

Public Opinion on Reinvestment in Community-Based Public Safety Programs

Analysis of Findings from Focus Group & Survey Research

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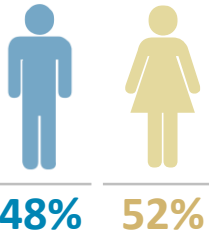
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Methodology

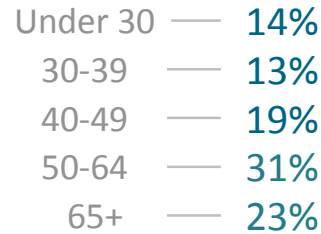
- Four focus groups were designed, conducted, and moderated by Lake Research Partners. The focus groups consisted of:
 - 2 groups in Philadelphia, PA on June 6, 2017 of
 - African-American men and women
 - Swing white men
 - 2 groups in Atlanta, GA on June 8, 2017 of
 - Latino men and women
 - Suburban swing white women
- Lake Research Partners designed and administered a survey of 800 randomly selected likely 2018 General Election voters across the country. Interviews were conducted by landline and cellphone between October 25th and 30th, 2017. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.5%.

Profile of the Sample (Likely 2018 Voters)

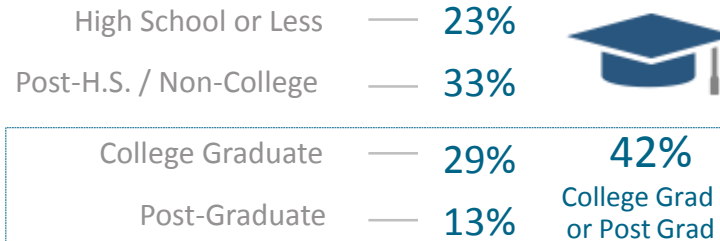
GENDER



AGE



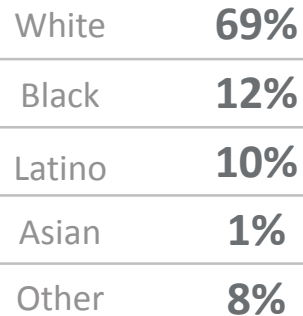
EDUCATION



PARTY REGISTRATION

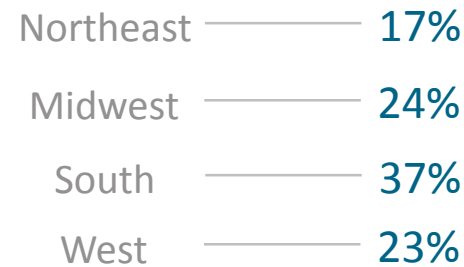
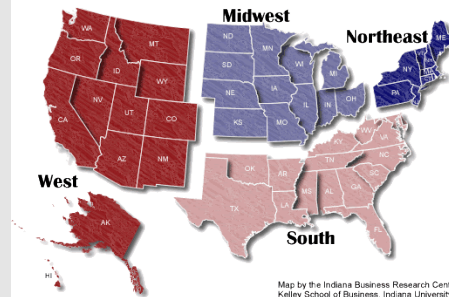


RACE



REGION

U.S. Census Regions



Key Findings

The Context

- Both focus group and survey research reveal deep anxiety among voters about a perceived rise in violent crime across the United States. This sentiment spans demographic, regional, and partisan lines.
- Voters have a broader perspective on crime prevention than might be assumed. They see the lack of prevention and reentry programs, along with high unemployment, as major barriers to improving public safety.

Support for Community Reinvestment

- Over three-quarters of voters support moving funding from incarceration to community based public safety programs, and this support is strong across demographic and party lines.
- After hearing both positive and attack messages about the proposal, support for the proposal stays strong and durable overall.

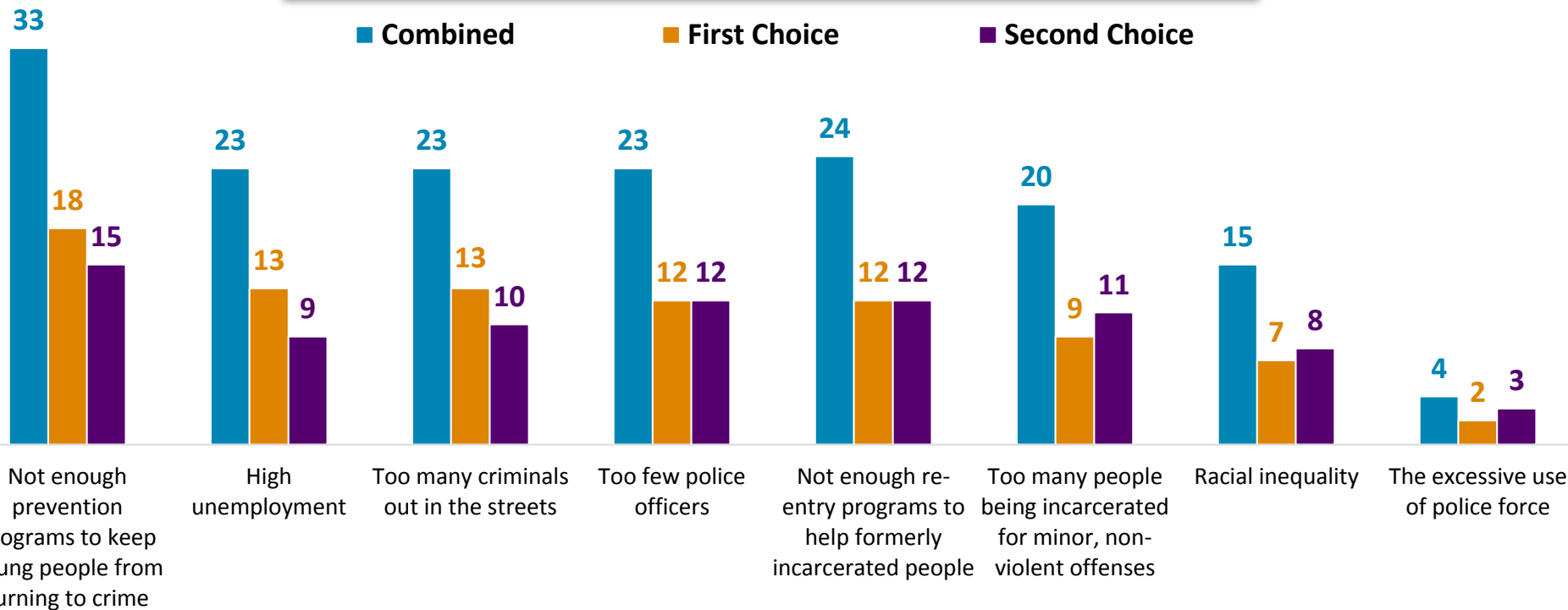
Messaging

- The most effective messages focus on setting youth down a path towards success; dramatically lowering recidivism; and breaking systemic causes of crime.
- While the race message is less effective on the whole, it appears in regression analysis as predicting towards supporting the proposal.

Voters see the lack of prevention and reentry programs, along with high unemployment, as major barriers to improving public safety. Racial inequality and the excessive use of police force rank lower.

Biggest Barriers to Public Safety in Your Community

■ Combined ■ First Choice ■ Second Choice



Across all groups, employment (and “job and skills training”) was seen as the most important and effective tool to reduce recidivism.

“They have to have help getting a job.”

-White woman in Atlanta

“If you had more employers that’s willing to offer a felon a chance through tax incentives...or something like that.”

-African American in Philadelphia

“[We’re] missing a piece of the puzzle where, once you come out, there has to be a program where the jobs are available for what you are trained for when you were inside, but it doesn’t happen.”

-Latino/a in Atlanta

“Mentoring and counseling services” and “treatment for addiction and mental health” were also seen as effective by all groups.

