

Understanding and Leveraging Implicit Partisanship

Survey Findings – 2022



Methodology

Global Strategy groups conducted two nationwide surveys:

Step #1 Weak partisan survey

The research goal was to understand what issues and message framing voters implicitly associated with Democrats or Republicans when not explicitly attached to a candidate from either party.

The survey was among less partisan voters with self-described strong Democrats and strong Republicans screened out of the sample.

This was an online panel survey of 1175 registered voters nationwide between March 7th – 16th, 2022.

The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 2.9%. The margin of error on sub-samples was greater.

Step #2 Registered voter survey

The research goal was to determine:

- If “atypical” less implicitly Democratic or Republican messages and language were more effective than “typical” messages at moving the vote for Congress.**
- If “atypical” language turns off or demotivates the Democratic base**

The survey was among all registered voters.

This was an online panel survey of 1600 registered voters nationwide between May 25th – June 7th, 2022. The margin of error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 2.5%. The margin of error on sub-samples is greater.

Step One: Identifying Implicit Partisanship

Key Groups Among soft partisans

Center-Left Targets

Among soft partisans, they are:

- Dems who vote R on the generic ballot
- Dems & Inds who vote Democratic on the generic AND are unfavorable to Biden
- Dems & Inds who vote Democratic on the generic AND are favorable to Trump

They skew sharply:

- Younger
- Female

Compared to center-right they are:

- More working class
- Less college educated
- Moderate

They are extremely hostile to Biden, are unhappy with both parties in Congress, and while not overly unfavorable to Trump and do not like the movements behind him.

Center-Right Targets

Among soft partisans, they are:

- Non-Dems who vote Republican on the generic ballot AND are unfavorable to Trump or did not vote for Trump in 2020
- Non-Dems who vote Republican on the generic ballot AND are favorable to Biden or voted for Biden in 2020
- Non-Dems who voted Democratic on the generic ballot

They tend to be:

- White
- Younger
- Split evenly on gender and between moderates and conservatives

They are not overtly hostile to Biden personally but give him very low job ratings and are hostile toward Trump and circus around him.

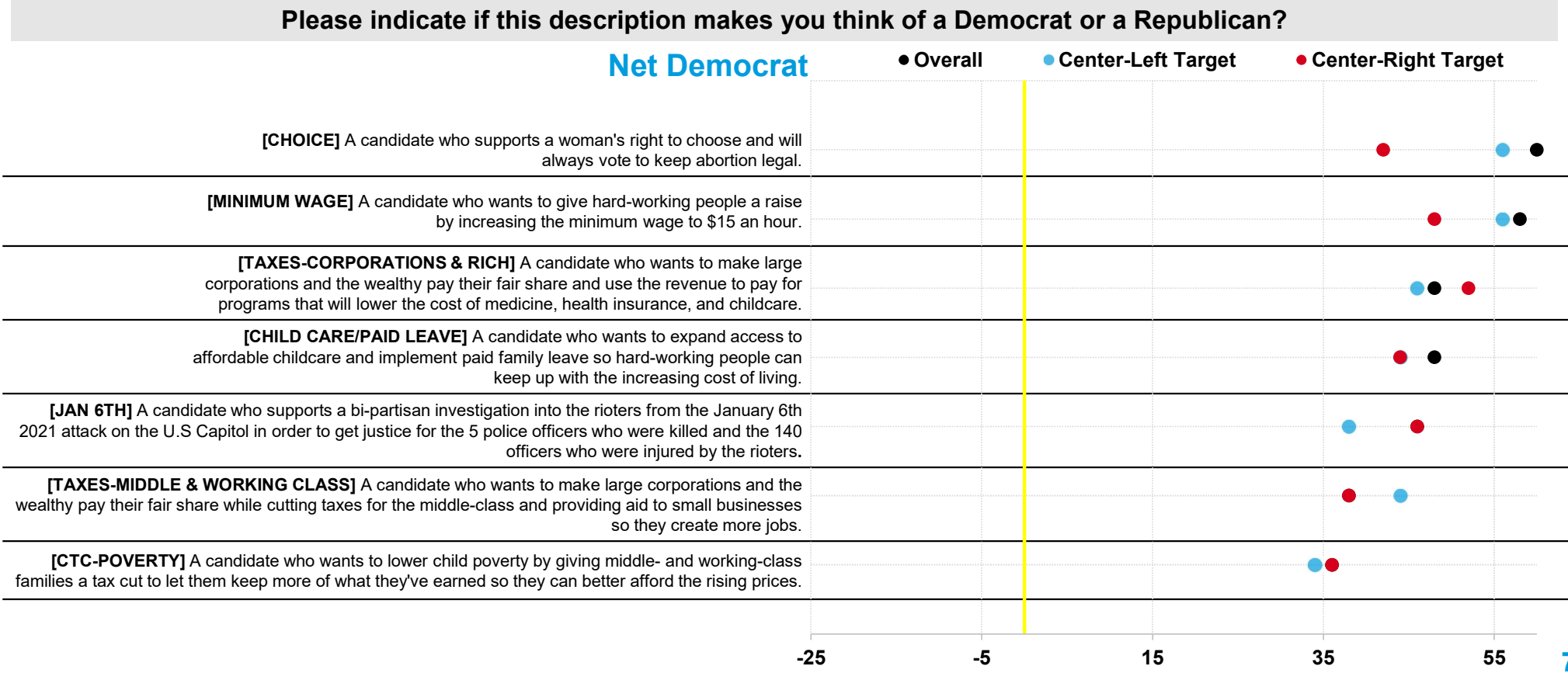
Partisanship of issues

- **The core messages from the Democratic side are laden with implicit partisanship.** Voters are predisposed to think a message is coming from a Democratic candidate when they hear a candidate talk about things like choice, the minimum wage and taxing the rich—although this doesn't necessarily mean these are not strong hits against Republicans.
- **There are positive lanes Democrats can take to sound less like a Democrat.** The military and being tough on foreign policy hold implicit Republican partisanship. Keeping schools open during COVID, more and smarter policing, and potentially acknowledging the economy's failings also signal that a Democrat is different.
- **Democrats can lean into implicit attitudes to better break type on key issues.** We conducted a few split message tests to identify what words or approaches can help a Democratic candidate seem out of the ordinary.
 - Crime** – Voters expect Democrats to push for more holistic approaches to combat crime, they don't expect a Democrat to want to put more police on the street.
 - Immigration** – Voters expect Democrats to want to reform the immigration system and create a path to citizenship, they don't expect a Democrat to want to place “tougher” criteria for the path.
 - Economy** – Voters expect Democrats to talk up the economy (and be a cheerleader to Biden), they don't expect a Democrat to recognize how bad the voter thinks things are going.
 - Trade** – Voters are more likely to expect that Democrats want America to be more competitive in world trade, voters do not expect Democrats to be overtly hostile to China on trade and competition.

Partisanship of issues

- **Democrats can also take issue positions that sound Republican without compromising their values:**
 - **Be pro-second amendment AND call for stronger background checks**
 - **Stand up to foreign aggressors to keep us safe here at home**
 - **Cut wasteful spending and reduce the deficit**
 - **Invest in veterans and reform the VA system**
 - **Show concern for the rural voters and small towns in their districts**
 - **Make keeping schools open a priority**

Voters expect Democrats to talk about choice, minimum wage, paid leave, poverty, and taxing the rich, as well as investigating January 6th



Blaming both parties on pharma or noting parents in ed messaging only marginally changes partisan read; Job training and tax cuts are seen as less Democratic, along with energy independence

