



THE COLORADO COLLEGE
STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT

Conservation in the West Poll

KEY FINDINGS

THE 2014 SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF VOTERS IN SIX WESTERN STATES



JANUARY 2014

CONDUCTED BY: LORI WEIGEL / PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES
DAVE METZ / FAIRBANK, MASLIN, MAULLIN, METZ & ASSOCIATES

METHODOLOGY

- ❖ 2,400 telephone (cell and landline) interviews with 400 registered voters in each of 6 states: Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.
- ❖ Interviews conducted January 7-13, 2014, in Spanish and English.
- ❖ The margin of overall sampling error is + 2.9% at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample; and + 4.9% for each state.
- ❖ The total numbers have been statistically weighted to reflect the true geographic distribution of voters throughout the region. Interviews within each state were distributed proportionally by region and each sample is demographically representative of their electorate.
- ❖ Bi-partisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies (R) and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D).



Conservation & Voting

We tested eight different positions that a Congressional candidate could take in order to assess the impact of those positions on the Western electorate.

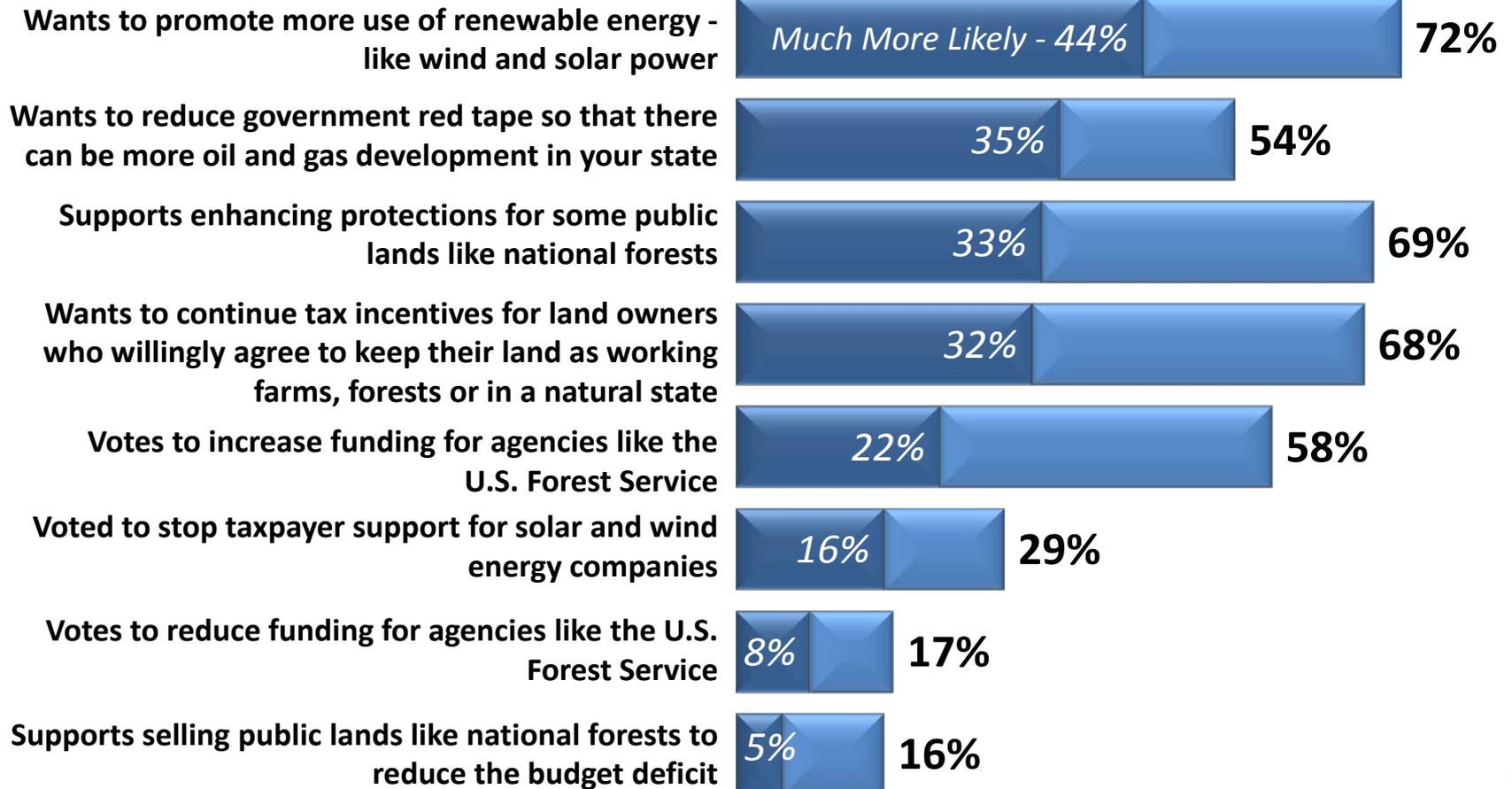


“In thinking about the elections for U.S. Congress this November, please tell me how a candidate taking each of the following positions would impact your vote - would it make you more likely or less likely to vote for that candidate, or would it not make much difference in your vote decision?”



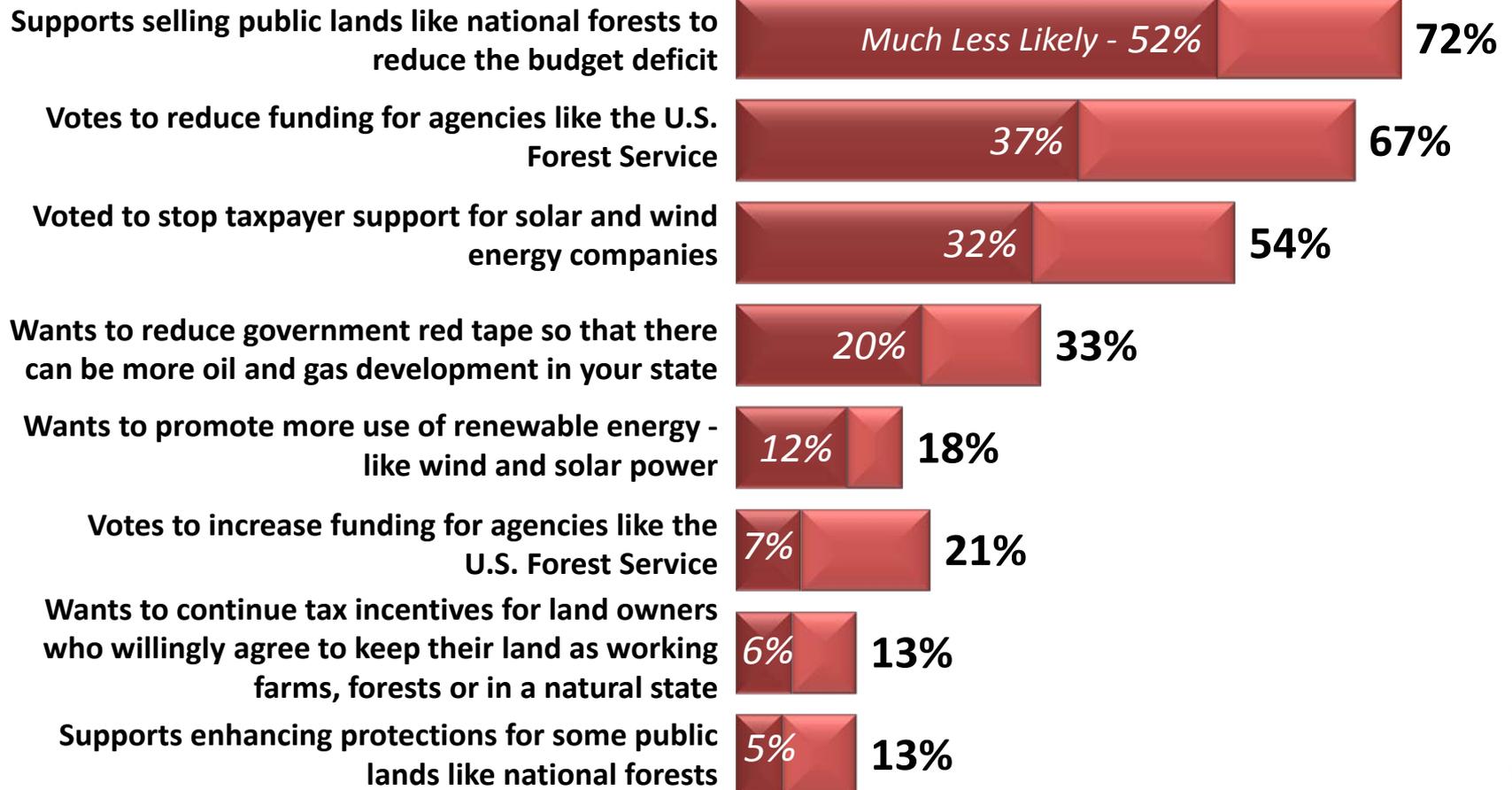
Developing energy and protecting public and private lands can be considered “vote motivating” issues.

