

Center for American Progress

Findings and Recommendations from Survey About
Crime and Public Safety

Methodology



Impact Research conducted a multi-modal poll of registered voters nationwide with an oversample of Black, Hispanic, and AAPI voters.




The sample includes N=1000 registered voters with an oversample of N=300 Black, Hispanic, and AAPI voters collected via text-to-web and an online panel.



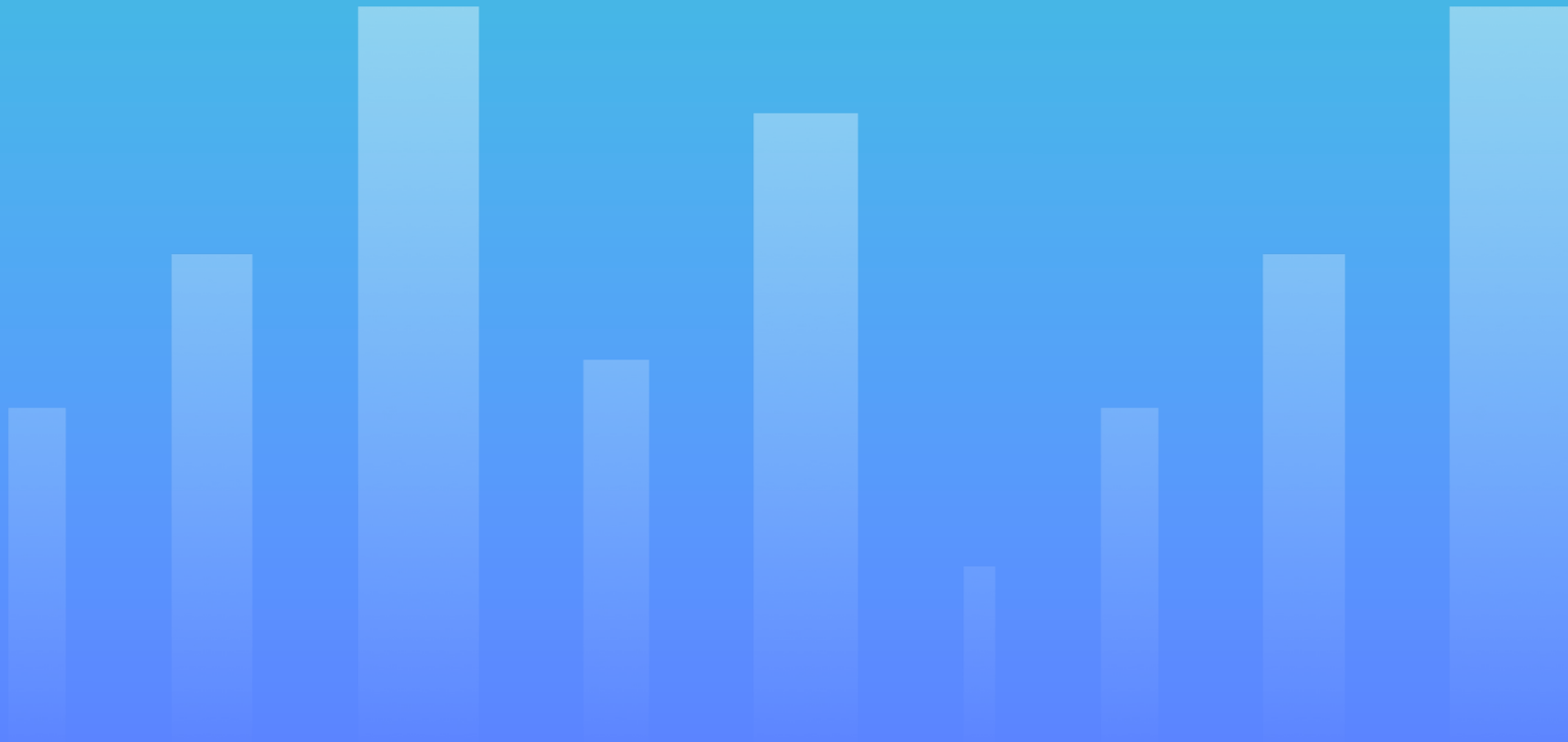
Interviews were conducted between November 14th -21st, 2023.



The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error for subgroups varies and is higher.



POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

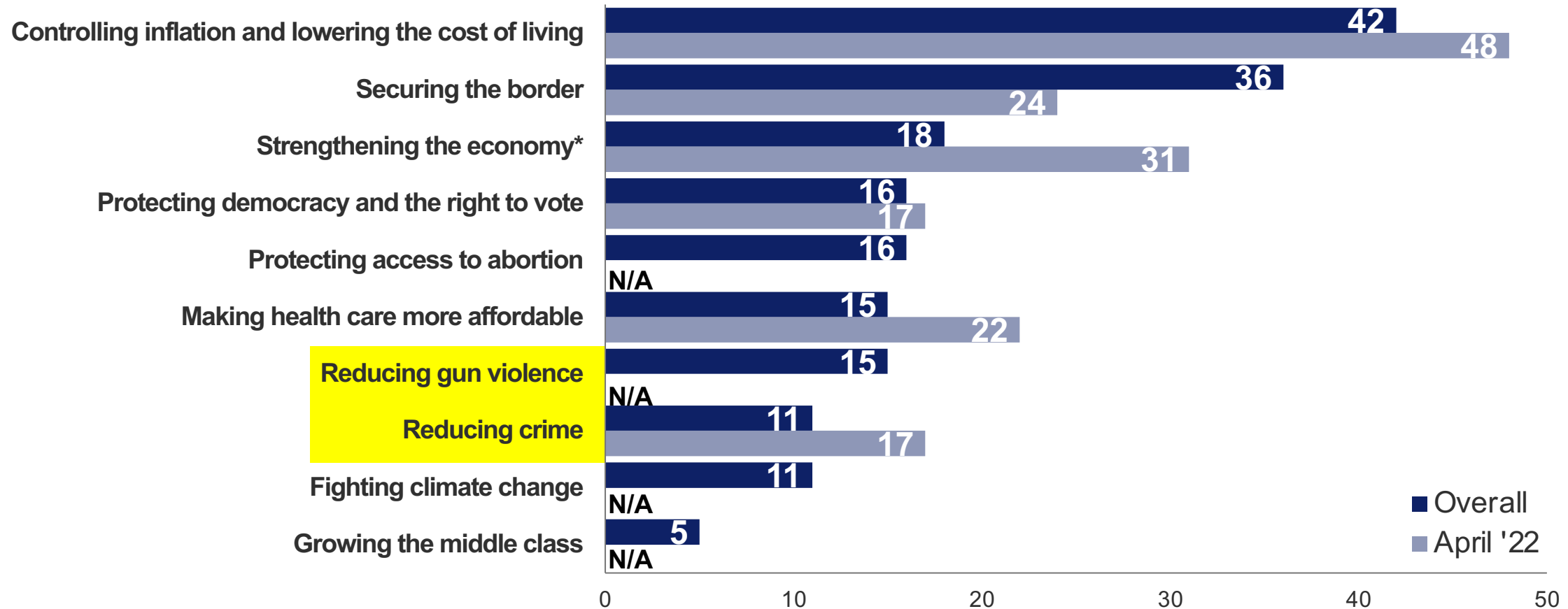


IMPACT
RESEARCH

Controlling inflation remains the top priority for voters and combined with strengthening the economy gets well over 50%.

Reducing gun violence and crime are a mid-tier priorities overall.

Which one or two of the following do you feel are the most important issues that our elected officials should make a top priority?



*April 2022 number reflects % who selected “rebuilding the economy”.

Montgomery, AL • Washington, DC • Chicago • Boston • New York

Reducing gun violence is more important to Democrats and Black and AAPI voters than voters overall.

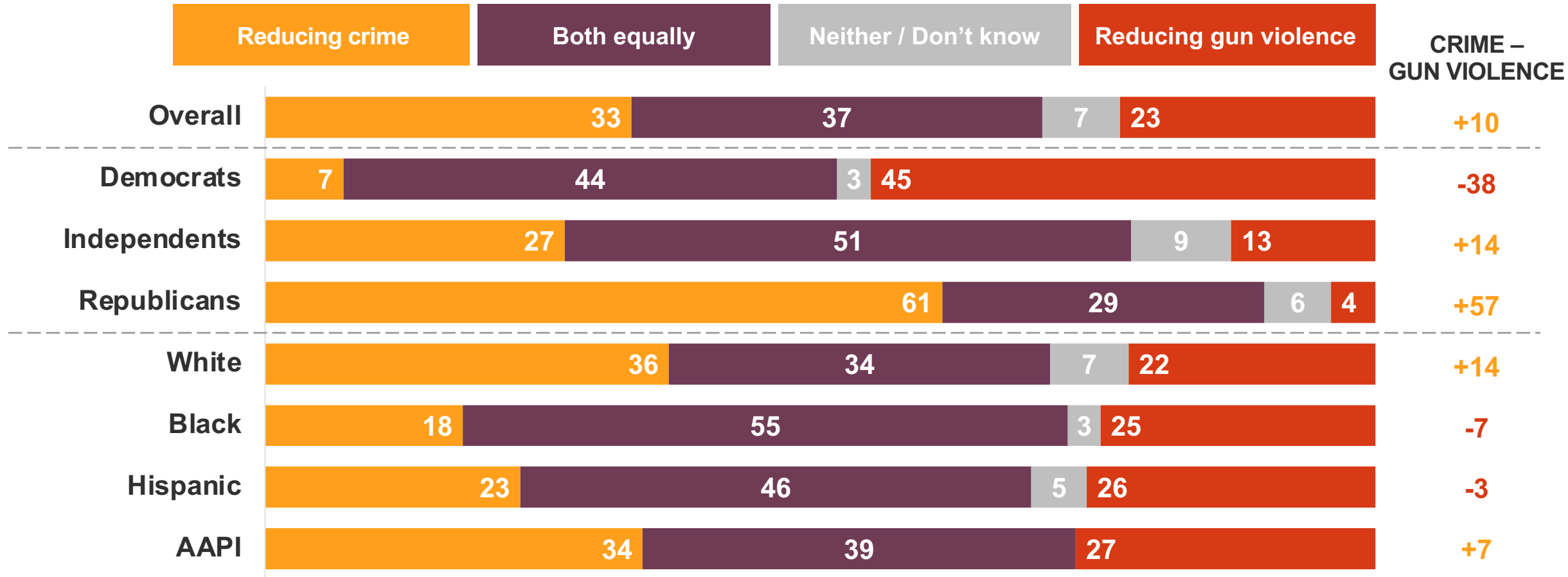
Inflation is a top tier priority for voters across demographics, including Democrats.

<i>% Top Two Issue Priorities</i>	Overall	Dem	Inds	Rep	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI
Controlling inflation and lowering the cost of living	42	29	46	53	41	41	46	50
Securing the border	36	5	27	67	41	15	23	26
Strengthening the economy	18	9	16	28	17	21	20	14
Protecting democracy and the right to vote	16	30	12	4	16	18	17	14
Protecting access to abortion	16	31	13	3	15	21	18	15
Making health care more affordable	15	21	23	7	13	29	16	18
Reducing gun violence	15	29	14	3	14	25	14	22
Reducing crime	11	6	14	15	11	9	11	18
Fighting climate change	11	22	7	1	11	8	14	12
Growing the middle class	5	6	8	2	4	6	7	2

A plurality say reducing crime and gun violence are equally important but there is nuance across partisanship.

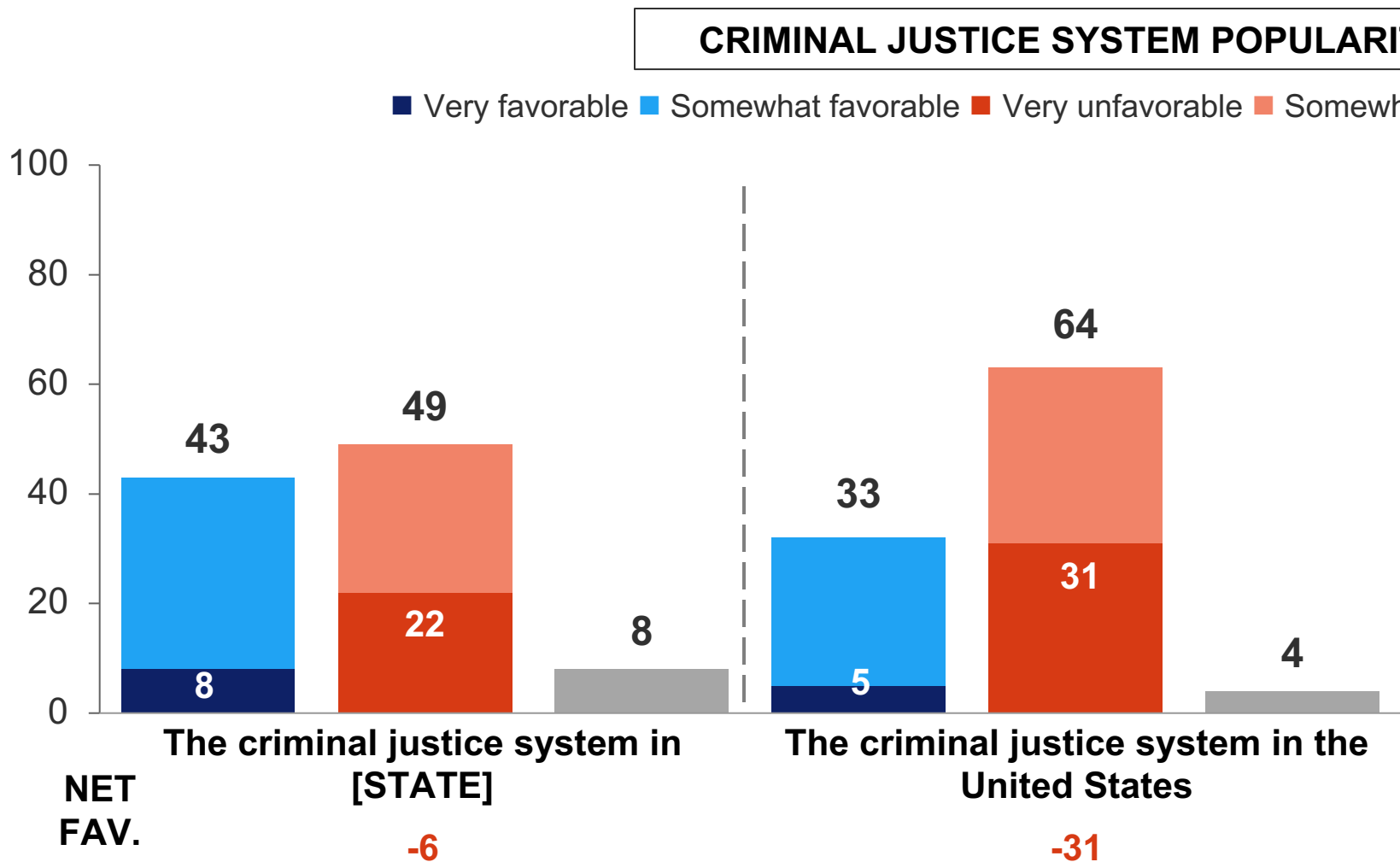
Democrats are much more inclined to point to gun violence while Republicans point to reducing crime.

Which of these two is more important for your elected officials to make a top priority?



Voters are not fond of the criminal justice system, even locally.

White voters in the south, white men, and white Democratic voters as well as older voters are most favorable to their states criminal justice system and unfavorable to it nationally.



