

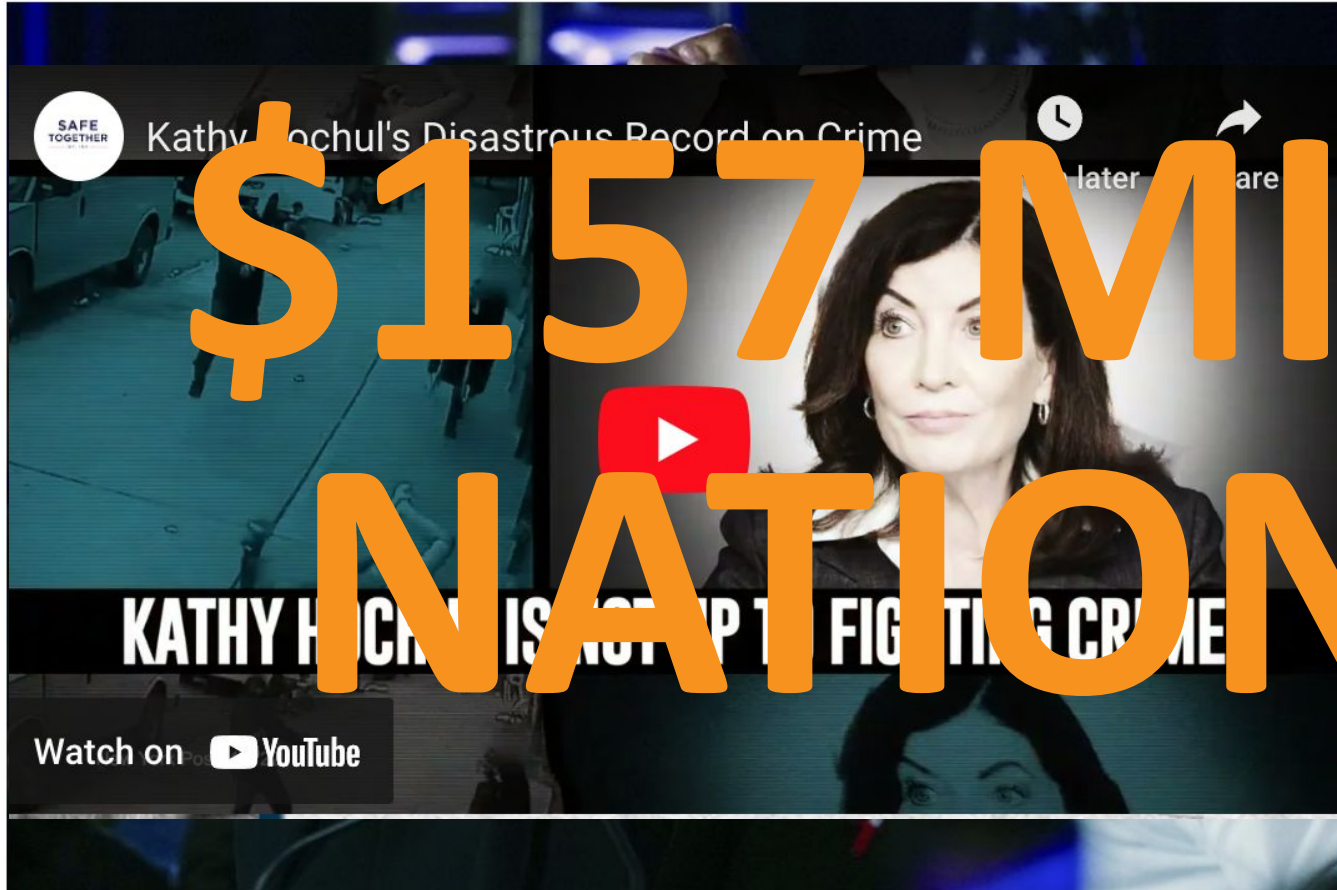
**WINNING BACK THE NARRATIVE
ON SAFETY, ACCOUNTABILITY,
AND JUSTICE IN CALIFORNIA:**

Lessons from the data on what to do

Vera ACTION

How blood-and-guts headlines propelled Republicans in New York

In New York, voters consistently ranked crime among their top concerns in polls, while voters nationally did not.



