



# THE ROCKY Mountaineer

July 2021, Issue 5

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

- **COLORADO VOTERS GIVE DEMOCRATS STRONG RATINGS AND CONTINUE TO TRUST THEM ON THE BIG ISSUES**
- **THE DEMOCRATS' LEGISLATIVE SESSION EARNS HIGH MARKS FROM VOTERS, WHO REJECT GOP CHARGES OF OVERREACH**
- **DEMOCRATS WIN THE MESSAGE DEBATE WITH REPUBLICANS ON TAXES, TRANSPORTATION, AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



# Welcome Back to The Mountaineer

Welcome to *The Mountaineer*, a resource for progressives and a guide for advocates across the state of Colorado, published by Global Strategy Group and ProgressNow Colorado. Research presented in this publication is the result of a survey conducted between June 17 and June 23, 2021 among 800 registered voters in Colorado.

This fifth publication will focus on the political landscape and how voters view the parties, their reactions to policies passed by the Democratic majorities during the recent legislative session, and how to talk to voters about the major issues facing the state.

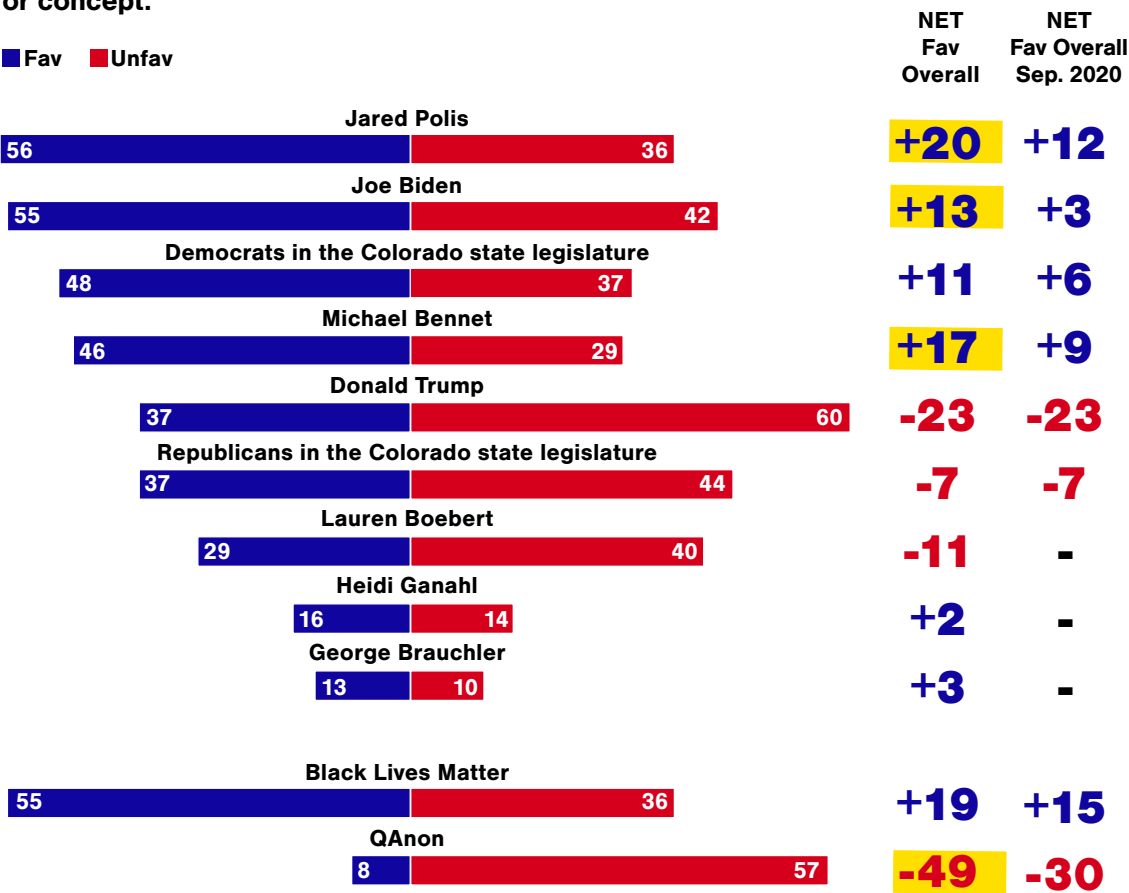
## In this issue

# Colorado voters continue to prefer Democrats and reject Republicans

**Democratic leaders at both the state and national level have seen their standing improve since last fall while Republicans remain underwater (especially Donald Trump).** President Biden, Governor Polis, and Senator Bennet all receive high marks personally, and voters approve of the jobs Biden and Polis are doing – particularly on handling the coronavirus pandemic, with Polis’ ratings on COVID returning to their May 2020 heights.

