Taking Down Trump on Gun Safety

Research Findings for Giffords

GIFFORDS
COURAGE TO FIGHT GUN VIOLENCE

GSG
GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP

Methodology

Focus Groups

Global Strategy Group conducted **six focus groups** among swing voters between March 10 and March 12, 2020:

- Denver, CO
  - Swing-voting women
  - Swing-voting men
- Grand Rapids, MI
  - Swing-voting women
  - Swing-voting men and women
- Charlotte, NC
  - Swing-voting women
  - Swing-voting men and women

Online Survey

Global Strategy Group conducted a nationwide survey of **804 likely voters and 1004 "swayable" voters** (voters who are neither very favorable nor very unfavorable toward Donald Trump) between April 28 and May 5, 2020.

What we knew from focus groups…

- Middle-of-the-road voters don't love Trump, but they are willing to forgive his shortcomings because he's a businessman – not politics as usual. He leaves them feeling hopeful even if he's not perfect.

- They don't have a great sense of where Trump stands on gun laws or background checks specifically, but give him the benefit of the doubt because background checks are so common sense.

- Trump's flip on background checks, specifically after talking to his donors at the NRA, takes them by surprise and causes them to feel confused and disappointed, and to re-evaluate their perceptions of Trump.

What we found in the survey…

- Despite Trump's steady approval during his presidency, there are still voters who can be persuaded to feel differently about him.
- But we cannot just rely on the facts and failures that appear to resonate most as those don't necessarily impact vote choice.
- Instead we must hit him in an emotionally resonant way, modeling the journey from hope and pride around Trump to disappointment. These emotions drive voter behavior.
- The most effective way to move these swayable voters toward disappointment is by making the case that Trump "is not the strong leader they thought" he was and "no longer represents change for the better," by emphasizing that he "does more for his donors than the people he represents." Guns are the type of emotional issue that have the potential to do this.
- Trump's flip on background checks is a compelling proof point to back this narrative, and once swayable voters learn that trump reversed his support for background checks after talking with NRA donors, they are less likely to feel hopeful and more likely to feel disappointed.

Audiences

“Swayable”

Definition: voters who are not “very favorable” or “very unfavorable” to Donald Trump.

“Movers”

Definition: voters who move toward Biden after the initial vote OR become more open to voting for Biden OR become less open to Trump at some point in the survey.

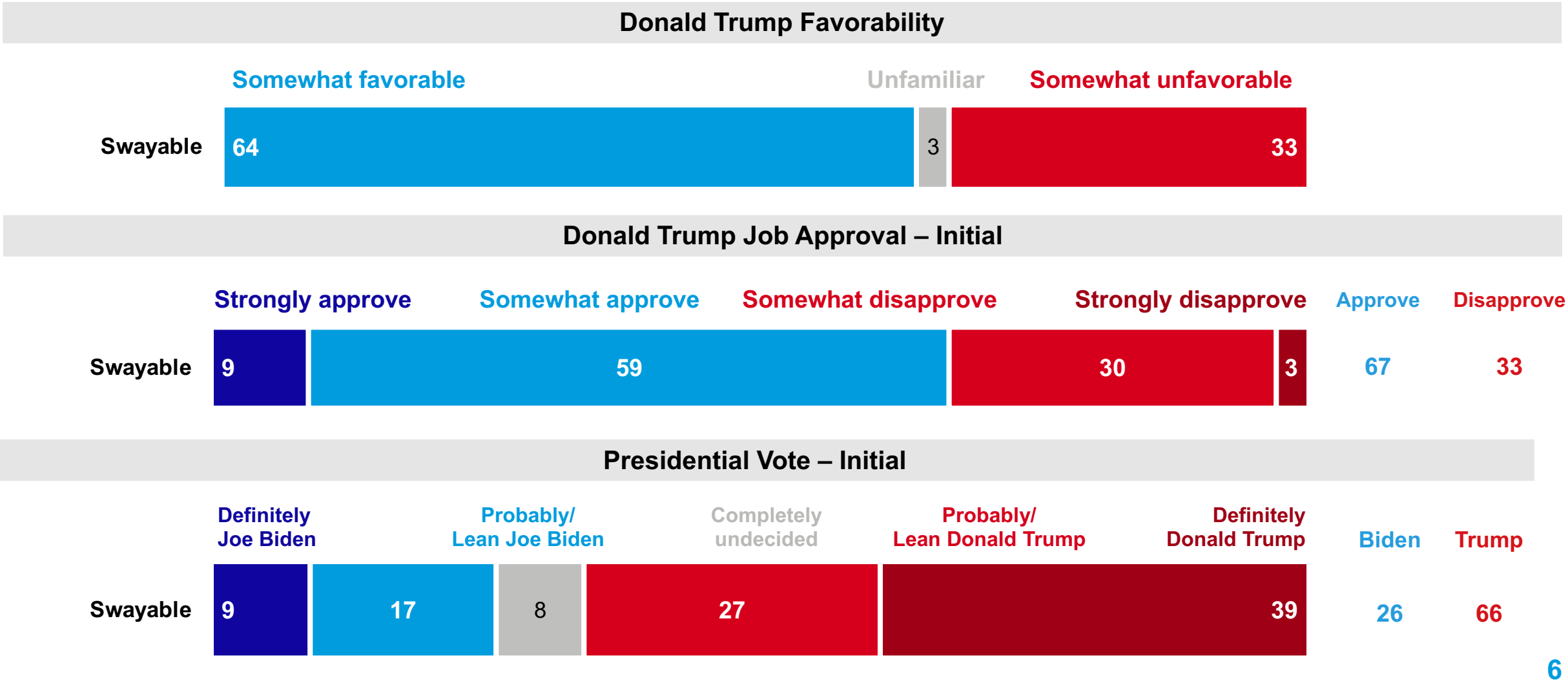
35% of the swayable electorate are movers.

“True Swing”

Definition: voters who sometimes vote for Trump but not always.

9% of the swayable electorate are true swing.

