

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

**Analysis of Findings from a Study of Likely Minnesota 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=520 Likely 2024 General Election voters in Minnesota. 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 +/-4.3% 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 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 911 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

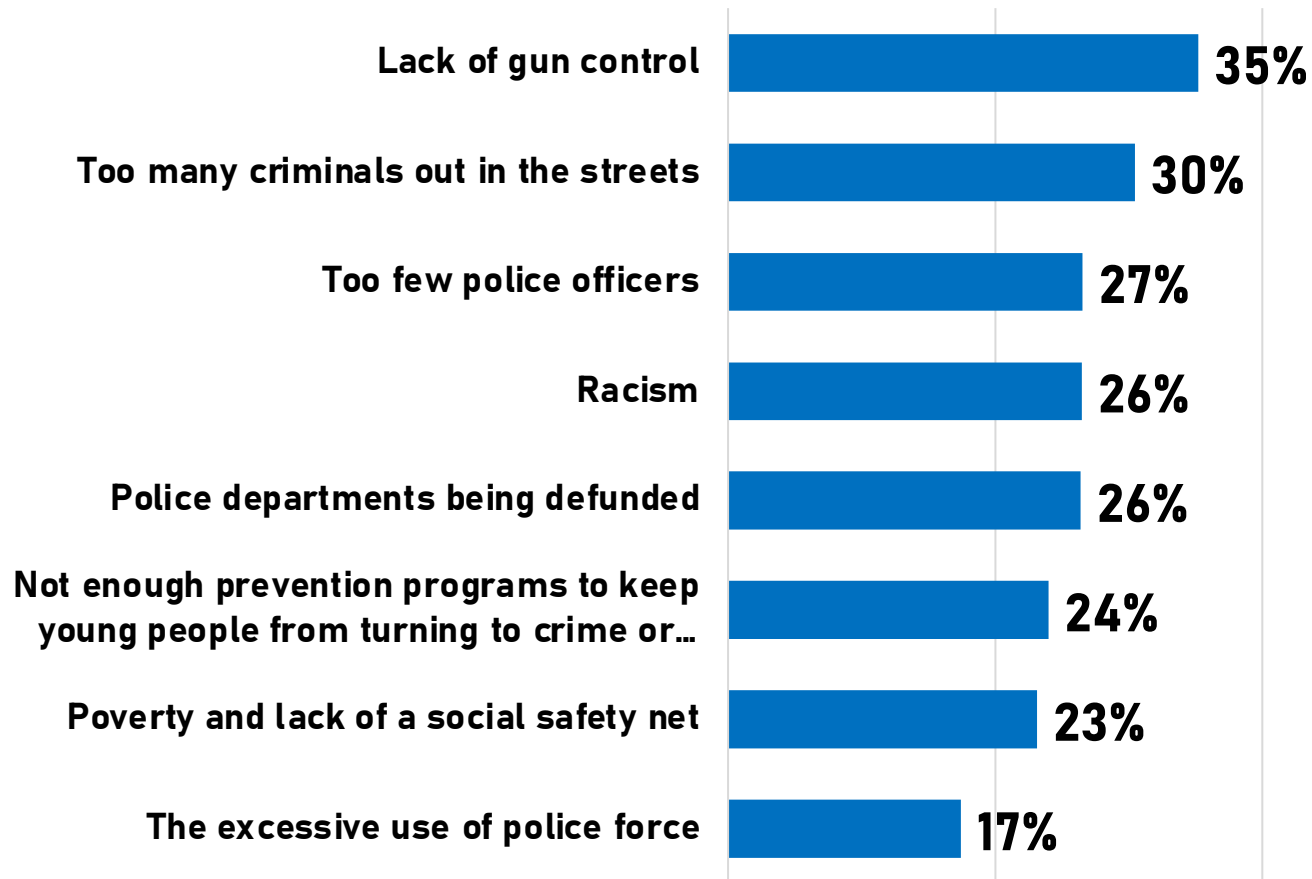
- Messages in support of co-responder and alternative responder models are persuasive.
- The most effective arguments:
 - Underscore just how few 911 calls are for violent emergencies—and that using other professionals in non-violent situations can free up officers to respond to violent crimes;
 - Focus on the success of pilot programs across the country;
 - Position reforms as supporting police by ensuring they have the resources to do their jobs;
 - Call for reimagining policing so that officers are no longer being dispatched to resolve situations better handled by health and social service professionals, like mental health emergencies
- **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

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

Biggest Barrier to Improving Public Safety

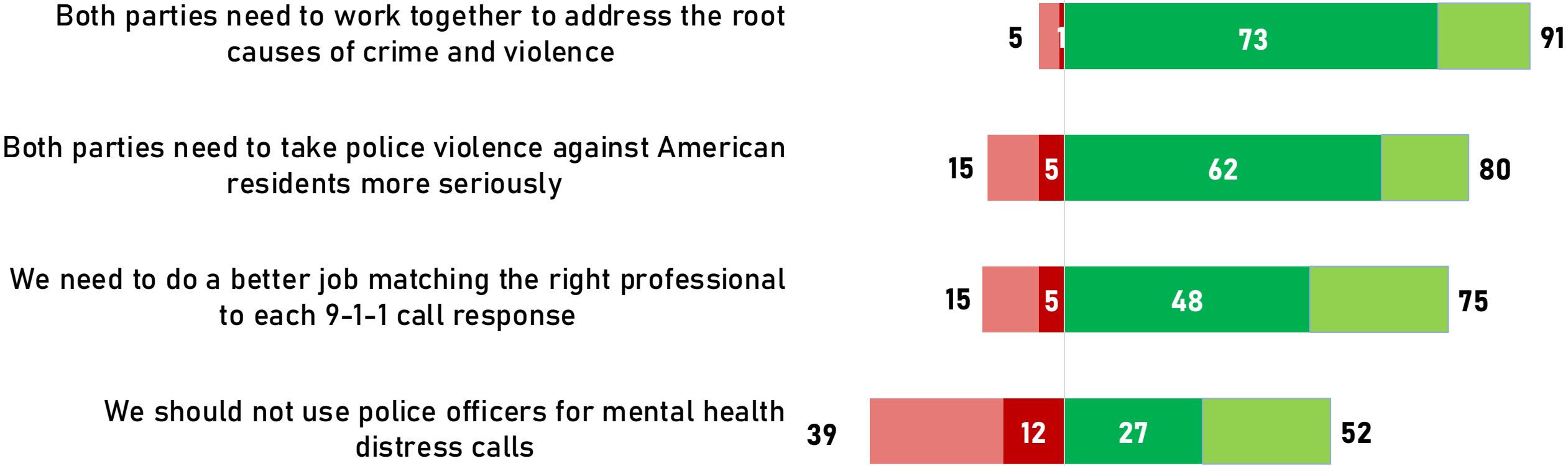


	Dem	Ind	Rep	White	POC
Lack of gun control	57%	26%	17%	35%	38%
Too many criminals out in the streets	15%	28%	49%	32%	24%
Too few police officers	13%	23%	43%	29%	10%
Racism	38%	29%	13%	24%	43%
Police departments being defunded	9%	19%	47%	28%	16%
Not enough prevention programs to keep young people from turning to crime or...	23%	20%	27%	25%	14%
Poverty and lack of a social safety net	31%	26%	15%	23%	26%
The excessive use of police force	25%	20%	8%	17%	22%

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



■ Not so strongly agree
■ Strongly agree
■ Not so strongly disagree
■ Strongly disagree