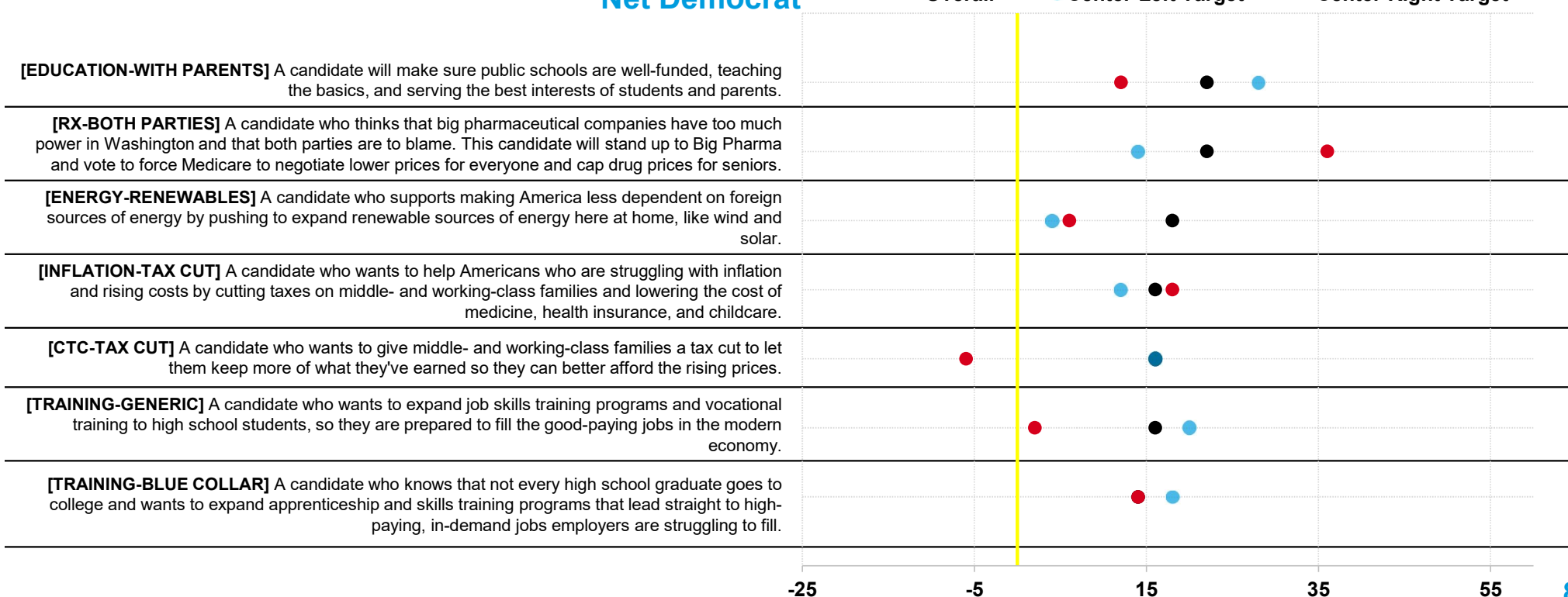
Please indicate if this description makes you think of a Democrat or a Republican?

Net Democrat

● Overall

● Center-Left Target

● Center-Right Target

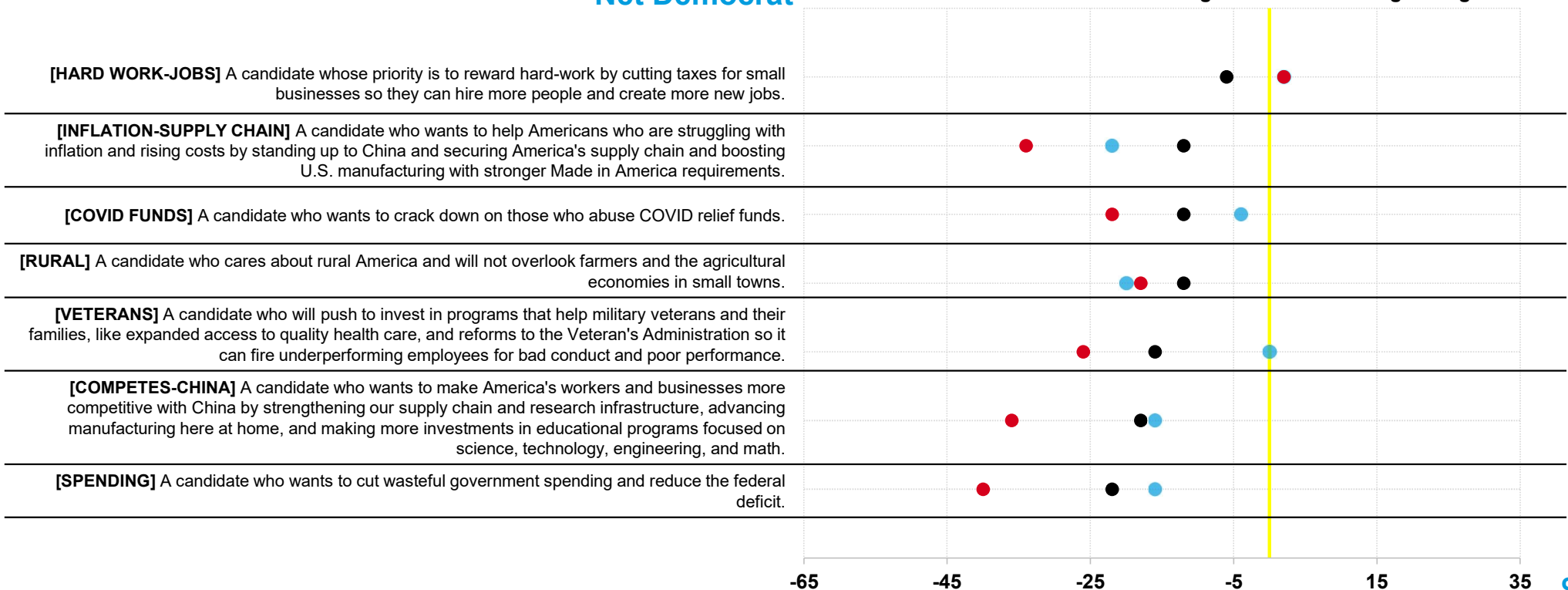


Focusing on rural issues, veterans, fiscal discipline and getting tough on China will all go against type for a Democrat

Please indicate if this description makes you think of a Democrat or a Republican?

Net Democrat

● Overall ● Center-Left Target ● Center-Right Target



Support for the military and drilling strongly signal Republican, but so does gun control with respect for 2nd amendment, re-opening schools during COVID, and emphasizing back taxes and prioritizing military services as part of CIR

Please indicate if this description makes you think of a Democrat or a Republican?

Net Democrat

● Overall ● Center-Left Target ● Center-Right Target

[ECONOMY-BAD] A candidate who thinks the American economy is still off on the wrong track. Millions of people are still unemployed and too many companies are sending American jobs overseas. And, the paychecks of hard-working Americans aren't keeping up with inflation and rising costs on things like gas, groceries, and utility bills.

[CRIME-MORE COPS] A candidate who wants to increase funding for local law enforcement so they can put more, better-trained officers on the street.

[IMMIGRATION-WITH TAXES] A candidate who wants to fix our immigration system by securing the border, funding the border patrol, and creating a path to citizenship for those who work, play by the rules, and pay taxes, and especially those who serve in our military.

[COVID-SCHOOLS] A candidate who made it a priority during the COVID pandemic to re-open schools quickly and stay open safely.

[HAWK] A candidate who will stand up to foreign aggressors who oppose democracy by using America's military strength overseas in order to keep us safe here at home.

[ENERGY-CARBON] A candidate who supports making America less dependent on foreign sources of energy by pushing to expand oil and natural gas drilling here at home.

[GUNS] A candidate who is a gun owner and supports the 2nd Amendment as well as commonsense gun safety reforms like stronger criminal and mental health background checks for all gun purchases.

[MILITARY] A candidate who supports investing more in America's military so we are prepared for any threat.

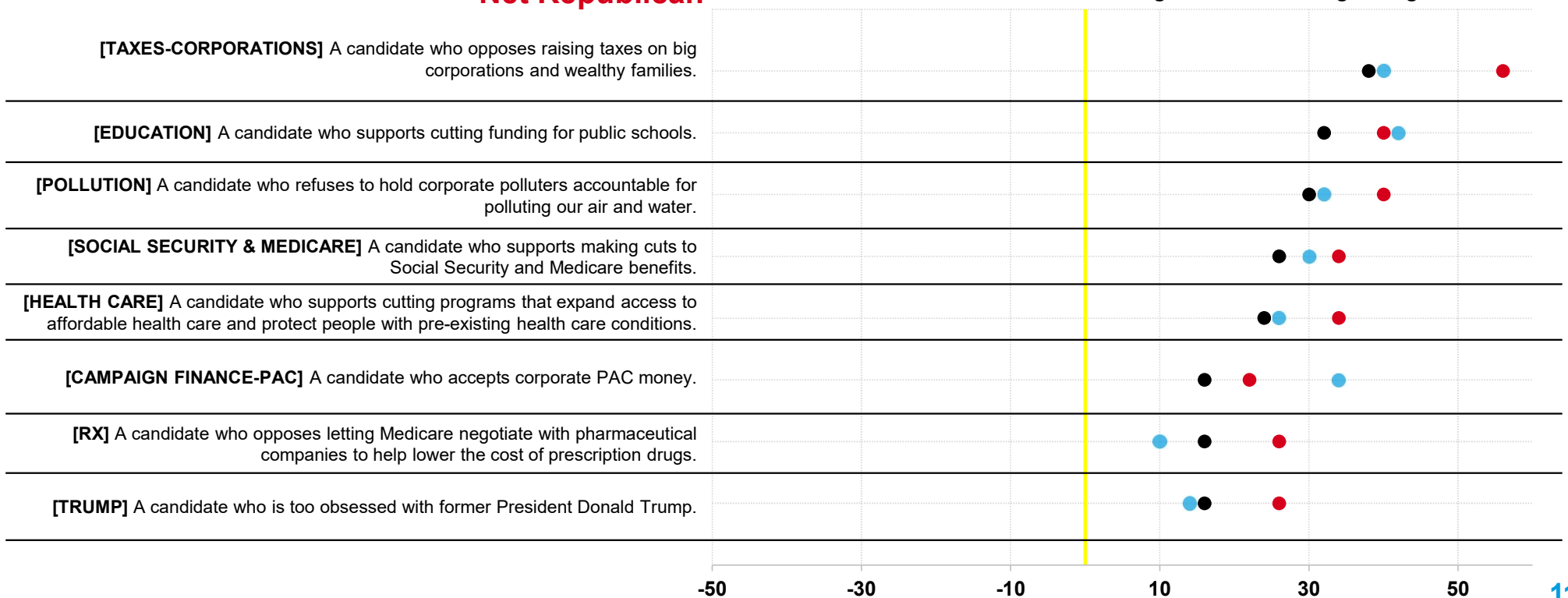
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Republican candidates are already well-defined by our standard arsenal of attacks, they are baked into the brand at this point

Please indicate if this description makes you think of a Democrat or a Republican?

