



A Poll of Virginia Voters

*Views on Criminal Justice and
Commonwealth's Attorneys*

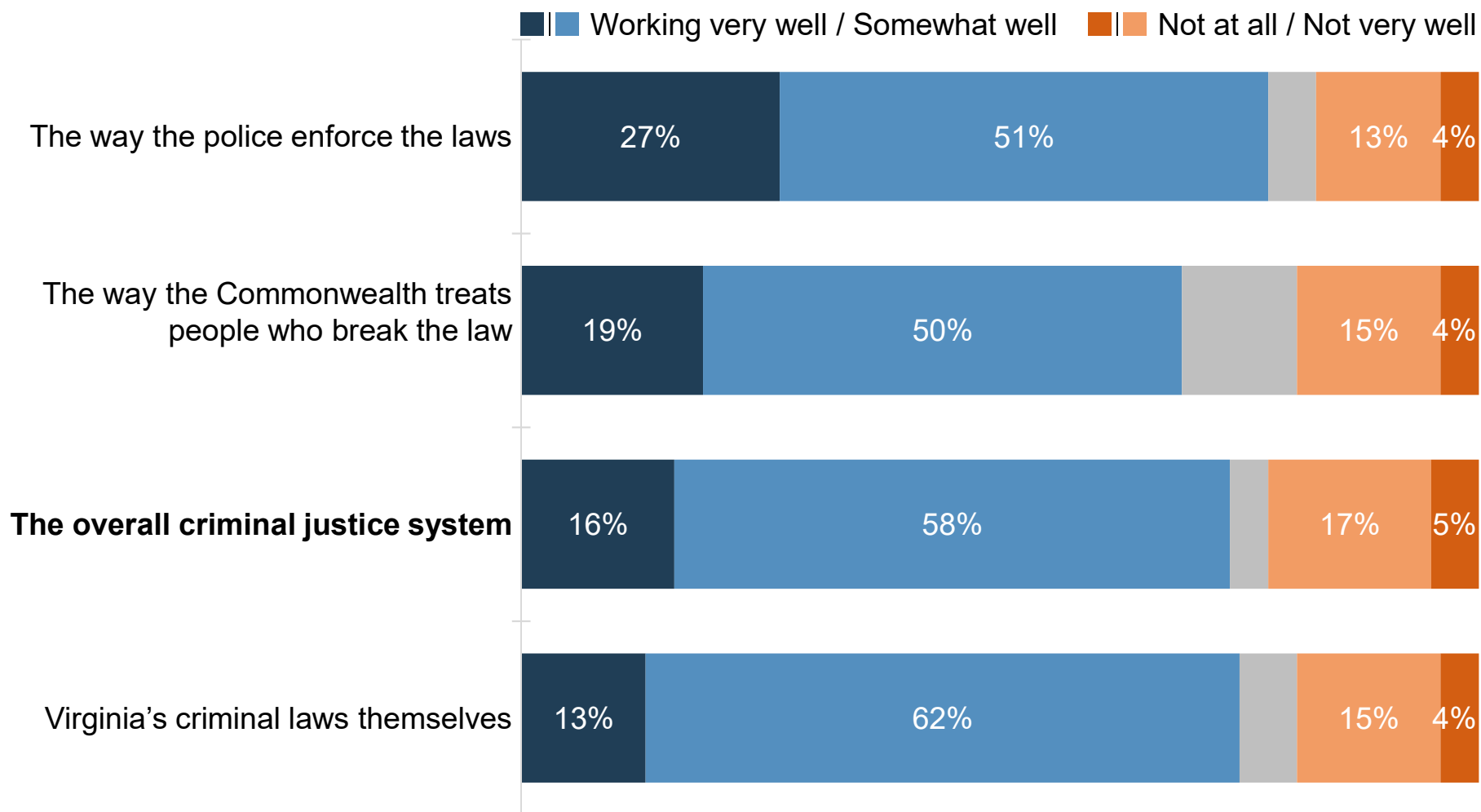
September 2018



About the Survey

Mode	Telephone survey conducted by trained professional interviewers from a central, monitored location
Sample	801 Virginia likely 2019 voters
Interviewing Dates	August 28 – September 9, 2018
Weights	Slight demographic weights were applied to ensure the sample accurately reflects the demographic profile of the potential 2019 Virginia electorate
Margin of Error	±3.5 at the 95% confidence level for the entire sample; the margin of error for subgroups is higher
Note	Some data may not add to 100% due to rounding

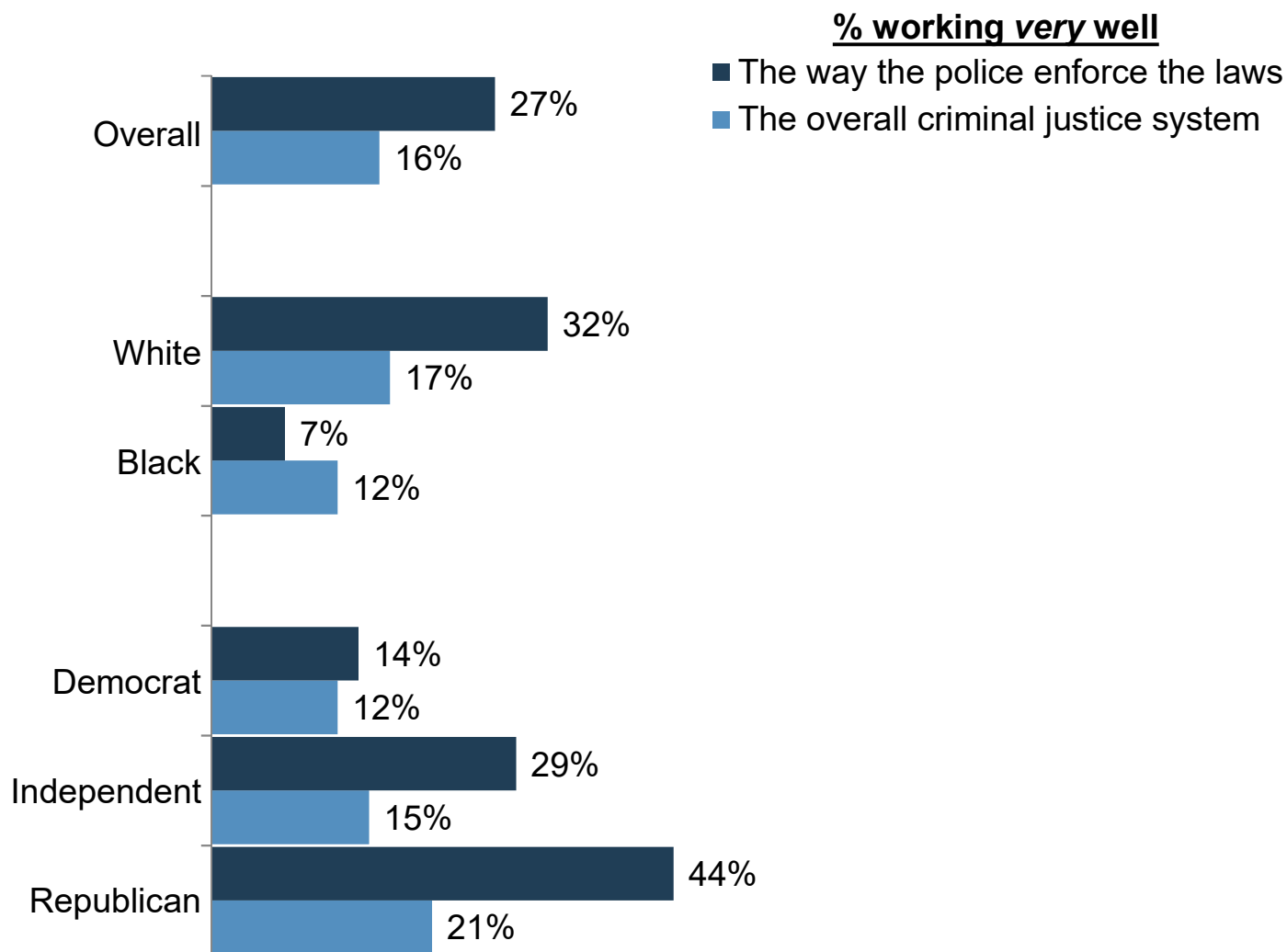
Evaluations of the criminal justice system are lukewarm; few think it's working very well.



