

September 2022

**CAP
ACTION**

Building a Democratic Brand on Crime

Findings and Recommendations from Surveys &
Discussion Boards About Crime and Public Safety

HART
RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES

GSG **IMPACT**
GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP RESEARCH

Methodology



Impact Research and **Hart Research** have each conducted nationwide online polls and **Global Strategy Group** conducted two online discussion boards among persuadable voters.



1. The Impact poll included N=1218 registered voters with an oversample of N=381 Black, Latino and AAPI voters.
2. The discussion boards included two groups of white, Black, and Latino voters: Urban/Suburban voters and Small Town/Rural voters.
3. The first Hart Research poll was 616 BG state voters; 591 BG district voters; and 722 Black, Latino, and AAPI voters.
4. The second Hart Research poll was 1,565 registered voters with an oversample of 454 voters of color



The Impact poll was conducted from April 6th to 13th

The GSG discussion boards were conducted from June 14th to 16th

Hart surveys were conducted July 15-25 and August 24-28

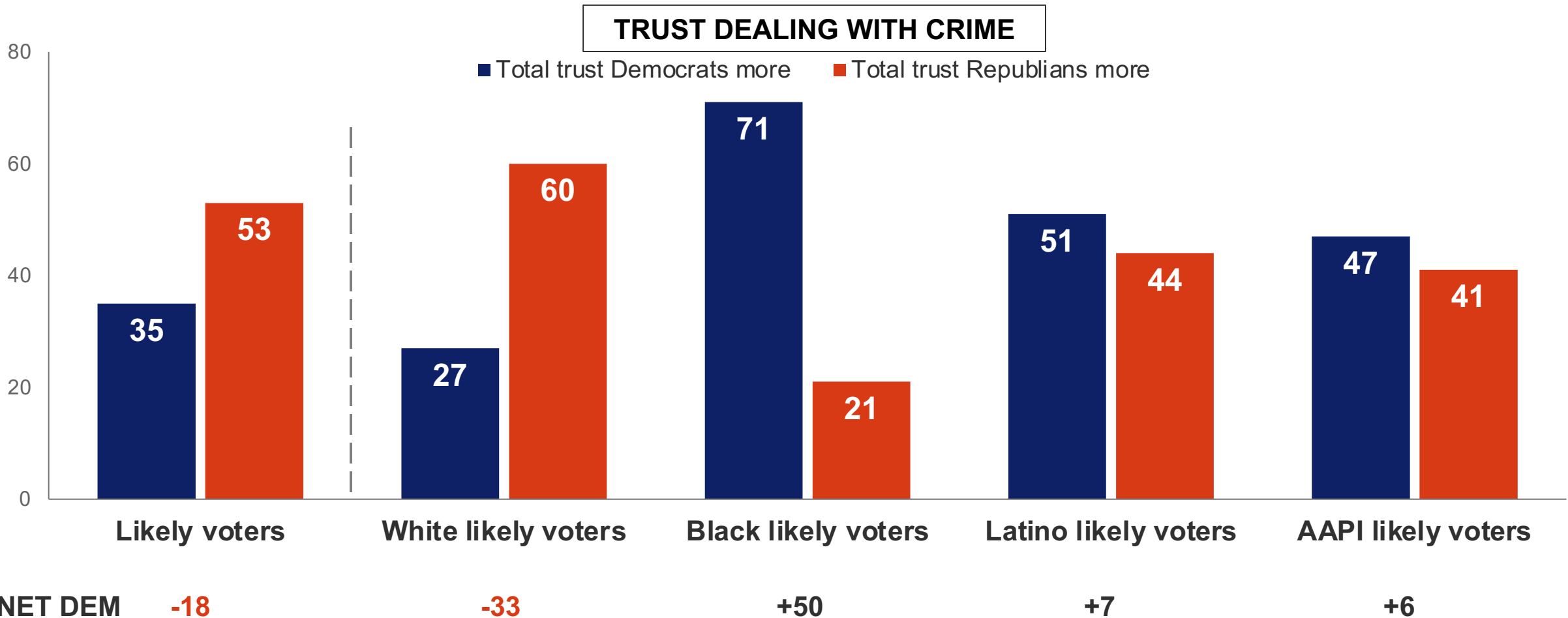
PARTISAN CHALLENGES ON CRIME

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Voters distrust Democrats on dealing with crime.

Latino and AAPI voters are more of a toss-up, both giving Democrats a slim trust advantage.



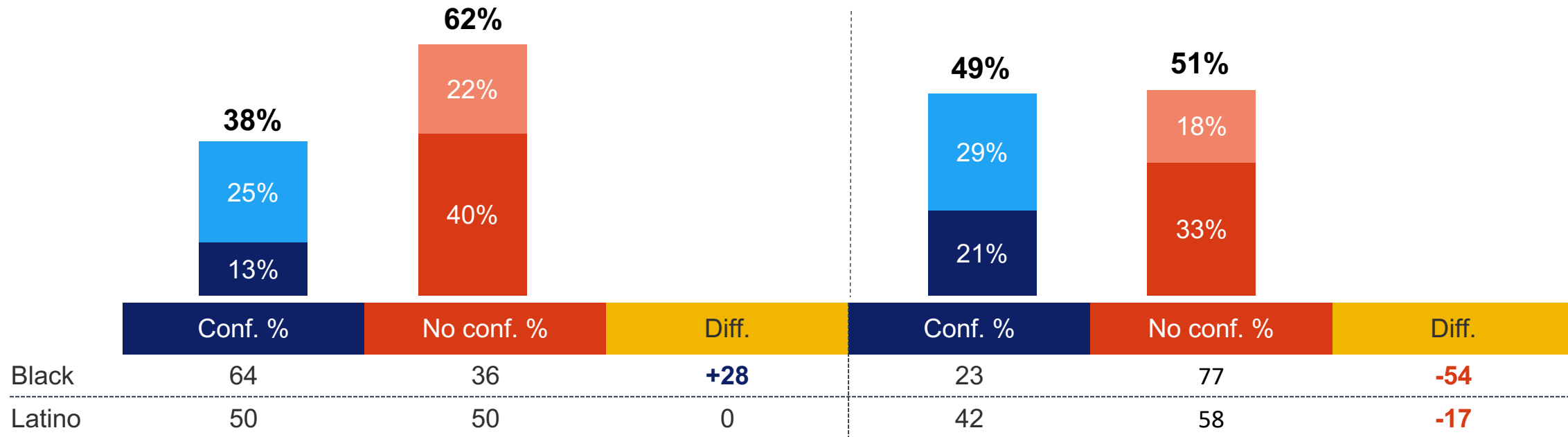
Three-in-five battleground (BG) voters do not have confidence in Democrats' ability to address crime. Confidence in Republicans is a toss-up.

