



Eye on the Economy

VOTER PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TODAY'S ECONOMY

Key Findings

A RISING ECONOMY

Voters' assessment of the U.S. economy remains negative, though **we may have turned a corner by which the deep pessimism we've seen over the past few years is starting to subside.** Since last August, the share of voters who give positive ratings of the U.S. economy has grown by a net 14-points, and the share of voters saying the economy is headed in the right direction has grown by a net 11-points – with all partisan groups becoming more optimistic. **This marks an improvement, but not a complete turnaround,** as a majority of voters still give the economy poor rankings (63%) and believe we are heading in the wrong direction (58%).

Inflation continues to dominate voters' outlook on the economy, with 68% of voters saying it is one of the most important issues today. Notably, this is down 7 points from January 2023 when 75% of voters said the same of inflation. And while voters overall still believe many aspects of the economy have worsened over the last year (on issues such as prices, wages, inflation) – **more voters today are starting to say that nearly all economic issues are better today than last year.**

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Since last August, **voters have grown less concerned about their personal finances** – and while there has been notable improvement on how they see their finances, most still have a bleak outlook.

Overwhelming **majorities say they are able to meet basic expenses today, however, attitudes towards affording those same items in the near future is more mixed.** Though large shares of voters believe their ability to afford basic necessities, groceries, and pay their bills will become easier by this fall, a small majority disagree and see those items becoming harder to afford. Relatedly, voters express ongoing struggles when it comes to their ability to afford eating out, paying down debt, and vacation, with few seeing those getting easier to afford in the near future.



Key Findings

GENERATION DIVIDE

There is a real generational divide that shapes what young voters want and expect from the economy.

- Voters under 30 years old are disproportionately more likely to believe more job opportunities will have a positive impact on their lives. They value having disposable income more than other age groups.
- Voters between 30 and 44 years old are the only age group to prefer their incomes to go up when forced to choose between that and costs going down. They put the least importance on disposable income, but the most on saving for retirement.
- Voters above 45 years old (and especially those above 65) believe a rising stock market will have more of a positive impact on their lives than other age groups and see less value in job growth, rising wages, etc.

One area of agreement: **Voters recognize that this economy is affecting generations differently.** A majority of voters across age groups believe things are financially harder for younger people today than for previous generations. Further, a plurality of all ages agree that the next generation will be worse off financially.

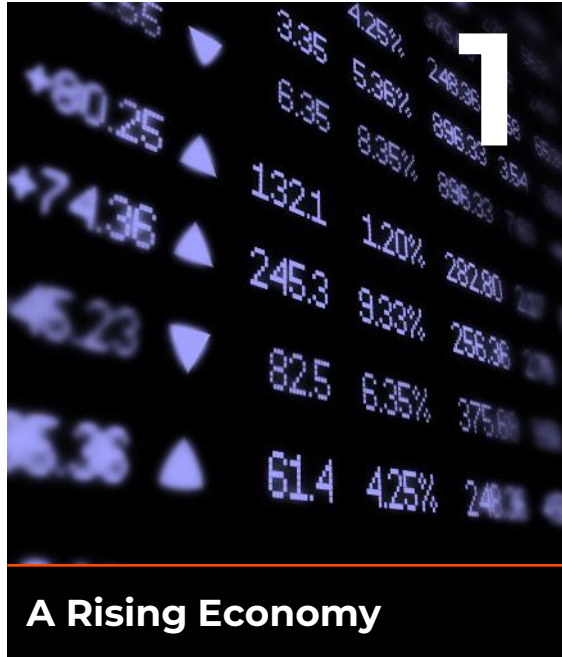
AN ELECTION DRAWS NEAR

Partisanship fuels how voters perceive today's economy and where they think the economy will be during the peak of election season this fall. Those who voted for Joe Biden in 2020 predict a stronger economy this fall by a net of 20 points. The opposite is true of Donald Trump's 2020 voting bloc – in which nearly half say the economy will be worse this fall (48%). Despite partisanship driving this outlook, those who say the economy will be better still overwhelmingly give credit to Joe Biden (73%).

Two parties. Two economies. Across a range of economic issues – from the cost of goods, wages, job markets, etc. – Biden's base is more optimistic about where nearly all those issues are headed this fall, while Trump's base is incredibly pessimistic across all the same issues. Voters overall, however, are squarely in the middle of the two extremes.

Despite partisan divide and disagreement on our economic outlook, one area where we see agreement is how we should judge our economy. The value of the dollar and unemployment rate fluctuate as top issues between those groups; however, **consumer spending is seen as a top indicator for economic success with voters across the board.**

