JUSTICE ACTION NETWORK

PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

TURNING QUESTIONS INTO ANSWERS

# National Survey


PREPARED BY:

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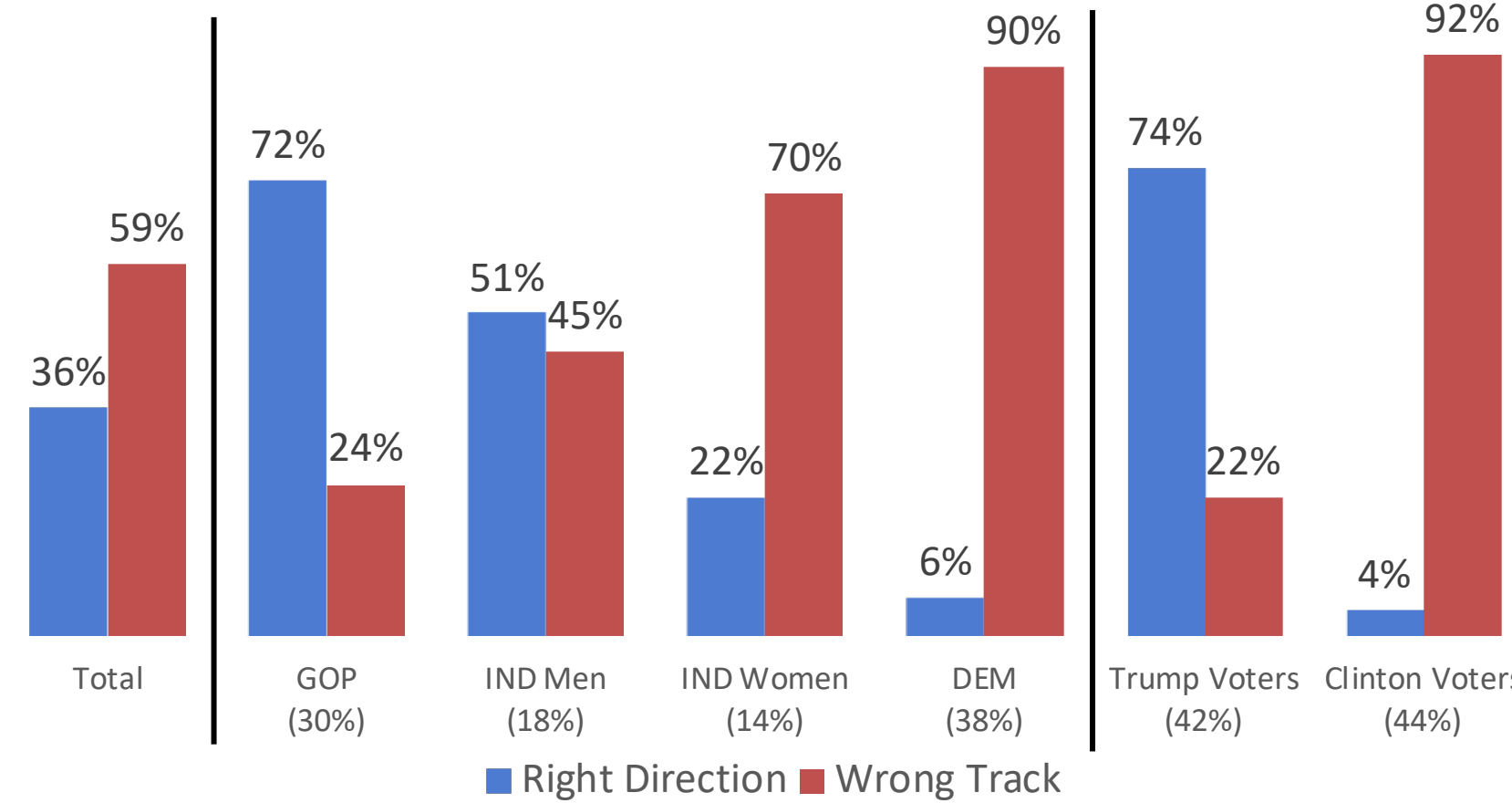
# Methodology

On behalf of the Justice Action Network, Public Opinion Strategies completed a survey of 800 registered voters nationwide.

Four hundred and forty respondents were contacted via landline and 360 via cell phone.

The survey was conducted July 13-16, 2019 and has a margin of error of ±3.5%.

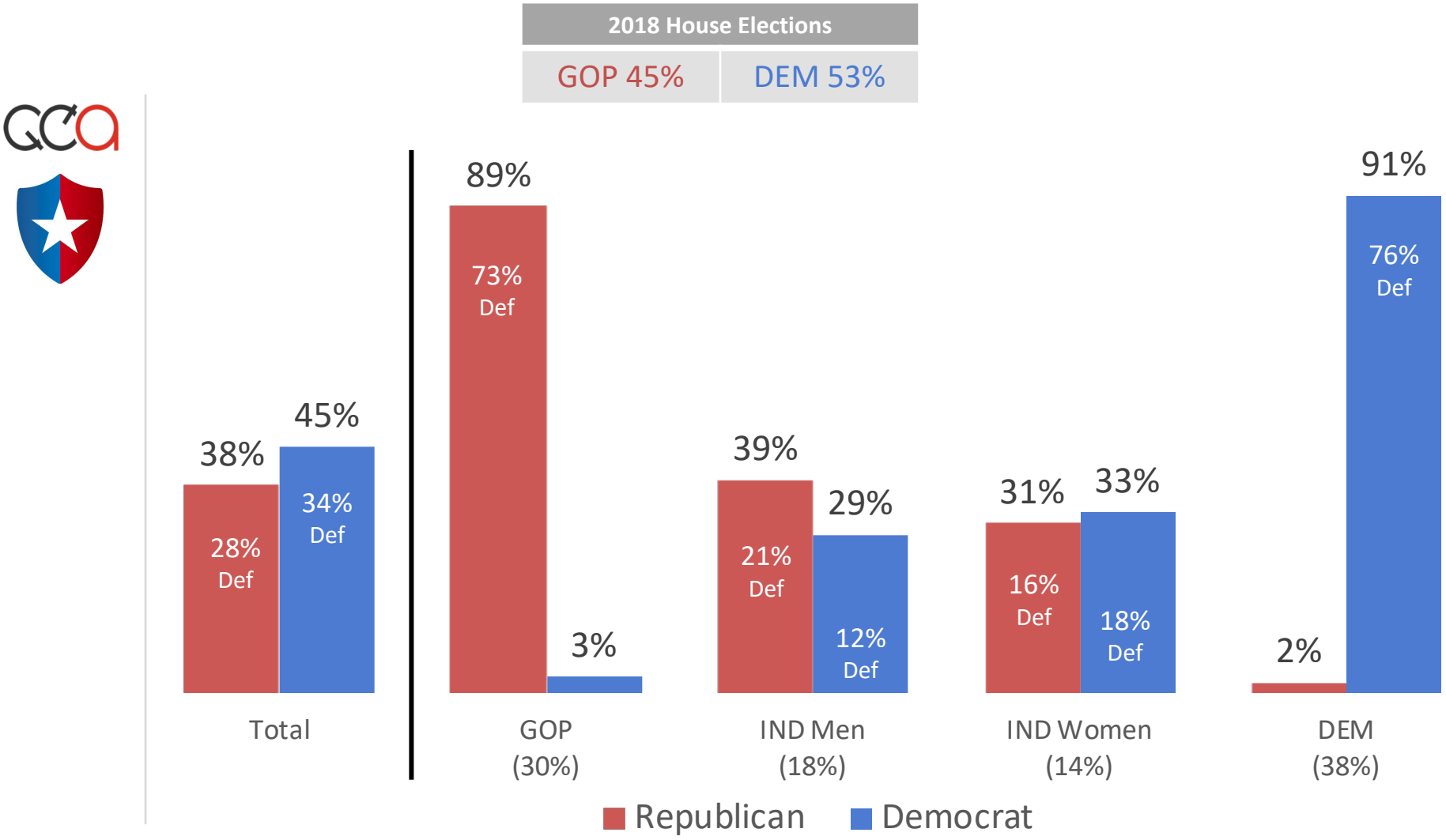
# Voters are negative about the country's direction.





