



# Good Governance Survey

Professor Cathy J. Cohen and Devin Green

University of Chicago

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# GenForward Survey

- Focus on young adults, 18-42
- Survey with oversample of young adults of color
- Nationally representative sample of over 3,000
- Able to disaggregate by race, ethnicity, gender, party id and region
- Regular schedule allows us to be current and topical
- Rooted in the experiences of young adults of color
- Accurate data about young adults' preferences and actions
- Data for journalists, activists and academics

# Why Young Adults?

- Largest share of workforce and eligible voters
- Most racially and ethnically diverse generation
- Voices and perspectives absent from policy and political debates
- At the center of many national issues—BIPOC communities
- This is what democracy looks like—important part of the public

# Good Governance Survey

- Focus on young adults, 18-42, in six midwestern states:
  - 3,000 respondents from Midwest → 4093
  - National sample of 1,000 respondents → 5390
- What do young adults think about:
  - their financial outlook
  - issues of affordability
  - democracy
  - The components of good governance
  - authoritarian threat
  - Power
  - Issue of the day
  - Trust in institutions
- Data concerns:
  - Smaller Ns in MN, IN, WI
  - Racial and other forms of disaggregation limited
  - Margin of error increases with smaller Ns

# Summary:

## Young adults:

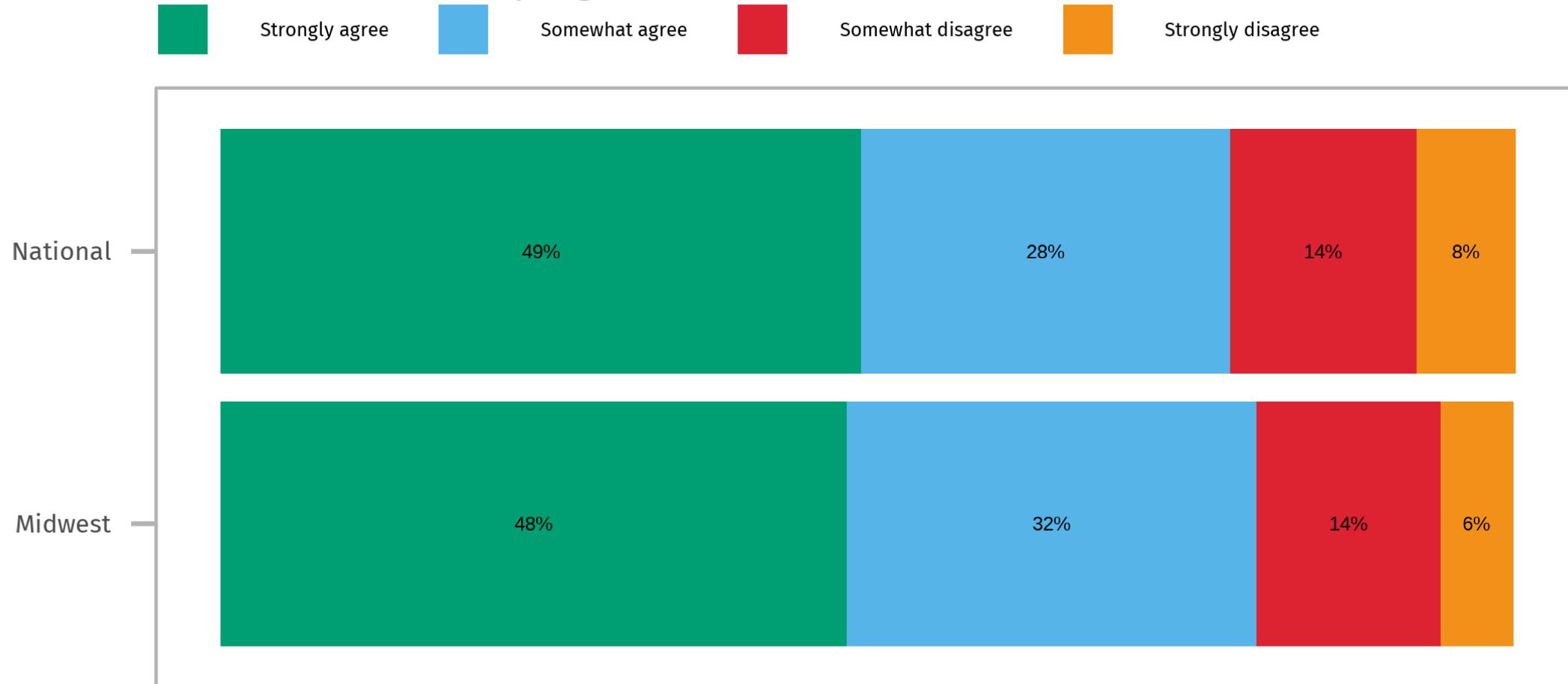
- Think our democracy is in crisis, but see it as the preferable governing system
- Believe in ideals of governance, but don't see them implemented today
- Believe economic issues to be some of the most important they and the country confront
- Are concerned about affordability issues, especially housing affordability
- Refuse to separate affordability issues from the working of a fully-functioning democracy
- Want the government to provide resources to those in need and in many cases to everyone
- Are distrustful of many democratic institutions, including ICE, and believe many have too much power

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- Immigration and Customs Enforcement

# Good governance

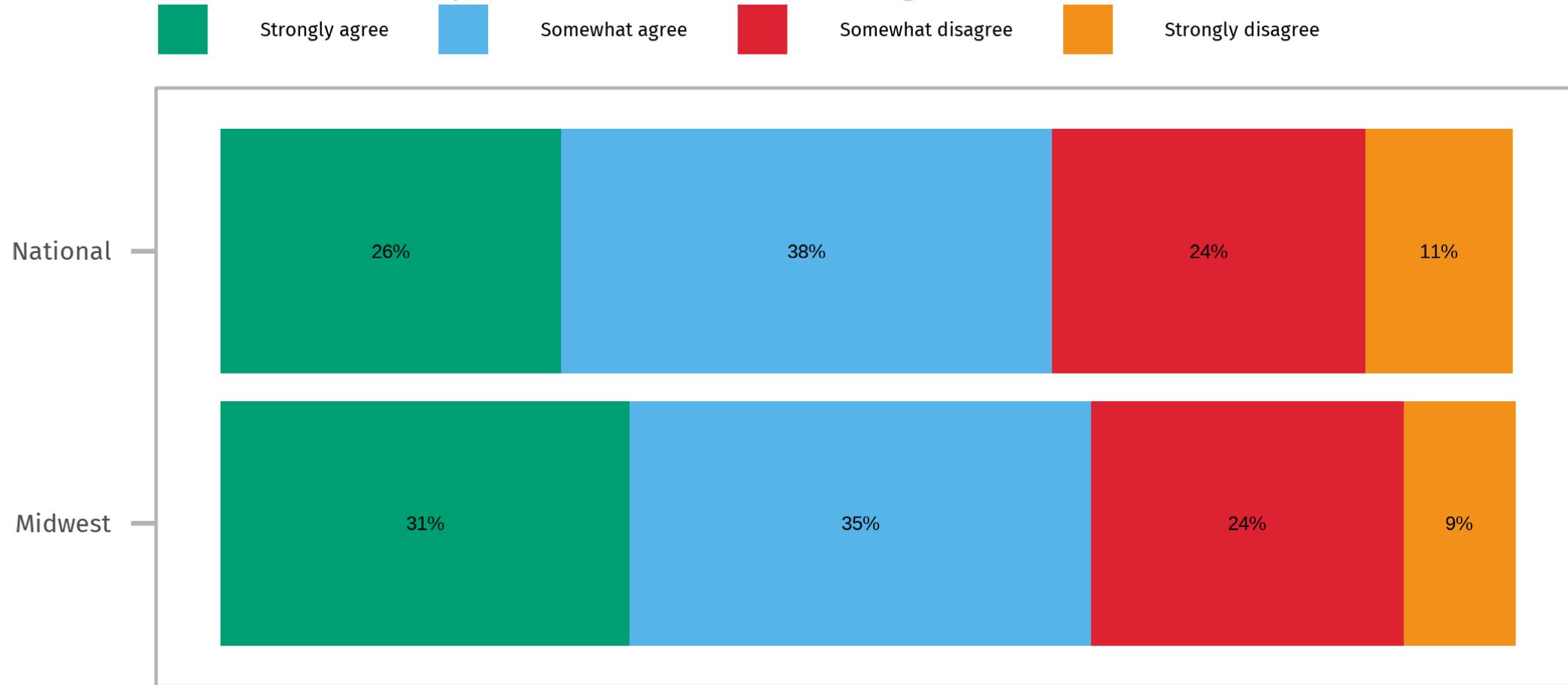
## How much do you agree with the following statement: In an ideal government, all eligible citizens should be automatically registered to vote.



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

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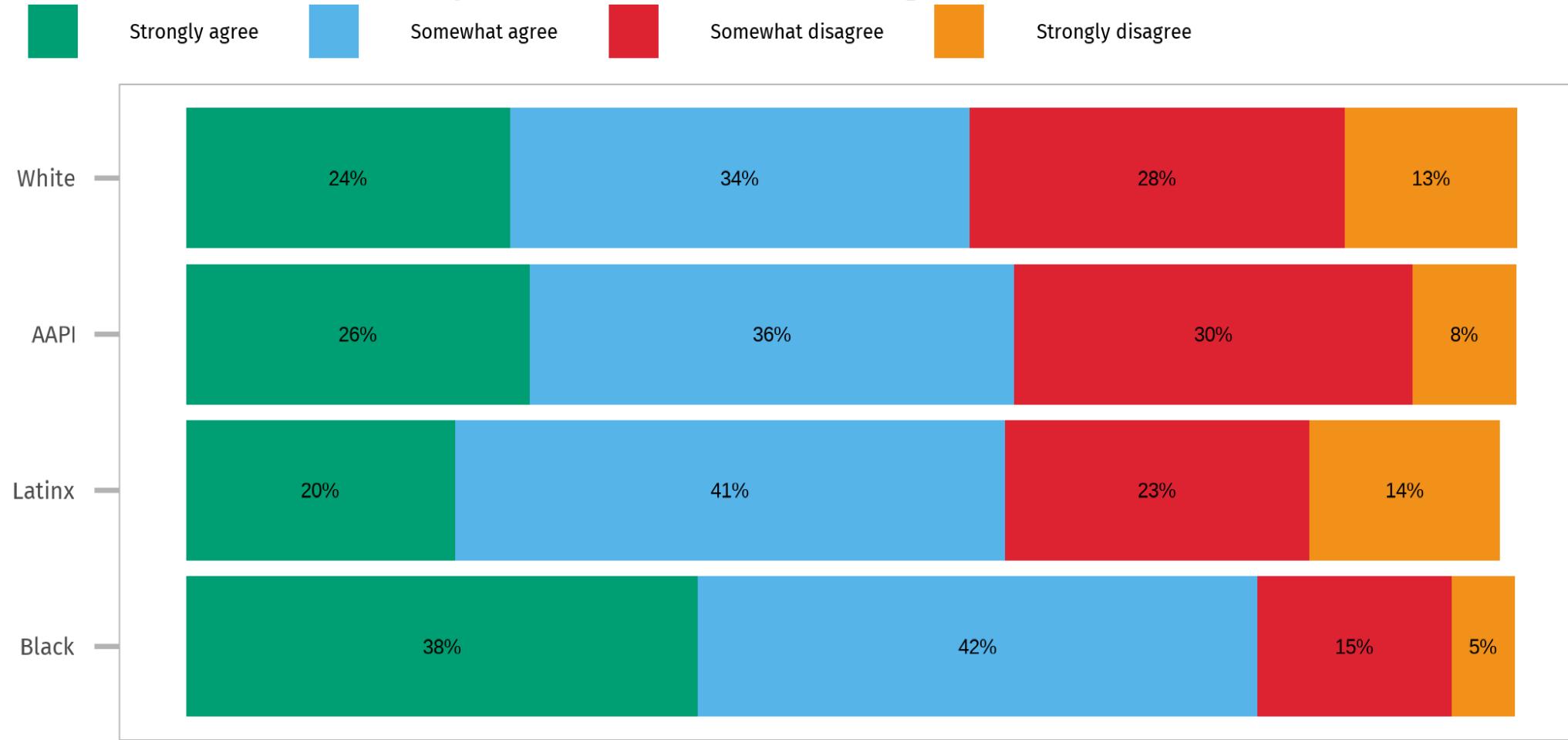
**How much do you agree with the following statement: In an ideal government, all individuals who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated should be eligible to vote.**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

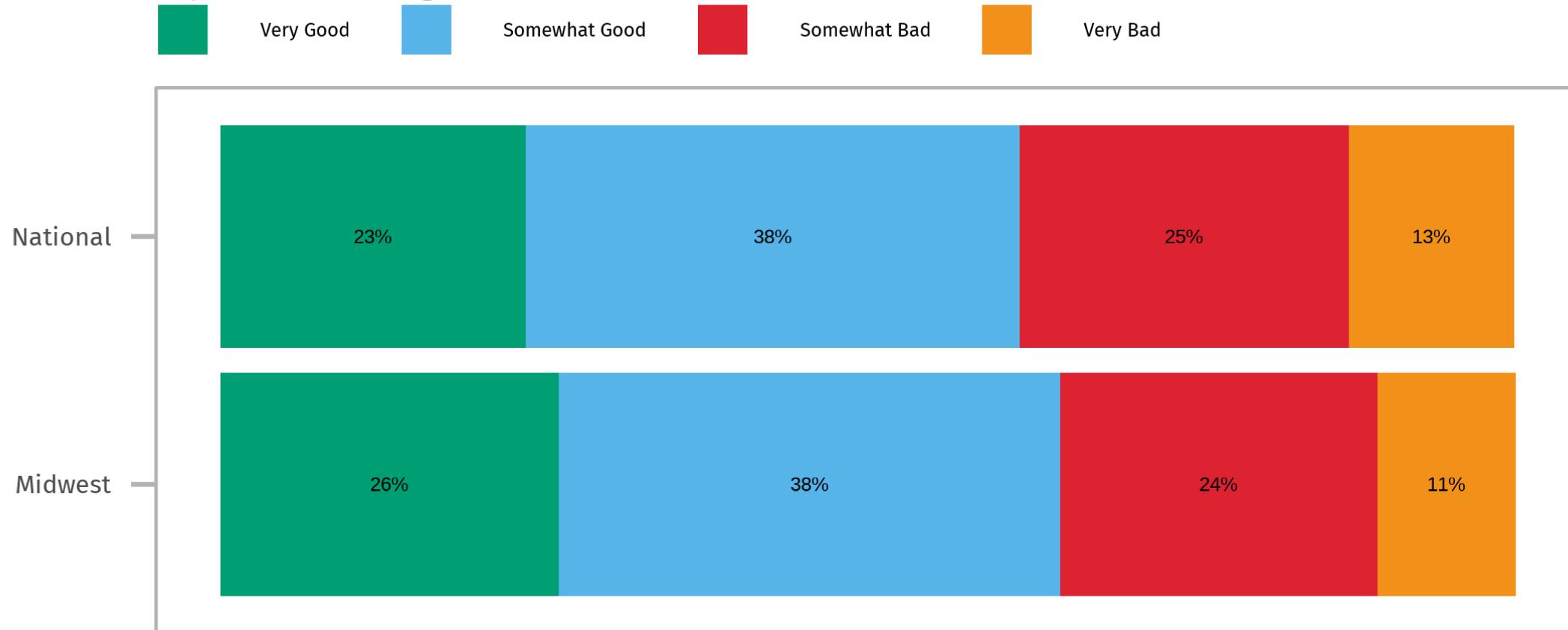
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## How much do you agree with the following statement: In an ideal government, all individuals who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated should be eligible to vote.



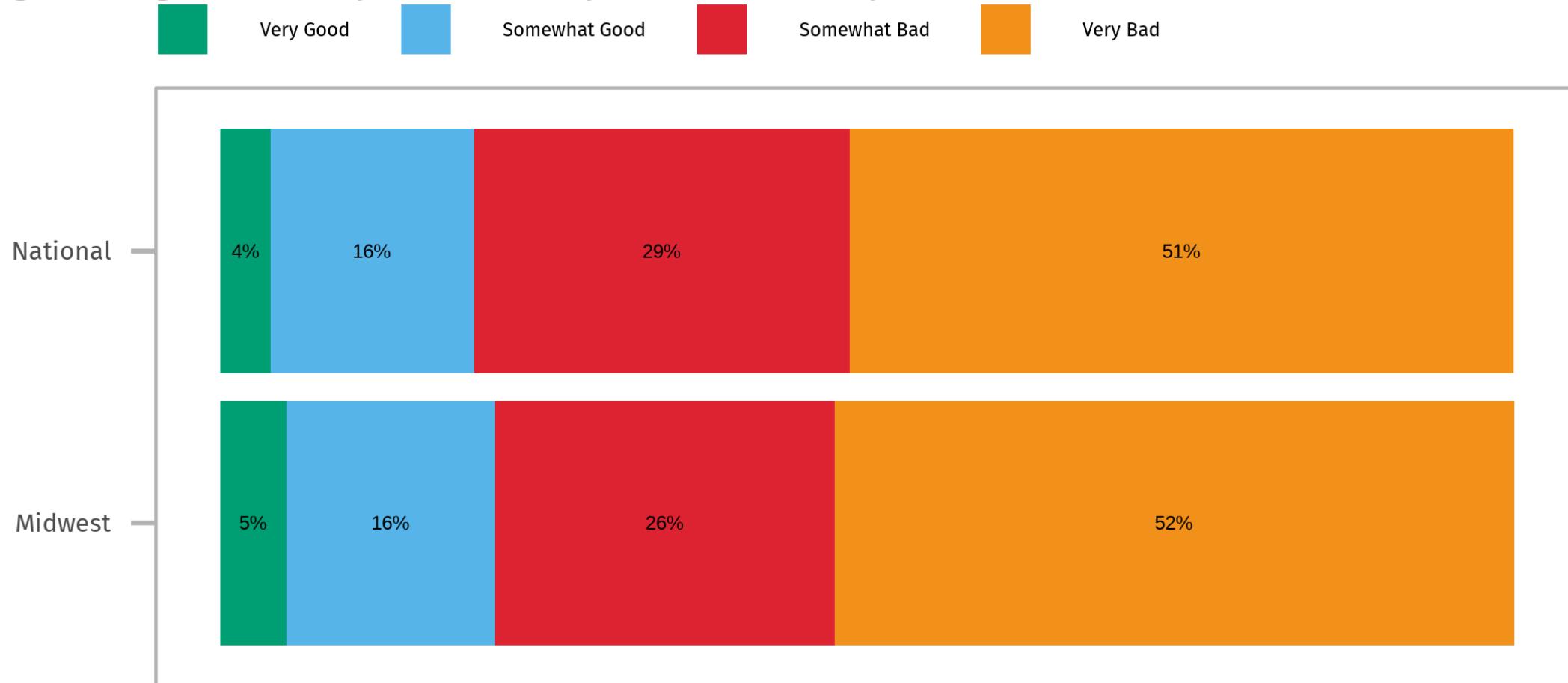
Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

**For each of the scenarios listed below, do you believe this would be a good or bad way of governing this country? [The government provides funds for all election campaigns and eliminates private funding from donors]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

**For each of the scenarios listed below, do you believe this would be a good or bad way of governing this country? [The military rules the country]**

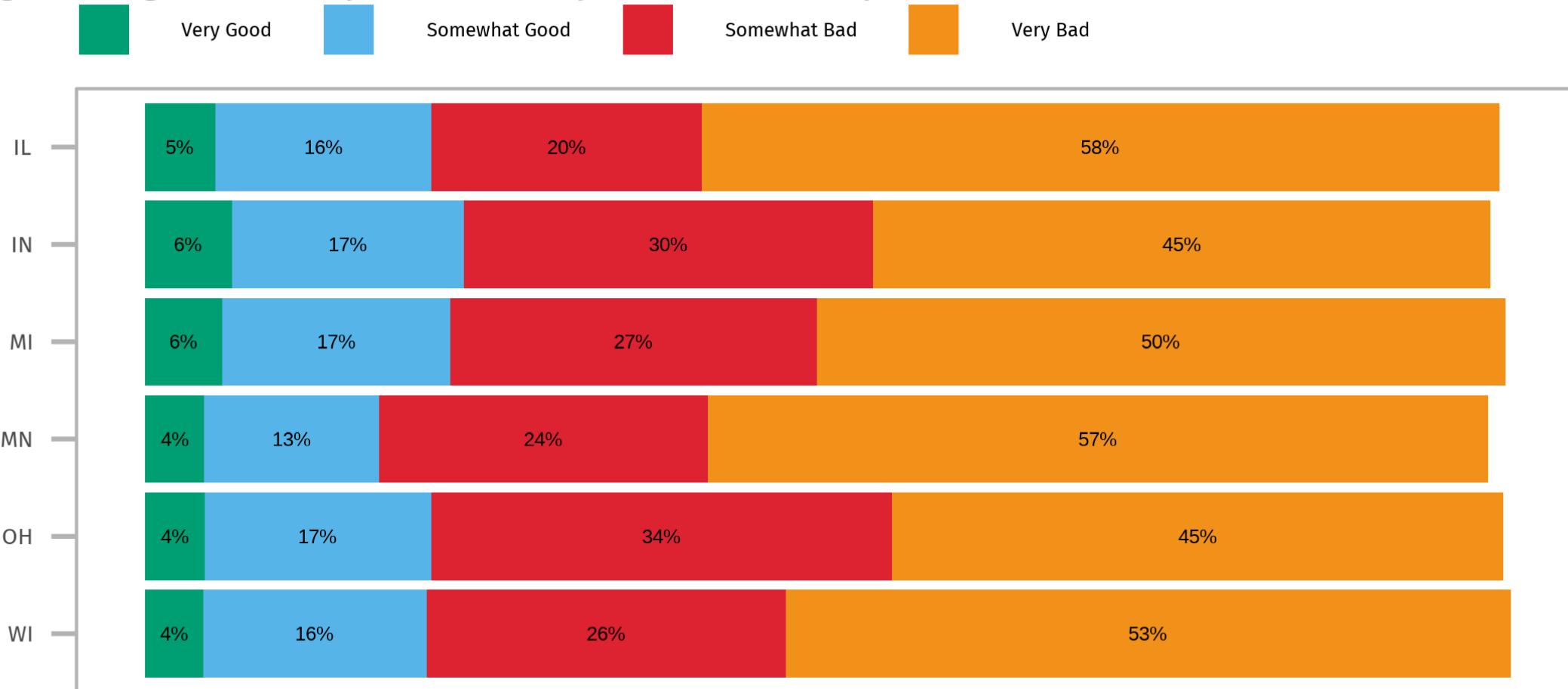


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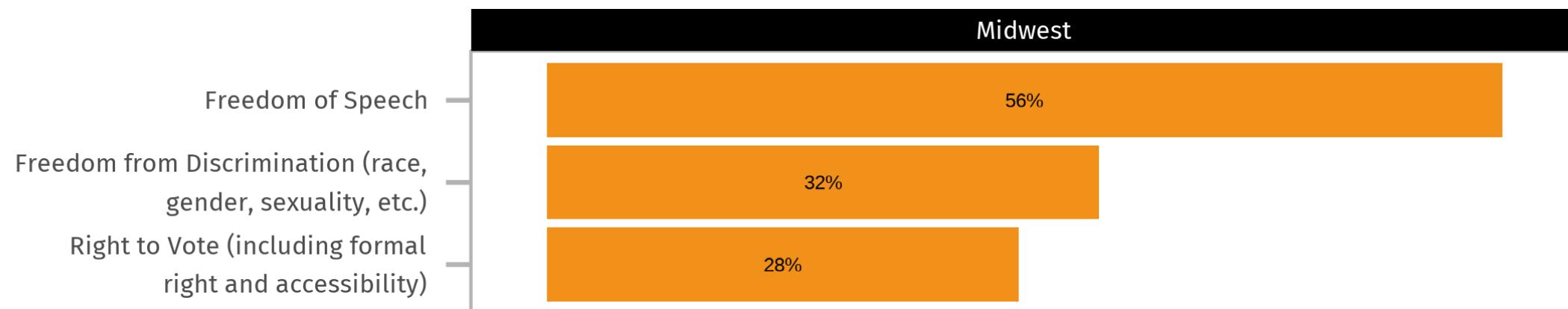
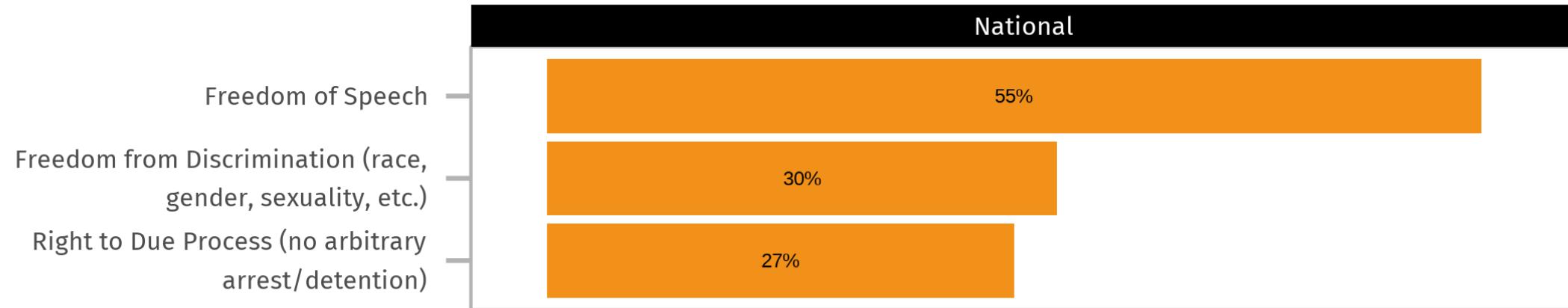
**For each of the scenarios listed below, do you believe this would be a good or bad way of governing this country? [The military rules the country]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 4093)

## There are many rights that governments provide to their citizens. Which of the following rights do you believe are the most important for any good government to guarantee?