In This Report

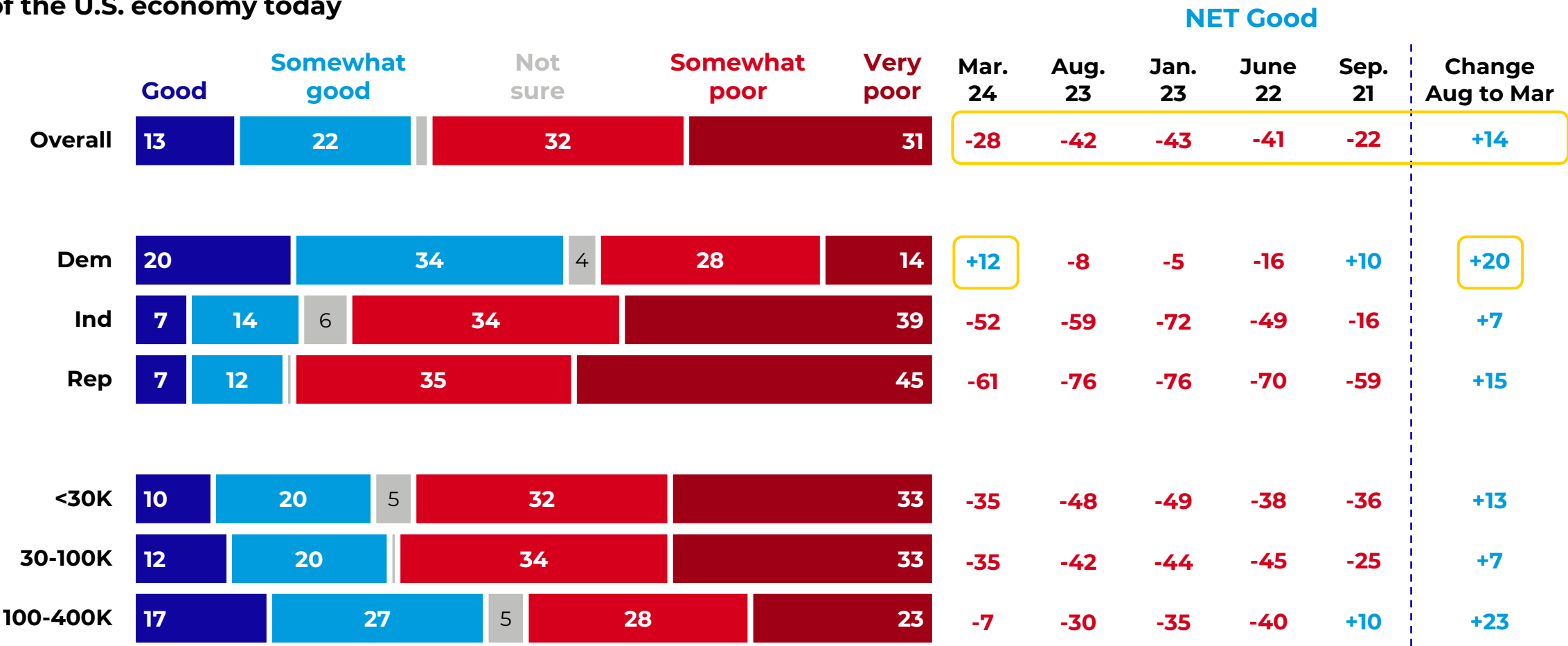




A Rising Economy

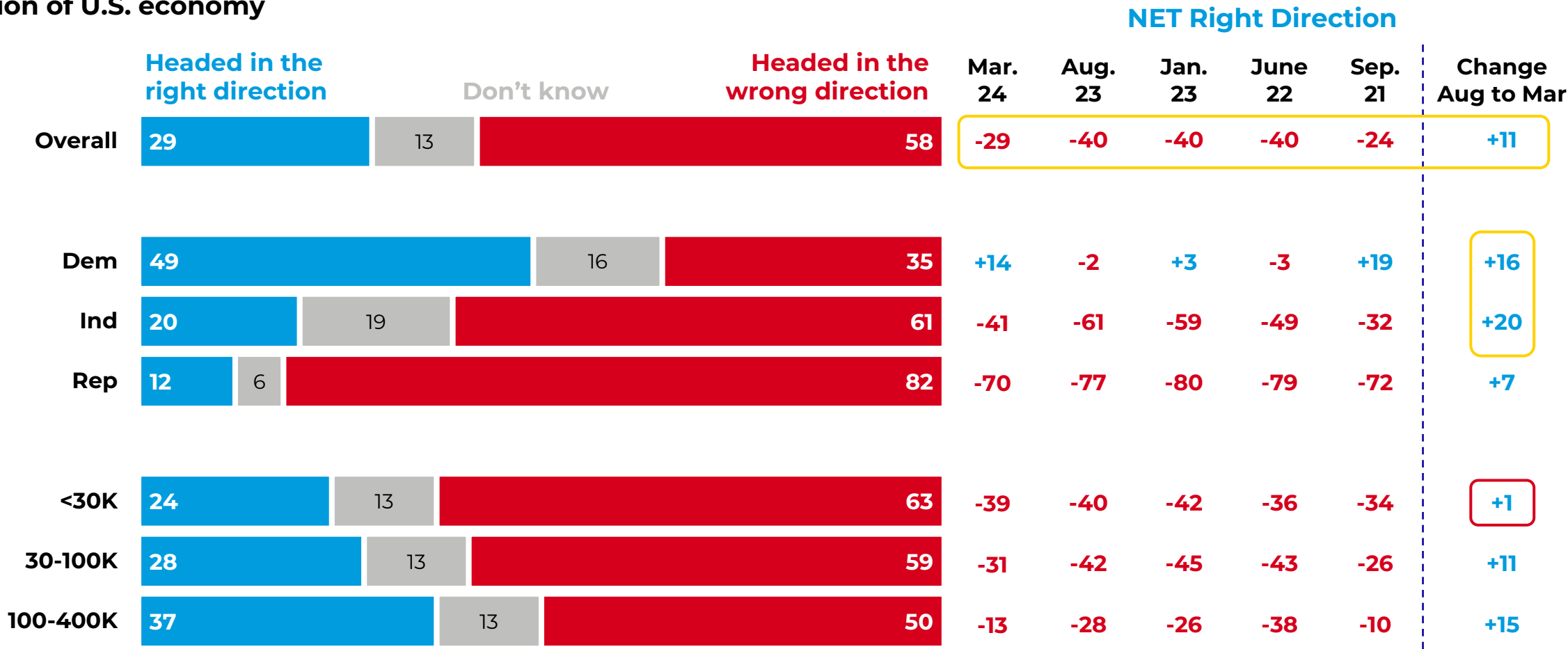
While negativity largely persists, attitudes towards the economy are now trending upwards – all partisans have grown more optimistic, especially Democrats

State of the U.S. economy today



Most still say the economy is heading in the wrong direction but negativity has decreased – especially among independent voters

Direction of U.S. economy



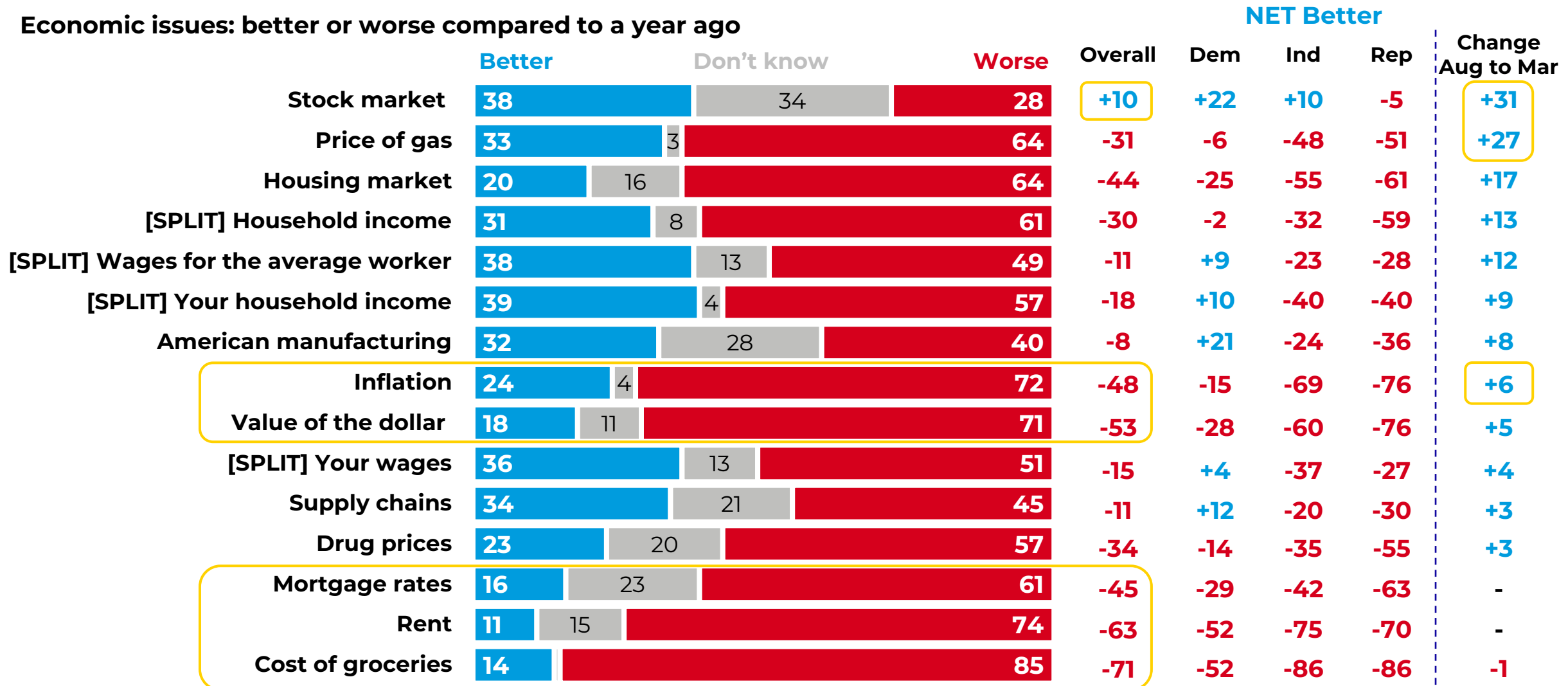
Inflation continues to dominate the economic issues voters find most crucial, but there is growing concern on health care costs

Most important issues facing economy today (top three)

Most important issues facing economy today (top three)				Total			Change Aug to Mar	
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Aug. 23	Jan. 23		
	Inflation	68	56	75	78	71	75	-3
	Wages keeping up with the cost of living	51	54	48	48	52	45	-1
	Health care costs	38	46	35	31	27	27	+11
	National debt	30	19	25	44	31	24	-1
	Poverty	23	24	26	20	21	24	+2
	Corporate greed	22	29	28	13	24	21	-2
	Income inequality	19	27	22	9	20	17	-1
	Unemployment	17	18	15	17	13	14	+4
	Supply chain disruptions	10	8	8	13	15	25	-5
	Labor/worker shortages	8	8	6	8	14	16	-6
	Fluctuations in the stock market		4	3	4	6	10	-2

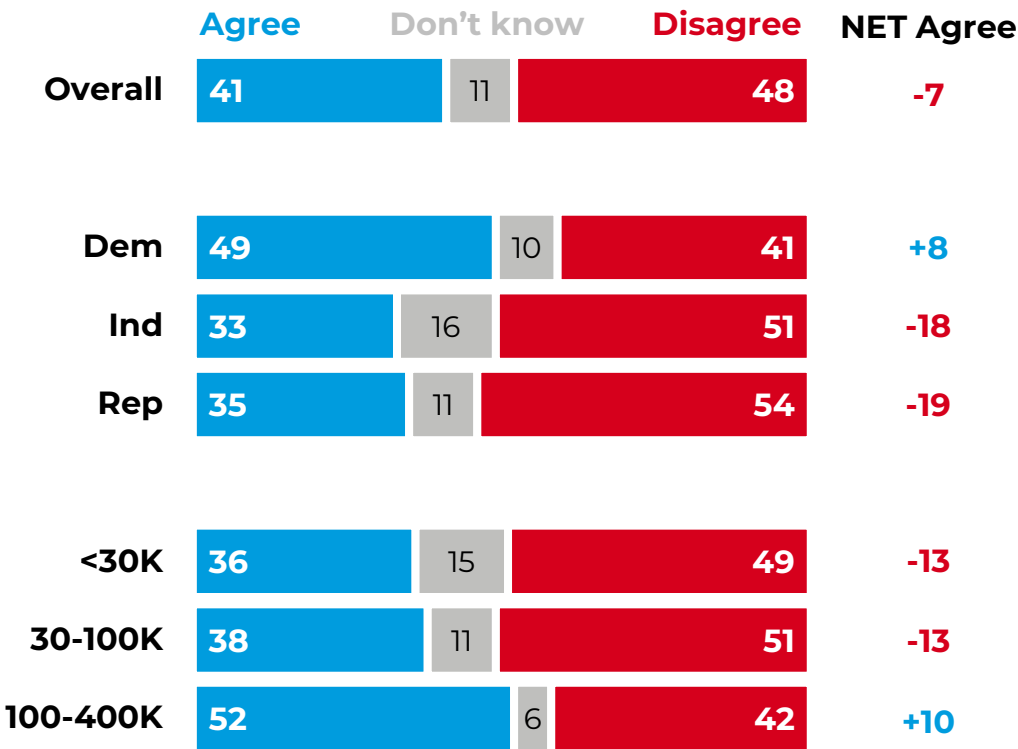
Voters believe many aspects of the economy are worse today than last year; deep negativity on grocery prices has remained steady, while the stock market, wages, inflation, and gas prices are now trending up

