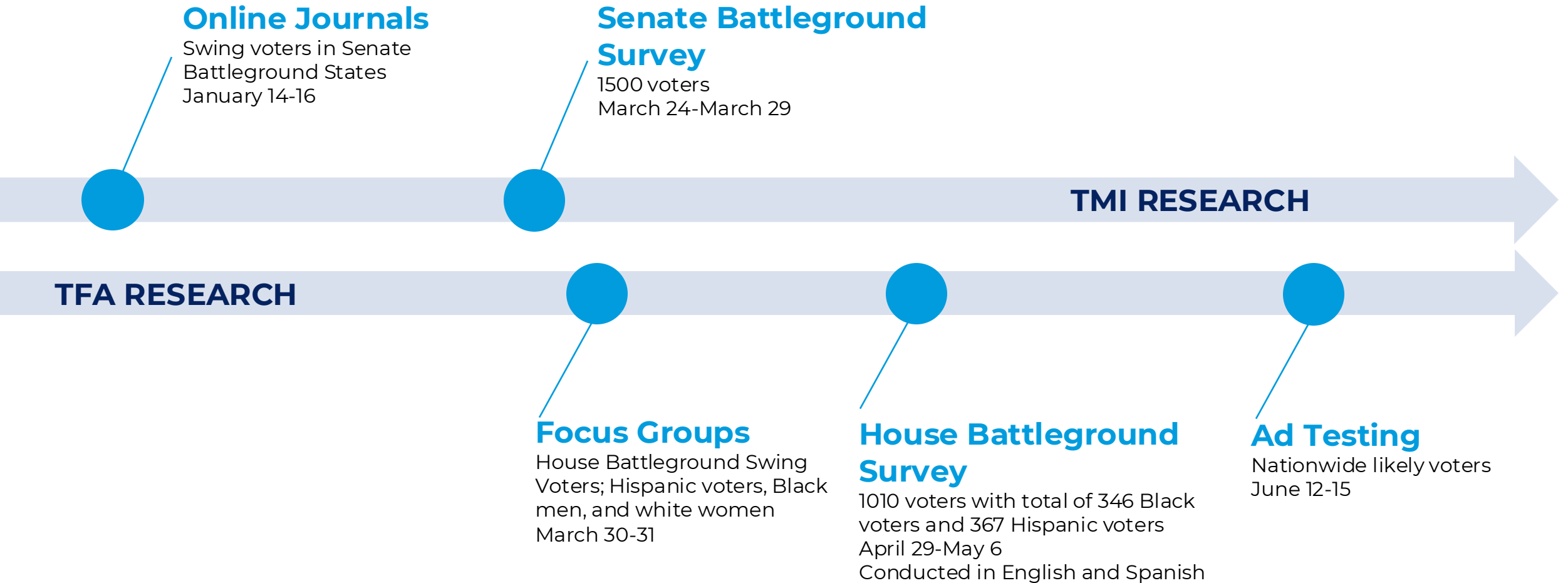


Messaging on Transgender Issues in the 2026 Election Cycle



Methodology

The following presentation is comprised of battleground research from Transgender Freedom Alliance and The Majority Institute, both aimed to establish where Republicans have an advantage on transgender issues and how to undermine that advantage, using their own positions against them.



Key Findings: What We Knew

Heading into the election cycle, Democrats...

- Continue to be seen as overly focused on transgender issues, but have an edge when it comes to equality
- Can avoid being seen as the more extreme party on the issue
- Need to build their brand around keeping kids safe – done by leaning into law enforcement experience, parental status, and involvement in athletics...
- ...But have to avoid playing into the parental rights and safety traps

When responding, candidates should...

- Lean on their values (fairness, safety, etc.)
- Highlight personal experiences that speak to these values
- Talk about ‘all of us’, not just transgender people

Tone

- Do not dismiss concerns outright
- Stay grounded and thoughtful
- Toughness is more helpful than compassion
- Be authentic

Timing

- Don't let the attacks be the first thing to define you
- Be prepared
- Engage without dwelling on the issue

Key Findings: What We Learned

Republicans start with an advantage over Democrats on most traits, including three of the four that drives vote according to regressions.

It hurts us to not respond at all.

Going on offense works. Talking about the GOP's approach to trans issues increases our lead and can help maintain it.

When you fight back, the most important thing to do is highlight the tradeoff: Republicans are prioritizing these issues at the expense of the economy

- Show how focused Republicans are on this issue.
- Continue to own values: dignity and respect
- As a corollary: show how Republicans expose kids to inappropriate things

Their attacks on health care for transgender youth are more potent than sports in a vacuum, but there's a reason they don't focus on it as much in ads: **We have a similarly good hit that accuses GOP of overriding the wishes of parents** and criminalizing doctors.

