BEACON
RESEARCH

Massachusetts Statewide

Road to Opportunity

November 2025

About the Survey

Sample	1,003 Massachusetts Voters
Dates	November 7-14, 2025
Weights	Slight weights were applied to accurately reflect the demographic profile of the Massachusetts population
Note	Some data may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Debt-Based Driving Restrictions

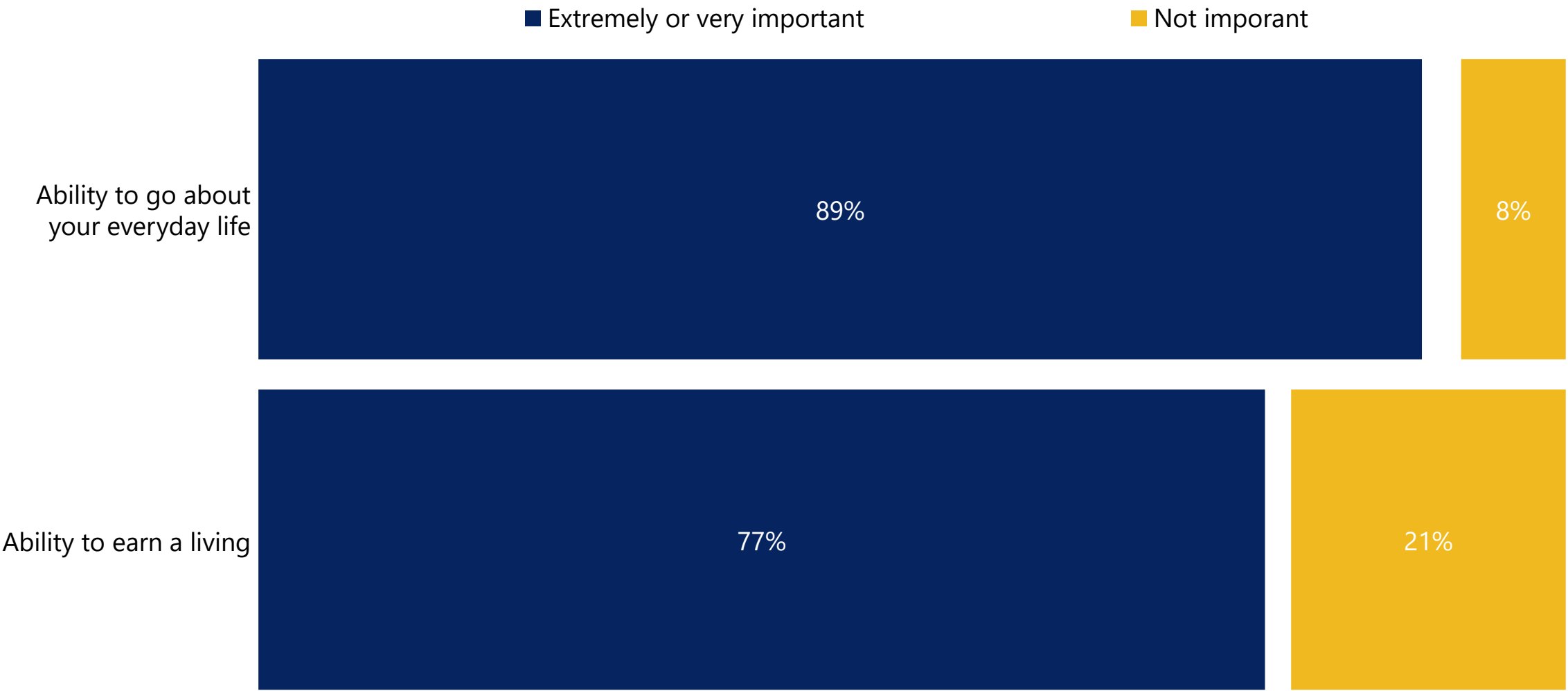# Cost of living and debt cycles are seen as major problems in Massachusetts.

How much of a problem do you think each of the following is in Massachusetts?

■ Total problem

The high cost of living	**94%**
People being trapped in cycles of debt	**88%**
An unfair criminal justice system	**66%**
A criminal justice system that is rigged against low-income people	**63%**
A criminal justice system rigged against people of color	**60%**

Voters see having a driver's license as indispensably important.

How important is having a driver's license to your...

■ Extremely or very important   ■ Not imporant

Ability to go about your everyday life
89%   8%

Ability to earn a living
77%   21%

# 3-in-10 know someone who has experienced debt-based driving restrictions.

Are you personally aware of anyone who has had their license suspended or become ineligible for renewal due to debts unrelated to dangerous driving?

Yes — 29% →

White	27%
Black	**49**
Latino	**49**
Suffolk County	41
Western MA	**46**
Rest of MA	25