In general, how much confidence do you have in...

Democrats to address crime

Republicans to address crime

■ A great deal of confidence ■ A fair amount of confidence ■ Just some confidence ■ Very little/no confidence

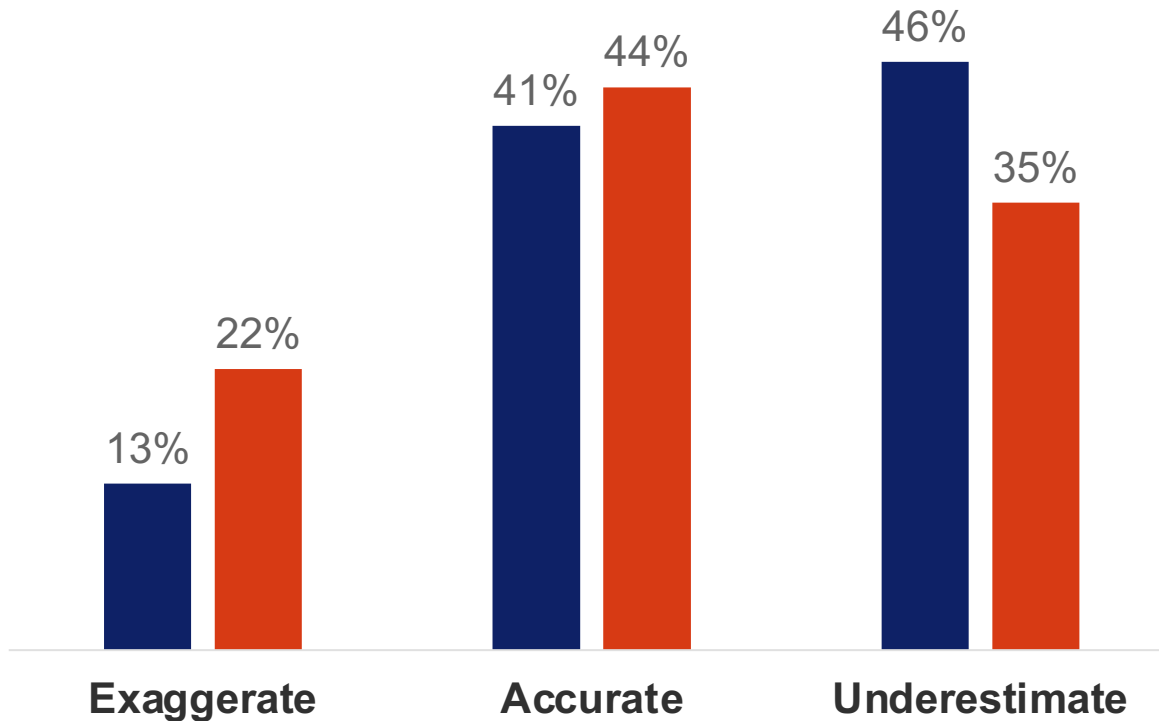


Neither party is seen by a majority as having an accurate understanding of crime, with a plurality saying Democrats underestimate it.

More say Republicans underestimate crime than say Republicans exaggerate the problem.

Do you think Democrats/Republicans exaggerate/have an accurate understanding/underestimate the amount of crime and violence in the country?

■ Democrats ■ Republicans



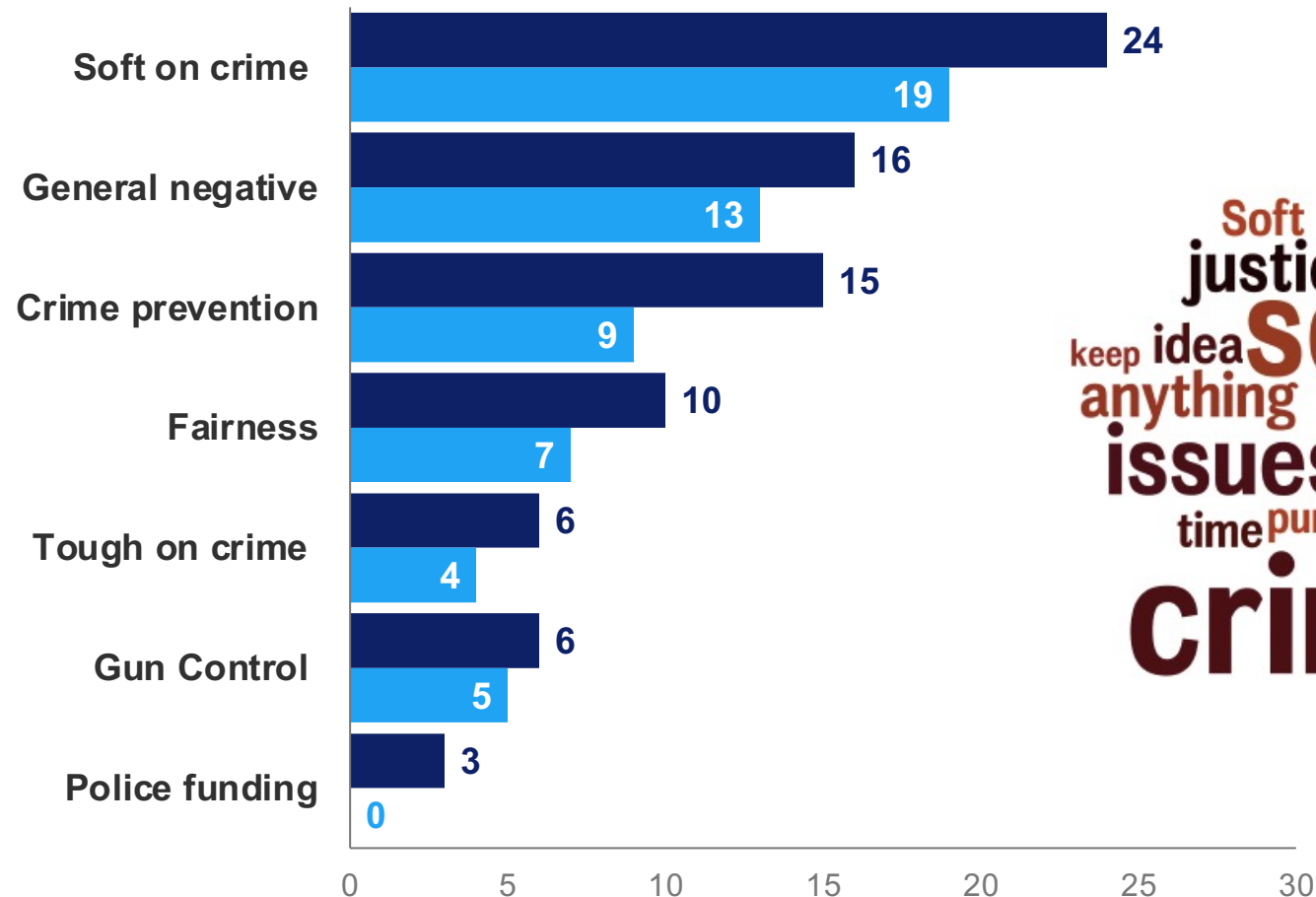
	Democrats are accurate %	Republicans are accurate %
White	38	50
Black	58	19
Latino	40	36

