

What Iowa Voters Actually Believe

Reading the 2026 RuralOrganizing.org Iowa YouGov Survey

All figures are from the Iowa sample of the RuralOrganizing.org/ YouGov survey fielded in late May 2026 by John Ray from YouGov. Presentation and analysis by Matt Hildreth from RuralOrganizing.org.

Democratic Democratic Decline in Non Metro Counties

- Obama's 2008 high-water mark at 42.6% was the best non-metro performance in this dataset — still well below a majority, but notably stronger than what followed.
- The 2016 cliff: Hillary Clinton dropped nearly 8 points from Obama's 2012 result, falling to just 31.4%. This single-cycle collapse is the sharpest drop in the series.
- Biden's modest 2020 recovery to 33.3% is noteworthy — he slightly improved on Clinton's 2016 number, suggesting some non-metro rebound was possible.
- Harris in 2024 essentially matched Clinton's 2016 floor at 31.5%, erasing Biden's small gains.

Democratic Democratic Decline in Non Metro Counties

- **The Midwest collapsed hardest.** Missouri (−20.9), West Virginia (−19.6), Iowa (−19.5), Indiana (−19.1), and Illinois (−18.7) are the top five — all states where Obama ran competitively in rural areas but Democrats have since been largely shut out.
- **The South held its floor better.** Georgia (−6.8), Mississippi (−5.8), and Alabama (−7.8) show smaller declines, partly because Democratic support in those non-metro counties was already low in 2008 — there was less room to fall — and partly due to consistent Black voter turnout in rural areas.
- **The West is relatively stable.** Colorado (−5.7), Washington (−4.2), California (−4.0), and Maryland (−3.2) are among the smallest declines, reflecting more diverse non-metro populations and different regional political dynamics.

Democratic Democratic Decline in Non Metro Counties

- **Race & ethnicity** — The biggest-decline counties are overwhelmingly non-Hispanic white (often 90%+).
- **Education** — The smallest-decline counties (Teton WY, Los Alamos NM, La Plata CO, Summit CO) are disproportionately college-educated. The biggest-decline counties — Appalachian coal and Ohio River valley counties — have among the lowest bachelor's degree rates in the country.
- **Industry** — The hardest-hit counties are concentrated in coal mining, steel/manufacturing, and timber — industries that peaked and declined.
- **Income & age** — The biggest-decline counties tend to be both poorer and older, a combination that tracks with rural depopulation.

Democratic Decline in Non Metro Counties

- Recent polling suggests a possible opening.
- Rural voters saying they would vote for a Democrat for Congress rose from 29% (July 2024) to 39% (March 2026) — a 10-point gain.
- Small-town voters swung even more, from 33% to 45%. Yet confidence in the Democratic Party as an institution remains very low among rural voters (20%), suggesting this opening is driven more by dissatisfaction with Republican governance than enthusiasm for Democrats.

THE CORE DISTINCTION

Popular means a lot of people agree with you.

Persuasive means agreement that would actually change a vote.

A position can be overwhelmingly popular and still move almost no one, because most people who agree with you are already satisfied with their own party — or aren't paying close enough attention to switch over it.

The Key Finding

On issue after issue, a striking share of Republican voters in Iowa hold positions usually associated with Democrats — corporate accountability, public schools, national healthcare, worry about healthcare cuts. Many of them even recognize that their own party is out of step with them. And large shares say they'd consider voting for a candidate from the other party who shared their view.

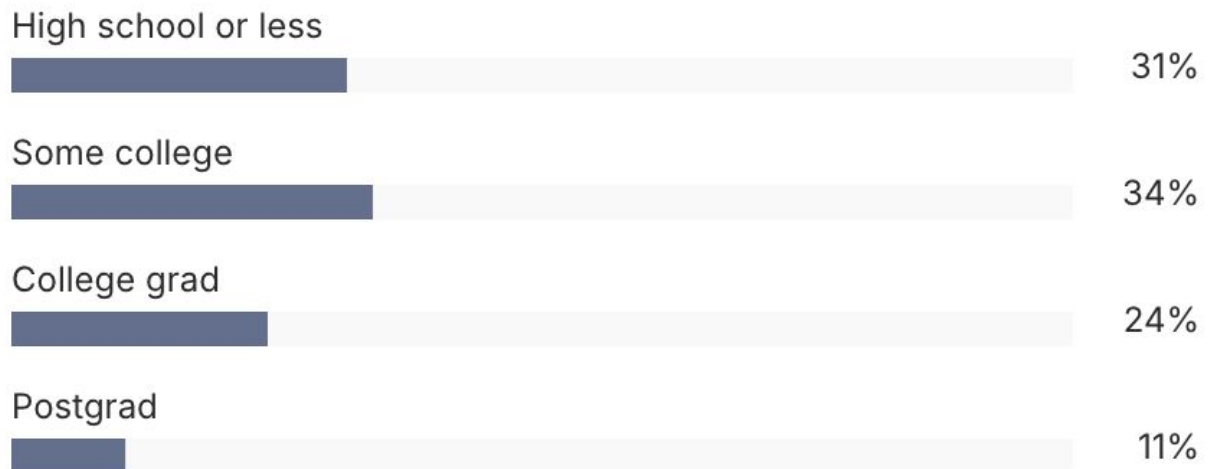
The Key Finding

That sounds like an enormous opportunity, but it's harder than people think.

When you filter for voters who (a) disagree with their party, (b) know their party disagrees with them, and (c) say they'd actually defect over it, the genuinely persuadable group on any single issue collapses to a few percent of the electorate. The opinions are real. The immediate vote-switching is small.

Education (4 category)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?



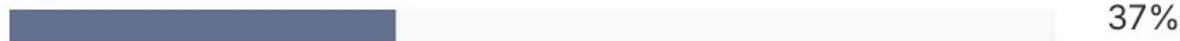
All Iowans

N 600

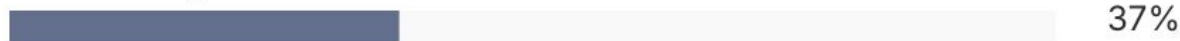
Education (4 category)

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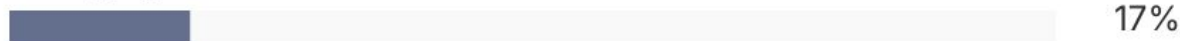
High school or less



