

How Americans View the Federal Government's Role

Gallup and *USA Today*

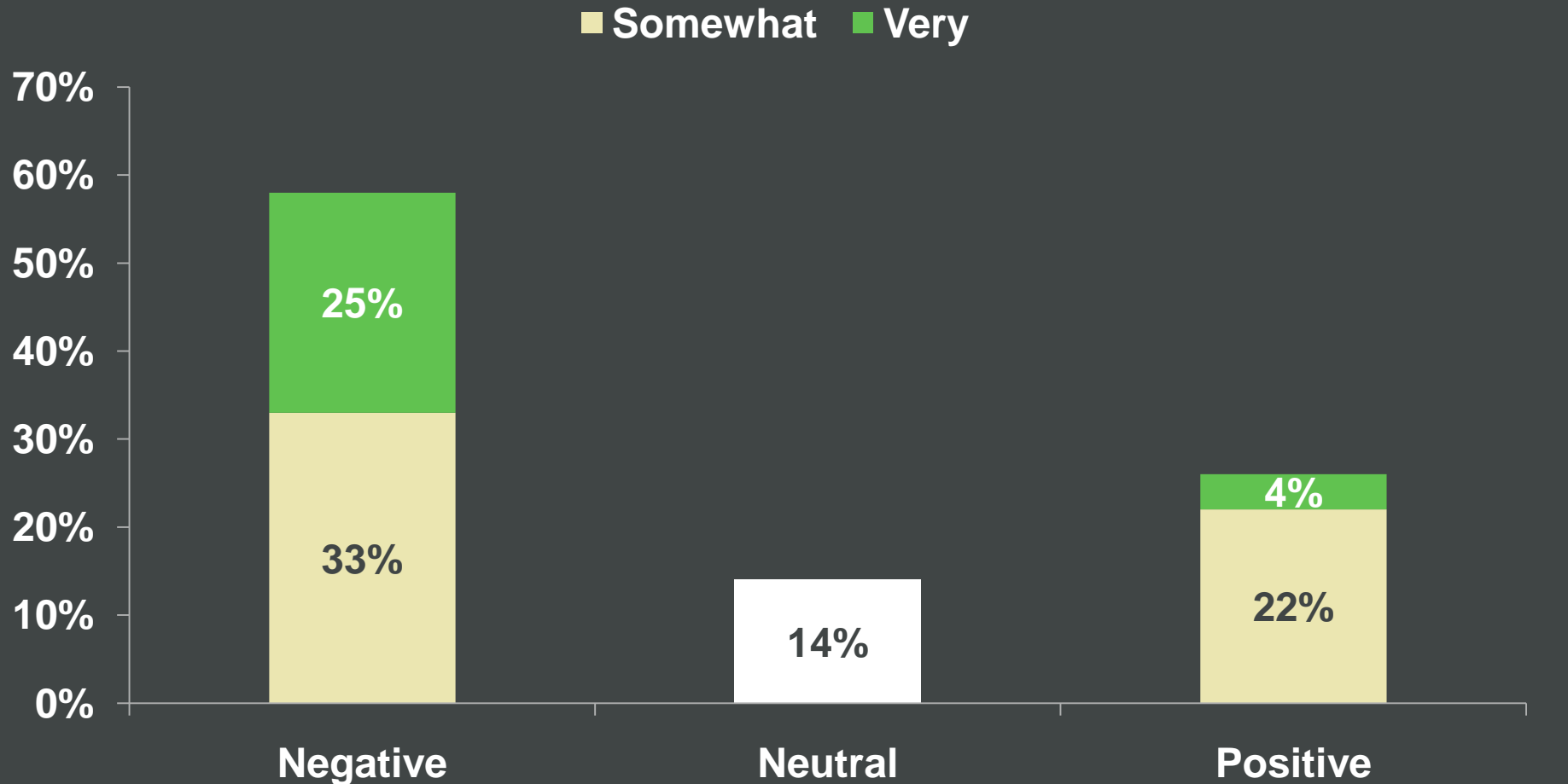
October 13, 2010

The Gallup Building

Washington, DC

The “Federal Government” Has An Image Problem

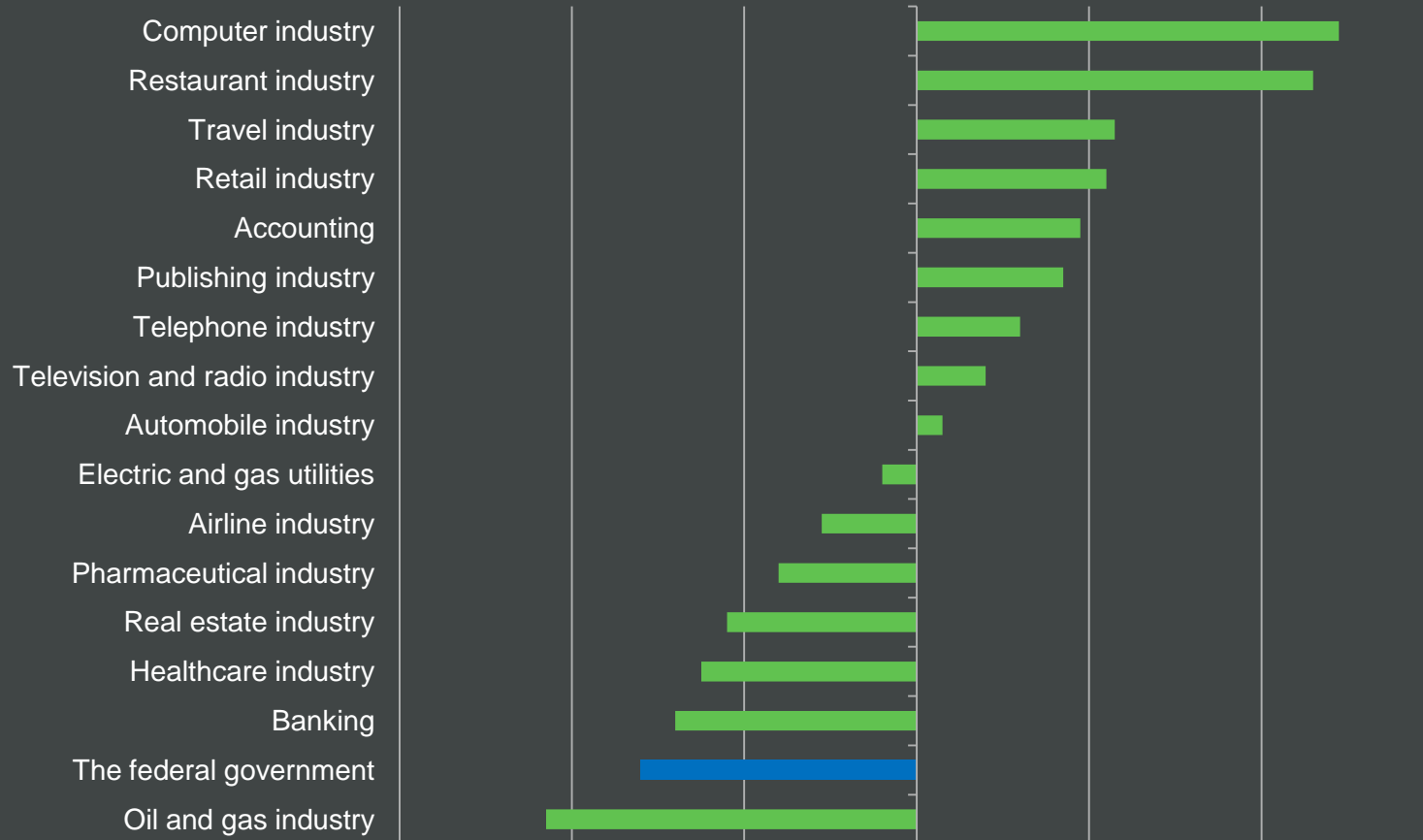
Americans' Overall View of the "Federal Government"



2010 Aug

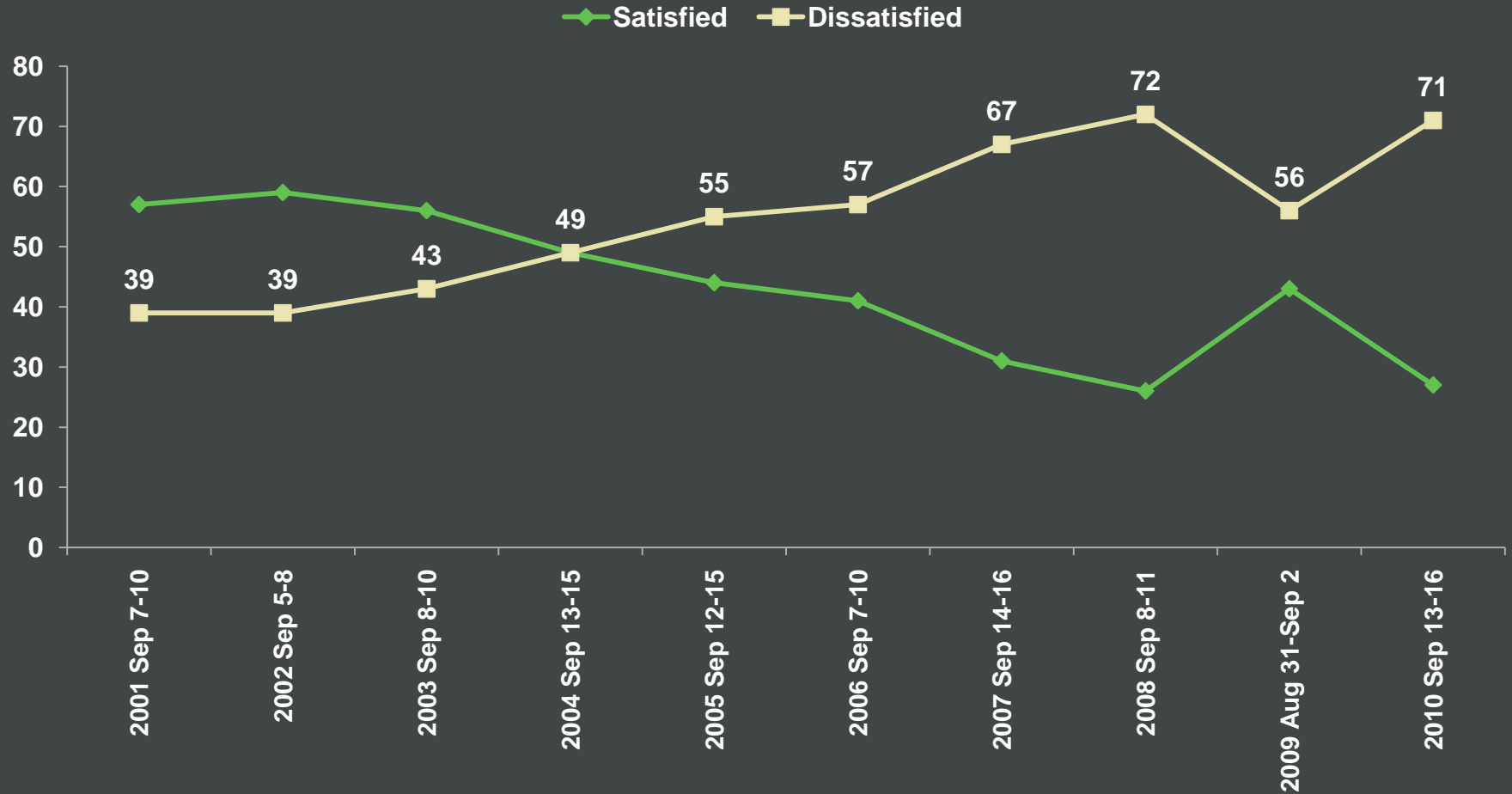
Americans' View of Business Industry Sectors