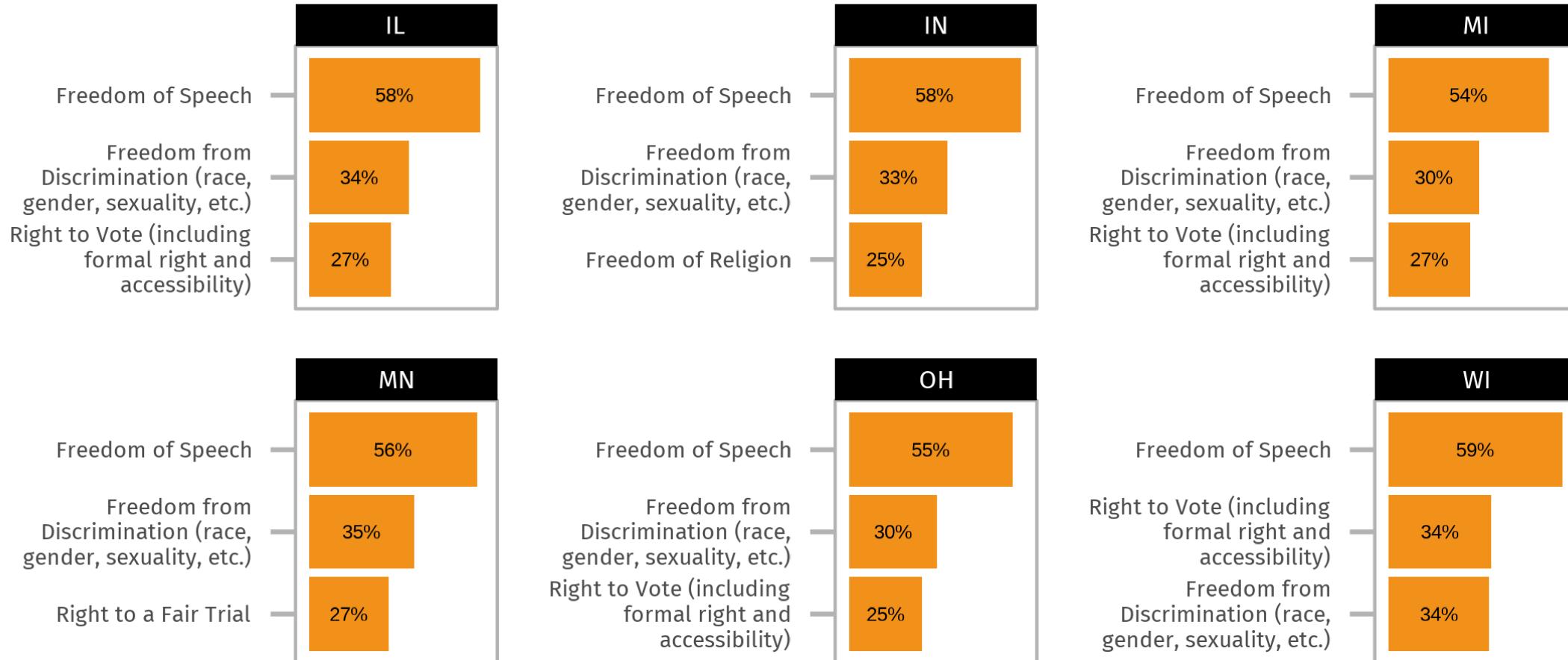
Top 3 choices for each group shown



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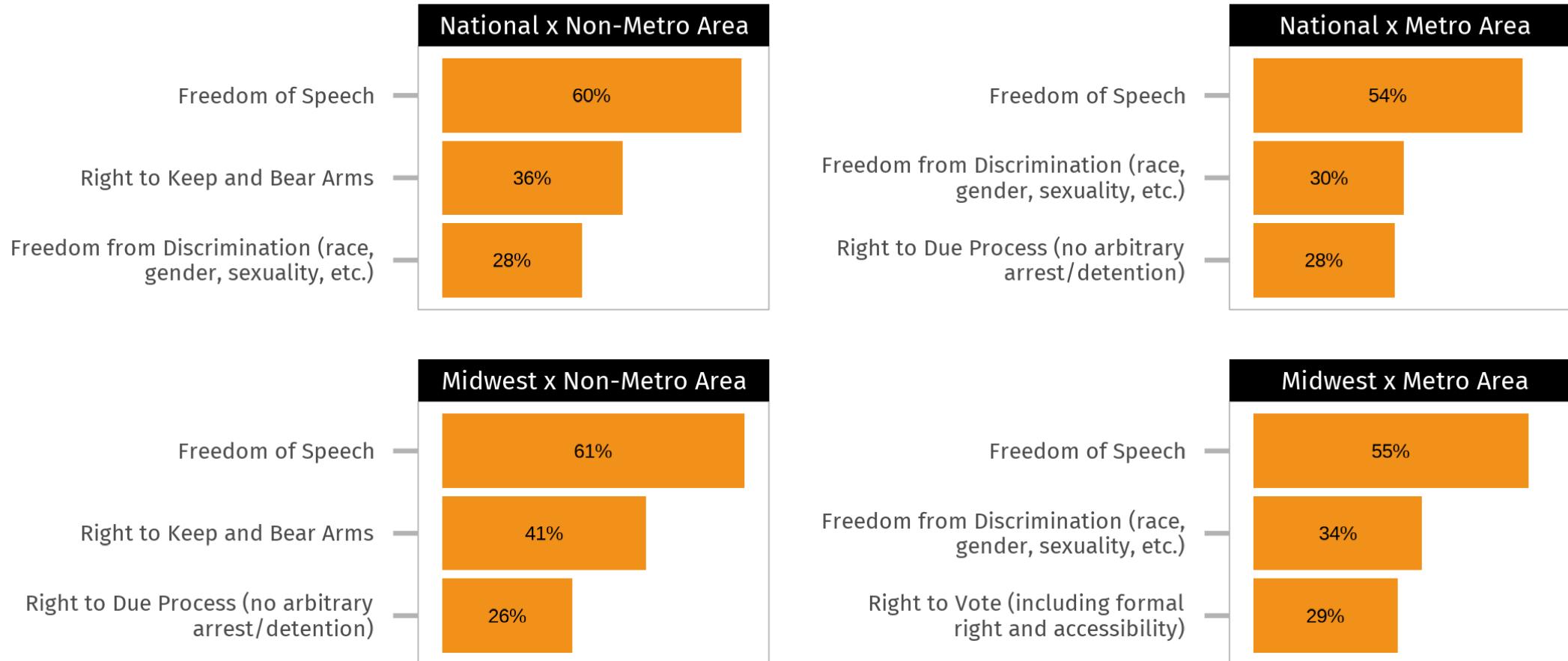
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# Good Governance: Ideals versus Practice

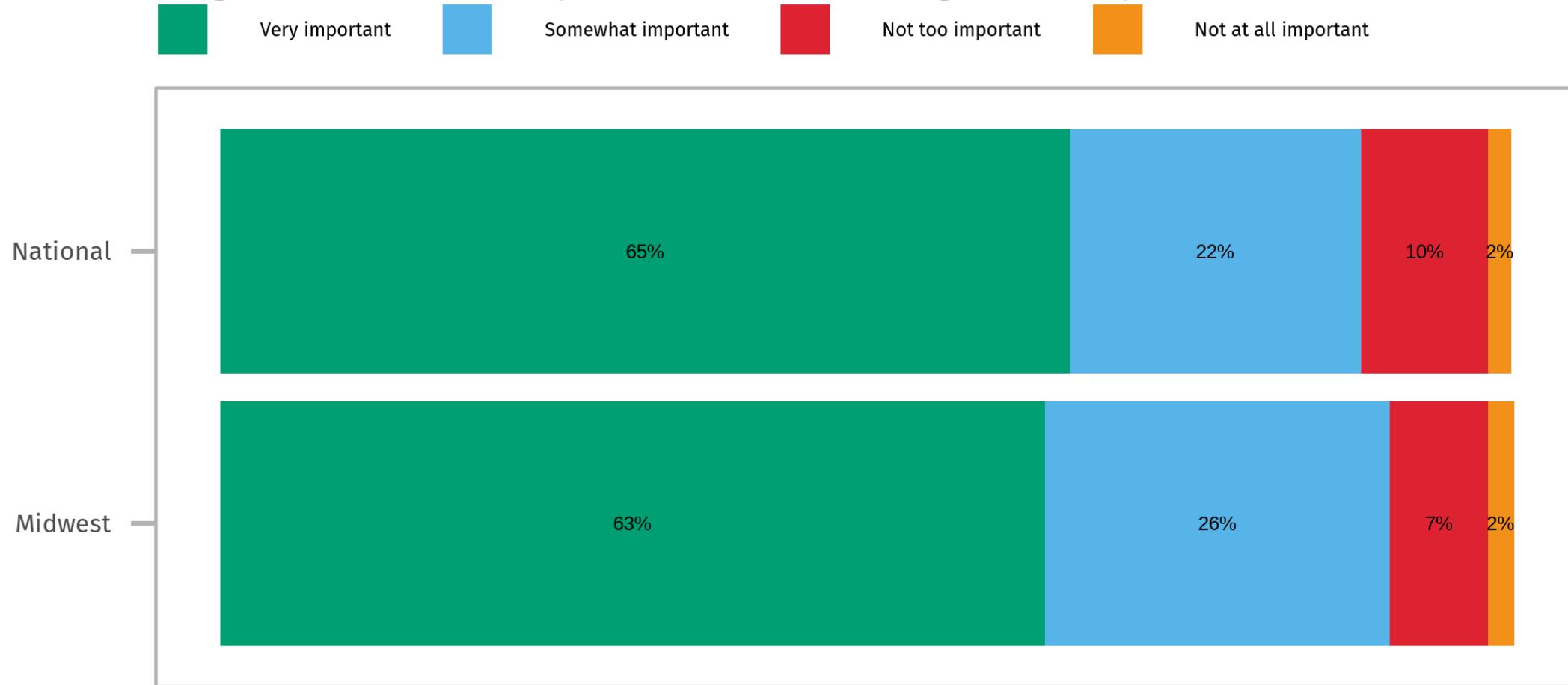
# Ideals and Practices

- For a series of ideals, we asked:
  - “In an ideal government, How important is it that X”
  - “Now, thinking about how things are in the U.S. today, how well does X describe the country?”
- Majorities of respondents believed that each ideal was very or somewhat important
- However, majorities of respondents also believed that the country was doing a somewhat or very bad job of meeting those ideals.

# List of ideals and practices

- Politicians working with members of the opposing party
- Government policies reflecting the views of most Americans
- Executive, legislative, and judicial checks and balances
- Elected officials face serious consequences for misconduct
- Judges are not influenced by the President
- The rights and freedoms of all people are respected
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed
- Views of those not in the majority are respected, even when you disagree
- People are free to peacefully protest
- All methods of voting and all public government meetings are accessible to people with disabilities

**In an ideal government, HOW IMPORTANT is it that: The executive, legislative and judicial branches of government each keep the others from having too much power.**



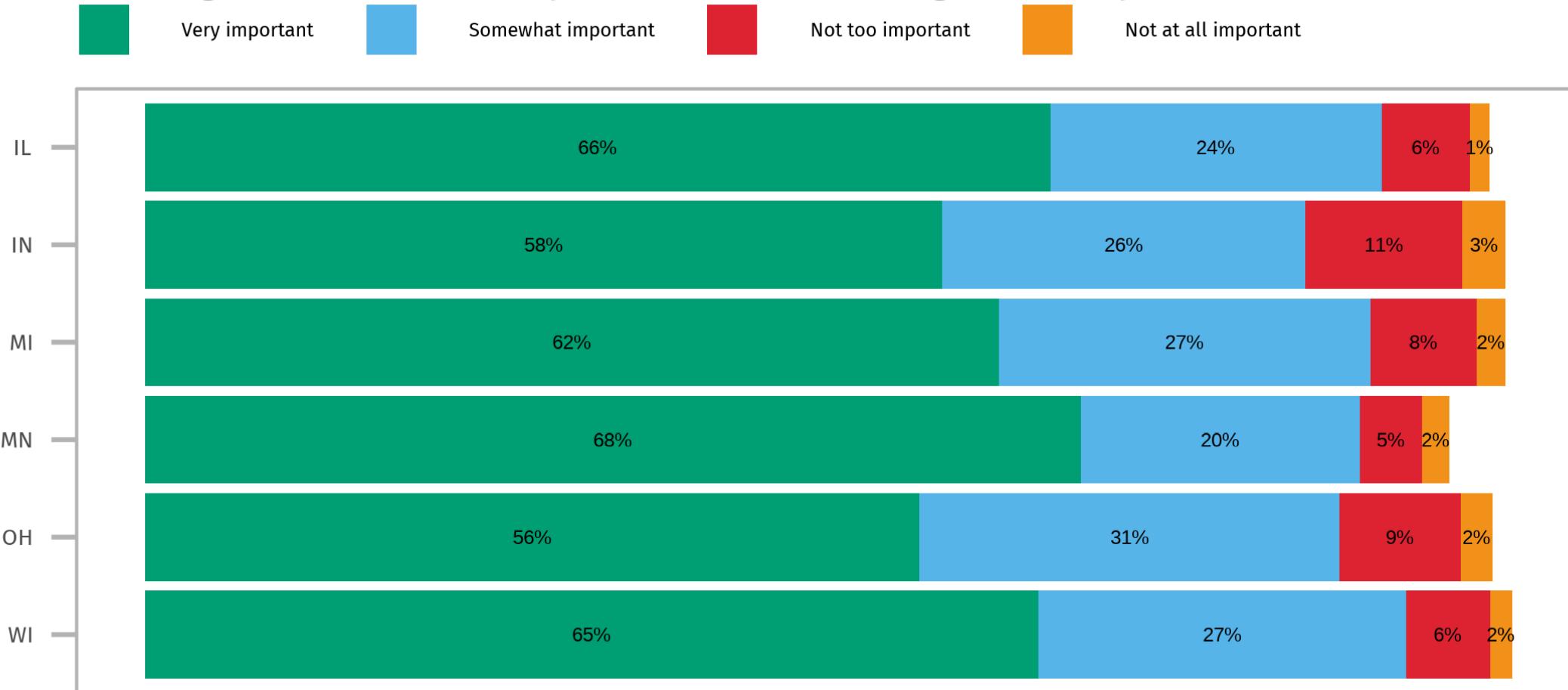
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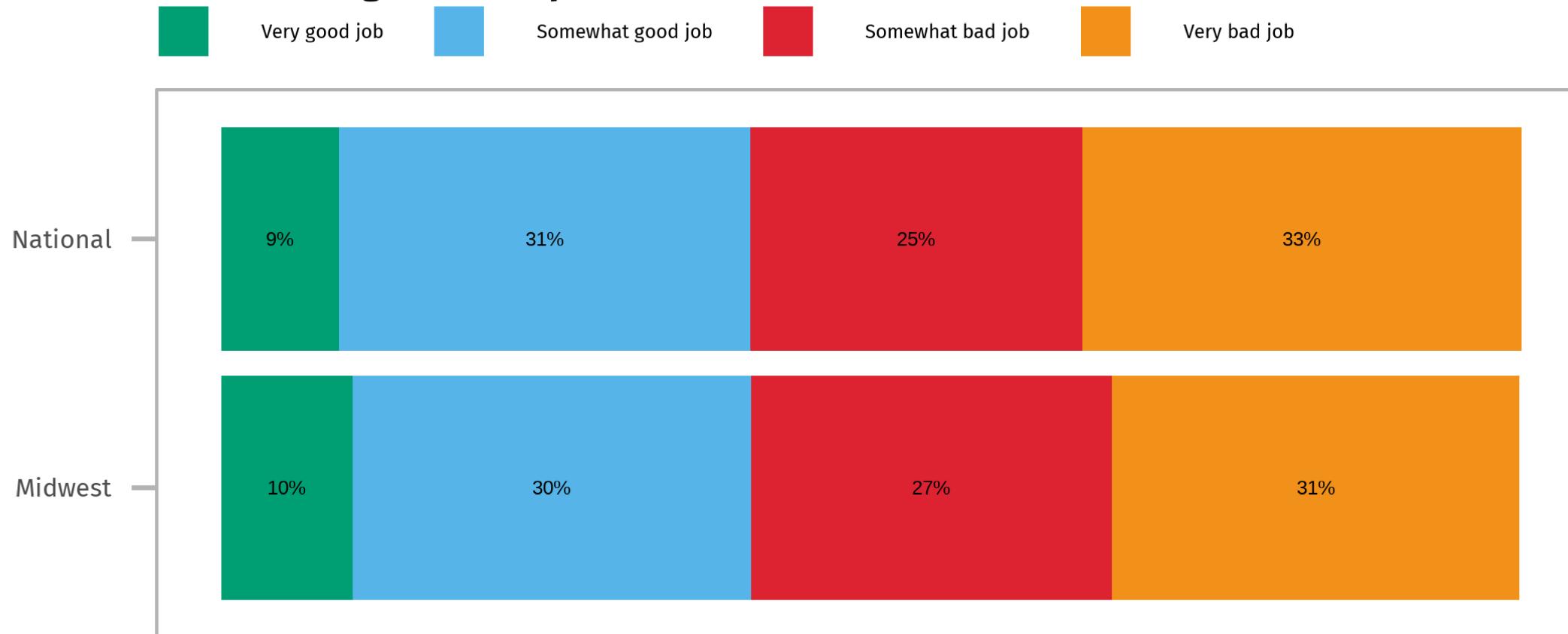
20

**In an ideal government, HOW IMPORTANT is it that: The executive, legislative and judicial branches of government each keep the others from having too much power.**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 4093)

**Now thinking about how things actually are in the U.S. today, HOW WELL does the following describe the country? The executive, legislative and judicial branches of government each keep the others from having too much power.**

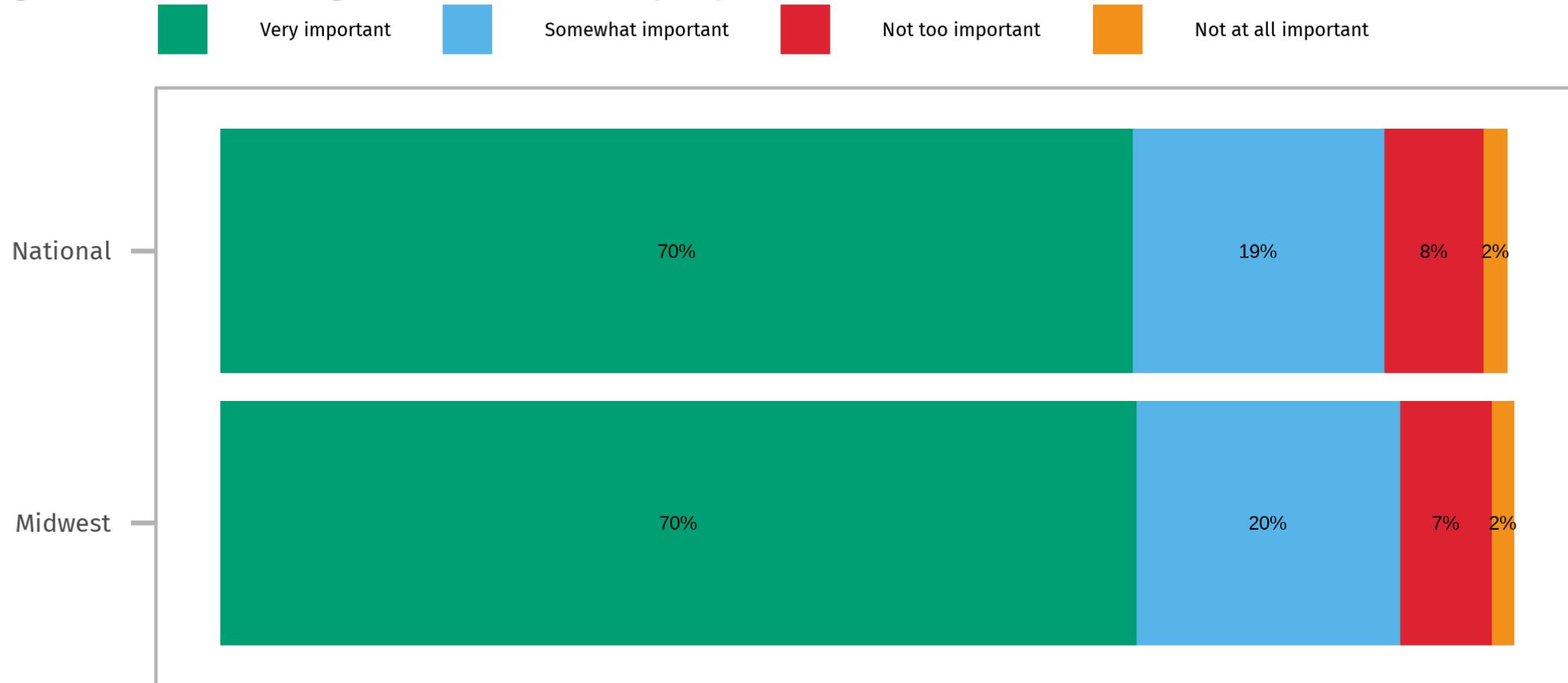


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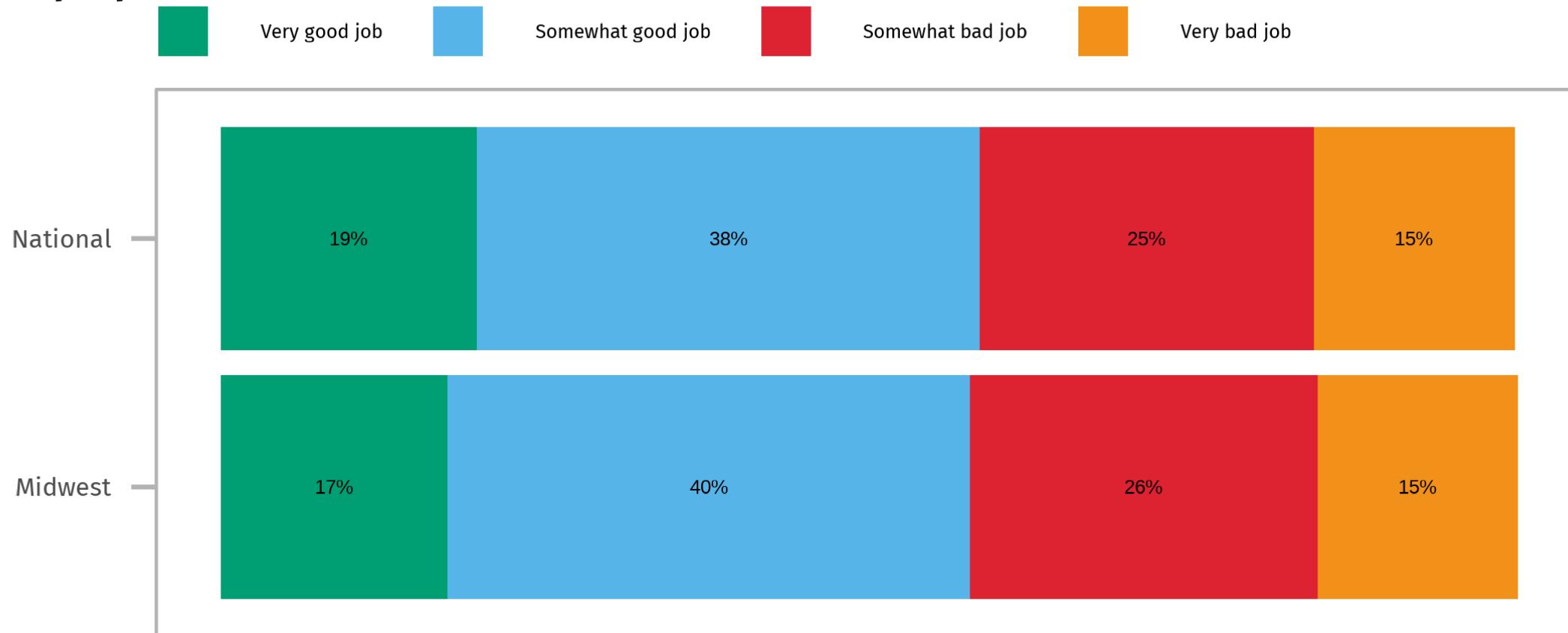
## In an ideal government, HOW IMPORTANT is it that: All methods of voting and all public government meetings are accessible to people with disabilities.



