

Chicago: Mayoral Race & Public Safety Polling

Key Findings & Analysis

March 2023

Executive Summary

- Schoen Cooperman Research conducted **600 interviews** with **likely April 2023 mayoral runoff voters in Chicago** to
 - Assess the **state of the race** for Chicago Mayor
 - Evaluate voter **perceptions of crime** and ratings of public officials on public safety
 - Determine **support for specific public safety policies**
 - Measure **ratings of public schools** and **support for school choice**

Executive Summary: Key Takeaways

Table 1. Key Takeaways	
1)	Paul Vallas leads in the mayoral runoff 44% to 39%, largely due to concerns about crime and public safety in Chicago and his positioning on these issues. However, undecided voters more closely match the profile of Johnson supporters, indicating that this will likely be a close election.
2)	Indeed, voters are highly concerned about crime in Chicago and believe the city is becoming increasingly unsafe.
3)	Voters overwhelmingly disapprove of the way local officials are handling crime and want more police and stronger punishments for criminals to make Chicago safer.

Summary of Findings

Summary of Findings: State of the Race for Chicago Mayor

Table 2. Summary of Findings: State of the Race for Chicago Mayor

1)	Paul Vallas leads Brandon Johnson by 5 points, 44% to 39%. 17% of the electorate remains undecided.
2)	Generally, <u>voters prefer a candidate who plans to increase public safety by hiring more police officers</u> than one who plans to increase public safety by investing in social services.
3)	However, <u>undecided voters match the profile of Johnson voters more so than Vallas voters – they skew black and more female</u> – indicating the race could further tighten, and that <u>this is likely to be a close election</u> .

Summary of Findings: Crime & Public Safety

Table 3. Summary of Findings: Crime & Public Safety

1)	A strong majority feels that Chicago is unsafe (57%) and that the level of crime is increasing (78%).
2)	A 54% majority of voters indicate crime and public safety is the most important issue in determining their vote for Chicago Mayor.
3)	<p>On the issue of crime and public safety, voters are supportive of J.B. Pritzker's efforts but blame Lori Lightfoot and Kim Foxx.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Voters approve of the way Governor Pritzker (63%) is handling the issue but strongly disapprove of the way Mayor Lightfoot (64% disapprove) and State's Attorney Foxx (59% disapprove) are.➤ Voters say Foxx (25%) and Lightfoot (23%) are most responsible for Chicago's current crime wave.

Summary of Findings: Public Safety Policies

Table 4. Summary of Findings: Public Safety Policies

1)

Chicago voters are largely familiar with and narrowly support Illinois's bail reform law that proposes a pretrial release system and ends cash bail.

However, once voters are presented with the law in a safety vs fairness tradeoff, a plurality believes this law makes the community less safe.

2)

A majority of Chicago voters are familiar with and support the Chicago Police Department's policy of restricting police foot pursuits.

3)

Still, voters believe punishments for criminals in Chicago are too lenient and want stronger punishments for repeat offenders.

Summary of Findings: Public Schools & Charters

Table 5. Summary of Findings: Public Schools & Charters

1)

Half of Chicago voters rate the quality of public schools in the city as “poor” while 38% rate it as “good.”

2)

A strong majority (70%) supports allowing parents to choose their child’s public school and have the funding for that student follow them, and a plurality (46%) supports opening more charter schools in Chicago.

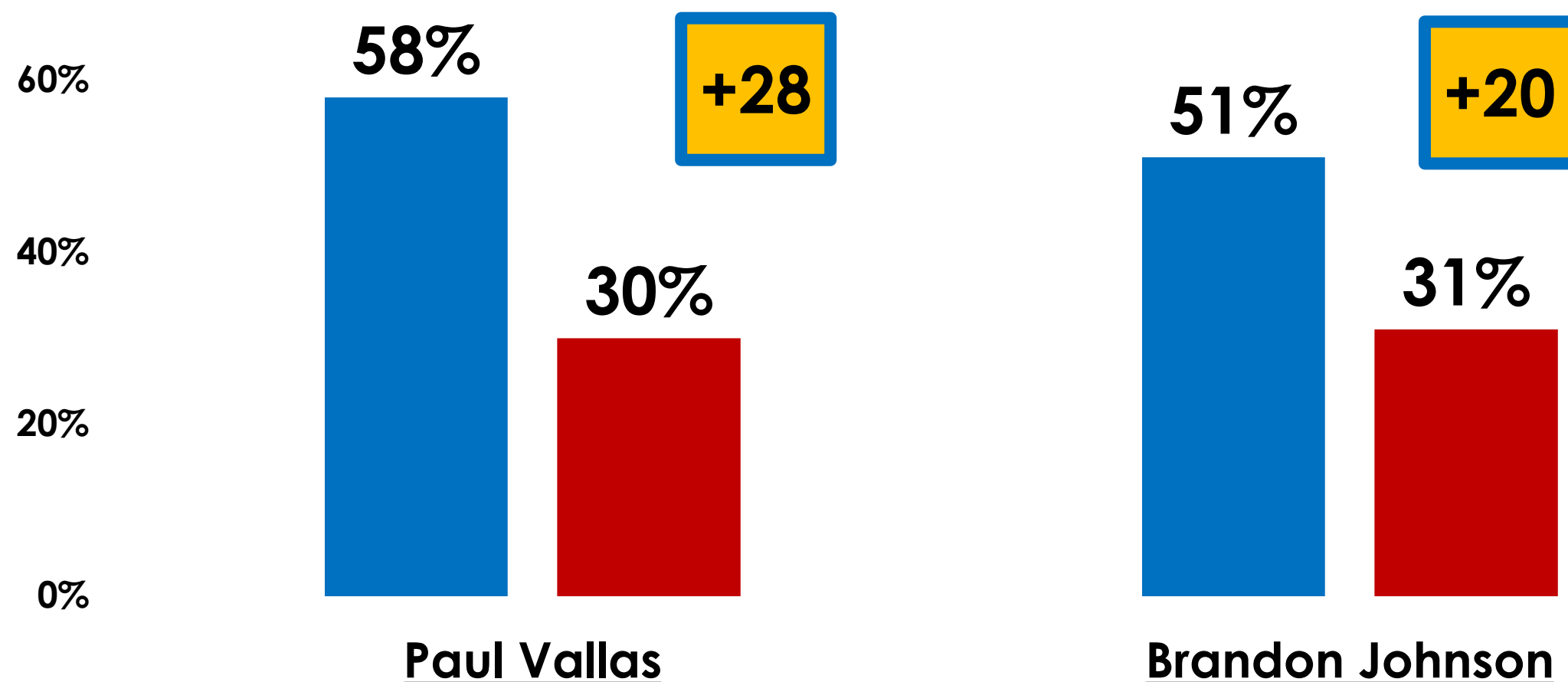
State of the Chicago Mayoral Race

Candidate Favorability Ratings

- Both Paul Vallas and Brandon Johnson have positive net favorability ratings and are viewed favorably by a majority of runoff voters, with Vallas more strongly positioned.

Chart 1. Candidate Favorability Ratings

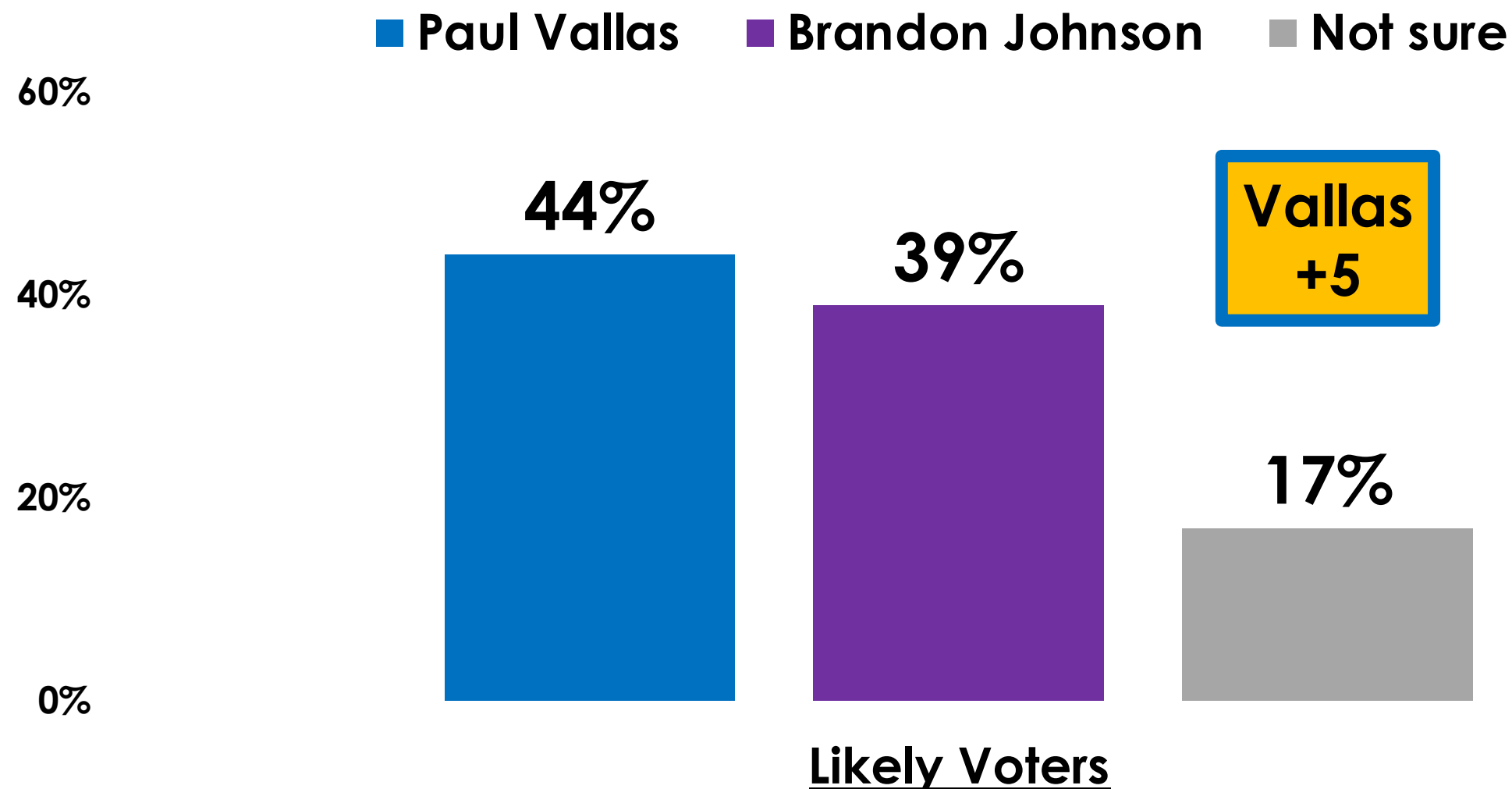
■ Total Favorable ■ Total Unfavorable



Candidate Horserace

- In the runoff election for Chicago Mayor, we find **Paul Vallas currently leads Brandon Johnson by 5 points, 44% to 39%**. 17% of the electorate remains undecided.

