



## Wilderness Society

Findings and Recommendations from the  
Pacific NW Forestry Policy Assessment

August 2016

# Methodology

- A statewide survey of 600 registered voters in Washington, Oregon and California, with an additional oversample of 200 registered voters in California counties, was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers, including 45% of all interviews conducted via cell phone.
  - In order to distinguish data between the three states, each state has been assigned a color:
    - Washington = Blue
    - Oregon = Green
    - California = Orange
- Interviews were conducted July 5-10, 2016.
- The margin of error for the whole sample is plus or minus 4.0% at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.

# Counties

**Washington Counties:** Chelan, Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Okanogan, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston, Wahkiakum, Whatcom, Yakima

**Oregon Counties:** Benton, Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Coos, Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Hood River, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Tillamook, Wasco, Washington, Yamhill

**California Counties:** Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Tehama, Trinity



Counties Intersecting the Northwest Forest Plan Boundary



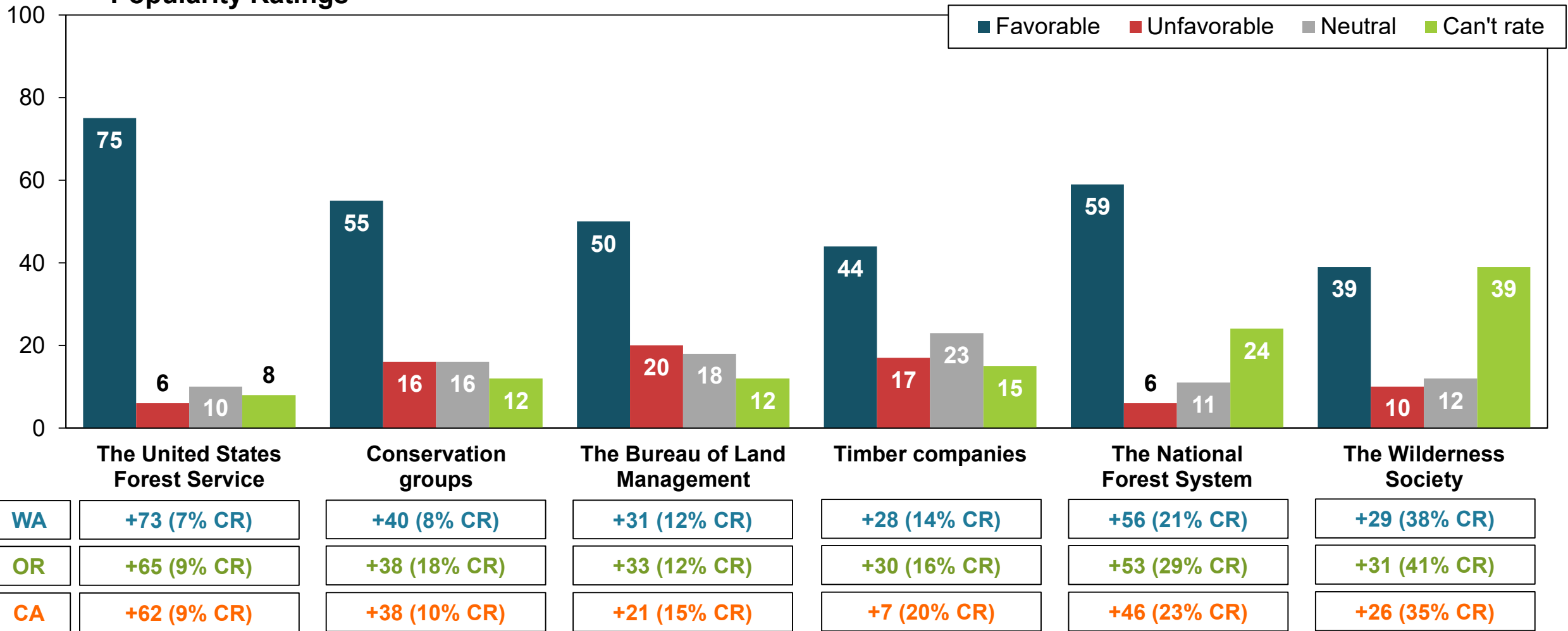
# The Landscape

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# Virtually all the relevant actors tested are popular

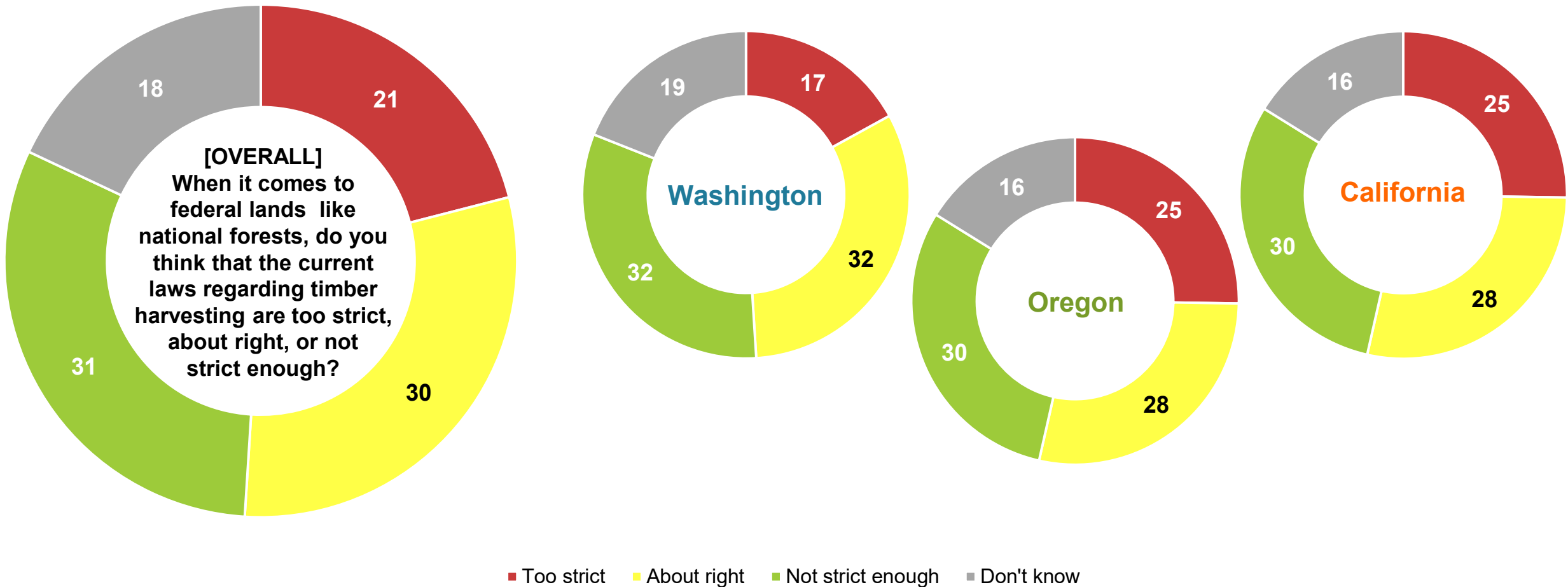
The USF and NFS show the highest favorable ratings, but even timber companies show a better than 2:1 favorable-to-unfavorable popularity rating. This is not as polarized and highly charged a debate as we might have seen several years ago.

