



The opposition to data centers

August 2026

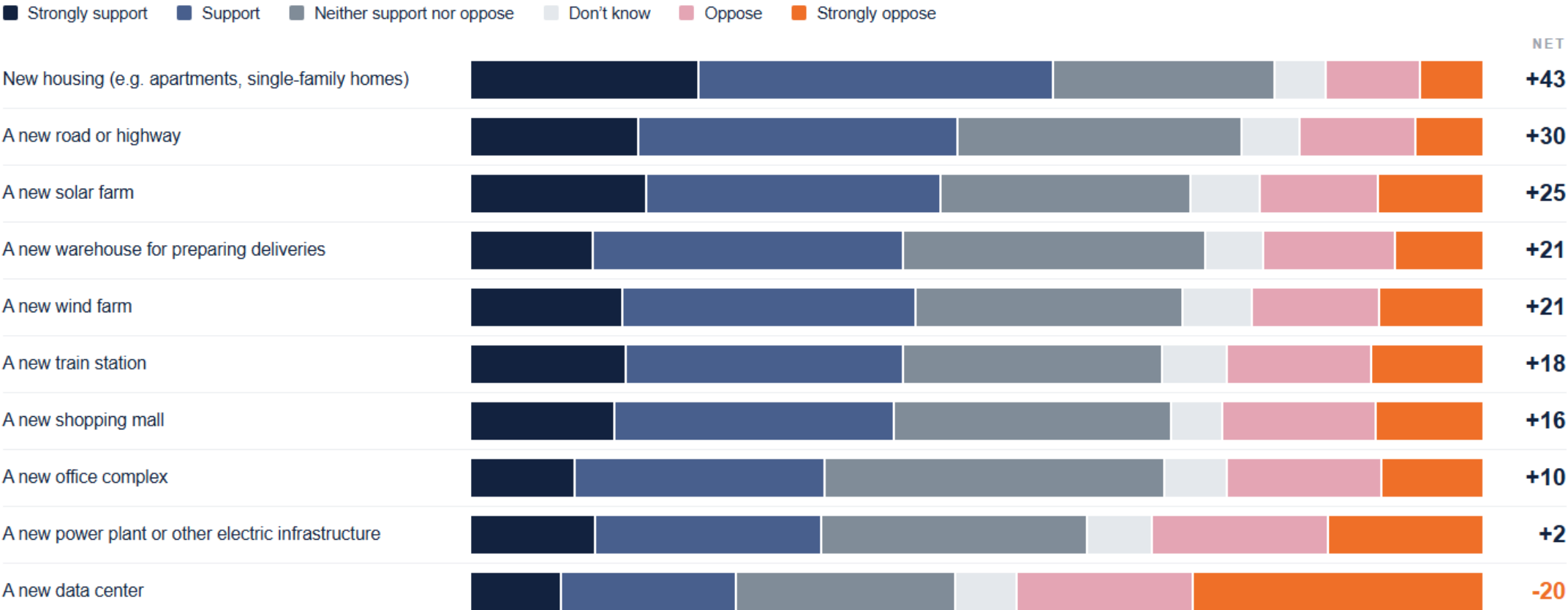
 **PUBLIC FIRST**
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Data centers are heavily opposed in the USA

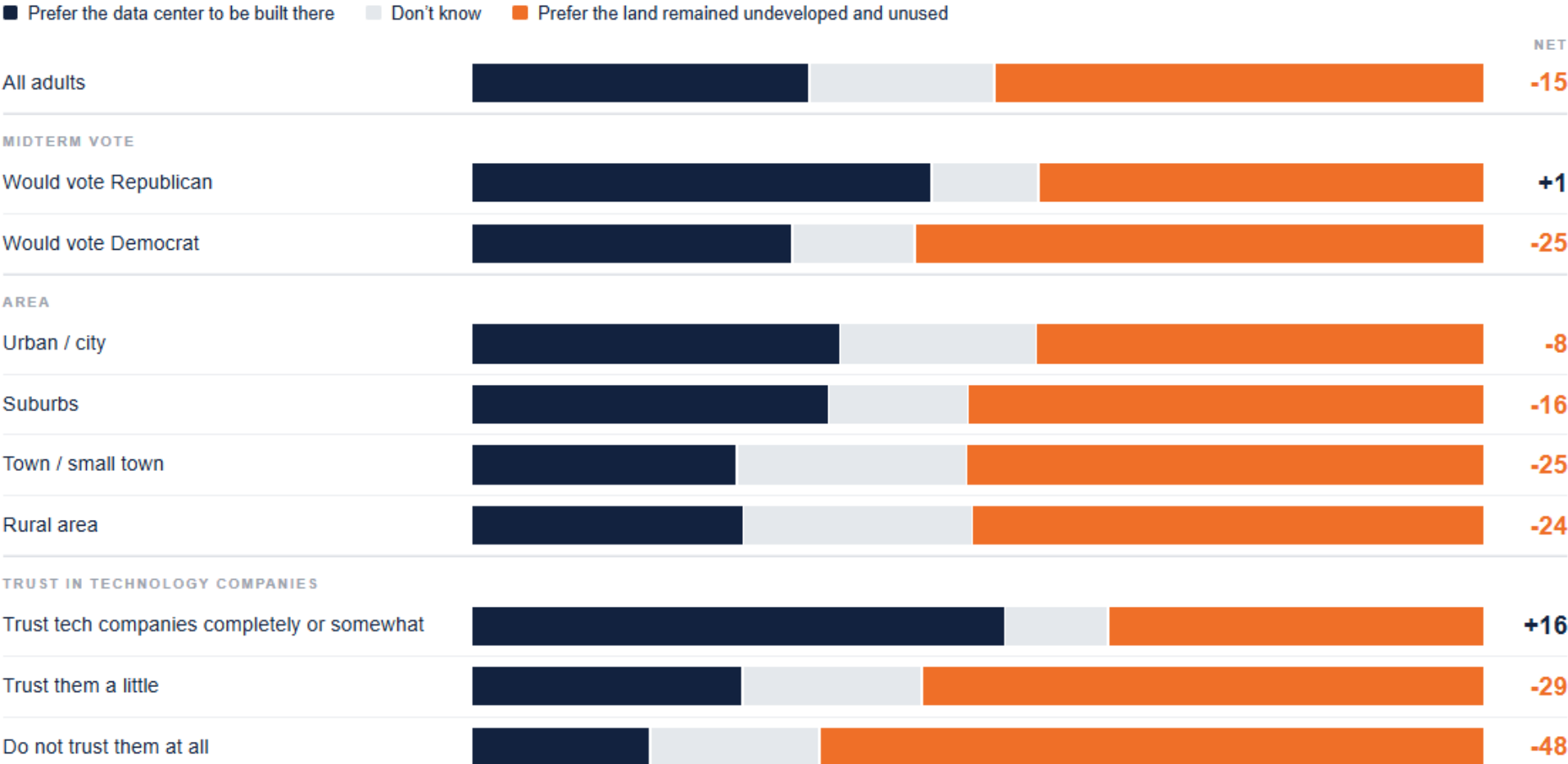
“Would you support or oppose the following being built in your community?”





