

MINNESOTANS' VIEWS ON ABORTION

Results from a Statewide Survey of Minnesota Voters

Conducted by PerryUndem and Bellwether Consulting
May 29, 2019

INTRODUCTION + METHODS.



PerryUndem, a nonpartisan polling firm, and Bellwether Consulting, a Republican polling firm, conducted a statewide survey of Minnesota voters to examine opinions toward abortion.

The survey was conducted among $n = 1,010$ registered voters statewide from May 8 through 17, 2019. The survey was administered using YouGov's panel. The margin of sampling error is ± 3.7 percentage points.

The study was commissioned by Gender Justice, a nonprofit legal and policy advocacy organization devoted to addressing the causes and consequences of gender inequality, both locally and nationally.

KEY FINDINGS.



1

While the national discussion on abortion heats up, a large majority of Minnesota voters (82%) thinks the issue should not be so political or politicized. By wide margins, Minnesota voters prefer that women and their doctors make decisions around abortion over politicians.

2

Seven in ten voters (70%) agree with the Minnesota Supreme Court's ruling that "the government may not put its thumb on the scale in favor of one pregnancy outcome (carrying a pregnancy to term) over another (abortion)."

3

Abortion is not an issue that most Minnesota voters struggle with or feel torn about (77%), despite holding concurrent views: 66% agree that "abortion is killing a life or potential life" and 74% agree that "people should be able to access abortion care without the government interfering."

4

About seven in ten Minnesota voters (69%) say they do not think about abortion as a religious issue for them personally. Three-quarters (78%) agree with the statement: "I don't want one group's religious beliefs on abortion swaying the rights and health care for everyone."

5

On questions related to legality, majorities of respondents:

- Support the Minnesota Supreme Court’s ruling on the issue (67% v. 33% oppose);
- Do not want *Roe v. Wade* overturned* (67% v. 34% want the decision overturned);
- Think abortion should be legal in all or most cases (64% v. 36% illegal in all or most); and
- Want Minnesota laws to support people’s rights and access to abortion (63% v. 37% restrict).

Seven in ten voters (71%) view the right to an abortion as an important part of women’s rights.

Question wording: “In 1973, the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision established a woman’s constitutional right to have an abortion. Would you like to see the Supreme Court overturn its Roe v. Wade decision, or not?”

6

Views toward abortion are correlated with beliefs around gender norms, women in power, and views of women generally.

For example, among respondents who want *Roe v. Wade* overturned:

- Close to half (46%) agrees: “It’s best if women are watched over and protected by men” (v. 13%).
- Four in ten (41%) disagrees: “I want there to be equal numbers of men and women in positions of power in our society” (v. 12%).
- Just one-quarter (25%) agrees: “The country would be better off if we had more women in political office” (v. 76%).
- More than half (57%) agrees: “Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist” (v. 27% who do not want *Roe* overturned).
- A majority (82%) agrees: “Most people who have abortions have acted irresponsibly” (v. 21%).
- Just one-quarter (27%) tends to think “women who have an abortion know what they are doing – that abortion is ending a life or potential life” (v. 76%).
- Twenty-two percent do not think women are capable of making the best decision for themselves about birth control (v. 3%).
- About half (54%) does not think it is important that state lawmakers work on issues related to women’s rights and equality (v. 13%).

7

More than half of voters (55%) thinks access to abortion would be easier if “men were the ones who got pregnant.”

This view is not just common among women (63%) – nearly half of all men also agrees (47%).

Republican men, however, are least likely (15%) to say access would be easier if the tables were turned and men were the ones who got pregnant.

8

While some stigma still exists, a majority of Minnesota voters (75%) say someone can be a good and moral person and have an abortion. Two-thirds (68%) say that having an abortion can be a responsible choice. Three-quarters (74%) say people are capable of making the best decisions on abortion for themselves.

For 59% of respondents, abortion is not just a political stance: They can imagine a personal situation in which an abortion might be the best option for them or a partner.

96% of voters cannot describe one Minnesota state law or restriction on abortion.

9

Voters lack knowledge about abortion and their assumptions can be quite inaccurate. For example:

- Voters overestimate abortion access. Right now, five health centers provide abortion in Minnesota.

We asked respondents to take a guess at how many health centers in the state provide abortion. The average estimate is 41.

Close to half of respondents (45%) assume there are providers in “most” communities in Minnesota.

- Voters underestimate safety. Respondents tend to guess incorrectly when comparing the safety of abortion with a colonoscopy or giving birth. For example, 54% think a colonoscopy is safer than abortion; 40% think it is about as safe; and 6% think it is less safe than abortion. Technically, the risks are about 50% lower for an abortion than a colonoscopy, although both procedures carry almost no risk of major complications (0.23% and 0.35%).

Additionally, most voters (86%) assume Minnesota’s laws support people’s rights and access to abortion rather than restrict them.

10

One reason for a lack of knowledge may be that respondents are much more likely to say they hear more about “the politics” of abortion (76%) from the news media than “the facts” (4%).

11

Abortion has been legal in the U.S. for 46 years. The best [estimate](#) is that about one in four women in the country will have an abortion in her lifetime.

When we ground the survey questions in these realities (i.e., beyond typical polling questions about legality), we find that majorities of Minnesota voters want the experience of abortion to be:

- Up-to-date in medical advances and standards (93%);
- Without protesters (80%);
- As simple as possible for the person (76%);
- As soon as possible (75%);
- Without shame (75%);
- Supportive (74%);
- Respectful of the decision (74%);
- Affordable (74%);
- Available in the person’s community (74%); and
- Available from the person’s primary care or OBGYN provider (64%).

About seven in ten respondents (69%) say abortion is an important part of access to reproductive health care.

In contrast, about one in four respondents wants the experience to be: Pressuring to change the person’s mind (26%), not affordable (26%), not supportive (25%), more delayed (25%), with shame (25%), and more complicated (24%). One-third (35%) wants care to be provided only at certain clinics v. available from primary care or OBGYN providers.

12

Not surprisingly, given all of the other data, we find that Minnesota voters are much more likely to say they want “the woman” and “the doctor” making decisions about how abortion care is provided in the state than elected officials in the legislature.

For example, we asked: “In your view, who should decide how abortion care is provided in Minnesota?” A majority says “the woman” (61%) – six times more than the proportion saying “elected officials in the state legislature” (10%).

Majorities say “the woman” (64%) and “the doctor” (61%) should decide what procedures or care are used for abortion – ten times the proportion saying state lawmakers (6%).

Voters are most likely to say “the doctor” (49%) and “the woman” (41%) should decide how far along in a pregnancy a woman can have an abortion (v. 10% saying elected officials in the state legislature).

Voters want “the doctor” (54%) deciding what information doctors give women about abortion rather than state lawmakers (8%).

DETAILED FINDINGS.

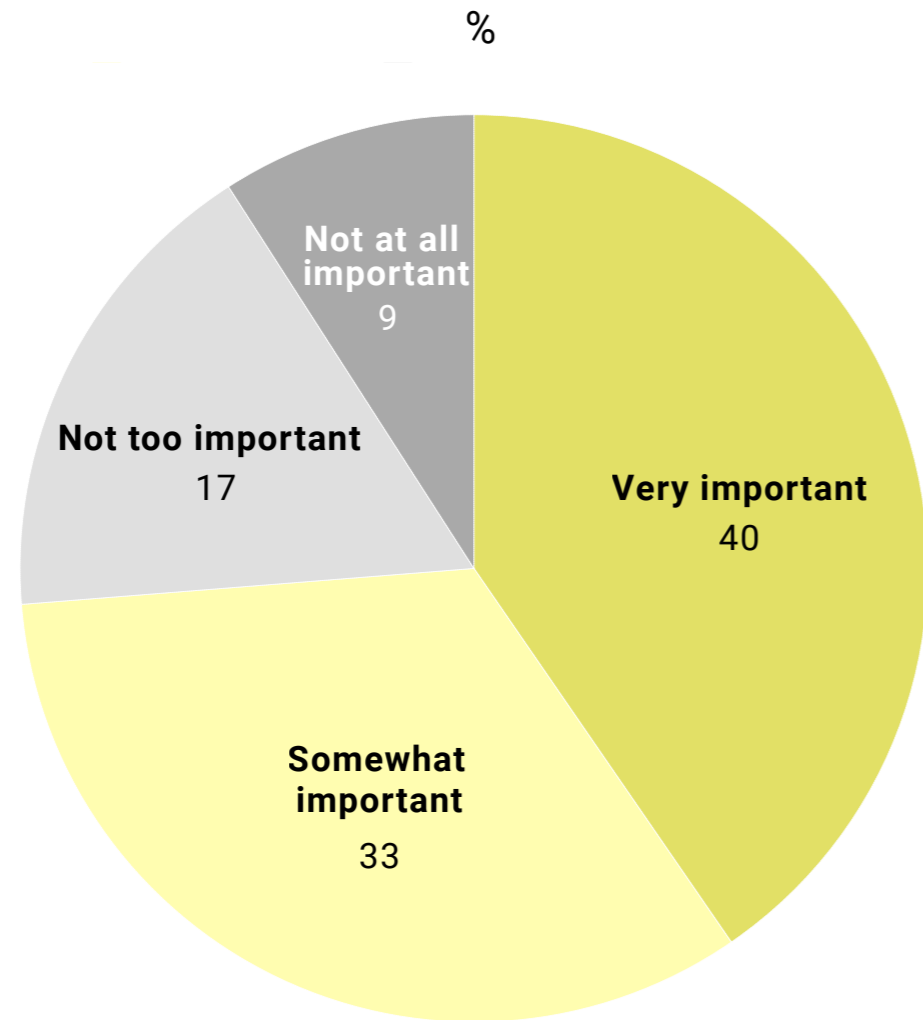


VIEWS TOWARD STATE LAWMAKERS WORKING ON ISSUES RELATED TO
WOMEN'S RIGHTS + EQUALITY.

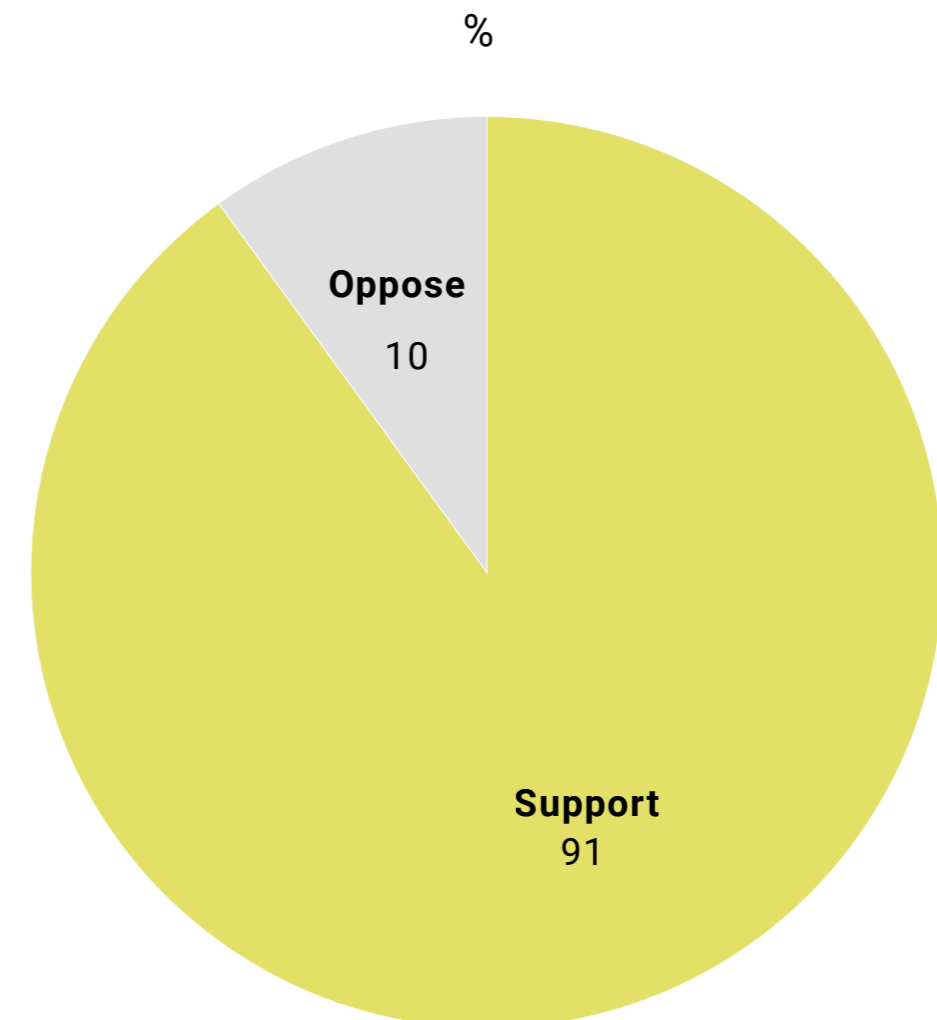


MOST SUPPORT STATE LAWMAKERS WORKING ON ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EQUALITY.

In your view, how important is it that your state elected officials work on issues around women's rights and equality?



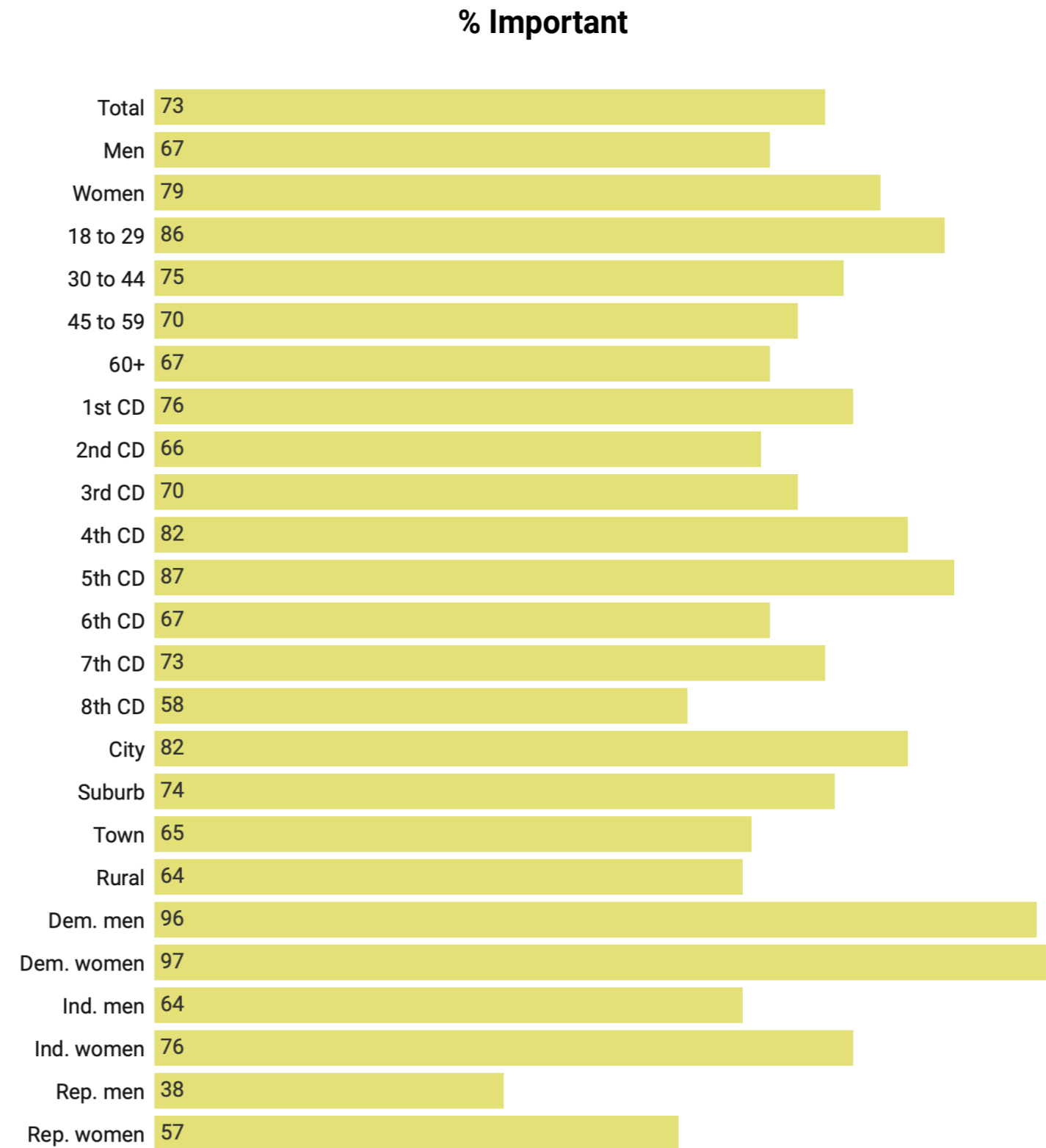
Do you support or oppose state lawmakers working to strengthen legal protections for victims of sexual harassment? *Base n = 677*



MAJORITIES ACROSS SEGMENTS SAY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT LAWMAKERS WORK ON ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EQUALITY.

