



# Americans' Views on SNAP and Nutrition Assistance

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Findings from a national survey conducted in spring 2023



# Research Conducted



## National Survey

- 1,010 online interviews with registered voters
- Conducted May 31-June 3, 2023
- Credibility interval of  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points
- Sample had equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats (46% apiece)

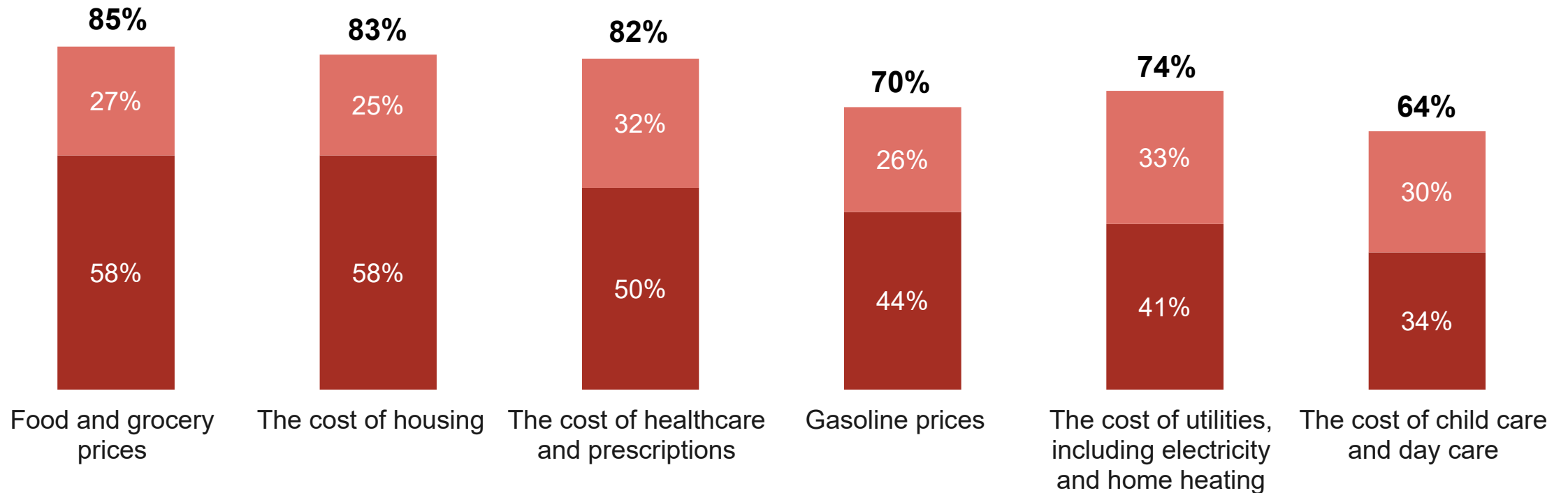
# Key Findings

- 1 As inflation slowly recedes, the cost of living remains a challenge for most Americans, with food costs at the top of the list. There is a broad desire for the government to do more to help struggling families.
- 2 That said, voter view SNAP as very important in helping families afford to eat. When they read that the typical SNAP recipient receives \$5.70 per day, two thirds say benefits should be increased. The \$5.70 amount is shocking to many and seems to play a big role in how people think about SNAP from that point on.
- 3 There is also substantial support for policies that would strengthen and expand SNAP on behalf of recipients—everything from reducing paperwork to continuing Double Up Food Bucks and produce prescription programs.
- 4 Support for these policies and for increasing SNAP benefits spans the electorate—crossing age, racial, income, and—crucially—partisan lines. The same holds true for negative feelings toward members of Congress who vote to cut SNAP benefits.
- 5 By far the strongest message in defense of SNAP focuses on the maintaining the gains made during the pandemic in reducing child poverty.

