John Jay College of Criminal Justice

November 2007

GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP
Research.Communications.Results.

Key Findings

- Voters consider crime a serious problem in the United States today that has only gotten worse in the last year.
  - Nearly all voters (94%) believe crime is a serious problem in America today, including a majority (53%) who believe it is a very serious problem.
    - Women, voters over 55, non-college-educated voters, Democrats, African-American and Latino voters are significantly more likely than their counterparts to believe crime is a very serious problem.
  - Two-thirds (64%) of voters believe crime has increased in America in the past year, including one-third (32%) who believe there is a lot more crime than one year ago.
    - African-American and Latino voters are 15 and 13 points more likely than Caucasian voters to day crime has increased a lot in America.
  - Voters believe the biggest increases in crime have occurred in the areas of youth crime – seven in ten say both school violence and juvenile crime has increased in the past year.

Key Findings

- Voters view reducing crime as an important issue for the President and Congress to address.
  - Four in five voters (81%) say reducing crime is the most or a very important issue for the President and Congress to address.
  - Voters prioritize reducing crime just ahead of reforming immigration laws (66% the most/very important issue).

- While voters place great importance on preventing another terrorist attack (86% most important/very important issue), they also believe officials spend too much time talking about terrorism and too little time talking about crime prevention.
  - Three-quarters (74%) agree elected officials are not talking enough about preventing crime.
  - Sixty percent (60%) agree elected officials spend too much time talking about terrorism.

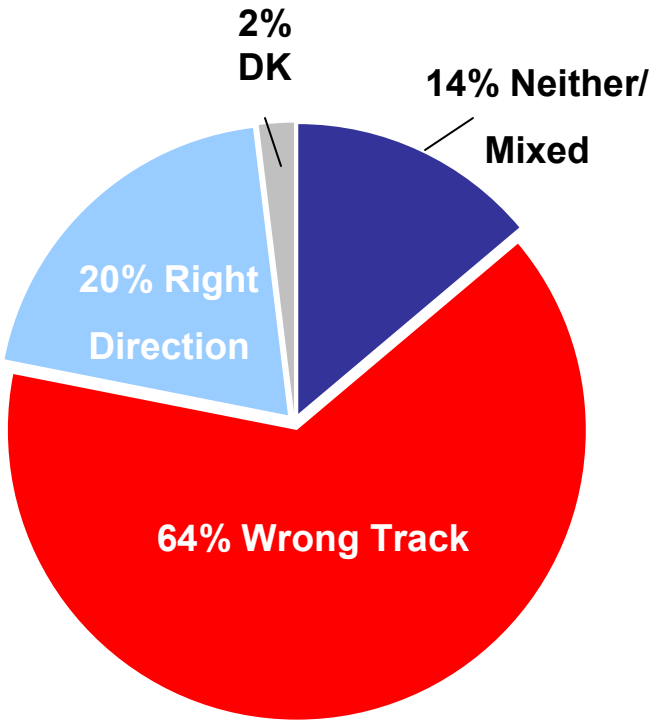
Key Findings

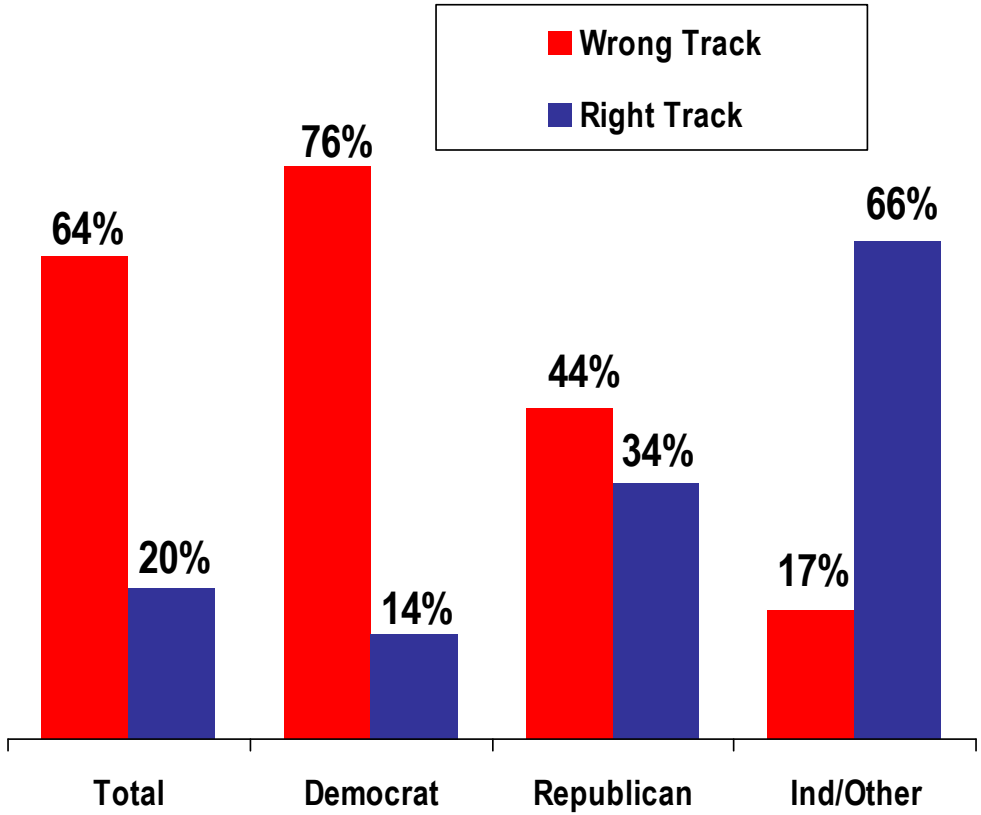
- Voters partially blame illegal immigration for increases in crime – 62% agree that illegal immigration results in increased crime – but believe a number of other factors are behind problems with crime.
  - Voters are most likely to blame drugs (33%) and poverty (17%) for problems with crime. Only 6% believe illegal immigration is most to blame for problems with crime.
  - Voters endorse an array of measures for reducing crime. At the top of their lists, one-quarter believe putting more police on the streets (24%) and enacting tougher sentencing laws (24%) would be most effective in reducing crime. Eleven percent (11%) point to reducing illegal

Perceptions of Crime

Two-thirds of voters believe the country is headed off on the wrong track

Q.3 In general, would you say that that things in this country are heading in the right direction or would you say things in this country are off on the wrong track?

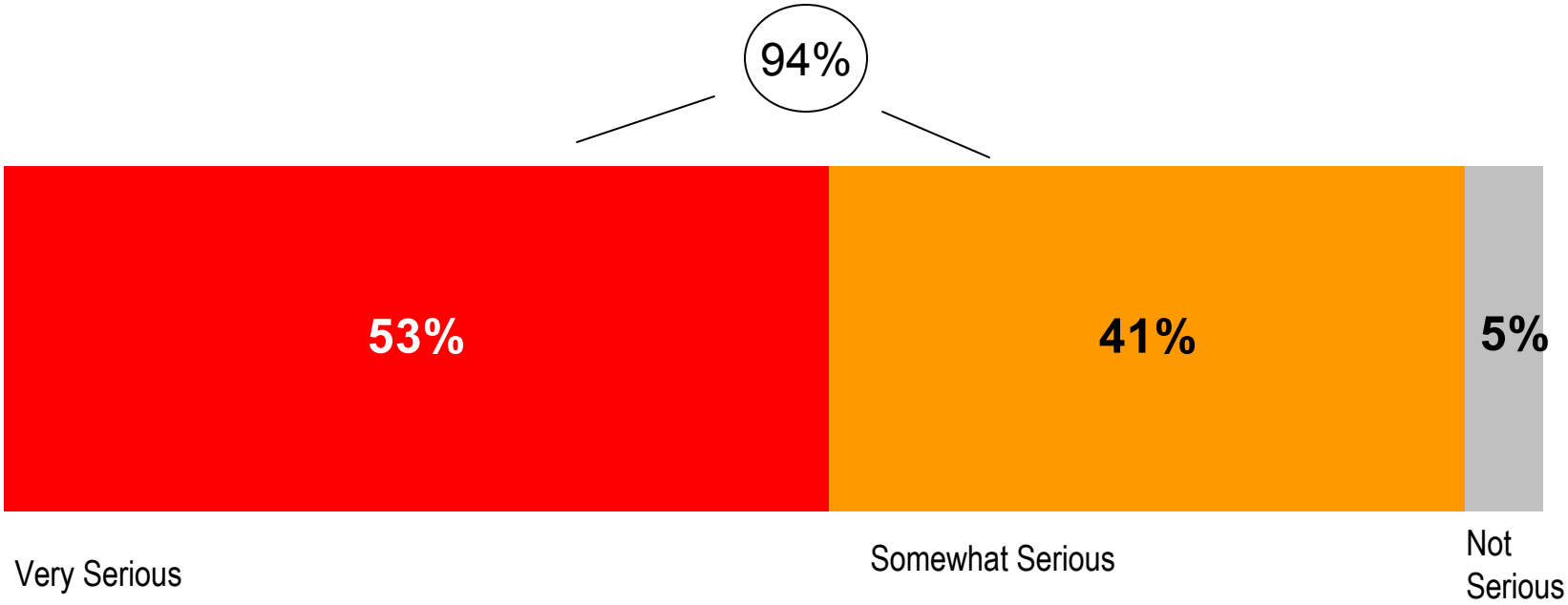




Two in five voters (60%) across demographic groups believe the country is headed off on the wrong track, except for Republicans (44%).

