Responding to Republican Narratives on Crime

INSIGHTS FROM SURVEY RESEARCH
CONDUCTED FOR VERA ACTION

July 11, 2022

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Introduction.

Vera Institute for Justice hired PerryUndem and Hart Research Associates to conduct messaging research on the topic of crime in the 2022 midterms. The research builds on recent qualitative and quantitative research on the topic from both PerryUndem and Hart.

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HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Specific objectives include:

1
Testing our best thinking on a Democratic narrative v. Republican narrative

2
Identifying the strongest “landing messages” for candidates

3
Exploring messaging on prevention

4
Exploring messaging on accountability

5
Testing responses to cash bail attacks

6
Testing responses to Defund attacks

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Methods.

- National survey of n = 3,876 likely 2022 voters, including:
  - N = 473 Black voters
  - N = 411 Latina/o/x voters
  - N = 459 Asian-American / Pacific-Islander voters
  - N = 1,245 battleground state voters (AZ, FL, GA, MI, MN, NC, NH, NV, OR, PA, WI)
- Conducted June 2 - 17, 2022
- Using YouGov's online panel
- Margin of sampling error for total: ± 2 percentage points

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Summary.

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9 Key findings.

1

What to know about the current landscape:

- Data suggest crime is a second-tier voting issue (after inflation).
- Interestingly, crime is least salient among white men, independent men, college-educated voters, and young voters.
- 90% of voters feel very or somewhat safe in their day-to-day lives in their communities.
- Voters of color – particularly Asian-American / Pacific Islanders – are least likely to feel “very” safe (26% AAPI voters, 34% of Black voters, 35% of Latina/o/x voters v. 45% of white voters).
- While voters oppose the tagline “defund the police,” data from several polls, including this one, show broad support for the concepts behind the movement.
- Most voters have favorable feelings toward police and they want accountability for excessive force.

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2

Our “solutions” Democratic narrative outperforms a Republican narrative by about 10 points. We crafted a Democratic narrative that centers solutions “instead of stirring up emotions,” expresses support for police along with the need for de-escalation training, and emphasizes prevention. (See next page.)

Here’s what we found:

- 55% of respondents agree with the ideas in the Democratic narrative v. 43% in the Republican narrative.
- Swing voters* are +15 points more likely to say a candidate expressing the Democratic narrative is more in step with their values than one expressing the Republican narrative.
- Even four in ten Republicans agree with the ideas in the Democratic narrative.
- We did not find evidence of backlash to the Democratic narrative among progressive voters.

** No definite preference for House candidate in ‘22*

OUR THINKING BEHIND THE DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

We crafted the Democratic narrative based on insights from recent research:

- Most voters feel distaste, if not disgust, for politicians who they feel aren’t doing their jobs. Voters want solutions.
- Most people feel worried about the country’s divisions.
- “New breakthroughs” in gun violence has potential to counteract feelings of hopelessness.
- Most voters have positive feelings (though not exclusively positive) toward police.
- Our recent polling suggests that de-escalation training may be broadly popular.
- Unprompted, people see safe communities as having jobs, economic opportunity, education, good infrastructure, and other structural public goods.

The Republican narrative was written in large part based on a Republican Study Committee memo.

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DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

Crime is rising and many of us are feeling less safe. While some politicians will try to divide us, my focus is fixing the problems. Let's look at solutions that reduce crime, increase safety, and serve the community.

Here's what we can do. In the short-term, new breakthroughs in gun violence and crime prevention programs are showing major success now. We need to fund and replicate these programs. Police have dangerous and hard jobs. Let's support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day. Let's make sure our first responders get better training, like how to de-escalate situations. We also have to stop the flood of illegal handguns and ghost guns that are coming into our communities.

In addition to fighting crime, we need to work on preventing it in the first place. We already have some answers on that. The safest places in America don't have more police, more jails, more prisons, and harsher sentences. They have access to jobs and opportunities. They have good schools. There's housing and health care. There's good infrastructure. There's hope for the future. We need to fully fund things that are proven to create safe neighborhoods.

Everyone deserves to work, play, and raise their children in safety. Instead of trying to stir up people's emotions just to get elected, I'll do my job to fix problems and keep people safe.

REPUBLICAN NARRATIVE

Crime has been on the rise for three years and we're reaching historic spikes in homicides, gang activity, motor vehicle thefts, and assaults. From the White House to liberal state and local governments, there has been a systemic failure to contain crime in America. It stems from the dangerous belief that enforcing the law is somehow morally wrong or even racist. It has paralyzed law enforcement agencies at all levels and created prosecutors who would rather let a dangerous criminal walk out of jail than enforce the law.

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.

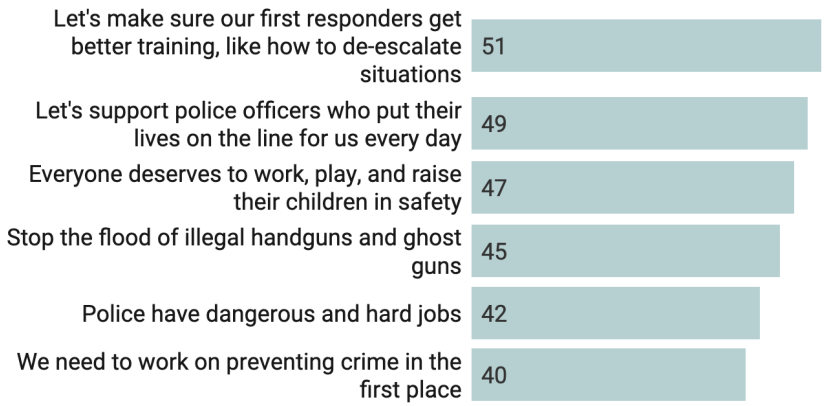
We need to stop subsidizing the Left's pro-criminal agenda. We need to rein in rogue prosecutors who are declining to prosecute types of cases or charge certain crimes. We need to stop federal funds to states that have "no cash bail" laws on the books.

Once again, Democrats have broken a part of our civil society, and once again it will be conservatives who will step up to piece it together.

These are some of the strengths of each narrative.

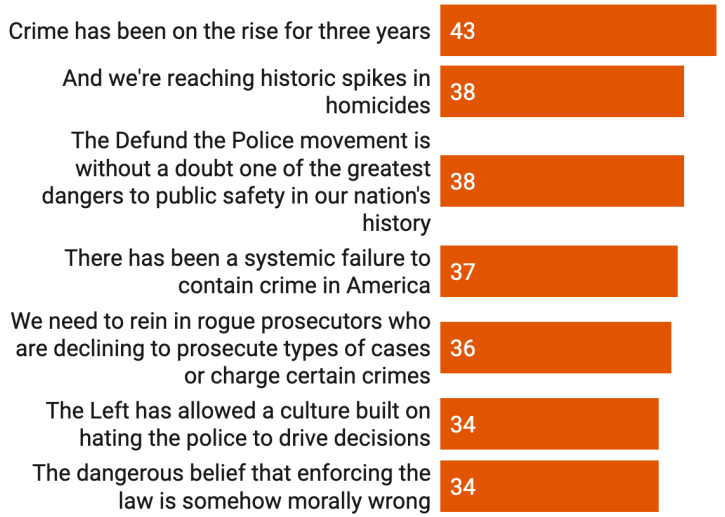
DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

% Agreed with most
(Text highlight exercise)



REPUBLICAN NARRATIVE

% Agreed with most
(Text highlight exercise)



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3

Overall, these are the top four “landing places.” These messages reflect values around safety, accountability for leaders, and prevention.

1

We all deserve to be safe, no matter what we look like, where we come from, or how much money is in our wallets.

94% agree, 81% strongly

2

We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than trying to stir up people’s emotions just to get elected.

94% agree, 75% strongly

3

We need to focus on preventing crime in the first place, not just reacting to it after it happens.

92% agree, 62% strongly

4

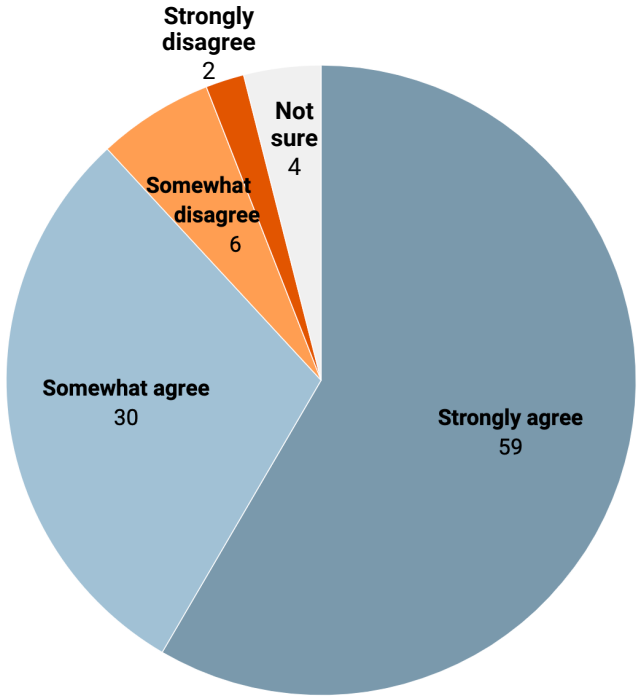
We need to fully fund things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people’s quality of life, like good schools, living wage jobs, and affordable housing.

81% agree, 54% strongly

4

Nearly all voters agree with the sentiment of supporting police <u>and</u> holding them accountable. This includes 86% of Republicans (43% agreeing strongly).

Do you agree or disagree:
We can support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and we can hold police accountable if they use excessive force or abuse their power.



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5

This message beats a strong Defund the Police attack by + 20 points. Sixty-percent of voters agree more with this candidate than one attacking Democrats for a Defund the Police movement (see page 76), including 61% of swing voters, 58% of Battleground voters, and 54% of independents in Battleground states.

+ 20 points

I'm not about scare tactics or slogans, and I'm not afraid to have an honest conversation. Remember when police officers were treated like doctors? When kids wanted to grow up to be them? Remember when police didn't have to carry every social problem on their back? We keep expecting the police to solve everything. 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. *Base n = 1,446*

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6

This message beats a Republican attack on cash bail by + 37 points. Two-thirds of respondents (68%) agree more with this statement than one attacking Democrats for wanting to eliminate cash bail (see page 71), including 74% of swing voters, 65% of independents, 65% of Battleground voters, and 57% of Republican women.

+ 37 points

Cash bail actually makes us less safe. When someone with minor offenses is kept in jail for months or years because they can't afford bail, they lose their livelihoods - their jobs and their ability to get jobs in the future. That feeds the cycle of crime. We need a system where public safety, not wealth, determines who is released pending trial.

7

These are the top accountability messages.

1

We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than trying to stir up people's emotions just to get elected.

93% agree; 75% strongly

2

We can support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and we can hold police accountable if they use excessive force or abuse their power.

89% agree; 59% strongly

3

We need more accountability at all levels. The criminal justice system needs to be more accountable for public safety and fairness. There needs to be accountability for people who break the law. Police should be held accountable for excessive force. Elected officials need to be accountable to voters when they spend billions on things that don't work.

90% agree; 63% strongly

4

There's got to be accountability when people break the law. For minor offenses, filling up our jails and prisons at taxpayer expense isn't the only option. Let's use new breakthrough interventions that hold people accountable, while preventing a cycle of crime.

80% agree; 41% strongly

8

A message arguing that prisons make people less safe is not intuitive. Just 26% of respondents strongly agree with the message at right. Another 29% somewhat agree.

Jails and prisons feed the cycle of crime, they don't prevent it. Incarceration makes people more likely to commit crime when they get out, not less likely.

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9

Voters most want officials to work on “preventing crime, not just responding after it happens.” Note how important it is to use the entire phrase - not just “prevention.”

Fill in the blank here. When it comes to crime, I want my elected officials to focus on _____ . Pick 3 of these that are closest to your views.

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Initial recommendations.

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6 Overall considerations.

The following slides have more details with suggestions for language and messages.

1
Candidates and elected officials need to take accountability and be solutions-oriented. Making communities safer is part of their job.

2
Solutions can be multi-faceted and include supporting the police. The #1 structural solution relates to economic opportunity / jobs.

3
Pivot from “crime” to “making communities safer.”

4
You can express support for police and accountability if they use excessive force or abuse their power.

5
Use this exact phrase to communicate solutions: “preventing crime, not just responding after it happens.” (“Preventing crime” alone is not enough).

6
Consider using our responses to Defund and cash bail attacks.

	Overall considerations
#1 Most important: Be solutions-oriented	• My focus is fixing the problems, instead of trying to stir up people's emotions just to get elected. • We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than trying to just get elected.
Give sample solutions	• Police have dangerous and hard jobs. Let's support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day. • Let's make sure our first responders get better training, like how to de-escalate situations. • Let's stop the flood of illegal handguns and ghost guns that are coming into our communities. • We need to increase economic opportunity and living wage jobs so people have the resources they need. • We need to fully fund things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people's quality of life, like good schools, living wage jobs, and affordable housing.
Your tone	• Measured, not about scare tactics or slogans. • Willing to have an honest conversation.
Meet people where they are	• Many of us are feeling less safe.
Start or end with a values message on safety	• We all deserve to be safe, no matter what we look like, where we come from, or how much money is in our wallets.

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	Here are 6 safe landing places
Solutions	• While some politicians will try to divide us, my focus is fixing the problems. Let's look at solutions that reduce crime, increase safety, and serve the community.
Safety	• We all deserve to be safe, no matter what we look like, where we come from, or how much money is in our wallets.
Accountability for leaders	• We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than trying to stir up people's emotions just to get elected.
Prevention	• We need to focus on preventing crime in the first place, not just reacting to it after it happens.
Bigger picture solutions	• We need to fully fund things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people's quality of life, like good schools, living wage jobs, and affordable housing.
On police	• We can support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and we can hold police [FOR MOST CONSERATIVE AUDIENCES: police departments] accountable if they use excessive force or abuse their power.

	Characterizing the opposition
Main motive	• Stirring up people's emotions just to get elected.
Cue "scare tactics" – which can mitigate the effect of a Republican narrative	• It's important we look at whether these candidates / electeds are using scare tactics as a way to get elected – rather than solutions. • If an attack includes misinformation: "It's important that we think about how accurate these claims are…" Use the words "accurate" and "accuracy." (Research shows that an "accuracy cue" has a measurable effect on belief in disinformation).
Other motives	• Trying to divide us.

	Responding to Defund attacks
Express support for police and accountability	• We can support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and we can hold police accountable if they use excessive force or abuse their power.
Consider a possible honest conversation	• FOR CONSERVATIVE AUDIENCES: I'm not about scare tactics or slogans, and I'm not afraid to have an honest conversation. Remember when police officers were treated like doctors? When kids wanted to grow up to be them? Remember when police didn't have to carry every social problem on their back? We keep expecting the police to solve everything. It's time for support and change, not blame. • FOR BROAD AUDIENCES: 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. It's time for support and change, not blame. • 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.
Keep in mind	• Voters support the policy ideas behind the Defund movement.

