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What We Learned
from the **2020**
Election Exit Polls



2020 Election Coverage

Challenges

Methods

Findings

Challenges

2020



Covering elections in 2020

DEALING WITH COVID-19

This affected both survey interactions with voters and having staff prepared to cover elections remotely

WAITING FOR RESULTS

This began with the Iowa Democratic Caucuses on February 3rd but became even more of an issue in the primary elections after COVID

CHANGING SCHEDULE

More elections were rescheduled in 2020 than in the past 32 years combined

CHANGING ELECTION RULES

Almost every state made changes to voting methods and reporting election results and courts become involved in procedural rulings

Challenges

Major changes to
the voting process

Massive increase in turnout

More than 158 million people voted in 2020, an increase of more than 20 million voters over 2016 and the highest percentage of voting eligible voters since 1900

Large increase in early voting

More than two-thirds of votes in 2020 were cast before election day – approximately 43% by mail and 24% in person at early voting centers – compared to approximately 42% who voted before election day in 2016



Huge partisan differences in the voting method used by voters

Partisan differences led to delays in reporting results in certain states and large swings in the results as they were reported over time



2020 Election Coverage

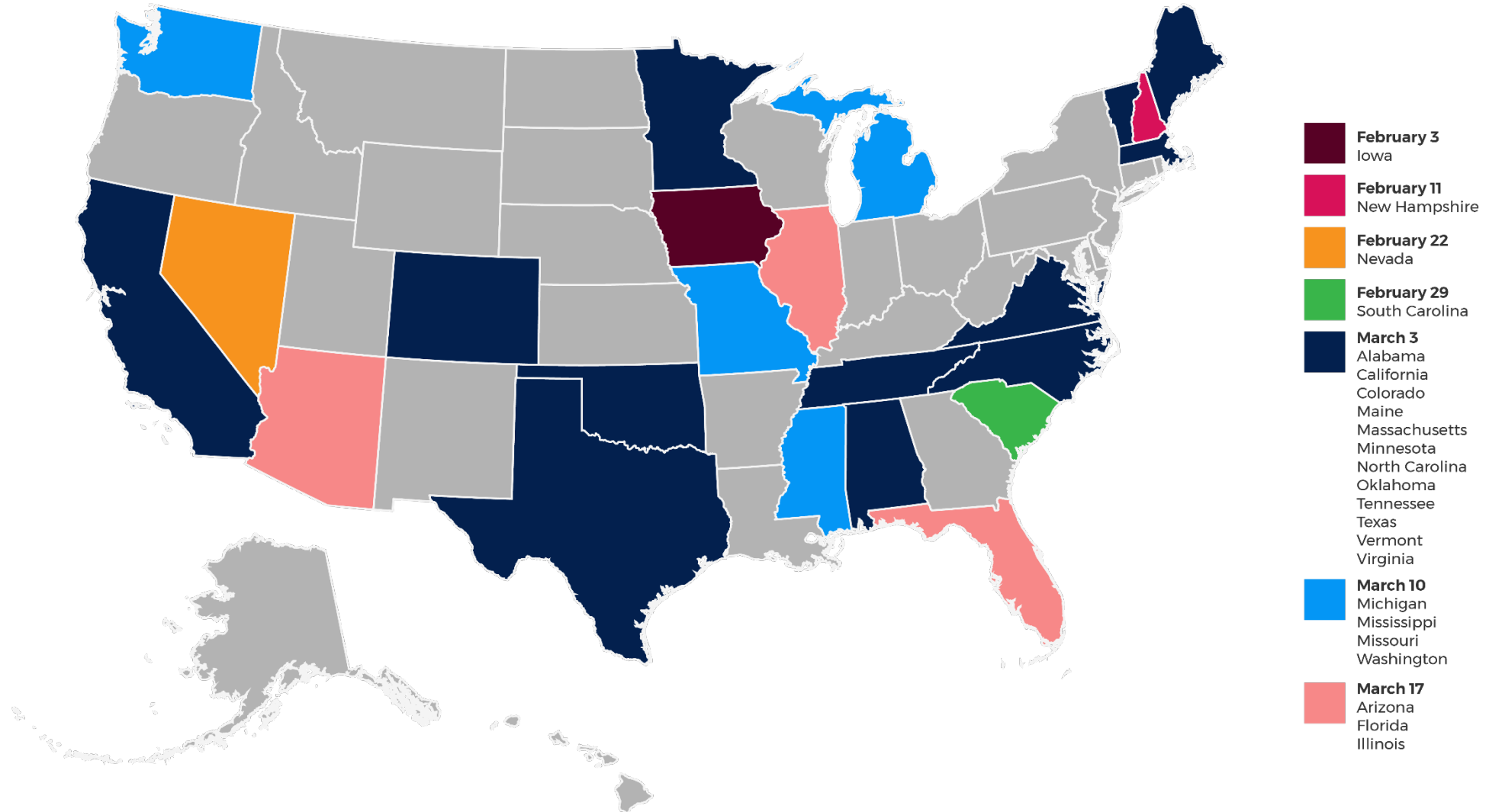
Challenges

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In 2020, Edison Research conducted entrance and exit polls in 23 states of 37,001 Democratic Primary voters





Procedural changes to exit poll interviewing tested in GA, KY, NJ and DE primaries in June and July and used in November

We maintained response rates by using the following interviewing procedures:

Exit Poll Interviewers were required to wear a mask at all times except during breaks

Exit poll materials were placed on a folding table

Gloves, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes were made available on the table for voters and the interviewer to use

Interviewers required to wipe down the folding table and use hand sanitizer before touching any exit poll materials

Interviewers approached voters from a 6 foot distance and invited them to participate in the exit

Willing participants were instructed to take a survey and single-use golf pencil from the table, fill out the survey, and place it in the ballot box

A garbage bag was provided for voters and interviewers to dispose of gloves, single-use golf pencils and sanitizing wipes

