

Housing Narrative Lab

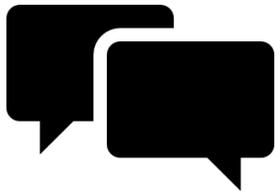
Public Opinion Research on Homeless Messaging

Celinda Lake
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Goals of the Research

- The goal of the Housing Narrative Lab is to show how homelessness is caused by inadequate and failed systems and we can solve homelessness by remaking these systems with sufficient resources that can provide safe housing for everyone.
- **The Lab's Theory of Change is that in order to win public policy victories that end homelessness, we must first WIN THE NARRATIVE around who is homeless and why.**
- The initial stage of the narrative and messaging research project identified and probed the status quo narrative of “personal responsibility” and identified values and messaging targets for a new homeless narrative focused on social responsibility and the root causes of homelessness.

Research Methodology



Public Opinion, Values & Messages Among the General Public

Focus Groups

Lake Research Partners, ASO Communications, and HIT Strategies designed and conducted 4 online focus groups among select audiences around homelessness, housing, and racial and economic inequality in October 2020.

- **Small business owners** in Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York, and Washington D.C.
- **Black/African American adults** age 25-60, Inner-ring suburbs of Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and New York
- **Latinx adults** age 25-60, Inner-ring suburbs of Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and New York
- **White adults** age 25-60 in Inner-ring suburbs of Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and New York

Online Dial Survey

Lake Research Partners, ASO Communications, and HIT Strategies designed and administered an online dial survey fielded January 5 – January 10, 2021. The survey reached a total of 1,401 adults nationwide along with oversamples of 100 African American adults, 100 Latinx adults, 100 Small Business Owners, and 100 Gen Z (age 18-23) adults.

The margin of error for the base sample is +/- 2.6%.

Defining Base, Opposition, and Persuadables

Base – 24% of adults

- Think people of color face greater barriers to economic success than White people, wealthy Americans were given more opportunities than others, and the government has a role to play.
- Strongly support policy agenda.
- More likely to be women, African American, Latinx, and Democratic.

Opposition – 10% of adults

- Think wealthy worked harder than others.
- Oppose government role in policy agenda and prioritize stopping the spread of COVID, creating good paying jobs, and lowering taxes over housing priorities.
- More likely male, Boomers, White, college-educated, and Republican.

Persuadable – 66% of adults

- Have views that at times reflect base adults, for example, wanting government to create more opportunities, and at times reflect opposition adults, for example, thinking housing is a private responsibility, people experience homelessness because of lack of personal discipline, and there is little we can do to solve homelessness.
- Demographic compositions more closely reflect demographics of the general public overall but are more likely to be Millennials.
- Small business owners are most likely to be persuadable.

Demographics	Total	Base	Opp.	Pers.
Men	49	41	61	50
Women	51	58	39	50
Gen Z	11	12	10	11
Millennial	30	26	22	33
Gen X	23	25	16	23
Boomer	32	33	46	30
White	66	64	71	66
AA	12	14	9	12
Latinx	16	18	12	16
Non-College	69	71	61	70
College	30	28	39	29
Democrat	43	63	16	40
Ind/DK	16	14	13	17
Republican	37	20	66	39
HH Income Under \$40K	42	47	28	42
HH Income Over \$40K	55	52	69	54
SBO	19	14	19	21

Executive Summary

- COVID-19 is top of mind but ***ensuring everyone can afford a place to live*** is high on people's list of priorities for elected officials to address.
- We need to develop messaging that shares a **positive vision of homeless policies** that benefit everyone, regardless of their income, zip code, or the color of their skin.
- With policies, **we need to articulate exactly what we're hoping to accomplish.** Our top value statements invoke:
 - a shared desire for everyone to get and keep a roof over their heads
 - a link between housing and the ability to get and hold onto a job
 - shared understanding about precarious financial situations that make finding and keeping stable housing difficult
- Cynicism and competing priorities threaten our success. **We need to reinforce that we can, and have, successfully implemented solutions in housing and homelessness when working together.**



Perceptions of Homelessness



Key Findings – Issue Priorities

- The issue at the top of Americans’ minds for elected officials to address this year, both nationally and in their own state, is **stopping the spread of the pandemic**. This is followed by **creating good paying jobs, expanding access to health care services, ensuring everyone can afford a place to live, lowering taxes, and making stable housing affordable**.
- Respondents feel relatively similar toward specific priorities whether at the state or national level, but base adults rate ensuring everyone can afford a place to live as a higher priority for national elected officials. Persuadables rate ensuring everyone can afford a place to live as a lower priority for both state and national elected officials.

% Rate 5 – Top Priority {TOP TIER}	Top priority for elected officials <u>in your state</u>			Top priority for elected officials <u>in the United States</u>		
	Total	Base	Pers	Total	Base	Pers
Stopping the spread of the pandemic	62	74	61	67	80	63
Creating good paying jobs	44	53	44	47	49	46
Expanding access to health care services	46	67	42	46	68	42
Ensuring everyone can afford a place to live	40	51	39	44	67	40
Lowering taxes	40	39	39	41	34	43
Making stable housing affordable	40	55	37	40	53	38

- The groups most likely to rate “making stable housing affordable” a top priority (5) for elected officials in the United States are African Americans (63%), mothers of children under 18 (62%), Latinx adults (56%), and adults under 30 (56%). The groups most likely to rate “making stable housing affordable” a top priority (5) for elected officials at the state level are African Americans (58%), mothers of children under 18 (58%), people with personal experience with homelessness (58%), people with personal experience with housing instability (54%), and Gen Xers (51%).

Key Findings – Issue Priorities Cont’d.

- Issue priorities differ among adults, especially among the base who make more differentiated judgments according to language. The top priority for the base at the national level is **ensuring everyone can afford a place to live** – our strongest language. The second top priority for our base is **ensuring everyone has a place to live**, which is the top priority at the state level.
- For persuadables, the strongest priority is also ensuring everyone can afford a place to live, but their judgments are less differentiated.
- Level of government matters to the base and less so to persuadables. The base favors national efforts more often than state actions but tend to be more differentiated when it comes to housing priorities. For example, the base favors national efforts ensuring everyone can afford a place to live by 10-points more than state action. The base prioritizes state action on ending homelessness and reducing homelessness slightly more than they favor national action.

% Rate 5 – Top Priority {SECOND TIER}	Top priority for elected officials <u>in your state</u>			Top priority for elected officials <u>in the United States</u>		
	Total	Base	Pers	Total	Base	Pers
Making housing affordable	40	53	38	39	56	36
Ending homelessness	38	51	37	36	48	37
Reducing homelessness	38	52	37	36	47	35

Key Findings – *Finding and Holding on to a Quality Place to Live*

- Adults believe a wide range of factors can contribute to people struggling to find and hold onto a quality place to live, but **substance abuse, job loss, and mental illness** rise to the top as very big reasons. The inability to find housing that is affordable, struggling to make ends meet, poor personal choices, a physical disability or chronic illness, and domestic violence round out the top tier of factors in people’s minds.
 - Base adults see a host of causes for why people struggle to find and hold onto a quality place to live but are most likely to say job loss/unemployment (75%), substance (drug/alcohol) abuse (66%), the inability to find affordable housing (66%), mental illness or related mental issues (63%), and struggles to make ends meet (63%) are very big reasons. More than half (52%) of persuadables say substance abuse is a very big reason that contributes to people struggling. Opposition adults see substance (drug/alcohol) abuse (65%), poor personal choices (65%), and mental illness or related mental issues (47%) as very big reasons.
- With less intensity, majorities also believe the inability to pay for medical expenses, social isolation, a breakup of a family, bad policies, racial discrimination, and family rejection can all contribute to people struggling to find and hold onto a quality place to live.
- **Adults are mixed on whether to place blame on any specific cause for people struggling to find and hold onto a quality place to live.** With low intensity, a plurality blames substance abuse issues (+8 blame), politicians passing laws that benefit the wealthy (+2), and rent or the cost of housing being too expensive (+1). For the base, politicians (66% blame), lack of available affordable homes (66%), the cost of housing (64%), and wages being too low (62%) rise to the top. Persuadables are most likely to blame substance abuse issues (47%), rent or the cost of housing being too expensive (44%), and politicians (42%).
- Most adults do not blame racial discrimination or bias, family rejection, the lack of homeless shelters or lack of space in shelters, limited access to mental health care, not having a support system, or the conditions of living on the streets being tolerable. A plurality of the base blame lack of access to mental health services (49% blame) and racial discrimination or bias (47%).

Key Findings – *Who is Homeless?*

- Adults nationwide are most likely to say **people with substance abuse issues** and **people with mental illness** are more likely than others to be homeless. With less intensity, unemployed adults, veterans, Black/African Americans, LGBTQ+ youth, and families with children round out the top tier of associations.
 - *People with substance abuse issues*: 43% much more likely to be homeless compared to others, 68% more likely
 - *People with mental illness*: 40% much more likely to be homeless compared to others, 70% more likely
 - *Unemployed adults*: 29% much more likely to be homeless compared to others, 68% more likely
 - *Veterans*: 24% much more likely to be homeless compared to others, 58% more likely
 - *Black/African Americans*: 18% much more likely to be homeless compared to others, 48% more likely
 - *LGBTQ+ Youth*: 16% much more likely to be homeless compared to others, 37% more likely
 - *Families with children*: 15% much more likely to be homeless compared to others, 40% more likely
- More than half of the base say people with substance abuse issues (58%) or mental illness (51%) are much more likely to be homeless compared to others. The base tends to believe LGBTQ+ youth are much more likely than LGTBQ+ people (30% vs. 17%), the elderly are much more likely than youth (22% vs. 9% much more likely), and Black/African Americans (33%) and Native Americans/American Indians (20%) are much more likely than other racial cohorts to be homeless.
- A plurality of persuadables say people with substance abuse issues (38%), mental illness (36%), unemployed adults (27%), and veterans (22%) are much more likely to be homeless compared to others. Opposition adults say people with substance abuse issues (47%) and people with mental illness (38%) are much more likely to be homeless compared to others.