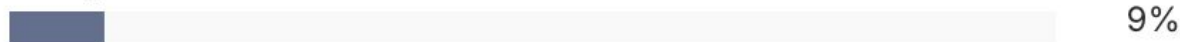
Some college



College grad



Postgrad

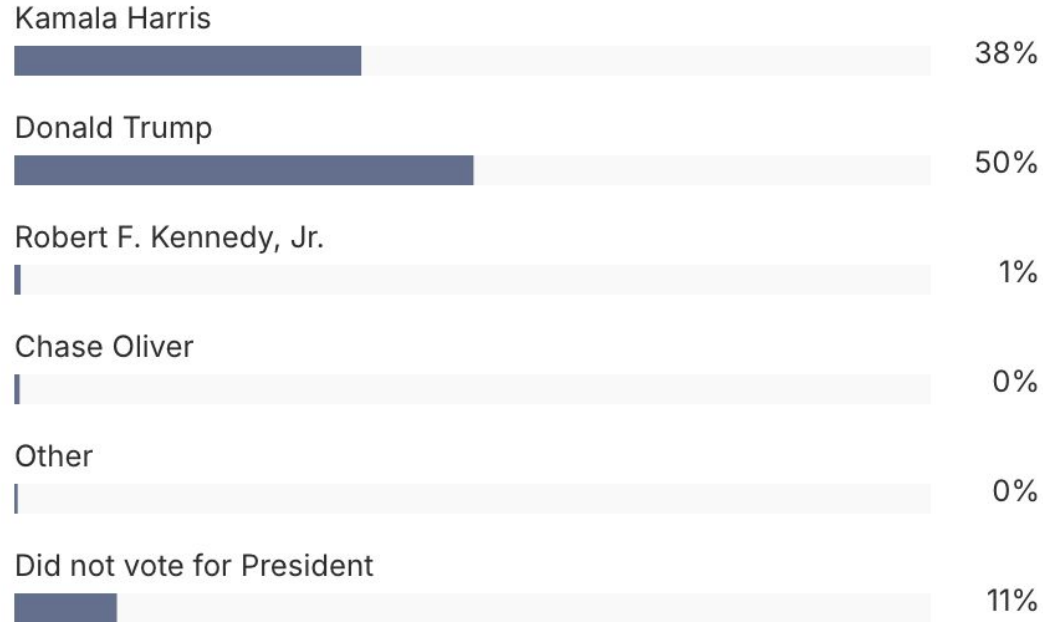


Rural Iowans

N 146

2024 President Vote Post Election

Who did you vote for in the election for President in 2024?



All Iowans

N 600

2024 President Vote Post Election

Who did you vote for in the election for President in 2024?

Kamala Harris



25%

Donald Trump



59%

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.



