

## Research Brief

# Chicago residents' views on immigration, the economy, public safety, and Pope Leo XIV

*The latest ChicagoSpeaks survey from NORC at the University of Chicago finds that Chicagoans' opinions on immigration have shifted since last year and many have positive views of Pope Leo XIV.*

Chicagoans remain more likely to say the United States should reduce rather than increase the number of immigrants. However, public opinion has shifted since last year. About one-third now support reducing immigration, down from half a year ago. Similarly, support increased for a pathway to citizenship for immigrants living in the country illegally, with nearly two-thirds of residents now in favor—up from half last year.

Immigration is low on the list of issues Chicagoans care about. While about half of Chicagoans express concern about illegal immigration, even larger majorities are worried about race relations, Social Security, environmental quality, the size and spending of the federal government and inflation, with nearly all concerned about the economy. A majority of Chicagoans lack confidence in a wide variety of public institutions.

Pessimism about the job market is growing. In 2024, 40% of employed Chicagoans thought it was highly unlikely they would lose their job. Now, just 29% are that confident. Roughly a quarter of employed adults in Chicago think there is a possibility of being laid off or losing their job within the next year.

Two-thirds of Chicagoans feel unsafe walking alone in their neighborhood at night, a share that has remained consistent in ChicagoSpeaks polls conducted since Summer 2024. Most women report feeling unsafe compared with half of men.

Most Chicagoans have heard at least something about Pope Leo XIV, and many express positive feelings about his historic role as the first pope from the United States. More residents believe it is important for him to focus on addressing the needs of the poor and global conflicts than on modernizing the Catholic Church, promoting unity within the Church, or expanding its membership. Chicago baseball fans – whether supporters of the White Sox, the Cubs, or both – are among his most ardent supporters.

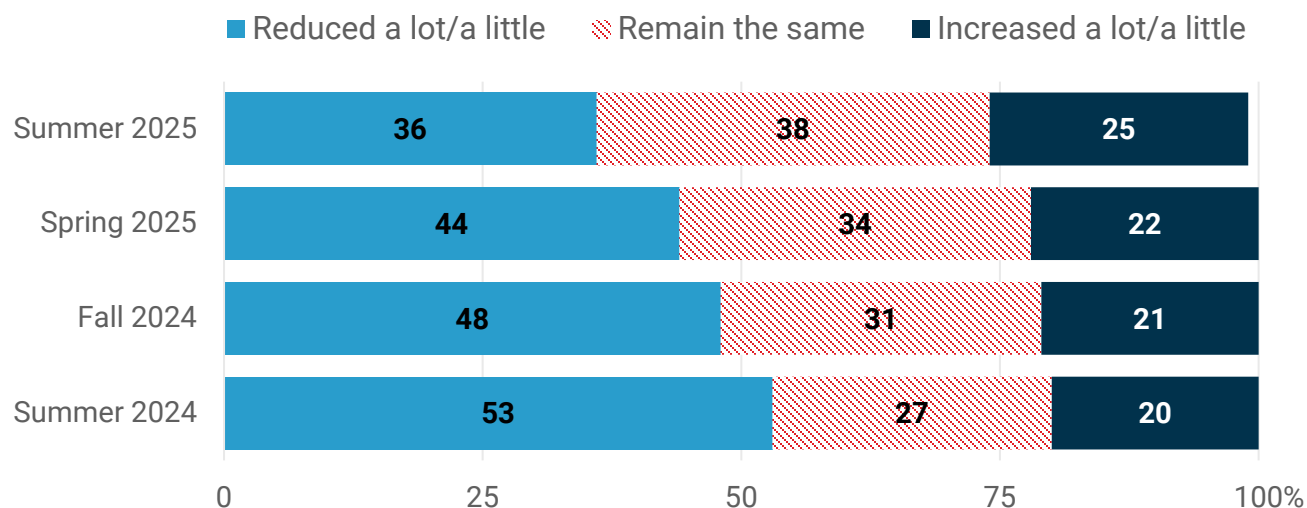
***Special thanks to the Chicago Community Trust, the Field Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation for their support of ChicagoSpeaks.***

## Fewer Chicagoans want to see immigration reduced nationally.

About a third of Chicagoans believe the number of immigrants to the U.S. should be reduced, while 4 in 10 believe it should stay the same and a quarter think it should increase. The share of Chicagoans who feel immigration should be reduced is on the decline. About half of Chicagoans believed the number of immigrants should be reduced in Summer and Fall of 2024, while 4 in 10 felt the same in Spring 2025 and Summer 2025.

### Fewer believe the number of immigrants should be reduced compared with a year ago.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

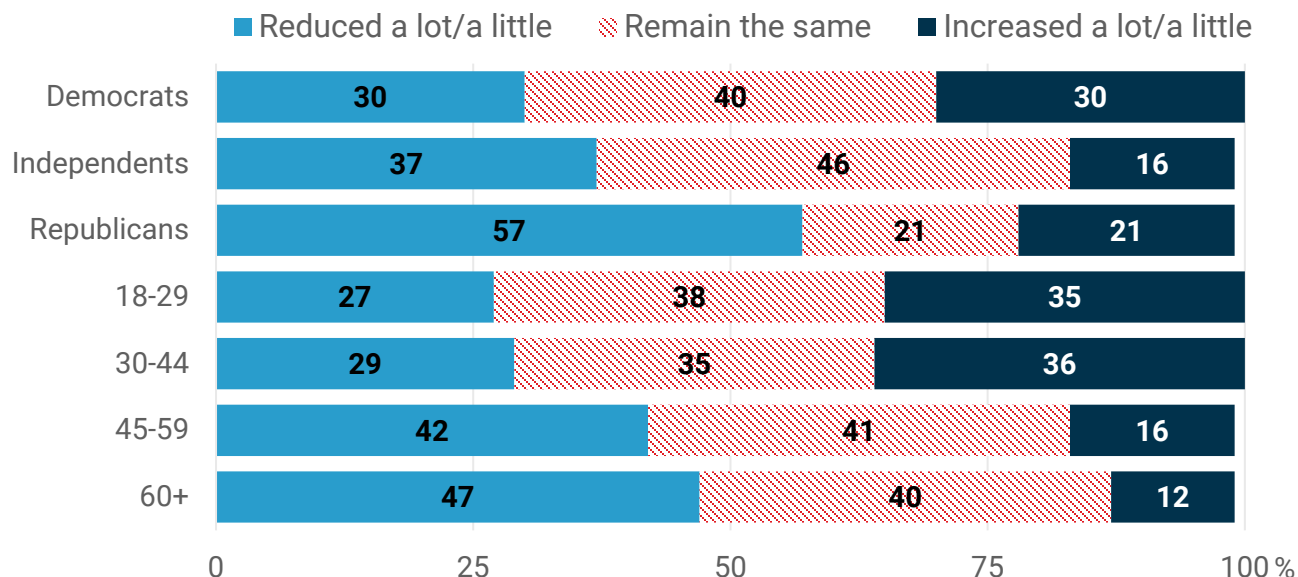
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents, March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents, November 14-December 2, 2024 with 1,097 adult Chicago residents, and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents.



