PROGRAM FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Americans on Ground-Level Ozone

A National Survey of Registered Voters

April 2018

Methodology

Fielded by: Nielsen Scarborough

Method: Administered online to a probability-based sample selected from a larger panel recruited by telephone and mail.

Margin of Error: +/-2.2%

Sample: 1,999 registered voters

Fielding Dates: March 9-23, 2018

Ground-Level Ozone

Ground-Level Ozone

The first issue we are going to explore is a] proposal being considered by Congress about the amount of ground-level ozone. Ozone is a key factor that creates smog and is harmful to humans.

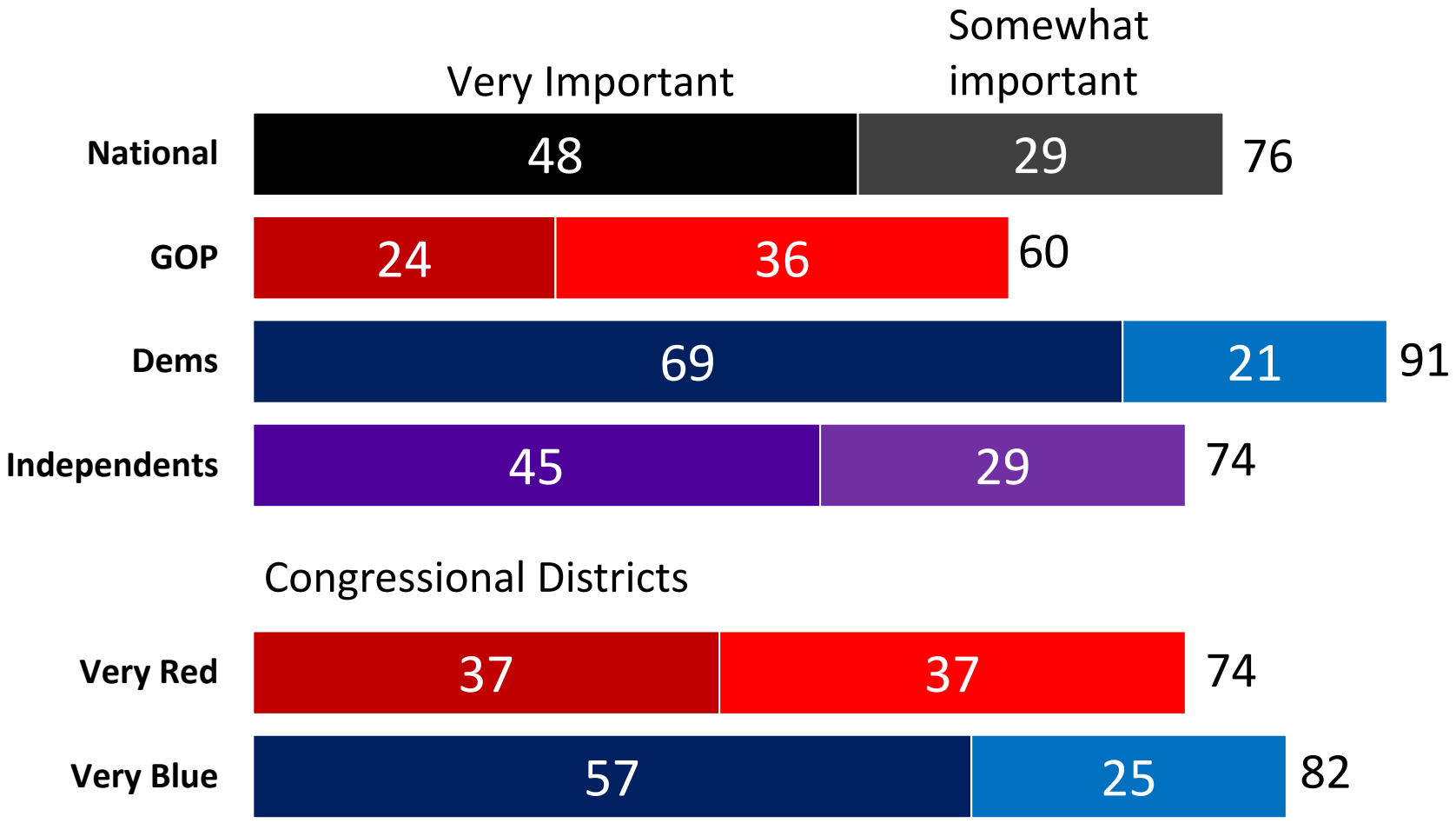
Briefly stated, states are currently required to undertake a step-by-step plan for lowering their maximum allowed ozone levels. The proposal in Congress is to delay this requirement for eight years.

Here is some background. In 1990, with bipartisan support, Congress passed an update of the Clean Air Act, which called for gradually reducing ozone. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was charged with establishing the standards for this process and working with the states to meet them. In 2008, the EPA lowered the maximum ozone allowed to a level called 75 ppb (this means: parts per billion). Most states have reached that standard. However, states that started with especially high ozone levels--especially California--were given more time and are still working on reaching that lower level.

In 2015, the EPA took another step, updating the standard, further lowering the maximum ozone level to 70 ppb--a 7% reduction.