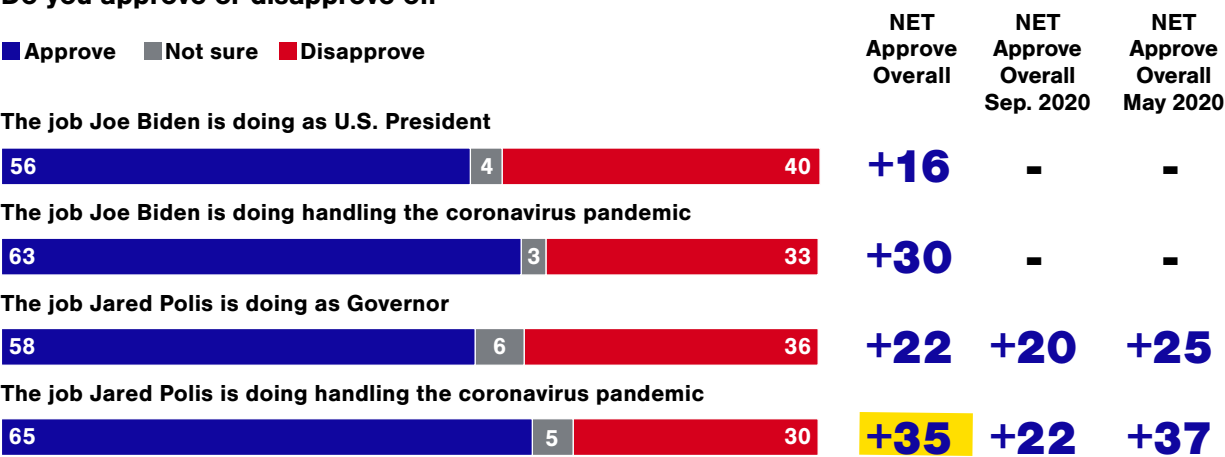
Please indicate whether you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each person, group, or concept.

Fav Unfav



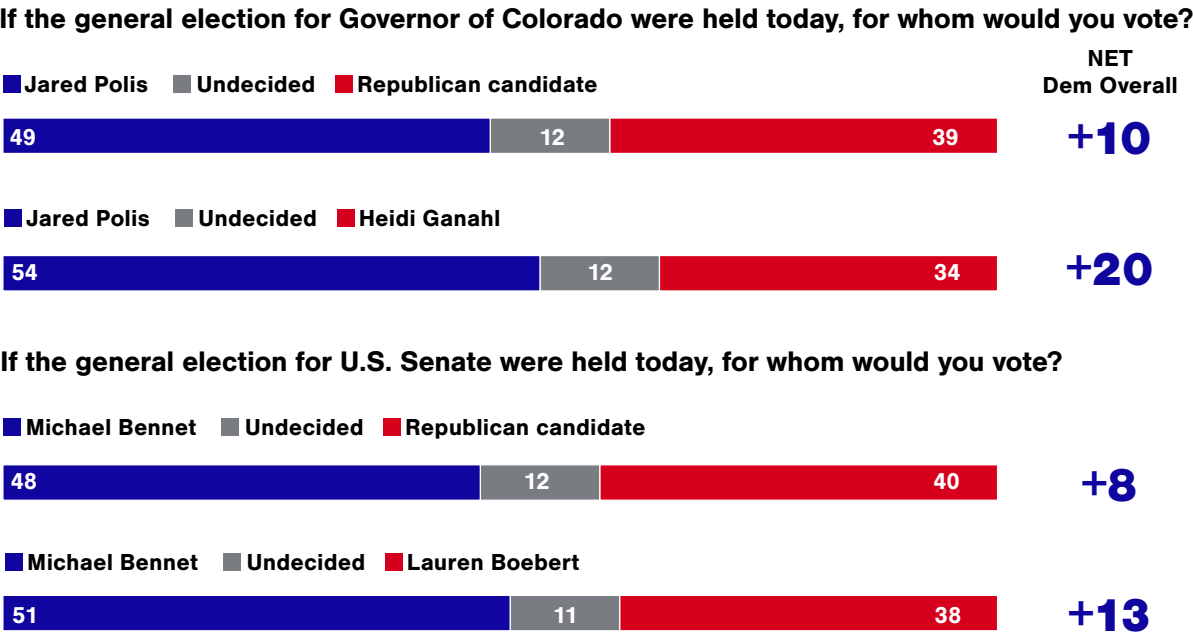
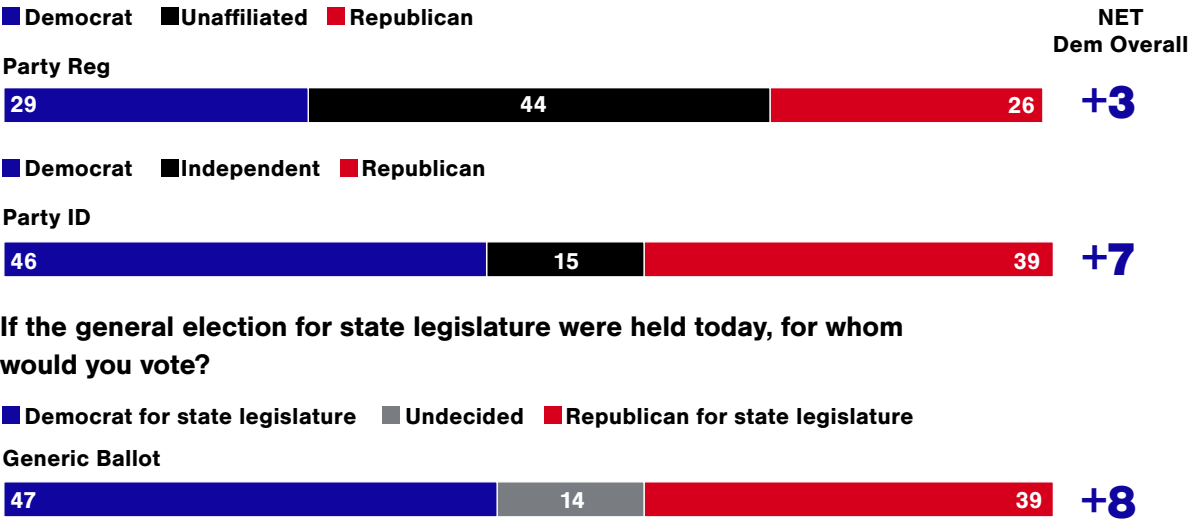
Do you approve or disapprove of:

Approve Not sure Disapprove



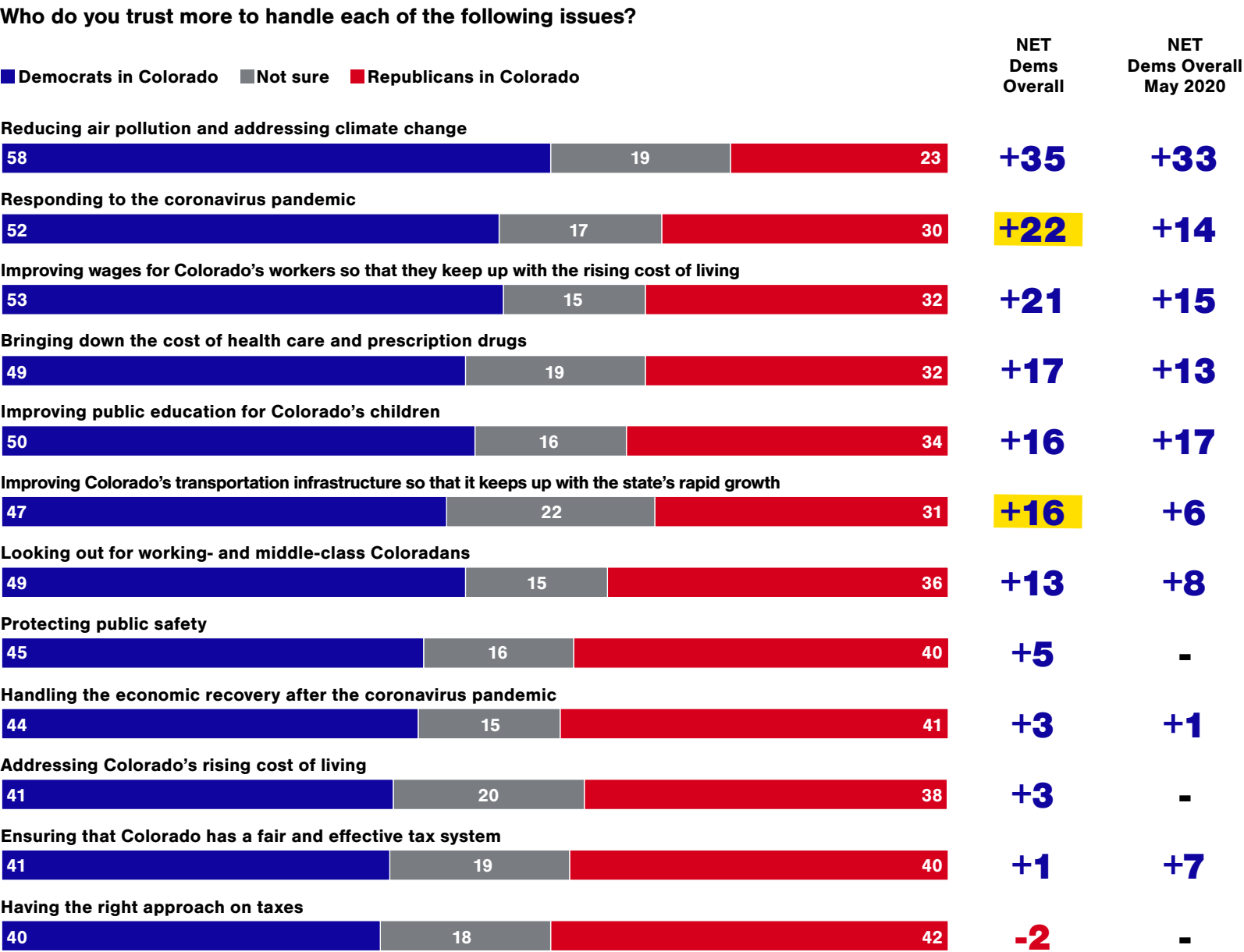
# Democrats enjoy a partisan advantage looking ahead to 2022