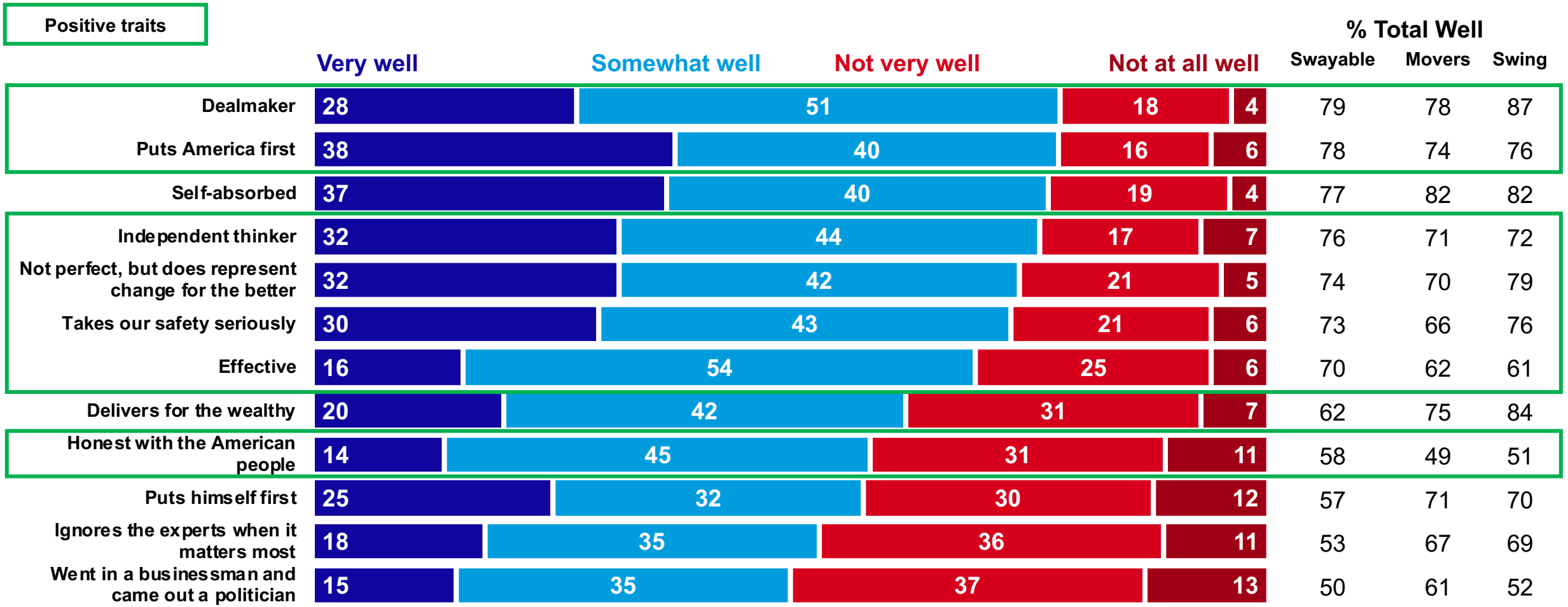
Most of these swayable voters are a tough get – they hold favorable views and approve of Trump, even if they don't feel strongly



The Current Landscape

Swayable voters overwhelmingly believe Trump is self-absorbed but also an independent thinker who puts America first

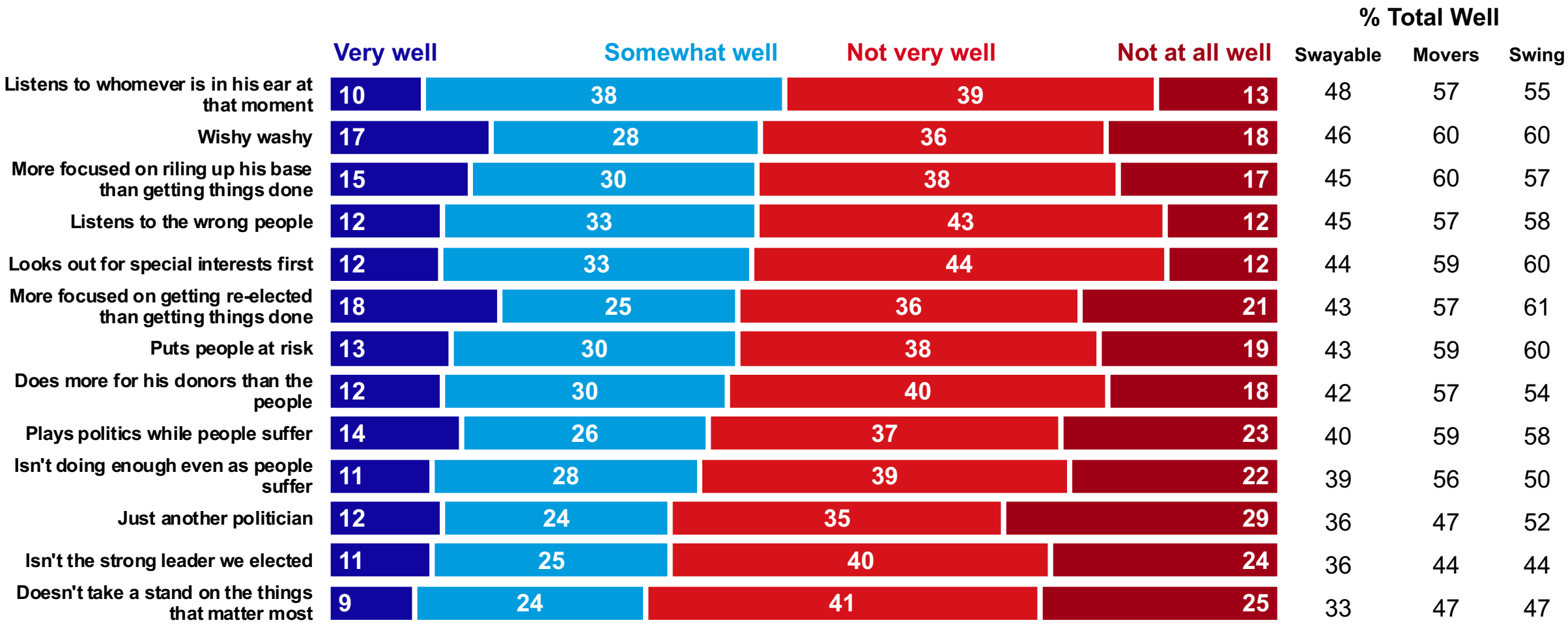
Please indicate how well each one describes President Trump:



Note: "Movers" move toward Biden after the initial vote or become more open to Biden or become less open to Trump. "True swing" sometimes votes for Trump but not always.