No — 67%
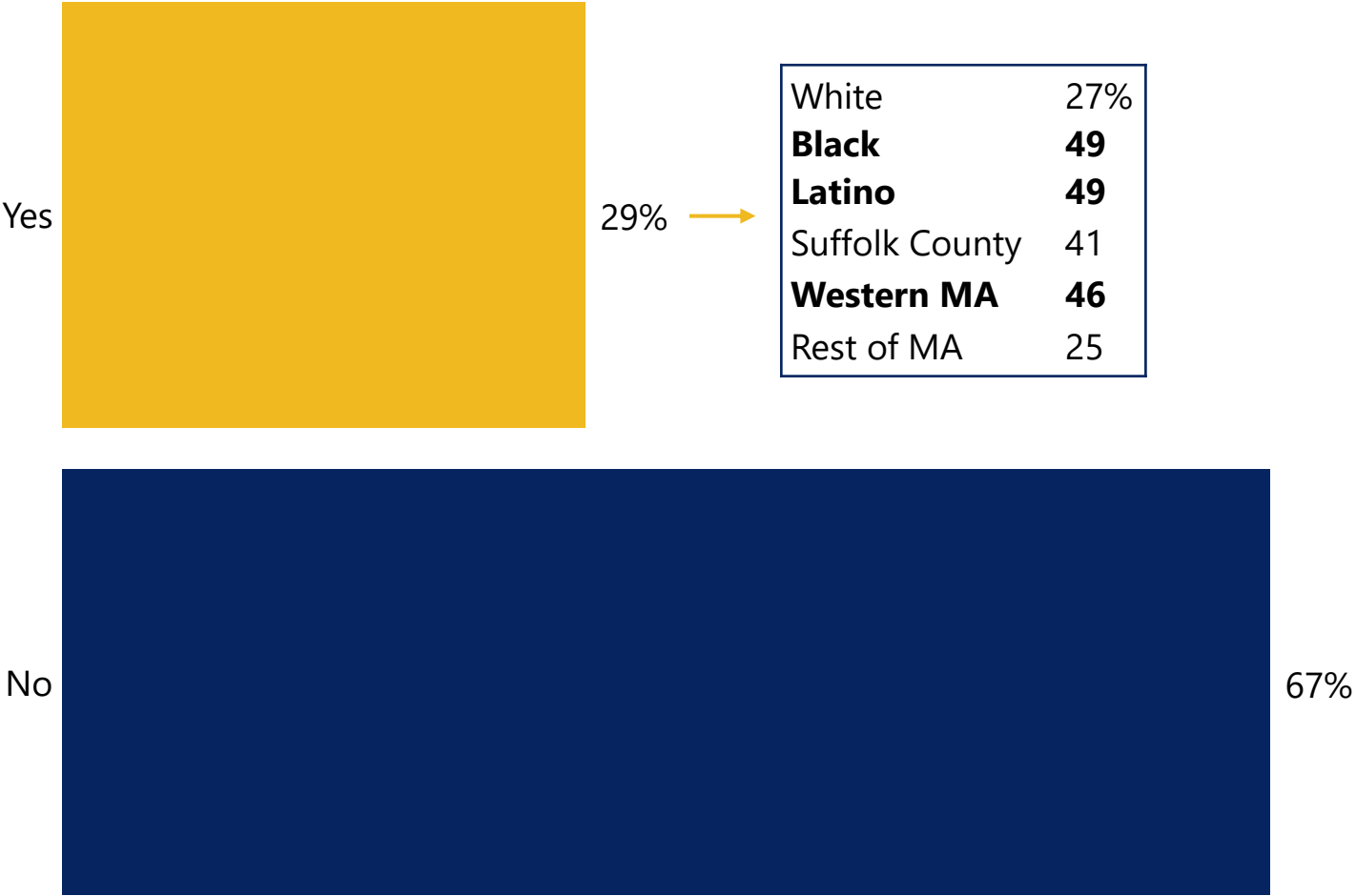
By a 2-to-1 margin, voters think it is unfair to take away someone's license due to debts.

In general, do you think it is fair or unfair for the state to take away someone's driver's license due to debts from things like unpaid parking tickets or E-ZPass fines?

Fair   29%

Unfair   58%

Net unfair: 29%
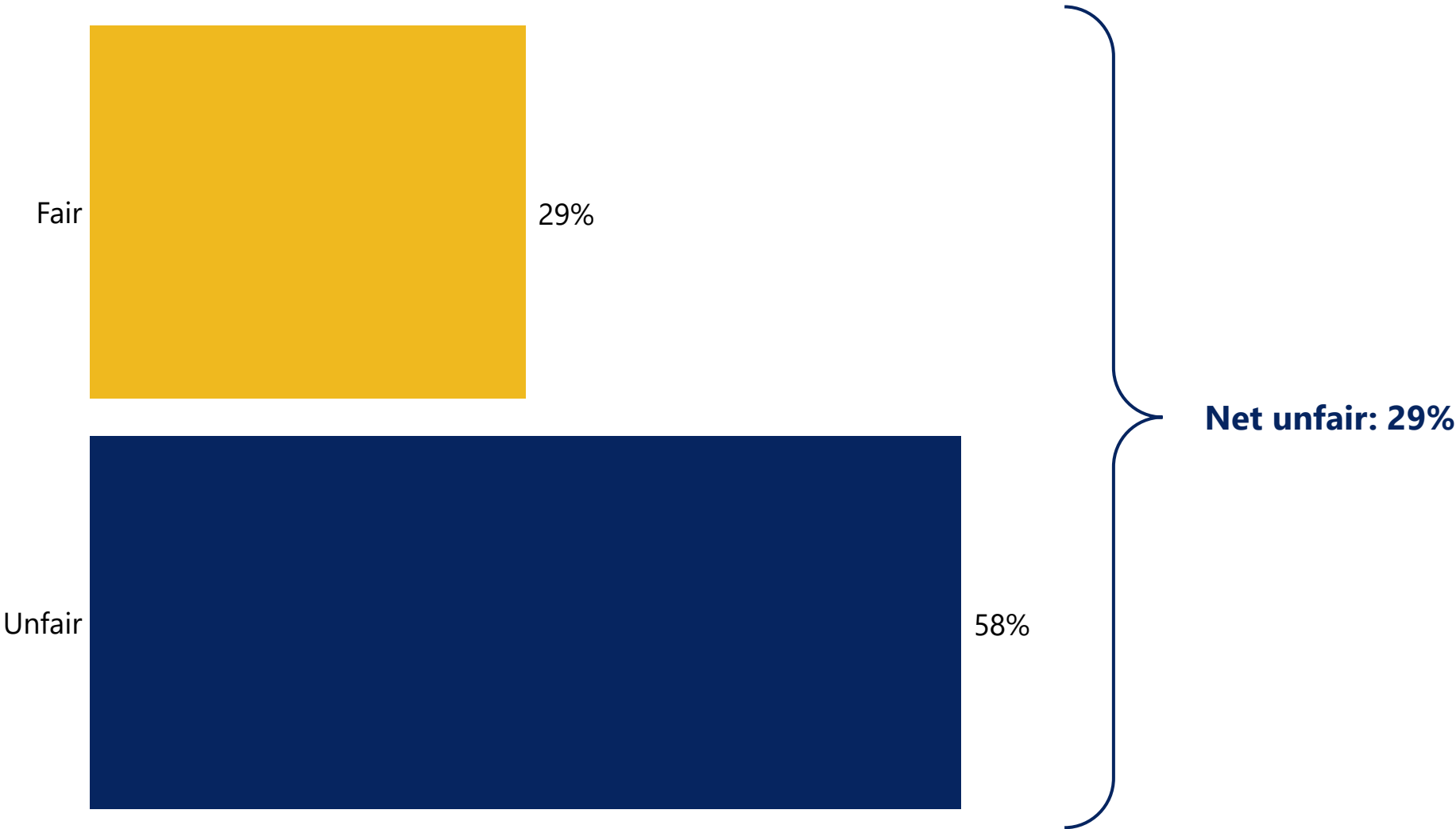
Most see debt-based restrictions as an ineffective policy.

