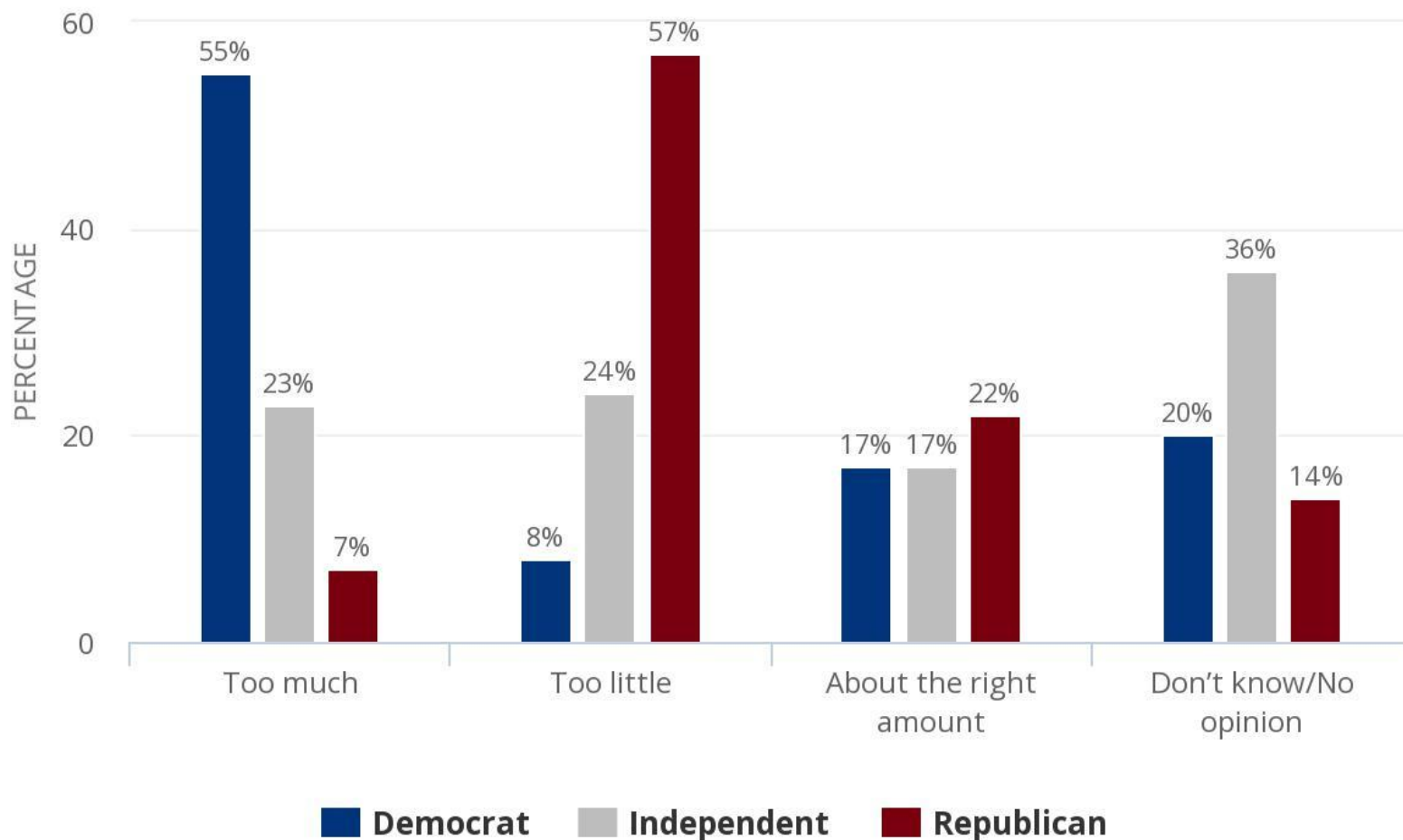


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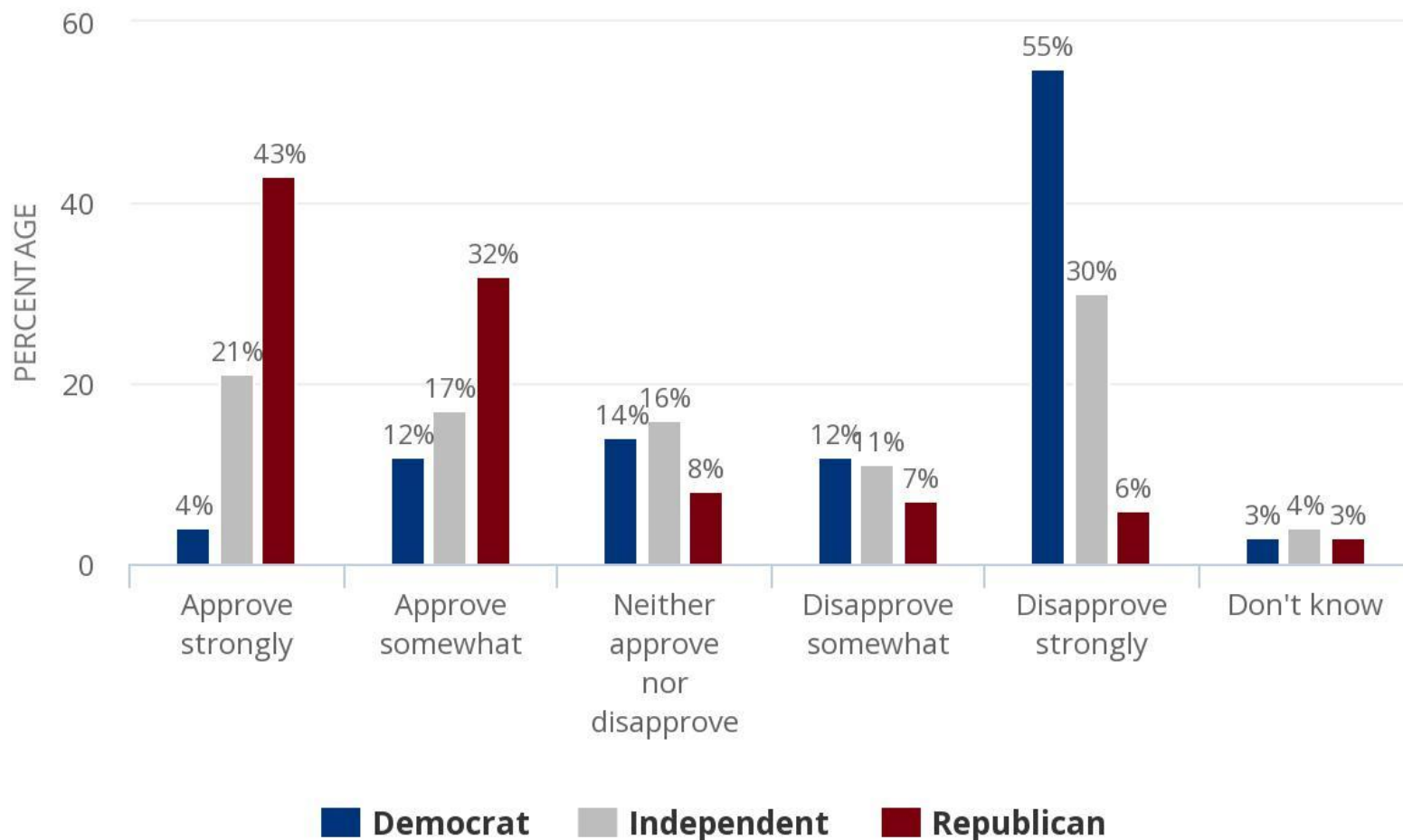
Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

## TEXAS SPENDING ON BORDER SECURITY (OCTOBER 2021)



Source: October 2021 University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll

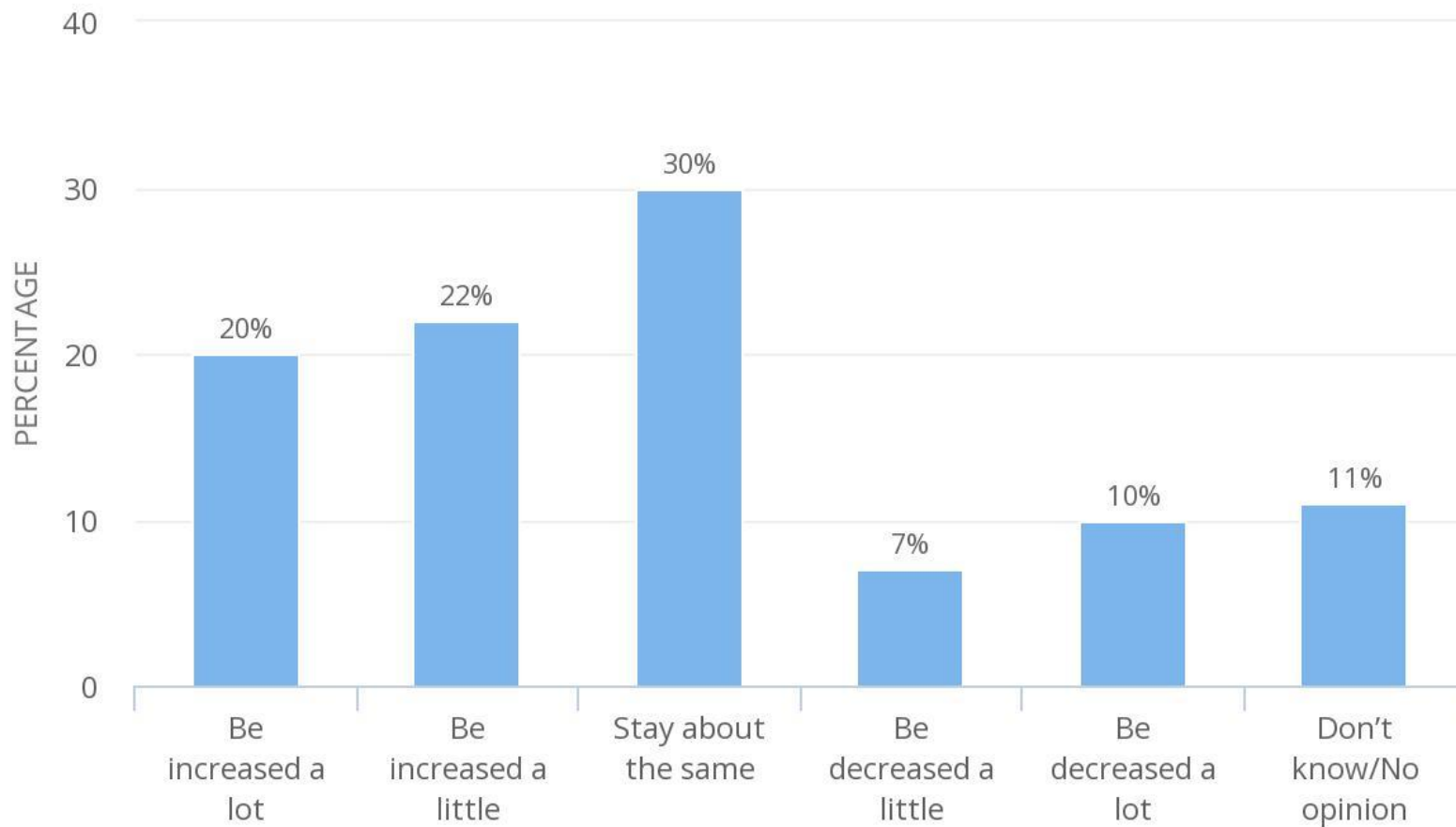
## GREG ABBOTT JOB APPROVAL: IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY (FEBRUARY 2022)



Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

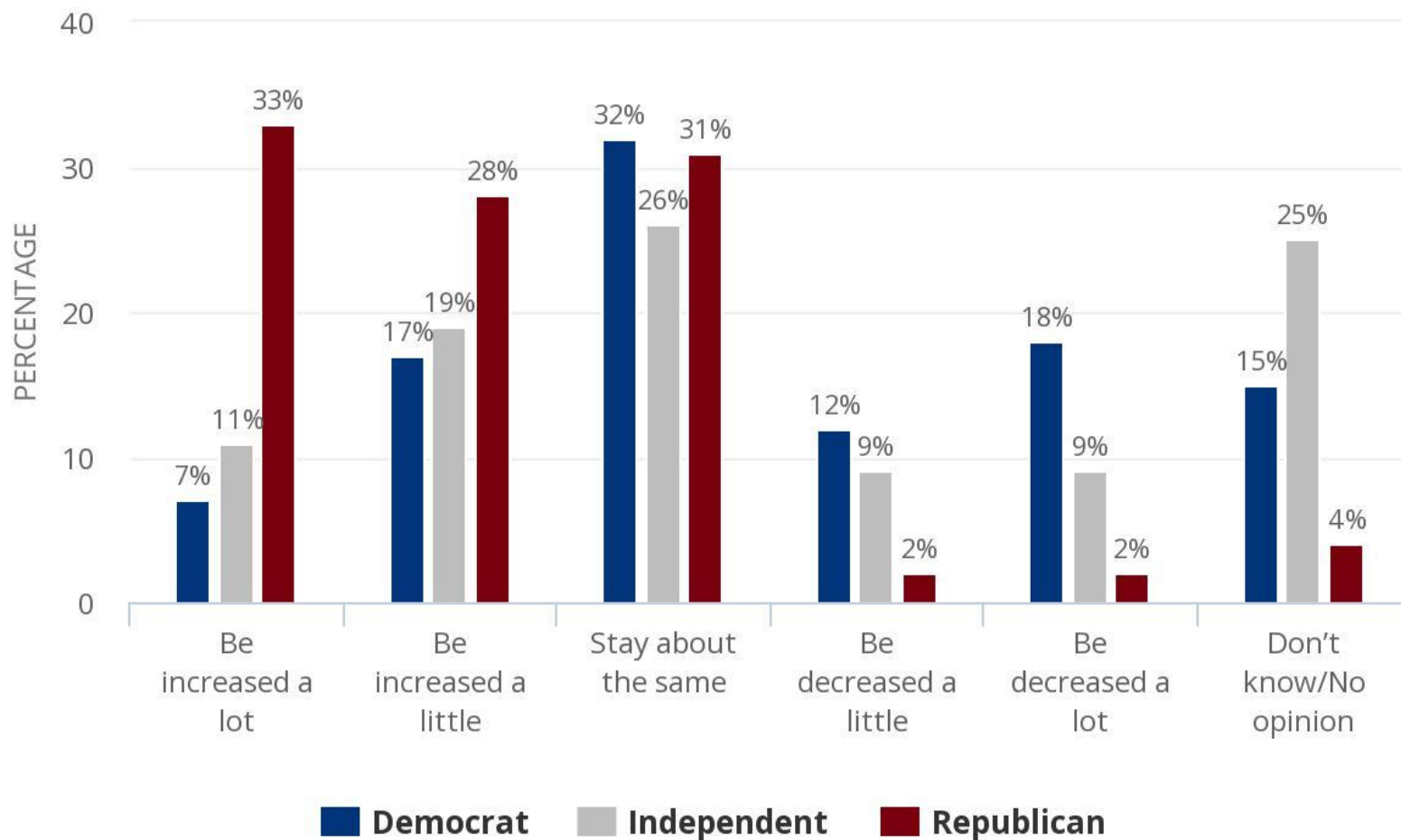
## SPENDING ON POLICING (APRIL 2021)

The Margin of Error for this Graphic is +/- 2.89%



Source: April 2021 University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll

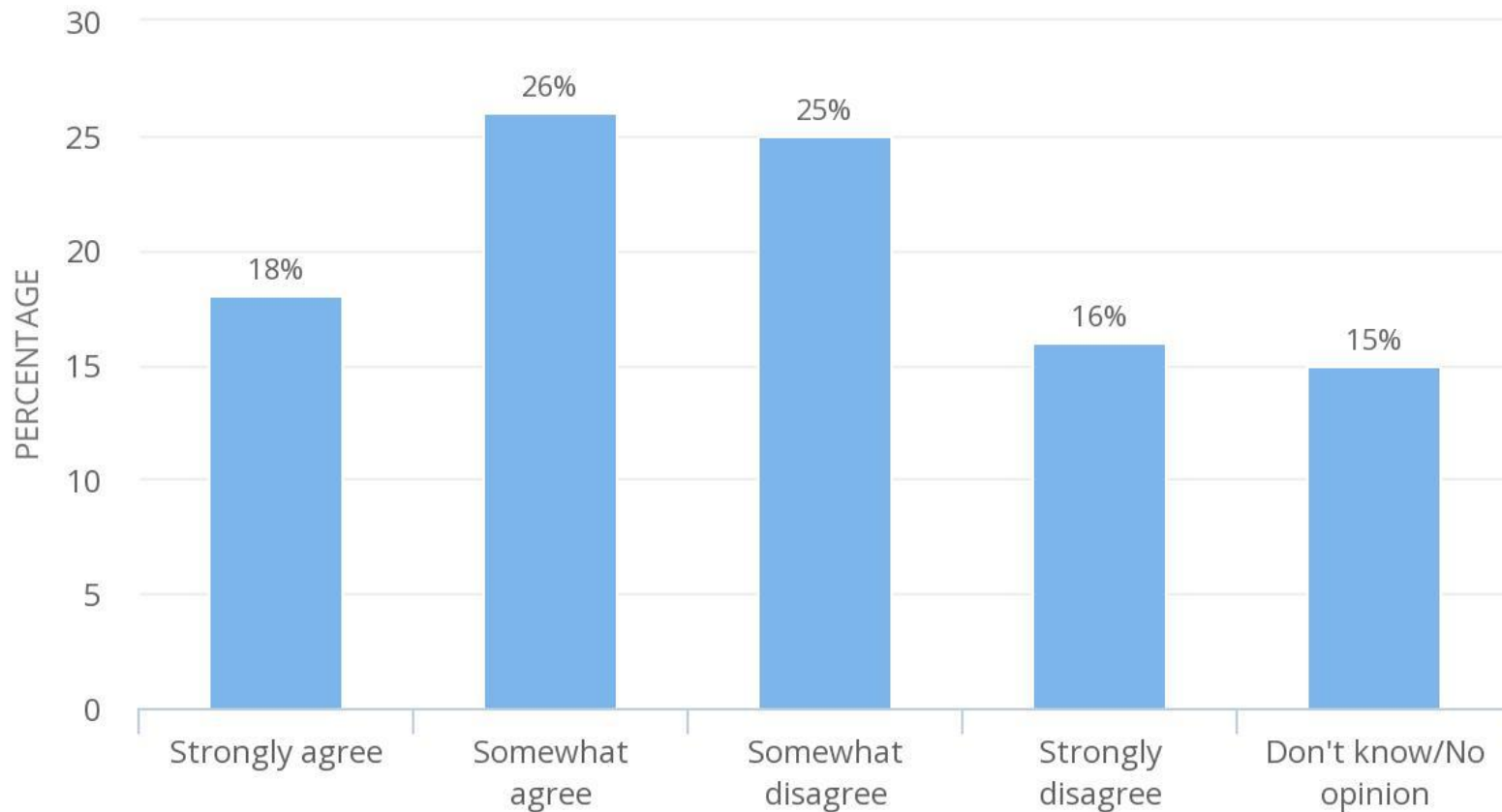
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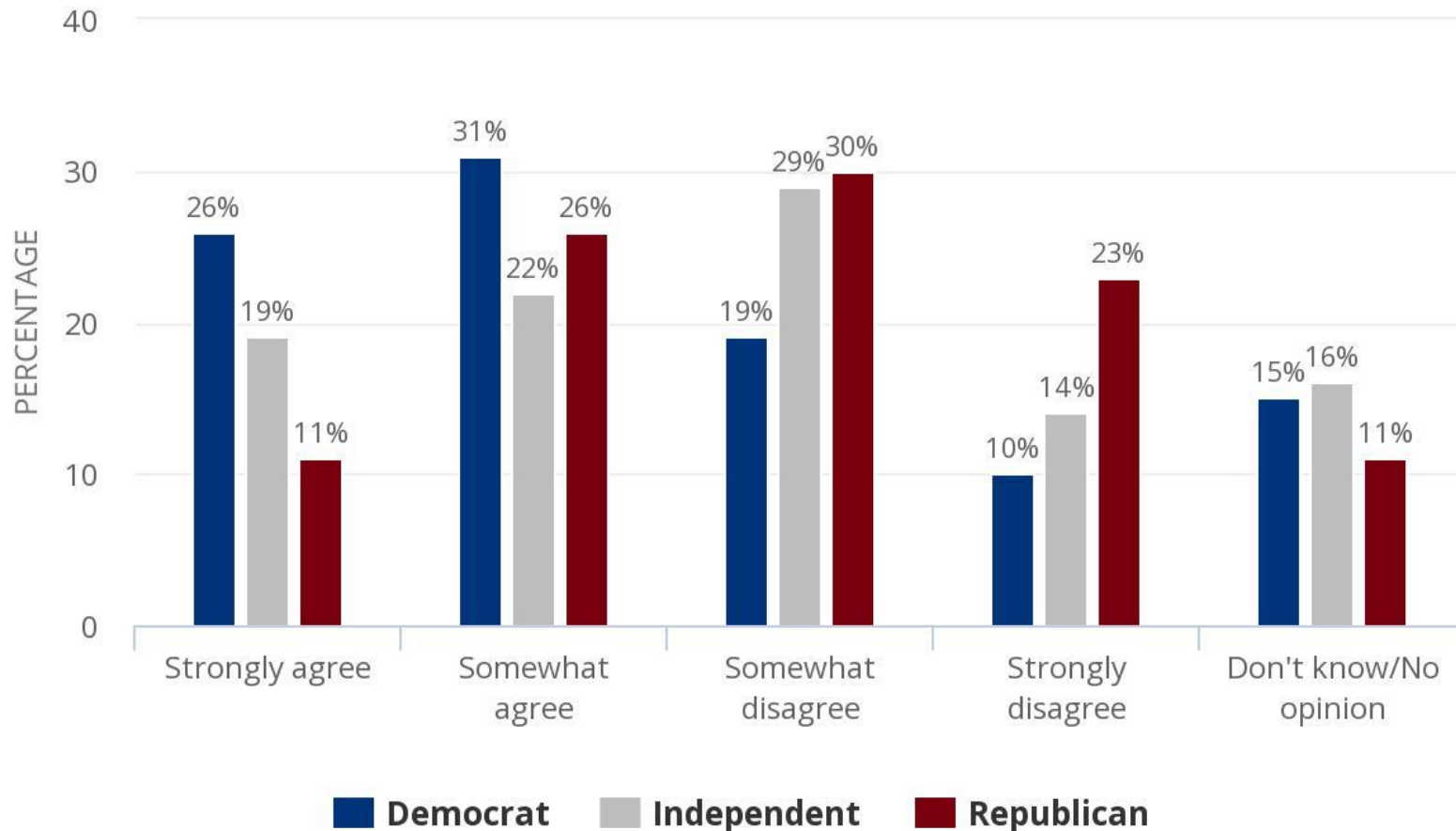
AGREE OR DISAGREE: PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE ENOUGH INFLUENCE ON WHAT THEIR CHILDREN ARE TAUGHT. (FEBRUARY 2022)