0%

Chase Oliver



0%

Did not vote for President



15%

Rural Iowans

N 146

7-point Party ID



\$pid7text

Strong Democrat



9%

Not very strong Democrat



6%

Lean Democrat



10%

Independent



6%

Lean Republican



13%

Strong Republican



29%

Not very strong Republican



22%

Something else



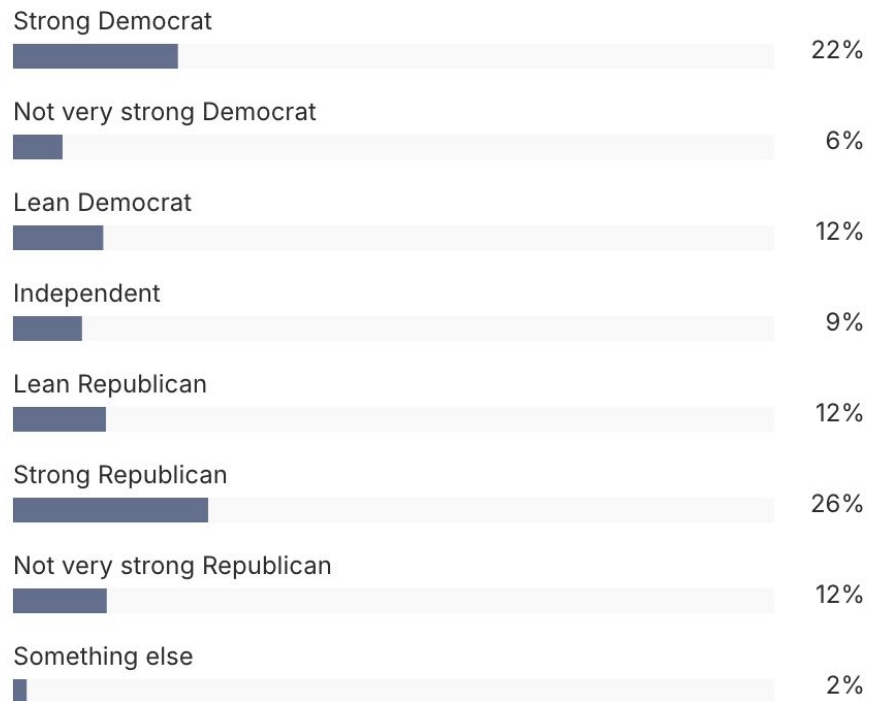
3%

Rural Iowans

N 146

7-point Party ID

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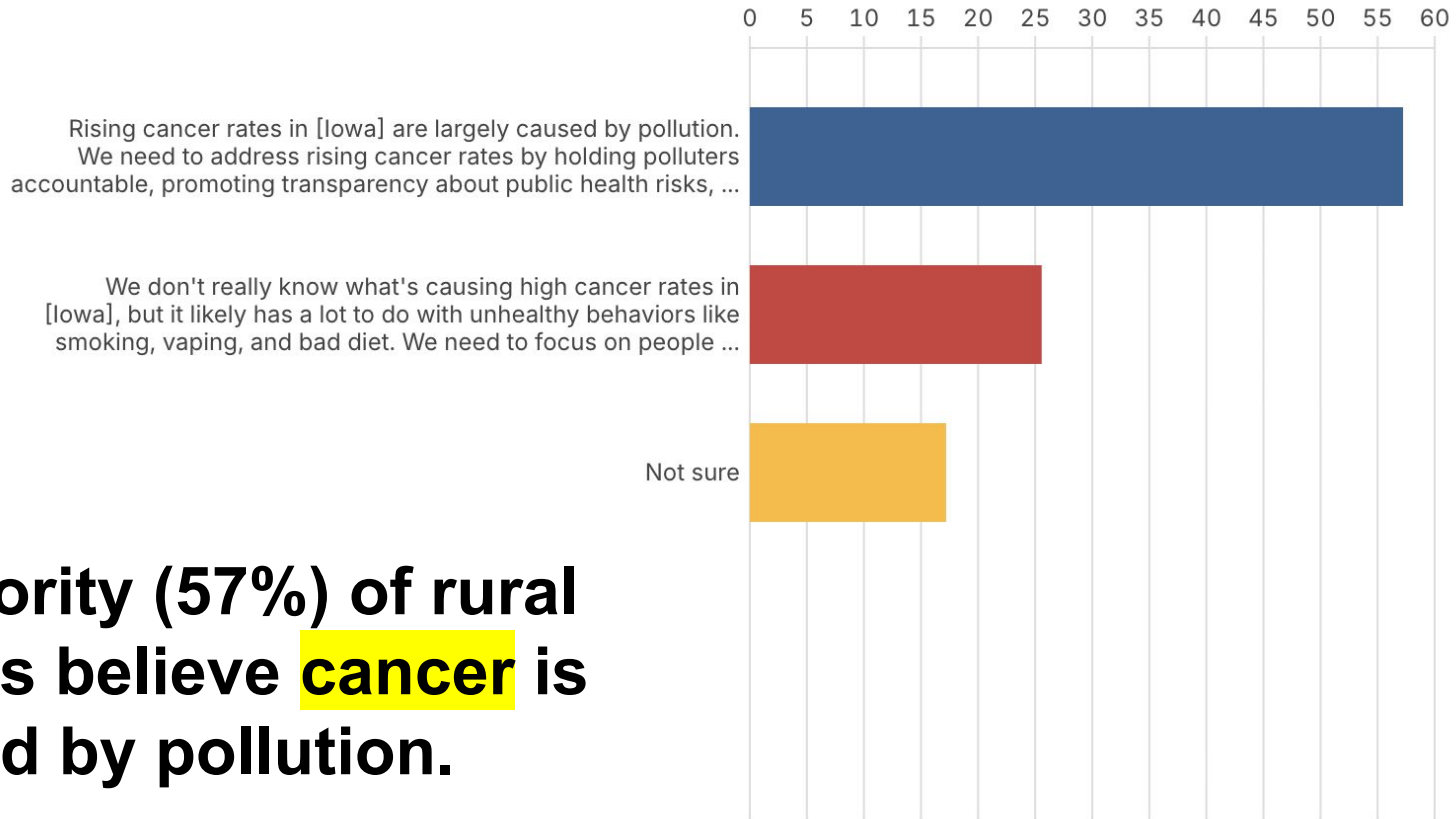


All Iowans

N 600

Cancer Rates - Self

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?



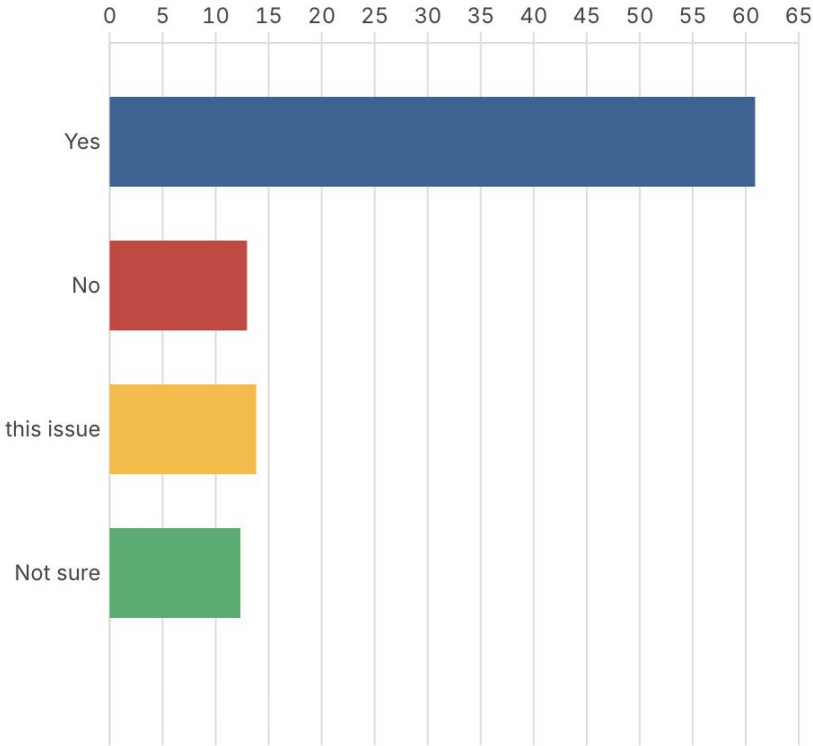
A majority (57%) of rural lowans believe cancer is caused by pollution.

Cancer Rates - Party Defect

Would you consider voting for a candidate from outside your preferred party if they shared your position? (Instead of sticking with candidates in your preferred party)