Net Republican

● Overall ● Center-Left Target ● Center-Right Target

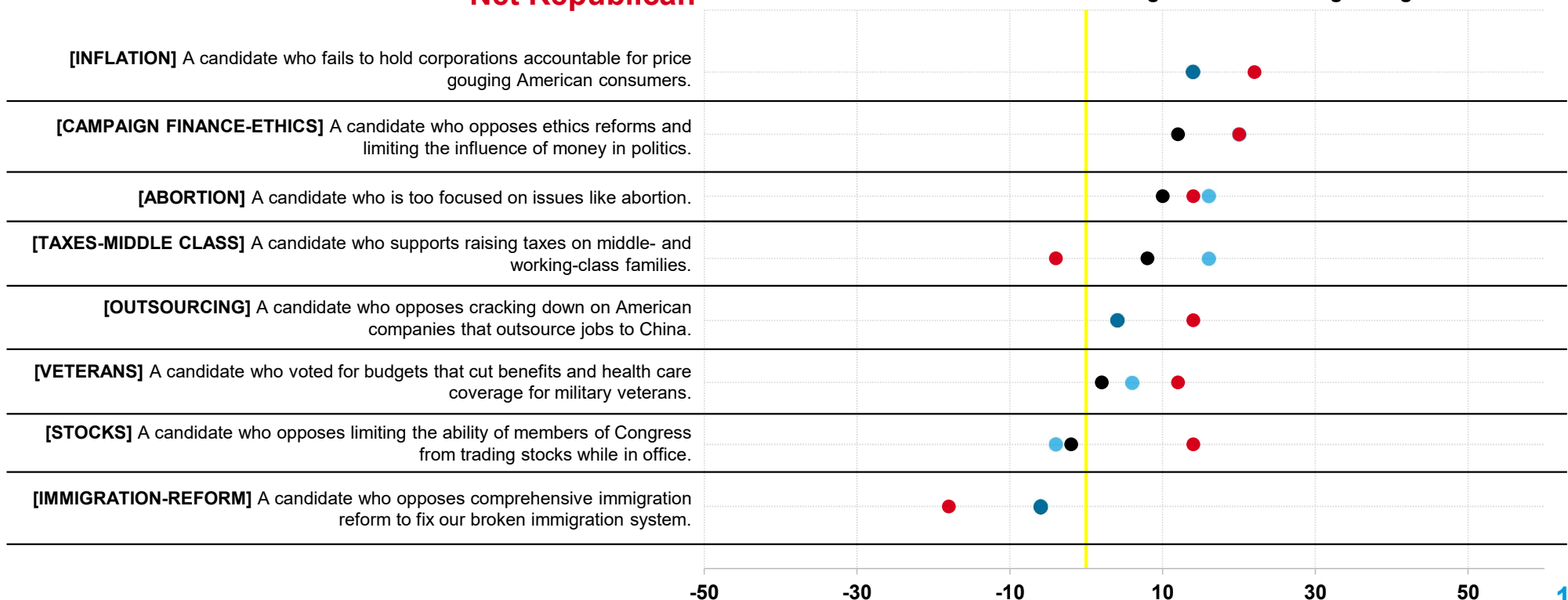


Democratic vulnerabilities on taxes, inflation and China shows; abortion is true to Democratic type, while outsourcing, veterans and ethics reform is open territory

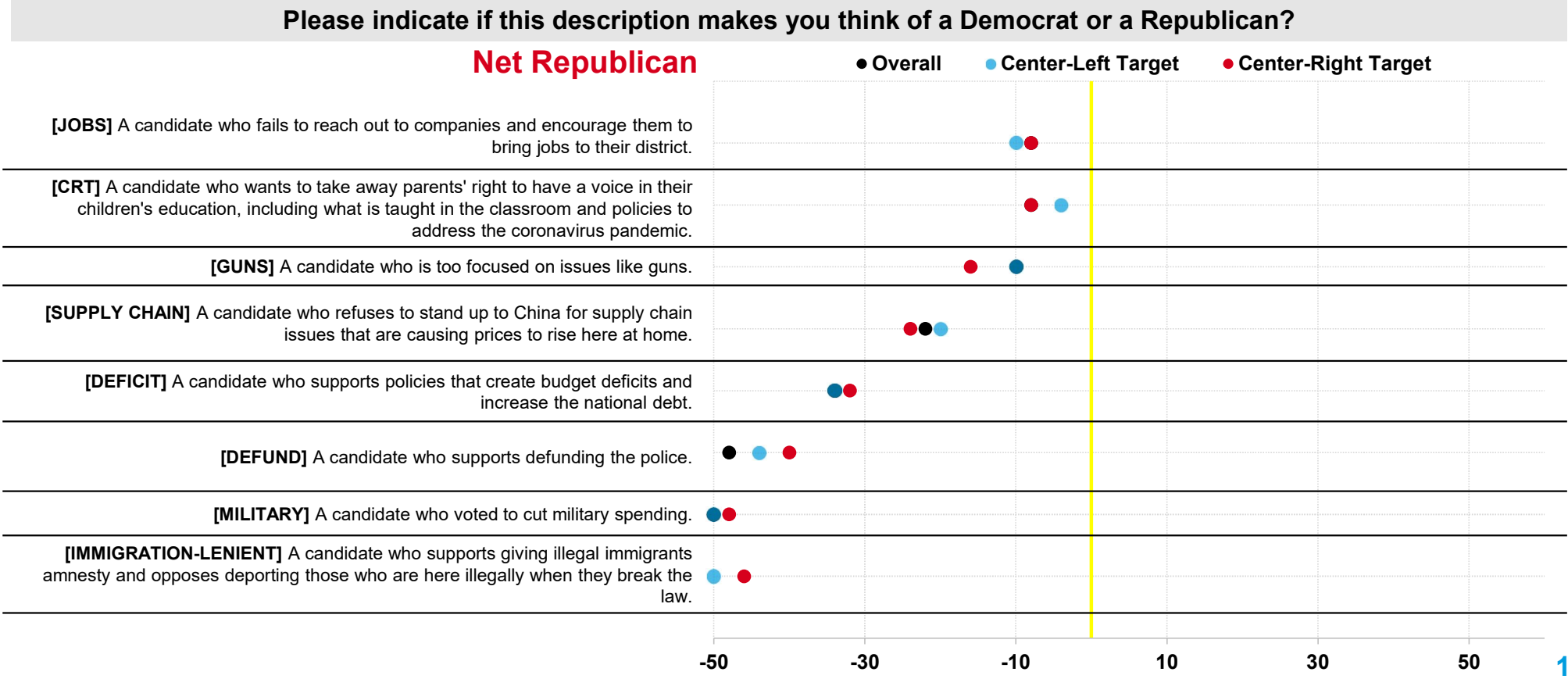
Please indicate if this description makes you think of a Democrat or a Republican?

