



South Carolinians on Housing: Challenges and Solutions

September 2024

Findings From a Survey of 400 South Carolina Registered Voters on Housing Issues & Policy Solutions

Conducted by Hart Research on Behalf of the National Low Income Housing Coalition

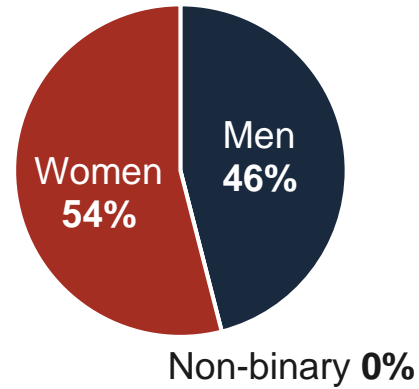


Methodology & Profile of South Carolina Registered Voters

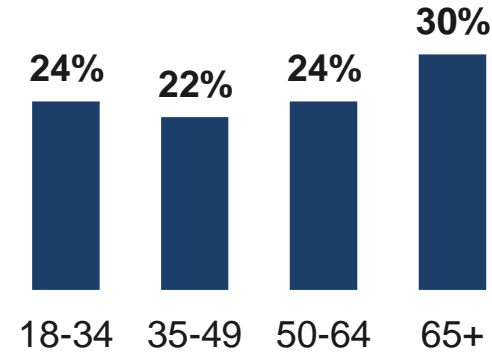
Online survey of 400 registered voters in South Carolina
 Conducted August 22-26, 2024

Credibility interval:
 ±4.9 percentage points
 Error is higher for subgroups

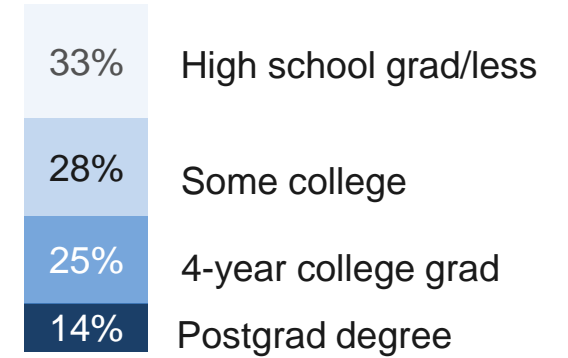
Gender



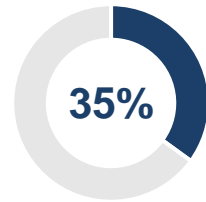
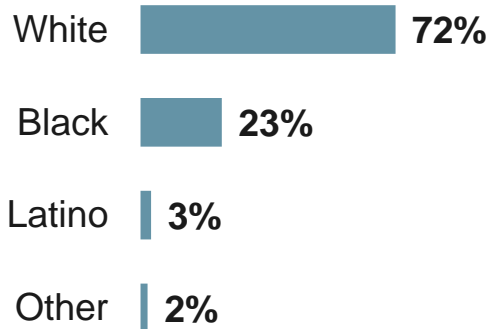
Age



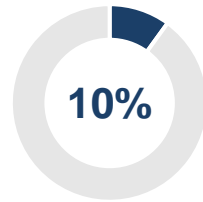
Education



Race

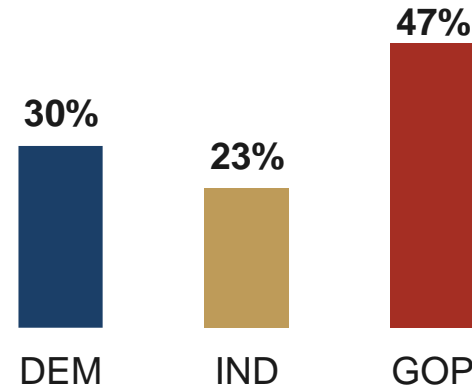


are parents/
 caregivers of
 minor children

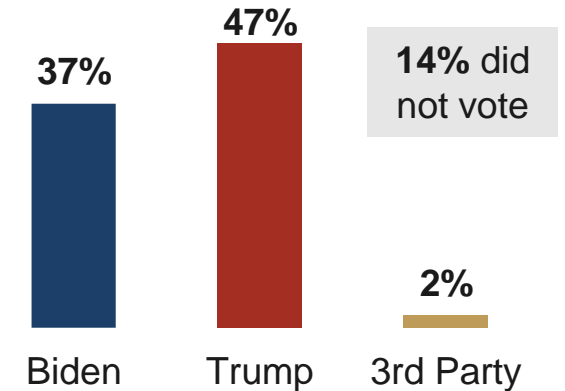


are caregivers
 for an adult
 dependent in
 their home

Party ID

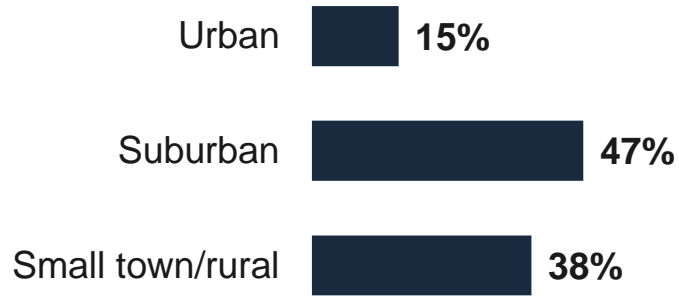


2020 Vote

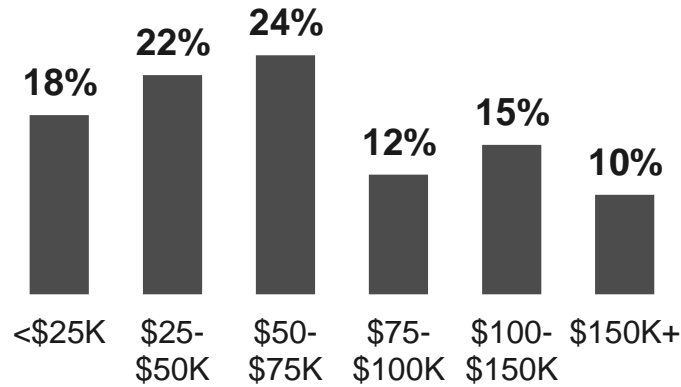


Housing Profile

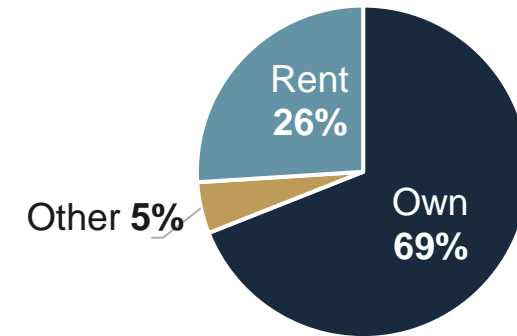
Area



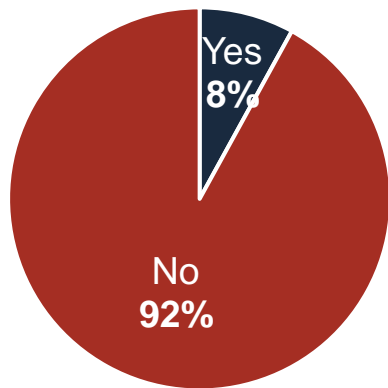
Income



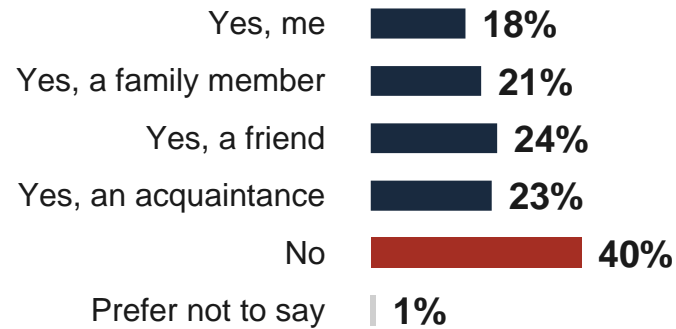
Housing



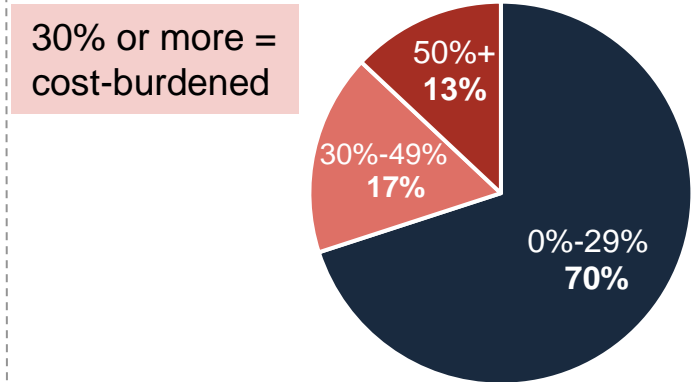
Received housing financial assist.