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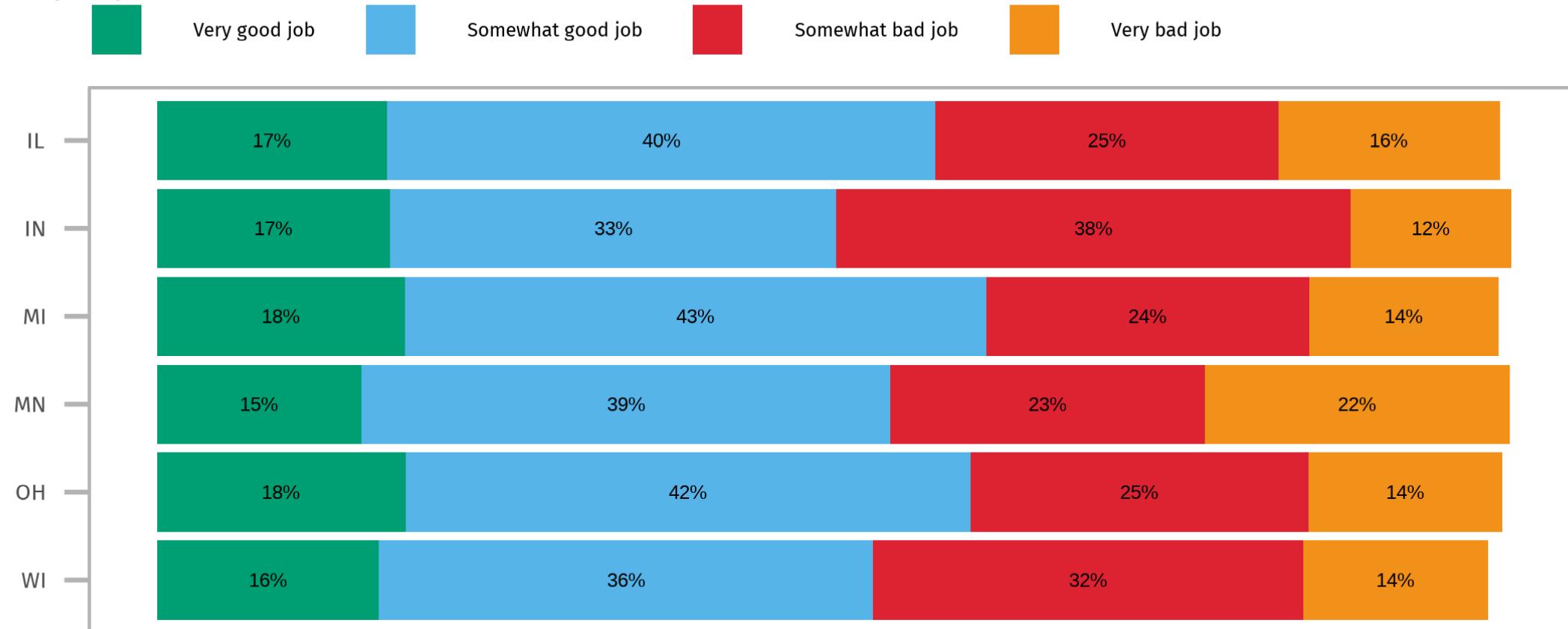
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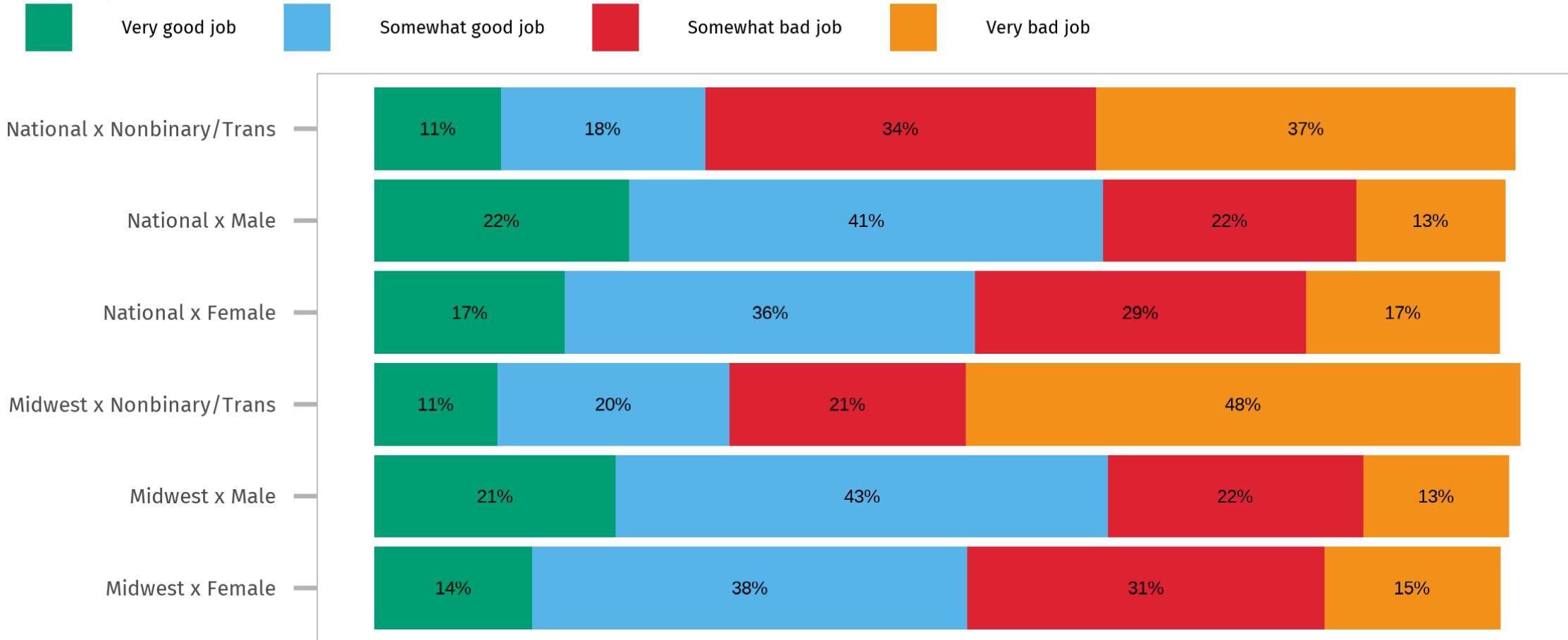
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Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

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# Democracy

## How much do you agree with the following statement: American democracy is in crisis.

Strongly agree     Somewhat agree     Somewhat disagree     Strongly disagree



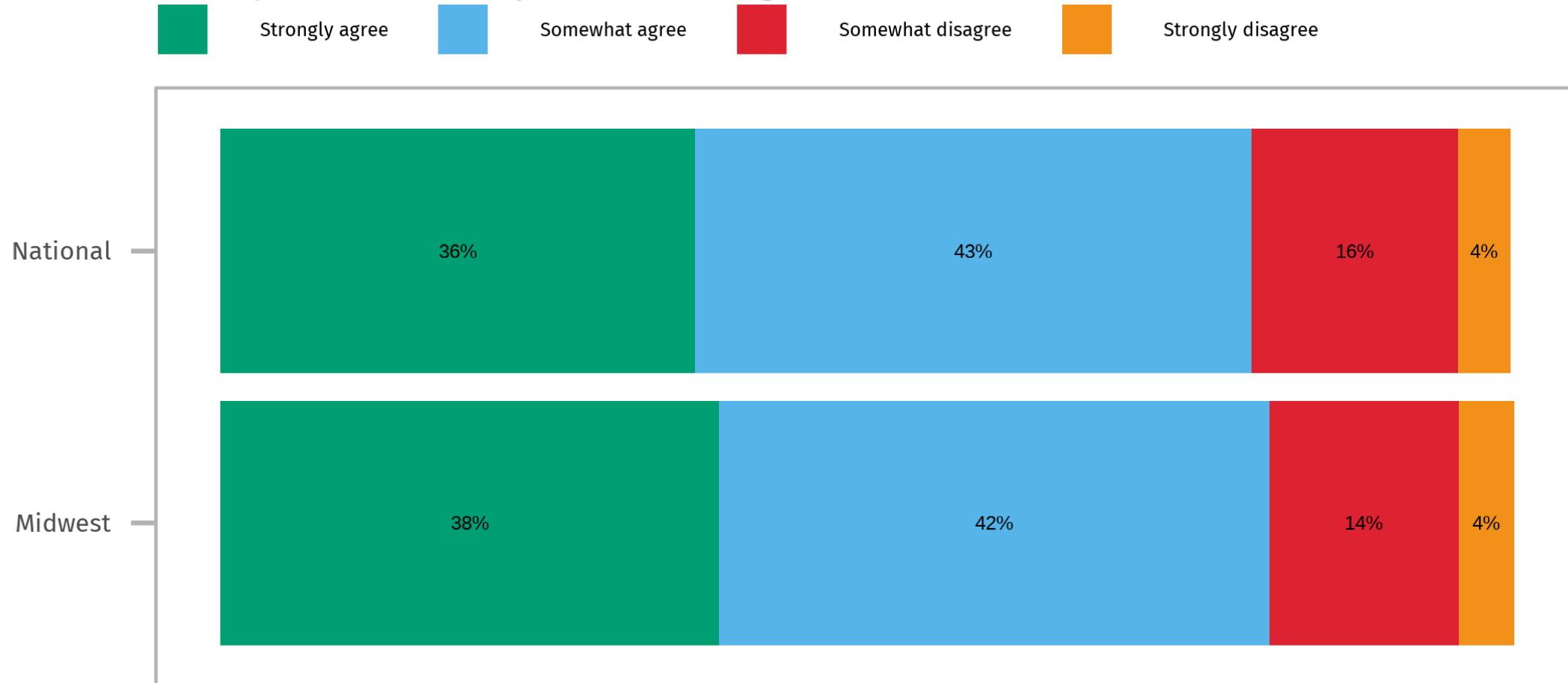
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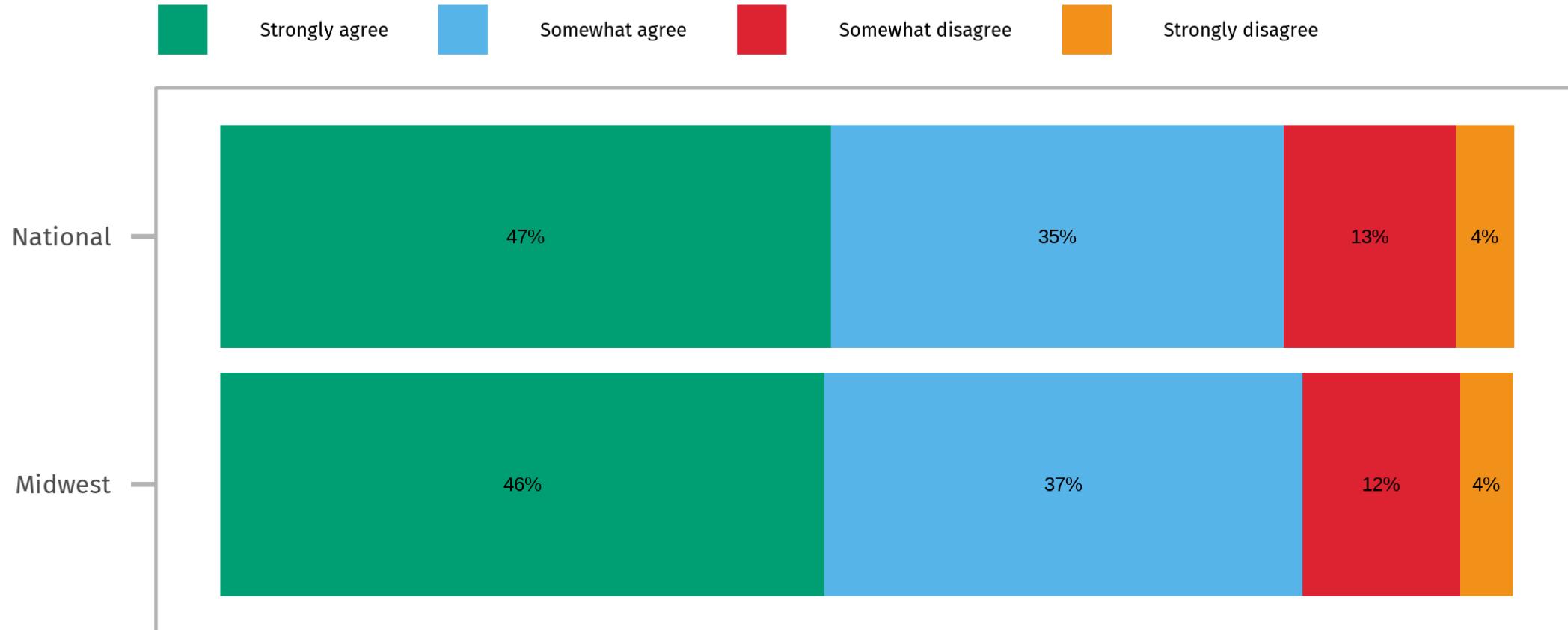
28

## How much do you agree with the following statement: Democracy is always and under all circumstances preferable to any other kind of government.



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

## How much do you agree with the following statement: The current Republican and Democrat parties do such a poor job representing the American people that voters need more political party choices.



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

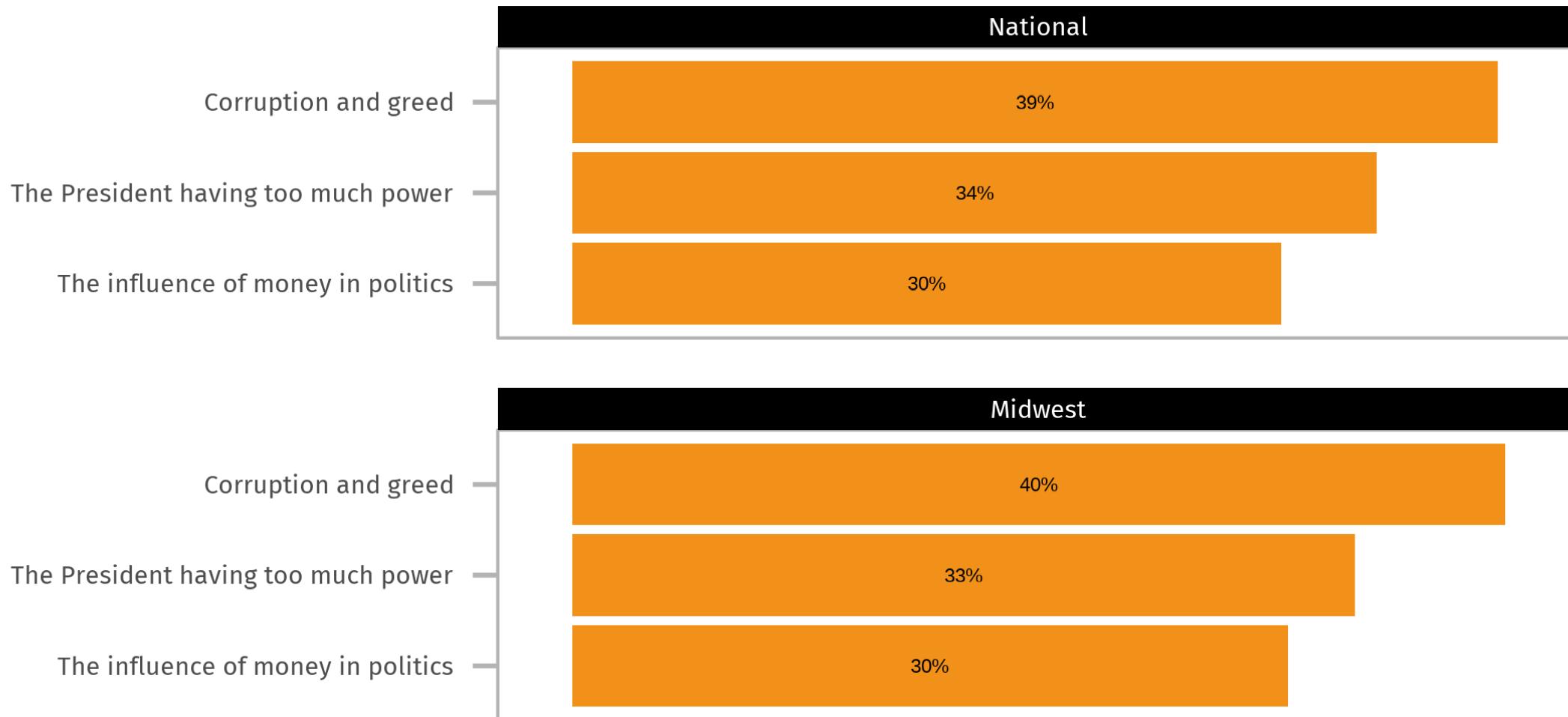
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## From the list below, please choose the three greatest threats to democracy.

Top 3 choices for each group shown

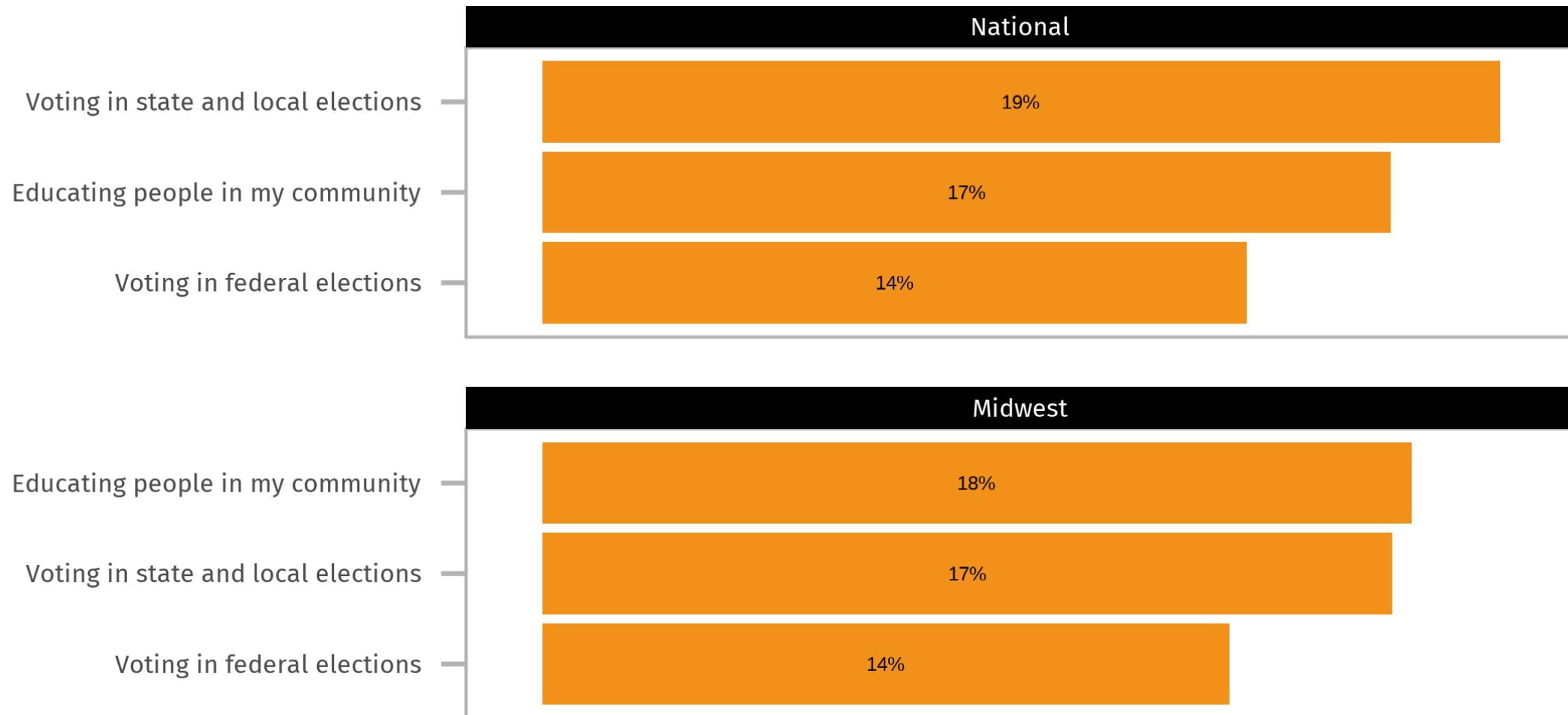


Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

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## Which of the following activities do you believe is most effective for influencing change?

Top 3 choices for each group shown



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

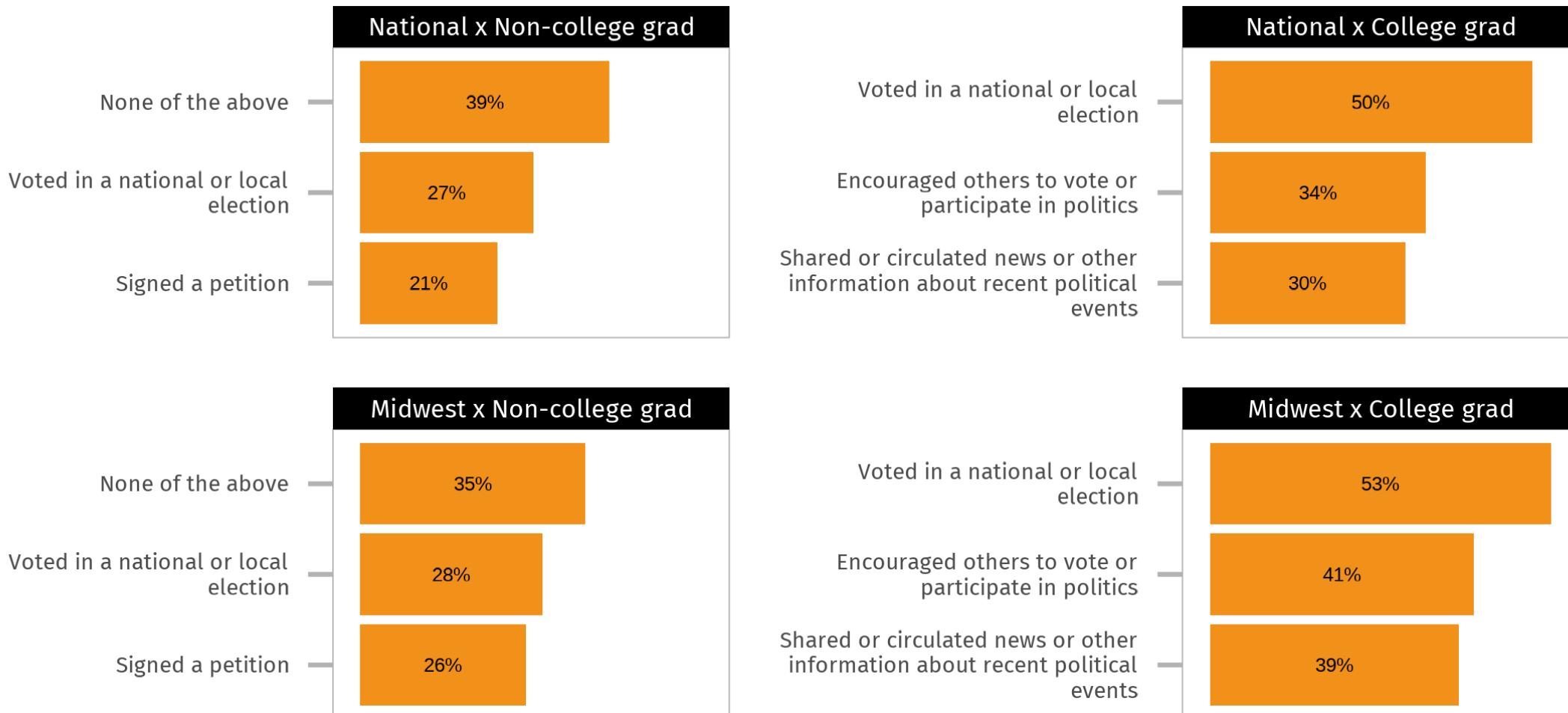
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## Please select all of the activities in which you have participated in the last 12 months:

Top 3 choices for each group shown

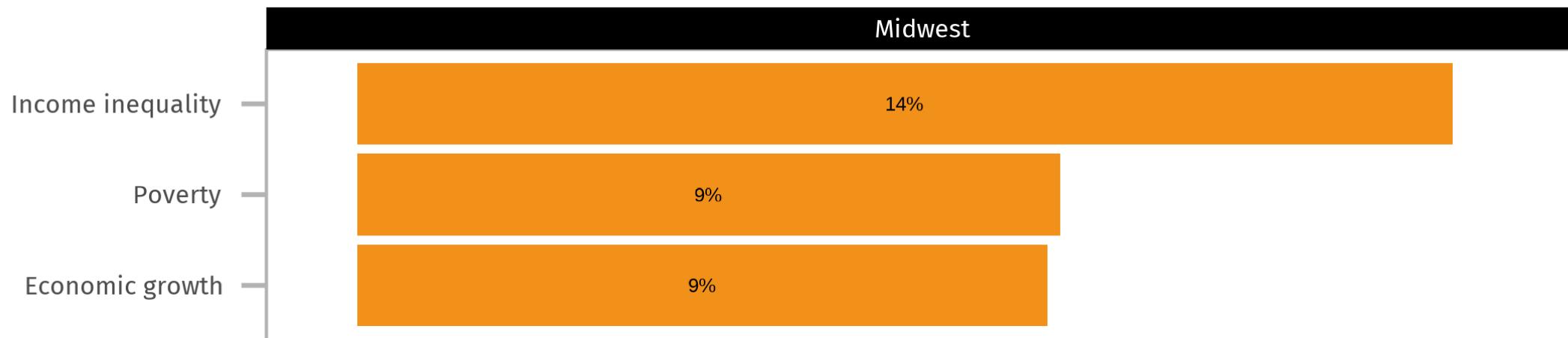
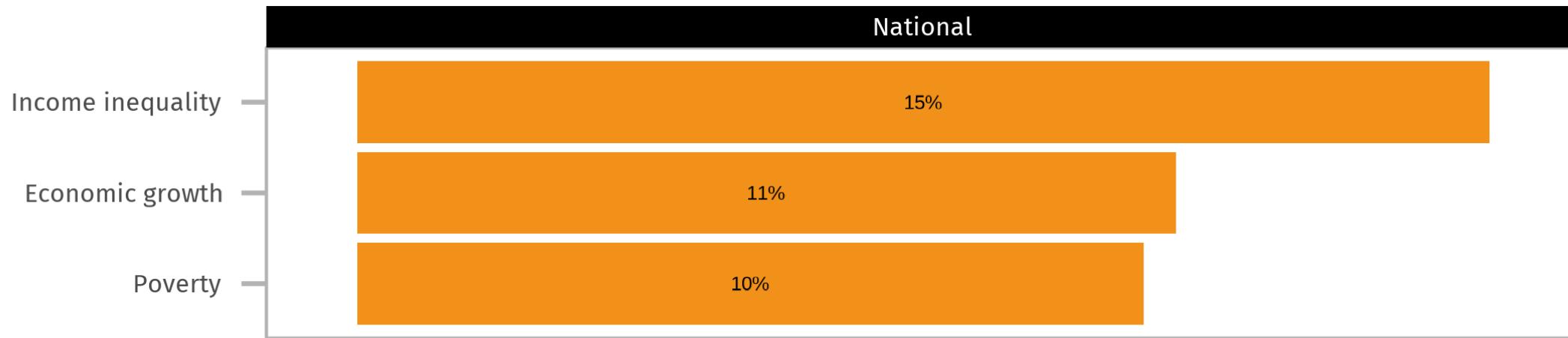


