Public Opinion on Plastics and Health

https://www.nrdc.org/

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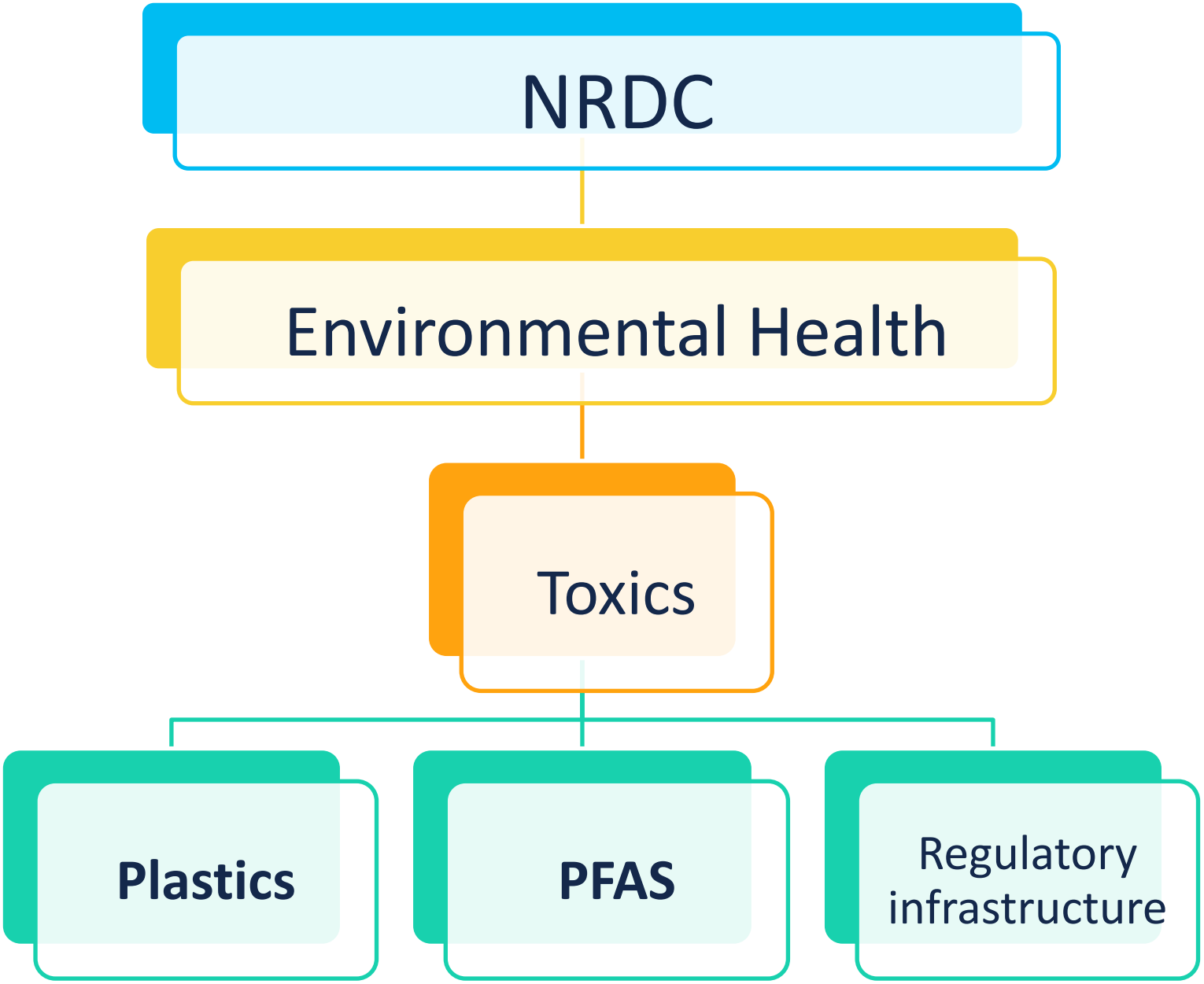

NRDC
Environmental Health
Toxics
Plastics
PFAS
Regulatory infrastructure

Polling Reviewed

1. 2024 NRDC plastics
    - Tested different messaging
    - Oversample in OH and PA
2. 2024 Oceana plastics
    - Sampled only registered voters
3. 2025 NRDC microplastics
    - Highest sample size of 2,978
    - Tested a sample of the NRDC consumer guide
4. 2025 5 Gyres microplastics

