

B | Center for
Middle East Policy
at BROOKINGS

American Attitudes toward the Middle East

A PUBLIC OPINION POLL BY SHIBLEY TELHAMI

A survey of the



CRITICAL ISSUES POLL

With Nielsen Scarborough

Shibley Telhami, Director
Stella Rouse, Associate Director

Valuable assistance was provided by Scott Willoth, Tisha Jett, Lauren Morris, and January Lee from Nielsen Scarborough. Brittany Kyser, Connor Kopchick, Tanya Anderson, Molly Schreier, and Anthony Richardson were particularly helpful.

*The University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll probes domestic and international issues that are central to our policy discourse and is led by Professors Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse.

To view the questionnaire, please visit: go.umd.edu/UMCIPMiddleEast

Survey Methodology (September 2019)

The survey was carried out September 3-20, 2019 online from a nationally representative sample of Nielsen Scarborough's probability-based panel, originally recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of adults provided by Survey Sampling International. The poll was conducted among a national poll of 3,016 respondents, with a margin of error of +/- 1.78%. Overall, the sample was adjusted to reflect population estimates (Scarborough USA+/Gallup) for Americans. The survey variables balanced through weighting were: age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, level of education, census regional division, and political party affiliation.

Survey Methodology (October 2019)

The survey was carried out October 4-10, 2019 online from a nationally representative sample of Nielsen Scarborough's probability-based panel, originally recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of adults provided by Survey Sampling International. The poll was conducted among a national poll of 1,260 respondents (958 for the Syria question), with a margin of error of +/- 2.76%. Overall, the sample was adjusted to reflect population estimates (Scarborough USA+/Gallup) for Americans. The survey variables balanced through weighting were: age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, level of education, census regional division, and political party affiliation.

**American Attitudes
toward
Syria and Iran**

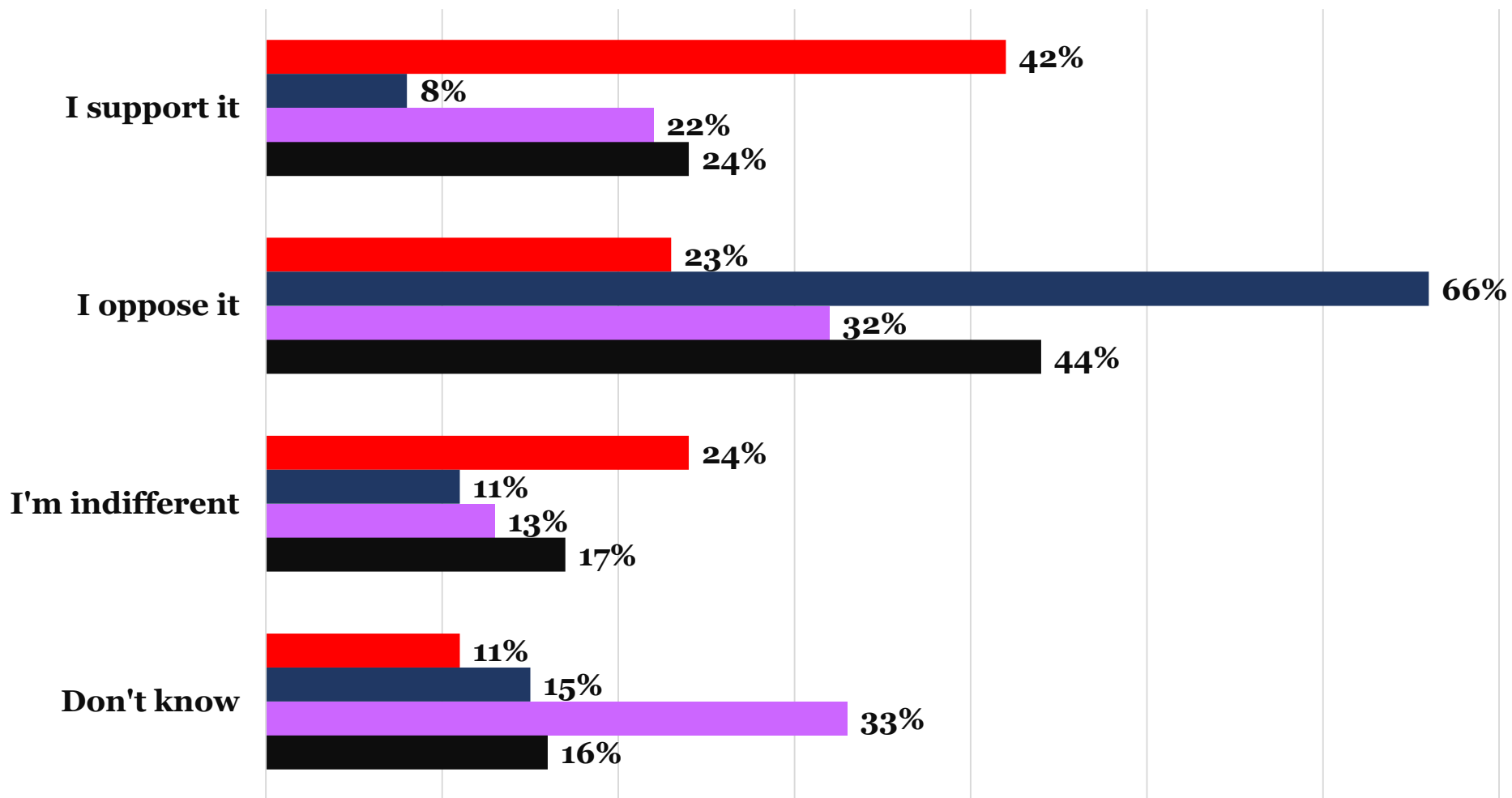
As you may know, the United States has recently announced the withdrawal of its forces from northern Syria, ahead of a Turkish military campaign there. President Trump explained the move by saying: "it is time for us to get out of these ridiculous Endless Wars, many of them tribal, and bring our soldiers home." Critics have argued that it was the wrong move because it leaves our Kurdish allies in northern Syria vulnerable and gives the upper hand to Turkey which, although a member of NATO, is considered by some as a foe whose aims have been questioned.

Tell me how you feel about the move to withdraw U.S. forces from northern Syria:

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Tell me how you feel about the move to withdraw U.S. forces from northern Syria:

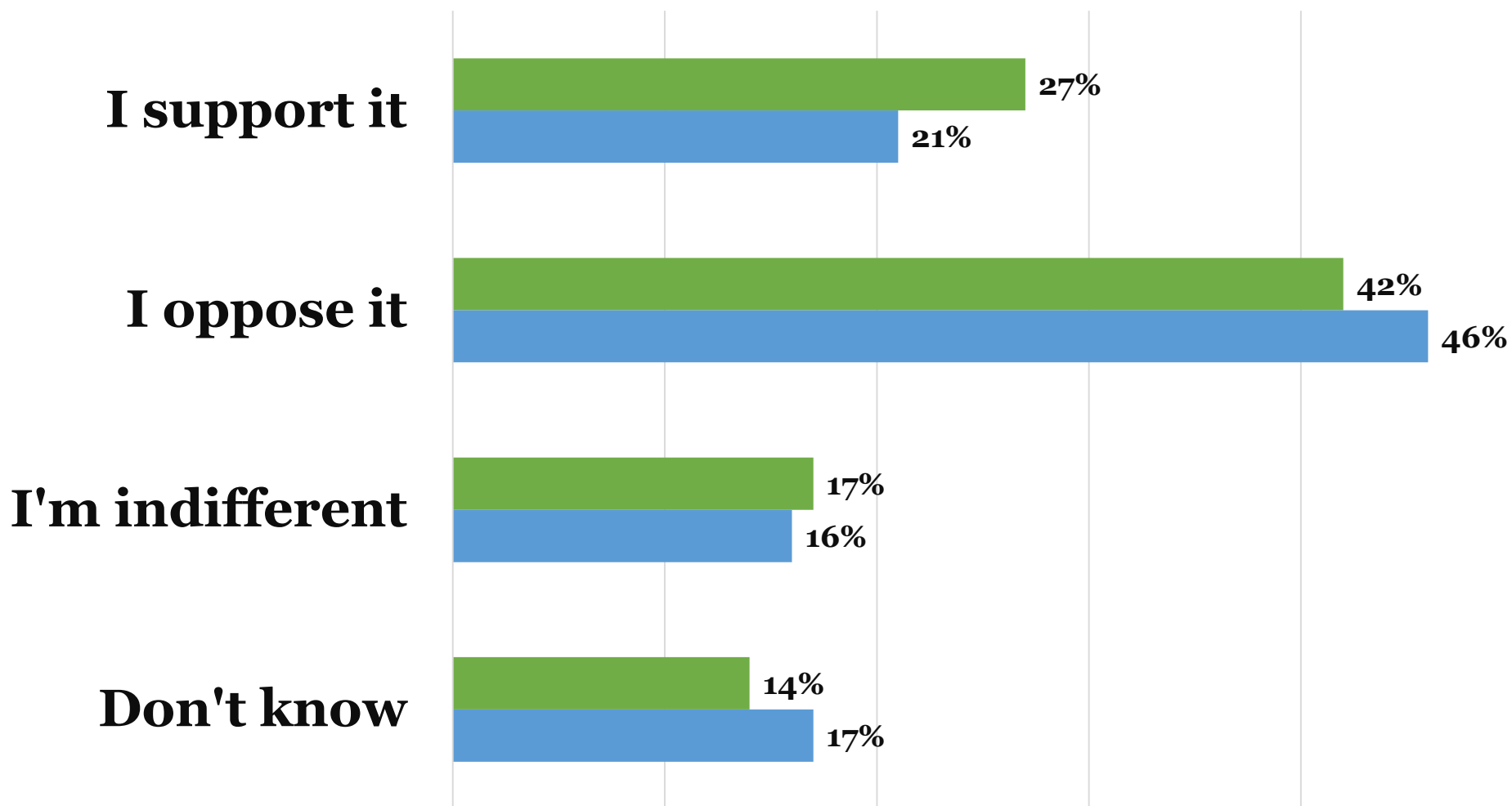
■ Republicans **■ Democrats** **■ Independents** **■ Total**



As you may know, the United States has recently announced the withdrawal of its forces from northern Syria, ahead of a Turkish military campaign there. President Trump explained the move by saying: "it is time for us to get out of these ridiculous Endless Wars, many of them tribal, and bring our soldiers home." Critics have argued that it was the wrong move because it leaves our Kurdish allies in northern Syria vulnerable and gives the upper hand to Turkey which, although a member of NATO, is considered by some as a foe whose aims have been questioned. Tell me how you feel about the move to withdraw U.S. forces from northern Syria:

October 7th/8th

October 9th/10th



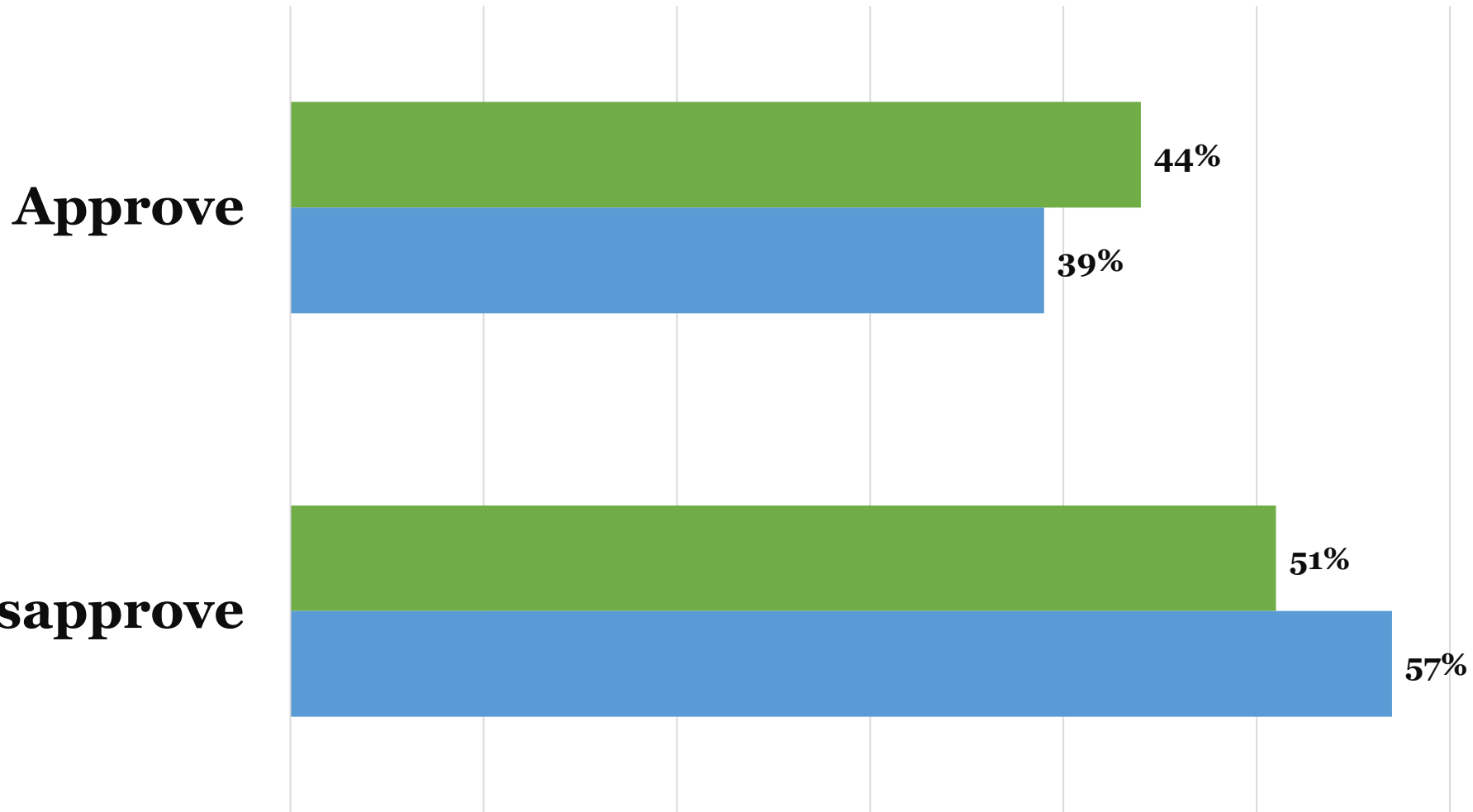
October 2019

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. government is handling Iran?

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Before September 14, 2019

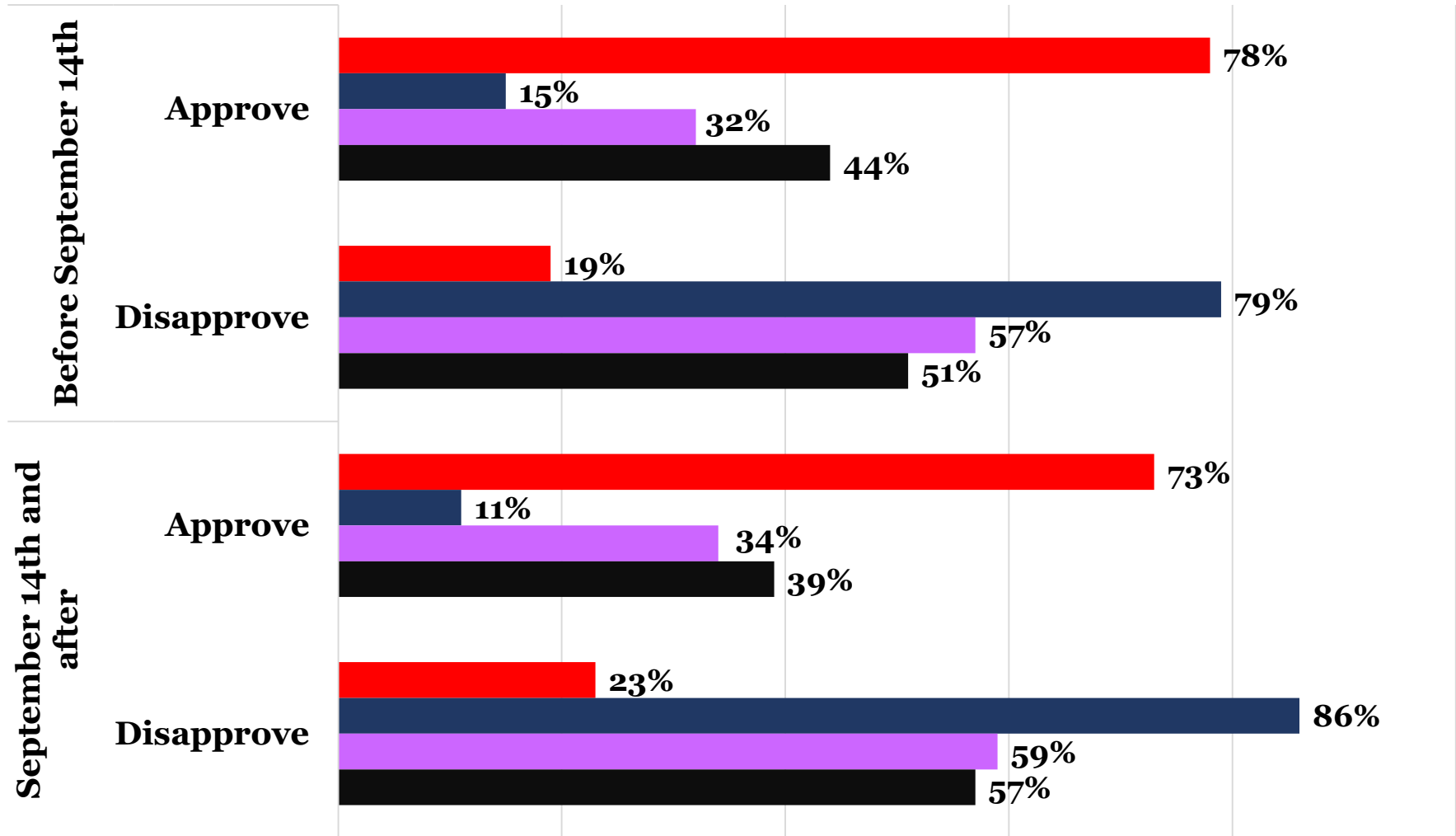
September 14, 2019 and after



September 2019

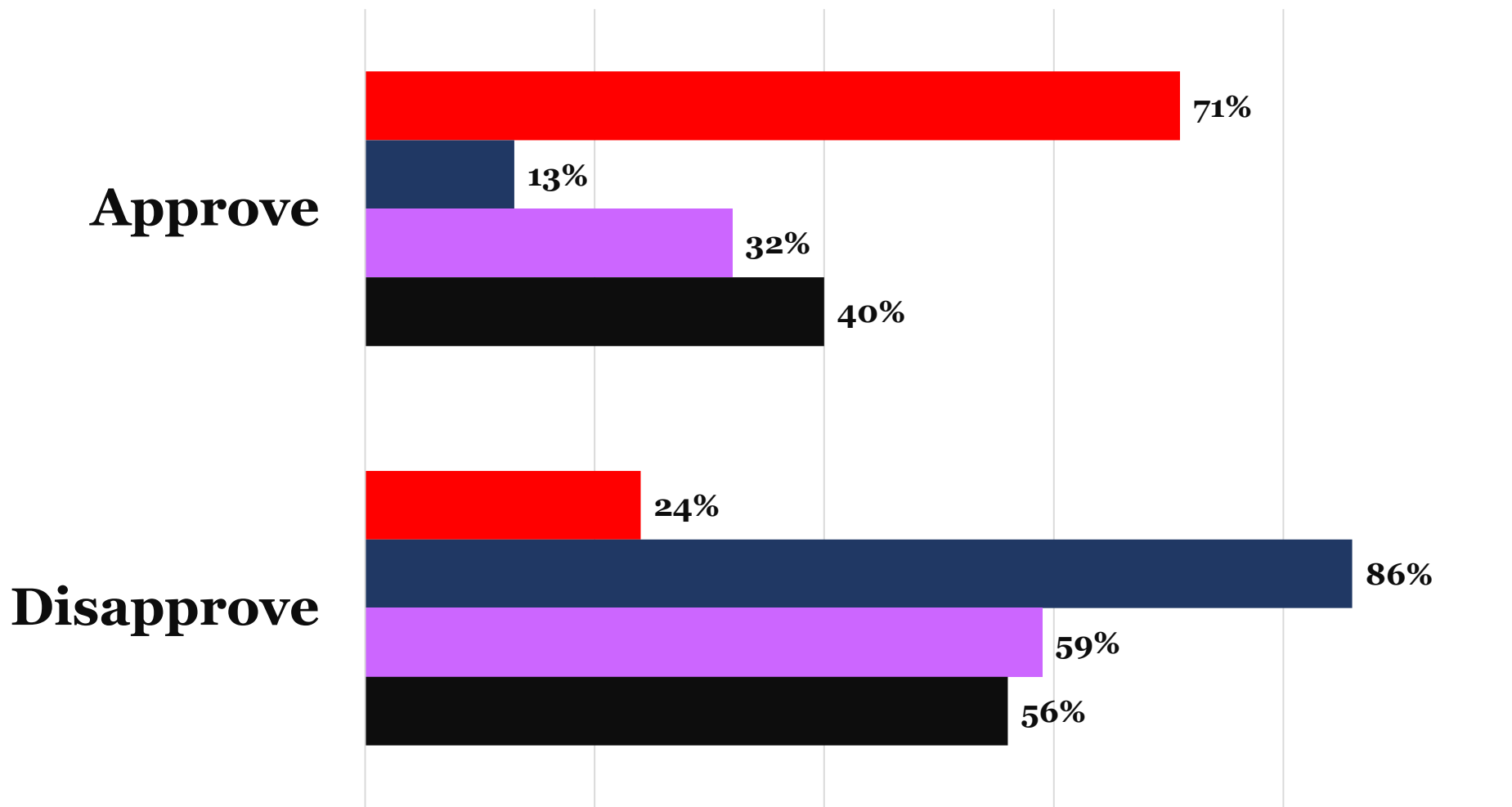
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■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total



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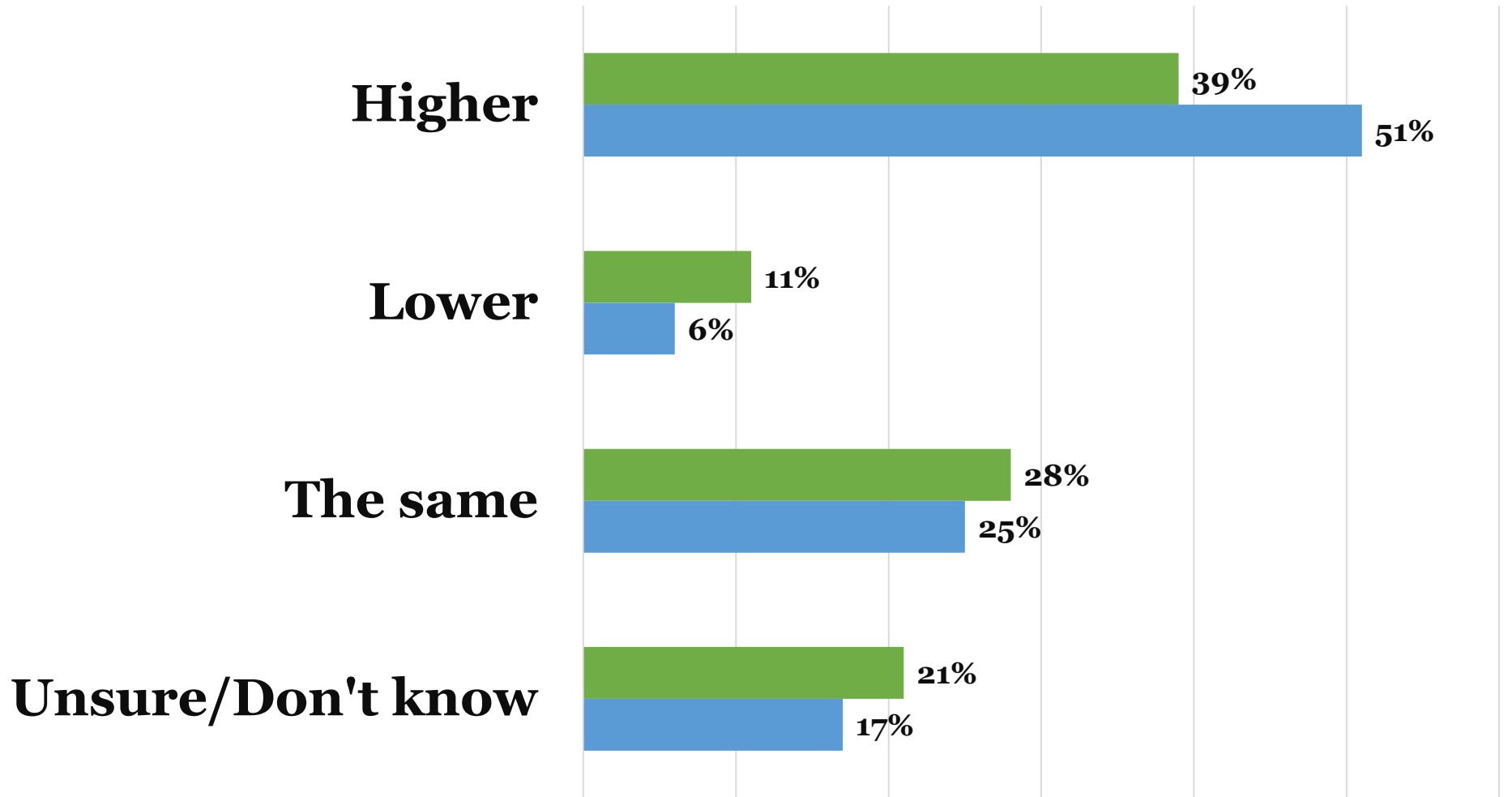


October 2019

In comparison to three years ago, do you think the odds of the U.S. going to war with Iran are higher, lower, or the same?

