

Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining

Key findings from a recent survey of 1000 likely voters nationwide.

October, 2008

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY

- **Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research and Consulting designed and administered this survey, which was conducted by phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 1000 adults nationwide, 18 years or older, who are registered to vote and indicated they are likely to vote in the 2008 general election.**
- **The survey was conducted between October 11th – 16th, 2008. The margin of error for this poll is +/-3.1%. Telephone numbers for the sample were generated by a random digit dial (RDD). The sample was stratified by region based on predicted turnout in the 2008 general election.**
- **The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, education, race, and party identification to accurately reflect the likely voting population.**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **A recent nationwide survey of 1000 likely voters conducted by Lake Research Partners and Bellwether Research and Consulting shows overwhelming opposition to the Bush administration's eleventh hour effort to repeal the Stream Buffer Zone Rule – the landmark federal environmental protection that prohibits coal companies from conducting mountaintop removal, and dumping their waste, within 100 feet of the nation's streams.**
- **Voters' opposition to this rule change stands against the backdrop of broad public concern about the deterioration of the environment in the U.S. and a strong sense that environmental protections *help* the economy.**



KEY FINDINGS

- **A majority of American voters believes the environment in the United States is deteriorating.**
 - Fully 55% say the quality of the environment has gotten worse in recent years.
 - Another quarter believes the environment has stayed about the same, and only 18 percent believe the environment has improved.
- **By more than a 2:1 margin, voters believe environmental protections are good for the economy.**
 - Voters categorically reject the argument that environmental protections are bad for jobs and business – a common refrain of the Bush administration, as well as oil and mining companies.
 - A plurality (47%) believe environmental protections are good for the economy
 - Another 23% believe such protections have no impact on the economy, and only 20% of Americans believe environmental protections are bad for the economy.



KEY FINDINGS (continued)

- **Two-thirds of American voters oppose the Bush administration’s effort to repeal the Stream Buffer Zone Rule.**
 - Fully 66% oppose repeal, including roughly half (49%) who “strongly oppose” repealing the rule, which for 25 years has protected our nation’s water resources from toxic debris caused by mountaintop removal coal mining.
 - Only two in ten (20%) support the Bush administration’s effort to gut this critical safeguard (just 8% support it strongly), and another 14% are unsure.
- **Opposition to Bush’s effort to repeal the Stream Buffer Zone Rule is both broad and deep, transcending traditional demographic and regional divides.**
 - Strong majorities of men (62%) and women (69%) oppose repealing the rule, as do college-educated and non college-educated voters (65% for each), and voters in all four corners of the country (74% in the Northeast, 64% in the Midwest, 64% in the South, and 64% in the West).



KEY FINDINGS (continued)

- **Over half have heard about mountaintop removal mining, and by roughly a 2:1 margin these voters have an unfavorable impression of the practice (34% unfavorable, 18% favorable). Furthermore, voters oppose strongly the practice. Without any description of mountaintop removal mining, voters oppose it by more than a 2:1 margin (39% to 15%). After giving voters a basic description of the practice, opposition spikes to 61%, with virtually no change in the level of support (16%). Public sentiment against mountaintop removal mining is also broad, with opposition outweighing support in every region of the country.**
- **Finally, voters also report high levels of concern over water quality and take a firm stand against further destruction of America’s streams.**
- **Upon hearing that “more than 1,200 miles of streams in Appalachia have already been buried or destroyed by mountaintop removal coal mining, with another 1,000 miles projected for burial and destruction in the next ten years,” fully 86% of voters say they are concerned about the effects of mountaintop removal, including a 60% majority who are very concerned.**
 - (It should be noted that this question was asked after the initial question about support or opposition to repealing the Stream Buffer Zone Rule.)



The Bottom Line

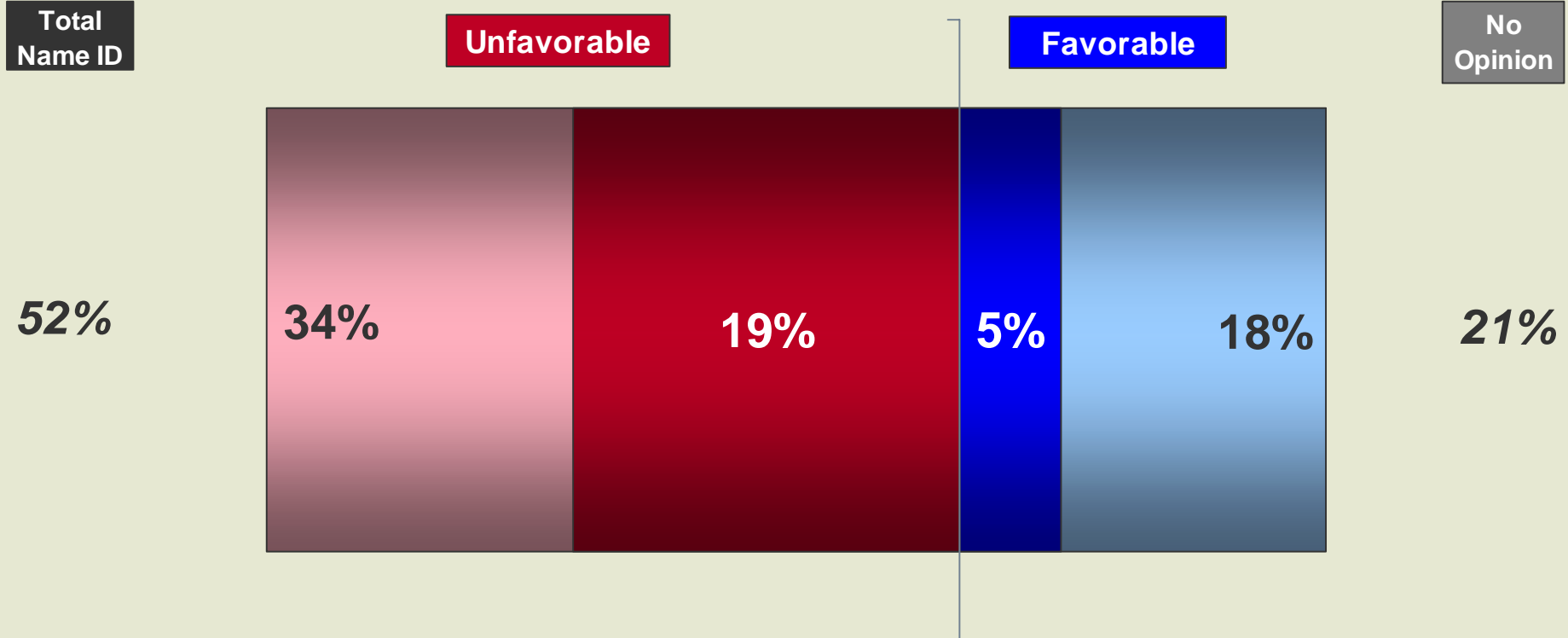
- **American voters flatly oppose repealing the protections outlined in the Stream Buffer Zone Rule. The Bush Administration – and public officials across the country – should take note, and understand that voters’ opposition to repealing this law is strong and considered, stemming from the sense that removing environmental protections would pose a threat not only to the quality of our environment, but also to the health of our economy.**



