



Jan. 30, 2026

Oregon Business & Industry (OBI) recently commissioned a statewide voter survey conducted by DHM Research in advance of the 2026 legislative session.

OBI commissioned this research to better understand what Oregonians see as the state's most urgent challenges, with an emphasis on taxes, regulations, affordability and economic competitiveness. The findings reinforce that voters are concerned about the direction of the state and are looking for solutions that improve economic competitiveness and ease cost pressures.

We are sharing this memo and data to provide policymakers with insights into Oregonians' values and beliefs and to help inform policy discussions during this year's legislative session.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing our shared goal of improving Oregon's economic competitiveness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Angela Wilhelms".

Angela Wilhelms  
President & CEO  
Oregon Business & Industry  
[angelawilhelms@oregonbusinessindustry.com](mailto:angelawilhelms@oregonbusinessindustry.com)

January 30, 2026

**To:** Angela Wilhelms and Preston Mann, Oregon Business & Industry  
**From:** John Horvick and Tony Iaccarino, DHM Research  
**Re:** OBI 2026 Legislative Survey Executive Summary

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This mixed-mode survey, combining phone and text-to-online approaches, engaged 600 registered Oregon voters across the state. The sample size enables comprehensive analysis of voter opinions overall and across demographic subgroups. Statistical weighting by age, gender, race, education level, income, party affiliation, and area ensures that results accurately represent the registered voter population. The margin of error for the full sample is  $\pm 4.0\%$ . Due to rounding, some totals may differ by  $\pm 1$  from the sum of individual responses.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Voters are pessimistic about the direction of the state.** Only 26% say the state is heading in the right direction, with positivity remaining stubbornly low since 2021. Most voters say the problems facing the state are getting worse: 85% saying cost of living and 77% say housing affordability are worsening.
- **Elected leaders get low ratings for job performance.** 64% disapprove of Governor Tina Kotek's job performance, 64% disapprove of the Oregon Legislature's performance, and 55% disapprove of President Donald Trump's performance.
- **Economic outlook is poor and Oregonians are struggling to get by.** 73% rate Oregon's current economic conditions as poor, an increase from 60% in 2021. 68% say conditions are getting worse, an increase from 62% over the same period. Nearly half have difficulties paying for essentials like groceries, healthcare, utility bills, auto insurance, and home mortgage or rent.
- **Voters blame high taxes and excessive regulations for Oregon's sluggish economy.** 52% think Oregon's economic growth rate is slower than the national average, 42% about the same, and 4% faster. Asked to explain the slow growth, 23% mention high taxes and 21% mention excessive regulations. No other reasons are cited as often.
- **Voters favor a pro-growth strategy to tackle upcoming state budget deficits.** 52% prefer reducing regulations and creating incentives to spur economic growth, jobs, and tax revenue. 27% support spending cuts, and 12% favor raising taxes to fully fund programs. Voters favor the first approach, regardless of party affiliation.

## VOTER SENTIMENT

**Positivity about the direction of the state remains low.** Only 26% say the state is heading in the right direction. Positivity has remained low, hovering below 40% since 2021. Partisanship shapes outlook, with only 5% of Republican and 23% of NAV/Other voters saying the state is headed in the right direction, compared to 46% of Democratic voters. Still, even among Democratic voters, fewer than half are positive about the direction of the state.



Asked to articulate in their own words the most important problem facing the state, voters most often mention issues related to government and leadership. While homelessness is mentioned by 21% of voters as the single-biggest problem in the state, the following issues, taken together, are mentioned by 50% of voters: government mismanagement (13%), taxes and tariffs (13%), Democratic leadership (12%), Republican leadership (7%), and budget cuts (5%).

Voters say key problems are getting worse. Most see the following problems as worsening: overall cost of living (85%), housing affordability (77%), homelessness (67%), access to affordable healthcare (65%), quality of K-12 education (61%), availability of quality jobs (54%), and the condition of streets, roads, and highways (53%).

Consider:

- *Slide 1: "Positivity about the direction of the state remains low and has declined since 2025." (showing right direction trends)*
- *Slide 2: "Perceptions about the direction of the state are partisan, with NAV/Other voters and Republicans less optimistic." (showing right direction by party)*
- *Slide 3: "When asked to identify Oregon's most important problem, voters most often point to political issues, followed by social and economic issues." (showing categories of most important problems)*
- *Slide 4: "Taken together, political issues such as government mismanagement, taxes, tariffs, political leadership, and funding are viewed as the state's biggest problems." (showing breakdown of the state's most important problems)*
- *Slide 5: "When it comes to key problems facing Oregon, most say the problems—especially cost of living and housing affordability—have been getting worse in recent years." (showing better, same, or worse on key problems)*

## JOB APPROVAL AND UPCOMING ELECTIONS

**Voters disapprove of the job performance of their elected leaders.** 64% disapprove of Governor Kotek's performance, 64% disapprove of the Oregon Legislature's performance, and 55% disapprove of President Trump's performance. While partisanship shapes perceptions of job performance, Republicans are more approving of their leaders than Democrats: 88% of Republicans approve of President Trump's performance while 63% of Democrats approve of Governor Kotek's performance.

If state legislative elections were today, voters are divided on who they would vote for in their districts. 45% would vote for the Republican Party candidate and 42% would vote for the Democratic Party candidate. Here too, there is stronger support among Republicans (92%) for their own party candidates than among Democrats for their own (75%), with NAV/Other voters leaning Republican (42%).

Consider:

- *Slide 6: "Voters disapprove of the job performance of Governor Kotek, the Oregon Legislature, and President Trump." (showing job performance ratings)*
- *Slide 7: "Democratic approval of Governor Kotek is softer than Republican approval of President Trump." (showing approval ratings by party)*
- *Slide 8: "If the election were today, voters are divided on who they would vote for in their district." (showing overall preference for legislative candidates)*

- *Slide 9: "Democratic support for Democratic candidates is softer than Republican support for Republican candidates." (showing preference by party)*

## ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

### **Voters are pessimistic about Oregon's economy and are struggling to make ends meet.** 73% rate

Oregon's economic conditions as poor, an increase from 60% in 2021. Only 20% rate the economy as good. These ratings are shared across region and income levels, with a minimum of 70% of voters in the Portland metro area, Willamette Valley, and the rest of the state rating conditions as poor; along with a minimum of 69% across all income groups. Partisan ratings are more mixed, with 89% of Republicans, 74% of NAV/Other voters, and 58% of Democrats rating the state's economy as poor.

68% of voters say economic conditions in Oregon are getting worse, an increase from 62% in 2021. 27% say economic conditions are staying the same. Only 2% say they are getting better. Voters are more likely to blame Governor Kotek than either President Trump or the Oregon Legislature for the state's worsening economic conditions. Among those who say economic conditions are getting worse, 43% blame Governor Kotek, while 29% blame President Trump, and 22% blame state legislators. Democrats are more likely to blame Governor Kotek than Republicans are to blame Trump: 14% of Democrats blame Governor Kotek, while only 2% of Republicans hold President Trump responsible.

Roughly half the state's voters say it's difficult to pay for basic expenses. 51% find it difficult to pay for groceries, 46% for healthcare, 46% for home energy bills, 44% for auto insurance, and 43% for home mortgage or rent. Lower-income and middle-income voters have the greatest difficulty paying for basic expenses, with a minimum of 50% across both income levels reporting difficulties. For voters in low-income households earning less than \$50,000, 70% say it's difficult to pay for groceries.

Consider:

- *Slide 10: "Most voters currently rate economic conditions in Oregon as poor. The negative outlook has increased since 2021." (showing OBI survey ratings over time)*
- *Slide 11: "Most groups rate Oregon's economic conditions as poor. Partisanship shapes perceptions of the economy." (showing 2026 ratings by area, party, and income)*
- *Slide 12: "Most voters say economic conditions in Oregon are getting worse." (showing OBI survey outlook over time)*
- *Slide 13: "Voters are more likely to back Governor Kotek for Oregon's worsening economic conditions." (showing who to blame)*
- *Slide 14: "More Democrats blame Governor Kotek than Republicans blame Trump, with NAV/Other voters more likely to blame Governor Kotek." (showing blame by party)*
- *Slide 15: "About half of voters have difficulties paying basic expenses." (showing difficulty in various areas)*
- *Slide 16: "Middle-income and lower-income voters have the most difficulty paying basic expenses." (showing difficulty by income level)*

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Voters say the state's economic growth rate is slower than the national average and blame high taxes and excessive regulations.** 52% say the growth rate is slower than the national average, 42% say it's about the

same, and 4% say it's faster. Asked to explain in their own words why growth has been slower, 44% of voters mention either high taxes (23%) or excessive regulations (21%). No other reasons are mentioned as often.

Consider:

- *Slide 17: "Most voters believe Oregon's economic growth rate is slower than the national average. They prefer it to be faster." (showing assessment of growth rate v. preference for growth rate)*
- *Slide 18: "More than 4 in 10 voters point to high taxes and excessive regulations as the main reasons for the state's slow economic growth. Nearly 1 in 5 blame Democratic leaders." (showing open-ended explanations)*

## TAXES AND REGULATIONS

**Voters think businesses in Oregon are over-taxed and over-regulated.** 56% of voters think taxes on businesses in Oregon are too high. 16% say they are about right. Only 9% think they are too low. Republicans (87%) are more likely than Democrats (28%) to think business taxes are too high, with NAV/Other voters (58%) more likely to agree with Republicans.

When it comes to issues like the environment, health, and workplace, 46% of voters think businesses are over-regulated, compared to 27% who think businesses are regulated about right, and only 15% who think they are under-regulated. Republicans (76%) and NAV/Other voters (49%) are more likely than Democrats (21%) to share the view that businesses are over-regulated.

93% of voters believe businesses simply pass along tax and regulatory costs to consumers in the form of higher prices. 76% believe Oregon should pause any new regulations until businesses have time to meet new requirements and to learn whether they are working—a belief that has remained consistent since 2021.

