

Social Security Works

Findings from an Election Eve/Night Survey of 1,200 Likely Voters Nationwide

Survey Methodology

Lake Research Partners designed and administered this pre-election and election night omnibus survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached a total of 1,200 likely, registered voters nationwide. The sample consisted of 1,000 interviews among voters who were reached on landline phones and an oversample of 200 interviews among voters reached on cell phones. The survey was conducted October 31st through November 2nd, 2010.

Telephone numbers for the base sample were drawn from a listed voter sample and the cell phone oversample was drawn from a listed sample. The sample was stratified geographically based on the proportion of likely voters in each region. Data were weighted to reflect the aggregated "national" Congressional vote as reported in the 2010 exit polls, as well as by gender, party identification, ideology, marital status, race, region, and probability of selection and phone usage.

Strategic Summary

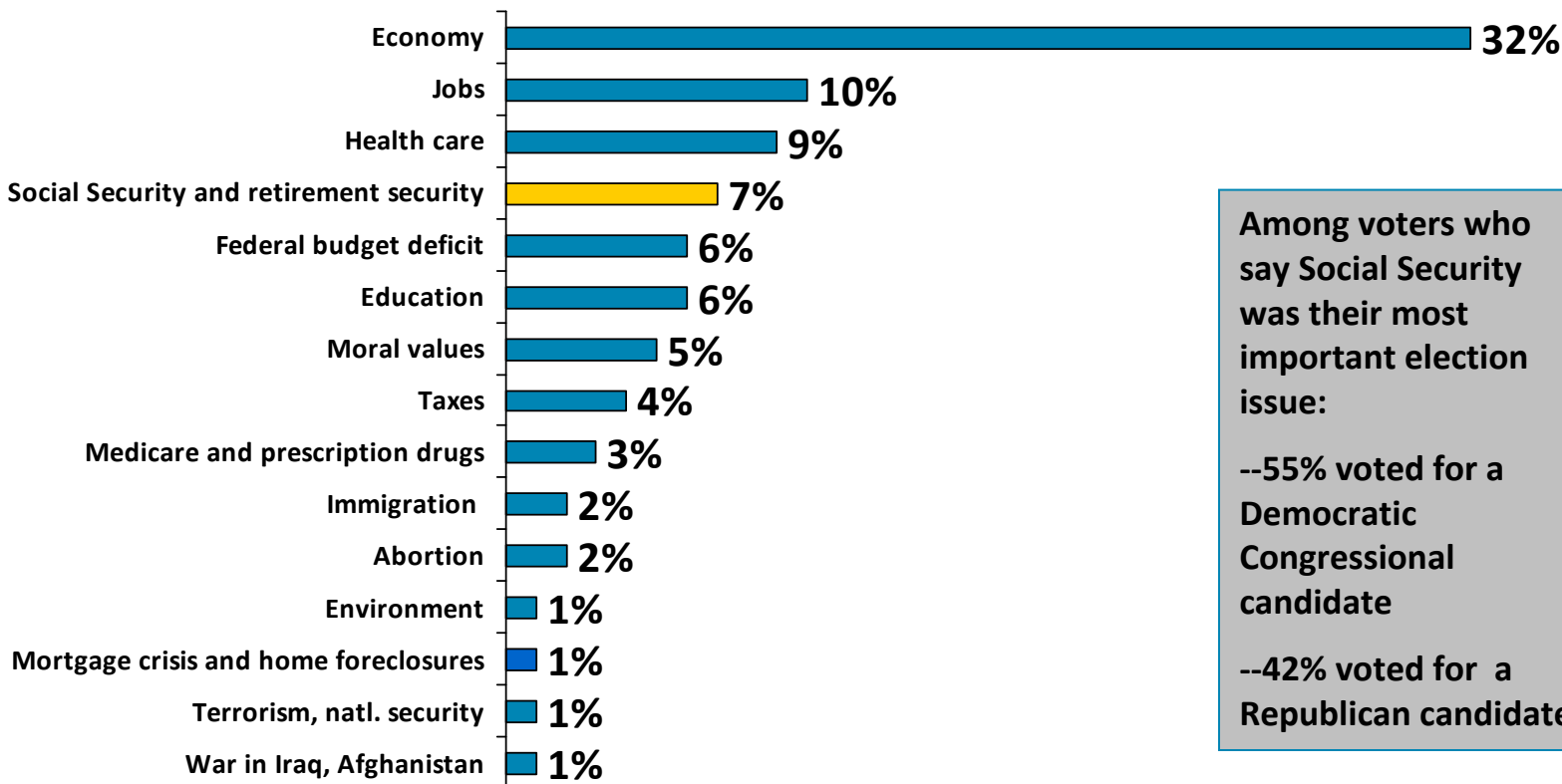
- **According to national exit poll data, Democrats lost seniors by historic proportions—21 points—in the November mid-terms. Even in 1994, Democrats only lost seniors by 2 points.**
- **The survey reveals Democrats no longer have the advantage they traditionally have enjoyed on Social Security. However, candidates who made Social Security an issue often saved their seats, and voters who say Social Security was a top voting issue voted more for Democratic candidates.**
- **As we have seen in previous work, voters see little relationship between the deficit and Social Security.**
- **Voters strongly oppose cutting Social Security benefits, even under the rationales of reducing the deficit or making the program more solvent in the long run. They strongly oppose cutting benefits for those earning above \$60,000, and they strongly oppose raising the retirement age to 69 years-old. This includes voters of all ages and partisan groups, including Republicans and Tea Party supporters.**
- **There is also strong bipartisan support for lifting the cap to impose Social Security taxes on all wages above \$106,800. Support for this is stronger when both employers and employees are taxed.**