Candidate Positions Ranked By Much More Likely



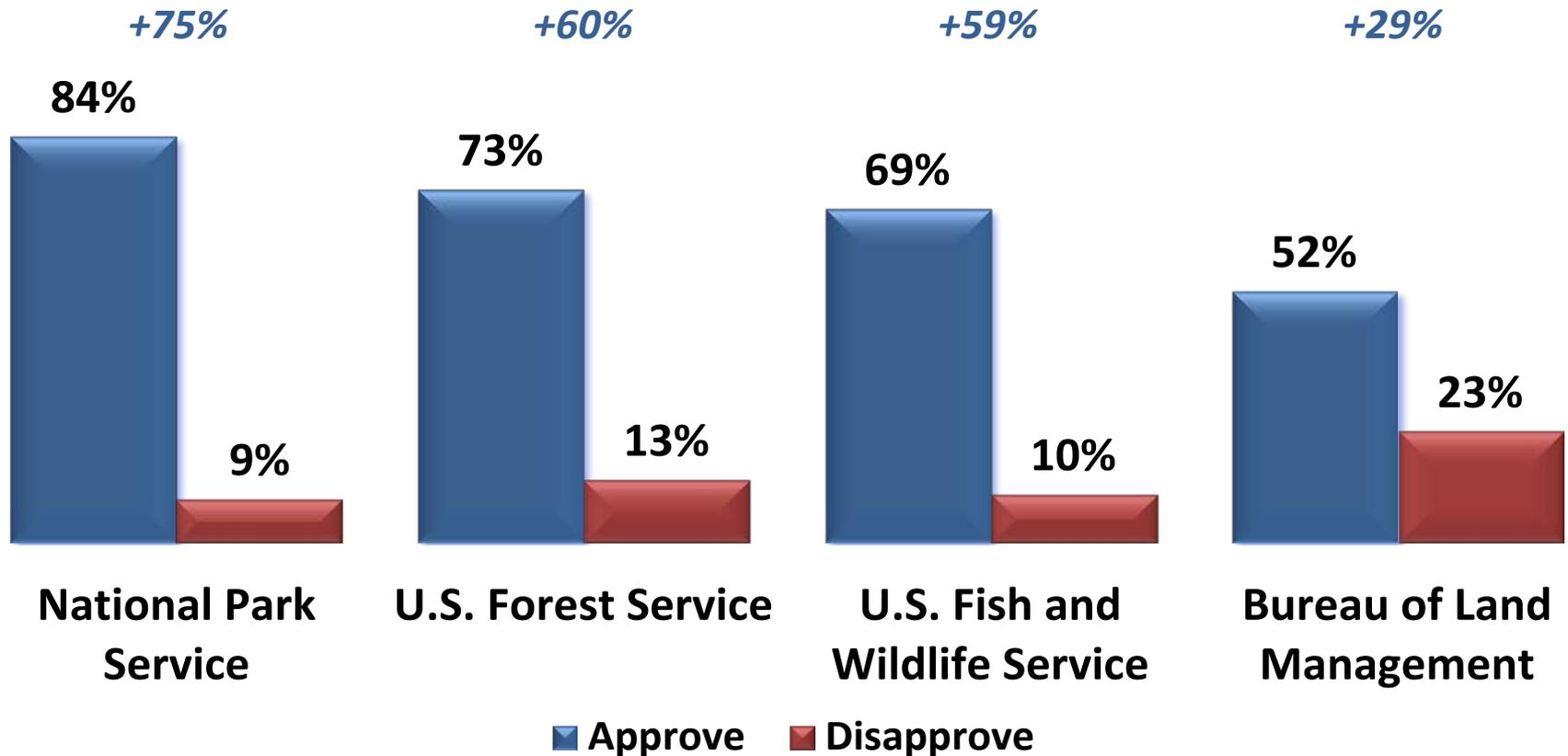
The most significant negative by far is espousing the sale of public lands to help reduce the budget deficit.