Key Findings – *Who is Homeless? Cont'd.*

- A solid majority of adults say **people who live on the streets (84% yes), in abandoned buildings (82%), in their cars (80%), and who are in homeless shelters (79%)** are homeless. At least three-quarters of the base, persuadables, and opposition would also label these groups as homeless.
 - Adults across gender, age, educational attainment, partisanship, race, region, and household income are net likely to consider people who live on the streets, in abandoned buildings, in their cars, and who are in homeless shelters to be homeless.
- Views are more mixed toward **people who stay with friends who have no other housing** and toward **people who stay with family members or other relatives with no other housing**. Adults split toward people living with friends – 41% say yes, 44% say no – and a plurality say people who stay with family are not homeless – 37% yes, 49% no. Half of base adults say people who stay with friends are homeless (50%) but split toward people who stay with family or other relatives (43% yes, 45% no). Persuadables lean toward believing people who stay with friends (39% yes, 44% no) and people who live with family or other relatives are not homeless (35% yes, 49% no).
 - Men, Boomers, Republicans, small business owners, adults in the West, and those with higher household incomes are least likely to consider people who live with friends or family to be homeless.

Now you will see a list of different factors that might contribute to people struggling to find and hold onto a quality place to live. Please indicate for each whether you think it is a very big reason, somewhat of a reason, not that much of a reason, or not a reason at all for why people struggle to find and hold onto a quality place to live.* {TOP TIER}

- Base adults see a host of causes for why people struggle to find and hold onto a quality place to live. They are most likely to say:
 - job loss/unemployment
 - substance (drug/alcohol) abuse
 - the inability to find affordable housing
 - mental illness or related mental issues
 - struggles to make ends meet
- More than half of persuadables say substance abuse is a very big reason that contributes to people struggling.

% Very Big Reason {TOP TIER}			
	Total	Base	Pers
Substance (drug/alcohol) abuse	56	66	52
Job loss/unemployment	51	75	45
Mental illness or related mental issues	48	63	43
Inability to find housing that is affordable	43	66	38
Struggles to make ends meet	42	63	38
Poor personal choices	39	29	40
A physical disability or chronic illness	35	45	33
Domestic violence	35	49	31

How much blame do you place on each of the following possible causes that might contribute to people struggling to find and hold onto a quality place to live?* {TOP TIER}

- When it comes to who or what is to blame, base adults are most likely to say politicians, lack of available affordable homes, the cost of housing, and wages being too low.
- Persuadables are most likely to blame substance abuse issues, rent or the cost of housing being too expensive, and politicians.

% Total Blame {TOP TIER}			
	Total	Base	Pers
Politicians passing laws that benefit the wealthy few and special interests while hurting most of us	46	66	42
Rent or the cost of housing is too expensive for people to afford	46	64	44
Substance abuse issues	50	49	47
Wages are too low	40	62	36
There are not enough affordable homes available	44	66	39
Even when we build more housing, developers go for the wealthy end of the housing market	40	55	38
There are not enough good paying jobs available	36	50	33

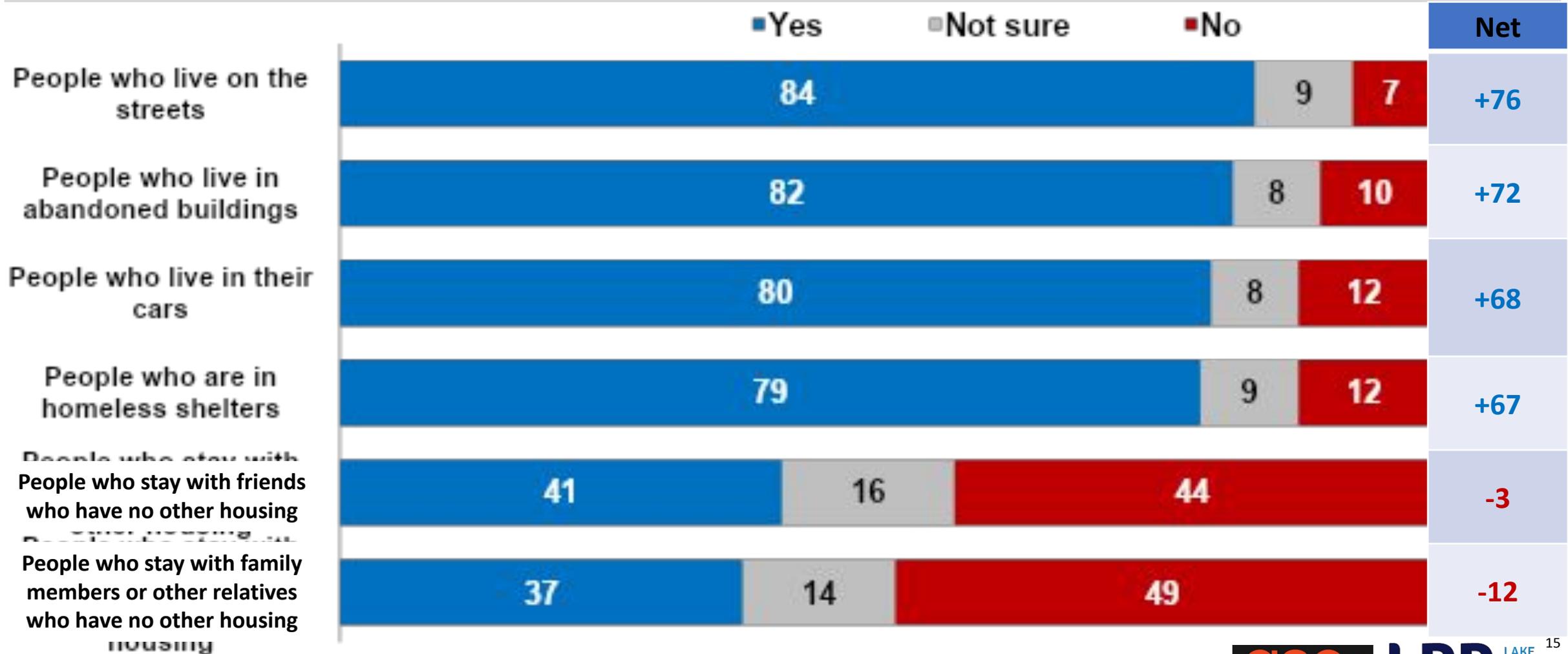
Indicate whether you think they are more likely or less likely to be homeless compared to others.*

[% Much More Likely]		All	B	O	P
People with substance abuse issues		43	58	47	38
People with mental illness		40	51	38	36
Unemployed adults		29	38	12	27
Veterans		24	33	17	22
LGTBQ+ youth		16	30	13	11
LGTBQ+ people		13	17	11	12
The elderly		14	22	9	12
Teens		11	9	10	11
Men		14	13	16	14
Women		12	15	8	11
Black/African Americans		18	33	15	12
Native Americans/American Indians		14	20	10	13
Latinos		10	8	10	11
Asian Americans		9	6	9	10
Whites		8	6	7	9

*All items split-sampled

A solid majority of adults say people who live on the streets, in abandoned buildings, in their cars, and who are in homeless shelters are considered homeless. Views are more mixed toward people who stay with friends who have no other housing and toward people who stay with family members or other relatives with no other housing.

Please indicate whether you consider them to be homeless or not.



There is more similarity than differences across base, opposition, and persuadable adults on who's considered homeless.

Please indicate whether you consider them to be homeless or not.

	Base	Net	Opposition	Net	Persuadables	Net
People who live on the streets	92	+87	88	+76	81	+71
People who live in abandoned buildings	91	+86	86	+73	78	+67
People who live in cars	89	+81	83	+70	76	+63
People who are in homeless shelters	87	+79	81	+64	76	+63
People who stay with friends who have no other housing	50	+12	32	-28	39	-5
People who stay with family members or other relatives...	43	-2	33	-25	35	-14

Who Has a Role to Play?

- A solid majority of adults say city, local, state, and federal governments play a role in *ensuring we all have a place to live and in solving homelessness*. With less intensity, adults nationwide also believe community groups, individuals, and the business community have a role to play.
- Base and persuadable adults believe all groups and organizations have a role to play, which, especially among persuadables, makes accountability difficult. The base, who are defined by seeing a role for government, would have all levels of government involved in housing and homelessness.