Political Credibility on Social Security

Democrats do not enjoy their traditional advantage when it comes to who would be better on Social Security. Yet, among voters who say Social Security and retirement security was the most important issue in their vote in the mid-term elections, more than half voted for a Democratic Congressional candidate.

The economy dominated voters' concerns in this election, followed by jobs, health care, Social Security and retirement security, the federal budget deficit, and education. The economy became the umbrella concern for voters in this election, with retirement security being an important component of retirement concerns.

Most Important Issue in Deciding Who to Vote for Congress



Among voters who say Social Security was their most important election issue:
 --55% voted for a Democratic Congressional candidate
 --42% voted for a Republican candidate

Democrats lost among voters who said the economy was the most important issue: 55% voted for a Republican candidate; 42% for a Democratic candidate.



Social Security was a particularly important voting issue for independents who voted for a Democrat in this election, voters aged 65 to 74, and older voters who are women, independent, moderate, white and African American.

Most likely to say Social Security and Retirement Security the Most Important Issue in Deciding for Whom to Vote in 2010:

- Voters 65-69 (17%)
- Voters 70-74* (16%)
- Women 55+ (15%)
- Independent women (14%)
- Moderates age 55+ (21%)
- Whites 55+ (14%)
- African Americans 55+* (17%)
- Independents who voted for a Democratic candidate (13%)

In terms of which political leaders will better handle Social Security, Congressional Republicans have a seven-point lead over President Obama, but Congressional Republicans and Congressional Democrats run about even among voters overall.

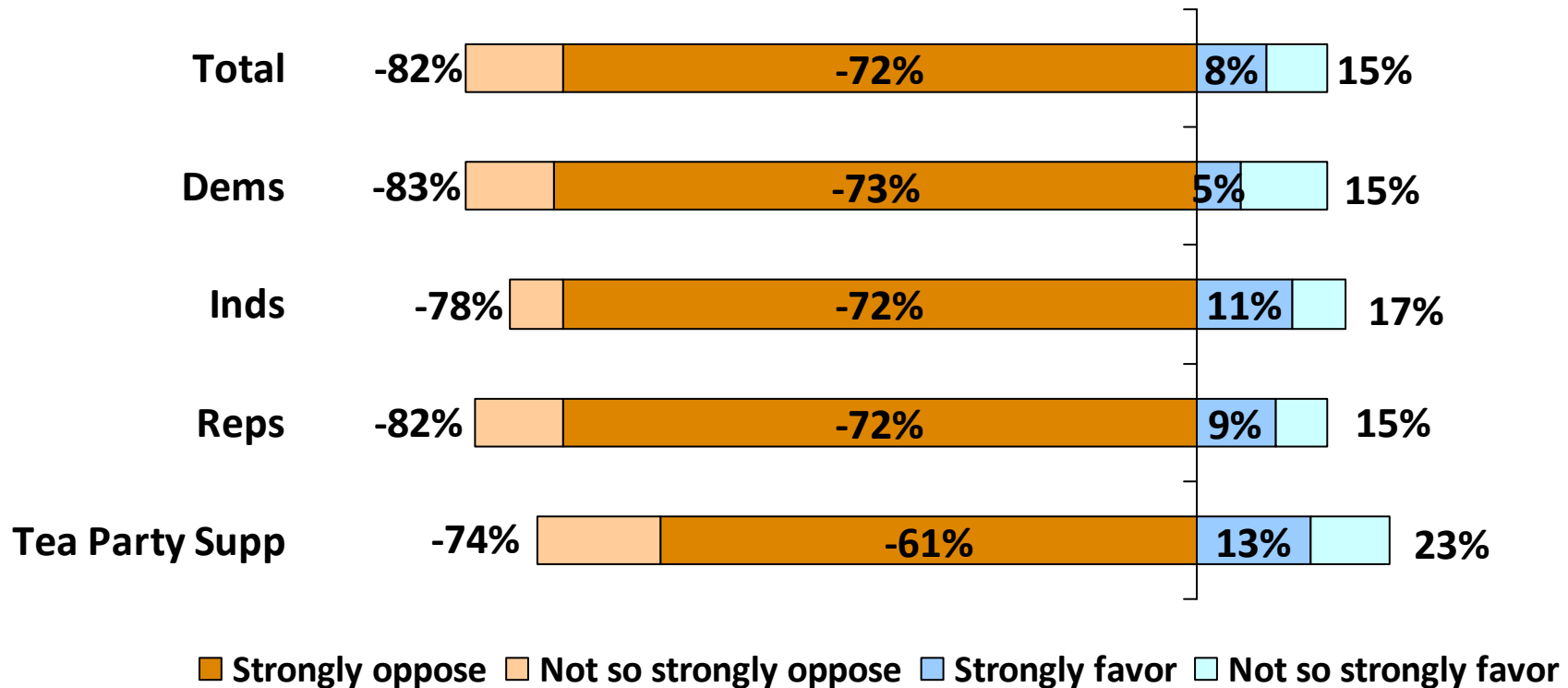
Who Will Better Handle Social Security					
	Total	Dems	Inds	Reps	Tea Party
Republicans in Congress	31%	3%	26%	59%	57%
	+3R		+3R		
Democrats in Congress	28%	64%	23%	1%	2%
Both the same	34%	29%	41%	34%	34%
Neither	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%
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Republicans in Congress	33%	4%	25%	65%	61%
	+7R		+7R		
President Obama	26%	61%	18%	2%	6%
Both the same	31%	27%	40%	27%	25%
Neither	6%	3%	11%	4%	6%