# Even with inflation slowly receding, food costs remain a major problem.

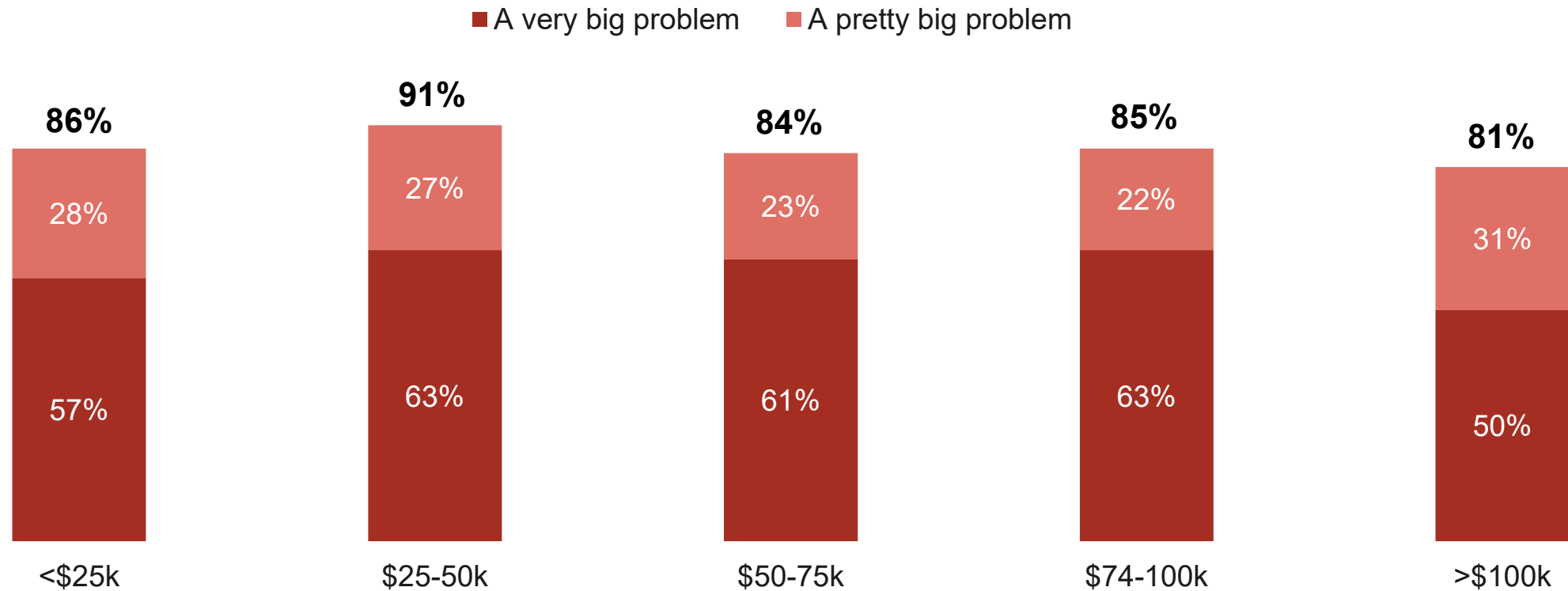
*% saying each of the following is a big problem right now*

■ A very big problem   ■ A pretty big problem



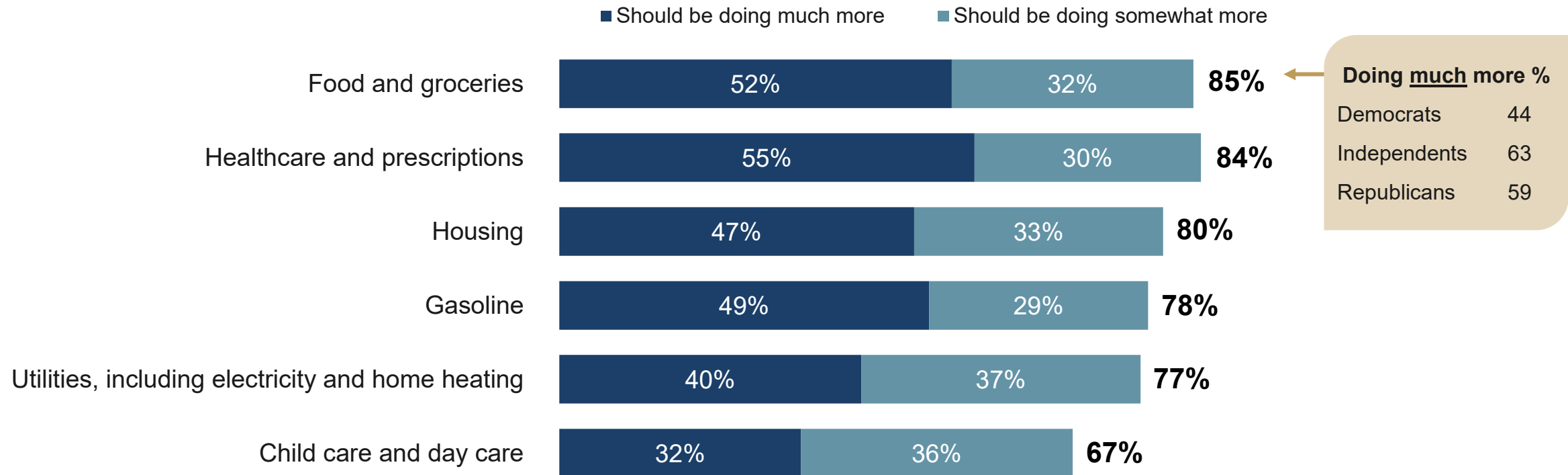
# Upper-income households are not immune to food costs.