The Margin of Error for this Graphic is +/- 2.89%



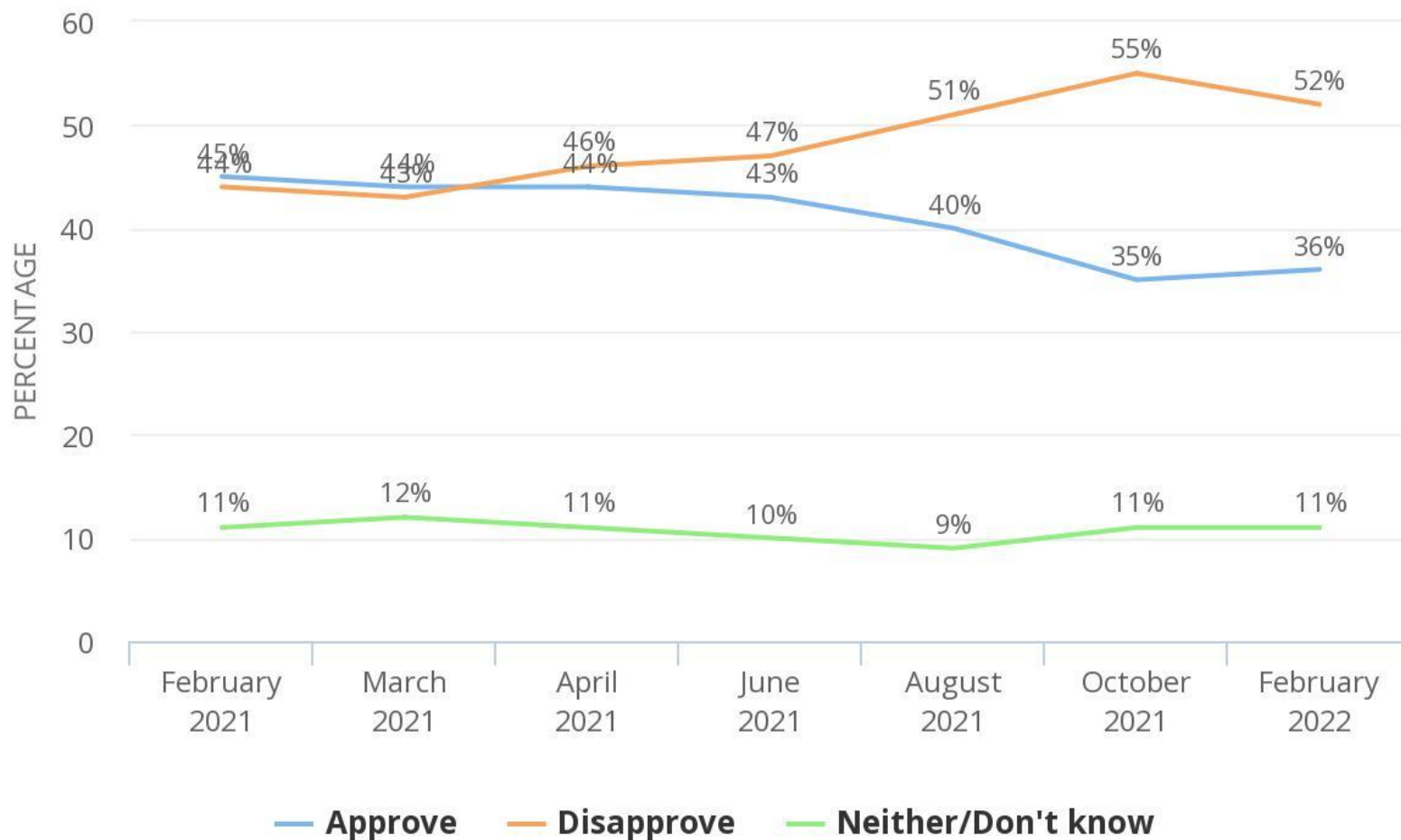
Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

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Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

# JOE BIDEN JOB APPROVAL TREND (FEBRUARY 2021 TO FEBRUARY 2022)

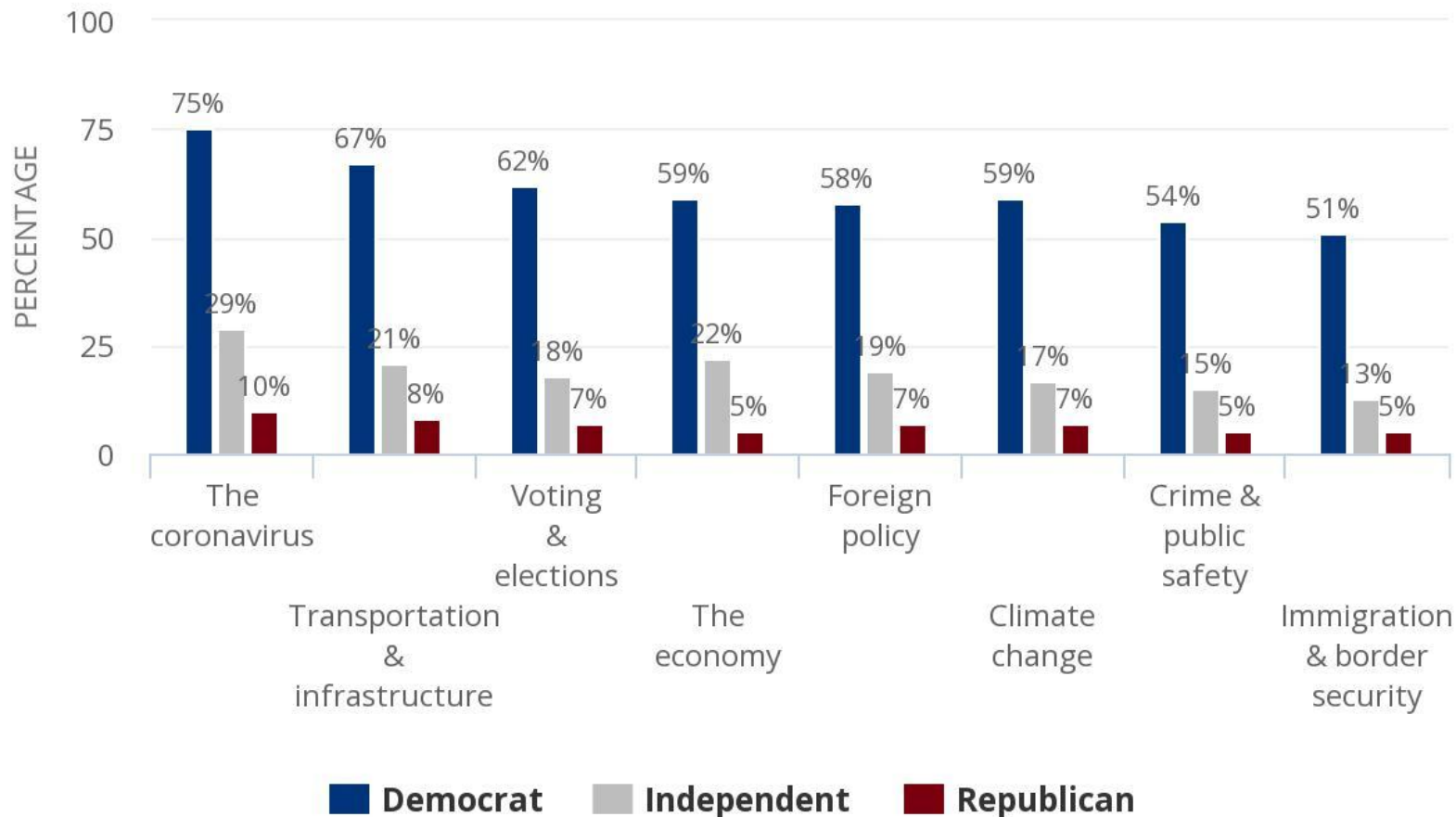


Source: University of Texas Polling.



## JOE BIDEN ISSUE AREA JOB APPROVAL (FEBRUARY 2022)

Share approving 'strongly' or 'somewhat'.



Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

# Election agenda setting: Beto O'Rourke & Texas Democratic candidates



# Likely Democratic/O'Rourke campaign agenda

Overarching critique of Abbott/GOP governance that taps into intense job disapproval among Democrats.



# Overarching critique of Abbott/GOP governance.

## Grid response and reliability



# Overarching critique of Abbott/GOP governance.

Grid response and reliability

Tap into general discontent/anxiety

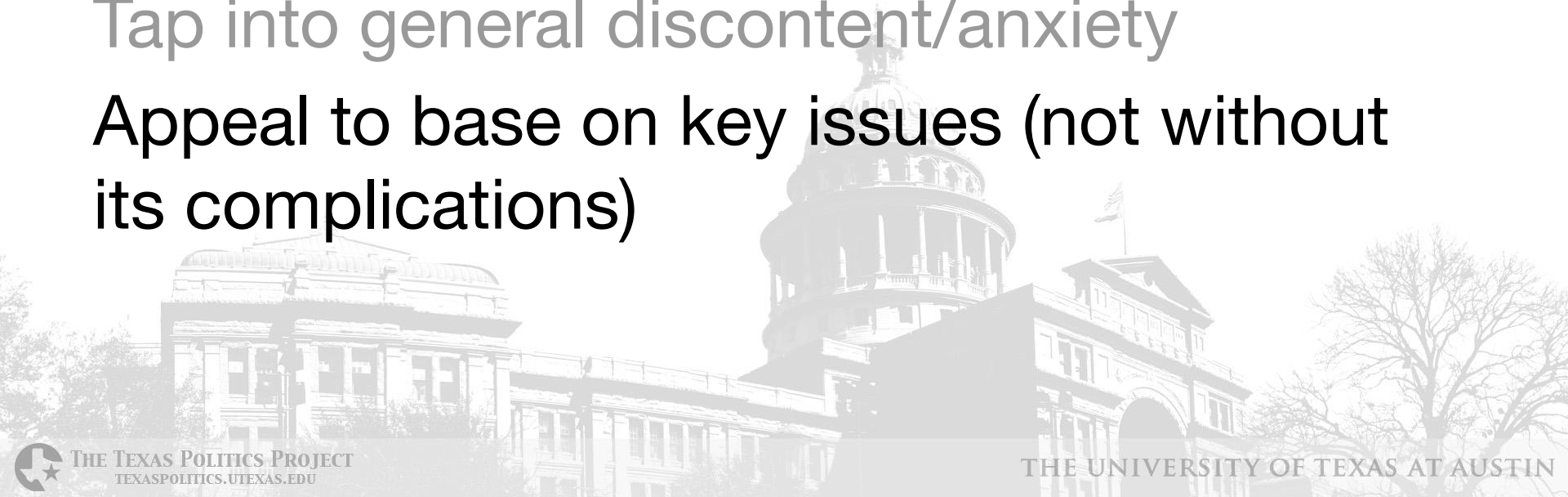


# Overarching critique of Abbott/GOP governance.

Grid response and reliability

Tap into general discontent/anxiety

Appeal to base on key issues (not without its complications)