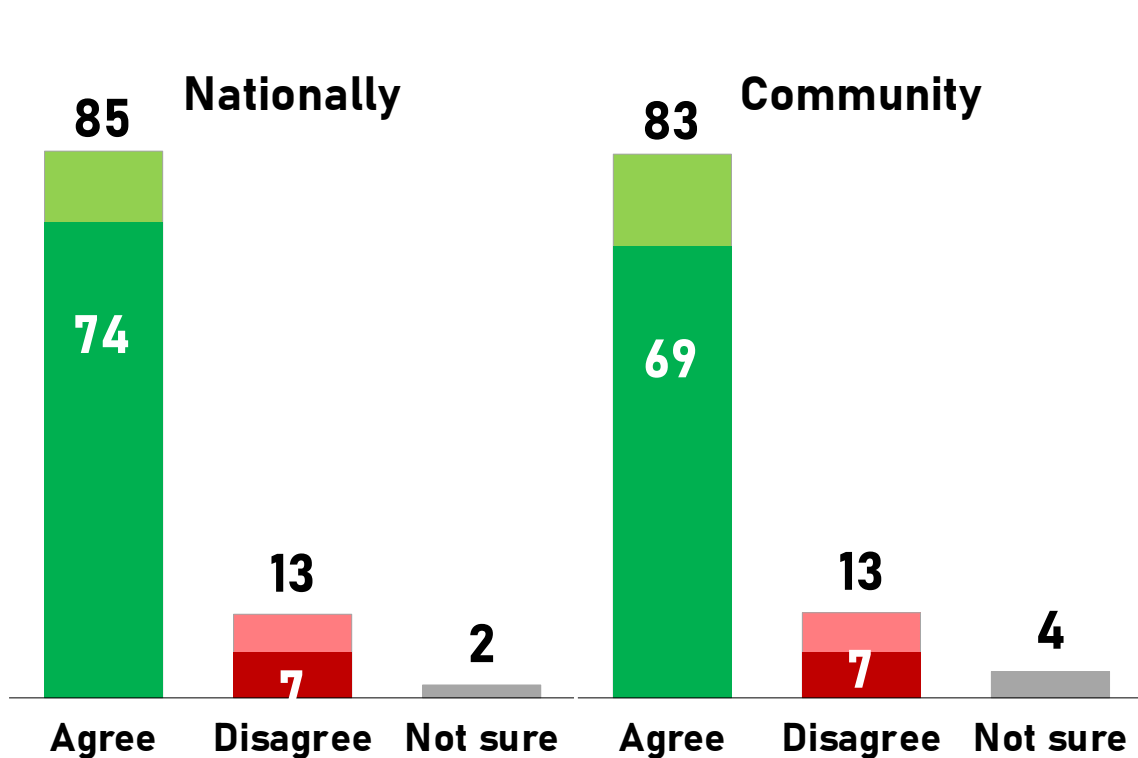
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 Q46. Below are some statements. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each statement.
 [RANDOMIZE]



First Responders

Voters support police both in their communities and nationally, and with little differentiation. White voters and Republicans most strongly support the police.

Perception of Police Officers

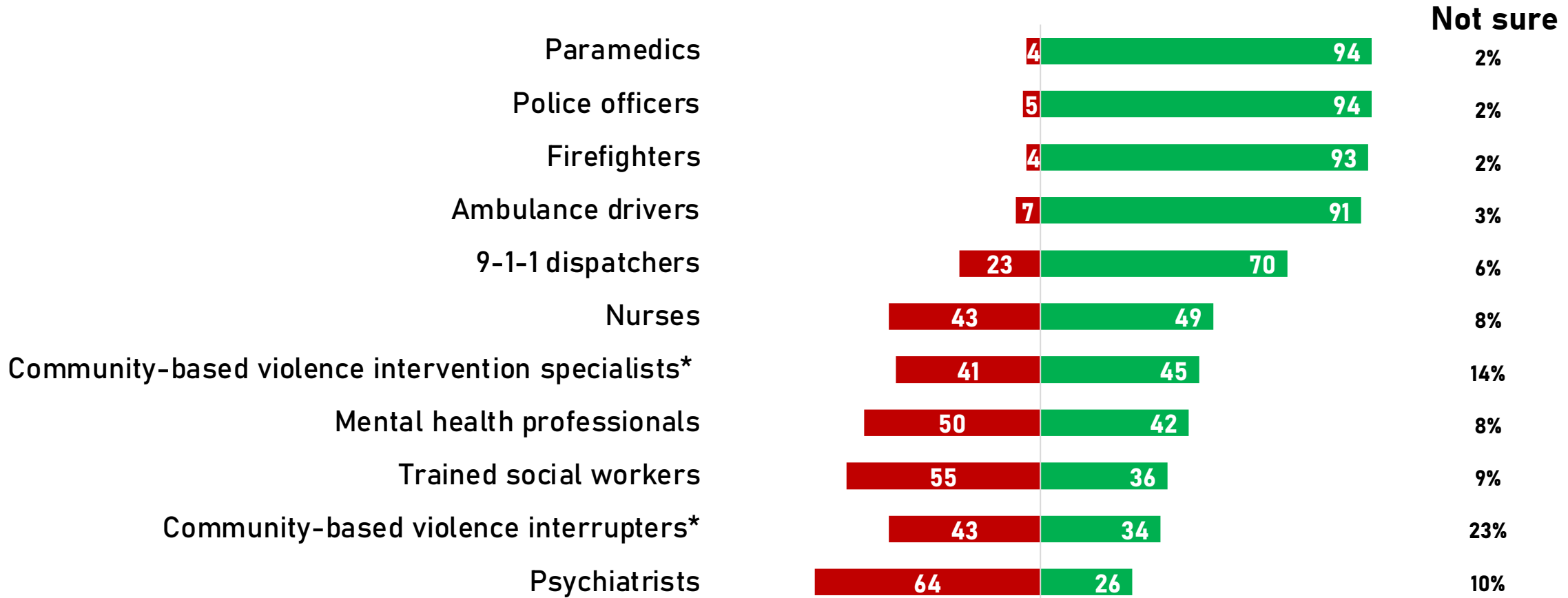


Demos	Nationally			Community		
	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
White alone	89%	10%	1%	86%	11%	4%
POC	56%	39%	5%	72%	24%	5%
Democrat	79%	19%	2%	78%	17%	6%
Indep/DK	74%	23%	3%	63%	31%	6%
Republican	95%	4%	1%	96%	4%	0%

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, police officers, firefighters, ambulance drivers, and 9-1-1 dispatchers.

Professions as First Responders



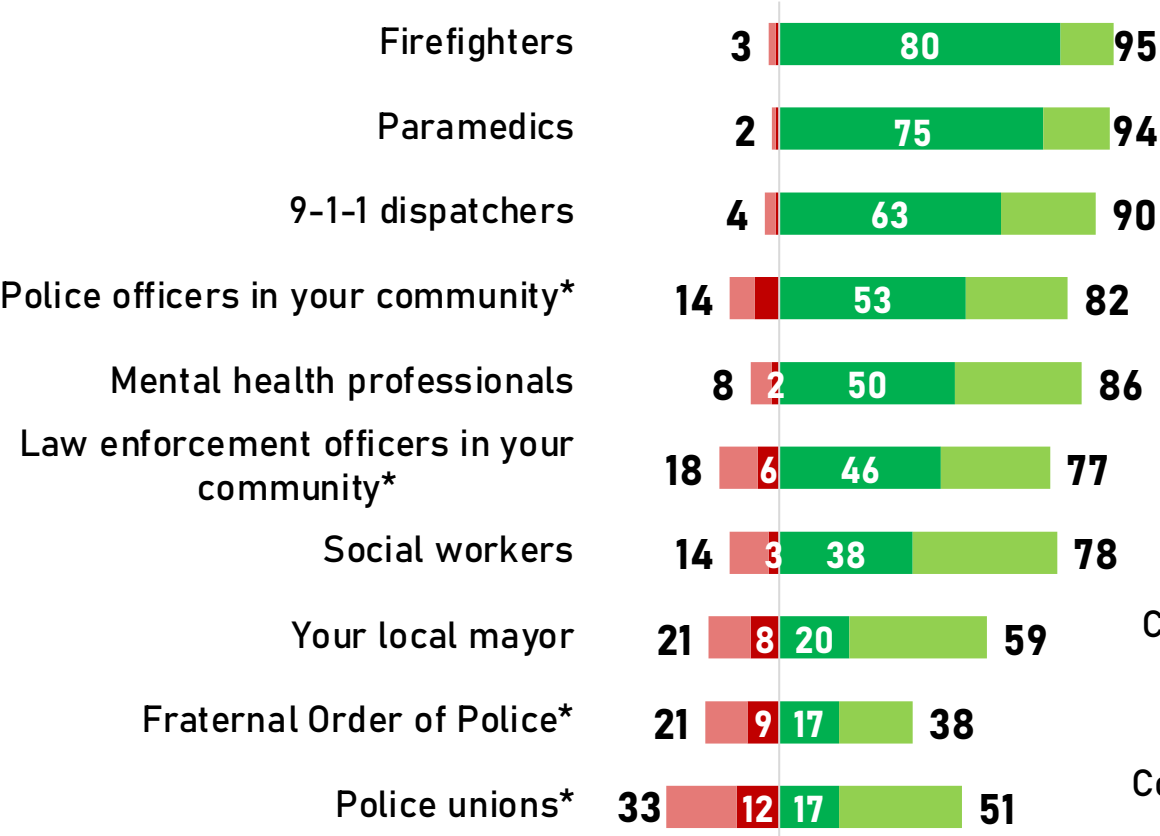
■ Yes, a first responder
■ No, not a first responder