Percent positive minus percent negative

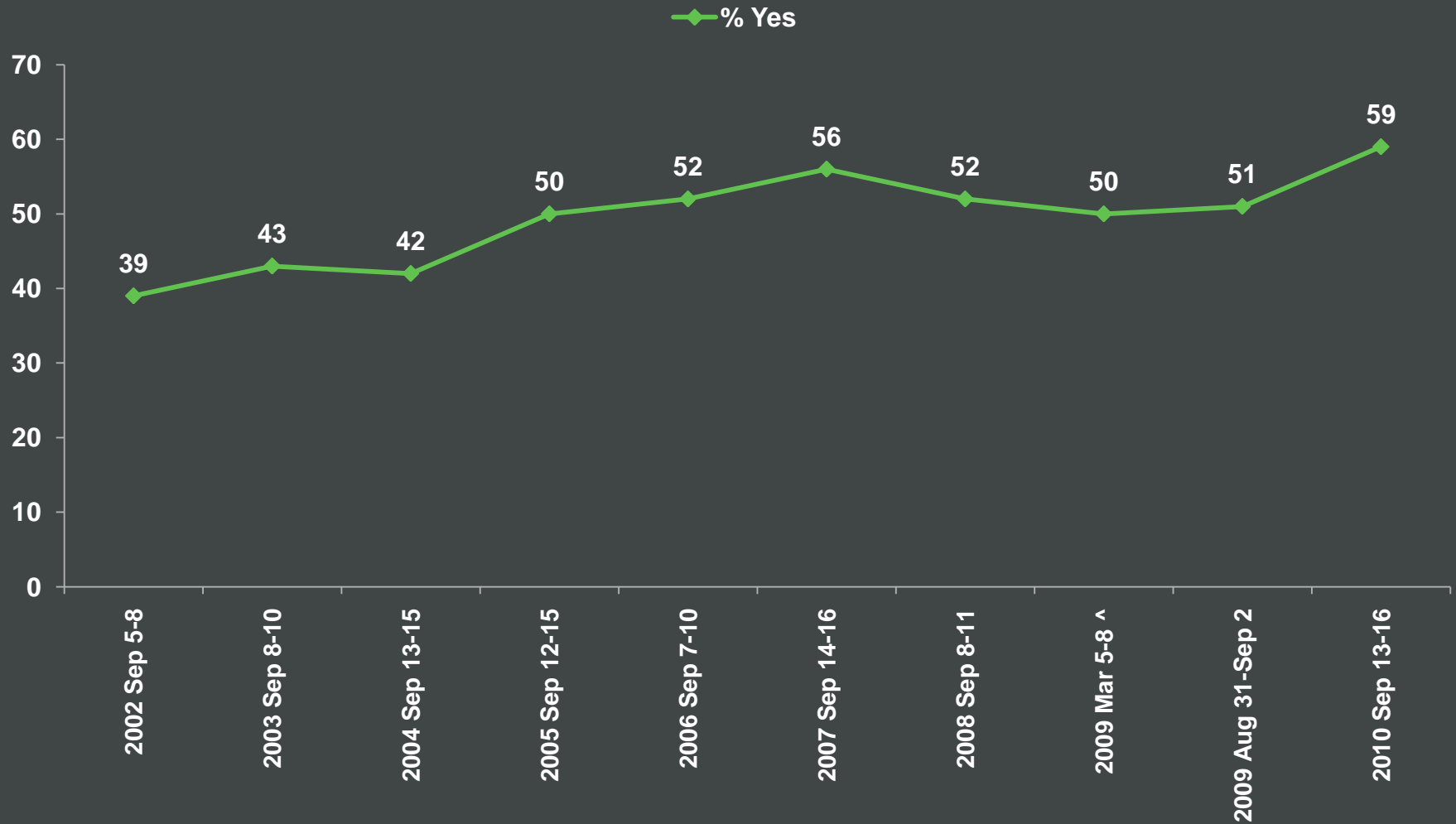


2010 Aug 5-8

Satisfaction With the Way the Nation is Being Governed



Do You Think the Federal Government Today Has Too Much Power?

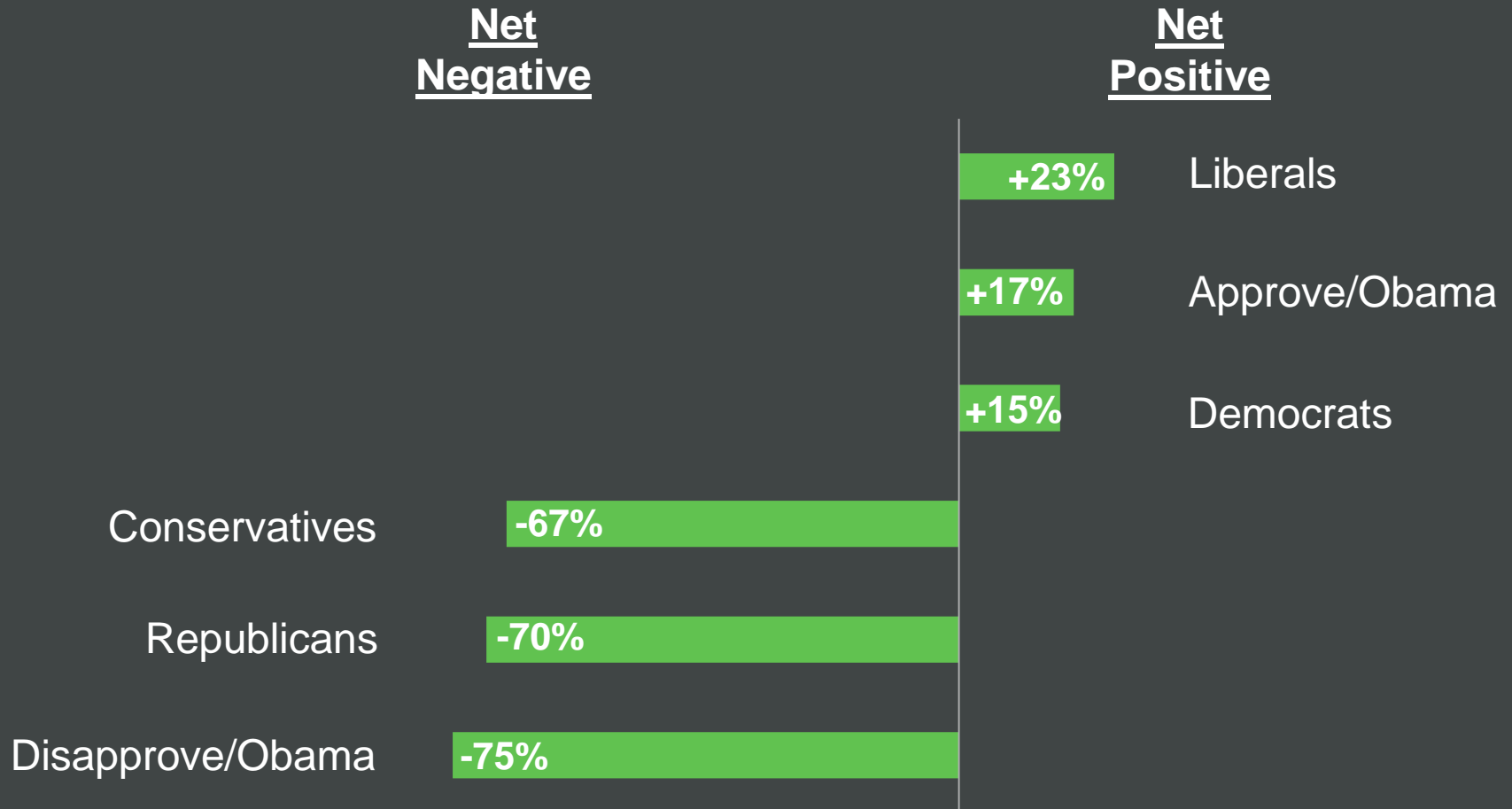


Do you think the federal government poses an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens, or not?



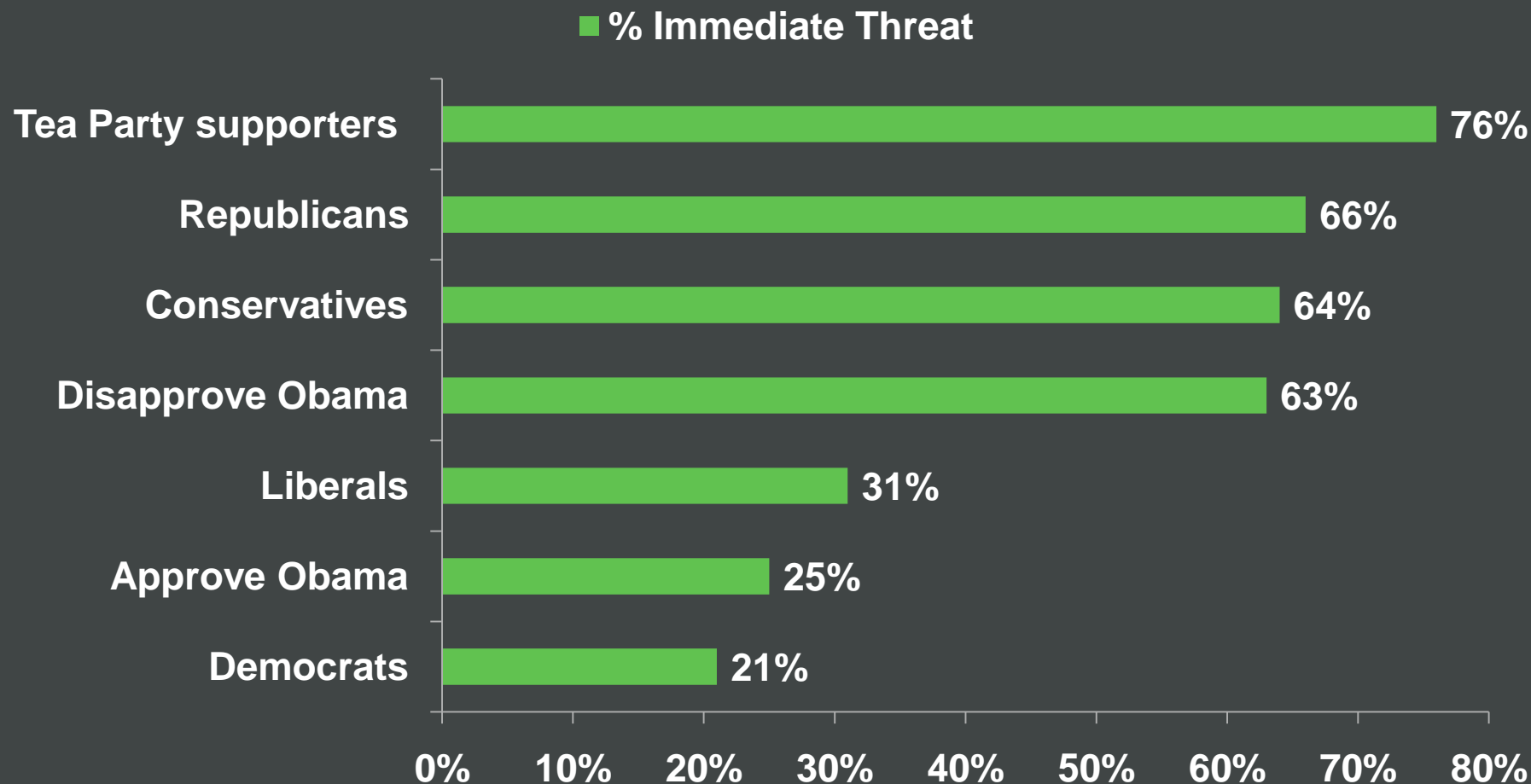
The Role of the Federal Government Is A Substantive and Symbolic Pivot Point in American Politics

Americans' Views of "The Federal Government"



2010 Aug

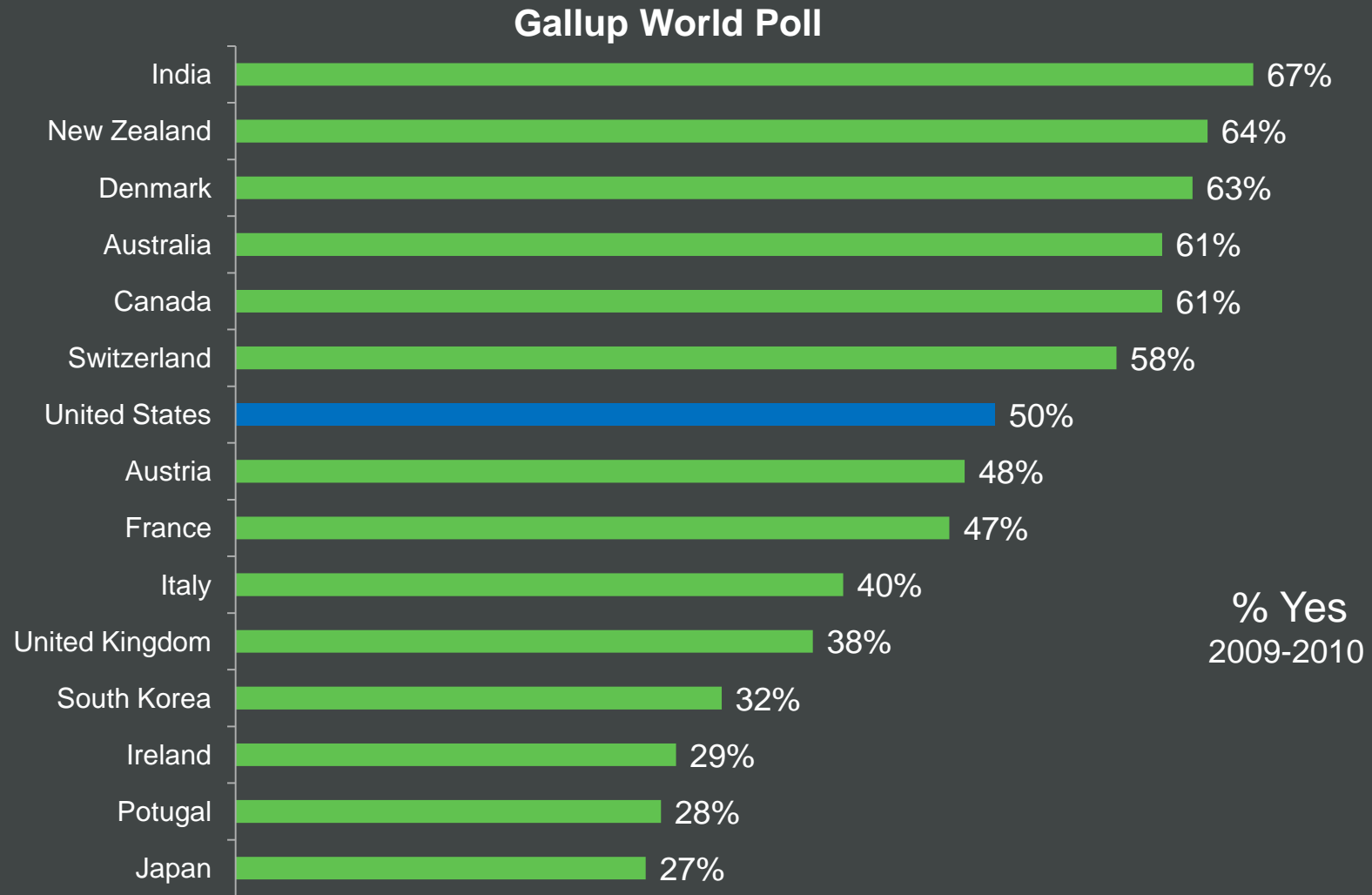
Do you think the federal government poses an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens, or not?



