

WINNING NEW YORK'S VOTERS ON SAFETY, ACCOUNTABILITY & JUSTICE

Messaging and policy takeaways from public opinion research
on what New York voters bring to the ballot box on crime and public safety

April 2026

Vera ACTION

Fighting for every New Yorker's safety

New Yorkers want a **fighter**—someone who is strong and willing to lean into the issue of preventing crime, breaking its cycle, and making New York's cities and neighborhoods safe. Governor Hochul has a strong **record to run on**:

- Shootings statewide have fallen by more than 50 percent and murders by 30 percent;
- Supporting strong, accountable law enforcement by expanding crime labs and forensic testing, and funding officer wellness and training;
- Expanding the Subway Co-Response Outreach Teams (SCOUT) program on the subways to treat New Yorkers in crisis; and
- Supporting victims and survivors by increasing access to compensation.

The campaign should highlight her comprehensive approach to making New York safe by highlighting that she is “serious about safety.” In contrast, Bruce Blakeman only fearmongers about crime and caters to Trump's agenda—which is actively undermining the safety and well-being of New Yorkers.

TAKEAWAY #1

Affordability ranks as New Yorkers' top issue driving vote choice. An effective message for Hochul shows her as a relentless fighter, focused on preventing crime to make communities safe *and* affordable.

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Most New Yorkers favor a comprehensive message tying safety, prevention, and affordability

If the election for governor was held today, who would you support?

[HOCHUL]: Kathy Hochul is relentlessly fighting for New Yorkers and our families—whether it's standing up to Trump or tackling the state's affordability crisis so all New Yorkers can get ahead. As Governor, Hochul's top priority is public safety and security. Hochul is working to prevent crime before it happens, instead of just reacting afterwards, by making historic investments in mental health care, increasing access to drug addiction treatment, and passing landmark gun legislation to keep illegal guns off the street.

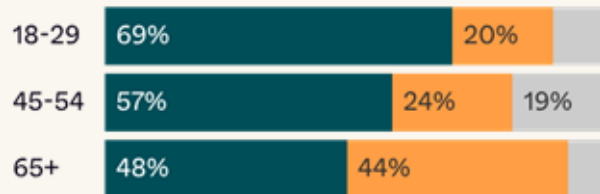
[BLAKEMAN]: Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman believes that Democrats' failed pro-criminal policies have created a crime crisis, and he knows that affordability is more than a slogan — it's whether people can stay in New York. He proudly "Backs the Blue", will repeal bail reform before more New Yorkers get hurt, put a stop to New York's policy of giving criminals more rights than victims, end New York's sanctuary state status and illegal-first policies, and work with ICE to deport violent and illegal immigrants who endanger our communities.

58%

33%

All age groups and racial demographics favor a Hochul “serious about safety” message—including independents, moderates, and upstate voters

Age



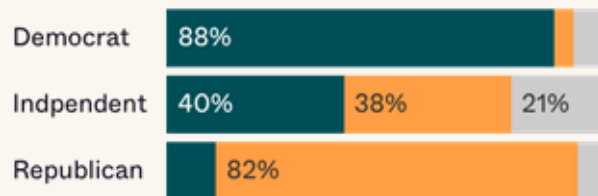
Race



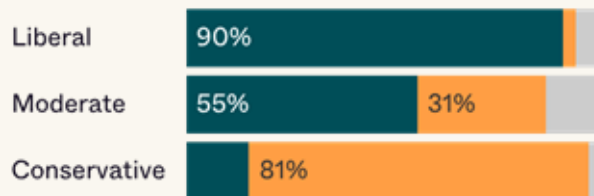
[SERIOUS]

[TOUGH]

Party ID



Ideology



Upstate

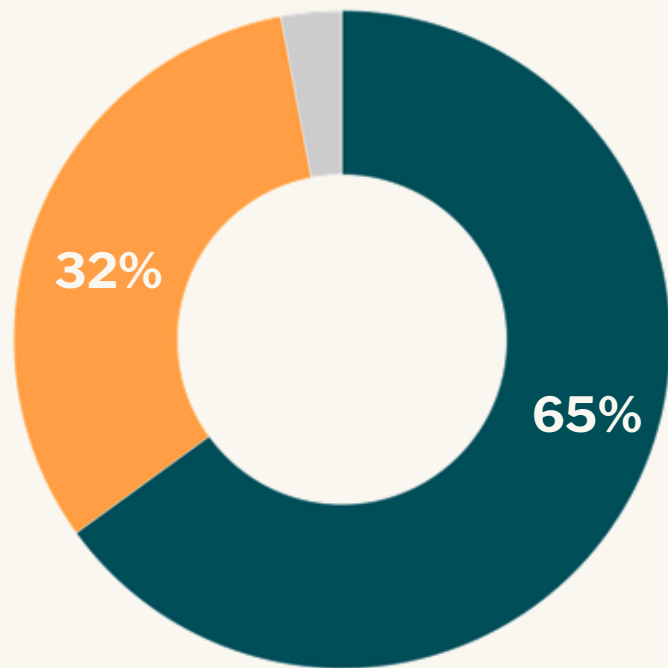


TAKEAWAY #2

New York voters overwhelmingly favor a “serious about safety” approach over a “tough-on-crime” one.