Among Chicagoans, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to think immigration should be reduced, as are older residents.

## Republicans and older adults are more likely to think the number of immigrants should be reduced.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents.

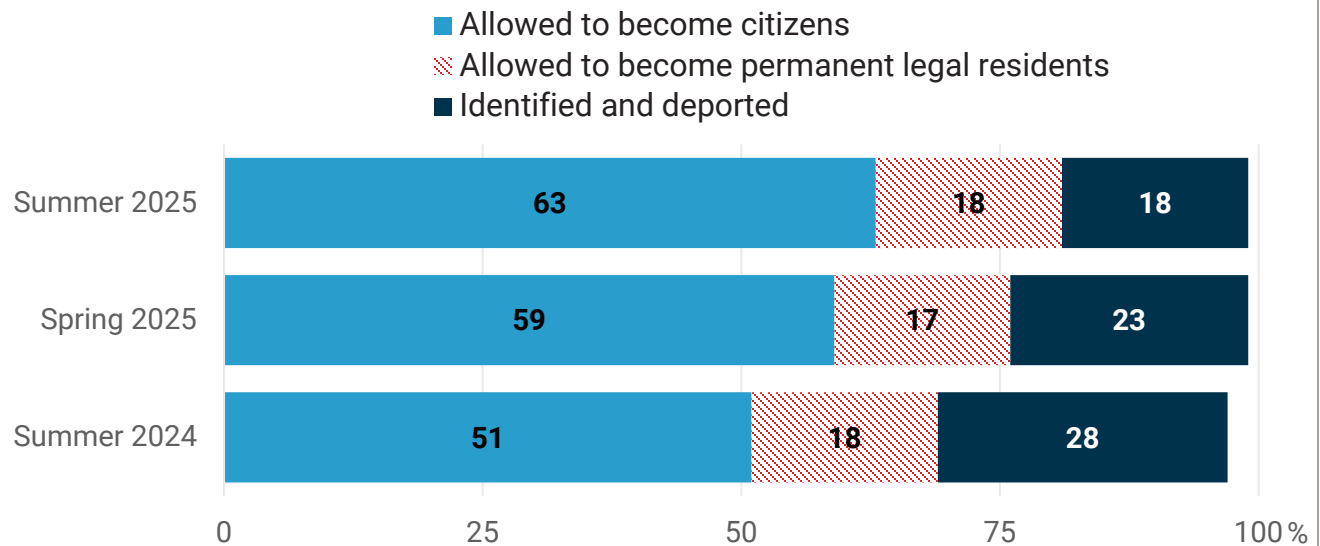


## Most Chicagoans want a pathway to citizenship for immigrants living in the country illegally.

Compared with a year ago, more Chicagoans think that immigrants living in the country illegally should be able to become citizens under certain conditions. In Summer 2024, about half of Chicagoans believed immigrants residing in the country illegally should be allowed to become citizens, and this share increased to 6 in 10 in Spring 2025 and has since remained the same.

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

Percent of Chicagoans



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

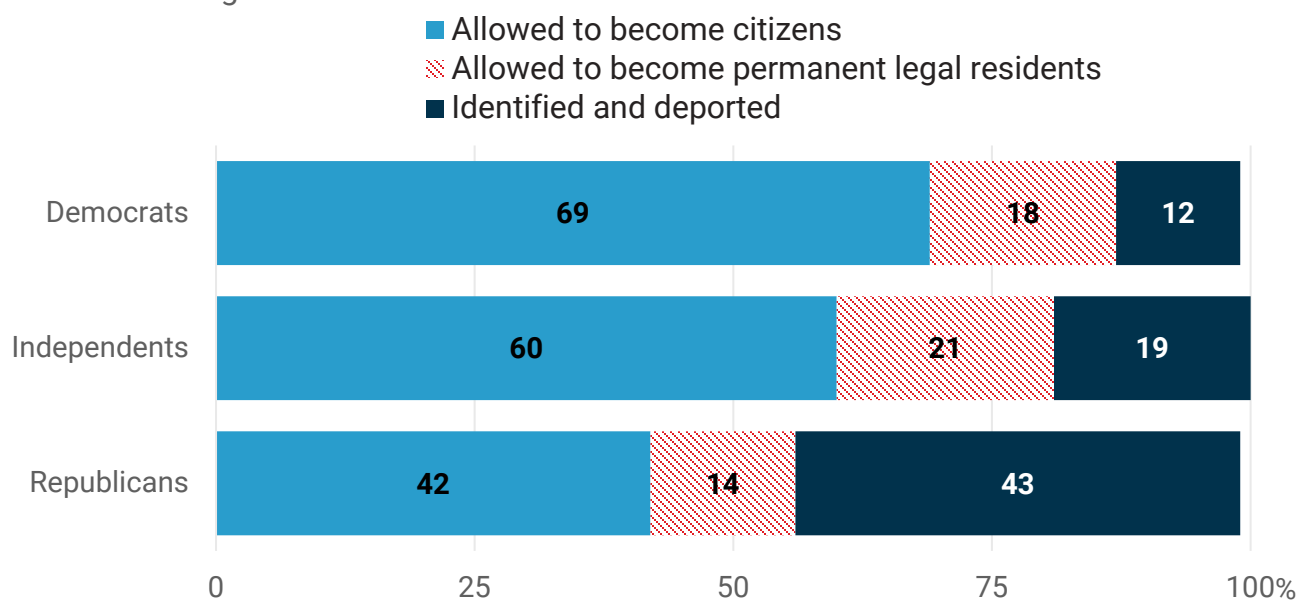
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents and June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents.



Views on immigration are heavily influenced by partisanship, with Chicago Democrats and independents more likely than Republicans to favor allowing immigrants residing in the country illegally to become citizens.

## Democrats and independents are more likely than Republicans to believe immigrants should be granted citizenship.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents.