Reactions to Cutting Social Security Benefits

There is strong, widespread opposition to cutting Social Security benefits in order to reduce the federal deficit. This carries across Democratic, Republican and independent voters, as well as Tea Party supporters. Opposition to cutting benefits in order to make the program solvent is less intense, but majorities of voters across parties still oppose benefit cuts under this rationale. Robust majorities oppose cutting retirement benefits for people earning more than \$60,000.

Majorities of voters across party lines are strongly opposed to cutting benefits in order to reduce the federal deficit.

Cutting Social Security Benefits in Order to Reduce the Federal Deficit

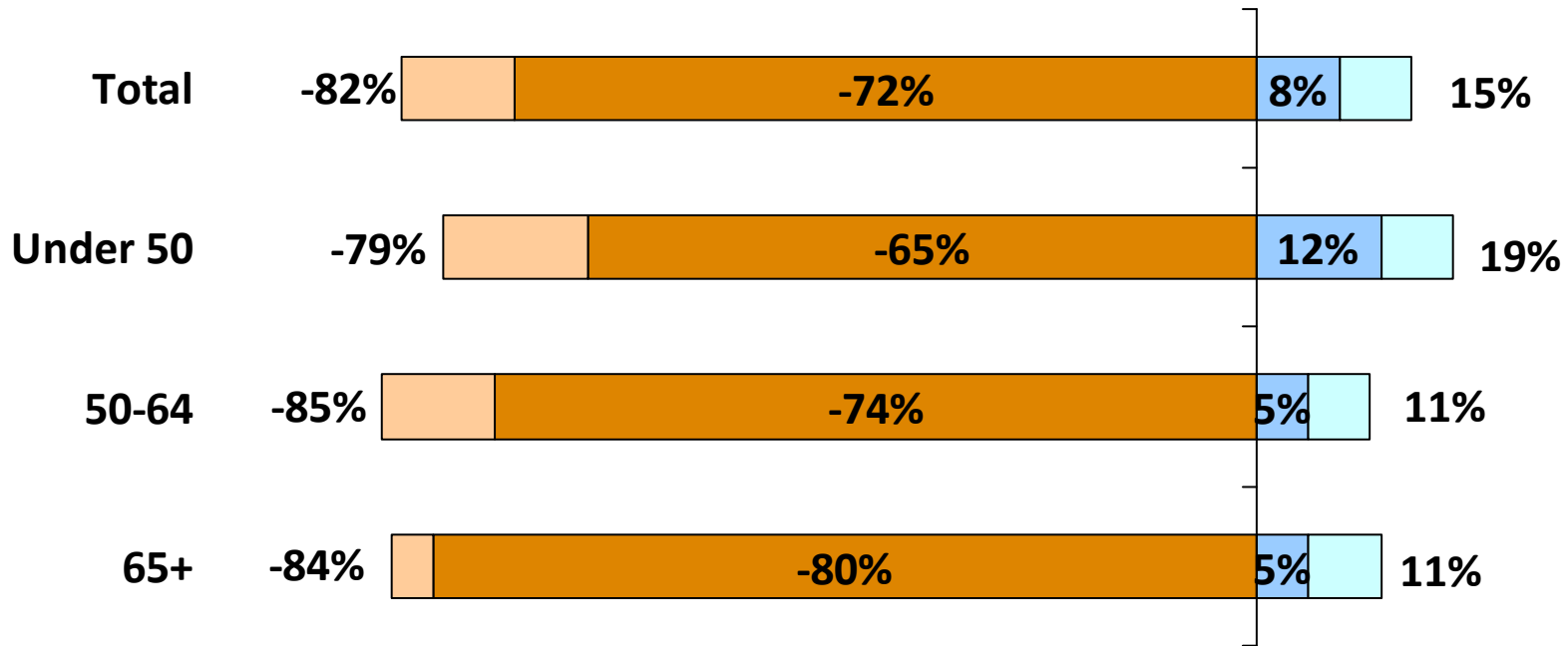