Candidate Positions Ranked By Much Less Likely



A majority of voters approve of the job various federal agencies are doing in handling their responsibilities, although BLM is most mixed.

Federal Agency Approval Ratings



Key swing sub-groups are strongly negative toward a candidate who advocates to reduce funding for these agencies.

Reduce Funding for Agencies By Key Groups

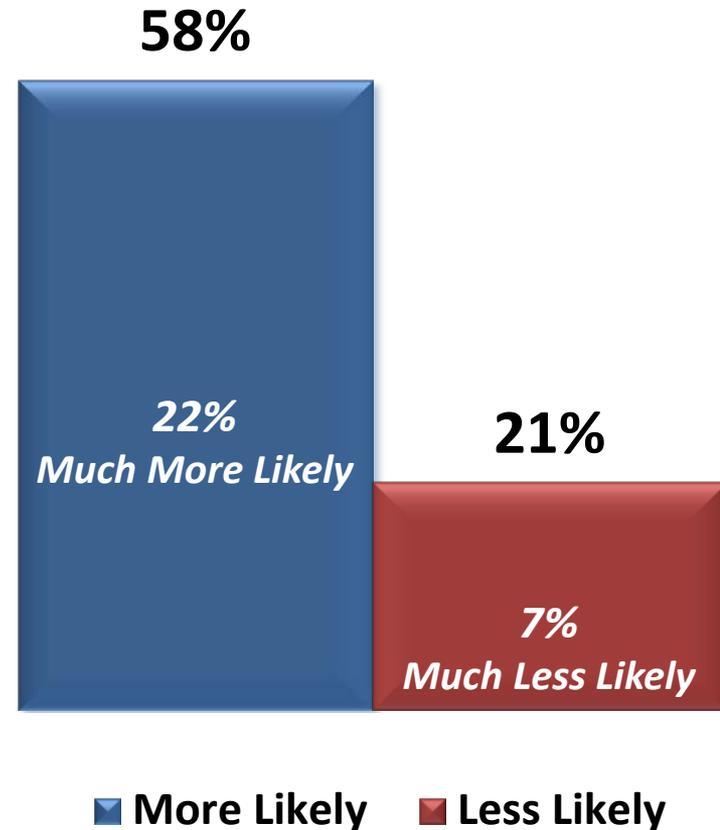


Much Less Likely

Latinos	44%
Moderates	42%
Sportsmen	40%
Small Town/Rural	38%
Independents	37%
Seniors	35%

And candidates can receive a positive boost - or at least are held harmless - if they *increase* funding for these agencies.

A candidate who votes to increase funding for agencies like the U.S. Forest Service



This could be due to the fact that voters perceive conservation as being a good value for the investment.

