

## Research Brief

# Priorities and expectations for public safety, education, and immigration among Chicago residents.

*A new ChicagoSpeaks survey from NORC at the University of Chicago reveals key insights about policy priorities of Chicagoans and their shift in attitudes since last summer.*

More than half of Chicagoans believe addressing crime and violence should be a government priority in the next year, making it the top concern for the city. Chicago residents report several other policy priorities, spanning economic concerns like jobs, cost of living, and housing affordability, education, and public services and infrastructure concerns like construction, road conditions, and public transportation.

Consistent with priorities to address crime and violence, the survey finds two-thirds of Chicagoans report an area around their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night and 17% report owning a gun in their household. These statistics have remained largely unchanged among Chicago residents since last summer.

However, feelings of job security among Chicagoans have shifted since last summer—specifically, fewer working residents believe it is not at all likely they will lose their job compared to last summer and fall, demonstrating greater insecurity in the current economic climate. Similarly, attitudes toward immigration policy have changed since last summer, with fewer believing immigration numbers should be reduced and slightly more favoring a path to citizenship for immigrants living in the country illegally.

With education as a top priority among Chicagoans, the survey also finds few view Chicago Public Schools (CPS) favorably, with 4 in 10 rating CPS a C grade and a third giving D or F grades. However, parents of children attending Chicago Public Schools are more likely to give favorable grades to CPS as a whole. Three-quarters of parents give A or B grades to their children's schools.

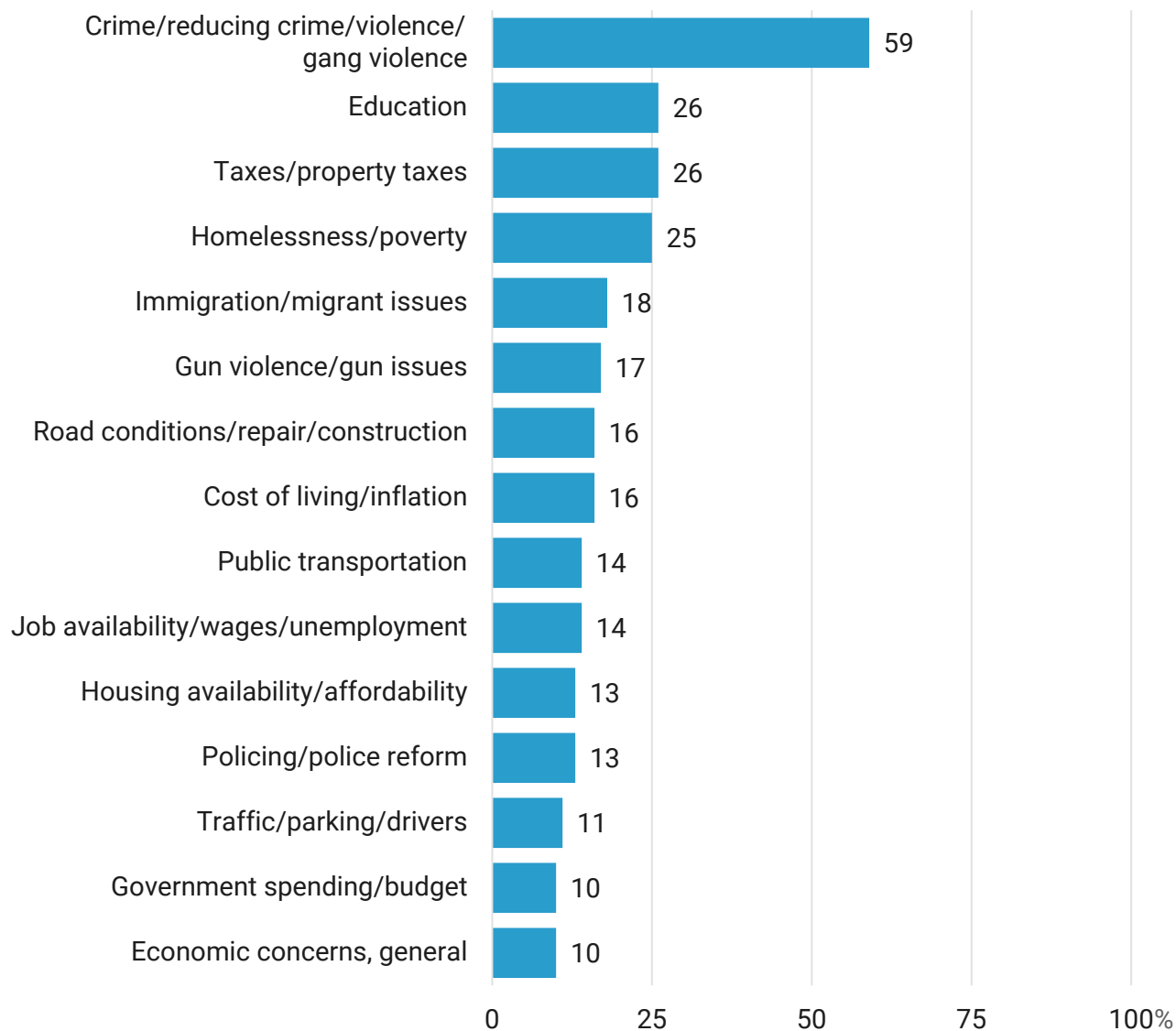
## Public safety, education, taxes, and homelessness and poverty are the top issues Chicagoans want the government to work on this year.

To assess Chicago residents' agenda for the upcoming year, the spring 2025 ChicagoSpeaks poll allowed respondents to provide up to five volunteered issues that they believe should be priorities for the government to address. Among the top issues cited, only crime and violence are cited by more than half of Chicagoans. Moreover, Chicago residents cite crime and violence more than twice as often as the next problems for the government to address.

Along with crime, taxes, education, and homelessness and poverty round out Chicagoans' top issues overall. In addition to mentions of generalized crime and violence, many Chicagoans offer concerns about gun violence and policing. Other economic issues—cost of living, inflation, affordable housing, and jobs—are also top priorities. Additionally, several concerns regarding infrastructure and public services are top issues, like road conditions, construction, public transportation, traffic, and parking.

## Public safety, education, taxes, and homelessness and poverty are the top issues cited by Chicagoans.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Thinking about the problems facing the city of Chicago, which problems would you like the government to work on in the year 2025? (Percentages above among those who provided at least one problem. Problems named by at least 10% of Chicagoans are shown above).

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.