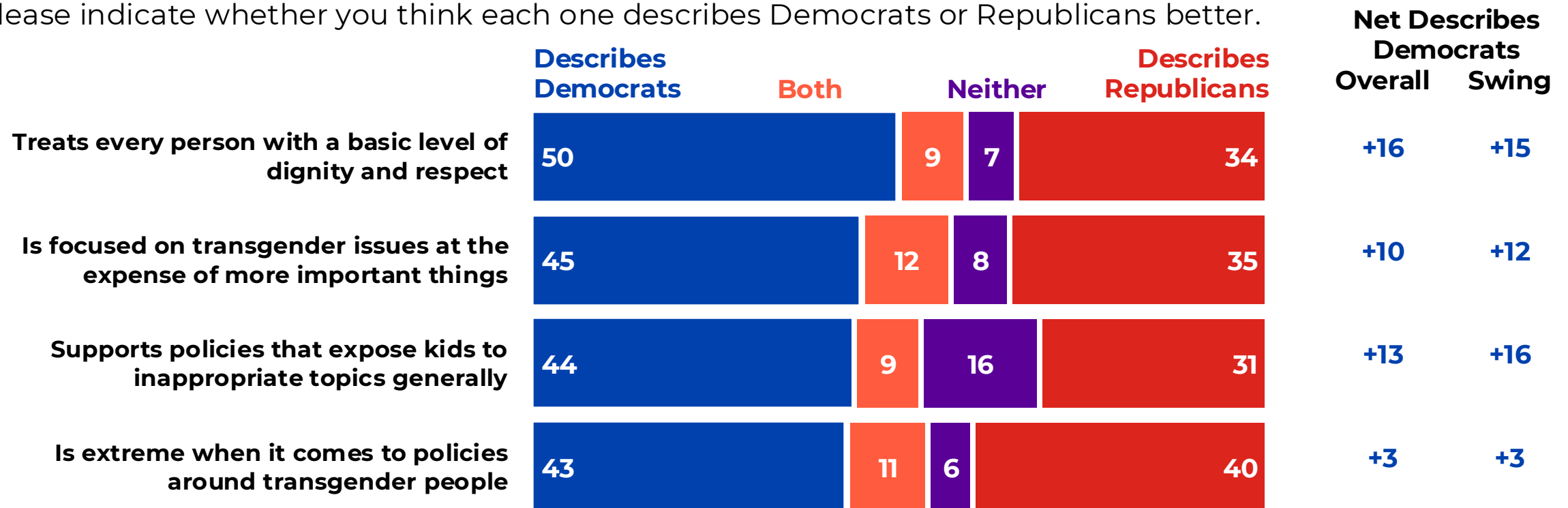
Changing the Narrative

There are four basic traits that drive vote related to policy around transgender people

Our Strength: Democrats are seen as more inclined to treat people with dignity and respect

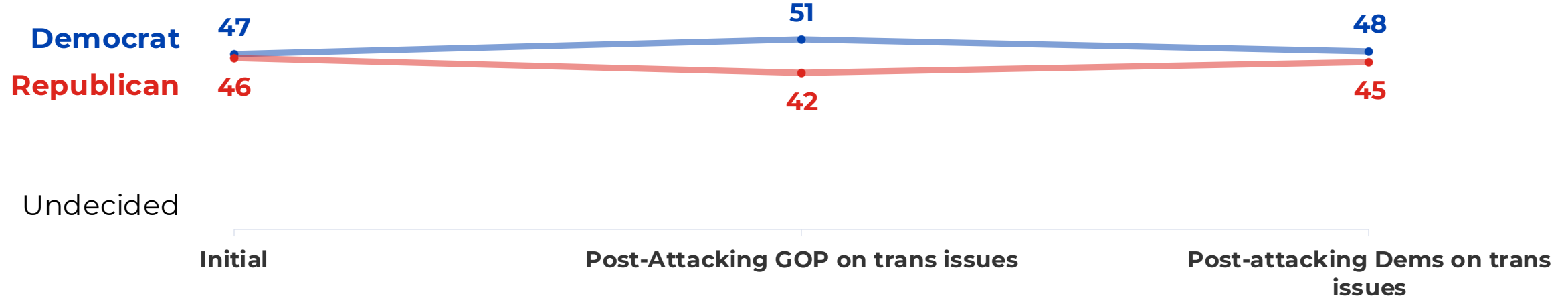
Our Challenge: Democrats are initially perceived as more focused and more extreme on trans issues, more likely to expose kids to inappropriate topics

Please indicate whether you think each one describes Democrats or Republicans better.

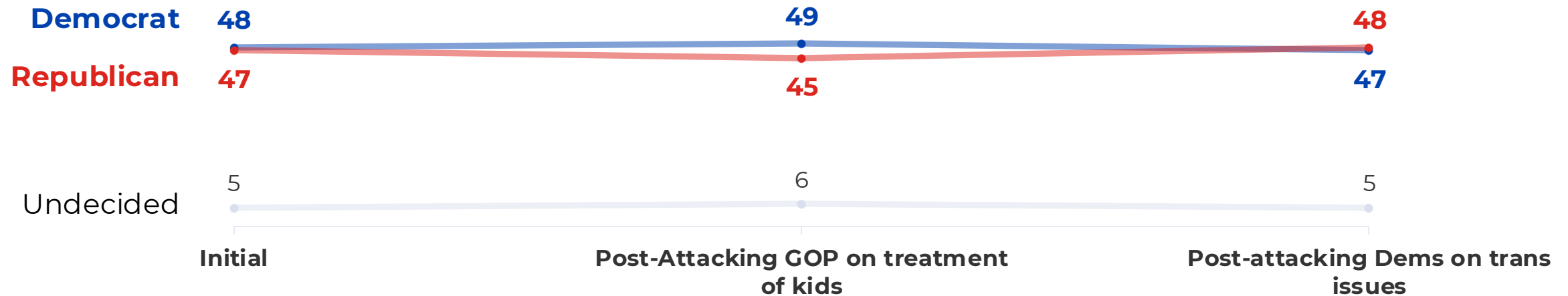


Attacking GOP with hits related to key traits grows Democrats' vote share and, in some cases, maintains a lead

Generic Vote for Senate Movement – **Attack GOP with Trans Proof Points First**



Generic Vote for Senate Movement – **Attack GOP with Non-Trans Proof Points First**



Unsurprisingly, a “yes and” approach is most effective

Attacking GOP for approach to trans issues moves numbers more on two of our key traits