Ground-Level Ozone
Importance

Just based on what you know, how important do you think it is to lower the maximum allowed ozone level.



Ground-Level Ozone

Here is how the 2015 EPA approach works:

States and the EPA will work together to specify which counties in their state exceed the new ozone level requirement--this is almost completed.

States will then have a year to come up with a plan for reducing the ozone levels in those counties and then another 2-3 years to finalize the plan with EPA and begin implementing it.

Most states are expected to get their ozone levels down to the 70 ppb level between 2021 and 2023.

For certain states that are still working on the earlier plan to get their ozone levels down to the 75 ppb level--primarily California-- they will have more time and it could be as late as 2040 before they get their ozone levels down to the 70 ppb level.

If states do not develop a plan or move forward with it, the EPA may step in and develop a plan, and impose sanctions on the state.

The EPA has done a number of studies and reviewed studies by other organizations assessing the likely COSTS and BENEFITS of the plan for bringing these counties air quality in line with the new standard. The EPA has also reviewed many studies done by other organizations.

The EPA has concluded that, once states start implementing their plan in 2020, this will begin to create some COSTS, which are projected to rise to $1.4 billion by 2025. After a few years these will then start coming down. At some point, California will get its level down to 75 ppb, and once it starts with its plan for getting down further, there will be a new cost of about $0.8 billion which will go for a few years before coming down.

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The National Association of Manufacturers did a study in which they concluded that the costs could be substantially higher, emphasizing that the costs are unknown for some of the steps that will be required.

The EPA also assessed the BENEFITS of reducing ozone to the new level of 70 ppb. It estimated the economic benefits as ranging from $2.9 to $5.9 billion each year. It is also estimated that the following negative health consequences would be avoided each year:

- 320 to 660 premature deaths
- 960 hospital admissions and emergency room visits
- 340 cases of acute bronchitis
- 11,000 cases of upper and lower respiratory symptoms
- 230,000 cases asthma attacks in children
- 28 to 260 heart attacks (nonfatal)
- 188,000 days when people miss work or school
- 620,000 minor restricted activity days

These benefits are estimated to substantially increase further when California lowers all its levels to 70 ppb.

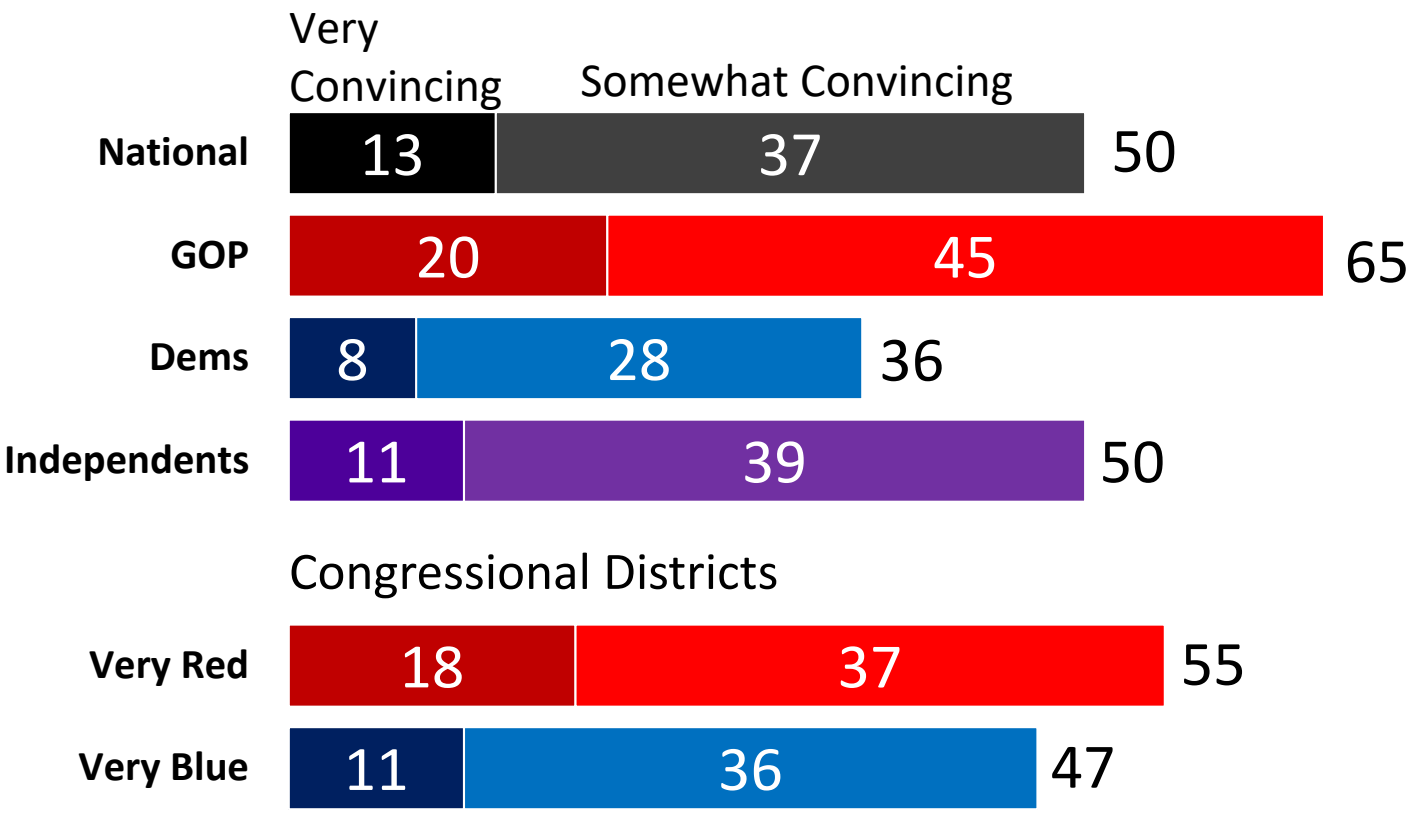
As mentioned, there is a bill in Congress that delays by eight years the requirement that states undertake a step-by-step plan for lowering the maximum allowed ozone levels from 75 ppb to 70 ppb.