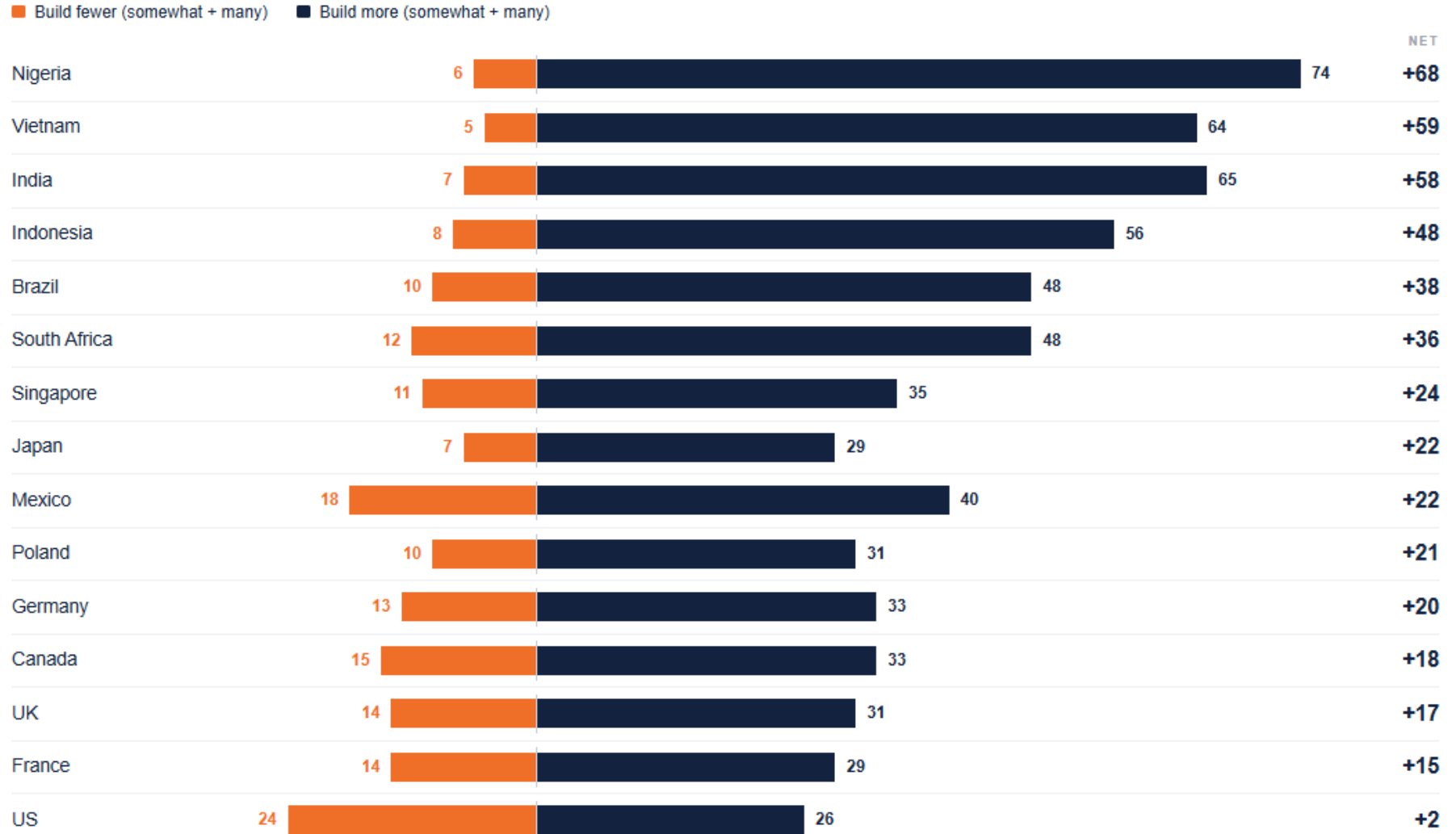
To the point where people would choose to leave land undeveloped

“Imagine there was an area of land that was undeveloped and unused near where you lived. If there was an option to have a data center built on this land, and there were no other viable options for what to do with it, which of the following comes closest to your view?”



This is a uniquely American phenomenon at the moment

“Should your country build more or fewer data centers?”



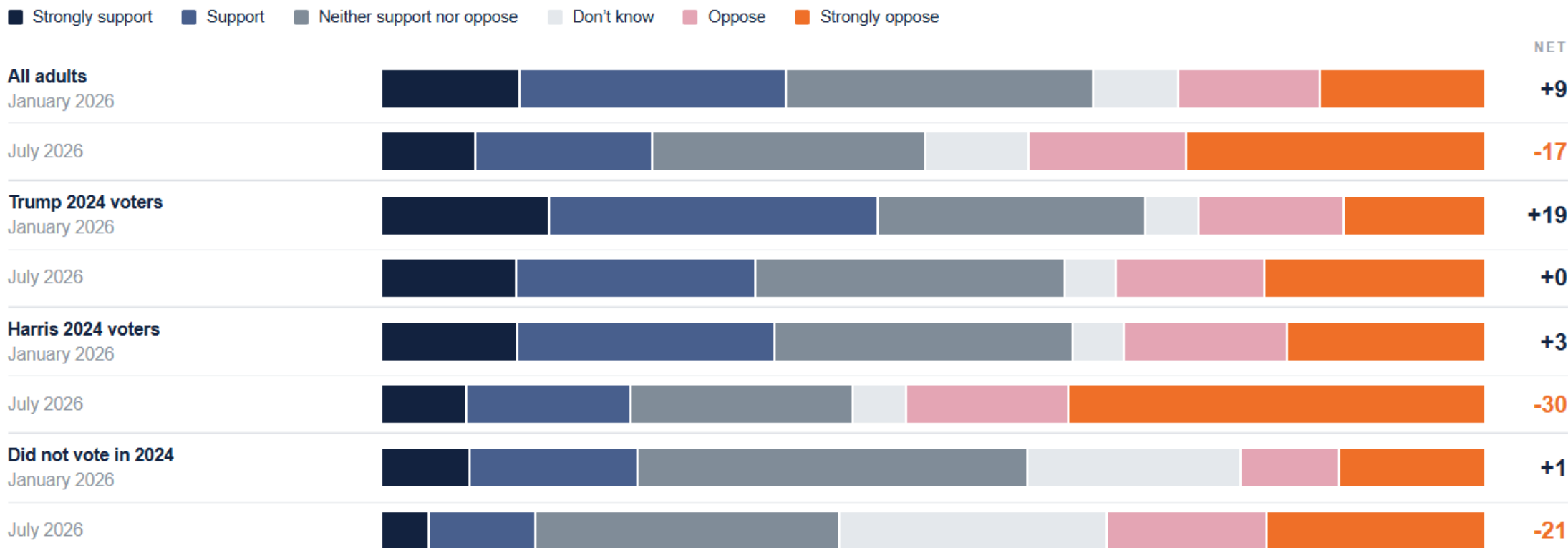
National totals, weighted, 2026. Sorted by net.