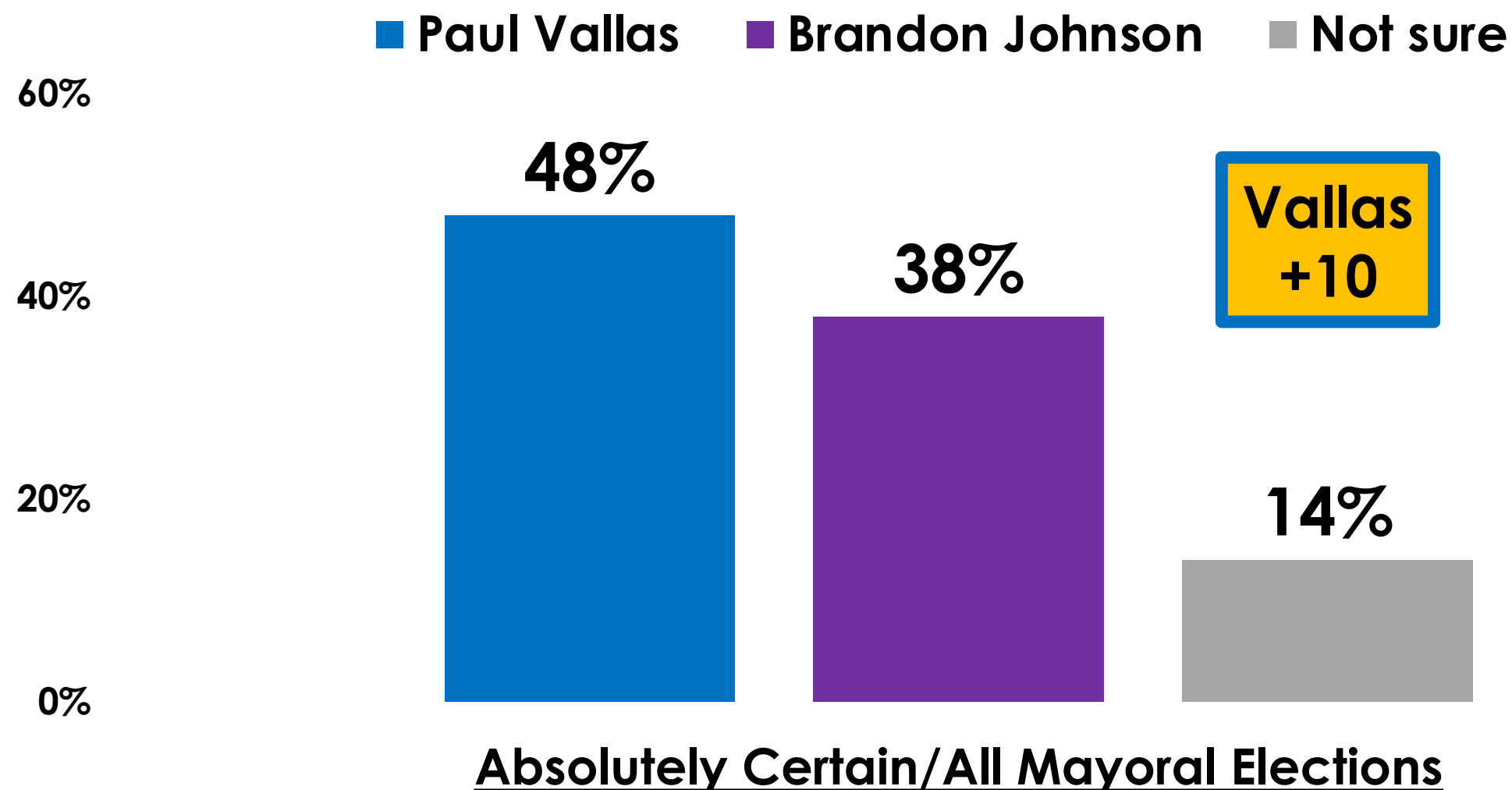
Chart 2. Candidate Horserace



Candidate Horserace: Low Turnout Scenario

- Vallas has a larger lead in a **low turnout scenario**. Among voters who indicate they are “**absolutely certain**” to vote in the runoff election and vote in “**all elections**” for Chicago Mayor, **Vallas leads by 10 points**.

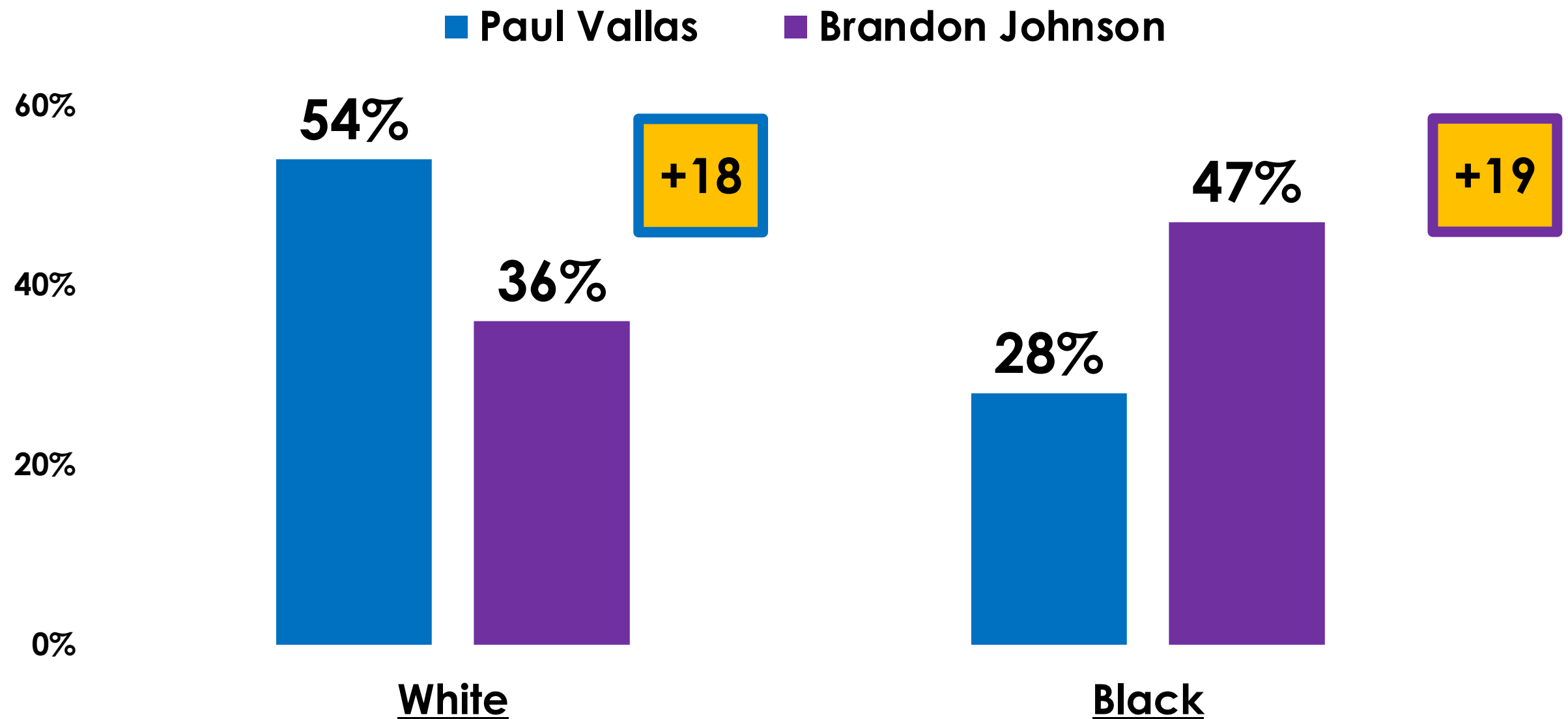
Chart 3. Candidate Horserace: Low Turnout Scenario



Candidate Horserace: Race

- Vallas leads by 18 points among **White voters**, and Johnson leads by 19 points among **Black voters**.

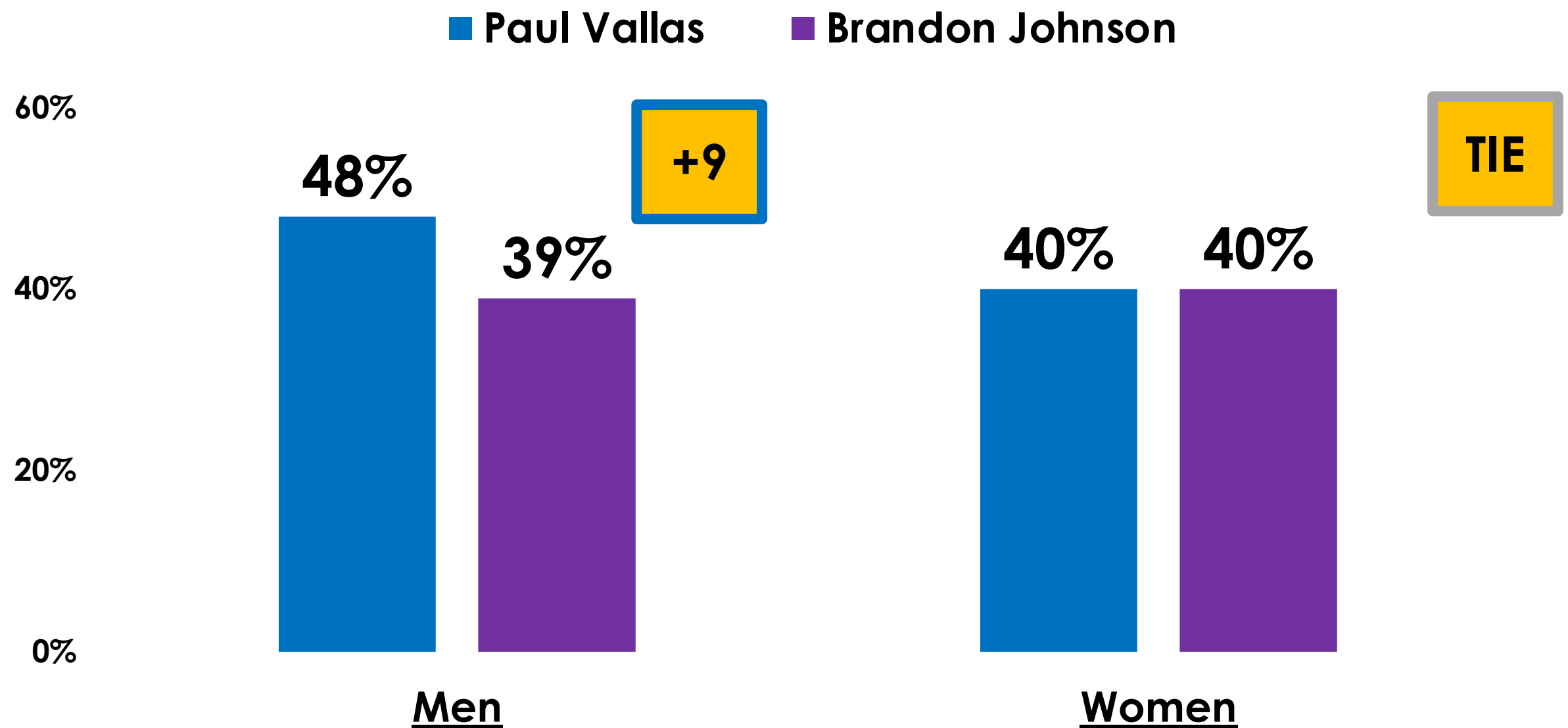
Chart 4. Candidate Horserace: Race



Candidate Horserace: Gender

- Vallas leads by 9 points among **men**, while **women** are split.

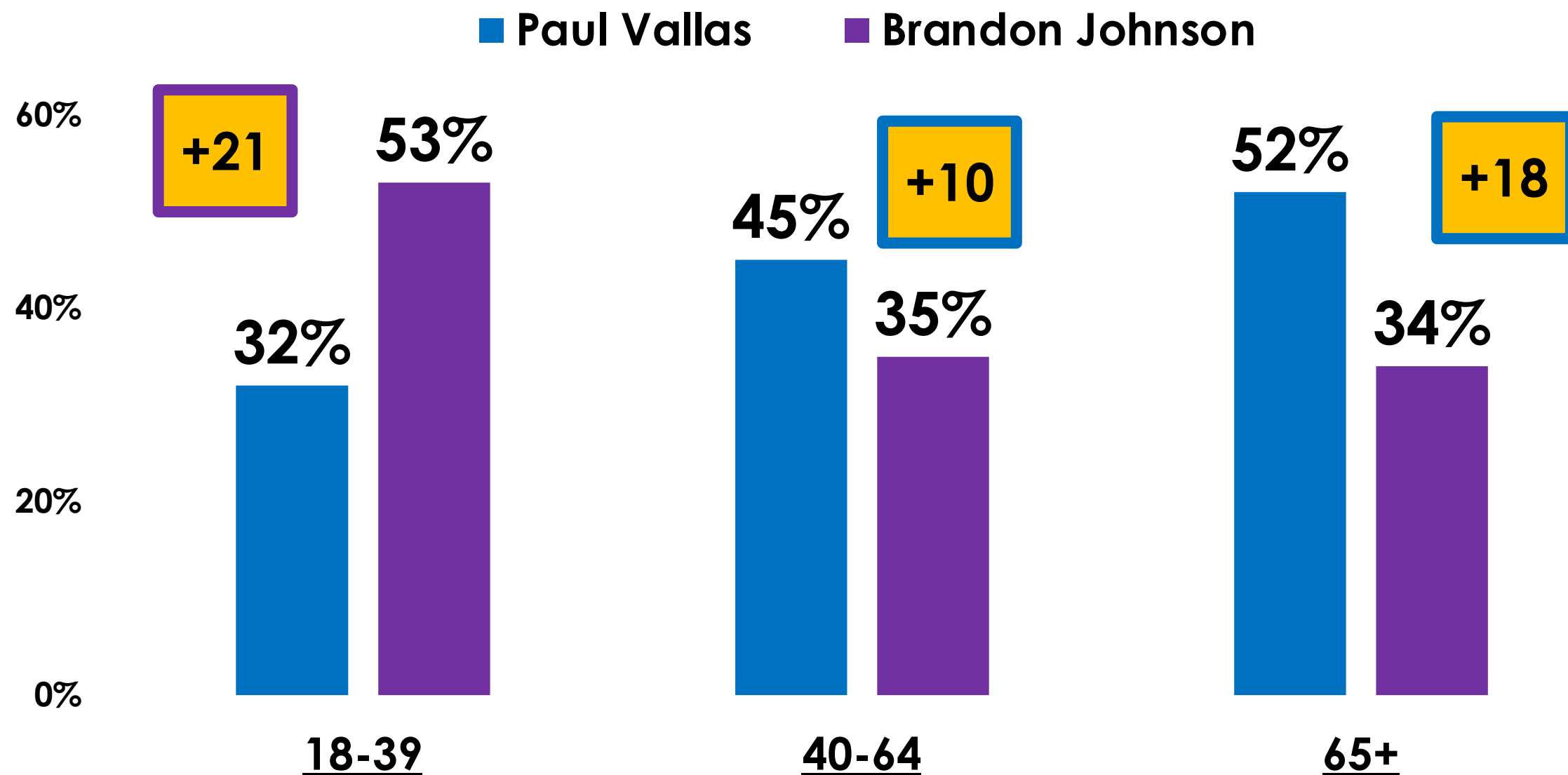
Chart 5. Candidate Horserace: Gender



Candidate Horserace: Age

- Johnson leads among **younger voters**, and Vallas leads among voters **40-64** and **65 and older**.