**Despite a plurality of voters being registered as unaffiliateds, the Colorado electorate leans Democratic on self-identifying partisanship** – which carries over into support for a generic Democrat for state legislature as well as for Polis and Bennet. Polis and Bennet both have solid leads against a generic opponent that expand in named matchups against Heidi Ganahl and Lauren Boebert, respectively.



# Voters trust Democrats to handle most issues facing Colorado

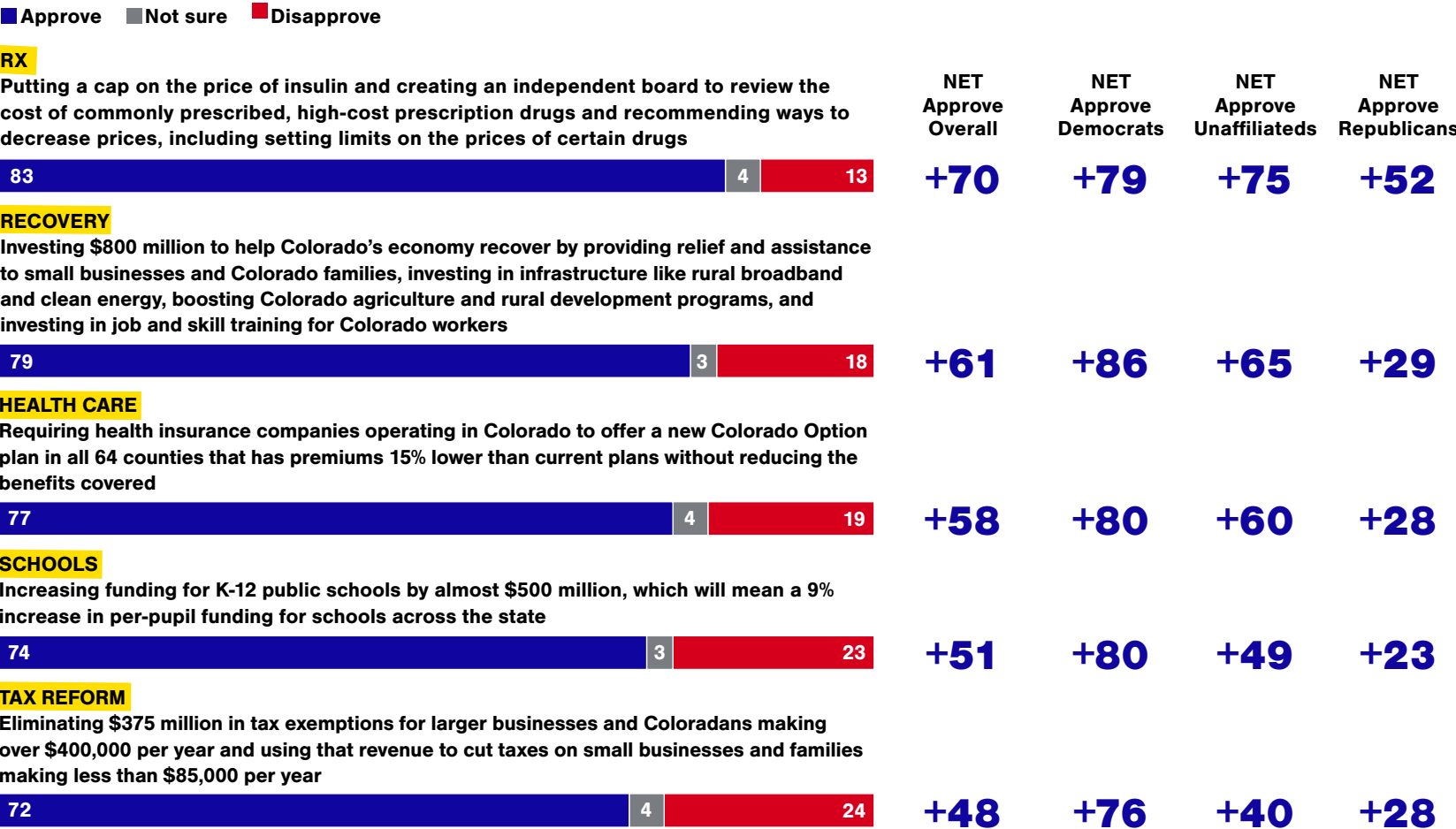
Democrats are more trusted than Republicans on nearly every issue tested, with their largest margins on climate issues, improving wages, and education. Republicans only earn near-draws on certain economic issues. The Democratic margin has expanded significantly since last year on responding to the pandemic (+22 now, up from +11 in September and +14 last May) and on improving the state’s transportation infrastructure (+16 now, up from +6 last May).



