

# Equity in the Clean Energy Economy (ECEE) 2023 Customer Survey Findings



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# Survey narrative



Equity is at the nexus of the relationship between customers living in frontline communities and their local utility. The survey findings from our annual ECEE survey underline that point.

This year's survey seeks to probe further on what frontline customers and communities need and desire from their relationship with the utility and investments in clean energy. This survey tests the proposition offered by the University of Michigan's Energy Equity Project:

*Energy equity recognizes the historical and cumulative burdens of energy system borne by frontline and low income communities. To eliminate these disparities, energy equity centers the voices of frontline communities in energy planning and decision making and ensures the fair distribution of clean energy benefits and ownership.*

The survey responses are more nuanced and layered on questions of fairness and equity than many advocates. But there is clearly more work to be done on the part of the utilities to fulfill the promise of equity in these communities.

# Survey themes



- **Community** – Customers care deeply about what happens in their communities and would like to be involved in decisions that impact their communities.
- **The past and future** – Transitioning to a clean energy economy also means reckoning with past decisions, including the planning for and siting of utility investments.
- **Health and justice** – Utilities are at a nexus point of driving many clean energy investments and playing a vital role in the economy of the communities they serve, leaving them in a unique position to help drive larger outcomes to improve the health and well being of these communities.

# Research methodology



- The Russell Omnibus was conducted via the internet among 1,035 adults 18 years of age or older from September 29 – October 3, 2023. Figures for gender, age, and geography were weighted where necessary to match their actual proportions in the population. The bases shown in this report are the unweighted bases.
  - The 1,035 omnibus respondents yielded 460 respondents with household incomes of less than \$50k who completed the survey.
  - An additional 144 boost interviews were conducted among respondents with household incomes of less than \$50k to bring the total sample size up to 604.

An invitation to participate in the study was sent by e-mail to panel members who have agreed to be contacted by Russell Research and interviewed over the Internet.

- Participating respondents were interviewed online at a secure Russell Research URL programmed for this study.
- Sample was provided to Russell Research from a leading sample provider.

*All research was carried out in compliance with all relevant legal and ethical requirements within the market and in compliance with ISO 20252:2019.*

# Statistical analysis

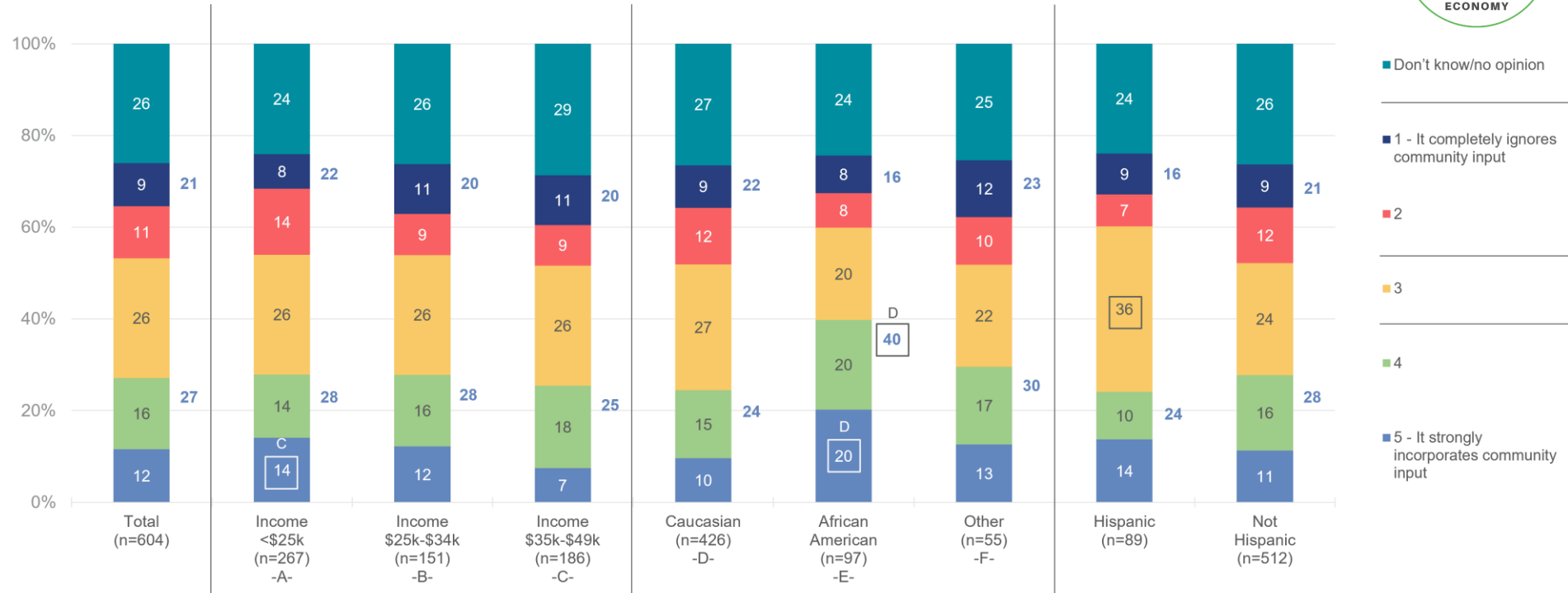


- The statistical significance of a result in this survey is the probability that the observed relationship (e.g., between variables) or a difference (e.g., between means) in a sample occurred by pure chance, and that in the population from which the sample was drawn, no such relationship or differences exist.
- Using less technical terms, one could say that the statistical significance of a result tells us something about the degree to which the result is "true". More technically, the value of the p-value represents a decreasing index of the reliability of a result. The higher the p-value, the less we can believe that the observed relation between variables in the sample is a reliable indicator of the relation between the respective variables in the population.
- Specifically, the p-value represents the probability of error that is involved in accepting our observed result as valid, that is, as "representative of the population." For example, a p-value of .10 (i.e., 1/20) indicates that there is a 10% probability that the relation between the variables found in our sample is a "fluke."
- The following statistical notation is used throughout the report:
  - = Indicates figure is significantly higher than the other/indicated sub-group at a 95% confidence level
- In theory, with probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 4.0 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (non-response), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online survey is not a probability sample.

