



**Manhattan
Institute**

Assessing Crime in Chattanooga

*Survey Analysis of Chattanooga Residents on
Public Safety, Policing, and Public Policy*



Methodology

- The Manhattan Institute polled a representative sample of 550 residents of Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Fieldwork dates: February 10-13, 2024
- Sample drawn from the state voter file, collected using mixed methods:
 - Live landline call for 110 responses (20%)
 - Live cell call for 165 responses (30%)
 - SMS-to-web for 275 responses (50%)
- Quotas were added to ensure representative data: on gender, age, race, and education. The sample was weighted back to the population using the following variables: on gender, age, race, and education
- 10-minute survey
- Margin of error: 4.2%

Headlines

- **There is deep and widespread concern about public safety in Chattanooga.**
 - 3 in 4 residents say this is a major issue.
 - 1 in 3 feel unsafe when shopping, even during the daytime; 6 in 10 feel unsafe when downtown at night.
- **What is more – as the public see it – this issue is getting worse.**
 - Half of Chattanooga residents (including 4 in 10 Democrats) say that there is more violent crime now than there was in 2020; just 10% say there is now less.
- **Concern about this issue spans across demographic and party lines.**
 - 7 in 10 Democrats say they are concerned about public safety in the city; 8 in 10 black residents feel the same.
- **There is also widespread agreement about some of the solutions:**
 - **Increased police numbers:** Half of residents think Chattanooga needs more police while just 1 in 10 say it needs fewer.
 - **Tougher sentencing for serious or violent criminals:** 7 in 10 support a toughened ‘three strikes’ law.
- **However, views on enforcement of ‘minor’ offences and ‘progressive’ prosecutors do divide more clearly along party lines.**

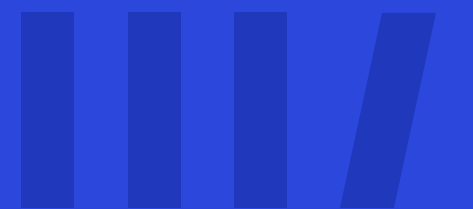
In detail

- 7 in 10 Chattanooga residents **feel that people in their community are generally trustworthy** – 8 in 10 that they are generally neighbourly. This is relatively consistent across demographics.
- 1 in 2 Chattanooga residents say that there is **more violent crime now than there was in 2020**; just 10% say there is now less. While Republicans are most likely to think crime has worsened, this is **an issue that crosses partisan lines**: half of independents and more than 4 in 10 of Democrats agree that levels of crime have increased.
- 3 in 4 say that **crime and public safety are major issues in Chattanooga**; 4 in 5 say these are major issues across the US.
- 3 in 4 Chattanooga residents, including 7 in 10 Democrats, say they are somewhat or very concerned about public safety in the city.
- A third of Chattanooga residents **feel unsafe when shopping, even during the daytime; a fifth feel unsafe in their local park**.
 - This is by no means a purely partisan issue: for example, **half of Democrats say they feel unsafe downtown at night**.
 - While white people are more likely to feel unsafe when downtown, **black people are more likely to feel unsafe in every other environment**.
- Majorities of Chattanooga residents say that **stabbings, muggings and homeless encampments are big issues in the city**.
- There is majority support for **increased police numbers in Chattanooga and across the country**. Only around 1 in 10 think police numbers should be reduced.
 - **Black residents are especially likely to support police numbers being increased**.

In detail

- There is overwhelming agreement that shootings, stabbings, muggings and stealing **should be met with arrests**. The Chattanooga public are split on whether graffiti and public urination should be met with arrest; but tend to think **littering and setting up a homeless encampment should not be**.
- The Chattanooga public are divided on police enforcement against ‘minor’ offences like graffiti, public urination, littering, and homeless encampments, with 47% (a plurality) in support and 40% opposed.
 - **This is an issue that divides along partisan lines:** 8 in 10 Republicans view this type of policing as good, while 6 in 10 Democrats view it as bad.
- Chattanooga residents **oppose** the “progressive” approach to criminal prosecutions by 47% to 38%. This is another issue that splits the city along **roughly partisan lines**.
- By a clear margin (54% to 28%), **Chattanooga residents think homeless people should not be allowed to sleep in public places**. This includes 36% of Democrats. But as above, residents are less sure that this should be an arrestable offence.
- There is firm and widespread agreement that **tougher legislation** is needed with respect to how Tennessee deals with offenders convicted of violent crimes: 7 in 10 say as much – including more than 6 in 10 Democrats – with fewer than 1 in 5 disagreeing.
- Similar, there is clear majority agreement on the need for **tougher sentencing laws**:
 - Two thirds of Chattanooga residents (including 6 in 10 Democrats) support the 2022 “truth in sentencing” law
 - 7 in 10 (including 6 in 10 Democrats) support toughening Tennessee’s existing three-strikes law.

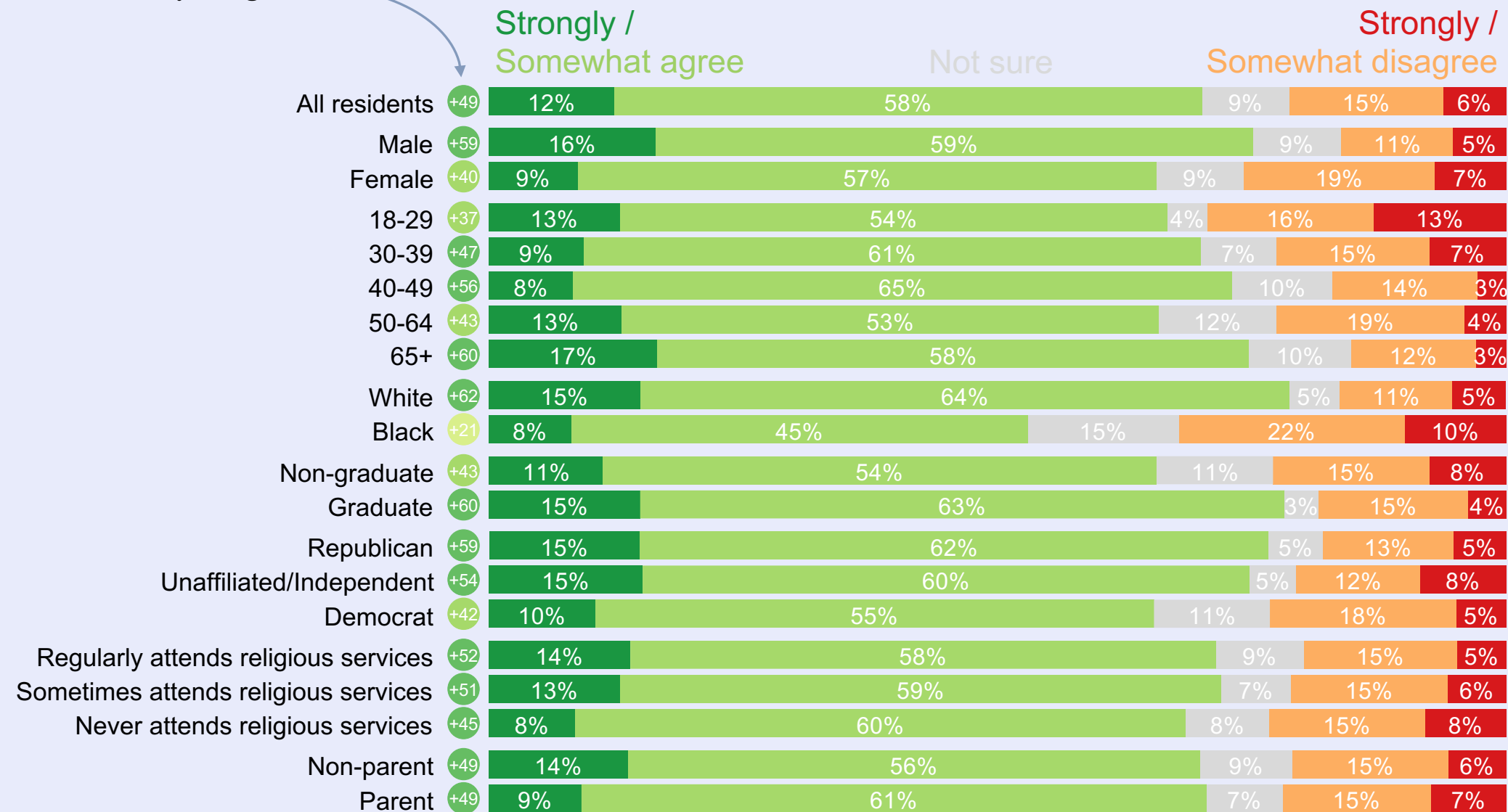
Trust levels and crime



Community trust

Do you agree or disagree that people in your community are generally trustworthy?

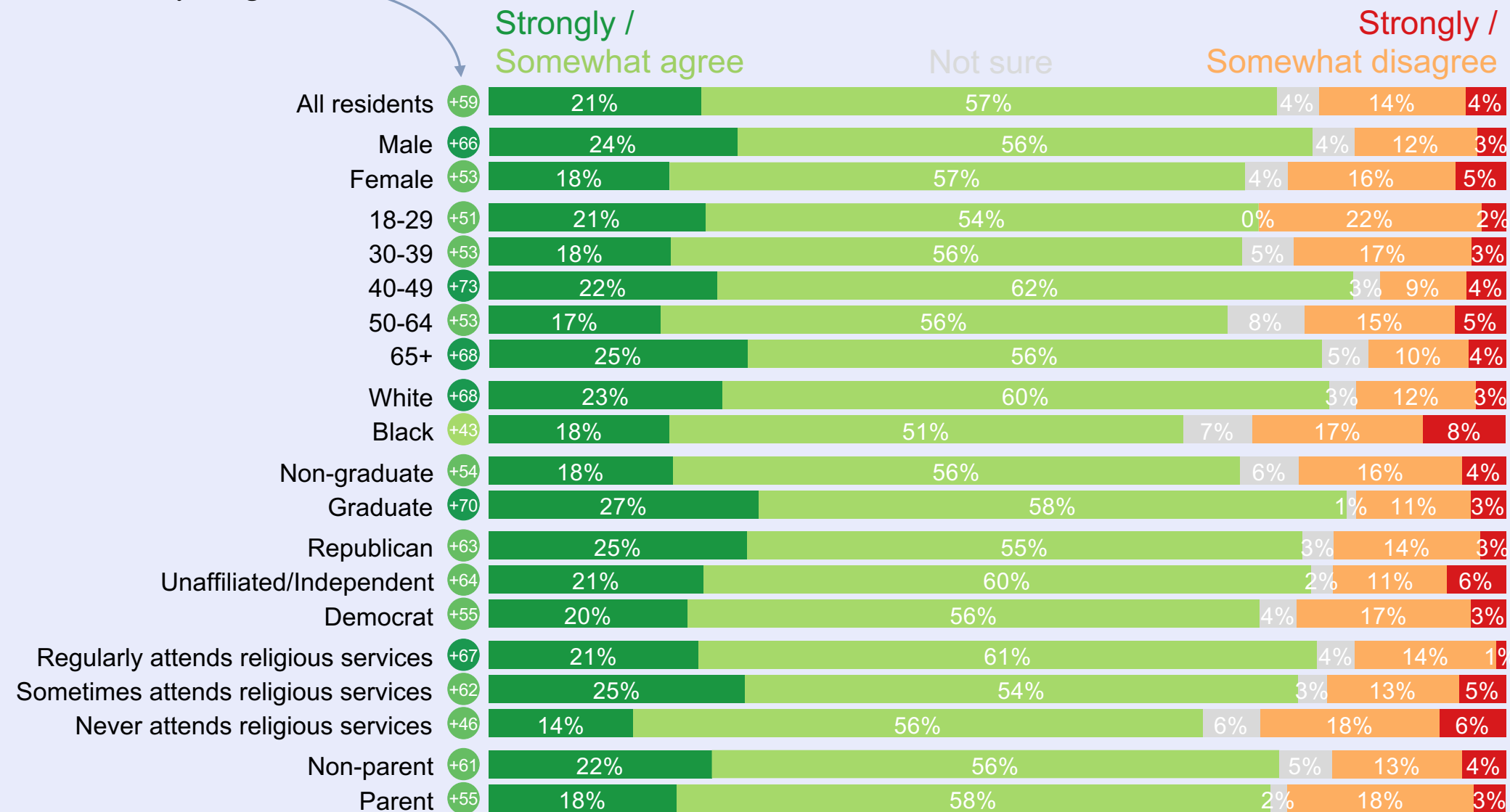
Net: % saying agree minus % who say disagree



Neighborliness

Do you agree or disagree that people in your community are generally willing to help their neighbors?