Economic issues: better or worse compared to a year ago

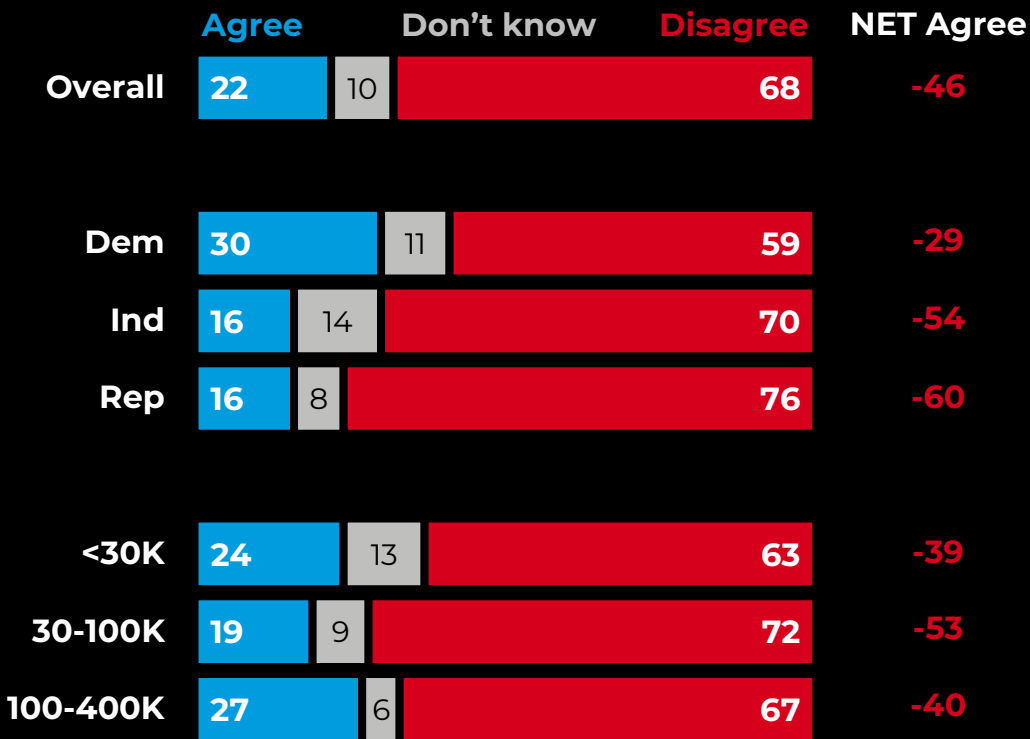


Voters are split on the idea that wages are rising in general – though, despite this, very few believe wages are rising enough to keep up with costs

Agree/Disagree: Wages for most workers are rising



Agree/Disagree: Workers' incomes are starting to rise fast enough to keep up with the cost of living



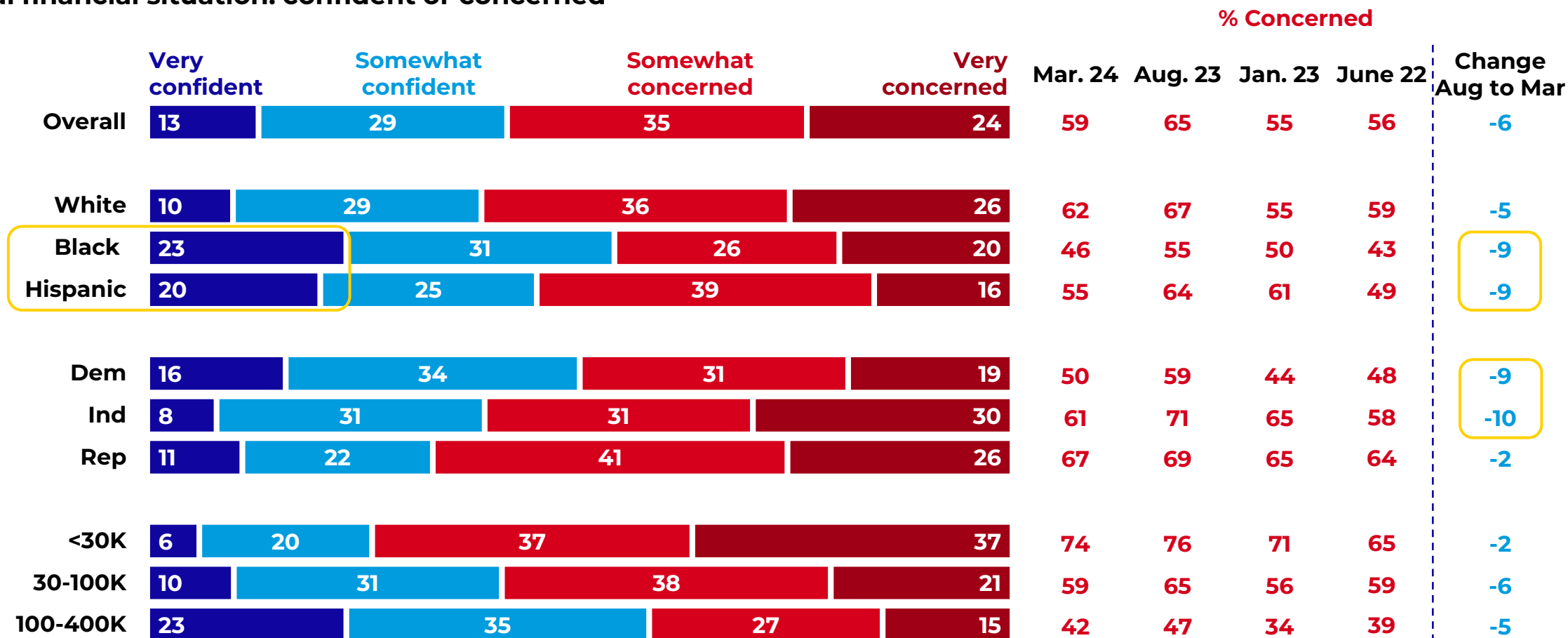
Conflicted Voters: 20% of voters agree that wages are rising for most workers but disagree that incomes are rising fast enough to keep up with the cost of living. These voters are more likely to be non-college women (37%), under the age of 45 (40%), and are D+1 on party self-ID (44% D, 43% R).



Personal Experiences

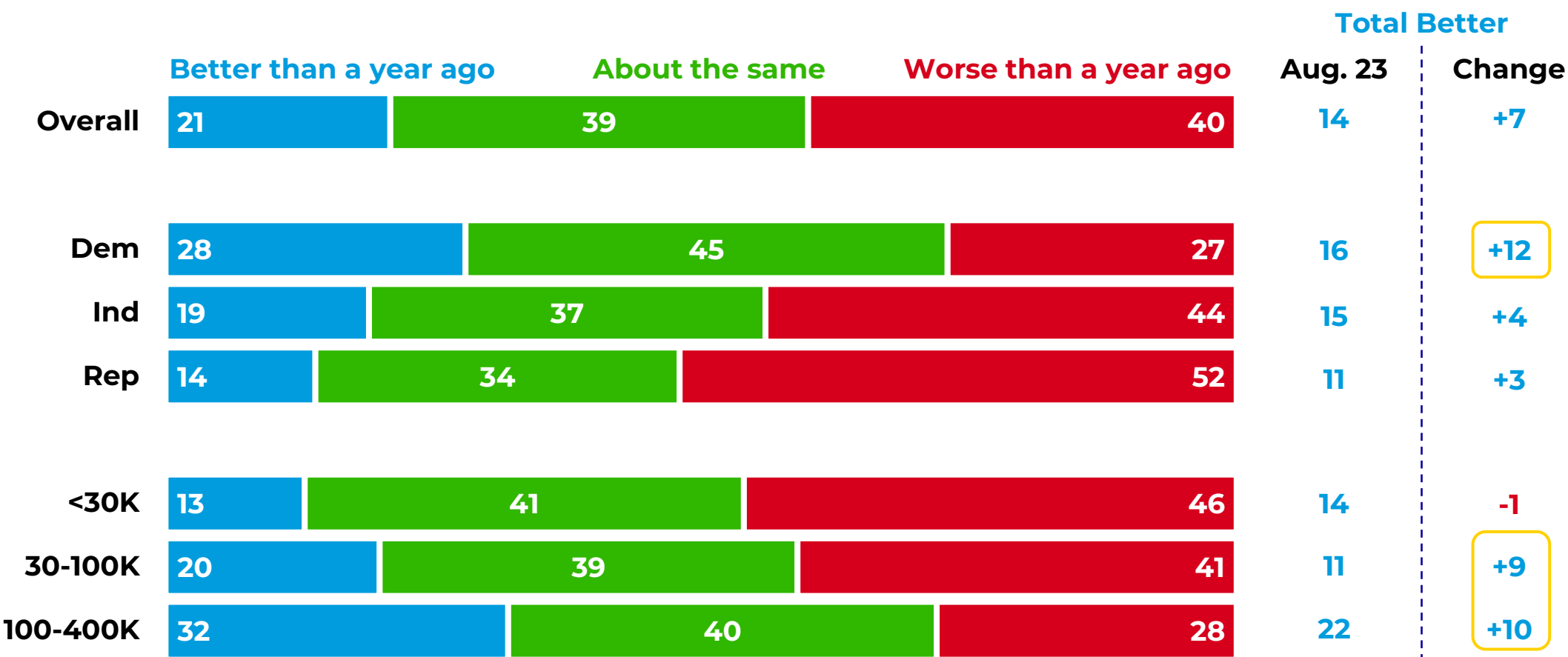
Since last summer, voters have grown less concerned about their personal finances, particularly voters of color and non-Republicans