Procedural changes to exit poll interviewing



Survey methods used in the NEP Exit Poll

1

In-person exit poll interviews of election day voters at more than 700 polling locations – representing 33% of the vote

2

In-person exit poll interviews of early voters at more than 175 early voting centers – representing 24% of the vote

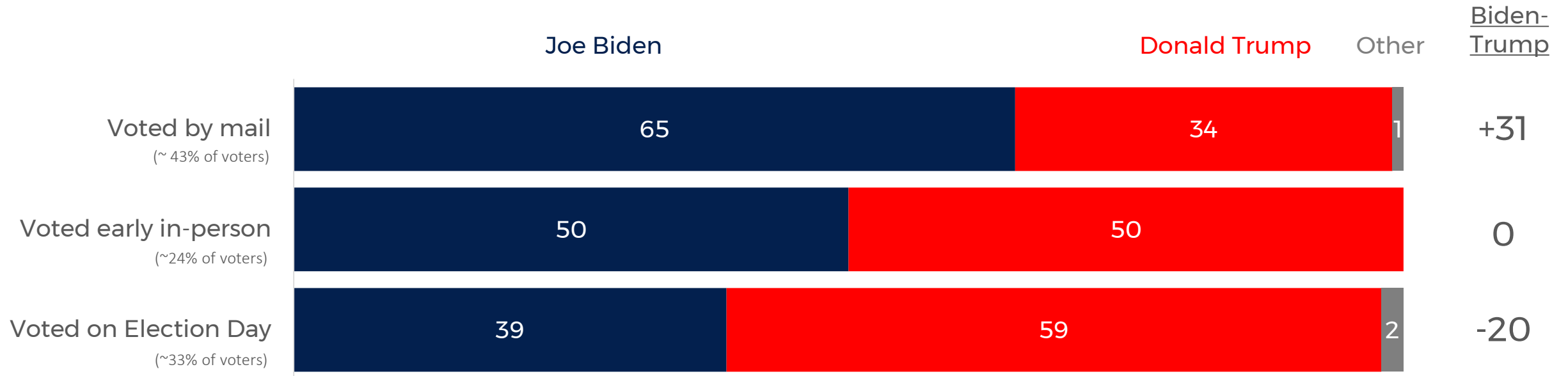
3

Telephone interviews of absentee/by-mail voters – representing 43% of the vote

Exit Poll response rates

Election Exit Poll	Response Rate
2000 General Election	54%
2004 General Election	53%
2006 General Election	45%
2008 Presidential Primaries	43%
2008 General Election	46%
2010 General Election	45%
2012 General Election	48%
2014 General Election	45%
2016 General Election	44%
2018 General Election	41%
2020 Presidential Primaries	43%
2020 General Election	42%

2020 presidential vote by voting method





2020 polls needed to estimate three different electorates by voting method

Georgia Presidential Vote by voting method

	Joe Biden	Donald Trump
Absentee by Mail (26%)	64.5%	34.3%
Early Voting in Person (54%)	46.4%	52.7%
Election Day in Person (20%)	37.9%	60.0%
Total	49.5%	49.3%

North Carolina Presidential Vote by voting method

	Joe Biden	Donald Trump
Absentee by Mail (18%)	70.3%	27.9%
Early Voting in Person (65%)	46.6%	52.3%
Election Day in Person (17%)	32.8%	64.7%
Total	48.6%	49.9%



2021 Georgia U.S. Senate run-off results by voting method

Special runoff election: Ossoff vs. Perdue

	Jon Ossoff	David Perdue
Absentee by Mail (24%)	67.7%	32.3%
Early Voting in Person (46%)	50.6%	49.4%
Election Day in Person (30%)	36.6%	63.4%
Total	50.6%	49.4%

Special runoff election: Warnock vs. Loeffler

	Raphael Warnock	Kelly Loeffler
Absentee by Mail (24%)	68.2%	31.8%
Early Voting in Person (46%)	51.0%	49.0%
Election Day in Person (30%)	37.1%	62.9%
Total	51.0%	49.0%