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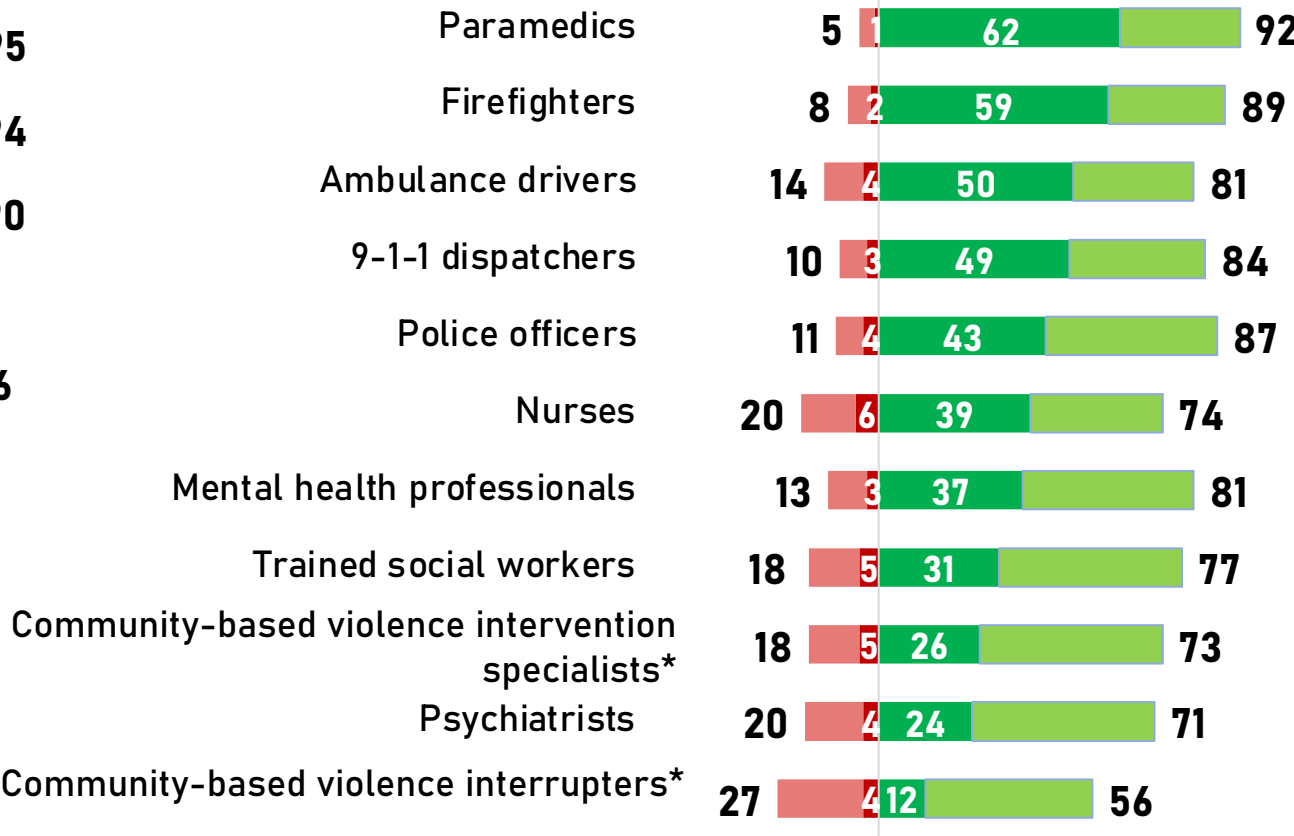
Q33. Please indicate whether or not you consider each of the following professions a first responder for various emergency situations: [RANDOMIZE LIST]

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 ambulance drivers, though more than 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

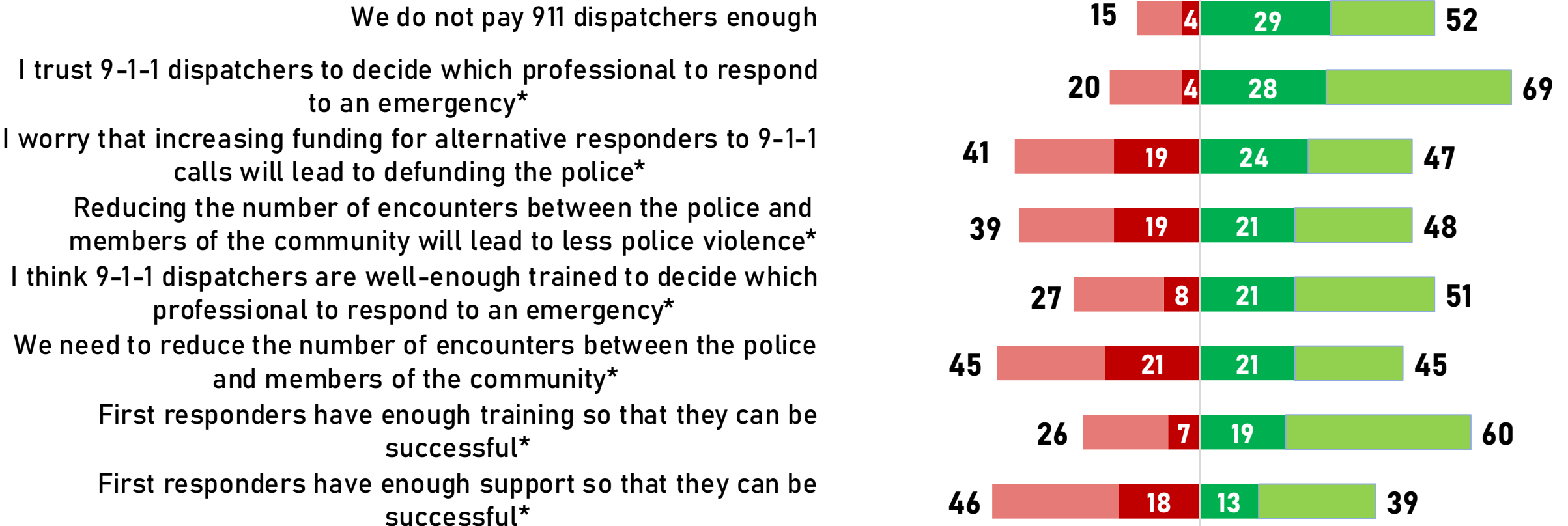


■ Somewhat favorable
■ Very favorable
■ Somewhat unfavorable
■ Very unfavorable

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

Voters are split on several statements we asked about, including whether first responders have enough support so that they can feel successful.