Personal financial situation: confident or concerned



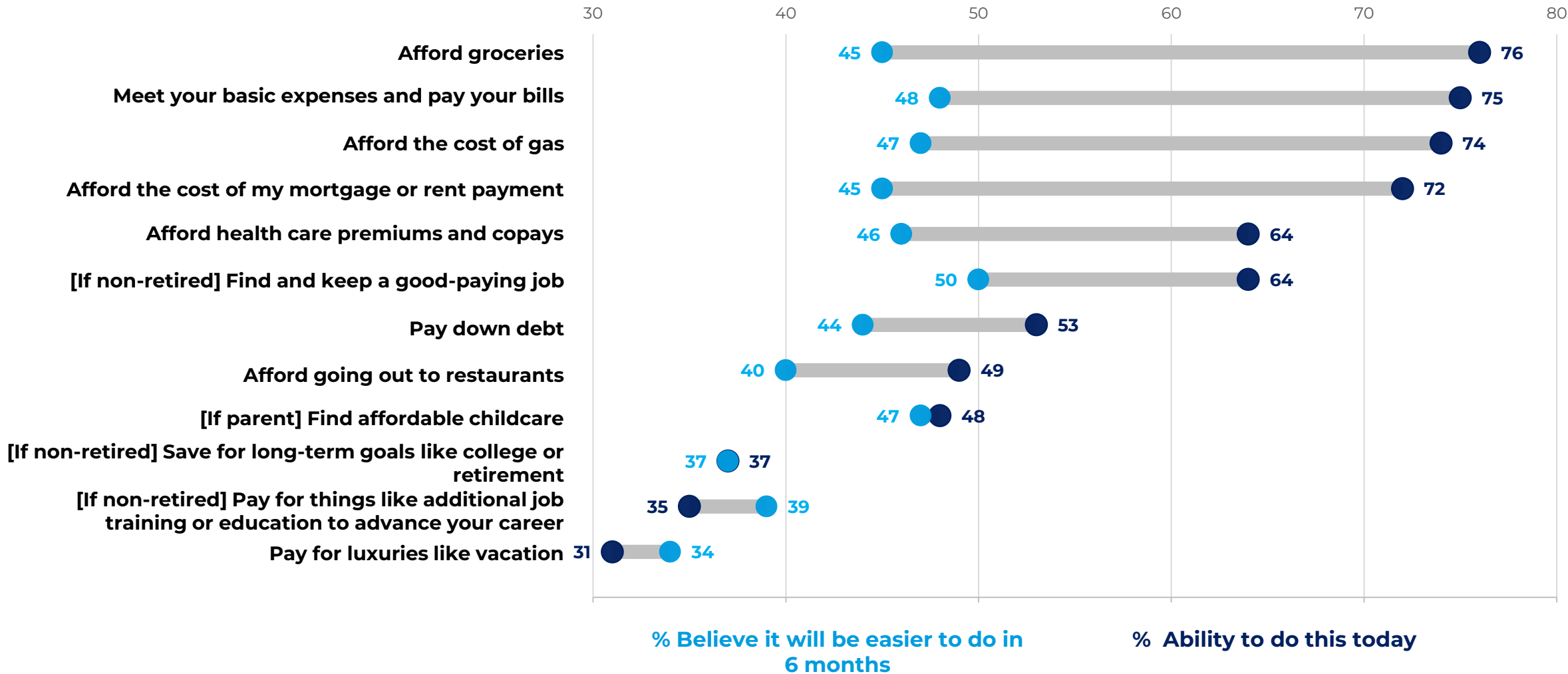
Pluralities still have a bleak outlook on their personal finances, but there has been notable improvement

Personal finances today vs. a year ago



Large shares of voters, though not majorities, say things will become easier in the future. Today, meeting basic expenses & affording necessities are within reach for most, but paying down debt and extra funds to save, eat out, & go on vacation are less attainable