Among white women and Latinos, rehabilitation services, mental health services, and drug and alcohol abuse counseling were viewed as central to crime prevention and reducing recidivism.

“I think the people that, you know, have been in trouble or in situations maybe they need more. They need help...like assisting. We need to support them in some way and show them there are other avenues that might help change people..”

-Latino in Atlanta

“We don’t have access to therapy and counseling...[they are] disproportionately relegated to people who have a great deal of money. And there are many people who are average, working citizens who need therapy and who need counseling and financially they don’t have access to it.

-Latina in Atlanta

“When you asked what takes a strong community...a strong community is exactly what it would take for rehab across the board.”

-White woman in Atlanta

Voters thought “police,” “employment and vocational training,” and “drug and mental health treatment” were the most effective tools to prevent crime. “Prison and jails” are regarded as the least effective tools.

Effectiveness at Preventing Crime

Police

43% Very Effective
(86% Total Effective, 12% Not)

Employment & Vocational Training

40% Very Effective
(79% Total Effective, 20% Not)

Drug & Mental Health Treatment

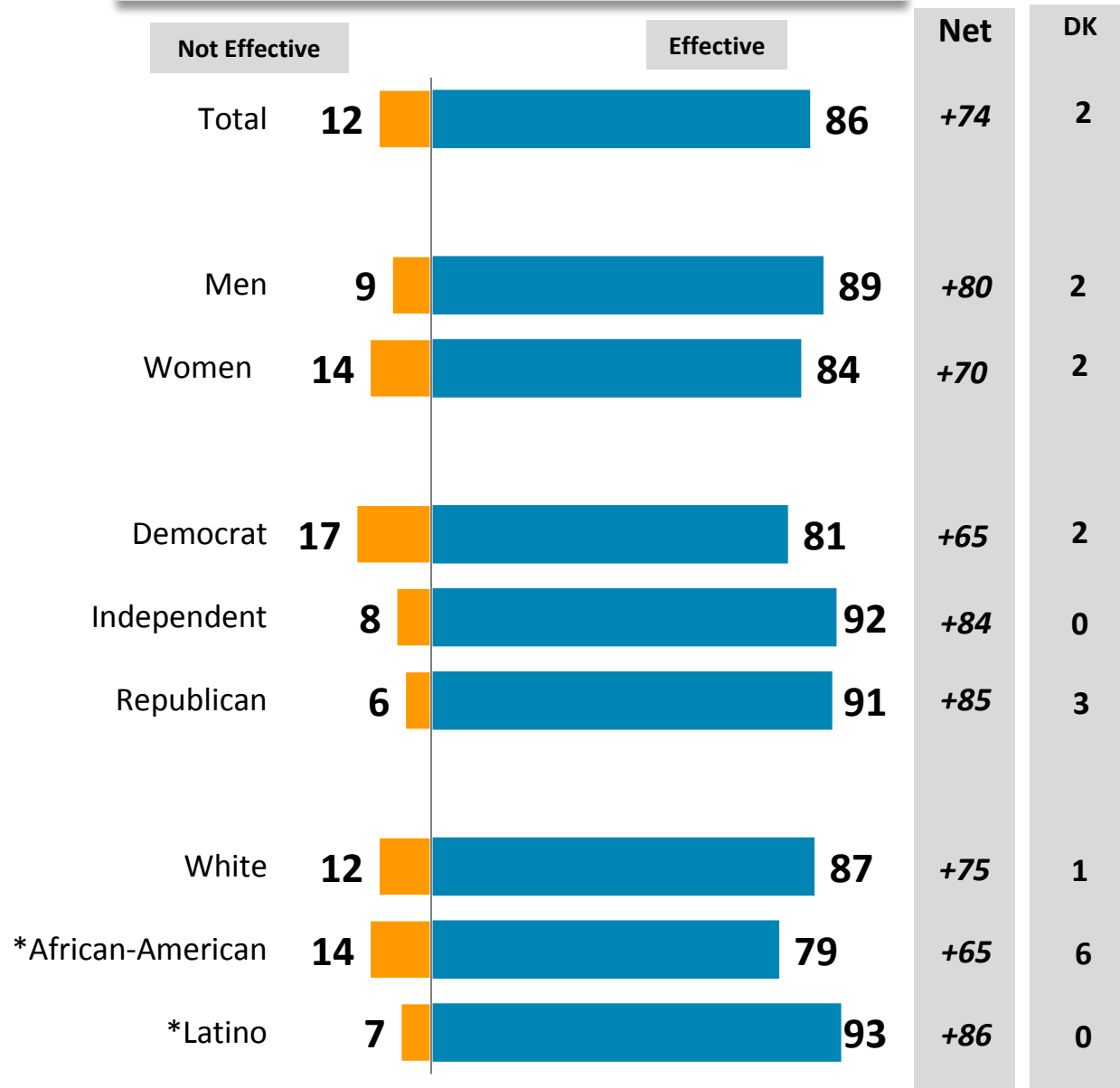
33% Very Effective
(71% Total Effective, 26% Not)

Prison & Jails

19% Very Effective
(63% Total Effective, 36% Not)