# Voters strongly approve of Democrats’ legislative accomplishments

**We tested 10 items passed by the Democratic majorities in the latest legislative session, including all of the biggest and most controversial pieces of legislation.** This test clearly framed the items as legislation passed by Governor Polis and Democrats in the state legislature and reminded voters that Democrats control both houses of the legislature and the governor’s office. Despite this partisan framing, every item tested earned support from at least two-thirds of Coloradans, including large majorities of unaffiliateds and, for most, majorities of Republicans – a rare accomplishment in these days of partisan polarization. Democrats’ efforts to lower the cost of prescription drugs are especially well-liked, with over eight in 10 approving and over half (57%) strongly approving. COVID recovery investments and the Colorado Option also rise to the top of the list, though every item tested gets very strong marks.

As you may know, the state legislature’s annual legislative session recently wrapped up and Democrats control the Governor’s office and both houses of the state legislature. Please indicate if you approve or disapprove of each piece of legislation that Governor Polis and Democrats in the state legislature passed into law.



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		■ Approve	■ Not sure	■ Disapprove					
PROPERTY TAXES						NET Approve Overall	NET Approve Democrats	NET Approve Unaffiliateds	NET Approve Republicans
Cutting property taxes on homes by \$200 million over the next two years while allowing school districts to raise more revenue for schools by increasing their rates to levels that have been previous approved by voters									
		71	6	23		+48	+64	+50	+23
CLIMATE									
Requiring power plants, factories, and the oil and gas industry to cut the carbon emissions that cause climate change so that the state can meet its target of reducing carbon emissions by at least 50% by 2030									
		70	3	27		+43	+89	+45	-19
CRIMINAL JUSTICE									
Restricting the use of chemical restraints such as ketamine, which resulted in the death of Elijah McClain, expanding parole programs for people who committed crimes when they were juveniles, and reforming sentencing guidelines for misdemeanor offenses									
		69	5	26		+43	+73	+48	+6
GUNS									
Expanding background checks on the sale or transfer of guns, allowing local governments to regulate the sale or possession of firearms, and creating a new state Office of Gun Violence Prevention to coordinate and promote efforts to reduce gun violence									
		66	3	31		+35	+78	+37	-19
TRANSPORTATION									
Investing \$5.4 billion over the next 10 years to improve Colorado’s roads and expand transit options to reduce traffic congestion, paid for by increasing fees on retail delivery and ride-sharing companies like Amazon and Uber, and creating a new fee on gasoline that will start at two cents per gallon and rise to eight cents by 2028									
		66	3	31		+35	+74	+32	-1

# Voters see the Democratic agenda as moving the state in the right direction and reject Republican claims of overreach

**Voters, including unaffiliateds, strongly approve of the Democratic agenda and describe it first and foremost**

as “progressive” but also use other enthusiastic adjectives to describe it like “positive,” “good,” “awesome,” “helpful,” “necessary,” “efficient,” “productive,” “proactive,” and “smart.” Combined, those responses far outweigh criticisms such as “socialist” and “expensive.” Perhaps more importantly, voters reject the Republican argument that Democrats pushed through a “radical” agenda that goes “too far, too fast,” instead agreeing that Democrats “laid the groundwork for a more prosperous future for regular Coloradans.”