Consider:

- *Slide 19: "Voters think business taxes in Oregon are too high. Views are partisan, with a majority of NAV/Other voters agreeing with Republicans that taxes are too high." (showing overall view and partisan view)*
- *Slide 20: "A plurality of voters think businesses are over-regulated on issues related to the environment, health, and workplace. Here too a similar pattern is evident." (showing overall view and partisan view)*
- *Slide 21: "Nearly all voters believe businesses pass the cost of taxes and regulations onto consumers." (showing this belief)*
- *Slide 22: "Voter preference for pausing new regulations until they are proven effective has remained consistent since 2021." (showing preference over time)*

## A PATH FORWARD

**Voters prefer a pro-growth strategy to address pending state budget deficits.** When provided with a set of options to address Oregon's budget deficit, 52% prefer reducing regulations and creating incentives for economic growth to increase tax revenue through more jobs and higher wages. 27% prefer reducing spending to match available revenue. 12% prefer raising taxes to ensure programs and services remain fully funded.

Regardless of party affiliation, voters prefer a pro-growth strategy to address deficits. 56% of NAV/Other voters, 53% of Republicans, and 46% of Democrats think this approach should be the priority for state lawmakers.

Democrats are the least likely to embrace this approach, but they prefer it to other approaches: reducing spending (23%), and raising taxes (17%).

Consider:

- *Slide 23: "To address deficits, voters prefer a third option when provided: reduce regulations and create incentives to drive higher growth, jobs, wages, and tax revenue." (showing preference and also preference by party)*

### **About DHM Research**

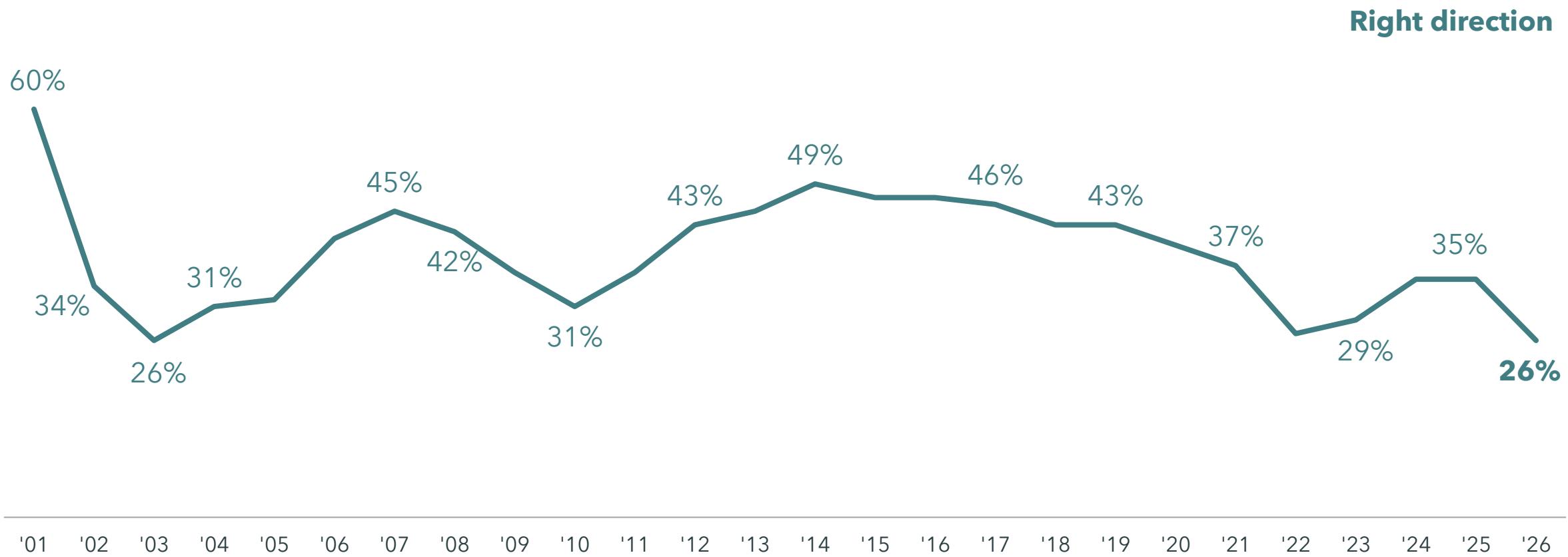
DHM Research is a nonpartisan research firm that specializes in measuring the values and priorities that drive public opinion. Our research provides high-quality, objective information to help organizations and leaders make informed decisions about complex issues. We have decades of experience in polling, public policy research, and how it can help shape communities. DHM is proud to be recognized as a B Corp-certified company that meets rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.

### **About Oregon Business & Industry**

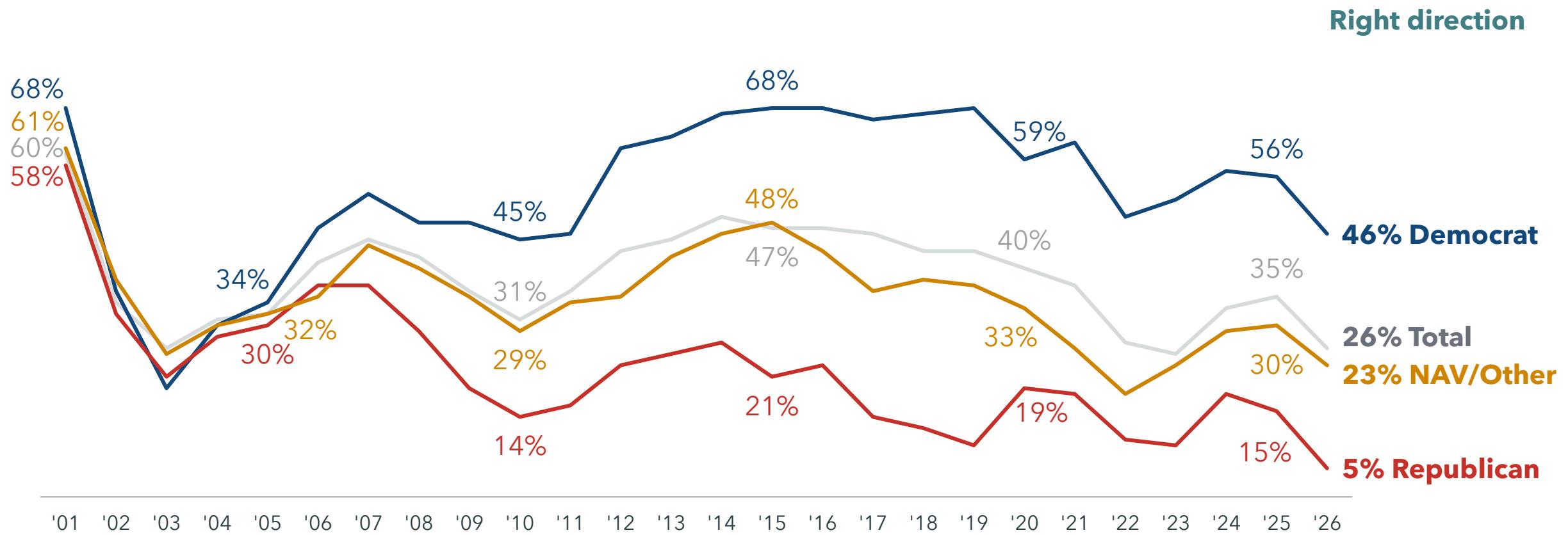
Oregon Business & Industry (OBI) is a leading business organization. As the statewide chamber of commerce, OBI's mission is to advocate for policies that create a healthy, prosperous and competitive Oregon for generations to come. OBI is also Oregon's affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Retail Federation. Its member companies, 75% of which are small businesses, employ more than 250,000 Oregonians in a variety of industries and across all of Oregon's 36 counties. Learn more at [www.oregonbusinessindustry.com](http://www.oregonbusinessindustry.com).



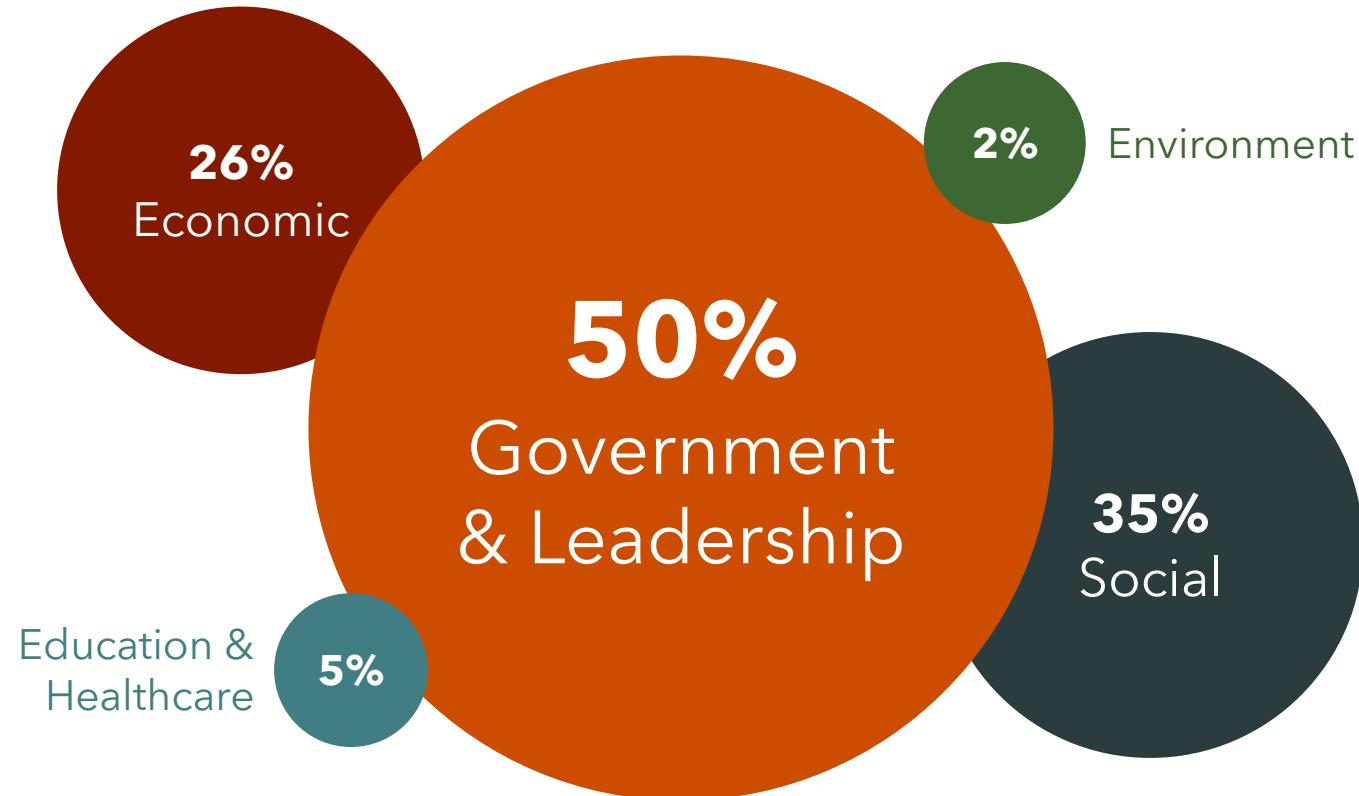
# Positivity about the direction of the state remains low and has declined since 2025.