The only brand for Democrats is one created by Republicans.

From a legislative standpoint, Democrats are most known for addressing root causes of crime, but this is not very well established among persuadable voters.

In a few words, what do Democrats stand for when it comes to crime issues?

■ Overall ■ Generic Persuadable



Democrats are perceived as being weak on crime, with voters believing they focus primarily on prevention, equity and criminal justice reform.



"Democrats priorities are in general **soft on crime and high on early intervention and rehabilitation...** They are the party of compassion and hand outs."

– Urban/Suburban, Male, White, AZ, Independent

"I do believe the Democrats prioritize crimes and social justice and public safety equally and fairly. But I believe some of the **weakness** that exists in this Democratic Party is trying to implement equality as a priority above crime or public safety... **Democrats do care about crime and unfairness, but I believe they can be more specific without trying to be the "nice party."**

– Urban/Suburban, Male, Latino, CA, Not strong Republican

"Democratic lawmakers scramble to assure voters that they're not **soft on crime**. It's a change from two years ago when, amid the height of racial justice protests... Democrats believe in the political or **social equality of all people. Democrats do care about crime and public safety.**"

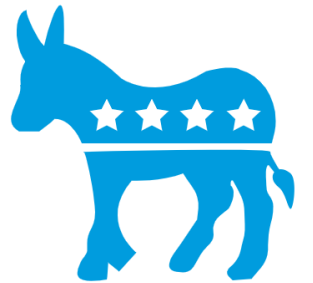
– Small Town/Rural, Female, Black, NV, Independent

"Democrats in my perspective have more socialist ideals. I believe they care, but I also believe **their means of interventions do not work**. I believe they prioritize crime, but I also believe they may be **too lenient on crime. Their tactics do not keep criminals accountable.**"

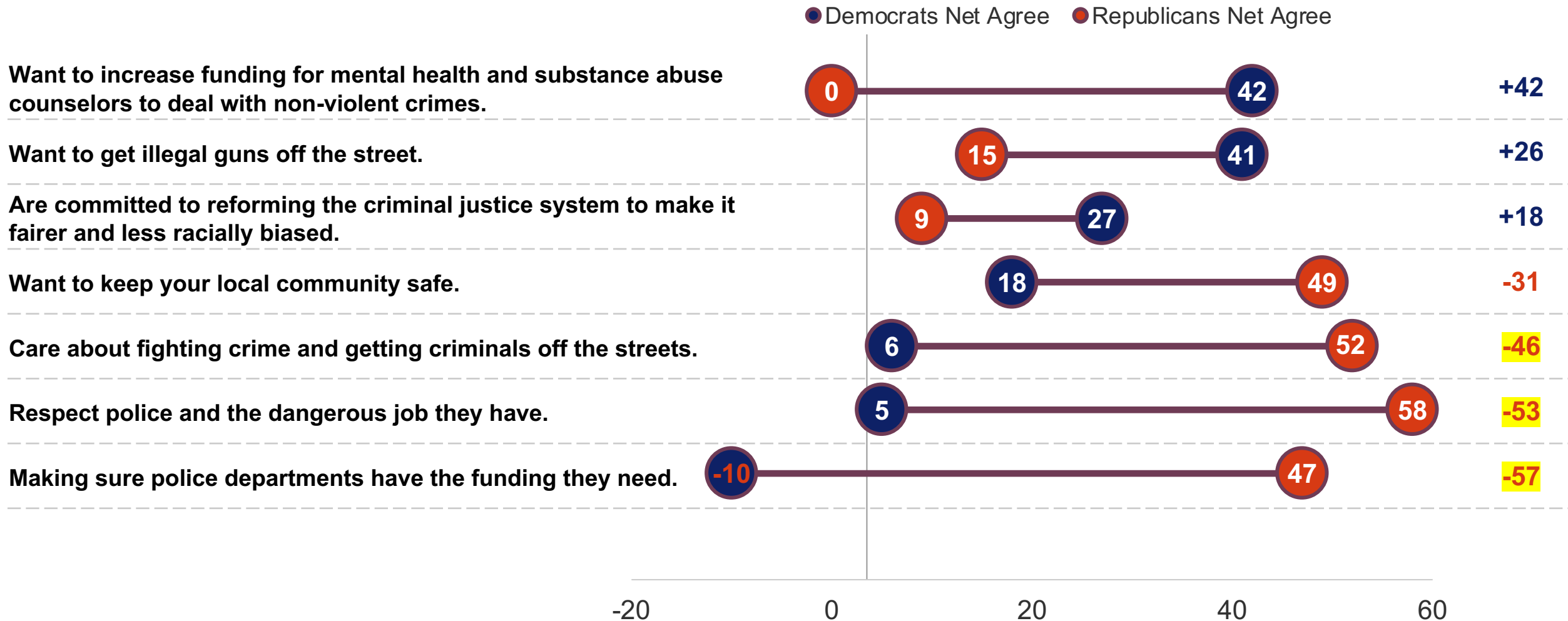
– Small Town/Rural, Female, Latino, CO, Independent

"The Democratic party is a bit **softer on crime**. They tend to give people a second chance, more opportunities to get life right."