Statements About Community Safety

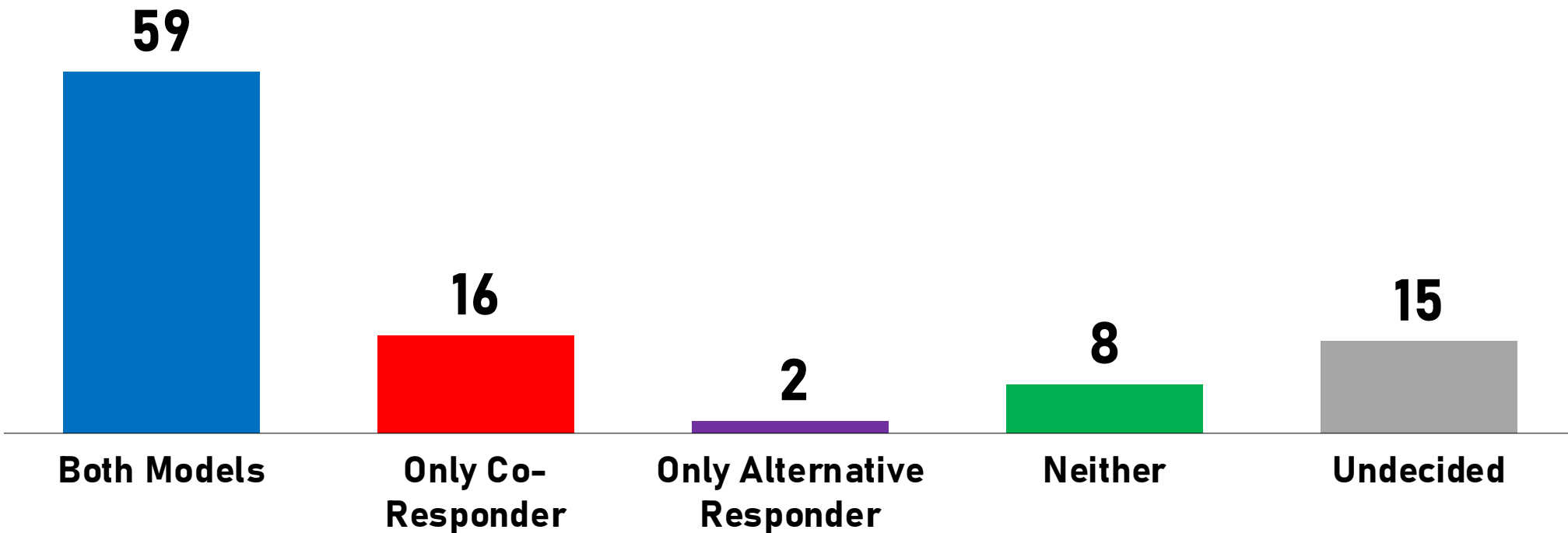


■ Not so strongly agree
■ Strongly agree
■ Not so strongly disagree
■ Strongly disagree

** indicates split sampled item*
 Q46. Below are some statements. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with each statement.
 [RANDOMIZE]

A solid majority of voters favor a combination of the co-responder and alternative responder models as additional approaches to traditional policing. Almost one-in-four voters expresses a preference for one model over the other, and just 8% prefer neither.

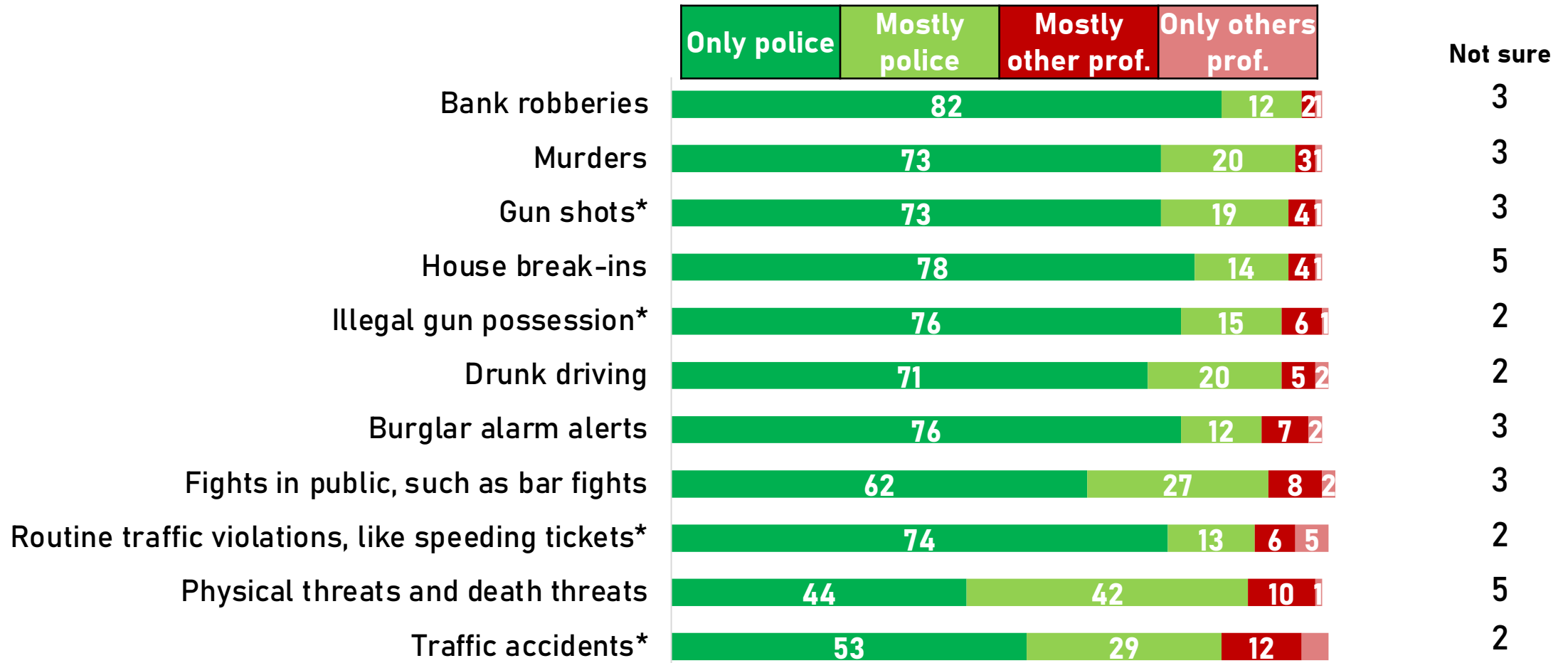
Support for Models of Responding



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, murders, and gun shots—but also incidents like fights in public and routine traffic violations.

Preferred Responders to Incidents – Police Preferred First Tier

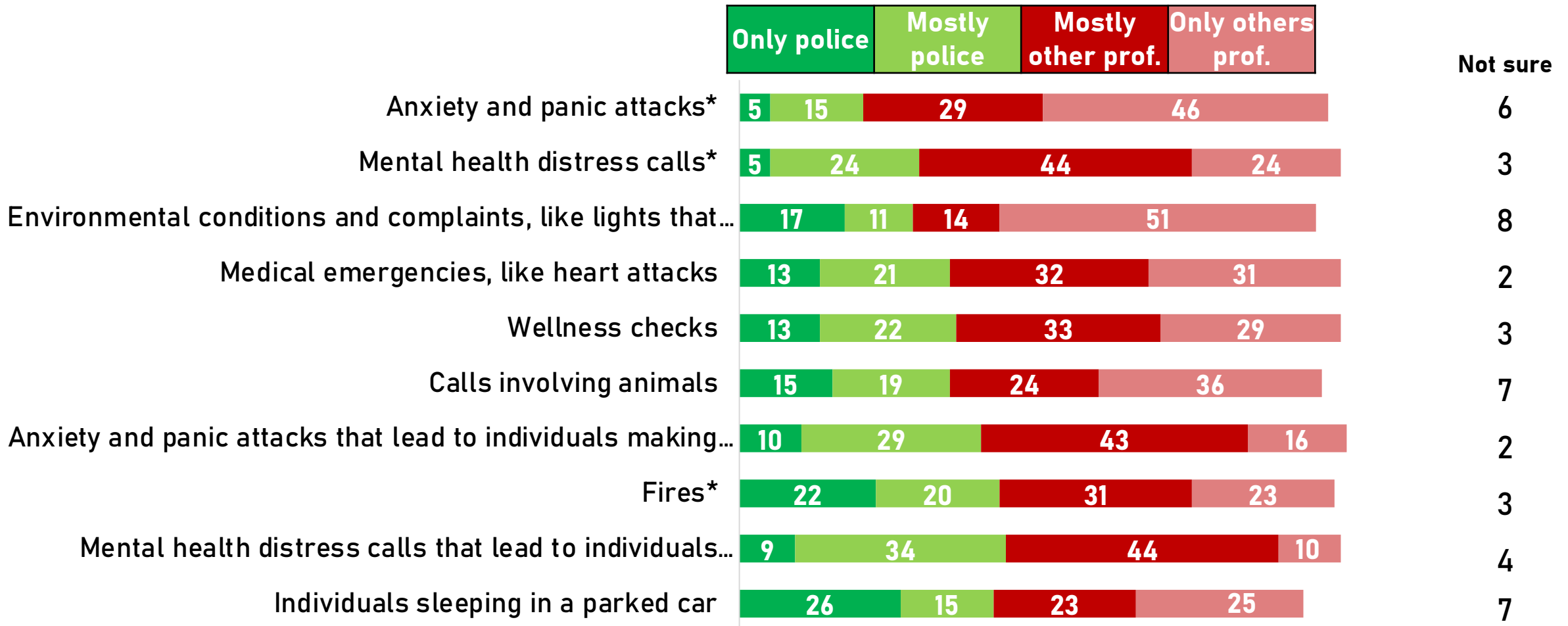


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Q55. Below are some types of incidents and emergencies for which people may call 9-1-1. Please indicate who would be best to respond to each type of incident when someone calls 9-1-1:

Voters feel the police are least needed for anxiety and panic attacks, mental health distress calls, and environmental conditions and complaints.

