



PUBLIC OPINION  
STRATEGIES

turning questions into answers



The Carter Malone Group, LLC  
DRIVEN. TRUSTED. PROVEN.

# Shelby County Crime Commission



Key Findings from a survey  
of 425 voters in  
Shelby County, TN.  
September 18-22, 2021



# Methodology

---



**Public Opinion Strategies presents the key findings from a survey of 425 registered voters in Shelby County, Tennessee. The survey was conducted September 18-22, 2021 via landline and cell phones and has a margin of error of  $\pm 4.9\%$ .**

# Demographic Breakdown of Sample.

Demographic	Shelby County (100%)	City Of Memphis (65%)
<b>RACE</b>		
African-American	46% (N=195)	58% (N=160)
White	48% (N=204)	37% (N=100)
Other/Refused	6% (N=26)	5% (N=14)
<b>GENDER</b>		
Female	60% (N=255)	60% (N=166)
Male	40% (N=170)	40% (N=109)
<b>AGE</b>		
18-44	43% (N=183)	44% (N=121)
45-64	33% (N=140)	31% (N=85)
65+	24% (N=101)	25% (N=67)
<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>		
City of Memphis	65% (N=275)	100%
Rest of County	35% (N=150)	0%

# Key Findings: Issue Priorities

## #1

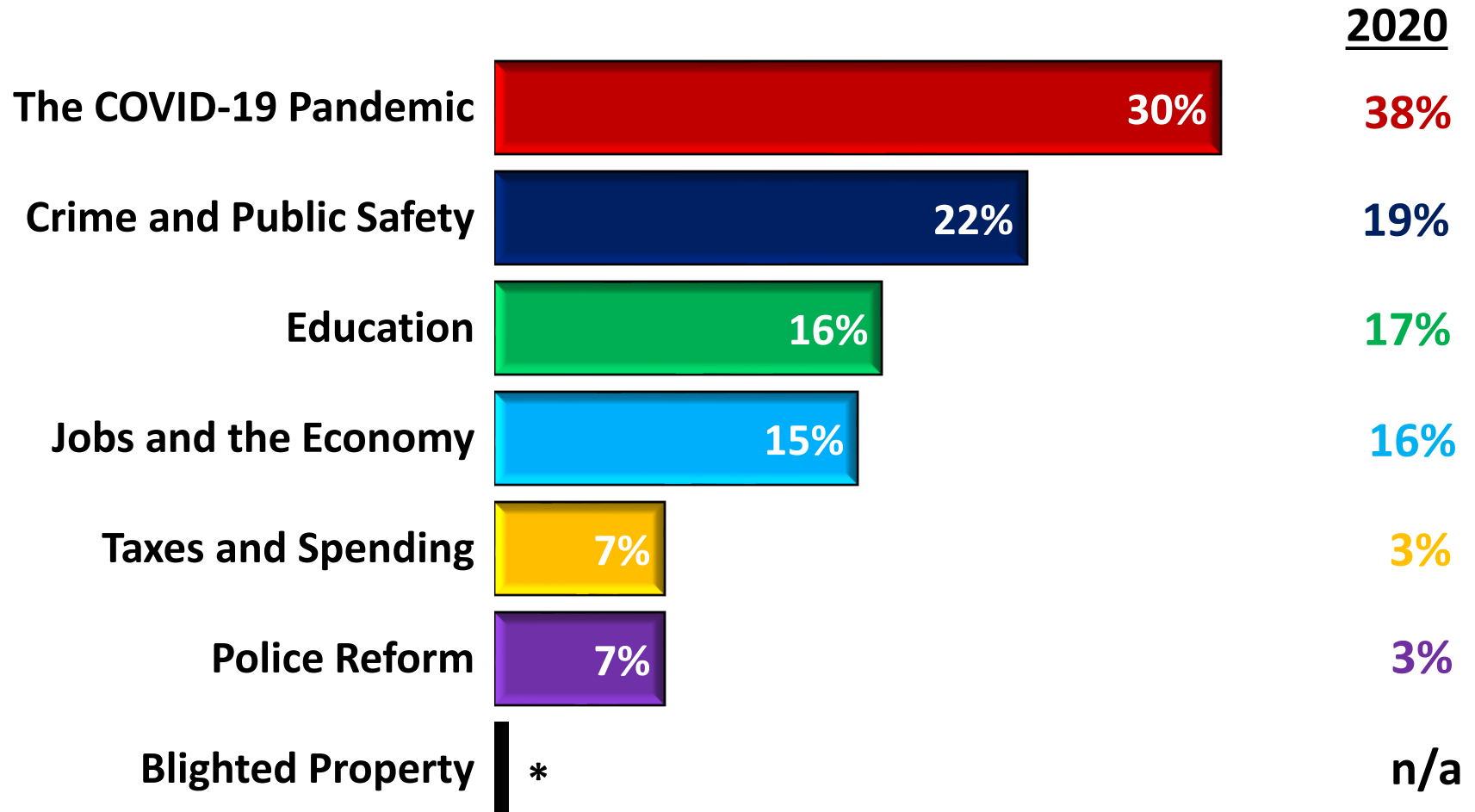
Concern about the pandemic has fallen from last summer, still dealing with COVID-19 retains the top position on voters' priority list. The pandemic ranks as the top priority with both men and women, white voters and African-American voters, voters under 45 years and seniors, and in both Memphis and the rest of the county.

Crime and public safety (22%) tops the list of second tier issues followed by education (17%) and jobs and the economy (15%).

Specifically, gun violence (48%) dominates the list of crime/public safety concerns – far outpacing the next highest issue, human trafficking (11%).

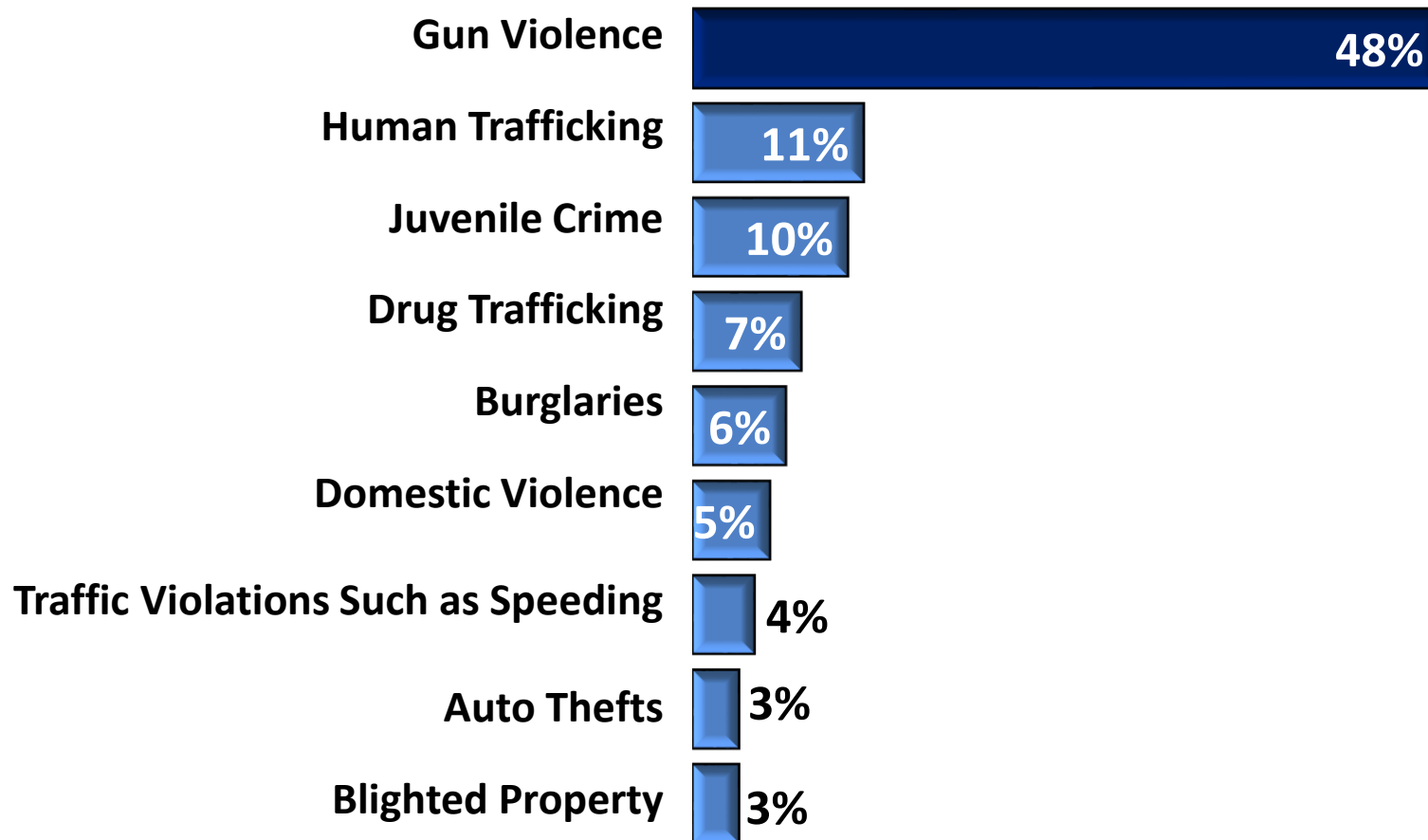
# COVID continues to top the issue agenda.

