



5 Borough Barometer

Polling on NYC's Affordability Crisis

HSG

Honan Strategy Group
Insights that Drive Results

September 18, 2025

Affordability is the Issue Du Jour



Affordability, public safety, Trump dominating race for NYC Mayor



NYC voters flock to socialist-style freebies as Mamdani pushes rent freezes, city-run stores



NYC Mayor's Race: Cuomo presents plan on affordability, painting Mamdani's pitch as irresponsible and unrealistic



The soaring prices of groceries in NYC



Who Is New York's 'Affordability' Candidate? Who Isn't?



NYC mayoral candidates answer questions on taxes, affordability, spending

Rising Concerns Re: American Dream and Capitalism

Newsweek

**The 2025 American
Dream Will Cost You \$5
Million**

GALLUP[®]

Image of Capitalism Slips to 54% in U.S.

Perceptions of socialism remain steady at
39% positive

Themes The Honan Strategy Group's Survey Examined

- Mood of NYers & Key Issues Facing NYC
- Personal Financial Outlook
- The American Dream
- Rating The NY Political Class
- Policy Solutions
- Implications

An aerial, high-angle view of a dense urban skyline, likely New York City, rendered in a monochromatic blue color scheme. The image shows a vast number of skyscrapers and buildings of varying heights and architectural styles, creating a complex, textured pattern of vertical lines and rectangular forms. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or a specific time of day, with subtle shadows and highlights that define the three-dimensional nature of the buildings. The overall mood is one of a bustling, tightly packed metropolis.

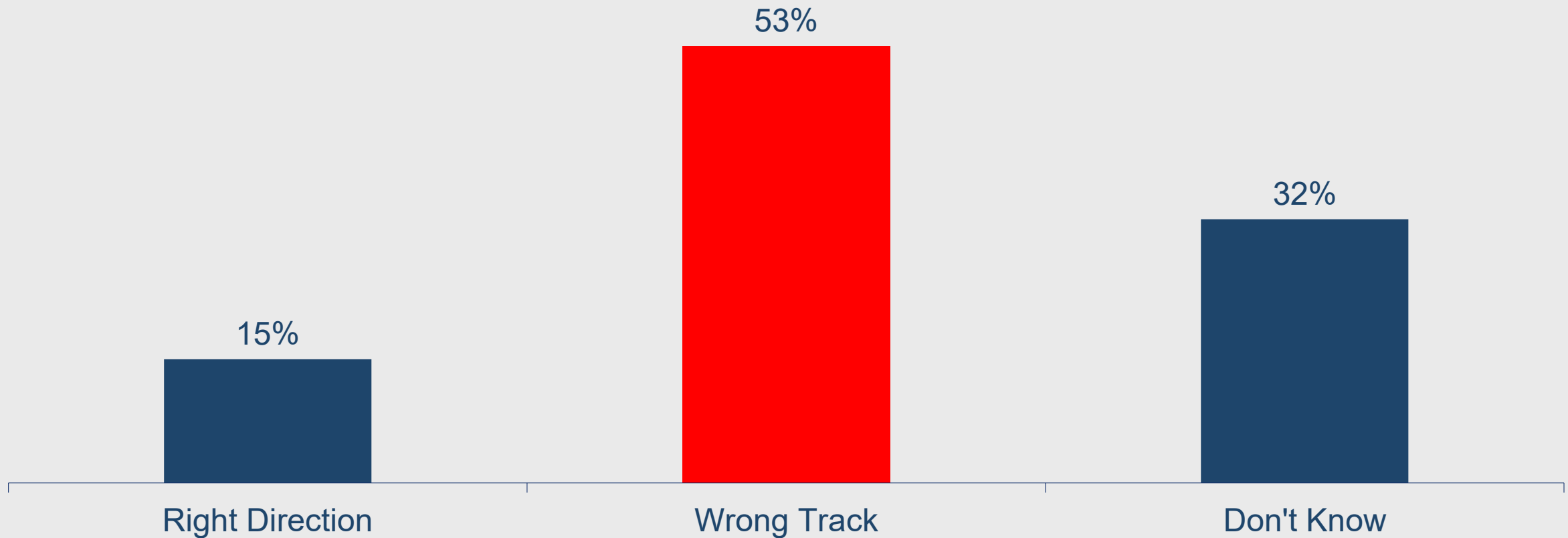
Mood & Key Issues

The Mood is Sour & Filled with Uncertainty

- More than half of NYers (53%) believe that the city is heading on the **wrong track**.
 - Nearly 3 in 10 (32%) are **not sure**.
- While 4 in 10 (38%) say that the best days for NYC are ahead of us, one quarter (25%) say they are behind us.
 - Nearly 4 in 10 (37%) say they are **not sure**.

NYC on Wrong Track

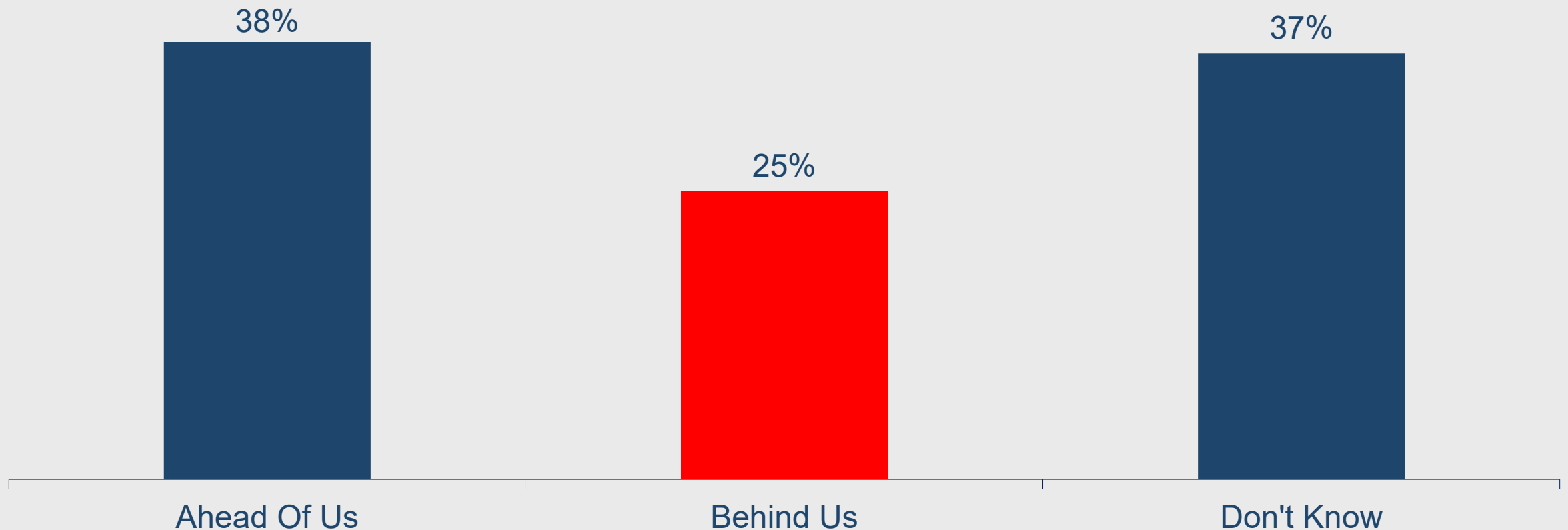
- More than half (53%) say NYC is off on the wrong track.



Question Text: Is New York City heading in the right direction or is it off on the wrong track?