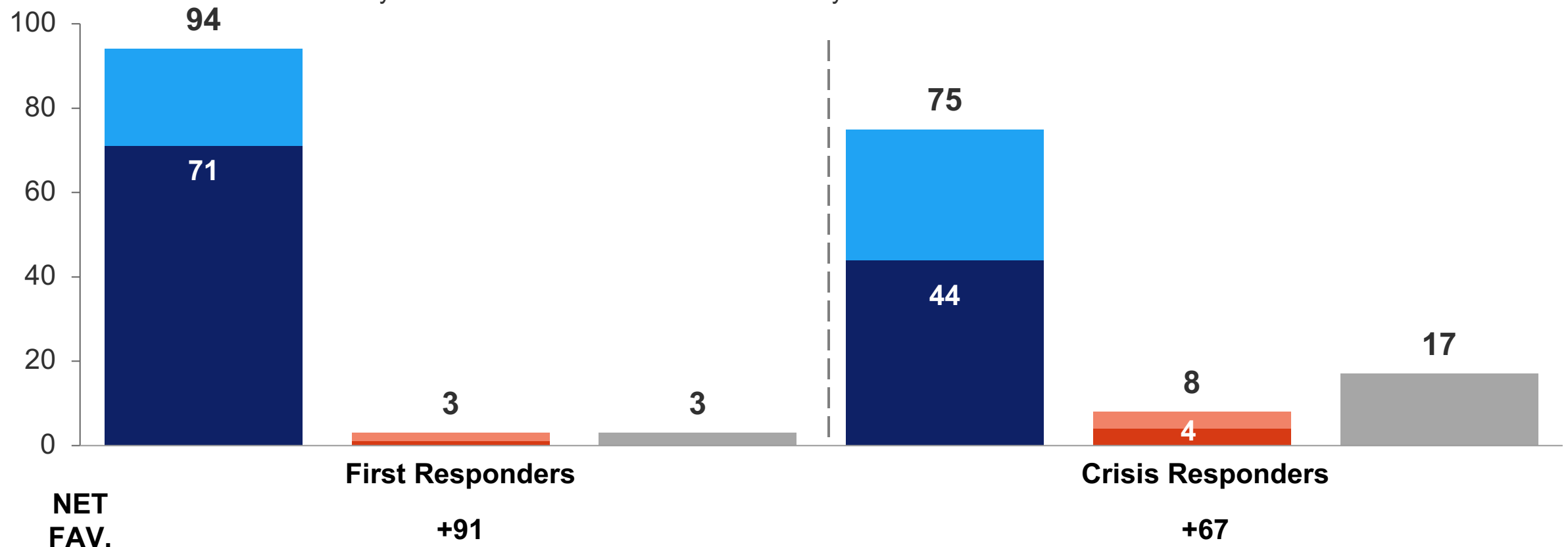
Net Favorability	State	U.S
White Southern	+10	-29
65+	+11	-23
White College Men	+17	-14
White Men 50+	+12	-19
White College	+10	-19
Mod/Cons. Dem	+15	-3
White Dem	+12	-1

Emergency responders have a good reputation as do crisis responders although voters are slightly less familiar with them.

Neither carries any real negativity.

EMERGENCY RESPONDERS POPULARITY

■ Very favorable ■ Somewhat favorable ■ Very unfavorable ■ Somewhat favorable ■ Can't rate



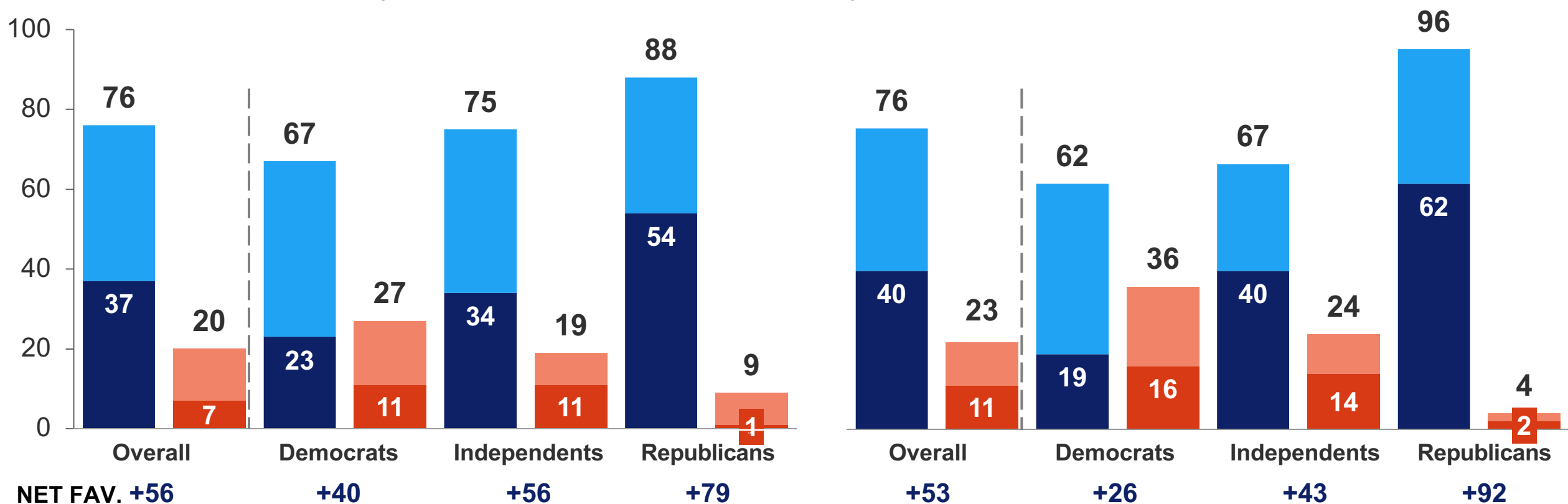
Both the police and local police departments continue to be broadly popular overall and across partisan lines.

Even 2-in-3 Democrats continue to be favorable of the police.

YOUR LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT

THE POLICE

■ Very Favorable ■ Somewhat Favorable ■ Very Unfavorable ■ Somewhat Unfavorable

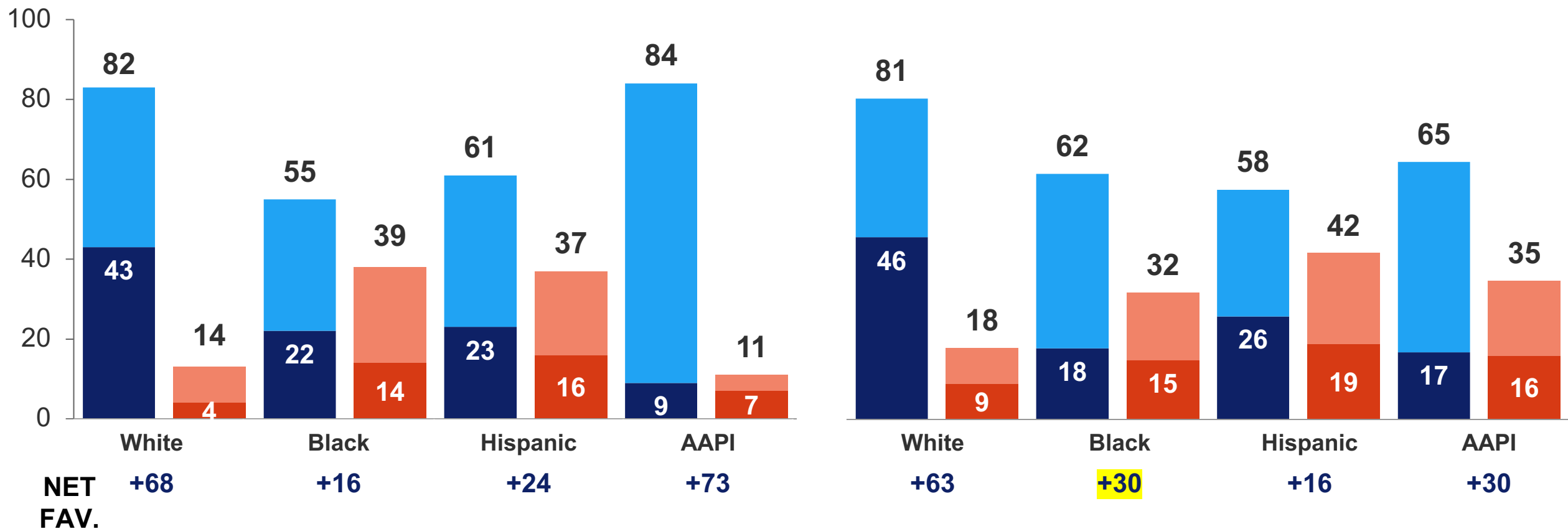


Positive assessments of the police extend to voters of color as well although white voters are most favorable.

YOUR LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT

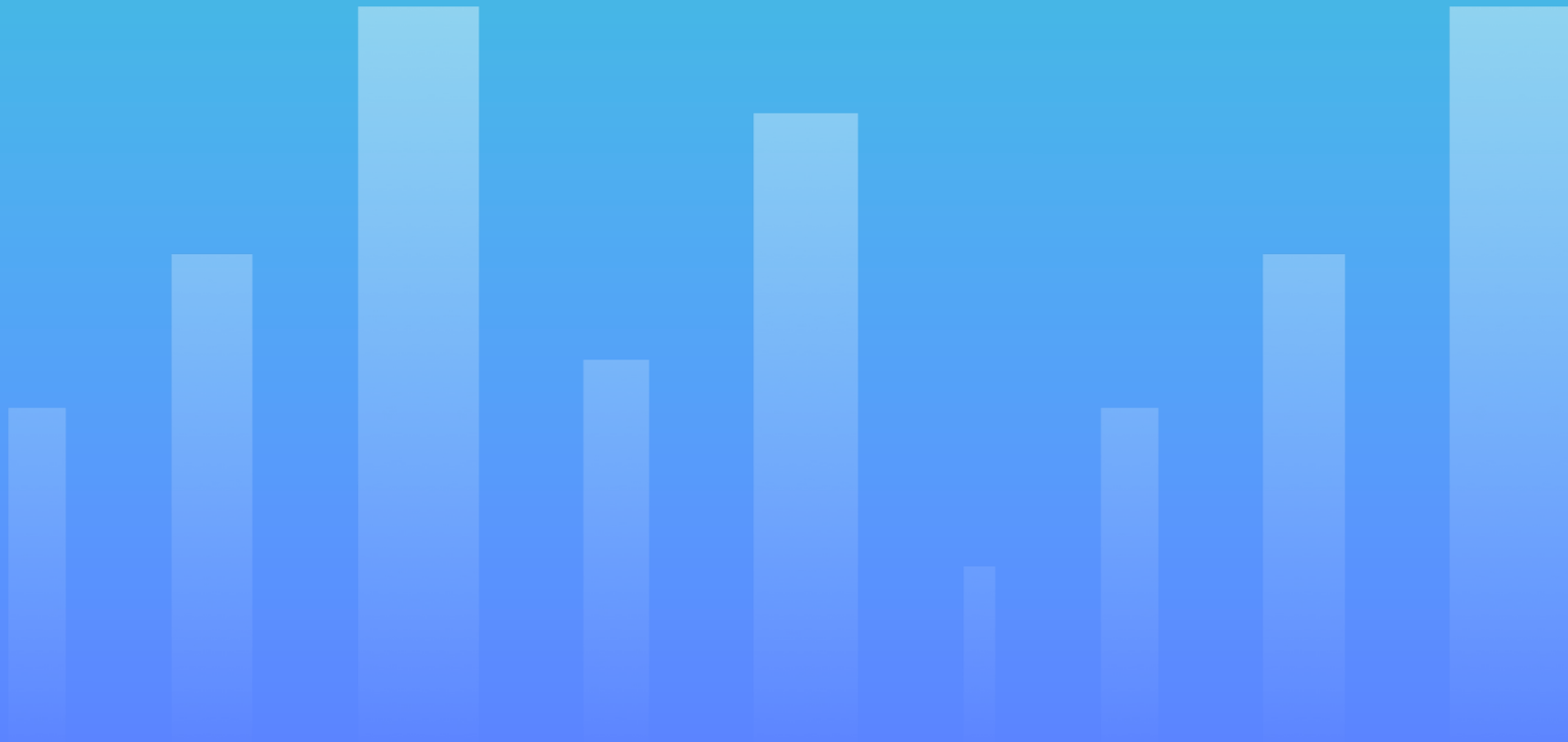
THE POLICE

■ Very Favorable ■ Somewhat Favorable ■ Very Unfavorable ■ Somewhat Unfavorable





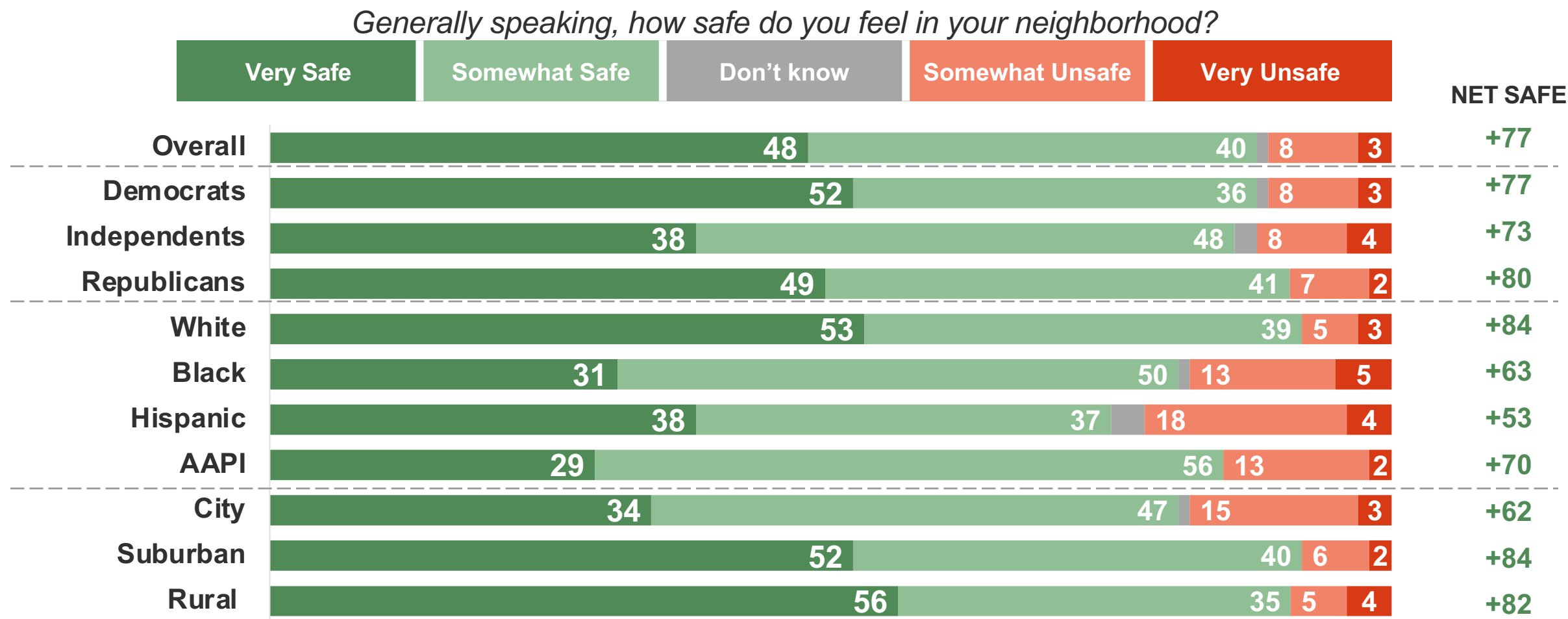
CURRENT CRIME PERCEPTIONS



IMPACT
RESEARCH

Voters across the board generally feel safe in their neighborhoods, particularly Republican and white voters of whom half feel *very safe*.

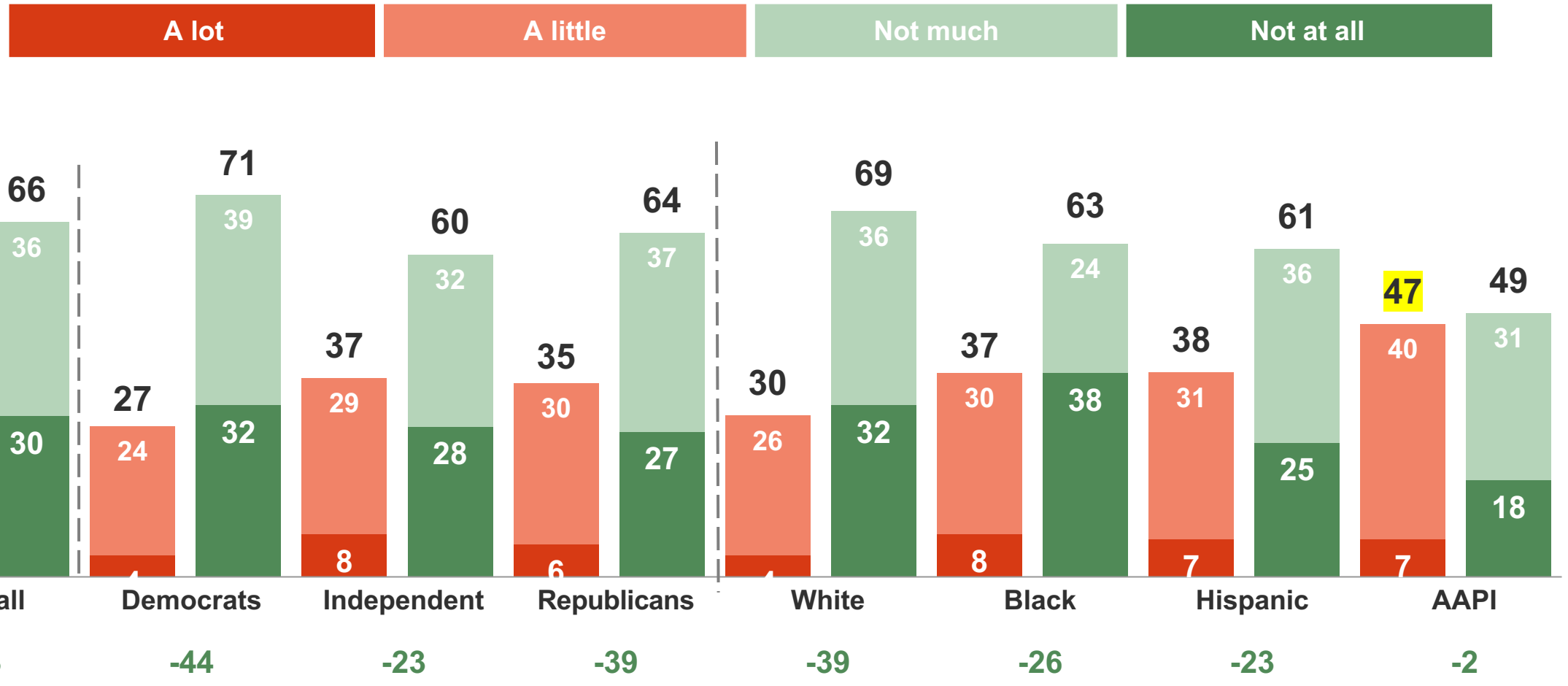
Black and Hispanic voters feel less intensely safe than their peers although more than 3-in-4 still feel safe overall.