And Yet.....Caveats

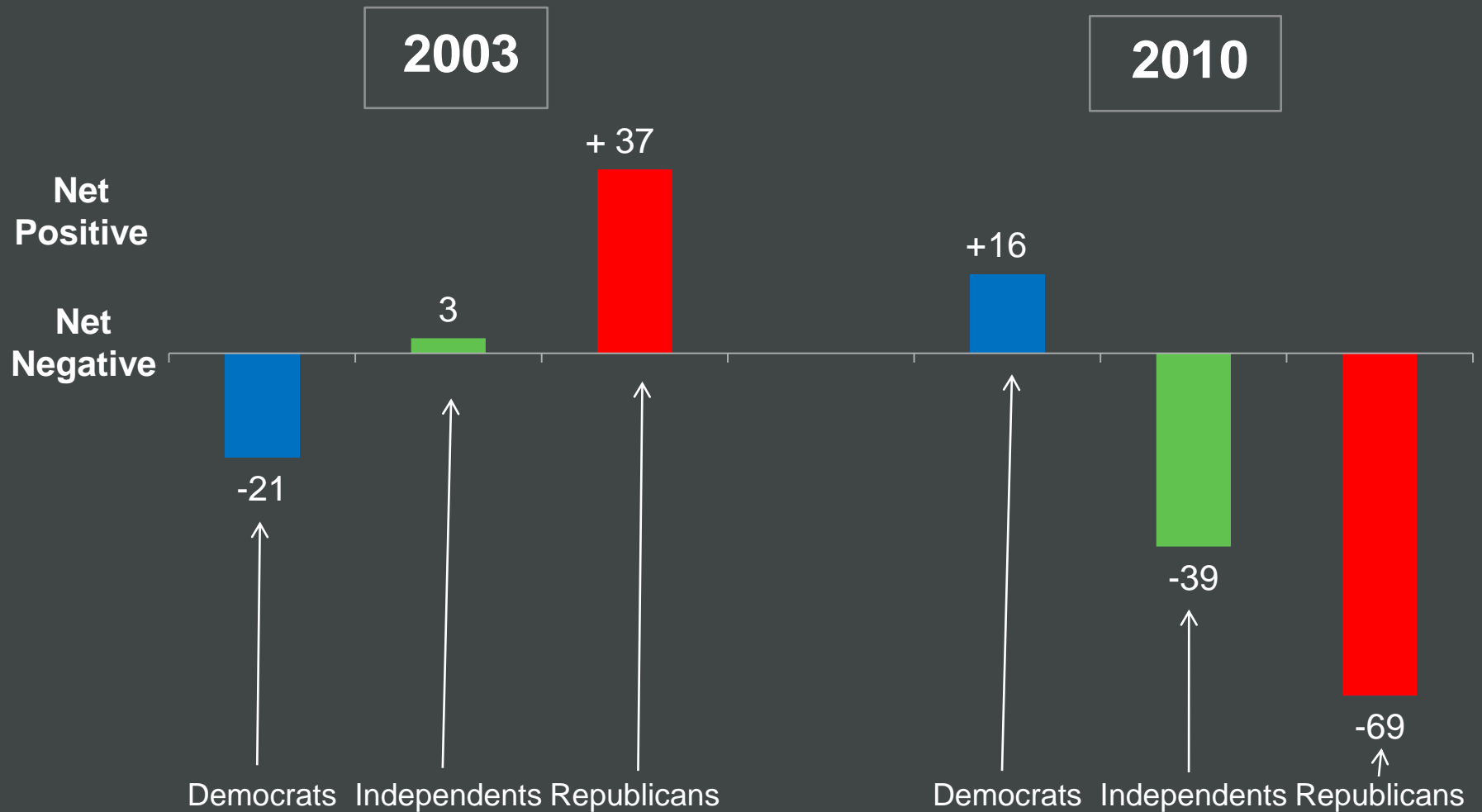
Caveat I: Americans Are Not as Negative as Residents of Other Democracies Around the World

Do You Have Confidence in Your National Government?

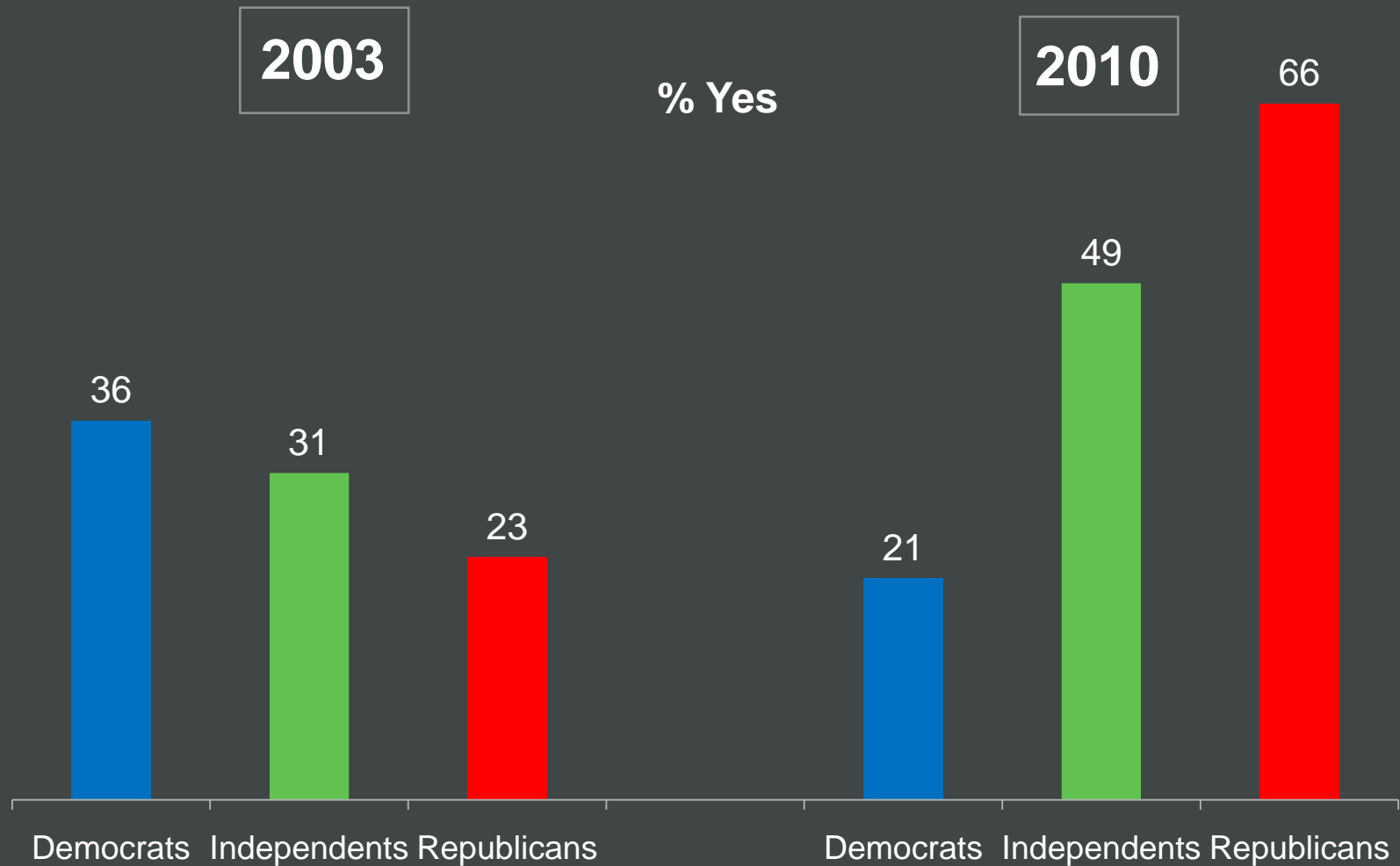


Caveat II: Views of Government Vary Based on Time Period, Political Environment, Political Segments

Americans' Views of "The Federal Government"

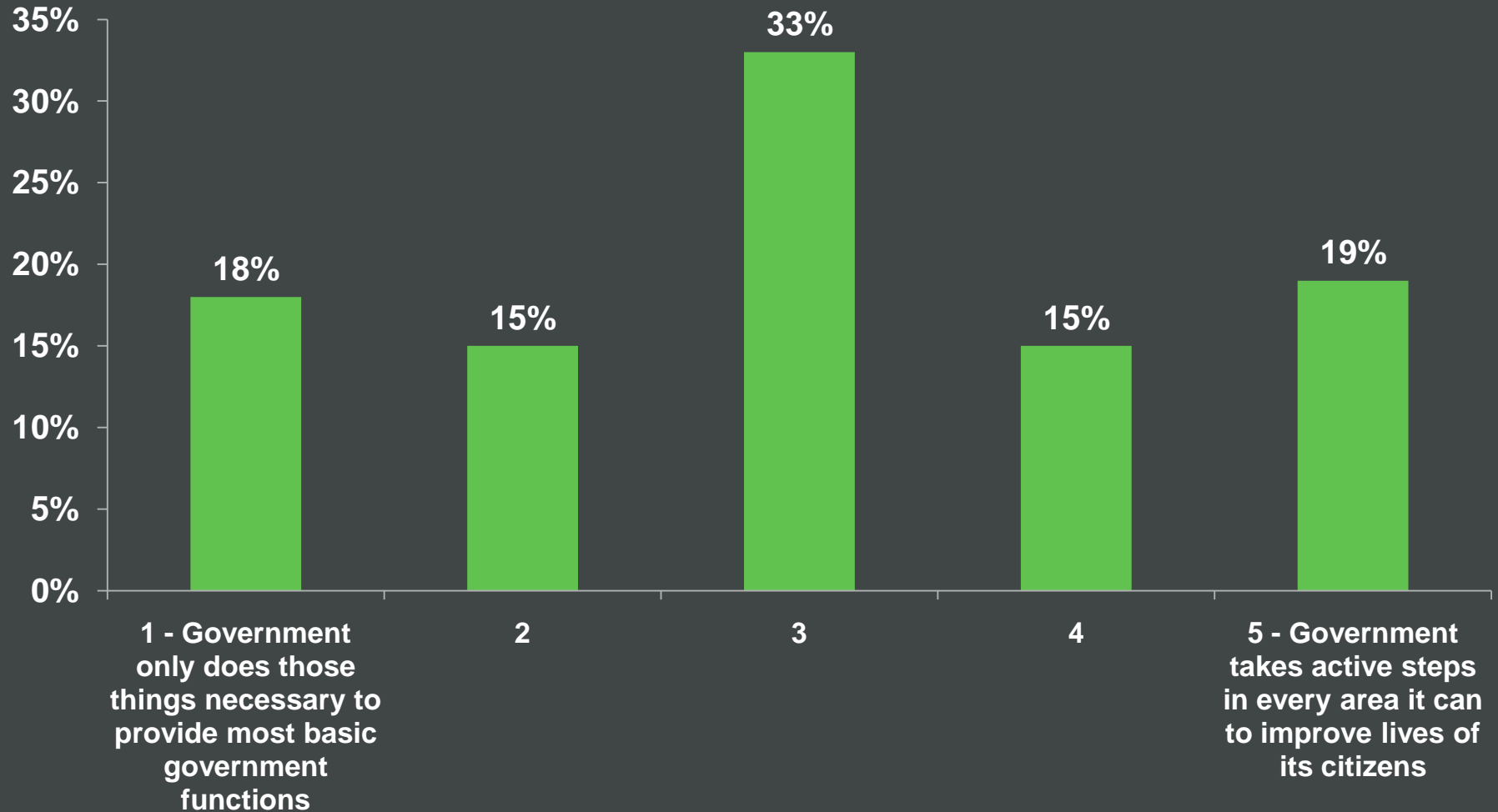


Do You Think the Federal Government Poses an Immediate Threat to the Rights and Responsibilities of Ordinary Citizens, or Not?

