


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

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

April 2023

Methodology

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- Lake Research Partners, in consultation with The Tarrance Group, designed and administered this survey online. The survey reached n=2000 Likely 2024 General Election voters, as well as n=500 voter oversample each in Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois, and n=200 voter oversamples each among Black and Latine voters. 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 +/-2.2% 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 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.
- Half of voters are at least somewhat concerned that using alternative responder models to 9-1-1 calls could lead to defunding the police.

Key Findings: Messages and Messengers

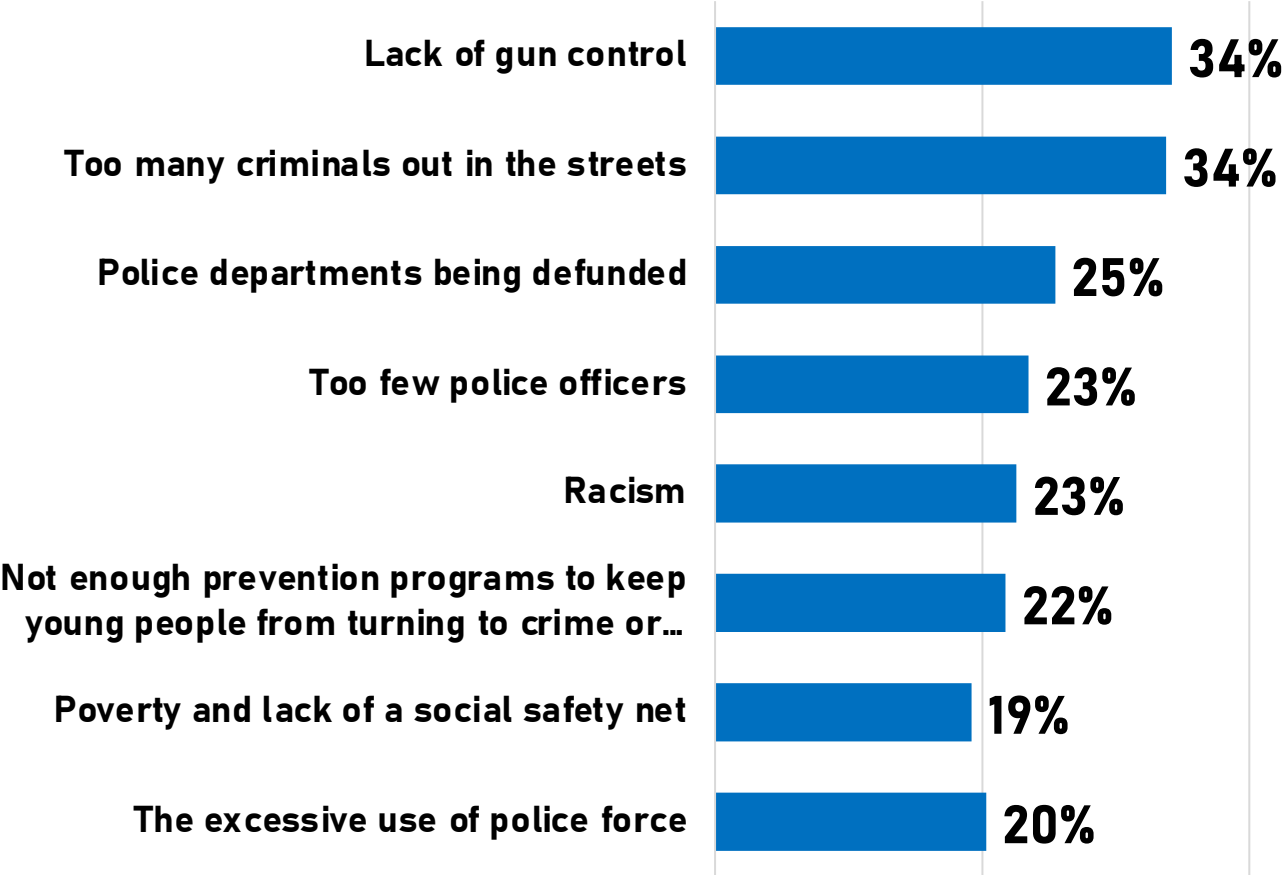
- Messages in support of co-responder and alternative responder models are persuasive.
- The most effective arguments:
 - Frame these public safety reforms as a critical healthcare investment;
 - Position reforms as supporting police by ensuring they have the resources to do their jobs;
 - Focus on the success of pilot programs across the country;
 - 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;
- **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

Voters believe the greatest barriers to improving public safety are lack of gun control, too many criminals in the streets, and police departments being defunded. Many of these feature a deep partisan split.

Biggest Barrier to Improving Public Safety

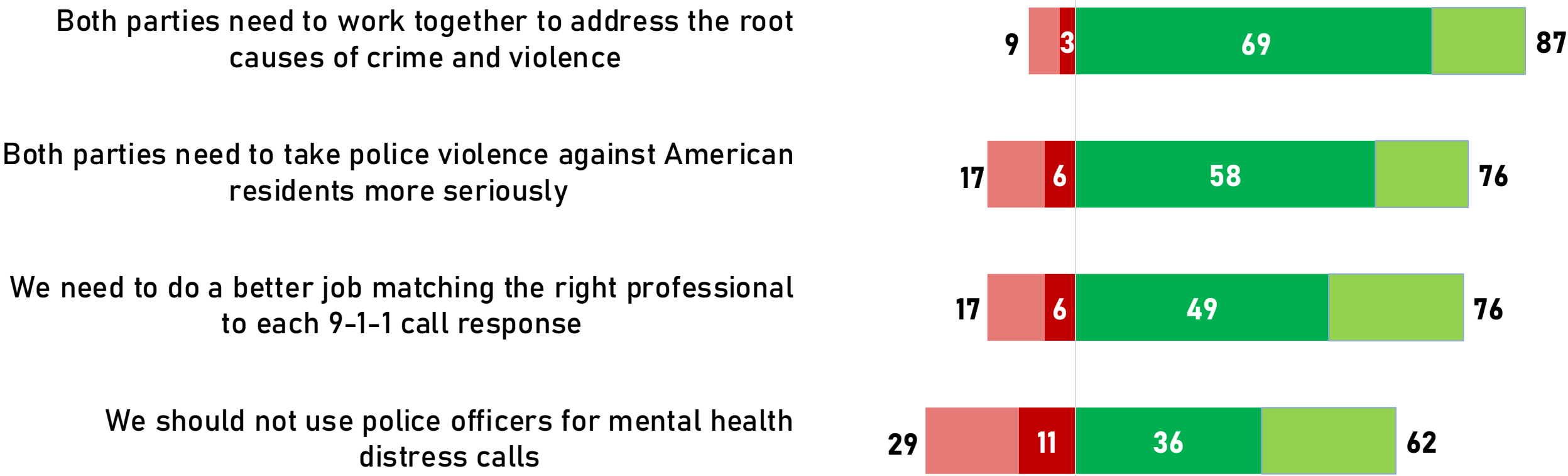


Dem	Ind	Rep	White	Black	Latine
51%	34%	17%	32%	39%	34%
19%	37%	50%	38%	17%	26%
10%	25%	44%	30%	7%	19%
12%	24%	38%	28%	11%	14%
32%	22%	11%	17%	47%	31%
23%	23%	22%	21%	22%	24%
24%	21%	13%	18%	23%	20%
28%	20%	11%	17%	36%	26%