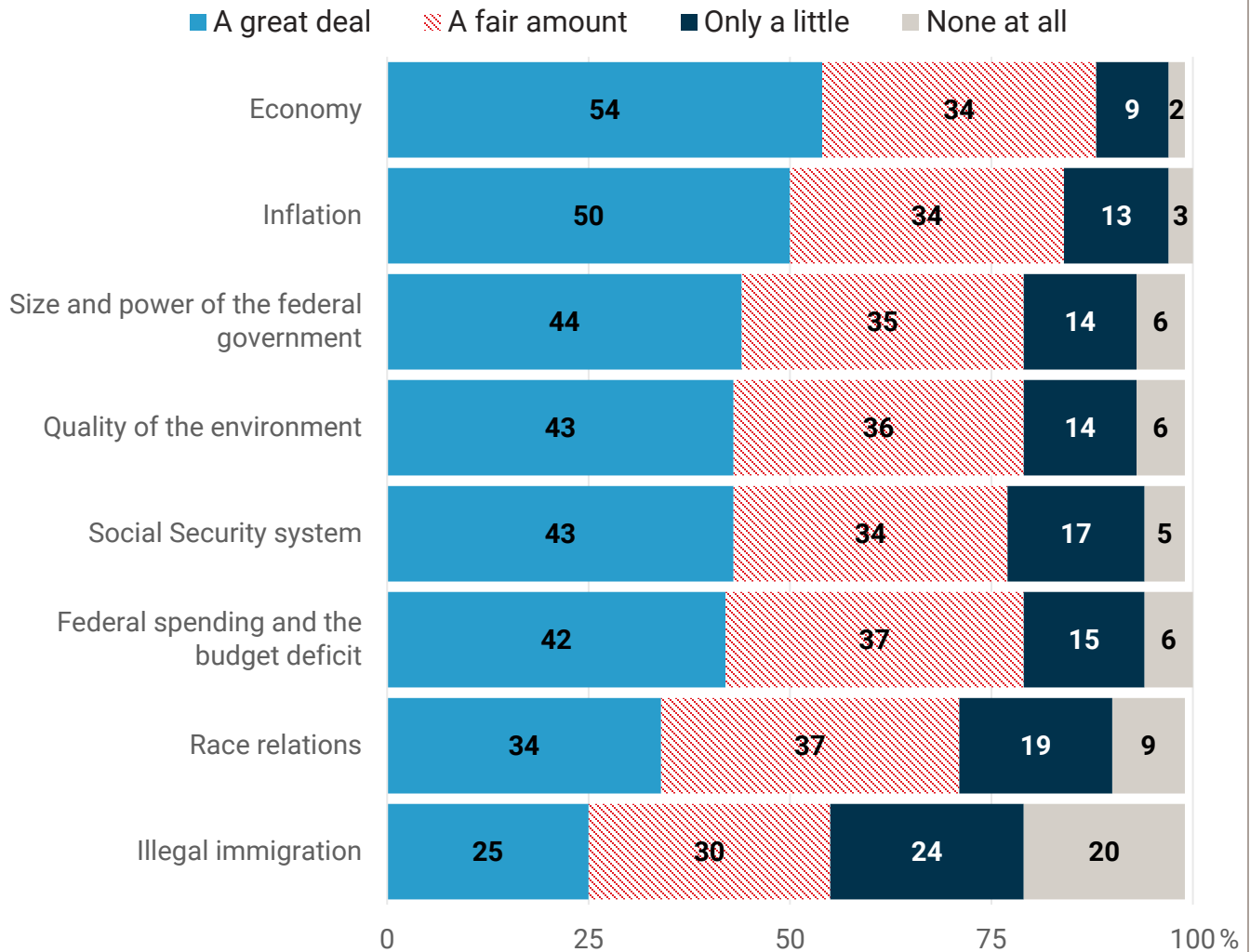


## Half of Chicagoans are highly concerned about the economy and inflation.

About half Chicagoans say they have a great deal of concern about the economy and inflation. Additionally, 4 in 10 report they are highly worried about the size and power of the federal government, federal spending and the budget deficit, environmental quality, and the Social Security system. About one-third are similarly concerned about race relations. One in 10 or fewer are not at all concerned about these issues. Chicagoans are more divided when it comes to illegal immigration with a quarter worried a great deal, a third worried a fair amount, a quarter a little worried, and a fifth not worried at all.

## Most Chicagoans are concerned about a wide range of social issues.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** How much, if at all, do you worry about each of the following problems facing the country?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents.



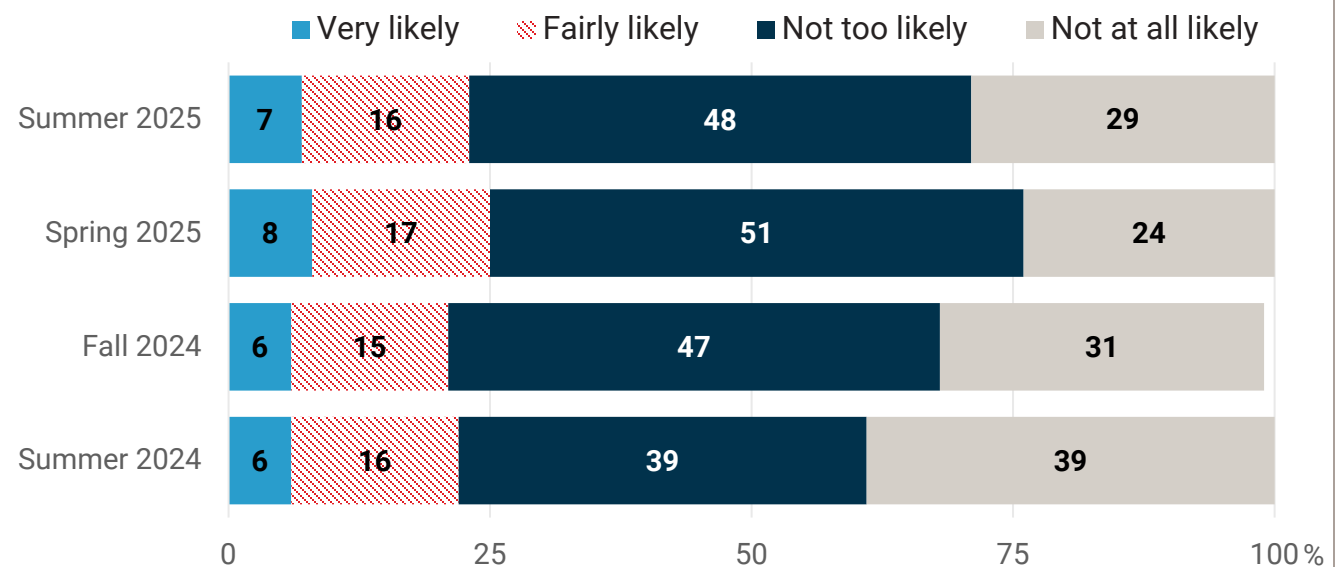
Chicagoans' concern over most of these issues is largely driven by partisanship, with Democrats more worried than Republicans about Social Security (85% vs. 59%), race relations (78% vs. 57%), the quality of the environment (86% vs. 60%), and the size and power of the federal government (83% vs. 69%). Conversely, Republicans are more concerned than Democrats about illegal immigration (71% vs. 46%). Concern over the economy and inflation is similar regardless of partisanship.