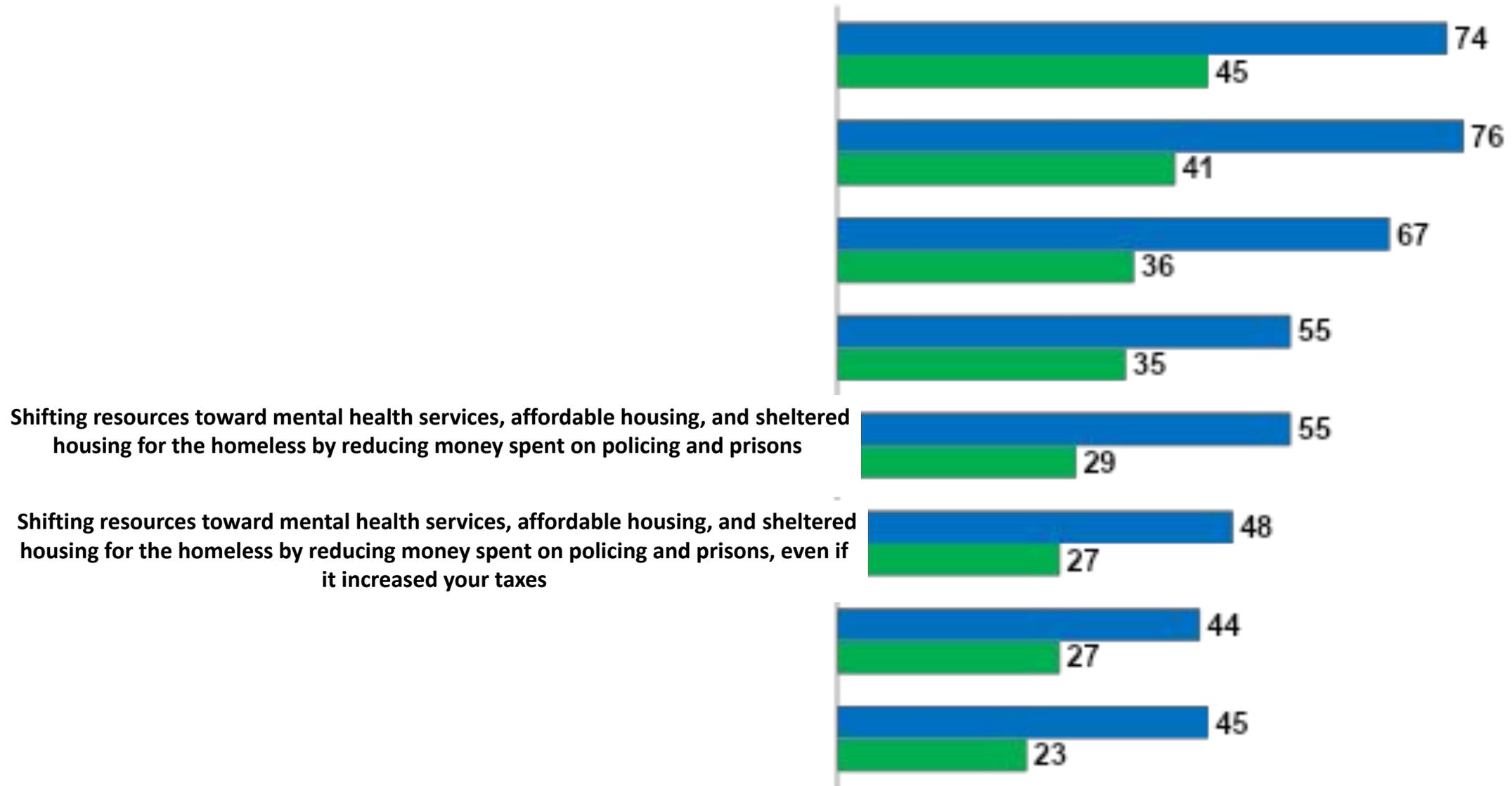
% Major Role (% Role)	<i>...ensuring we all have a place to live</i>		<i>...solving homelessness</i>	
	Base	Persuadables	Base	Persuadables
Federal Govt	66 (88)	36 (69)	69 (91)	38 (66)
State Govt	63 (90)	36 (72)	71 (92)	39 (70)
Local/City Govt	61 (92)	38 (70)	67 (91)	37 (69)
Community Groups	45 (85)	29 (69)	35 (84)	32 (69)
Individuals	35 (72)	30 (61)	32 (74)	30 (61)
Business Community	33 (78)	22 (58)	32 (75)	24 (55)



Reactions toward Policy Proposals

Now you will see a list of different policy proposals that **local** services and programs could do.*

% Strongly Favor Graphed

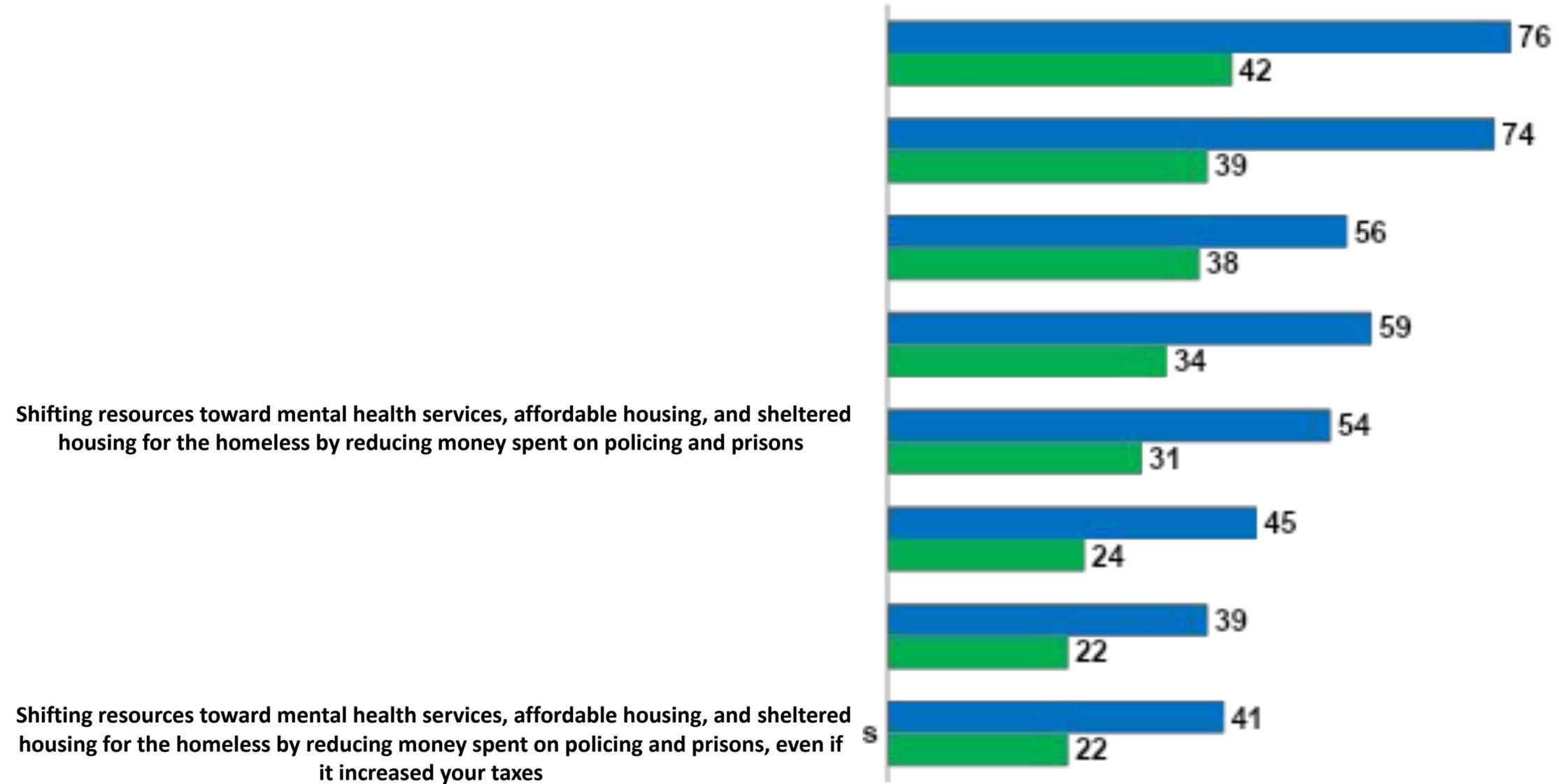


Base
Persuadable

*Question and all statements split-sampled

Now you will see a list of different policy proposals that **Government** services and programs could do.*

% Strongly Favor Graphed



Base
Persuadable

*Question and all statements split-sampled





Values and Language

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.* (TOP TIER)

VALUE STATEMENTS AROUND HAVING A QUALITY PLACE TO LIVE

% Strongly Agree {Ranked by Base % Strongly Agree}			
	Total	Base	Pers
We need policies that put housing within reach for everyone	44	75	37
Every person deserves a safe, quality, and affordable place to live no matter what we look like or where we come from	52	74	47
Without an address or a roof over your head, you are likely to struggle to get and keep a job	50	71	45
Everyone should have a safe, quality place to call home no matter their income level	45	71	41
Without a job, you are likely to struggle to get and keep a roof over your head	57	70	54
Any one of us or someone we love could find ourselves struggling to afford a quality place to live so we must ensure there are programs and supports in place for all	43	69	37
Everyone should have a safe, quality place to call home, no exceptions	44	67	40

- The top statements for our base around having a quality place to live are policy-focused, as the base is more action- and solution-oriented. They like the idea of policies putting housing within reach for everyone.
- Persuadable adults share a number of top value statements with our base - these statements are strong enough to hold the base and swing additional adults to our side.

*All statements split-sampled

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.* (TOP TIER)

VALUE STATEMENTS AROUND NOT HAVING A STABLE PLACE TO LIVE

% Strongly Agree {Ranked by Base % Strongly Agree}			
	Total	Base	Pers
No matter our race, gender, or income we all want to get and keep a roof over our heads	55	77	48
We need to solve the homelessness issue in our communities because shelter is a human need	44	72	39
In the richest country in the world, seeing families on the street means something is fundamentally wrong with our society	39	67	33
This pandemic has exposed just how vulnerable many of us are to financial disaster while the wealthiest few profit and refuse to contribute their fair share so all of us can have what we need	40	66	35
This pandemic has truly revealed how critical it is that we have systems and supports in place to ensure everyone can make ends meet, get care and have a roof over our heads	41	65	37
For some of us, getting laid off or having huge unforeseen expenses means a rough patch, but for others it means homelessness	43	64	39
We all struggle with something, no matter our gender, race, or income -- and for some of us, that includes being able to afford a quality place to live	43	60	40

- Value statements that invoke a shared desire for all to get and keep a roof over their heads are strongest for adults overall, our base, and persuadable adults.
- While base and persuadable adults see systemic problems, the opposition is individualistically focused.