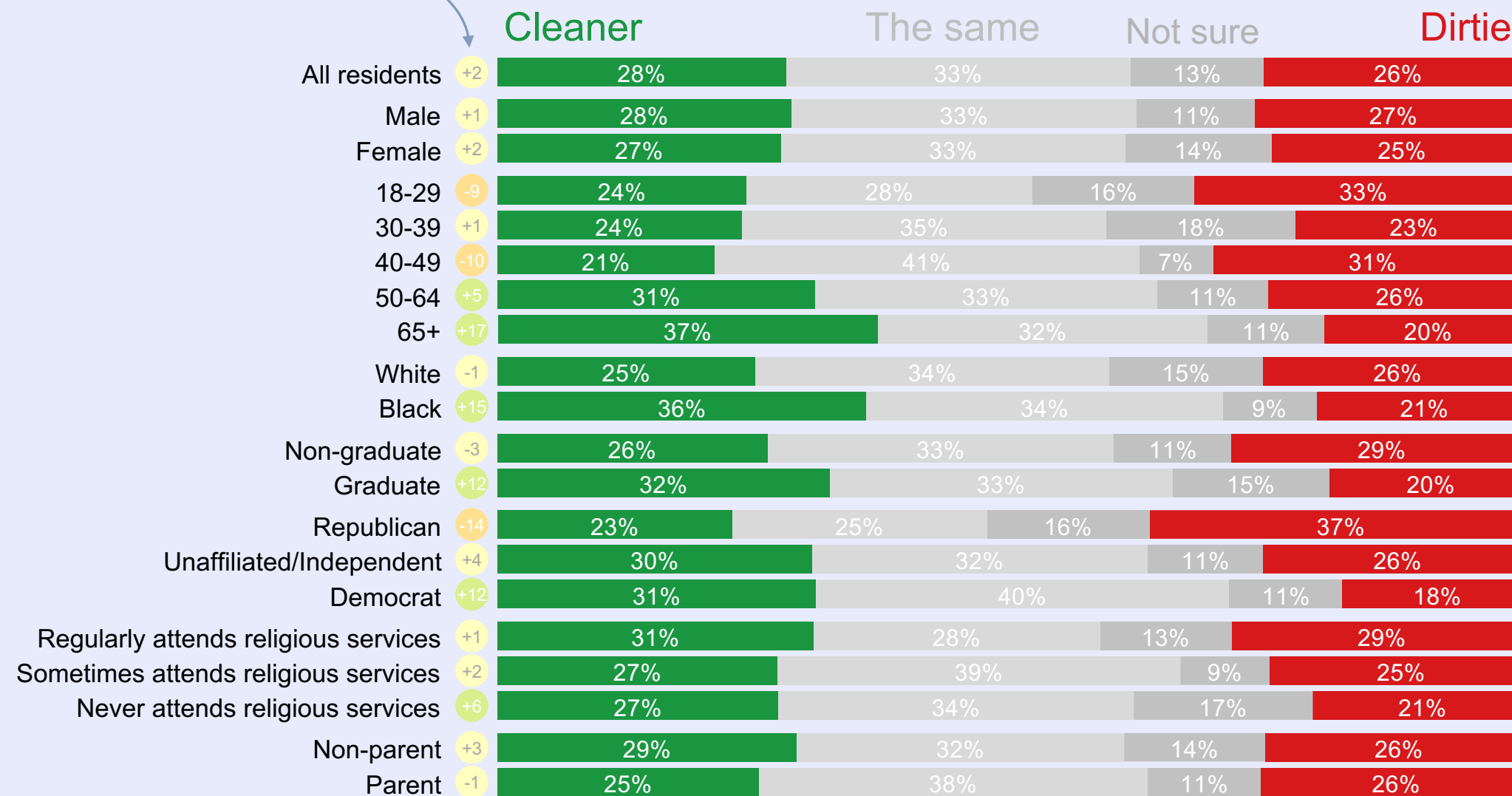
Net: % saying agree minus % who say disagree



Cleanliness

Do you believe Chattanooga is cleaner or dirtier than it was before 2020?

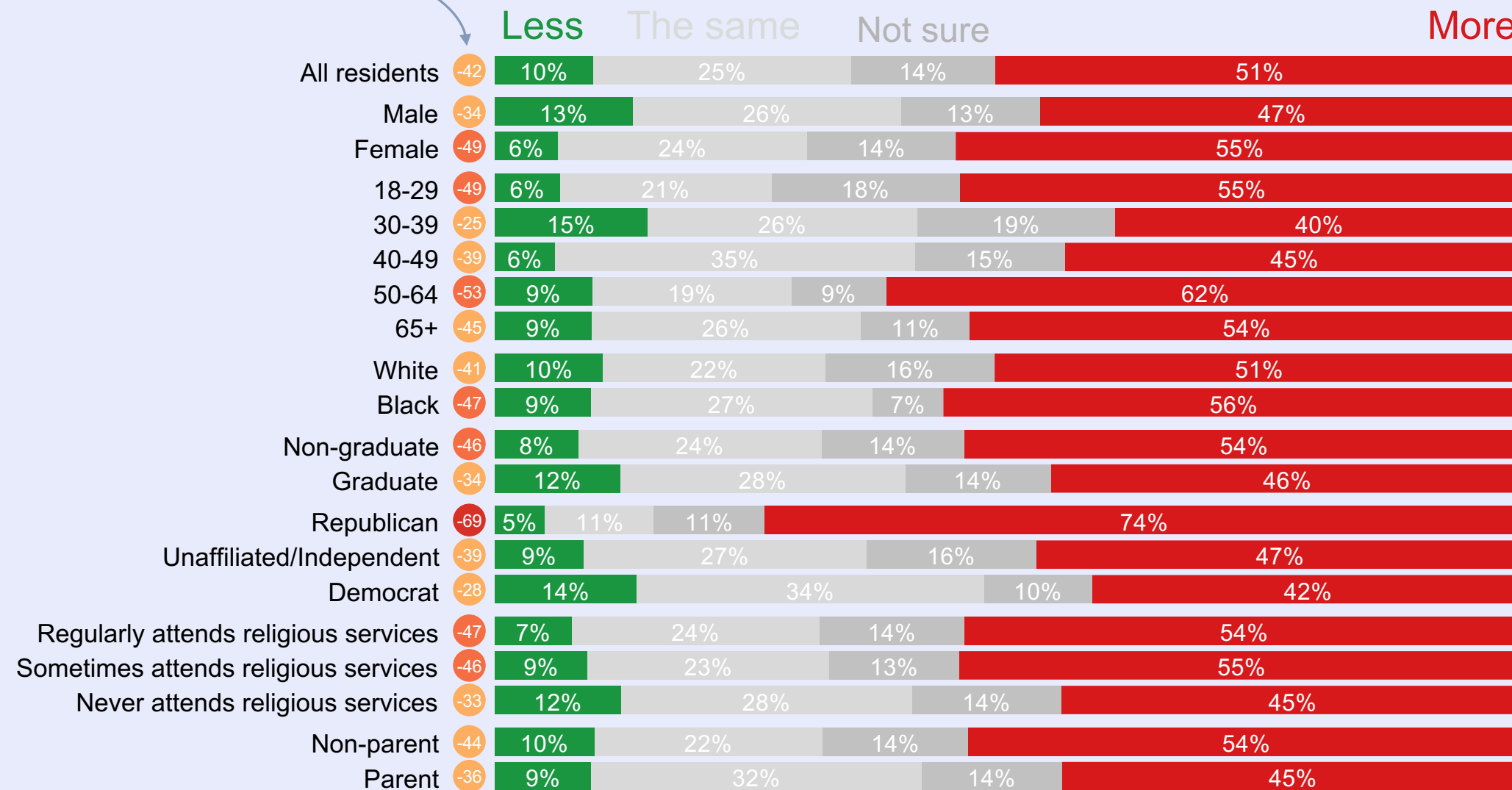
Net: % saying cleaner minus % who say dirtier



Crime

Do you believe that there is more or less violent crime in Chattanooga than there was before 2020?

Net: % saying less minus % who say more

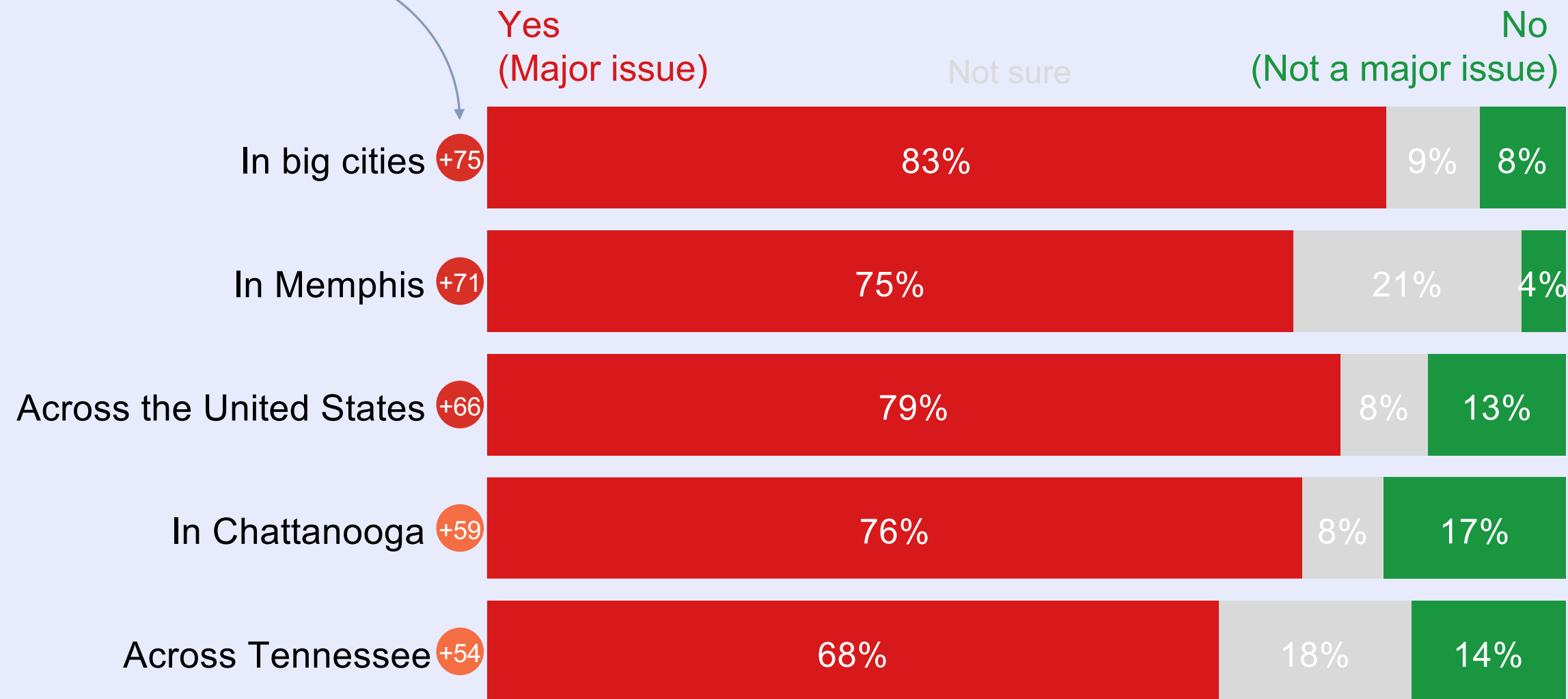


Crime

Would you say that crime and public safety are major issues...?