## A quarter of Chicagoans are concerned they will lose their job or be laid off in the next year.

Among employed Chicagoans, 23% think it is likely that they will be laid off or lose their job over the next 12 months. The poll conducted a year ago found that 39% did not think it was at all likely they would lose their job. Fewer, 29%, are that confident now.

### Employed Chicagoans remain less confident in their job security compared with 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 June 23-July 9, 2025 with 773 employed adult Chicago residents 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.



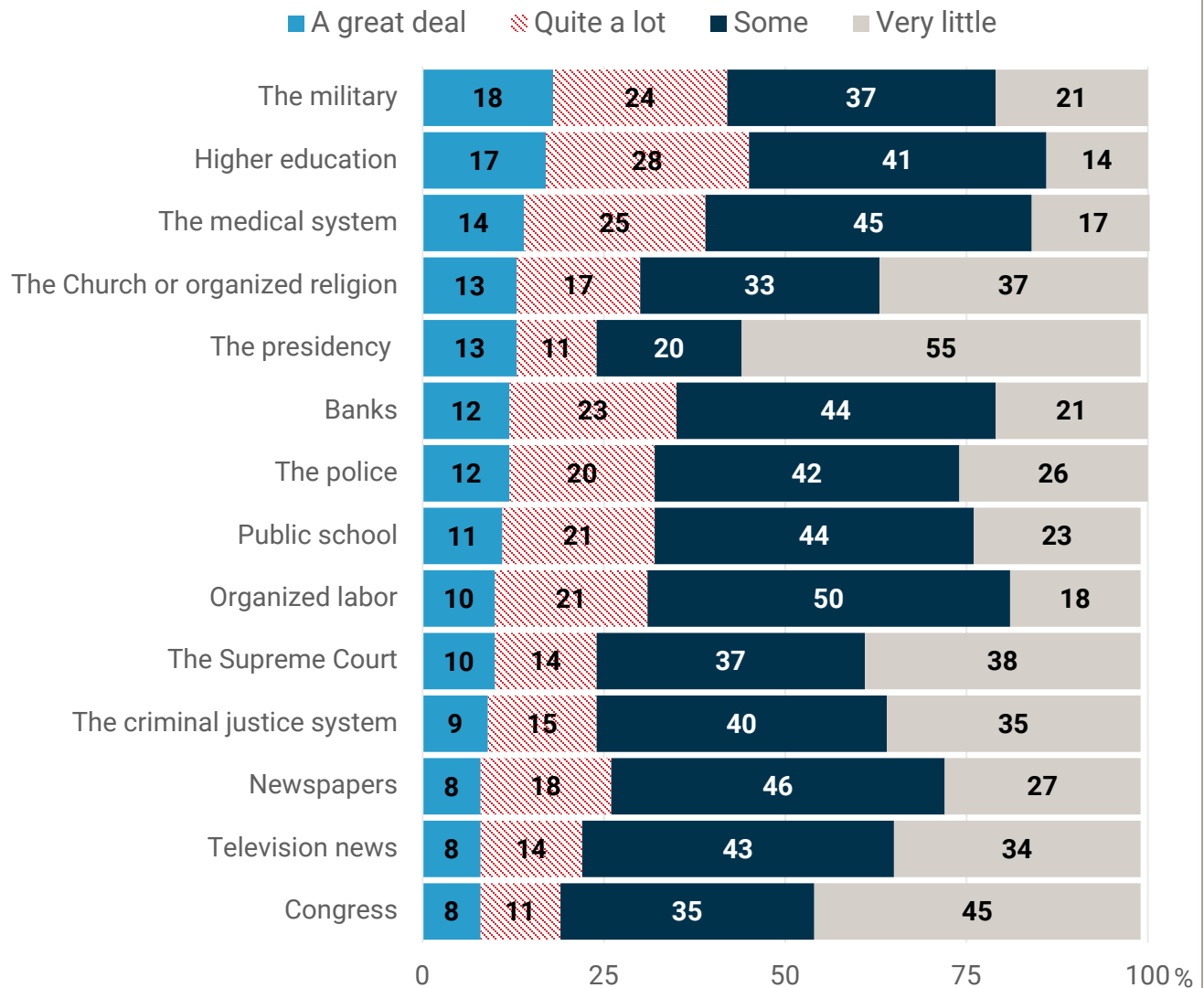
## A majority of Chicagoans do not have confidence in most public institutions.

About three-quarters of Chicagoans report they have only some or little confidence in Congress, television news, the Supreme Court, the criminal justice system, the presidency, or newspapers, while 7 in 10 lack confidence in the Church or organized religion, the police, organized labor, public schools, or banks. Furthermore, about 6 in 10 are not confident in the medical system, the military, or higher education.

However, amidst a general lack of trust, confidence in the presidency and Congress is especially low compared with other institutions. Just over half of Chicagoans have very little confidence in the presidency, while nearly half say the same about Congress. By contrast, only 1 in 5 Chicagoans or fewer report having very little trust in the military, higher education, the medical system, banks, or organized labor.

### Most Chicagoans lack confidence in public institutions.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** How much confidence do you have in each of the following institutions in American society?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents.