And only about 1-in-3 voters overall say crime is affecting their day to day life.

The most impacted are AAPI voters, of whom half say they are at least somewhat affected on a daily basis.

How much would you say crime where you live is affecting your day to day life?



NET A LOT/LITTLE

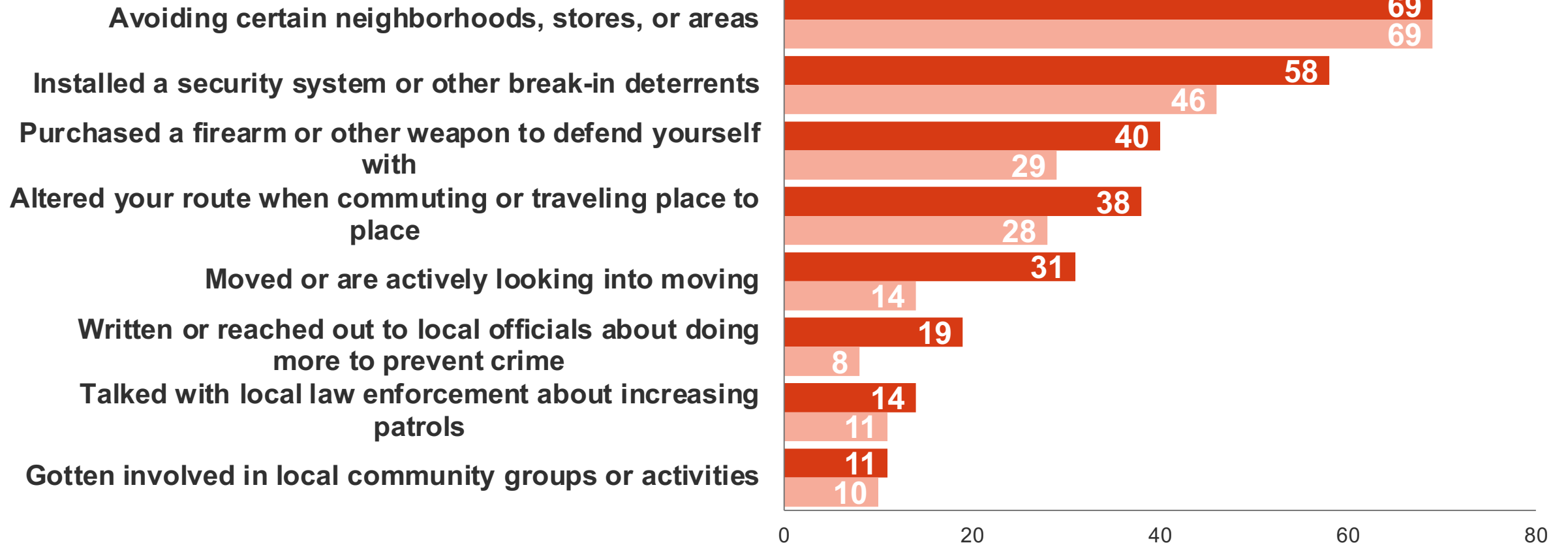
Voters who's lives have been affected tend to avoid certain neighborhoods, and have installed security systems.

40% of those who says their life has been affected a lot by crime have purchased a gun or other weapon for self-defense.

Have you taken any of the following actions as a result of the way crime is affecting your day to day life? Please select all that apply.

■ Said crime is affecting daily life a lot

■ Said crime is affecting daily life a little



Across racial subgroups, those affected by crime are likely to avoid certain neighborhoods or install a security system.

White and Hispanic voters affected by crime are more likely to have purchased a weapon for self-defense.

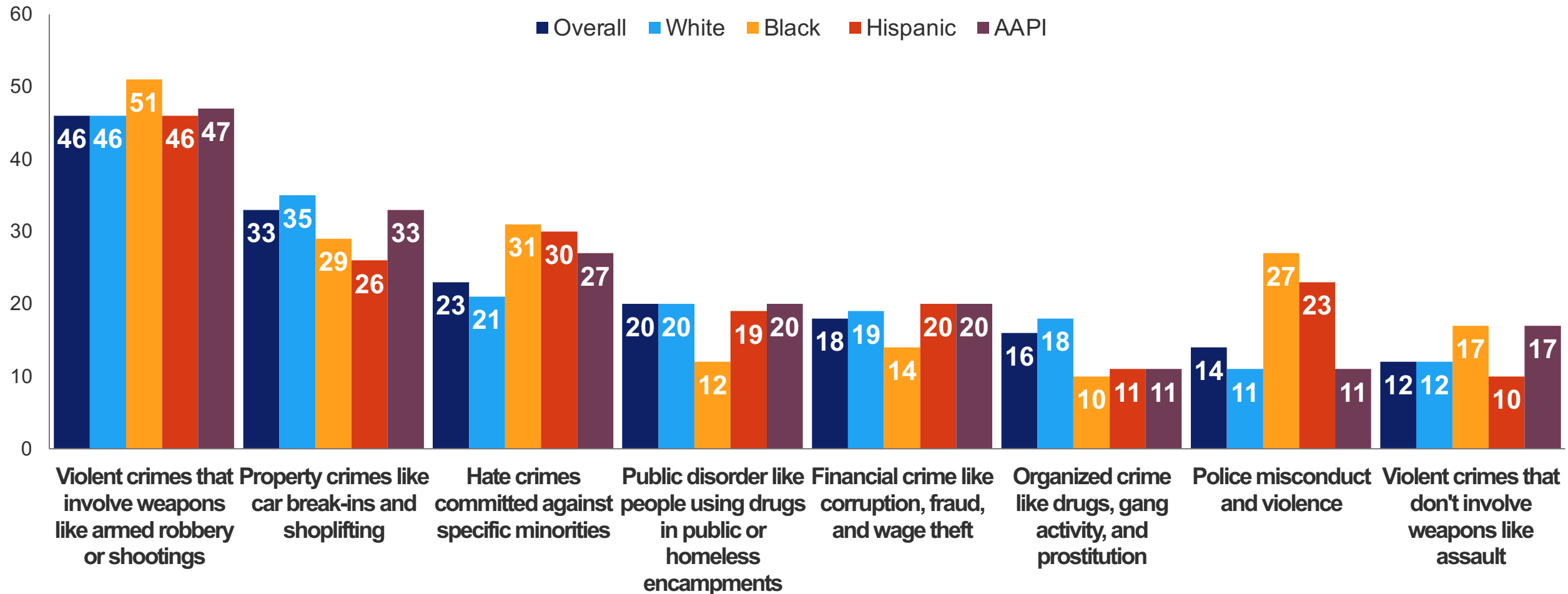
Have you taken any of the following actions as a result of the way crime is affecting your day to day life? Please select all that apply.

	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI
Avoiding certain neighborhoods, stores, or areas	70	71	66	60
Installed a security system or other break-in deterrents	49	41	46	47
Purchased a firearm or other weapon to defend yourself with	32	19	31	19
Altered your route when commuting or traveling place to place	32	23	25	15
Moved or are actively looking into moving	16	16	20	12
Written or reached out to local officials about doing more to prevent crime	9	10	14	13
Gotten involved in local community groups or activities	8	7	10	20
Talked with local law enforcement about increasing patrols	11	9	7	12

Nearly half of all voters, including across racial subgroups, are most concerned with violent crimes involving weapons.

Hate crimes and police misconduct are equally high concerns as property crimes for Black and Hispanic voters.

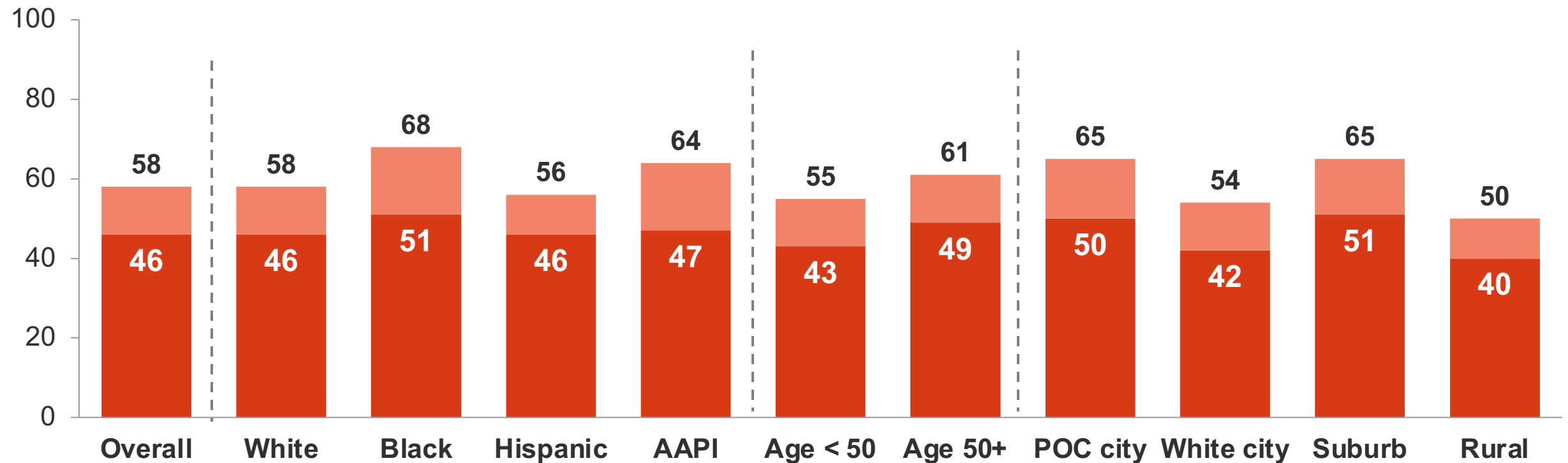
When thinking about crime, which TWO of the following are the biggest concerns for you and your family?



Non-white voters (namely Black and AAPI) and suburbanites are most concerned about violent crime, while younger and white city voters are least concerned.

CONCERN WITH VIOLENT CRIME

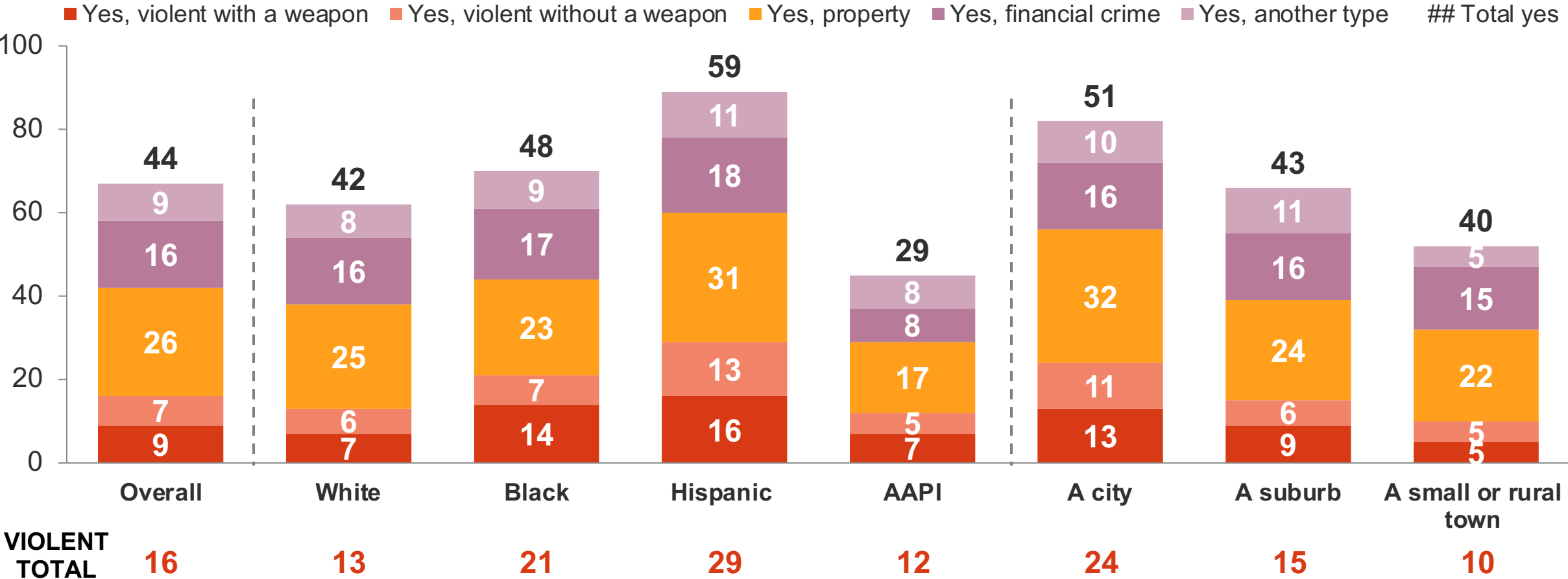
■ Violent crimes that involve weapons like armed robbery or shootings ■ Violent crimes that don't involve weapons like assault



Overall, 44% of voters have been the victim of a crime, most often property crime.

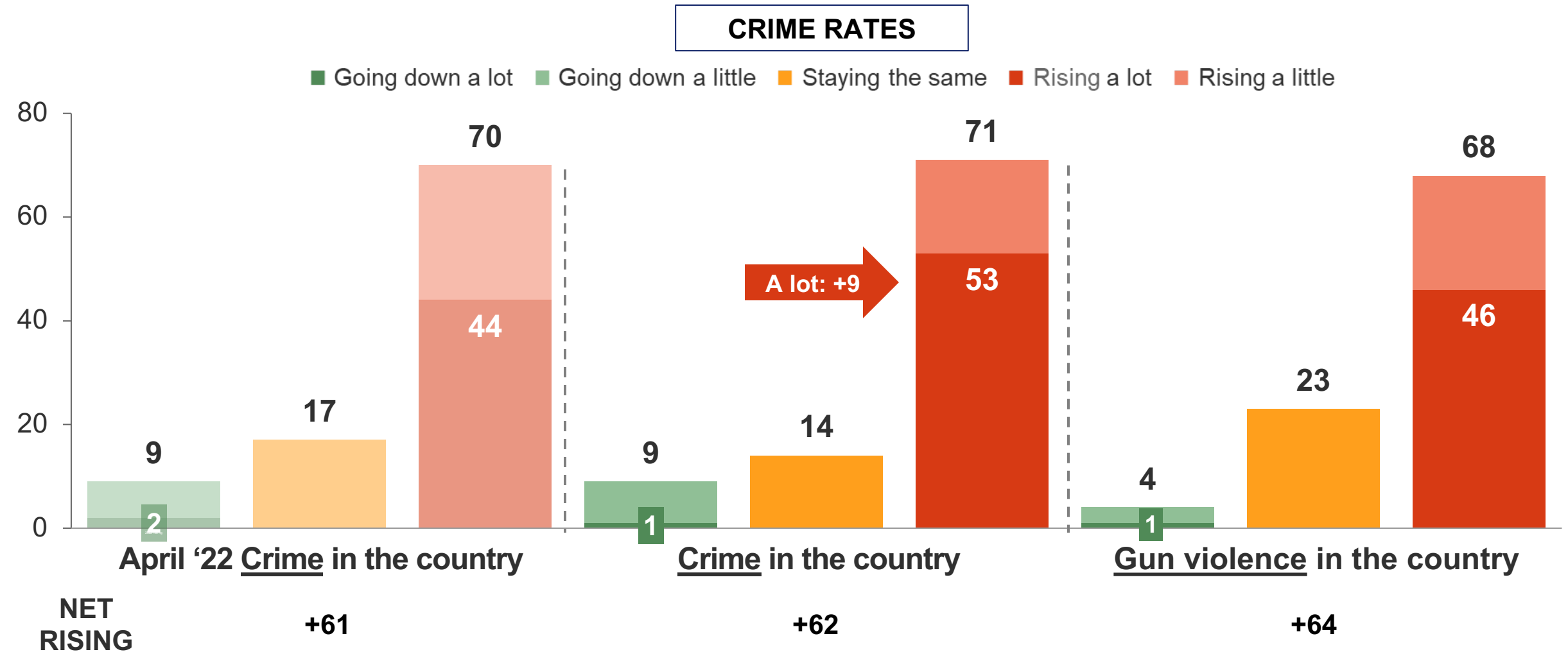
More than half of Hispanics and urban residents have been or know a crime victim, roughly a quarter violent crime.