Net: % saying yes minus % who say no

All residents



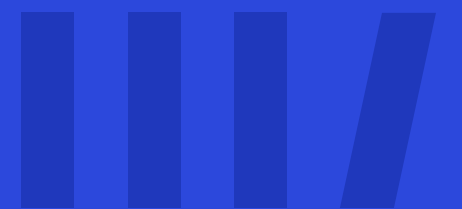
Crime

Would you say that crime and public safety are major issues...?

Net: % saying crime and public safety are major issues in ... minus % who say they are not:

	All residents	Male	Female	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	White	Black	Non-graduate	Graduate	Republican	Unaffiliated/Independent	Democrat	Regularly attends religious services	Sometimes attends religious services	Never attends religious services	Non-parent	Parent
In big cities	+75	+70	+80	+80	+63	+69	+87	+77	+73	+78	+77	+74	+94	+78	+64	+83	+77	+66	+76	+73
In Memphis	+71	+71	+71	+75	+69	+75	+75	+63	+69	+73	+72	+70	+72	+76	+67	+69	+77	+68	+71	+70
Across the United States	+66	+59	+73	+71	+60	+53	+79	+67	+60	+77	+70	+60	+85	+67	+55	+78	+66	+53	+67	+64
In Chattanooga	+59	+50	+67	+55	+37	+47	+81	+70	+56	+71	+64	+49	+77	+64	+47	+63	+66	+46	+63	+48
Across Tennessee	+54	+43	+63	+49	+34	+51	+69	+63	+50	+68	+60	+43	+67	+51	+50	+55	+59	+46	+58	+42

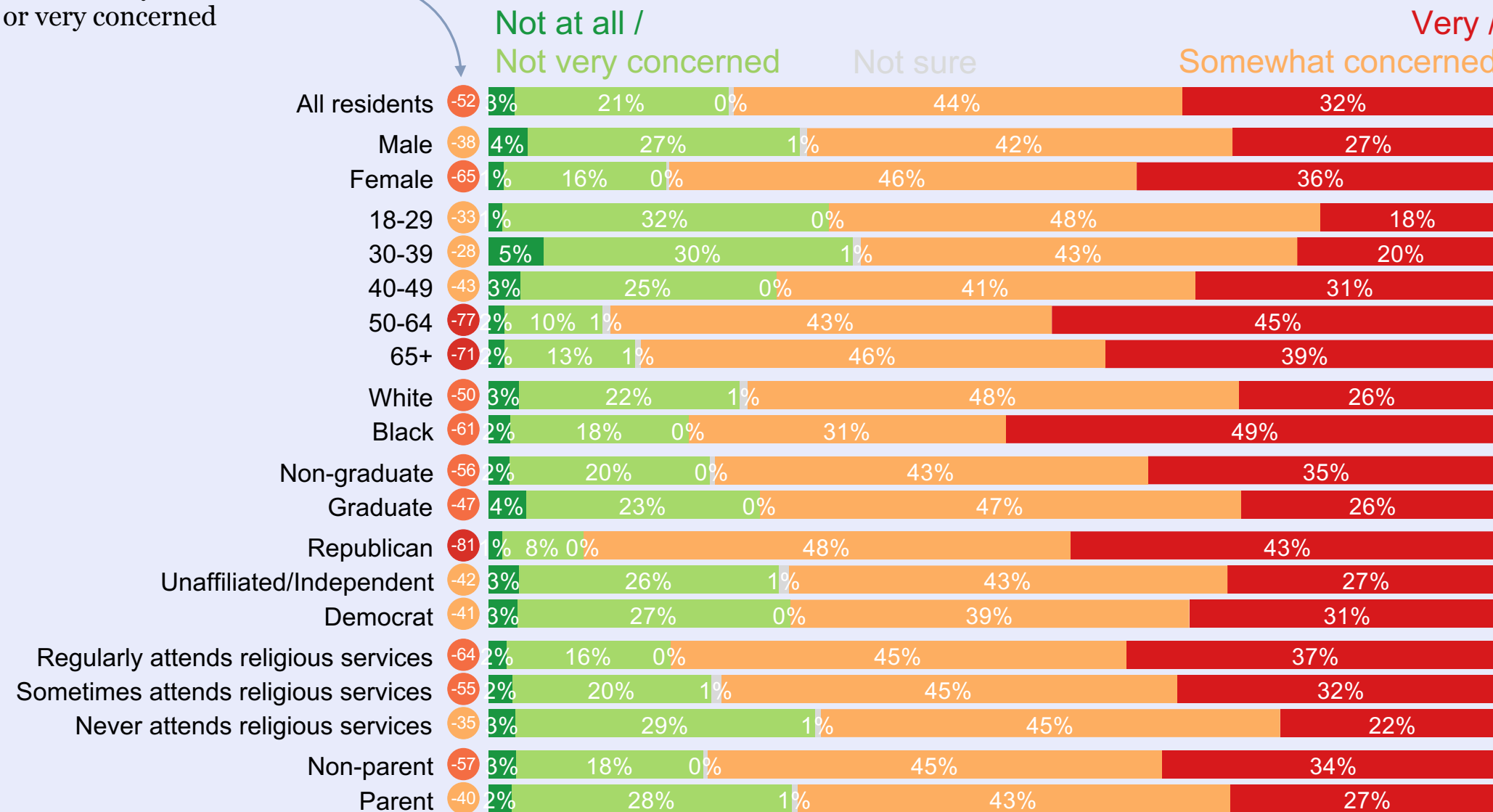
Perceptions of safety



Public safety

How concerned are you, if at all, about public safety in Chattanooga?

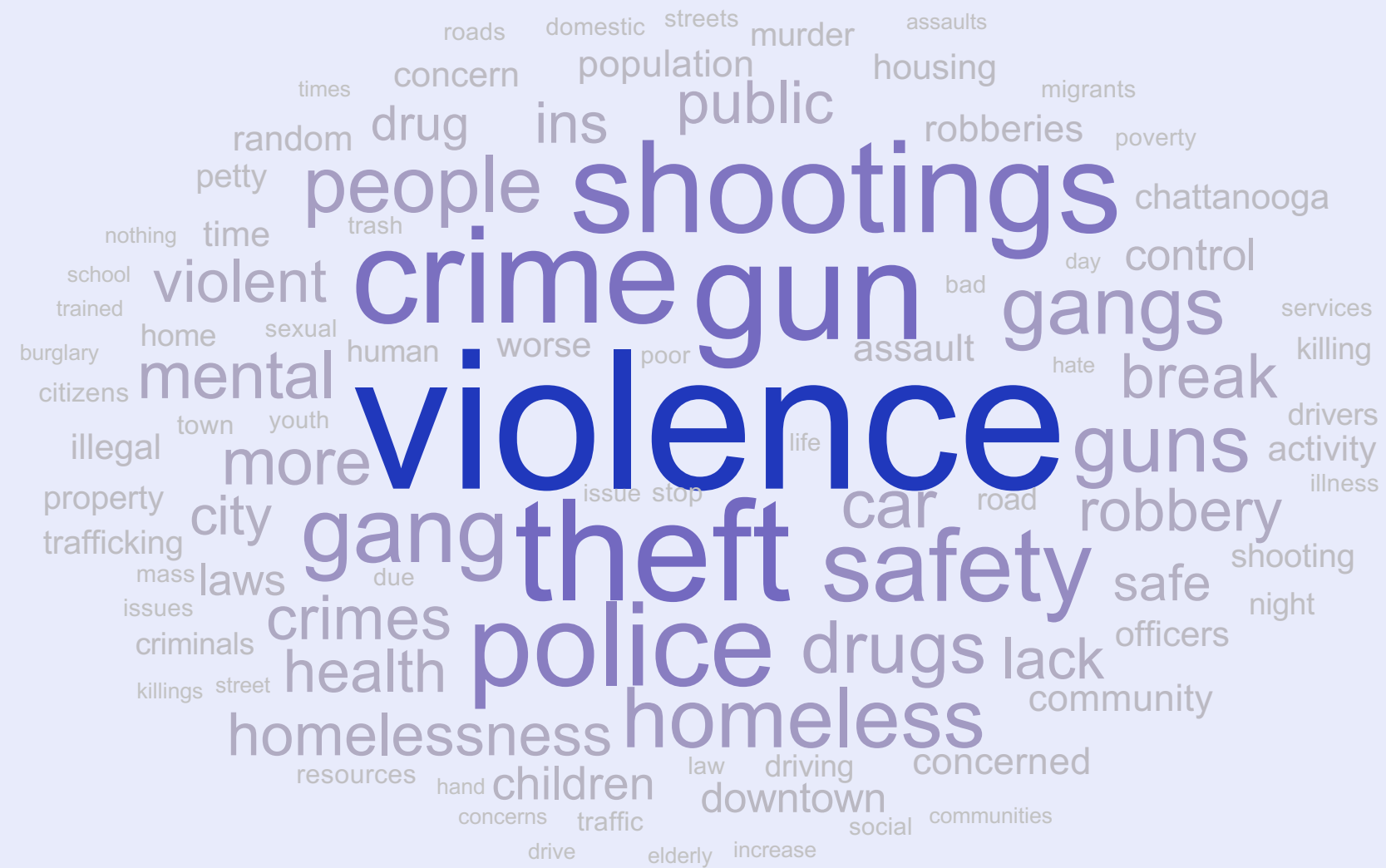
Net: % saying not at all or not very concerned minus % who say somewhat or very concerned



In their own words

When you think about crime, disorder, or other risks to public safety in Chattanooga, what sorts of concerns come to mind?