Over half of all voters have heard about mountaintop removal mining. By roughly a 2:1 margin, these voters have an unfavorable opinion of the practice.

**Split Sampled. Bold colors indicate intensity*

Mountaintop Removal Mining – Name ID

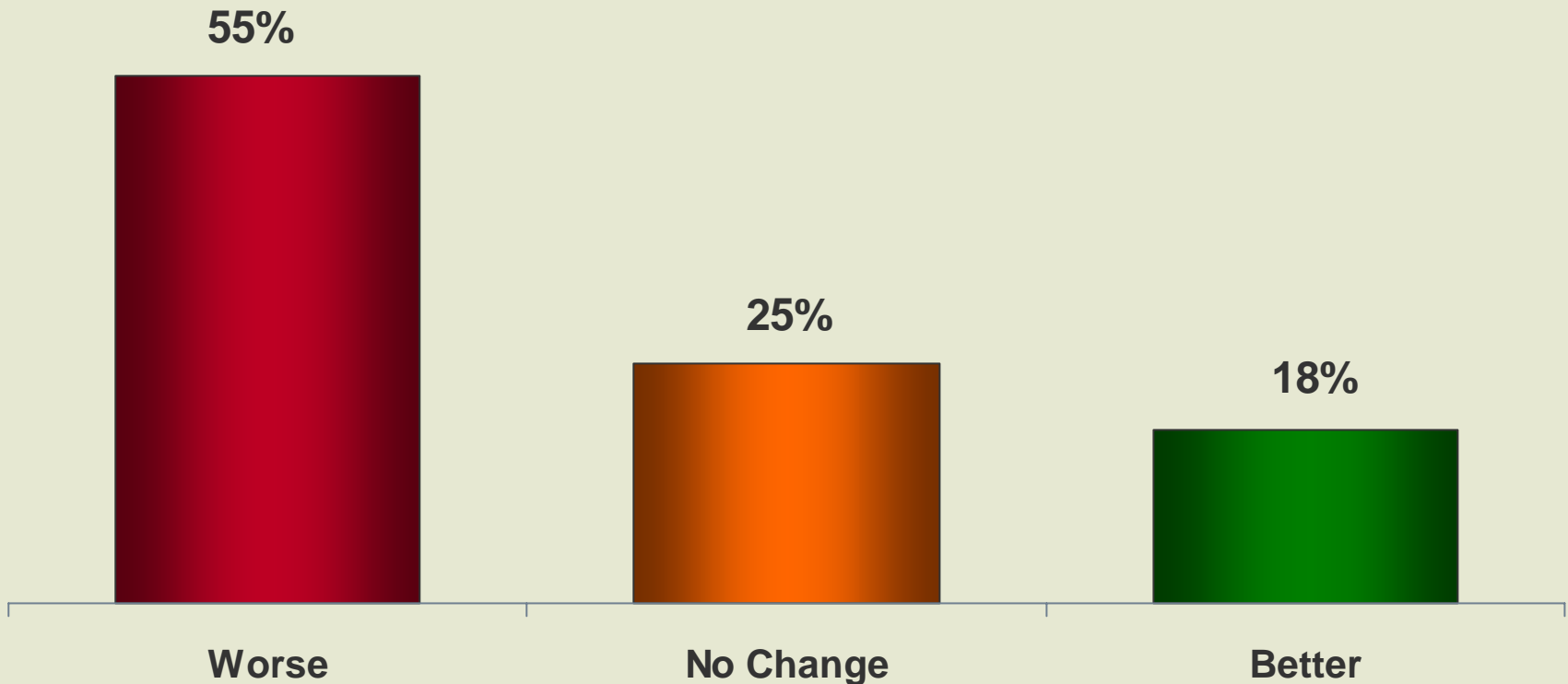


Now I'd like to ask you about some organizations and issues. For each, please tell me whether you have a VERY favorable, SOMEWHAT favorable, somewhat UNFAVORABLE, or VERY unfavorable impression. If you have heard of the organization and issue but do not know enough to have an impression or if you haven't heard of the organization and issue, just say so, and we will move on.