## Popularity Ratings



Roughly equal amounts feel timber harvesting laws should be more strict or are “about right” – only one-in-five feel such laws are too strict.

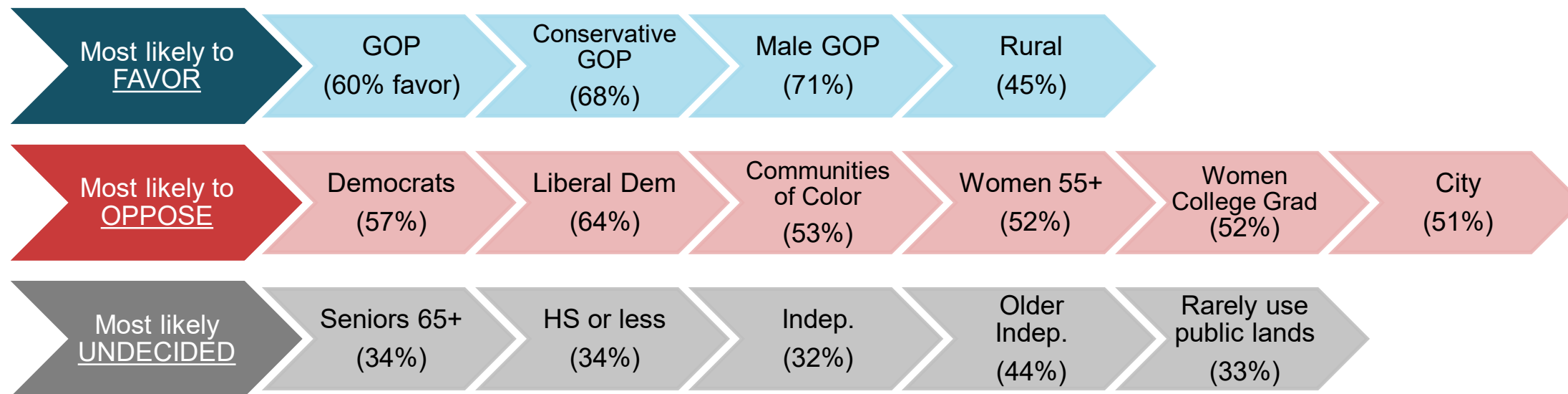
In each state, more voters feel laws are “not strict enough” rather than “too strict.”



# More than four-in-ten this region oppose increased logging on federal lands.

This is a politically polarized issue. Over one-quarter don't weigh in here – we have lots of empty heads to fill.

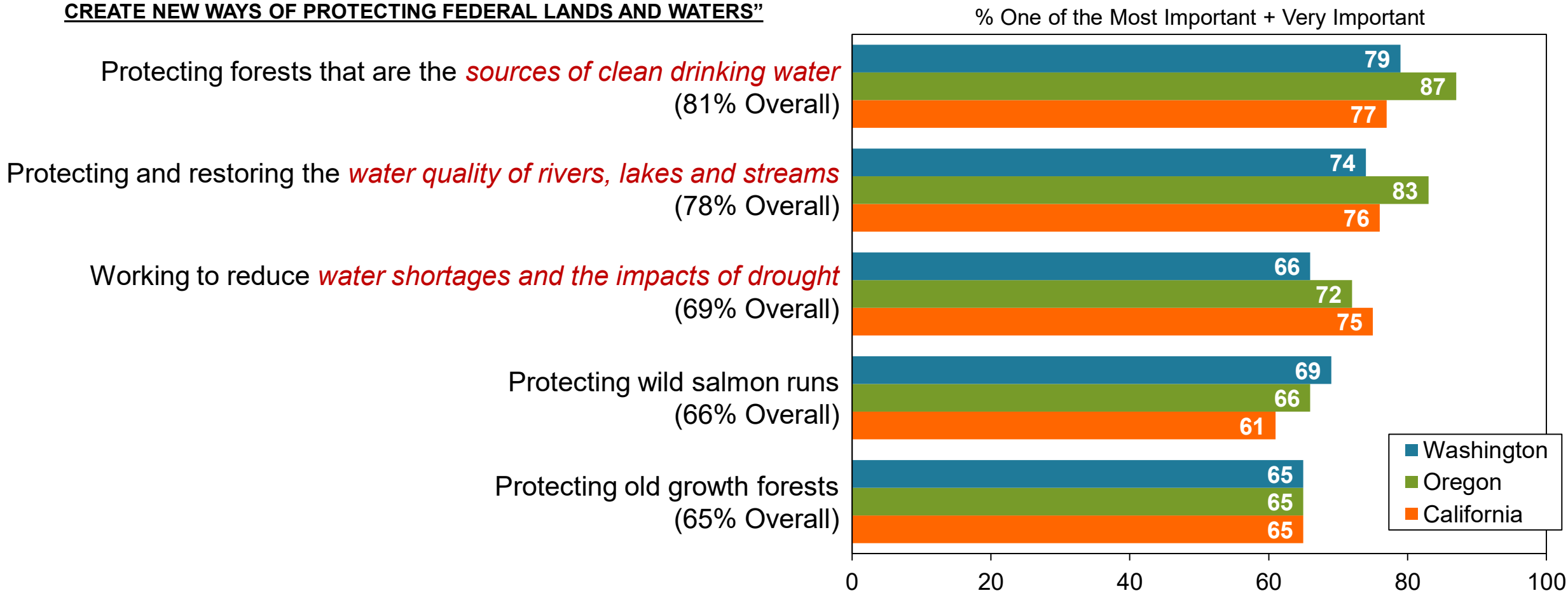
As you may know, logging does take place on some federal lands in your state. Would you favor or oppose allowing more logging on federal lands?	% Total Favor	% Total Opp.	% Don't Know	NET FAVOR
<b>Overall</b>	31	<b>42</b>	26	<b>-11</b>
<b>Washington</b>	29	<b>43</b>	28	<b>-14</b>
<b>Oregon</b>	35	<b>42</b>	23	<b>-7</b>
<b>California</b>	31	<b>40</b>	29	<b>-9</b>