*First, which ONE of the following issues do you believe should be the top priority for government leaders? Is it....*



# Gun violence dominates the list of crime concerns.

*Next, on the issue of crime and public safety, which ONE of the following do you think is the most important to focus on? Is it....*



# Key Findings: Outlook on the Criminal Justice System



## #2

**Overall, Shelby County voters hold nuanced views on the public safety climate and efficacy of elements of the criminal justice system.**

- **Fully 77% of Shelby County voters say they feel safe in their own neighborhoods -- and just 6% of voters report feeling “unsafe.” But only one-in-five voters (21%) report “always” feeling safe – a drop from 29% last summer.**
- **Nearly three-quarters (74%) of voters rate community involvement programs like neighborhood watch as an “effective” tool in fighting crime. However, less than a quarter (23%) of county voters believe they are “very effective” -- offering a lukewarm endorsement at best.**

## #2

(cont'd)

- Just 7% of voters believe victims receive “a lot” of support from the criminal justice system. By comparison, 31% of voters say victims receive “not much support at all.” Pessimism about these programs cuts across all demographic subgroups.
- The county – across all major subgroups -- holds mixed opinions on the treatment of juvenile and adult offenders. A slim plurality of voters believe the system is “about right” in treatment of both juveniles and adults. In both questions, slightly more voters see the system as “too lenient” rather than “too harsh.” White voters and African-Americans voters differ on the treatment of adults while being nearly aligned on the treatment of juveniles.



# Key Findings



## #2

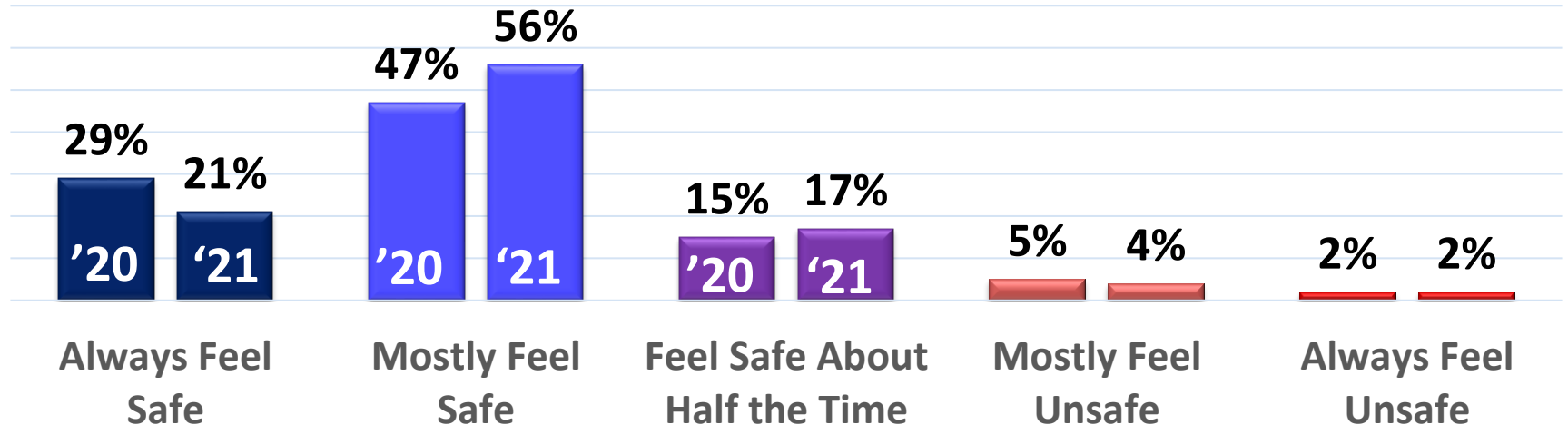
(cont'd)

- There is no consensus on the current parole system. Nearly a third (32%) of voters believe it should be kept as is while 29% of voters want it reformed to be harder to get parole and another 22% would prefer parole be reformed to make it easier. Importantly, only 7% of voters believe the system should be eliminated.

# Voters continue to feel safe in their neighborhood.

*First, which one of the following best describes your feelings about your safety from crime in your neighborhood? Would you say...*

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	
76%	77%	<b>TOTAL FEEL SAFE</b>
7%	6%	<b>TOTAL FEEL UNSAFE</b>



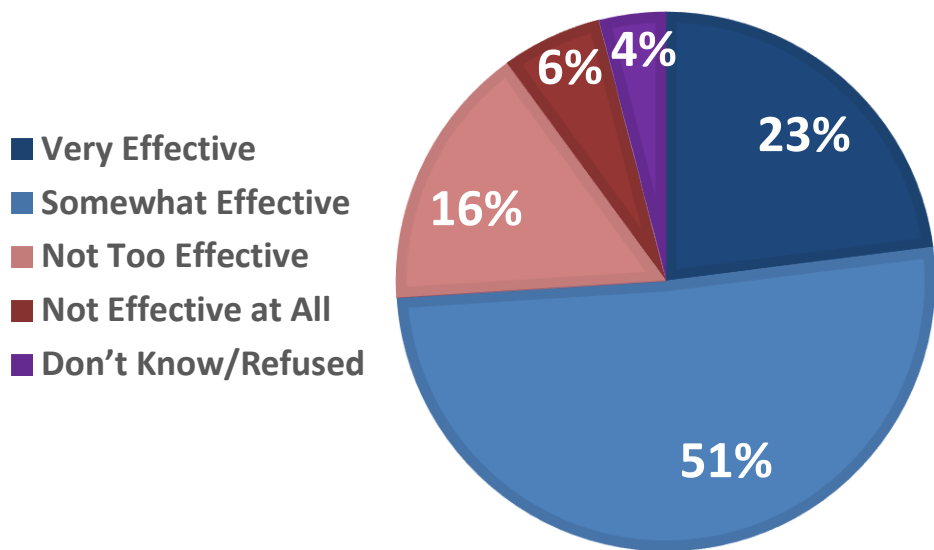
The sentiment cuts across all subgroups.

<i>Subgroups</i>	<i>Feel Safe% – Feel Unsafe%</i>	<i>Always Safe% – Mostly Safe%</i>
Men	73% - 6%	23% - 50%
Women	80% - 5%	20% - 60%
Memphis	74% - 7%	14% - 60%
Rest Shelby	83% - 4%	34% - 49%
African-American	67% - 9%	15% - 52%
White	87% - 2%	27% - 60%
Non-College	72% - 7%	21% - 51%
College+	83% - 4%	22% - 61%

# Less than a quarter of voters think community involvement programs are “very effective” in preventing crime.

*First, how effective do you think community involvement through neighborhood-based groups like neighborhood watch is in preventing crime?*