Note: Remainder Not Sure / Refused

Q10 – 13: How well would you say each of the following is working in Virginia – is it working very well, somewhat well, not very well, or not working at all?

Whites and Republicans have much more positive evaluations of police enforcement than of the overall justice system.



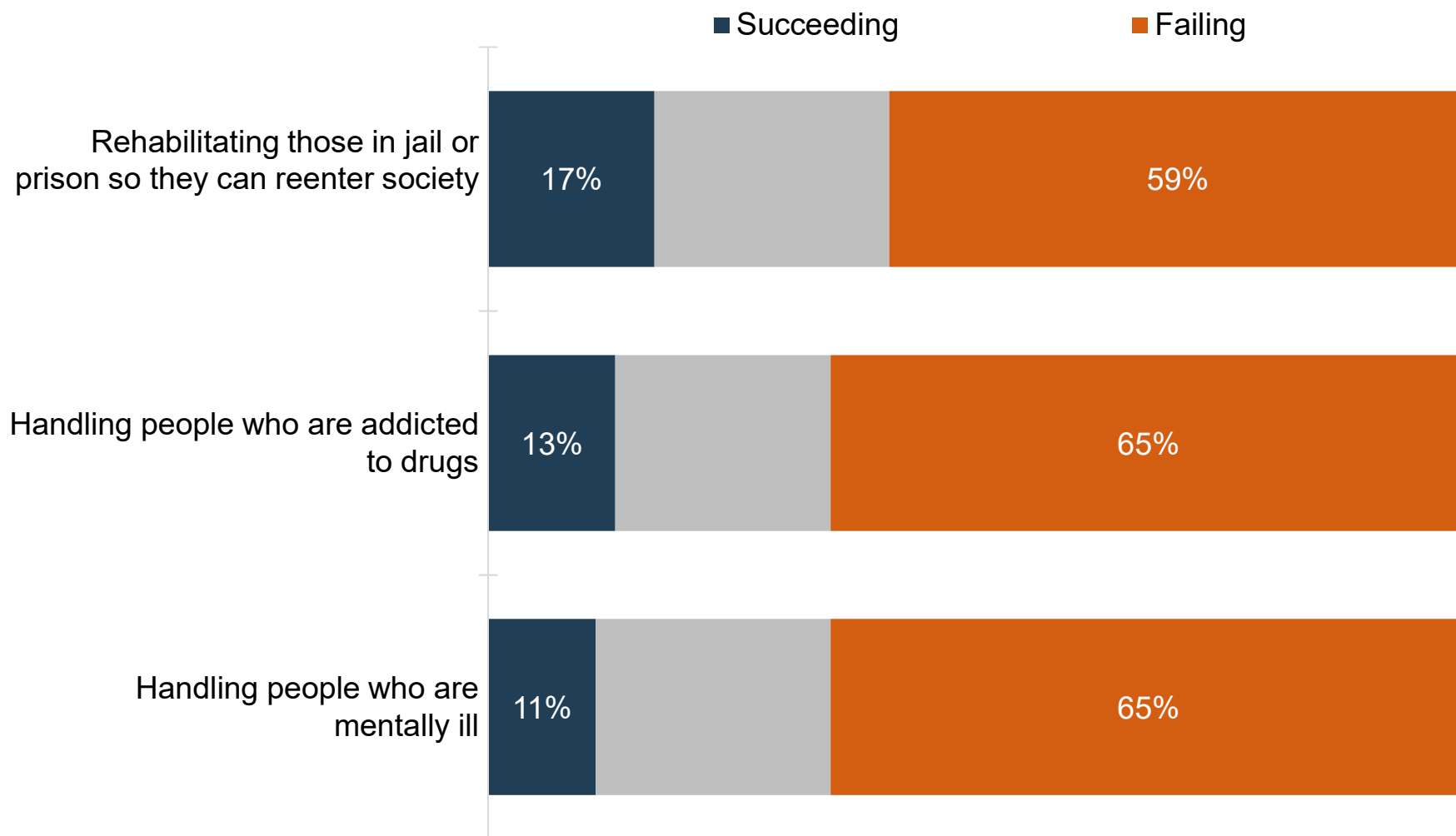
Those who say the system isn't working primarily blame a lack of fairness.

Why is the criminal justice system not working?		
LACK OF FAIRNESS: 62%	Unfair/lack of equality	29%
	Prison time for minor offenses	18
	Racial differences	17
	Criminalization for marijuana	7
	Favors the rich	7
	Lack of police accountability	6
LACK OF ENFORCEMENT: 36%	Too soft on crime	22
	Existing laws aren't being enforced	12
	Illegal immigration/not being deported	5
LACK OF REHABILITATION: 12%	Lack of effort to rehabilitate	10
NEED FOR PRISON REFORM: 5%	Privatization of prison system	4

Note: Responses among those who say system isn't working well, N=183. Responses under 4% not shown.
Multiple responses accepted, so percentages add to more than 100%.

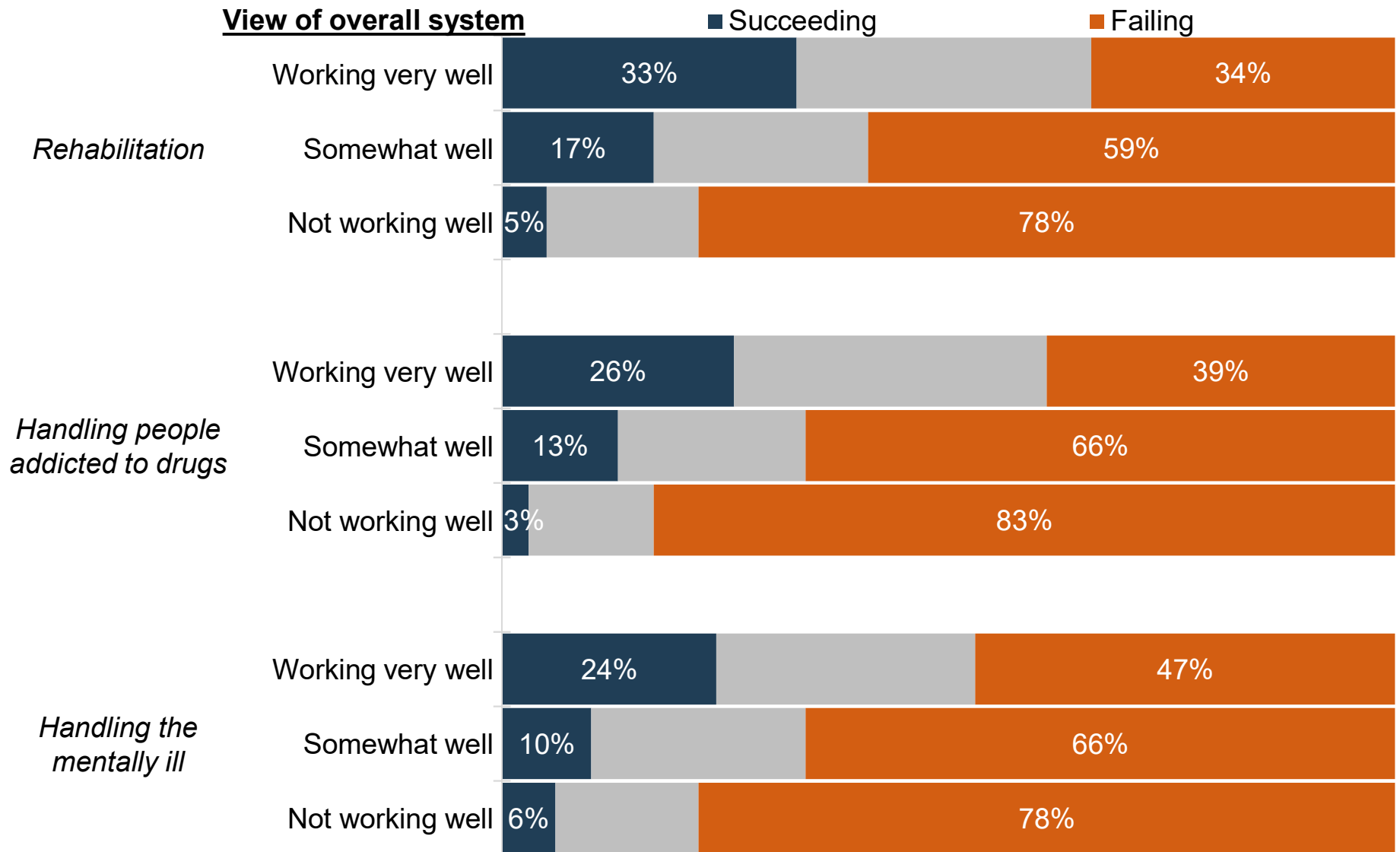
Q14: You said the overall criminal justice system is not working well— what, specifically, do you feel is not working?

