

To: New York Civil Liberties Union
From: Daniel Gotoff and Ronan Ferrentino, *Lake Research Partners*
Re: Key Findings from Validation Surveys in NY Battleground Districts
Date: May 28, 2024

In an effort to understand support for solutions-based messages on public safety and immigration in New York's battleground districts, the New York Civil Liberties Union engaged Lake Research Partners to survey voters in two sample swing districts.

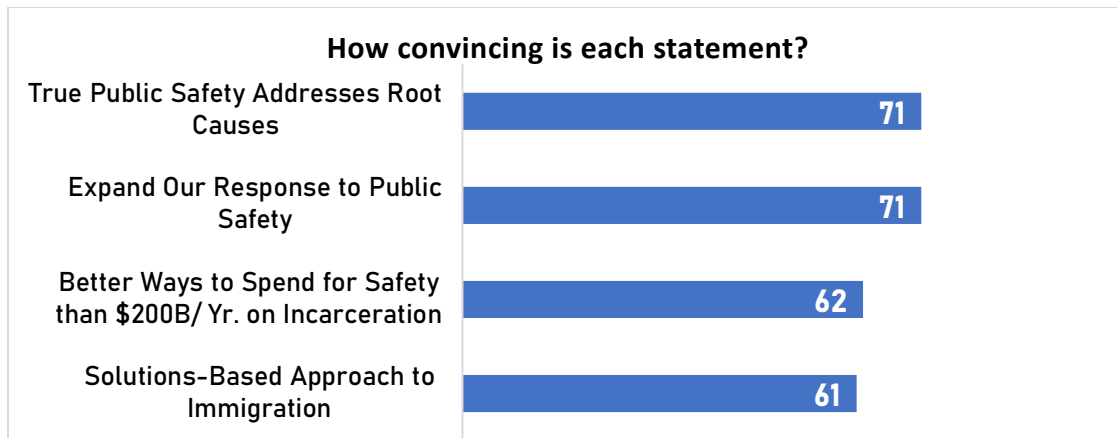
Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey via phone using professional interviewers. The survey reached 600 likely voters across New York's 19th and 22nd Congressional Districts. The survey was conducted March 14 – March 21, 2024. The margin of error is +/-4.0%.

The Context: Voters Are Not Hearing Solutions-Oriented Messages on Safety and Immigration

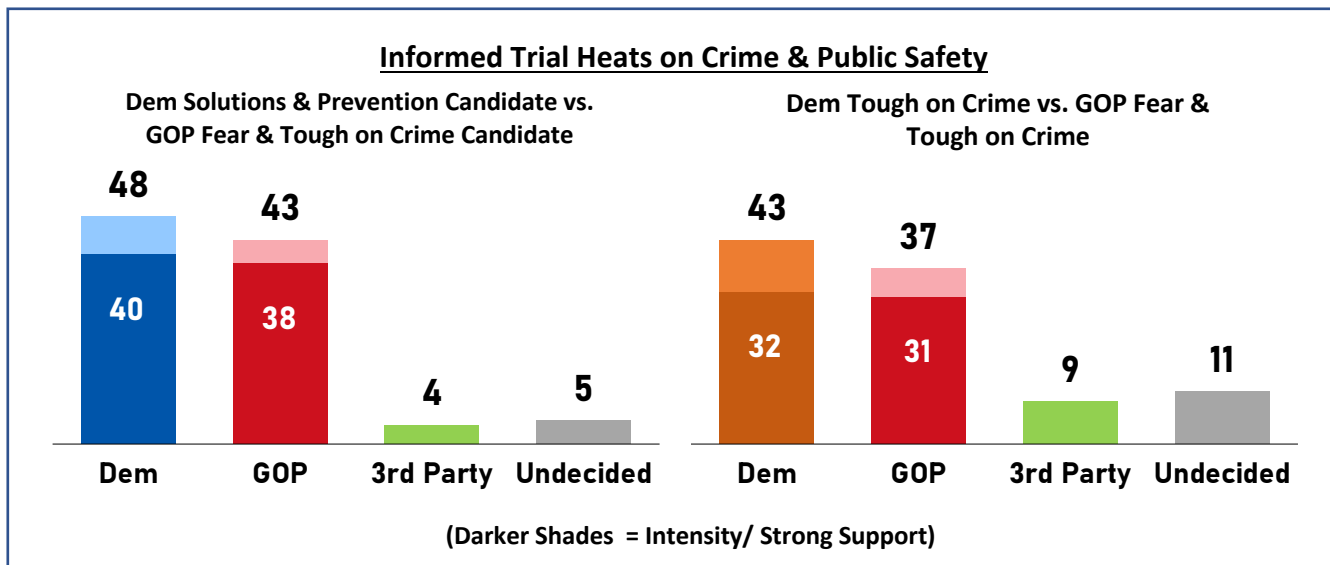
- Context is critical. Voters in these districts report hearing far more from Republicans on safety (greater than 56%) and immigration (68%), than they have from Democrats (fewer than 18% on safety, and 19% on immigration).
- What voters in these districts have heard to date is making them more likely to vote Republican today, with 42% of voters saying they are more likely to vote for Republicans compared to 27% who are more likely to vote for Democrats.

