

Research Brief

Chicagoans express deep concern about the nation's and city's direction, as well as the overall state of the economy.

The most recent ChicagoSpeaks poll from NORC at the University of Chicago finds that Chicago residents lack confidence in public institutions and are pessimistic on key issues.

Chicagoans remain deeply pessimistic about the nation's trajectory with most believing things are headed in the wrong direction nationally and a majority expressing similar concerns about Chicago. Views on Illinois are more divided. Confidence in public institutions is strikingly low. Few express confidence in Congress, the presidency, the Supreme Court, major media, organized religion or the police.

Economic worries dominate, driven by high living costs and stagnant wages. Many residents also fear rising medical expenses with half concerned about affording care, accessing services, or losing insurance, concerns especially pronounced among lower-income and Hispanic Chicagoans.

The recent federal shutdown is widely seen as a major national problem among Chicagoans, even though few were personally affected. Three-quarters blame Donald Trump, seven in ten fault Congressional Republicans, and 4 in 10 hold Congressional Democrats responsible, underscoring sharp partisan divides for each.

Most Chicago residents favor a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, while a about a third want reductions in the number of immigrants and 40% prefer current levels. Support for cutting the number of immigrants is higher among Republicans, those age 60 and older, and people without a college degree. While most Chicagoans believe immigration benefits Chicago's economy and culture, opinions are mixed on its impact on politics and crime.

Personal safety remains a pressing concern. More than half of Chicagoans fear walking alone at night near their homes, a trend unchanged throughout 2025, with women more likely than men to feel unsafe. Violent crime is the leading reason, followed by strangers or suspicious individuals. About half cite poor lighting or limited police presence, while those who feel safe credit well-lit streets, strong community ties, and low crime.

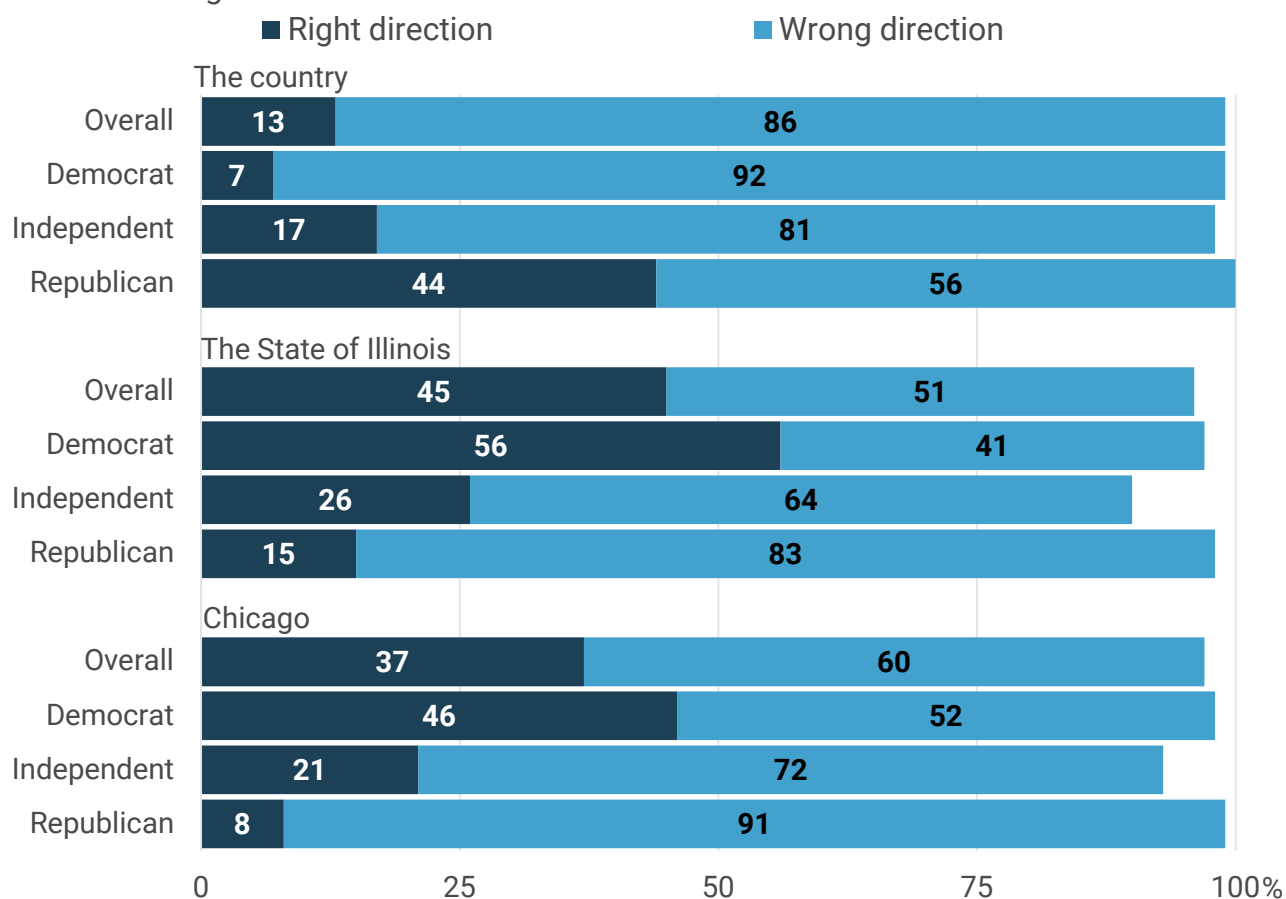
Few Chicagoans believe the country or the city are on the right track, while opinions about the state are more evenly divided.

Chicagoans are largely pessimistic about the state of the country as a whole, with 9 in 10 saying they think things are heading in the wrong direction. About 6 in 10 also think Chicago is going in the wrong direction. However, opinion is divided on the State of Illinois with about half saying it is headed either in the right direction or wrong direction.

Both Democrats and independents are more likely than Republicans to feel that the country is headed in the wrong direction, while Republicans are most likely to say the same about the State of Illinois or the city of Chicago, followed by Democrats, then independents.

A majority of Chicagoans are pessimistic about the state of the country and the city of Chicago.

Percent of Chicagoans



Question: Generally speaking, would you say things in [this country/the State of Illinois/Chicago] are heading in the...