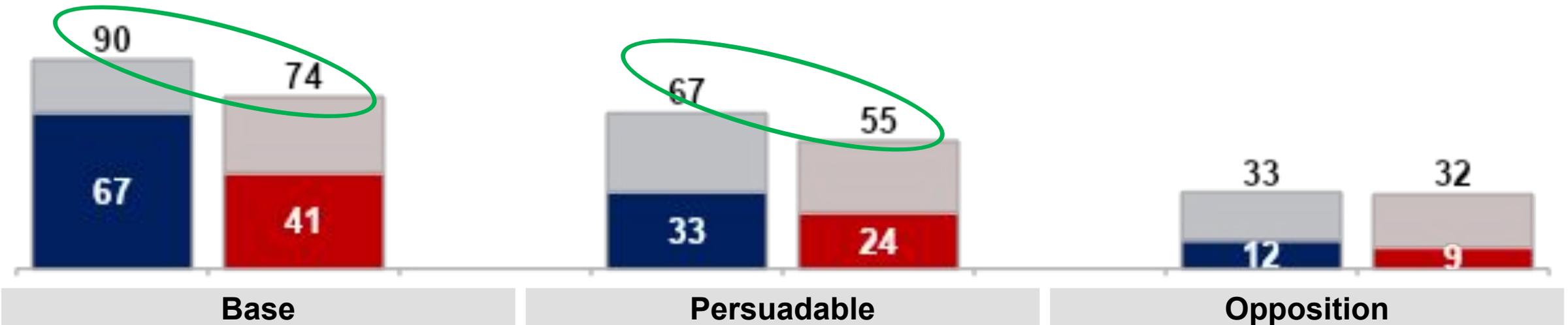
*All statements split-sampled

Base and persuadable adults are more likely to agree that in the richest country in the world, seeing families on the street means something is fundamentally wrong than they are to agree that if we had the right policies in place, almost no one would be homeless. Value statements work, but efficacy is a problem even with the base.

Please indicate if you agree or disagree.

In the richest country in the world, seeing families on the street means something is fundamentally wrong with our society*

If we had the right policies in place, almost no one would be homeless in America*



"How can we ethically allow homelessness to occur in our country? Supposedly the wealthiest country in the world. How can we allow that?" – White Female, Inner-Ring Suburbs

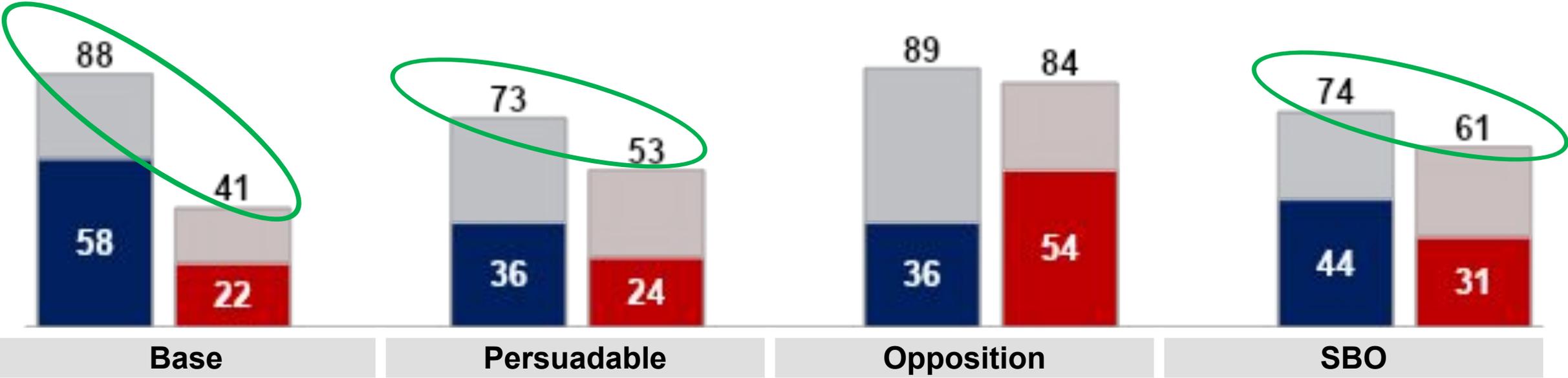


Community safety is a stronger argument for base, persuadable, and small business owners than enforcement of laws prohibiting the homeless from public areas.

Please indicate if you agree or disagree.

Communities are safer when people do not have to live on the streets*

Communities should enforce laws to prohibit the homeless from public areas like parks, streets, and libraries*



*Split-sampled question

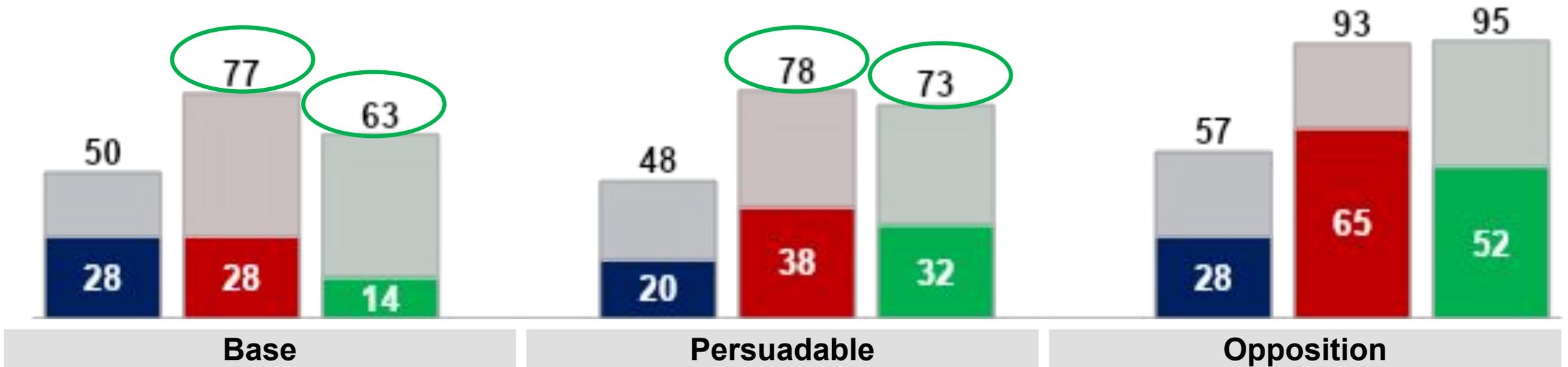
Efficacy and cynicism that solutions can work threatens homelessness initiatives as more than three-quarters of the base and persuadables agree that no matter what is done there will always be people who remain homeless, which lowers intense agreement. The opposition's messaging around personal responsibility playing a role in homelessness also resonates with most of our base and persuadables.

Please indicate if you agree or disagree.

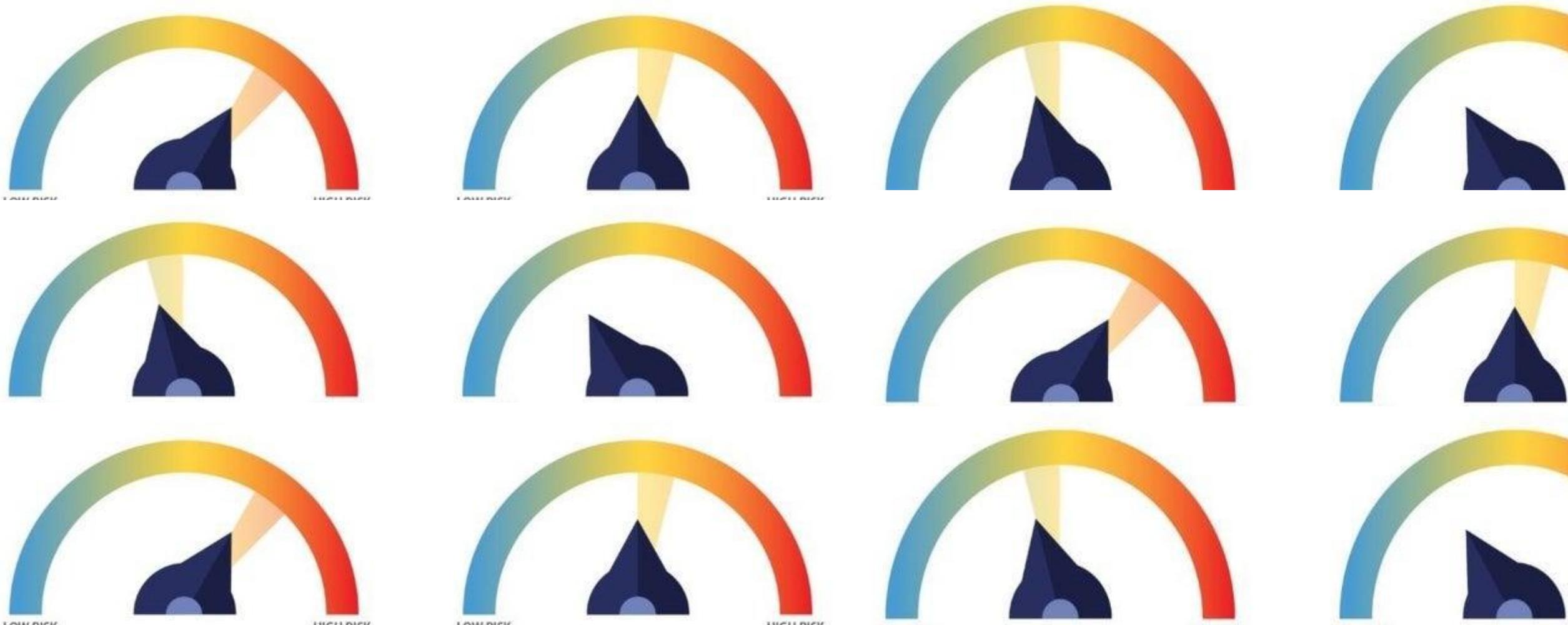
Fewer people would sleep on the streets if there were more active policing making it "less tolerable"*

No matter what is done there will always be some people who remain homeless*

People who are homeless need to take personal responsibility for improving their situation*



*Split-sampled question



Dial Messages

Summary of Message Ratings

Each message on our side outperforms the opposition messages in conscious and unconscious ratings among adults overall, the base, and persuadables, but persuadable adults find both Personal Responsibility and Criminalization convincing.