A majority of Americans believes the quality of the environment in the United States is deteriorating. Only 18% thinks the environment is getting better.

Quality of Environment – Better or Worse?

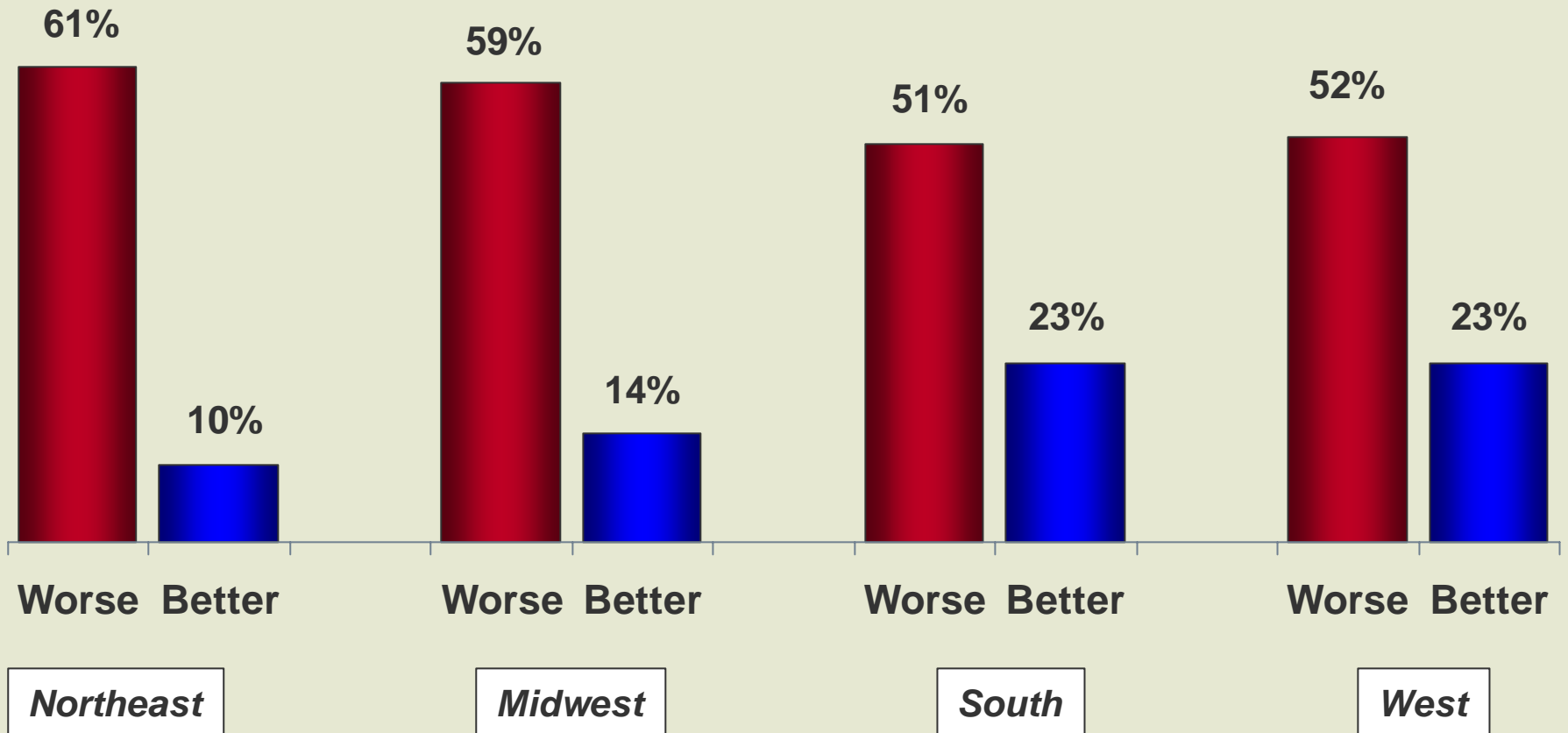


Overall, do you think the quality of the environment in the United States has gotten better, stayed about the same, or gotten worse?



Majorities in all corners of the country believe that the environment is worsening. Concerns about the deteriorating environment is most acute in the Northeast and Midwest – areas where Mountaintop Coal Removal Mining is most prevalent.