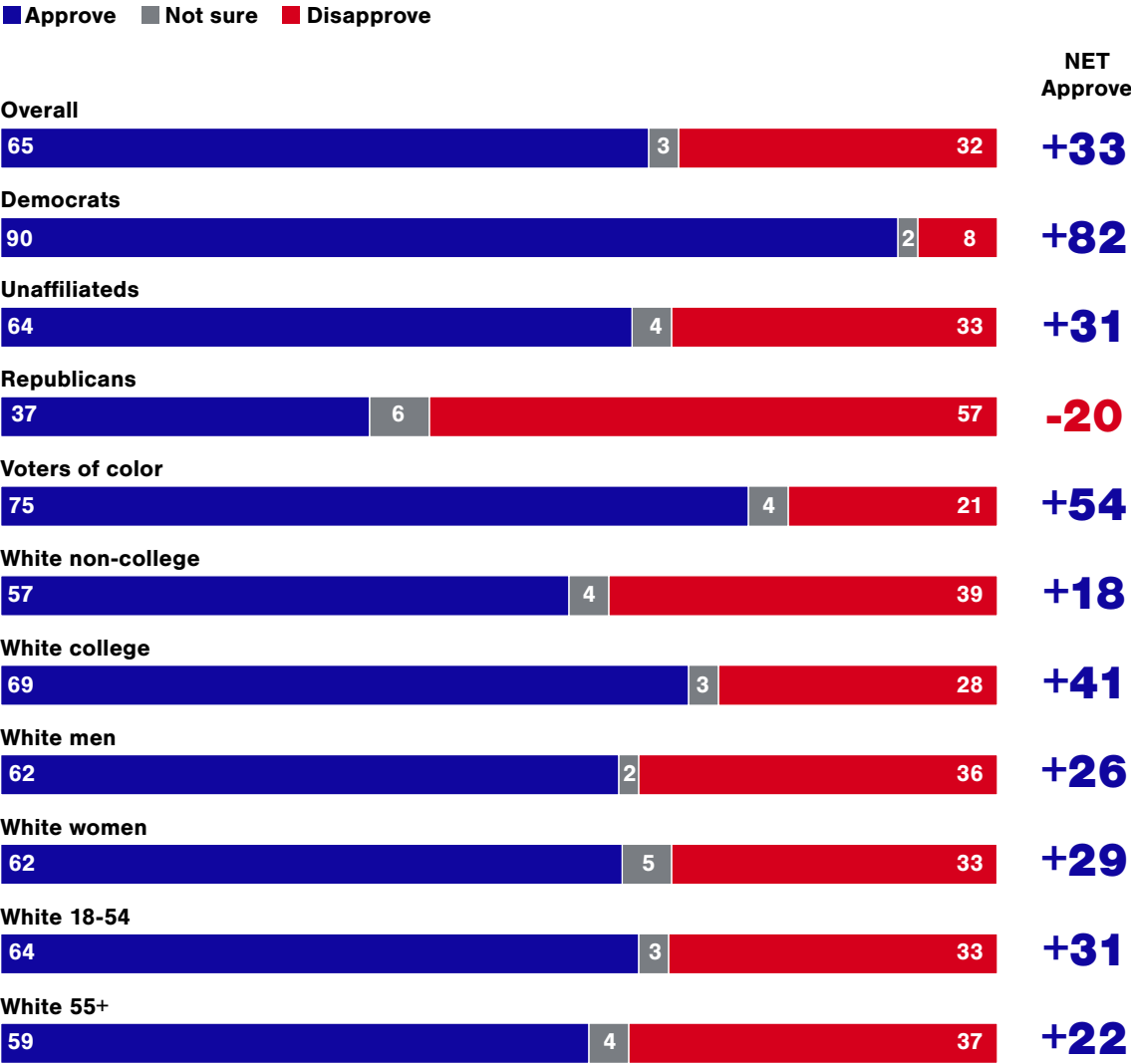
**Thinking about all of this legislation as a whole, what one word would you use to describe the legislation that Governor Polis and Democrats in the legislature passed during this session?**

**With “progressive” removed to better show secondary items**

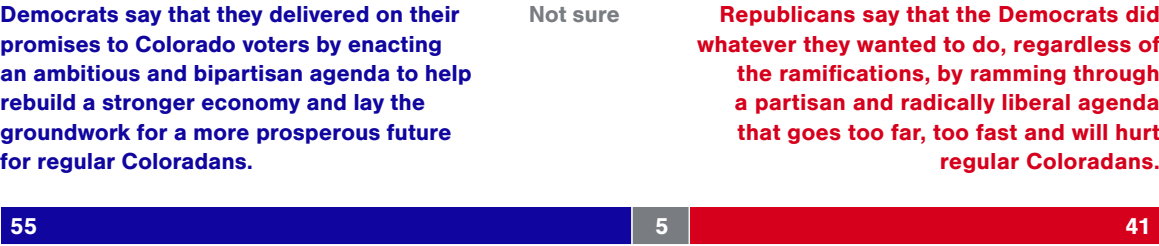




Thinking about all of this legislation as a whole, do you approve or disapprove of the legislation passed by Governor Polis and Democrats in the state legislature during this legislative session?



Which of the following two statements do you agree with more, even if neither is exactly right?



# Democratic arguments defeat GOP attacks on taxes, transportation, and criminal justice

We tested balanced messaging debates on three of the hottest-button issues in Colorado politics: taxes, transportation, and criminal justice – using Republican’s actual language on the issues when possible. Democrats not only won each of these debates by between 13 and 15 points, but the simulated debate moved undecided voters on the generic legislative ballot into the Democrats’ camp and more than doubled the Democratic lead among unaffiliated voters.