Summary of Message Ratings (Sorted by Total Mean Convincing Rating)	Mean Convincing Rating				Mean Dial Rating			
	Total	Base	Pers.	Oppo.	Total	Base	Pers.	Oppo.
Housing First	71	86	70	38	66	73	65	54
Joining Together	68	81	68	36	64	70	64	50
RCN Explicit	68	83	68	31	64	72	63	46
A Place To Call Home	67	83	66	31	62	70	61	44
Imagine a World	67	81	67	30	65	71	64	49
Rigged Game	66	79	66	33	62	68	61	49
Opposition: Personal Responsibility	58	45	62	73	59	51	61	65
Opposition: Criminalization	48	34	51	58	53	44	55	60

Summary of Message Ratings

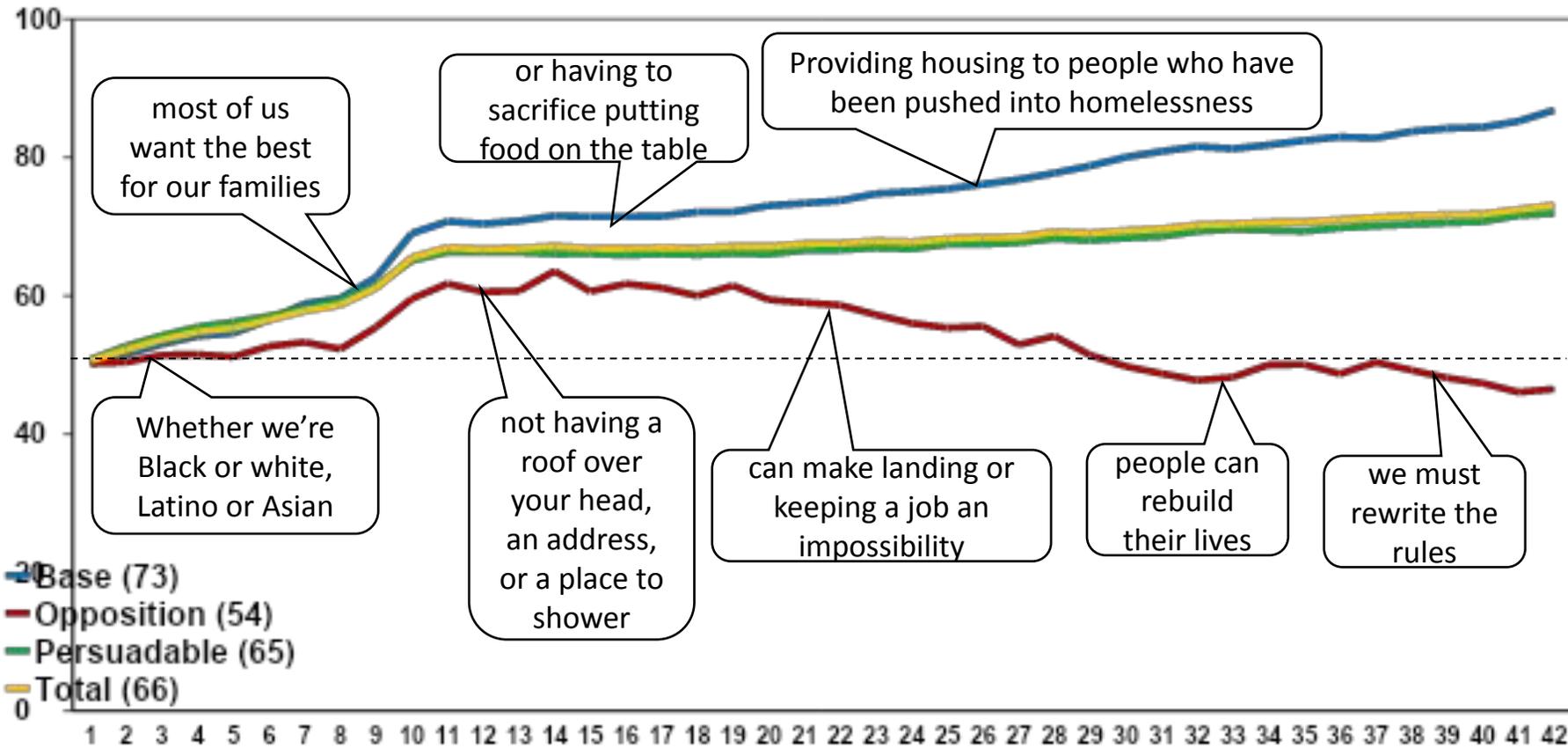
Each message on our side outperforms the opposition messages in conscious and unconscious ratings across racial groups and among small business owners, but *Personal Responsibility* has traction.

Summary of Message Ratings (Sorted by Total Mean Convincing Rating)	Mean Convincing Rating						Mean Dial Rating					
	Total	White	AA	Latinx	Gen Z	SBO	Total	White	AA	Latinx	Gen Z	SBO
Housing First	71	69	78	73	69	67	66	65	69	68	65	67
Joining Together	68	67	76	69	67	66	64	64	67	65	63	65
RCN Explicit	68	66	79	70	70	65	64	63	70	66	66	65
A Place To Call Home	67	65	75	70	67	62	62	61	66	64	61	64
Imagine a World	67	65	77	68	65	62	65	63	68	67	64	66
Rigged Game	66	65	75	66	65	63	62	60	66	63	61	64
Opposition: Personal Responsibility	58	60	55	55	51	61	59	60	58	58	57	62
Opposition: Criminalization	48	48	47	47	42	48	53	53	54	53	51	57

Housing First



Persuadables and adults overall dial up modestly over the course of the message. People dial up on the shared values of “most of us want the best for our families” and they like the positive vision and solution-oriented framing.

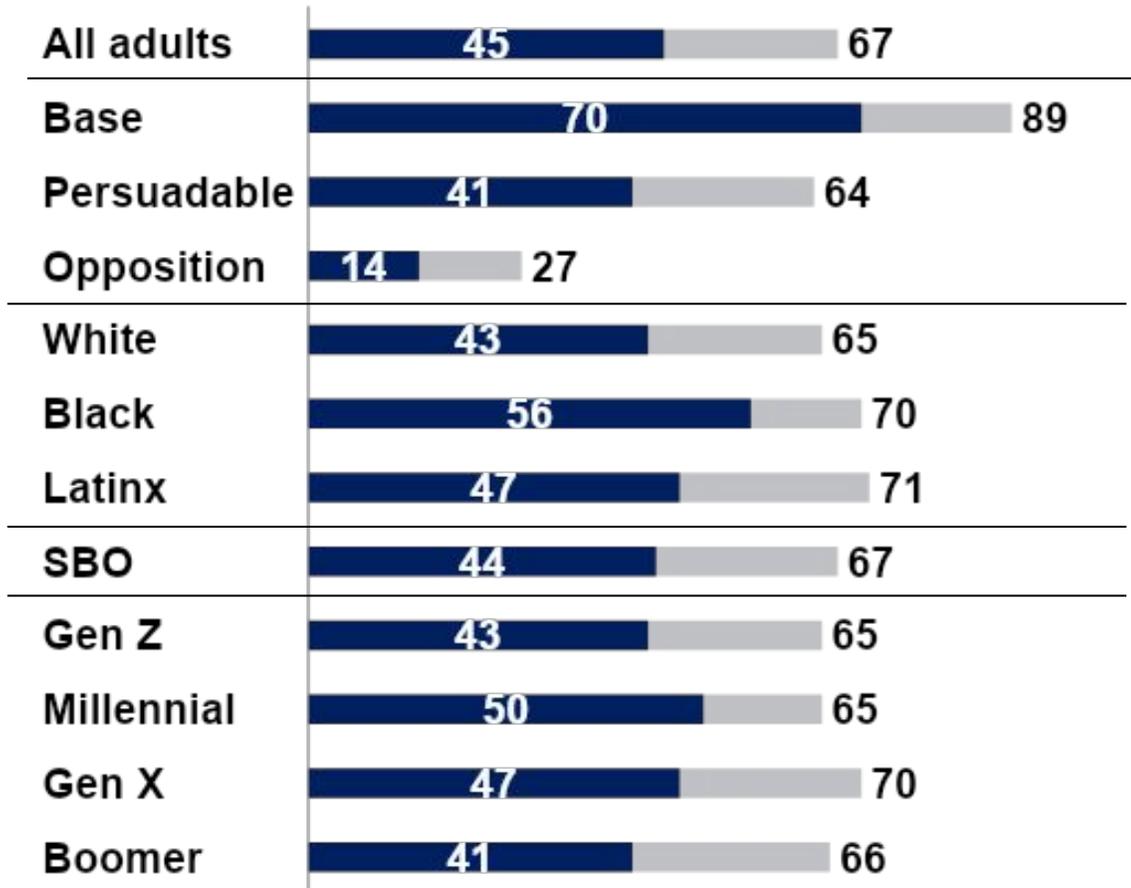


Whether we're Black or white, Latino or Asian, Native or newcomer, most of us want the best for our families. But not having a roof over your head, an address, or a place to shower -- or having to sacrifice putting food on the table in order to pay rent -- can make landing or keeping a job an impossibility. Providing housing to people who have been pushed into homelessness is a proven approach that ensures people can rebuild their lives. To make this a place where all of our families can thrive, we must rewrite the rules to ensure everyone has shelter.

Housing First

How convincing did you find this message?

80-100 – Very Convincing 51-100 – Total Convincing



WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Leads with the values-based statement, “most of us want the best for our families,” generating a quick dial up for all groups.
- ✓ Latinx adults dial up at “native or newcomer.”
- ✓ The opposition is successfully alienated by the idea of providing housing to those experiencing homelessness, meanwhile the base dials up at this concept.
- ✓ It works for Democrats, urban adults, and Black adults to say that providing housing to those experiencing homelessness is a “proven approach.”
- ✓ Democrats, Republicans, the base, Latinx adults, and urban adults dial up at “rewrite the rules,” a phrase we have seen be successful in past work.
- ✓ Having to sacrifice putting food on the table in order to pay rent has resonance with independents.
- ✓ This message generates real intensity with the base and alienates the opposition by the link to getting a job, rebuilding lives, and rewriting the rules.

