

National Public Radio National Survey on Social Security

February 2005



Methodology

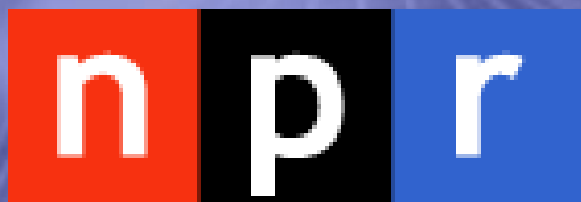
The reported results on public attitudes come from a national survey conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research for National Public Radio (NPR) February 15-17, 2005. The firms, together with NPR, developed questions to inform a news segment for Morning Edition. This is our fifteenth survey in the NPR series. This is our first survey of 2005.

The sample of potential respondents was generated by random digital methodology. The sample size for this survey was 800 registered voters with a margin of error of $\pm 3.46\%$.

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I. Key National Political Data

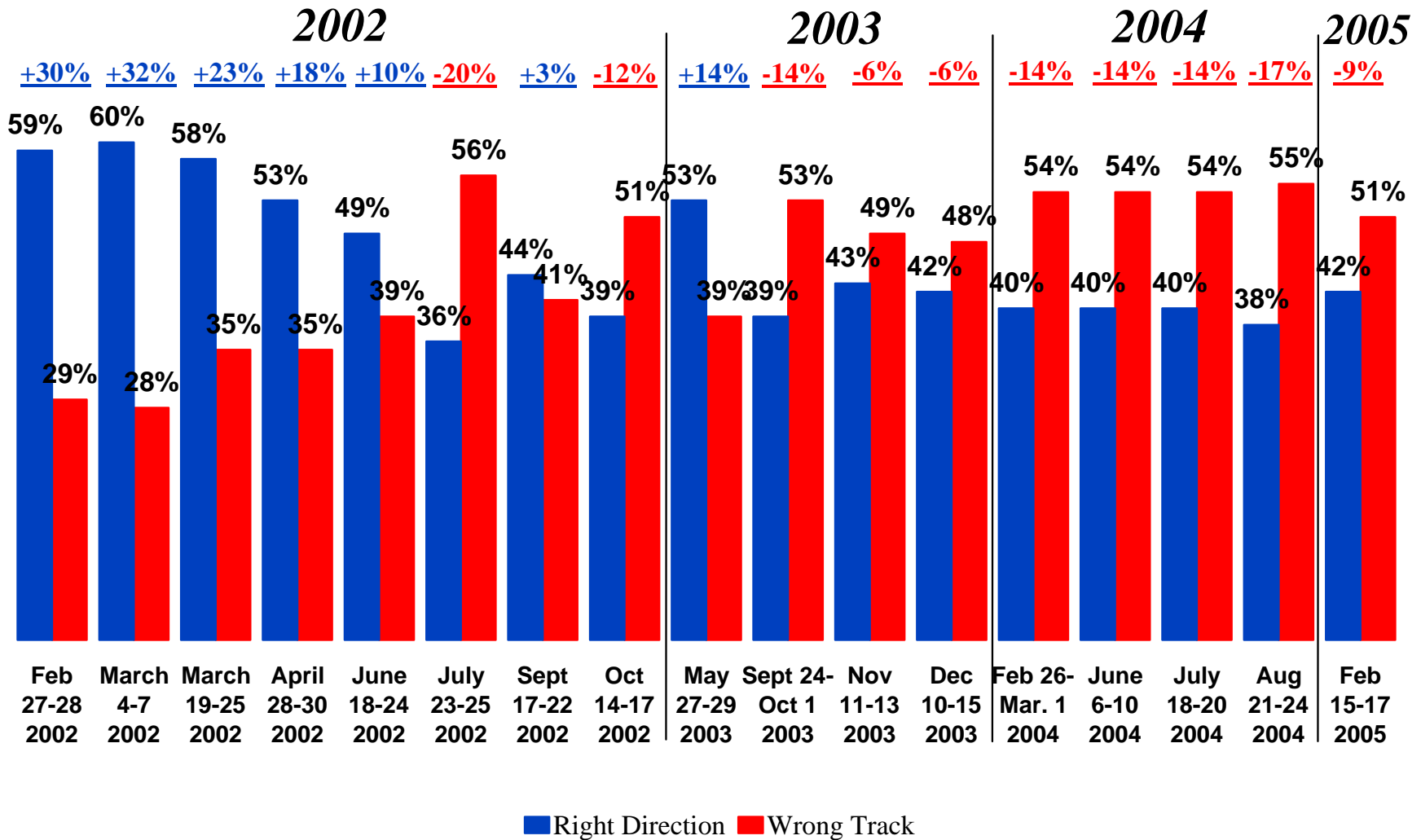
II. Social Security



Key National Political Data

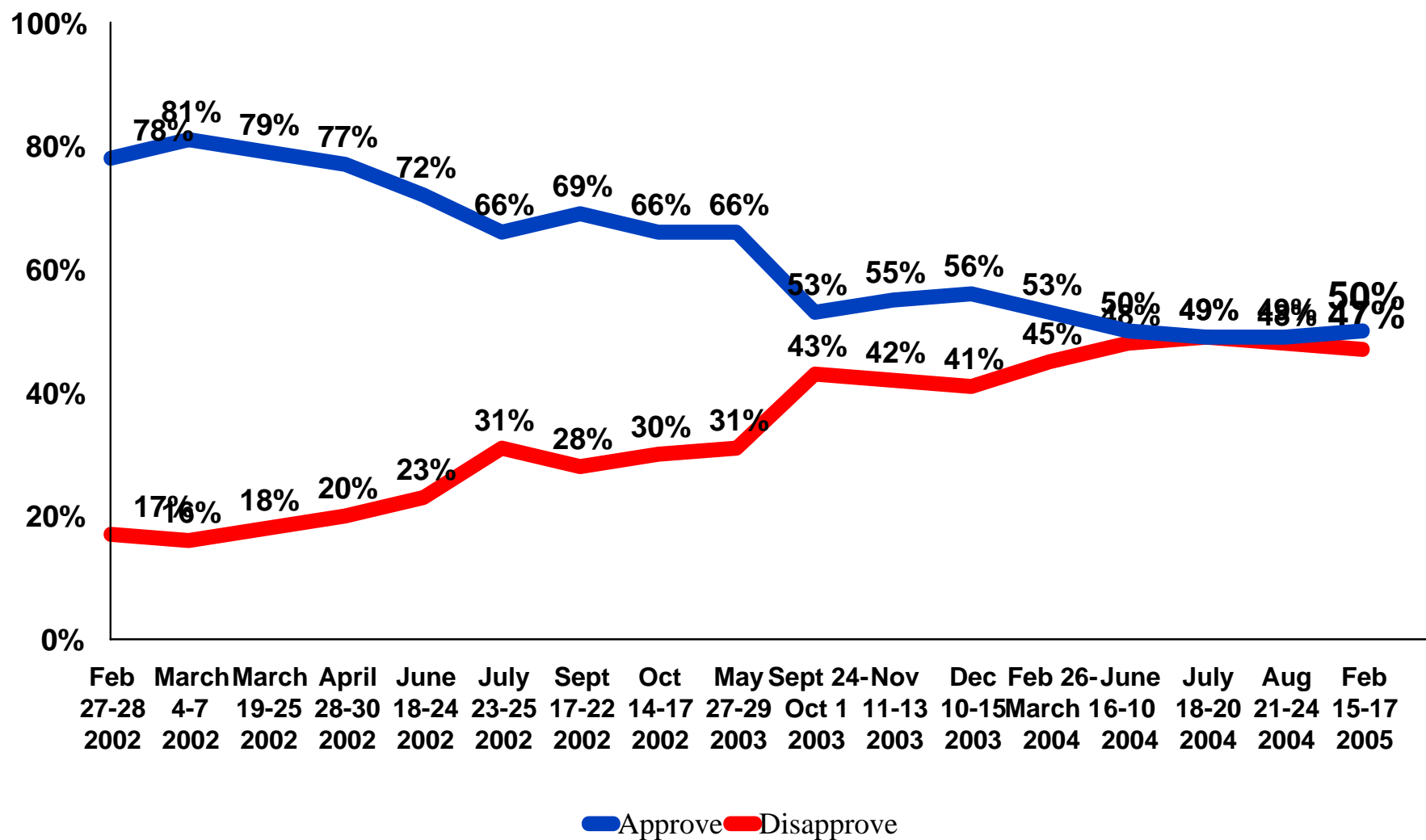


The mood has improved since last year but is still negative.



Generally speaking, would you say that things in the country are going in the right direction, or have they seriously gotten off on the wrong track?

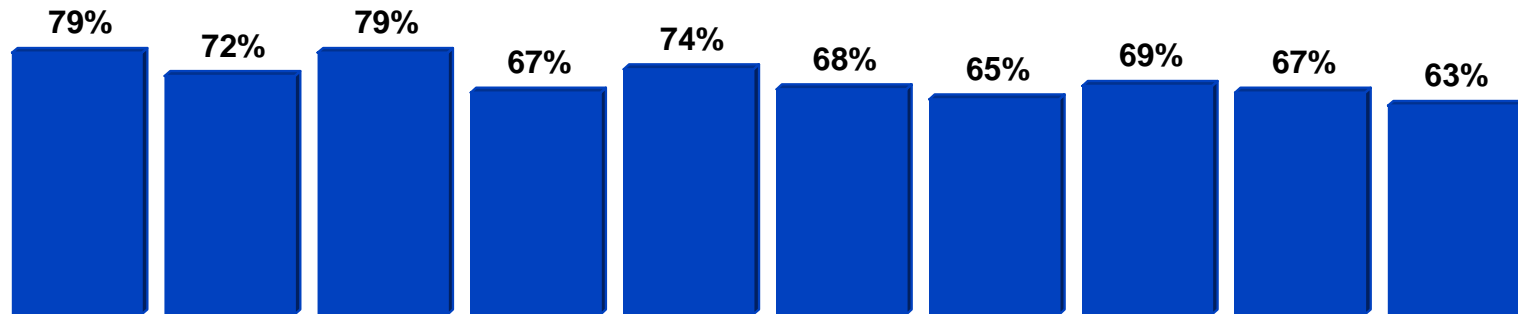
Voters continue to be split over the President's job rating.



Since the election, the partisan intensity of the President's job rating has declined slightly.

Presidential Job Approval by Republican

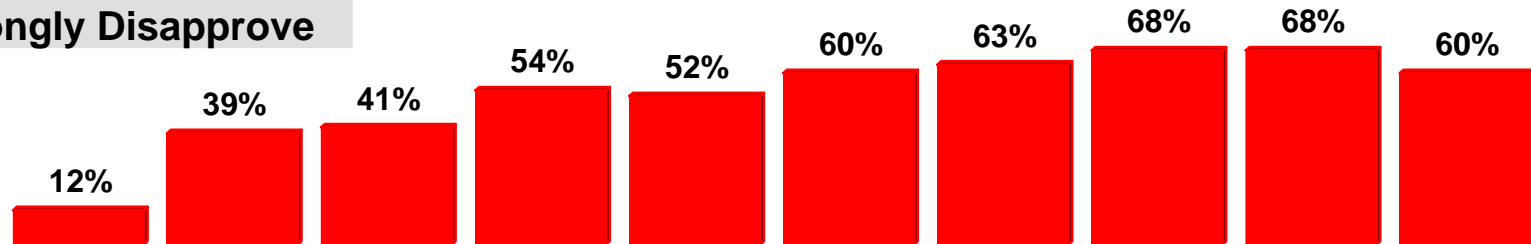
Strongly Approve



■ GOP Strongly Approve

Presidential Job Approval by Democrat

Strongly Disapprove

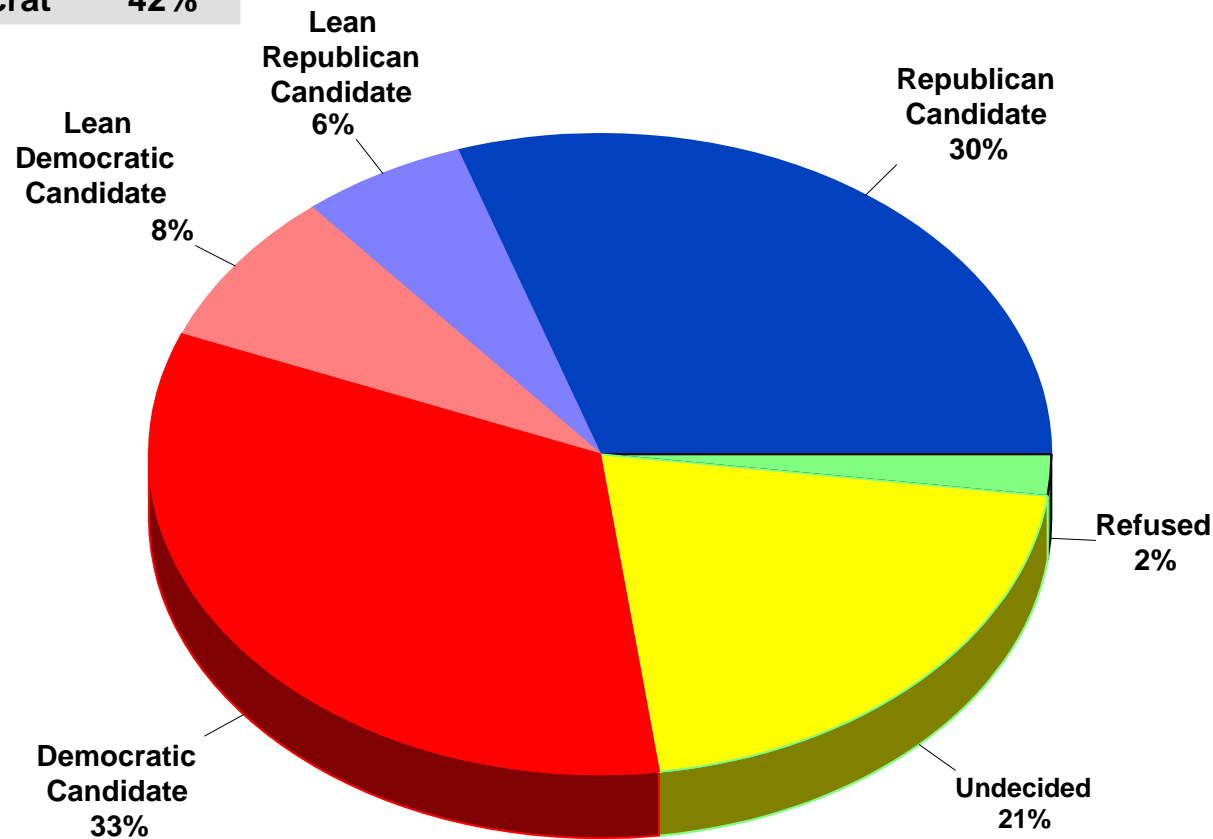


■ DEM Strongly Disapprove

And, do you approve or disapprove of the job George W. Bush is doing as President?

Currently, the Democrats have a six point lead on the generic Congressional ballot.