Net Republican

● Overall ● Center-Left Target ● Center-Right Target



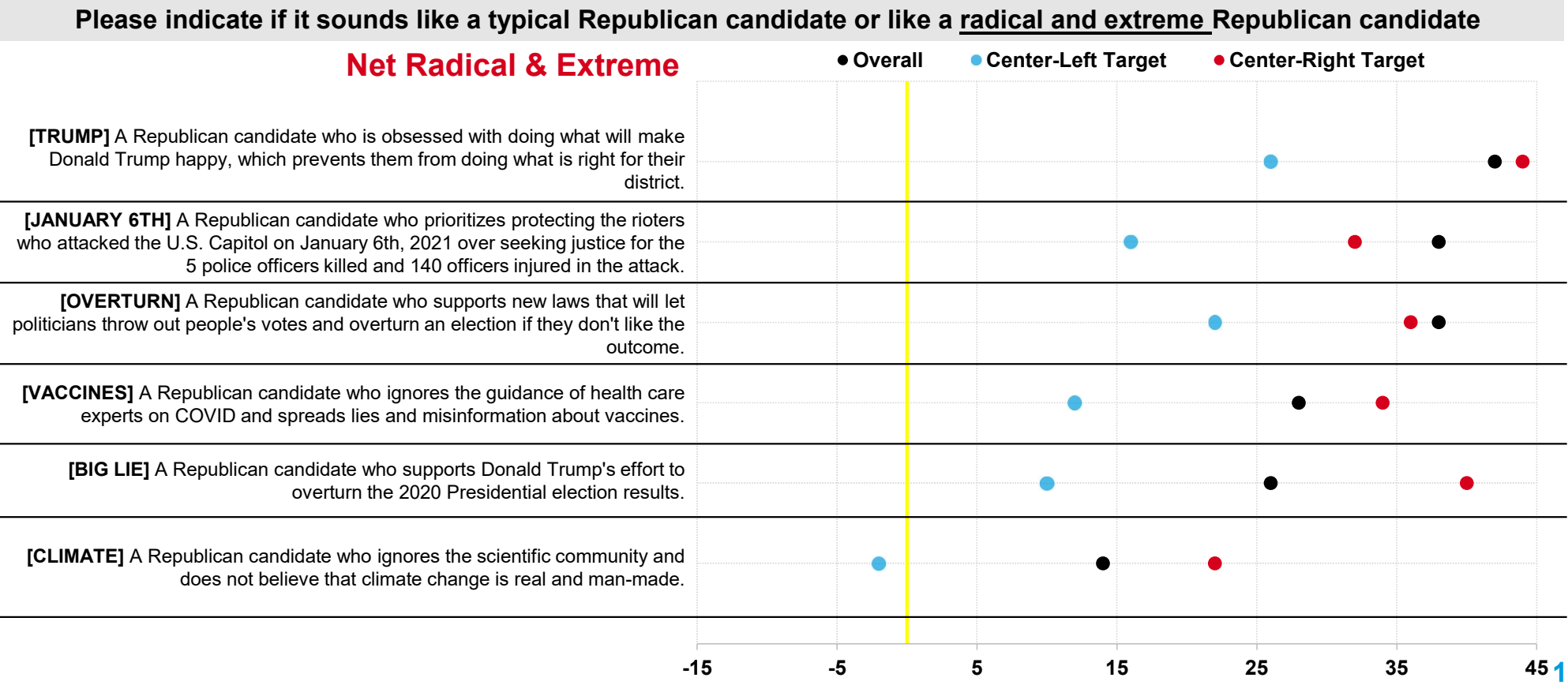
Voters are not surprised to hear that a Democrat is too lenient on immigration and crime, weak on China and the military, and bad on spending



Perceptions of Republican extremism

- **Trump and the 2020 election make Republicans seem “extreme.”** Being obsessed with Trump and wanting to overturn the election and supporting January 6th rioters signal to voters that a Republican is beyond the pale. These soft-partisans are more unfavorable to Trump movements than Trump himself.
- **There are some non-Trump issue areas that imply that a GOP candidate is “extreme.”** Being an anti-vaxxer and denying climate change signal to both target groups that a candidate is not a traditional Republican. Center-Right targets also feel that banning abortion and not defending protections for pre-existing conditions makes a candidate “radical.”

Connections to Trump, Jan. 6th rioters, and overturning elections all signal that a Republican is too radical; being an anti-vaxxer and climate denier only slightly out of the ordinary, and less so for center-left targets



Center-right targets think supporting an abortion ban, opposing protections for pre-existing condition, and being in the pocket of drug companies all indicate a Republican candidate is radical and extreme

Please indicate if it sounds like a typical Republican candidate or like a radical and extreme Republican candidate

Net Radical & Extreme

● Overall ● Center-Left Target ● Center-Right Target

[ABORTION] A Republican candidate who wants to ban abortion, even in cases of rape, incest and to save the life of the mother.

[HEALTH CARE] A Republican candidate who supports policies that will allow health insurance companies to deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions.

[RX] A Republican candidate who is in the pocket of big pharmaceutical companies and opposes measures that will lower the cost of prescription drugs.

[GUNS] A Republican candidate who opposes commonsense gun safety laws like stronger background checks for all gun purchases.

[TAXES] A Republican candidate who supports tax plans that give tax cuts to corporations and the wealthiest 1%, while increasing taxes on middle- and working-class families.

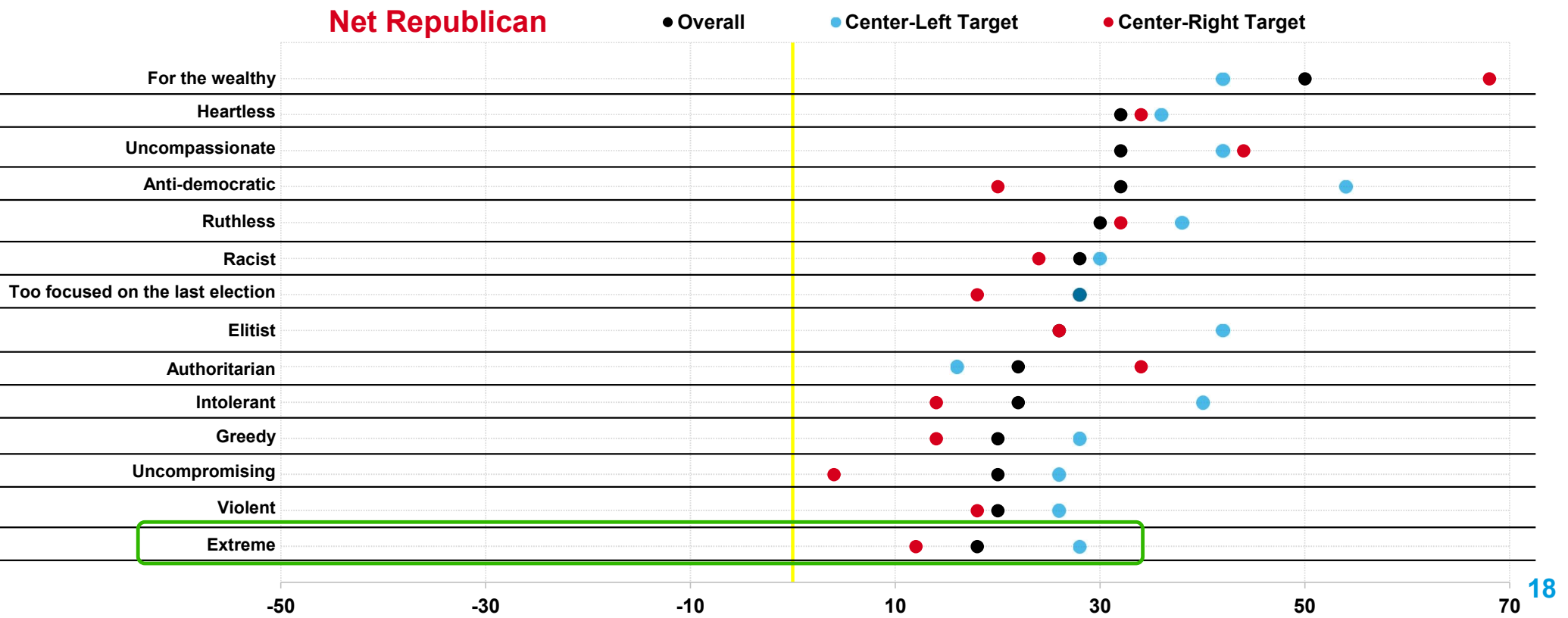
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Partisanship of language and endorsers