– Small Town/Rural, Male, White, MN, Independent



Voters barely believe Democrats care about fighting crime, holding people who commit crimes accountable, or that they respect the police.



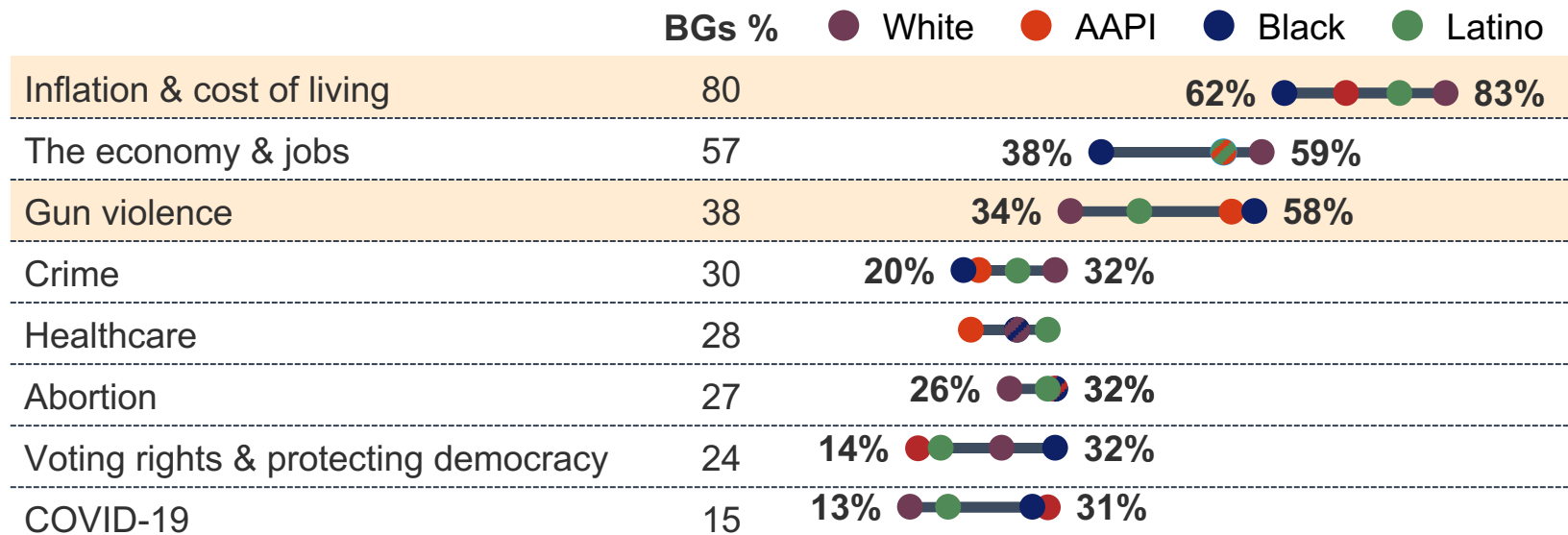
CURRENT CRIME PERCEPTIONS

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Economic concerns are the most salient issues, but gun violence is also high on the list, especially for voters of color.

*Below is a list of some possible issues that elected officials could prioritize.
Please indicate which three should be the most important issues for elected officials to address.*



Gun violence as a top 3 issue %

Men 18-49	34
Men 50+	35
Women 18-49	47
Women 50+	38
Urban	48
Suburban	37
Small town/rural	33
Democrats	57
Independents	39
Republicans	21

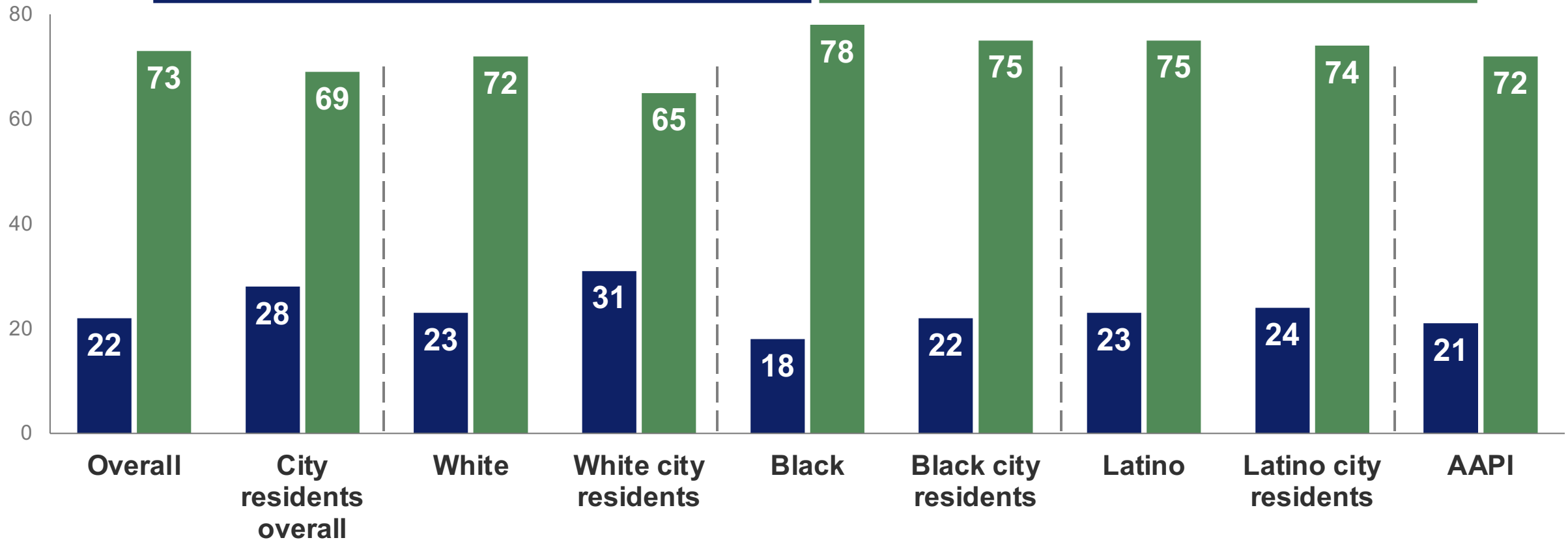
Regardless of race or whether they actually live in an urban area, voters think violent crime is a problem *everywhere*.

No one views this as a “city problem.”

Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view when it comes to crime, even if neither is exactly right?

