



THE COLORADO COLLEGE  
STATE OF THE ROCKIES PROJECT

Conservation in the West Poll

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# KEY FINDINGS

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THE 2015 SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF VOTERS IN SIX WESTERN STATES



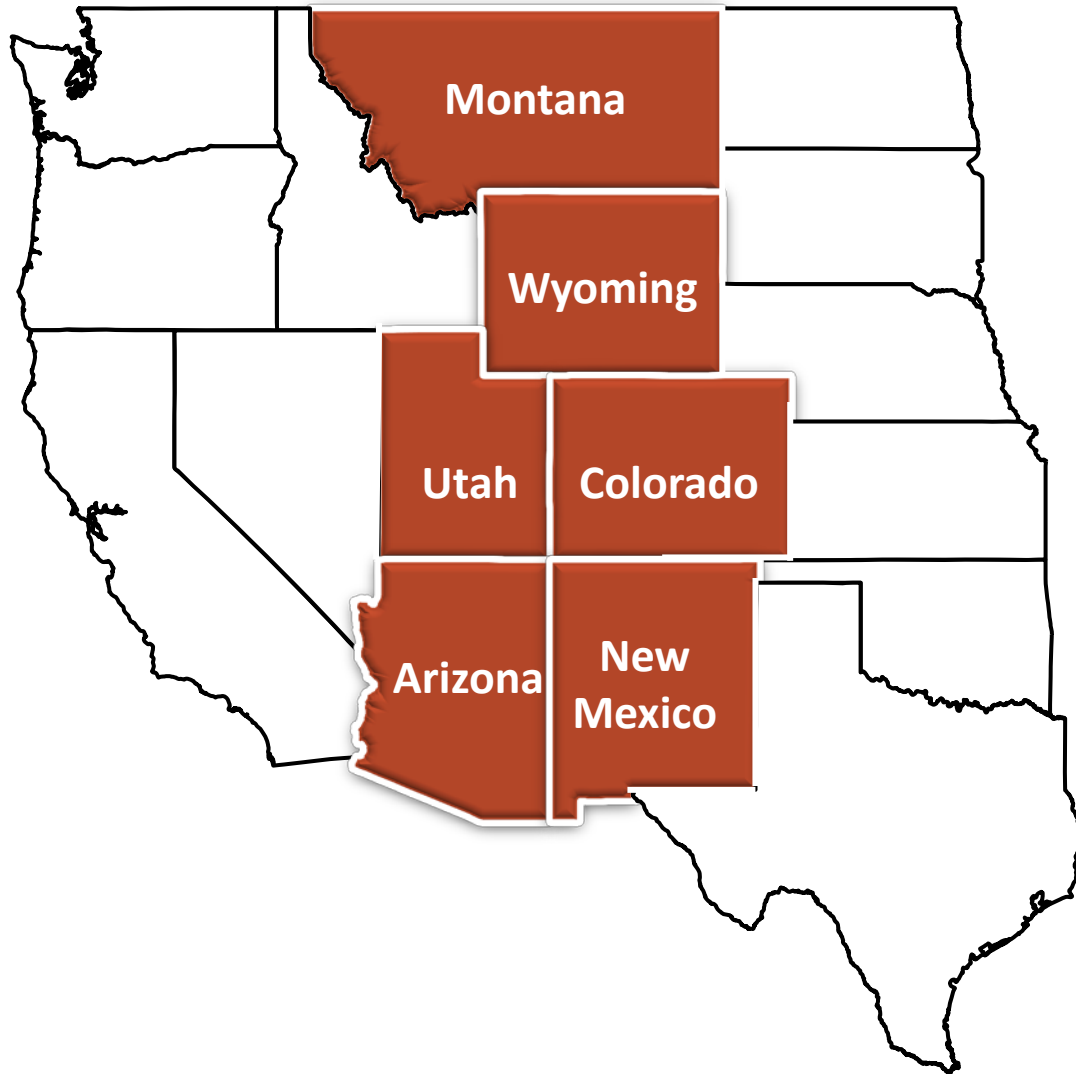
**JANUARY 2015**

CONDUCTED BY: LORI WEIGEL / PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES  
DAVE METZ / FAIRBANK, MASLIN, MAULLIN, METZ & ASSOCIATES

# METHODOLOGY

- ❖ 2,400 telephone (cell and landline) interviews with 400 registered voters in six states: Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.
- ❖ Interviews conducted December 29, 2014 & January 3-11, 2015, in Spanish and English.
- ❖ The margin of overall sampling error is  $\pm 2.9\%$  at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample; and  $\pm 4.9\%$  for each state.
- ❖ The total numbers have been statistically weighted to reflect the true geographic distribution of voters throughout the region. Interviews within each state were distributed proportionally by region and each sample is demographically representative of their electorate.
- ❖ Comparisons made to similarly conducted surveys in 2011, 2012, 2013 & 2014
- ❖ Bi-partisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies (R) and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D).





# Reasons for Living in the West

We tested 11 different potential factors that could play a role in someone being attracted to life in the West, and asked voters tell us if it was a “significant factor, somewhat of a factor or not really a factor in you deciding to live and stay in the West.” The rationales voters say are most significant all revolve around the outdoors and nature.