Solutions and Prevention Messages Beat Tough-on-Crime Messaging

- Majorities of voters in these districts favor solutions-oriented messages on safety and immigration.
 - The most convincing public safety arguments call for prevention and solutions: tackling the root causes of crime by investing in affordable housing, mental health treatment, quality schools, and good jobs; not expecting to solve every social problem by tasking police or locking people up.
 - Juxtaposing these investments in what makes communities safer with the \$200 billion spent every year in the U.S. to put people behind bars resonates powerfully with these voters.
 - Voters also respond strongly to a solutions-oriented immigration message that highlights how immigrants contribute—i.e., working hard, paying taxes, building and owning small businesses—and then goes on to make the case for a balanced approach to immigration that addresses the challenges at the border while including pathways to citizenship (see page 3 of memo).



- Most important, when posed against each other in competitive message experiments, a Democratic candidate’s solutions-oriented argument on public safety is competitive with, and even beats out, tough-on-crime and fear-based framings of the debate by a Republican candidate—and outperforms a Democratic candidate’s tough-on-crime messaging, as well.
 - In an informed trial heat focused on safety, the solutions- and prevention-oriented messaging tests five points better with voters. It also pulls votes out of the undecided and 3rd party columns and generates greater intensity of support, underscoring its potential to catalyze voter turnout.



- In addition, the solutions- and prevention-oriented argument performs better among independent voters in these swing congressional districts. In a head-to-head between a Democratic candidate’s solutions-oriented message and a Republican candidate’s fear-based and tough-on-crime message, the Democrat pulls ahead by 4 points: 36% to 32%, with the remaining third of voters (33%) undecided or opting for another candidate. By comparison, in a head-to-head between a Democratic candidate’s tough-on-crime message and a Republican candidate’s fear-based and tough-on-crime message, the Republican candidate pulls ahead by 17 points: 35% to 18%, with nearly half of voters (48%) undecided or opting for another candidate.

Solutions-Oriented Messages Increase Voter Engagement

- Majorities of voters across the two districts indicate they would be more likely to vote for their Member of Congress if they supported investing in proven solutions that address the root causes of crime, like affordable housing, and mental health and addiction services. (63% would be more likely to vote for such a candidate compared to just 9% who would be less likely).
- A plurality would be more likely to vote for one's Member of Congress if they supported a balanced and humane approach to immigration—including ensuring that states have the resources they need to welcome new arrivals, and DREAMers and other longtime residents have a roadmap to citizenship (49% would be more likely to vote for such a candidate compared to 34% who would be less likely).

Appendix: Message Language

[TRUE PUBLIC SAFETY ADDRESSES ROOT CAUSES] We all deserve to be safe, but many people are understandably worried about crime and drugs like fentanyl. We need real solutions. The safest places often have more resources and support. To keep people safe, we need to focus on stopping crime before it happens. This includes making housing more affordable, helping people with mental health and addiction problems, providing good education, and creating jobs.

[SOLUTIONS-BASED APPROACH TO IMMIGRATION] People who are immigrants work hard, pay taxes, build and own small businesses, and fill jobs in industries facing worker shortages. Hard-working Americans, including immigrant workers, have fueled the country’s economic comeback. We need a balanced approach to immigration that addresses the challenges at the border and includes pathways to citizenship for DREAMers and other longtime residents.

[EXPAND OUR RESPONSE TO PUBLIC SAFETY] We keep expecting police to solve every social problem, from kids skipping school to mental illness to homelessness to gun violence. It’s common sense that police are not the answer to every problem. Instead of throwing money at things that haven’t worked, we should focus on solutions that will work. We should fully fund things that are proven to create safe neighborhoods – like good jobs and schools. We should reduce the burden on police.

[BETTER WAYS TO SPEND FOR SAFETY THAN \$200B/ YR. ON INCARCERATION] We can’t solve homelessness, addiction, or poverty by arresting people. We need real solutions. The U.S. has more people behind bars than any other country, and it costs \$200 billion a year. This money could be better spent on the things that make people safer and healthier. This includes making housing more affordable, giving people job training, and providing treatment for addiction and mental health issues. This can help stop crime before it happens.

Informed Trial Heats on Crime and Public Safety

Solutions & Prevention Message	Tough on Crime Message
The Democratic candidate says: “We all deserve to be safe. The safest places often have more resources and support. To keep people safe, I will focus on proven solutions to stop crime before it happens. This includes making housing more affordable, helping people with mental health and addiction problems, providing good education, and creating jobs. We can't solve homelessness, addiction, and poverty by arresting people. It's better to deal with the main reasons people have these problems. That way, police can focus on solving the most serious crimes.”	The Democratic candidate says “I am committed to keeping communities safe and holding those who break the law accountable. I support giving police more funding so they can put more officers on the streets. I will give police and prosecutors tools to solve and prosecute homicides and violent crimes. I support strict penalties for drug dealers. I will stop the revolving door of criminals in and out of our communities and ensure repeat violent offenders and people committing crimes with guns don’t get early release from prison.”

Fear and Tough on Crime Message

The Republican candidate says: “We are under siege by a violent crime wave in lawless liberal cities from New York to San Francisco – and it is the Democrats fault. I will restore law and order in New York by prioritizing hard-working, law-abiding citizens, and ending the revolving door that releases violent criminals onto our streets. I will ensure prosecutors enforce all the laws. I will support and resource police departments suffering from understaffing and low morale. And I will oppose Democrats promoting bail reform and defund the police.”