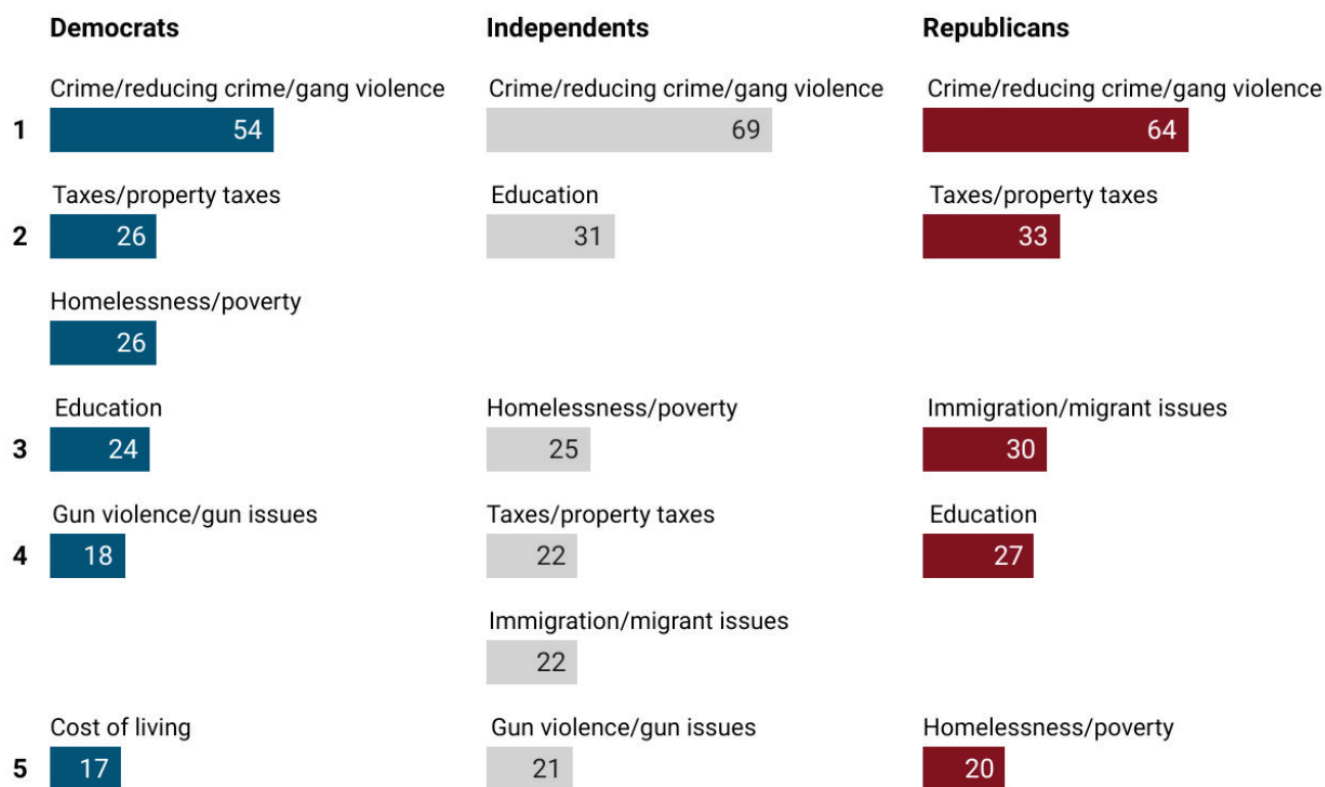


Though political parties often disagree about government priorities at the federal level, Chicago residents have similar top issues across the political spectrum. Crime and violence, taxes, homelessness and poverty, and education all make the top five issues among each party.

Though the top issues are largely similar across parties, differences do emerge when examining the frequency with which certain issues are offered. For instance, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to raise immigration and migrant issues as a top concern (30% vs. 14%) and independents are more likely than Democrats to cite crime and violence as a top issue.

## Top five issues among political parties

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Thinking about the problems facing the city of Chicago, which problems would you like the government to be working on in the year 2025? Percentages above among those who provided at least one problem.

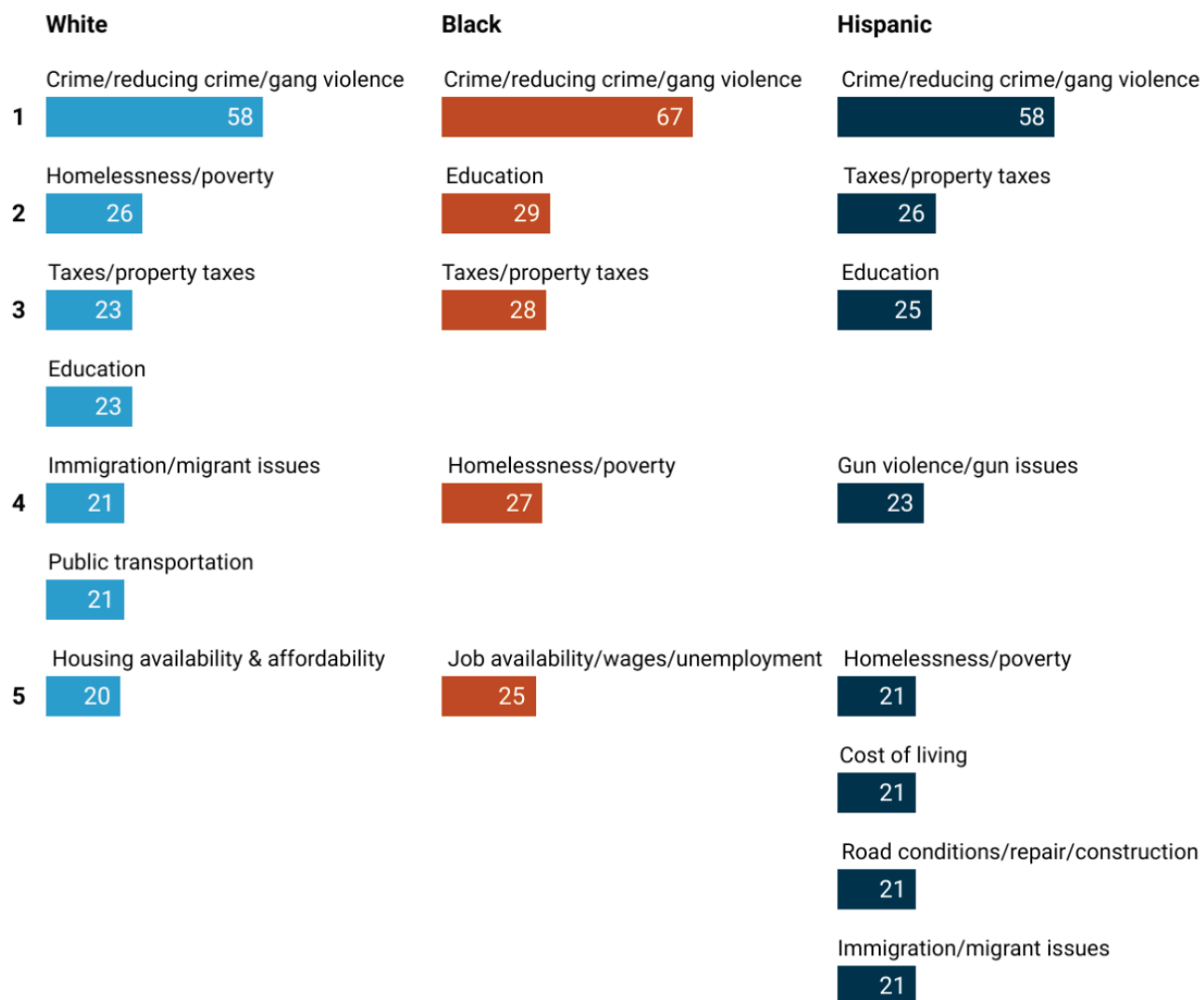
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



Crime and violence is the primary concern for white, Black, and Hispanic residents. Homelessness and poverty, taxes, and education are also top issues among each group. However, white and Hispanic residents are more likely than Black Chicagoans to raise immigration and migrant issues (21% and 21% vs. 11%). Black residents are more likely to cite jobs, wages, and unemployment compared to white and Hispanic Chicagoans (25% vs. 8% and 12%), while Hispanic and Black residents are more likely than white residents to cite inflation or cost of living as an issue (21% and 19% vs. 7%).

## Top five issues among racial and ethnic groups

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Thinking about the problems facing the city of Chicago, which problems would you like the government to be working on in the year 2025? Percentages above among those who provided at least one problem.