Ability to do this today vs. easier or harder to do in 6 months

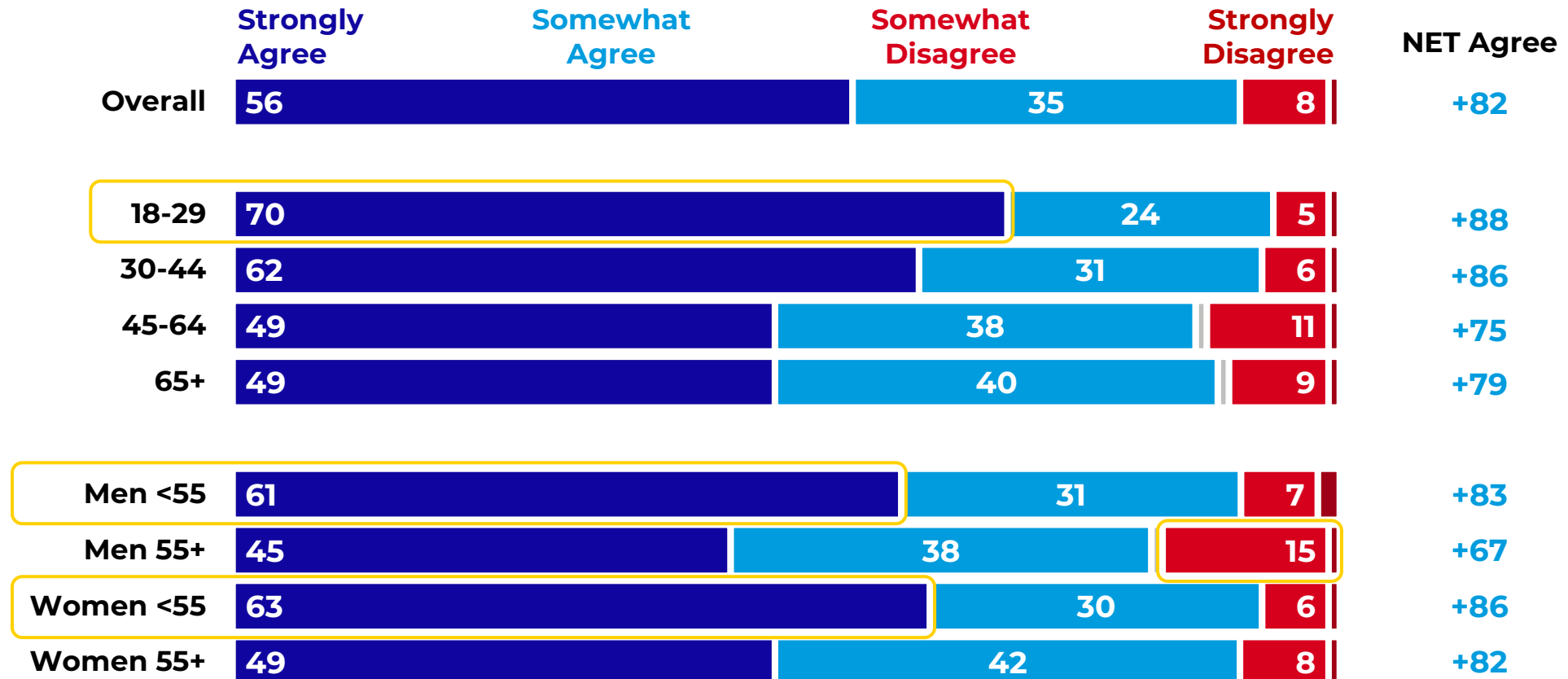




Generational Divide

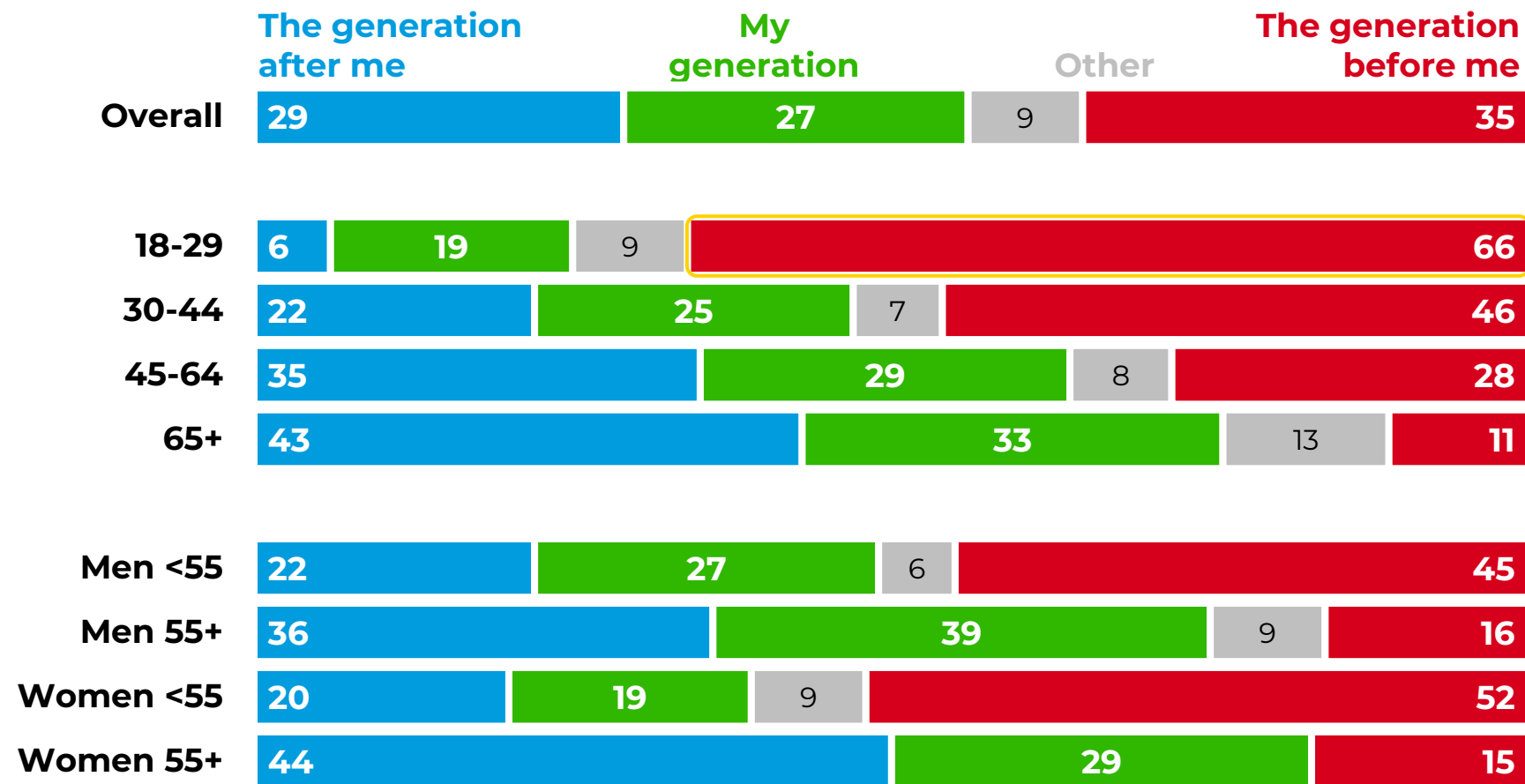
Nearly all believe that young people today face more financial hardships than previous generations – intensity is incredibly high among younger voters; Older men most likely to reject this idea

Do you agree or disagree with the statement: *Things are financially harder for younger people starting off today than they were for previous generations*



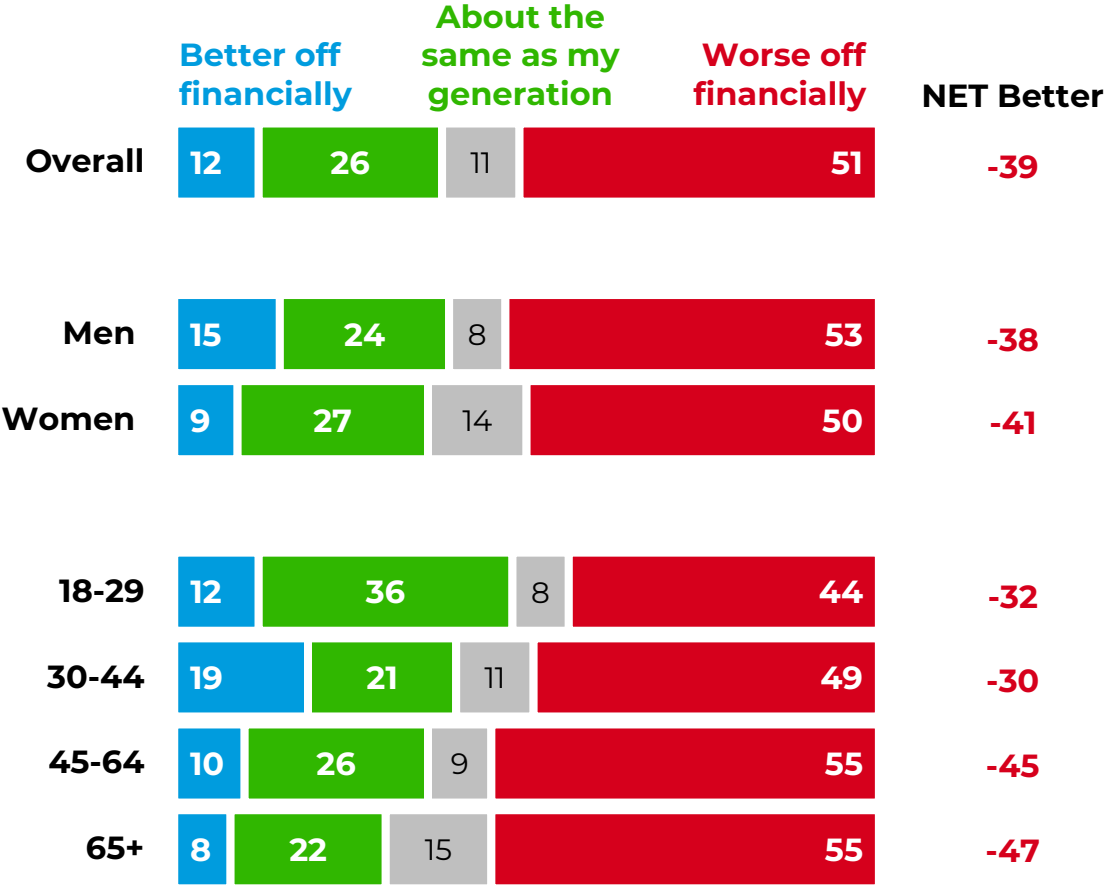
Understandably, age correlates with the generation voters hold most responsible for today's economic conditions, though across the board majorities point the finger at other generations

Which generation is most responsible for economic conditions today?

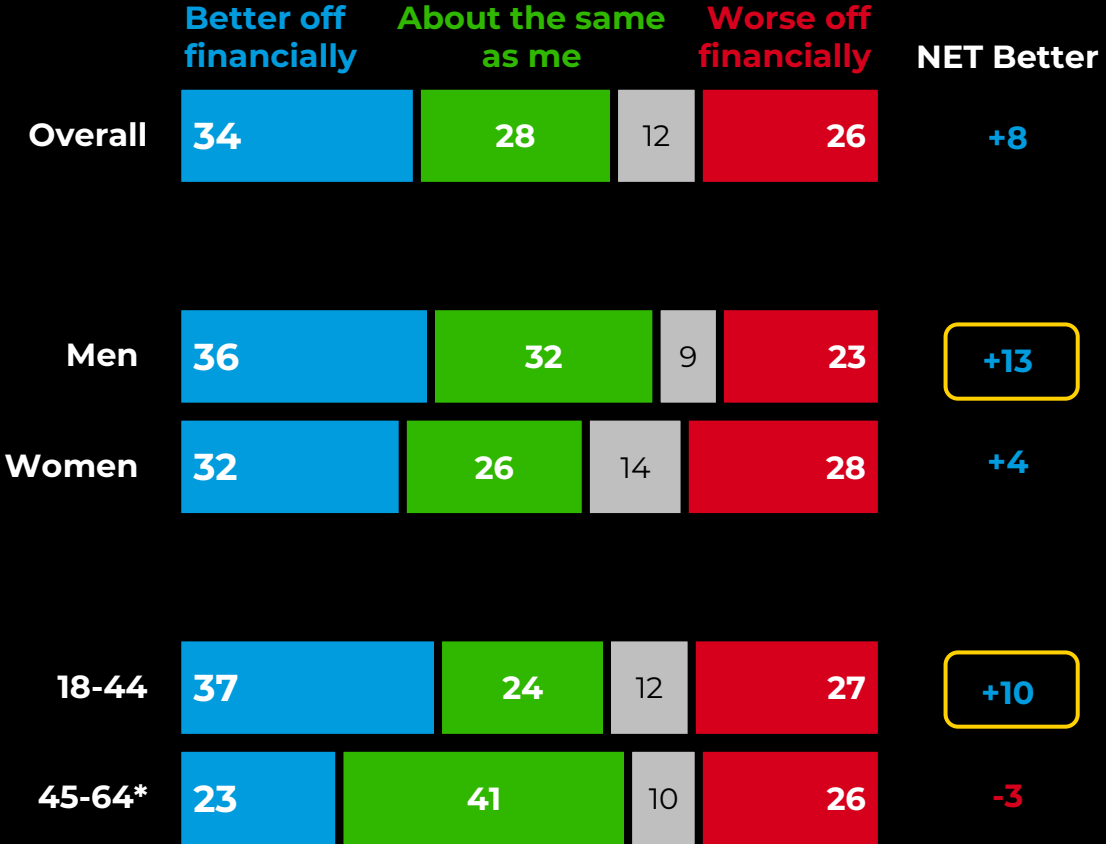


No matter their age, voters believe that the next generation will be worse off. Parents, however, don't share this negativity when it comes to *their own* children's future

Do you think the next generation will be...