Source: Public First - AI Global - 2026



And a new one - support has dropped dramatically since January, particularly among Democrats

“Would you support or oppose the following being built in your local area (within 3 miles of where you live)?: A new data center”



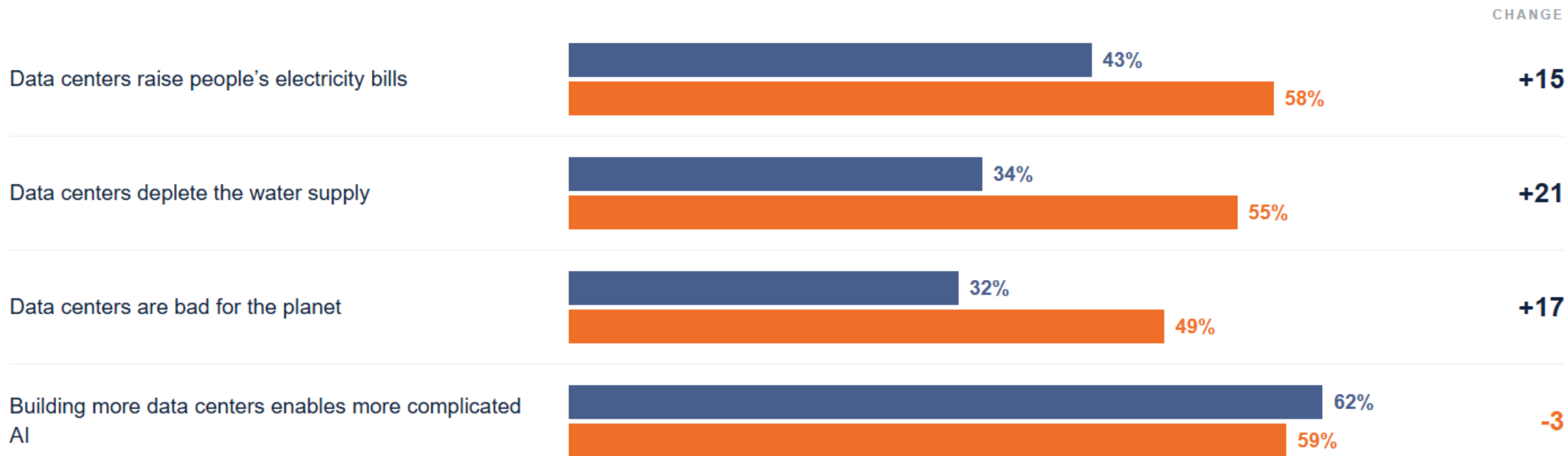
Source: The POLITICO Poll by Public First, Jan 26 - July 26



Beliefs are shifting too - more Americans see data centers as resource drains

“Which of the following, as far as you are aware, are true or false?” (% saying true)

■ January 2026 ■ July 2026



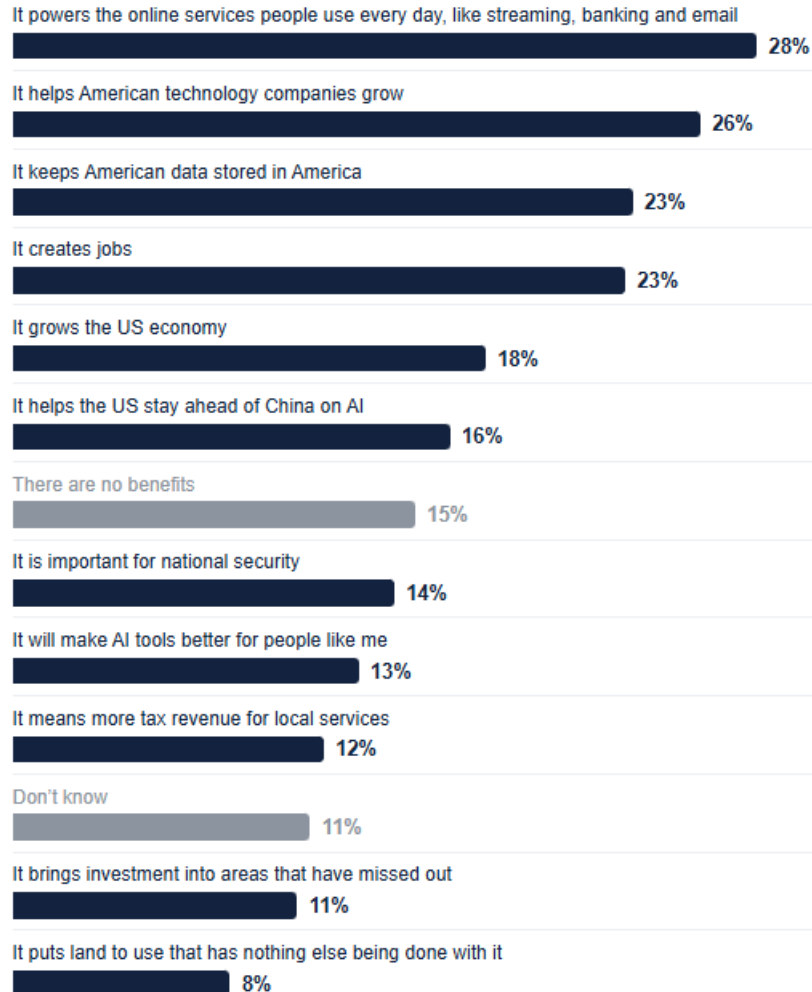
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This resource concern is the top worry - up against functional and sovereignty benefits

