

Beyond Traditional Policing: Public Support for Co-Responder and Alternative Responder Models

**Analysis of Findings from a Study of Likely Illinois Voters
with Regional and Demographic Oversamples**

July 2023

Methodology

- Lake Research Partners, in consultation with The Tarrance Group, designed and administered this survey online. The survey reached n=556 Likely 2024 General Election voters in Illinois. The survey was conducted January 30th – February 9th, 2023.

- Respondents were drawn for the sample from an online panel and screened to be likely registered voters. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, race, region, education level, and party identification to reflect the profile of the likely 2024 electorate.

- In interpreting survey results, all sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error—i.e., the results of a survey may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population of likely voters were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon both the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a question. The margin of error for the base sample is +/-4.2% and larger for the oversample and subgroups.

Goals of this Research

With the support of The Joyce Foundation, Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group conducted groundbreaking research on Americans' attitudes toward public safety. Primary objectives included:

- Creating baseline understanding of Americans' opinions on the core causes of crime, the role of the police, and support for other first responders
- Assessing existing support for alternative crises response, such as co-responder and alternative-responder methods
- Categorizing incidents requiring first responders by the public's desire to see police respond vs alternative responders
- Evaluating public support for funding and sources for funding
- Identifying strong messaging narratives that resonate with Americans, and the messengers to best deliver said narratives

Key Findings: Broad, Intense Support for Public Safety Approaches beyond Traditional Policing

- Strong appetite among Illinois voters for implementing public safety strategies in addition to traditional policing.
 - These reforms are not seen as controversial or antagonistic to the police (who garner broad public support).
- Overwhelming majorities of voters agree that “both parties need to work together to address the **root causes of crime and violence.**”
- Overwhelming majorities also agree that “we need to do a better job matching the right professionals to each 9-1-1 call response.”
- Solid majorities believe “we should not use police officers for mental health distress calls.”

Key Findings: Partisan Differences, but Mostly by Degrees of Support

- Vulnerabilities in this data are limited. Broad support across partisan lines remains robust even after voters hear opposition arguments, but differences in *intensity* of support between Democrats, independents, and Republicans persist.
- Republicans' strong support of the police and higher concerns about crime lead to some skepticism about the concept of non-law enforcement professionals responding to 9-1-1 calls.
- Democrats and independents are more willing to accept the idea that police officers need assistance in all the matters they are asked to handle.

Key Findings: Messages and Messengers

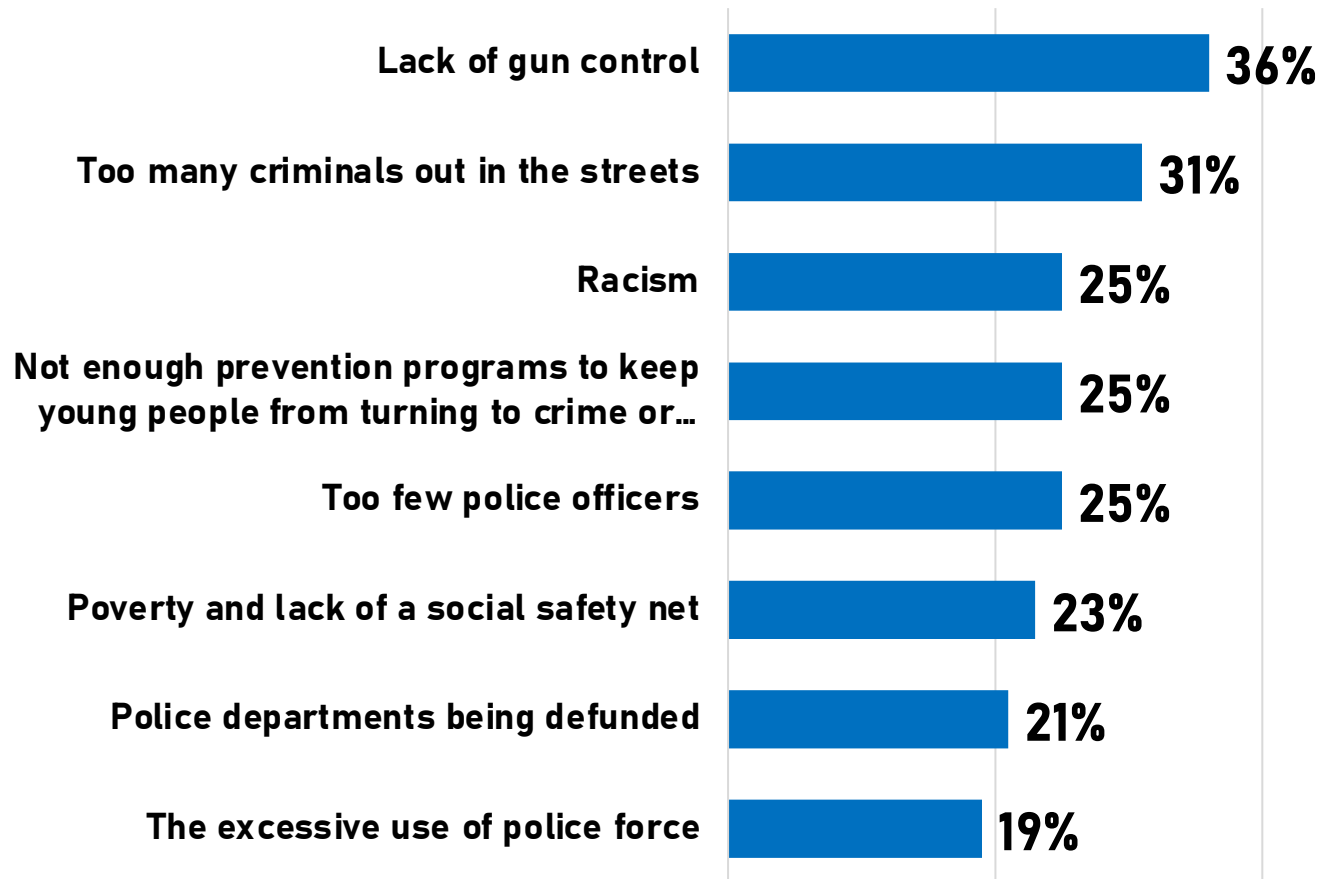
- Messages in support of co-responder and alternative responder models are persuasive.
- The most effective arguments:
 - Focus on the success of pilot programs across the country;
 - Position reforms as supporting police by ensuring they have the resources to do their jobs;
 - Support investing in our 9-1-1 dispatchers, paying them more, and giving them better training and more options to decide who responds to an emergency;
 - Frame these public safety reforms as a critical healthcare investment
- **Reform-oriented law enforcement leaders, alongside leaders in community-based anti-violence prevention and intervention services, will be important voices in articulating these messages and policy changes.**



Concerns Around Public Safety

Illinois voters believe the greatest barriers to improving public safety are lack of gun control, too many criminals in the streets, and racism. Many of these feature a deep partisan split.

Biggest Barrier to Improving Public Safety



	Dem	Ind	Rep	White	Black
Lack of gun control	49%	35%	18%	34%	39%
Too many criminals out in the streets	17%	40%	47%	33%	19%
Racism	36%	20%	13%	21%	39%
Not enough prevention programs to keep young people from turning to crime or...	27%	35%	21%	26%	26%
Too few police officers	16%	24%	38%	29%	12%
Poverty and lack of a social safety net	28%	32%	16%	23%	28%
Police departments being defunded	8%	18%	38%	25%	8%
The excessive use of police force	25%	16%	10%	15%	30%

Q31. Below is a list of some things people have said are major barriers to improving public safety in the United States. In your own opinion, what are the three the biggest barriers to public safety in the United States? [RANDOMIZE, ALLOW SELECTION OF UP TO THREE]

Voters want government to change how public safety is addressed in America, including addressing the root causes of crime and violence and doing a better job matching the right professionals to each 9-1-1 call response.