A majority of voters across demographic and political subgroups oppose cutting Social Security benefits. Opposition is particularly strong among: women (74% strongly oppose), voters age 55 and older (80%), voters with a high school education or less (79%), independent women (77%)*, unmarried women (82%), and Northeasterners (77%) *Note small n size.



Intense opposition to cutting Social Security benefits is stronger among senior citizens and voters aged 50-64, but, still nearly two-thirds of voters under age 50 are strongly opposed to benefit cuts.

Cutting Social Security Benefits in Order to Reduce the Federal Deficit



■ Strongly oppose
 ■ Not so strongly oppose
 ■ Strongly favor
 ■ Not so strongly favor

Split sampled question

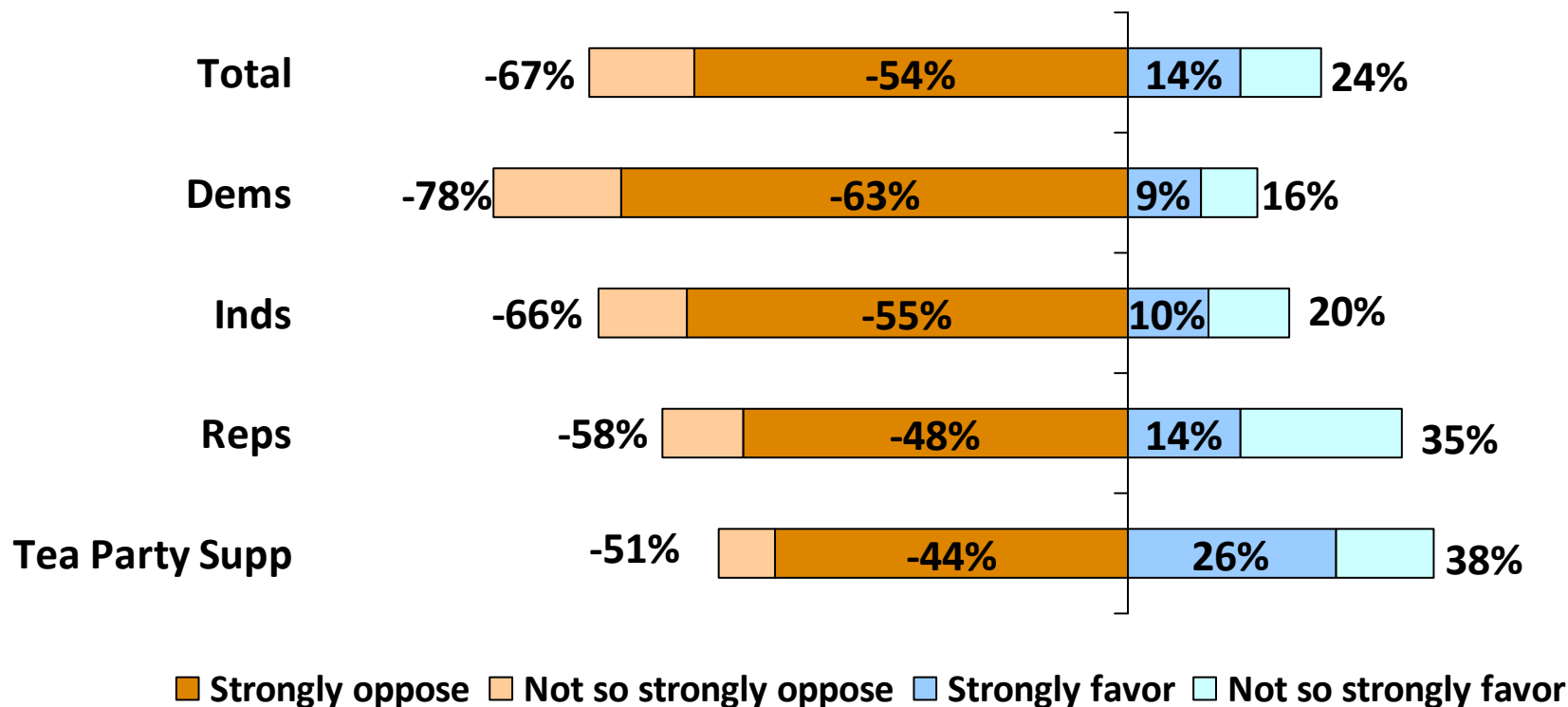
In the past six months, independents and Republicans both have increased slightly in their strong opposition to cutting benefits. Independents are up six points in strong opposition, as are Republicans.