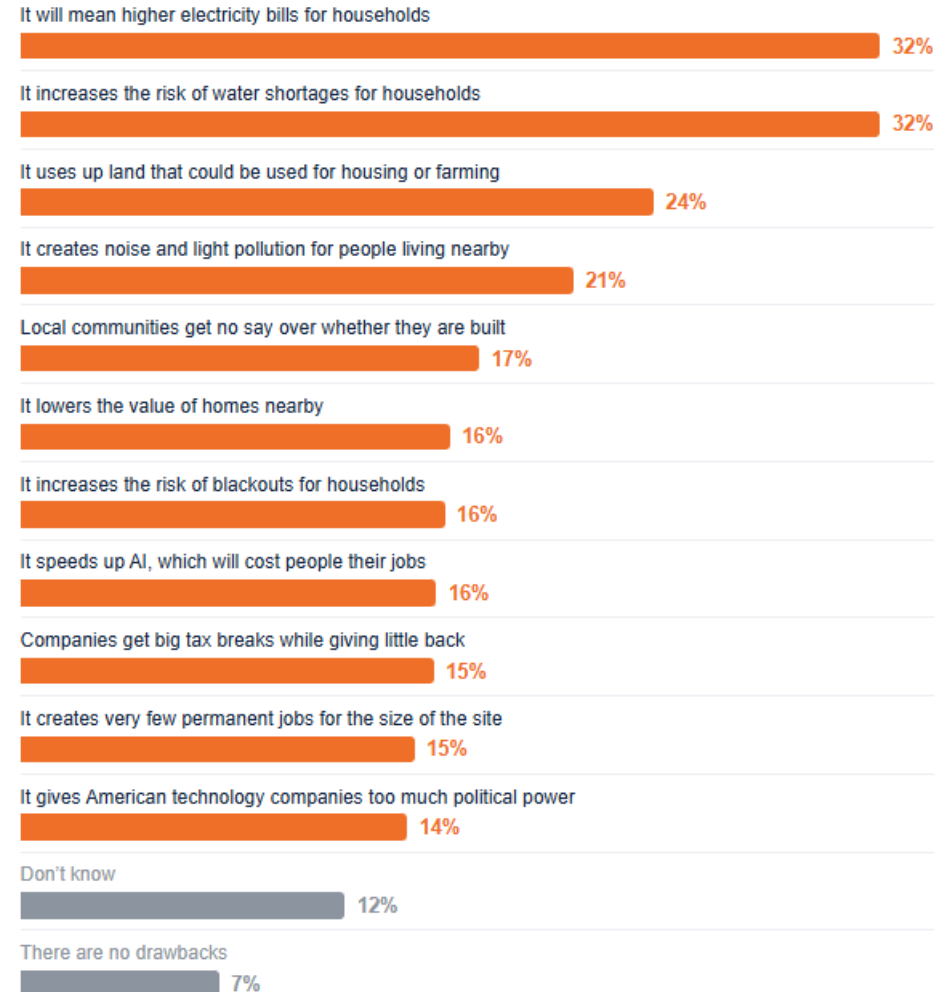
“From what you know, what are the main benefits, and the main drawbacks, of building data centers in the US?”

Respondents could select up to three of each

Benefits



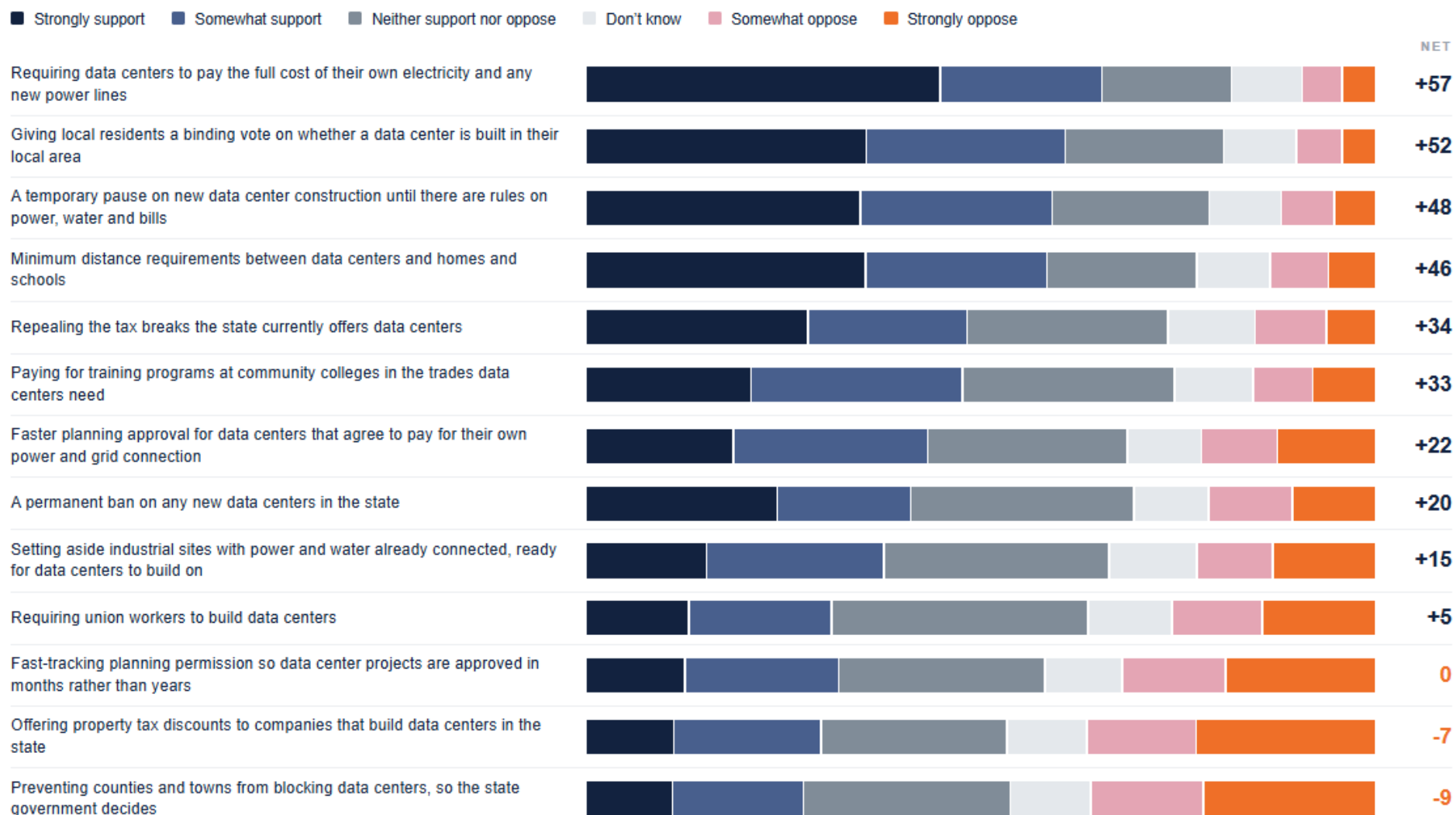
Drawbacks





The most popular policies for building are around costs, but a pause is popular too

“Imagine a political candidate running in your state made the following policy announcement. Would you support or oppose this announcement?”



When the public is forced to choose, the focus is all on resources and costs

Which of these commitments from a data center developer would be most, and least, important to you?