Which comes closer to your view on the state taking away driver's licenses due to debts from unpaid fines and fees?

It is an **ineffective policy** because taking away a license makes it harder for a person to get to work and earn money needed to pay fines and fees.

68% →

Democrat	75%
Independent	64
Republican	62

It is an **effective policy** for the state to collect unpaid fines and fees.

25%

High support for the Road to Opportunity Act.

Massachusetts lawmakers are currently considering a new law that deals with this issue... The Road to Opportunity Act would end the practice of MA taking away driver's licenses solely because of debts unrelated to dangerous driving — such as unpaid parking tickets, tolls, court fees, or other non-safety related debts. The law would still allow suspensions for offenses like drunk or reckless driving. Would you support or oppose this law?

Total support   78%

Total oppose   16%
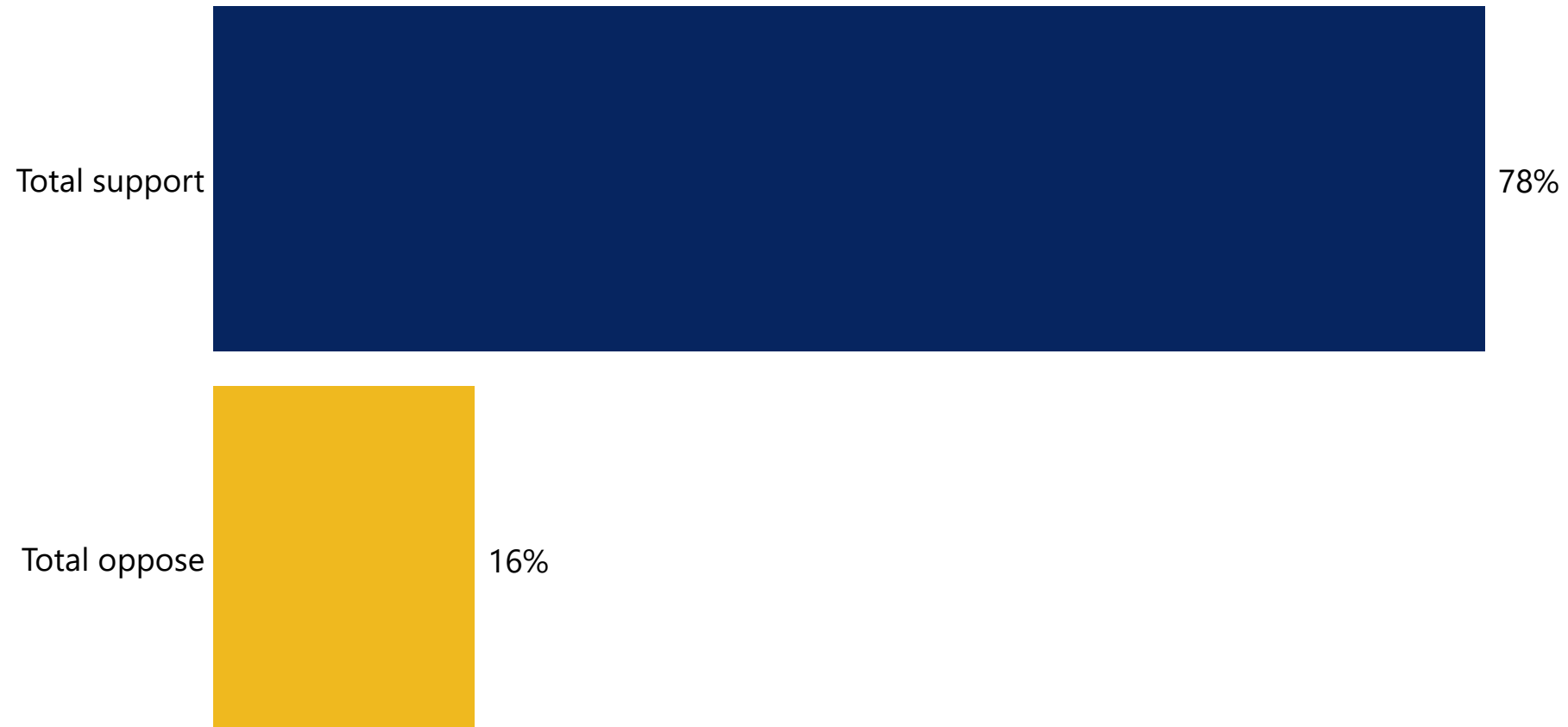
Support for Road to Opportunity Act is bipartisan…

The Road to Opportunity Act would end the practice of MA taking away driver's licenses solely because of debts unrelated to dangerous driving… Would you support or oppose this law?