*Have you or has anyone you know been a victim of violent crime or property crime in the last couple of years?
Please select all that apply.*



Similarly, voters also see rising crime and rising gun violence rates as equally big issues.

Those who cite crime is rising “a lot” is up 9-points from our previous research.



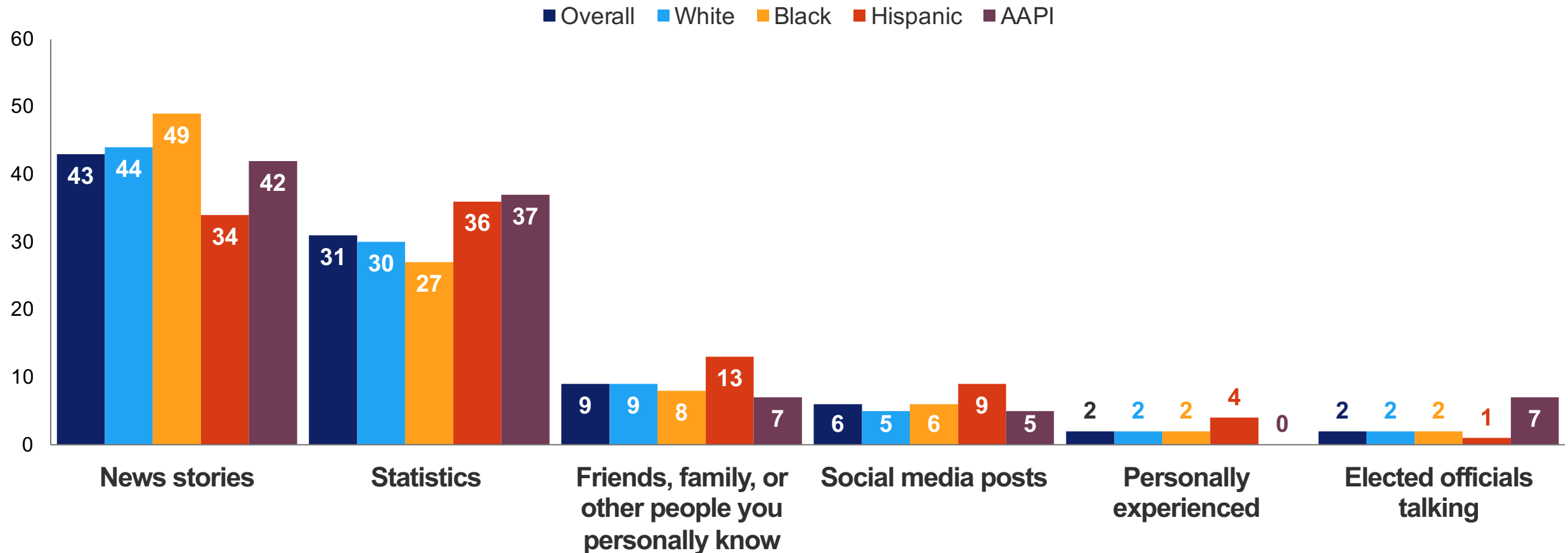
Black voters, especially men, voters under 50, and those outside the city are much more inclined now than they were last year to say crime is rising *a lot*.

% Crime in the country is rising a lot	April 2022	Nov 2023	SHIFT
Overall	44	53	+9
White Men	46	54	+8
White Women	46	54	+8
Black Men	33	53	+20
Black Women	44	57	+13
Hispanic Men	38	44	+6
Hispanic Women	39	48	+9
AAPI Men	46	40	-6
AAPI Women	45	29	-16
18-34	31	50	+19
35-49	33	47	+14
50-64	51	53	+2
65+	65	63	-2
Non-College Educated	47	54	+7
College Educated	40	51	+11
City	45	45	0
Suburbs	44	54	+10
Rural	44	60	+16

Those that say crime is going up see it as very much based in fact and cite news stories and statistics about rising crime as evidence.

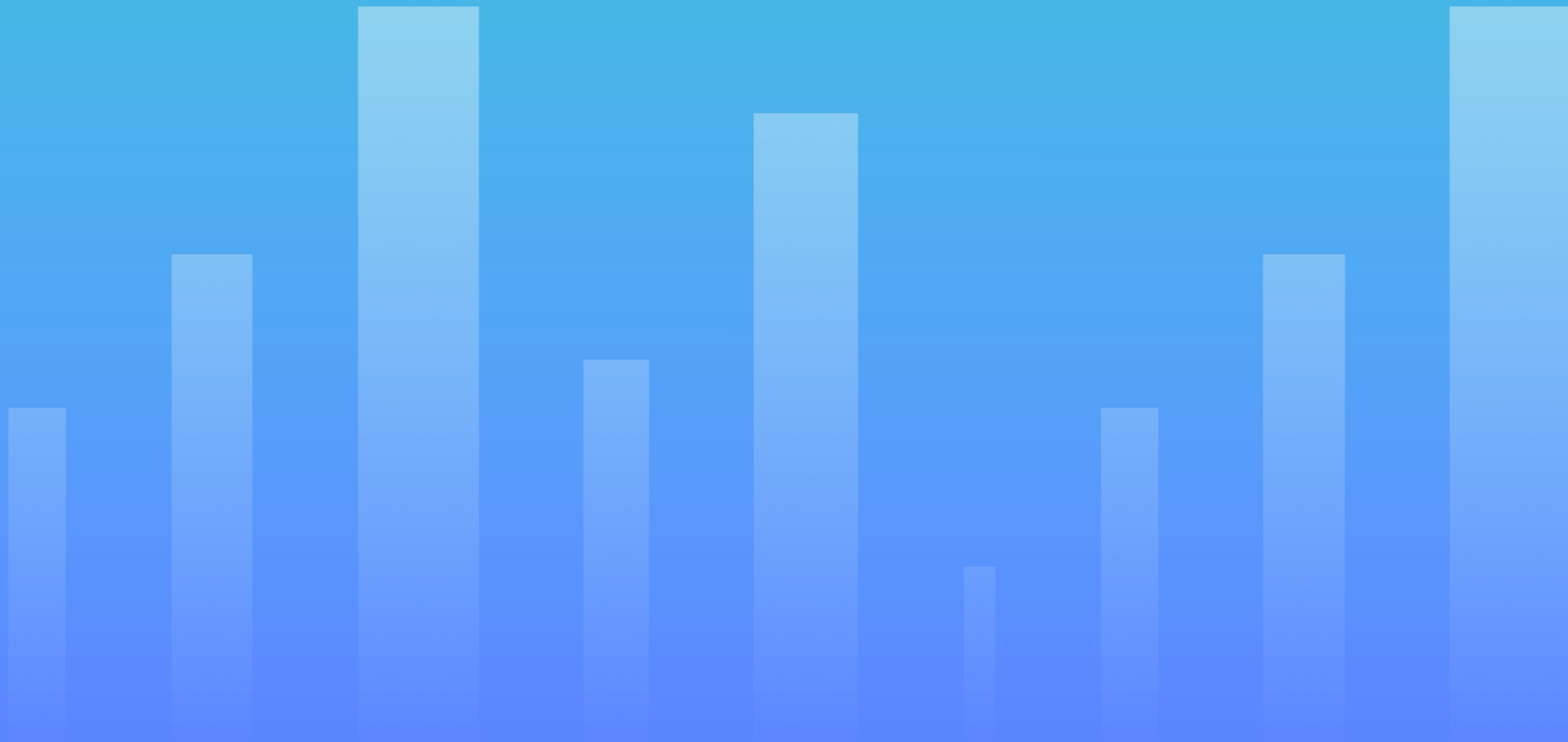
The few voters who say that crime is going down (9% overall) also cite statistics.

What makes you say that [crime/gun violence] is going up?





CAUSES OF RISING CRIME



IMPACT
RESEARCH

Voters are generally mixed whether crime is a widespread issue or if crimes are committed by a select few.

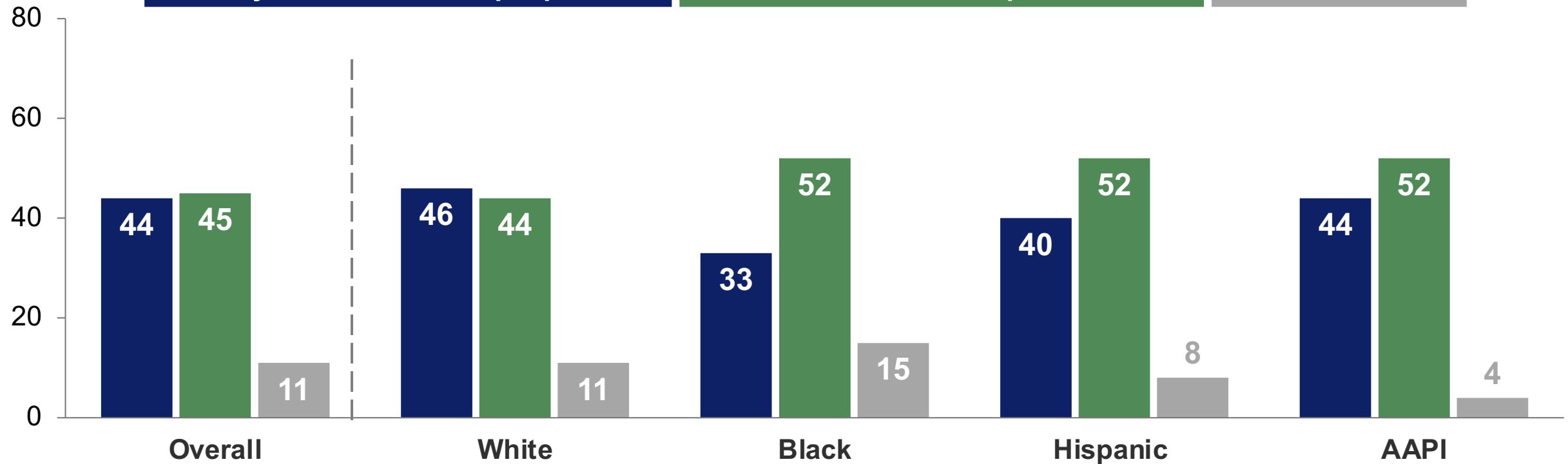
Voters of color are more inclined to blame a widespread number of people.

When it comes to crime, which of these statements do you agree with more even if neither is exactly right:

Most crimes are committed by a few number of people

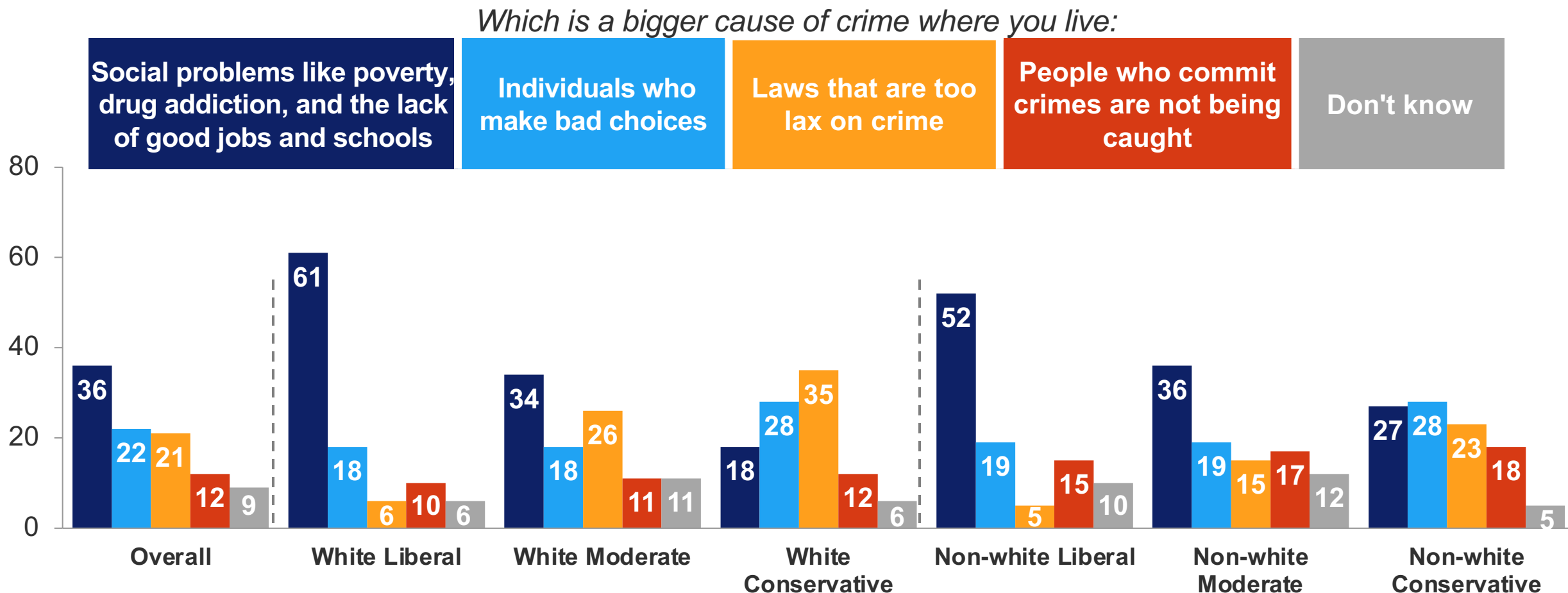
The number of people committing crimes is widespread

Don't know



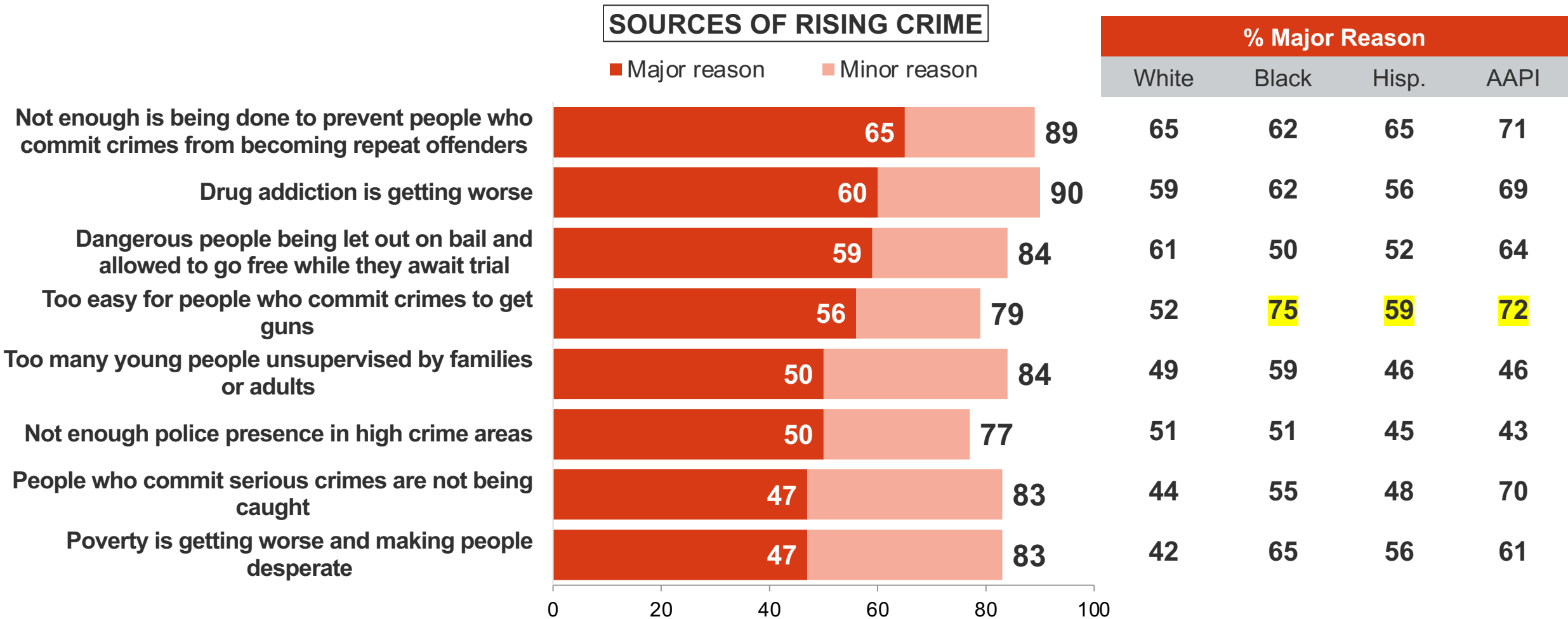
Liberal voters, those white and not, strongly blame societal problems for crime where they live while moderates tend to agree.

