

**Conservation in the West**  
**The 2026 Survey of the Attitudes of Voters in**  
**Eight Western States**

copyright Kathryn Hahne

presented to Boulder County Nature Association Ecosystem Symposium  
*Public Lands in Public Hands for the Public Good*

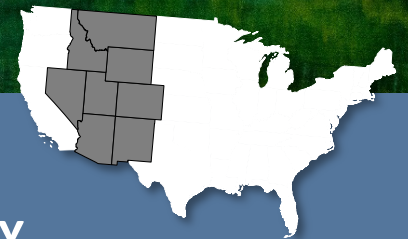
April 4, 2026

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# CONSERVATION IN THE WEST

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THE 2026 SURVEY OF THE ATTITUDES OF VOTERS IN EIGHT WESTERN STATES



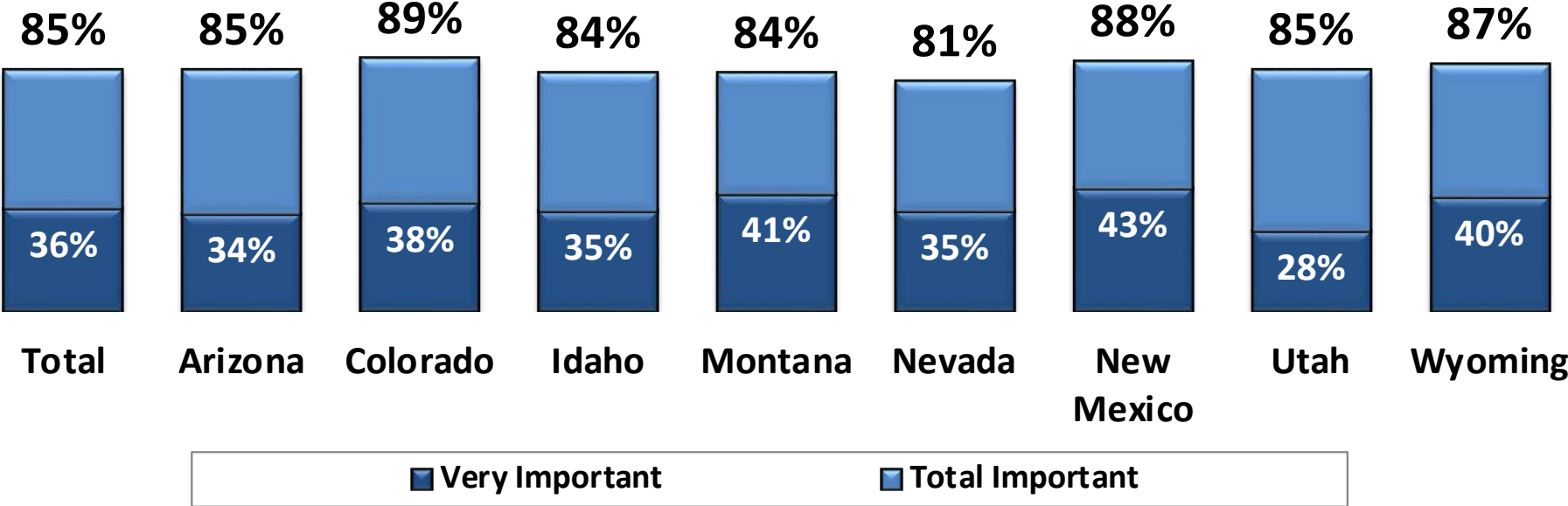
**JANUARY 2026**

CONDUCTED BY: LORI WEIGEL & KATHRYN HAHNE/ NEW BRIDGE STRATEGY  
MIRANDA EVERITT / FAIRBANK, MASLIN, MAULLIN, METZ & ASSOCIATES