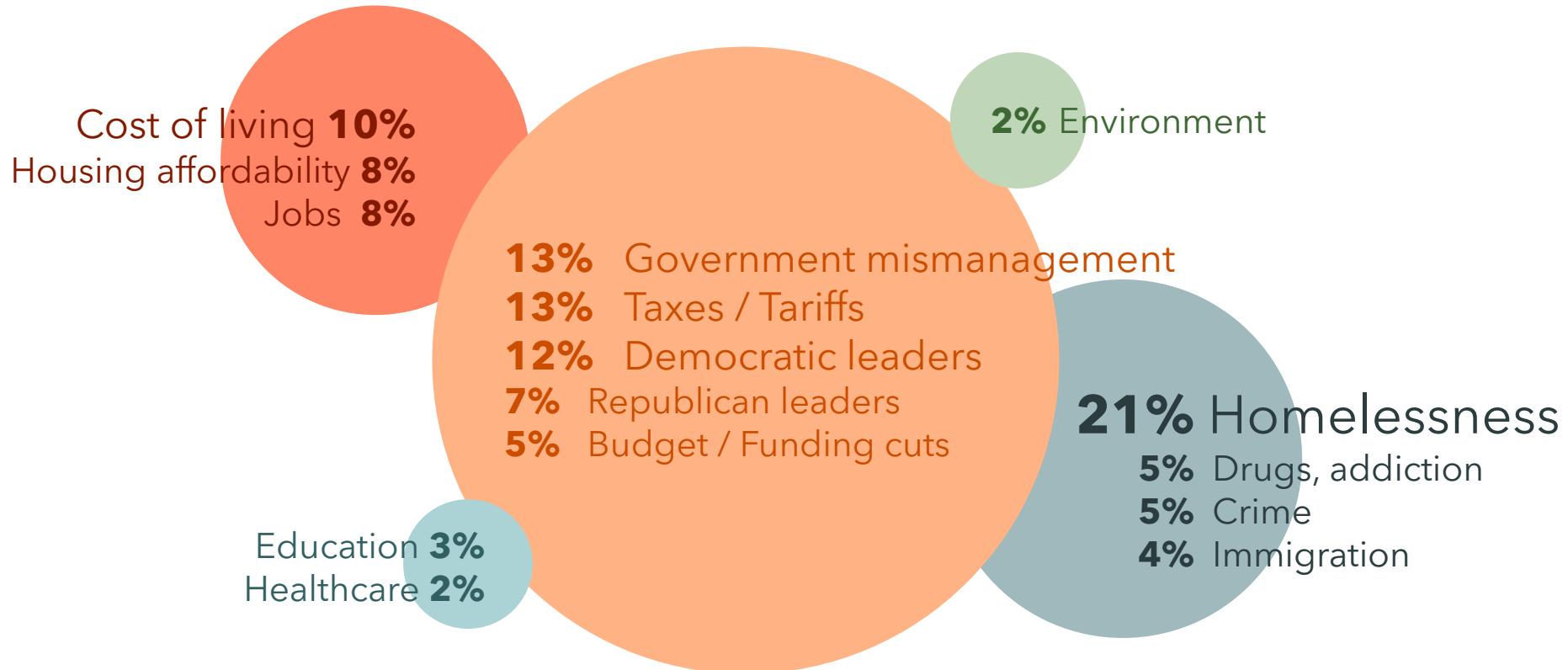
# Perceptions about the direction of the state are partisan, with NAV/Other and Republican voters less optimistic.



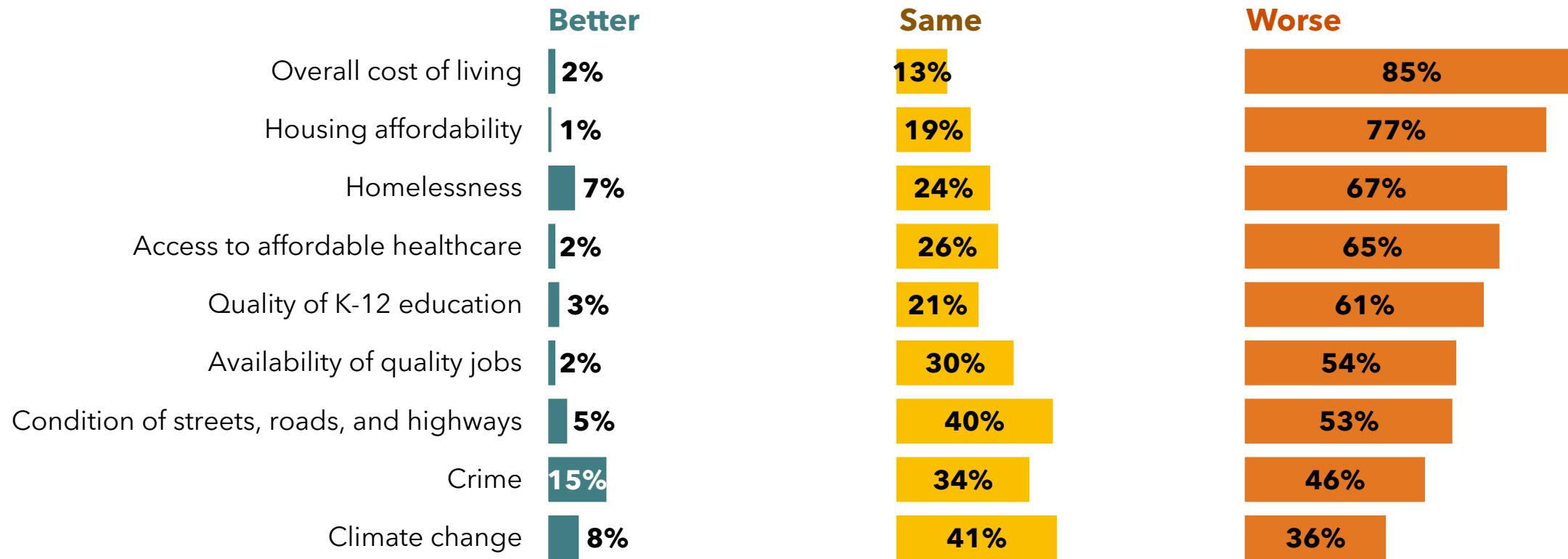
When asked to identify Oregon's most important problem, voters most often point to political issues, followed by social and economic issues.



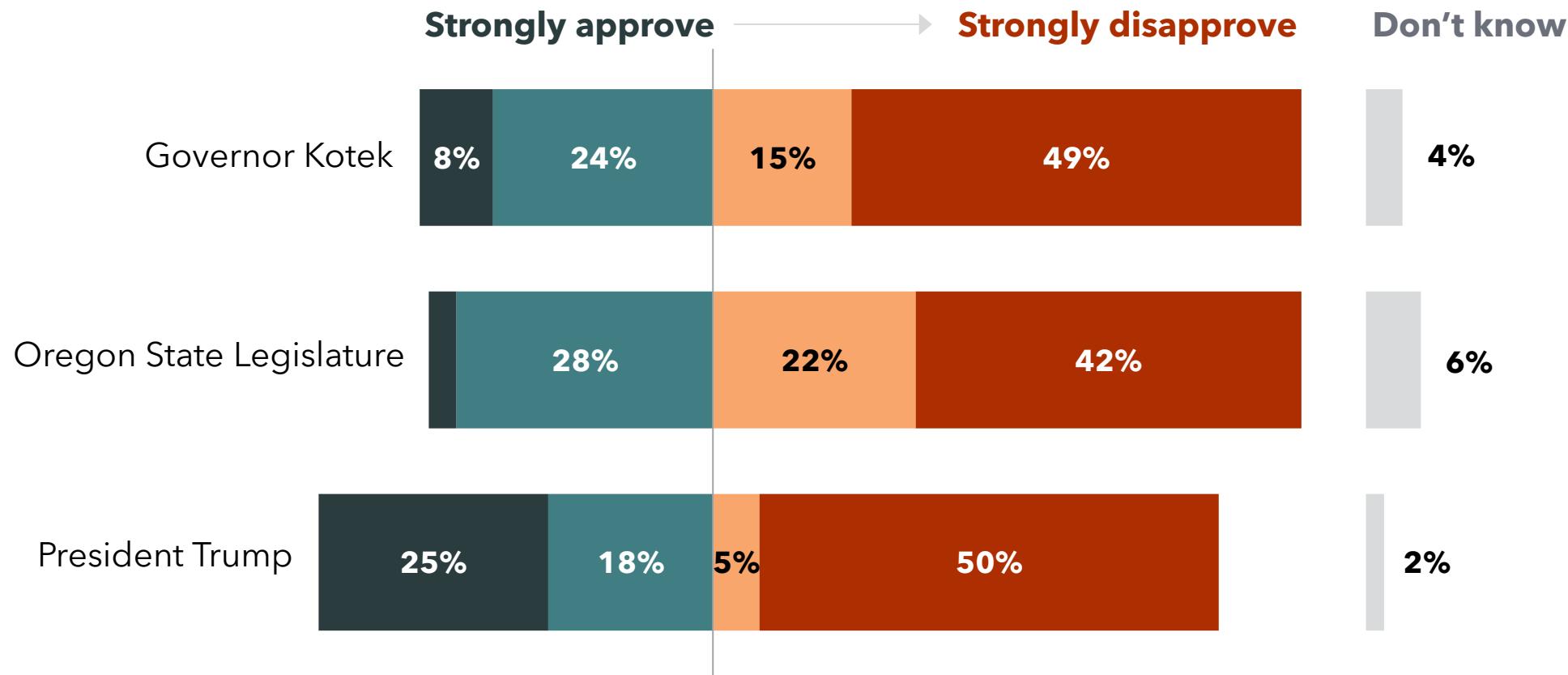
Taken together, political issues such as government mismanagement, taxes, tariffs, political leadership, and funding are viewed as the state's biggest problems.