Priorities that focus on water (clean drinking water, water quality, water shortages) are clearly the most resonant.

Protecting forests is also important, but is a second tier compared to water – unless the forests are directly connected to “sources of clean drinking water.”

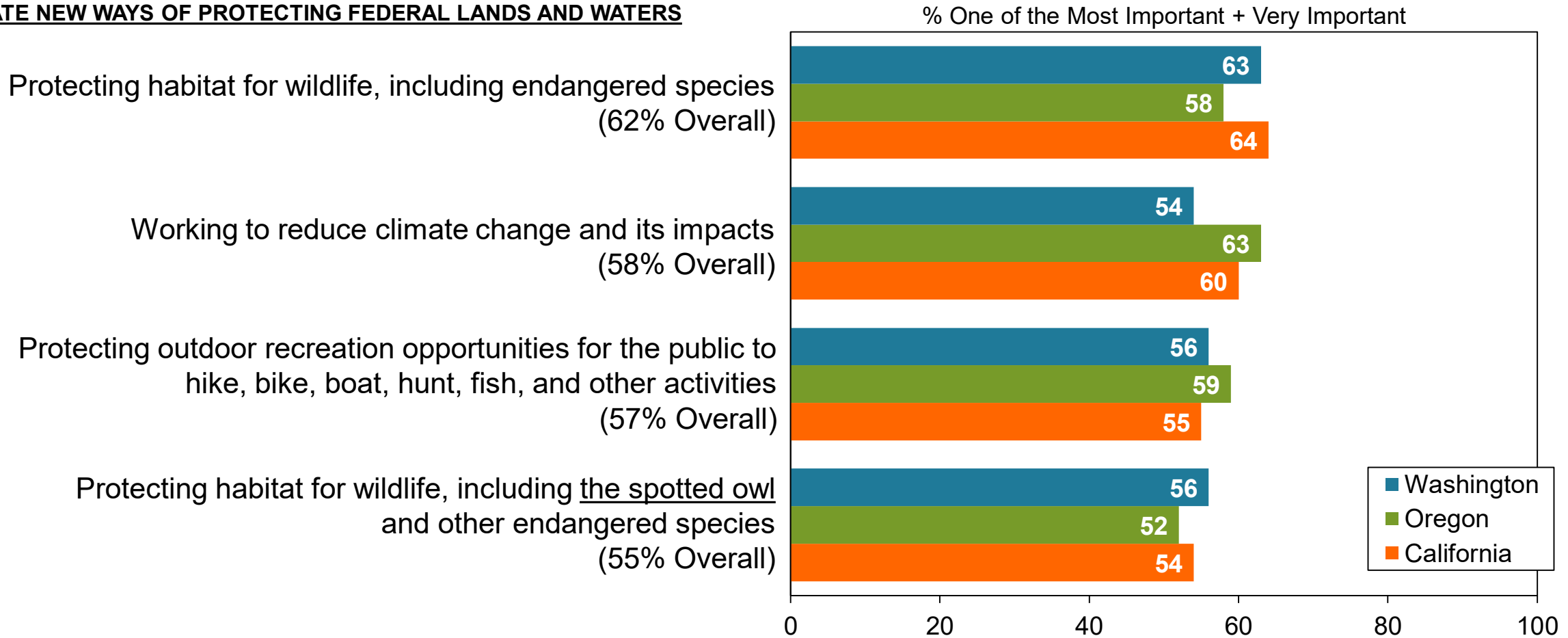
**“PRIORITIES THAT LEADERS IN YOUR STATE ARE TRYING TO BALANCE AS THEY CREATE NEW WAYS OF PROTECTING FEDERAL LANDS AND WATERS”**