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



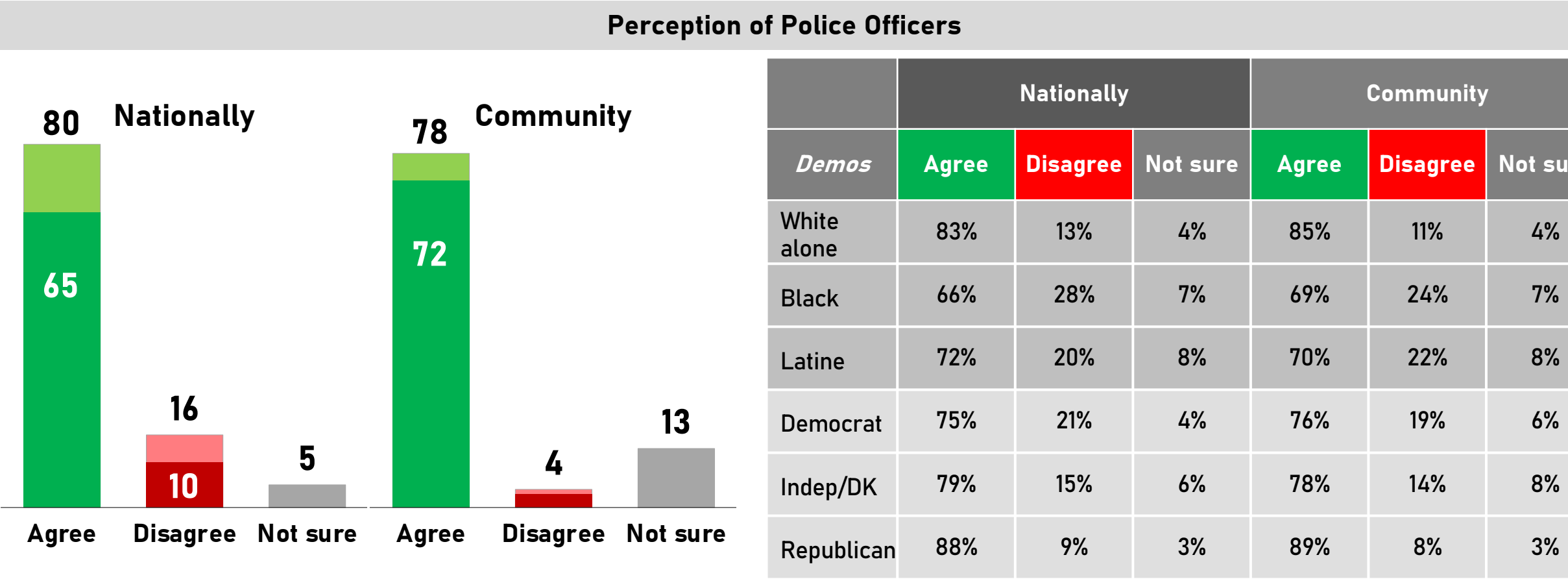
Not so strongly agree
Strongly agree
Not so strongly disagree
Strongly disagree

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



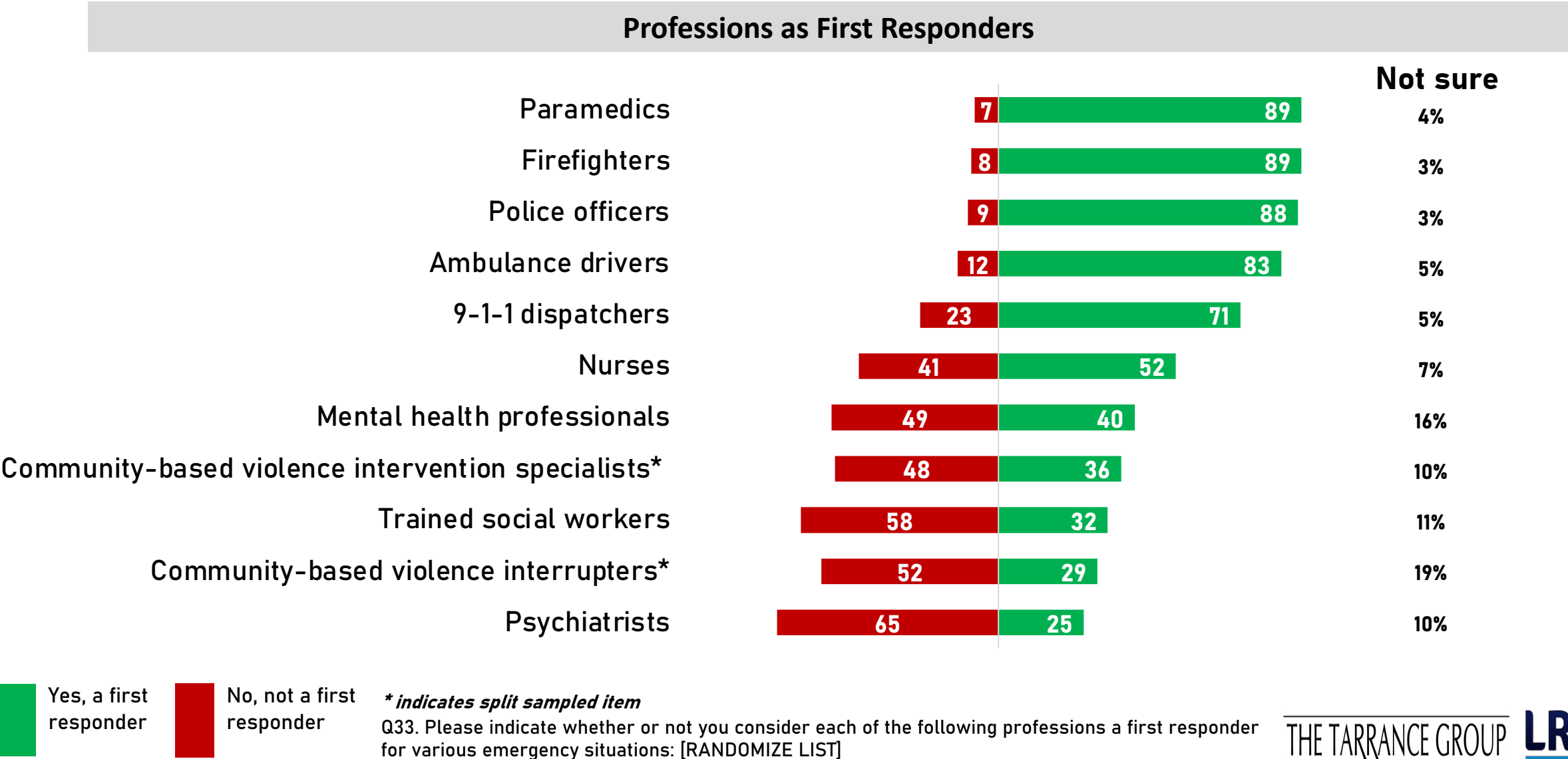
First Responders

Voters support police both in their communities and nationally, and with little differentiation.



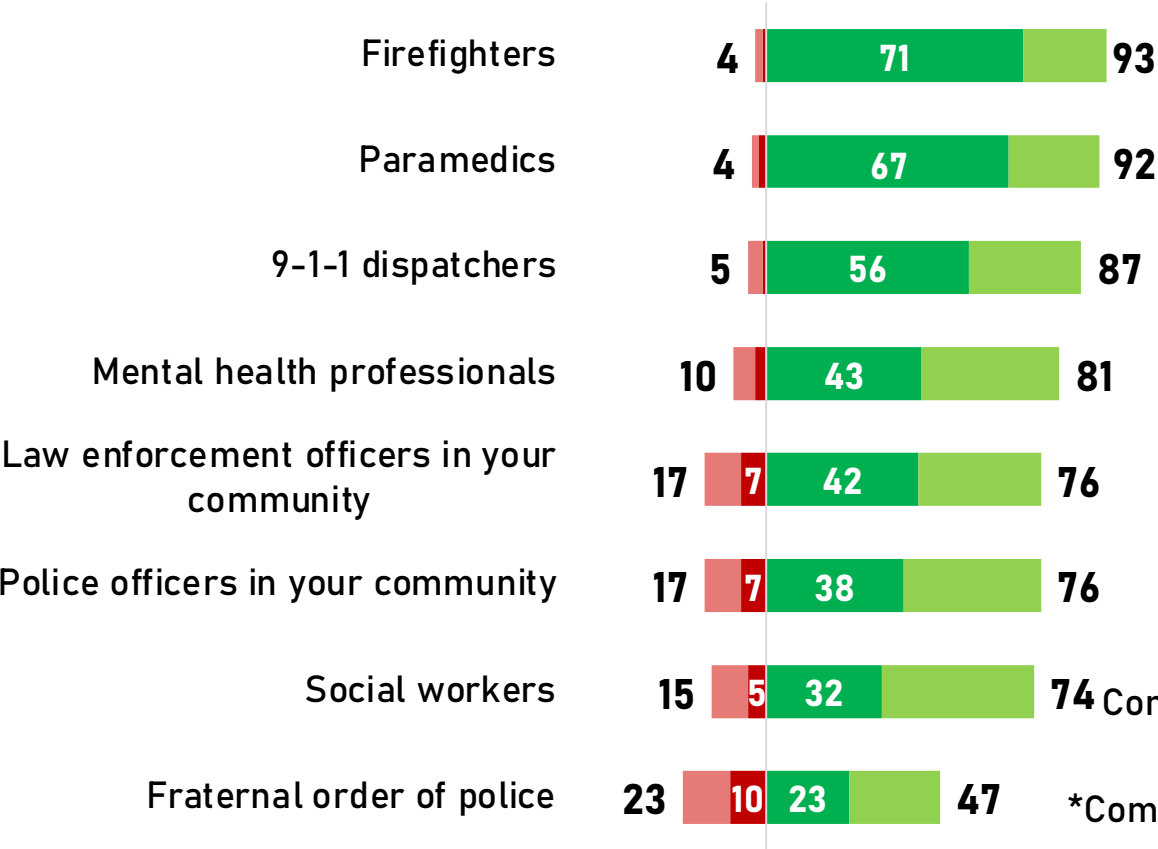
Q49./50. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “the vast majority of police officers nationally/in your community want to do the right thing”?