Black Chicagoans are more likely than white Chicagoans to express low confidence in the military and the police. Seventy percent of the city's Black residents report having only some or very little

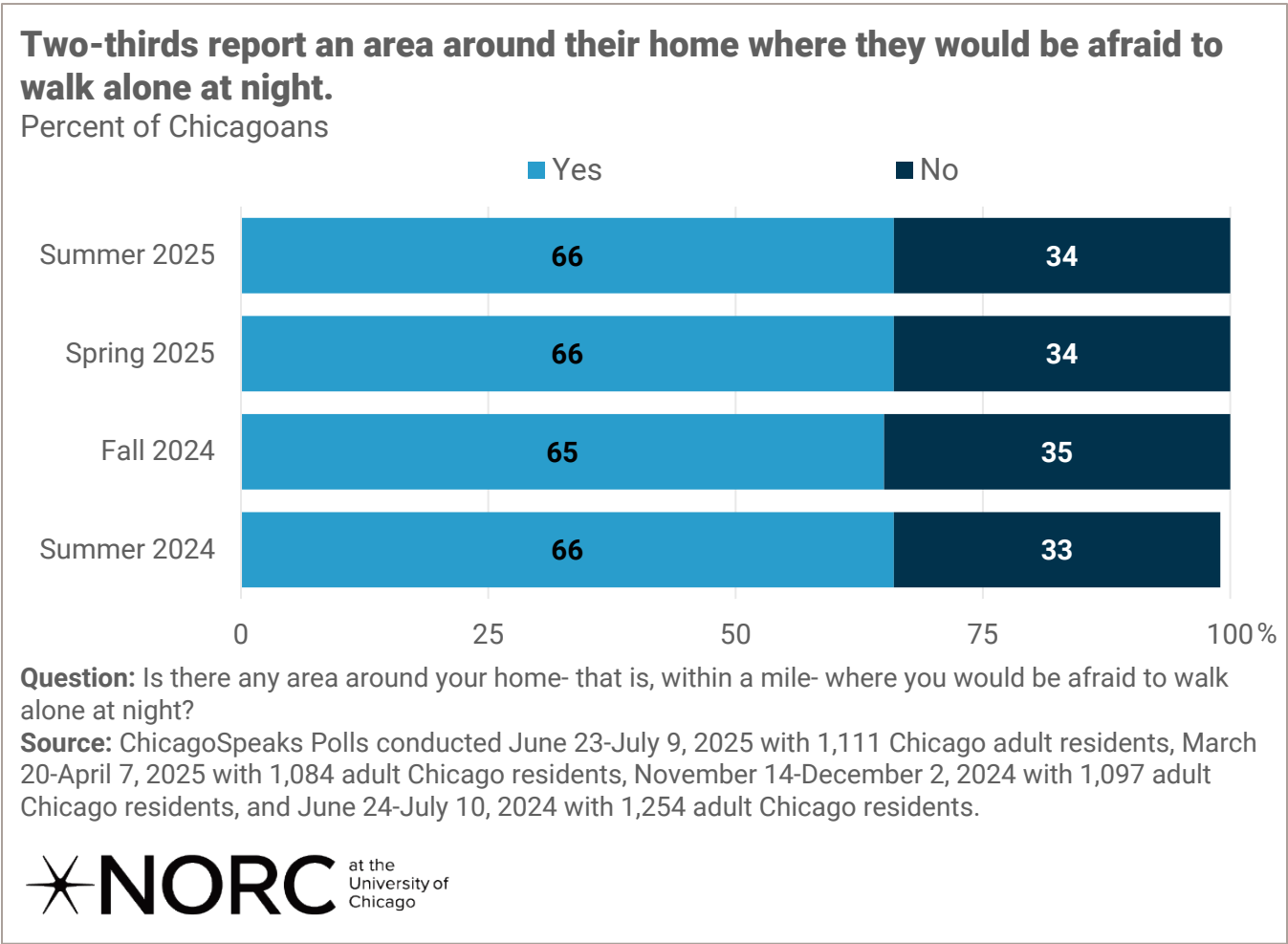


confidence in the military, compared with 48% of white residents. Seventy-one percent of Black residents also have limited confidence in the police, compared with 60% of white residents. Conversely, white Chicagoans are more likely than Black Chicagoans to lack confidence in Congress (86% vs. 69%) or television news (80% vs. 69%).

## Two-thirds of Chicagoans are afraid to walk alone at night within a mile of their home.

Two-thirds of Chicagoans report that there is an area within a mile of their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night. This share has remained consistent, with two-thirds also reporting they were afraid to do so in ChicagoSpeaks polls conducted in Spring 2025, Fall 2024, and Summer 2024.

Women are more likely than men to be fearful walking around their homes at night (76% vs. 55%).



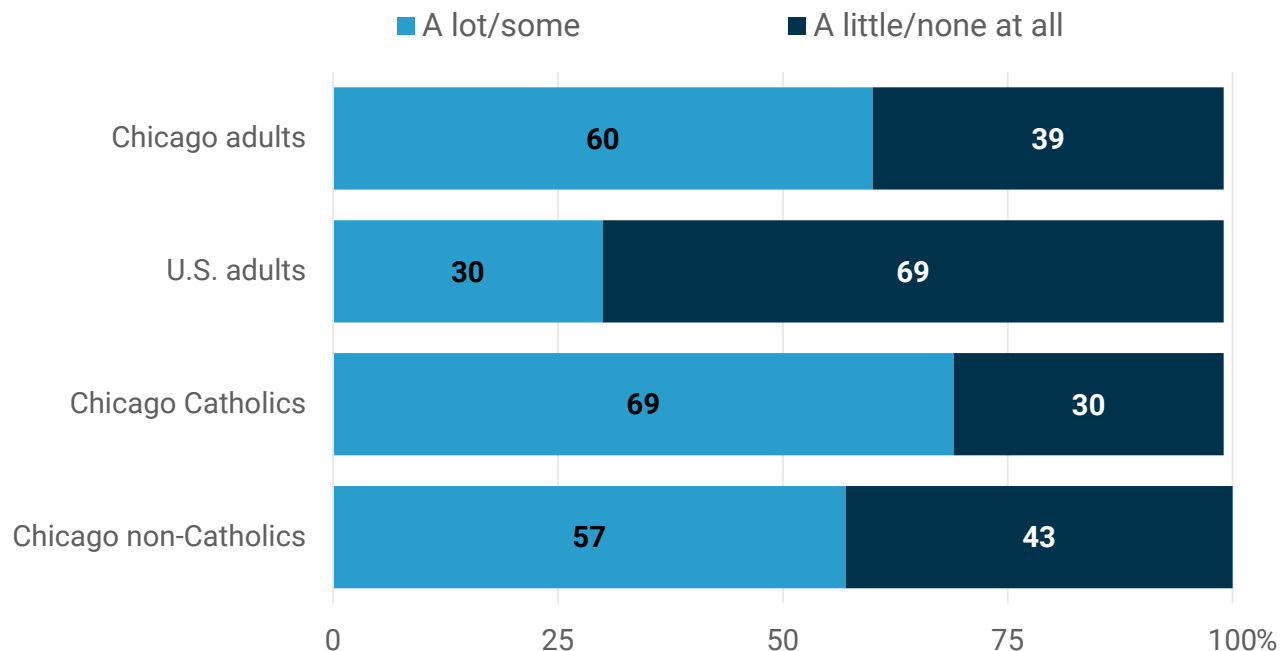
## The majority of Chicagoans have heard at least some about Pope Leo XIV.