**74% TOTAL EFFECTIVE**  
**22% TOTAL NOT EFFECTIVE**

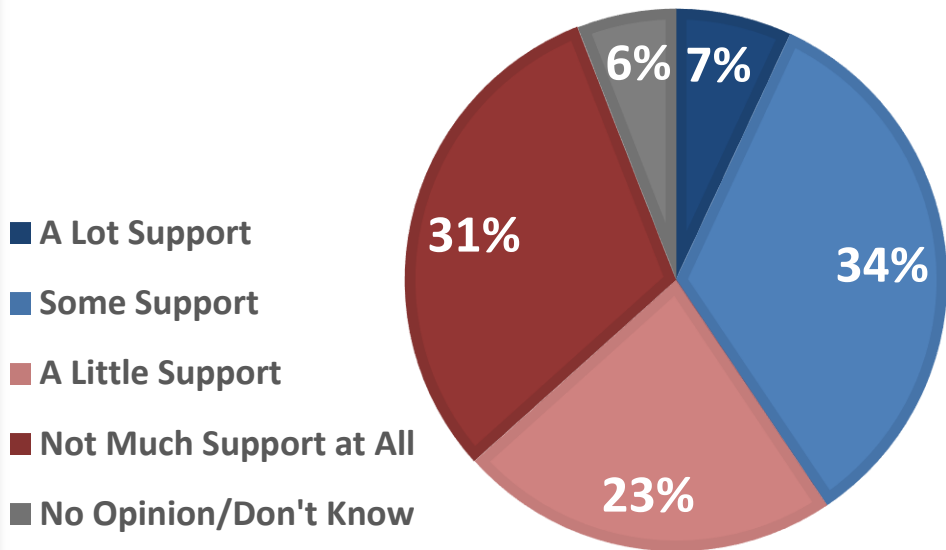


Subgroups	Effective% – Not Effective%
Men	70% - 28%
Women	77% - 18%
Memphis	69% - 27%
Rest Shelby	83% - 13%
African-American	74% - 23%
White	74% - 20%
Non-College	67% - 27%
College+	81% - 17%

# Few voters believe victims receive support and assistance.

*Next, how much support and assistance do you think victims of crime get from the criminal justice system?*

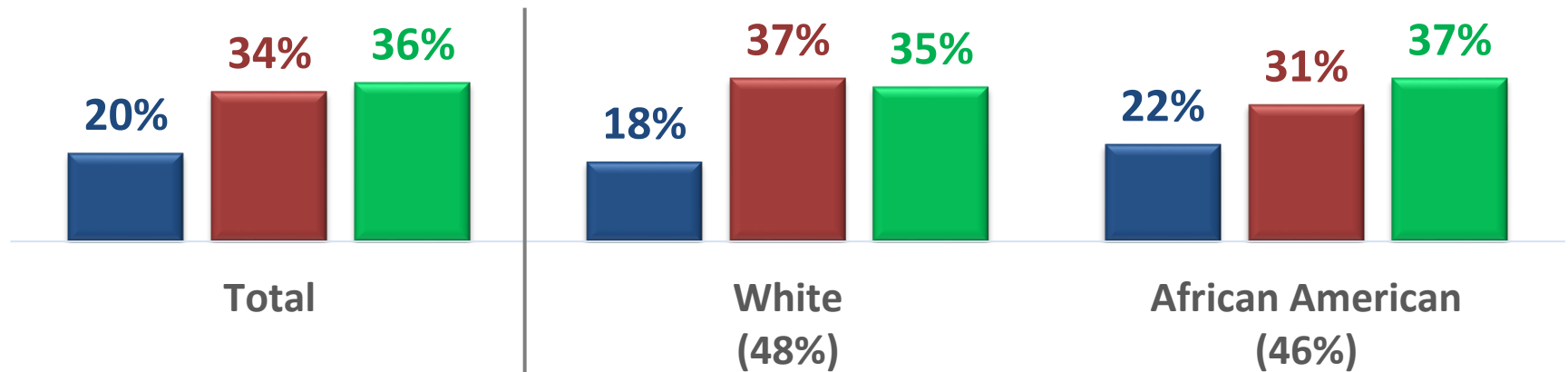
**40% TOTAL A LOT / SOME**  
**54% TOTAL LITTLE / NOT MUCH**



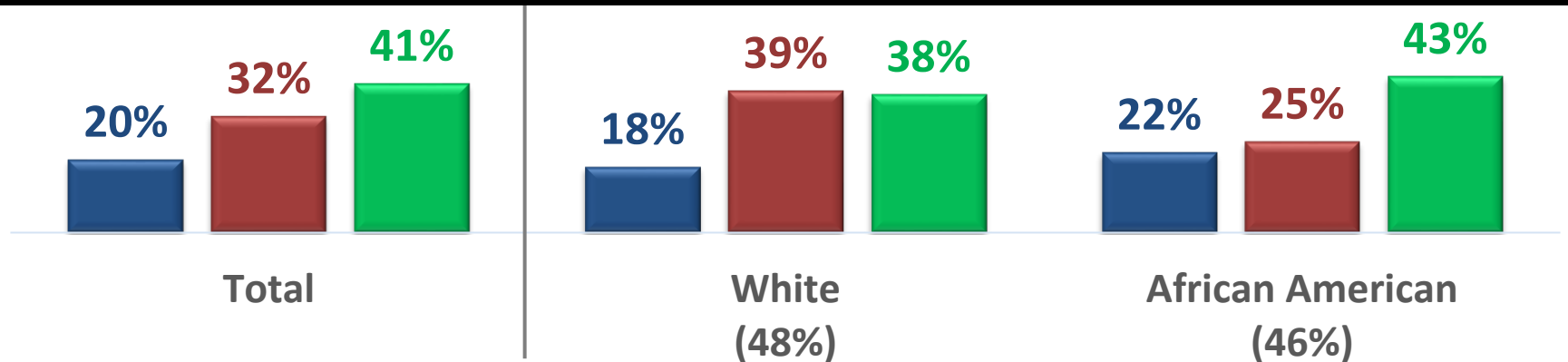
Subgroups	A Lot % – Not Much At All %
Men	10% - 29%
Women	4% - 32%
Memphis	7% - 29%
Rest Shelby	5% - 33%
African-American	8% - 28%
White	5% - 35%
Non-College	8% - 31%
College+	5% - 31%

# White voters and African-American voters nearly align on the justice system's treatment of juveniles, but differ on adults.

*Do you believe the criminal justice system treats JUVENILES who commit crimes...*



*Do you believe the criminal justice system treat ADULTS who commit crimes ...*



■ Too Harshly   ■ Too Leniently   ■ About Right



# There is no consensus on the parole system.

*Most adults convicted of committing a crime and incarcerated are eligible for early release through the parole system. Which one of the following is closer to your view:*

The parole system should be kept as is

32%

The parole system should be changed to make it easier to get parole

22%

The parole system should be changed to make it harder to get parole

29%

The parole system should be eliminated

7%

There are slight differences by race.

<i><b>Subgroups</b></i>	<i><b>Kept as Is</b></i>	<i><b>Reformed Easier</b></i>	<i><b>Reformed Harder</b></i>	<i><b>Eliminated</b></i>
<b>Men</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Memphis</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Rest Shelby</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>African-American</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Non-College</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>College+</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>6%</b>

# Key Findings: Local Police Job Performance

## #3

Local police receive a positive performance review from county voters: 62% “**excellent**” / “**good**” – 36% “**fair**” / “**poor.**” The “**excellent**” rating (24%) is more than three times the “**poor**” rating (7%) – and “**excellent**” outpolls “**poor**” in nearly every subgroup.

Across all subgroups, voters overwhelmingly agree with the following statements:

- ***I respect my local law enforcement*** (95% agree)
- ***My friends and neighbors generally respect local law enforcement*** (89% agree)
- ***I would like an increased local law enforcement presence in my neighborhood*** (73% agree)

## #3

(cont'd)

While local police remain popular in the county, the poll identifies a couple of trends to watch. First, the “excellent/good” rating for local police fell by nine points since 2020 and dropped with nearly all subgroups. (Much of the movement can be attributed to movement in the middle from “good” to “fair.”)

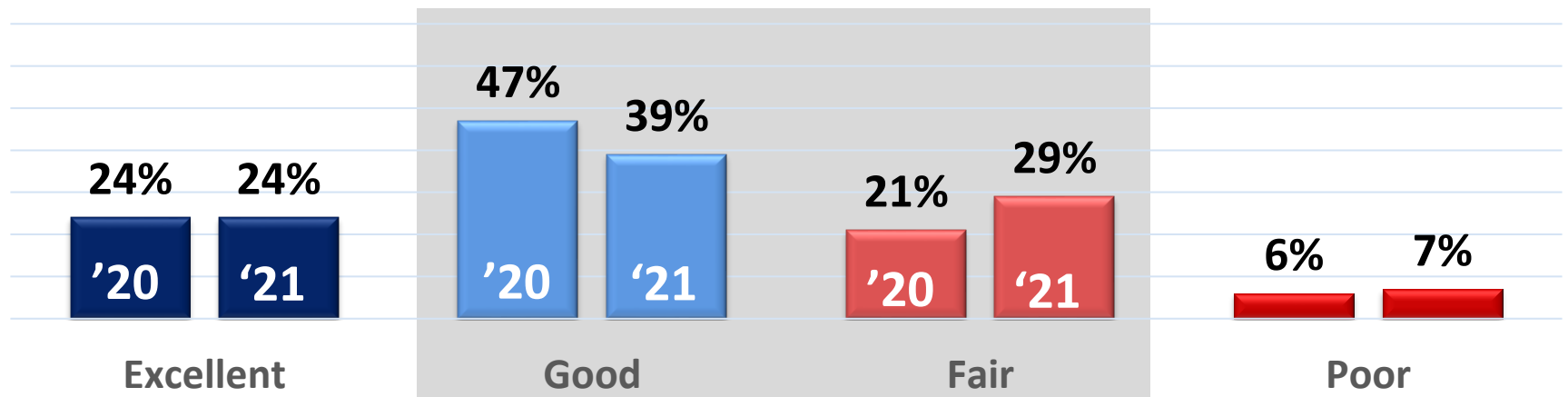
Specifically, the local police has seen erosion with voters under 45 years old, Memphis voters, and non-college educated men.