Know someone homeless



% Income spend on housing



Strategic Takeaways

1

Housing affordability is a key part of cost-of-living concerns. As the cost of living becomes the dominant issue for South Carolina voters, housing affordability stands out as a critical challenge. Four in five voters say housing costs are a problem in their communities, with 64% reporting they have had to make sacrifices—such as cutting back on nutritious food or going into debt—just to cover rent or mortgage.

2

Younger generations, renters, and low-income families face the most acute challenges. Majorities of these groups view the cost of housing as a significant problem, and nearly four in five report making major sacrifices to afford housing. These populations are particularly vulnerable to rising housing costs.

3

The demand for affordable rental housing spans the electorate. While renters are more directly impacted, homeowners also recognize the growing need for affordable rental housing. The perception that finding affordable, quality rental housing is becoming more difficult is shared by both owners and renters alike.

4

Voters believe affordable housing is harder to find now than five years ago. There is a widespread belief that finding stable, affordable housing in South Carolina is more difficult than it was five years ago, with most voters expecting the situation to worsen unless action is taken.

Strategic Takeaways (cont.)

5

Strong bipartisan demand for action on housing affordability. Across the political spectrum, voters are calling for elected leaders to address housing affordability. Leaders who support detailed plans to expand access to affordable housing, protect renters, and provide support services for low-income households gain significant favorability among voters.

6

Protecting renters and providing emergency assistance are top policy priorities. Voters across party lines support policies that protect renters from excessive rent increases and offer emergency assistance to low-income households facing financial hardships. These policies receive high and intense support among South Carolina voters.

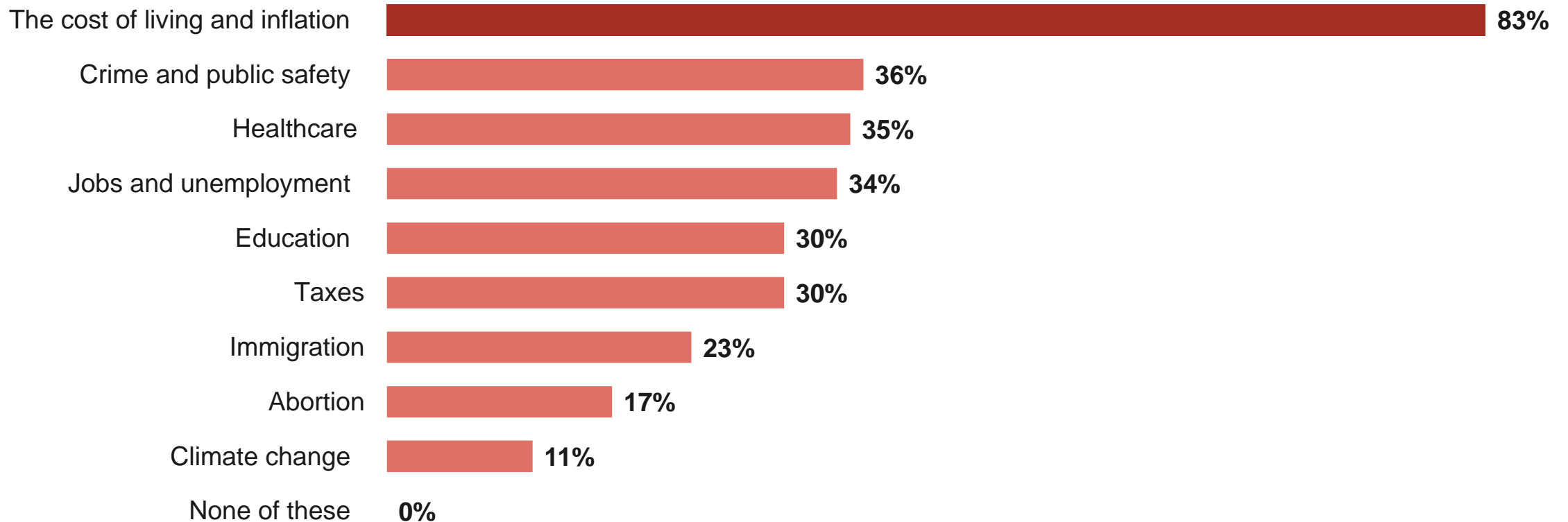
7

Affordable housing and homelessness are closely linked in voters' minds. Voters see the lack of affordable housing, coupled with stagnated wages relative to the cost of living, as major contributors to homelessness. They overwhelmingly reject the idea that policing those experiencing homelessness is the solution, believing it will make it harder for individuals to secure stable housing and employment.

The Importance of Housing & Housing Challenges

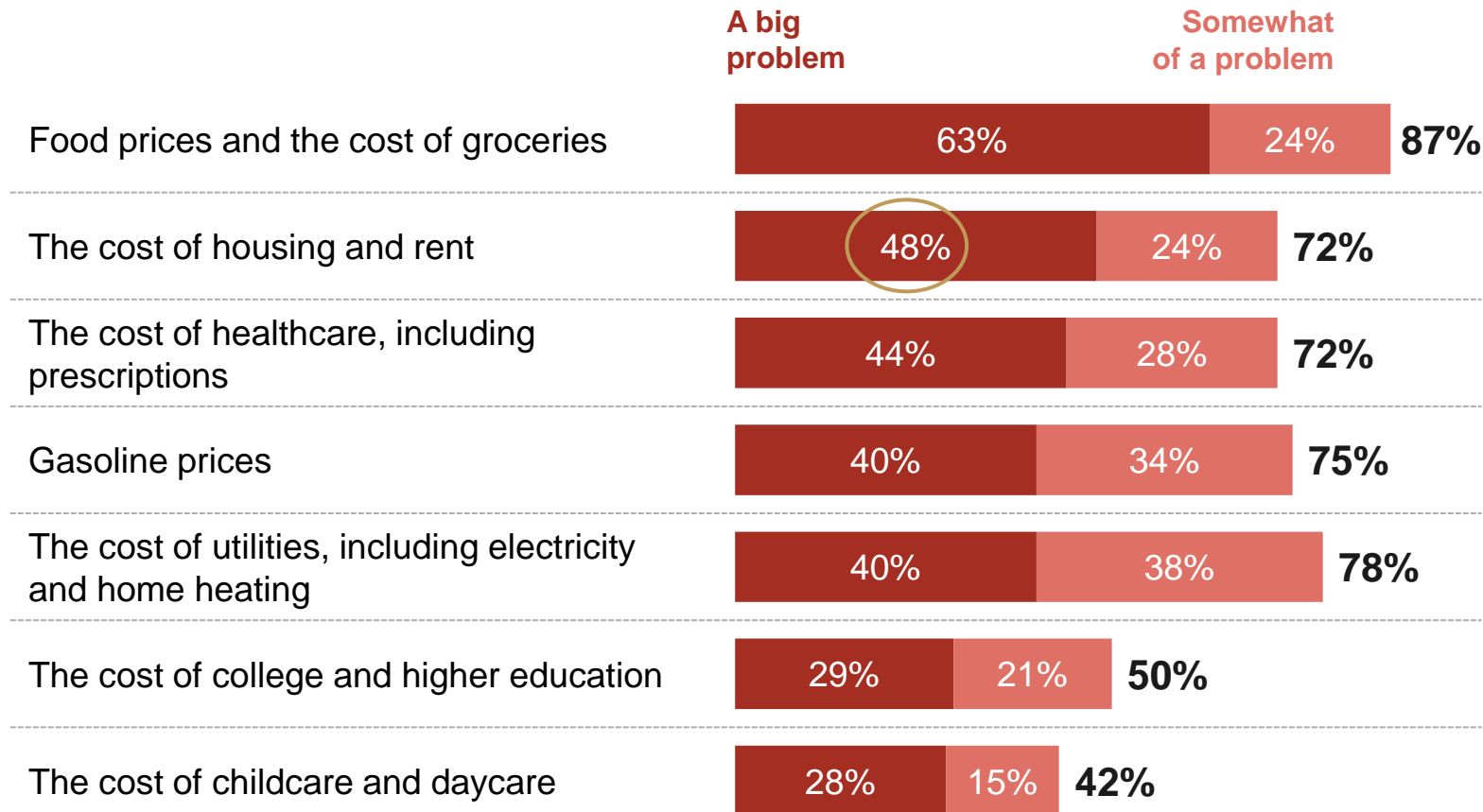
For South Carolinians, the cost of living and inflation overshadow all other concerns.

In your opinion, what are the three most important issues facing South Carolina today?