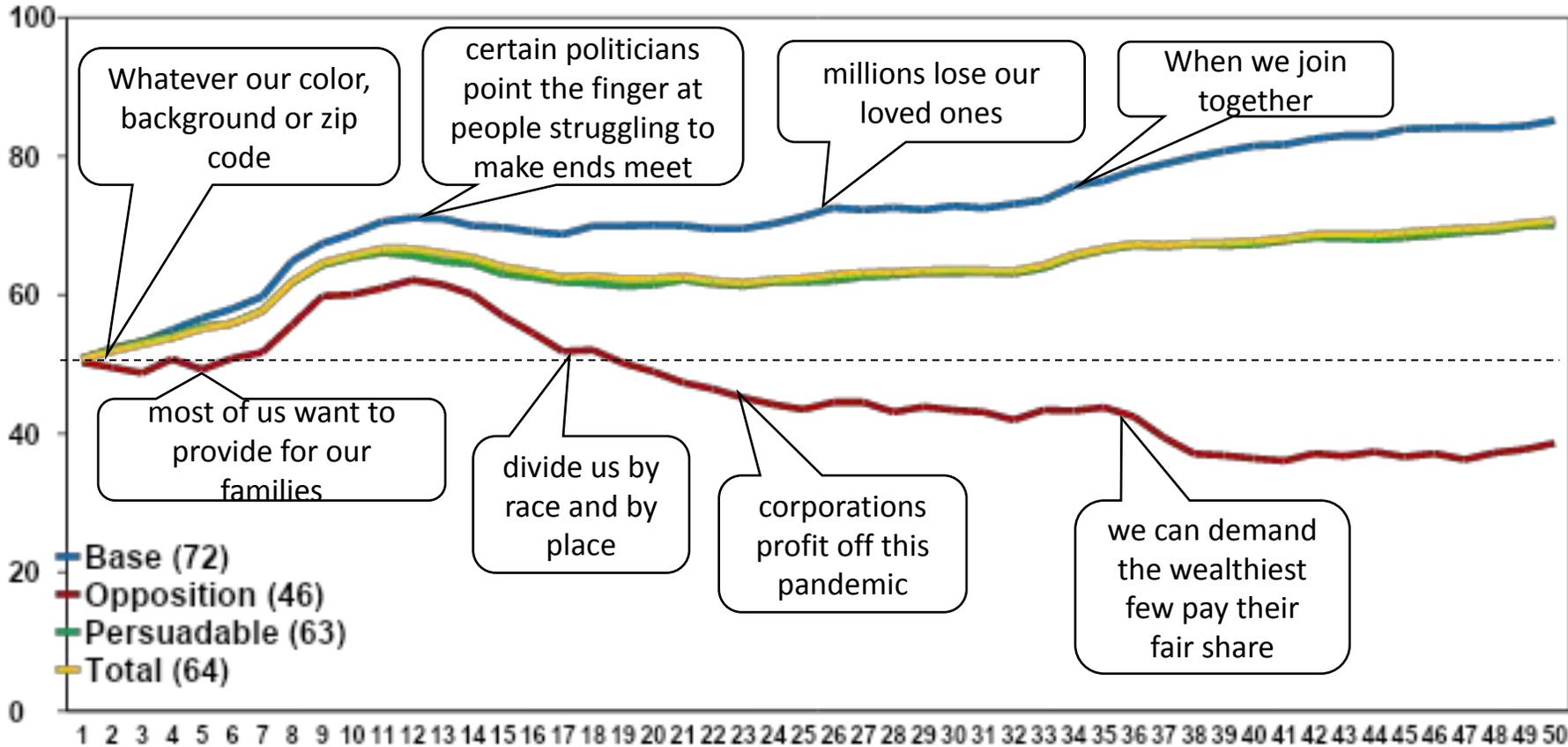
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- Adults plateau at “But not having a roof over your head, an address, or a place to shower -- or having to sacrifice putting food on the table in order to pay rent -- can make landing or keeping a job an impossibility.”
- Modest dialing at the call to action.

Race Class Narrative (RCN) Explicit



This message successfully alienates the opposition and energizes the base. Bringing in the pandemic works for the base, but dials are modest in response, and it plateaus among persuadable adults. Persuadables dial up at the call to action.

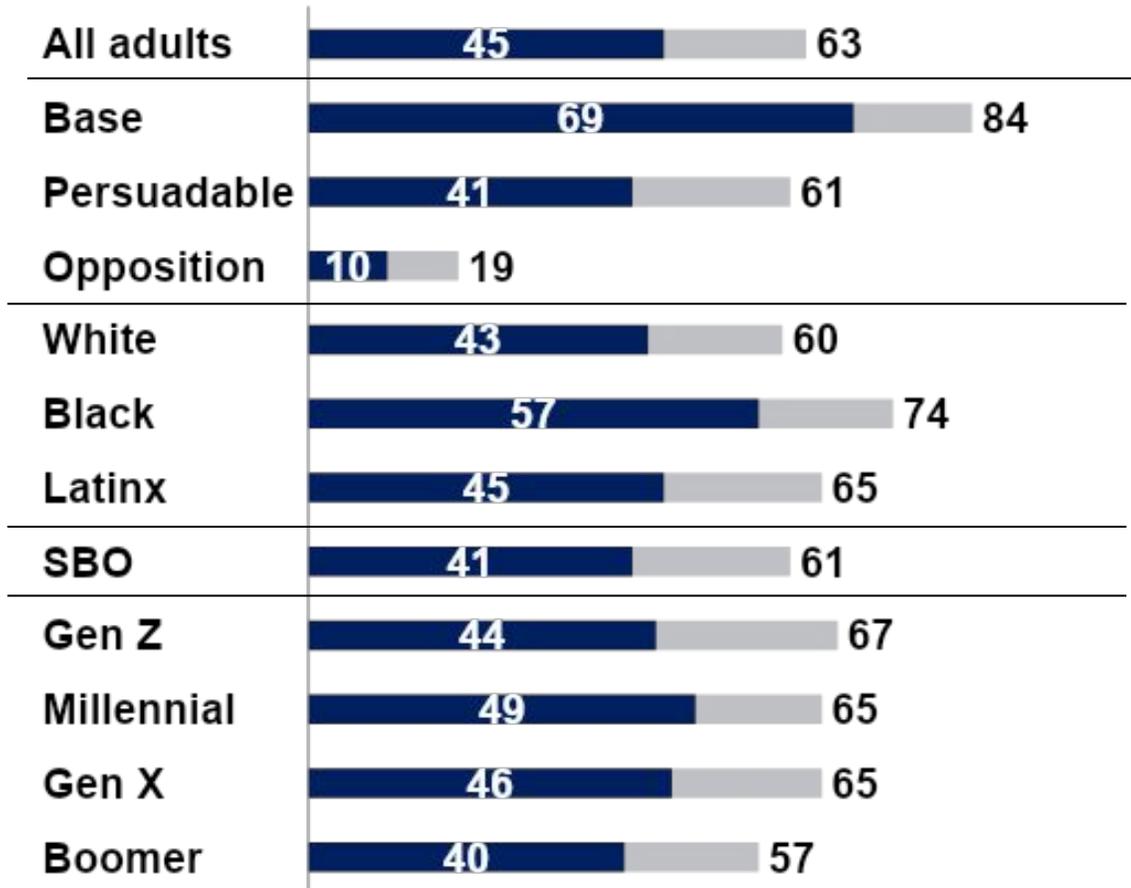


Whatever our color, background or zip code, most of us want to provide for our families and know that hardship won't mean homelessness. But today, certain politicians point the finger at people struggling to make ends meet or divide us by race and by place while corporations profit off this pandemic even as millions lose our loved ones and livelihoods, and families get evicted and forced onto the streets. When we join together, we can demand the wealthiest few pay their fair share so that homelessness is a choice we don't need to keep making. Together, we can demand proven solutions that ensure every family has a place to call home.

Race Class Narrative (RCN) Explicit

How convincing did you find this message?

80-100 – Very Convincing 51-100 – Total Convincing



WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Some take off with framing of “whatever our color...most of us want to provide for our families” and there is strong reaction to the shared value of most wanting to provide for our families.
- ✓ This is one of the most polarizing messages.
- ✓ Universal dial up from all but the opposition who dial down around the call to join together to demand the wealthiest pay their fair share, and demand proven solutions.
- ✓ Saying “know that hardship won’t mean homelessness” works well across race.
- ✓ Opposition is alienated by “hardship won’t mean homelessness” and mention of politicians’ division. They stay alienated through the end of the message.
- ✓ Base and persuadables like joining together.
- ✓ Persuadables dial up at the call to action as well.