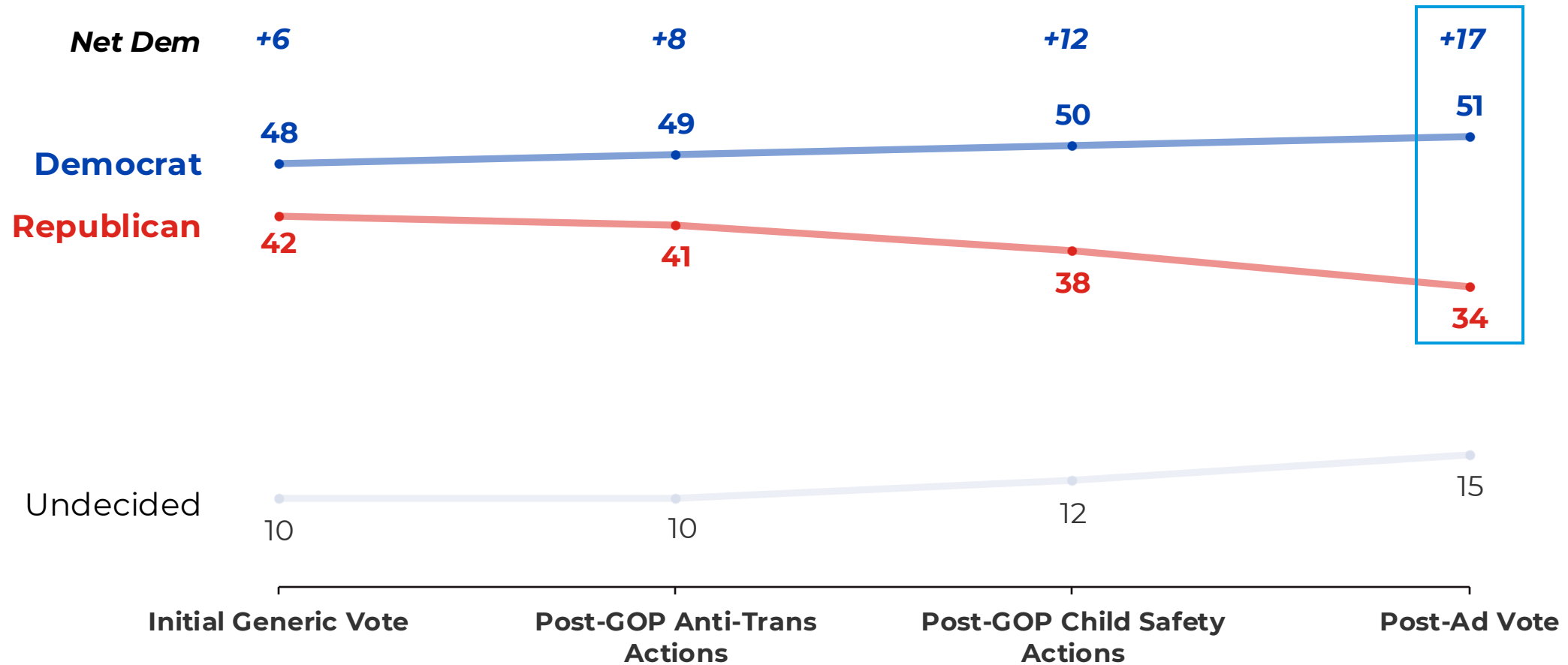
Attacking GOP for approach to kids moves numbers on the other key trait

Change in % Saying Trait Describes GOP “Very Well”

Change in Describes Republicans Very Well	After attacking GOP for approach to...					
	...transgender issues		...kids		Difference (transgender approach – kids approach)	
	Overall	Swing	Overall	Swing	Overall	Swing
Supports policies that expose kids to inappropriate topics generally	+7	+1	+7	+7	--	-6
Is focused on transgender issues at the expense of more important things	+10	+11	+4	+2	+6	+9
Is extreme when it comes to policies around transgender people	+7	+5	+3	+5	+4	--

TFA research buoys this finding: Together, these two sets of attacks move numbers substantially, especially when voters see an example mailer

Vote Movement for Generic Congressional Ballot



Going on Offense

Most effective way of eroding GOP advantage on treatment of kids: They are protecting sexual predators, making it easier for them to access your kids

Attacking Republicans – Most Concerning Attacks Related to Kids

Swing **Overall**

*% extremely concerning /
% total concerning*

- 45/68** **46/58** **[EPSTEIN]** Republicans in Washington **voted against Democratic efforts to release the Epstein files four separate times**, even after learning that Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking operation exploited girls as young as 14 for sex.
- 43/64** **46/60** **[ABORTION]** Republicans in Washington have **pushed a nationwide abortion ban** with no exceptions for rape, incest, or when a woman's life is at risk. That means **even a child who becomes pregnant through rape could be forced to carry that pregnancy to term** because politicians in Washington decided they know better than families and doctors.
- 42/63** **41/60** **[PREDATOR SAFETY]** Republican-backed proposals have **weakened background checks and safety standards for adults working with children in youth programs and after-school activities**, making it easier for predators to gain access to kids.
- 38/63** **40/59** **[AI]** Republicans have **refused to pass even a single law cracking down on AI companies and their CEOs**, even as platforms are now allowing **pedophiles** to use artificial intelligence to generate and share realistic **sexual images of children**.
- 40/62** **42/62** **[SEXTORTION]** Online sextortion is one of the fastest-growing crimes targeting children, with predators blackmailing kids using explicit images and driving some victims to suicide. Yet Republicans in Washington have **blocked efforts to crack down on the platforms where these crimes happen and strengthen laws to protect kids online**.

Statements oriented around sexual predators outperformed everything we tested around book bans, school shootings, child labor, vaccinations.