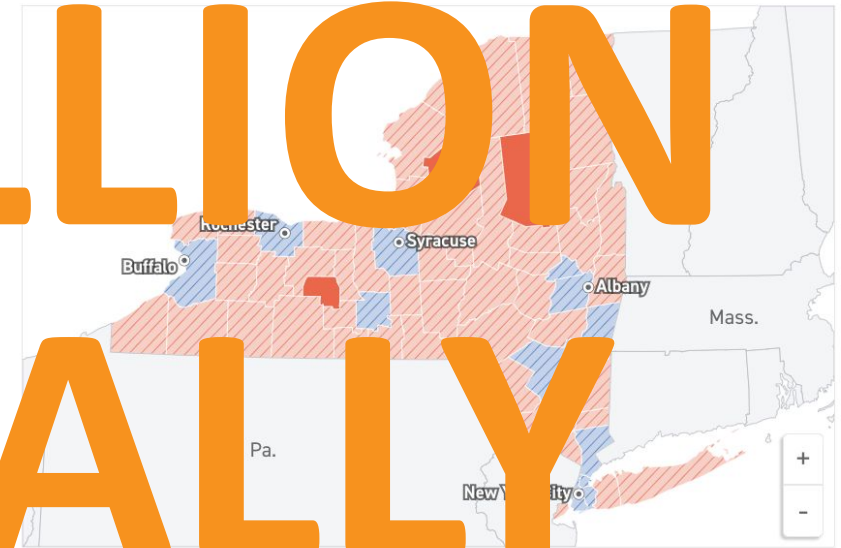
POLITICO

Election results: New York Governor

Last updated Jan. 12, 2023, 12:44 p.m. EST

Leading/Won

Dems ◆ GOP



Candidate	Pct.
✓ Hochul* (D)	52.9%
◆ Zeldin (R)	47.1%

*Incumbent 97% in

By ERIN DURKIN
11/12/2022 07:00 AM EST
Updated: 11/12/2022 10:29 AM EST



New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, left, poses for photographs with New York City Mayor Eric Adams as they gesture to supporters, Tuesday, Nov. 2, 2021, in New York. [Frank Franklin II/AP Photo]

NEW YORK — Republicans nationwide leaned hard on crime in the midterms — and mostly fell flat.

But it did gangbusters in New York, where a tabloid drumbeat of chaos resonated with voters out in the city's suburbs, helping the GOP claim one open New York House seat and wrest three more from Democratic control.

Hochul outspent Zeldin almost 4:1, but Zeldin spent \$15 million on ads about crime—while Hochul spent close to nothing on the issue.

As fears about crime dominated the headlines, what did New York Democrats do?

Didn't talk about crime unless attacked by opponents and media for being "soft" on it.

Tried to appease all voters by rolling back hard-won reforms instead of defending them to Democratic voters who continued to favor the reforms.

Failed to offer an alternative vision to prevent crime, respond to crisis, and stop the violence.

Retail theft drives possible return to tough-on-crime policies in California

After 1,000+ car break-ins so far in 2023, SF leaders brainstorm ways to end epidemic



By Lena Howland

Thursday, September 21, 2023



The New York Times

WHEN CALIFORNIA IS ON CRIME



This California city will stay in the 'doom loop' in 2024 as businesses flee and crime rises, resident warns

Rampant crime has turned Oakland into a 'ghost town': nonprofit founder

By Michael ... Fox News

Published December 2, 2023 12:00pm



RETAIL

In L.A. District Attorney Race, Rhetoric Shifts From Reform to Fear

George Gascón is running for re-election in a very different climate, where concerns about crime have overtaken demands for equity and accountability.

New York and California make retail theft a 2024 priority: 'We mean business'