Statements About Community Safety

Both parties need to work together to address the root causes of crime and violence



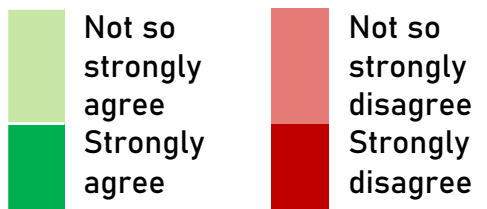
Both parties need to take police violence against American residents more seriously



We need to do a better job matching the right professional to each 9-1-1 call response



We should not use police officers for mental health distress calls



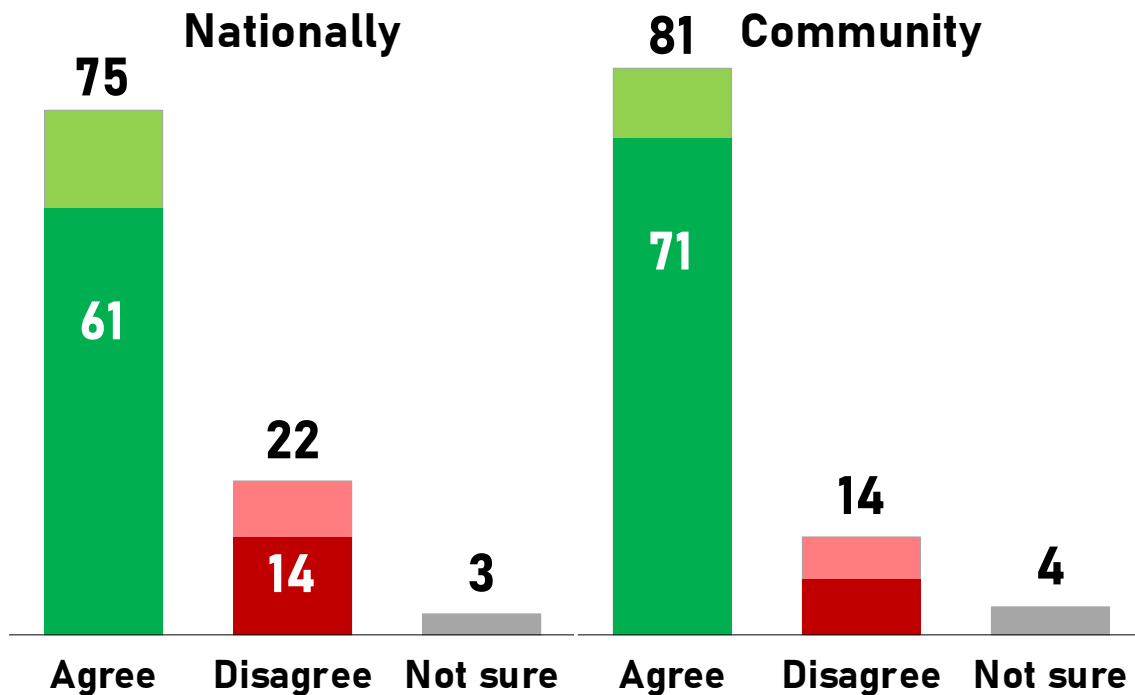
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 Q46. Below are some statements. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each statement.
 [RANDOMIZE]



First Responders

Voters support police both in their communities and nationally, but Illinoisans support police in their community more overall and with stronger intensity. White voters and Republicans are most likely to support the police both nationally and in their communities.

Perception of Police Officers

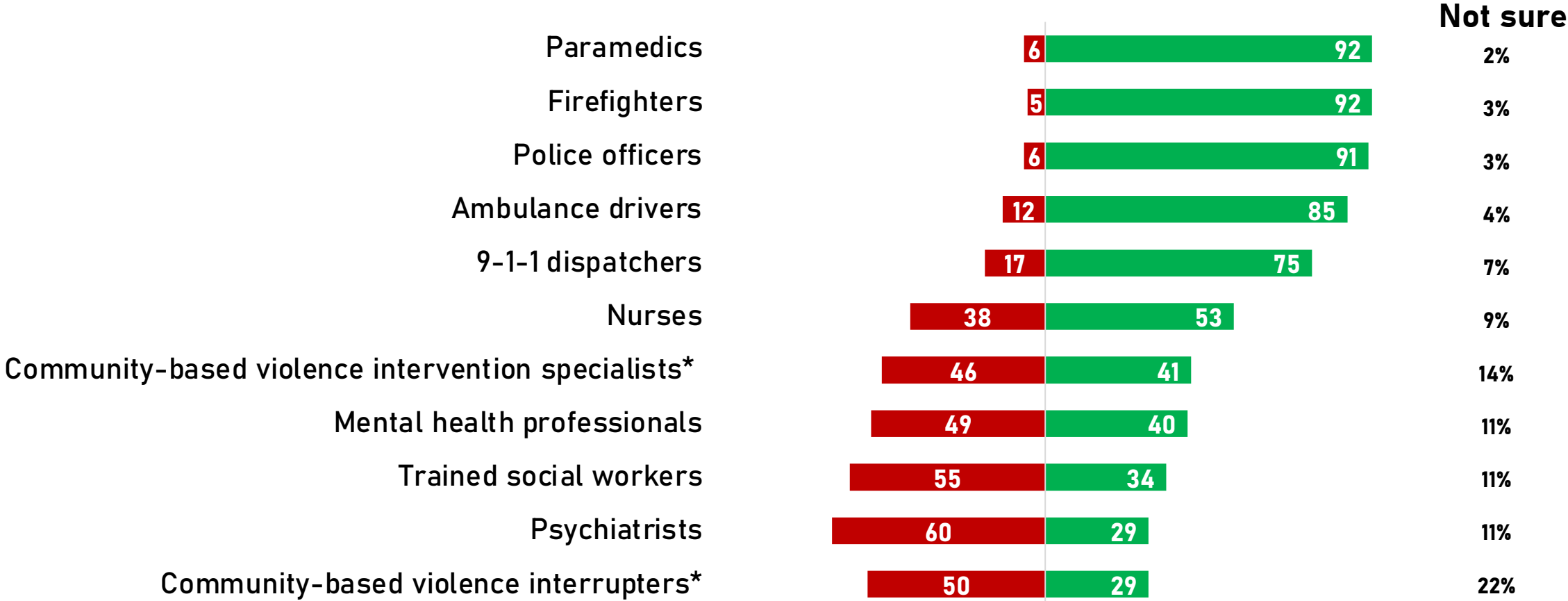


<i>Demos</i>	Nationally			Community		
	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
White alone	80%	16%	4%	88%	10%	2%
Black	47%	51%	3%	63%	28%	9%
Democrat	66%	31%	3%	76%	17%	7%
Indep/DK	71%	18%	11%	80%	12%	8%
Republican	87%	11%	2%	90%	9%	1%

Q49./50. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "the vast majority of police officers nationally/in your community want to do the right thing"?

Voters consider multiple professions to be first responders, including paramedics, firefighters, police officers, ambulance drivers, and 9-1-1 dispatchers.