# Methodology

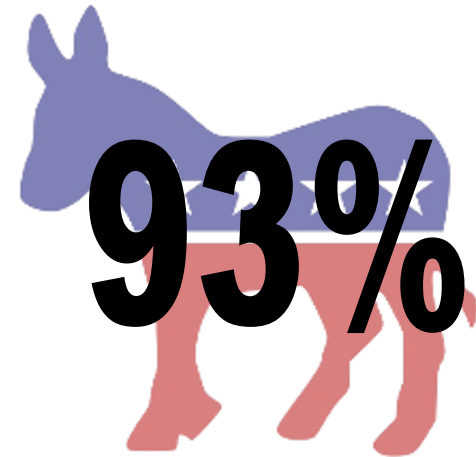
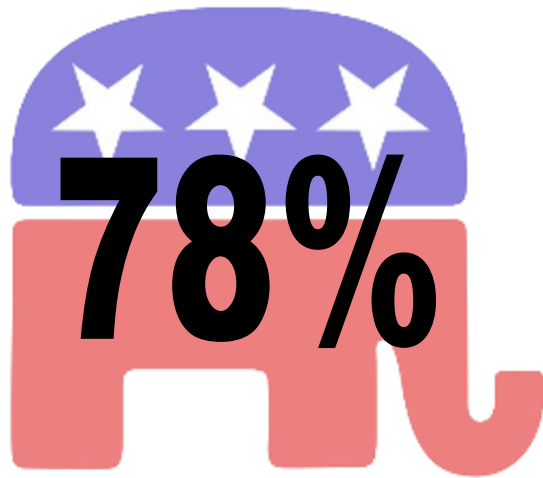
- ❖ 3,419 telephone and online interviews with registered voters in eight states: Arizona (N=479), Colorado (N=422), Idaho (N=410), Montana (N=408), Nevada (N=442), New Mexico (N=443), Utah (N=409), and Wyoming (N=406).
- ❖ Two oversamples were also conducted to have greater ability to report distinctions among racial/ethnic sub-groups. We conducted additional interviews to reach a total of N=239 Black voters and a total of N=247 Native American voters, which were then weighted back to reflect their true proportions within the electorate in this region.
- ❖ Interviews were conducted January 2-18, 2026, in Spanish and English.
- ❖ The effective margin of error is  $\pm 2.4\%$  at the 95% confidence interval for the total sample; and at most  $\pm 4.9\%$  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.
- ❖ Comparisons are made to similarly conducted surveys each year from 2011 to 2025.
- ❖ Bi-partisan research team of New Bridge Strategy (R) and Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D).

# More than four-in-five voters across all eight states say conservation issues are important in deciding whether to support an elected official.



*Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official? Are they...*

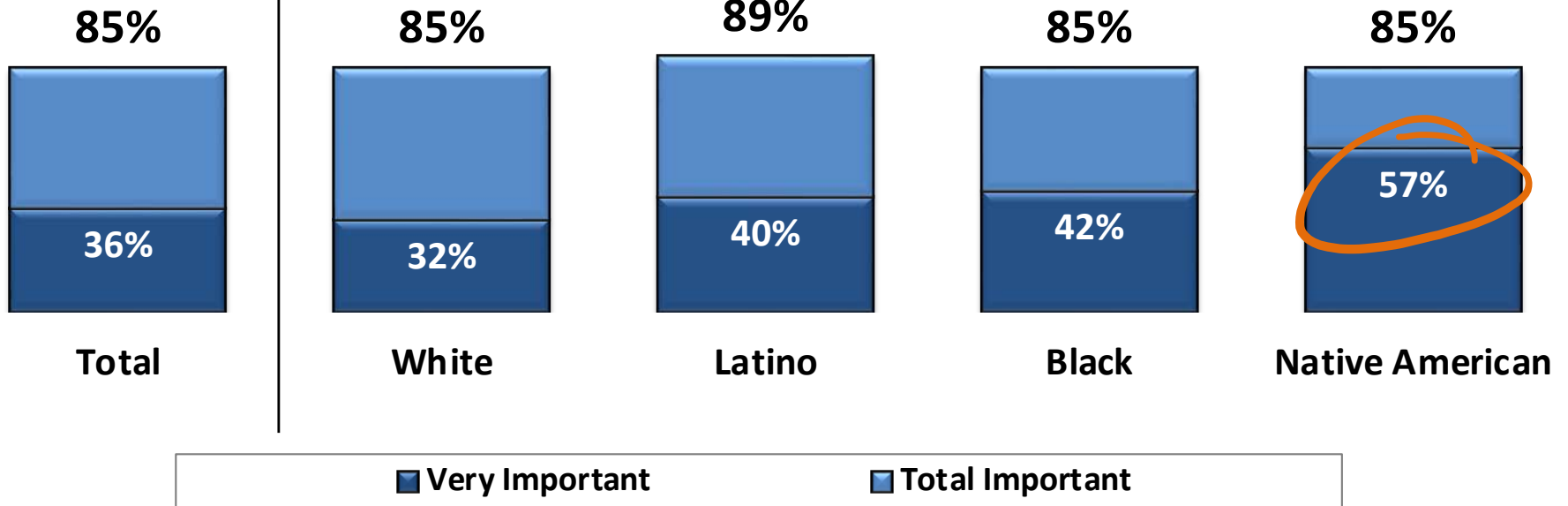
# Solid majorities of voters across party lines say these issues are important in deciding whether to support an elected official.