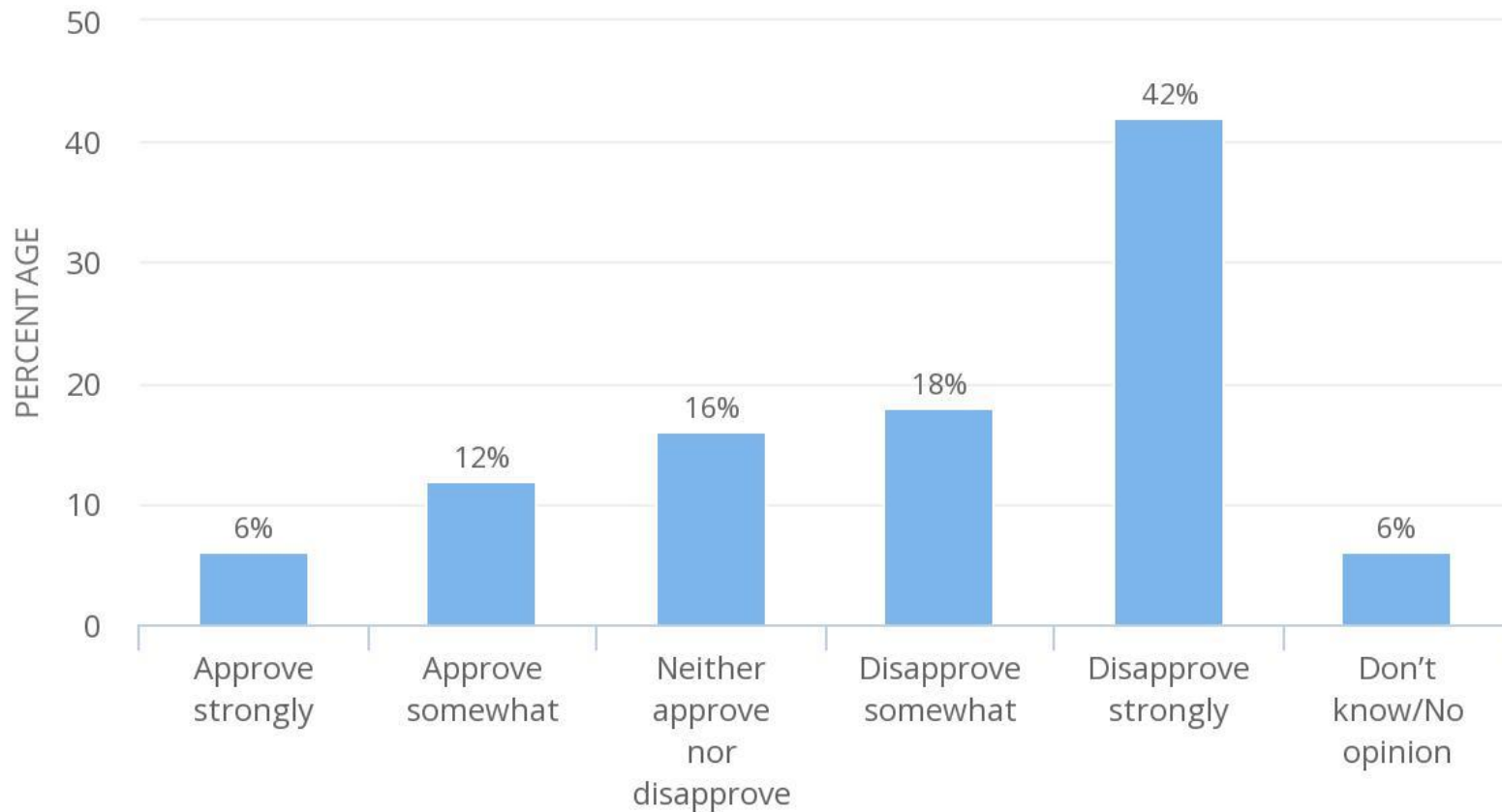


# A few public opinion snapshots of Democratic campaign agenda items



# APPROVAL OF HOW STATE LEADERS AND THE LEGISLATURE HAVE HANDLED THE RELIABILITY OF THE ELECTRICITY GRID IN TEXAS (OCTOBER 2021)

The Margin of Error for this Graphic is +/- 2.80%

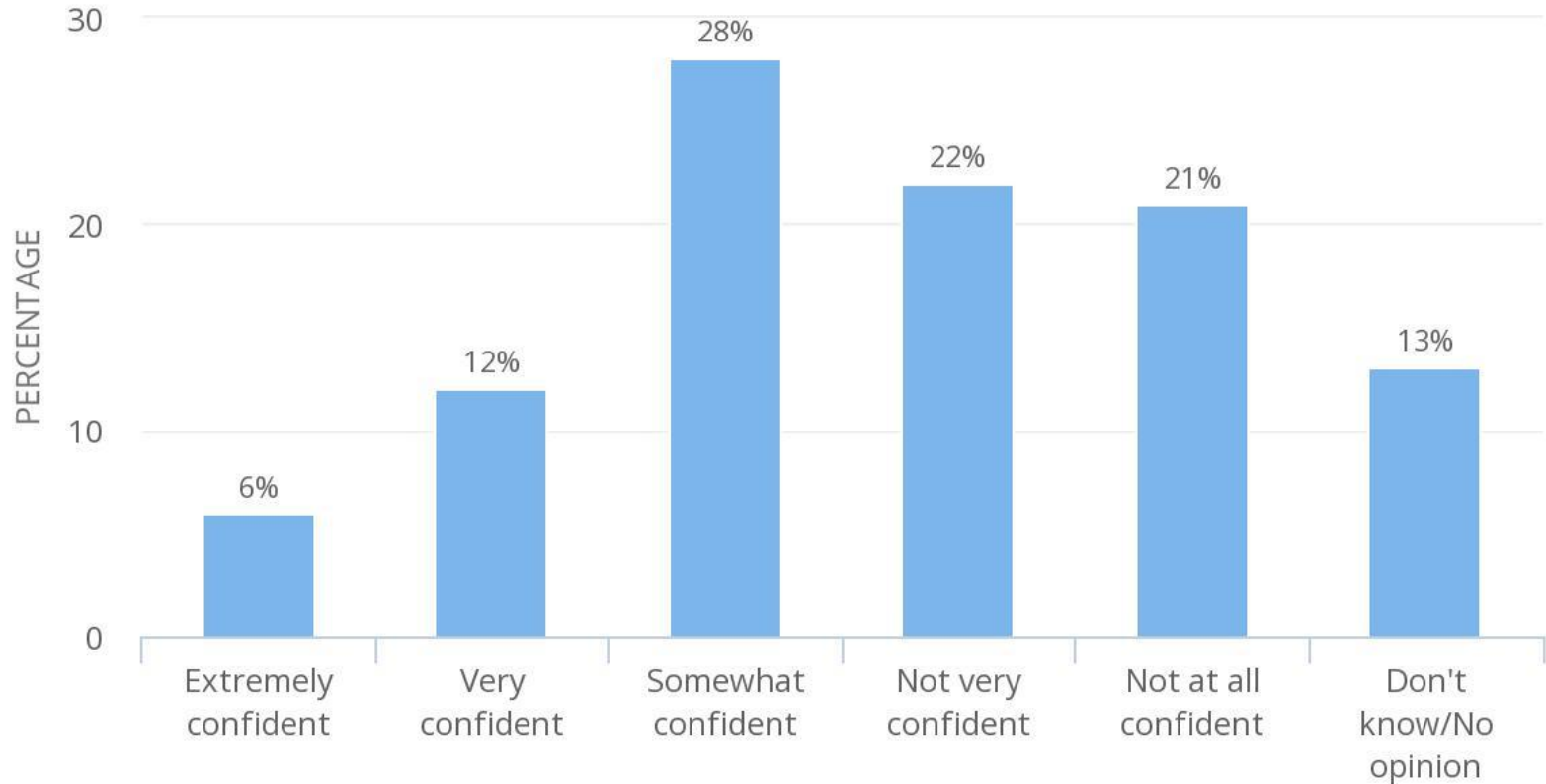


Source: October 2021 University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll



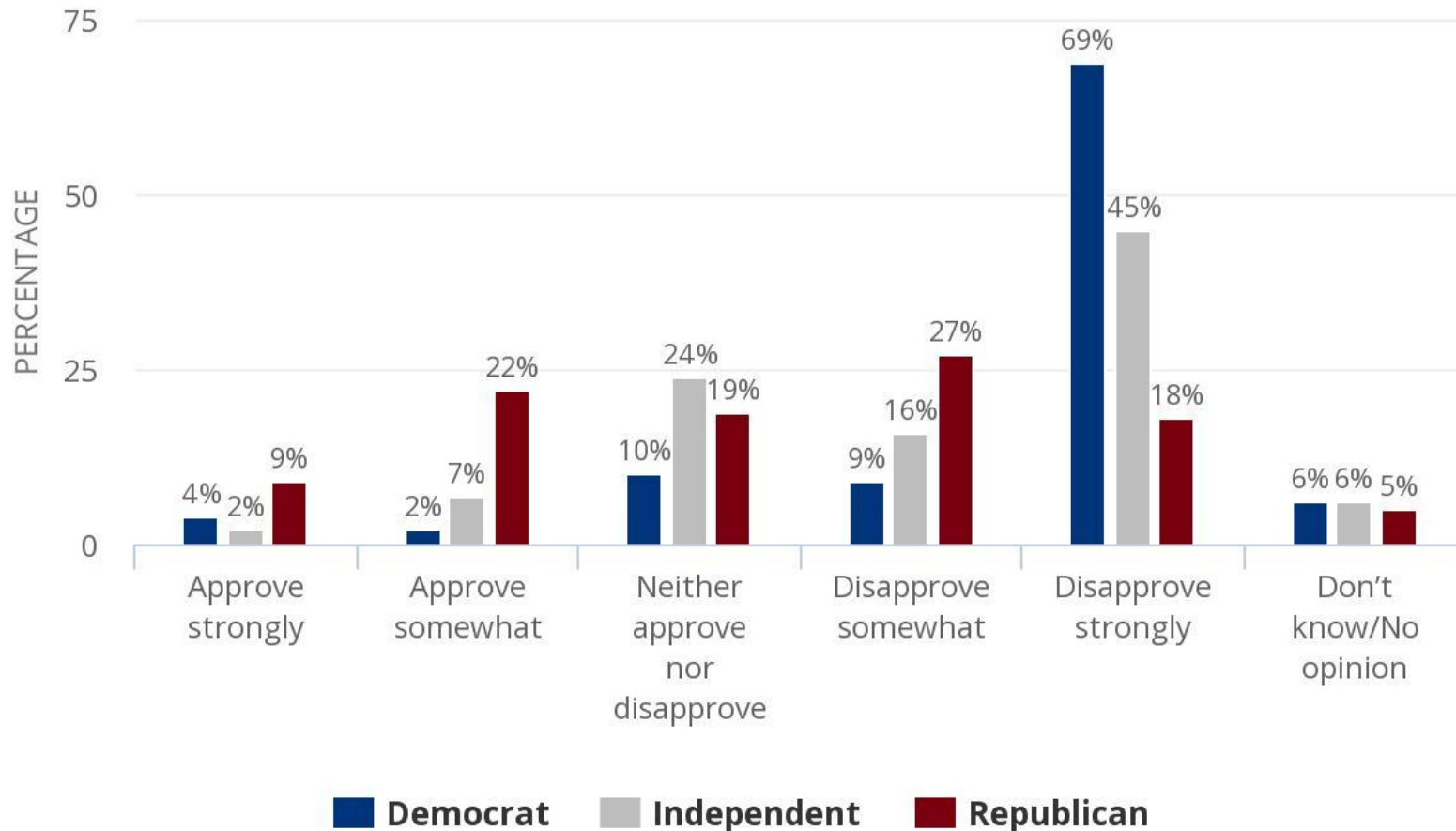
HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT NEW LAWS ENACTED BY THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE WILL BE EFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING FUTURE DISRUPTIONS IN UTILITY SERVICES LIKE THOSE THAT RESULTED FROM THE FEBRUARY 2021 WINTER STORM? (FEBRUARY 2022)