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



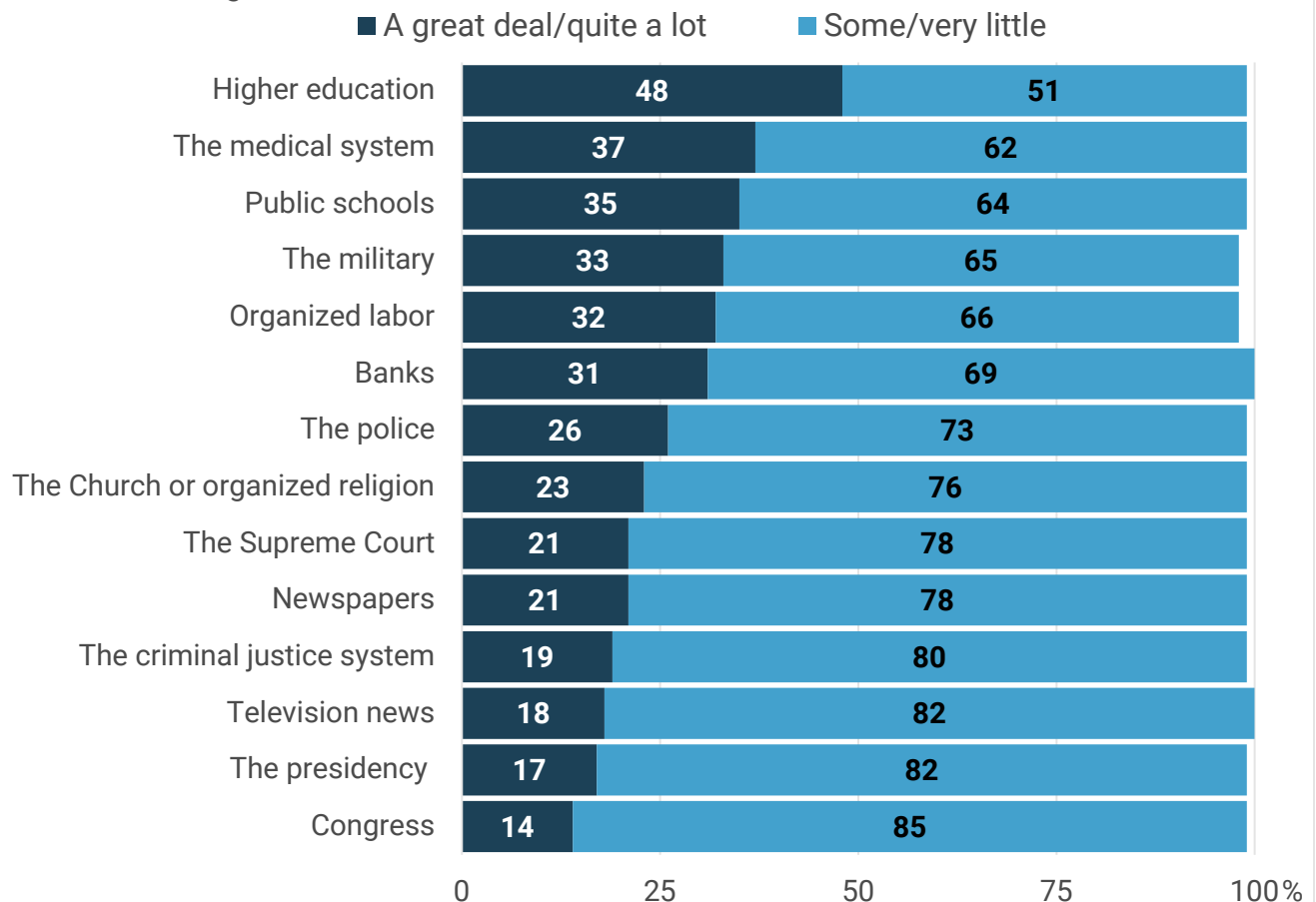
Chicagoans have little confidence in public institutions.

Compared with the Summer 2025 ChicagoSpeaks Poll, similarly small shares of Chicagoans report having a great deal of confidence in public institutions. Eight in 10 report just some or very little confidence in Congress, the presidency, television news, the criminal justice system, newspapers, and the Supreme Court, while three-quarters say the same about the Church or organized religion and the police. A majority also express low confidence in banks, organized labor, the military, public schools, and the medical system, and about half feel similarly about higher education.

Notably, confidence is especially low in the presidency, Congress, the Supreme Court, and organized religion. Two-thirds of Chicagoans report having “very little” trust in the presidency, about half say the same about Congress, and roughly 4 in 10 express similarly low confidence in the Supreme Court and the Church or organized religion.

Chicago residents' confidence in public institutions remains low.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



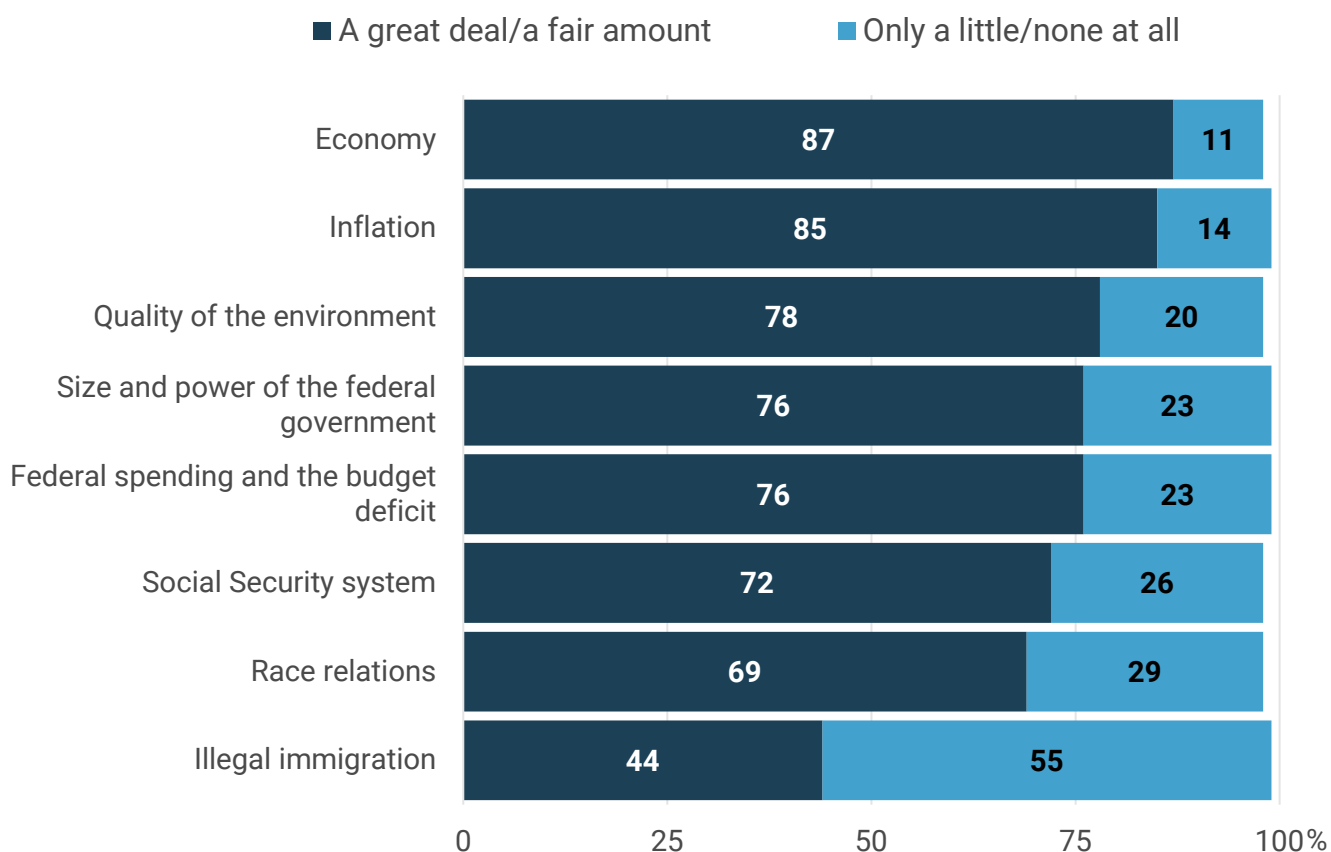
The economy and inflation top the list of national issues of concern to Chicagoans.