We will now evaluate some arguments for and against the proposed legislation.

Ground-Level Ozone

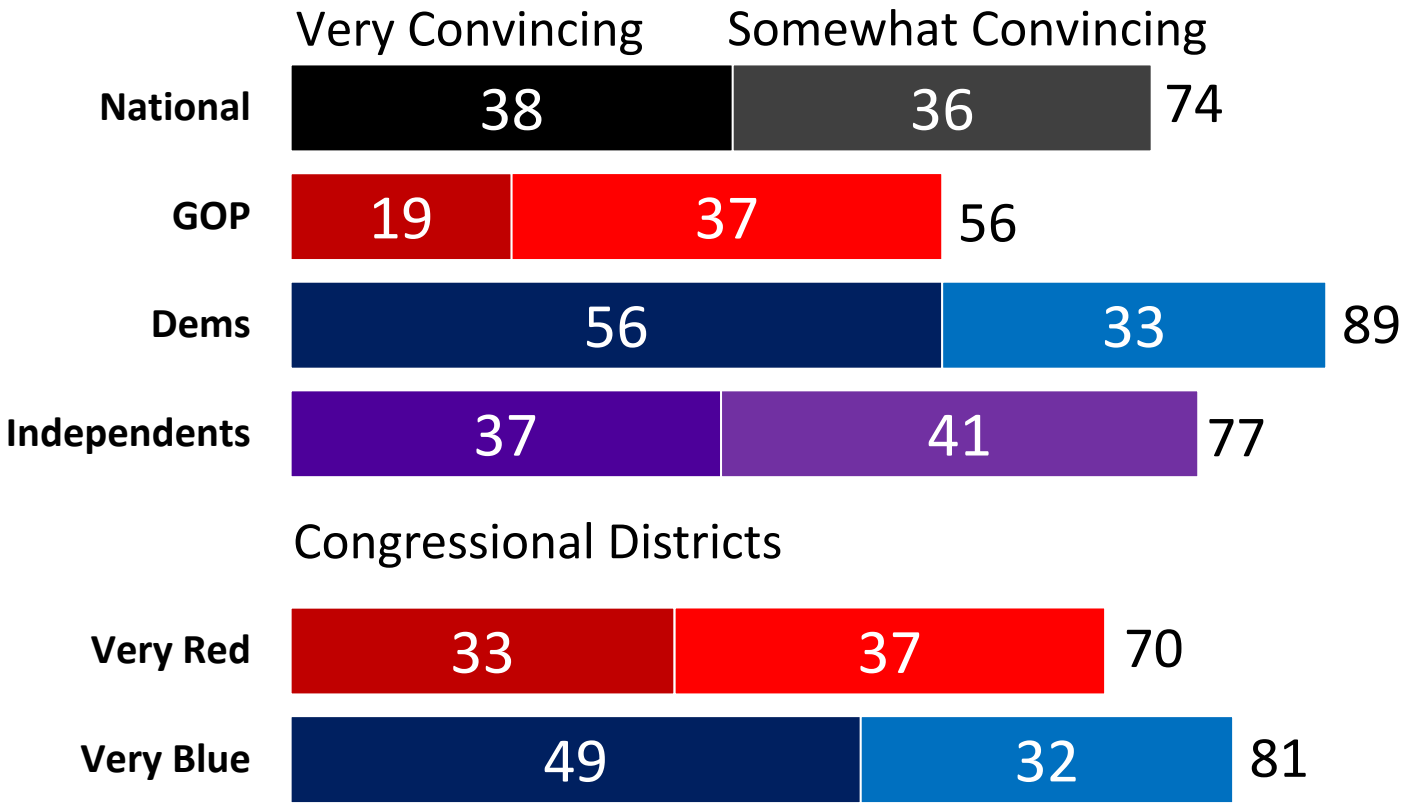
Pro Argument 1

Industry is already taking many steps to reduce air pollution, spending tens of billions of dollars per year. And ozone levels are already coming down--they have come down 17% since 2000. The EPA established stringent new ozone standards in 2008, but did not issue guidelines for meeting them until 2015. Some states have only just reached the 2008 levels and some have not yet reached them. Yet, the EPA, in the same year, issued even more stringent standards, requiring states to come up with yet another plan. This is too much, too soon.