Polling Focuses

- Knowledge and attitudes towards plastic and microplastic pollution and exposure
- Messaging and messengers
- Accountability and mobilization
- Support for US and international solutions

Results across demographics

- Overall similar sentiments for all results across political parties, races and ethnicities, ages, education, income, and region
- More care (re: policy support, level of concern, etc.) from democrats than republicans

Level of Concern on Plastics

86-89%

Believe plastics pollution is a crisis or very concerning problem to ocean wildlife and habitats

Source: NRDC, 2024; Oceana, 2024; 5 Gyres 2025

Level of Concern on Plastics

65-90%

Believe plastics or microplastics pollution is a crisis or very concerning problem to human health, including in our food and drinking water

Source: NRDC, 2024; Oceana, 2024; 5 Gyres 2025

Level of Concern on Plastics

73-85%

Believe plastic filling up landfills and polluting waterways, air, and soil is a crisis or major problem

Source: NRDC, 2024; Oceana, 2024; 5 Gyres 2025

Level of Concern on Plastics

64-85%

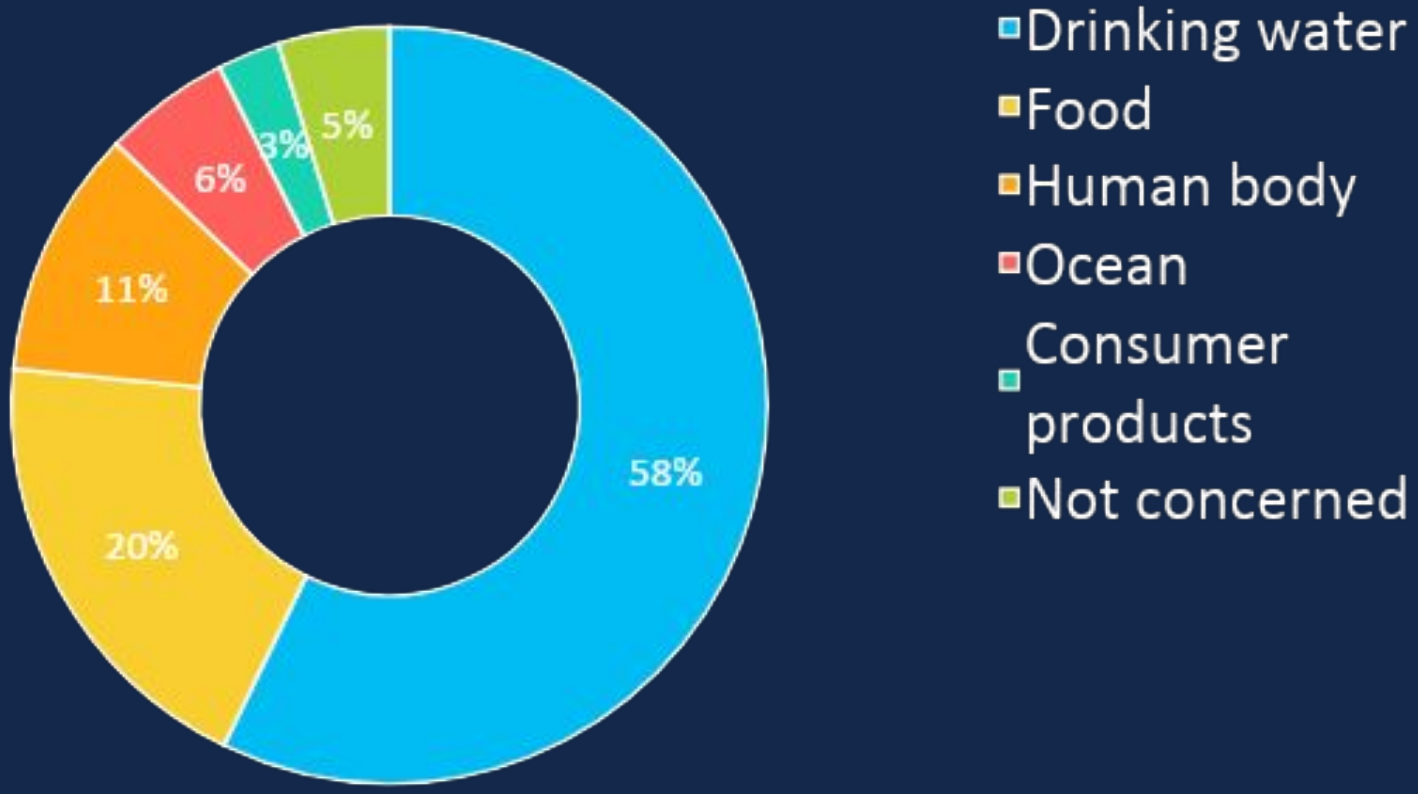
Are concerned with plastic or microplastic pollution's impact on climate change