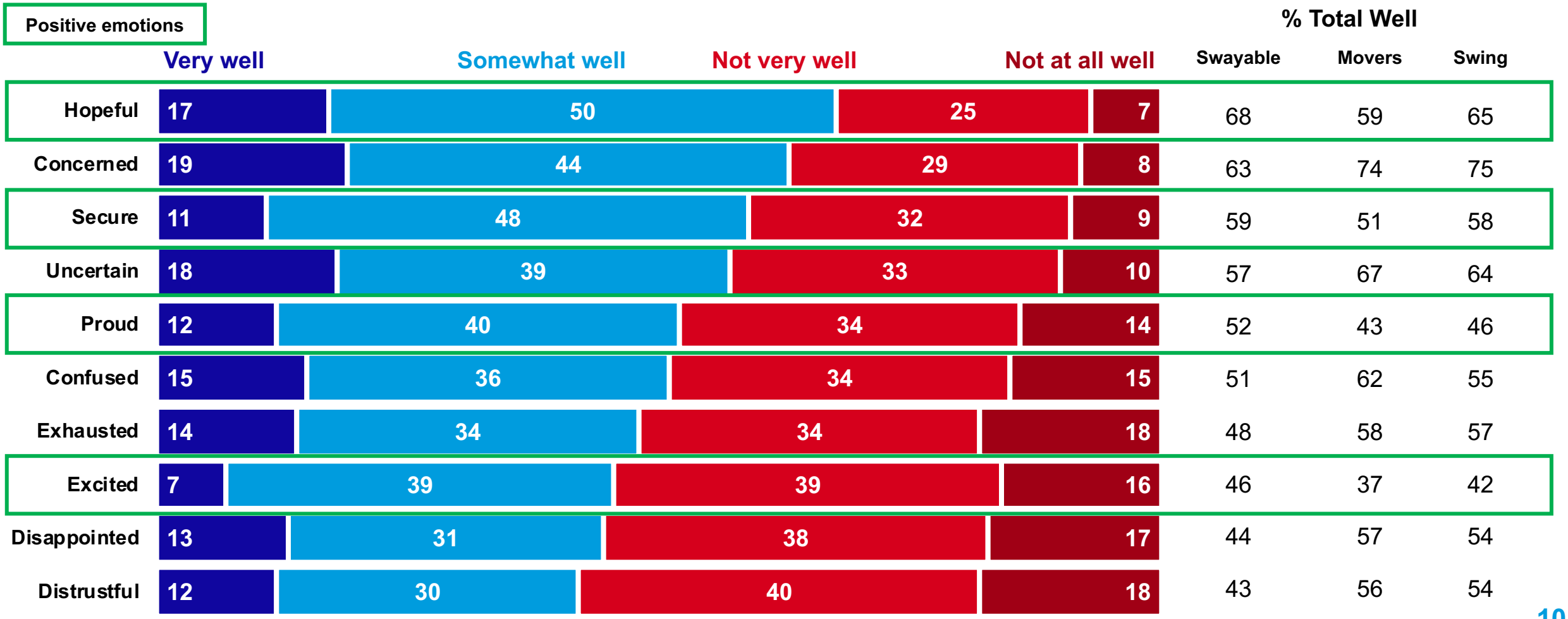
Swayable voters are less inclined to believe that he is like other politicians or that he flip flops

Please indicate how well each one describes President Trump:



There is clear dissonance though: even as swayable voters say they're hopeful about Trump, they feel uncertain.

Please indicate how well each one describes how you feel about President Trump's time in office:



Importantly though, regression analysis shows that of all of these, only two emotions and six traits currently drive opposition to Trump

Emotions currently that drive vote choice

- Hopeful****
- Disappointed****

Traits that currently drive vote choice

- Isn't the strong leader we elected**
- Not perfect but does represent change for the better****
- Effective***
- Does more for donors than the people**
- Puts himself first***
- Ignores the experts when it matters most***

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.

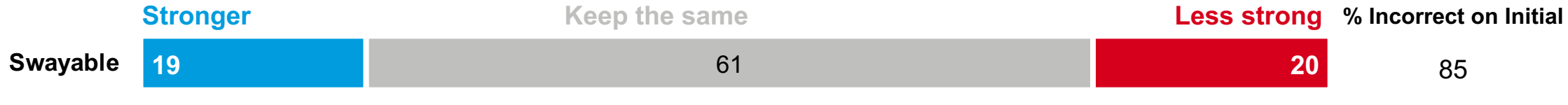
Trump and Gun Violence Prevention

Swayable voters support background checks and assume the same of Trump

Do you support or oppose background checks on all gun sales?

Based on what you know, how does President Trump feel about background checks on all gun sales?

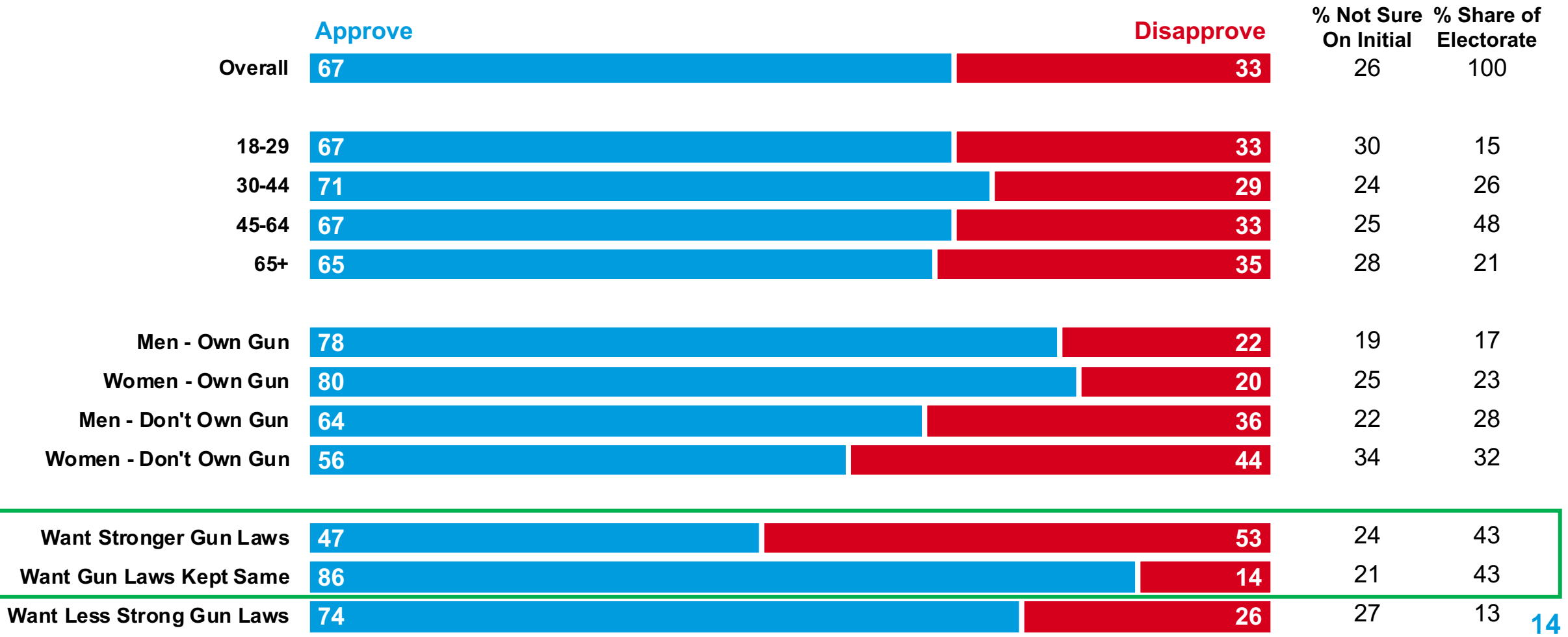
Based on what you know, does President Trump want to make gun laws in the U.S. stronger, less strong, or keep them the same?



Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Trump is doing on the issue of guns?

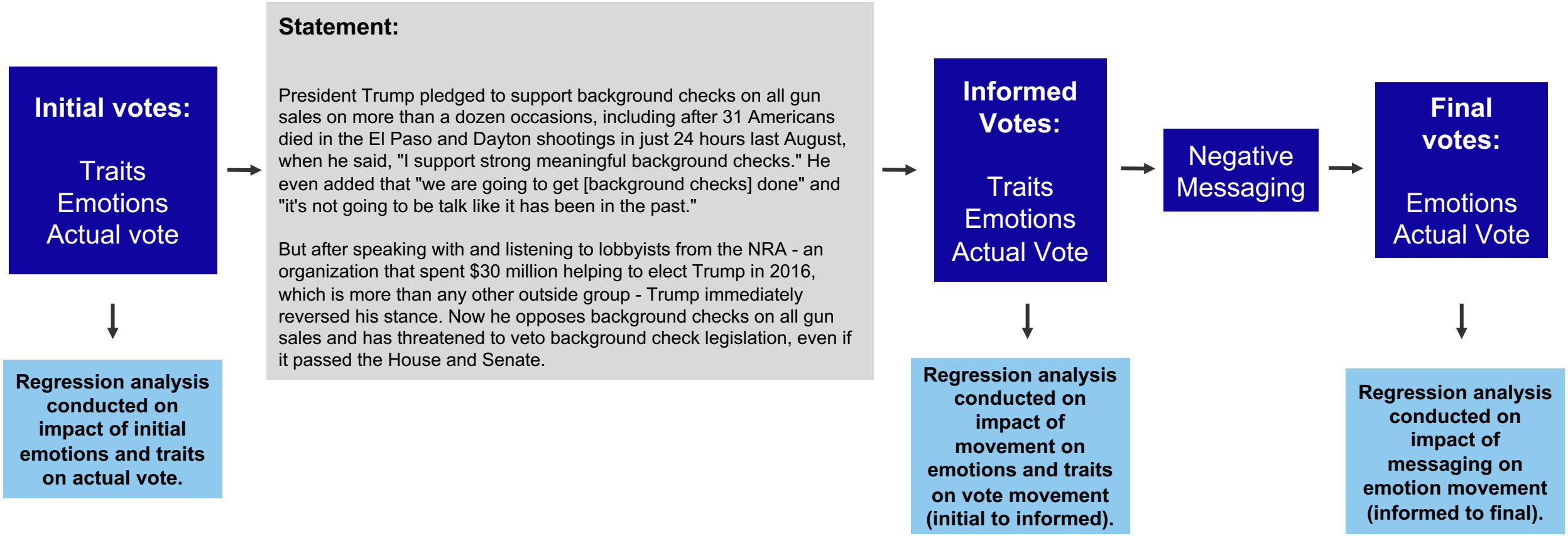
Even a significant number of voters who are on our side give Trump the benefit of the doubt on guns

Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Trump is doing on the issue of guns?



Movement

Survey Structure



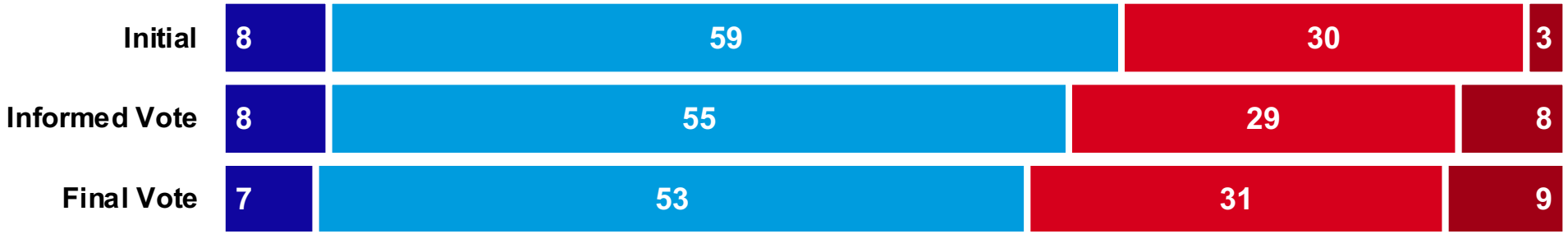
Note: We also appended the votes with Grow Progress scores to understand what values persuadable voters hold.

The information about Trump flipping on background checks is responsible for the bulk of vote movement, but additional messaging about the flip also helps

Vote Movement – Presidential Vote

	% Total Vote Trump		
	Swayable	Movers	Swing
Initial Vote	66	57	77
Informed Vote	63	47	46
Final Vote	61	41	23

Vote Movement – Donald Trump Job Approval



	% Total Approve Trump		
	Swayable	Movers	Swing
Initial	67	58	67
Informed Vote	63	48	47
Final Vote	61	42	36

Within this swayable group, young voters, and especially younger women are apt to move making them prime targets

Vote Targets

Movers
35% of swayable electorate

Move toward Biden after initial vote OR become more open to Biden OR become less open to Trump at some point in the survey

Black Voters (59% are movers)*

Ages 18-29 (55%)

Latinx Voters (48%)*

Women (38%):

Women 18-54 (42%)

Non-college women (41%)

Democratic women (50%)

Non-gun owning women (41%)

True Swing
9% of swayable electorate

Sometimes votes for Trump but not always

Ages 18-29 (18% are true swing)

Latinx Voters (14%)*

Black Voters (12%)*

Women (11%):

Women 18-54 (13%)