Next, on the issue/attribute rating of “*Protecting people from violent crime*” local police saw their positive rating drop from 56% to 48% (-8) with the “excellent/good” rating slipping with most subgroups.

# The job rating for local police has slipped but remains positive.

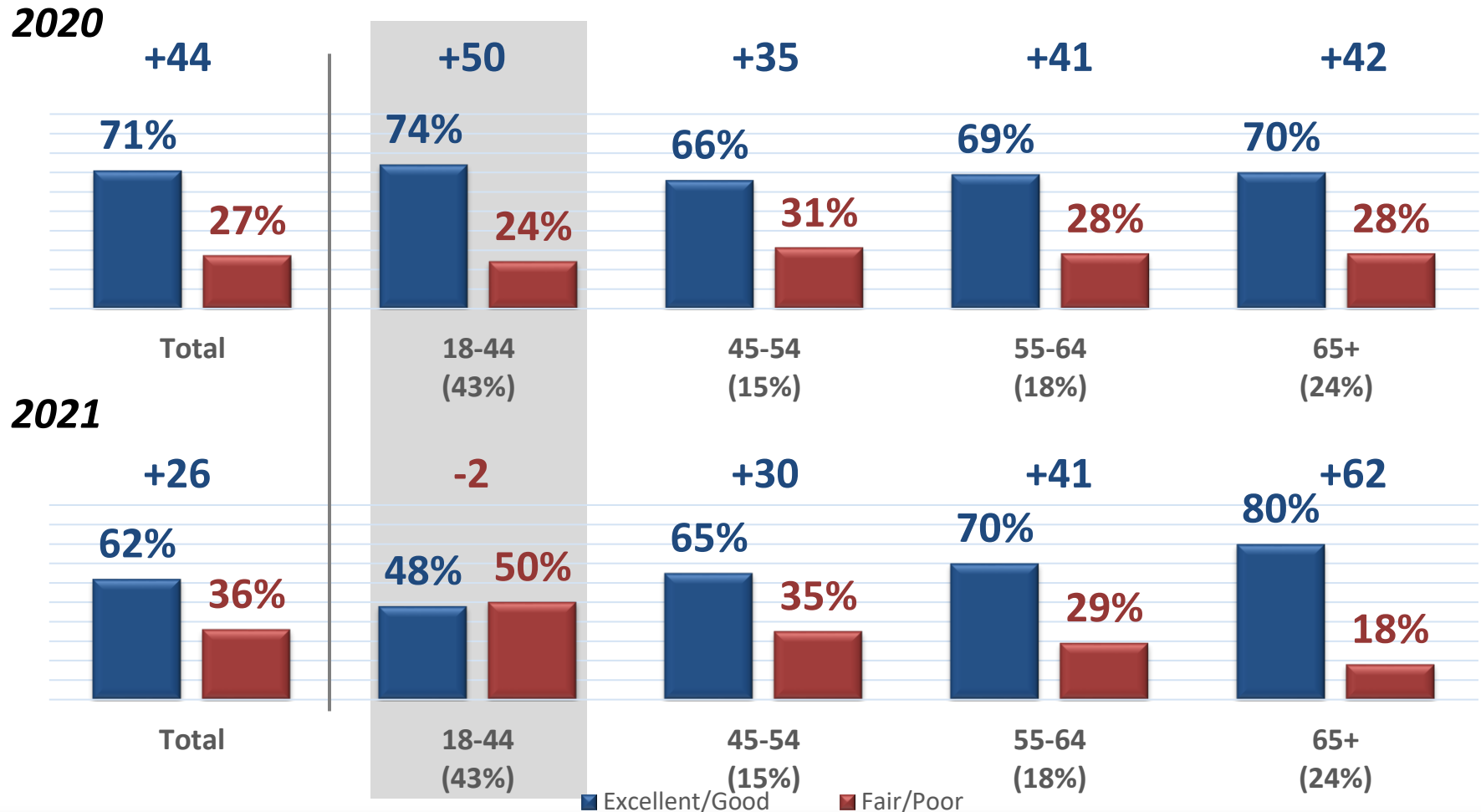
*How would you rate the job your local police are doing in your neighborhood? Are the local police doing ... an **excellent**, **good**, **only fair** or **poor**...job?*

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	
<b>71%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>TOTAL EXCELLENT/GOOD</b>
<b>27%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>TOTAL FAIR/POOR</b>



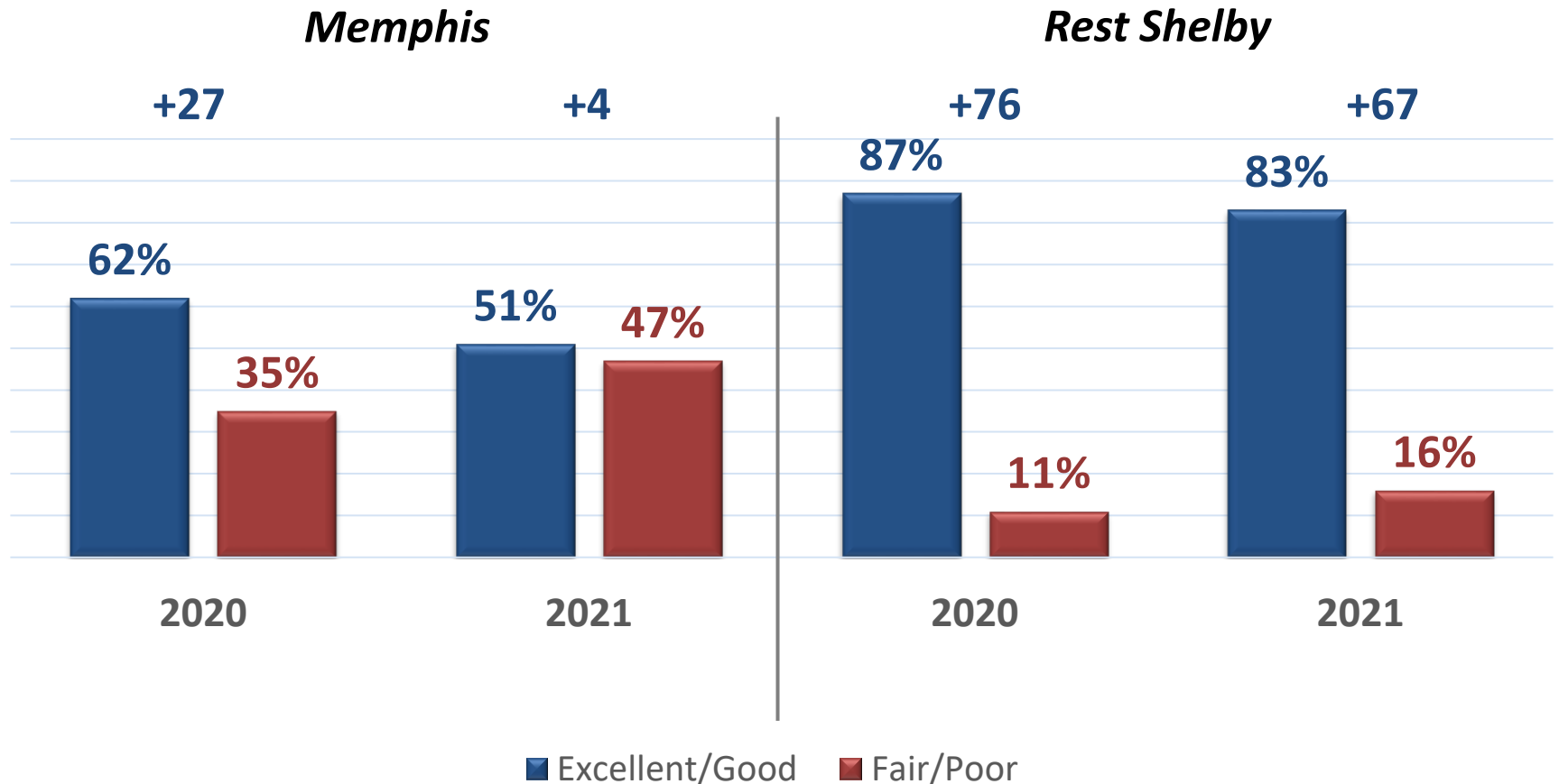
The biggest drop occurs with residents under 45 years old.