Majorities think the system is failing at rehabilitation and at handling those with mental illness or drug addiction.



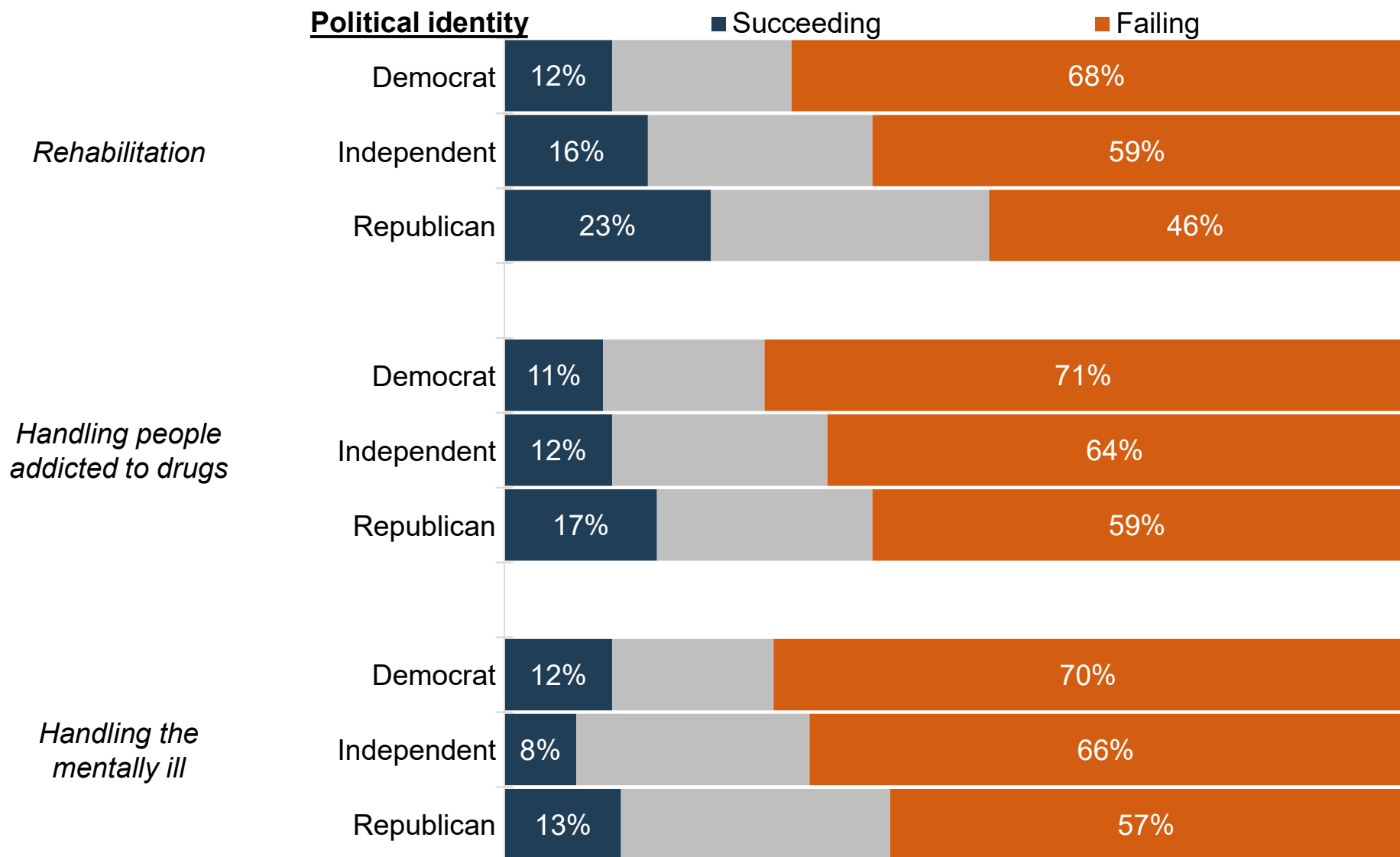
Note: Remainder About Right / Not Sure / Refused

Even voters who think the criminal justice system is working somewhat well see it failing at rehabilitation and handling drug and mental health cases.



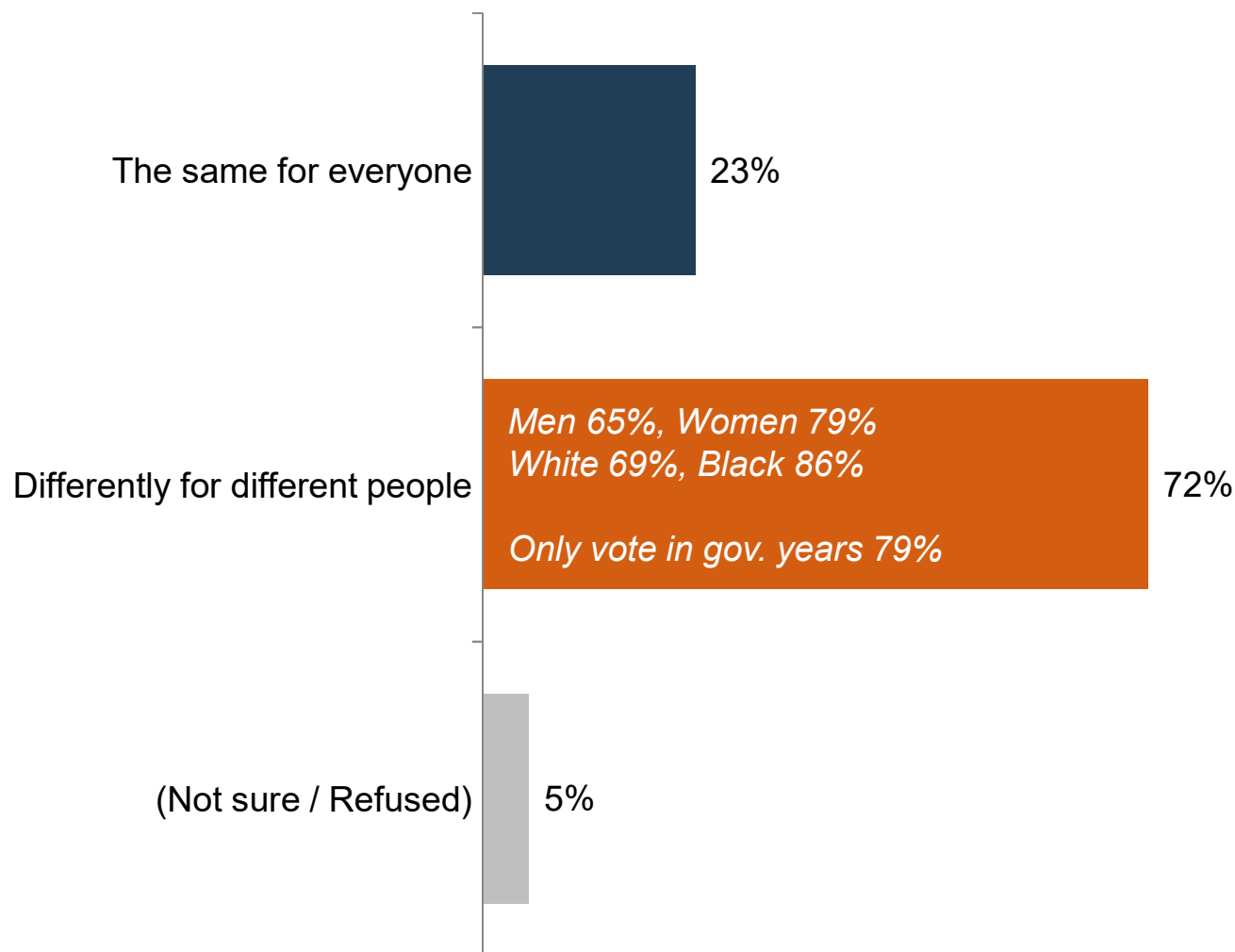
Note: Remainder About Right / Not Sure / Refused

Majorities across the political spectrum believe VA is failing to handle people with drug and mental health issues.