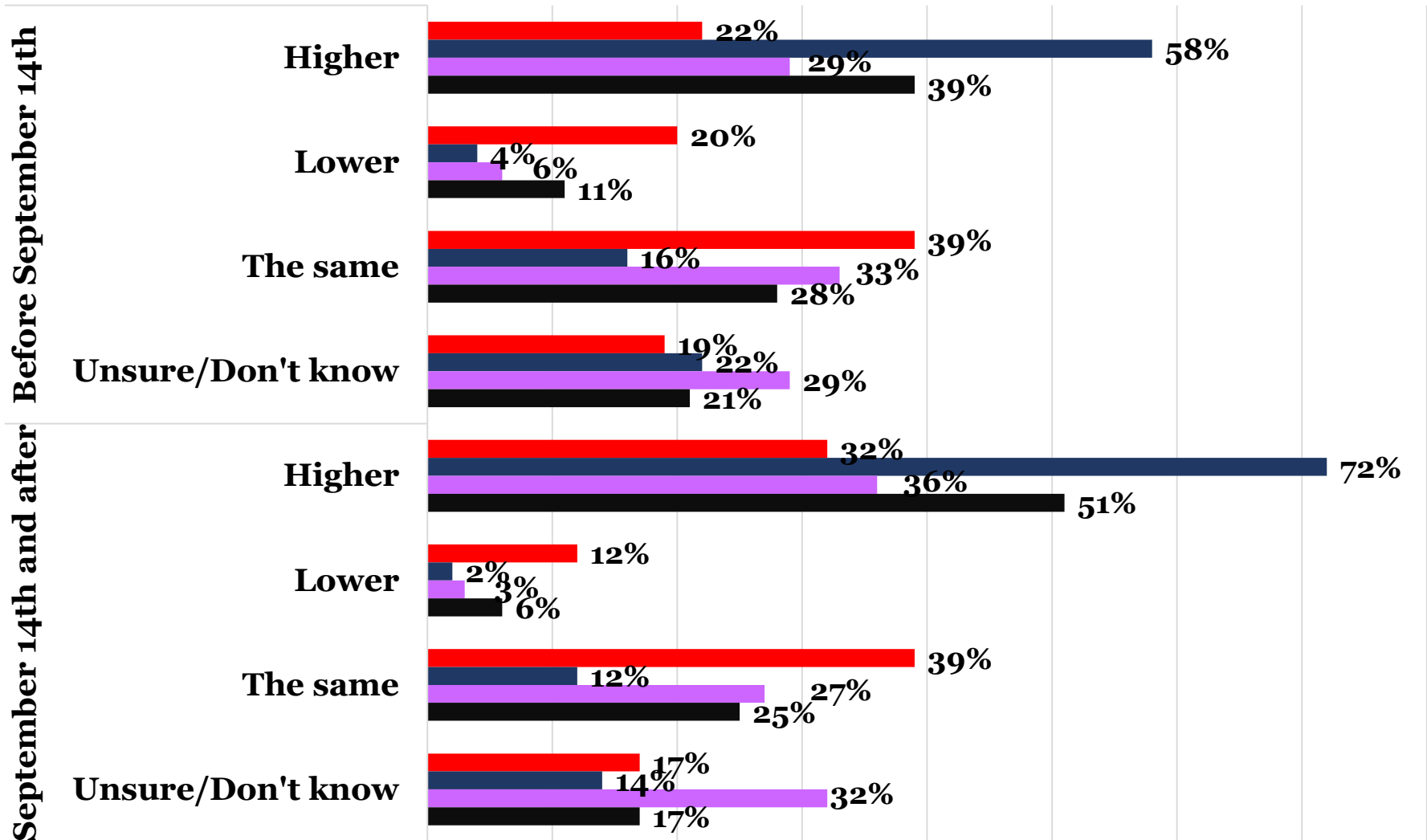
In comparison to three years ago, do you think the odds of the U.S. going to war with Iran are higher, lower, or the same?

■ Before September 14, 2019 ■ September 14, 2019 and after



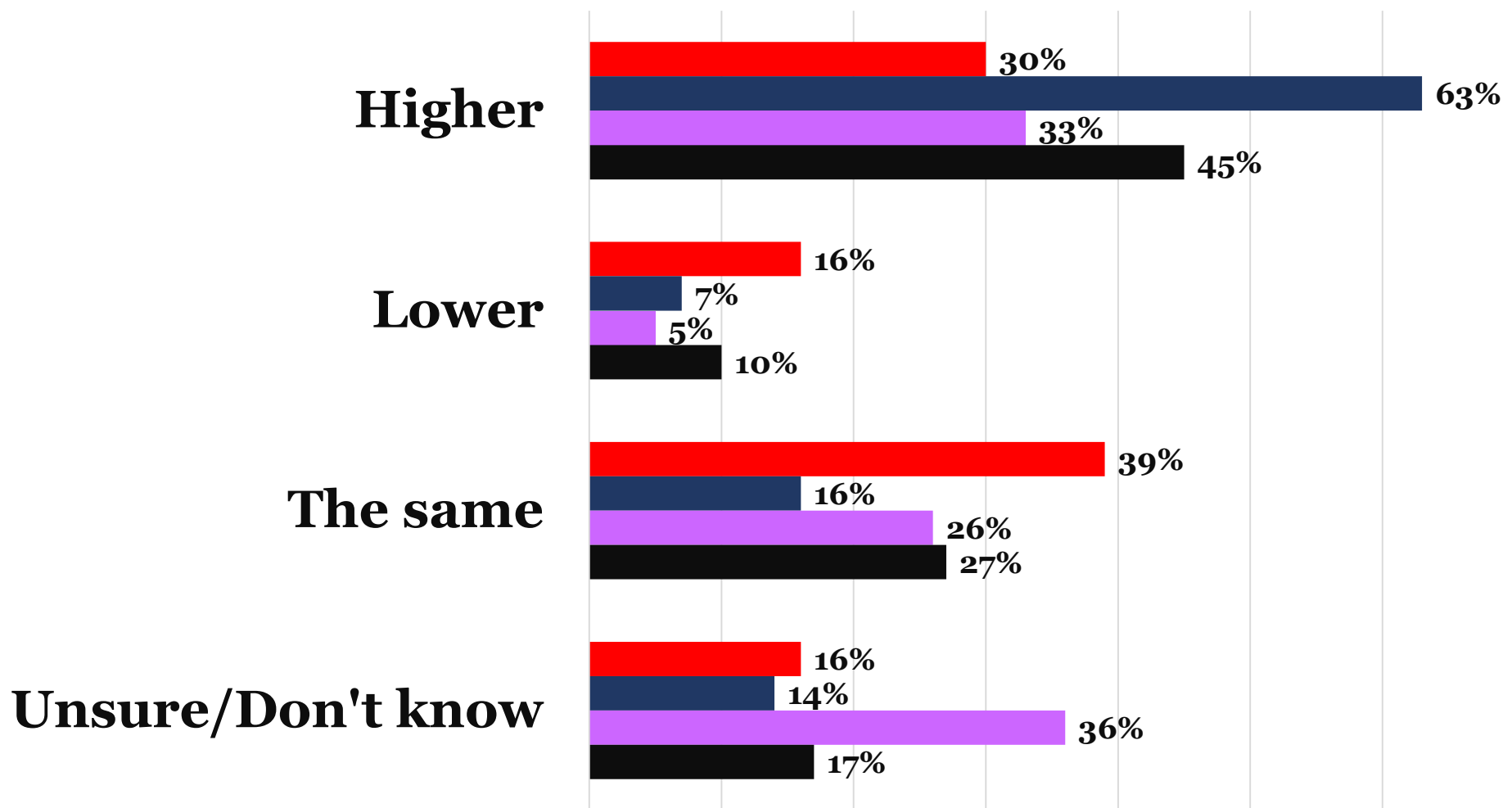
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■ Republicans
 ■ Democrats
 ■ Independents
 ■ Total



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■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**

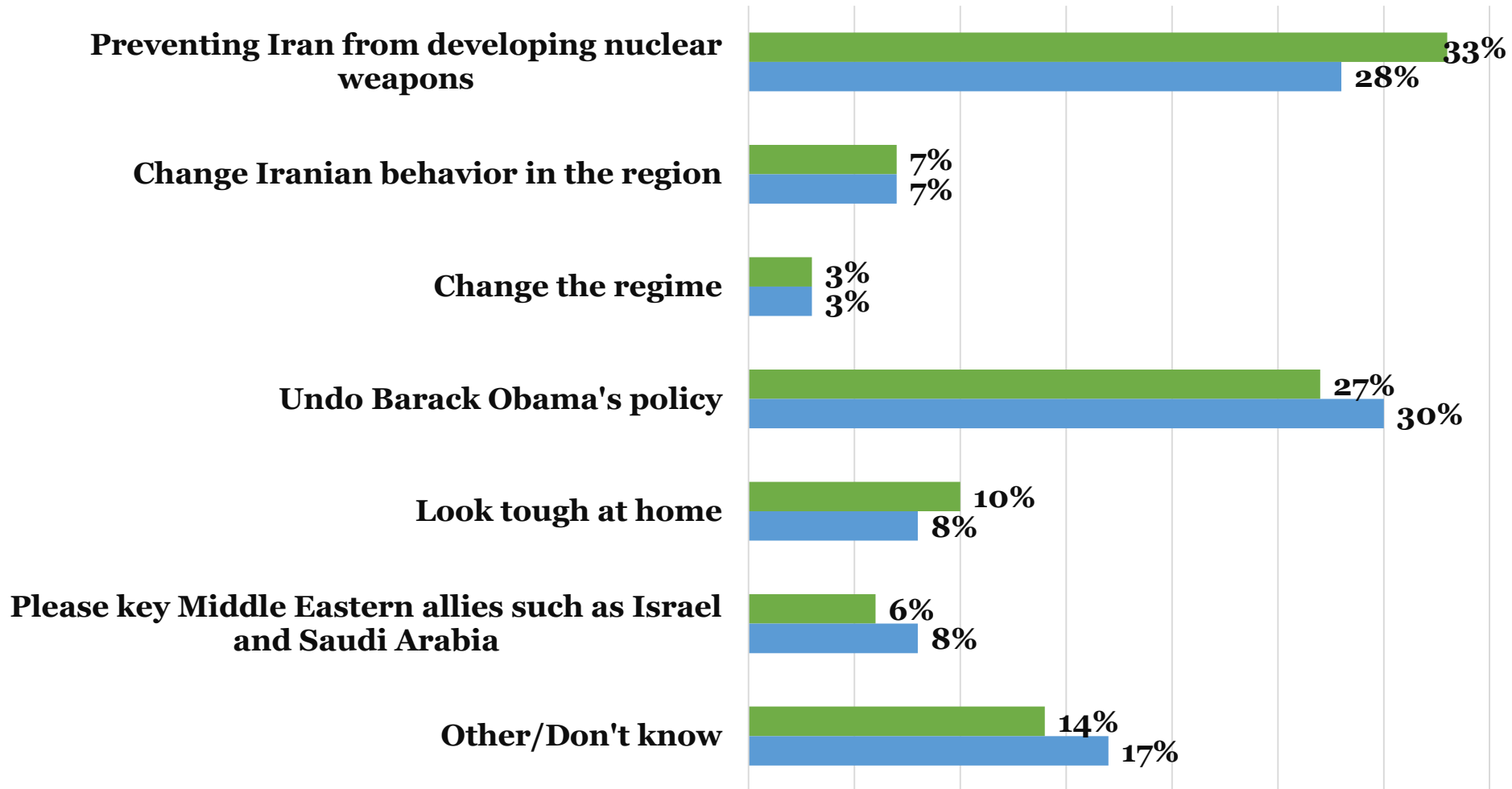


**What do you believe the
Trump administration's
most important goal in its
policy toward Iran is
currently?**

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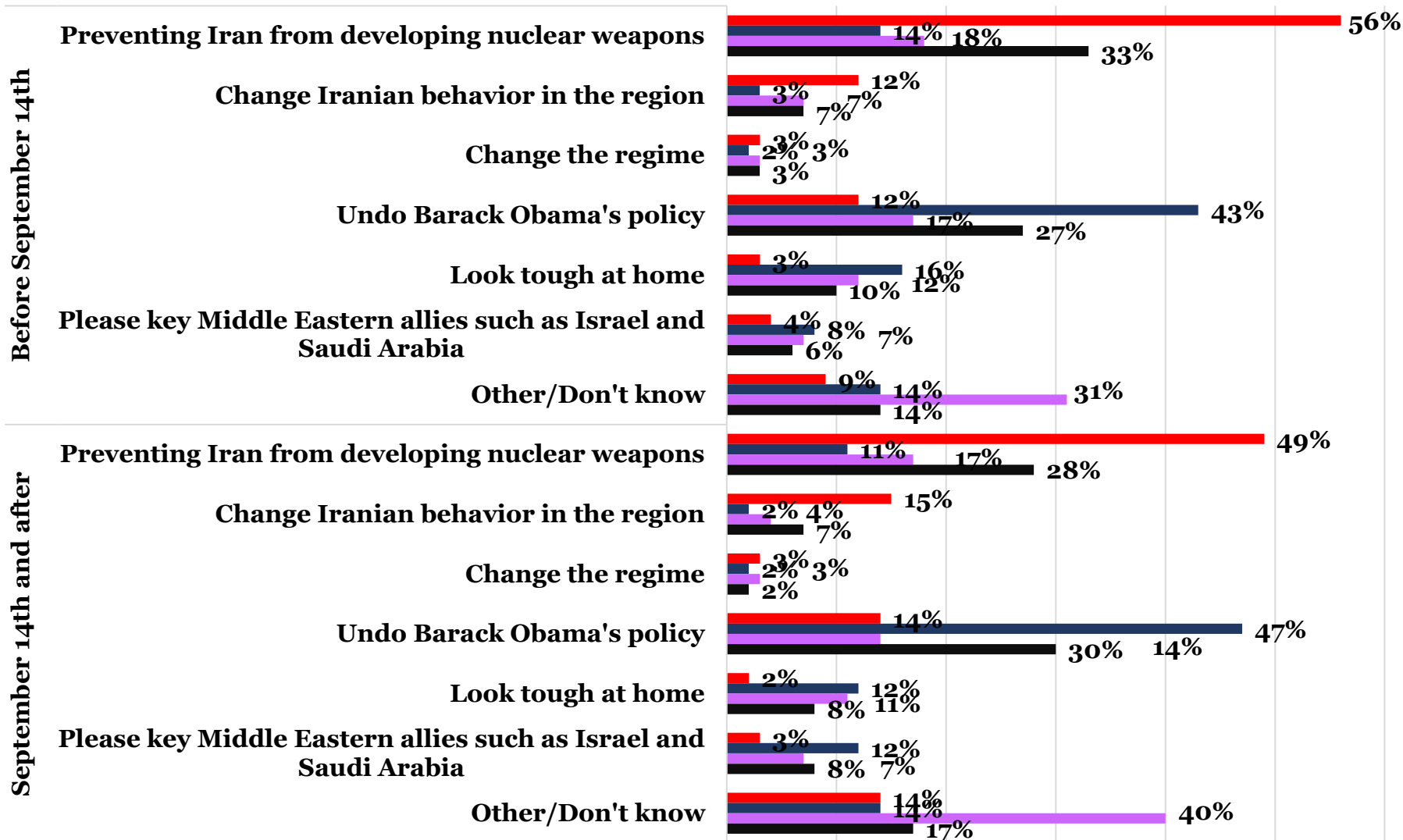
■ Before September 14, 2019

■ September 14, 2019 and after



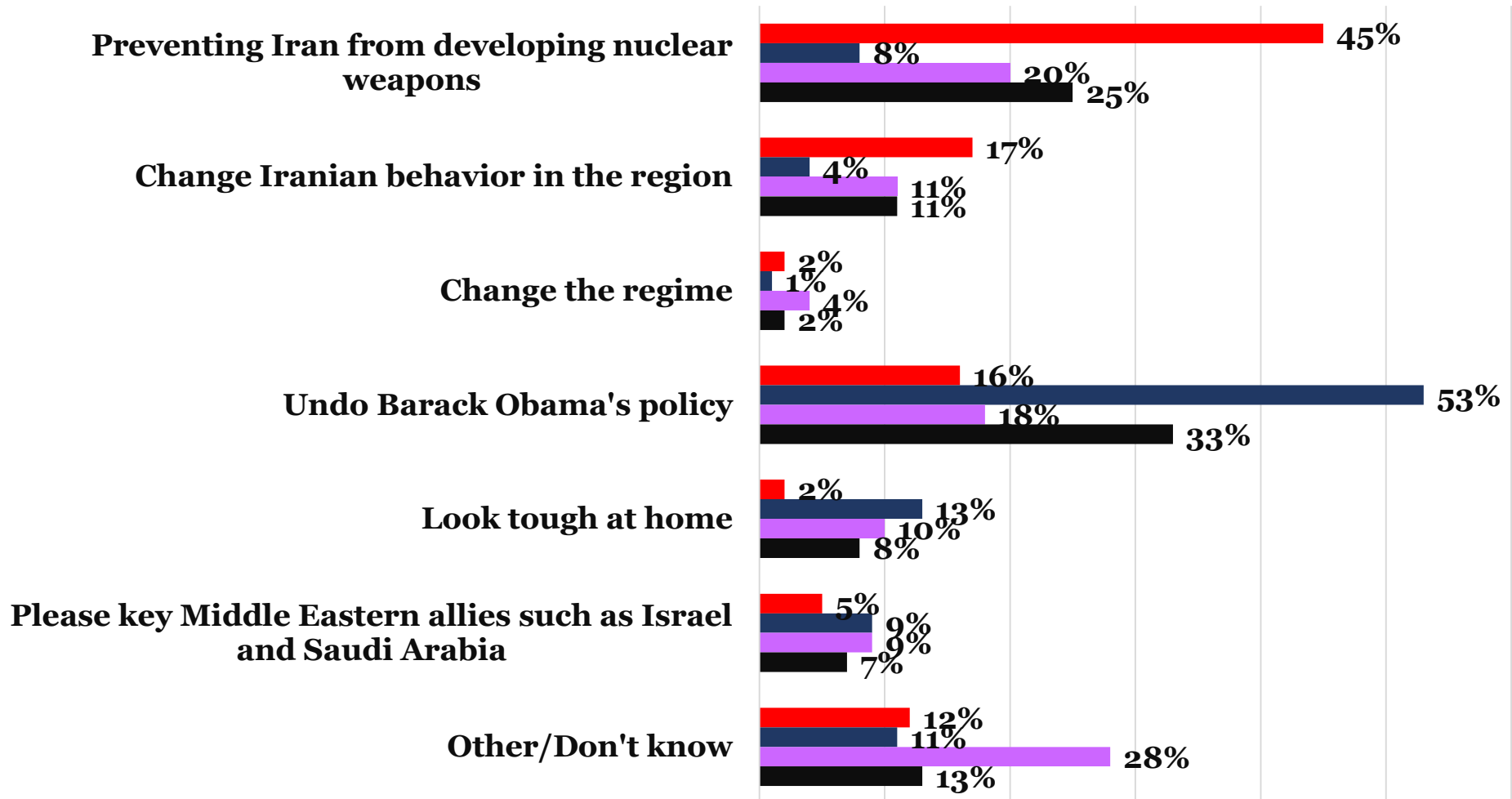
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■ **Democrats**
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■ **Total**



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October 2019

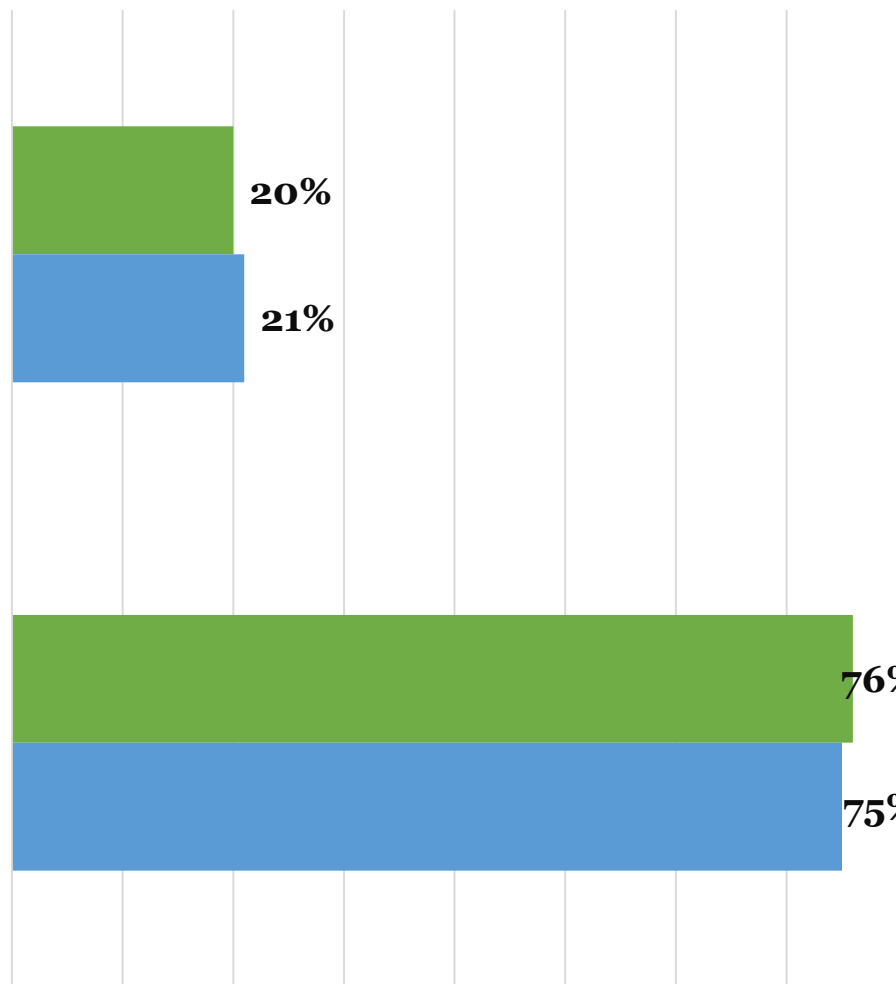
**Which of the following
is closer to your view?**

Which of the following is closer to your view?

■ Before September 14, 2019

■ September 14, 2019 and after

To achieve its current goal vis-à-vis Iran, the U.S. should be prepared to go to war.



The current goals of the U.S. policy do not warrant waging war. The U.S. must rely on other means short of war.

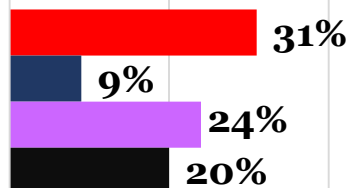
September 2019

Which of the following is closer to your view?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

Before September 14th

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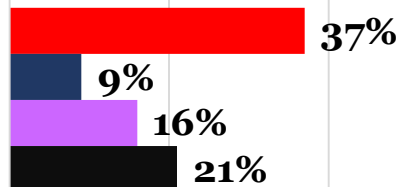


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September 14th and after

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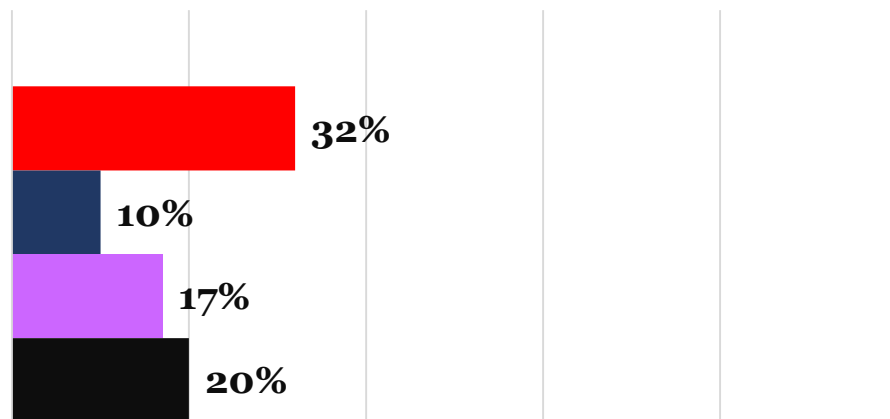
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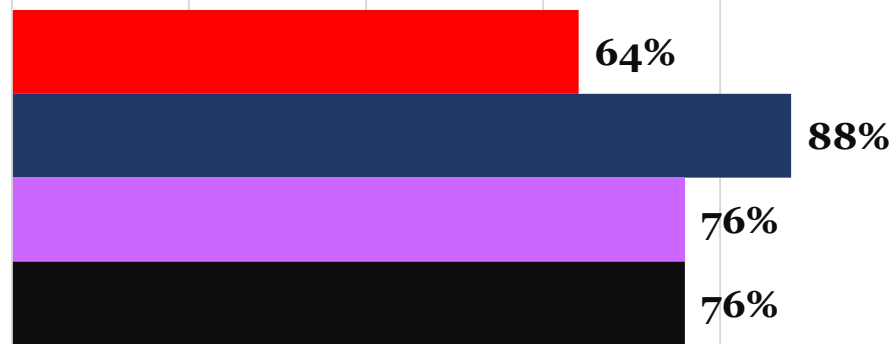
Which of the following is closer to your view?