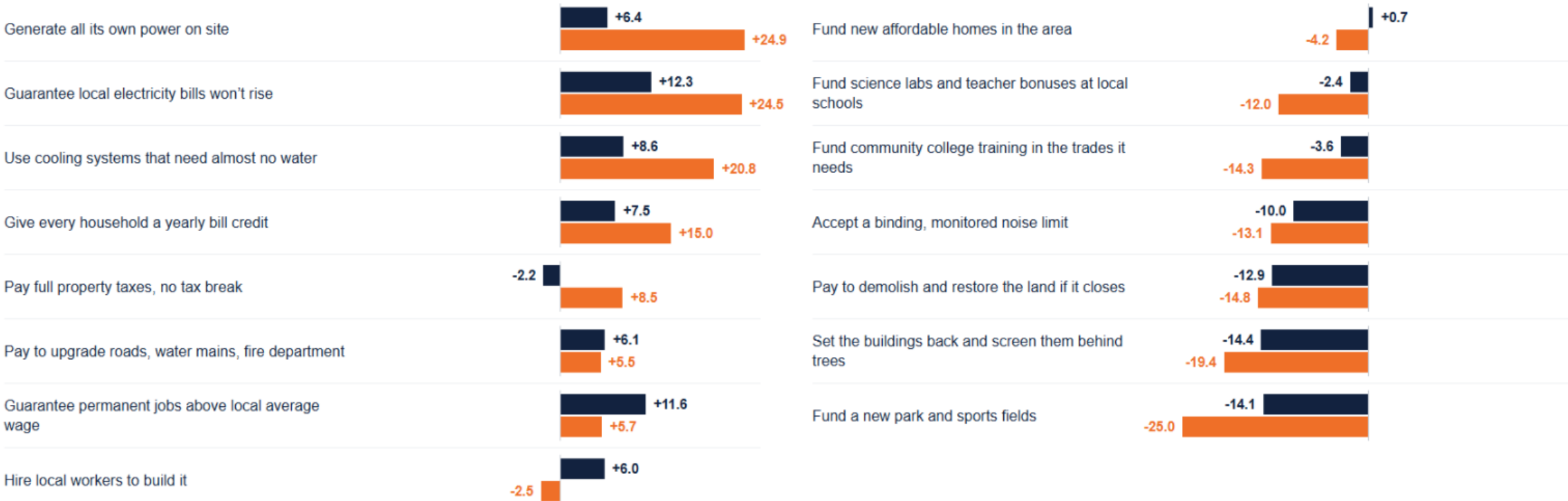




Particularly for those inclined to oppose a data center - resources matter the most

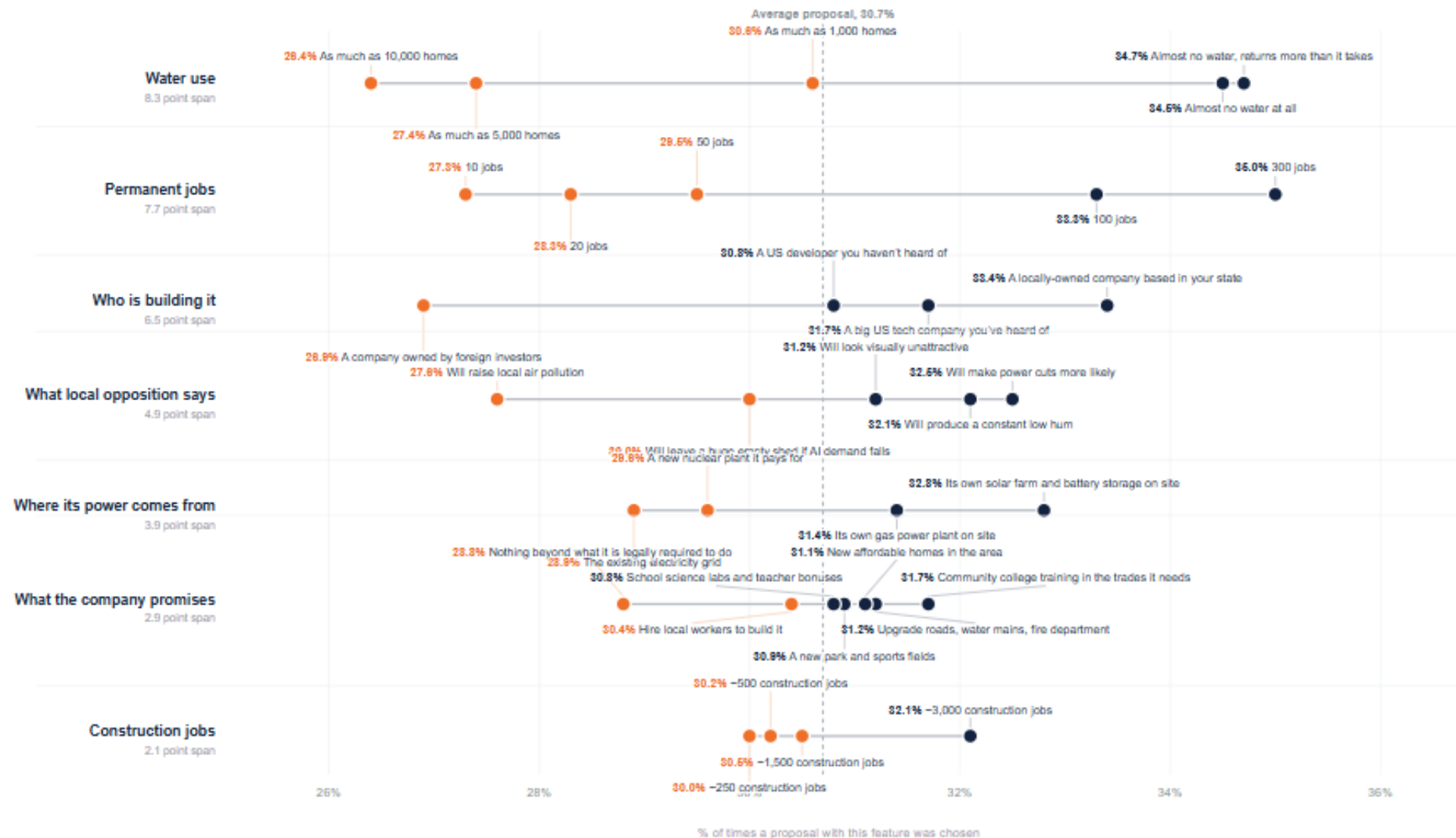
“Which of these commitments from a data center developer would be most, and least, important to you?”