Professions as First Responders

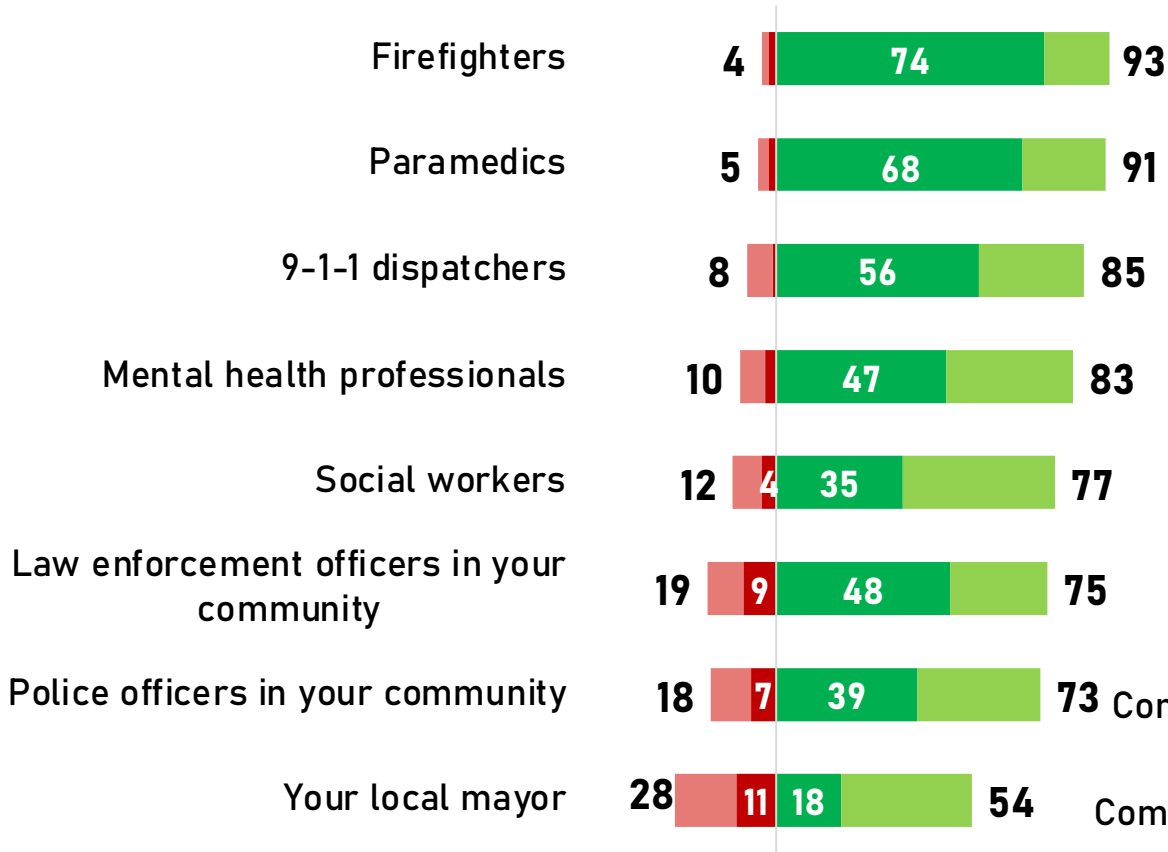


■ Yes, a first responder
■ No, not a first responder

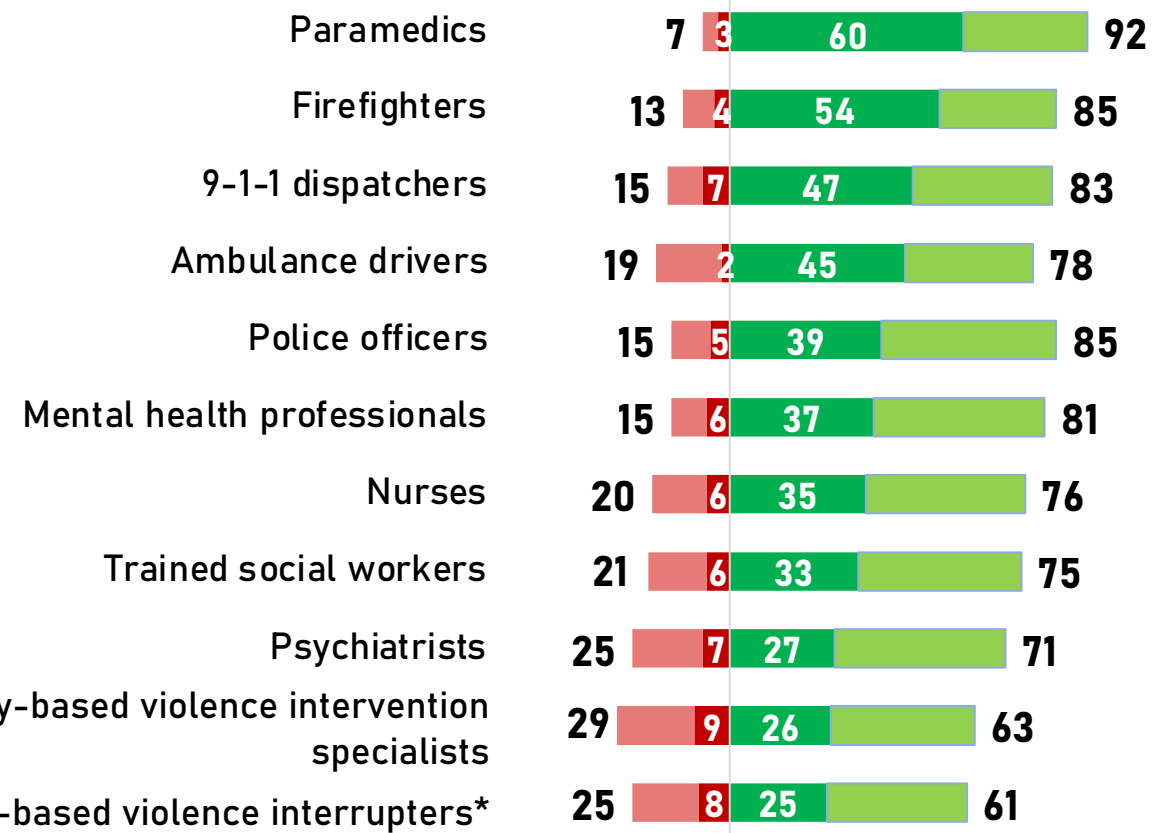
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 Q33. Please indicate whether or not you consider each of the following professions a first responder for various emergency situations: [RANDOMIZE LIST]

Voters have solidly favorable opinions of a wide range of first responders. When it comes to the perceived efficacy of various first responders, voters are most positive about paramedics, followed closely by firefighters and 9-1-1 dispatchers, though nearly two-thirds of voters also see CVI specialists as effective in responding to 9-1-1 calls.

Favorability of First Responders, Policies, and Groups



Effectiveness in Responding to 9-1-1 Calls

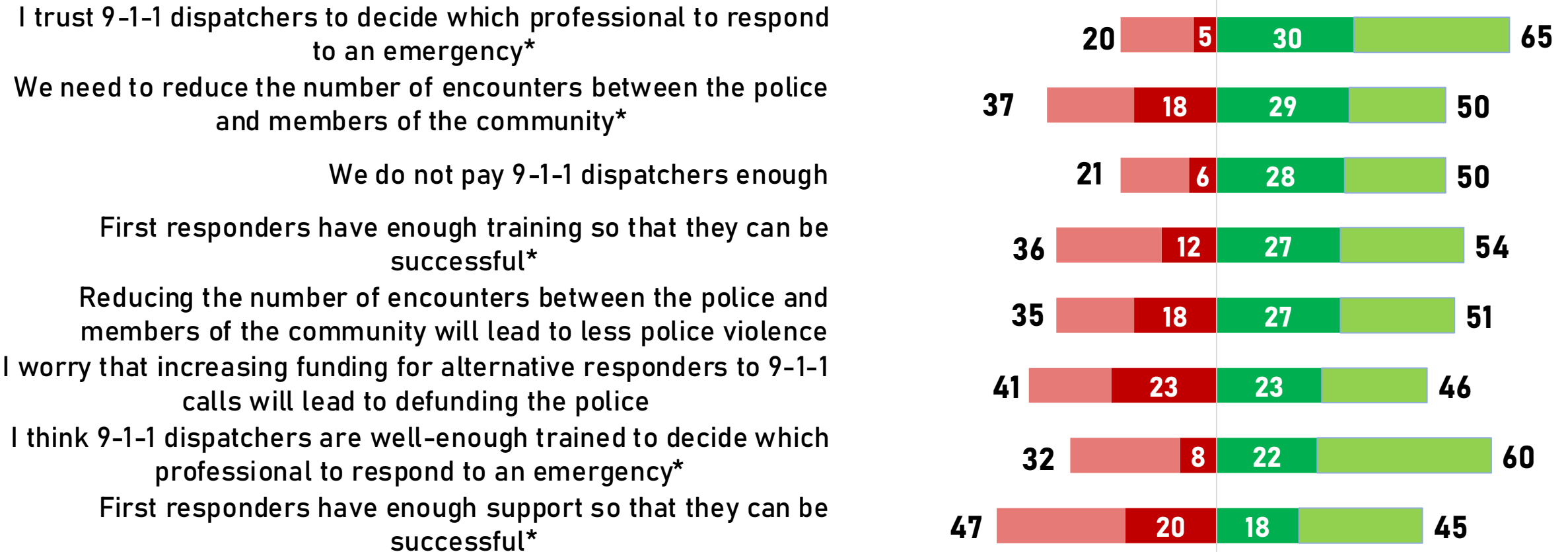


■ Somewhat favorable
■ Very favorable
■ Somewhat unfavorable
■ Very unfavorable

■ Somewhat effective
■ Very effective
■ Not very effective
■ Not at all effective

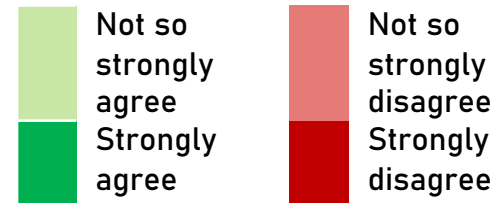
A majority of Illinois voters trust 9-1-1 dispatchers and believe they are well-enough trained but are split about whether first responders have enough support so that they can feel successful.

Statements About Community Safety



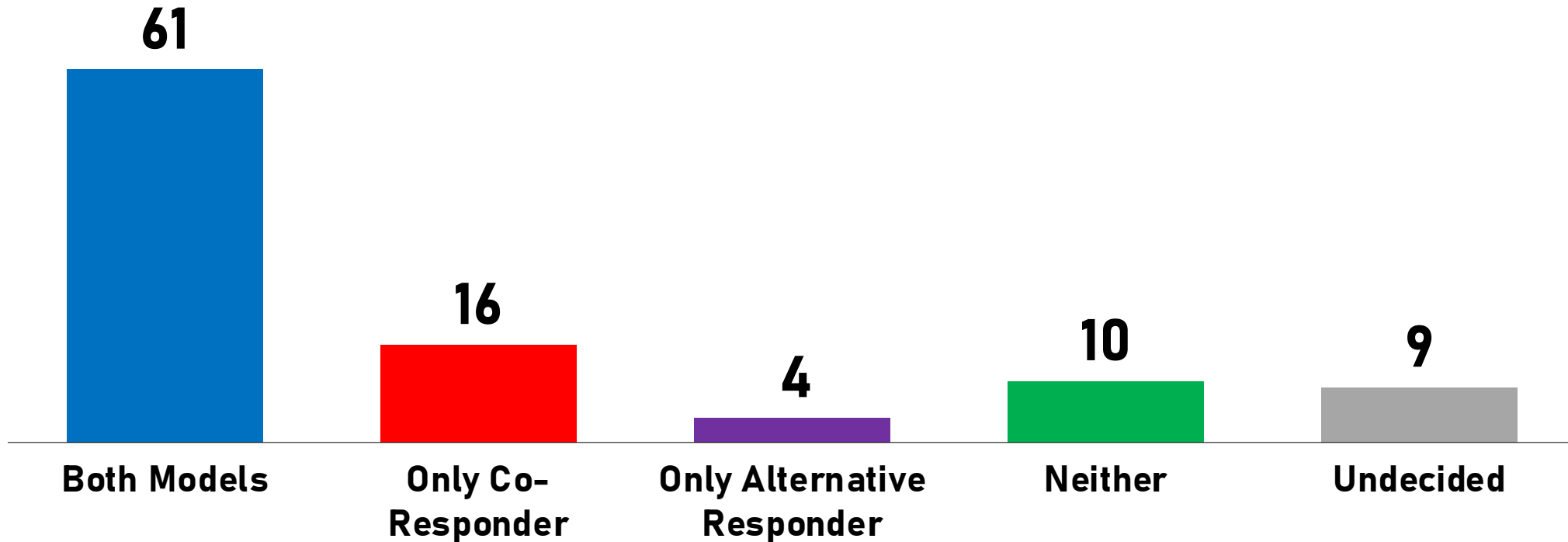
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Q46. Below are some statements. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each statement. [RANDOMIZE]



Six-in-ten voters favor a combination of the co-responder and alternative responder models as additional approaches to traditional policing. One-in-five voters expresses a preference for one model over the other, though just 10% prefer neither.