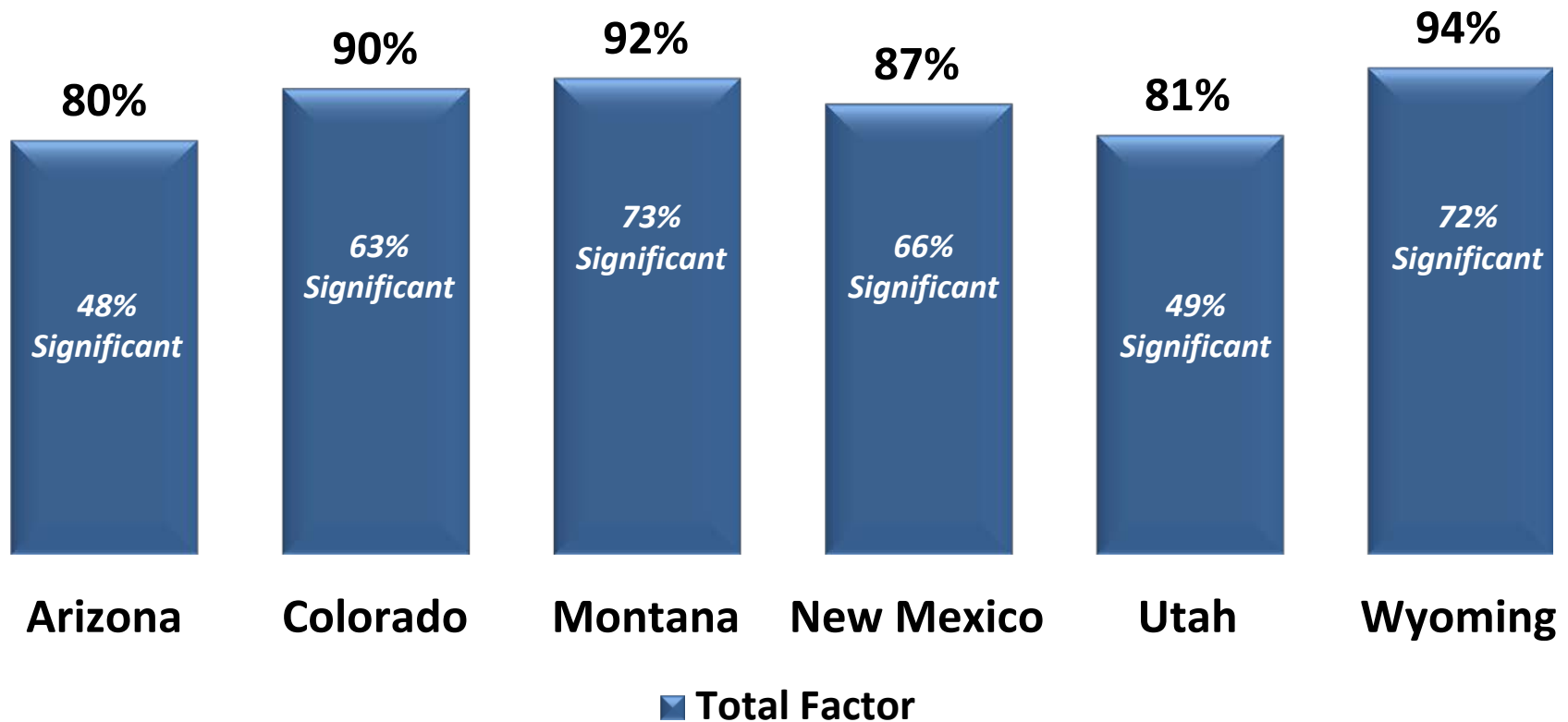


# In fact, these factors outrank economic ones in their significance.

<i>Reasons for Living in West Ranked By Significant Factor</i>	<b>Significant Factor</b>	<b>A Factor</b>
Clean air, clean water and environment	57%	85%
Healthy, outdoor lifestyle	56%	88%
Ability to live near, recreate on and enjoy public lands like national parks and forests	49%	80%
Cost of living	44%	80%
Economic opportunities	41%	78%
Quality of public schools	36%	63%
Quality of health care and hospitals	32%	66%
Level of traffic congestion	32%	64%
Amount of taxes	27%	61%
Hunting and fishing opportunities	25%	48%
Opportunities to open my own business	25%	45%