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



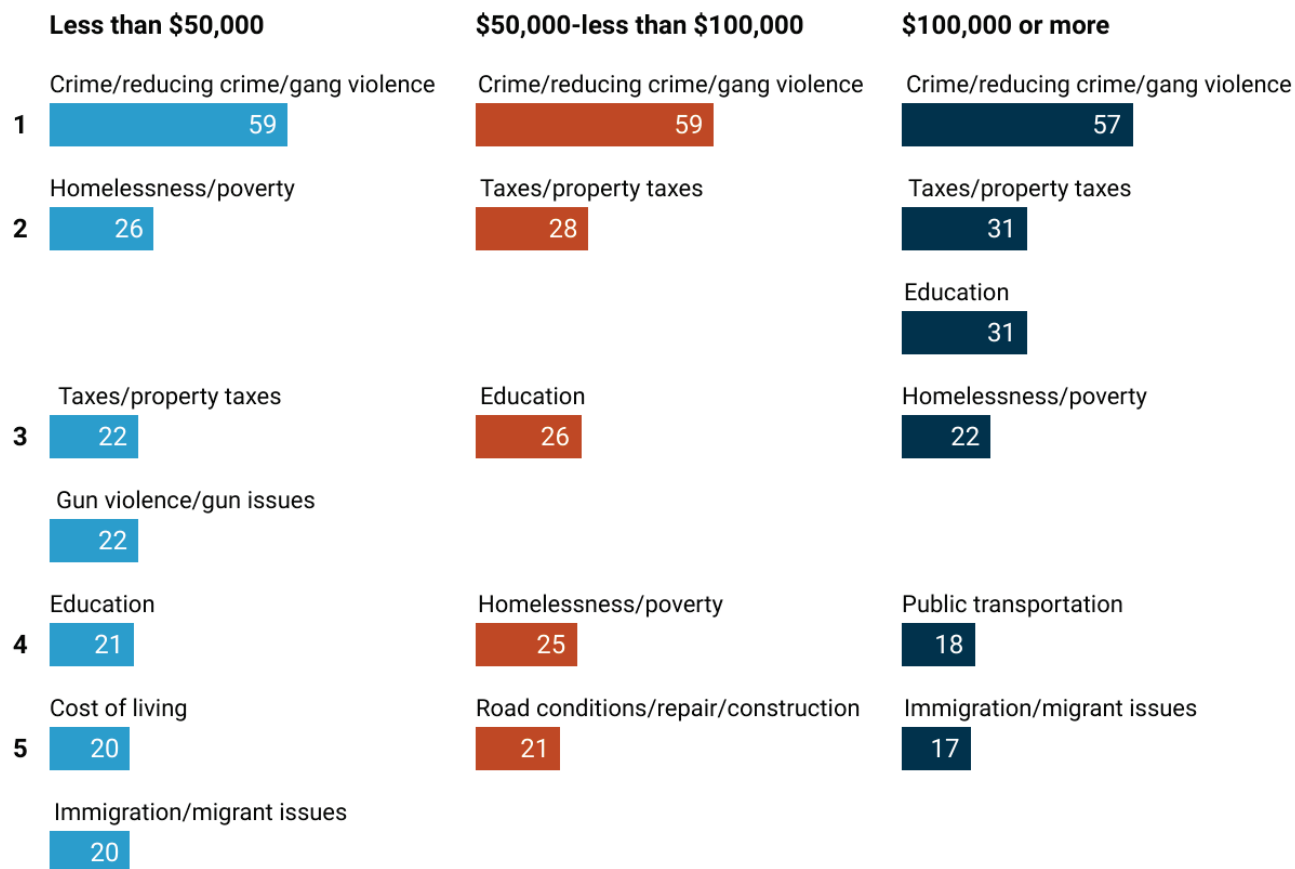
Crime and violence, homelessness and poverty, taxes, and education make the top five issues among each income level. However, cost of living is a top issue for those making less than \$50,000 a year, road conditions for those making between \$50,000 and \$100,000, and public transportation for those making more than \$100,000.

Again, differences emerge when examining the frequency at which the different income groups cite issues as top concerns. Those making less than \$50,000 are more likely than those making \$100,000

or more to cite concerns about guns or gun violence (22% vs. 10%), while those making more than \$100,000 are more likely than those making less than \$50,000 to report education as a top concern (31% vs. 21%).

## Top five issues among income groups

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Thinking about the problems facing the city of Chicago, which problems would you like the government to be working on in the year 2025? Percentages above among those who provided at least one problem.

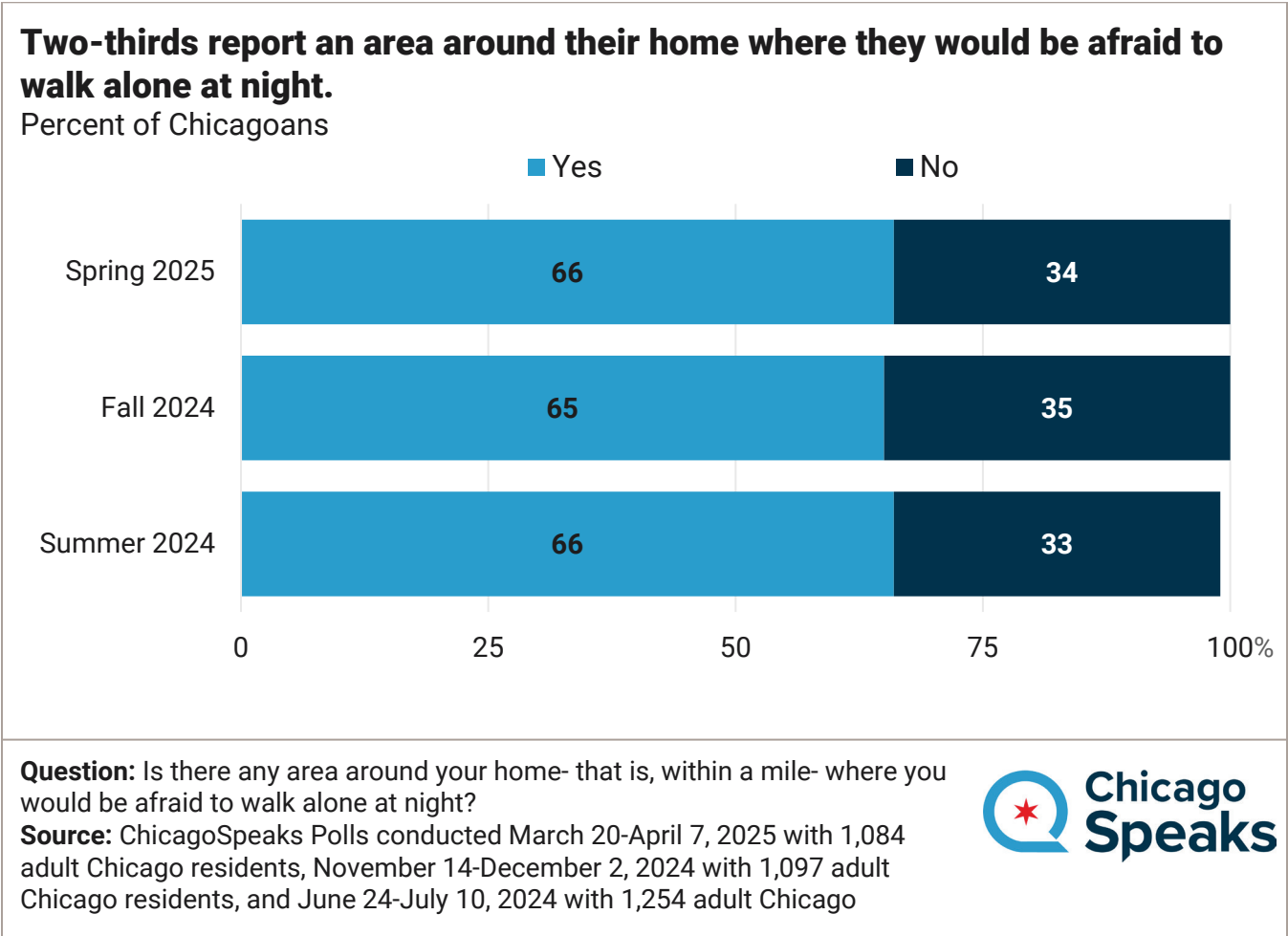
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



# Two-thirds of Chicago residents report an area around their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night.

Consistent with residents’ priorities to address crime and violence, 66% of Chicago residents have an area within one mile of their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night. This has remained unchanged since last summer and fall, despite the continuing decline in murders and non-fatal shootings in the city since 2021.