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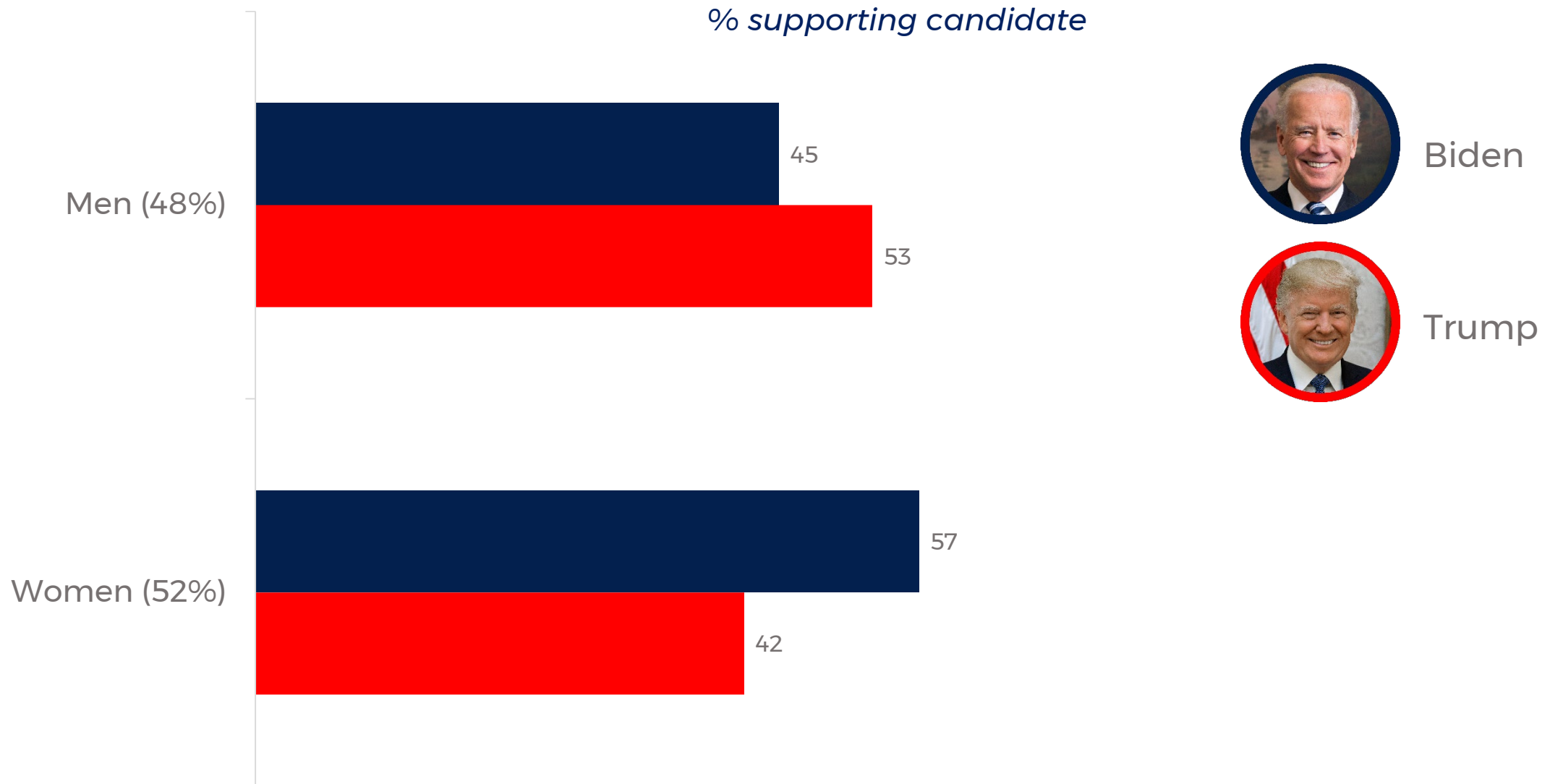