Note: Remainder About Right / Not Sure / Refused

Three-quarters of voters think the system works differently for different people.



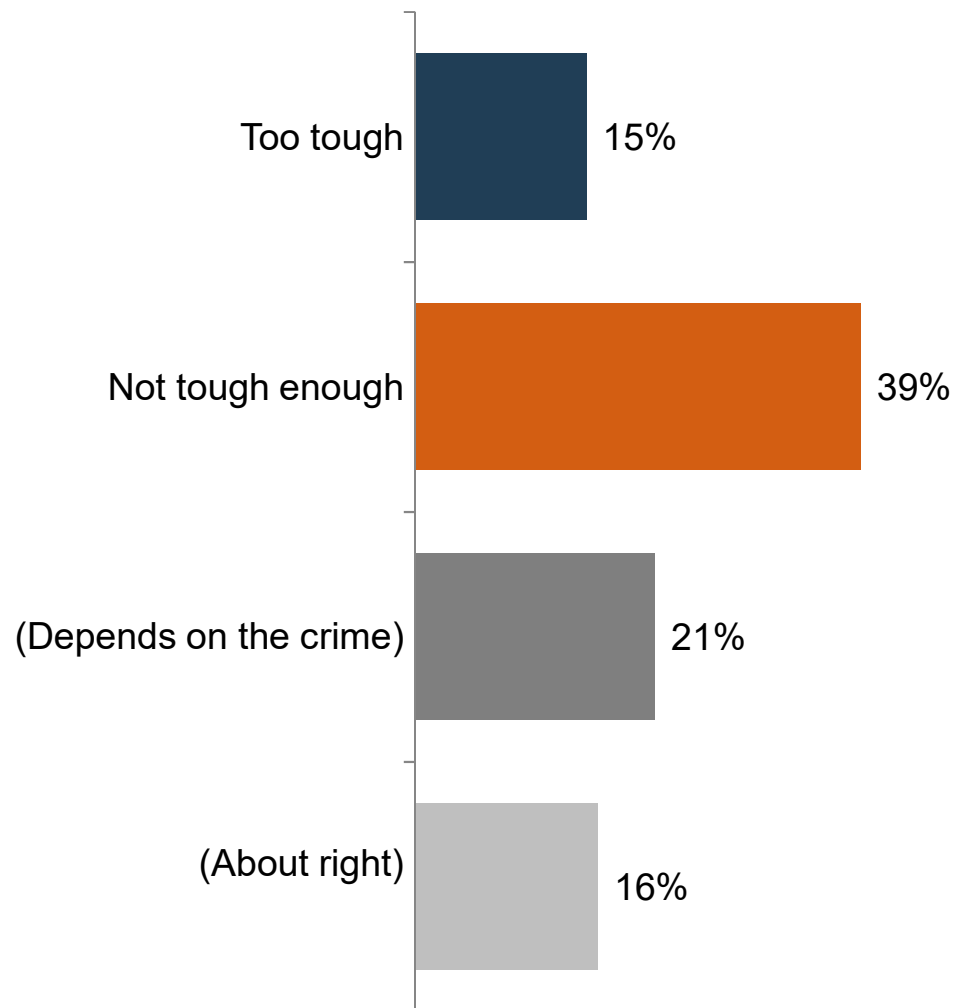
Economic inequality is seen as the primary source of unfairness in the system, followed by racial inequality.

Why does the system work differently for some?		
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY: 48%	Favors the rich	36%
	Have to have a good attorney	12
	Depends on social class / neighborhood	11
	Favors the connected	5
RACIAL INEQUALITY: 35%	Racial inequality	35
BIAS: 20%	Lack of consistency / differing sentences for same crime	8
	Personal bias of judge, lawyer, or police	6
	Criminal justice is unfair everywhere	5
MISCELLANEOUS: 26%	Based on personal experience	6
	Depends on the situation	6
	Politics	5

Note: Responses among those who say system works differently for different people, N=578. Responses under 4% not shown.
Multiple responses accepted, so percentages add to more than 100%.

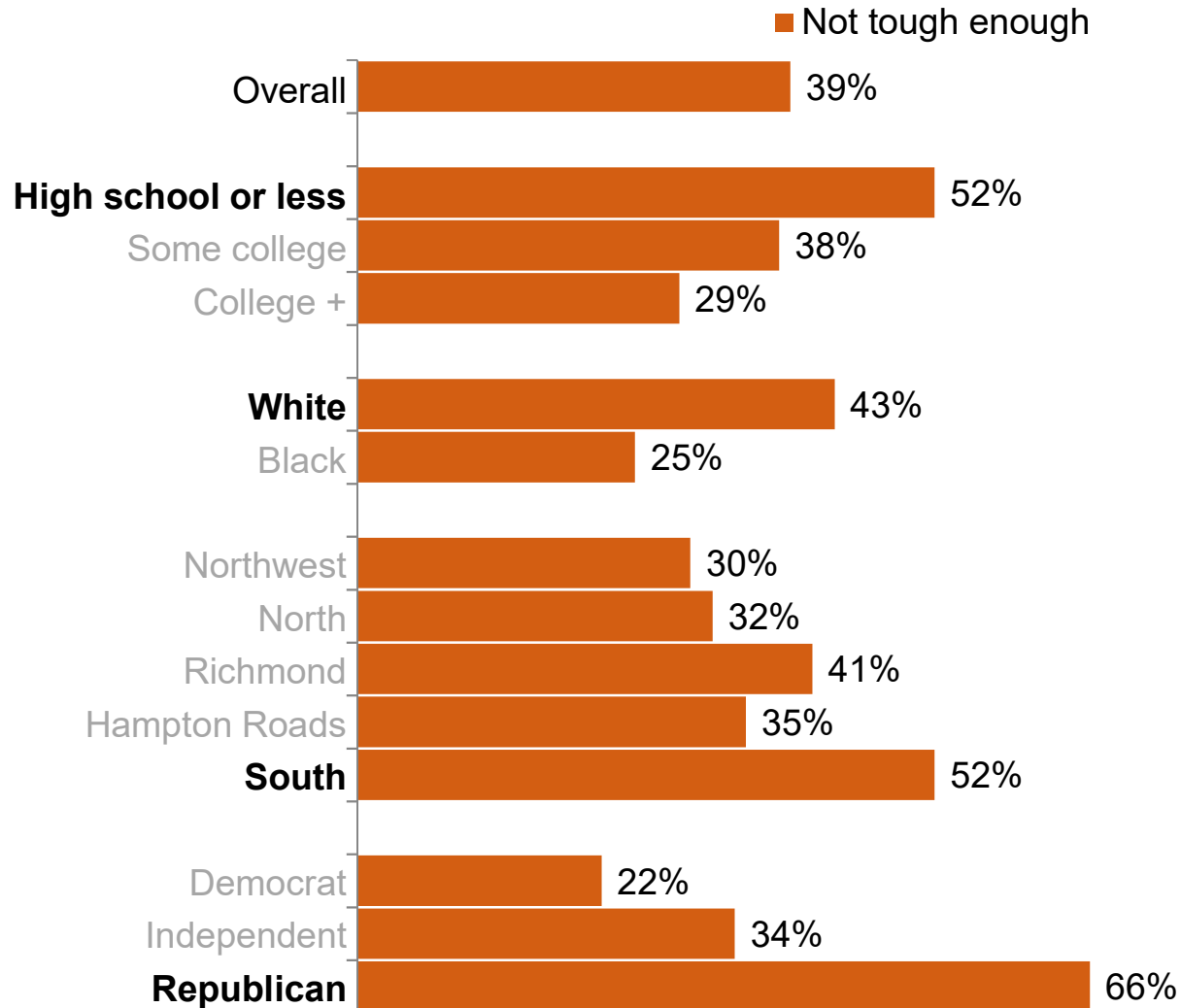
Q19: Why do you think the criminal justice system in Virginia does not work the same for everyone?

Four-in-ten voters think Virginia is too soft on crime.



