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# Prescription Drug Safety *National Survey*

Key findings from a national survey of  
800 adults, conducted September 4-6, 2007

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POS Project #07473



# Methodology

**Public Opinion Strategies and The Mellman Group are pleased to present the key findings of a national telephone survey conducted September 4-6, 2007 among 800 adults. The survey has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.46\%$ .**

**Glen Bolger and Mark Mellman were the principal researchers on this project. David Kanevsky was the project director, and Jennifer Myers provided analytical support.**



# Survey Overview

## SURVEY OVERVIEW

Americans are deeply concerned about the issue of prescription drug safety, but they give off conflicting signals about how to handle it. Voters are evenly divided on the Food and Drug Administration Revitalization Act (FDARA). There is strong support for placing a higher emphasis on safety in getting new prescription drugs to market than on speed of approval.

Not surprisingly, prescription drug safety is not perceived to be as important as health care issues more broadly, but prescription drug safety is an important subset issue – particularly among base Democrats.

Prescription drug safety is of personal interest to many Americans:

- Forty percent (40%) of adult Americans either suffer personally from life-threatening illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's or HIV/AIDS or have someone in their immediate family who does.
- Three out of four (74%) say they took a prescription drug for at least two weeks during the past year.

- Only 8% of Americans surveyed say they did not have a conversation with or receive written instructions from their doctor or pharmacist about potential side effects when the drugs were prescribed.
- Thirty percent (30%) report having a negative side effect while taking a prescription drug in the last three to five years. Side effects are more likely to be reported by women than by men.

There is a great deal of confidence in the safety of prescription drugs made and sold in the United States (88% confident). That confidence level drops off markedly about drugs made in areas like Europe and Canada (56% confident). Confidence is virtually non-existent about the safety of drugs made in countries like China and India (14% confident).

Interestingly, survey respondents say pharmaceutical companies are more trustworthy sources of information about prescription drug issues than the U.S. Congress. Of the four groups tested, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is perceived by far and away as the most trustworthy, while consumer advocate groups are slightly more trustworthy than pharmaceutical companies.

Despite the trust Americans have in the FDA, Americans are evenly divided about the job the organization does overall. Only 53% rate the FDA as excellent or good, while 47% rate it as only fair or poor. Overall, 18-34 year olds are more positive to the FDA, while senior citizens (especially men) are more negative.

Just 54% believe that all prescription drugs sold in the U.S. have been approved by the FDA, while 37% say just some of them have approval. There is also uncertainty about where the FDA receives its funding – 54% say it is from the government, 20% from pharmaceutical companies, and 17% say it is from both.

Skepticism towards Congress abounds – only 6% have a lot of trust in Congress to pass common-sense laws governing FDA approval of drugs, while 20% have no confidence at all. Overall, 50% have a lot or some confidence, while 49% have not too much or no confidence in Congress on this issue. However, 66% do want Congress to do more to strengthen the FDA's ability to ensure the safety of prescription drugs, compared to 30% who want Congress to leave the FDA alone and allow it to continue to work as it does now. Thus, Americans don't trust Congress, but do place a high priority on a strong FDA.

A plurality (41%), say it takes the FDA too long to approve a drug and allow it to be sold to consumers, while 34% say it is about right and 18% say not long enough. Older men are most likely to say it takes too long, while women are more inclined to believe it is about the right amount of time. Minorities and lower income Americans are more inclined to believe the FDA doesn't take enough time.

However,, 72% say the most important goal of the FDA in approving new drugs should be to make sure there is no risk of serious side effects before making a new drug available to patients, while 23% want new drugs available as fast as possible, even if there is some risk of serious side effects.

By 57%-38%, a majority support the concept of a proposal that would strengthen the FDA's ability to ensure the safety of prescription drugs, but could also increase the amount of time it takes drugs to get to the market, thereby limiting the public's access to needed medicines. There is no partisan differences in support for the proposal. However, men age 55+ are opposed to the idea.

There is support for creating a separate class of drugs for illnesses such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Americans perceive that the biggest contributor to the cost of prescription drugs is the profit margin (43%), while 28% say it is the cost of marketing, and only 25% say it is the cost of research.

Only 8% say they have seen, read, or heard anything about the Food and Drug Administration Revitalization Act (FDARA). Once informed that it allows FDA to collect user fees from pharmaceutical companies to cover the cost of reviewing new drugs, the public is divided – 47% in favor and 46% opposed to companies paying user fees to the FDA to cover the cost of reviewing new drugs. While base Democrats are slightly more opposed, the issue does not split significantly by partisanship. However, older women are very much opposed to user fees, while 18-34 year olds are much more supportive.



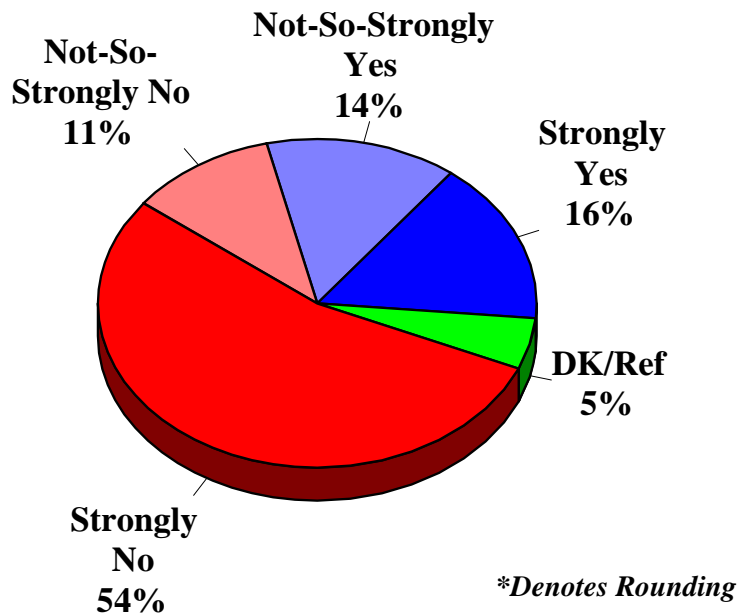
# Health Care Issues

# Note: Americans say our health care system is broken.

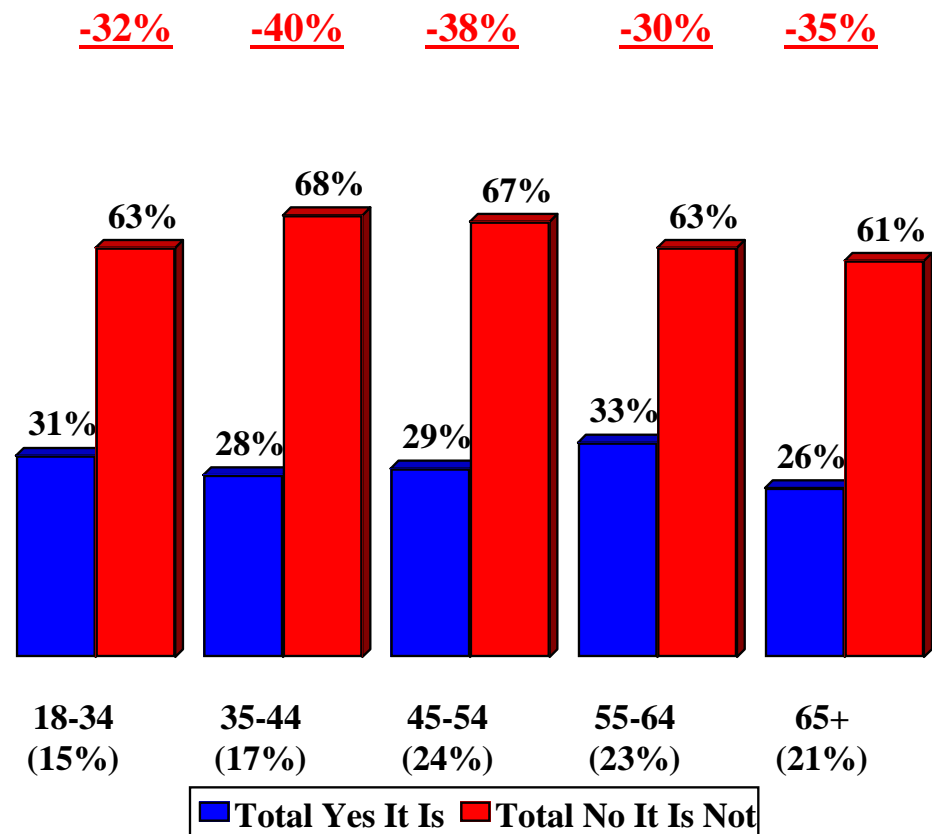
*“Generally speaking, is the current health care system meeting the needs of most Americans?”*

## Overall

**Total Yes It Is: 30%**  
**Total No It Is Not: 64%\***



## By Age

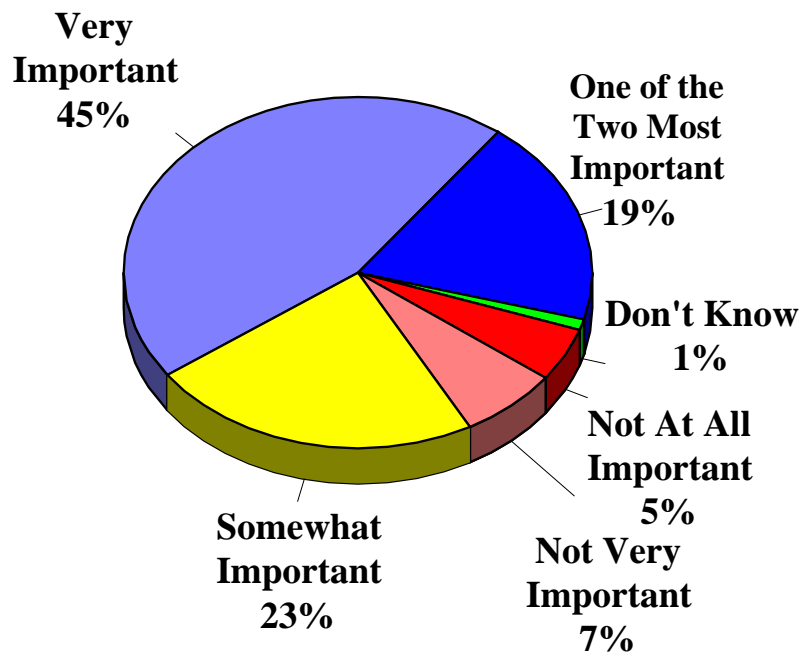


# Nearly two-thirds of Americans rank health care issues as very important in deciding how to vote in 2008.

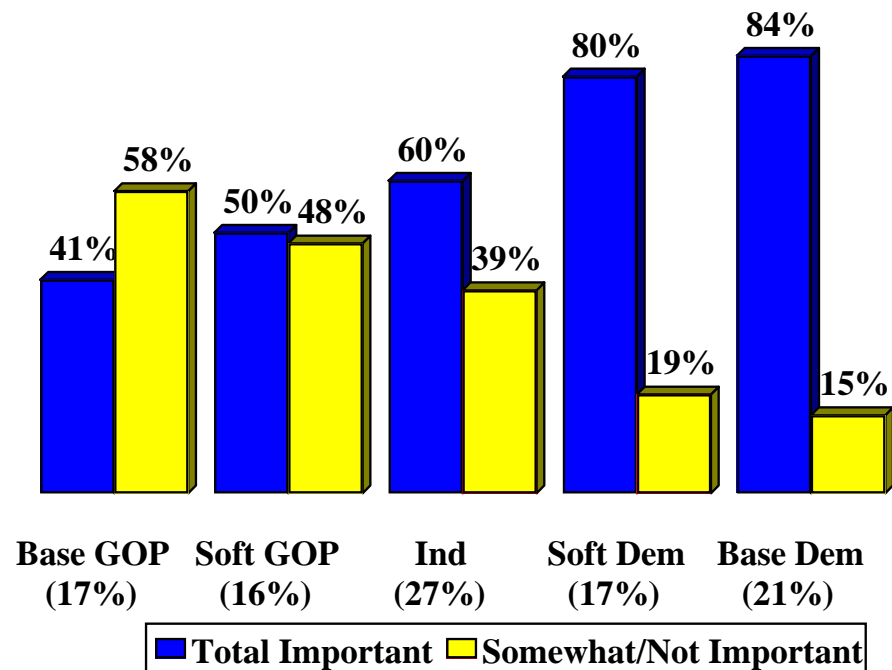
*“How important will health care issues be when considering who to support in the 2008 Presidential election. Would it be... one of the two most important issues, very important, somewhat important, not very important ...or... not at all important?”*