	Responding to cash bail
Among broad audiences	• Cash bail actually makes us less safe. When someone with minor offenses is kept in jail for months or years because they can't afford bail, they lose their livelihoods - their jobs and their ability to get jobs in the future. That feeds the cycle of crime. We need a system where public safety, not wealth, determines who is released pending trial.
Among AAPI voters and young voters	• This country has two systems of justice -- one for the rich, one for the poor. If you're wealthy, you go free and you're innocent until proven guilty. But if you're poor, you stay in jail. Bail reform and reducing the use of cash bail means that public safety, not wealth, determines who is released pending trial.
In a sentence	• Bail reform and reducing the use of cash bail means that public safety, not wealth, determines who is released pending trial.

Detailed findings.

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Voting priorities.

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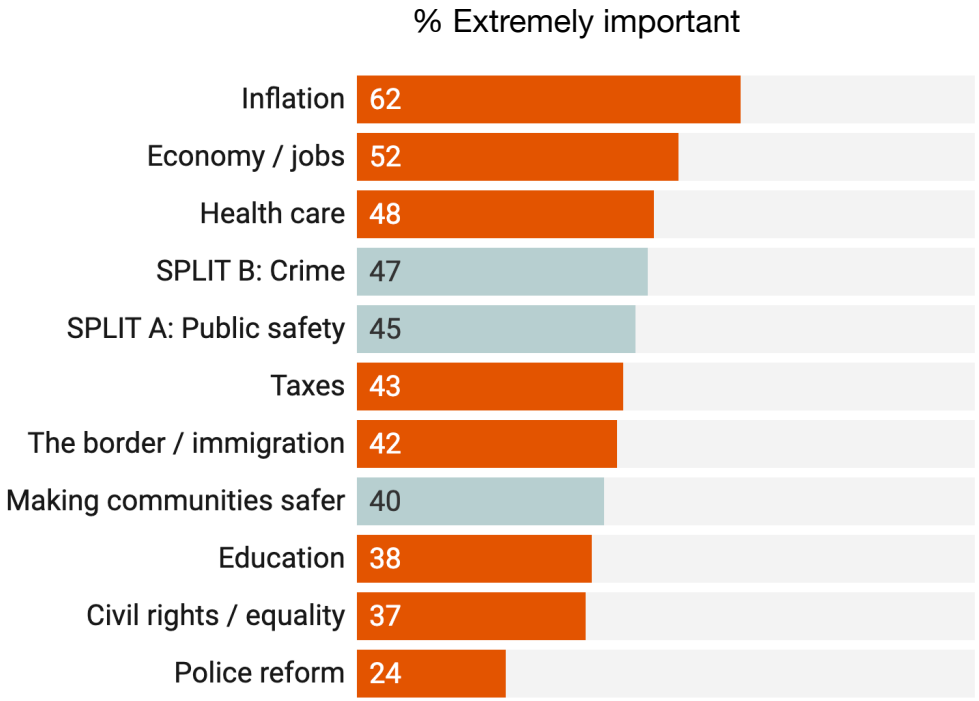
Data suggest crime is a second-tier voting issue – after inflation and the economy.

Notably, there's no statistically-significant difference between responses to "crime" and "public safety" as voting issues.

Think about how you decide to vote for a candidate. How important is each of these issues to you personally when it comes to voting this year?



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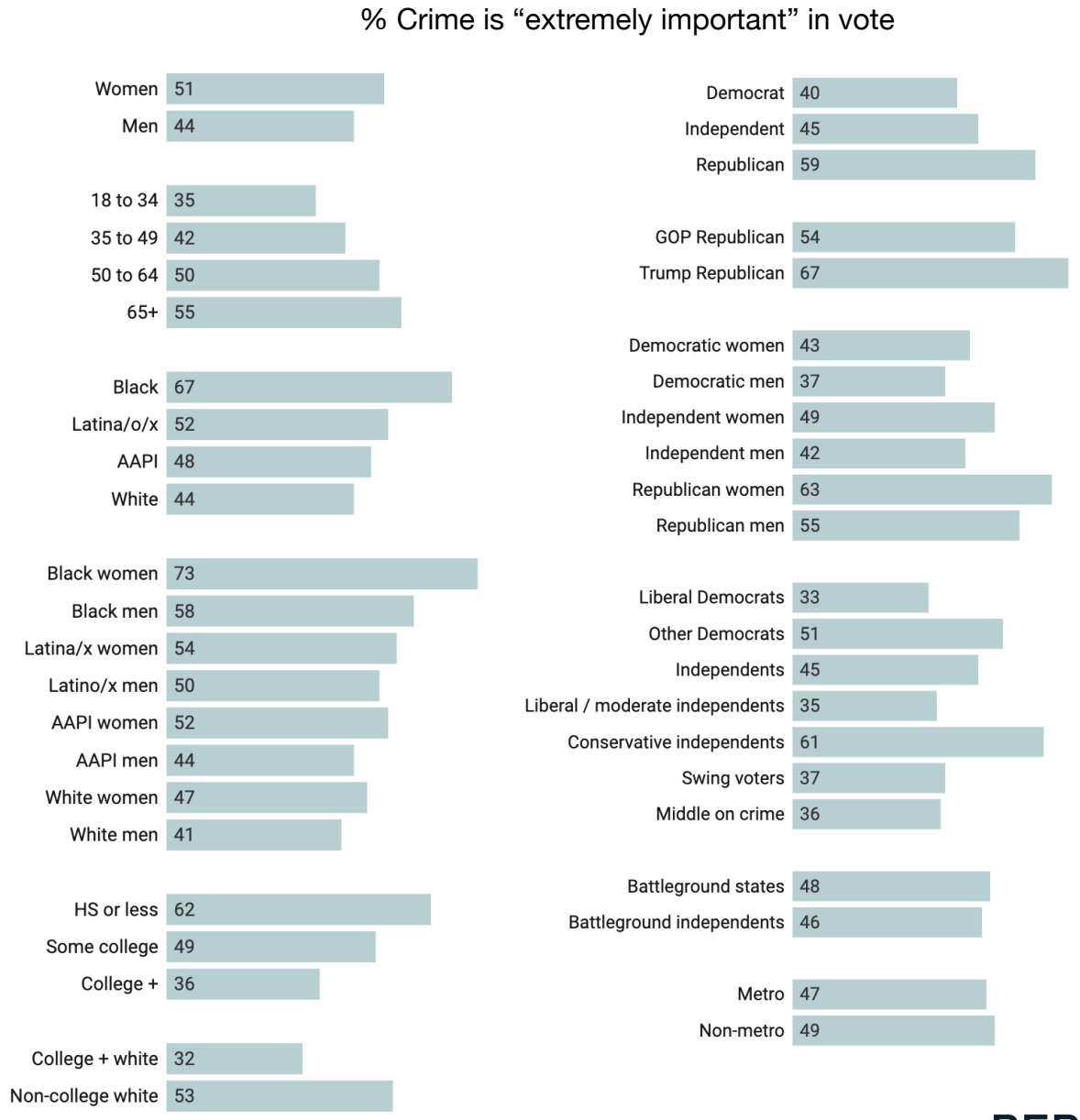
Crime is most salient among:

- Black women (73%)
- Trump Republicans (67%)
- Republican women (63%)
- Voters with a high school degree or less (62%)
- Conservative independents (61%)
- Black men (58%)

Interestingly, crime is least salient among swing voters, white men, independent men, college-educated voters, and young voters.



*"Middle on crime" are respondents who "somewhat support" both a conservative and more expansive approach to addressing crime

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Testing narratives.

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We tested two narratives.

We crafted two narratives on crime – a Democratic and Republican statement. The voice of each narrative is a candidate running for US House of Representatives.

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three conditions:

1. Receiving the Democratic narrative first
2. Receiving the Republican narrative first
3. A control group that did not get either narrative

After reading each narrative, respondents were asked a set of questions to assess the impact. Responses to some of these questions were compared to the control group.

Note: we crafted a Democratic narrative based on our recent data.

These recent insights informed our narrative.

1
Most voters feel distaste, if not disgust, for politicians who they see aren't doing their jobs. Voters want solutions.

2
Most people feel worried about the country's divisions.

3
"New breakthroughs" in gun violence has potential to counteract feelings of hopelessness.

4
Most voters have positive feelings (though not exclusively positive) toward police.

6
Our recent polling suggests de-escalation training may be broadly popular.

7
Unprompted, people see safe communities as having jobs, economic opportunity, education, good infrastructure, and other structural public goods.

DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

Crime is rising and many of us are feeling less safe. While some politicians will try to divide us, my focus is fixing the problems. Let's look at solutions that reduce crime, increase safety, and serve the community.

Here's what we can do. In the short-term, new breakthroughs in gun violence and crime prevention programs are showing major success now. We need to fund and replicate these programs. Police have dangerous and hard jobs. Let's support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day. Let's make sure our first responders get better training, like how to de-escalate situations. We also have to stop the flood of illegal handguns and ghost guns that are coming into our communities.

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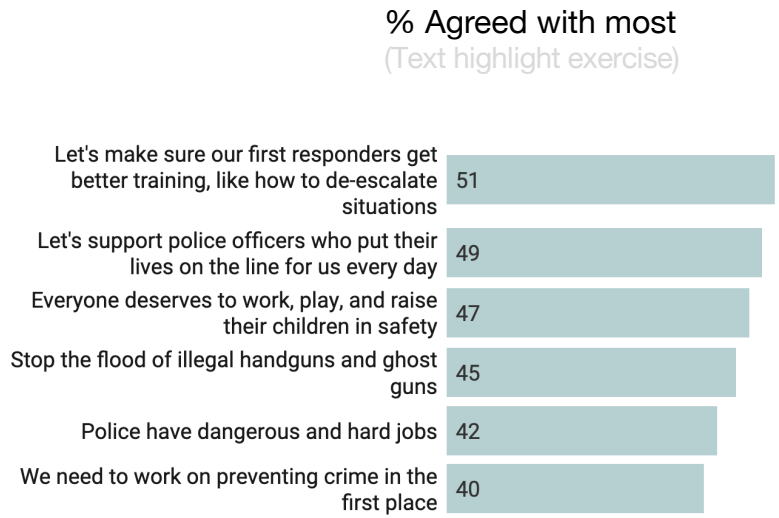
Everyone deserves to work, play, and raise their children in safety. Instead of trying to stir up people's emotions just to get elected, I'll do my job to fix problems and keep people safe.



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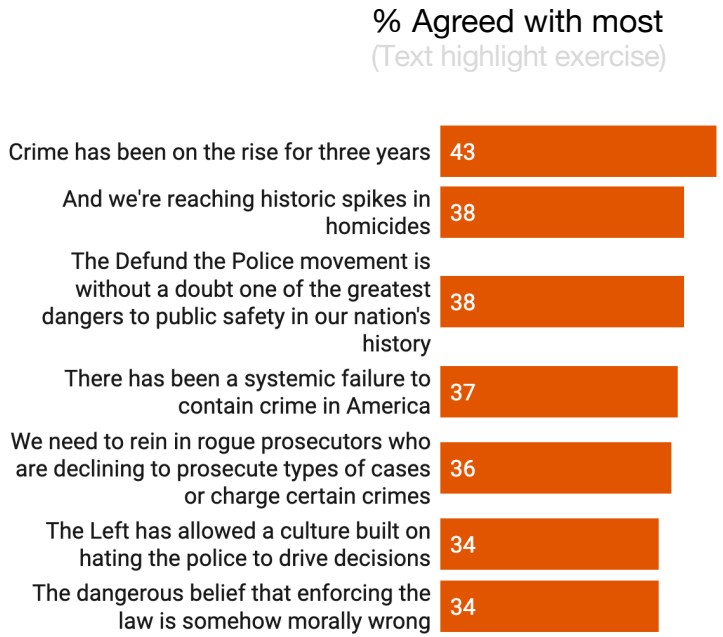
REPUBLICAN NARRATIVE

Crime has been on the rise for three years and we're reaching historic spikes in homicides, gang activity, motor vehicle thefts, and assaults. From the White House to liberal state and local governments, there has been a systemic failure to contain crime in America. It stems from the dangerous belief that enforcing the law is somehow morally wrong or even racist. It has paralyzed law enforcement agencies at all levels and created prosecutors who would rather let a dangerous criminal walk out of jail than enforce the law.

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.

We need to stop subsidizing the Left's pro-criminal agenda. We need to rein in rogue prosecutors who are declining to prosecute types of cases or charge certain crimes. We need to stop federal funds to states that have "no cash bail" laws on the books.

Once again, Democrats have broken a part of our civil society, and once again it will be conservatives who will step up to piece it together.



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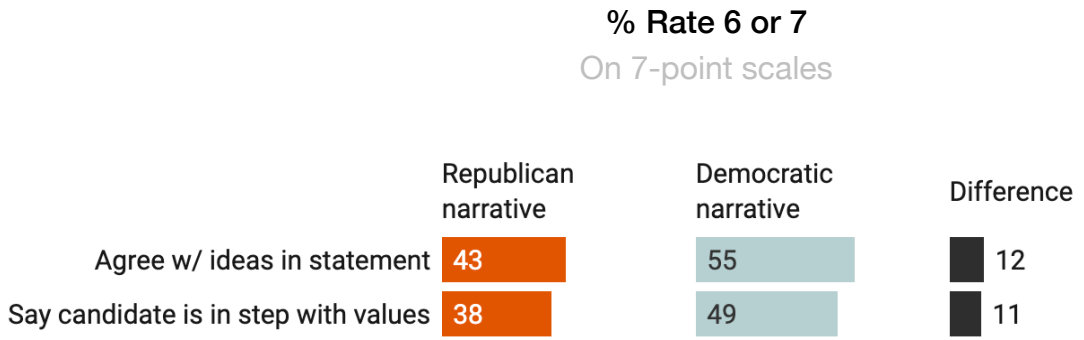
Overall, the Democratic narrative outperforms the Republican narrative.