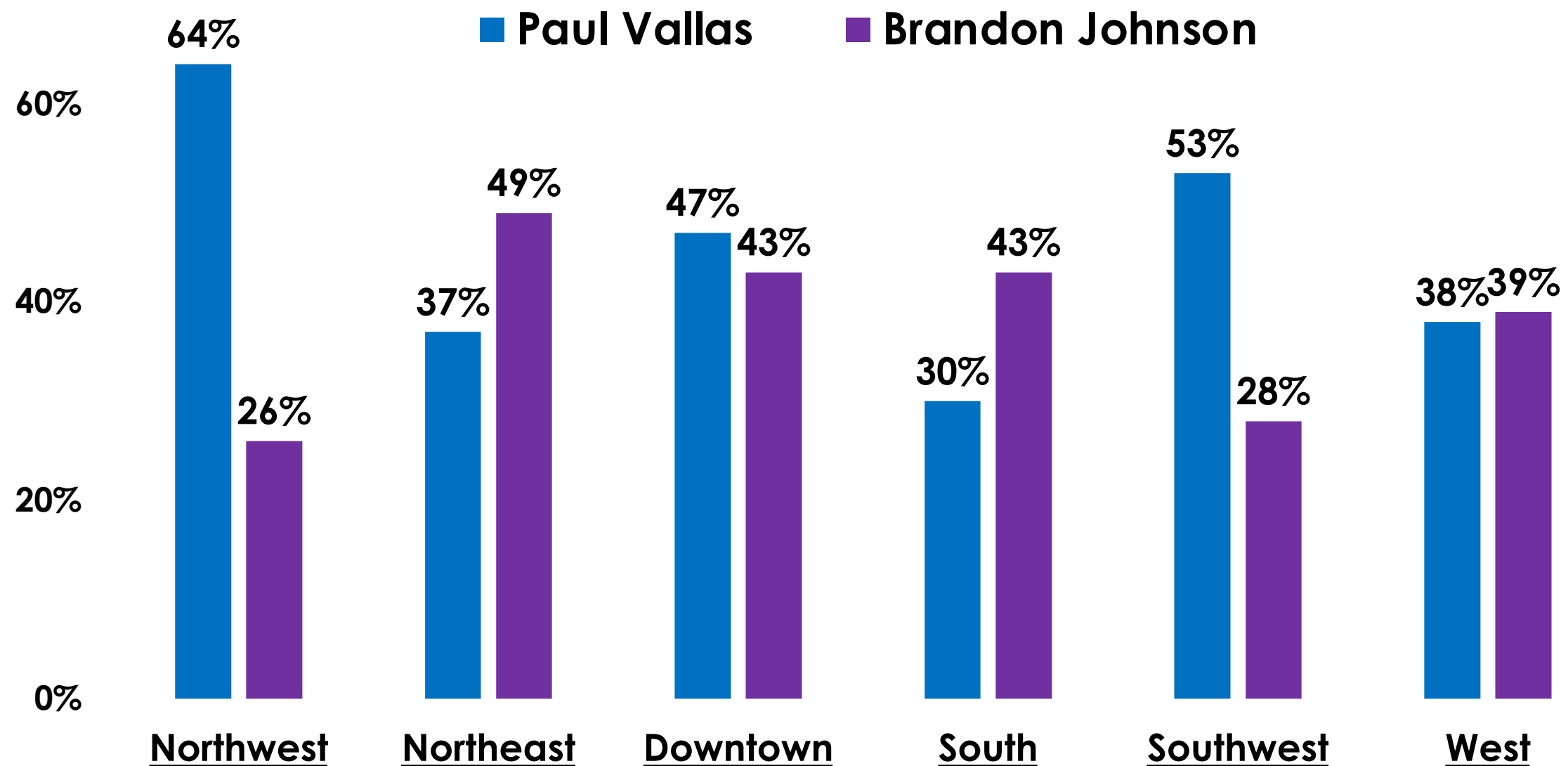
Chart 6. Candidate Horserace: Age



Candidate Horserace: Region

- Vallas leads among voters in **Northwest**, **Downtown**, and **Southwest** Chicago. Johnson leads among voters in **Northeast** and on the **South Side**.

Chart 7. Candidate Horserace: Region



Generic Public Safety Horserace

- When voters are asked to choose between a mayoral candidate who plans to increase public safety by **hiring more police officers and arresting more criminals** vs **investing in social services and rerouting funds from traditional policing to violence prevention programming**, they prefer the candidate who plans to hire more police by 8 points.

Table 6. Generic Public Safety Horserace	
Generic Candidate	Chicago Voters
A candidate who plans to hire more police	48%
A candidate who plans to invest in social services	40%
Margin	Hire More Police +8

Generic Public Safety Horserace: Race

- **White voters** are more likely to vote for a candidate who plans to increase public safety by hiring more cops and arresting more criminals while **Black voters** prefer a candidate who prioritizes investing in social services and rerouting fund from traditional policing to violence prevention programming.

Table 7. Generic Public Safety Horserace: Race

Generic Candidate	White Voters	Black Voters
A candidate who plans to hire more police	55%	36%
A candidate who plans to invest in social services	36%	47%
Margin	Hire More Police +19	Invest in Social Services +11

Profile of Undecided Voters

- **Undecided Voters more closely match the profile of Johnson voters rather than Vallas voters**, indicating that this will likely be a close election. Indeed, Undecided Voters are largely:
 - **Black**
 - **Women**
 - **South Side of Chicago**
- **44% of Undecided Voters** are also **younger**, and younger voters are more pro-Johnson as well.
- Undecided voters prefer a **generic mayoral candidate** who plans to increase public safety by **investing in social services** over one who will hire more cops.

Demographic Profile: Undecided Voters

Table 8. Demographic Profile of Undecided Voters	
Group	Undecided Voters
White	24%
Black	54%
Men	38%
Women	62%
Under 50	44%
Over 50	56%
Northwest	10%
Northeast	20%
Downtown	7%
South Side	36%
Southwest	15%
West	12%

Generic Public Safety Horserace: Undecided Voters

- Unlike likely voters overall, **a plurality of undecided voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who plans to increase public safety by investing in social services** and rerouting funds from traditional policing to violence prevention programming.

Table 9. Generic Public Safety Horserace: Undecided Voters

Generic Candidate	Chicago Voters	Undecided Voters
A candidate who plans to hire more police	48%	30%
A candidate who plans to invest in social services	40%	42%
Margin	Hire More Police +8	Invest in Social Services +12

Crime & Public Safety

Top Issue for Mayoral Vote

- A 54% majority of voters, including **White voters** and **Black voters**, indicate **crime and public safety** is the most important issue in determining their vote for Chicago Mayor.

Table 10. Top Issue for Mayoral Vote

Issue	Chicago Voters	White voters	Black voters
Crime/public safety	54%	56%	51%
Taxes/spending	10%	11%	6%
Education/schools	9%	8%	12%
Housing/homelessness	9%	7%	11%
Jobs/economy	9%	9%	9%
Public health	3%	3%	5%
Transit/transportation	2%	1%	1%

Job Approval on Public Safety & Crime

- Voters approve the way **J.B. Pritzker** is handling public safety and crime as Governor of Illinois but overwhelmingly disapprove of the way **Kim Foxx** and **Lori Lightfoot** are in the roles.

Table 11. Job Approval on Public Safety & Crime

Public Official	Approve	Disapprove	Net
J.B. Pritzker as Governor of Illinois	63%	32%	+31
Kim Foxx as State's Attorney for Cook County	32%	59%	-27
Lori Lightfoot as Mayor of Chicago	32%	64%	-32

Responsible for Chicago Crime Wave

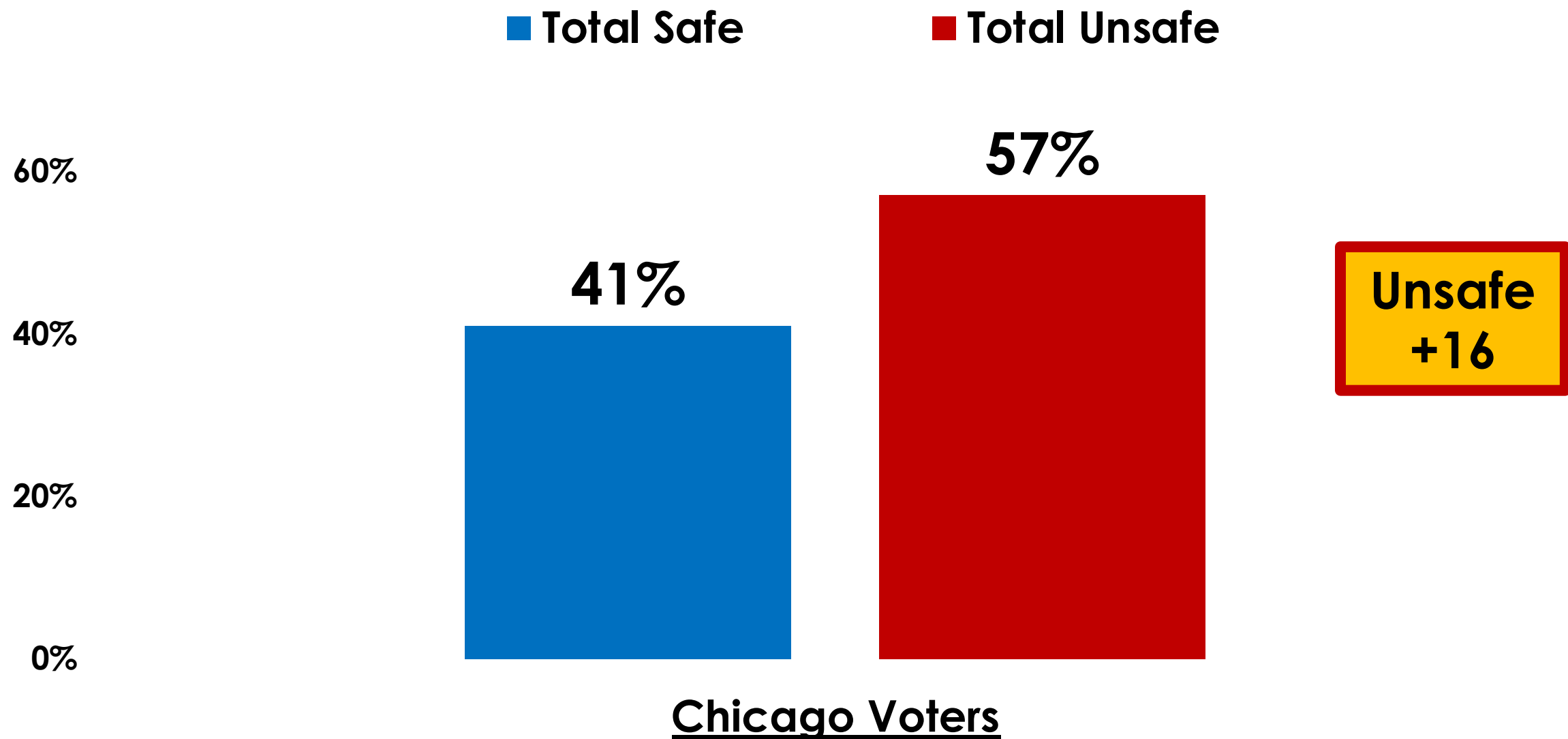
- Voters believe State's Attorney for Cook County Foxx and Mayor Lightfoot are most responsible for Chicago's current crime wave.

Table 12. Responsible for Chicago Crime Wave	
Public Official	Chicago Voters
State's Attorney for Cook County Foxx	25%
Mayor Lightfoot	23%
Governor Pritzker	9%
Someone else	3%
No one in particular is to blame	31%
Not sure	9%

Safety in Chicago

- A 57% majority of voters feels that Chicago is unsafe.