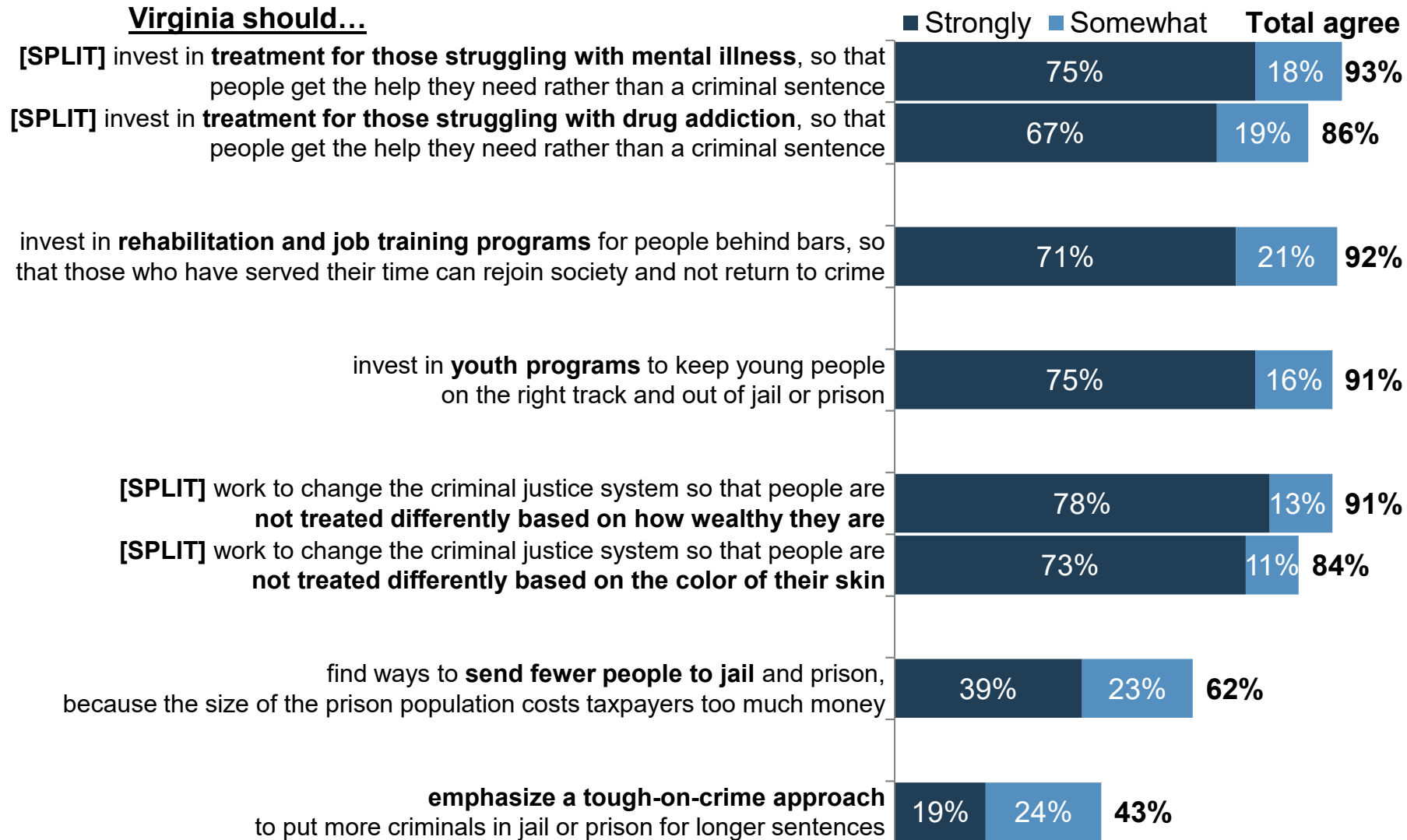
Note: Remainder Not Sure / Refused

Republicans, less educated voters, and those in the southern region think VA is not tough enough on crime.



Huge majorities agree VA should focus on a range of reform priorities; just four-in-ten want a tough-on-crime approach.

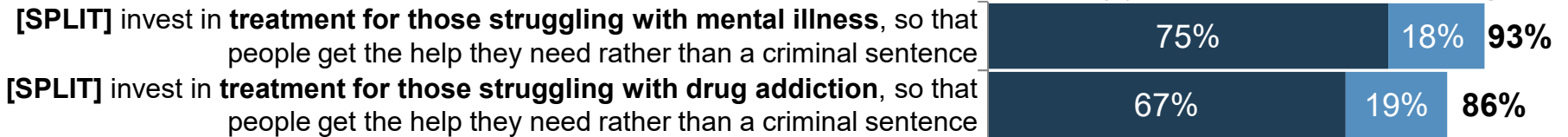
Virginia should...



Treating mental illness garners slightly more support than treating drug addiction, particularly among noncollege and Republican audiences.

Virginia should...

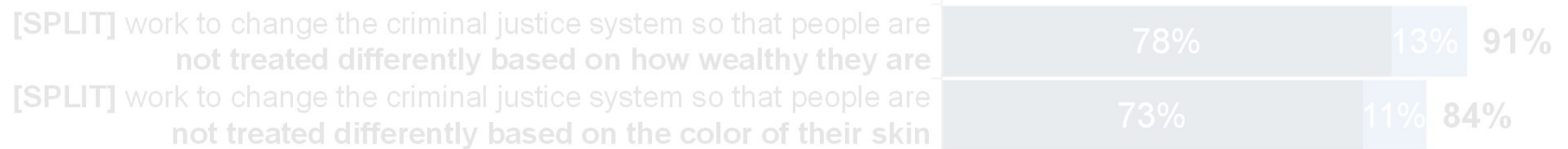
■ Strongly ■ Somewhat Total agree



invest in **rehabilitation and job training programs** for people behind bars so that those who have served their time can rejoin society and not return to the criminal justice system

	Total Agree		
	Mental Illness	Drug Addiction	
Noncollege	91%	81%	92%
College +	96%	92%	
Democrat	97%	96%	
Independent	90%	82%	91%
Republican	90%	77%	

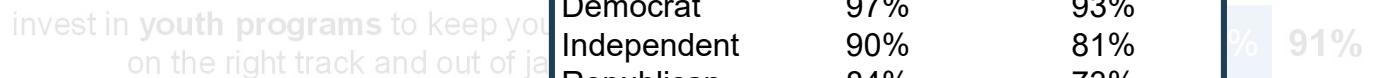
invest in **youth programs** to keep young people on the right track and out of jail



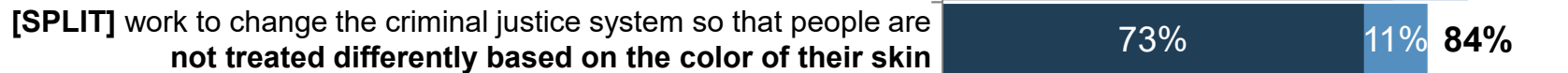
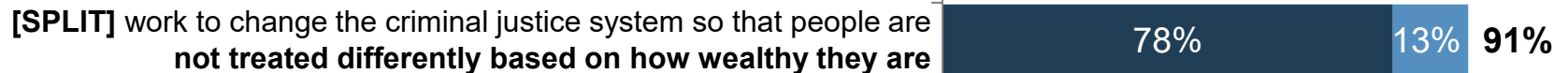
Reducing economic biases in the system generates broader agreement than a focus on reducing racial bias.

Virginia should...