Nearly all voters believe crime is a serious problem in American today; half believe it is a very serious problem

Q.10 How big a problem is crime in America today? Is it a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, a not very serious problem or is it not a serious problem at all?

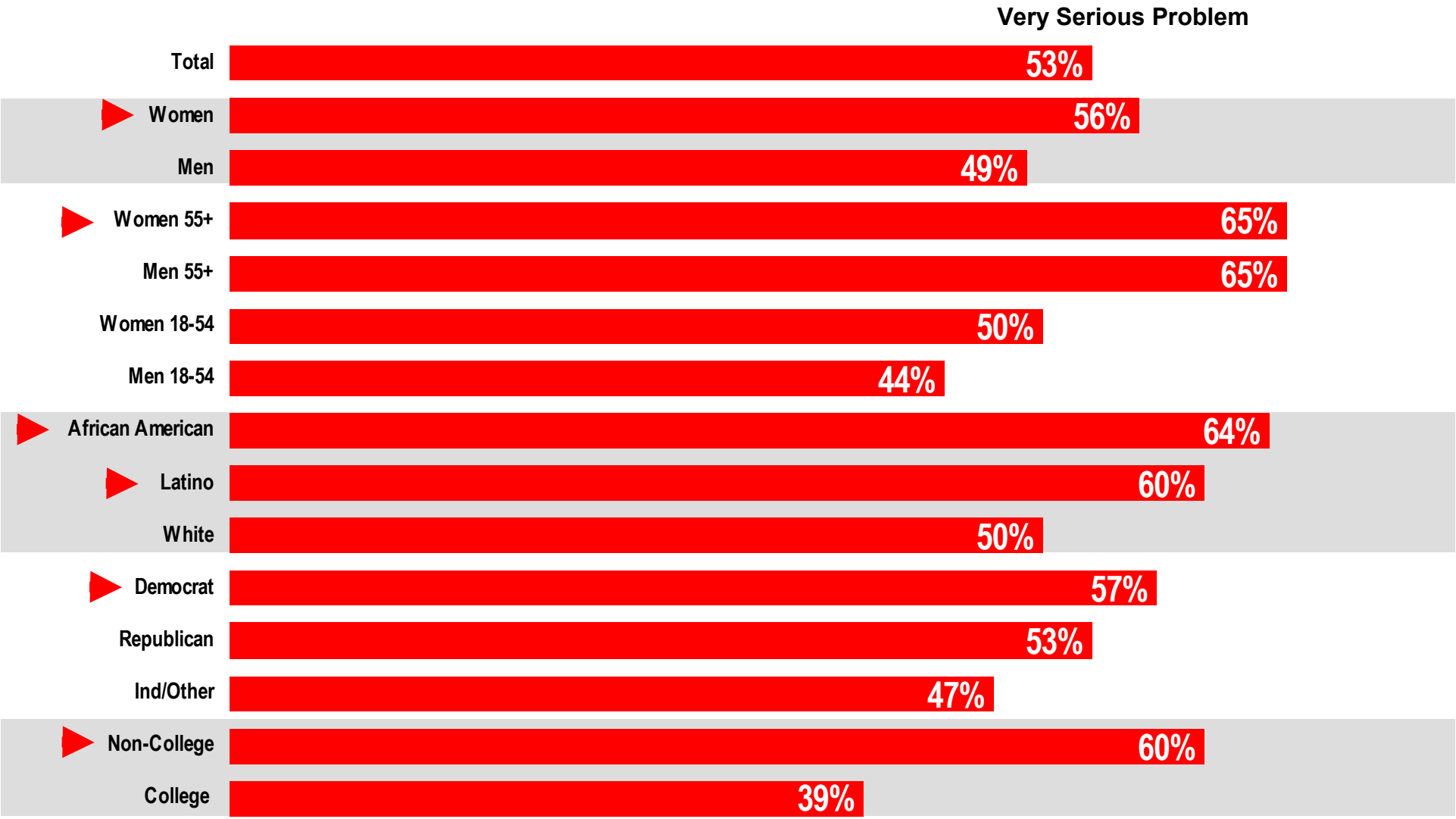


- No less than four in five voters (80%) across demographic groups believe crime is a serious problem in America today

- Women over 55, non-college educated voters, Republican and Democratic women, African-Americans, and Latinos are even more likely than voters as a whole to believe crime is a very serious problem

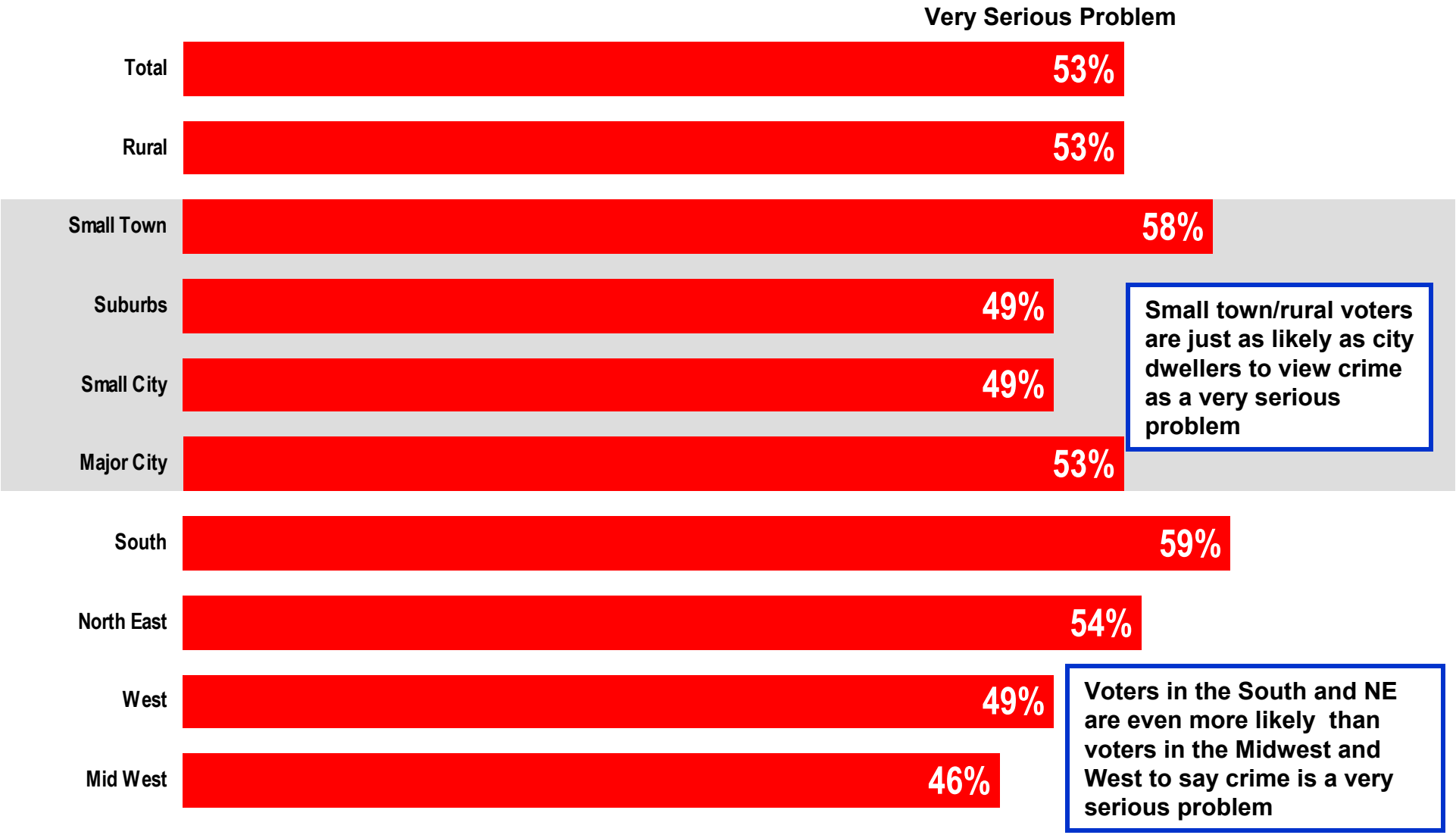
Who worries more about crime?