Violent crime is mainly a problem in urban areas

Violent crime is a problem everywhere including big cities, small towns, and rural communities



When battleground voters think about violent crime, homicide and various forms of gun-related violence come to mind.

Voters associate gun violence with mass shootings, assault weapons, and mental health.

Describe what comes to mind when you think about violent crime in the United States. (open-ended)

	DEM %	IND %	GOP %
Homicide	16	13	23
Gun violence	20	17	12
Mass shootings	17	3	6
Cities	4	3	18
Democrats/Liberals	-	-	13
Stiff penalties	2	7	8

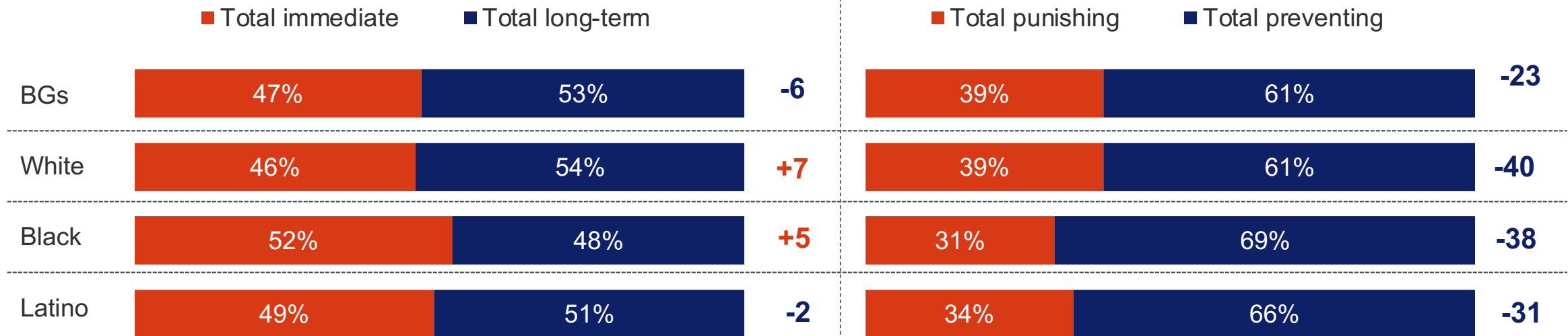
Describe what comes to mind when you think about gun violence in the United States. (open-ended)

	DEM %	IND %	GOP %
Crime is worse/out of control	17	18	7
Mental health	8	15	14
Assault & automatic weapons	15	22	4
School shootings	13	12	7
Children and youth	14	-	7
Mass shootings	14	5	4
Law-abiding gun ownership	3	8	15

Battleground voters are split about prioritizing immediate vs. long-term solutions, yet three-in-five prioritize prevention over punishment.

*When it comes to addressing crime and keeping people safe, which of the following is more important: **Immediate solutions** to address violent crime or **long-term solutions** that address the root causes of violent crime?*

*When it comes to addressing crime and keeping people safe, which of the following is more important: **Punishing** people who have already committed violent crimes or **preventing** people from committing violent crimes in the future?*



Voters believe issues like poverty, mental health, and drug addiction are the most important drivers of crime.

Inherent criminality is mentioned by some but is secondary.

Voters see causes of crime as: **Poverty/economy, Drug addiction, and inherent immorality/criminality**



“Poverty, economic disparity...”

– Urban/Suburban, Male,
Black, NY, Not strong
Democrat

“But where I see most crimes and activities happening on a regular basis are where **homelessness** is allowed to start encampments and crime seems to spread from those areas... **most regularly because of drug addiction.**”

– Urban/Suburban, Male,
Latino, CA, Not strong
Republican

“Because **some people have no morals and don’t value human life** not even their own.”

– Small Town/Rural, Female,
Black, MS, Independent

Violent crimes that voters are concerned about include **gun violence, robbery, and homicide**

“The types of violent crime in my area that concern me the most are **armed robbery and gun violence.**”

– Urban/Suburban, Female, Latino, PA, Not strong Republican

“Murder, robbery and assault concern me the most. The **number of robberies has really been on the rise** in both residential and commercial places.” – Urban/Suburban, Female, Black, GA, Not strong Democrat

A majority of voters see easy gun access as a major driver, and it's a top reason for Democrats, Independents, and people of color.

Independents are in line with Democrats in not seeing a lack of police funding as a driver.

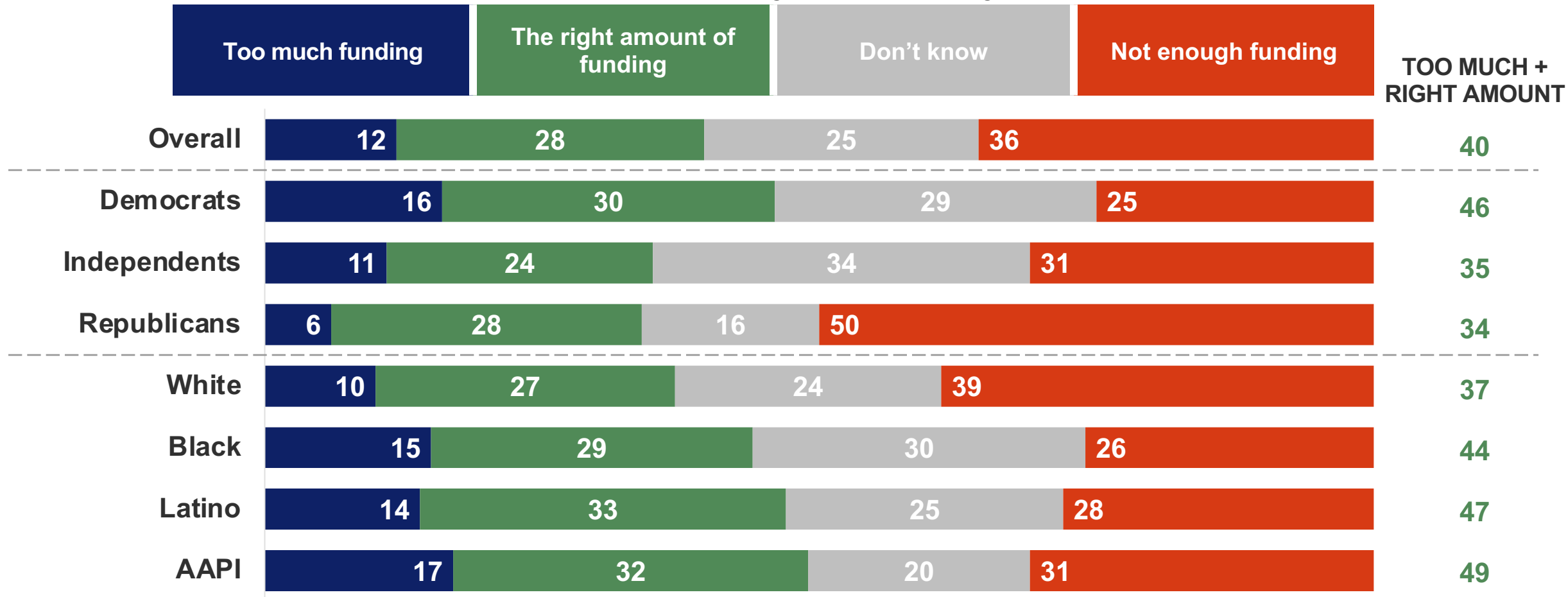
Next are some people, things, and entities that some people say may lead to rising crime. After each, please indicate whether each is a major reason for rising crime, a minor reason, or not a reason at all.