# Detailed findings

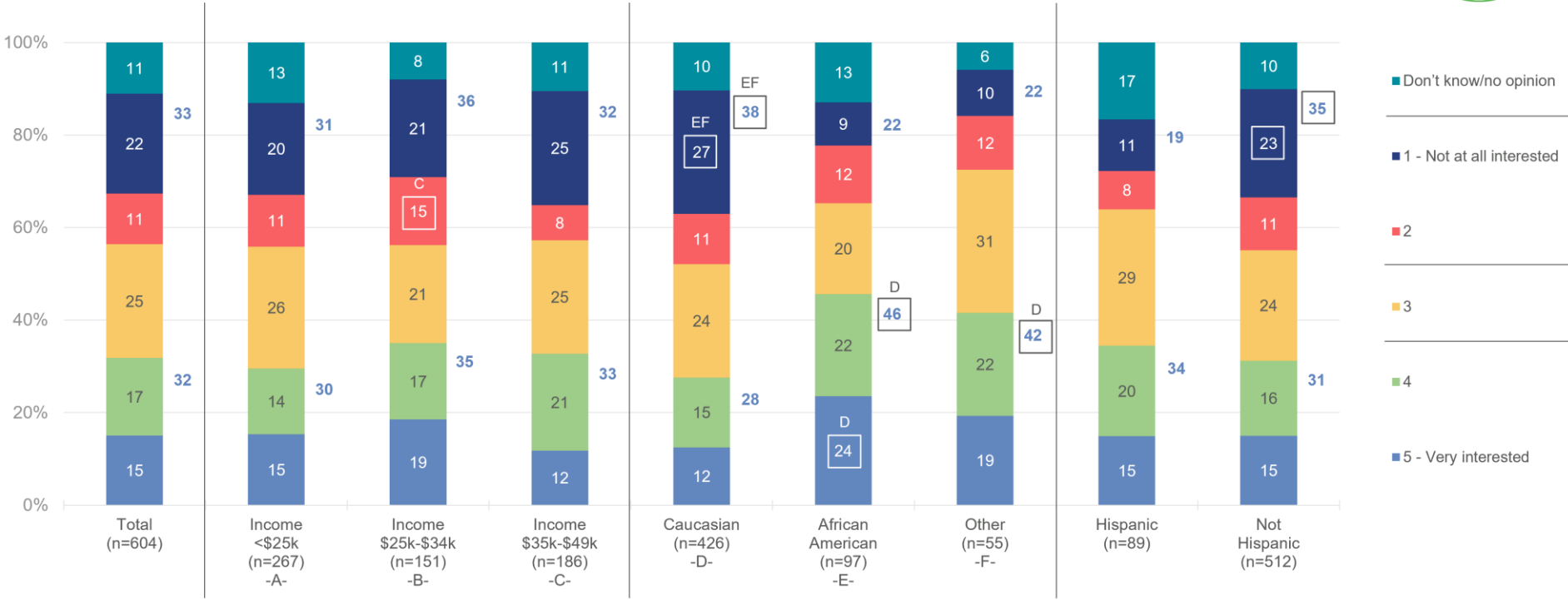


# How well local utility incorporates community input



Base: Total Respondents. H2. One aspect of equity is to ensure that your community is represented in the process of making decisions or investments that directly impact the community. Rate how well your local utility incorporates your community's input into their decision-making.

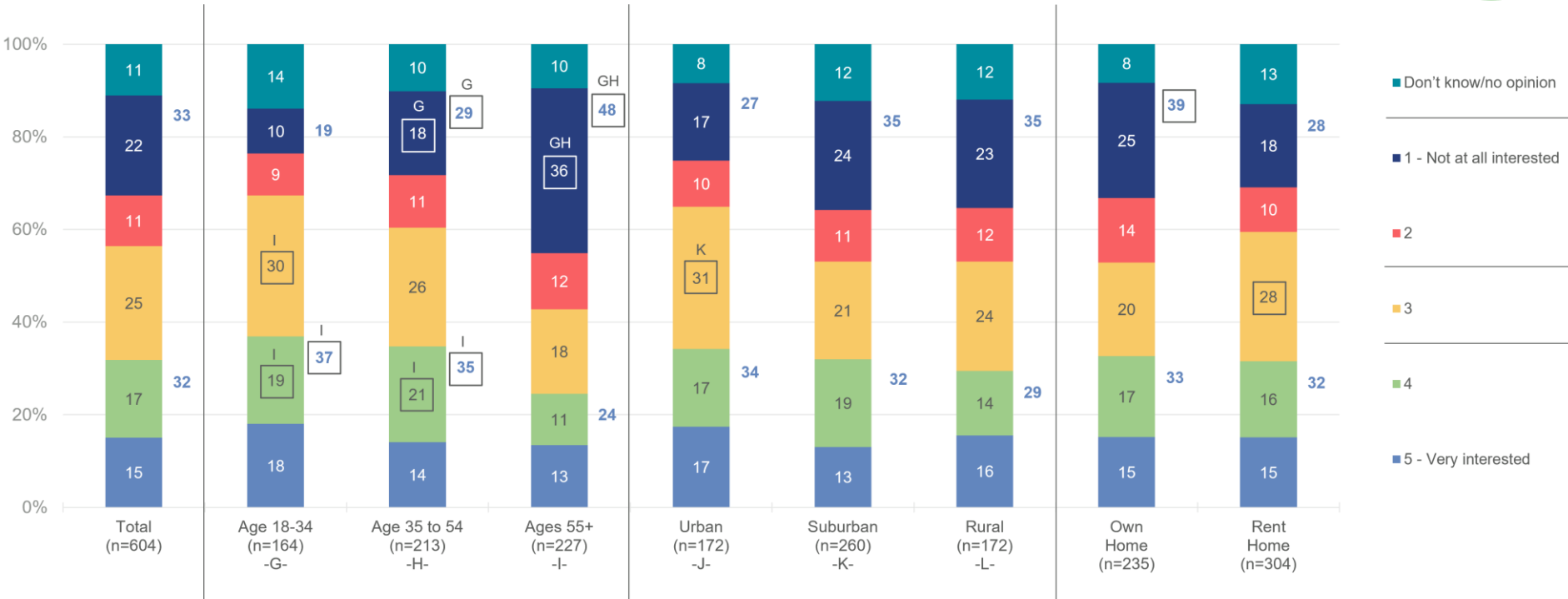
# Interest in volunteering for utility citizen advisory group



Base: Total Respondents. H3. Some utilities work with citizen advisory groups that help guide their decision-making. How interested would you be in volunteering in a group like that in your own community?