Q.10 How big a problem is crime in America today? Is it a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, a not very serious problem or is it not a serious problem at all?



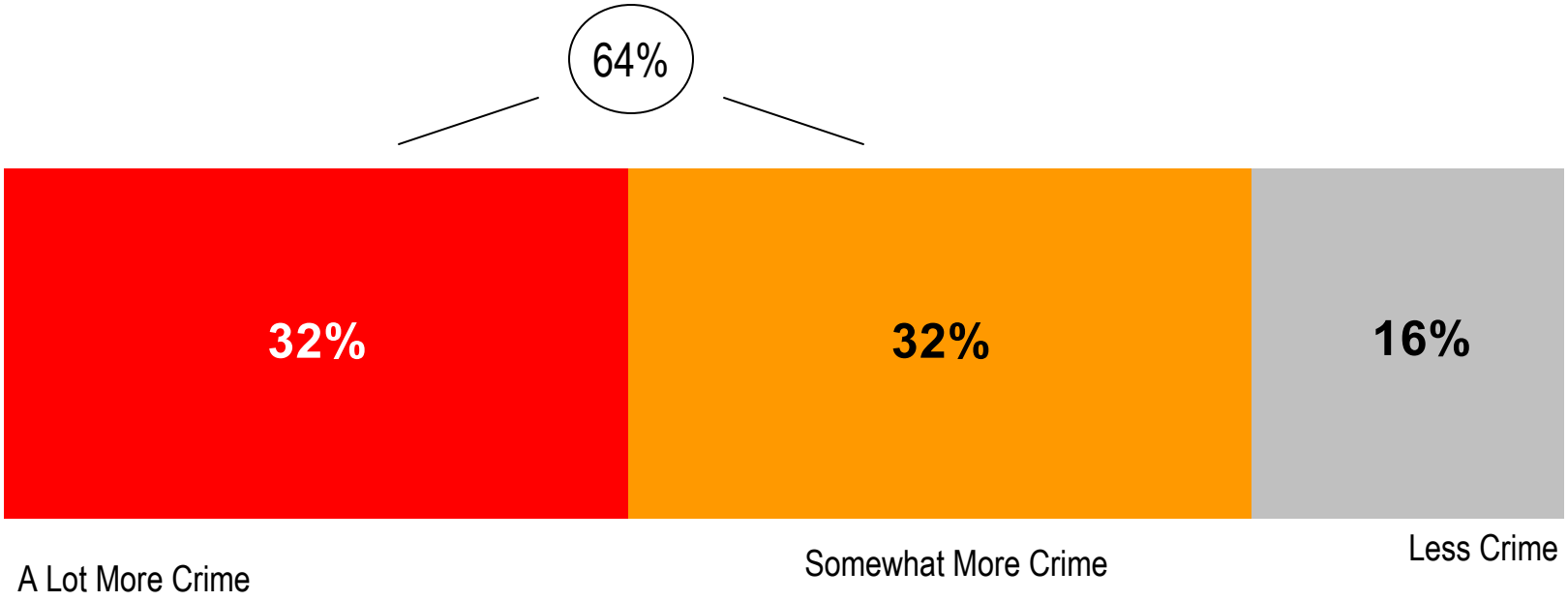
Regional Differences

Q.10 How big a problem is crime in America today? Is it a very serious problem, a somewhat serious problem, a not very serious problem or is it not a serious problem at all?



Two-thirds of voters believe crime has increased in America in the past year; one-third believe it has increased a lot

Q.11 As far as you know, is there more or less crime in America than one year ago?

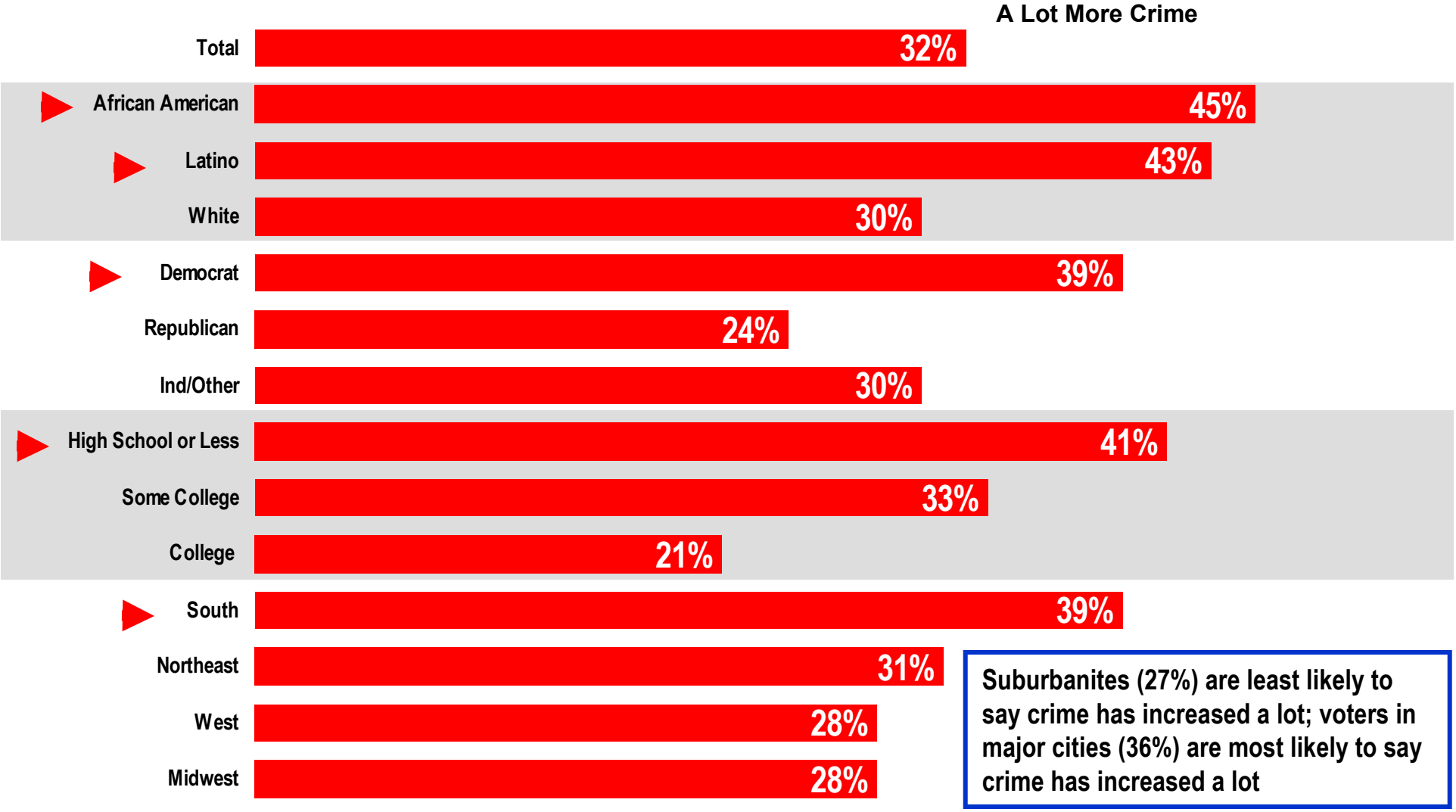


- A majority of voters across all demographic groups say crime has increased, except for Republican men (46%)