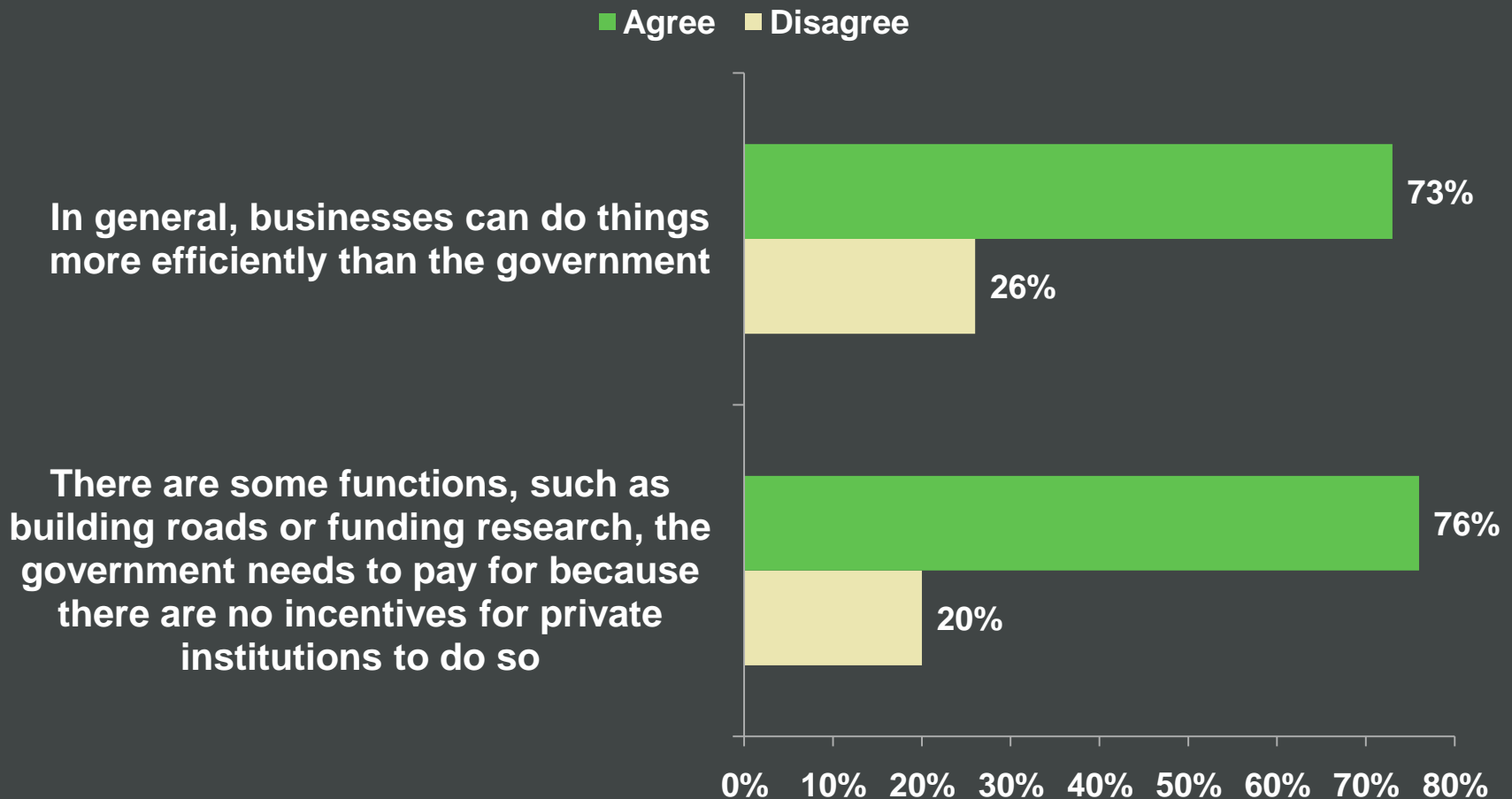


Caveat III: Despite Broad Negative **Image** of Federal Government, Much More Divided Views on **Role** of Federal Government

On a 1 to 5 Scale, What Americans Want Government To Do



Government versus Business



2010 Sep 13-16

On a 1 to 5 scale, how much responsibility you think the government should have for each of these?

2010 Sep 13-16	% Total Responsibility (5)	% No Responsibility (1)
Protecting Americans from foreign threats	83	2
Protecting consumers against unsafe products	51	3
Preventing discrimination	47	8
Protecting the environment from human actions that can harm it	42	5
Making sure that all Americans have adequate health care	42	20

On a 1 to 5 scale, how much responsibility you think the government should have for each of these?

2010 Sep 13-16	% Total Responsibility (5)	% No Responsibility (1)
Developing and maintaining the nation's transportation systems	36	6
Making sure that all those who want jobs have them	35	14
Providing a minimum standard of living for all	30	18
Upholding moral standards among its citizens	25	24
Reducing income differences between the rich and the poor	23	33
Protecting major U.S. corporations that are in danger of going out of business	13	36

Caveat IV: In Fact, No Monolithic Structure of Attitudes, but Instead a Wide Diversity

Five Groups of Americans

Obama liberals (24%)

Most heavily Democratic,
highest number of liberals,
least religious, majority
female

Keep it small (22%)

Highest percentage of males,
Republicans, conservatives, non-
Hispanic whites, most affluent, oldest

Mushy middle (17%)

Highest education levels,
most independents

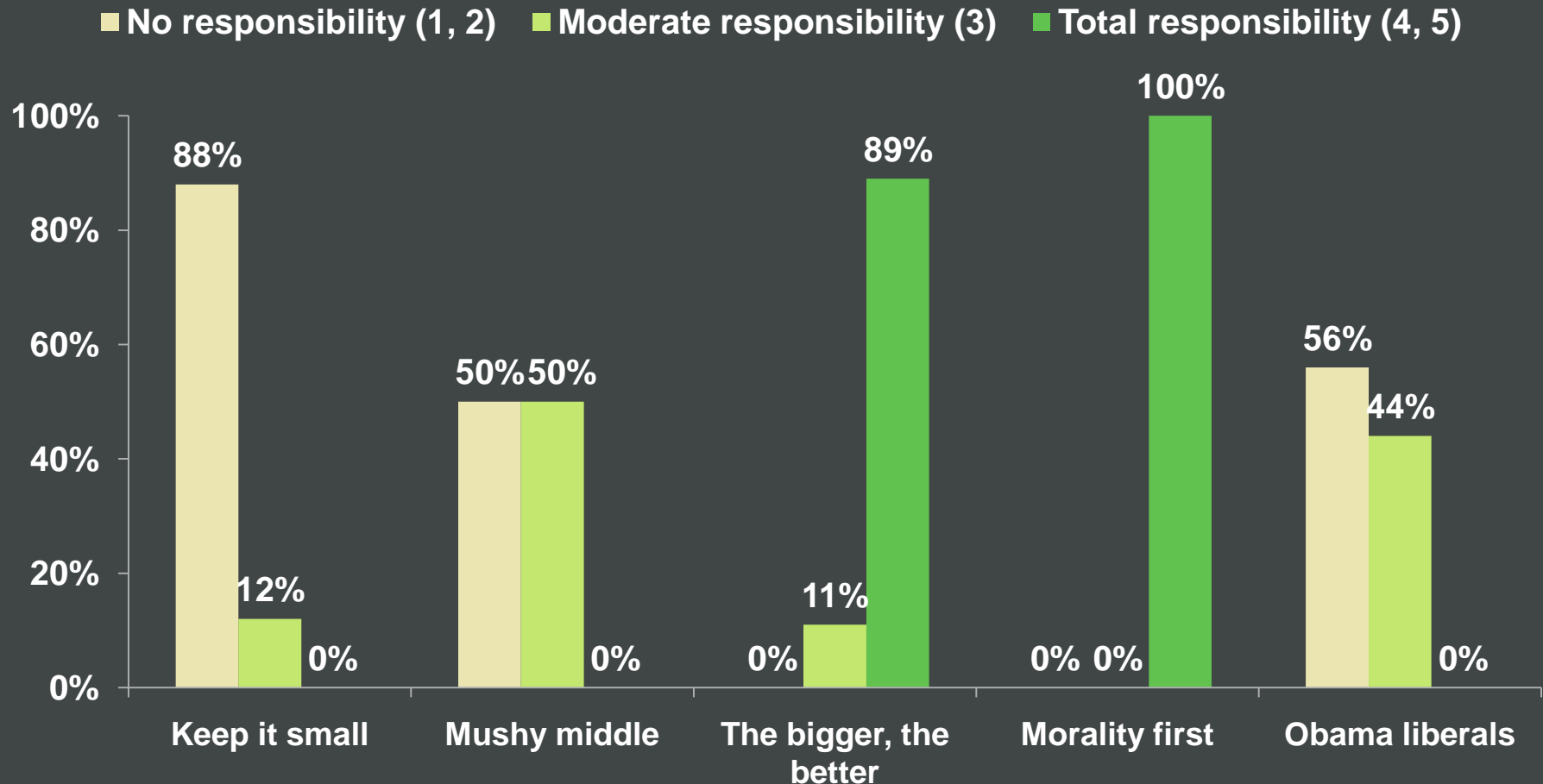
The bigger, the better (20%)

Majority female, highest percentage of
non-whites, never-been-marrieds

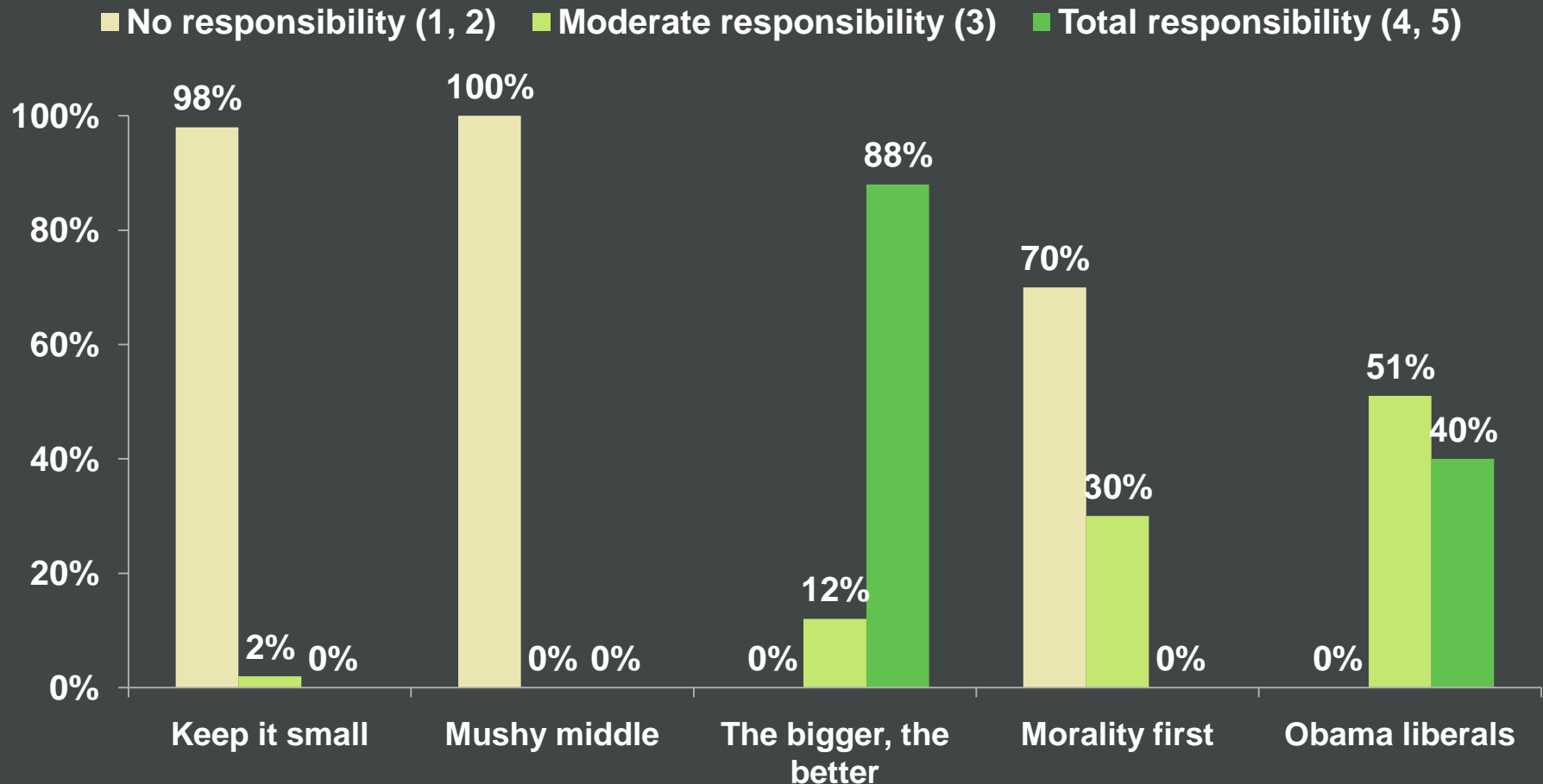
Morality first (17%)