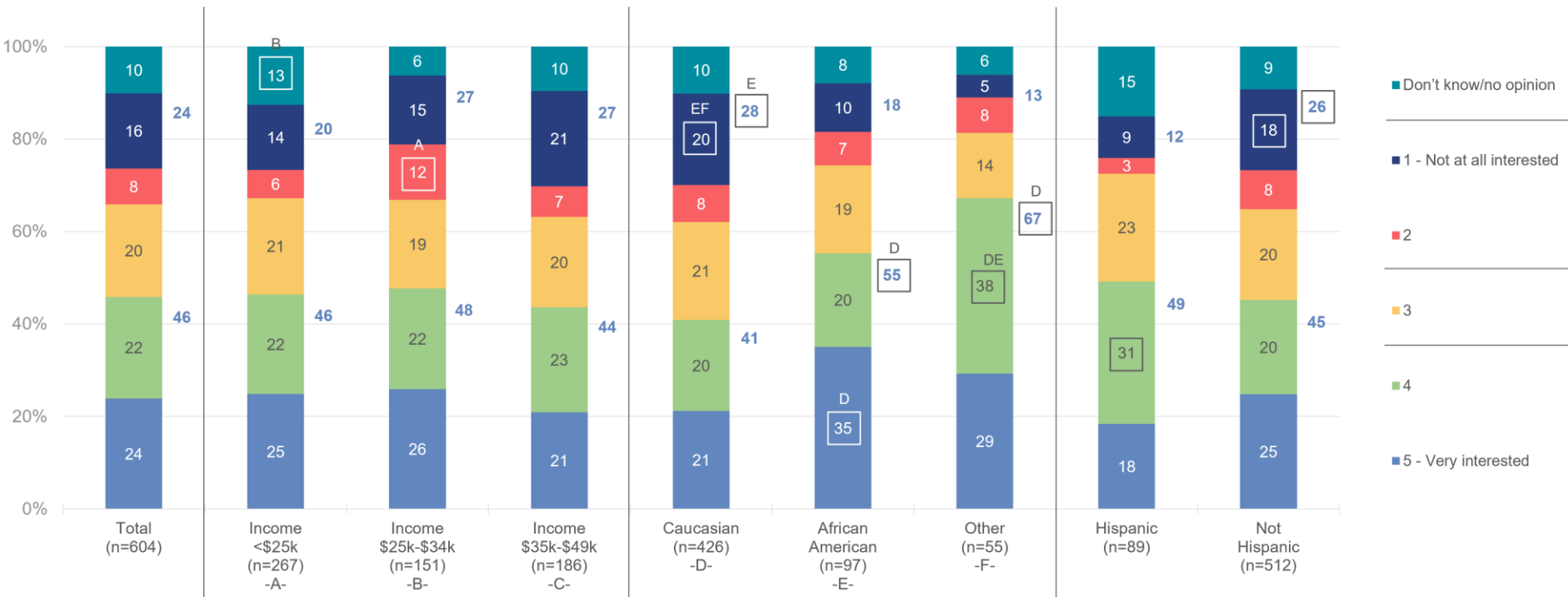


# Interest in volunteering for utility citizen advisory group (cont'd)



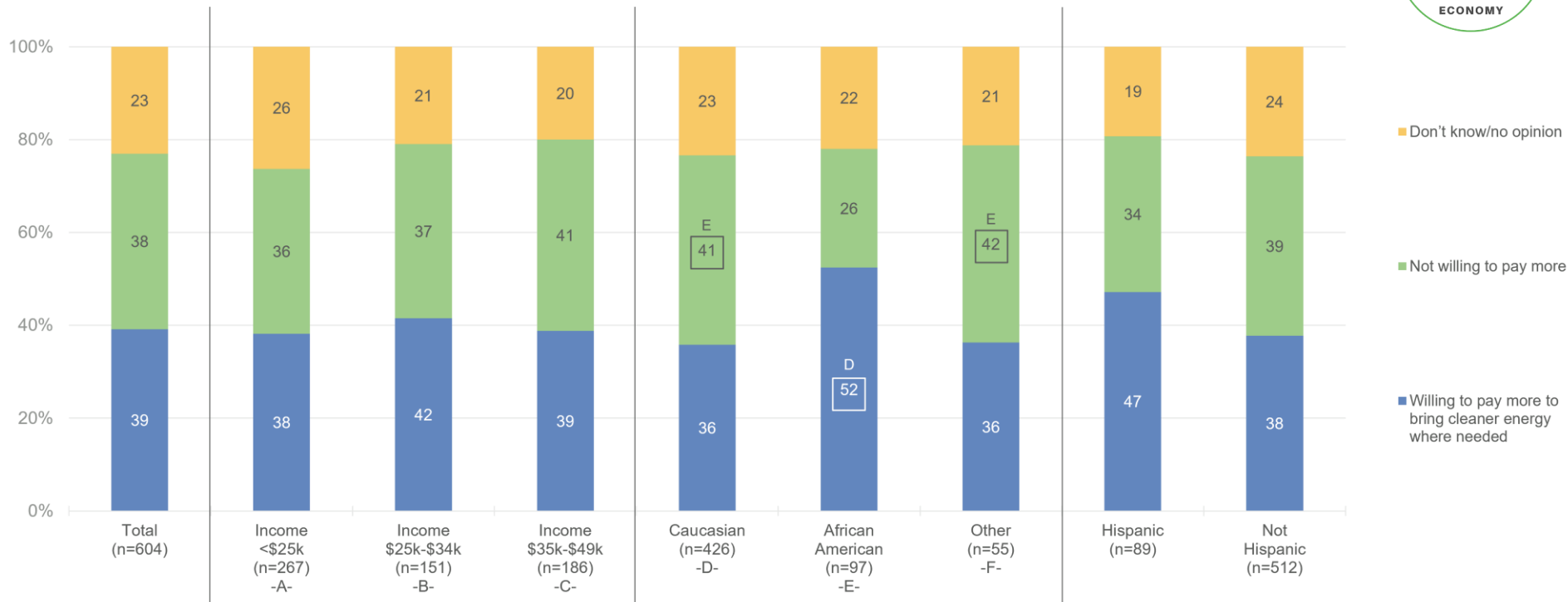
Base: Total Respondents. H3. Some utilities work with citizen advisory groups that help guide their decision-making. How interested would you be in volunteering in a group like that in your own community?

# Interest in volunteering for utility citizen advisory group if compensated



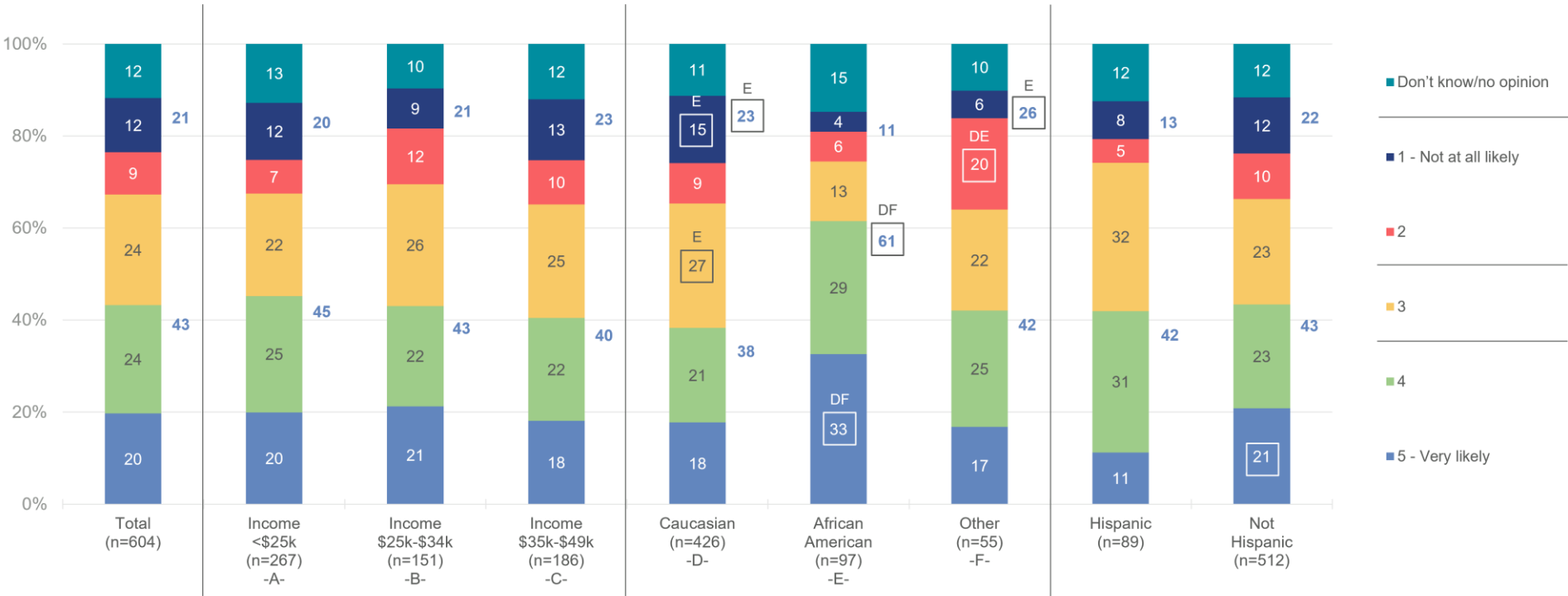
Base: Total Respondents. H4. Some utilities provide compensation in community members to serve in citizen advisory group. How interested would you be in working for a group like that in your own community if you were compensated fairly for your time?