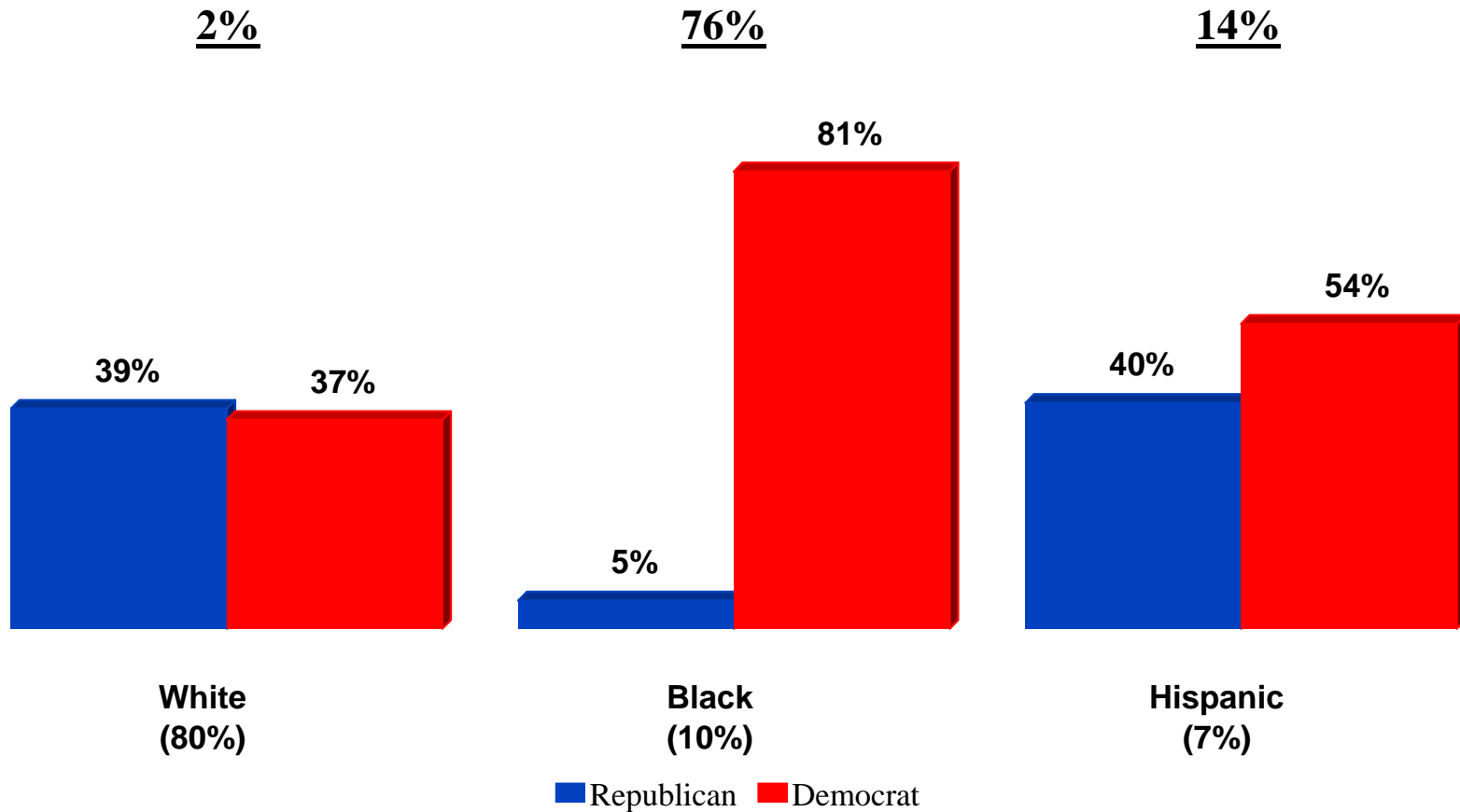
Total Republican	36%
Total Democrat	42%*



If the 2006 elections for United States Congress were being held today, for whom would you vote...the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate...in this district?

**denotes rounding*

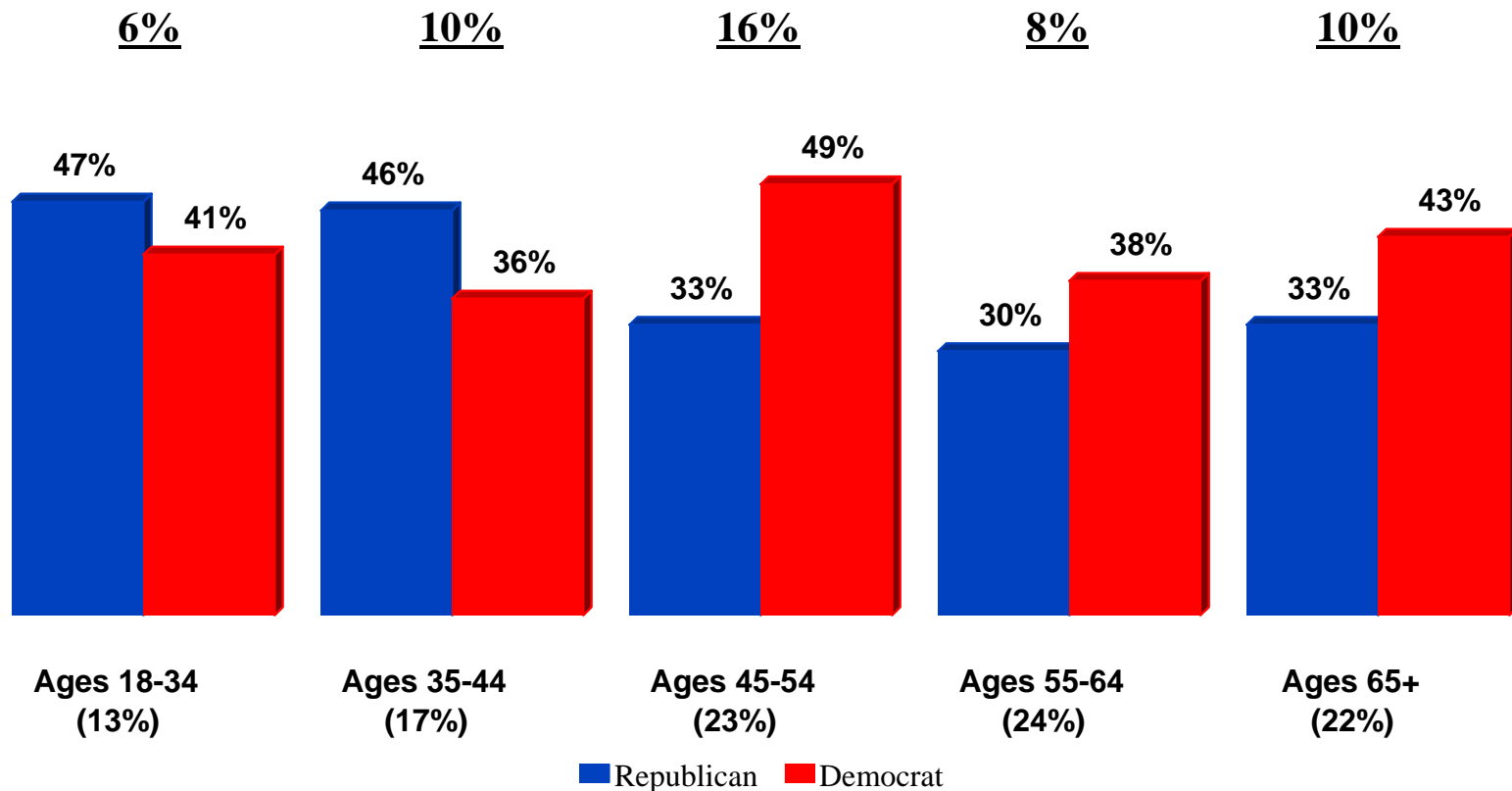
Generic Congressional Ballot By Ethnicity



If the 2006 elections for United States Congress were being held today, for whom would you vote...the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate...in this district?

Younger voters are supporting the GOP candidate while older voters prefer the Dem candidate.

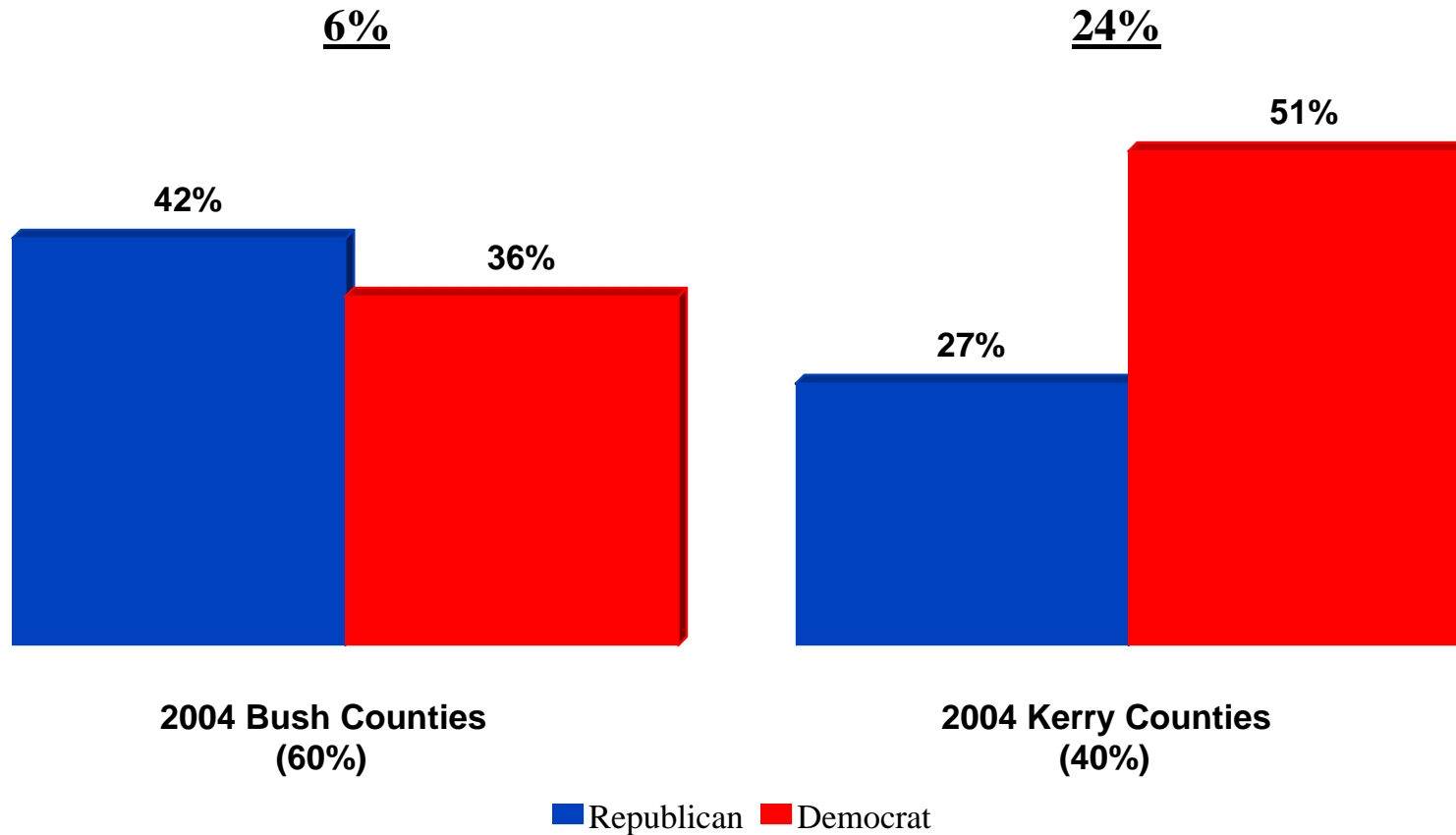
Generic Congressional Ballot By Age



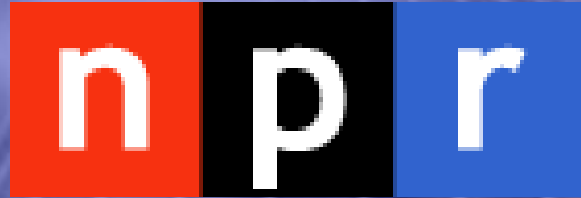
If the 2006 elections for United States Congress were being held today, for whom would you vote...the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate...in this district?

The Dem advantage comes from their base counties.

Generic Congressional Ballot By 2004 Counties



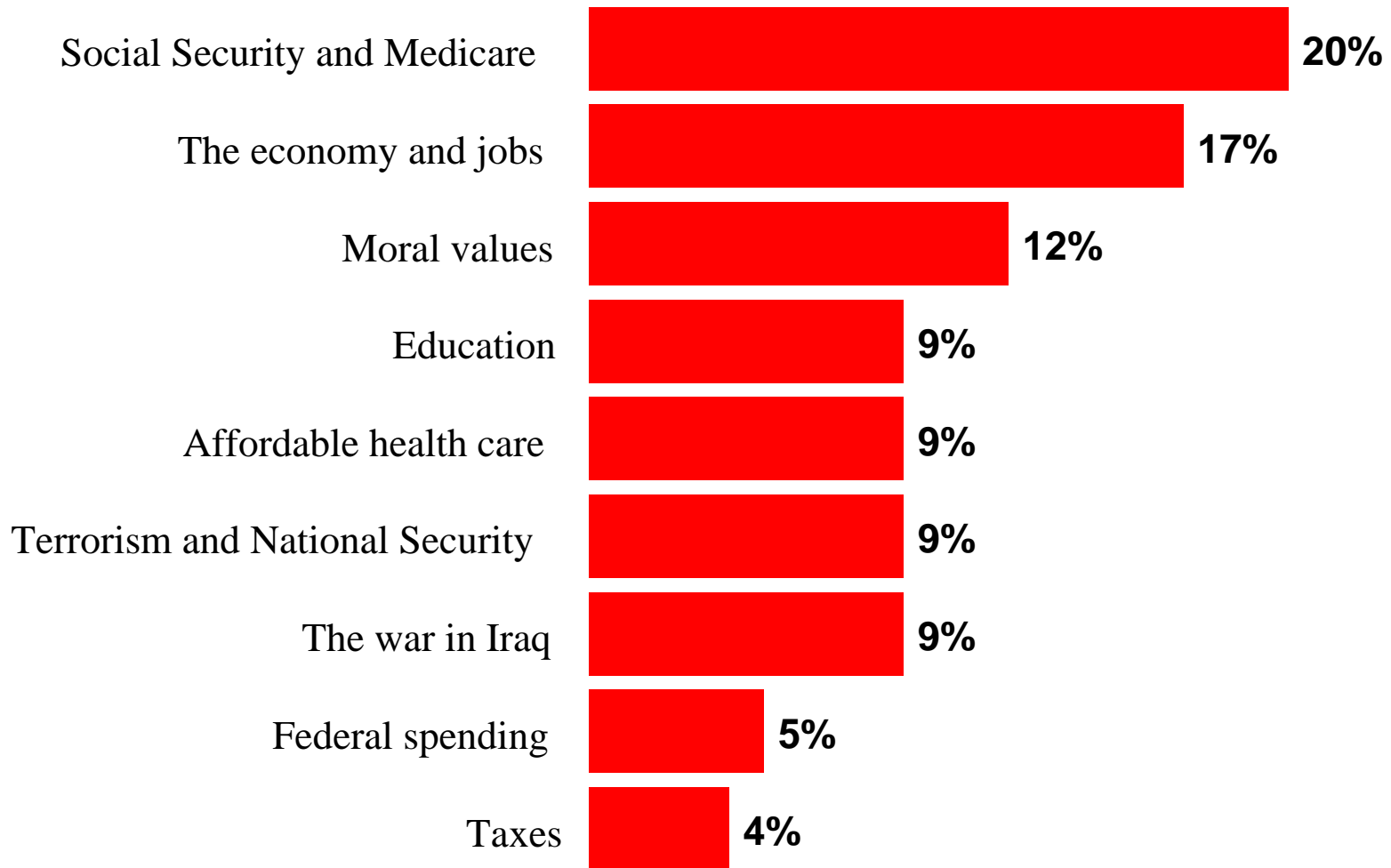
If the 2006 elections for United States Congress were being held today, for whom would you vote...the Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate...in this district?