*Showing % Total Important*

*Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official? Are they...*

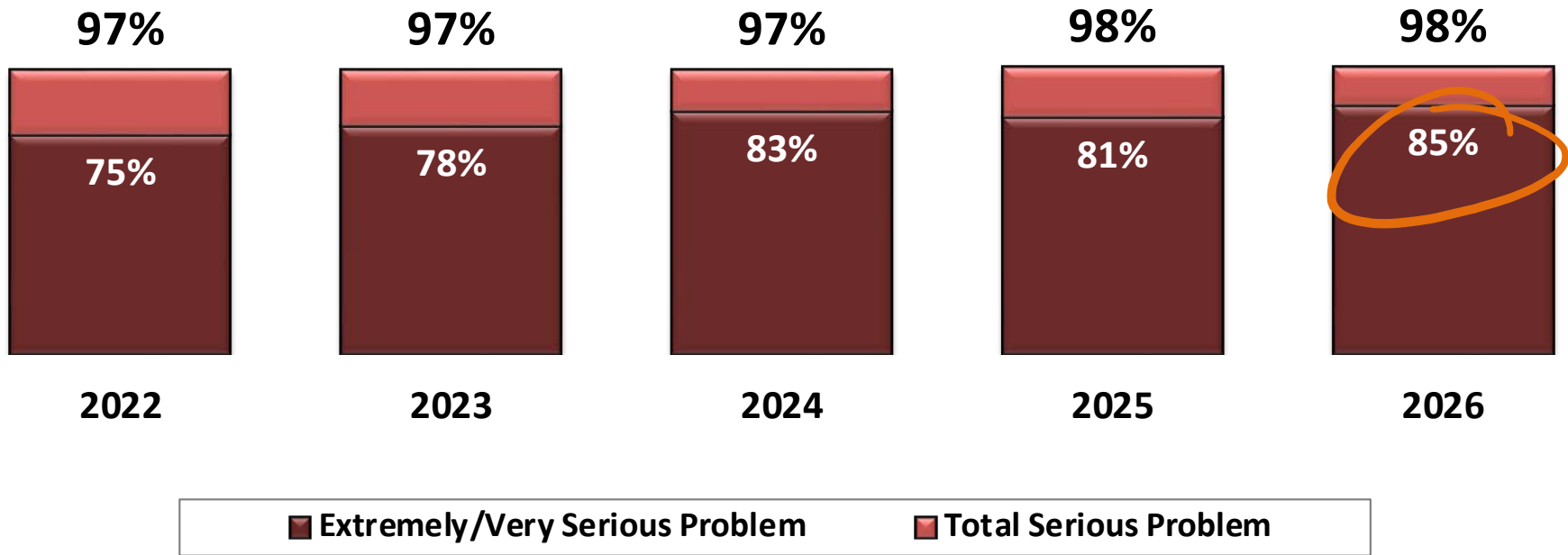
# Nearly three-in-five Native American voters say these issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife are very important compared to other issues.



*Compared to other issues like the economy, health care and education, how important are issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife for you in deciding whether to support an elected public official? Are they...*

# The fact that conservation is viewed as important compared to other issues is even more significant given that affordability continues to be a major concern.

The rising cost of living



For each one, please tell me if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in (STATE). **The rising cost of living** (Asked of N=1726)

# When given the opportunity to send a message to their Member of Congress Westerners say to protect public lands and keep them in public hands.

*Showing top mentions from open-ended responses*

Preserve/protect public lands for future generations	<b>19%</b>
Keep public lands public	<b>13%</b>
Protect wildlife and their habitats	<b>13%</b>
Maintain/increase funding for national parks and public lands	<b>9%</b>
Stop/limit development and building on public lands	<b>5%</b>
Protect water resources and water quality	<b>4%</b>
Take action on climate change/environmental protection	<b>4%</b>
Stop drilling/mining/resource extraction on public lands	<b>4%</b>

*If you could send a message to your Member of Congress regarding the future of our national public lands and what is most important to you when you think about those lands, what would your message be? (Asked of N=1732)*