■ Republicans **■** Democrats **■** Independents **■** Total

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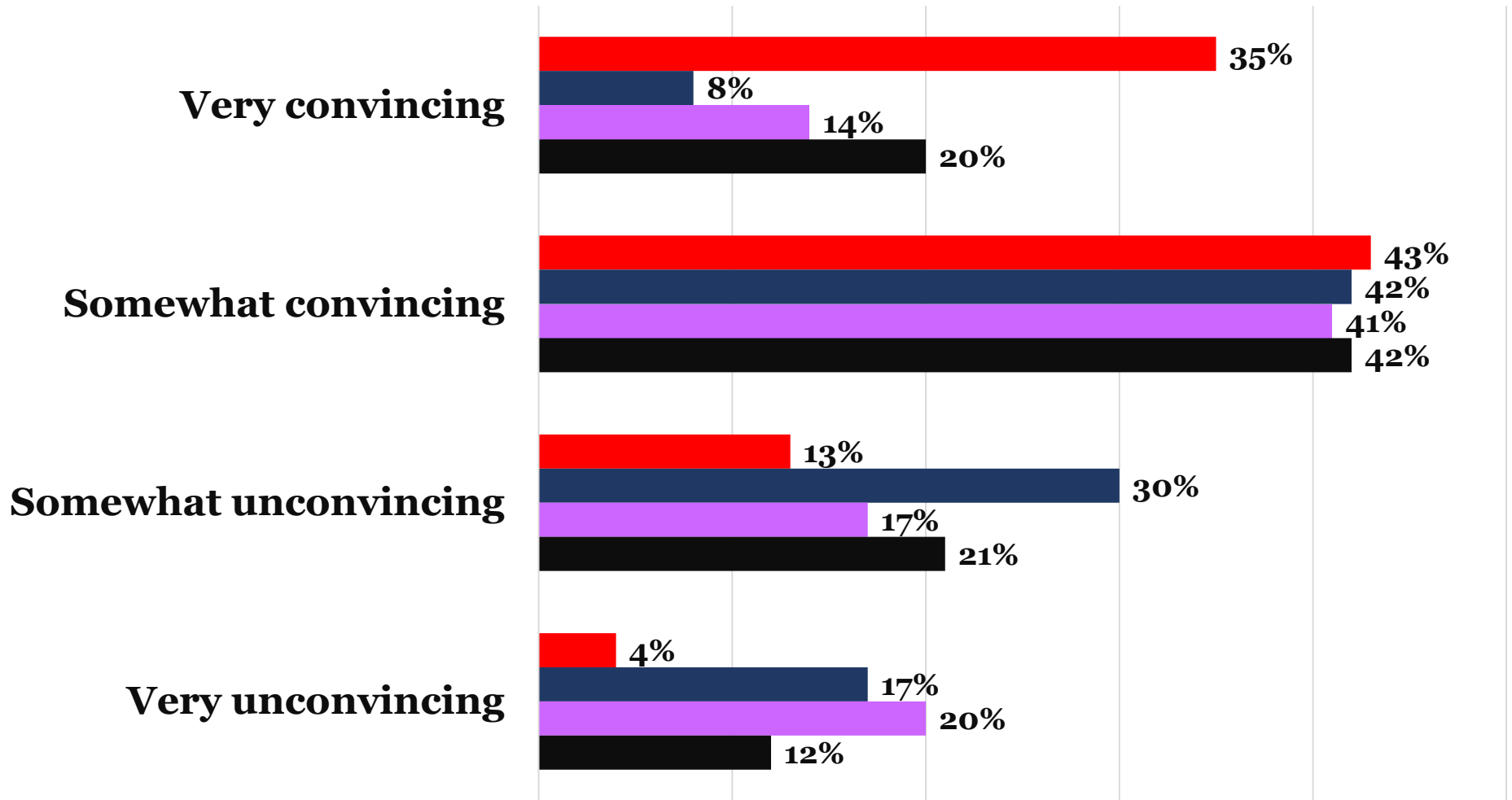


On September 14, an attack on Saudi Arabia's oil fields cut Saudi oil production by half, accounting for 5% of the world's oil supply, for several weeks. Yemen's Houthi rebels, fighting Saudi Arabia, took responsibility for the attack, and the United States and some European countries blamed Iran.

Which one of the following is closest to your view about the evidence presented to the public so far about Iran's responsibility?

On September 14, an attack on Saudi Arabia's oil fields cut Saudi oil production by half, accounting for 5% of the world's oil supply, for several weeks. Yemen's Houthi rebels, fighting Saudi Arabia, took responsibility for the attack, and the United States and some European countries blamed Iran. Which one of the following is closest to your view about the evidence presented to the public so far about Iran's responsibility?

■ Republicans **■ Democrats** **■ Independents** **■ Total**

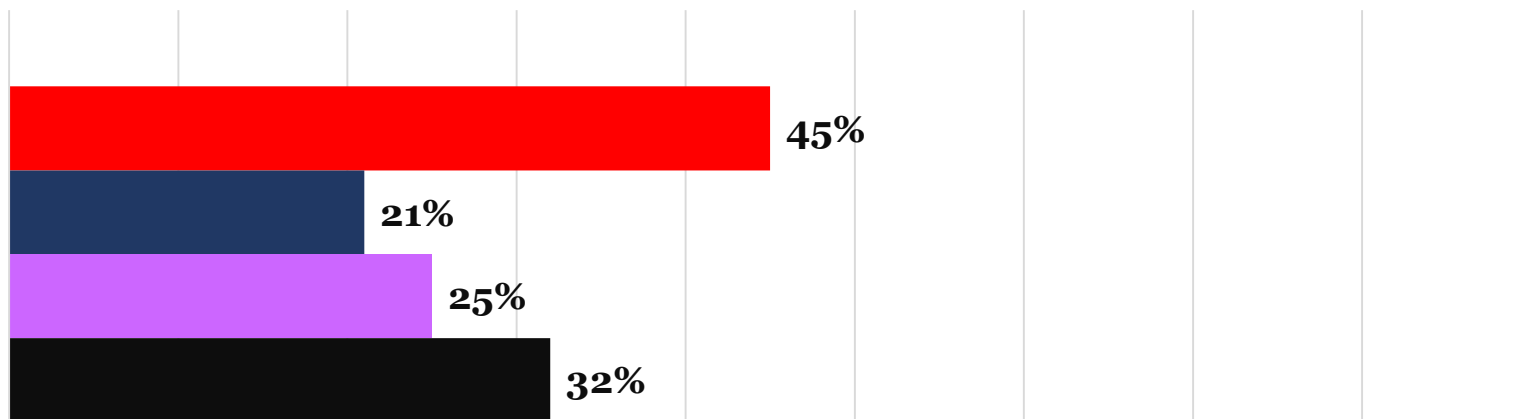


If sufficient evidence emerges that Iran is responsible, should the U.S. consider a military action in response?

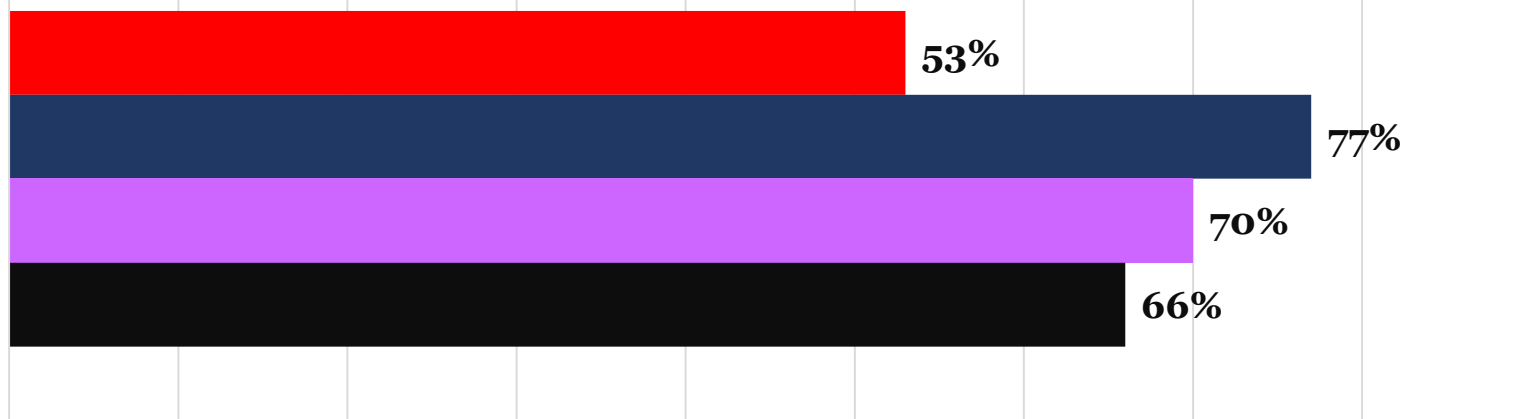
If sufficient evidence emerges that Iran is responsible, should the U.S. consider a military action in response?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

Yes



No



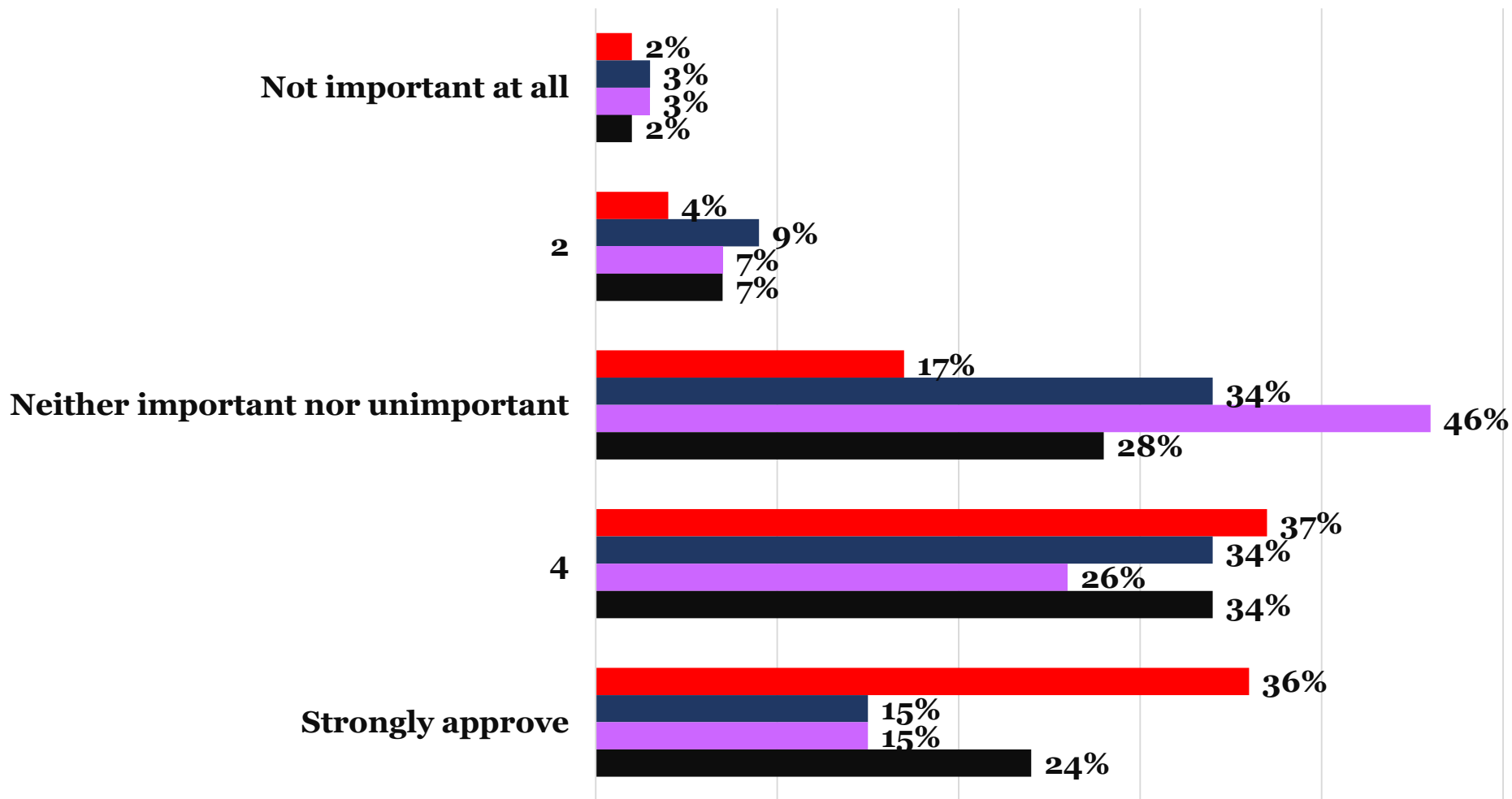
October 2019

**Tell me how important you think
the following factors are in
explaining the escalation in the
Gulf region that has endangered
the oil trade:**

The nature of Iran's regime

Tell me how important you think the following factors are in explaining the escalation in the Gulf region that has endangered the oil trade:
The nature of Iran's regime

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

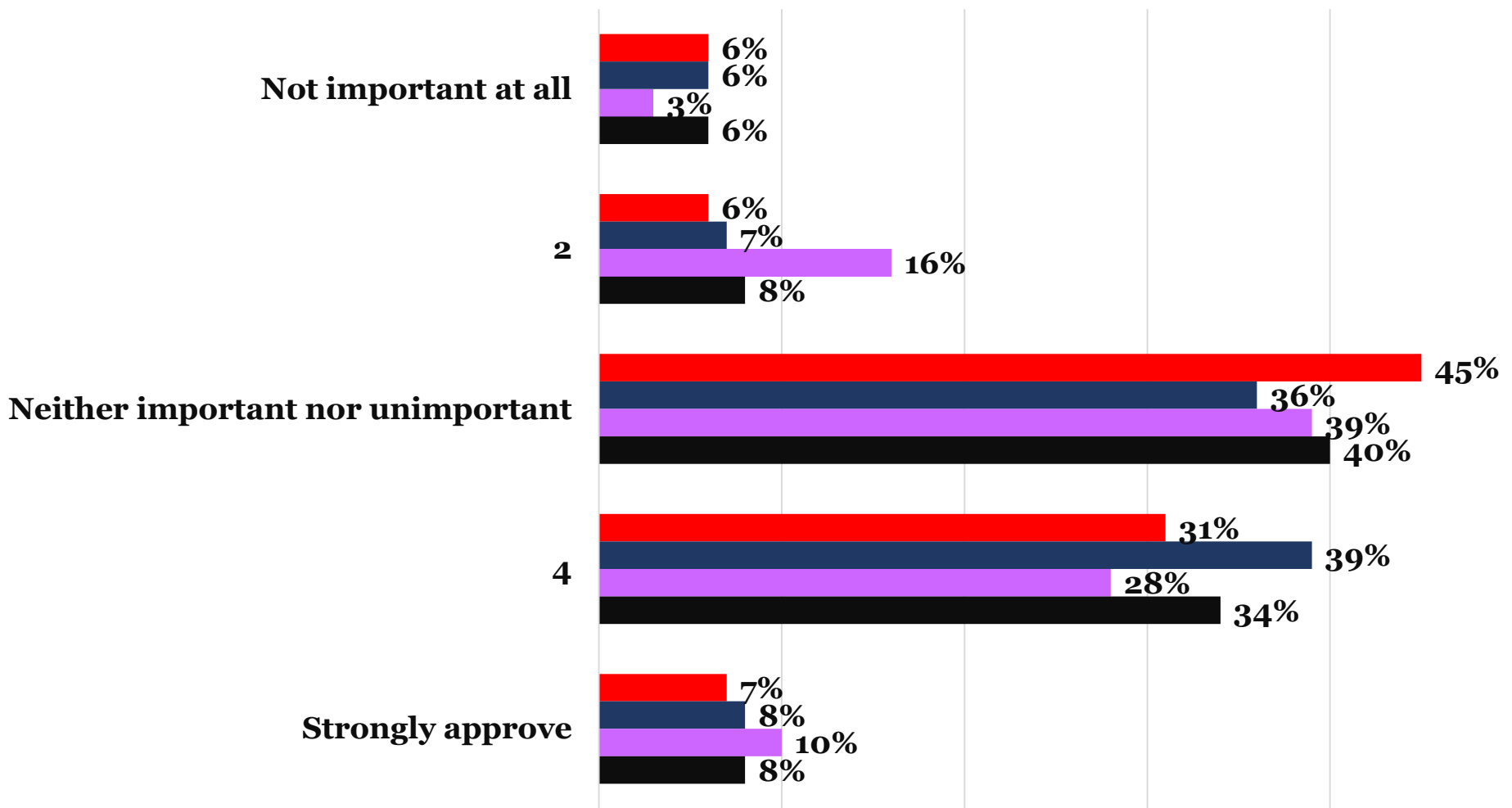


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The war in Yemen

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The war in Yemen

■ **Republicans**
 ■ **Democrats**
 ■ **Independents**
 ■ **Total**



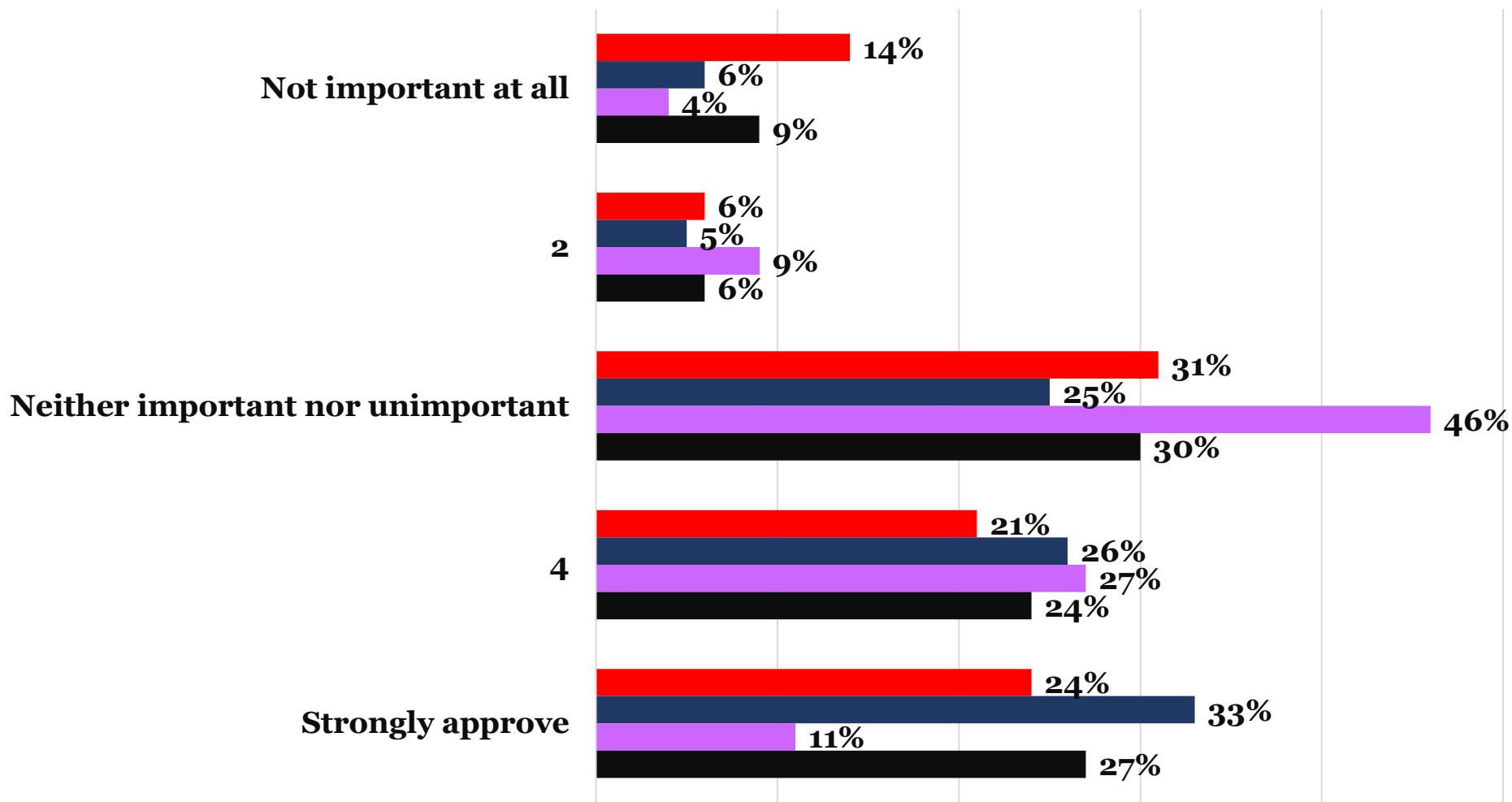
**Tell me how important you think
the following factors are in
explaining the escalation in the
Gulf region that has endangered
the oil trade:**

**The U.S. withdrawal from the
2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (the
JCPOA)**

Tell me how important you think the following factors are in explaining the escalation in the Gulf region that has endangered the oil trade:

The U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (the JCPOA)

■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**



October 2019

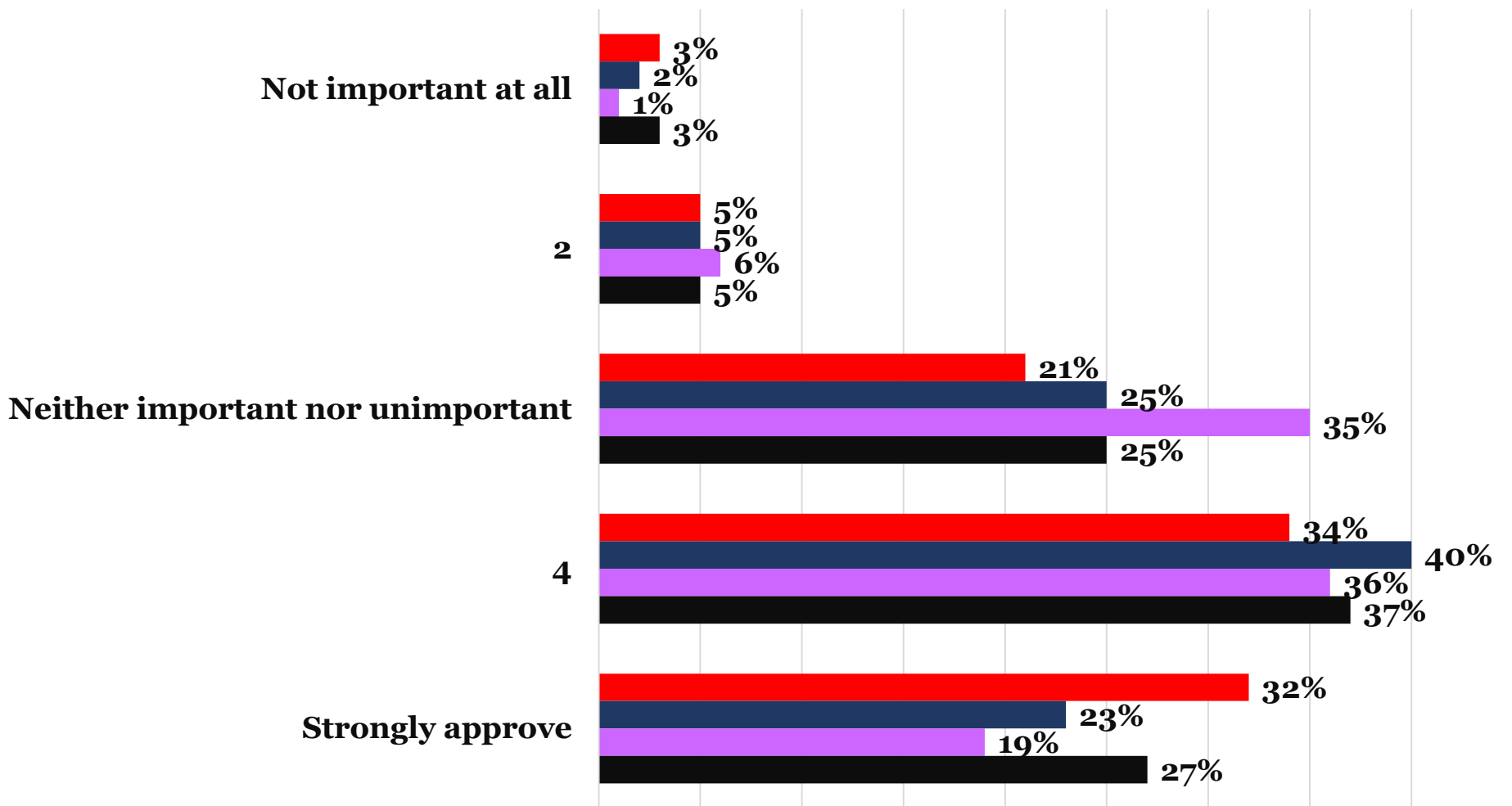
**Tell me how important you think
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the oil trade:**