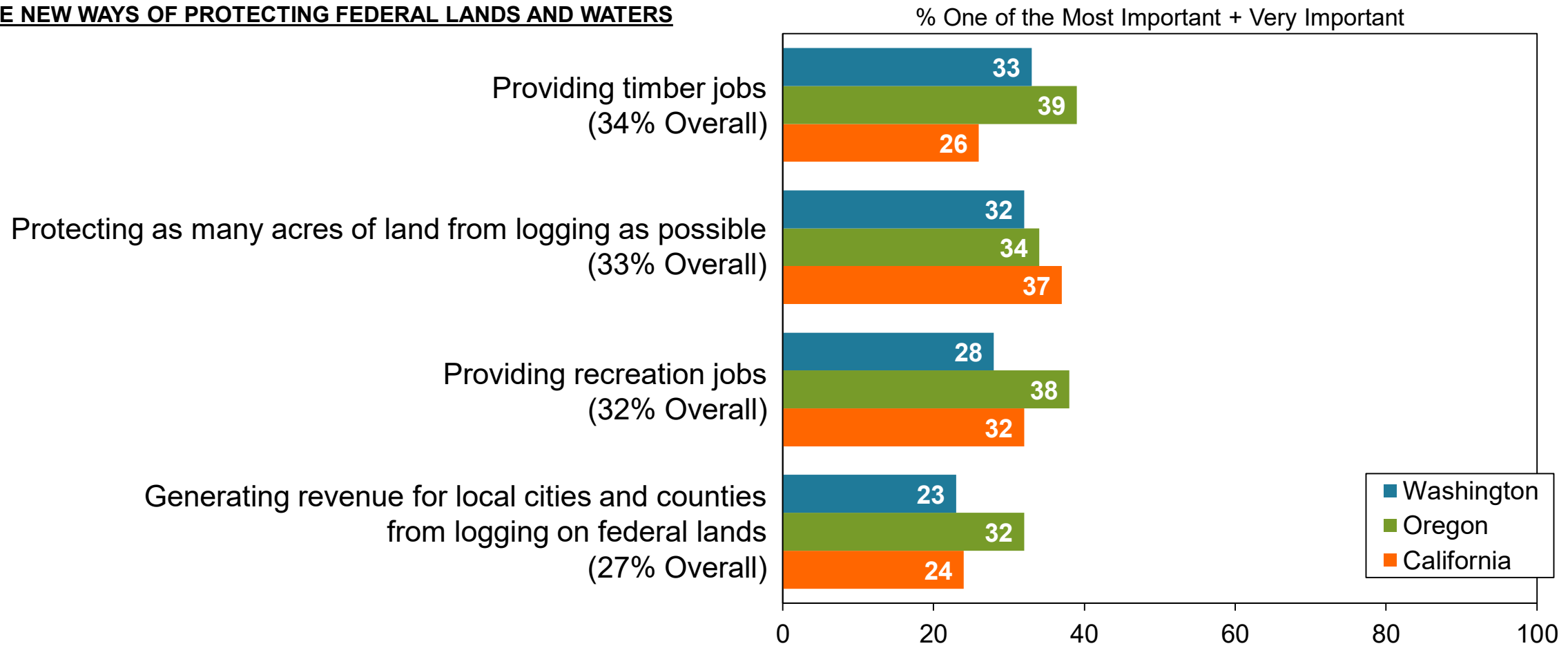
Climate and recreation are not unimportant, but are clearly behind the higher tier concerns that center on water and forests. Climate is a top tier concern among self-identified liberal voters, but much less so among others.

**PRIORITIES THAT LEADERS IN YOUR STATE ARE TRYING TO BALANCE AS THEY  
CREATE NEW WAYS OF PROTECTING FEDERAL LANDS AND WATERS**



Elements that have an economic impact fall dramatically behind the more conservation-minded components.

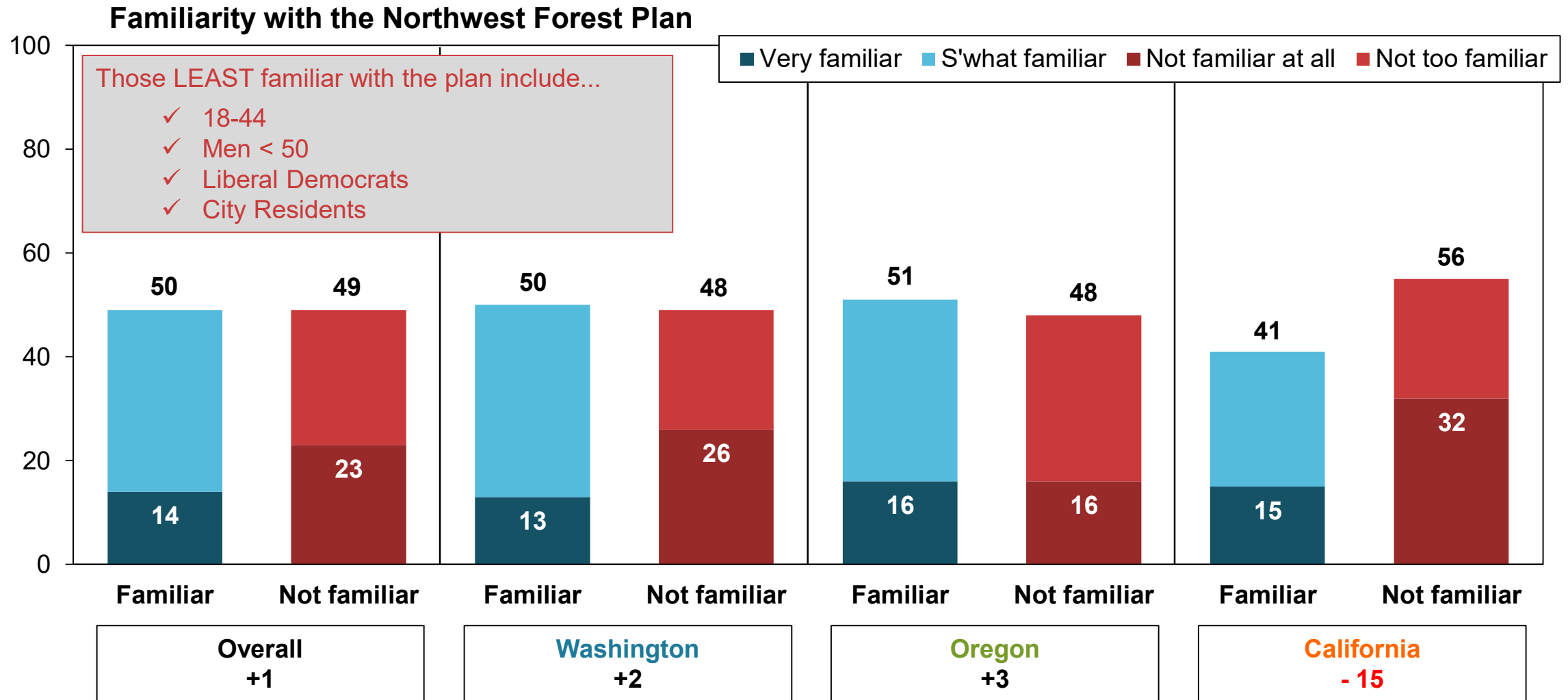
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# The Northwest Forest Plan