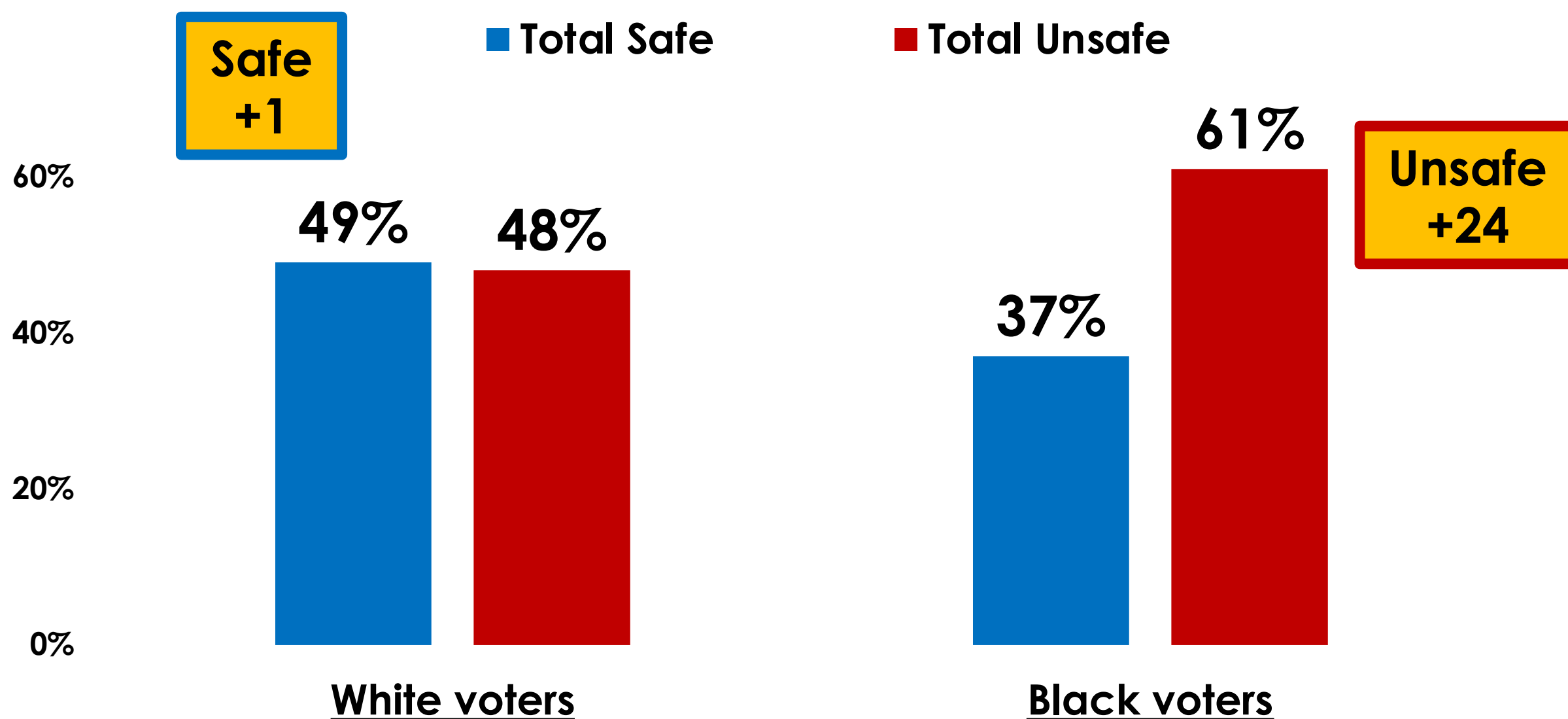
Chart 8. Safety in Chicago



Safety in Chicago: Race

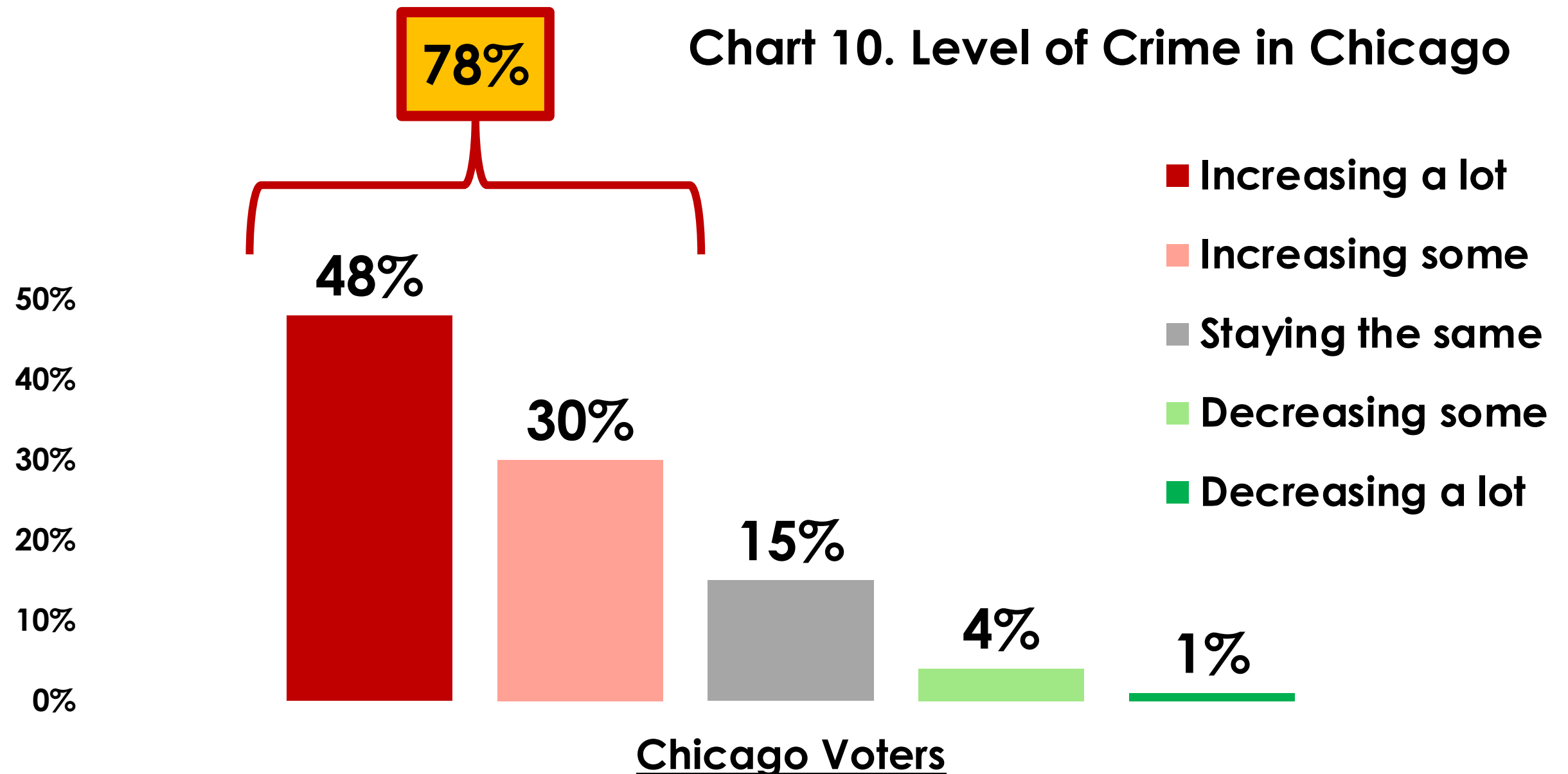
- Black voters are more likely to believe Chicago is unsafe than White voters.

Chart 9. Safety in Chicago



Level of Crime in Chicago

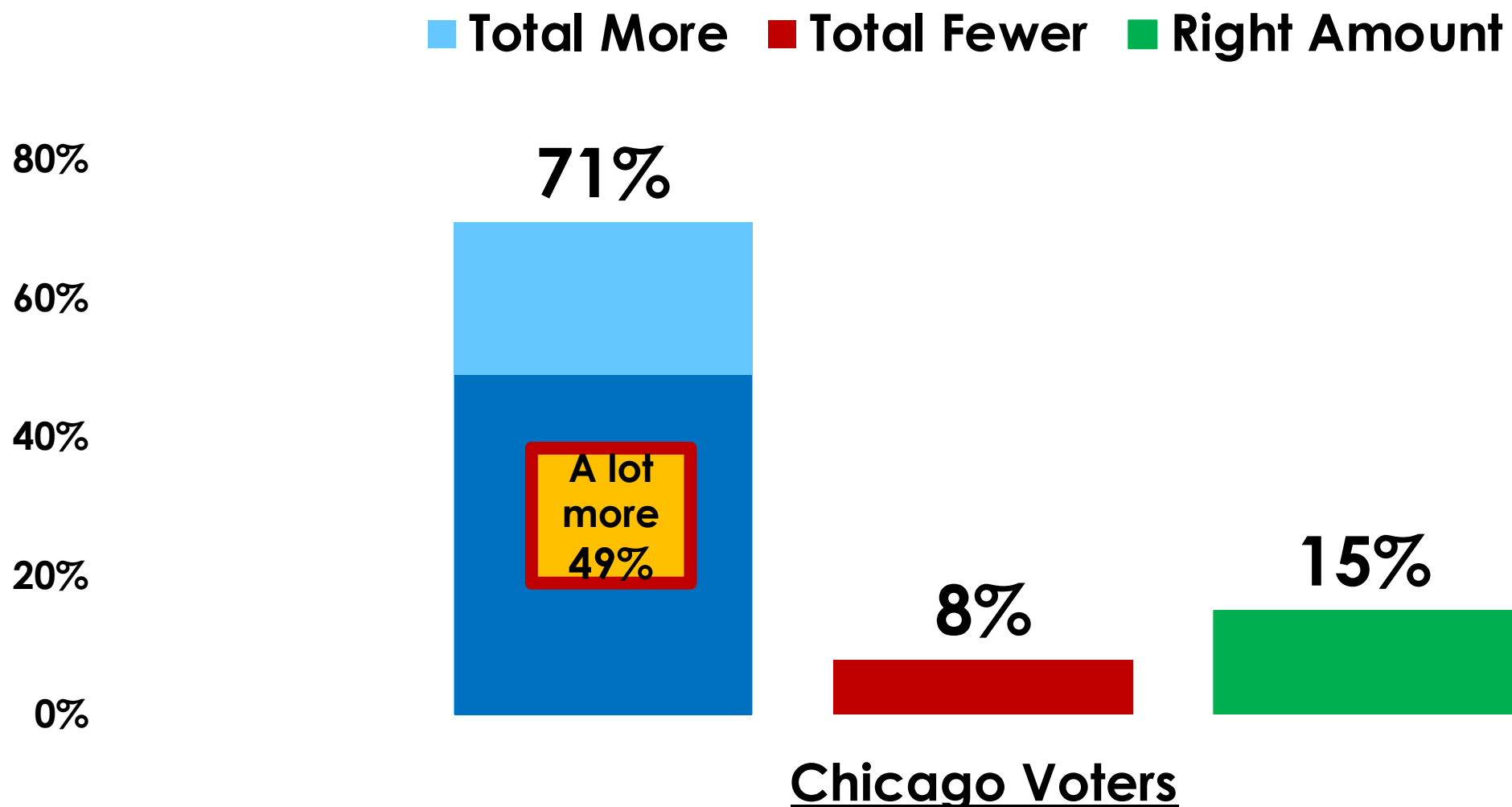
- Further, a **78% majority** thinks the level of crime in Chicago is increasing, including 48% who think crime is increasing a lot.



Number of Police Officers in Chicago

- 71% of voters – including voters across all demographic groups – believe there should be more police officers in Chicago, including 49% who say there should be a lot more.