Uncertainty About NYC's Future

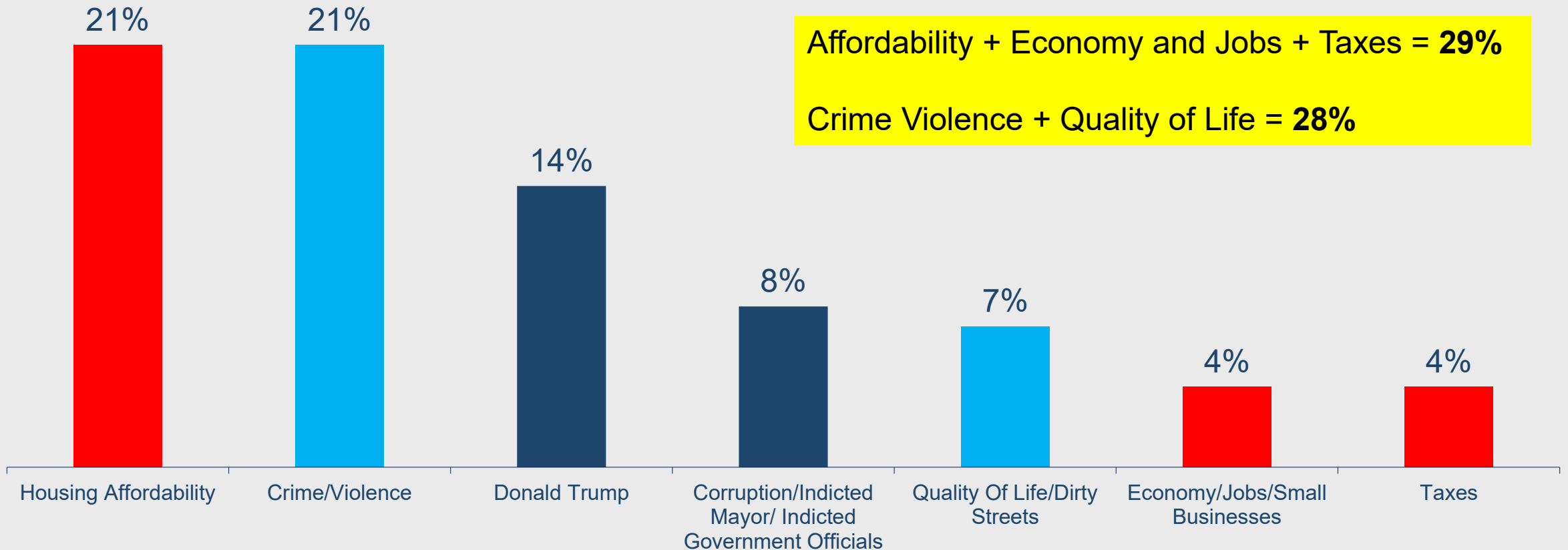
- Less than 4 in 10 say NYC's best days are ahead of us, 1 in 4 (25%) say they are behind us and about **4 in 10 are uncertain** about NYC's future.



Question Text: Are New York City's best day's ahead of us or behind us?

Housing Affordability & Crime/Violence Are Top Issues

- 21% mention housing affordability and 21% cite crime/violence as the leading issues.



Question Text: What is the most important issue facing New York City today?

An aerial, high-angle view of a dense urban skyline, likely New York City, rendered in a monochromatic blue color scheme. The image shows a vast number of skyscrapers and buildings of varying heights and architectural styles, creating a complex, textured landscape. The text "Financial Outlook" is centered over the middle of the image in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

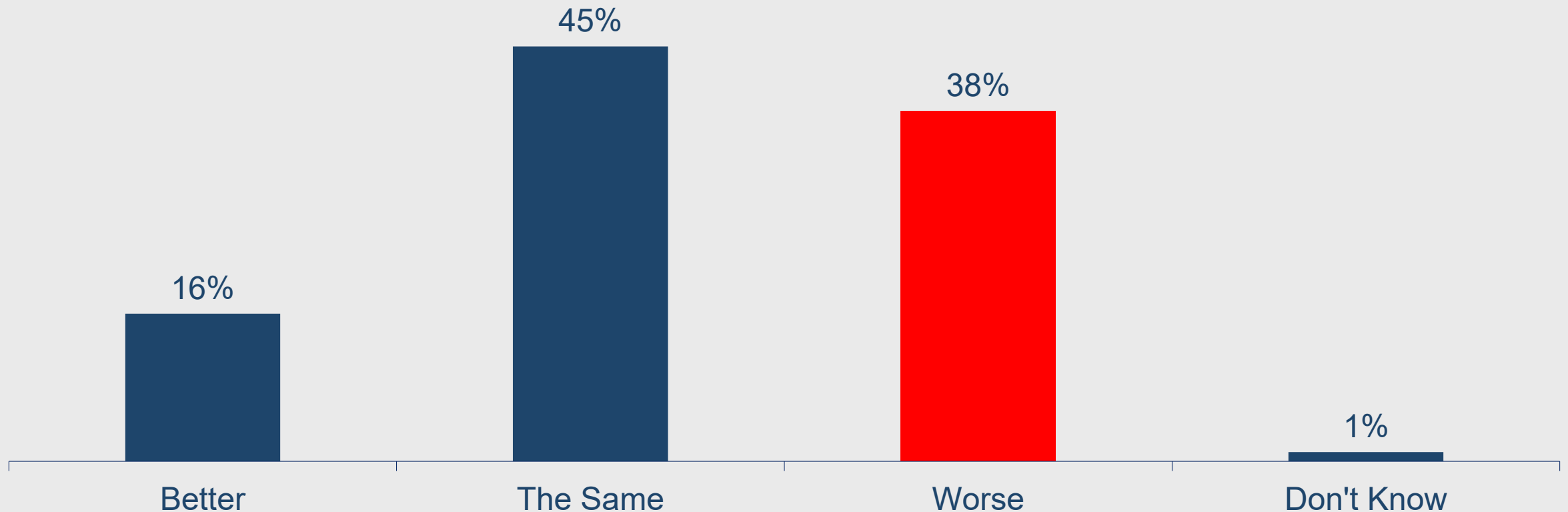
Financial Outlook

Financial Situation and Inflation Impact

- The survey examined:
 - *The financial situation of families today vs. 4 years ago.*
 - *How much hardship inflation has caused them.*