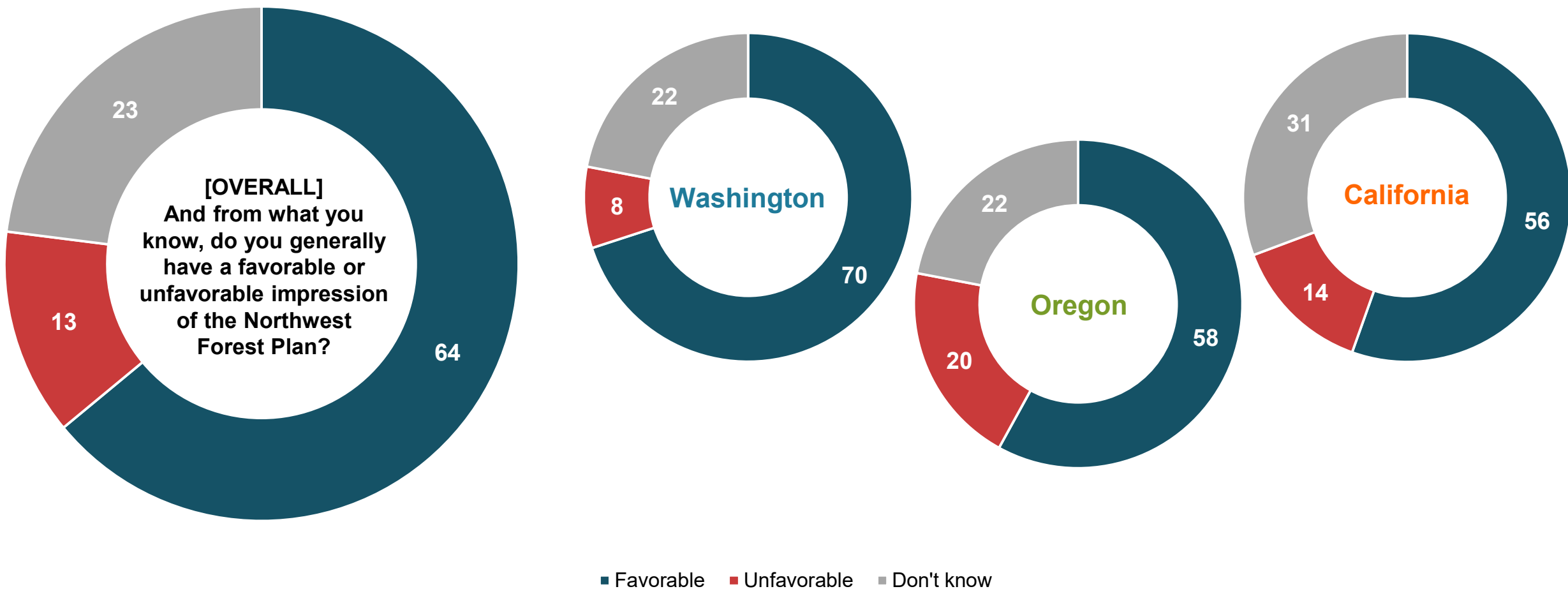
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Roughly half of Oregon and Washington voters say they are familiar with the plan, while fewer Californians are less aware.



# Nearly two-thirds of voters have a positive impression of the Northwest Forest Plan – it sounds good to most.

We see higher positive feelings in Washington, and more in the “don’t know” column in California.



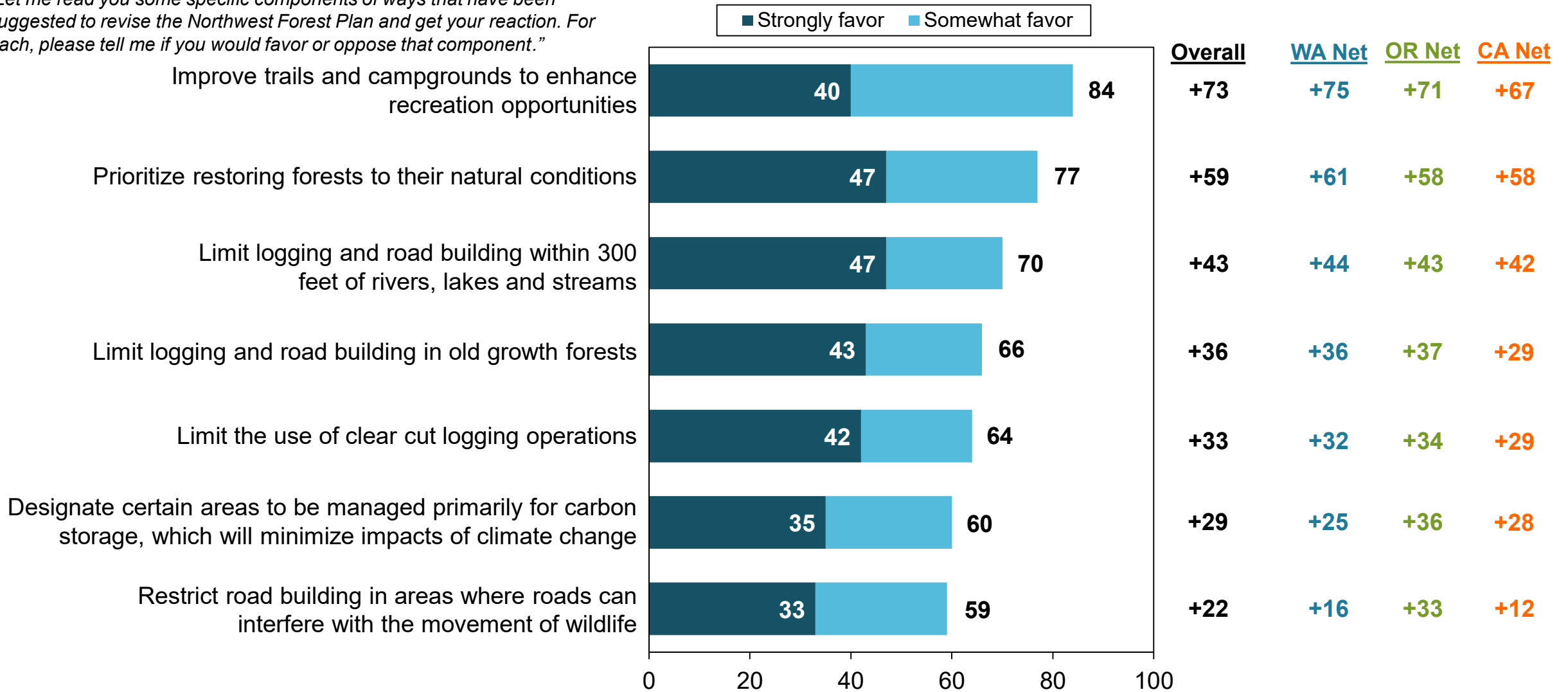
## Information about the Northwest Forest Plan

Voters were read this description:

The Northwest Forest Plan is a collection of federal policies that governs the management of roughly twenty-five million acres of federal lands in the Pacific Northwest, over areas that stretch from Northern California and across western Oregon and Washington. This area contains most of the old-growth forests in the continental United States, endangered fish and wildlife, recreational opportunities, and sources of clean water. The Northwest Forest Plan was enacted in 1994 and is now up for revision.