# Willingness to pay more to bring clean energy

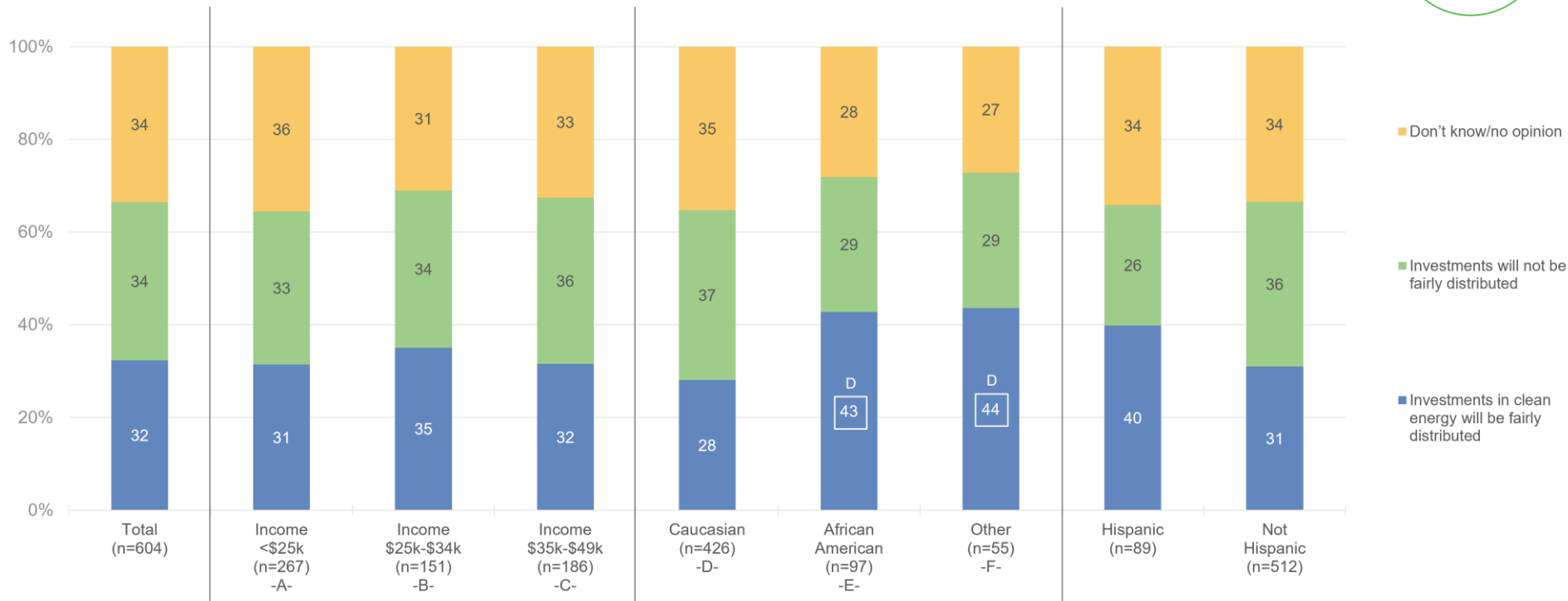


Base: Total Respondents. H5. Many utilities are making investments that can lead to cleaner energy, less pollution, and assisting households most in need. In the first few years of these investments, this could mean higher utility bills for you to pay. Given the potential benefits, would you be willing to pay a bit more to bring cleaner energy to the households most in need?

# Likelihood to recommend job training/placement opportunities from local utility

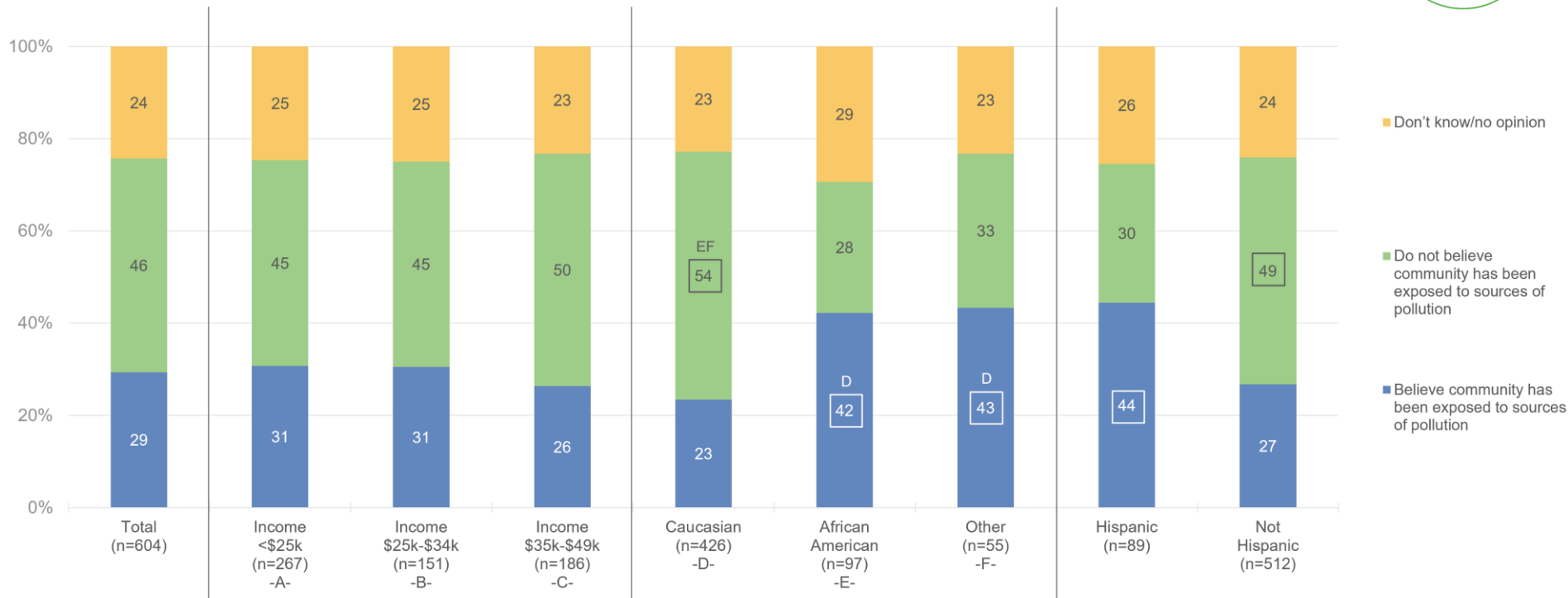


# Clean energy investments will be fairly distributed in your community compared to other communities



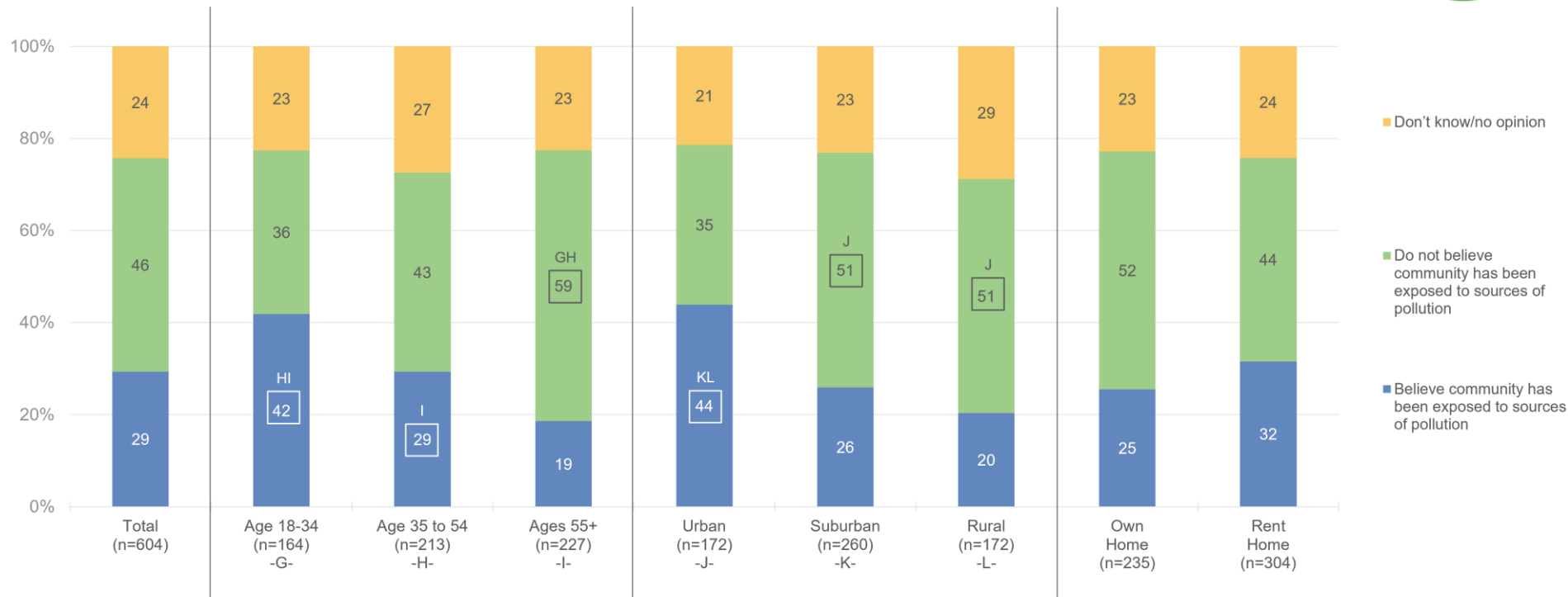
Base: Total Respondents. H9. Do you think investments in clean energy will be fairly distributed in your community compared to other communities?