2020 Election Coverage

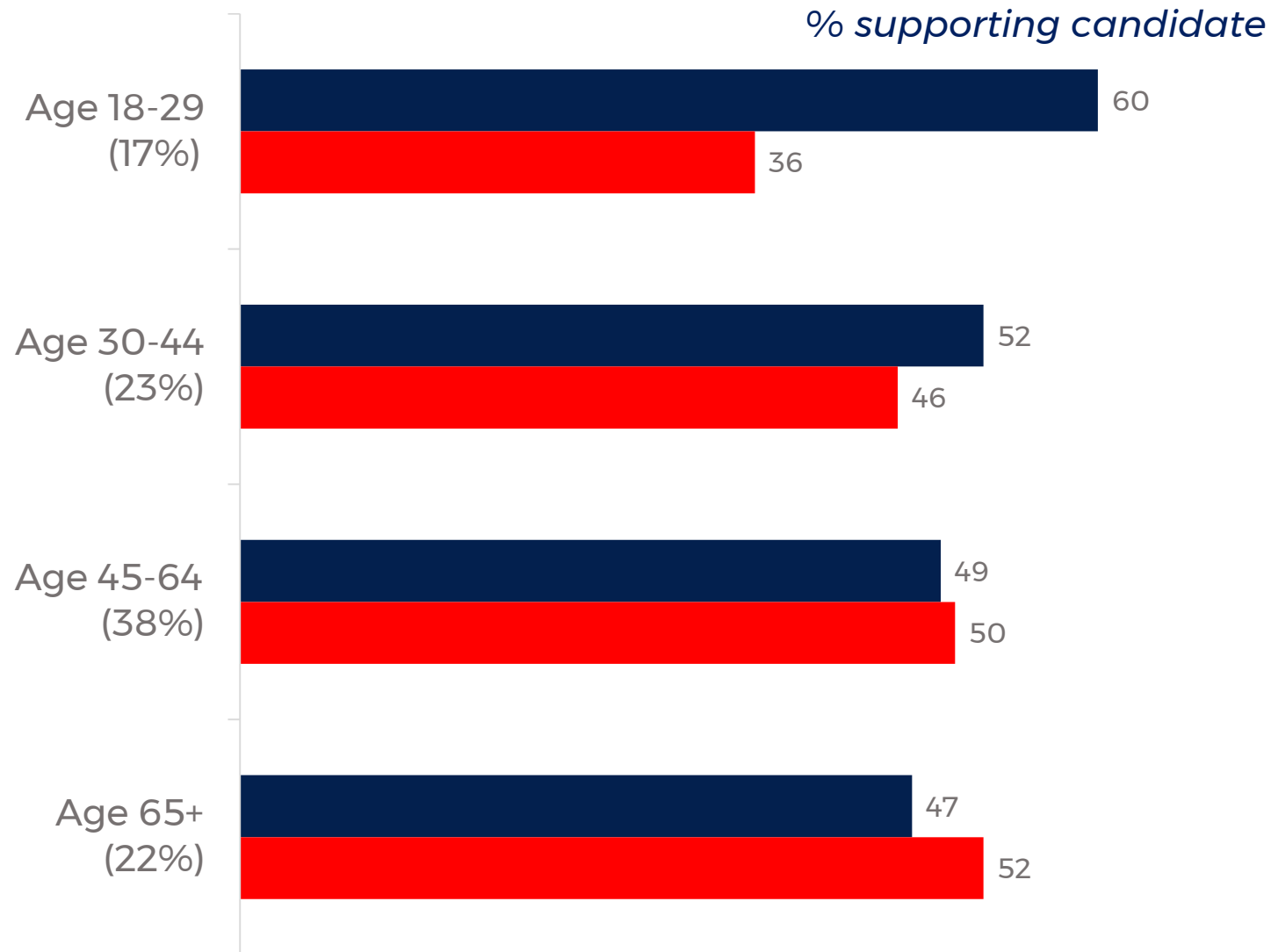
U.S. Election November 3, 2020

Findings

Vote by gender



Vote by age