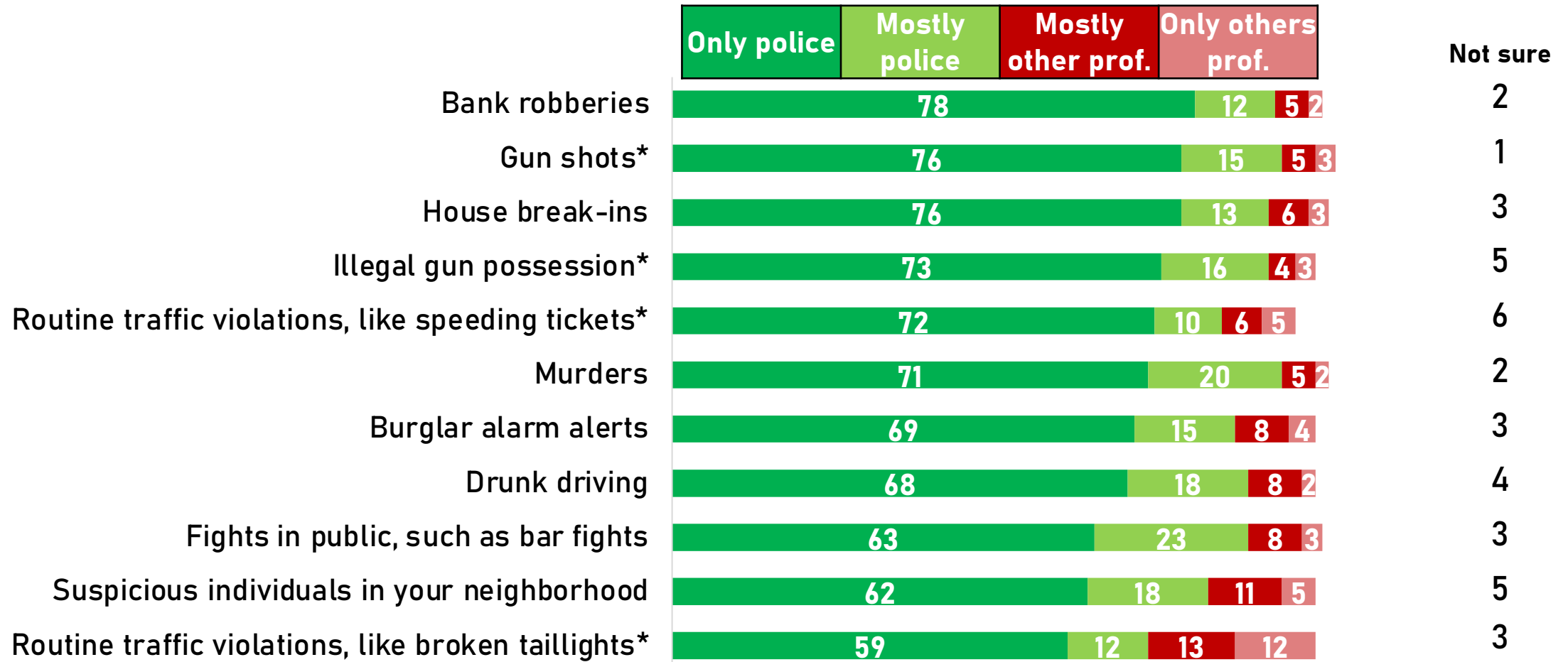
Support for Models of Responding



Q29. At this point in the survey, you have read about two possible additional approaches to traditional policing, [ROTATE] _co-responder models, where professionals, like mental health professionals, trained social workers, and/or community-based violence intervention specialists respond to certain 9-1-1 calls along with police officers, AND _alternative responder models, where professionals, like mental health professionals, trained social workers, and/or community-based violence intervention specialists respond to certain non-violent 9-1-1 calls in place of police officers. Which of the following options would you say best describes your own points of view, do you prefer:

Voters believe that a “police only” response is necessary for a wide variety of incidents, including bank robberies, gun shots, and house break-ins, but also for incidents like fights in public and routine traffic violations.

Preferred Responders to Incidents – Police Preferred First Tier

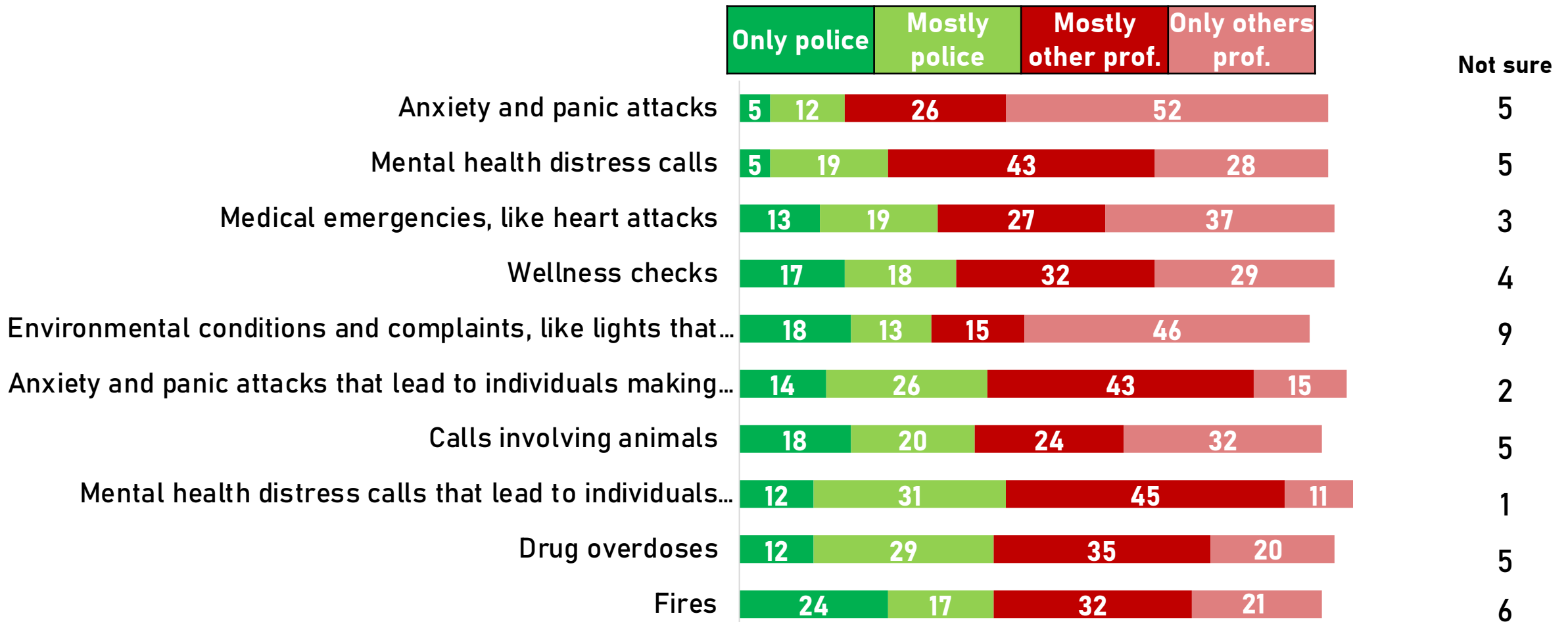


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Q55. Below are some types of incidents and emergencies for which people may call 9-1-1. Please indicate who would be best to respond to each type of incident when someone calls 9-1-1:

Voters feel the police are least needed for anxiety and panic attacks, mental health distress calls, and medical emergencies, like heart attacks.