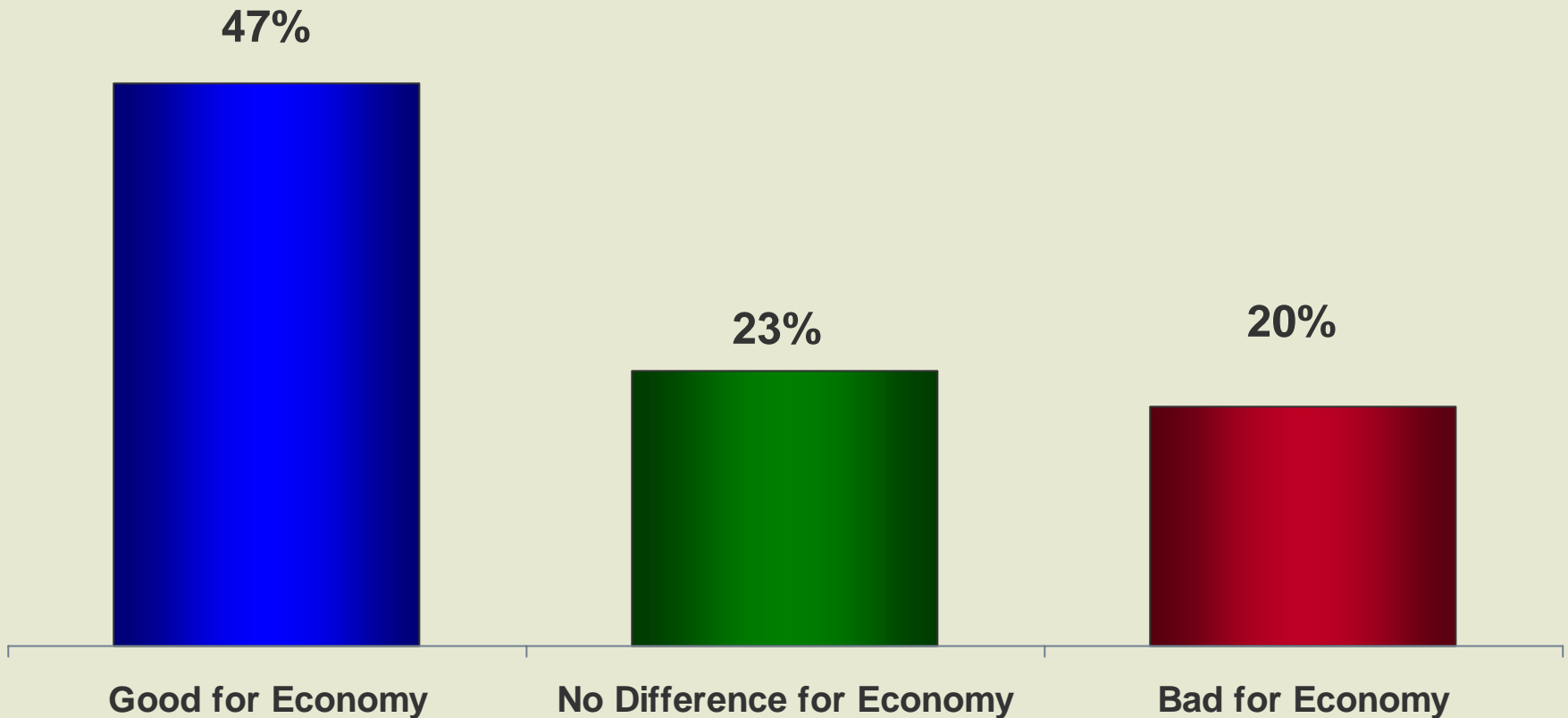
Quality of Environment – By Region





Nearly half of all voters say environmental protections are good for the economy, while just two in ten says these protections are bad for the economy.

Environmental Protections – Good or Bad for the Economy?