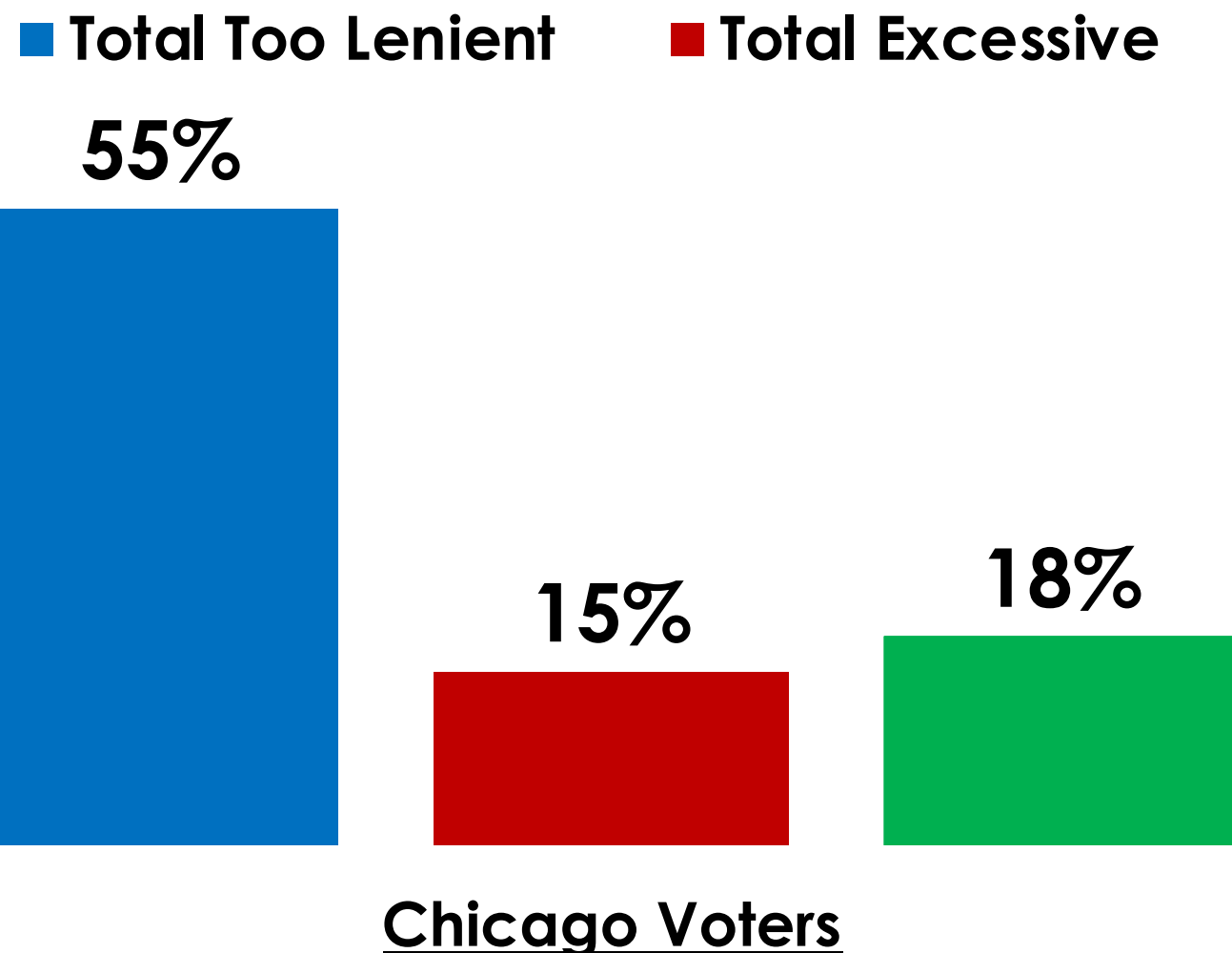
Chart 11. Number of Police Officers in Chicago



Punishments for Criminals

- A majority of voters – including at least pluralities of voters across all demographic groups – say **punishments for criminals in Chicago are too lenient**, with only 15% indicating they're too excessive despite the police brutality issue.

Chart 12. Punishments for Criminals



Punishment and Repeat Offenders

- **79% of Chicago voters believe there should be stronger punishments for repeat offenders** to make Chicago safer, while just 14% think stronger punishments unfairly target disadvantaged communities without enhancing public safety.

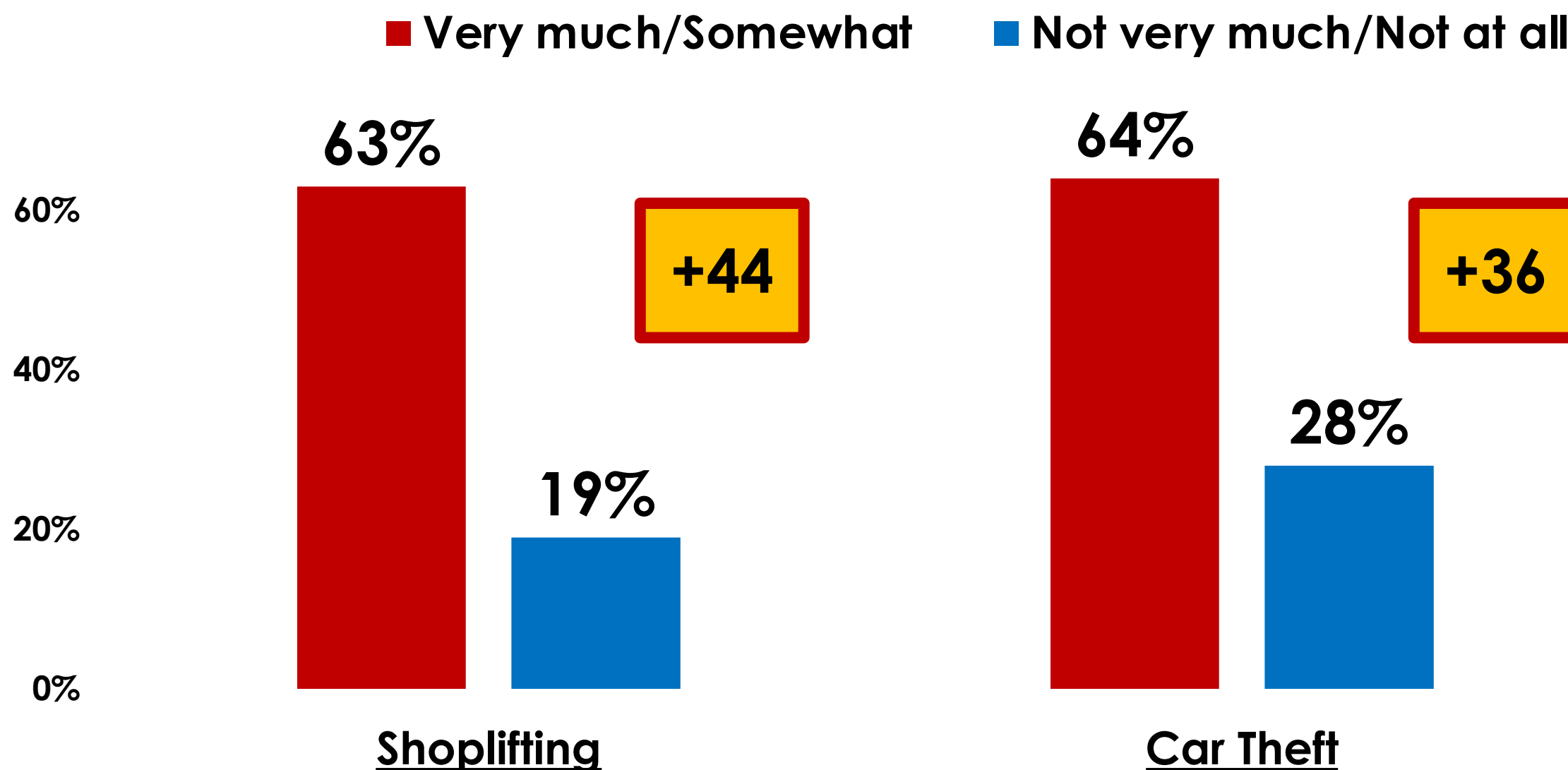
Table 13. Punishment and Repeat Offenders

Position on Punishment	Chicago Voters
There should be stronger punishments for repeat offenders	79%
Stronger punishments for repeat offenders are unfair and ineffective	14%
Margin	Stronger punishments +65

Toll of Shoplifting and Car Theft

- Chicagoans say **shoplifting** has hurt businesses in their community (63%) and **car theft** has affected their community (64%).

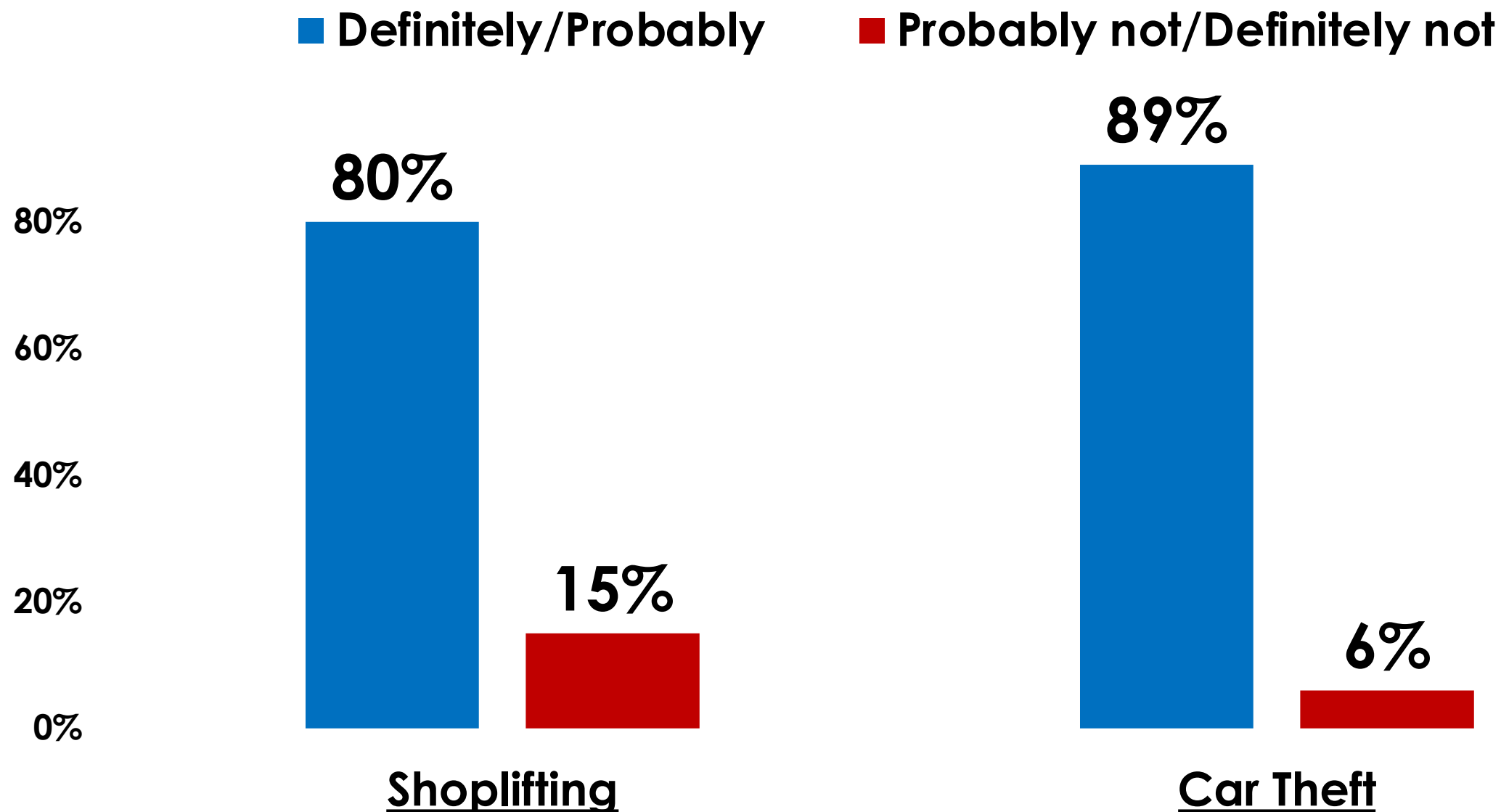
Chart 13. Toll of Shoplifting and Car Theft



Prosecution for Shoplifting and Car Theft

- Accordingly, Chicagoans say there should be more arrests and prosecutions associated with shoplifting (80%) and car theft (89%).

Chart 14. More Arrests and Prosecutions



Public Safety Policies

Bail Reform & Police Foot Pursuits

- Respondents were then given brief descriptions of the **Illinois bail reform and pretrial release law** and the **Chicago Police Department's foot pursuit policy** and asked whether they were familiar with and supported each policy.