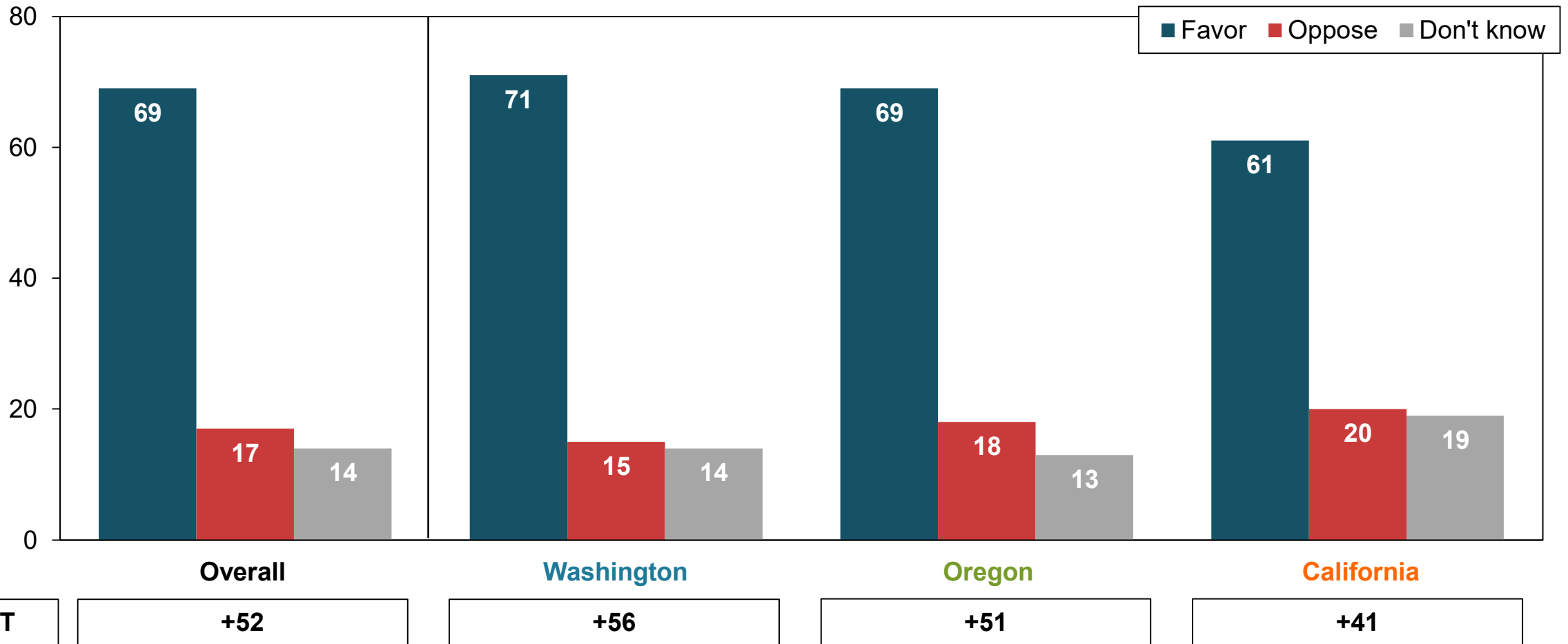
# Proposals that enhance recreation, restoration, waterway protection and old growth forests are the most popular plan provisions, though there is meaningful support for all.

*“Let me read you some specific components of ways that have been suggested to revise the Northwest Forest Plan and get your reaction. For each, please tell me if you would favor or oppose that component.”*



Provided with information, support for the plan hovers around 70% in Washington and Oregon, and 60% in California.

The components you just heard are parts of a proposal to revise the Northwest Forest Plan – from what you know, would you generally favor this revised Northwest Forest Plan or oppose this revised Northwest Forest Plan?