Source: NRDC, 2024; Oceana, 2024; 5 Gyres 2025

“Health” was the most used word when asked for the strongest reason to reduce plastic production

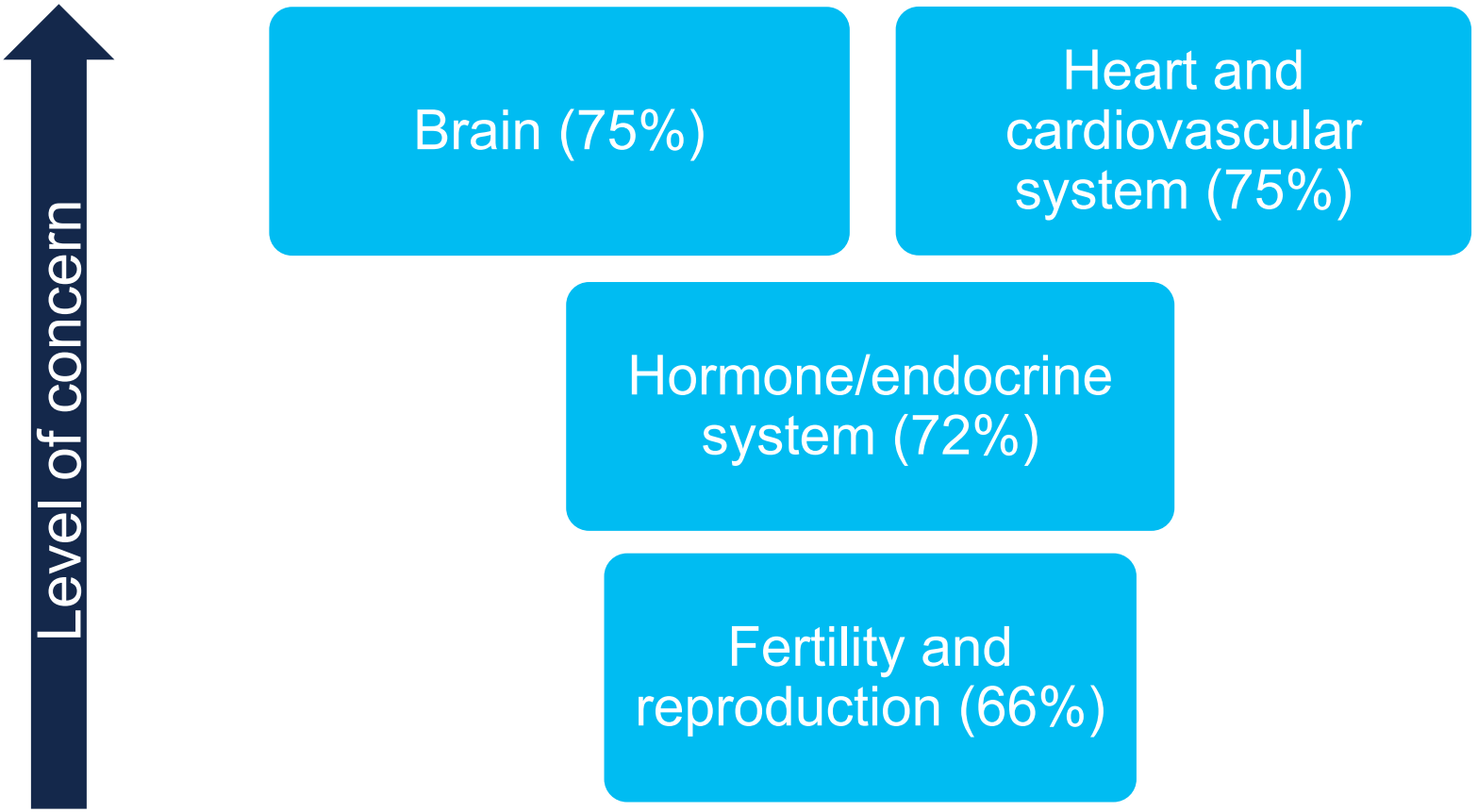
Source: NRDC, 2024

“When it comes to microplastics, what concerns you the most? Microplastics in…”