When it comes to the cost of living, housing is the second biggest challenge, after food.

When it comes to the cost of living, how much of a problem are each of the following for you personally?



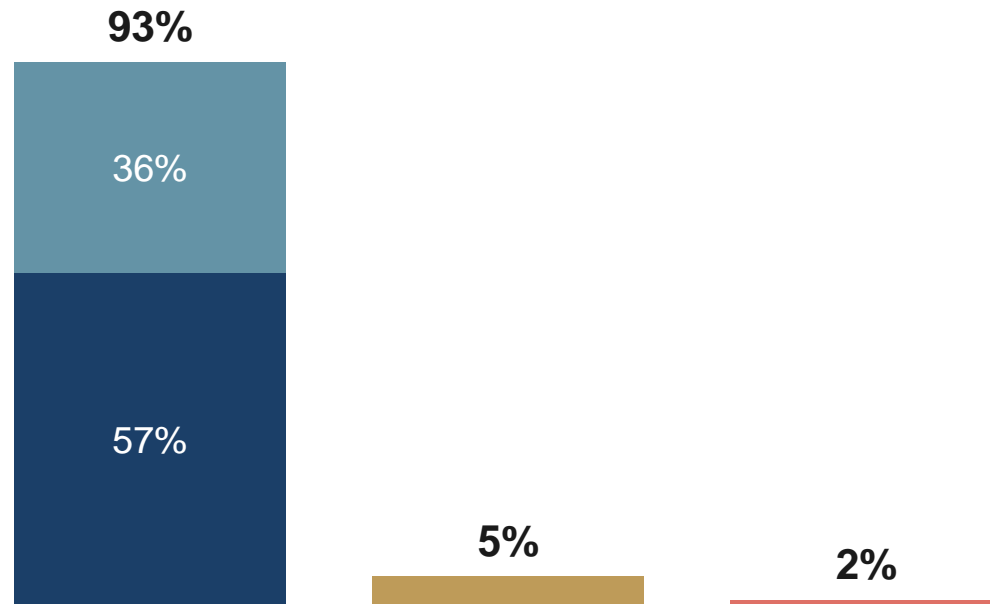
% Cost of housing a BIG problem has higher rates among:

Ages 18-39	65
High school/less educ	57
Income less than \$40k	50
Urban	60
Parents	59
Renters	67
Cost-burdened	65

Across the board, South Carolina voters believe housing is foundational to our security and wellbeing.

When you think about the things that affect people's security and well-being here in South Carolina, how important is having stable affordable housing?

■ Most important ■ Very important ■ Fairly important ■ Somewhat important ■ Not important

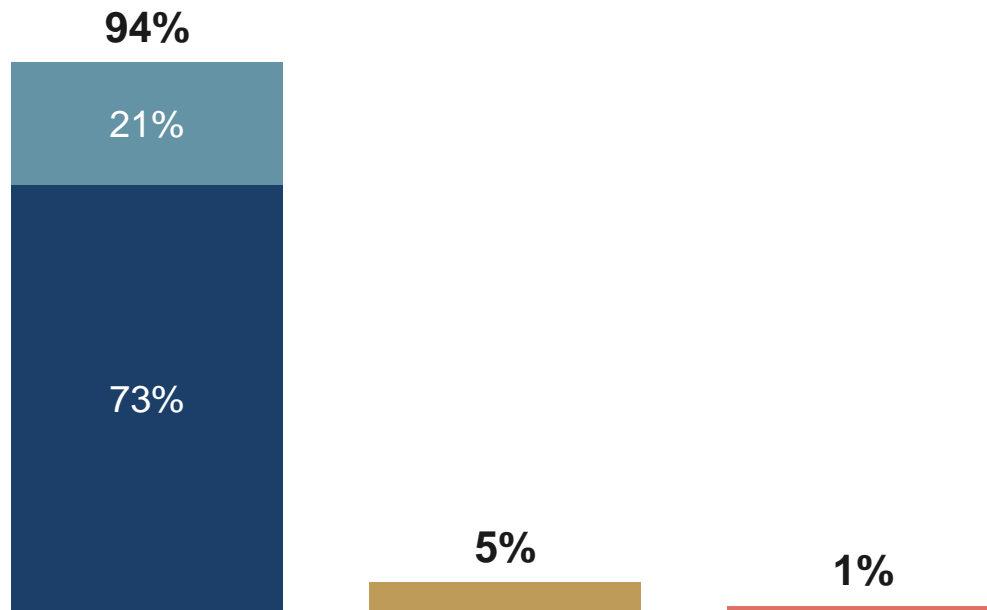


	One of most important/very important %
Women	95
Men	91
18-39	95
40-59	96
60 and older	88
Voters of color	96
White voters	92
Income: less than \$40k	92
Income: \$40k-\$75k	95
Income: \$75k+	92
Urban	99
Suburban	91
Small town/rural	93
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	94
Charlotte-Columbia	92
Rest of South Carolina	94
Own	92
Rent	95
Democrats	99
Independents	88
Republicans	92

Significant majorities across the electorate believe it is very important for communities to have affordable, quality rental housing.

How important do you think it is for communities to have affordable, quality rental housing?

■ Very important ■ Fairly important ■ Just somewhat important ■ Not that important ■ Not important at all

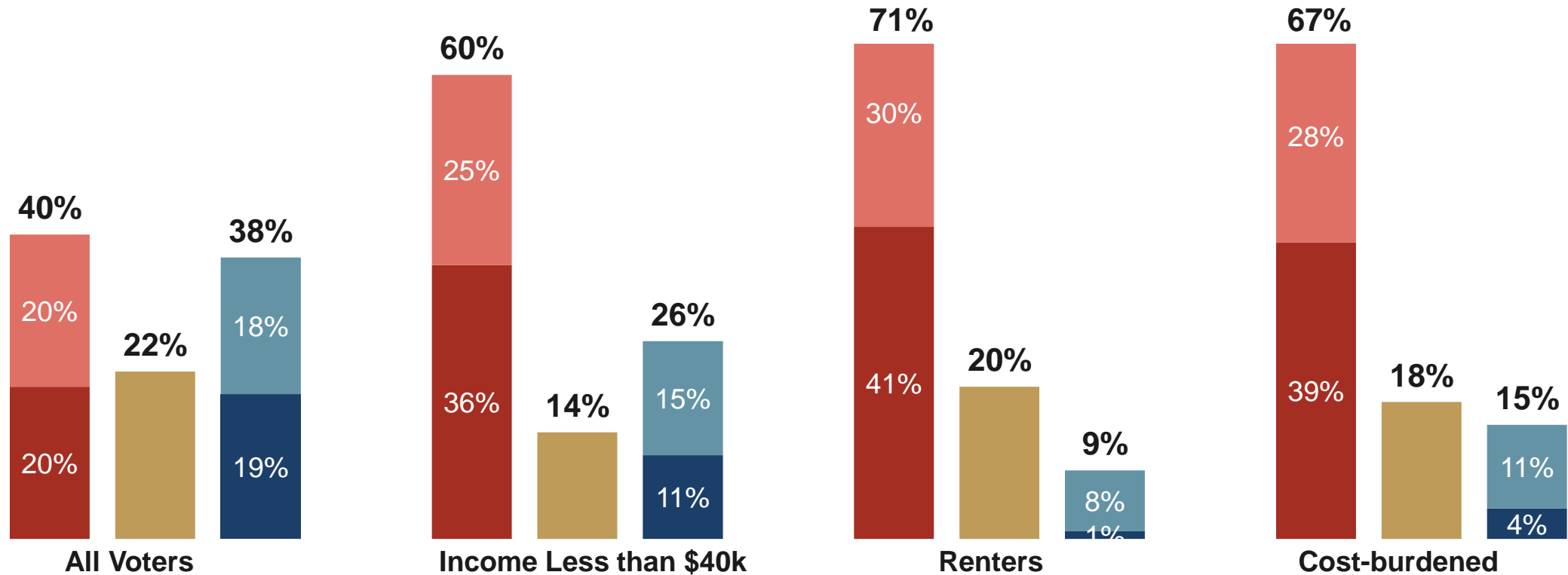


	Very important %
Women	78
Men	67
18-39	77
40-59	71
60 and older	71
Voters of color	84
White voters	69
Income: less than \$40k	84
Income: \$40k-\$75k	73
Income: \$75k+	63
Urban	87
Suburban	72
Small town/rural	69
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	70
Charlotte-Columbia	71
Rest of South Carolina	77
Own	67
Rent	87
Democrats	88
Independents	77
Republicans	62

Concerns about housing costs are deeply personal for many voters, especially renters and those with lower incomes.