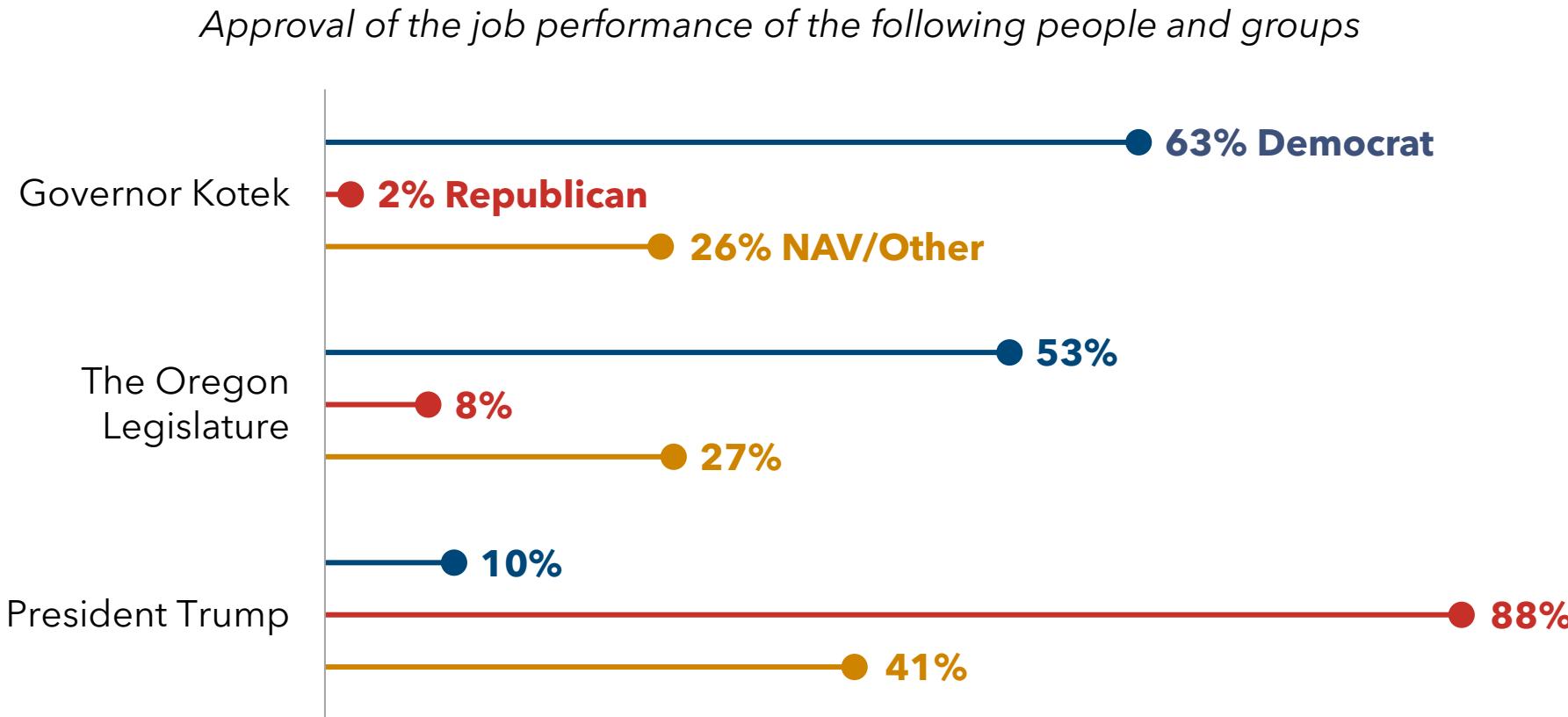
# When it comes to key problems facing Oregon, most voters say the problems—especially cost of living and housing affordability—have been getting worse in recent years.



# Voters disapprove of the job performance of Governor Kotek, the Oregon Legislature, and President Trump.

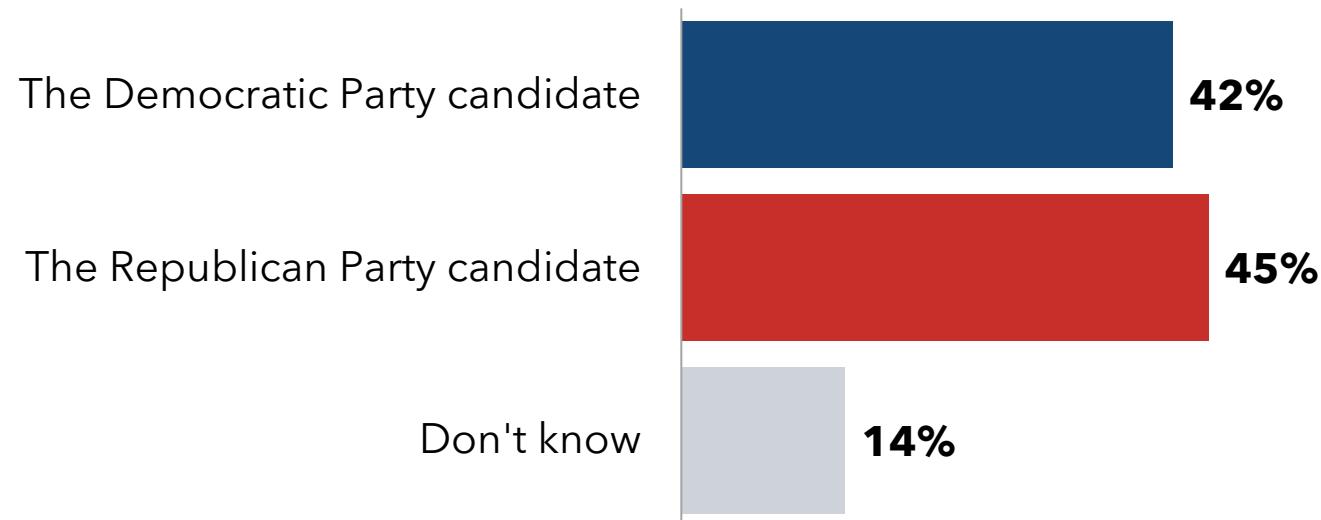


# Democratic approval of Governor Kotek is softer than Republican approval of President Trump.

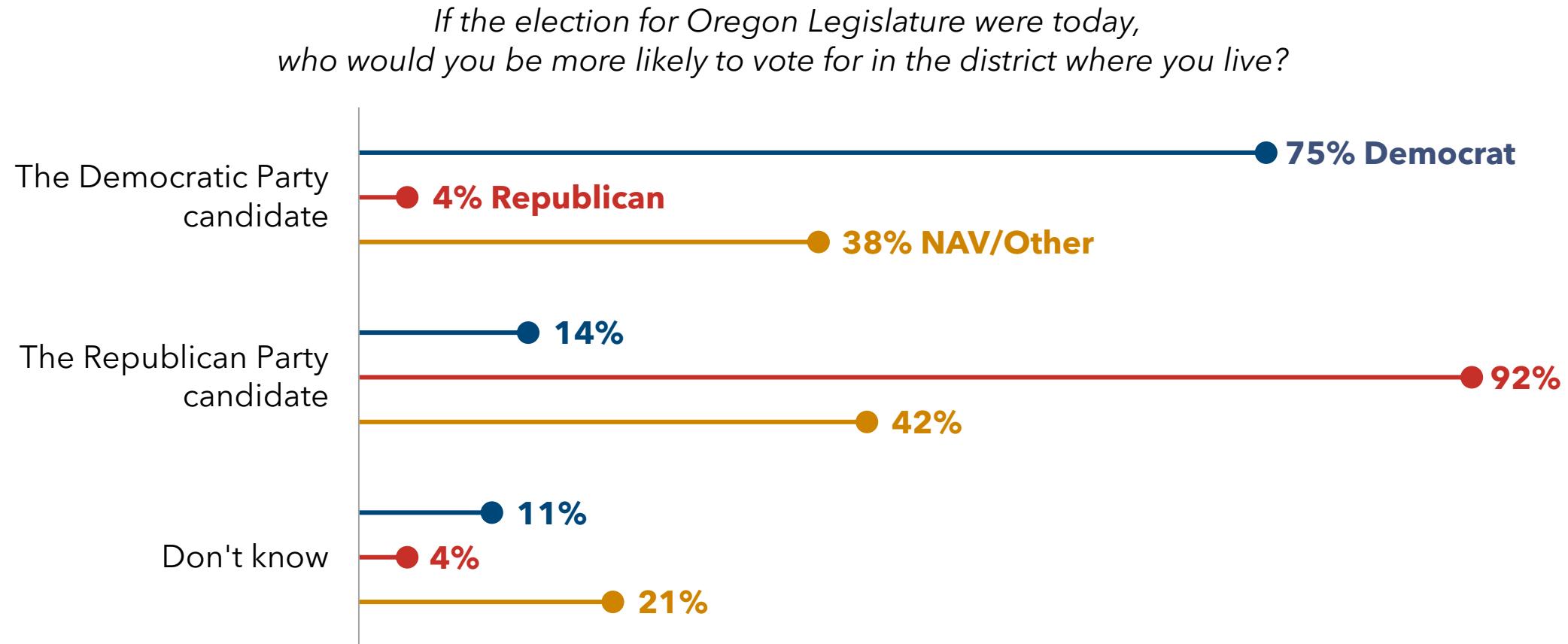


# If the election for Oregon Legislature were today, voters are divided on who they would vote for in their district.

*If the election for Oregon Legislature were today,  
who would you be more likely to vote for in the district where you live?*