■ Support a data center in their community ■ Oppose a data center in their community



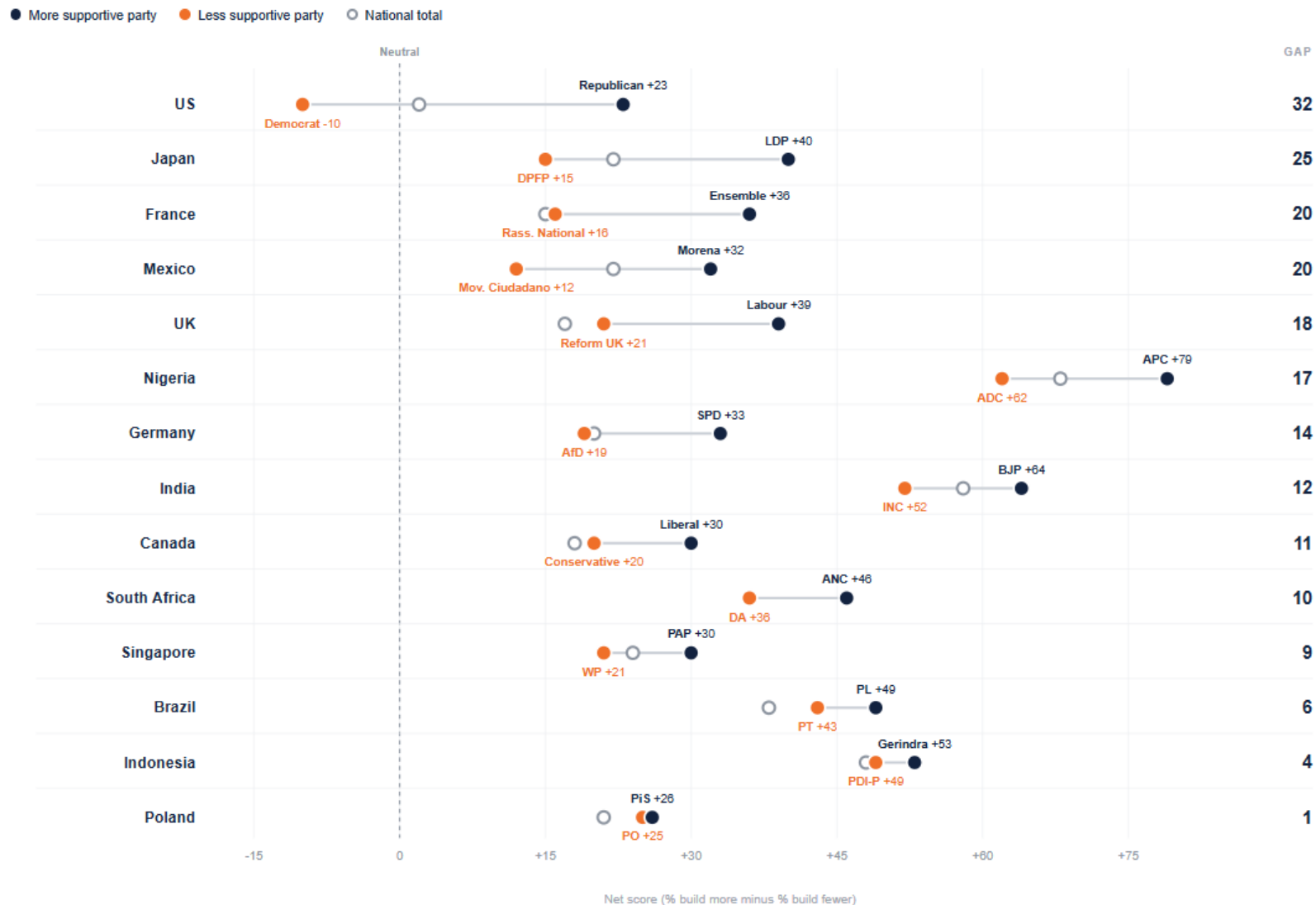
And it shows in the sort of data centers they would choose to build - the critical factor is water usage, ahead of permanent jobs

Two data center proposals were shown side by side, with the option to leave the land undeveloped. How often was each feature chosen?



US Democrats are a big part of the reason for America standing out

“Should your country build more or fewer data centers?”



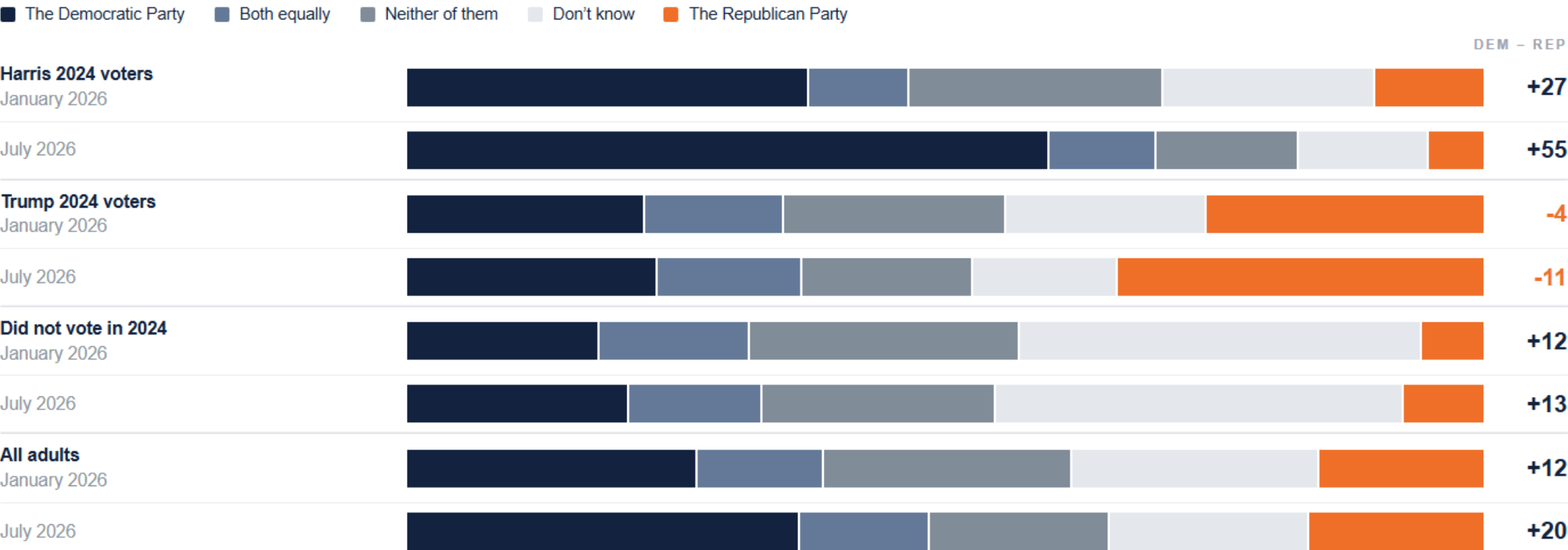
Net score by vote intention. Countries ordered by partisan gap. Weighted, 2026.

Source: Public First - AI Global - 2026



And increasingly are seen by their voters to own the “anti-data-center” narrative

“Which political party do you think would want to stop a data center being built in my local area?”