PUBLISHED THU, JAN 11 2024 1:04 PM EST | UPDATED THU, JAN 11 2024 2:19 PM EST

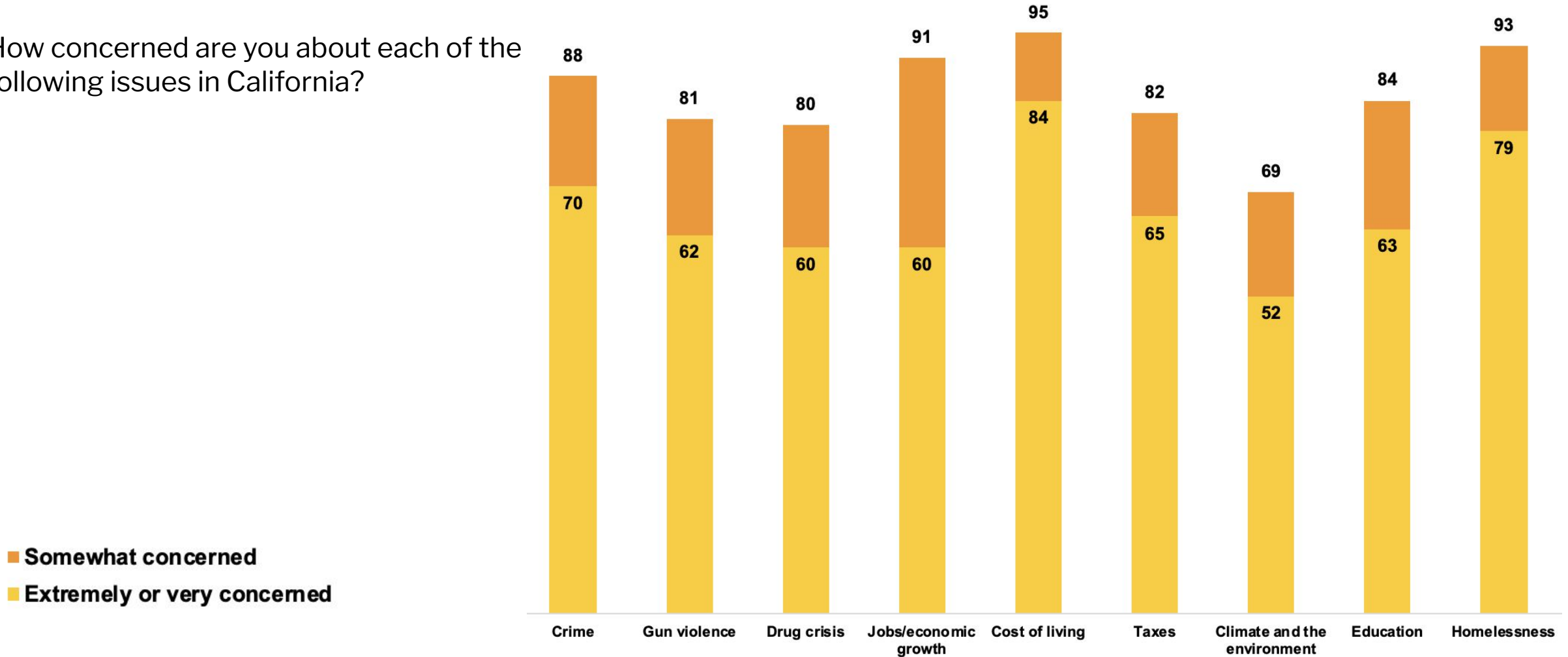


Gabrielle Fonrouge @IN/GABRIELLE-FONROUGE @FONROUGE GAB

SHARE f t in e

EVEN THOUGH CRIME RATES HAVE TICKED DOWN, CALIFORNIANS STILL RANK THE ISSUE A PRIORITY

How concerned are you about each of the following issues in California?



■ Somewhat concerned
■ Extremely or very concerned

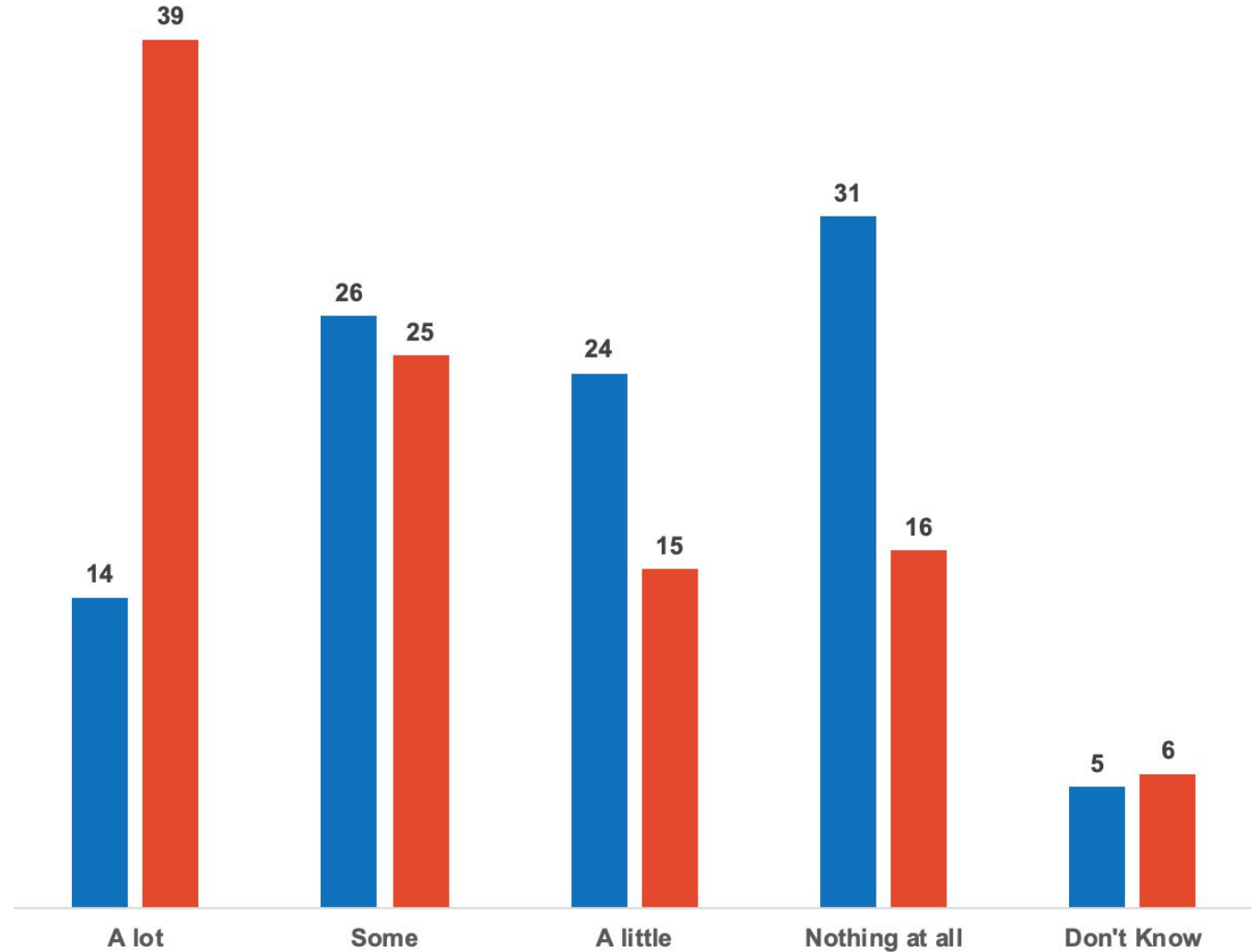
LESSON # 1.