Preferred Responders to Incidents – Other Professionals Preferred First Tier



* indicates split sampled item

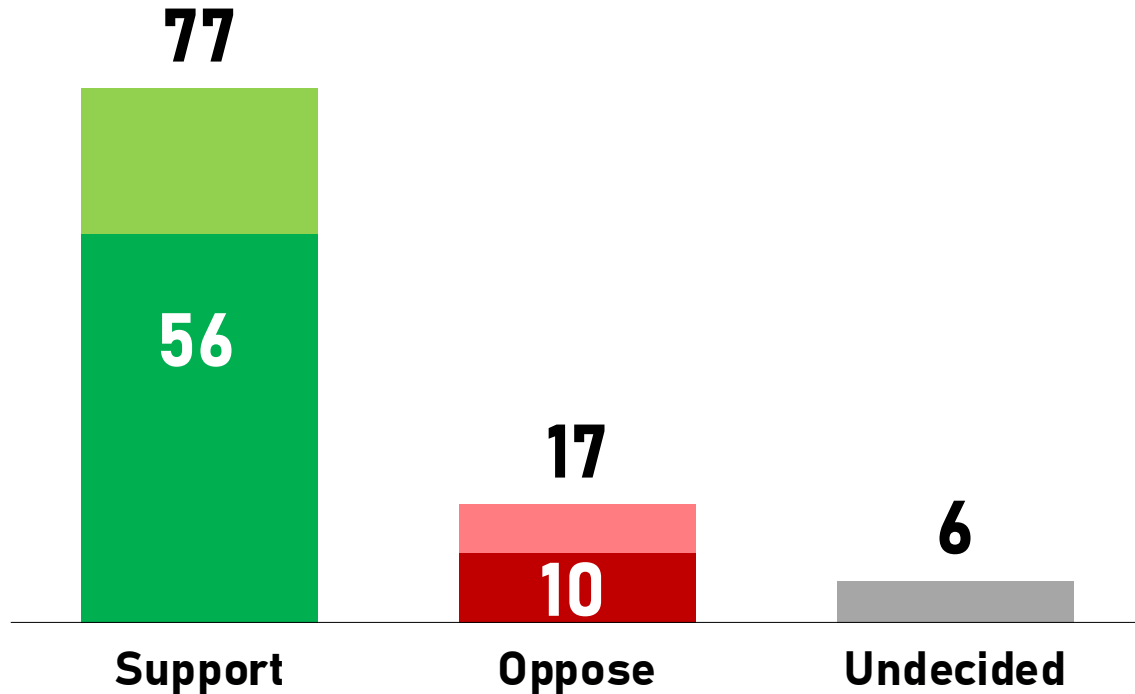
Q55. Below are some types of incidents and emergencies for which people may call 9-1-1. Please indicate who would be best to respond to each type of incident when someone calls 9-1-1:

An illustration of a diverse group of approximately 15 people of various ethnicities, ages, and abilities standing in a line. The group includes a woman with long red hair, a man with a beard, a woman in a wheelchair, a man in a suit, a woman in overalls, a woman with a large afro, a man holding a folder, a woman with a bun, a man with a white beard, a woman with sunglasses, and a man in a suit. The background is a simple grey with a large, light green abstract shape behind the group.

Support for Investing in Additional Approaches to Traditional Policing

More than three-quarters of Illinois voters support investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other professionals—like mental health professionals, trained social workers, and/or community-based violence intervention specialists—either along with police officers, or, for some non-violent calls, in place of police officers. Support is broad-based and intense, though women, Democrats, and Black voters are among the strongest supporters.

Support for Investing in Additional Approaches to Traditional Policing: Initial Ballot



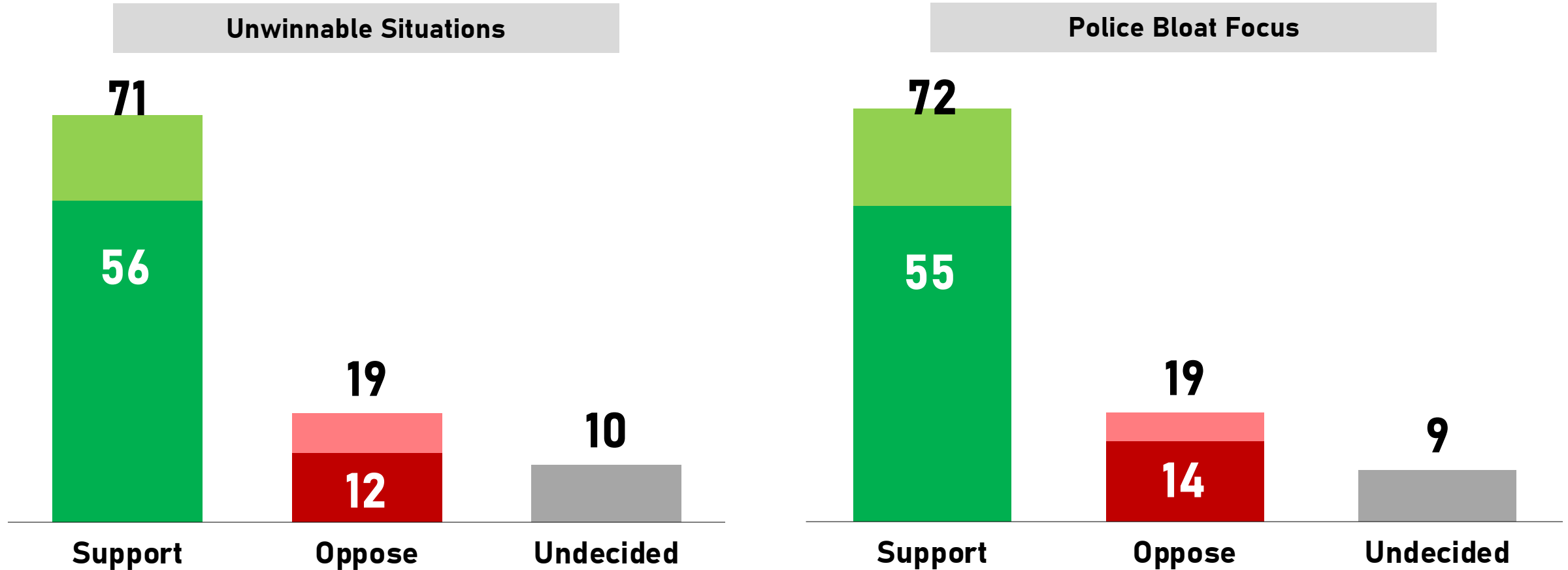
<i>Demos</i>	Support	Oppose	Undecided
White alone	74%	19%	6%
Black	89%	5%	6%
Democrat	93%	4%	3%
Indep/DK	66%	21%	13%
Republican	58%	35%	8%
Women	80%	12%	7%
Men	73%	23%	4%

Q20. SSE Would you [ROTATE] _support OR _oppose investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other professionals—like mental health professionals, trained social workers, and/or community-based violence intervention specialists—either along with police officers, or for some non-violent calls, in place of police officers, or are you undecided?

Engaged Debate

UNWINNABLE SITUATIONS	POLICE BLOAT FOCUS
<p>[PRO-REFORM] (Some/Other) people say we're spending hundreds of billions of dollars every year to continue the same failed approach to public safety. We must stop putting police in unwinnable situations, having them respond to crises that other professionals can handle better. A smarter approach better protects communities and the police who serve them. Across the country, law enforcement and community leaders have been implementing pilot programs that use a range of trained professionals who work with members of our communities and respond to certain emergencies—and seeing dramatic decreases in crime. It's time we started implementing these proven solutions at the national level.</p>	<p>[PRO-REFORM] (Some/Other) people say we're spending hundreds of billions of dollars every year on the same failed approach. Police budgets nationwide are only expanding, but that money's being used to buy up military equipment and massively swell police PR departments. Instead of improving public safety, civilians are dying in record numbers and the "clearance rate" for solving murders has fallen from more than 90% a few decades ago to just 50% today. This approach isn't sustainable and will never work. It's time we started implementing proven solutions, including deploying a range of trained professionals and violence prevention specialists to respond to certain emergencies.</p>
<p>[ANTI-REFORM] (Some/other) people say that these new programs are how socialist Democrats will defund the police. We need police officers to protect us, but in Democrat-run sanctuary cities, like Portland, San Francisco and Chicago, local socialist leaders have all implemented these programs and the results are disastrous. They are Democrats coming to take your guns and turn your neighborhood into another Detroit, with rioting, murder and lawlessness. Paramedics who respond to emergencies get killed and violent criminals get let free when we don't let police respond to crime. This is the wrong approach to making our communities safer.</p>	