# Community has been exposed to more pollutants than other communities



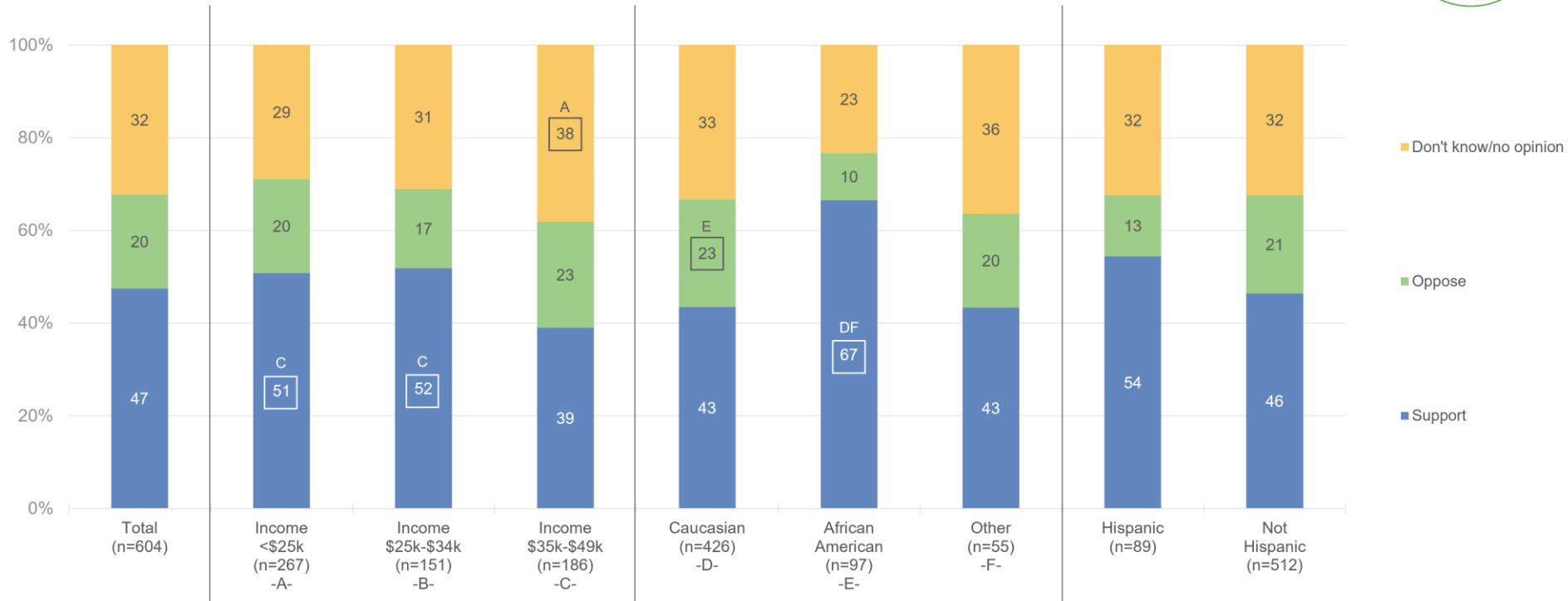
Base: Total Respondents. H11. Do you believe that your community has been more exposed to sources of pollution than other communities?

# Community has been exposed to more pollutants than other communities (cont'd)



Base: Total Respondents. H11. Do you believe that your community has been more exposed to sources of pollution than other communities?

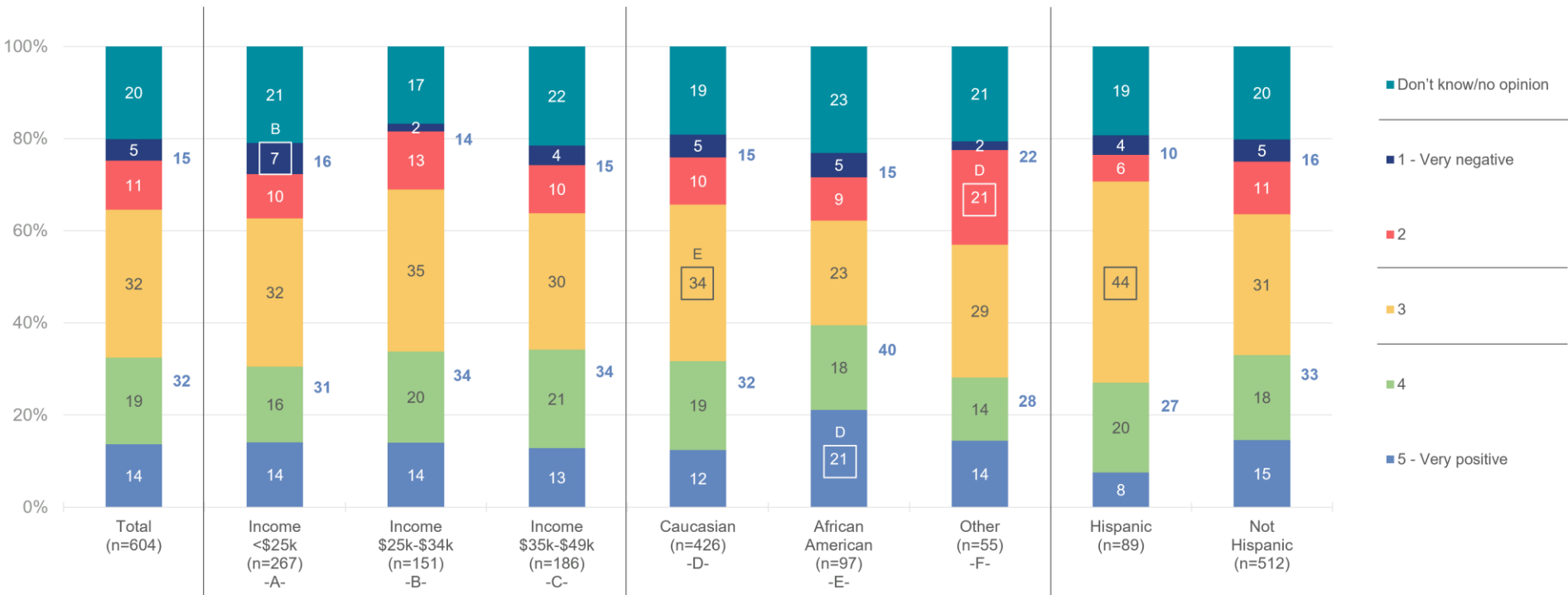
# Support for Biden administration goal of 40% clean energy investments benefiting disadvantaged communities



Base: Total Respondents. H1. The Biden administration has a goal of ensuring 40% of benefits from clean energy investments will benefit disadvantaged communities. Do you support or oppose this goal?