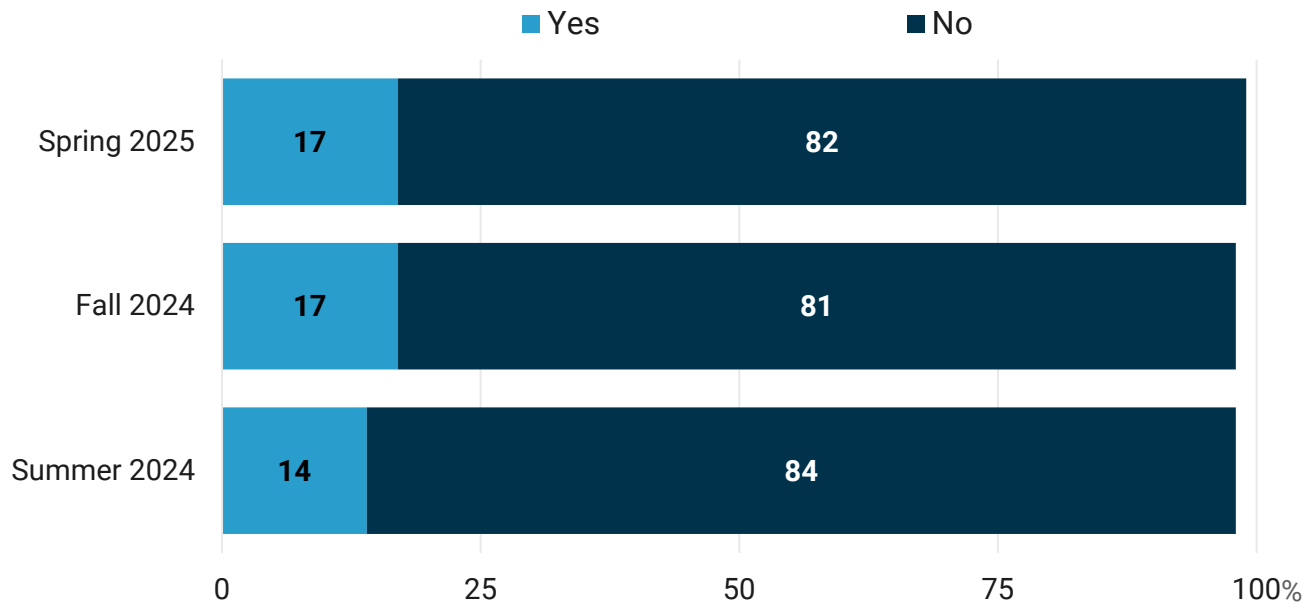
Women are more fearful than men of walking alone around their home at night (75% vs. 57%), as well as those living in the south side compared to residents of the north central neighborhoods (78% vs. 58%).



Since last summer, gun ownership among Chicagoans has also remained constant, with 17% reporting a gun in their home.

## Seventeen percent of Chicagoans have a gun in their household.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Do you have a gun in your home?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents, November 14-December 2, 2024 with 1,097 adult Chicago residents, and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents.

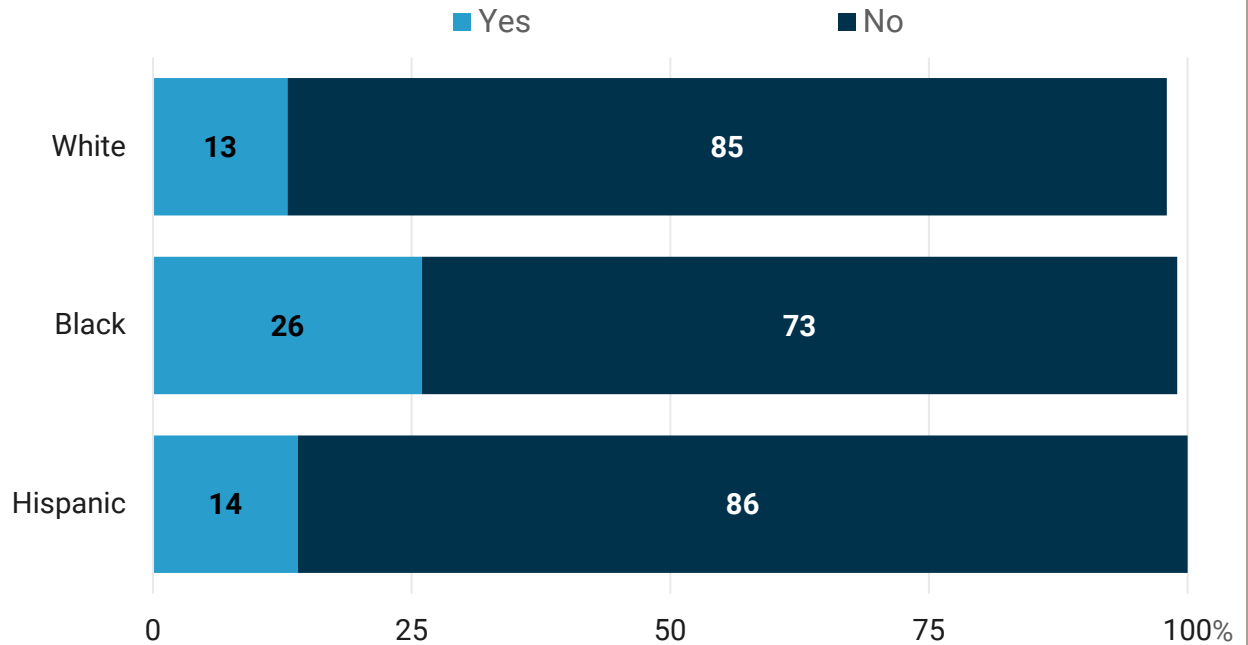


The survey also finds Black residents are more likely than white or Hispanic Chicagoans to report a gun in their home.



**Black Chicago residents are more likely to have a gun in their home.**

Percent of Chicagoans

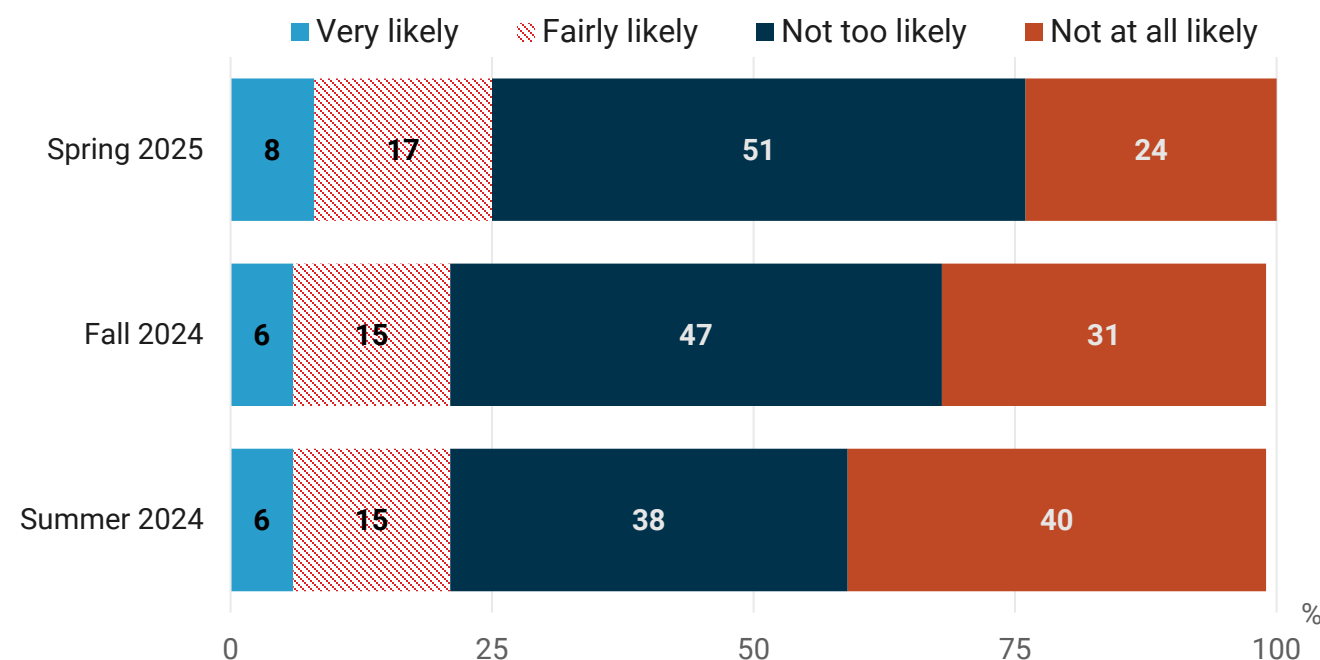
**Question:** Do you have a gun in your home?**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.

## 1 in 4 employed Chicagoans feel job insecurity.

Among employed Chicago residents, 25% believe it is very or fairly likely they will lose their job or be laid off within the next 12 months. This has not changed since 2024, although fewer have strong confidence in keeping their job compared to last summer. Today, only 24% believe they are not at all likely to lose their jobs or be laid off, compared to 40% who said the same last summer.