Conventional political wisdom is that voters concerned about crime want a “tough” approach—but “serious about safety” is twice as popular

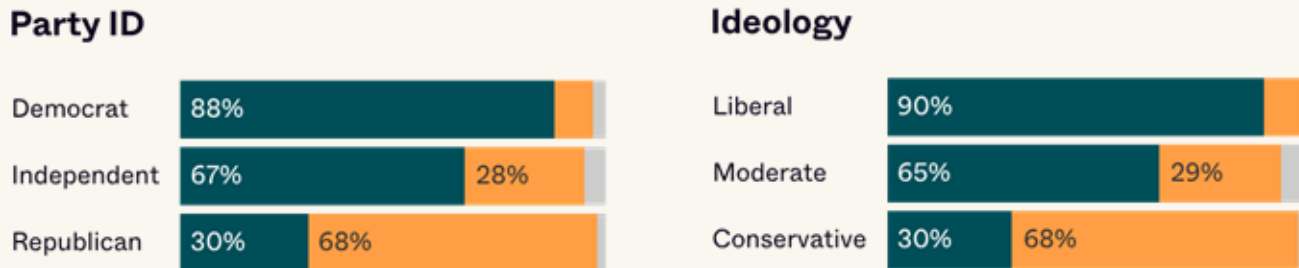
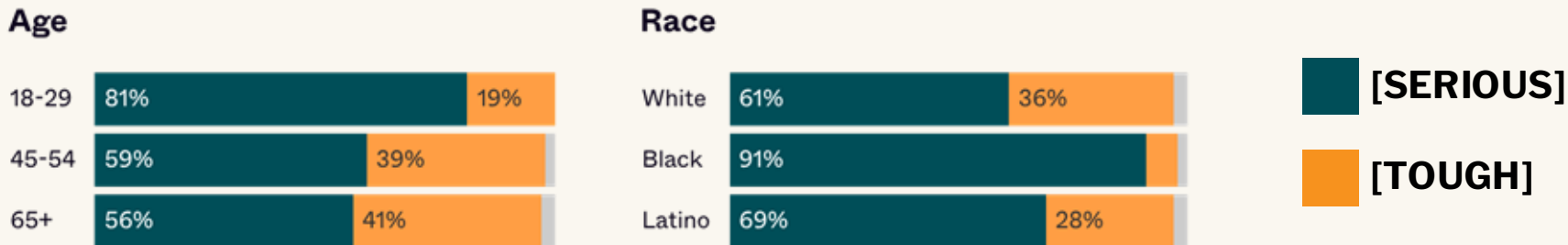
Even if neither is exactly right, which of the following statements comes closest to your view?



[SERIOUS]: We need to prevent crime before it happens by getting illegal guns off the street, increasing treatment for mental health and drug addiction, and fully funding things that are proven to create safe communities—like good schools, jobs, and affordable housing.

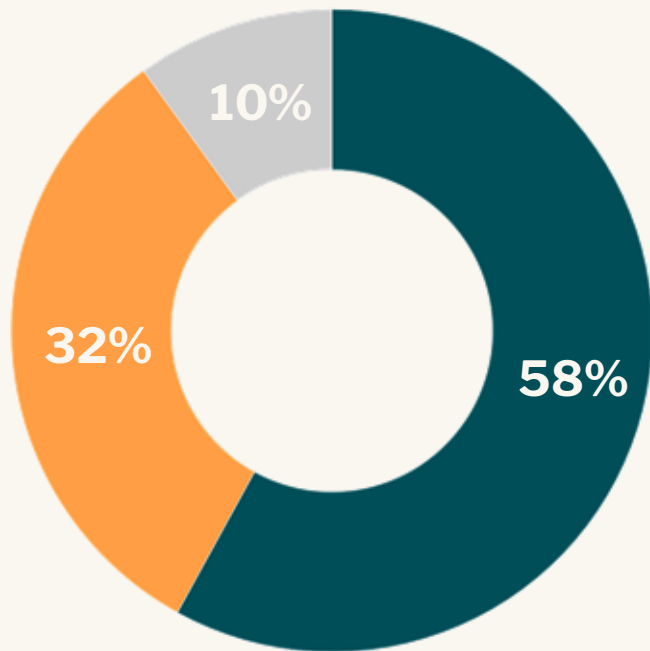
[TOUGH]: We should do more to get tough on crime — like having longer prison sentences for people convicted of violent crimes, maintaining strong bail laws to keep dangerous people in jail, and providing police with more support and resources.