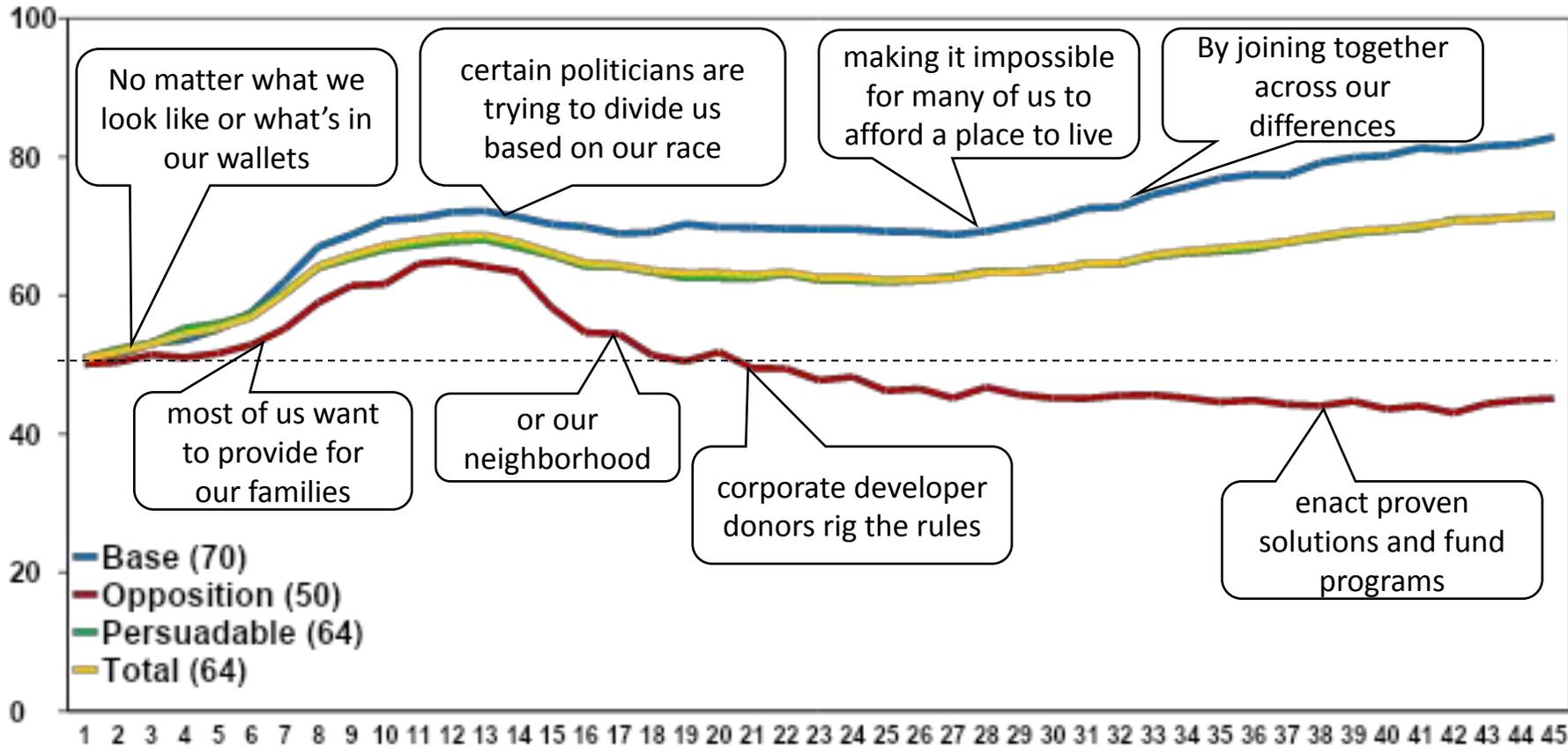
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- Demographic subgroups plateau around description of consequences like “families evicted and forced on to the streets,” and “millions lose our loved ones and livelihoods.”
- Small business owners are less likely to dial up at the call to action, plateauing here.

Joining Together



This message successfully alienates the opposition and persuadables dial more closely to our base. “By joining together across differences” is strong language for base and persuadables. People respond strongly to the shared value of most of us wanting to provide for our families.

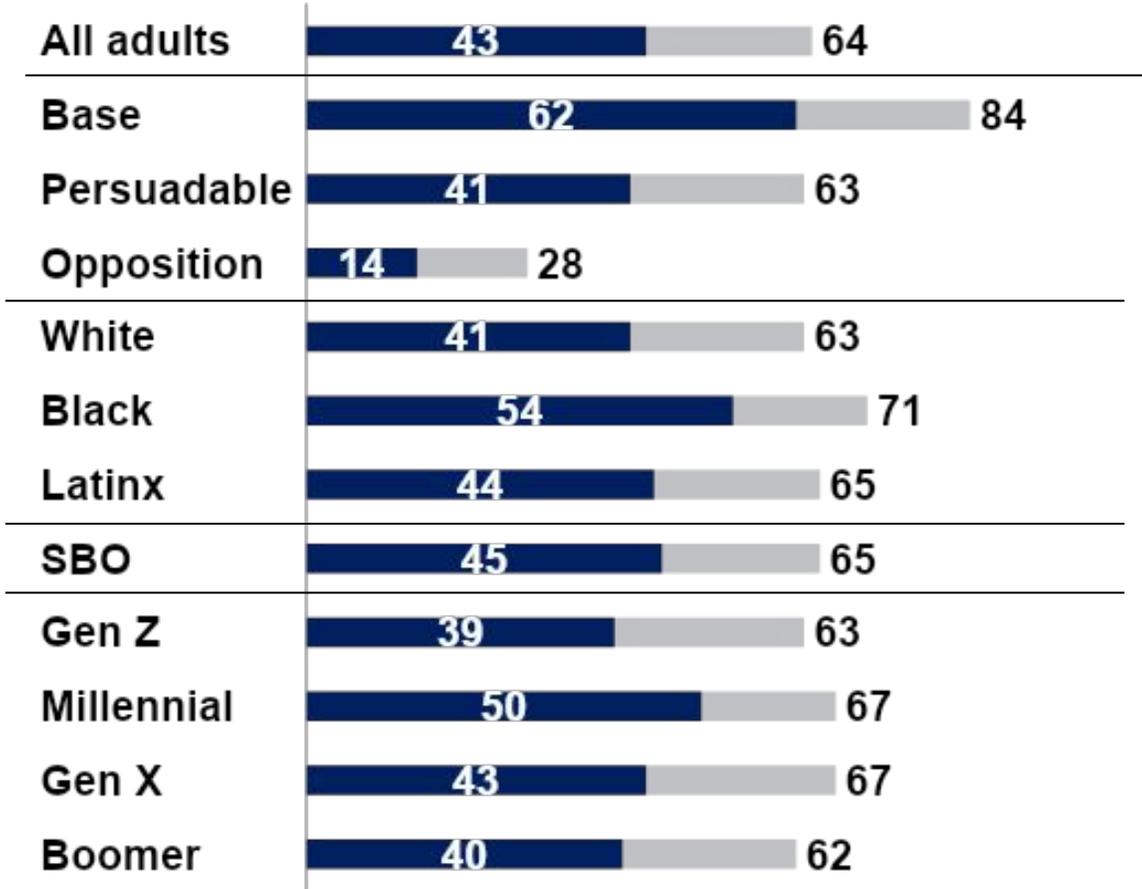


No matter what we look like or what's in our wallets, most of us want to provide for our families, have a roof over our heads, and pursue our dreams. But today, certain politicians are trying to divide us based on our race or our neighborhood, so we'll look the other way when their corporate developer donors rig the rules to hoard ever more profits for themselves while making it impossible for many of us to afford a place to live. By joining together across our differences, we can enact proven solutions and fund programs that ensure we all have a place to live our lives and raise our families, no exceptions.

Joining Together

How convincing did you find this message?

80-100 – Very Convincing 51-100 – Total Convincing



WHAT WORKS

- ✓ Leading with the value that “most of us want to provide for our families” creates a strong start.
- ✓ People respond to the ending of positive solutions and joining together across our differences.
- ✓ The opposition is immediately alienated by calling out certain politicians who want to divide us based on our differences.
- ✓ Black adults dial up (meaning they positively respond) through the call-out that the actions of corrupt politicians and the wealthy adversely affect housing opportunities for everyday people.
- ✓ Latinx adults dial up around the solution of enacting solutions and funding programs.
- ✓ Boomers dial up consistently after “by joining together across our differences.”
- ✓ Persuadables dial up pattern mirrors the base, while the opposition stays alienated.