The exception is men who self-identify as Republican (about 12% of Minnesota voters).

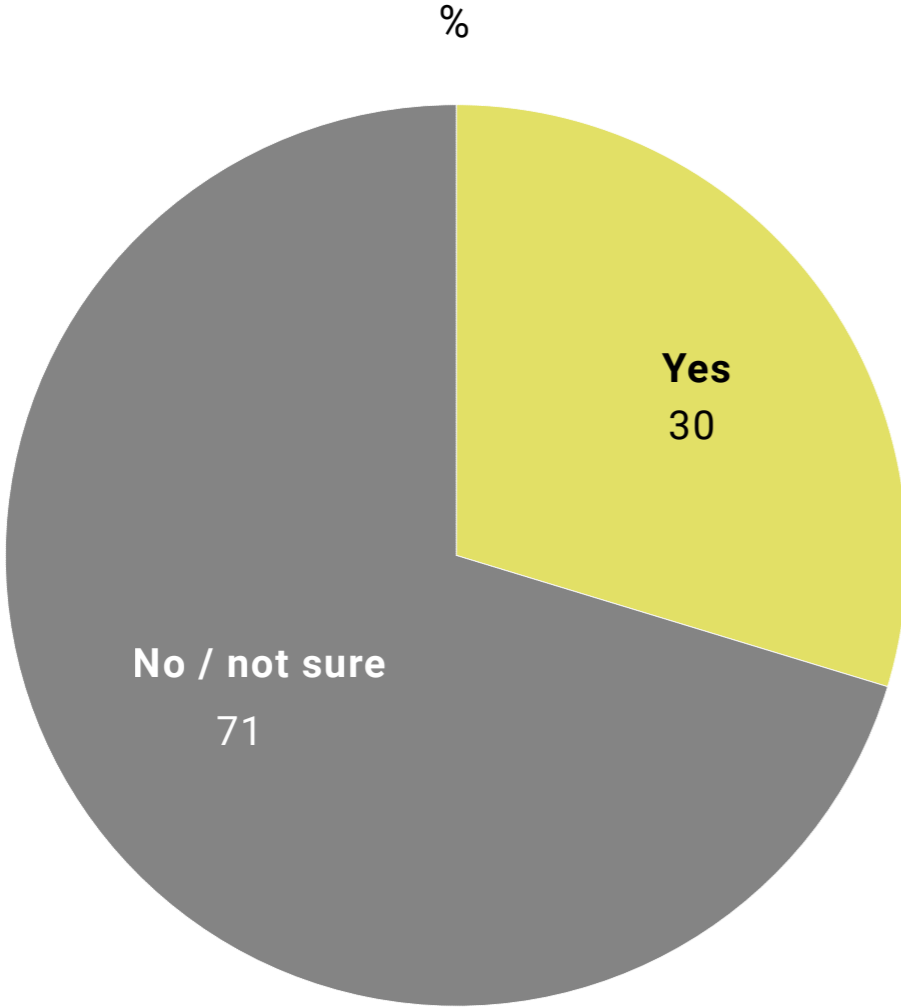
In your view, how important is it that your state elected officials work on issues around women's rights and equality?



VOTERS' LEVELS OF
AWARENESS + KNOWLEDGE OF ABORTION.



Do you know what laws there are on abortion in Minnesota, or not? It's okay if you're not sure.



IF YES: What laws are there that you know of? (Open end)
Base n = 300

- 65% Incorrectly name a law or restriction, or say something like "it's legal"
- 21% Are not sure
- 14% Name one or more laws/restrictions correctly

THE VAST MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS CANNOT CORRECTLY DESCRIBE A STATE LAW OR RESTRICTION ON ABORTION.

4%

Of all survey respondents say they know what laws exist in Minnesota on abortion and can correctly name at least one law or restriction.

96%

Of survey respondents say they do not know what laws exist on abortion in the state or cannot correctly identify a law or restriction.

RESPONDENTS OVERESTIMATE ACCESS IN THE STATE.

41

When asked to guess how many health centers provide abortion care in Minnesota, the average estimate is 41.

Right now, there are 5 health centers in the state that provide abortion care.

Q. If you had to guess, how many health centers in Minnesota do you think provide abortion care or medication abortion? Just a guess is fine.

45%

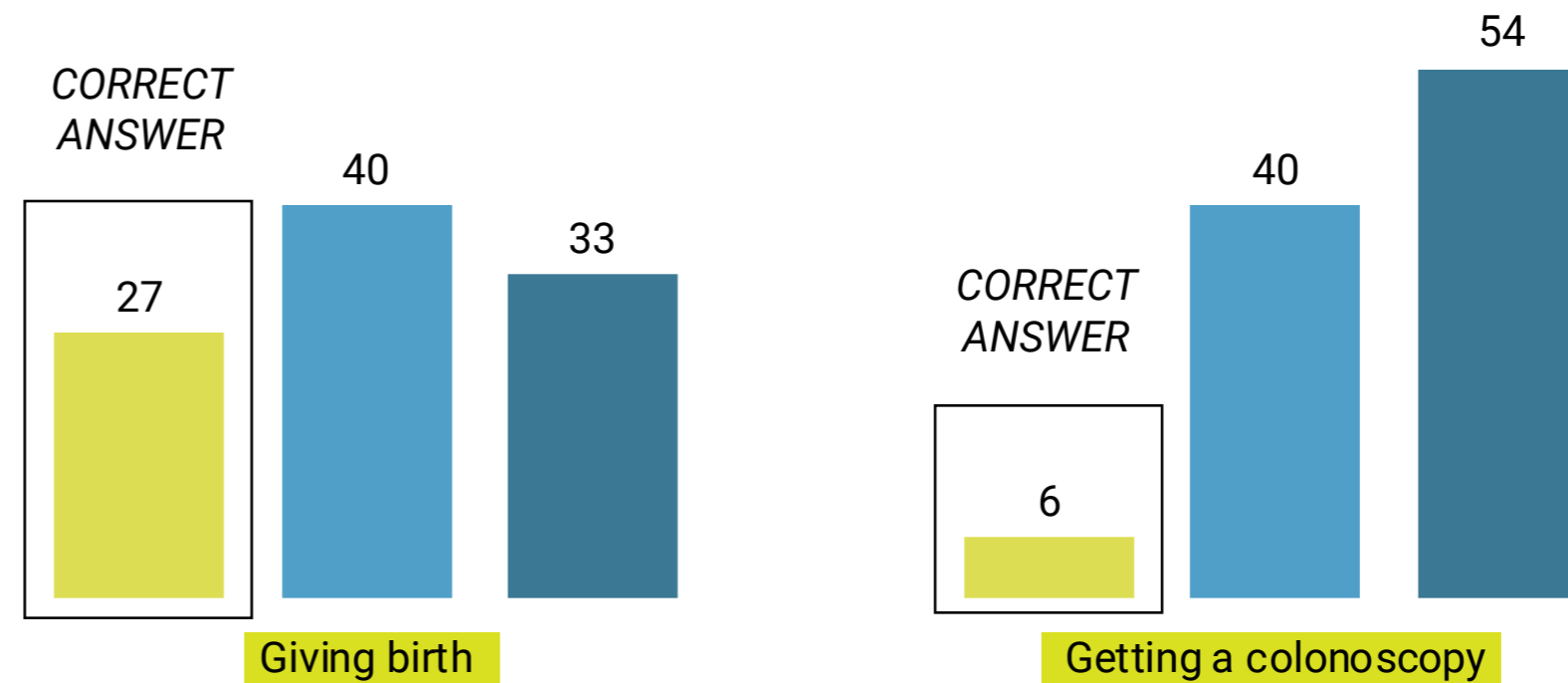
Think that most communities in Minnesota have a health care provider who provides abortion or medication abortion.

If you had to guess, what is your sense:
 _____ is more safe than an abortion, less safe than an abortion, or
 about as safe as an abortion.

■ Less safe than abortion ■ About as safe ■ More safe than abortion

%

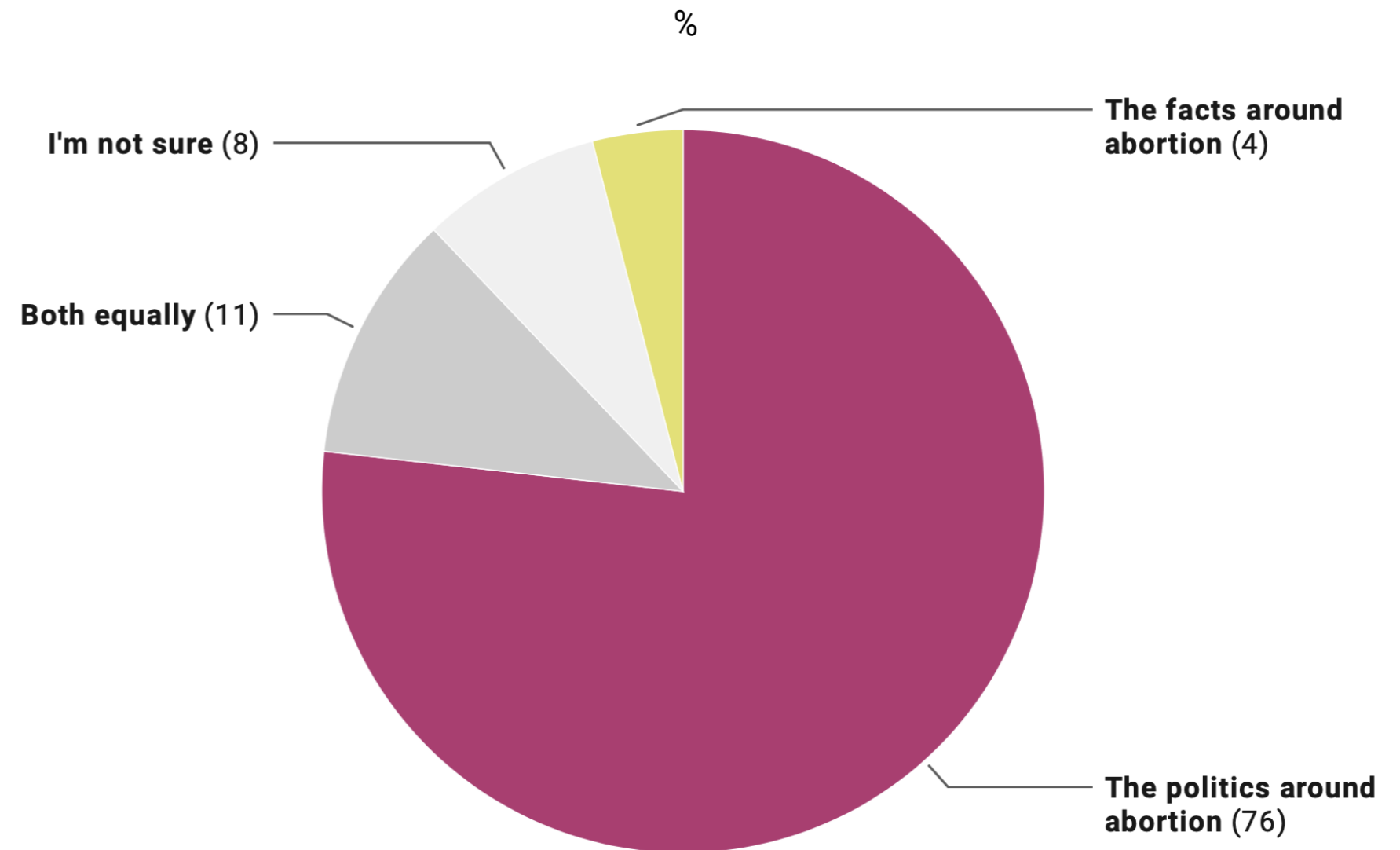
**RESPONDENTS
 UNDERESTIMATE SAFETY.**



According to a study published in the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, the risk of death associated with childbirth is approximately 14 times higher than that with abortion. The risks of major complications from abortion is 0.23% v. 0.35% of colonoscopy according to a study published by the *American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy*.

**MOST RESPONDENTS SAY
THEY HEAR MORE ABOUT
THE "POLITICS" FROM THE
NEWS MEDIA THAN THE
"FACTS" ON THE ISSUE.**

On abortion, what do you tend to hear more from the news media:
ROTATE FIRST TWO

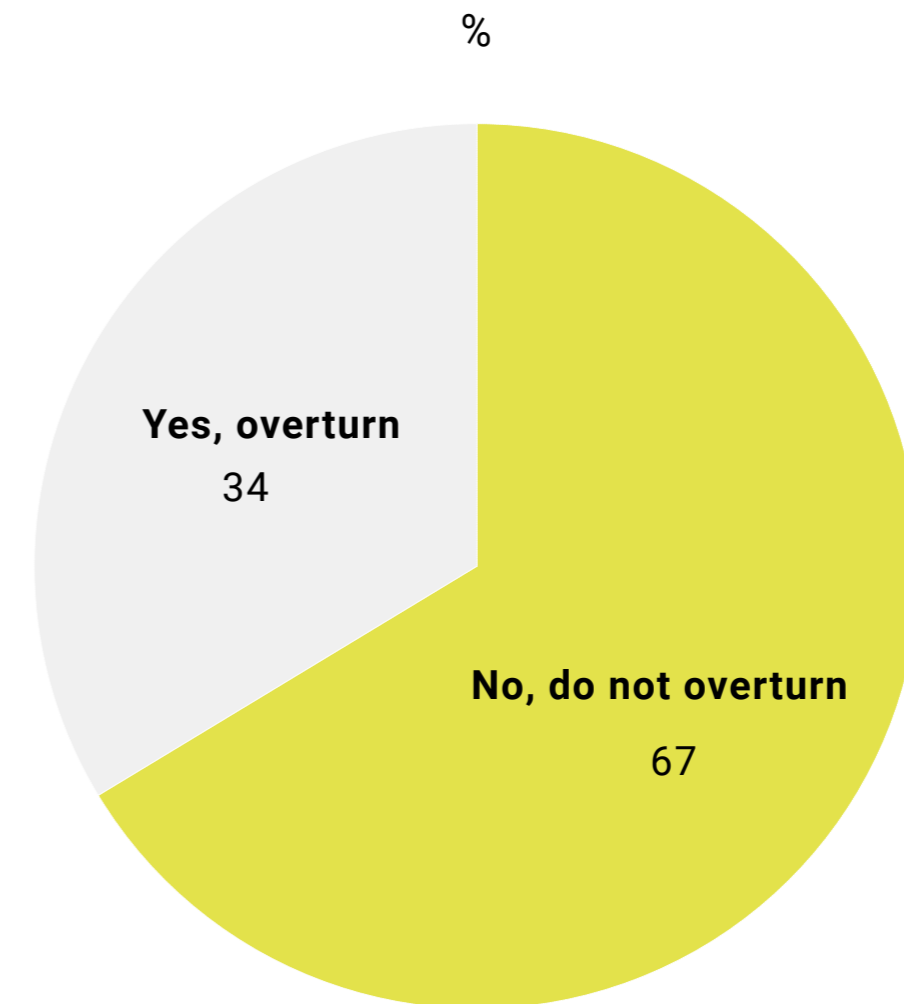


VOTERS' VIEWS AROUND
ABORTION LEGALITY.