**11% of rural lowans are
Trump voters who would
consider voting for a
different party over
Iowa's cancer rates**

I don't really have a preferred political party on this issue

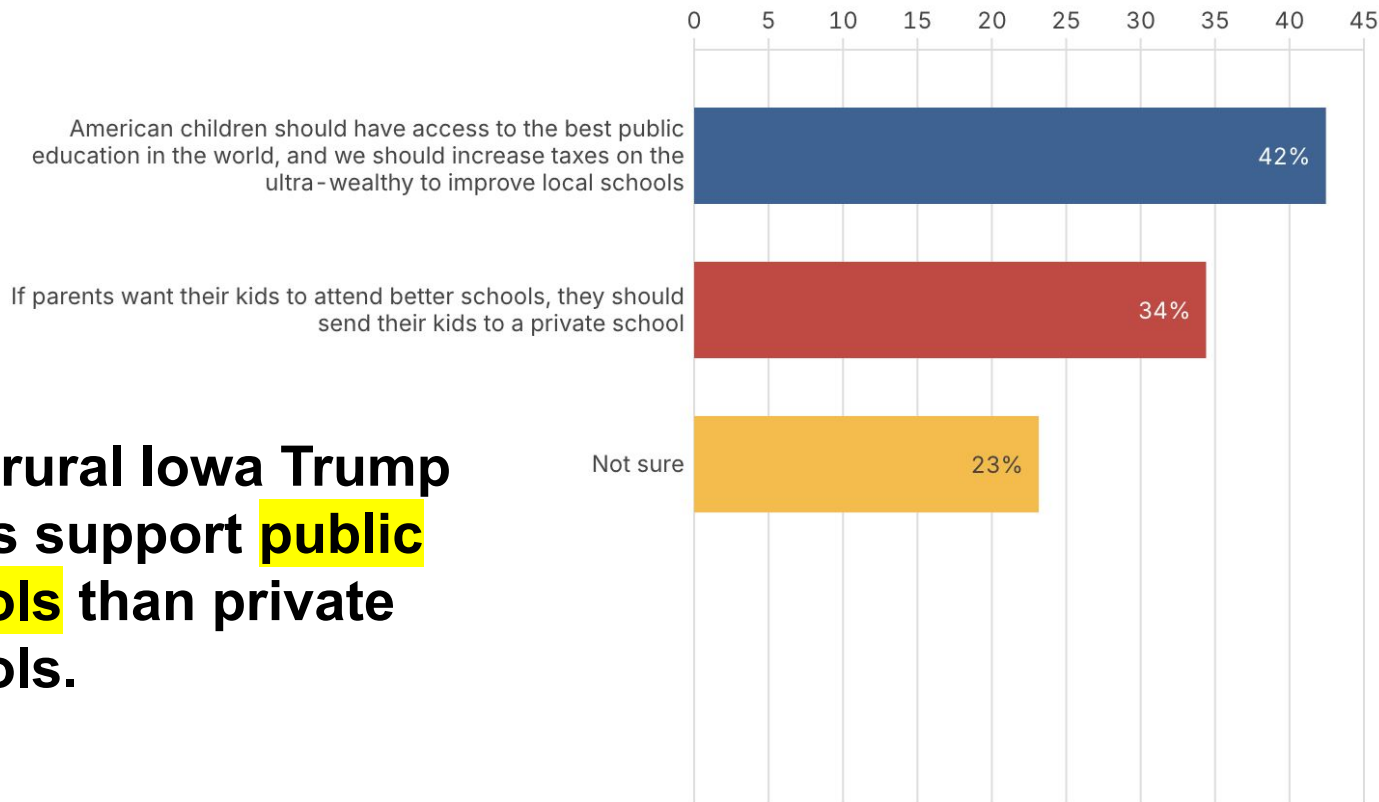


N 27

Rural Iowa Trump Voters Who Agree Cancer Rates Are Cause by Pollution and Their Party Disagrees with Them

Education - Self

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?

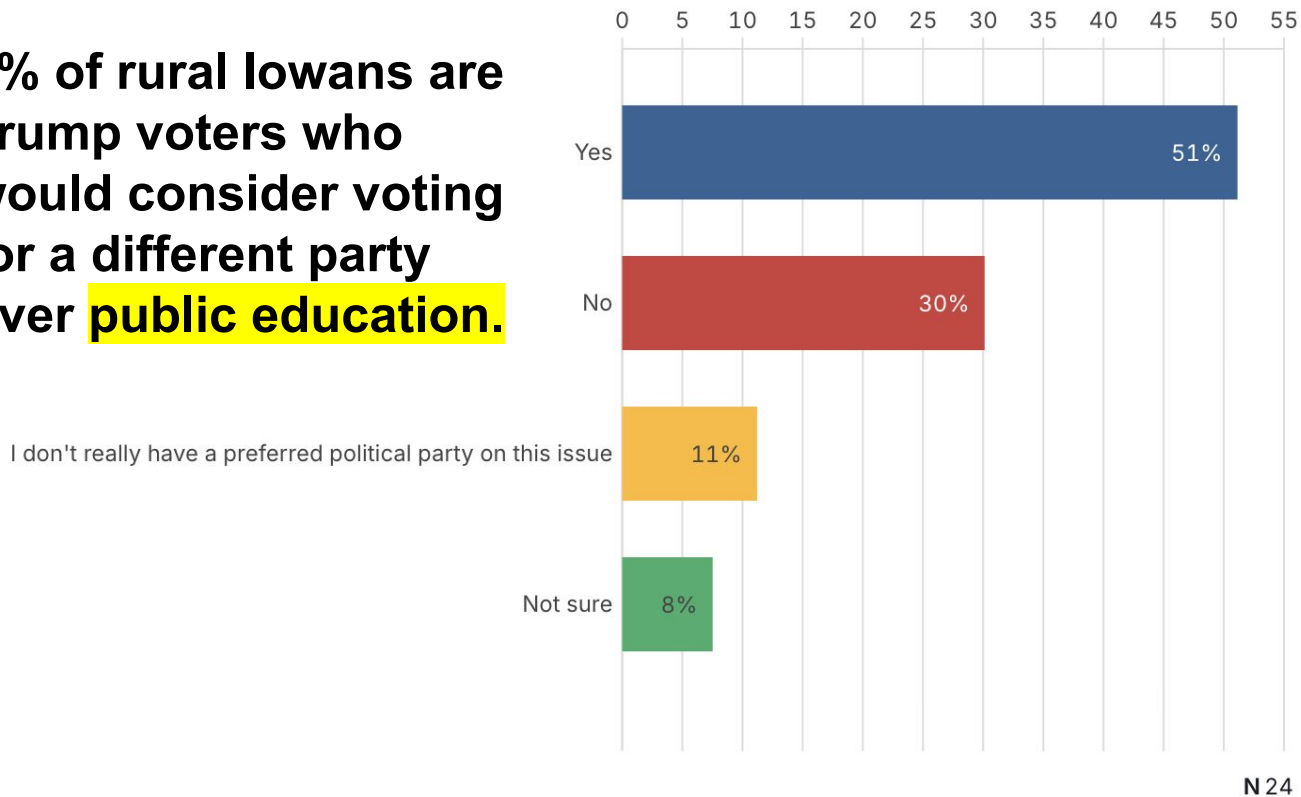


More rural Iowa Trump voters support public schools than private schools.

Education - Party Defect

Would you consider voting for a candidate from outside your preferred party if they shared your position? (Instead of sticking with candidates in your preferred party)