When talking about GOP approach to transgender issues: Show GOP is so focused on enforcing harsh restrictions that they're punishing all of us including doctors, parents, schools, and pocketbooks

Attacking Republicans – Most Concerning Attacks Related to Transgender Issues

Swing **Overall**

*% extremely concerning /
% total concerning*

- 34/58** **40/55** **[OVERRIDE PARENTS]** Republicans **want to have the final say over what care you and your kids can get.** You don't have to agree with or understand why a parent, together with those they love and trust, would make a certain healthcare decision to know it's wrong to have government come in and override that decision entirely.
- 37/55** **40/53** **[CRIMINALIZATION]** Republicans aren't just proposing restrictions: **they want to criminalize people who disagree with them.** Republican proposals would make it a felony for doctors, nurses, or even parents working with doctors to get gender-affirming care for their kids, exposing them to prosecution and potentially years in prison.
- 36/55** **39/51** **[SPEND TAXPAYER DOLLARS]** Republicans are **spending our tax dollars investigating the doctors families rely on.** Trump's Justice Department bragged they will "use all available resources to prioritize investigations of doctors, hospitals, and pharmaceutical companies" who provide care for transgender people.
- 32/55** **40/54** **[PRIORITY USING SAVE ACT]** Republicans are **so focused on transgender issues that they are blocking progress on other, more pressing issues.** President Trump has said a bill about transgender people was his "number one priority" and that he wouldn't sign another bill until it passed, telling the U.S. Senate, "If it takes you six months - I'm for not approving anything" - even if it lowers costs for Americans.
- 34/51** **40/52** **[CUT FUNDING FOR ALL]** Republicans in Washington say they **will strip our hospitals and schools of all funding if even a single doctor or teacher continues to treat transgender people like they always have.** And they mean it. They have already cut millions from public schools all of our children attend, because a few teachers have said transgender people exist.

Proof points that highlight tangible broad economic impact rise to the top as most concerning

Trump and Republicans' Actions – Using Examples with Money

Trans Targets

Overall	Swing	White	Black	Hisp.	% <i>extremely concerning (9-10)</i>
52	42	41	68	44	**Spent over \$220 million calling transgender people "rainbow haired freaks" and blaming them for mass shootings
49	39	38	68	32	**Wasted an estimated \$3.7 billion taxpayer dollars enforcing restrictions on transgender people.
50	37	39	67	34	**Threatened to defund hospitals if they continue to provide care to their transgender patients.
49	35	38	66	41	**Wasted taxpayer dollars invalidating driver's licenses for transgender people, leaving them without identification.
44	35	33	61	43	Put important bills to fund programs like health care and defense on hold by inserting unrelated restrictions on transgender people into them [SPLIT B ONLY: One restriction even stripped funding from hospitals we all rely on if they don't turn away transgender patients]
45	26	33	62	27	**Stripped \$12 million in funding from public schools whose textbooks referenced the existence of transgender people.

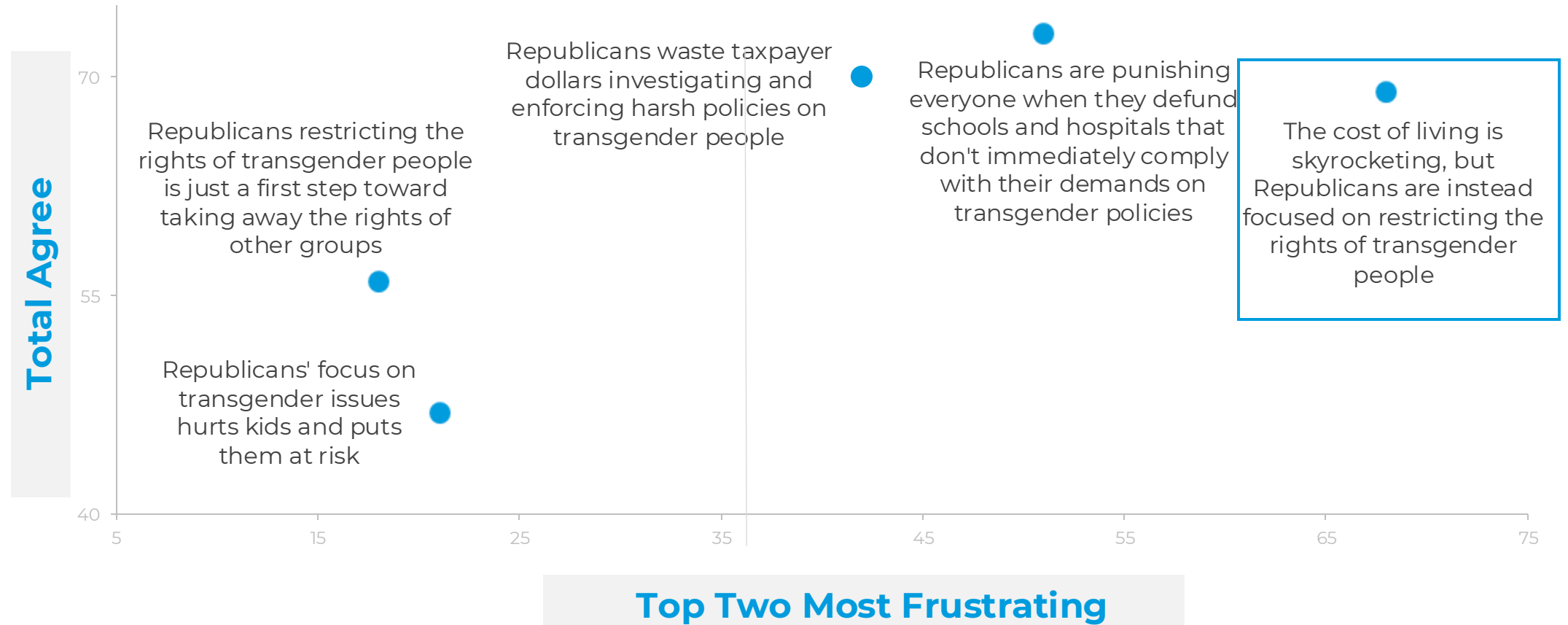
Time spent and ordering of priorities are comparatively less compelling; SAVE legislation quote is most helpful