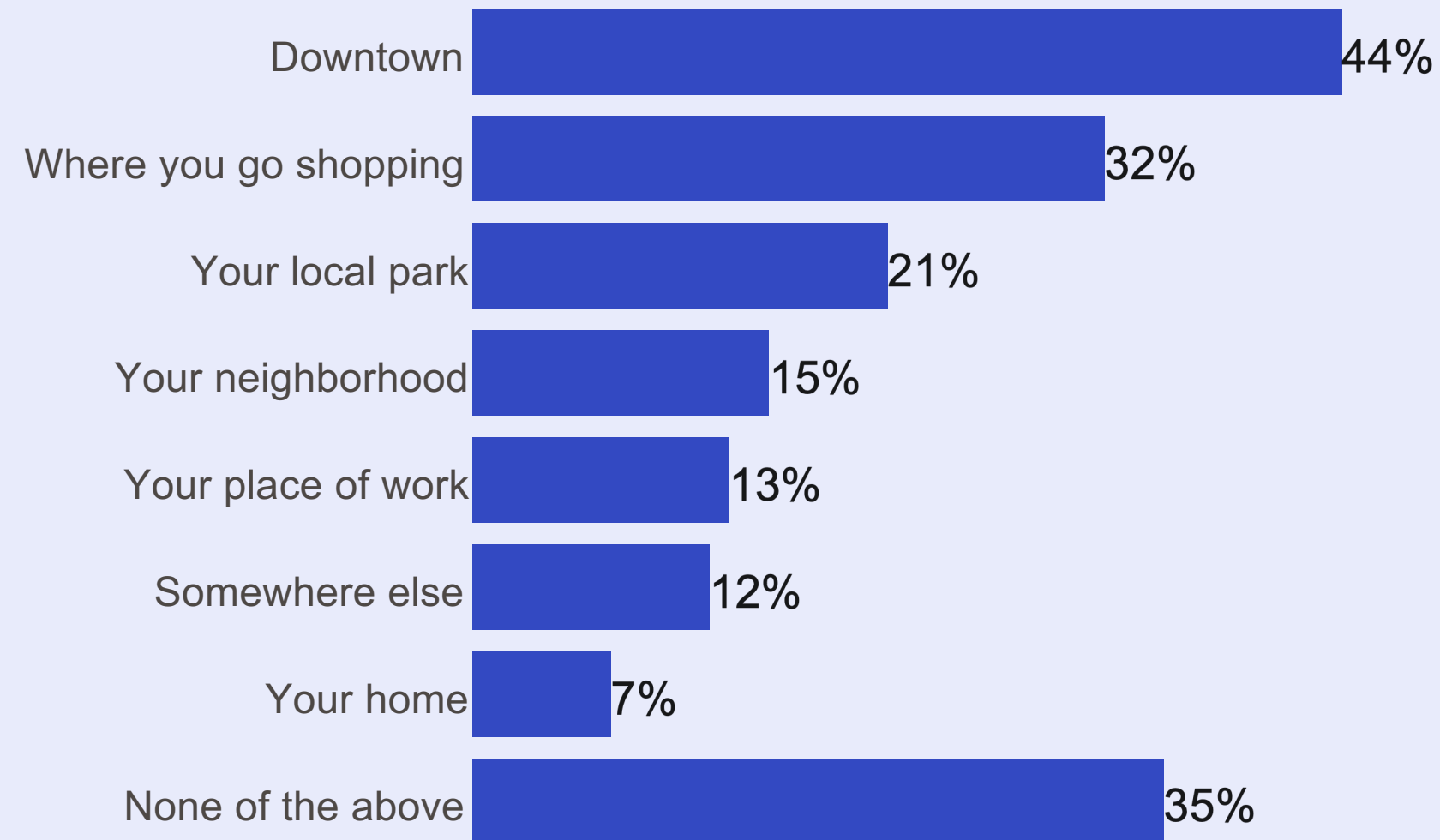
All residents



Feelings of safety

In which of these environments, if any, would you say that you often feel unsafe **during the daytime**? Please select all that apply.

All residents



Feelings of safety

In which of these environments, if any, would you say that you often feel unsafe **during the daytime**? Please select all that apply.

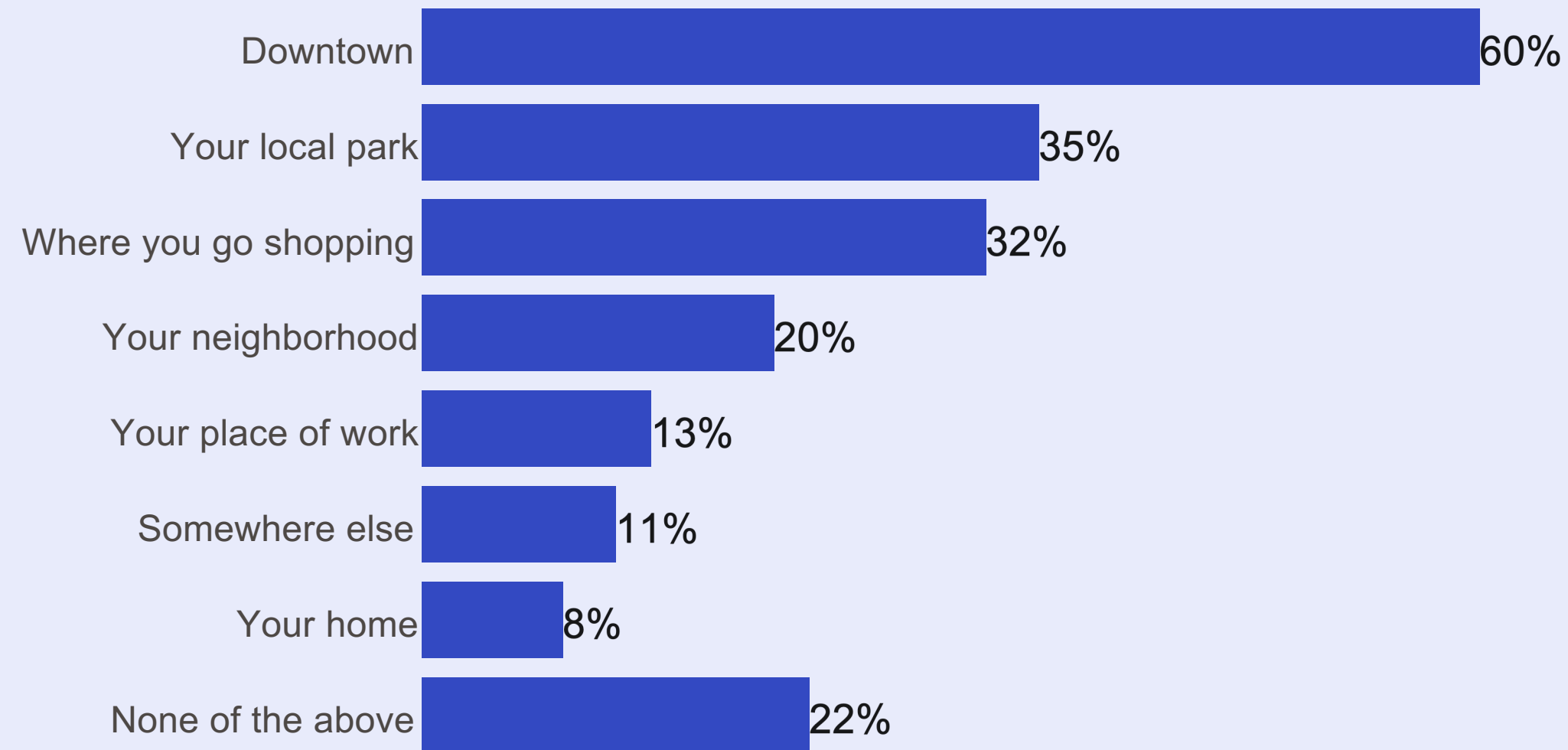
% who say they often feel unsafe ... during the daytime

	All residents	Male	Female	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	White	Black	Non-graduate	Graduate	Republican	Unaffiliated/Independent	Democrat	Regularly attends religious services	Sometimes attends religious services	Never attends religious services	Non-parent	Parent
Downtown	44%	44%	44%	55%	44%	39%	40%	43%	47%	39%	45%	42%	68%	42%	33%	49%	45%	37%	43%	46%
Where you go shopping	32%	26%	37%	28%	31%	18%	35%	40%	28%	40%	36%	25%	41%	29%	28%	36%	33%	26%	33%	29%
Your local park	21%	16%	25%	20%	18%	18%	30%	18%	16%	34%	25%	14%	24%	18%	20%	27%	21%	14%	20%	22%
Your neighborhood	15%	15%	14%	14%	19%	8%	14%	14%	11%	24%	16%	11%	11%	13%	19%	15%	16%	12%	16%	12%
Your place of work	13%	14%	13%	19%	13%	12%	16%	8%	10%	17%	15%	11%	17%	14%	14%	18%	13%	8%	13%	15%
Somewhere else	12%	12%	11%	8%	9%	9%	13%	16%	9%	15%	11%	13%	18%	9%	11%	13%	16%	4%	12%	10%
Your home	7%	8%	6%	3%	11%	4%	7%	8%	5%	11%	9%	3%	9%	5%	8%	10%	7%	4%	8%	5%
None of the above	35%	40%	31%	29%	43%	49%	32%	27%	38%	30%	33%	38%	18%	40%	41%	26%	34%	45%	33%	41%

Feelings of safety

And in which of these environments, if any, would you say that you often feel unsafe **late at night**? Please select all that apply.

All residents



Feelings of safety

And in which of these environments, if any, would you say that you often feel unsafe **late at night**? Please select all that apply.

% who say they often feel unsafe ... late at night

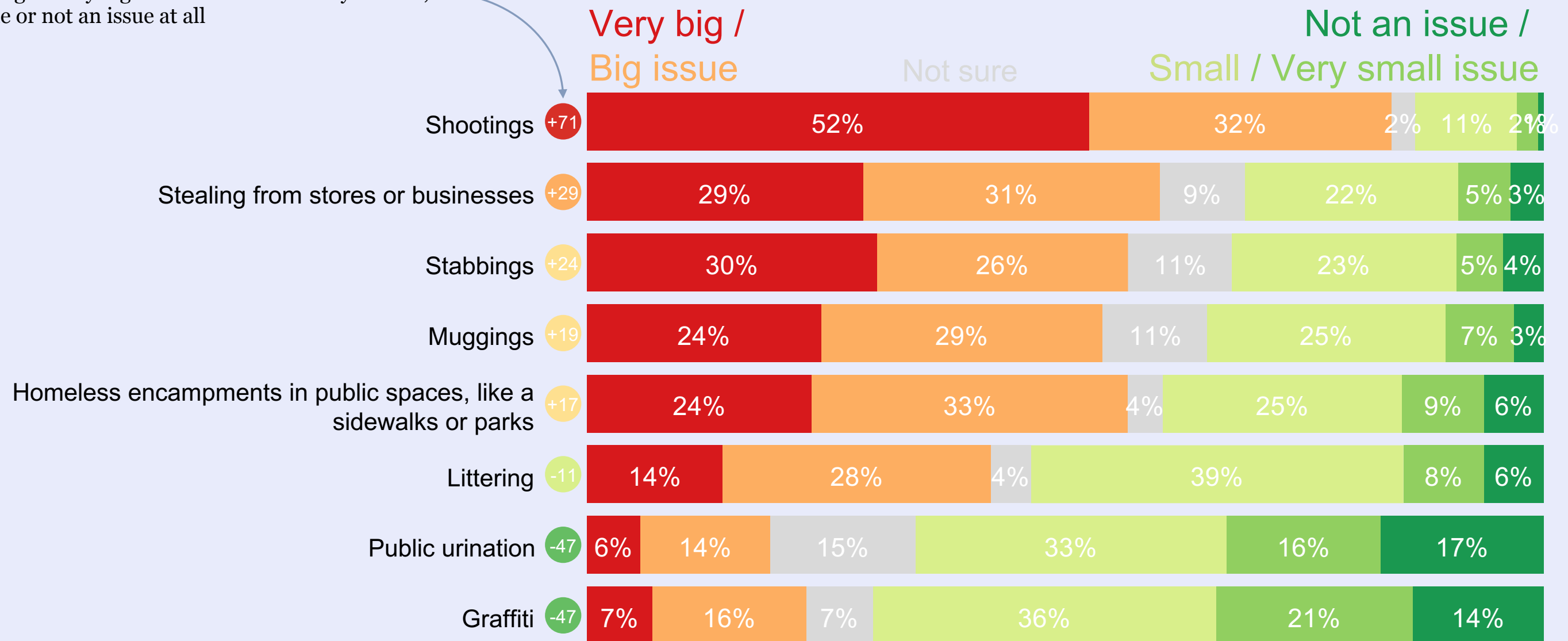
	All residents	Male	Female	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	White	Black	Non-graduate	Graduate	Republican	Unaffiliated/Independent	Democrat	Regularly attends religious services	Sometimes attends religious services	Never attends religious services	Non-parent	Parent
Downtown	60%	54%	66%	68%	61%	57%	59%	56%	65%	54%	59%	63%	86%	55%	47%	65%	60%	57%	58%	67%
Your local park	35%	28%	40%	42%	36%	33%	39%	26%	34%	38%	38%	29%	43%	33%	29%	36%	35%	33%	33%	39%
Where you go shopping	32%	24%	39%	37%	26%	28%	41%	28%	29%	42%	37%	22%	41%	31%	28%	36%	32%	27%	29%	38%
Your neighborhood	20%	17%	23%	27%	23%	11%	23%	15%	18%	27%	23%	16%	19%	22%	20%	21%	20%	19%	20%	20%
Your place of work	13%	11%	14%	21%	14%	7%	14%	8%	12%	15%	15%	8%	20%	14%	10%	16%	14%	7%	13%	13%
Somewhere else	11%	11%	11%	10%	12%	8%	12%	12%	10%	11%	11%	12%	12%	10%	14%	11%	14%	8%	11%	11%
Your home	8%	7%	9%	9%	7%	3%	12%	9%	7%	13%	10%	5%	11%	9%	7%	8%	10%	5%	9%	4%
None of the above	22%	28%	17%	15%	25%	30%	17%	24%	21%	22%	21%	24%	5%	26%	27%	13%	25%	26%	23%	18%