	Support	Oppose
OVERALL	**78%**	**16%**
Women	76	17
Men	82	16
White	79	16
Latino	82	15
Black	81	15
Democrat	82	15
Independent	72	20
Republican	83	13

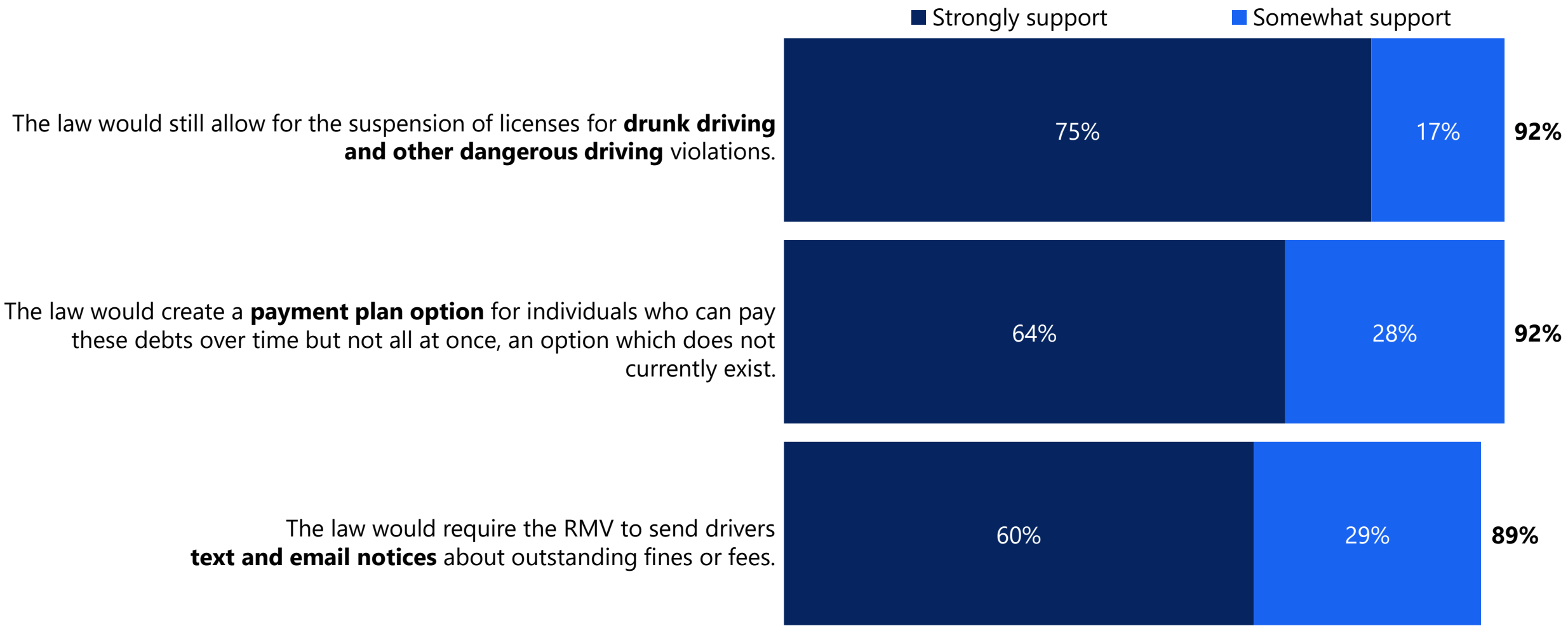*The Road to Opportunity Act would end the practice of MA taking away driver's licenses solely because of debts unrelated to dangerous driving... Would you support or oppose this law?*

	Support	Oppose
OVERALL	**78%**	**16%**
Middlesex	75	20
South	77	17
West	86	11
Worcester	84	10
Essex	74	18
Norfolk	75	20
Suffolk	83	14

There is very strong support for key components of the Road to Opportunity Act.

Here are some specific components of the Road to Opportunity Act. For each, please indicate if you support or oppose that component of this proposed law.

■ Strongly support　　■ Somewhat support

The law would still allow for the suspension of licenses for **drunk driving and other dangerous driving** violations.
75% | 17% | **92%**

The law would create a **payment plan option** for individuals who can pay these debts over time but not all at once, an option which does not currently exist.
64% | 28% | **92%**

The law would require the RMV to send drivers **text and email notices** about outstanding fines or fees.
60% | 29% | **89%**

Over three-quarters support ending debt-based restrictions for common suspension triggers.

If the Road to Opportunity Act passes, the following infractions would <u>no longer</u> result in someone having their driver's license taken away. Do you support or oppose each of these changes?

Drivers would no longer lose their license for...

