

Election 2002: Rural Voter and Rural Issues December 2, 2002



**Report for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
by Public Opinion Strategies and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research**



Analysis Methodology

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research (GQR) and Public Opinion Strategies (POS) are pleased to present some of the key findings from an analysis of rural voters and rural voting patterns. The analysis specifically focuses on post-election research conducted by both firms with actual 2002 voters, plus a look at previous national post-election data from 1998 and 2000.

The analysis relies on two POS national post-election surveys with a combined sample size of 1,600 2002 voters and two GQR national post-election surveys with a combined sample of 1,763 2002 voters. All four of these surveys were conducted on November 5-6, 2002. In addition, the analysis relies on a POS Pfizer RGA national post-election survey with a sample size of 800 2002 or 2000 general election voters conducted November 12-14, 2002. Finally, the analysis employed a National Public Radio/POS/GQR study of 890 2002 voters conducted November 5-6.

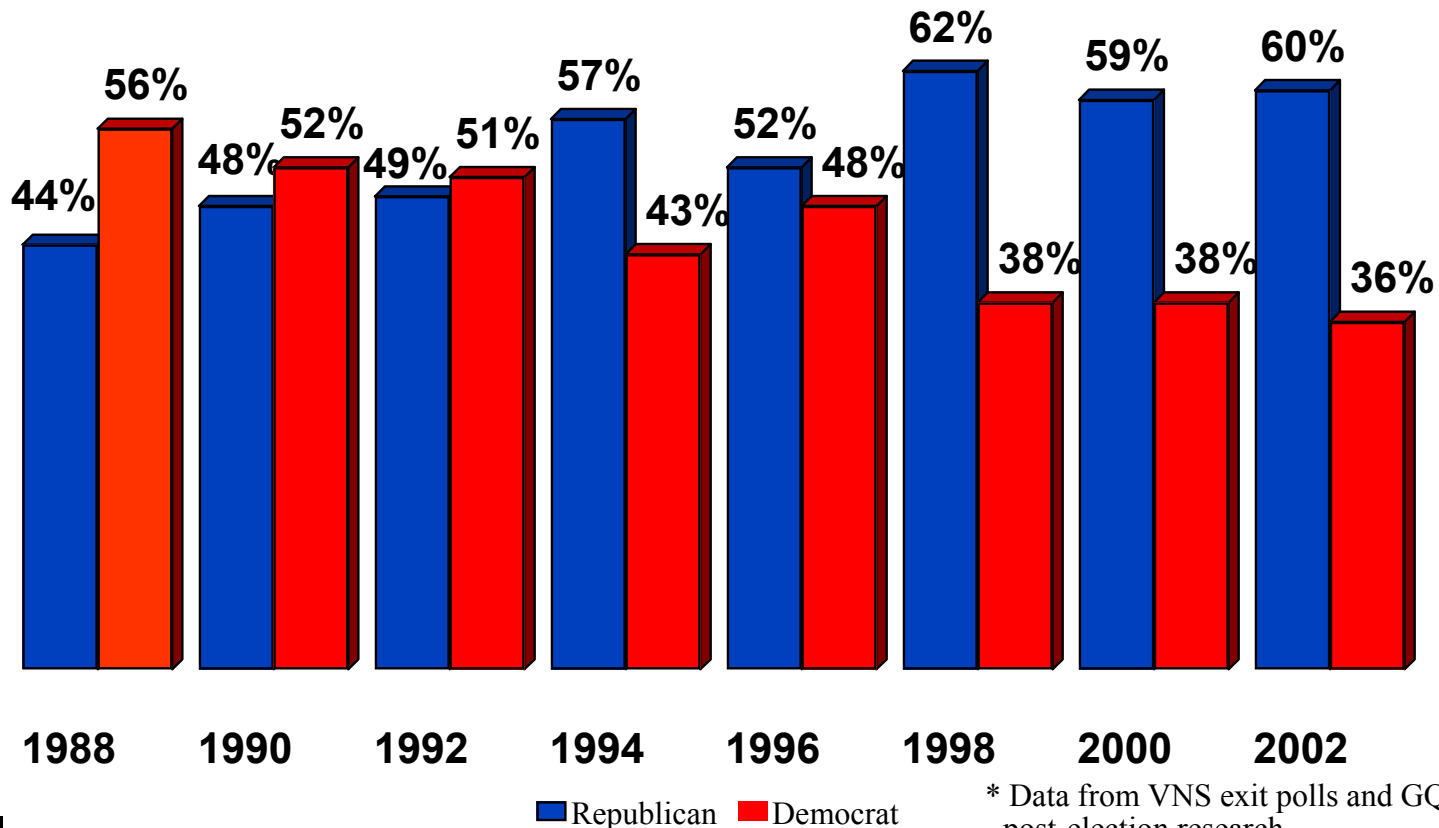
Our goal was to look at three issues – how rural voters actually voted this year, what issues were important to them and their view of the political environment, and the demographic make-up of rural voters in the United States.

LOOKING AT RURAL VOTING IN 2002...



For the third election cycle in a row, Republicans display a substantial advantage on the Congressional generic ballot among rural voters.

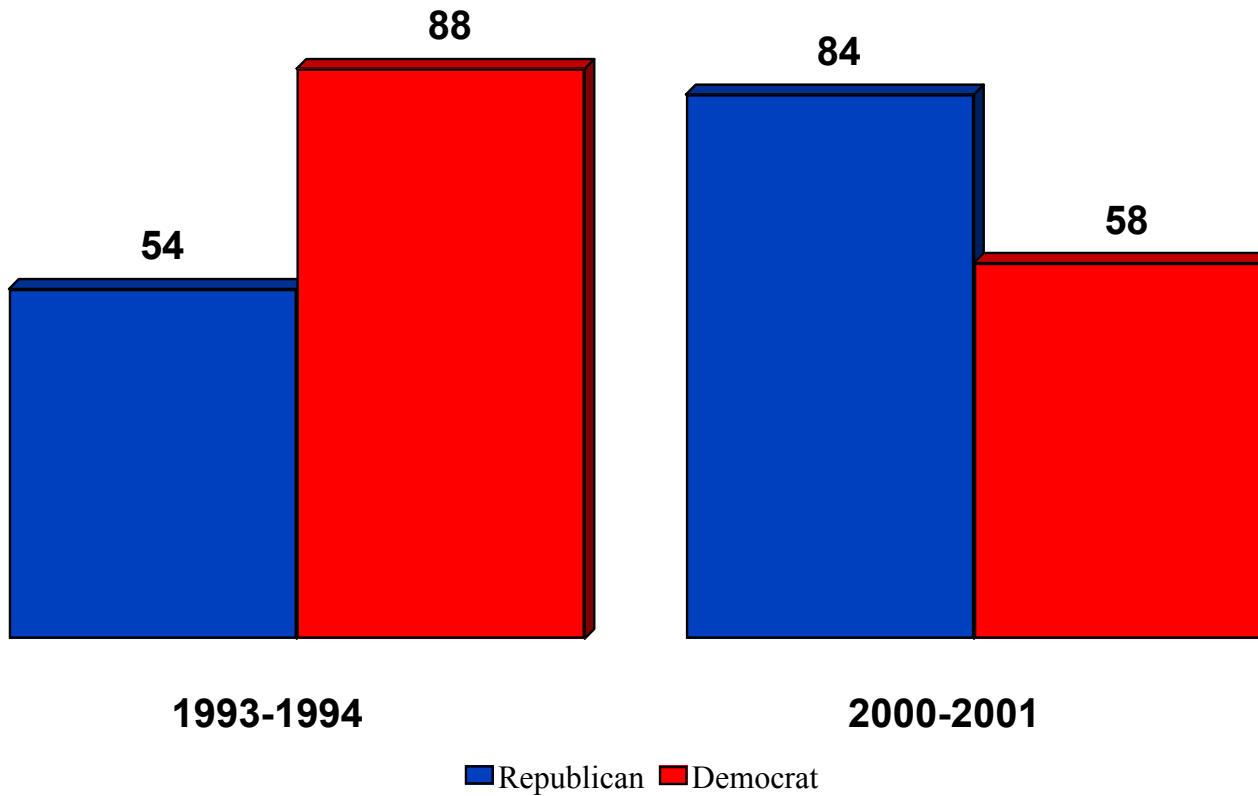
Congressional Generic Ballot Among Rural Voters



* Data from VNS exit polls and GQR post-election research

And, further evidence of these GOP gains and Democrat reverses in rural America are found by looking at the partisan make-up of the Congressional Rural Caucus.

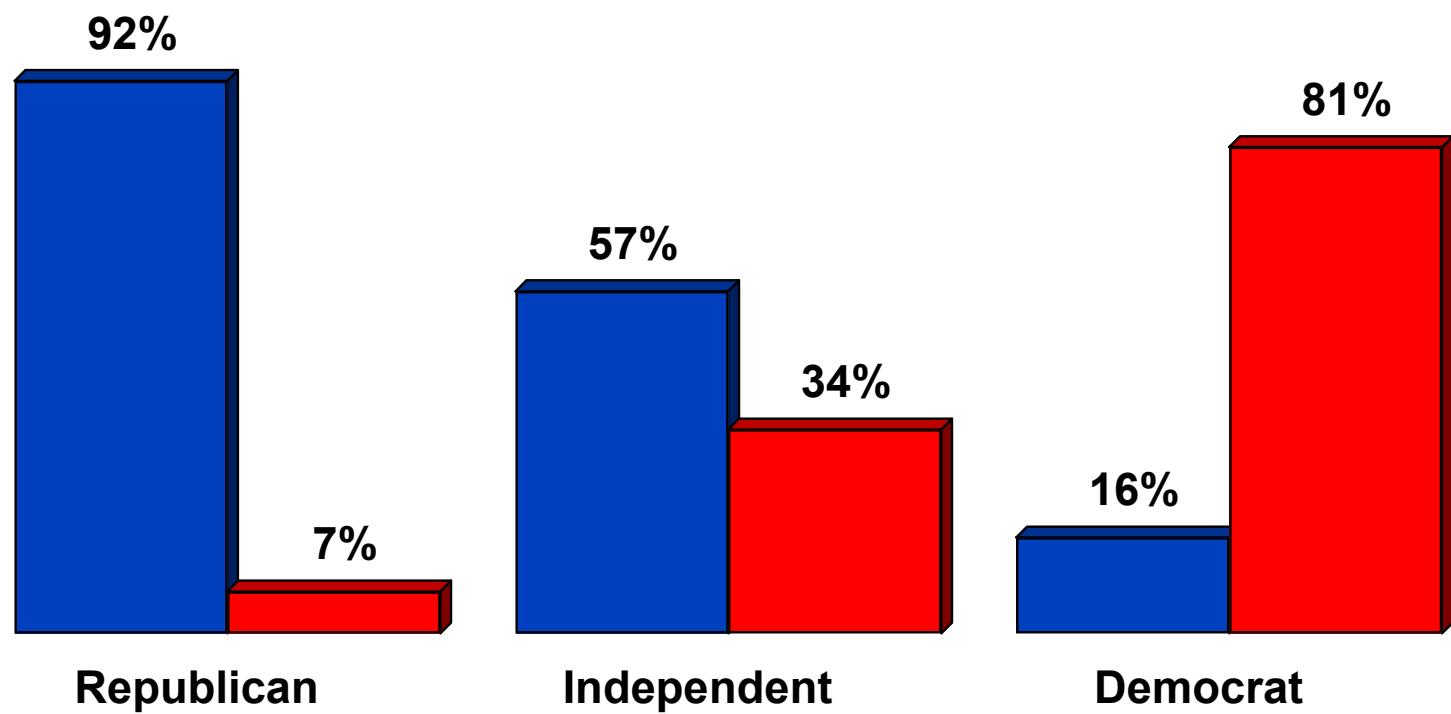
Number of Caucus members



* Partisanship of Caucus members for both 1993-94 and 2000-01 are based on the district numbers defined as rural caucus districts

Positive GOP performance in rural Congressional elections this year may have been driven by differences in partisan loyalty between GOP and Democrat voters.