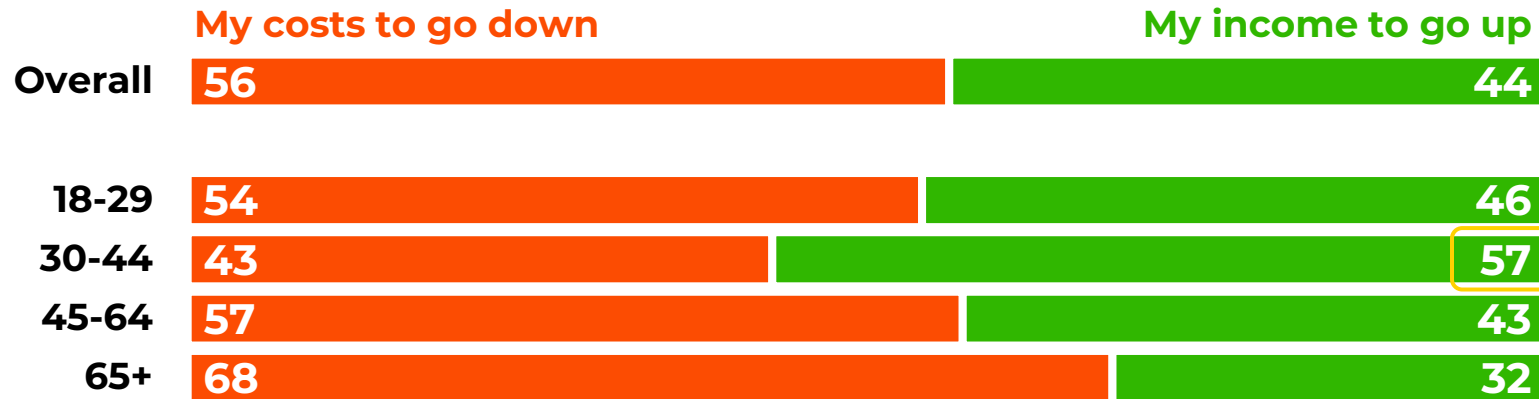


[If parent of child under 18] Do you think your children will be better off financially than you?

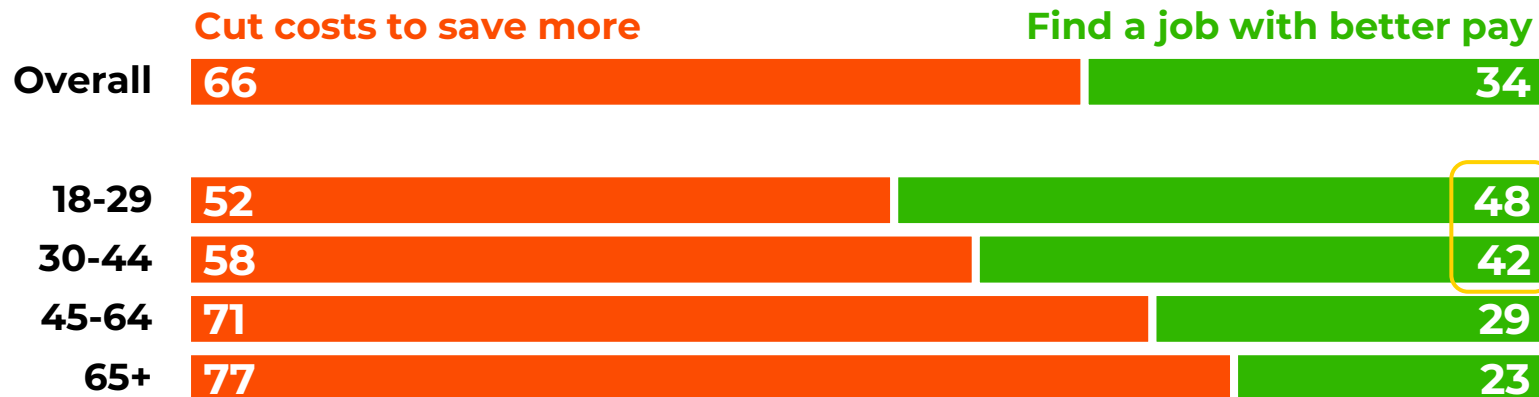


Age plays a big role in one's preferences and beliefs towards cutting costs vs. seeking higher incomes

When you think about your economic situation, would you prefer...

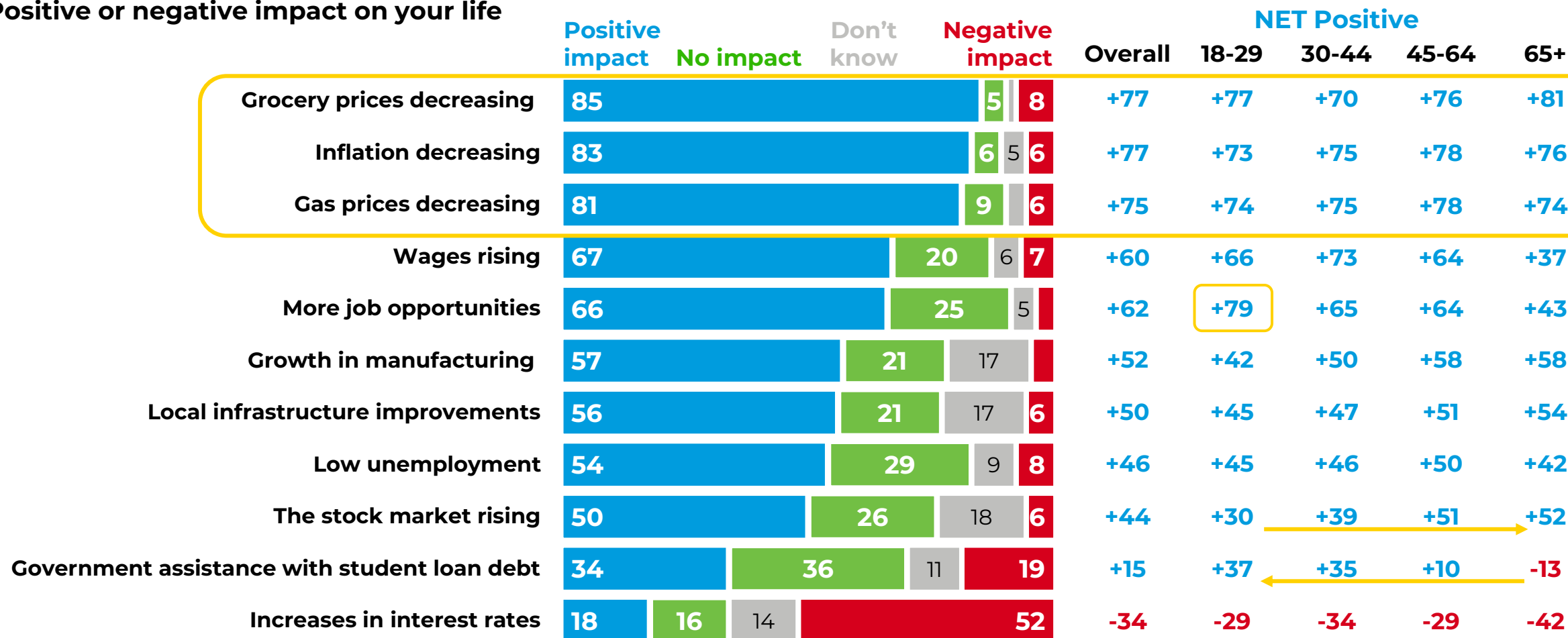


What's the best way to get ahead financially?