- Non-college educated women, voters in the South, Democrats, African-Americans, and Latinos are even more likely than voters overall to say crime has increased a lot in the past year

Differences exist across racial, party, and regional lines, as well as by educational attainment

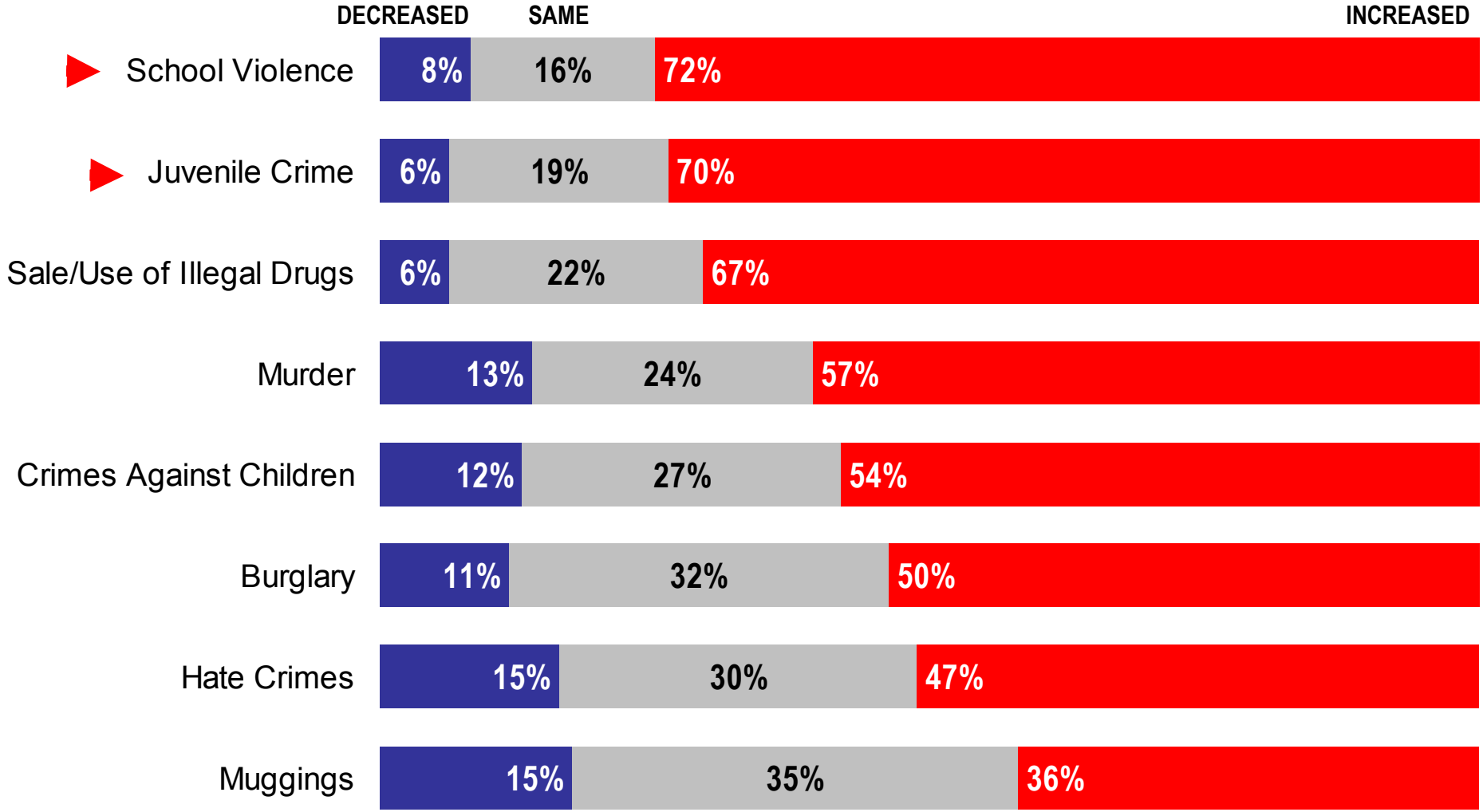
Q.11 As far as you know, is there more or less crime in America than one year ago?
[IF MORE]: Is that a lot more/ somewhat more?



Suburbanites (27%) are least likely to say crime has increased a lot; voters in major cities (36%) are most likely to say crime has increased a lot

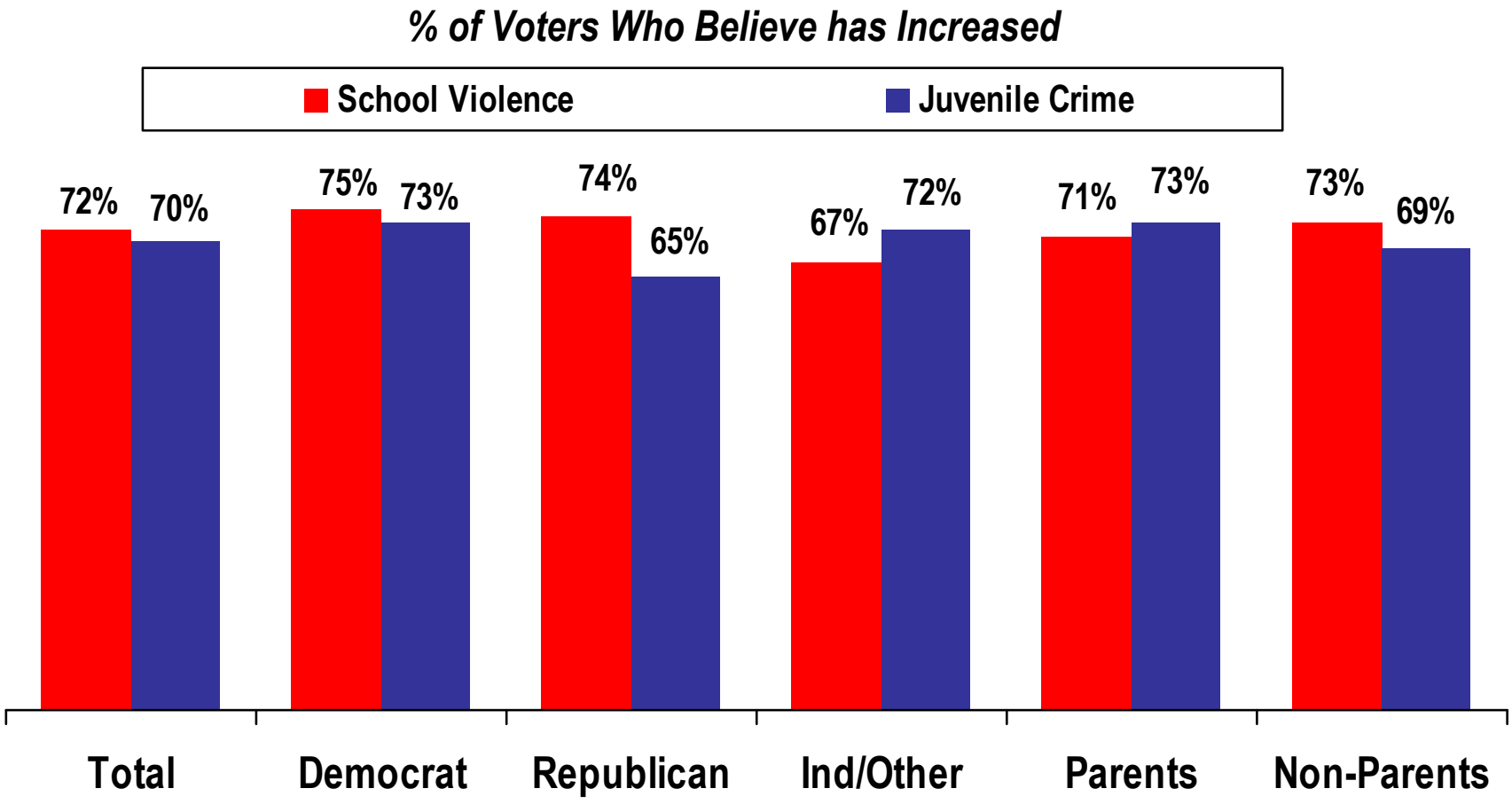
Voters believe all forms of crime tested are on the rise; school violence and juvenile crime top the list

Q.12-19 Now I am going to read you a list of crimes…After each, tell me whether you think this type of crime has increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the past year.