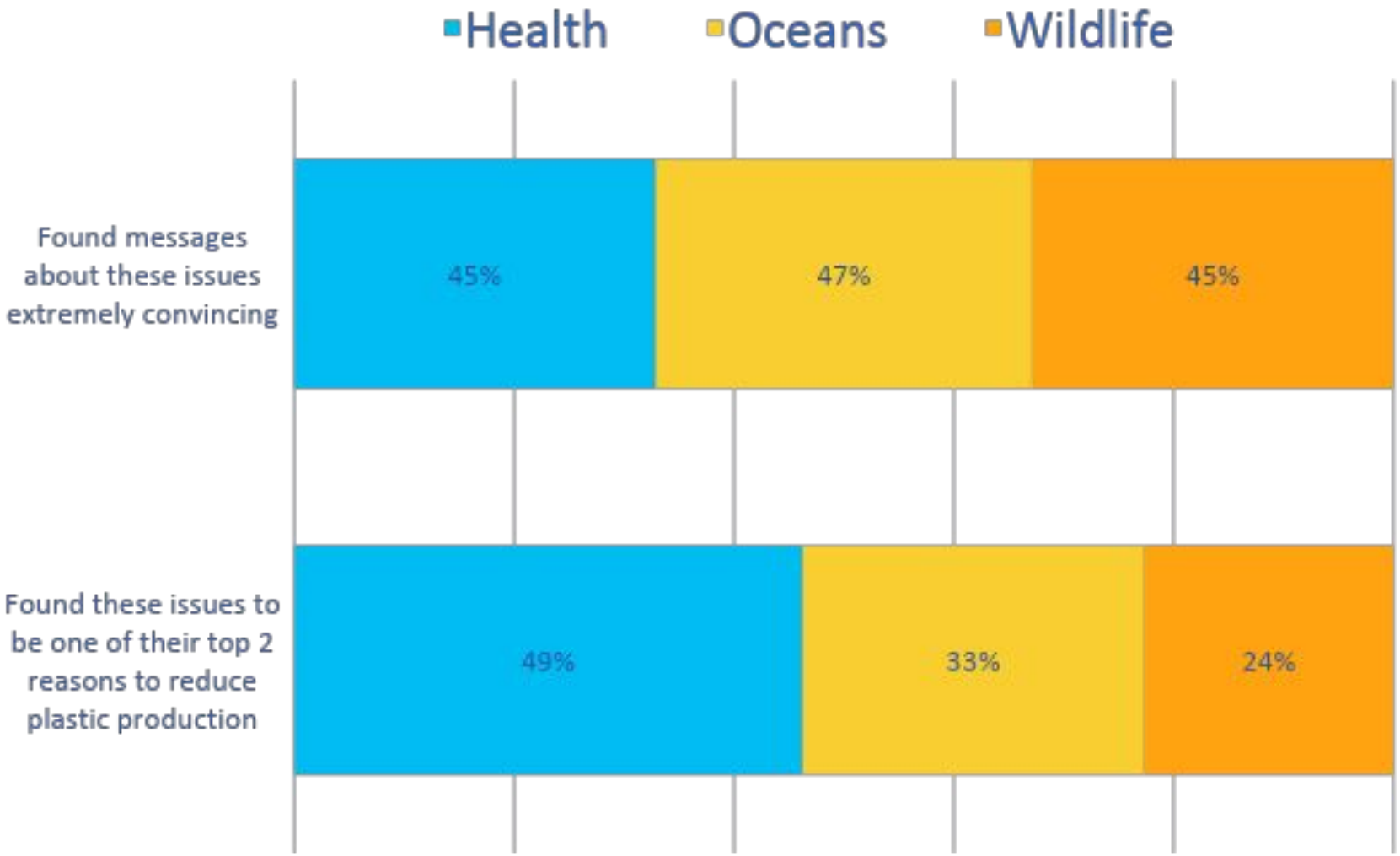
Source: NRDC, 2025

Sliding scale: “When it comes to microplastics and your health, how concerned are you about its impacts on the following?”