Voters continue to say that lowering costs for everyday items will have the largest impact on their lives; younger voters see the most positive impacts coming from job opportunities

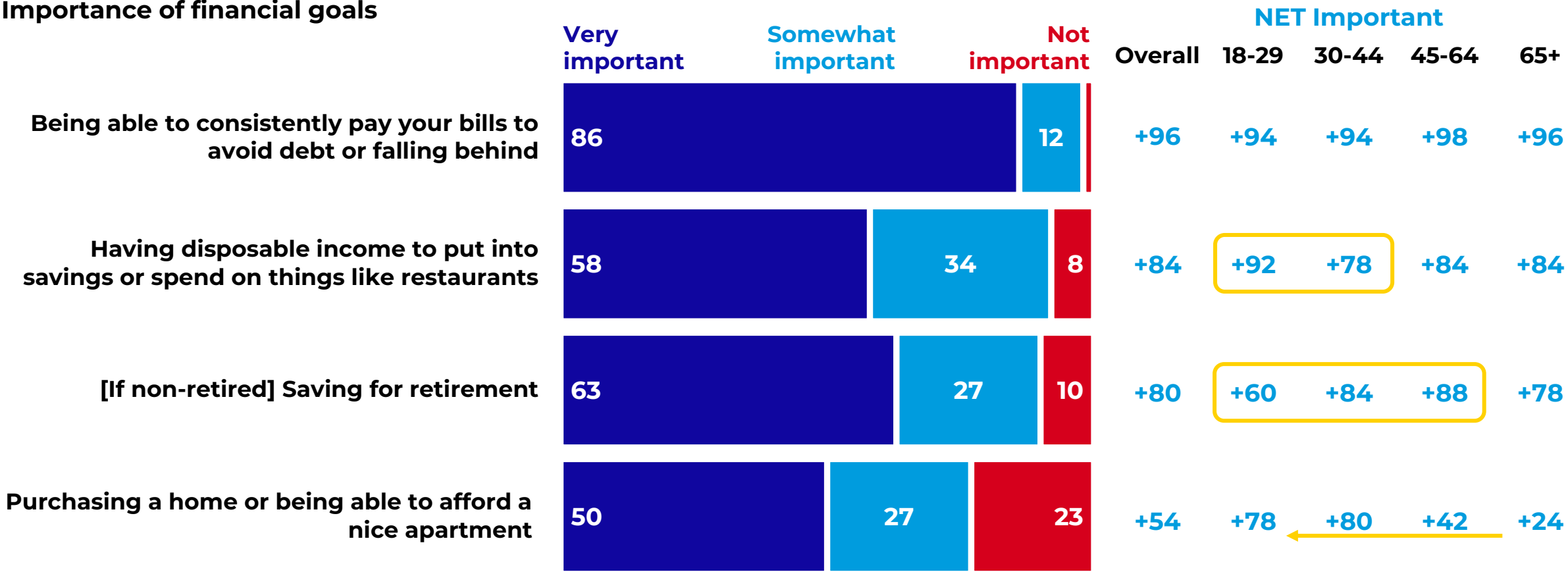
Positive or negative impact on your life

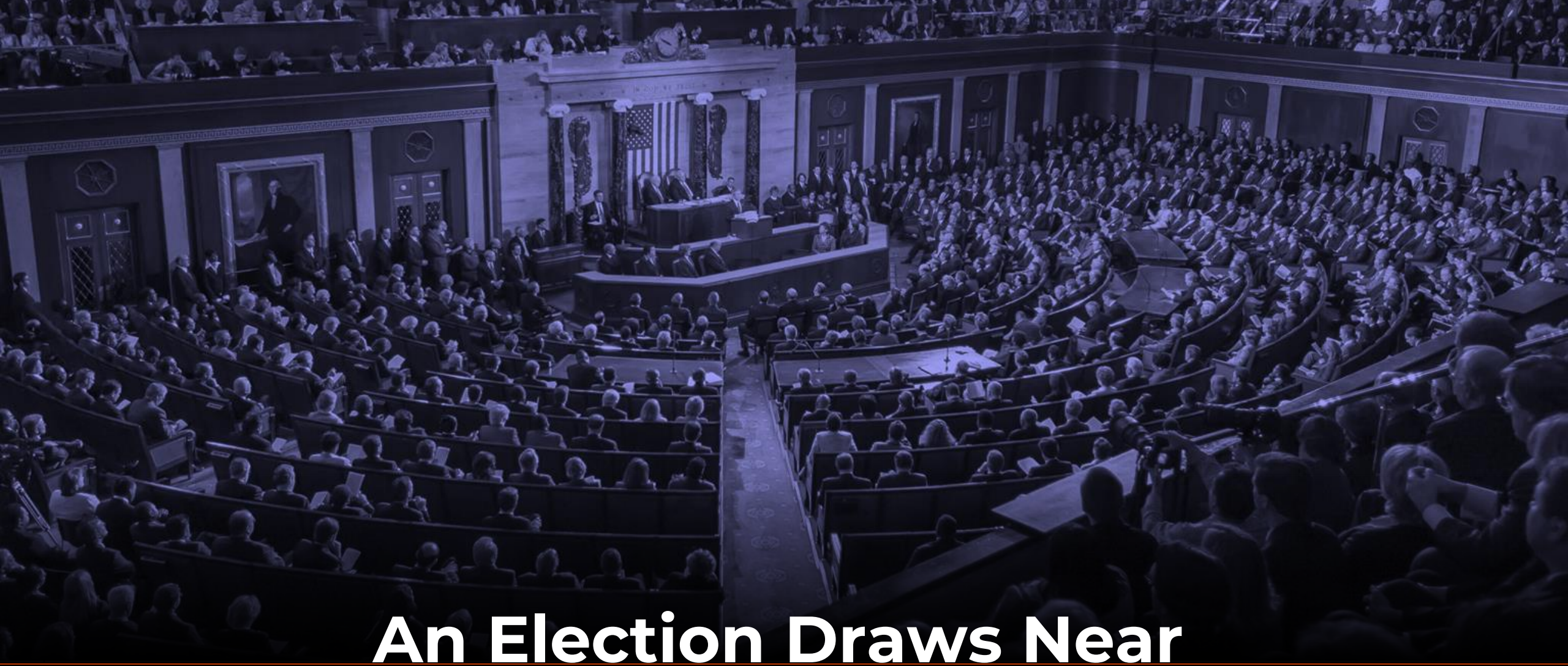


In our August 2023 poll, decreasing grocery prices (84% positive impact), inflation (81%) and gas prices (80%) were the top performing items that voters believe will have the biggest positive impact on their lives.

Voters prioritize having savings or go ability to out to restaurants more than they prioritize buying a home

Importance of financial goals

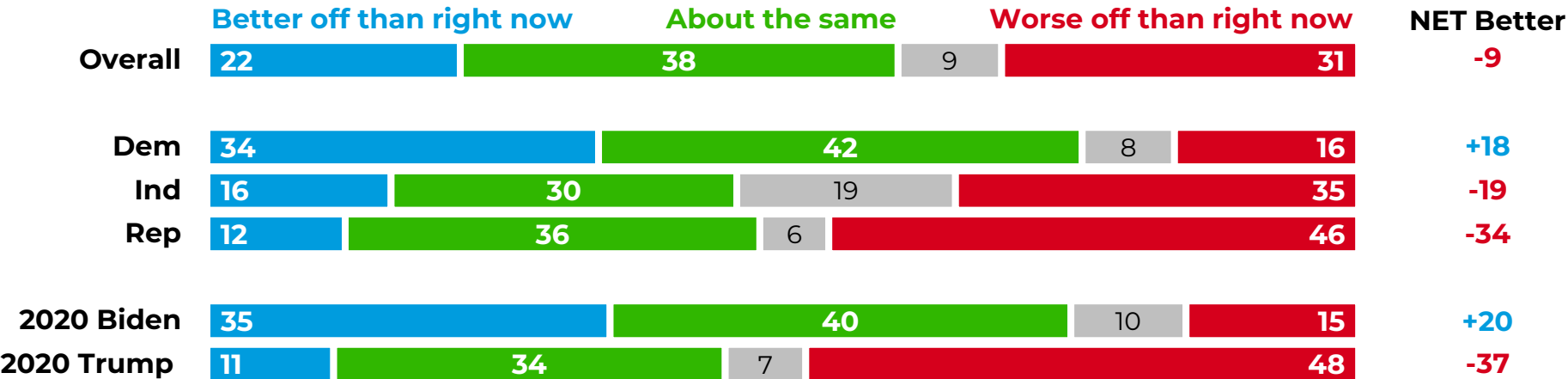




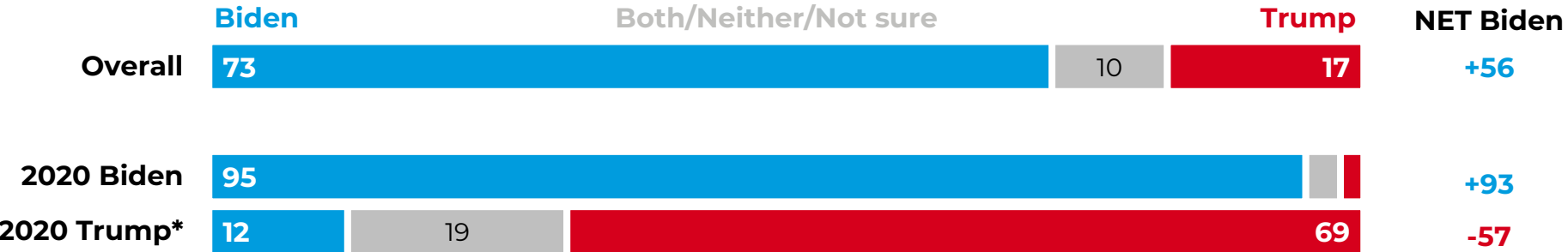
An Election Draws Near

Partisanship fuels what voters predict the economy will look like during peak campaign season; Biden 2020 voters predict a stronger economy this fall and overwhelmingly give him the credit