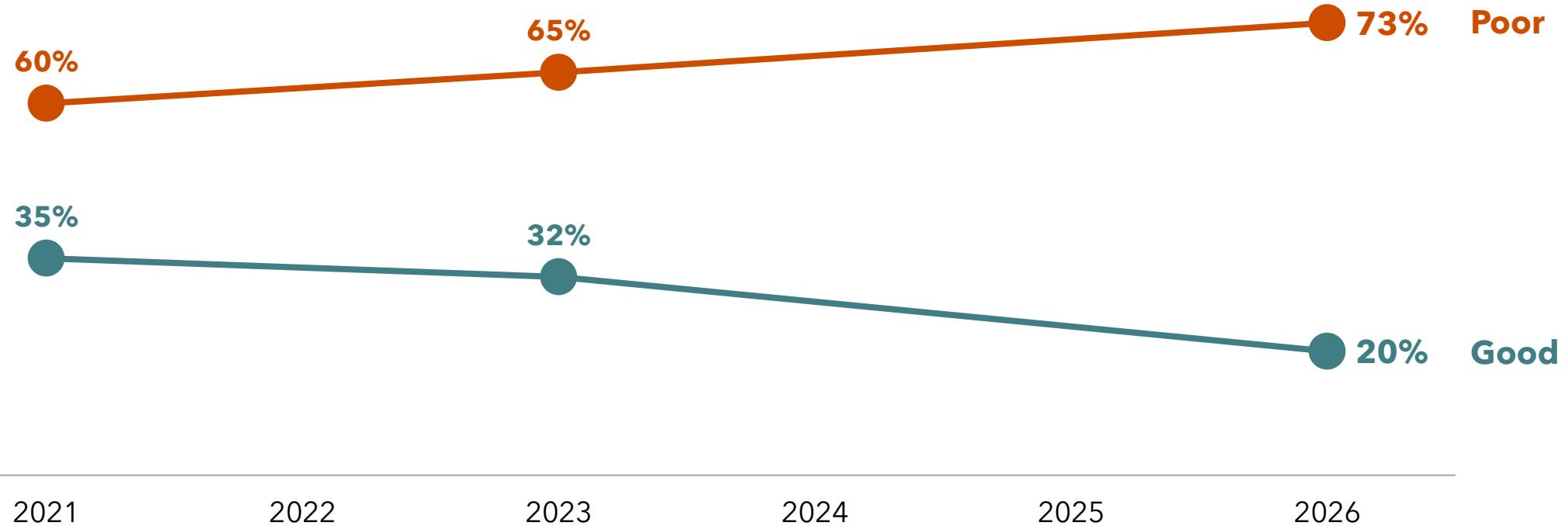


# Democratic support for Democratic candidates is softer than Republican support for Republican candidates. NAV/Other voters lean Republican.



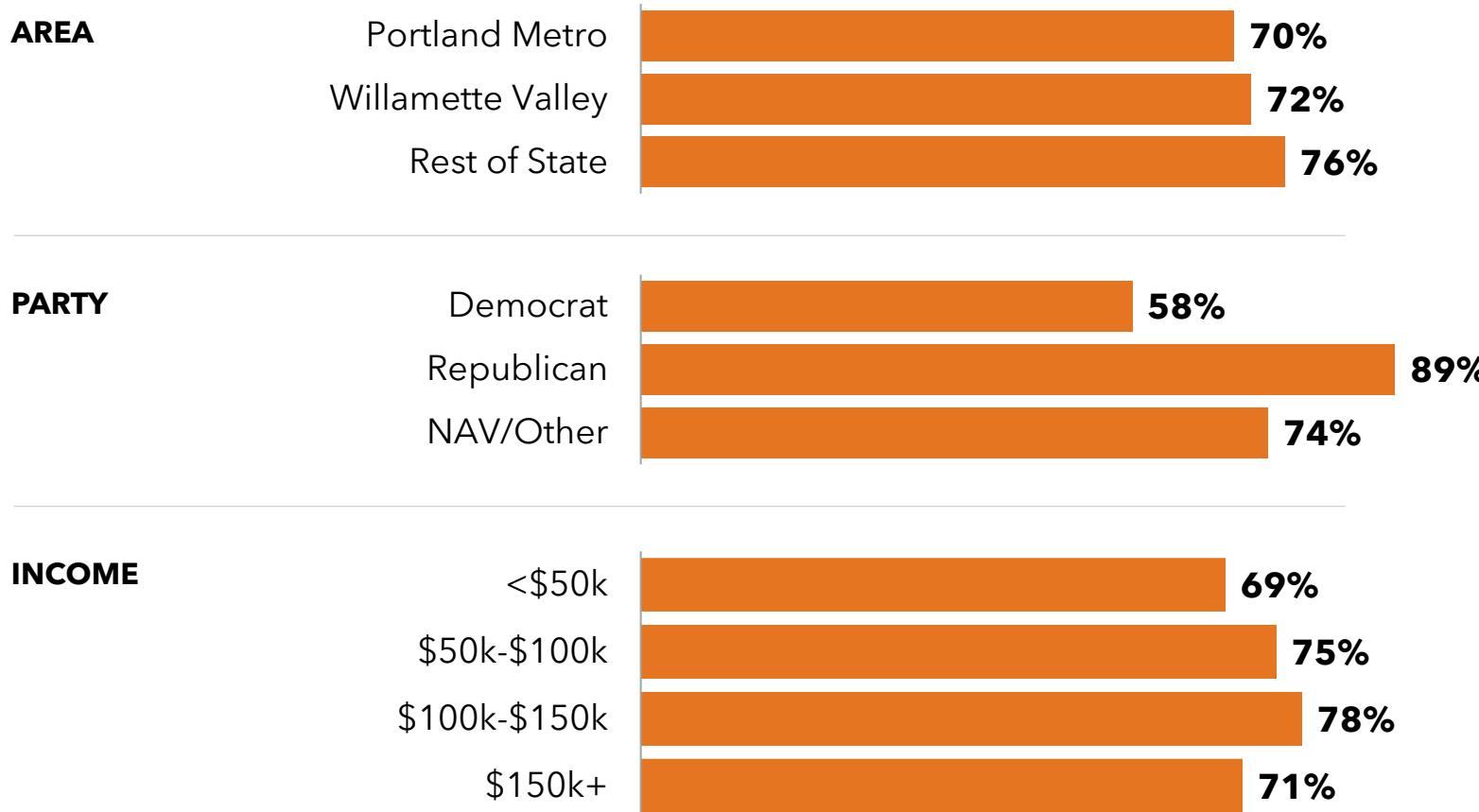
# Most voters currently rate economic conditions in Oregon as poor. The negative outlook has increased since 2021.

*How would you rate economic conditions in Oregon today?*



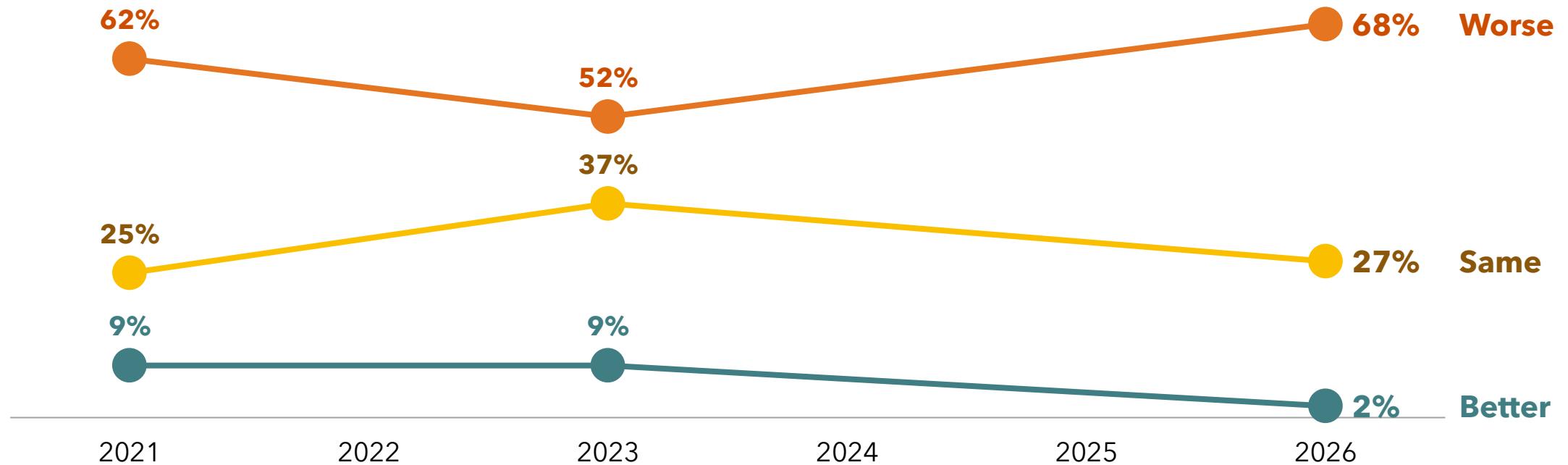
# Most groups rate Oregon's economic conditions as poor. Partisanship shapes perceptions of the economy.