Prevalence

For each, please tell me if you believe that illegal action is a very big issue, a big issue, a small issue, a very small issue, or not an issue in Chattanooga.

Net: % saying big or very big issue minus % who say a small, very small issue or not an issue at all

All residents



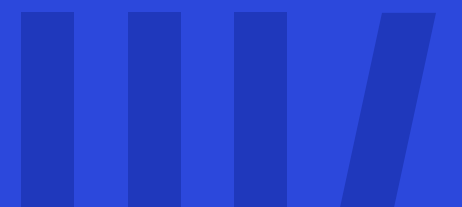
Prevalence

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	All residents	Male	Female	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	White	Black	Non-graduate	Graduate	Republican	Unaffiliated/Independent	Democrat	Regularly attends religious services	Sometimes attends religious services	Never attends religious services	Non-parent	Parent
Shootings	+71	+64	+76	+58	+67	+56	+78	+81	+64	+82	+75	+63	+79	+62	+74	+77	+70	+59	+74	+58
Stealing from stores or businesses	+29	+24	+33	-6	-2	+16	+49	+60	+18	+49	+32	+22	+56	+21	+16	+51	+27	+2	+32	+20
Stabbings	+24	+11	+35	-5	-3	+14	+42	+56	+13	+47	+34	+5	+27	+8	+35	+31	+24	+19	+28	+14
Muggings	+19	+10	+27	+6	-5	-8	+41	+44	+10	+41	+27	+3	+37	+6	+16	+31	+21	+5	+23	+7
Homeless encampments in public spaces, like a sidewalks or parks	+17	+9	+24	+12	+7	+22	+11	+26	+12	+21	+15	+21	+49	+10	+8	+18	+28	+6	+16	+18
Littering	-11	-15	-9	-11	-6	-10	-32	-2	-8	-20	-11	-12	-4	-9	-21	-7	-10	-24	-13	-7
Graffiti	-47	-50	-45	-56	-70	-63	-44	-19	-49	-41	-43	-56	-24	-56	-58	-21	-45	-79	-43	-57
Public urination	-47	-57	-38	-58	-62	-58	-44	-25	-51	-33	-39	-60	-30	-50	-55	-33	-51	-57	-43	-55

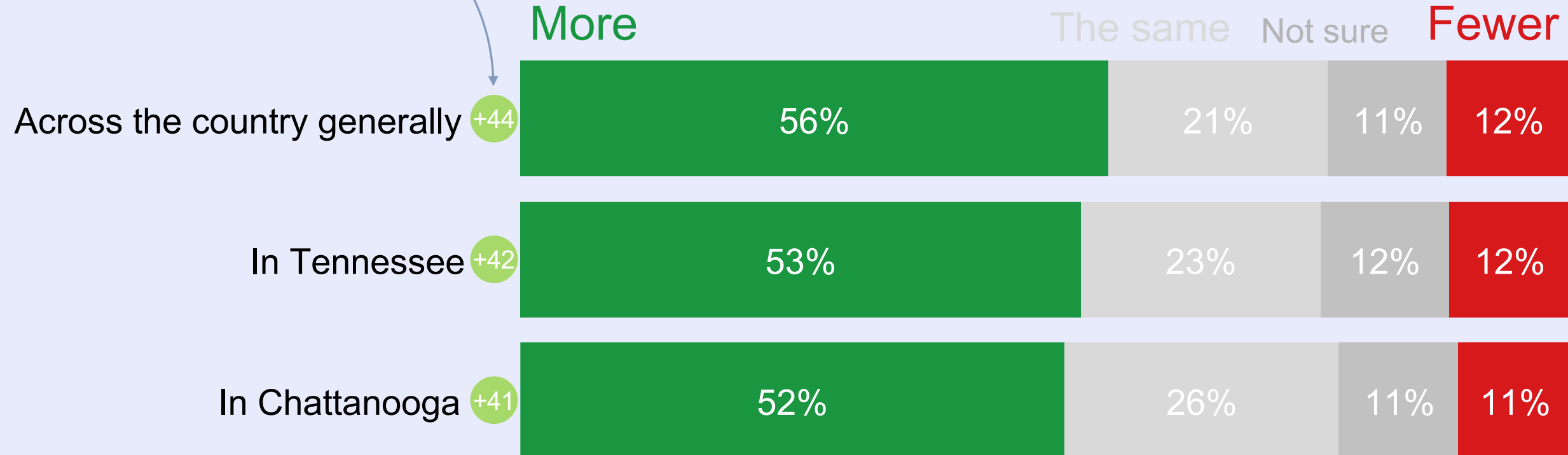
Policing and strategies



Police numbers

Across the country / In Tennessee / In Chattanooga... Do you think we need more or fewer police officers?

Net: % saying more minus % who say fewer
All residents



Police numbers

Across the country / In Tennessee / In Chattanooga... Do you think we need more or fewer police officers?

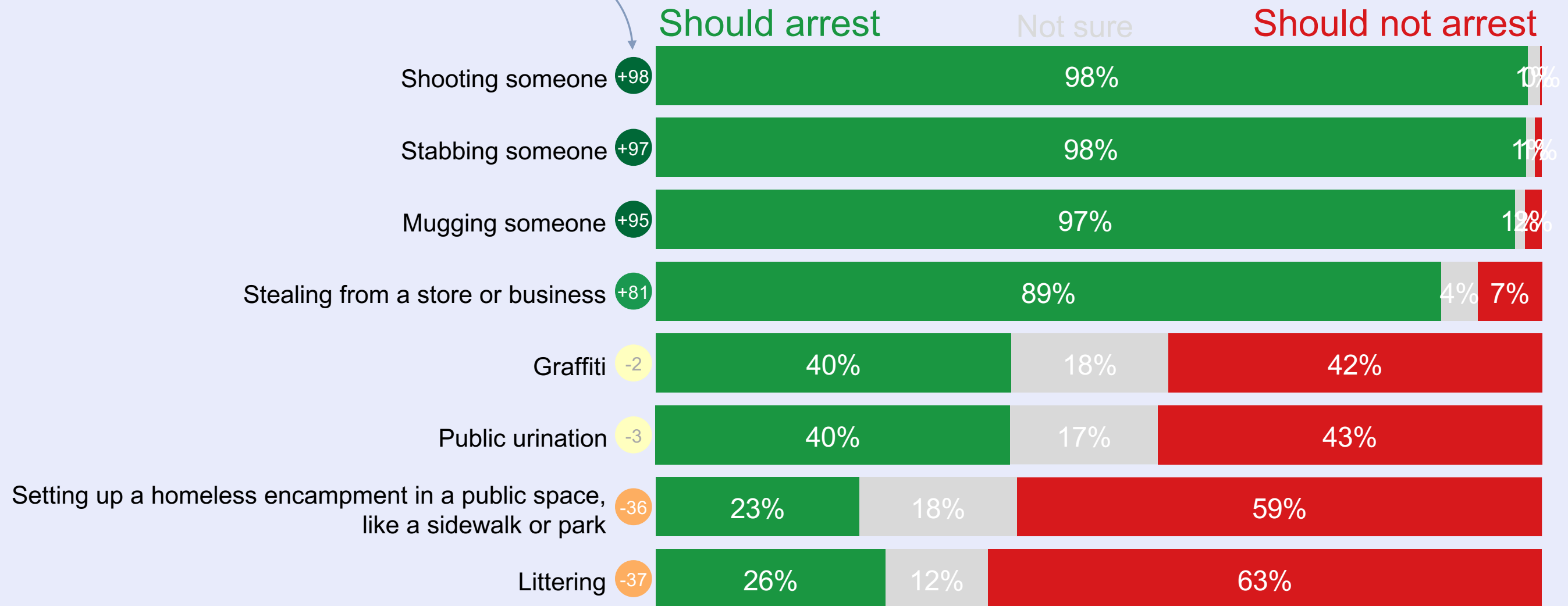
Net: % saying we need more police officers in ... minus % who say we need fewer:

	All residents	Male	Female	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	White	Black	Non-graduate	Graduate	Republican	Unaffiliated/Independent	Democrat	Regularly attends religious services	Sometimes attends religious services	Never attends religious services	Non-parent	Parent
Across the country generally	+44	+47	+42	+28	+25	+21	+62	+73	+38	+56	+45	+43	+87	+40	+28	+64	+48	+15	+46	+39
In Chattanooga	+41	+42	+40	+13	+22	+28	+62	+69	+36	+56	+44	+36	+72	+42	+29	+59	+43	+17	+42	+39
In Tennessee	+42	+45	+39	+15	+25	+21	+61	+72	+34	+57	+44	+37	+76	+39	+28	+61	+44	+15	+43	+39

Police arrests

Do you believe that police should or should not arrest people for engaging in...?