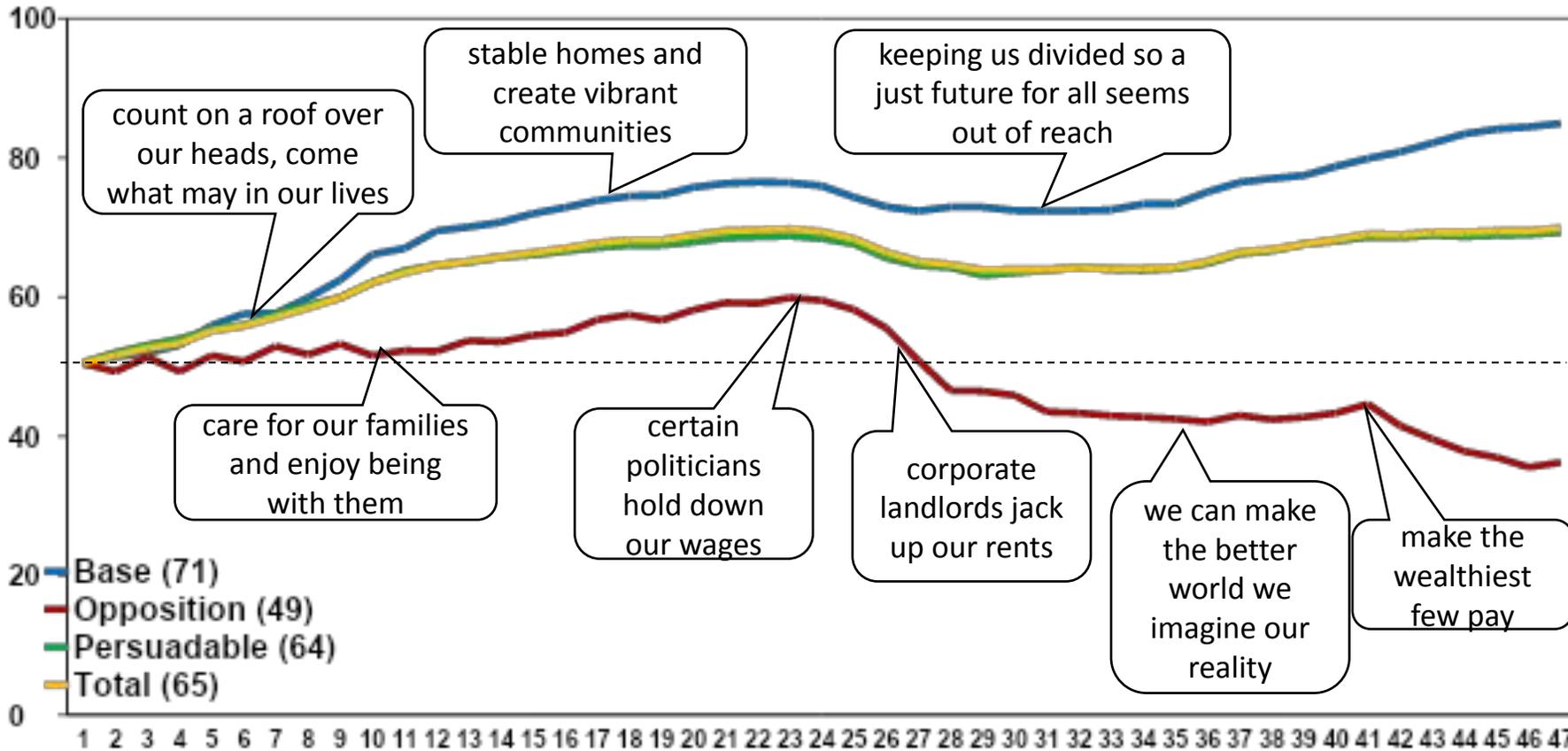
WHAT FALLS SHORT

- Slight drop at call-out of dog-whistle politics among most groups, including the base.
- Small business owners plateau through the middle of the message, and only dial up at the values-based beginning and call to action at the end. The description of the problem doesn’t resonate with them.



Imagine a World

The opposition is alienated when the villain is named. Base and persuadables both plateau in dialing when they hear “keeping us divided so a just future for all seems out of reach” but dial up at the call to action. The opposition and all other groups dial up at “we can make the better world we imagine our reality.”

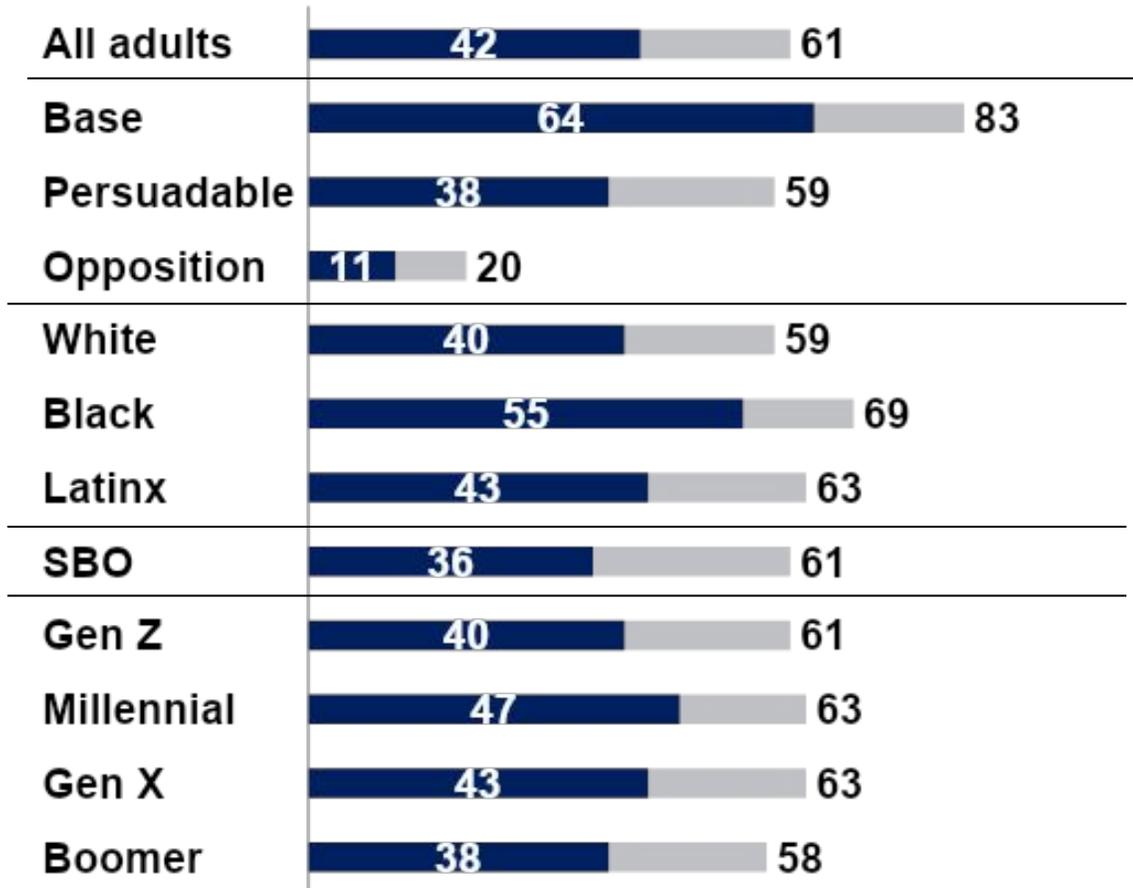


Imagine a world where no matter what we look like or where we come from, we can count on a roof over our heads, come what may in our lives. Where we can care for our families and enjoy being with them. Where neighbors head to stable homes and create vibrant communities. Right now, certain politicians hold down our wages while corporate landlords jack up our rents -- keeping us divided so a just future for all seems out of reach. But we can make the better world we imagine our reality by joining together to make the wealthiest few pay their fair share so all of us can have what we need.

Imagine a World

How convincing did you find this message?

80-100 – Very Convincing 51-100 – Total Convincing



WHAT WORKS

- ✓ This message has a positive outlook for the beginning half of the message and keeps most demographic subgroups engaged longer than other messages that call out the problem right away.
- ✓ People like the vision of stable housing and creating vibrant communities.
- ✓ Politicians holding down wages tends to cause adults to dial down in part because they don't like what they are doing, but they make a come back when they hear "corporate landlords jack up rents."
 - ✓ Adults are more likely to see a villain in corporate landlords than politicians.
 - ✓ Independents, small business owners, and Black adults are especially likely to dial up at the call-out of corporate landlords.
- ✓ The opposition becomes alienated when the actions of politicians and corporate landlords are called out. They dial down sharply at the idea of making the wealthy pay their fair share, meanwhile the base, Democrats, and persuadables like this.

WHAT FALLS SHORT

- ☐ Placing blame on politicians keeping wages low is not as strong as placing blame on corporate landlords. Often, people see low wages as a personal failing, while they view rising rents as something more out of their control.

Messaging Recommendations

Establish Shared Value

Establish a shared value across race before naming the problem.

Strong language: “no matter what we look like or where we come from, most of us want to provide for our families and know that hardship won’t mean homelessness”

Highlight Divisive Tactics

Highlight the divide-and-conquer tactics the bad actors employ and connect them to the outcomes they create.

Strong language: “certain politicians are trying to divide us based on our race or our neighborhood” “certain politicians point the finger at people struggling to make ends meet or divide us by race and by place”

Name Race

Talk about race when articulating an agenda to make housing within reach for people and families.

Strong language: “Whether we’re Black or white, Latino or Asian, Native or newcomer” “divide us by race and by place” “Whatever our color, background or zip code”

Create Unity

Create a unity of purpose by describing people working together.

Strong language: “we must come together to rewrite the rules, regulate rents, and build options people can actually afford” “we can make the better world we imagine our reality by joining together”

Provide a Compelling Call to Action

Instead of dwelling on problems, provide a positive call to action grounded in unity and the change “we the people” can deliver.

Strong language: “together, we can demand proven solutions” “we all have a place to live our lives...no exceptions” “joining together to make the wealthiest few pay their fair share so all of us can have what we need”

In Sum, analysis finds specific strengths and opportunities moving forward.

Strengths

- People support our core values.
- We only have a hard-core opposition of 10 percent and even they would move on some narrow policies, for example around substance abuse and mental health.
- The linkage of jobs to housing is strong, especially with the persuadables.
- People respond to inclusive language.
- Explicit references to race test well.
- In the dials people respond positively when we connect the structural elements of systemic racism/income inequality to homelessness.
- People resist criminalization as a solution to homelessness.
- Our messages beat the opposition messages.

Opportunities

- People respond strongly to linking jobs to housing.
- Affordability links housing and homelessness.
- People see circumstances as more predictive to why people may struggle to find and hold housing or experience homelessness more than demographics, leading to people being more solution-oriented.
- Focus group participants talked about systemic racism and income inequality in housing; we know people have for some time seen more of a structural element to housing access.
- All but the opposition see a role for government.
- People respond to providing a positive vision and solution. They want to join together and respond to taking action together on this issue.
- People are willing to vote this issue — both rewarding and punishing candidates based on their stances.

Analysis shows there are weaknesses and threats to our work moving forward that need to be kept in mind, too.

Weaknesses

- Persuadables often resemble the opposition.
- The pandemic has pushed everything else out as a top priority for elected officials to address.
- People have a narrow definition of homelessness.
- Systemic reasons for homelessness are not top associations, nor are a person's race/sexual orientation.
- There is tax sensitivity on policies, even with the base.
- People, especially persuadables, prefer starting the conversation with jobs rather than housing.
- Naming the villain is a challenge and “harsh” characterizations receive pushback.
- Even our base is somewhat responsive to opposition messaging based on personal responsibility and poor personal decisions.

Threats

- Efficacy and cynicism is a big problem for us.
- There is a strong individualism thread with personal responsibility and private solutions throughout the data that has appeal to some of our base and persuadables.
- Safety pops in our statements but is a contested value and can lead to more responsiveness to links to crime than we would like.
- Small business owners are a tough audience (Republican, open to personal responsibility argument) but a popular one with our audiences and elites.
- People are less likely to see an impact on a personal/community level.
- Latinx adults may prove to be tough to persuade.
- At the end of the survey, persuadables moved in both directions — toward both systemic solutions and personal discipline.

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