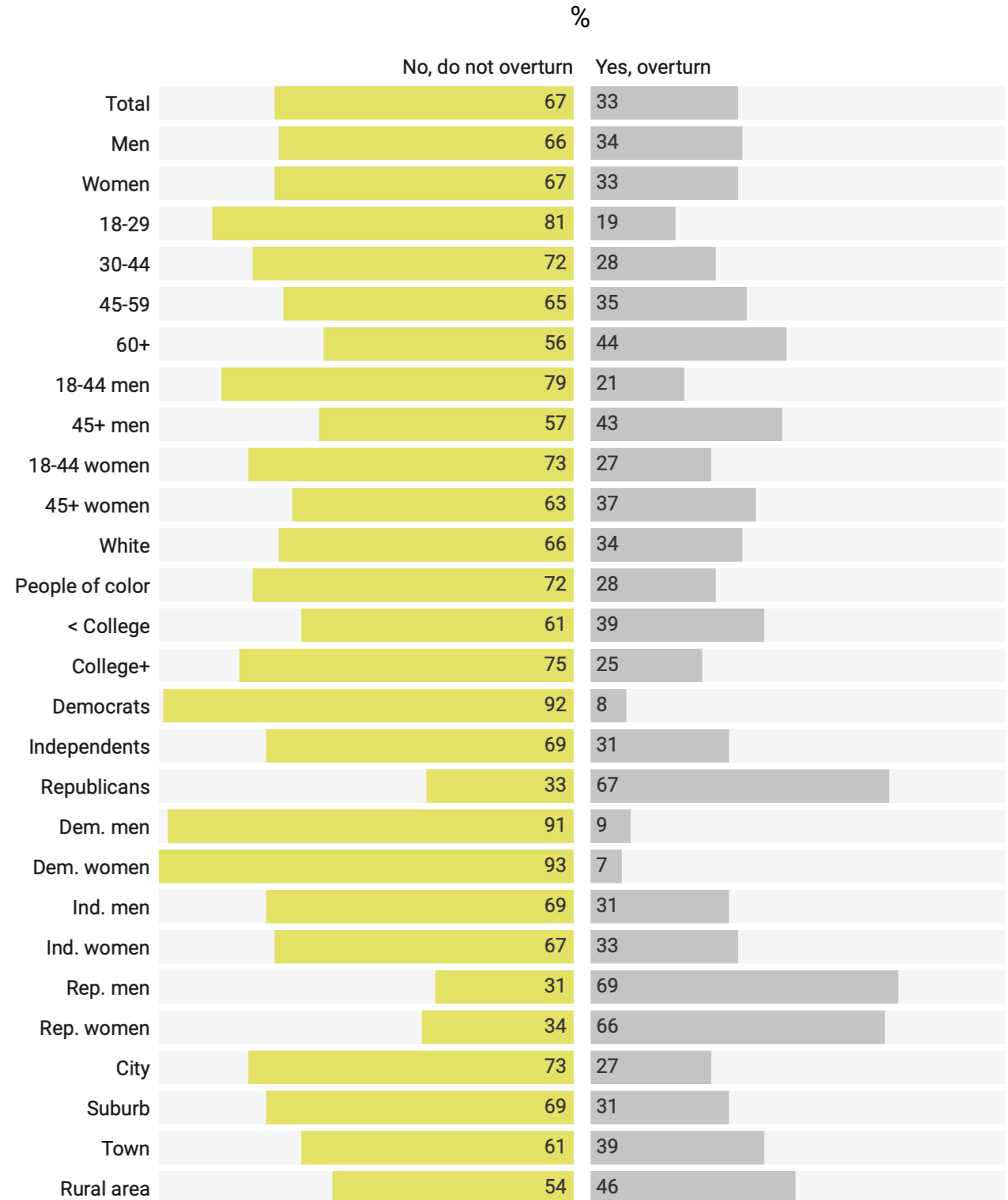
**A MAJORITY OF MINNESOTA VOTERS
DOES NOT WANT ROE V. WADE
OVERTURNED.**

In 1973, the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision established a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion. Would you like to see the Supreme Court overturn its *Roe v. Wade* decision, or not?



MAJORITIES ACROSS SEGMENTS DO NOT WANT ROE OVERTURNED.

With the exception of self-identified Republicans (27% of all respondents), majorities across every segment do not want *Roe* overturned.



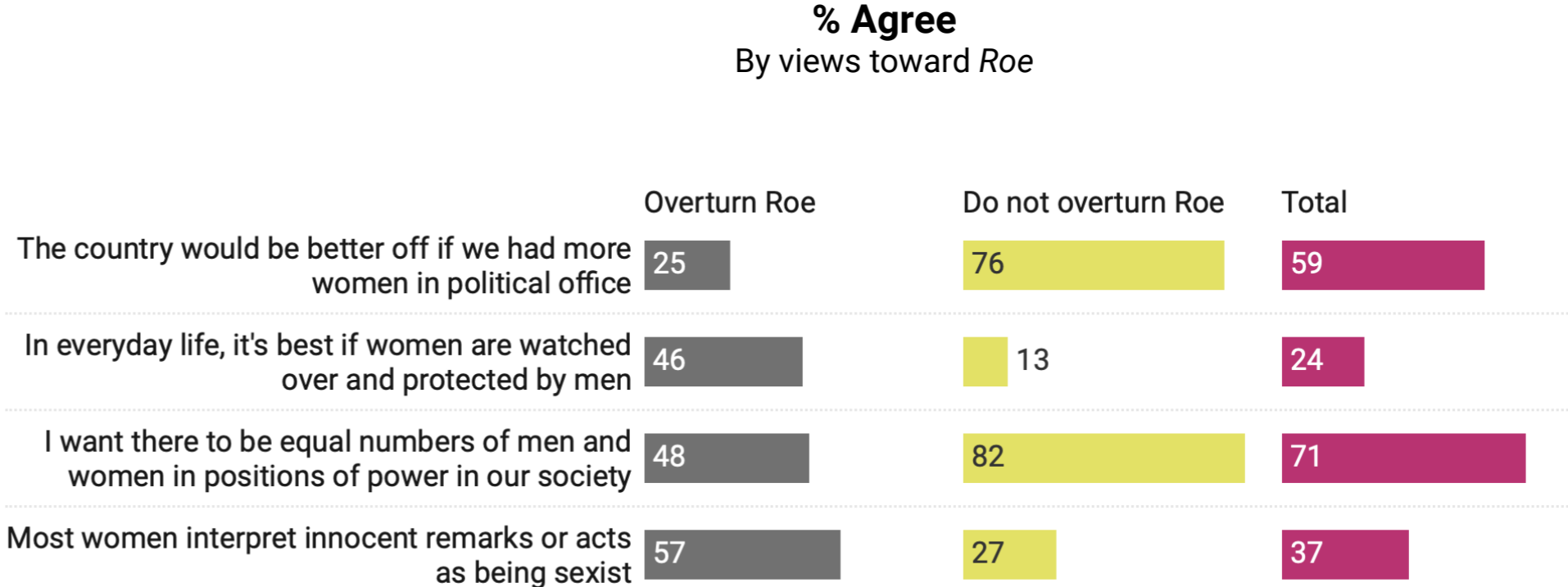
VIEWS TOWARD ABORTION ARE STRONGLY CORRELATED WITH VIEWS TOWARD WOMEN AND GENDER ROLES.

Just 25% of voters who want *Roe v. Wade* overturned thinks the country would be better off with more women in political office, compared to 76% of voters who support *Roe*.

Nearly half (46%) of anti-abortion respondents agrees that “in everyday life, it’s best if women are watched over and protected by men” (v. 13%).

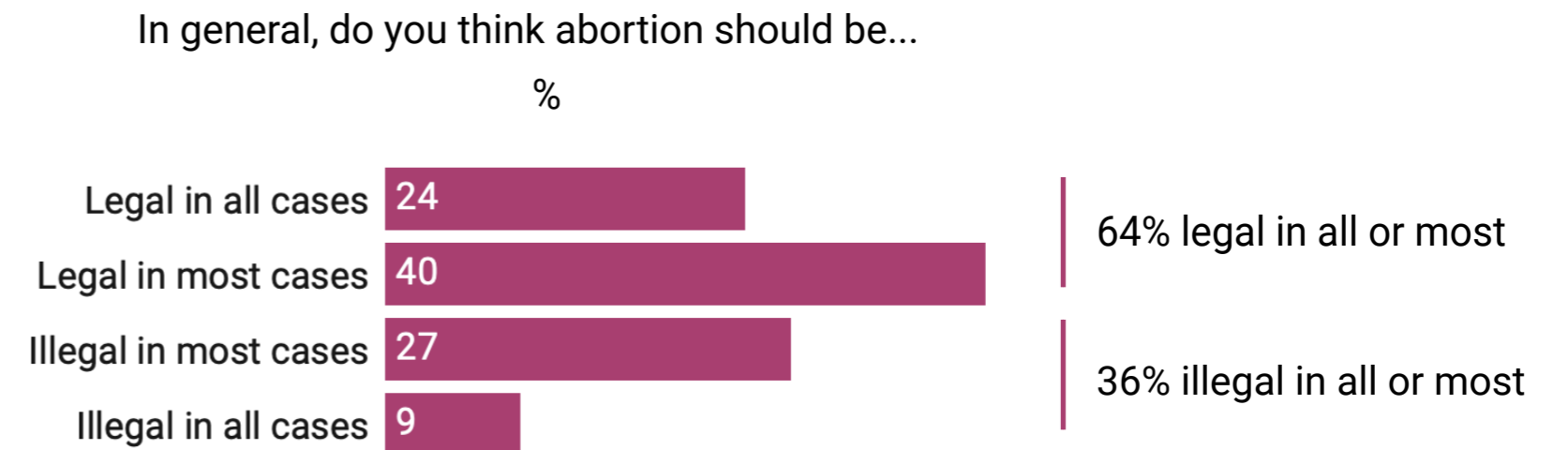
A majority of anti-abortion voters (57%) agrees that “most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist,” compared to 27% of voters who support *Roe v. Wade*.

Eight in ten voters who do not want *Roe* overturned (82%) agree they want equal numbers of men in women in positions of power, compared to 48% of anti-abortion voters.



A MAJORITY THINKS ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGAL IN "ALL" OR "MOST" CASES.

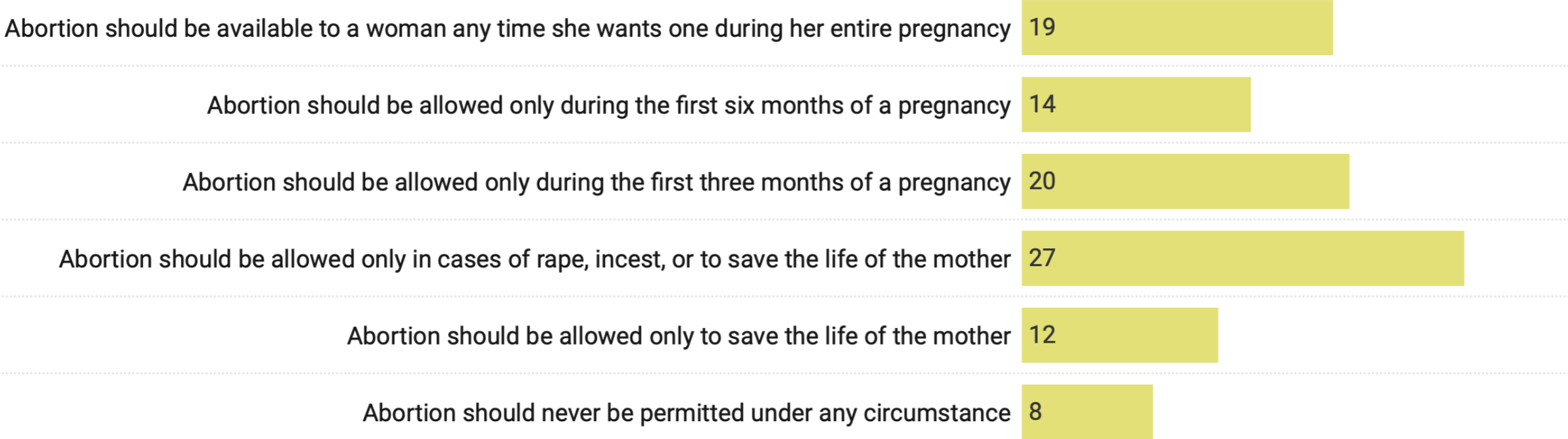
This is a standard question used in many national surveys.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ASK A DIFFERENT QUESTION?

Survey questions can elicit different results based on the question wording. For example, we replicated a question from a Knights of Columbus survey and then explored the responses further.

Here's a similar question. Which comes closest to your opinion on abortion:
%



When asked this way, 67% of respondents say abortion should be restricted to the first three months of pregnancy, only in certain cases, or never permitted.

RESULTS TO THIS QUESTION ARE REPORTED AS VOTERS WANTING "SUBSTANTIAL RESTRICTIONS."

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81% Americans, 66% pro-choice advocates support 'substantial abortion restrictions' says Marist Poll



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By Jennifer Harper - The Washington Times - Tuesday, January 19, 2016

FILE A nurse points out the image of a three-month-old fetus during a sonogram scan for "Nancy" Yin at the Xi'an clinic Dec. 13. The clinic performs about 60 abortions a month, mostly on students age 24 or younger. (Associated ... more >

BREITBART

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Should Trump Build Our Wall - National Opinion Poll

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POLL: 76 PERCENT OF AMERICANS FAVOR SUBSTANTIAL ABORTION RESTRICTIONS

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**BUT, THESE RESULTS ARE
CONTRARY TO WHAT WE HAVE
LEARNED IN OUR RESEARCH.**

So we followed up with a question to explore further.

Next question:

Which comes closer to your view between these two:

ROTATE

I think lawmakers should pass a new law that makes all abortions _____
(RESPONSE FROM PREVIOUS QUESTION)

or

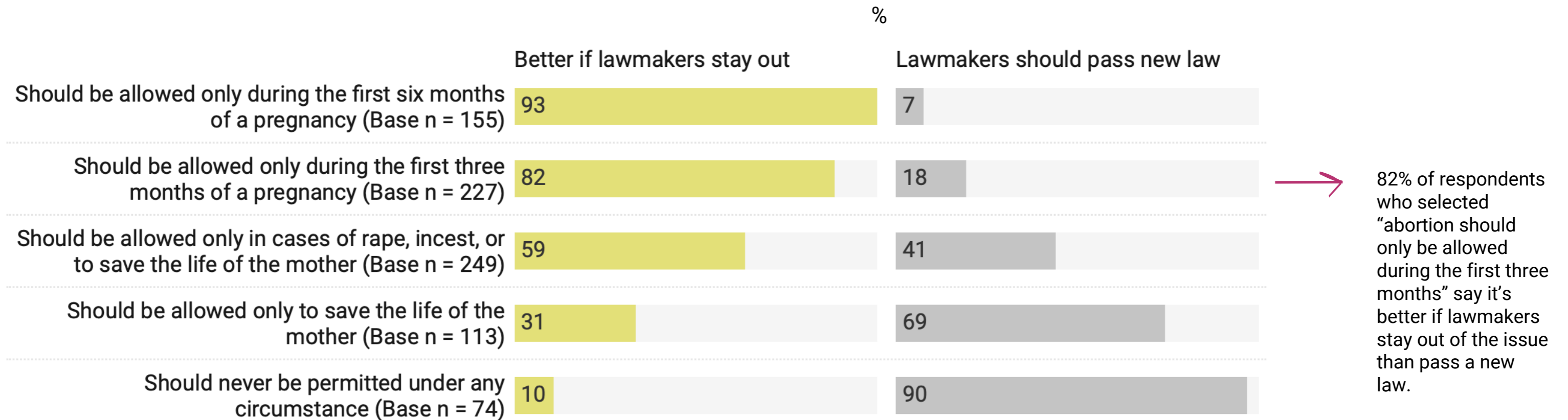
I think it's better if lawmakers stay out of this because every situation is different



E.g., "Illegal after
the first three
months of
pregnancy"

FROM THE FOLLOW-UP QUESTION, WE FIND THAT MOST RESPONDENTS DO NOT WANT LAWMAKERS TO PASS NEW RESTRICTIONS.

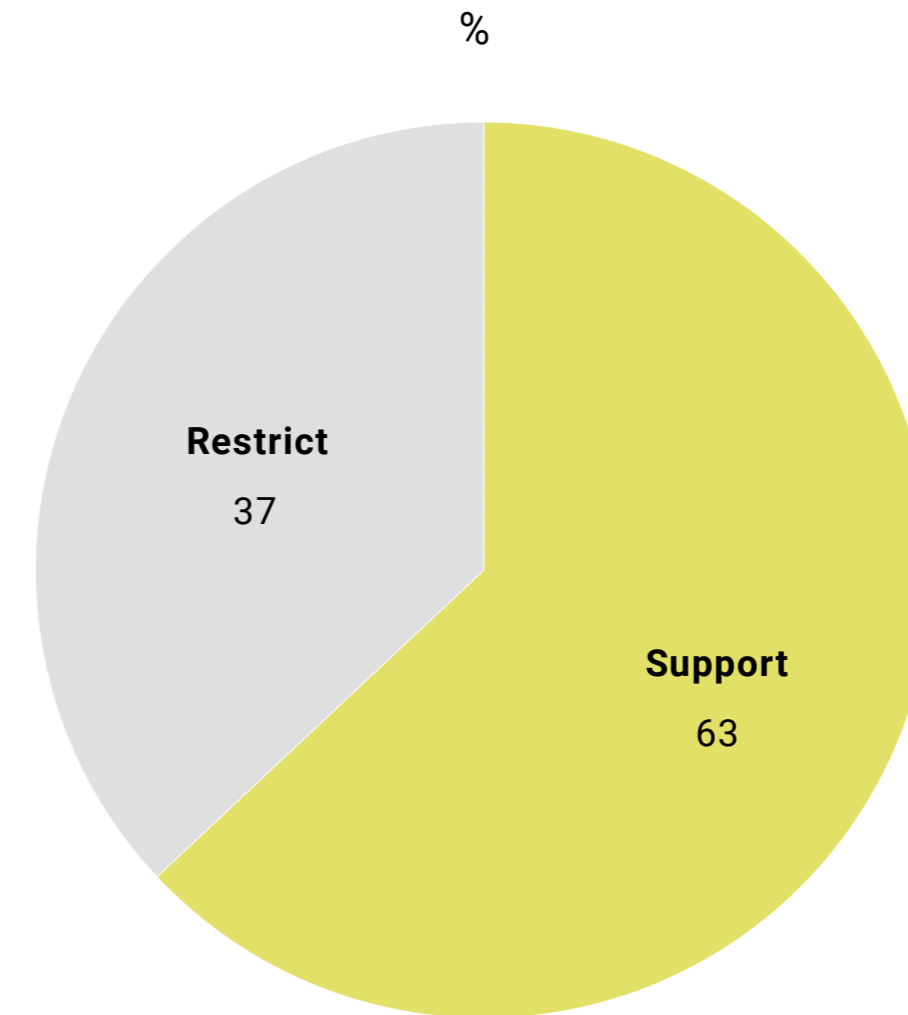
A total of 64% of respondents do not want lawmakers to pass new laws in these circumstances.