California Democrats lag behind the GOP in voter trust on crime and safety. But the confidence gap can be overcome by owning the issue. It's the silence that's deadly.

CALIFORNIA VOTERS HEAR FAR MORE FROM REPUBLICANS THAN FROM DEMOCRATS ON CRIME

Who do you hear more from on the issue of crime and making communities safer?

■ Democrats
■ Republicans

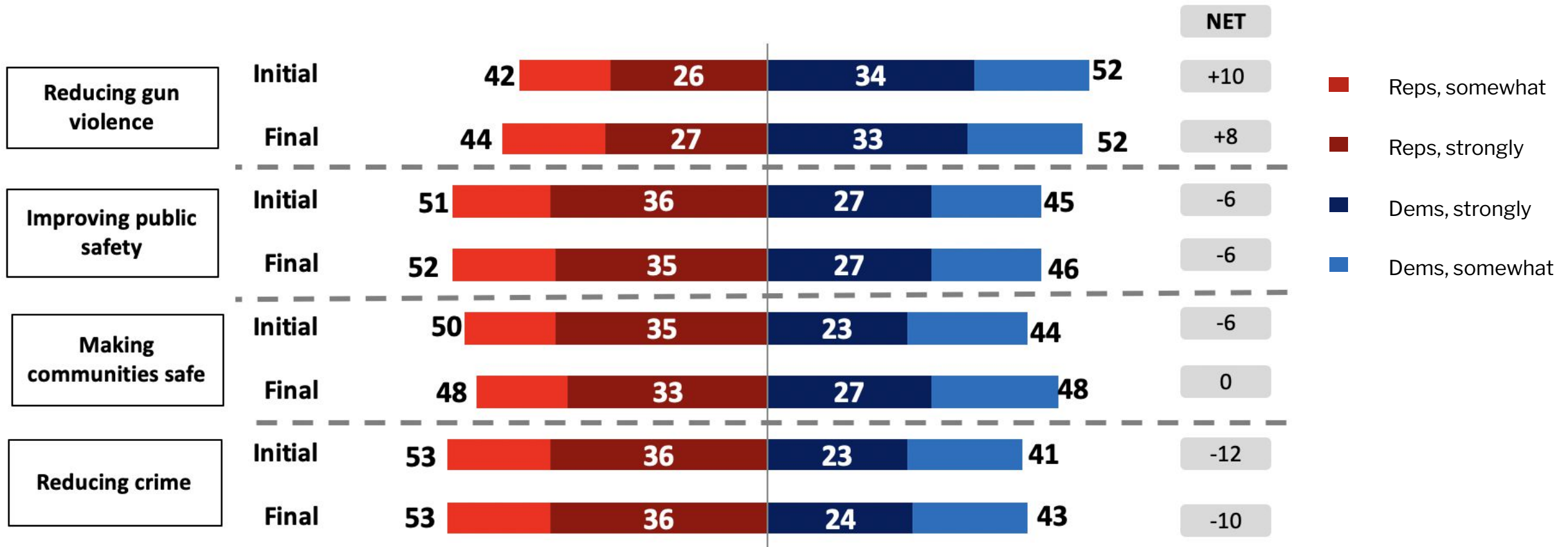


LESSON # 2.