**U.S. imposition of new sanctions
on Iran, including on its oil
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Tell me how important you think the following factors are in explaining the escalation in the Gulf region that has endangered the oil trade:

U.S. imposition of new sanctions on Iran, including on its oil exports

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

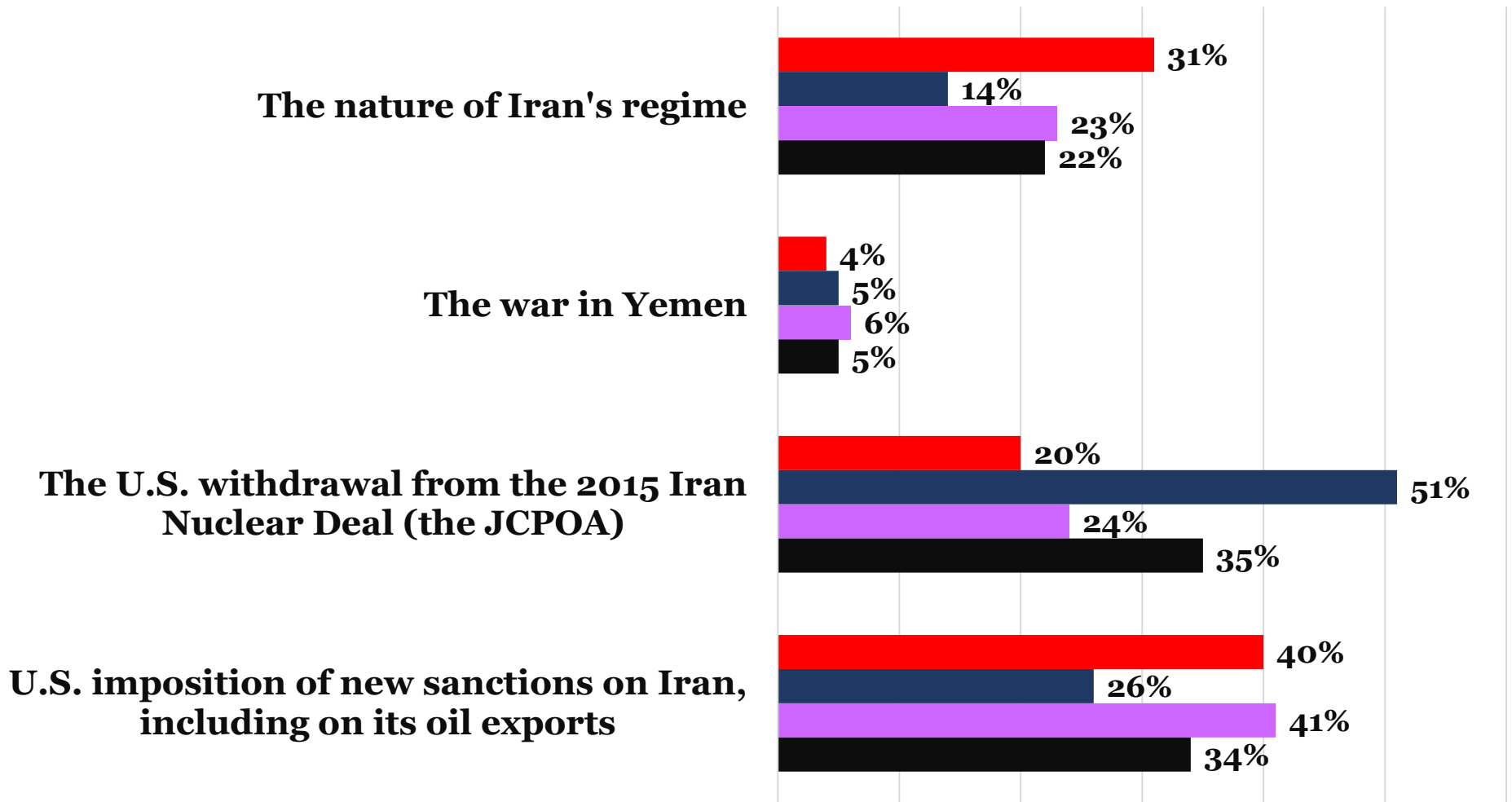


October 2019

**Now tell me, which
one of the above do
you think is most
important?**

Now tell me, which one of the above do you think is most important?

■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**

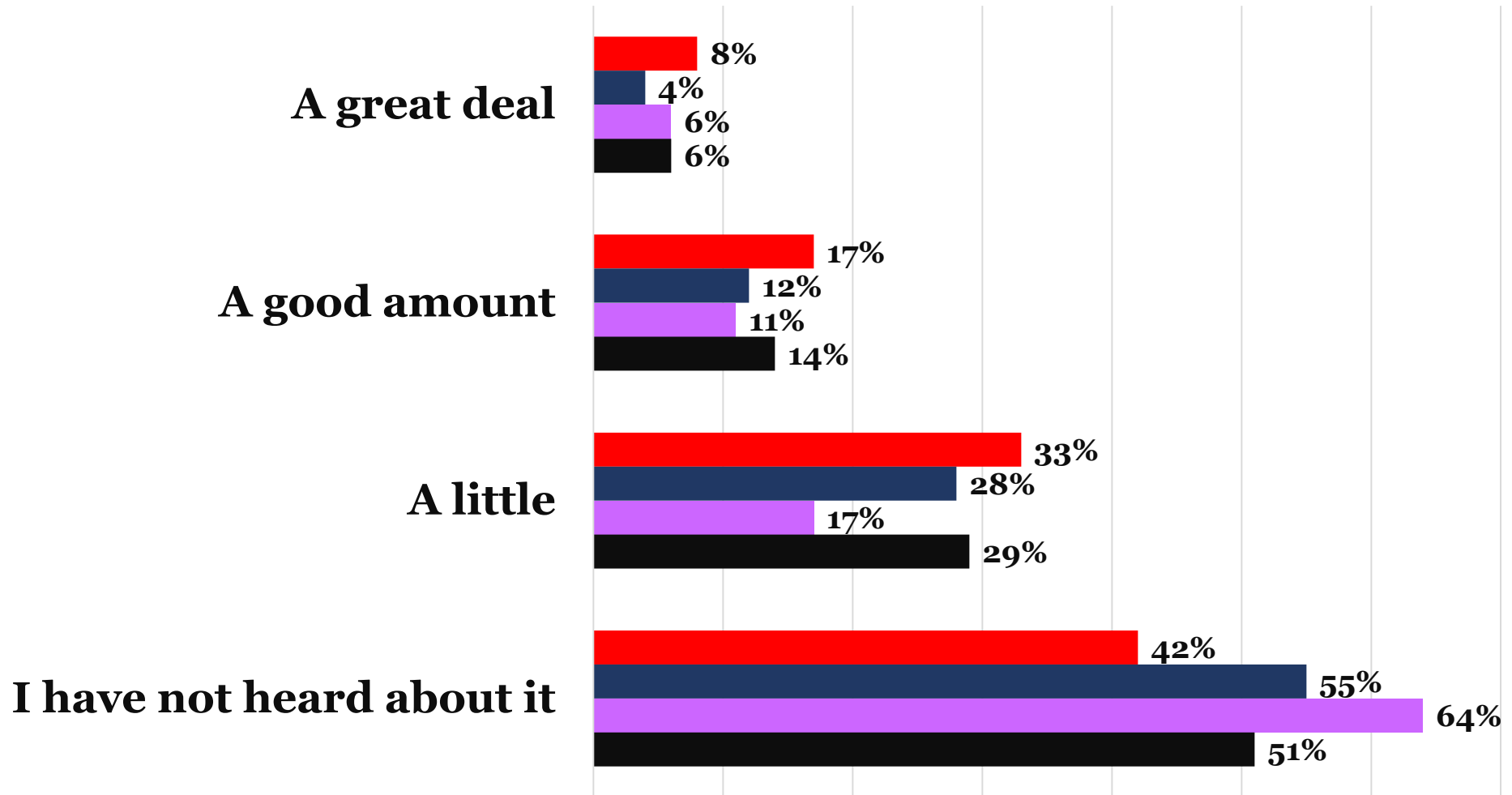


American Attitudes toward BDS

How much have you heard about BDS, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement aimed at Israel?

How much have you heard about BDS, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement aimed at Israel?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total



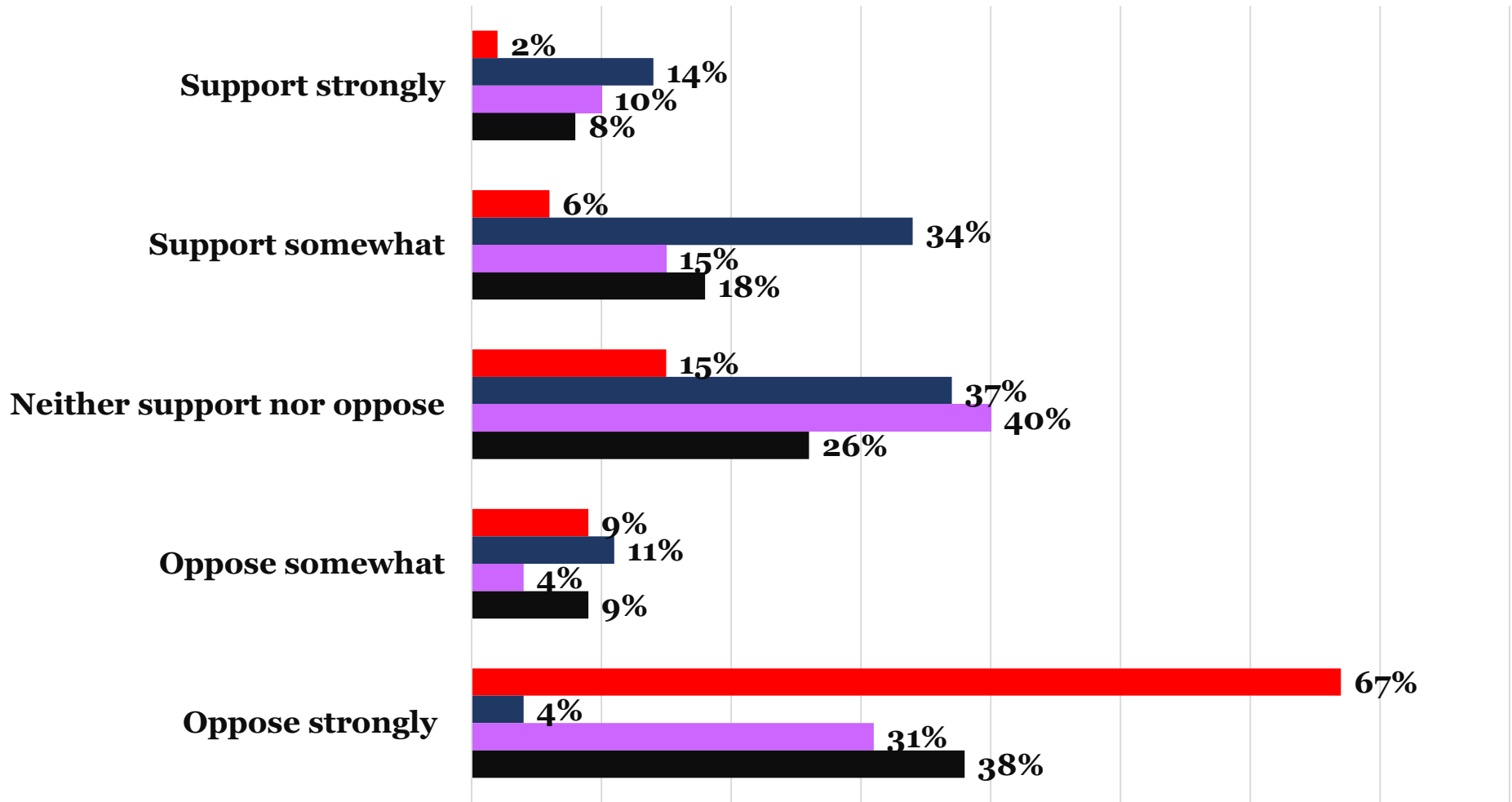
**[Among those who have
heard of BDS]**

**Based on what you have
heard, do you support or
oppose BDS, or the Boycott,
Divestment, and Sanctions
movement?**

[Among those who have heard of BDS]

Based on what you have heard, do you support or oppose BDS, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement?

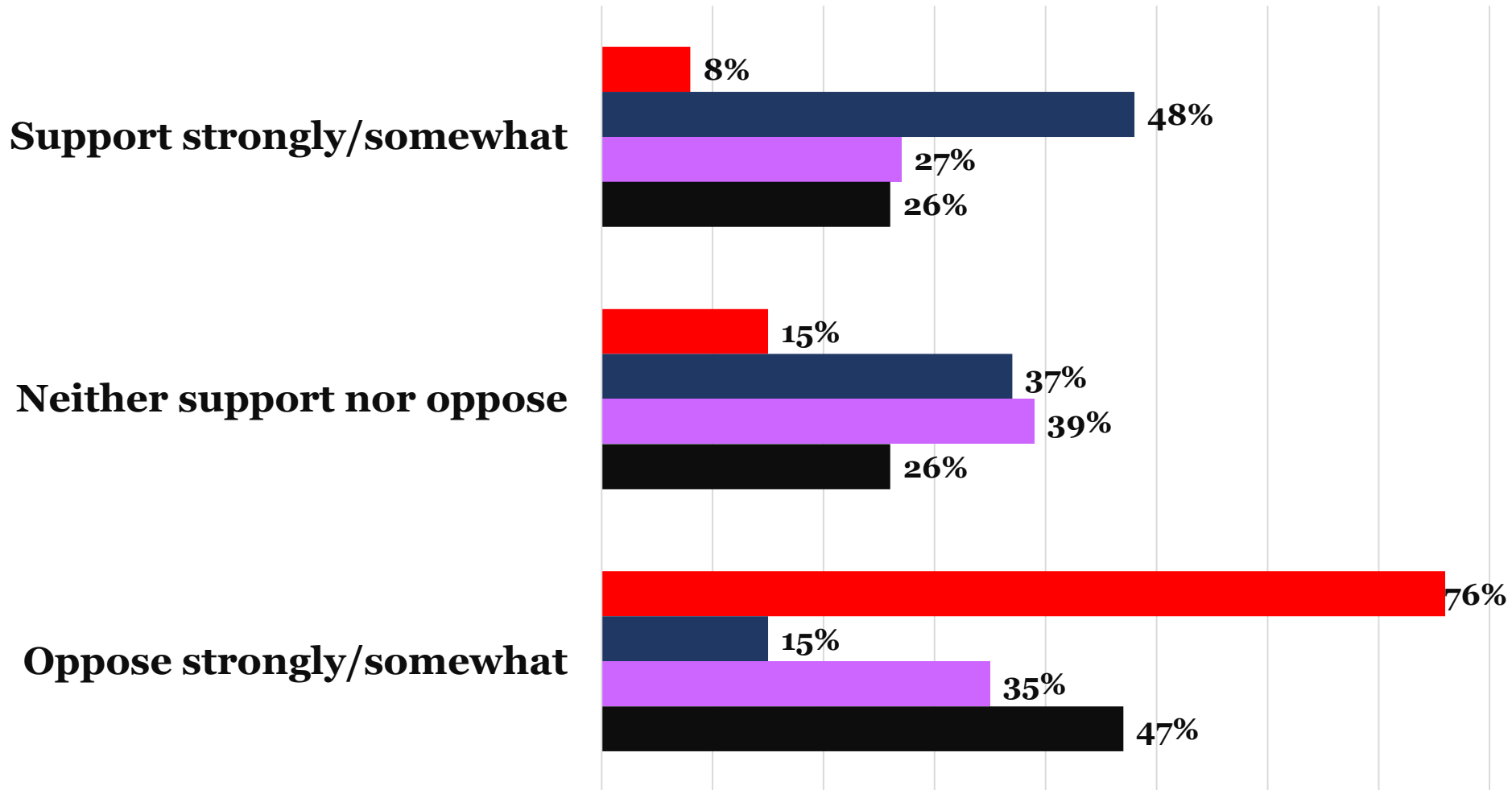
■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**



[Among those who have heard of BDS]

Based on what you have heard, do you support or oppose BDS, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total



October 2019

[Among those who have heard of BDS]

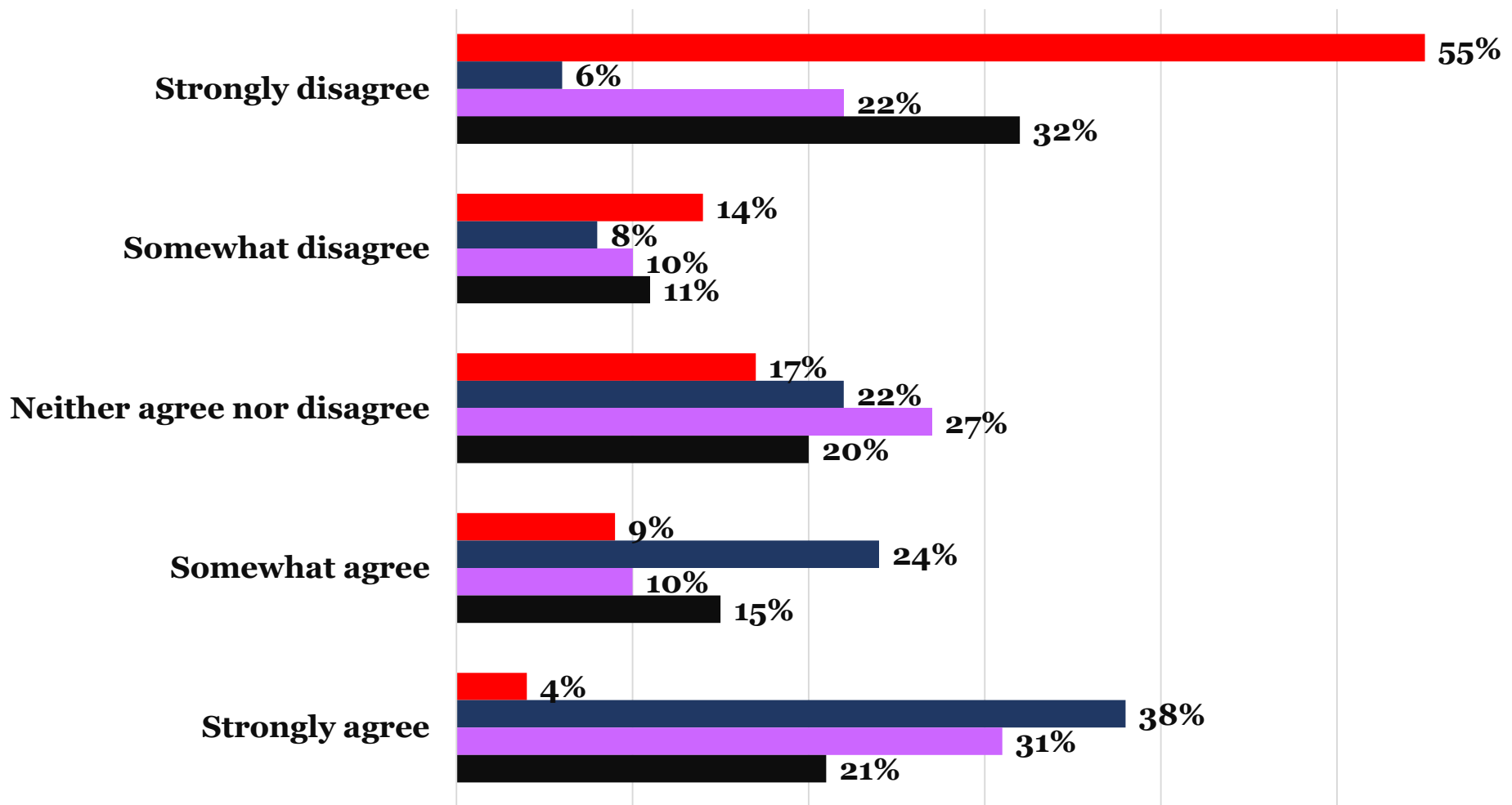
**Tell me how much you agree or disagree with
the following statement:**

**BDS is a legitimate, peaceful way of opposing
Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.
Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid
movement, BDS urges action to pressure Israel
to comply with international law. Opposing
Israeli policy does not equal anti-Semitism.**

[Among those who have heard of BDS]
Tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

BDS is a legitimate, peaceful way of opposing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, BDS urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law. Opposing Israeli policy does not equal anti-Semitism

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total



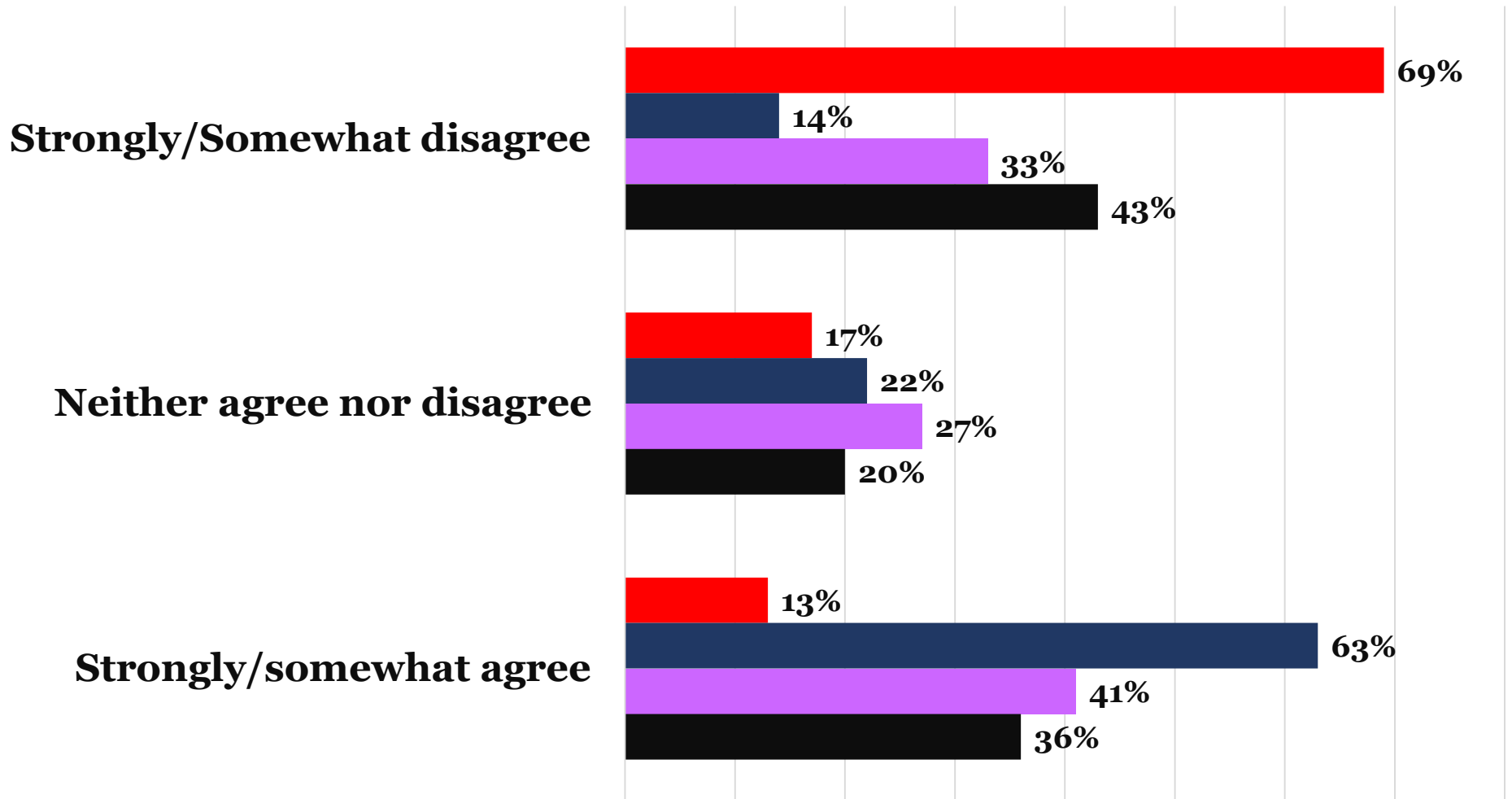
October 2019

[Among those who have heard of BDS]

Tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

BDS is a legitimate, peaceful way of opposing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. Inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, BDS urges action to pressure Israel to comply with international law.
Opposing Israeli policy does not equal anti-Semitism

■ Republicans **■ Democrats** **■ Independents** **■ Total**



October 2019

[Among those who have heard of BDS]

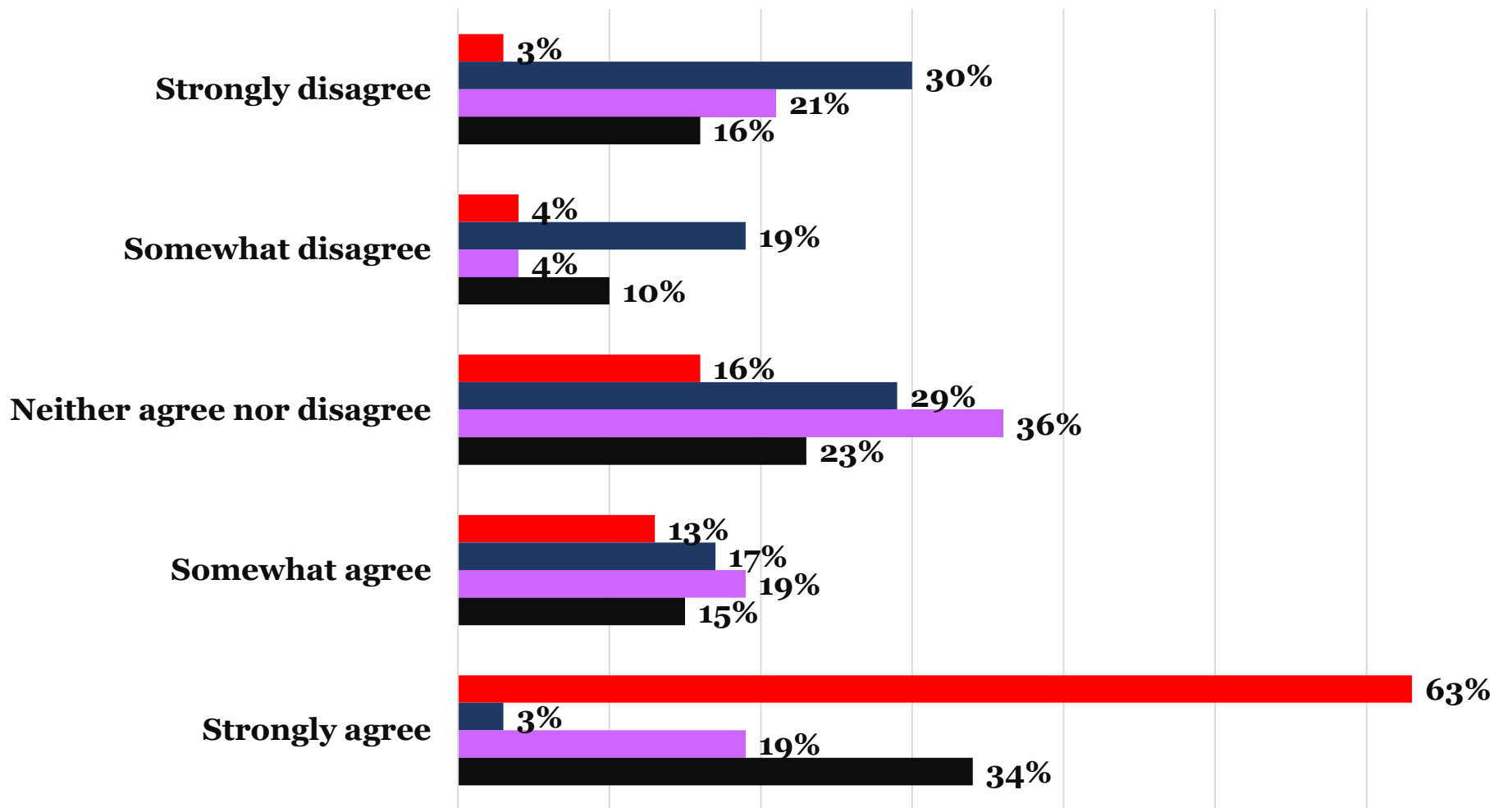
**Tell me how much you agree or disagree with
the following statement:**

**Regardless of how BDS defines itself, it is an
anti-Israel organization attempting to weaken
Israel and to undermine its legitimacy. Some of
its supporters are opponents of Israel's very
existence and may even be anti-Semitic.**

[Among those who have heard of BDS]
Tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Regardless of how BDS defines itself, it is an anti-Israel organization attempting to weaken Israel and to undermine its legitimacy. Some of its supporters are opponents of Israel's very existence and may even be anti-Semitic.