Similar to the Summer 2025 Poll, nearly 9 in 10 Chicago residents are at least fairly worried about the nation's economy and inflation, while about three-quarters say the same about the quality of the environment, the size and power of the federal government, and federal spending. About 7 in 10 are worried about Social Security and race relations, but only about 4 in 10 are concerned about illegal immigration.

Notably, comparable majorities of Democrats and Republicans are at least fairly worried about the economy, inflation, federal spending, and Social Security. However, Democrats are more concerned than Republicans about the quality of the environment (85% vs. 57%), the size and power of the federal government (79% vs. 68%), and race relations (76% vs. 51%), while Republicans are more likely to worry about illegal immigration (69% vs. 36%).

Chicagoans are most worried about the economy and inflation.

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 November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.

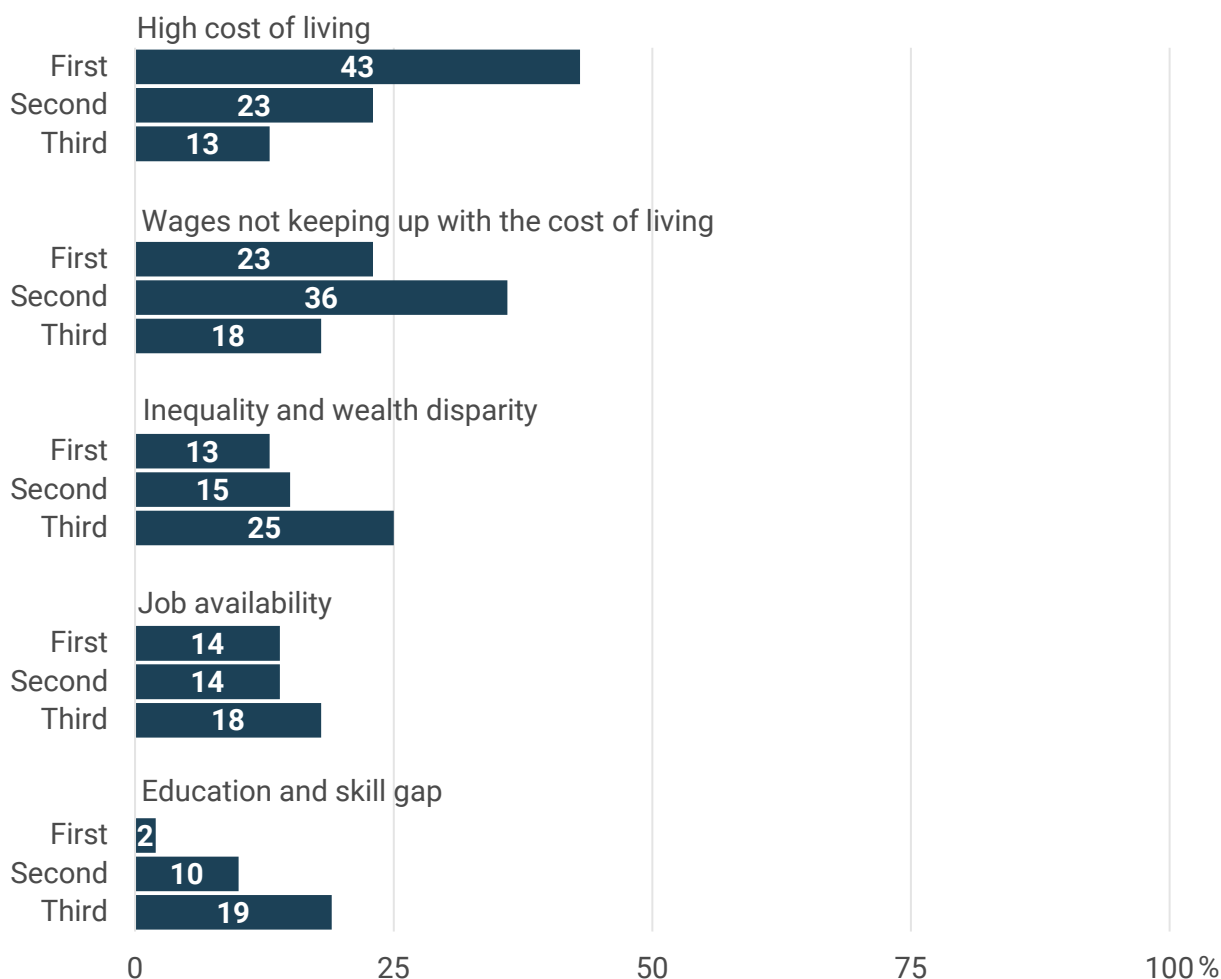


Chicagoans cite the high cost of living and stagnant wages as their most pressing economic challenges.

Among the economic challenges facing Chicago residents, about 4 in 10 rank the high cost of living as the top concern, followed by a quarter who point to wages failing to keep pace with rising costs. Fewer, about 1 in 10, cite wealth inequality or job availability. Almost no one cites education or skill gaps.

Chicagoans rank high cost of living and wage stagnation as the top economic issues they face.

Percent of Chicagoans



Question: What do you think are the top 3 economic challenges facing Chicago residents today?