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

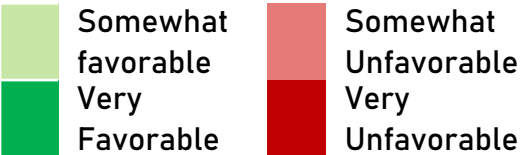
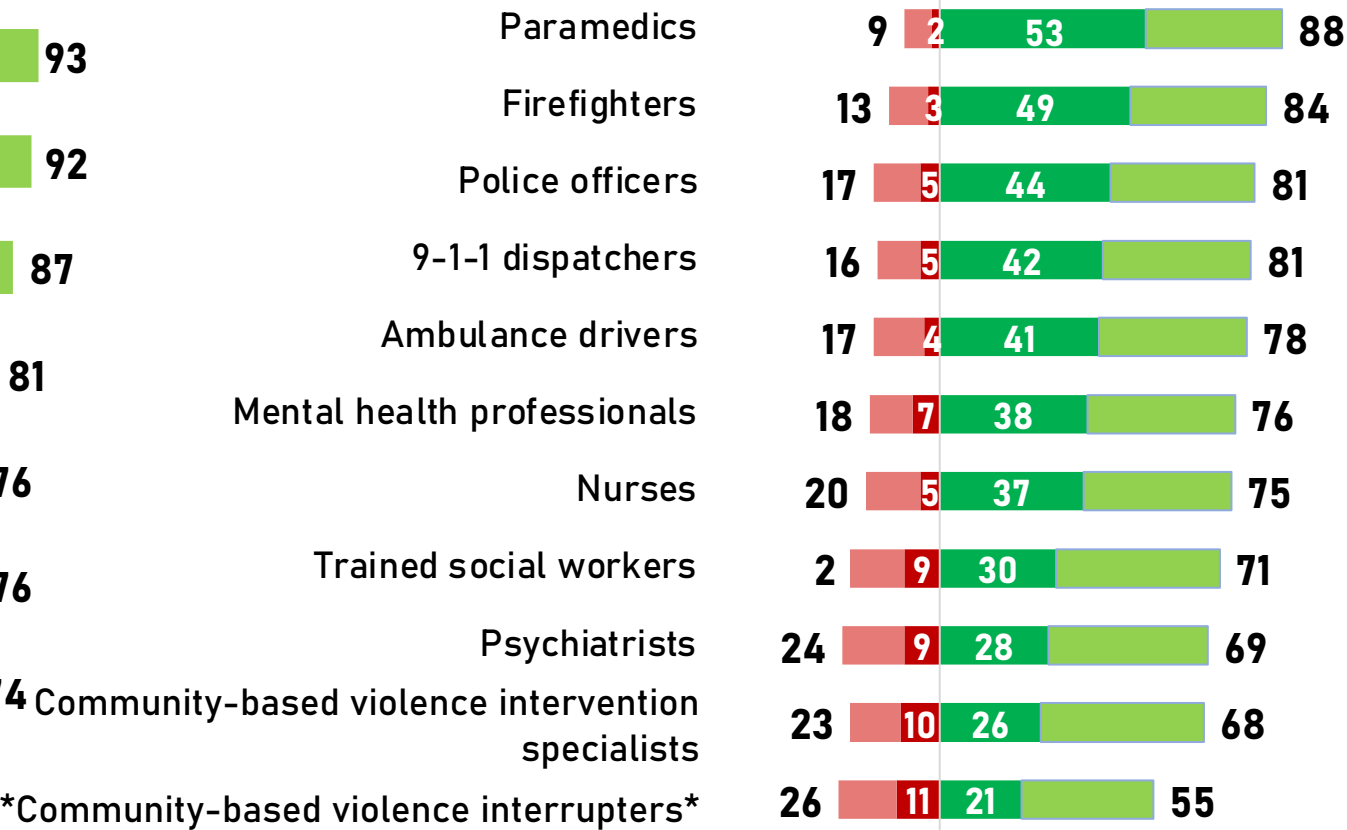


Voters have solidly favorable opinions of a wide range of first responders. When it comes to the perceived efficacy of various first responders, voters are most positive about paramedics, followed closely by firefighters and police officers, though more than two-thirds of voters also see CVI specialists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

Favorability of First Responders, Policies, and Groups

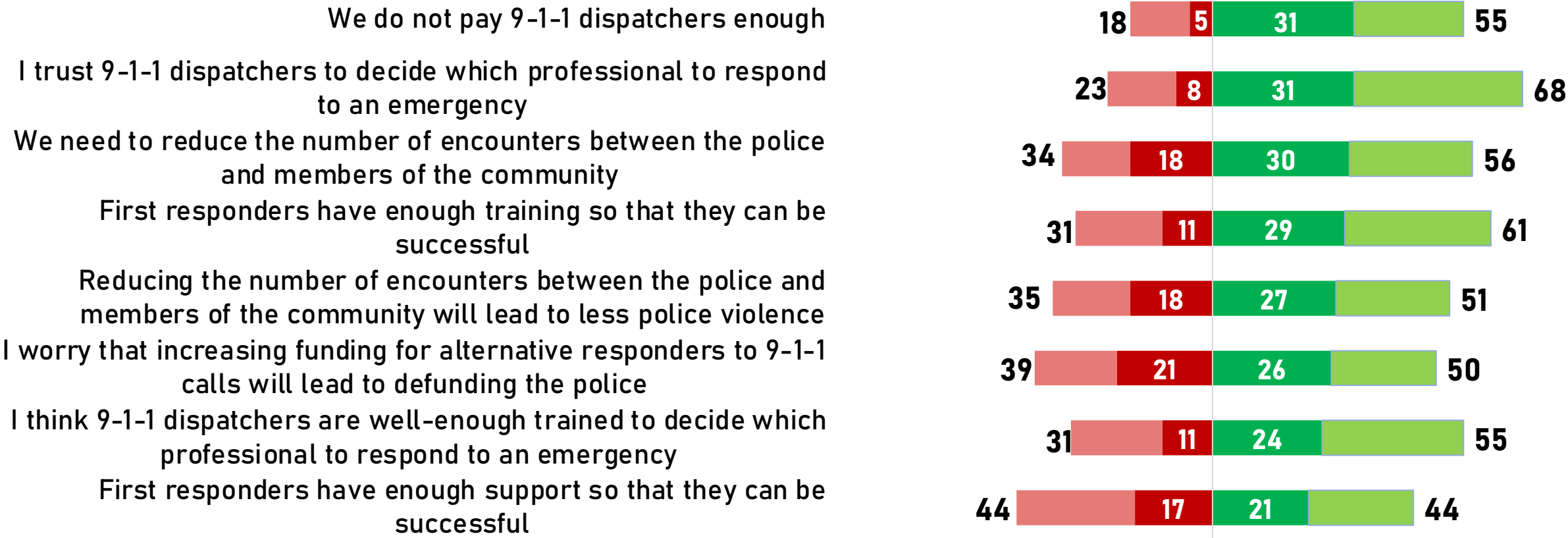


Effectiveness in Responding to 9-1-1 Calls



Voters are most split about whether first responders have enough support so that they can feel successful.