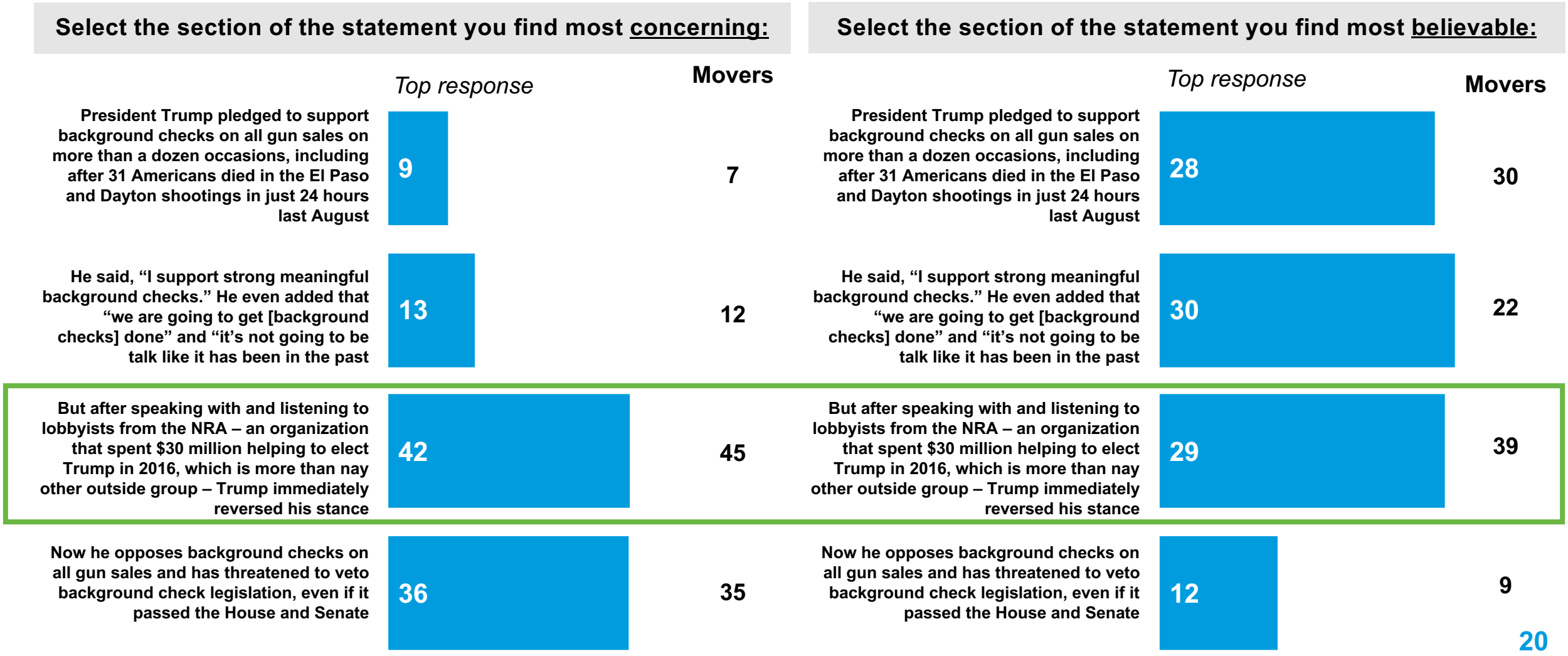
Independent women (12%)

Non-college women (12%)

*While we see movement among Black and Latinx voters, they make up small portions of these audiences. 14% of Movers are Black and 8% are Latinx, while 11% of True Swing are Black and 9% are Latinx.

Messaging on Trump and Gun Violence Prevention

MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE MESSAGE: Convey that Trump flipped after speaking to the NRA – he's listening to them. It is both concerning and believable, and provides motivation for opposing background checks.



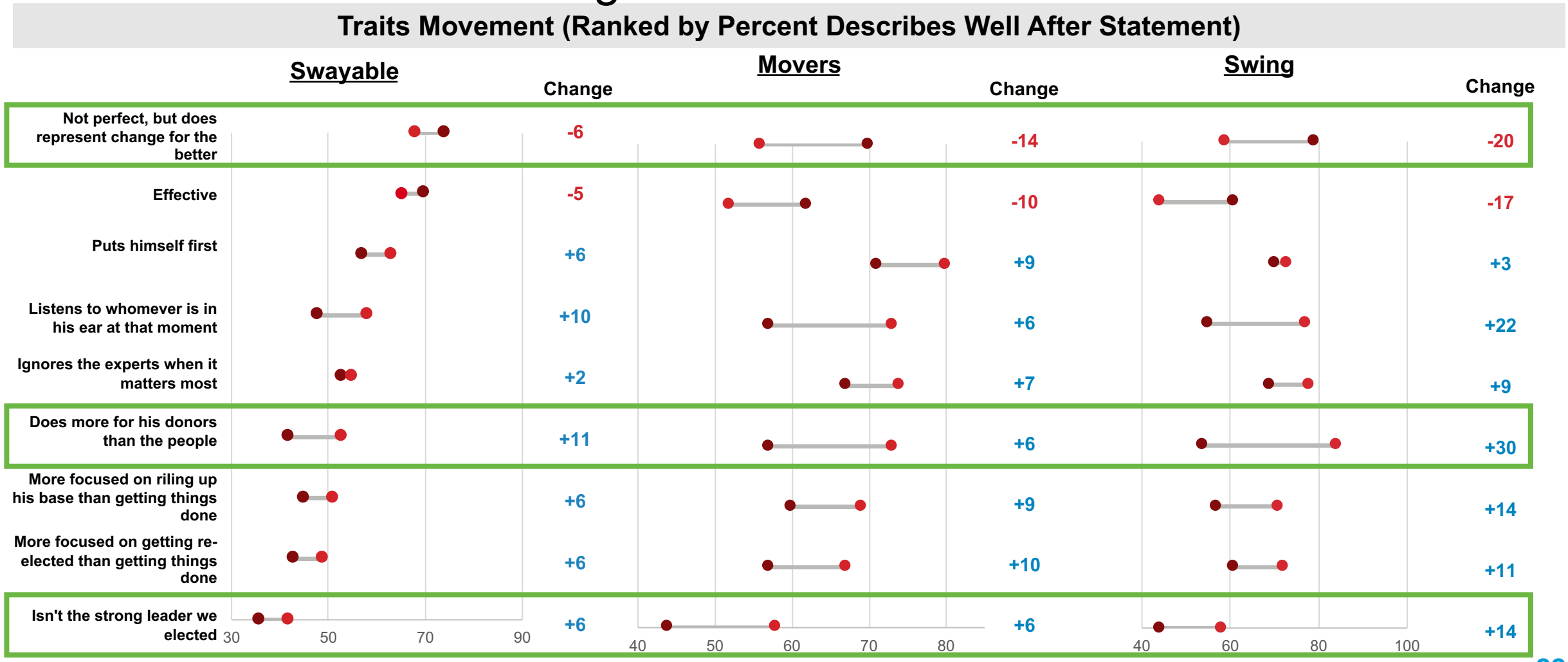
This information moves people to feel greater disappointment, less hope, and diminished pride

Emotions Movement (Ranked by Percent Describes Well After Messaging)

% Describes how they feel about Trump's time in office initially

% Describes how they feel about Trump's time in office post-messaging

Telling people about Trump's background check flip leads them to rate him more negatively on a number of traits; they say that he does more for donors and isn't a strong leader



When messaging though, it is most important to model the emotional journey from hope to disappointment and to diminish voters' pride around Trump. Statistical analysis shows that moves the vote.