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



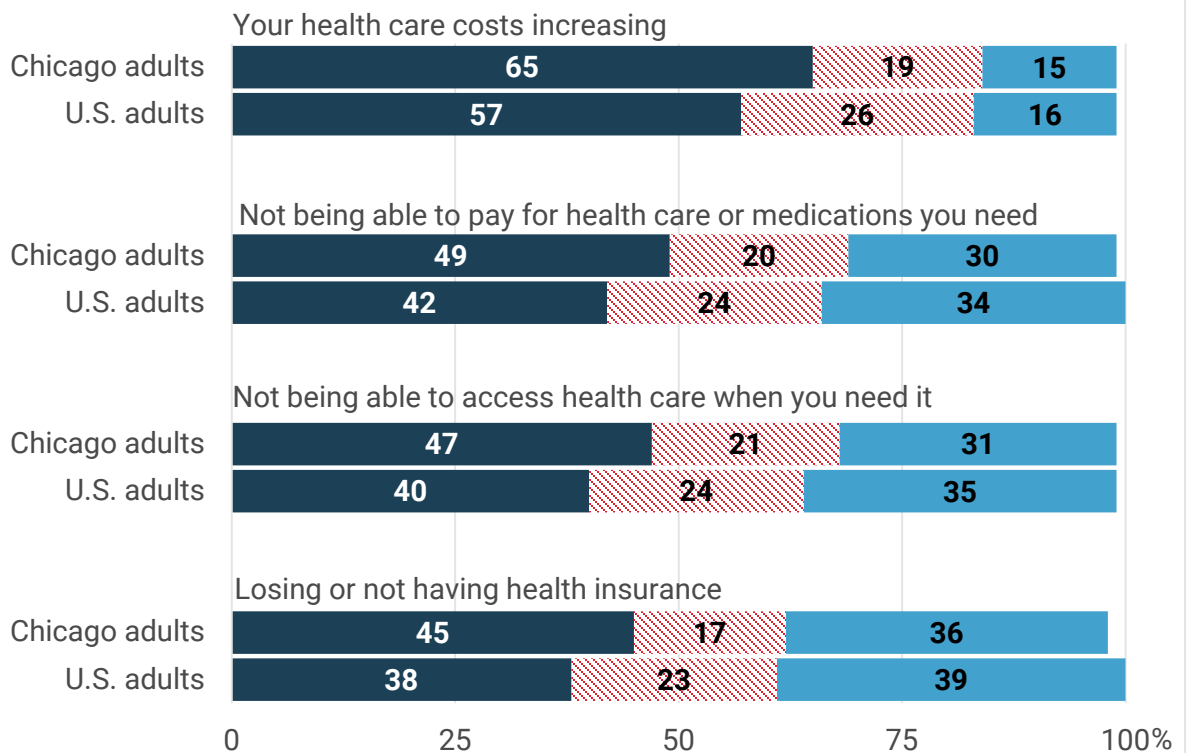
Chicagoans are concerned about the cost of medical care increasing or losing access.

Two-thirds of Chicago residents are concerned about rising health care costs, while about half express concern over being unable to afford necessary care or medications, not being able to access care when needed, or losing health insurance. Levels of concern are like U.S. adults overall, with 6 in 10 worried about increasing health care costs, and roughly 4 in 10 fearing they may not be able to afford or access care or maintain insurance coverage.

Chicagoans share similar concerns about health care with adults nationwide.

Percent of adults

■ Extremely/very concerned ▨ Somewhat concerned ■ Not very/not at all concerned



Question: How concerned are you about each of the following next year?

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents and AP-NORC Poll conducted October 9-13, 2025 with 1,280 adults nationwide.

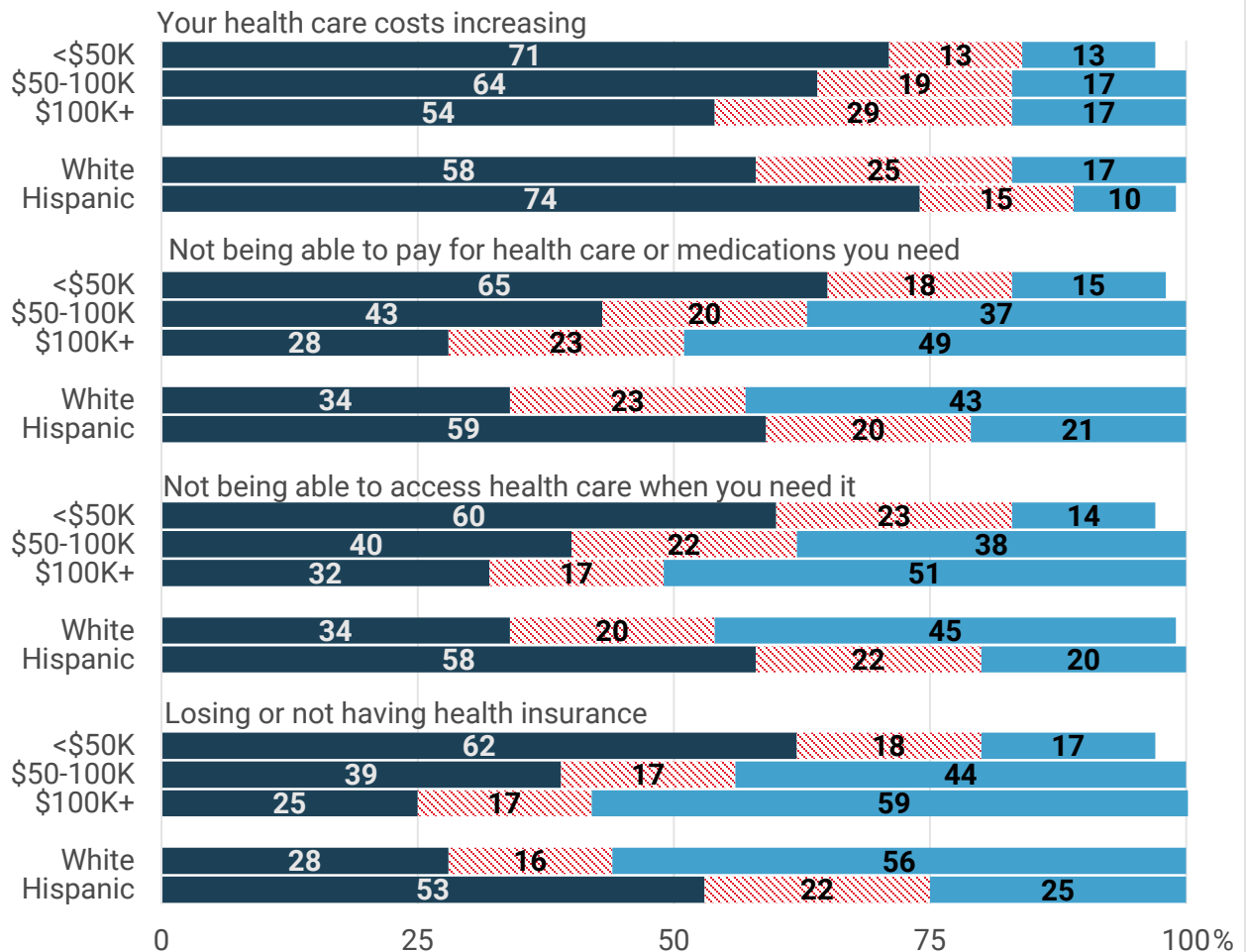


Among Chicagoans, financial status plays a major role in shaping concern. Chicagoans in lower-income households are more likely than those living in middle- or higher-income households to worry about these issues. Hispanic residents also report greater concern compared with white residents, but there are no significant differences between Black residents and white or Hispanic residents.