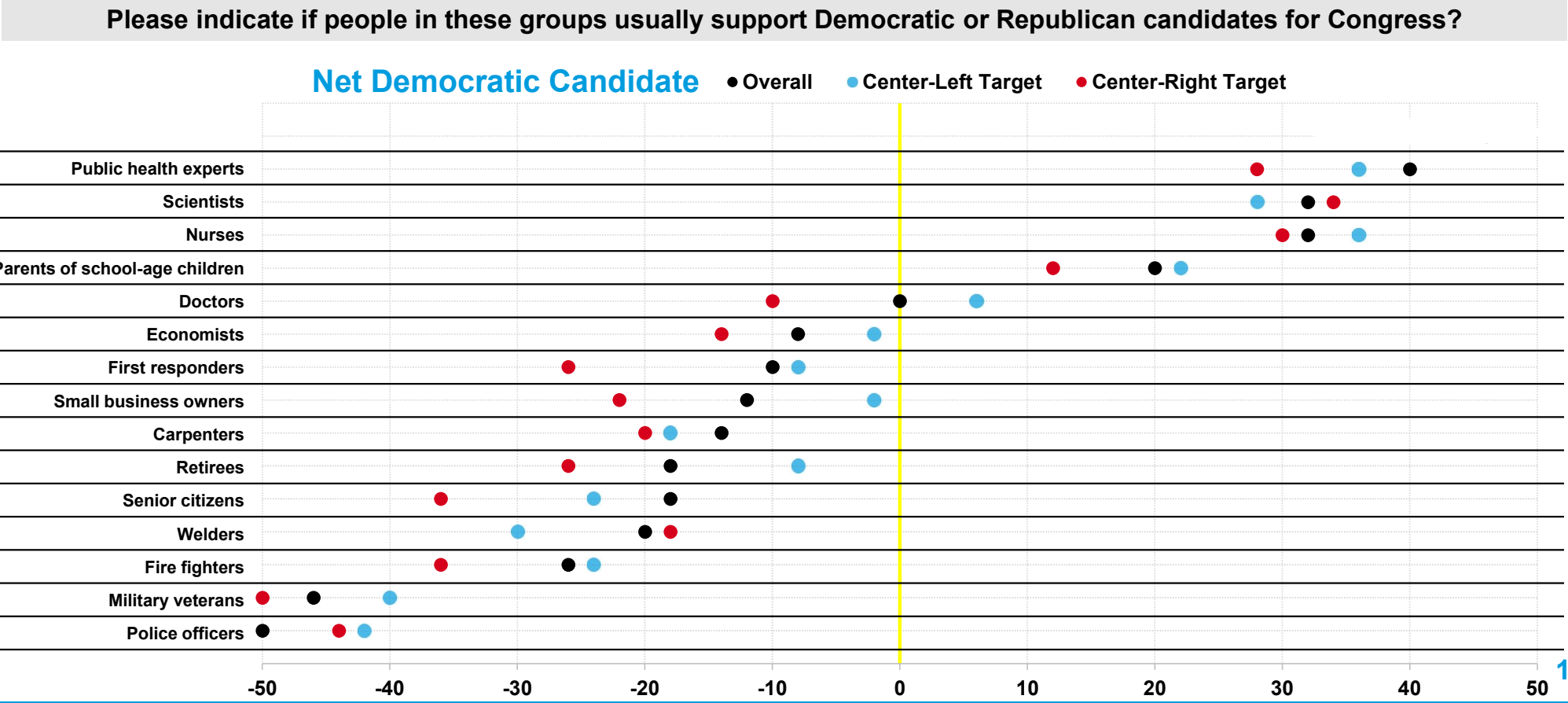
- **“Extreme” is a better description for GOP candidates than “radical” – but there are also harder hitting terms to potentially use.** Tough words like “heartless,” “ruthless,” “intolerant,” and “greedy.” Are all better descriptions of Republicans than Democrats. Very aggressive terms like “racist” and “violent” also bring the GOP to mind more than Democrats. Other terms may undercut a Republican’s strength among voters who are predisposed to default to a Republican, such as “weak,” “follower,” and “spineless.”
- **There are counter-intuitive endorsers and validators that carry implicit Republican signals.** We shouldn’t let the GOP hold a monopoly on police officers, veterans, blue-collar workers, senior citizens and small business owners. Voters think these groups typically favor Republicans, so having them in our communications sends a signal that “this Democrat is different.”

The term “extreme” shows up in our hits on Republicans and most feel it is appropriate, but there are other, more hard-hitting descriptions that many find accurate

Please indicate if this description makes you think of a Democrat or a Republican?



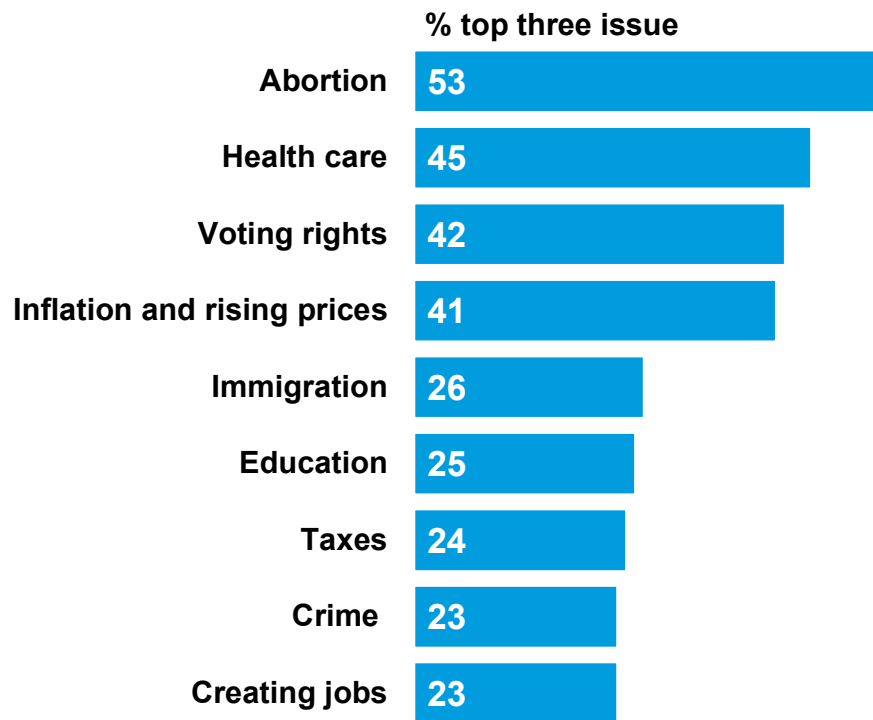
As endorsers, police, veterans, senior citizens, small business owners and blue-collar workers, all signal that a Democratic candidate is different



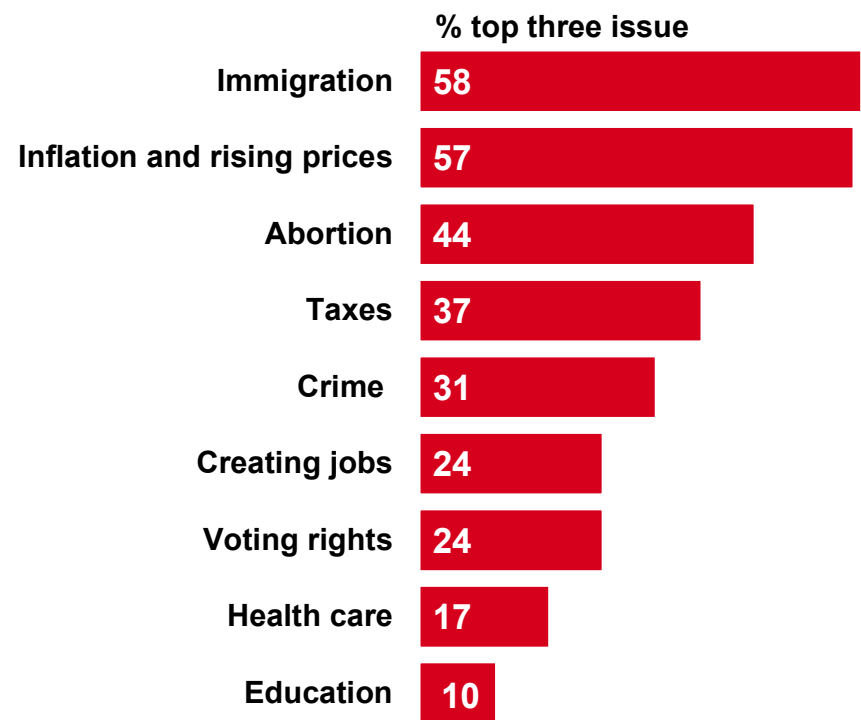
Step Two: Leveraging Implicit Partisanship

While economic research shows voters are largely not hearing about inflation plans from either party, Democrats are seen as focused on other issues