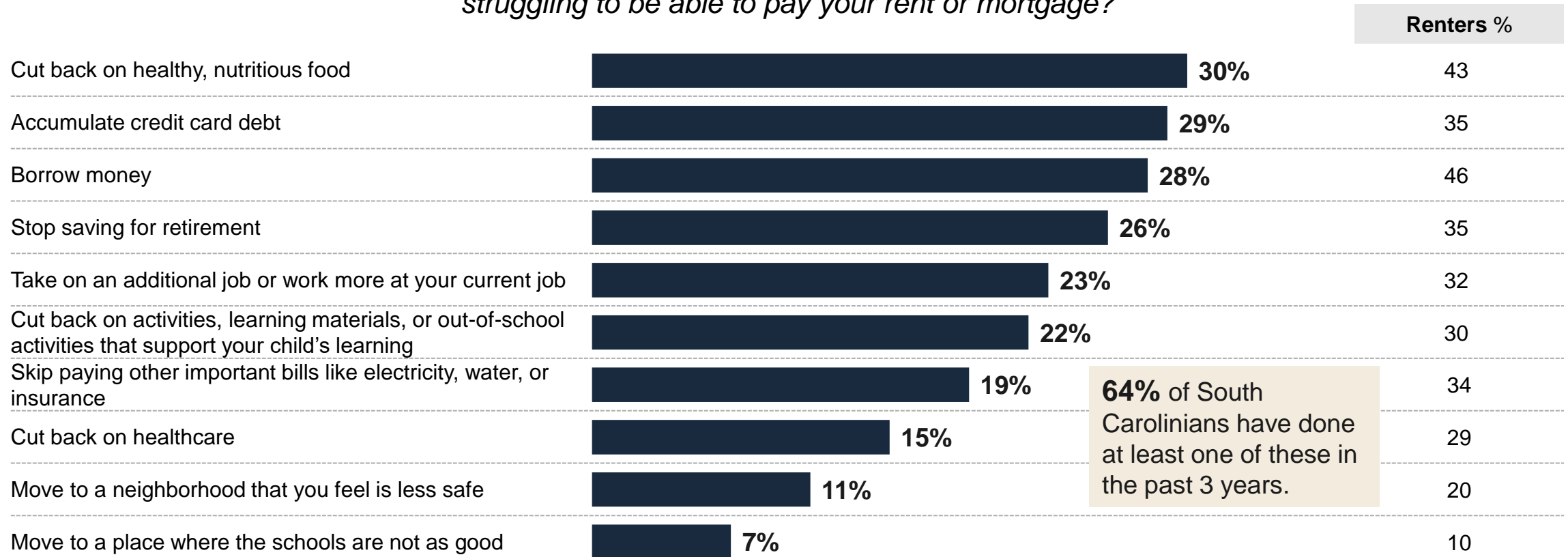
For you personally, is the amount you pay for housing--either your monthly mortgage payment or your rent...?

■ Very big concern
 ■ Fairly big concern
 ■ Somewhat a concern
 ■ Not much a concern
 ■ Not a concern



More than three in five South Carolinians, including nearly four in five renters, have had to make significant sacrifices to cover their housing costs in the past three years.

Which of the following actions, if any, have you personally had to do in the past three years because you were struggling to be able to pay your rent or mortgage?

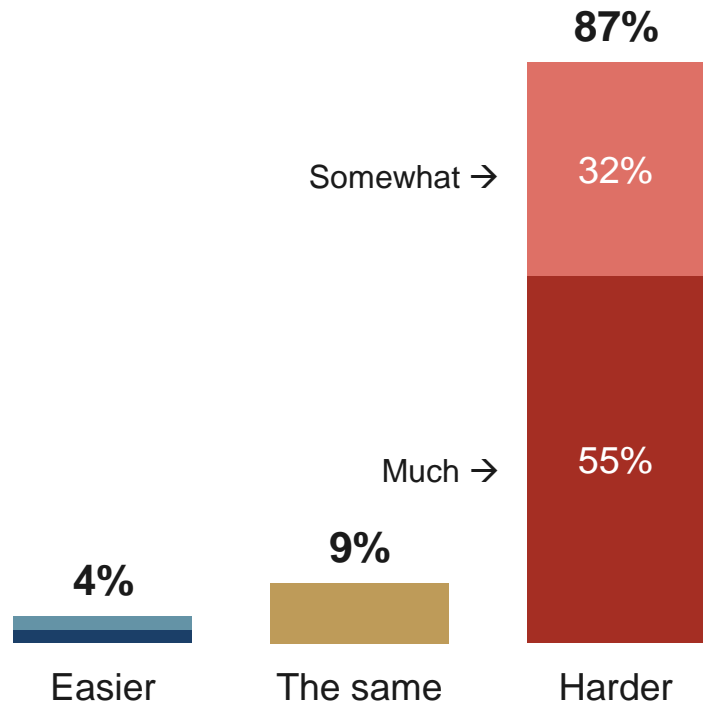




Perspectives on the Housing Situation Statewide and in their Community

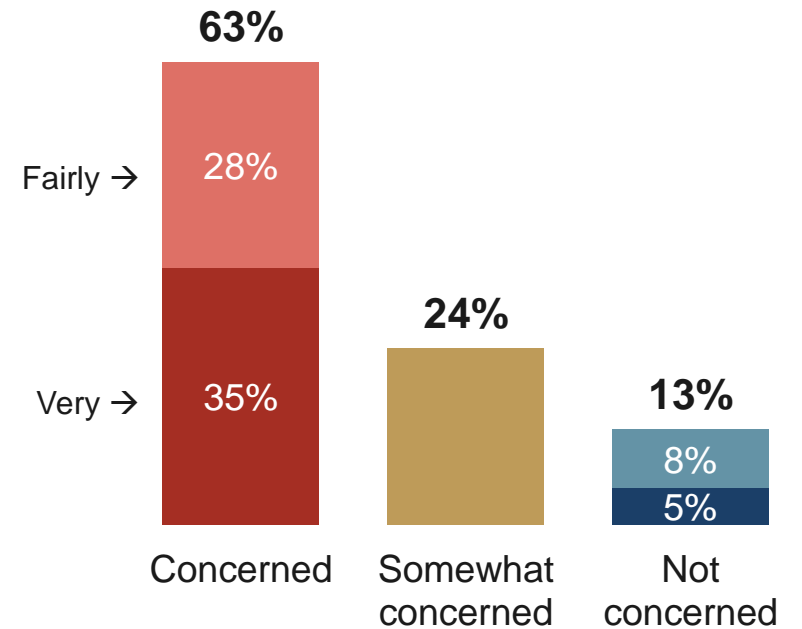
The vast majority of South Carolina voters believe it is more difficult today than it was five years ago to find stable, affordable housing in the state, with many expressing concern about evictions.

Compared to four or five years ago, do you think it is easier or harder today for people to find stable housing they can afford here in South Carolina?



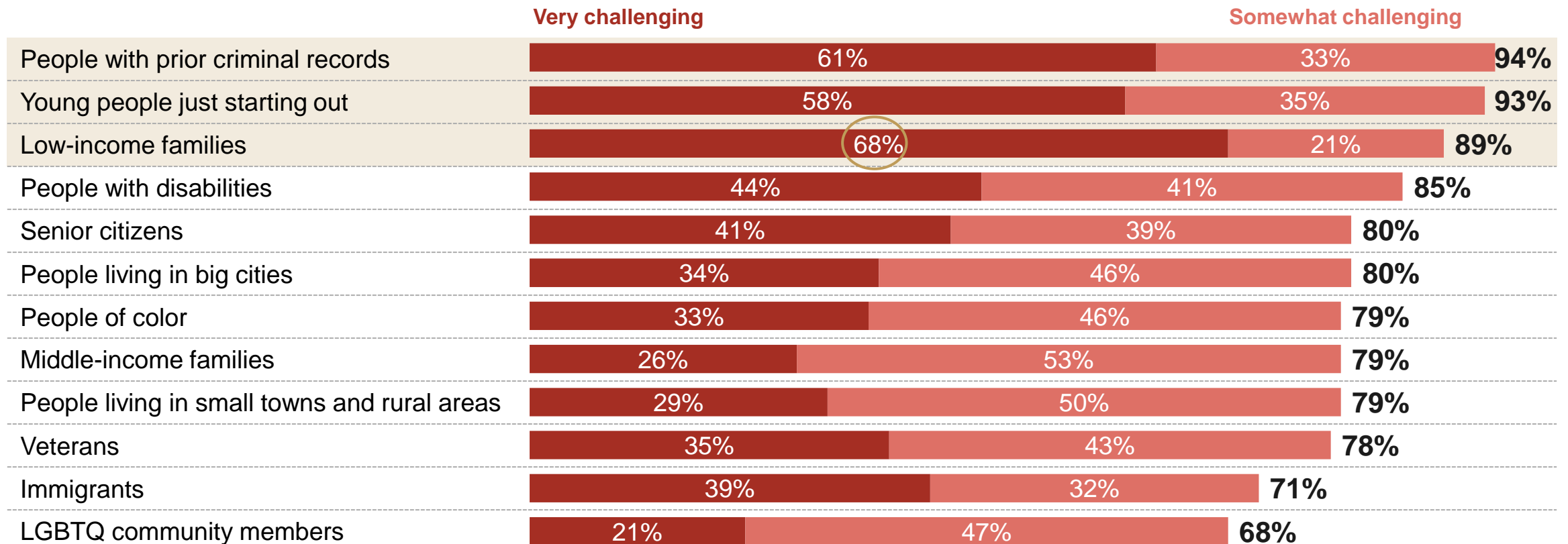
% Harder	
Urban	81
Suburban	93
Small town/rural	83
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	96
Charlotte-Columbia	82
Rest of South Carolina	86
Own	87
Rent	90

How concerned, if at all, are you about South Carolinians being evicted from their homes because they cannot afford their rent?