Lower-income and Hispanic Chicagoans are more likely to be concerned about health care access and affordability.

Percent of Chicagoans

■ Extremely/very concerned ▨ Somewhat concerned ■ Not very/not at all concerned



Question: How concerned are you about each of the following next year?

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.

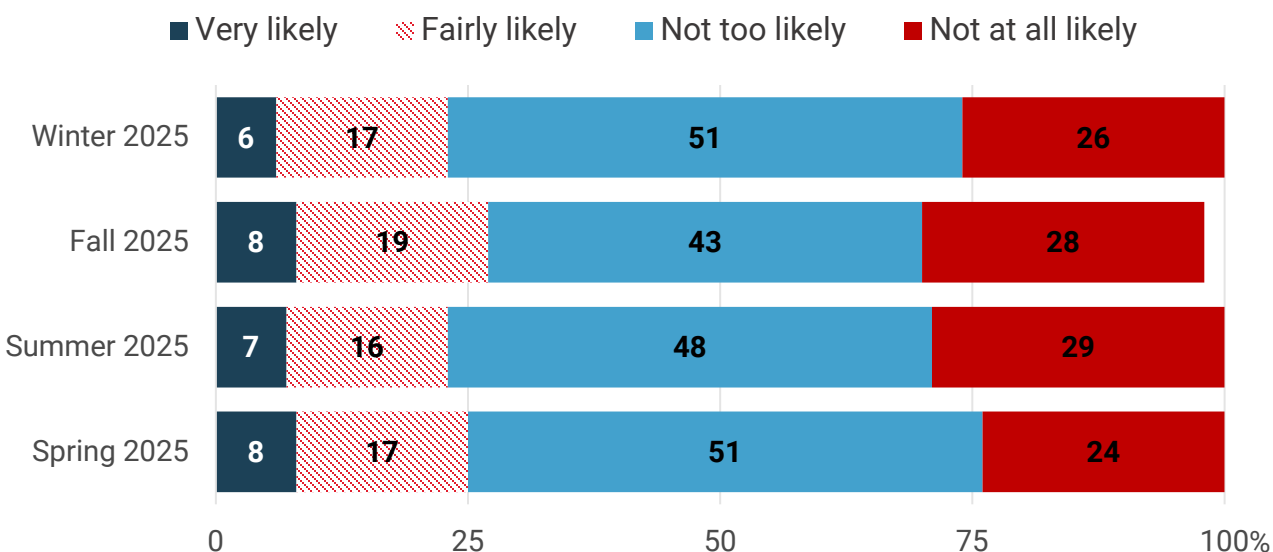


Concern about job security among Chicagoans has remained consistent throughout 2025.

Similar to polls taken in Spring, Summer, and Fall 2025, about a quarter of employed Chicagoans think it is likely they will become unemployed in the next year.

Perception of job security among employed Chicagoans has remained largely unchanged throughout 2025.

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 November 24-December 8, 2025 with 947 employed adult Chicago residents, September 16-29, 2025 with 921 employed adult Chicago residents, June 23-July 9, 2025 with 773 employed adult Chicago residents, and March 20-April 7, 2025 with 735 employed adult Chicago residents.

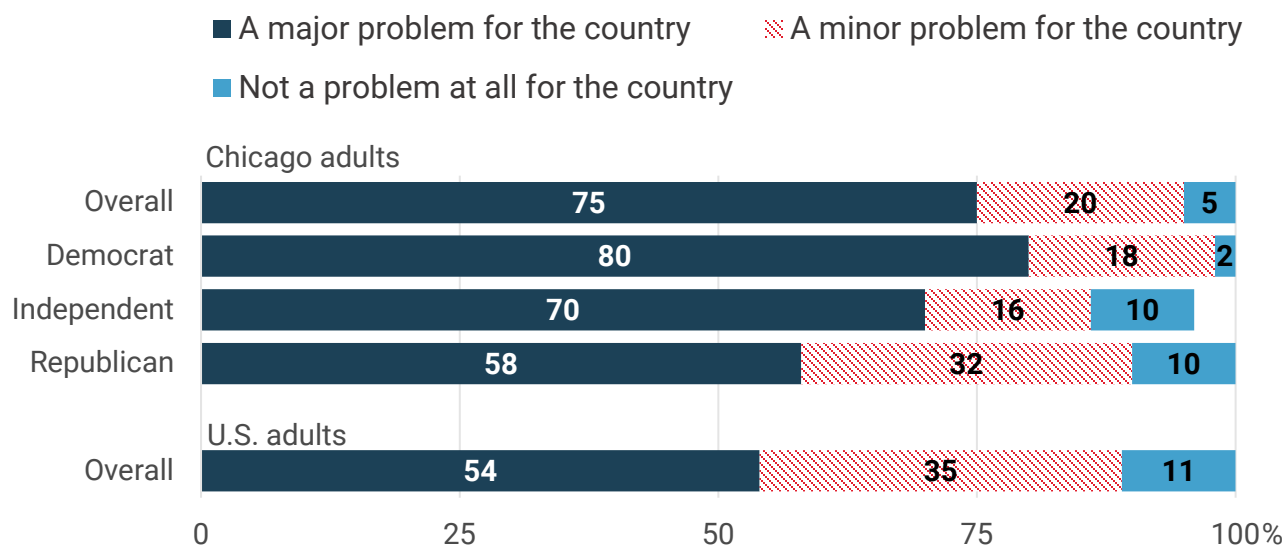


Although few Chicagoans were personally impacted by the shutdown, most view the federal shutdown as a major problem for the country and hold Trump and Congressional Republicans responsible.

Three-quarters of Chicagoans think the federal government shutdown that began on October 1, 2025 and lasted until November 12, 2025 was a major problem for the country, while 1 in 5 think it was a minor problem. Views diverge according to partisanship with Democrats most likely to think it was a major problem, followed by independents, then Republicans. Chicago residents are more likely than U.S. adults to see the shutdown as a major problem with half of U.S. adults describing the federal government shutdown as a major issue and a third as a minor issue.

A majority of Chicago residents think the federal government shutdown was a major problem for the country.