Top 3 Issues Democrat Candidate is Focused on Most



Top 3 Issues Republican Candidate is Focused on Most

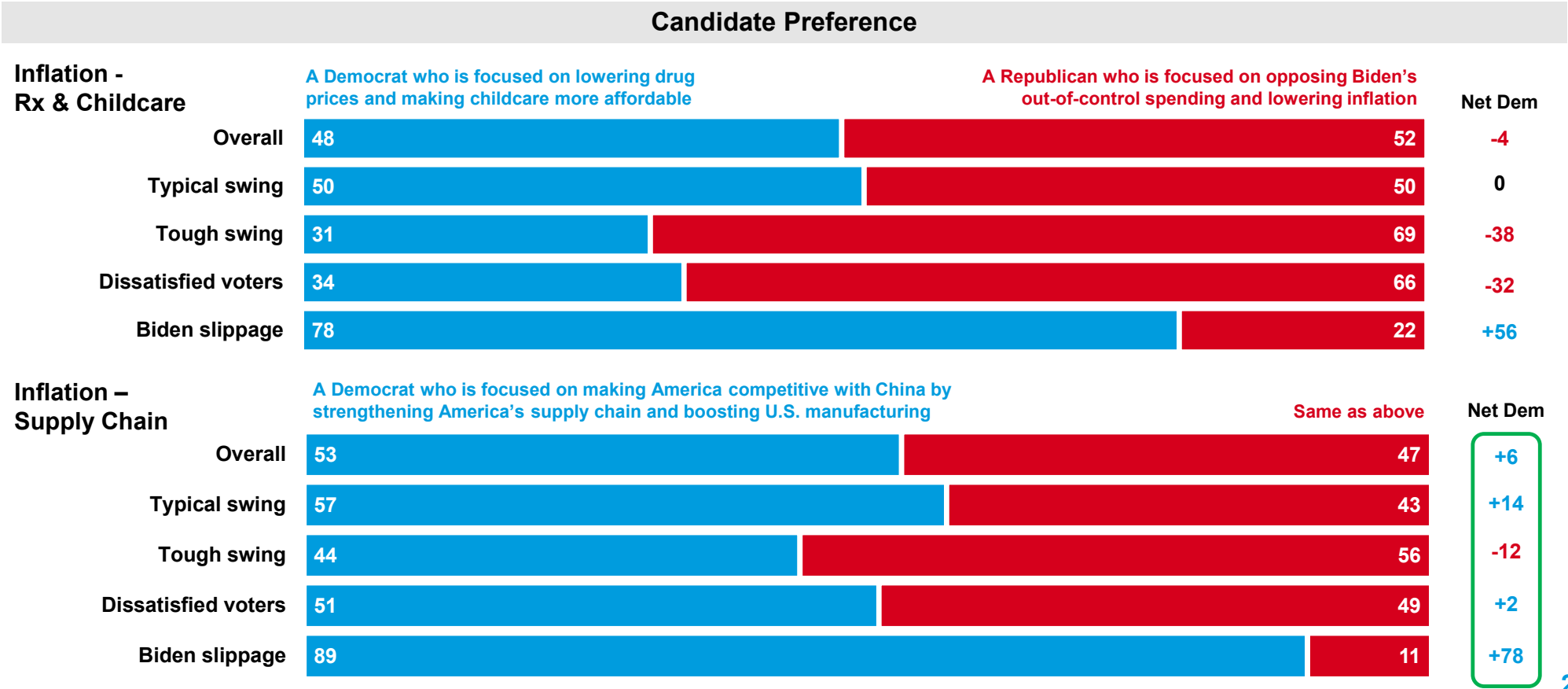


Positive Messaging

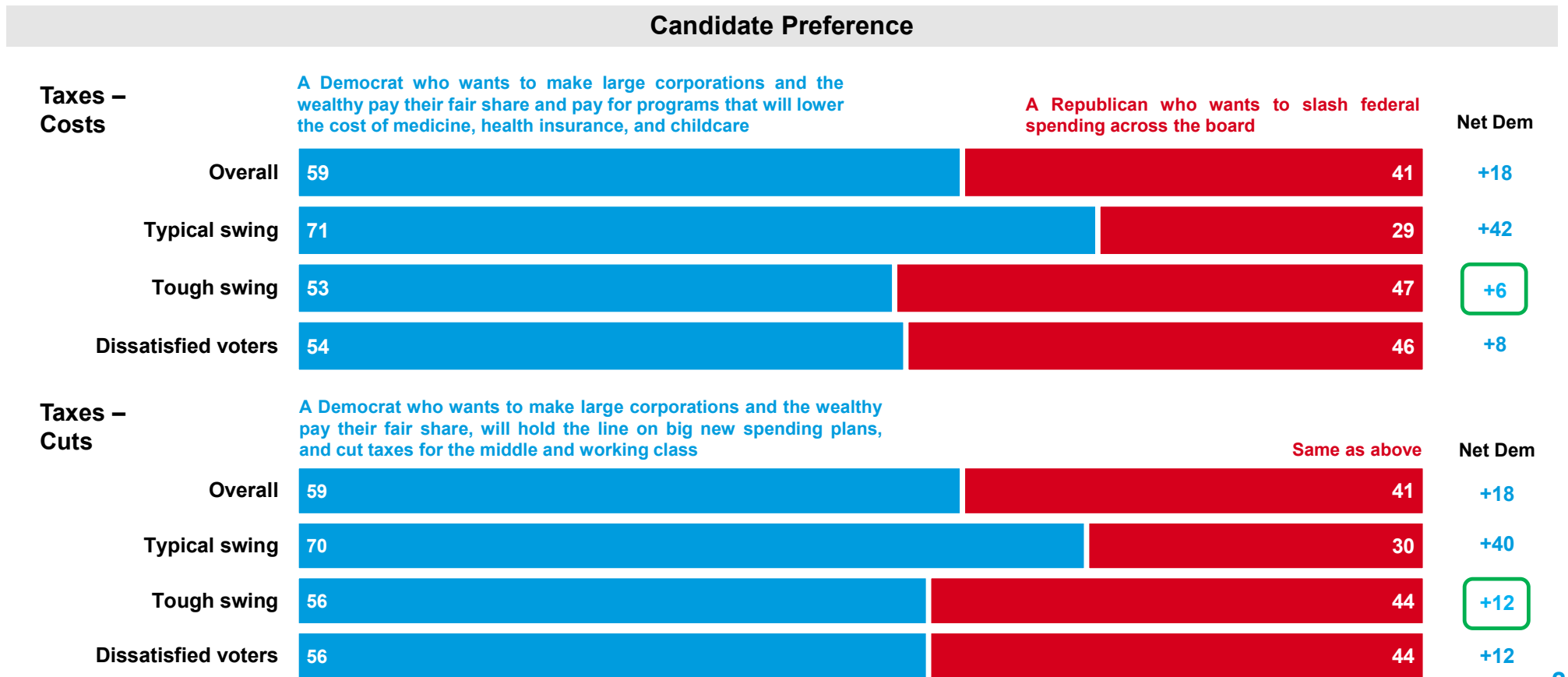
“Atypical” positive messages that are not what voters expect to hear from Democrats are more effective at moving the vote with Independents.

- Individual messages that are typically associated with Democrats generate more positive response from base Democratic voters to those messages, but do not result in any difference in level of support for the Democrat among the base.
- “Atypical” messages in aggregate help win over more independent voters without dampening support among base Democrats.
- This is particularly true when it comes to inflation argument focused on supply chain and China, cutting taxes, and immigration. Taking a tack on these issues that middle partisans and independent voters believe sound more like what they expect to hear from a Republican is appealing to persuadable voters and doesn’t necessarily impact our base negatively.
- In phase 1, voters that leaned Democratic were more likely to project the Democratic label on to positive issue messages. Therefore, we do not see Democratic support dampened after messages that middle partisans and independents see as less associated with Democrats.
- There are still issues associated with Democrats – notably abortion and guns – that hold appeal with persuadable voters.

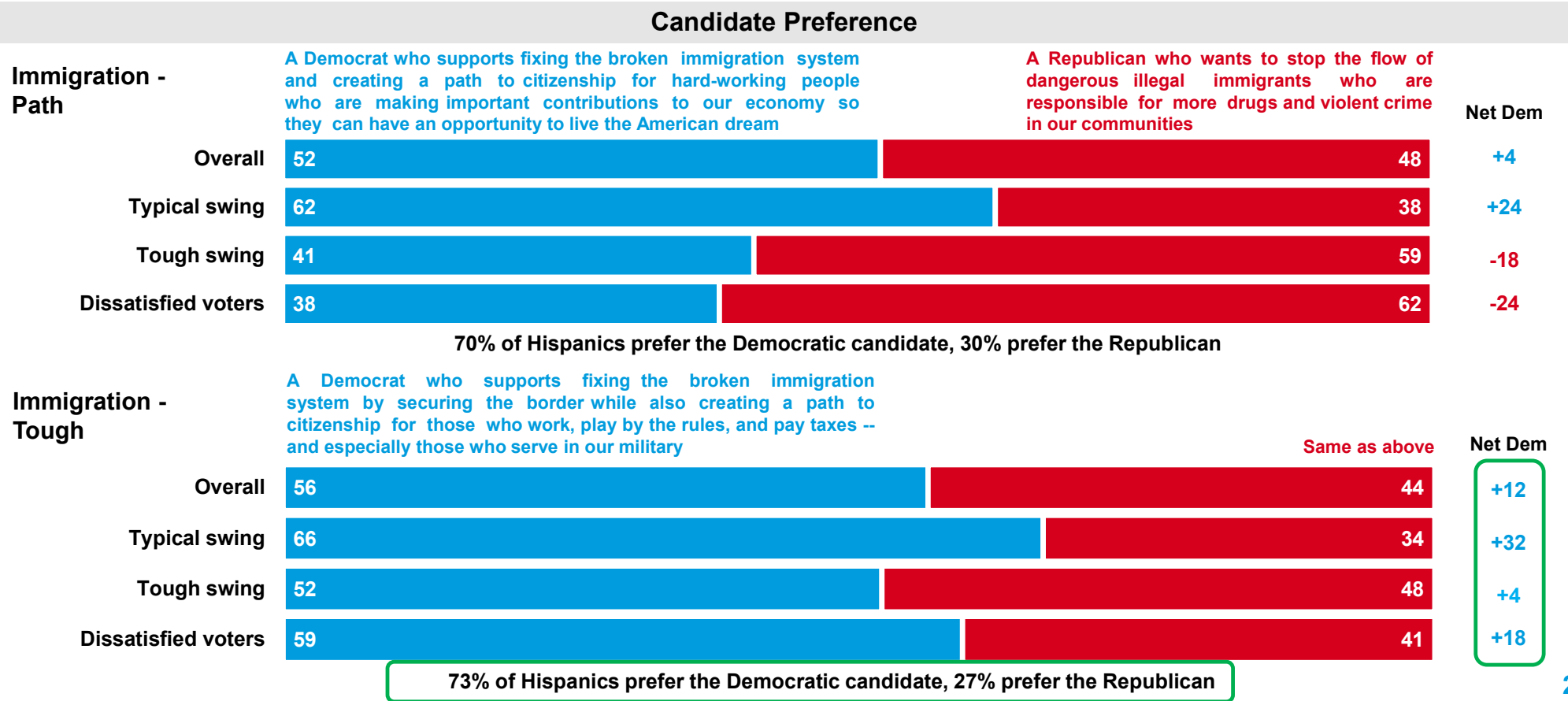
Focusing on competitiveness with China – something voters do not expect from a Democrat - is a stronger approach for Democrats in the face of GOP inflation messaging