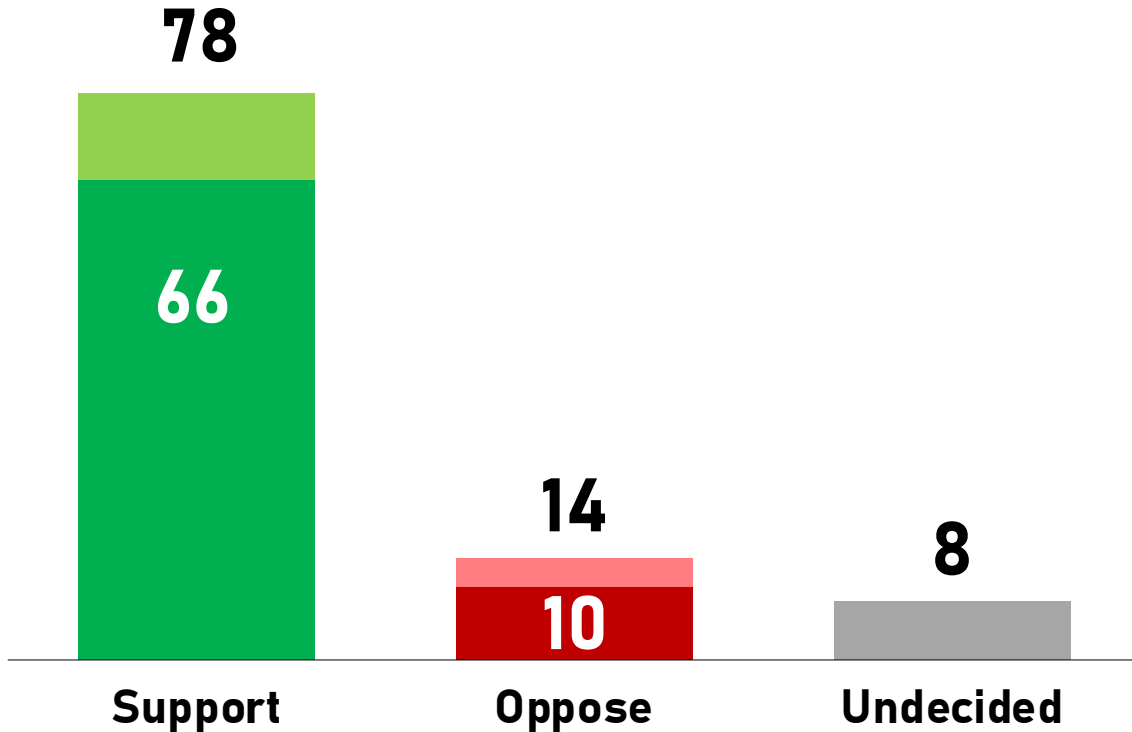
After voters read simulated debates which include the opposition's argument against reform as well as two different messages in support of reform, there are almost identical responses and very little movement.



Q56/59. Sometimes over the course of a survey like this, people change their mind. Would you [ROTATE] _support OR _oppose investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other professionals—like mental health professionals, trained social workers, and/or community-based violence intervention specialists—either along with police officers, or for some non-violent calls, in place of police officers, or are you undecided?

By the end of the survey, after reading a long battery of positive messages, over three-quarters of voters are in support—including a solid two-thirds majority who feel that way strongly. Democrats and Black voters are most strongly in support.

Final Ballot Support for Investing in Additional Approaches to Traditional Policing

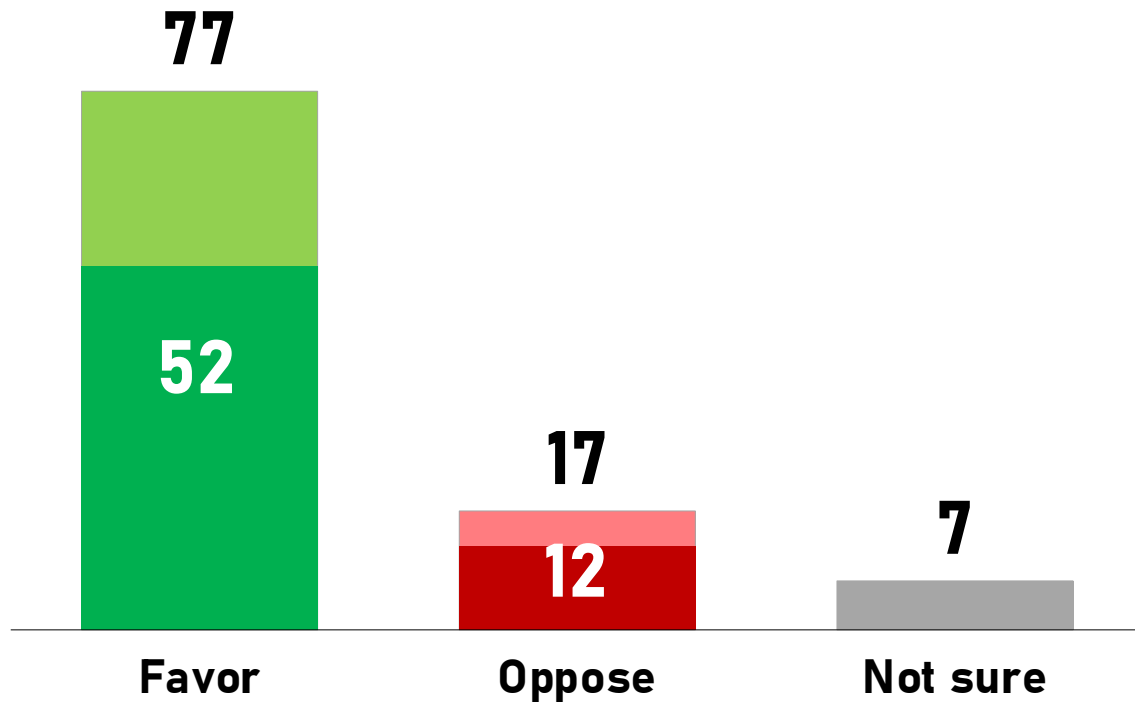


<i>Demos</i>	Support	Oppose	Undecided
White alone	75%	17%	8%
Black	84%	7%	9%
Democrat	90%	4%	5%
Indep/DK	72%	17%	12%
Republican	65%	26%	10%

Q63. One last time. Would you [ROTATE] _support OR _oppose investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other professionals—like mental health professionals, trained social workers, and/or community-based violence intervention specialists—either along with police officers, or for some non-violent calls, in place of police officers, or are you undecided?

There is also strong support for state and local governments to use public funds increase the usage of additional approaches to police when responding to 9-1-1 calls. Over half of voters strongly favor this proposal, and there is majority support across racial and partisan lines.

Government Funding for Additional Approaches to Police Responding to 9-1-1 Calls



<i>Demos</i>	Support	Oppose	Undecided
White alone	76%	18%	7%
Black	81%	13%	6%
Democrat	87%	8%	5%
Indep/DK	70%	11%	19%
Republican	66%	28%	6%

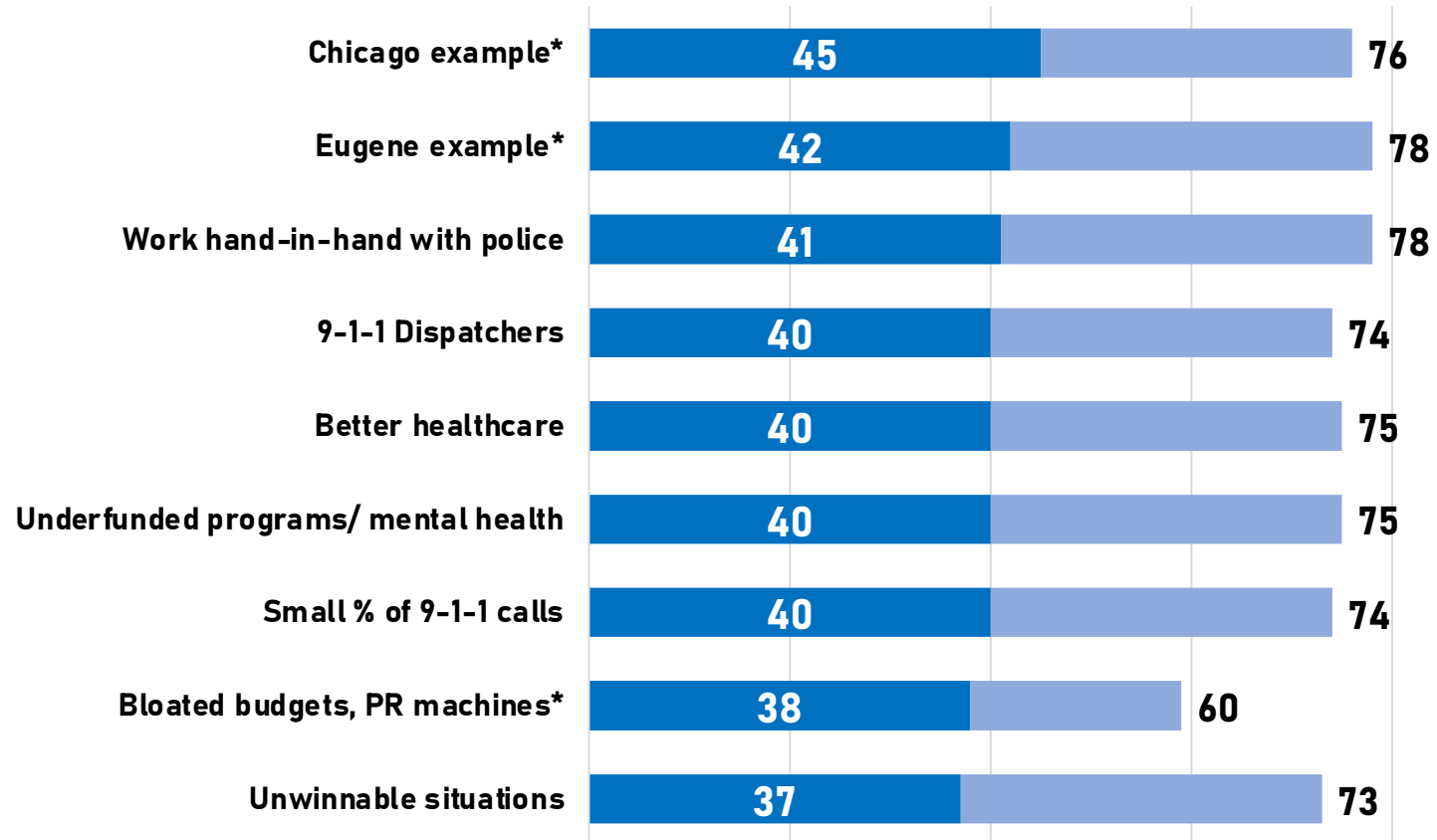
Q39. Would you favor or oppose the government providing funds for state and local governments to increase the number of additional approaches to police responding to 9-1-1 calls?