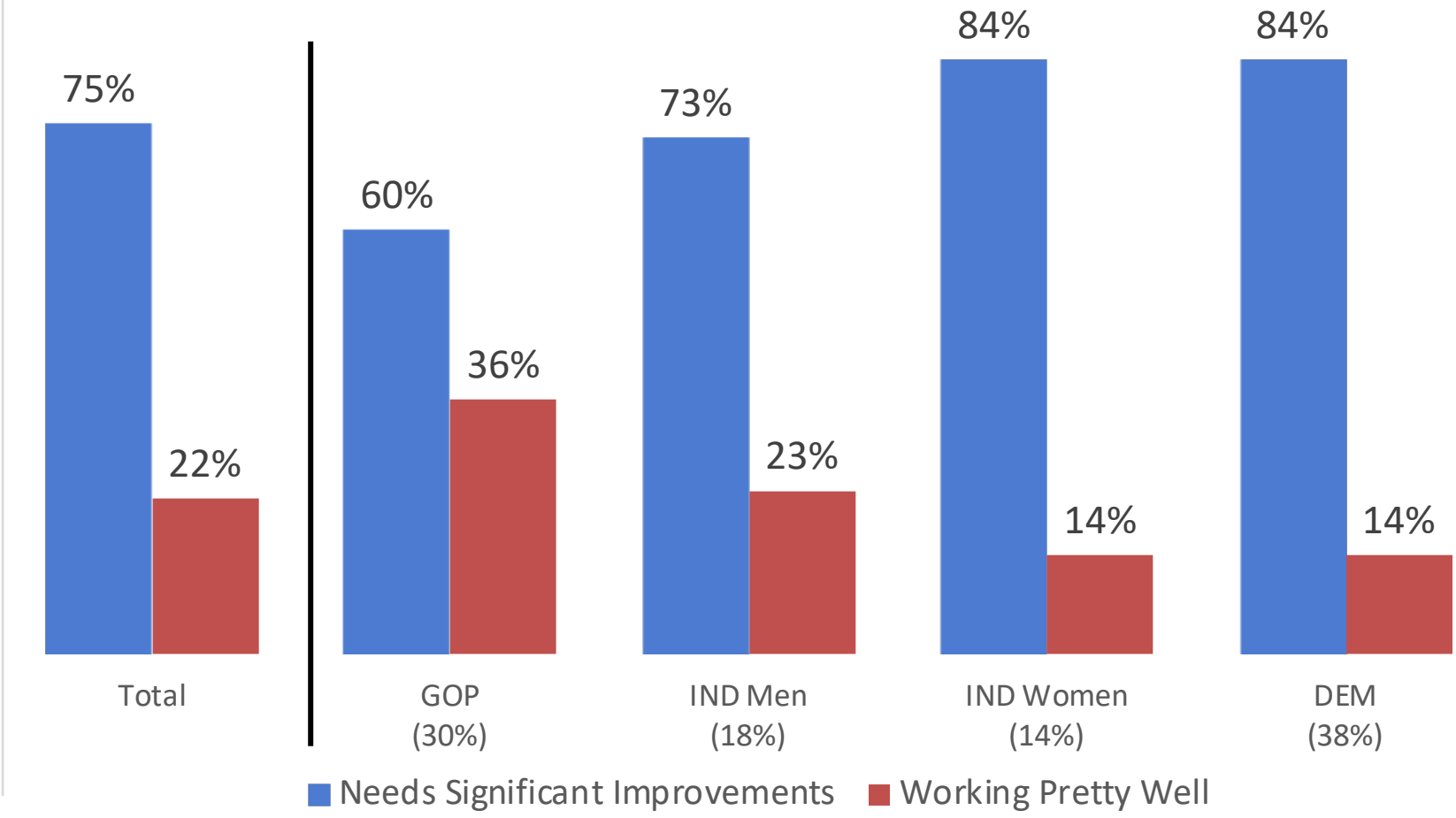

*Generally speaking, would you say that things in the United States are going in the right direction, or have they pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track?*

# A 2020 generic ballot for Congress shows a competitive terrain.




*And, if the election for U.S. Congress were being held today, for whom would you vote? The Republican candidate or the Democratic candidate from this district?*