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# Most Important Issue

## What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

Top 3 choices for each group shown

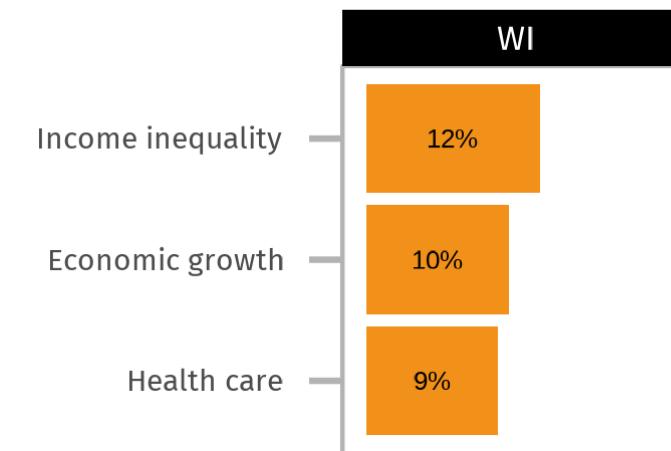
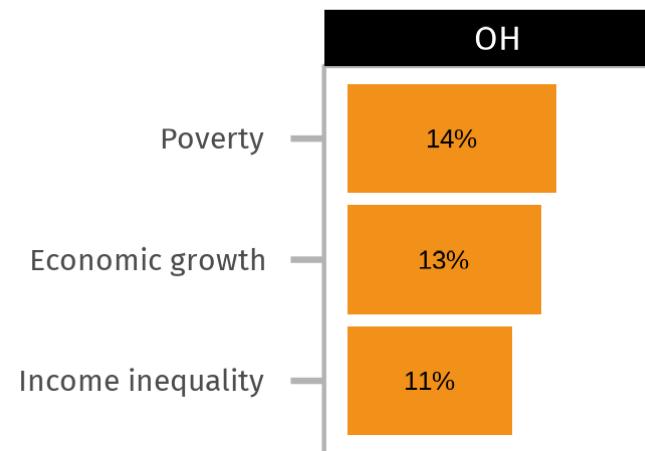
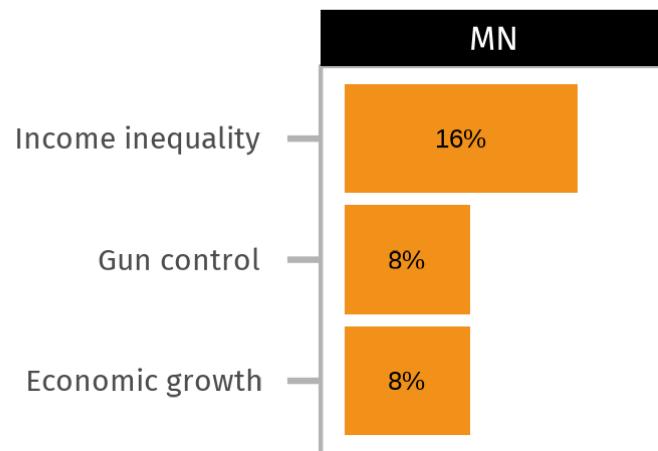
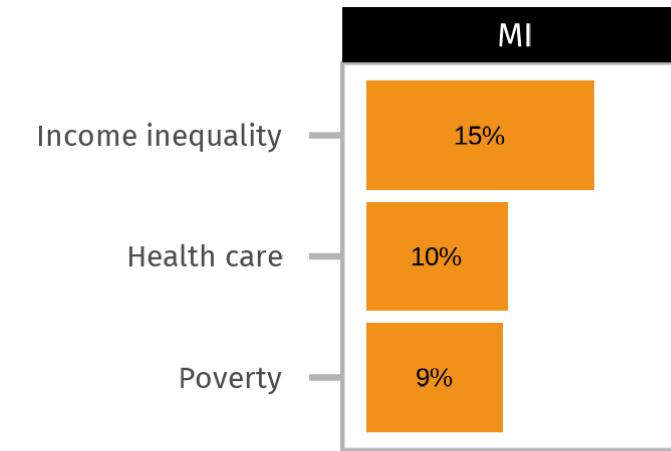
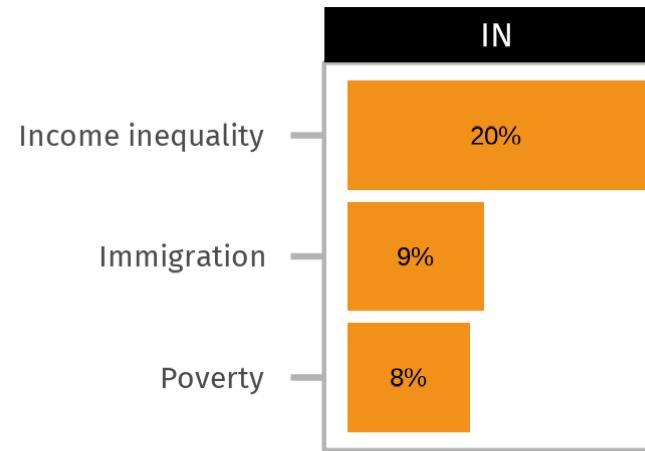
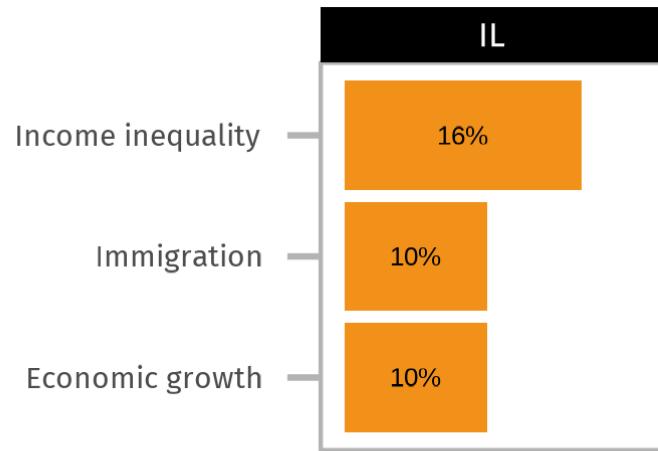


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# What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

Top 3 choices for each group shown



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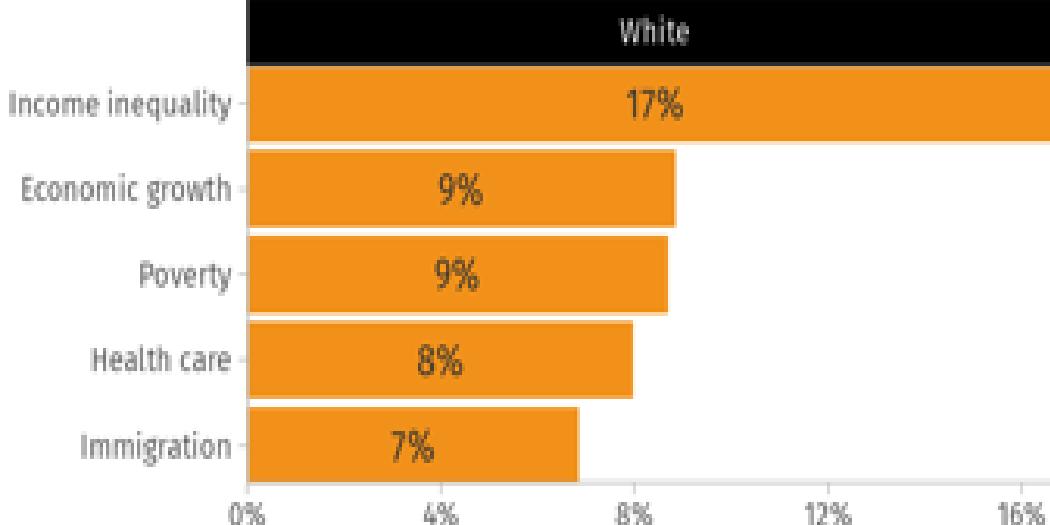
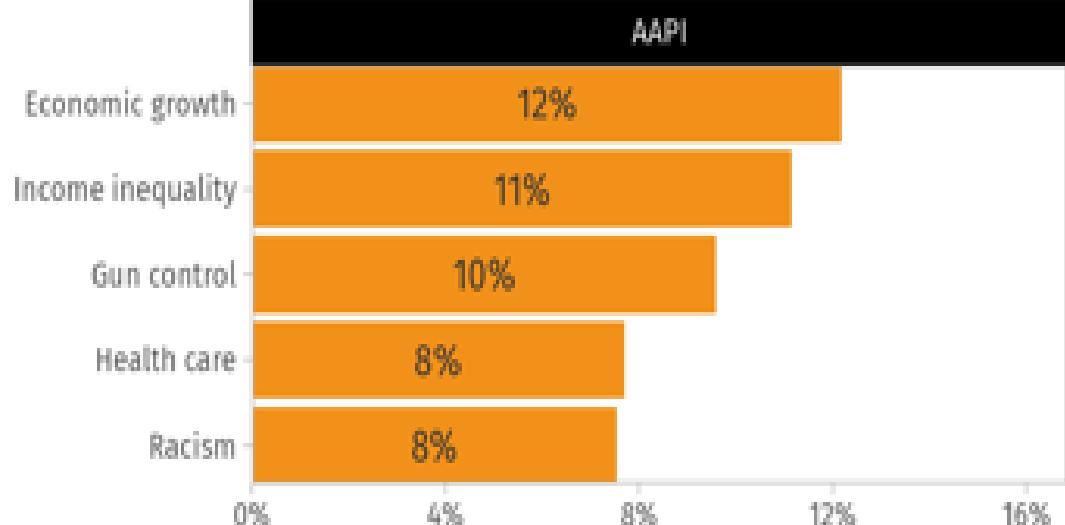
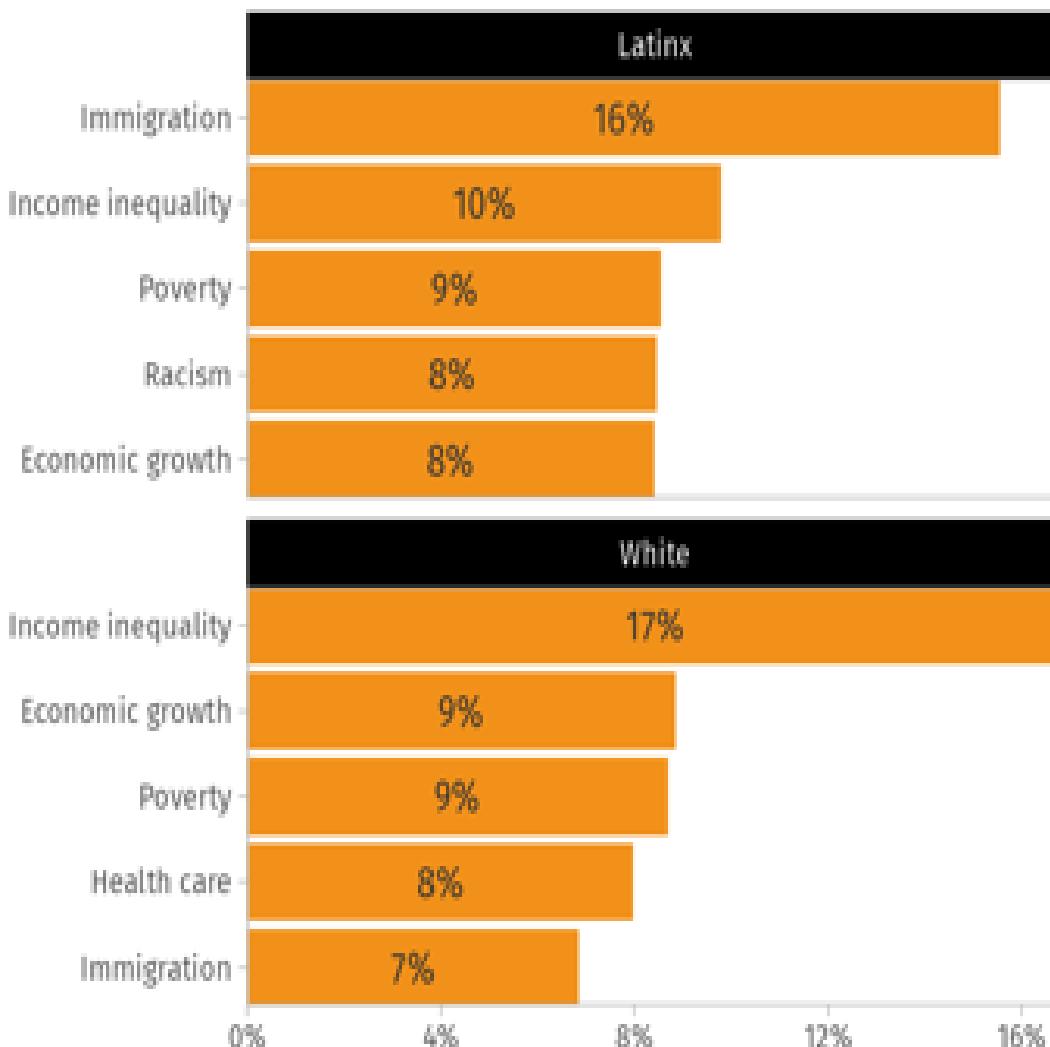
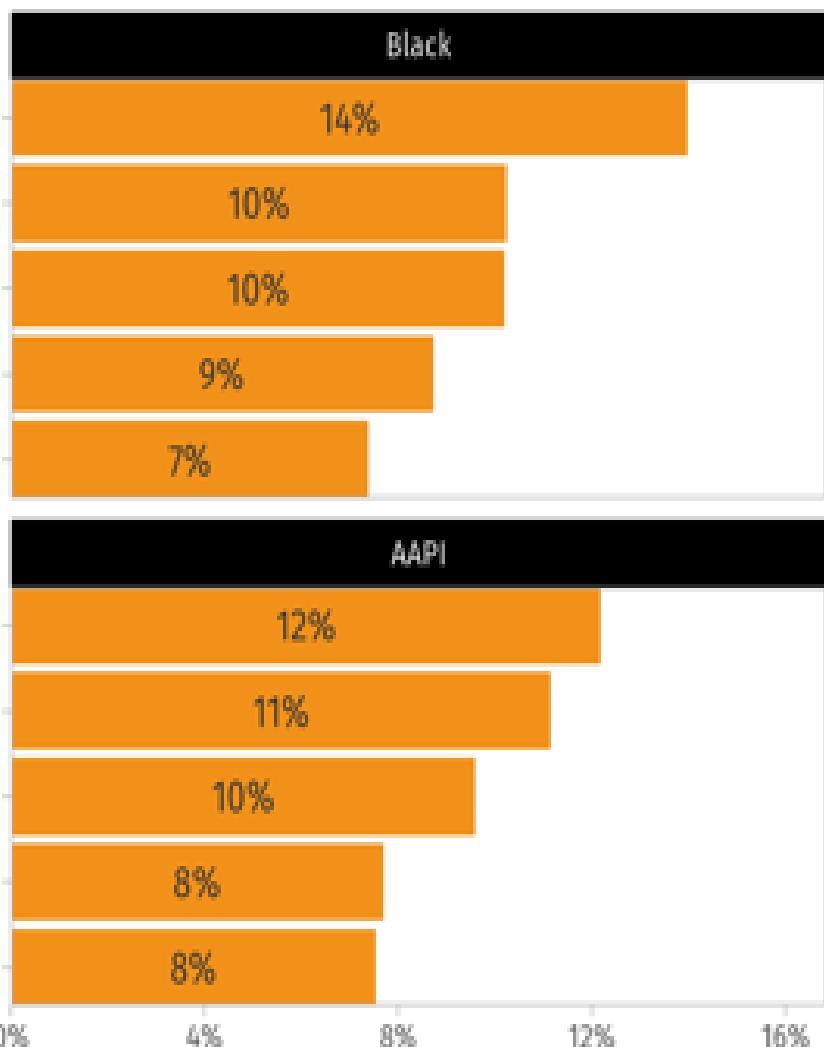
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# What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

Breakdown by race/ethnicity | Top 5 choices for each group shown

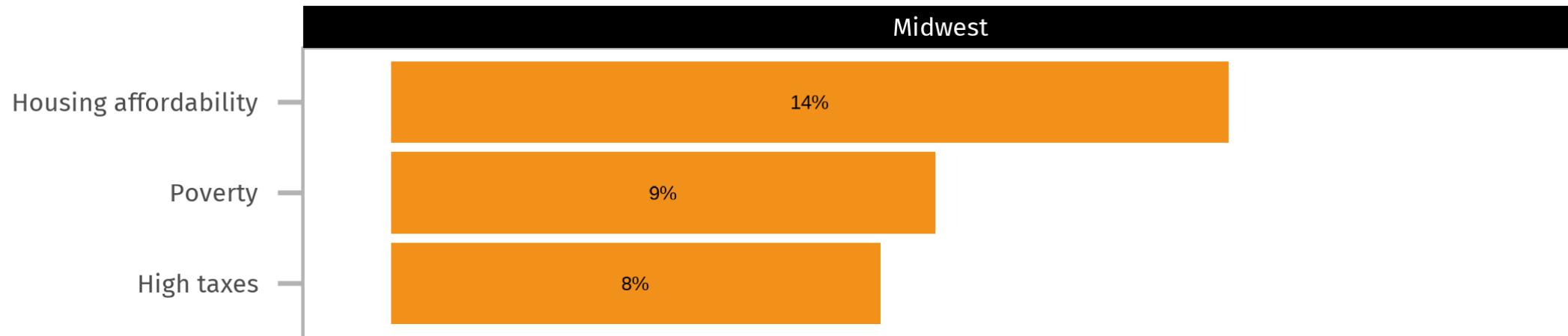
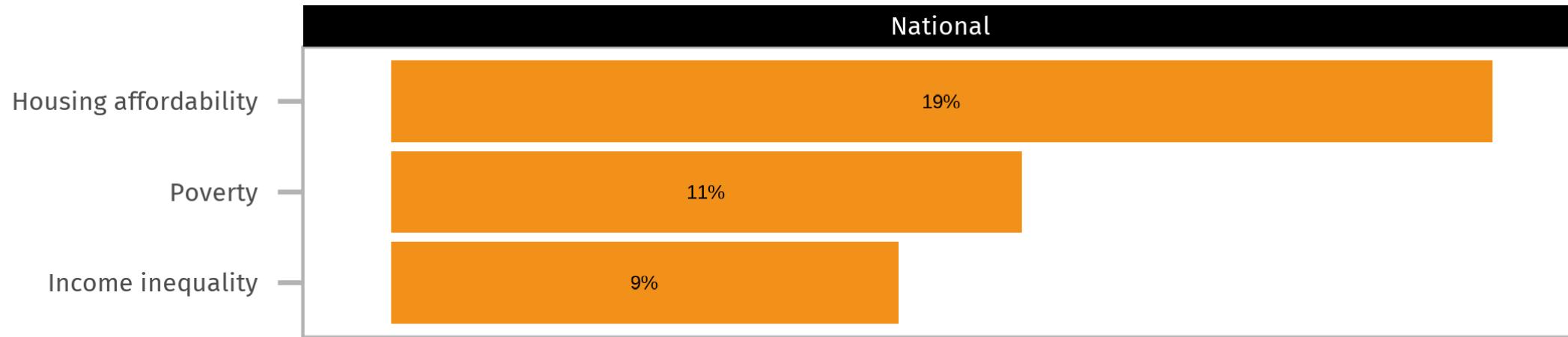


Source: Oct 2025 survey (n=4,093)

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## What is the greatest issue facing your community?

Top 3 choices for each group shown

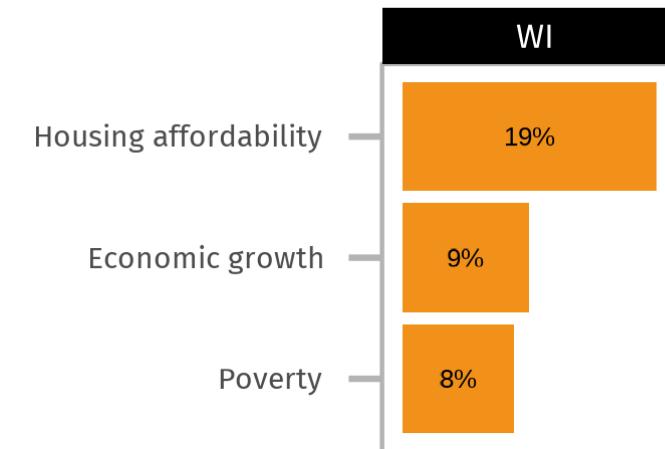
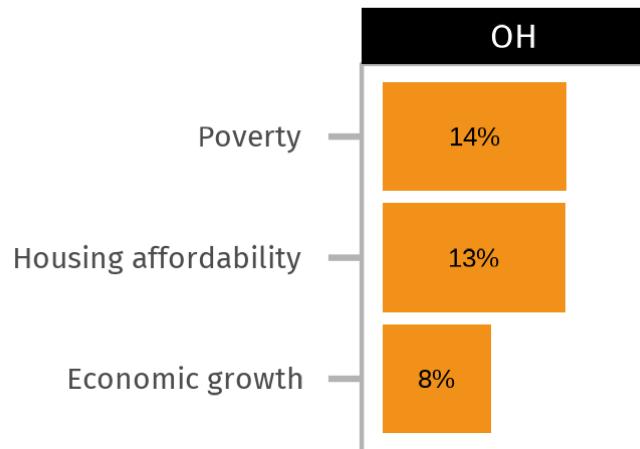
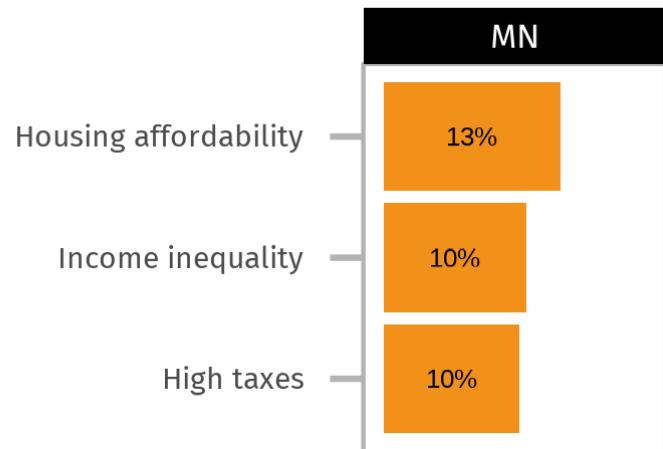
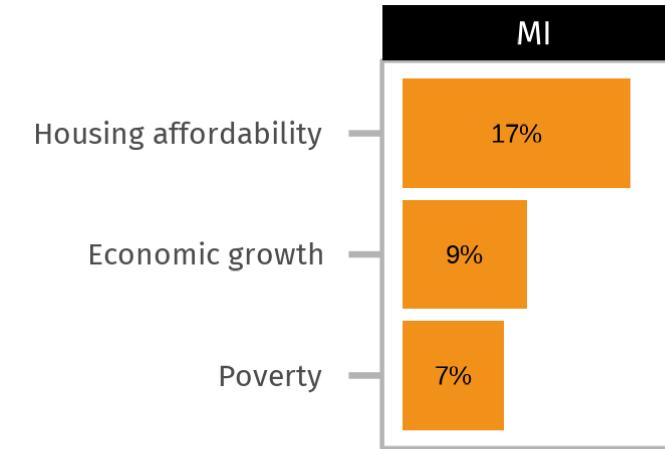
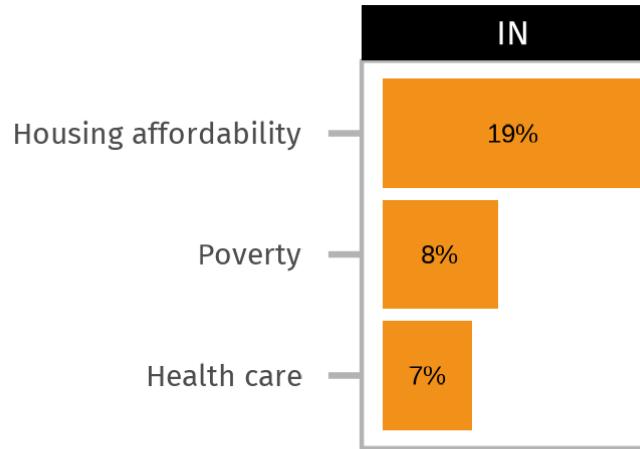
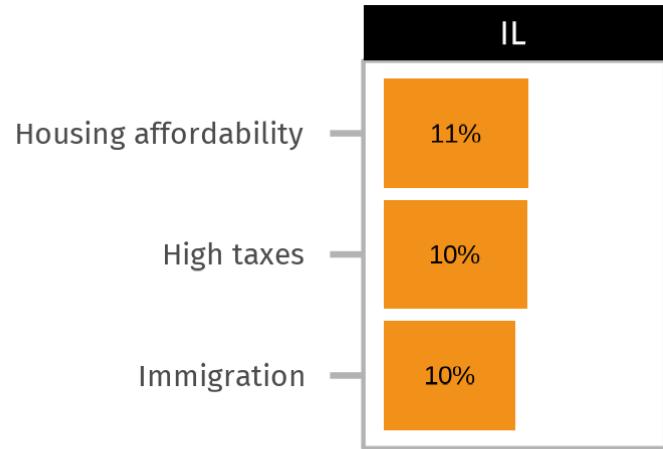


Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

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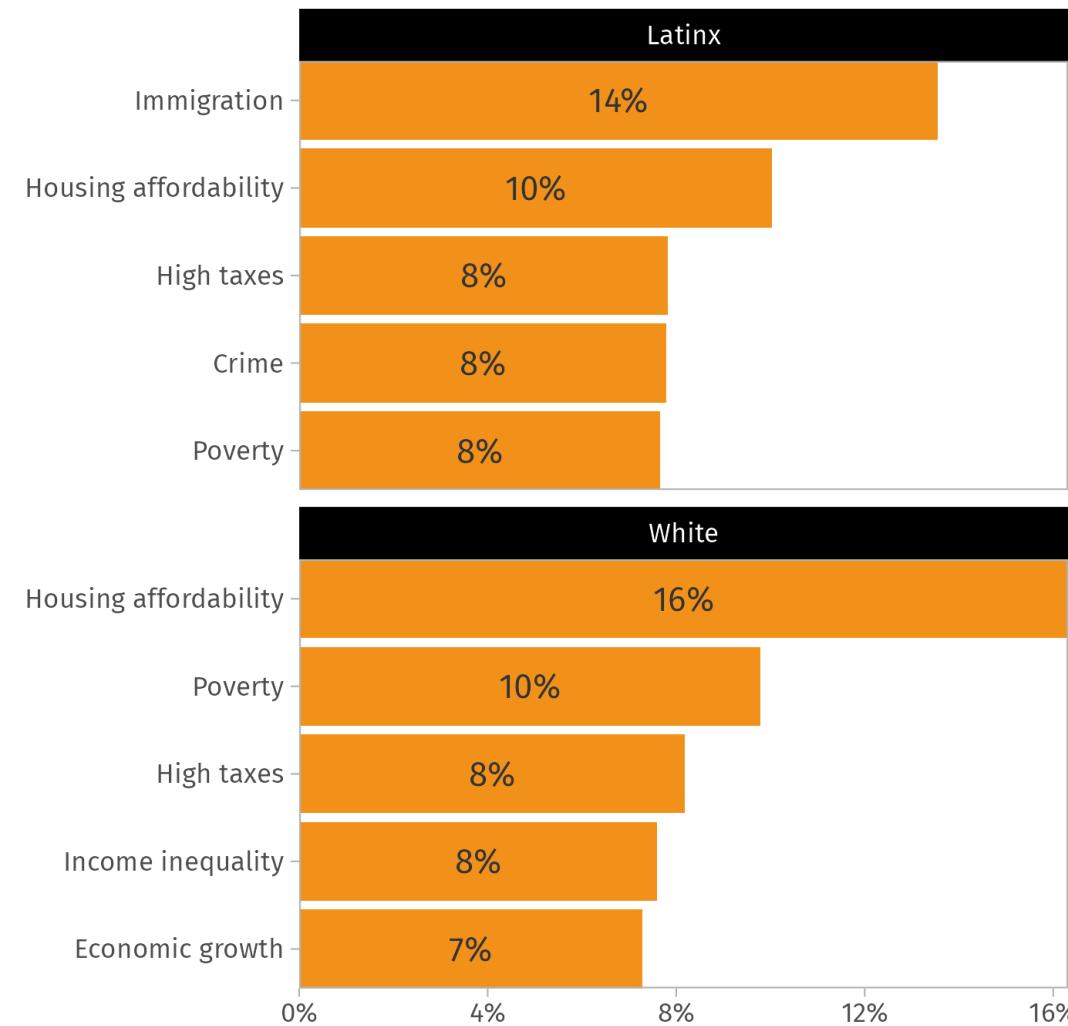
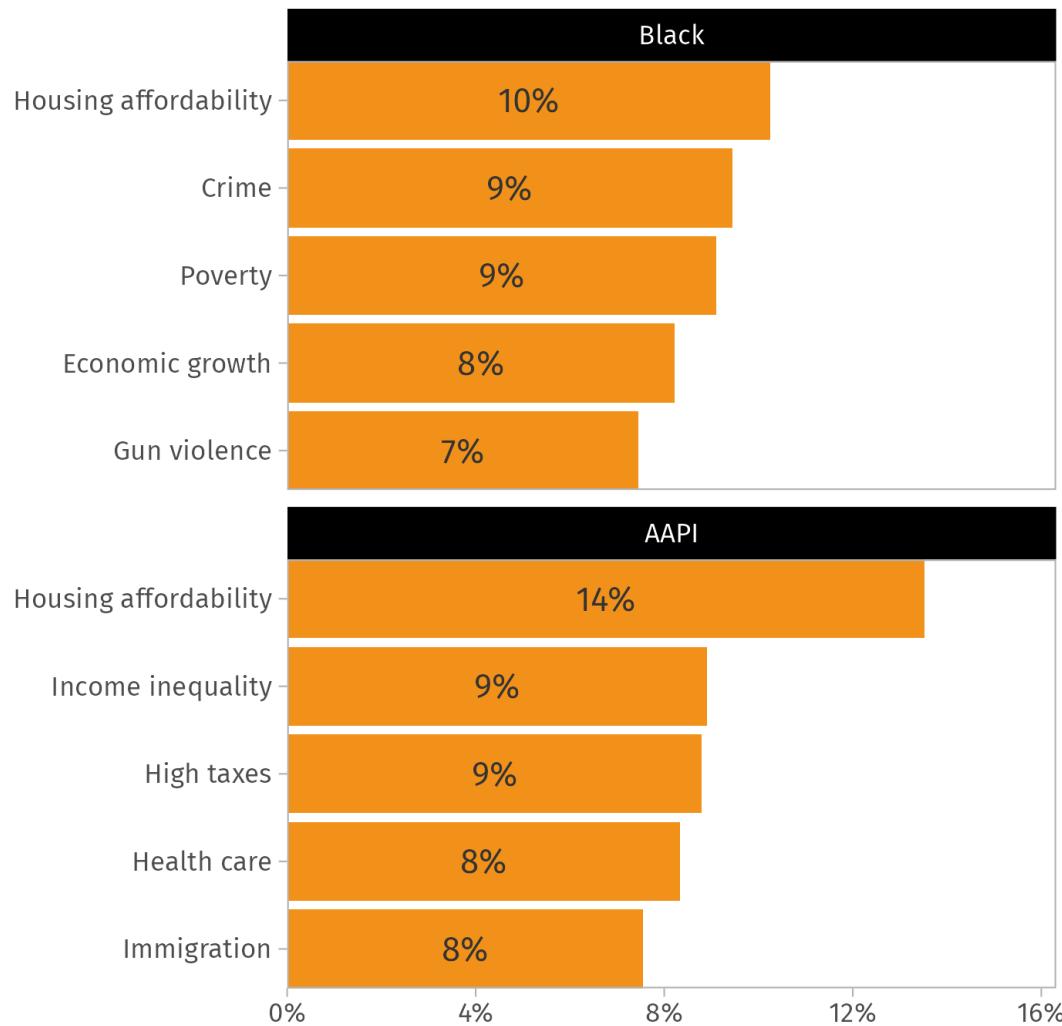
Top 3 choices for each group shown



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## What is the greatest issue facing your community?

Breakdown by race/ethnicity | Top 5 choices for each group shown

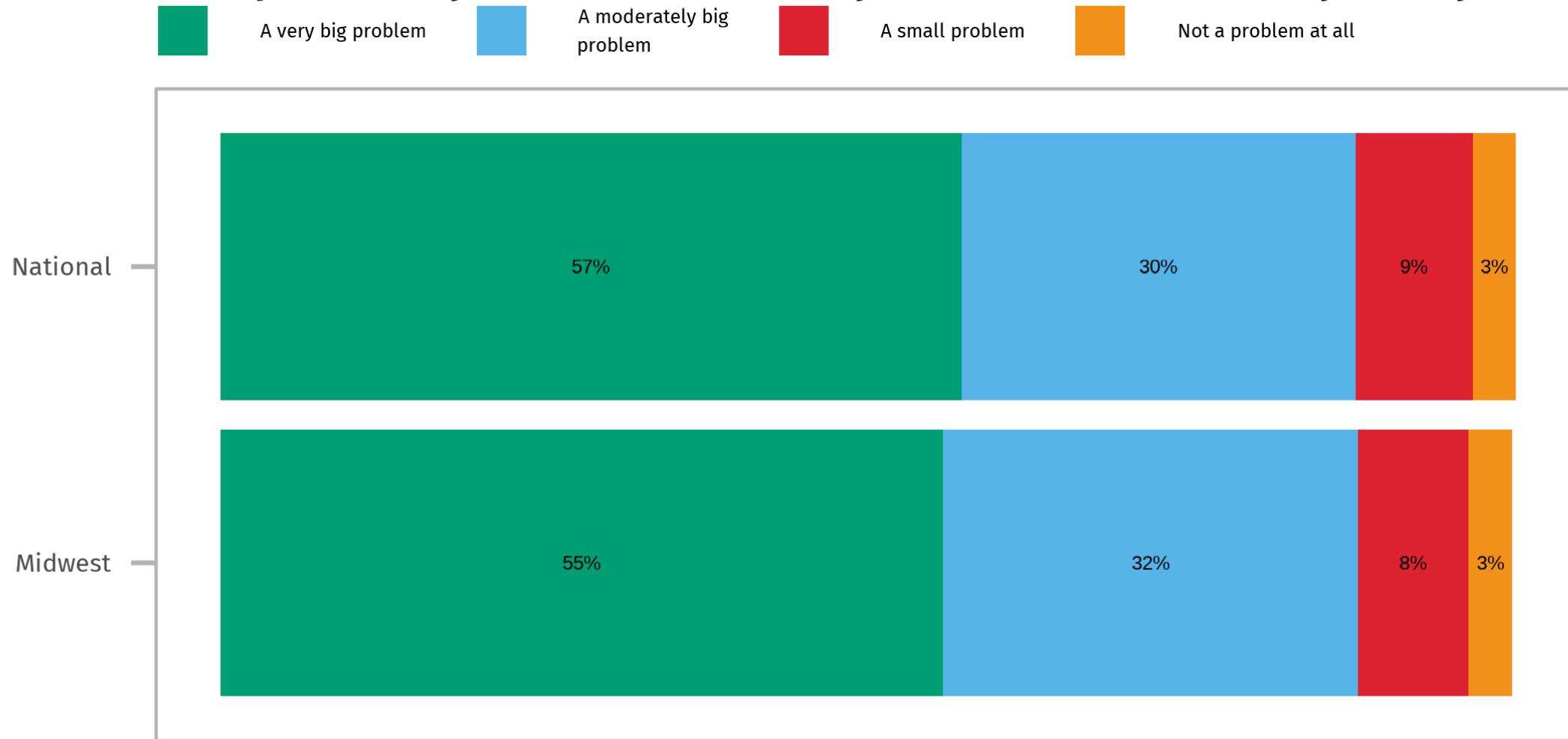


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# Affordability Concerns

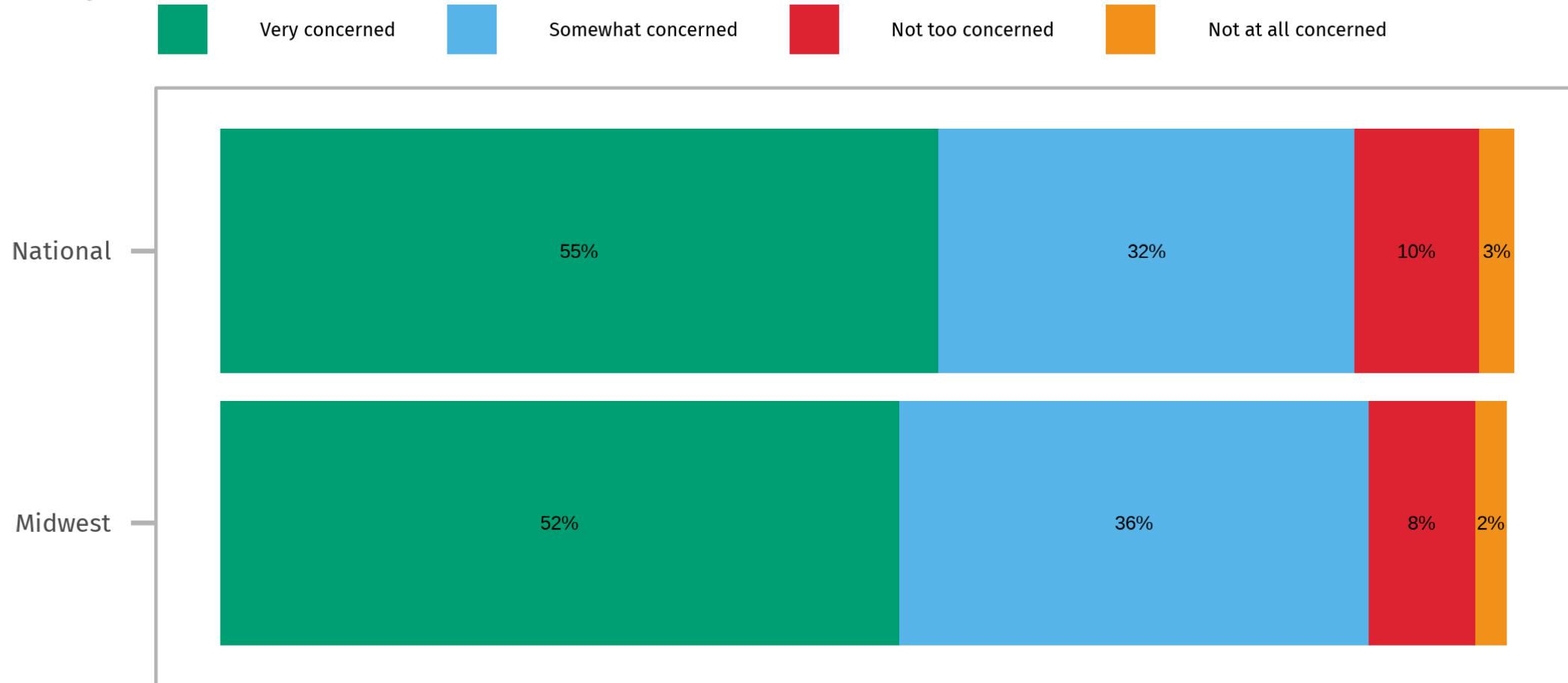
## How much of a problem do you think the affordability of health care in the country is today?



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

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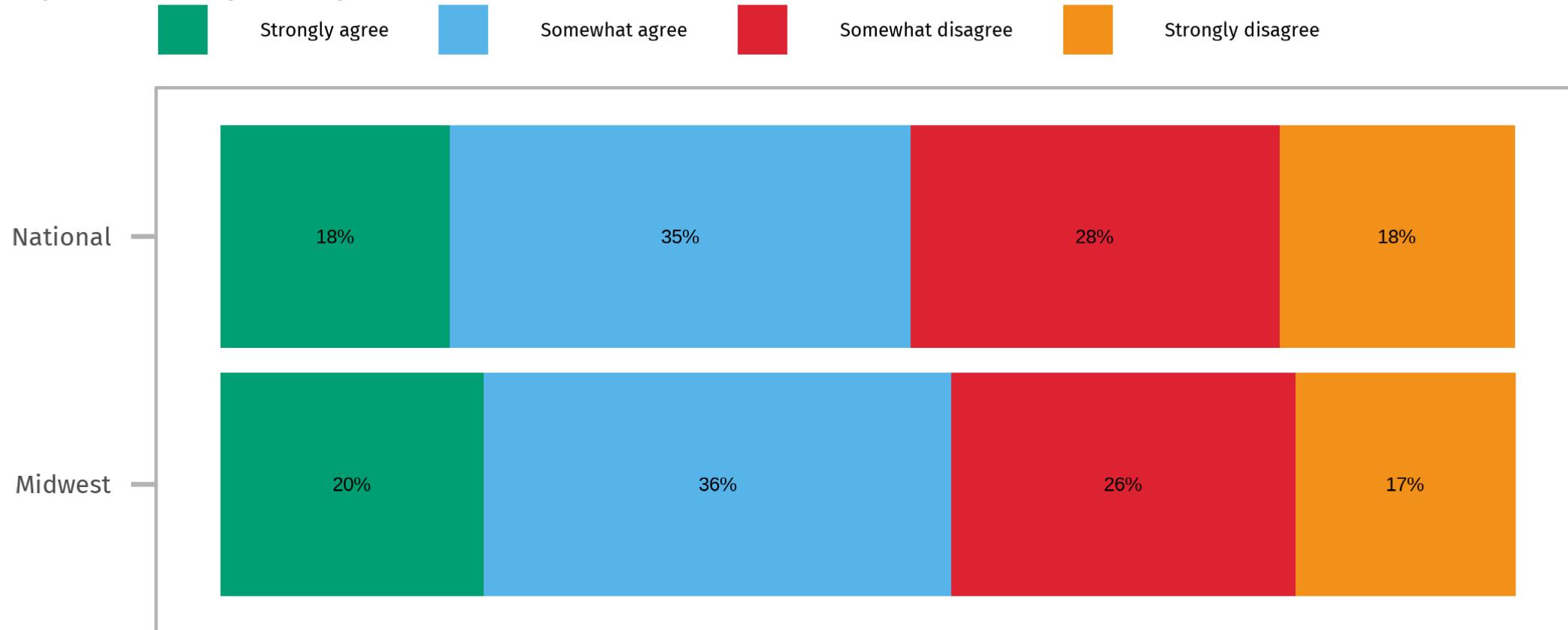
## How concerned, if at all, are you about the price of food and consumer goods in the country today?



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

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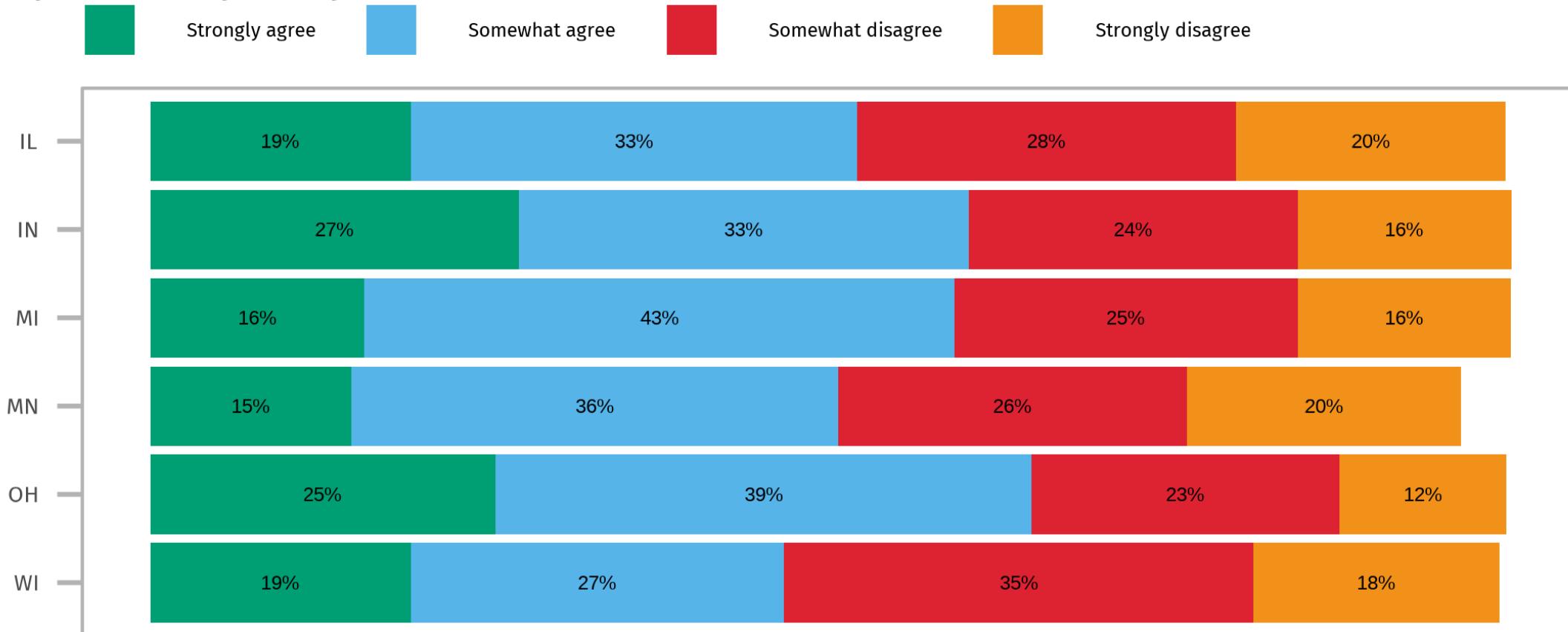
**How much do you agree with the following statement: I am less concerned about my democratic rights, such as voting, free speech, due process, than I am about the economic well-being of myself and my family.**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

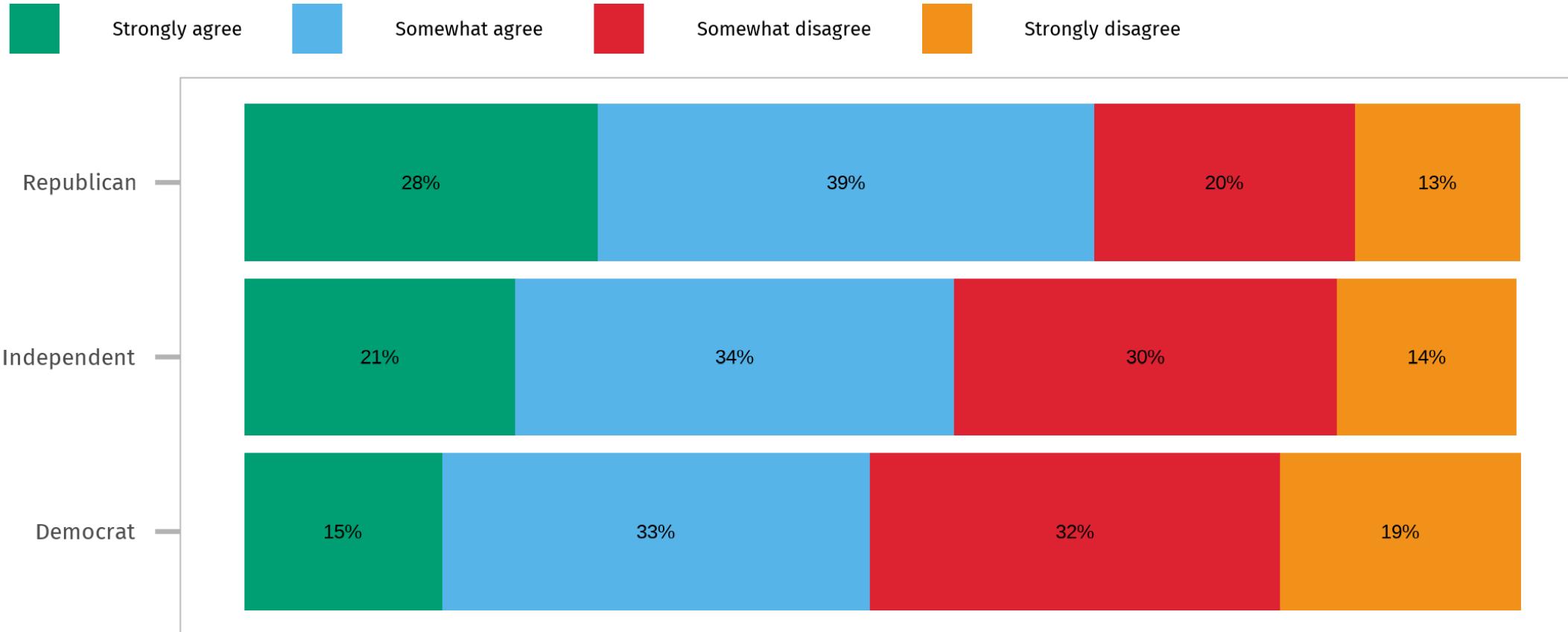
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**How much do you agree with the following statement: I am less concerned about my democratic rights, such as voting, free speech, due process, than I am about the economic well-being of myself and my family.**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 4093)