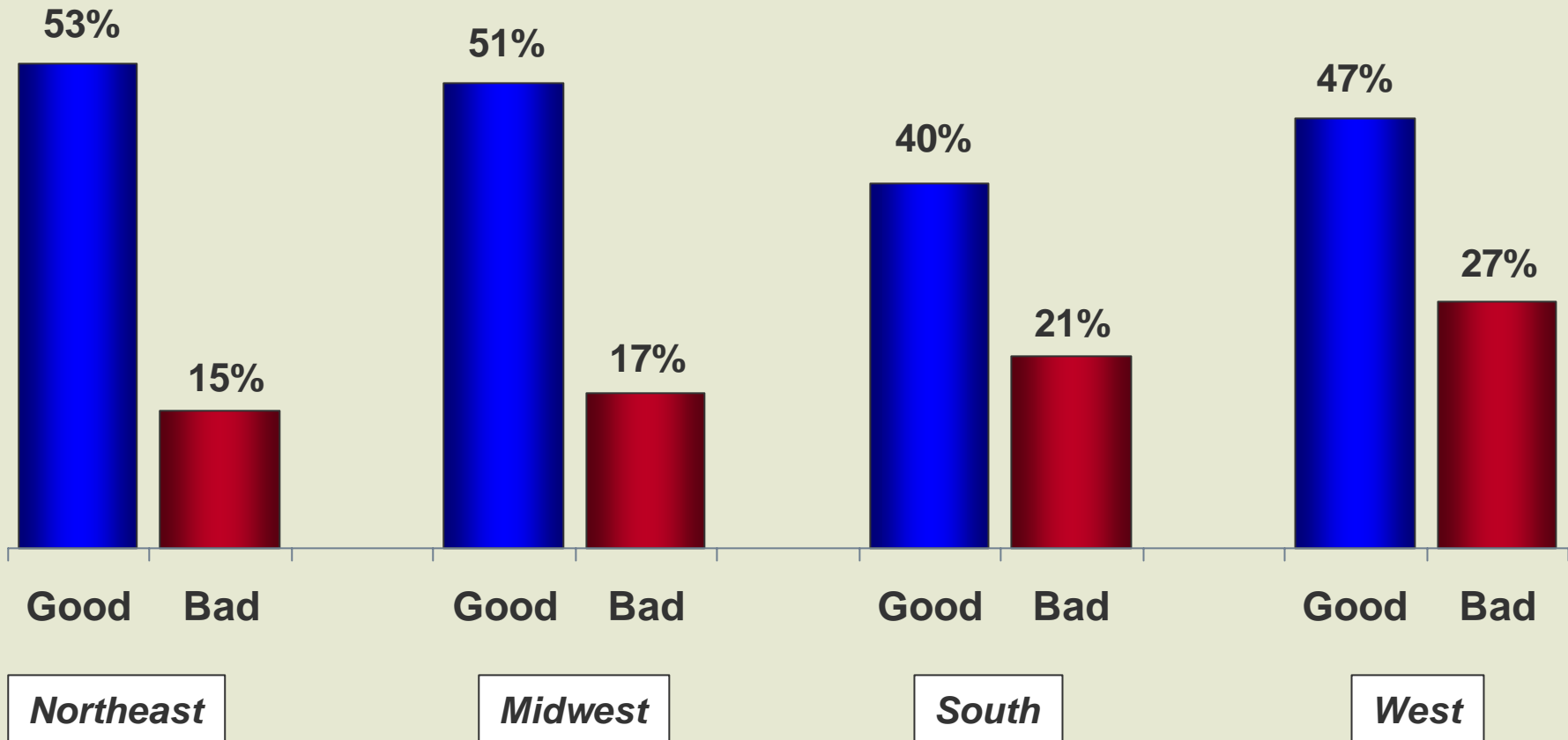


Are environmental protections usually good for the economy, bad for the economy, or do they not make any difference on the economy?



Majorities in the Northeast and Midwest, and solid pluralities in the South and West believe environmental protections are good for the economy.

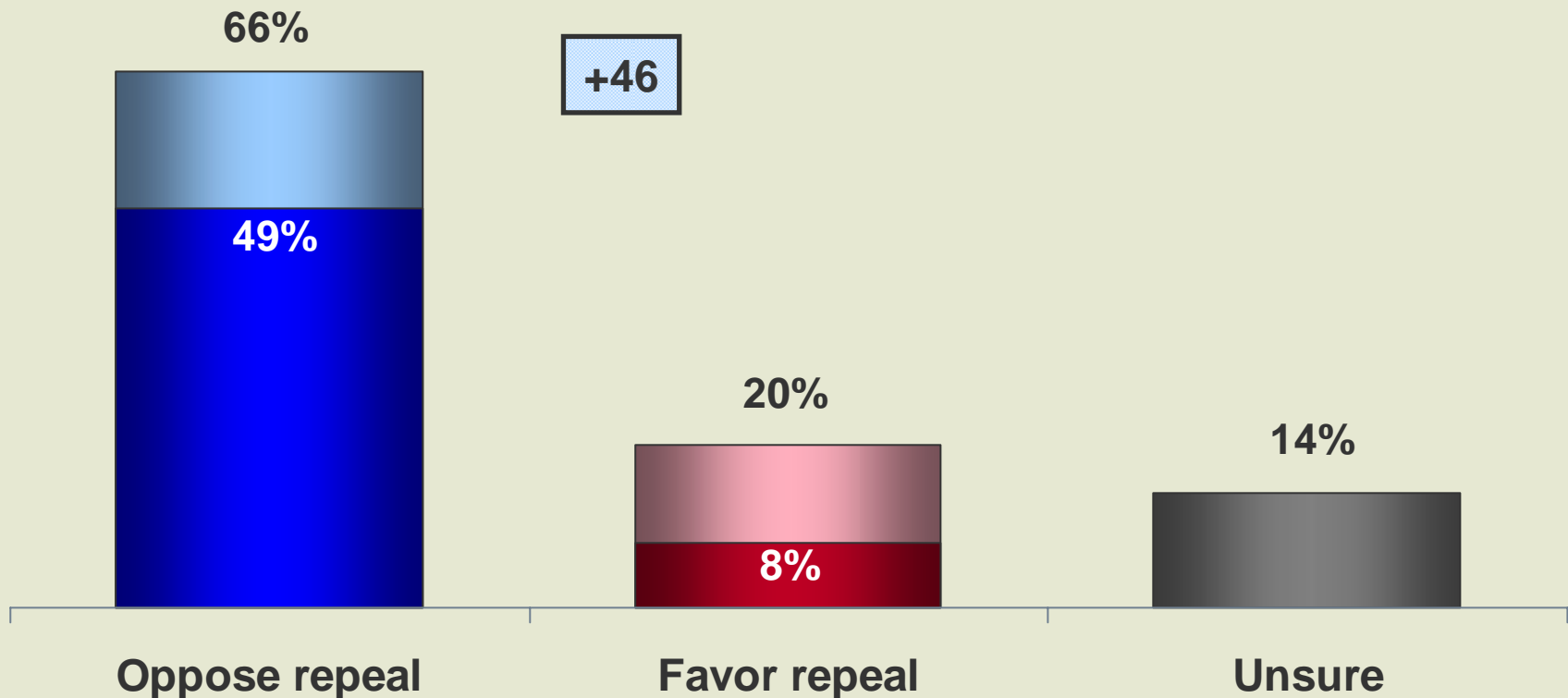
Environmental Protections & the Economy – By Region





Roughly two-thirds of voters oppose the Bush administration's effort to repeal the Stream Buffer Zone Rule. Only 20% percent support repeal, and 14% are unsure.

The Stream Buffer Zone Rule – Favor or Oppose REPEAL?