Congressional Generic Ballot By Party Among Rural Voters

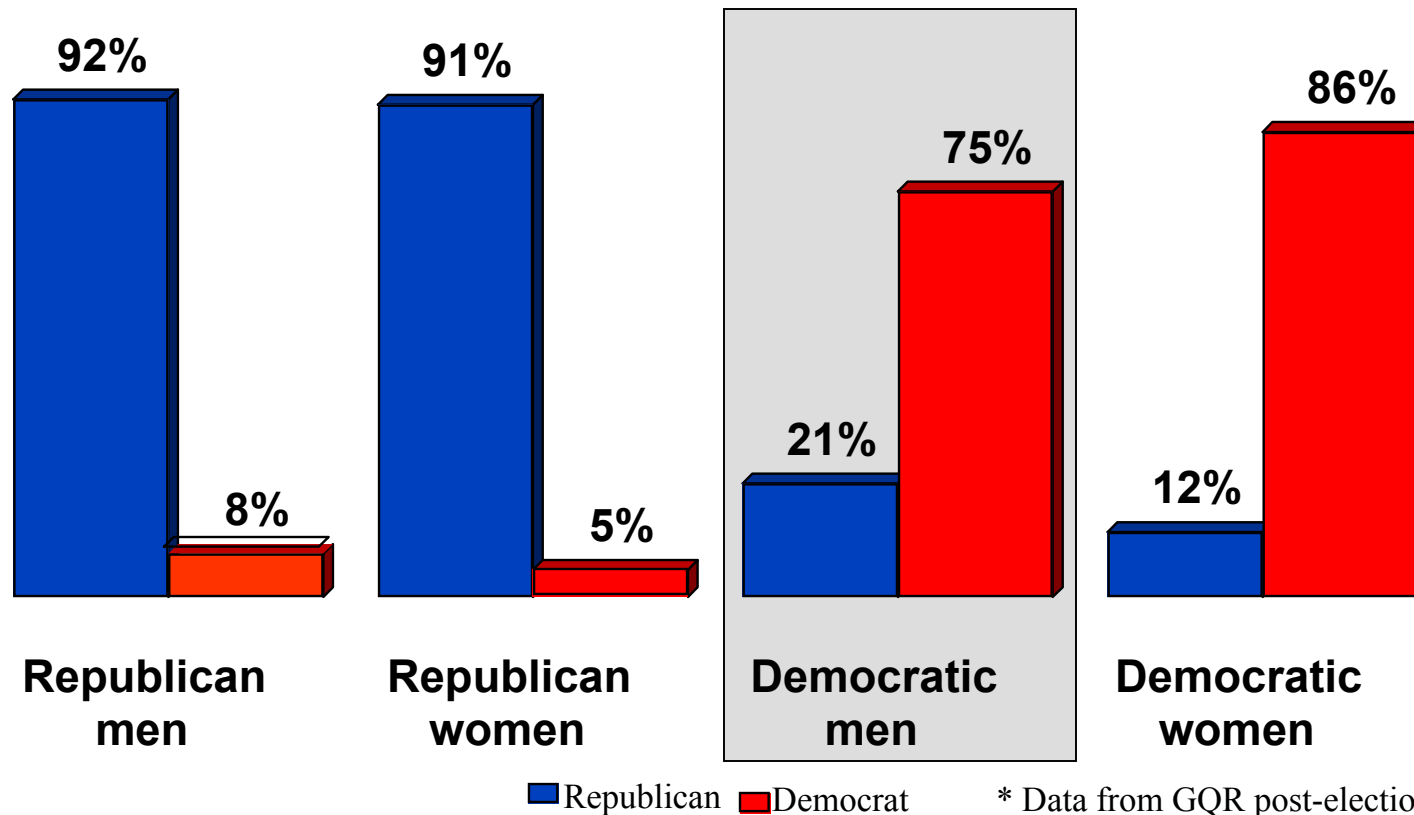


* Data from GQR post-election research

■ Voted Republican ■ Voted Democrat

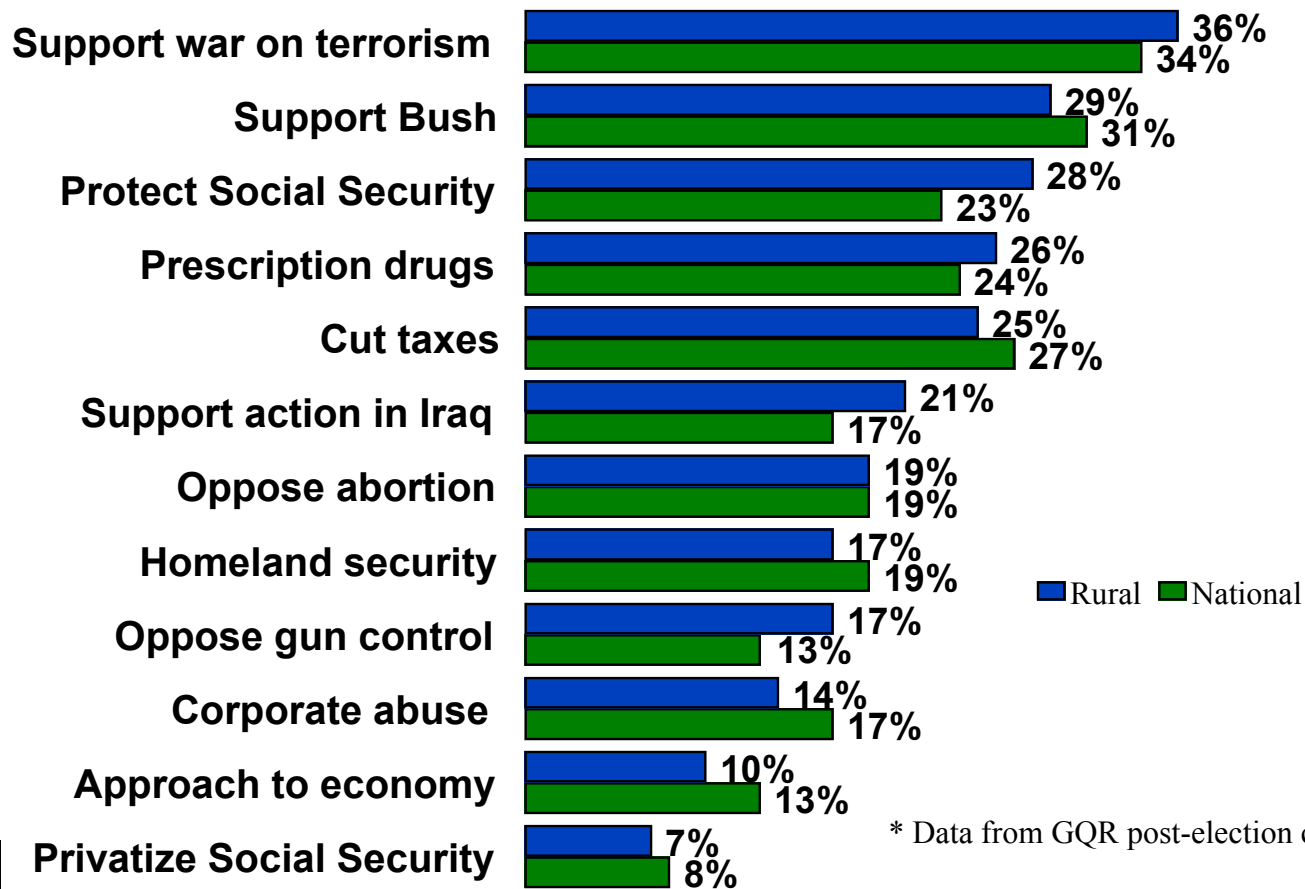
Democrat vote defections in Congressional races were more heavily driven by rural Democrat men.

Congressional Generic Ballot By Gender/Party Among Rural Voters



Key reasons for rural support of GOP candidates for Congress focused on terrorism, support for President Bush, and Social Security. These numbers are not significantly different from national data.

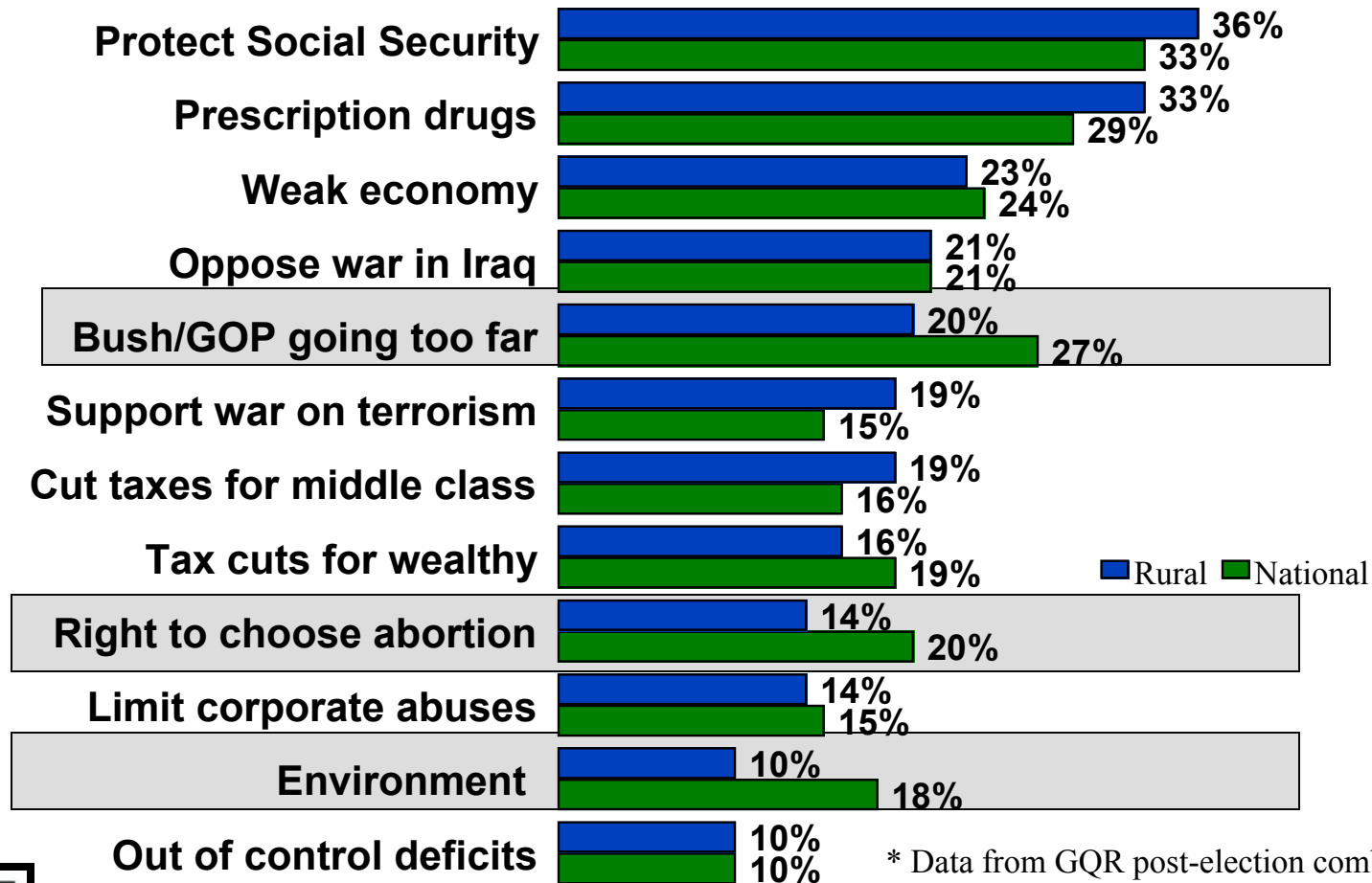
Which describes the best reasons for you personally in this election to support or consider the Republican candidate?