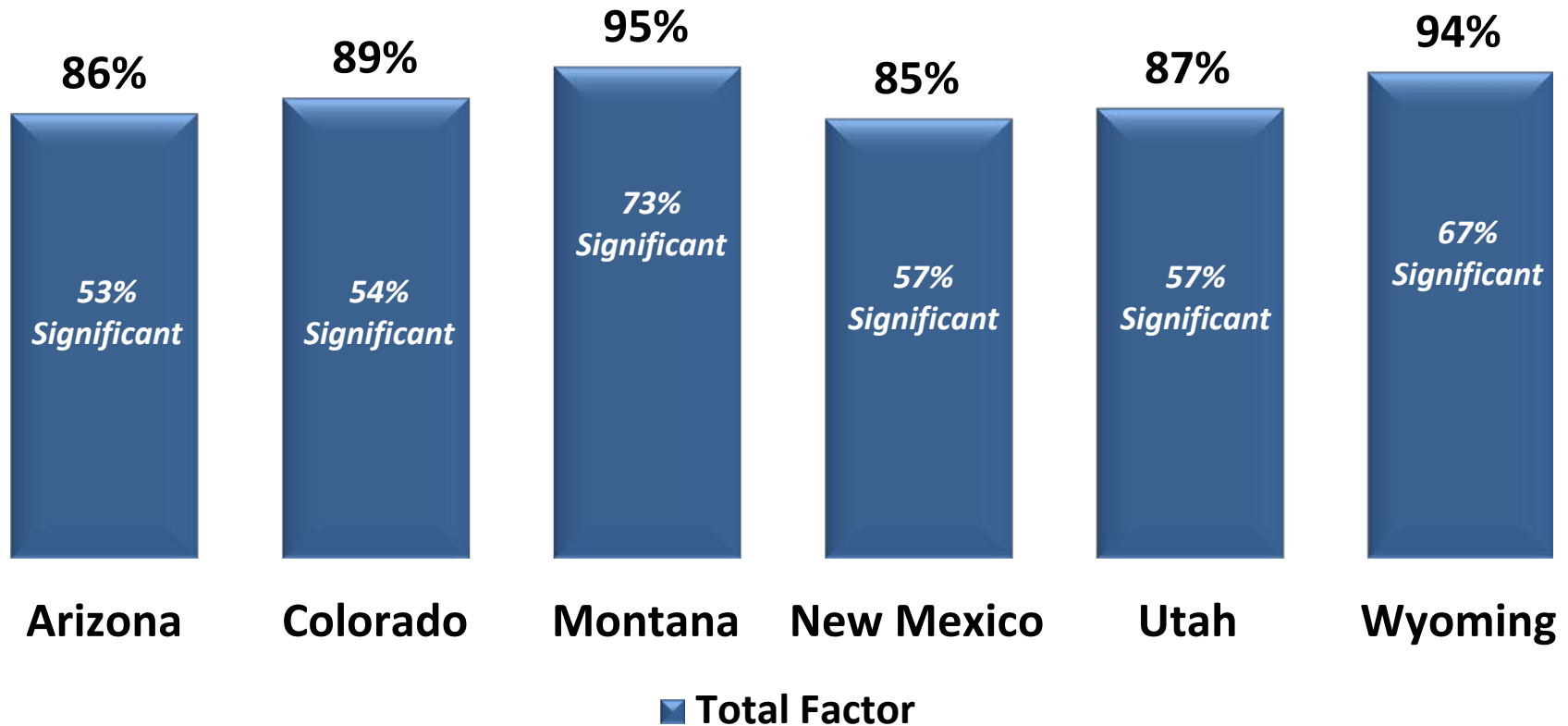
# Majorities of voters in four of the six states say a clean environment is significant in drawing them to and keeping them in the West.

*Clean Air, Clean Water and Environment By State*



There's even more agreement over a "healthy outdoor lifestyle" playing a role; particularly strong in Montana and Wyoming.

*Healthy, Outdoor Lifestyle By State*



## Here's the kind of reasons voters provided for why they live in the West.

*"We just like it here. We like the weather. Mostly, probably the main reason is just the weather and the out doors. There's sunshine and so much stuff outdoors to do, and things are just fresh."*

**- Democratic Woman Age 45-54, Colorado**

*"Outdoor recreation. I like that it's year round and that we have seasons, so you can go out in the winter and you can also go out in the summer."*

**- Democratic Man Age 35-44, Montana**

*"It's a beautiful place to live and I can go walking with my wife in the mountains. It's a nice place to live. You can raise your children and grandchildren where they have room to run, jump, explore, and be kids."*

**- Republican Man Age 65+, Wyoming**

*"We have the cleanest air and the most pristine wild lands and wildlife. I'm more comfortable here than I am anywhere else."*

**- Independent Man Age 65+, Montana**

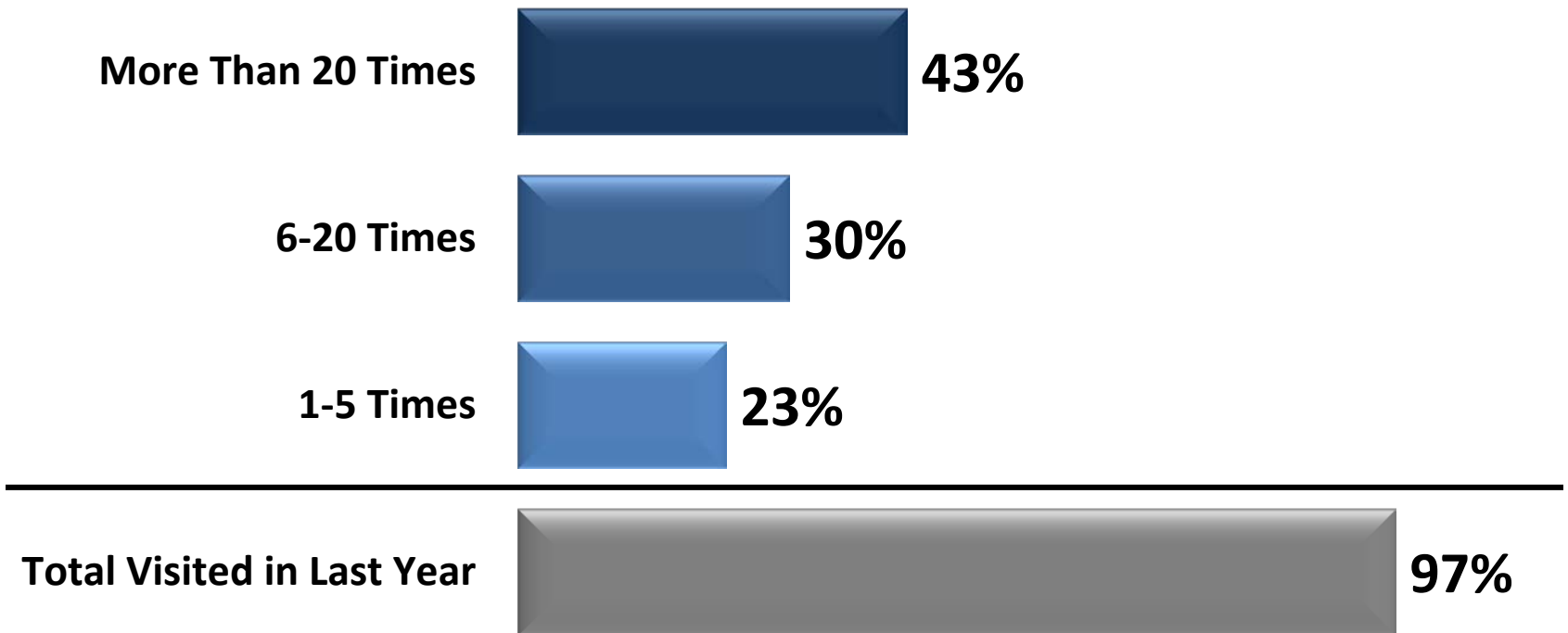
*"I like the national parks. I like the outdoors, the recreation possibilities."*