Preferred Responders to Incidents – Other Professionals Preferred First Tier



* indicates split sampled item

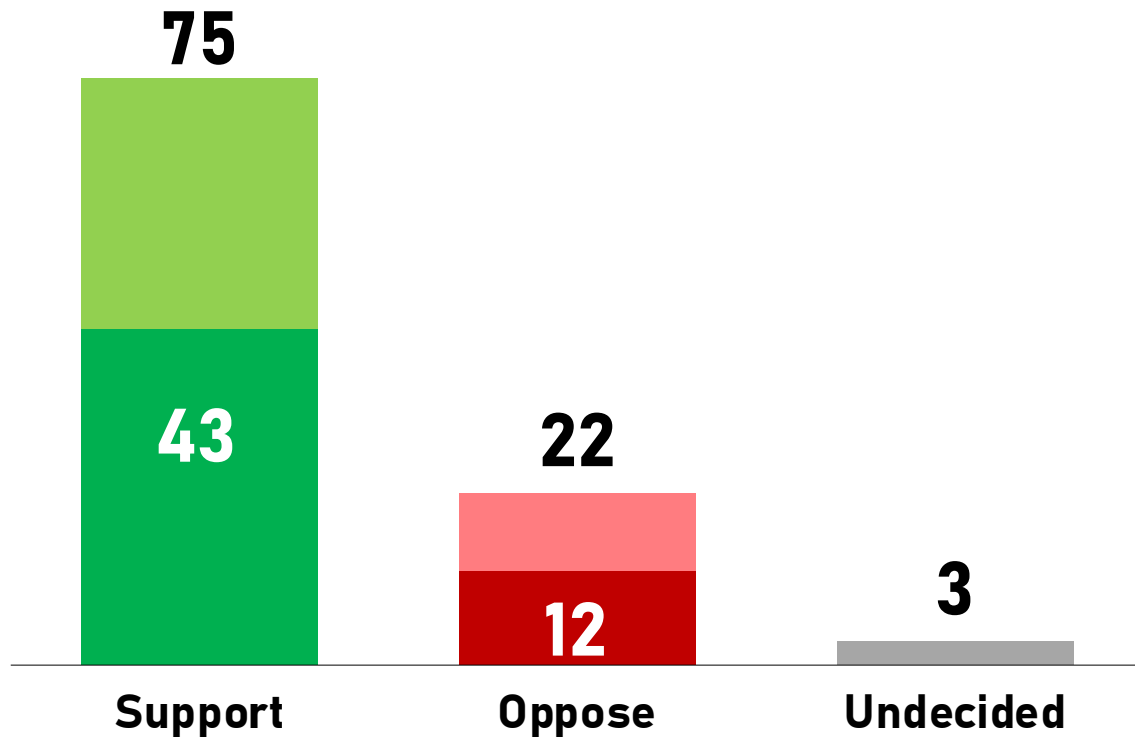
Q55. Below are some types of incidents and emergencies for which people may call 9-1-1. Please indicate who would be best to respond to each type of incident when someone calls 9-1-1:

An illustration of a diverse group of approximately 15 people of various ethnicities, ages, and abilities standing in a line. From left to right: a woman with long red hair, a man with a beard in an orange shirt, a woman in a blue top and red skirt, a woman in a red top, a man in a blue suit, a woman in a blue top and orange pants, a woman in a red top and orange pants, a man in a blue shirt holding a folder, a woman in a blue top and orange pants, a man in a light blue shirt, a woman in a pink top and blue skirt with a cane, and a man in a blue jacket and orange pants. The background features a large, light green abstract shape on a grey background.

Support for Investing in Additional Approaches to Traditional Policing

Three-quarters of Minnesotans 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 voters of color are among the strongest supporters.

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



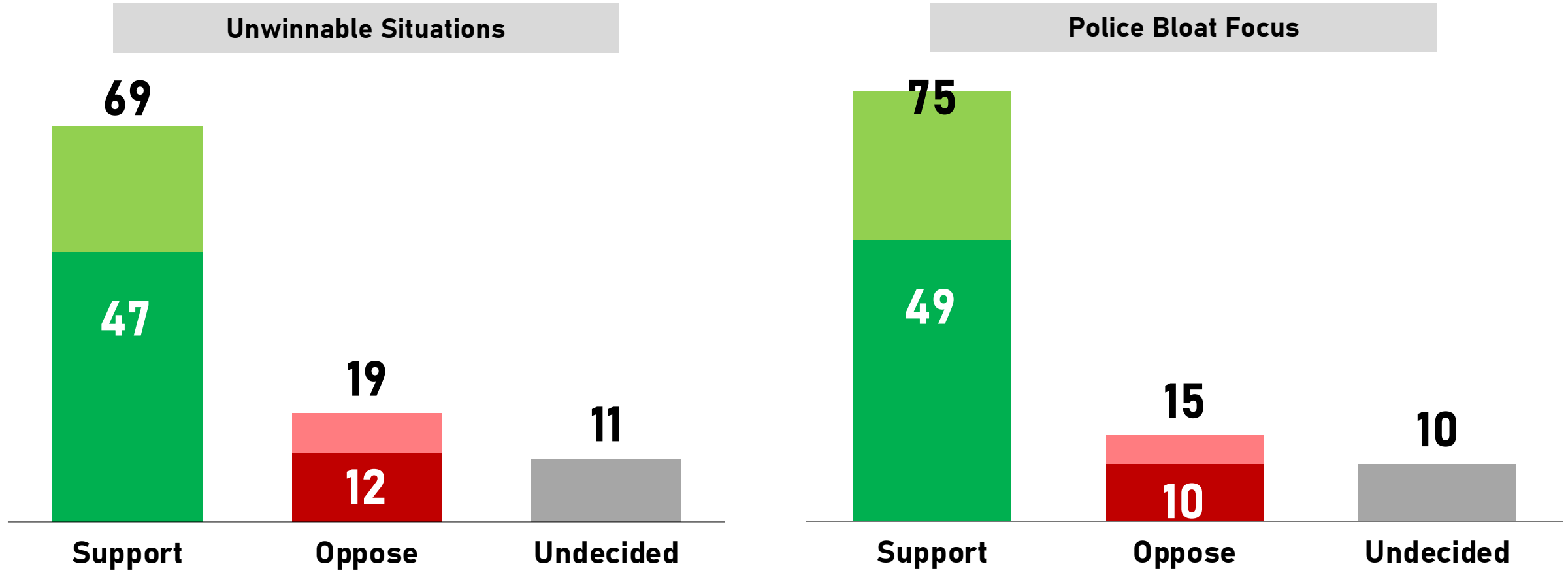
<i>Demos</i>	Support	Oppose	Undecided
White alone	74%	23%	3%
POC	80%	18%	2%
Democrat	92%	6%	2%
Indep/DK	68%	28%	4%
Republican	57%	40%	3%
Women	78%	20%	2%
Men	71%	25%	4%