* Data from GQR post-election combined data

Reasons for rural support of Democrats are also generally like national figures, with some differences on attitudes toward President Bush, abortion and the environment.

Which describes the best reasons for you personally in this election to support or consider the Democratic candidate?



* Data from GQR post-election combined data

Despite the large ballot advantage on both Congressional and statewide elections, Democrats won some key races in rural states – proving that individual campaigns and candidate quality can make a difference for Democrats.

- ✓ **Kansas Governor**
- ✓ **Wyoming Governor**
- ✓ **Oklahoma Governor**
- ✓ **New Mexico Governor**
- ✓ **South Dakota Senate**

Even in rural states where Democrats were very competitive or victorious, it's clear that Democrats did not win on the backs of rural voters.

**Ballot margins among rural voters in
Zogby post-election surveys**

	<u>DEM-GOP D/S</u>
Iowa (DEM 42-GOP 40)	+2
Arkansas (DEM 45-GOP 44)	+1
New Hampshire (DEM 45-DEM 50)	-5
Minnesota (DEM 41-GOP 52)	-11
Louisiana (DEM 29-GOP 57)	-28
Colorado (DEM 31-GOP 60)	-29

As coded by Survey Sampling, Inc., as well as typical sample presentations on national surveys, the nation is approximately one-quarter rural. Fully 24 states in the country have at least 30% of their telephone exchanges in areas defined as rural. Thirteen states in the country are at least 50% rurally defined...

Wyoming

West Virginia

Vermont

North Dakota

Montana

Iowa

South Dakota

Maine

Mississippi

Kentucky

Idaho

Arkansas

Alaska

Despite the clear advantages Republicans enjoy in rural areas of the country, the electoral make-up of these 13 states shows diversity and competitiveness.

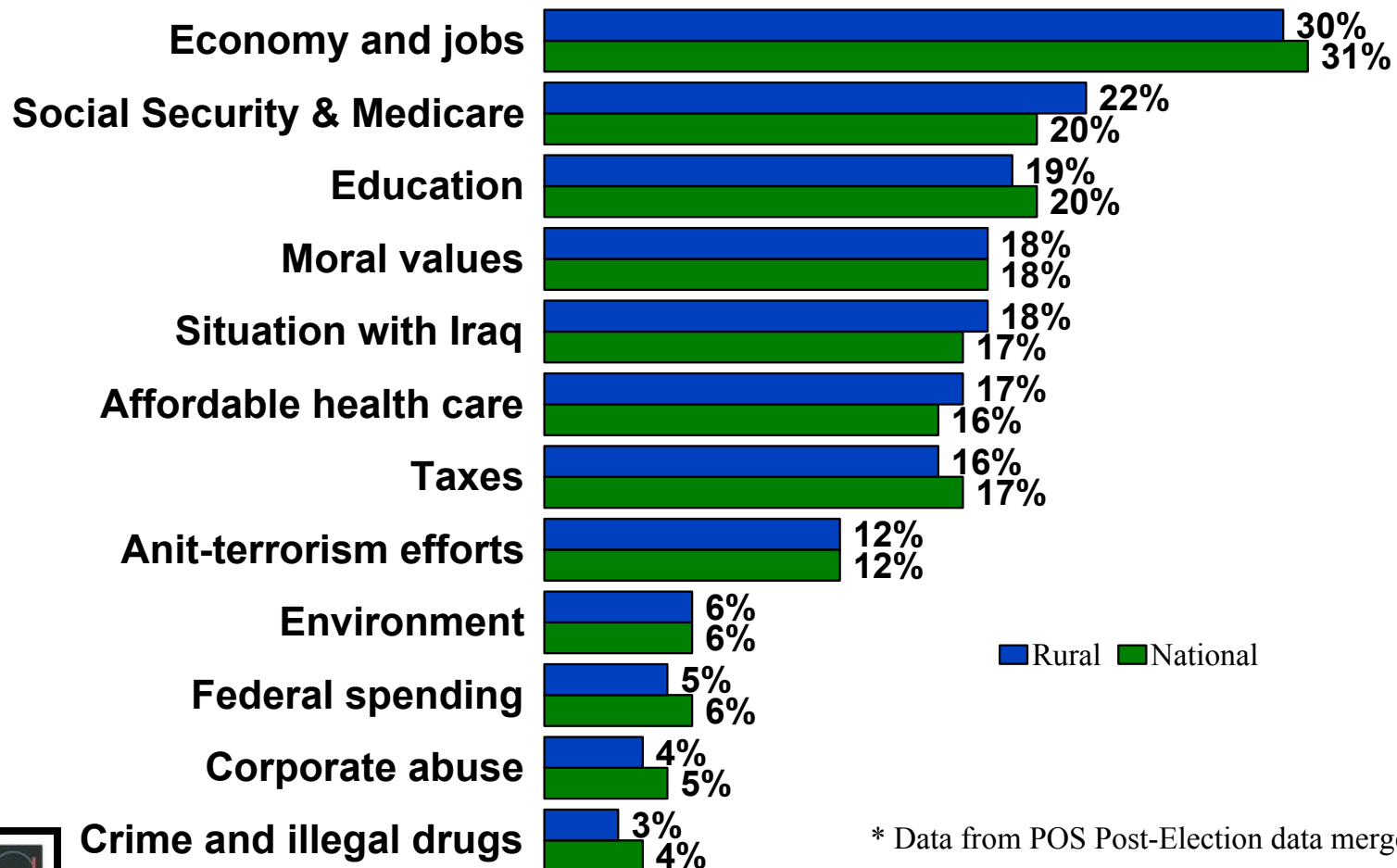
	<u>Governor</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>House</u>	<u>TOTAL GOV.</u>
Alaska	R	2R	1R	7 GOP
Arkansas	R	2D	3D, 1R	6 DEM
Idaho	R	2R	2R	
Iowa	D	1R, 1D	4R, 1D	<u>TOTAL SEN.</u>
Kentucky	D	2R	5R, 1D	14 GOP
Maine	D	2R	2D	11 DEM
Mississippi	D	2R	2R, 2D	1 IND
Montana	R	1R, 1D	1R	
North Dakota	R	2D	1R	<u>TOTAL HOUSE</u>
South Dakota	R	2D	1R	20 GOP
Vermont	R	1 D, 1 Ind.	1 Ind.	11 DEM
West Virginia	D	2D	2D, 1R	1 IND
Wyoming	D	2R	1R	

LOOKING AT ISSUES AND PARTY PERCEPTIONS AMONG RURAL VOTERS



Rural voters had virtually identical vote concerns as voters nationally.

Top two important issues on congressional vote decision among rural voters



* Data from POS Post-Election data merge

Further, our post-election research tested 15 issues and asked voters to rate how important they were to them on a scale of 1-10. Of these issues, only seven showed significant differences by geographic region. Rural voters were higher than both suburban or urban voters on only two of these seven issues.

Top Tier Issue (50% + rated “10” among overall sample)

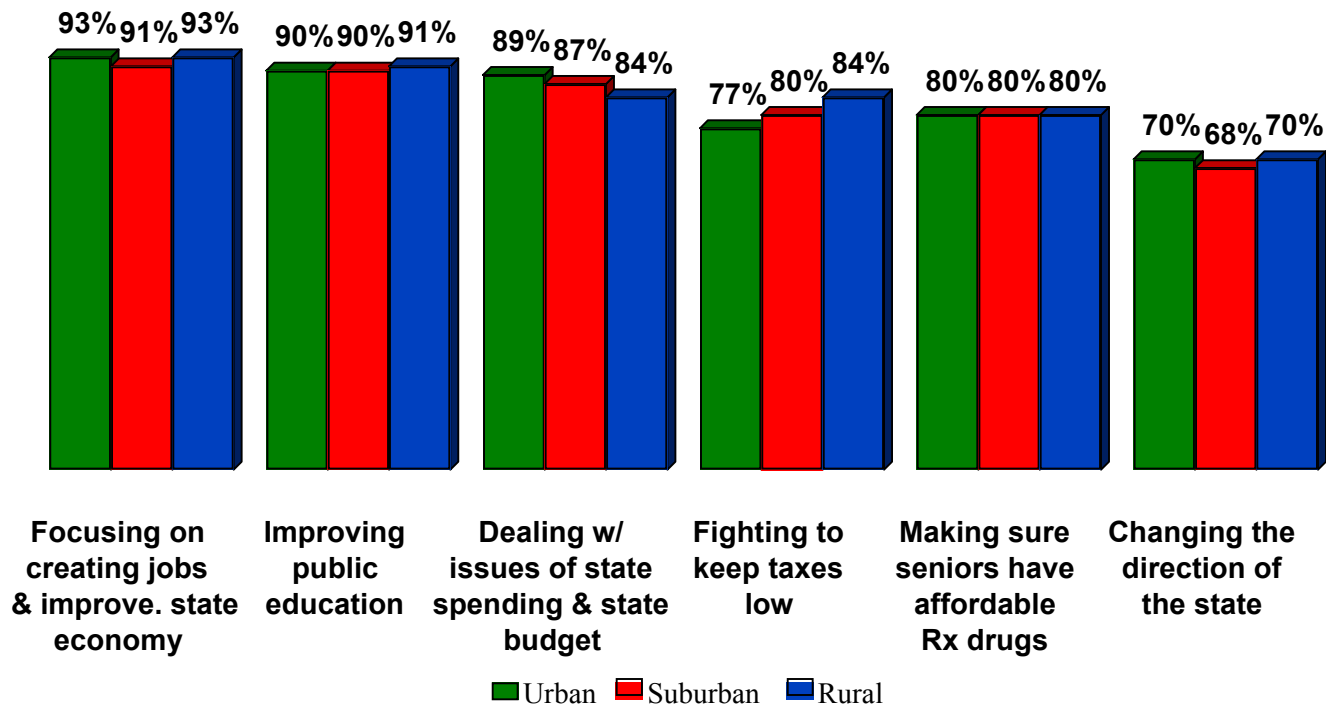
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Helping put a stop to corporate abuse	55%	57%	60%
Making sure doctors & patients control health care decisions	56%	54%	59%
Helping control the cost of health care	55%	53%	53%
Improving the quality of public education	58%	56%	56%
Zero tolerance for violent felons	56%	48%	61%
Bringing new jobs and businesses to the state	49%	47%	55%
Preparing to deal with any terrorist threats	46%	51%	47%
Balancing state budget without cutting vital programs	52%	47%	51%

* Data from POS RGA/Pfizer research

Voters were also asked how much six specific areas influenced their vote in 2002. Again, there is little difference by geographic region on the priority or importance of these items.

Please tell me whether that item has a great deal of influence on your vote, some influence, not that much influence, or no influence at all on your vote for Governor?

% Great Deal/Some by Geographic Region



* Data from POS RGA/Pfizer post-elect research

But, there was definitely a difference in perception of which party's candidate would have better handled these issues. Education and seniors' issues are the Democrats biggest perceptual advantages in rural areas, with GOPers having advantages elsewhere.