All ages and racial groups favor a “serious about safety” approach over a “tough on crime” one, including independents, moderates, and upstate voters



After adding partisan cues, a “serious about safety” Democrat wins by 26 points over a Republican

Based on the following statements, which candidate for office would you trust more?

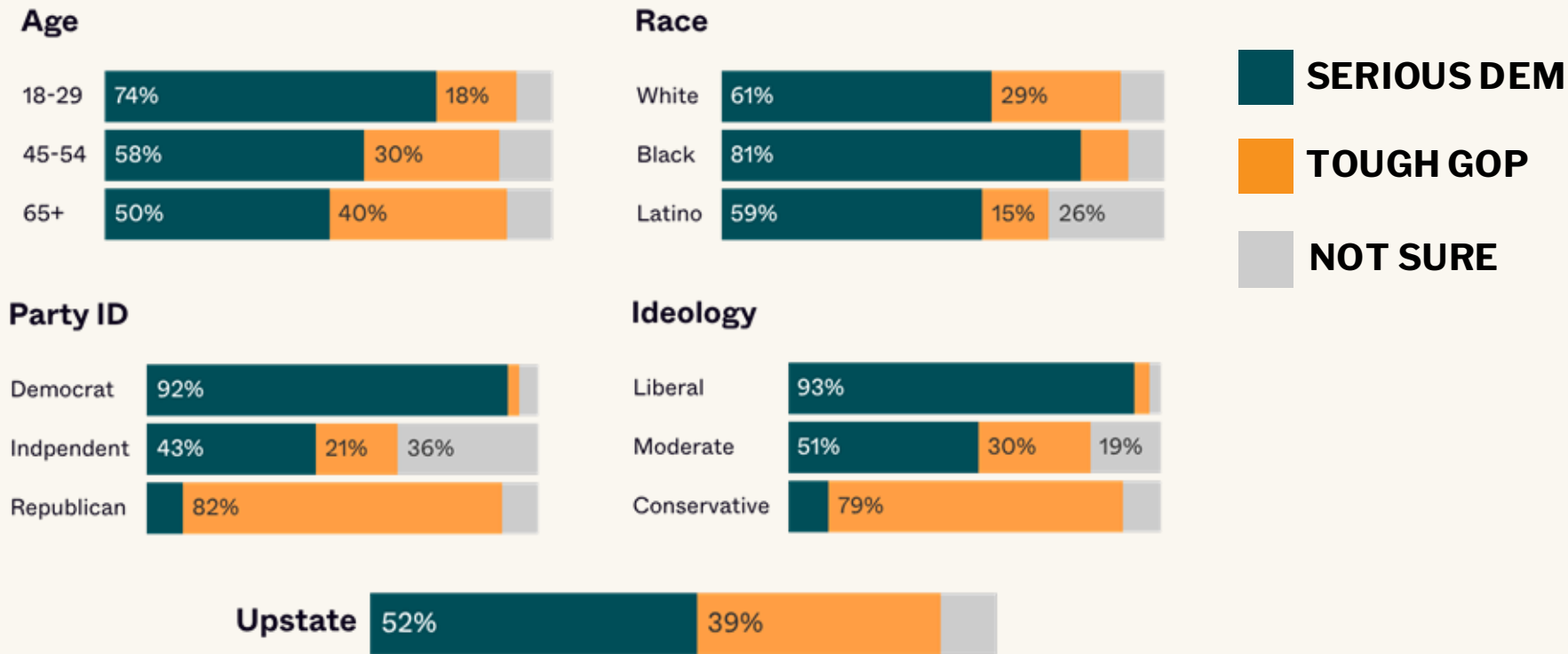


[SERIOUS DEM]: I’m a Democrat who is serious about safety. That means fully funding things that are proven to create safe communities—like good schools, jobs, and affordable housing—and preventing crime by increasing treatment for mental health and drug addiction and getting illegal guns off the street.

[TOUGH GOP]: I’m a Republican who is tough on crime. That means having longer sentences for people convicted of violent crimes, maintaining strong bail laws to keep dangerous people behind bars, and providing police with more support and resources.