■ Strongly support   ■ Somewhat support

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Total
Unpaid parking tickets	46%	34%	**80%**
Unpaid tolls or E-ZPass debt	48%	31%	**79%**
Unpaid RMV fees	42%	35%	**77%**
Unpaid vehicle excise taxes	40%	36%	**76%**
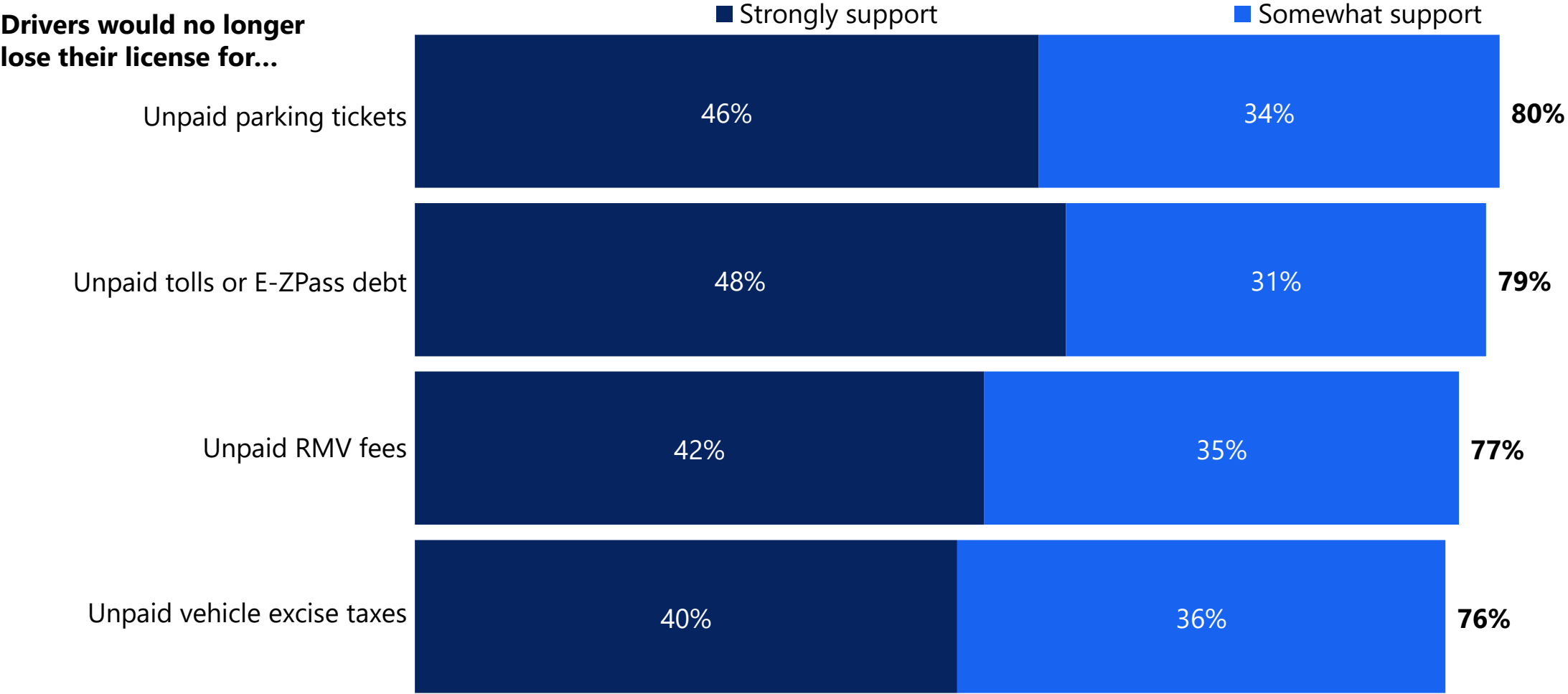
Two-thirds support eliminating mandatory sentencing for driving without a license.

If a driver in Massachusetts has their license taken away because of debts unrelated to dangerous driving, then is found guilty of driving without a license, they face a mandatory prison sentence of 60 days to 1 year for just their second offense. Knowing this, do you support or oppose <u>eliminating this mandatory sentencing law</u>?

Support — 65%

Oppose — 28%

	Support	Oppose
Democrat	68%	26%
Independent	55	36
Republican	75	19
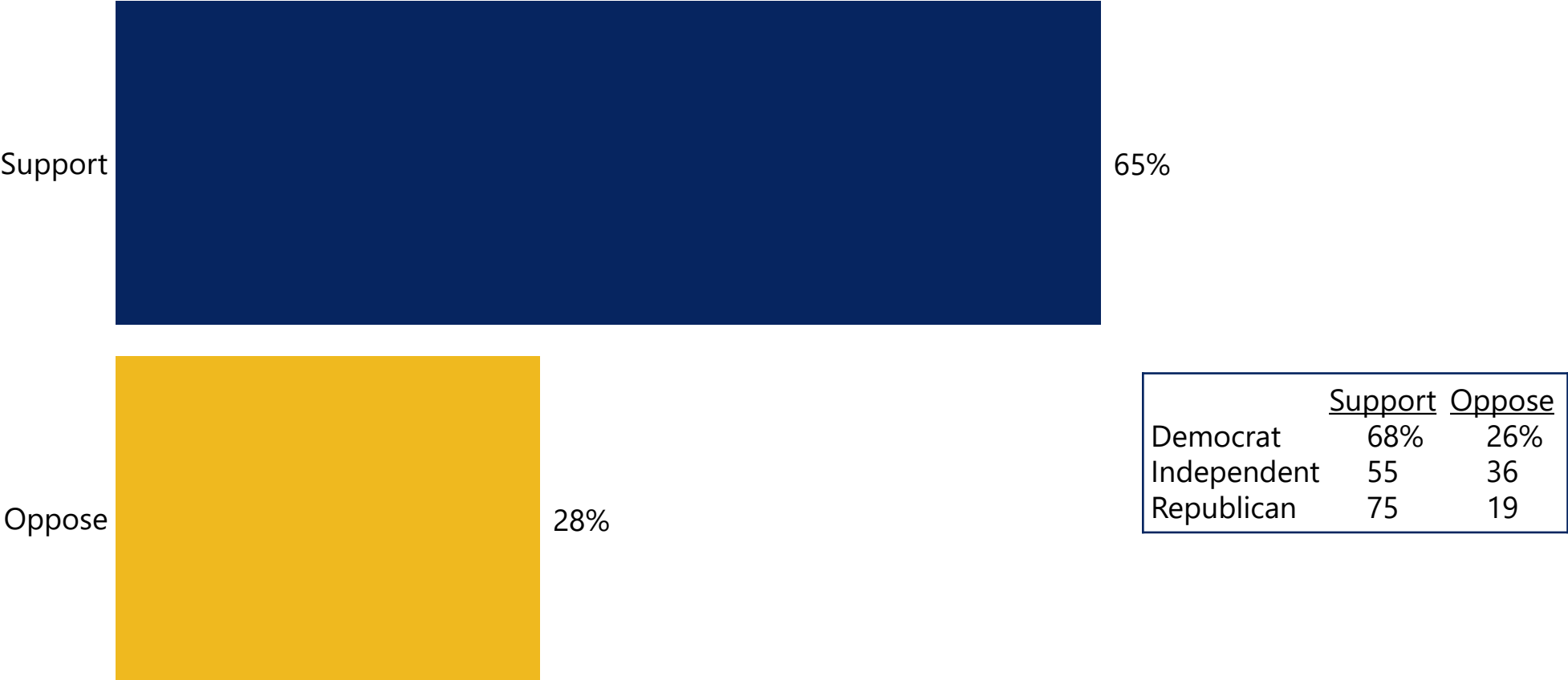
Being able to get to work to pay off debts is seen as the most important reason to end debt-based driving restrictions.