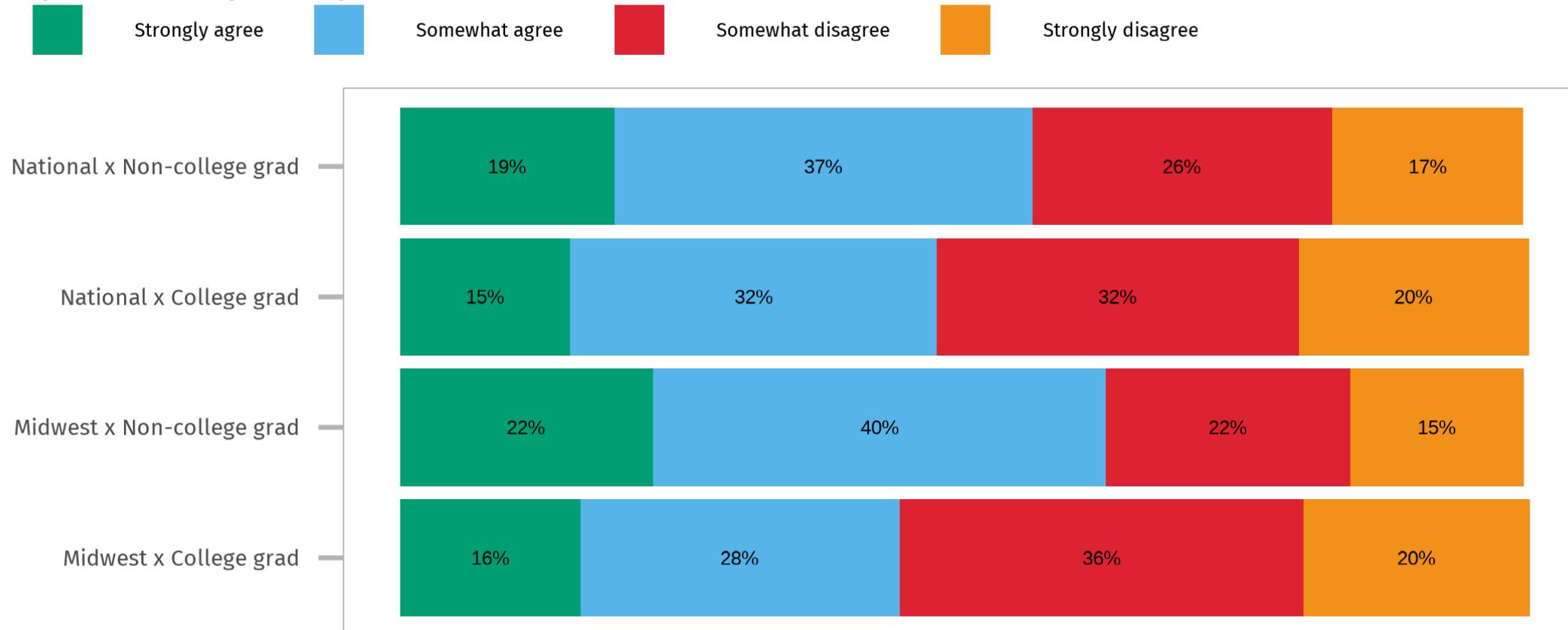
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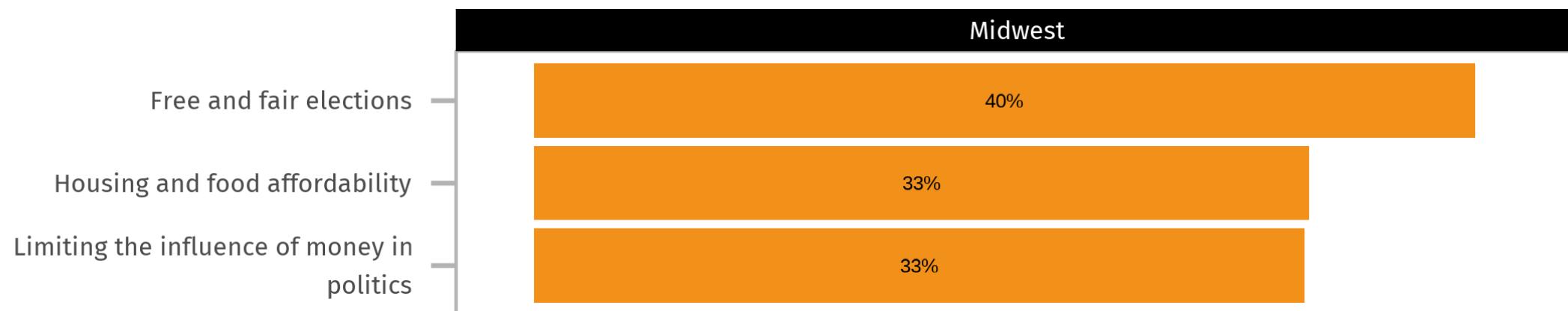
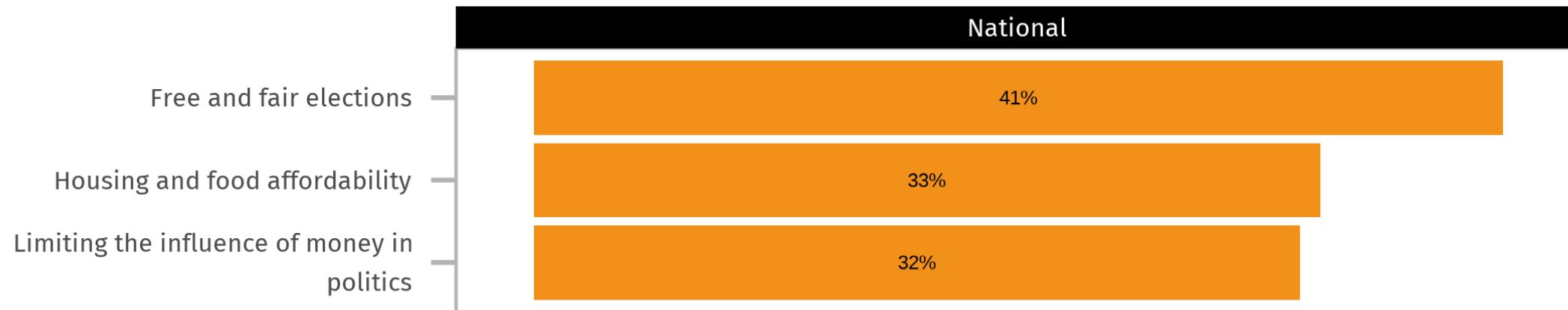


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## From the list below, please choose the three most important factors needed for democracy to work well in the United States.

Top 3 choices for each group shown

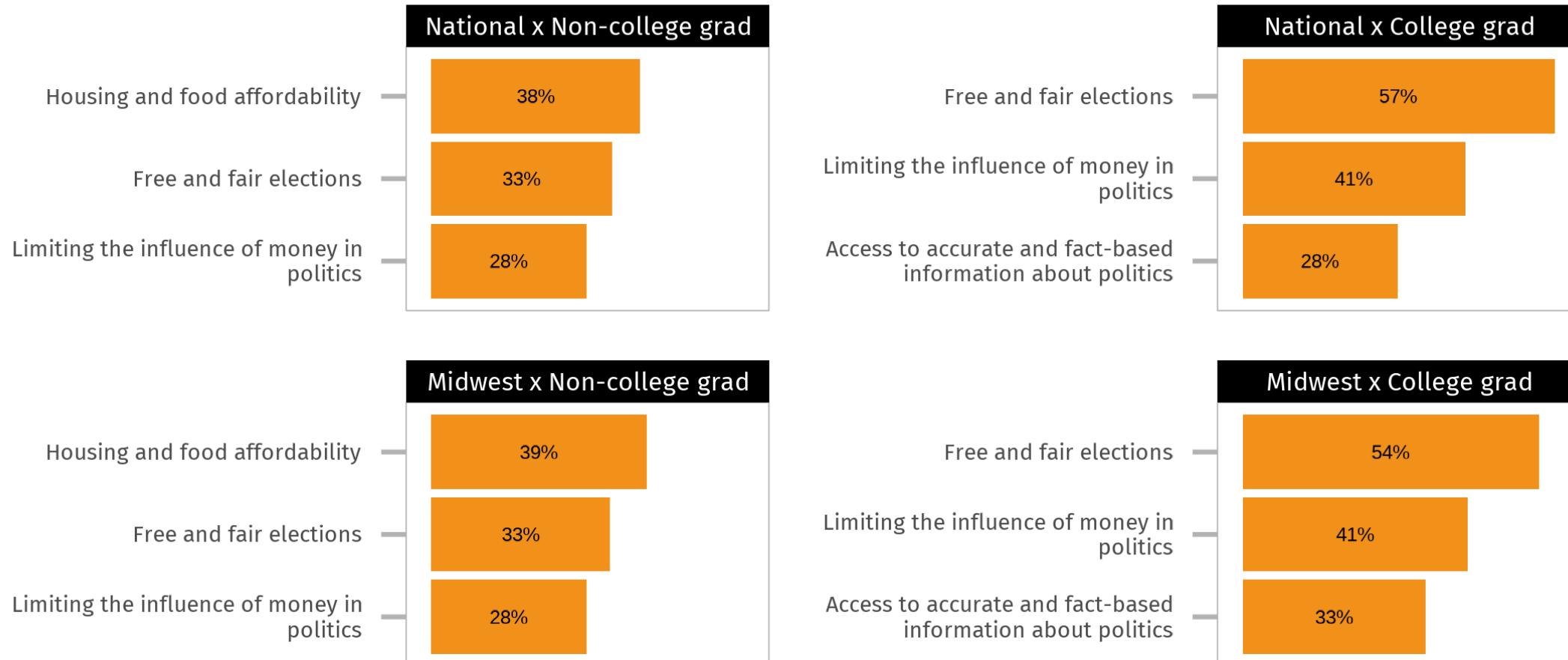


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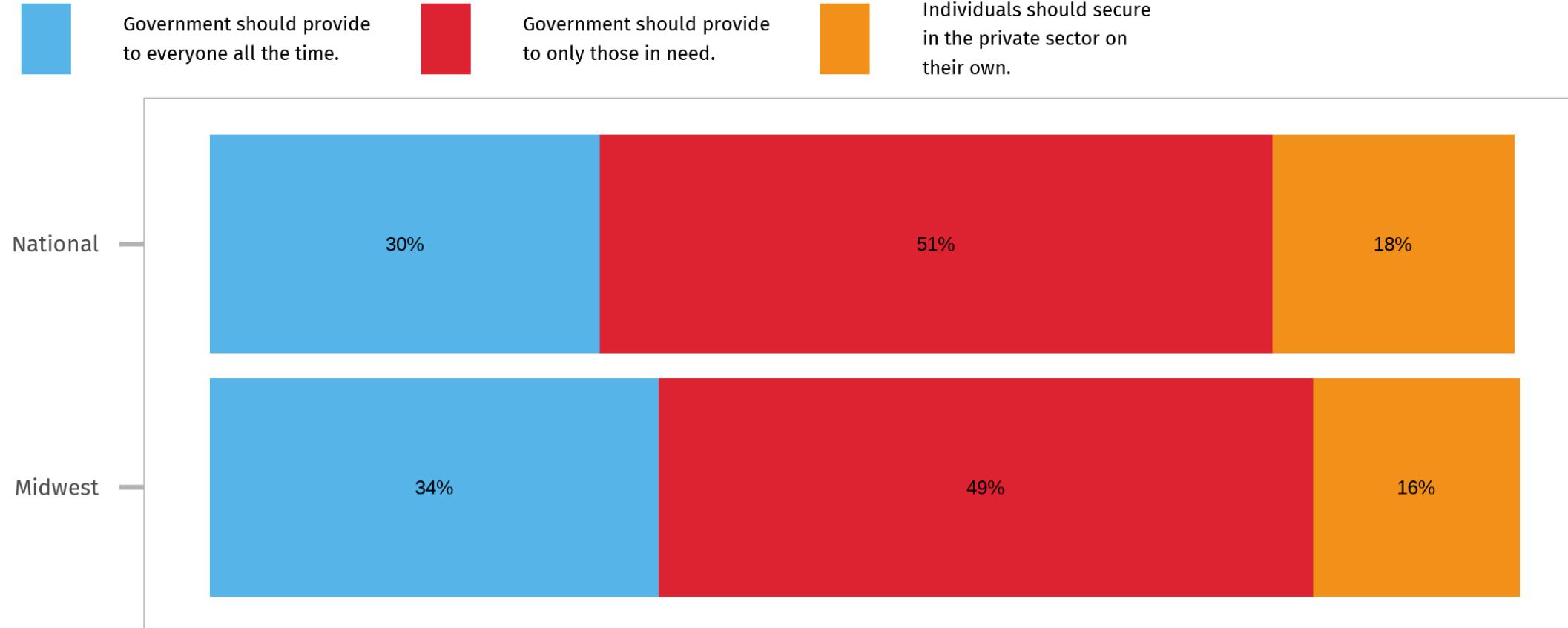
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# An Expansive State: Should the government guarantee resources and support?

# Government Guarantees

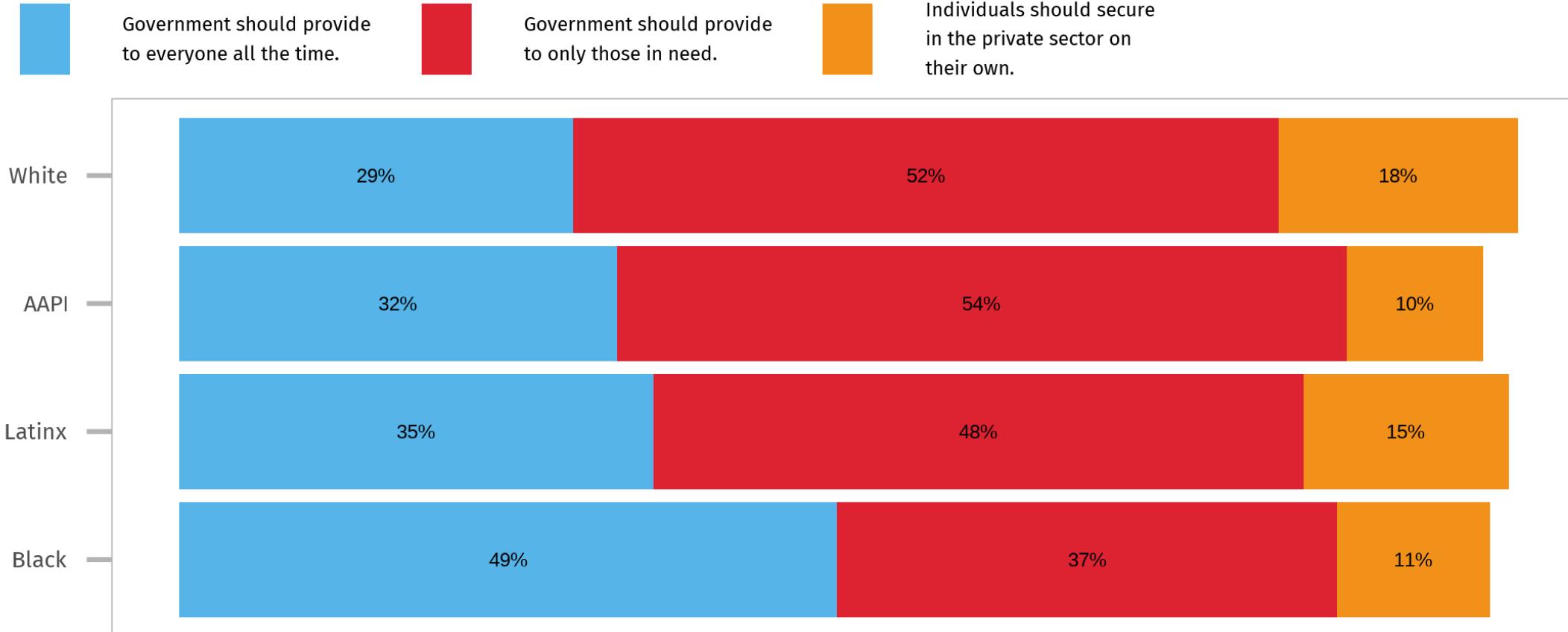
- Below is a list of policies for which there was majority or near majority agreement among national and Midwest respondents that everyone should be granted or guaranteed these services or support:
  - K-12 education
  - College Education: (national 48%; Midwest 52%)
  - Healthcare
  - Funding for Retirement: (national 48%; Midwest 52%)
  - Paid Family Leave
  - Paid Medical Leave

**Please indicate which items from the following list should be provided to everyone all the time, only provided to those in need, or individuals should secure them in the private sector on their own. [Housing]**



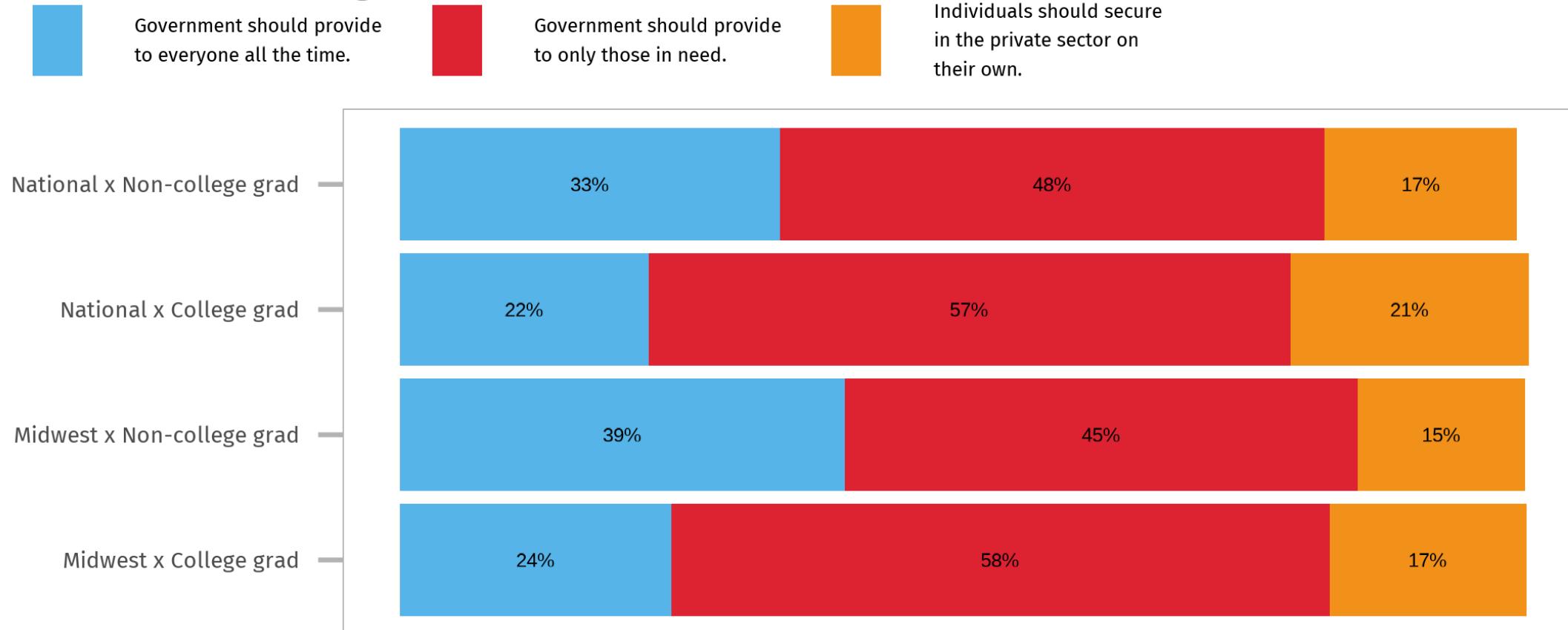
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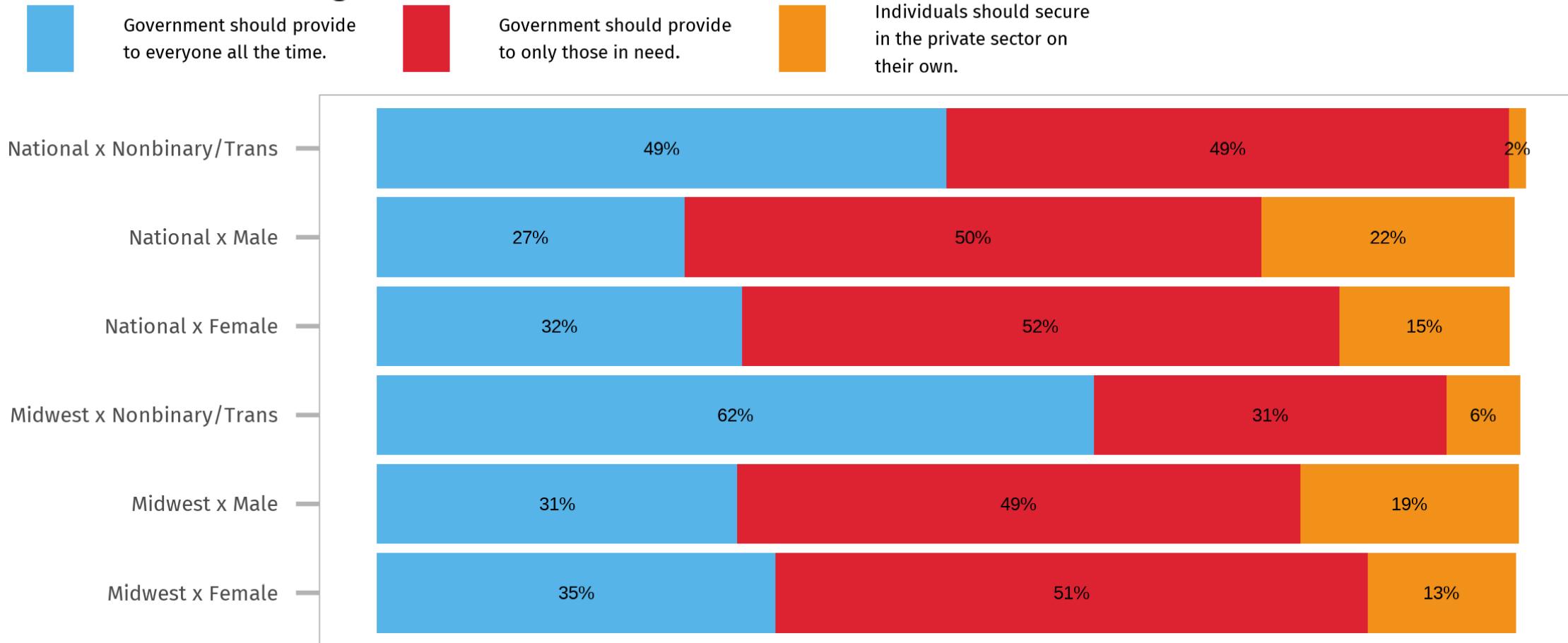
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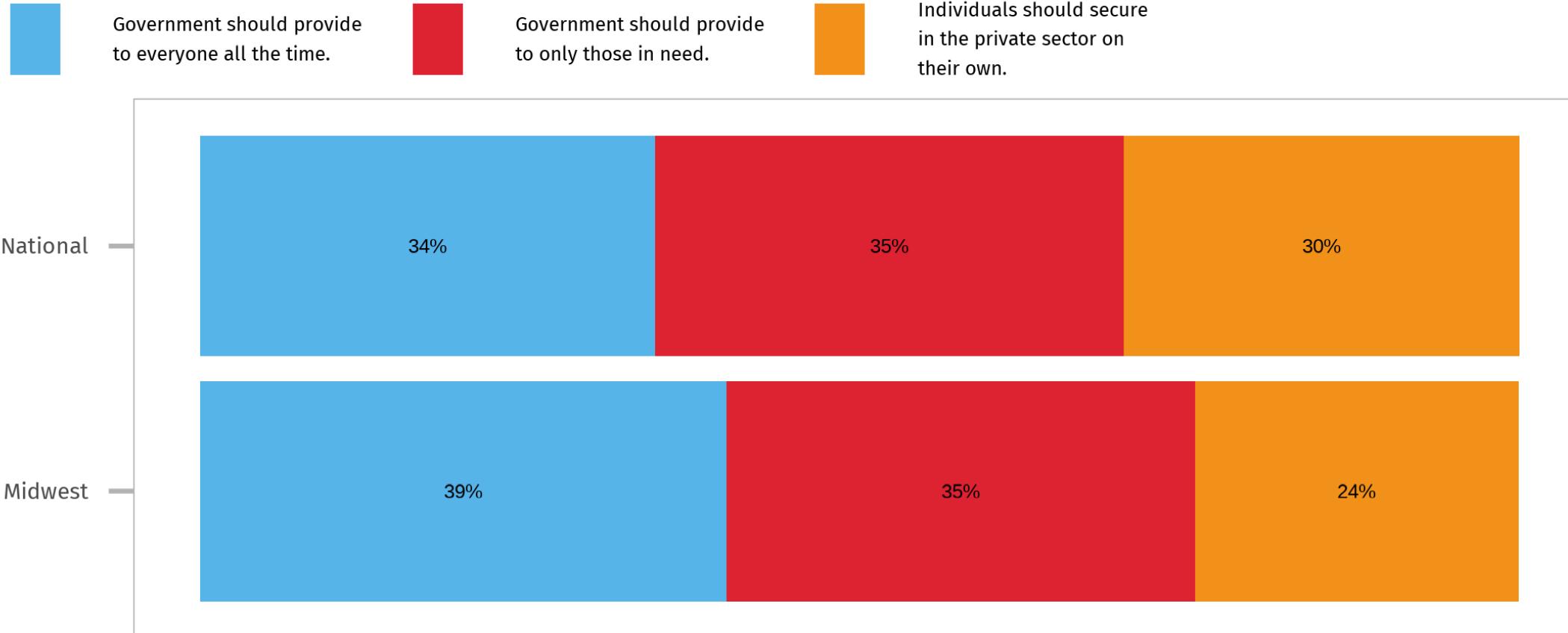
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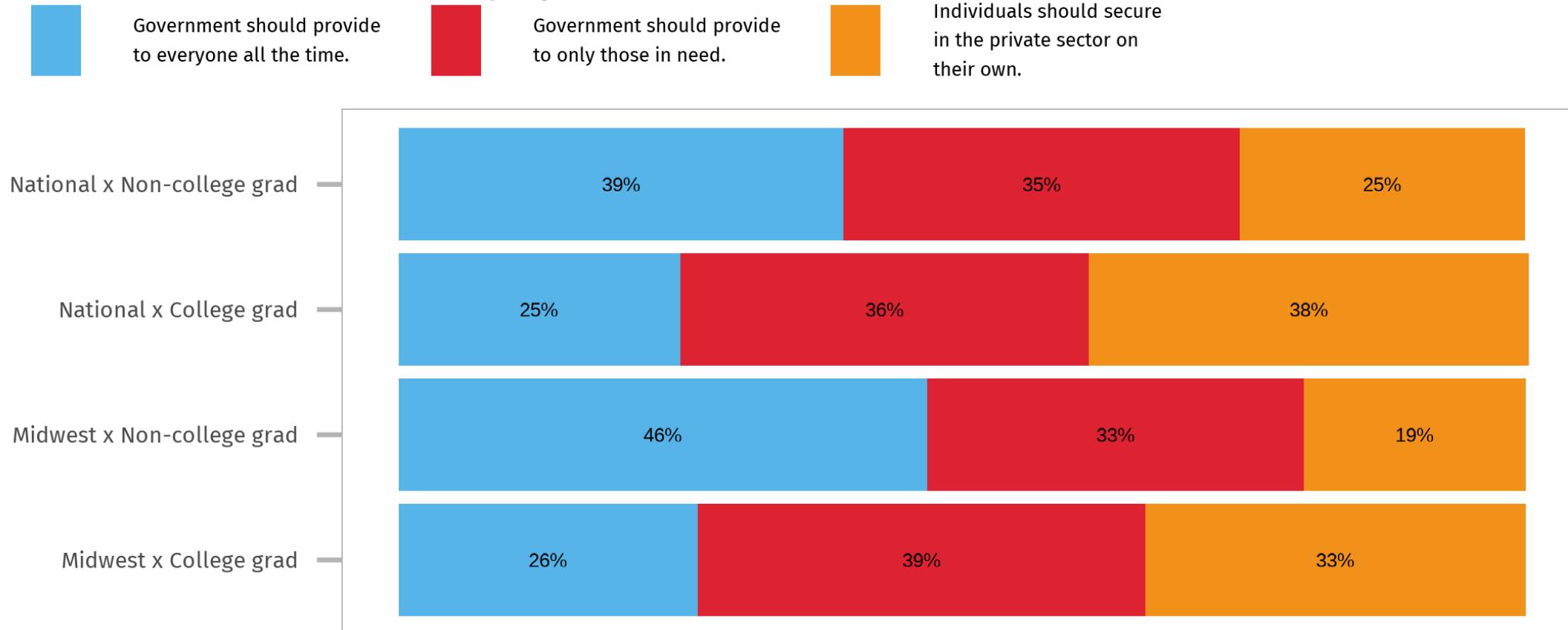
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**Please indicate which items from the following list should be provided to everyone all the time, only provided to those in need, or individuals should secure them in the private sector on their own. [Guaranteed Employment]**