# Fully three-quarters of Americans believe the country's criminal justice system "needs significant improvements."



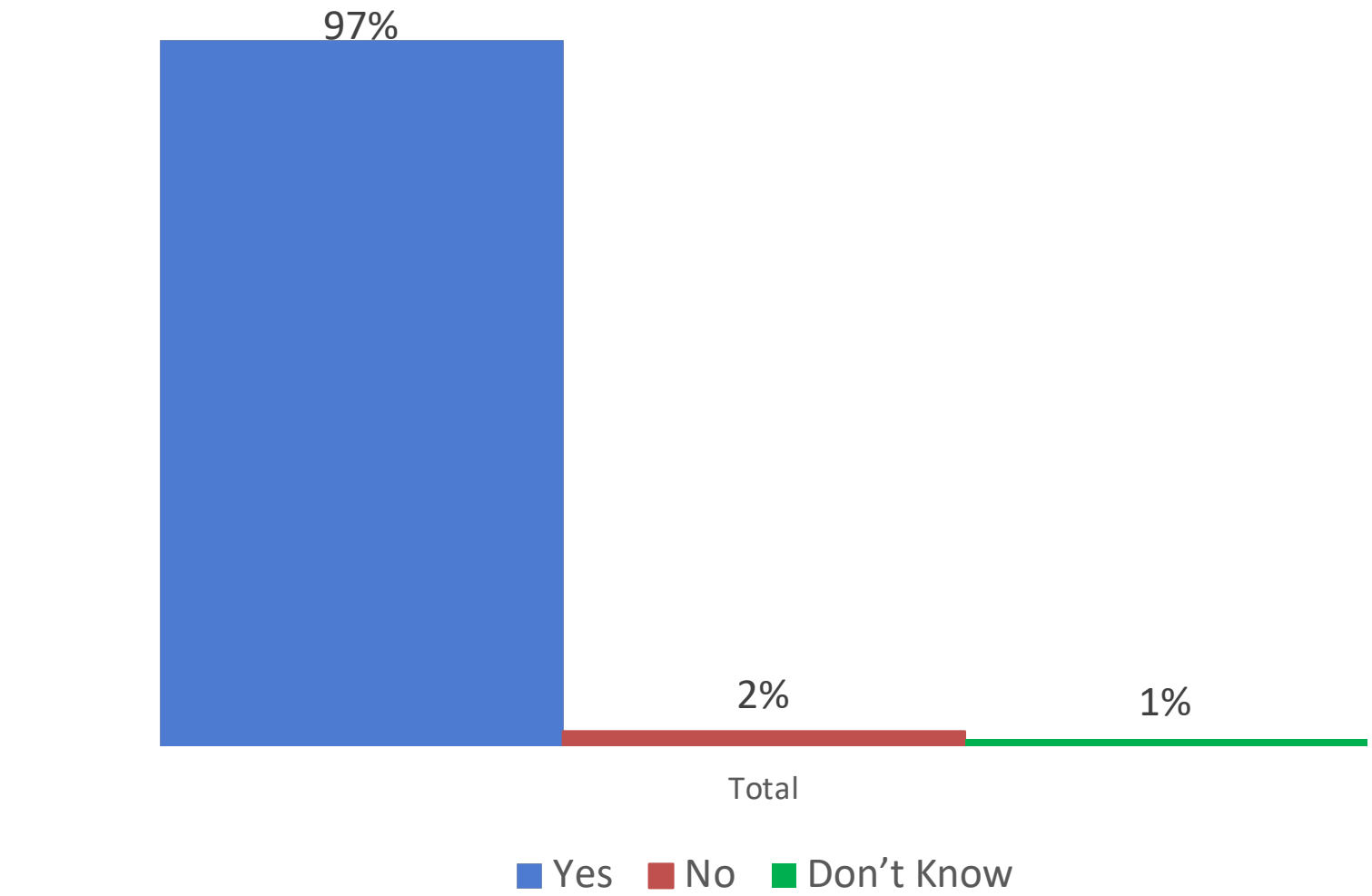

*Generally speaking, do you think the country's criminal justice system needs significant improvements, or is it working pretty well as it is?*

# Criminal Justice System Agree/Disagree Statements

| %Agree-Disagree | Total | GOP (30%) | IND Men (18%) | IND Wmn (14%) | DEM (38%) | White Men (36%) | White Wmn (38%) | Af-Am (12%) | Hispa-nic (10%) | 18-34 (27%) | 35-54 (28%) | 55-64 (26%) | 65+ (18%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| We should break down barriers for people coming out of prison so they can get jobs, support their families, and stop being so dependent on government services. | 93% - 6% | 87% - 12% | 96% - 4% | 96% - 4% | 94% - 5% | 92% - 6% | 92% - 7% | 93% - 5% | 95% - 5% | 96% - 4% | 95% - 4% | 90% - 10% | 91% - 7% |
| It does not matter whether a person is in prison for months or years. What really matters is the criminal justice system does a better job of making sure they are less likely to commit another crime. | 73% - 24% | 70% - 25% | 64% - 34% | 72% - 24% | 81% - 18% | 68% - 30% | 74% - 23% | 85% - 13% | 79% - 17% | 82% - 16% | 72% - 22% | 67% - 30% | 71% - 28% |
| The main goal of our criminal justice system should be rehabilitating people to become productive, law-abiding citizens. | 89% - 10% | 81% - 18% | 84% - 16% | 89% - 11% | 99% - 1% | 86% - 14% | 90% - 10% | 98% - 2% | 93% - 7% | 93% - 7% | 90% - 10% | 85% - 15% | 90% - 10% |
| Federal law should require that all federal job applicants are allow to explain their skills and qualifications for a job before they are asked about their criminal record. | 76% - 23% | 65% - 34% | 69% - 29% | 75% - 24% | 88% - 11% | 74% - 24% | 71% - 26% | 88% - 12% | 84% - 16% | 89% - 11% | 72% - 26% | 68% - 30% | 73% - 25% |