Overall Strong Support for Police

Effectiveness of the Police: Contours

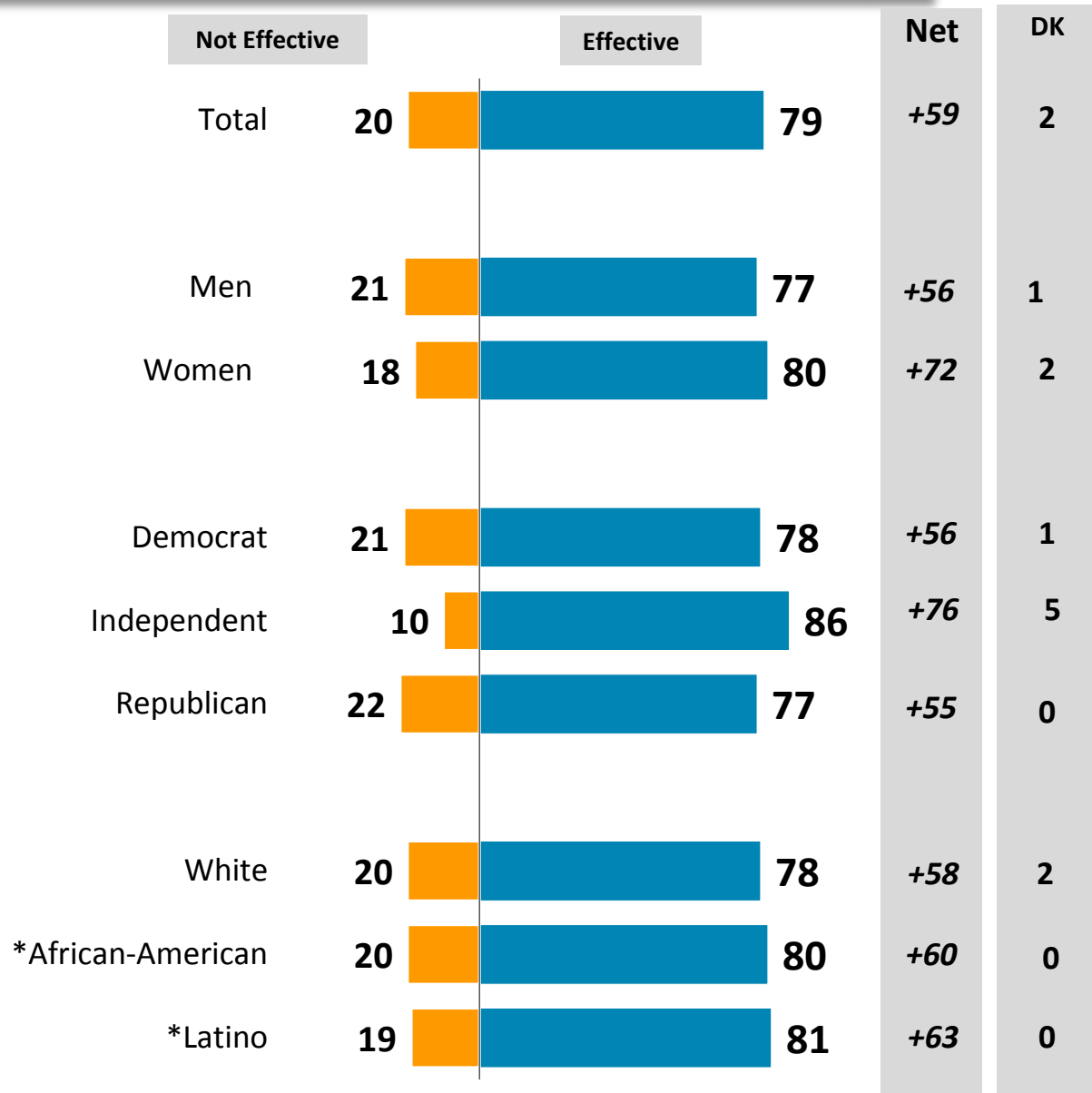


**Small sample size*

Q3a: Do you think the police are VERY effective, SOMEWHAT effective, A LITTLE effective, or NOT AT ALL effective at preventing crime?

Effectiveness of Employment and Vocational Training

Employment and vocational training are viewed positively by solid majorities across demographic and partisan lines, with the most effective praise coming from women and independents.

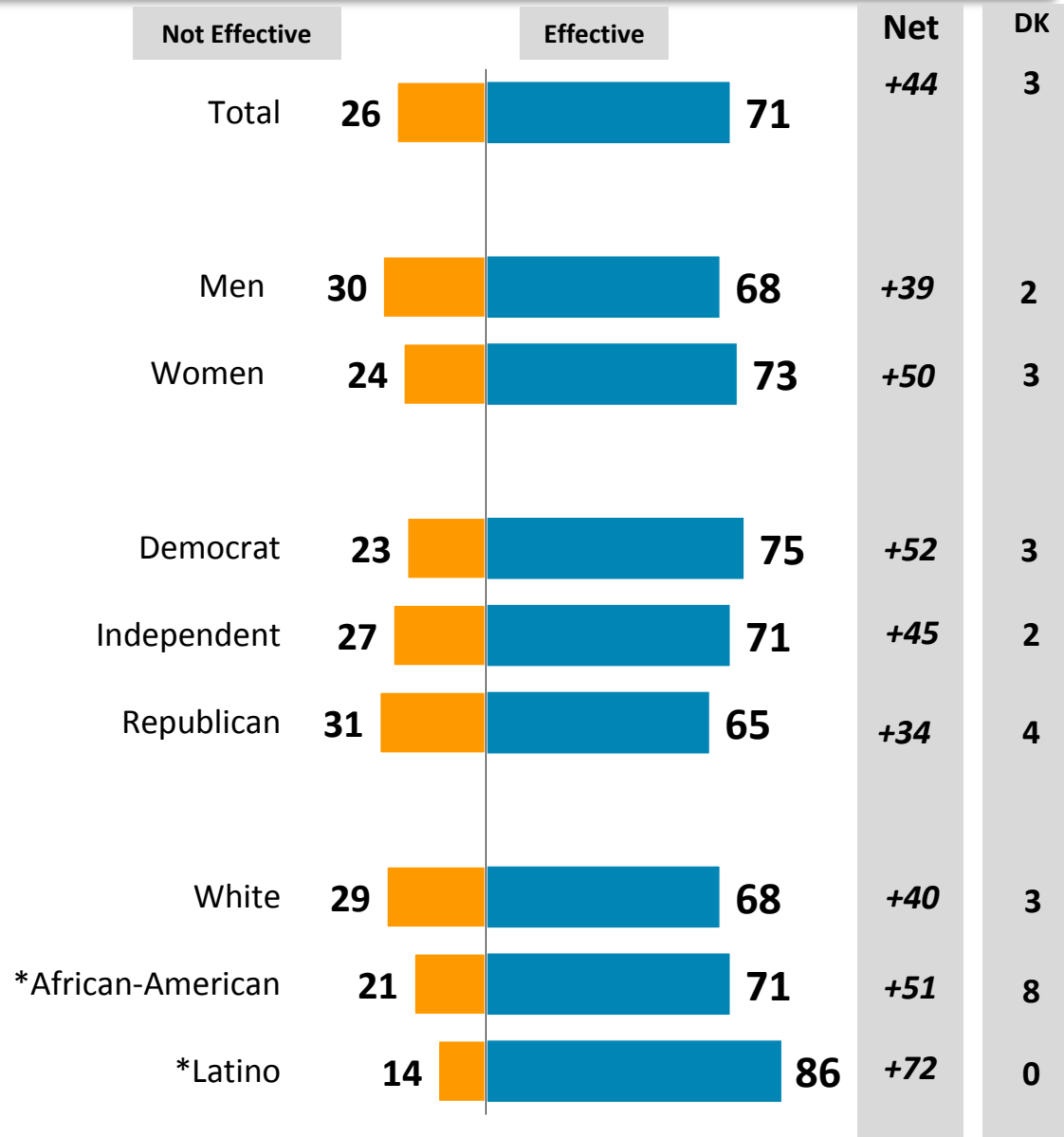


**Small sample size*

Q3c: Do you think employment and vocational training is VERY effective, SOMEWHAT effective, A LITTLE effective, or NOT AT ALL effective at preventing crime?

Effectiveness of Drug and Mental Health Treatment and Services

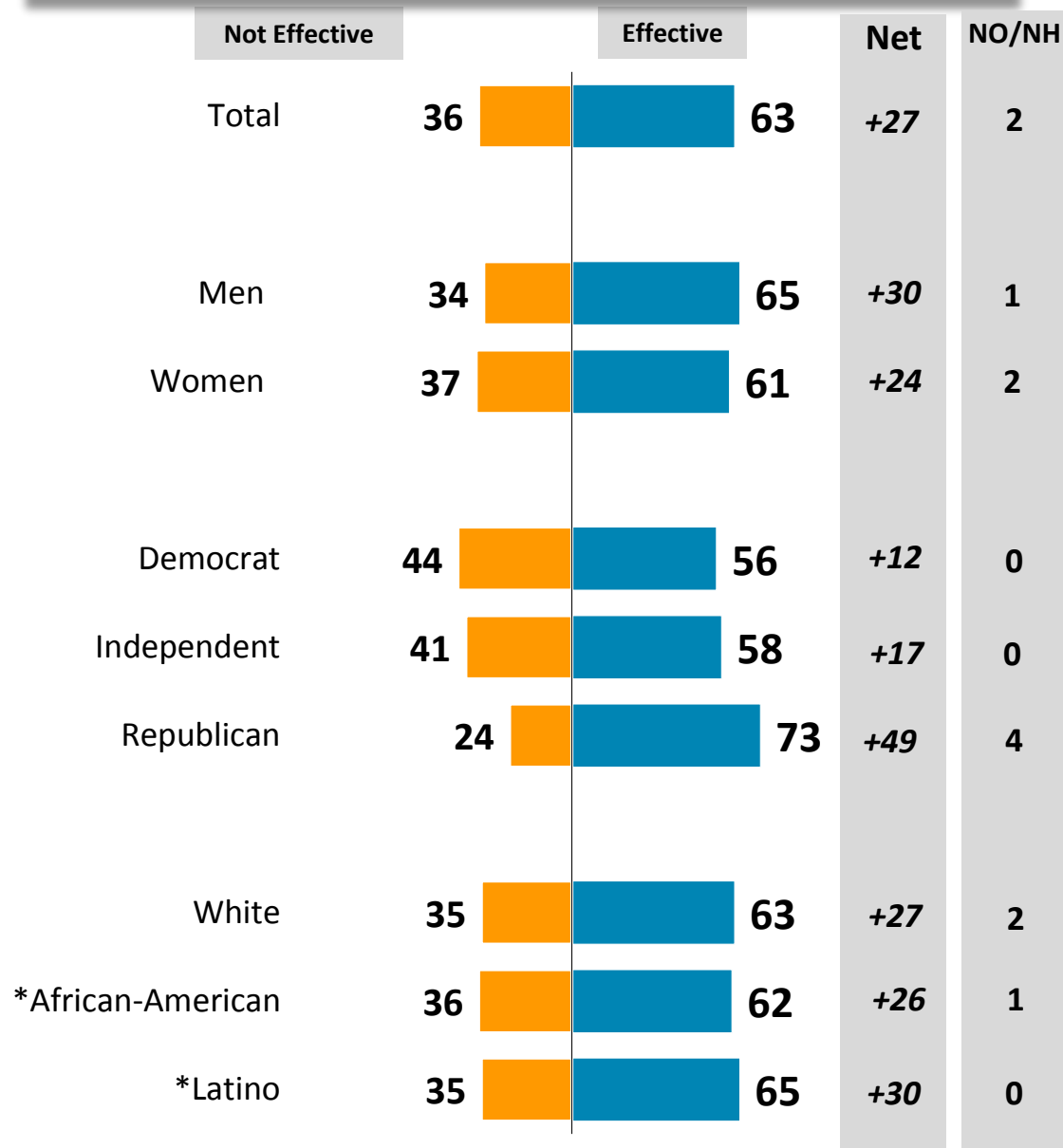
Drug and mental health treatment is in a similar tier to employment and vocational training, with Democrats and women viewing these tools most effectively.