**Overall**

**Total Important: 64%**  
**Total Not Important: 12%**



**By Party**

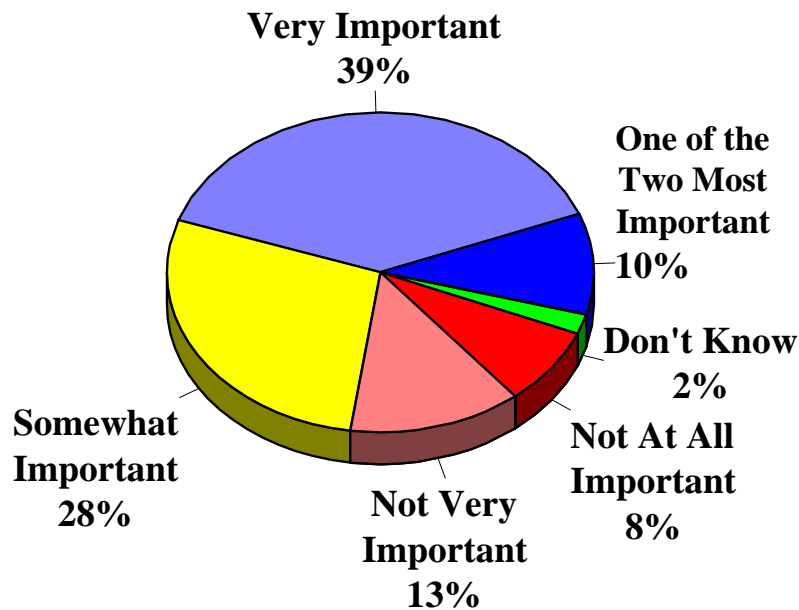


# More than three-quarters of Americans say prescription drug safety is at least somewhat important to them in deciding their vote for the 2008 Presidential election.

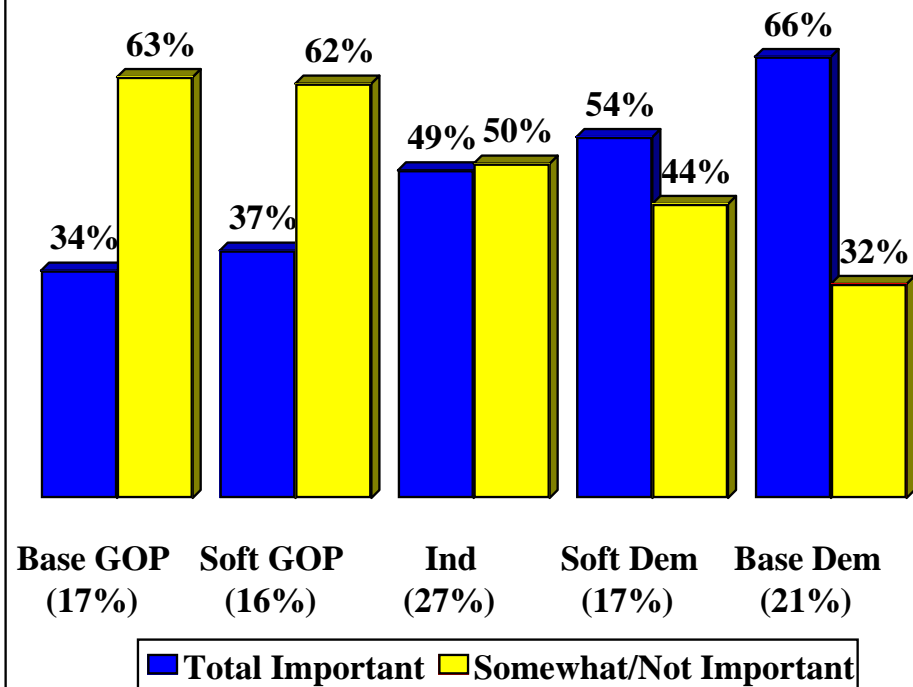
*“And thinking about the issue of prescription drug safety... How important will issues involving prescription drug safety be when considering who to support in the 2008 Presidential election. Would it be... one of the two most important issues, very important, somewhat important, not very important ...or... not at all important?”*

## Overall

**Total Important: 49%**  
**Total Not Important: 21%**



## By Party



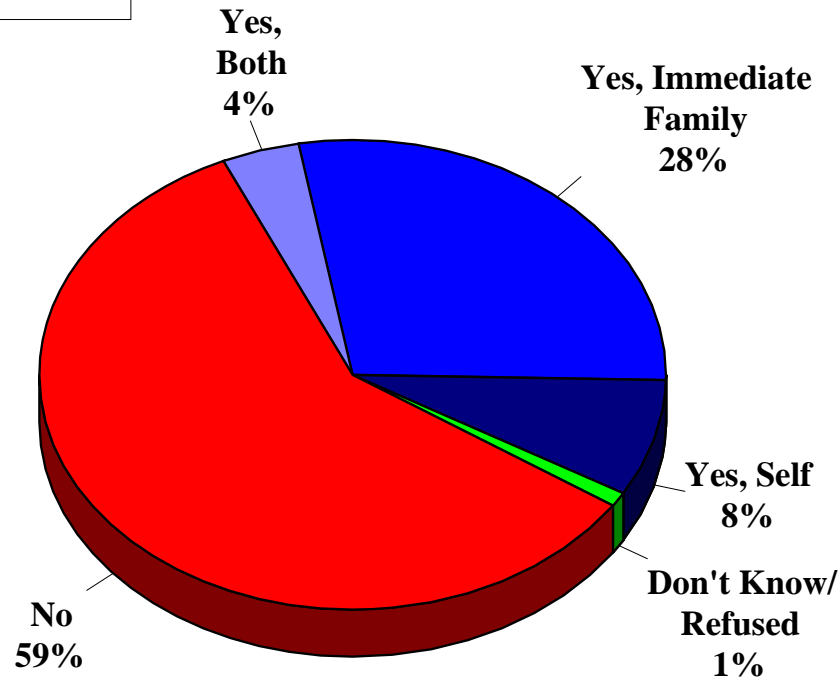


# Personal Health Status

# Four in ten Americans say they are touched by a life-threatening illness.

*“And do you or has anyone in your immediate family suffer from life-threatening illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, or HIV/AIDS?”*

**Total Yes: 40%**  
**No: 60%**

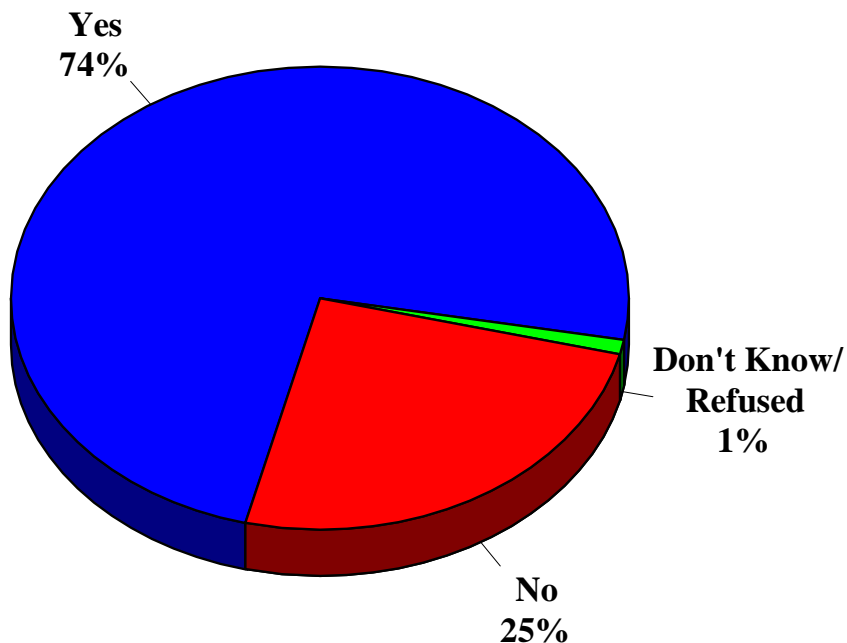


## Top Groups: Total Yes

Great Lakes	53%
Rural Women	51%
Midwest	49%
White Midwest	48%
Rural Dem	48%
White Dem	47%
Men 65+	47%
Women 55+	47%
Income \$20-40K	47%
Hispanic	46%
White Women	46%
White South	46%
Deep South	46%
Rural	46%
Dem Women	46%
Dem 55+	46%
Women	45%
Some College	45%
Income \$80-100K	45%

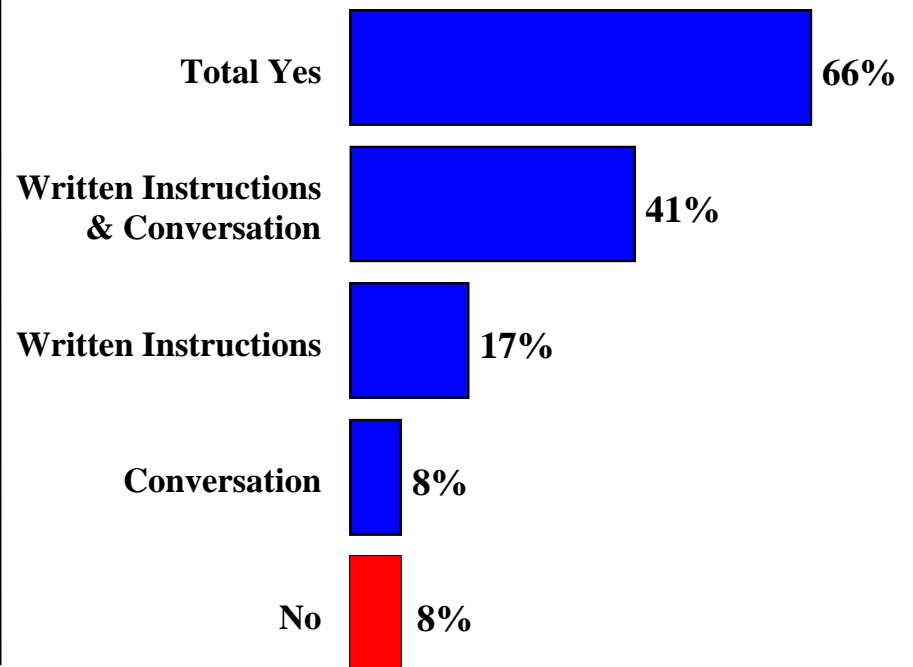
# Three out of every four Americans report taking a prescription drug during the last year. Nearly all say they have been informed about potential side effects.