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>	

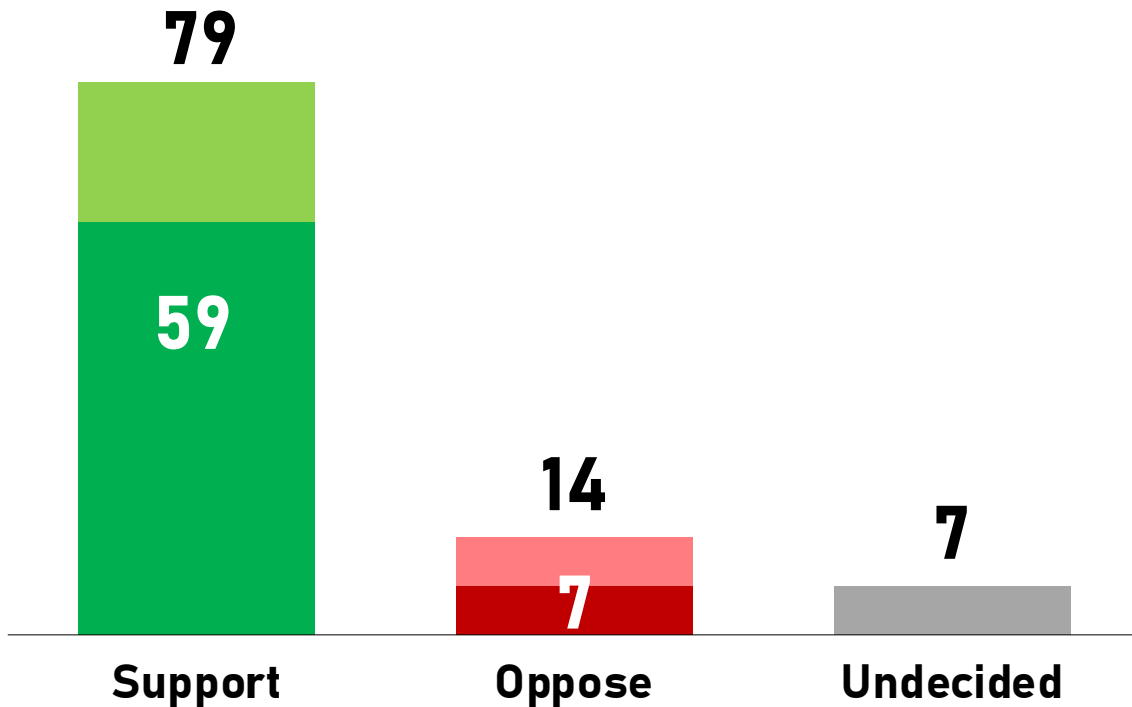
After voters read simulated debates which include the opposition's argument against reform as well as two different messages in support of reform, there is greater support for the "police bloat" message. Opposition to reform is stronger among those who heard "unwinnable situations."



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 majority who feel that way strongly. Support is strong across racial and partisan lines.

Final Ballot Support for Investing in Additional Approaches to Traditional Policing

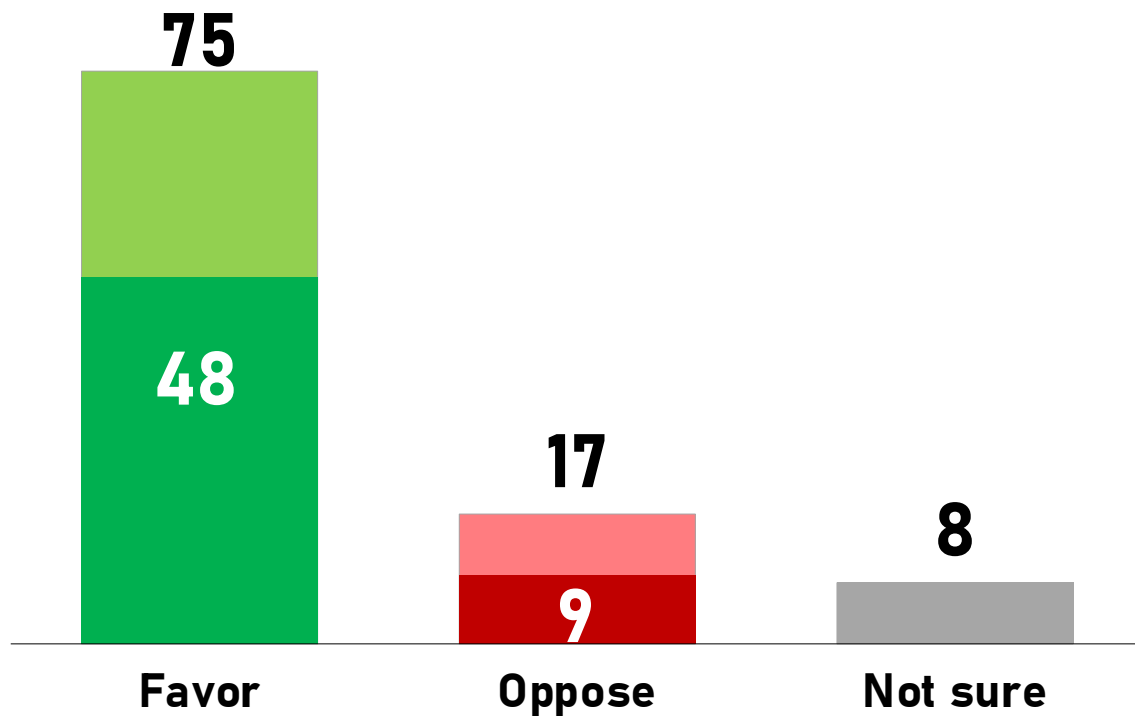


<i>Demos</i>	Support	Oppose	Undecided
White alone	78%	15%	7%
POC	83%	11%	5%
Democrat	93%	4%	3%
Indep/DK	72%	11%	17%
Republican	68%	25%	7%

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 to increase the usage of additional approaches to police when responding to 9-1-1 calls. Democrats are most likely to favor this policy, while independent voters are slightly more skeptical.

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



<i>Demos</i>	Favor	Oppose	Undecided
White alone	76%	16%	8%
POC	74%	22%	4%
Democrat	88%	8%	4%
Indep/DK	59%	24%	17%
Republican	68%	23%	8%

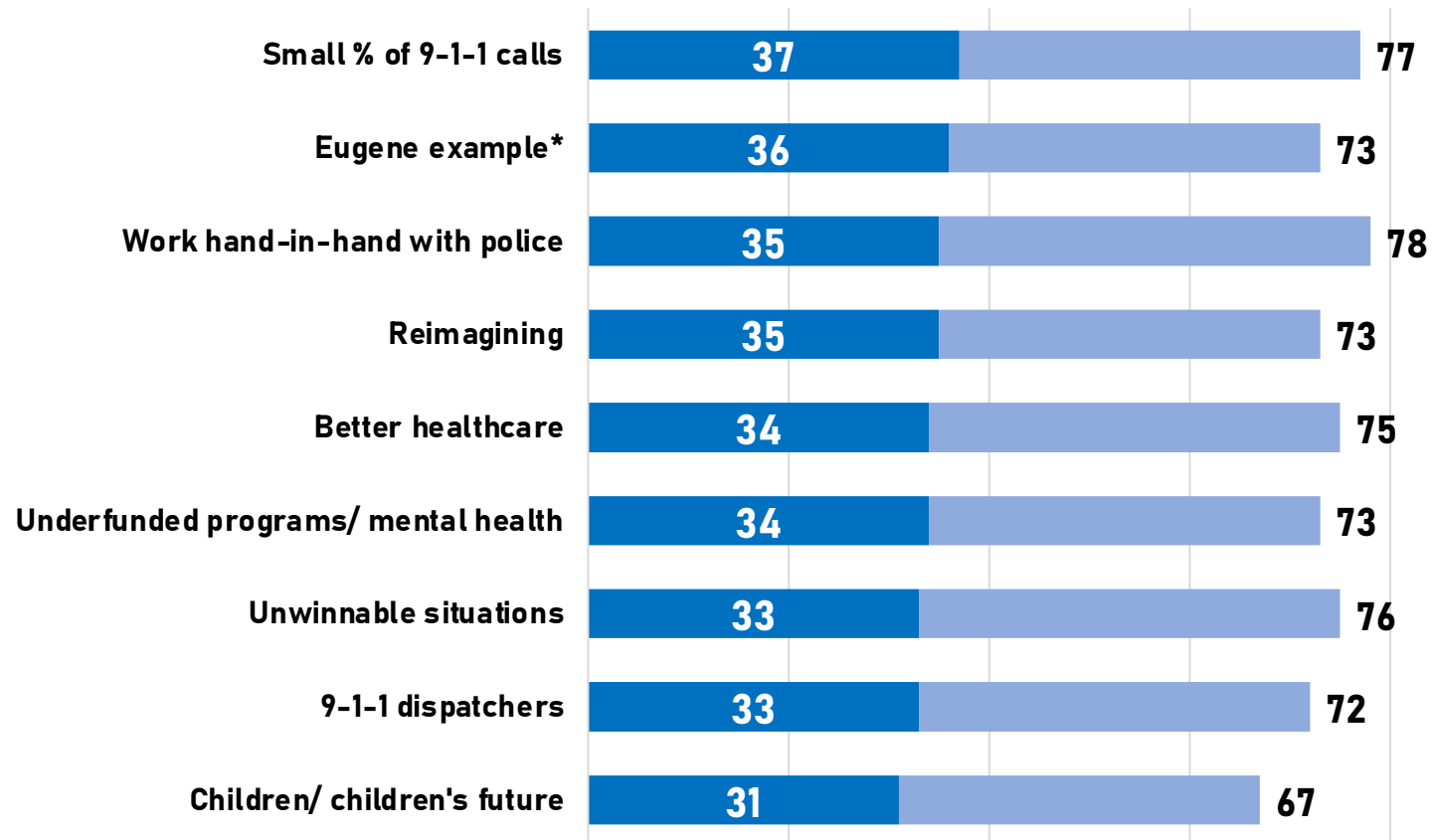
Q39. Would you favor or oppose the government providing funds for state and local governments to increase the number of additional approaches to police responding to 9-1-1 calls?