*% saying food and grocery prices are a big problem right now*



# There's an overwhelming sense that government should be doing more in all of these areas, though most likely as a general indictment of inflation.

*% saying the government should be doing more to help financially struggling families afford each item*



# Most voters correctly understand the term “food insecurity.”

*In your own words, please say what you think of when you hear the term **food insecurity**.  
(Coded responses to open-ended question)*

The inflated price of food, groceries, high prices	25%
Unable to consistently feed a family, not having enough food for the entire family	19%
Low food quality, unable to afford/access nutritious food	17%
Food shortages, scarcity, supply chain issues, reduced farm production	16%
Not consistently able to afford food, able to eat	14%
Hunger, not eating on a daily basis, not knowing where your next meal is coming from	14%
People run out of food before the next paycheck, low wages	7%
Lack of access to grocery stores, live in food deserts	6%
Being scared, fearful of having no food	4%
Food is not safe to eat, contaminated	3%
Having to make eating less of a priority in order to pay other bills	3%
Need to rely on food banks, subsidies, SNAP benefits	2%
People who have an eating disorder	2%
Affects people who are poor, live in poverty	2%

## Net combined responses

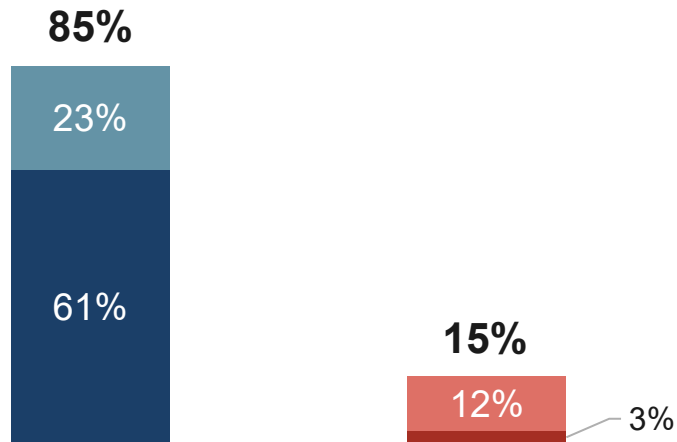
All voters	52%
High school or less	40%
Some college	54%
4-year college	56%
Postgrads	63%

# Voters widely and strongly believe SNAP is important to helping families facing food insecurity.

**Food insecurity** is defined as a lack of consistent access to enough food for every person in a household to live an active, healthy life. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a federal program that helps families who are facing food insecurity by helping them to afford food. The program is sometimes called SNAP, formerly known as food stamps.