*\*\*Only showing summary categories 4% and above\*\**

# Open-ended question responses from voters:

*"Once they are gone, they are gone for good. We need to preserve them for future generations to enjoy, just as our ancestors did for us."*  
**Male, Age 65+, DEM, MT**

*"Public lands need to remain in public hands. They belong to we the people and should not be sold to private interests."*  
**Female, Age 35-44, GOP, WY**

*"What is done to public land should be up to the people."*  
**Male, Age 45-54, DEM, NM**

*"Conservation of land and protection of the environment are the most important."*  
**Male, Age 35-44, GOP, ID**

*"Keep the funding in place to keep them safe."*  
**Male, Age 65+, GOP, MT**

*"Do not ever allow their sale. If Mike Lee ever tries to do it again, rebuke him."*  
**Male, Age 25-34, GOP, WY**

*"We only borrow from our children. Let's make sure they have a beautiful future."*  
**Female, Age 25-34, DEM, CO**

*"I would tell them to take climate change seriously. They may not be alive to see the effects but our future will."*  
**Male, Age 35-44, GOP, NV**

*"It's important to balance protecting natural lands and animals as well as needs to sustain human life."*  
**Female, Age 55-64, GOP, UT**

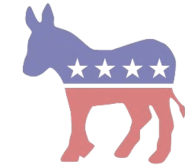
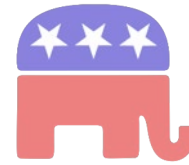
*"I live in Idaho because of the vast amount of nature. It's beautiful here and I would hate to see it disappear. Hunting is a way of life for my family."*  
**Female, Age 25-34, IND, ID**

*"We need to keep the beauty of New Mexico lands. The Native Lands are a key to our history. These tribes deserve water to properly grow and keep the younger natives in their lands to carry on traditions."*  
**Male, Age 35-44, IND, NM**

*"We need our public lands to preserve our heritage and have safe places for recreation."*  
**Female, Age 65+, DEM, AZ**

*If you could send a message to your Member of Congress regarding the future of our national public lands and what is most important to you when you think about those lands, what would your message be? (Asked of N=1732)*

# Two-in-three across party lines say these are issues where people have more in common.



Issues where people have more in common and we should be able to find common ground in order to get things done

65% 65% 63%

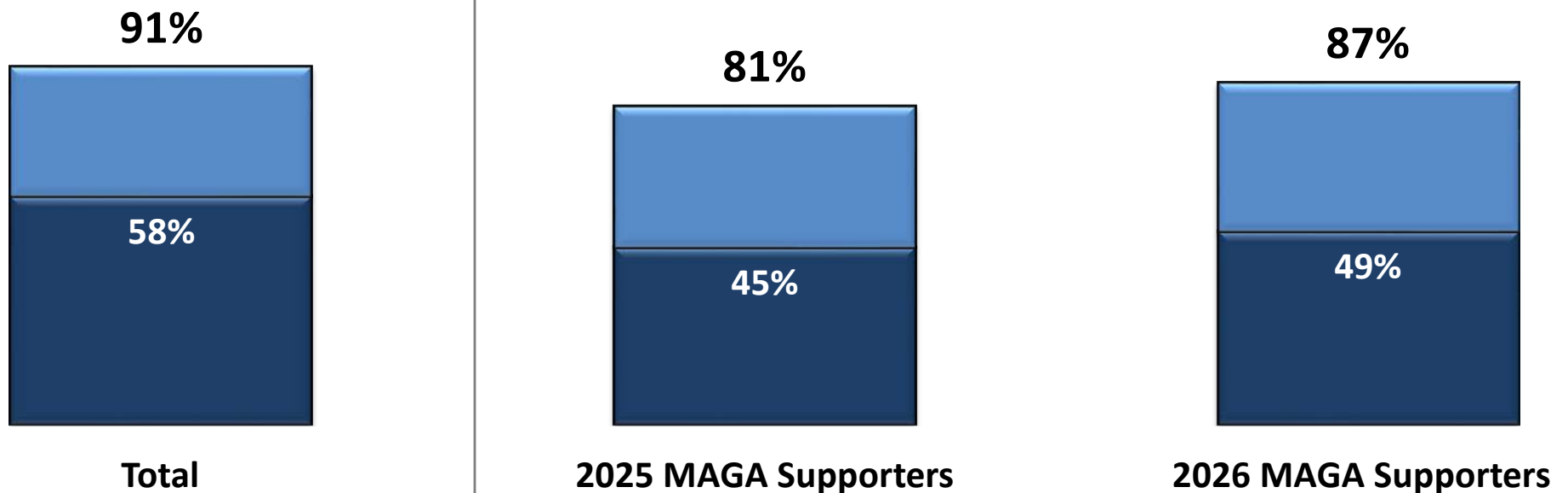
Issues where there are more partisan or other differences that will make it very hard to get things done

33% 33% 36%

*When you think about these issues involving public lands, waters, and wildlife in your state – do you think those are more –*

# Support for keeping national monument designations in place has increased significantly among MAGA supporters in the last year.