Messaging and Messengers

The top messages frame these public safety reforms as allowing more resources for response to violent crime and show the success of pilot programs around the country. Minnesota voters find messages centered on working with police and linking public safety to healthcare to be convincing as well.

First Tier Positive Messaging



* indicates split sampled item

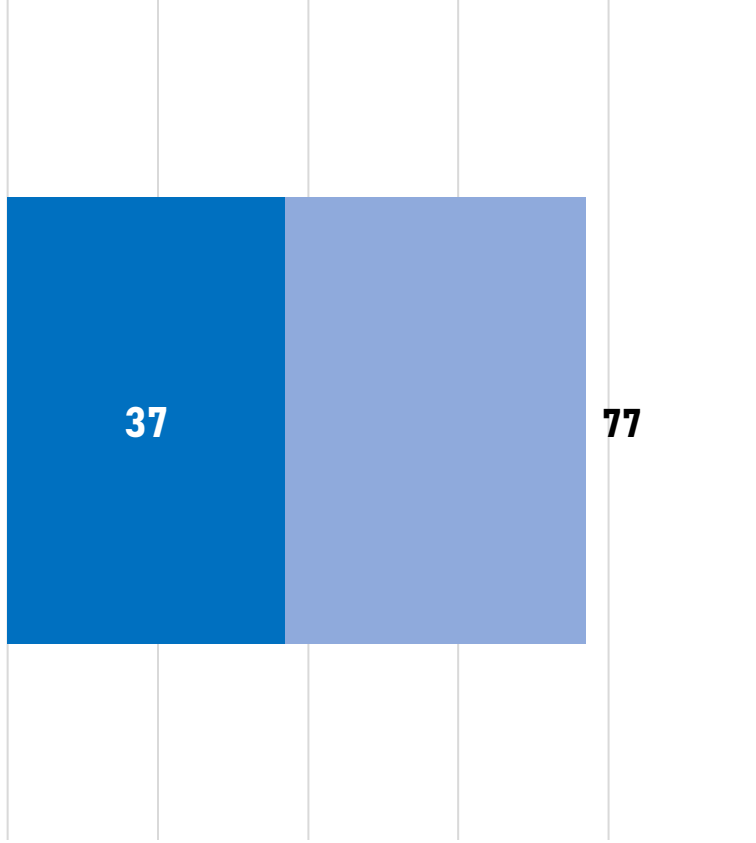
Q62. Now you will read some statements people have made about investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other trained professionals, either along with police officers, or for some non-violent calls, in place of police officers. Please 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

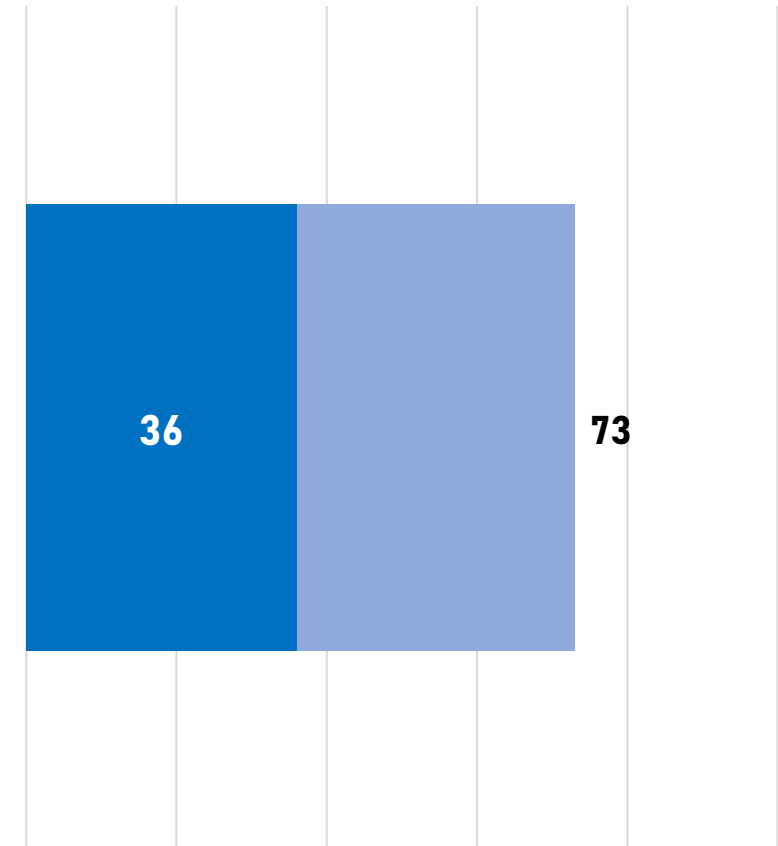
Language of Top Arguments: Small % Of 9-1-1 Calls

Studies show only a tiny percentage of 9-1-1 calls are actually for violent emergencies—less than 2%. There are millions of 9-1-1 calls every year for issues like blocked driveways, noise complaints and medical emergencies, that are not violent, but which police officers often respond to anyway. Sending trained alternative responders to police offers for non-violent emergencies will free up more officers to respond to and investigate the most violent crimes, like gun violence, sexual assault, murder and burglaries.



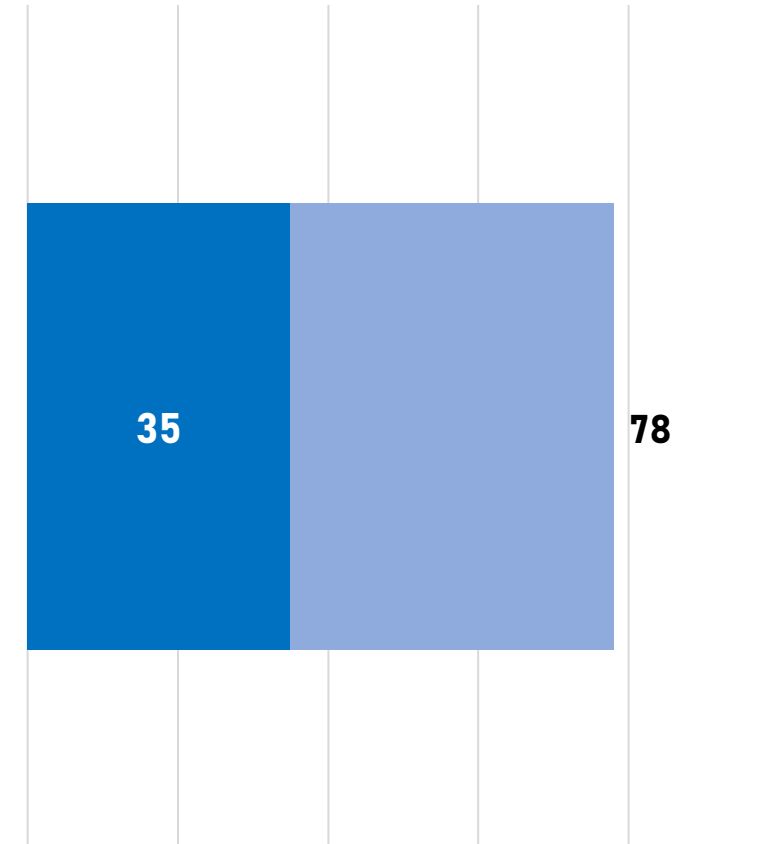
Language of Top Arguments: Eugene, OR Example

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.