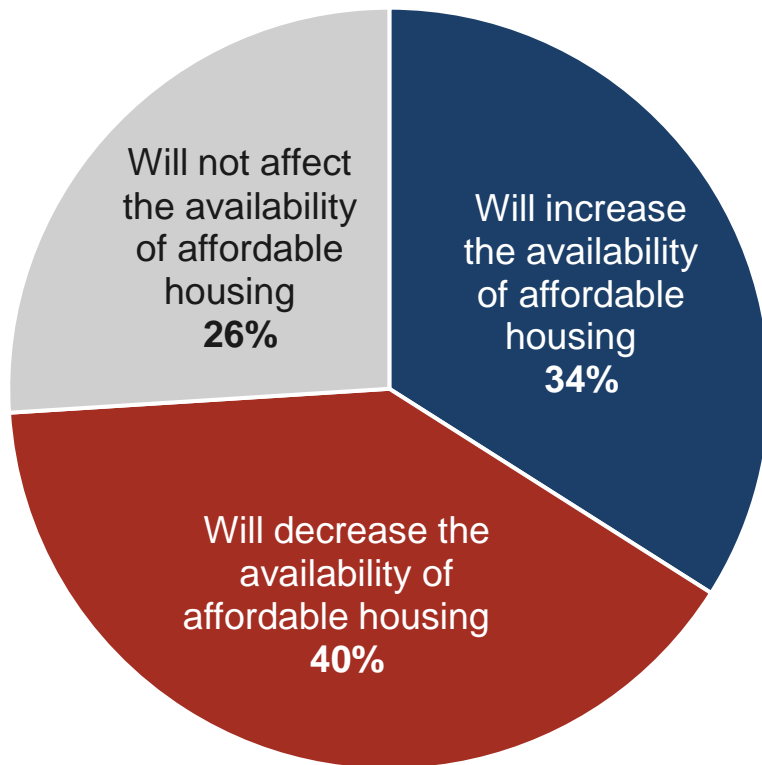
South Carolinians believe finding stable, affordable housing is challenging for everyone, but especially for some groups.

How easy or challenging do you think it is for each of the following to find stable housing they can afford?



Voters are mixed on what they think the impact of the expanding economy will be on the availability of affordable housing.

What impact, if any, do you think the expanding economy and growth of new businesses here in South Carolina will have on the availability of affordable housing for current residents?

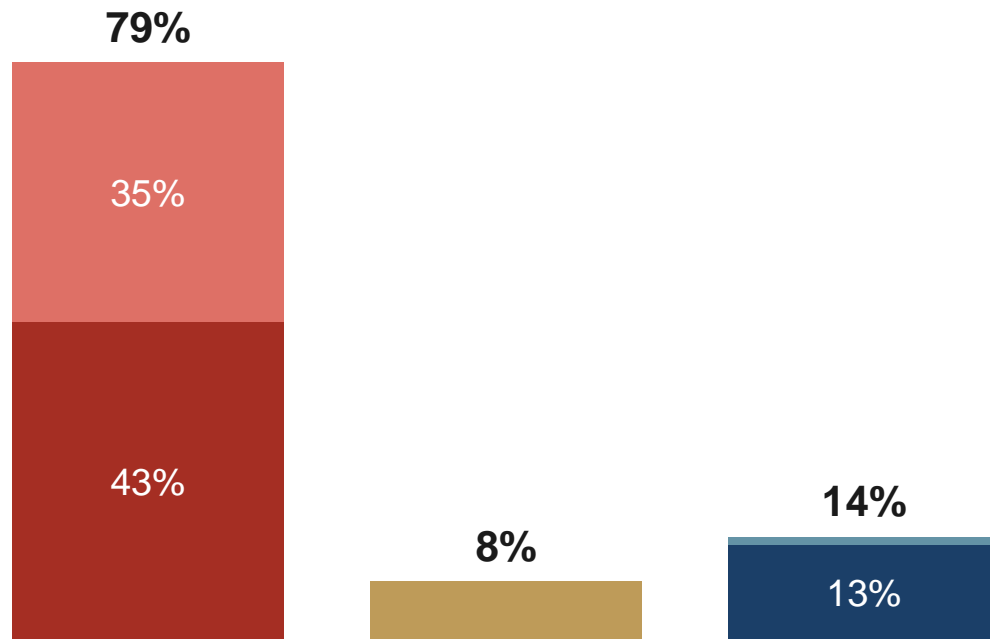


	% Will increase	% Will decrease	% No affect
Urban	42	28	29
Suburban	33	41	26
Small town/rural	31	43	25
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	25	50	25
Charlotte-Columbia	40	31	29
Rest of South Carolina	35	40	26
Democrats	36	38	25
Independents	31	38	31
Republicans	33	42	25

Significant majorities across South Carolina think housing affordability is a serious problem in their own community.

Do you think housing affordability is a problem or not really a problem in your community or the area where you live?

■ Very serious problem ■ Fairly serious problem ■ Somewhat a problem ■ Minor problem ■ Not a problem



	Serious problem %
Women	83
Men	73
18-39	81
40-59	84
60 and older	72
Voters of color	73
White voters	81
Income: less than \$40k	80
Income: \$40k-\$75k	77
Income: \$75k+	79
Urban	78
Suburban	82
Small town/rural	75
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	82
Charlotte-Columbia	75
Rest of South Carolina	79
Own	78
Rent	84
Democrats	78
Independents	75
Republicans	81

Why South Carolinians Think Housing Affordability is a Serious Problem

In their own words:



“It is very difficult for people to find places to live working just one 40 hr/week job. **With affordable housing as hard as it is to get, I could not even consider moving even if I wanted or needed to.**”

“It is very important to be able to afford housing, and with the rate of inflation driving up the cost of goods and services it can be very challenging.”

“Housing affordability is a very serious problem in my community because there are a **lot of homeless people**. Some of them even have **families or are veterans**. **I think it is crucial that we figure out a way to house everyone.**”

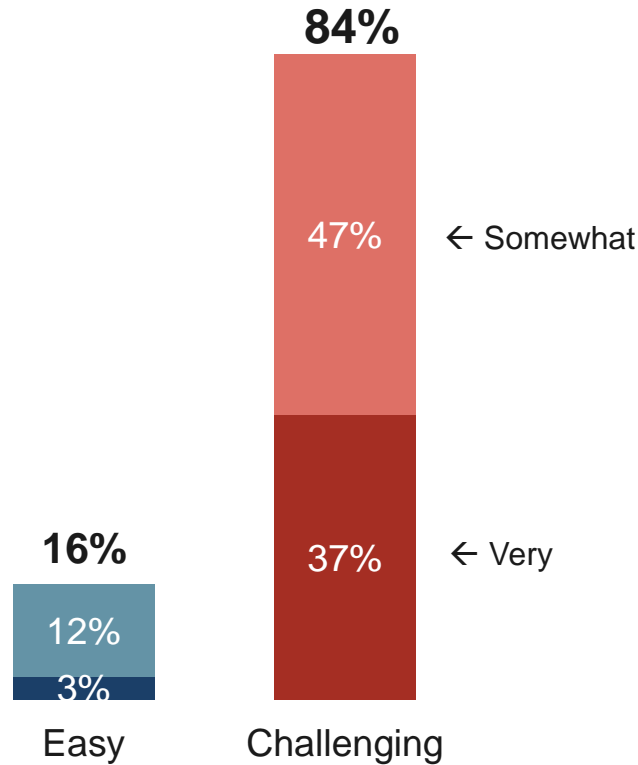
“Housing affordability is a serious problem because of high interest rates and high rents.”