■ Republicans **■ Democrats** **■ Independents** **■ Total**



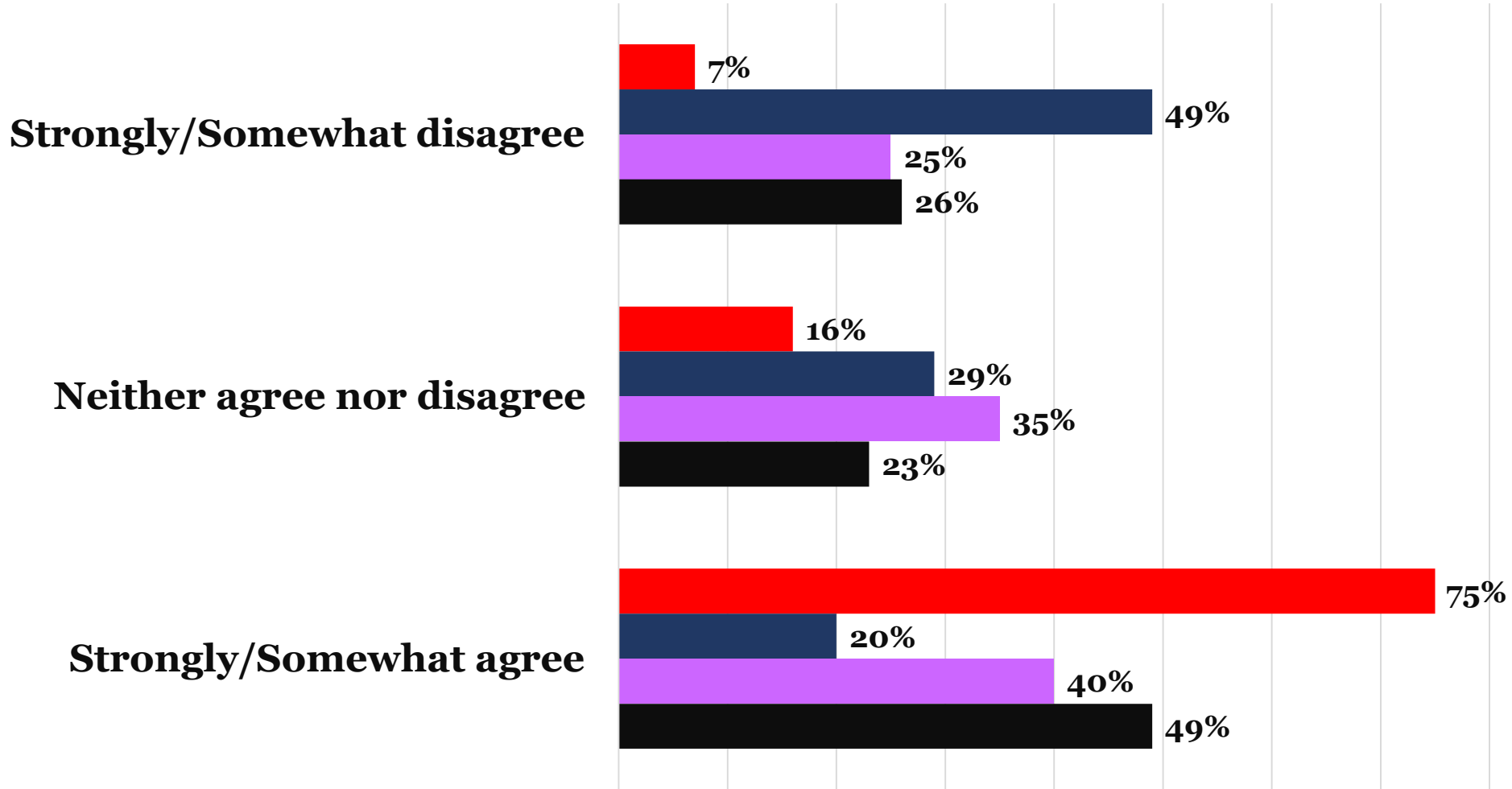
October 2019

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■ Republicans **■ Democrats** **■ Independents** **■ Total**



October 2019

**[Among those who have
heard of BDS]**

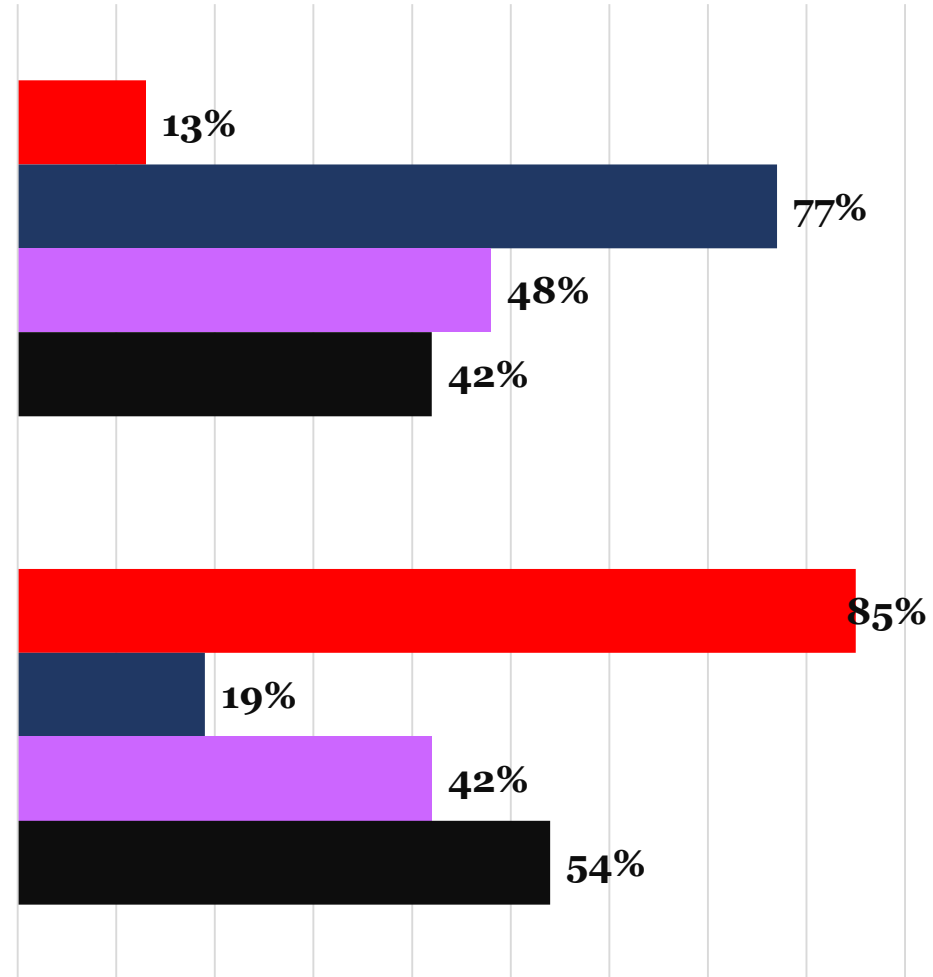
**Now tell me, which of the
following is closer to your
view?**

[Among those who have heard of BDS]
Now tell me, which of the following is closer to your view?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

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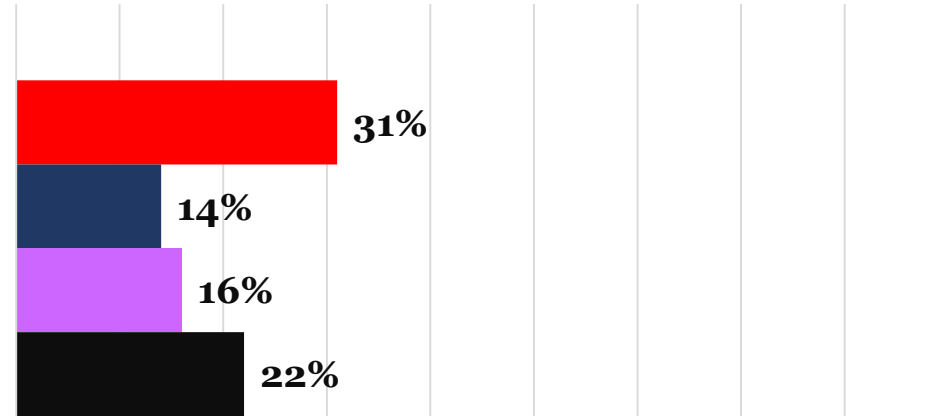


**Which of the following is
closer to your view?**

Which of the following is closer to your view?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

We should SUPPORT laws that penalize people who boycott Israel because these laws help protect Israel.



We should OPPOSE laws that penalize people who boycott Israel because these laws infringe on the Constitutional right to free speech and peaceful protest.

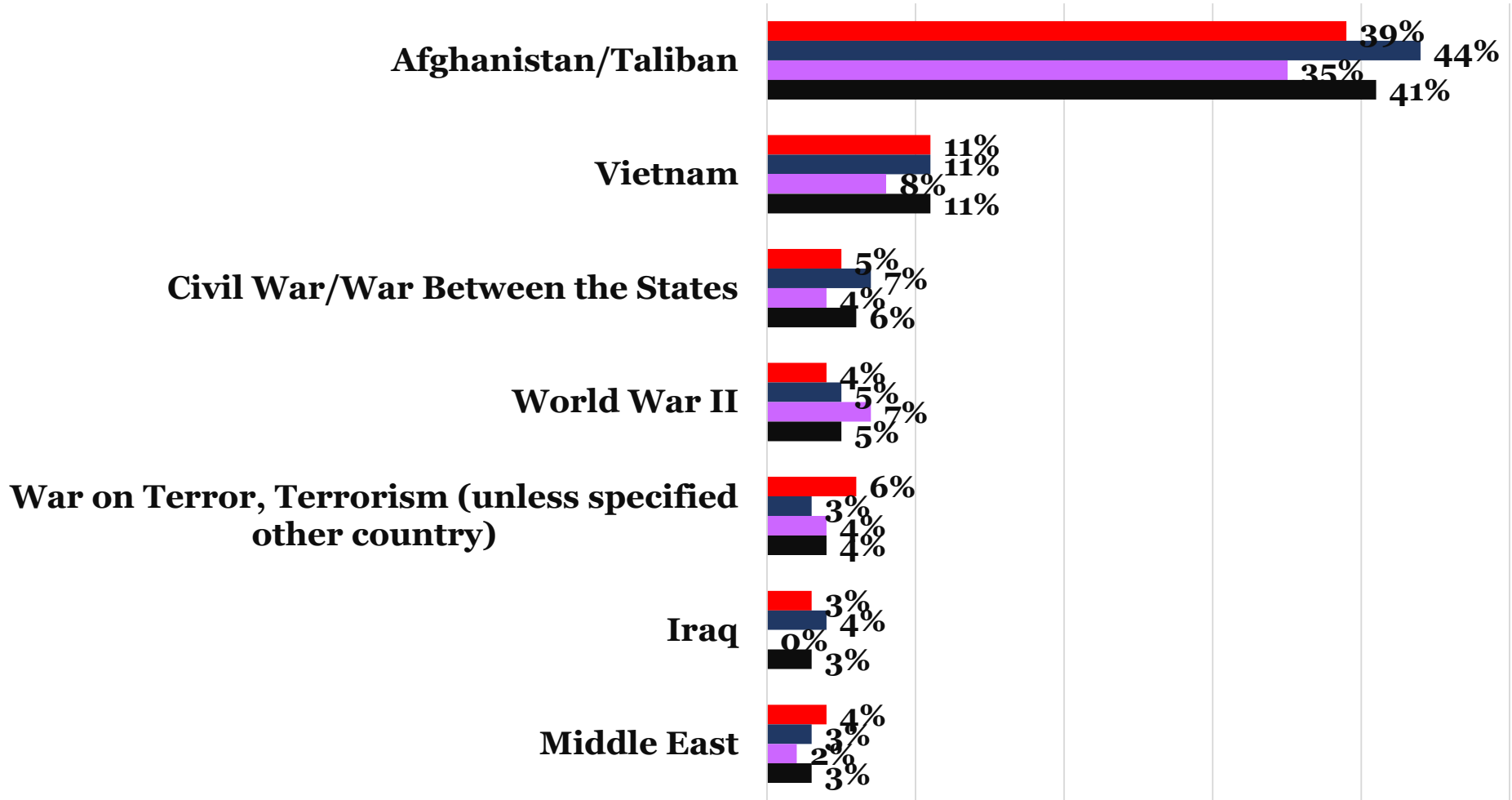


American Attitudes toward Afghanistan

**If you had to guess,
which would you say is
the longest war in
American history?**

If you had to guess, which would you say is the longest war in American history?

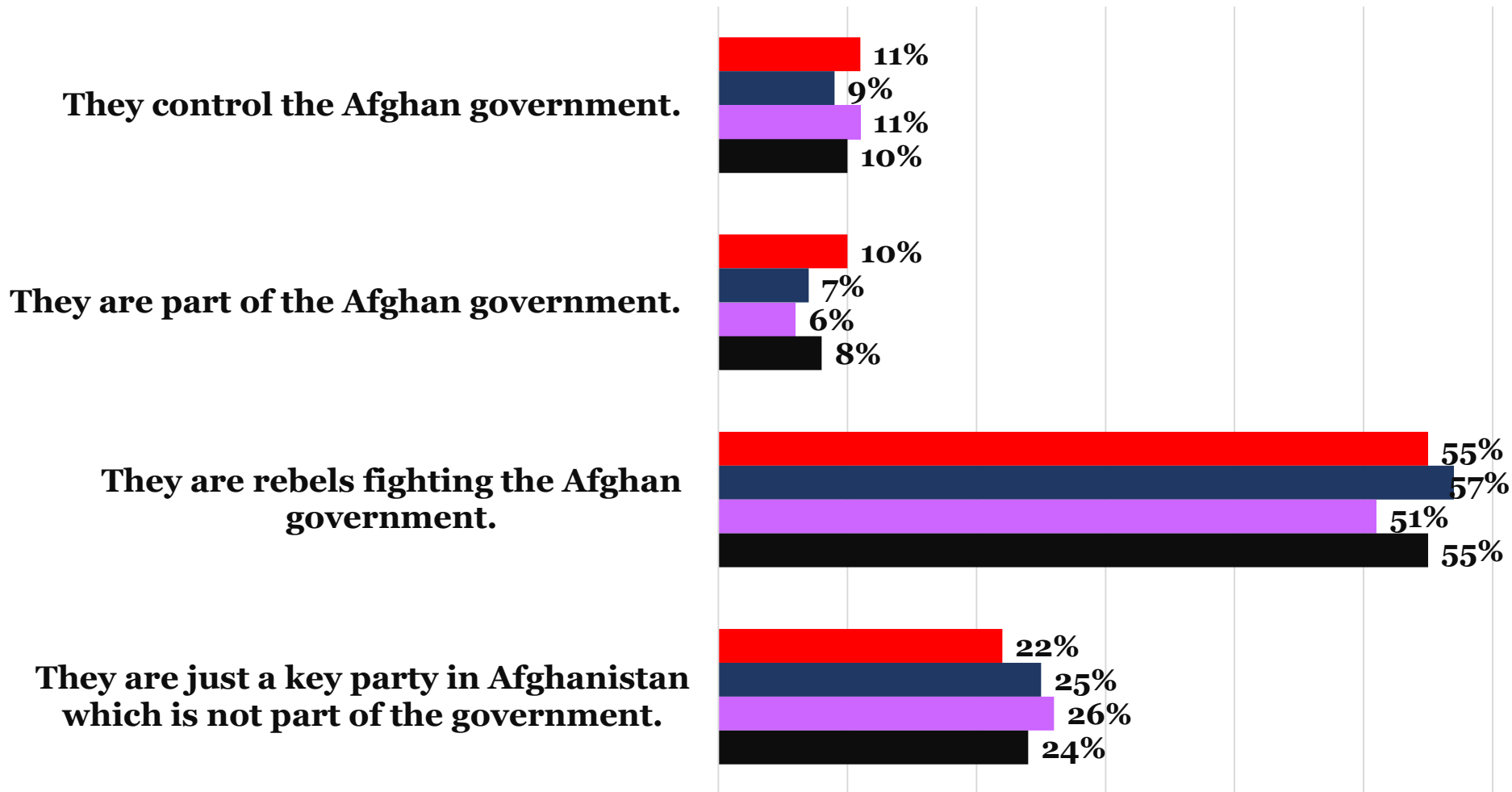
■ **Republicans**
■ **Democrats**
■ **Independents**
■ **Total**



**As far as you know,
which of the following
best describes the role
of the Taliban in
Afghanistan
currently?**

As far as you know, which of the following best describes the role of the Taliban in Afghanistan currently?

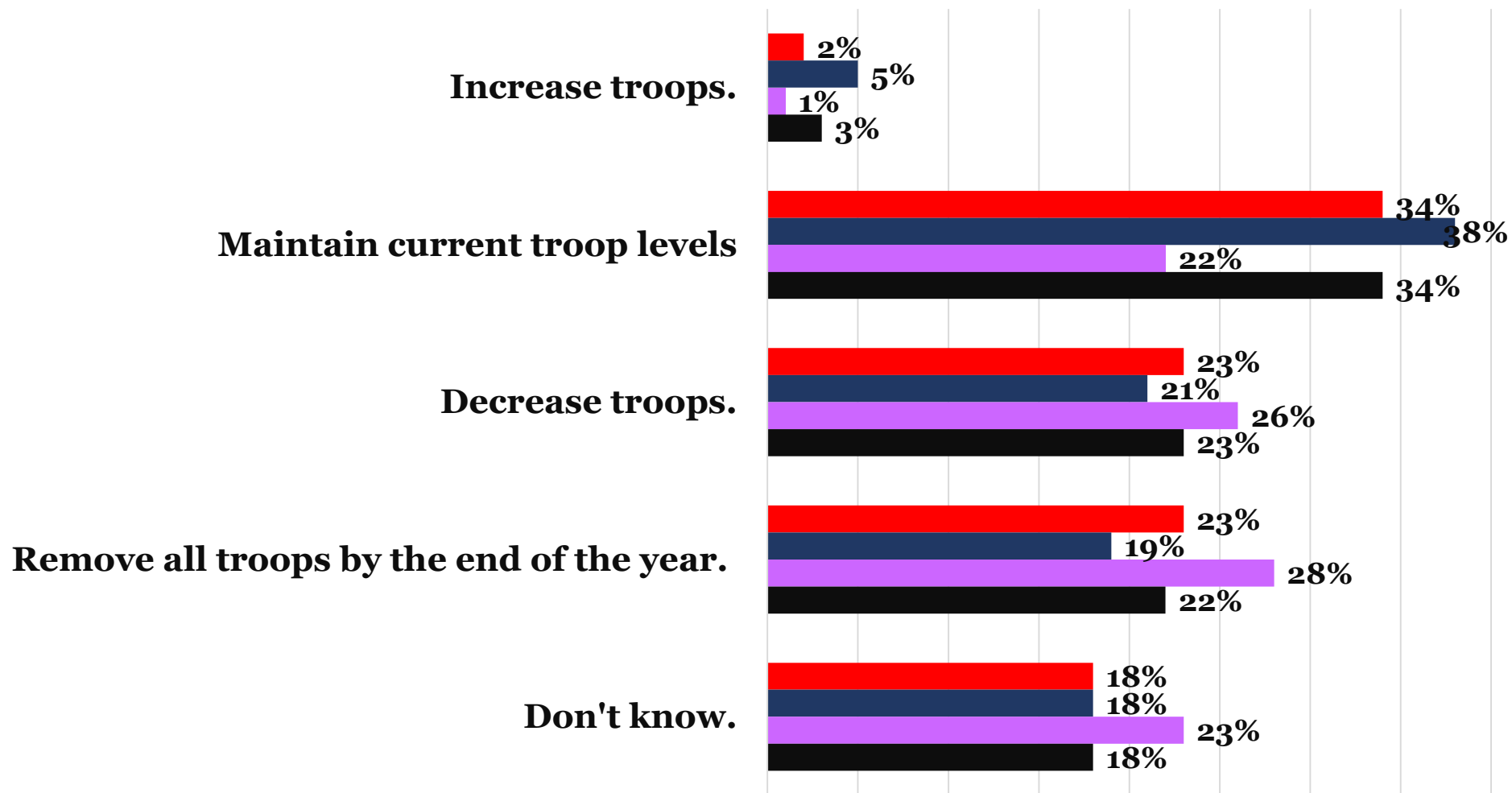
■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**



**Do you think the U.S. should
increase troops, maintain
current troop levels, decrease
troops, or remove all troops
from Afghanistan in the next
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Do you think the U.S. should increase troops, maintain current troop levels, decrease troops, or remove all troops from Afghanistan in the next year?