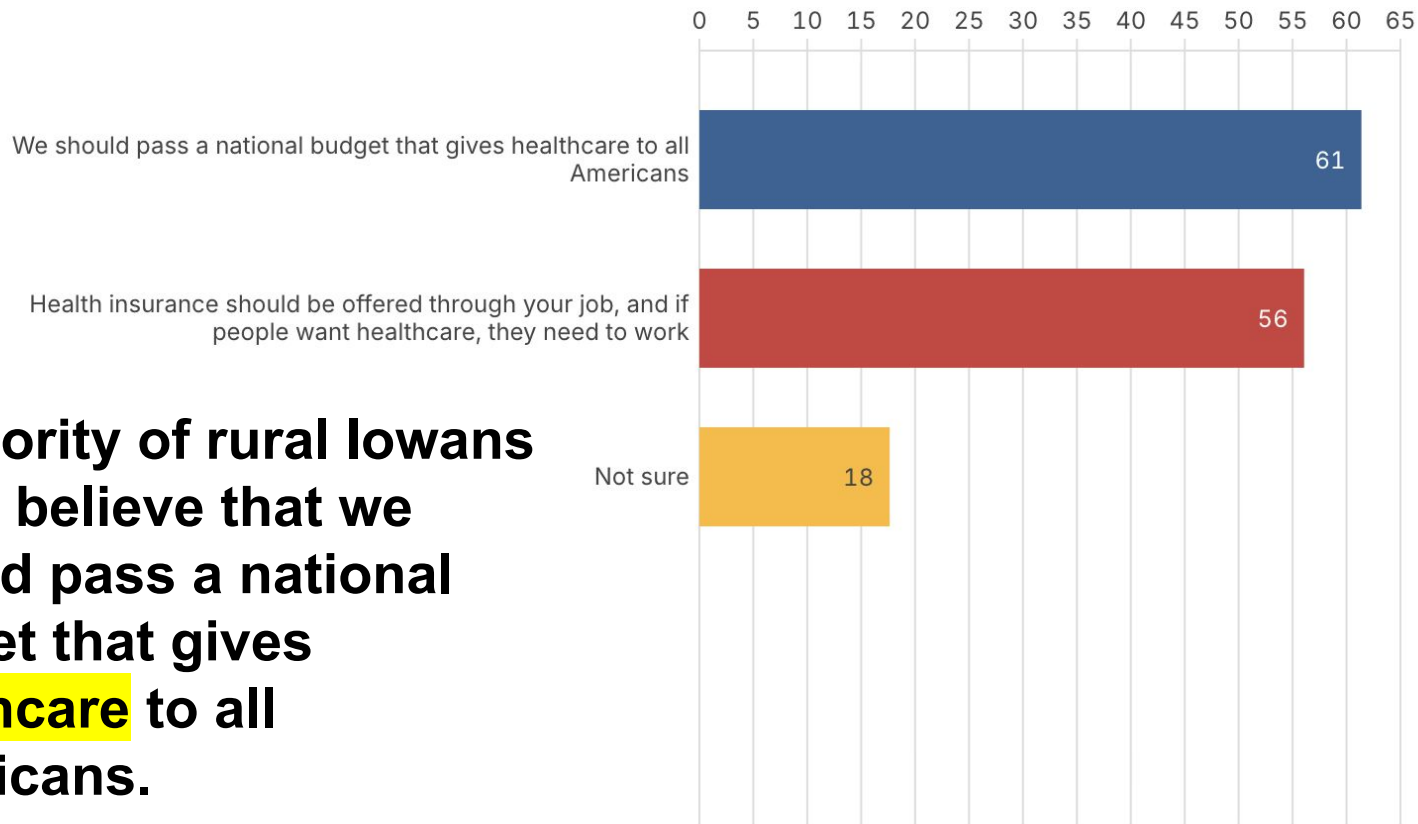
**8% of rural lowans are
Trump voters who
would consider voting
for a different party
over public education.**



Rural Iowa Trump Voters

Healthcare - Self

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?



A majority of rural lowans (61%) believe that we should pass a national budget that gives healthcare to all Americans.

Rural Iowa Voters

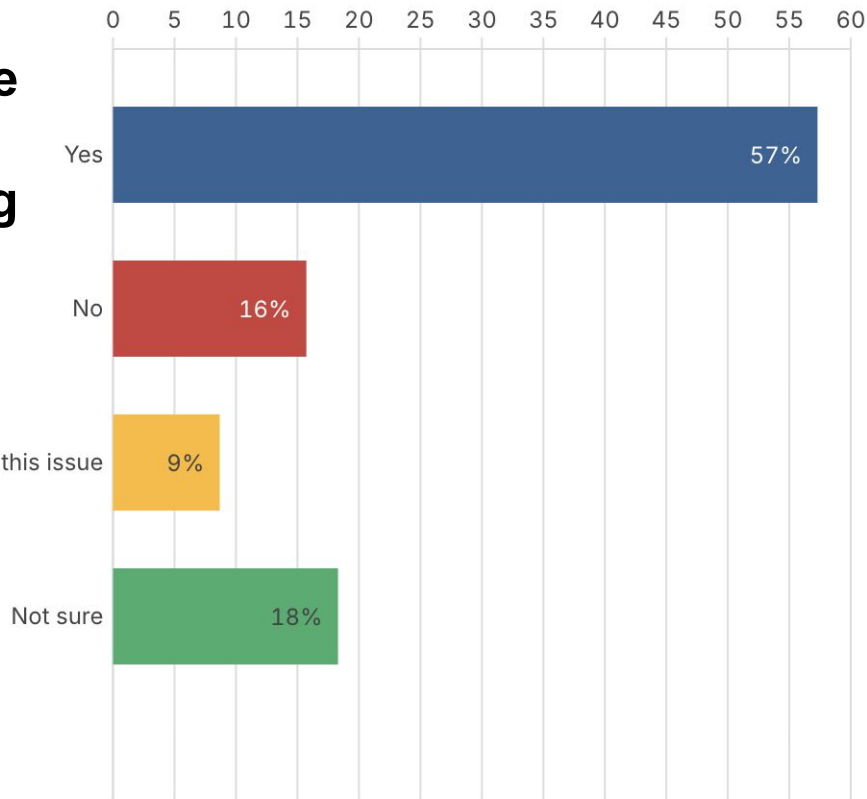
N 146

Healthcare Cuts - Party Defect

Would you consider voting for a candidate from outside your preferred party if they shared your position? (Instead of sticking with candidates in your preferred party)