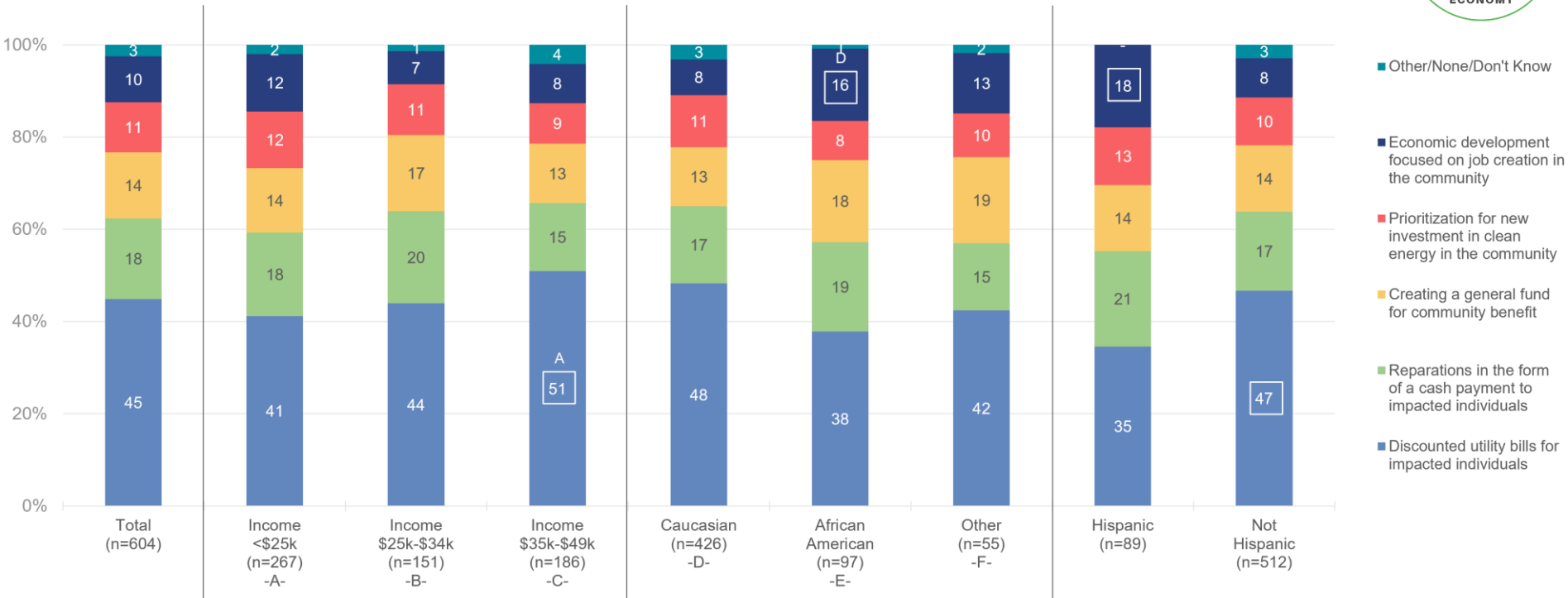


# Impact of local utility decisions/investments on local community



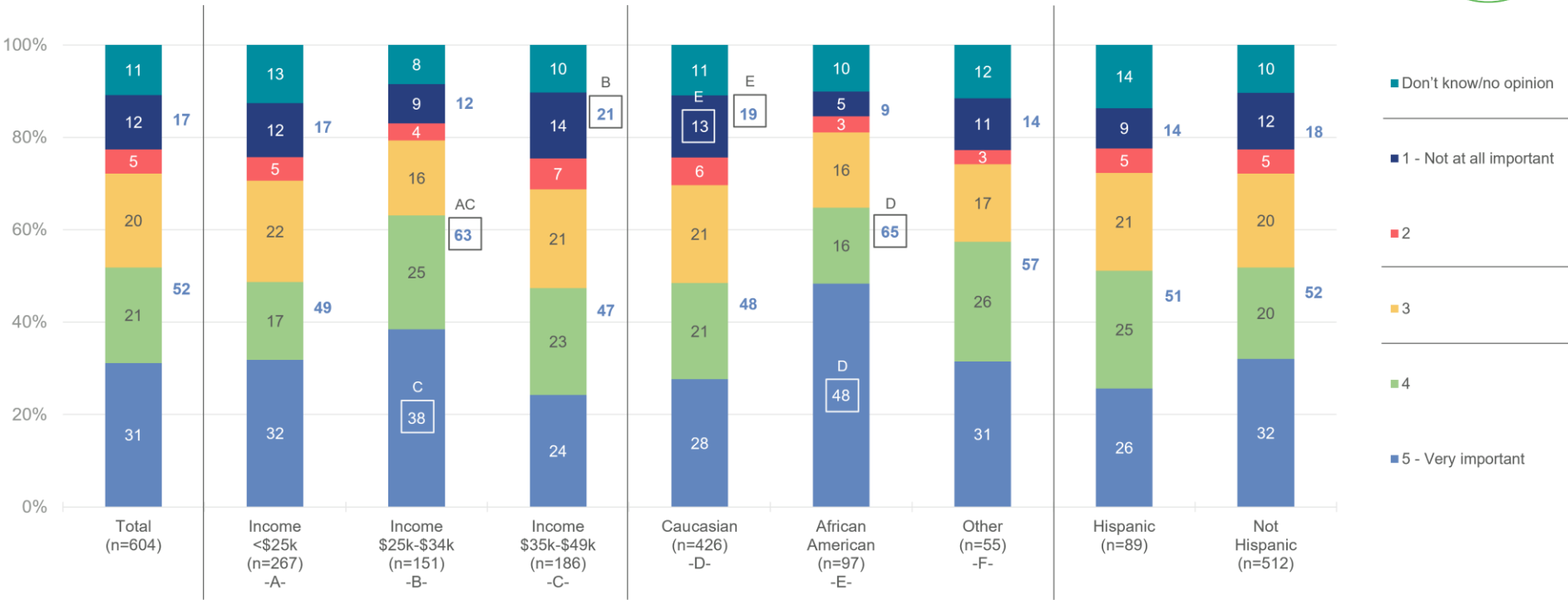
Base: Total Respondents. H7. Another aspect of equity is recognizing that past decisions and investments by utilities have impacted their customers and communities in different ways. How would you rate your local utility in terms of its impact on your community?

# Best way local utility should compensate community for negative impacts of past decisions/investments



Base: Total Respondents. H8. For any negative impacts caused by your local utility's past decisions or investments, how best should your community be compensated?

# Importance that local utility employs diverse/inclusive workforce



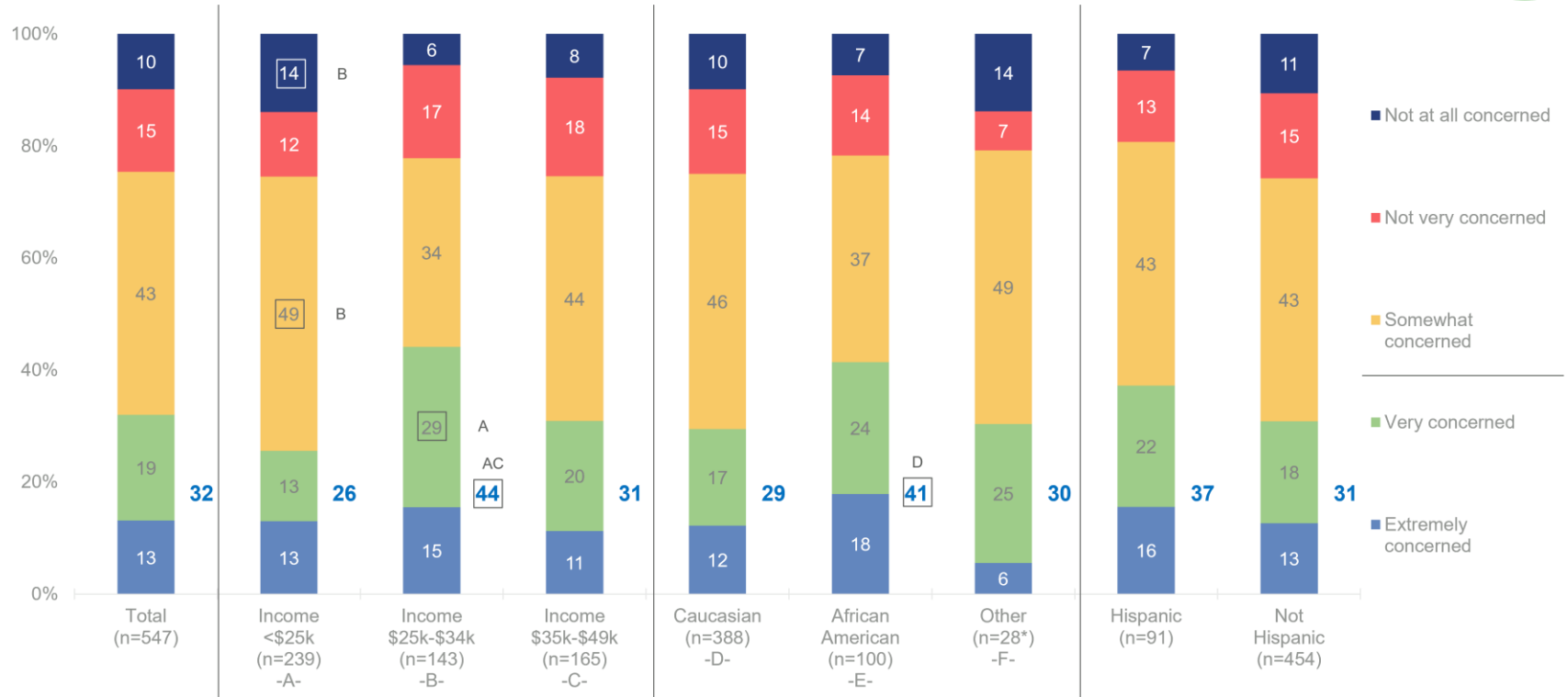
Base: Total Respondents. H10. How important is it to you that your local utility employs a diverse and inclusive workforce?