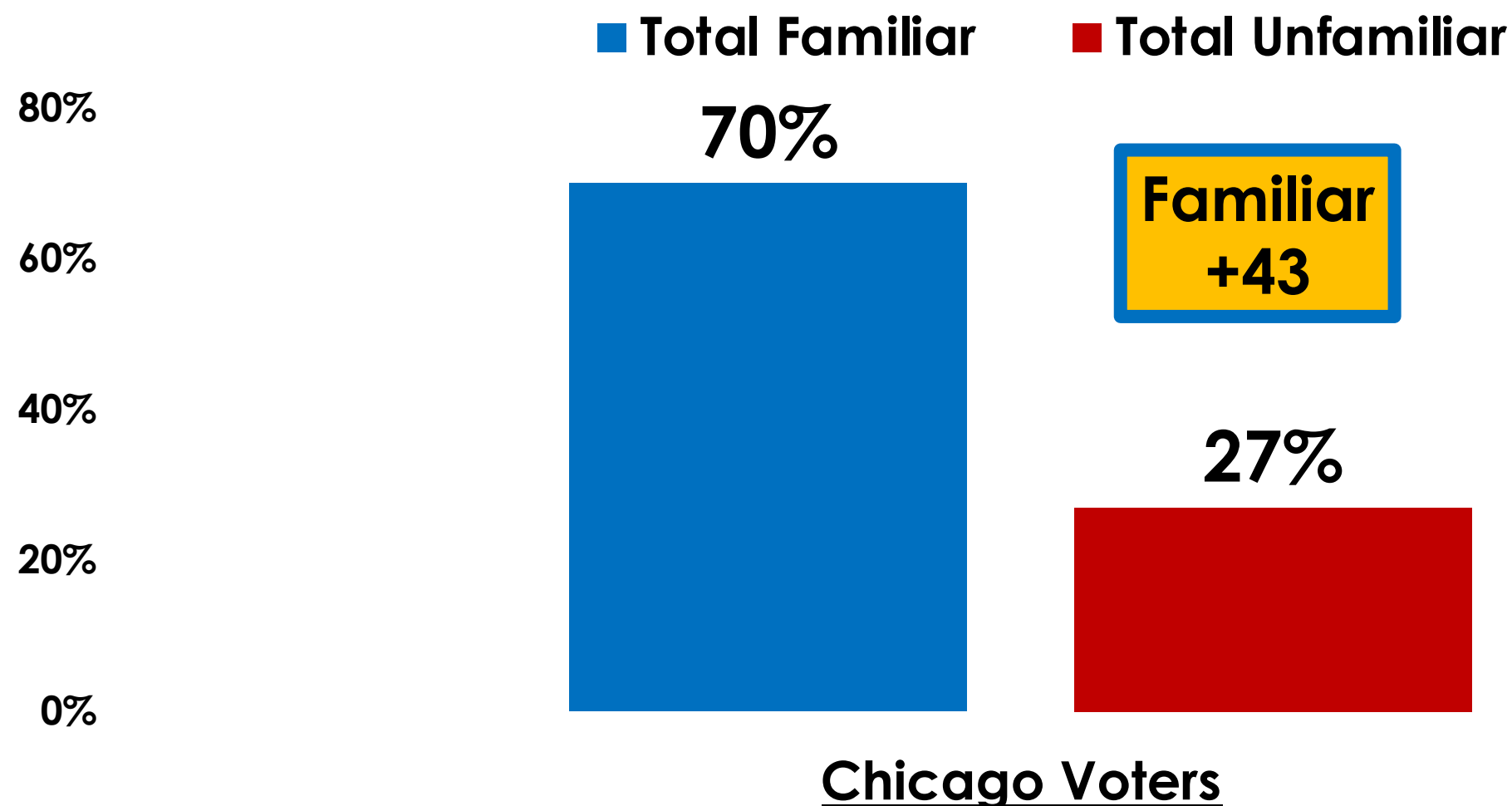
Illinois Bail Reform & Pretrial Release

- The **Illinois bail reform and pretrial release law (Safe-T Act)** was introduced as follows:
 - Illinois recently passed a law that proposes a “pretrial release” system and ends “cash bail,” meaning judges cannot require any accused criminal to put up money in order to be released from jail before trial. The law also limits the ability of judges to jail accused criminals before trial based on their risk of fleeing the jurisdiction or the danger they may pose to the community.

Familiarity with Illinois Bail Reform & Pretrial Release Law

- 7-in-10 voters indicated they are familiar with the with the Illinois bail reform and pretrial release law.

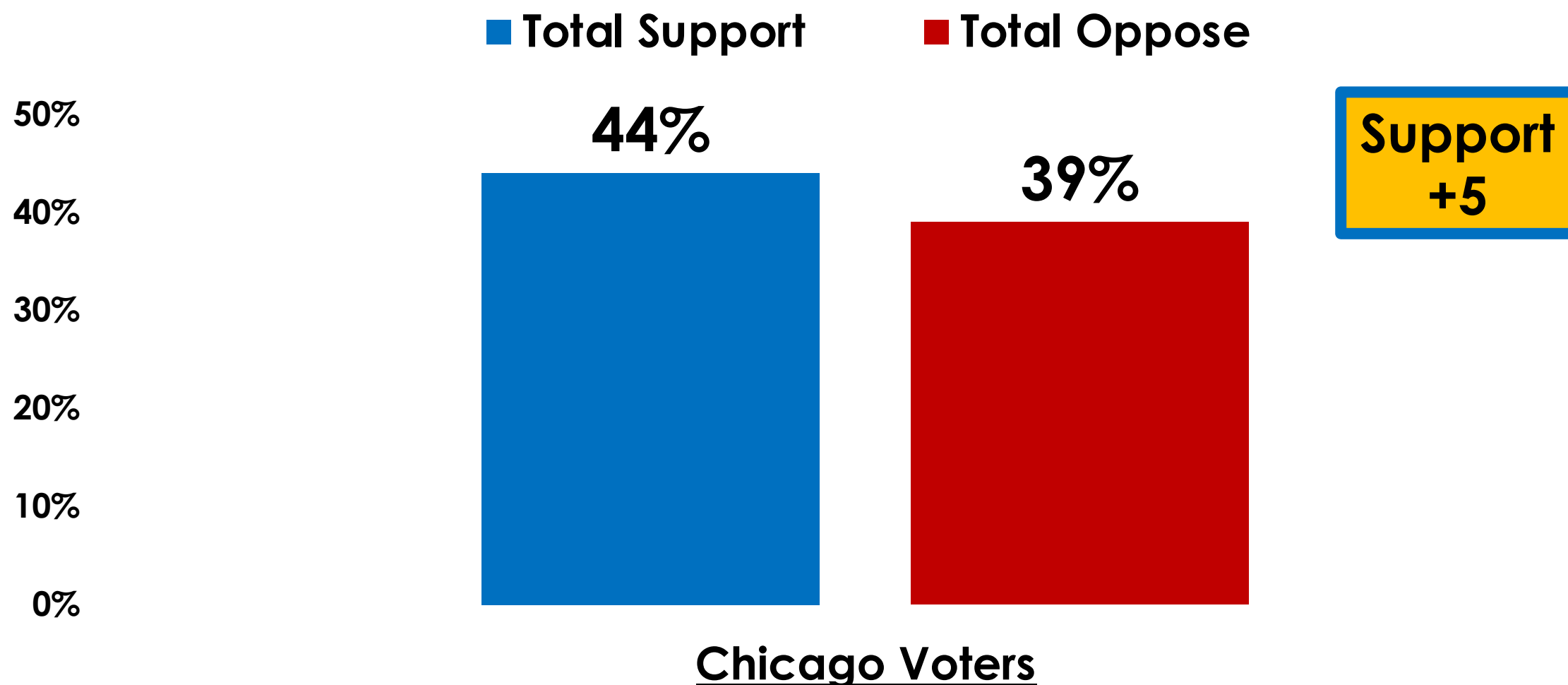
Chart 15. Familiarity with Illinois Bail Reform & Pretrial Release Law



Support for Illinois Bail Reform & Pretrial Release Law

- There is narrow support for the Illinois bail reform and pretrial release law, as 44% support it and 39% oppose it.

Chart 16. Support for Illinois Bail Reform & Pretrial Release Law



Support for Bail Reform & Pretrial Release Law by Demo Group

- While majorities of Black voters and voters under 50 support the bail reform law, a plurality of voters 50 and older opposes it. White voters are split.

Table 14. Support for Bail Reform Law & Pretrial Release by Demo Group			
Group	Total Support	Total Oppose	Margin
White voters	42%	41%	+1
Black Voters	50%	37%	+13
Under 50	54%	35%	+19
50+	37%	44%	-7

Bail Reform Law Tradeoff: Fairer vs. Less Safe

- 45% of voters believe this law makes our communities less safe, because more criminals are put back on the streets where they commit additional crime, while 39% say that this law makes our justice system fairer because people aren't kept in jail based on whether they can afford to pay bail.

Table 15. Bail Reform Law Tradeoff	
Position	Chicago Voters
This law makes our justice system fairer	39%
This law makes our communities less safe	45%
Margin	Less Safe +6

Bail Reform Law Tradeoff

- **White voters** and **voters 50 and older** believe this law makes our communities less safe, while **voters under 50** say that this law makes our justice system fairer. **Black voters** are largely split. These findings are largely consistent with support levels for the bail reform law.

Table 16. Bail Reform Law Tradeoff				
Position	White voters	Black voters	Under 50	50+
This law makes our justice system fairer	39%	41%	48%	30%
This law makes our communities less safe	48%	39%	36%	54%
Margin	Less Safe +9	Fairer +2	Fairer +12	Less safe +24

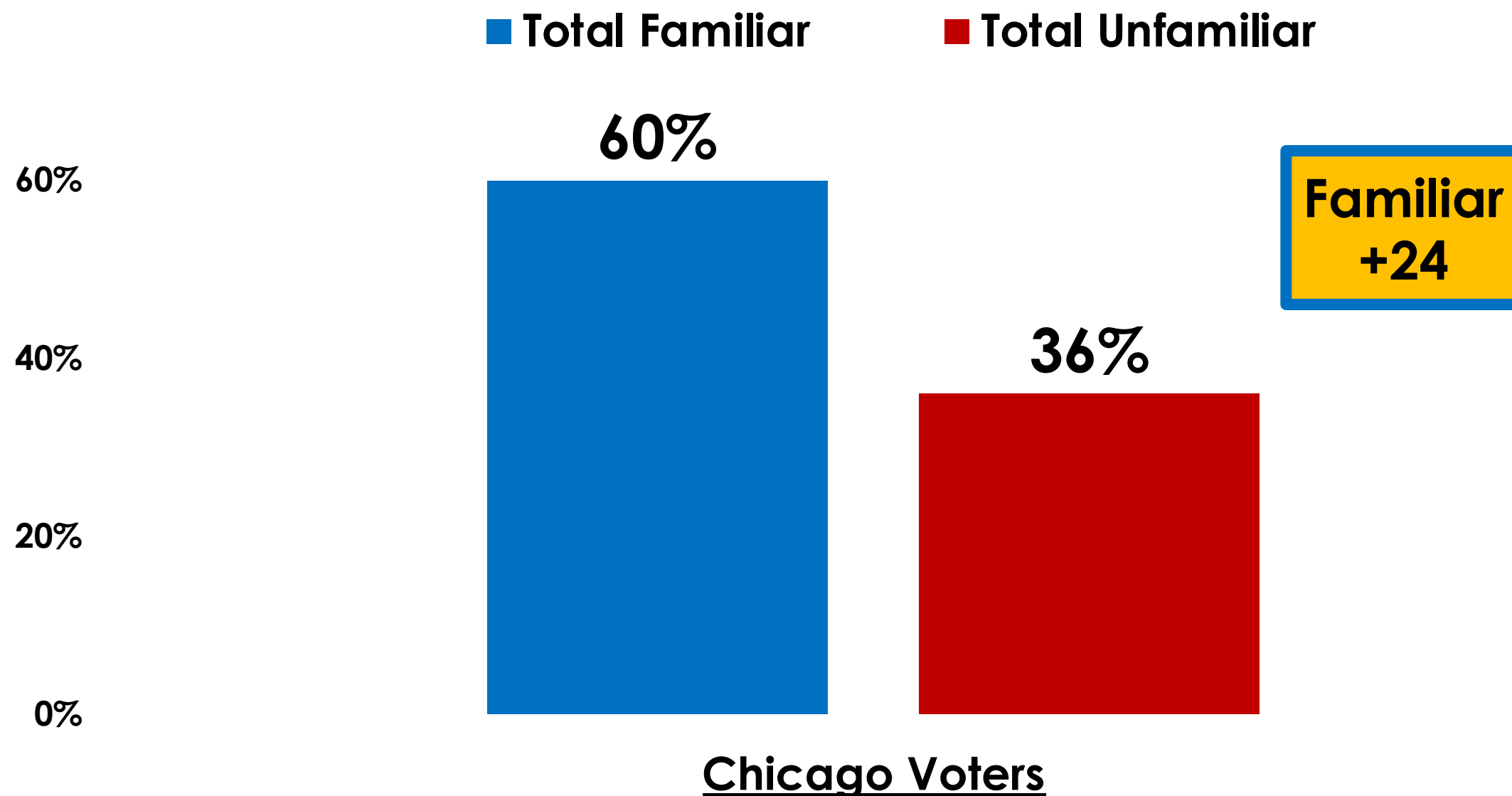
Chicago Police Foot Pursuit Policy

- The **Chicago Police Department's foot pursuit policy** was introduced as follows:
 - Last summer, the Chicago Police Department implemented a new policy preventing its officers from chasing people suspected of committing minor offenses on foot if they run away. Under the new policy, police officers may only chase an offender on foot if they believe a person is committing or is about to commit a felony, a serious misdemeanor, or a serious traffic offense that could risk injuring others.