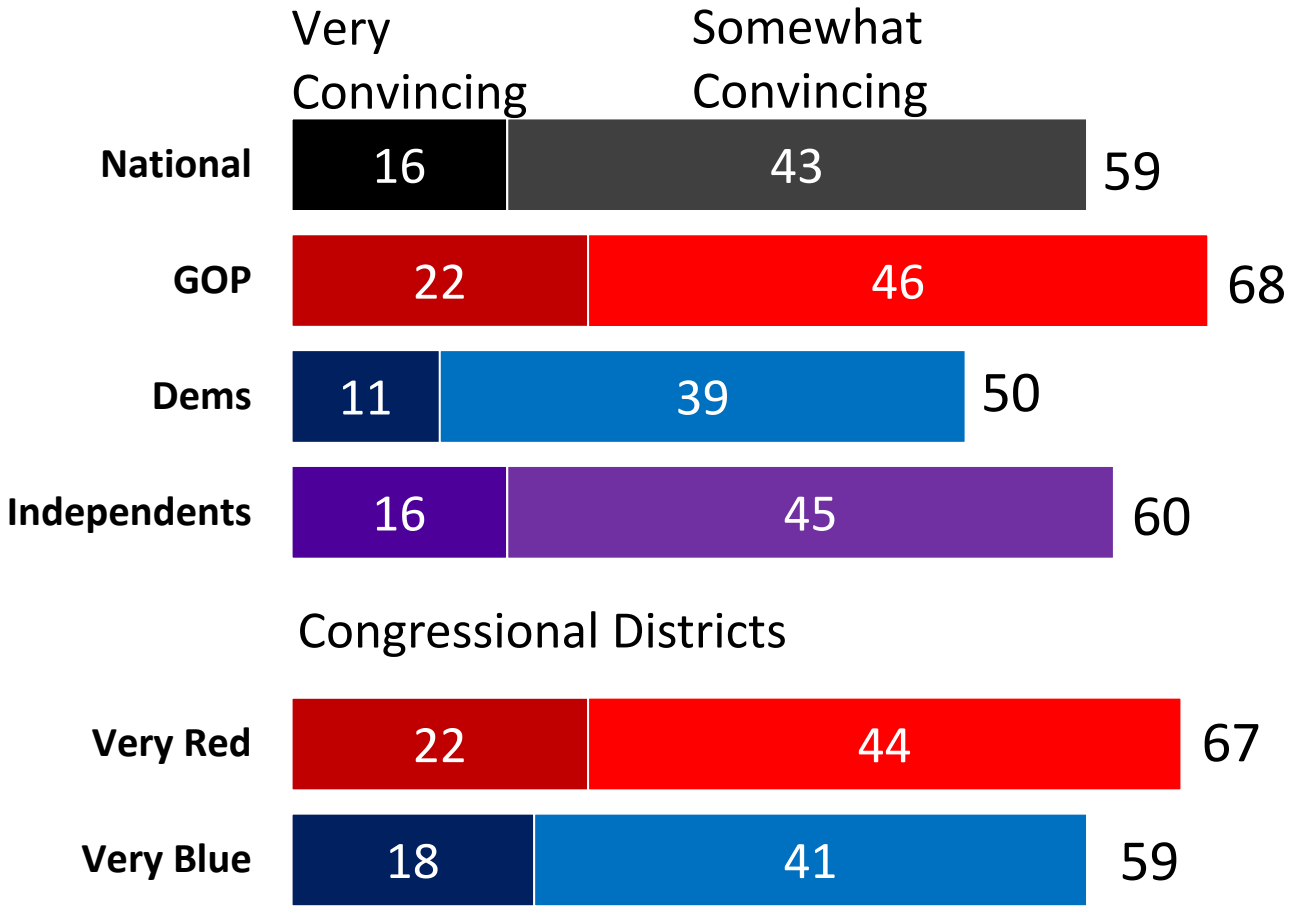
Ground-Level Ozone
Con Argument 1

Extensive research has clearly shown that ozone is dangerous, especially to children, the elderly, those with respiratory illnesses, and unborn fetuses. About 24.6 million Americans, including 6.2 million children, live with asthma, making them especially vulnerable to ozone. It can even cause premature deaths. Exposure to ozone during pregnancy can cause low birth weights, increasing the likelihood of other health problems. Clearly, we cannot delay bringing down ozone levels.