Democrats and Republicans, parents and non-parents are equally likely to believe school violence has increased

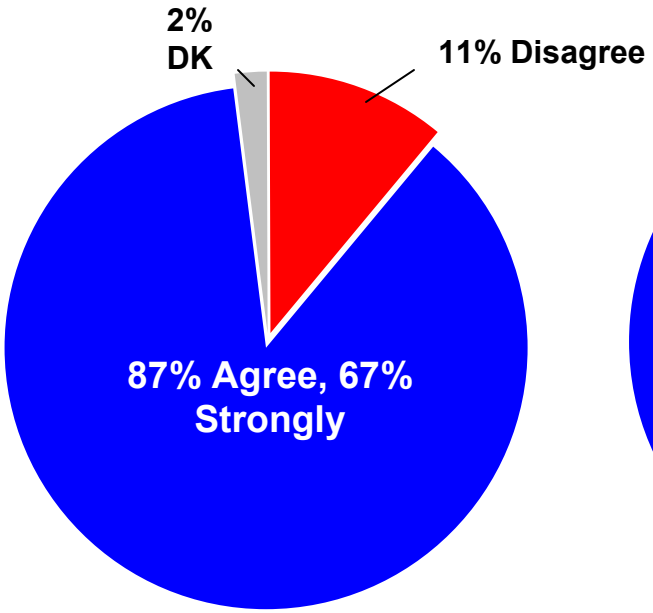
Q.12-19 Now I am going to read you a list of crimes that happen in the United States. After each, I want you to tell me whether you think this type of crime has increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the past year.



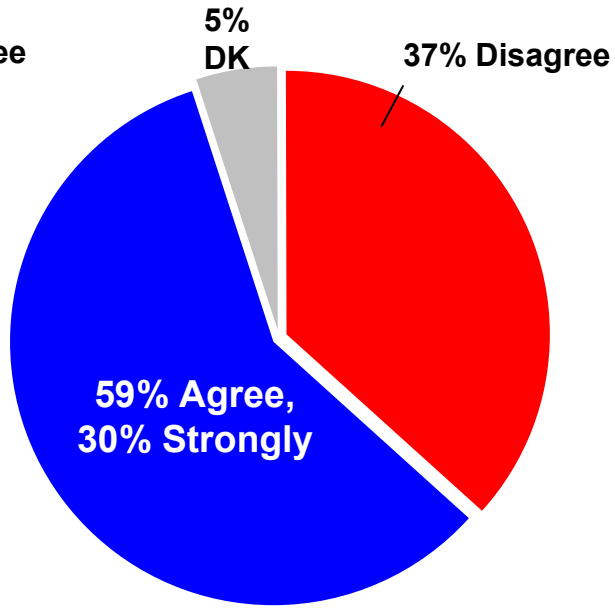
Voters think cities are less safe than they used to be, especially for kids, but voters refute the notion they are afraid to walk alone at night

Q.23/25/27: Please tell me whether you strongly agree , somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement:

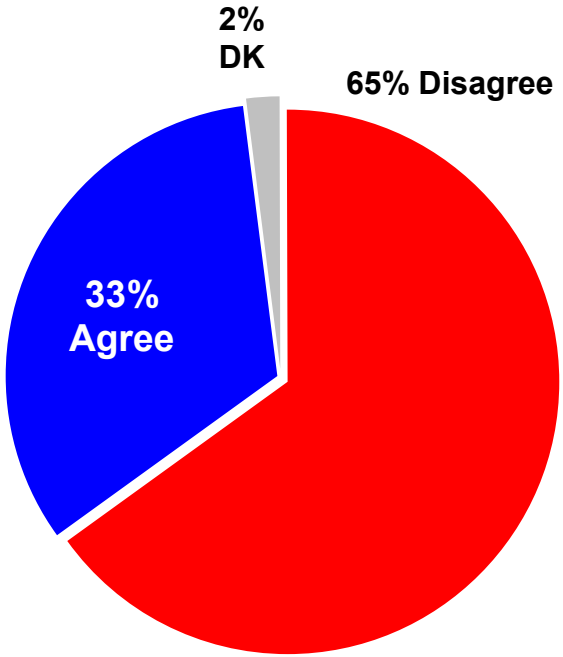
The streets are less safe for kids today than when I was growing up.



My city is less safe than it used to be.



I am afraid to walk alone at night in my neighborhood.



Whose most concerned about safety on the streets for themselves and kids?

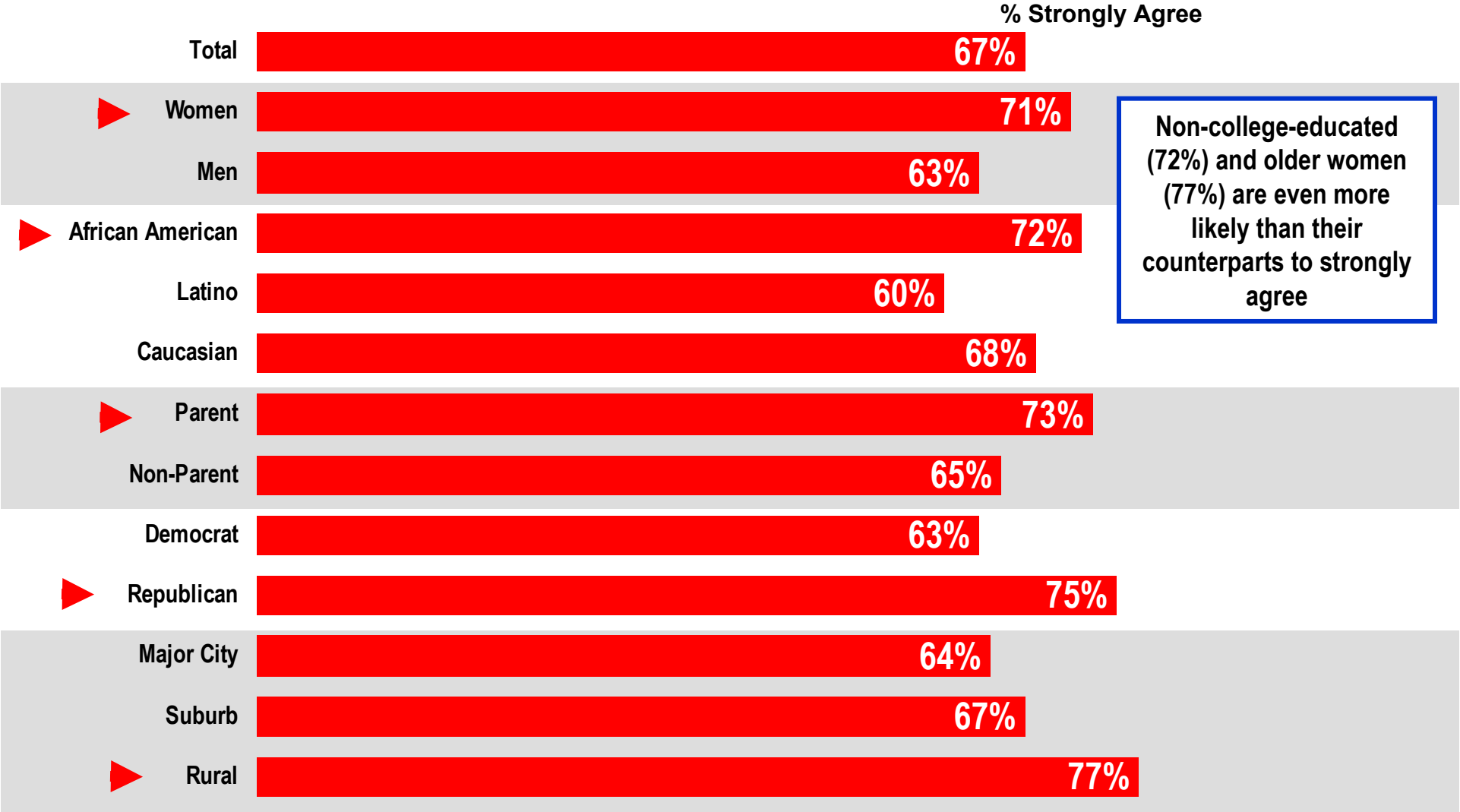
- Seniors (35%), non-college-educated women (36%), Democratic women (36%), African-Americans (45%), and Latinos (35%) are most likely to strongly agree their city is less safe than it used to be

- Women 55+ (28%), non-college-educated women (25%), major city dwellers (23%), unmarried voters (23%), and Latinos (25%) are most likely to strongly agree they are afraid to walk alone at night

- Women 55+ (77%), non-college-educated women (72%), rural voters (77%), Republicans (75%), African-Americans (72%), and parents (73%) are most likely to strongly agree the streets are less safe for kids than when they were growing up

Perceptions of safety (for kids) differ by gender, parental status, race, party, and area of residence

Q.27 Please tell me whether you strongly agree , somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: The streets are less safe for kids today…



Factors Driving Crime Rates

Voters largely believe drugs and poverty are to blame for problems with crime

Q.30: Thinking about crime in this country, which of the following do you think is MOST responsible for problems with crime today?