Social Security



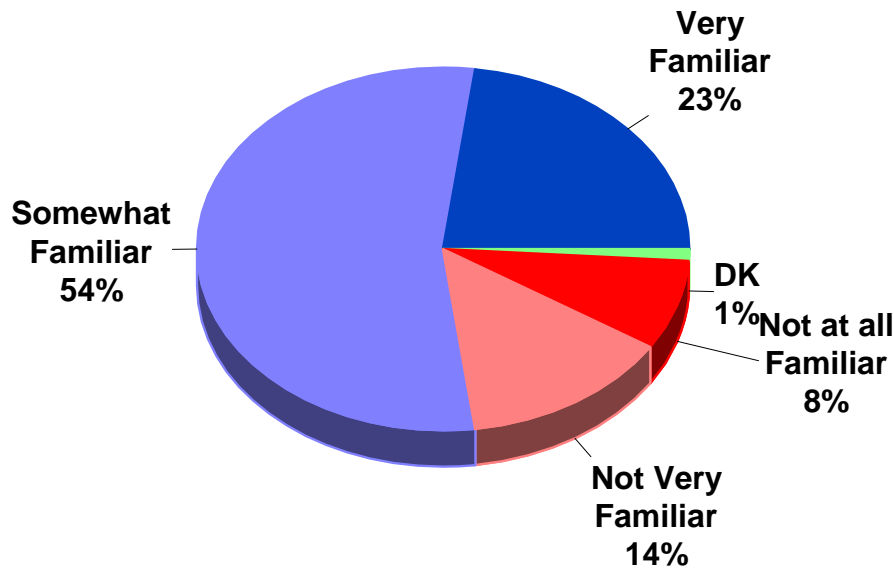
Americans list Social Security and Medicare as their most important issue.



And, which one of the following issue areas would be most important to you in deciding how to vote for a candidate for Congress?

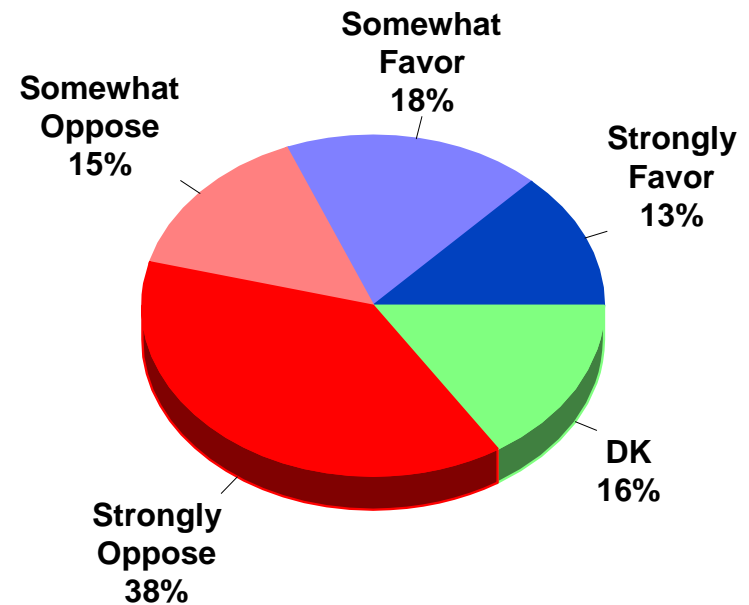
Voters are only somewhat familiar with the President's plan on Social Security-- and more than half oppose his proposed changes.

Total Familiar 77%
Total Not Familiar 22%



How familiar would you say that you are with President Bush's Social Security plan?

Total Favor 30%*
Total Oppose 53%

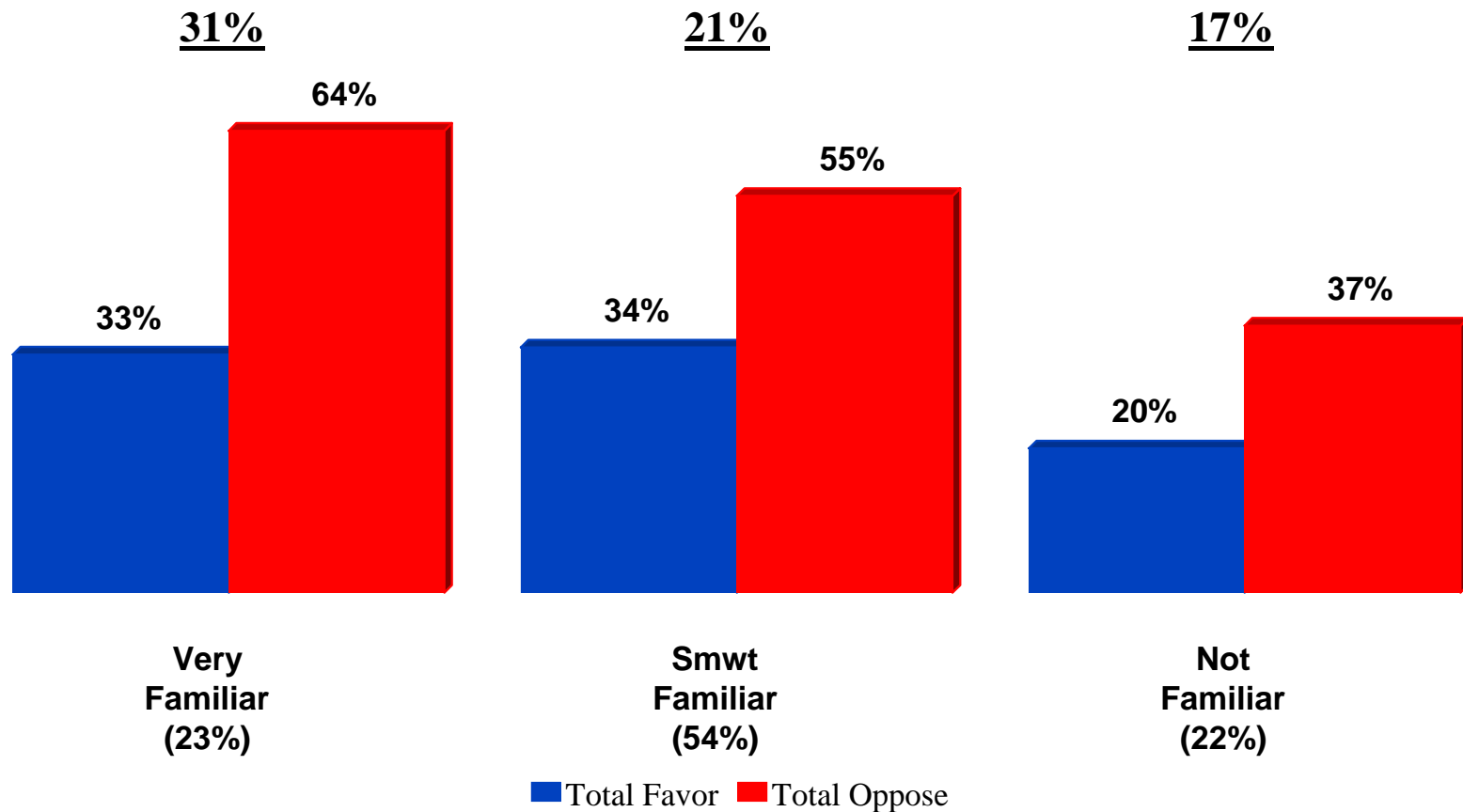


Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposed changes to Social Security?

*denotes rounding

This is a major problem for the White House.

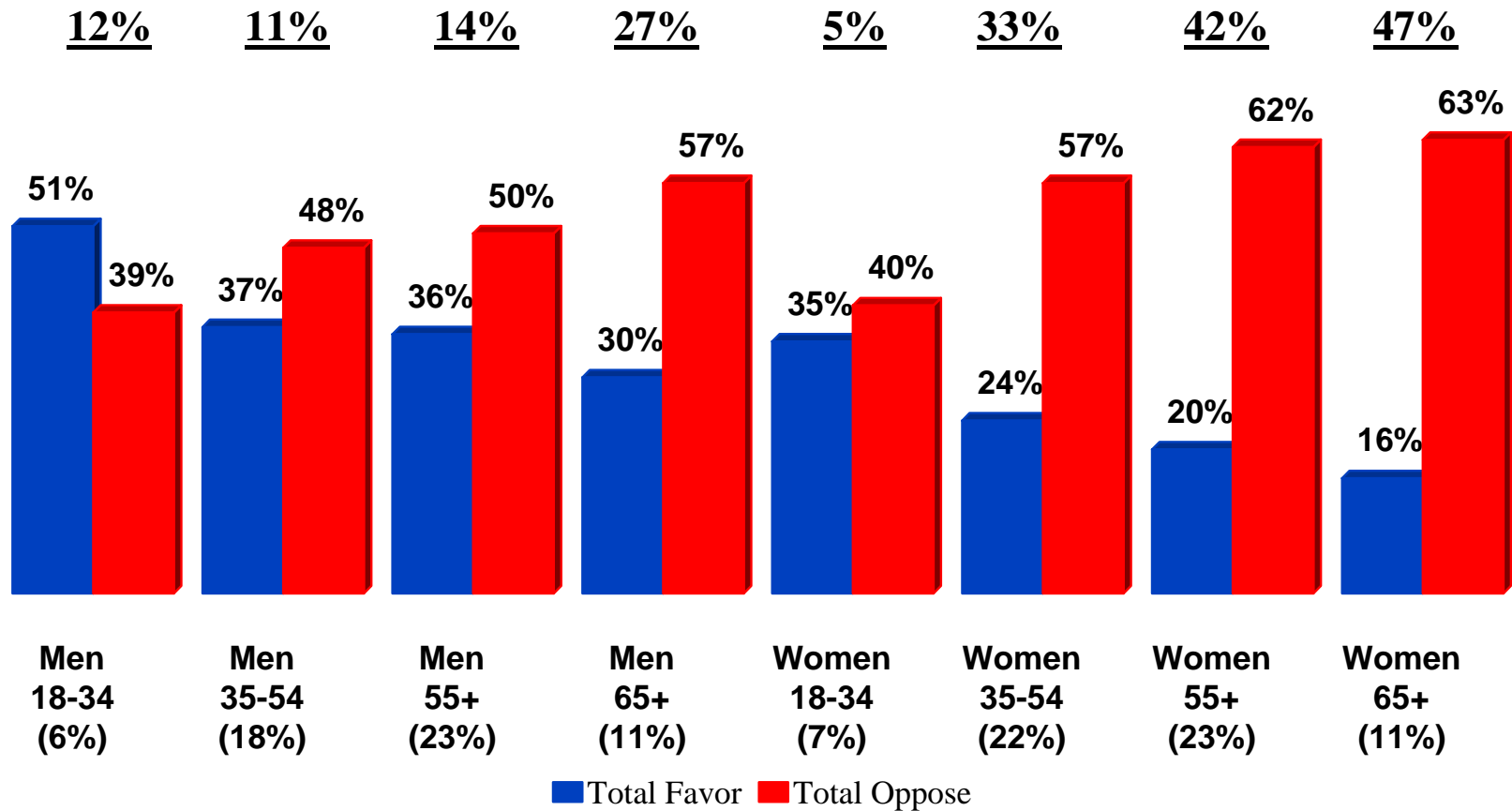
By Familiarity with Bush's SS Plan



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposed changes to Social Security?

The President needs to convince older voters about his plans on Social Security.

By Gender/Age

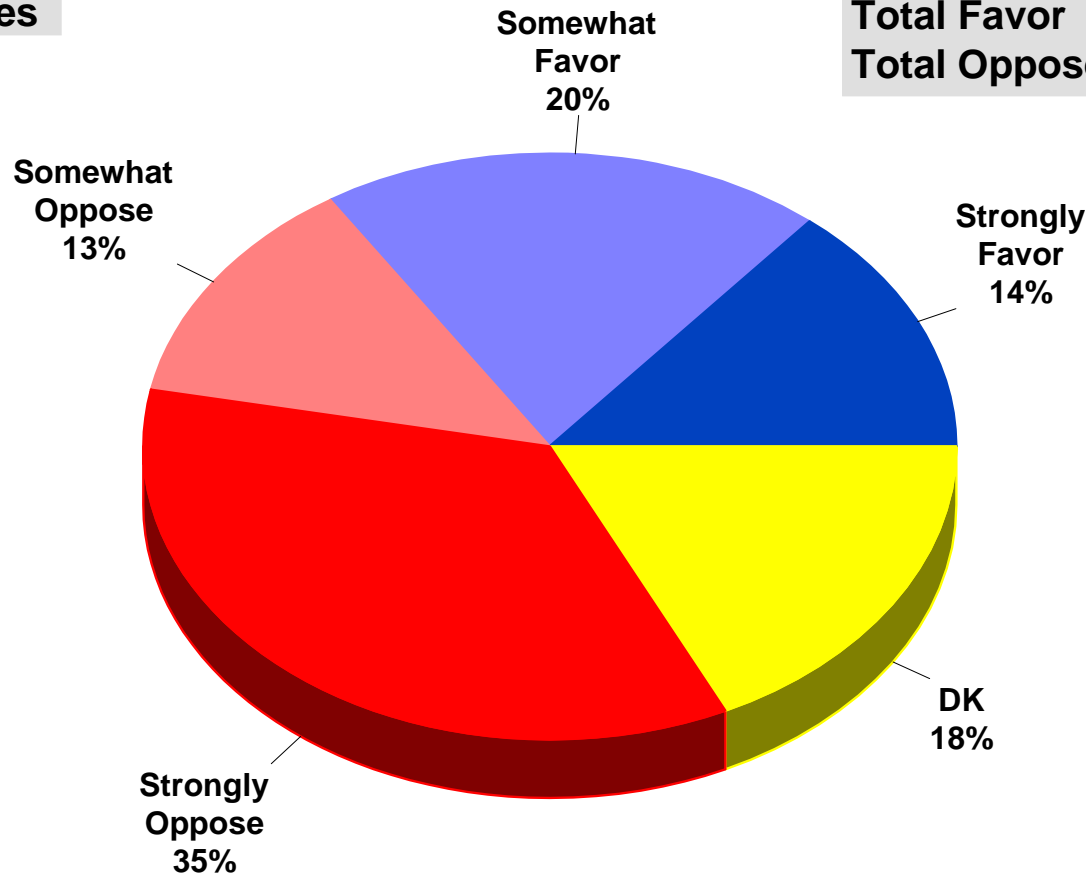


Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposed changes to Social Security?

Underscoring the difficulty of moving forward on Social Security, almost half of voters in counties the President carried are opposed to his plans.

By Bush Counties

Total Favor	34%
Total Oppose	49%*

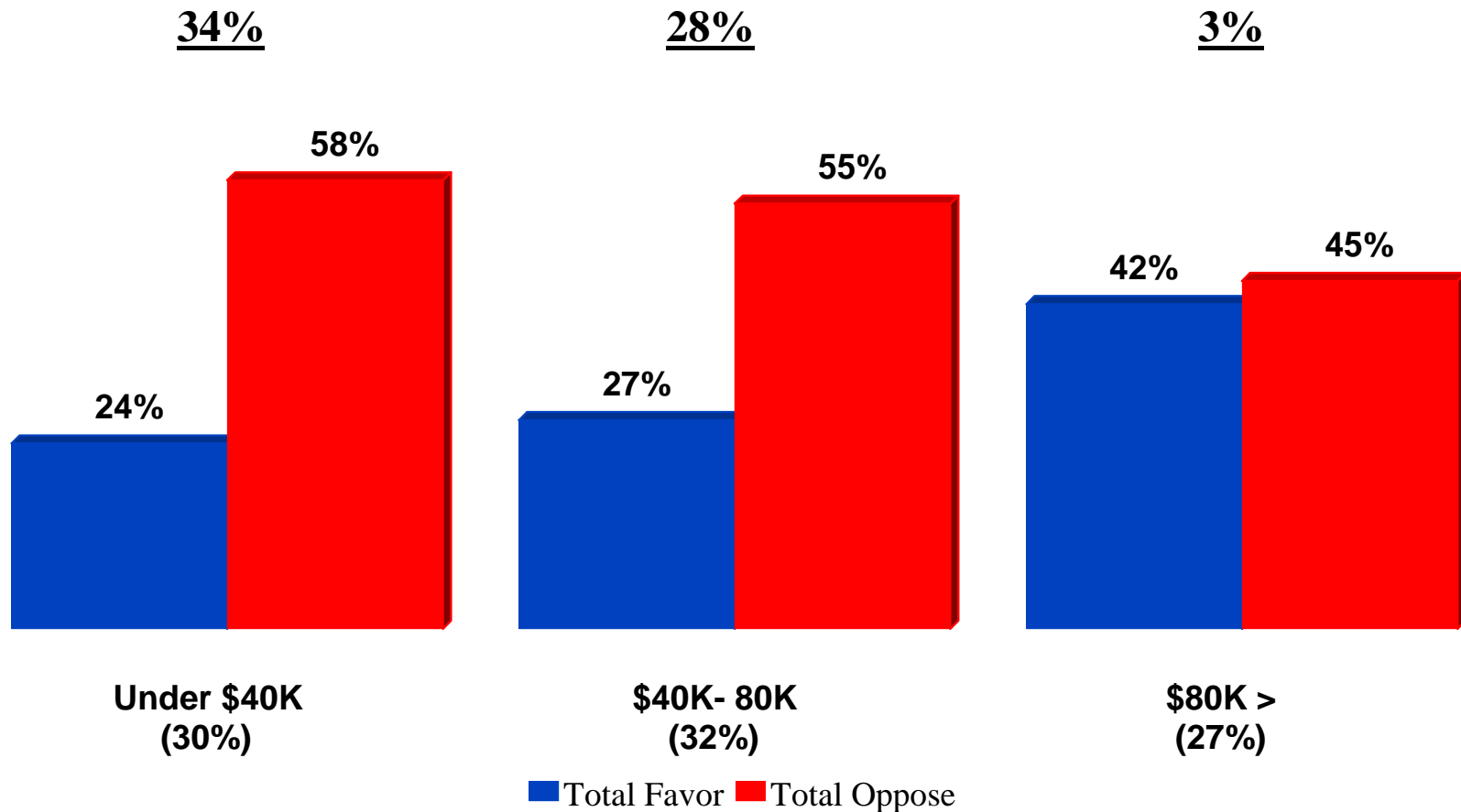


Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposed changes to Social Security?