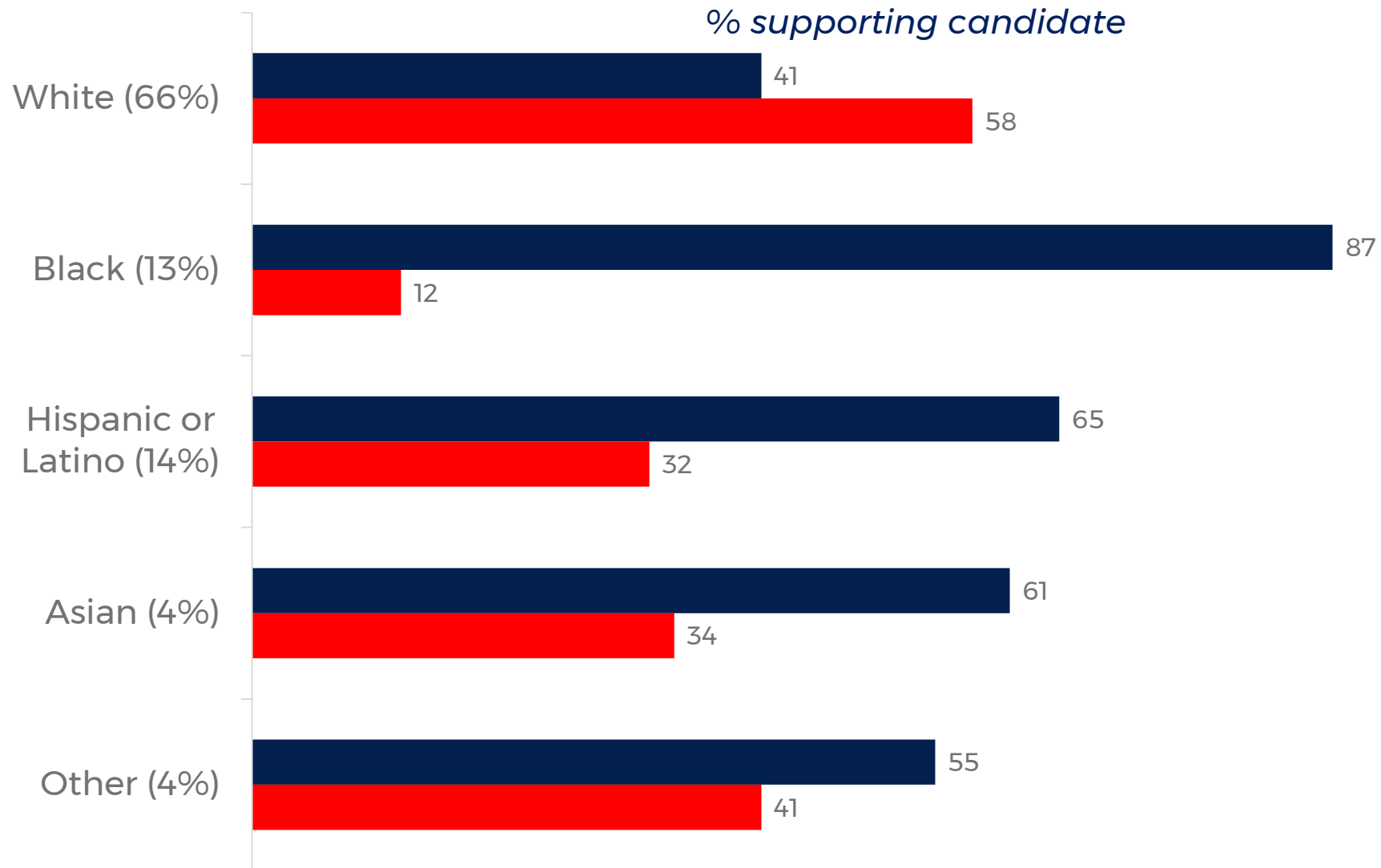


Biden



Trump

Vote by race/ethnicity

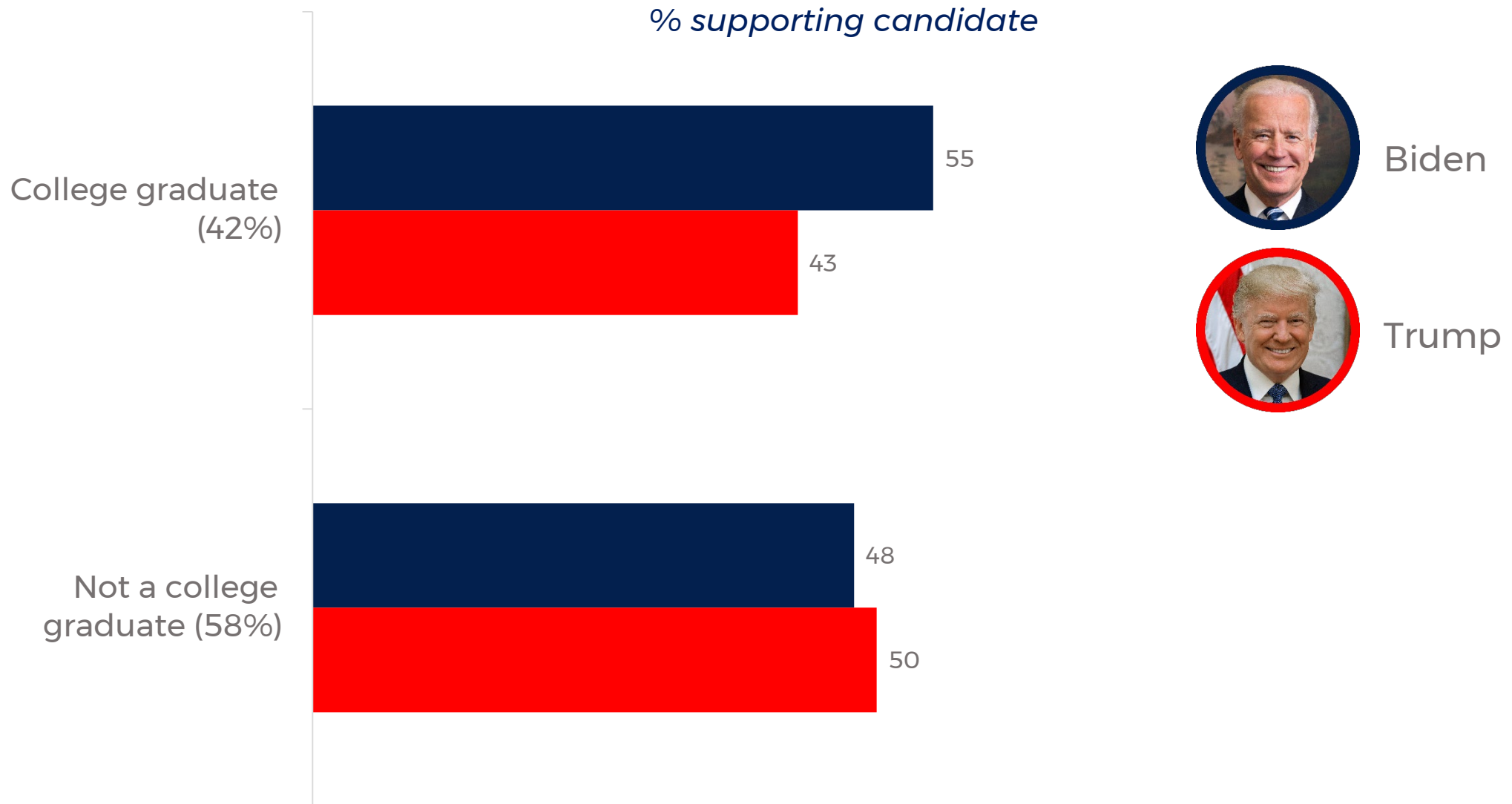


Biden

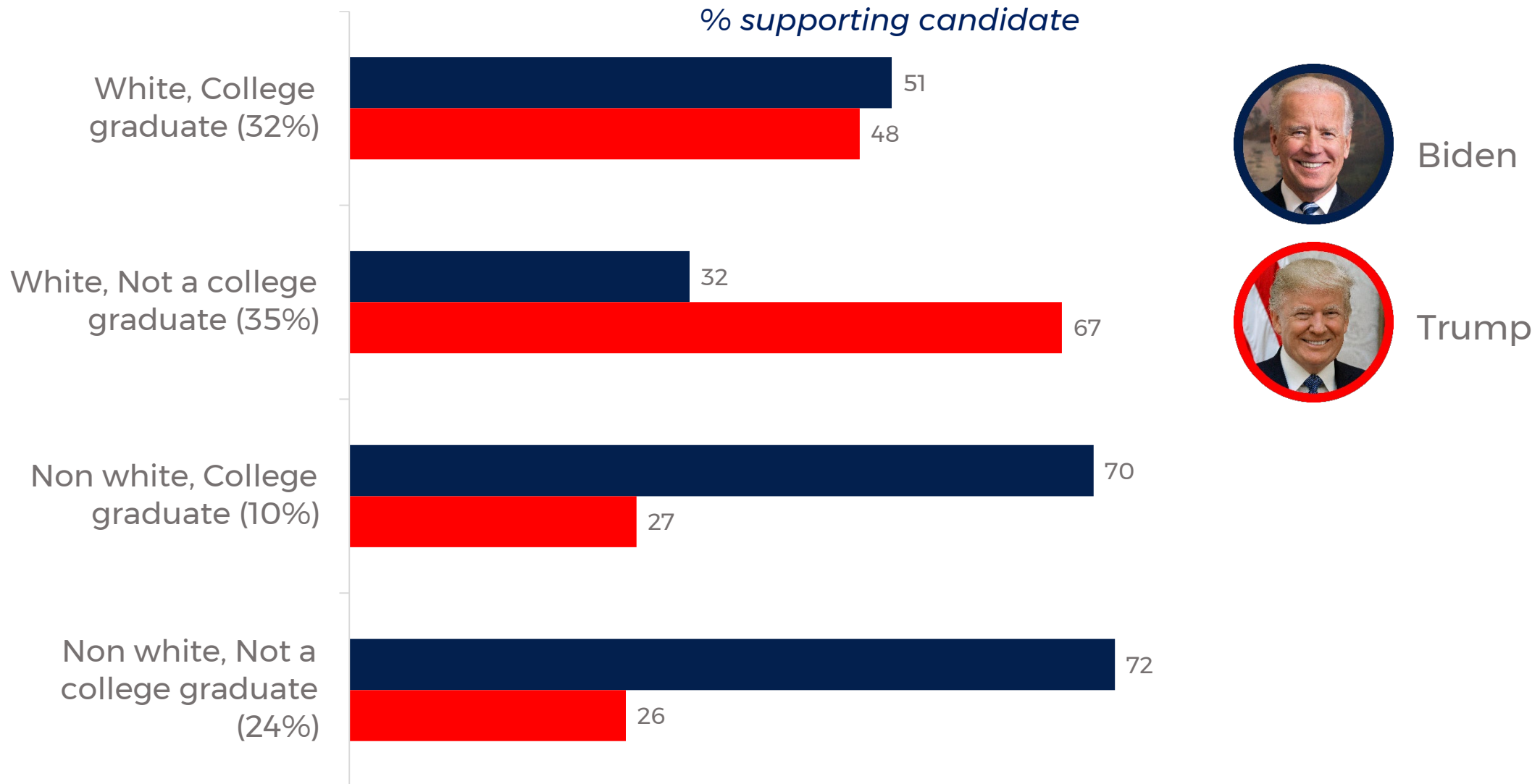