Drugs and alcohol	33%
Poverty	17
Lenient Judges	9
Availability of Handguns	8
Unemployment	7
Illegal Immigration	6
Not Enough Police on Streets	6
Lenient Parole Boards	3
(None)	1
(Other)	6
(DK)	3

Republicans:

Drugs and alcohol	34%
Poverty	12
Lenient Judges	18
Availability of Handguns	3

Democrats:

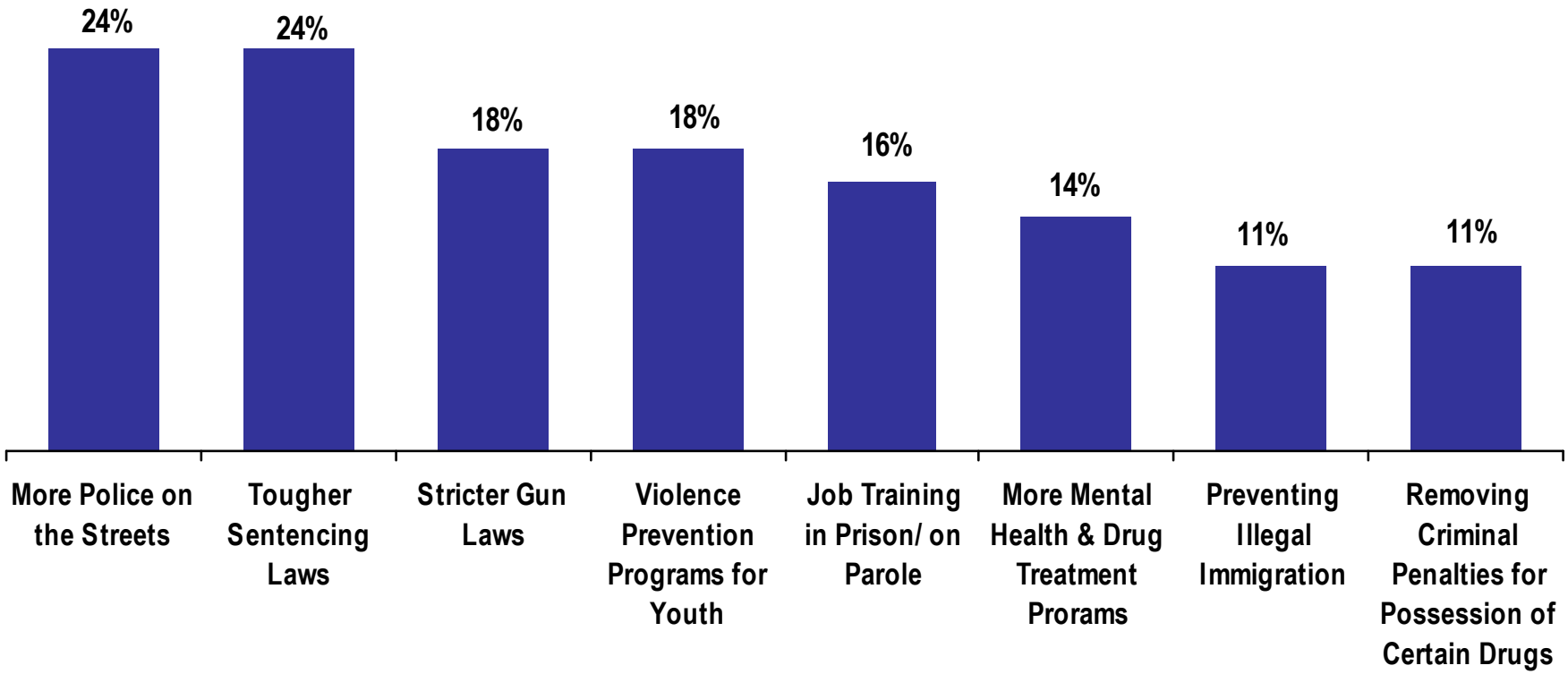
Drugs and alcohol	32%
Poverty	19
Lenient Judges	5
Availability of Handguns	14

Independents:

Drugs and alcohol	34%
Poverty	21
Lenient Judges	7
Availability of Handguns	7

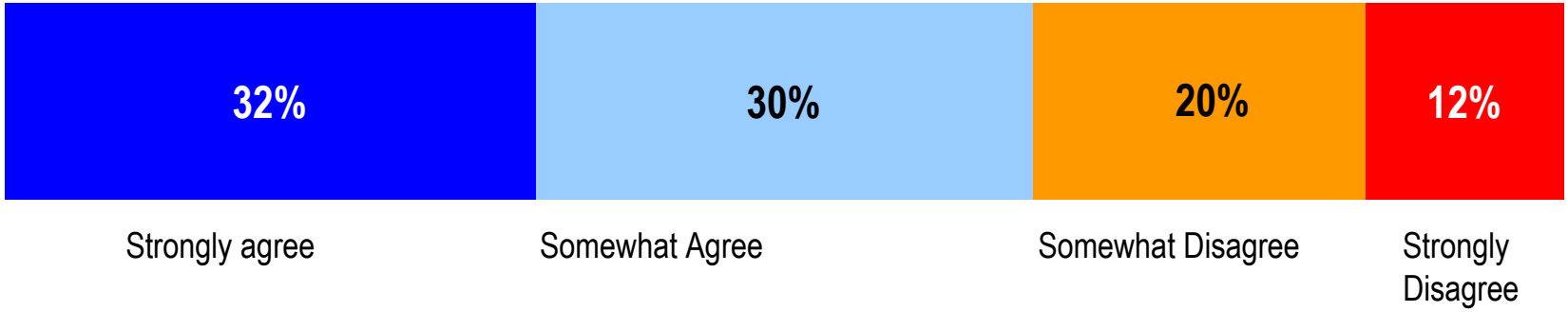
Voters divide on the best measures for reducing crime, though more police and tougher sentencing laws test best

Q.31 I am going to read you a list of ways some people have said we can reduce crime in the United States. Please tell me which ONE or TWO of the following you believe would be most effective in reducing crime?



Voters believe illegal immigration has resulted in more crime, though few would say it is the biggest contributor to crime

Q.22 Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: The growing number of illegal immigrants to this country has resulted in more crime.