Statements About Community Safety

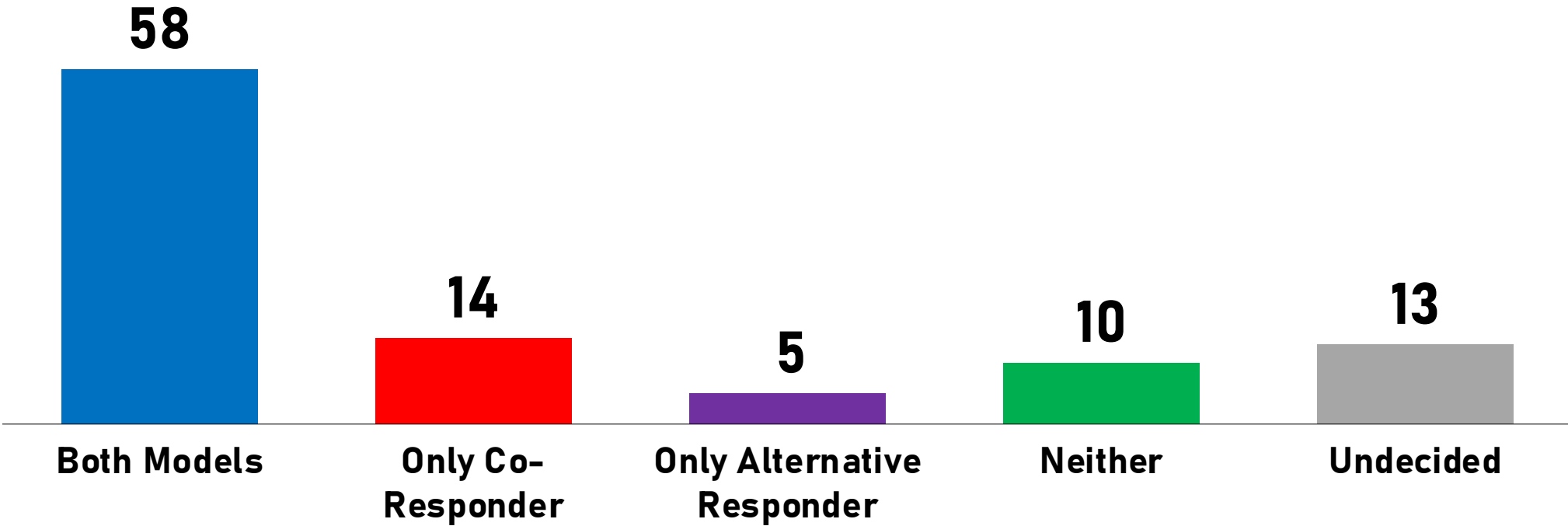


Not so strongly agree
Strongly agree
Not so strongly disagree
Strongly disagree

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

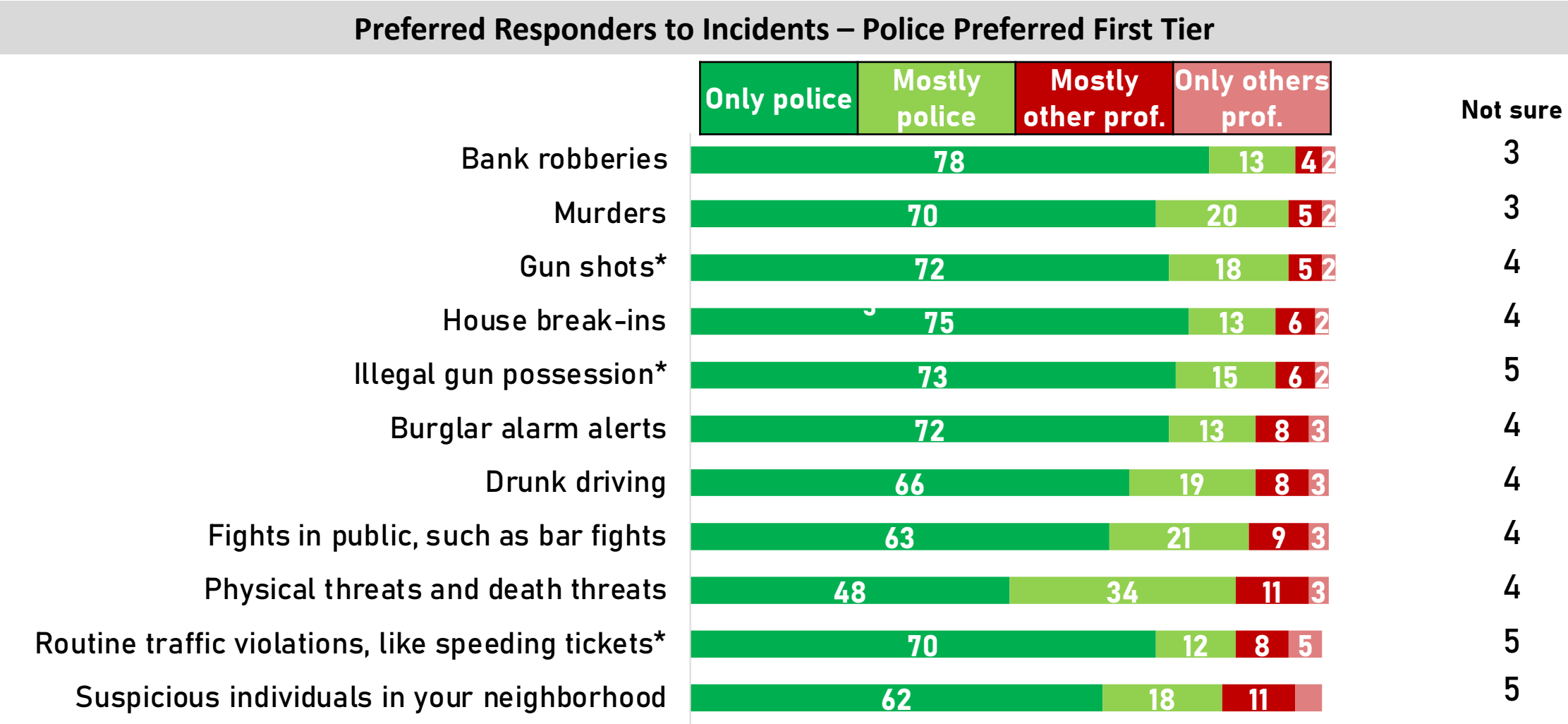
A solid majority of voters favors a combination of the co-responder and alternative responder models as additional approaches to traditional policing. One-in-four voters expresses a preference for one model over the other, though just 10% prefer neither.

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, murders, and gun shots,—but also incidents like shoplifting and routine traffic violations.

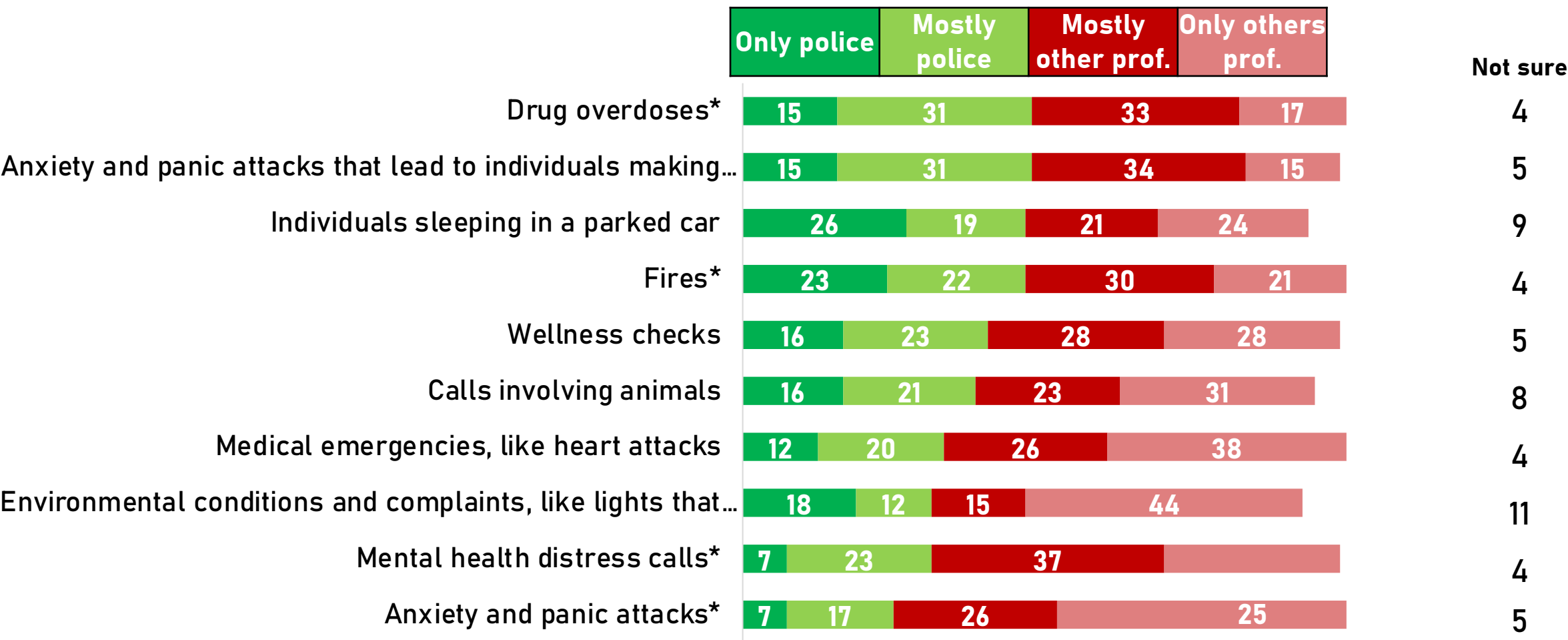


* indicates split sampled item

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:

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

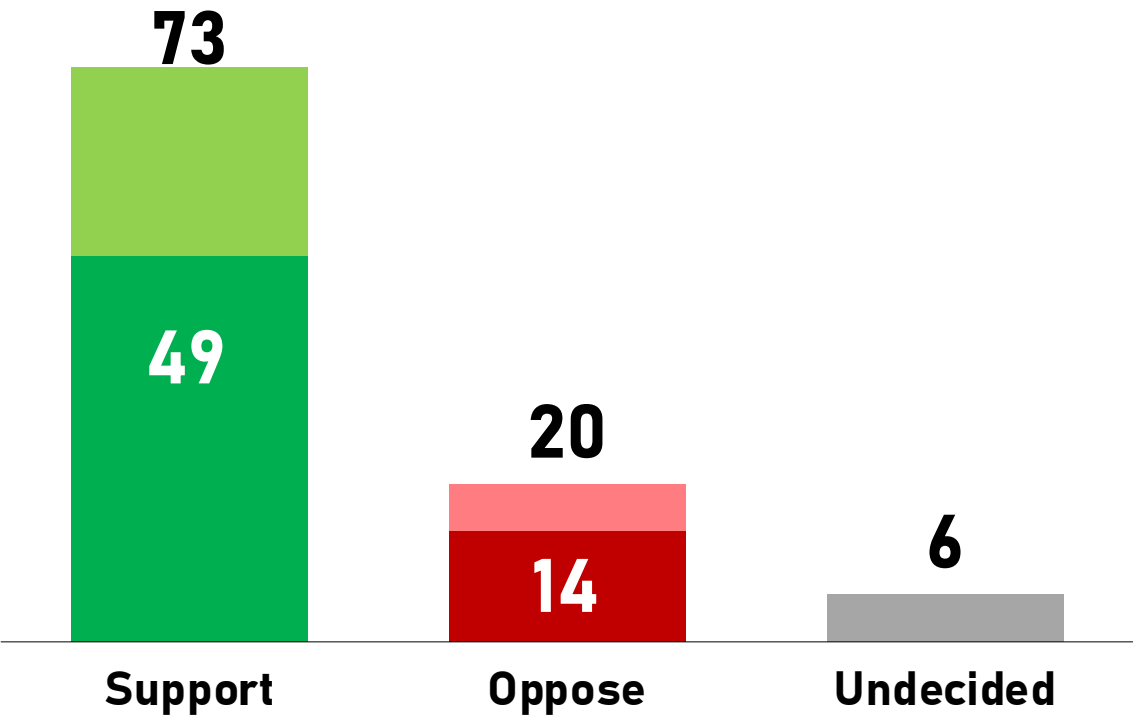
Q55. Below are some types of incidents and emergencies for which people may call 9-1-1. Please indicate who would be best to respond to each type of incident when someone calls 9-1-1:

An illustration of a diverse group of approximately 15 people standing in a line. The group includes individuals of various ages, ethnicities, and abilities. For example, there is a person in a wheelchair on the left, a person with a beard, a person with a large afro, a person with a cane, and a person with sunglasses. They are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire. The background is a simple, stylized landscape with a large, light green hill and a grey sky. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Support for Investing in Additional Approaches to Traditional Policing

Almost three-quarters of 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, Black, and Latine voters are among the strongest supporters.

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



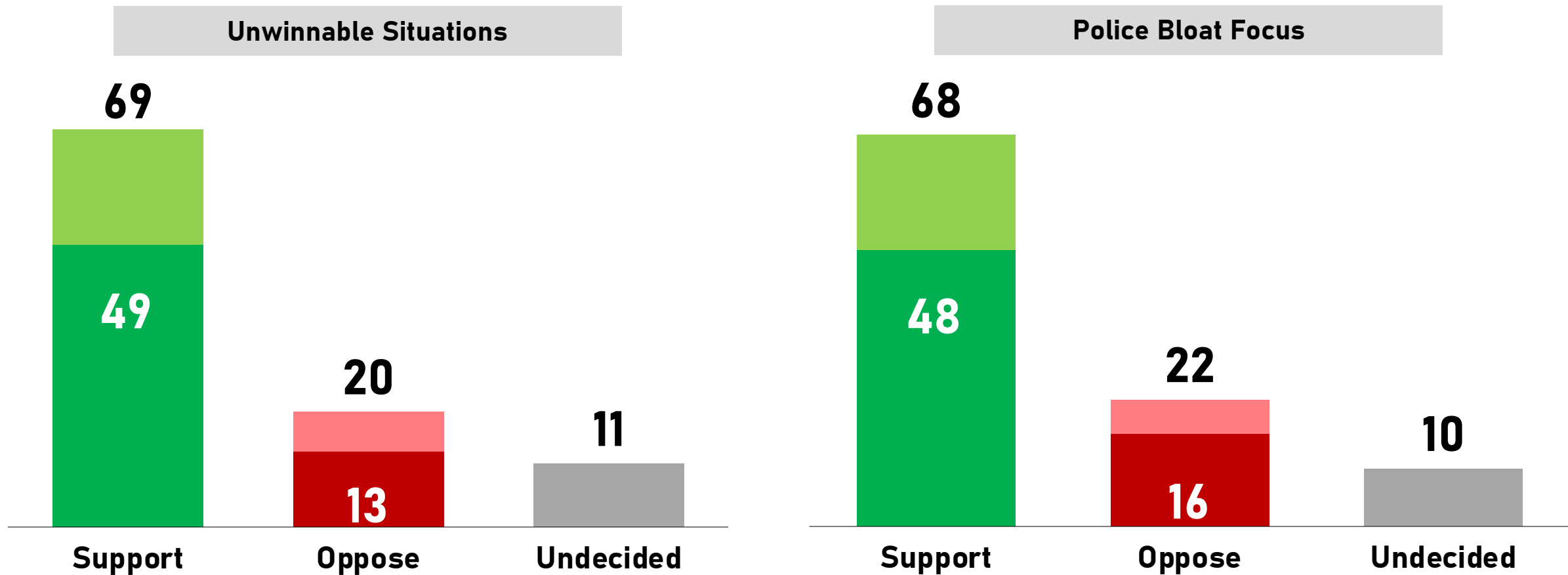
Demos	Support	Oppose	Undecided
White alone	72%	22%	7%
Black	82%	13%	5%
Latine	78%	16%	5%
Democrat	88%	8%	4%
Indep/DK	72%	18%	10%
Republican	59%	35%	6%
Women	76%	17%	8%
Men	71%	24%	5%