# LIEIF-DSM equity survey

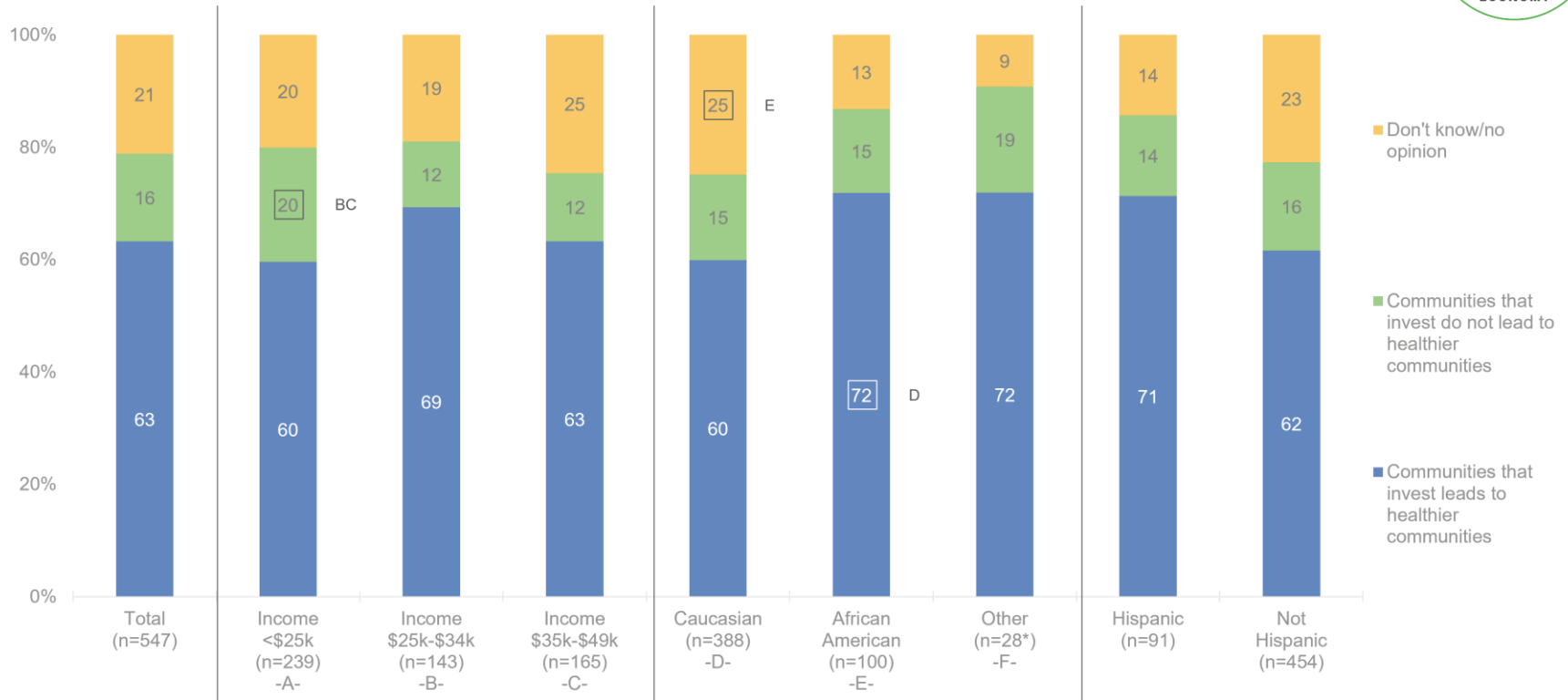


# Concern level about pollution/climate change on personal health



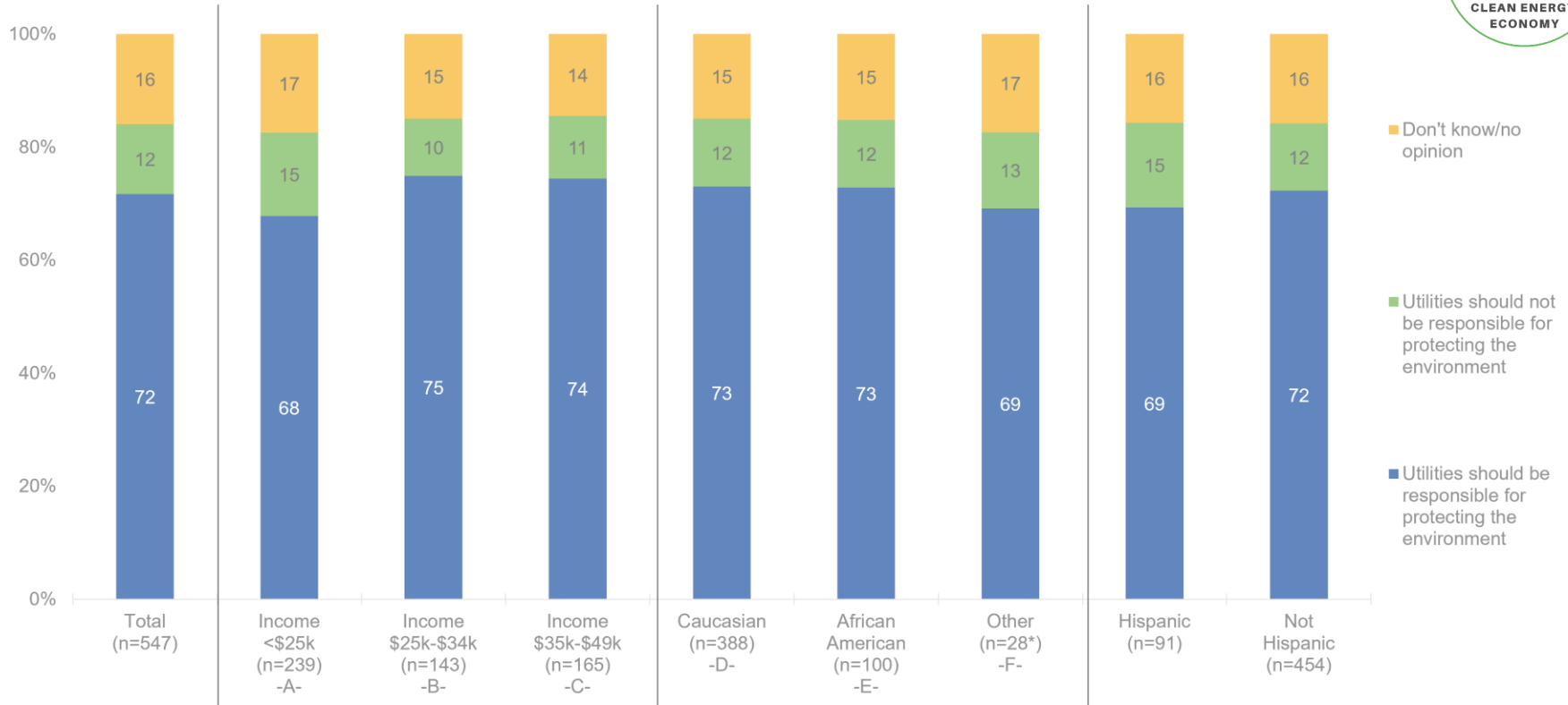
\*Use caution small base size. Base: Total Pay Utility Bills. H16. How concerned are you about your local pollution and the impacts of climate change on your community negatively affect your health?

# Communities that invest leads to healthier communities



\*Use caution small base size. Base: Total Pay Utility Bills. H17. Do you believe that communities that invest more into clean/renewable-energy lead to healthier communities?