**A MAJORITY OF MINNESOTA VOTERS
SAYS THEY WANT STATE LAWS TO
SUPPORT PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND
ACCESS TO ABORTION.**

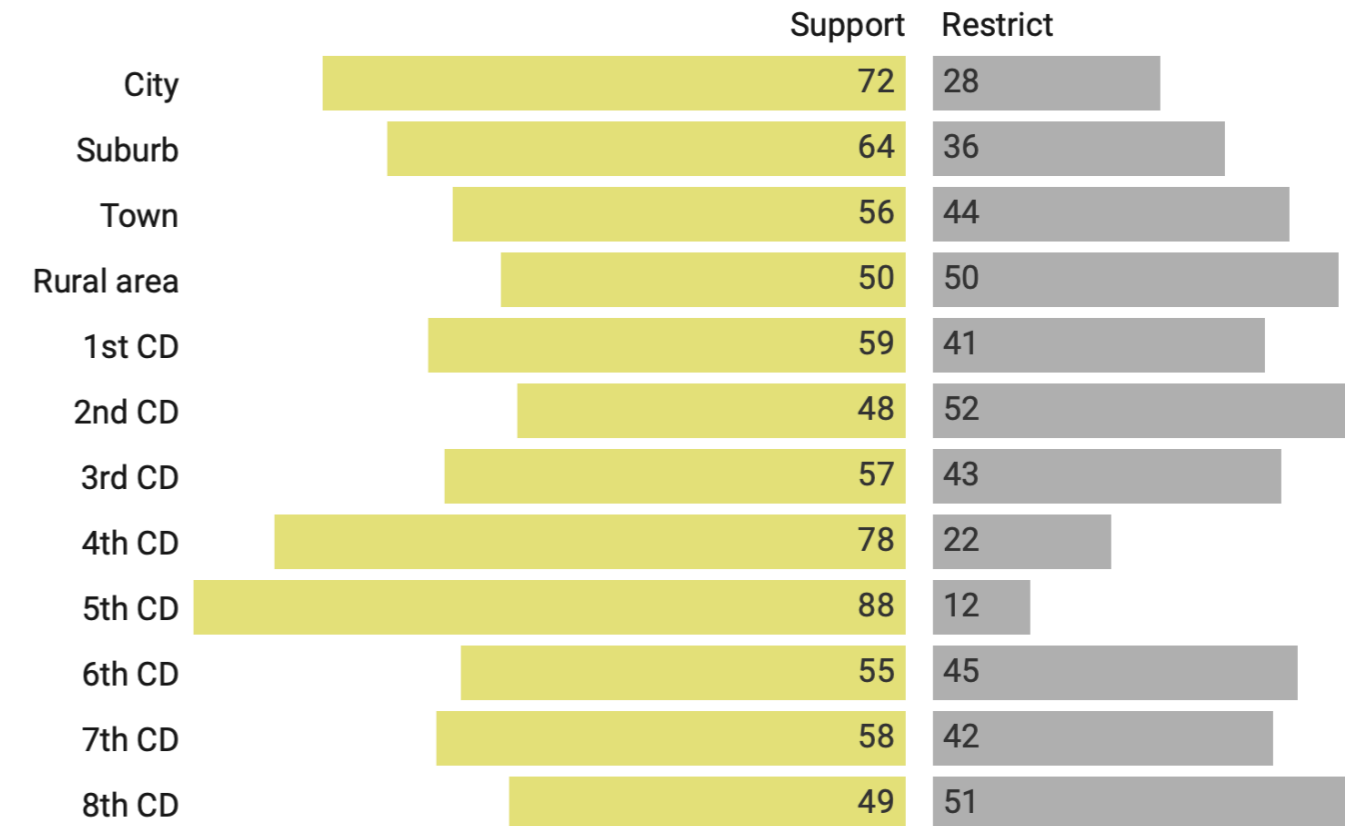
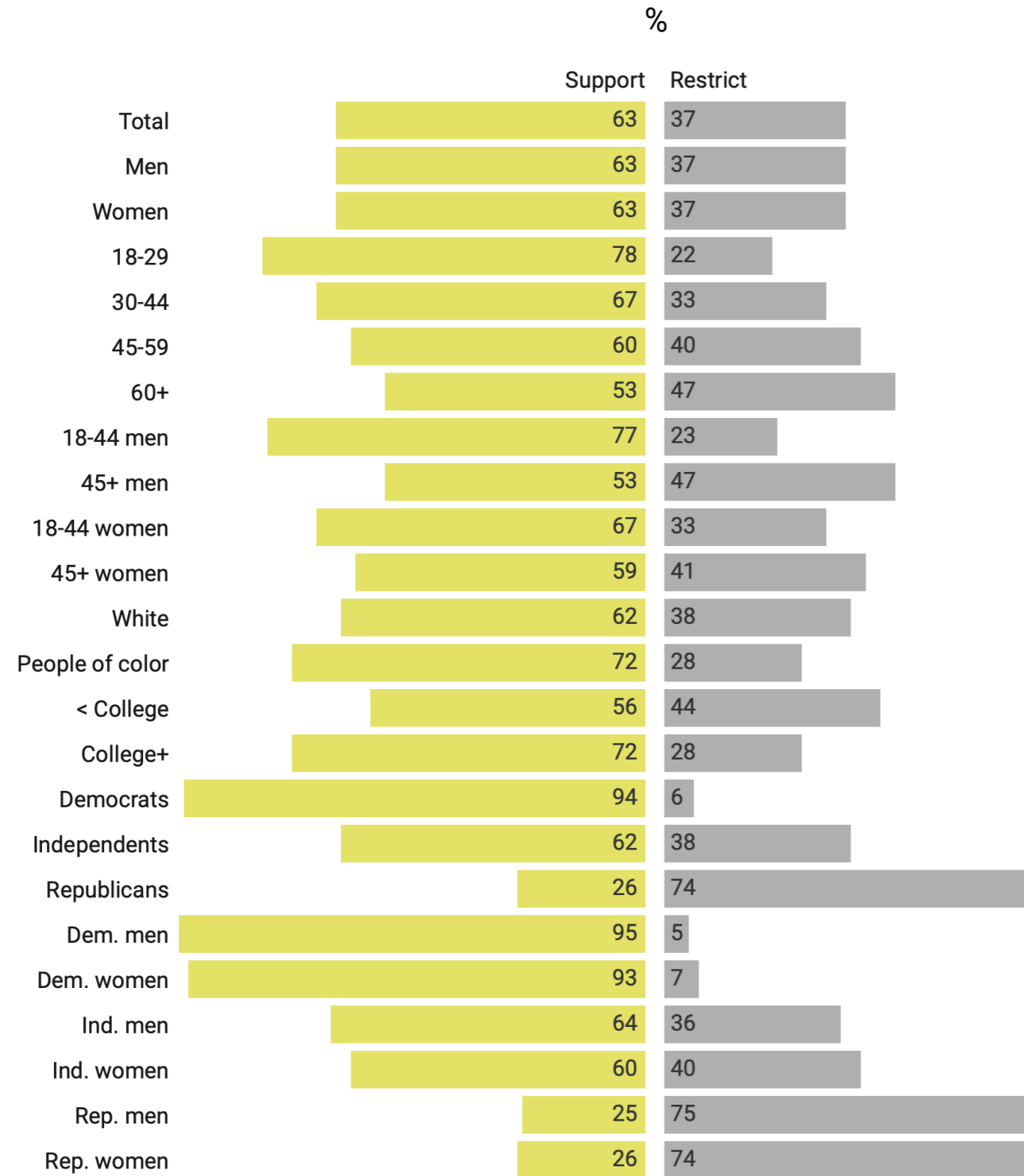
In general, would you want our state laws to...ROTATE

Support people's rights and access to abortion
Restrict people's rights and access to abortion



MAJORITIES OF MOST SEGMENTS WANT STATE LAWS TO SUPPORT RATHER THAN RESTRICT ACCESS AND RIGHTS.

The exceptions are Republicans. Voters in rural areas are split on the issue.



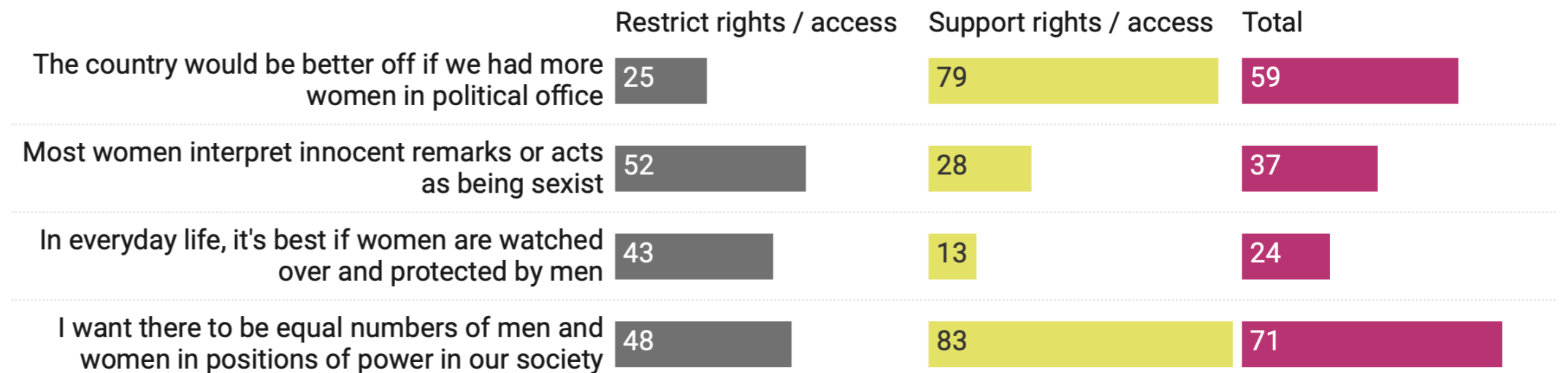
AGAIN, WE FIND ATTITUDES ARE STRONGLY CORRELATED WITH VIEWS OF WOMEN AND GENDER ROLES.

For example, just 25% of voters who want restrictive state laws agree that “the country would be better off if we had more women in political office” (v. 79% of those who want state laws to support access).

In general, would you want our state laws to...ROTATE

Support people’s rights and access to abortion
Restrict people’s rights and access to abortion

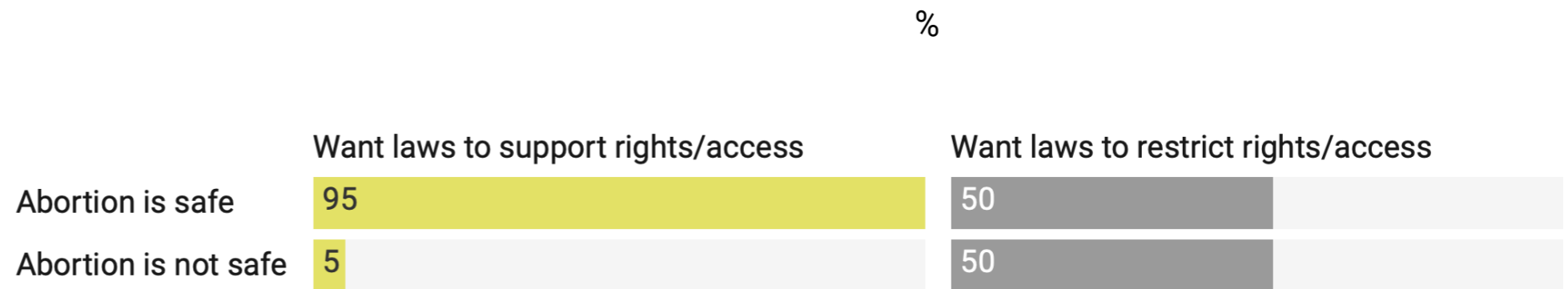
% Agree
Within views toward wanting state laws to restrict or support access



VIEWS ON RESTRICTING ACCESS ARE ALSO CORRELATED WITH PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY.

The vast majority of voters who want Minnesota laws to support people’s rights and access to abortion say abortion is safe.

Half of respondents who want to restrict rights and access say abortion is not safe.



SUPPORT + AGREEMENT WITH

MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT RULINGS.



RESPONDENTS WERE PRESENTED WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE CONSTITUTION AND SUPREME COURT RULINGS ON ABORTION.

Because the survey was conducted online, respondents could read and respond to information about the Minnesota Supreme Court's ruling on the issue.

RESPONDENTS READ THE FOLLOWING:

As you may know, the Minnesota Supreme Court has found that the state constitution protects people's right to abortion. Here's what the Minnesota Supreme Court has said.

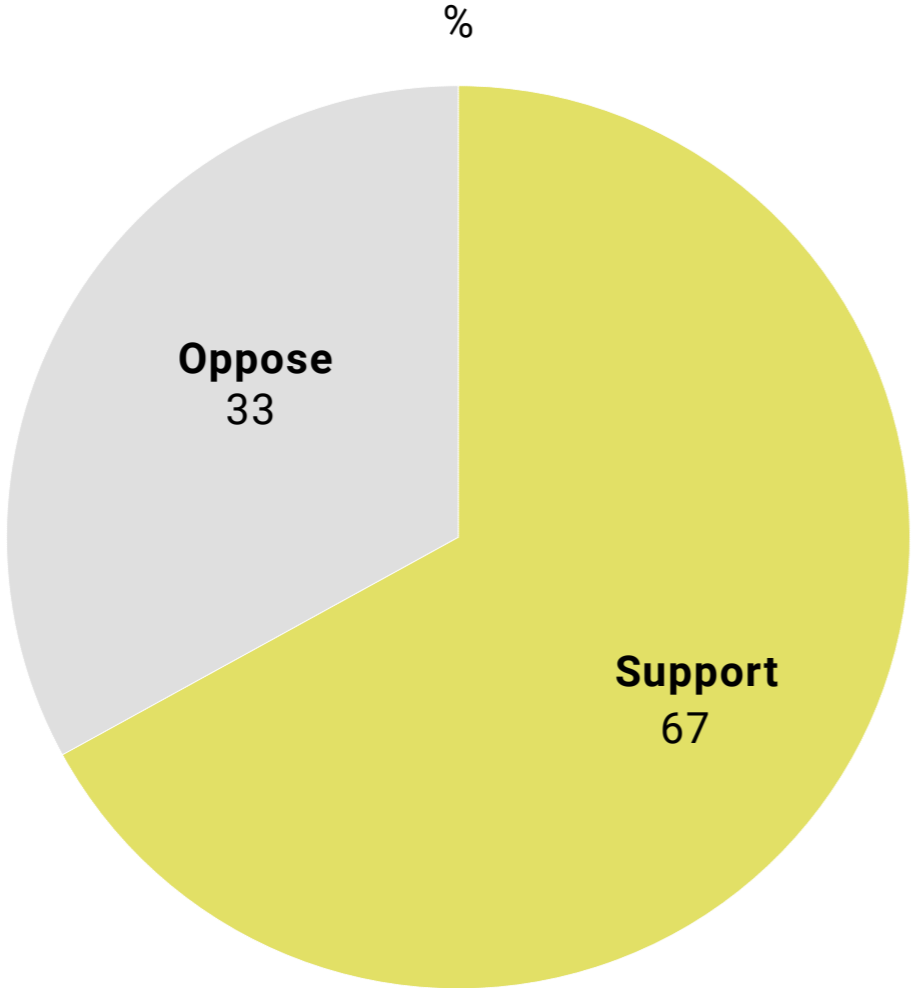
The Minnesota Constitution guarantees and protects the right of privacy. In 1995, in *Doe v. Gomez*, the Minnesota Supreme Court found that the right to privacy includes both the right to have an abortion and the right to decide whether or not to have an abortion.