Trump

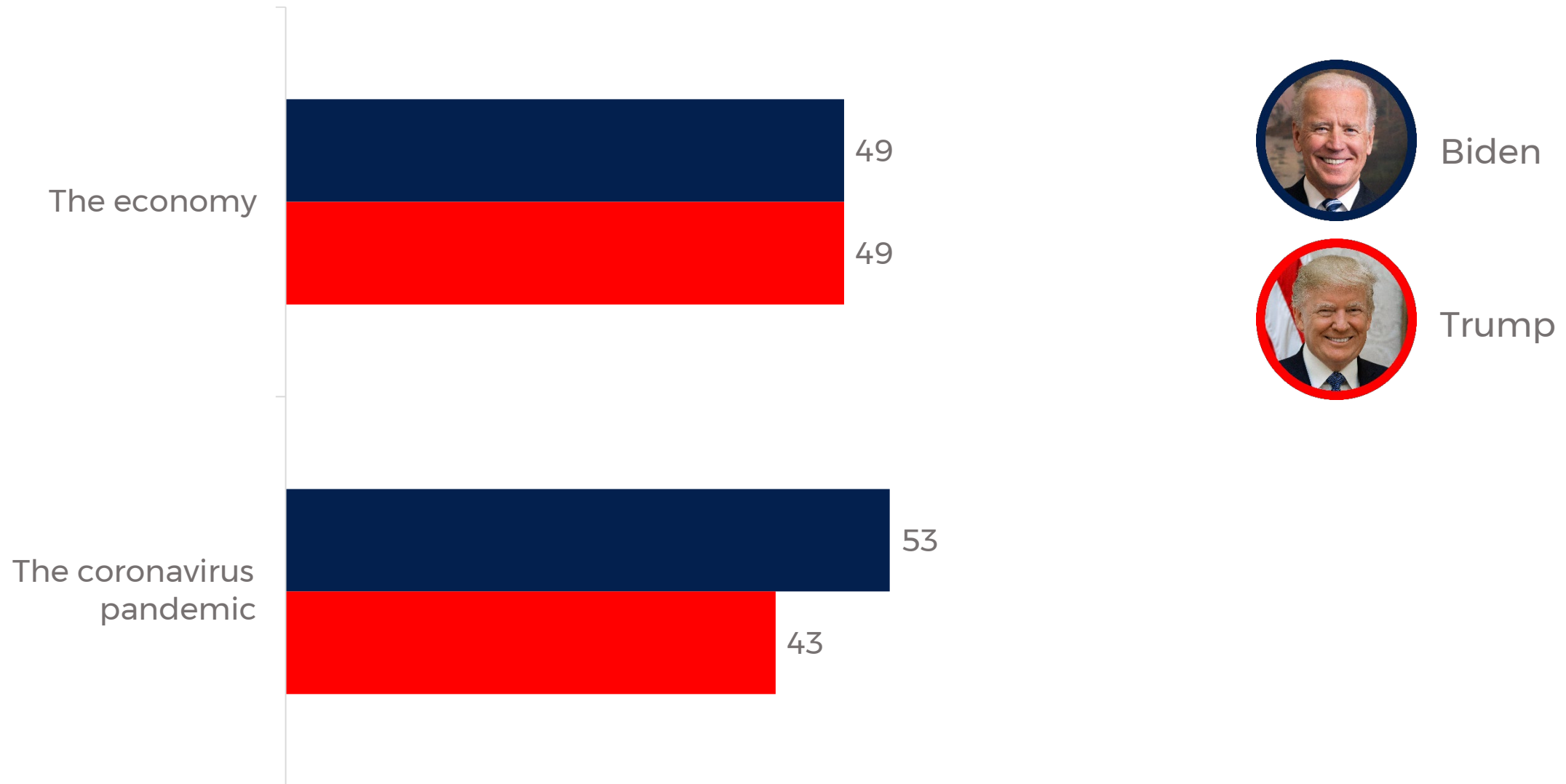
Vote by education



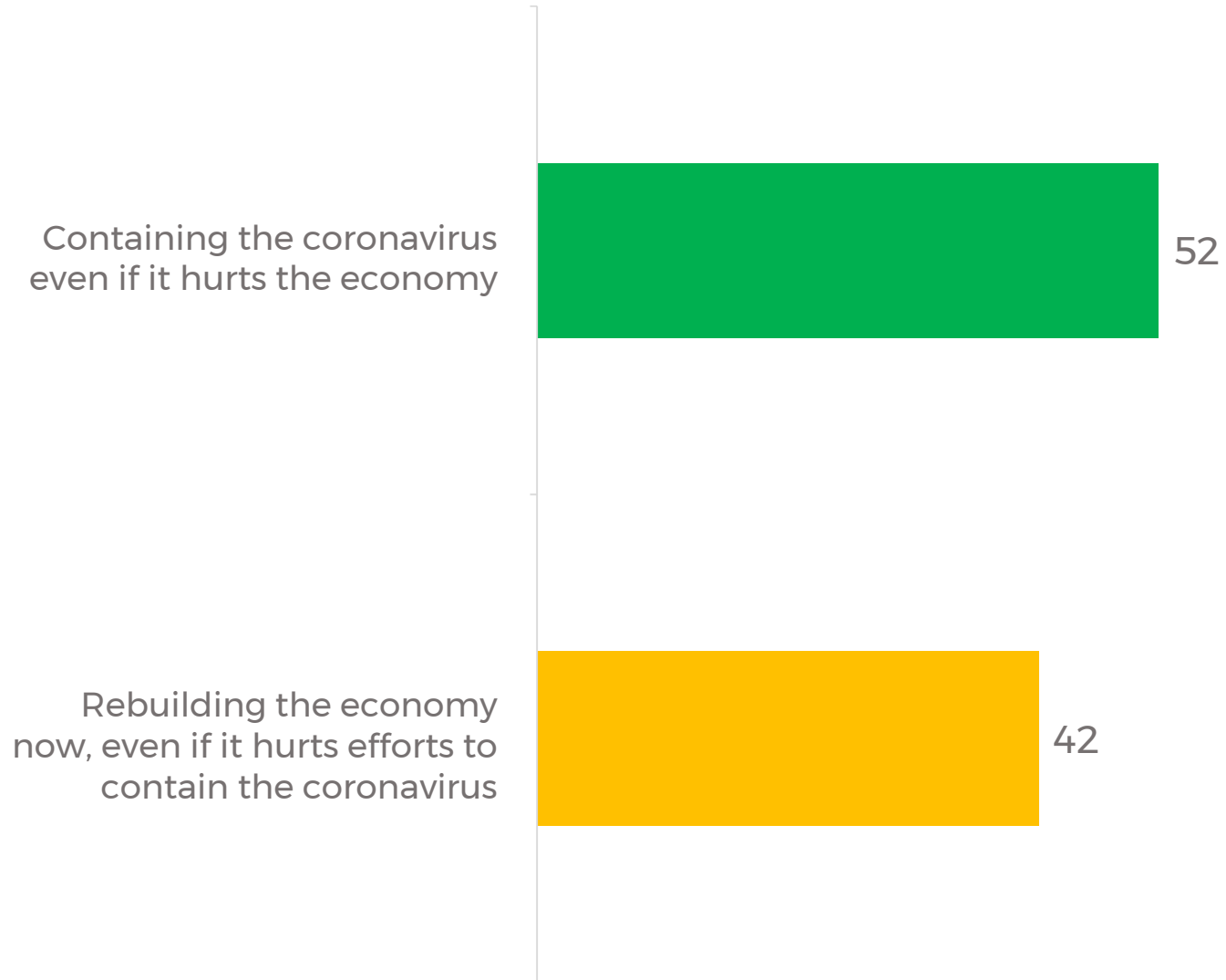
Vote by education/race