Cutting Social Security Benefits in Order to Reduce the Deficit										
	Total		Dems		Inds		Reps		Tea Party	
	Nov '10	May '10*	Nov '10	May '10	Nov '10	May '10	Nov '10	May '10	Nov '10	May '10
% oppose <i>(% strongly oppose)</i>	82% (72%)	81% (71%)	83% (73%)	89% (79%)	78% (72%)	76% (66%)	82% (72%)	77% (66%)	74% (61%)	76% (64%)
Change in opposition <i>(Change in strong opposition)</i>	+1 (+1)		-6 (-6)		+2 (+6)		+5 (+6)		-2 (-3)	

*May 2010: National survey of 1,000 likely voters, conducted May 13-20, 2010

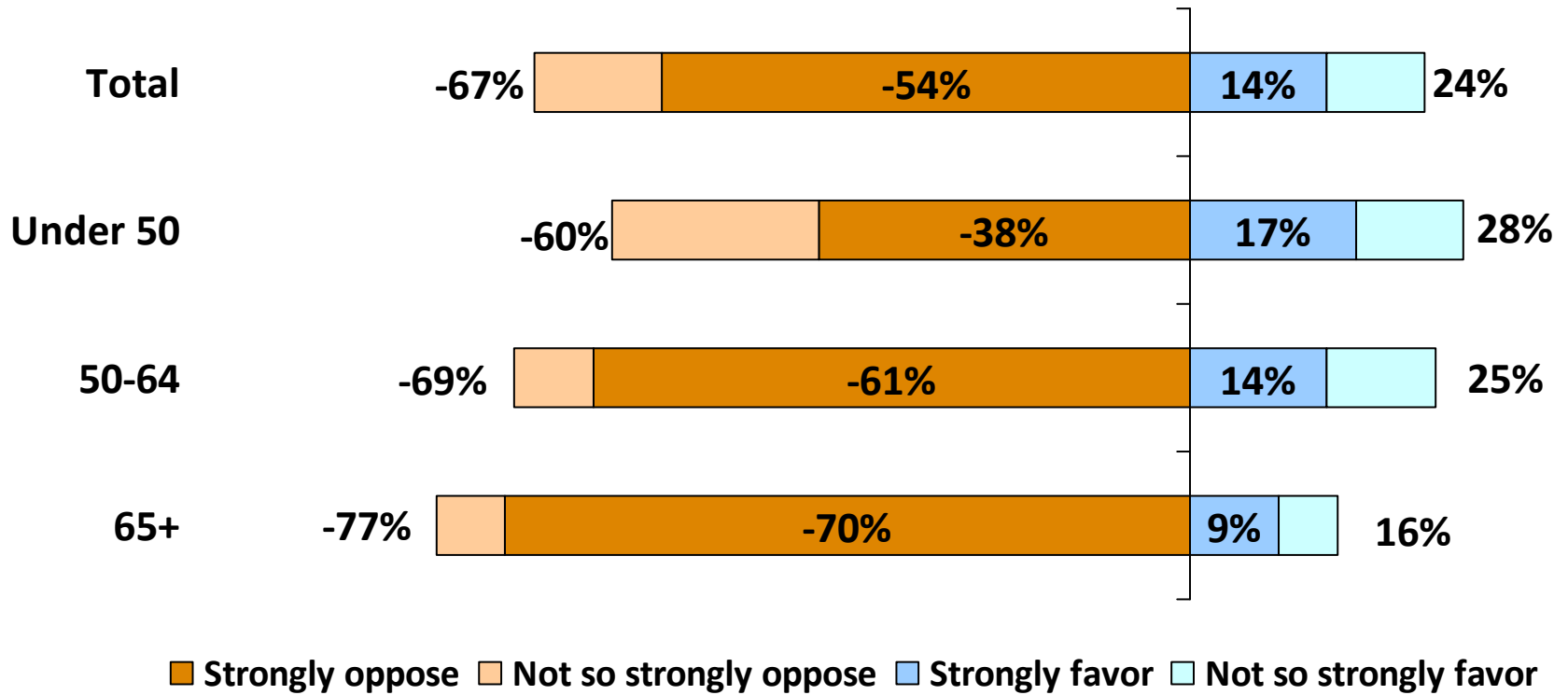
Majorities of voters oppose cutting Social Security benefits to make the program solvent in the long term, including Democrats, independents, and Republicans. Just over half of Tea Party supporters also oppose cuts under this rationale. Intense opposition is lower, however, among Republicans and Tea Party supporters.