“**Rent is high and it keeps going up every time the lease is renewed.**”

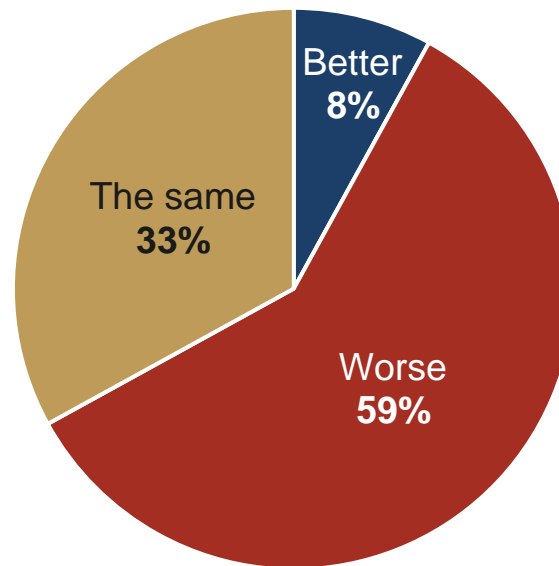
“I have a criminal record and avoid moving at all costs.”

Voters see the rental market in their communities as already a challenge and believe it is only getting worse.

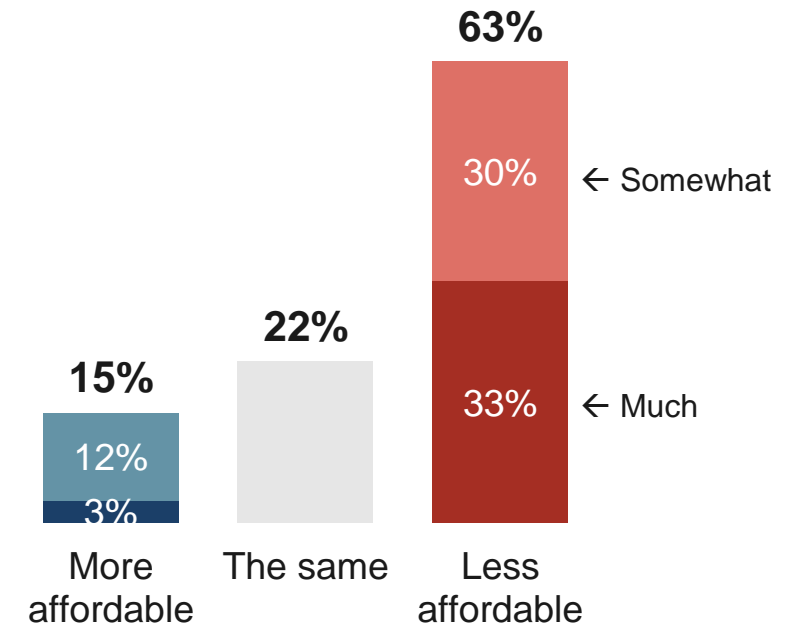
How easy or challenging is it to find affordable, quality rental housing in your community or the area where you live?



Would you say that the availability of quality, affordable rental housing in your community or the area where you live is an issue that is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?



Over the next year, do you think rent in your community or in the area where you live will become more affordable, less affordable, or stay about the same?



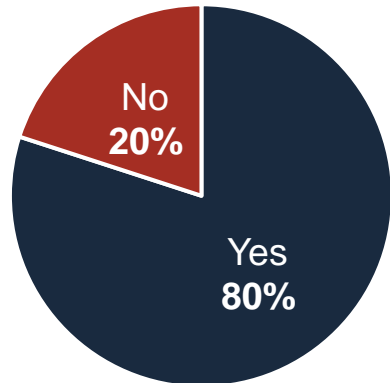
The pessimistic outlook for rental housing in their communities is pervasive across the state and is shared by both renters and homeowners.

	% In your community...		
	<u>Challenging</u> to find affordable, quality rental housing	Availability of affordable, quality rental housing is <u>getting worse</u>	Outlook for rent in the next year: <u>less affordable</u>
Urban	77	59	53
Suburban	88	64	64
Small town/rural	83	54	66
Greenville-Spartanburg-Asheville-Anderson	85	66	68
Charlotte-Columbia	82	50	53
Rest of South Carolina	86	63	69
Own	84	61	65
Rent	84	60	64

Role of Government in Addressing Issues of Housing Affordability and Access

Across the political spectrum, South Carolina voters want to see their elected leaders take action on housing issues.

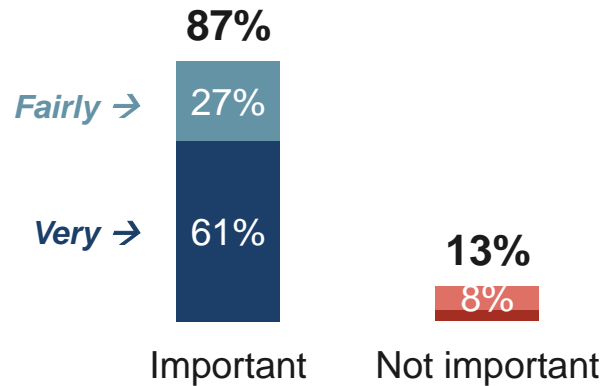
Do you think government has an important role to play in making sure there are enough affordable places for people to live?



% Gov't has important role to play

Democrats	96
Independents	82
Republicans	70

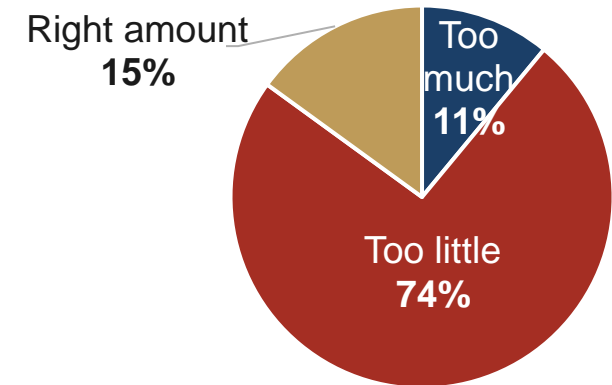
How important is it for South Carolina's elected leaders to address problems related to housing affordability and people's ability to buy or rent housing that meets their needs?



% VERY important for leaders to act

Democrats	76
Independents	60
Republicans	51

Do you think the government is doing too much, too little, or the right amount to make sure people can continue to cover their housing costs?



% Government doing too little

Democrats	85
Independents	74
Republicans	66

Voters express broad agreement with several statements of principal about the need to do more to address the housing challenges many South Carolinians face.

% Strongly/somewhat agree

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Ensuring that everyone has a safe, decent, affordable place to live should be a top priority for South Carolina.



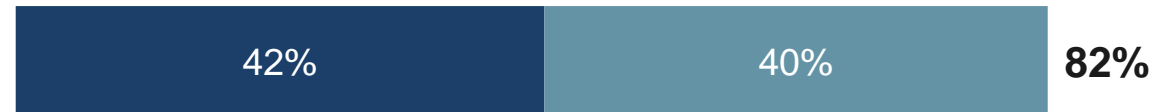
The recent increases in the cost of living have demonstrated that the government needs to invest more in affordable housing over the long-term.



Providing housing assistance to prevent evictions and homelessness should be considered as urgent a priority as investments in healthcare.



Our elected leaders are not putting enough attention on people's need for help to pay for their housing.



South Carolina voters express high levels of support for all of the policy proposals we tested in Opportunity Starts at Home's policy agenda.

% Strongly/somewhat favor

Strongly favor

Somewhat favor

Protect renters from excessive rent increases, unfair evictions, harassment, and discrimination by landlords.

65%

25%

90%

Provide emergency assistance to help cover rent if low-income households face an unexpected hardship, such as losing a job or a medical emergency.

58%

32%

90%

Expand stability services to help households in a crisis avoid eviction and homelessness.

54%

35%

89%

Ensure affordable rental homes are located in neighborhoods that are safe, have good schools, and good job opportunities.

57%

31%

89%

Ensure families with young children who receive rental assistance can afford to live in neighborhoods that are safe, have good schools, and have job opportunities.

55%

33%

88%

South Carolina voters express high levels of support for all of the policy proposals we tested in Opportunity Starts at Home's policy agenda (cont.)

% Strongly/somewhat favor

Strongly favor

Somewhat favor

Expand rental assistance to help households with the lowest incomes afford housing.



Expand investments to build more rental homes that are affordable for the lowest-income people.



Expand rental assistance to help the 17 million households who currently qualify for assistance but are not receiving it.



Give renters a tax break, similar to the federal tax break homeowners currently receive.



Allow counties and cities in South Carolina to require that new housing developments (both multi-family or single-family) set aside up to 25% of their units as affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families.



All the proposals receive solid support across the political spectrum.