Familiarity with Police Foot Pursuit Policy

- 60% of voters indicate they are familiar with the Chicago Police Department foot pursuit policy.

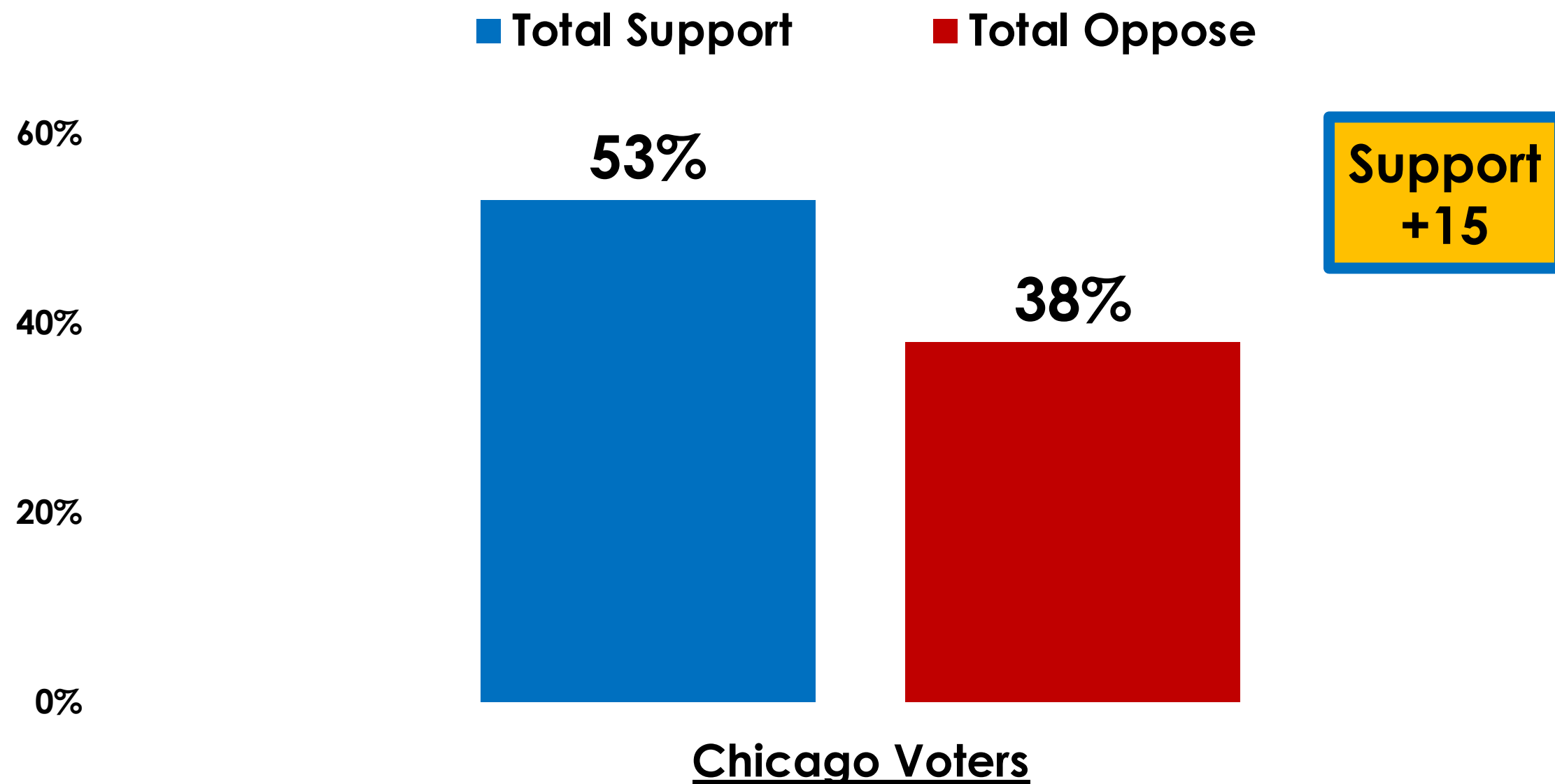
Chart 17. Familiarity with Police Foot Pursuit Policy



Support for Police Foot Pursuit Policy

- A 53% majority of Chicago voters support the policy of restricting police foot pursuits.

Chart 18. Support for Police Foot Pursuit Policy

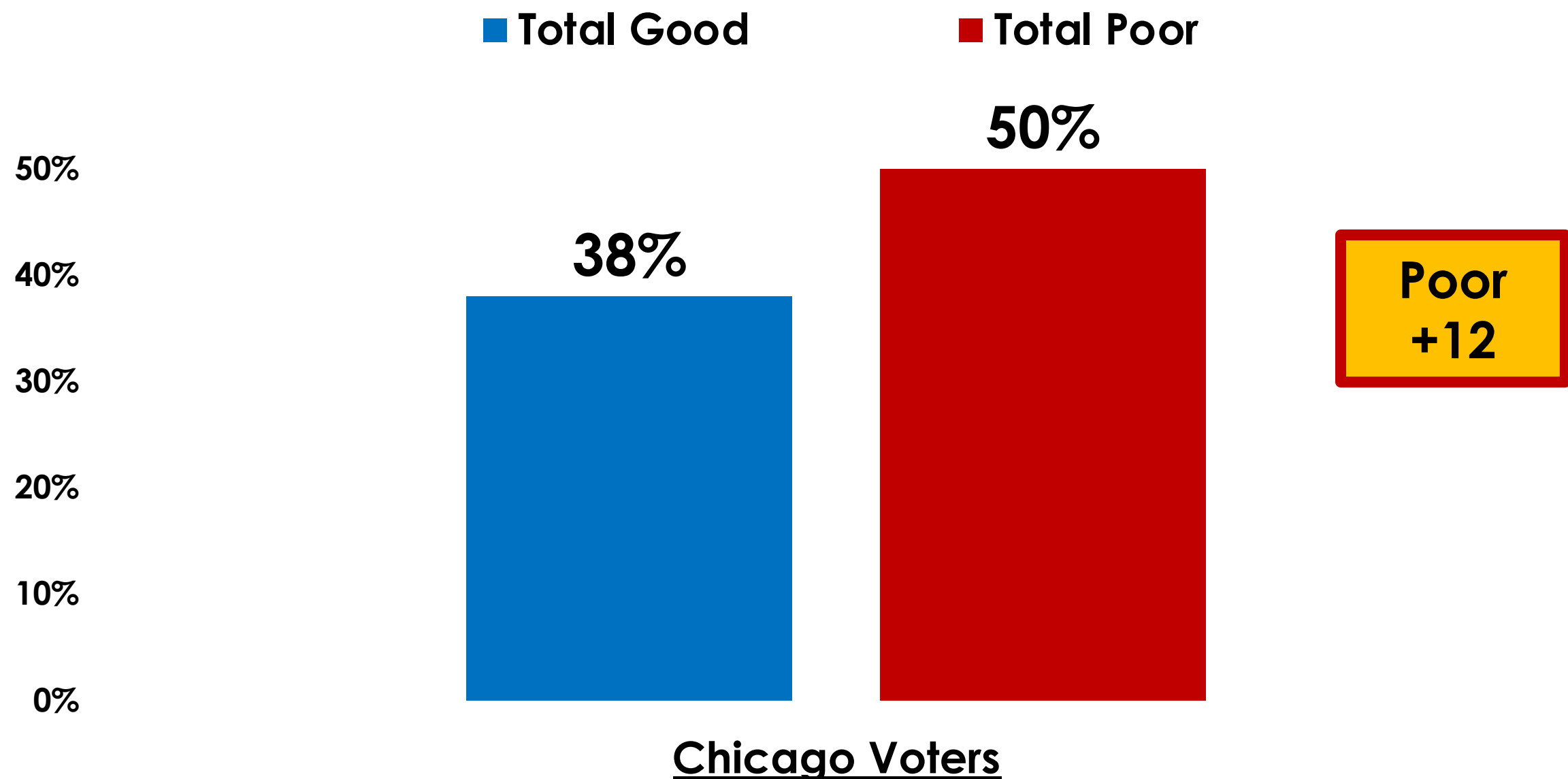


Education

Quality of Chicago Public Schools

- Half of Chicago voters rate the quality of public schools in the city as “poor” while 38% rate it as “good.”

Chart 19. Quality of Chicago Public Schools



Public School Ratings by Demo Group

- While pluralities of White voters, Black voters, voters under 50, and voters 50+ rate the quality of public schools as poor, Parents rate them as good.

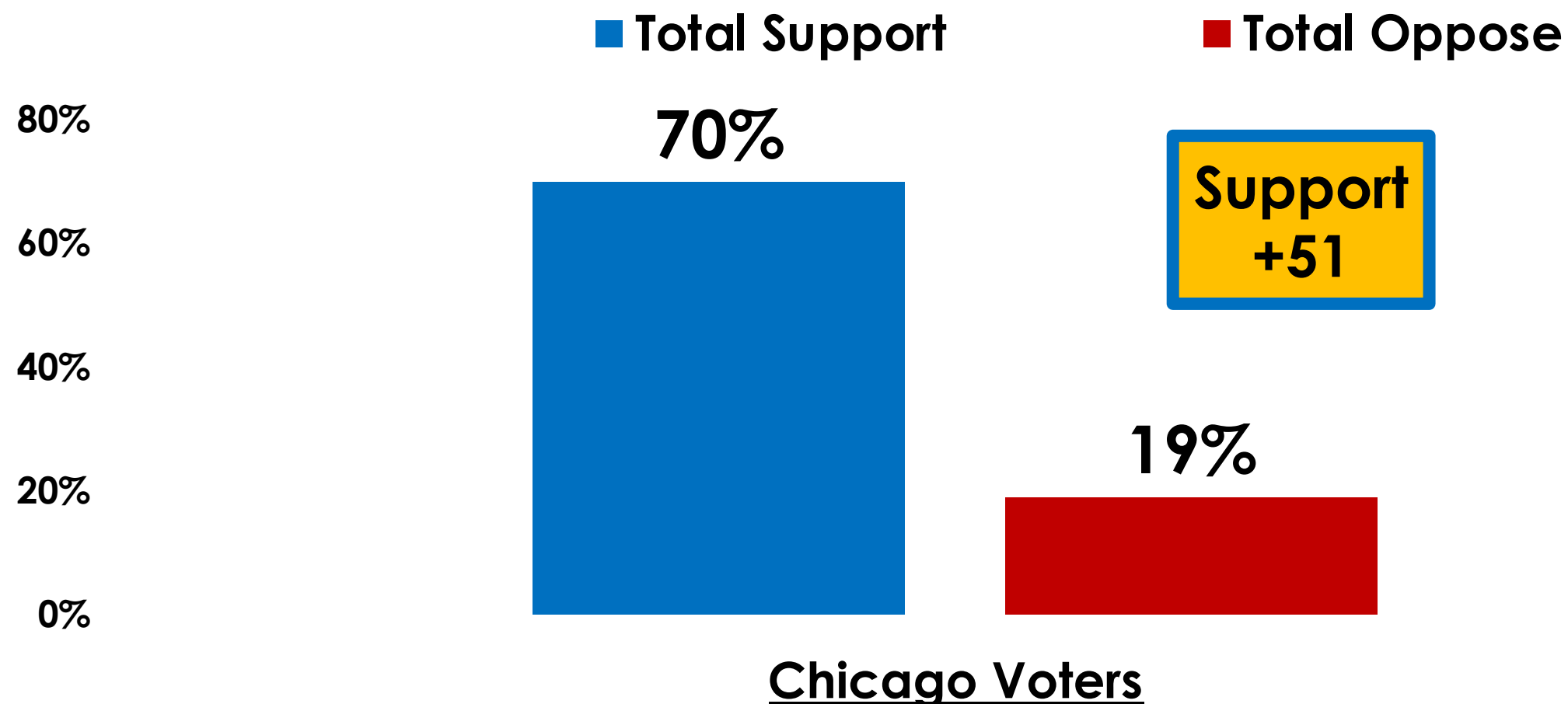
Table 17. Public School Ratings by Demo Group

Group	Total Good	Total Poor	Margin
White voters	43%	45%	-2
Black Voters	38%	48%	-10
Under 50	40%	49%	-9
50+	36%	49%	-13
Parents	59%	37%	+22

Support for School Choice & Following Funds

- Chicago voters overwhelmingly support allowing parents in Chicago to choose which public school they would like to send their children to, regardless of their zip code, and have the funding for that student follow them to their school of choice