**- Independent Man Age 65+, Utah**



# Western voters back up their words in action. Nearly all of them report having visited nationally-managed public lands in the last year.

*“And over the past year, how many times do you think you have visited public lands managed by U.S. agencies, such as national parks, national forests, national monuments, national wildlife refuges, or Bureau of Land Management Lands.”*



# Priorities for Public Lands



*I'm going to mention a few priorities that some people have for national parks, forests, national monuments, wildlife refuges, and other national public lands. Please tell me how important each one is to you personally. Is it very important, somewhat important, not very important or not at all important as a priority for parks and public lands.*

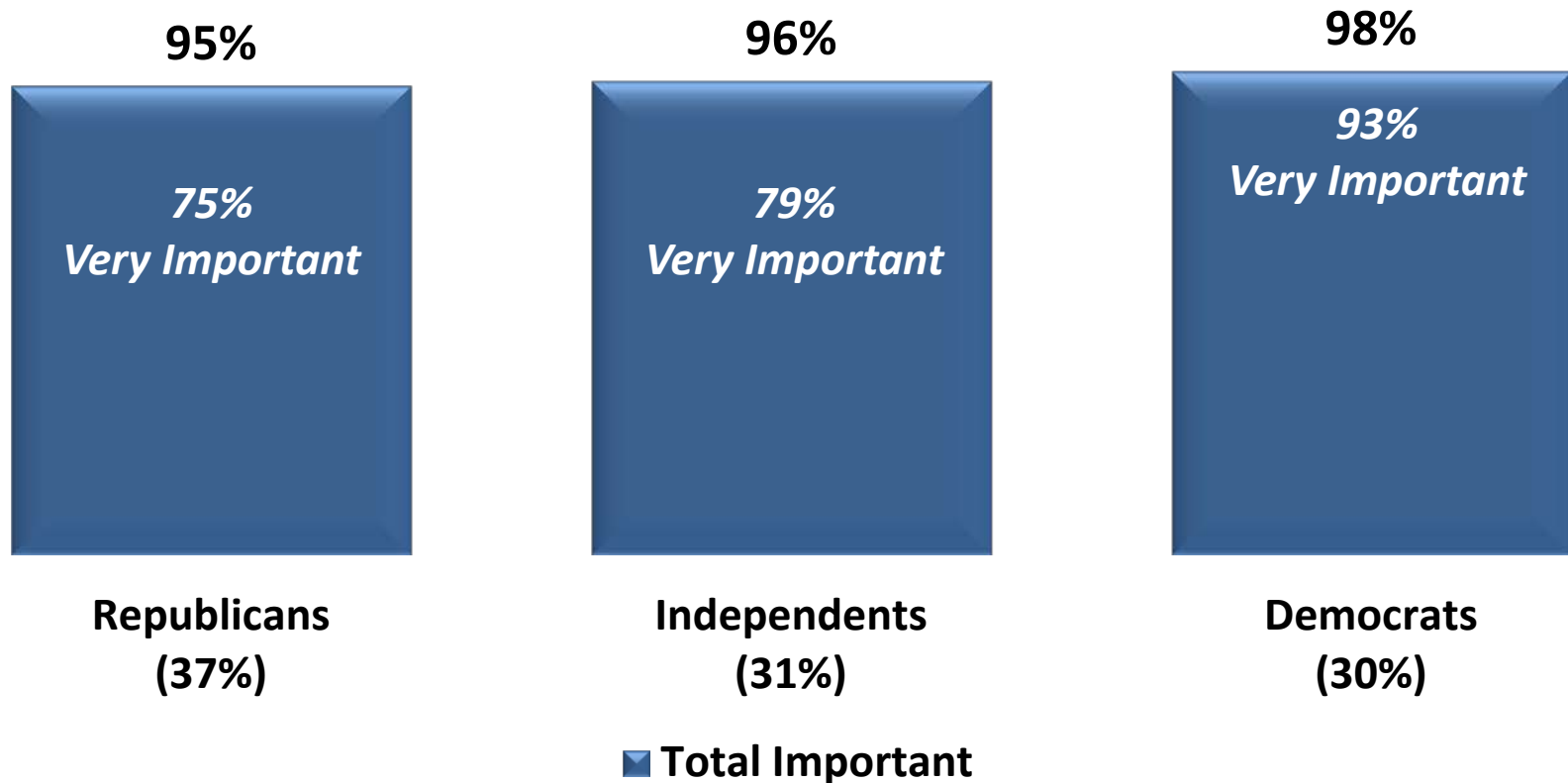


# Protecting and conserving national public lands for future generations and wildlife are the top priorities Westerners hold.

<i>Priorities for Public Lands Ranked By Very Important</i>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Total Important</b>