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

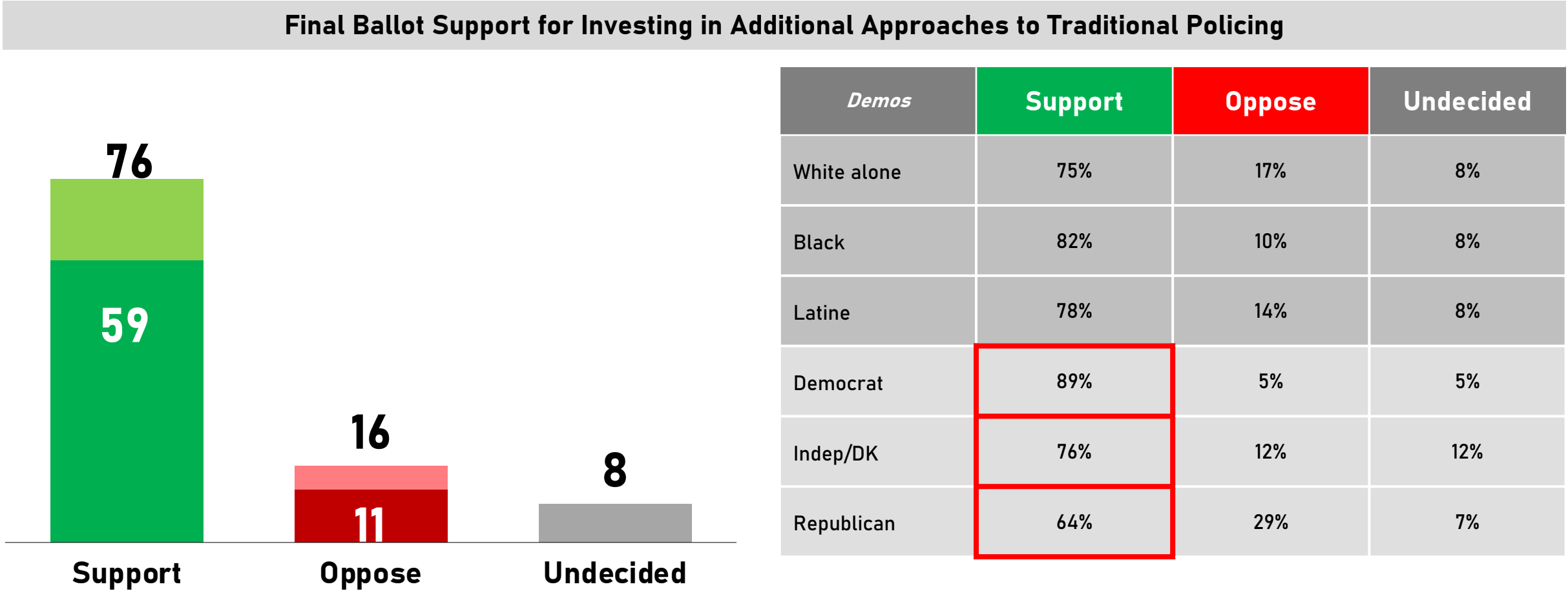
UNWINNABLE SITUATIONS	POLICE BLOAT FOCUS
<p>[PRO-REFORM]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Billions of dollars spent to continue the same failed approach to public safety.• Need to stop putting police in unwinnable situations -- crises that other professionals can handle better.• Pilot programs using range of trained professionals have dramatically decreased crime.• These solutions should be implemented at the national level.	<p>[PRO-REFORM]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Billions of dollars spent to continue the same failed approach to public safety.• Police budgets are growing, but the money goes to military equipment and PR.• Public safety is not improving, number of murders being solved has declined.• we need to implement proven solutions, like using trained professionals and violence prevention specialists
<p>[ANTI-REFORM]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• These new programs are how socialist Democrats will defund the police.• Need police officers to protect us, but in many cities that are testing new programs, the results are disastrous.• Leaders want to take your guns and turn your neighborhood into another Detroit.• Paramedics who respond to emergencies get killed and violent criminals get let free when we don't let police respond to crime.	

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 majority who feel that way strongly.

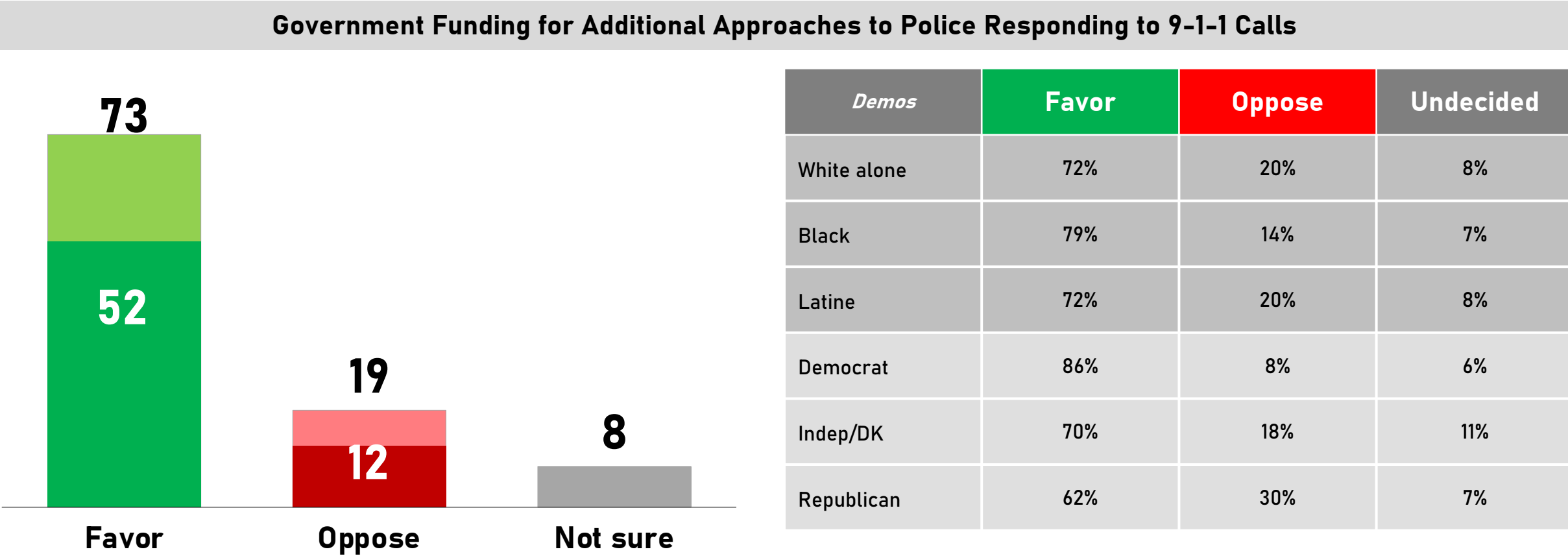


Q63. One last time. Would you [ROTATE] _support OR _oppose investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other professionals—like mental health professionals, trained social workers, and/or community-based violence intervention specialists—either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

Soft Supporters of Additional Approaches to Traditional Policing

- **One-quarter (25%) of voters are soft supports. These voters skew slightly older and slightly more Republican than voters overall, but otherwise—in terms of their gender, racial, educational, and other demographic makeup—closely resemble the electorate as a whole.**
- **Attitudinally, these soft supporters are most likely to think the biggest barrier to improving public safety is needing better gun laws and better police training/oversight.**
- **They strongly feel that both parties need to work together on the root cause of crime.**
- **The messages they find most compelling include “Working hand-in hand with police,” “Unwinnable situations,” and the “Chicago example”. They respond much better to the term “Community-based violence intervention specialists” than “Violence interrupters”.**
- **Professionals who are best positioned to carry the messages to these voters include a mix of police officers, paramedics, mental health professionals, and 911 dispatchers.**

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.



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?