*How important do you think SNAP is when it comes to helping families pay for food when they are facing food insecurity?*

■ Very important   ■ Pretty important   ■ Somewhat important   ■ Not important



	Very/Pretty Important %
Democrats	95
Independents	89
Republicans	74
18-34	89
35-49	88
50-64	80
65+	82
White voters	84
Black voters	93
Latino voters	79
Urban	91
Suburban	81
Small town/rural	86



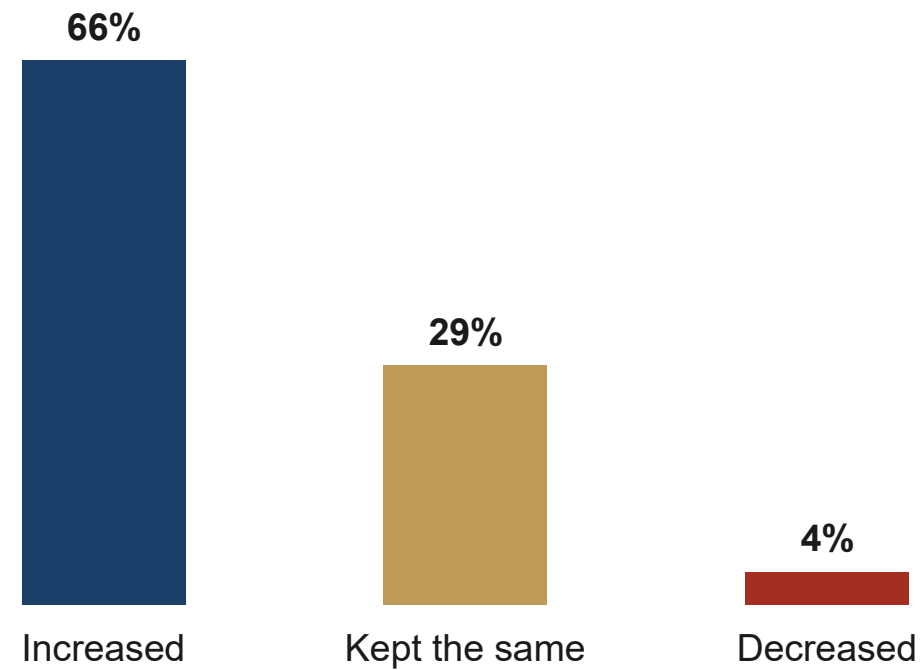
# People vastly overestimate the size of SNAP benefits; reading the actual amount substantially changes people's thinking about the program.



*I think the typical SNAP recipient receives an average of \$\_\_\_ per day.*

Median  
guess: **\$20**

*The typical family of four who receives SNAP benefits receives an average of about \$5.70 per family member per day. Do you think this amount should be...*



**Majorities across the board—including of key GOP constituencies—say SNAP benefits should be increased.**

	<b>% should increase</b>
Democrats	80
Independents	63
Republicans	53
Less conservative	57
Very conservative	42
18-34	72
35-49	71
50-64	66
65+	57
Urban	78
Suburban	65
Small town/rural	61
Current/past SNAP HHs	78
Know SNAP recipient	72
Don't know SNAP recipient	59
White non-college grads	65
White college grads	61
Black voters	83
Latino voters	65

# The \$5.70 figure strikes a chord.



“\$5 per day per person is completely unsustainable in this economy. The only way to feed on that would be canned/processed foods or bare minimum nutrition. This takes pressure off but does not alleviate the issue. Common issue of ‘solving’ symptoms, not problems.”



“How little money SNAP members receive a day, only \$5. That is a measly amount and not enough to support people. It should be at least \$20 a day.”



“I was shocked by how little money is provided per person per day. I expected much more, and I think it SHOULD be much more.”