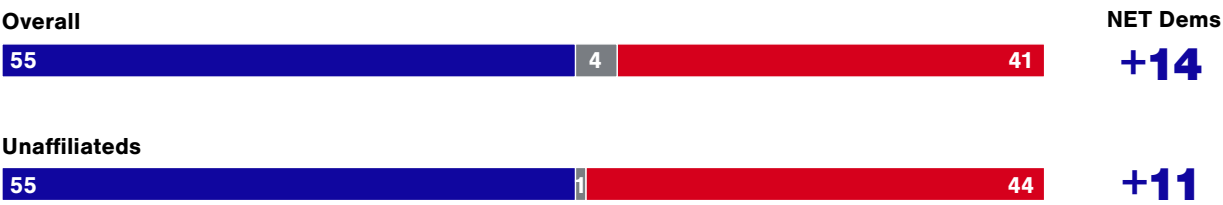
Democratic arguments about criminal justice reform defeated Republican attacks that Democrats had pushed through “pro-criminal laws” by similar margins whether they explicitly rejected calls to defund the police or not. Interestingly, the version with the explicit rejection of defunding the police performed significantly better with voters of color and somewhat better with unaffiliateds, while the version that, instead, focused on “interrupting the pipeline for people of color who commit misdemeanors” did slightly better with whites and Republicans.

Please indicate which statement about the Democrats’ approach to taxes you find to be more convincing, even if neither is perfect.

Democrats say that they took important steps to fix Colorado’s broken tax system by eliminating loopholes that allowed big corporations and the wealthiest Coloradans to avoid paying their fair share while reducing property taxes and cutting taxes on the small businesses and working families that drive our economy.

Not sure

Republicans say that the Democrats rammed through billions in tax increases, including hiking the gas tax, allowing local governments to hike property taxes and hitting Colorado businesses with massive tax hikes that will force companies to re-locate and put undue hardship on small businesses who drive our economy.

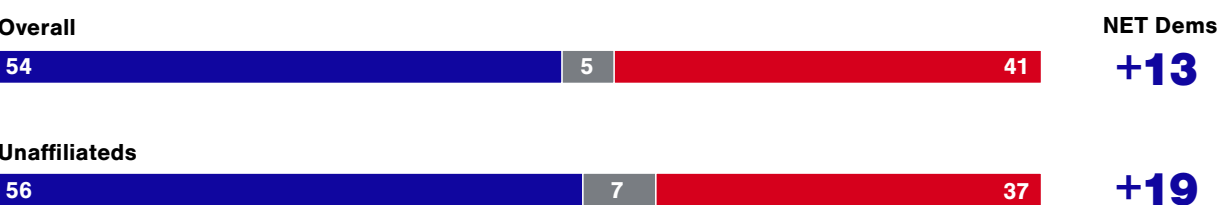


Please indicate which statement about the Democrats’ transportation plan you find to be more convincing, even if neither is perfect.

Democrats say that after decades of population growth yet stagnant funding, Colorado’s roads are in desperate need of repair, modernization, and expansion – and that’s holding our economy back. That’s why they passed a groundbreaking and bipartisan transportation plan that will modernize our roads, reduce traffic, create 27,000 good-paying jobs, and boost long-term economic growth by asking those who use our roads more to pay their fair share.

Not sure

Republicans say that the Democrats pulled an end-run around the state’s constitution by raising the gas tax without getting approval from voters. The Democrats’ gas tax hike, along with the new taxes that Coloradans will pay every time they use Uber or Lyft or order something from Amazon, will hit every single Colorado family and business at the exact worst time – when families are struggling with the rising cost of living and the state is recovering from the recession.



Please indicate which statement about **the Democrats’ approach to criminal justice** you find to be more convincing, even if neither is perfect.

Democrats say they are committed to keeping our communities safe while also making our criminal justice system fairer for all Coloradans. That’s why they passed common-sense reforms to limit the use of the deadly chemicals that killed Elijah McClain, prevent police brutality, and increase accountability, **while continuing to make sure that law enforcement has the resources they need by rejecting calls to defund the police.**