% Strongly/somewhat favor

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Protect renters from excessive rent increases, unfair evictions, harassment, and discrimination by landlords.	98%	84%	87%
Ensure affordable rental homes are located in neighborhoods that are safe, have good schools, and good job opportunities.	98%	80%	87%
Provide emergency assistance to help cover rent if low-income households face an unexpected hardship, such as losing a job or a medical emergency.	97%	88%	86%
Ensure families with young children who receive rental assistance can afford to live in neighborhoods that are safe, have good schools, and have job opportunities.	97%	80%	86%
Expand stability services to help households in a crisis avoid eviction and homelessness.	96%	88%	85%
Allow counties and cities in South Carolina to require that new housing developments (both multi-family or single-family) set aside up to 25% of their units as affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families.	95%	76%	67%
Expand rental assistance to help households with the lowest incomes afford housing.	94%	85%	82%
Expand rental assistance to help the 17 million households who currently qualify for assistance but are not receiving it.	93%	82%	79%
Expand investments to build more rental homes that are affordable for the lowest-income people.	91%	84%	79%
Give renters a tax break, similar to the federal tax break homeowners currently receive.	91%	81%	73%

When asked to prioritize policies, voters rank protecting renters and low-income households as the most important for elected leaders to address.

Top three most important actions for elected officials to take.

Protect renters from excessive rent increases, unfair evictions, harassment, and discrimination by landlords.



Top priority across the state among Democrats and Republicans.

Provide **emergency assistance** to help cover rent if low-income households face an unexpected hardship, such as losing a job or a medical emergency.



Top priority among Independents.

Ensure families with **young children** who receive rental assistance can afford to live in neighborhoods that are safe, have good schools, and have job opportunities.



Ensure affordable **rental homes are located in neighborhoods** that are safe, have good schools, and good job opportunities



Give **renters a tax break**, similar to the federal tax break homeowners currently receive.



Expand rental assistance to help the 17 million households who currently qualify for assistance but are not receiving it.



Expand **stability services** to help households in a crisis avoid eviction and homelessness.



Expand rental assistance to **help households with the lowest incomes** afford housing.



Expand investments to **build more rental homes** that are affordable for the lowest-income people.

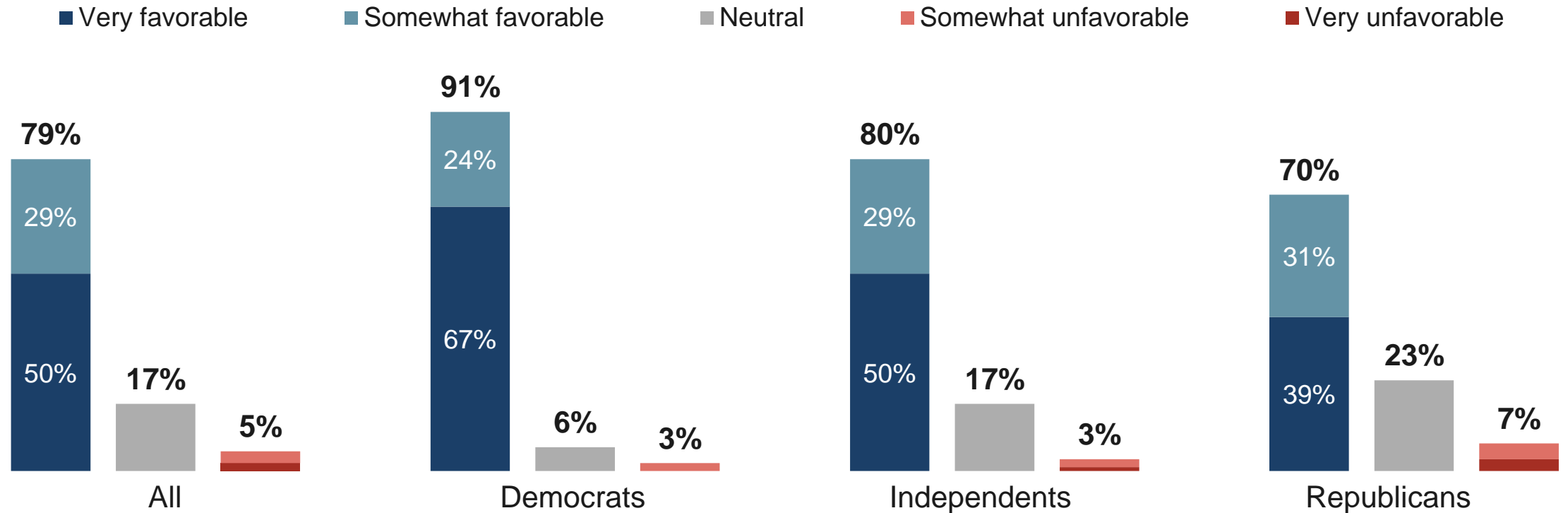


Allow counties and cities in South Carolina to require that new housing developments (both multi-family or single-family) **set aside up to 25% of their units as affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families.**



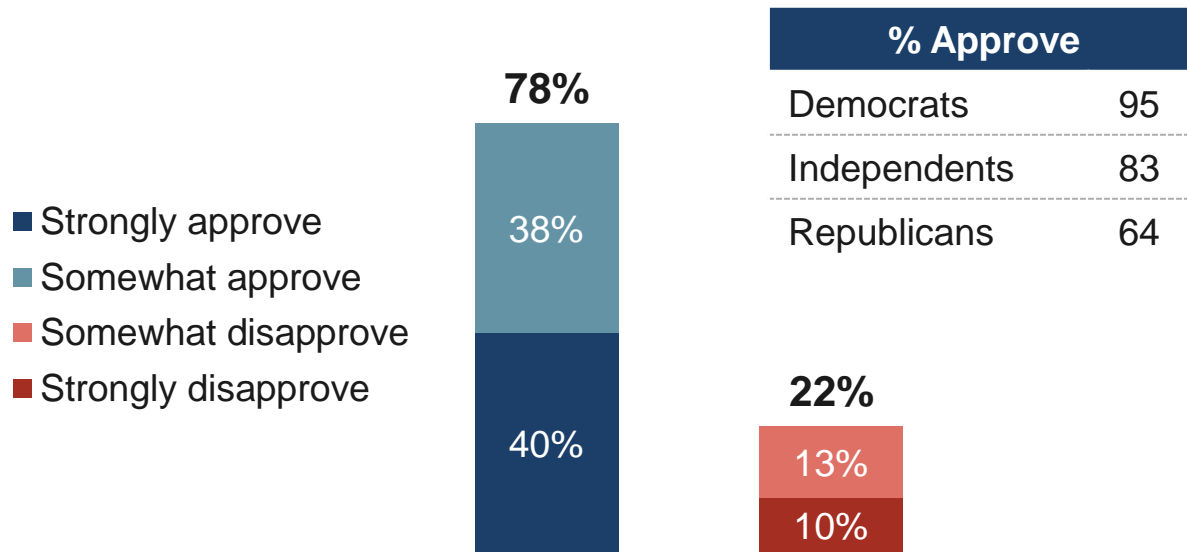
Supporting this policy agenda will give elected leaders a favorability boost with voters across the political spectrum.

Suppose you learned that an elected official from South Carolina has a detailed plan for making housing more affordable that includes the policies you just read about. How would you feel about this elected official?



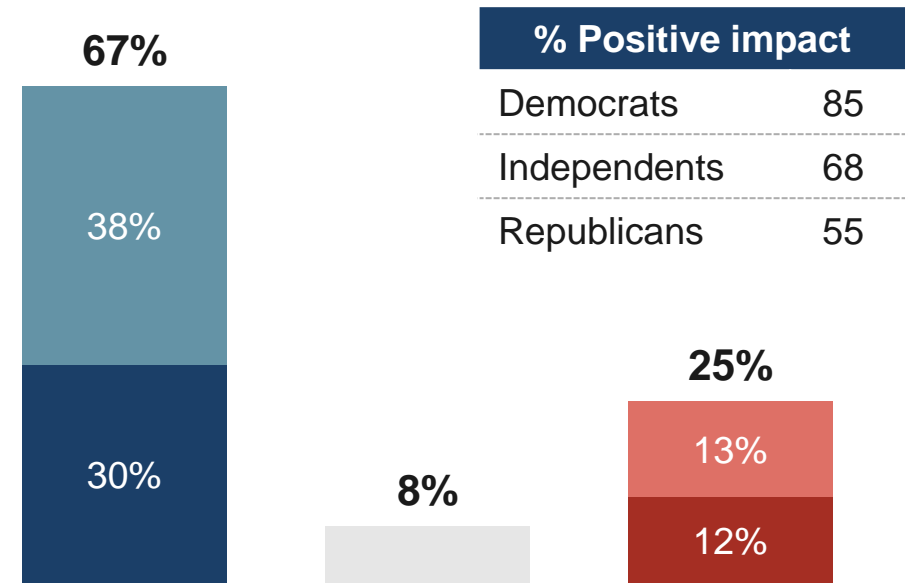
South Carolina voters express strong support for requiring new housing developments to set aside 25% of their units to create more housing for low- and moderate-income families.