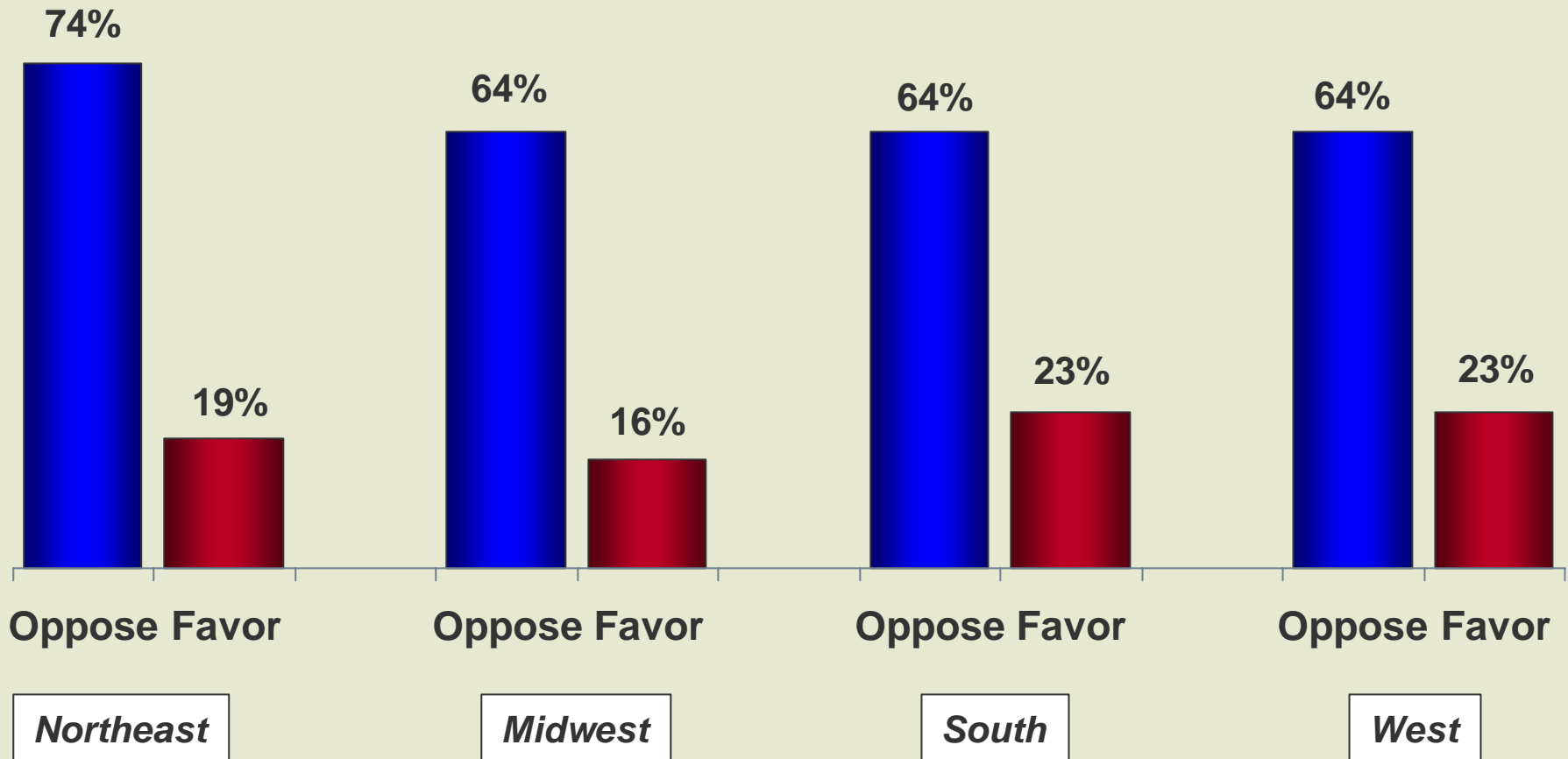


As you may know, the Bush Administration is now proposing repealing the Stream Buffer Zone Rule. For 25 years, this rule has prohibited mountaintop removal coal mining within 100 feet of streams unless it can be done in a way that does not adversely affect the water quantity or quality or other environmental resources of the stream. The change would allow coal companies to conduct mountaintop removal and dump their waste in streams as long as they try to minimize the damage to the streams. Do you favor or oppose these changes, or are you unsure?



Strong majorities across the country oppose repealing the Stream Buffer Zone Rule. Opposition is especially strong in the Northeast, where nearly three-quarters oppose the rule change.

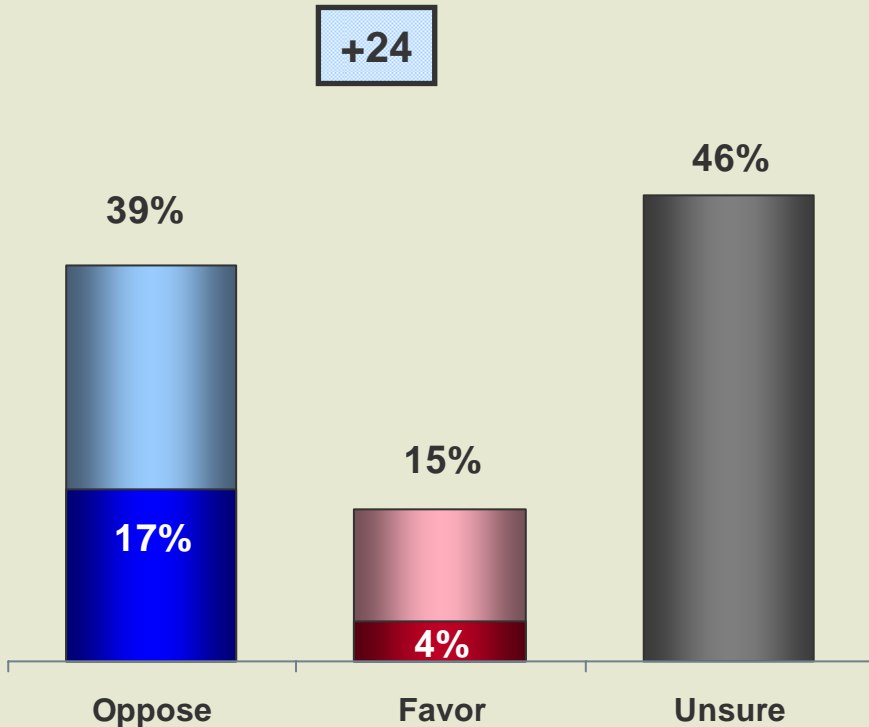
The Stream Buffer Zone Rule Rule – By Region