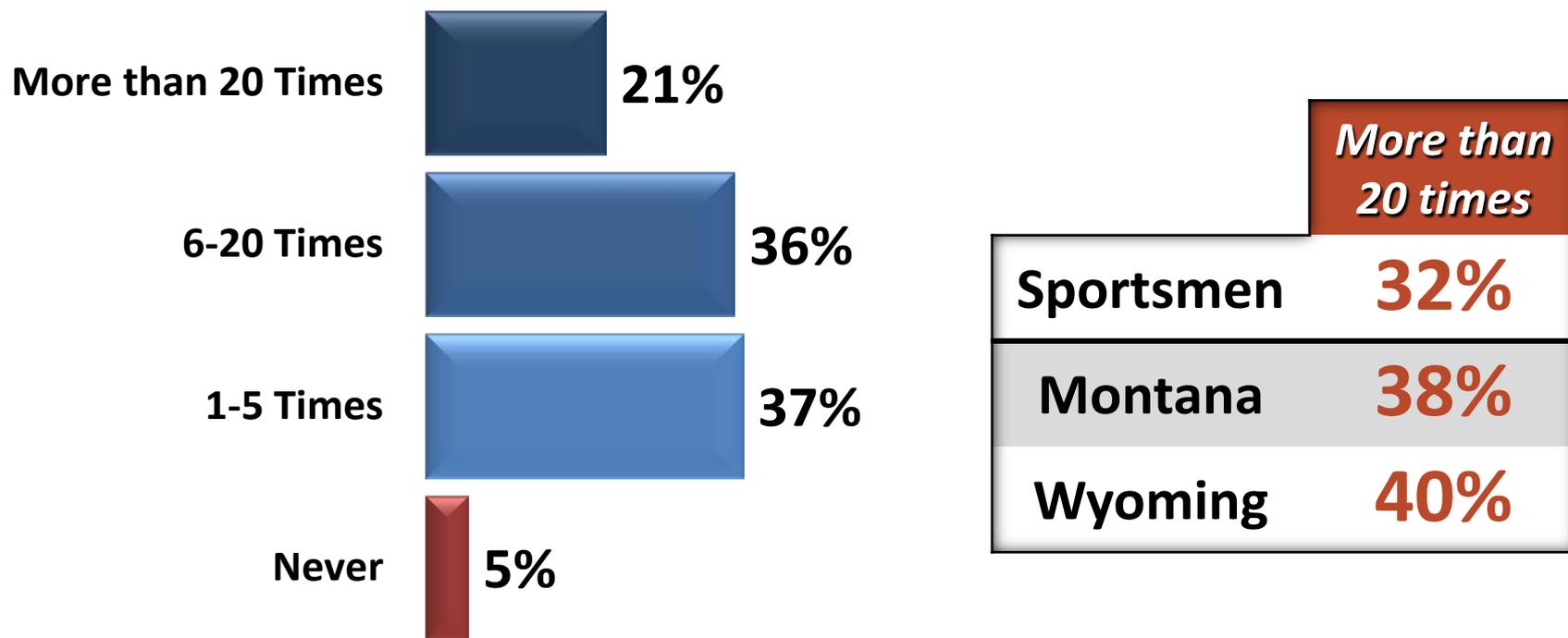
Funding for national parks, national forests and other public lands should not be cut, as it provides a big return for a small investment.

Agree
83%

Disagree
13%

Also, Western voters tell us that they are visiting public lands frequently, with one-in-five residents and one-third of sportsmen going more than 20 times in the last year.

“And over the past year, how many times do you think you have visited public lands, such as national parks, national forests, Bureau of Management lands, wildlife refuges, or state parks?”



Westerners perceive their natural areas and public lands as the biggest attractions in their home state.

“And if a friend came to visit you, would you recommend that they see something in a city or town, such as a museum, restaurants or shopping...OR...see something in a natural area, such as a national park, wildlife area, mountains, canyon, forest, or river?”

Natural Area

68%



City / Town

14%



The closing of public lands during last year's government shutdown was perceived as affecting local economies in every state.