Would you approve or disapprove if the city or county where you live required new multi-family and single-family housing developments to set aside up to 25% of their units as affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families?



What kind of impact do you think requiring new multi-family and single-family housing developments to set aside up to 25% of their units as affordable housing would have on the area where you live?

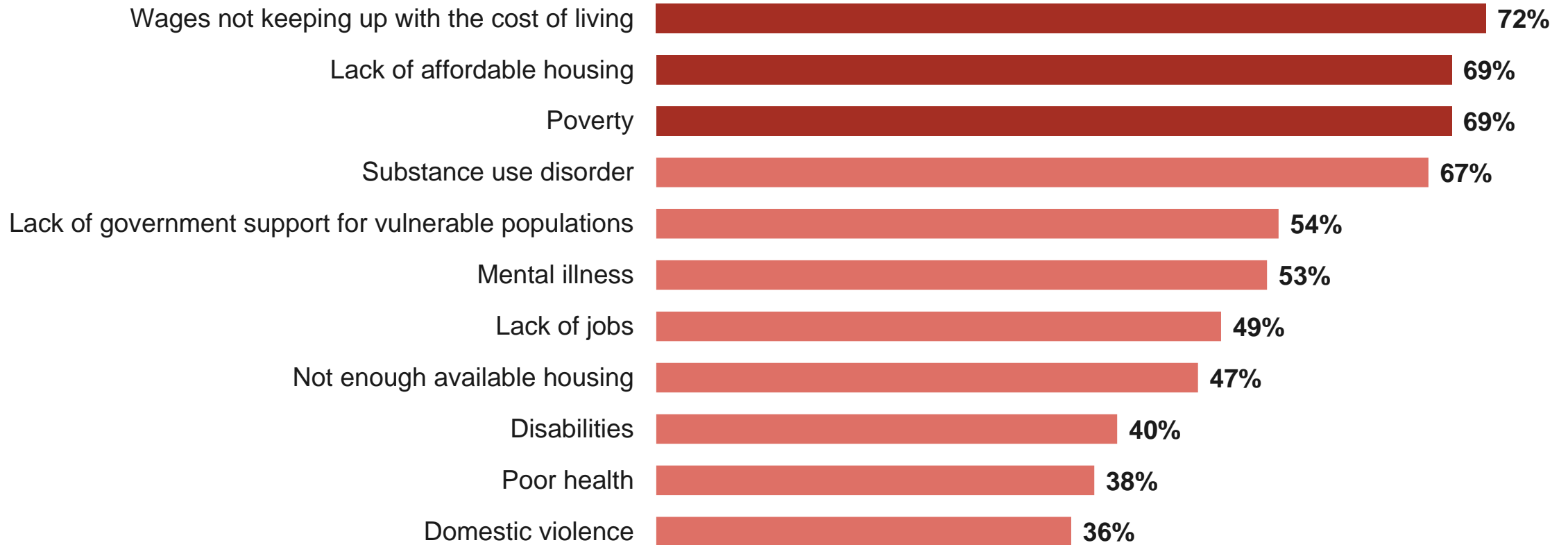
■ Very POS ■ Somewhat POS ■ Somewhat NEG ■ Very NEG ■ No impact



Perspectives on Homelessness

Low wages, a lack of affordable housing, and poverty are viewed as the top causes of homelessness.

% is a major cause of homelessness



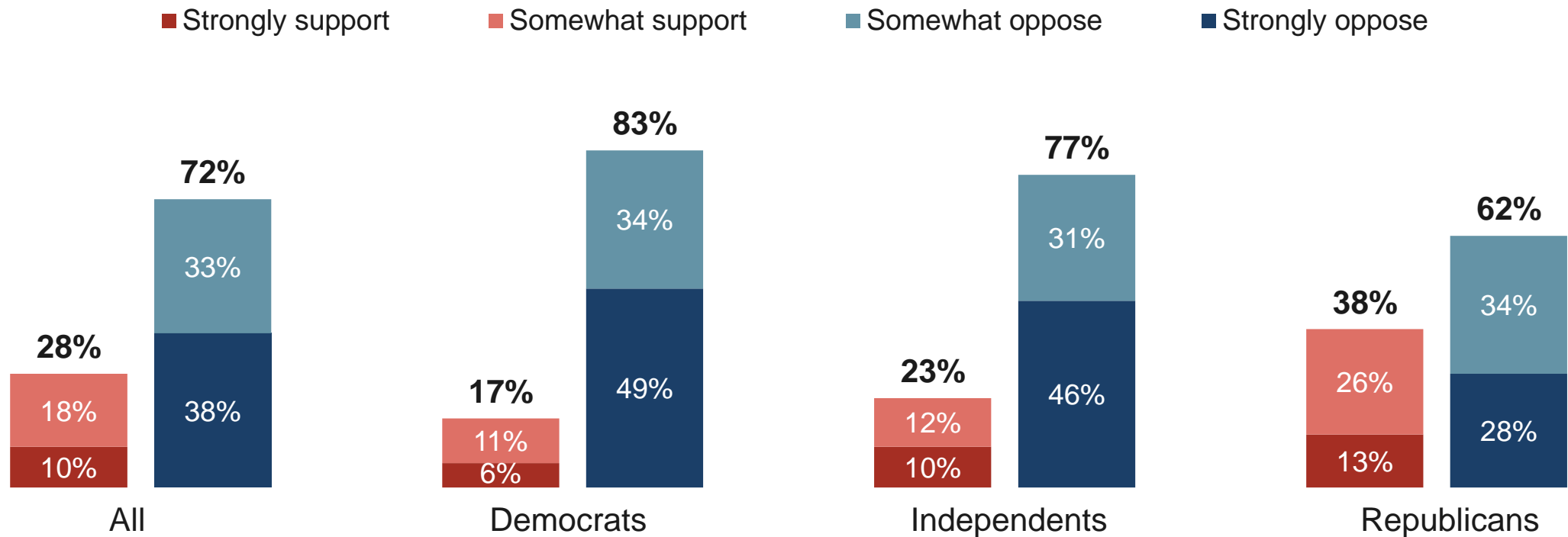
Perspectives on the primary causes of homelessness vary somewhat by political affiliation.

% is a major cause of homelessness

Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Lack of affordable housing (79%)	Lack of affordable housing (80%)	Wages not keeping up (71%)
Poverty (73%)	Wages not keeping up (79%)	Substance use disorder (69%)
Wages not keeping up (69%)	Poverty (72%)	Poverty (65%)

Most South Carolinians oppose arresting, ticketing, and fining people who are unhoused and sleep in public spaces.

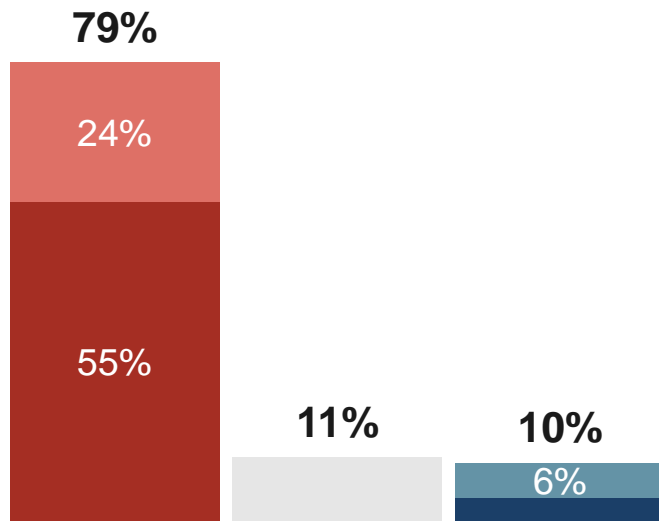
Do you support or oppose cities and local governments arresting, ticketing, and fining people who sleep in public spaces when no shelter is available?



The large majority of South Carolinians recognize the detrimental impact of these policies on the unhoused.

■ Makes it a lot harder ■ Makes it somewhat harder ■ Makes it somewhat easier ■ Makes it a lot easier ■ No impact

*When people experiencing homelessness are arrested, ticketed, and fined, what kind of impact do you think that has on **their ability to find and keep stable housing**?*



*When people experiencing homelessness are arrested, ticketed, and fined, what kind of impact do you think that has on **their ability to find and keep stable employment**?*