	MAJOR REASON							
	Overall	Dem	Inds	Rep	White	Black	Latino	AAPI
Drug addiction is getting worse	61	55	55	71	64	52	61	57
Dangerous people being let out on bail and allowed to go free while they await trial	60	48	55	76	60	55	65	57
Too easy for criminals to get guns	57	71	55	44	52	72	71	73
Local police departments not having the funding they need	36	25	29	50	38	24	41	26

Just 36% of voters think there isn't currently enough police funding but one in four aren't sure.

For every subgroup except for Republicans and white voters, more think there is already an adequate level of police funding.

And from what you know, does the police department where you live receive too much funding, not enough funding or does it receive the right amount of funding?



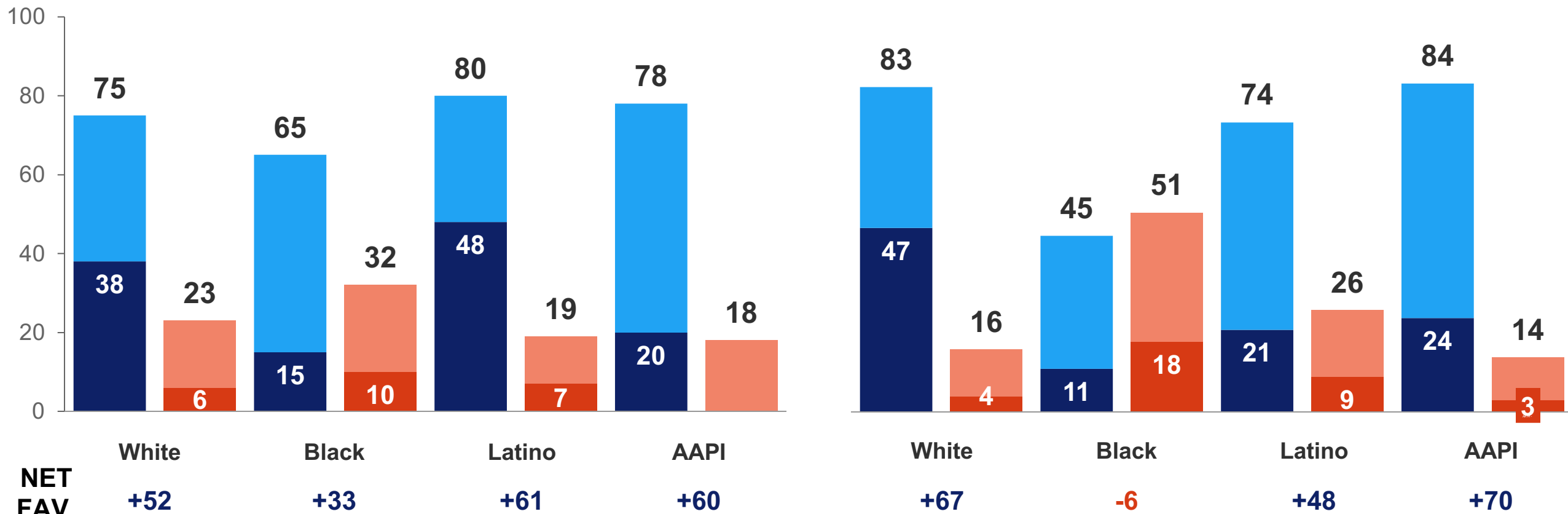
75% of voters overall support their local police department, and 77% of voters overall support the police generally.

Black voters are less favorable to the police in general, but at the local level 65% of them remain favorable.