**Small sample size*

Q3b: Do you think drug and mental health treatment and services are VERY effective, SOMEWHAT effective, A LITTLE effective, or NOT AT ALL effective at preventing crime?

Effectiveness of Prisons and Jails: Contours



Democrats, independents, and women are the most skeptical of the effectiveness of prisons and jails as tools for preventing crime.

**Small sample size*

Q3d: Do you think prisons and jails are VERY effective, SOMEWHAT effective, A LITTLE effective, or NOT AT ALL effective at preventing crime?



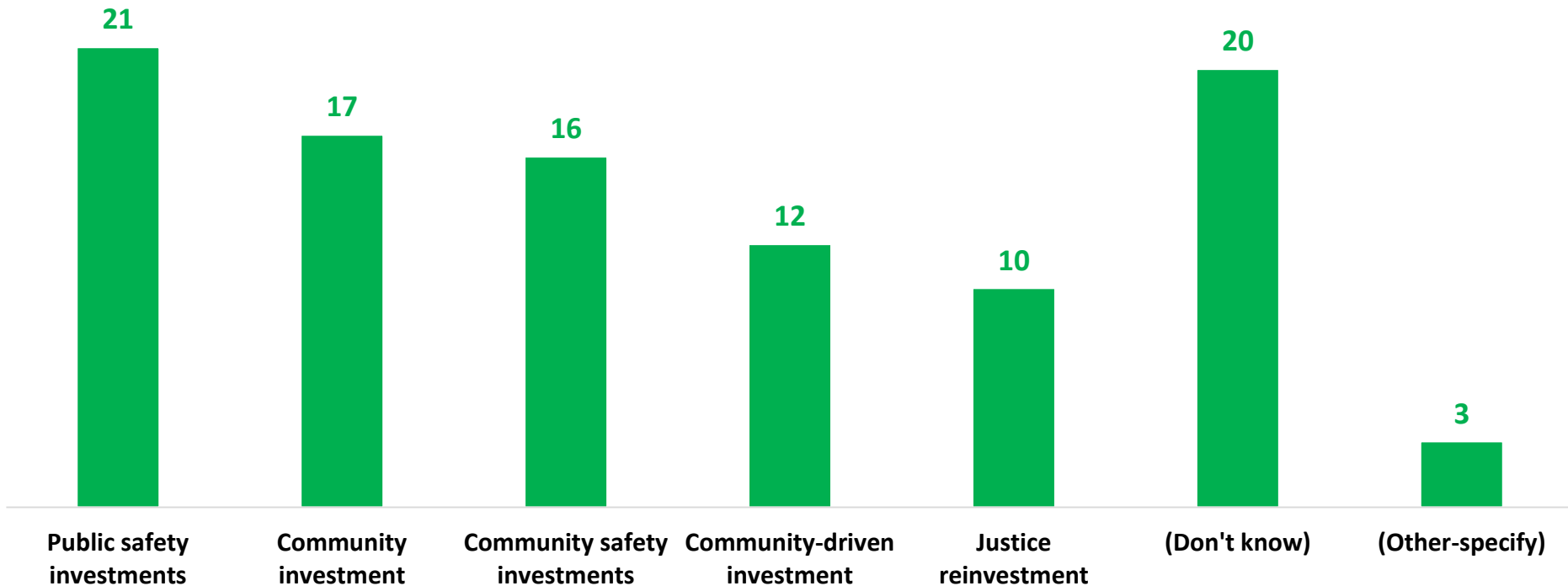
Support for Moving Funding from Incarceration to Community Based Public Safety Programs

Support for Moving Funding from Incarceration to Community Based Public Safety Programs

- Over three-quarters of voters support moving funding from incarceration to community based public safety programs (78% and 16% oppose), with support spanning major regional, demographic, and partisan lines.
- Further, a majority (57%) supports the proposal “strongly”.
- After hearing both positive and attack messages about the proposal, support for the proposal stays relatively constant overall (83% support, 59% strongly support).
- Voters are much more hesitant, however, to move funding from policing to pay for this proposal with a majority (54%) opposing such a move.

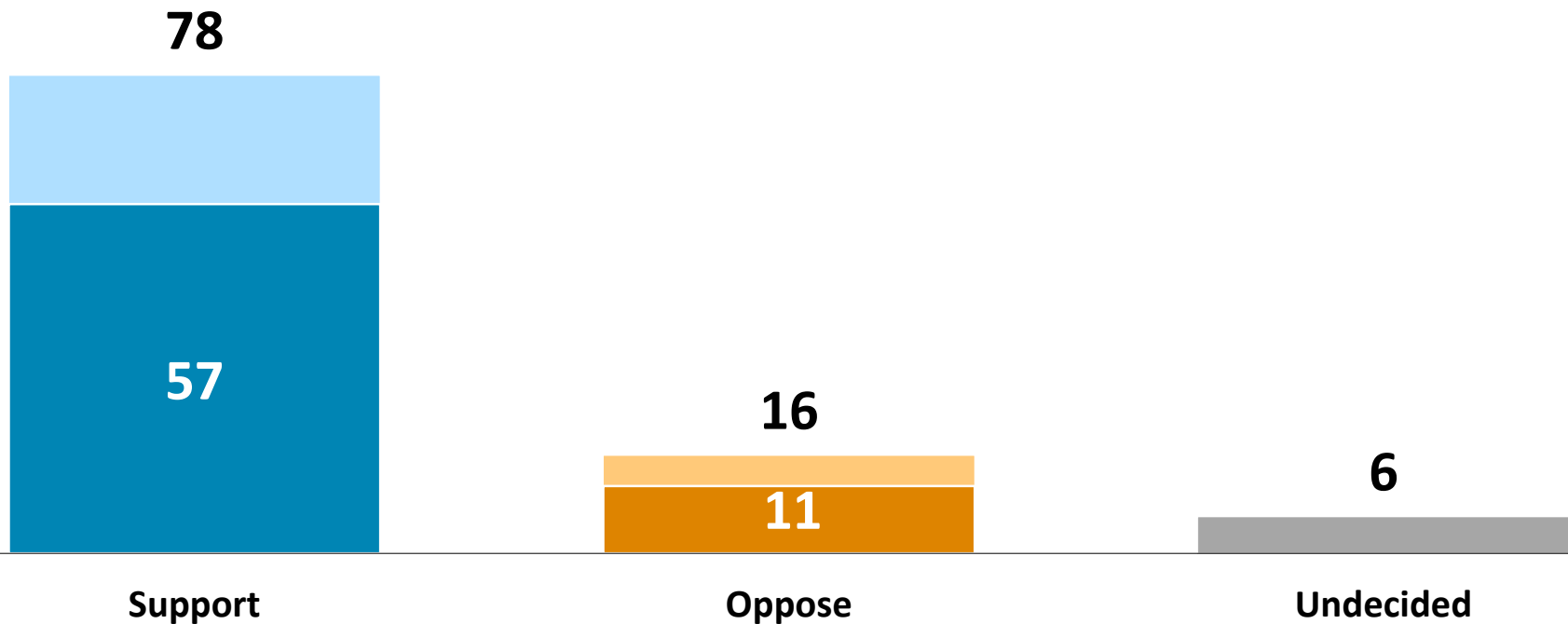
There is no clear consensus on terminology for this proposal. Approximately one-in-five voters thinks the term “public safety investments” most accurately describes the proposal, with “community investment” and “community safety investments” close behind.