*“Have you taken a prescription drug at least once for two weeks or more at any point during the last year?”*



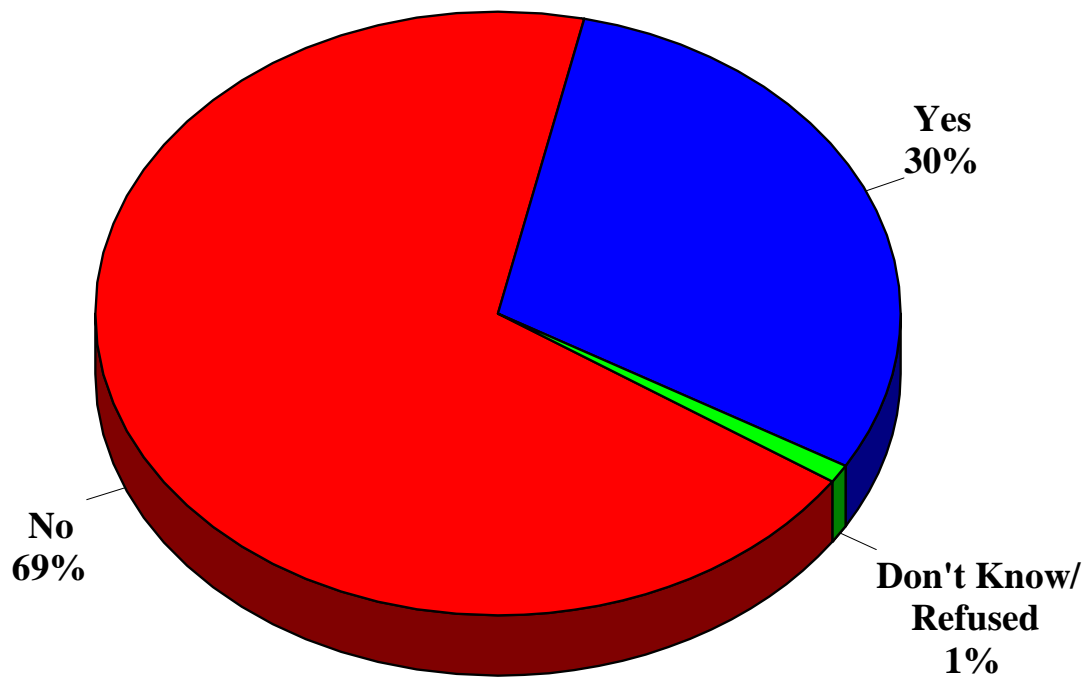
*“Did your doctor or pharmacist have a conversation with you, or provide written instructions, about the potential side effects of the drugs prescribed to you?”*

Asked of adults who have taken a prescription drug at least once for two weeks or more during the last year (Shown off total base, N=800)



# Three in ten Americans have suffered a negative side effect from a prescription drug.

*“And, thinking about your experience with prescription drugs in the last three to five years, have you ever had a negative side effect to a prescription drug?”*



## Top Groups: Yes

Women 18-34	44%
Urban Women	43%
Minority Women	40%
Women <\$40K	40%
Ind Women	39%
Great Lakes	38%
Ind 55+	38%
Income \$20-40K	38%
Soft Dem	37%
Women w/o Degree	37%
Women <\$60K	37%
Midwest	36%
Rural Women	36%
Mountain	35%
Income <\$20K	35%
Income \$80-100K	35%

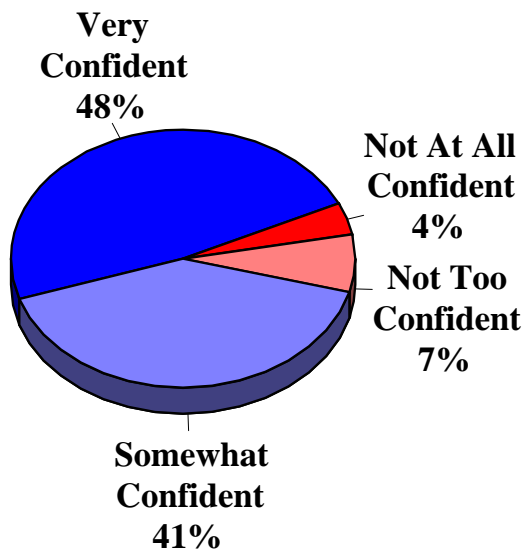


# Prescription Drugs: Safety & Trust

# While Americans are very confident in U.S.-made drugs, they are more skeptical of drugs made outside the country, and especially those from China and India.

*“Overall, how confident are you in the safety of prescription drugs made and sold in the United States?”*

**Total Confident: 88%\***  
**Total Not Confident: 10%\***

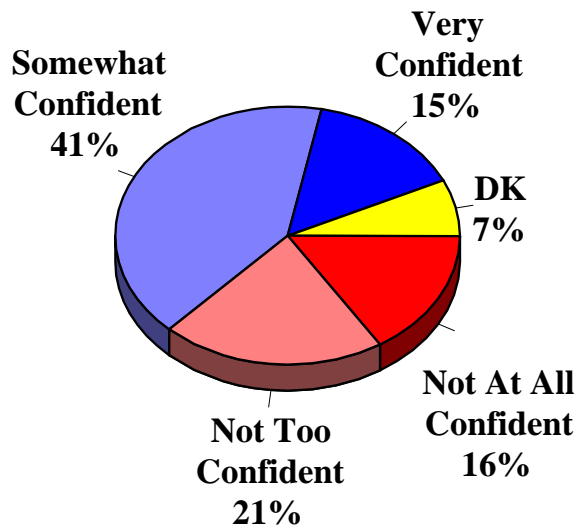


*\*Denotes Rounding*

*“And, how confident are you in the safety of prescription drugs made in areas like Europe and Canada and sold in the United States?”*

Split Sample A, N=403

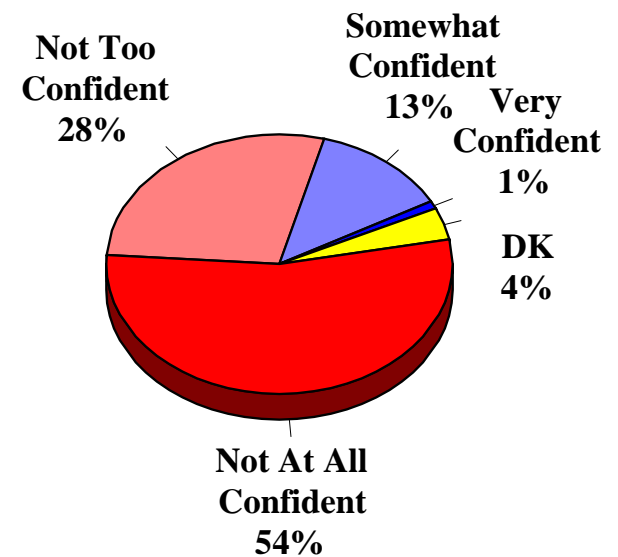
**Total Confident: 56%\***  
**Total Not Confident: 38%\***



*“And, how confident are you in the safety of prescription drugs made in countries like China and India and sold in the United States?”*

Split Sample B, N=397

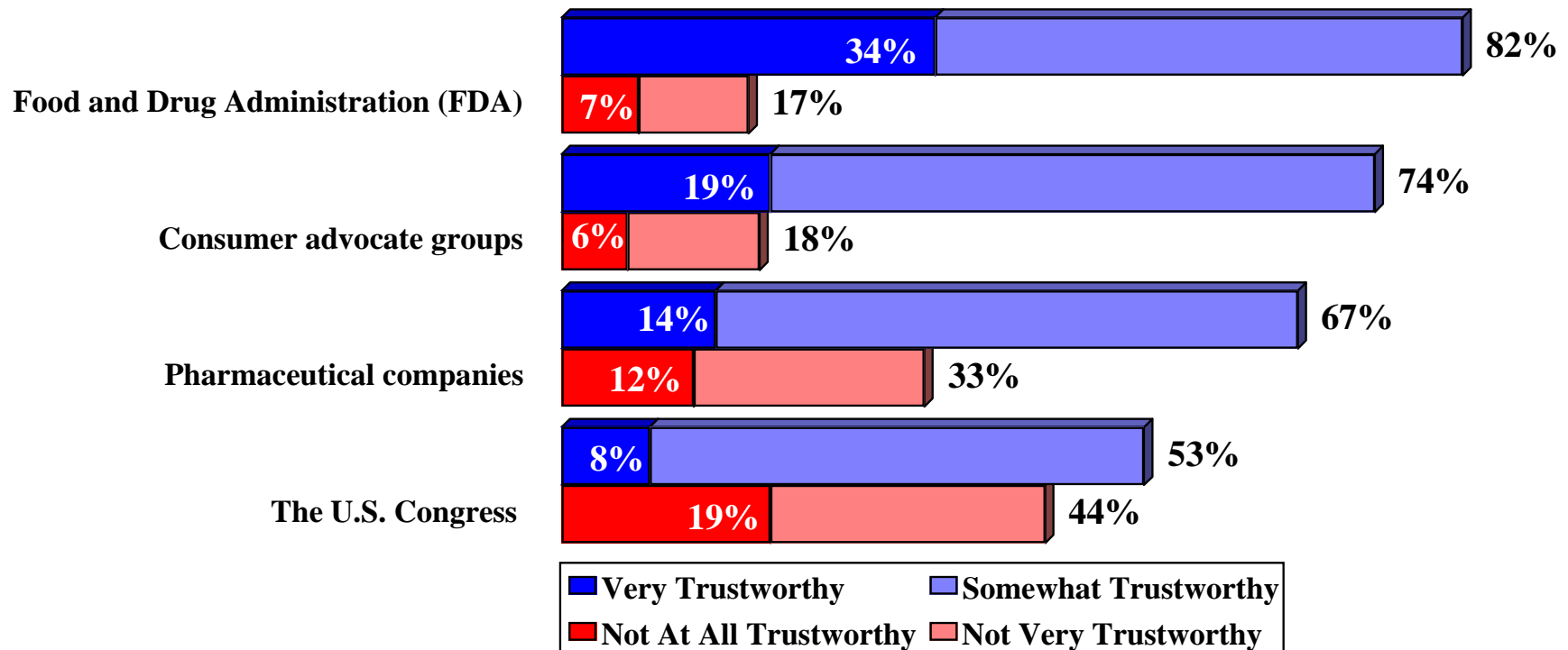
**Total Confident: 14%\***  
**Total Not Confident: 81%\***



# On prescription drug issues, Americans are most likely to trust the FDA.

*“As you are probably aware, there are many sources of information about prescription drug safety issues. For each source I mention, I would like you to tell me how trustworthy you think the information is that they provide. Please tell me if you think the source is VERY trustworthy, SOMEWHAT trustworthy, NOT VERY trustworthy or NOT AT ALL trustworthy?”*