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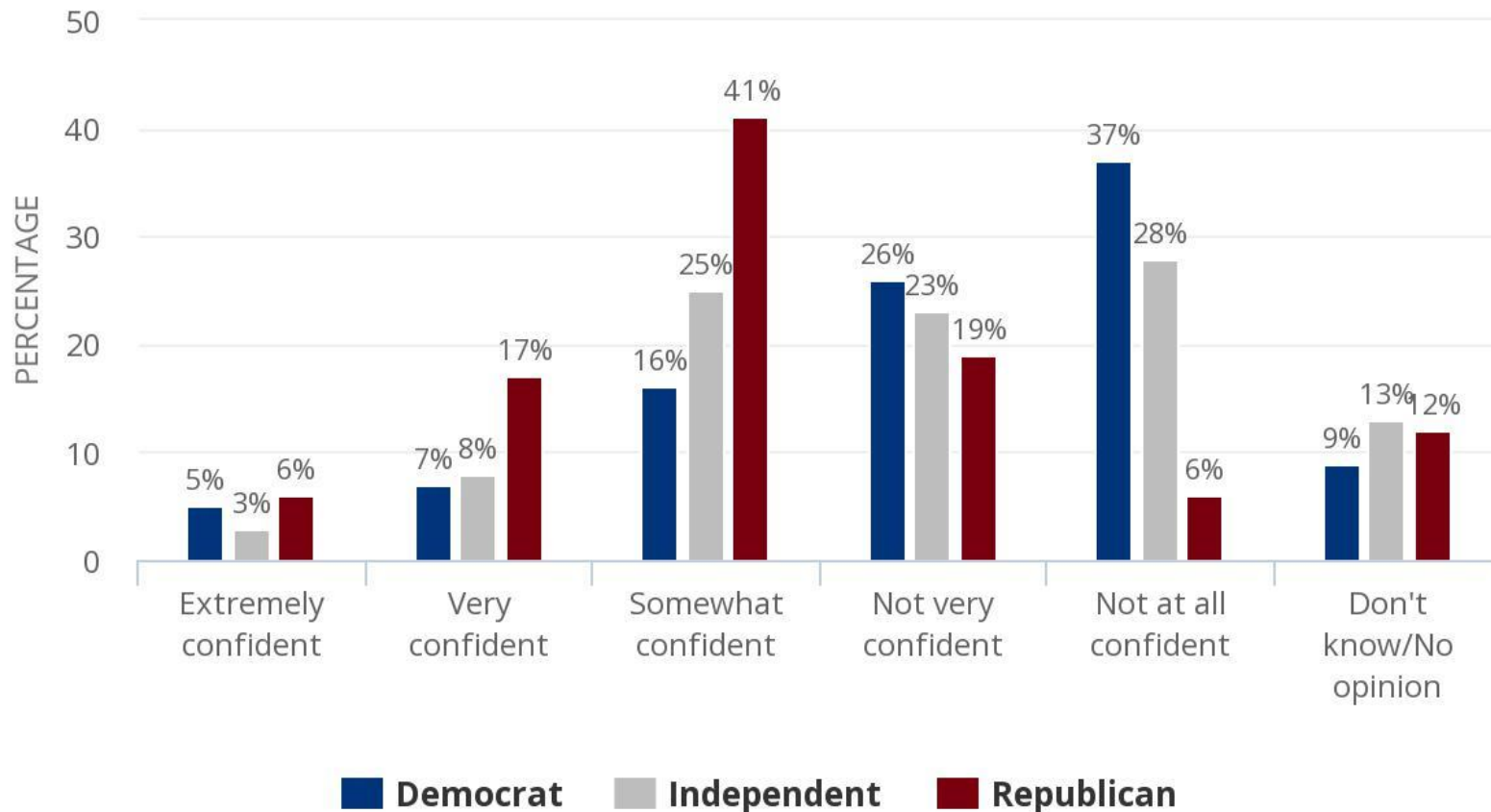
Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

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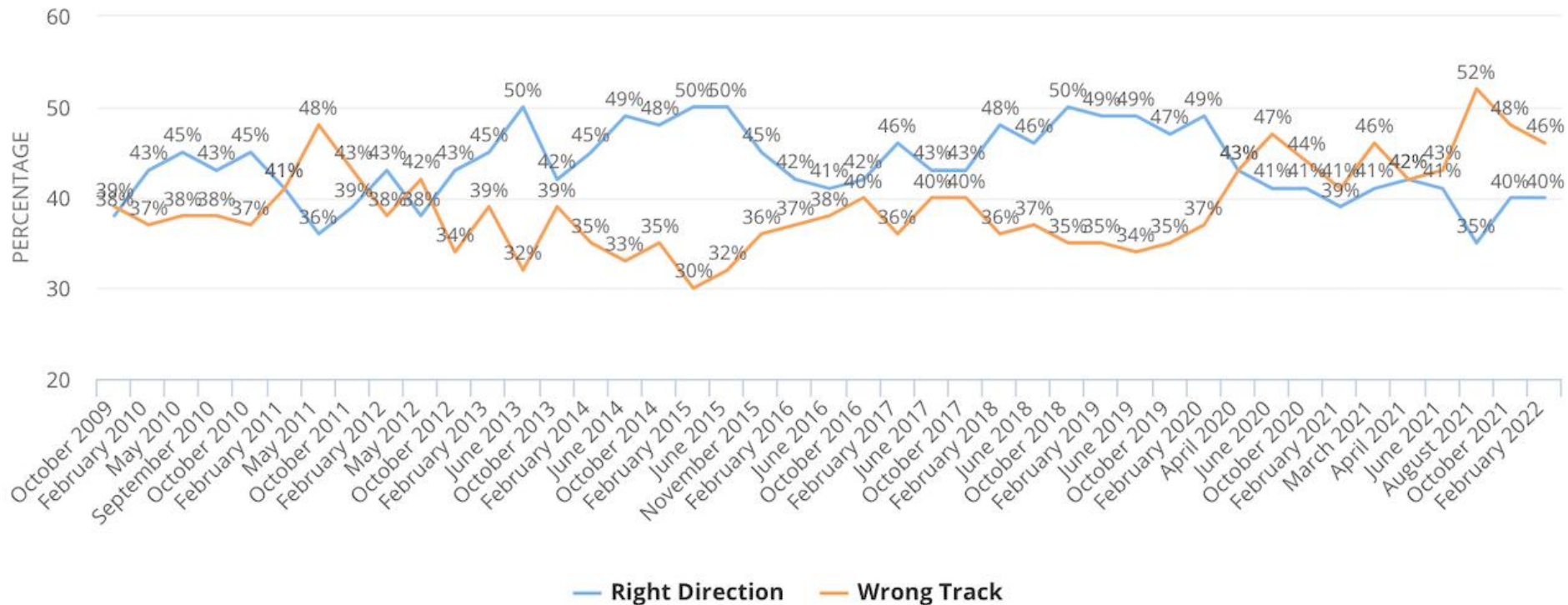
Source: October 2021 University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll

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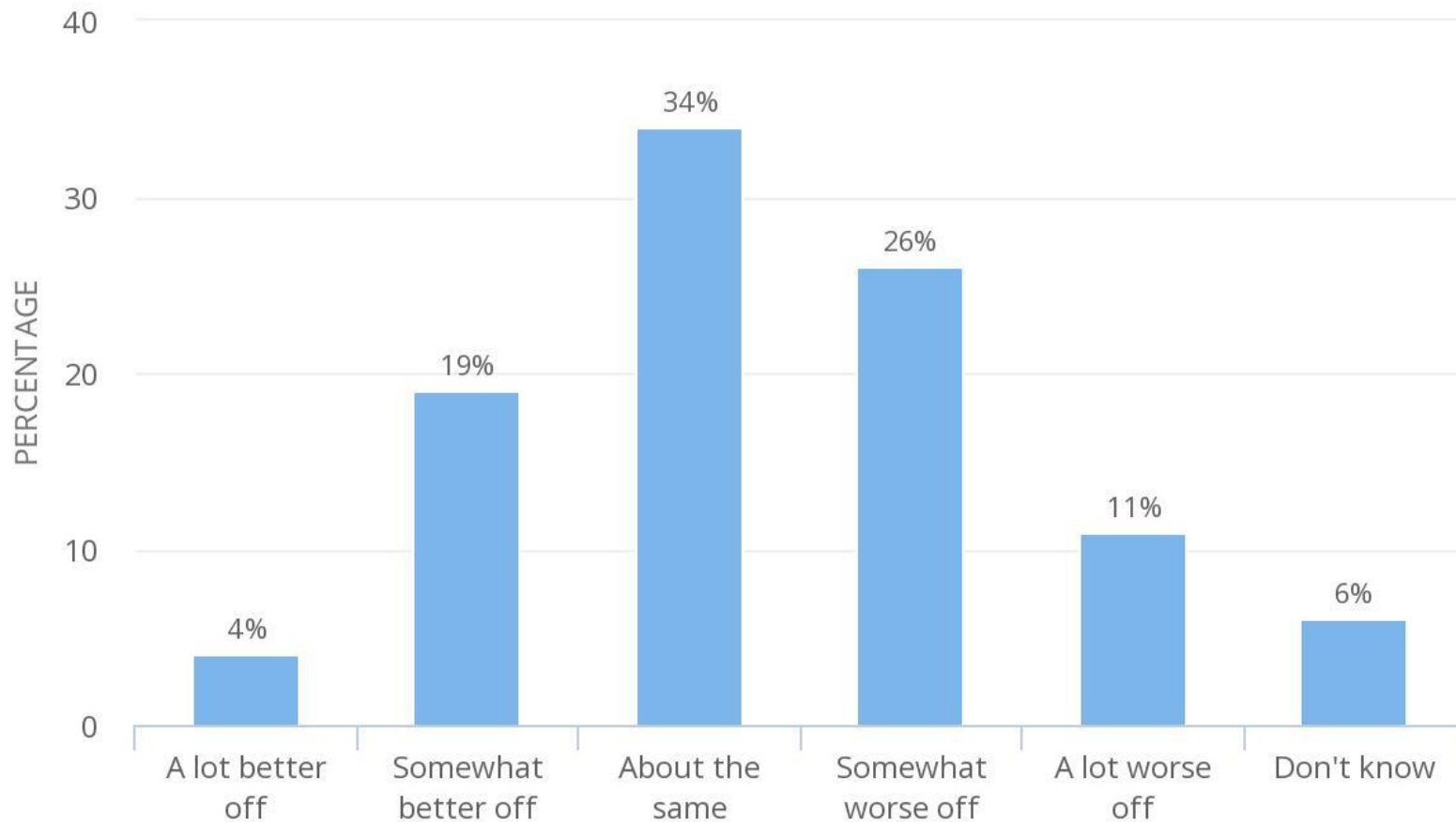
## DIRECTION OF TEXAS (OCTOBER 2009 TO FEBRUARY 2022)



Source: University of Texas/Texas Tribune Polling.

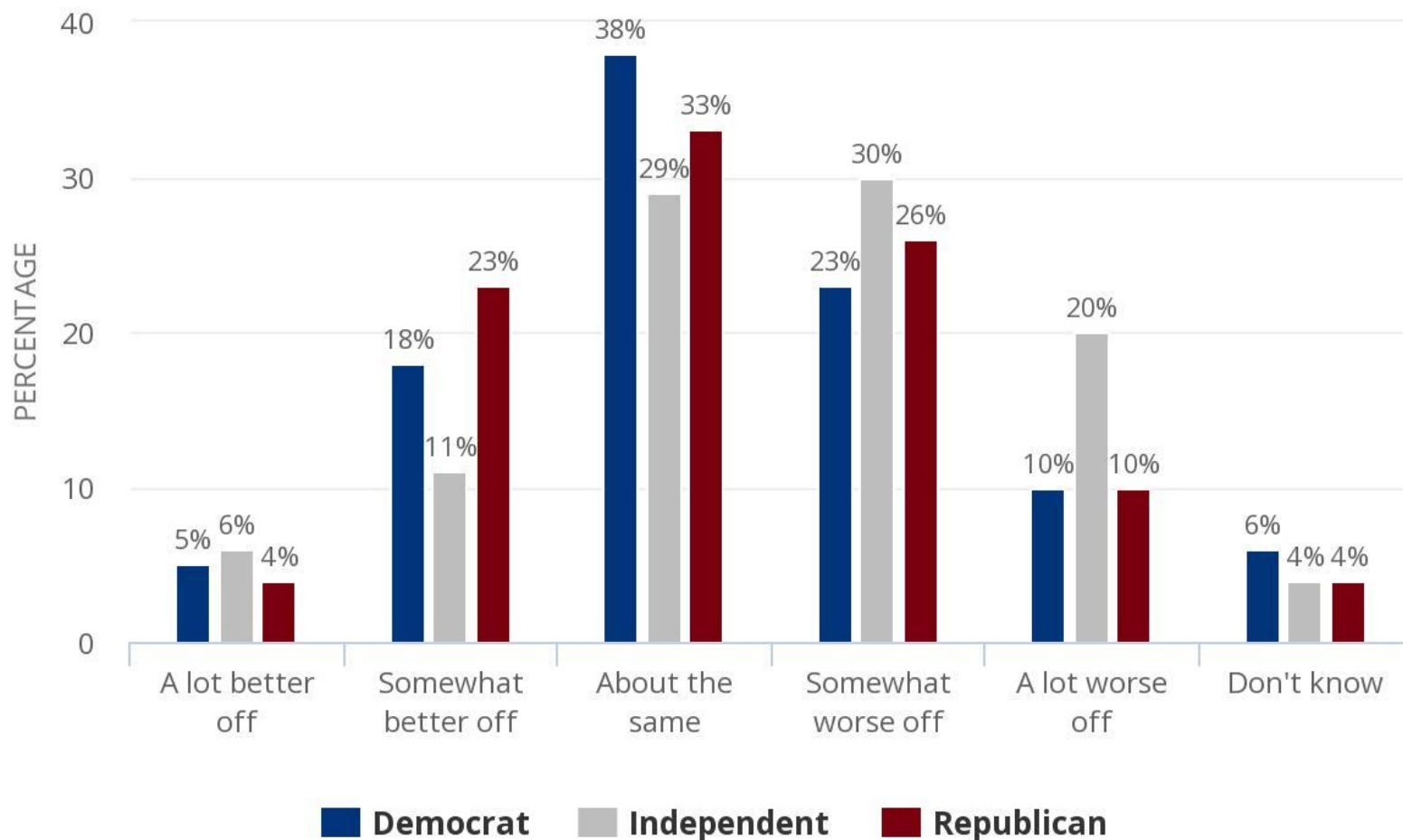
## TEXAS ECONOMIC CONDITIONS (FEBRUARY 2022)