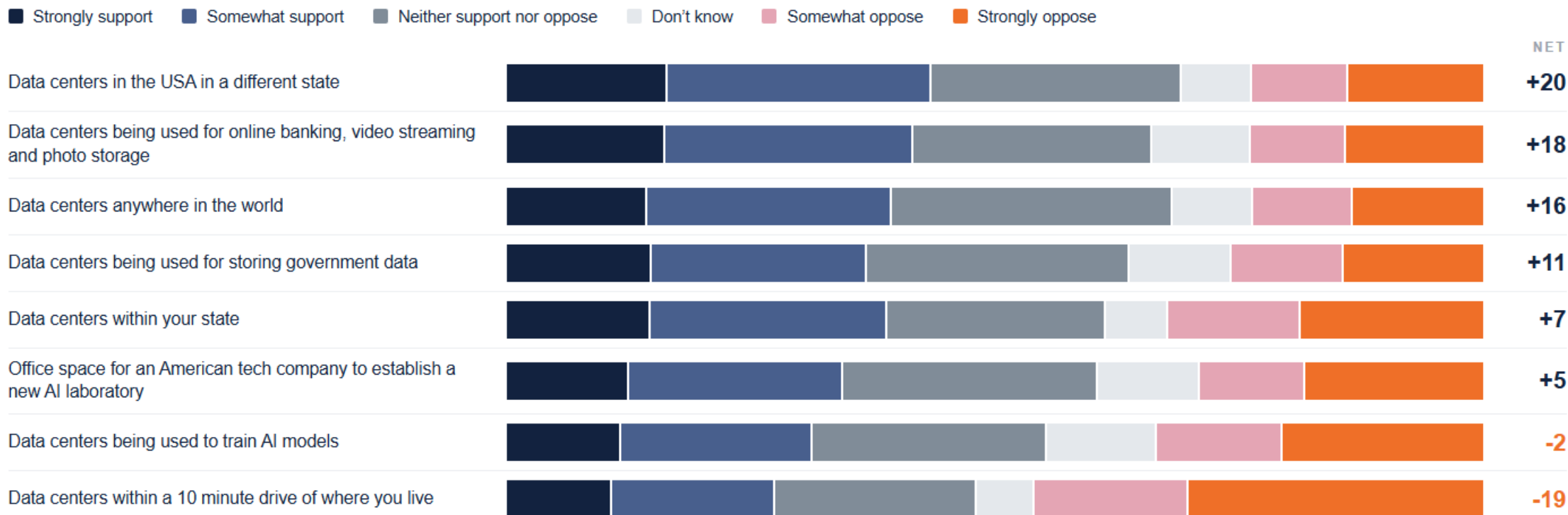


Source: The POLITICO Poll by Public First, Jan 26 - July 26



But crucially, this is not tracking straightforward “NIMBYism” alone - attitudes to AI are critical

“To what extent would you support or oppose the following being built in the United States?”

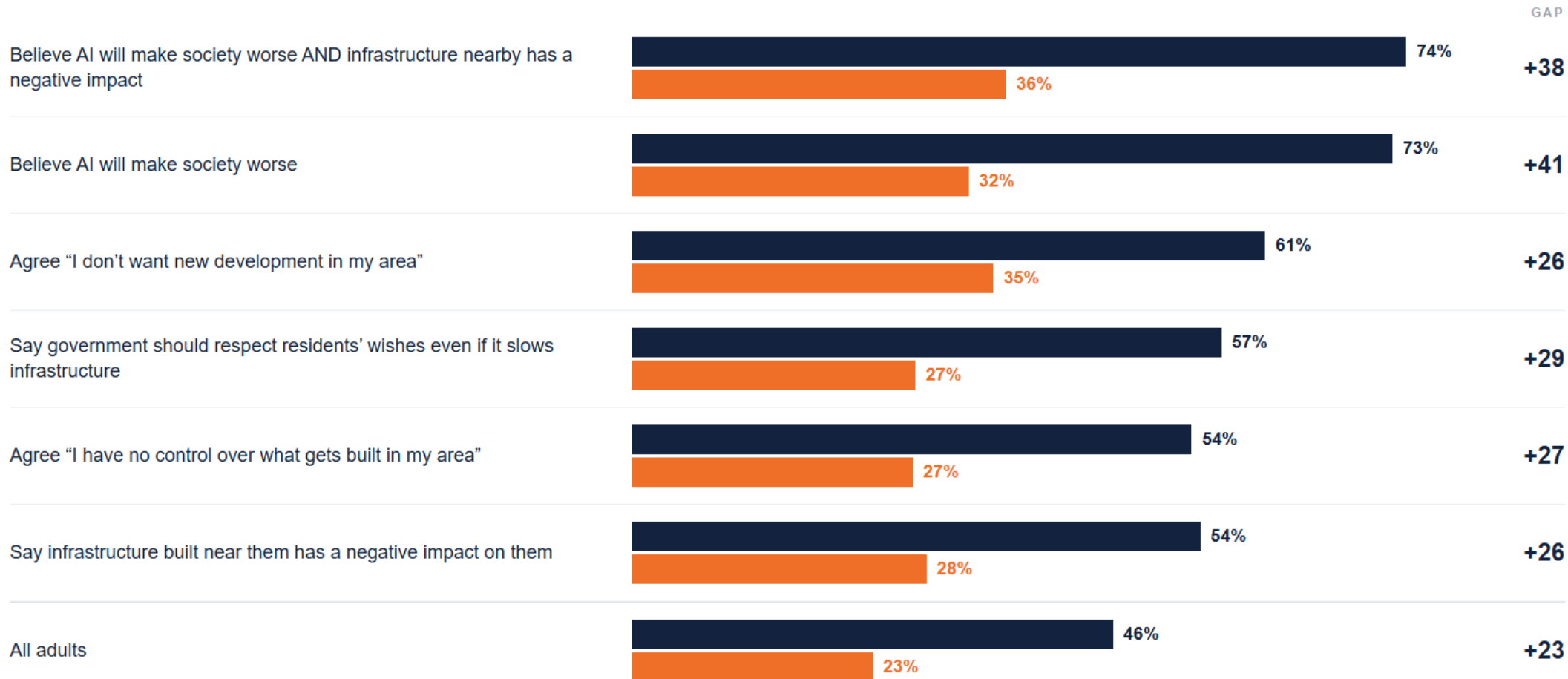




Those who believe AI is bad for society are considerably more opposed to data centers

% who oppose each being built in their community

■ A new data center ■ Other local development (average of nine)