*Ranked by % Very Trustworthy*



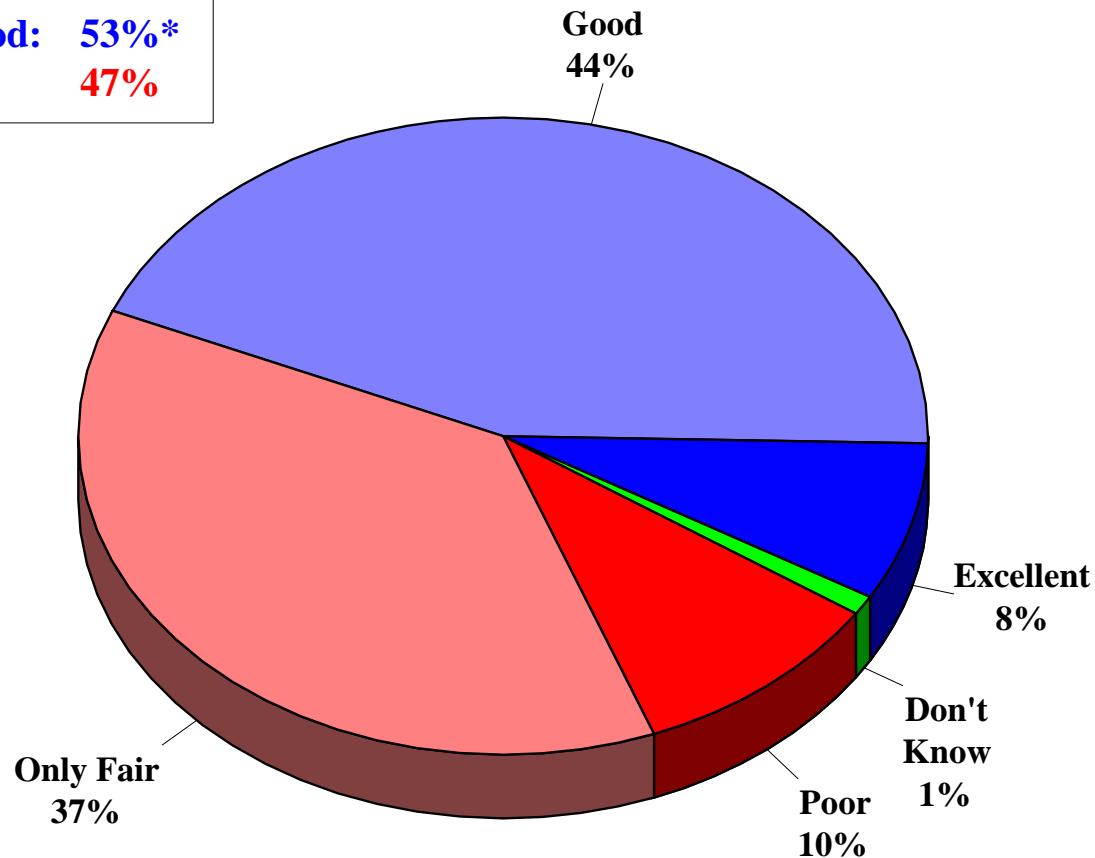


# Food & Drug Administration

# Americans give the FDA mixed reviews.

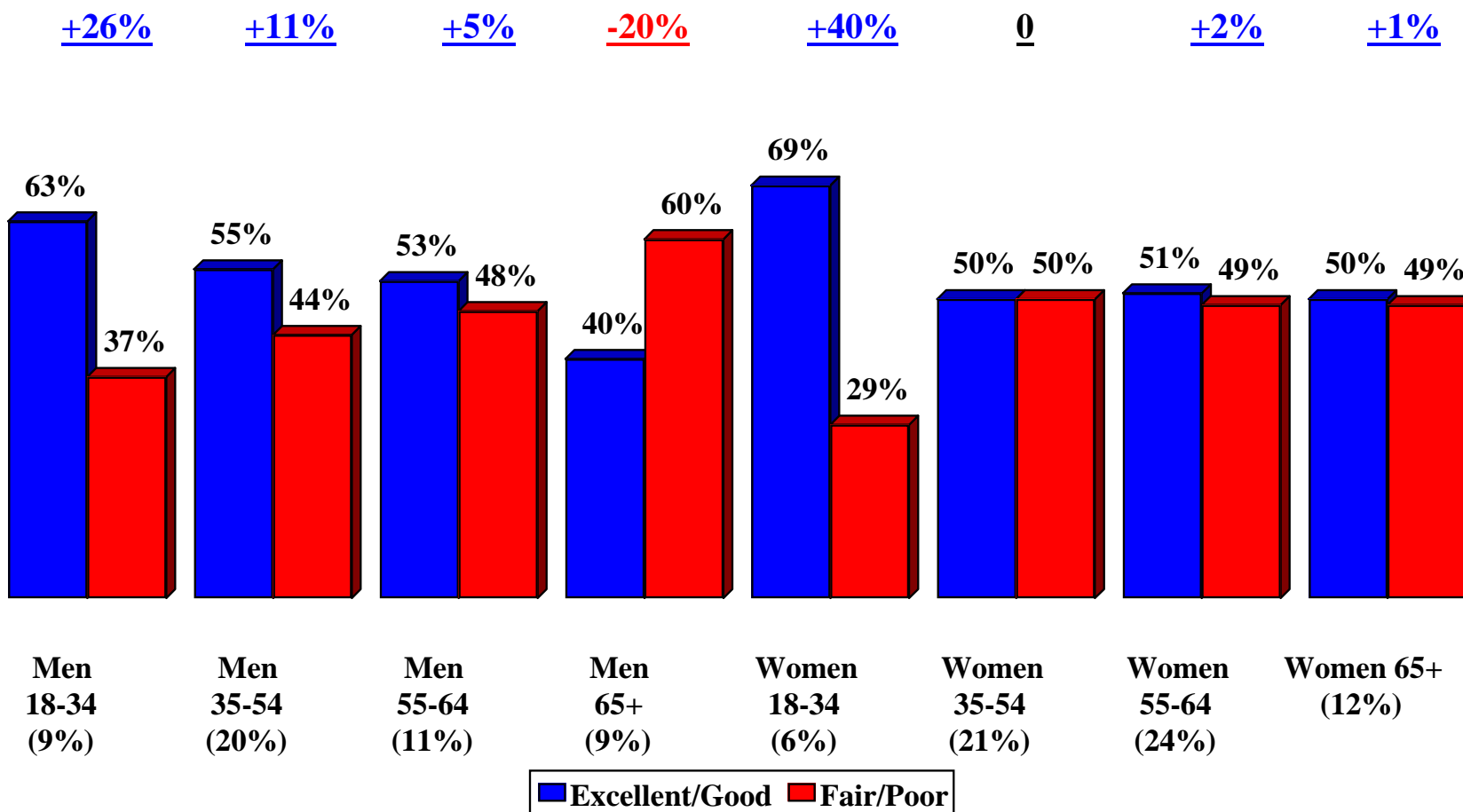
*“Overall, how would you rate the job the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, does?  
Would you say it is... excellent, good, only fair, ...or... poor?”*

**Total Excellent/Good: 53%\***  
**Total Fair/Poor: 47%**



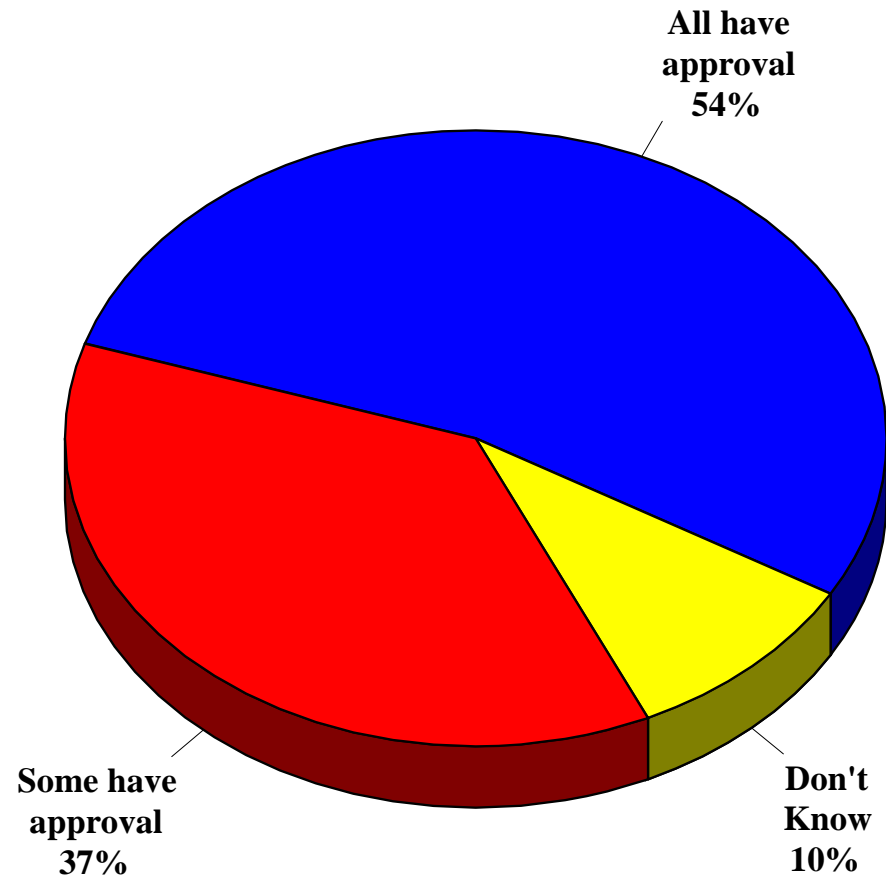
**While younger people give the FDA good ratings, women ages 35 and older and men ages 55-64 are divided. Older men are pretty negative.**

*FDA Job Rating By Gender/Age*



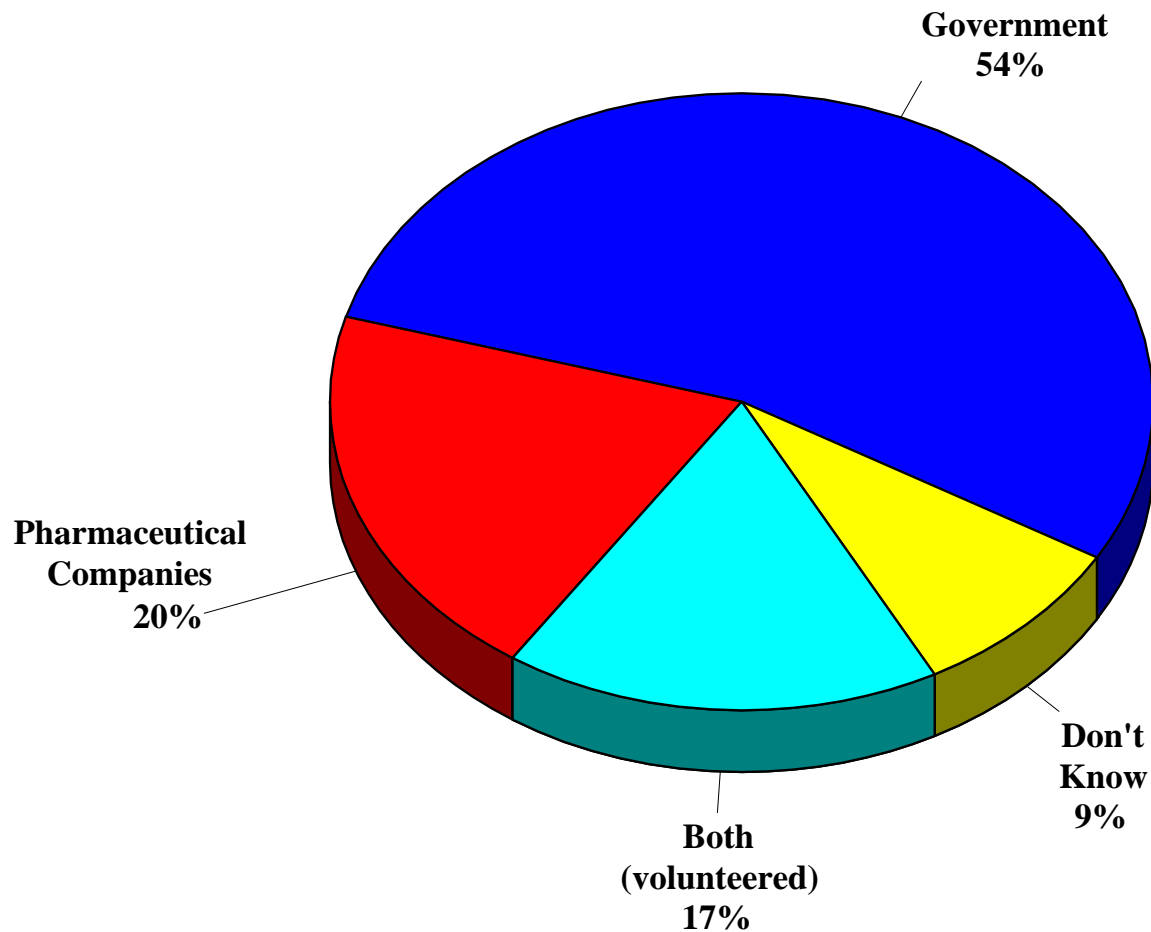
# A majority of Americans believe that all prescription drugs sold in the U.S. have been approved by the FDA.