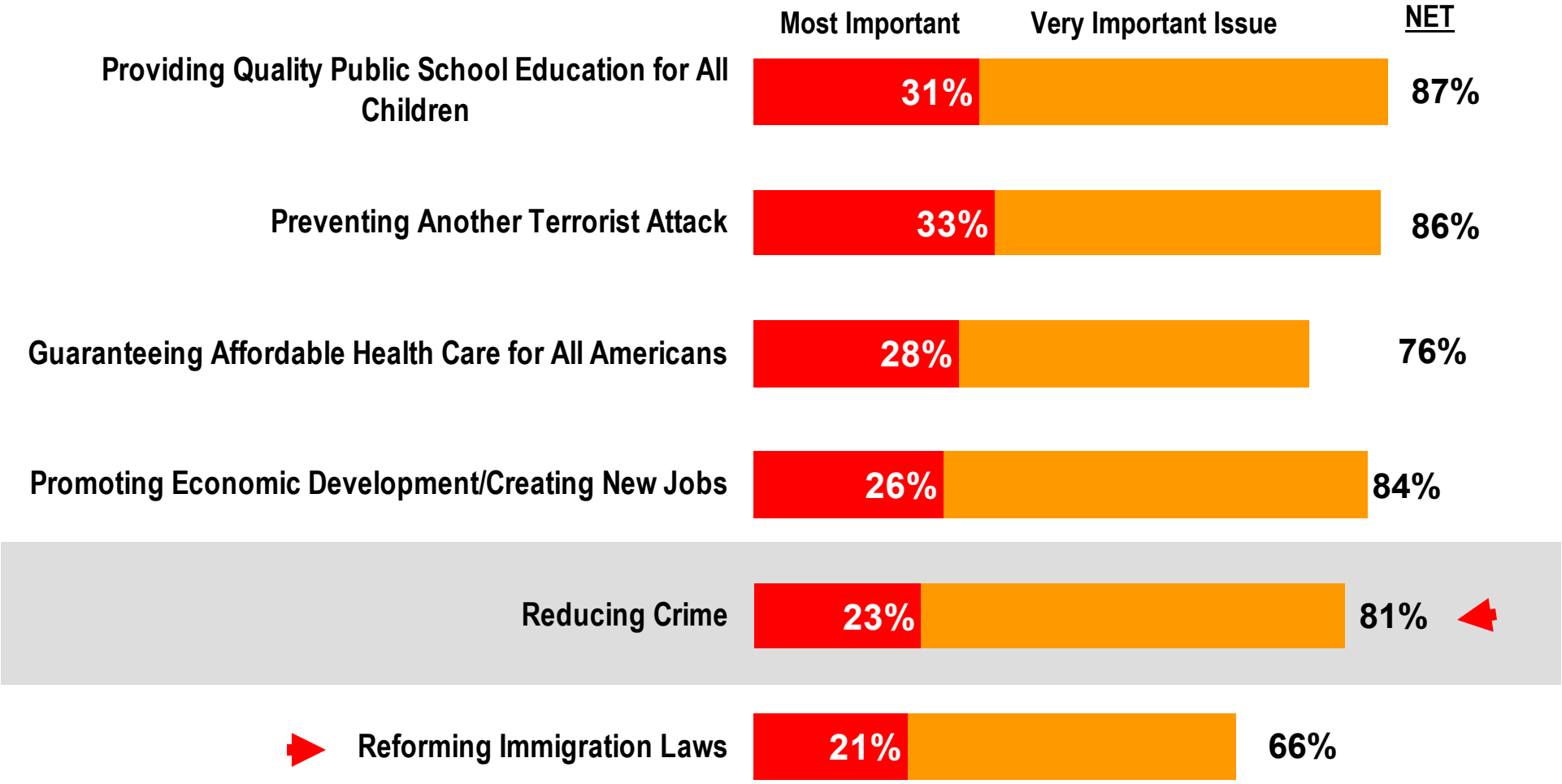


- Q30 – 6% of voters say illegal immigration is most responsible for problems with crime today.
- Q31 – 11% of voters say preventing illegal immigration would be most effective in reducing crime.
- Men 55+ (42%), rural voters (45%), Republican men (42%), and married men (38%) are most likely to <u>strongly</u> agree that illegal immigration has resulted in more crime.
- Roughly one-third of Caucasian, as well as African-American and Latino voters strongly agree.

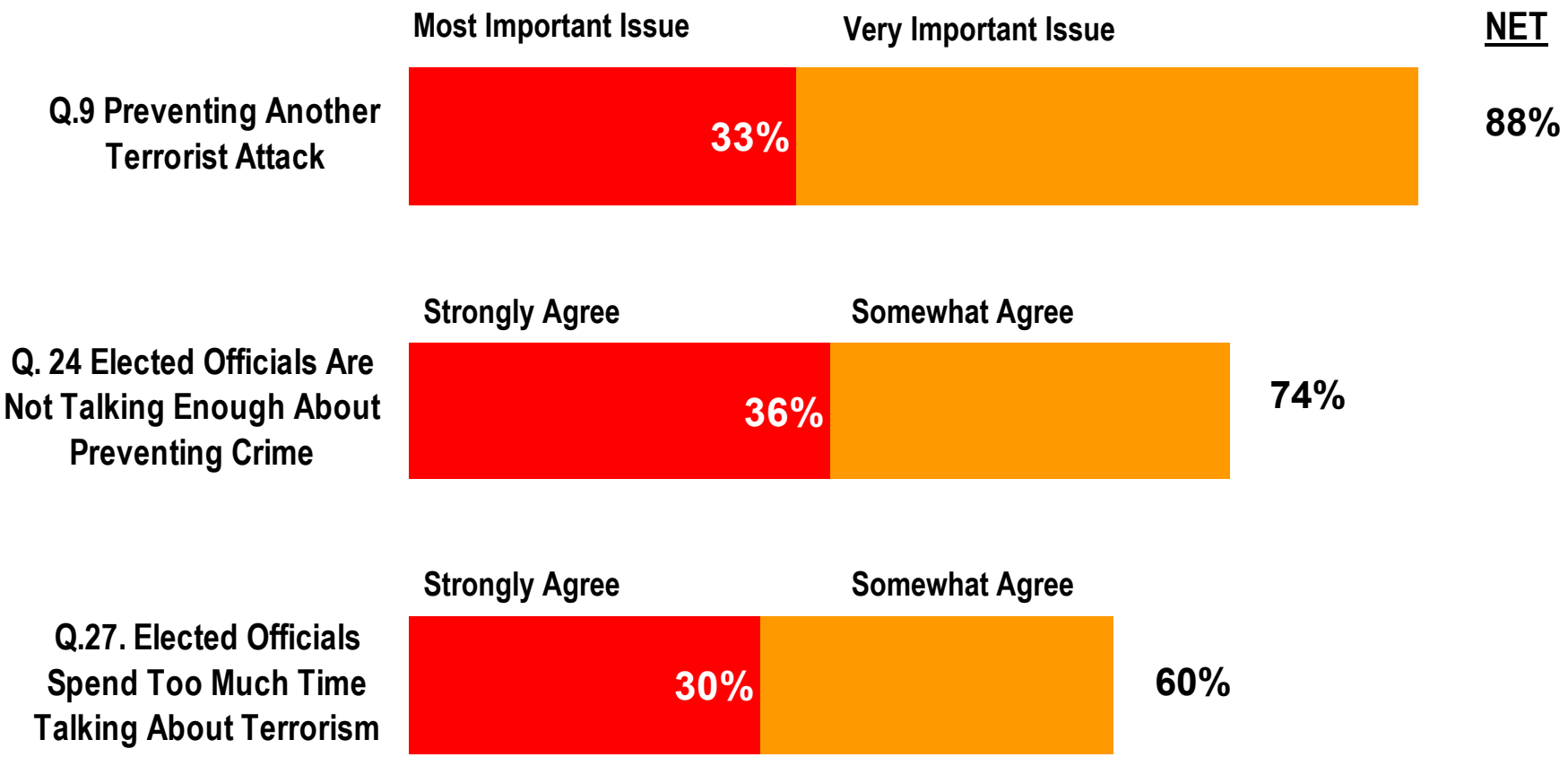
Elected Officials

Four in five want the President and Congress to focus on reducing crime

Q.4-9 I want to read a list of issues some people have mentioned as important for our President and Congress to address…Please tell me if it is the most important issue for our President and Congress to address, a very important issue, a somewhat important issue, or if it is not an important issue at all…