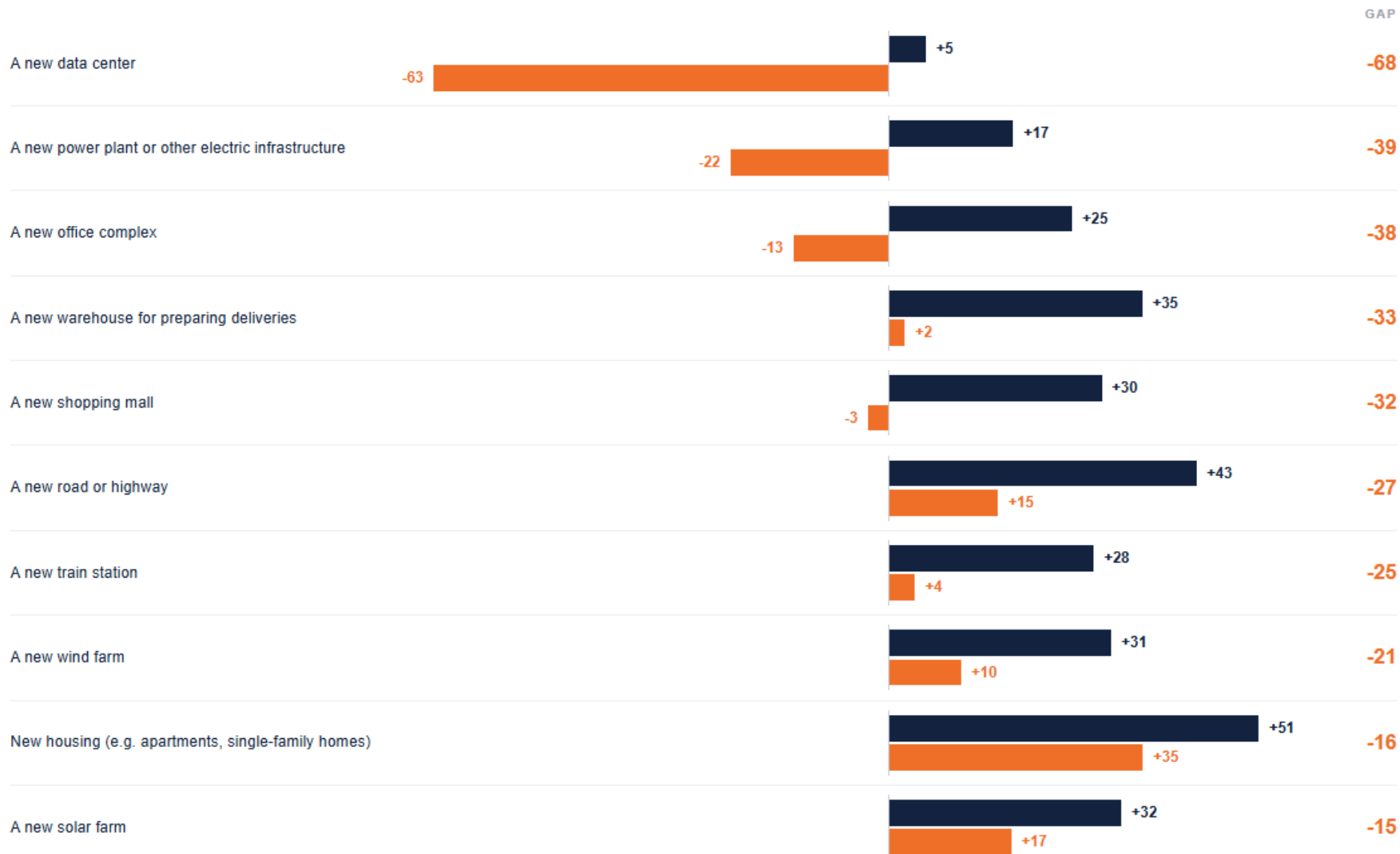
Oppose or strongly oppose. The nine other developments are housing, roads, solar, wind, warehouses, train stations, shopping malls, office complexes and power plants. Groups overlap and are not mutually exclusive.



Though there are generally pessimists, the gap is far wider for data centers

Would you support or oppose the following being built in your community?

■ Says AI will not make society worse ■ Says AI will make society worse

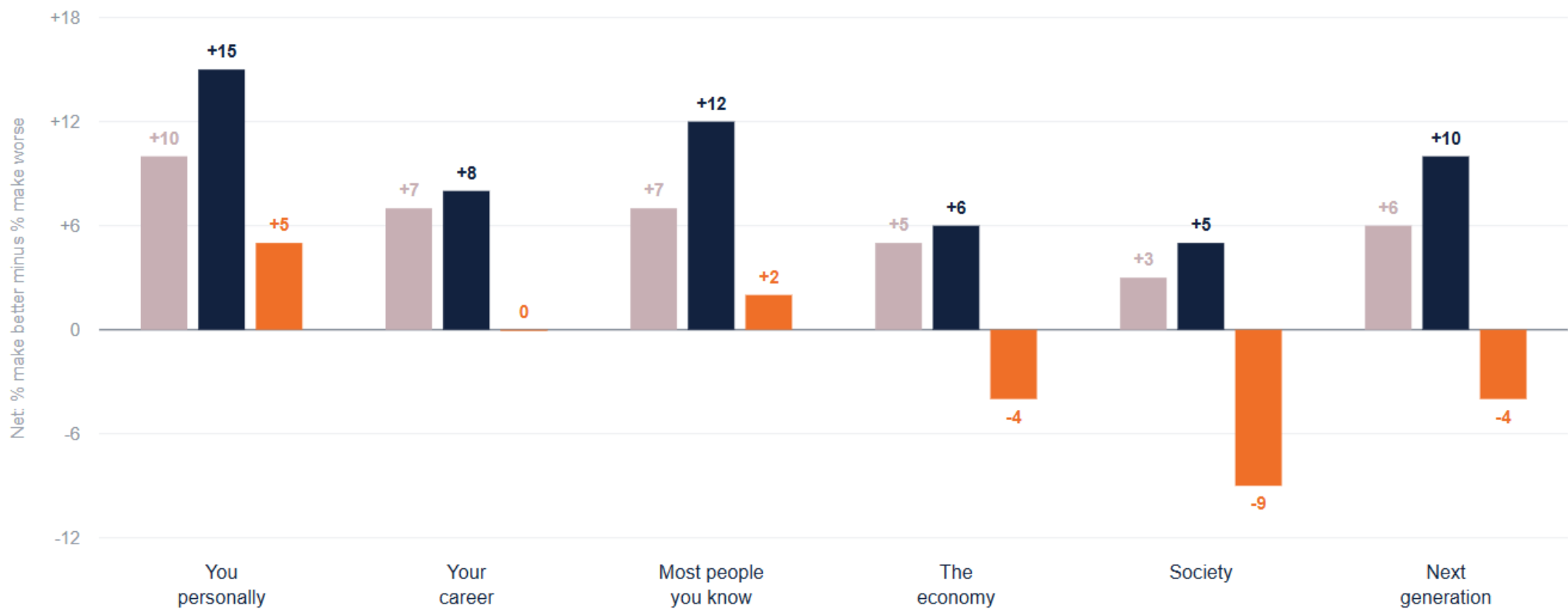




And this sentiment is growing year on year - data center support may fall apart just on AI attitudes

“Do you think AI will make better, make worse, or have no impact for...”

2024 2025 2026



Source: Public First - AI Global - 2026