*“To the best of your knowledge, do all prescription drugs sold in the United States have approval from the FDA, or do just some of them have FDA approval?”*



# A majority believe that the FDA receives its financial support from the government.

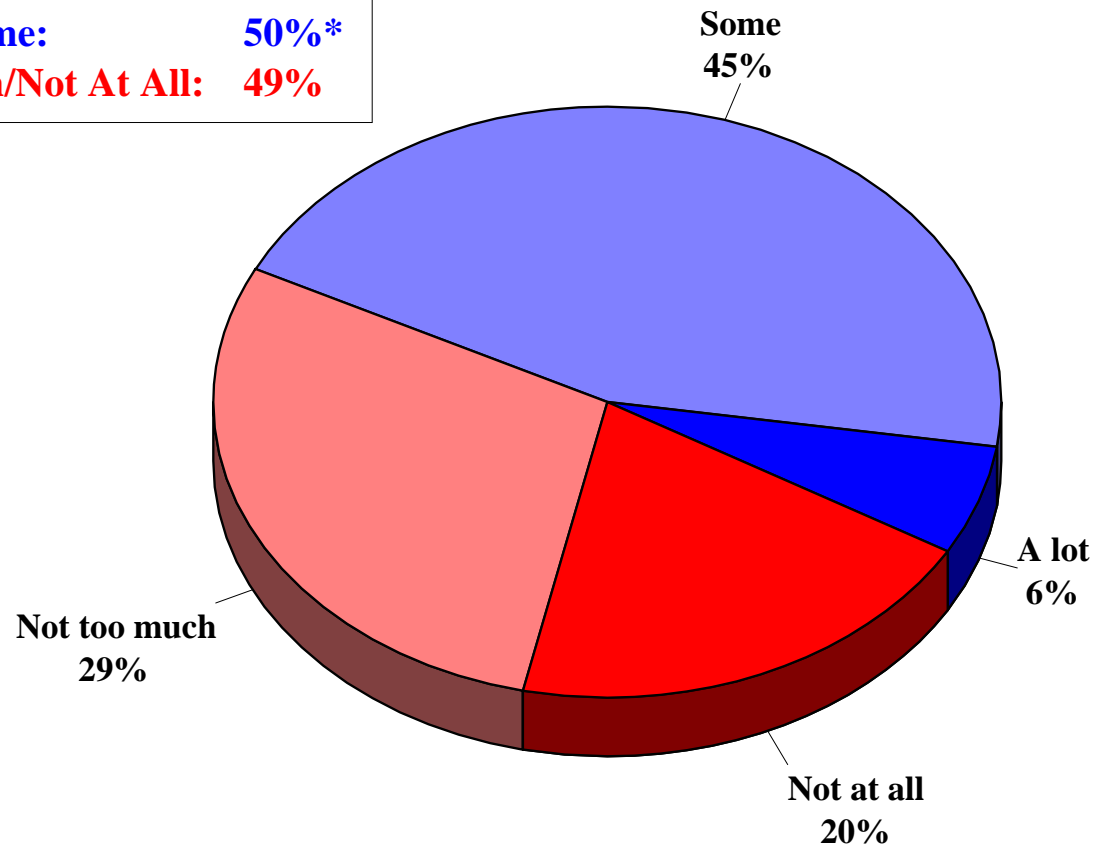
*“And, to the best of your knowledge, where does the FDA get the funding that supports its work... from the government ...or... from pharmaceutical companies?”*



# People are somewhat skeptical of Congress' ability to pass common-sense laws about the FDA.

*“How much do you trust the U.S. Congress to pass common-sense laws governing how the Food and Drug Administration approves drugs... a lot, some, not too much, ...or... not at all?”*

**Total A Lot/Some: 50%\***  
**Total Not Much/Not At All: 49%**



*\*Denotes Rounding*

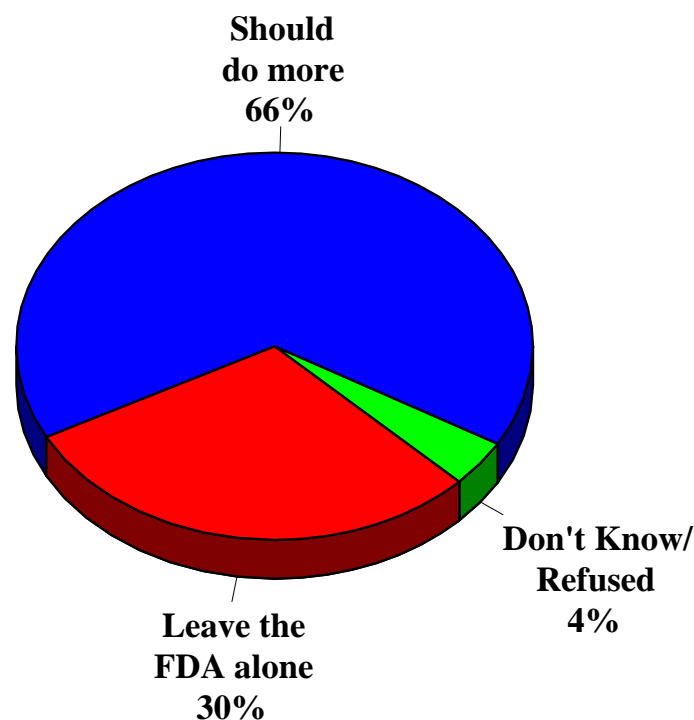
# Two-thirds agree Congress should do more to strengthen the FDA's ability to ensure prescription drug safety.

*“When it comes to ensuring the safety of prescription drugs, which statement do you agree with more...*

*The Congress should do more to strengthen the FDA's ability to ensure the safety of prescription drugs.*

*...or...*

*The Congress should leave the FDA alone and allow it to continue to work as it does now?”*

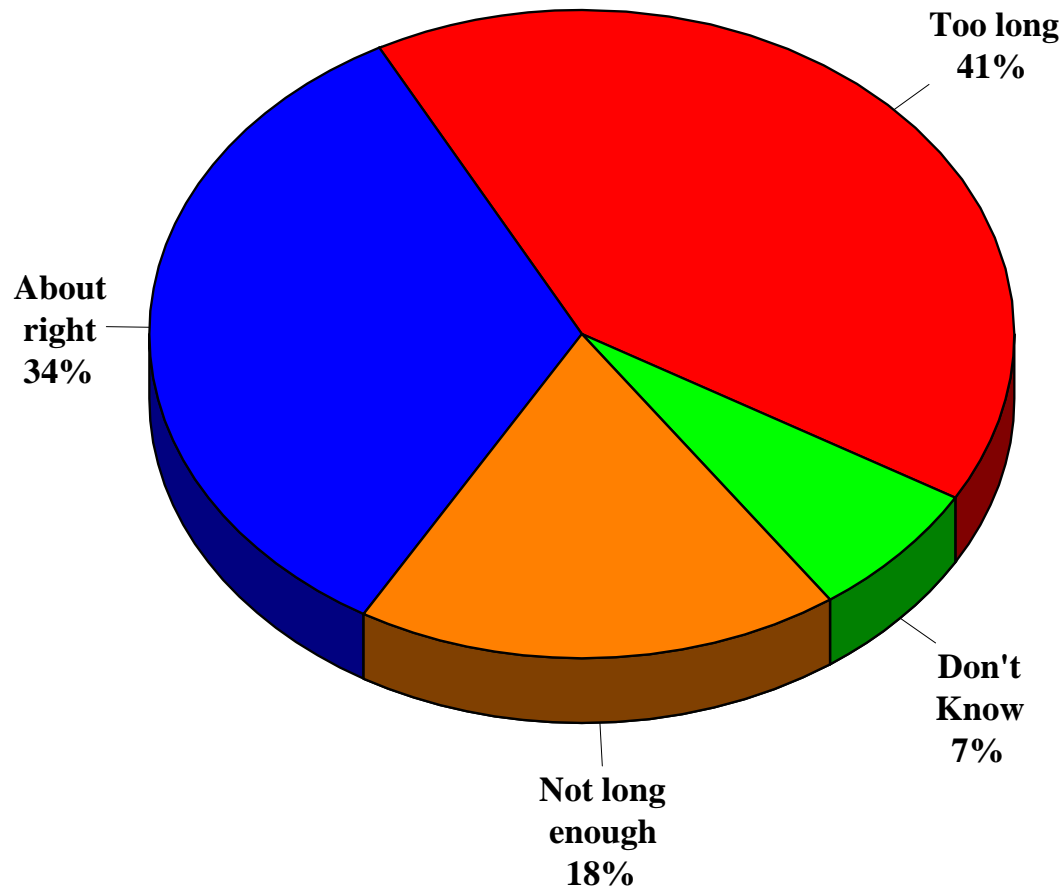




# Prescription Drugs: Safety vs. Speed

# Americans are divided on how long it takes the FDA to approve drugs, with a plurality saying it takes too long.

*“Would you say that the amount of time it takes for the FDA to approve a drug and allow it to be sold to consumers is too long, about right, ...or... not long enough?”*



# Men and older Americans are most likely to say it takes too long.

## *Top Groups: Too Long (41%)*

Men 55-64	60%
55-64	57%
Men Income >\$80K	56%
Rural Men	54%
Income \$100K +	54%
GOP Men	52%
White Men	51%
Baby Boomers	51%
Men 65+	51%
Base GOP	50%
Men 35-54	50%
Ind 55+	50%
Men Income >\$60K	50%
Men w/ Degree	49%
GOP 55+	49%
Men	48%
Urban Men	48%
Soft Dem	47%
White South	47%
White West	47%
Men w/o Degree	47%
Dem 55+	47%
West	46%

## *Top Groups: About Right (34%)*

Millennials	56%
Ind Women	46%
Men 18-34	44%
18-34	43%
Women Inc \$40-80K	43%
Hispanic	42%
Women 18-34	42%
Women 65+	42%
Minority Women	41%
Women 35-54	41%
Income \$40-60K	41%
Dem 18-54	40%
Urban Women	39%
Women w/ Degree	39%
Opinion Elites	39%
Income \$60-80K	39%

## *Top Groups: Not Long Enough (18%)*

Black	39%
Minority Women	35%
Women 18-34	32%
Minorities	32%
Ind 18-54	30%
Income under \$20K	29%
Minority Men	29%
18-34	28%
Ind Men	25%
Men Income <\$40K	25%
Men 18-34	25%
Rural Men	24%
35-44	24%
HS or Less	23%
Downscale	23%
Women Inc <\$40K	23%
Men w/o Degree	20%

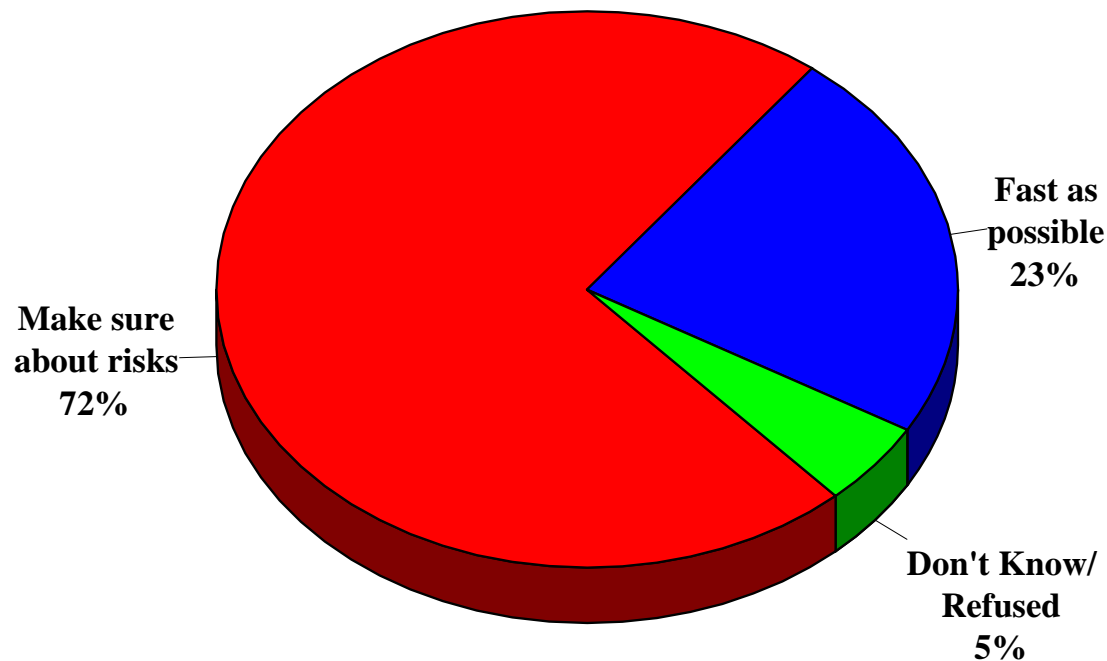
# A solid majority prioritize safety over speed to market.