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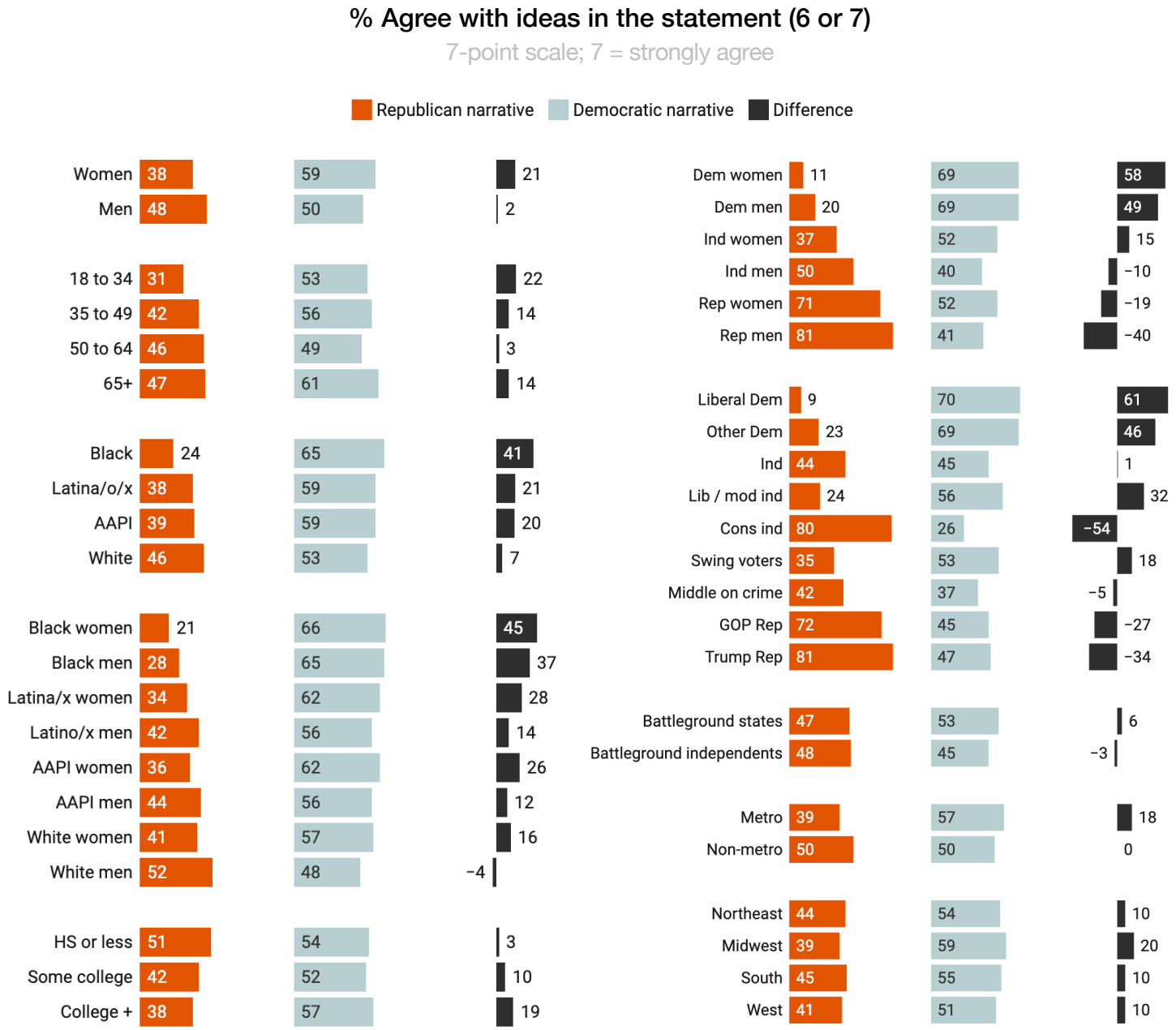
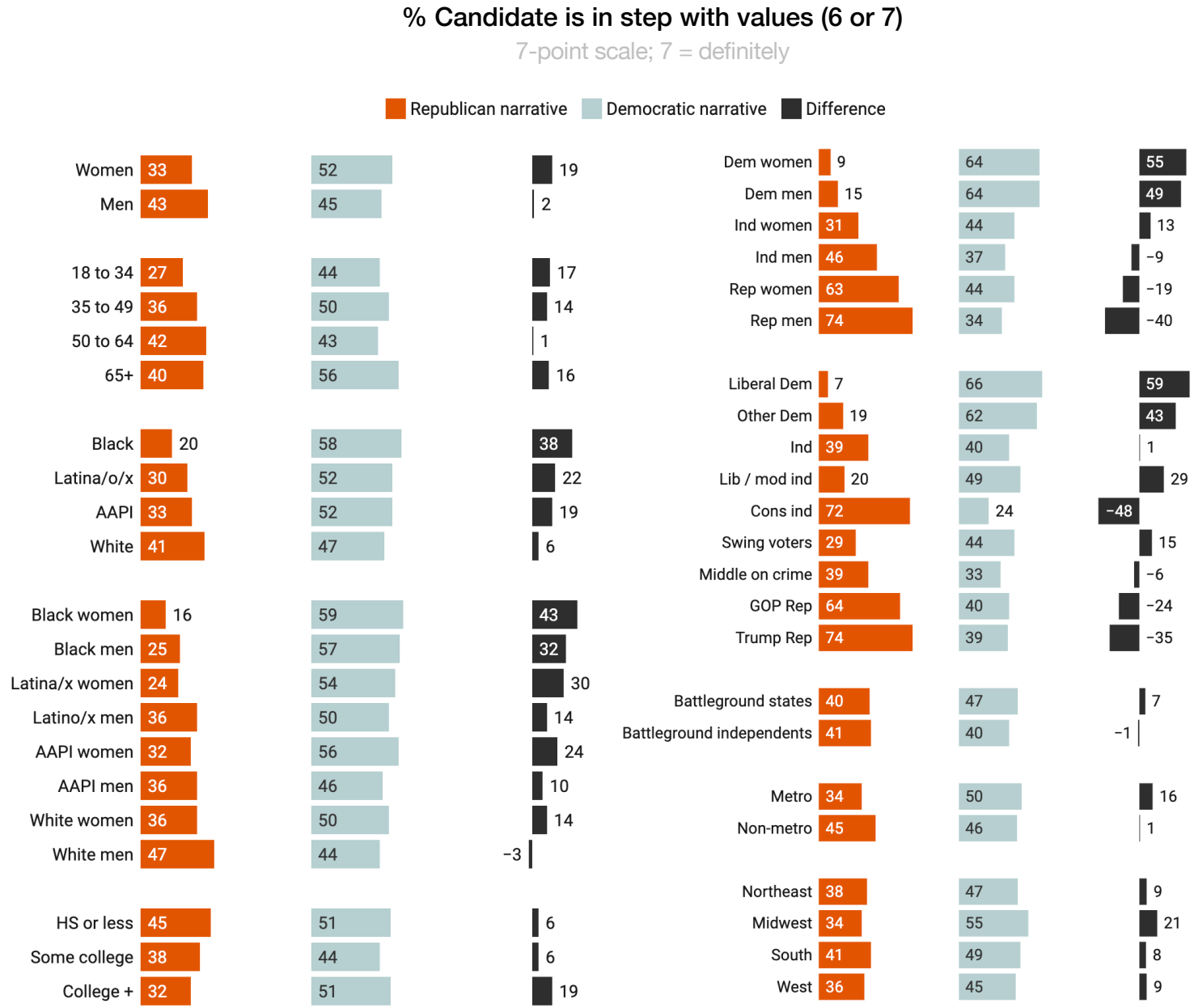
Most segments lean toward agreeing with the ideas in the Democratic narrative.

The exceptions are Republicans, independent men, white men, and non-metro voters. Still, 40% or more of these voters agree with the ideas in the Democratic narrative.



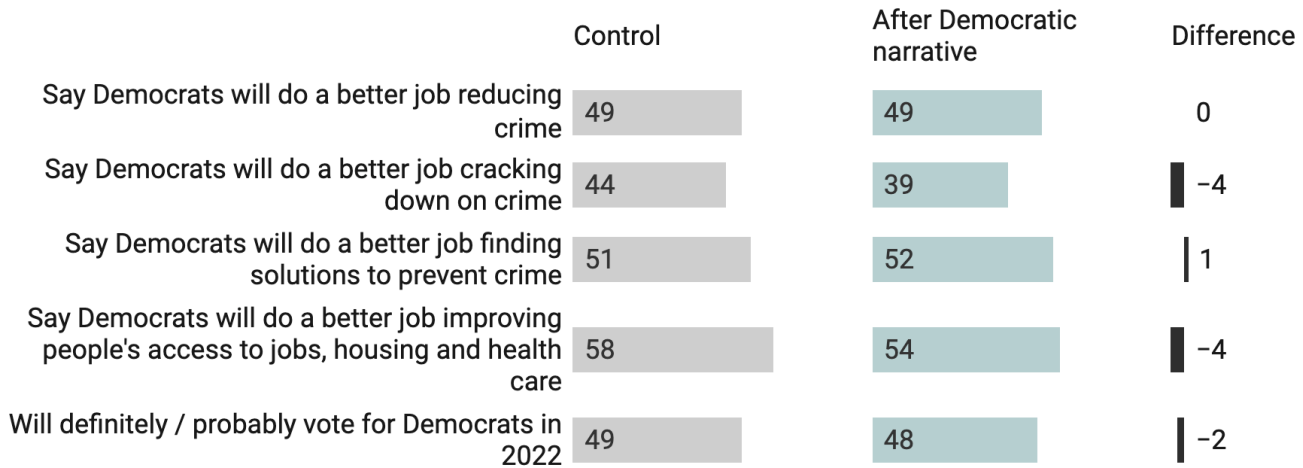
We find similar results when asking whether the candidate is someone who is in step with their values.



Neither narrative changes views overall.

We compared exposure to each narrative to voters in a control group, who received neither narrative. We do not find major differences overall.

All voters



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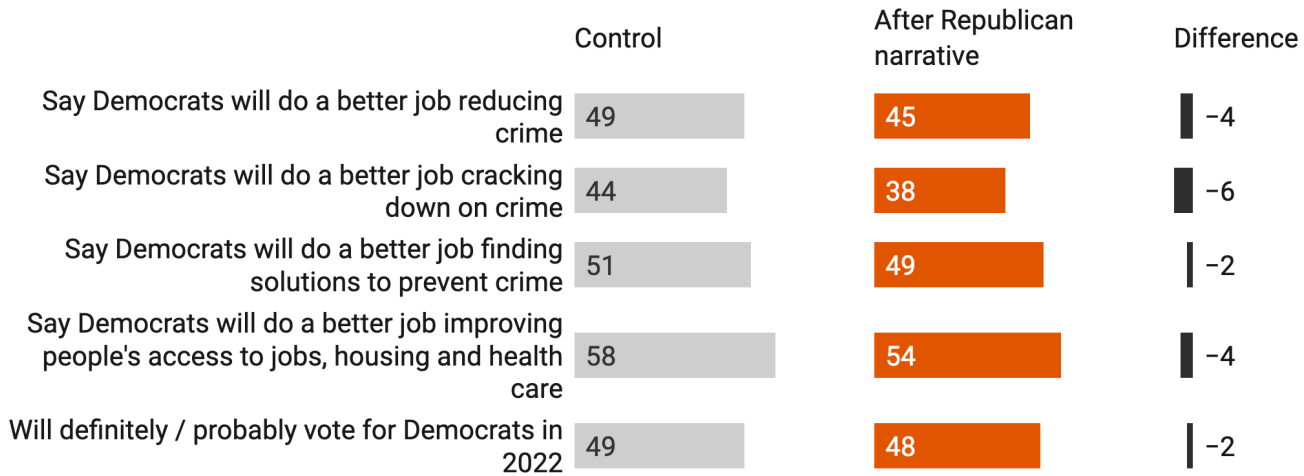
The Republican narrative also doesn't impact views overall – at least at the level of statistical significance.

All voters



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However, there is some slight movement among a few segments.

SHIFTS TOWARD DEMOCRATIC SUPPORT AFTER DEMOCRATIC NARRATIVE

- Swing voters (+6 to +11 percentage points)
- Black voters (+6 to +12)
- Latina/o/x voters (+6 to +8)
- Independent women (+2 to +9)

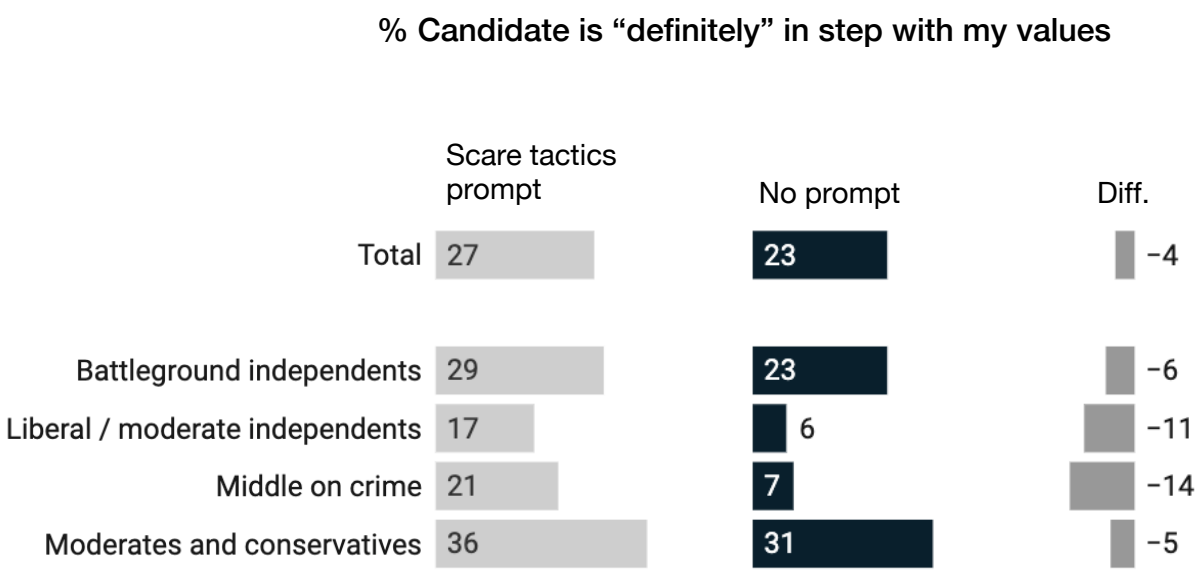
SHIFTS TOWARD REPUBLICAN SUPPORT AFTER REPUBLICAN NARRATIVE

- GOP Republicans (+7 to +13 percentage points)
- Voters ages 35 to 49 (+5 to +14)

A “scare tactics” prompt may weaken the Republican narrative.

After reading the Republican narrative, half of respondents were asked: “Do you think this candidate is using scare tactics?” The other half of respondents did not receive this prompt.

Data suggest the prompt may have a slight neutralizing effect among some independents and those who are “in the middle” on addressing crime. For example, those in the middle are 14 points less likely to say the Republican candidate (narrative) is in step with their values after being asked whether they think the candidate is using scare tactics.



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We tested synthesized versions of the narratives in a head-to-head message among the control group.

The Democratic message outperforms the Republican statement by 10 points (see next page).

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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: From the White House to liberal state and local governments, there has been a systemic failure to contain crime in America. It stems from the dangerous belief that enforcing the law is somehow morally wrong or even racist. It has paralyzed law enforcement agencies at all levels and created prosecutors who would rather let a dangerous criminal walk out of jail than enforce the law. Once again, Democrats have broken a part of our civil society, and once again it will be conservatives who will step up to piece it together. We've got to get back to law and order and being tough on crime.

45%

Candidate B: We've tried things like more patrols, militarized police, and incarcerating people for minor offenses. Look where we are: crime is rising, prisons are full, and the cycle is never broken, costing taxpayers billions every year. Some politicians want to throw money at things that haven't worked. I want to invest in promising new breakthroughs in gun violence prevention and crime intervention programs. I want to support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and I want to make sure they get better training, like how to de-escalate situations. I also want to fully fund things that are proven to create safe neighborhoods and prevent crime from happening in the first place - like good jobs, schools, and infrastructure.

55%

Here are voters most likely to agree with…

(See next page for details.)