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Changing the direction of your state	GOP +6	GOP +3	GOP +14
Dealing with issues of state spending and the state budget	GOP +11	GOP +13	GOP +27
Fighting to keep taxes low	GOP +21	GOP +26	GOP +34
Making sure seniors have access to affordable prescription drugs	DEM +21	DEM +16	DEM +8
Focusing on creating jobs and improving the state's economy	DEM +3	GOP +7	GOP +7
Improving public education	DEM +11	GOP +1	DEM +2

* Data from POS RGA/Pfizer research

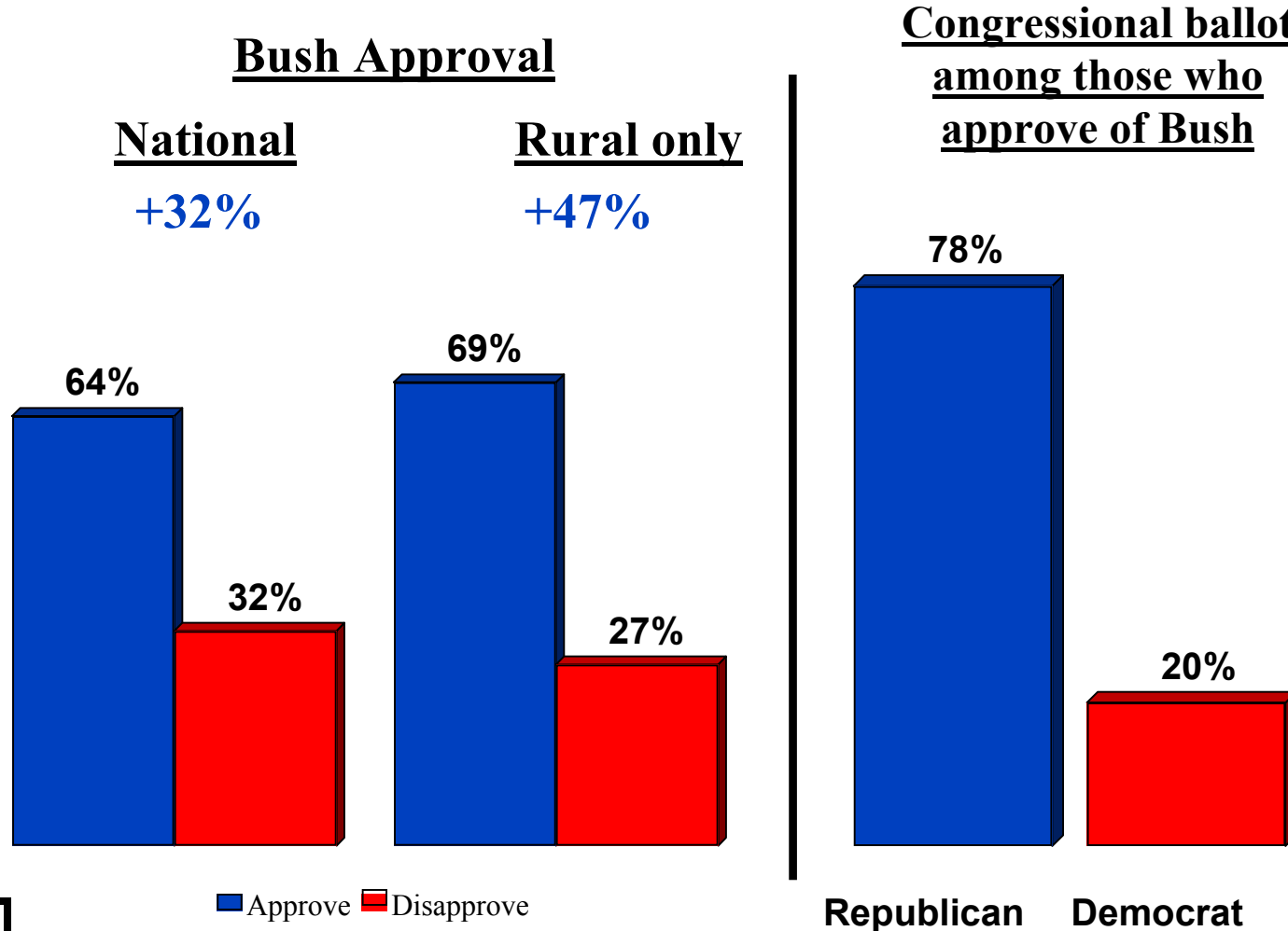
The differences by area on key perceptual attributes by party is interesting. Rural areas show clear GOP advantages on all attributes, while other areas show pro-GOP movement.

Now, I would like to read you some phrases and have you tell me if each best describes the national Republican party, the national Democratic party or if it doesn't describe either the national Republican party or the national Democratic party.

Difference between political parties (GOP – DEM)	Urban		Suburban		Rural	
	1998	2002	1998	2002	1998	2002
Has a vision for the future and practical solutions to the problems we face today.	DEM +10	GOP +4	DEM +1	GOP +22	GOP +5	GOP +9
Is in touch and cares about people like you.	DEM +20	DEM +12	DEM +7	GOP +1	DEM +1	GOP +8
Has the strong leadership and determination to get things done.	DEM +14	GOP +12	GOP +6	GOP +22	GOP +22	GOP +26
Is focused on issues that are relevant to you and your family.	N/A	DEM +9	N/A	GOP +1	N/A	GOP +8

* Data from POS RGA/Pfizer research

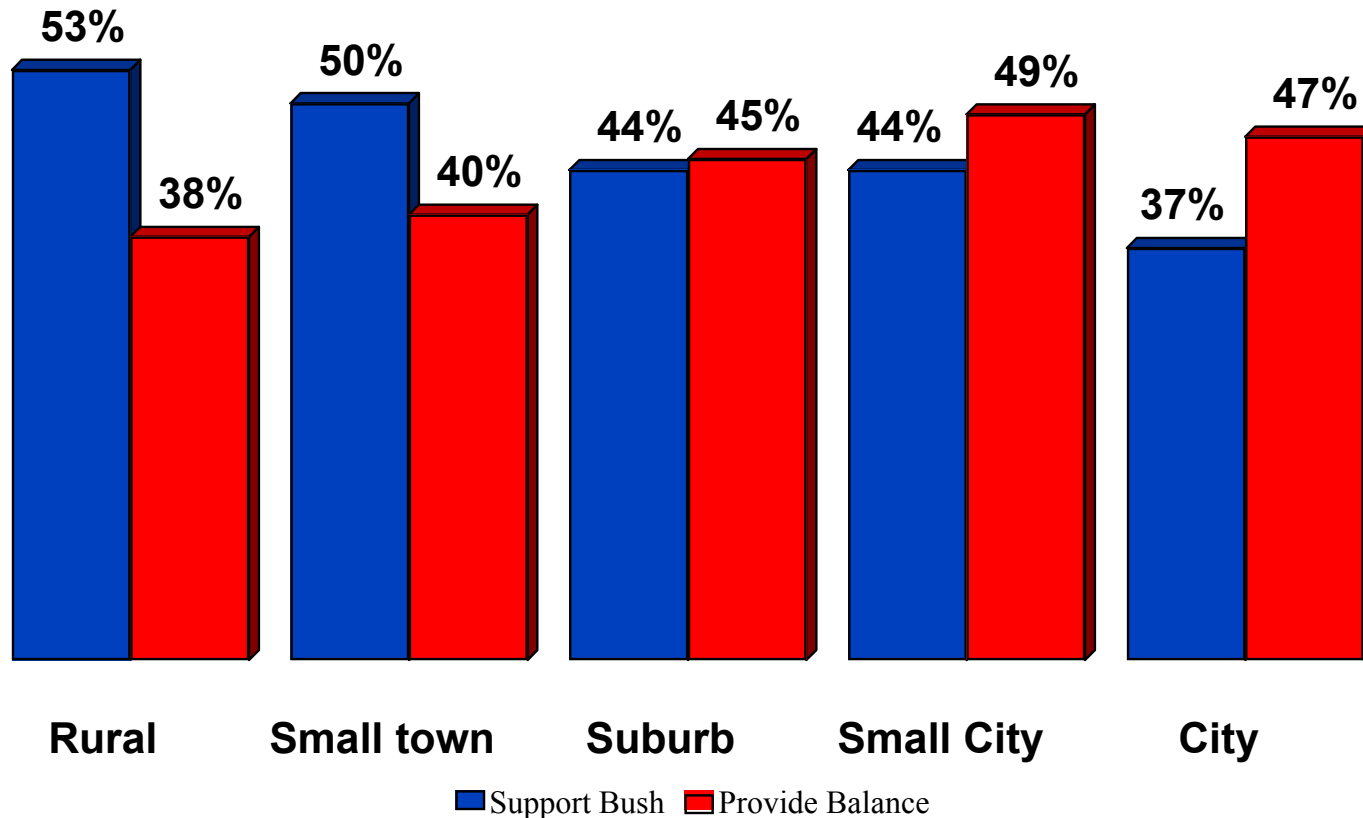
Clearly, President Bush played a powerful part in the large margins that GOP candidates rolled up this election cycle. His approval numbers in rural areas are higher than national numbers and GOP congressional candidates carried a majority of voters who approved of the President.



* Data from GQR post-election combined data

The President's popularity is further demonstrated among rural voters by looking at the question of supporting versus balancing the Bush agenda.

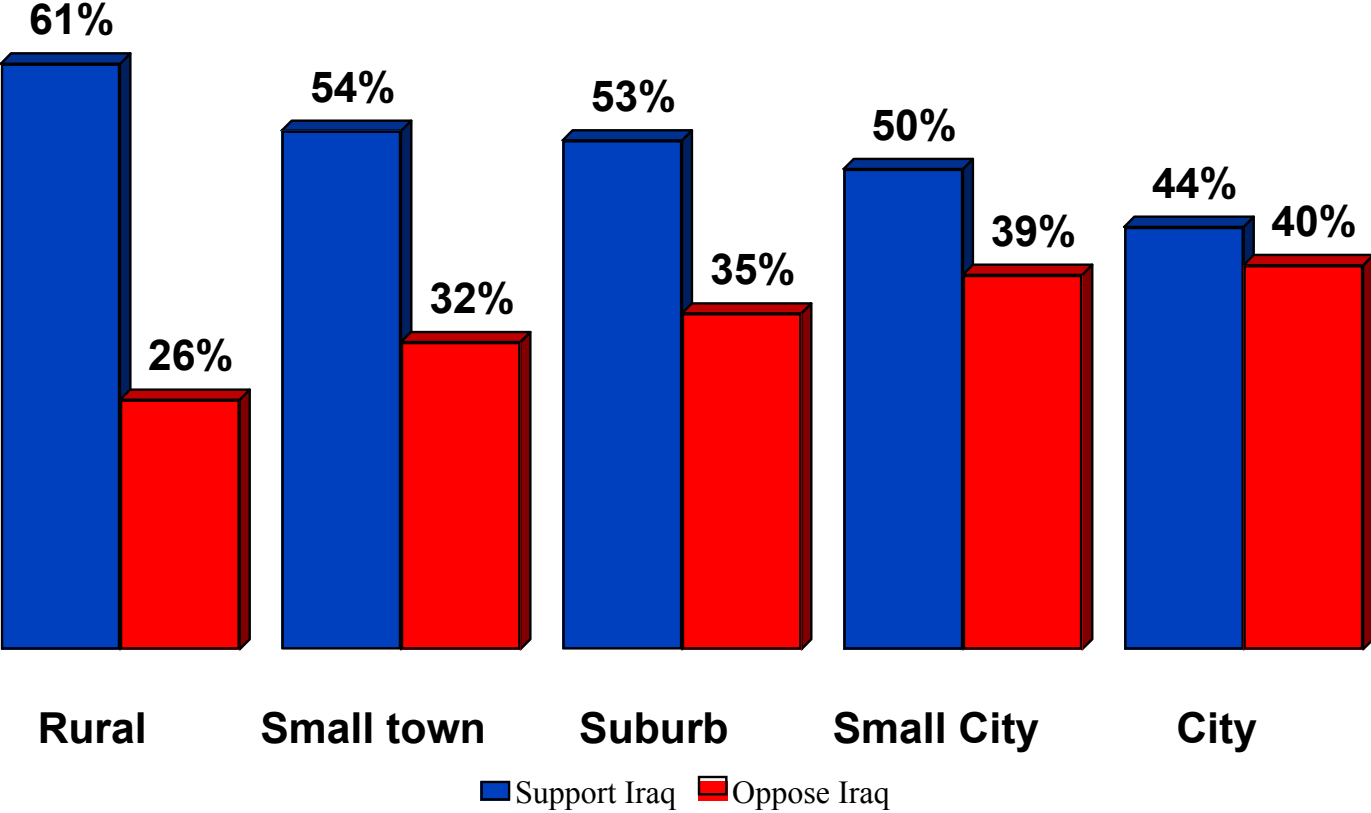
I chose somebody who would support President Bush's policies and programs OR I chose someone who would provide balance to President Bush's policies and programs



* Data from NPR/POS/GQR post-election research

Not surprisingly, President Bush's position on Iraq is also supported more strongly in rural America than in any other area.