U.S. economy in 6 months

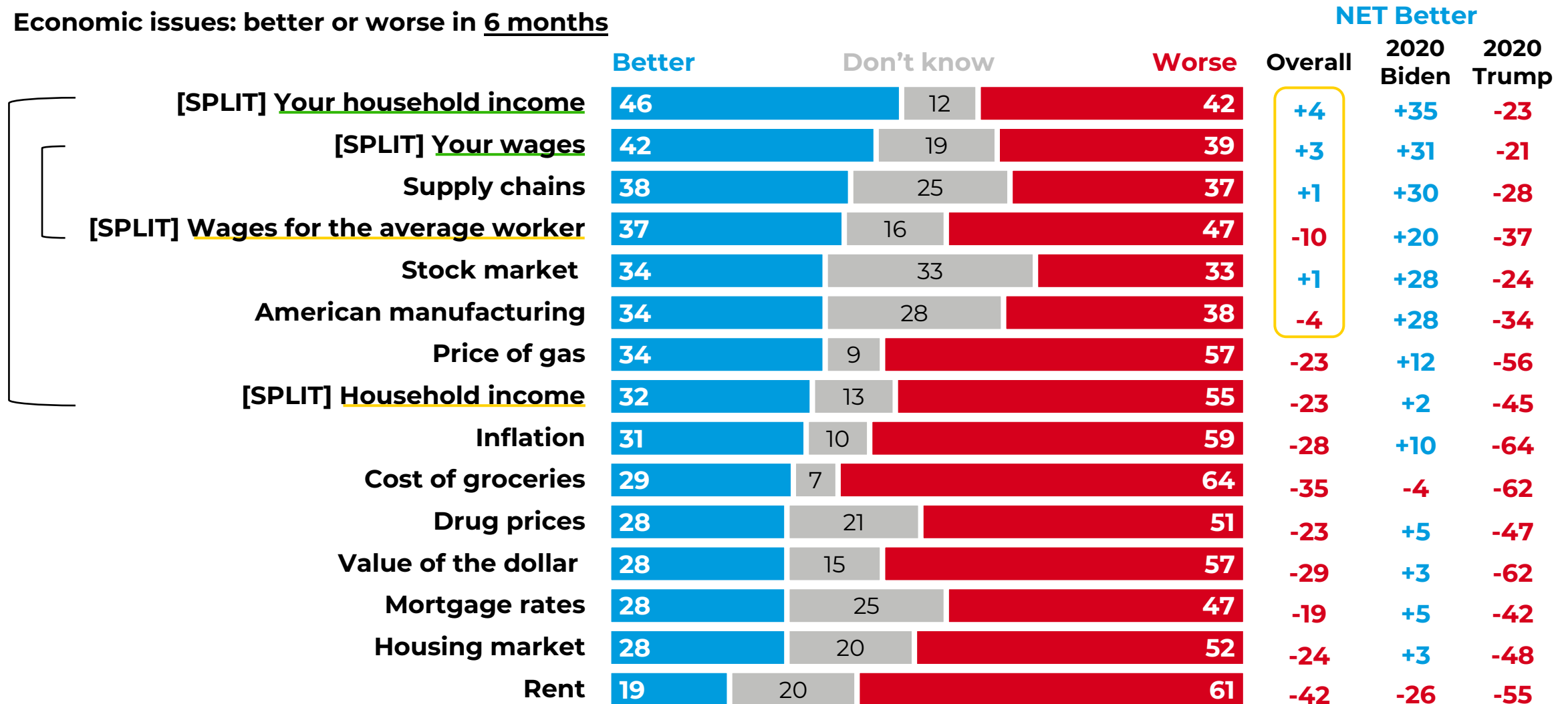


[If better off] Do you give Joe Biden or Donald Trump more credit for a better economy in 6 months?



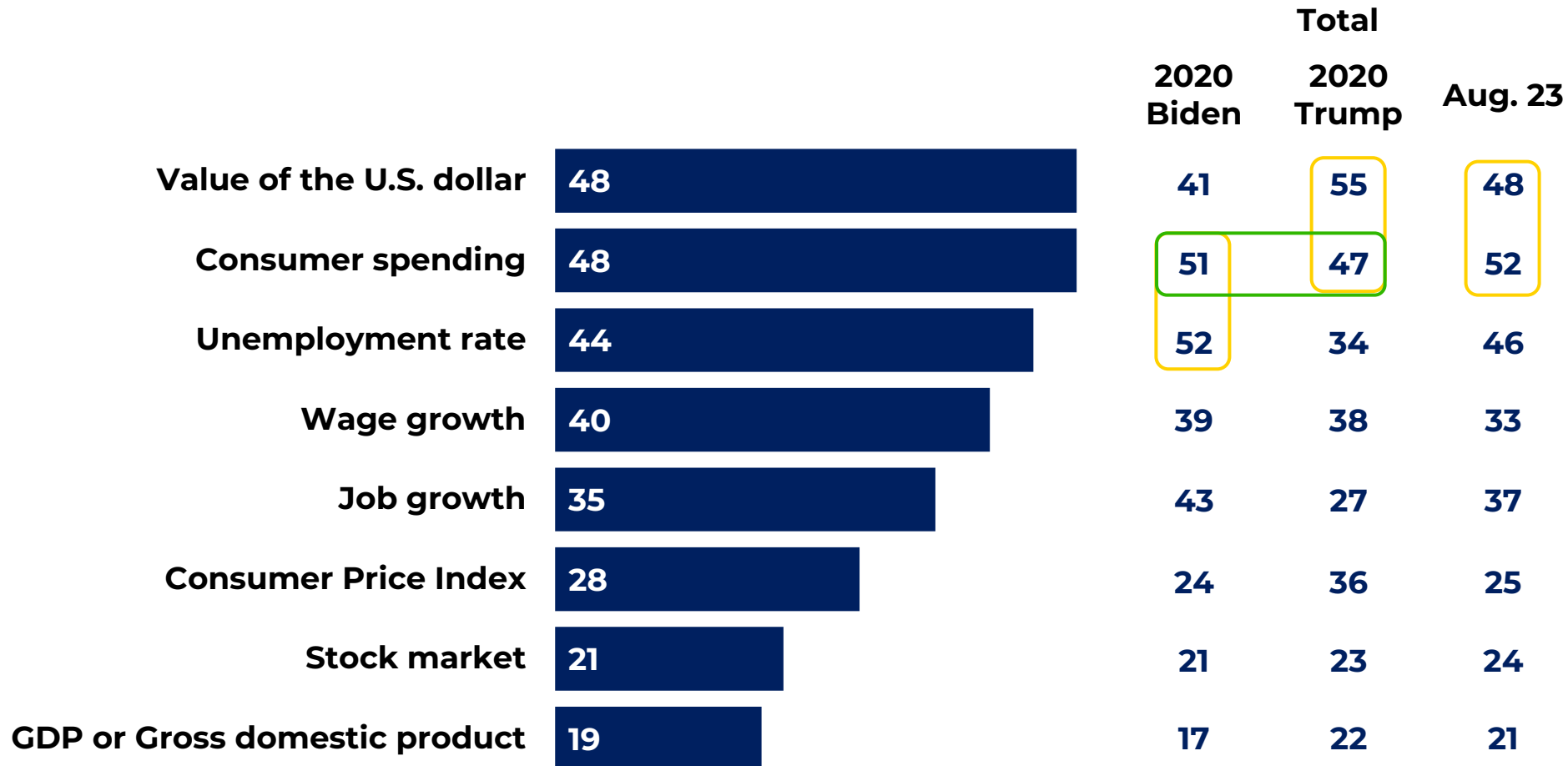
Across a range of issues, Biden's base is more optimistic, Trump's pessimistic. Voters overall are squarely in the middle and foresee a better personal outlook when compared to the nation as a whole

Economic issues: better or worse in 6 months



Despite partisan divide elsewhere, both Biden and Trump 2020 voters agree that consumer spending is one of the best ways to judge our economy

Best ways to judge how the economy is doing today (top three)



What It Means

- **There are signs that perceptions are improving, but voters are uncertain about what comes next.** Across many metrics, voters are less pessimistic about the economy and their personal finances overall. Though, we have yet to turn the corner completely and many voters still foresee a worsening economy in the coming months.
- **There is a real generational divide that influences what many desire in today's economy.** Everyone agrees that things are harder for today's young Americans than previous generations, which is why young voters in particular place a premium on opportunities for economic mobility, like job opportunities. For older Americans, the focus is much more on maintaining their quality of life and navigating the rising cost of living.
- **During the height of election season, the economy is and isn't really about the economy.** How one voted in 2020 largely influences how they judge the economy today and where they believe the economy is headed by this fall. In many ways the two voting blocs (Biden 2020 and Trump 2020 voters) perceive entirely different realities when it comes to the economy.

About this study

Global Strategy Group's *Eye on the Economy* research series – now in its fourth year – explores voters' ever-changing perceptions of the economy, personal financial challenges, and the government's impact in the eyes of voters.

GSG's *Eye on the Economy* reports are available at: gsgpolitical.com/eye-on-the-economy

Methodology

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among **1,003 registered voters nationwide between March 4 – 7, 2024** and has a confidence interval of +/- 3.1%. Margin of error on subgroups is greater.

The survey was conducted online, recruiting respondents from a leading opt-in panel vendor.

Thank You

We are interested in your feedback! Please send questions or comments to:



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