Most religious. Majority are 50
or older, Republican,
conservative

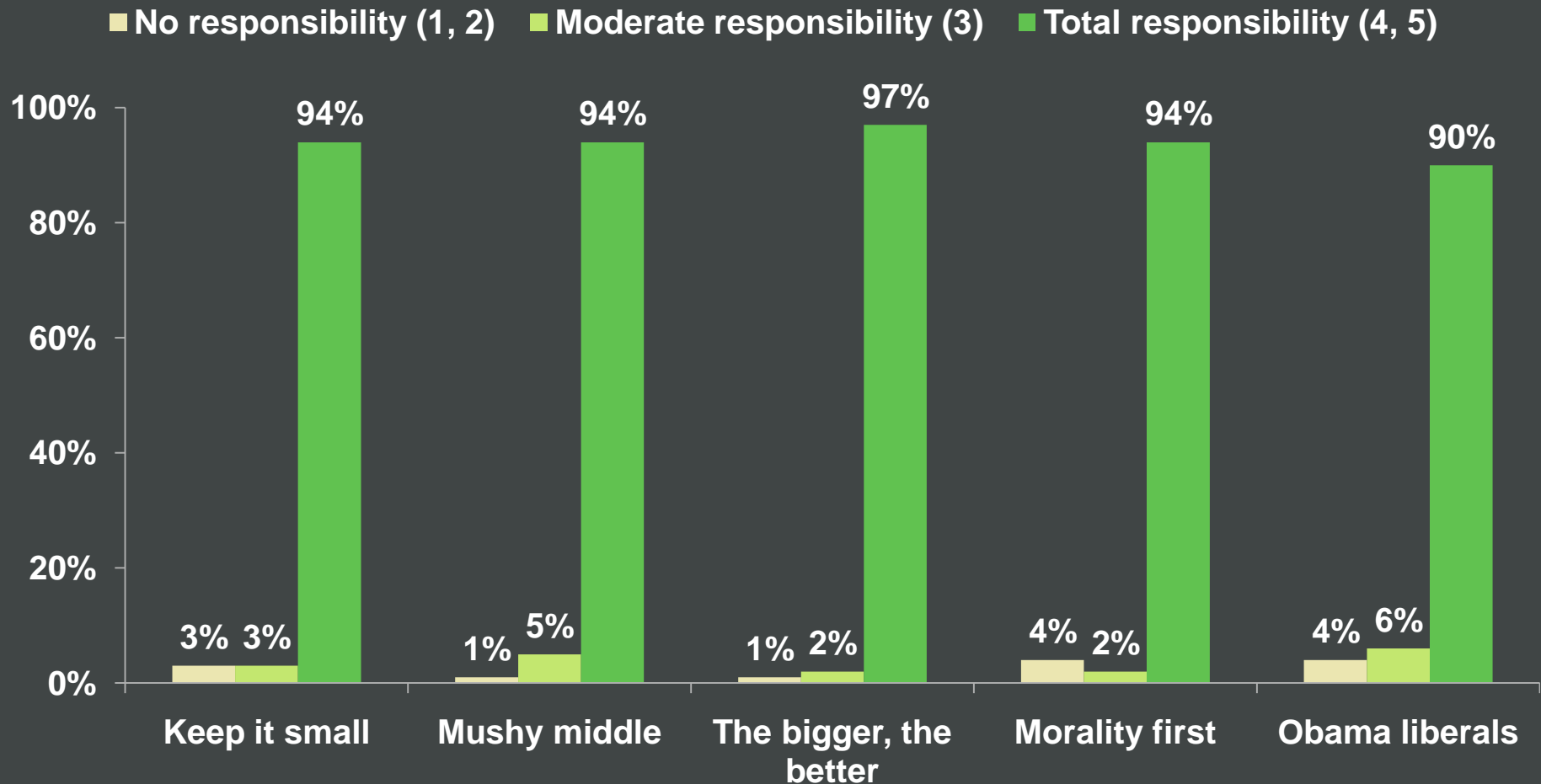
Federal Government Responsibility for “Upholding Moral Standards”



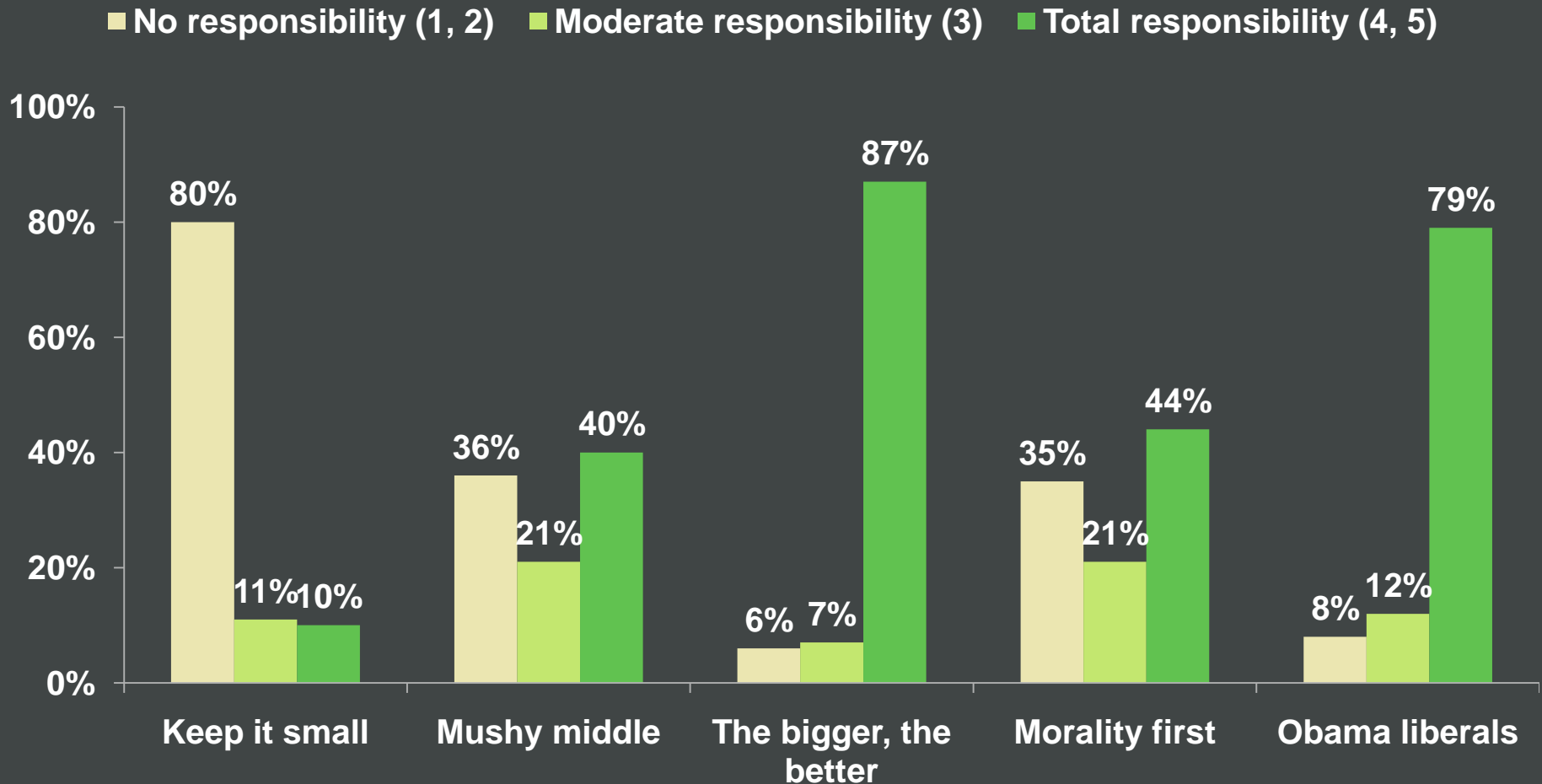
Federal Government Responsibility for “Reducing Income Differences”



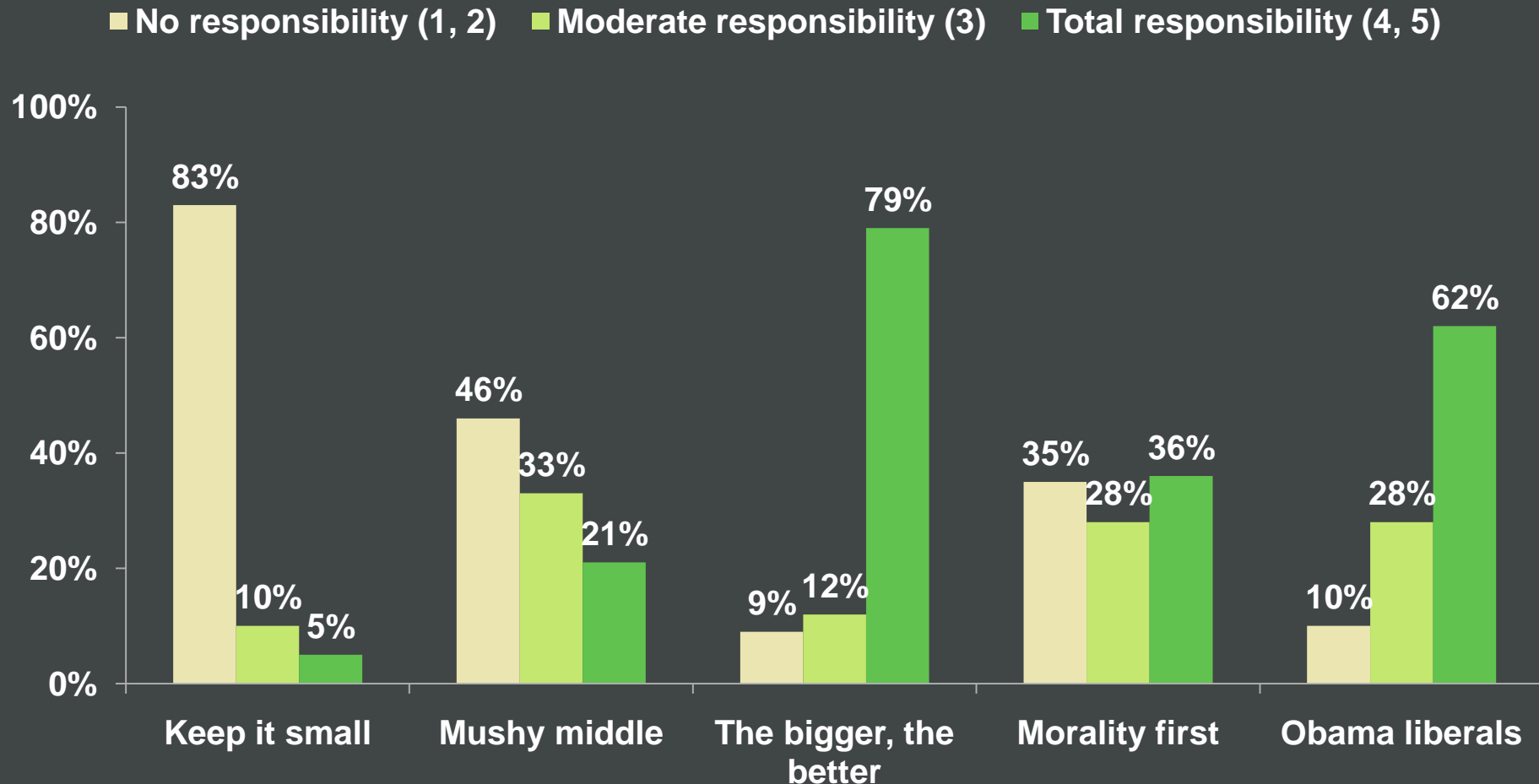
Federal Government Responsibility for “Protecting Americans from Foreign Threats”