Percent of adults



Question: Overall, do you think the federal government shutdown, which began Wednesday, October 1, was:

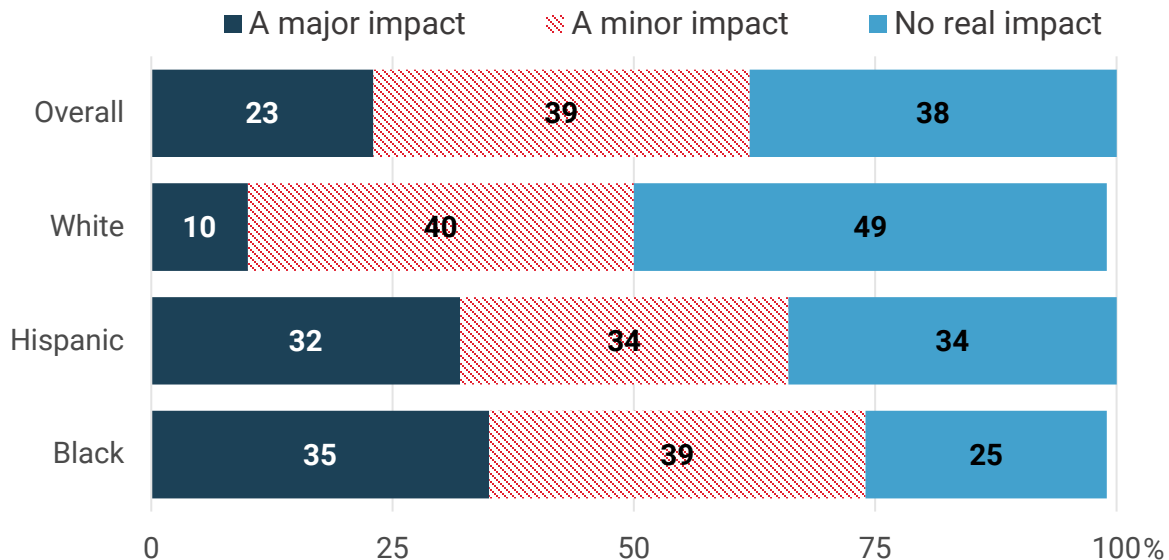
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents and AP-NORC Poll conducted October 9-13, 2025 with 1,280 adults nationwide.



When considering personal impact, a quarter of Chicagoans say it had a major impact on them and their family, while 4 in 10 say it either had a minor impact or no real impact. Hispanic and Black Chicagoans are more likely than white residents to say that the shutdown had a significant impact on them personally.

Hispanic and Black Chicagoans report being hit harder by the federal government shutdown.

Percent of Chicagoans



Question: How much of an impact has the partial federal government shutdown had on you and your family?

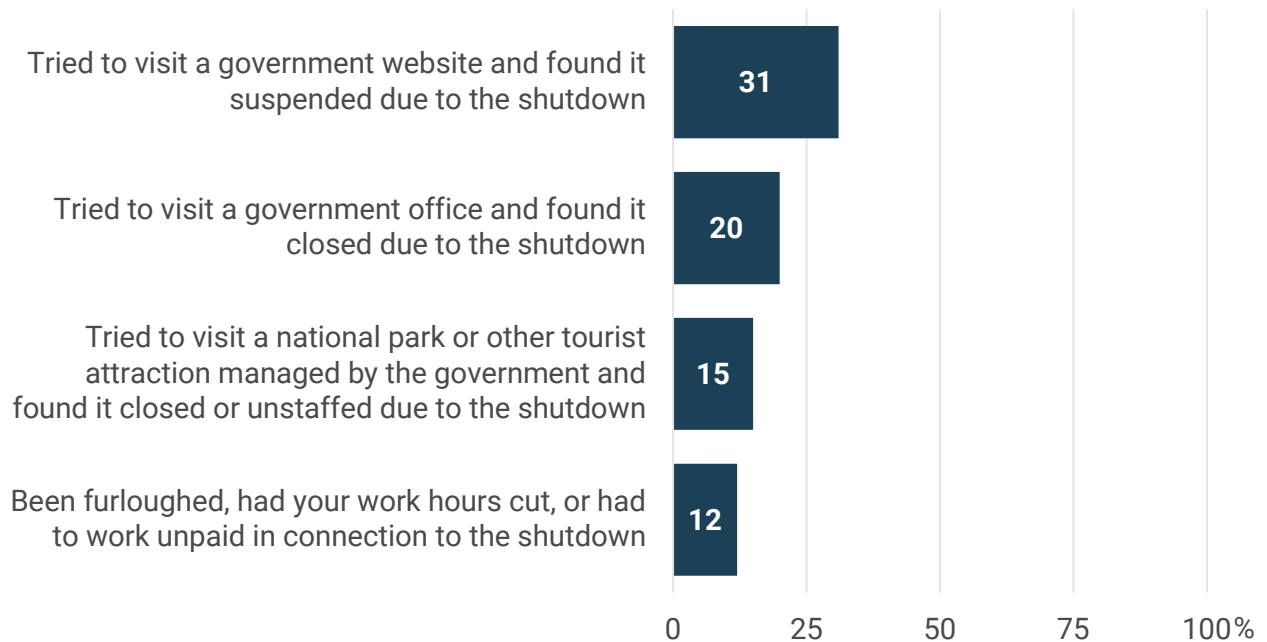
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



Few Chicagoans report experiencing direct effects of the shutdown, such as being unable to access government websites or offices, visiting national parks or federally managed attractions, or facing employment disruptions like furloughs, reduced hours, or unpaid work.

Few Chicagoans experienced specific impacts related to the suspension of government functions.

Percent of Chicagoans who responded yes to each of the following



Question: Since the partial federal government shutdown began, have you or has anyone in your household experienced any of the following, or haven't you?