Regression Analysis: Impact of Emotions Felt on Vote Before Statement & After Statement

Drives vote choice before statement	Drives vote movement away after statement	Doesn't drive vote movement
Disappointed****	Disappointed***	Concerned
Hopeful****	Proud**	Confused
	Secure*	Uncertain
	Hopeful**	Excited
	Distrustful*	Exhausted

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.
: drives vote choice before statement and vote movement after statement.

To do this, strip him of his armor by showing he is “not the strong leader we elected,” no longer “represents change for the better,” and does more for donors than people

Regression Analysis: Impact of Believing a Trait Describes Trump on Vote Before Statement & After Statement

Drives vote choice before statement

- Isn’t the strong leader we elected**
- Not perfect but does represent change for the better****
- Effective***
- Does more for donors than the people**
- Puts himself first***
- Ignores the experts when it matters most***

Drives vote movement after statement

- Isn’t the strong leader we elected***
- Puts people at risk**
- Plays politics while people suffer**
- Not perfect but does represent change for the better***
- Effective**
- Does more for donors than the people**
- More focused on getting re-elected than getting things done*

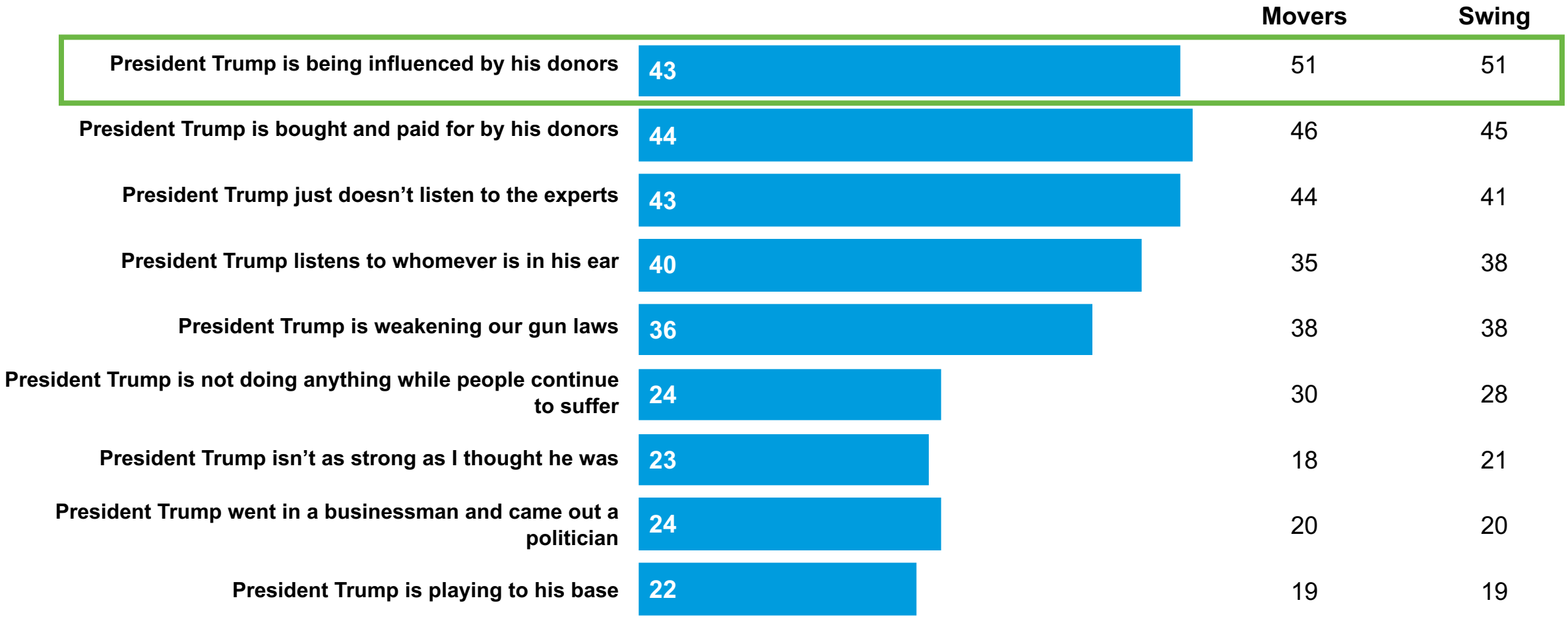
Doesn’t drive vote movement

- Wishy washy
- Isn’t doing enough even as people suffer
- Dealmaker
- Independent thinker
- Puts America first
- Honest with the American people
- Takes our safety seriously
- Looks out for special interests first
- Delivers for the wealthy
- More focused on riling up his base than getting things done
- Self-absorbed
- Listens to the wrong people
- Listens to whomever is in his ear at the moment
- Went in a businessman and came out a politician
- Just another politician

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.
■ **:** drives vote choice before statement and vote movement after statement.

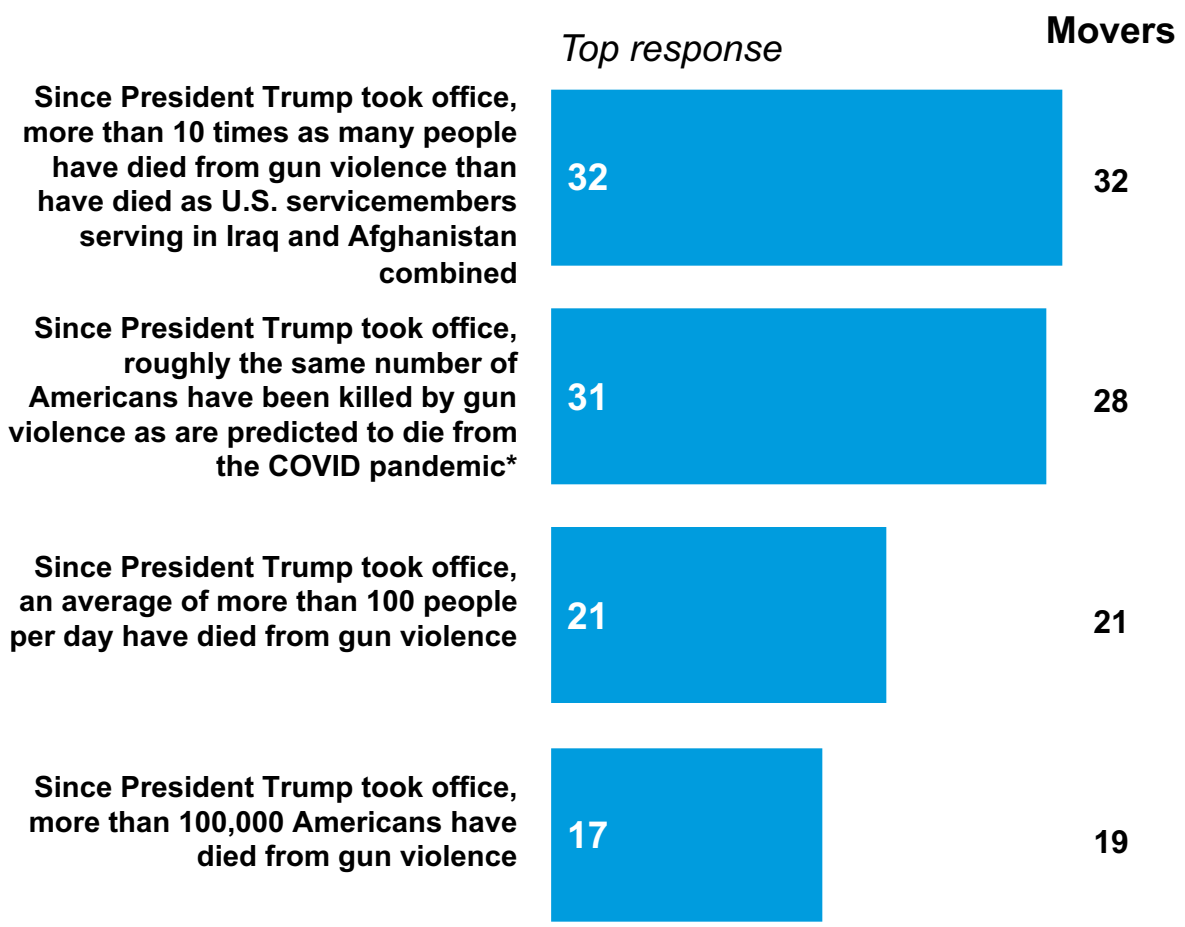
Phrasing is key though: we should say he's being influenced, not that he's corrupt or bought and paid for