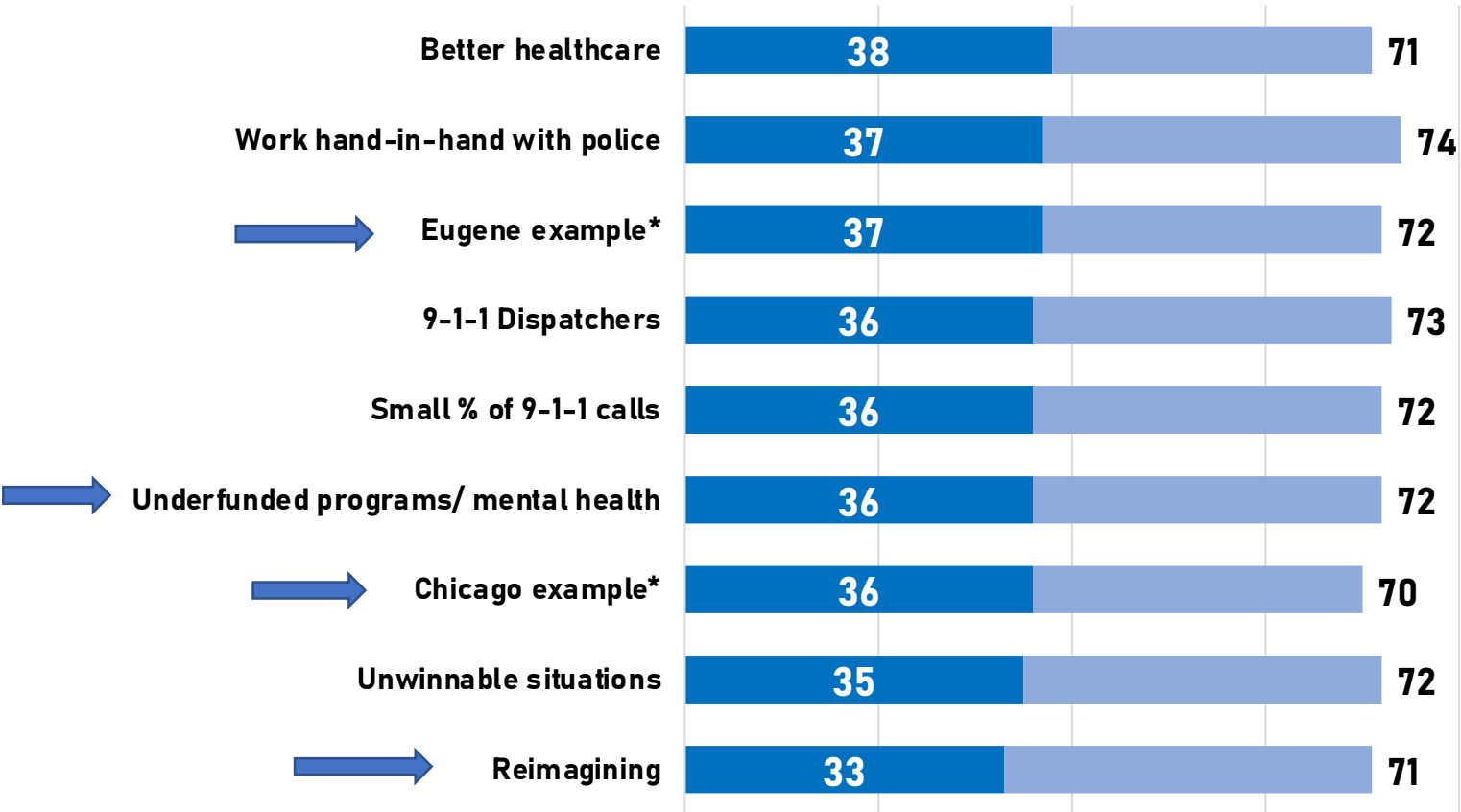


Messaging and Messengers

The top messages frame these public safety reforms as a critical healthcare and as a way to support police by ensuring they have the resources to do their jobs. Additionally, voters are persuaded by arguments that highlight the success of these approaches in bringing crime down in different pilot projects.

First Tier Positive Messaging

→ =disproportionately predicts shifting toward support in the final ballot

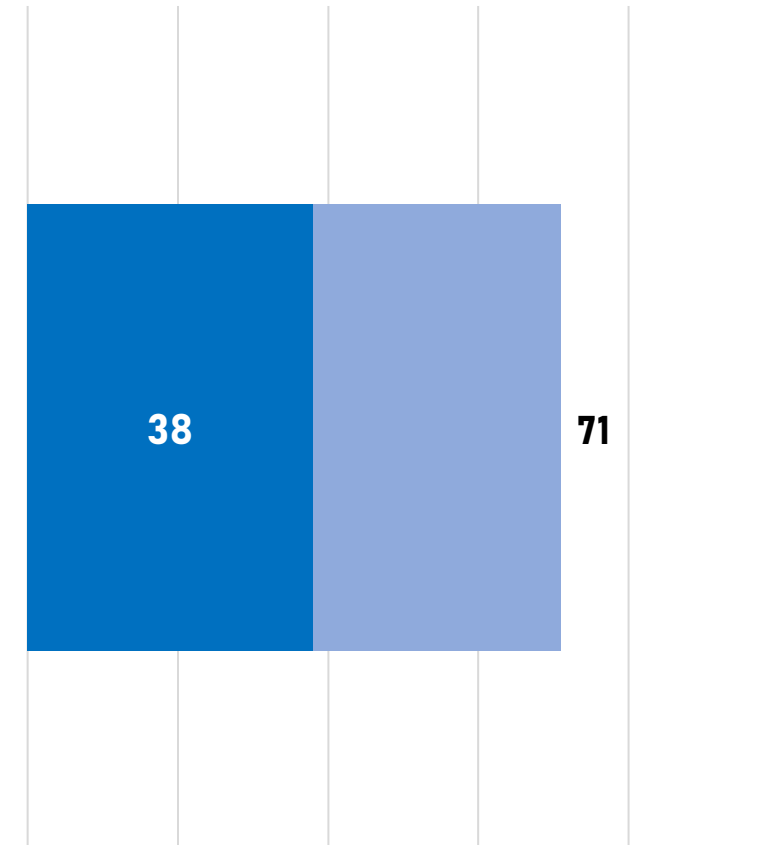


* indicates split sampled item
Q62. Now you will read some statements people have made about investing in additional approaches to traditional policing, to include having certain 9-1-1 calls responded to by other trained professionals, either along with police officers, or for some non-violent calls,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

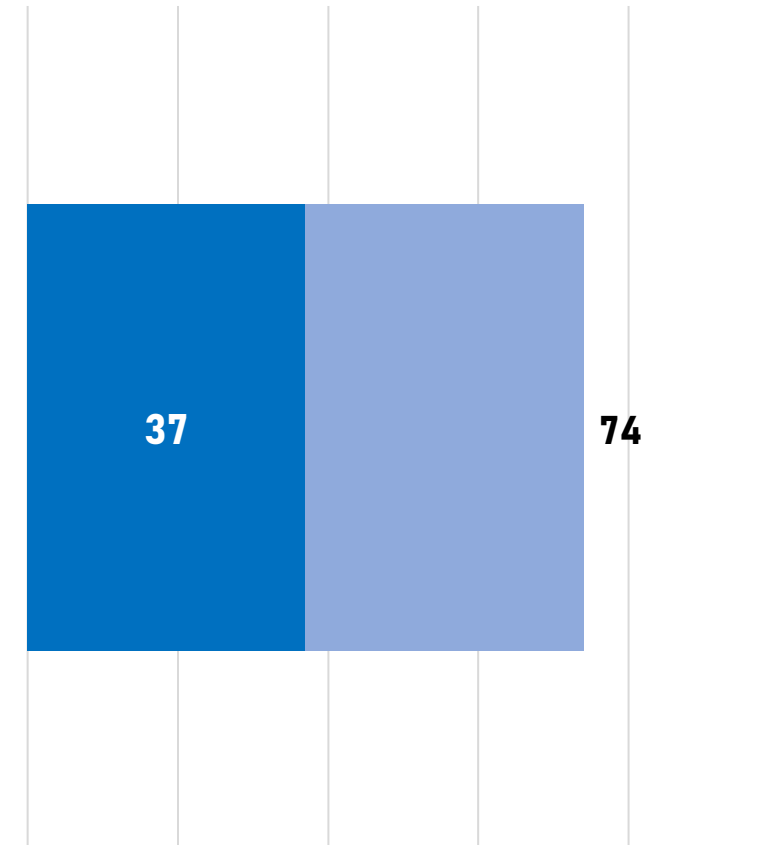
Language of Top Arguments: Better Healthcare

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: Work Hand-in-hand With Police

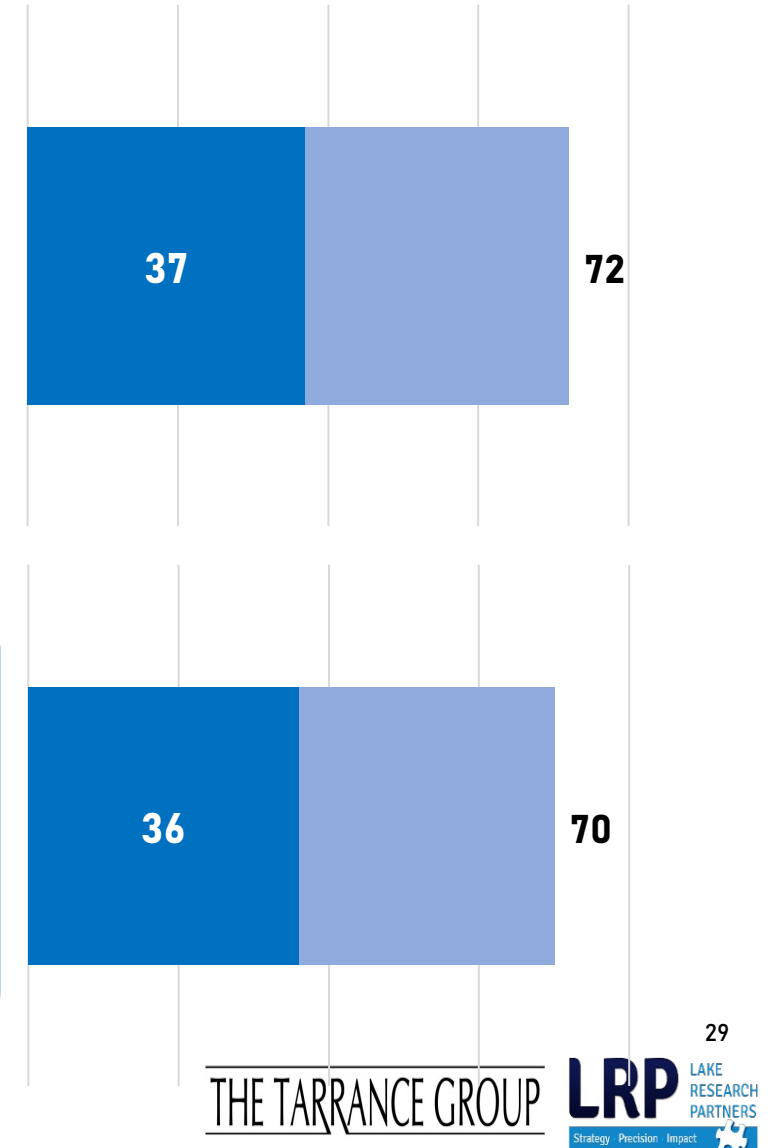
Everyone has the right to feel safe in their communities. We need to support leaders who will work hand-in-hand with the police and communities to reduce crime. We need leaders that understand the challenges police officers face and how to support them to make our communities safer. We need to support 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: Eugene, OR & Chicago, IL Examples