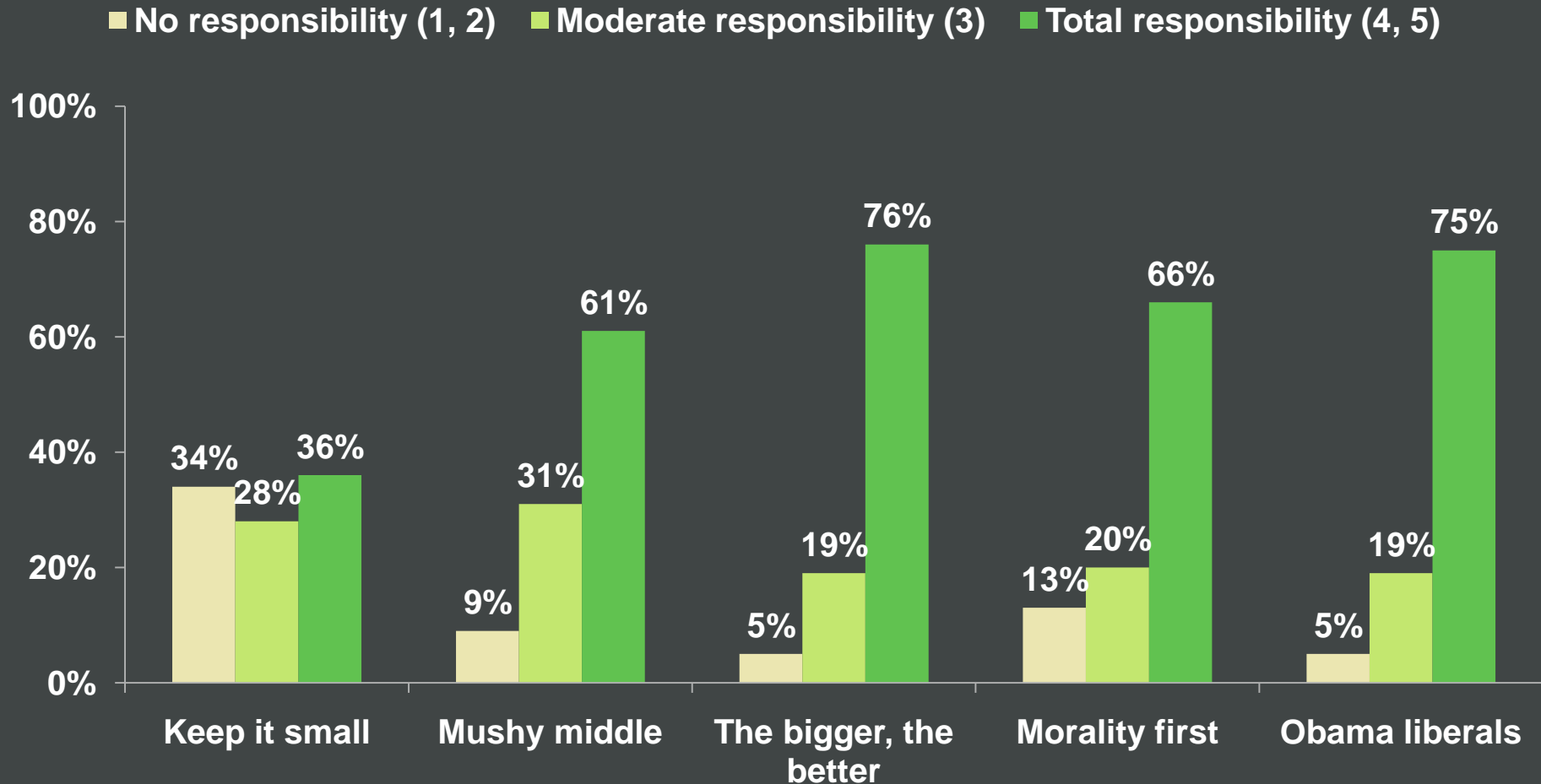
Federal Government Responsibility for: “Making Sure All Americans Have Adequate Healthcare”



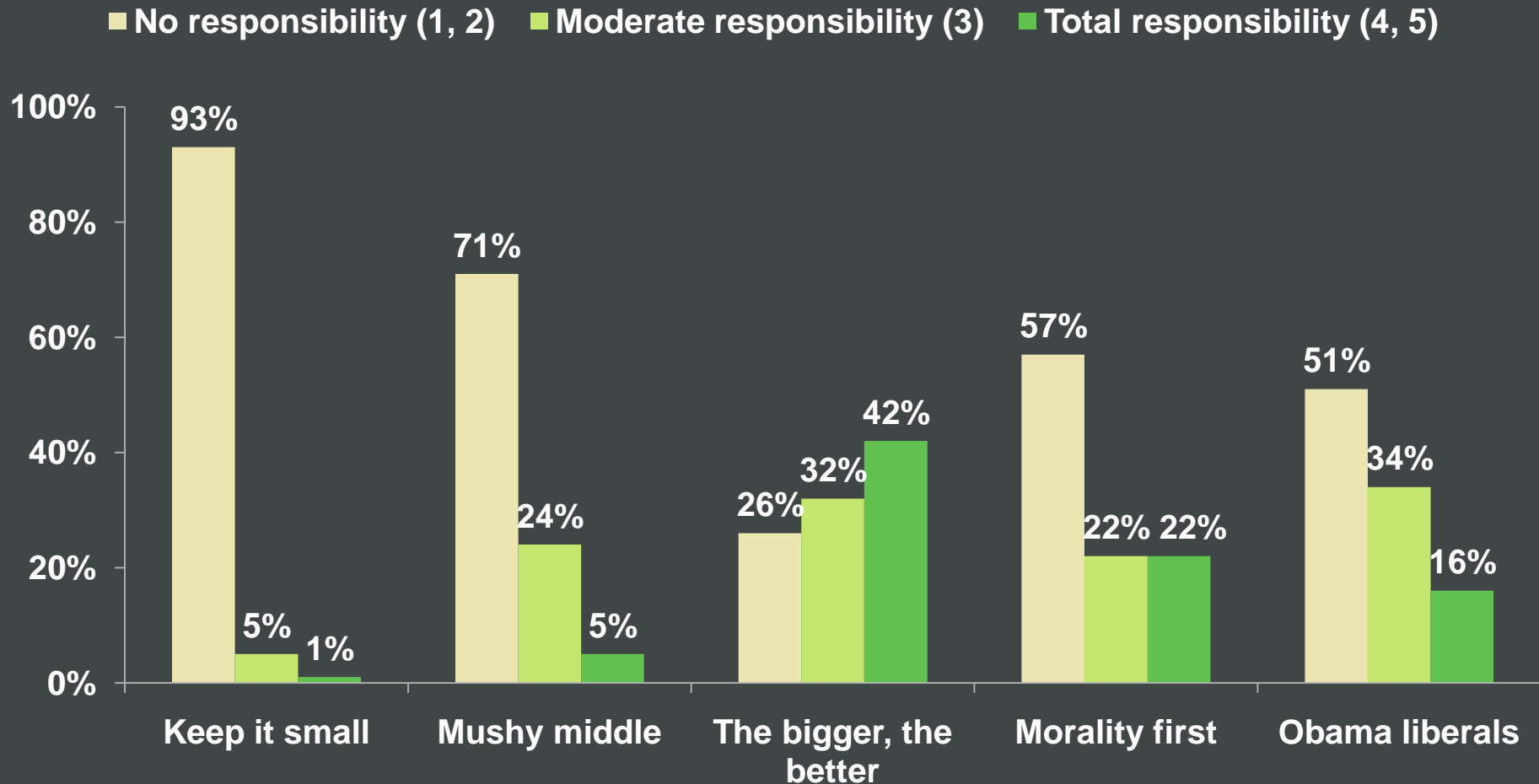
Federal Government Responsibility for “Providing a Minimum Standard of Living For All”



Federal Government Responsibility for: “Developing, Maintaining National Transportation System”

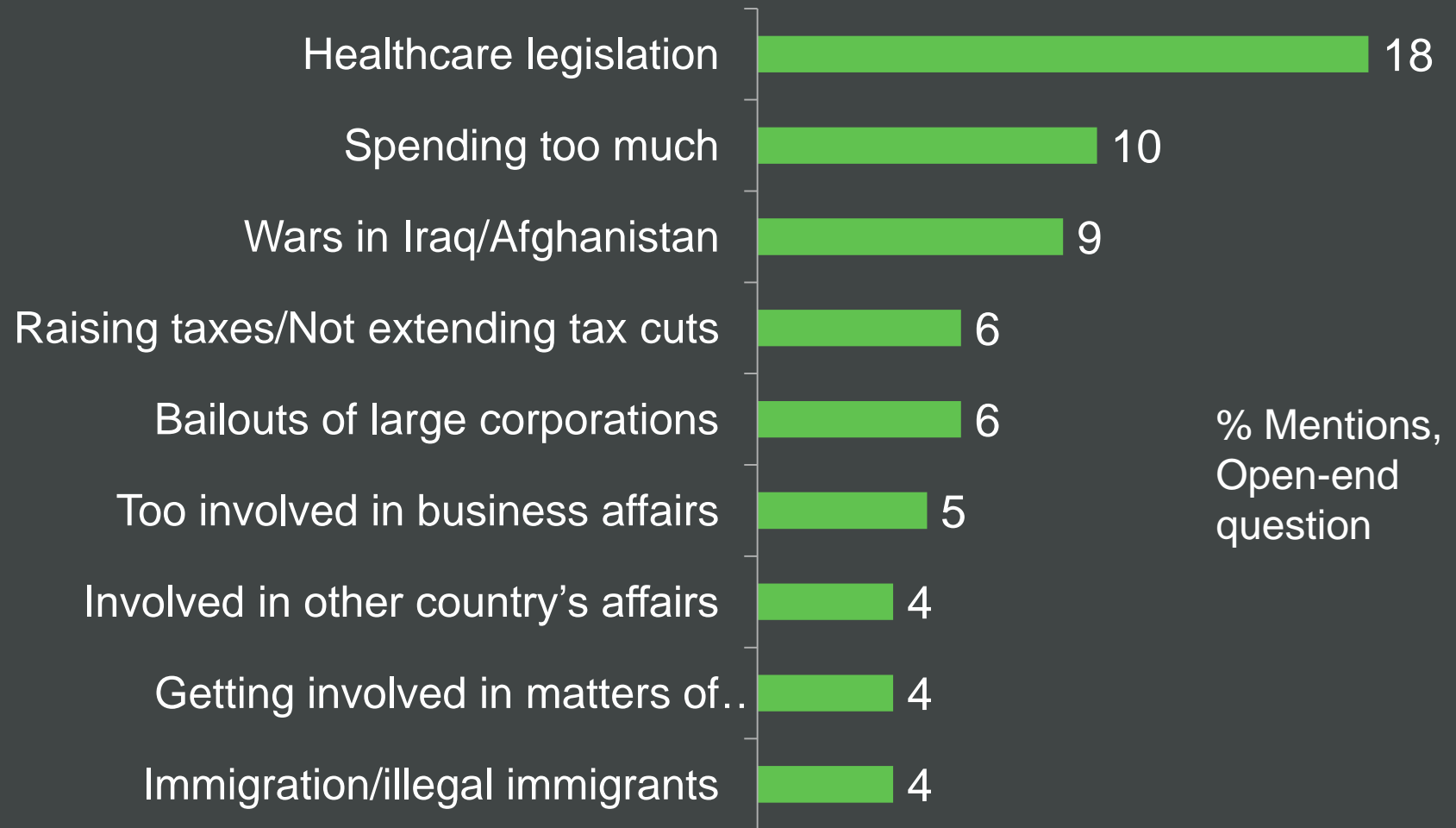


Federal Government Responsibility for “Protecting Major U.S. Corporations in Danger of Going Out of Business”