I voted to support President Bush's position on Iraq OR I voted to oppose President Bush's position on Iraq



* Data from NPR/POS/GQR post-election research

UNDERSTANDING THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF RURAL VOTERS



Key Demographics by Geographic Region

Rural Voters are...

Political Affiliation

More Republican

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Republican	36%	44%	45%
Democrat	45%	38%	37%
Independent	15%	16%	15%

Education

...Have less formal education

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
HS or less	24%	27%	42%
Some college	30%	26%	26%
College grad +	45%	46%	32%

Ideology

More Conservative

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Conservative	31%	38%	44%
Moderate	39%	42%	40%
Liberal	24%	16%	11%

Abortion position

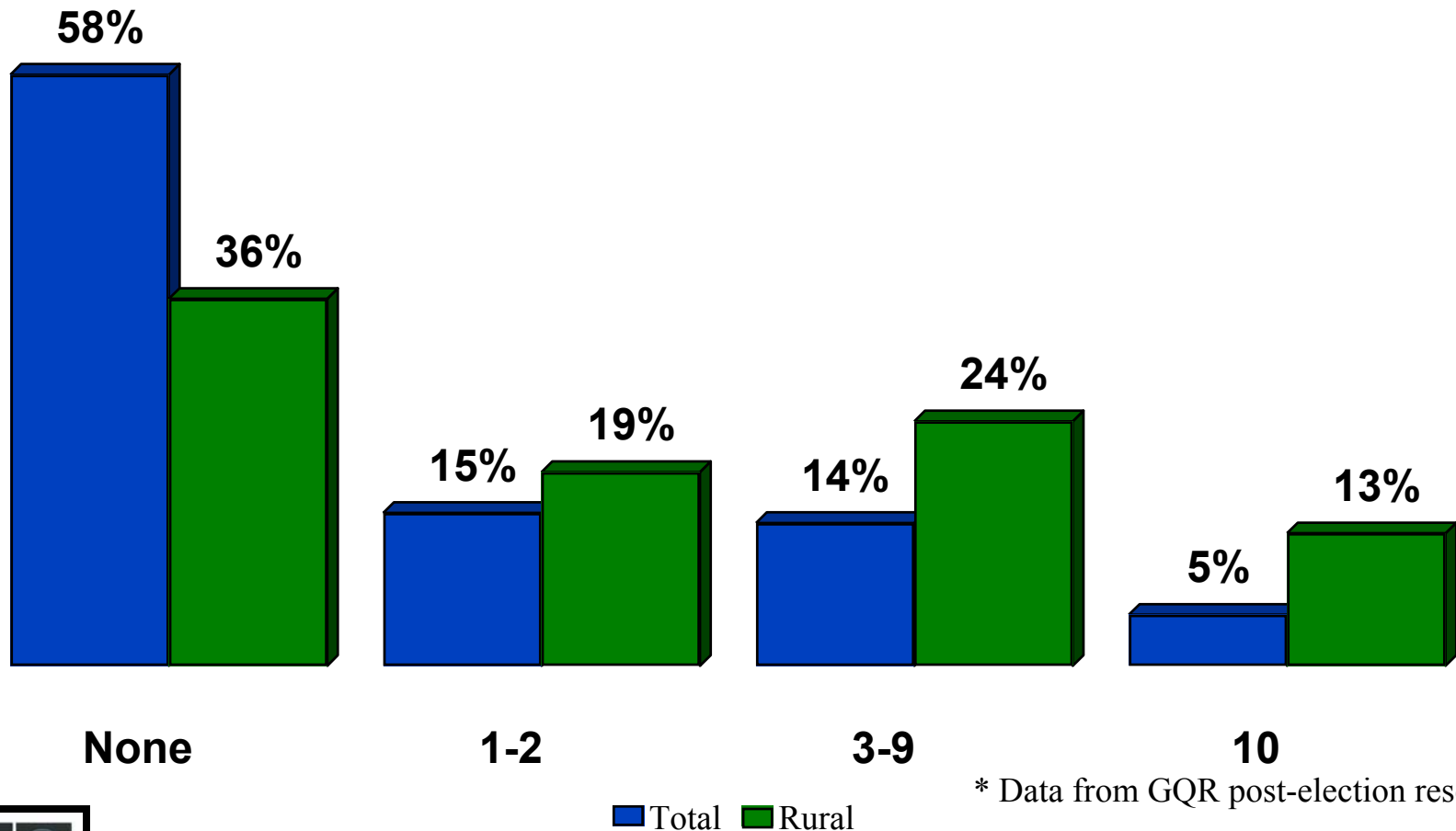
More pro-life

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Pro-life	34%	31%	37%
Pro-choice	42%	40%	29%
Difference	-8	-9	+8

* Data from POS post-election merge data

There is a large difference in firearm ownership between rural and non-rural areas.

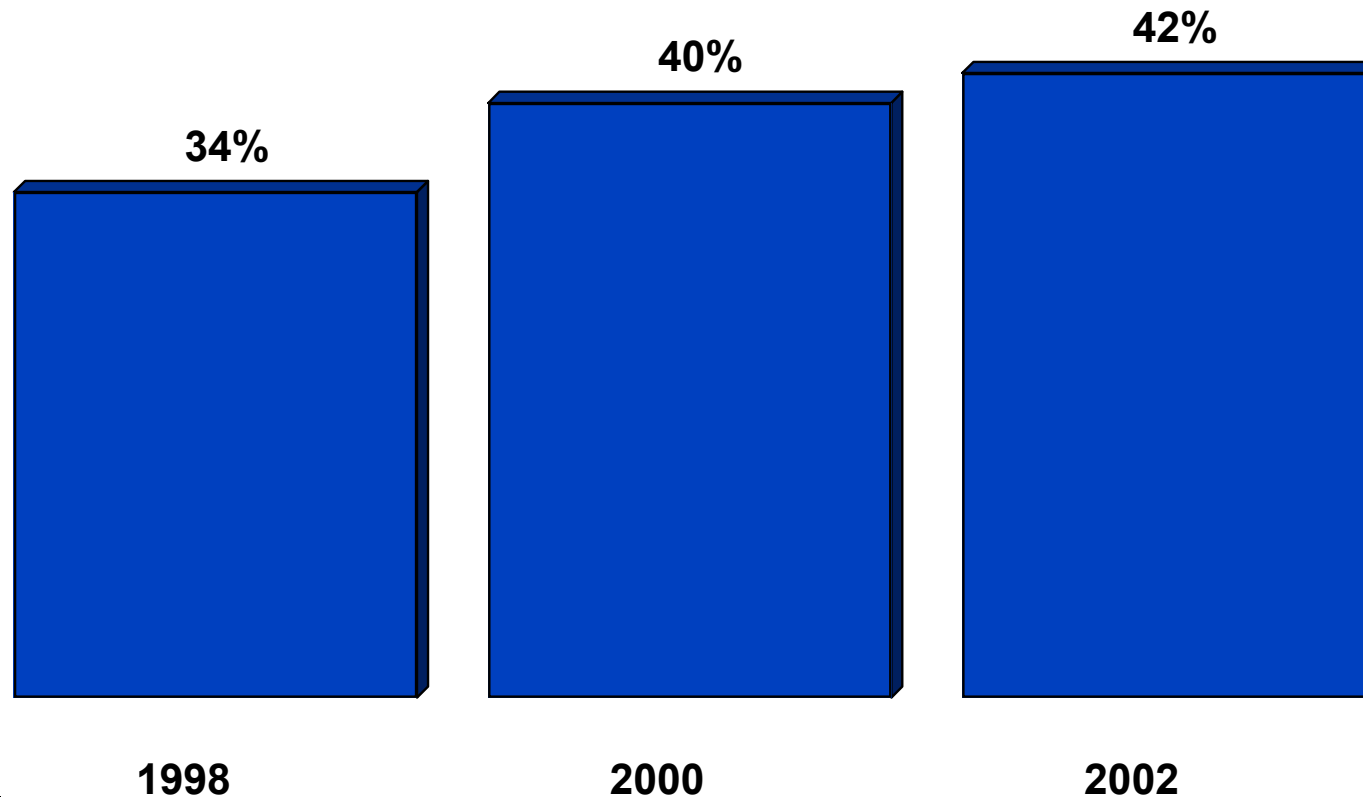
How many guns or rifles do you own?