Here is some additional information about this issue. For each piece of information, please indicate how important of a reason it is to end the practice of taking away driver's licenses solely because of debts unrelated to dangerous driving.

■ Extremely or very important reason

Statement	Extremely or very important reason
When someone has their license suspended, it becomes much harder for them to pay off their debts.	79%
70% of Massachusetts residents drive to work and public transportation is limited in much of the state.	79%
Many people have no choice but to continue driving after their license has been taken away because they need to work or take care of family members.	76%
Most people can pay the fines and fees they owe but for those who can't afford to, the impacts are severe and can follow people for life.	75%
A conviction for driving on a suspended license can make it harder for people to find jobs, secure housing, or pass background checks.	74%
License suspensions impede people's ability to work, reducing state income tax revenue and worsening the labor shortage.	74%

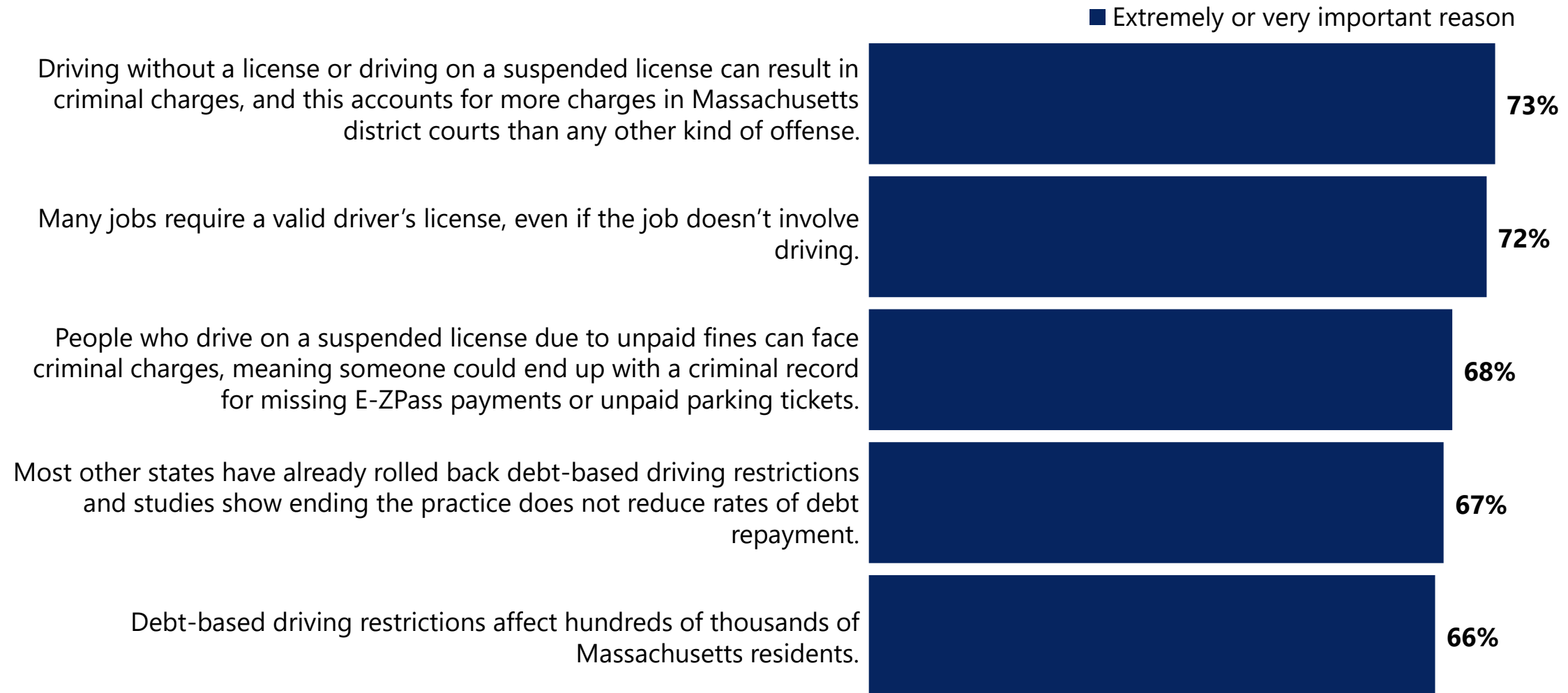# Reasons to end debt-based driving restrictions, continued.