Ground-Level Ozone
Pro Argument 2

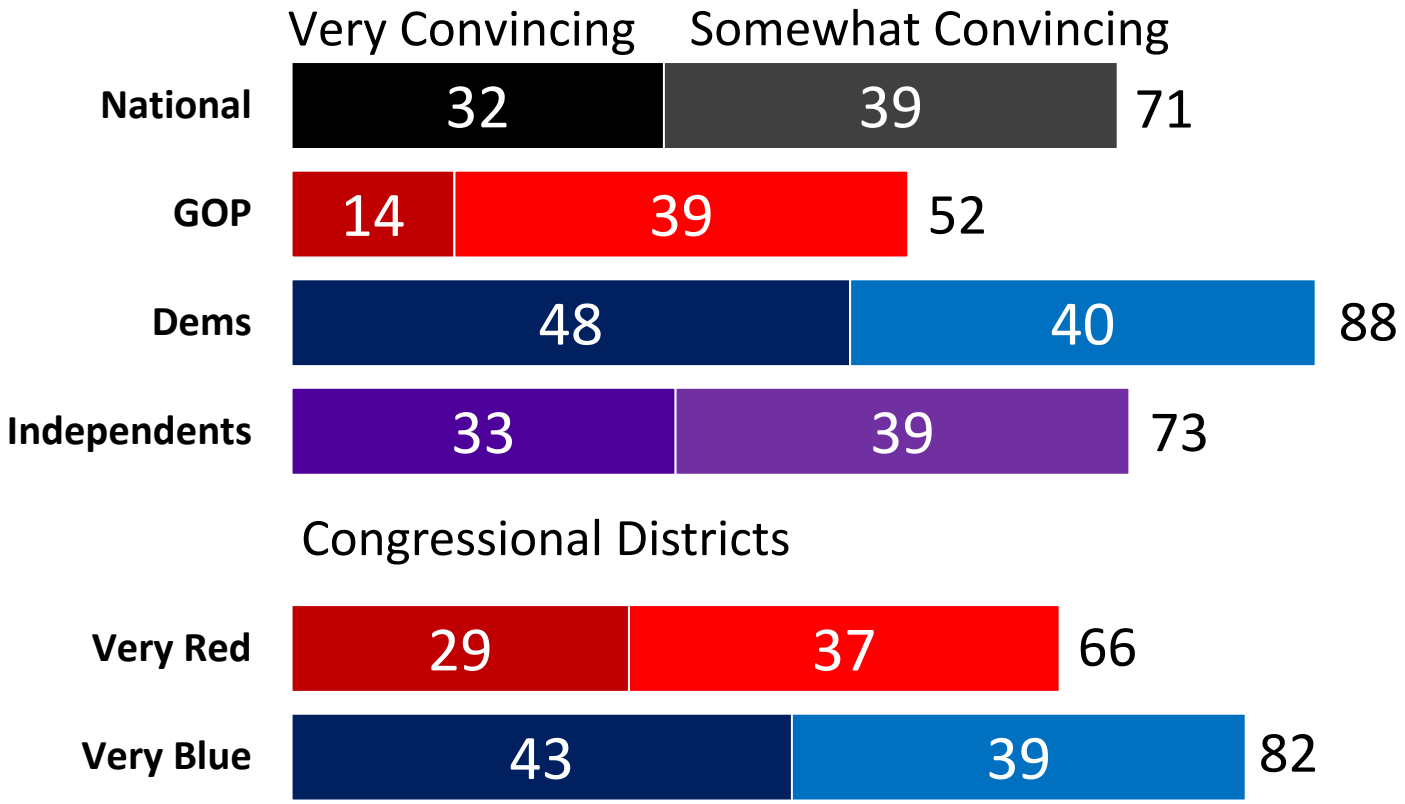
To meet this new ozone standard, states could be required to place restrictions on everything from manufacturing and energy development to infrastructure projects like roads and bridges, hurting their economy. This will hurt the many people who are already having a hard time economically. This bill would give states more time to get ready for the new standard, thus balancing the needs for better air quality and economic growth.