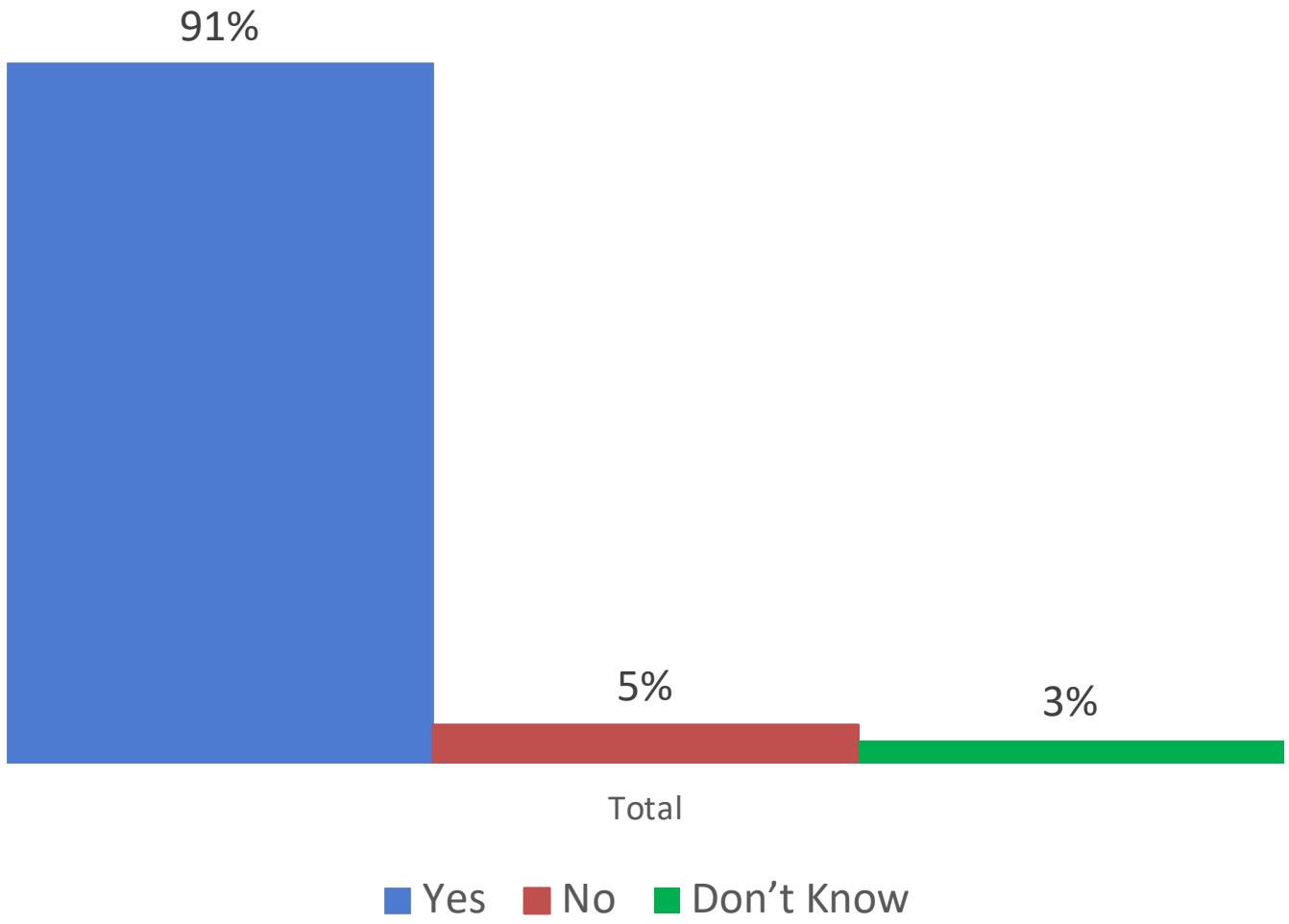
*Now, I'd like to read you some different statements that people make about improving the criminal justice system here in the U.S. After I read each one, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with that statement...*

# Almost every American believes that a criminal record makes it harder for a person to find a job.




*Do you think a criminal record makes it harder for a person to find a job?*

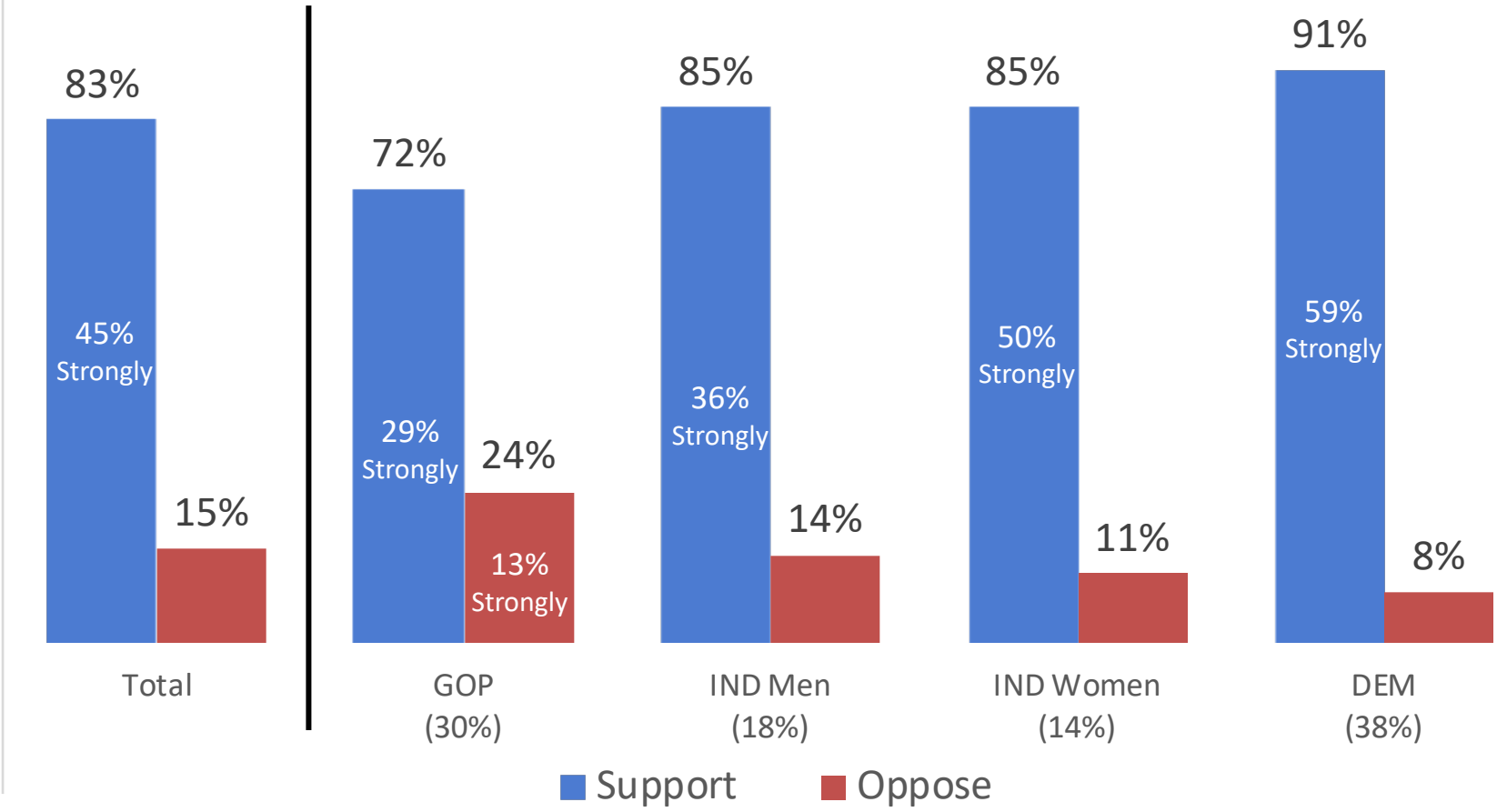
# And, Americans overwhelmingly believe those who cannot find a job are more likely to recommit a crime.