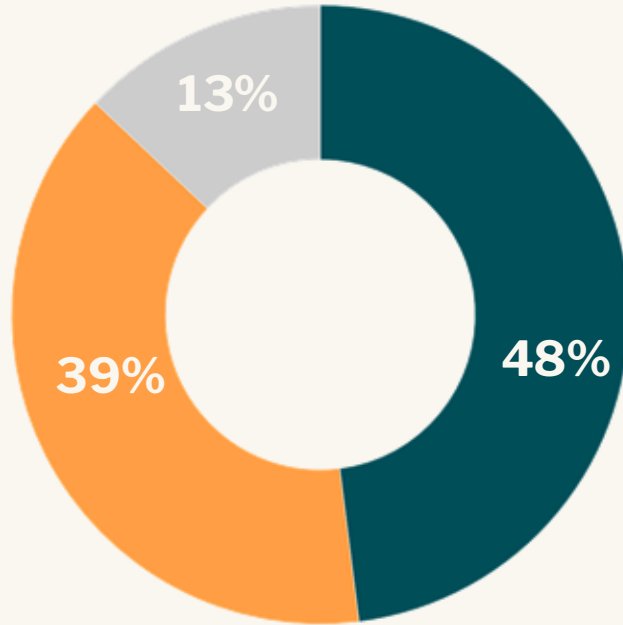
NOT SURE

All age groups, racial groups, independents, and upstate voters favor a “serious about safety” Democrat over a “tough on crime” Republican



In contrast, a “tough-on-crime” Democrat underperforms

Based on the following statements, which candidate for office would you trust more?