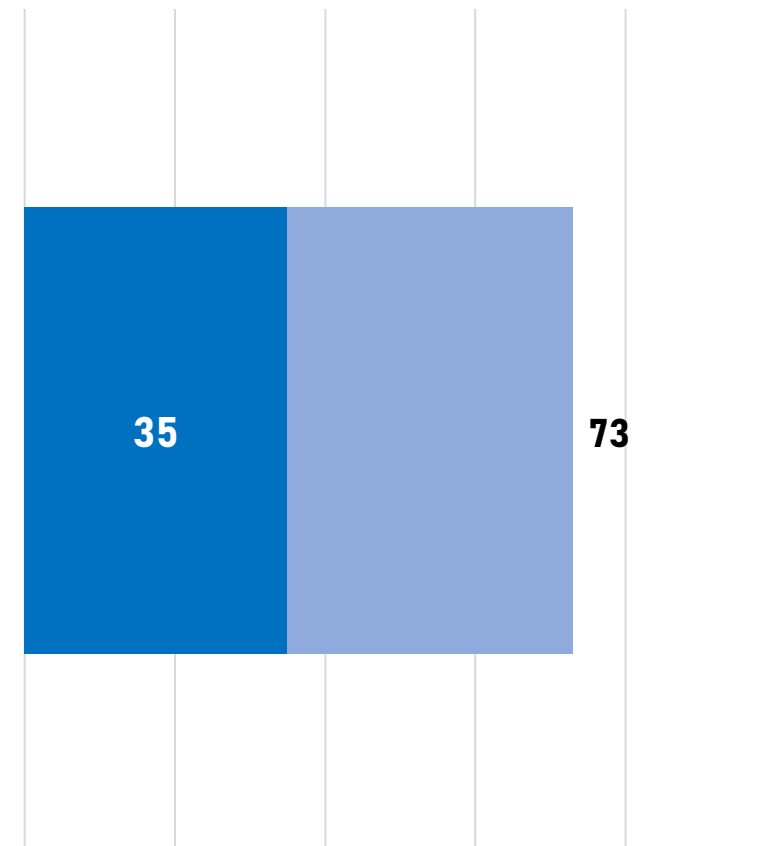
Language of Top Arguments: Work Hand-in-hand With Police

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.



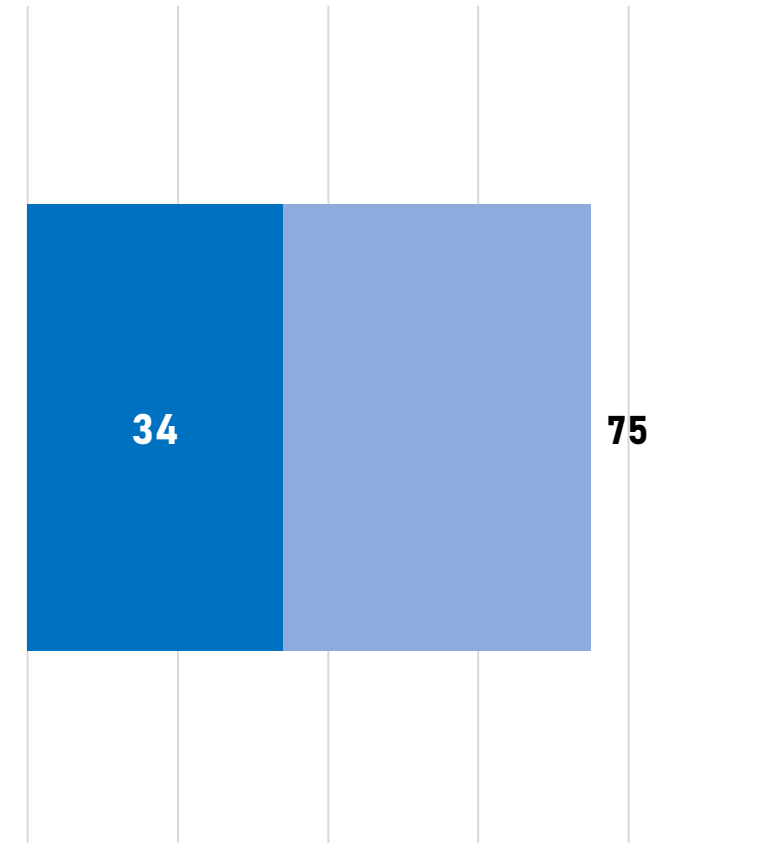
Language of Top Arguments: Reimagining

Americans call 9-1-1 when they are in need of assistance. This too often results in police officers being dispatched to resolve situations better handled by health and social service professionals, like mental health emergencies. Jurisdictions across the country are now reimagining their approach to public safety by investing in programs that position health professionals trained in crisis response as first responders. We need to expand these programs and show that these investments can help support people in the community and conserve public resources.



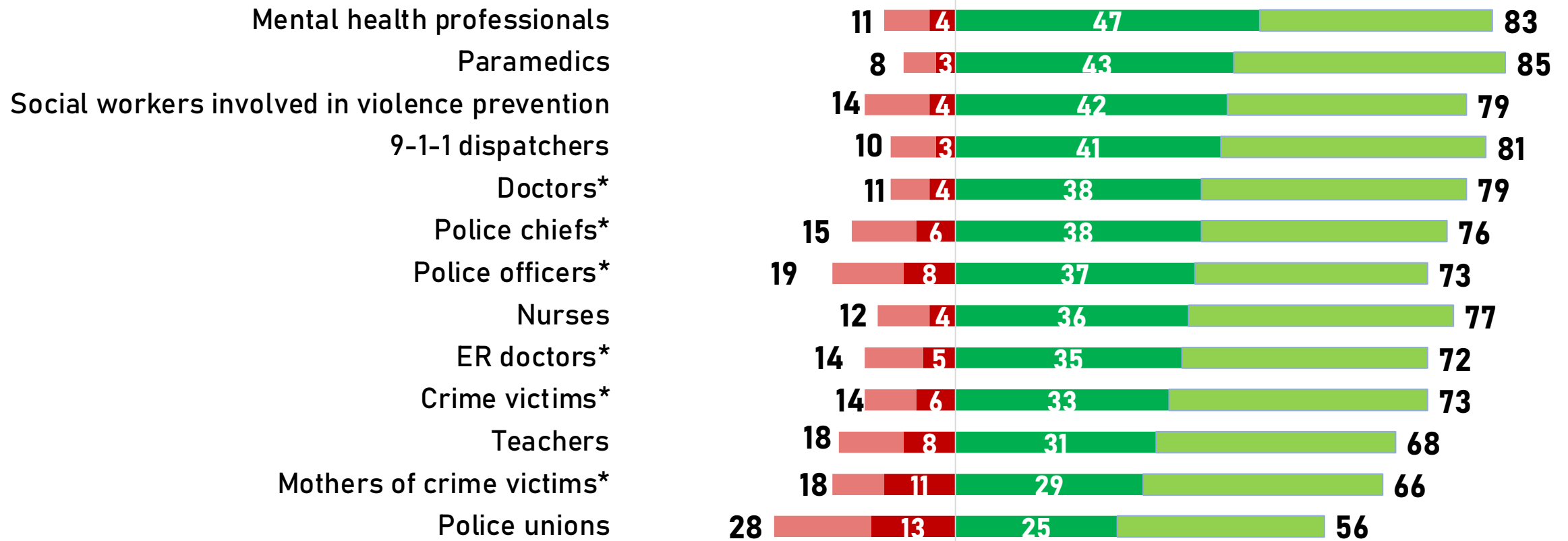
Language of Top Arguments: Better Healthcare

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.



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

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 of alternative responder and co-responder methods and working with voters to simplify 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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