Candidate A	Candidate B	Split
• White men • Non-college white voters • Independent men • Conservative independents • Republicans	• Women • Voters of color • College educated white voters • Democrats • Independent women • Liberal / moderate independents • No definite preference in ‘22 House vote	• Battleground voters • Midwest • Less than college

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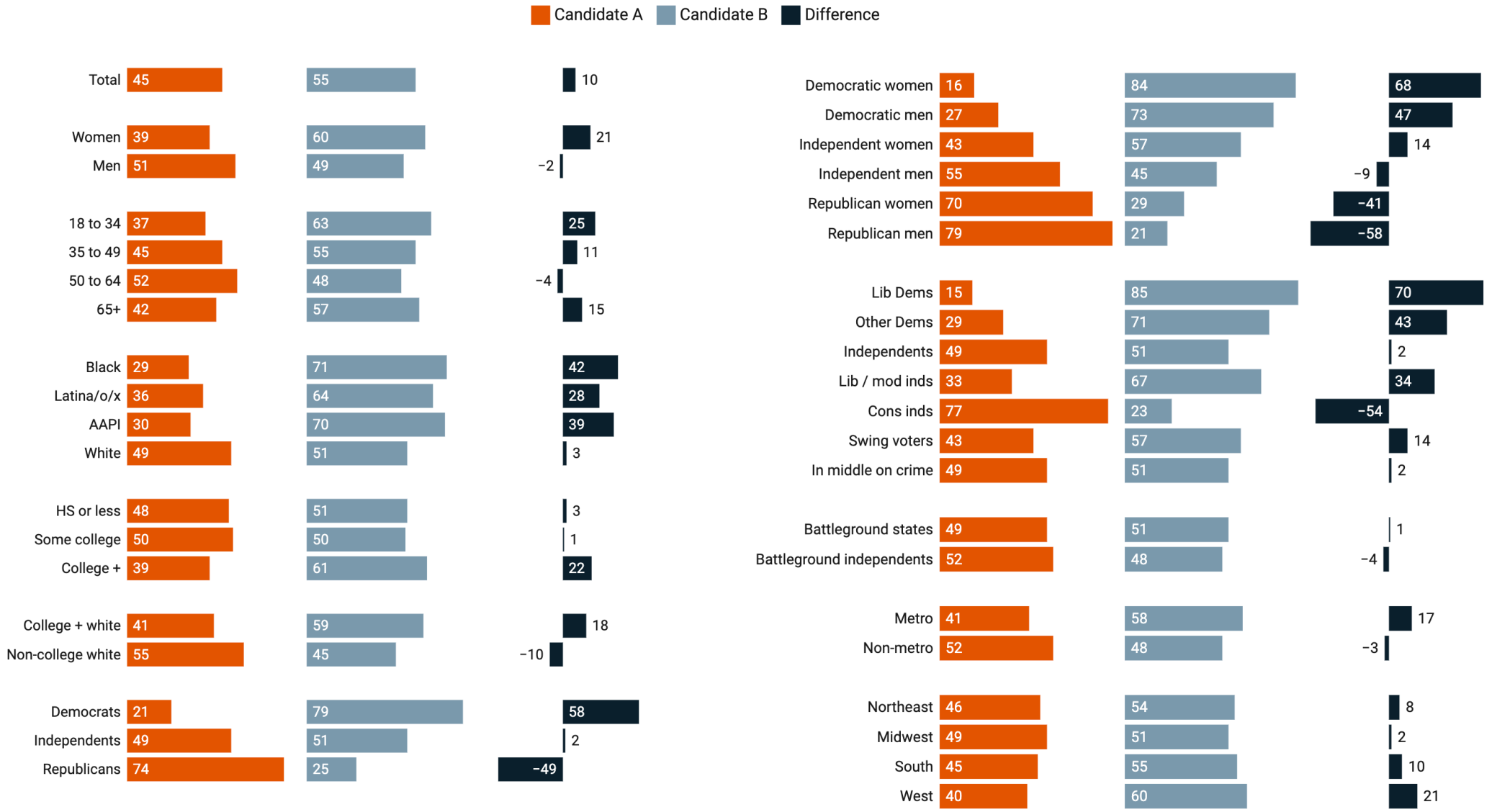
Agree more with _____ .

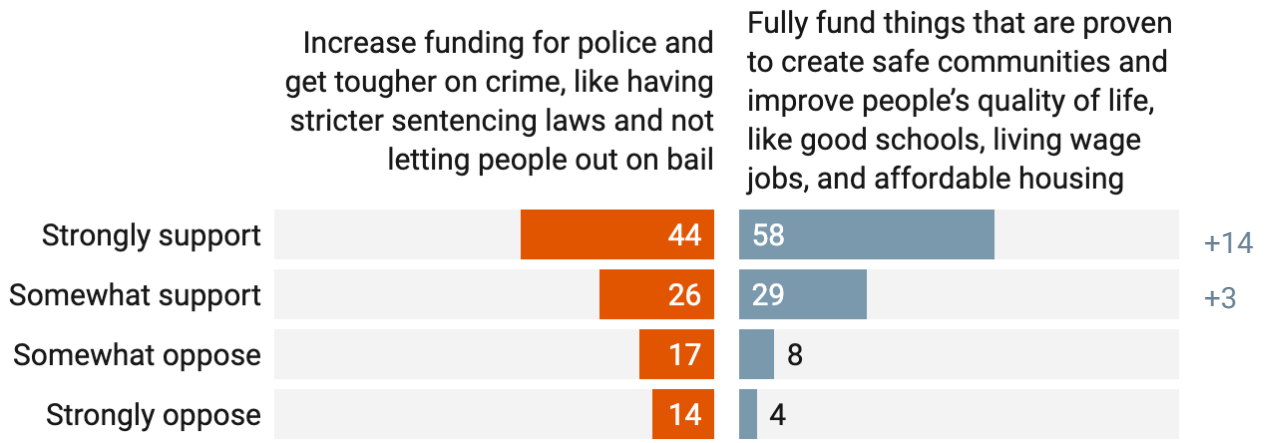


Broad sentiment about approach to crime.

Voters are more likely to express support for an expansive approach to crime than a tough on crime strategy.

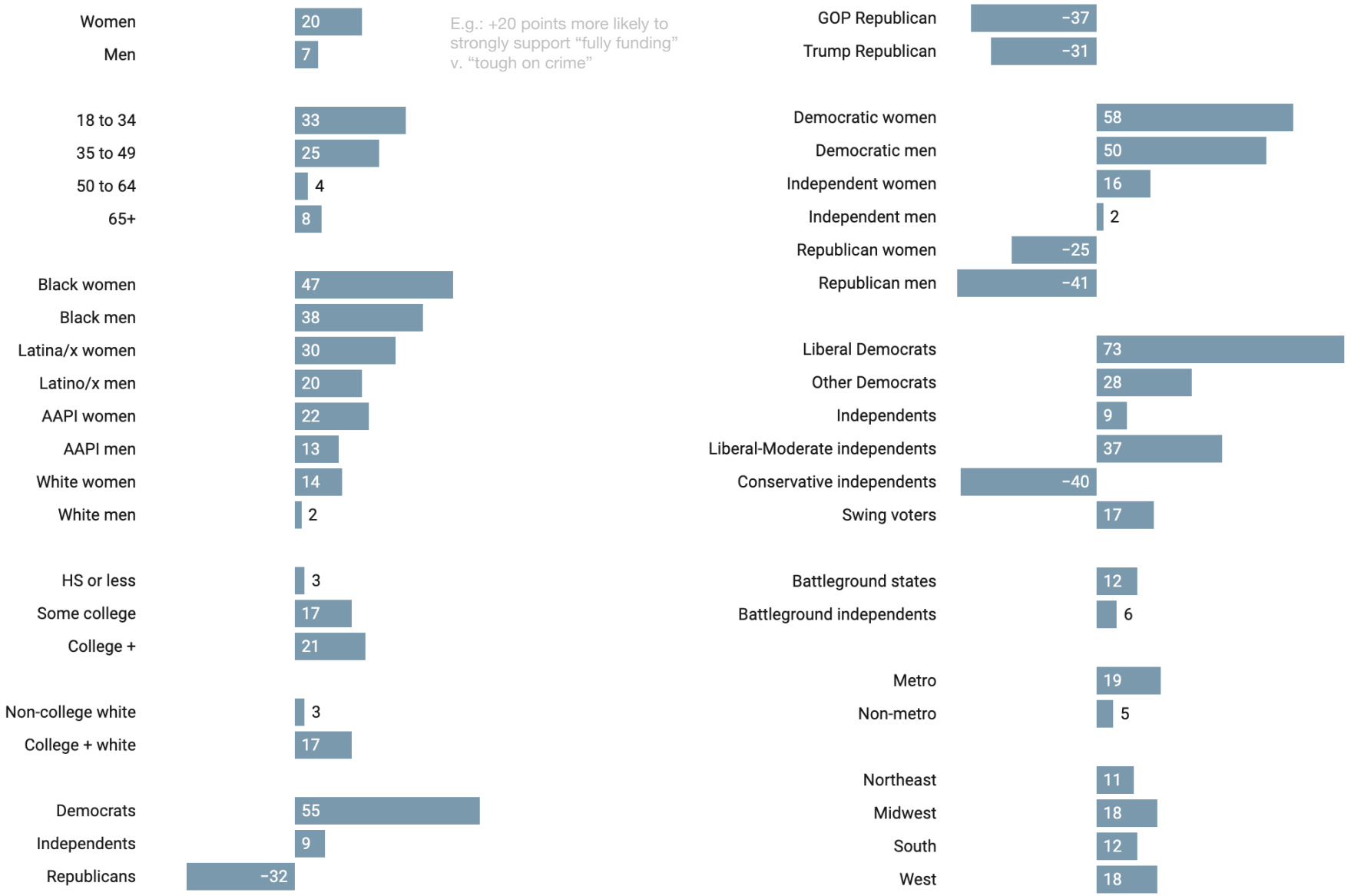
Most segments lean toward an expansive approach (see next slide).

Here are two ways we could work on crime. First, would you support or oppose this way:



PERRY UNDEM

Percentage-point difference in strong support for “fully funding” v. “tough on crime”



PERRY UNDEM

“Landing places.”

PERRY UNDEM

We tested several messages to explore safe “landing places” in a dialogue on crime.

MESSAGES TESTED

- Prevention statements
- What creates safe communities
- Investing in communities
- Values on safety
- Accountability

PERRY UNDEM

Overall, these are the top 4 landing places.

Following are more details.

1

We all deserve to be safe, no matter what we look like, where we come from, or how much money is in our wallets.

94% agree, 81% strongly

2

We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than trying to stir up people's emotions just to get elected.

94% agree, 75% strongly

3

We need to focus on preventing crime in the first place, not just reacting to it after it happens.

92% agree, 62% strongly

4

We need to fully fund things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people's quality of life, like good schools, living wage jobs, and affordable housing.

81% agree, 54% strongly

One statement on safety edges out another.

The first message performs better among men (especially independent men), young voters, older voters, and independents in Battleground states.

Both messages perform equally well among women and Democrats.

Among voters ages 35 to 49, the message about children elicits +6 pts stronger agreement.

% Strongly agree

81%

We all deserve to be safe, no matter what we look like, where we come from, or how much money is in our wallets. (Split sample; base n = 1,419)

Independent men: +17 pts
Men: +12 pts
18- to 34-year-olds: +9 pts
65 and older: +11 pts
Battleground independents; +11 pts

75%

Every child should be able to grow up in a safe community with good schools, safe places to play, parents who can provide for them, and hope for the future. (Split sample; base n = 1,457)

Trying to “stir up emotions” may work better than “scare tactics” among conservative audiences.

% Strongly agree

75%

We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than trying to **stir up people’s emotions** just to get elected.

Republican men: +13 pts
Latinx voters: +13 pts
Trump Republicans: +10 pts
50 and older: +6 pts

72%

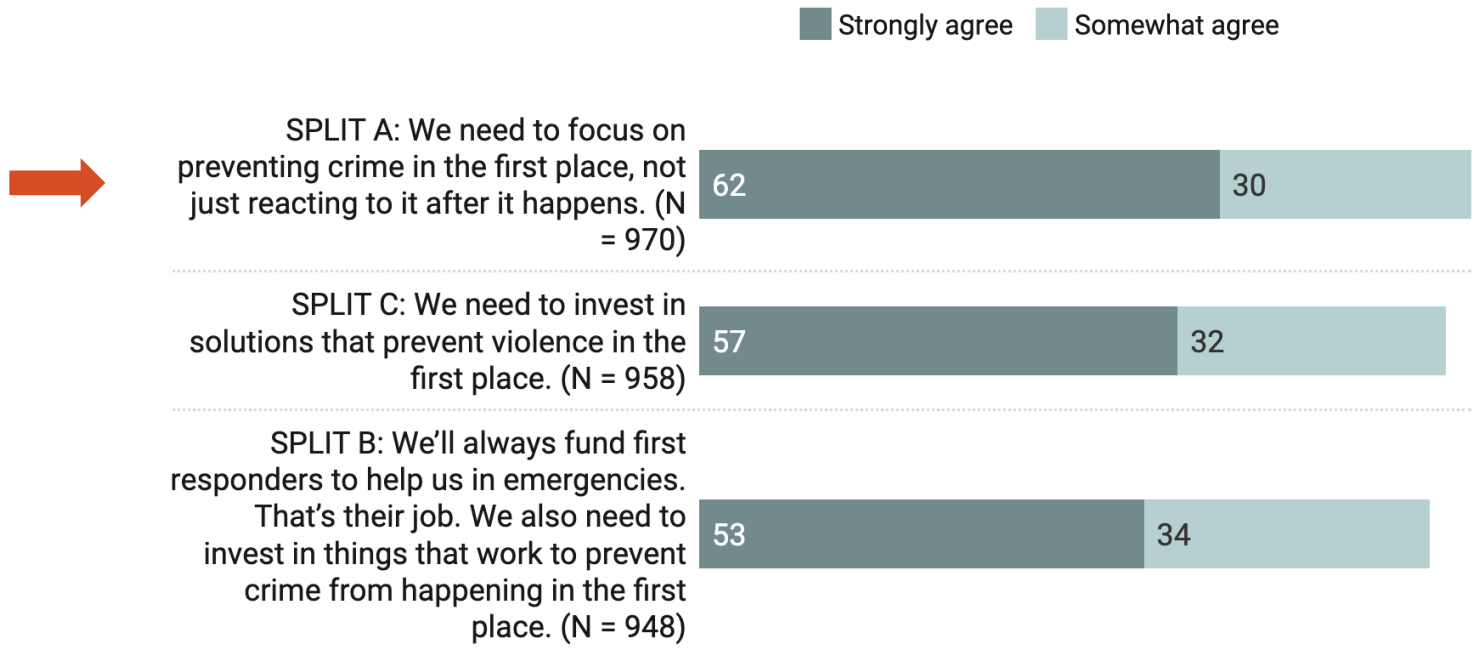
We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than **using scare tactics** just to get elected.

Liberal Democrats: +9 pts

PERRY UNDEM

A straightforward prevention message garners strong agreement among a majority of respondents.

“Invest in solutions” resonates less so with conservative independents.