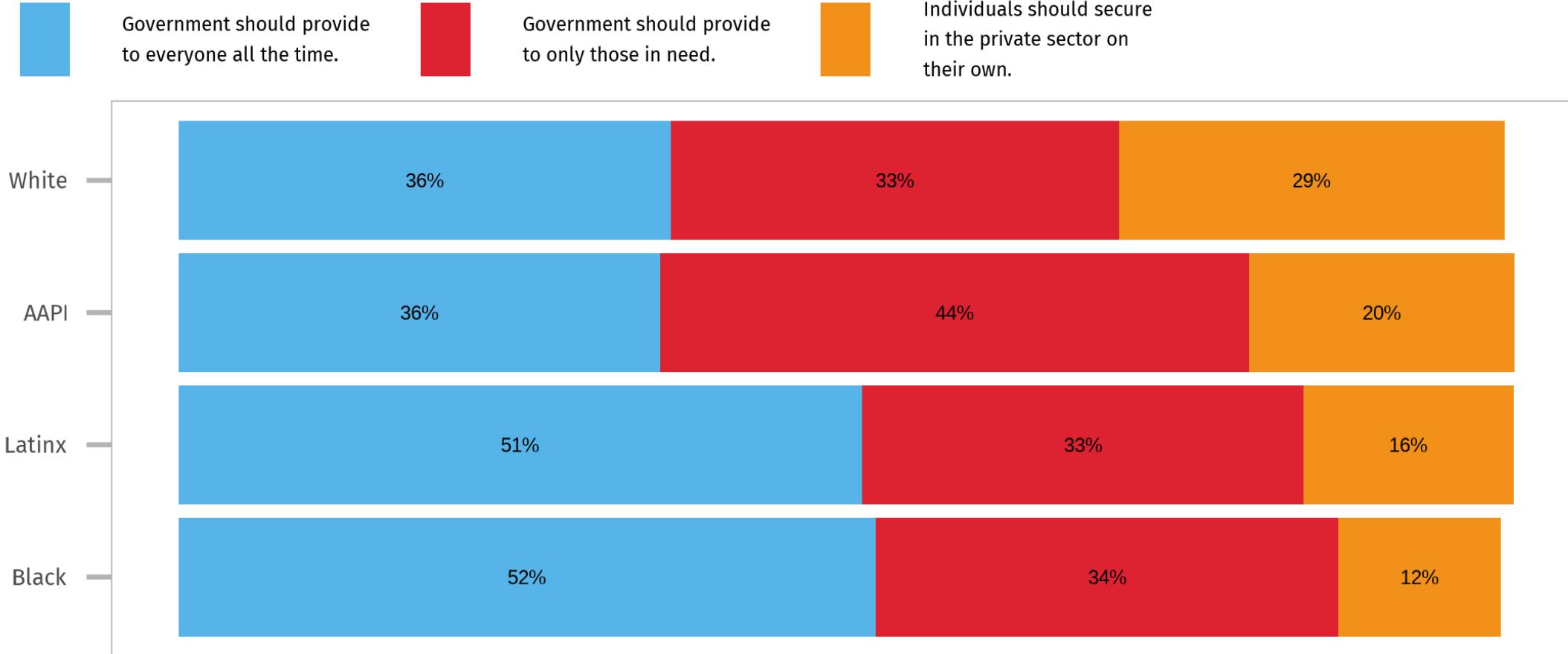
Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

**Please indicate which items from the following list should be provided to everyone all the time, only provided to those in need, or individuals should secure them in the private sector on their own. [Guaranteed Employment]**



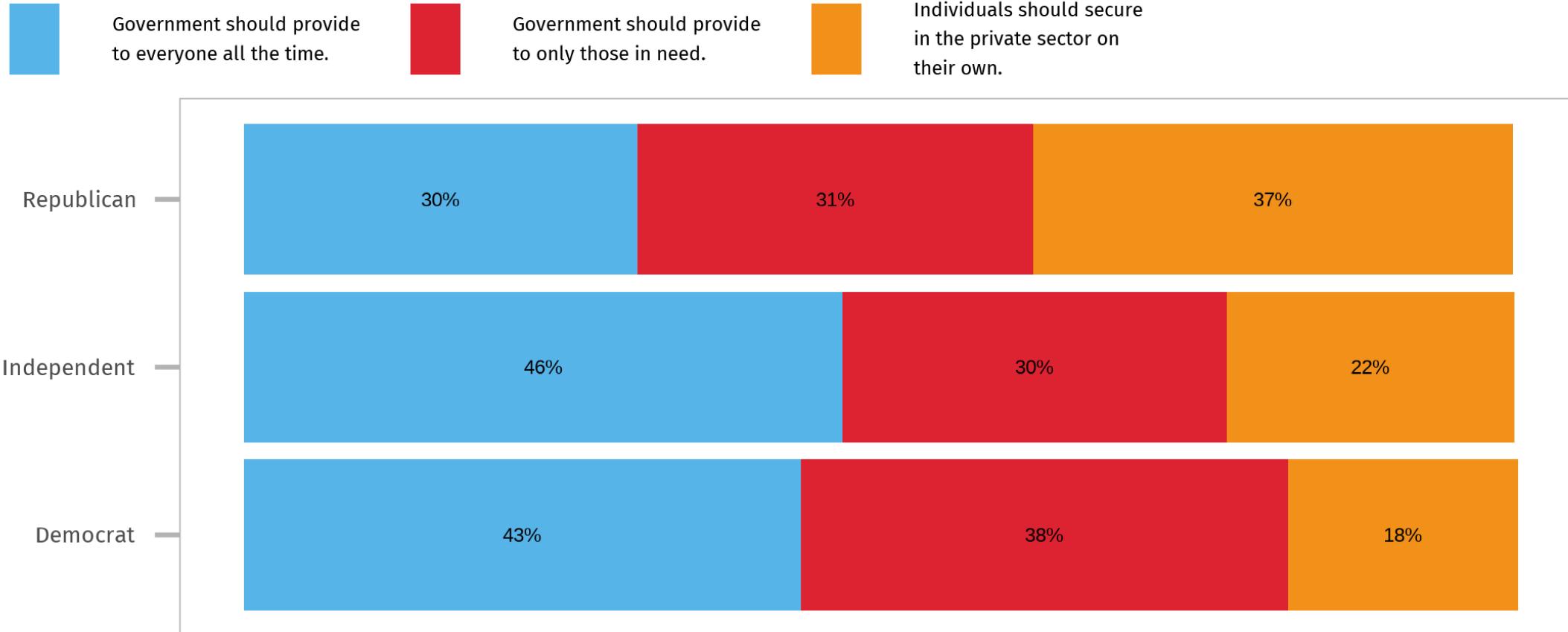
Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

**Please indicate which items from the following list should be provided to everyone all the time, only provided to those in need, or individuals should secure them in the private sector on their own. [Guaranteed Employment]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 4093)

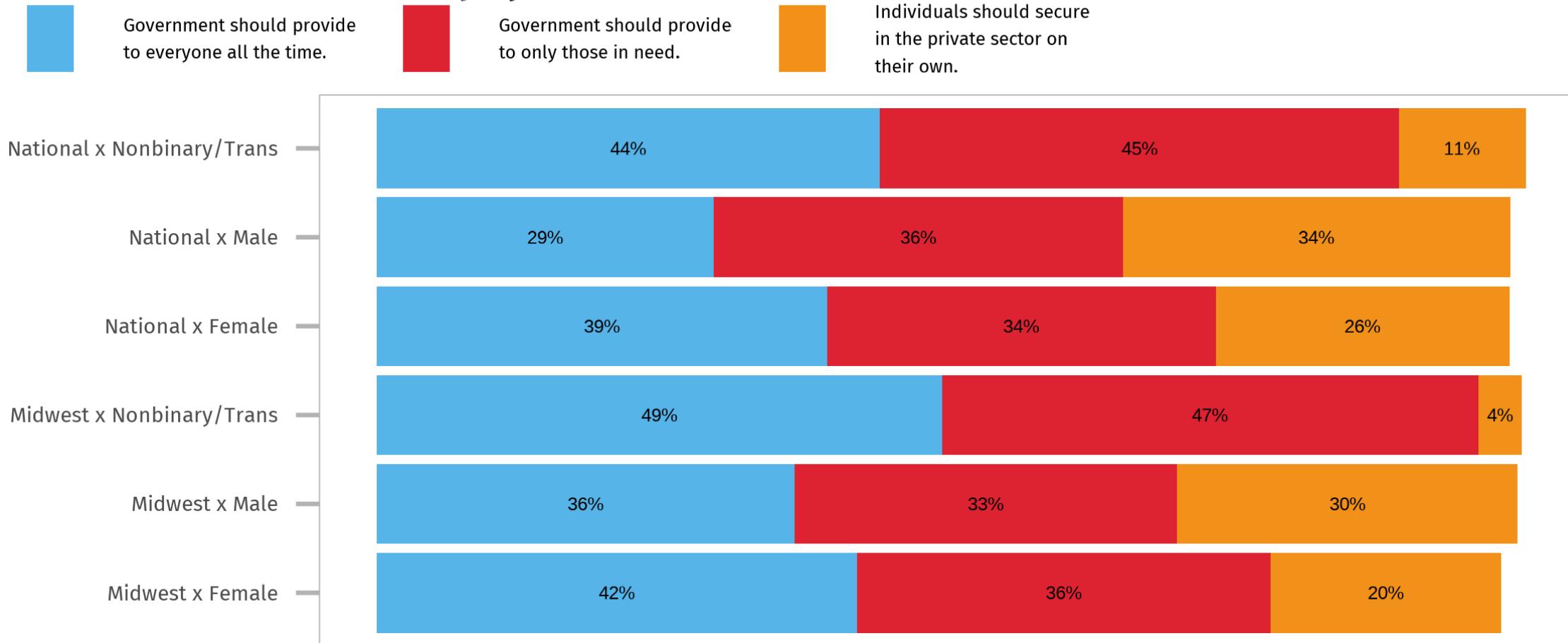
**Please indicate which items from the following list should be provided to everyone all the time, only provided to those in need, or individuals should secure them in the private sector on their own. [Guaranteed Employment]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 4093)

genFORW>RD

**Please indicate which items from the following list should be provided to everyone all the time, only provided to those in need, or individuals should secure them in the private sector on their own. [Guaranteed Employment]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

genFORW>RD

# Trust in Institutions

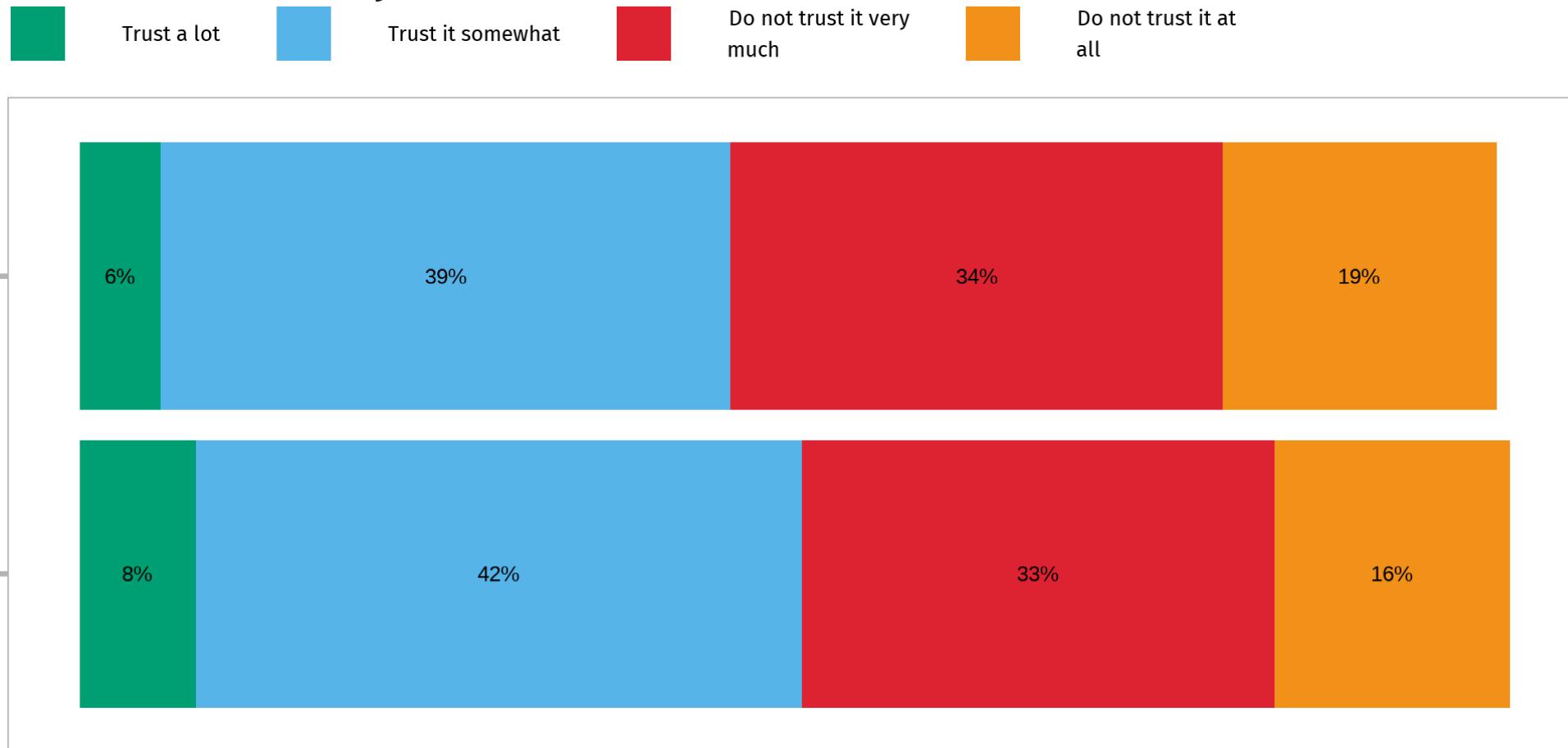
# Institutions/Groups that majority of Americans say they trust

- Print news (Midwest only; less than half the National sample trust)
- The military
- The police (Midwest only, less than half trust in the National sample)
- The American people
- Scientists
- Universities

# Institutions/Groups that majority of Americans say they do not trust

- Elected officials
- Presidential administration
- Congress
- Supreme Court
- ICE
- Corporations
- Large donors to political campaigns
- Social media
- Artificial Intelligence
- Television news

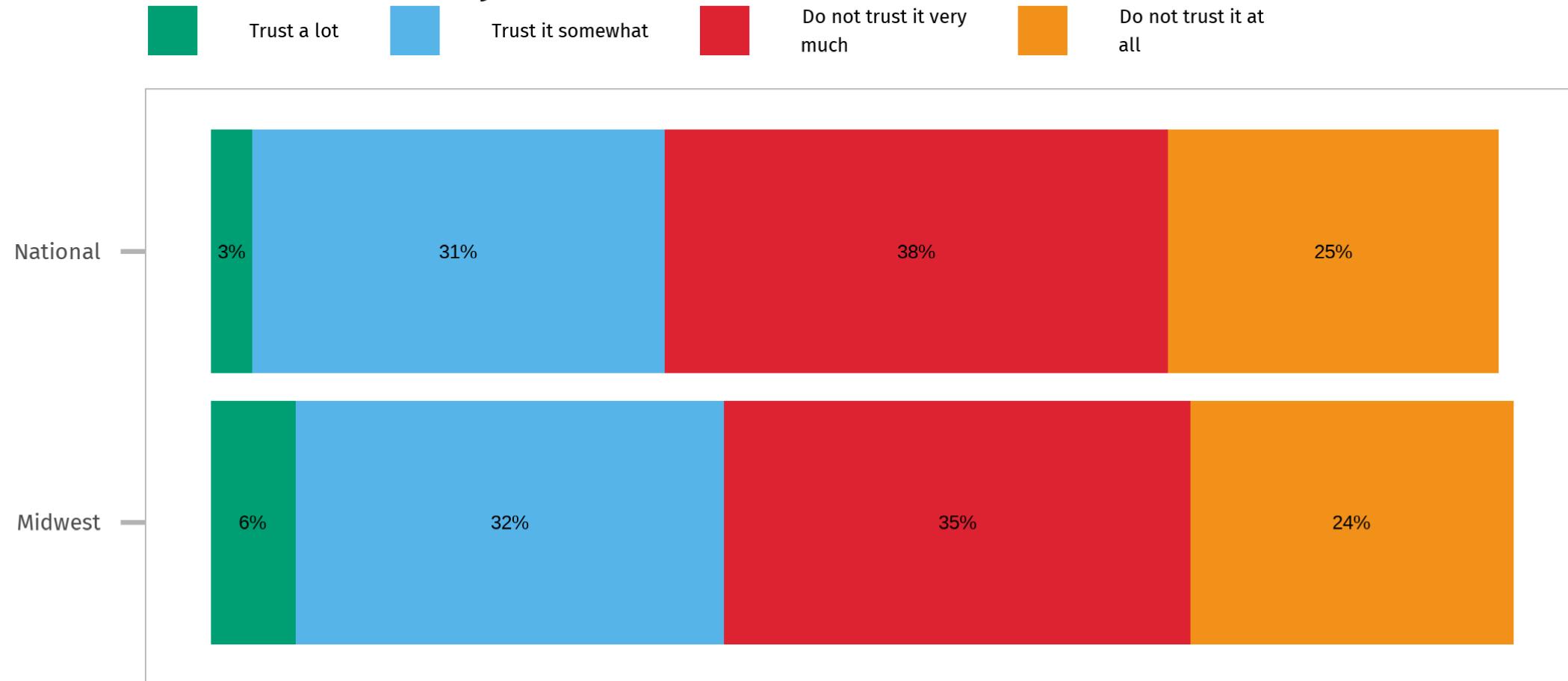
**For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you trust it a lot, trust it somewhat, do not trust it very much, or do not trust it at all? [Print news]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

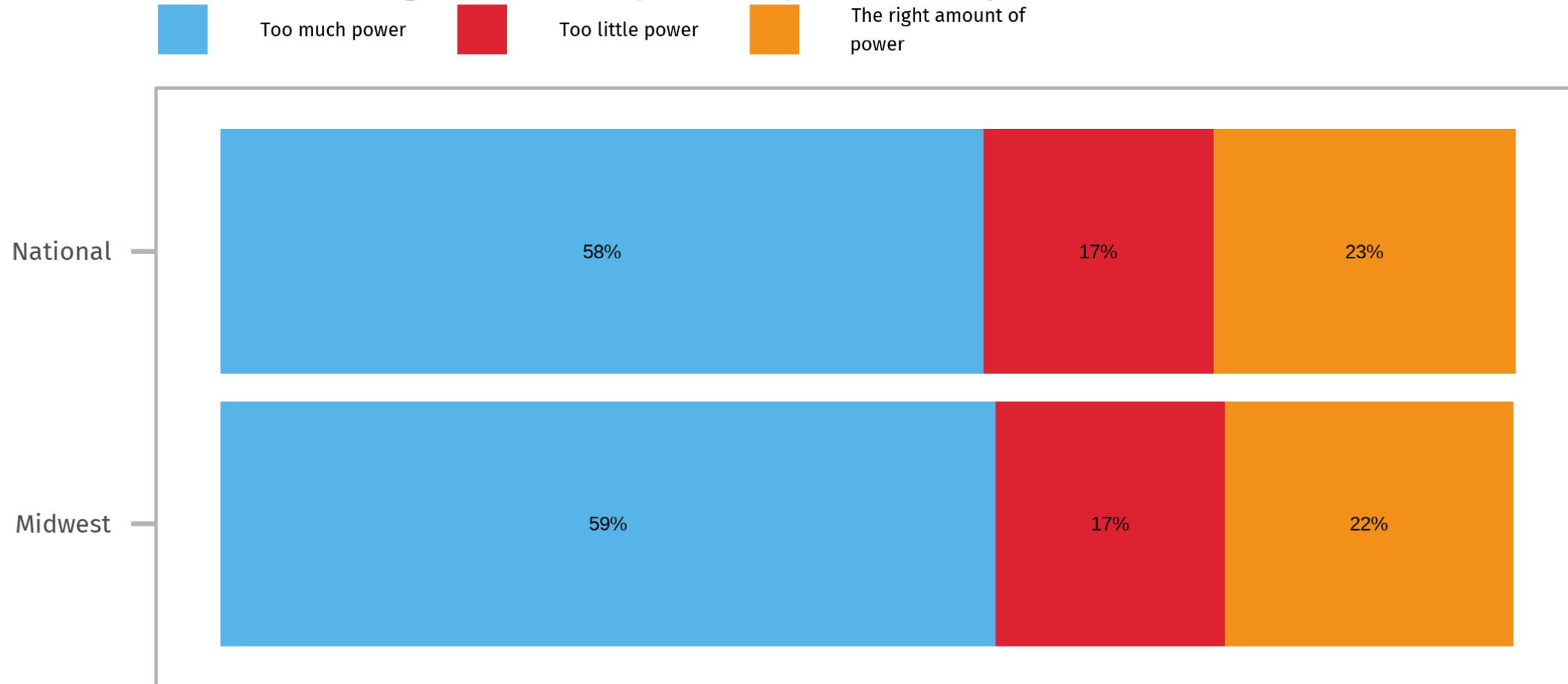
genFORW>RD

**For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you trust it a lot, trust it somewhat, do not trust it very much, or do not trust it at all? [Television news]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