Keep existing national monument designations



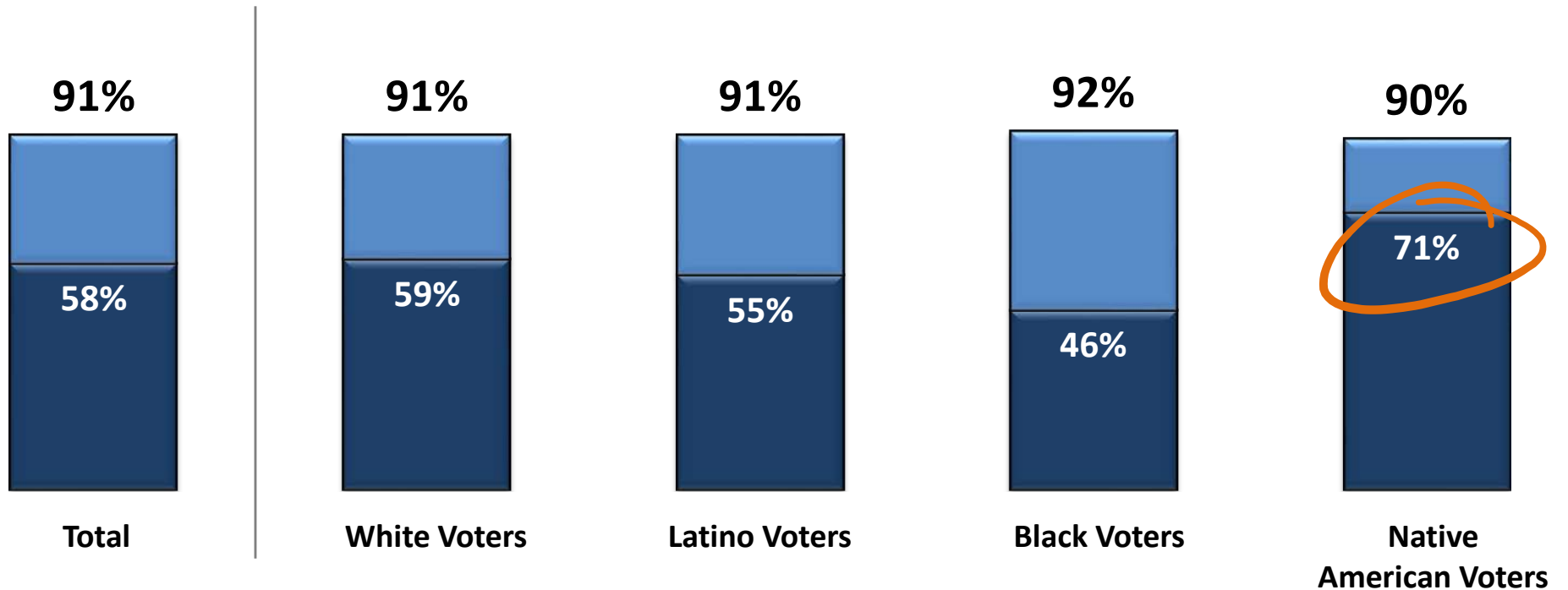
■ Definitely Keep In Place

■ Total Keep In Place

*And, do you think that existing national monument designations for some public lands protected over the last decade should be kept in place or should they be removed?*

# Nearly three-in-four Native American voters say we should *definitely* keep existing national monument designations in place.