Please choose the three that you find to be the most concerning:

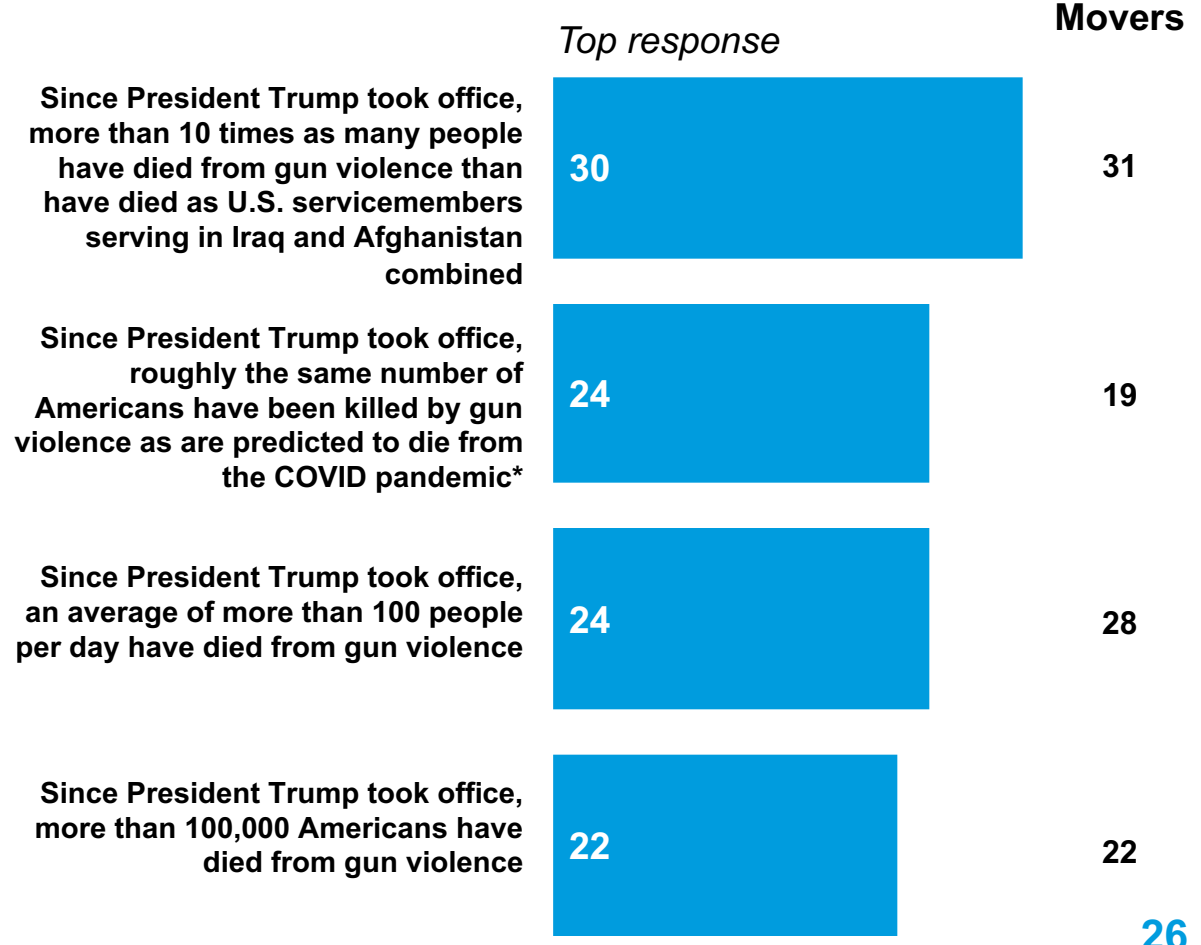


Consider showing ingroup dynamics by referencing that more people have died from gun violence than overseas

Which of the following is <u>most surprising</u> to you?