*denotes rounding

Voters with incomes below \$80K don't support the plan while those with higher incomes are almost evenly split.

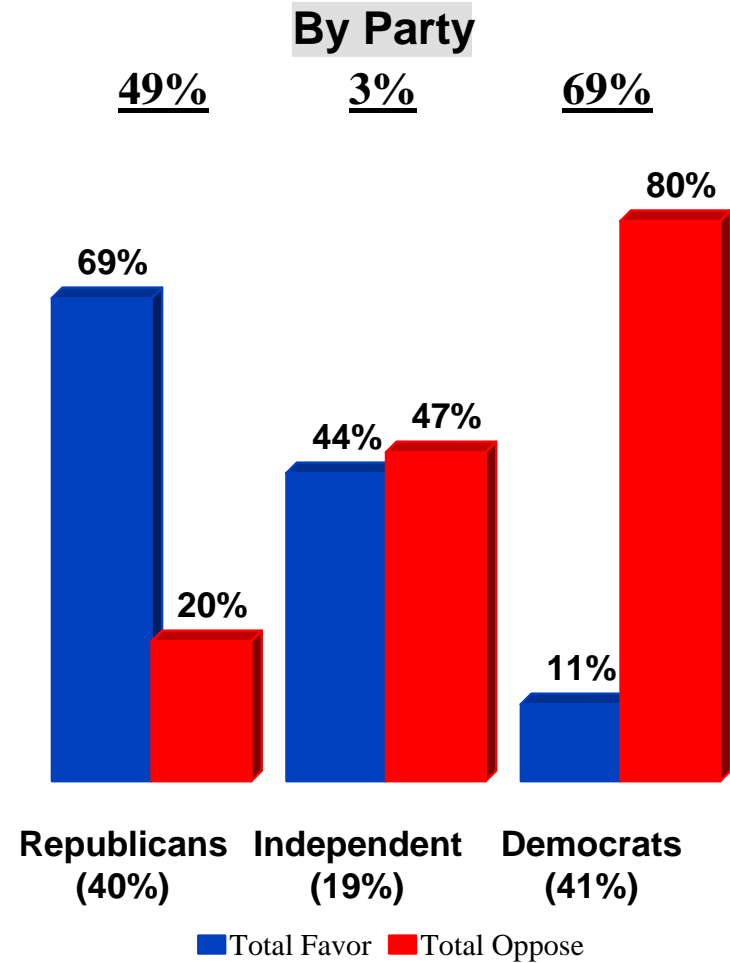
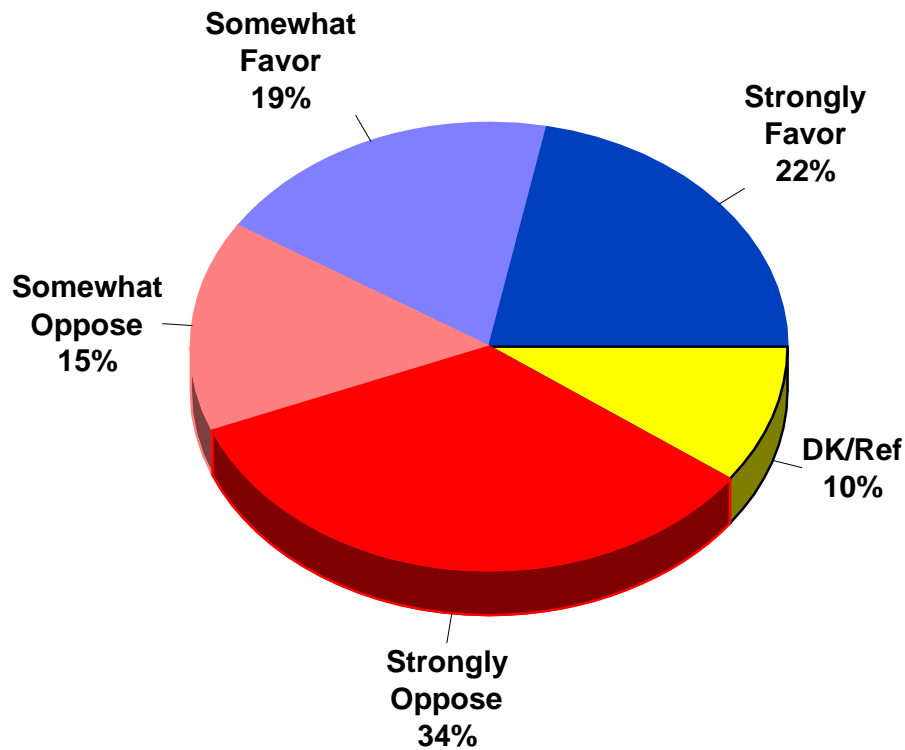
By Income II



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposed changes to Social Security?

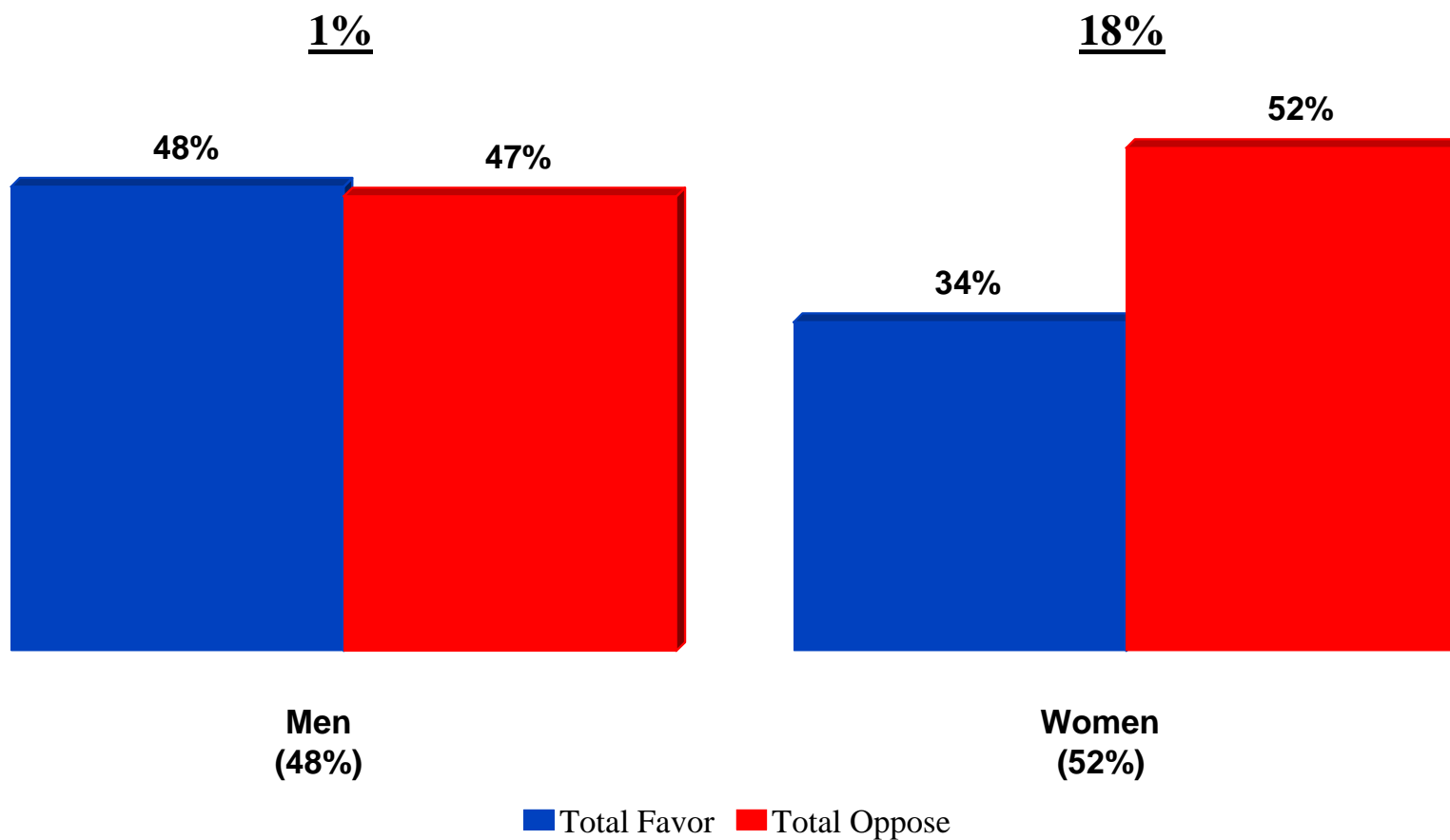
Changing the wording to “Republican” language increases support by seven points.

Total Favor	41%
Total Oppose	49%



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to create voluntary Personal Retirement Accounts as part of the Social Security system?

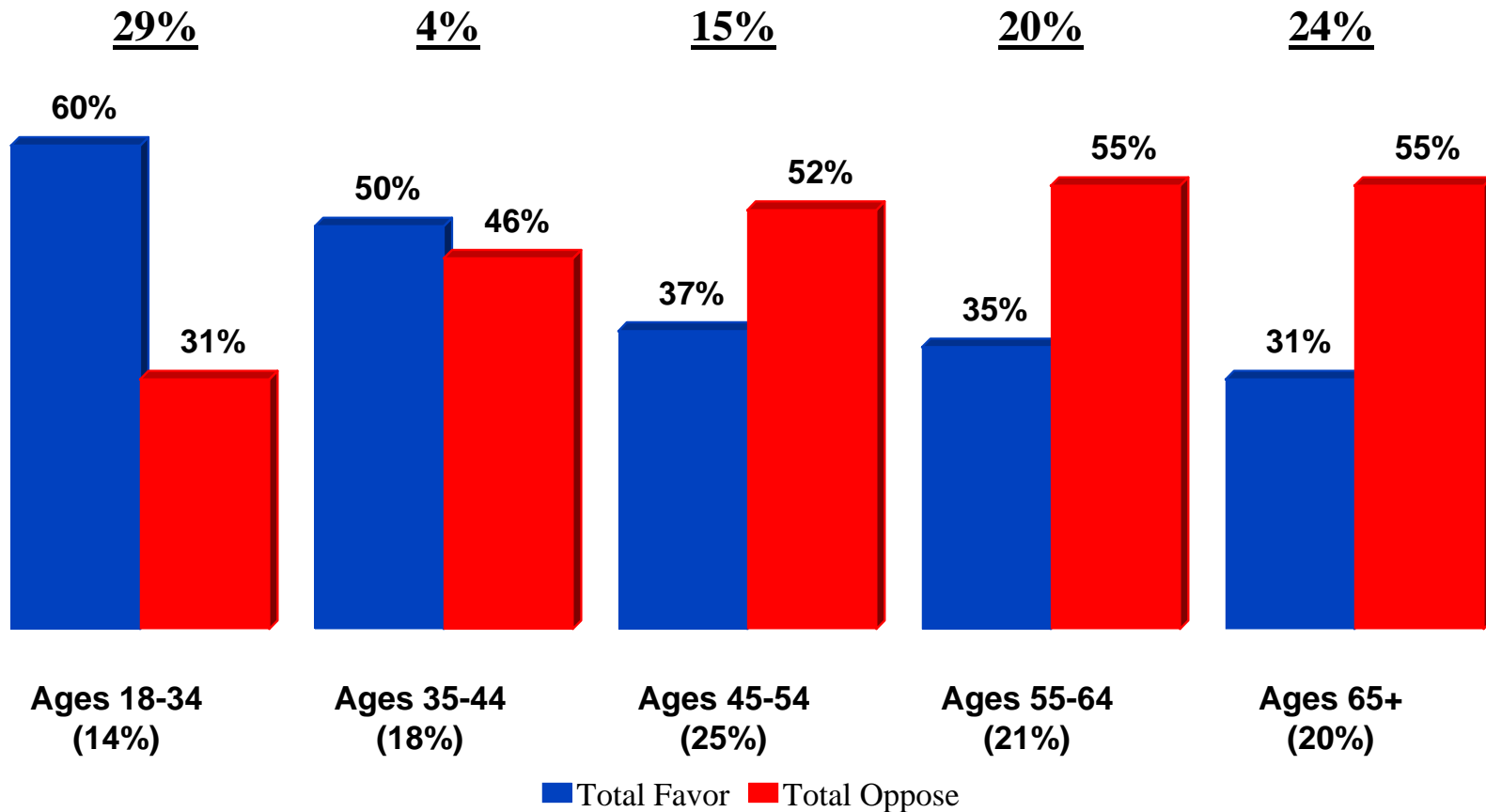
By Gender



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to create voluntary Personal Retirement Accounts as part of the Social Security system?