YOUR LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT

THE POLICE

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

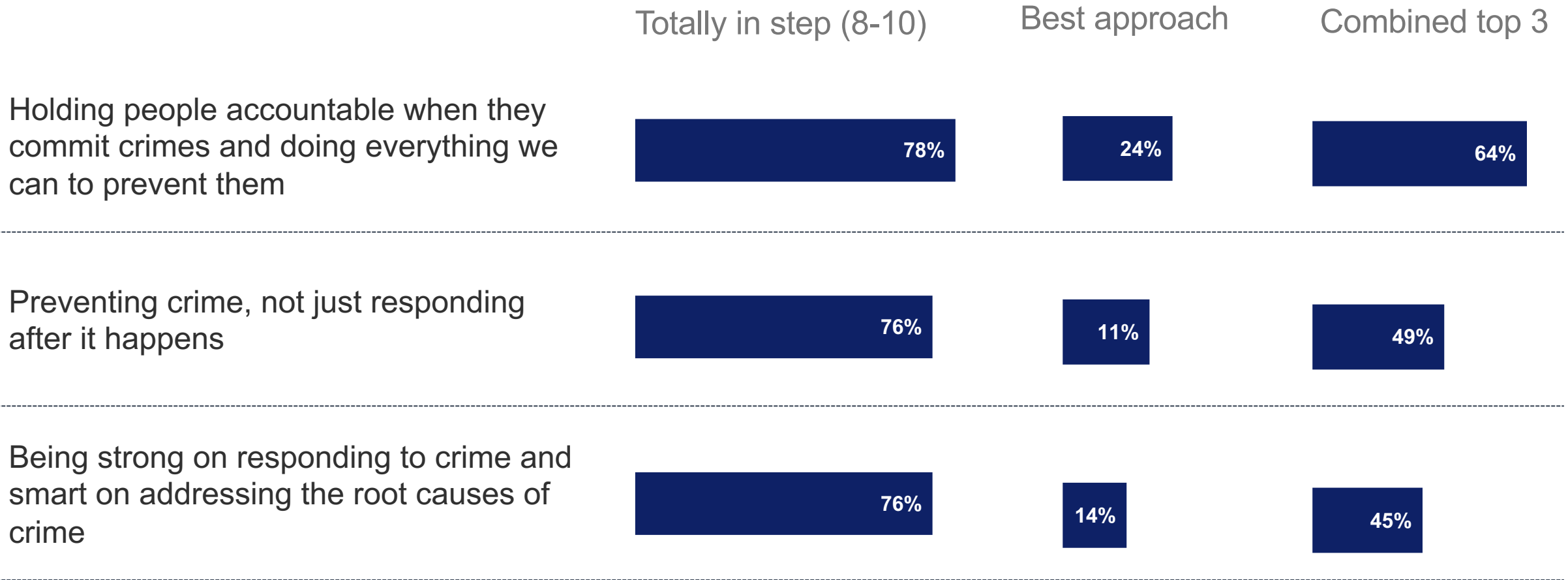


MESSAGING DEMOCRATIC SOLUTIONS

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The accountability/prevention message is rated as the most in step with voters' views. One quarter rate it as the best approach, and two thirds rate it as one of the top three.



The accountability and prevention message is in step with voters across all groups, including Republicans. This is an opportunity for Dems to enhance their standing among non-MAGA Republicans.

	All voters %	Democrat %	Independent %	Republican %	White %	Black %	Hispanic %
Holding people accountable when they commit crimes and doing everything we can to prevent them	78	73	73	84	81	71	76
Preventing crime, not just responding after it happens	76	77	70	76	77	72	70
Being strong on responding to crime and smart on addressing the root causes of crime	76	75	76	78	79	68	73
Stopping violence now and preventing crime in the future	76	74	73	79	78	72	70
Using every tool in our toolbox to stop crime and keep communities safe	72	68	70	76	73	66	69
Being tough on crime and tough on the root causes of crime	71	65	67	78	73	60	68
Being pro-cop and pro-community	63	50	57	77	67	46	59

Dems message must emphasize the need to keep people who commit violent crimes off the streets; keeping guns away from people who commit crimes and increasing mental health and drug addiction services are also important.

<i>Would greatly help reduce crime</i>	All battleground voters		Black %	Latino %	Crime confidence movers (↑D) %
Keeping people who commit violent crimes off the streets	 74%		41	37	35
Making it harder for people who commit violent crimes to get guns	 46%		44	48	52
Supporting common-sense gun reform to keep guns out of the hands of violent people	 44%		47	46	51
Increasing access to mental health and drug addiction services for people in crisis	 44%		43	45	52

Addressing gun violence is critical, but how Democrats talk about it matters.

Democrats should show voters that Republicans are in the pocket of the gun lobby which leads to extreme gun laws.

What are voters' concerns?

68% of voters say that Republicans passing extreme laws to make it easier for people who commit crimes to get guns raises concerns.

66% of voters say that Republicans passing policies to weaken gun laws against the opposition of law enforcement, even after Uvalde, raises concerns.



Who is responsible?

While 53% of voters in battleground districts are favorable to the NRA, **only 35% are favorable to the gun lobby.**



How does it work together?

The message that concerned the most voters about Republicans, including those who gain confidence in Democrats approach to crime, is:

Republicans are in the pocket of the gun lobby and pass extreme laws, opposed by law enforcement, that make it easier for criminals to get guns.

Position statements

DEMOCRATS. Everyone—no matter where they live—has a right to be safe from crime and violence. Keeping our communities safe is a responsibility and a priority I take very seriously. That’s why I think we need to focus on both accountability and prevention. I will work to hold violent criminals accountable and keep them off our streets. And I will work to ensure our local police departments have the support they need to keep us safe, including the resources to clear criminal case backlogs and close cases. The best way to keep our communities safe is by doing what works to prevent crime and violence before they happen. A safe community is one that invests in improving mental health and substance abuse treatment and new crime prevention programs that are showing success right now. And a safe community is one that makes it harder for people who commit crimes to get guns. I agree with law enforcement leaders who have told us that we need to strengthen background checks and crack down on the sale of illegal guns, while MAGA Republicans side with the gun lobby by consistently opposing common sense gun safety laws that are needed to address the deadly gun violence that threatens our communities. If we want to keep Americans safe, we need to make sure that people who commit crimes are held accountable, while also doing everything we can to prevent crime from happening in the first place.

REPUBLICANS. Crime is out of control in this country. In nearly every city, crime is at near-record level. We’ve seen historic spikes in murders, violent assaults, carjackings, and gang activity. People are scared in their homes and in their communities. This lawlessness needs to stop. We need to get tough on crime and bring law and order to our communities. As a Republican, I will always stand with our brave law enforcement officials who put their lives at risk every day to keep us safe. Democrats want to defund our police and cancel our cops just for doing their jobs. I will fight any effort to defund the police and I will work tirelessly to increase the number of police officers in our communities and increase funding for police departments until we get this crime wave under control. My priority is to protect the rights and safety of law-abiding citizens, unlike the far-left Democrats who care more about the rights of criminals and support policies that put criminals back on our streets. The best way to address our growing crime crisis is to keep criminals in jail and off our streets.

Consistent with earlier findings, heat maps show that voters are drawn to Dems' ideas about accountability and prevention and GOP's ideas about crime being out of control and needing a tough response.