Net: % saying police should arrest minus % who say they should not
All residents



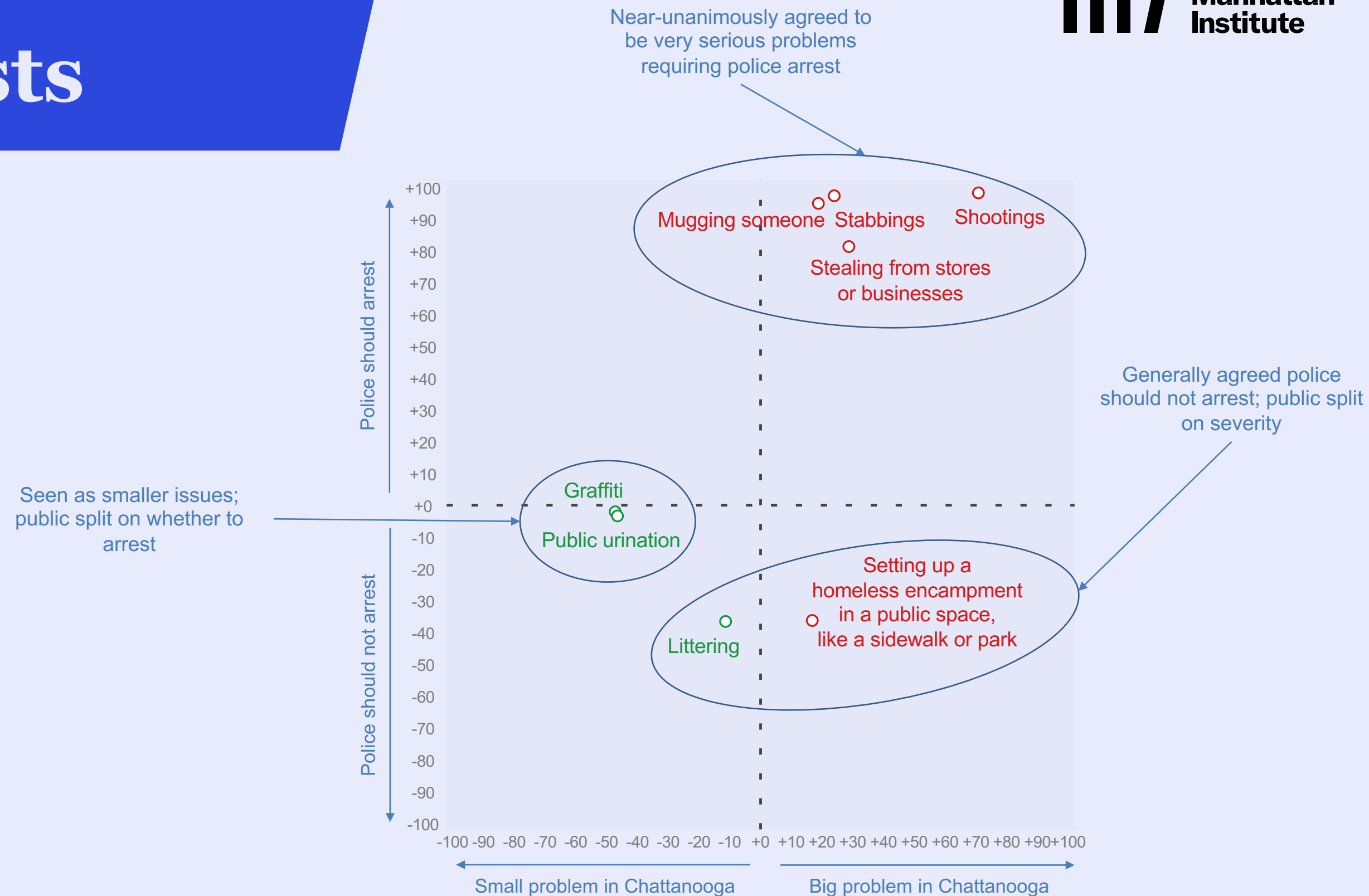
Police arrests

Do you believe that police should or should not arrest people for engaging in...?

Net: % saying police should arrest minus % who say they should not

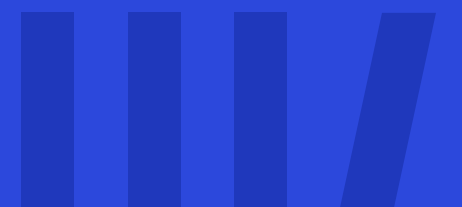
	All residents	Male	Female	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+	White	Black	Non-graduate	Graduate	Republican	Unaffiliated/Independent	Democrat	Regularly attends religious services	Sometimes attends religious services	Never attends religious services	Non-parent	Parent
Shooting someone	+98	+99	+98	+98	+100	+100	+93	+100	+98	+97	+98	+99	+99	+98	+99	+97	+99	+98	+98	+98
Stabbing someone	+97	+96	+99	+100	+93	+97	+96	+100	+99	+96	+96	+99	+99	+98	+96	+96	+99	+96	+98	+96
Mugging someone	+95	+96	+94	+95	+92	+99	+93	+97	+96	+90	+94	+98	+99	+96	+95	+96	+95	+94	+95	+95
Stealing from a store or business	+81	+82	+81	+63	+69	+90	+87	+95	+79	+80	+82	+79	+97	+86	+75	+90	+84	+69	+82	+81
Graffiti	-2	+3	-7	-13	-31	-17	+13	+26	-4	+4	-1	-6	+42	-2	-26	+19	+10	-41	+2	-12
Public urination	-3	+2	-8	+11	-25	-23	-4	+17	-1	-10	-2	-5	+42	-8	-25	+9	+0	-23	-0	-11
Littering	-37	-32	-41	-29	-60	-48	-31	-22	-32	-35	-34	-43	-20	-45	-45	-34	-25	-56	-32	-49
Setting up a homeless encampment in a public space, like a sidewalk or park	-36	-18	-53	-23	-56	-41	-40	-25	-33	-51	-38	-33	+8	-32	-68	-23	-32	-56	-35	-40

Police arrests



Q17. The following actions are examples of illegal activity in Chattanooga. Do you believe that police should or should not arrest people for engaging in...? Q18. Now let's go through those examples of illegal activity in Chattanooga once more. After each, please tell me if you believe that illegal action is a very big issue, a big issue, a small issue, a very small issue, or not an issue in Chattanooga. Y axis: Net: % saying police should arrest minus % who say they should not. X axis: Net: % saying big or very big issue minus % who say a small, very small issue or not an issue at all

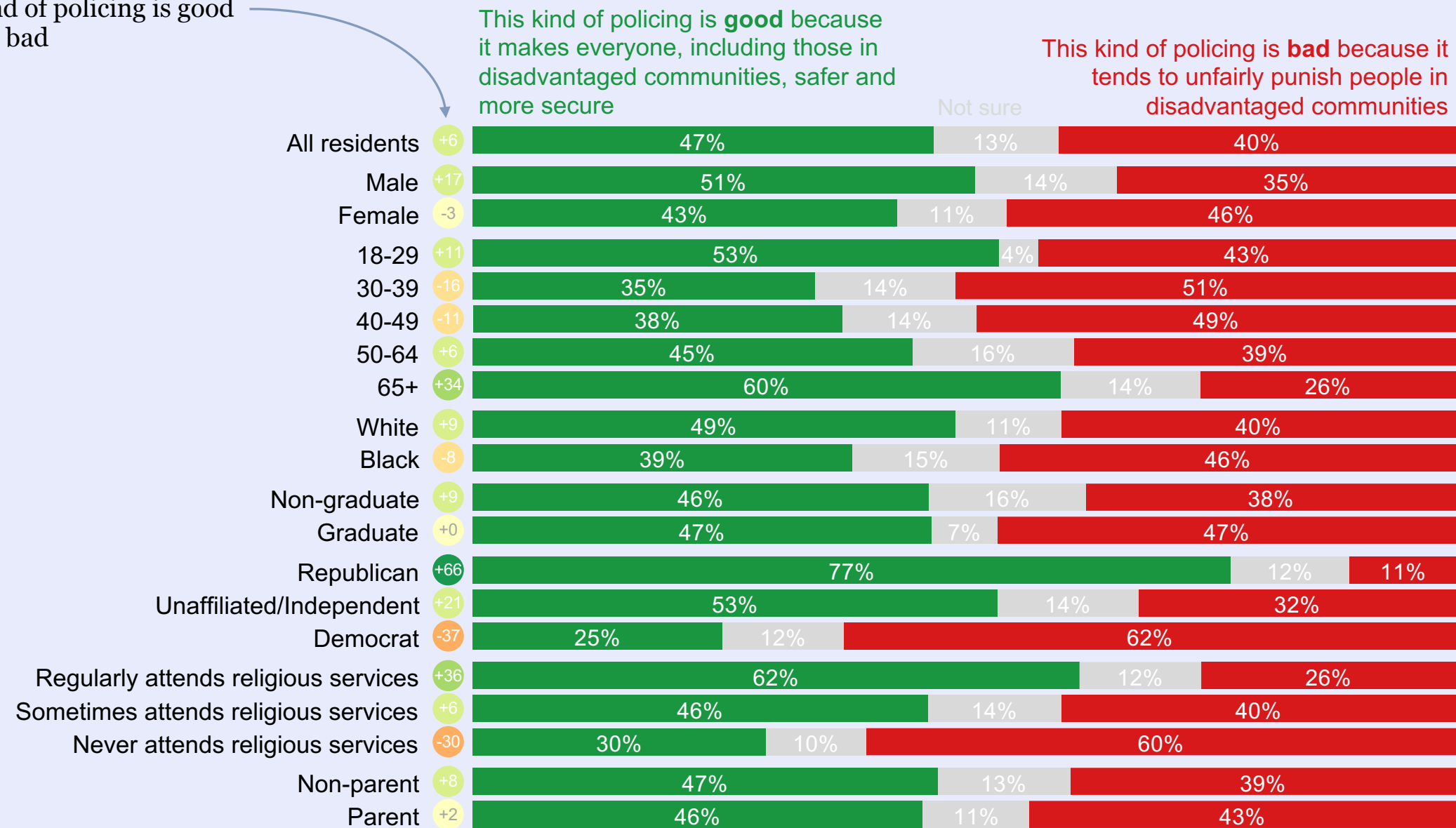
Policy choices



Enforcement

Which of the following is closer to your view on police enforcement against offenses like graffiti, public urination, littering, and homeless encampments?