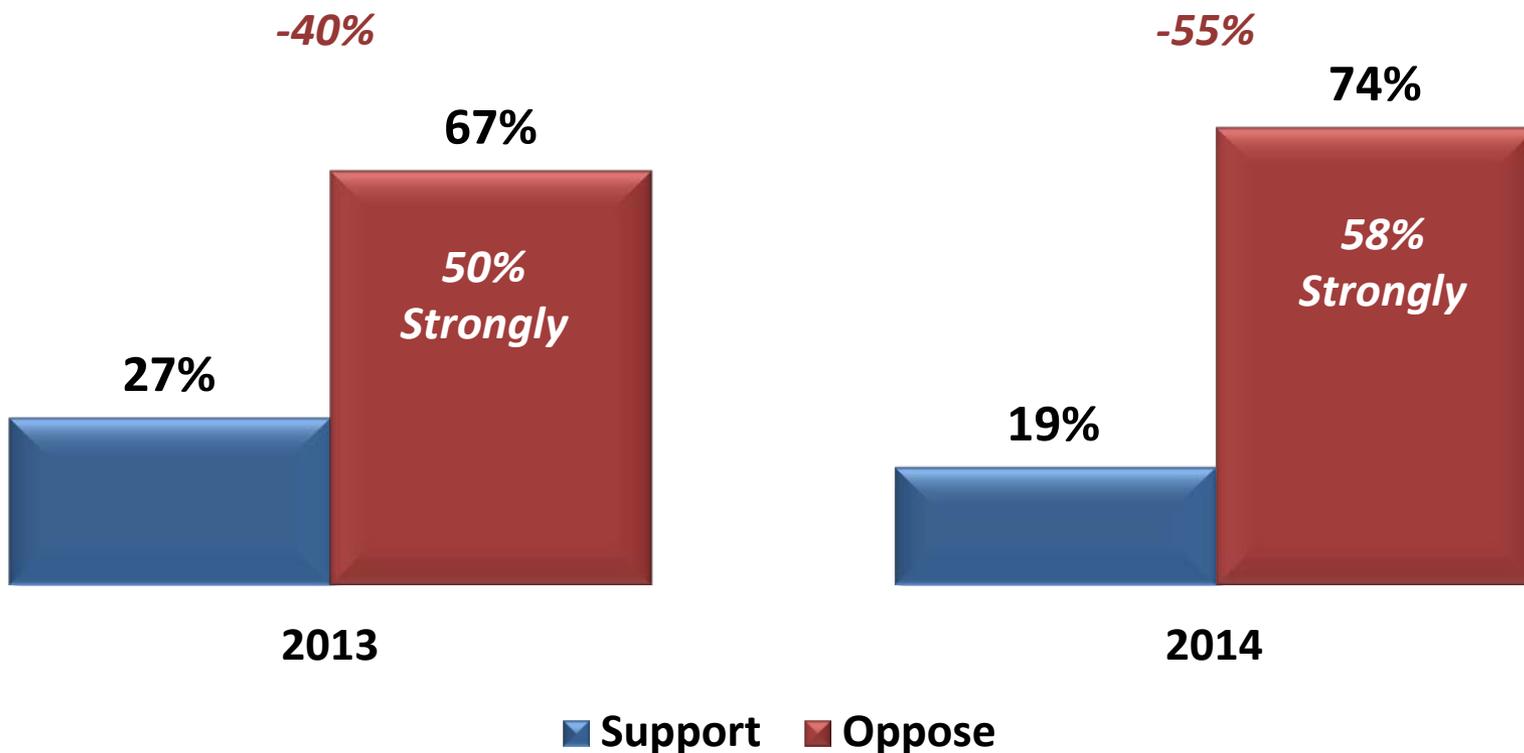
The closing of national parks and public lands to visitors and recreation during the recent government shutdown hurt small businesses and the economy of communities.

Agree
85%

Disagree
13%

There has been a significant increase in opposition to the sale of public lands in the last year.

“Some Members of Congress have proposed selling off some public lands, such as National Forest land or Bureau of Land Management areas, as a way to help reduce the budget deficit. Would you support or oppose the sale of public lands?”