Which is the Best Description of this Proposal?
Answer Choices Provided to Respondents



Nearly eight-in-ten voters support a proposal to move funding from incarceration to community-based public safety programs.

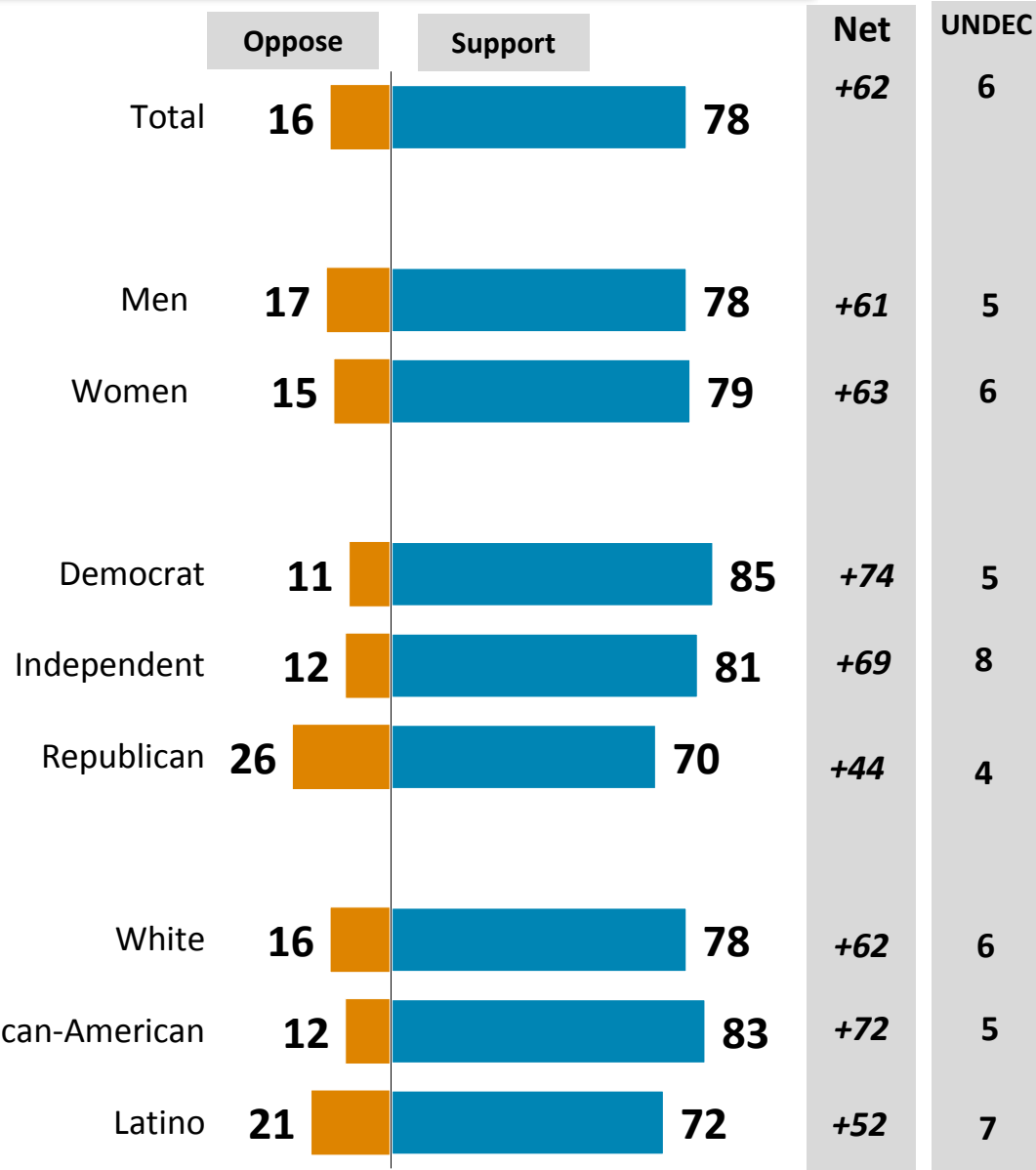
Initial Ballot



Darker colors indicate intensity

Q7: Do you support or oppose moving some funding from incarceration to community-based public safety programs, like treatment, rehabilitation, job training, and other crime prevention services? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK: Is that strongly (yes/ no) or not-so-strongly (yes/ no)?] [IF UNDECIDED: Well, if you had to decide, which way do you lean?]

Initial Ballot Contours



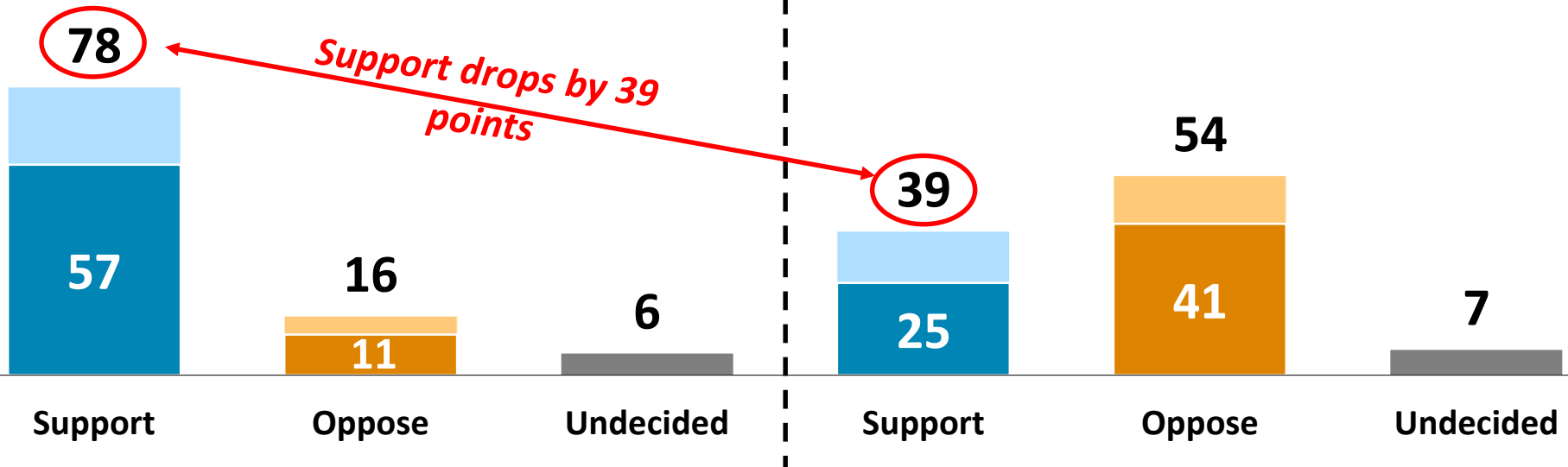
Support for the proposal on the initial ask is remarkably strong across demographics subgroups, especially Democrats, independents, and African Americans. Republicans and Latinos are more reserved in their support for the proposal, though we still win significant majorities of both groups.