PERRY UNDEM

% Strongly agree

	Liberal Dems	Other Dems	Ind	Liberal / mod ind	Cons ind	Swing	Battle-grnd	Battle-grnd ind	Black	Latinx	AAPI	White	18 to 34
We need to focus on preventing crime in the first place, not just reacting to it after it happens.	79%	68%	56%	58%	49%	53%	61%	58%	70%	70%	64%	60%	58%
We'll always fund first responders to help us in emergencies. That's their job. We also need to invest in things that work to prevent crime from happening in the first place.	64%	67%	52%	54%	48%	49%	52%	57%	64%	55%	46%	51%	50%
We need to invest in solutions that prevent violence in the first place.	85%	61%	47%	63%	25%	47%	54%	42%	69%	58%	51%	55%	59%

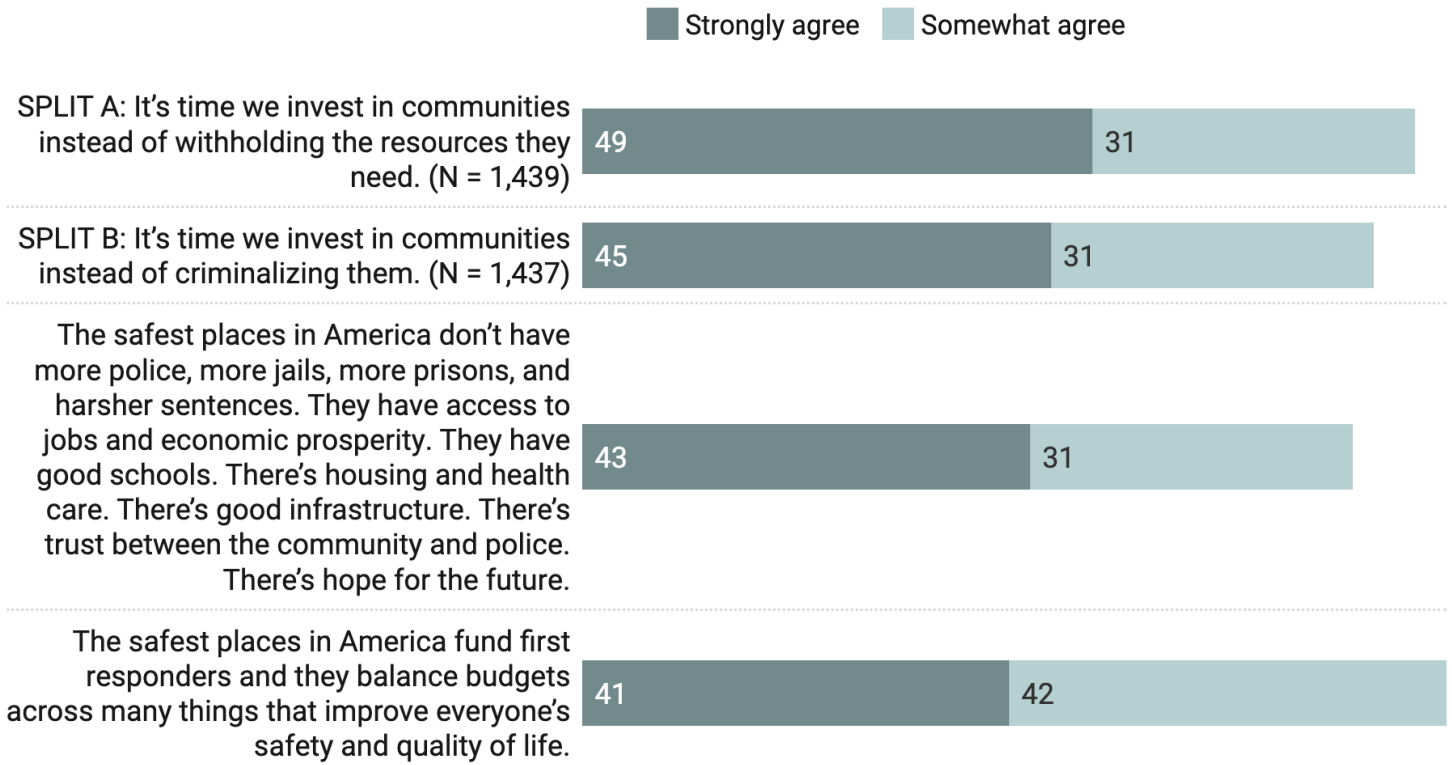
PERRY UNDEM

Fully funding things proven to create safe communities also has fairly broad appeal.

	Liberal Dems	Other Dems	Ind	Liberal / mod ind	Cons ind	Swing	Battle-grnd	Battle-grnd ind	Black	Latinx	AAPI	White	18 to 34
We need to fully fund things that are proven to create safe communities and improve people's quality of life, like good schools, living wage jobs, and affordable housing.	83% strongly agree 97% total agree	65% 90%	45% 75%	58% 86%	21% 56%	44% 82%	51% 77%	43% 73%	74% 89%	61% 86%	51% 87%	50% 79%	58% 85%

PERRY UNDEM

Other messages on funding, investment, and safety resonate across broad audiences – just not as strongly.



PERRY UNDEM

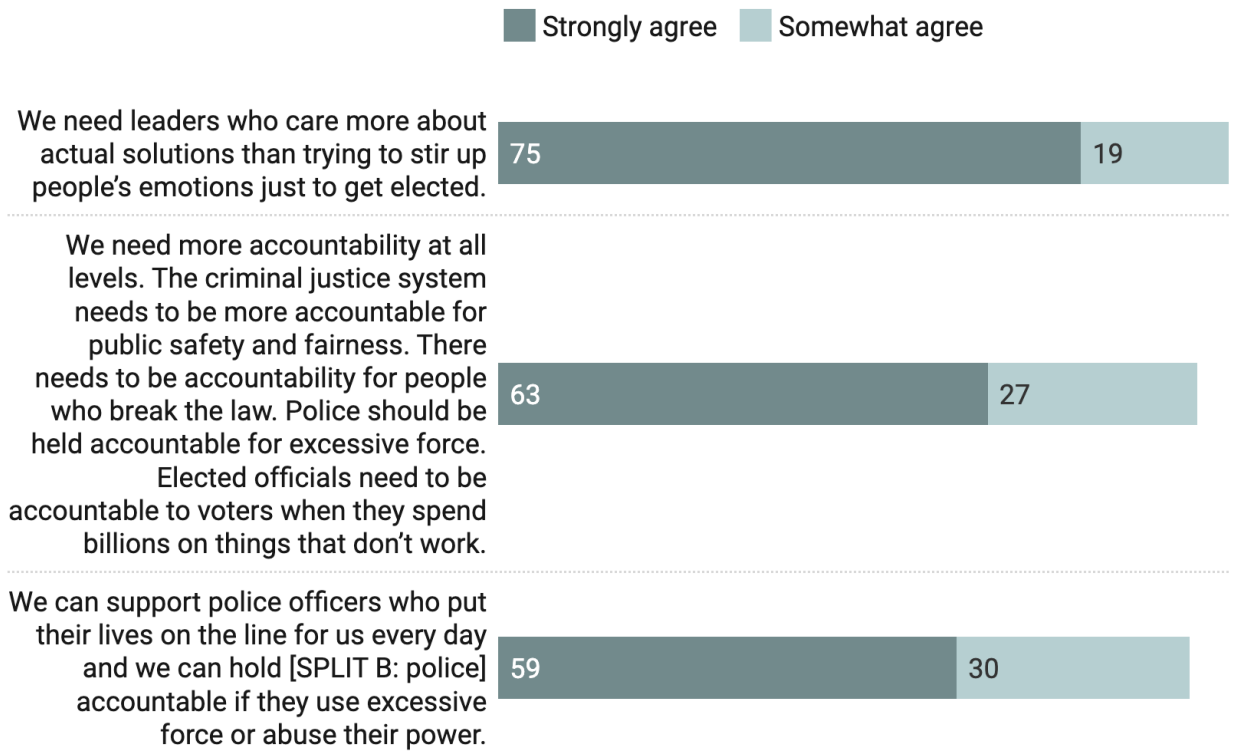
% Strongly agree

	Liberal Dems	Other Dems	Ind	Liberal / mod ind	Cons ind	Swing	Battle-grnd	Battle-grnd ind	Black	Latinx	AAPI	White	18 to 34
SPLIT A: It's time we invest in communities instead of withholding the resources they need. (N = 1,439)	80% 95% total agr	53% 84%	44% 75%	58% 87%	20% 58%	42% 83%	49% 81%	46% 77%	66% 88%	54% 87%	49% 82%	47% 79%	54% 80%
SPLIT B: It's time we invest in communities instead of criminalizing them. (N = 1,437)	71%	53%	41%	50%	24%	37%	42%	37%	61%	56%	39%	42%	46%
The safest places in America don't have more police, more jails, more prisons, and harsher sentences. They have access to jobs and economic prosperity. They have good schools. There's housing and health care. There's good infrastructure. There's trust between the community and police. There's hope for the future.	72%	46%	37%	48%	19%	36%	42%	38%	53%	47%	43%	41%	47%
The safest places in America fund first responders and they balance budgets across many things that improve everyone's safety and quality of life.	44%	43%	37%	39%	36%	31%	39%	37%	43%	43%	38%	40%	38%

PERRY UNDEM

These are the top accountability messages – across audiences.

Majorities across every segment agree with these statements (see next page).



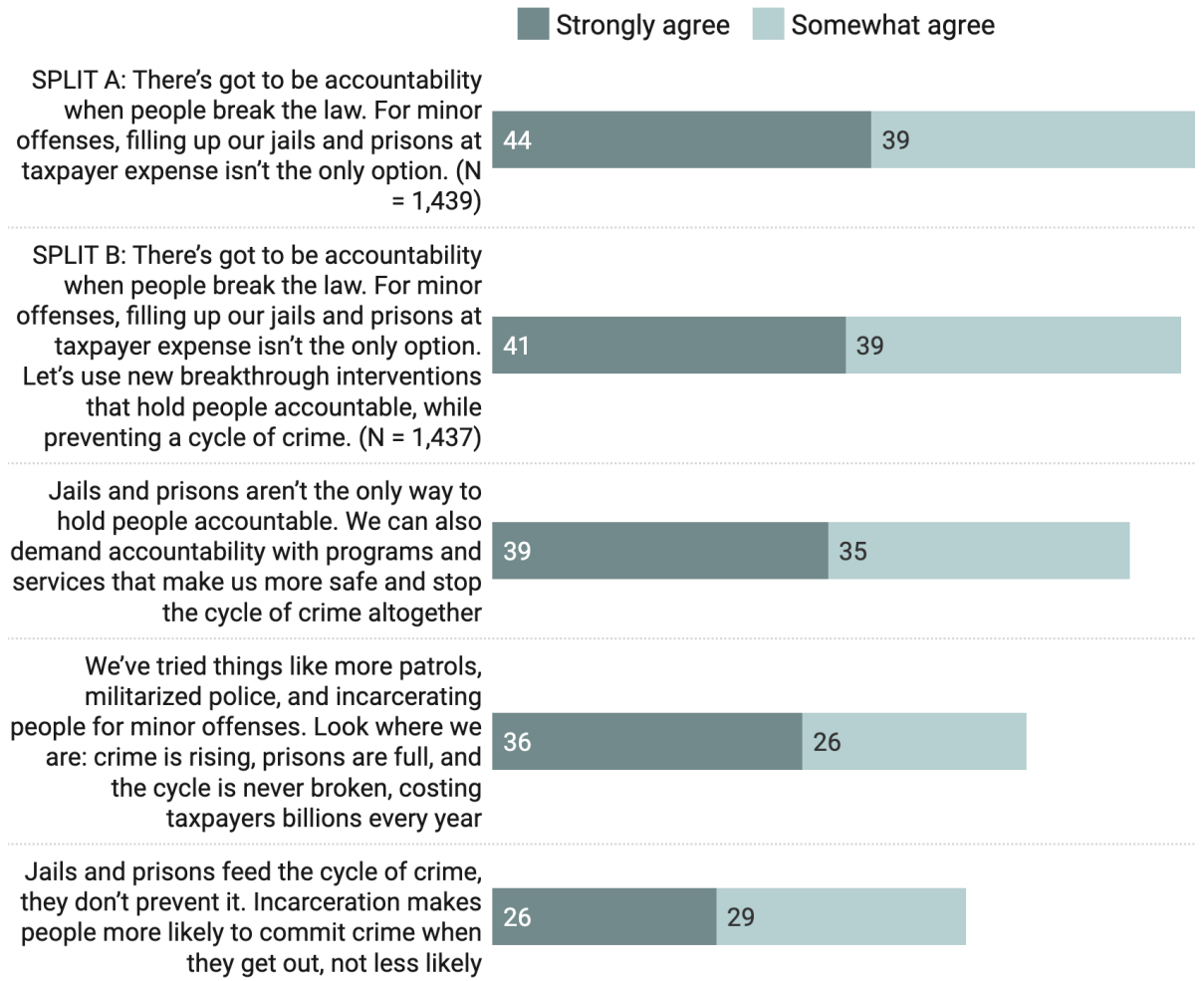
PERRY UNDEM

% Strongly agree

	Liberal Dems	Other Dems	Ind	Liberal / mod ind	Cons ind	Swing	Battle-grnd	Battle-grnd ind	Black	Latinx	AAPI	White	18 to 34
We need leaders who care more about actual solutions than trying to stir up people's emotions just to get elected.	81%	69%	75%	77%	74%	63%	76%	77%	75%	76%	66%	75%	62%
We need more accountability at all levels. The criminal justice system needs to be more accountable for public safety and fairness. There needs to be accountability for people who break the law. Police should be held accountable for excessive force. Elected officials need to be accountable to voters when they spend billions on things that don't work.	69%	62%	66%	69%	64%	54%	62%	65%	70%	61%	61%	63%	54%
We can support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and we can hold police accountable if they use excessive force or abuse their power.	72% 92% total agree	71% 90%	55% 89%	62% 94%	45% 83%	47% 88%	59% 89%	58% 90%	71% 86%	59% 85%	59% 91%	57% 90%	51% 78%

PERRY UNDEM

These messages perform less well – but still receive majority agreement.