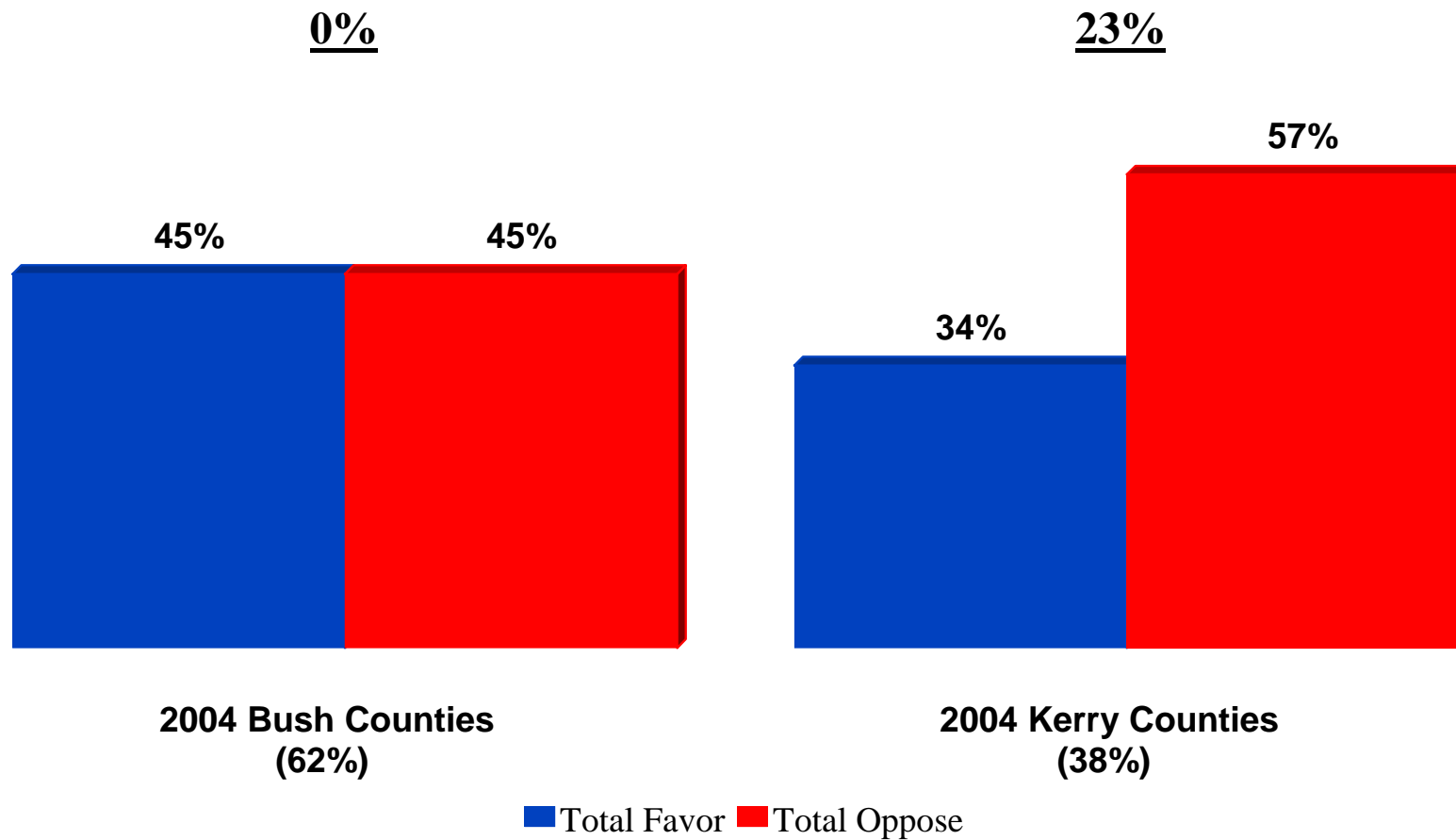
The change of wording helps, but older voters need more convincing to gain their support.

By Age



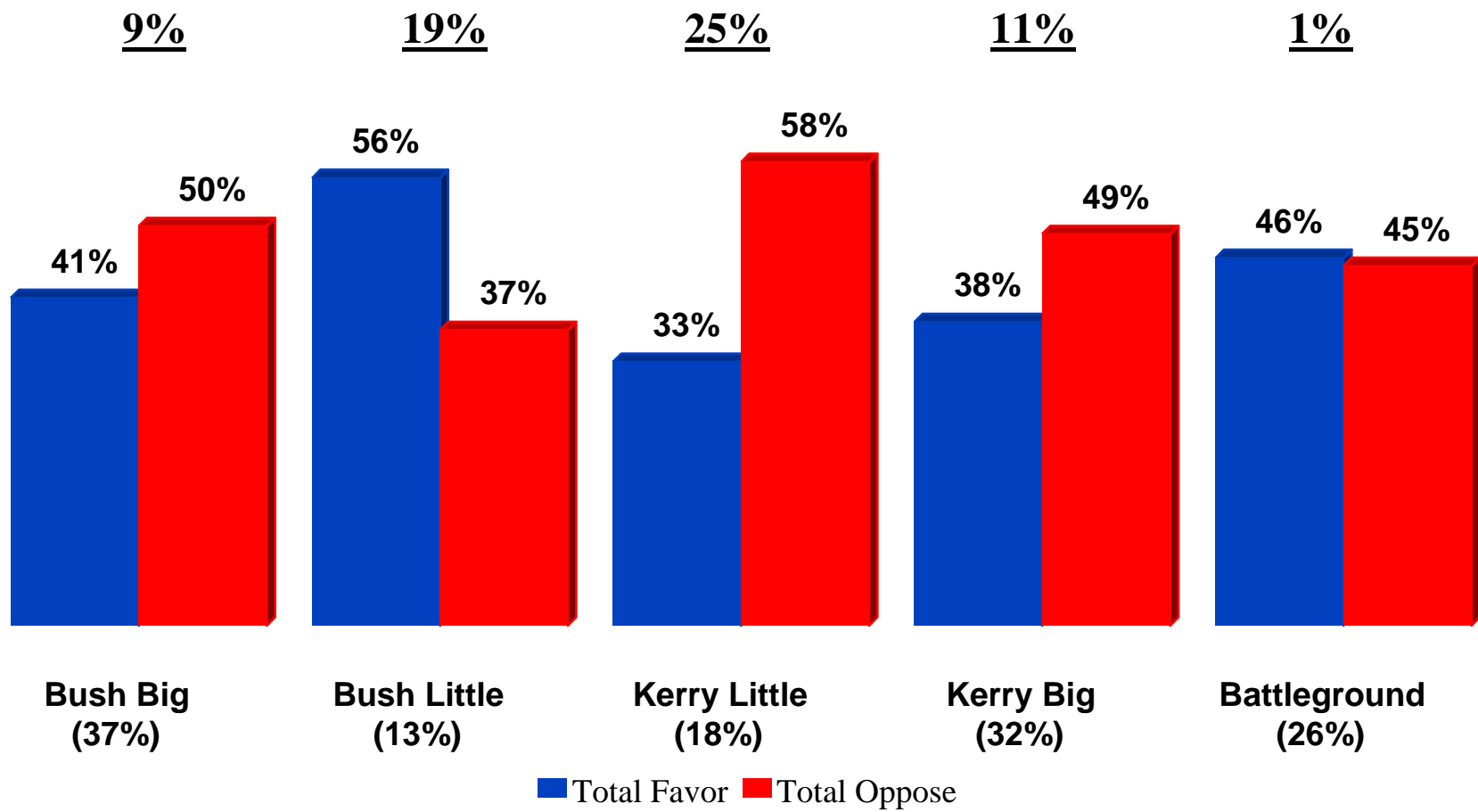
Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to create voluntary Personal Retirement Accounts as part of the Social Security system?

By 2004 Counties



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to create voluntary Personal Retirement Accounts as part of the Social Security system?

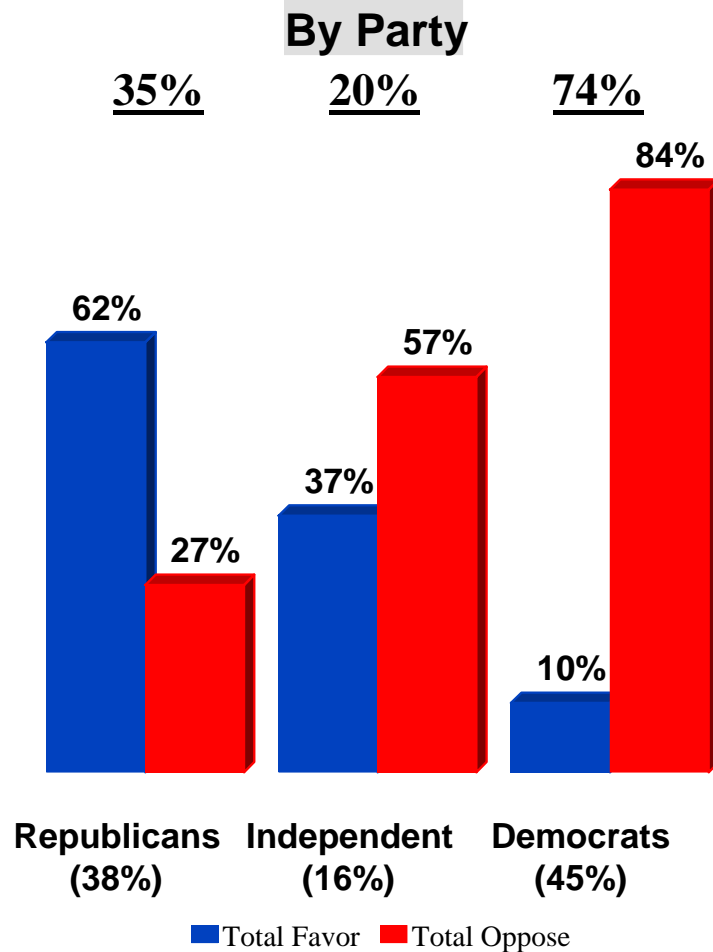
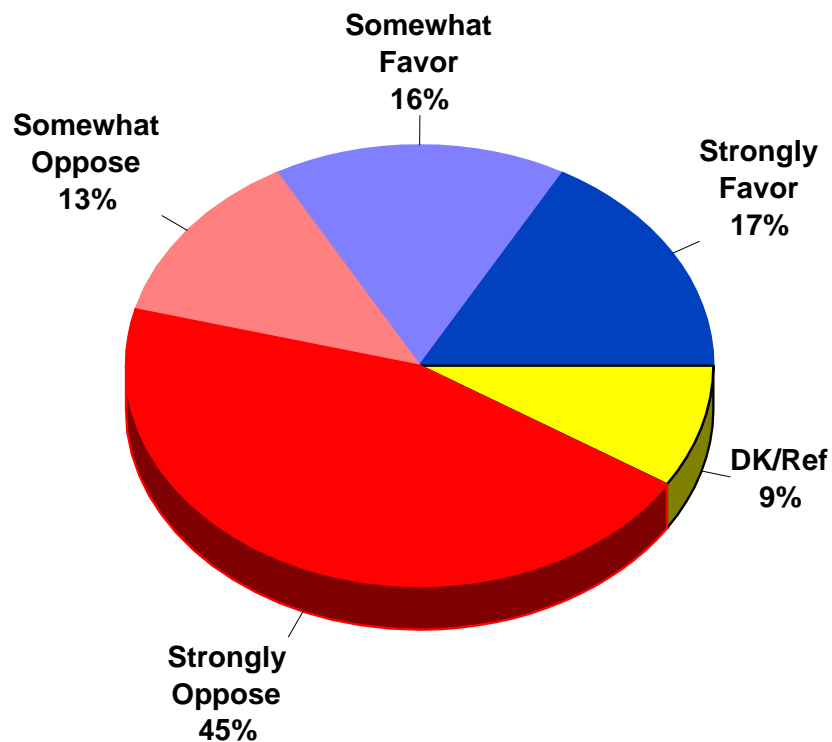
By 2004 States



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to create voluntary Personal Retirement Accounts as part of the Social Security system?

The Democratic message underscores the importance of language.

Total Favor 34%*
Total Oppose 58%

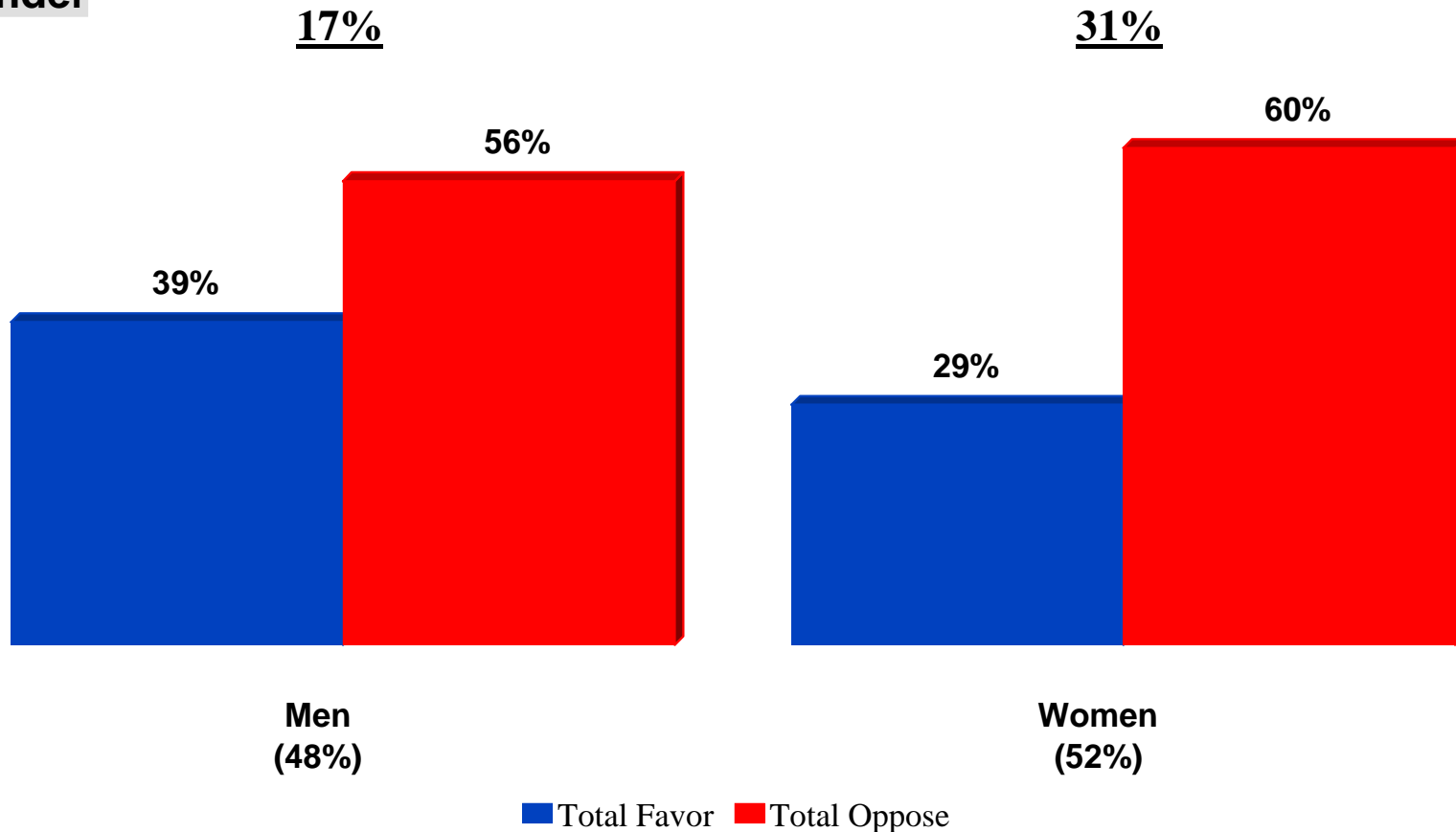


Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to privatize Social Security and divert part of the Social Security system into private accounts?