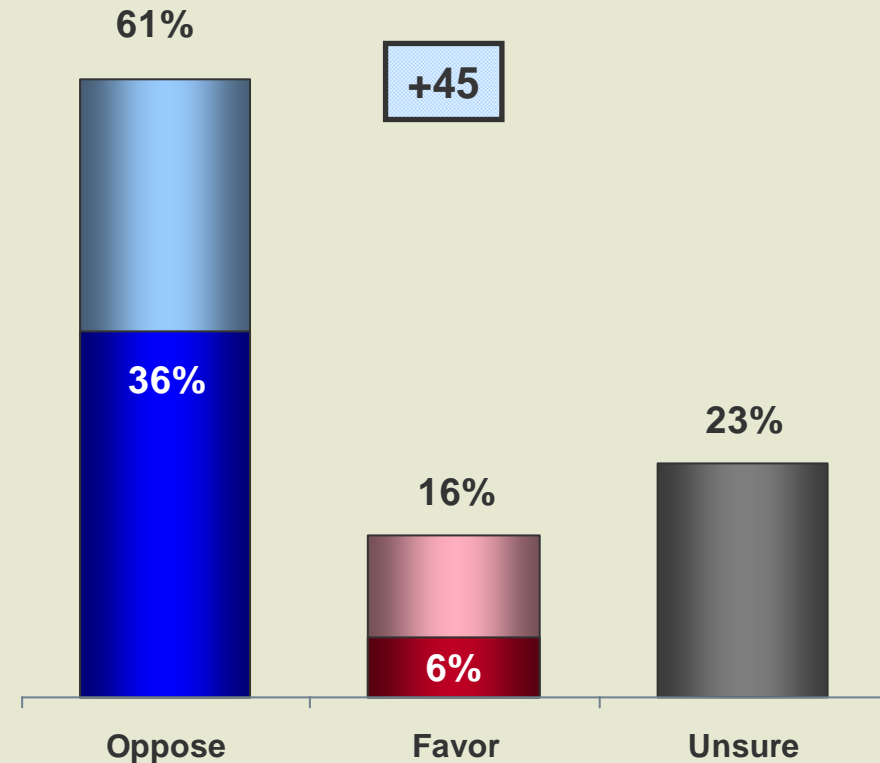


Support for mountaintop removal mining is anemic. Without any description of mountaintop removal mining, voters oppose it by more than a 2:1 margin. After giving voters a basic description of the practice, opposition spikes to 61%, with virtually no change in the level of support.