Voters are much more hesitant to move funding from policing to pay for this proposal with a majority opposing such a move.

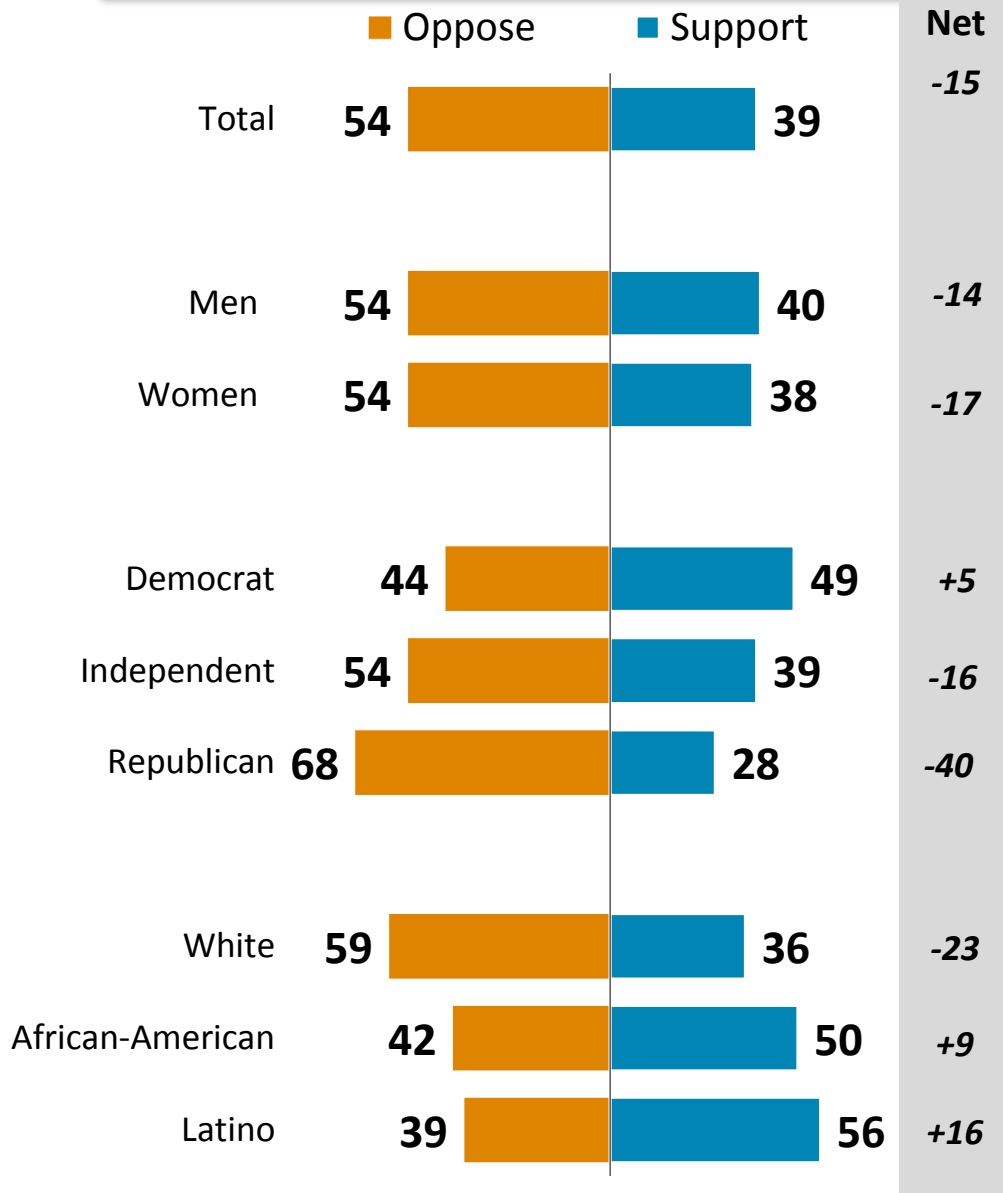
Moving Funding from Incarceration vs. Moving Funding from Policing

Initial Ballot
(move from incarceration)

Move funding from Policing



Move Funding from Policing Contours



Support for this alternative is noticeably weaker at the subgroup level, with Democrats, Latinos, and African Americans the only groups who express net-positive support. Republicans and white voters represent the most fierce opposition to this proposal.

Q17. Now, instead of moving funding from incarceration, some have proposed moving some funding from POLICING to community-based public safety programs, like treatment, rehabilitation, job training, and other crime prevention services? Do you support or oppose that proposal? [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK: Is that strongly (yes/ no) or not-so-strongly (yes/ no)?] [IF UNDECIDED: Well, if you had to decide, which way do you lean?]



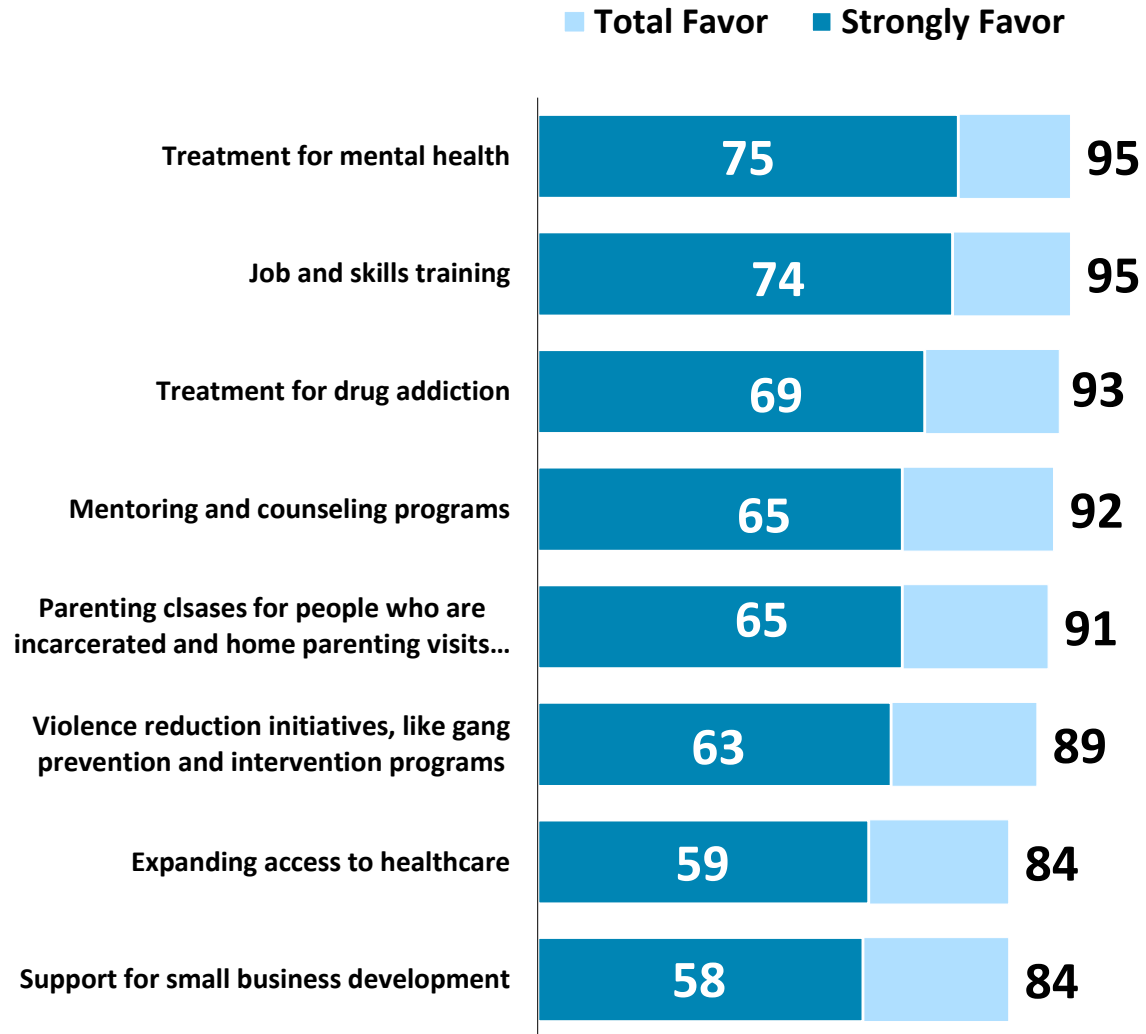
Endorsers & Support for Various Community Based Public Safety Programs