**6% of rural lowans are
Trump voters who
would consider voting
for a different party
over universal
healthcare.**

I don't really have a preferred political party on this issue

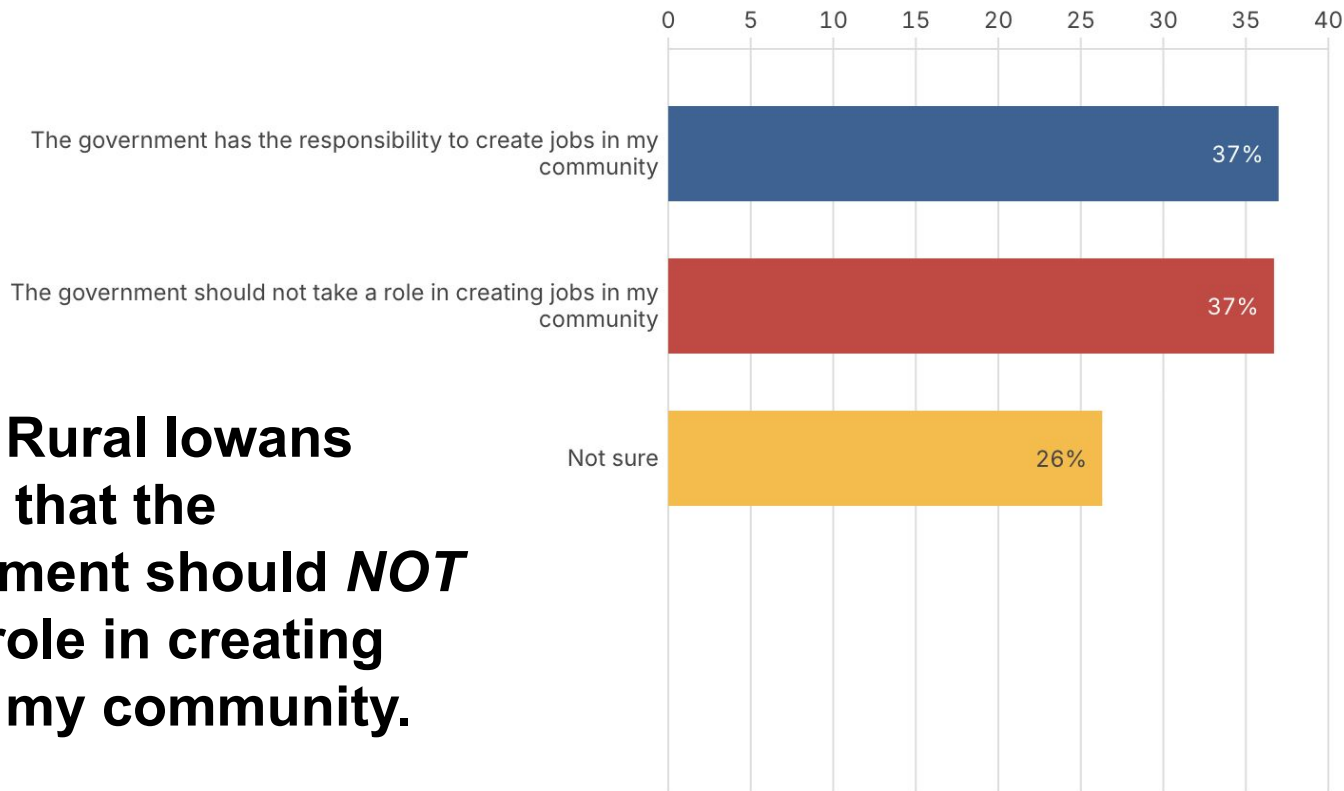


N 16

Rural Iowa Trump Voters Who Agree with Universal Healthcare and Their Party Disagrees with Them

Jobs - Self

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?



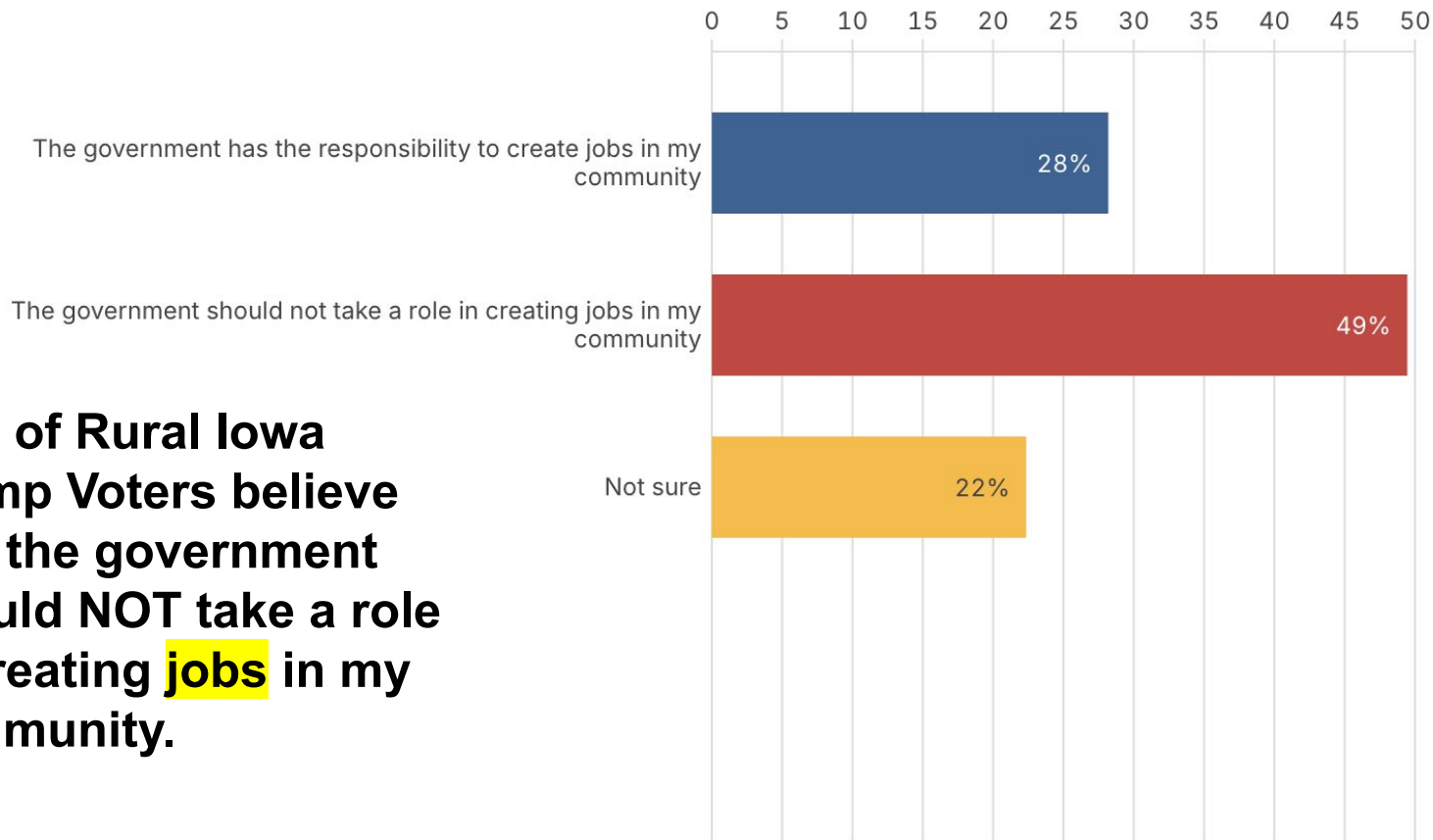
37% of Rural Iowans believe that the government should *NOT* take a role in creating **jobs in my community.**

N 146

Rural Iowa Voters

Jobs - Self

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?