Most Chicagoans have heard at least some or a lot about Pope Leo XIV, with 4 in 10 reporting that they have heard only a little or nothing at all. By contrast, in a national poll conducted a few weeks earlier, only a third of U.S. adults overall had heard or read at least some about the current pope, while 7 in 10 had not.

Among Chicagoans, Catholics are more likely than those who are not Catholic to have heard at least some about the new pope, but a majority of non-Catholics have still heard something.

### A higher share of Chicagoans have heard at least some about Pope Leo compared with U.S. adults overall.

Percent of adults



**Question:** How much have you heard or read about Pope Leo XIV?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents and NORC Omnibites Poll conducted June 5-9, 2025 with 1,056 U.S. adults nationwide.



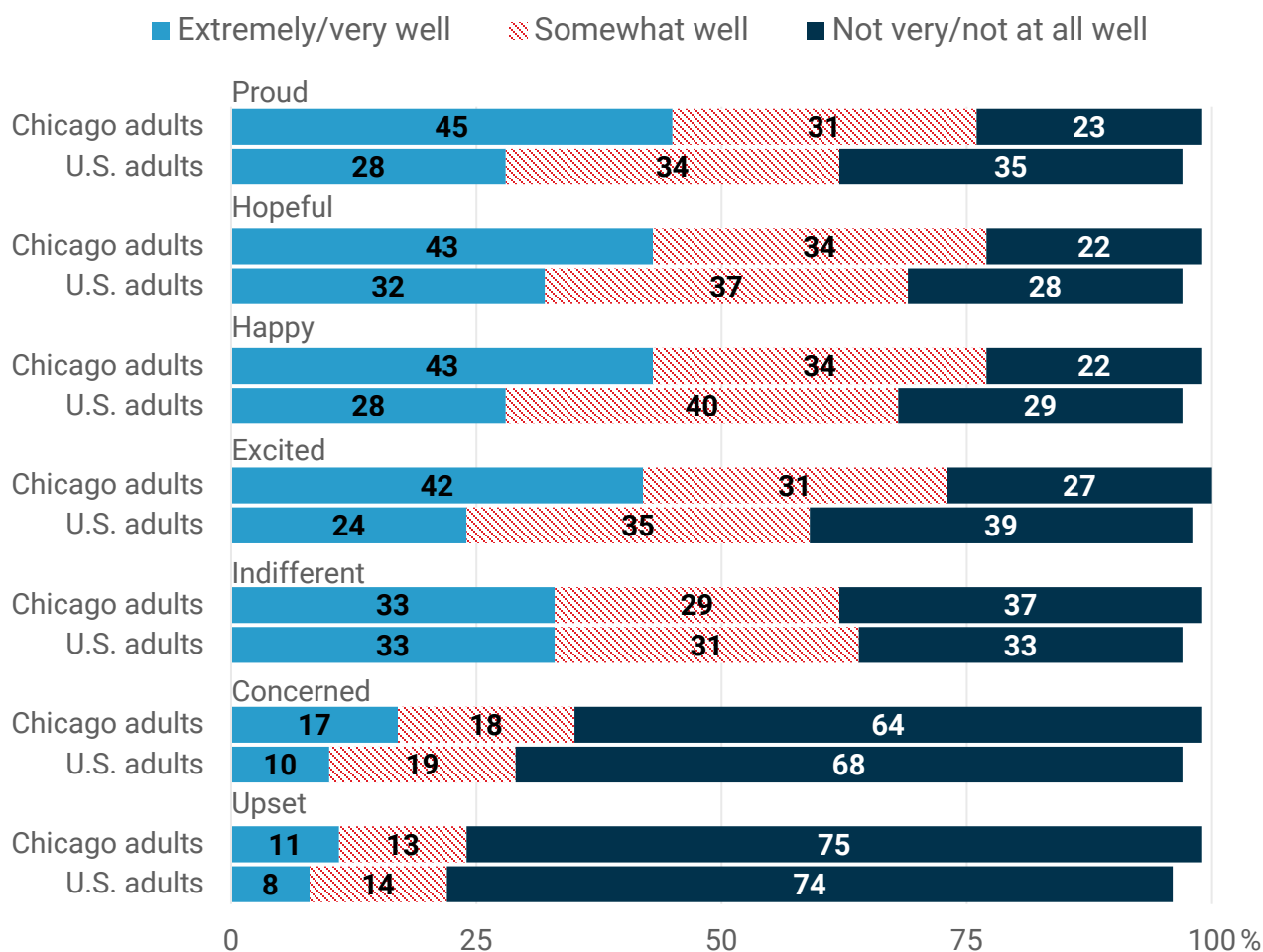
## About 4 in 10 Chicagoans are proud, happy, hopeful, or excited about Pope Leo XIV being the first pope from the United States.

A slightly higher share of Chicagoans reports positive emotions about the new pope being from the United States compared with U.S. adults. About 4 in 10 Chicagoans report that happy, hopeful, proud or

excited describes their feelings about the pope, while about 3 in 10 U.S. adults overall feel the same. A third of both Chicagoans and U.S. adults overall are indifferent and few among either group are concerned or upset.

## About 4 in 10 Chicagoans report positive emotions about the new pope being from the United States.

Percent of adults



**Question:** How well do each of the following words describe your feelings about the new pope being from the United States?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents and NORC Omnibites Poll conducted June 5-9, 2025 with 1,056 U.S. adults nationwide.