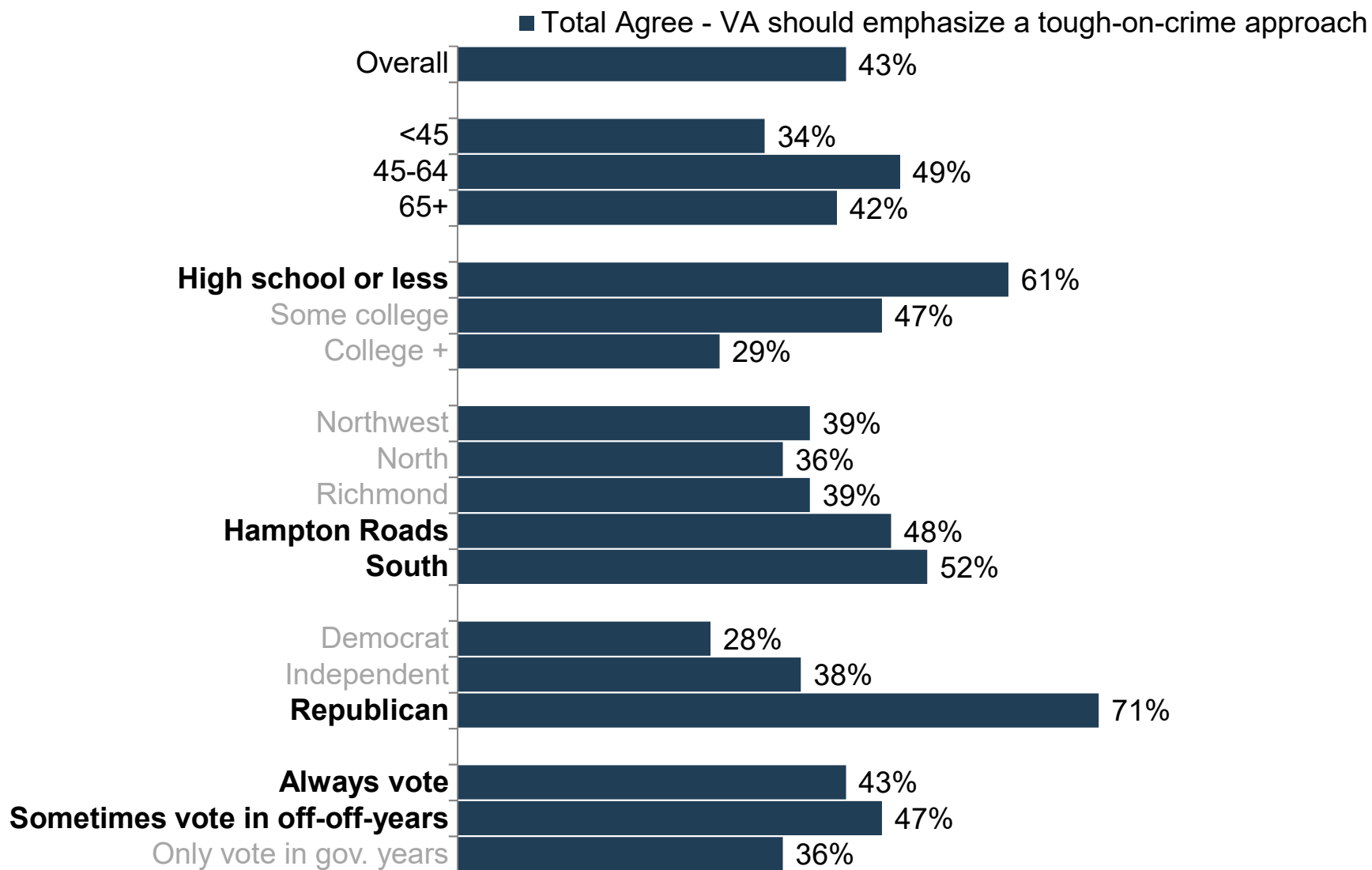
■ Strongly ■ Somewhat Total agree



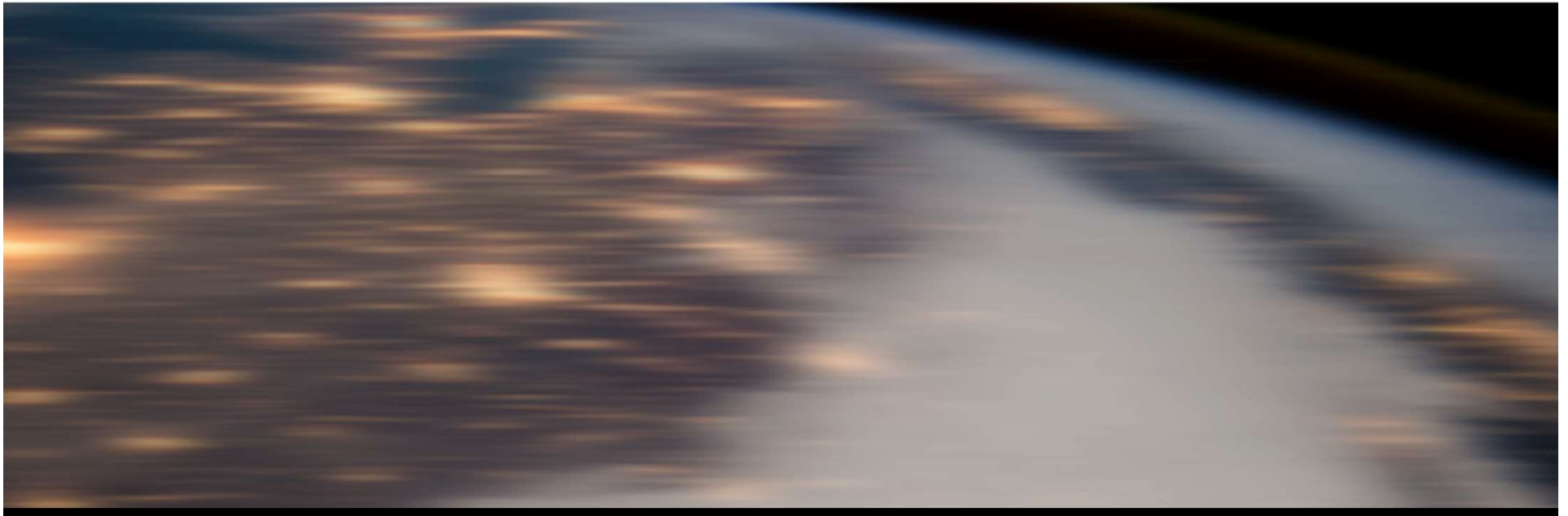
	Total Agree	
	Wealth	Race
White	91%	82%
Black	96%	97%
Income <\$60k	91%	90%
Income \$60k+	92%	80%
Democrat	97%	93%
Independent	90%	81%
Republican	84%	73%



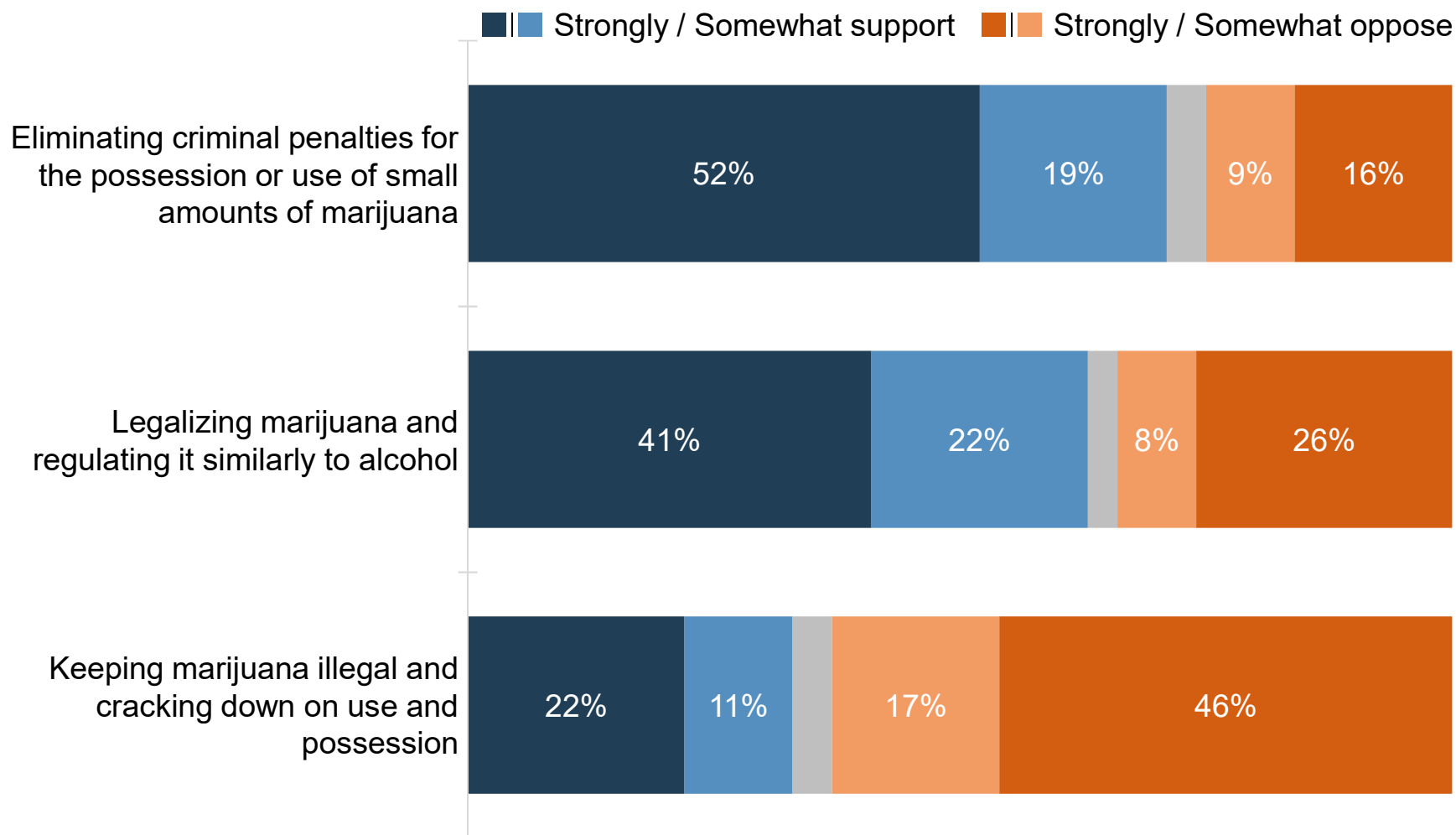
A tough-on-crime approach resonates with Republicans, less educated voters, and those in southern VA.