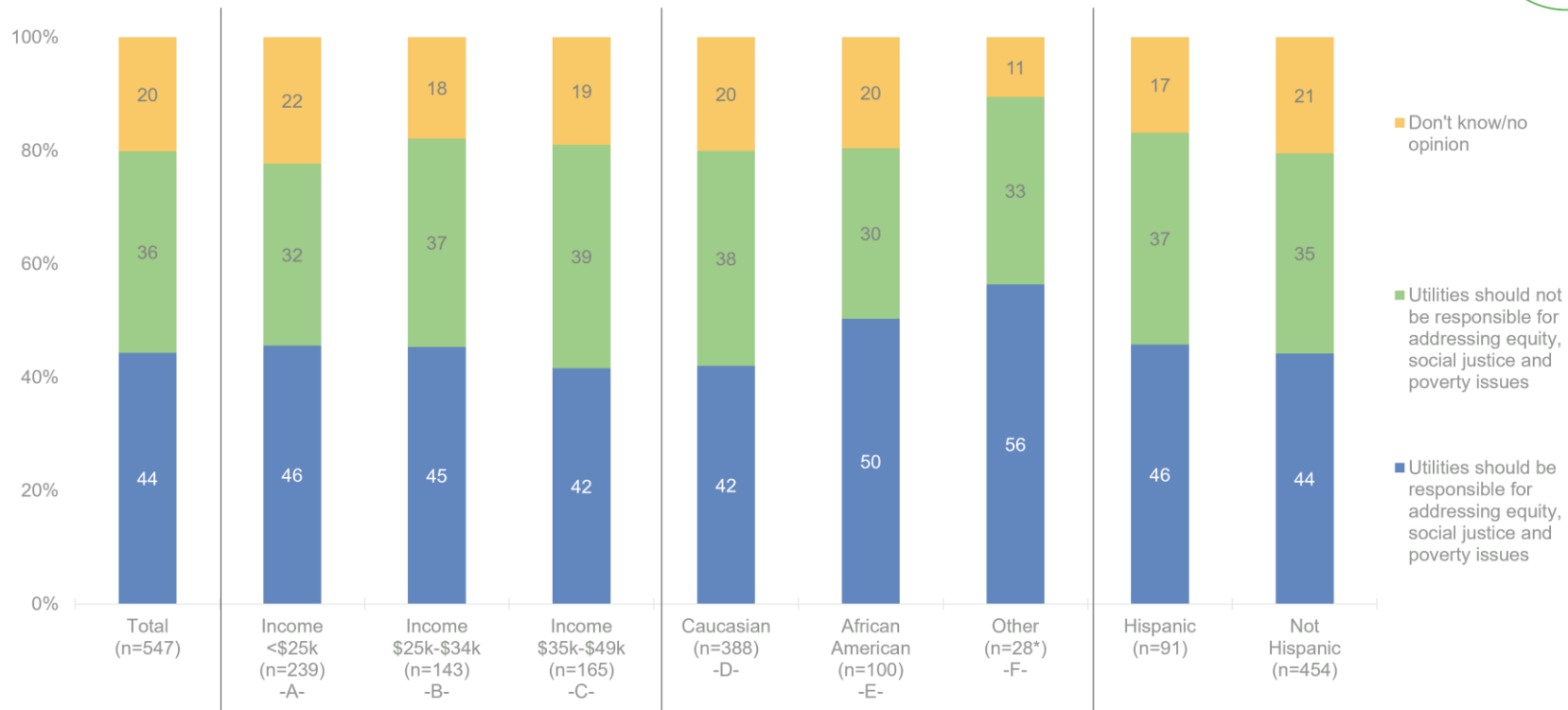
# Utilities' responsibility to help protect the environment



- Don't know/no opinion
- Utilities should not be responsible for protecting the environment
- Utilities should be responsible for protecting the environment

\*Use caution small base size. Base: Total Pay Utility Bills. H18. Do you think it's your utility's responsibility to do their part in protecting the environment?

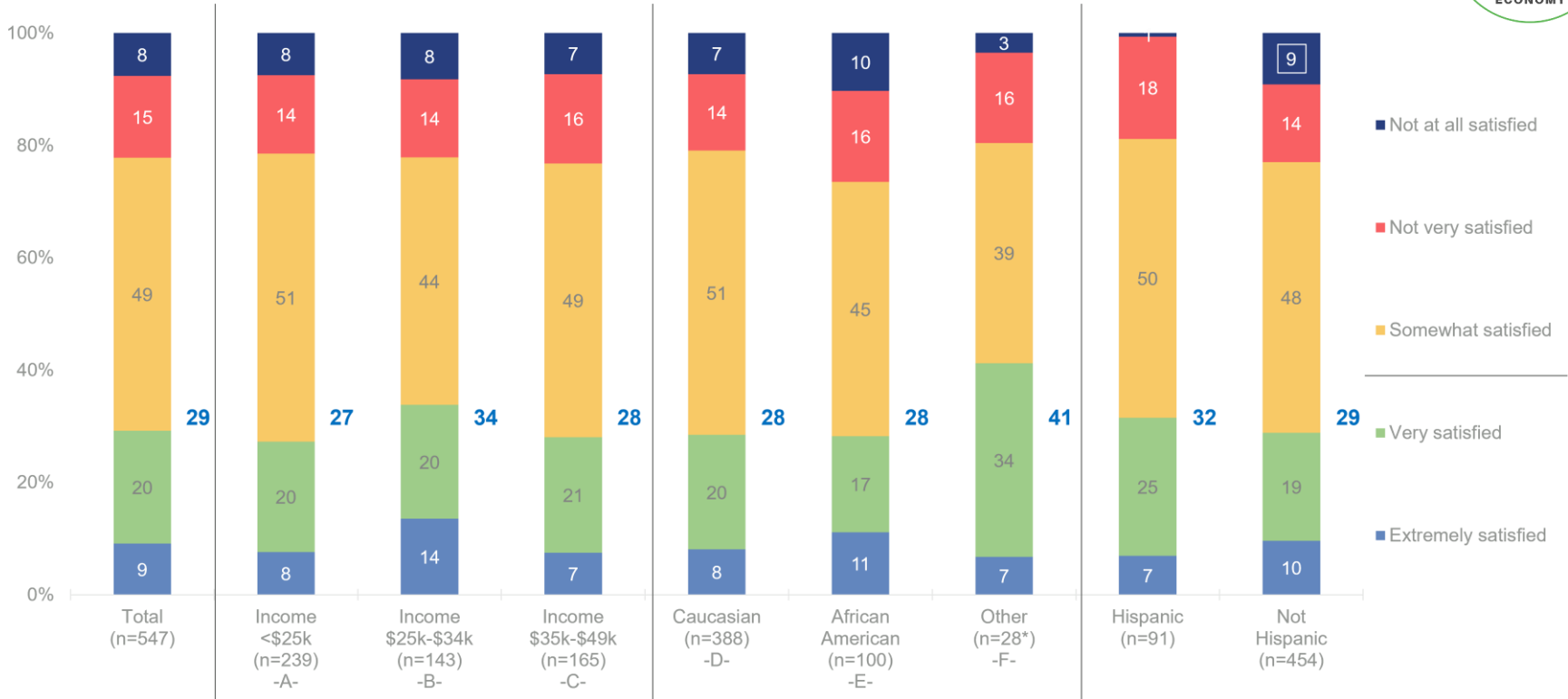
# Utilities' responsibility to address issues like equity, social justice and poverty



\*Use caution small base size. Base: Total Pay Utility Bills. H19. Do you think it's your utility's responsibility to do their part in addressing larger issues like equity, social justice, and poverty?



# Satisfaction Level with Utilities' Addressing Issues Like Equity, Social Justice and Poverty



\*Use caution small base size. Base: Total Pay Utility Bills. H20. How satisfied are you with your local gas or electricity utility's efforts in addressing larger issues like equity, social justice, and poverty?

# Lessons learned



# Lessons learned



- Bring customers into the decision-making process early on – customers, especially younger ones, have an appetite to be involved more, either in the form of an advisory group or by joining the utility workforce. Pay folks for their time!
- When thinking of where to start, job training for clean energy jobs is a clear winner.
- Customers have a generally negative or indifferent view of their utility’s impact on social issues – many customers have an expectation of most companies to use their voice and influence to drive positive outcomes for people. Utilities have a unique presence in local communities which can be leveraged to move the needle both on the issues customers care about as well as the perception those customers have.
- When crafting programs of services, keep a holistic view in mind – pollution, health, social justice, clean energy investments, community feedback. These are all factors that can be brought into consideration when assessing the success of certain programs or projects.

# Contacts



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