Financial Situation and Inflation Impact

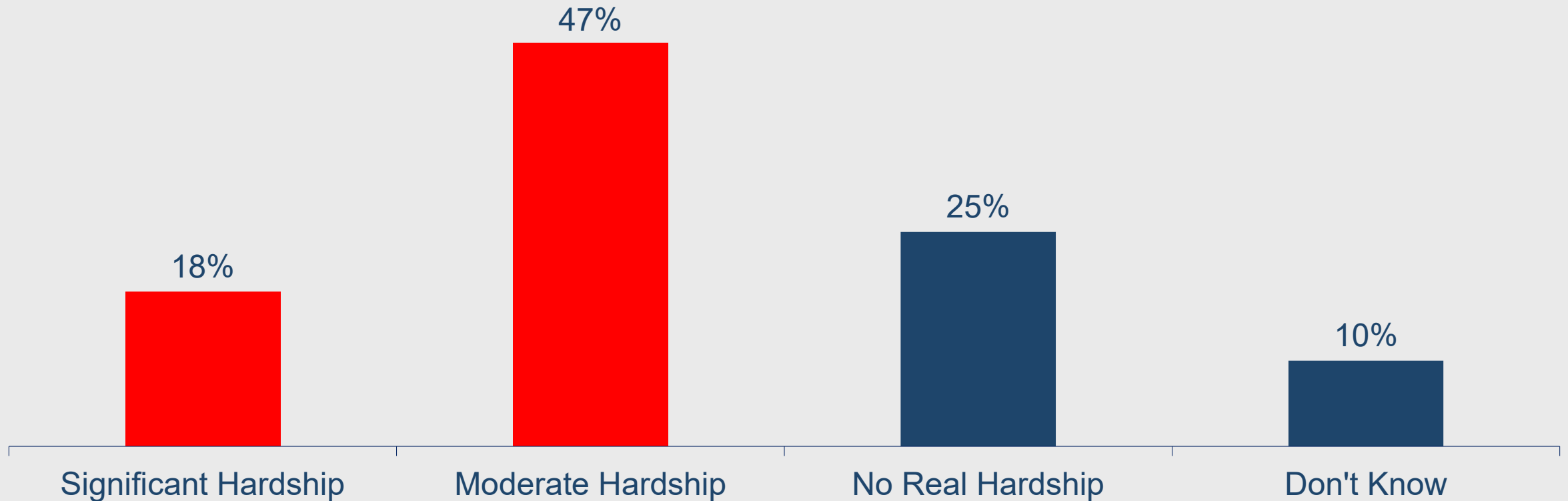
- Compared with 4 years ago, 16% say their families' future is better versus 38% who say it's worse. Slightly under half (45%) say it's the same.



Question Text: Compared to four years ago, is your family's financial situation?

Financial Situation and Inflation Impact

- Just under two-thirds report that in the last year inflation has caused their family either a **significant or moderate hardship**.



Question Text: In the last year, has inflation caused you and your family significant hardship, moderate hardship, or no real hardship?

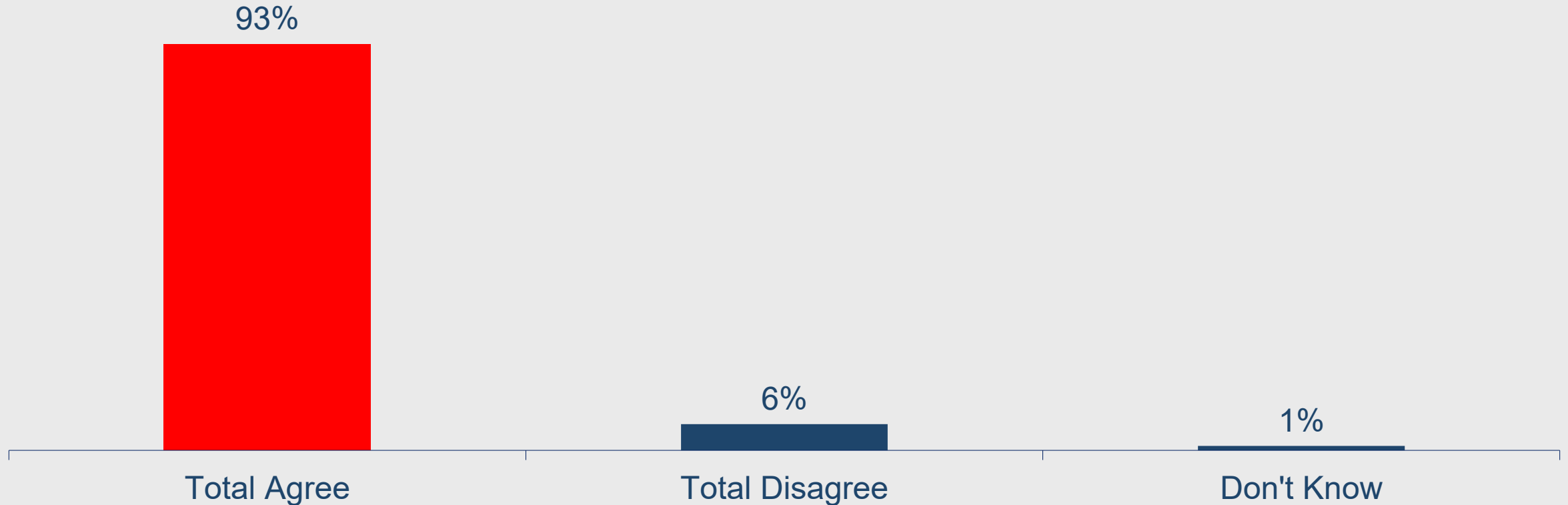
Agree/Disagree Statements

- Next in the survey, a series of agree/disagree statements were presented, including the following:
 - *New York City is having an affordability crisis.*
 - *New York City is increasingly only affordable for the rich people of Manhattan.*
 - *My income has stagnated, and I am not sure how I can get ahead economically anymore.*
 - *It's a real struggle every month to pay my rent/mortgage.*

Agree/Disagree Statements

- 93% say that NYC is having an affordability crisis.

New York City is having an affordability crisis.

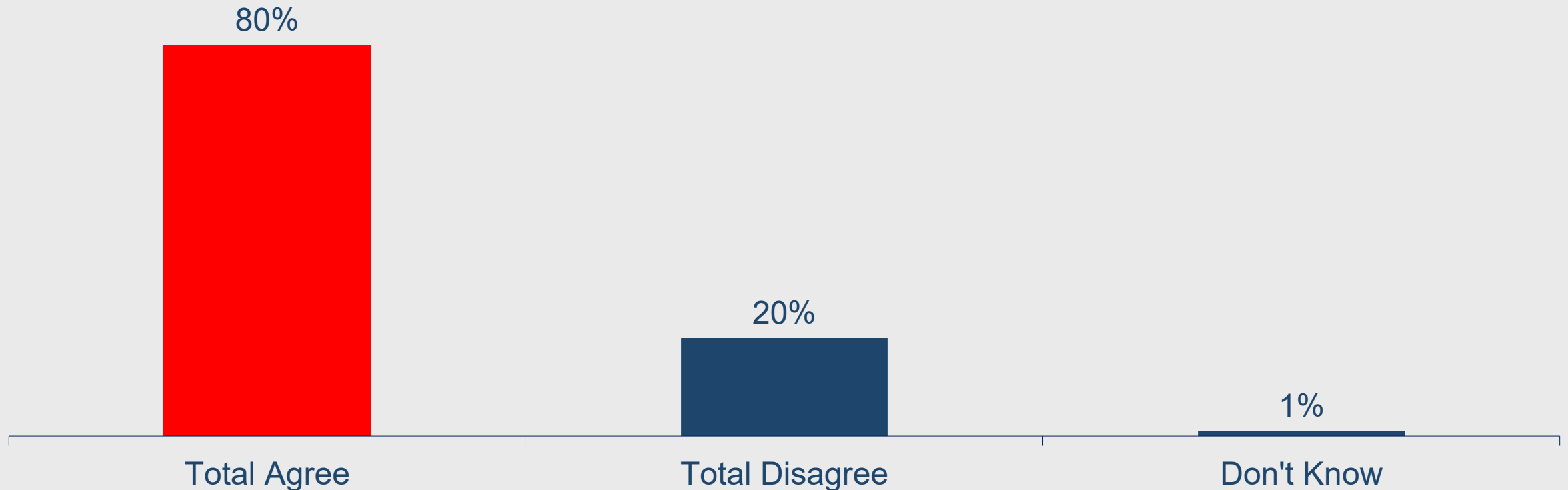


Question Text: Please agree or disagree with each of these statements:

Agree/Disagree Statements

- 80% agree that NYC is increasingly only affordable for rich Manhattanites.