Cutting Social Security Benefits to Make the Program Solvent in the Long Term



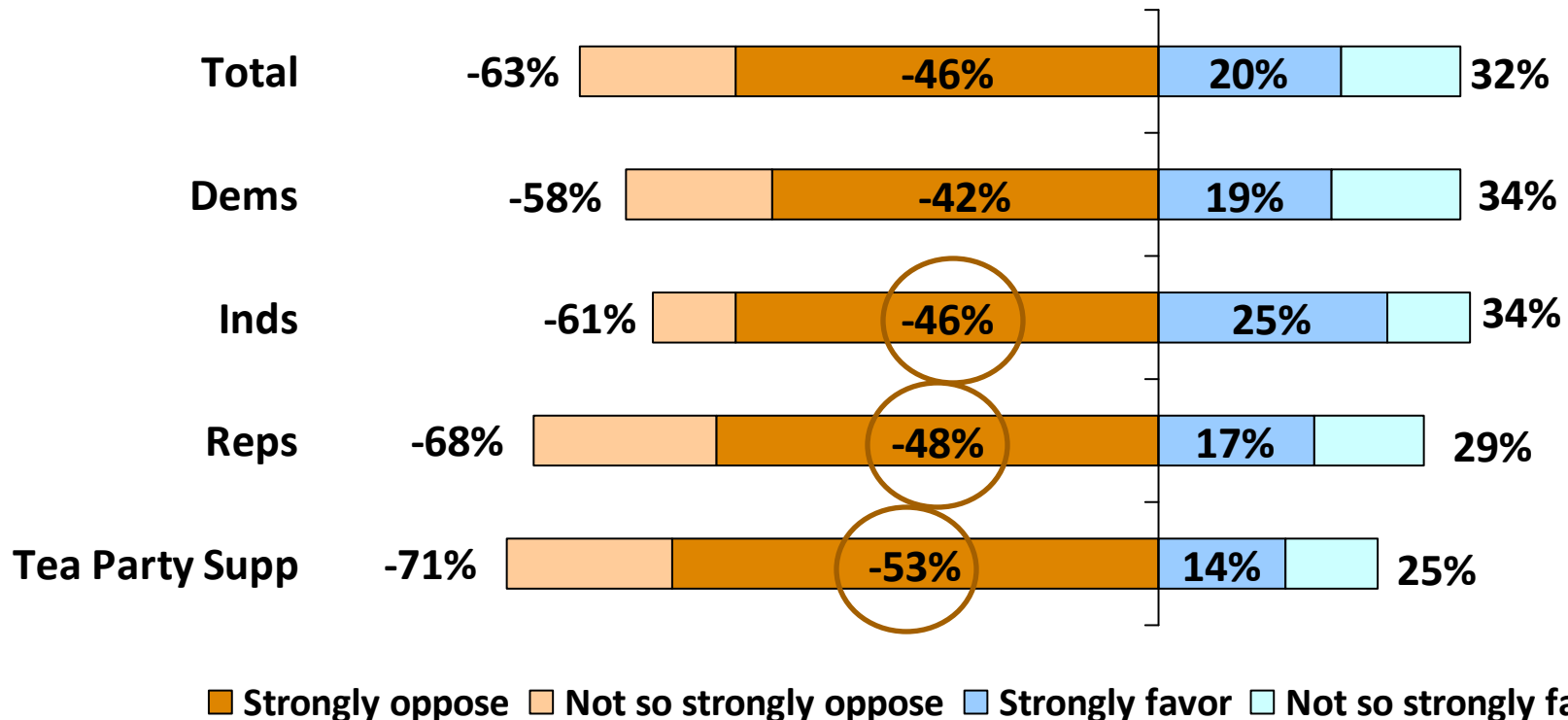
Voters under age 50 are more willing to cut benefits in the name of long-term solvency, but still six in ten oppose cuts.

Cutting Social Security Benefits to Make the Program Solvent in the Long Term



Across political affiliations, six in ten voters oppose reducing benefits, upon their retirement, for people earning over \$60,000 today. Intense opposition is highest among Republicans, independents, and Tea Partiers.

Reducing Social Security Benefits for People Earning Above \$60,000 Today When They Retire