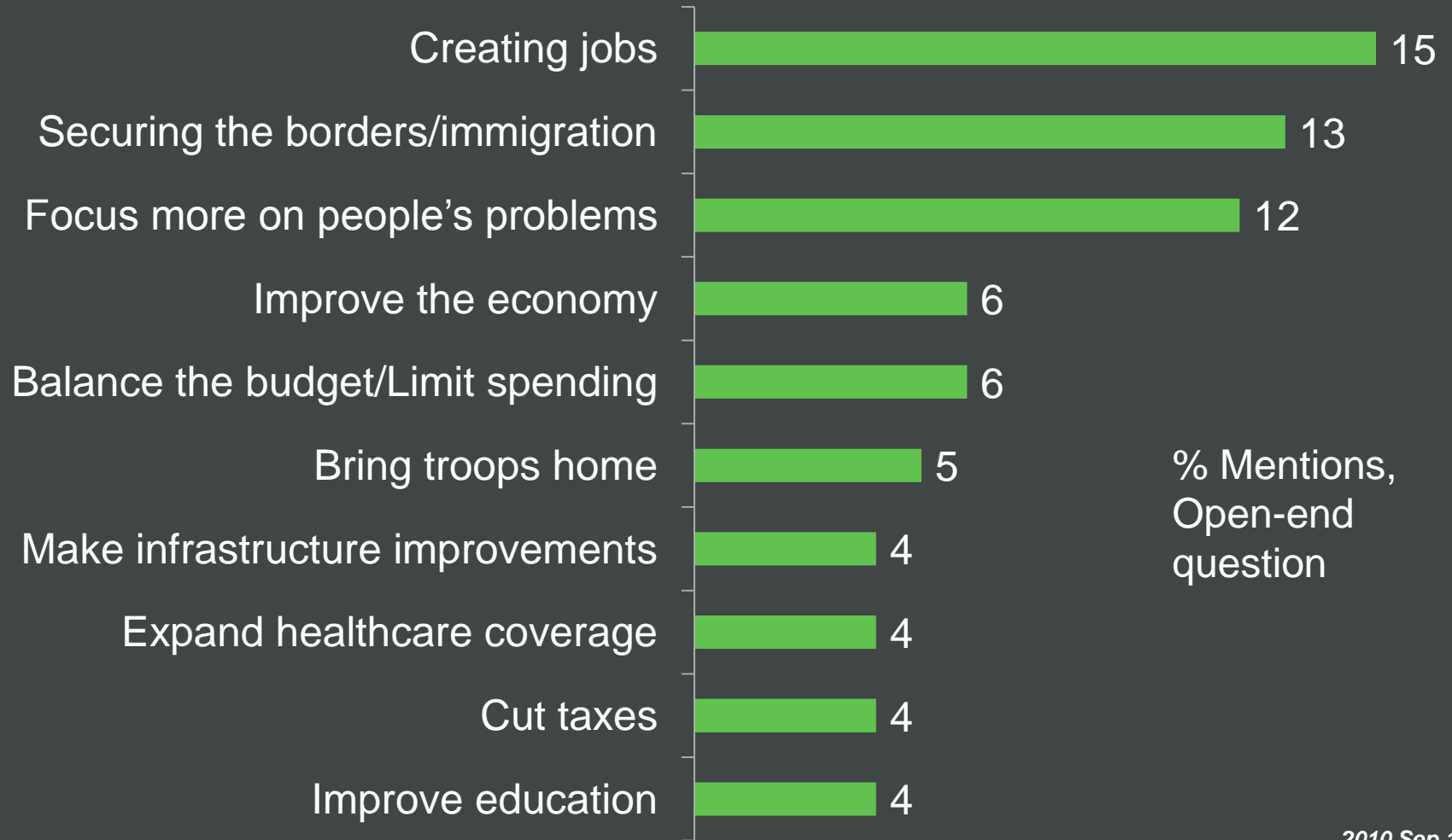
Caveat V: Yes, Americans Can Name Things
They Think the Government Should **Not** be
Doing, but They Also Can Name Things They
Think the Government **Should** Be Doing

Can you please give me an example of something the federal government is currently doing that you think it should NOT be doing?



2010 Sep 13-16

Can you please give me an example of something the federal government is currently NOT doing that you think it SHOULD be doing?



2010 Sep 13-16

So, what have we learned so far?

- Like the cable company – bad image, but necessary service
- Americans largely dissatisfied with government today, and want changes in process
- But – widely varying support for government taking an active role in addressing most problems
- And some dissatisfaction has to do with federal inaction, not just too much action

So, what have we learned so far?

- So, what is to be done?
 1. Recognize, regardless of who is in power, that Americans neither want no government nor total government
 2. Next Congress, be it Republican or Democrat, needs to consider tacking toward the middle
 3. If Republicans win control of Congress, could be at risk of overstepping, politically, just as Obama and the Democrats may have overstepped in the past two years in the other direction

So, what have we learned so far?

4. Fix the federal government's brand image
5. Decide on how to improve process of providing services

From the People's Perspective: What Can Be Done? *Ask the American Public Directly*

What is the One Thing You Would Recommend to Fix the Federal Government (Open-End)?

- Fire all elected officials and start over
- Cut spending/Control the deficit
- Work together/More bipartisanship
- Need more honest/reliable candidates
- Create more jobs/Keep jobs in U.S.
- Smaller government
- Impeach the president and elect a new one
- Term limits
- Improve public awareness about voting/government
- Less government involvement/control
- Stop raising taxes/Lower taxes
- Take care of people at home/Stop worrying about other countries
- Follow the constitution

October 2010

What is the One Thing You Would Recommend to Fix the Federal Government (Open-End)?

- Fire all elected officials and start over
- Work together/More bipartisanship
- Need more honest/reliable candidates
- Impeach the president and elect a new one
- Term limits
- Improve public awareness about voting/government

From the People's Perspective: What Can Be Done? *Fix the Federal Government's Image Problem*

What's Behind the Image Problem?

TAXES: Spending too much of the people's money

INTRUSIVE: Taking away rights, interfering with business, economy

BUREAUCRACY: Inefficient, corrupt

PROCESS: Not representative, ignores people, Congress doesn't work

SPECIFIC LEGISLATION: Actions viewed as wrong

From the People's Perspective: What Can Be Done?

Reduce Inefficiency

Examples of Top-of-Mind Association With Words “Federal Government”

A mess

Bloated

Broken

Chaos

Dysfunctional

Disorganized

Gridlock

Incompetent

Ineffective

Needs help

Oversized

Poor

Slow moving

Terrible

Too big

Too big, large & inefficient

Unorganized

Wasteful

From the People's Perspective: What Can Be Done?

Get the People More Involved

NEWS

American People Hire High-Powered Lobbyist To Push Interests In Congress

OCTOBER 8, 2010 | ISSUE 46•40



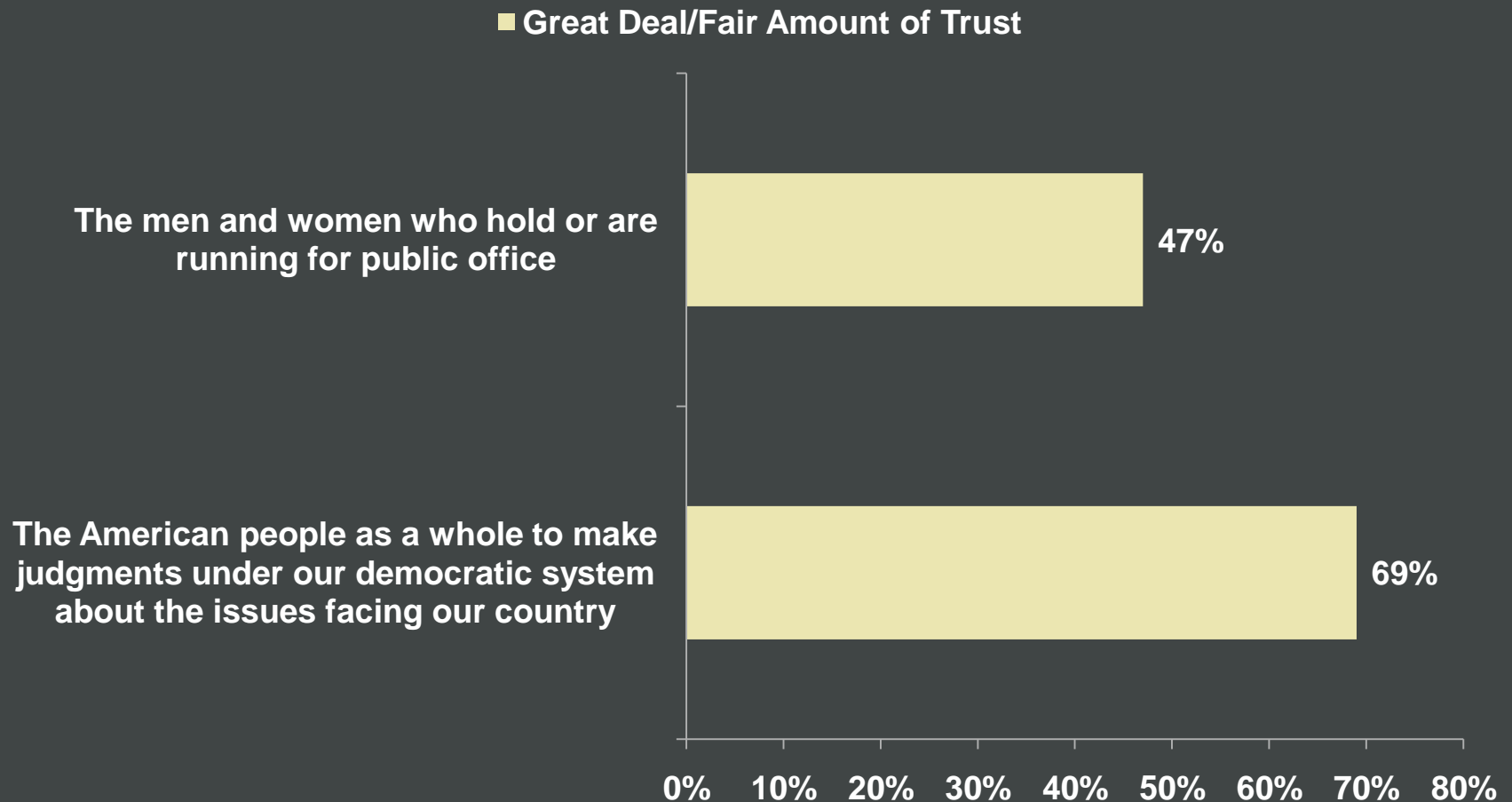
Americans hope lobbyist Jack Weldon will finally give them a voice in Washington.

WASHINGTON—Citing a desire to gain influence in Washington, the American people confirmed Friday that they have hired high-powered D.C. lobbyist Jack Weldon of the firm Patton Boggs to help advance their agenda in Congress.

ARTICLE TOOLS

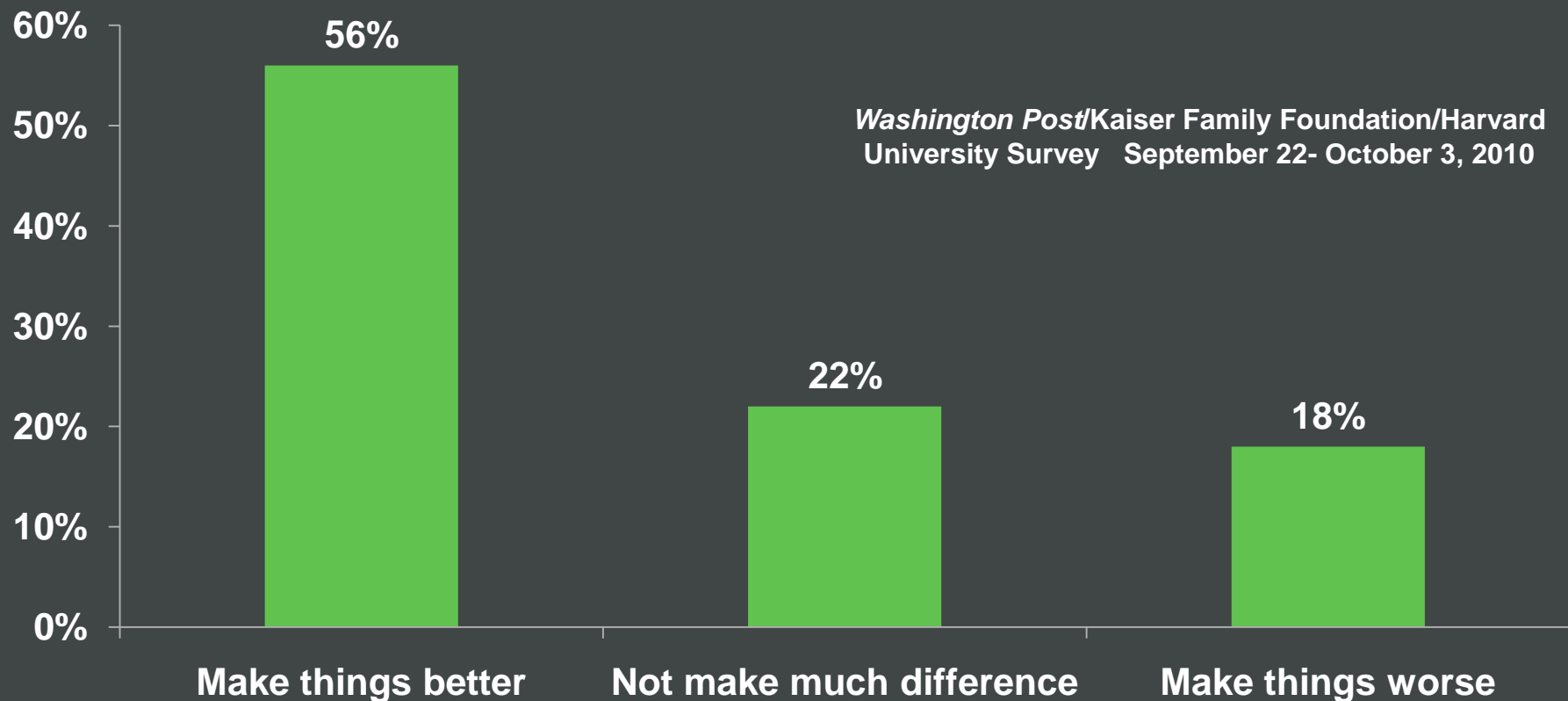
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Trust in Elected Representatives Versus People Themselves