PERRY UNDEM

% Strongly agree

	Liberal Dems	Other Dems	Ind	Liberal / mod ind	Cons ind	Swing	Battle-grnd	Battle-grnd ind
There's got to be accountability when people break the law. For minor offenses, filling up our jails and prisons at taxpayer expense isn't the only option.	61%	44%	43%	48%	36%	42%	41%	37%
There's got to be accountability when people break the law. For minor offenses, filling up our jails and prisons at taxpayer expense isn't the only option. Let's use new breakthrough interventions that hold people accountable, while preventing a cycle of crime.	54%	51%	39%	47%	26%	34%	39%	40%
Jails and prisons aren't the only way to hold people accountable. We can also demand accountability with programs and services that make us more safe and stop the cycle of crime altogether.	63% 92% total agree	47% 84%	32% 70%	42% 81%	16% 51%	32% 76%	38% 71%	33% 69%
We've tried things like more patrols, militarized police, and incarcerating people for minor offenses. Look where we are: crime is rising, prisons are full, and the cycle is never broken, costing taxpayers billions every year.	60%	40%	31%	41%	14%	28%	33%	30%
Jails and prisons feed the cycle of crime, they don't prevent it. Incarceration makes people more likely to commit crime when they get out, not less likely.	47%	27%	23%	30%	10%	19%	22%	21%

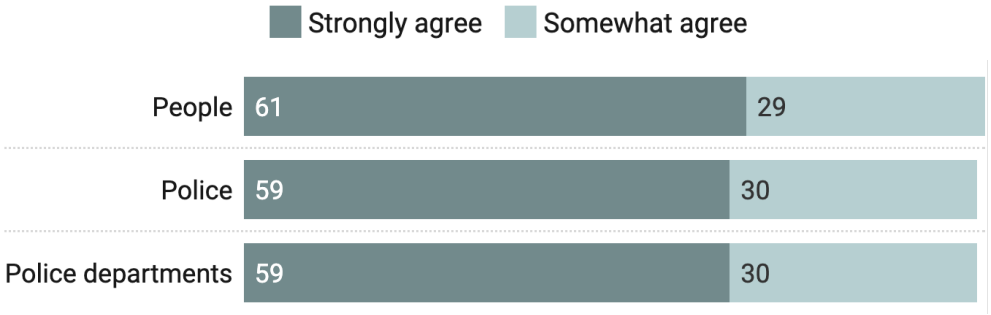
% Strongly agree

	Black	Latinx	AAPI	White	18 to 34
There's got to be accountability when people break the law. For minor offenses, filling up our jails and prisons at taxpayer expense isn't the only option.	50%	50%	39%	43%	49%
There's got to be accountability when people break the law. For minor offenses, filling up our jails and prisons at taxpayer expense isn't the only option. Let's use new breakthrough interventions that hold people accountable, while preventing a cycle of crime.	54%	44%	39%	38%	43%
Jails and prisons aren't the only way to hold people accountable. We can also demand accountability with programs and services that make us more safe and stop the cycle of crime altogether.	50% 82% total agree	47% 81%	36% 79%	36% 72%	47% 80%
We've tried things like more patrols, militarized police, and incarcerating people for minor offenses. Look where we are: crime is rising, prisons are full, and the cycle is never broken, costing taxpayers billions every year.	51%	43%	33%	33%	39%
Jails and prisons feed the cycle of crime, they don't prevent it. Incarceration makes people more likely to commit crime when they get out, not less likely.	36%	29%	26%	24%	35%

Nearly all voters agree with the sentiment of supporting police and holding them accountable.

Overall, there's no difference between holding "police" v. "police departments" v. "people" accountable. There are a few differences by segment, however. Democrats and Black voters are more likely to want to hold "police" accountable; conservative independents are more likely to respond to "people." See next page.

We can support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and we can hold _____ accountable if they use excessive force or abuse their power.



PERRY UNDEM

We can support police officers who put their lives on the line for us every day and we can hold _____ accountable if they use excessive force or abuse their power.

% Strongly agree

	Liberal Dems	Other Dems	Ind	Liberal / mod ind	Cons ind	Swing	Battle-grnd	Battle-grnd ind	Black	Latinx	AAPI	White	18 to 34
Police	72%	71%	55%	62%	45%	47%	59%	58%	71%	59%	59%	57%	51%
Police departments	69%	61%	63%	68%	56%	57%	58%	62%	67%	53%	50%	60%	51%
People	67%	54%	62%	61%	66%	54%	62%	68%	55%	67%	47%	62%	45%

Large margins of error by race/ethnicity

PERRY UNDEM

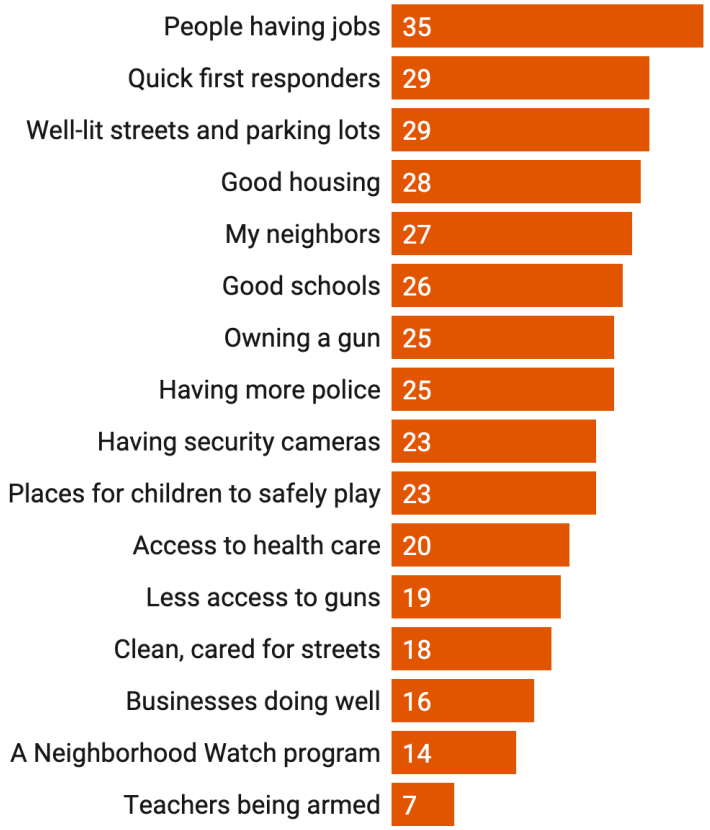
We also explored environmental factors that may make people feel safe.

Jobs, housing, and schools are the top structural issues. Other top factors are:

- Quick first responders
- Well-lit streets and parking lots
- Owning a gun
- More police

Factors vary by demographic (see next few pages).

Think about being safe in your own neighborhood and community. What makes you feel safe? Choose the top 3 or 4 for you:



PERRY UNDEM

Top 5 by demographic.

	Women	Men	Black	Latinx	AAPI	White	18 to 34	Metro	Non-metro
People having jobs	33%	37%	37%	30%	41%	35%	30%	35%	35%
Quick first responders	32%			25%		31%		28%	31%
Well-lit streets and parking lots	33%		30%	31%	31%	28%	29%	31%	
Good housing	28%	27%	32%	28%	28%		32%	28%	26%
My neighbors	28%	27%				29%			33%
Good schools		28%			30%		28%	26%	
Owning a gun		32%				29%			37%
Having more police		27%							
Having security cameras			36%	27%	27%				
Places for children to safely play			25%	25%			27%		
Access to health care									
Less access to guns				25%					

PERRY UNDEM

Top 5 by demographic (cont.)

	Dem women	Dem men	Ind women	Ind men	Rep women	Rep men
People having jobs	38%	38%	32%	41%		31%
Quick first responders			31%	28%	41%	28%
Well-lit streets and parking lots	33%		33%		32%	
Good housing	33%	32%	30%	30%		
My neighbors			27%		33%	33%
Good schools	30%	35%	27%			
Owning a gun				41%	36%	51%
Having more police				27%	37%	42%
Having security cameras						
Places for children to safely play			27%			
Access to health care		26%				
Less access to guns	36%	33%				

PERRY UNDEM

Top 5 by demographic (cont.)

	Liberal Dems	Other Dems	Ind	Liberal / mod ind	Cons ind	Swing	Battle-grnd	Battle-grnd ind
People having jobs	41%	31%	37%	40%	33%	35%	35%	38%
Quick first responders			30%	27%	36%	32%	31%	32%
Well-lit streets and parking lots		30%	27%	30%		30%		
Good housing	38%	26%	30%	36%		29%	27%	30%
My neighbors					28%		30%	28%
Good schools	36%	26%	27%	33%		27%	28%	28%
Owning a gun			32%		55%		28%	36%
Having more police					39%			
Having security cameras		32%						
Places for children to safely play								
Access to health care	34%							
Less access to guns	41%	26%						

PERRY UNDEM

Responding to cash bail attacks.

We tested three responses to a cash bail attack.

This response tests best across nearly every segment:

Cash bail actually makes us less safe. When someone with minor offenses is kept in jail for months or years because they can't afford bail, they lose their livelihoods - their jobs and their ability to get jobs in the future. That feeds the cycle of crime. We need a system where public safety, not wealth, determines who is released pending trial.

See the following pages for more details.

PERRY UNDEM

Which statement do you think is most convincing?

Statement A

Democrats are hellbent on eliminating cash bail. They wanted to release dangerous criminals on their own recognizance or a nominal bond amount. Now there's blood on their hands.

Statement B

Split sampled

Cash bail actually makes us less safe. When someone with minor offenses is kept in jail for months or years because they can't afford bail, they lose their livelihoods - their jobs and their ability to get jobs in the future. That feeds the cycle of crime. We need a system where public safety, not wealth, determines who is released pending trial. *Base n = 965*

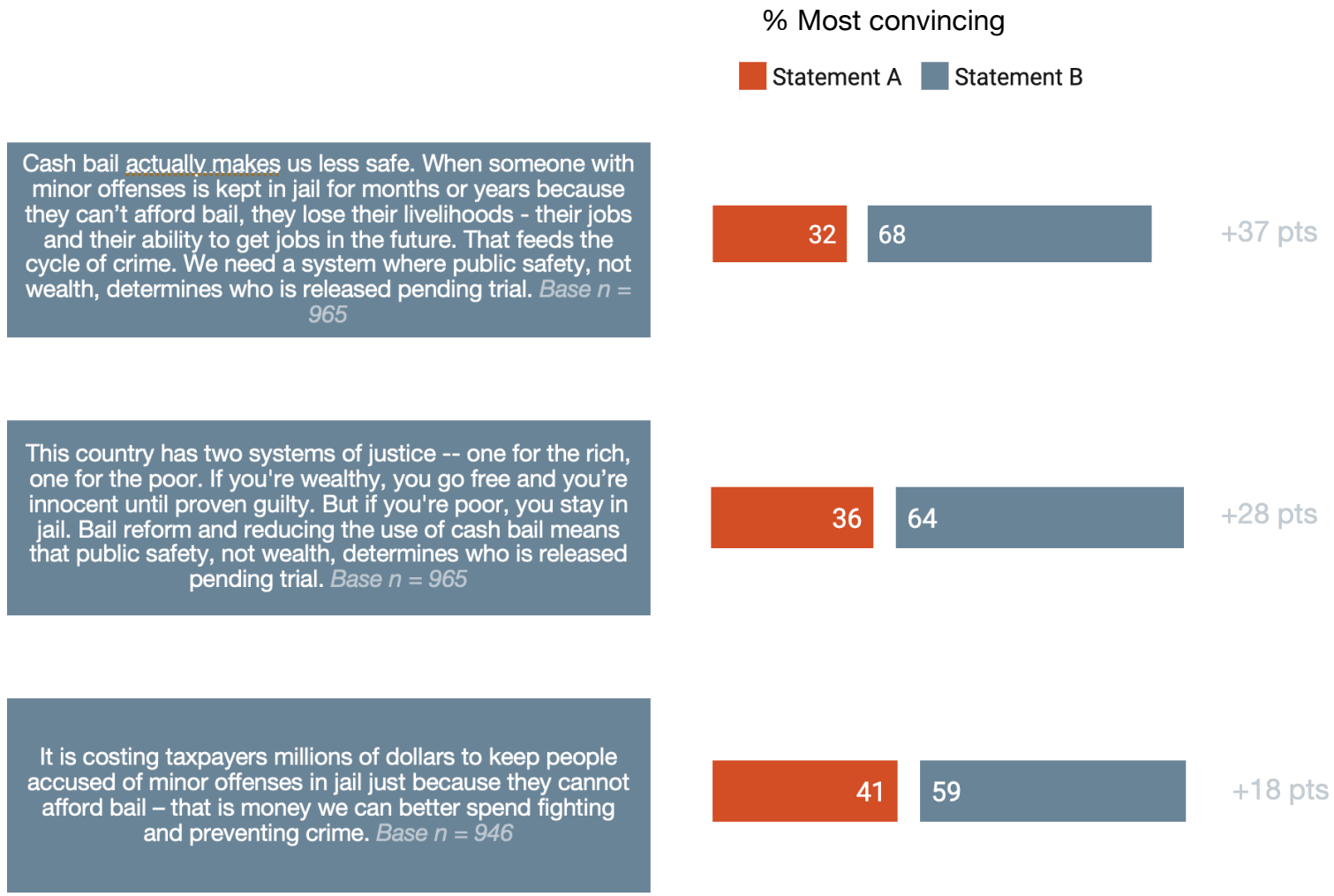
This country has two systems of justice -- one for the rich, one for the poor. If you're wealthy, you go free and you're innocent until proven guilty. But if you're poor, you stay in jail. Bail reform and reducing the use of cash bail means that public safety, not wealth, determines who is released pending trial. *Base n = 965*

It is costing taxpayers millions of dollars to keep people accused of minor offenses in jail just because they cannot afford bail – that is money we can better spend fighting and preventing crime. *Base n = 946*

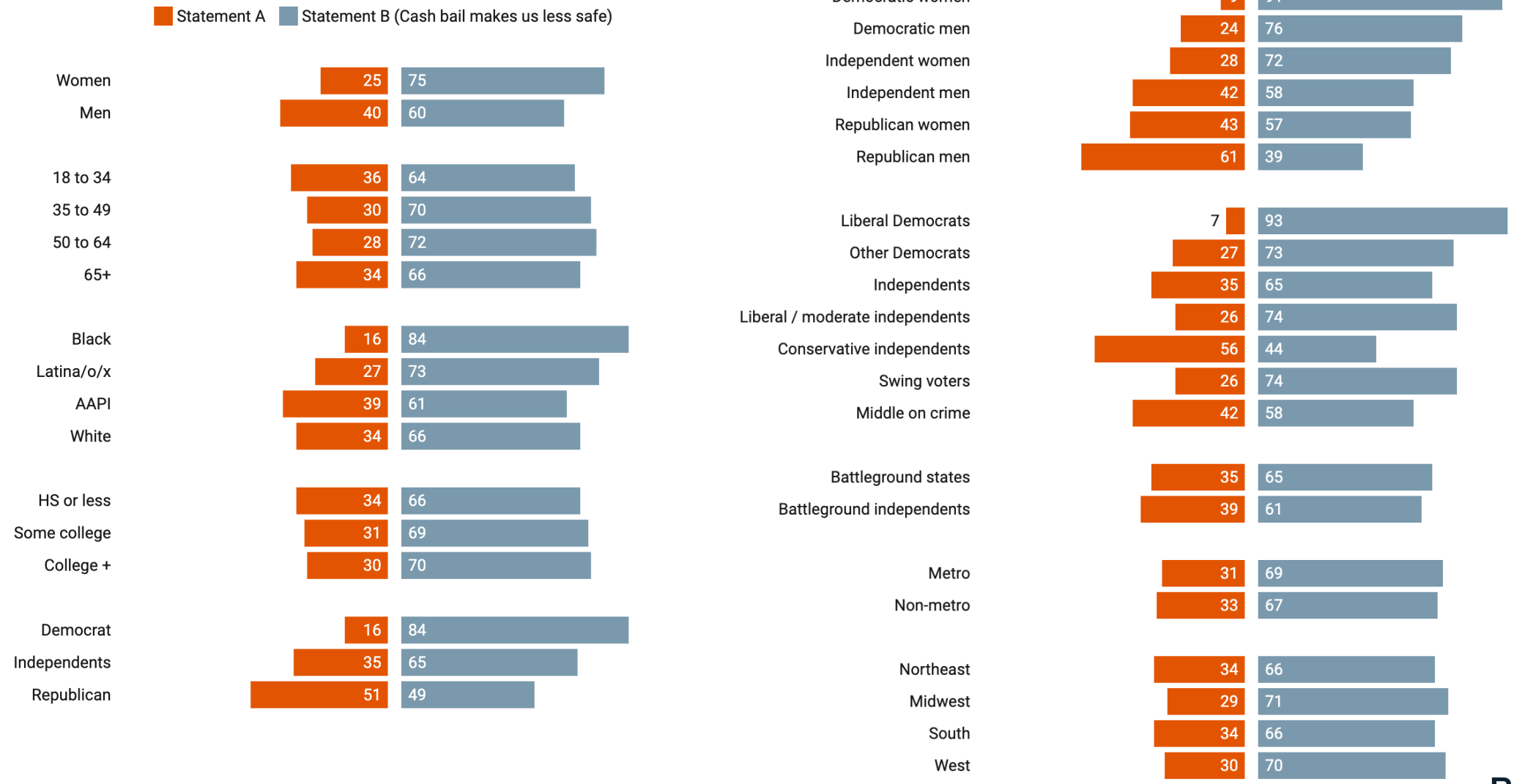
The first response (at right) performs best overall – winning by a margin of 37 points.