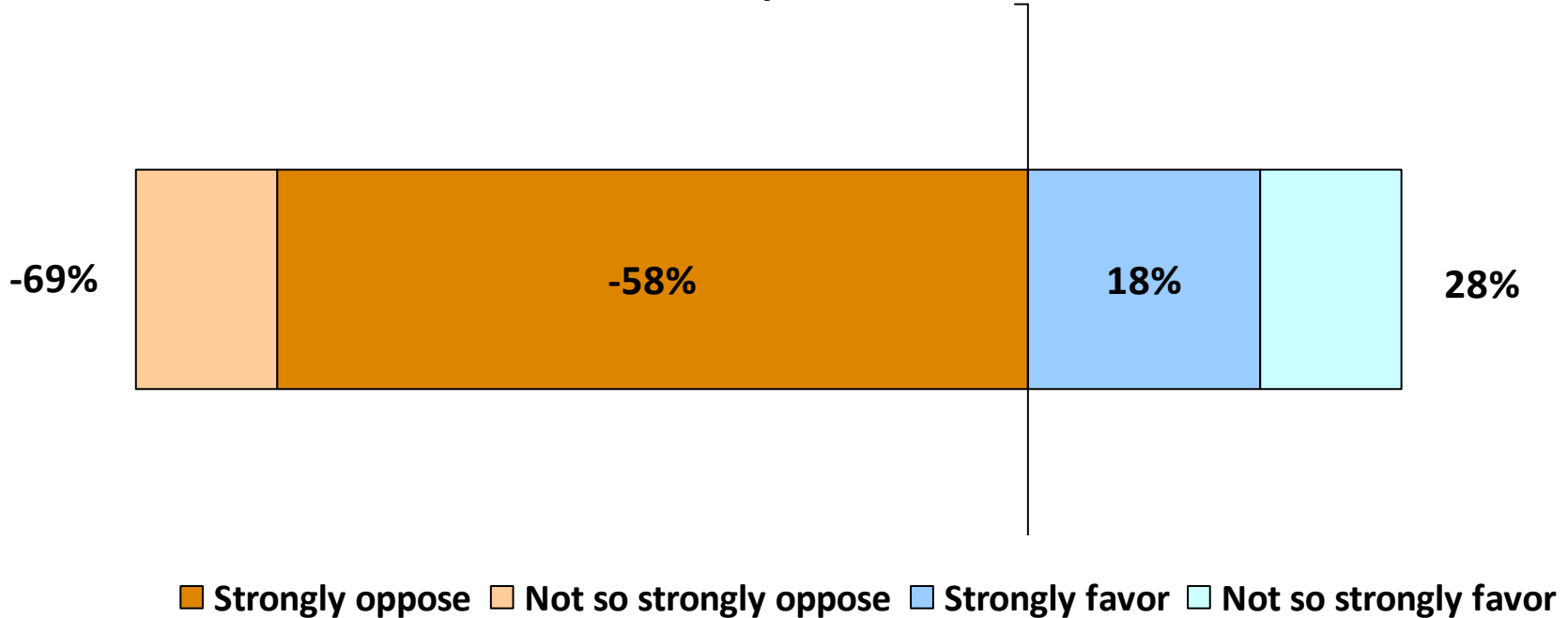
A majority of voters across all demographic and political subgroups oppose reducing benefits for people earning above \$60,000.

Raising the Retirement Age

There is broad opposition to raising the retirement age to 69, with intense opposition across party lines.

Seven in ten voters oppose raising the retirement age to 69 years old. Nearly six in ten strongly oppose this.

Support for Raising the Retirement Age to 69, to Make Social Security More Solvent



Opposition to raising the retirement age to 69 is at six in ten across party lines, with Democratic and independent voters showing the most intense opposition.

Raising the Retirement Age to Make Social Security More Solvent					
<i>% opposed (% strongly opposed)</i>	Total	Dems	Inds	Reps	Tea Party
Raise the retirement age to 69	69% (58%)	76% (62%)	77% (63%)	57% (50%)	62% (56%)

Majorities of voters across age groups oppose raising the retirement age to 69. Opposition is stronger among voters under age 65.

Raising the Retirement Age to Make Social Security More Solvent				
<i>% opposed (% strongly opposed)</i>	Total	<50	50-64	65+
Raise the retirement age to 69	69% (58%)	75% (61%)	70% (61%)	58% (48%)

Opposition to raising the retirement age to 69 is especially robust among blue-collar voters.