Ground-Level Ozone

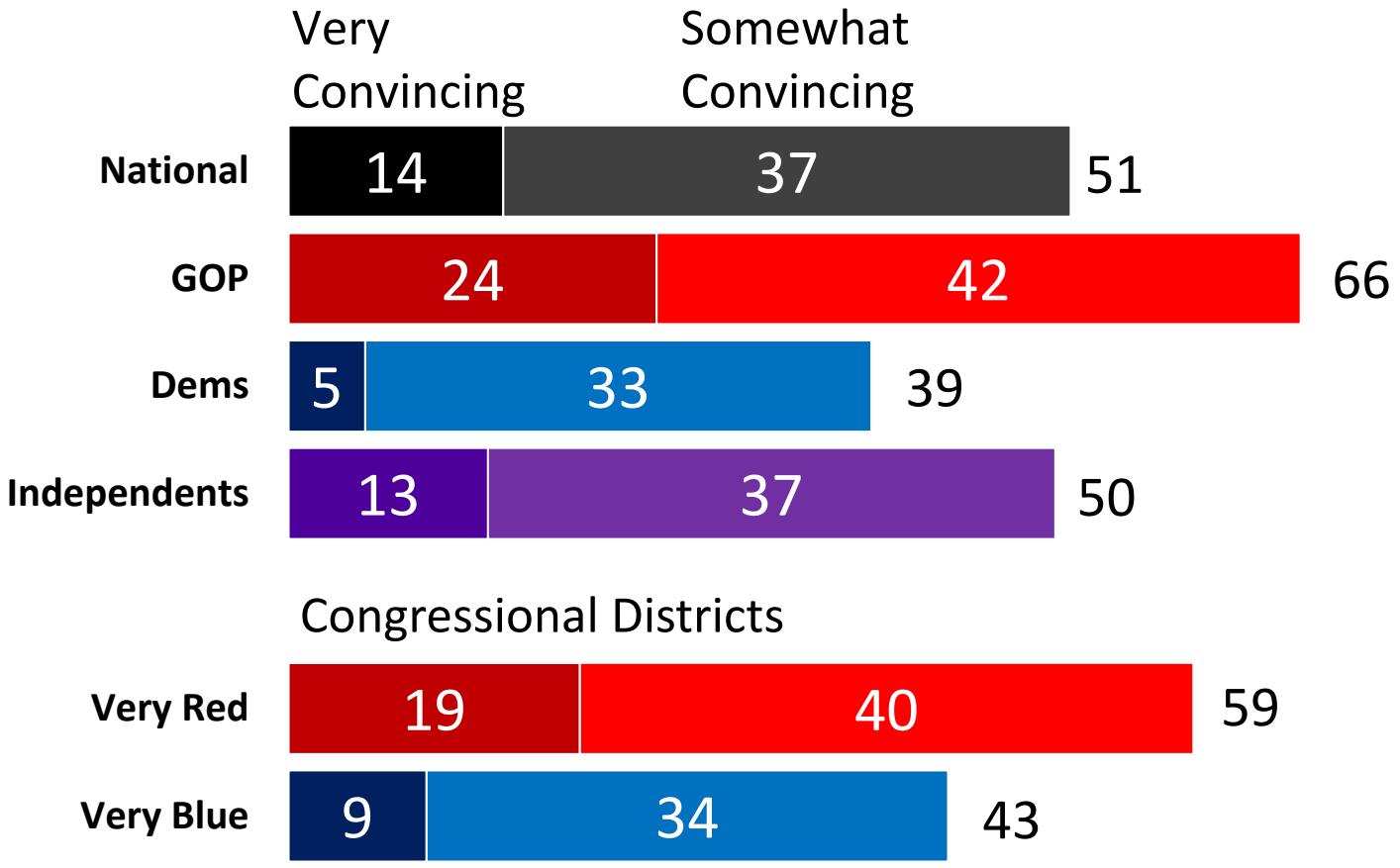
Con Argument 2

Ozone pollution has serious economic consequences. It creates healthcare costs related to respiratory problems, such as increased emergency room visits from asthma attacks. It results in more lost worker days and reduced worker productivity. It reduces tree and crop growth, harming agriculture and timber production. Local economies are affected as ozone pollution discourages tourism.