49% of Rural Iowa Trump Voters believe that the government should NOT take a role in creating **jobs in my community.**

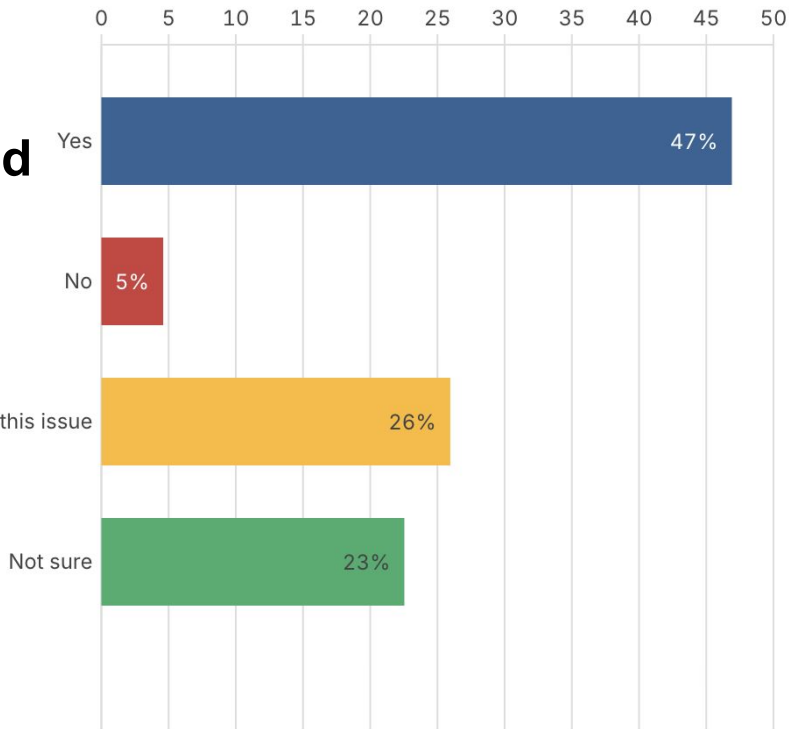
Rural Iowa Trump Voters

N 88

Jobs - Party Defect

Would you consider voting for a candidate from outside your preferred party if they shared your position? (Instead of sticking with candidates in your preferred party)

**4% of rural lowans are
Trump voters who would
consider voting for a
different party over job
creation policies**

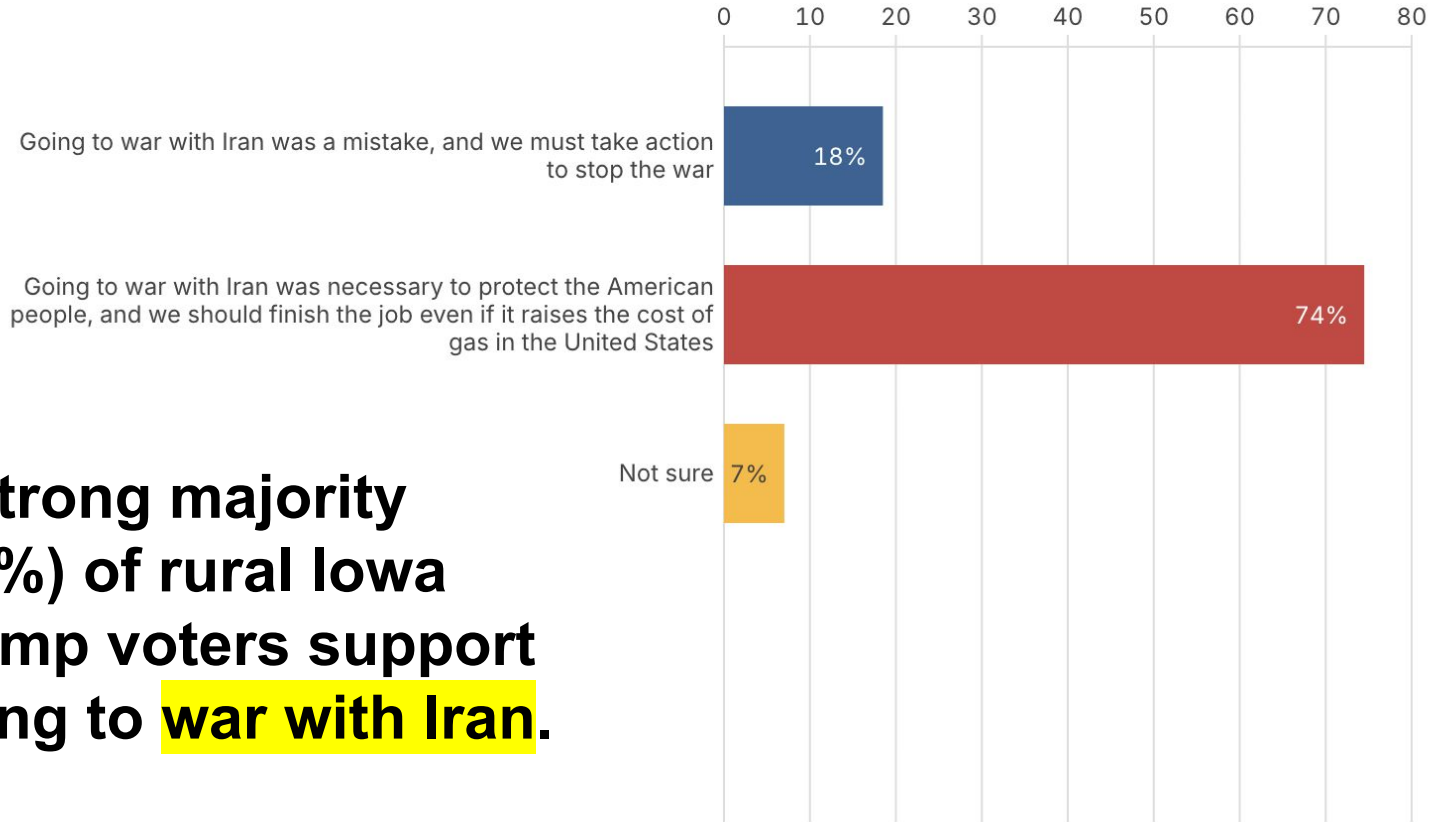


N 11

Rural Iowa Trump Voters

War - Self

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?