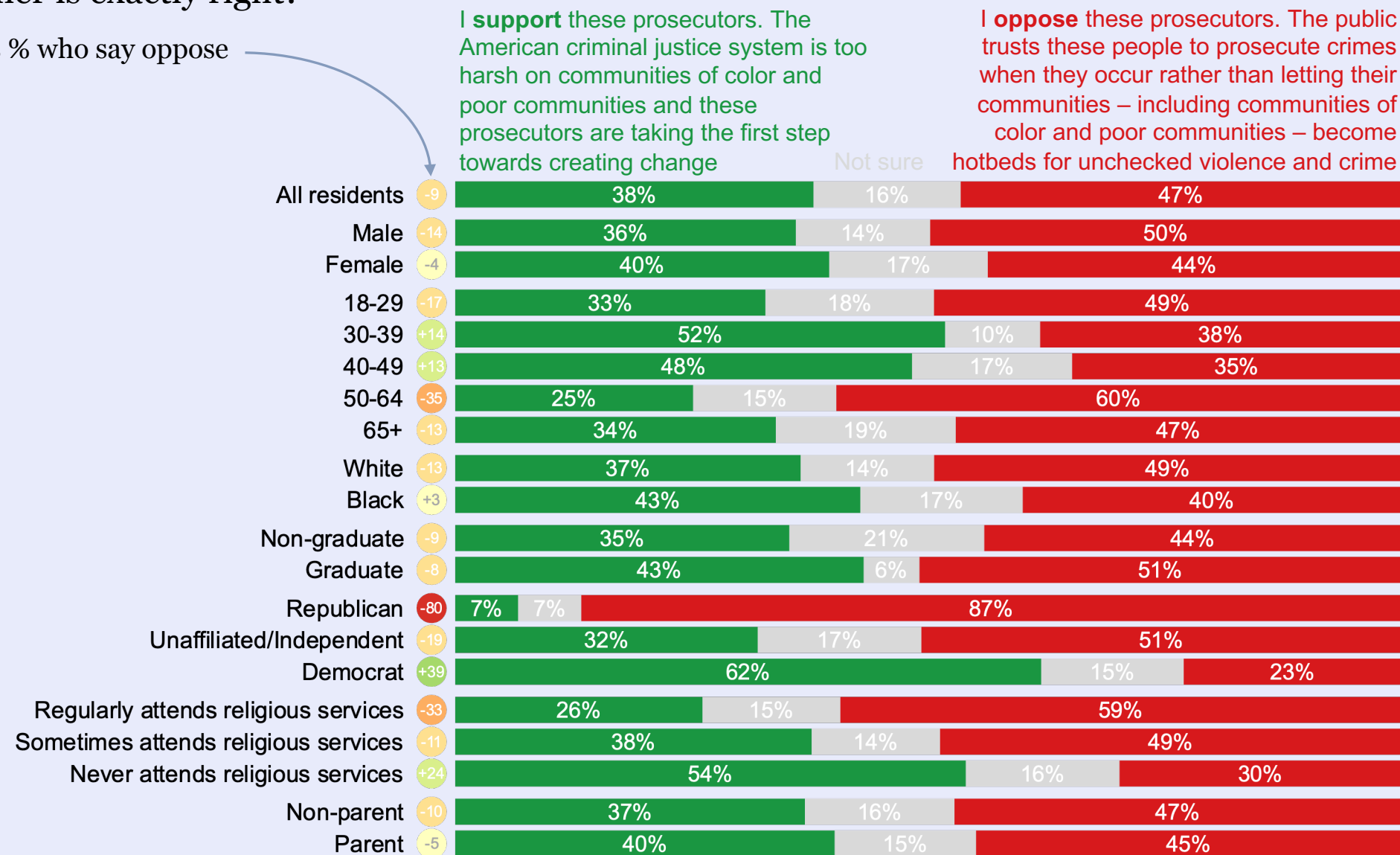
Net: % saying this kind of policing is good minus % who say it is bad



Prosecutions

In some cities and counties, self-described “progressive” prosecutors have been elected on platforms of prosecuting fewer drug, property, and weapons offenses, which they believe contribute to racial inequality. When thinking about these prosecutors, which of the following statements comes closest to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

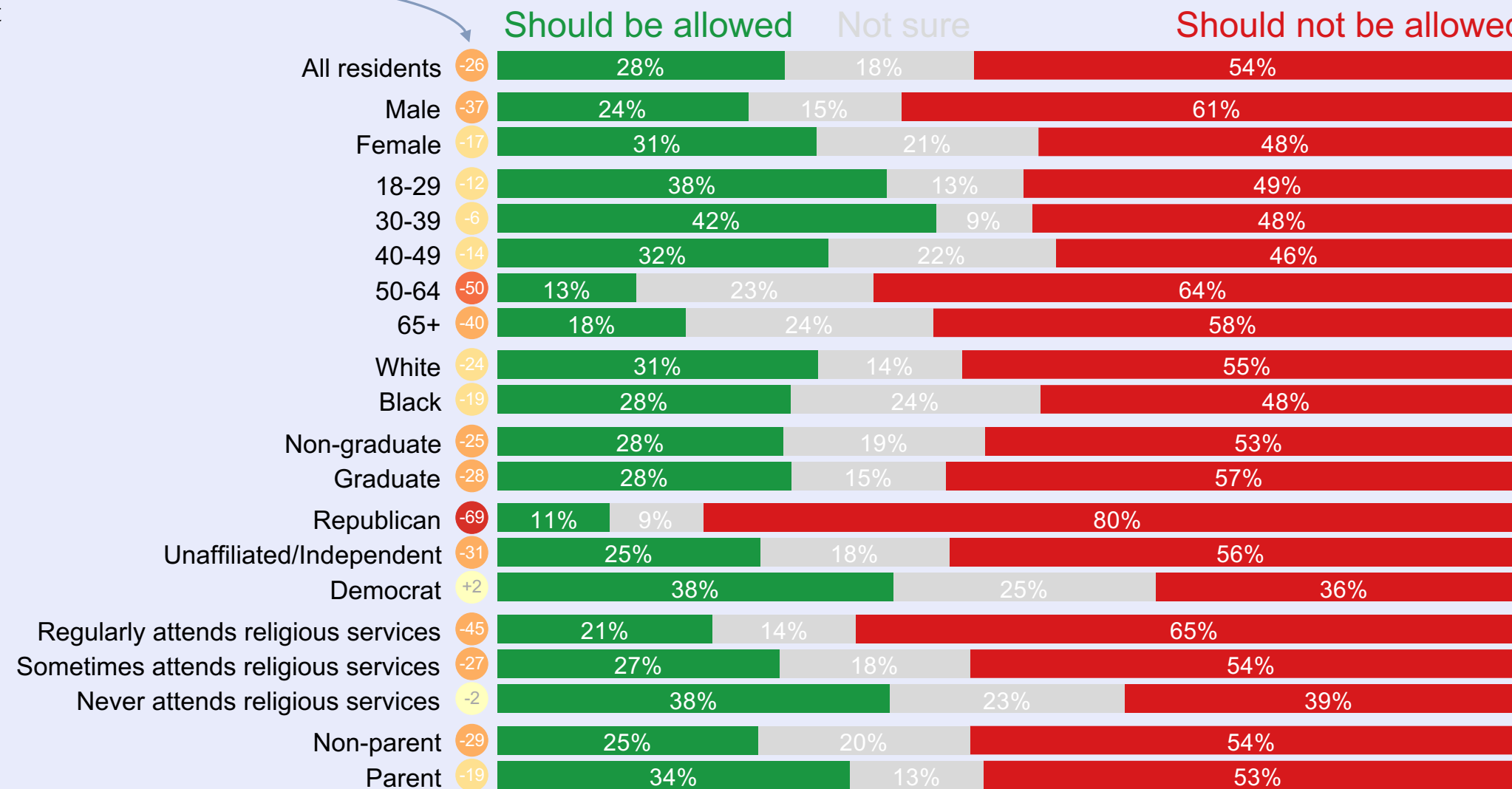
Net: % saying support minus % who say oppose



Homelessness

Do you think that homeless people in Chattanooga should or should not be allowed to sleep on sidewalks, in parks, or in other public places instead of in homeless shelters?

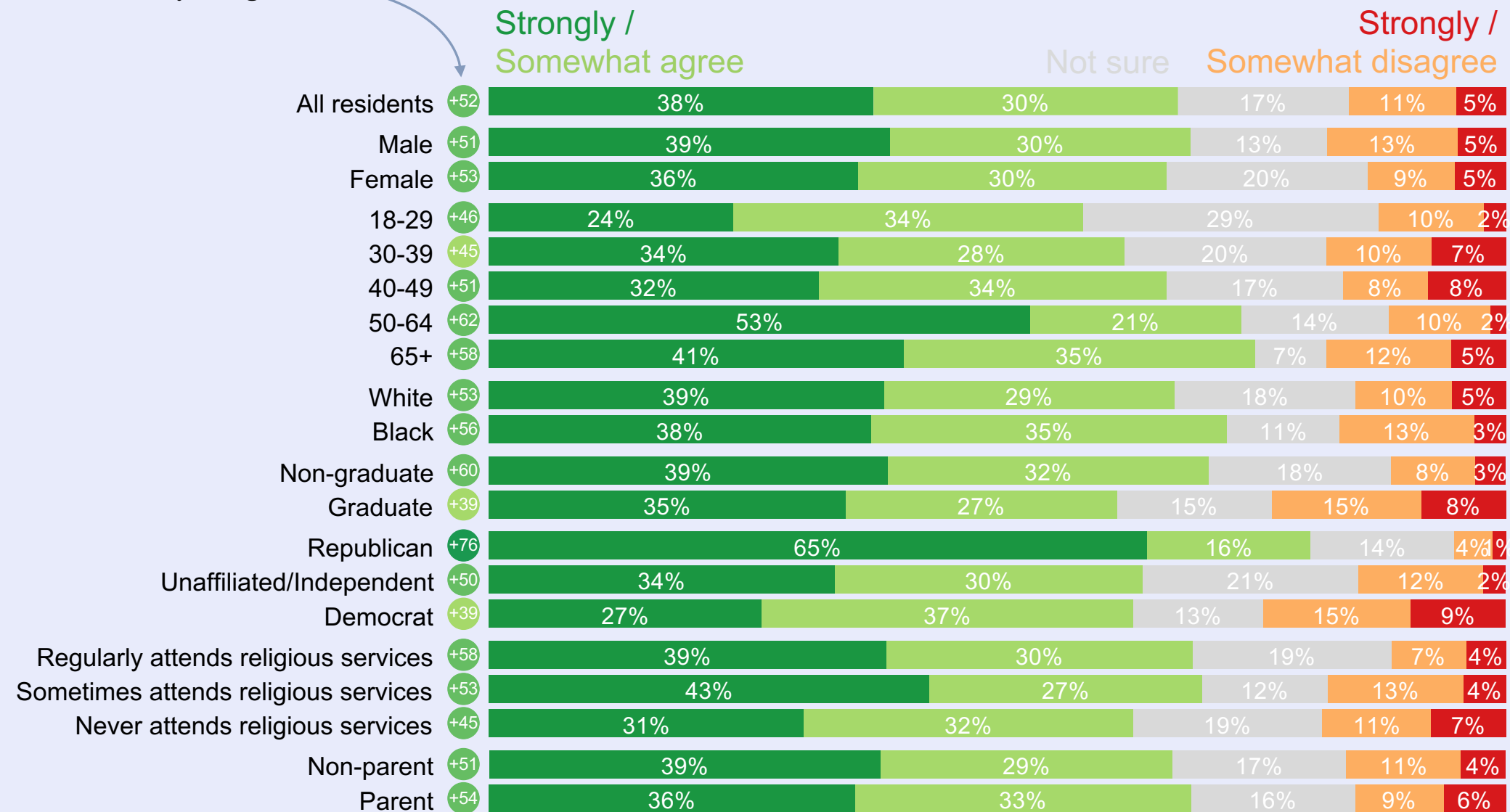
Net: % saying should be allowed minus % who say should not



Violent crime

Do you agree or disagree that Tennessee needs tougher laws on the books with respect to how the state deals with offenders convicted of violent crimes?