Trump and Republicans' Actions – Non-Monetary Examples

Overall	Swing	<i>Trans Targets</i>			*/** indicates split sample % extremely concerning (9-10)
		White	Black	Hisp.	
45	37	34	62	46	Blocked progress on other legislation by making a bill targeting transgender people their “number one priority” and refusing to advance other measures until it passed [SPLIT B ONLY: including bills on disaster relief and prescription drug costs]
47	36	38	62	41	Introduced 12 bills on transgender issues [SPLIT B ONLY: including topics as inconsequential to most people as whether a transgender person should be able to have a passport,] before a single bill about the cost of living
45	36	36	58	35	Spent more time in Congress making speeches about transgender people than about affordability or health care [SPLIT B ONLY: including calling for transgender people to be “institutionalized”]
44	32	33	55	39	President Trump called a bill about transgender issues one of the “most IMPORTANT & CONSEQUENTIAL pieces of legislation in the history of Congress, and America itself” [SPLIT B ONLY: elevating it above proposals on the economy, border security, or health care in public messaging and legislative focus]
42	32	34	55	36	Spent more time on the campaign trail talking about transgender people than any other issue [SPLIT B ONLY: including how to bring down skyrocketing costs or improve health care]
44	31	35	54	33	Introduced 100 different bills on issues relating to transgender people at the national level in 2025 alone [SPLIT B ONLY: including legislation to charge parents with child abuse if they - together with a doctor they trust - decide to allow their child to access transition-related health care]
40	30	31	51	31	Used time in Congress meant to discuss government efficiency to instead talk about whether a transgender person could participate in a fencing match [SPLIT B ONLY: throwing away valuable time meant to prevent government corruption and waste]
41	29	29	56	41	Upon taking power in Washington, the first bill they introduced was about transgender people [SPLIT B ONLY: before anything to lower the cost of living]

Our sweet spot with framing GOP actions is contrasting Republicans' focus on trans rights over addressing the cost of living

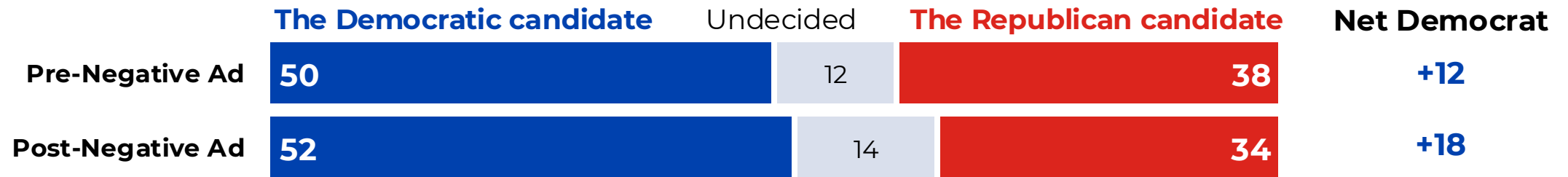
Statements About Republicans – Agree With the Most and Top Two Most Frustrating Among Swing



The strongest frame with Hispanic swing voters is the notion that Republicans are wasting taxpayer dollars enforcing trans policies. Black swing voters mirror swing overall

Testing Real-World Examples

A negative ad on a Republican candidate deepens the Dem advantage beyond what written attacks could do



Then we put it to the test with an ad test. First voters saw an attack on Democrats...



Then, ads where we punched back

Obsessed

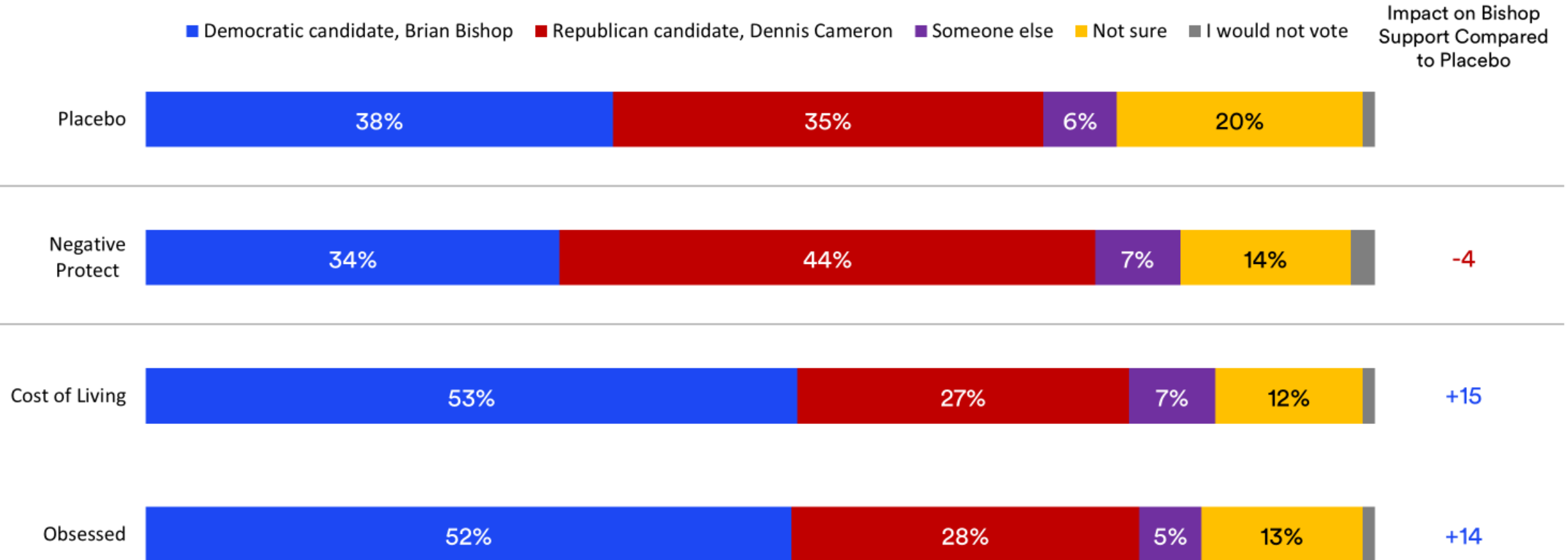


Cost of Living



🎯 *All of our ads won over undecideds and ate into support for Republican candidate, Dennis Cameron.*

Q1. If the November election for U.S. Congress were held today, for whom would you vote?