*“Which of the following do you think should be the most important goal of the FDA in approving new drugs? Is it...*

*Making new drugs available to patients as fast as possible, even if there is some risk of serious side effects,*

*...Or...*

*Making sure that there is no risk of serious side effects before it makes a new drug available to patients?”*





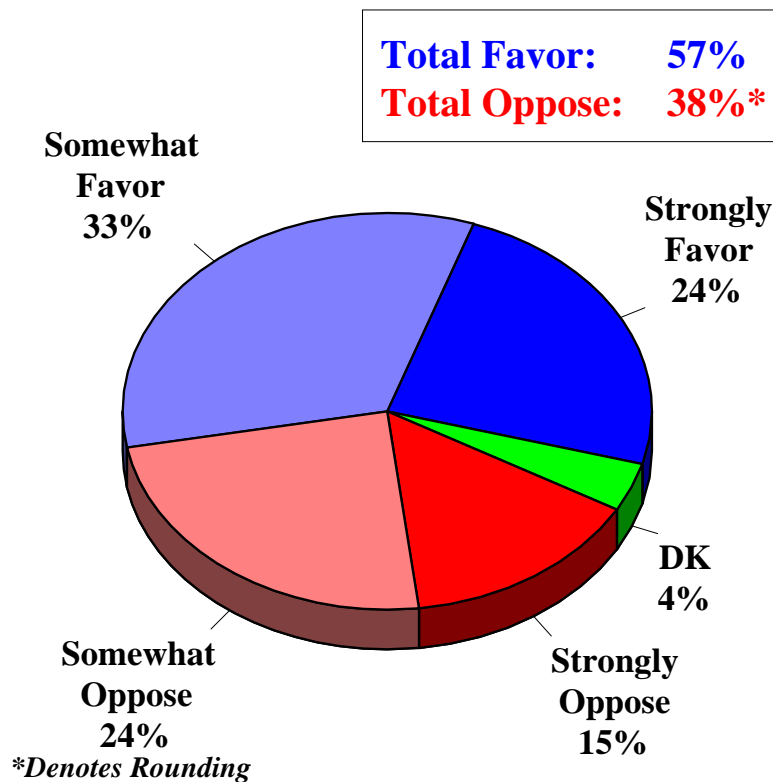
# Prescription Drugs: Policy Proposals

# A bipartisan majority support strengthening the FDA's safety regimen, even if it increases time to market.

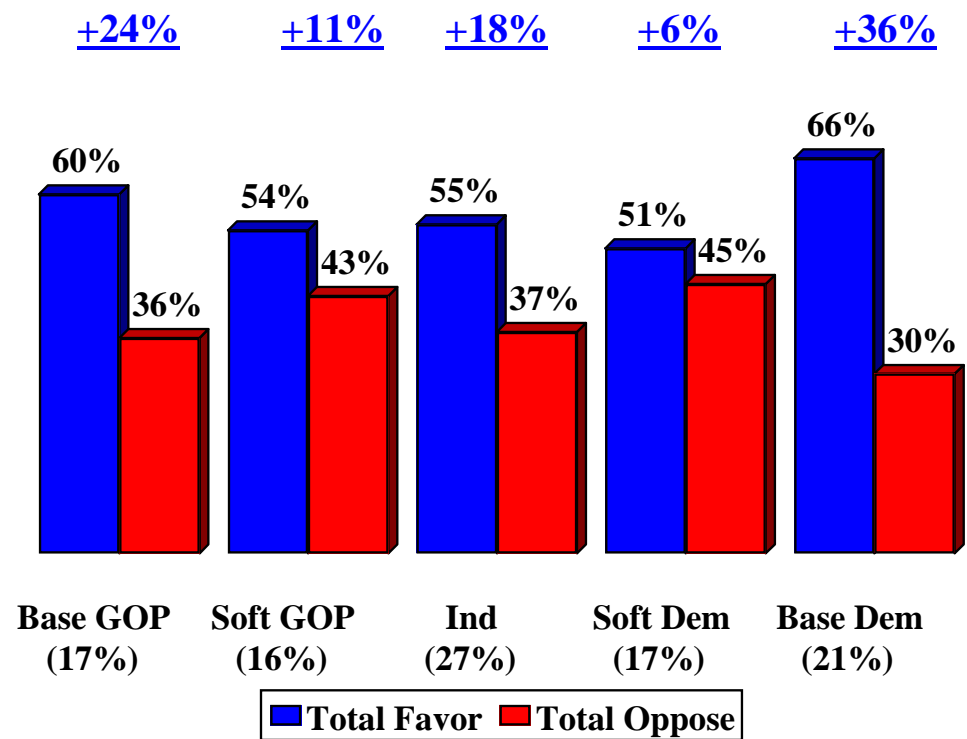
*“Now, I am going to read you a proposal that is currently under consideration in the U.S. Congress, and please tell me if you favor or oppose that proposal.*

*This proposal would strengthen the FDA's ability to ensure the safety of prescription drugs, but could also increase the amount of time it takes drugs to get to the market, thereby limiting the public's access to needed medicines.”*

**Overall**



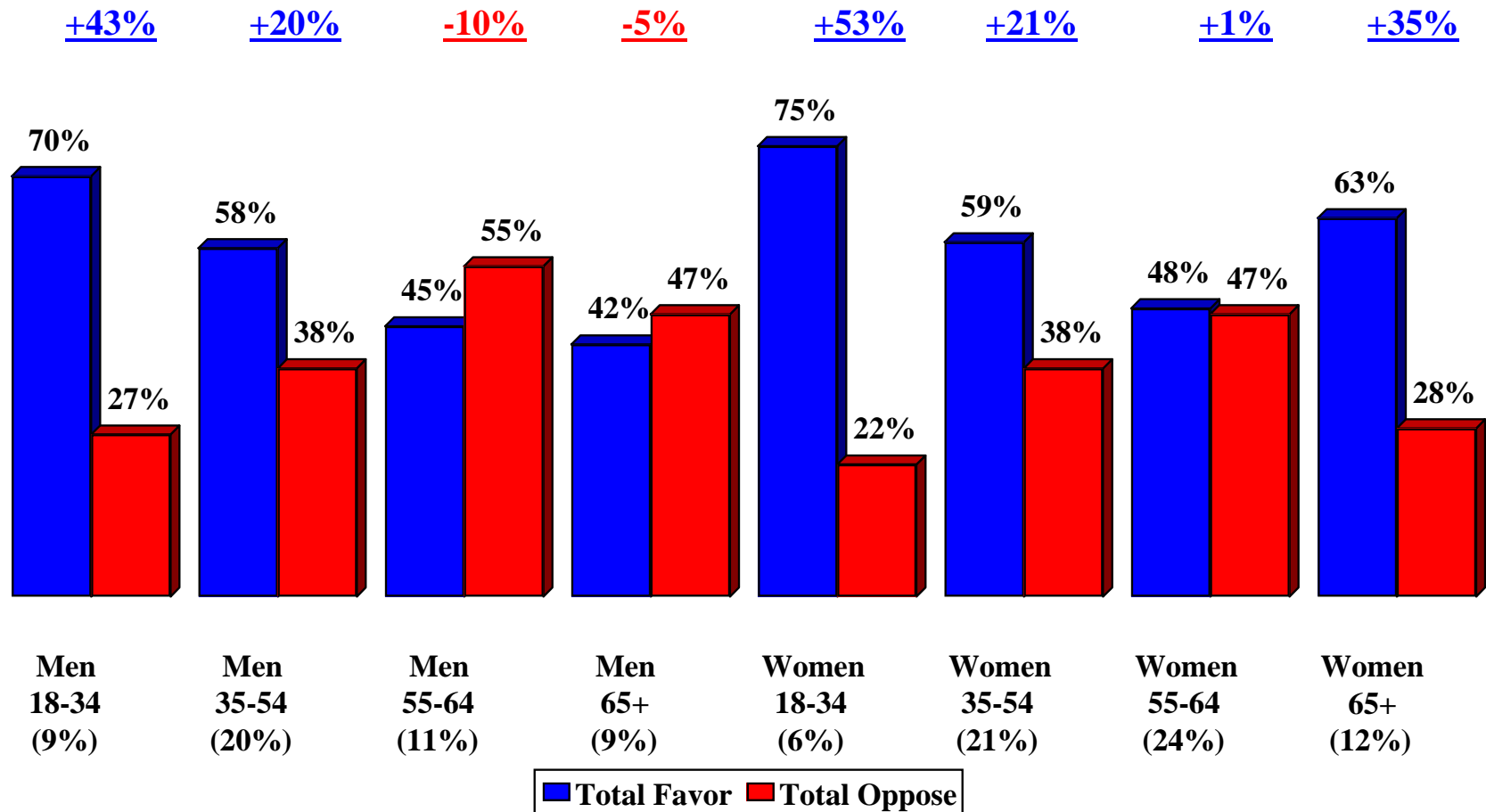
**By Party**



# Women and younger Americans are especially like to support the proposal. Men over the age of 55 are divided.

Overall  
Men: +14%  
Women: +23%

## *Proposal to Increase Safety but Delay Access* By Gender/Age



# We tested two sets of contrasting statements on the proposed creation of a separate class of drugs for illnesses such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

*“As you may know, there is legislation pending in Congress to create a process for approval at the FDA for a class of drugs which are used to treat illnesses such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Now I am going to read you two statements about this legislation, and please tell me which statement comes closest to your own point of view...”*

**Split Sample A, N=403**

**Split Sample B, N=397**

*Some people say they support this legislation because it could cut the cost of drugs and increase access for people who need these medicines.*

*Consumer advocates say they support this legislation because it could cut the cost of drugs and increase access for people who need these medicines.*

*...while...*

*...while...*

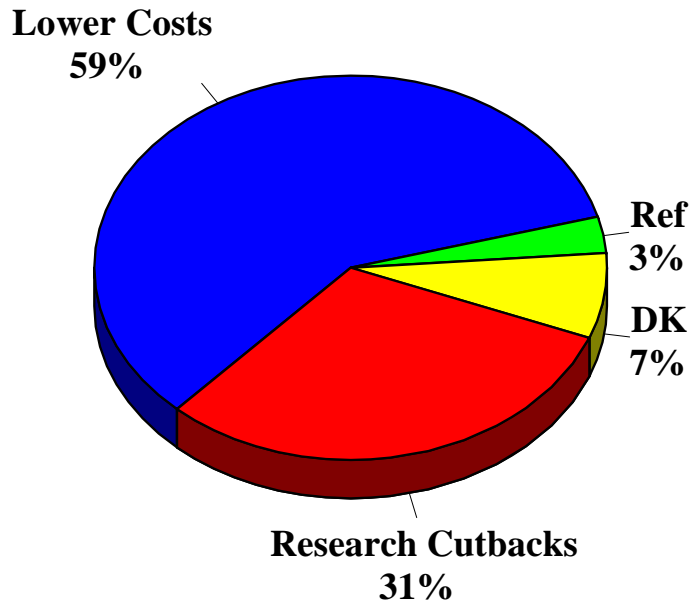
*Other people say they oppose this legislation because they say it may lead pharmaceutical companies to cut back on the research and development of new drugs, thereby creating fewer new medicines in the future.*