The right to have an abortion means that abortion is legal in the state. The right to decide means that the government may not put its thumb on the scale in favor of one pregnancy outcome (carrying a pregnancy to term) over another (abortion) - or vice versa.

The Minnesota Supreme Court has long seen abortion access as a fundamental right because "few decisions" are "more intimate, personal, and profound than a woman's decision between childbirth and abortion." *Doe v. Gomez*, 542 N.W.2d 17, 27 (Minn. 1995).

**TWO-THIRDS OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORT THE MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT'S RULING ON ABORTION.
A MAJORITY THINKS THAT MOST MINNESOTANS WOULD SUPPORT IT.**

In general, do you support or oppose how the Minnesota Supreme Court has ruled?



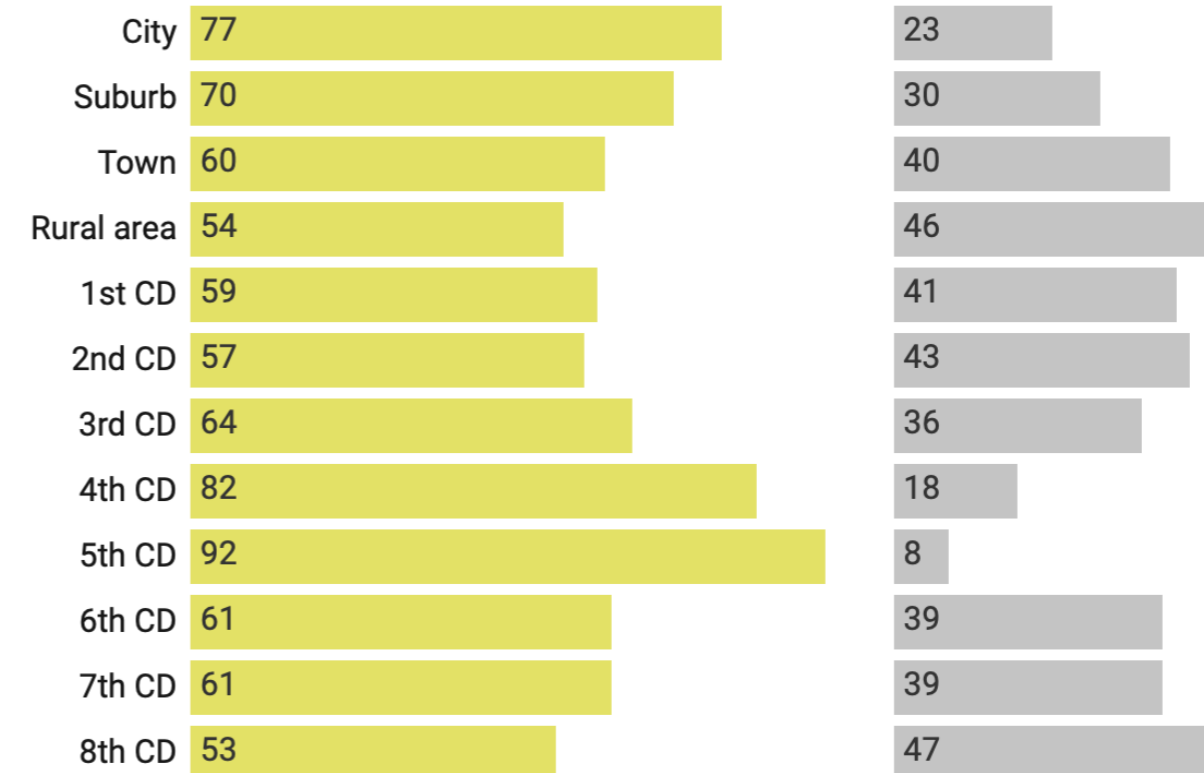
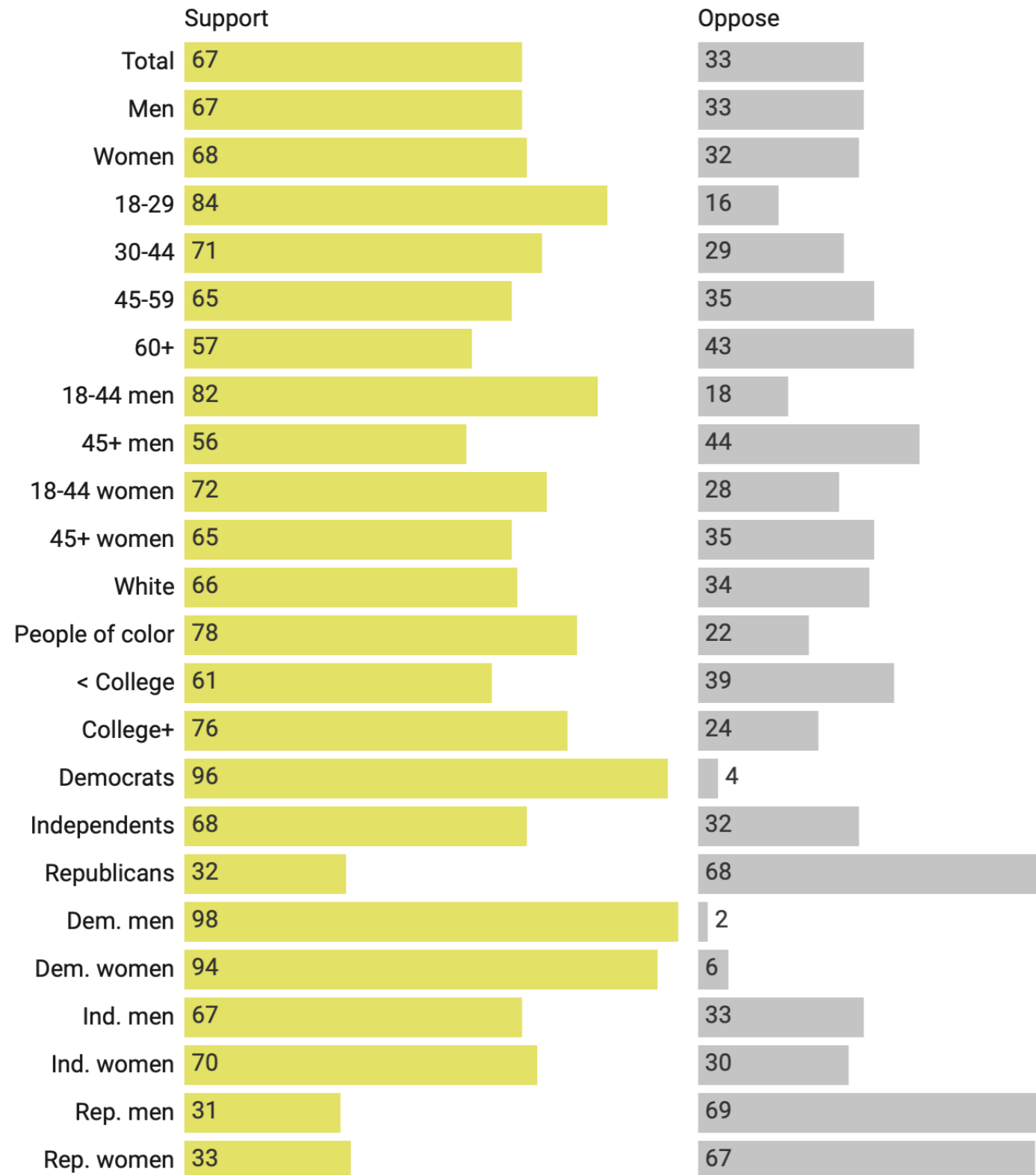
81%

Of survey respondents say they would guess that most Minnesotans would support how the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled.

MAJORITIES ACROSS NEARLY ALL SEGMENTS SUPPORT THE RULING.

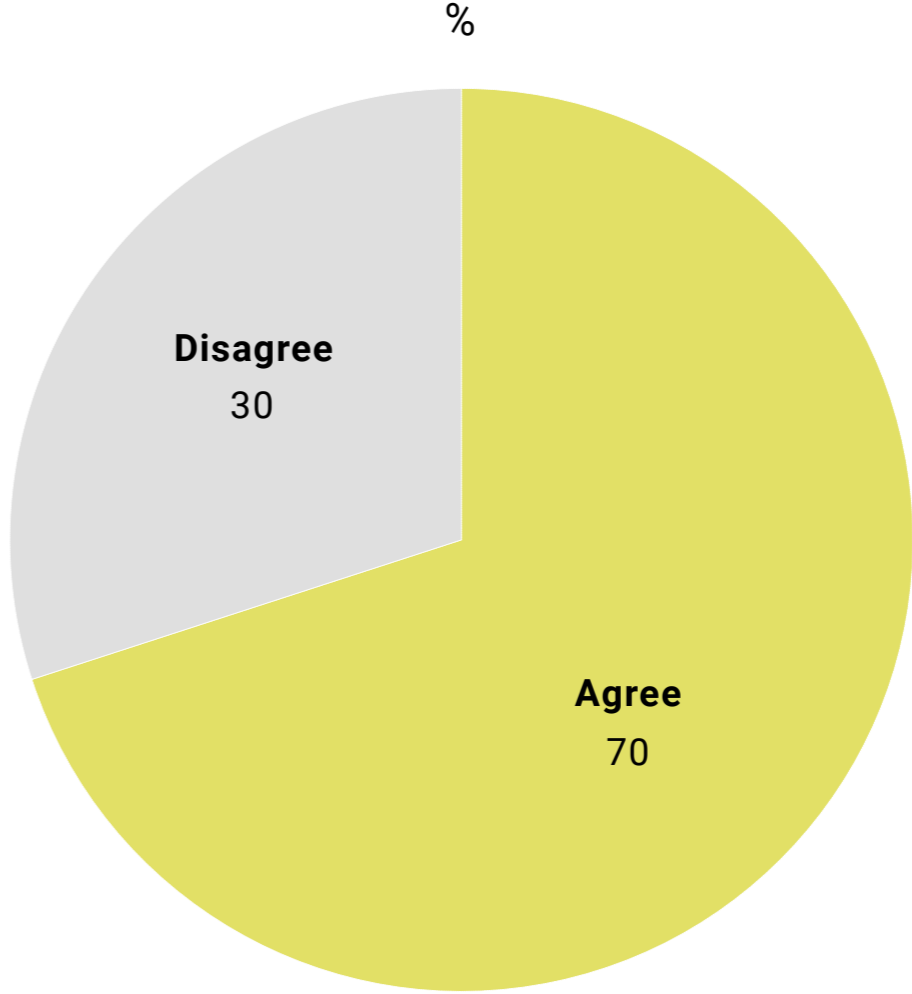
The exception is Republicans.

%



In Minnesota, the right to decide to have an abortion means that the government may not put its thumb on the scale in favor of one pregnancy outcome (carrying a pregnancy to term) over another (abortion) - or vice versa. Do you agree or disagree with this ruling?

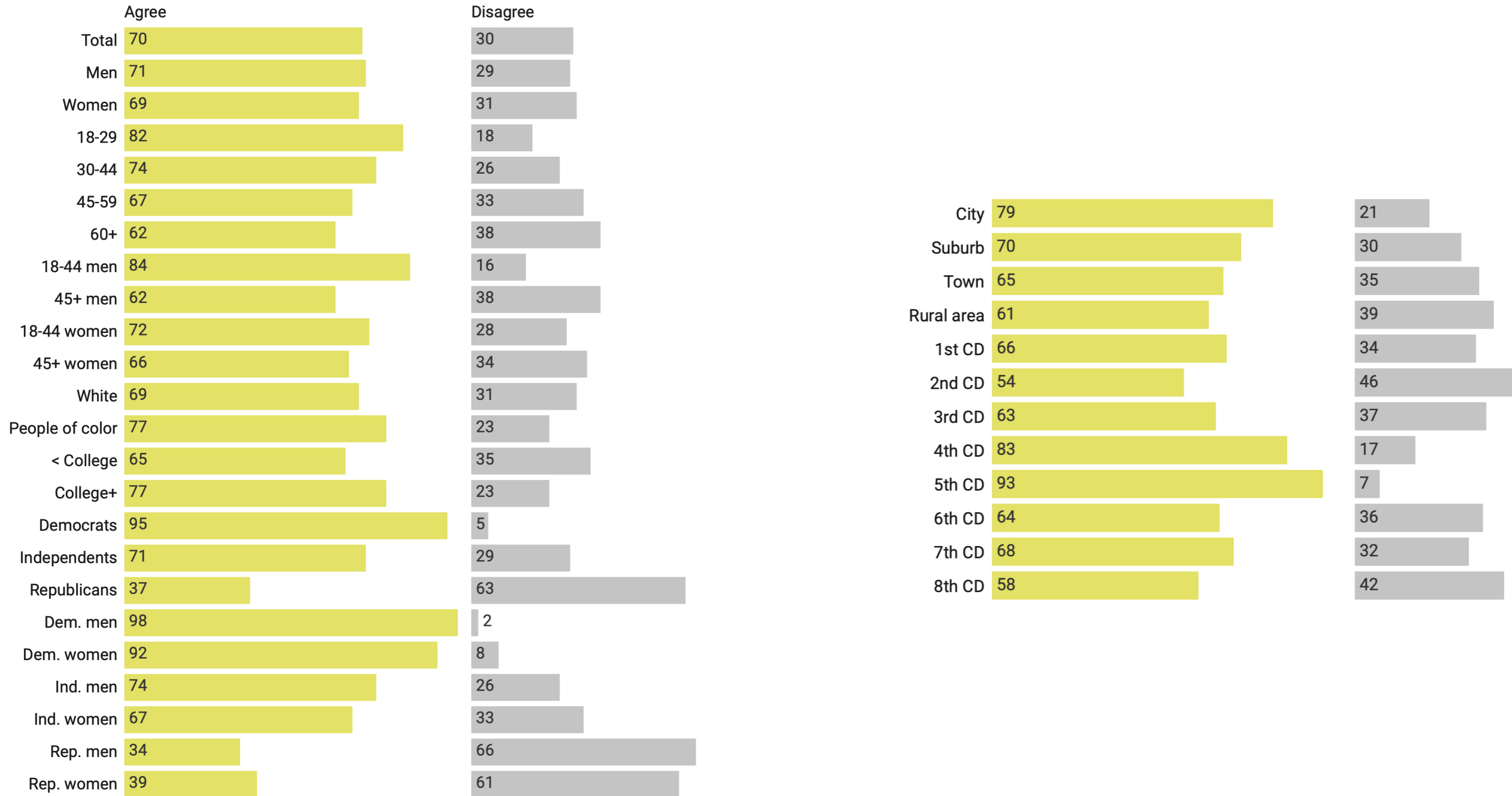
7 IN 10 "AGREE" WITH THIS PART OF THE RULING.



MAJORITIES ACROSS NEARLY ALL SEGMENTS AGREE WITH THE RULING.