<b>Protecting and conserving natural areas for future generations</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Protecting and conserving wildlife habitat</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>95%</b>
<b>Making sure that rangers have the resources they need to take care of public lands and provide services to visitors</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>95%</b>
<b>Ensuring access for recreational activities such as hiking, biking, hunting and fishing</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>Making sure resources such as oil and gas, minerals or coal are available for development and mining</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>72%</b>
<b>Making them available for livestock grazing</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>76%</b>

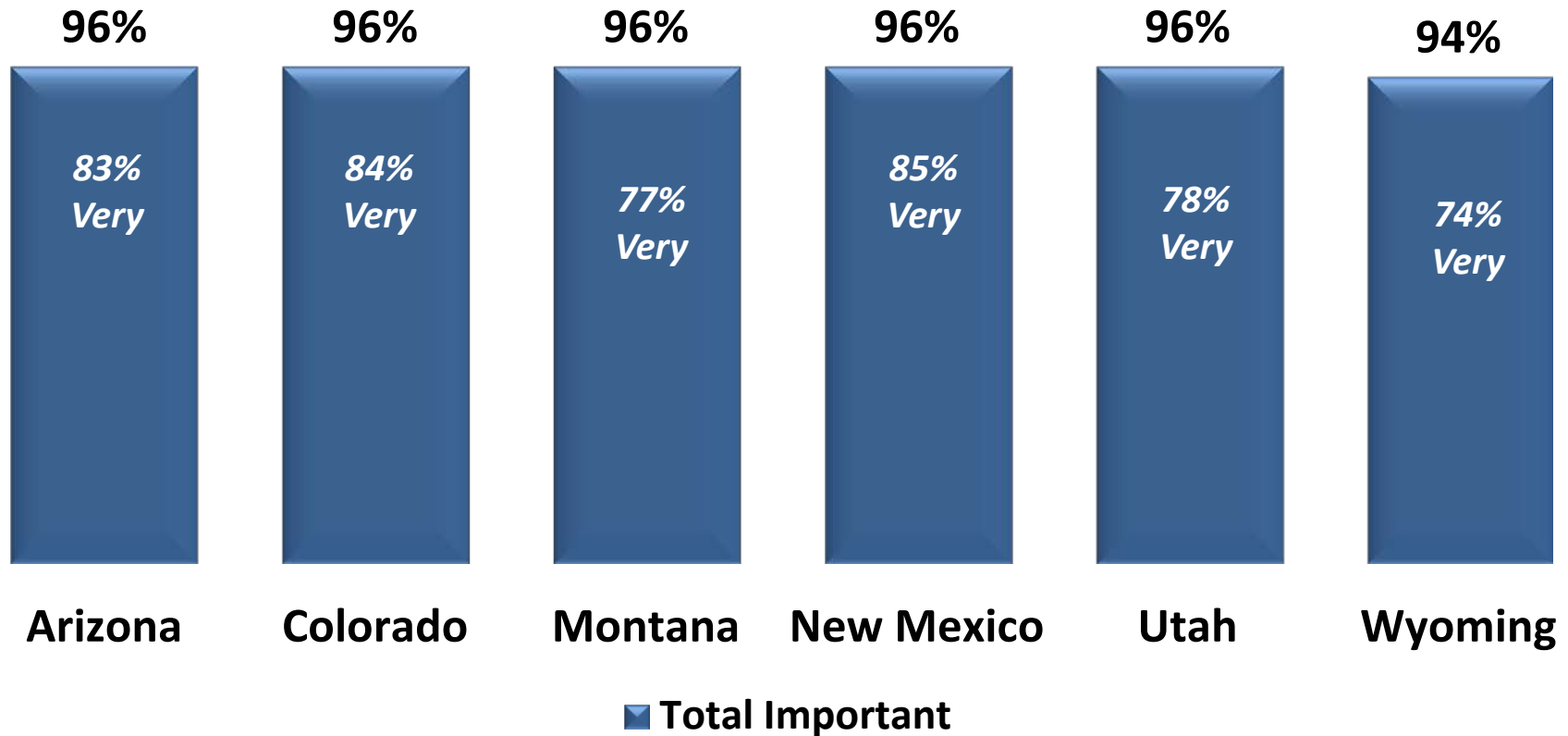
# Voters across the political spectrum place protecting public lands as the top priority they hold.