White conservative voters are more inclined to blame laws that are too lax and conservatives who are not white are more mixed.



Overall, voters most often point to drug addiction and not enough being done to prevent repeat offenders as the biggest reasons for rising crime.

Voters of color continue to point to how easy it is for criminals to get guns as the biggest reason.



White and AAPI voters blame weak borders and police not being able to do their jobs at much higher rates than their peers.

Less than half across racial subgroups see a lack of police resources as a major reason.

SOURCES OF RISING CRIME

■ Major reason ■ Minor reason

Weak borders are letting dangerous people illegally enter the country

47

69

Police not having the resources they need to do their jobs

42

74

Police not being able to do their jobs because they are worried about being unfairly punished

41

66

There are more people who are homeless and living on the streets

38

77

Not enough people want to be police officers

32

66

Not enough opportunities for young people so they turn to crime

24

64

0 20 40 60 80 100

% Major Reason

White Black Hisp. AAPI

49 35 39 52

43 37 35 39

44 28 32 40

38 33 33 62

35 25 23 29

20 40 34 42

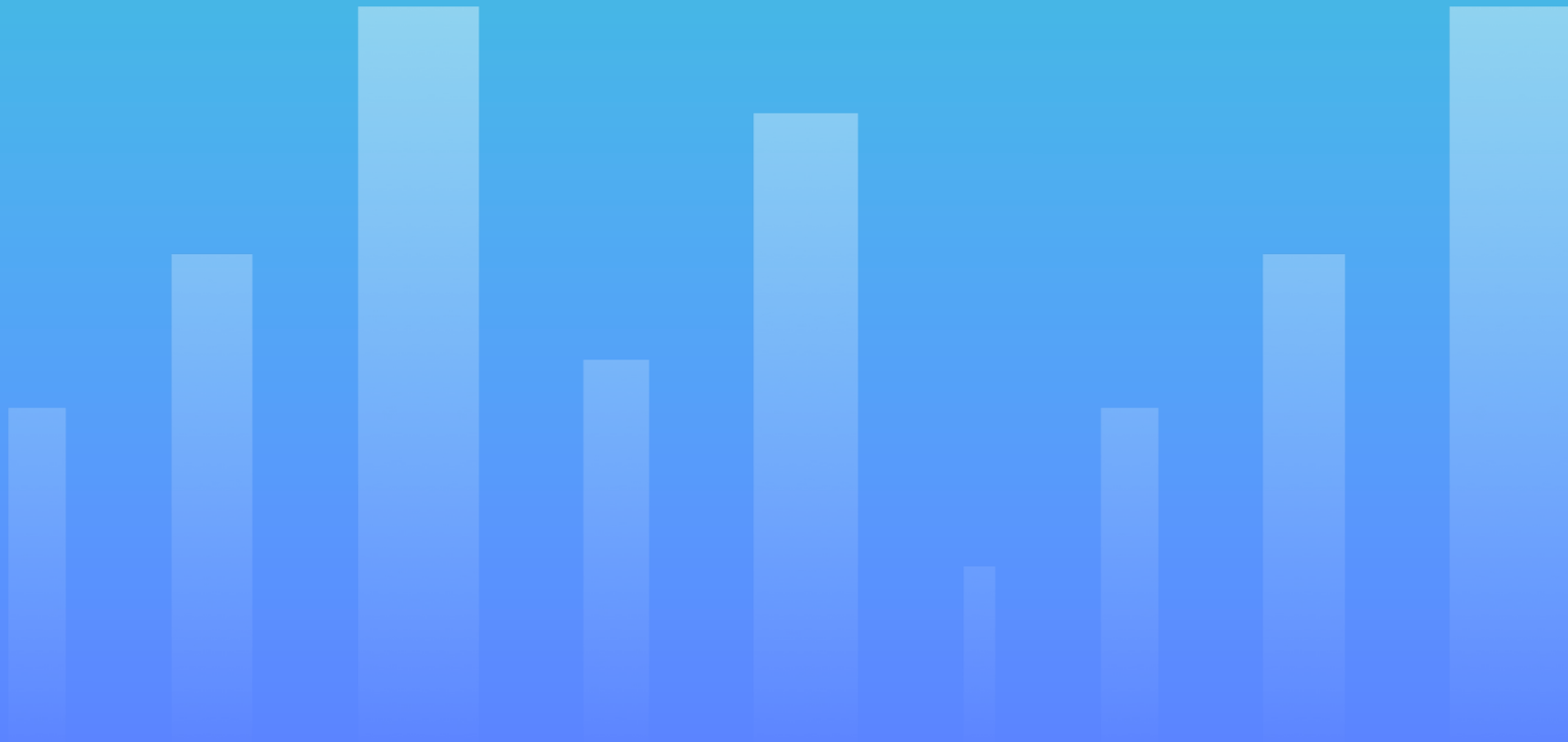
Not enough being done to prevent repeat offenders is seen as the biggest reason for rising crime overall and among Independents.

Guns being too easy to get is already seen as the biggest reason for rising crime among Democrats.

	Biggest Reason	2 nd Biggest Reason	3 rd Biggest Reason
Overall	Not enough is being done to prevent people who commit crimes from becoming repeat offender (65%)	Drug addiction is getting worse (60%)	Dangerous people being let out on bail and allowed to go free while they await trial (59%)
Democrats	Too easy for people who commit crimes to get guns (80%)	Poverty is getting worse and making people desperate (57%)	Drug addiction is getting worse (52%)
Independents	Not enough is being done to prevent people who commit crimes from becoming repeat offenders (63%)	Drug addiction is getting worse (57%)	Dangerous people being let out on bail and allowed to go free while they await trial (57%)
Republicans	Dangerous people being let out on bail and allowed to go free while they await trial (83%)	Weak borders are letting dangerous people illegally enter the country (82%)	Not enough is being done to prevent people who commit crimes from becoming repeat offenders (79%)



ADDRESSING RISING CRIME

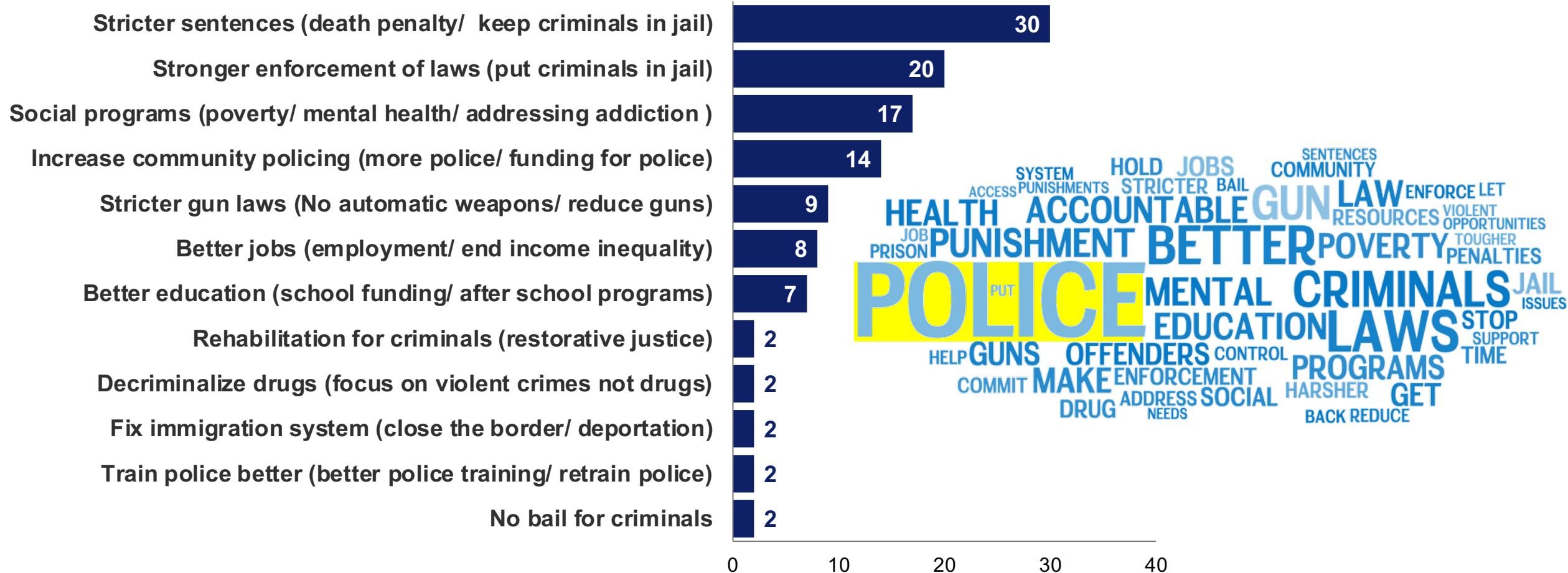


IMPACT
RESEARCH

A plurality of voters intuitively see stricter sentences as the most effective way to address crime initially.

Many of these solutions also involve the police.

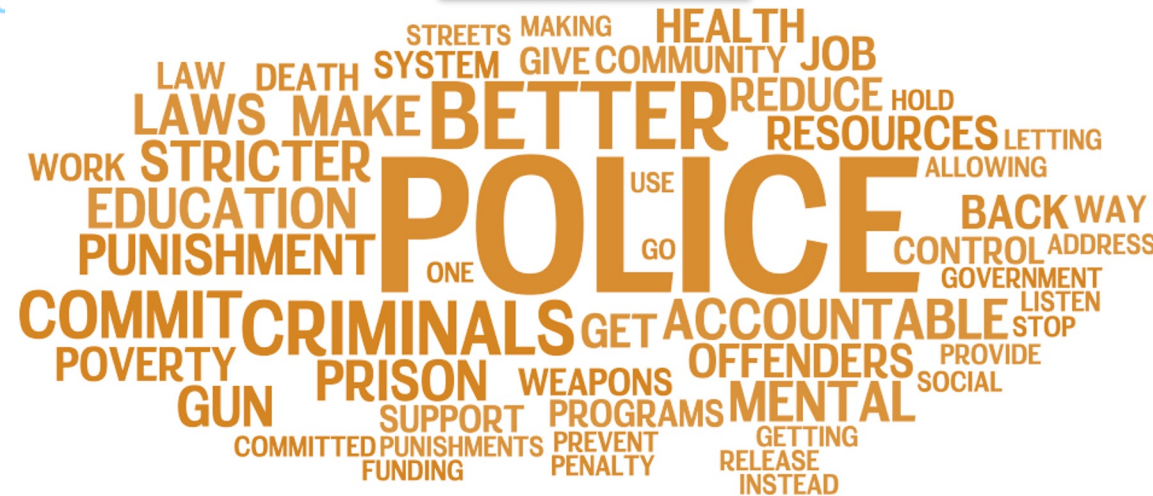
In your own words, what do you think would be the most effective way to address crime? [OPEN-ENDED] [MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED]



Republicans and Independents were both more likely to mention criminals and accountability.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN



Stricter sentences is the solution that initially comes to mind for most voters aside from Democrats and Hispanic voters.

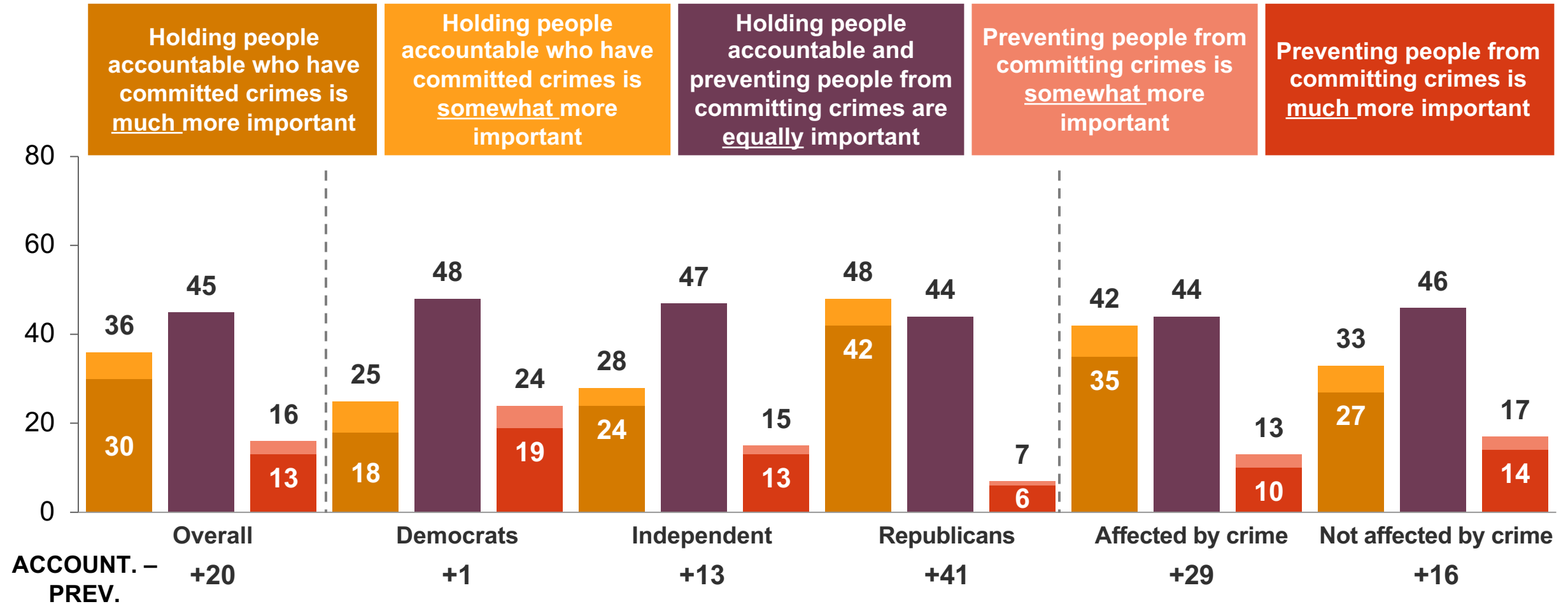
These voters initially place more stock in social programs.

In your own words, what do you think would be the most effective way to address crime?
[OPEN-ENDED] [MULTIPLE RESPONSES ACCEPTED]

	Democrat	Independent	Republican	White	Black	Hispanic	AAPI
Stricter sentences	18	26	44	30	31	22	30
Stronger enforcement of laws	10	22	30	21	18	19	15
Social programs	26	19	6	15	19	24	22
Increase community policing	12	15	17	14	11	13	18
Stricter gun laws	17	6	3	9	10	8	19
Better jobs/ inequality	13	6	2	6	11	12	8
Better education	12	4	4	7	9	9	4
Rehabilitation for criminals	5	1	0	2	4	2	2
Decriminalize drugs	4	0	1	2	0	3	0
Fix immigration system	0	0	4	3	1	1	0
Train police better	2	2	1	2	2	1	1
No bail for criminals	1	2	4	3	2	1	0

Nearly half see accountability and prevention as equally important to start, but accountability is less partisan than prevention.

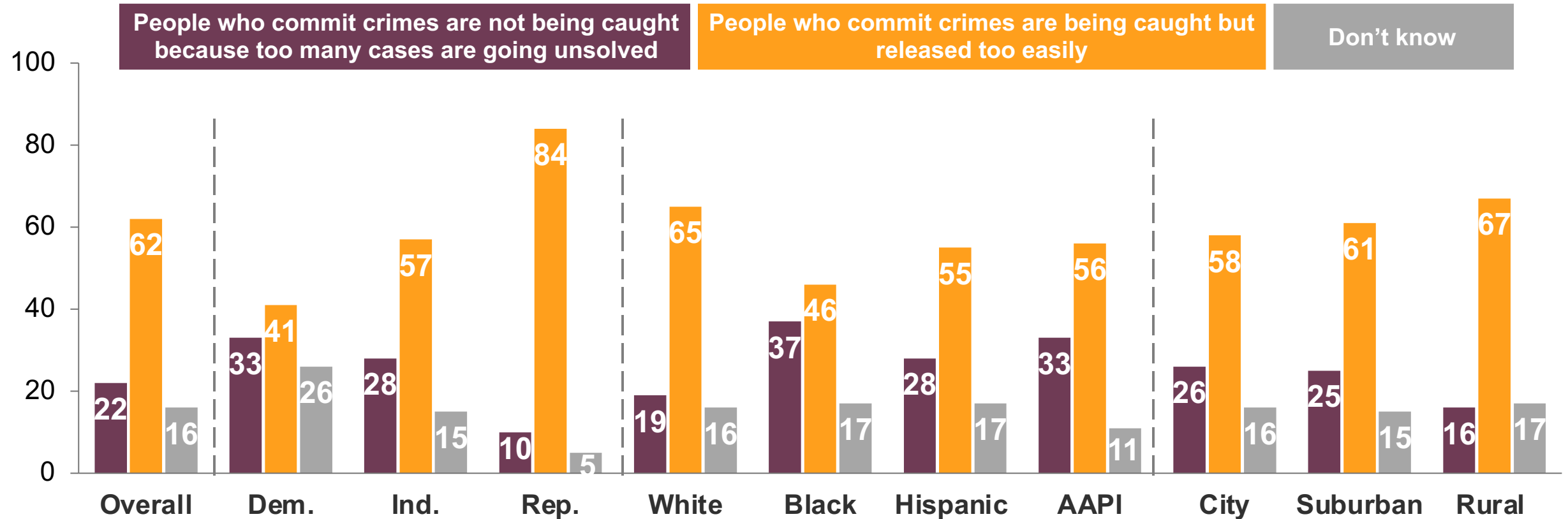
When it comes to addressing crime, which of the following do you think is more important:



Across the board voters believe criminals being caught and released too easily is a bigger issue than not being caught at all.