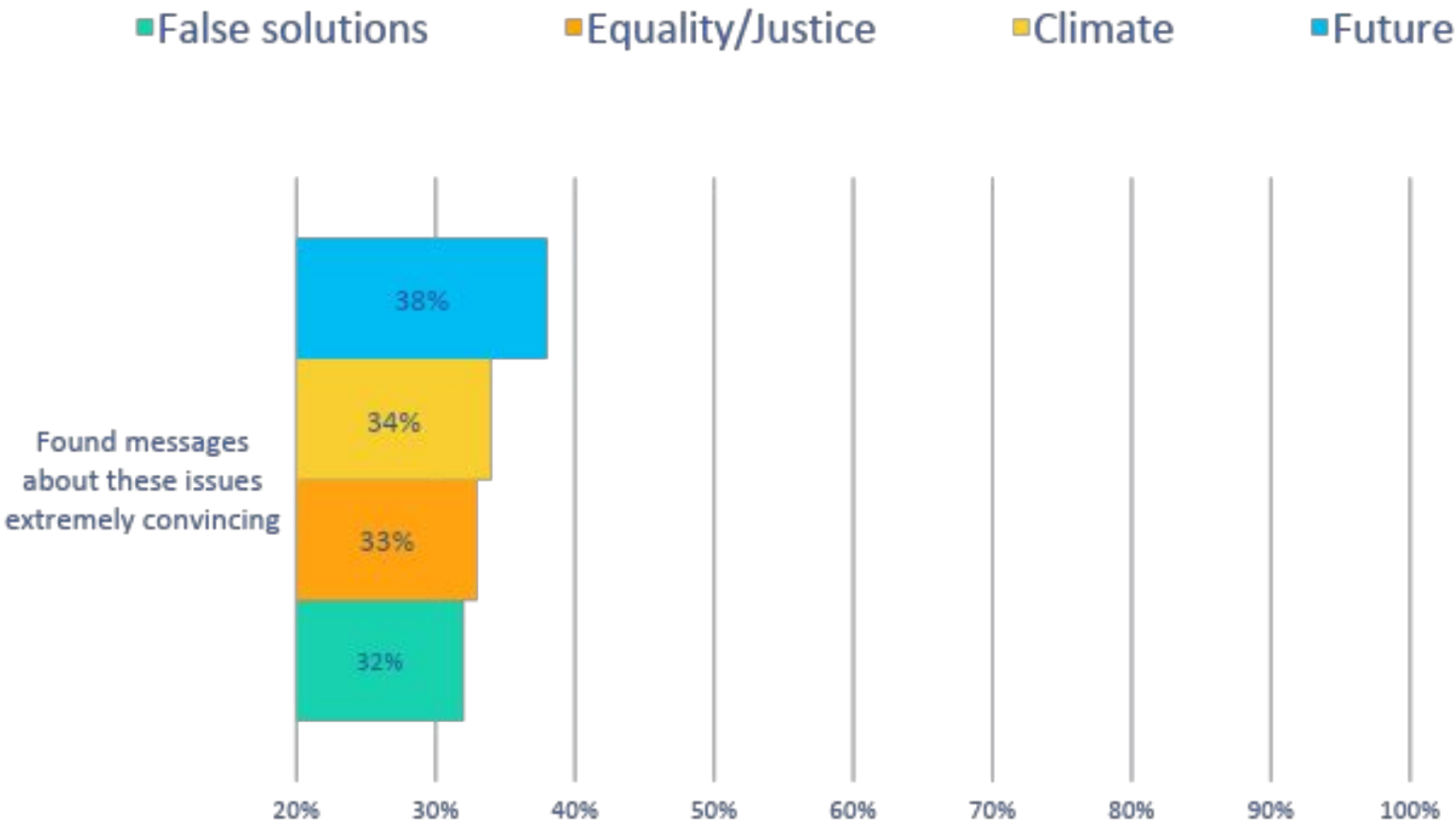
Source: NRDC, 2025

People respond to plastic impact messaging about:



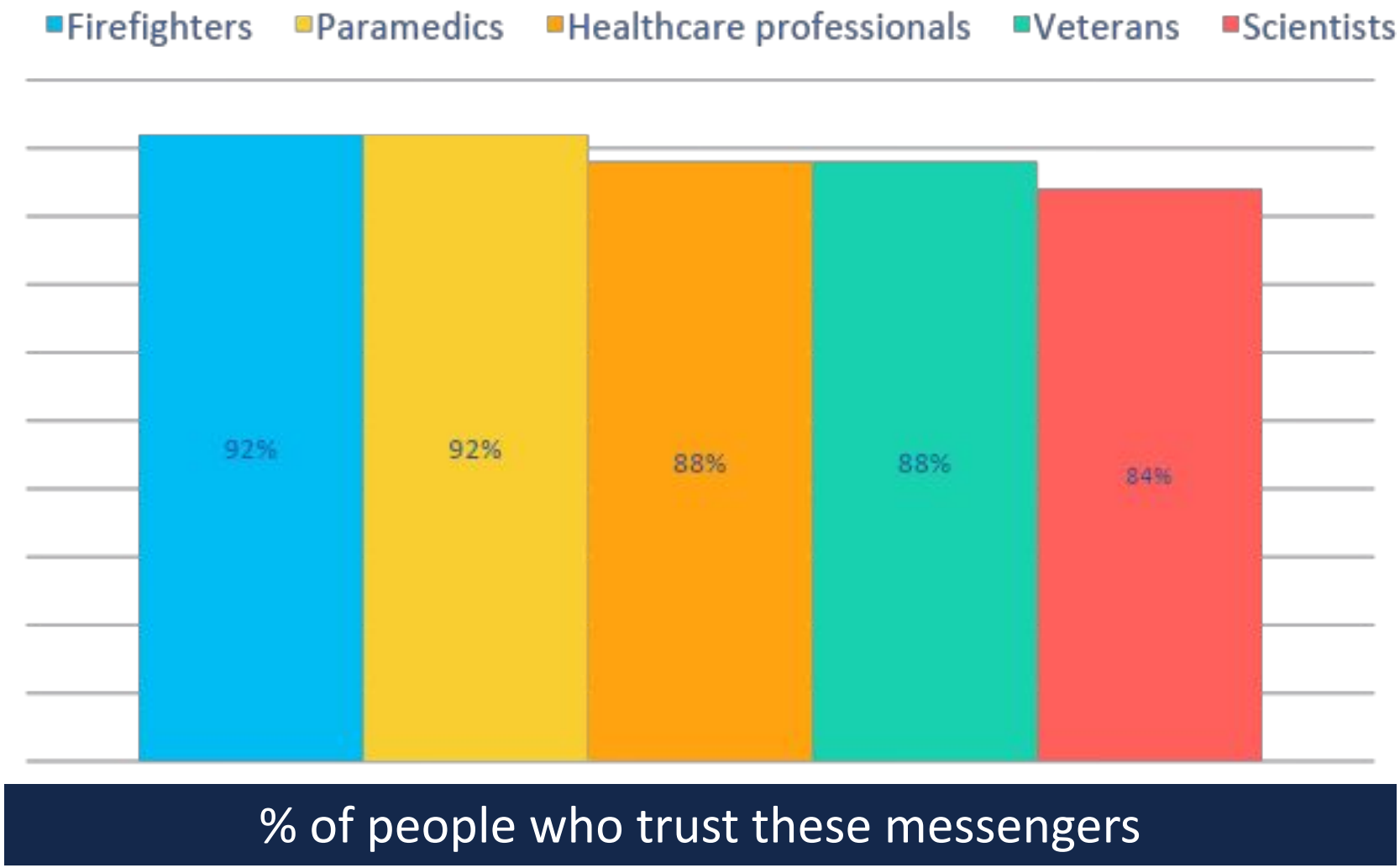
Source: NRDC, 2024

People do not respond as much to plastic impact messaging about:



Source: NRDC, 2024

People respond to plastic impact messaging from:



Source: NRDC, 2024

Issue notice

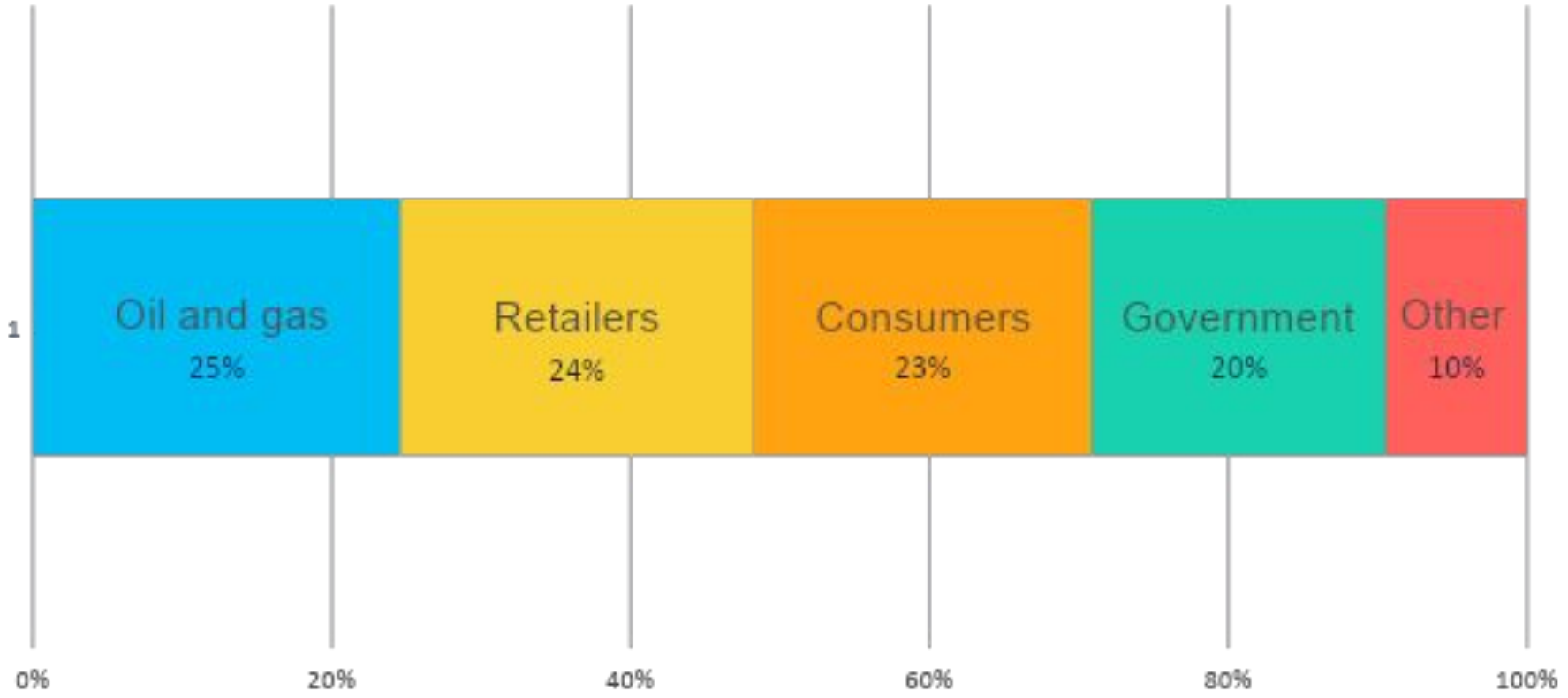
- “Advanced recycling” polled more positively (58% favorable) versus “chemical recycling” (42% favorable) and incineration (24% favorable)
- More about “chemical recycling”

Source: NRDC, 2024

Most people (>66%) had a motivation to make changes to reduce exposure to microplastics and were interested in news related to microplastics pollution

Source: NRDC, 2025

Split blame for microplastics problems



Source: NRDC, 2025

Microplastics education and opportunities

1. 36-56% of people said they did not know if a certain source could produce microplastics
2. Most people (69.7%) identified bottled water as their primary source of microplastics exposure, followed by personal care products (17.7%), kitchenware (8.0%), and clothing (5.0%)
3. 82% of people are concerned about chemicals leaching from microplastics

Source: NRDC, 2025; 5 Gyres, 2025

US and International Plastics Policy

Support	Action
94%	Eliminate most toxic forms
94%	Prevent microplastics from entering food and water supplies
92%	Transparency on harmful chemicals used in plastic products
90%	Reduce plastic production and waste
90%	Encourage and support alternatives to single-use plastics
87%	Support US joining an international treaty
84%	The US becoming an international leader in addressing plastic pollution