* Data from GQR post-election research

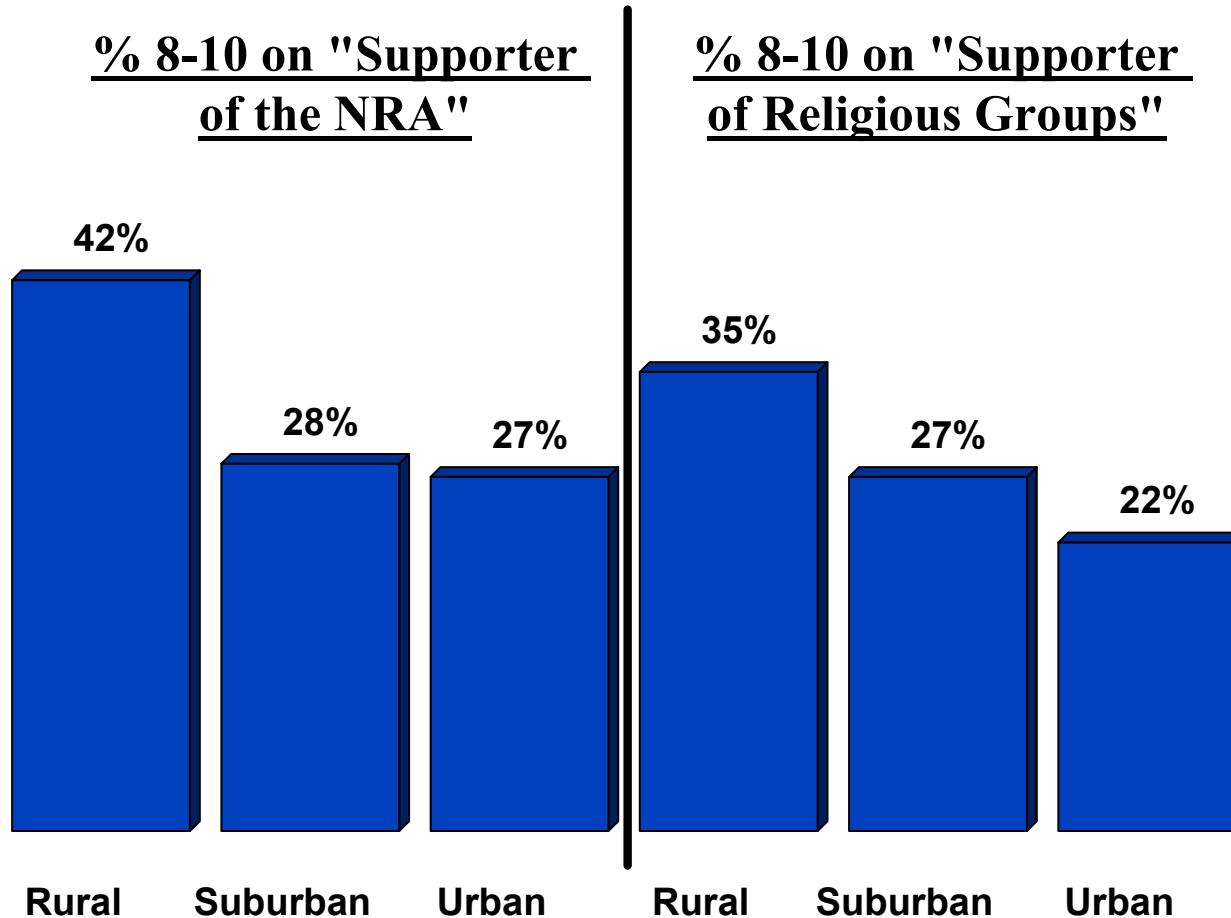
Further, the NRA's standing among rural voters has steadily improved.

% 8-10 on "Supporter of the NRA" in Rural Areas



* Data from 1998, 2000 and 2002 POS post-election surveys

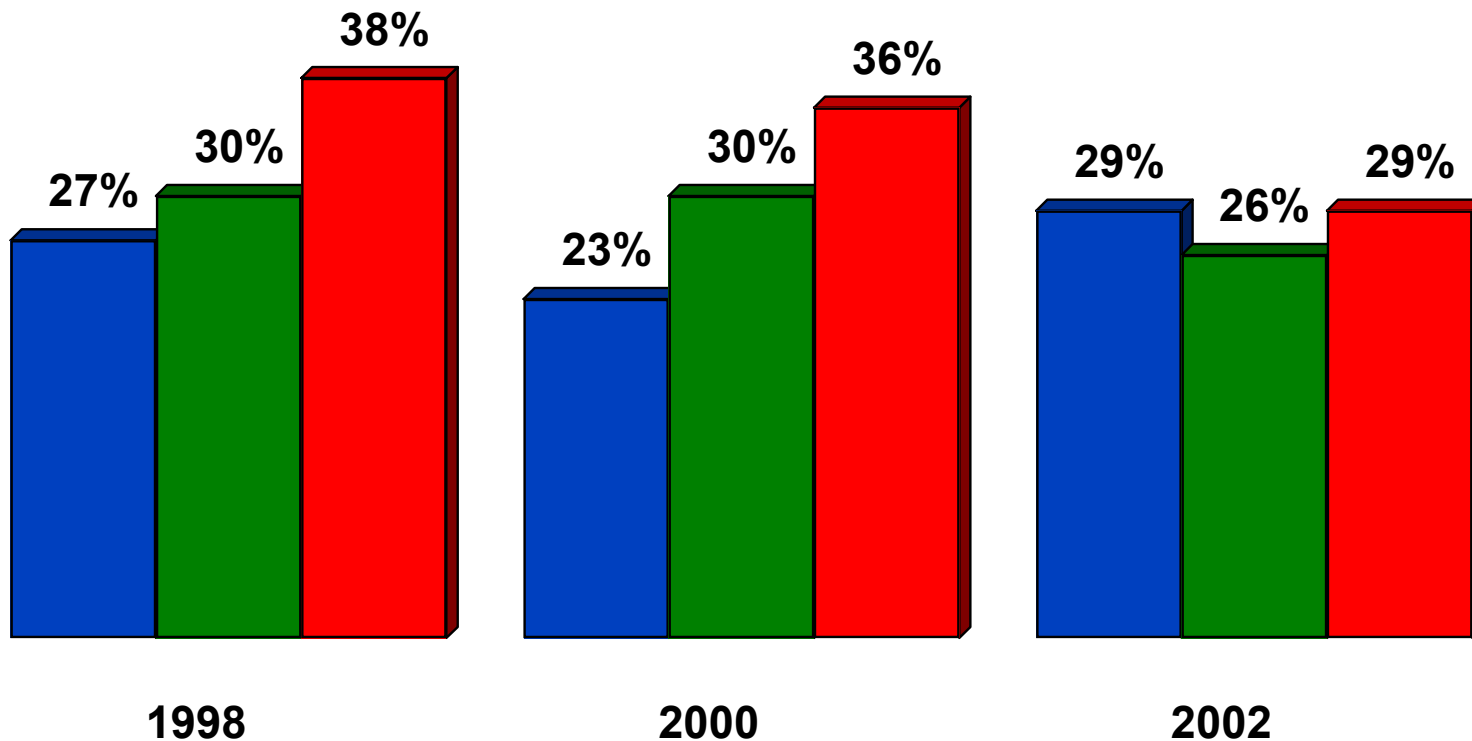
There is, not surprisingly, large differences in the perception of the NRA and support for conservative religious groups between rural voters and voters in urban and suburban areas.



* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

This is the first cycle since before 1998 where there is not a significant difference in self-described union supporters.

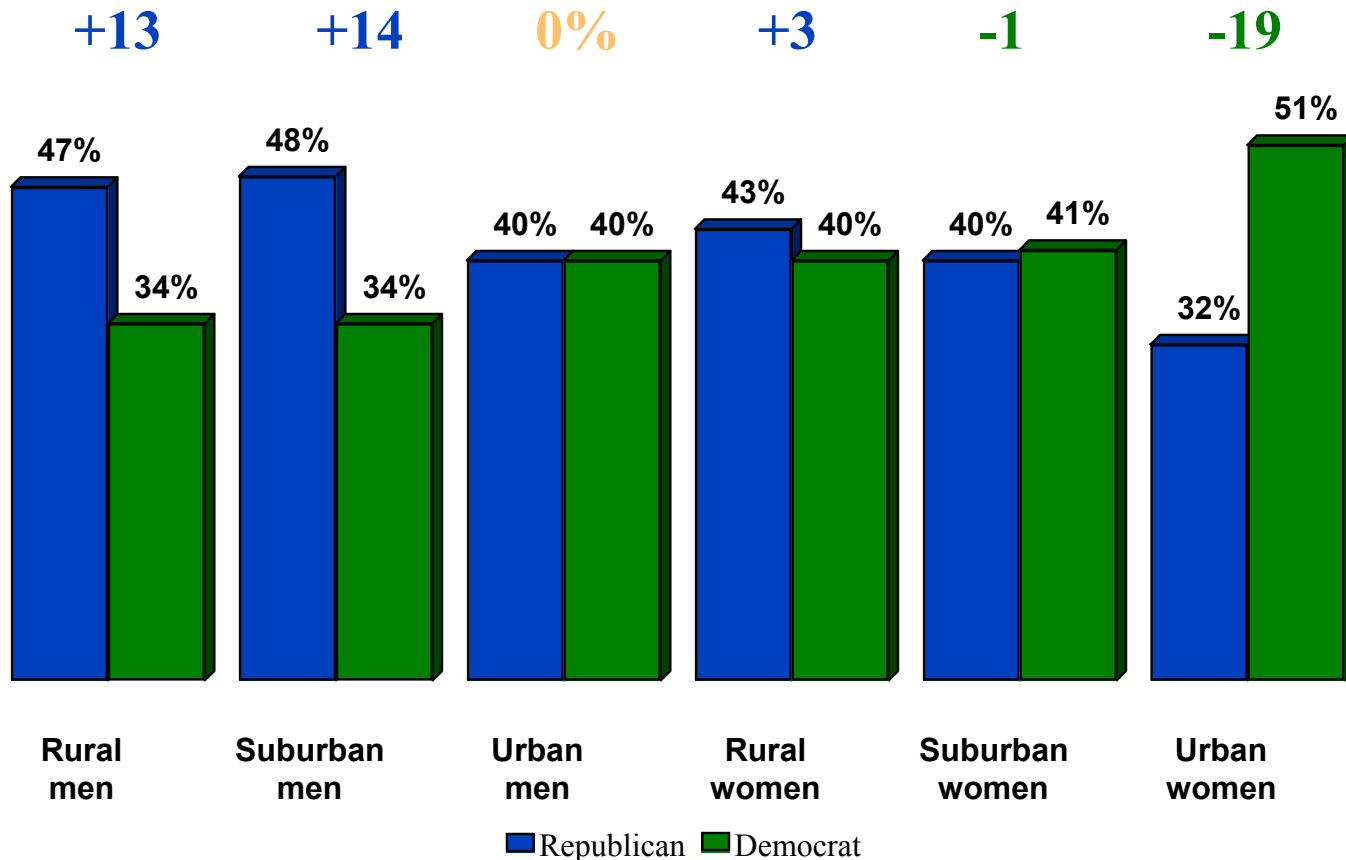
Support for unions by geographic region



■ Rural ■ Suburban ■ Urban

There is little difference between rural men and women and their suburban counterparts on party identification, although urban voters are clearly different.