The Margin of Error for this Graphic is +/- 2.89%



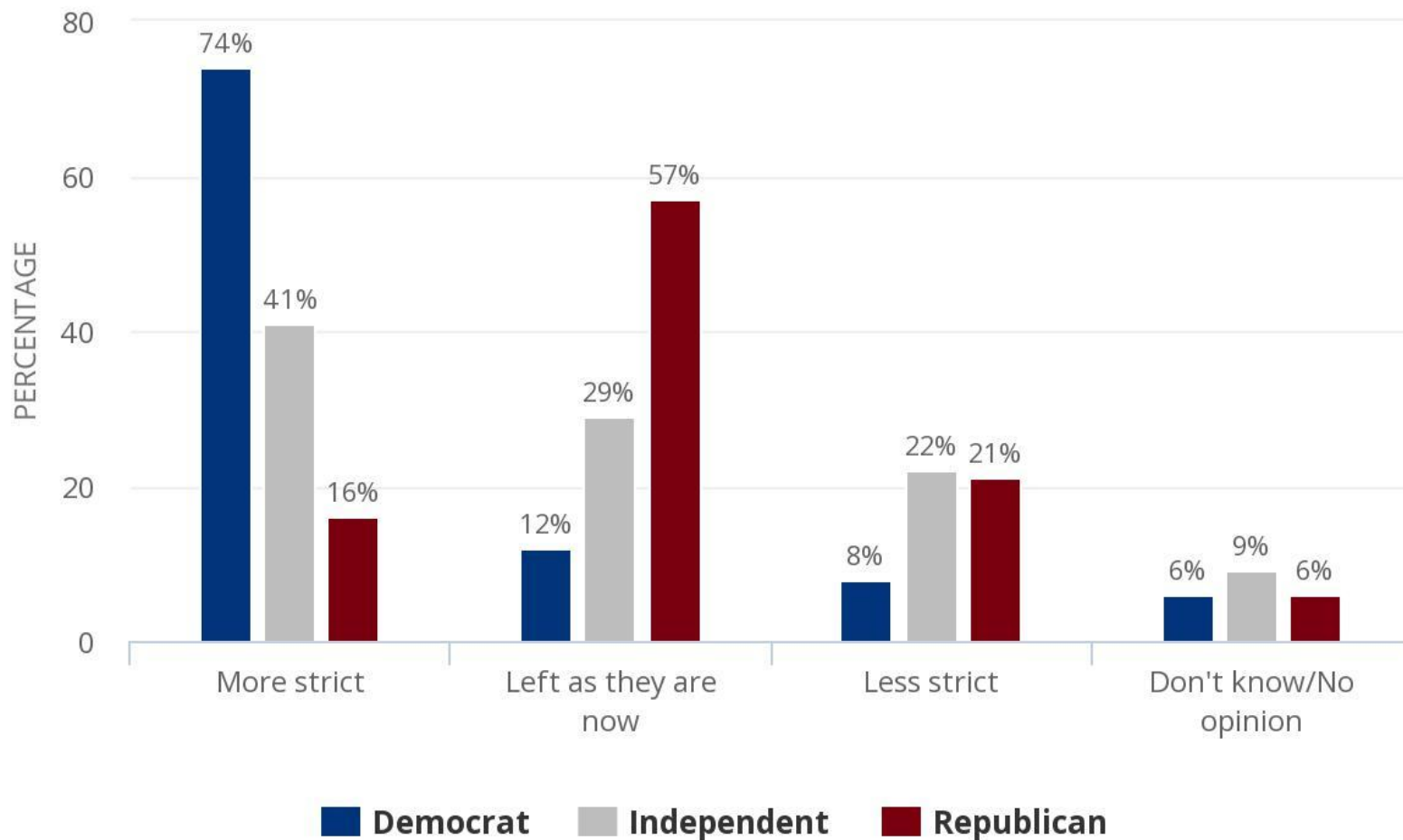
Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

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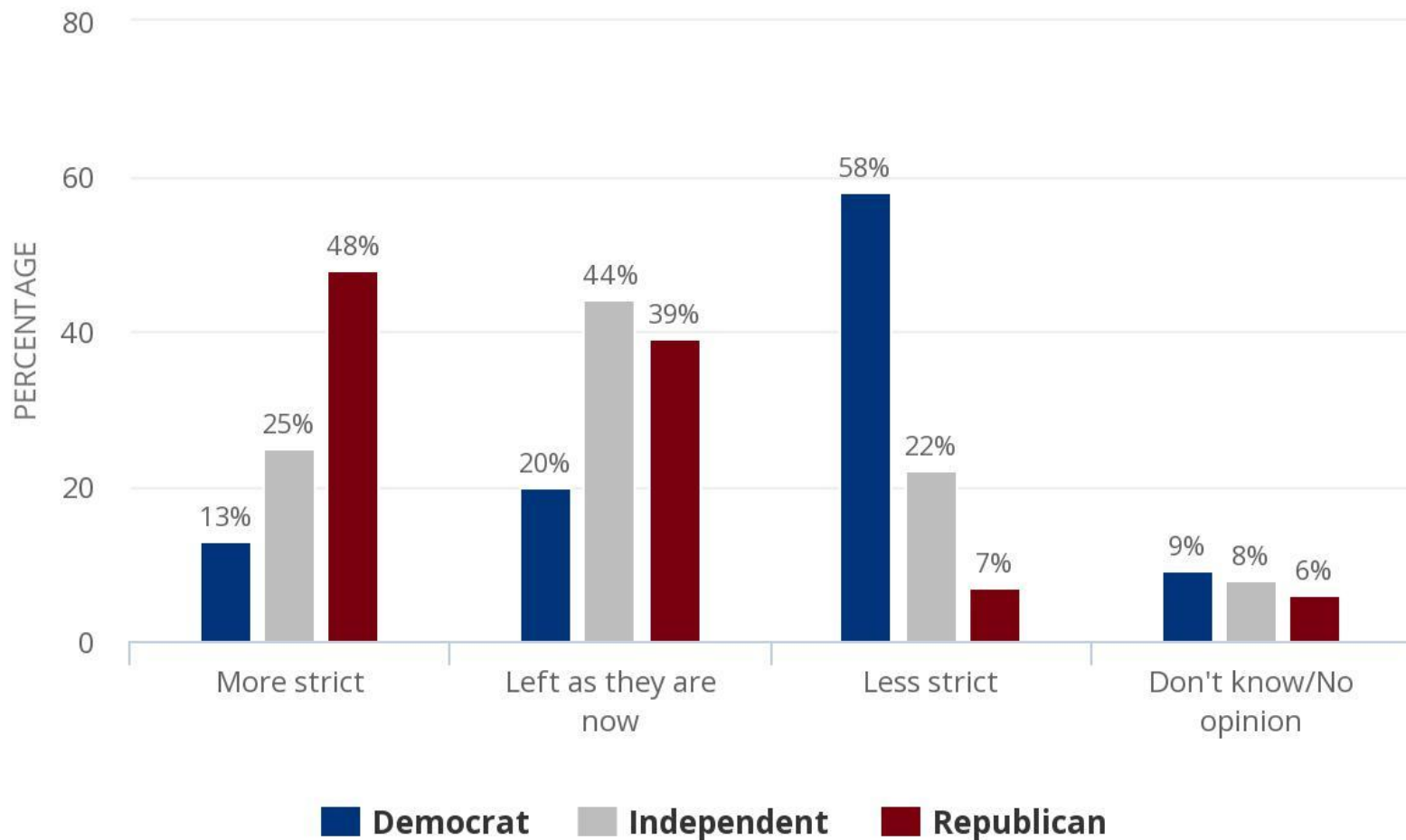
Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

## SHOULD GUN LAWS BE MORE OR LESS STRICT? (FEBRUARY 2022)



Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

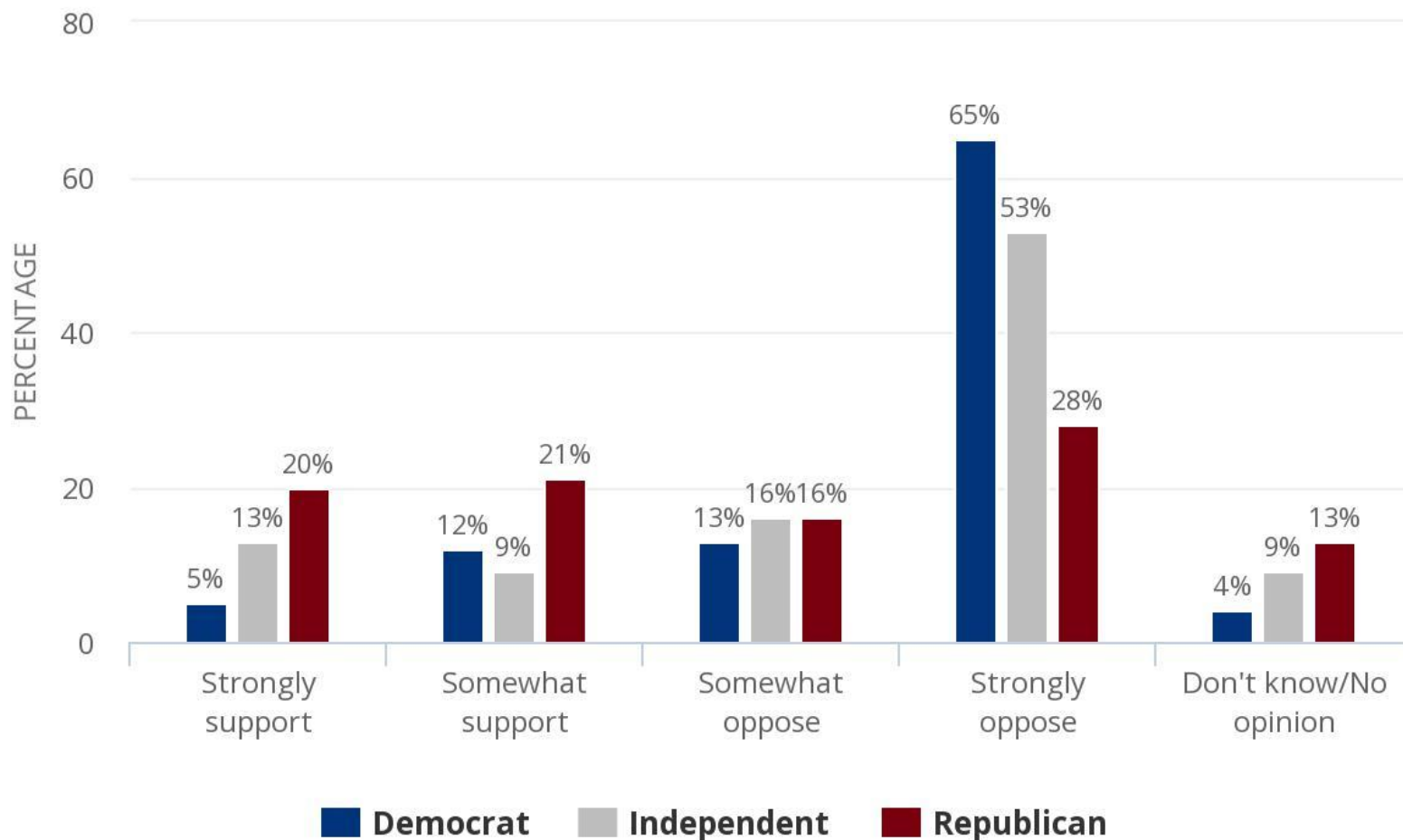
# SHOULD THE RULES FOR VOTING IN TEXAS BE MORE OR LESS STRICT (FEBRUARY 2022)



Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

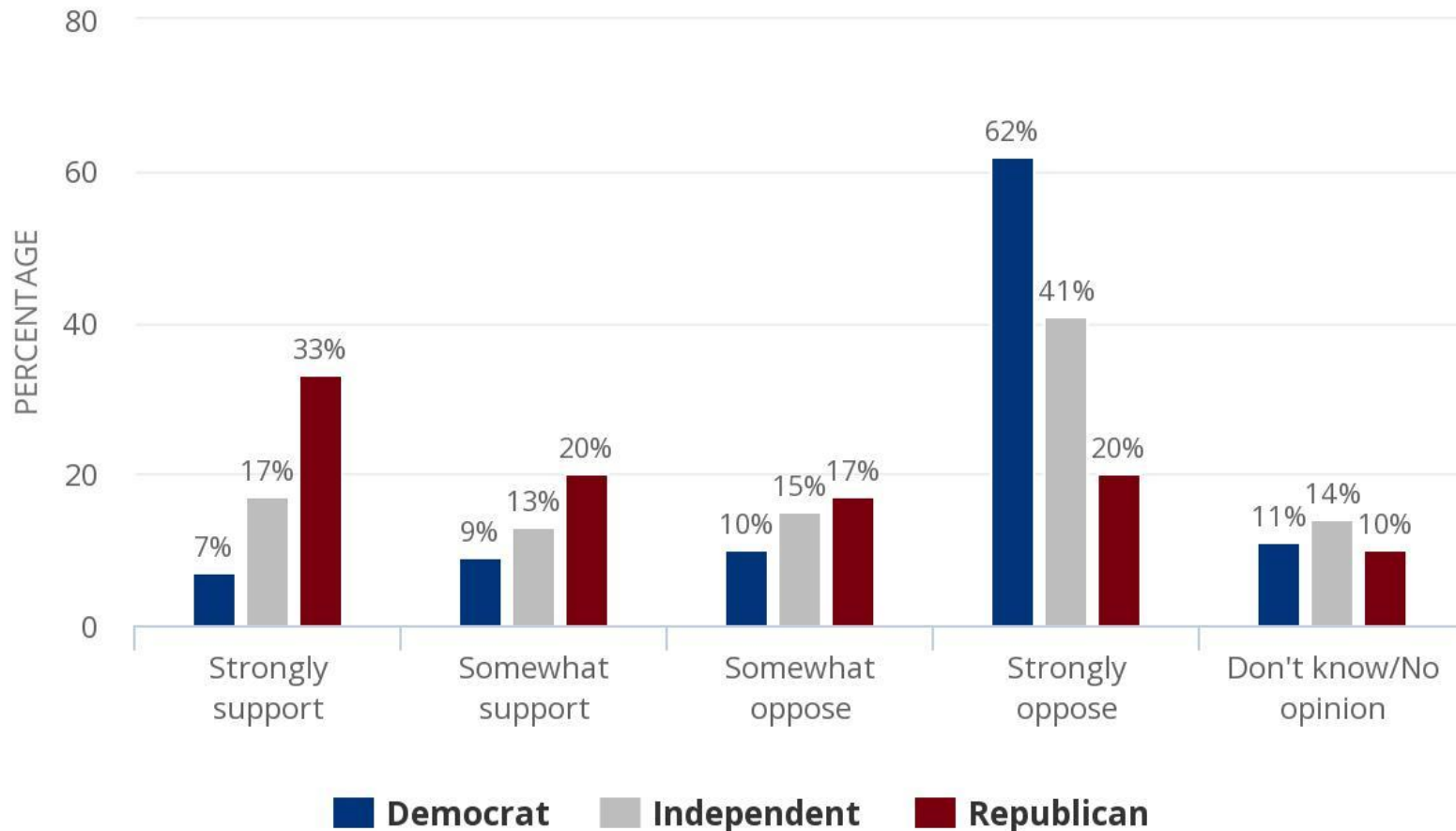


## SUPPORT OR OPPOSE: EFFORTS TO REMOVE BOOKS FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES (FEBRUARY 2022)



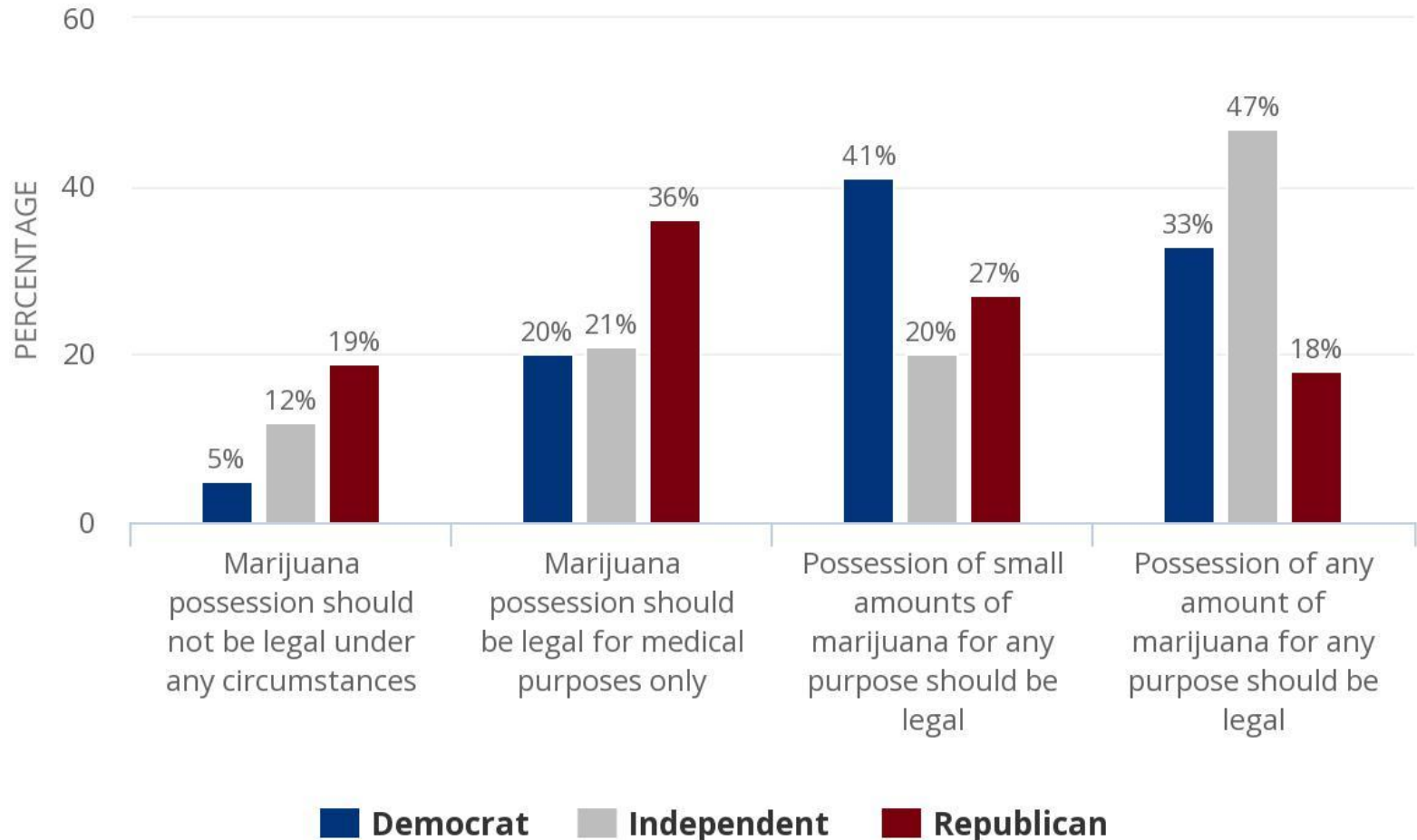
Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

SUPPORT OR OPPOSE: AUTOMATICALLY BANNING ALL ABORTIONS IN TEXAS IF THE U.S. SUPREME COURT OVERTURNS ROE V. WADE (FEBRUARY 2022)



Source: February 2022 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

## LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA (FEBRUARY 2021)



Source: February 2021 University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll

# Some takeaways

Overall public opinion environment adds to prevailing Republican electoral advantages in Texas.

Campaigns likely to want to avoid emphasis on some issues that intense partisans and activists will want to hear about.

Independents are in a bad mood and unpredictable...but advantage likely remains with GOP.

What is the potential for a disruption to the political environment?



# Thanks – and keep in touch.

Polling data with thousands of downloadable graphics and raw data:

<https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/polling-data-archive>

Find content at the Texas Politics Project blog:

[texaspolitics.utexas.edu/blog](https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/blog)

The Second Reading Podcast: Spotify, Stitcher, Apple Podcasts.

Interested in updates? Use the form on the blog at our site or email me to be added to our email list: [j.henson@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:j.henson@austin.utexas.edu)

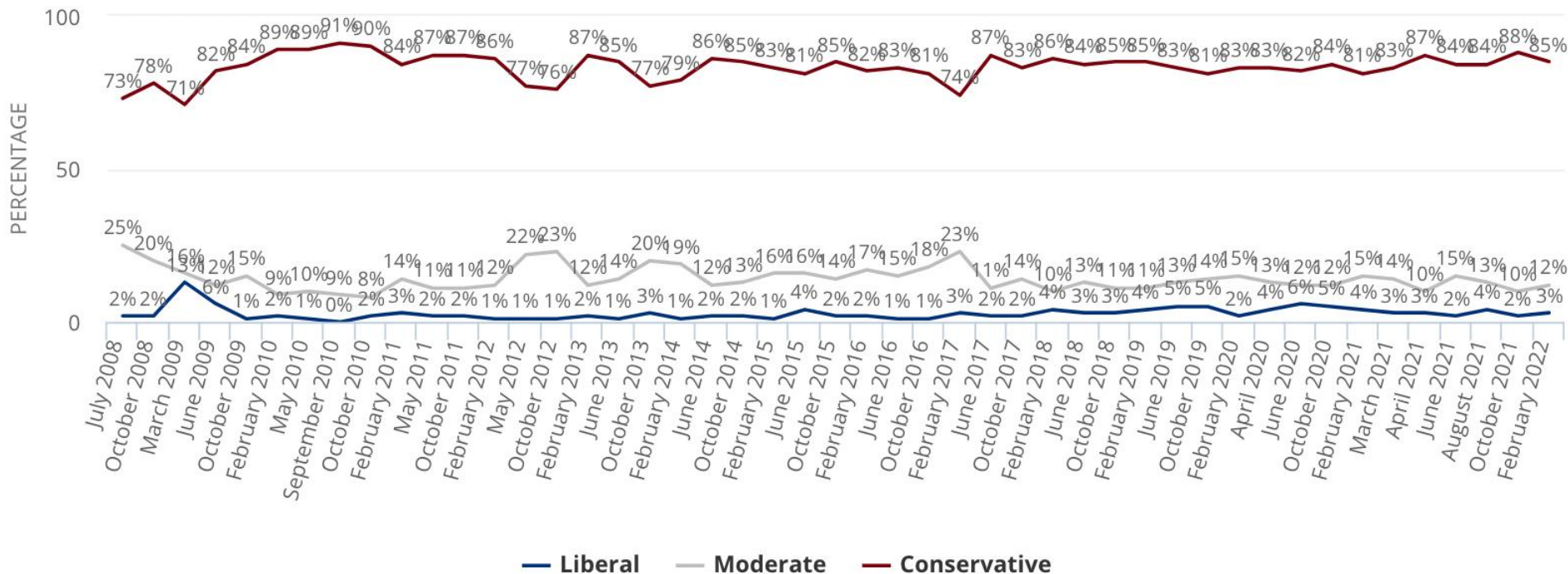
Facebook: /texaspoliticsproject    Twitter: @TxPolProject, @jamesrhenson