### *Local Police Performance by Age*



Memphis residents give the local police a mixed rating while the remainder of the county is very positive.

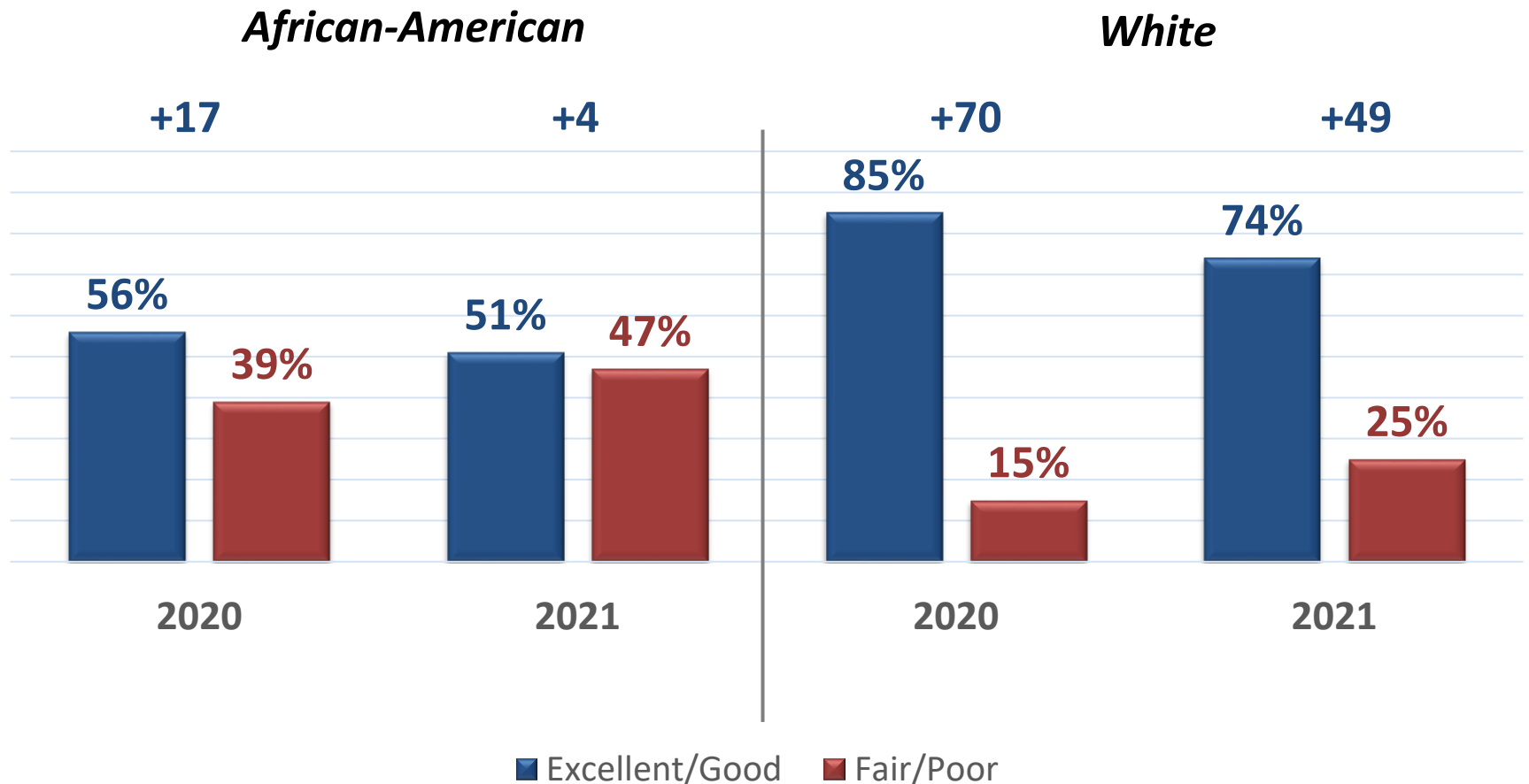
*Local Police Performance by Geography*





Positive ratings dropped with both African-American voters and white voters.

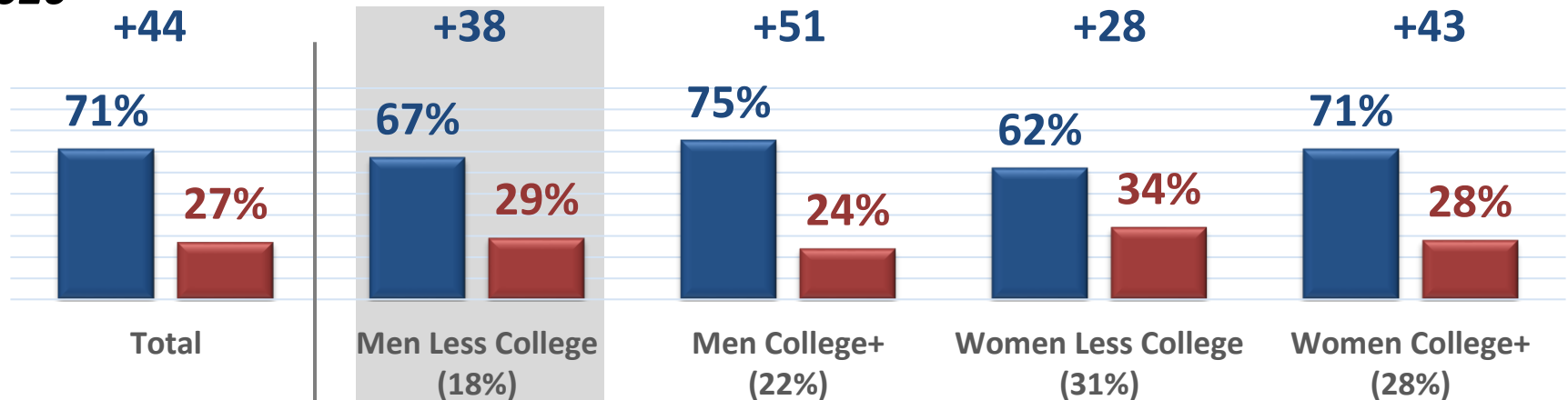
*Local Police Performance by Race*



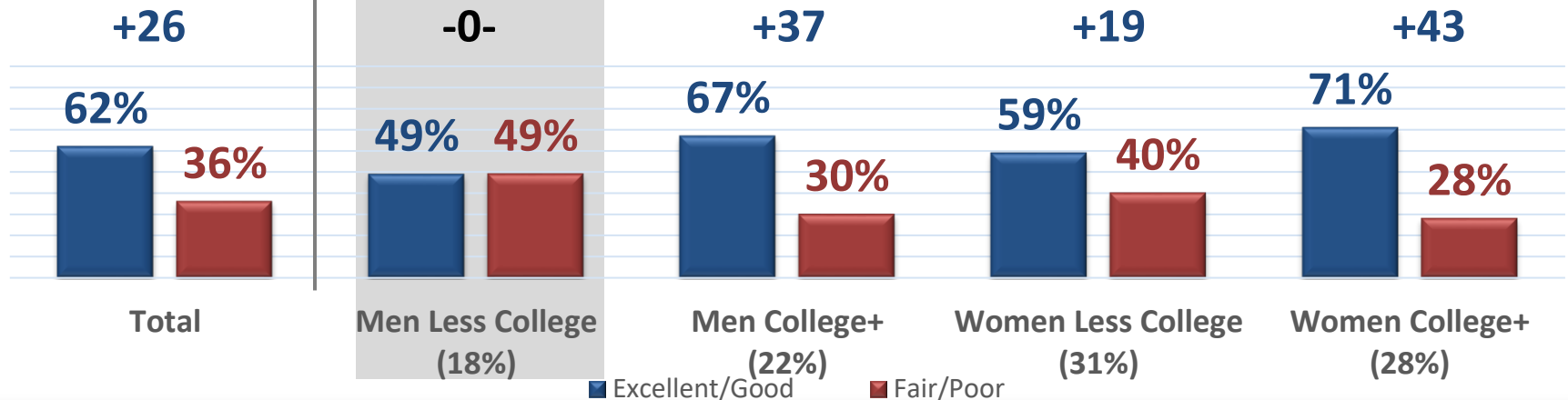
Non-college men are also more negative than 2020.