Republican-leaning swing voters respond better to a Democrat who has an “atypical” focus on fiscal discipline and cutting taxes for the middle class

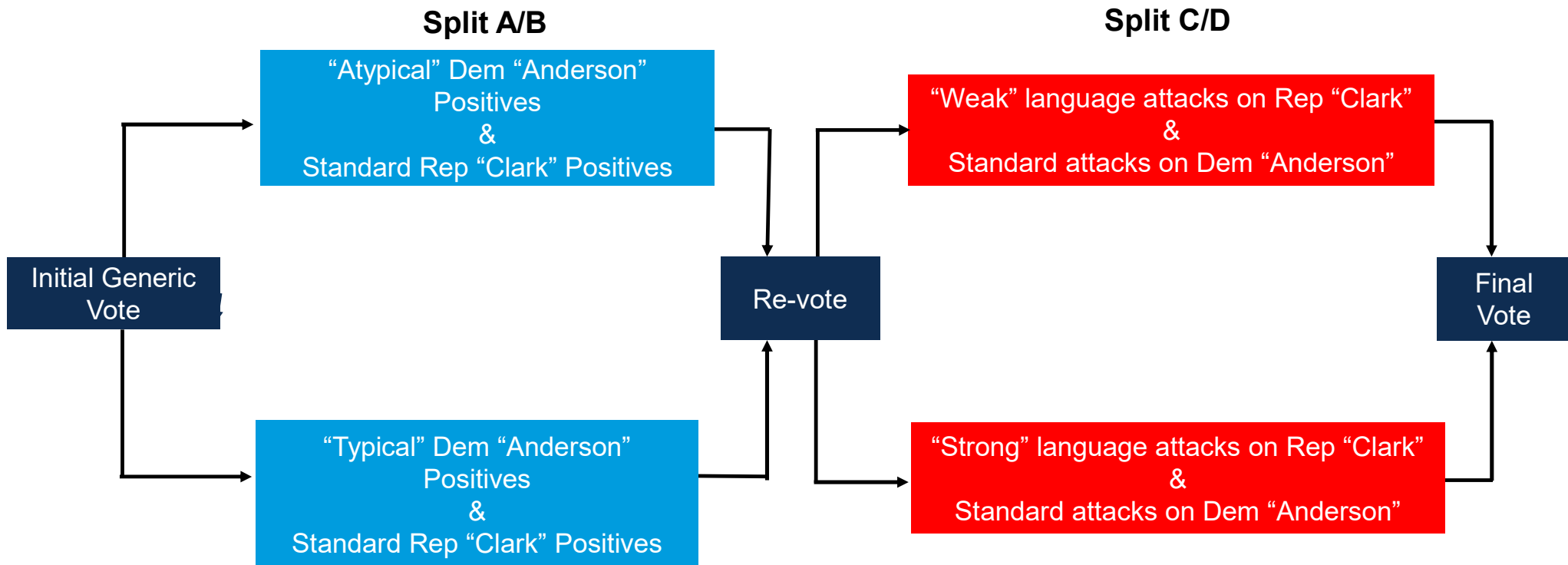


A tougher immigration message is more effective among all persuadable voters – and doesn't alienate Hispanic voters

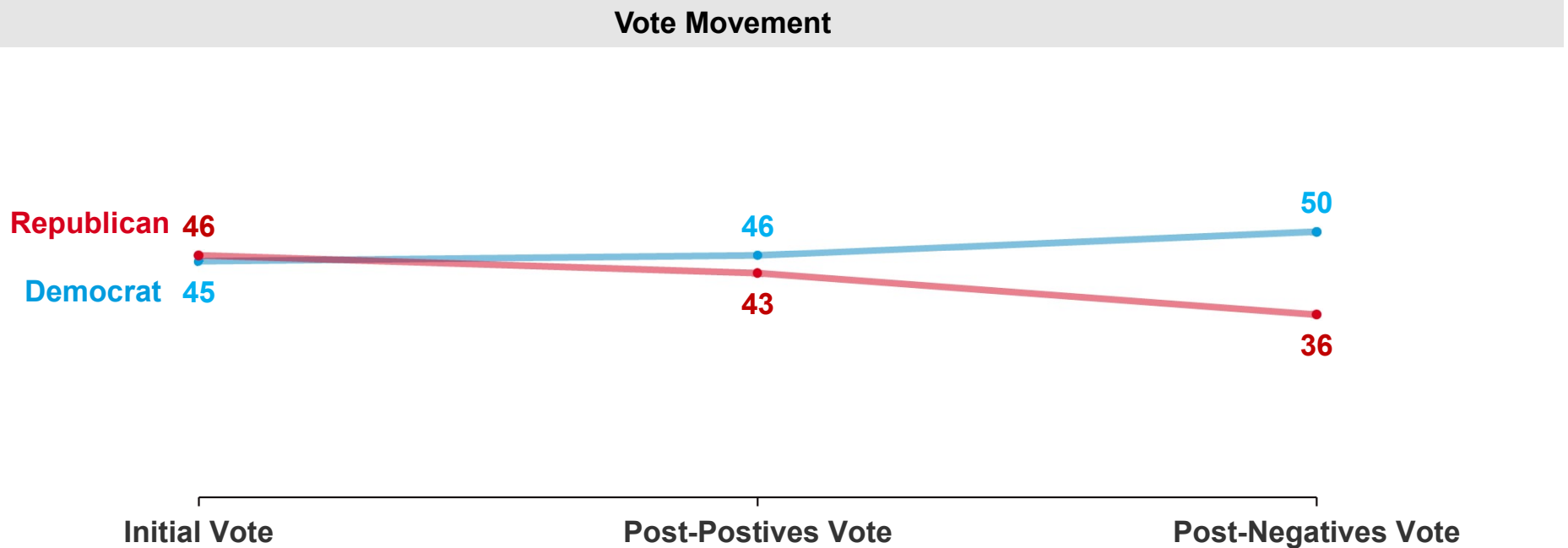


Survey Structure

The survey started with a generic vote for Congress, then presented somewhat balanced messaging batteries using two named generic candidates Democrat “Jeff Anderson” and Republican “Tim Clark.”



In a somewhat balanced exercise Democratic messaging was effective at shifting support



“Typical” positive messages from Democrats are quite appealing for base voters but generate a lukewarm response outside these solid Dem voters

“Typical” Positive Democratic Messages

Overall	Base	Swing		Dissatisfied	Biden slip	
		“Typical”	Tough			
44	72	36	34	38	64	[RX] Democrat Jeff Anderson thinks big pharmaceutical companies have too much power in Washington and are making record profit by gouging patients who need life-saving medicine. Anderson will stand up to Big Pharma by voting to allow Medicare to negotiate lower prices for everyone and cap drug prices for seniors. Anderson also supports capping the price of insulin to \$35 a month.
		% Very convincing				
41	72	40	30	29	64	[CHOICE] Democrat Jeff Anderson will fight Republican efforts to overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i> and always support a woman's right to choose and will always vote to keep abortion legal.
40	73	38	32	29	66	[TAXES] Democrat Jeff Anderson thinks it is time to make large corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes. Anderson wants to raise taxes on millionaires and big corporations and invest in programs that will lower the costs of medicine, health care, and childcare for hard-working families.
40	73	35	29	27	64	[INFLATION] Democrat Jeff Anderson wants to help Americans who are struggling with inflation and rising costs by going after oil companies and other greedy corporations who are raising prices for everyday items families need. Anderson will hold these wealthy corporations accountable for price-gouging consumers, suspend the gas tax to give drivers a break at the pump, and work to lower the cost of medicine and childcare.
39	73	32	28	26	63	[MINIMUM WAGE/PAID LEAVE] Democrat Jeff Anderson wants to help hard-working people keep up with the increasing cost of living. Anderson wants to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, expand access to affordable childcare, and implement paid family leave.