The Negative Protect ad converted left-leaning groups of voters to vote for the Republican candidate, but our response ads won them back and expanded support for Democrat, Brian Bishop.

Q1. If the November election for U.S. Congress were held today, for whom would you vote?

Vote Choice – Democratic Candidate Brian Bishop

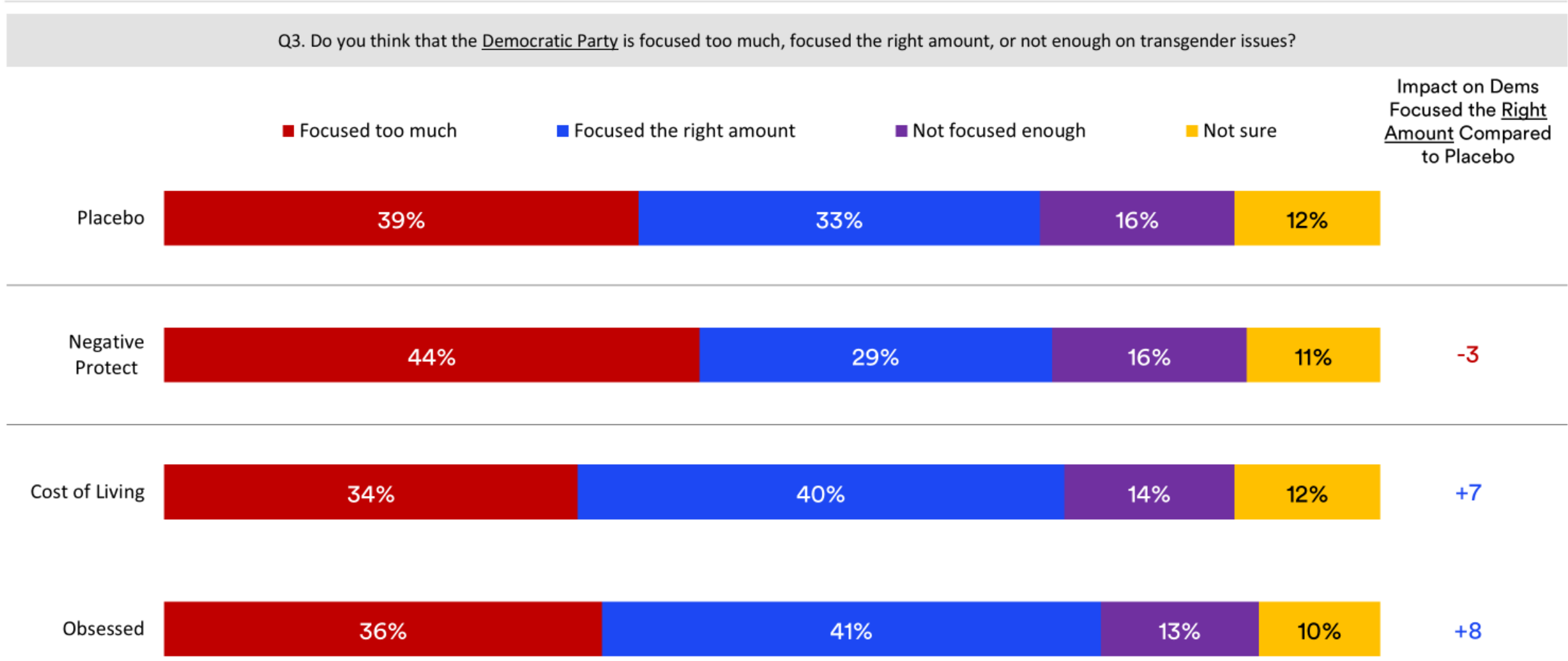
% selected Bishop	Party ID				Gender		Race			Age			Religion		
	Total	Dem	Ind	GOP	Cis Women	Cis Men	White	Black	Latino/a	18-34	35-54	55+	Attends Service Weekly	Christian	Evangelical
Placebo	38	81	21	3	41	34	35	56	40	40	39	36	28	33	26
Negative Protect	34	65	30	2	32	34	32	46	37	45	35	30	23	27	17
Cost of Living	53	92	49	14	57	49	48	70	71	59	55	51	48	48	39
Obsessed	52	90	49	14	53	51	50	72	53	51	52	53	41	46	35

We lost support among left-leaning groups if they only saw the Negative Protect ad, including Democrats (+6 Not sure compared to Placebo). Democrats, cis women, and Black voters were more likely to vote for the Republican candidate (+8, +16, and +8 compared to Placebo, respectively).





Our response ads effectively persuaded voters that the Democratic Party is appropriately focused on transgender issues.





The Obsessed ad had the largest impact on Independents, and the Cost of Living ad resonates most with Black, Latino/a, and younger voters.

Q3. Do you think that the Democratic Party is focused too much, focused the right amount, or not enough on transgender issues?