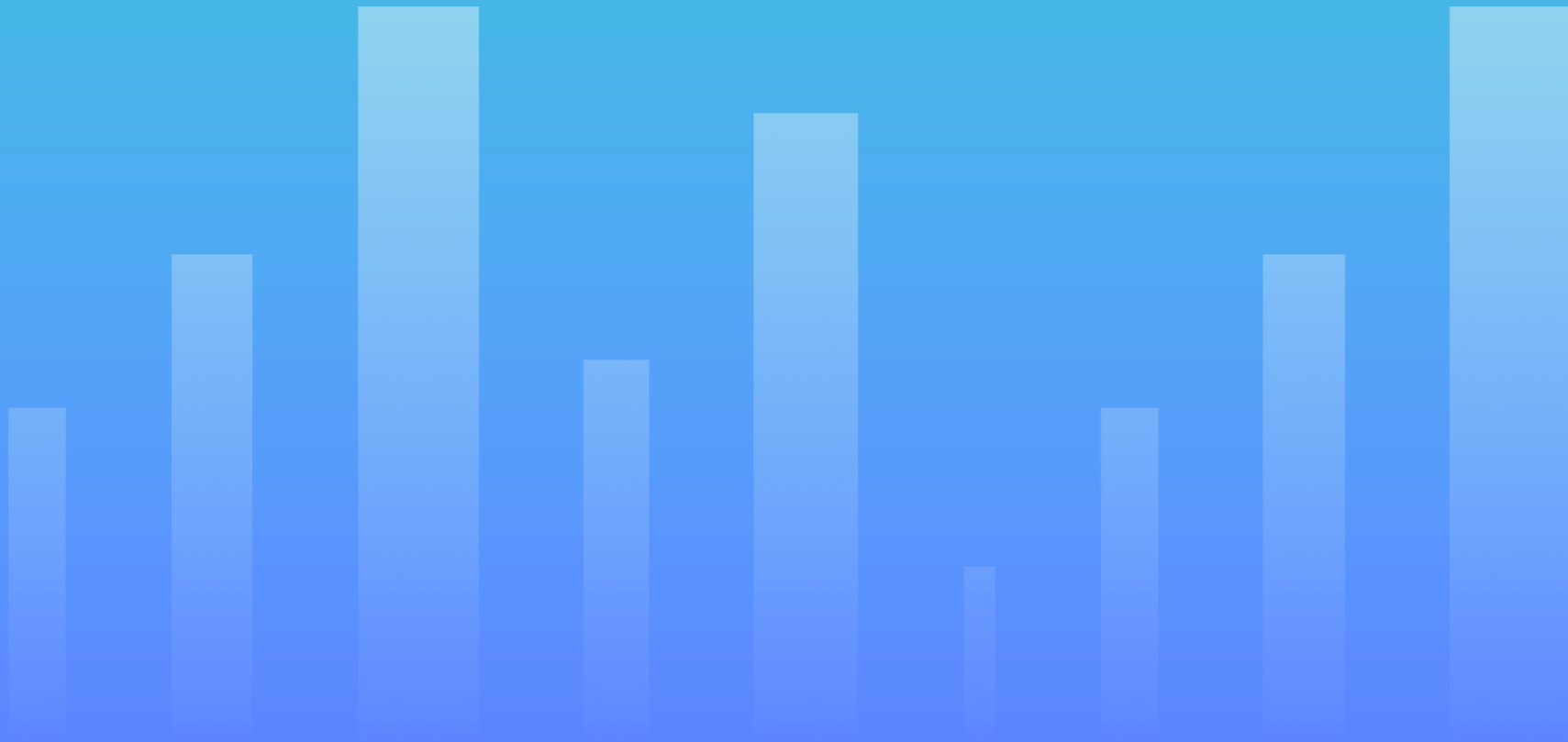
Democrats and Black voters are more mixed in these feelings.

When it comes to holding people accountable who have committed crimes, which of the following do you think is a bigger issue:





ACCOUNTABILITY



IMPACT
RESEARCH

By a 6-point margin, voters think tougher sentences for violent criminals is the solution that will do the most to address crime.

Improving trust between police and communities is also highly rated by voters of color.

ACCOUNTABILITY PROPOSALS – TOP TIER

■ Do a lot to address crime

■ Do a little to address crime

Do a lot to address crime

White

Black

Hisp.

AAPI

Tough sentences for people who commit violent crimes

71

90

73

70

61

63

Increase police presence in high crime areas

65

89

67

62

57

61

Tough sentences for people who commit crimes

63

81

66

51

49

74

Direct law enforcement to prioritize catching people who commit violent crimes

61

90

61

63

57

68

More funding for law enforcement so they can hire more officers

60

83

63

55

49

40

Improving trust between police and communities they serve so that they can better work together

60

89

57

70

66

71

Increase resources for law enforcement so they can prioritize catching people who commit violent crimes

59

82

60

55

57

66

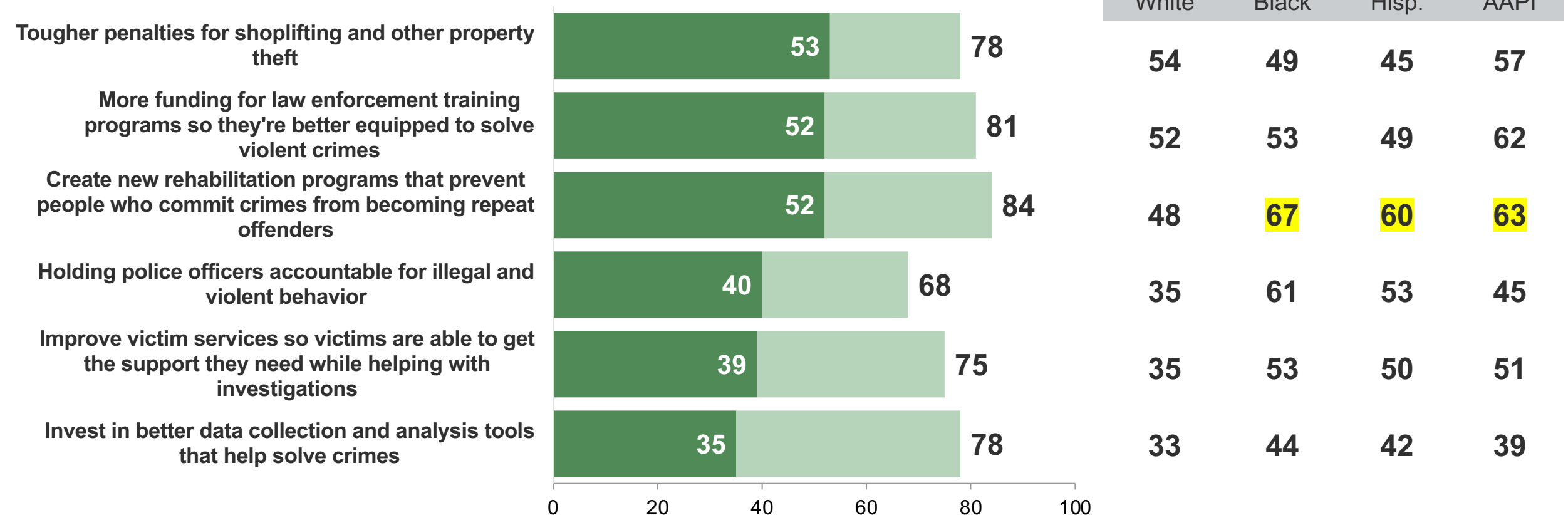
0 20 40 60 80 100

Better data collection and victim services rank as least likely to do a lot to address crime.

Voters of color are more likely to see the value of new rehabilitation programs.

ACCOUNTABILITY PROPOSALS – SECOND TIER

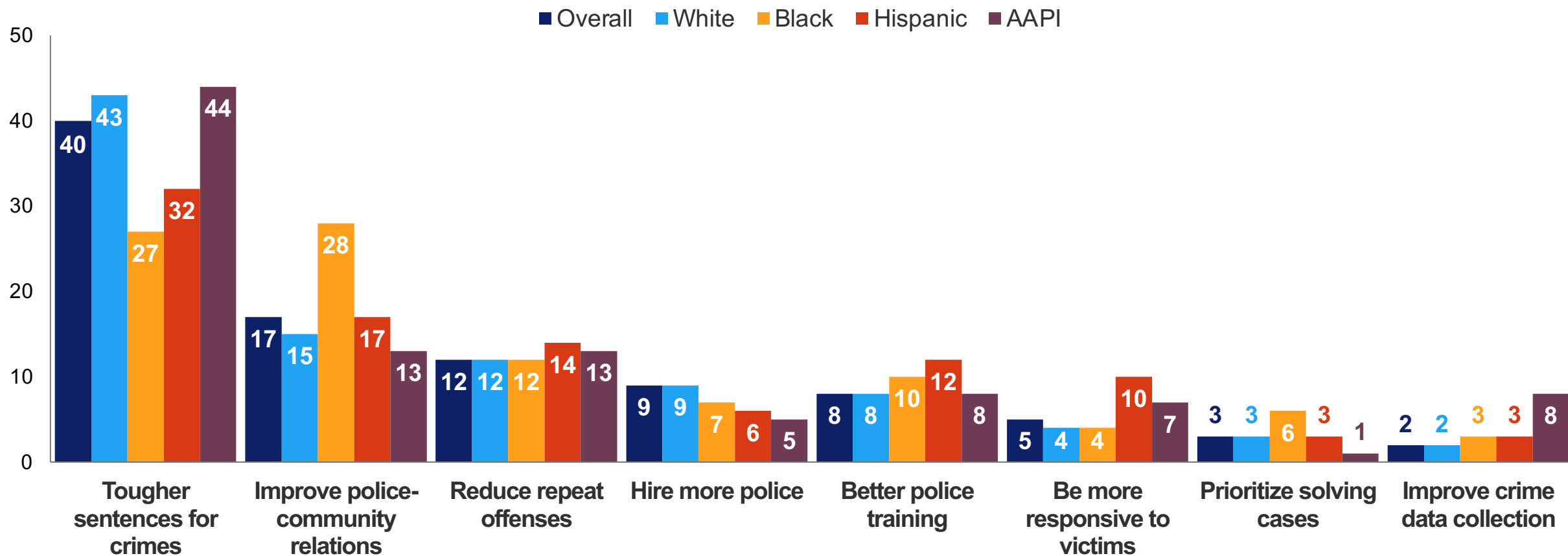
■ Do a lot to address crime ■ Do a little to address crime



After seeing various policies, tougher sentences continues to top what voters believe would do the most to reduce crime through accountability.

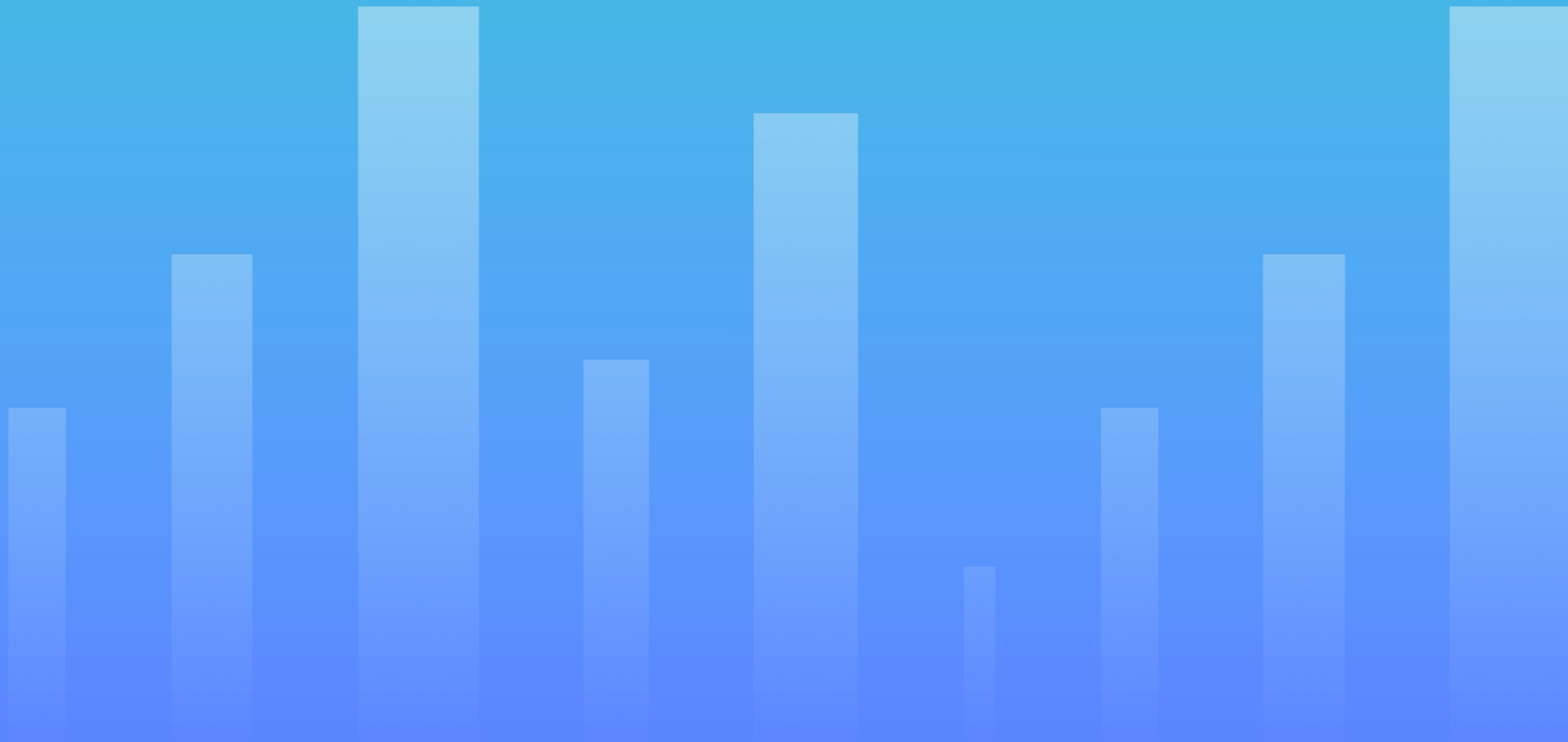
Black voters value improving police and community relations just as much.

If you had to choose, which of the following ways to address crime through more accountability do you think would be most effective?





PREVENTION



IMPACT
RESEARCH

Increasing funding for programs that offer mental health counseling and drug abuse treatment is the prevention policy that voters deem most impactful.

Generally, top prevention policy proposals rank with less intensity than top accountability proposals.

PREVENTION PROPOSALS – TOP TIER

■ Do a lot to address crime ■ Do a little to address crime

Do a lot to address crime

White Black Hisp. AAPI

Increase funding for programs that offer mental health counseling and drug abuse treatment

60

88

58

74

63

52

Expand programs that focus on teaching people a skill and make it easier for them to start a career

55

87

52

66

64

57

Ensure that people who have served their sentence have access to resources like housing and job training so they can rebuild their lives

55

87

50

73

66

61

Investing more in after school programs that keep kids off the streets

50

86

46

65

64

58

0 20 40 60 80 100

Increasing affordable housing and expanding violence prevention programs are less likely to be seen as impactful solutions.

Just under half of voters believe stronger gun laws will do a lot, but it's above 60% with Black and AAPI voters.

PREVENTION PROPOSALS – SECOND TIER

■ Do a lot to address crime ■ Do a little to address crime

Stronger gun laws that keep guns out of the hands of people who commit crimes

48

66

Expand the public safety workforce to include experts who can handle nonviolent calls so police can focus on violent crime

45

76

Improve run-down neighborhoods where crime takes place by cleaning abandoned lots, creating parks, increasing street lighting, and building...