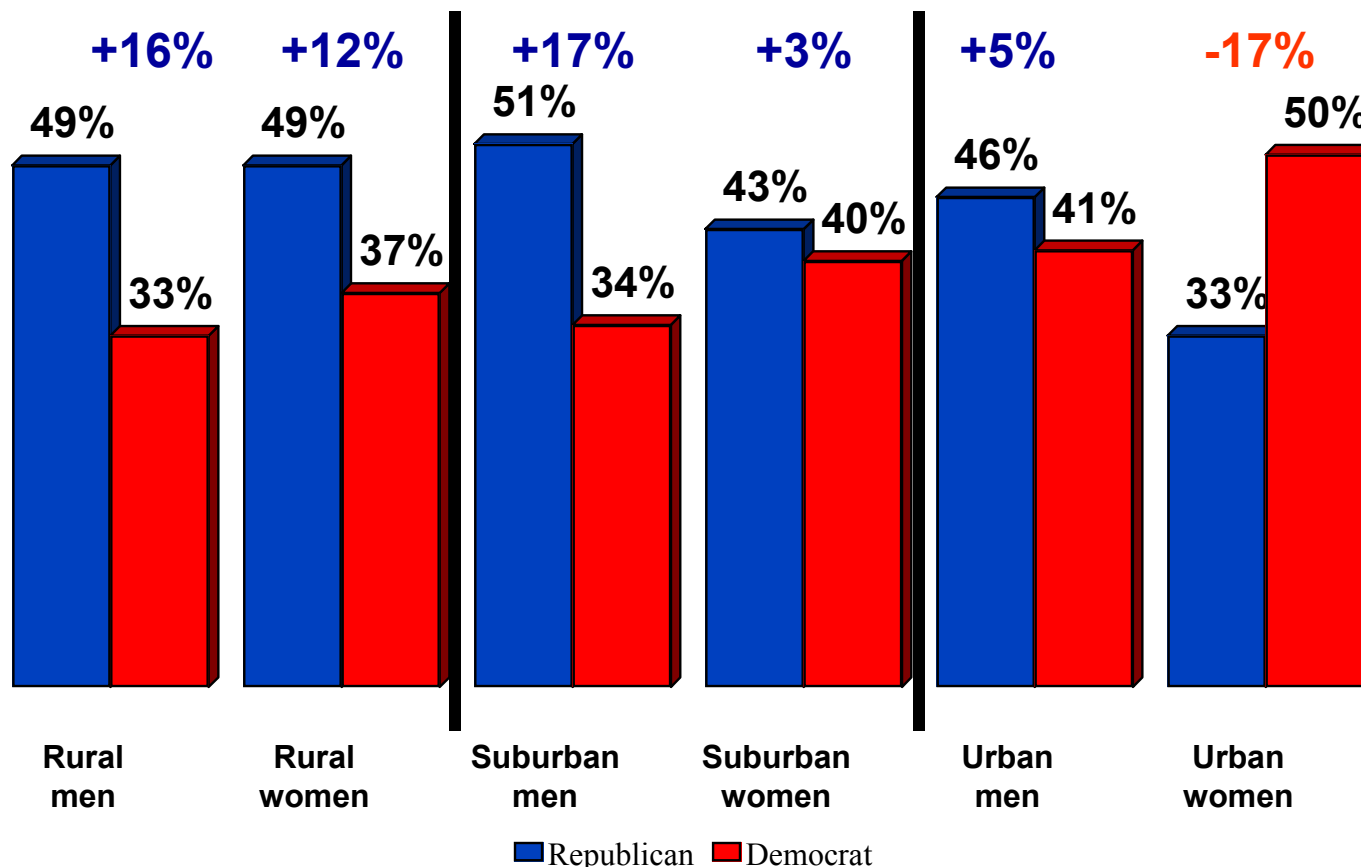
Party Identification By Gender/Geographic Region



* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

But, there is a key difference in vote *behavior* by gender between rural voters and voters in non-rural areas. The gender gap is very small between rural men and women, but very substantial between men and women in non-rural areas.

Congressional Generic Ballot By Gender/Geographic Region



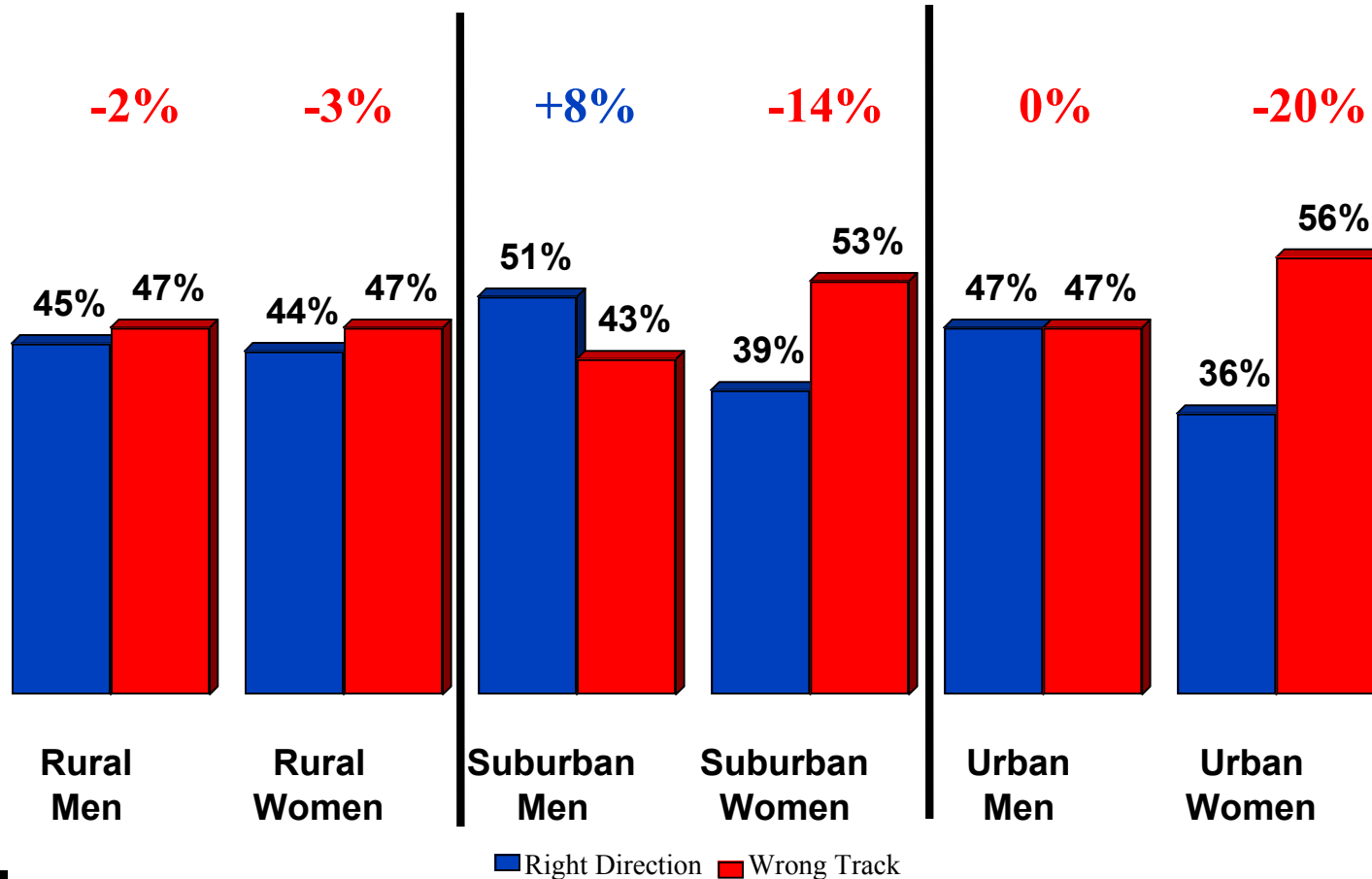
* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

Why is this? It may be because there is almost no gender gap between rural men and women on issues when compared to suburban and urban men/women.

Difference in issue importance by gender	Rural (Men-Women)	Suburban (Men-Women)	Urban (Men-Women)
The economy and jobs	+4	+8	+7
Education	-4	-7	-12
Social Security & Medicare	-1	-7	-2
Moral values	-5	-2	+2
Situation with Iraq	+3	+4	+1
Taxes	+1	+6	-1
Affordable health care	+1	-10	-17
Anti-terrorism efforts	-1	+5	-1

Also, rural men and women view the political environment very much the same, especially when compared to their suburban and urban counterparts.

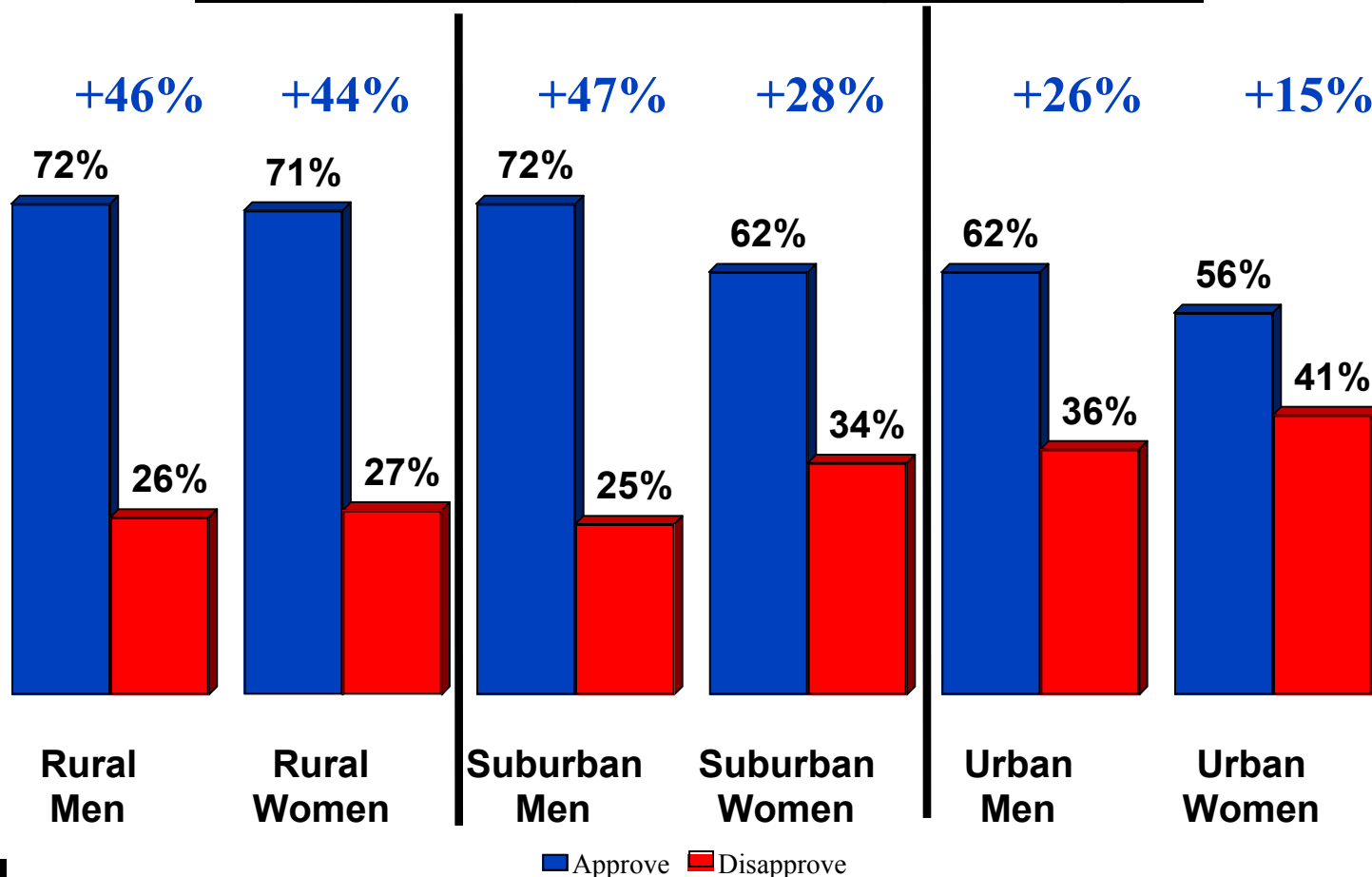
Mood of Country By Gender/Geographic Region



* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

Also, rural men and women view Bush approval very much the same, especially when compared to their suburban and urban counterparts.