% who rate Oregon's economic conditions as **poor**



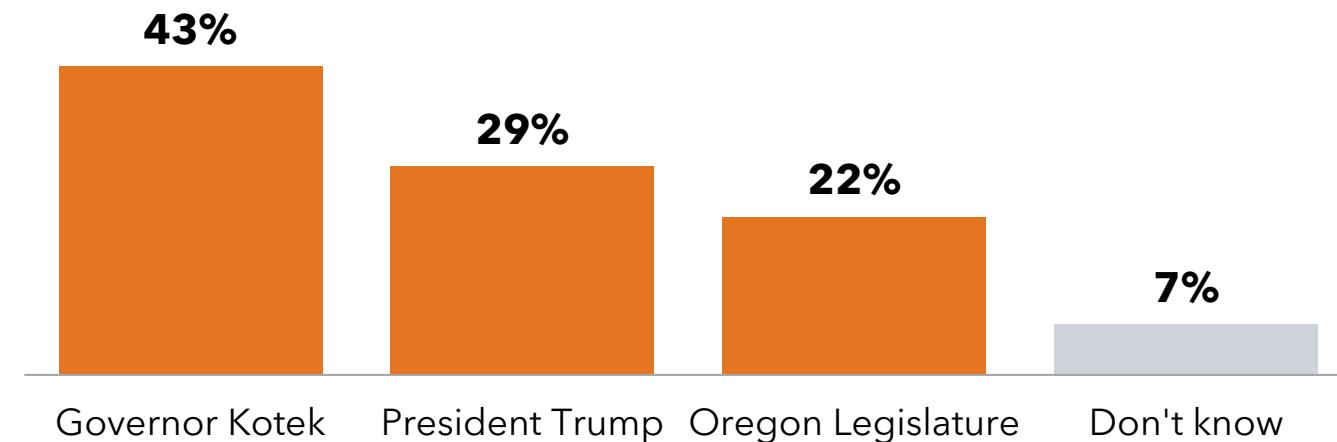
# Most voters say economic conditions in Oregon are getting worse.

*Would you say economic conditions in Oregon are getting better, staying the same, or getting worse?*



# Voters are more likely to blame Governor Kotek for Oregon's worsening economic conditions.

*Who do you think is most responsible for Oregon's economic conditions getting worse?*

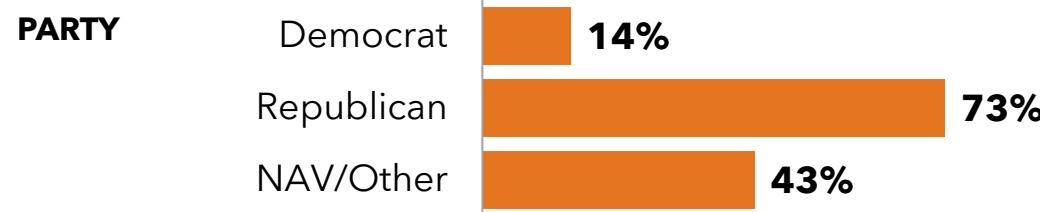


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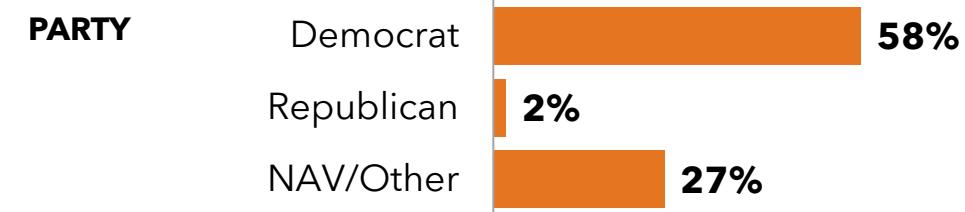
# More Democrats blame Governor Kotek than Republicans blame President Trump, with NAV/Other voters more likely to blame Governor Kotek.

*Who do you think is most responsible for Oregon's economic conditions getting worse?*

% **Blame** Governor Kotek

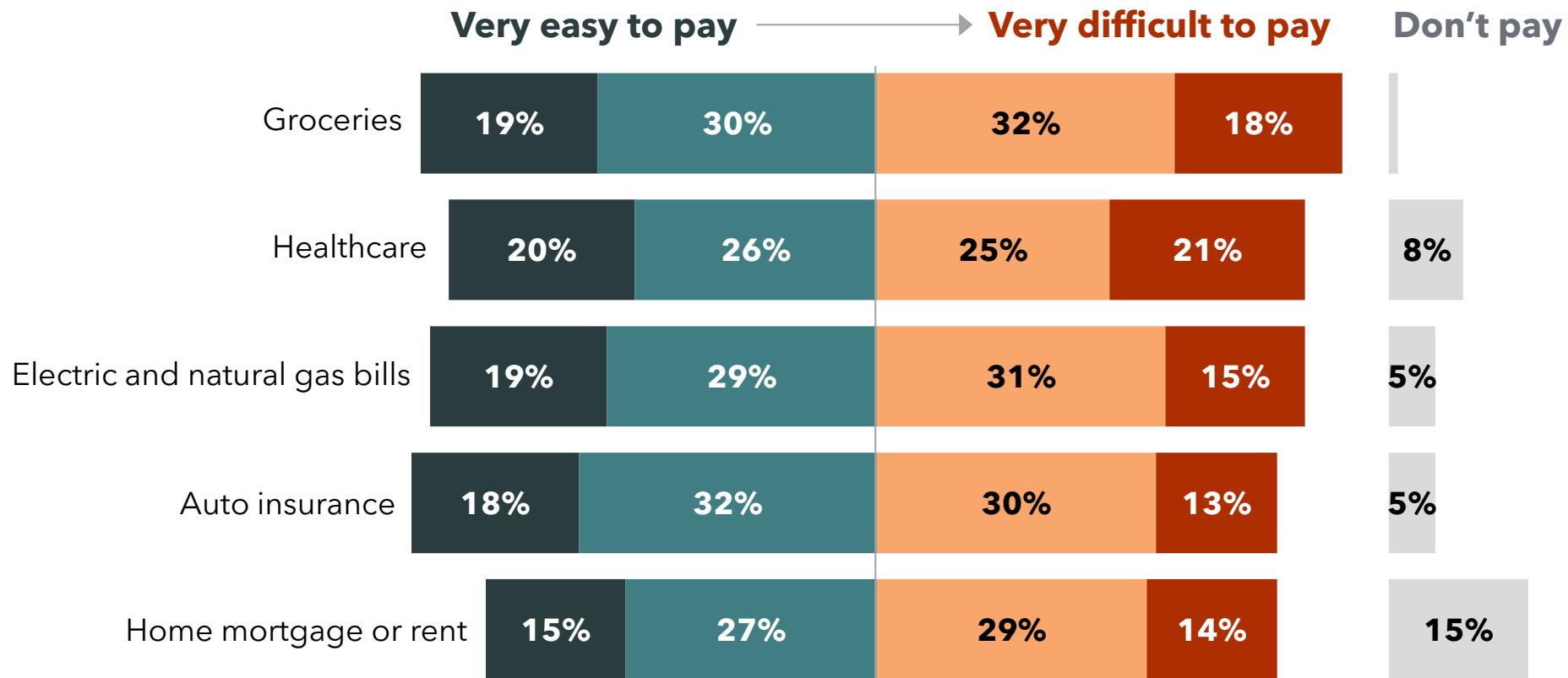


% **Blame** President Trump



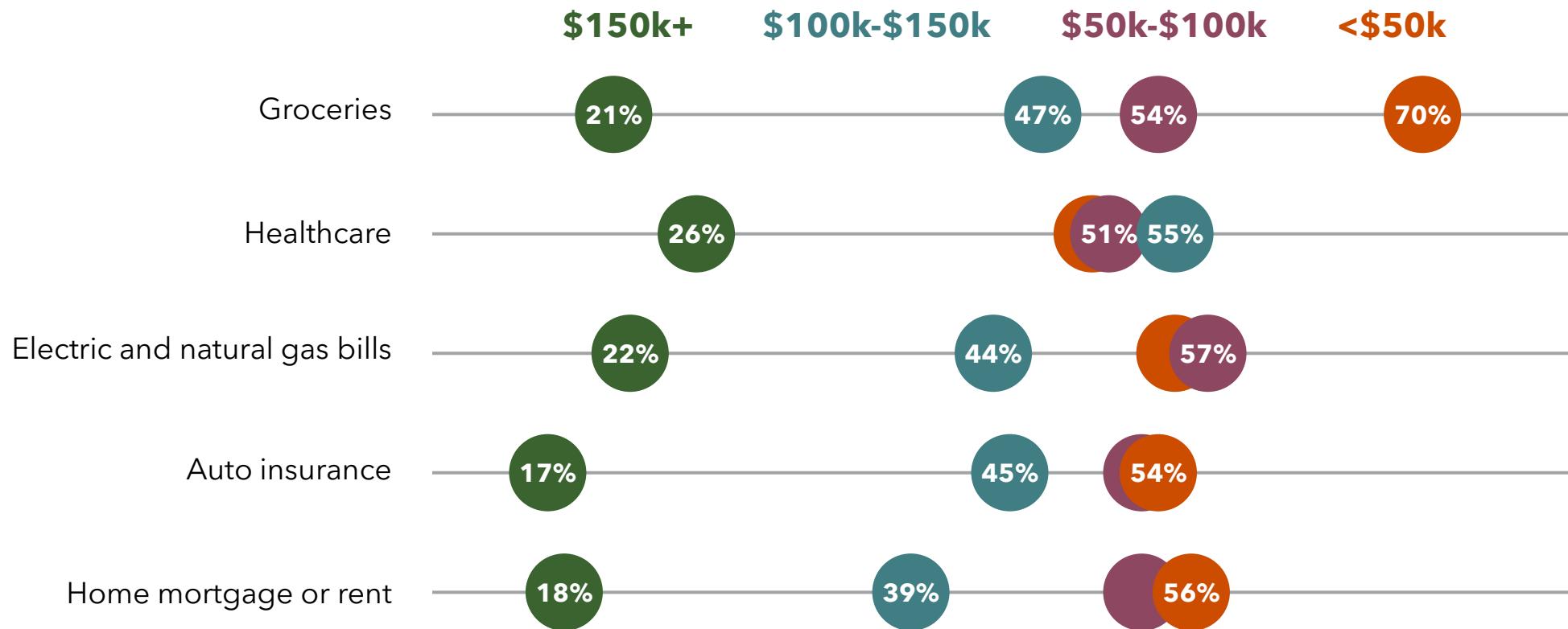
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# About half of voters have difficulties paying basic expenses.