*denotes rounding

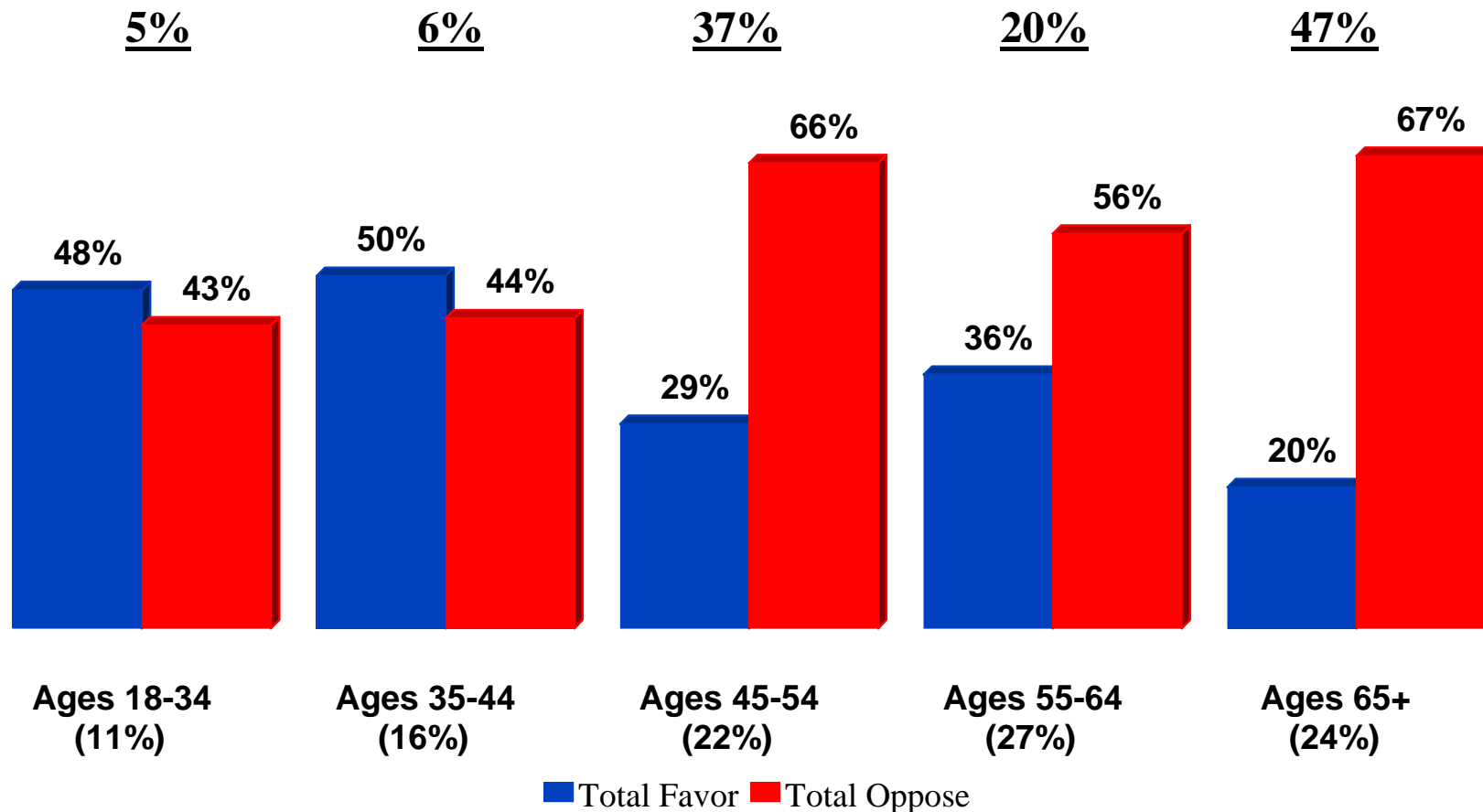
There are big shifts by gender when using the Democratic language on the President's plan for Social Security.

By Gender



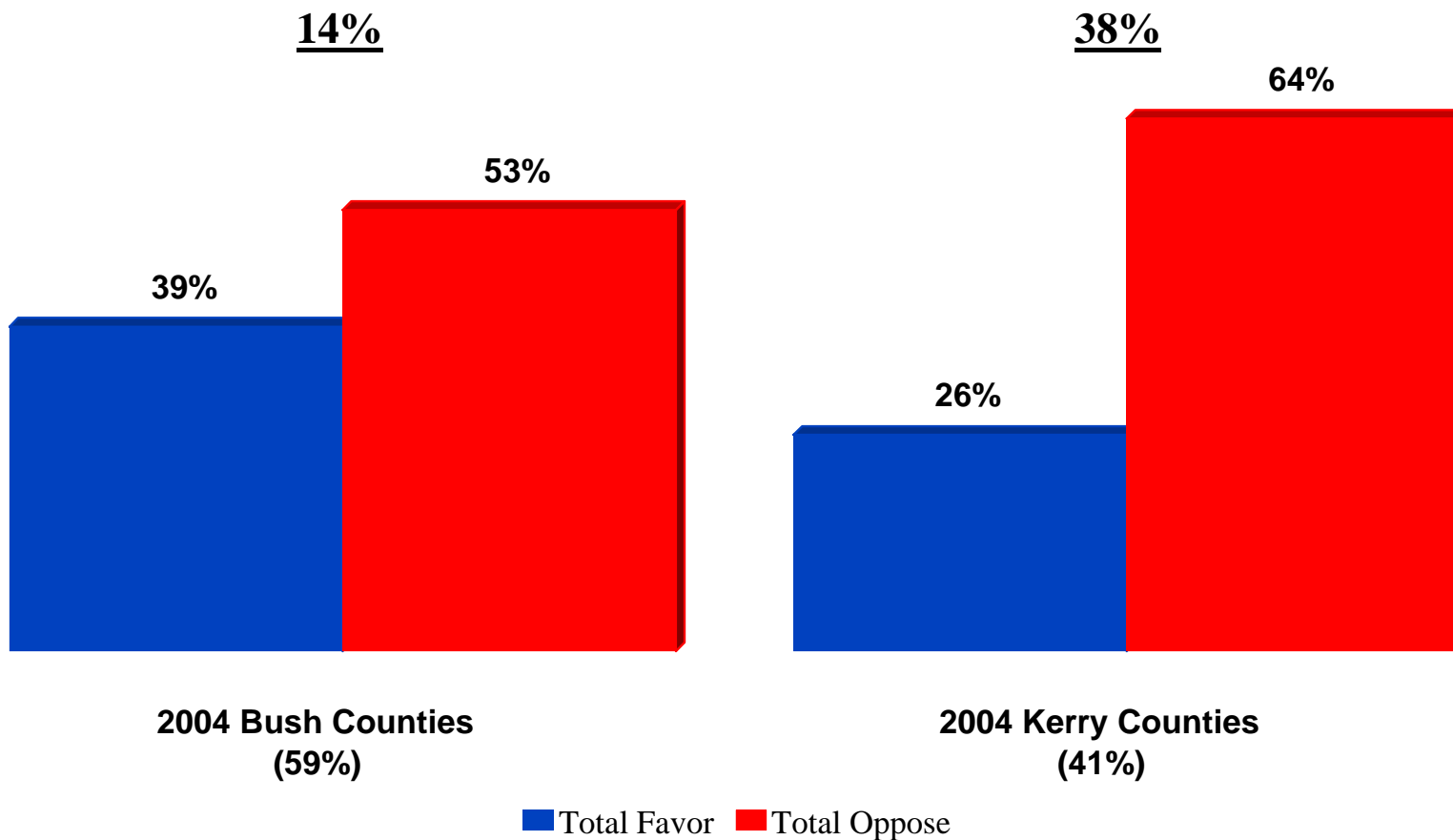
Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to privatize Social Security and divert part of the Social Security system into private accounts?

By Age



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to privatize Social Security and divert part of the Social Security system into private accounts?

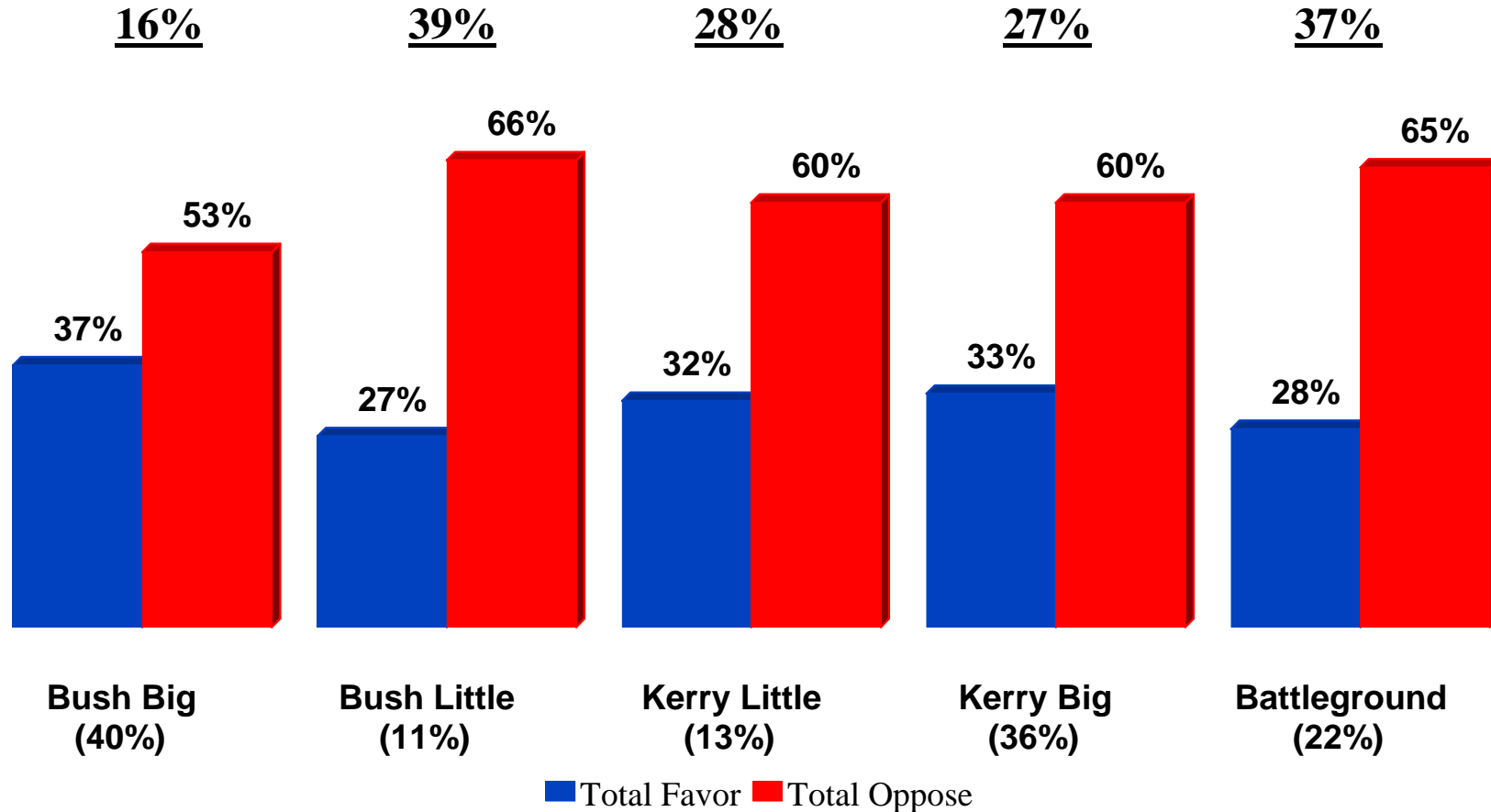
By 2004 Counties



Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to privatize Social Security and divert part of the Social Security system into private accounts?

The Dems message on Social Security is strong across the country.

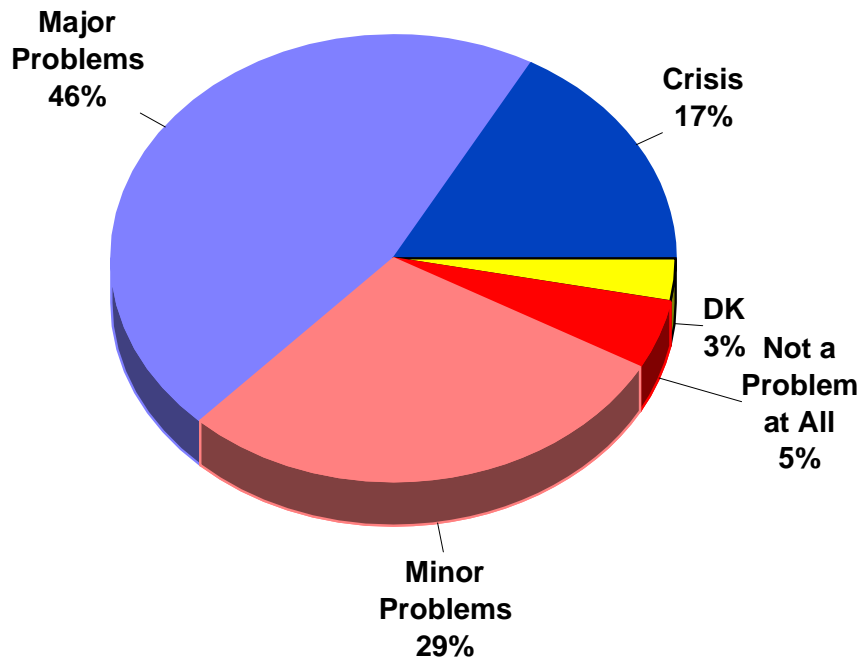
By 2004 States



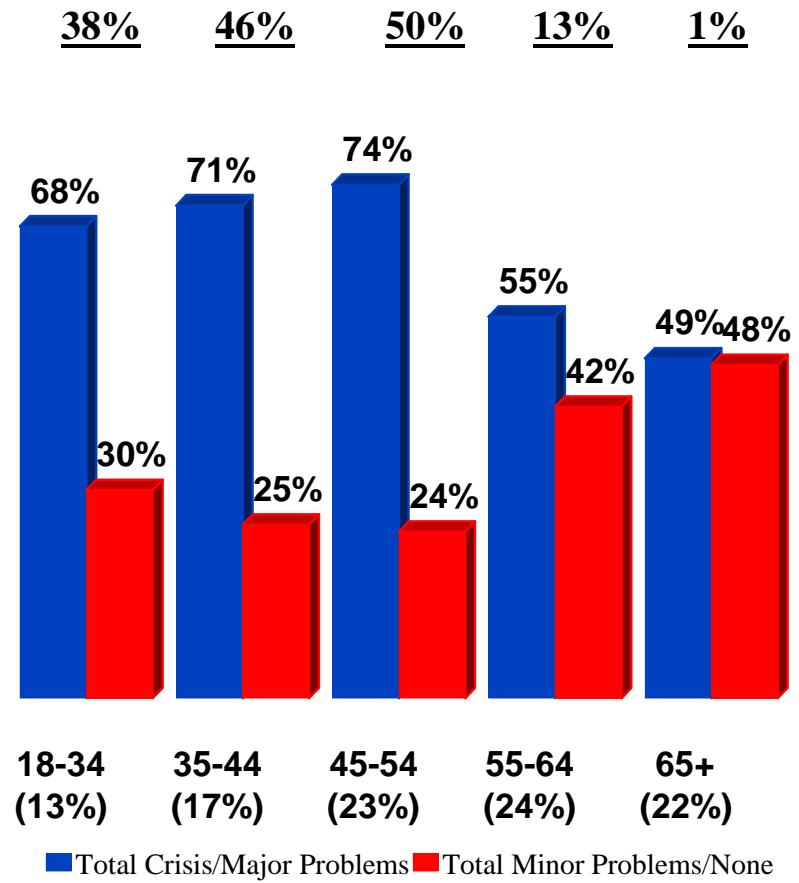
Do you favor or oppose President Bush's proposal to privatize Social Security and divert part of the Social Security system into private accounts?

Younger voters strongly believe there is a problem with Social Security while older voters are not as convinced.