*And, if those who have been arrested or have served time cannot find a job once they get out, do you think they are more likely to recommit a crime?*

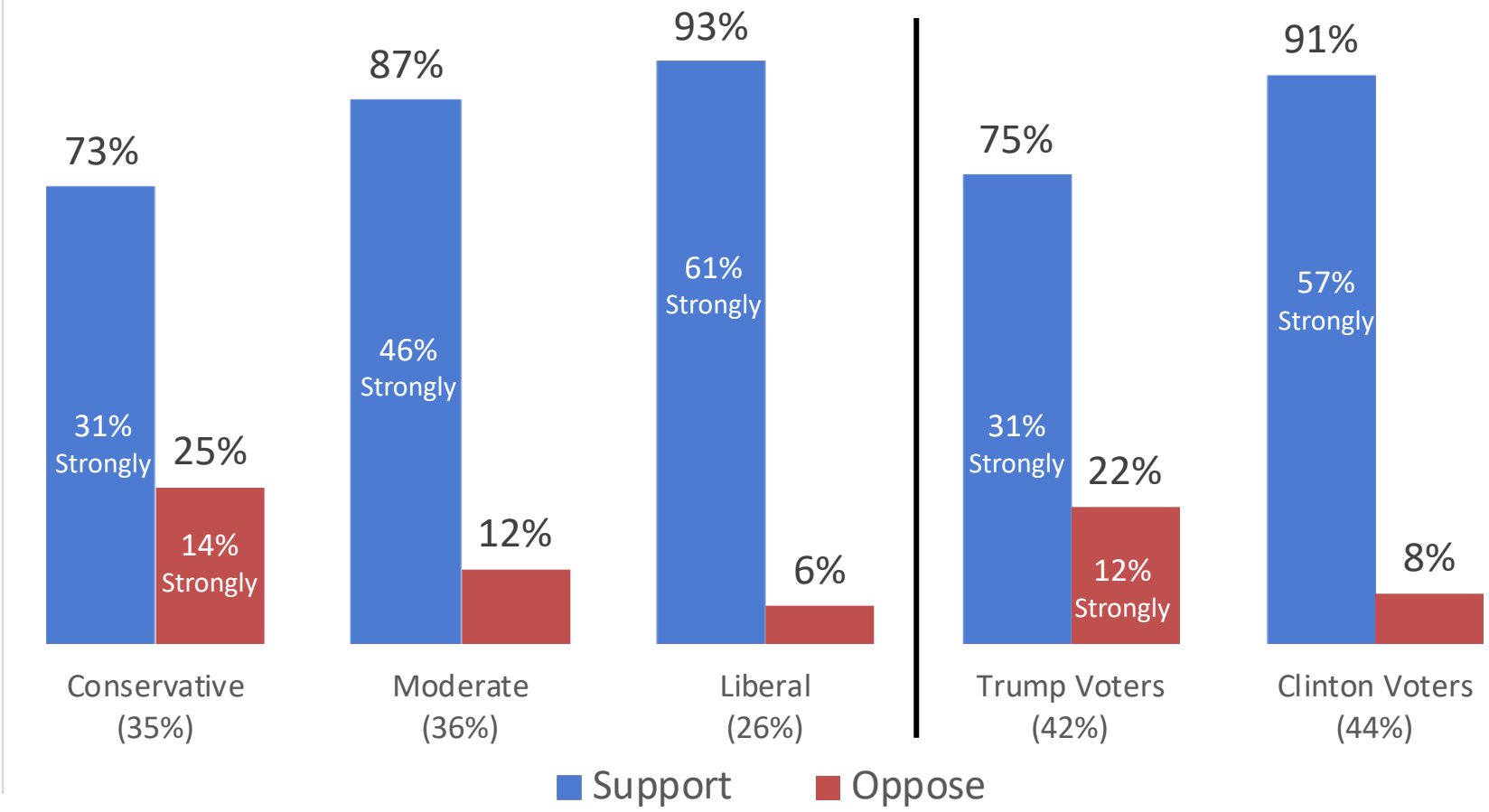
# More than 80% of American voters support the Fair Chance proposal.






*Now, there's a proposal in Congress which would ensure the federal government and federal contractors give all applicants a fair chance at employment. Under this proposal, conducting background checks is still permitted, but not until after applicants have had a chance to share their skills and qualifications. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this proposal?*