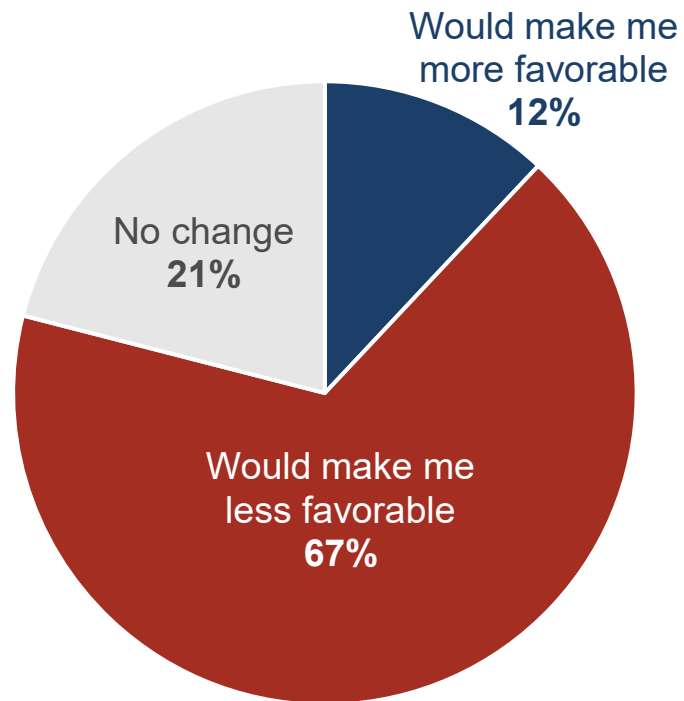
“I was surprised to learn how little each family member gets per day. No way can that cover a nutritional meal for three square meals.”



“Food costs have gone up, but SNAP benefits have not. So SNAP users are getting less food and having to spend more money on food instead of bills.”

# With \$5.70/day in mind, the idea of cutting SNAP benefits leaves a bad taste in voters' mouths.

*If your member of Congress voted to cut SNAP benefits that people can receive, would this make you feel more or less favorable toward your member of Congress, or would it not affect your opinion about them either way?*



	More favorable %	Less favorable %
Democrats	10	81
Independents	9	70
Republicans	15	52
White non-college women	8	69
Latino voters	19	63
Suburban	12	67

**Majorities express general disapproval of:** President Biden (55%); Democrats in Congress (55%); Republicans in Congress (59%)

# Policies aimed at expanding and strengthening SNAP for recipients are also very popular.

■ Strongly favor

■ Somewhat favor



Continuing the program that matches the amount recipients spend on produce/allows them to afford more fruits and vegetables

51%

43%

**94%**



Allowing people more ways to apply for SNAP benefits--in person/face to face, or over the phone if they do not have transportation

48%

39%

**87%**



Continuing the program that allows recipients to get nutritious foods for free with a prescription from their doctor or health insurance provider

42%

41%

**83%**



Allowing a range of choices of products people can buy with SNAP benefits rather than only certain types of products

35%

39%

**75%**



Reducing the government paperwork people have to go through in order to apply for SNAP benefits






37%

32%

**70%**

# Support for the policies crosses partisan lines.

*% who say they strongly or somewhat favor each policy*

	Democrats %	Independents %	Republicans %
 Continuing the program that matches the amount recipients spend on produce/allows them to afford more fruits and vegetables	97	96	91
 Allowing people more ways to apply for SNAP benefits--in person/face to face, or over the phone if they do not have transportation	96	85	78
 Continuing the program that allows recipients to get nutritious foods for free with a prescription from their doctor or health insurance provider	91	81	76
 Allowing a range of choices of products people can buy with SNAP benefits rather than only certain types of products	85	77	63
 Reducing the government paperwork people have to go through in order to apply for SNAP benefits	83	73	55