Total Crisis/Major Problems 63%
Total Minor Problems/None 35%*



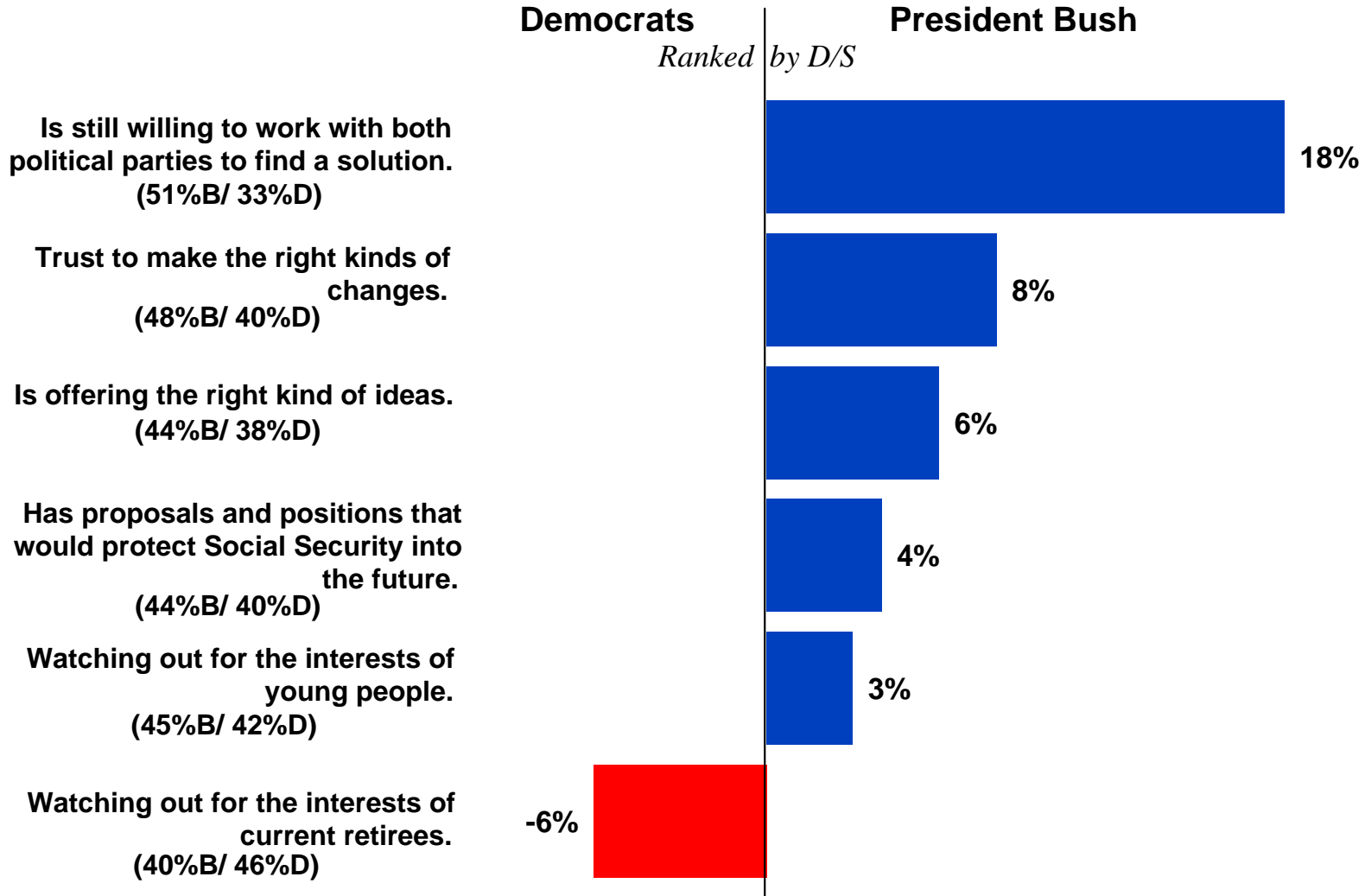
By Age



Would you say that Social Security is facing a crisis, has major problems, has minor problems, or is there not a problem at all with Social Security?

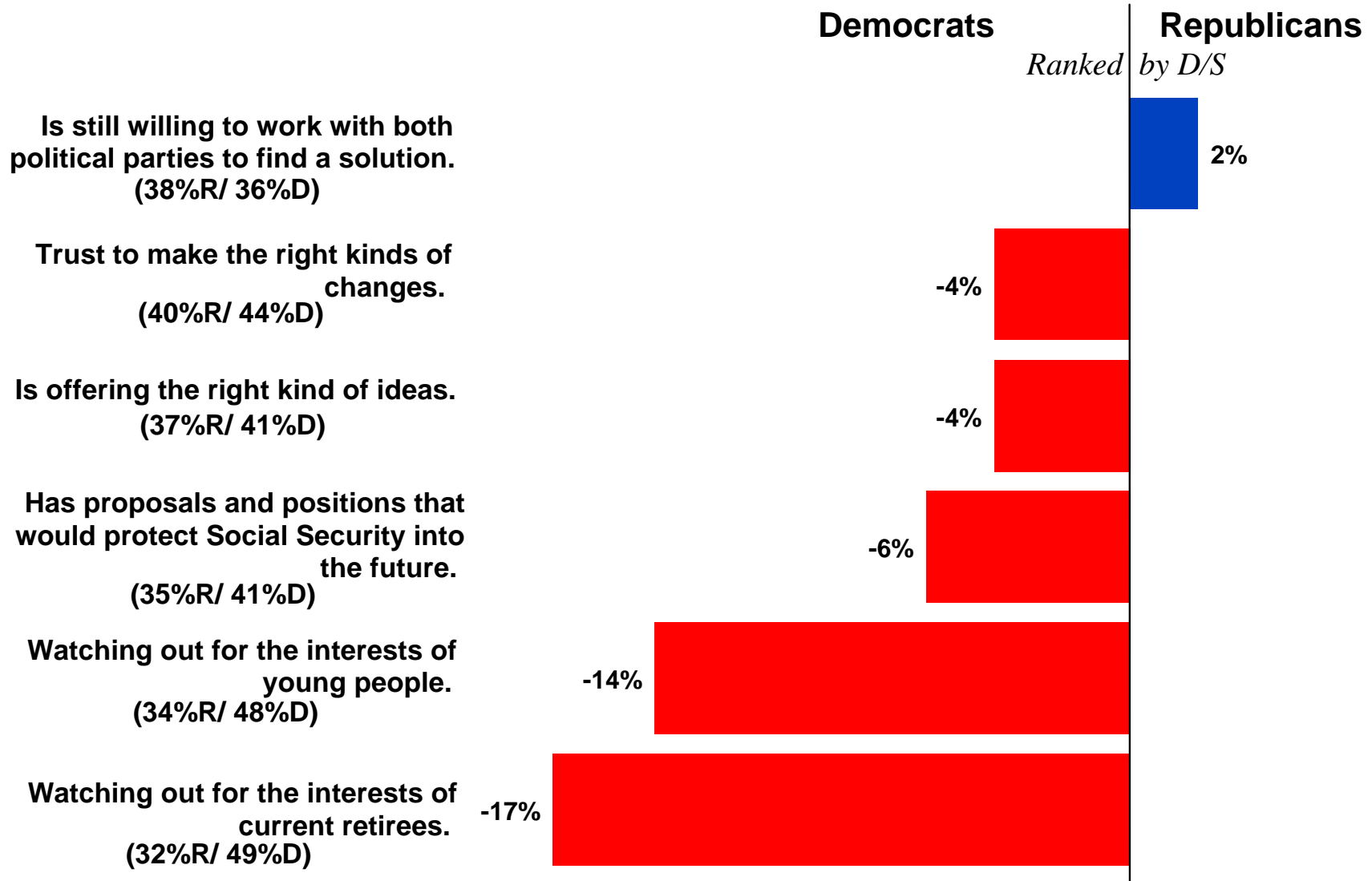
The President is the best messenger.

Now I would like to read you a list of phrases related to Social Security and after I read each phrase, please tell me whether you believe the phrase best describes President Bush or the Democrats.



While Dems in Congress are trusted more than the GOPers.

Now I would like to read you a list of phrases related to Social Security and after I read each phrase, please tell me whether you believe the phrase best describes the Republicans or the Democrats.

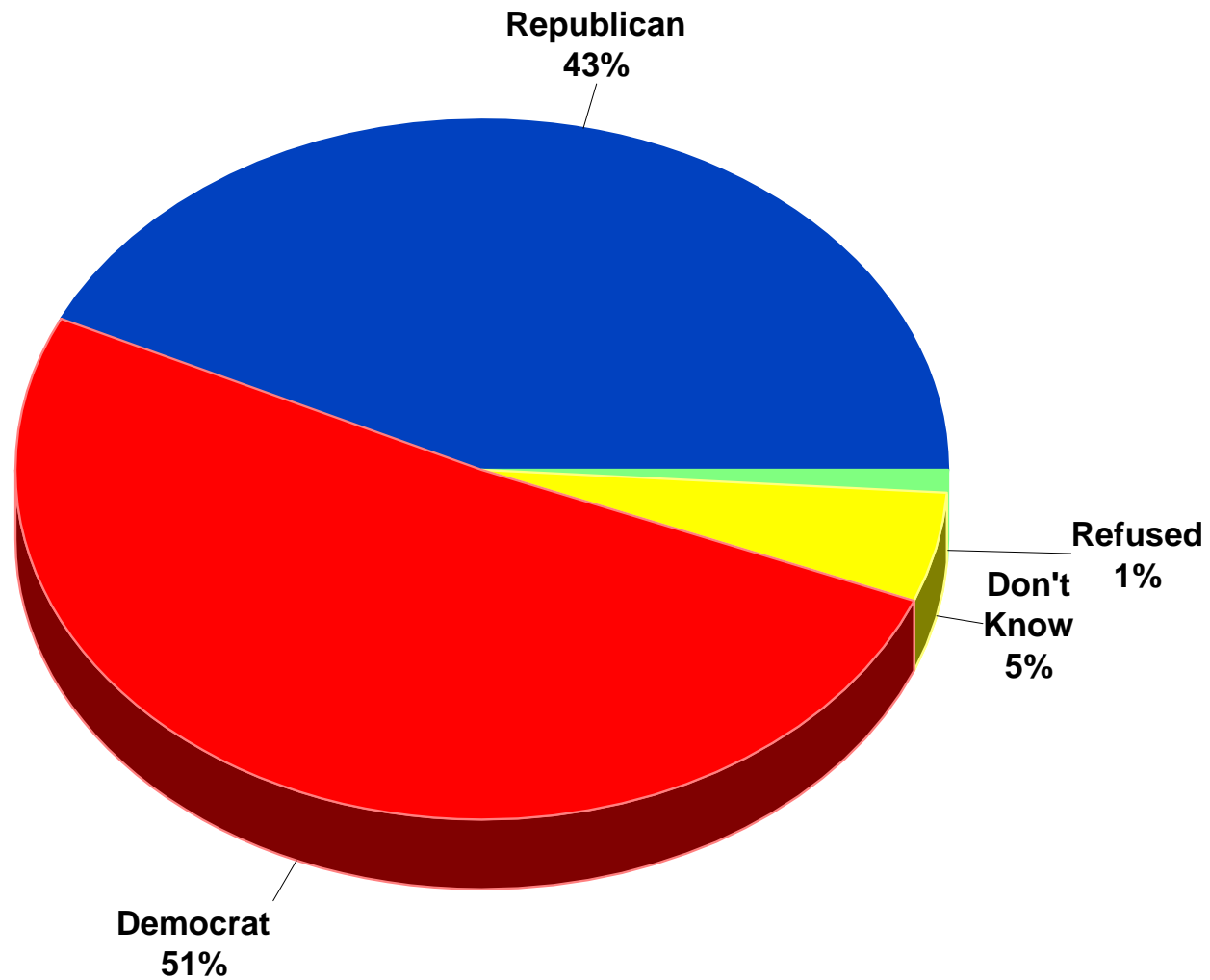


Now, I'd like to read you two descriptions of the proposed changes to Social Security, and please tell me which description is closer to your own point of view on how you would describe the changes.

Republicans say President Bush has proposed allowing workers under the age of fifty-five to voluntarily redirect a portion of their current Social Security taxes into voluntary personal retirement accounts. This is an account that individuals would own and control and they could invest in certified bonds, mutual funds, or stock funds that follow basic standards of safety and soundness. The money could only be used for retirement, or passed along as an inheritance. If you are able generate an average return rate of more than three percent on your voluntary personal retirement account investment, you would get more money than you would under the traditional system. Anyone over the age of fifty-five would not be affected by this proposal.

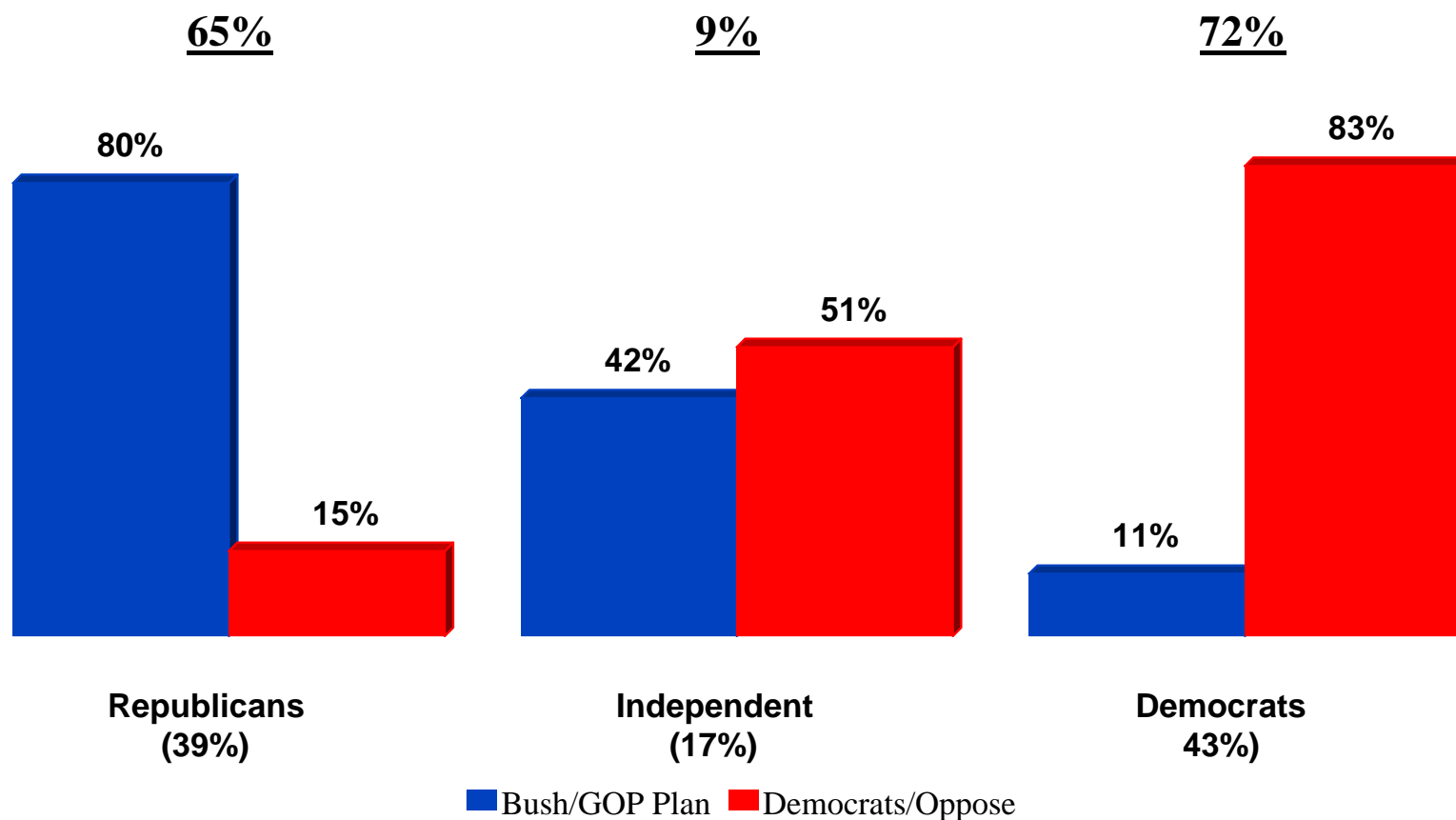
Democrats say President Bush's proposed changes to Social Security undermine the future security of the program for everyone. To finance it, the Republicans will add two trillion dollars to the deficit and continue to spend down the Social Security Trust Fund. Democrats say Republicans pass on the debts and interest costs to the next generation. Their plan would cut benefits for future retirees by up to forty percent, even if you do not switch over to a private account. With fees paid to Wall Street, this plan reduces benefits by thirty billion dollars, helping stock brokers more than seniors. We would be better off making the right kinds of changes that would maintain the guaranteed retirement income offered by Social Security.

Which statement comes closer to your point of view?



Independents give the Dems an edge on message.