New York City is increasingly only affordable for the rich people of Manhattan.

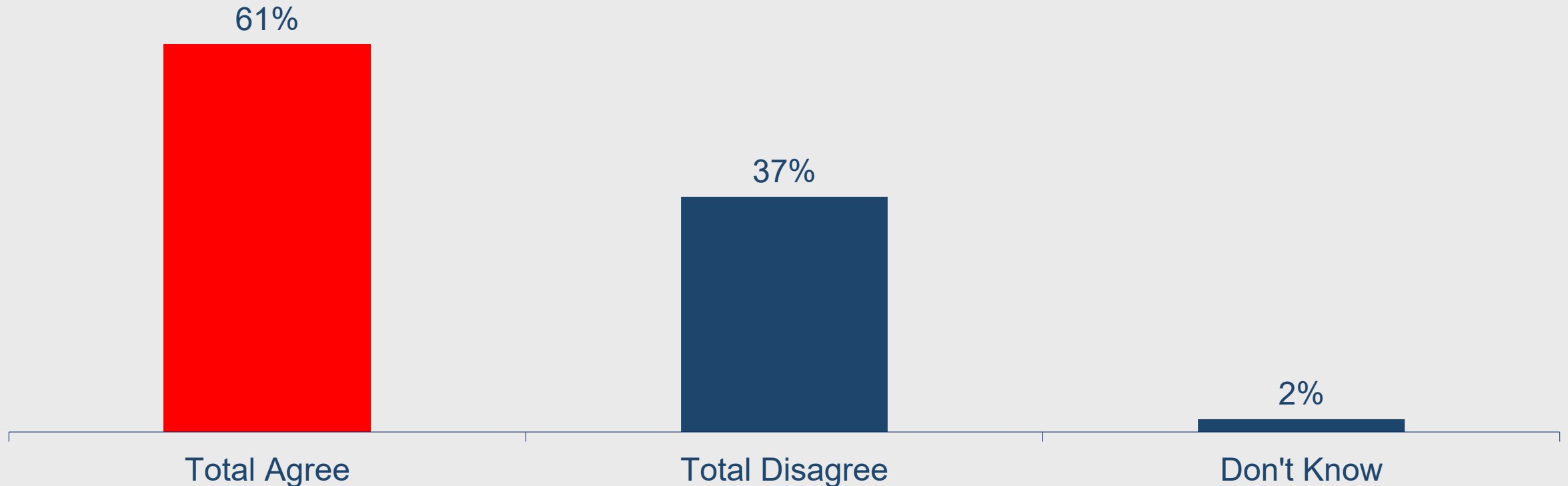


Question 50: Please agree or disagree with each of these statements:

Agree/Disagree Statements

- 61% agree their income is stagnated and they are not sure how to get ahead economically anymore.

My income has stagnated, and I am not sure how I can get ahead economically anymore.

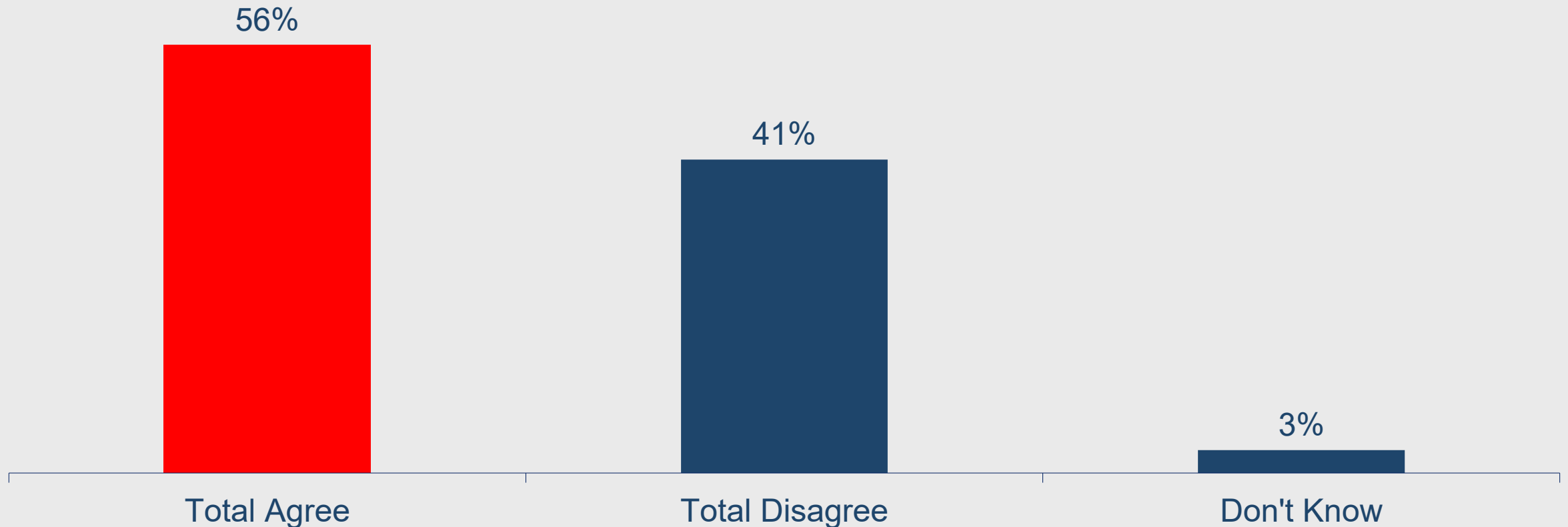


Question 49: Please agree or disagree with each of these statements:

Agree/Disagree Statements

- 56% say that it's a real struggle to pay the rent/mortgage every month.

It's a real struggle every month to pay my rent/mortgage.



Question Text: Please agree or disagree with each of these statements:

An aerial, high-angle view of a dense urban skyline, likely New York City, rendered in a monochromatic blue color scheme. The image shows a vast number of skyscrapers and buildings of varying heights and architectural styles, creating a complex, textured landscape. The text "The American Dream" is overlaid in the center in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