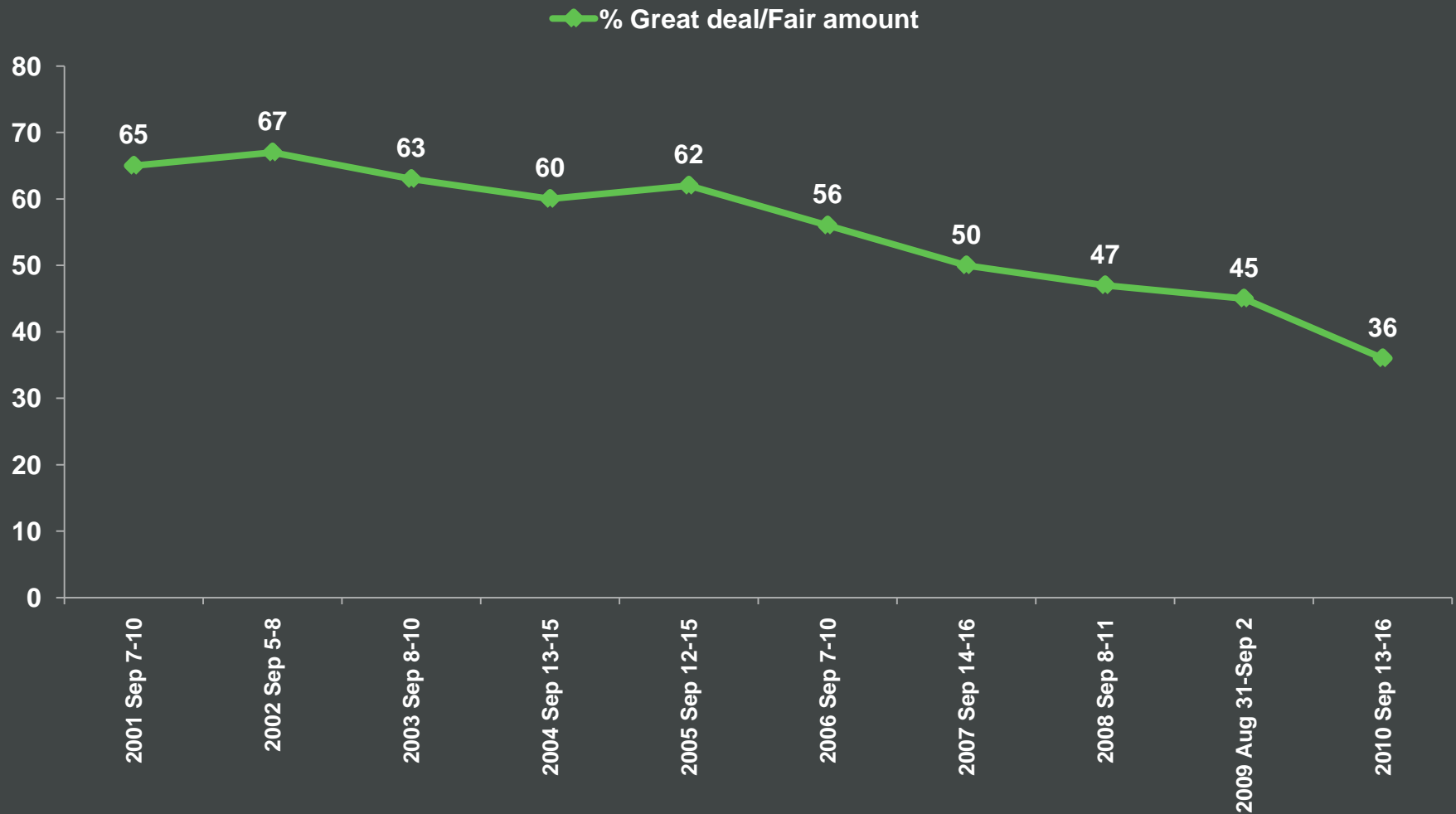
2010 Sep 13-16

Expected impact of a “**national referendum system**” in which all citizens voted on proposals that deal with major national issues, before they became law”

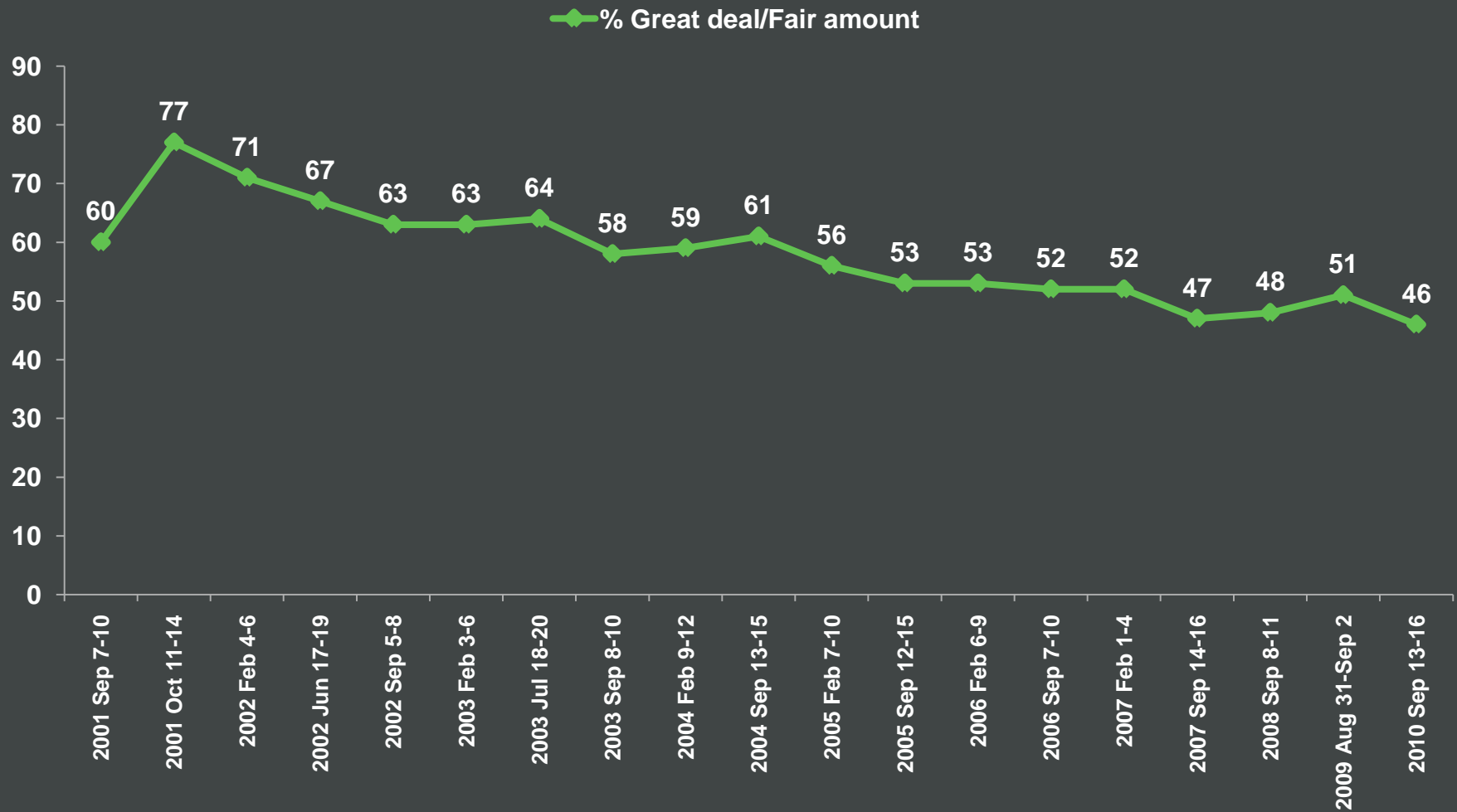


From the People's Perspective: What Can Be Done? *Fix the Way Congress Works*

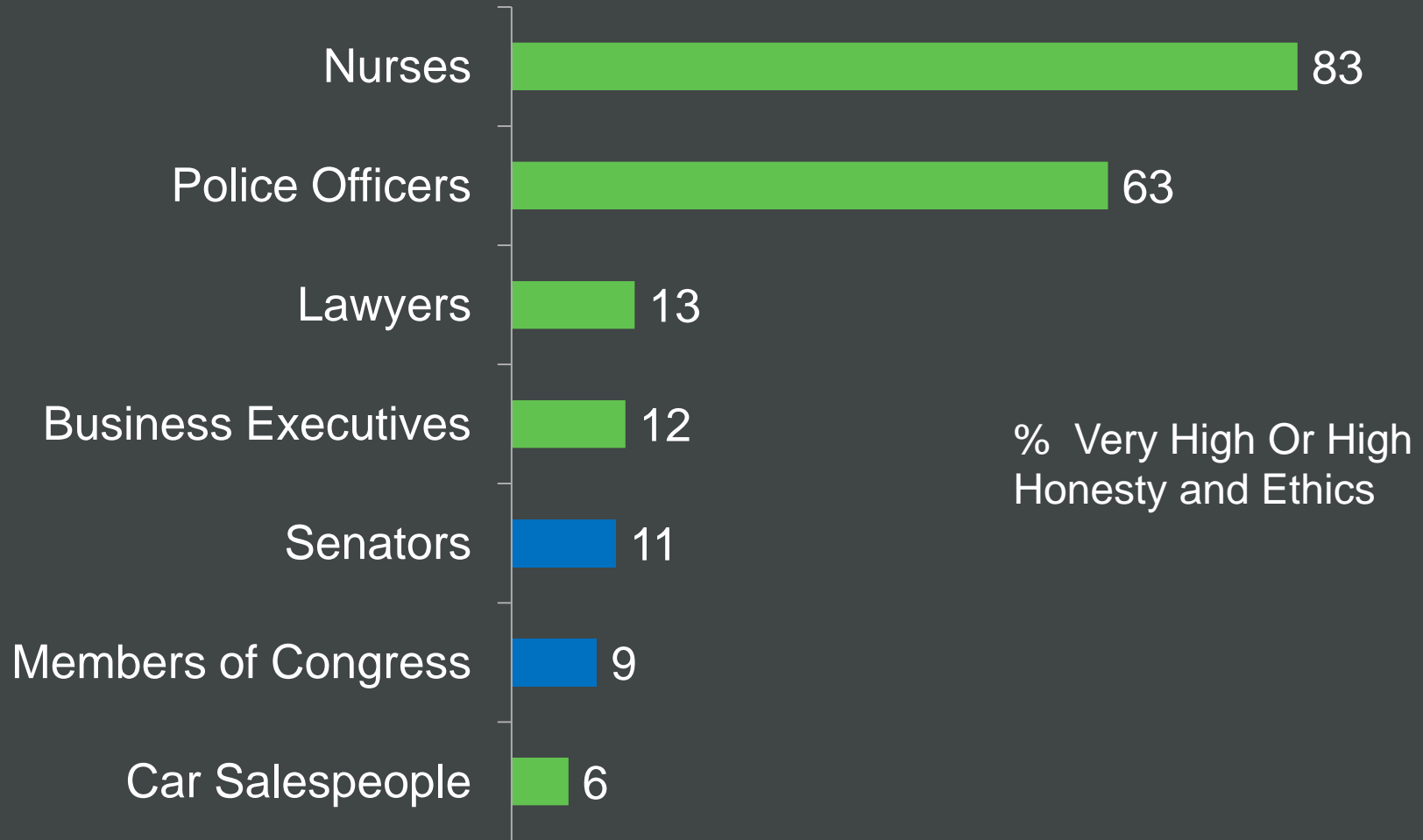
Trust and Confidence in the Legislative Branch, consisting of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives



Trust and Confidence in Federal Government to Handle Domestic Problems



Rate the Honesty and Ethics of These Professions



Nov 2009

From the People's Perspective: What Can Be Done? *Experts Weigh In*

Questions, Answers and Discussion

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