### *Local Police Performance by Gender/Education*

**2020**



**2021**



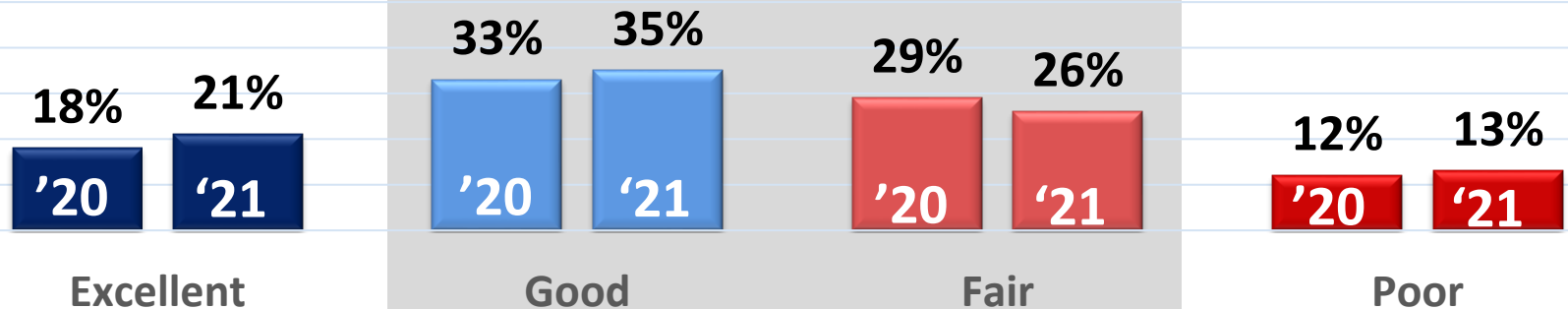
■ Excellent/Good ■ Fair/Poor

# Modest improvement on the excessive force attribute.

*Next, please rate the job your local police are doing on each of the following issues:*

## *Not Using Excessive Force*

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	
<b>51%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>TOTAL EXCELLENT/GOOD</b>
<b>41%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>TOTAL FAIR/POOR</b>



The numbers are stable in Memphis; the rest of the county is more positive on this attribute.

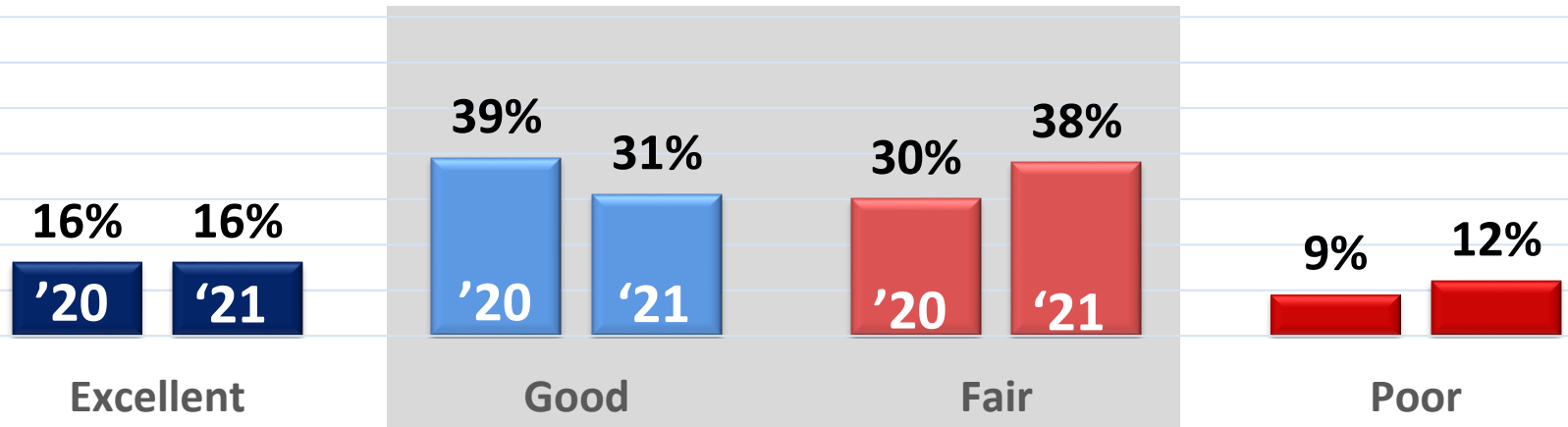
Subgroups	2020 (Excel/Good- Fair/Poor)	2021 (Excel/Good- Fair/Poor)
Men	55% - 38%	62% - 34%
Women	48% - 43%	53% - 41%
Memphis	44% - 47%	45% - 48%
Rest Shelby	63% - 31%	78% - 19%
African-American	36% - 54%	38% - 58%
White	66% - 28%	74% - 20%
Non-College	45% - 47%	47% - 47%
College+	55% - 36%	65% - 29%

# The police lost ground on “protecting people from violent crime.”

*Next, please rate the job your local police are doing on each of the following issues:*

## *Protecting people from violent crime*

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	
56%	48%	<b>TOTAL EXCELLENT/GOOD</b>
39%	49%	<b>TOTAL FAIR/POOR</b>



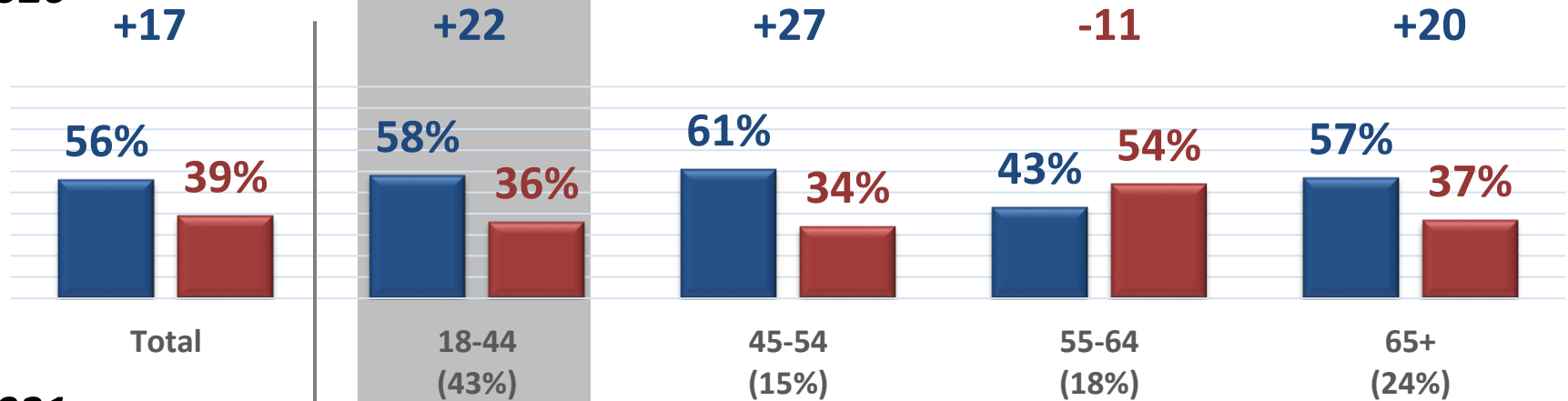
The excellent/good rating dropped across the board.