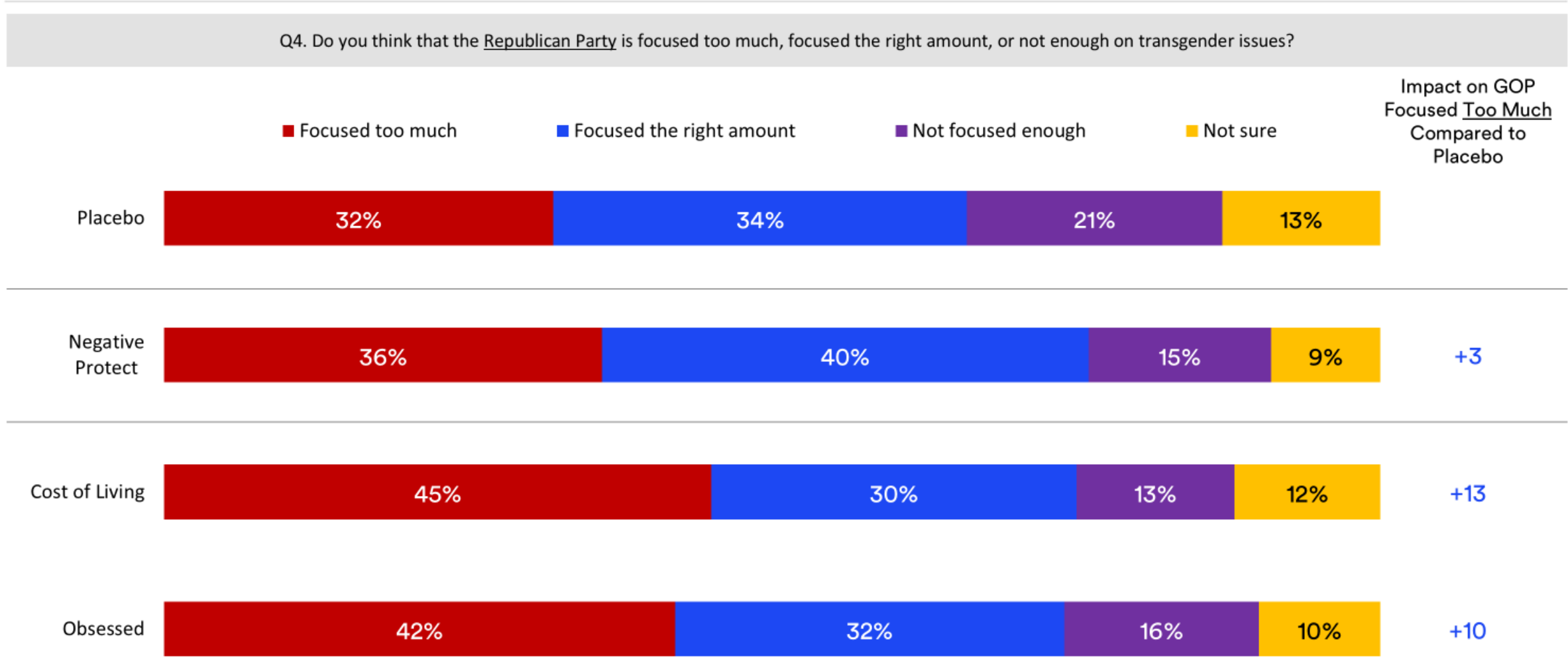
Democratic Party Focused the Right Amount on Transgender Issues

% selected right amount	Party ID				Gender		Race			Age			Religion		
	Total	Dem	Ind	GOP	Cis Women	Cis Men	White	Black	Latino/a	18-34	35-54	55+	Attends Service Weekly	Christian	Evangelical
Placebo	33	62	20	11	33	33	29	53	40	46	36	28	23	28	26
Negative Protect	29	50	22	13	33	25	29	32	35	31	32	28	26	27	22
Cost of Living	40	67	26	20	40	39	37	56	52	49	39	38	41	39	33
Obsessed	41	67	40	14	42	40	40	52	45	47	41	40	34	38	28

More Democrats believed the Democratic Party focuses too much on transgender issues if they only saw the Negative Protect ad (+10 compared to Placebo). Also, 18-34-year-old voters (+14) and Black voters (+10) thought it focuses too much on transgender issues.



More voters thought the Republican Party is too focused on transgender issues if they saw the Negative Protect ad or either of our response ads.




The Negative Protect ad saw backlash among key groups, including Independents and Latino/a voters; the Cost of Living and Obsessed ads were most effective at persuading voters the Republican Party is too focused on transgender issues across demographics.

Q4. Do you think that the Republican Party is focused too much, focused the right amount, or not enough on transgender issues?

Republican Party Focused Too Much on Transgender Issues

% selected focused too much	Party ID				Gender		Race			Age			Religion		
	Total	Dem	Ind	GOP	Cis Women	Cis Men	White	Black	Latino/a	18-34	35-54	55+	Attends Service Weekly	Christian	Evangelical
Placebo	32	48	34	13	31	33	33	28	26	34	33	31	24	25	18
Negative Protect	36	55	42	10	34	38	37	27	34	41	38	32	23	30	17
Cost of Living	45	62	51	22	46	44	45	34	55	49	46	43	43	42	34
Obsessed	42	58	48	21	44	41	42	47	29	42	48	40	36	38	34

Conclusions and Recommendations

Going on Offense

Messaging on Anti-Trans Issues

- **The Frame: Republicans' relentless focus on trans people is hurting all of us.** As we saw in qualitative, voters are more concerned with the anti-trans focus coming at the expense of things that impact them, like dealing with high costs or impacts on the medical system. This is a zero-sum game: Republicans focus/dollars on anti-trans efforts is one less moment or dollar focused on people like you.
- **The Proof Points:** Quantify using dollar amounts over numbers of bills. Talk about the impact on doctors and hospitals over schools and teachers. Specifically...
 - Spent over \$220 million calling transgender people "rainbow haired freaks" and blaming them for mass shootings
 - Threatened to defund hospitals if they continue to provide care to their transgender patients
 - Wasted over \$100 million taxpayer dollars in just a couple of months enforcing restrictions on transgender people

Example Message

The cost of living is skyrocketing, but Republicans are more focused on restricting the rights of transgender people to please President Trump than helping solve our problems. It's excessive and now it's impacting us. Republicans have already wasted over \$100 million taxpayer dollars in just a couple of months to enforce these excessive restrictions, and now they're threatening to defund hospitals for all of us and are threatening doctors if they continue to provide care for transgender people. Republicans need to get their priorities straight.