# Support for Fair Chance is high across the ideological spectrum.

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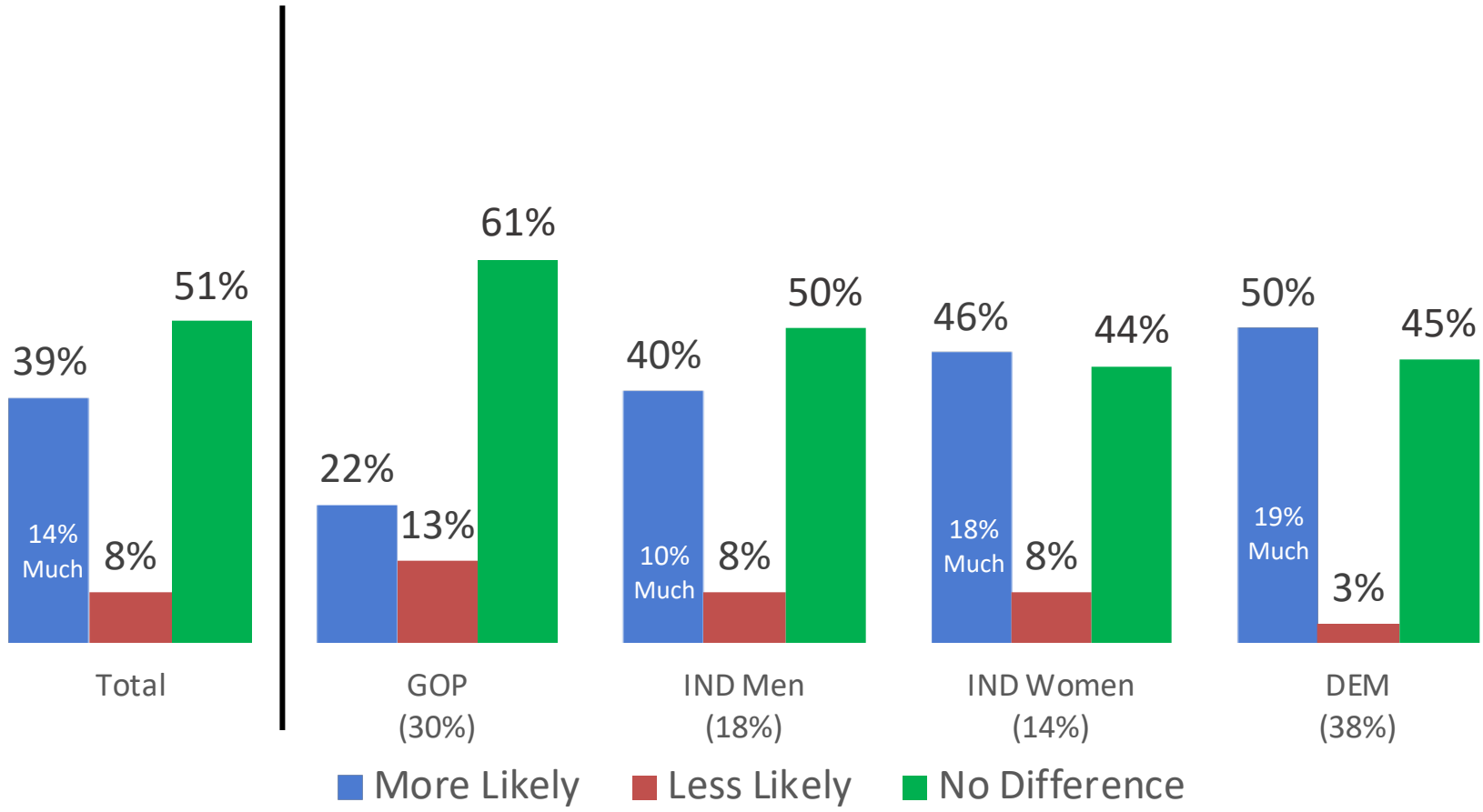
# By nearly four-to-one, Americans would be more likely to re-elect their Member of Congress of they voted for this proposal.




*And, if you knew your Member of Congress supported this proposal, would you be more likely or less likely to vote to re-elect them, or would it make no difference in your vote?*

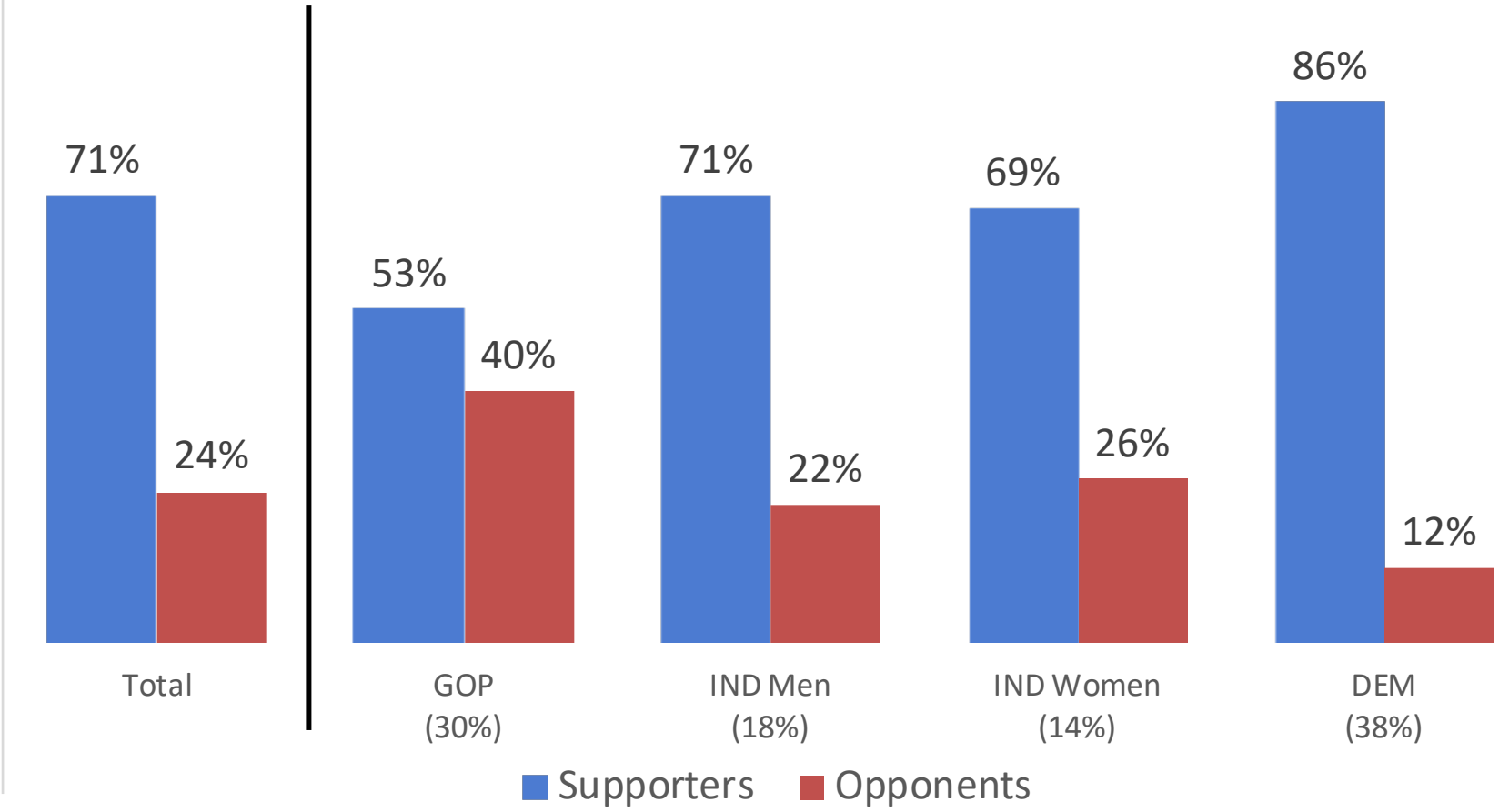
# After voters hear from both sides…

*Supporters of this proposal say that nearly one-in-three American adults has a criminal record and it is wrong that almost 70 million Americans don't have a fair chance at employment, especially in public service. They say that although the job market has improved and more employers are actively searching for qualified workers, a criminal record still puts many jobs out of reach for far too many workers, and we need to improve job prospects for them to improve public safety.*