45

81

Increase access to affordable housing to get more people off the street

42

72

Expand violence prevention programs that train and employ community members to help prevent crime where they live

37

76

Do a lot to address crime

White

Black

Hisp.

AAPI

43

67

53

60

41

59

57

47

39

62

57

65

37

64

55

49

33

56

44

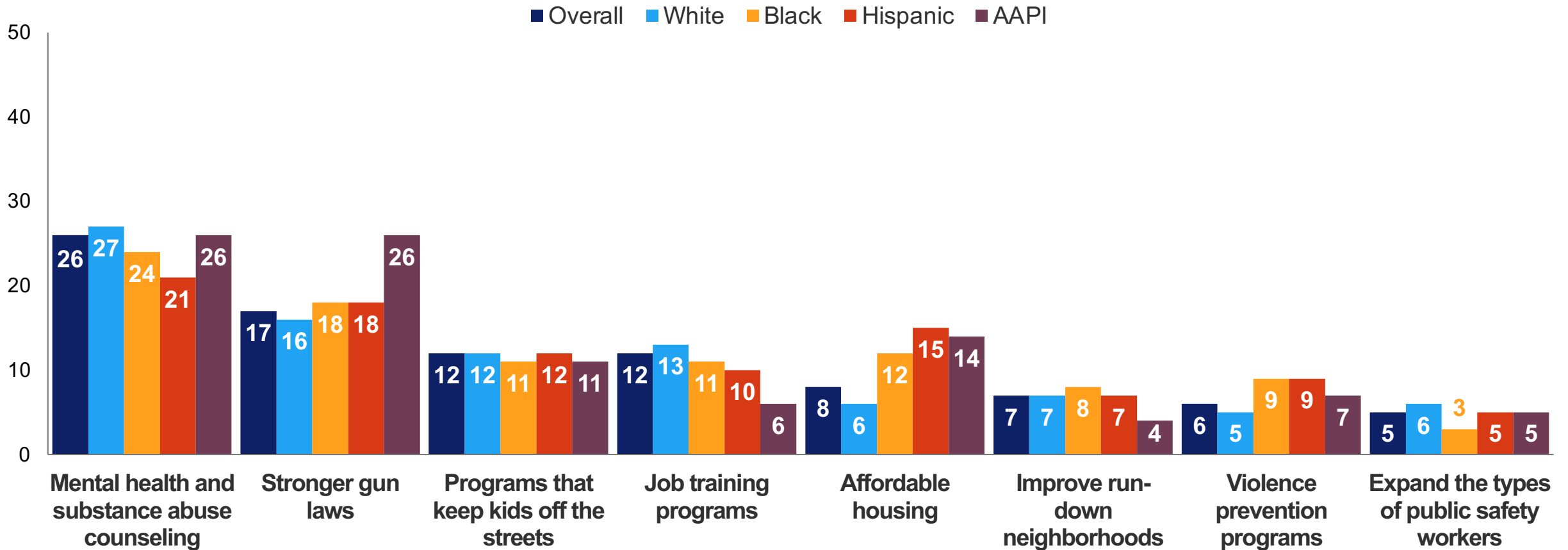
49

0 20 40 60 80 100

Except for AAPI, voters see addressing mental health issues as more effective than stronger gun laws in preventing crime.

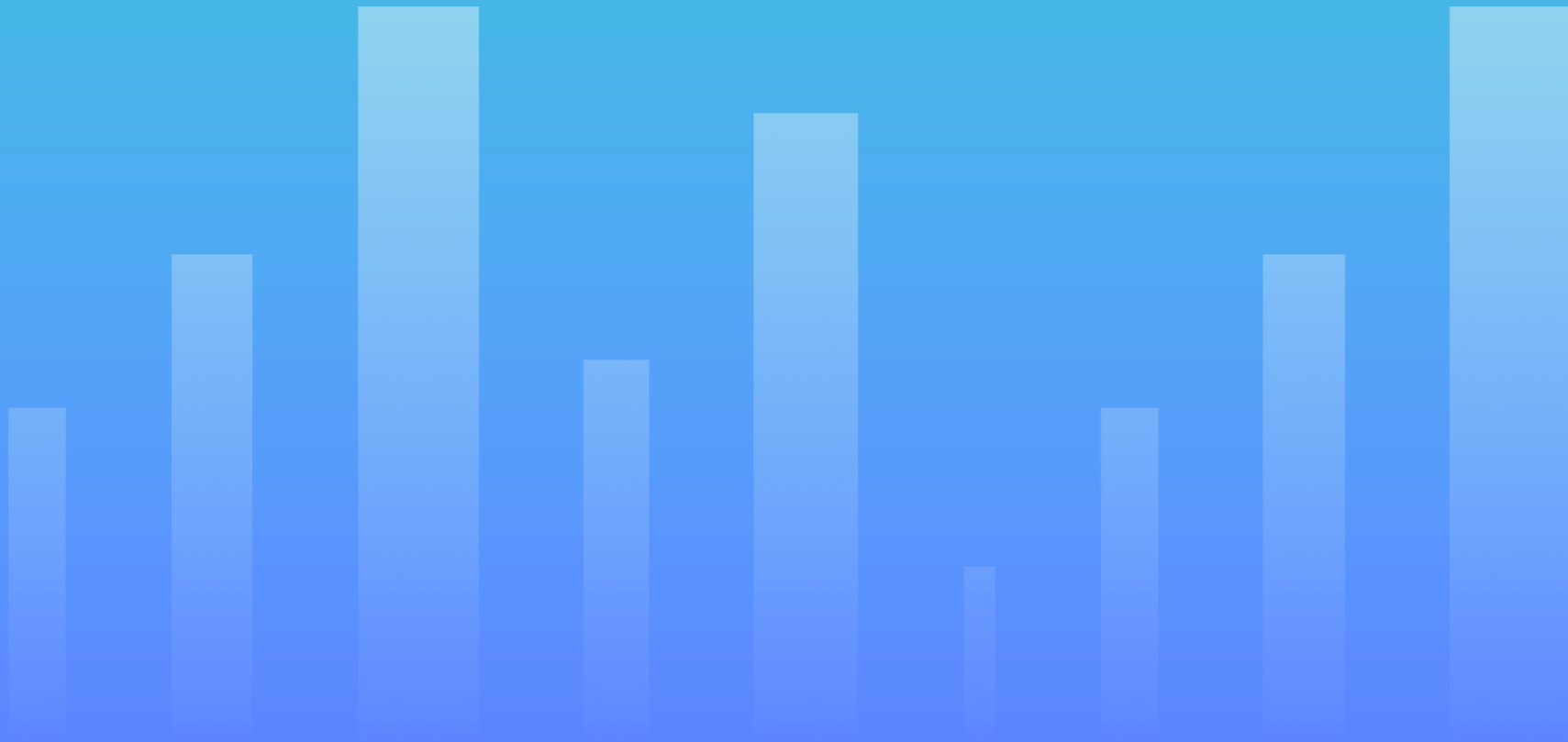
AAPI voters believe stronger guns and mental health and substance abuse counseling are equally important.

If you had to choose, which of the following ways to address crime through more prevention do you think would be most effective?





COMPARING ACCOUNTABILITY AND PREVENTION



IMPACT
RESEARCH

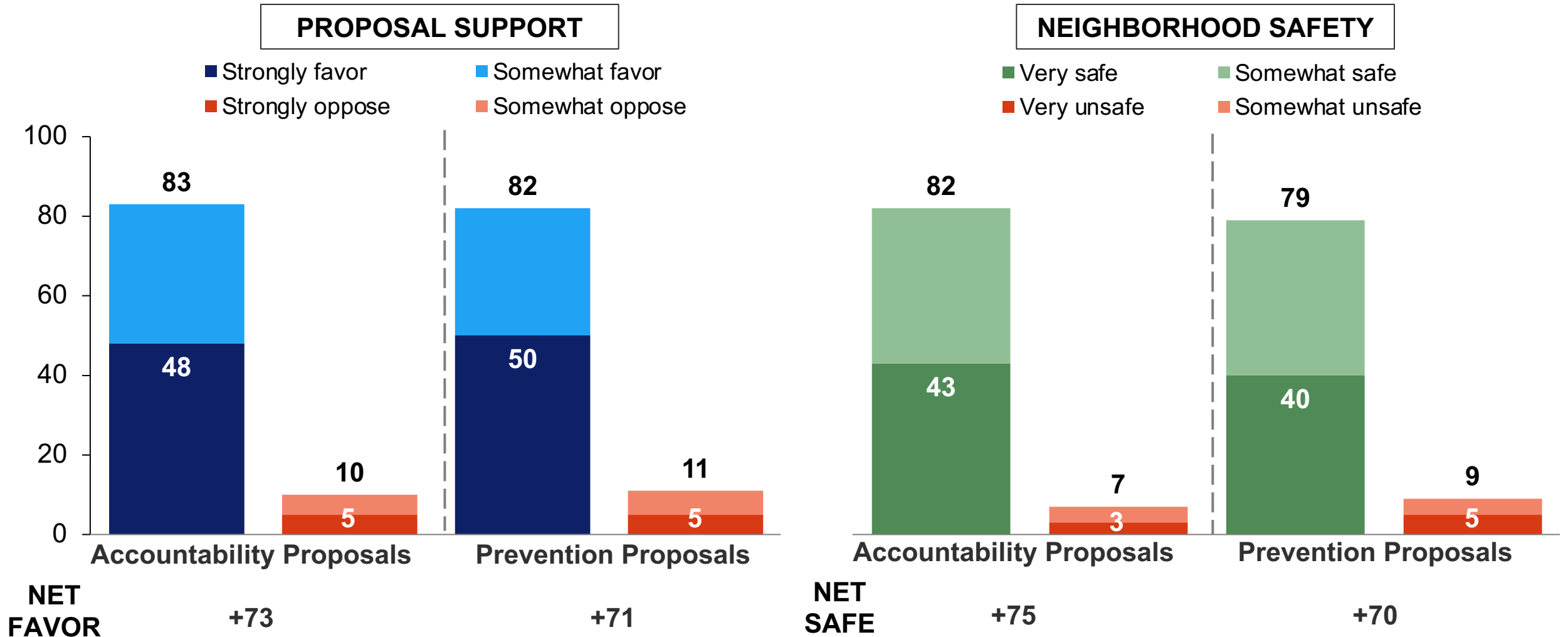
Tough sentences for violent crimes is the top solution overall among likely, Republican, Independent, White, and AAPI voters.

Democrats, Black, and Hispanic voters' top 3 solutions are all prevention-based.

% Do a lot	Do the most	2 nd most	3 rd most
Overall	Tough sentences for people who commit violent crimes (71%)	Increase police presence in high crime areas (65%)	Direct law enforcement to prioritize catching people who commit violent crimes (61%)
Affected by crime	Tough sentences for people who commit violent crimes (82%)	Increase police presence in high crime areas (72%)	More funding for law enforcement so they can hire more officers (68%)
Democrats	Increase funding for programs that offer mental health counseling and drug abuse treatment (78%)	Stronger gun laws that keep guns out of the hands of people who commit crimes (78%)	Ensure that people who have served their sentence have access to resources like housing and job training ... (75%)
Independents	Tough sentences for people who commit violent crimes (77%)	More funding for law enforcement so they can hire more officers (63%)	Increase police presence in high crime areas (62%)
Republicans	Tough sentences for people who commit violent crimes (86%)	Increase police presence in high crime areas (81%)	Increase resources for law enforcement so they can prioritize catching people who commit violent crimes (77%)
White	Tough sentences for people who commit violent crimes (73%)	Increase police presence in high crime areas (67%)	More funding for law enforcement so they can hire more officers (63%)
Black	Increase funding for programs that offer mental health counseling and drug abuse treatment (74%)	Ensure that people who have served their sentence have access to resources like housing and job training so ... (73%)	Improving trust between police and communities they serve so that they can better work together (70%)
Hispanic	Improving trust between police and communities they serve so that they can better work together (66%)	Ensure that people who have served their sentence have access to resources like housing and job training ... (66%)	Investing more in after school programs that keep kids off the streets (64%)
AAPI	Tough sentences for people who commit crimes (74%)	Improving trust between police and communities they serve so that they can better work together (71%)	Direct law enforcement to prioritize catching people who commit violent crimes (68%)

Both an accountability policy package and a prevention policy package receive overwhelming support from voters overall.

Both would make voters feel equally safe in their neighborhoods.



Voters instinctively credit Republicans with the accountability policy package but Democrats with the prevention proposals.

Independents have a similar perspective on which party is more likely to champion the policies.

Which party in Congress do you think is more likely to introduce the package you just read about:

ACCOUNTABILITY PROPOSALS

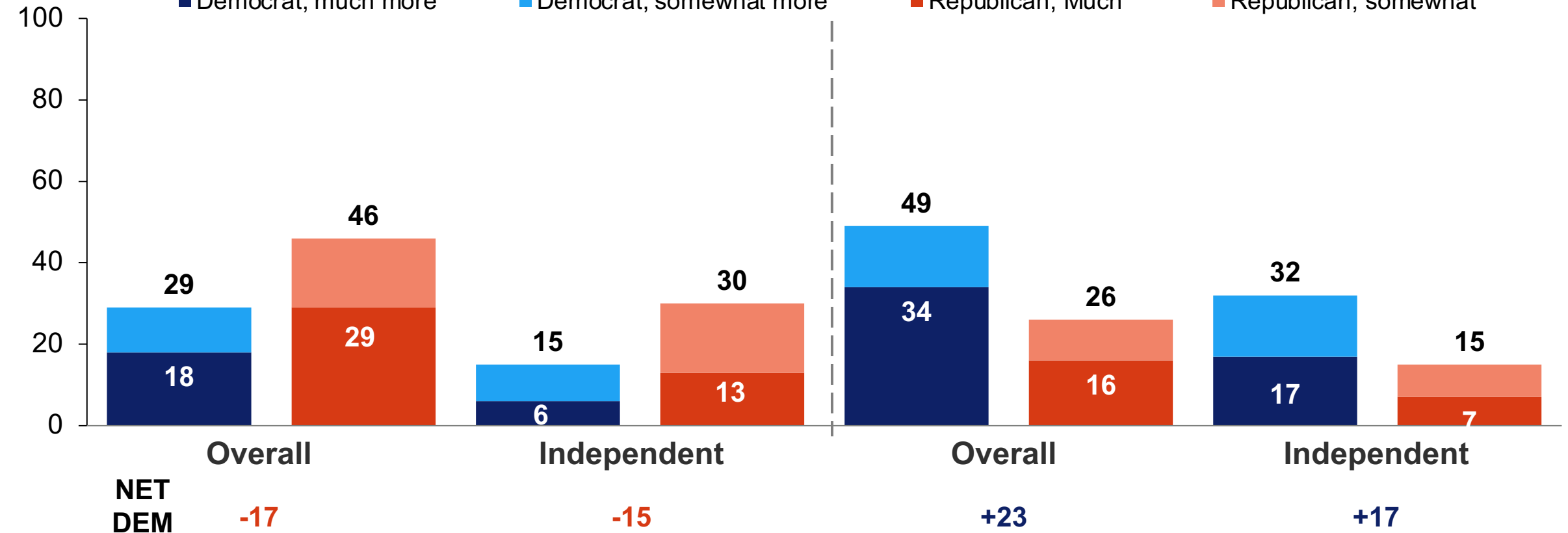
PREVENTION PROPOSALS

■ Democrat, much more

■ Democrat, somewhat more

■ Republican, Much

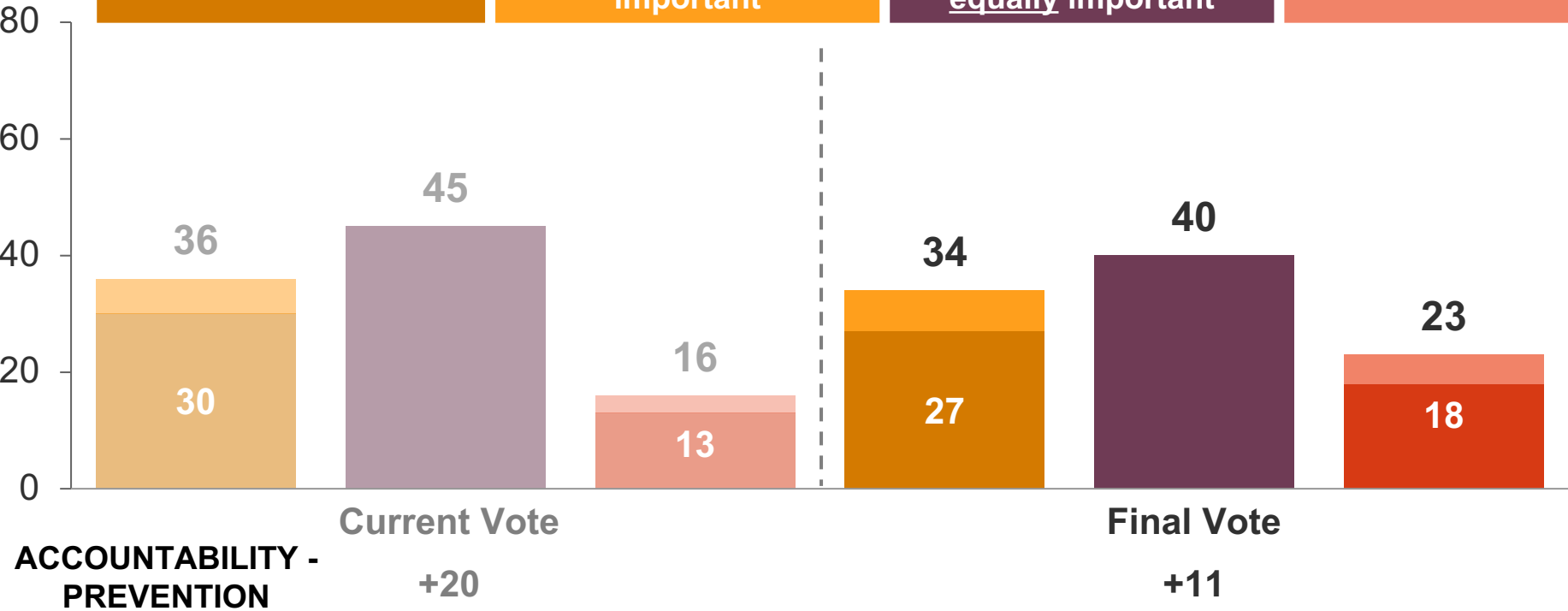
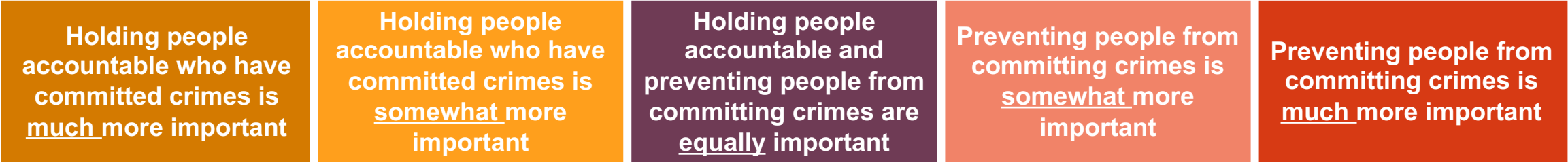
■ Republican, somewhat



After both policy package options, a plurality remain convinced that both accountability and prevention are equally important.

Prevention does gain 7-points (more among non-white and liberal voters) but remains under a quarter who believe it alone is the best solution.

When it comes to addressing crime, which of the following do you think is more important:



Biggest Prevention Vote Share Growth	
Overall	+7
POC Liberal	+22
POC men	+19
POC Dem	+18
Liberal	+16
Latino	+16
Dem	+15
Black	+13

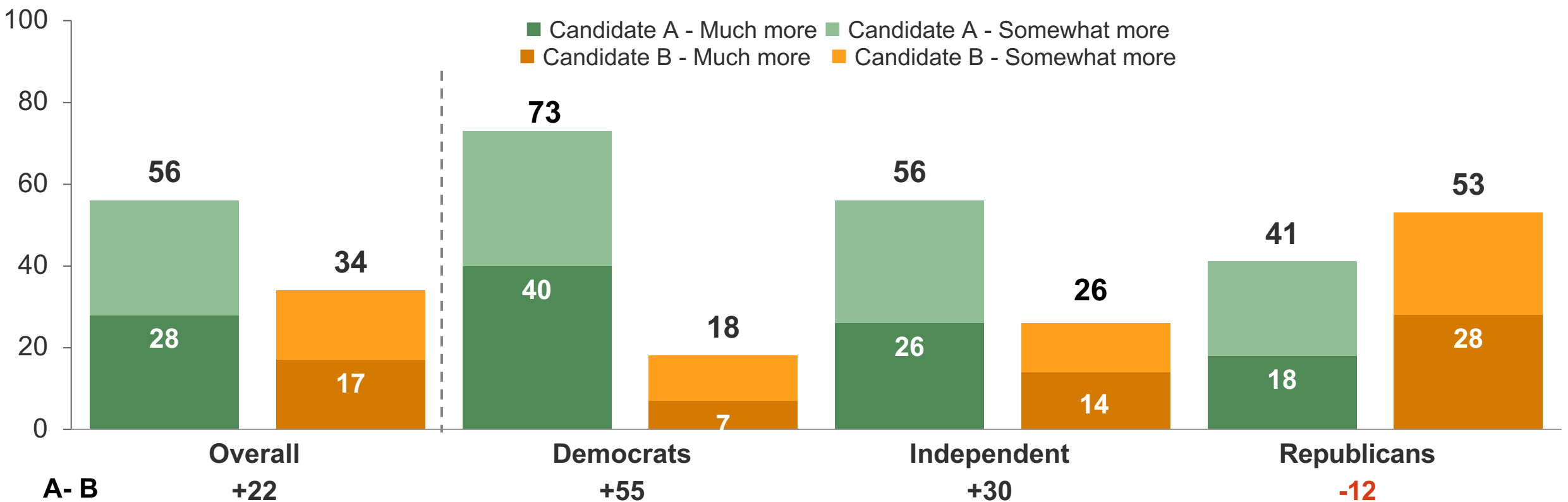
A generic candidate who mentions both outperforms another who is only talking about police and keeping criminals in jail.

This message is effective with the base and more effective with Independents by a 2-to-1 margin.

Candidate A says to address rising crime we need to hold people accountable when they commit crimes and do everything we can to prevent it.

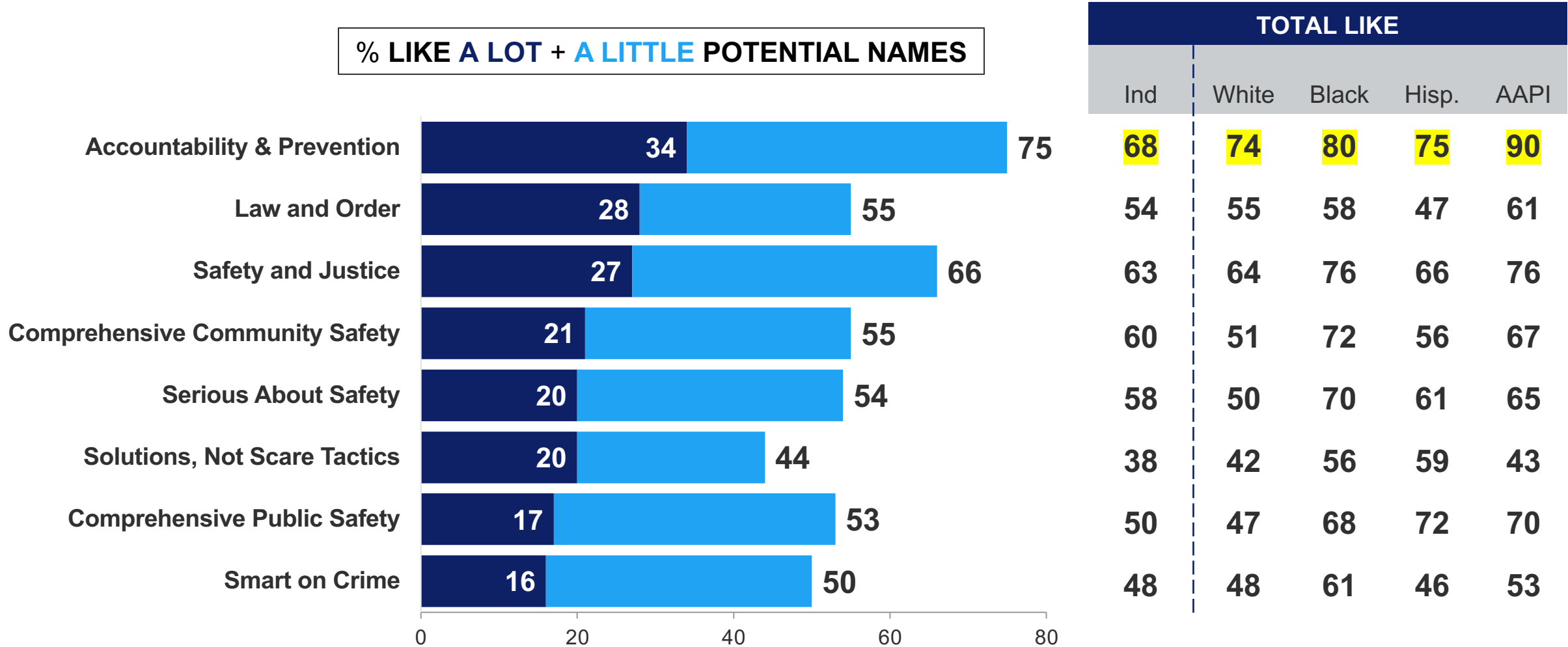
Candidate B says to address rising crime we need to put more police officers on the streets and keep criminals in jail and off our streets.

Which candidate do you agree with more?



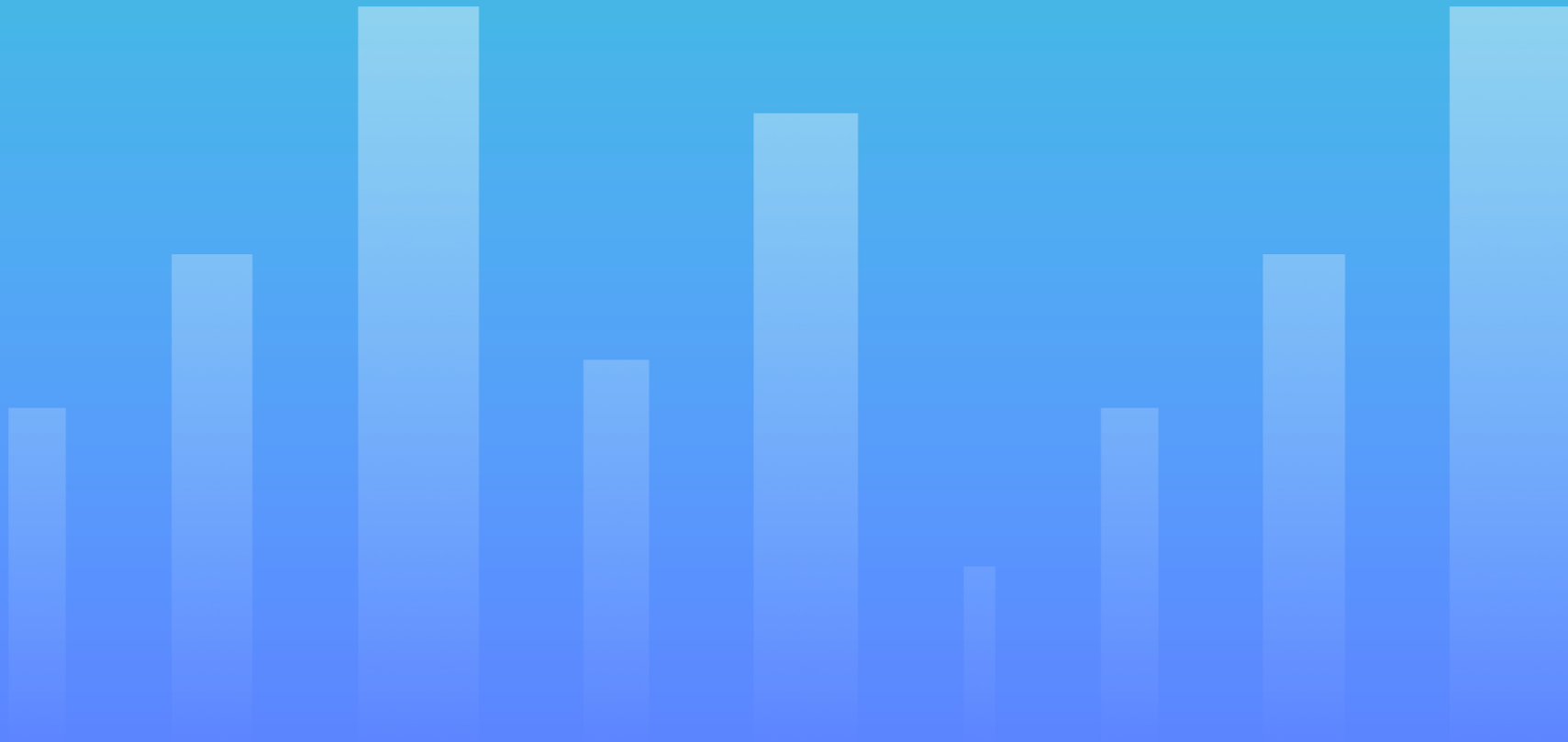
Accountability & Prevention is by far what these voters feel is the best name for a proposal that would address crime.

It's by far the most preferred name across racial subgroups.





FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



IMPACT
RESEARCH

Key Findings – Environment

- **Voters believe crime and gun violence are rising in the country with increasing intensity, with particular concern about violence.** Across demographic, geographic, and ideological subgroups voters say crime is rising in the country - and are primarily concerned about violent crime with a weapon. They see this as a fact relying on news stories and statistical data on escalating crime as substantiation for their perspective.
 - Politically, reducing crime and gun violence are mid-tier priorities that continue to lag behind inflation. While partisanship drives whether addressing gun violence vs crime should be a bigger priority (Dems prioritize guns, Reps prioritize crime), Independents are squarely in the middle with a majority saying they are equally important.
- **Voters are concerned with criminals being released too easily and want to see stricter laws particularly towards violent crime.** Not enough being done to stop criminals from committing more crimes, drug addiction, and people getting out on bail are the top contributions to rising crime in their minds.
- **Though they recognize the causes of rising crime might be social issues, they gravitate toward accountability measures like stricter sentences and strong enforcement of existing laws.** Only Democrats really point to social programs being the tip of the spear for solving this issue while most demographics instinctively want more accountability-focused measures once someone has broken the law.

Key Findings – Solutions

- **Voters believe both accountability and prevention are important for fully addressing crime, but gravitate toward solutions focused on accountability.** Voters prioritize more immediate results to address crime now, including tougher sentences and a greater police presence to bring down rates. These solutions are important across the demographic spectrum including among voters of color.
 - Our best prevention policy (increased funding for mental health and substance abuse programs) tests as well as our 4th and 5th best accountability policy overall, but ranks highest for Dems and Black voters.
- **Both the Accountability and Prevention packages earn broad support and are seen as effective in making communities safer.** Support for the accountability package is strong across partisan lines (80% Dem/ 89% Rep/ 80% Inds) while the prevention package receives nearly unanimous support from Democrats (93%) and wide support from Republicans (74%) and Independents (78%) as well.
- **Voters assume that Republicans are driving the Accountability package and Democrats the Prevention package.** By a 17-point margin, voters are more likely to believe an accountability package is championed by Republicans than Democrats while crediting Democrats with a prevention package by a 23-point margin.

Recommendations

- **Acknowledge people's concerns about violent crime and gun violence, and embrace the role police play in keeping communities safe.** While economic issues are dominant in voters' minds, rising crime and gun violence is real to voters and they have genuine concerns.
- **Include police as one of the most important ways to help people feel safe – while including better relationships in the community and community policing.** When it comes to police, all of the above is popular. People want to feel safe in their communities and police are viewed favorably; this does not mean our police answers need to be “Back the Blue” in rhetoric. Police who build relationships and trust in the community are a key part of this.
- **Addressing crime requires both prevention AND accountability – so long as both feel immediate.** Voters recognize that both are equally important, but accountability measures are more likely to register as immediately effective and receive more support. The fact that voters also see accountability as a Republican-driven narrative also presents an opportunity for Democrats to break the mold on the issue.

Recommendations

- **Focus on solutions with quick results and avoid talk of long-term solutions in the messaging.** While long-term solutions are critical from a policy standpoint, it can also sound like the problem will not/does not need to be addressed urgently. Solutions like affordable housing and improving run-down neighborhoods may not feel fast enough.
- **Policy solutions aimed at reducing crime that reach a broad audience include:**
 - Tougher sentences for people who commit violent crimes
 - Increased police presences in high crime areas
 - Stronger enforcement / directed focus on catching and retaining violent criminals
 - Increased funding for mental health and drug abuse programs that get people off the streets.
 - Preventing recidivism (to some this might mean keeping people in jail and others it's investment in programs)
- Explore calling this ***Accountability & Prevention NOW***. This was the top testing name in this survey across demographics and is a good short-hand for both what this is, and what it will do. While we did not test including “now” in the name, we believe it conveys the urgency.