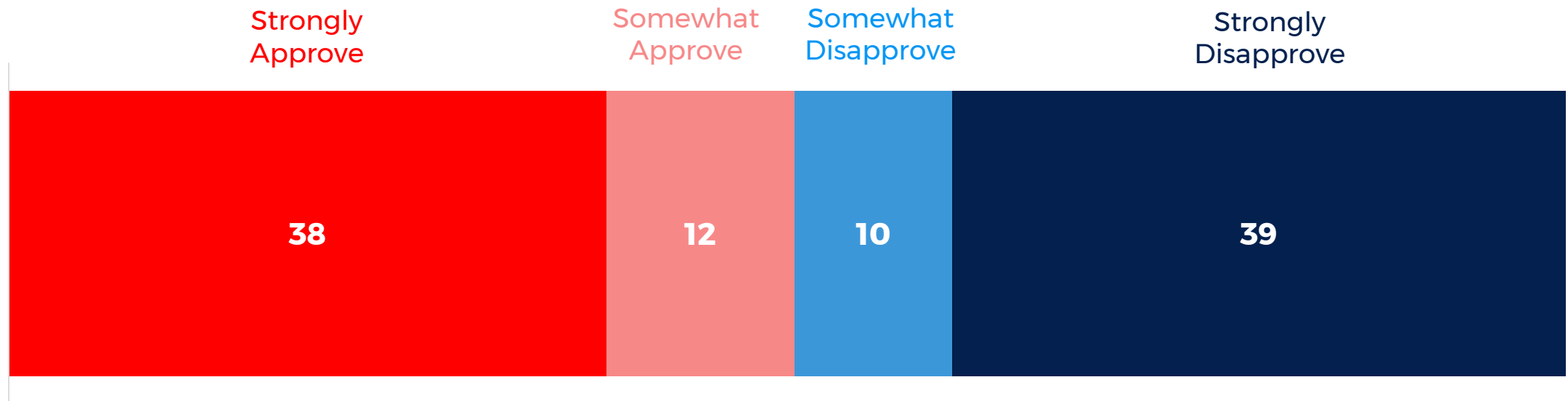
Who would better handle:



Which is more important?



How do you feel about the way Donald Trump is handling his job as president?