<i>Subgroups</i>	<b>2020</b> <i>Excel/Good - Fair/Poor%</i>	<b>2021</b> <i>Excel/Good% - Fair/Poor%</i>
Men	58% - 36%	48% - 49%
Women	54% - 42%	47% - 50%
<i>Memphis</i>	<i>52% - 43%</i>	<i>34% - 62%</i>
Rest Shelby	62% - 33%	73% - 25%
African-American	43% - 50%	37% - 59%
White	70% - 28%	58% - 40%
Non-College	52% - 41%	43% - 53%
College+	60% - 37%	52% - 46%

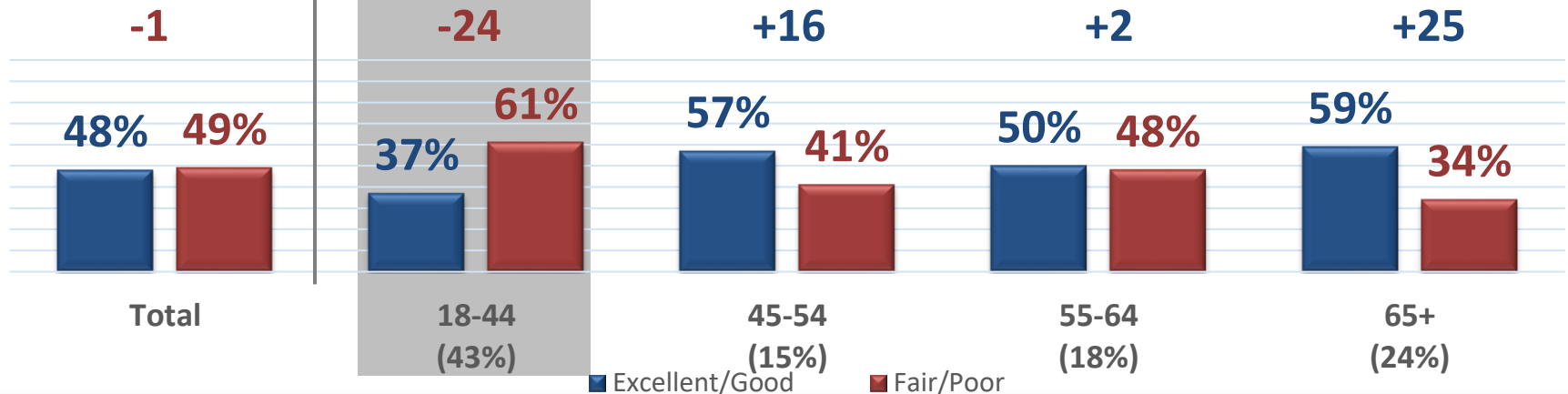
Voters under 45 years old are much more negative than 2021.

***“Protecting People From Violent Crime”***  
***by Age***

**2020**



**2021**



■ Excellent/Good ■ Fair/Poor

# Voters overwhelmingly agree with the following statements:

<i><b>Agree%</b></i>	<b>I respect my local law enforcement.</b>	<b>My friends and neighbors generally respect local law enforcement.</b>	<b>I would like an increased local law enforcement presence in my neighborhood.</b>
All Voters	95%	89%	73%
Male	93%	87%	71%
Female	97%	91%	74%
White	94%	93%	68%
Af. Am.	95%	85%	78%
Memphis	95%	86%	78%
Rest of Shelby	96%	95%	65%



# Key Findings: Policy Proposals

## #4

As the 2020 poll showed, support for hiring more police officers is both wide (81% total support) and deep (59% “strongly support”). Every demographic subgroup supports hiring more police officers including wide majorities of men (81%), women (82%), white voters, (84%), African-American voters (80%), Memphis (79%) and the rest of the county (85%).

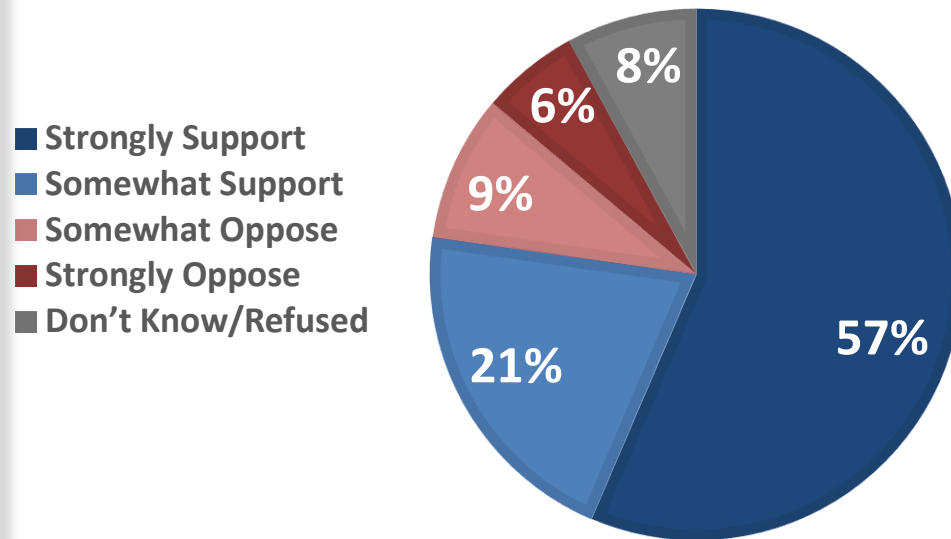
In addition, nearly three-quarters (73%) of Shelby County voters support loosening the residency requirements for police officers and firefighters. Again, support cuts across every major subgroup in the poll including 69% of Memphis voters.

# Overwhelmingly, Shelby County voters support hiring more police officers.

*Would you support or oppose hiring more local police officers?*

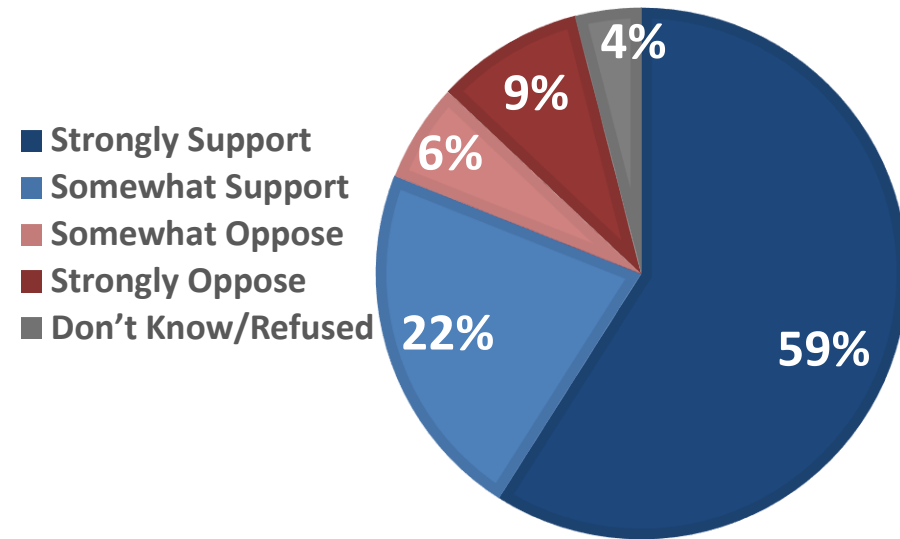
**2020**

**78% TOTAL SUPPORT**  
**15% TOTAL OPPOSE**



**2021**

**81% TOTAL SUPPORT**  
**15% TOTAL OPPOSE**



Solid majorities of every subgroup support hiring more police.

<i><b>Subgroups</b></i>	<i><b>Total Support% – Total Oppose%</b></i>
<b>Men</b>	<b>81% - 15%</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>82% - 15%</b>
<b>Memphis</b>	<b>79% - 18%</b>
<b>Rest Shelby</b>	<b>85% - 11%</b>
<b>African-American</b>	<b>80% - 17%</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>84% - 13%</b>
<b>Non-College</b>	<b>80% - 16%</b>
<b>College+</b>	<b>83% - 14%</b>

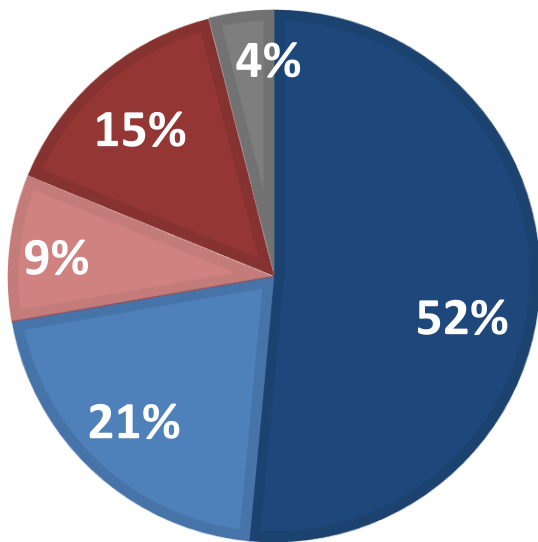
# Voters endorse a change to police and fire residency requirements.