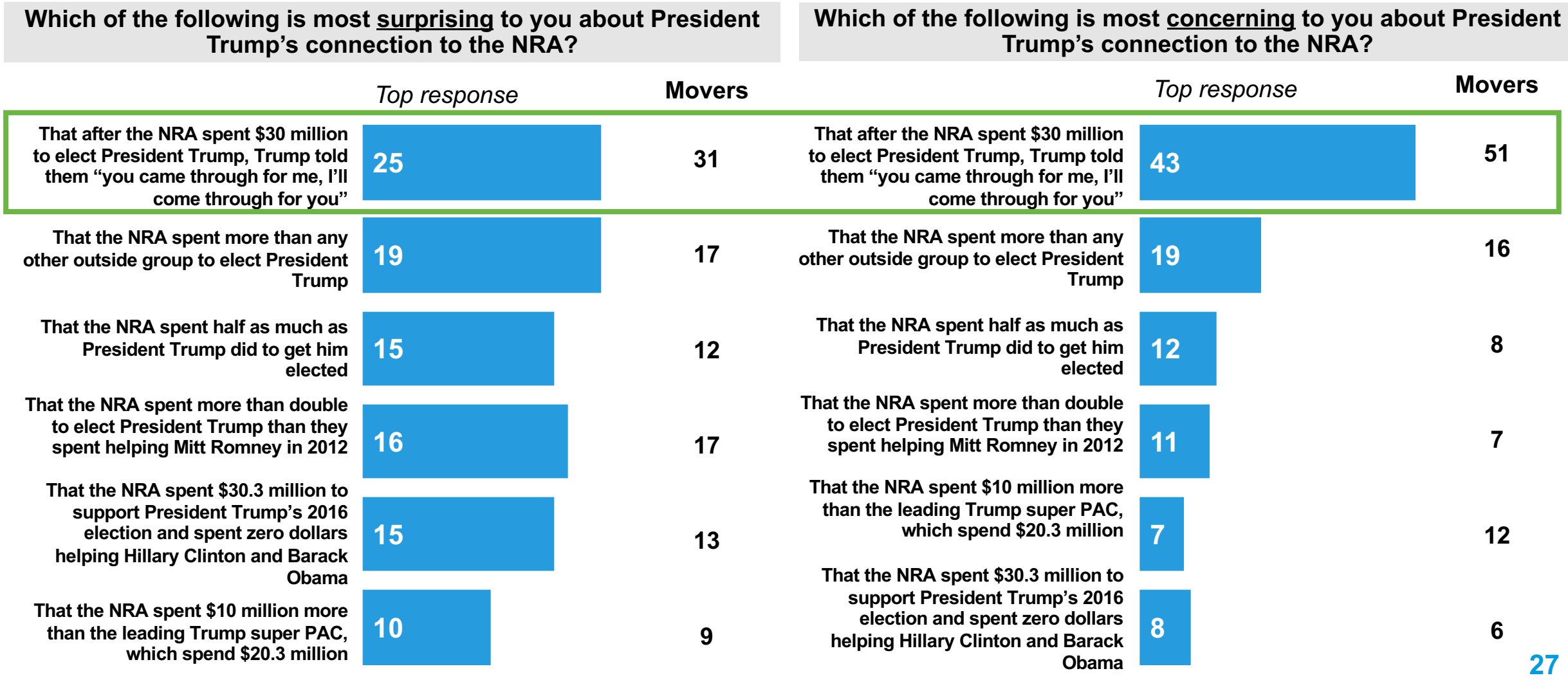


Which of the following <u>demonstrates most clearly the need to act</u> on gun violence?



*The number of predicted COVID deaths is susceptible to change since fielding this survey

Show impurity by using Trump's own words to tie him to the NRA



Recommendations and Conclusions

Our Recommended Story

1) Convey the core information: Trump flipped on background checks after talking to NRA lobbyists. In both focus groups and the survey, Trump flipping on background checks after speaking with donors/lobbyists at the NRA broke through as most concerning. We must make sure that voters understand the sequence of events, and as part of that, where he ultimately landed: in opposition to background checks.

2) Evoke emotion: model the journey from hope and pride to disappointment. These voters aren't necessarily over the moon for Trump, but they largely voted for him, want to believe the best of him, and still express hope and pride about his presidency. In fact, regressions show that whether a voter feels hope about Trump's presidency or disappointment, with it is most indicative of how they will vote, and the voters who move toward disappointment and away from hope and pride are most likely to change the way they vote.

We must therefore model the journey from hope to disappointment for these voters. There are any number of ways to do this that we are continuing to explore, but showing that he has become like every other politician is key to that journey and reduces pride in him.

3) Fit into a larger narrative: show he is not the strong leader we elected. Voters are willing to use any number of negative traits to describe Trump, especially his ego, but only a few actually drive opposition toward/movement away from him in the vote. Reflect these traits by reflecting voters' own language about how he seemed different, strong, and represented change for the better, but ultimately behaved like everyone else when it came to background checks, putting donors and reelection over people and getting things done.

Thank You

New York Washington, DC Hartford Chicago Denver Seattle

Appendix

When messaging, it is most important to model the emotional journey from hope to disappointment and to diminish voters' pride around Trump. Statistical analysis shows that moves the vote.

	Regression Analysis: Impact of Emotions Felt on Vote Before Statement	Regression Analysis: Impact of Emotion Movement on Vote Movement After Statement
Concerned	-0.03	-0.02
Confused	-0.03	0.03
Uncertain	-0.02	0.03
Disappointed	**-0.19******	**0.08*****
Excited	0.07**	0.02
Proud	0.03	**0.08****
Secure	0.05	**0.06***
Hopeful	**0.13******	**0.10*****
Distrustful	-0.05	**0.04***
Exhausted	-0.01	0.03

Before reading the statement, feelings of disappointment and hope about Trump drove vote choice.

When voters are made to feel more disappointed in Trump and less hope/pride surrounding his presidency, they move away from him on the vote.

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.

To do this, strip him of his armor by showing he is “not the strong leader we elected,” no longer “represents change for the better,” and does more for donors than people

	Regression Analysis: Impact of Believing a Trait Describes Trump on Vote Before Statement	Regression Analysis: Impact of Trait Movement on Vote Movement After Statement
Wishy Washy	0.02	-0.003
Isn’t the strong leader we elected	**-0.08****	**0.08*****
Puts people at risk	0.003	**0.07****
Isn’t doing enough even as people suffer	-0.05	-0.01
Plays politics while people suffer	-0.02	**-0.06****
Dealmaker	-0.01	0.01
Independent thinker	0.03	0.01
Puts America first	0.05	0.01
Honest with the American people	0.02	-0.01
Takes our safety seriously	0.06	0.002
Not perfect but does represent change for the better	**0.11******	**0.12*****
Effective	**0.11*****	**0.06****

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.

Before reading the statement, believing Trump isn’t the strong leader we elected, represents change for the better, and is effective drives vote choice.

Making voters feel he isn’t the strong leader we elected and doesn’t represent change for the better also drives movement away from Trump.

Self-absorption, ignoring the experts, and putting himself first don't hurt, but they don't move additional votes

	Regression Analysis: Impact of Believing a Trait Describes Trump on Vote Before Statement		Regression Analysis: Impact of Trait Movement on Vote Movement After Statement
Looks out for special interests first	-0.01		0.02
Does more for donors than the people	**-0.06****		**0.06****
Delivers for the wealthy	0.03		0.02
More focused on riling up his base than getting things done	0.01		0.02
Puts himself first	**-0.09*****		0.03
Self-absorbed	0.02		0.04
Listens to the wrong people	0.01	**Note:** *p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001. **** is most meaningful.	0.03
Ignores the experts when it matters most	**-0.08*****		-0.02
More focused on getting re-elected than getting things done	-0.06		**0.05***
Listens to whomever is in his ear at the moment	0.04		-0.01
Went in a businessman and came out a politician	0.01		-0.02
Just another politician	-0.01		0.03

Before reading the statement, believing Trump does more for donors than people, puts himself first, and ignores experts drives vote choice.

Making voters feel he does more for donors than people also drives movement away from Trump.