### Employed Chicagoans are less confident in their job security compared to 2024.

Percent of employed Chicagoans



**Question:** Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off?

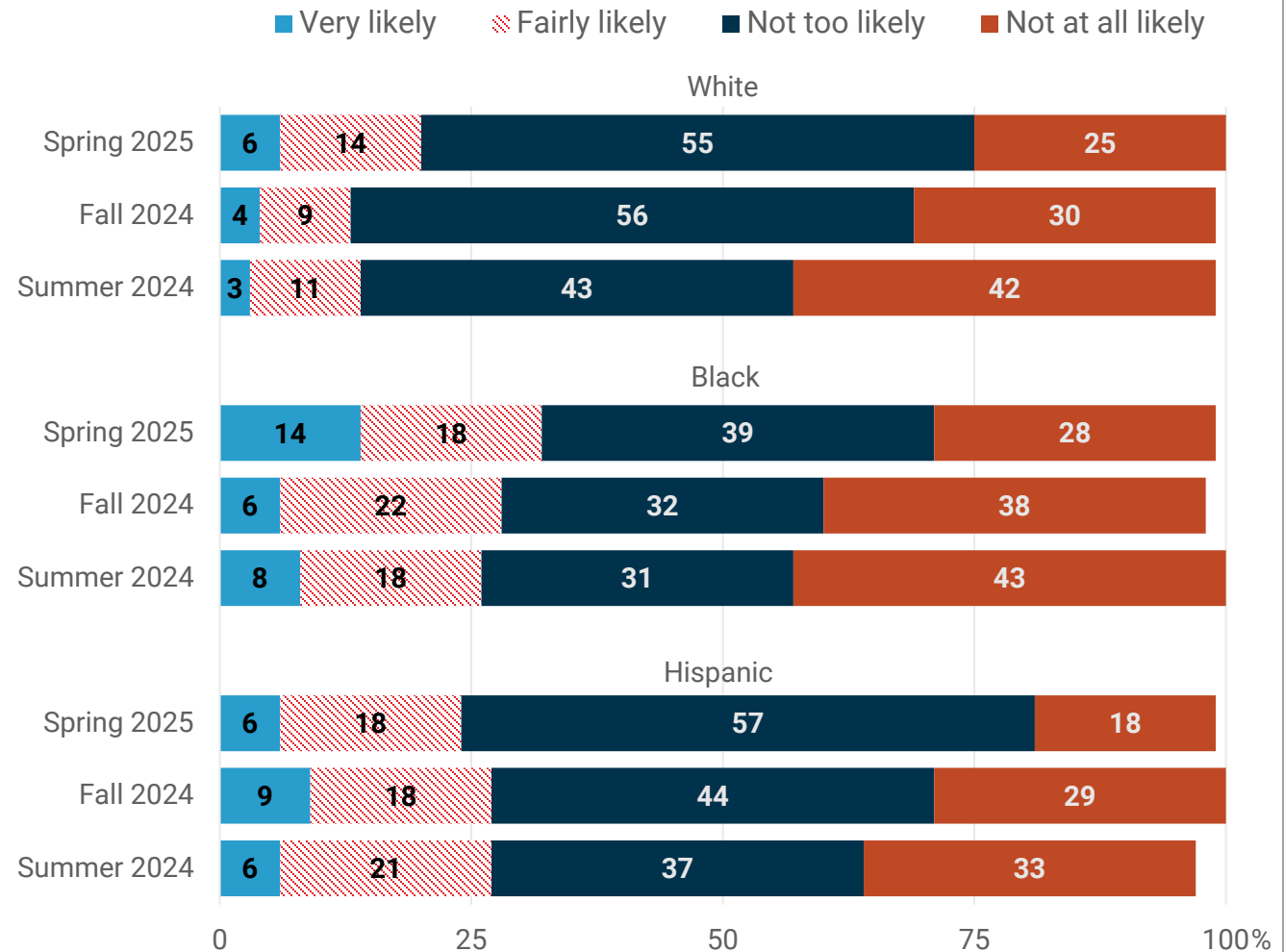
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 735 employed adult Chicago residents, November 14-December 2, 2024 with 784 employed adult Chicago residents, and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 880 employed adult Chicago residents.



Across racial and ethnic groups, there has been a similar decline in job security since last summer, with a roughly 15 to 18 percentage point decline in the share of white, Black, and Hispanic residents who are not at all concerned they could lose their jobs.

## White, Hispanic, and Black Chicagoans are less confident in their job security compared to 2024.

Percent of employed Chicagoans



**Question:** Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off?

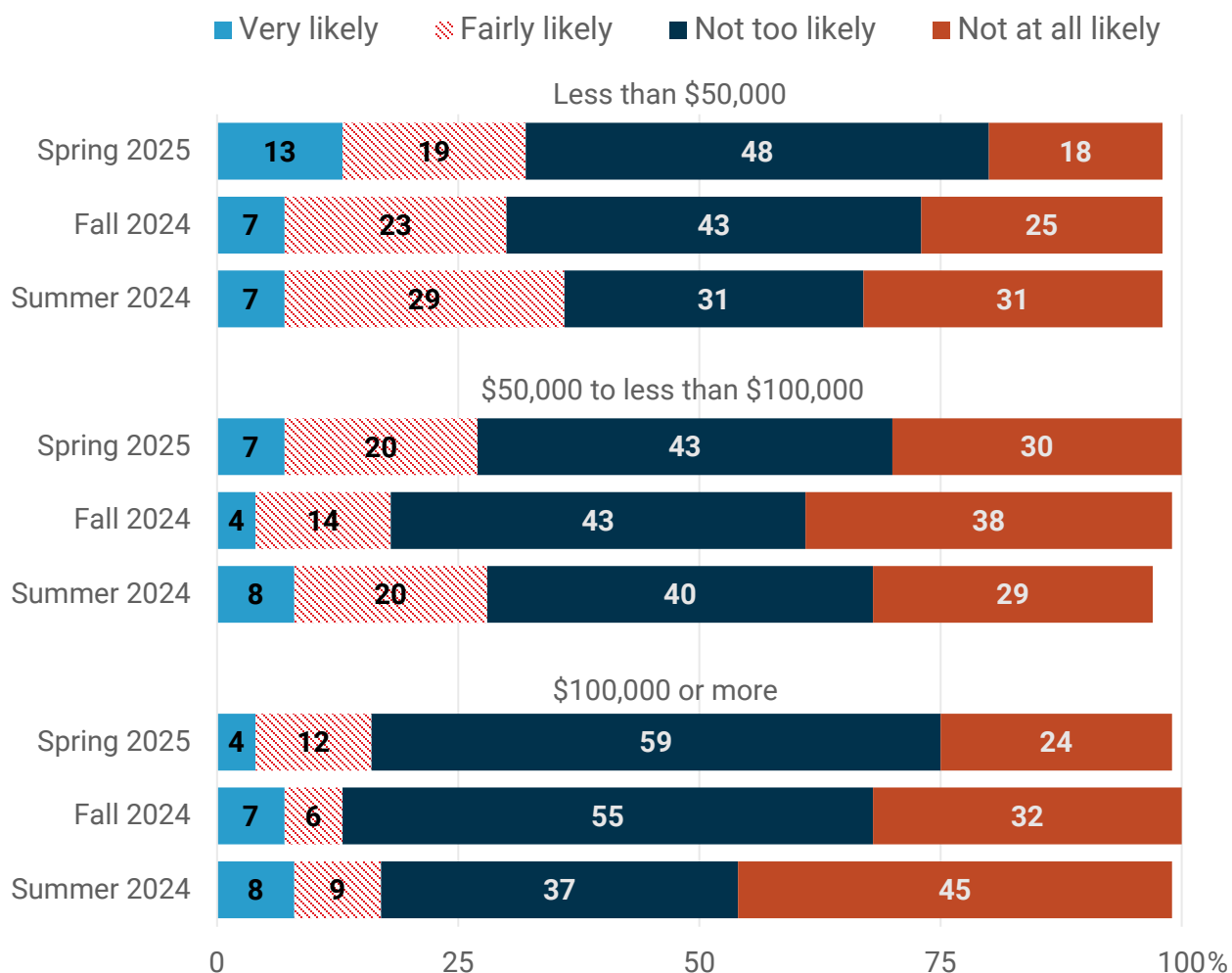
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 735 employed adult Chicago residents, November 14-December 2, 2024 with 784 employed adult Chicago residents, and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 880 employed adult Chicago residents.