What you say about crime matters. To motivate registered Democrats and not lose Independents, get off the opposition's narrative playing field and onto your own.

AFTER MESSAGING, DEMS GAIN WITH SAFETY

For each aspect, do you trust Democrats or Republicans to do a better job?

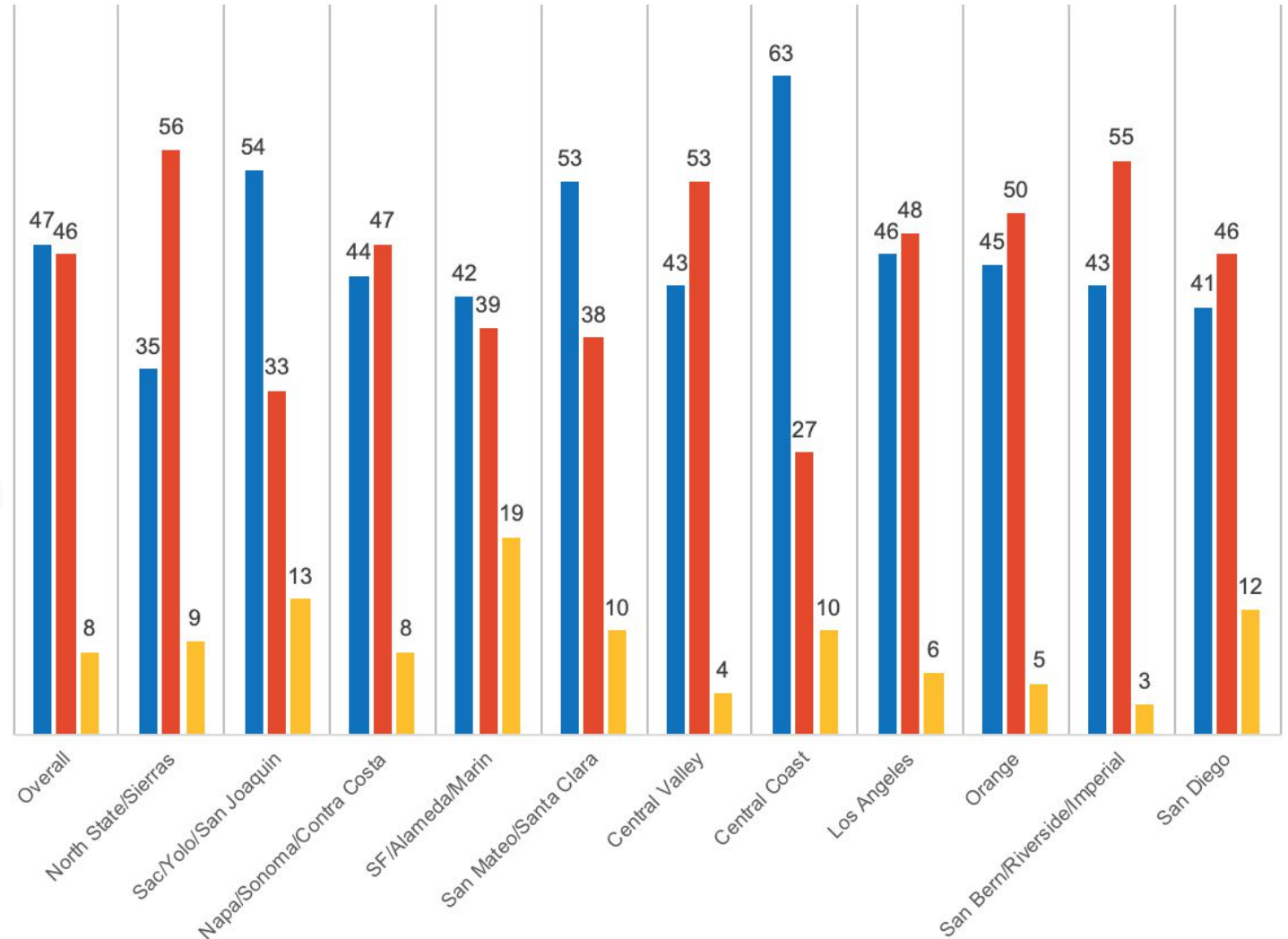


'SERIOUS ABOUT SAFETY' BREAKS EVEN WITH 'TOUGH ON CRIME' OVERALL STATEWIDE

COMPREHENSIVE 'SERIOUS ABOUT SAFETY':
Fully fund things to create safe communities and improve people's quality of life, like good schools, a living wage, and affordable housing, and do more to prevent crime by increasing treatment for mental health and drug addiction and getting illegal guns off the street.