Endorsers & Support for Various Community Based Public Safety Programs

- Voters overwhelmingly favor a list of steps that could be taken at the local level to improve community public safety, with treatment for mental health and job and skills training the most popular overall.
- Treatment for drug addiction, mentoring and counseling programs, increased resources for parents, and violence reduction initiatives are also incredibly popular.
- Voters want to hear from a diverse coalition supporting community reinvestment reforms, including police, crime victims, as well as formerly incarcerated individuals who have turned their lives around.

Local Level Steps to Improve Public Safety

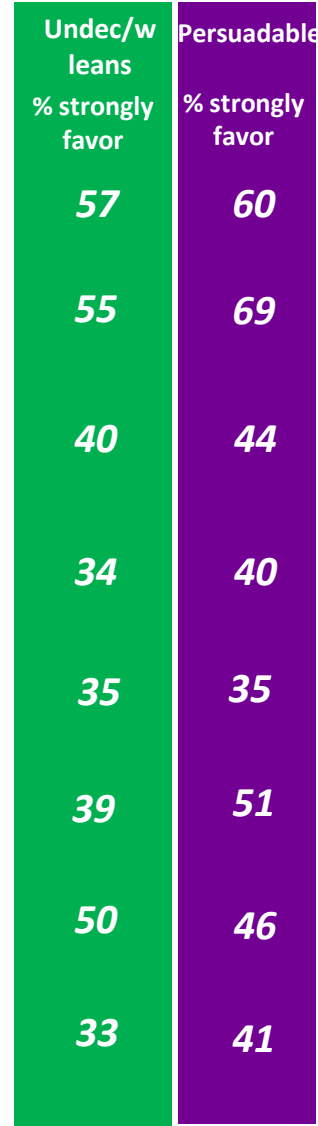
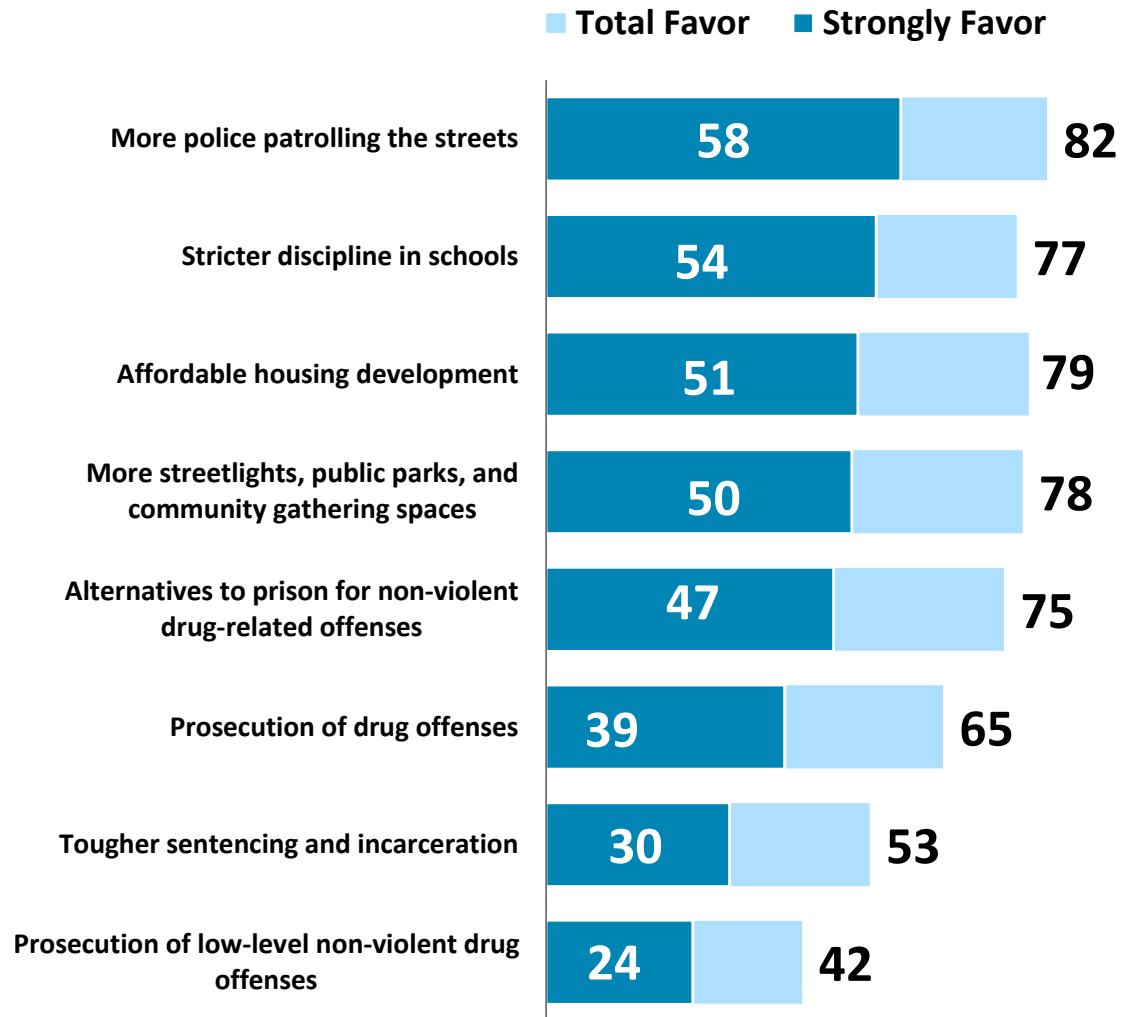
Voters overwhelmingly favor treatment for mental health and job and skills training, as well as treatment for drug addiction, mentoring and counseling programs, increased resources for parents, and violence reduction initiatives.



Q12. Now I will read you a list of steps that can be taken at the local level to improve community public safety. For each item, please tell me whether you STRONGLY favor, SOMEWHAT favor, somewhat OPPOSE, or STRONGLY oppose that item as a way to improve community public safety.