*...while...*

*Opponents of this proposal say that some studies have shown that this type of legislation has actually encouraged discrimination and won't actually increase rates of employment for those with a criminal record. They say that employers should always be allowed to ask about a criminal record on the initial job application, and be allowed to dismiss applicants before they can even share their skills and qualifications.*

# Voters overwhelmingly side with those who support Fair Chance.




*Now, let me read you two points of view about this proposal and please tell me which one comes closest to your opinion...*

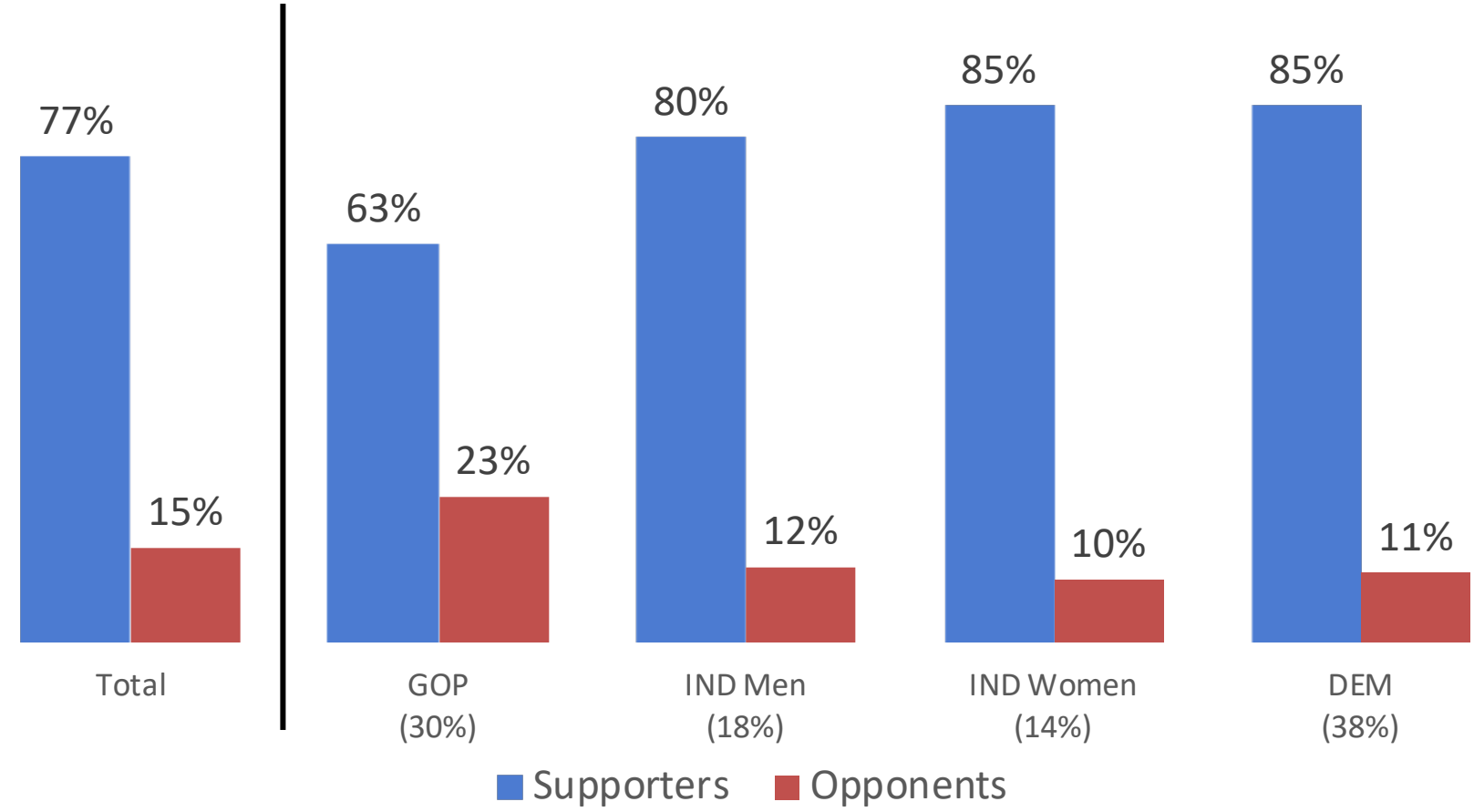
# And, after voters hear more arguments from both sides…

*Supporters of this proposal say this bi-partisan legislation doesn't force government employers to interview or hire anyone. It simply ensures that people with records applying for federal government work are not dismissed before they have a chance to share their skills and qualifications. They also say that once hiring managers have met job applicants in person, they can better determine whether the person's record is even relevant to the job, rather than categorically dismissing applicants with records.*