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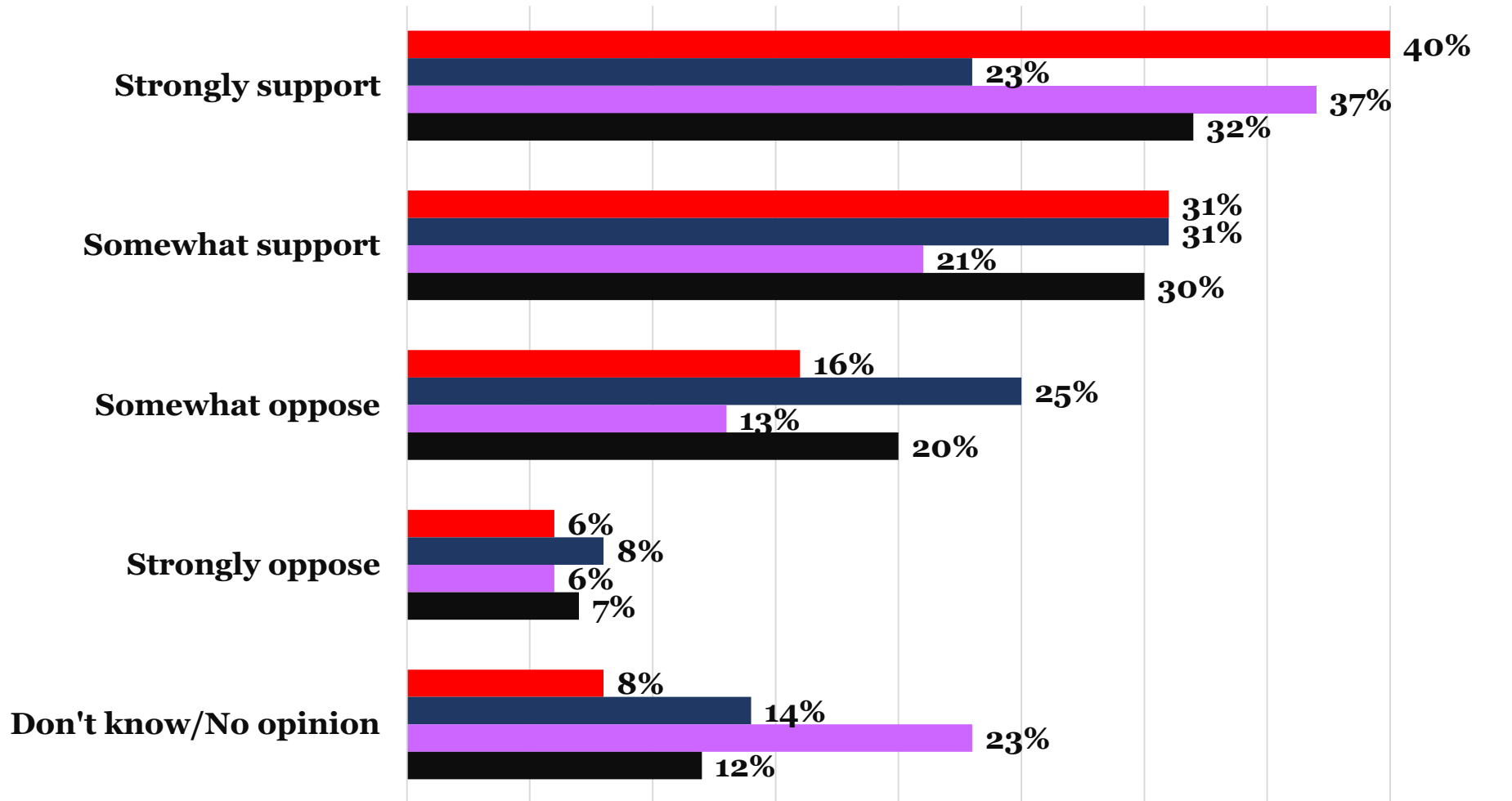


October 2019

As you may know, the U.S. has started the reduction of military presence in Afghanistan, with about half of the approximately 14,000 U.S. troops there set to begin returning home in the near future. Based on what you know, do you support or oppose this action?

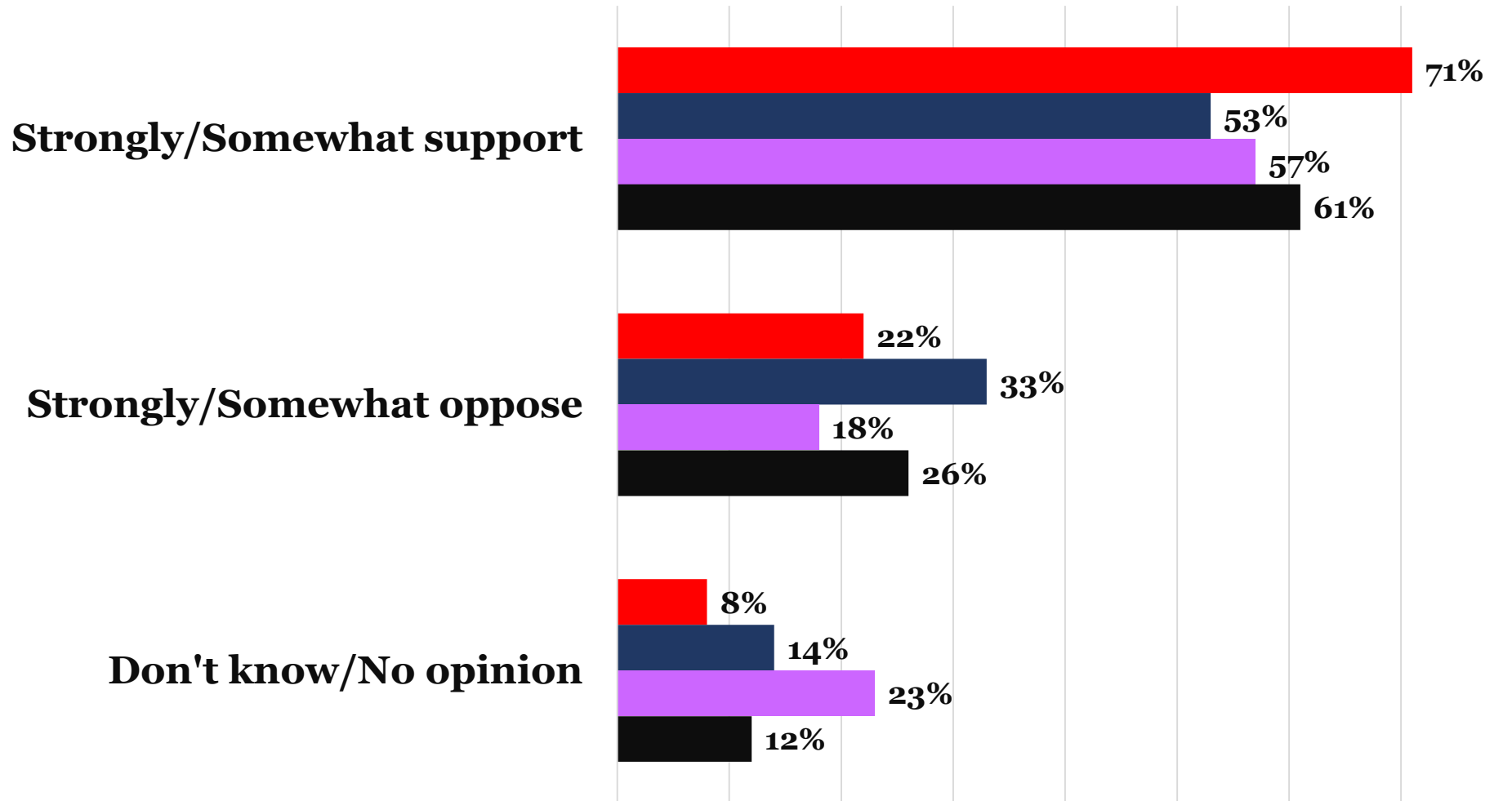
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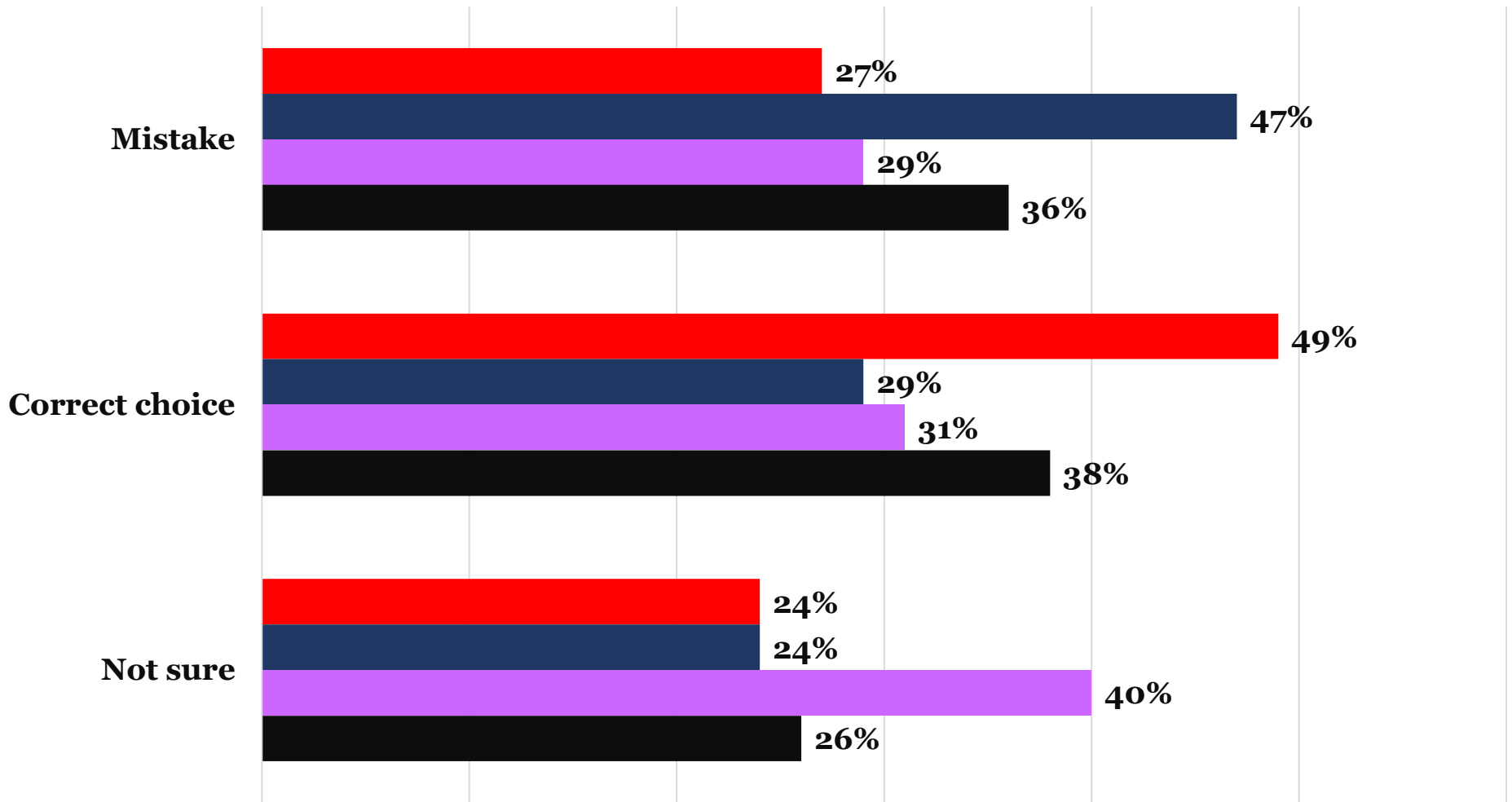
■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total



**Looking back, do you think it was a
mistake or the correct choice to
send U.S. troops to Afghanistan in
2001?**

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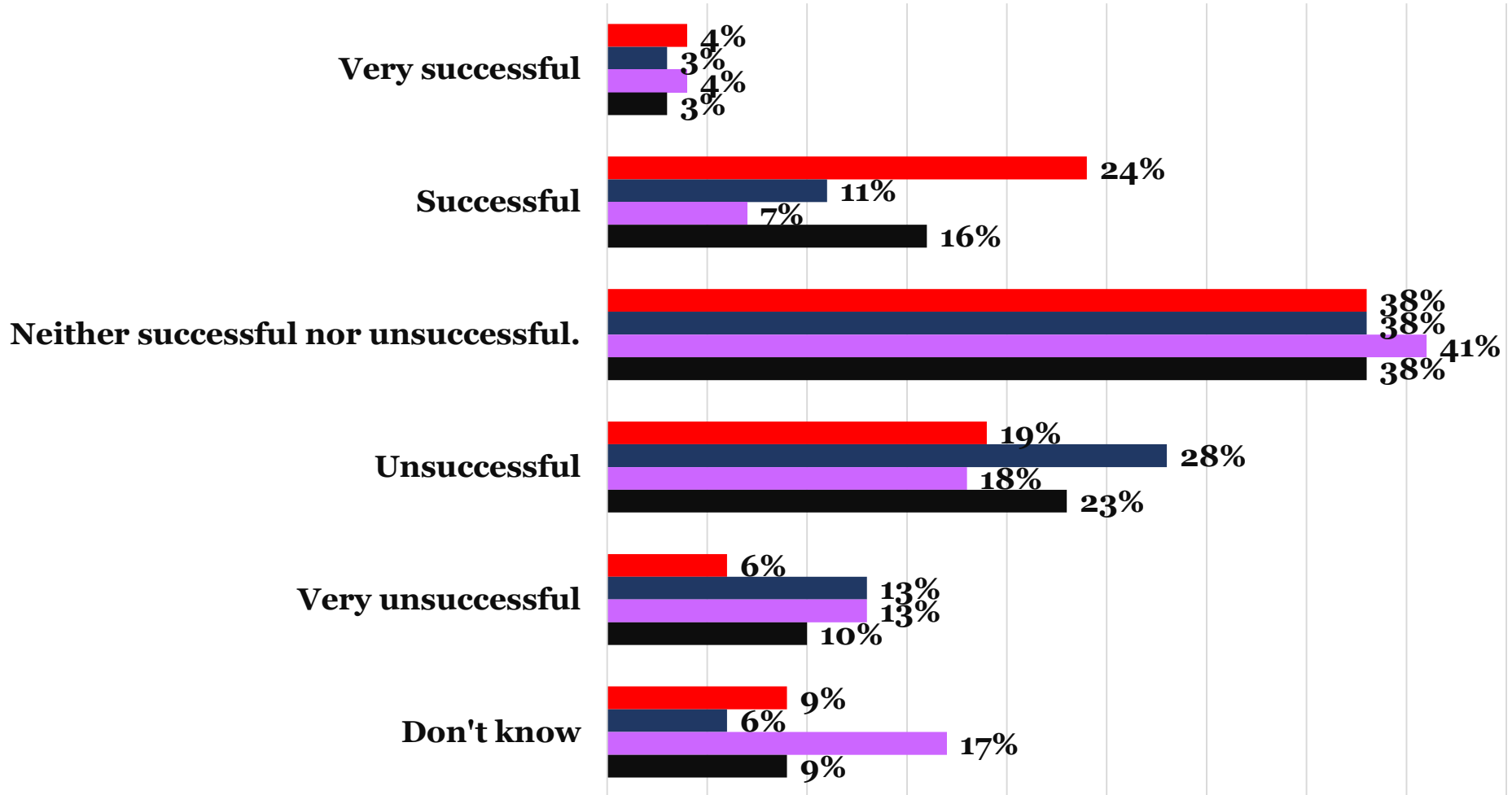
■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**



Do you think America's military involvement in Afghanistan has been successful or unsuccessful in obtaining America's strategic objectives?

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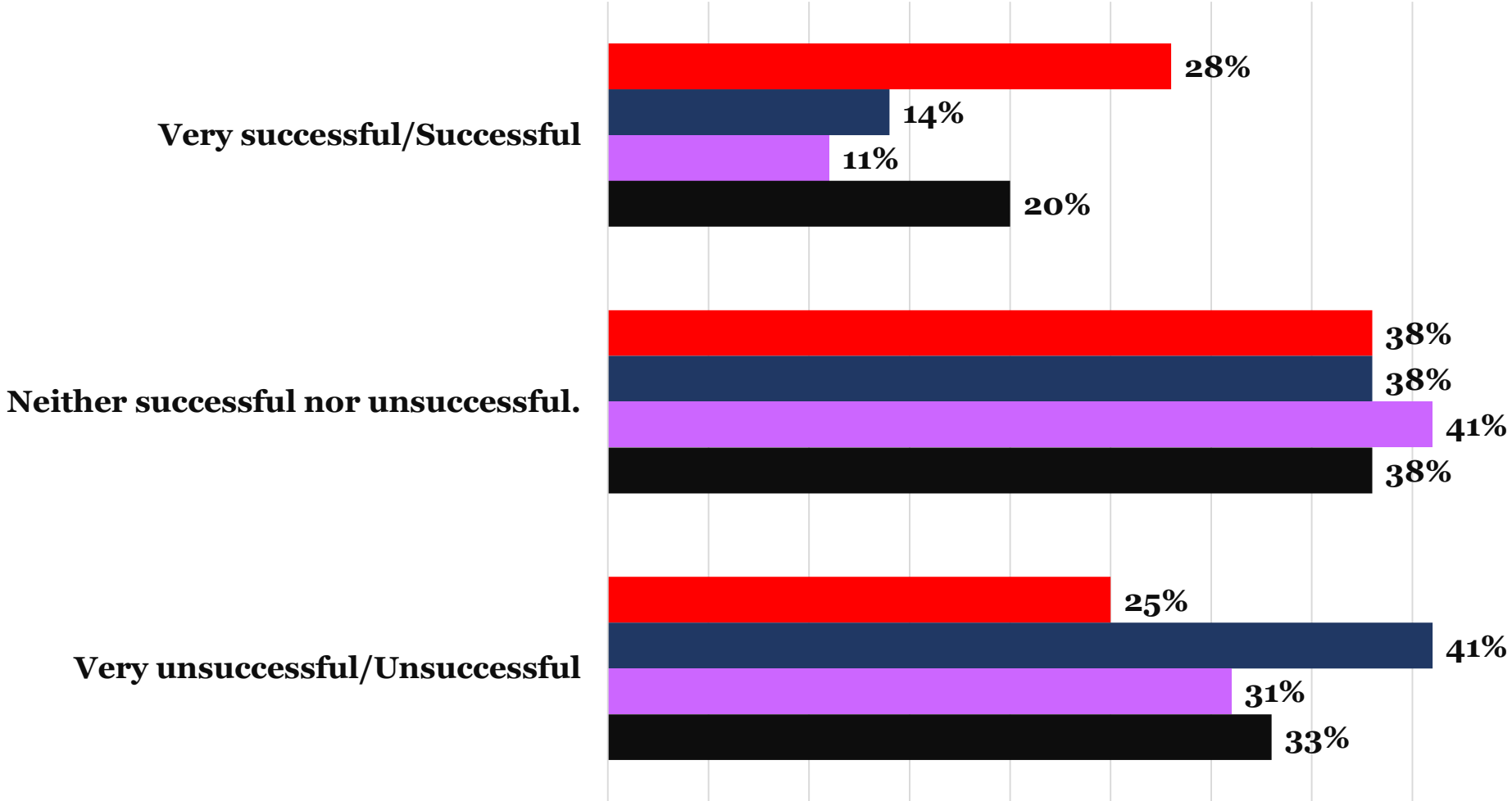
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October 2019

Do you think America's military involvement in Afghanistan has been successful or unsuccessful in obtaining America's strategic objectives?

■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**

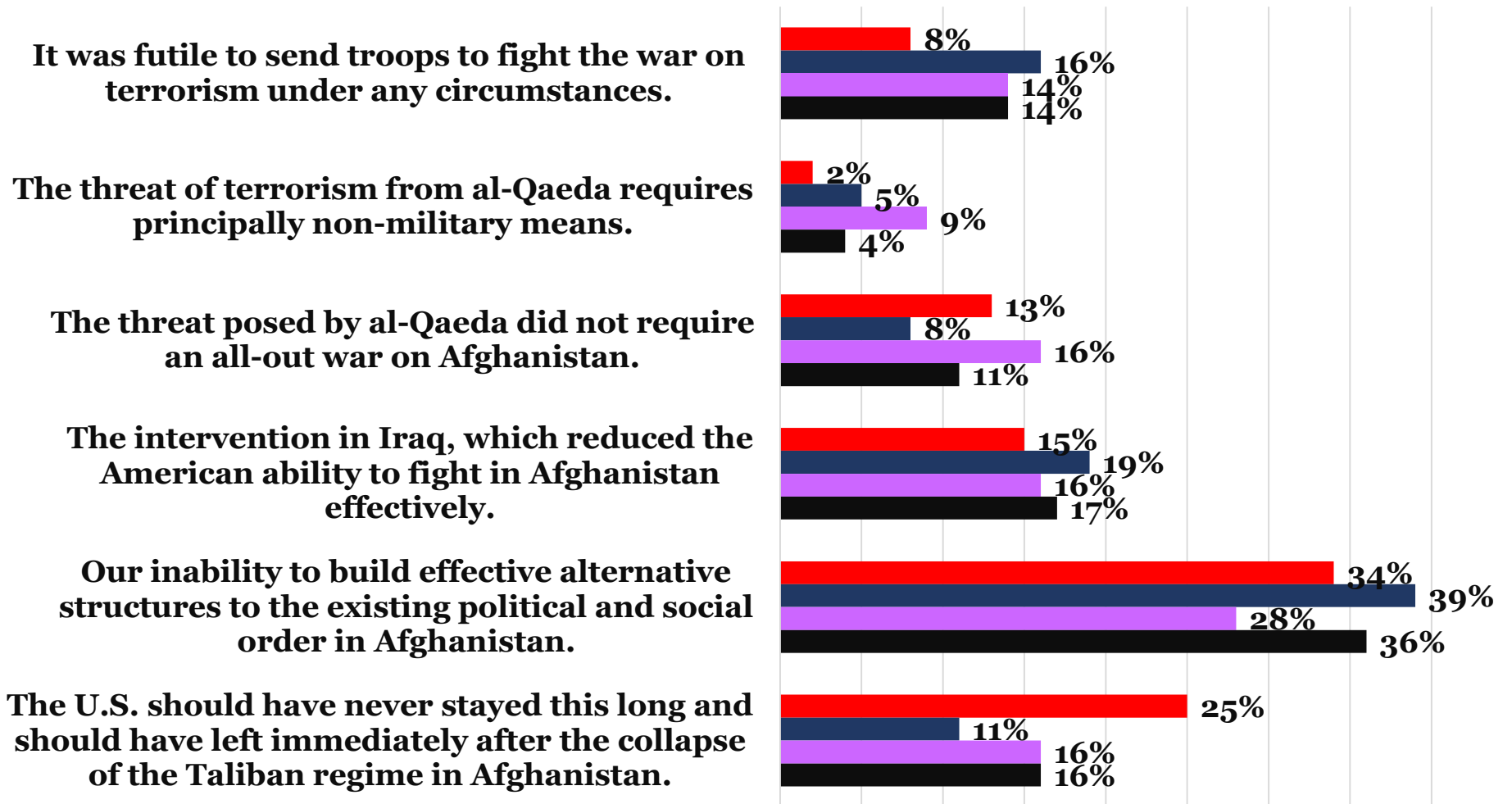


**[Among those who think America's
military involvement in Afghanistan
has been unsuccessful]**

**Which of the following
factors do you think is
MOST important in
explaining the reason for
failure in Afghanistan?**

[Among those who think America's military involvement in Afghanistan has been unsuccessful]
 Which of the following factors do you think is MOST important in explaining the reason for failure in Afghanistan?

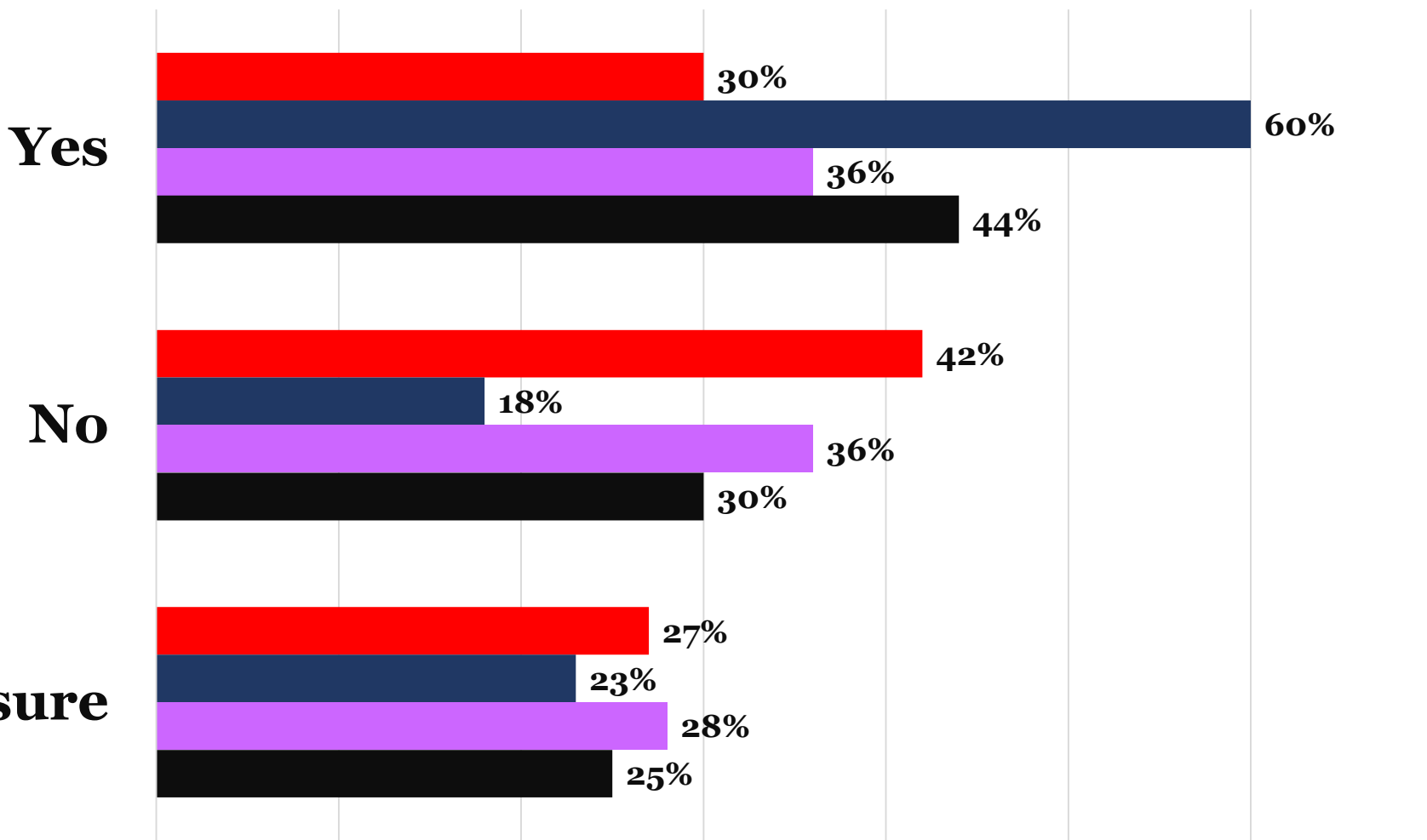
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 ■ **Independents**
 ■ **Total**



Regardless of whether our intervention in Afghanistan was justified or not, do you believe that the U.S. has an obligation towards the Afghan government and the many segments of society who were impacted by that intervention?