A. Favor or Oppose MTR – No Information



B. Favor or Oppose MTR – Basic Description

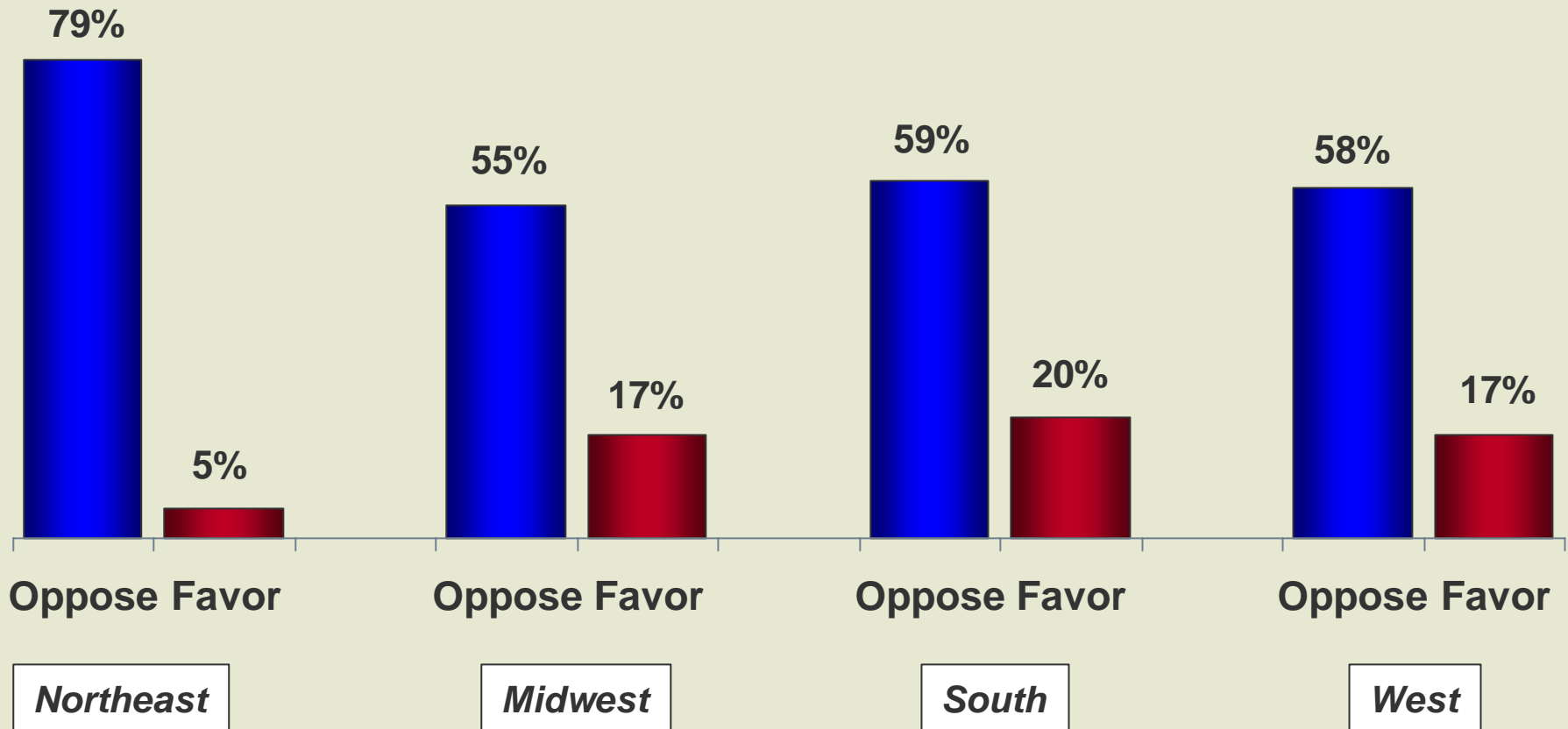


As you may know, some coal companies in the United States mine coal from mountains through a process called mountaintop removal mining [B: where the top of a mountain is removed to extract the coal and waste is disposed in nearby valleys and streams]. Do you favor or oppose mountaintop removal mining or are you unsure?



Opposition to mountaintop removal mining traverses geographical divides. Solid majorities in every region oppose the practice – especially those in the Northeast.

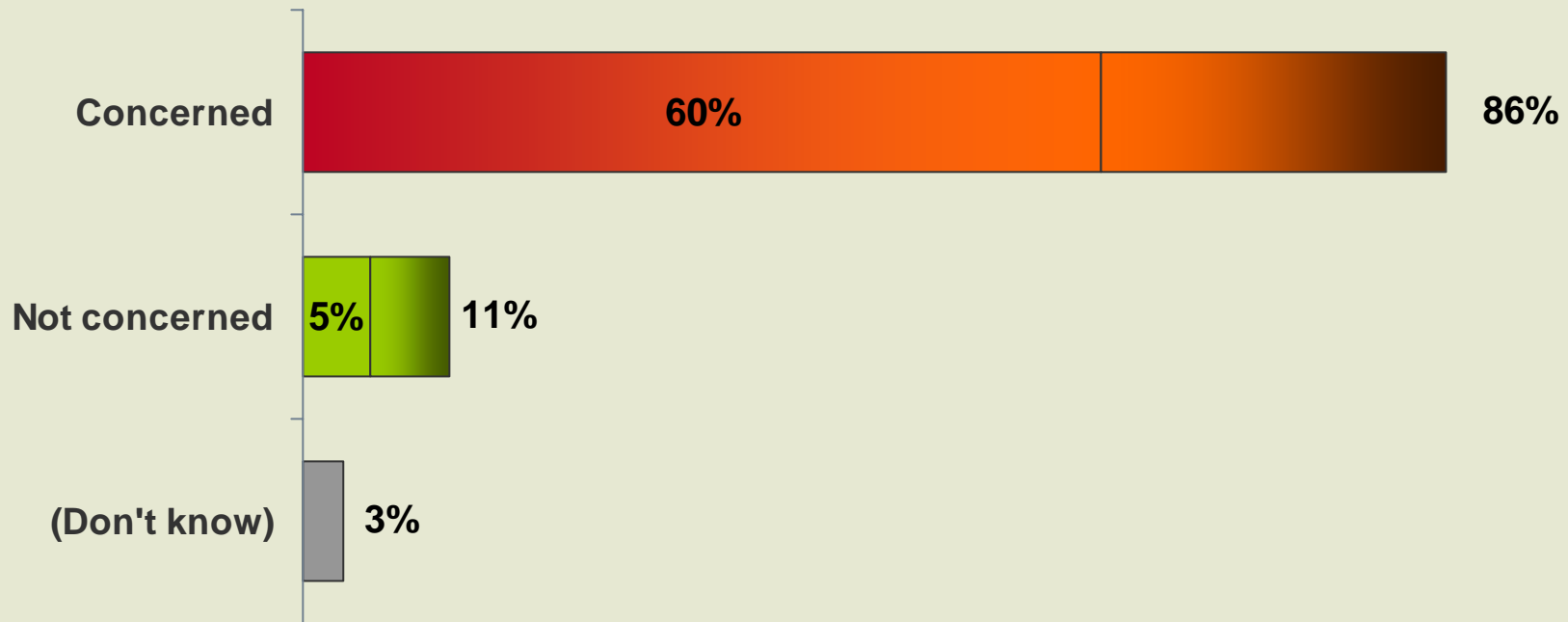
B. Favor or Oppose MTR – Basic Description – By Region





The vast majority of voters are concerned about mountaintop removal after hearing about past – and projected – destruction of streams caused by the practice.

Concerned Over Effects of Mountaintop on Surrounding Communities After Hearing...



*Darker Shades = Greater Intensity

More than 1,200 miles of streams in Appalachia have already been buried or destroyed by mountaintop removal coal mining, with another 1,000 miles projected for burial and destruction in the next ten years.

(Note: this question was asked *after* the question about support or opposition to repealing the Stream Buffer Zone Rule.)

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