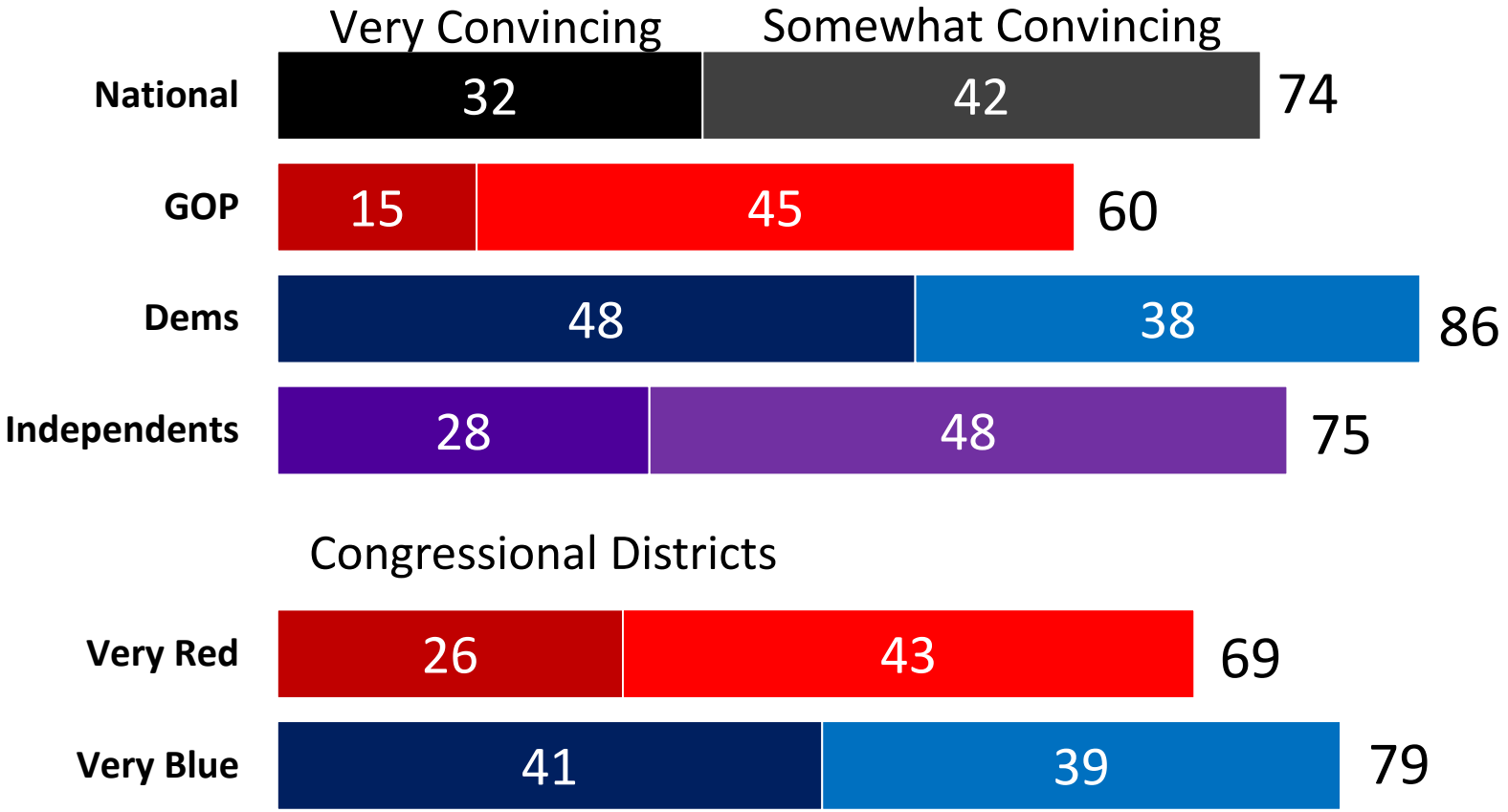
Ground-Level Ozone
Pro Argument 3

While it is not difficult for some states to get their ozone levels down, for others it will be a real economic hardship. Some have exceptionally high ozone levels to start with. In some cases this is due to natural sources of ozone and topographic features that they can do nothing about. It is unfair to impose the same high standards on everyone so suddenly. We should ease up for a while and give the states more time.