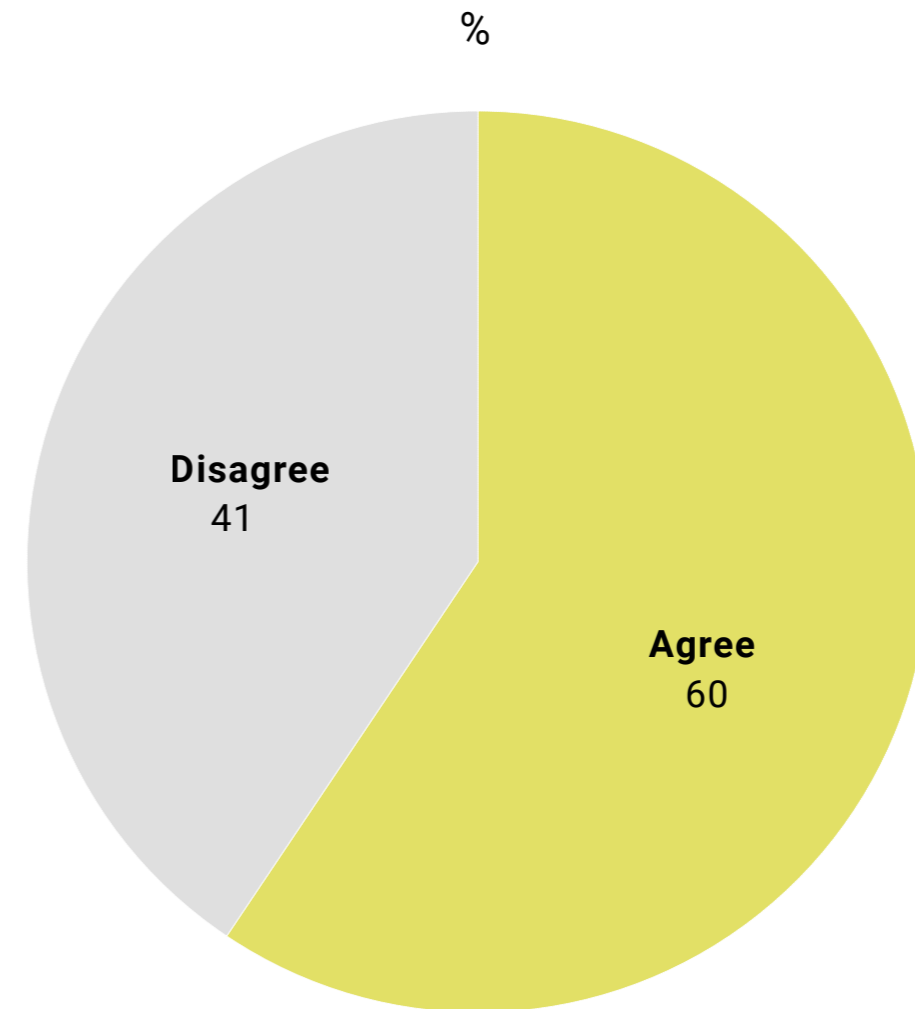
The exception is Republicans.

%



This ruling means that if Medicaid (Medical Assistance or MA) covers maternity care, it must also cover abortion care. Otherwise the government is favoring one outcome over another. After hearing more, do you agree or disagree with this ruling?

A MAJORITY STILL AGREES WITH THE RULING AFTER HEARING THAT MEDICAL ASSISTANCE MUST COVER ABORTION AS A RESULT OF THE RULING.



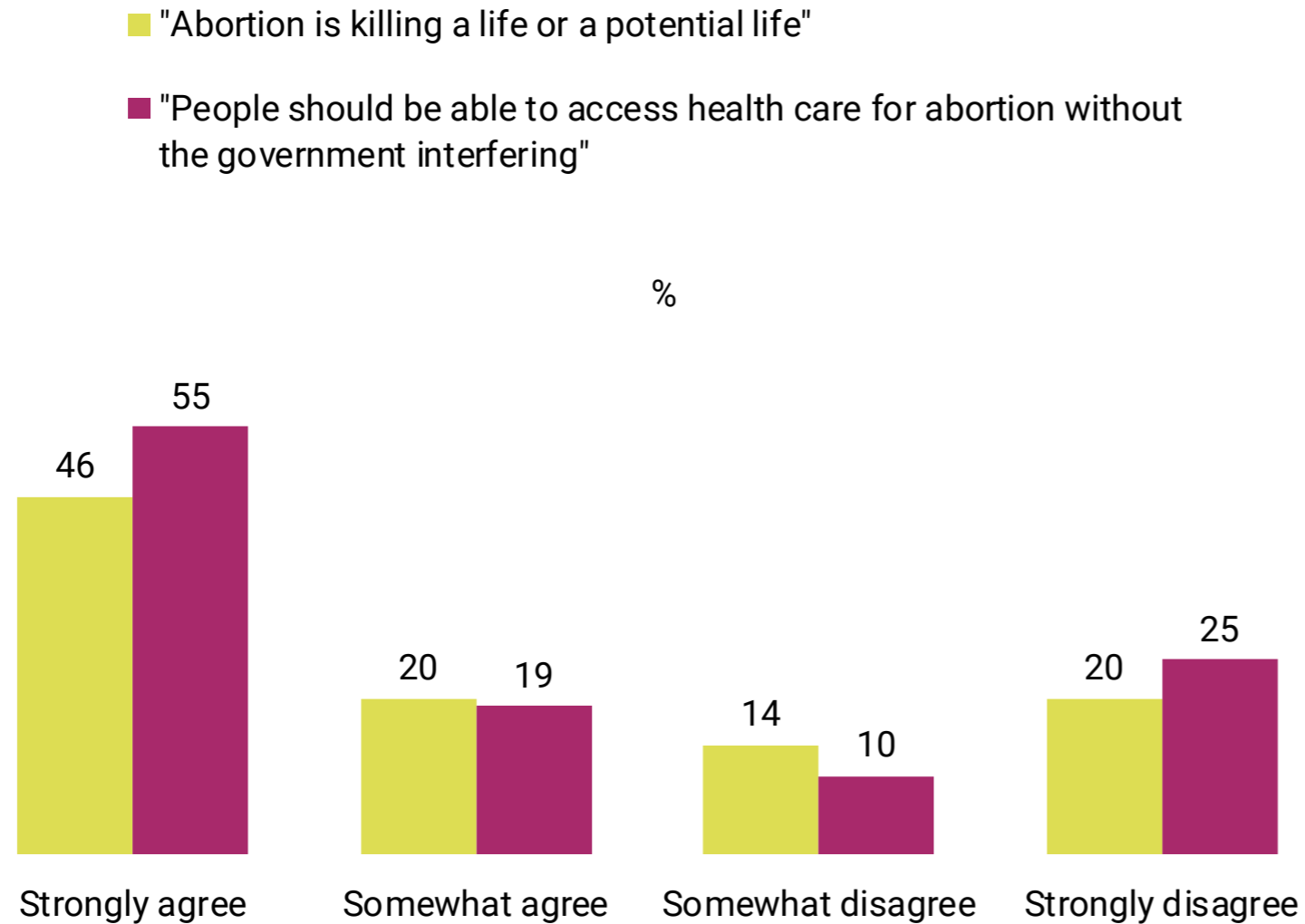
VOTERS' VIEWS AROUND

ABORTION GENERALLY.



VOTERS HOLD CONCURRENT VIEWS ON THE ISSUE.

For example, two-thirds (66%) agree that “abortion is killing a life or potential life” and 74% agree that “people should be able to access health care for abortion without the government interfering.” Nearly three-quarters (73%) agree they can respect religious beliefs on the issue and respect that women have a choice.



73%

Agree: “I respect religions that do not believe in abortion and I respect that women have a choice to get an abortion.”

MYTH BUSTERS?

FOR MOST VOTERS, ABORTION IS NOT A RELIGIOUS ISSUE
NOR AN ISSUE THEY STRUGGLE WITH.

69%

Say abortion is not a religious issue for them personally.

Even 50% of those who attend religious services at least once a month say the issue is not a religious one for them.

Q. For you personally, is abortion a religious issue, or not?

Note: 40% of respondents attend religious services at least once a month; 60% attend less frequently.

77%

Say they do not struggle with their feelings on abortion / are not torn about how they feel on the issue.

Q. Do you struggle with your feelings on abortion – for example, are you torn about how you feel on the issue, or not?

IN YOUR OWN VIEW, IS THE RIGHT TO AN ABORTION AN
IMPORTANT PART OF _____, OR NOT?

74%

**The right to privacy around
our own medical decisions**

56% Very important
18% Somewhat important

71%

Women's rights

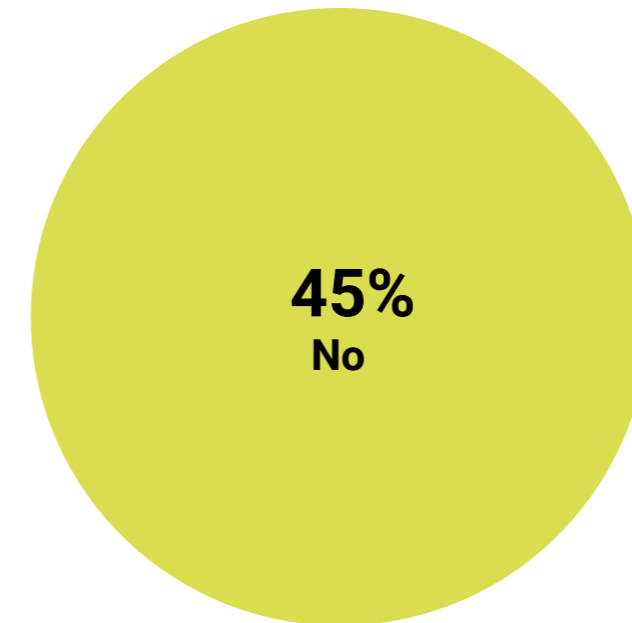
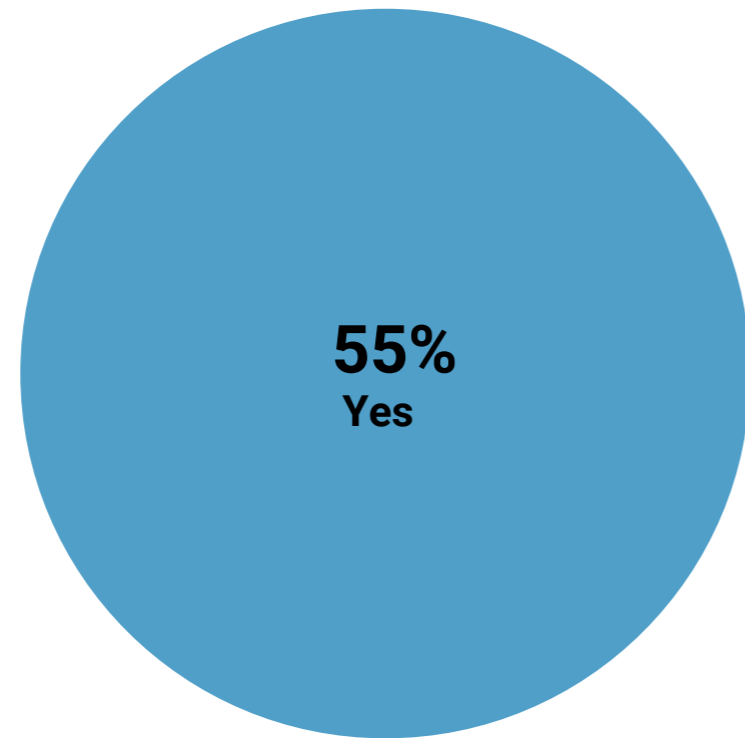
54% Very important
17% Somewhat important

69%

**Access to reproductive
health care**

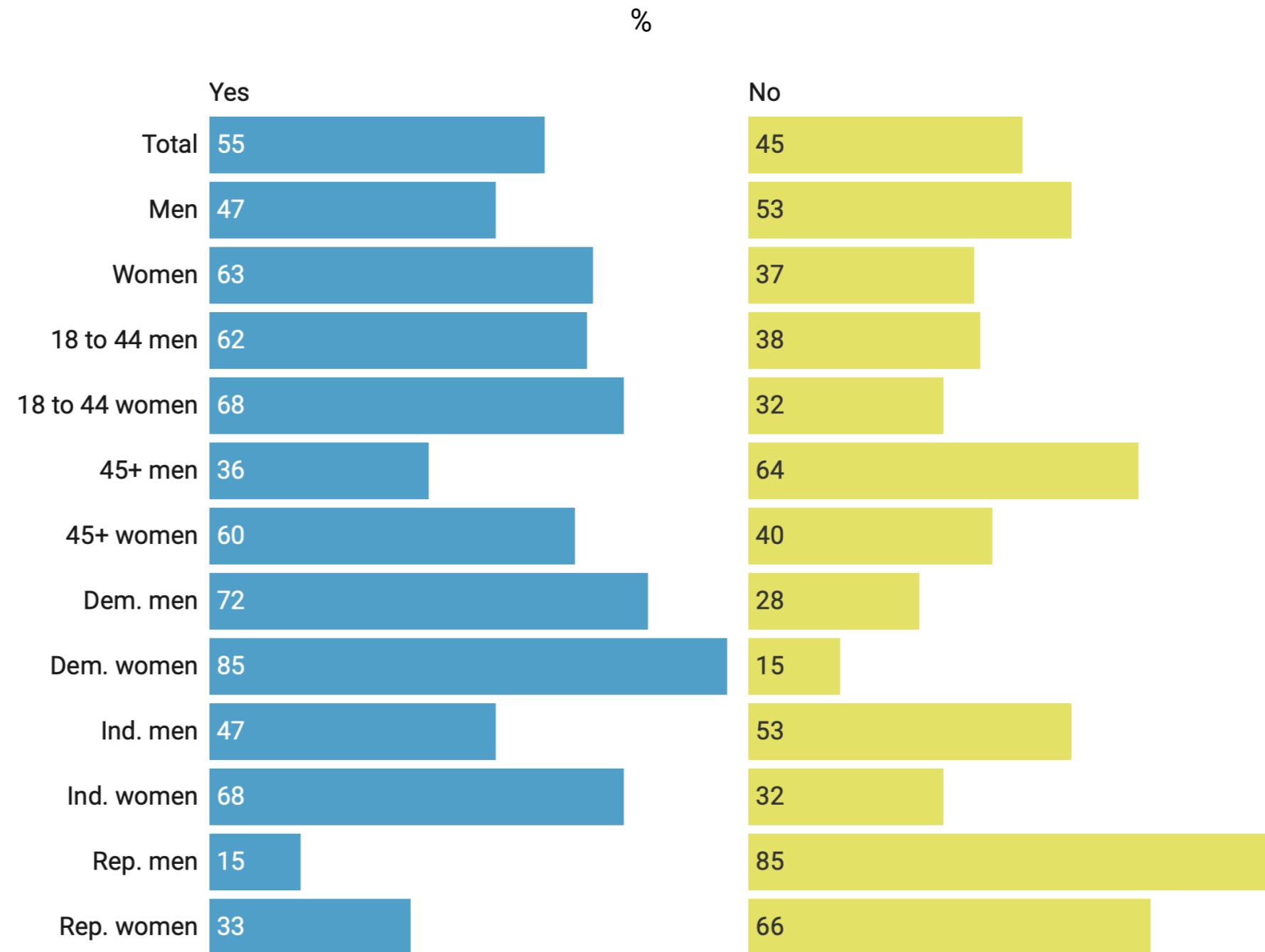
50% Very important
19% Somewhat important

DO YOU THINK ACCESS TO ABORTION WOULD BE EASIER IN ANY WAY IF MEN WERE THE ONES WHO GOT PREGNANT?



**REPUBLICAN MEN ARE
LEAST LIKELY TO
PERCEIVE A GENDER
FACTOR AT PLAY.**

Do you think access to abortion would be easier in any way
if men were the ones who got pregnant?



MAJORITIES AGREE WITH STATEMENTS ABOUT PEOPLE MAKING DECISIONS AND ACCESSING CARE WITHOUT THE GOVERNMENT INTERFERING.