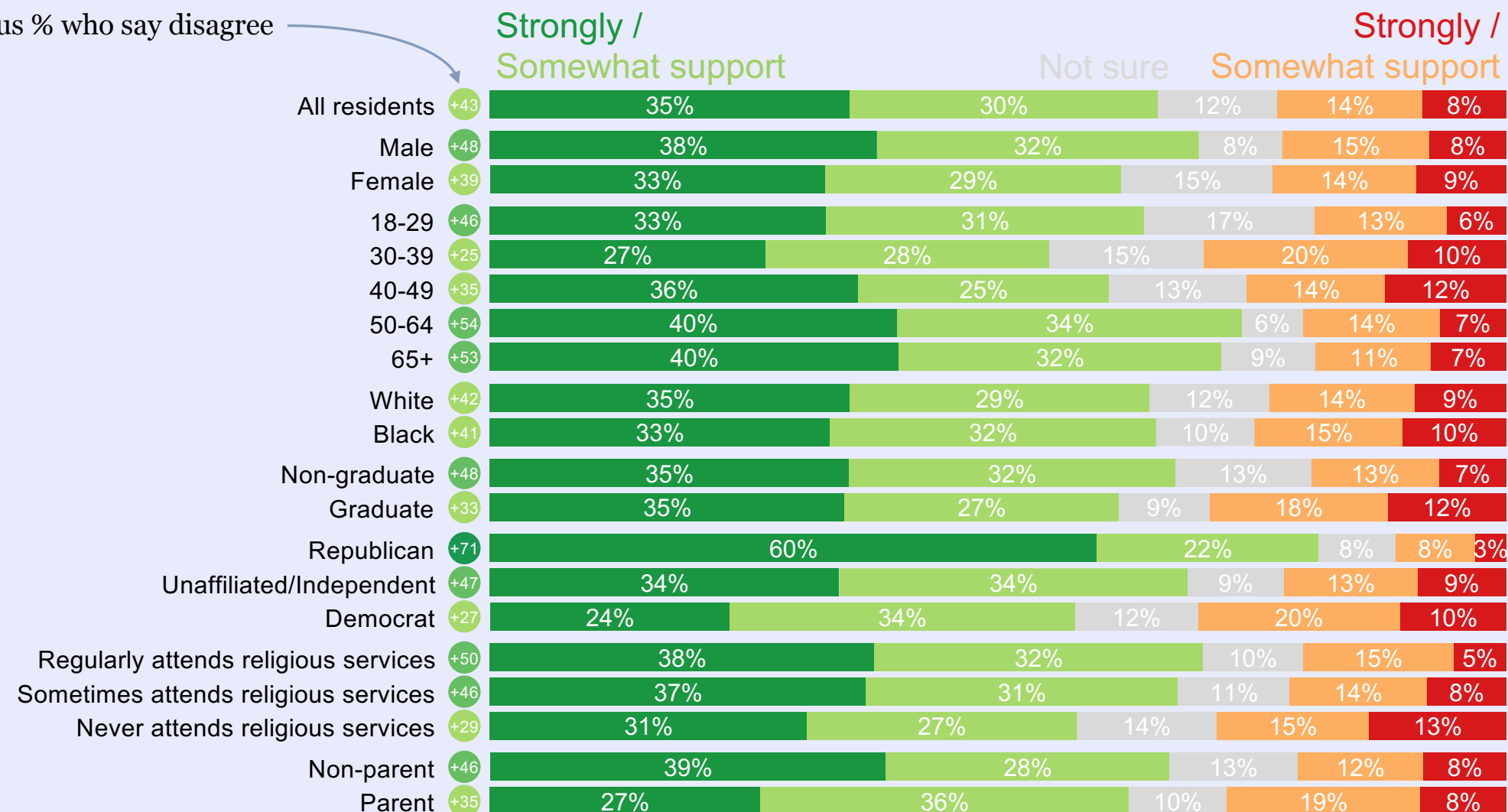
Net: % saying agree minus % who say disagree



Truth in sentencing

In 2022, Tennessee enacted a "truth in sentencing" law that requires many offenders to serve 100% of their prison sentences for certain violent crimes, including attempted murder, carjacking and especially aggravated burglary. A cluster of other crimes included in the law require a minimum of 85% of prison time served in order to be given parole. Previously, those violent offenders could get credits and pursue parole after serving a shorter portion of their sentences in prison. Do you support or oppose the new law?

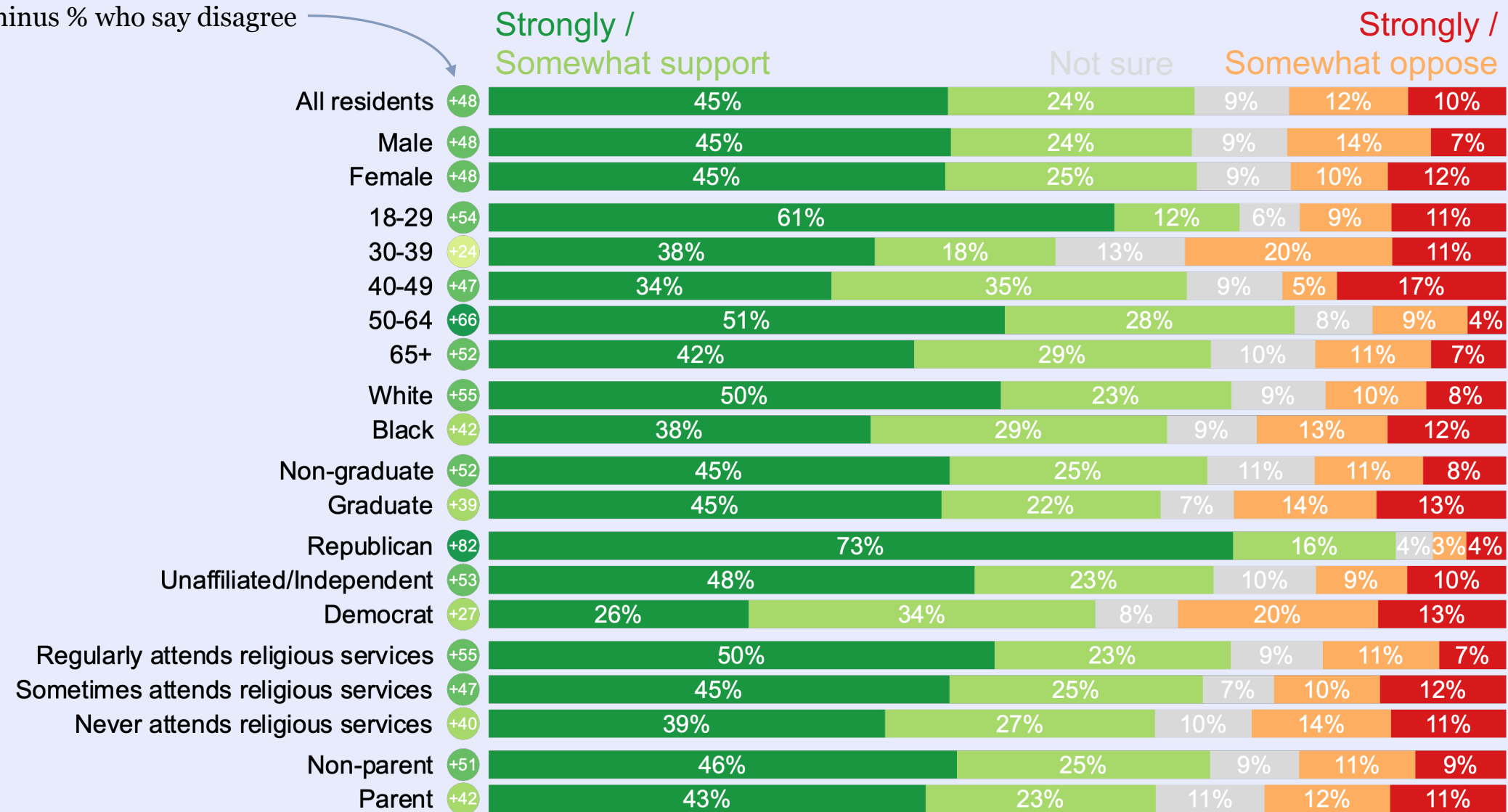
Net: % saying agree minus % who say disagree



Three strikes

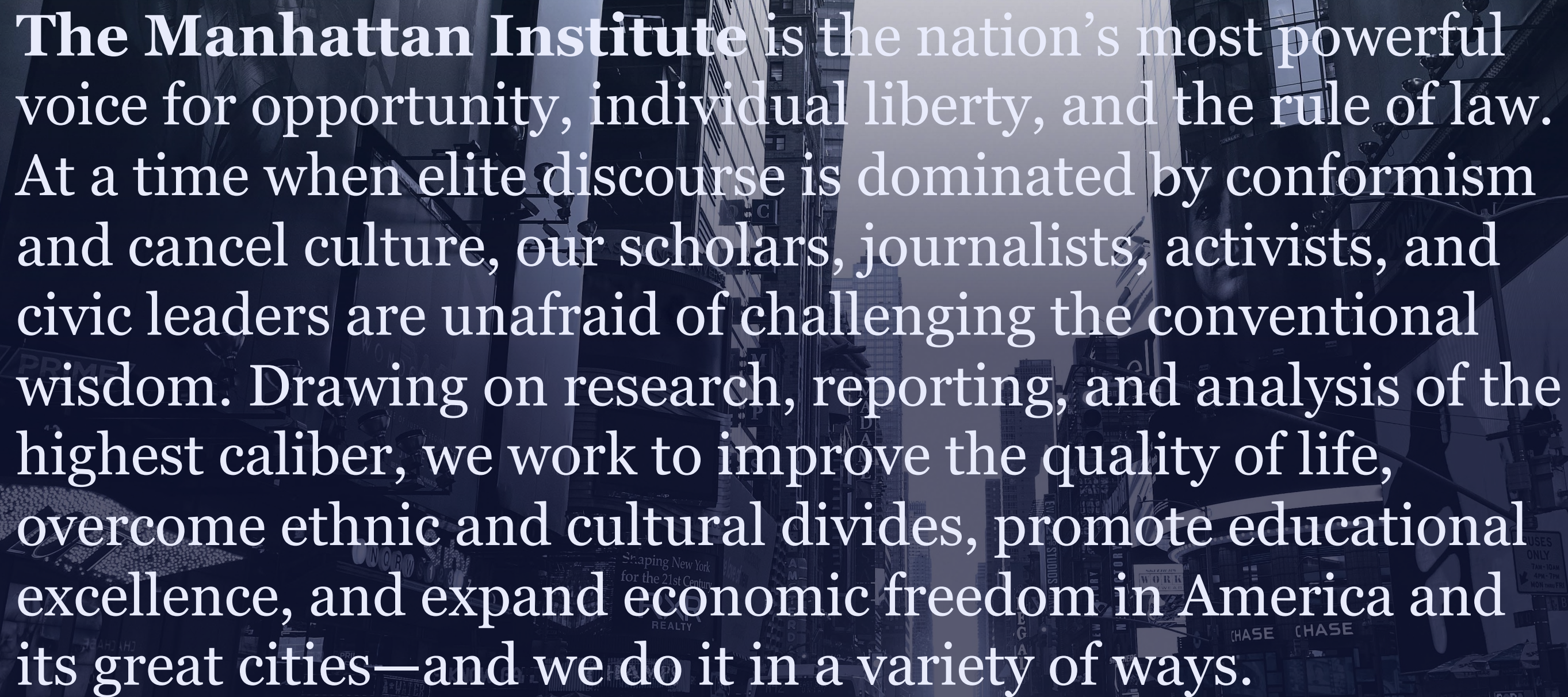
In 2023, Tennessee’s legislature considered a “three strikes law” proposal that would require life sentences for two or more convictions of the most serious offenses, such as murder, rape, and kidnapping. This would go further than the existing three-strikes law in Tennessee which only mandates life imprisonment without parole for three or more convictions of the same offense. Do you support or oppose this proposed law?

Net: % saying agree minus % who say disagree



Questions?





The Manhattan Institute is the nation's most powerful voice for opportunity, individual liberty, and the rule of law. At a time when elite discourse is dominated by conformism and cancel culture, our scholars, journalists, activists, and civic leaders are unafraid of challenging the conventional wisdom. Drawing on research, reporting, and analysis of the highest caliber, we work to improve the quality of life, overcome ethnic and cultural divides, promote educational excellence, and expand economic freedom in America and its great cities—and we do it in a variety of ways.