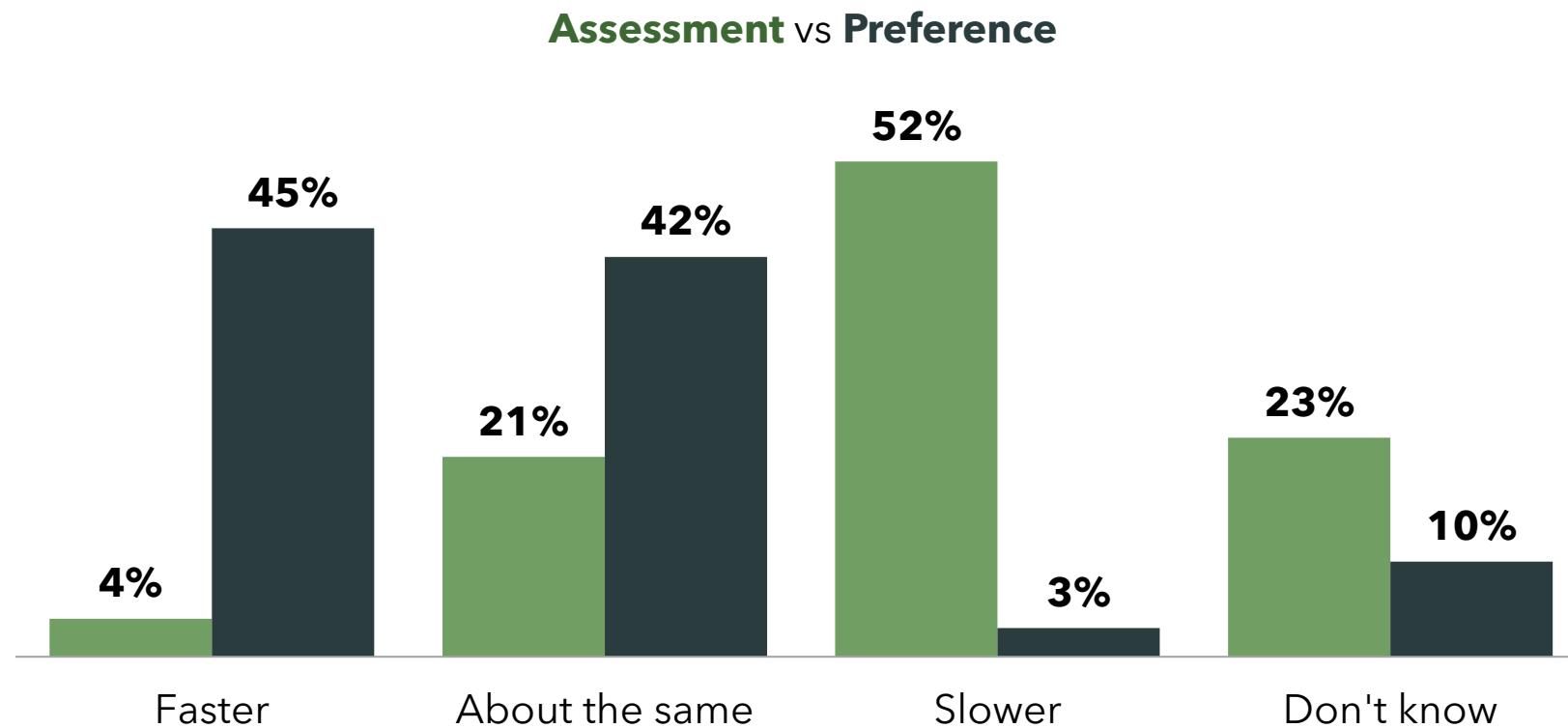
# Middle-income and lower-income voters have the most difficulty paying basic expenses.

% Find it **difficult** to pay for the following expenses



# Most voters believe Oregon's economic growth rate is slower than the national average. They prefer it to be faster than the national average.

*Has Oregon's economic growth rate been faster, about the same, or slower than the national average?*



**More than 4 in 10 voters point to high taxes and excessive regulations as the main reasons for the state's slow economic growth. Nearly 1 in 5 blame Democratic leaders.**

## Government

- 23%** High taxes
- 21%** Excessive regulations
- 18%** Democratic leaders
- 9%** Government mismanagement
- 5%** Republican leaders

## Economy

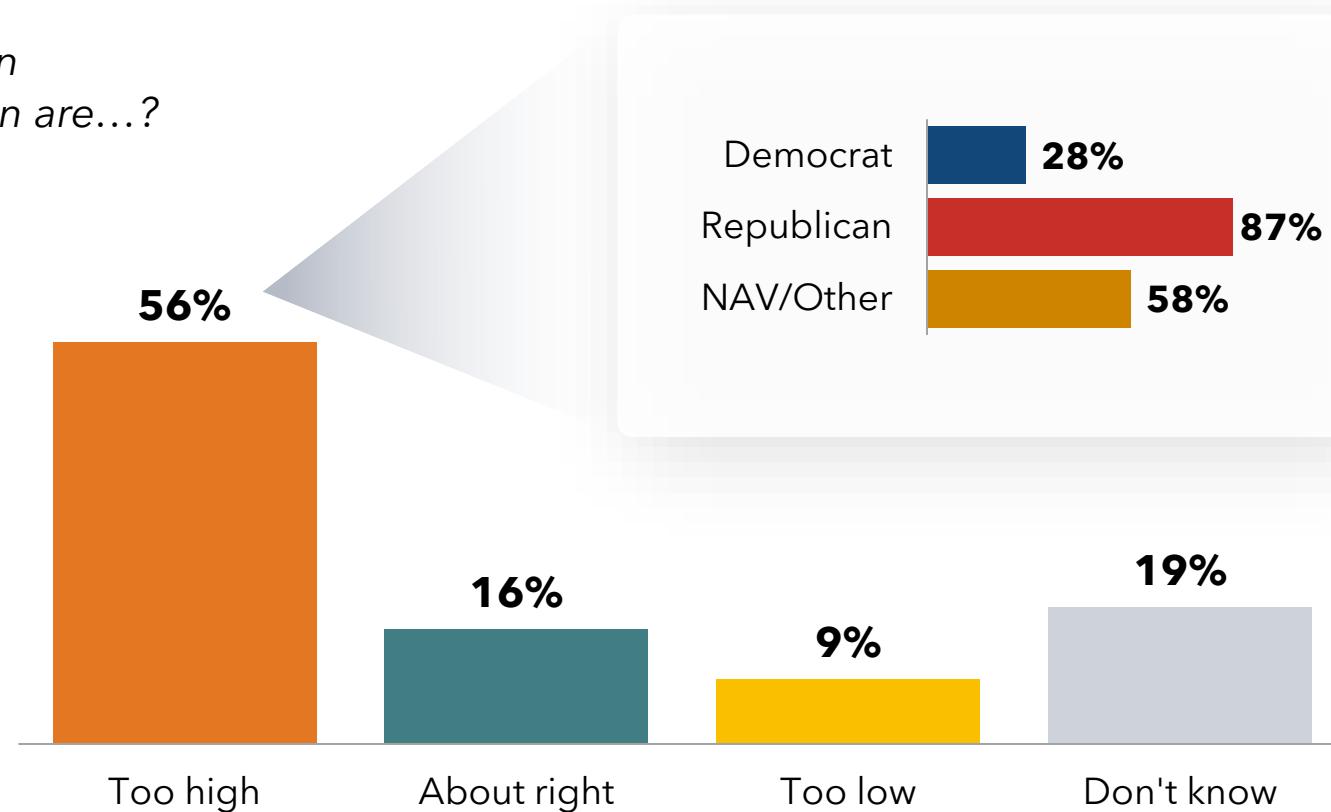
- 10%** High cost of living
- 8%** Lack of jobs
- 5%** Flight from state
- 5%** Housing affordability
- 3%** Corporate greed