Do you agree or disagree:

72%

Agree: "People should be able to make their **own decision about abortion** without the government interfering." *Base n = 509*

Disagree: 29%

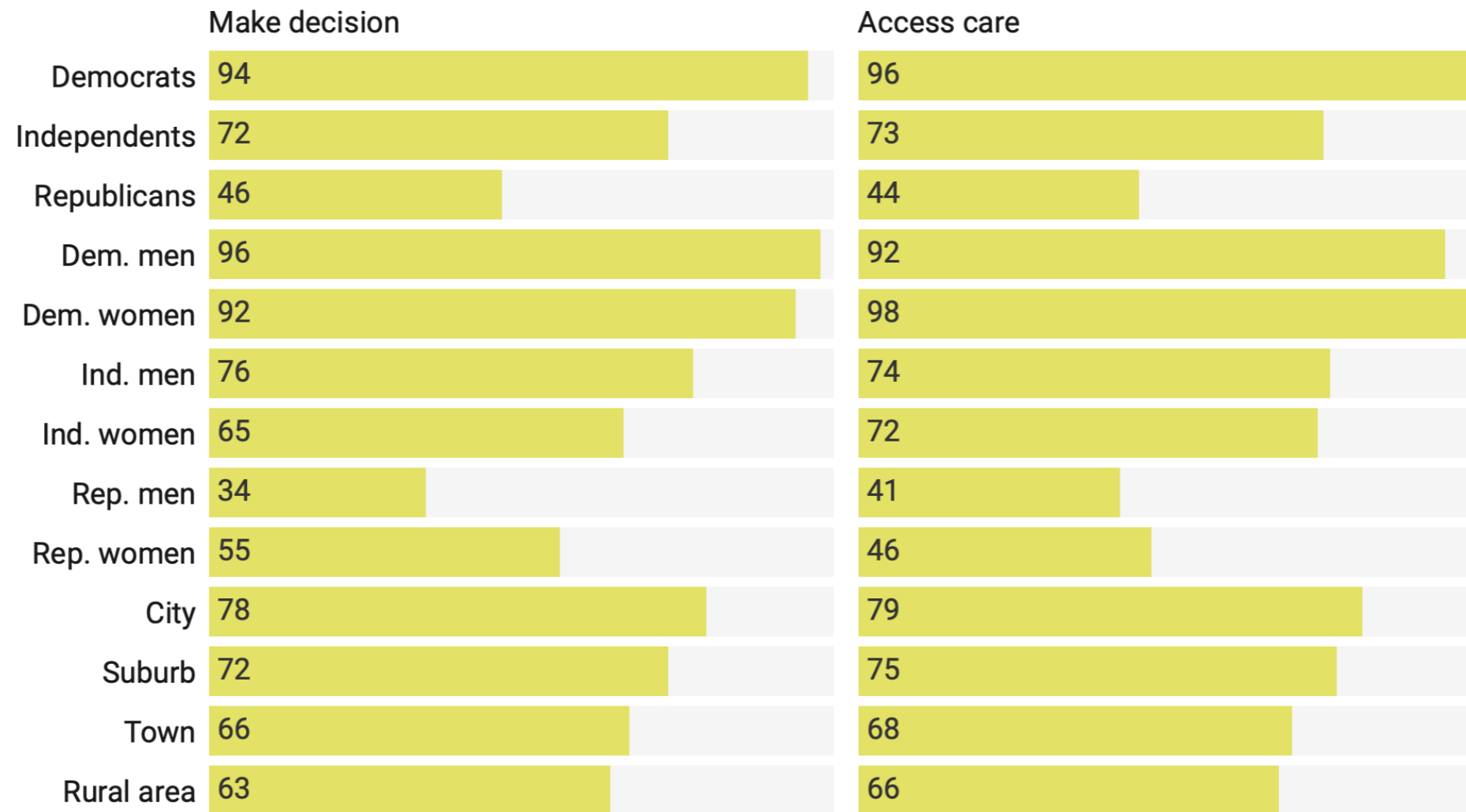
74%

Agree: "People should be able to **access health care for abortion** without the government interfering." *Base n = 501*

Disagree: 25%

MAJORITIES ACROSS AREAS OF THE STATE AGREE WITH PEOPLE MAKING DECISIONS AND ACCESSING CARE WITHOUT THE GOVERNMENT INTERFERING.

% Agree



74%

Of survey respondents say they think people **are capable of making the best decision for themselves** on abortion.

26%

Of survey respondents say they **do not think** people are capable of making the best decision for themselves on abortion.



77% Of these respondents want *Roe* overturned

51% Think it's best when women are watched over and protected by men

51% Disagree the country would be better off with more women in office

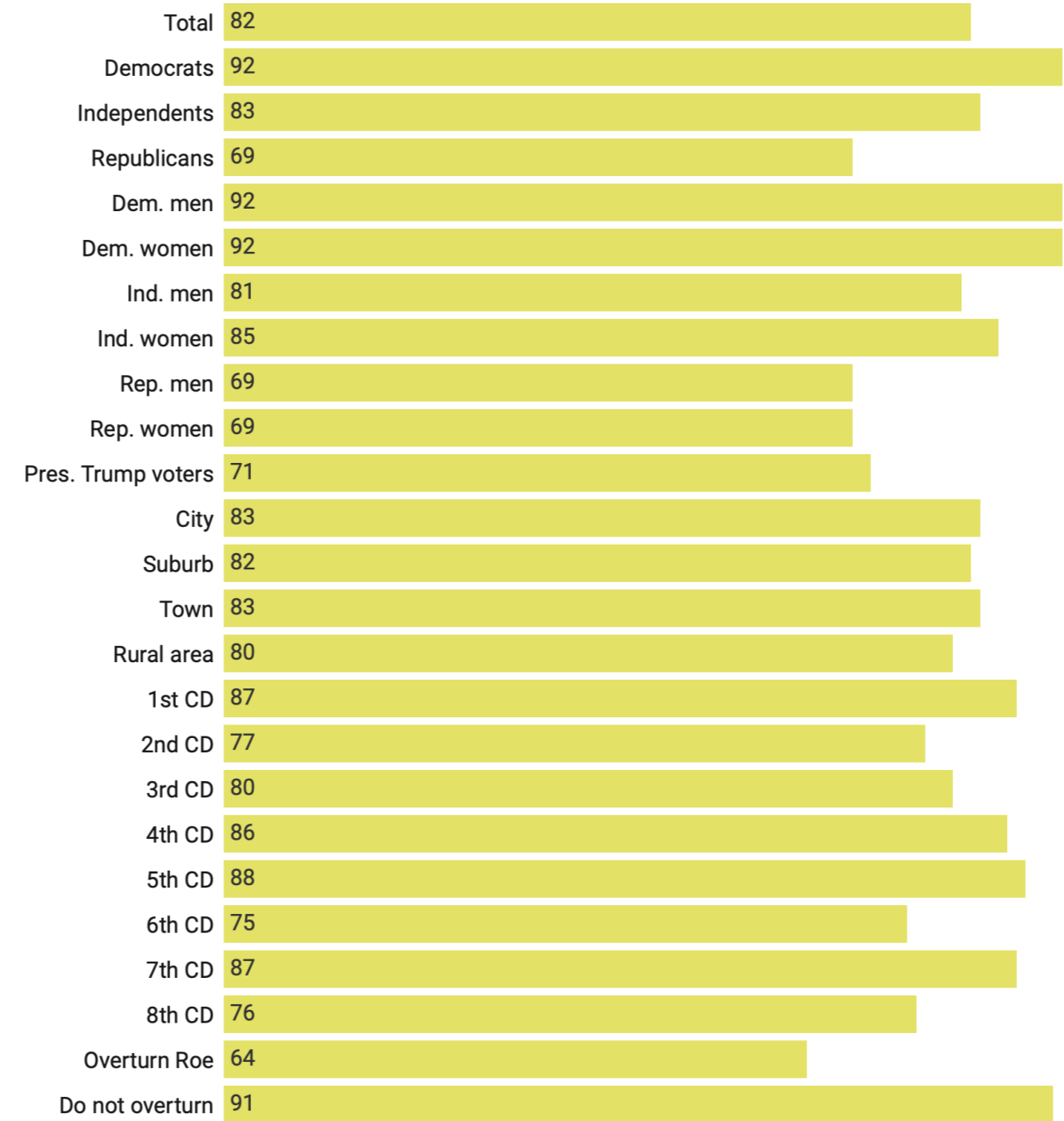
47% Disagree they want equal numbers of men and women in positions of power in society

MOST (82%) AGREE ABORTION SHOULD NOT BE "SO POLITICAL OR POLITICIZED."

Majorities of President Trump voters and those who want *Roe v. Wade* overturned also agree.

Do you agree or disagree:
"I don't think this issue should be so political or politicized."

% Agree

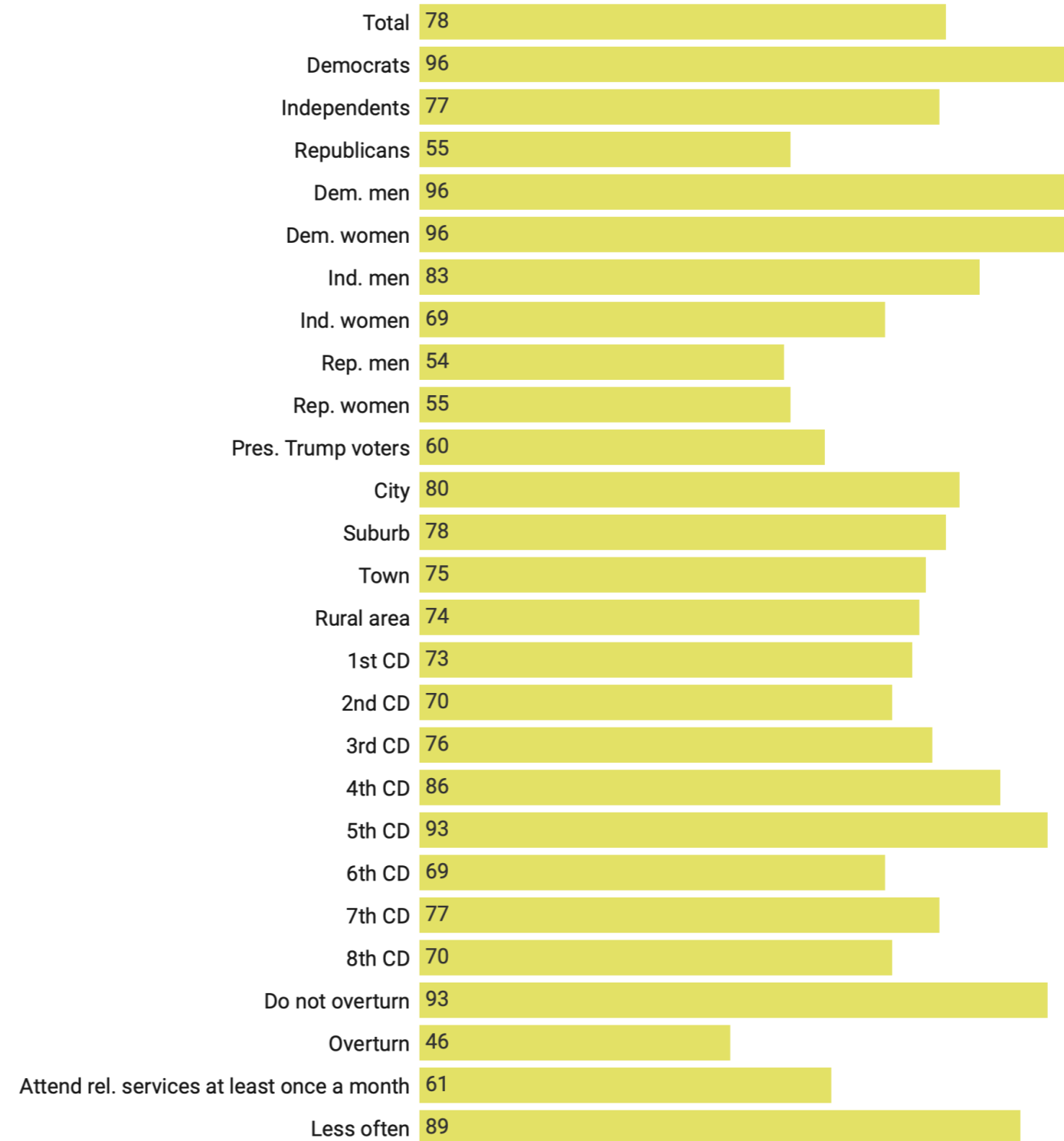


A MAJORITY (78%) AGREES THEY DO NOT “WANT ONE RELIGIOUS GROUP’S BELIEFS SWAYING OTHERS’ RIGHTS AND HEALTH CARE FOR EVERYONE.”

A majority of respondents who attend religious services at least once a month also agrees.

Do you agree or disagree:
 “I don’t want one group’s religious beliefs on abortion swaying the rights and health care for everyone.”

% Agree



PREFERENCES AROUND

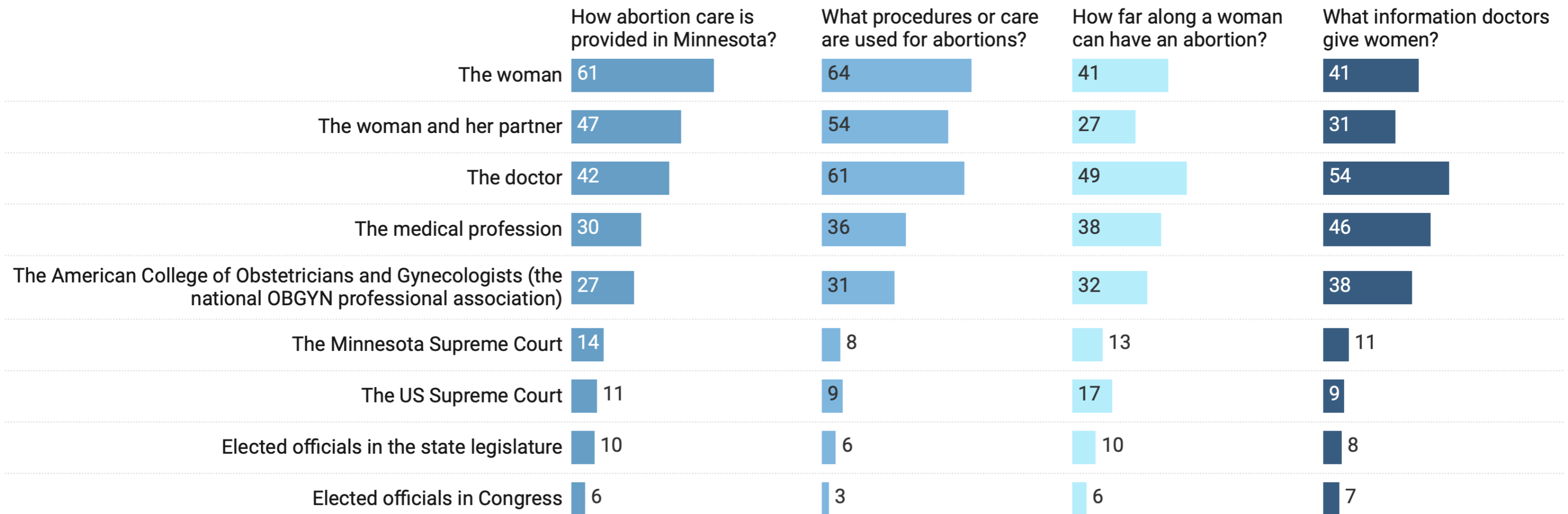
HEALTH CARE FOR ABORTION.



RESPONDENTS ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO WANT THE WOMAN AND HER DOCTOR MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT CARE OVER LAWMAKERS.

Who should decide...

%



The state legislature has passed laws that mandate doctors say specific things to someone before they can have an abortion. This law only applies to abortion, not other types of health care. This information is in addition to other standard health care requirements.

Would you feel most comfortable if: ROTATE FIRST TWO

5%

Democratic elected officials
decide what doctors must say to patients

13%

Republican elected officials
decide what doctors must say to patients

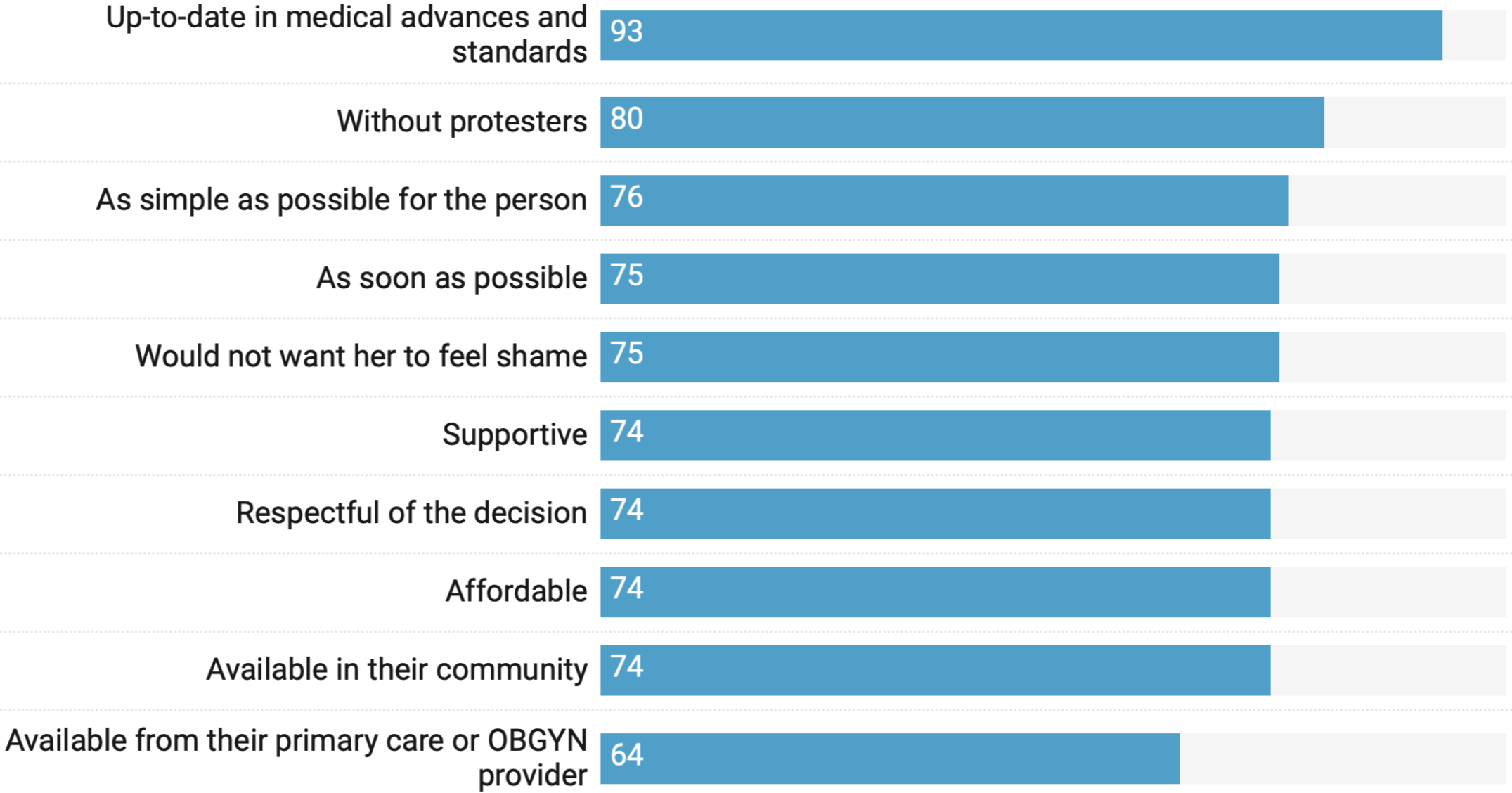
82%

Doctors or the medical profession decide what to say without elected officials' input

Let's say someone has decided to have an abortion.
Would you want the experience to be....