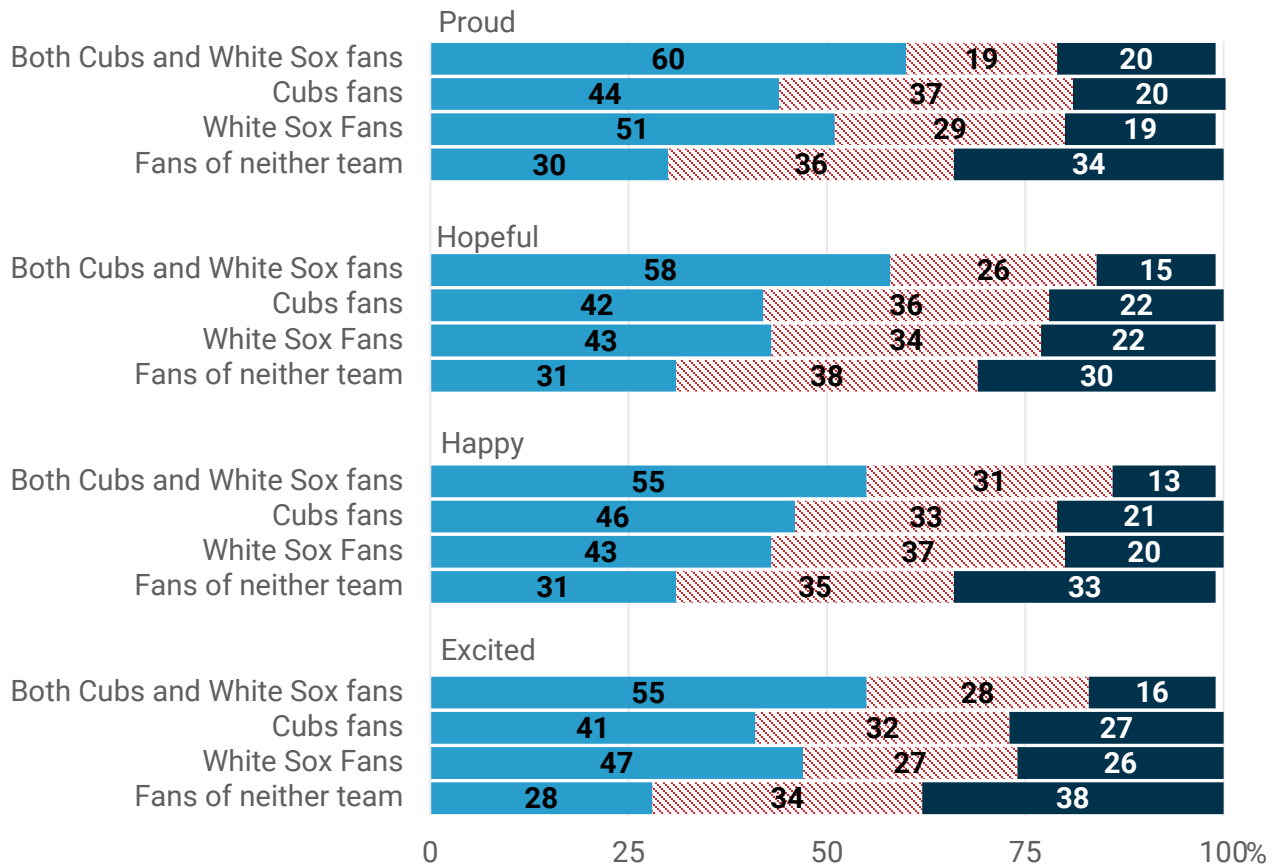


Despite Pope Leo XIV being a White Sox fan, Chicago baseball fans – whether rooting for the White Sox or the Cubs - are more likely than those who are fans of neither team to describe themselves as happy, proud, excited, or hopeful about the pope being from the United States.

## Chicago baseball fans are more likely to feel positively about the pope than those who don't support either team.

Percent of Chicagoans

■ Extremely/very important   ■ Somewhat important   ■ Not at all/not very important



**Question:** How well do each of the following words describe your feelings about the new pope being from the United States?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents.



Catholics are also much more likely than non-Catholics to report being happy (60% vs. 37%), proud (64% vs. 38%), excited (66% vs. 33%), or hopeful (62% vs. 36%).

## Compared with the general population, a higher share of Chicago adults thinks it's important for Pope Leo XIV to address the needs and concerns of the poor and modernize Catholic traditions.

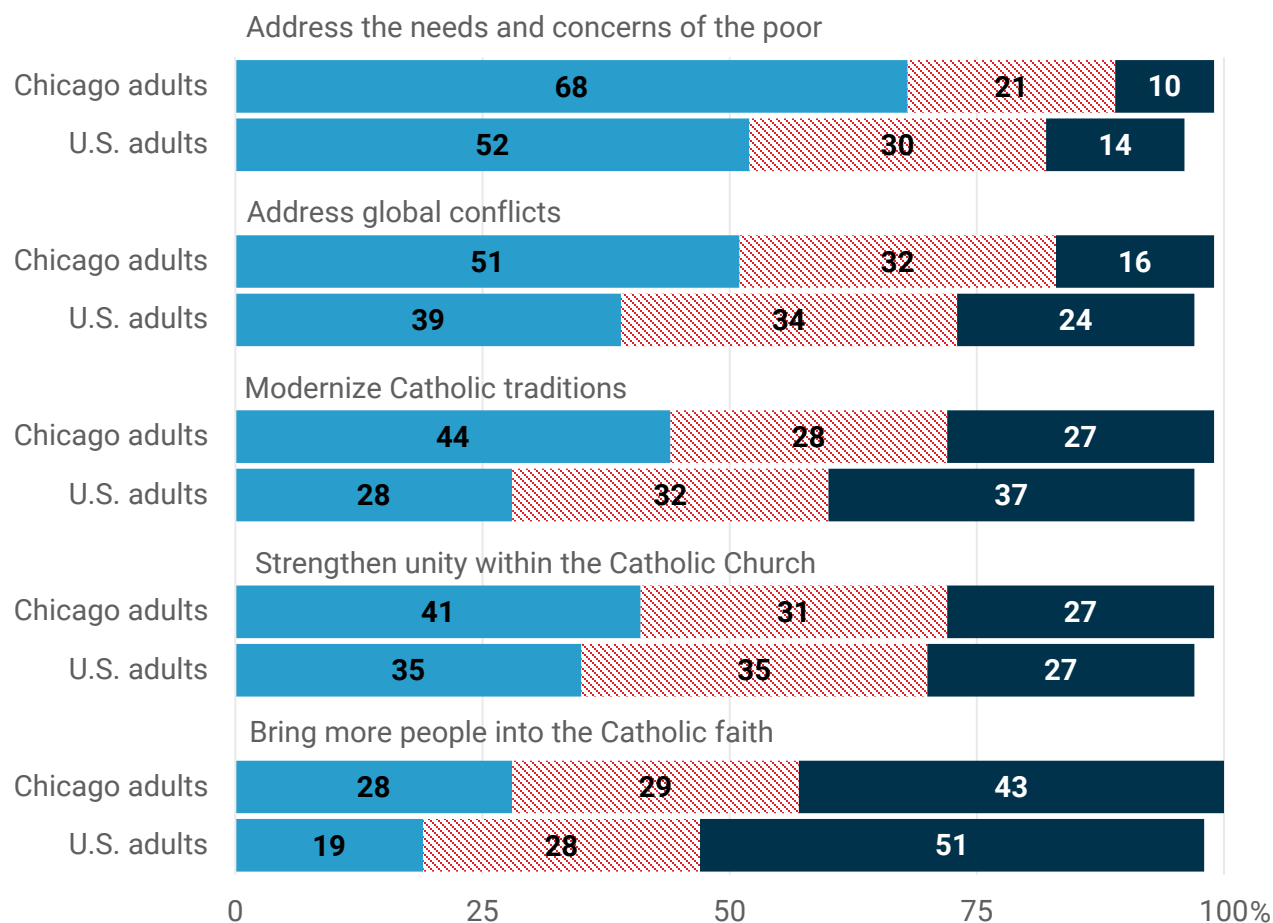
Among Chicago residents, addressing the needs and concerns of the poor stands out as the top priority for the new pope, with 7 in 10 believing it is important. At the same time, half believe it's important for the pope to focus on global conflicts, while about 4 in 10 emphasize the need to strengthen unity within the Catholic Church or modernize its traditions. Fewer—roughly 3 in 10—believe that expanding the Catholic faith to new followers should be a priority.