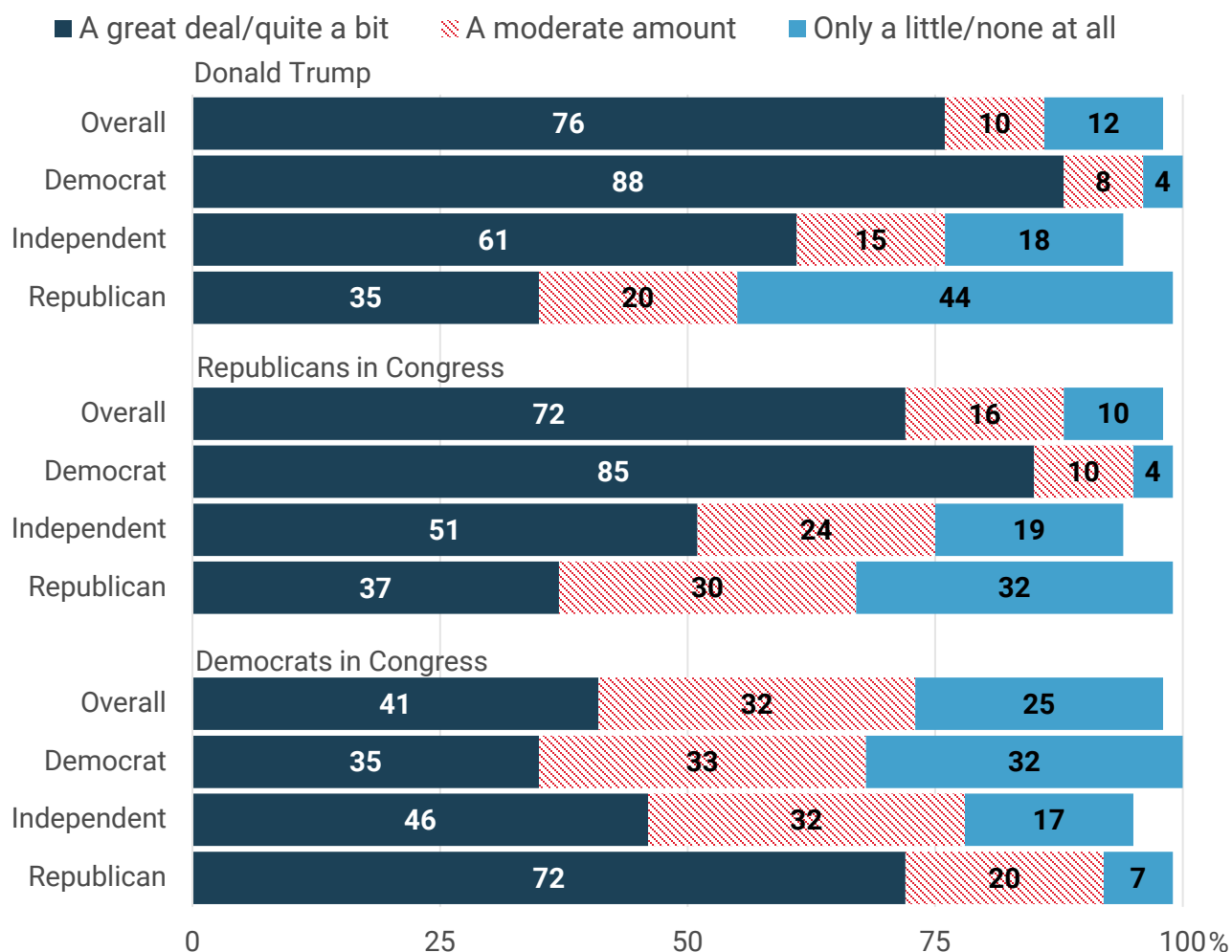
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



Three-quarters of Chicagoans blame Trump for the federal shutdown. While 7 in 10 think Congressional Republicans are responsible, just 4 in 10 say the same about Democrats in Congress. Views are largely tied to partisanship with each more likely to say the other party is responsible and Democrats more likely than Republicans to place blame on Trump.

A majority of Chicagoans view Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress as primarily responsible for the government shutdown.

Percent of Chicagoans



Question: How much responsibility did each of the following have for the federal government shutdown?

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.

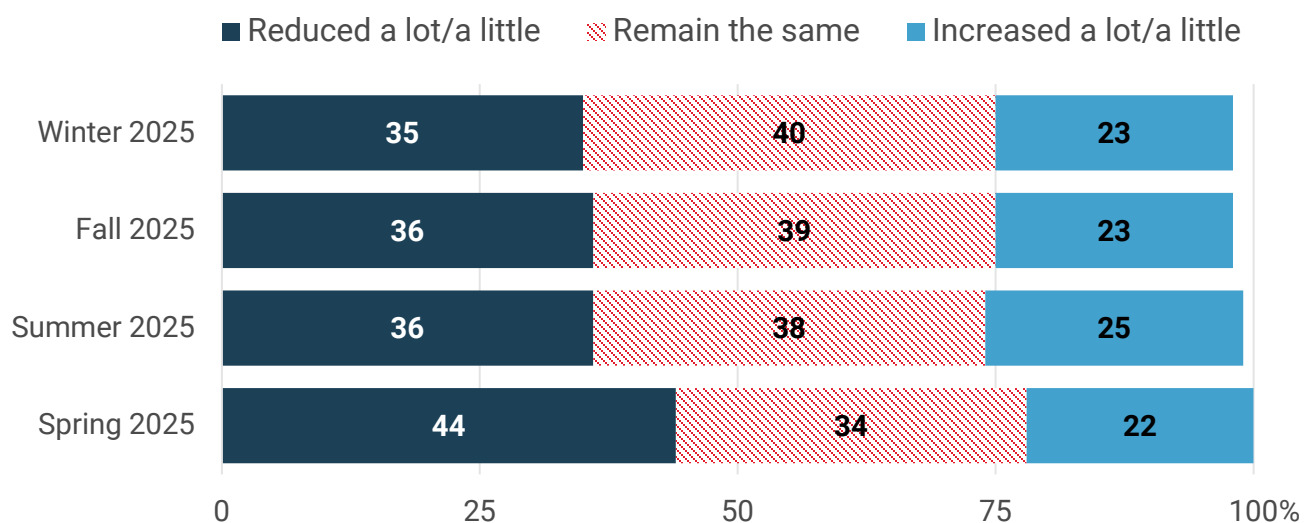


Like earlier this year, a third of Chicagoans think immigration should be reduced, but a majority think that those living in the country illegally should be allowed to become citizens.

Thirty-five percent of Chicagoans believe immigration levels should be reduced, similar to the shares saying so in Fall, Summer, and Spring 2025. Meanwhile, 1 in 4 think immigration should be increased, and roughly 4 in 10 prefer it remain the same.

Chicago residents remain divided as to whether immigration into the U.S. should be increased, decreased, or remain the same.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

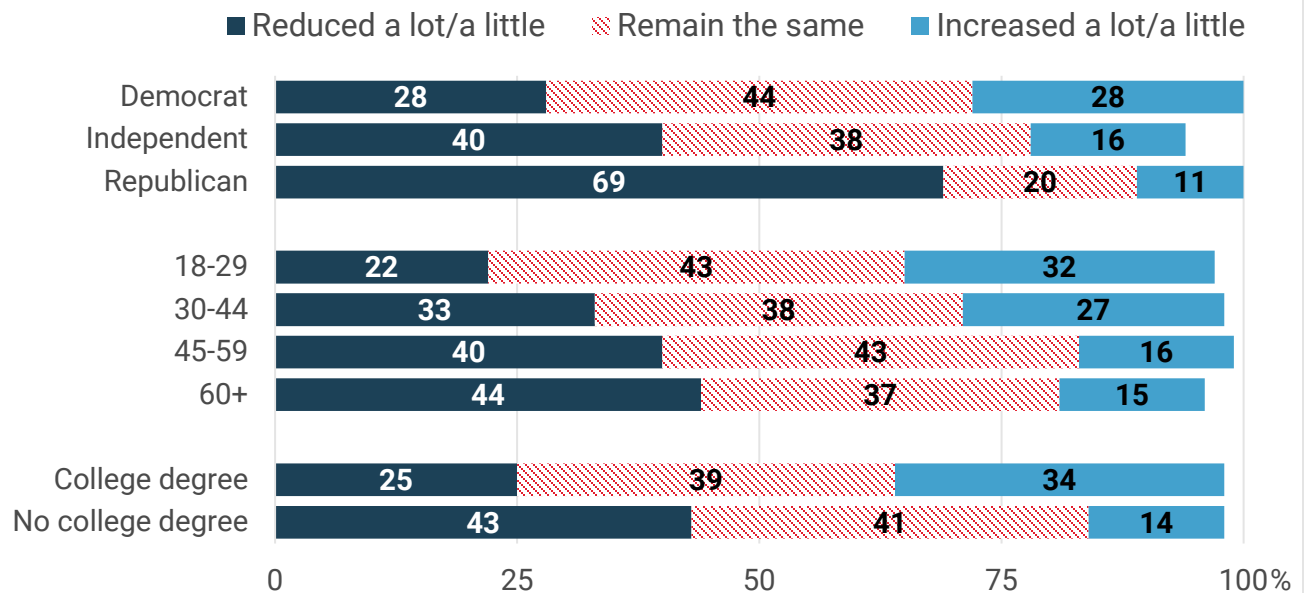
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted November 30-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents, September 16-29, 2025 with 1,361 adult Chicago residents, June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents, and March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