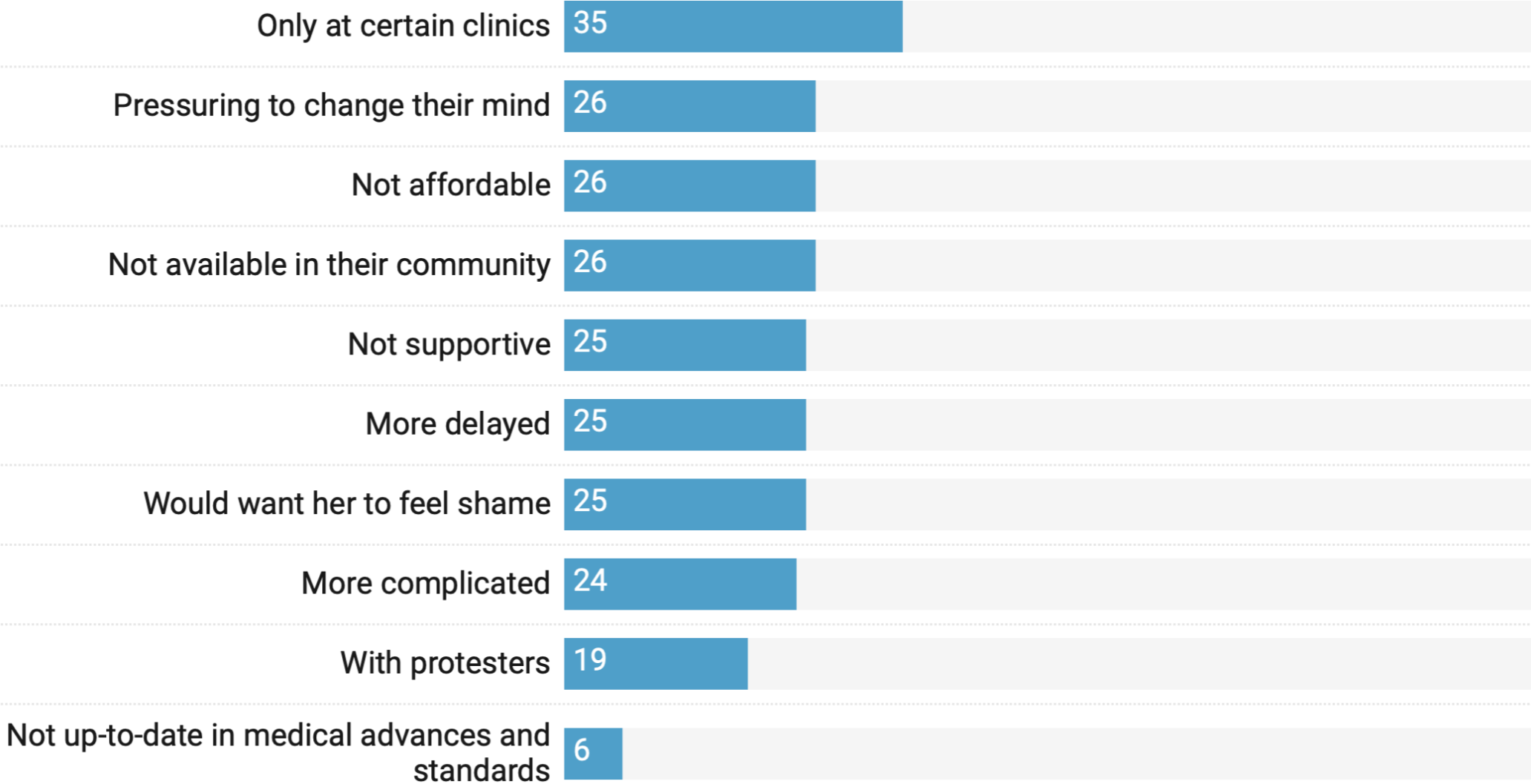
%

PREFERENCES ON ACCESS.



Let's say someone has decided to have an abortion.
Would you want the experience to be...

%



PERCEPTIONS OF
PEOPLE WHO HAVE AN ABORTION.



FOR MANY, ABORTION IS NOT JUST
A POLITICAL STANCE.

47%

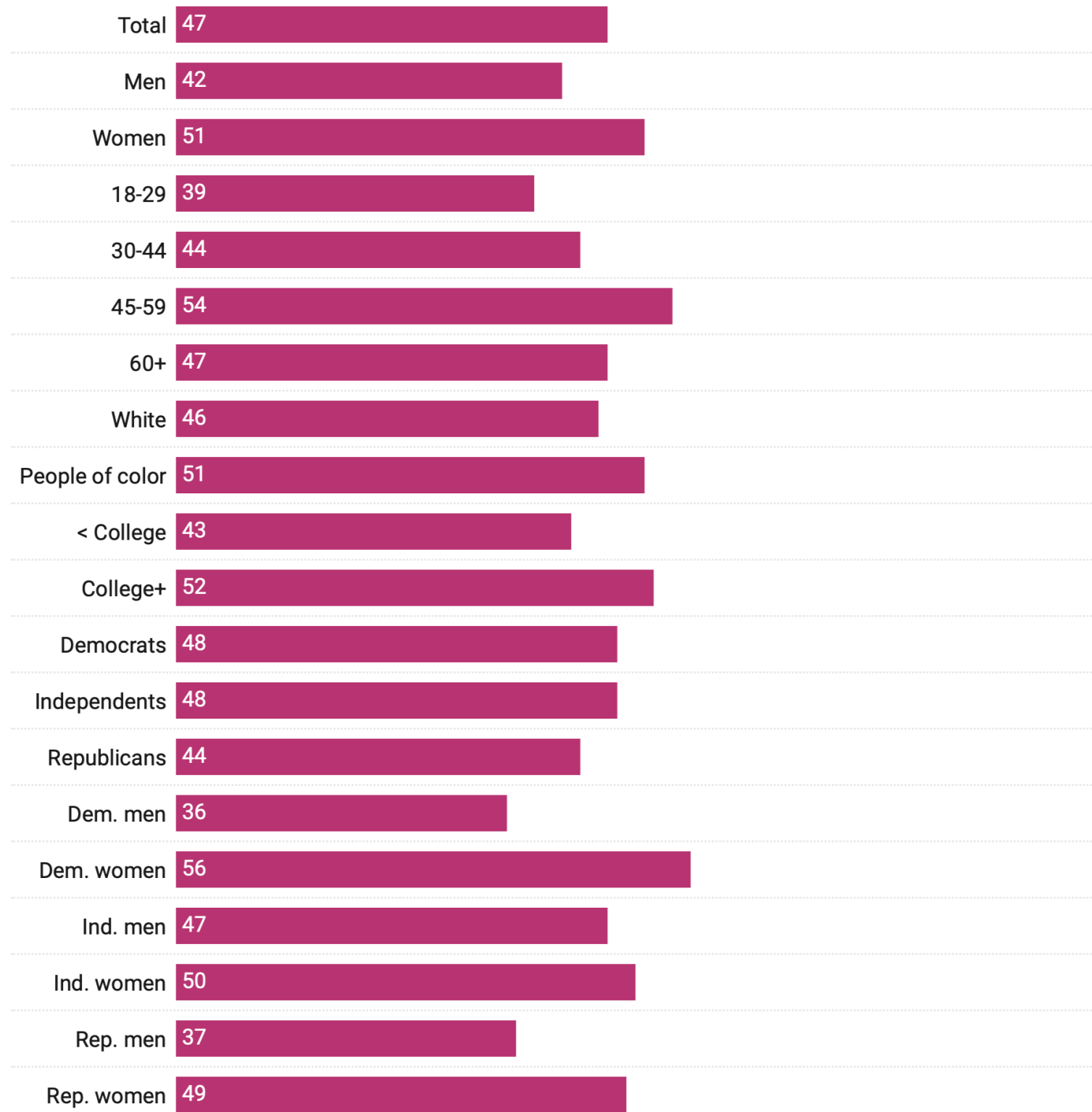
Have personal experience,
having talked with someone about
their experience having an
abortion or someone's personal
decision to have one.

59%

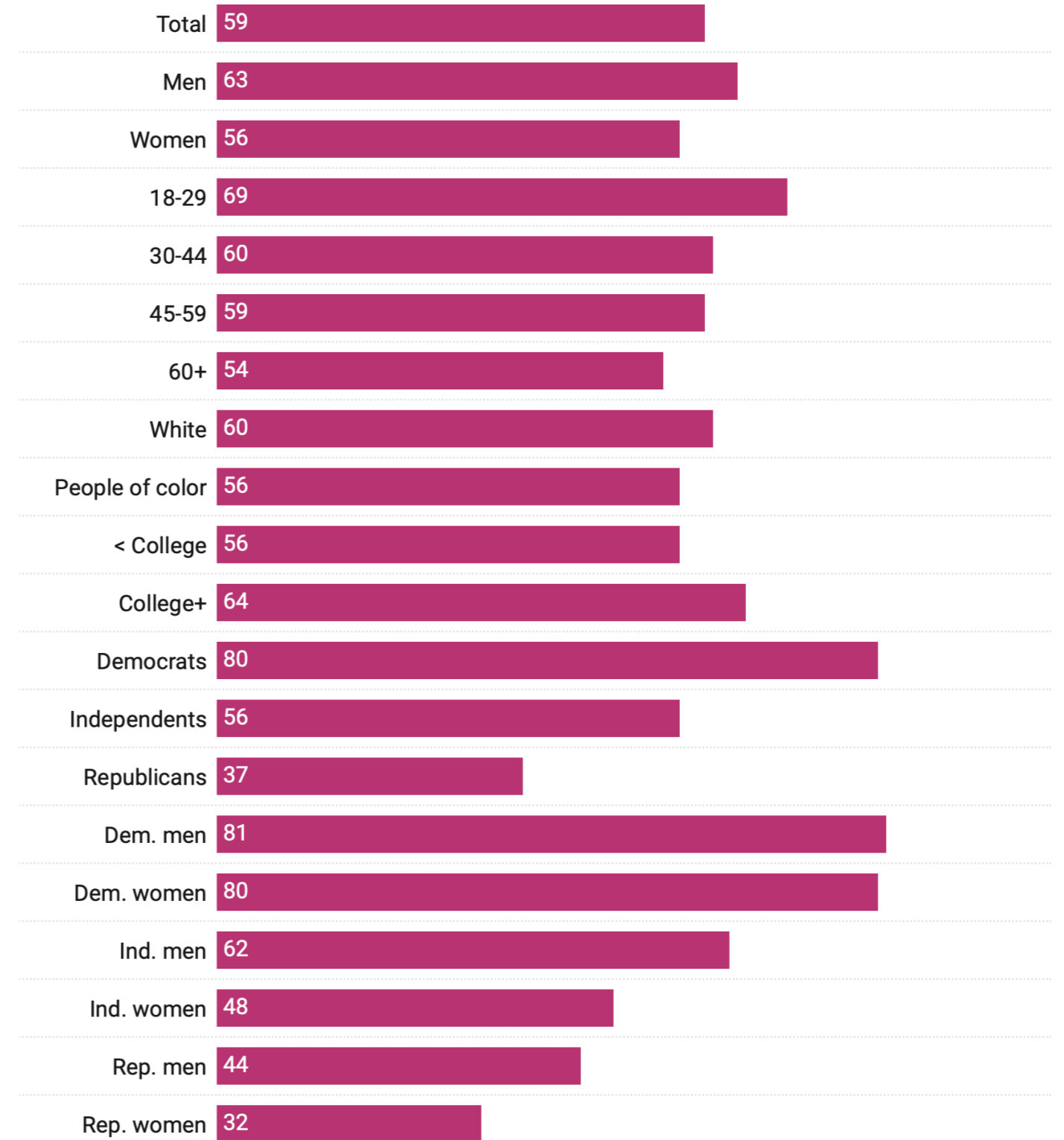
Can imagine a situation in
which an abortion might be the
best option for them or a partner.

Have talked with someone personally about the decision or experience of abortion

%



Can imagine a situation in which an abortion might be the best option for me / partner

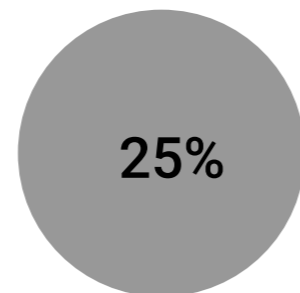


**MAJORITIES THINK SOMEONE WHO HAS AN ABORTION CAN BE GOOD AND MORAL
AND THAT AN ABORTION CAN BE A RESPONSIBLE CHOICE.**

Which comes closest to your view?
ROTATE



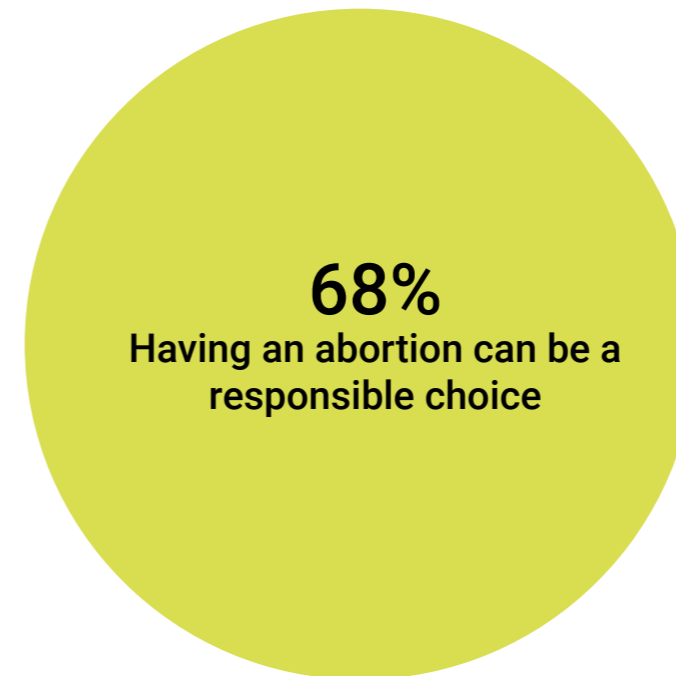
75%
Someone can be a good and
moral person and have an
abortion



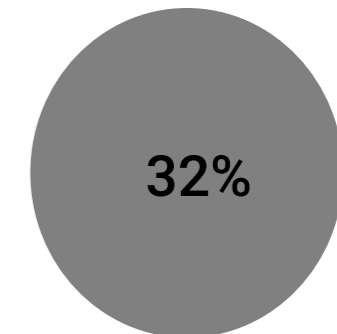
25%

Someone cannot be a good and
moral person and have an
abortion

Which comes closest to your view?
ROTATE



68%
Having an abortion can be a
responsible choice



32%

Having an abortion
cannot be a responsible
choice

CONCLUSION.



Overall, the data suggest that Minnesota voters want and trust individuals to make their own decisions about abortion without the state being involved.

Even in the midst of – or perhaps in spite of – a national debate on abortion rights and access, Minnesotans do not want the issue to be so politicized or political. They also tend not to see the issue as a religious one, nor one they struggle with.

If anything, voters are more likely to want laws that support access than restrict it, especially given voters vastly overestimate access right now. Majorities, in fact, say they want people who have decided to have an abortion to have a supportive, affordable, and respectful experience available from providers in their own community.

Not surprisingly, voters who want to restrict access have very strong feelings about abortion as killing a life or a potential life. Interestingly, they also tend to have very different views of women and gender equality.