*Pharmaceutical companies say they oppose this legislation because they say it may lead pharmaceutical companies to cut back on the research and development of new drugs, thereby creating fewer new medicines in the future.*

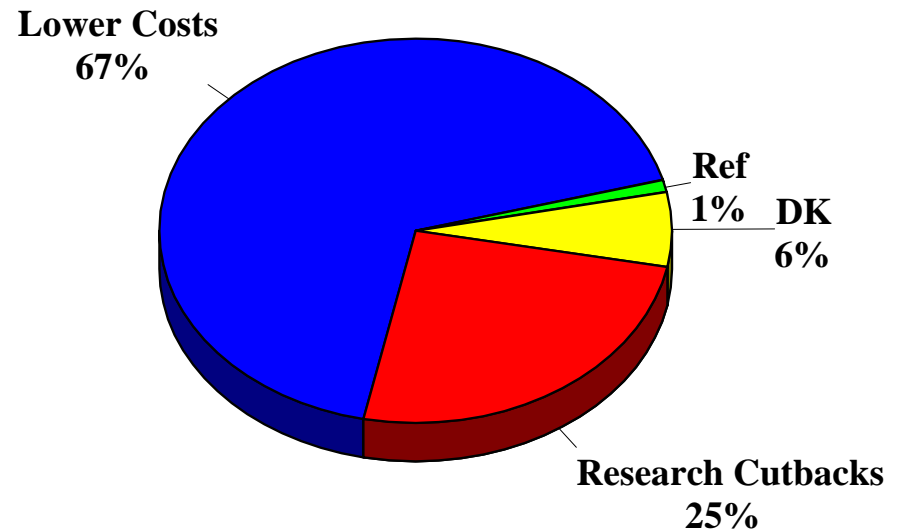
# Support for the separate process is higher regardless of how each side is labeled, though less sympathetic to drug companies.

*“Which statement comes closest to your own opinion?”*

*Lower Costs vs. Research Cutbacks:  
Generic Contrast*

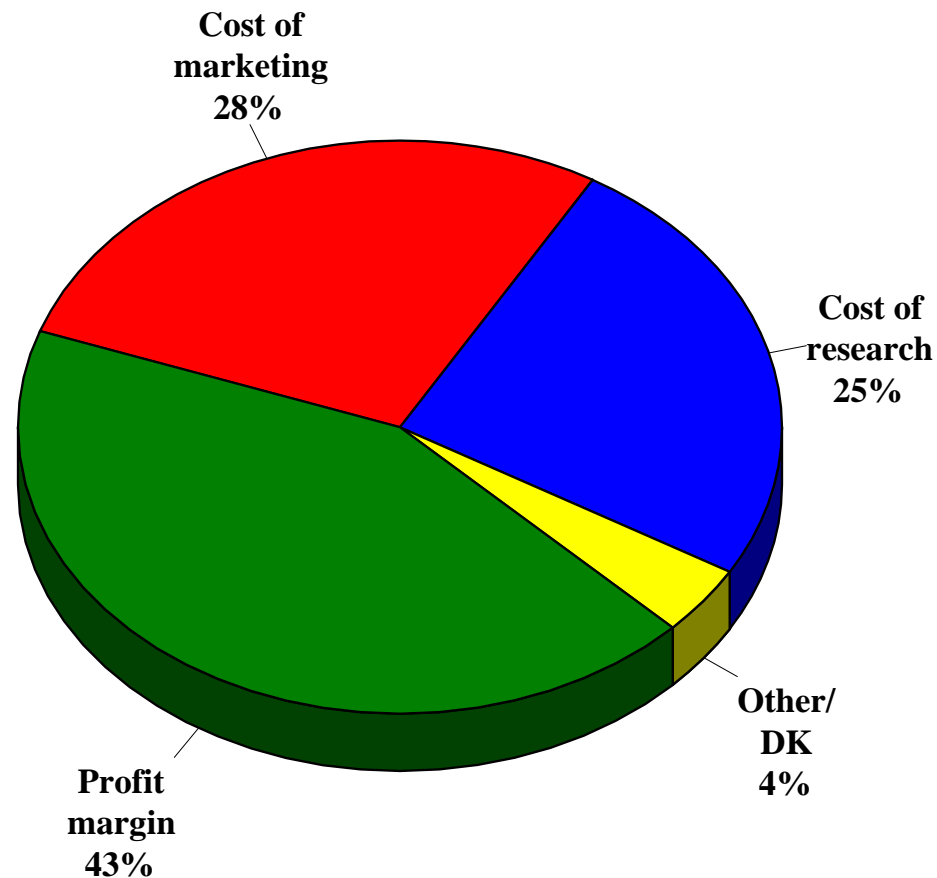


*Lower Costs vs. Research Cutbacks:  
Consumer Advocates vs.  
Pharmaceutical Companies*



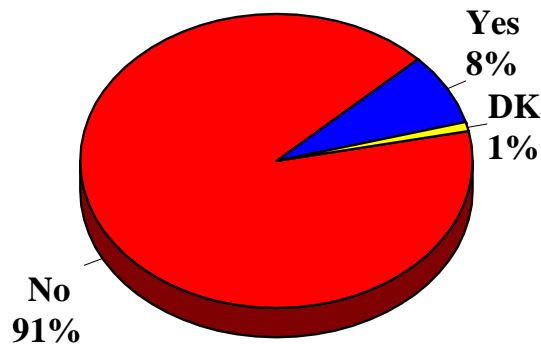
# A plurality say that the biggest influence on the price of prescription drugs is the profit margin.

*“Which of the following do you think contributes most to the price of prescription drugs? Is it the cost of medical research, the cost of marketing and advertising, ...or... the profit margin?”*



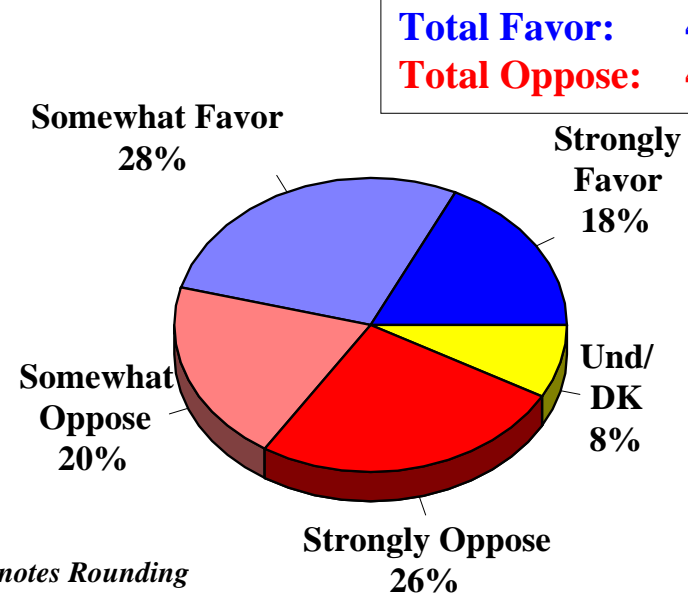
# Voters are unfamiliar with but divided on FDARA, though opponents are more intense.

*“Have you seen, read, or heard anything about the Food and Drug Administration Revitalization Act, which is also known as FDARA?”*



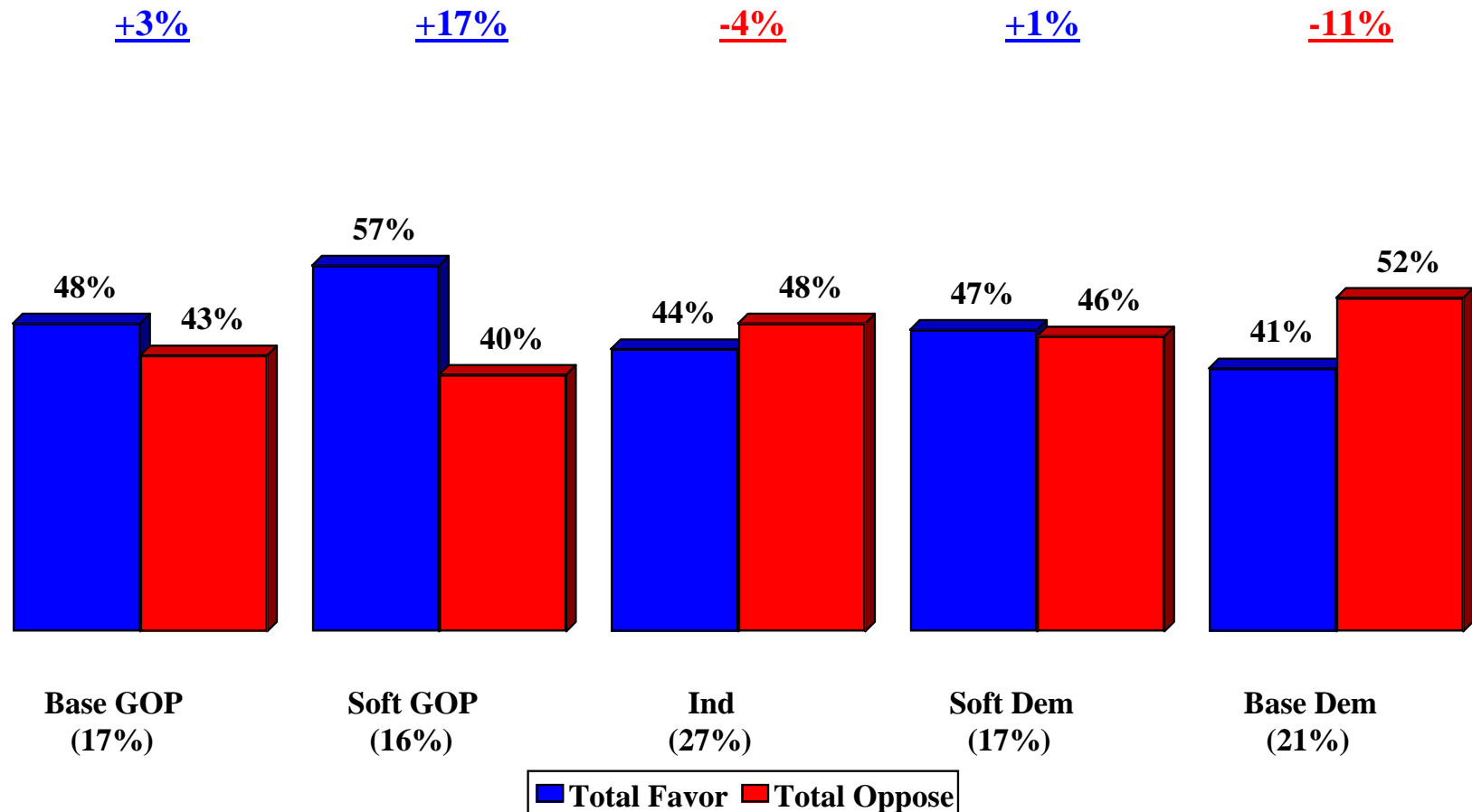
*“Thinking some more about FDARA... FDARA was passed by Congress in 1992, and allows the FDA to collect user fees from pharmaceutical companies. This means that pharmaceutical companies pay user fees to the FDA to cover the cost of reviewing new drugs.*

*Now that you have heard some more about FDARA, do you favor or oppose the idea of pharmaceutical companies paying user fees to the FDA to cover the cost of reviewing new drugs?”*