Local Level Steps to Improve Public Safety

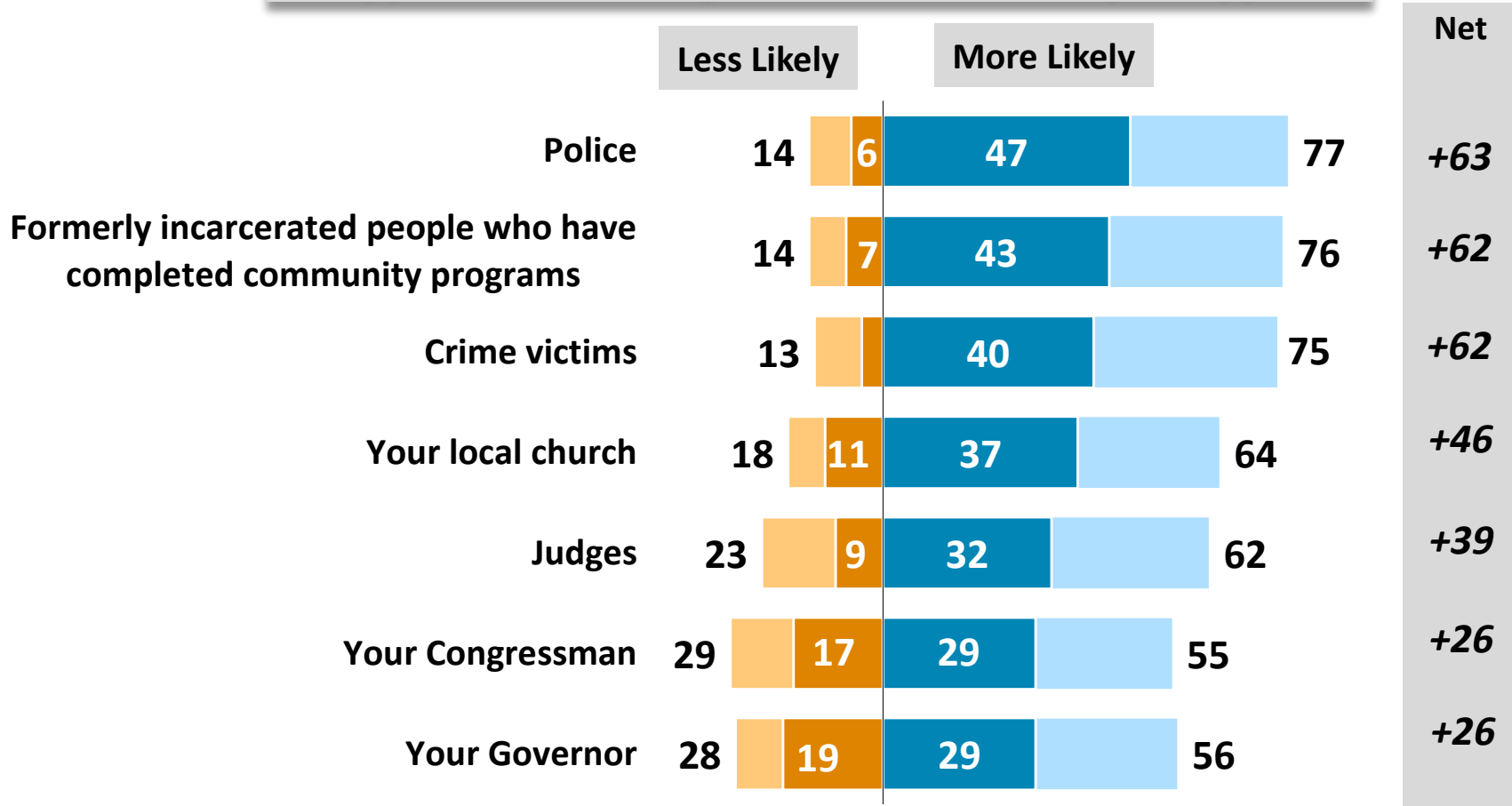
A second tier of steps including more policing, stronger school discipline, and affordable housing development is also widely supported. Voters express reservations at prosecuting drug offenses and low-level non-violent offenses.



Q12. Now I will read you a list of steps that can be taken at the local level to improve community public safety. For each item, please tell me whether you STRONGLY favor, SOMEWHAT favor, somewhat OPPOSE, or STRONGLY oppose that item as a way to improve community public safety.

Top messengers include police, formerly incarcerated individuals who have completed community programs, and victims of crime.

Support would make you MORE or LESS likely to support



**All asked of half the sample. Darker colors indicate intensity.*

Q11. Now, I'm going to read you a list of individuals and groups who might choose to SUPPORT the proposal we're discussing. For each, please tell me if their support would make you MORE or LESS likely to support moving some funding from incarceration to community-based public safety programs, like treatment, rehabilitation, job training, and other crime prevention services?

Endorsements of this proposal by police and formerly incarcerated individuals would have a positive effect across racial and partisan lines, though Democrats are less enthused than independents and Republicans.

	All	Undecided with leans	White	Non-white	Dem	Ind.	GOP
<i>% Much More Likely</i>							
Police	47	40	49	40	39	49	55
Formerly incarcerated people who have completed community programs	43	25	38	53	44	49	40
Crime victims	40	25	38	46	45	36	38
Your local church	37	28	33	46	35	36	40
Judges	32	32	31	33	35	34	27
Your Congressman	29	21	29	26	32	28	27
Your Governor	29	10	27	35	28	34	27

**All asked of half the sample. Darker colors indicate intensity.*

Q11. Now, I'm going to read you a list of individuals and groups who might choose to SUPPORT the proposal we're discussing. For each, please tell me if their support would make you MORE or LESS likely to support moving some funding from incarceration to community-based public safety programs, like treatment, rehabilitation, job training, and other crime prevention services?



Messaging

Messaging Takeaways

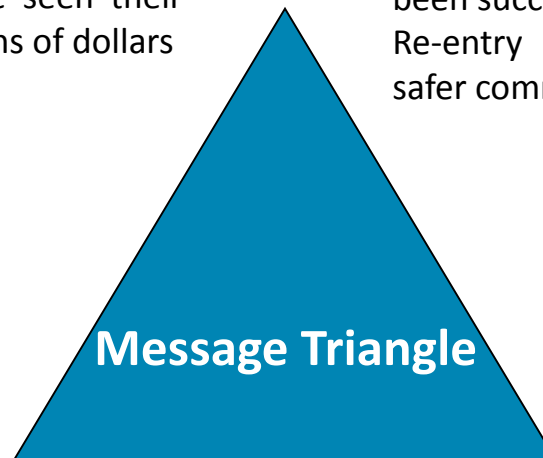
- The most effective messages in favor of the proposal focus on...
 - how such programs are better at setting youth down a path towards success (50% very convincing);
 - the “community focus,” message which highlights how re-entry programs dramatically lowered recidivism by helping formerly convicted individuals find employment (49% very convincing);
 - and a message detailing how proposals like these help to break systemic causes for crime (48% very convincing).
- Though these three messages garner the most intensity, every message has impressive reach overall.
- The most effective attack against the proposal focuses on how the proposal would make communities less safe (32% serious doubts).
- While this is certainly a narrative that we need to remain cautious of, our positive messages have strikingly more intense support and farther overall reach.

Youth

Incarcerating young people is often counterproductive and expensive. Taxpayers pay an average of \$407 per person per day and as much as \$148,000 per person per year. Locking up young people increases their chances of going to jail again by 22 percent. We need to set our children on a path toward being successful, responsible adults. States that have worked to decrease their youth incarceration rates by reinvesting in community programs have seen their youth crime rates drop while saving millions of dollars

Community Focus

Investing in community-based prevention, treatment, and re-entry programs is making a proven difference. In one state, the Department of Corrections established a program to help community reentry organizations that focus on education, job training, and counseling services, and only two and a half percent of participants have returned to prison while in the program. More than half of participants have been successful finding jobs and remaining employed. Re-entry programs are an investment in stronger, safer communities.



Message Triangle

Priorities

Locking someone up should be the last resort, not our first response. We spend over \$80 billion every year to incarcerate nearly 1 in every 100 Americans. It costs more to send someone to prison for one year than to send someone to a private university. Preventing and curbing crime takes more than long sentences – it takes prevention, treatment, and re-entry programs. If we choose this approach, we can reduce crime and start investing in priorities like education, affordable housing, good jobs, and quality health care.