Keep existing national monument designations



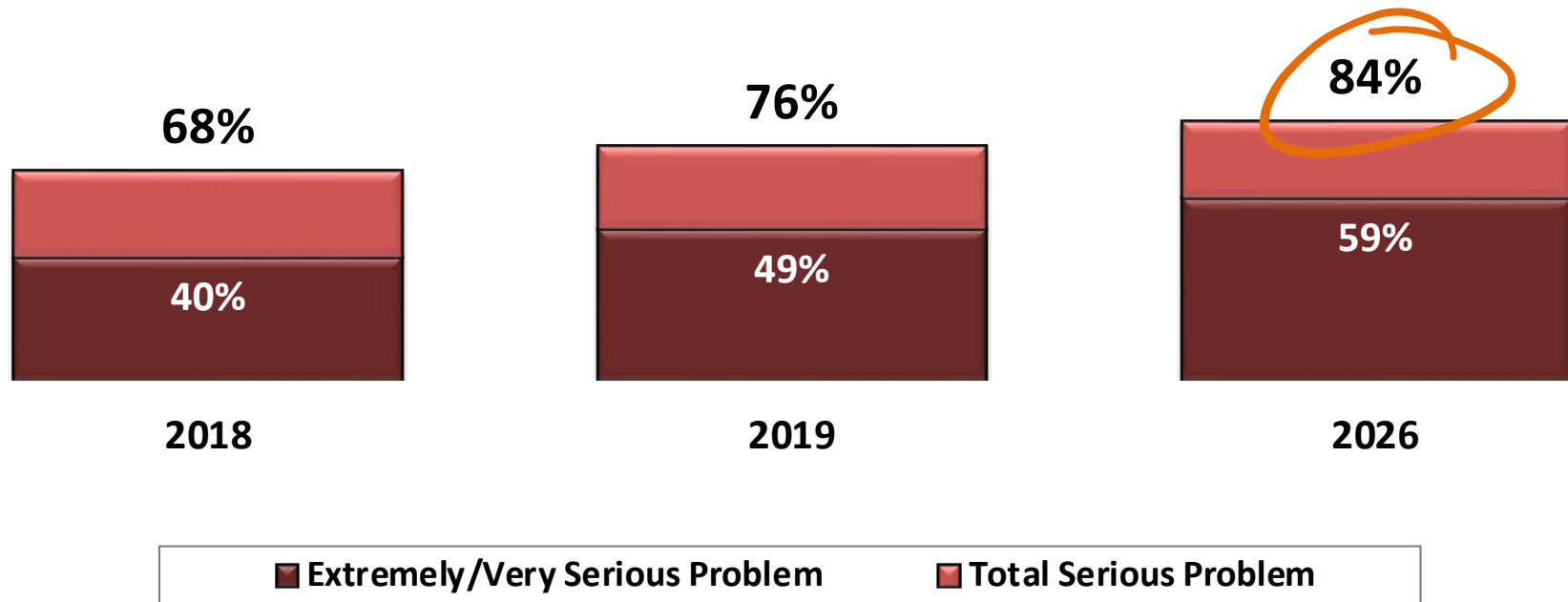
■ Definitely Keep In Place

■ Total Keep In Place

*And, do you think that existing national monument designations for some public lands protected over the last decade should be kept in place or should they be removed?*

# Nearly three-in-five voters say the rollbacks of laws that protect our land, water, and wildlife are an extremely or very serious problem – a significant increase from 2019.