In comparison, U.S. adults overall are less likely to view each of these areas as important. About half believe the pope should prioritize the needs of the poor, while 4 in 10 point to global conflicts and Church unity. Just 3 in 10 support modernizing Catholic traditions, and only 1 in 5 consider bringing more people into the faith a key concern.

## More believe it is important for the pope to address the needs of the poor and global conflicts than to reform the Catholic Church.

Percent of adults

■ Extremely/very important   ■ Somewhat important   ■ Not at all/not very important



**Question:** How important is it to you for the new pope to do each of the following?

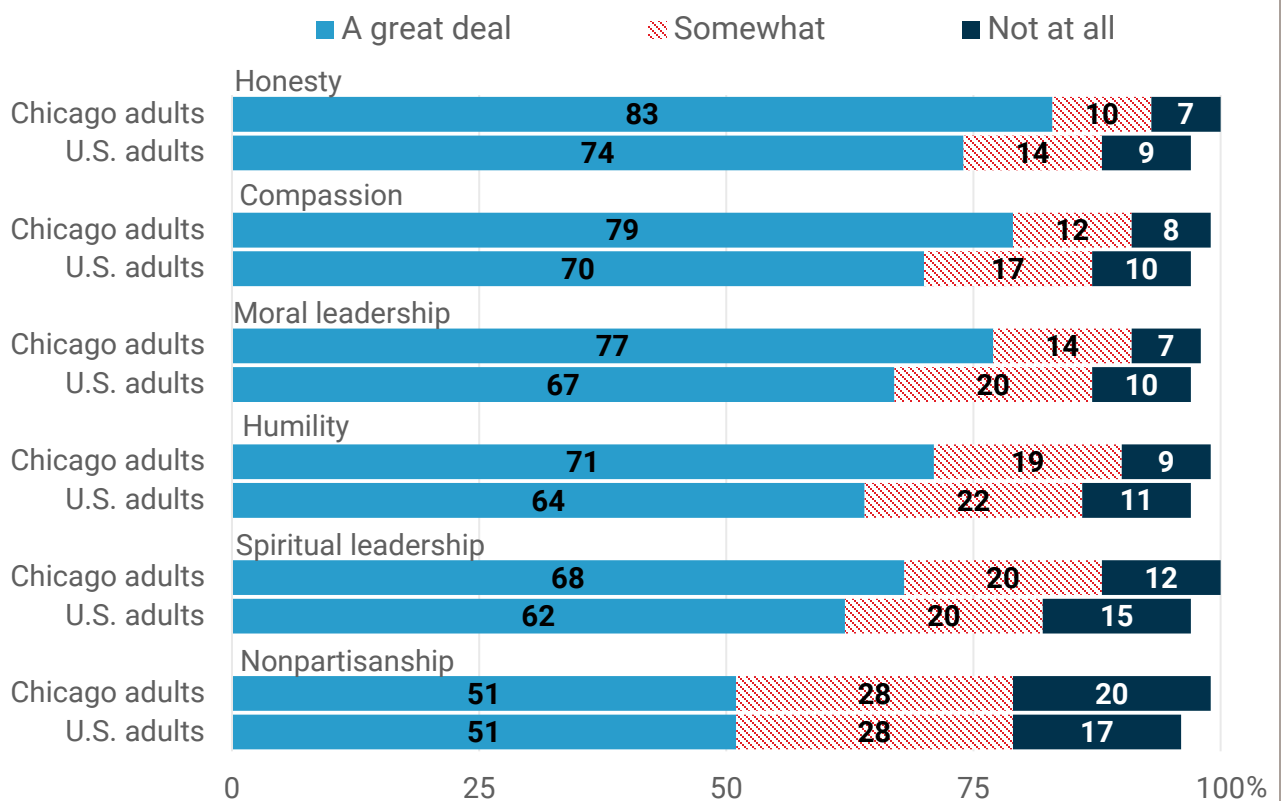
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents and NORC Omnibites Poll conducted June 5-9, 2025 with 1,056 U.S. adults nationwide.

## Most Chicagoans feel it is important for the pope to demonstrate moral and spiritual leadership and traits like honesty, humility, and compassion; few feel strongly about him being nonpartisan.

Eight in 10 Chicago adults believe it is important that the pope show the traits of moral leadership, honesty, and compassion, while 7 in 10 report the same about humility and spiritual leadership. Fewer—about half—rank nonpartisanship as important.

Similarly, 7 in 10 U.S. adults say it's important to them that the pope demonstrate honesty, compassion, and moral leadership while 6 in 10 think he should demonstrate spiritual leadership and humility. About half also rank nonpartisanship as an important trait.

### More believe it is important for the pope to demonstrate moral and spiritual leadership than nonpartisanship.



**Question:** How important is it to you that the new pope demonstrate each of the following? **Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents and NORC Omnibites Poll conducted June 5-9, 2025 with 1,056 U.S. adults nationwide.

## 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 summer 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 June 23 and July 9, 2025 with Chicago residents aged 18 and older, the overall study target population. Overall, 1,111 Chicago residents completed the survey including 533 probability cases and 578 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 online 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, 24 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 calibrated 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).

<https://www.norc.org/research/projects/chicagospeaks.html>