The American Dream

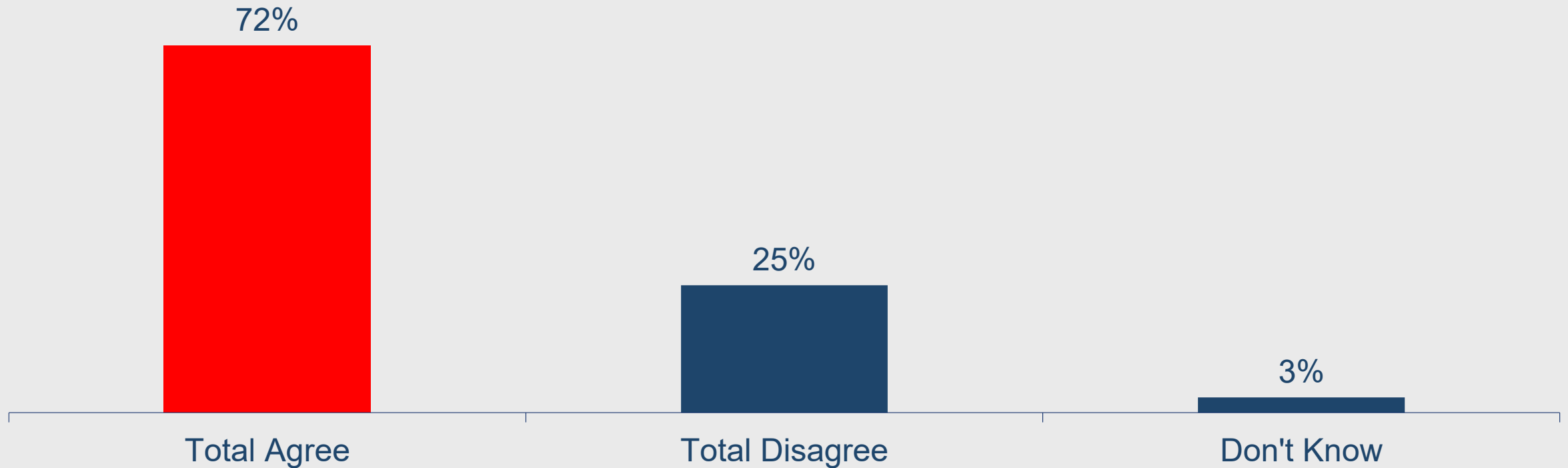
The State of the American Dream

- The survey also included questions about the American Dream and specifically the following:
 - Whether New York voters agree or disagree with this statement:
 - *My family and I are struggling to achieve the American Dream, despite hard work and effort.*
 - Which statement they agree with more:
 - *Statement 1: I am achieving the opportunities and success that the American Dream represents.*
 - *Statement 2: I am not living the American Dream.*

The American Dream

- Nearly three-quarters agree they are struggling to achieve the American Dream, despite hard work and effort.

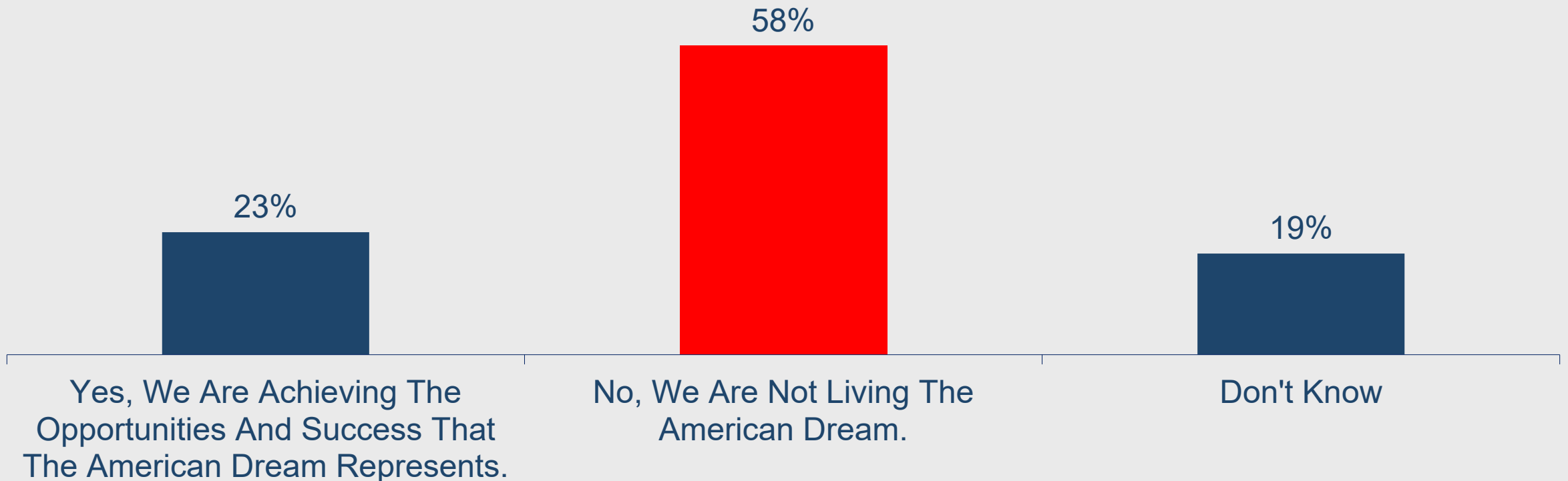
My family and I are struggling to achieve the American Dream, despite hard work and effort.



Question Text: Please agree or disagree with each of these statements:

The American Dream

- Only 23% of New Yorkers say that they are achieving the opportunities and success that the American Dream represents.
- By a ratio of more than 2:1, NYers say they are not currently living the American Dream.



Question Text: Do you believe you and your family are currently living the American Dream?

An aerial, high-angle photograph of the New York City skyline, heavily tinted with a dark blue color. The image shows a dense cluster of skyscrapers and buildings, with the MetLife building clearly visible in the upper left quadrant. The text "NYC and NY Political Class" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

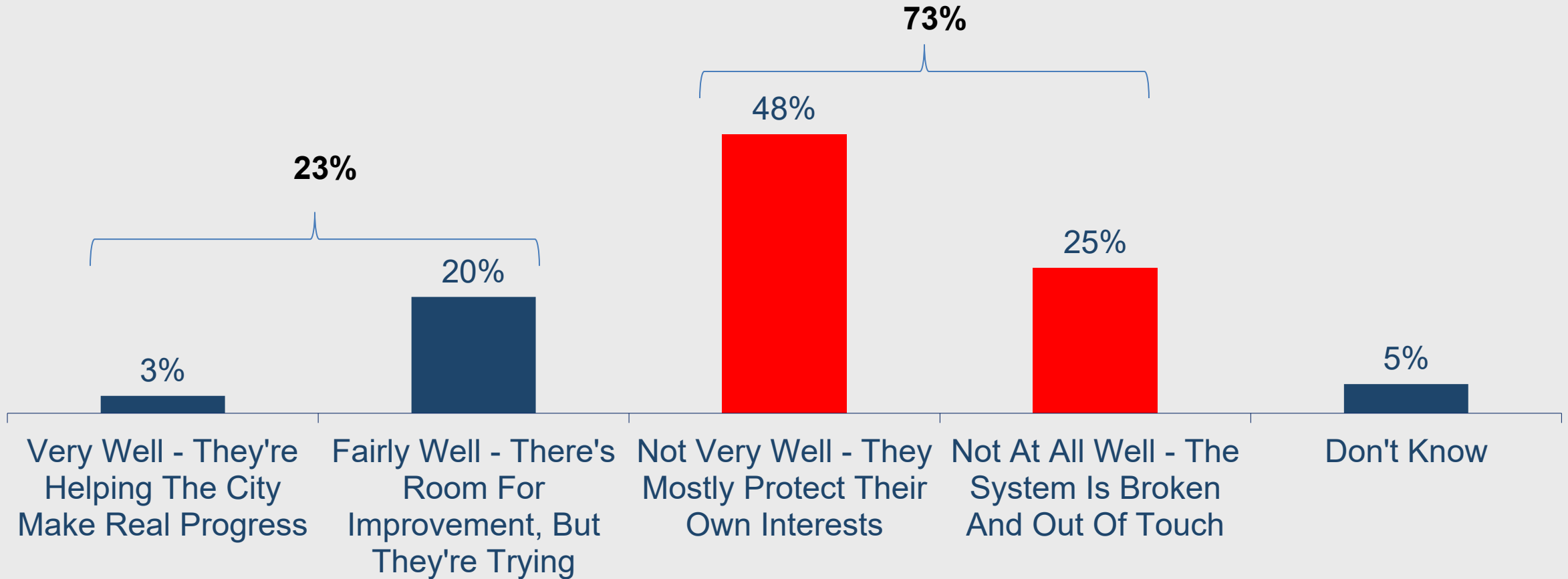
NYC and NY Political Class

Policy Makers are Failing In The Eyes of the Public

- Voters were asked how well they think New York City and New York State's political class is doing at moving New York City forward.
 - Nearly half (48%) say not **very well** – they mostly protect their own interests.
 - One-quarter (25%) say **not at all well** – the system is broken and out of touch.
- In contrast, only one quarter (23%) say the political class is doing either very well or fairly well.