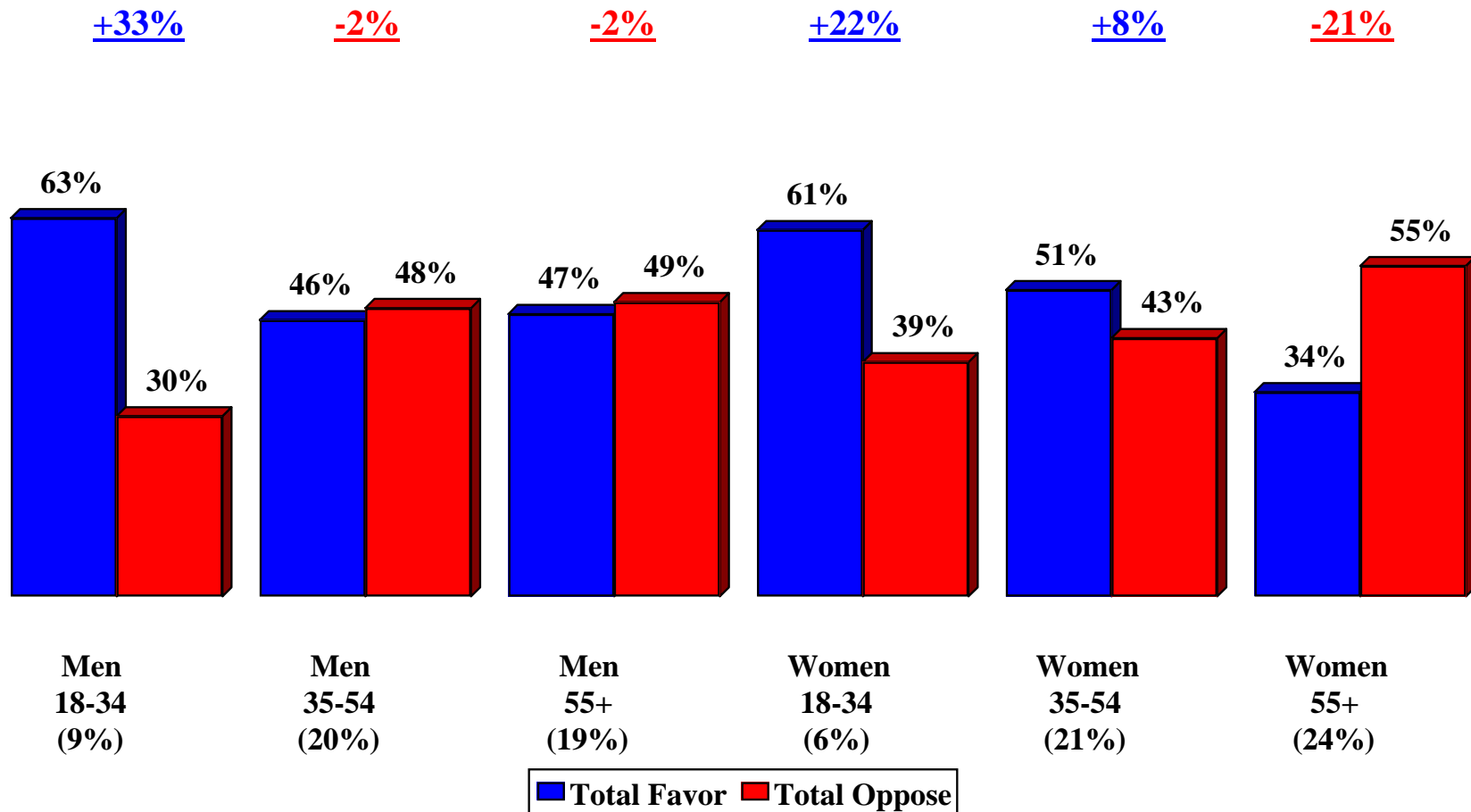
# The FDARA fees aren't a particularly partisan issue.

*Favor/Oppose User Fees by Party*



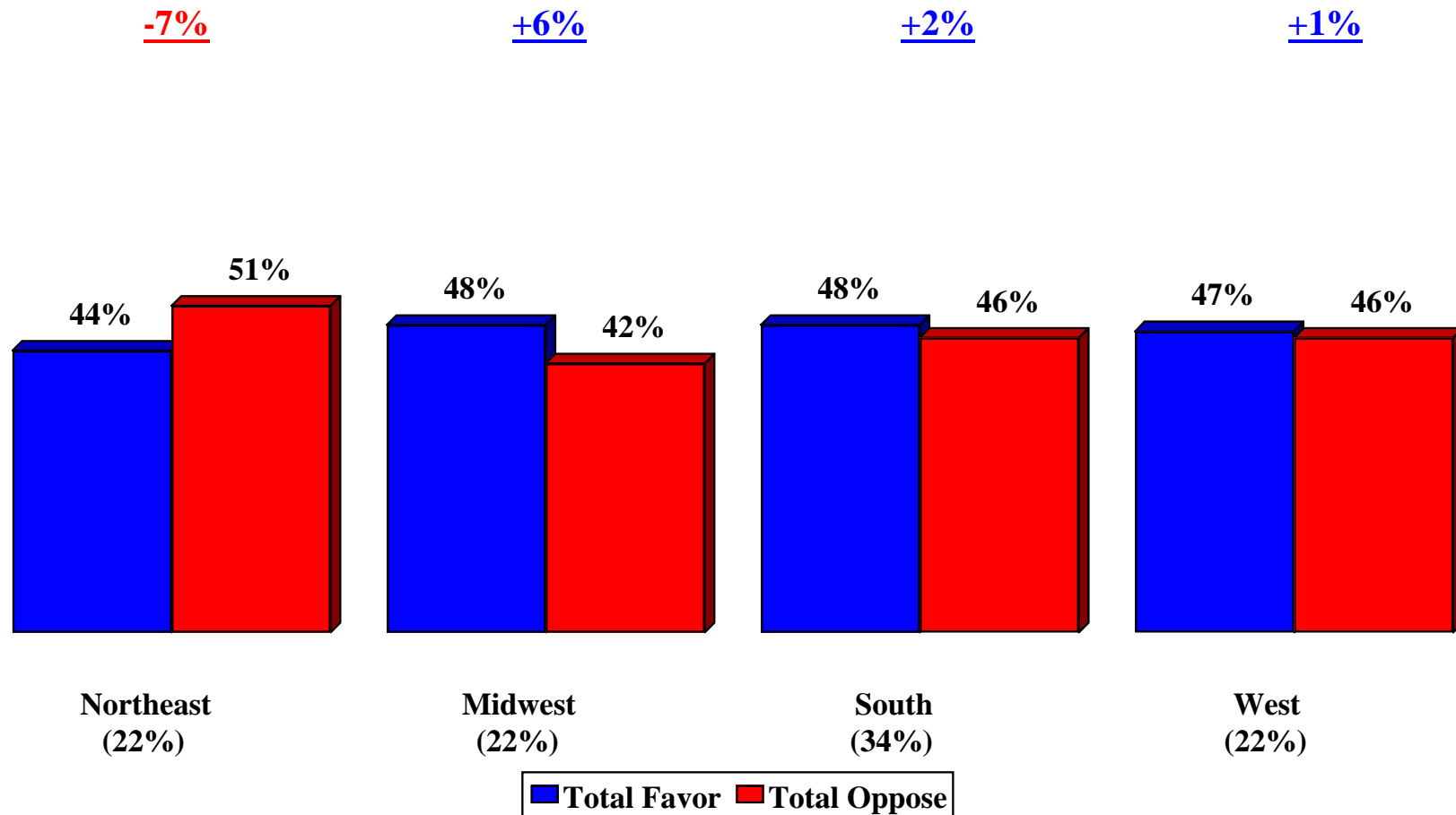
# Younger Americans favor the fees, while older women are opposed. Men over the age of 34 are divided.

*Favor/Oppose User Fees By Gender/Age*



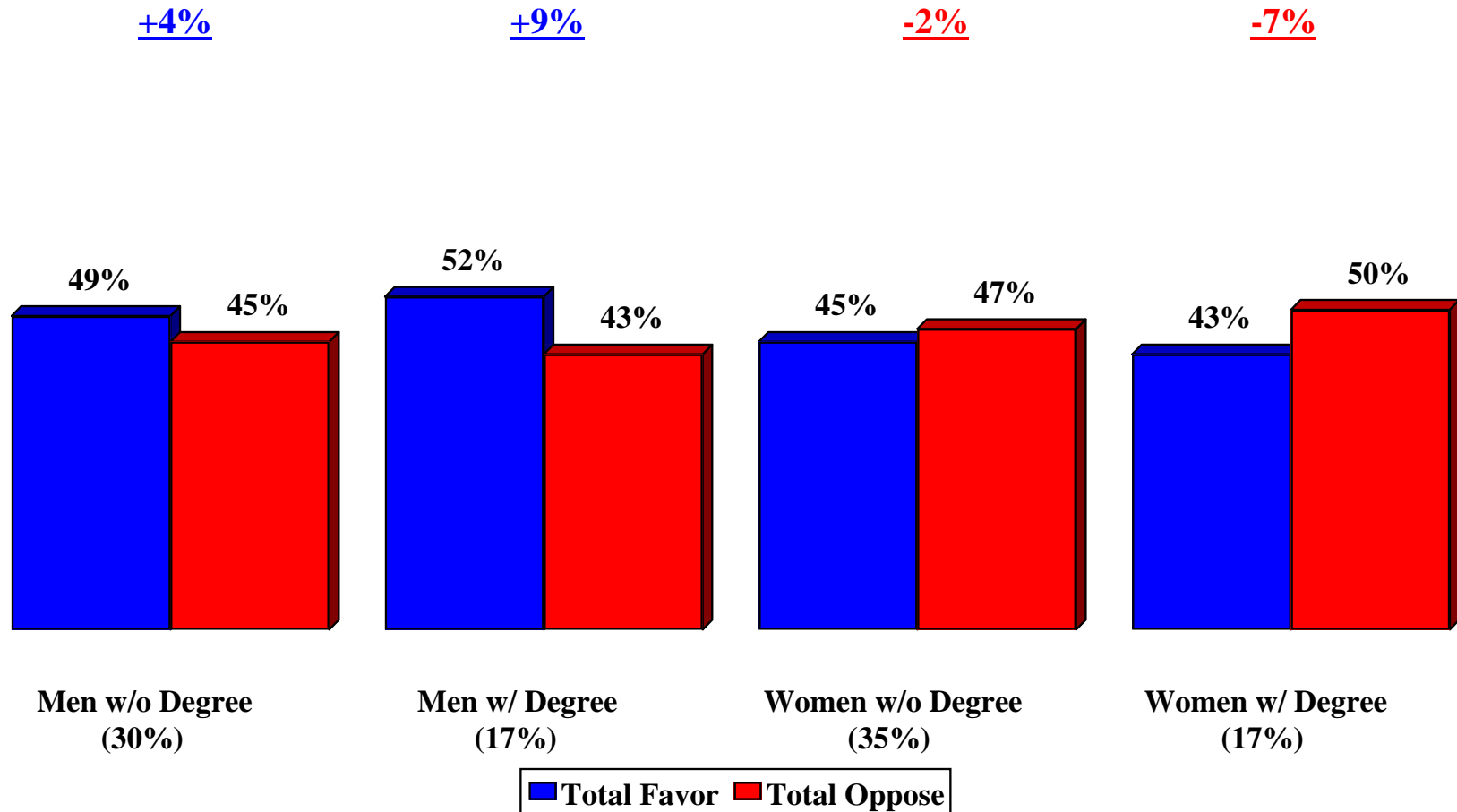
# Americans are divided across the country.

*Favor/Oppose User Fees By Region*



# Men with a college degree are the most likely to support the FDARA fees, but all gender/age groups are divided.

*Favor/Oppose User Fees By Gender/Education*



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