# Pro/Con about the Northwest Forest Plan

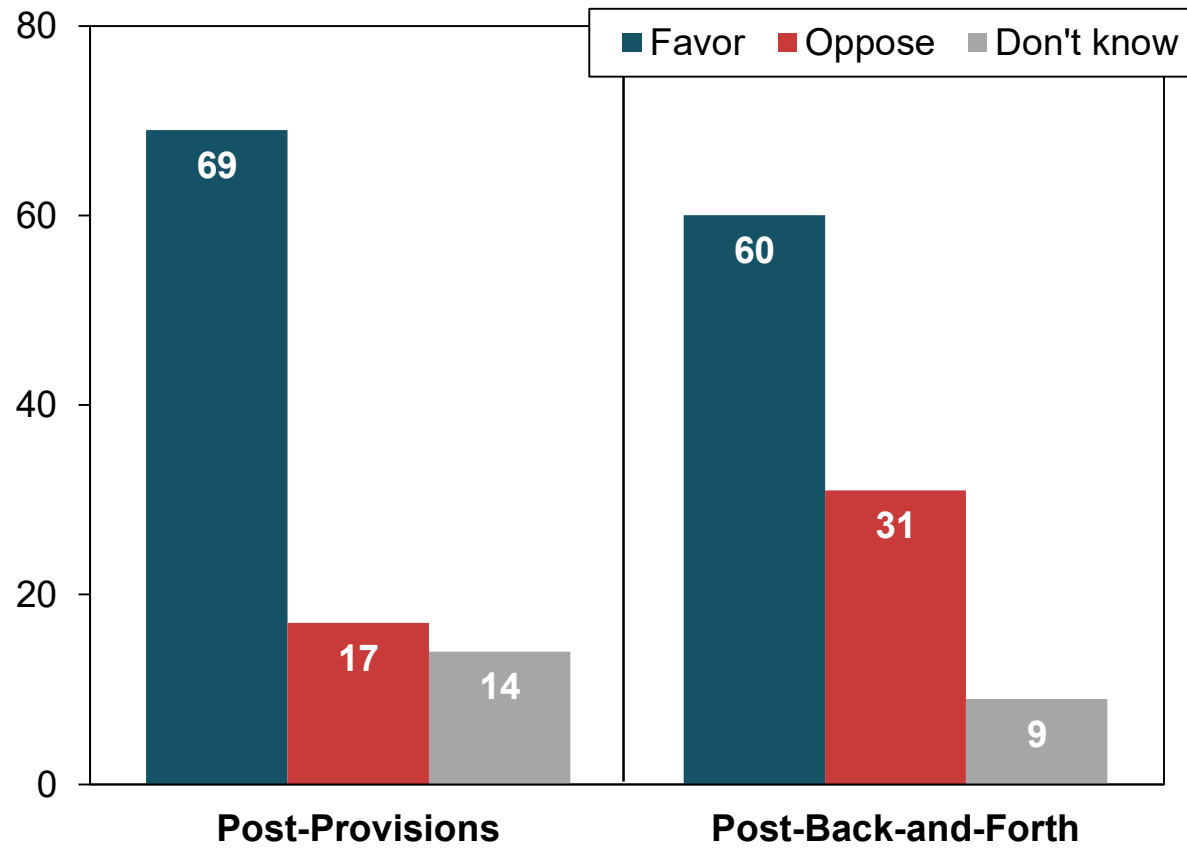
SUPPORTERS say the current plan has been successful in protecting clean water, old growth forests, and recreation opportunities both for today and for future generations. They say this revision will update the plan with science-based policies that continue to keep pollution out of rivers, lakes and streams and protect forests, habitats for endangered animals, and public recreational areas from reckless and damaging over development.

OPPONENTS say the current plan has failed to deliver the amount of timber harvesting that was promised. And this revision would lock up more land, kill more jobs, and jeopardize the economies of towns in the Pacific Northwest. And this plan prevents road construction that would do more to help fight forest fires. They say that's why most elected officials in the areas, that would be most impacted by the plan, oppose this revision.

Replicating communication from both sides narrows the pro-plan margin from roughly 4:1 to around 2:1.

The voters shifting against the plan are largely conservative, rural and Republican-leaning.

After hearing this information, would you generally favor this revised Northwest Forest Plan or oppose this revised Northwest Forest Plan?



**Who moves against the plan?**

- ✓ Men 50+
- ✓ Men w/o College Degrees
- ✓ Republicans
- ✓ Conservatives
- ✓ Rural Residents
- ✓ Washington State

NET

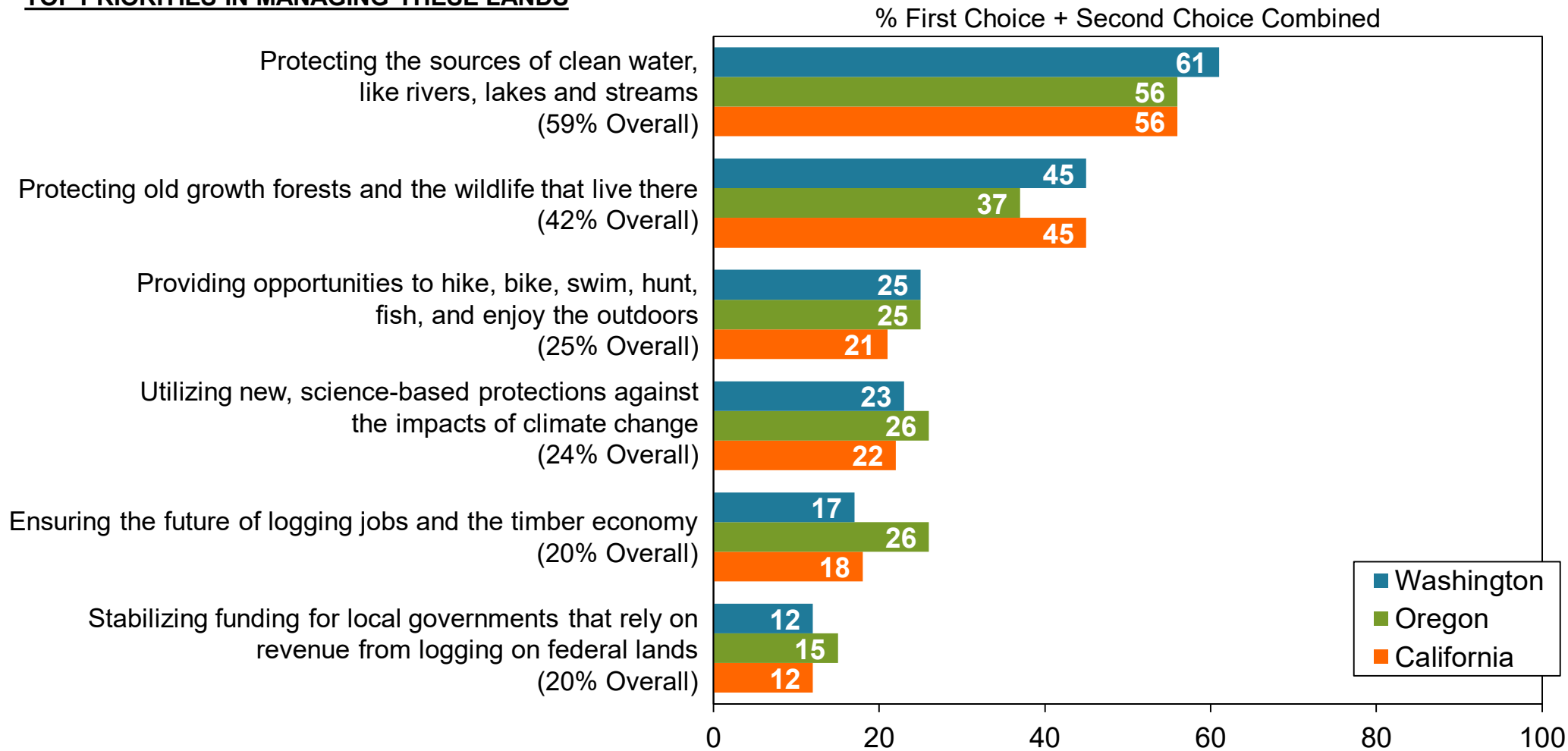
+52

+29

# Forcing voters to choose their two top priorities again reveals the premium placed on clean water and protecting old growth forests.