Evaluating the NYC Political Class

- Nearly three-quarters of voters give negative marks to NY's political class.



Question Text: How well do you think New York City and New York State's political class is doing at moving New York City forward?

An aerial, high-angle view of a dense urban skyline, likely New York City, with numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The entire image is overlaid with a dark blue color filter. The text "Policy Solutions" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

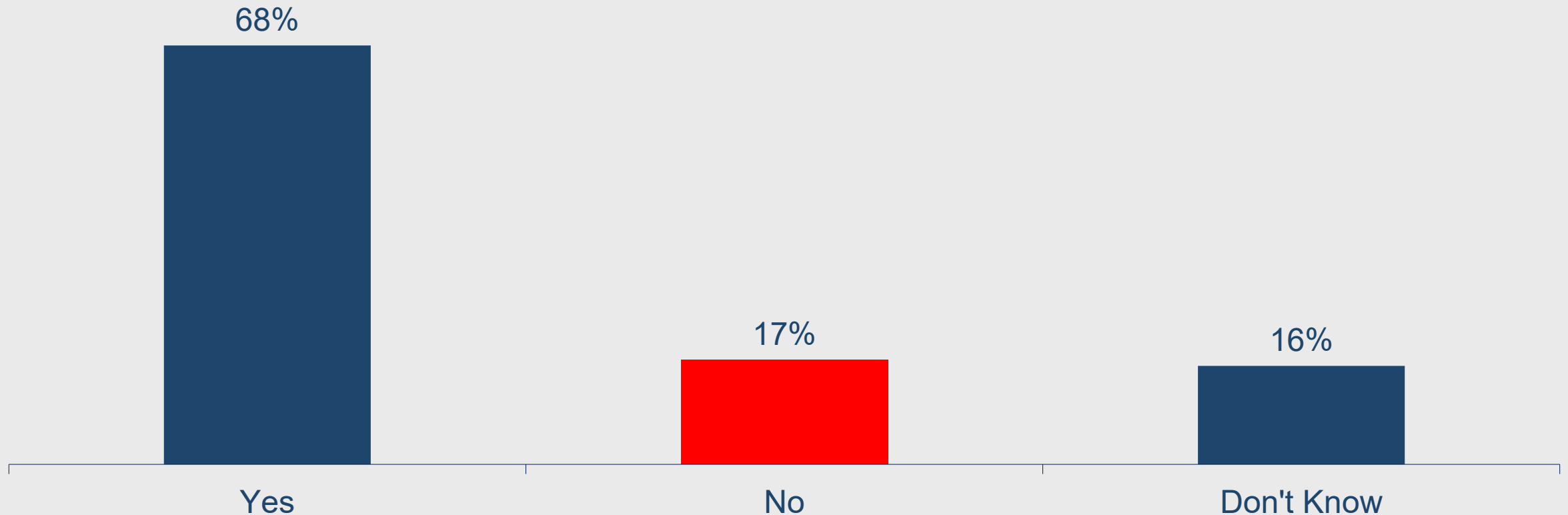
Policy Solutions

Potential Policy Solutions

- In the survey, we also evaluated a range of possible public policy solutions that have been put forward by the candidates for Mayor. These included:
 - *Requiring real estate developers to include affordable housing units in new projects.*
 - *Having city-funded grocery stores to lower food costs.*
 - *Freezing rent increases in rent-stabilized apartments.*
 - *Increasing corporate tax rates to finance affordable housing and free public transit.*
 - The same proposal was evaluated but tested with the caveat that this could force businesses to leave and take jobs with them.
 - *Providing free public buses.*

Require Developers to Include Affordable Housing In New Projects

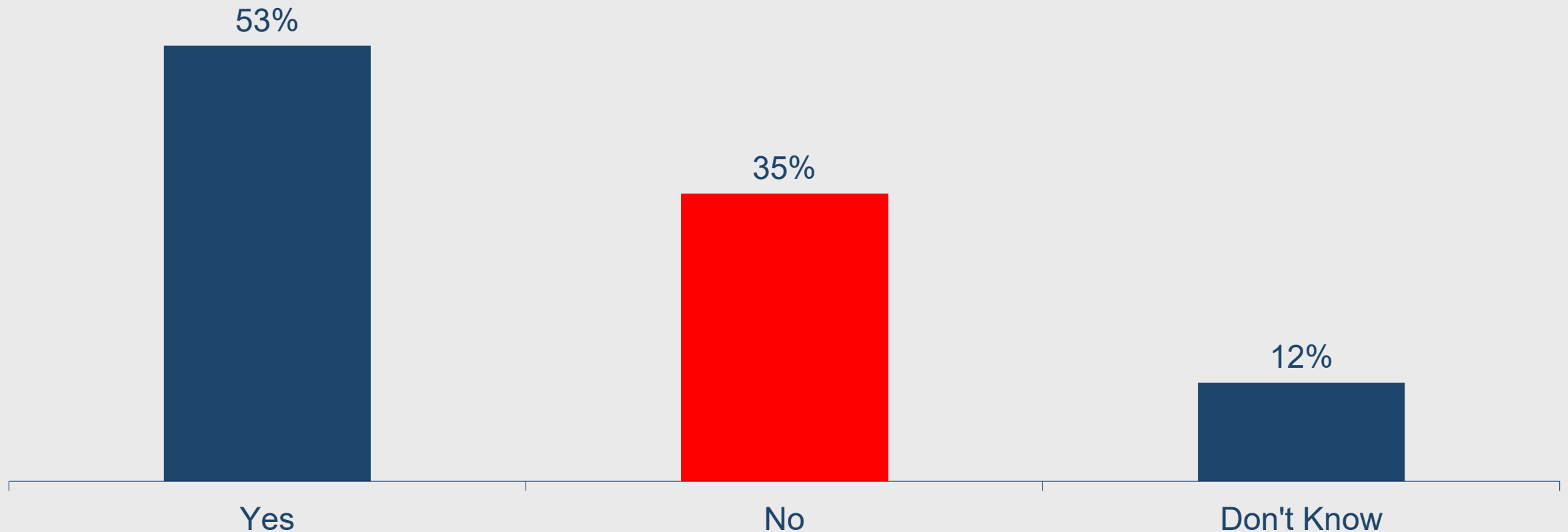
- 68% support requiring real estate developers to include affordable housing in their new projects citywide.



Question Text: Would you support requiring real estate developers to include affordable housing units in new projects citywide?