The message is also successful across many key segments (see next page).

The “two systems of justice” response works best among 18- to 34-year-olds and AAPI voters.



PERRY UNDEM


Statement A
Statement B (Cash bail makes us less safe)
Women 25 75
Men 40 60
18 to 34 36 64
35 to 49 30 70
50 to 64 28 72
65+ 34 66
Black 16 84
Latina/o/x 27 73
AAPI 39 61
White 34 66
HS or less 34 66
Some college 31 69
College + 30 70
Democrat 16 84
Independents 35 65
Republican 51 49
GOP Republican 49 51
Trump Republican 56 44
Democratic women 9 91
Democratic men 24 76
Independent women 28 72
Independent men 42 58
Republican women 43 57
Republican men 61 39
Liberal Democrats 7 93
Other Democrats 27 73
Independents 35 65
Liberal / moderate independents 26 74
Conservative independents 56 44
Swing voters 26 74
Middle on crime 42 58
Battleground states 35 65
Battleground independents 39 61
Metro 31 69
Non-metro 33 67
Northeast 34 66
Midwest 29 71
South 34 66
West 30 70

PERRY UNDEM

Responding to Defund attacks.

PERRY UNDEM

We tested two responses to an attack about Defund the Police.

Both beat the attack message by 15 to 20 points.

PERRY UNDEM

Which candidate do you agree with more?

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.

Candidate B

Split sampled

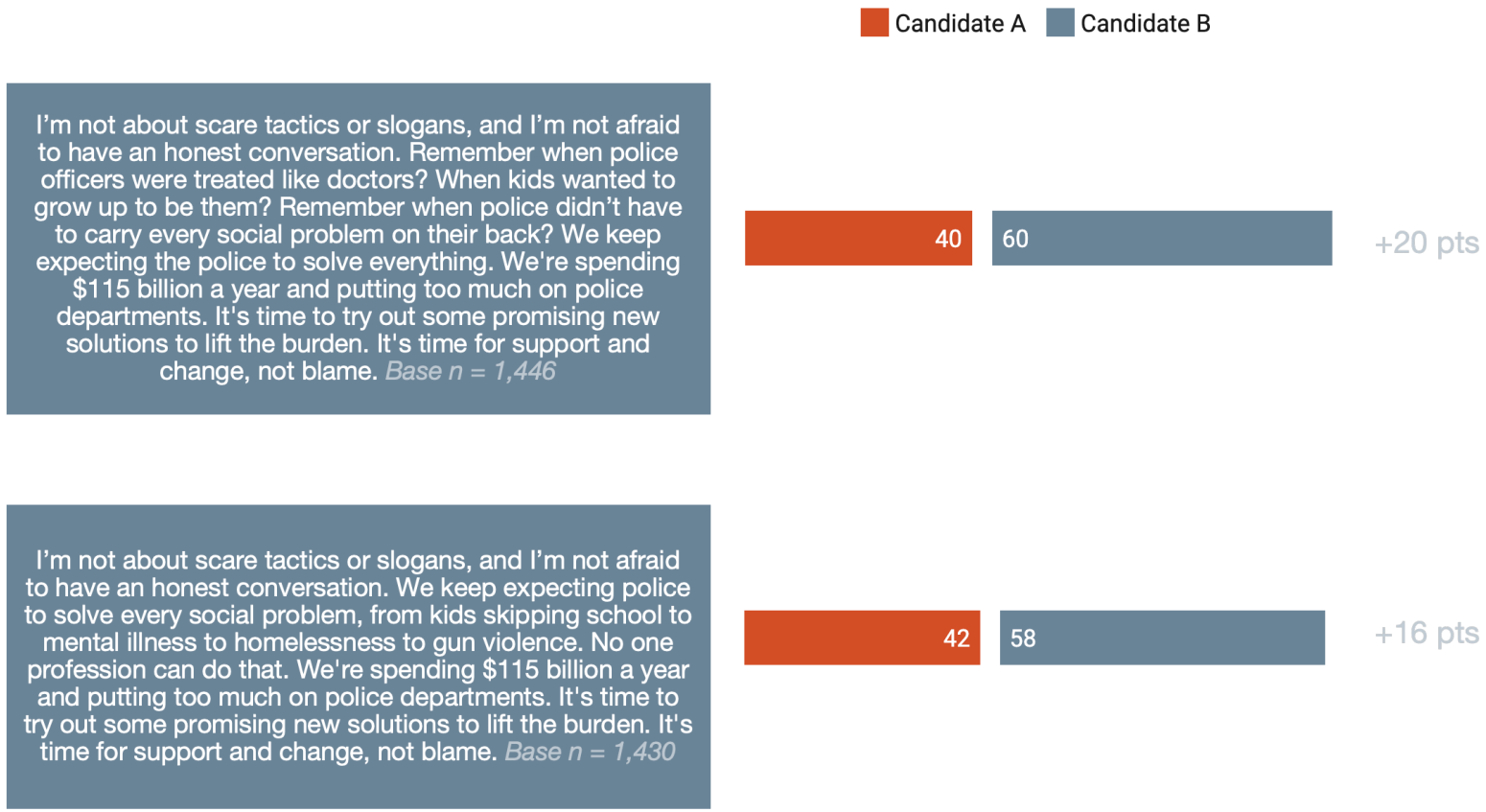
I'm not about scare tactics or slogans, and I'm not afraid to have an honest conversation. Remember when police officers were treated like doctors? When kids wanted to grow up to be them? Remember when police didn't have to carry every social problem on their back? We keep expecting the police to solve everything. 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. *Base n = 1,446*

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. *Base n = 1,430*

PERRY UNDEM

Overall, there's little difference between the two responses.

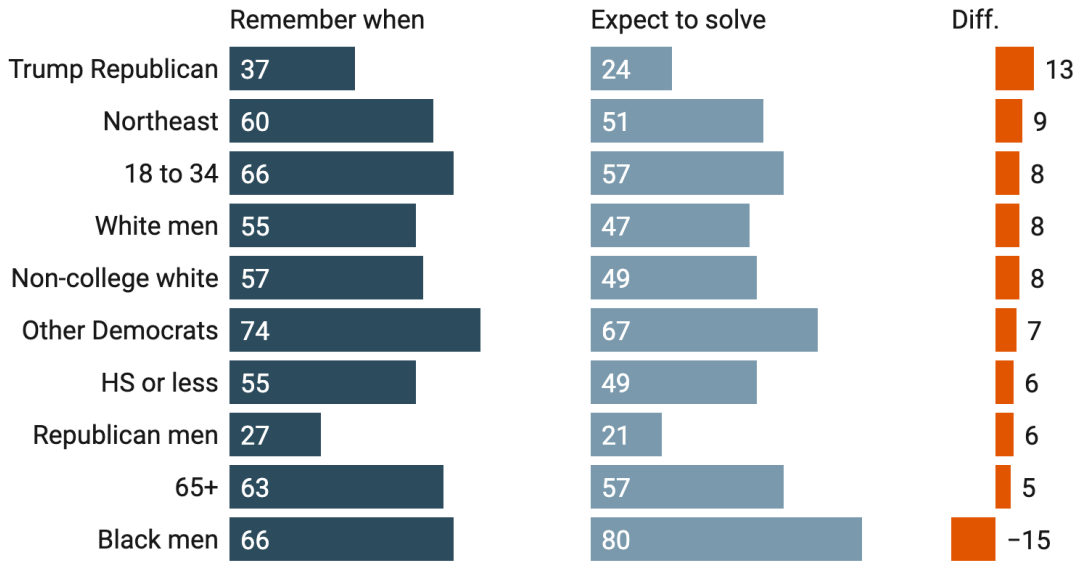
% Agree with most



PERRY UNDEM

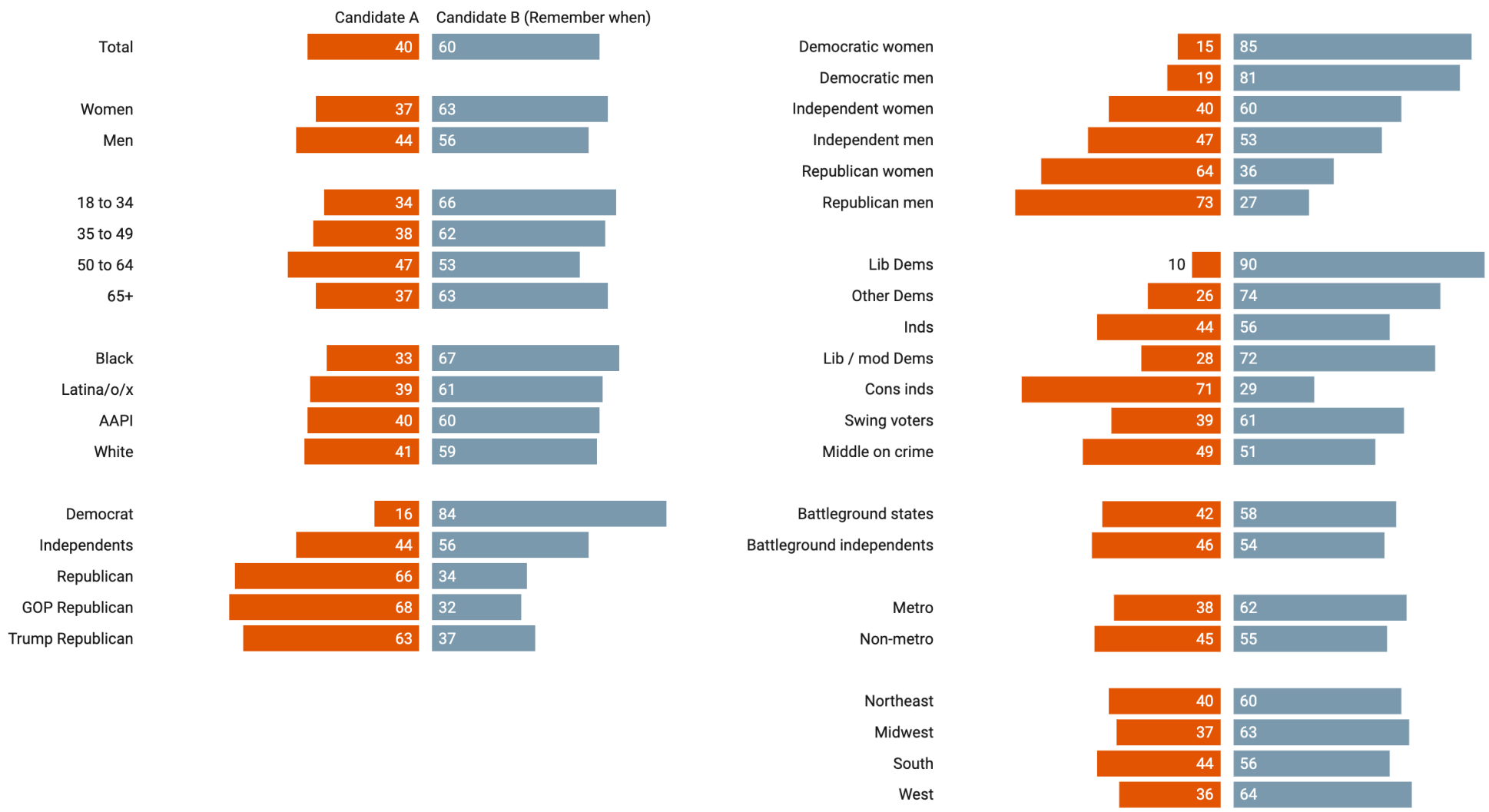
“Remember when” performs better among more conservative audiences - but less well among Black men.

There are no other significant differences by segment.



PERRY UNDEM

% Agree with most



PERRY UNDEM

Language.

PERRY UNDEM

Preventing crime, “not just responding after it happens” tops a list of phrases.

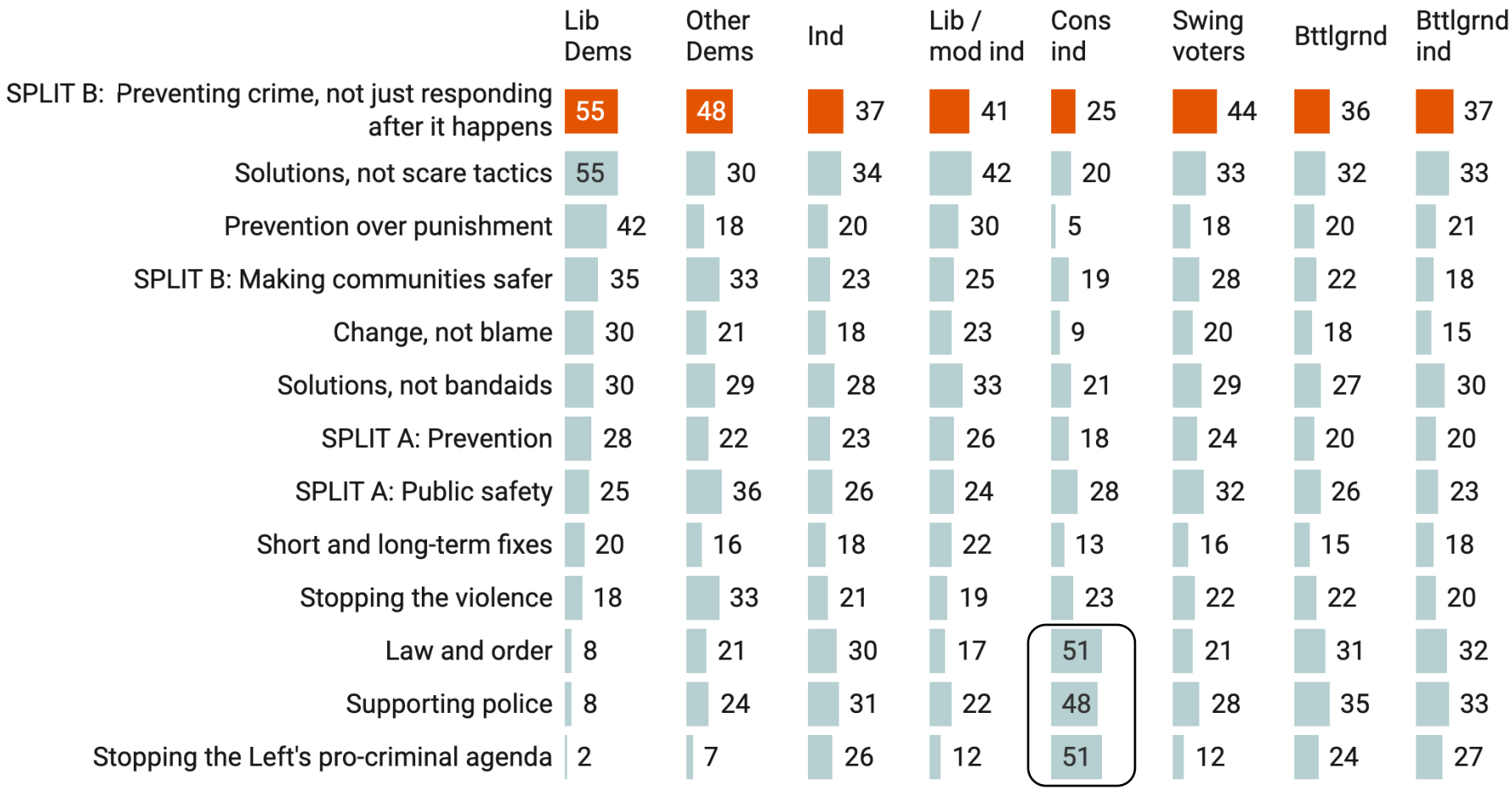
This is consistent across most segments – excluding conservatives and conservative independents.