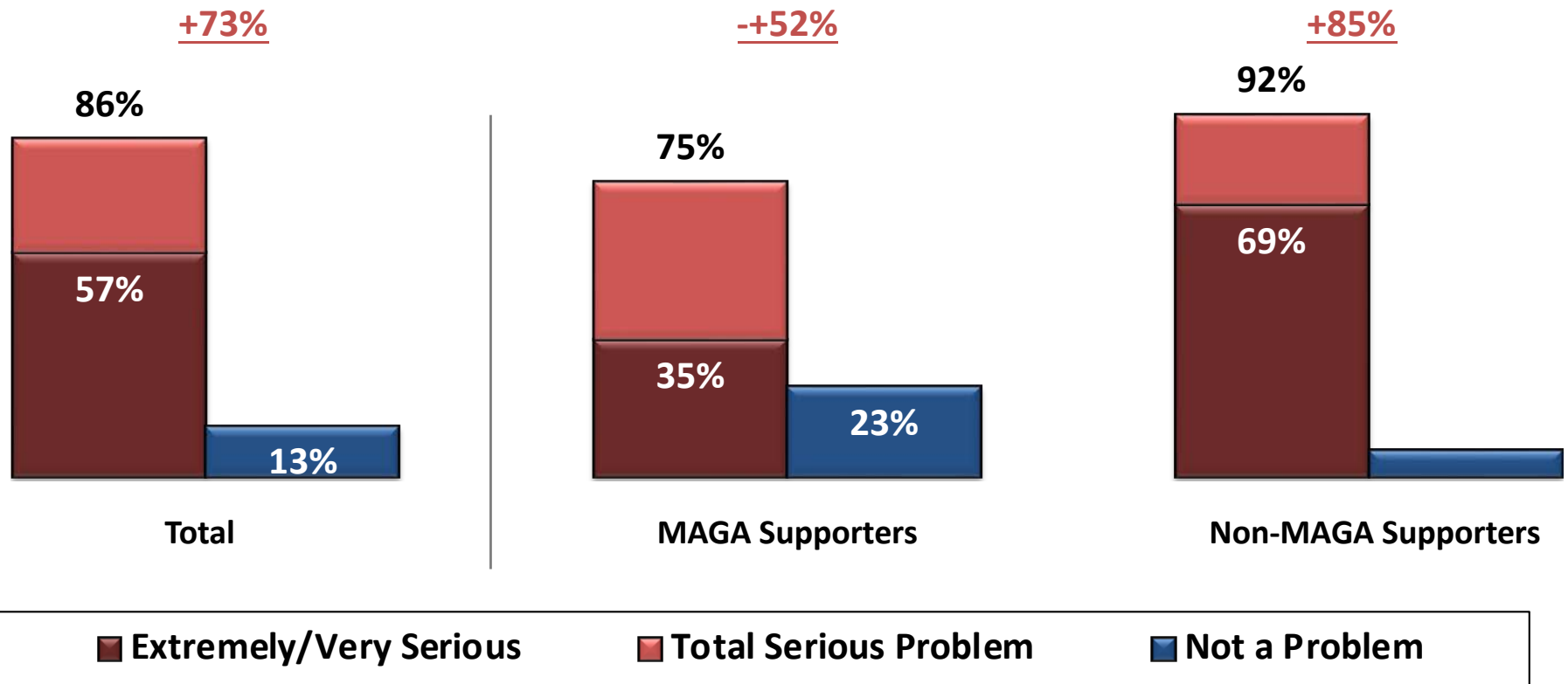
Rollbacks of laws that protect our land, water, and wildlife



For each one, please tell me if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in (STATE). **Rollbacks of laws that protect our land, water, and wildlife** (Asked N=1726)

# Even three-quarters of MAGA supporters say funding cuts are a problem, although with less intensity than the rest of the electorate.

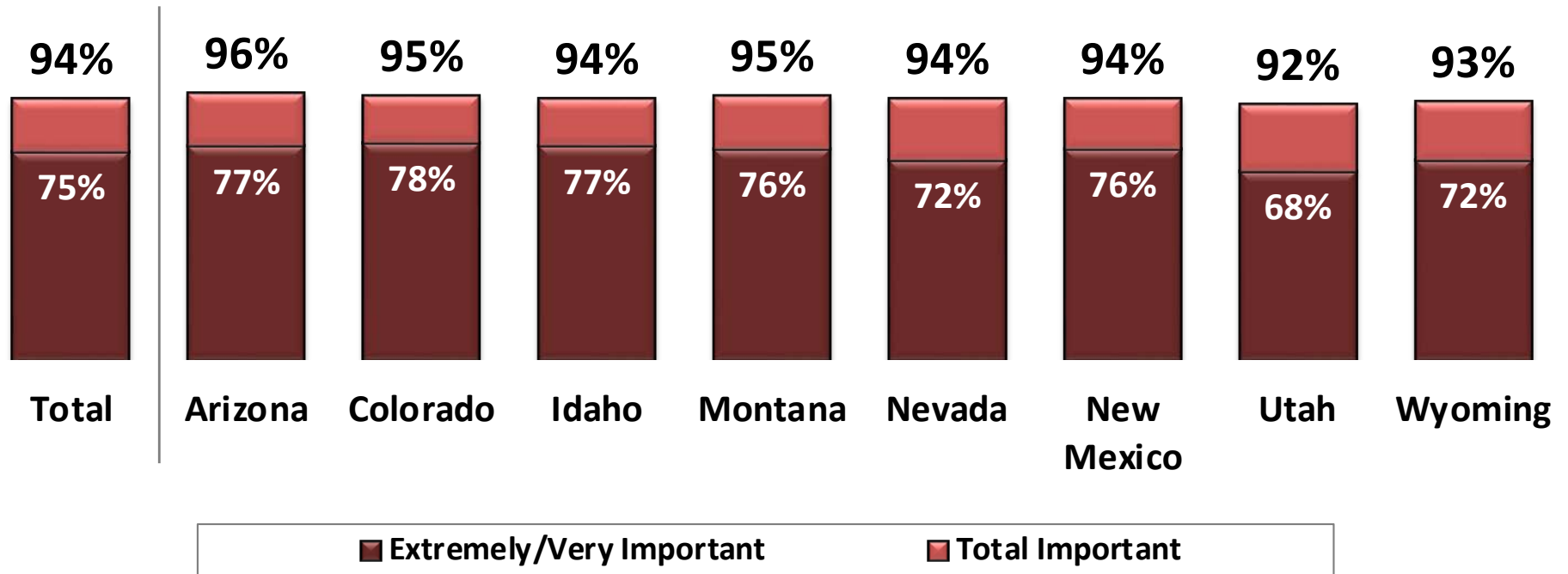
Funding cuts to management of national parks, forests and other public lands