Here is some additional information about this issue. For each piece of information, please indicate how important of a reason it is to end the practice of taking away driver's licenses solely because of debts unrelated to dangerous driving.

■ Extremely or very important reason

Driving without a license or driving on a suspended license can result in criminal charges, and this accounts for more charges in Massachusetts district courts than any other kind of offense. **73%**

Many jobs require a valid driver's license, even if the job doesn't involve driving. **72%**

People who drive on a suspended license due to unpaid fines can face criminal charges, meaning someone could end up with a criminal record for missing E-ZPass payments or unpaid parking tickets. **68%**

Most other states have already rolled back debt-based driving restrictions and studies show ending the practice does not reduce rates of debt repayment. **67%**

Debt-based driving restrictions affect hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts residents. **66%**

Support for Road to Opportunity Act increases with further information.

Now that you have seen some additional information, would you support or oppose the Road to Opportunity Act to end the practice of taking away a driver's license solely because of debts unrelated to dangerous driving — such as unpaid parking tickets, tolls, court fees, or other non-safety debts — but would still allow suspensions for offenses like drunk or reckless driving?
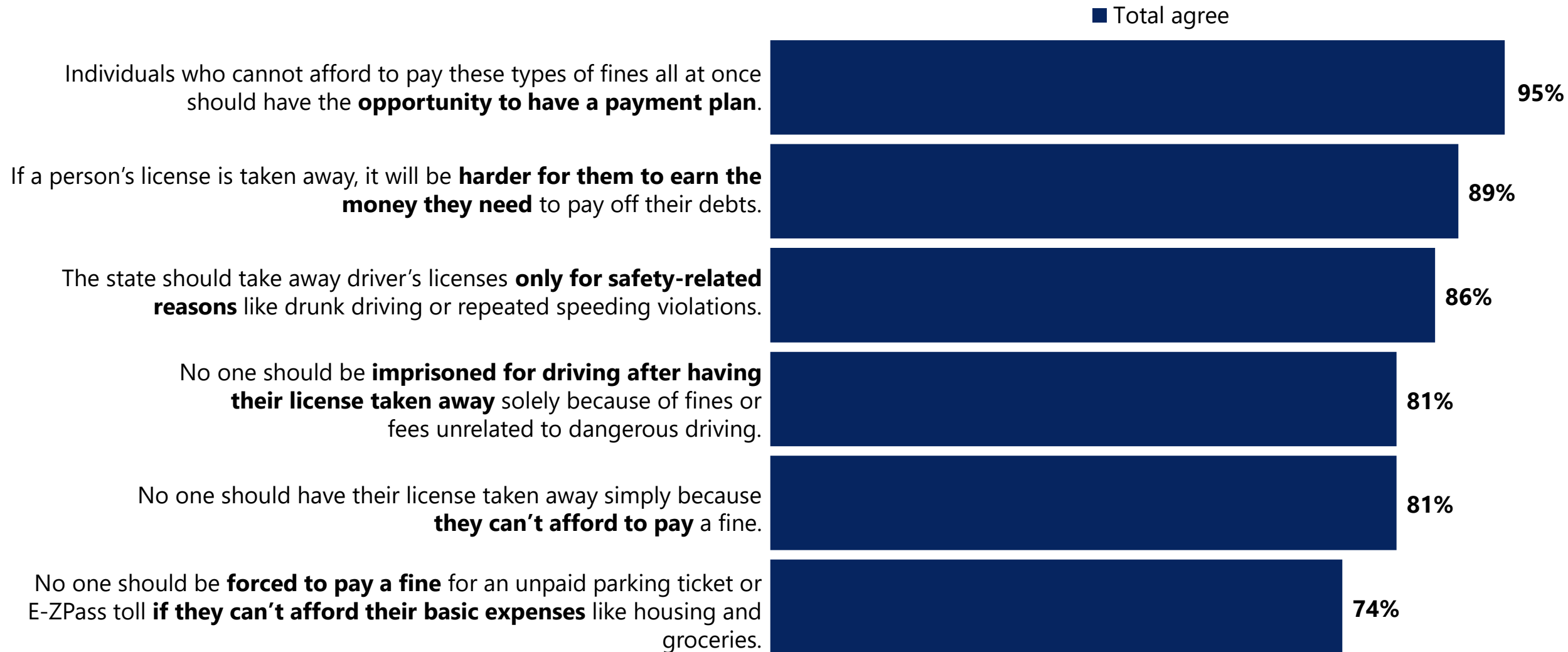
Informed

Total support — **84%**

Total oppose — **13%**

Initial

Total support — **78%**

Total oppose — **17%**

There is broad agreement with the logic of the Road to Opportunity Act.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

■ Total agree

Individuals who cannot afford to pay these types of fines all at once should have the **opportunity to have a payment plan**. **95%**

If a person's license is taken away, it will be **harder for them to earn the money they need** to pay off their debts. **89%**

The state should take away driver's licenses **only for safety-related reasons** like drunk driving or repeated speeding violations. **86%**

No one should be **imprisoned for driving after having their license taken away** solely because of fines or fees unrelated to dangerous driving. **81%**

No one should have their license taken away simply because **they can't afford to pay** a fine. **81%**

No one should be **forced to pay a fine** for an unpaid parking ticket or E-ZPass toll **if they can't afford their basic expenses** like housing and groceries. **74%**

Nearly 7-in-10 believe most people would still pay what they owe without the threat of having their license taken away.