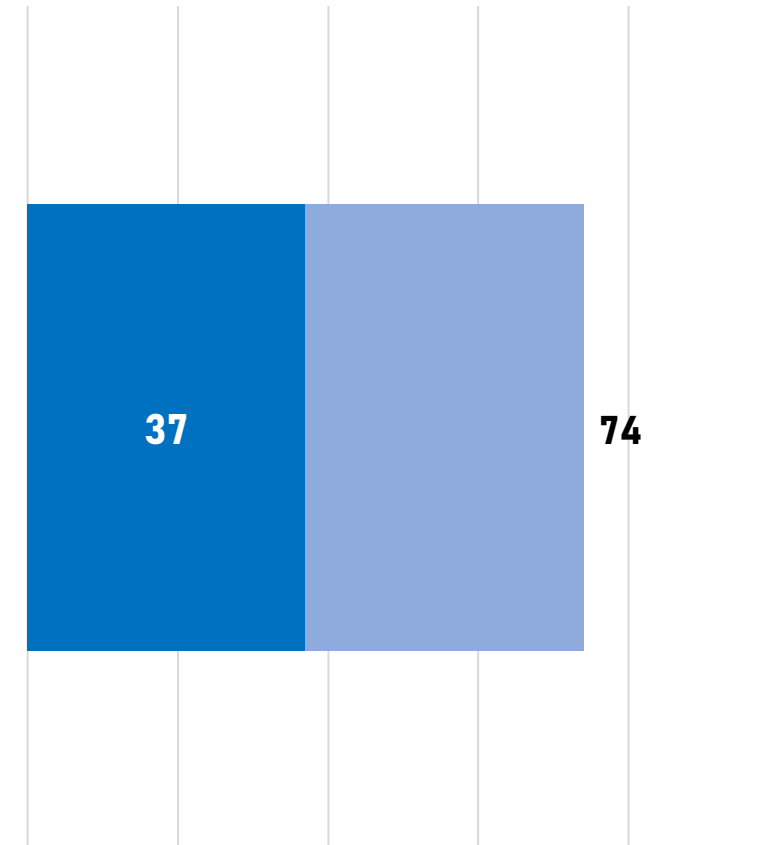
Eugene, Oregon has a community responder program that has been operating for more than 30 years, where mobile crisis intervention teams are dispatched after a person calls 9-1-1. Eugene's 24/7 service includes trauma-informed de-escalation, welfare checks, first aid and non-emergency medical care, suicide 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.

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.



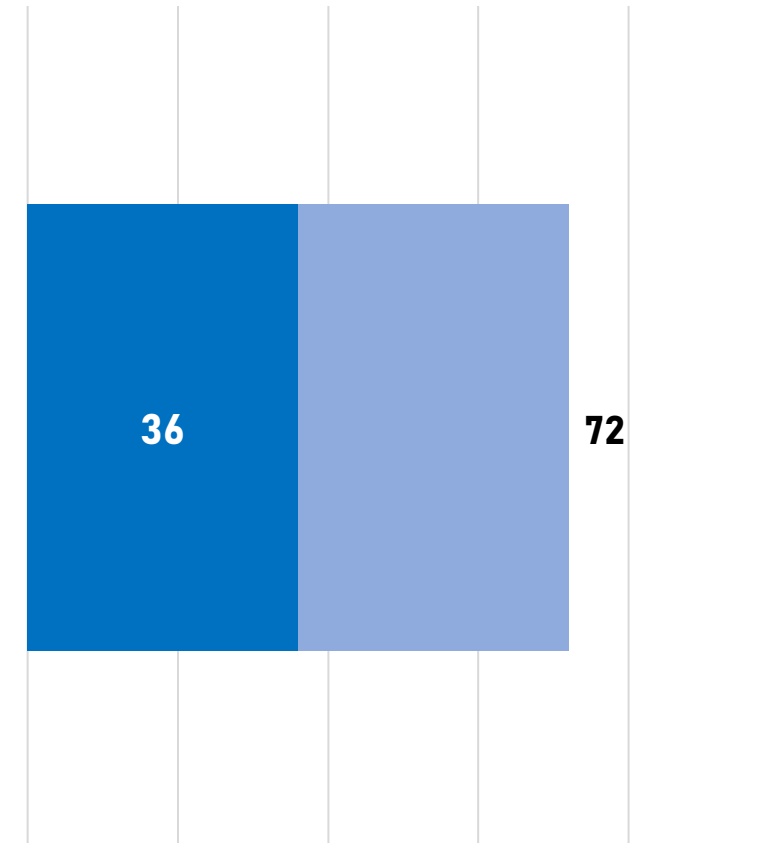
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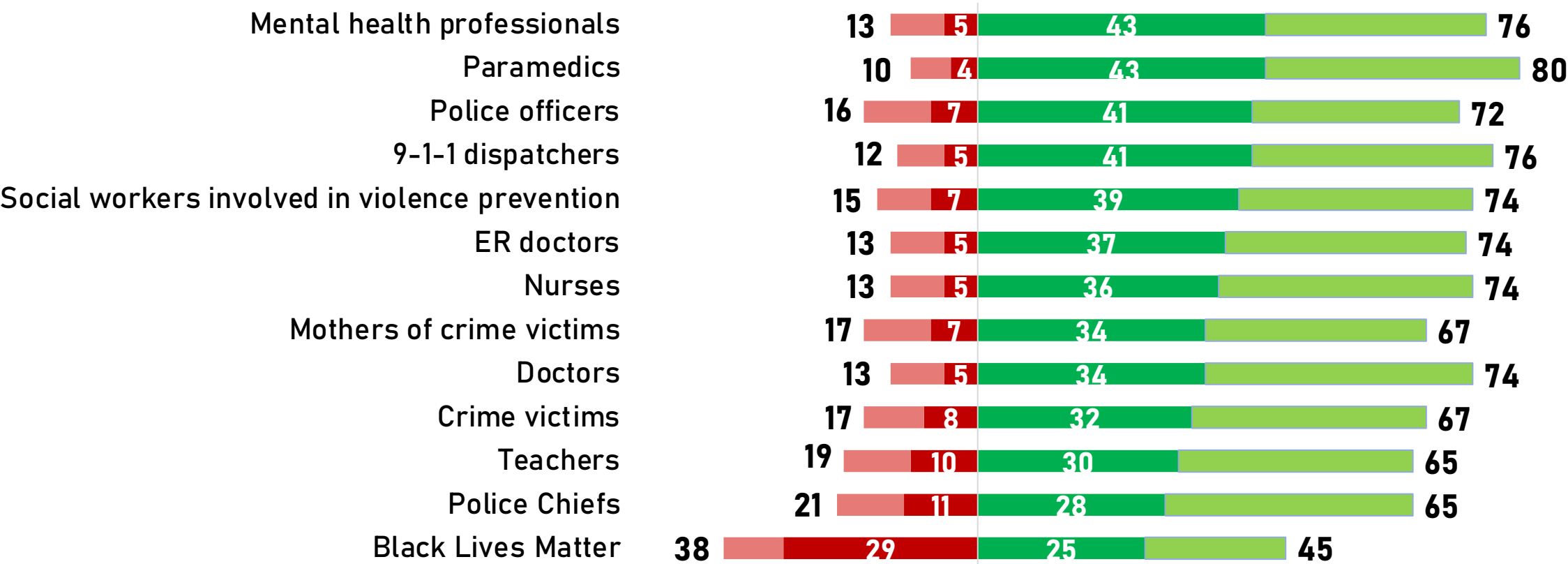
Language of Top Arguments: Small % Of 9-1-1 Calls

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.



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

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.



Washington, DC | Berkeley, CA | New York, NY
LakeResearch.com
202.776.9066

THE TARRANCE GROUP

Alexandria, VA
Tarrance.com
703.684.6688

Daniel Gotoff
dgotoff@lakeresearch.com

Brian Nienaber
bnienaber@tarrance.com

Celinda Lake
clake@lakeresearch.com

Sandra Markowitz
smarkowitz@lakeresearch.com

McCauley Pugh
mpugh@lakeresearch.com

Ronan Ferrentino
rferrentino@lakeresearch.com