*Protect and Conserve for Future Generations By Party*



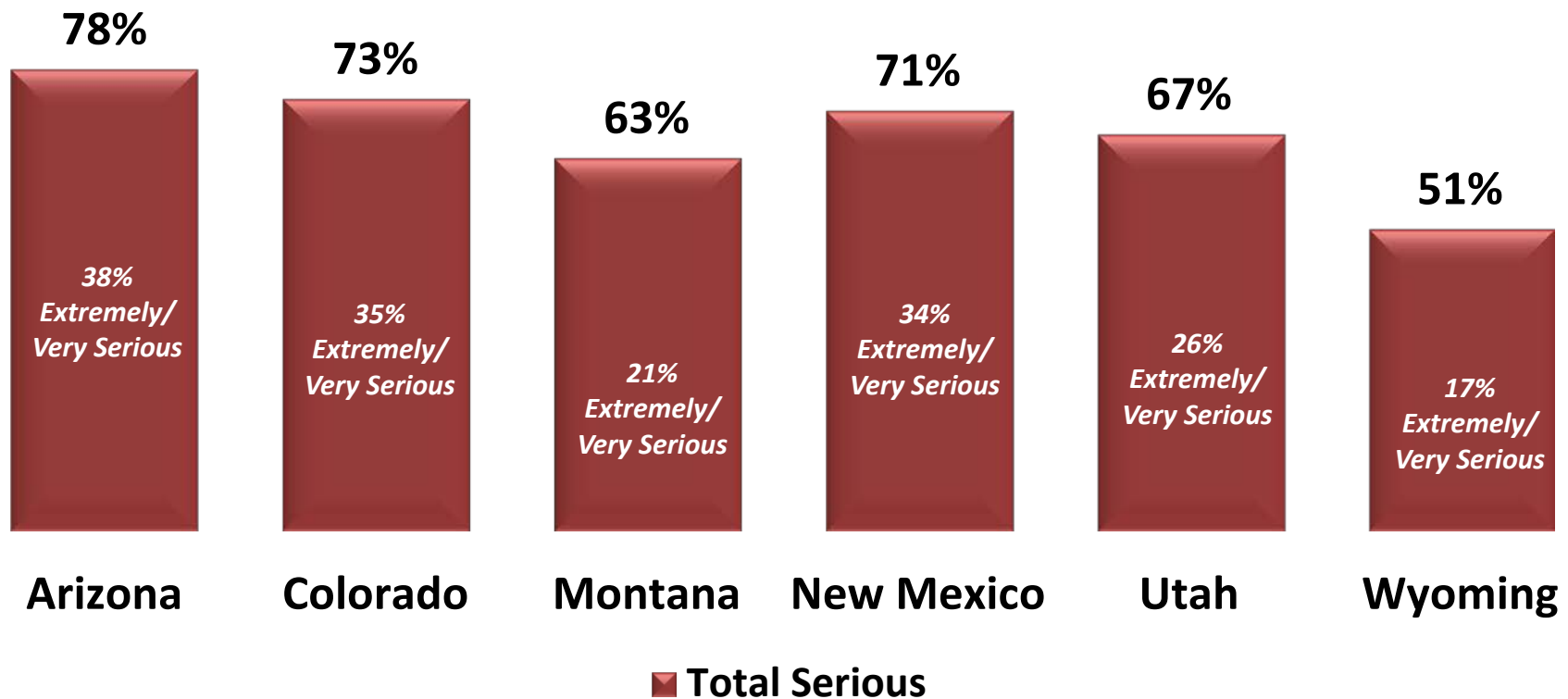
This is the top or next to top rationale in every state.

*Protect and Conserve for Future Generations By State*



A majority of voters in each of these states say a lack of proper funding for these nationally managed lands is a problem in their state.

*Lack of Resources to Properly Maintain Public Lands By State*



**By a 44 point margin, voters tell us they view these federal public lands as belonging to the nation – not to their state.**

*“And do you think of these public lands more as - AMERICAN places that belong to everyone in our country, or STATE places that belong more to the people of (STATE)?”*

**American Places**

**68%**

**State Places**

**24%**

**There is overwhelming support for Presidents continuing to have the prerogative to designate National Monuments; Support for Congress funding LWCF, but not for sale of public lands.**