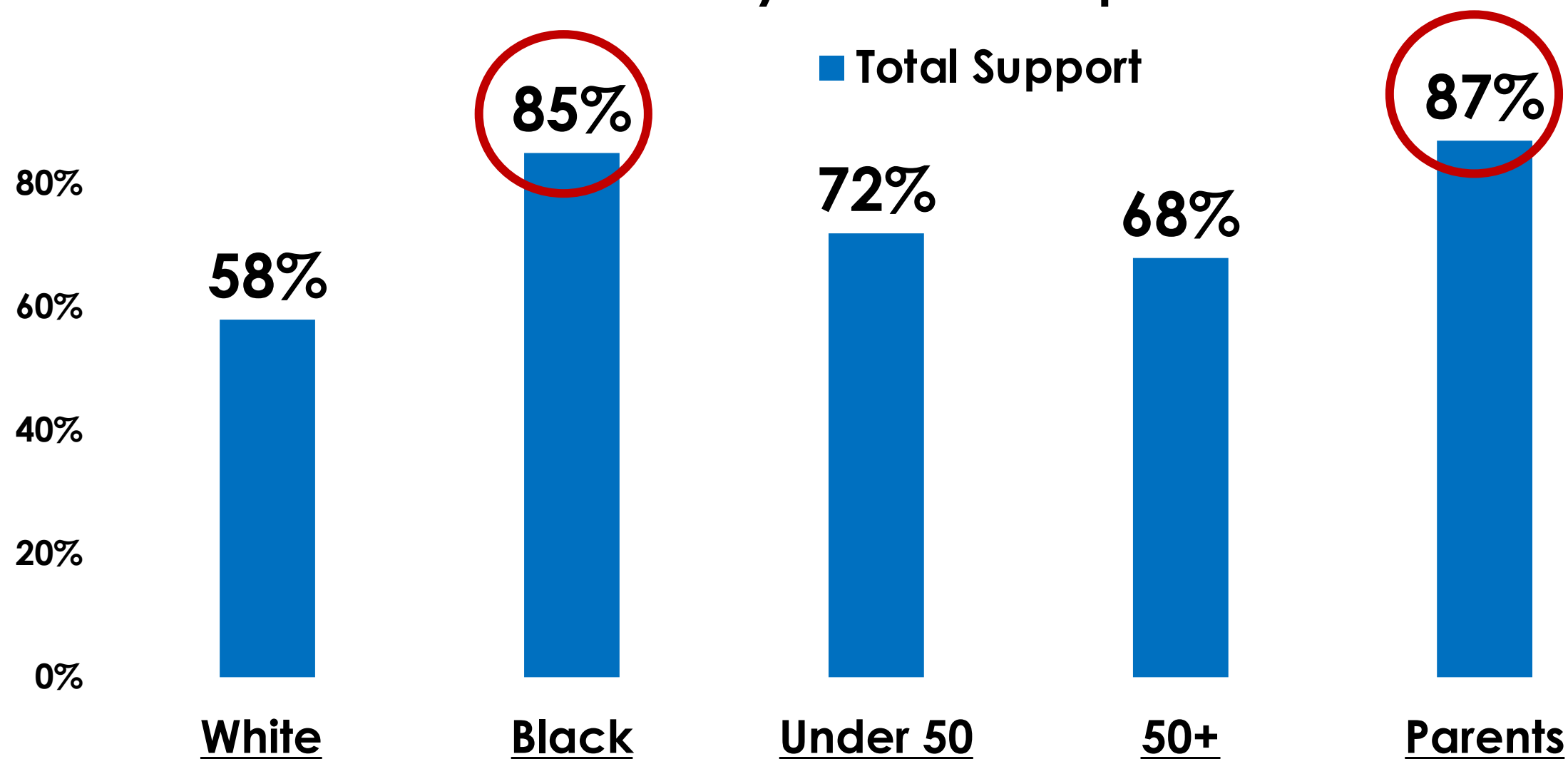
Chart 20. Schools Choice & Following Funds



Support for School Choice & Following Funds by Demo Group

- There is strong support for school choice and following funds among key demographic groups, particularly **Parents** and **Black voters**.

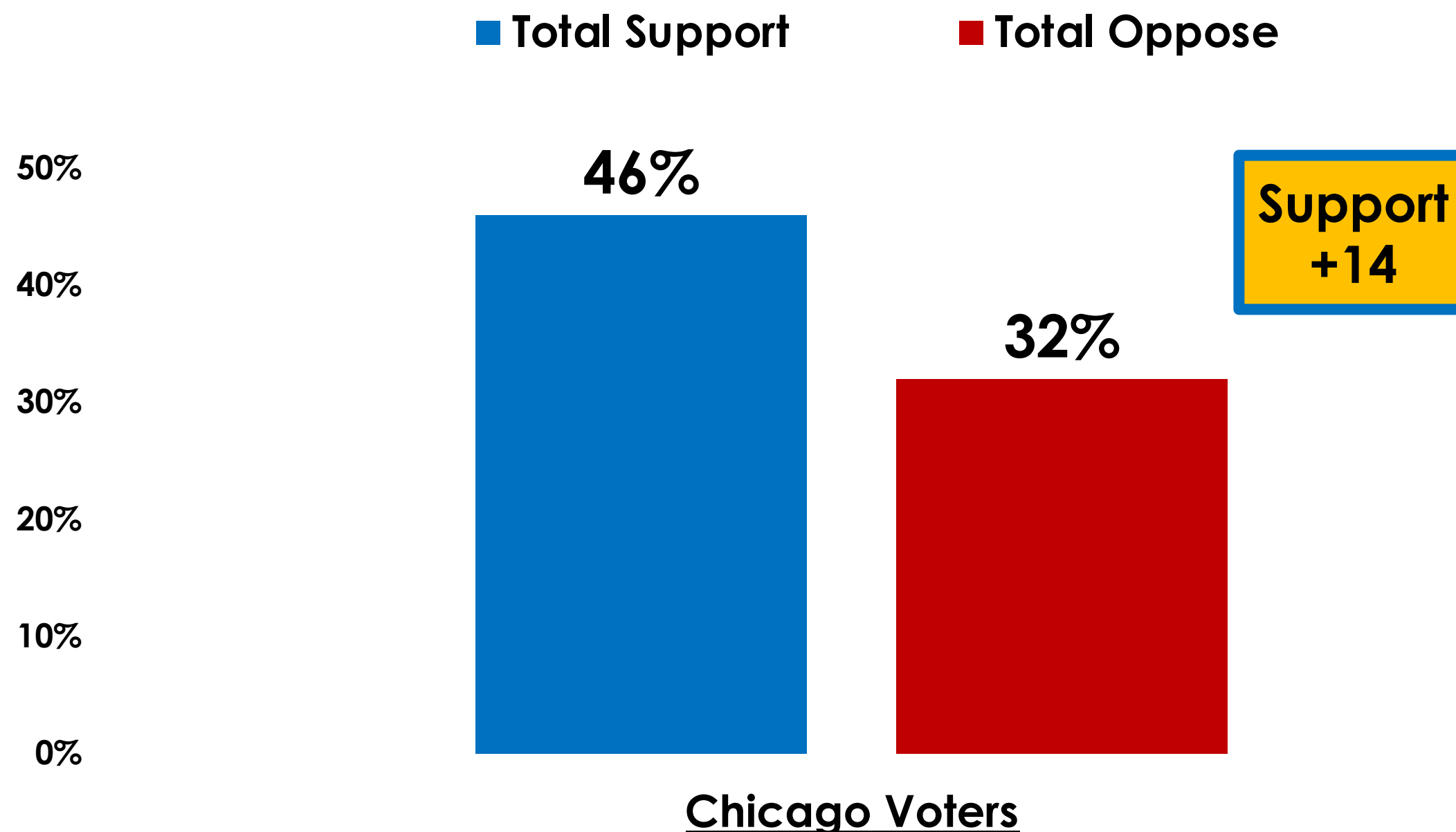
**Chart 21. Schools Choice & Following Funds
by Demo Group**



Support for More Charter Schools

- A **46%** plurality of voters supports opening more charter schools in Chicago.

Chart 22. Support for More Charter Schools



Support for More Charter Schools by Demo Group

- Strong majorities of Parents, Black voters, and voters under 50 support opening more charter schools in Chicago, while White voters are slightly opposed.

Table 18. Support for More Charter Schools by Demo Group

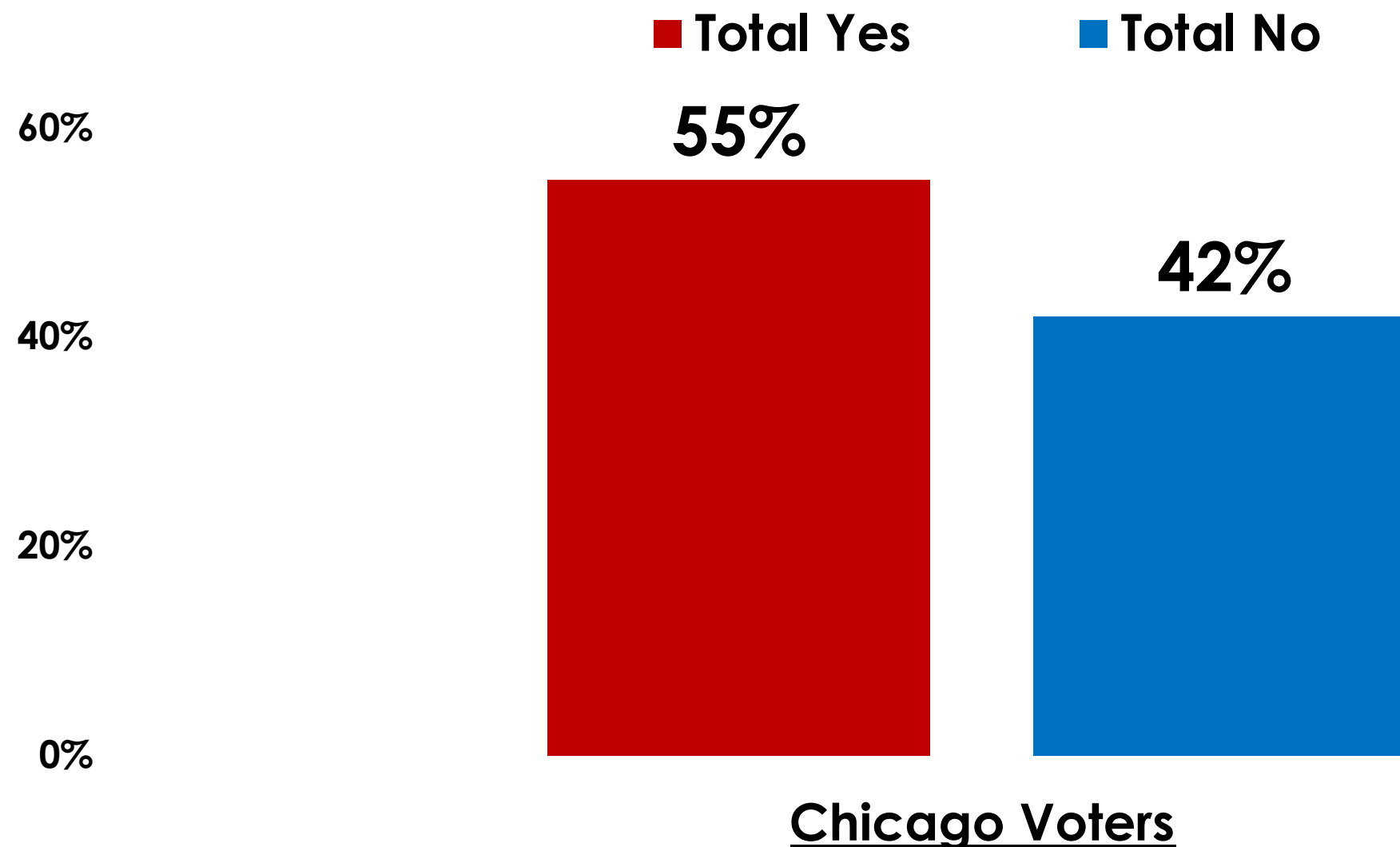
Group	Total Support	Total Oppose	Margin
White voters	36%	40%	-4
Black Voters	54%	21%	+33
Under 50	53%	29%	+24
50+	39%	34%	+5
Parents	64%	26%	+38

Chicago Departures

Considered Leaving Chicago

- A 55% majority of Chicago voters say they have considered leaving the city in the last few years.

Chart 23. Considered Leaving Chicago



Reasons for Potentially Leaving Chicago

- Among the voters who have considered leaving Chicago in recent years, 50% said **crime and public safety would play the biggest role in a decision to leave the city.**

Table 19. Reasons for Potentially Leaving Chicago

Reason	Chicago Voters
Crime/public safety	50%
Cost of living/inflation	22%
Taxes	15%
Jobs & the economy	3%
Weather	2%
Family	2%
Homelessness	1%