NARROW 'TOUGH ON CRIME':
Doing more to get tough on crime, like having tougher sentences for people convicted of violent crimes, maintaining strong bail laws to keep potentially dangerous people in jail, and providing police more support and resources.

- Comprehensive 'serious about safety'
- Narrow 'tough on crime'
- Don't know

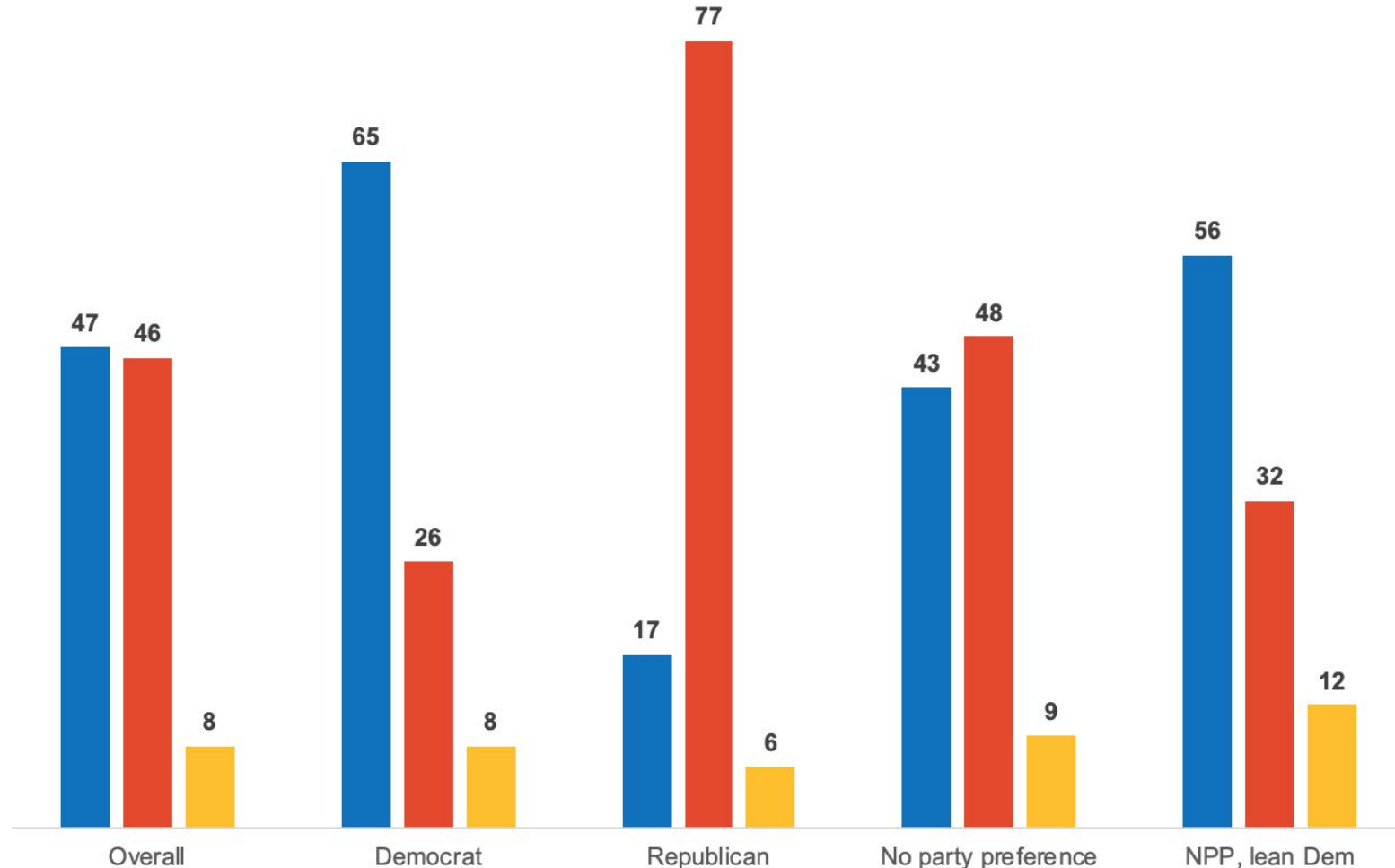


BUT DEMOCRATIC VOTERS HEAVILY FAVOR 'SERIOUS ABOUT SAFETY' OVER 'TOUGH ON CRIME'

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LESSON # 3.