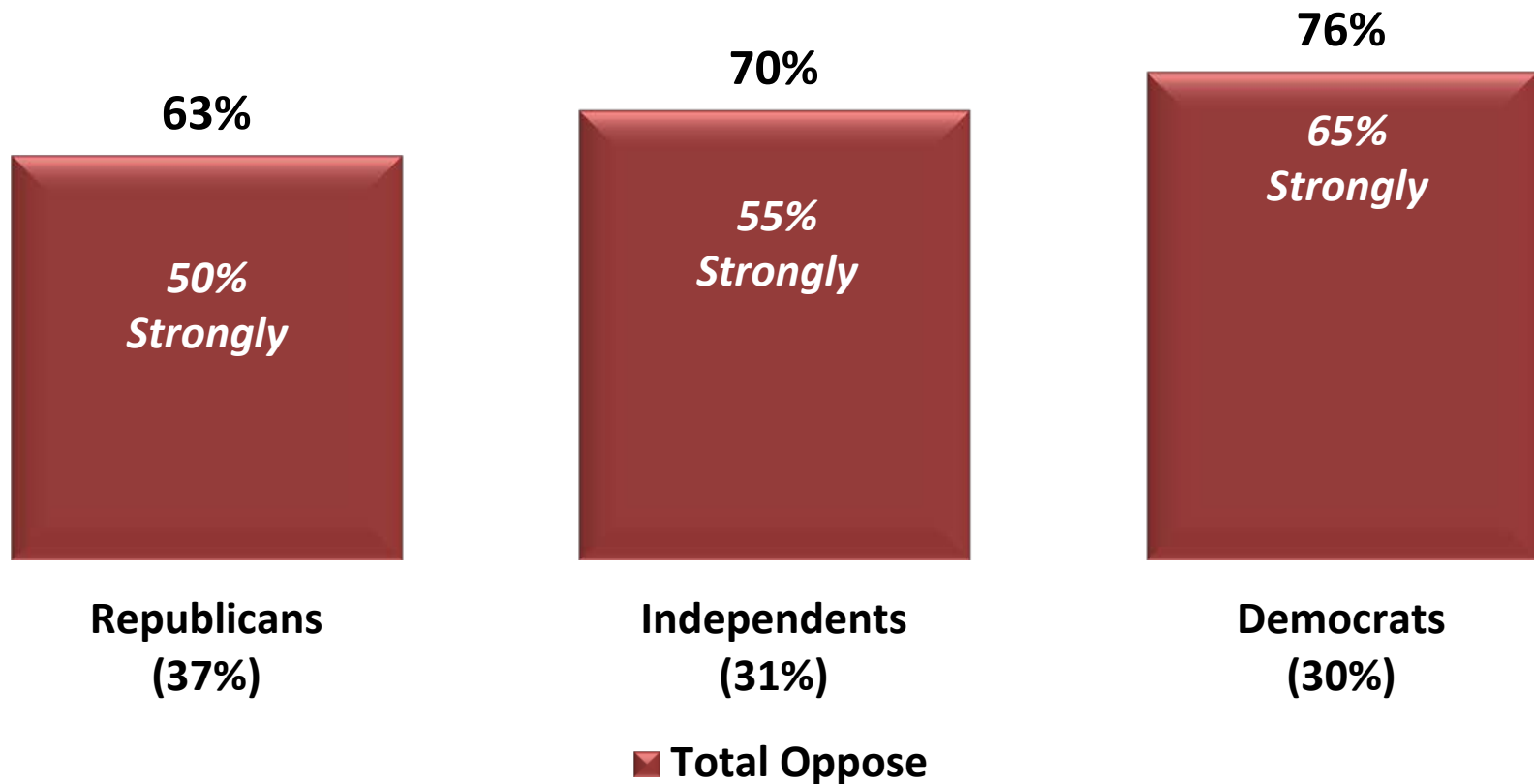
*Public Lands Actions Ranked By Support*

	<i>Support</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
<b>Future Presidents continuing to protect existing public lands as national monuments</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Continue to use some of the money from fees charged to oil and gas companies that drill offshore for conservation of natural areas and clean water, and to ensure access to outdoor recreation</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Sell significant holdings of public lands like national forests to reduce the budget deficit</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>69%</b>



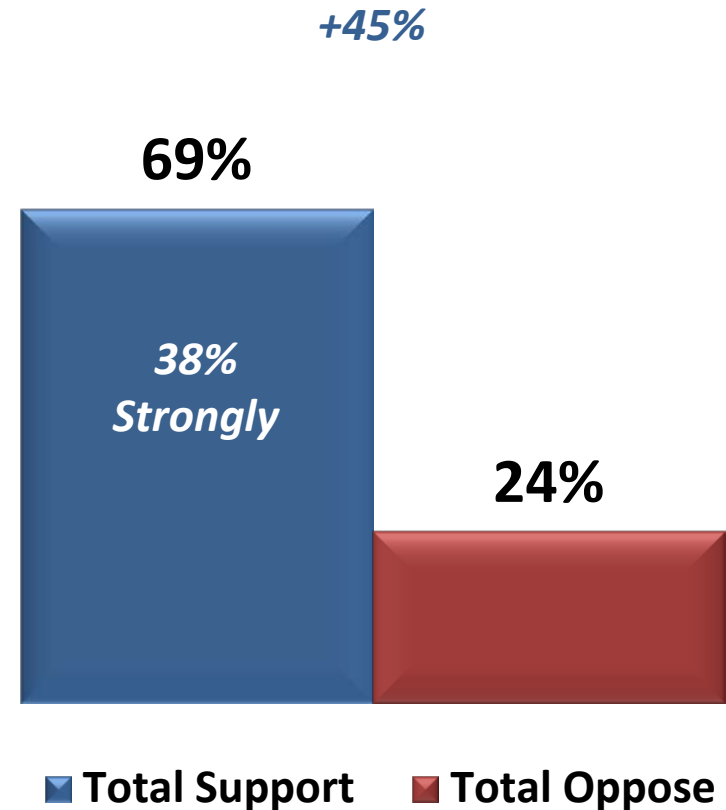
# Opposition to Congress acting to sell off public lands in order to reduce the budget deficit is rejected by majorities across the partisan spectrum.