Independent and Republican men are more likely than their women counterparts to say “law and order.” (See next few pages.)

Fill in the blank here. When it comes to crime, I want my elected officials to focus on _____ . Pick 3 of these that are closest to your views.

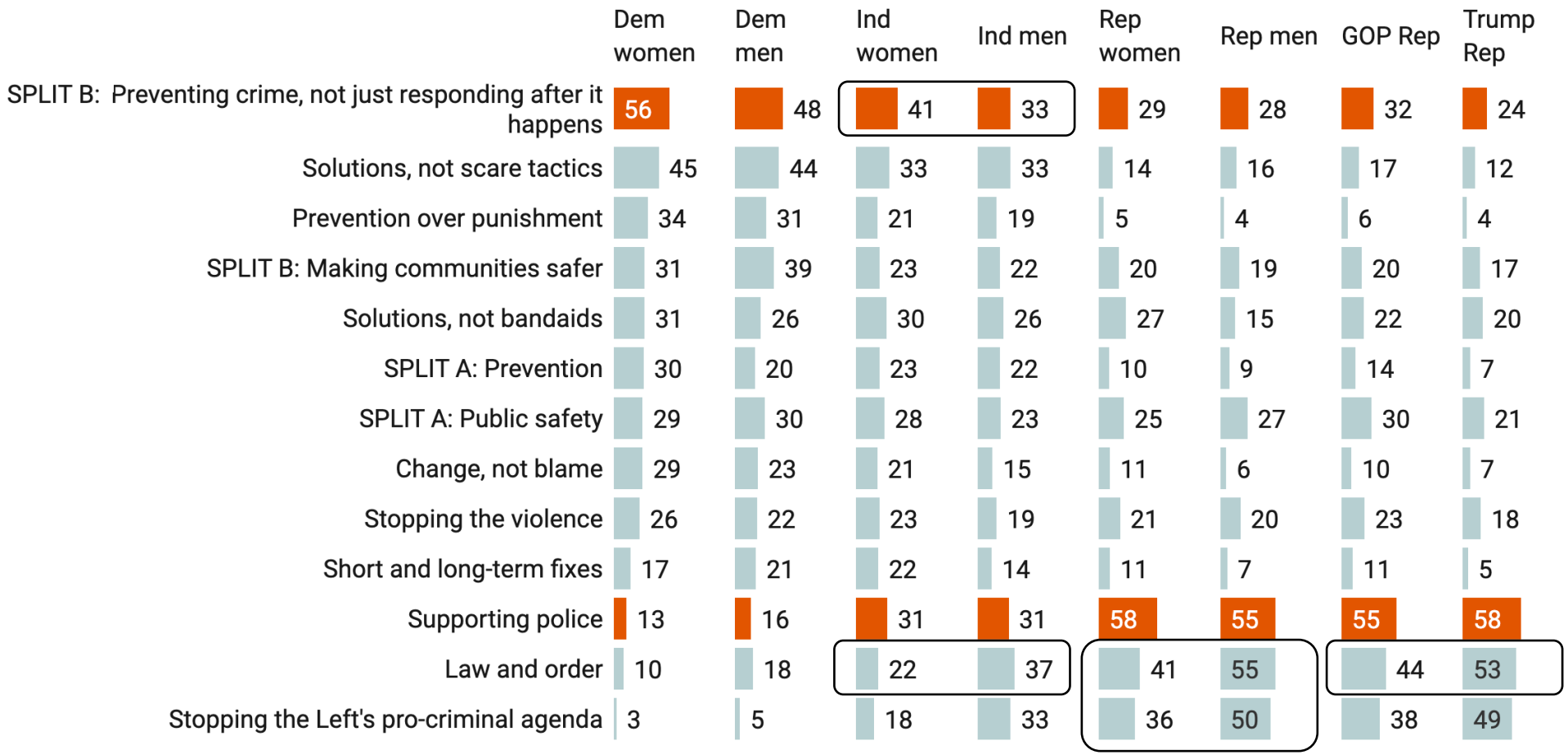
PERRY UNDEM

Fill in the blank here. When it comes to crime, I want my elected officials to focus on _____ . Pick 3 of these that are closest to your views.



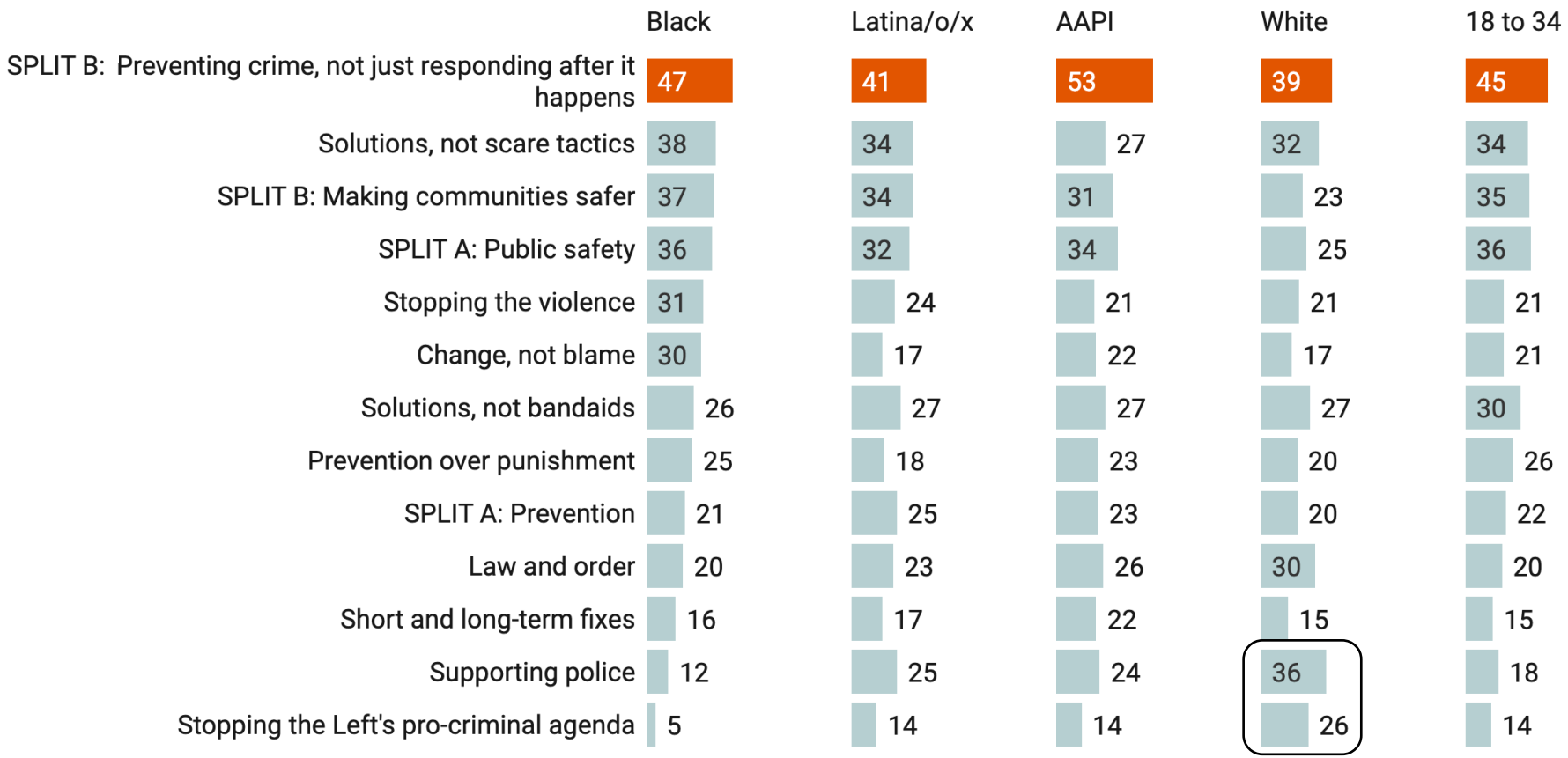
PERRY UNDEM

Fill in the blank here. When it comes to crime, I want my elected officials to focus on _____ . Pick 3 of these that are closest to your views.



PERRY UNDEM

Fill in the blank here. When it comes to crime, I want my elected officials to focus on _____ . Pick 3 of these that are closest to your views.



PERRY UNDEM

At the end of the survey, we explored voters' own language and views toward solutions to crime and public safety.

Randomly-selected, small subsets of respondents were given a "fill in the blank" exercise at the end of the survey.

HERE'S WHAT WE LEARNED

- Respondents were more likely to point to progressive / structural solutions when the question is framed as "making communities safer" v. "crime."
- On "making communities safer," structural solutions around jobs, schools, housing, and resources rise to the top among progressive themes.
- On "crime," prevention / root causes rises to the top of progressive solutions.
- A top conservative theme is tougher sentences and punishment – more so than police-related responses.

Try to fill in the blanks here – with your own words. “When it comes to making communities safer, we need _____, not _____ .”

We need _____:
Base n = 200

Progressive / structural themes	**46%**
Better jobs / job training	15%
Better education / safe schools	13%
Better trained police / good police / police who care	9%
Investment in communities / more resources	7%
Gun restrictions	7%
More housing / housing / homeless housing	6%
Higher minimum wage / living wage / reduce poverty	5%
Health care	4%
Equality / racial equity / economic equality	3%
Mental health treatment	3%
Fund crime prevention	2%
More access to food / healthy food	2%
Youth programs / programs for at-risk kids	2%
Reform police / criminal justice reform	2%
More opportunities generally	2%
Infrastructure / street investment / parks	1%
Conservative themes	**40%**
Tougher punishment / tough on crime	18%
More police / support police	17%
Better parenting / involvement	5%
More morals / religion / values	4%
Allow people to be armed/more guns	1%
Other	**17%**
Work together / unity	10%
Neighborhood watch / cameras / lighting	3%
Safe neighborhoods / safer streets / safety / security	3%
Stop drugs/reduce drug use	1%

PERRY UNDEM

Try to fill in the blanks here – with your own words. When it comes to making communities safer, we need _____, not _____ .

Not _____:
Base n = 200

Progressive / structural themes	**42%**
More police / militarization of police	14%
More guns	13%
Restrictive laws / interventions / overly punitive	11%
Racism /police stopping people based on color / hate	6%
Bad cops / "shoot first"/ covering up police wrongdoing	5%
Unaffordable housing / homelessness	1%
Unemployment / lack of job opportunities / low wages	1%
Conservative themes	**26%**
Weaker sentences / less prosecution / releasing criminals	17%
Defund police / saying police don't matter / less police	5%
Gun control / taking away guns/gun laws	4%
Protestors	1%
Other	**27%**
Blame / dividing people	6%
Denial / doing nothing	4%
Politicians / politicians who do nothing	4%
Unsupervised kids / unaccountable kids	3%
Division / isolation / political division	3%
Scaring people / scare tactics / fear	2%
Violence / crime	2%
Lying to the public / lying politicians	1%

PERRY UNDEM

Try to fill in the blanks here – with your own words. When it comes to crime, we need _____, not _____ .

We need _____:
Base n = 200

Progressive / structural themes	**41%**
Prevention / root causes	13%
Police improvement / better police	5%
Better education / schools	5%
Ban assault weapons / no guns / less access to guns	5%
More opportunities generally / invest in communities	4%
Social programs / services supports	4%
Drug rehabilitation / rehab / programs for 1st offenders	4%
Job opportunities / good jobs	3%
Equality / racial equity / reduce racism	3%
Increase minimum wage / higher wages / reduce poverty	2%
Criminal justice reform / systems / better courts / judges	2%
Mental health care / response	2%
Reduce homelessness / affordable housing	2%
Health care	1%
Conservative themes	**48%**
Tougher sentences / criminals kept in jail	27%
Respect / support / more police	18%
Tougher / stronger laws / enforce laws	8%
Religion / God in life / family values / morals in children	2%
Parents accountable / better parenting	1%
More people armed / guns	1%
Other	**6%**
Better leaders / term limits / hold politicians accountable	2%
Support youth outside of school	1%
Work / stand together / community involvement	1%
Safe neighborhoods / streets / safety / security	1%

PERRY UNDEM

Try to fill in the blanks here – with your own words. When it comes to crime, we need _____, not _____ .

Not _____:
Base n = 200

Progressive / structural themes	**33%**
Overcriminalization	18%
Police militarization / excessive force / abuse of power	6%
Police / more police / police funding	5%
Racism / hate / biased systems	3%
Listening to right wing / Republicans	1%
Conservative themes	**34%**
Weak prosecution / punishment / slap on the wrist	22%
Defund police	7%
Guns / lax gun laws / gun lobbies	6%
Listening to liberals / BLM	3%
Less police	3%
Crime tolerance / coddling criminals	2%
Take away guns / ban guns / more gun laws	1%
Funding for failed programs /social welfare	1%
Other	**12%**
Doing nothing	4%
Blaming others / poor / ethnic groups	3%
Politics / politicians blaming each other	3%
Scare tactics / fear	2%
Violence / death	1%

PERRY UNDEM

Try to fill in the blanks here - with your own words. When it comes to crime and making communities safer, I want my elected officials to _____ .

I want my elected officials to _____:

Base n = 200

Progressive / structural themes	**38%**
Reform / improve policing	10%
Gun control / make it harder to get guns	8%
Find solutions / find root causes	8%
Police should understand / listen to communities	8%
Invest in communities / assess community needs	6%
Provide education / better education	5%
Provide job opportunities / job training	4%
Programs to solve social problems / funds to help people	4%
Provide rehabilitation for young / 1st time / minor offenders	3%
Provide mental health care	3%
Provide housing / affordable housing	2%
Less racism / reform systems / enforce laws equally	2%
Provide / invest / fund health care	2%
Livable wages / raise minimum wage	1%

Conservative themes	**34%**
Tough on criminals, crime / do not release criminals	17%
Support police / fund police	16%
Protect 2nd amendment rights / allow gun access	2%

Other	**38%**
Do their job / keep promises / try harder	14%
Enforce / strengthen laws	8%
General fight / reduce / prevent crime	7%
Care / do what is best for us / be honest	5%
Work together / both sides listen / bipartisan effort	4%
Do not push agenda / not party politics / not partisan	3%

Thank you.