City-Funded Grocery Stores

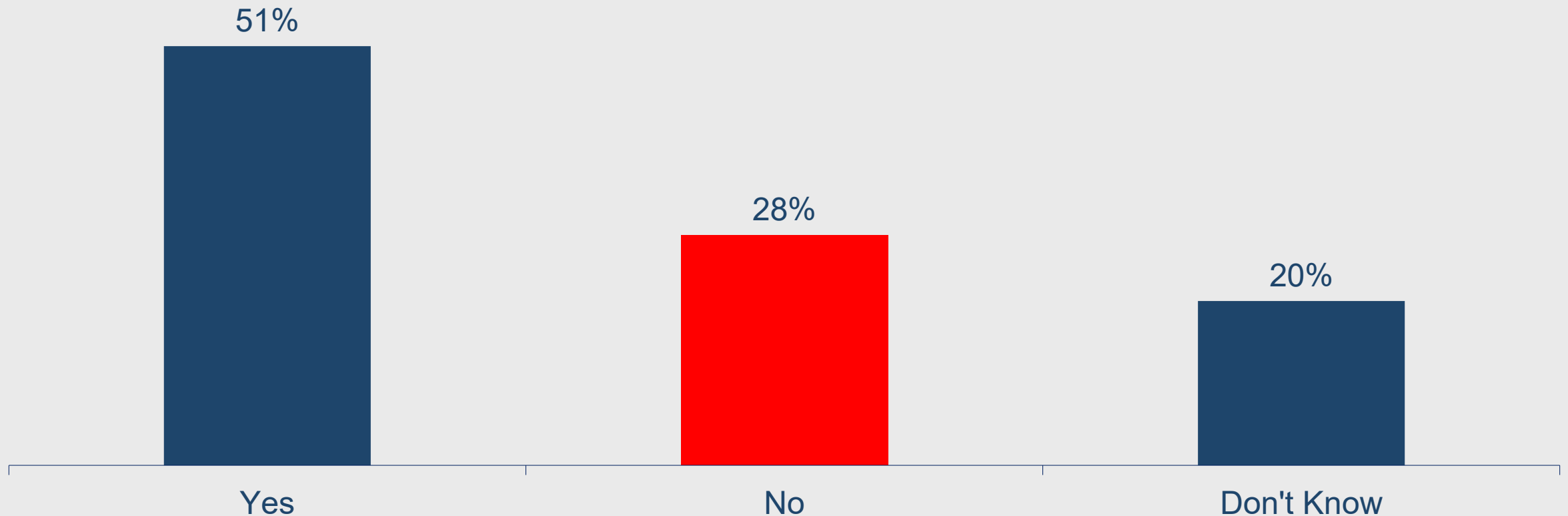
- 53% support city-funded grocery stores aimed at lowering food prices, even if they required moderate tax increases on high-income earners.



Question Text: Would you support city-funded grocery cooperatives aimed at lowering food prices, even if they required moderate tax increases on higher incomes?

Rent Freeze

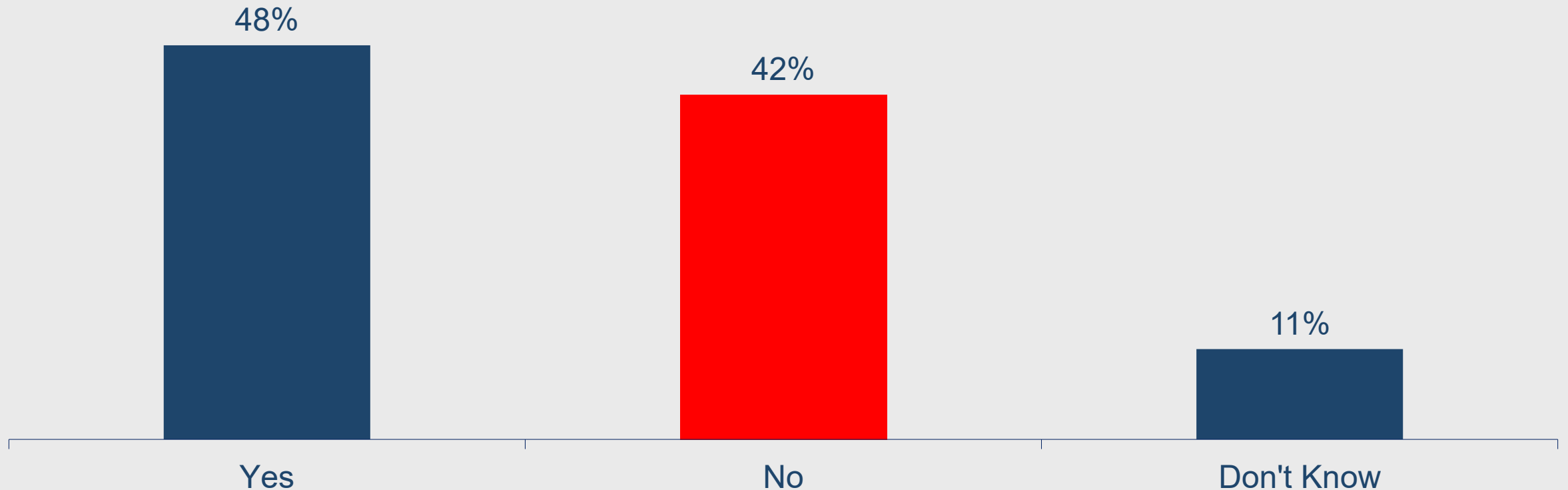
- 51% would support a freeze on rent-stabilized apartments if it meant increased taxes on income over \$1 million.



Question Text: Would you support a rent freeze on rent-stabilized apartments if it meant increased taxes on incomes over \$1 million?

Increase Corporate Tax to Finance Affordable Housing and Free Transit

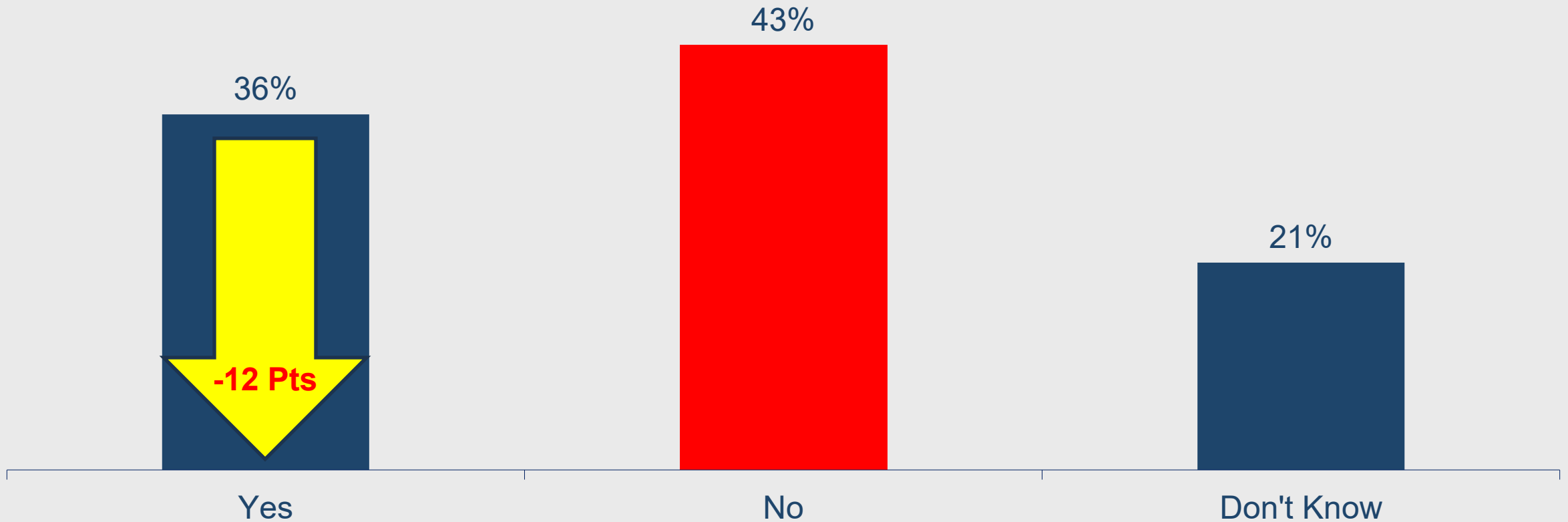
- 48% believe that the city should consider increasing the corporate tax for NYC-based companies to finance affordable housing and free public transit and 42% are opposed.