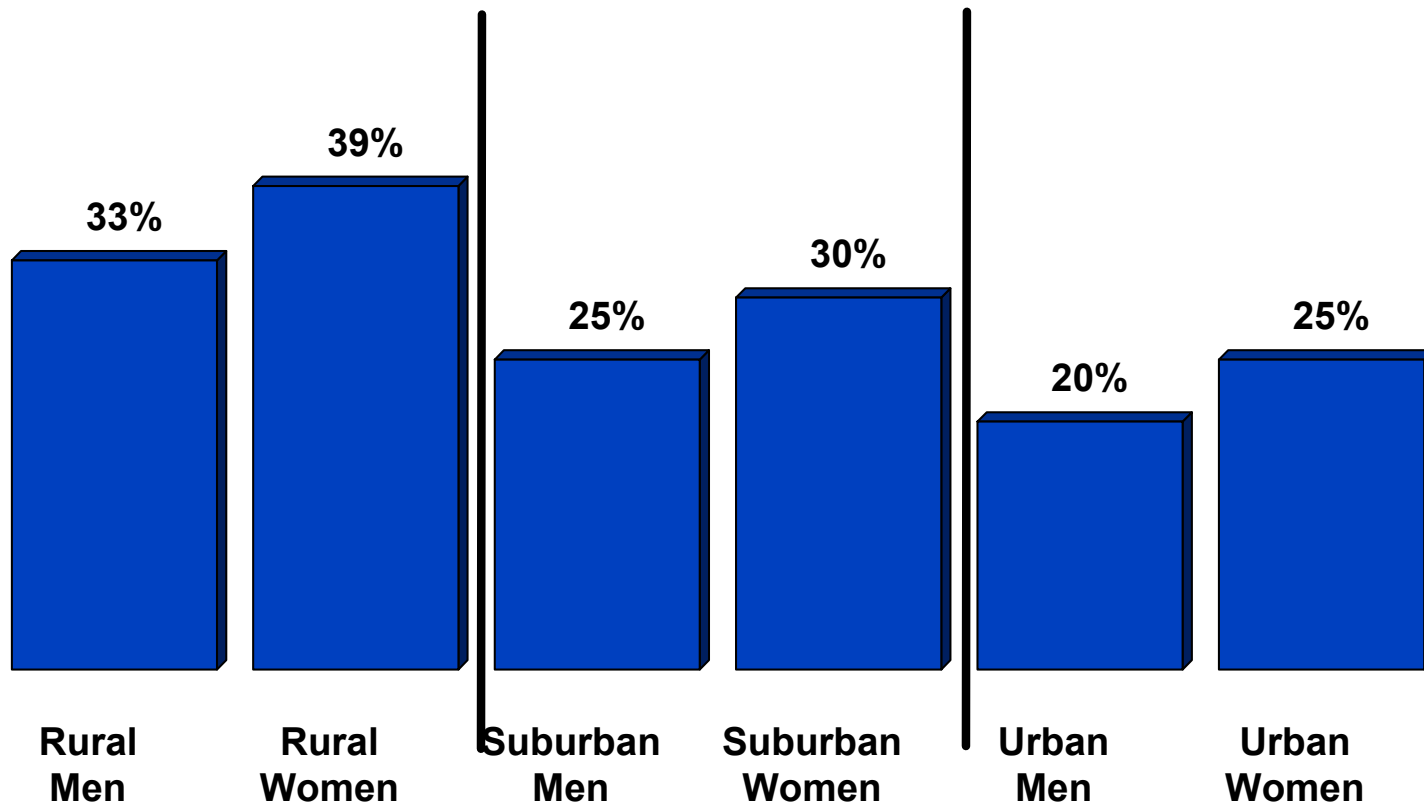
Bush Approval By Gender/Geographic Region



* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

What makes rural women different is ideological. Rural women are significantly more supportive of conservative religious groups.

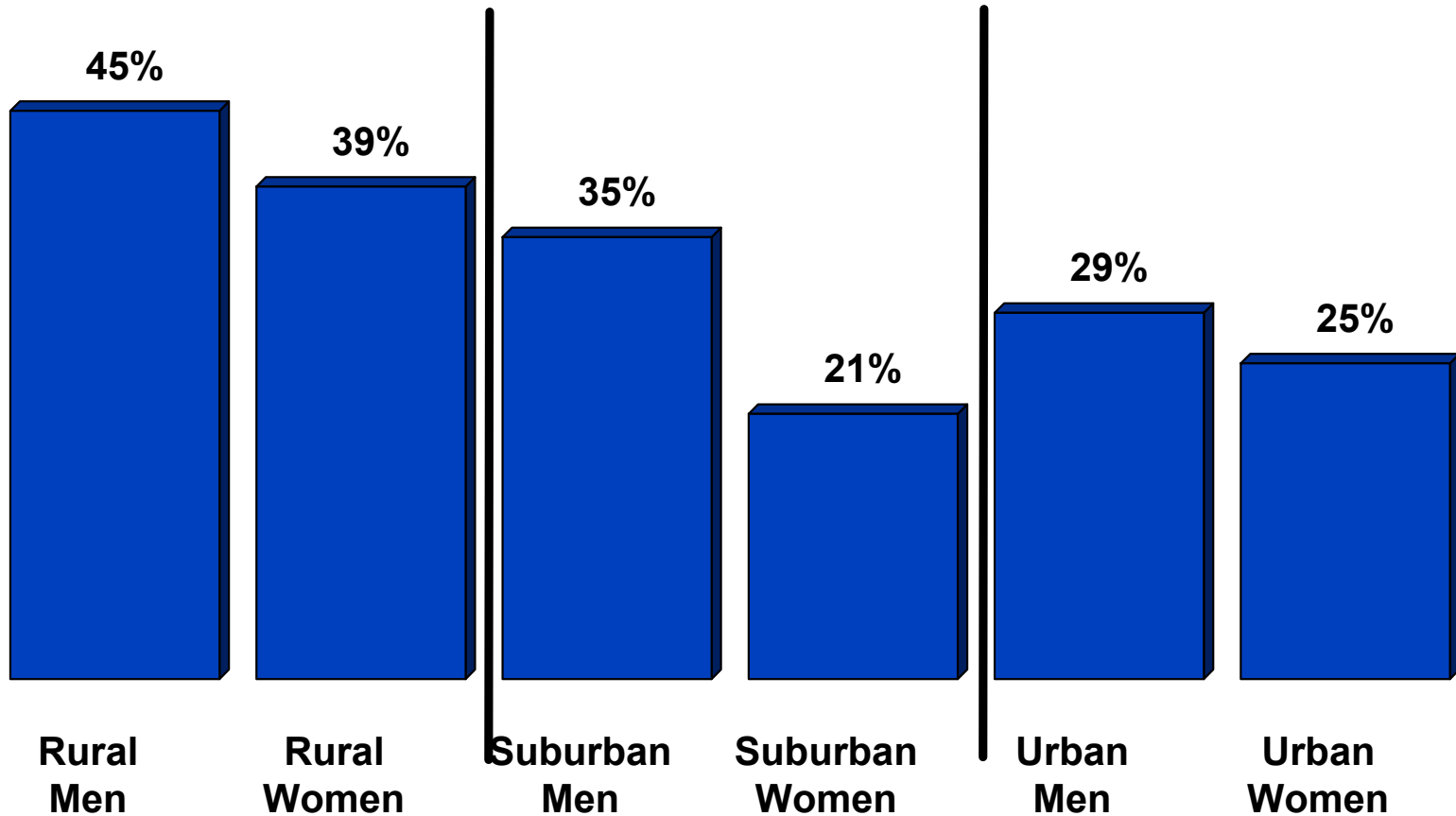
%8-10 Supporter of Conservative Religious Groups
by Gender/Geography



* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

Compared to other female voters (and even some male voters), rural women are more supportive of the NRA.

%8-10 NRA Supporter by Gender/Geography

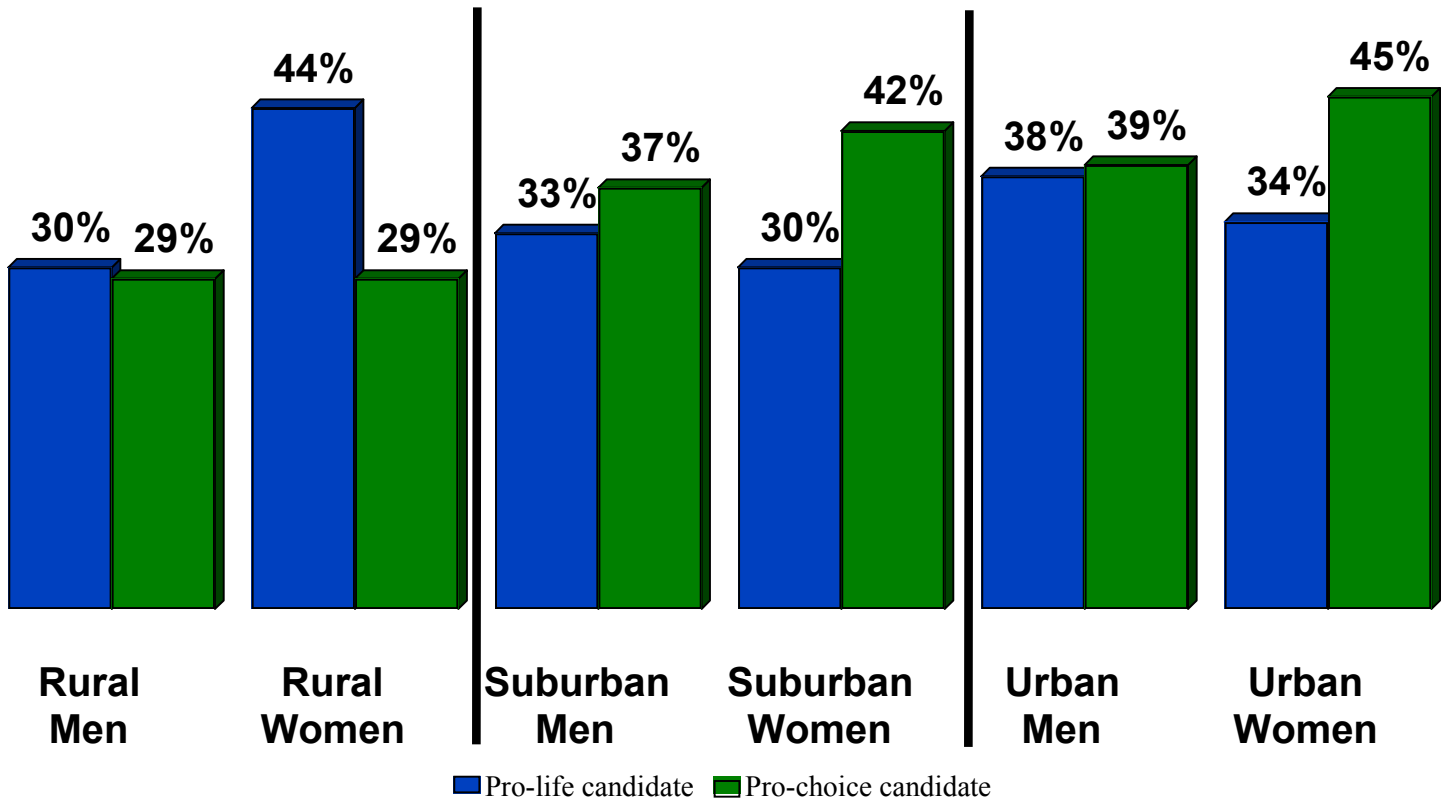


* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

And, rural women are the only voter group below to definitively prefer pro-life candidates.

On the issue of abortion, would you say you are more likely to vote for...

Candidate Abortion Preference by Gender/Geographic Region



* Data from POS 2002 post-election merge data

So, why do rural men and women track alike so often on voting behavior and issues when compared to men and women in non-rural areas?

- Rural women are actually stronger GOP partisans than their male counterparts, are more supportive of conservative religious groups, are more conservative than non-rural men on self-reported ideology, and are the only gender/area group that are a net positive in their support of pro-life candidates.
- In short, it is *not* a partisan difference; the difference is ideological. Rural women are socially conservative, support the President at higher levels than suburban and urban women, and care about the same issues as rural men. Suburban and urban women, on the other hand, are substantially different from their male counterparts on a whole range of ideological and issue-based measures – thus creating very different vote behavior.