Even in head-to-head responses against a Republican “soft-on-crime” attack, Democrats lose no ground with the base by getting onto their own narrative playing field.

EVEN ON DEFUND, A SAFETY MESSAGE WORKS TO INOCULATE AGAINST A “SOFT” ON CRIME ATTACK

Next are two statements from two different candidates running for US House of Representatives. **Which do you agree with more, even if neither is quite right in your view?**

Candidate A: The Left has allowed a culture built on hating the police to drive decisions surrounding law enforcement. The Defund the Police movement is without a doubt one of the greatest dangers to public safety in our nation’s history, and Democrats are responsible for it. The hostile climate for police has discouraged proactive police work. We can’t expect the police to keep us safe if we aren’t willing to keep them safe.

42%

Candidate B: I’m not about scare tactics or slogans, and I’m not afraid to have an honest conversation. We keep expecting police to solve every social problem, from kids skipping school to mental illness to homelessness to gun violence. No one profession can do that. We're spending \$115 billion a year and putting too much on police departments. It's time to try out some promising new solutions to lift the burden. It's time for support and change, not blame.

58%

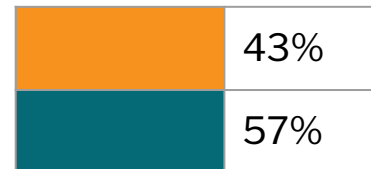
ON RETAIL THEFT, THERE ARE RESPONSES THAT WORK

THE ATTACK: We can thank woke prosecutors for letting American cities spiral out of control. People are scared to go into stores because of theft and looting. Hardworking employees and business owners are traumatized and scared to go to work. Organized retail crime is just happening brazenly. Evil is spreading across the country, with thieves taking whatever they want and prosecutors aren't doing a thing about it. In fact, woke prosecutors are against any charges or prosecutions for theft. There are no consequences and that's why criminals are so open, brazen, and violent with stealing. We've got to get tougher on crime. I'll start by making sure every thief is punished to the full extent of the law.

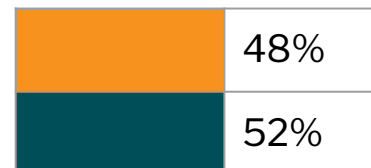
RESPONSE W/ SAFETY: My opponent wants to use scare tactics to rile people up to win votes. Here's what I can tell you. We all deserve to live in safe neighborhoods and shop at places in peace. I will work with police to take down organized theft so that our stores don't have to lock up basics like toothpaste and shampoo. Also, some people are stealing out of desperation and poverty because they're in survival mode. Throwing them in jail or charging them with huge fines will not change their behavior. It will just make them more desperate. My focus is on holding people accountable in ways that actually stop the cycle of crime - and make all of us safer.

RESPONSE W/ FACTCHECK: My opponent wants to use scare tactics to rile people up to win votes. Look at the data. There is not a retail theft epidemic. We should do more to stop theft, but let's tell the truth about the problem and solutions. I will work with police to reduce theft so that our stores don't have to lock up basics like toothpaste and shampoo. Also, some people steal out of desperation and poverty because they're in survival mode. Throwing them in jail or charging them with huge fines will not change their behavior. It will just make them more desperate. My focus is on holding people accountable in ways that actually stop the cycle of crime - and make all of us safer.

HEAD-TO-HEAD ATTACK
V. SAFETY SOLUTIONS



HEAD-TO-HEAD ATTACK
V. FACTCHECK



LESSON # 4.

Going on attack against the opposition and highlighting their weaknesses on crime and safety is an effective play to Democratic voters and draws even with Independents.