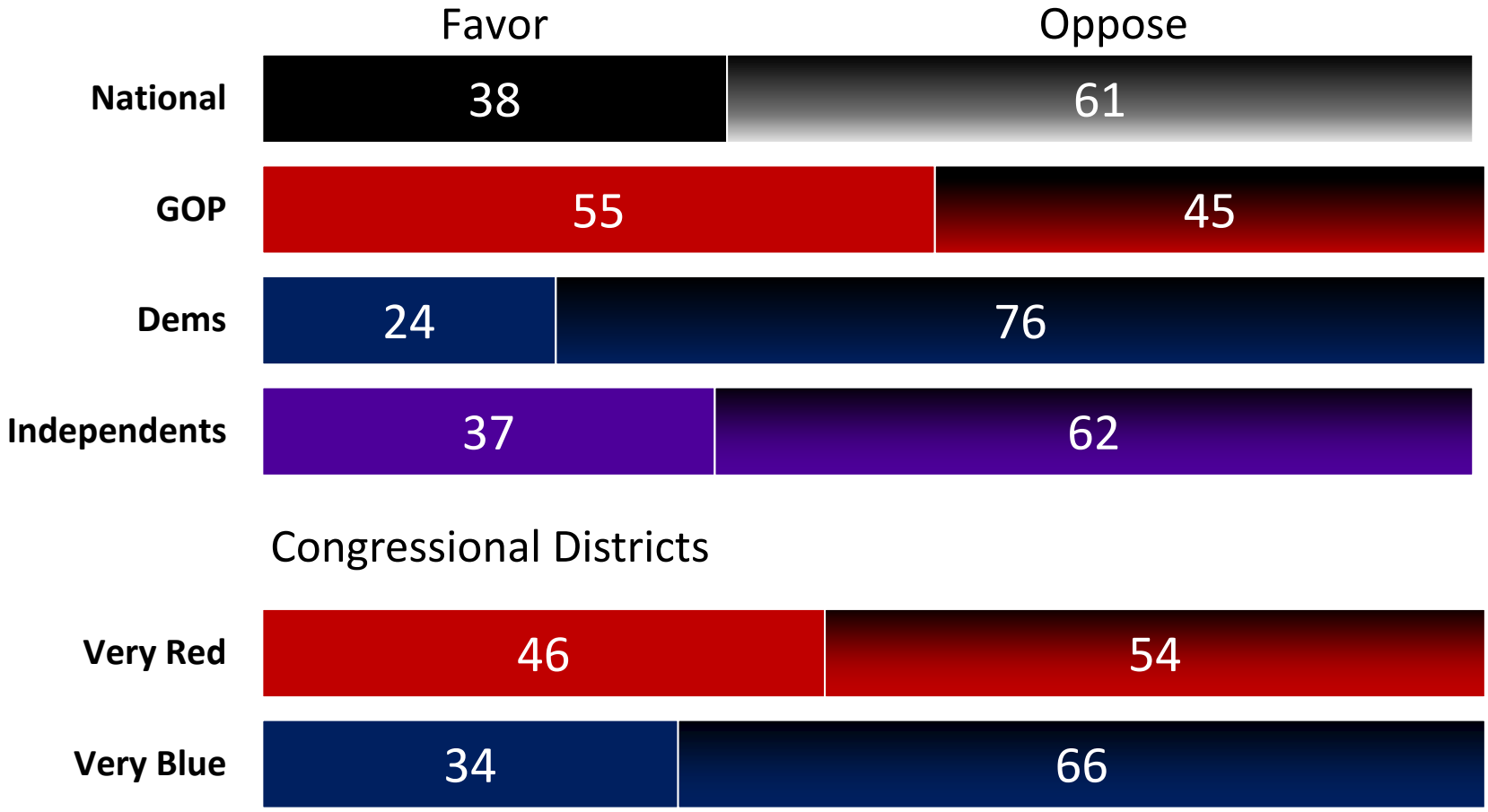
Ground-Level Ozone
Con Argument 3

The EPA plan already gives states with high ozone levels more time to get their levels down. Easing up on all states is no favor to the states with high levels. Much ozone is blown in from neighboring states. Even the state of California--which has exceptionally high ozone levels--has testified in opposition to this legislation. Their economy has grown dramatically while pollution levels have been cut significantly.



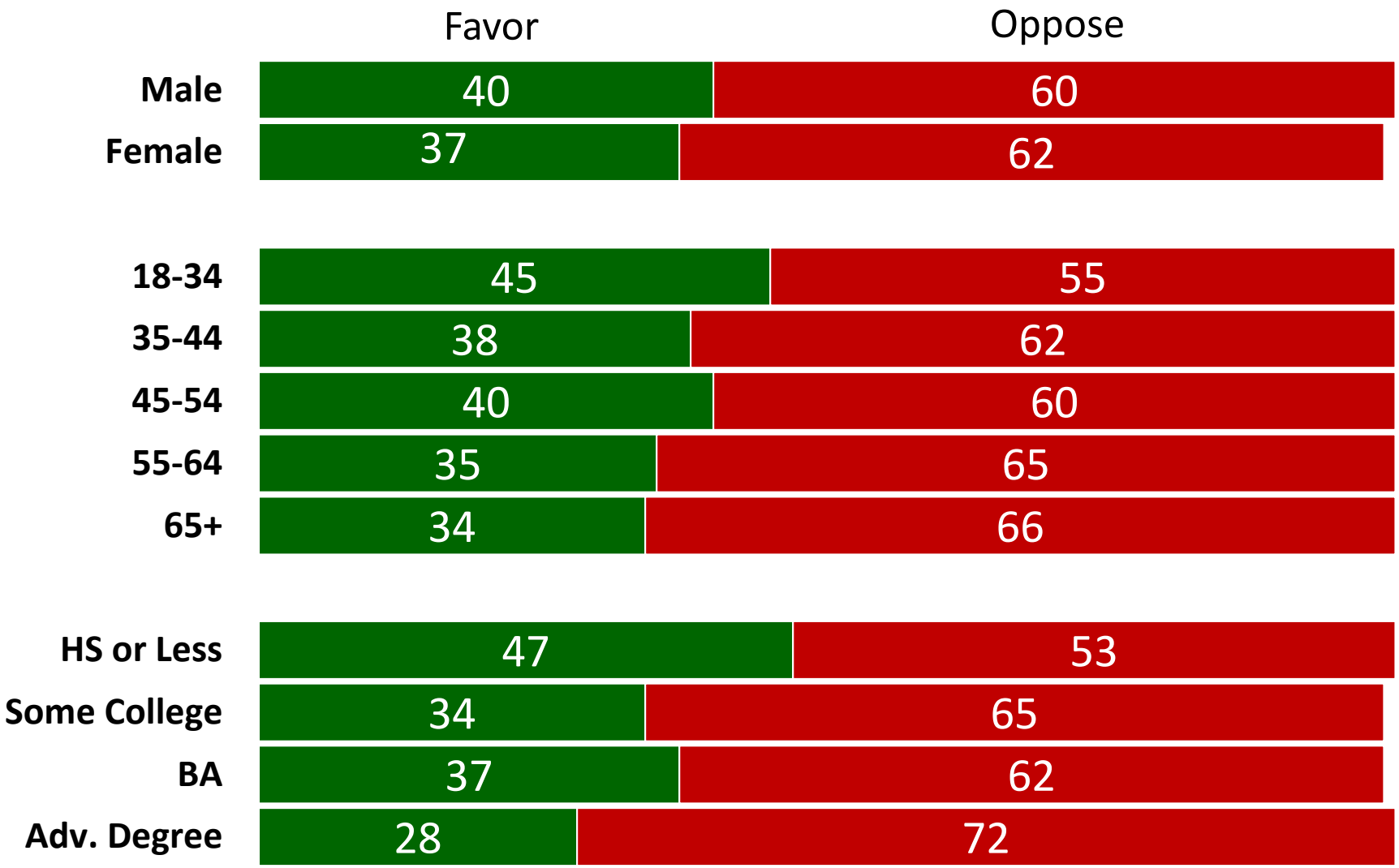
Ground-Level Ozone
Final Recommendation

So, in conclusion, do you favor or oppose legislation in Congress that delays by eight years the requirement that states undertake a step-by-step plan for lowering the maximum allowed ozone levels from 75 ppb to 70 ppb?



Ground-Level Ozone

Final Recommendation - Demographics



Ground Level Ozone

Final Recommendation - Congressional Districts

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