Going on Offense

Messaging on Child Safety Issues

- **Emphasize that it's about all kids' safety** to broaden the scope of the impact and get out of the trans framing.
- **Focus on the threat of sexual predators.** This trumps more general concerns about online exposure or social media. While all are considered urgent for most voters, sexual predators finding kids online and skirting rules to abuse kids is far and away the most urgent priority for these voters.
- **The Proof Points:** It will depend on the race, but there are examples of the following across the country and many in Congress...
 - Voted against Democratic efforts to release Epstein files four separate times (important to name Democratic efforts and bring visuals in)
 - Weakened background checks for adults working with kids, making it easier for sexual predators to gain access
 - Refuse to crack down on the AI companies allowing pedophiles to use their platforms for creating and sharing sexual images of children
 - Blocked Democratic efforts to crack down on sextortion of kids and teens, even as it's one of the fastest-growing crimes targeting kids

Example Message

Parents are understandably worried about their kids' safety today, which is why it's so terrifying that Republicans are weakening laws even further. They've stripped background checks out of the law, making it easier for sexual predators to gain access to kids; voted against Democrats' efforts to release the Epstein files four times; and blocked efforts to crack down on new types of technology that enable sextortion and pedophilia. They're not looking out for our kids – just the Epstein class.

Recommendations for a Latino-specific program

- **Responding to attacks is key to earning Latinos' votes.** Negative messaging around trans issues works particularly well in moving Latinos to think that Republicans care more about people like them. But response messaging focused on the **economic impact of Republicans' misplaced priorities** resonates with Latinos and increases support for Democrats.
- Frame messaging to Latinos around **wrong priorities** and the human/everyday impact it has on ALL of us.
 - **Focus on contrast and call out the tradeoffs.**
 - Use proof points that show **economic waste** and highlight the **real cost of Republicans focusing on trans issues** instead of more salient issues like the cost of living.

Example Message

From gas to groceries, from electricity to health care, everything is more expensive. And what's [Republican candidate] doing about it? Attacking our transgender neighbors. Adding to the **\$220 million Republicans have spent on negative television ads** about it. And **wasting over \$100 million of our taxpayer dollars in just a couple of months** for restrictions on the 1% of Americans who are transgender. He's not about you. He's about extremes. [Democratic candidate] has a better idea. He'll **work to lower prices for working families** like us.

- **Reach Latinos where they are — on social media.** Latinos are more likely than non-Latinos to report being passive news consumers and they over-index on social media use.

Narrative Structure

SHARED PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Cost are going up

OR

Republicans are focused on transgender people instead of helping you



Republican candidate is making the problem worse

AND/OR

Republican candidate's focus leads to wasting your money



Democratic candidate is focused on your bottom line



Democratic candidate shares your priorities

TRANSGENDER FREEDOM ALLIANCE

Thank You

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GSG
POLITICAL

Messaging Playbook

1. **Don't let the attacks be the first thing to define you.** While campaigns need to be mindful of spending too much too soon, the more we can emphasize important values and experiences ahead of the attacks, in our positive, the better.
2. **Be authentic.** When we don't exude confidence in what we are saying, we further uncertainty about us and our position. Candidates should balance learnings from this playbook and what has worked with who they are.
3. **Tone should be grounded and thoughtful. Toughness is more helpful than compassion.** As long as we acknowledge voters' concerns, they respond well to attempts to take the temperature down a notch. That doesn't mean you need to lose your edge. In fact, if someone accuses you of being soft on safety, indignation and toughness can go a long way.
4. **Lean on your values:** safety, especially for kids, what's fair, ensuring everyone has the same rights, respect, and freedom.
5. **Highlight personal experiences that speak to these values.** For example, being in law enforcement shows you care about kids' safety, being a parent says you put kids first, working in schools says you understand kids need rules and equal treatment, and pushing legislation that touches on safety (this can be their physical safety and beyond, like giving parents a greater say over what kids do online or with AI) says you care about kids.

Messaging Playbook

6. **Push off left and right.** It shows reasonableness, that you hear the concerns, and a willingness to work through this.
7. **Talk about all of us, not just transgender people.** Democrats are seen as overly inclusive and too focused on one group at the expense of the whole. Thus, emphasizing the whole – looking out for everyone – rather than specific groups is key.
8. **Engage without dwelling on the issue.** People want to know you take this seriously and are committed to solutions, but they don't want this to be your top focus.
9. **Take a “Protect Children, Respect Parents” approach.** Show you care about kids and what they're exposed to either through your bio/background or using policy as a vehicle. Acknowledge parents know best how to keep their kids safe and healthy.

There are plenty of options here. Some starting policy ideas that contrast well with our attacks on Republicans:

- Spearheading the Kids Online Safety Act, so social media companies better protect children from harmful content, strengthen privacy protections, and give parents more tools to understand and control what their kids see online.
- Holding AI accountable for continuing to enable pedophiles to use their platforms
- Crack down on AI generated deepfake pedophilia and other harmful content that puts women and girls at risk
- Create a zero-tolerance policy for sextortion – the fastest rising crime impacting kids, driving teens to suicide