Oil and Gas Development

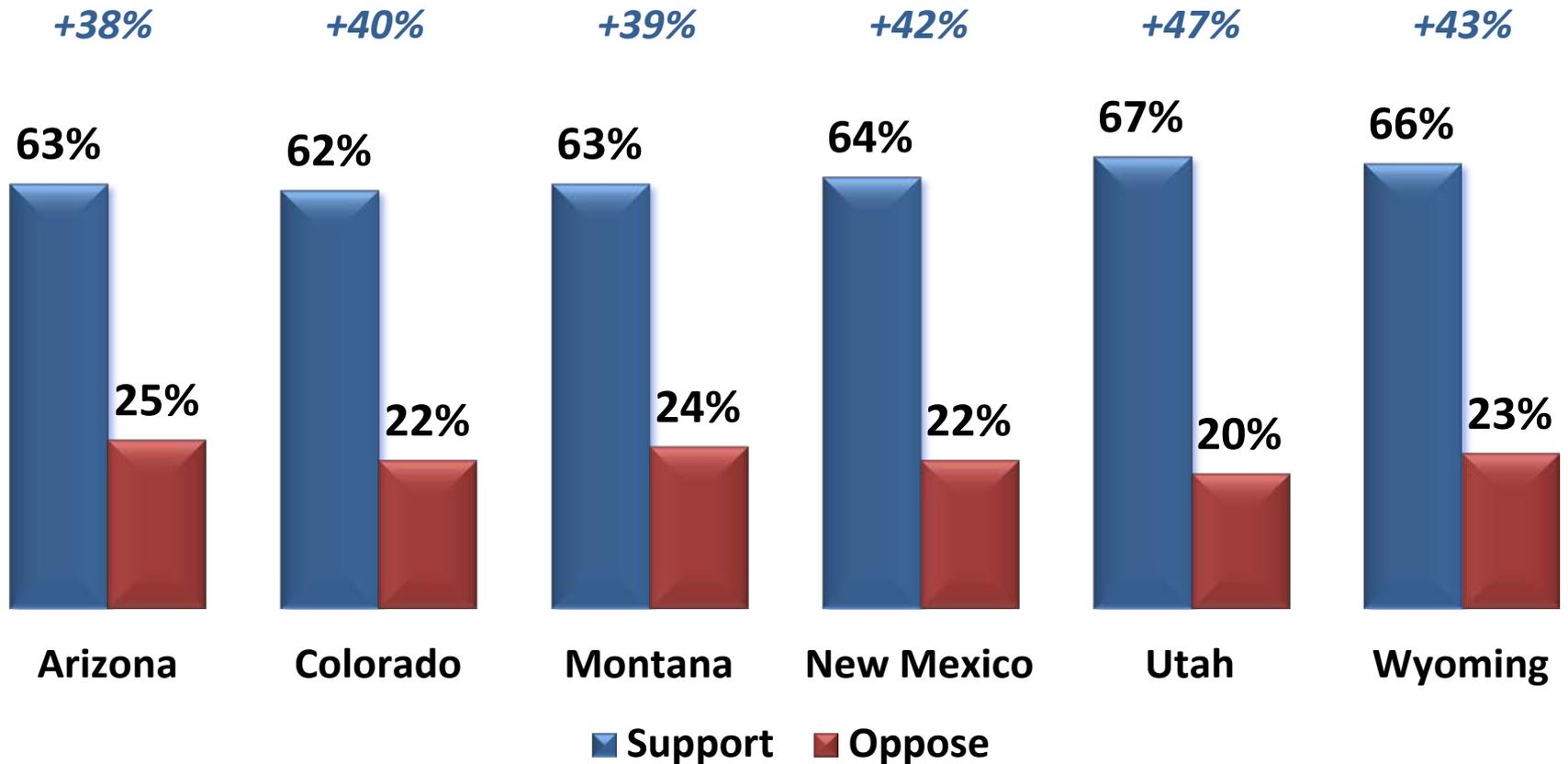
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A new tool being used by BLM was also explored in the survey this year with this explanation of Master Leasing Plans provided to respondents:

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for balancing oil and gas drilling, fish and wildlife habitat protection, and recreational uses on millions of acres of public lands. In areas where there could be future disagreements over the best use of the land, the agency is using a new tool, called a Master Leasing Plan. Before any oil or gas drilling is considered, the Master Leasing Plan would map out specific areas appropriate for oil and gas drilling, and create protections where needed for wildlife, water and historic sites. Oil and gas companies, local governments, local businesses environmental organizations, and the public will be able to provide input in the design of the plan.