Marijuana

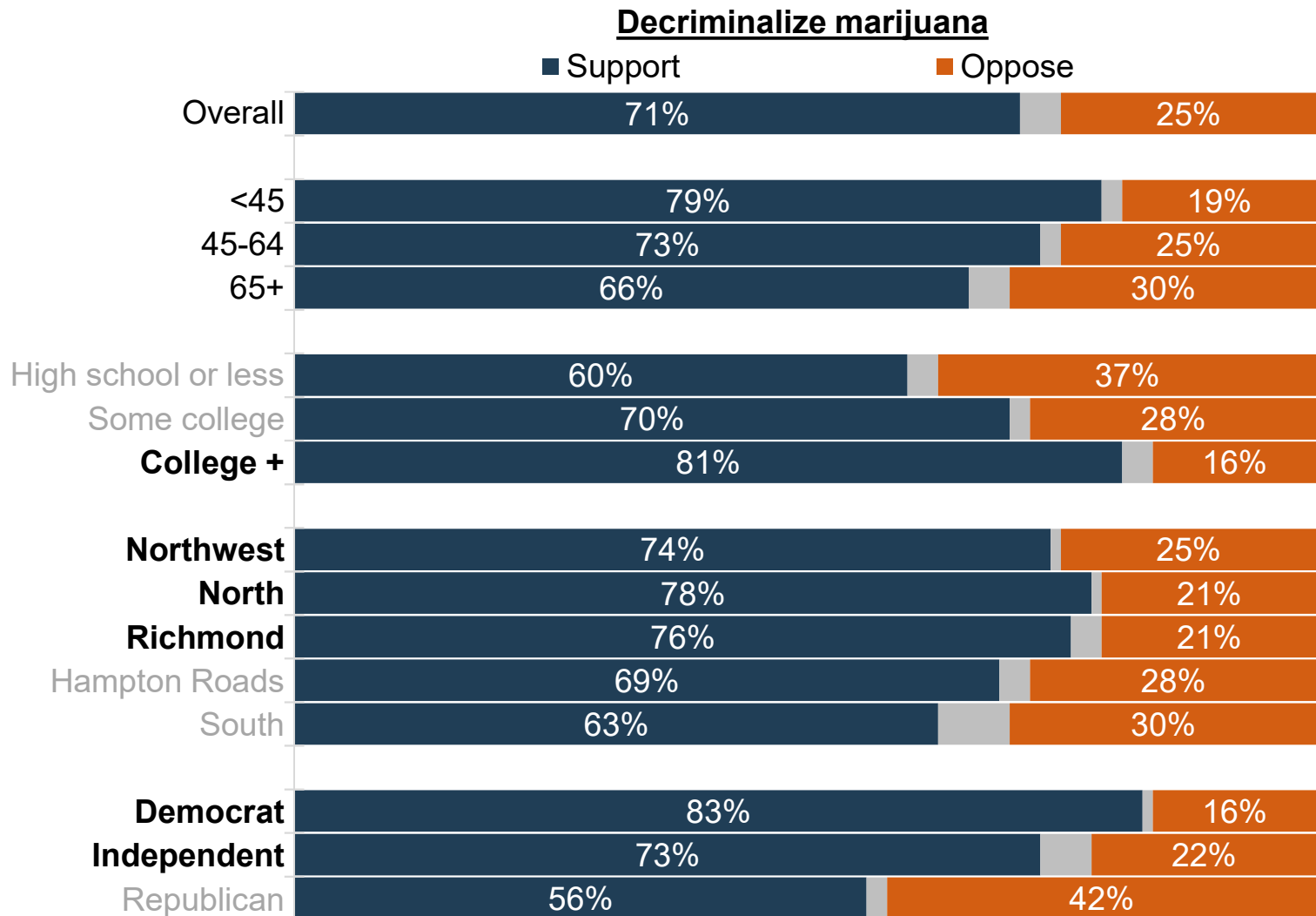


Wide majorities support decriminalizing – or even legalizing – marijuana.



Note: Remainder Not Sure / Refused

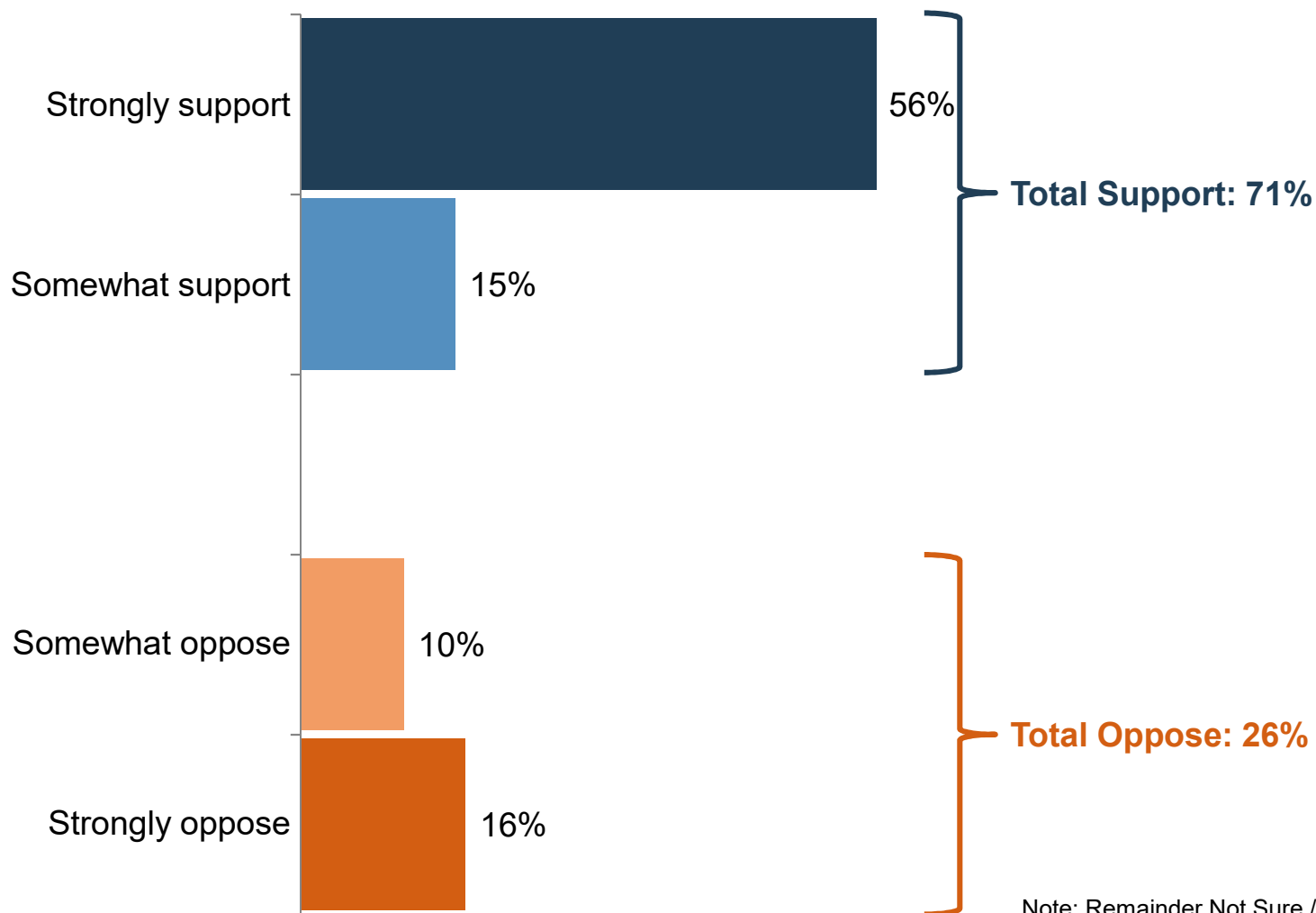
Profile of Support for Decriminalization