TWO KITCHEN TABLE PLATFORMS, COMPARED

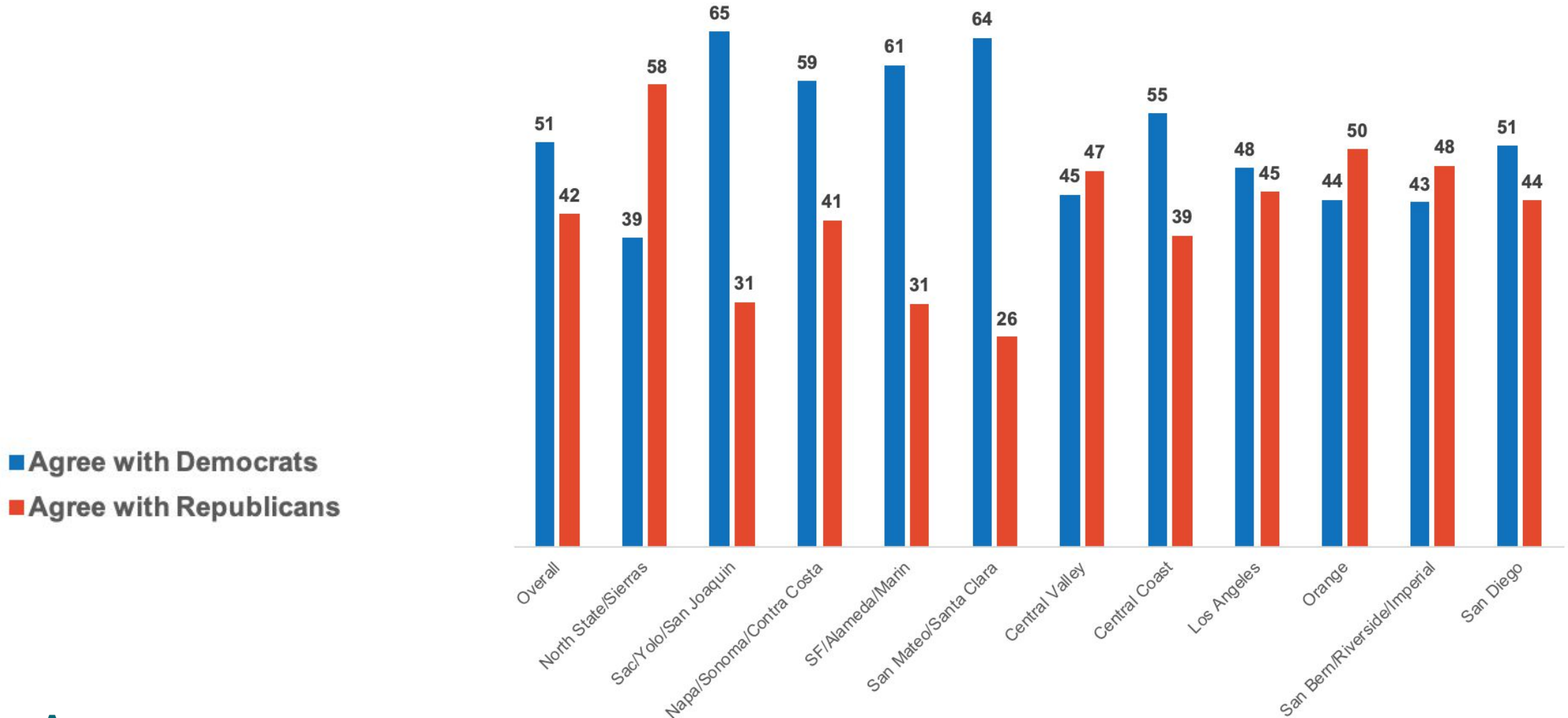
First/Next is a statement from a Republican:

The radical left wants to **defund and dismantle our police**. Murders have spiked in cities and radical prosecutors and District Attorneys in San Francisco and Los Angeles have given **free rein to violent criminals** who threaten our citizens. Republicans will revitalize **police departments**, force **prosecutors to enforce the law**, put violent offenders behind bars, and when necessary, send in the **National Guard** to patrol crime-plagued cities. Republicans will stop the flow of drugs by **building the wall** and using the United States military to **destroy the cartels**. Under Republicans, criminals will never sleep soundly again.

First/Next is a statement from a Democrat:

Everyone deserves to be safe, regardless of where they live, how much money is in their pockets, or the color of their skin. But **MAGA Republicans have an extreme agenda** of wielding the military as a domestic police force, targeting their political enemies, and launching a new war in Mexico. We need **real solutions that prevent crime** before it happens by investing in **good schools, affordable housing, and treatment for mental health and drug addiction**, not more culture war and failed policies of the past. You **deserve to feel safe**, and Democrats won't stop working until you do.

A 'MAGA' ATTACK AGAINST THE OPPOSITION INOCULATES AGAINST 'TOUGH ON CRIME' POLITICS



LESSON # 5.

When it comes to policy proposals to address crime and safety, “tough” language certainly resonates with Californians overall—but not with California Democrats.

DEM VOTERS CONSISTENTLY FAVOR 'SERIOUS ABOUT SAFETY' PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS CRIME



Where else can we look to as an example of how Democrats owned and won on a ‘serious about safety’ narrative?

Illinois passed an omnibus criminal justice reform bill, including the Pretrial Fairness Act, in 2021.

\$40 million spent on the 2022 midterm campaign trail calling Democrats “soft on crime.”

Everyone from Governor Pritzker to state legislators defended reform *and* championed measures to demonstrate they were serious about safety.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



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