Messaging and Messengers

The top messages highlight the success of these public safety reforms in bringing crime down in different pilot projects. Voters are also persuaded by messages centering on working hand-in-hand with police, investing in 9-1-1 dispatchers, and a message that links public safety to healthcare.

First Tier Positive Messaging



* indicates split sampled item

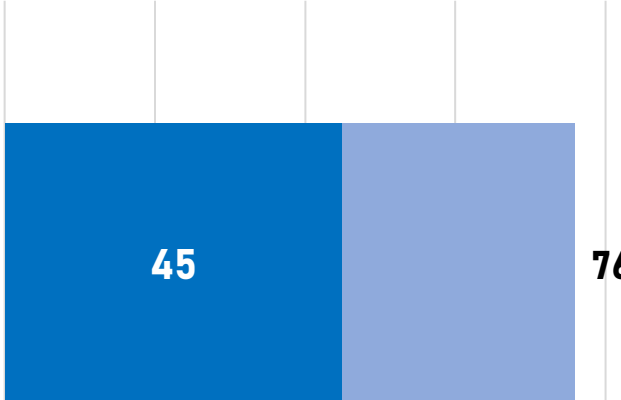
Q62. Now you will read some statements people have made about investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other trained professionals, either along with police officers, or for some non-violent calls, in place of police officers. Please select whether each statement, assuming it is true, is a VERY convincing, SOMEWHAT convincing, NOT TOO convincing, or NOT AT ALL convincing reason to support this proposal.

Somewhat Convincing

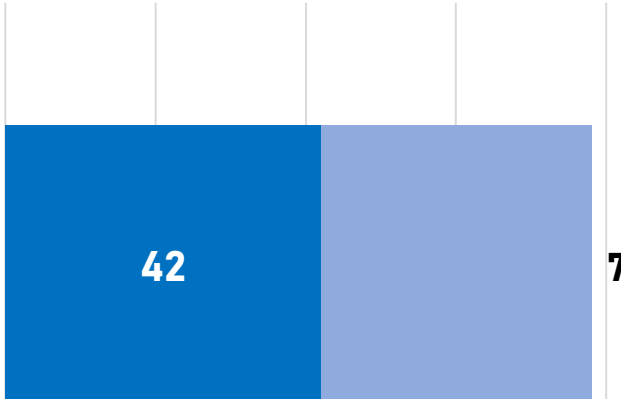
Very Convincing

Language of Top Arguments: Eugene, OR & Chicago, IL Examples

Chicago started a pilot program so that when individuals experience a mental health crisis, they are assisted by teams of behavioral health professionals, with resources to address their unmet health and social needs. The program has responded to hundreds of calls so far, helping people without resulting in any arrests and no uses of force. We need to expand programs like this across the country, so our communities can become safer and more Americans can get the help they deserve.

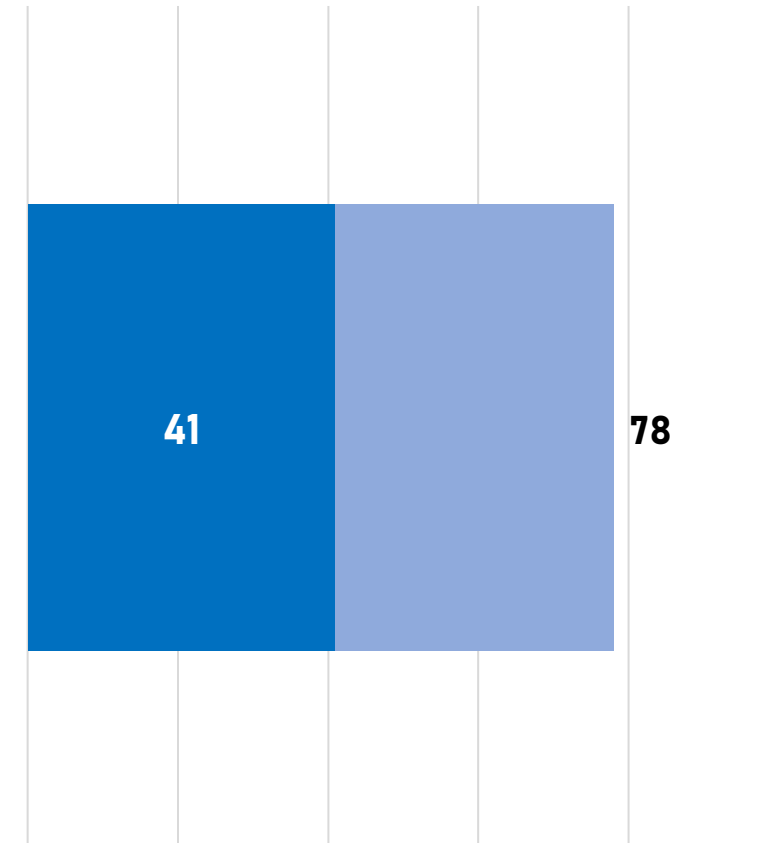


Eugene, Oregon has a community responder program that has been operating for more than 30 years, where mobile crisis intervention teams are dispatched after a person calls 9-1-1. Eugene's 24/7 service includes trauma-informed de-escalation, welfare checks, first aid and non-emergency medical care, suicide prevention and intervention, housing crisis assistance, and crisis counseling. Thousands of people have gotten the help they need in Eugene, and we should expand it so people across America get the same services.



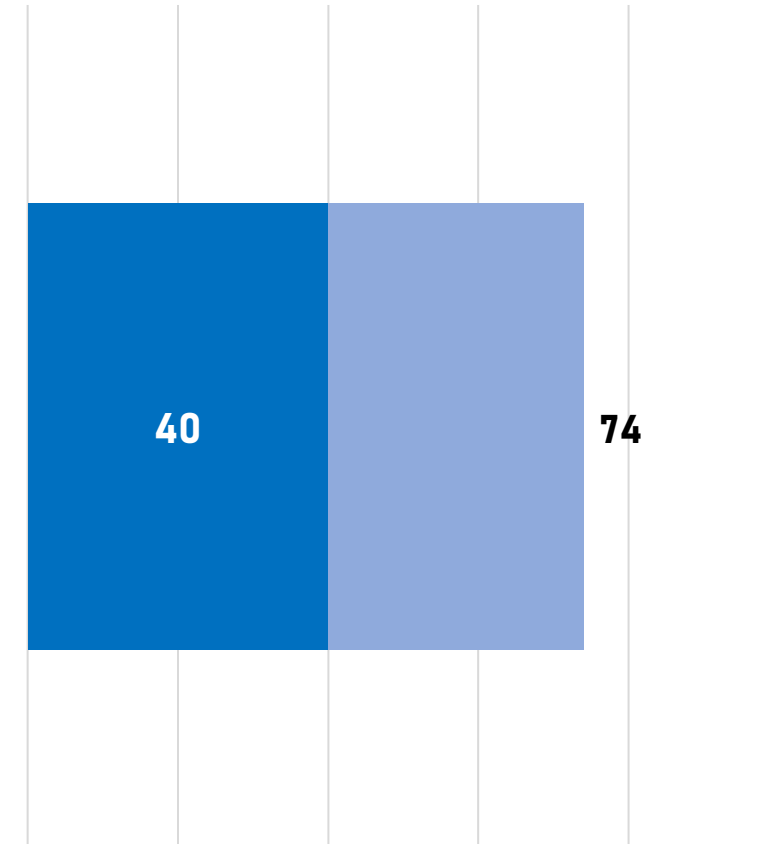
Language of Top Arguments: Work Hand-in-hand With Police

Everyone has the right to feel safe in their communities. We need to support leaders who will work hand-in-hand with the police and communities to reduce crime. We need leaders that understand the challenges police officers face and how to support them to make our communities safer. We need to support leaders who support expanding additional approaches to police responding to 9-1-1 calls to make sure law enforcement has the resources, time and money necessary to do their jobs.