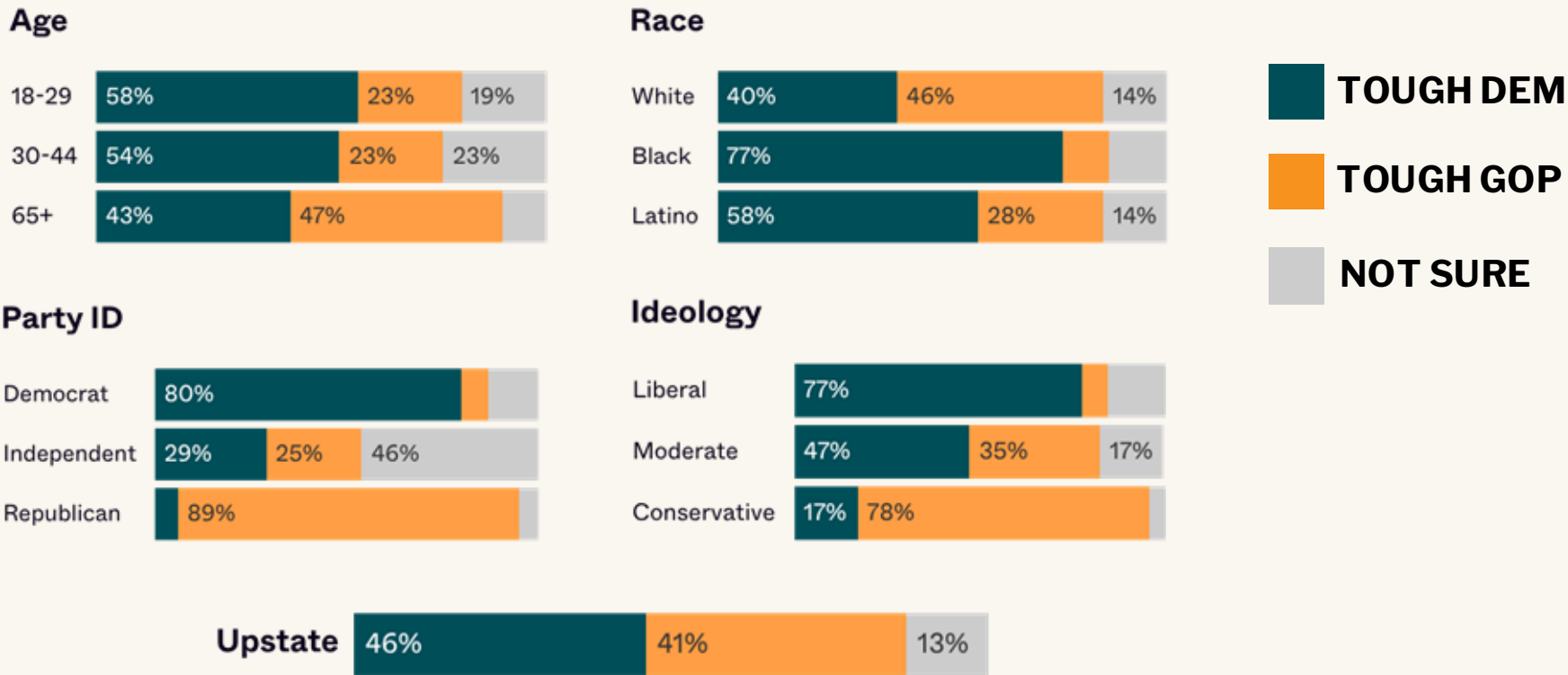


[TOUGH DEM]: I'm a Democrat who is tough on crime. That means more cops on the beat and tough action against violent criminals. We should increase police funding and invest in new technologies like predictive policing, not defunding the police.

[TOUGH GOP]: I'm a Republican who stands on the side of law and order. That means having longer sentences for people convicted of violent crimes, maintaining strong bail laws to keep dangerous people behind bars, and providing police with more support and resources.

NOT SURE

The “tough-on-crime” Democrat underperforms with older voters, white voters, moderates, independents, and upstate voters



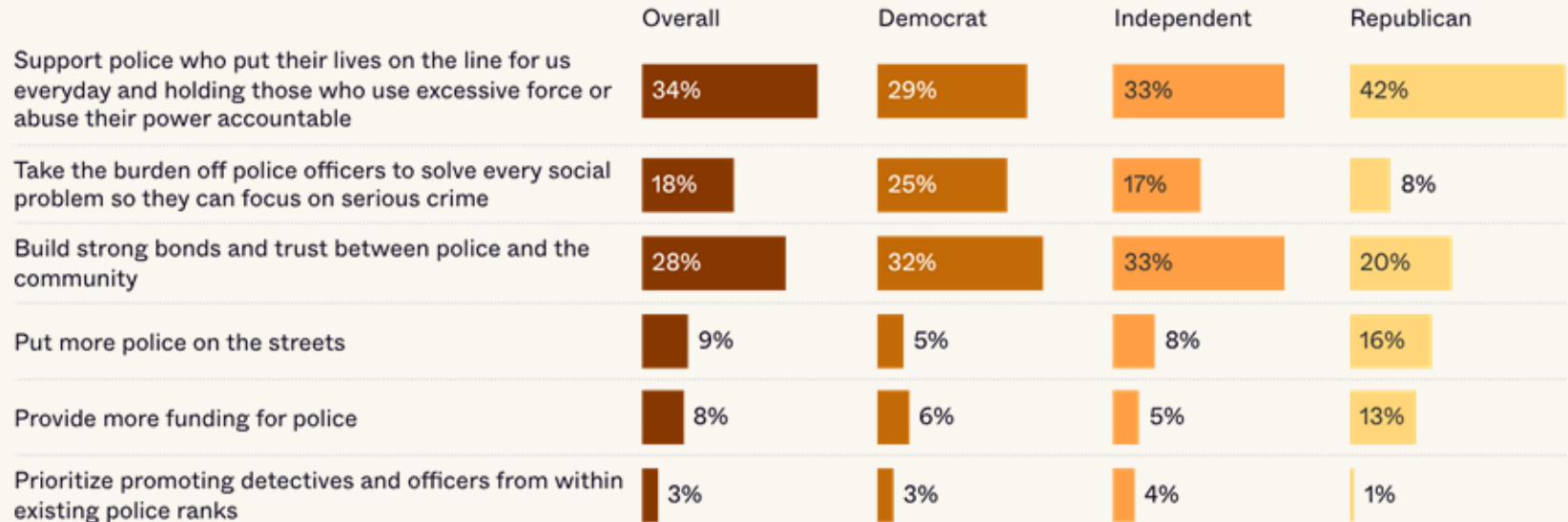
TAKEAWAY #3

Most New Yorkers want strong, trustworthy, *and* accountable policing—not simply more police

Instead of debating police budgets and department sizes, lead with “strong, accountable policing”—the message favored by a plurality of New Yorkers

Which of the following is closest to your personal view?

The best way to improve public safety in our communities would be to...



Key recommendations

What not to say

What to say

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Reinforce tough on crime tropes | → | Emphasize comprehensive solutions like getting illegal guns off the street, strong, accountable policing, fully funding good schools, and affordable housing |
| (ONLY) Increased funding for police, more police | → | Highlight need for more accountable policing and continued investments in mental health and drug treatment |
| Do the crime, do the time | → | Spotlight accountability and own the issue through programs to turn around the lives of those who have committed crimes |
| Assume voters prefer Trump's "tough" approach | → | Most voters prefer an approach that is serious about safety and don't like Trump's approach |

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



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