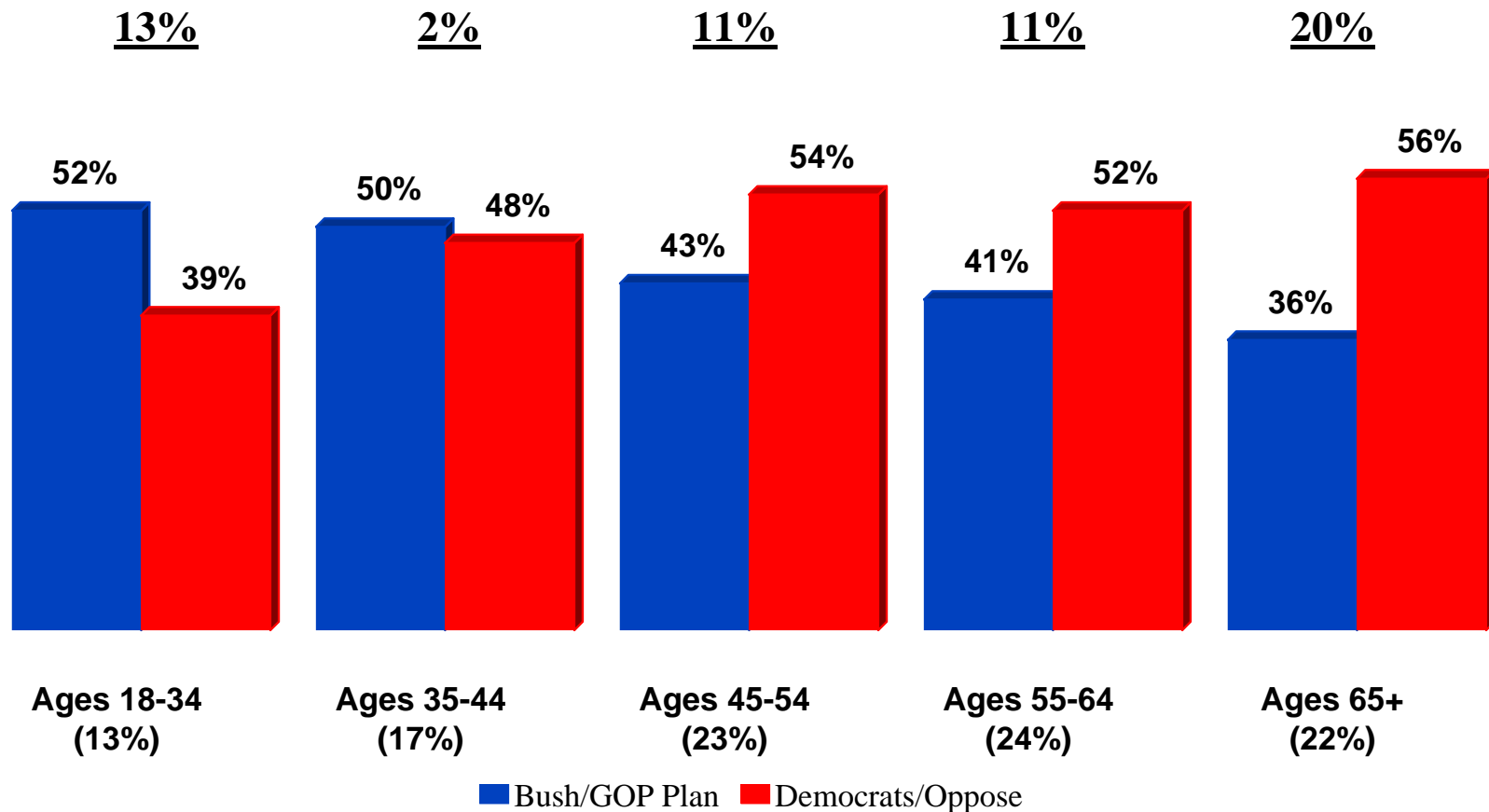
By Party



Which statement comes closer to your point of view?

The generation gap continues on the message test.

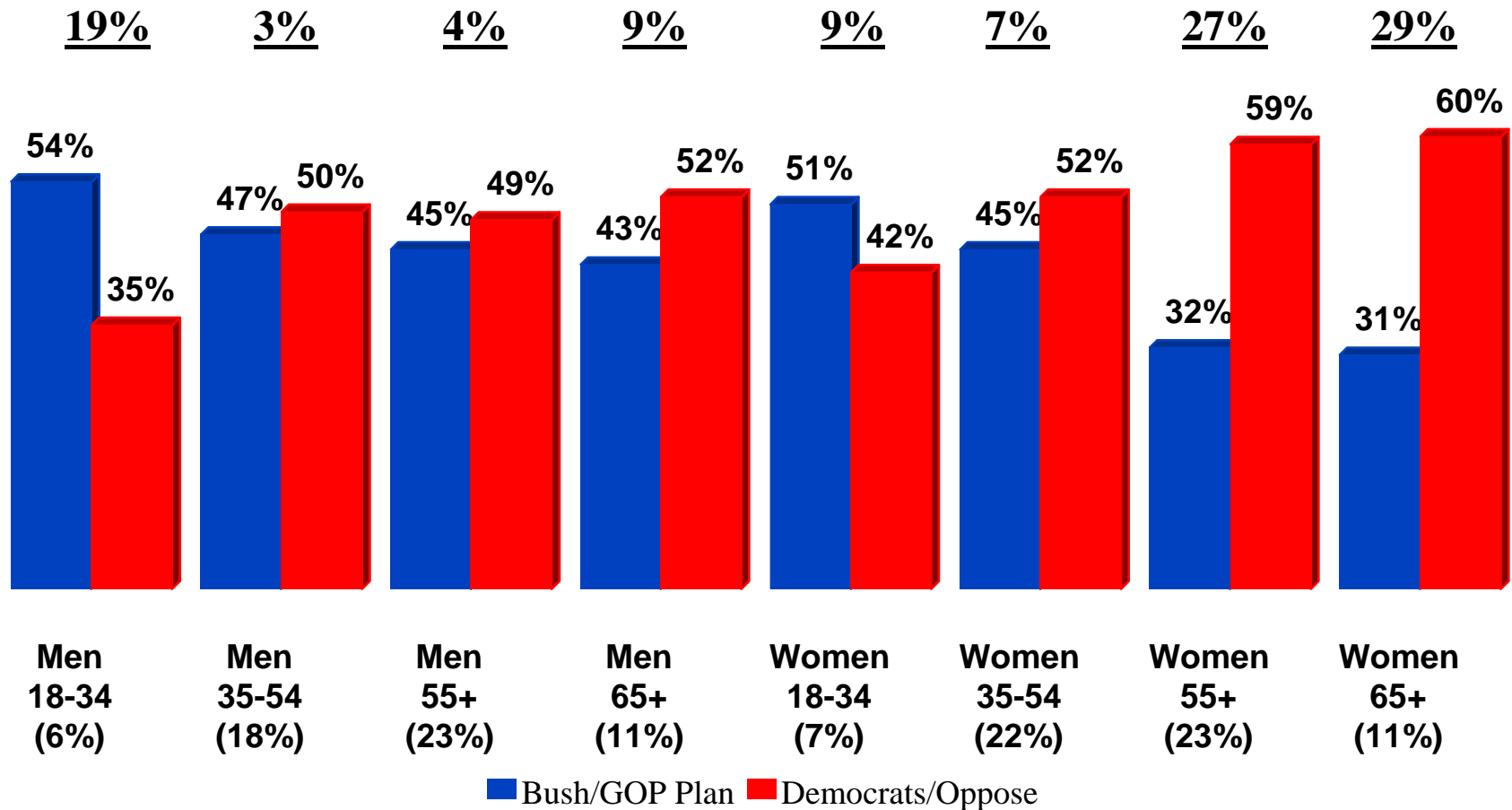
By Age



Which statement comes closer to your point of view?

Men overall are more supportive and notice the drop off with women over 55.

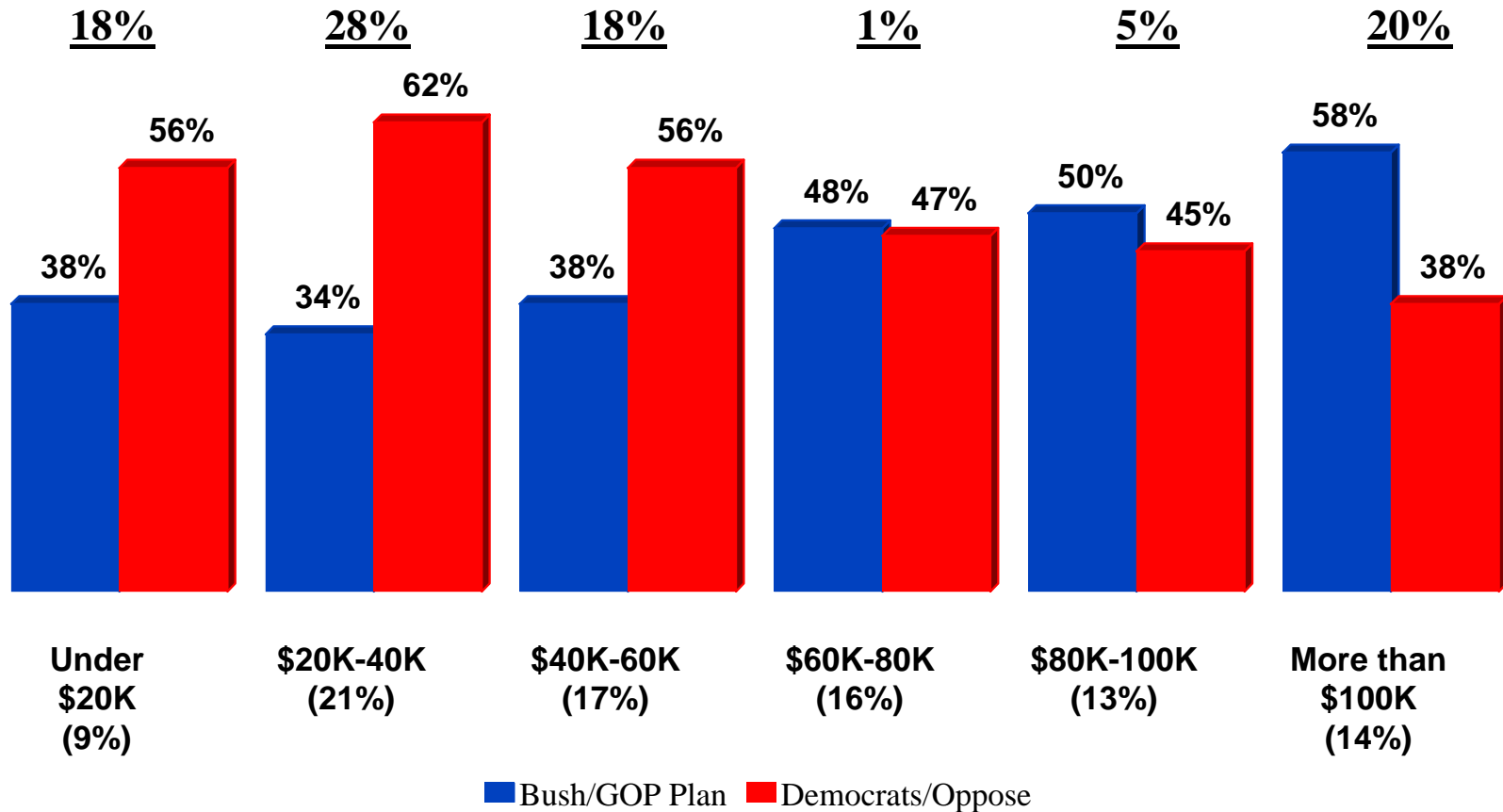
By Gender/Age



Which statement comes closer to your point of view?

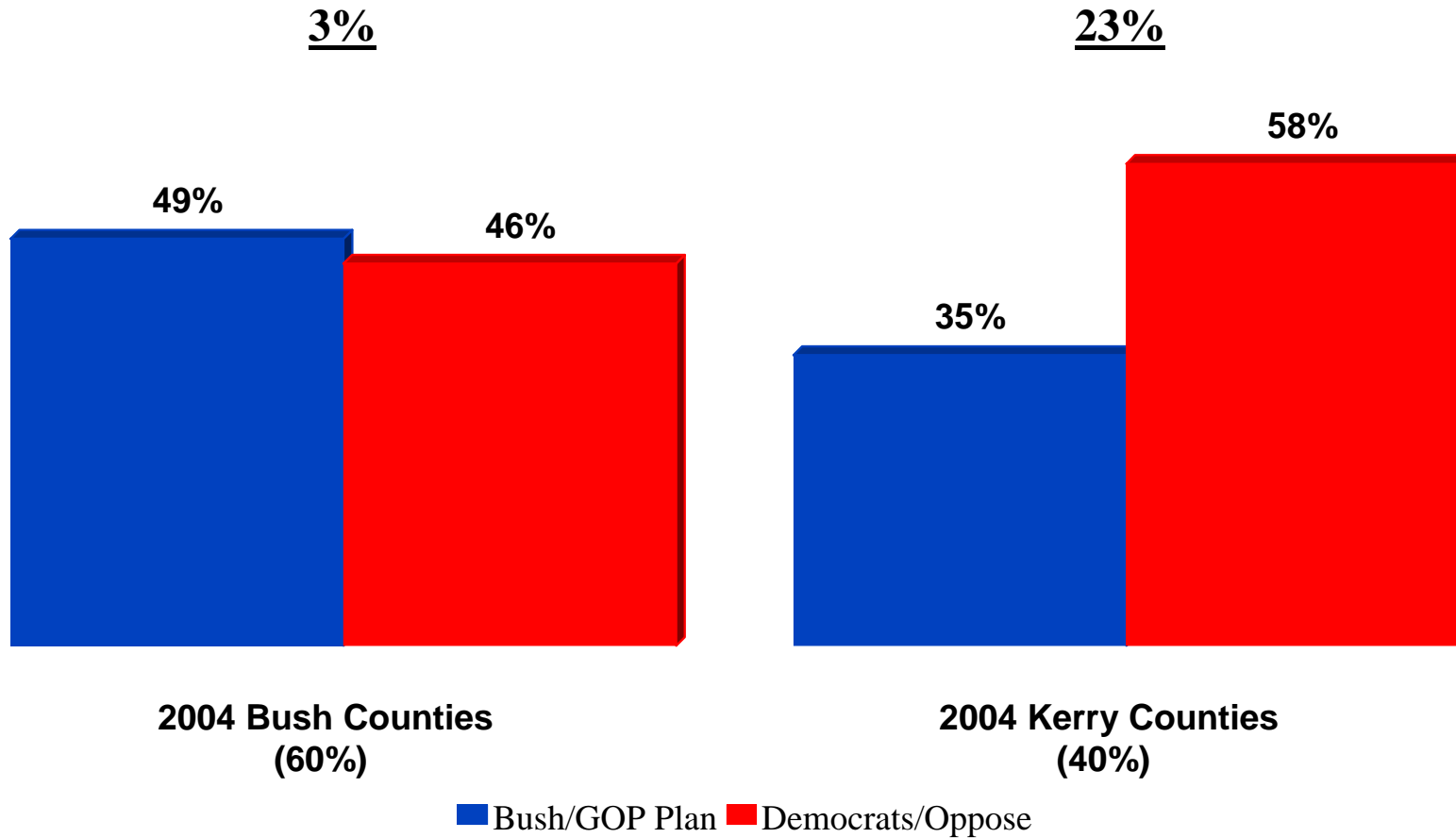
Support for the GOP plan increases as incomes rise.

By Income



Which statement comes closer to your point of view?

By 2004 Counties



Which statement comes closer to your point of view?

Now, I'd like to read you two more descriptions of the proposed changes to Social Security, and please tell me which description is closer to your own point of view on how you would describe the changes.

Republicans say that voluntary personal accounts are a good idea because it is voluntary and will allow younger workers to earn more for their retirement while saving Social Security for future generations. Republicans say that people currently on Social Security or about to go on Social Security will not be affected at all. They say that if no changes to the program are made, the Social Security system will either have to significantly cut benefits or significantly raise taxes on workers. Republicans say Democrats have no plan to save Social Security, and that Democrats are wrong to say that there is no problem with Social Security.

Democrats say we should make changes in Social Security to guarantee its long term security, but the Republicans are greatly exaggerating the problem to make sweeping changes that endanger the program. Democrats say the President's plan adds two trillion dollars to the deficit and continues to spend down the Social Security Trust Fund. Their plan would cut benefits for future retirees by up to forty percent and helps Wall Street more than seniors. Democrats recognize the shortfall that will emerge in forty years, but believe we should act carefully, and create a bi-partisan commission, to make the right kind of changes to continue Social Security's guaranteed benefits for future retirees.

Which statement comes closer to your point of view?