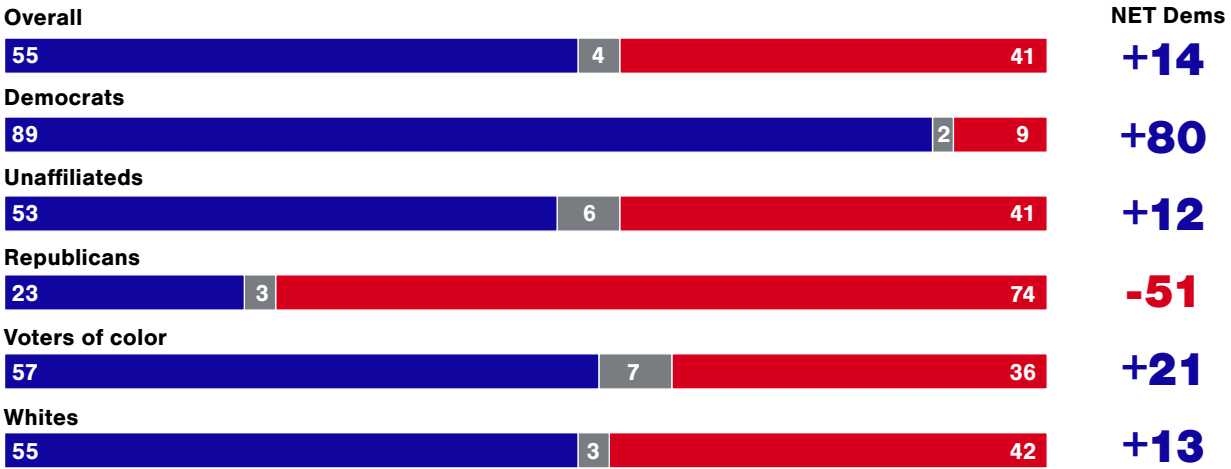
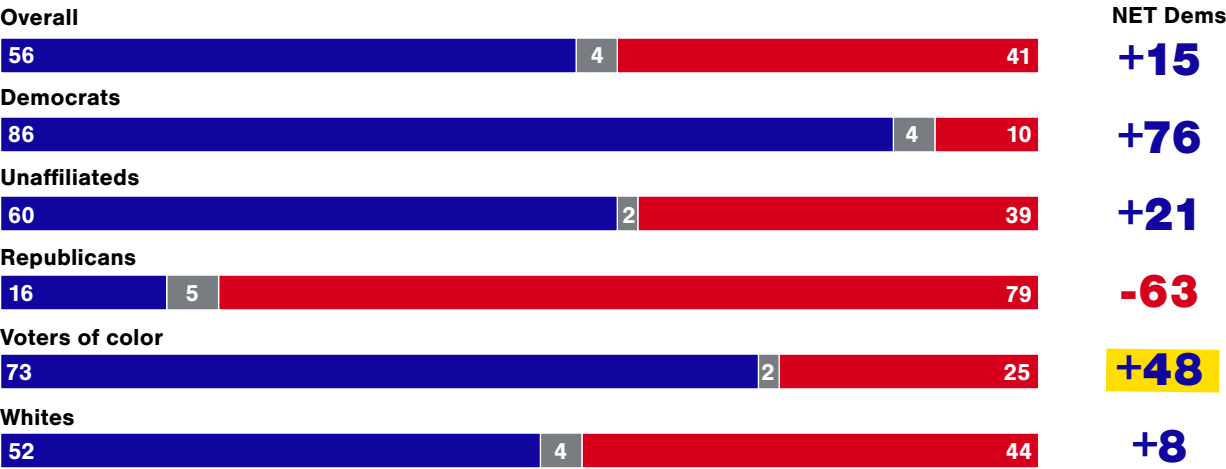
Not sure

Republicans say that the Democrats have pushed through pro-criminal laws that will make Coloradans less safe by tying police officers’ hands and giving criminals a free pass. The Democrats are beholden to their radical base that wants to defund the police, so it’s no surprise that they tied the hands of police and reduced penalties for criminals who commit violent felonies like rape, aggravated robbery, and murder.

Democrats say they are committed to keeping our communities safe while also making our criminal justice system safer and fairer for all Coloradans. That’s why they passed common-sense reforms to limit the use of the kinds of deadly chemicals that killed Elijah McClain, prevent police brutality, increase police accountability, and **interrupt the pipeline to prison for people of color who commit misdemeanors.**

Not sure

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Now that you’ve read more about these issues, once again, if the general election for state legislature were held today, for whom would you vote?

■ Democrat for state legislature   ■ Undecided   ■ Republican for state legislature



## About The Mountaineer

**Colorado has a long history as a leader in developing and implementing ground-breaking progressive policy, but as the state's leaders continue to build on this progressive tradition, they also face unique challenges that range from the state's TABOR amendment to its rapid growth.**

*The Mountaineer* is designed to act as a consistent, flexible, and responsive tool to help inform the unique political and policy debates in Colorado. By conducting methodologically sound research and providing reliable guidance to inform allies, elected leaders, and the press, The Mountaineer will help progressive leaders and communicators shape the debate on the issues that matter most to Coloradans.

## About the Study

Global Strategy Group conducted a public opinion survey among a sample of 800 registered voters in Colorado June 17-June 23, 2021. The survey was conducted over the phone and online, with online respondents recruited from multiple opt-in online panel vendors. Respondents were verified against a voter file, and special care was taken to ensure the demographic composition of our sample matched that of Colorado's registered voter population across a variety of demographic variables including party registration, race, gender, age, education, region, and population density.

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