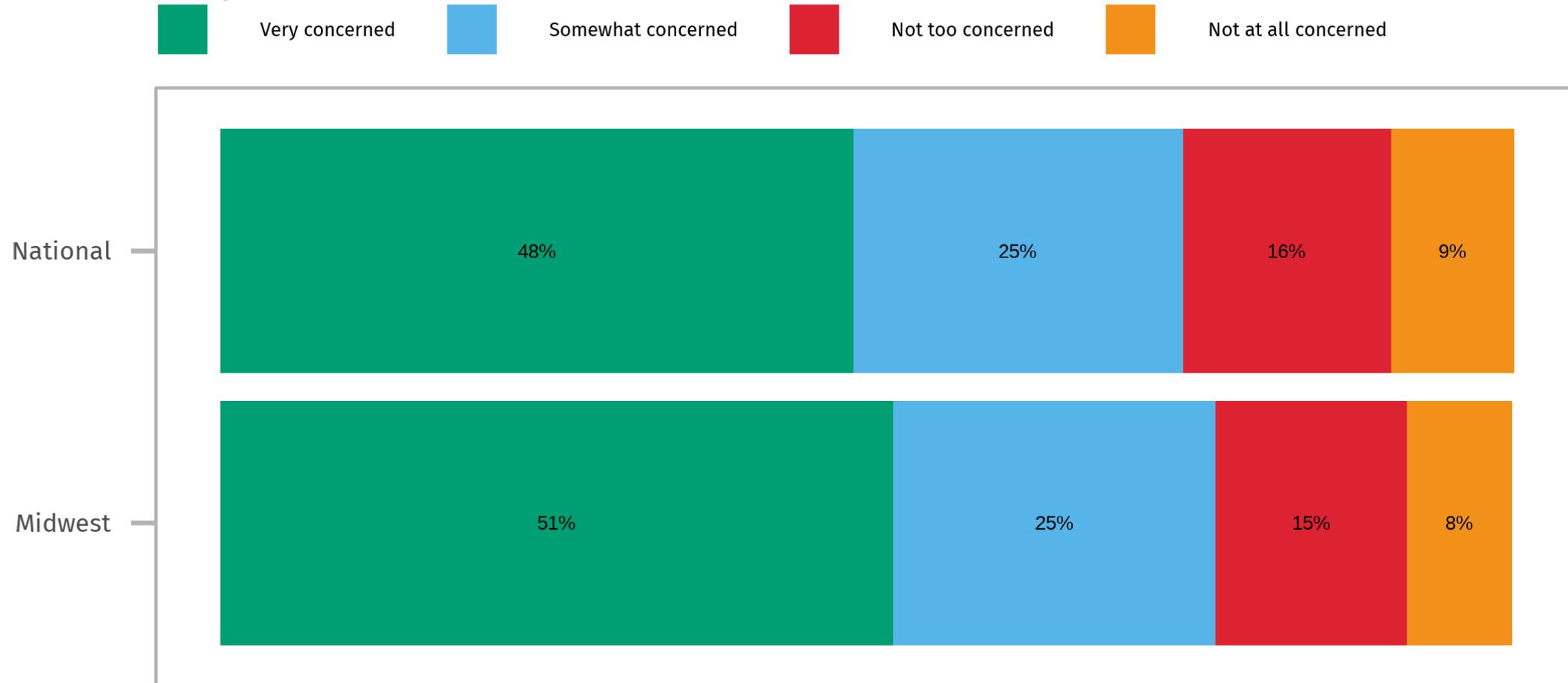
**Thinking about the groups and institutions listed below, please indicate whether they have too much, too little, or the right amount of power in politics today? [The Media]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

genFORW>RD

## How concerned are you, if at all, that the President will use their power to control what the media can say and do?



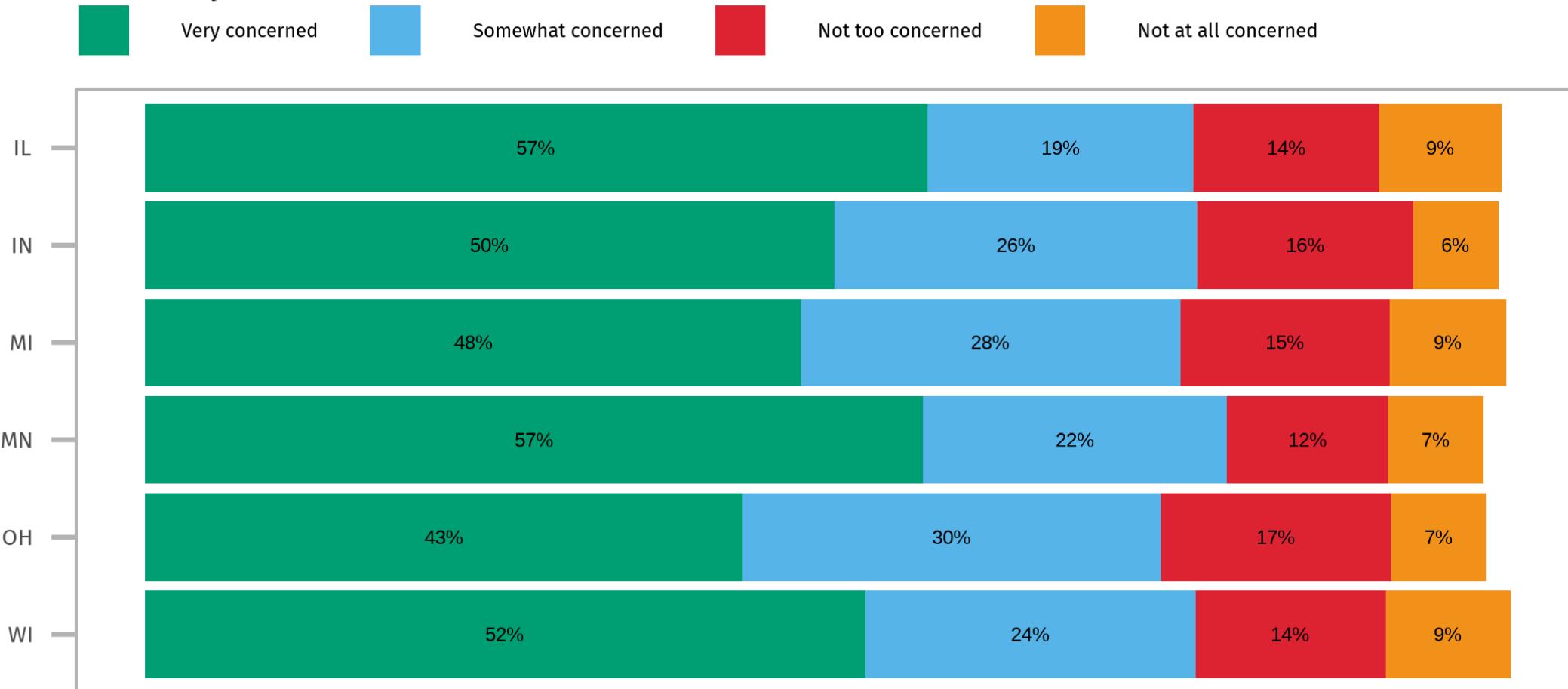
Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

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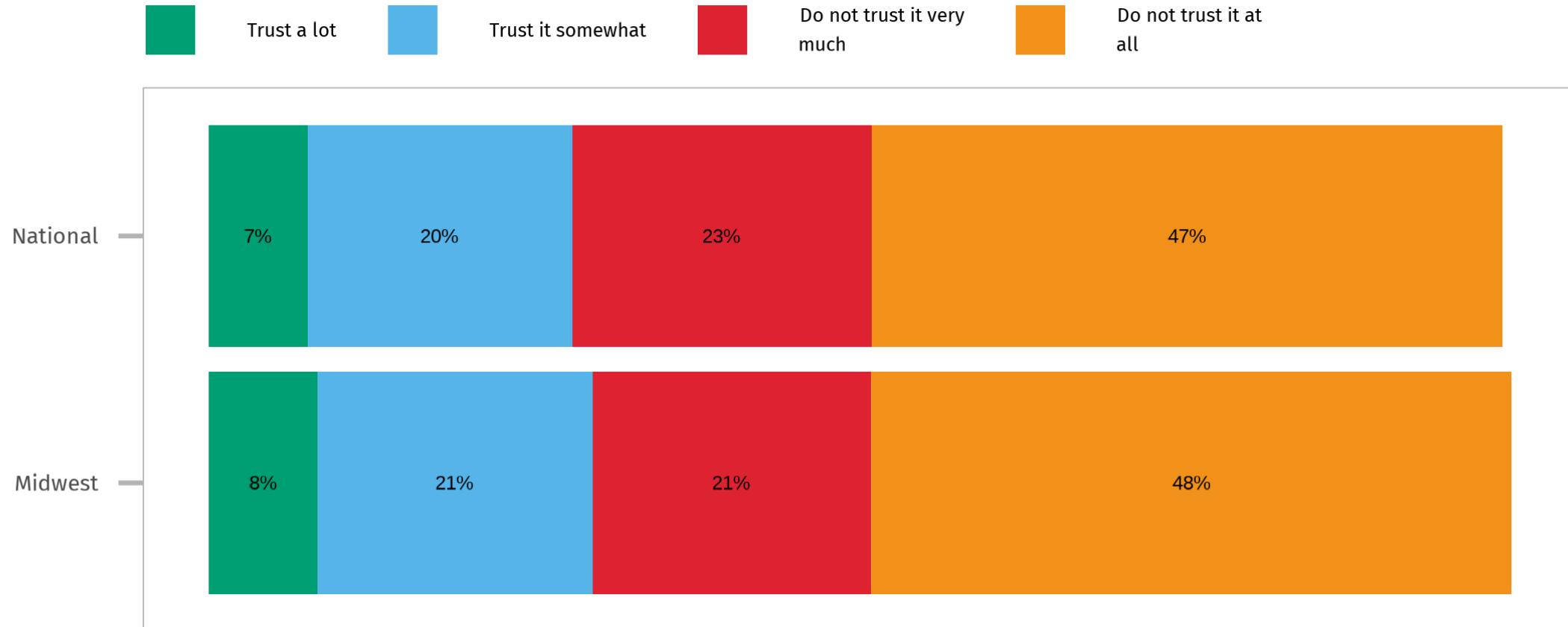
## How concerned are you, if at all, that the President will use their power to control what the media can say and do?



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 4093)

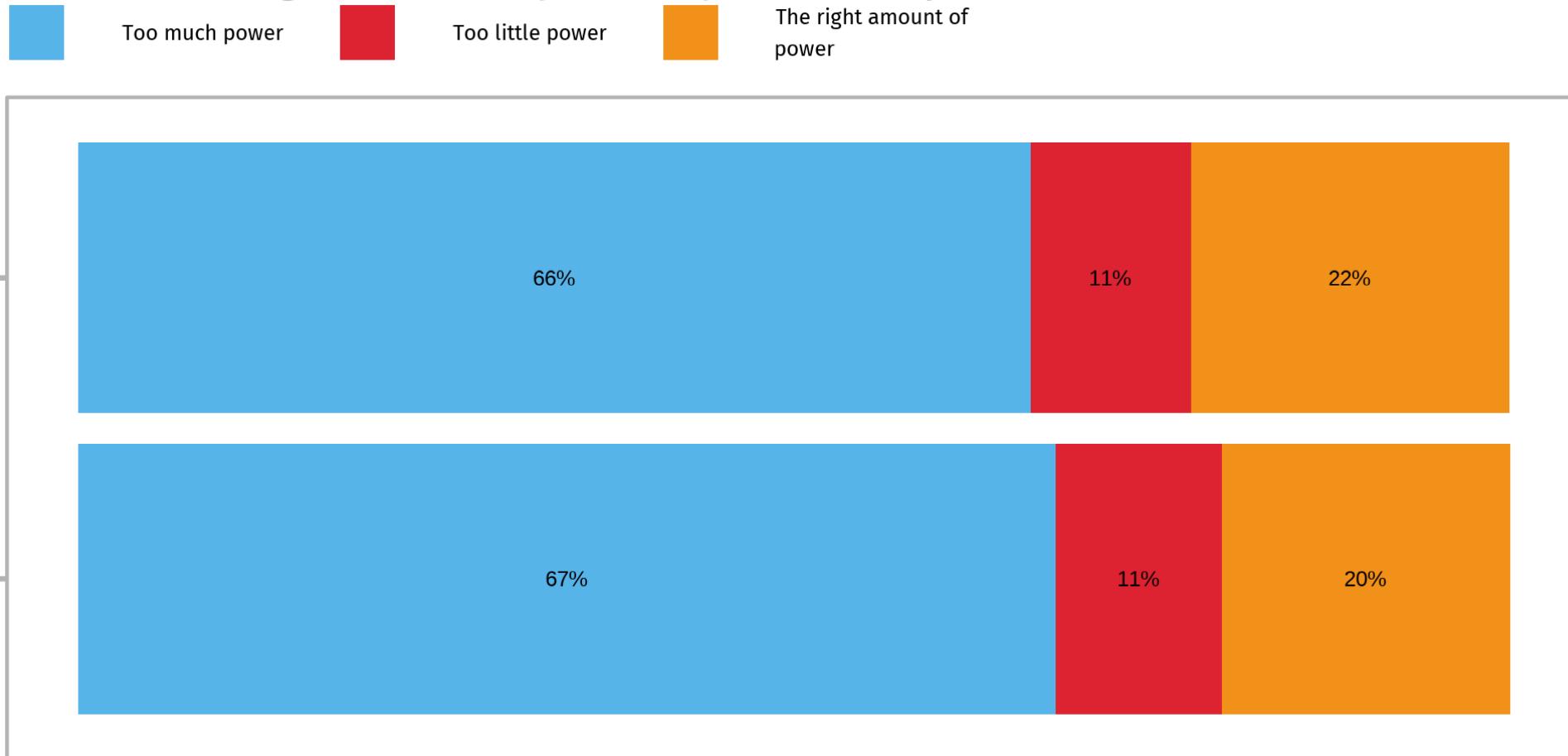
# ICE: Immigration and Customs Enforcement

**For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you trust it a lot, trust it somewhat, do not trust it very much, or do not trust it at all? [Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

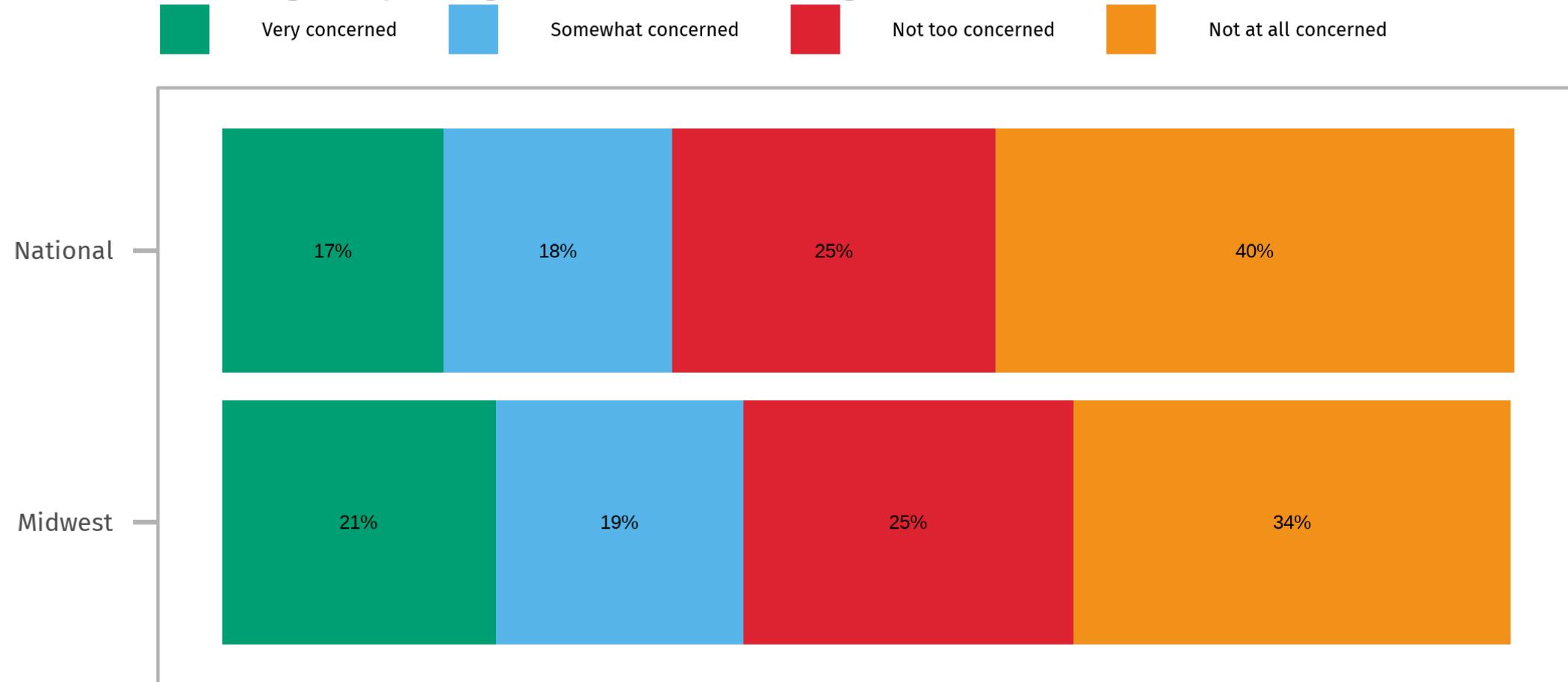
**Thinking about the groups and institutions listed below, please indicate whether they have too much, too little, or the right amount of power in politics today? [ICE]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

genFORW>RD

**Thinking about the work of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), how concerned are you with the following? [Deporting undocumented immigrants who have committed violent crimes]**

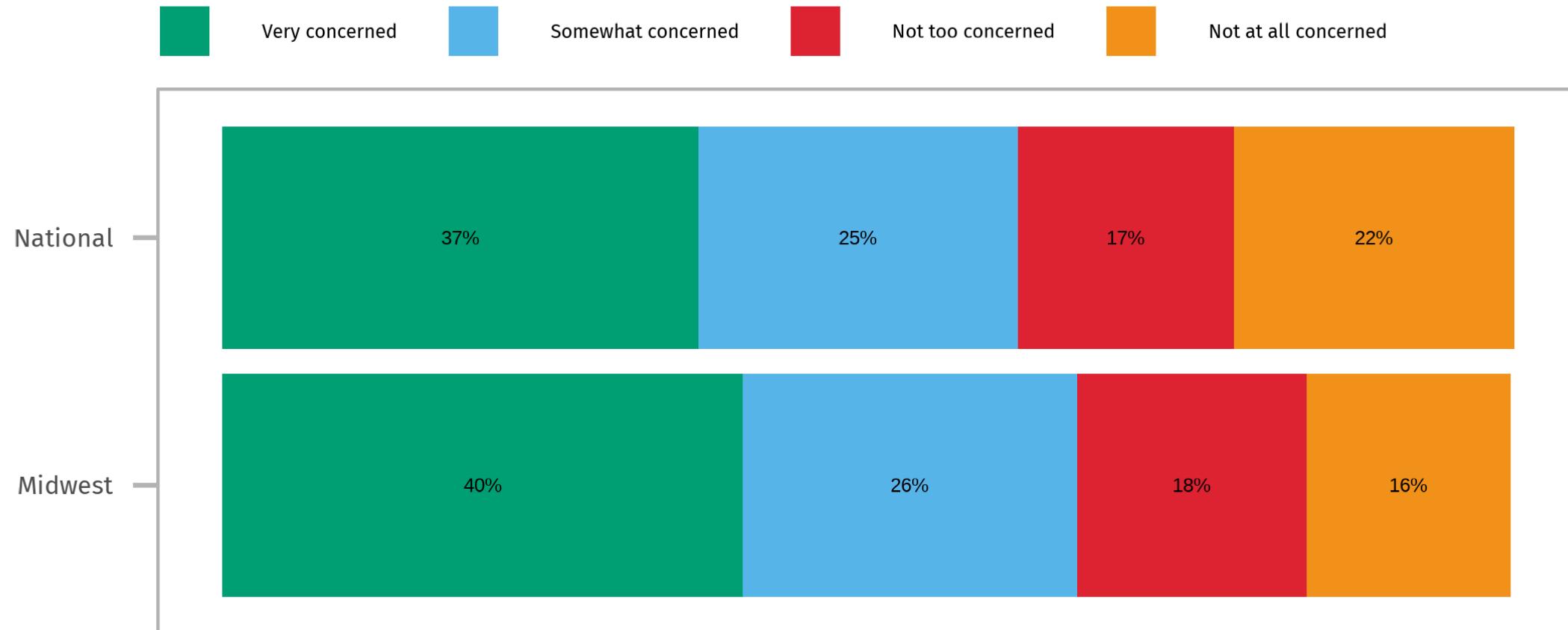


Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

genFORW>RD

genFORW>RD

**Thinking about the work of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), how concerned are you with the following? [Deporting undocumented immigrants who have committed minor crimes (such as traffic violations)]**

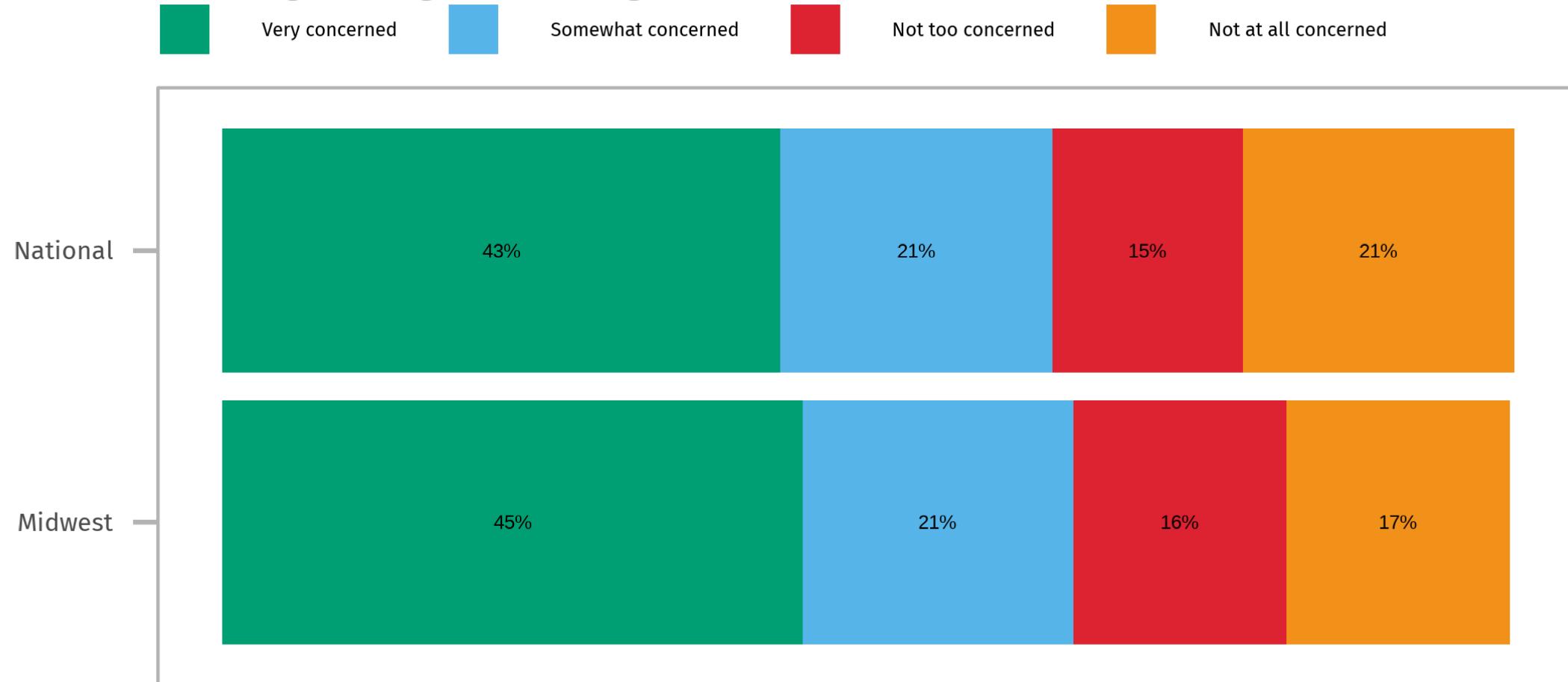


Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

genFORW>RD

genFORW>RD

## Thinking about the work of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), how concerned are you with the following? [ICE agents wearing masks]

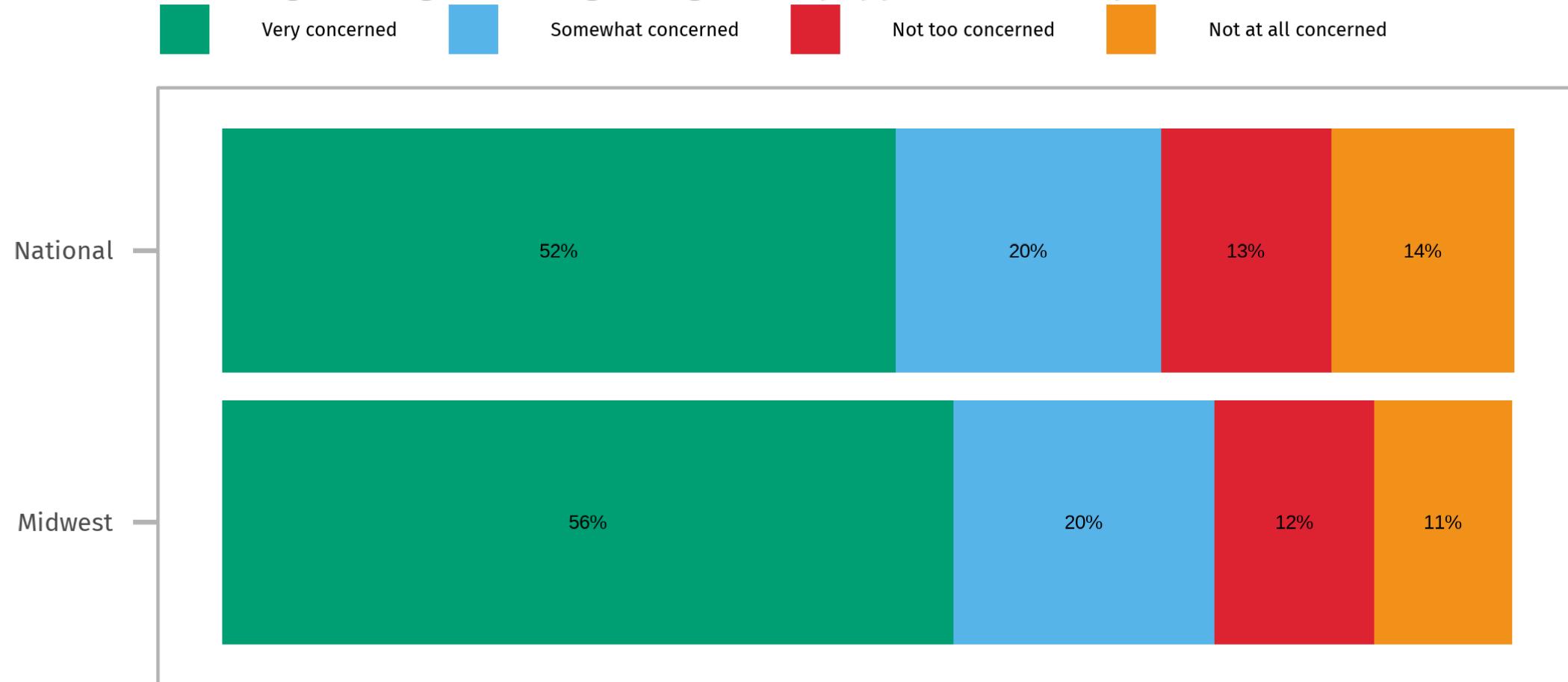


Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

genFORW>RD

genFORW>RD

**Thinking about the work of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), how concerned are you with the following? [ICE agents using tear gas and pepper bullets on protestors]**



Source: October 2025 survey (N = 5390)

genFORW>RD

genFORW>RD

# Summary:

## Young adults:

- Think our democracy is in crisis, but see it as the preferable governing system
- Believe in ideals of governance, but don't see them implemented today
- Believe economic issues to be some of the most important they and the country confront
- Are concerned about affordability issues, especially housing affordability
- Refuse to separate affordability issues from the working of a fully-functioning democracy
- Want the government to provide resources to those in need and in many cases to everyone
- Are distrustful of many democratic institutions, including ICE, and believe many have too much power

gen **FORW>RD**

Thank you!

Cathy J. Cohen and Devin Green

University of Chicago

February 4, 2026