Among income groups, both lower- and higher-income Chicagoans are exhibiting more job insecurity. Both those making less than \$50,000 and \$100,000 or more annually are less likely to believe the possibility of losing their job is not at all likely compared to last summer (13 and 21 percentage points difference, respectively). However, Chicagoans making \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year have been more stable in their job security.

## Both lower- and higher-income Chicagoans are less confident in their job security compared to 2024.

Percent of employed Chicagoans



**Question:** Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely do you think it is that you will lose your job or be laid off?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 735 employed adult Chicago residents, November 14-December 2, 2024 with 784 employed adult Chicago residents, and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 880 employed adult Chicago residents.



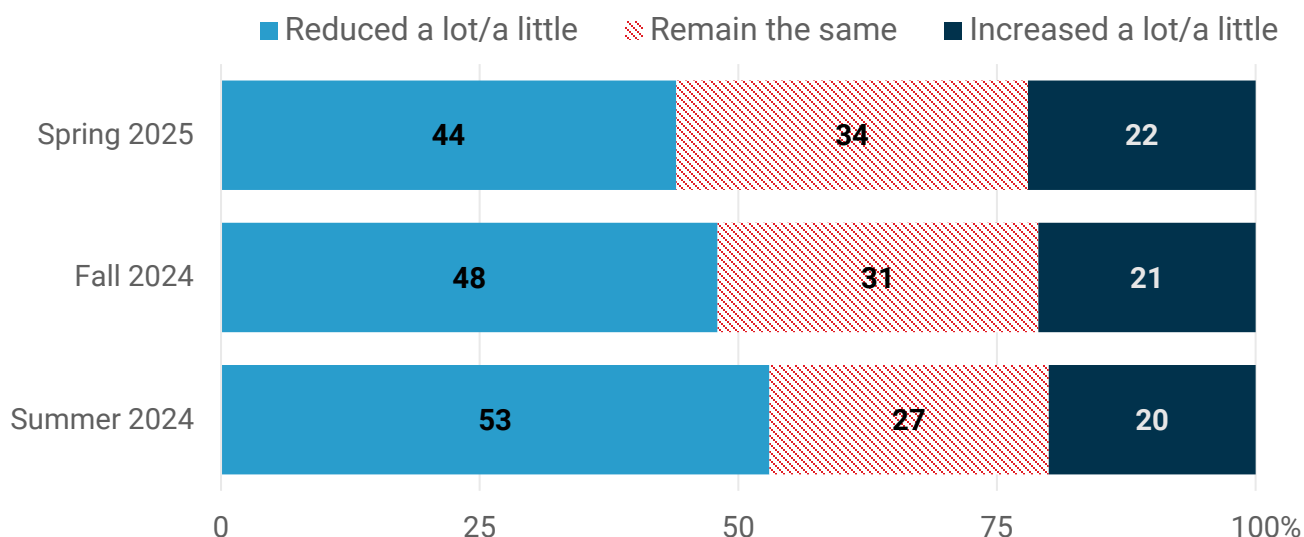
## About 4 in 10 Chicagoans want the number of immigrants in America to be reduced, though fewer believe this compared to last summer.

About 4 in 10 Chicago residents believe the number of immigrants to the U.S. should be reduced, compared to about 1 in 5 who believe immigration should increase. A third believe immigration numbers should remain the same.

While more Chicagoans believe the number of immigrants should be reduced than increased, fewer believe this compared to summer 2024.

### Fewer believe the number of immigrants should be reduced compared to last summer.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Do you think the number of immigrants to America nowadays should be...

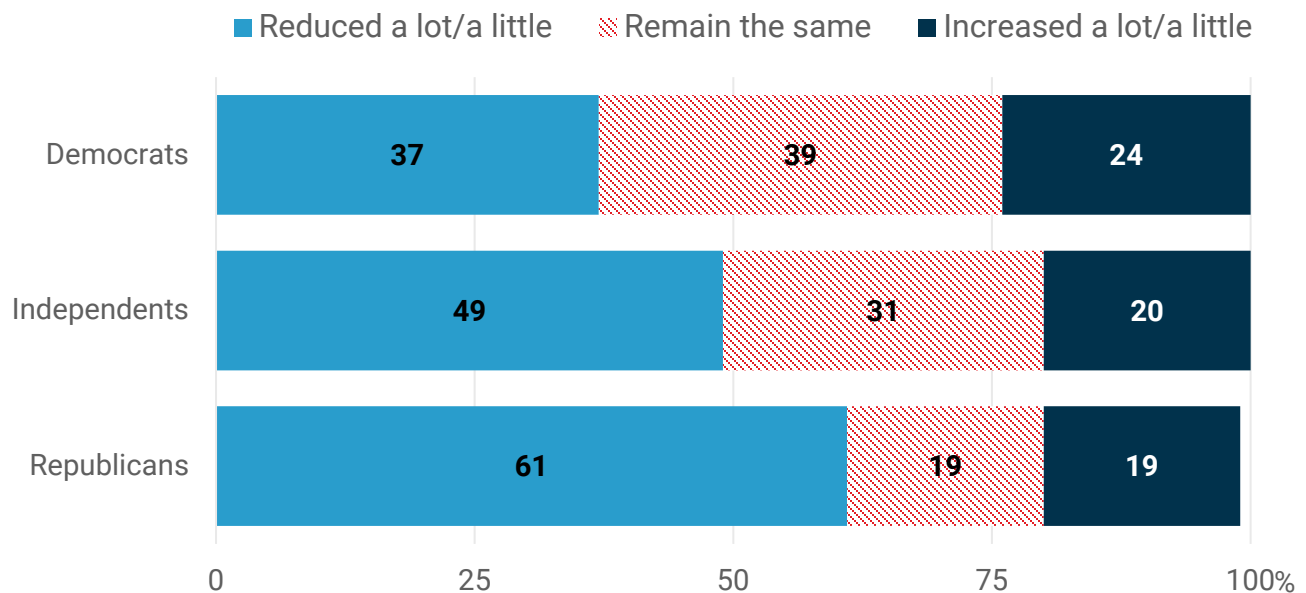
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents, November 14-December 2, 2024 with 1,097 adult Chicago residents, and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents.



Partisan differences emerge when examining Chicago residents' attitudes toward immigration. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe the number of immigrants to the U.S. should be reduced. Across parties, only about 2 in 10 want to see immigration increase.

## More Republicans want immigration numbers reduced, but few in any party want to see an increase.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Do you think the number of immigrants to America nowadays should be...

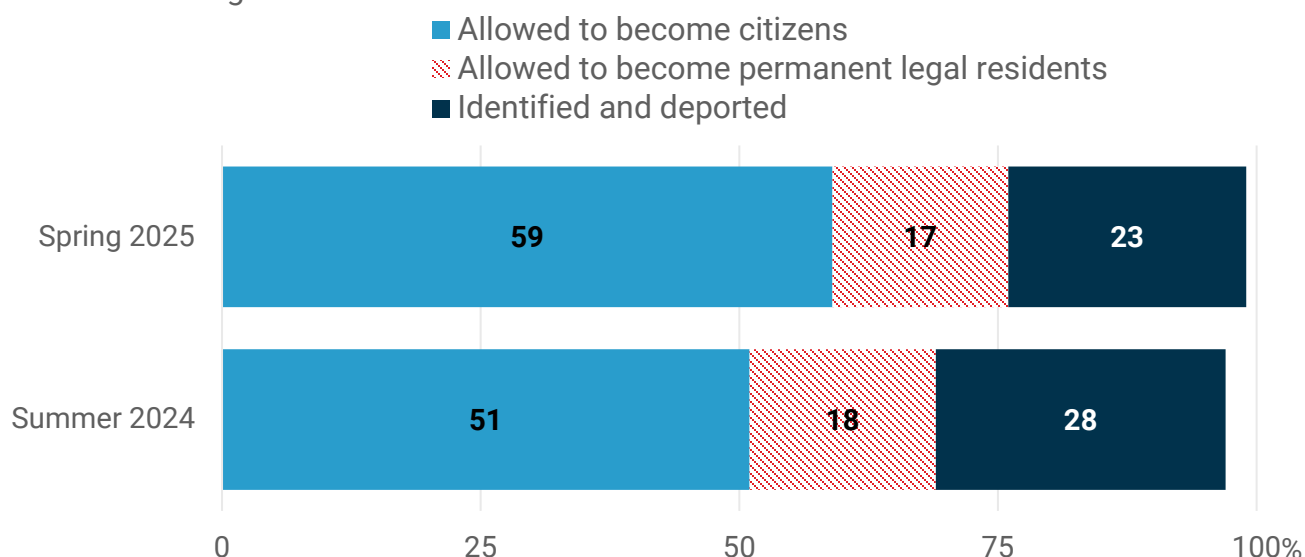
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