For each one, please tell me if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in (STATE). **Funding cuts to management of national parks, forests and other public lands** (Asked N=1693)

# More than nine-in-ten Westerners across all eight states say it is important to dedicate LWCF funds to adding inholdings to national public lands.

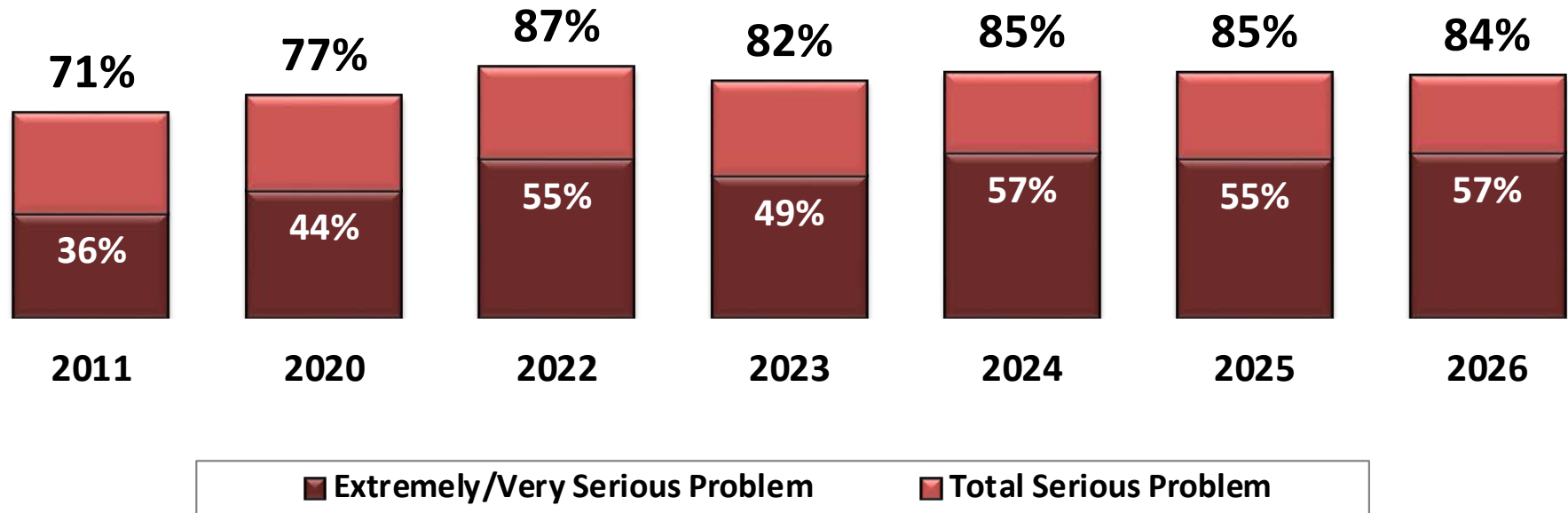
Thousands of acres of private lands within existing national parks and other public lands are up for sale. Right now, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has dedicated money to purchase these areas and ensure they are incorporated into our public lands.



*How important is it to continue to dedicate funds to protecting these places inside the boundaries of our parks and public lands. Is it...*

# The desire to continue to fund and conserve public lands may be partly rooted in the view that loss of natural areas is an extremely or very serious problem.

## Loss of natural areas



*For each one, please tell me if you think it is an extremely serious problem, a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, or not a problem in (STATE). **Loss of natural areas** (Asked N=1693)*

*Showing 2020-2026 data by just 2011 states: CO, MT, NM, UT & WY*



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