These top two priorities are consistent in each of the three states.

## TOP PRIORITIES IN MANAGING THESE LANDS



# Messaging Protections

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Testing specific pro-plan messaging also shows the importance of water – with the highest intensity among all voters and in each of the three states.

The salmon message (that also emphasizes clean water) and forest message also test well – with each of these top three frames using the specter of pollution.

<b>Pro-Revised Northwest Forest Plan Statements</b> % Very Convincing	Overall	Plan Base	WA	OR	CA
[WATER] Nothing is more important than having clean water and sources of safe drinking water are becoming increasingly scarce and valuable. This plan would help keep pollution out of rivers, lakes, and streams - and protect the quality of drinking water of millions of families in the Pacific Northwest.	49	76	47	52	47
[SALMON] Wild salmon runs are not only good for the environment, but are also critical for fishermen and the economy in the Pacific Northwest. This plan will ensure wild salmon runs in this area are protected from pollution and reckless over-development that would threaten their survival.	40	62	38	42	39
[FORESTS] The Pacific Northwest is home to most of the remaining old growth forests left in North America. Without these protections, irreplaceable forests are in danger of being degraded and damaged by pollution and reckless industrialization.	39	70	37	43	38
[REC ACTIVITY] These lands offer hiking, biking, climbing, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation activities at a time when there are fewer and fewer outdoor areas open to the public. This plan will help ensure these natural areas remain accessible and protect this legacy for future generations.	32	50	31	32	38
[CLIMATE] This plan would put in place, for the first time, a comprehensive strategy to protect against the impacts of climate change. The plan would enact science-based protections that will help the area better adapt to changes in the climate – which protects the forests, water quality, and wildlife of the Pacific Northwest.	32	54	29	37	30

## Messages that don't test as well...

<b>Pro-Revised Northwest Forest Plan Statements</b> % Very Convincing	Overall	Plan Base	WA	OR	CA
[BALANCE] This plan strikes the right balance in order to preserve this area's natural resources and natural heritage, while protecting small town economies, responsible logging practices, and creating jobs in the right way.	24	37	20	29	24
[REC ECONOMY] Recreation is the primary use of these forests and is increasingly important to the economy throughout the region and in many small towns. By providing high-quality recreation opportunities, this plan ensures that recreation continues to be a job-creator and a stable, sustainable force in the economy for years to come.	23	40	22	25	25
[ROLE FOR TIMBER] Some parts of these forests need to be restored to natural conditions. This plan continues to provide for some timber harvest to fulfill this need and thus ensures that the timber industry still plays a role in the diversifying regional economy.	18	28	16	20	19

The final vote (after several pro-plan messages) pushes support for the plan close to where it started – both in the region and in each of the three states.

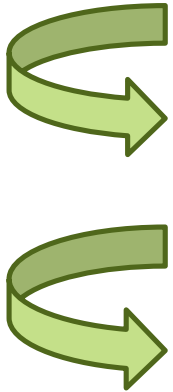
	<b>Vote A: Post-Information</b>	<b>Vote B: Post-Back-and-Forth</b>	<b>Vote C: Post-Messaging</b>	<b>Shift from A to B</b>	<b>Shift from B to C</b>	<b>Shift from A to C</b>
<b>Overall</b>	69% favor / 17% oppose (+52)	60% favor / 31% oppose (+29)	67% favor / 21% oppose (+46)	<b>-23</b>	<b>+17</b>	<b>-6</b>
<b>Washington</b>	71% favor / 15% oppose (+56)	57% favor / 35% oppose (+22)	68% favor / 20% oppose (+48)	<b>-34</b>	<b>+26</b>	<b>-8</b>
<b>Oregon</b>	69% favor / 18% oppose (+51)	64% favor / 26% oppose (+38)	67% favor / 22% oppose (+45)	<b>-13</b>	<b>+7</b>	<b>-6</b>
<b>California</b>	61% favor / 20% oppose (+41)	60% favor / 28% oppose (+32)	59% favor / 24% oppose (+35)	<b>-9</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>-6</b>

## **Message Narrative:** Protect the region's water and old growth forests

The Northwest Forest Plan must protect the sources of safe, clean drinking water.

We also must protect old growth forests in the Pacific Northwest – some of the only remaining old growth forests left in North America – which are home to critical sources of water and habitat for endangered wildlife, including wild salmon runs that are threatened by pollution and overdevelopment

These sources of clean water and old growth forests are in danger of being degraded and damaged by pollution and reckless industrialization and overdevelopment. We must keep pollution out of our water and forests by limiting logging and road building within three hundred feet of rivers, lakes, streams or forests – and limiting the use of clear cut logging operations.





# Strategic Takeaways

- **Protecting forests is not an issue as fraught with partisan and ideological divides as in previous years.** Broad coalitions initially favor the proposed reforms to the Northwest Forest Plan, including conservatives, Republicans, and those in rural areas.
- **It's difficult to overstate the importance of clean water in this debate.** Virtually any component or message that includes prioritizing clean water tests with a great deal of intensity. Most fundamentally this translates to protecting sources of clean drinking water, but also when talking about recreation (rivers, lakes, streams, forests) and wildlife (salmon), it's important to connect the dots explicitly to water.
- **Protecting old growth forests are also important to voters.** This certainly has a water component as well, but also speaks to protecting endangered wildlife.

# Strategic Takeaways

- **Economic factors are not unimportant but are not top tier concerns.** This means opposition fear mongering about logging jobs or local revenue largely fall flat, but also indicates our side is better served talking about these core elements (water, forests) rather than economic arguments about a tourism economy.
- **Specifically naming a threat raises the stakes for voters.** When threats like pollution and industrialization are given, voters become more protective of both water and forests.
- **The focus on climate should not be a broad-based message.** Liberal voters show some real concern about climate, but – when forced – this concern is secondary to protecting the quality of water and old growth forests.