Note: Remainder Not Sure / Refused

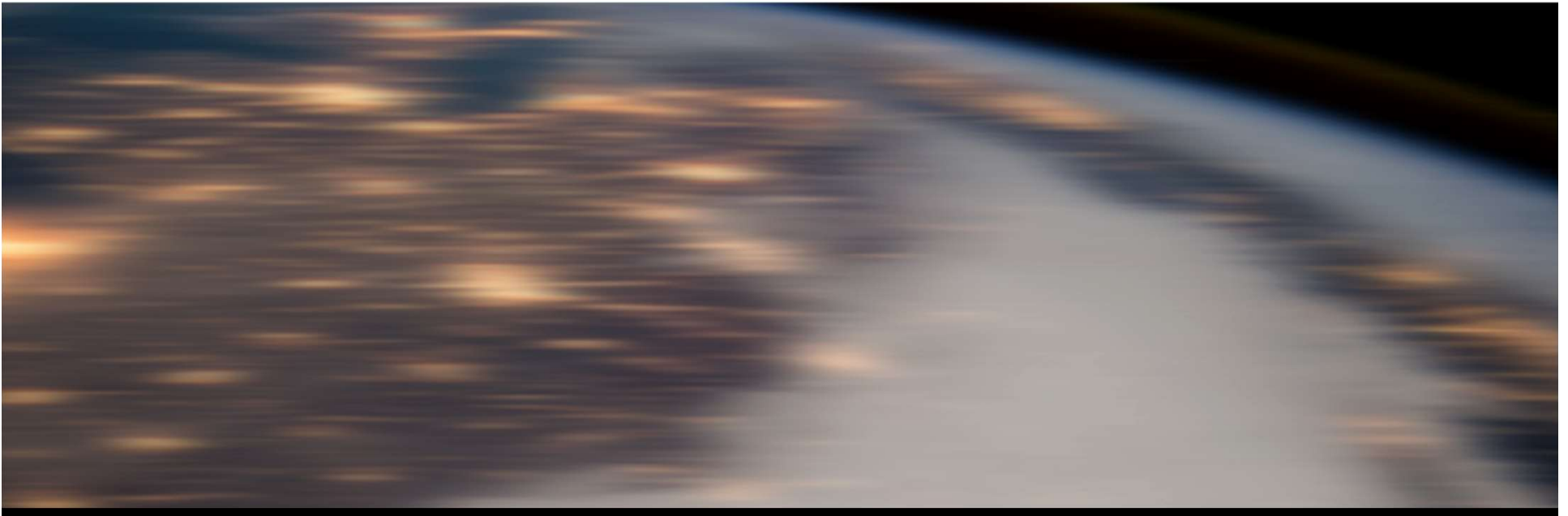
Q30: Please tell me whether you support or oppose eliminating criminal penalties for the possession or use of small amounts of marijuana

A strong push message on decrim does not move many voters, suggesting minds are already made up.

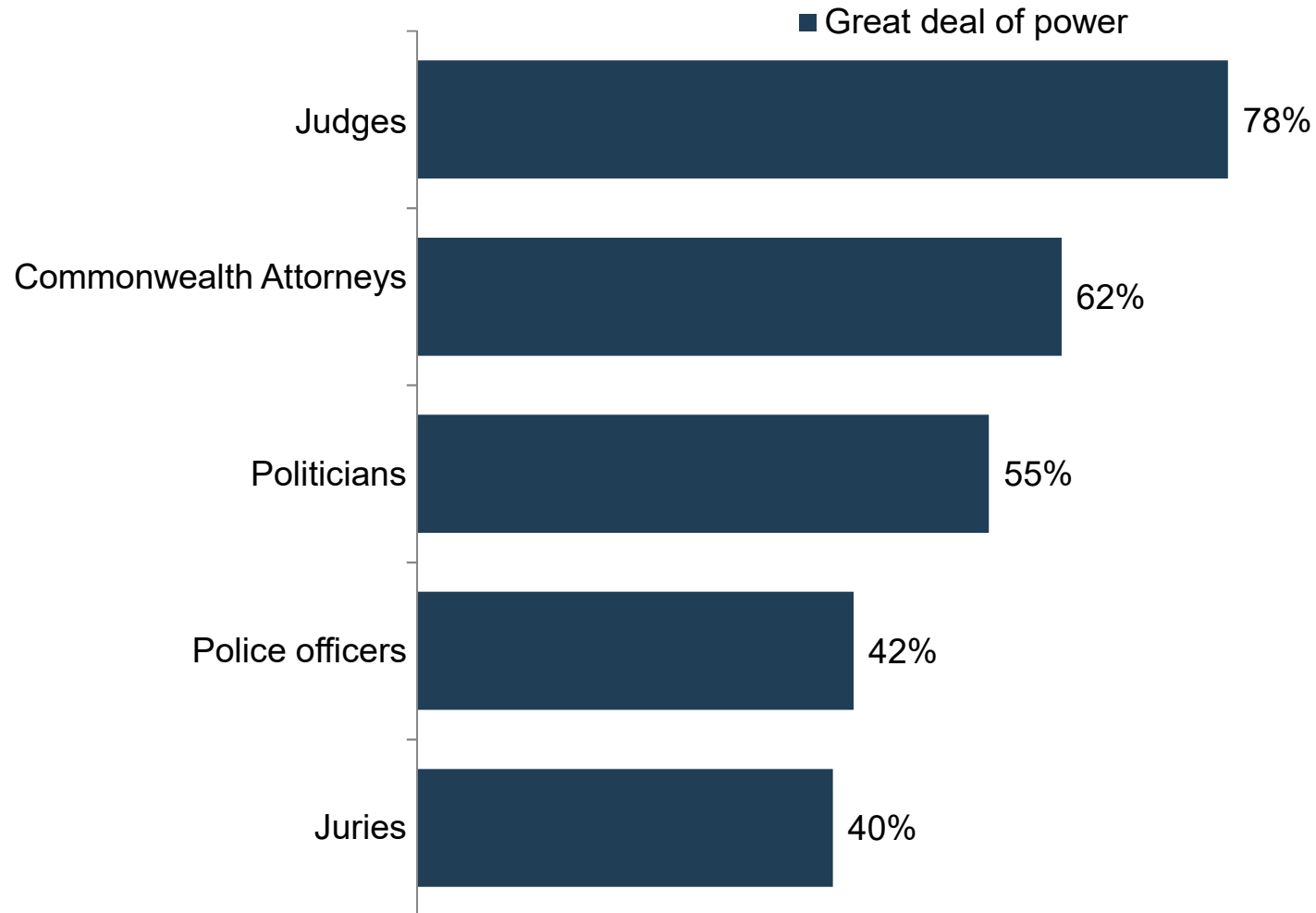


Q32: Those who support decriminalizing marijuana point out that the Commonwealth convicted 25,000 people of simple marijuana possession in 2017. They say prosecuting these minor offenses costs taxpayers millions of dollars, forever changes lives by exposing people to the criminal justice system, and disproportionately harms people of color, who are nearly four times more likely to be arrested for possession. Hearing this, do you support or oppose eliminating criminal penalties for the possession of small amounts of marijuana?

The Role of Commonwealth's Attorneys



Voters think CAs have a lot of power in dispensing justice...



...and are concerned about both the lack of oversight and CAs ability to unfairly distort the justice system.