Regardless of whether our intervention in Afghanistan was justified or not, do you believe that the U.S. has an obligation towards the Afghan government and the many segments of society who were impacted by that intervention?

■ Republicans **■ Democrats** **■ Independents** **■ Total**



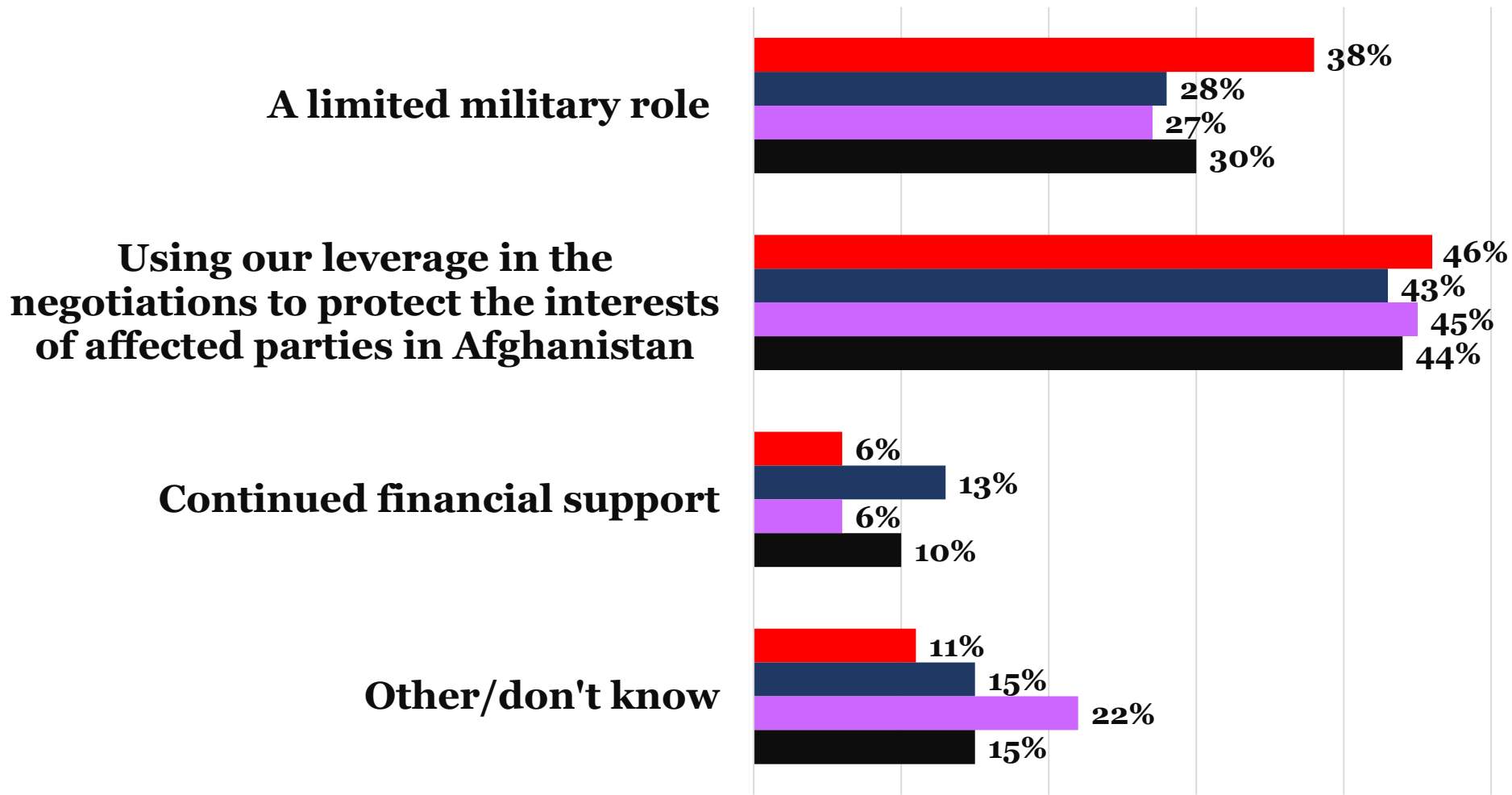
**[Among those who believe the U.S. has
an obligation towards the Afghan
government and the many segments of
society who were impacted by the
intervention]**

**What form should
our responsibility
take?**

[Among those who believe the U.S. has an obligation towards the Afghan government and the many segments of society who were impacted by the intervention]

What form should our responsibility take?

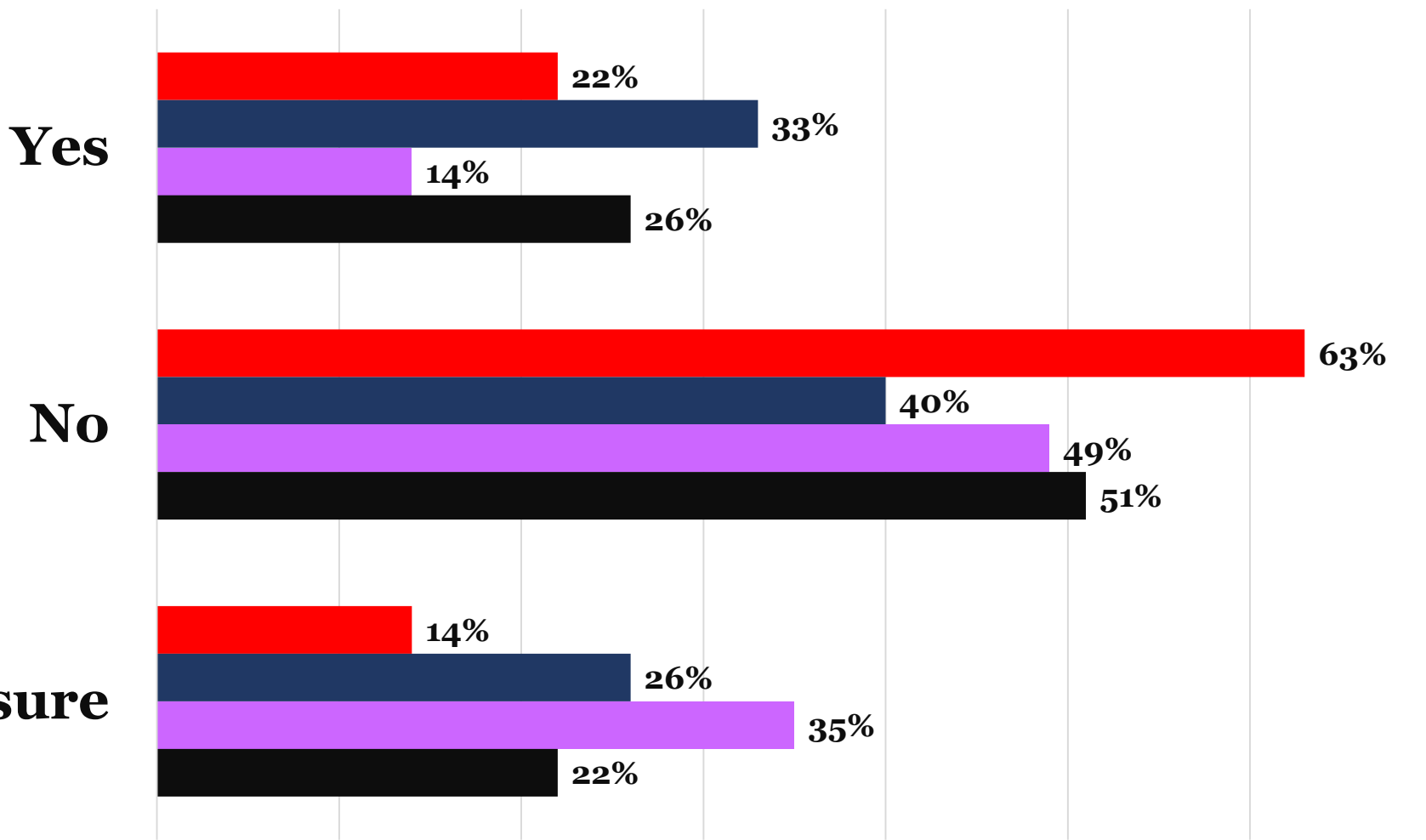
■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total



Do you think the U.S. military should be responsible for ensuring that Afghanistan has a liberal democratic government, one that protects things like fair and open elections for all citizens, equal rights for women, and equal access to education for all?

Do you think the U.S. military should be responsible for ensuring that Afghanistan has a liberal democratic government, one that protects things like fair and open elections for all citizens, equal rights for women, and equal access to education for all?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

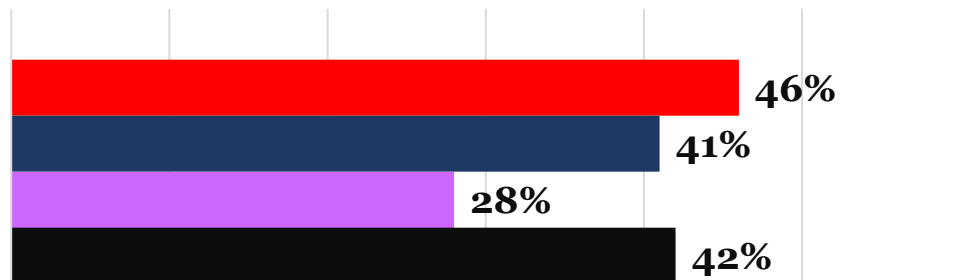


If the central government of Afghanistan in Kabul, the capital, does not have control over all of the territory of Afghanistan, does that pose a threat to the safety of the United States?

If the central government of Afghanistan in Kabul, the capital, does not have control over all of the territory of Afghanistan, does that pose a threat to the safety of the United States?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

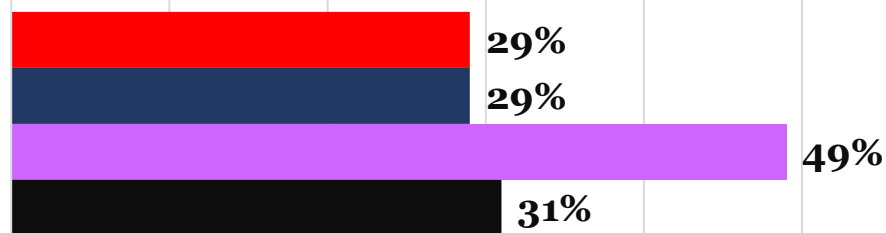
Yes, it does pose a threat.



No, it does not pose a threat.



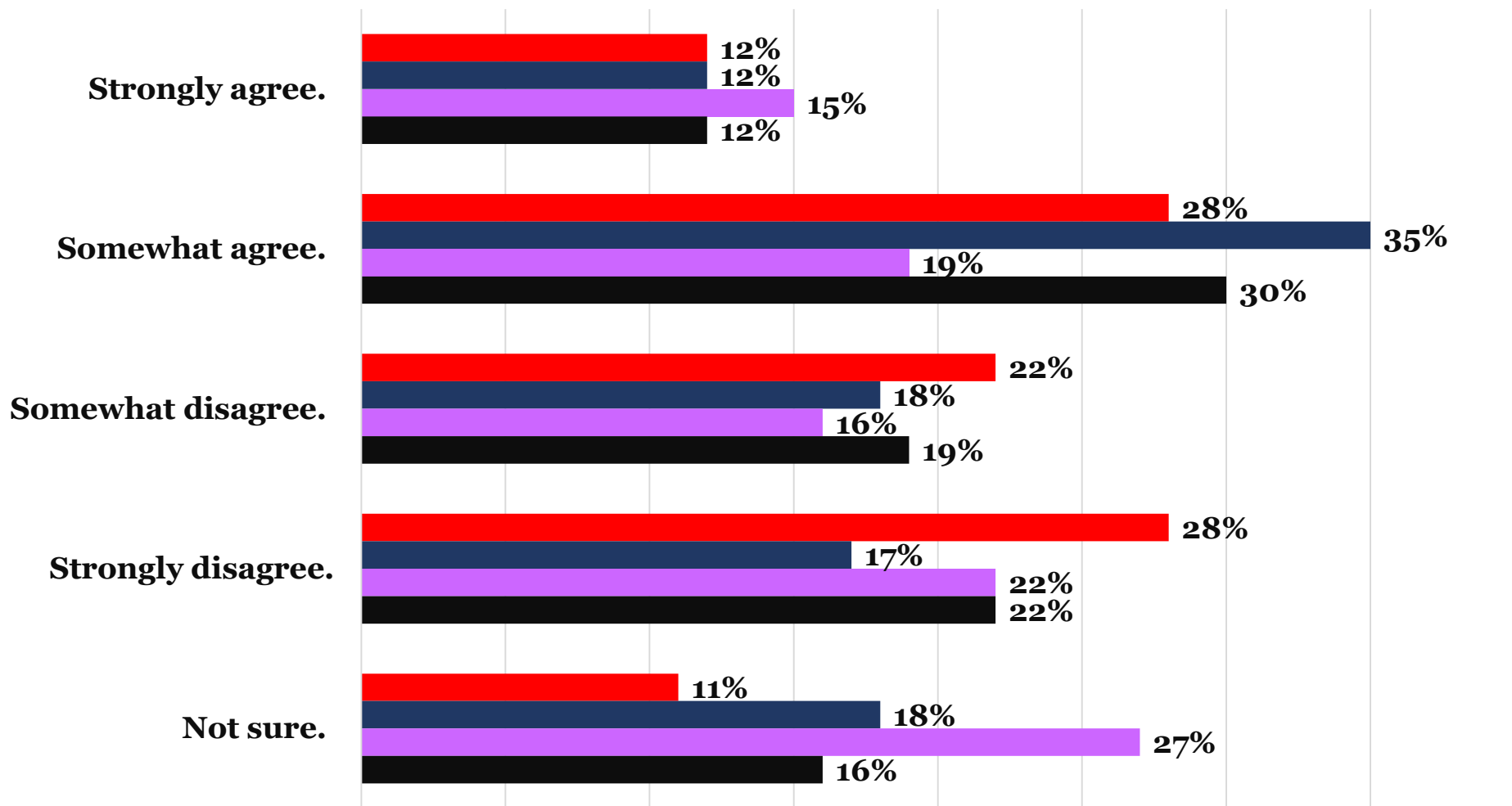
Not sure.



How strongly do you agree or disagree with the opinion that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan?

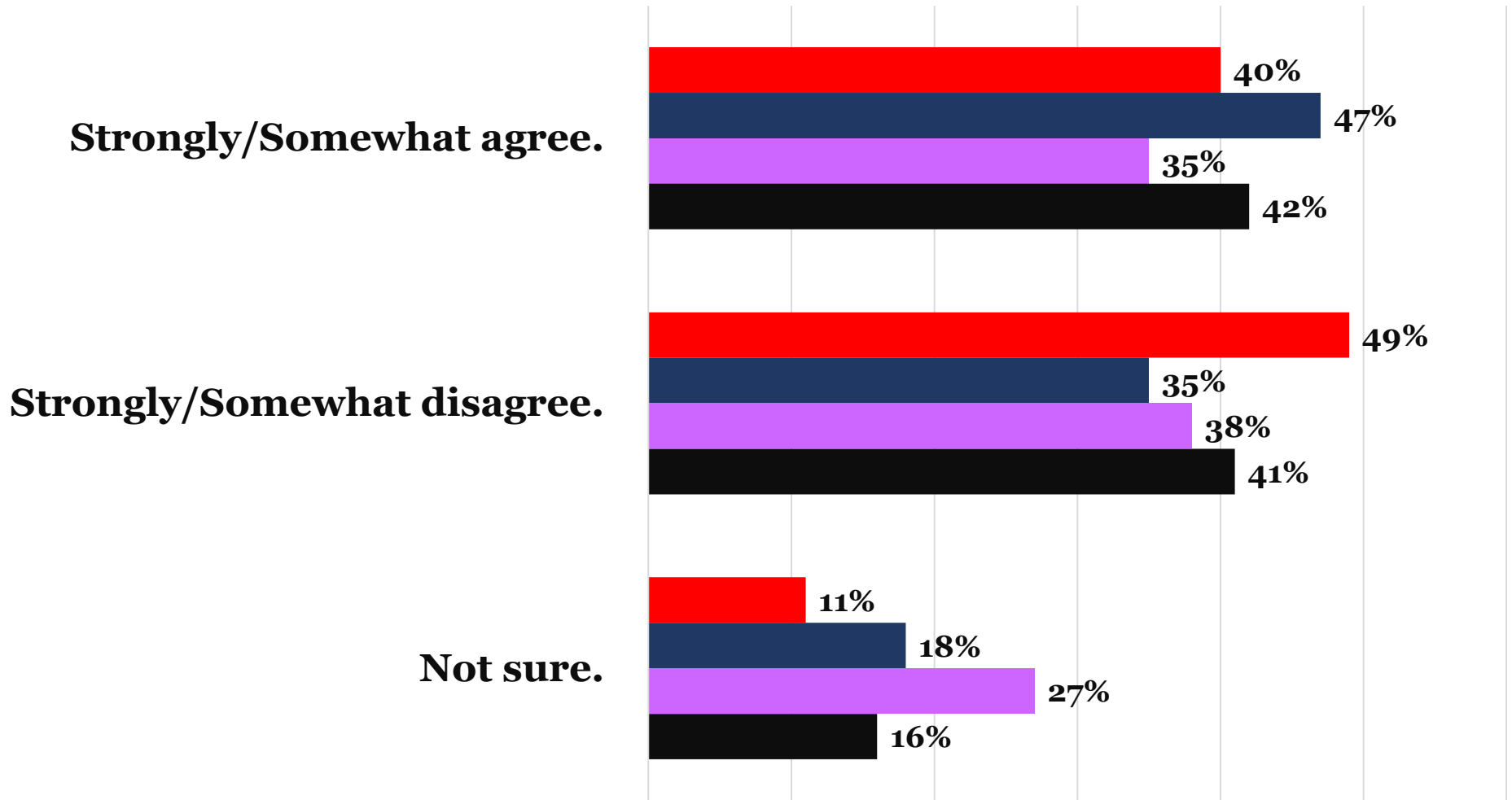
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the opinion that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan?

■ **Republicans** ■ **Democrats** ■ **Independents** ■ **Total**



How strongly do you agree or disagree with the opinion that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan?

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total



**[Among those who agree that the U.S.
should negotiate with the Taliban to end
the war in Afghanistan]**

**On a scale of 1-5, do you support the
following forms of relations with the
Taliban? Indicate your support
below, with 1 indicating “strongly
oppose” and 5 indicating “strongly
support.”**

**A full peace agreement and normal
relations**

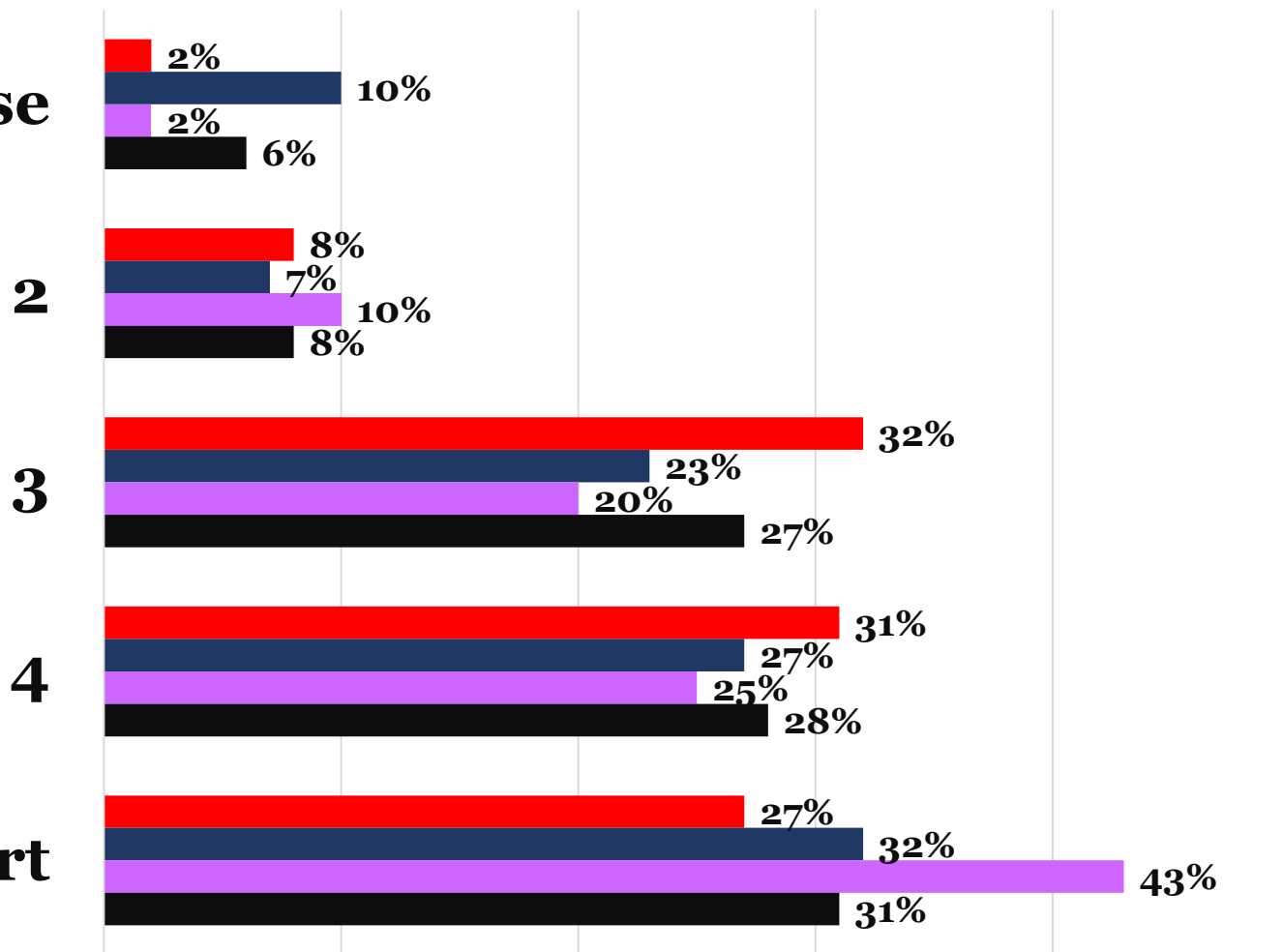
[Among those who agree that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan]

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A full peace agreement and normal relations.