Since last summer, attitudes toward citizenship status have also slightly shifted among Chicago residents. More believe immigrants living in the U.S. illegally should be allowed to become citizens, provided they meet certain requirements, compared to last summer. And slightly fewer believe immigrants living in the country illegally should be identified and deported.

## More believe immigrants should be allowed to become citizens compared to 2024.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** What should be done about immigrants who are currently living in the U.S. illegally?

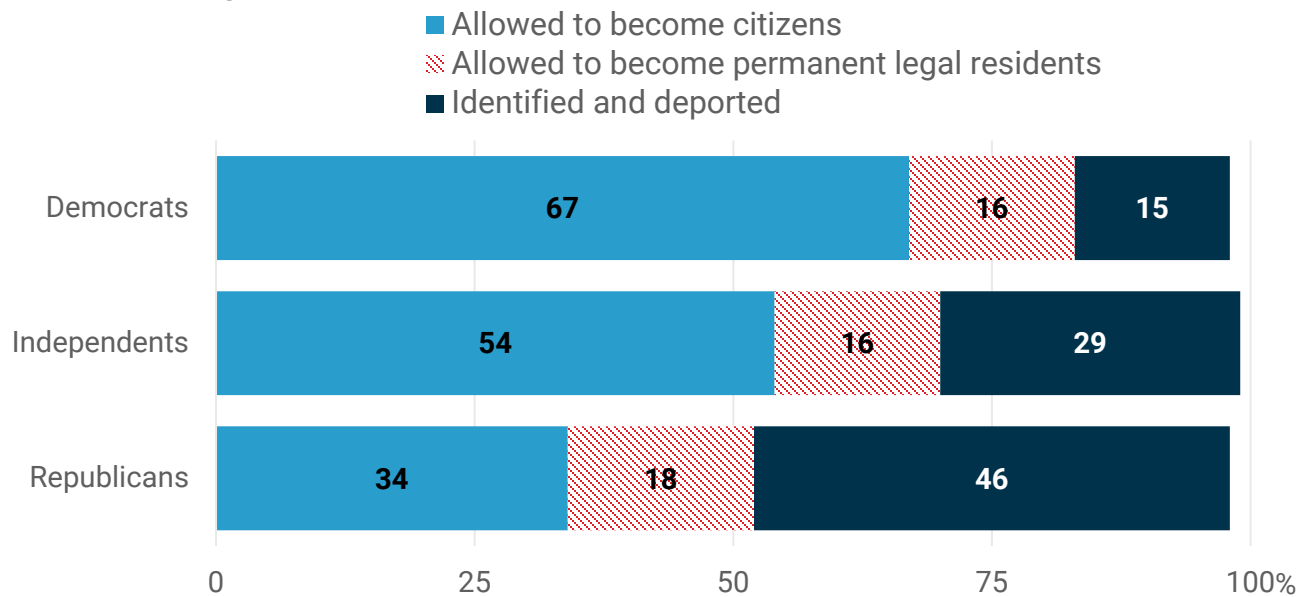
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents.



Similar partisan differences also emerge when examining attitudes toward citizenship status, with Republicans more likely to favor deportation and Democrats more likely to favor granting citizenship. Though independents are less likely than Democrats to favor a path to citizenship, they are more likely than Republicans to express support for this policy.

## Democrats are more likely to believe immigrants should be granted citizenship and Republicans are more likely to support deportation.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** What should be done about immigrants who are currently living in the U.S. illegally?

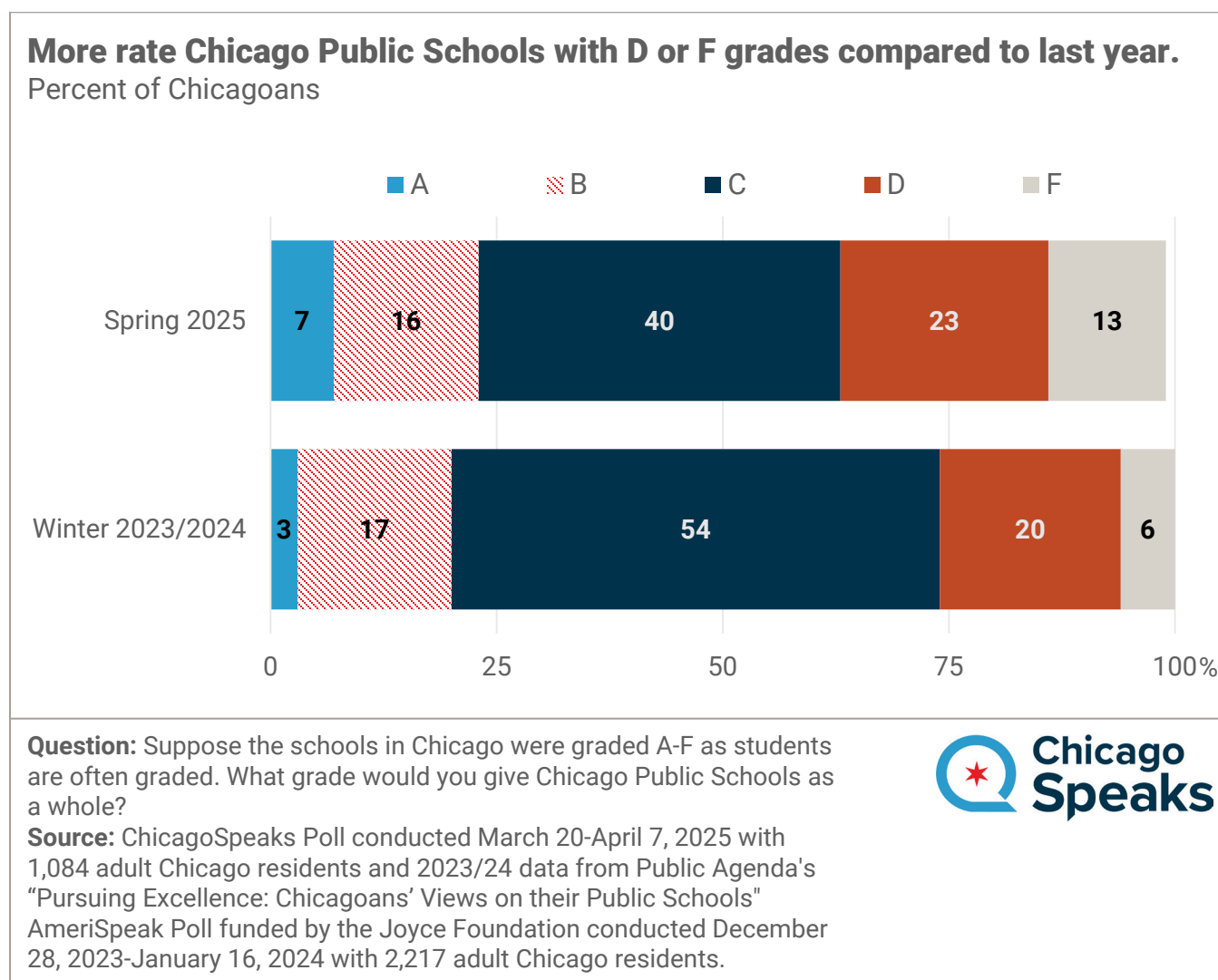
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.