Question Text: Should the city consider increasing the corporate tax for NYC-based companies to finance affordable housing and free public transit?

Housing & Free Transit If Companies/Jobs Might Flee

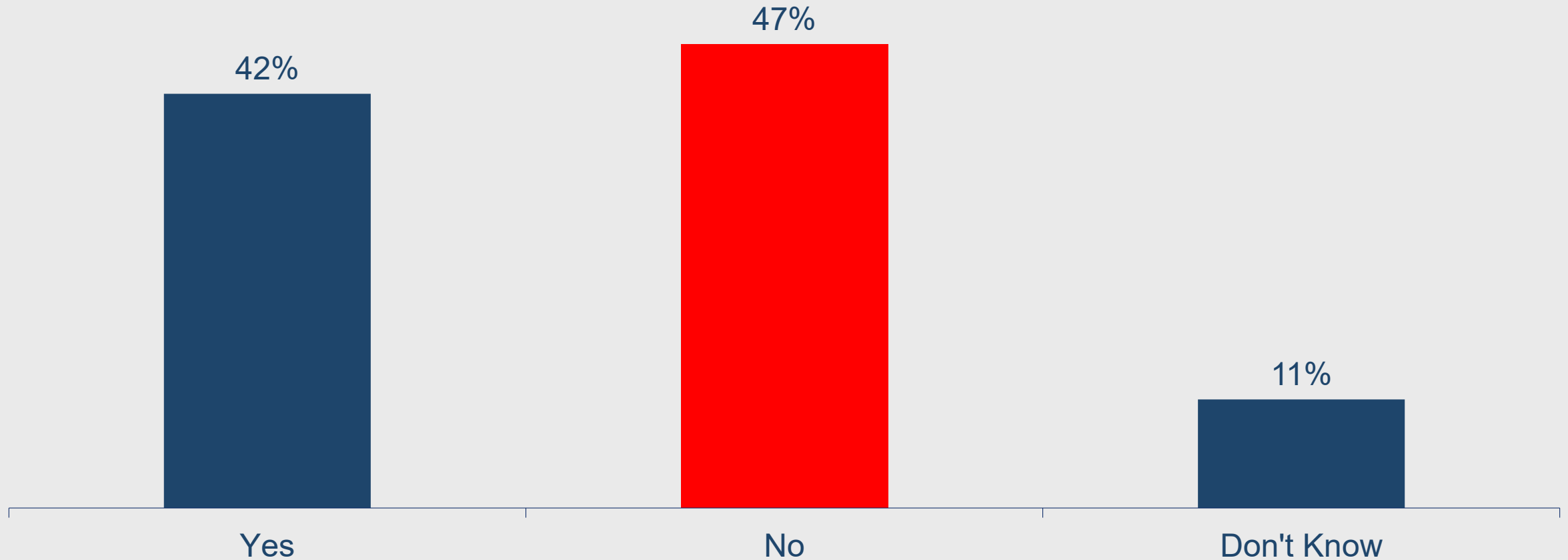
- However, support for this potential initiative drops to 36% when placed in the context that a large number of companies may leave NYC and take jobs with them as a result of this potential tax.



Question Text: Should the city consider increasing the corporate tax for NYC-based companies to finance affordable housing and free public transit, even if it means a larger number of companies may leave NYC and take jobs with them?

Free Public Buses

- 42% support free public buses funded by a wealth tax, while 47% are opposed.



Question Text: Would you support free public buses if funded by a wealth tax?

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a dense urban skyline, likely New York City, rendered in a monochromatic blue color scheme. The image shows a vast array of skyscrapers and buildings of varying heights and architectural styles, packed closely together. The word "Implications" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

Implications

Implications

- There are implications from this polling analysis for:
 - *Candidates running for office*
 - *Lobbyists and Advocacy Groups*
 - *PR and Public Affairs Professionals*
 - *Corporate Business Leaders*

For Candidates Running for Office

Anchor Your Message Around Affordability

- 93% of voters say NYC is facing an affordability crisis.
- 72% feel they are working hard but still struggling to achieve the American Dream.

Action: Build your campaign narrative around *kitchen table economics*—affordable housing, rent relief, grocery prices, and stagnant wages. This cuts across demographics and boroughs.

Promote Specific, Popular Solutions

- 68% support mandatory affordable housing units in new developments.
- 53% support city-funded grocery stores to lower prices.
- 51% support a rent freeze on rent-stabilized units with higher taxes on millionaires.

Action: Champion policies with majority support but also explain trade-offs (e.g., potential tax increases or developer pushback) to build credibility.

Focus on Older and Rent-Burdened Voters

- 56% struggle to pay rent/mortgage each month; many of these voters are 55+ and vote consistently.

Action: Tailor outreach and messaging to older renters and lower-income homeowners across outer boroughs.

For Lobbyists/Advocacy Organizations

Prioritize Policies with Cross-Ideological Appeal

- While tax-heavy proposals like wealth-funded free buses (42% support) are divisive, affordable housing mandates (68%) enjoy wide support.

Action: Advocate for policies that both progressive and centrist lawmakers can publicly support.

Be Prepared for Tax Resistance Framing

- Support drops 12 points when corporate tax increases are framed as threatening job loss.

Action: When lobbying around funding mechanisms (e.g., corporate or wealth taxes), pre-emptively address business flight and job loss concerns.

Highlight the Cost of Inaction

- 38% of voters say their financial situation is worse than four years ago; only 16% say it's better.

Action: Use this data to argue for urgent policy action and investment - even among moderates who may fear bold solutions.

For PR/Public Affairs Professionals

Connect Brands to Affordability Narratives

- A dominant voter concern is affordability, with 93% agreement.

Action: Position clients as part of the solution - whether through community investments, affordable product lines, or housing/community development initiatives.

Anticipate and Shape the Narrative on Corporate Taxes

- 48% support raising corporate taxes for housing/transit—but support drops to 36% if job loss is part of the message.

Action: Manage reputational risk by messaging around *shared responsibility*, job retention, and public-private partnerships instead of reactive opposition.

Leverage Emotional Resonance of the “American Dream”

- Only 23% say they are achieving the American Dream.

Action: Frame campaigns and storytelling around restoring opportunity and dignity to hard-working New Yorkers.

For Corporate Business Leaders

Expect Renewed Calls for Wealth and Corporate Taxes

- Support exists for taxing high-income earners and large companies to fund social programs.

Action: Engage early with policymakers to shape equitable, predictable tax policy and build goodwill through local reinvestment.

Housing Affordability Will Shape the Talent Pipeline

- If housing continues to be out of reach, employers may face workforce retention and recruitment challenges - especially for younger and middle-income workers.

Action: Consider supporting zoning/policy reforms that boost affordability.

Position as a Partner in Economic Equity

- With voters reporting income stagnation and financial hardship, companies who are seen as raising prices or hoarding profits face brand and regulatory risk.

Action: Emphasize price stability, community support programs, and long-term investment in NYC's future.

Thank You



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Research Methodology



Interview Dates

June 25 to 26, 2025



Interview Method

Text-to-Web off NYC voter file



Audience

817 New York City general election voters
Regular voters plus Anti-Trump “surge” Democratic voters.



Margin of Error

= +/-3.42% overall and larger for subgroups
95% confidence level



Sampling Composition

The sampling was drawn to reflect the known voting population characteristics including; race, age, gender, and borough.



Interpretation Note

Due to rounding certain answer choices may add up to +/- 100% or reflect the net percentages.