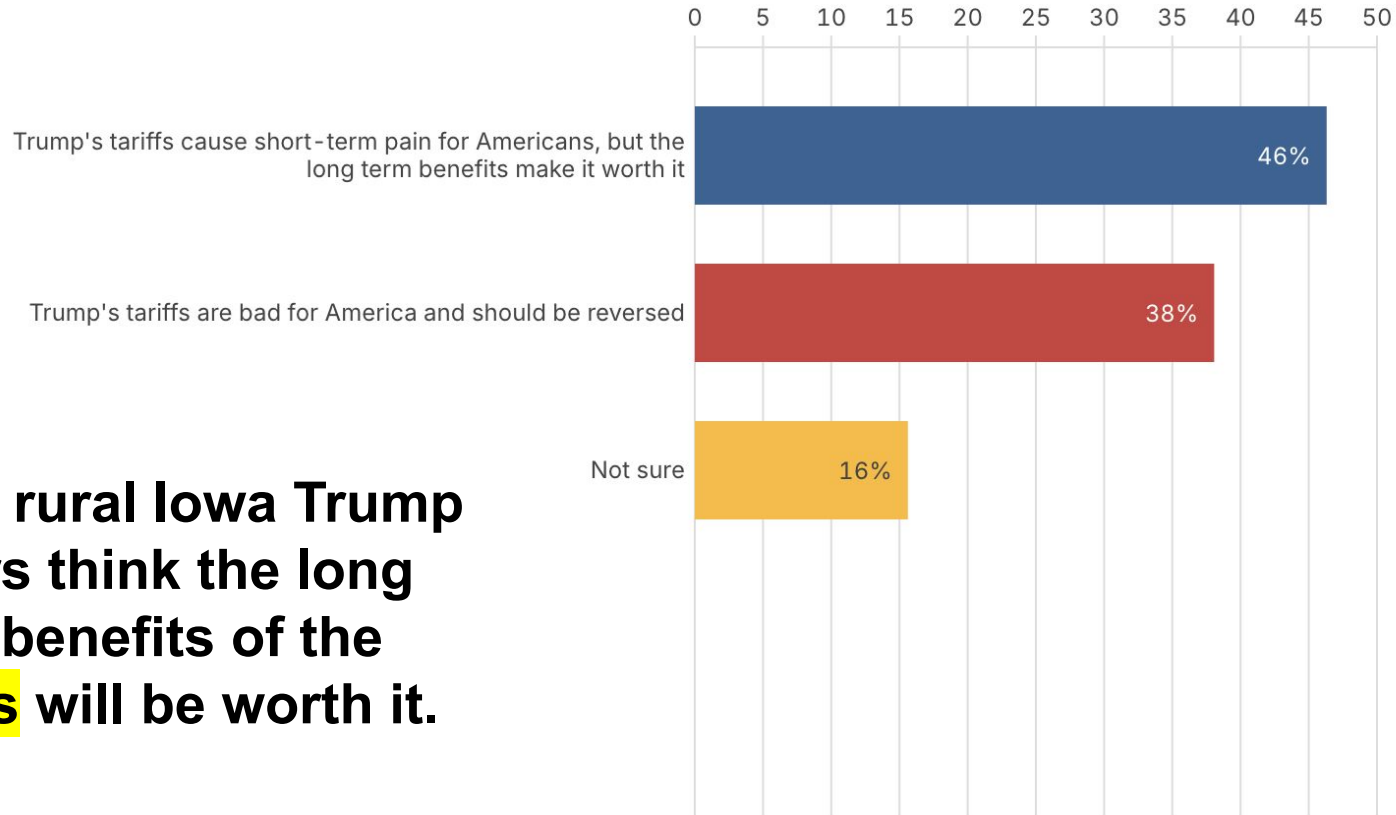
**A strong majority
(74%) of rural Iowa
Trump voters support
going to war with Iran.**

Rural Iowa Trump Voters

N 88

Tariffs - Self

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?

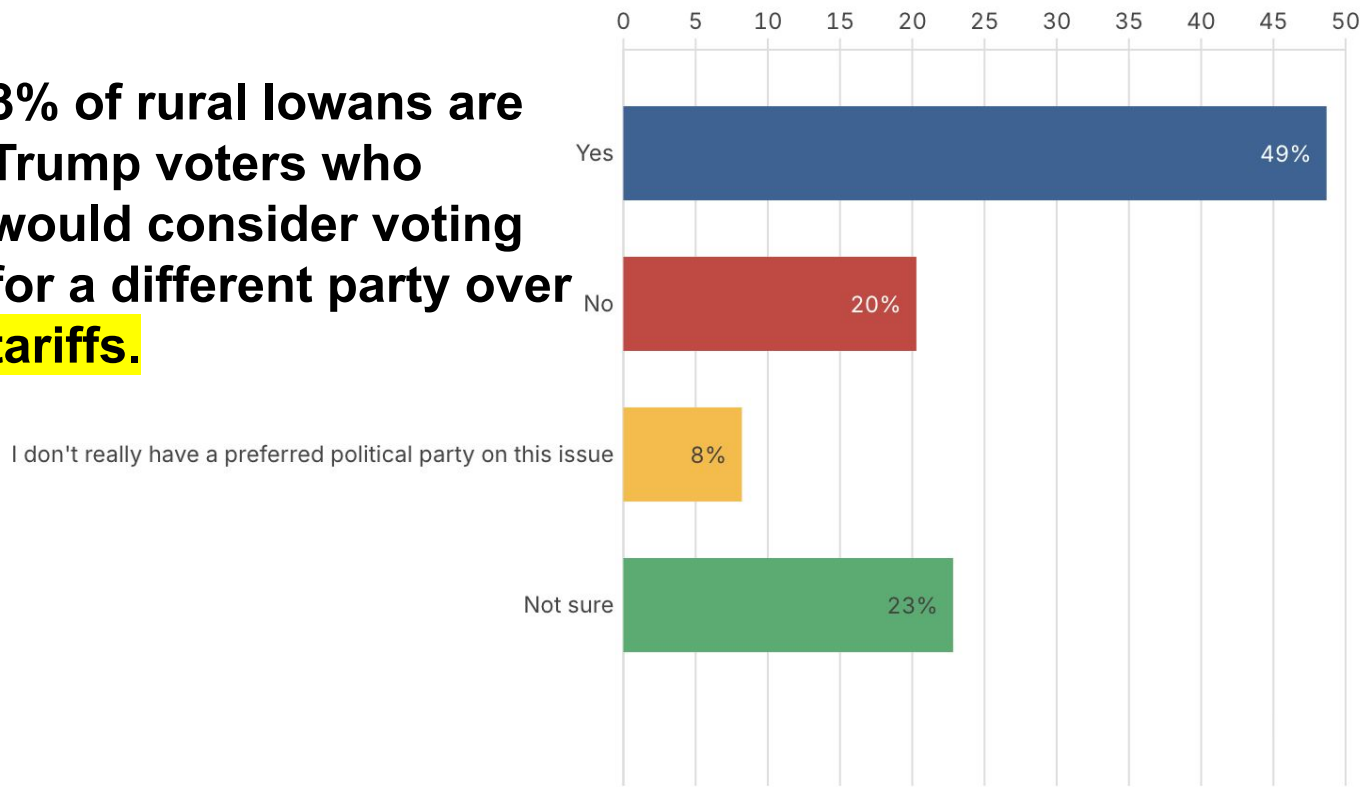


More rural Iowa Trump voters think the long term benefits of the tariffs will be worth it.

Tariffs - Party Defect

Would you consider voting for a candidate from outside your preferred party if they shared your position? (Instead of sticking with candidates in your preferred party)

**3% of rural lowans are
Trump voters who
would consider voting
for a different party over
tariffs.**



N 11

Rural Iowa Trump Voters Who Agree Trump's Tariffs Should be Reversed and Their Party Disagrees with Them