## A third of Chicagoans rate Chicago schools with D or F grades overall, though parents grade their children's schools more favorably.

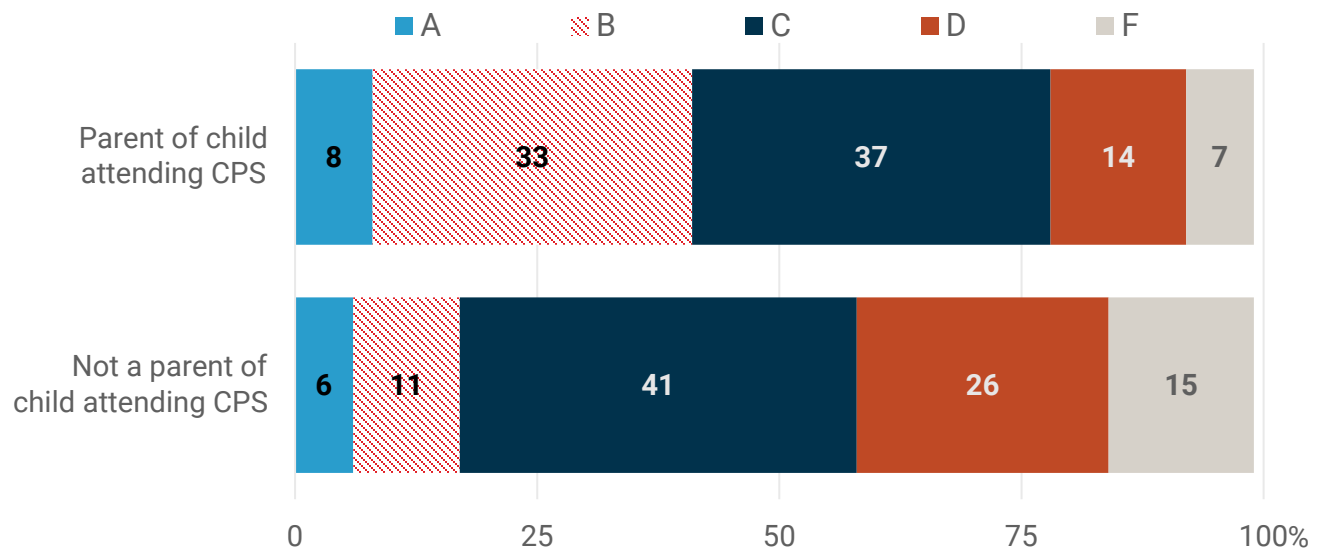
When assessing Chicago residents' views of Chicago Public Schools (CPS), more rate CPS with D or F grades than A or B grades. Still, 4 in 10 give CPS a C grade. This is down from a December 2023/January 2024 survey of Chicago residents, where about half gave CPS a C and fewer gave D or F grades.



Parents of children attending Chicago Public Schools rate the overall system more favorably than those without a child in CPS. Parents are more likely to grade CPS a B, whereas non-parents are more likely to give D or F grades.

## Parents of children attending CPS have a more positive view of the school system.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Suppose the schools in Chicago were graded A-F as students are often graded. What grade would you give Chicago Public Schools as a whole?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.

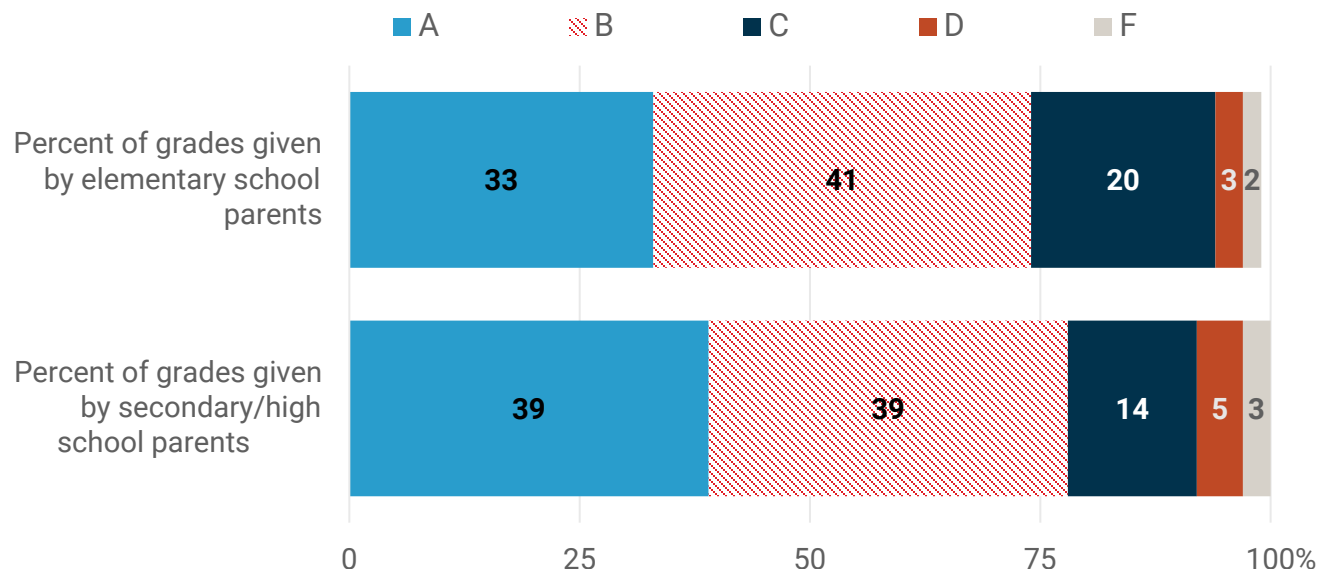


Parents are more favorable to their children's schools than to CPS overall. A majority of both elementary and secondary or high school parents grade their children's schools an A or B.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Respondents with more than one child attending CPS were asked to grade their youngest and oldest child's schools. Grade percentages are calculated as a proportion of all grades assigned by parents to elementary, secondary, or high schools.

## Three-quarters of parents grade their children's schools an A or B.

Percent of grades given by parents of children in CPS



**Questions:** Suppose the schools in Chicago were graded A-F as students are often graded. [What grade would you give your youngest child's school?/What grade would you give your oldest child's school?]

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



## Study Methodology

Funded and operated by NORC at the University of Chicago, ChicagoSpeaks® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the Chicago household population. NORC conducted the ChicagoSpeaks spring 2025 survey using three sample sources: (1) NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panelists who reside in Chicago, (2) NORC's ChicagoSpeaks Panelists, and (3) Chicago residents from Dynata's web panel.

AmeriSpeak and ChicagoSpeaks are probability-based panels and Dynata is a non-probability panel. The final survey estimates were calibrated to account for these different sample sources. This research was done to support a scientifically rigorous, community-driven research resource for informing policymakers and the public with accurate information about the experiences and opinions of all Chicago residents.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between March 20 and April 7, 2025 with Chicago residents aged 18 and older, the overall study target population. Overall, 1,084 Chicago residents completed the survey including 553 probability cases and 531 non-probability cases. AmeriSpeak panelists were invited through the password-protected AmeriSpeak Mobile App and received email reminders and SMS reminders. ChicagoSpeaks panelists received a combination of email and SMS communications

while Dynata used their typical panel recruitment methods. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference, using an on-line survey. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 18 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them or for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

The final TrueNorth weights for the combined sample are developed in three major steps. First, a weighted tree model is fit to the combined probability and nonprobability sample. Second, based on the fitted tree model, NORC estimates the probabilities of inclusion in the combined probability and nonprobability sample and computes the initial weights as the inverse of the estimated probabilities. Third, poststratification adjustments, including calibration to benchmarks and weight trimming, are made to the initial weights to create the final weights.

Poststratification variables included Chicago region, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment. The sociodemographic characteristics are weighted to benchmarks from the American Community Survey 2023 1-year estimates.

For more information, email [AmeriSpeak-BD@norc.org](mailto:AmeriSpeak-BD@norc.org) or visit [AmeriSpeak.norc.org](https://www.norc.org/research/projects/chicagospeaks.html).

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