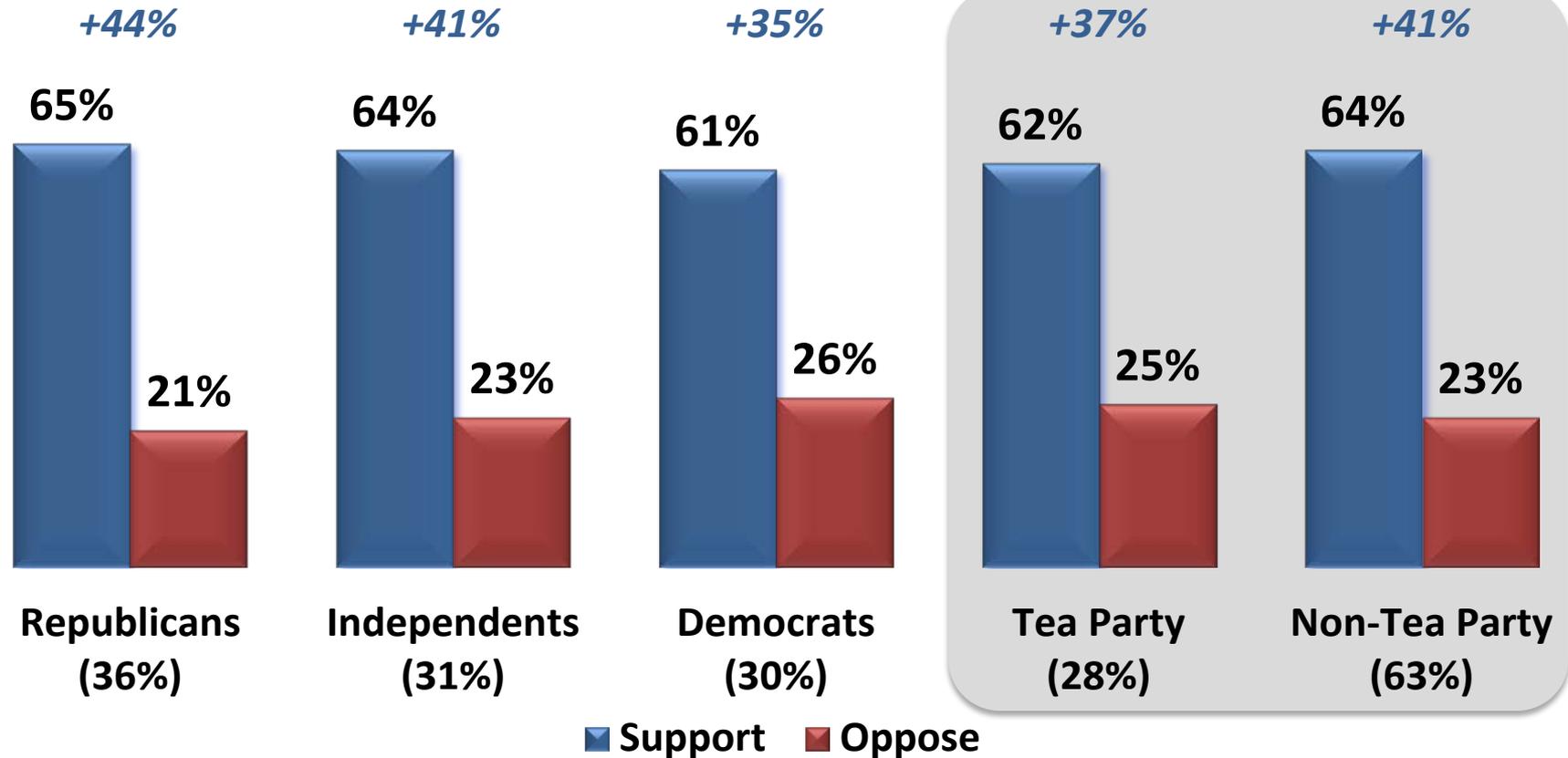
There is almost no variation in support for MLP's between these states.

Master Leasing Plan By State



And more than three-in-five voters – including Tea Party supporters – support the concept of MLP's.

Master Leasing Plan By Party and Tea Party



Voters are more than twice as likely to side with proponents of this new tool than its detractors after hearing both viewpoints.

“Please tell me which point of view comes closest to your own, even if neither matches your point of view exactly.”

Those who support master leasing plans say that some places are appropriate for drilling, but on some public lands drilling could negatively affect our rivers, wildlife, or opportunities for hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. These plans will resolve conflicts in advance so that wildlife habitats, air quality and water quality are protected, and leasing can move forward in appropriate areas with fewer delays.

62%

Those who oppose master leasing plans say that the government already takes years planning for whether or not oil and gas drilling can occur in specific sites. Master leasing plans are yet another layer of red tape that will slow down responsible energy production on public lands, making it take even longer for oil and gas companies to develop our country's energy resources.

25%



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