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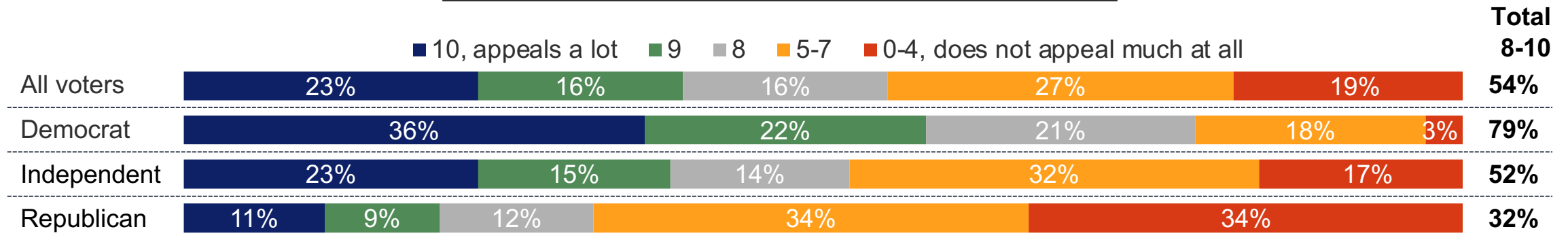
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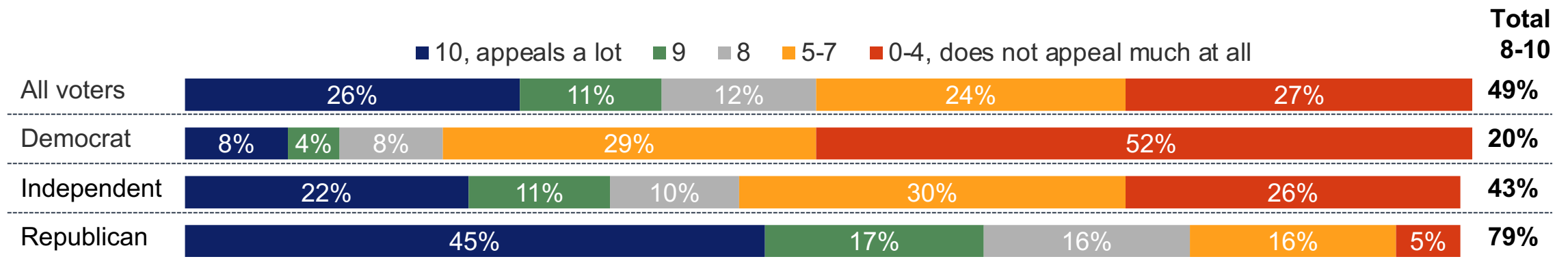
The best way to address our growing crime crisis is to keep criminals in jail and off our streets.

Independents prefer Democratic messaging by +9 percentage points, and Republicans are more favorable toward Democratic message than Democrats are to Republican message.

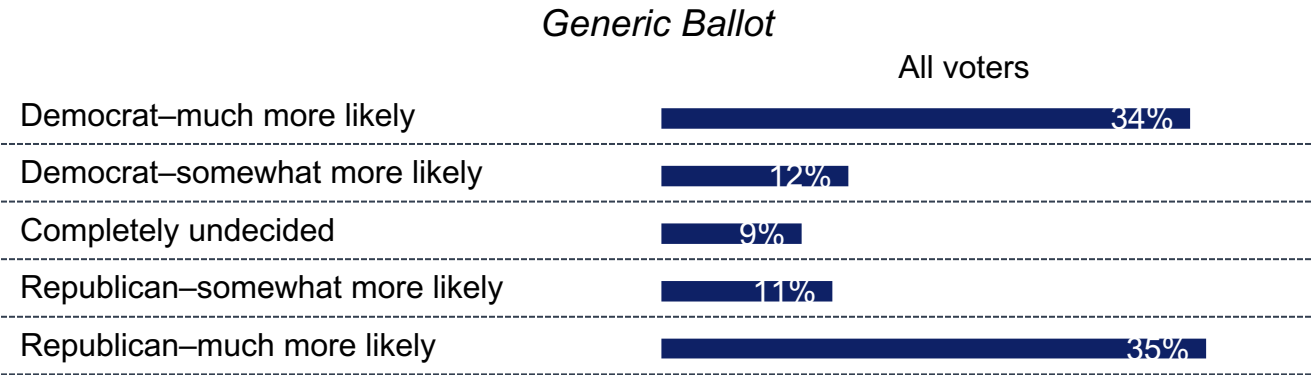
DEMOCRATIC MESSAGE



REPUBLICAN MESSAGE



Over half of voters would vote for Democrats based on this messaging. Compared to the generic ballot, this Democratic messaging increases support for Dems by +7 percentage points.



If you were deciding whom to vote for just on the basis of these two statements, which candidate would you be more likely to vote for—the Democrat or the Republican?

All voters		Democrat	Independent	Republican	White	Black	Latino
		%	%	%	%	%	%
Definitely for the Democrat	35%	73	28	2	31	62	38
Probably for the Democrat	18%	21	30	11	15	24	23
Probably for the Republican	15%	4	22	23	16	7	17
Definitely for the Republican	32%	2	20	63	38	7	22
Differential (D - R)	+7	+88	+16	-73	-8	+72	+23

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Three Steps to Effective Messaging on Crime

Meet Voters Where They Are	Emphasize the Importance of Accountability AND Prevention	Going on Offense – Attacking Republicans on Guns and Increase in Violent Crime
<p>Acknowledge that voters’ fears on crime are real; Democrats should not try to talk people out of it or tell them they are wrong to think this way.</p>	<p>As Democrats, you must affirm your commitment to accountability for people who commit violent crimes as well as your respect for local police departments. You need to say that police will have the resources they need to stop violent crime, particularly for eliminating criminal case backlogs.</p>	<p>Voters increasingly see gun violence as a huge problem in our society, and Democrats need to put the blame for crime squarely on the shoulders of Republicans who have repeatedly weakened gun laws, making communities less safe.</p>
<p>Show empathy by recognizing the importance of this problem and your shared values on the issue. Republicans want people to feel scared; Dems want people to feel they are hearing their concerns.</p>	<p>Once you show voters that you take accountability seriously, you should focus on a suite of solutions that will help prevent crime and stop it before it occurs. Democratic solutions are popular, but voters want to hear how they will positively impact their communities now.</p>	<p>How you talk about it matters. You must emphasize the impact that weak gun laws have on communities, not just Republicans’ opposition to common sense reforms.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Everyone-no matter where they live-has a right to be safe from crime and violence.” • “Everyone deserves to feel safe in their communities, and we need to do everything in our power to stop the violence.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hold people who commit violent crimes accountable and keep them off our streets” • “Ensure local police departments have the support they need to keep us safe” • “Invest in improving mental health and substance abuse treatment” • “Invest in new crime prevention programs showing success now” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In the pocket of the gun lobby” • “Pass extreme laws that make it easier for people who commit crimes to get guns” • “Even after mass shootings, Republicans have passed policies to weaken gun laws against the opposition of law enforcement”