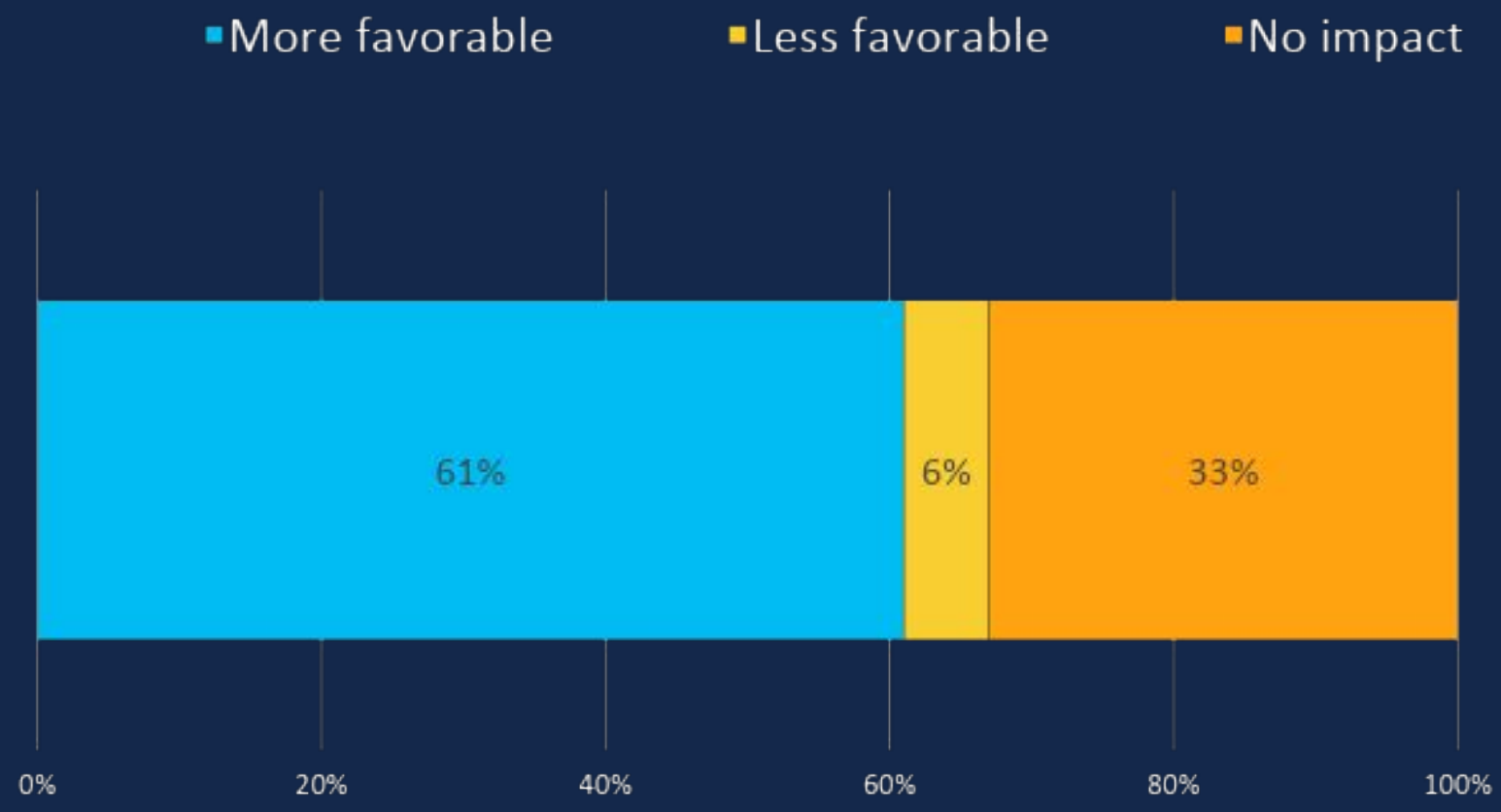
Source: NRDC, 2024; 5 Gyres, 2025

Specific US Plastics Policy

Support	Action
85%	Increasing the use of reusable packaging and foodware
82%	Protecting people in neighborhoods that are affected by pollution from nearby plastic production facilities
82%	Reducing the amount of single-use plastic state and federal governments buy and use
80%	Local and state policies that reduce single-use plastic foam
80%	Requiring companies to reduce single-use plastic packaging and foodware

Source: Oceana, 2024

“Would you have a more or less favorable opinion towards a lawmaker who supports measures to reduce the production of plastics?”



Source: NRDC, 2024

References

1. 2024 NRDC plastics
2. 2024 Oceana plastics
3. 2025 NRDC microplastics – not published
4. 2025 5 Gyres microplastics

Source: NRDC, 2025; 5 Gyres, 2025

Thank you