*As you may know, there are restrictions on where people hired as local police officers or firefighters can live. Would you **SUPPORT** or **OPPOSE** changing the law so that local police officers and firefighters could live in a neighboring county or within a fifty-mile radius?*

73% TOTAL SUPPORT

24% TOTAL OPPOSE

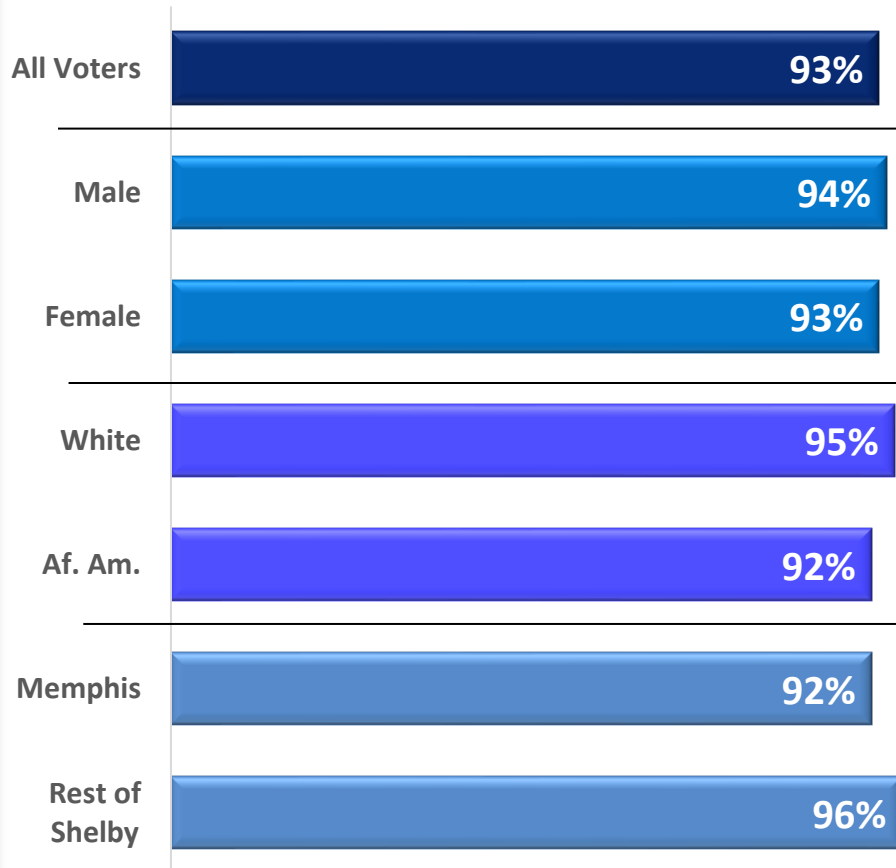
- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose
- Don't Know/Refused



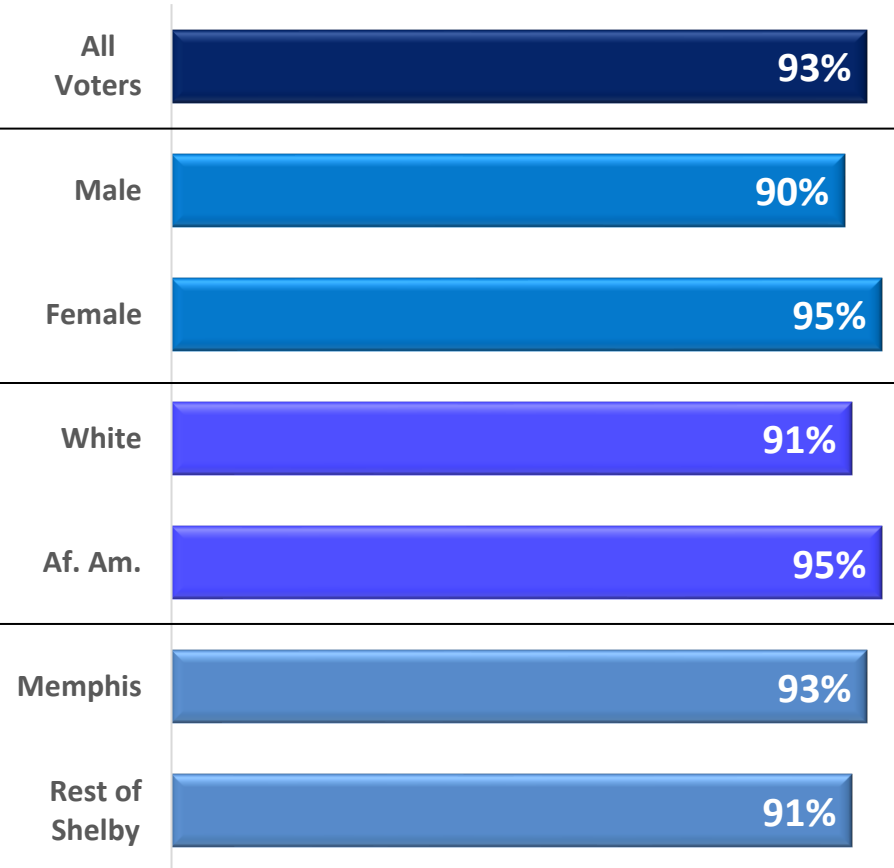
Subgroups	Support% – Oppose%
Men	71% - 26%
Women	74% - 22%
Memphis	69% - 27%
Rest Shelby	80% - 18%
African-American	64% - 31%
White	81% - 18%
Non-College	77% - 20%
College+	69% - 28%

# There is near unanimous support for:

**Focusing more resources and efforts on holding serious violent offenders accountable.**



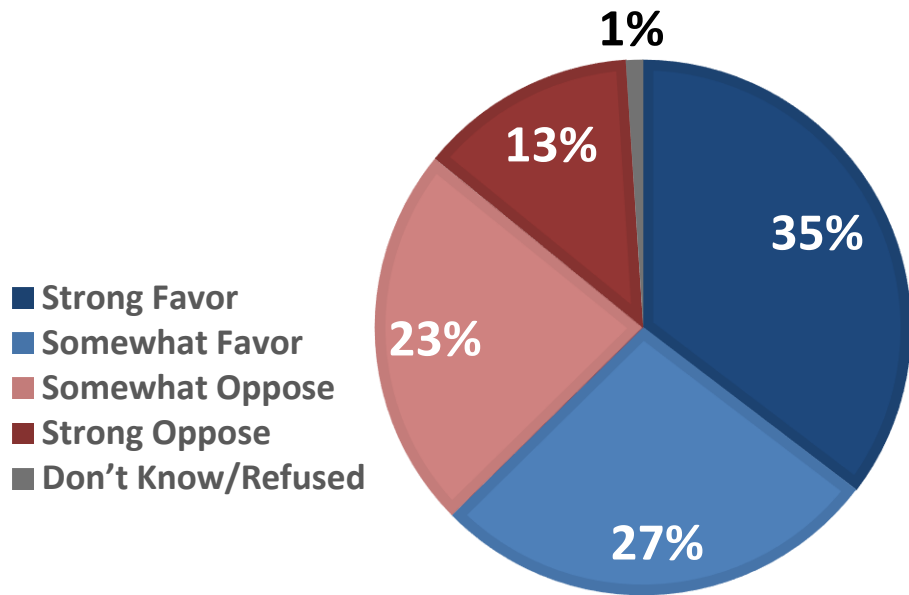
**Providing more resources to offenders who have been incarcerated when they return to the community, such as jobs and job training and treatment for any drug addictions they may have.**



# Cracking down on minor offenses is popular across subgroups.

*Focusing more resources and efforts on tackling so-called minor offenses, such as speeding, vandalism, disorderly conduct, and blighted property.*

**63% TOTAL FAVOR**  
**36% TOTAL OPPOSE**



Subgroups	Favor% – Oppose%
Men	60% - 40%
Women	64% - 33%
Memphis	65% - 33%
Rest Shelby	59% - 41%
African-American	62% - 37%
White	63% - 35%
Non-College	66% - 31%
College+	60% - 40%



# Take Away Points

TURNING QUESTIONS INTO ANSWERS





# Takeaway Points



- ✓ **On crime/public safety issues, Shelby County voters tend to give “middle of road” assessments on a host of issues ranging from their personal safety to police performance to grading the impact of neighborhood watch. With few strong feelings anchoring the current outlook, new information or events can rapidly shape public opinion.**
- ✓ **Local police departments remain popular, but their job performance rating slipped from 2020 – especially among voters under 45 years old.**



# Takeaway Points



- ✓ **Voters continue to strongly endorse the hiring more police officers. In addition, voters will support changing residency policies to facilitate the hiring of new public safety officers.**