## Society

- 4%** Homelessness
- 3%** Crime
- 2%** Social services

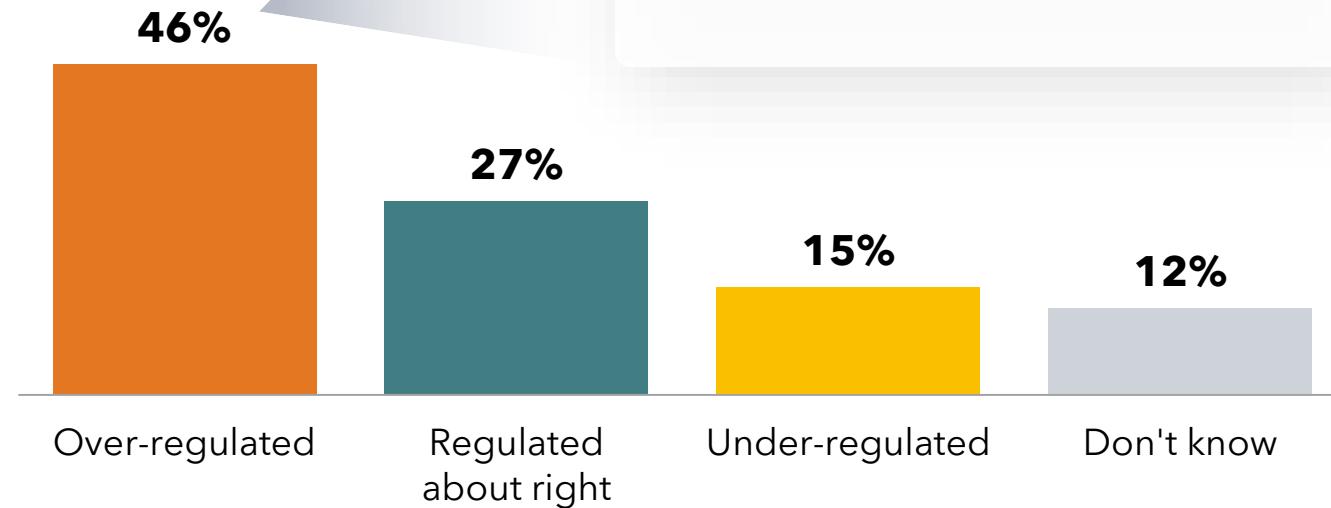
# Voters think business taxes in Oregon are too high. Views are partisan, with a majority of NAV/Other voters agreeing with Republicans that taxes are too high.

*Do you think taxes on  
businesses in Oregon are...?*



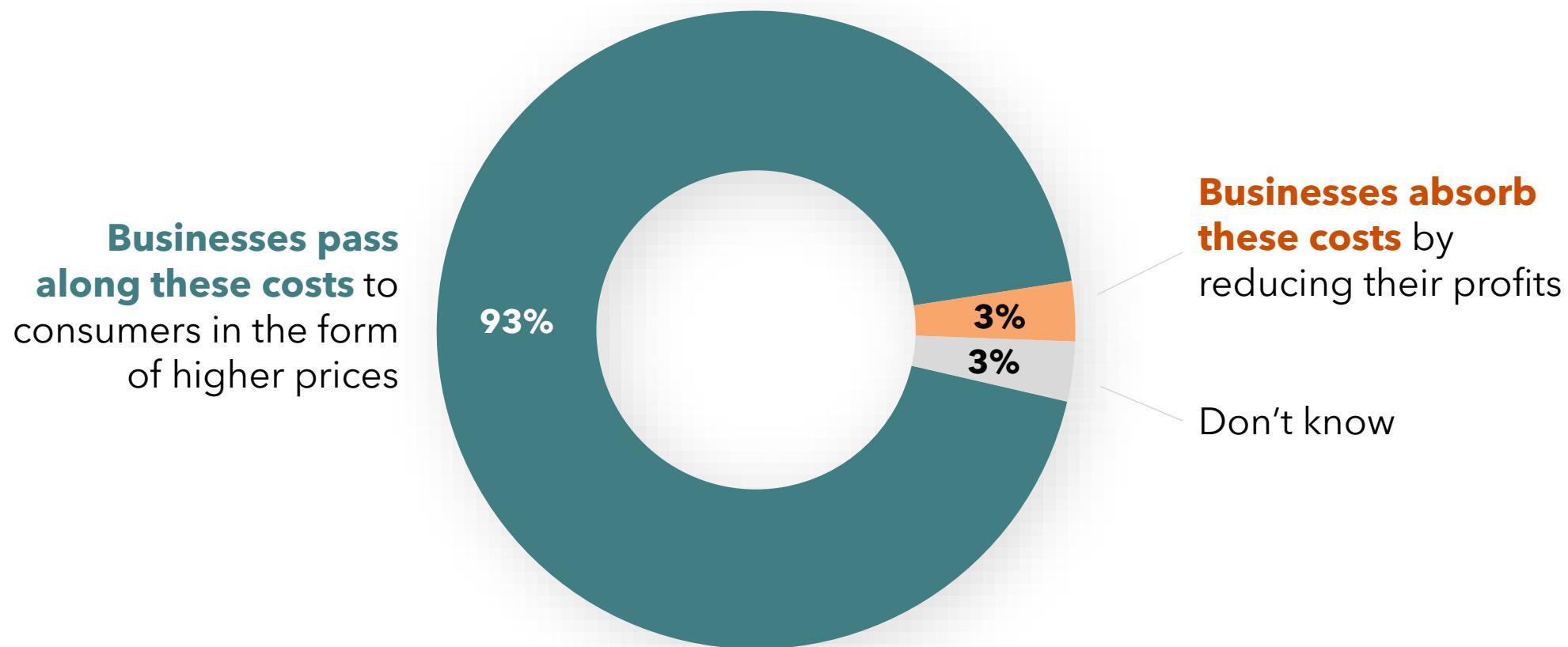
# A plurality of voters think businesses are over-regulated on issues relating to the environment, health, and workplace. Here too, a similar partisan pattern is evident.

*When it comes to the environment, health, and workplace, do you think businesses in Oregon are...?*

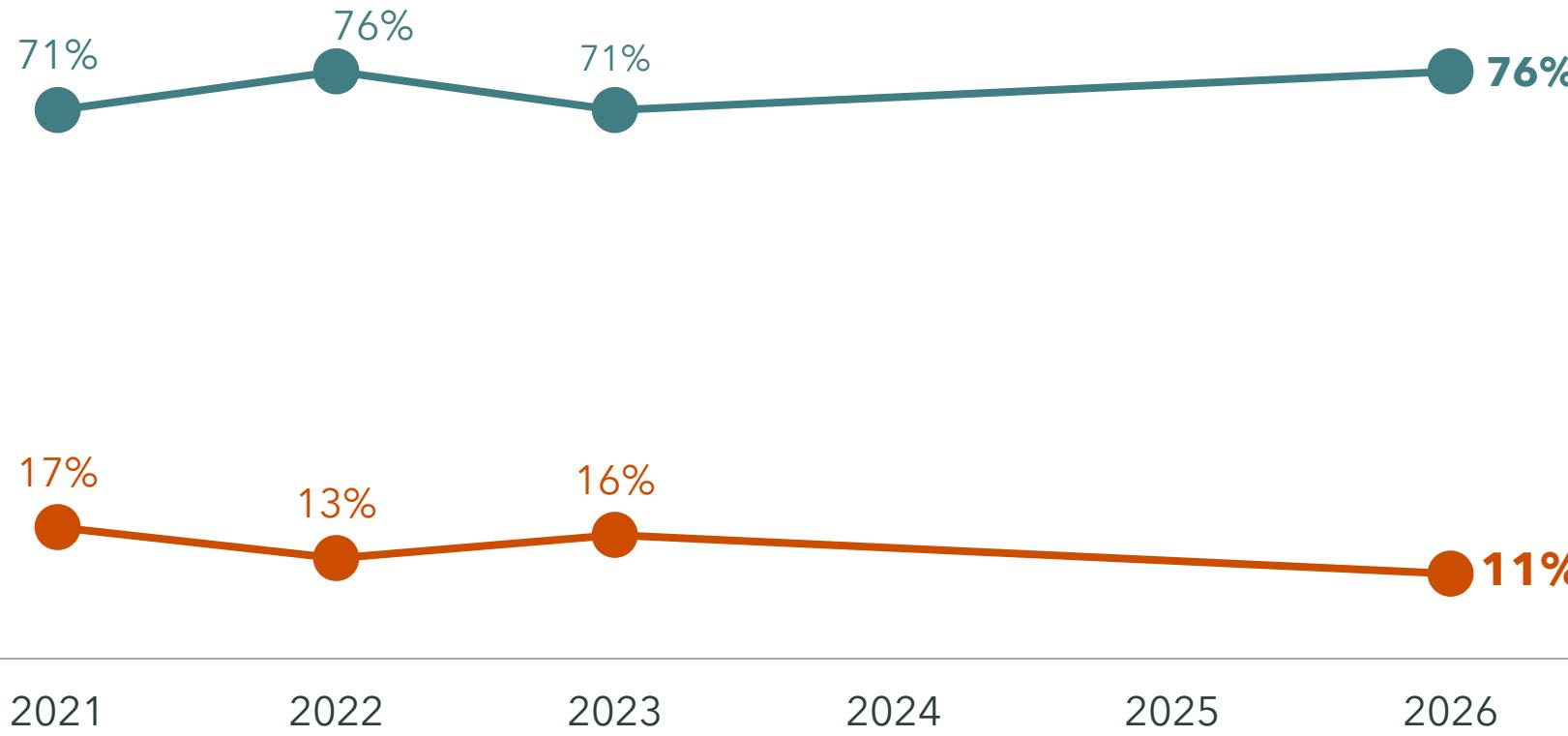


# Nearly all voters believe businesses pass the cost of taxes and regulations onto consumers.

*Which is more likely when state government enacts new taxes and regulations on businesses?*



# Voter preference for pausing new regulations until they are proven effective has remained consistent since 2021.



**Pause new regulations** until businesses have time to meet these requirements and we learn if they are working

**Business regulations in Oregon are still too lax**, and the state should act quickly to put additional controls in place

# To address deficits, voters prefer a third option when provided: reduce regulations and create incentives to drive higher growth, jobs, wages, and tax revenue.

*Which of these **three options** do you think should be the priority for state lawmakers?*