“Atypical” messaging on taxes, China, and immigration is as appealing to tough swing voters as “typical” Dem approaches – but do generate less enthusiasm from our base

“Atypical” Positive Democratic Messages

Overall	Base	Swing		Dissatisfied	Biden slip	
		“Typical”	Tough			
36	56	29	30	31	40	[TAXES] Democrat Jeff Anderson says families are struggling to keep up with the rising price of gas and groceries, and his top priority is letting them keep what they earn. That is why he will push to cut wasteful spending and fraud to reduce the deficit and lower inflation. Anderson will fight to cut taxes for the middle-class and working families.
34	46	35	33	34	39	[CHINA] Democrat Jeff Anderson says too many politicians have been soft on China and it is time to get tough. He wants to make America's workers and businesses more competitive with China by strengthening America's supply chain and boosting U.S. manufacturing with stronger Made in America requirements. And Anderson says we need more in training and apprenticeship opportunities for workers who don't go to college.
32	46	31	30	27	32	[IMMIGRATION] Democrat Jeff Anderson wants to fix our broken immigration system by securing the border and increasing funding for the border patrol to help crack down on illegal border crossings and keep drugs and criminals out. Anderson wants to create a path to citizenship for those who work, play by the rules, and pay taxes -and especially those who serve in our military.
29	49	20	21	22	33	[MILITARY] Democrat Jeff Anderson has been endorsed by military veterans because he supports investing more in America's military, so we are prepared for any threat. Anderson wants to make more investments in programs that help military veterans and their families, like a pay raise for troops and access to affordable health care. And Anderson will push to reform the Veterans Administration so it can fire employees for bad conduct and poor performance.
28	43	26	26	30	32	[POLICE] Democrat Jeff Anderson knows that crime is on the rise, and everyone has the right to feel safe in their community. Anderson wants to increase funding for local communities so they can put more, better-trained law enforcement officers on the street. Local police and other law enforcement have endorsed Anderson because they know he will help them keep our neighborhoods safe.

Taken together, “atypical” messaging is more effective at moving the vote among independents without dampening support among low motivation Democrats

Vote Movement

“Atypical” messages – % Dem				“Typical” messages – % Dem			
	Initial	Post-Positive	Change		Initial	Post-Positive	Change
Overall	45	46	+1	Overall	45	47	+2
Democrats	93	87	-6	Democrats	91	88	-3
Independents	15	27	+12	Independents	15	22	+7
Republicans	2	7	+5	Republicans	2	8	+6
Liberal Dems	98	93	-5	Liberal Dems	96	95	-1
Non-liberal Dems	85	77	-8	Non-liberal Dems	82	77	-5
Non-con Ind/GOP	10	23	+13	Non-con Ind/GOP	8	19	+11
Con Ind/GOP	1	4	+3	Con Ind/GOP	1	4	+3
Motivation Targets	90	84	-6	Motivation Targets	83	81	-2

Motivation targets are Democrats and liberal independents who are voting for the generic Dem but are not extremely motivated to vote.

Negative Messaging

“Stronger” language that voters implicitly associate negatively with Republicans is generally more effective in attacking the GOP

- Attempts to apply “weaker” language that is implicitly associated with Democrats against Republicans is generally not as effective as sticking to the words and phrases voters use themselves for the GOP.
- This “stronger” language is better at moving the vote among the voters we most need to persuade – and doesn’t generate blow-back with our base of support.
- The stronger association with MAGA in particular comes through more clearly in the open end.
- The weaker connection to January 6th and rejecting the 2020 election, however, is just as effective as having the candidate dead to rights on that issue.

The abortion issue is ground we want to fight on – but we don’t need to expand the scope of the issue

- We are on solid ground in a back and forth with Republicans on the choice issue.
- However, we do not need to press our advantage by expanding the scope of the Republican’s extremism. Voters understand that politicians shouldn’t be involved in such a personal decision. Staying focused on the GOP’s opposition to exceptions for rape, incest, and the life of the mother is enough to win the debate.

The “stronger” language that voters implicitly associate with Republicans packs more of a punch in an Rx attack

Republican Negatives - RX

Overall	Base	Swing		Dissatisfied	Biden slip	
		“Typical”	Tough			
53	80	57	52	49	79	[SPLIT C RX-WEAK] Republican Tim Clark <u>is in the pocket</u> of big pharmaceutical companies and does their bidding. That is why Clark opposes letting Medicare negotiate with pharmaceutical companies to help lower the cost of prescription drugs. Clark is <u>so weak and out-of-touch</u> that he even opposes capping the price of insulin to \$35 a month.
		% major doubts				
52	76	64	55	55	67	[SPLIT D RX-STRONG] Republican Tim Clark <u>is looking out for</u> big pharmaceutical companies - not working families. That is why Clark opposes letting Medicare negotiate with pharmaceutical companies to help lower the cost of prescription drugs. Clark is <u>so heartless and ruthless</u> that he opposes capping the price of insulin to \$35 a month.

Using the “weak” language that voters implicitly associate with Democrats is not helpful in pumping up a MAGA attack

Republican Negatives - MAGA

Overall	Base	Swing		Dissatisfied	Biden slip	
		“Typical”	Tough			
54	81	65	56	62	77	[SPLIT D MAGA-STRONG] Tim Clark is a proud MAGA Republican focused on pushing a new, extreme MAGA agenda. Clark and <u>MAGA Republicans are ruthless</u> and only focused on gaining power so they can reward their friends and punish their enemies. Clark and MAGA Republicans want to take away our rights, end Medicare and Social Security, and raise taxes on working families and seniors.
		% major doubts				
52	81	55	24	49	81	[SPLIT C MAGA-WEAK] Tim Clark is <u>a weak politician who spinelessly follows</u> an extreme MAGA Republican agenda because <u>he is too afraid of angering his Republican leaders</u> in Washington. <u>Instead of speaking up, Clark remains silent</u> as MAGA Republicans use their power to reward their friends and punish their enemies. <u>Clark will go along</u> with plans to take away our rights, end Medicare and Social Security, and raise taxes on working families and seniors.

There is more evidence that a simpler attack on abortion is better than emphasizing a more extreme attack

Republican Negatives - Choice

Swing						
Overall	Base	"Typical"	Tough	Dissatisfied	Biden slip	
54	81	66	55	53	80	[SPLIT C CHOICE-TYPICAL] At a time when the U.S. Supreme Court may overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i> , Republican Tim Clark wants to ban abortion, even in case of rape, incest, and to save the life of the mother.
% major doubts						
54	81	54	49	55	73	[SPLIT D CHOICE-EXTREME] At a time when the U.S. Supreme Court may overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i> , Republican Tim Clark wants to ban abortion, even in cases of rape, incest, and to save the life of the mother. Clark also wants to criminally prosecute and put in prison women who seek abortions and the doctors who perform them.

When forced to choose, the Republican anti-abortion position troubles voters more than January 6th and the GOP tax priorities

Most Troubling about Republican Tim Clark								
		Read only		Base	Swing		Dissatisfied	Biden slip
		Weak	Strong		"Typical"	Tough		
Clark wants to ban abortion, even in the cases of rape, incest, and to save the life of the mother	43	44	42	44	49	44	41	49
Clark believes the 2020 election was stolen from Trump and opposes investigating the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol	32	32	32	43	31	28	28	36
Clark supports an economic plan that give tax cuts to corporations and the wealthiest 1%	25	24	26	14	20	28	30	15

“Stronger” negative language more typically associated with Republicans performs slightly better among moderates

Vote Movement

Split C “Weaker” Language – Net Dem				Split D “Stronger” Language – Net Dem			
	Post-Positive	Post-Negative	Change		Post-Positive	Post-Negative	Change
Overall	+3	+14	+11	Overall	+3	+14	+11
Democrats	+80	+86	+6	Democrats	+82	+85	+3
Independents	-5	+13	+21	Independents	-10	+18	+28
Republicans	-75	-64	+11	Republicans	-80	-64	+16
Liberal Dems	+90	+98	+8	Liberal Dems	+92	+93	+1
Non-liberal Dems	+65	+70	+5	Non-liberal Dems	+67	+72	+5
Non-con Ind/GOP	-33	-18	+15	Non-con Ind/GOP	-32	-5	+27
Con Ind/GOP	-82	-73	+9	Con Ind/GOP	-86	-73	+13
Motivation Targets	+74	+80	+6	Motivation Targets	+78	+78	0

Motivation targets are Democrats and liberal independents who are voting for the generic Dem but are not extremely motivated to vote.

Using “stronger” language helps raise concerns about MAGA and Trump, too

Troubles most about Republican Tim Clark [OPEN END]

[Split C] “Weaker” language



[Split D] “Stronger” language