If the state no longer took driver's licenses away because of debts from things like unpaid parking tickets and E-ZPass debts, which do you think is a more likely outcome?
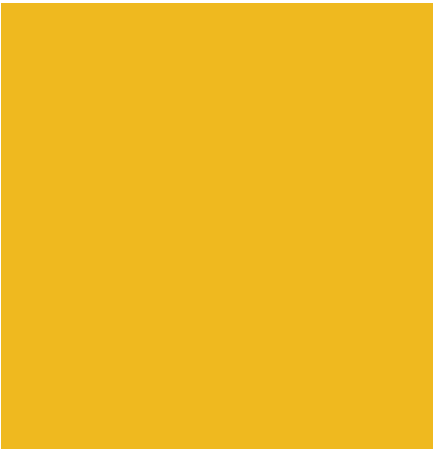
Most people would still pay what they owe due to the threat of having their debts sent to collection, having their credit score go down, and not being able to register their vehicle.

68% →

Middlesex	69%
Essex	69
Suffolk	76
Norfolk	63
Worcester	61
South	66
West	70

Most people would ignore their debts because they wouldn't have to worry about losing their license.
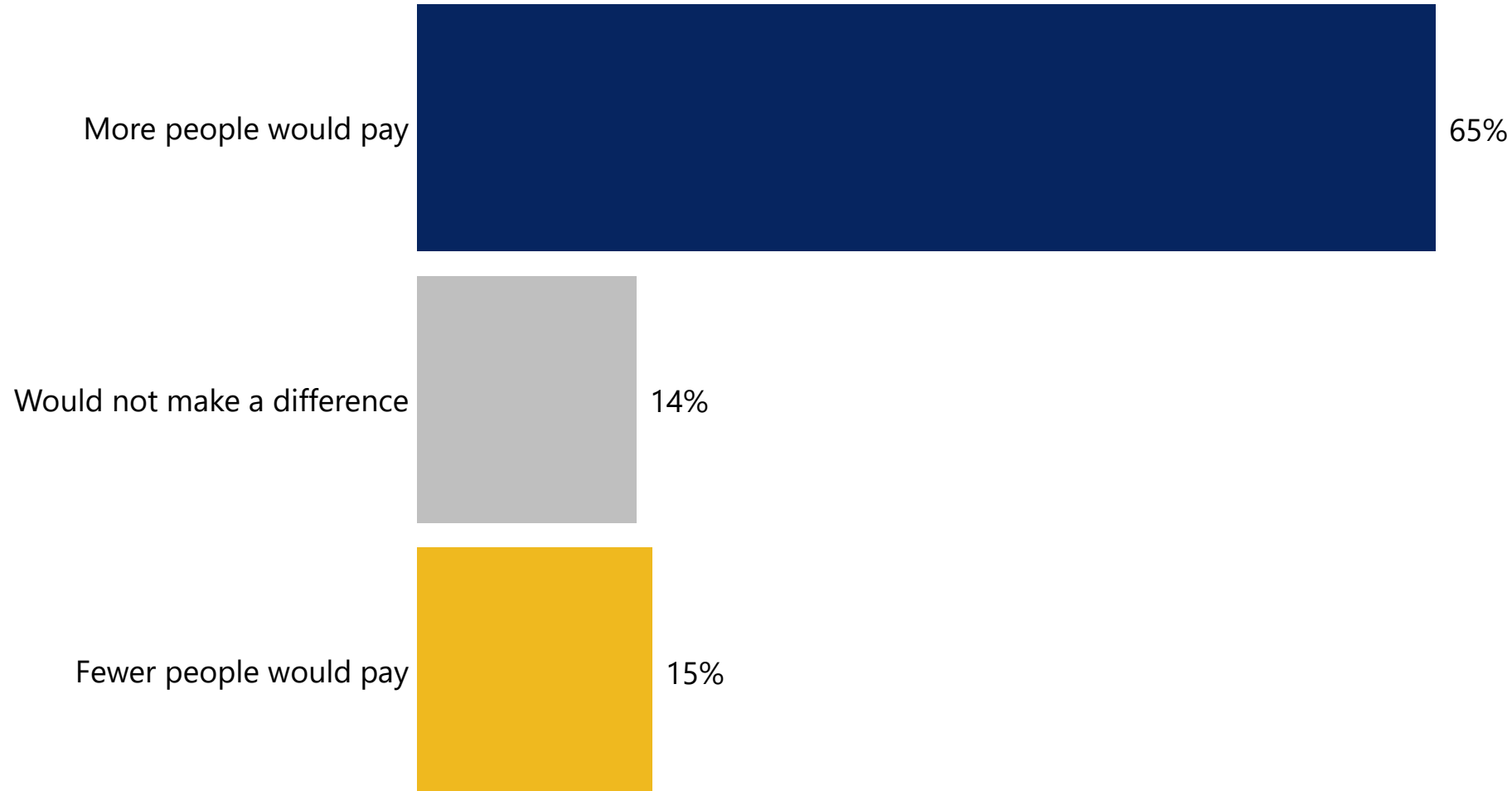
23%

If there were an option for income-based repayment plans for people with these types of debts, do you think more people would pay, fewer people would pay, or would it not make a difference?

More people would pay — 65%

Would not make a difference — 14%

Fewer people would pay — 15%

Key Findings

- Most voters think the practice of debt-based driving restrictions is unfair and ineffective; voters understand this as a commonsense reform to help residents pay their fines and fees.

- There is a clear sense among the electorate that if someone has their license taken away because they owe money, it will make it much harder to earn money to payoff debts.

- Voters are deeply concerned about the high cost of living and household debts and see debt-based driving restrictions as something that makes those issues worse for people.

- Support for the Road to Opportunity Act is high and bipartisan.

- Voters are highly supportive of specific provisions within the legislation, including:
  - **Safety carveouts:** The state will continue to take away licenses for safety related reasons
  - **Repayment plans:** The law includes a payment plan option
  - **Better notifications:** The law requires the RMV to send email and text notifications about unpaid fines

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