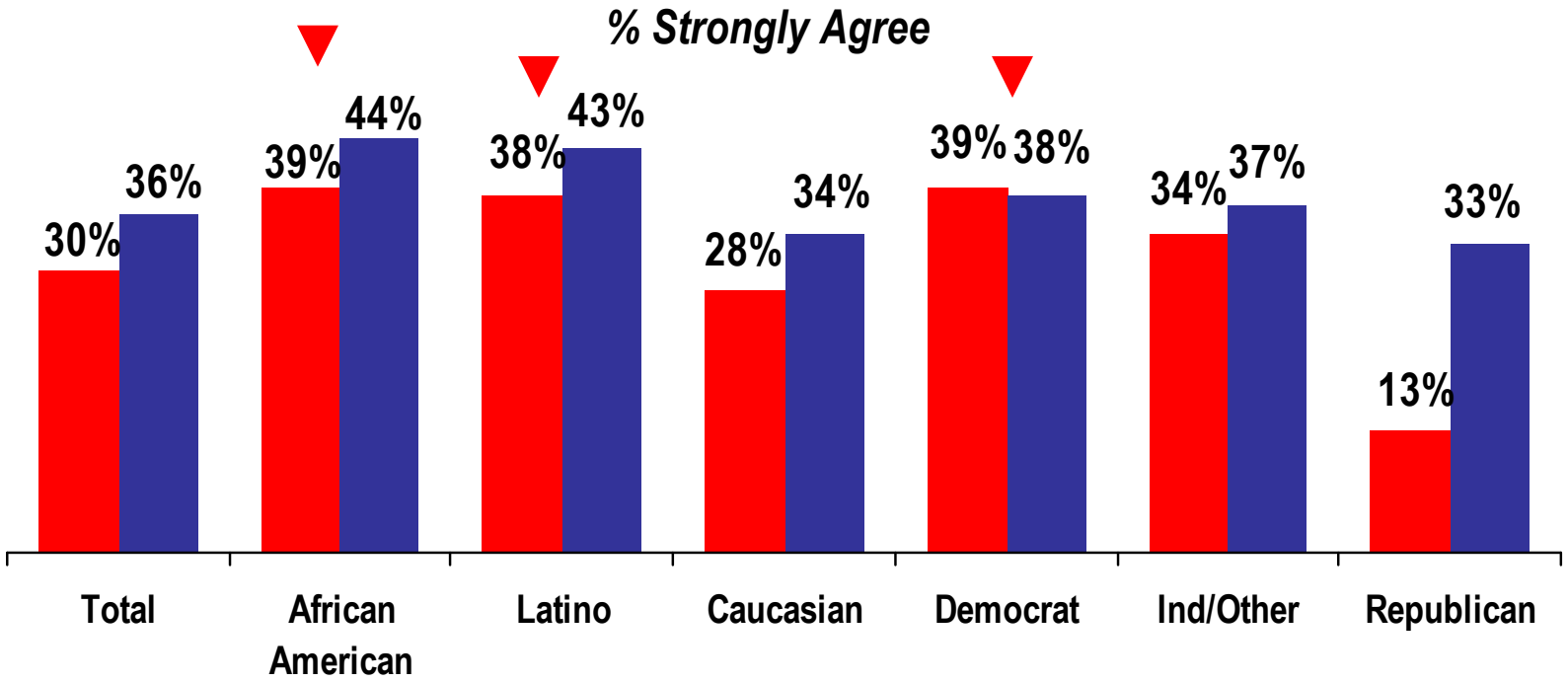


Voters prioritize national security as a top issue but still agree elected officials spend too much time talking about terrorism and not enough time talking about crime



African Americans, Latinos, and Democrats are more likely to strongly agree officials spend too much time talking about terrorism

Q.24/27 Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:
Elected officials are not talking enough about preventing crime.
Elected officials spend too much time talking about terrorism.

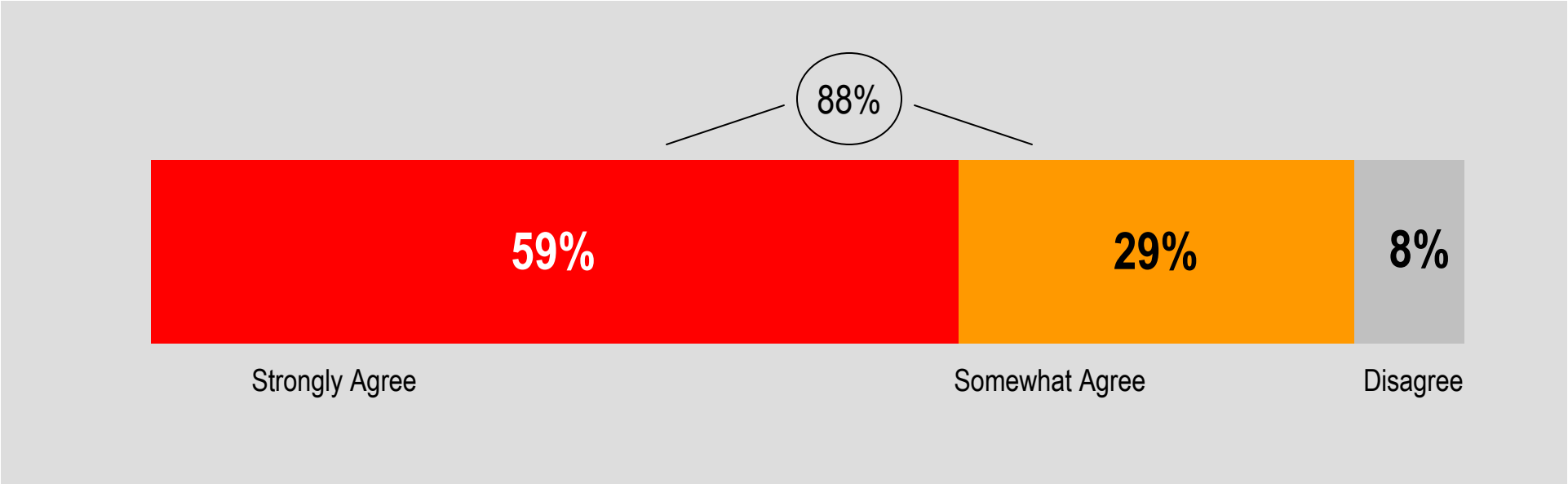


Too Much Time On Terrorism
Not Enough Time On Crime

Only 13% of Republican voters strongly agree that elected officials are spending too much time talking about terrorism.

Voters think they have a greater chance of being killed by crime than a terrorist attack than

Q. 24 Please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements: Americans have a greater chance of being killed by crime than a terrorist attack.



A majority of voters across all demographic groups strongly agree.

Crime and the Media

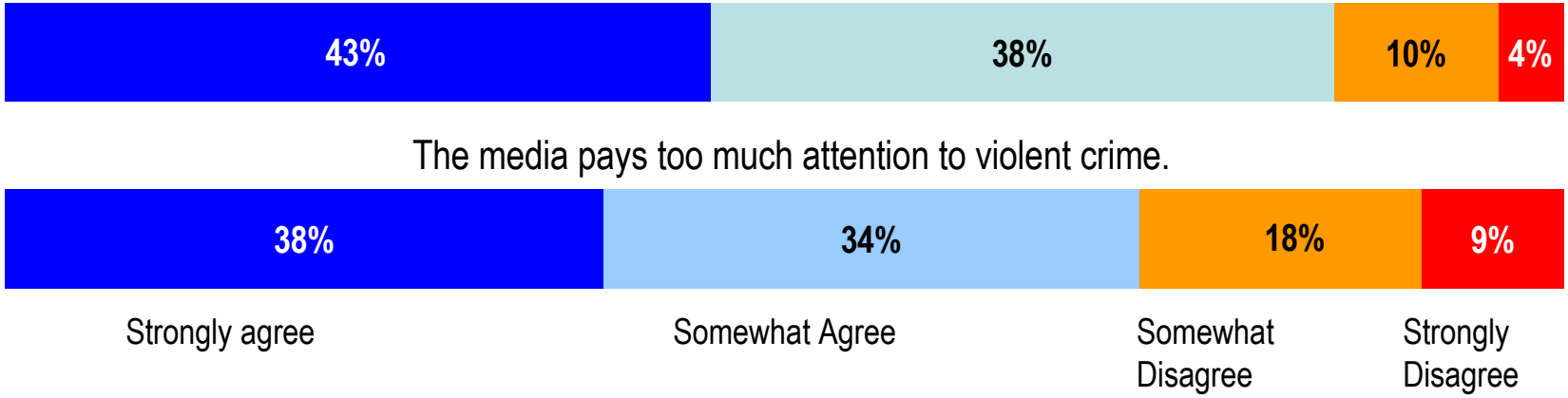
Voters get most of their news about crime from local television and criticize the media for focusing on violence and not prevention

Q.32-33 Where do you get most of your news about crime? AND Thinking about the news you get from televisions, do you get most of your news about crime from watching local news, network news, or news cable channels?

Television	66%
Newspapers	29%
Internet	15%
Radio	9%
Magazine	2%

Local news	53%
Network news	15%
Cable	27%

Q.26/29 Please tell me whether you strongly agree…: I want to hear more news about what communities are doing to prevent crime and less about actual crimes.



Methodology

- Global Strategy Group conducted a telephone survey of 800 registered voters nationwide with oversamples of 100 African American and 100 Latino voters.
- The survey was fielded between October 29 and November 13, 2007.
- The base sample was called using a Random Digit Dialing phone methodology; the oversamples were called using targeted RDD sample and listed surname sample.
- The overall margin of error is +/- 3.5% at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error varies at the subgroup level.