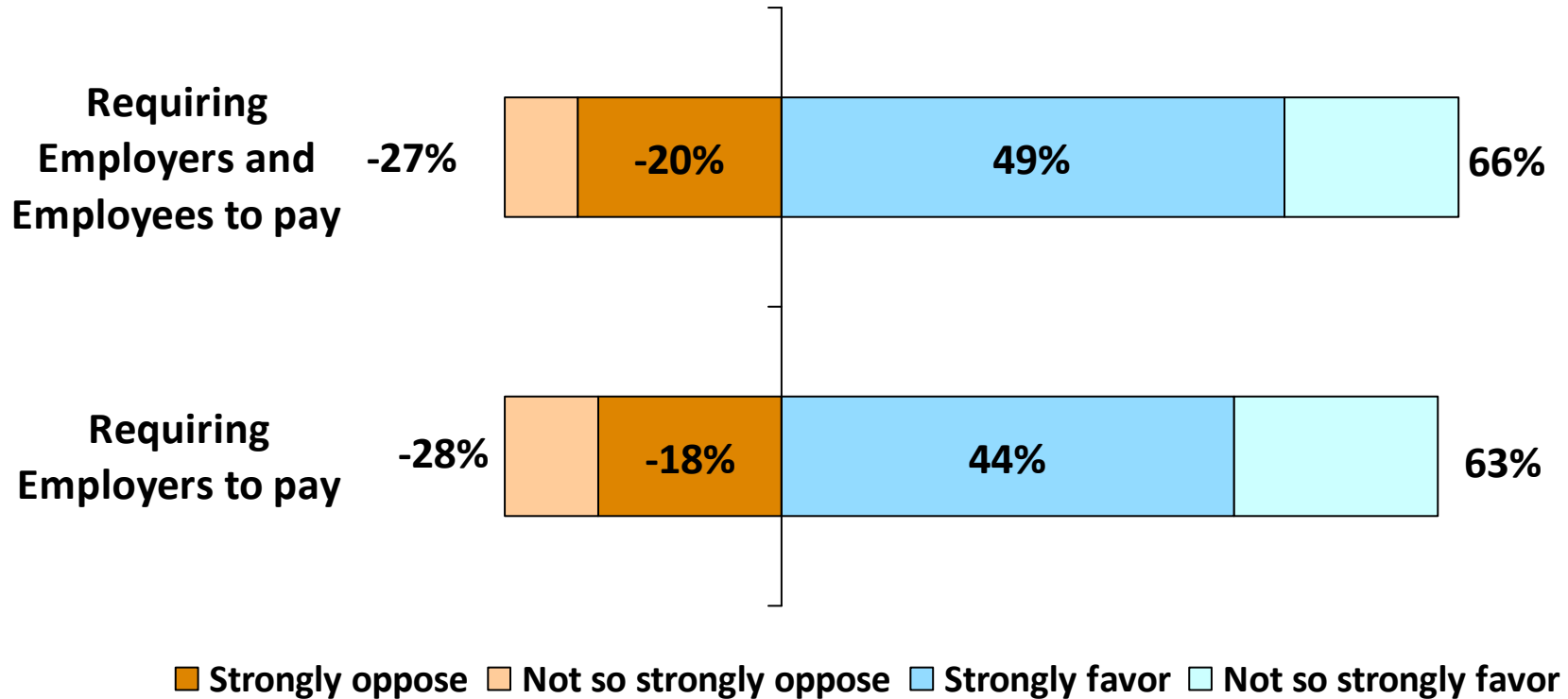
Raising the Retirement Age to Make Social Security More Solvent					
<i>% opposed (% strongly opposed)</i>	Total	Non-college men	Non-college women	College men	College women
Raise the retirement age to 69	69% (58%)	71% (58%)	76% (68%)	66% (49%)	61% (53%)

Enacting Social Security Taxes on Wages Above \$106,800

Around two-thirds of voters favor, and nearly half strongly favor, a proposal to gradually require employees and employers to pay Social Security taxes on all wages above \$106,800. Intense support is slightly higher for requiring both employees and employers to pay taxes on all wages above \$106,800, rather than just employers. There are surprisingly few partisan divisions.

Two-thirds of voters favor, and nearly half strongly favor, a proposal to gradually require employees and employers to pay Social Security taxes on all wages above \$106,800, which they do not do now. Slightly fewer voters support the same proposal that would only apply to employers.

Support for Gradually Requiring Social Security Taxes Paid on All Wages Above \$106,800, Which is Not Required Now, To Make Social Security More Solvent



Both versions of the proposal earn a majority in support across political affiliations. Yet, support is weaker among independents, Republicans and Tea Party supporters, especially when taxes are just required of employers.

Gradually Requiring Social Security Taxes be Paid on All Wages Above \$106,800 in Order to Make Social Security More Solvent					
<i>% favor</i> <i>(% strongly favor)</i>	Total	Dems	Inds	Reps	Tea Party
Requiring employers	63% (44%)	76% (55%)	58% (46%)	56% (36%)	51% (29%)
Requiring employers <u>and employees</u>	66% (49%)	73% (59%)	66% (47%)	59% (43%)	60% (42%)
Employers & Employees margin over Employers alone	+3 favor (+5 strg favor)	-3 (+4)	+8 (+1)	+3 (+7)	+9 (+13)

Voters under age 50 are slightly more likely than their older counterparts to favor lifting the wage cap for employers and employees alike, but strong majorities across age groups favor the proposals.

Gradually Requiring Social Security Taxes be Paid on All Wages Above \$106,800 in Order to Make Social Security More Solvent				
<i>% favor (% strongly favor)</i>	Total	<50	50-64	65+
Requiring employers	63% (44%)	67% (44%)	63% (47%)	58% (40%)
Requiring employers <u>and</u> <u>employees</u>	66% (49%)	65% (49%)	70% (52%)	60% (46%)
Employers & Employees margin over Employers alone	+3 favor (+5 strg favor)	-2 (+5)	+7 (+5)	+2 (+6)