# Ideology and partisan sorting



# TEXAS REPUBLICAN PARTY IDEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION

2008-2022

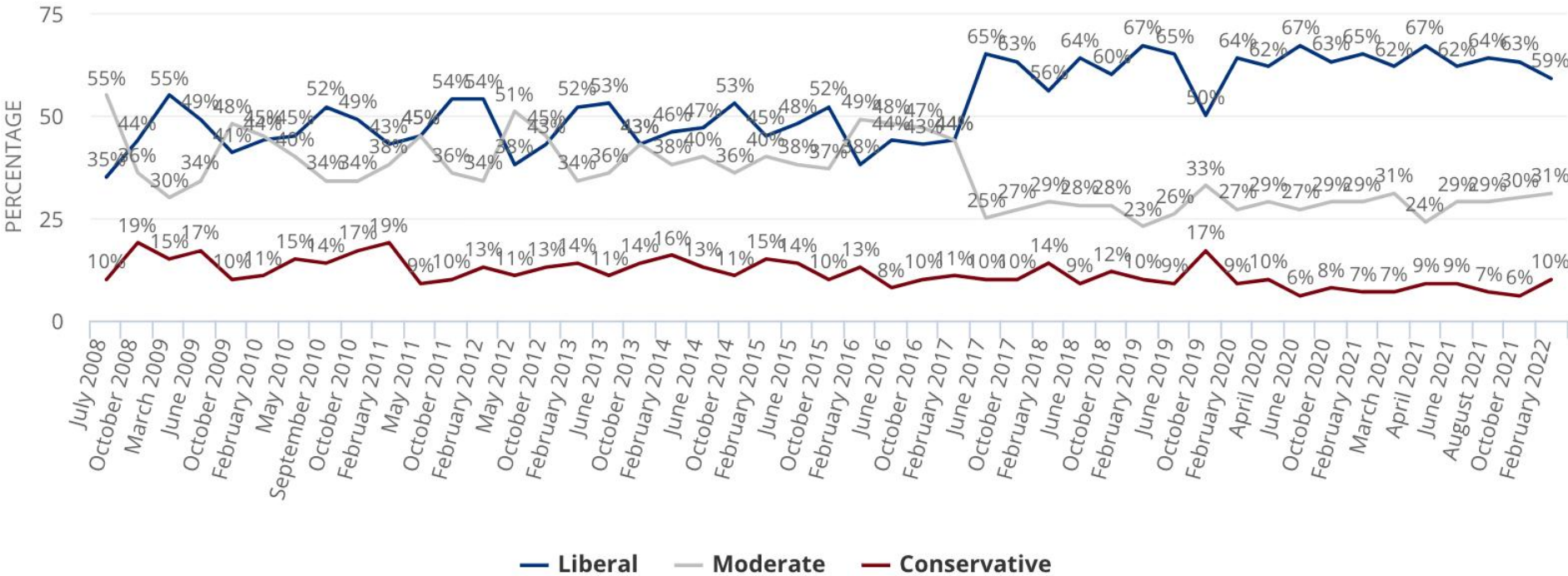


Source: University of Texas/Texas Tribune Polling.

(Interactive graphic: <https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/partisan-ideological-identification>)

# TEXAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY IDEOLOGICAL IDENTIFICATION

2008-2022



Source: University of Texas/Texas Tribune Polling.

(Interactive graphic: <https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/set/partisan-ideological-identification>)



# Negative partisanship

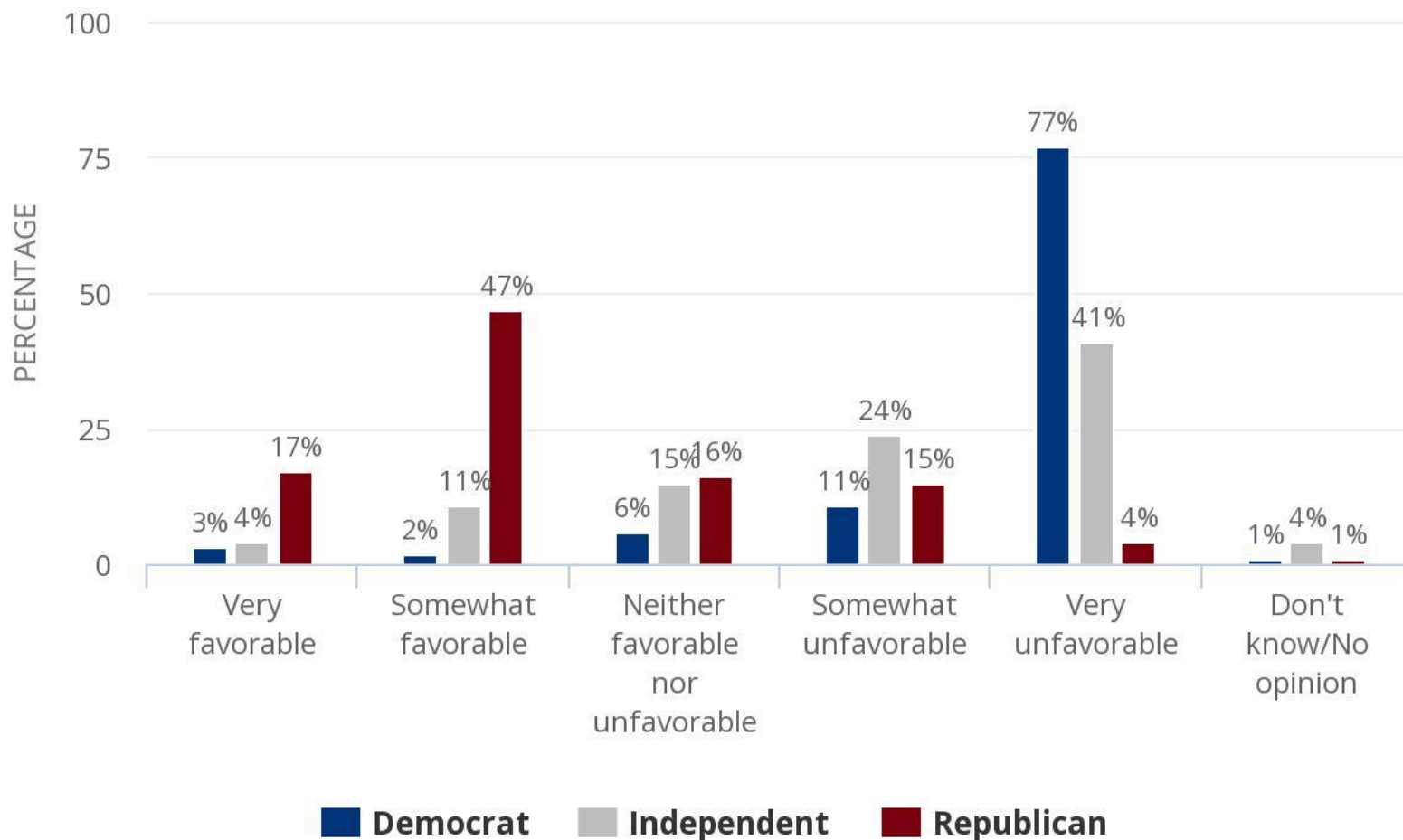


# Negative partisanship - working definition

The tendency of a voters' identification with one party to be significantly or primarily driven by hostility toward the other party.

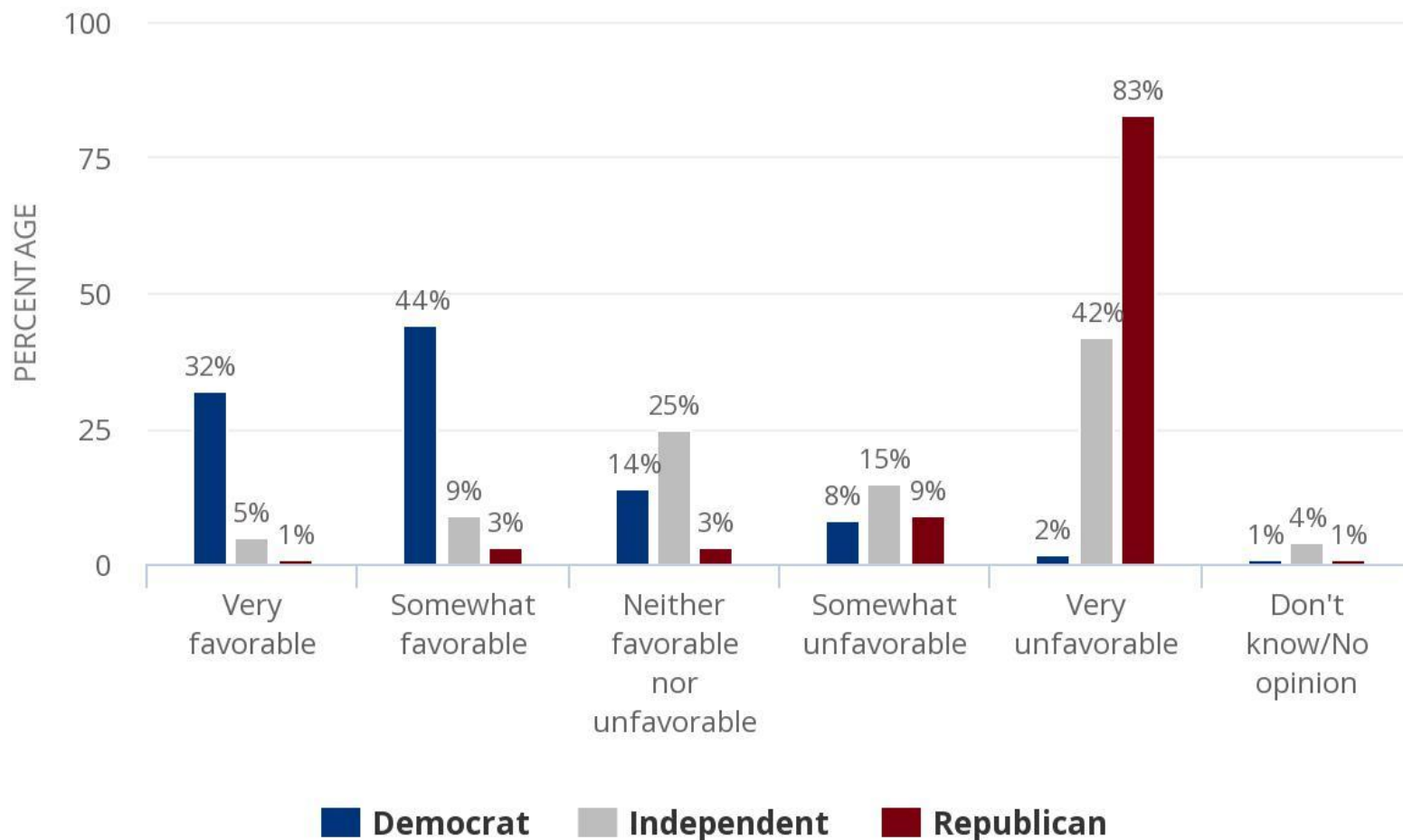


## REPUBLICAN PARTY FAVORABILITY (AUGUST 2021)



Source: August 2021 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

## DEMOCRATIC PARTY FAVORABILITY (AUGUST 2021)



Source: August 2021 University of Texas/Texas Politics Project Poll

# Party identification within geographical categories

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Democratic	54%	37%	26%
Republican	32%	49%	65%
Independent	13%	13%	9%

(August 2021 UT/Texas Politics Project Poll: N=1200 self-declared registered voters, geography self-declared)