*Selling Public Lands By Party*



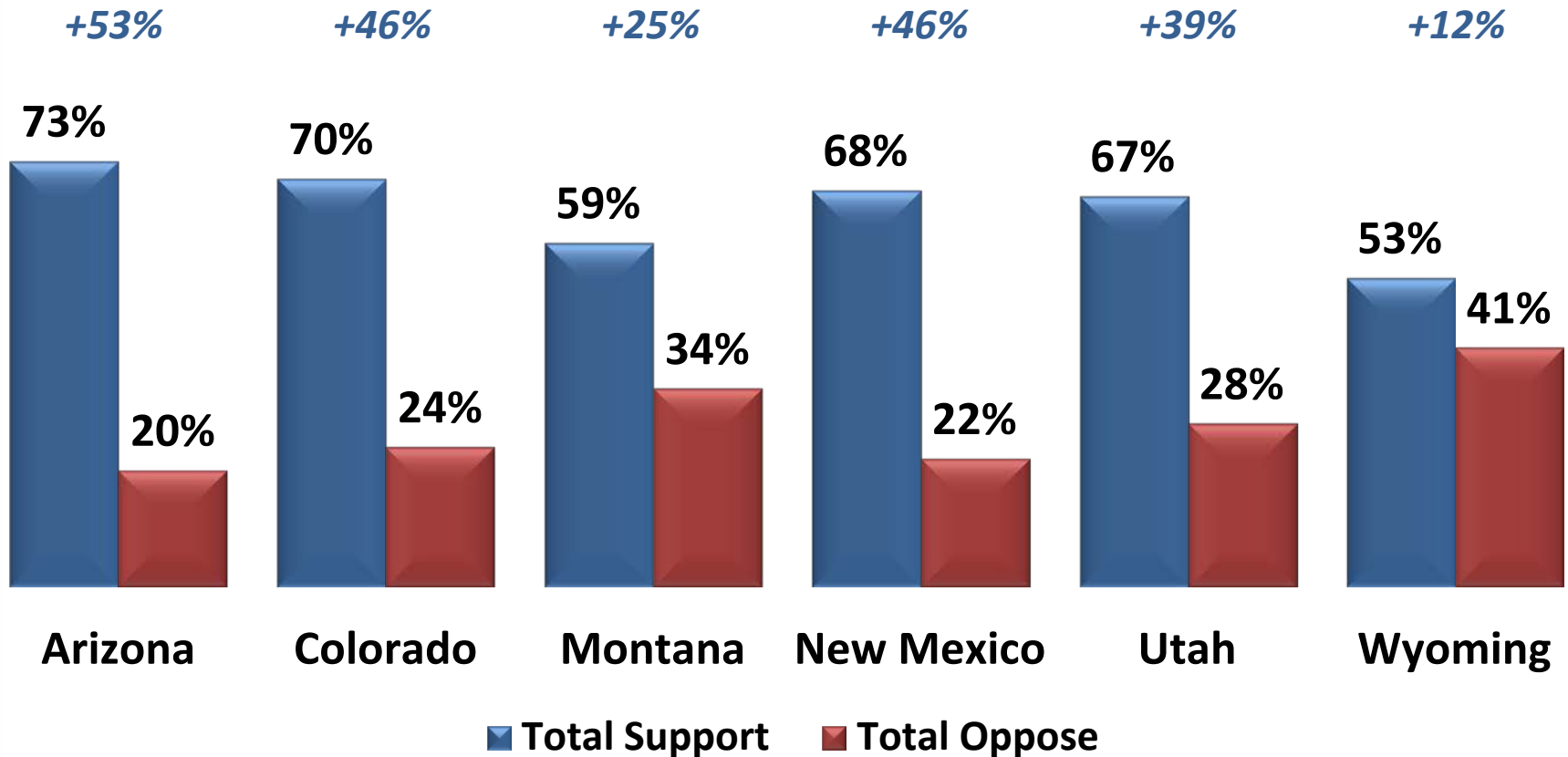
# More than two-thirds also support the BLM protecting sage-grouse habitat through restricting some activities on public lands.

*Approximately half of all remaining Greater sage-grouse habitat is on public lands managed by the BLM, that is the Bureau of Land Management. Because of the sage-grouse's declining population, the BLM drafted plans to protect the bird and other animals that live in its habitat. Those plans would mean the habitat would continue to be open to hiking, biking, camping, fishing, and more, but there would be some limits on energy development, livestock grazing, and off-road vehicle use in certain areas.*



# These plans engender majority support in every state.

*Sage Grouse Habitat Protections By State*



# Most voters still admit not knowing their Members' views on these issues.

*“Would you say that your Member of Congress probably...”*

	2013	2015	D/S
Places a <b>HIGHER</b> priority on protecting land, air and water than you do	6%	6%	0%
Places the <b>SAME</b> priority on protecting land, air and water that you do	17%	18%	+1%
Places a <b>LOWER</b> priority on protecting land, air and water than you do	22%	27%	+5%
Not really sure of the positions your Member of Congress has taken	54%	47%	-7%

# THE BOTTOM LINE

- ❖ Voters in these Western states tell us that the public lands, opportunities for outdoor recreation, and clean air and water they find here are significant reasons they choose to live where they do. Those eclipse economic factors.
- ❖ Westerners value our national public lands. They visit them regularly and prioritize preserving them for future generations.
- ❖ They have a conservation agenda for the new Congress that includes protection of land and water, but rejects the selling of public lands. Few are confident their Member of Congress places as high a priority on these issues as they themselves do.





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