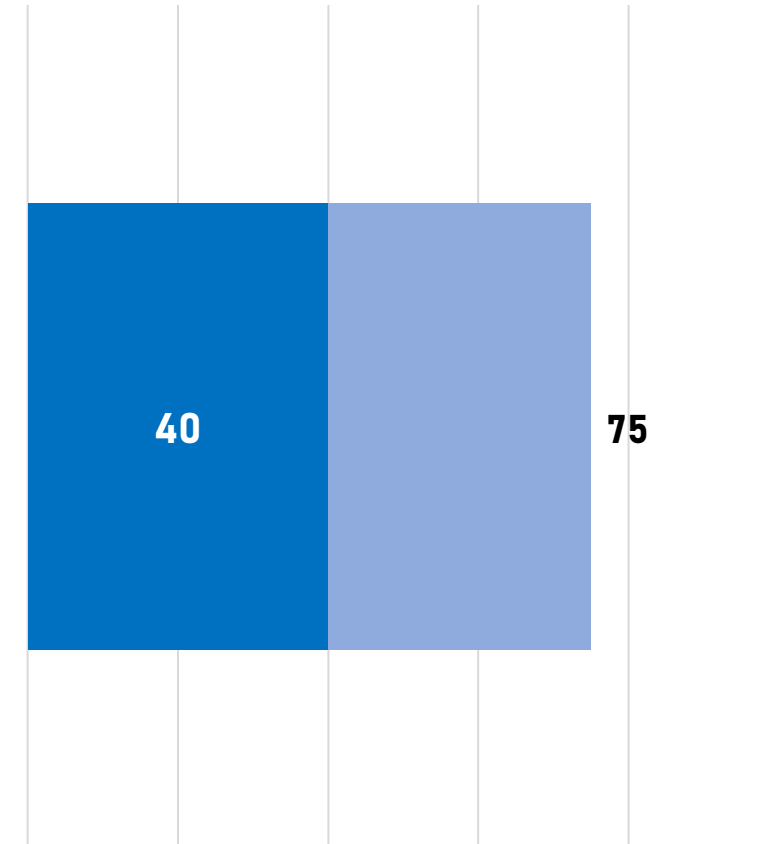
Language of Top Arguments: 9-1-1 Dispatchers

9-1-1 dispatchers are often paid below a living wage. They do not get the training required for such an important job and are left with few tools at their disposal besides sending police to respond to situations that they are not best equipped or trained for. We must change how we respond to emergencies, including by investing in our 9-1-1 dispatchers, paying them more, giving them better training and more options to decide who responds to an emergency.



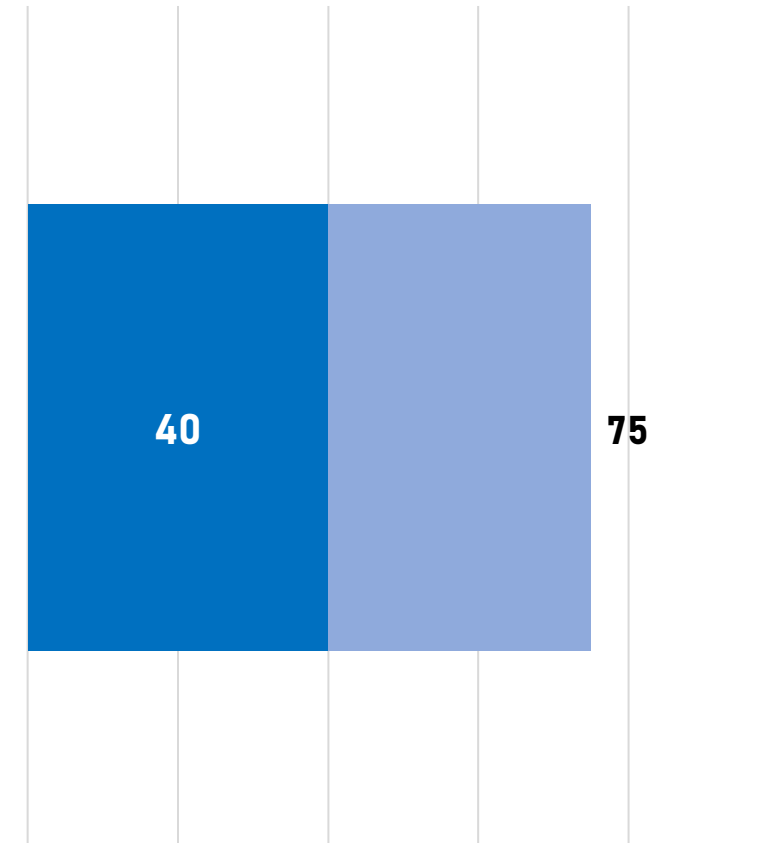
Language of Top Arguments: Better Healthcare

Every American deserves quality, affordable healthcare. Part of that is having good hospitals, doctors, and reliable care. Part of that is also having safe communities to live in. Funding additional approaches to police responding to 9-1-1 calls, so victims of violence can see a paramedic or mental health professional right away, is a necessary healthcare investment. Preventing people from being injured, sick or killed and improving our mental health is one of the greatest healthcare investments we as Americans can make.



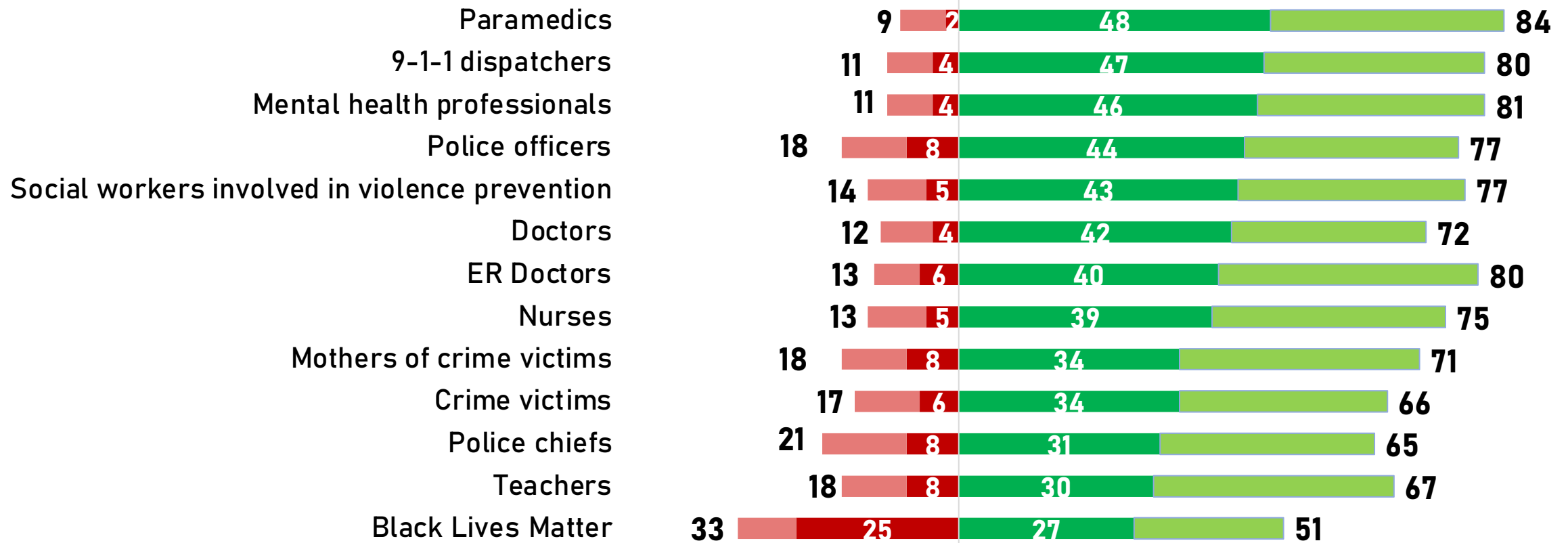
Language of Top Arguments: Underfunded Programs/ Mental Health

Mental healthcare is healthcare, but mental health services have long been underfunded and disinvested. With rates of depression, substance abuse, gun violence, and suicide at high levels over the last few years, America will need to make significant investments in mental health. Expanding additional approaches to police responding to 9-1-1 calls, including social workers and mental health professionals, is an investment that will help reduce violence and save countless American lives.



The professionals who are best positioned to carry the messages include a mix of paramedics, 9-1-1 dispatchers, mental health professionals, police officers, social workers involved in violence prevention, and doctors.

Messengers for Alternative Response Programs – Top Tier



* indicates split sampled item

Q67. Below is a list of individuals and groups who might choose to SUPPORT the proposal to fund alternative response programs you read about. For each, please indicate if their support would make you much more likely, somewhat more likely, much less likely or somewhat less likely to support federal funds going towards alternatives to police responding to 9-1-1 calls. [RANDOMIZE]

■ Somewhat more likely
■ Much more likely

■ Somewhat less likely
■ Much less likely

Recommended future research

Qualitative research could fill in some of the gaps and answer questions that can't easily be asked through survey work, including:

- Taking more time to introduce the concept and alternative responder and co-responder methods and working with voters to simplifying the language and improve understanding of the roles.
- Why voters support such a wide range of 9-1-1 calls to be only or mostly responded to by the police, and the thought process behind the decision-making of which calls should be matched with which responders.
- Improving intensity of support behind the strongest messages.

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