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

Strongly oppose



Strongly support

**[Among those who agree that the U.S.
should negotiate with the Taliban to end
the war in Afghanistan]**

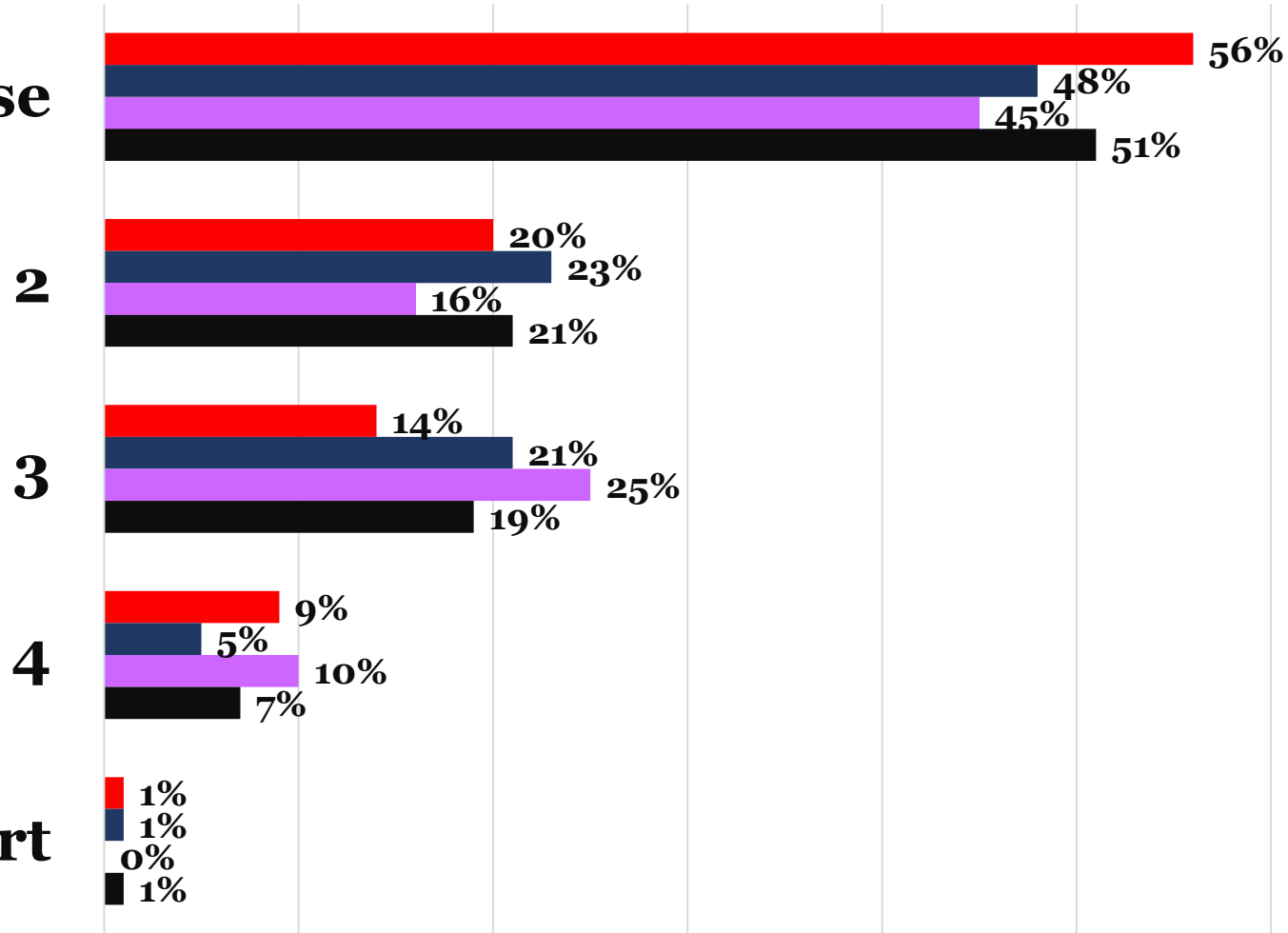
**On a scale of 1-5, do you support the
following forms of relations with the
Taliban? Indicate your support below,
with 1 indicating “strongly oppose”
and 5 indicating “strongly support.”**

**Inviting the Taliban to the United
States**

[Among those who agree that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan]
 On a scale of 1-5, do you support the following forms of relations with the Taliban? Indicate your support below, with 1 indicating “strongly oppose” and 5 indicating “strongly support.”
Inviting the Taliban to the United States.

■ Republicans **■ Democrats** **■ Independents** **■ Total**

Strongly oppose



Strongly support

[Among those who agree that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan]

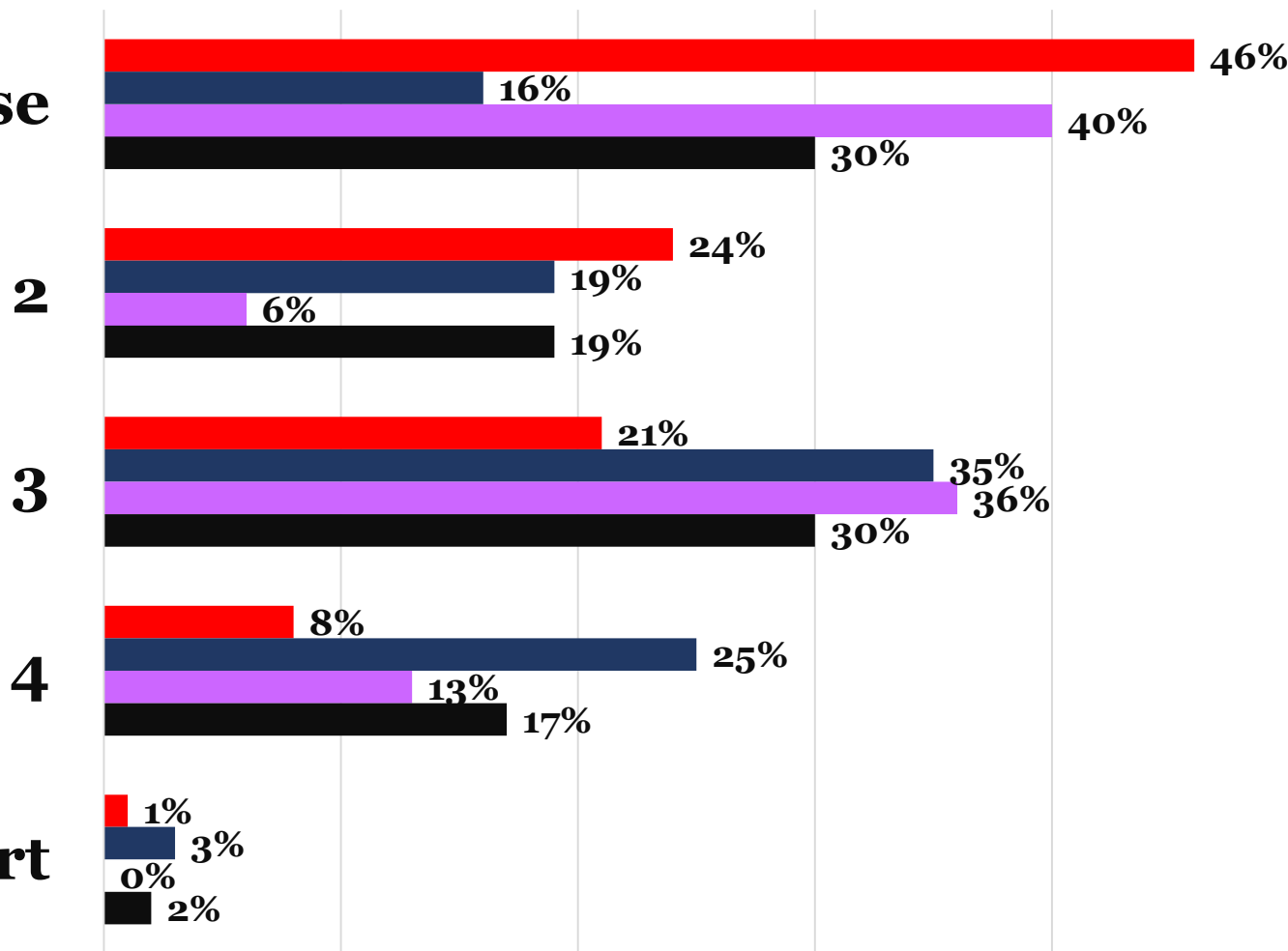
On a scale of 1-5, do you support the following forms of relations with the Taliban? Indicate your support below, with 1 indicating “strongly oppose” and 5 indicating “strongly support.”

Being prepared to provide financial assistance to Afghanistan even with the Taliban being part of the government.

[Among those who agree that the U.S. should negotiate with the Taliban to end the war in Afghanistan]
 On a scale of 1-5, do you support the following forms of relations with the Taliban? Indicate your support below, with 1 indicating “strongly oppose” and 5 indicating “strongly support.”
Being prepared to provide financial assistance to Afghanistan even with the Taliban being part of the government.

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

Strongly oppose



Strongly support

It was recently revealed that a meeting had been planned at Camp David between senior Taliban representatives, Afghan government officials, and the U.S. President and his staff, to occur on September 8, 2019 (later canceled).

Which of the following comes closest to your initial reaction:

It was recently revealed that a meeting had been planned at Camp David between senior Taliban representatives, Afghan government officials, and the U.S. President and his staff, to occur on September 8, 2019 (later canceled).

Which of the following comes closest to your initial reaction:

■ Republicans **■** Democrats **■** Independents **■** Total

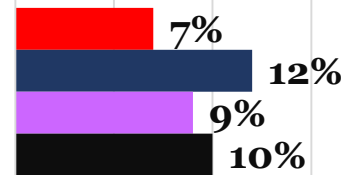
I support an agreement with the Taliban if possible but do not support the Taliban being honored on American soil given their role in hosting al-Qaeda.



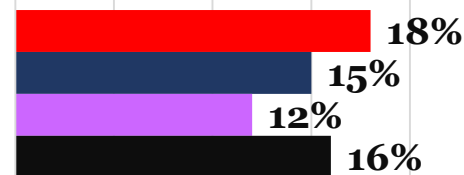
I am opposed to an agreement with the Taliban whether or not they come to the U.S.



I am open to the Taliban coming to the U.S. if that's what it takes to reach an agreement but object to the timing so close to the anniversary of 9/11.



I am open to the Taliban coming to the U.S. if that's what it takes to reach an agreement, and have no problem with the timing.



Assume that a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban is reached, and the U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan. If the Taliban continues their war with the Afghan government and emerge victorious, capturing Kabul and other major cities, how much do you support the following actions?

Indicate your support below, with 1 indicating “strongly disapprove” and 5 indicating “strongly approve.”

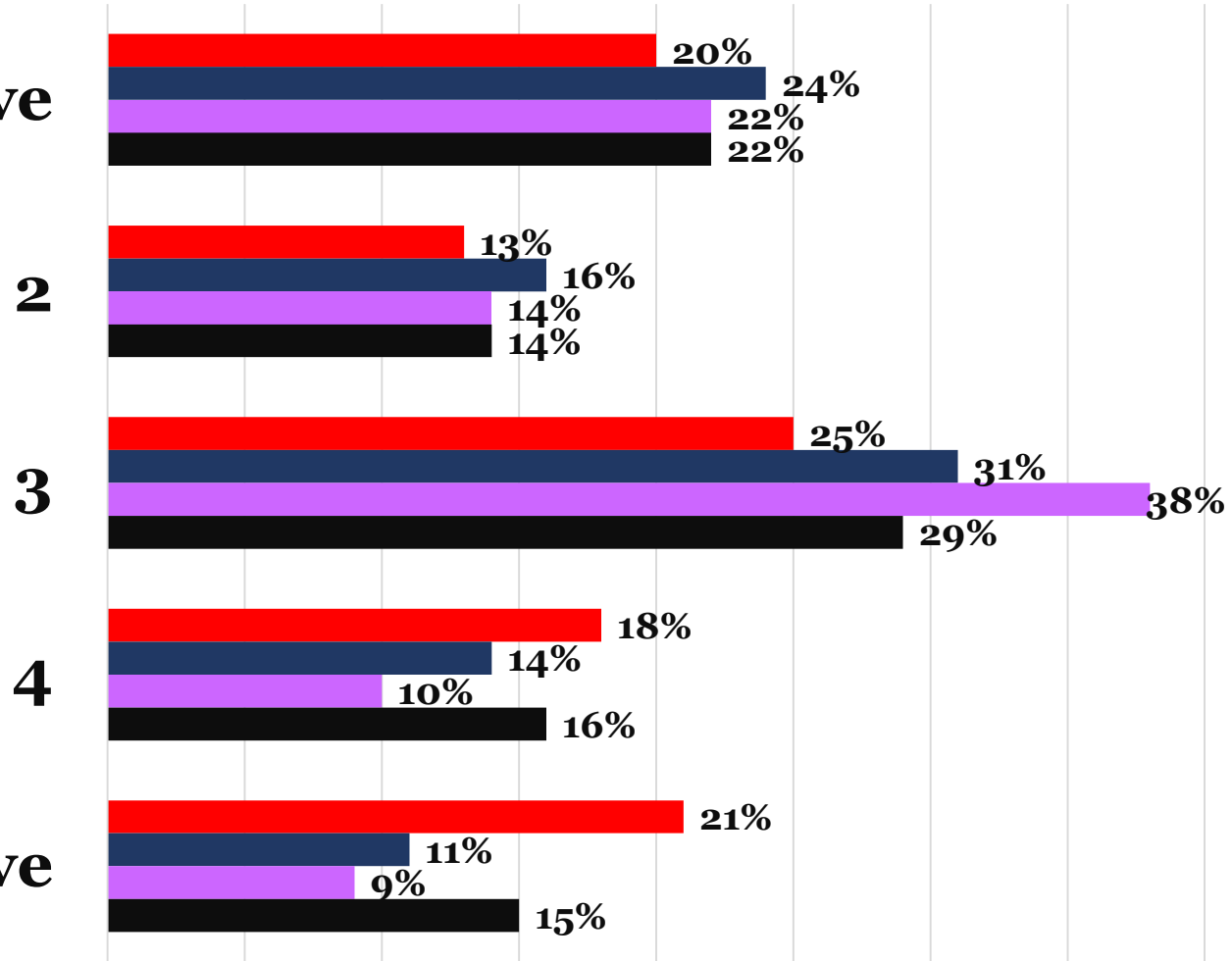
Military action.

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Military action.

■ **Republicans**
■ **Democrats**
■ **Independents**
■ **Total**

Strongly disapprove



Strongly approve

Assume that a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban is reached, and the U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan. If the Taliban continues their war with the Afghan government and emerge victorious, capturing Kabul and other major cities, how much do you support the following actions?

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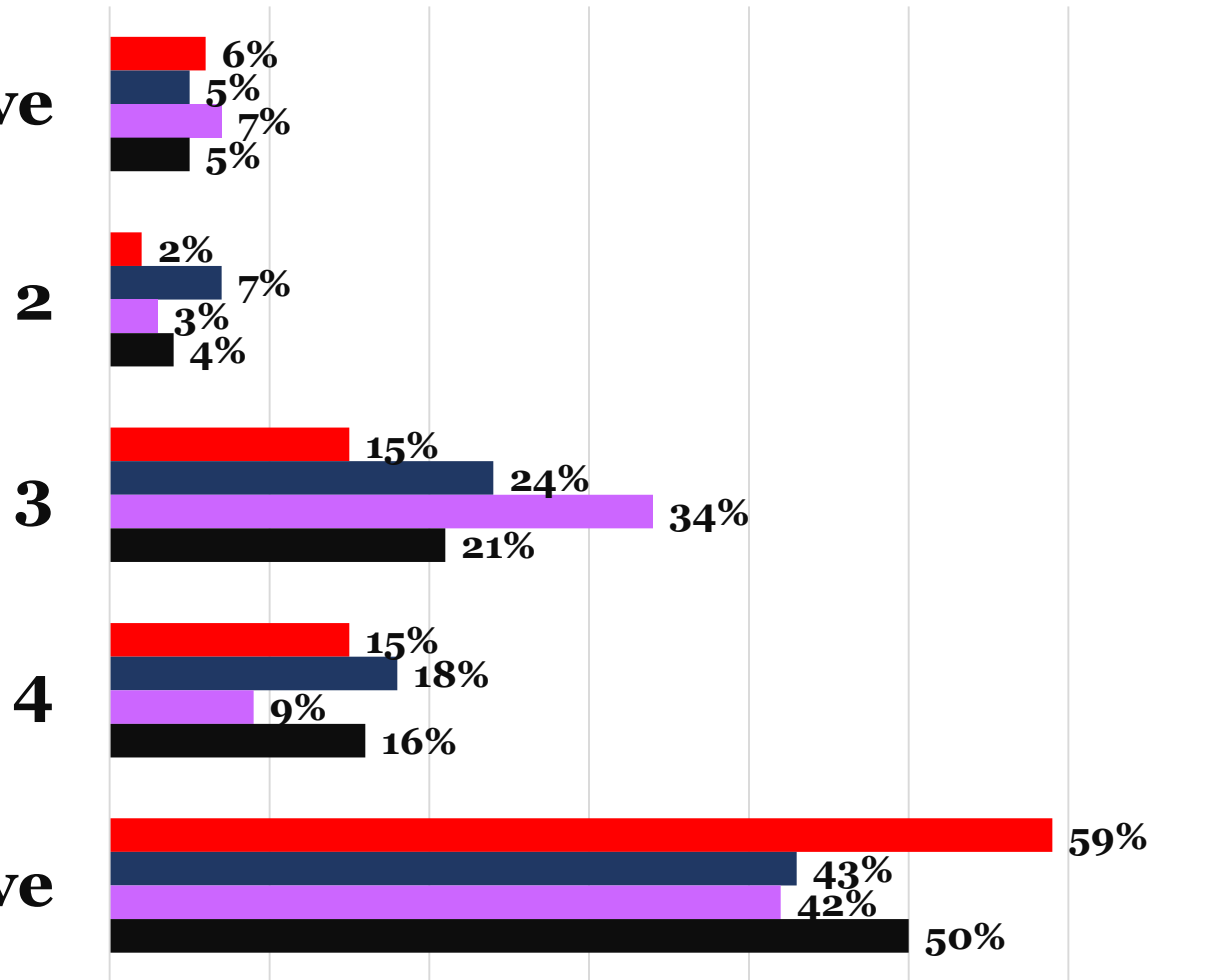
Impose economic sanctions on the Taliban.

Assume that a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban is reached, and the U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan. If the Taliban continues their war with the Afghan government and emerge victorious, capturing Kabul and other major cities, how much do you support the following actions? Indicate your support below, with 1 indicating “strongly disapprove” and 5 indicating “strongly approve.”

Impose economic sanctions on the Taliban.

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

Strongly disapprove



Strongly approve

October 2019

Assume that a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban is reached, and the U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan. If the Taliban continues their war with the Afghan government and emerge victorious, capturing Kabul and other major cities, how much do you support the following actions?

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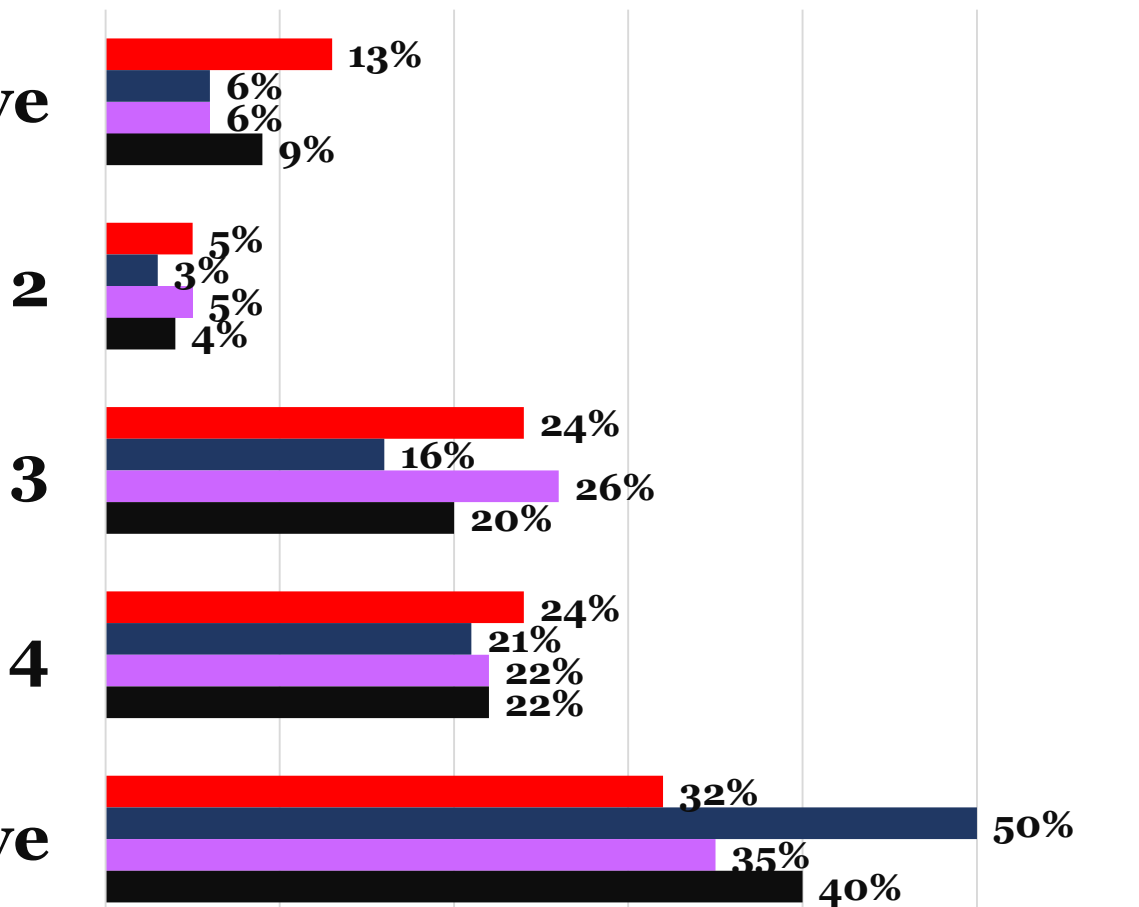
Engage in international diplomatic efforts

Assume that a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban is reached, and the U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan. If the Taliban continues their war with the Afghan government and emerge victorious, capturing Kabul and other major cities, how much do you support the following actions? Indicate your support below, with 1 indicating “strongly disapprove” and 5 indicating “strongly approve.”

Engage in international diplomatic efforts

■ Republicans
 ■ Democrats
 ■ Independents
 ■ Total

Strongly disapprove



Strongly approve

Assume that a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban is reached, and the U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan. If the Taliban continues their war with the Afghan government and emerge victorious, capturing Kabul and other major cities, how much do you support the following actions?

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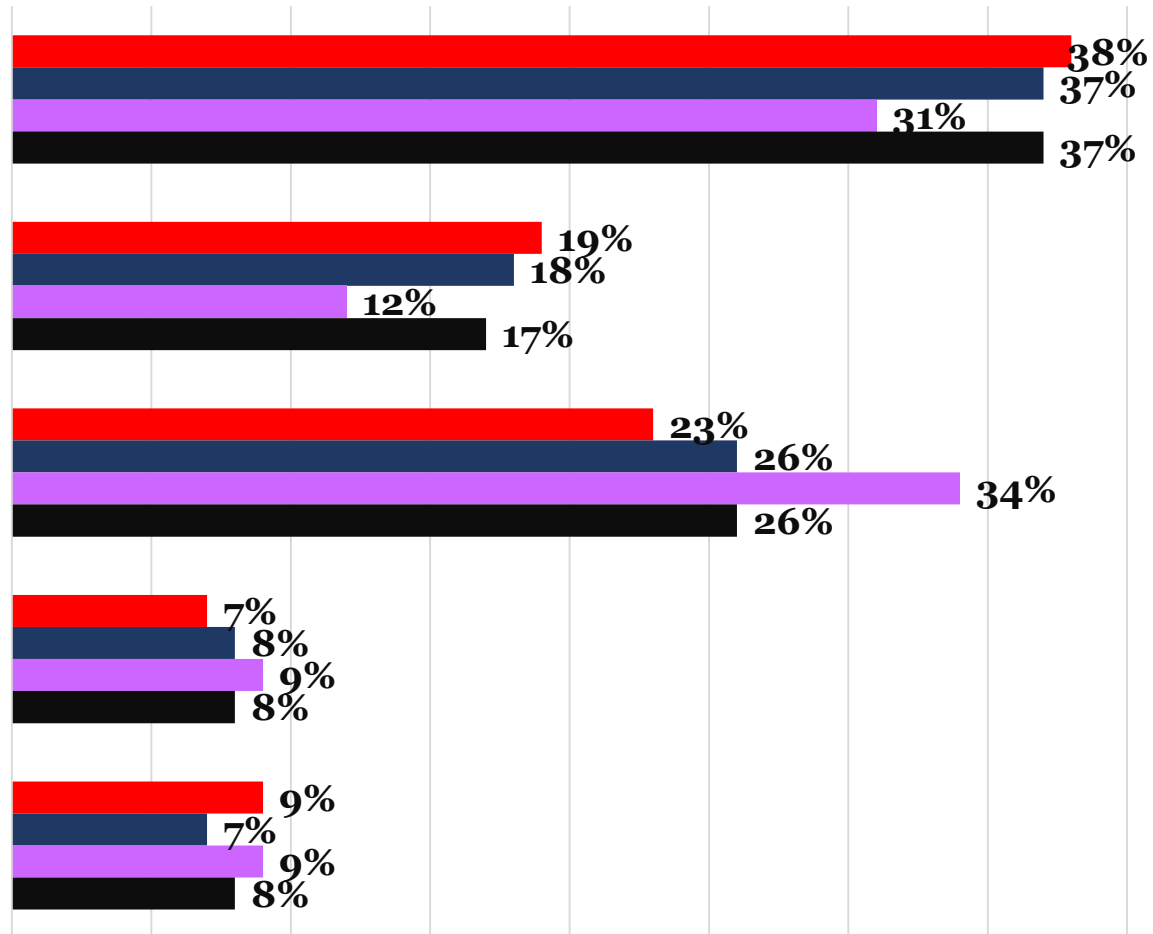
Do nothing.

Assume that a peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban is reached, and the U.S. withdraws all troops from Afghanistan. If the Taliban continues their war with the Afghan government and emerge victorious, capturing Kabul and other major cities, how much do you support the following actions? Indicate your support below, with 1 indicating “strongly disapprove” and 5 indicating “strongly approve.”

Do nothing.

■ Republicans ■ Democrats ■ Independents ■ Total

Strongly disapprove



Strongly approve