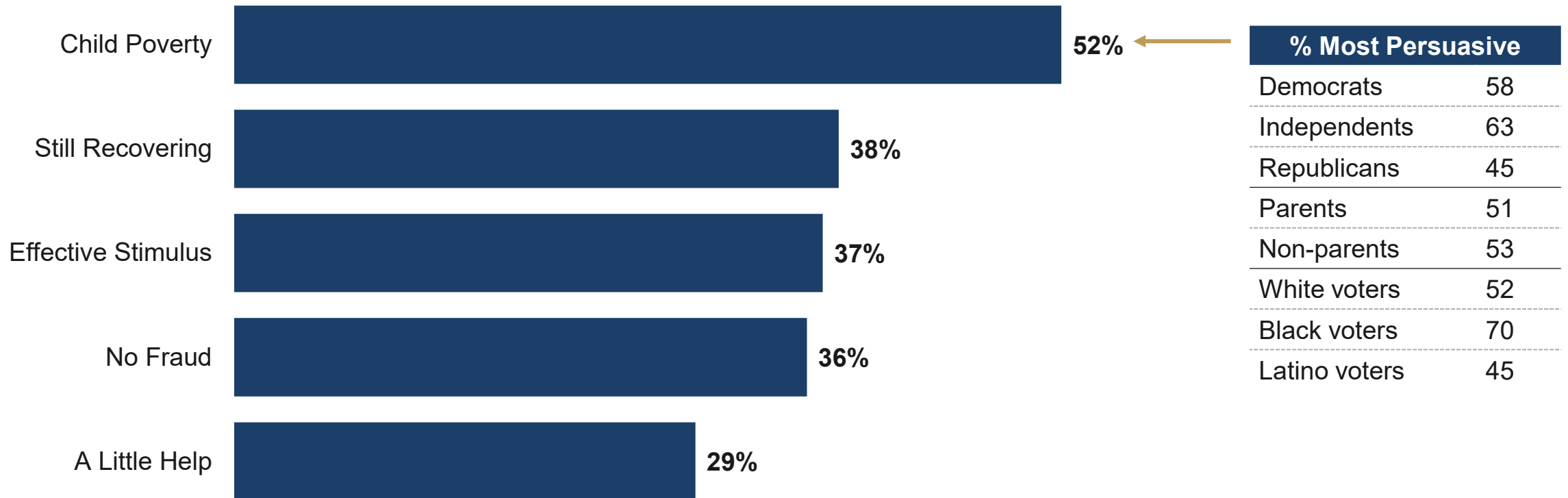
# All messages against SNAP cuts we tested are compelling.

*% saying each reason to not cut SNAP benefits and not make it harder to qualify are **very persuasive***

<b>Child Poverty</b>	In the richest country in the world, it is unacceptable that nine million children do not have enough food to eat. In the last few years, assistance to families, including nutrition assistance like SNAP, increased because of the pandemic--and child poverty dropped to the lowest level ever recorded. If we cut SNAP benefits, child poverty will increase again, and we can't let that happen.	<b>53%</b>
<b>Still Recovering</b>	The economy has not recovered from the pandemic. Inflation is still high, especially for groceries, and many are still struggling to pay the bills. If we cut SNAP now, it will make things even harder for millions of families who are struggling the most. These families need our empathy and our help while the economy recovers.	<b>48%</b>
<b>A Little Help</b>	The last few years have shown that there are times when people just need help. Food is one of the basic needs people have and is something we can do to help people while they are getting back on their feet. If we cut SNAP benefits, we won't be able to help people when they need it most.	<b>45%</b>
<b>No Fraud</b>	The SNAP program is monitored very closely to make sure people don't take unfair advantage of it. The program's quality control is so effective that it is more than 99% accurate. This is a program with virtually no waste and that fulfills its mission of helping those who are food insecure.	<b>45%</b>
<b>Effective Stimulus</b>	SNAP benefits are important for the U.S. economy overall. When SNAP recipients have more money to spend on food, it ends up providing more money to grocery stores, farms, food producers, transportation companies, and others--meaning more jobs in in all of those areas. Every \$1.00 that SNAP recipients receive puts almost \$1.50 back into the economy.	<b>42%</b>

# A child poverty narrative rates as by far the most persuasive.

*MOST persuasive messages against SNAP cuts (two chosen)*





# A number of concepts from the survey are “sticky,” with the average benefit amount chief among them.

*Please mention one or two ideas from this survey that stand out to you.  
(Coded responses to open-ended question)*

Surprised how low SNAP benefits are, \$5.70 per family member is inadequate	<b>28%</b>
SNAP helps people in need	<b>12%</b>
Benefits children, 9M children do not have enough to eat	<b>12%</b>
Benefits the economy, every \$1.00 used for SNAP puts almost \$1.50 back into the economy	<b>12%</b>
Amount of paperwork, should be easier to apply	<b>11%</b>
Efficiently run, closely monitor for fraud/waste, over 99% accuracy rate	<b>11%</b>
Learned the amount that SNAP pays recipients per day	<b>8%</b>
Believe people abuse SNAP, continues to be fraud/waste	<b>8%</b>
Important program, should not be cut	<b>7%</b>