*...while...*

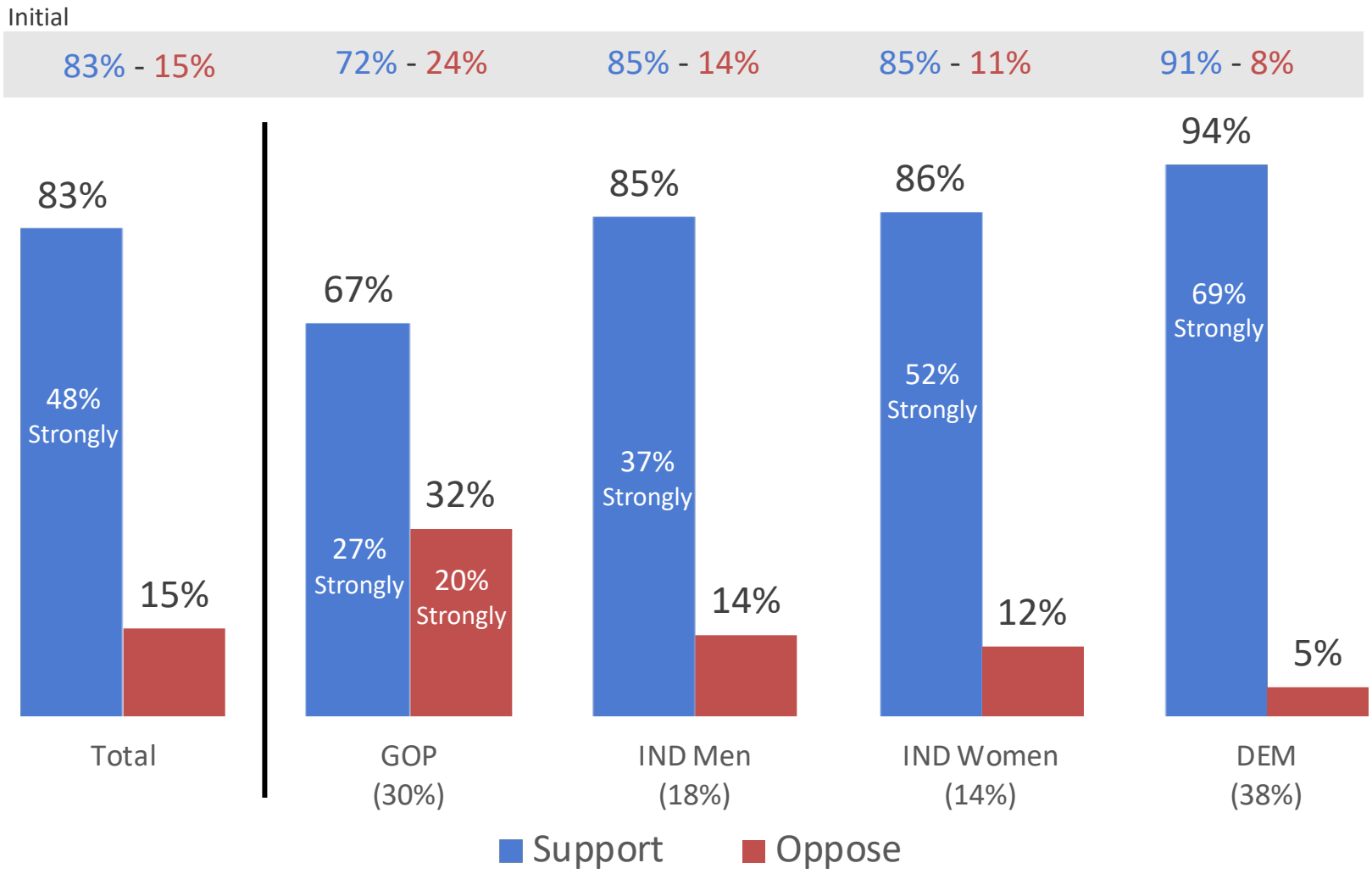
*Opponents of this proposal say that hiring people with criminal records would make for less quality employees and therefore would lower the quality of services provided by the organization, so government employers should just be able to screen them whenever they want. They also say employers might just use the race of the applicant to guess at the likelihood the applicant has a criminal record.*

# Voters still overwhelmingly side with those who support Fair Chance.



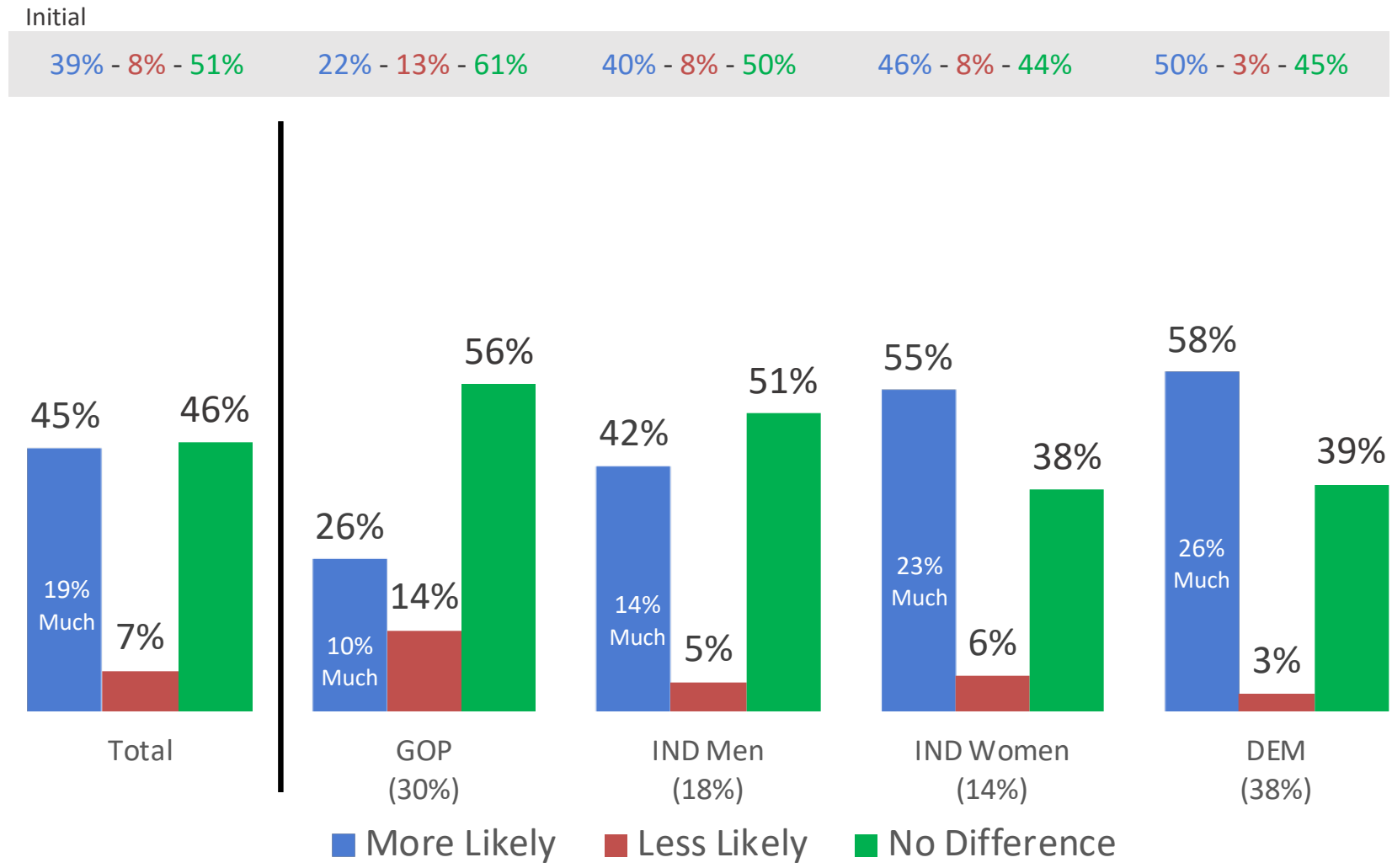

*Now, let me read you two (more) points of view about this proposal and please tell me which one comes closest to your opinion...*

# After voters hear messaging from both sides, support for Fair Chance legislation holds strong in the 80's (!).




*And, now that you've heard some more information, do you support or oppose giving applicants for federal government jobs a fair chance to share their skills and qualifications before they are asked about their records?*

# And, Americans would still be more likely to re-elect their Member of Congress if they voted for this proposal.

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