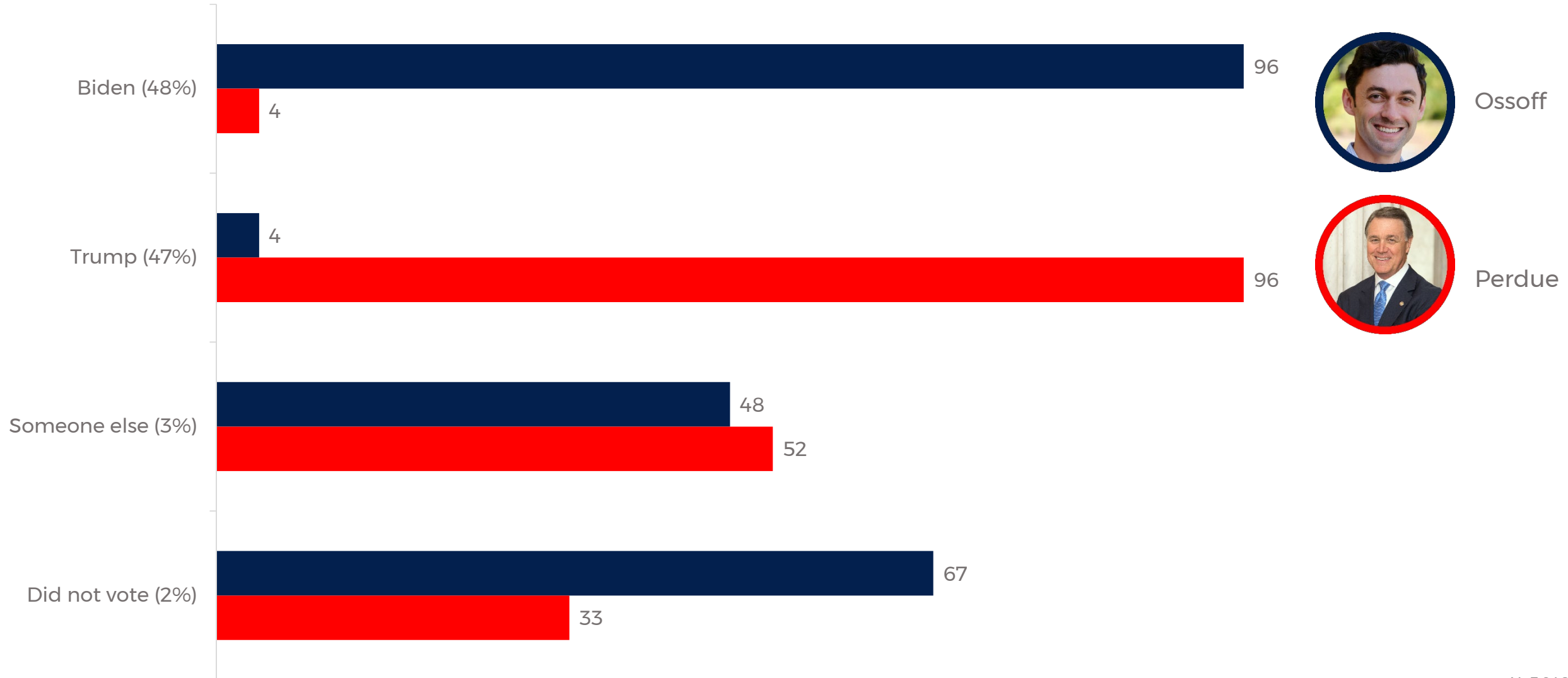
Do you think [candidate] has the temperament to serve effectively as president?



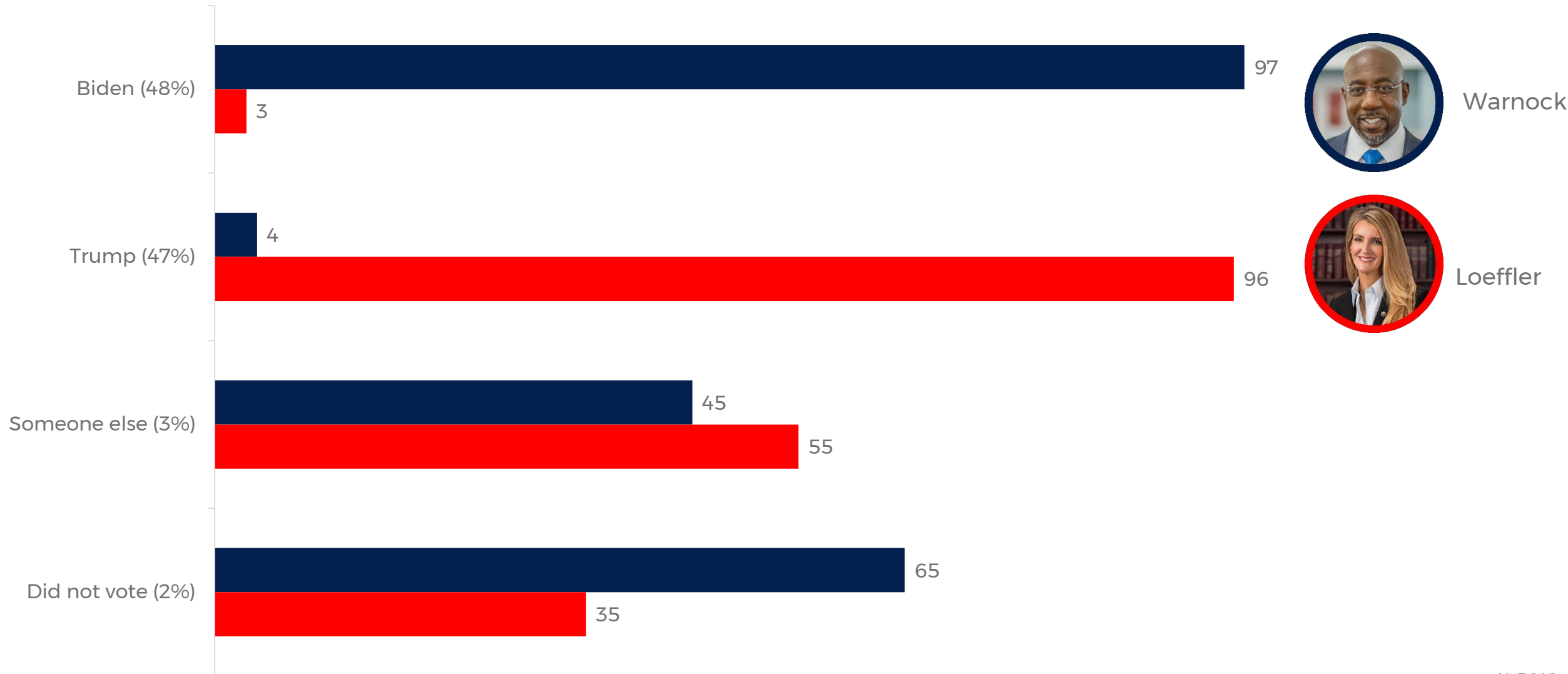
Georgia U.S. Senate run-offs January 5, 2021

Findings

In the 2020 election for president, did you vote for:



In the 2020 election for president, did you vote for:



Would you rather see the U.S. senate controlled by:





Q&A

Upcoming Webinars:



Twitter Before and After Trump

Tuesday, February 16th

The Infinite Dial 2020

Thursday, March 11th



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