However, differences emerge according to partisanship, age, and education with Republicans, those older than 60, and those without a college degree more likely to believe immigration should decrease compared with Democrats, those younger than 40, and college graduates.

Republicans, older adults, and those without a college degree 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...

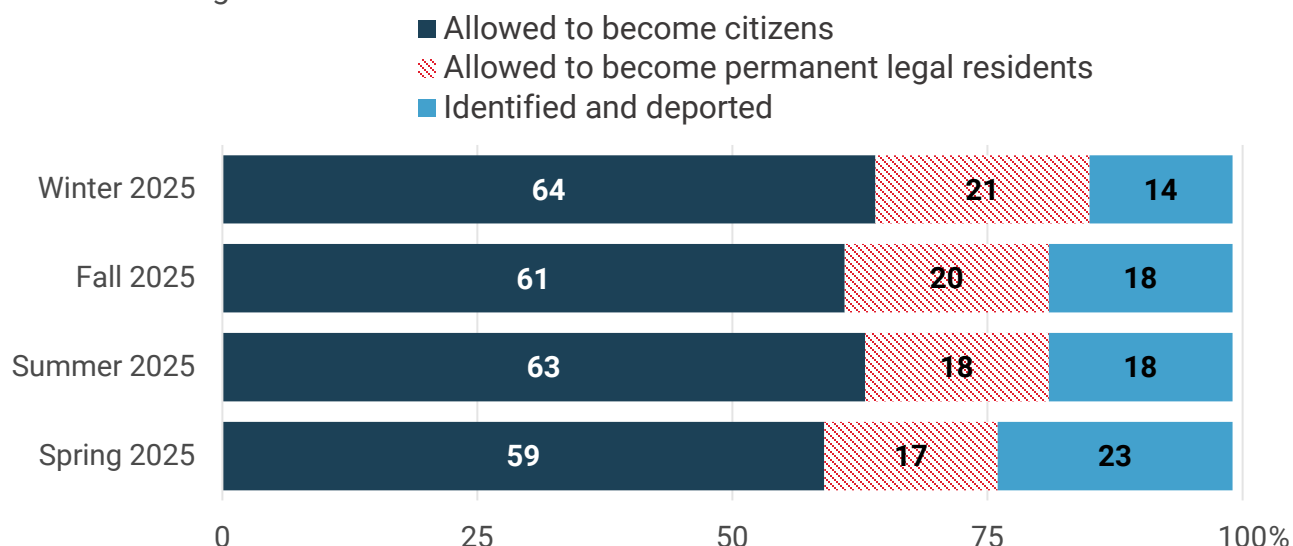
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



Since Spring 2025, fewer Chicagoans believe undocumented immigrants should be identified and deported, down from 23% to 14%. Meanwhile, 6 in 10 think they should be allowed to become citizens under certain conditions, and 2 in 10 favor granting permanent legal residency, shares that have remained steady throughout 2025.

A majority of Chicagoans think immigrants living in the country illegally should be allowed to become citizens.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

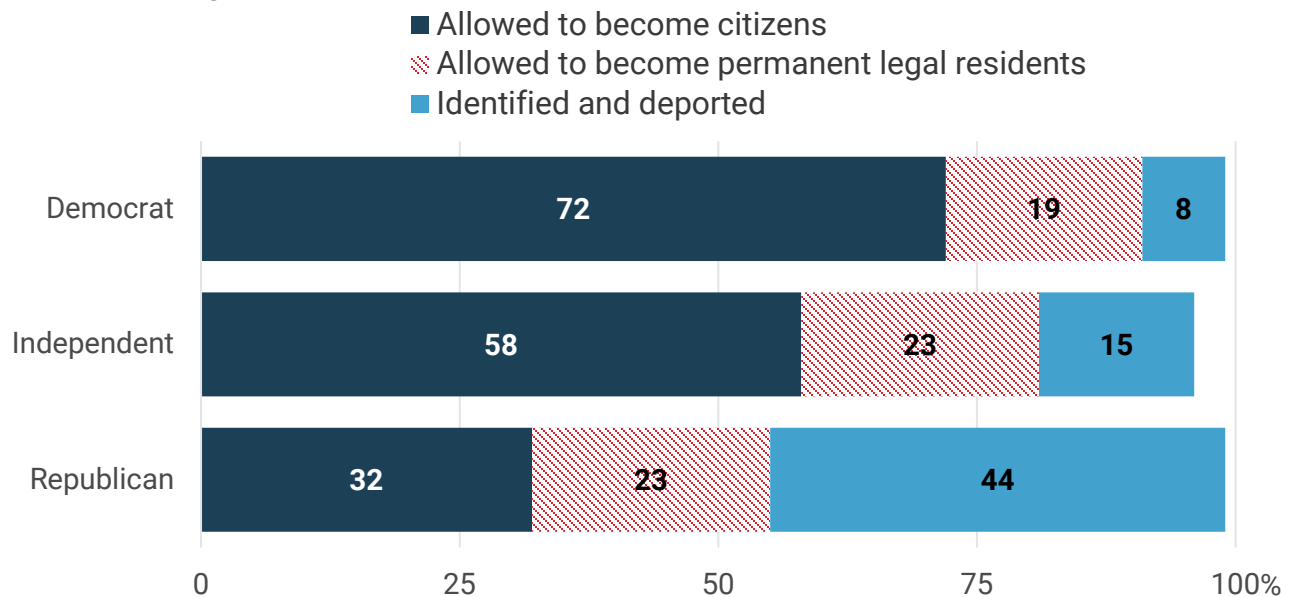
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents, September 16-29, 2025 with 1,361 adult Chicago residents, June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 adult Chicago residents, and March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



Democrats and independents are more likely to favor allowing immigrants residing in the U.S. illegally to become citizens, while Republicans are more likely to be proponents of identifying and deporting them.

Democrats and independents are more likely to believe immigrants without documentation should be allowed to become citizens.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.

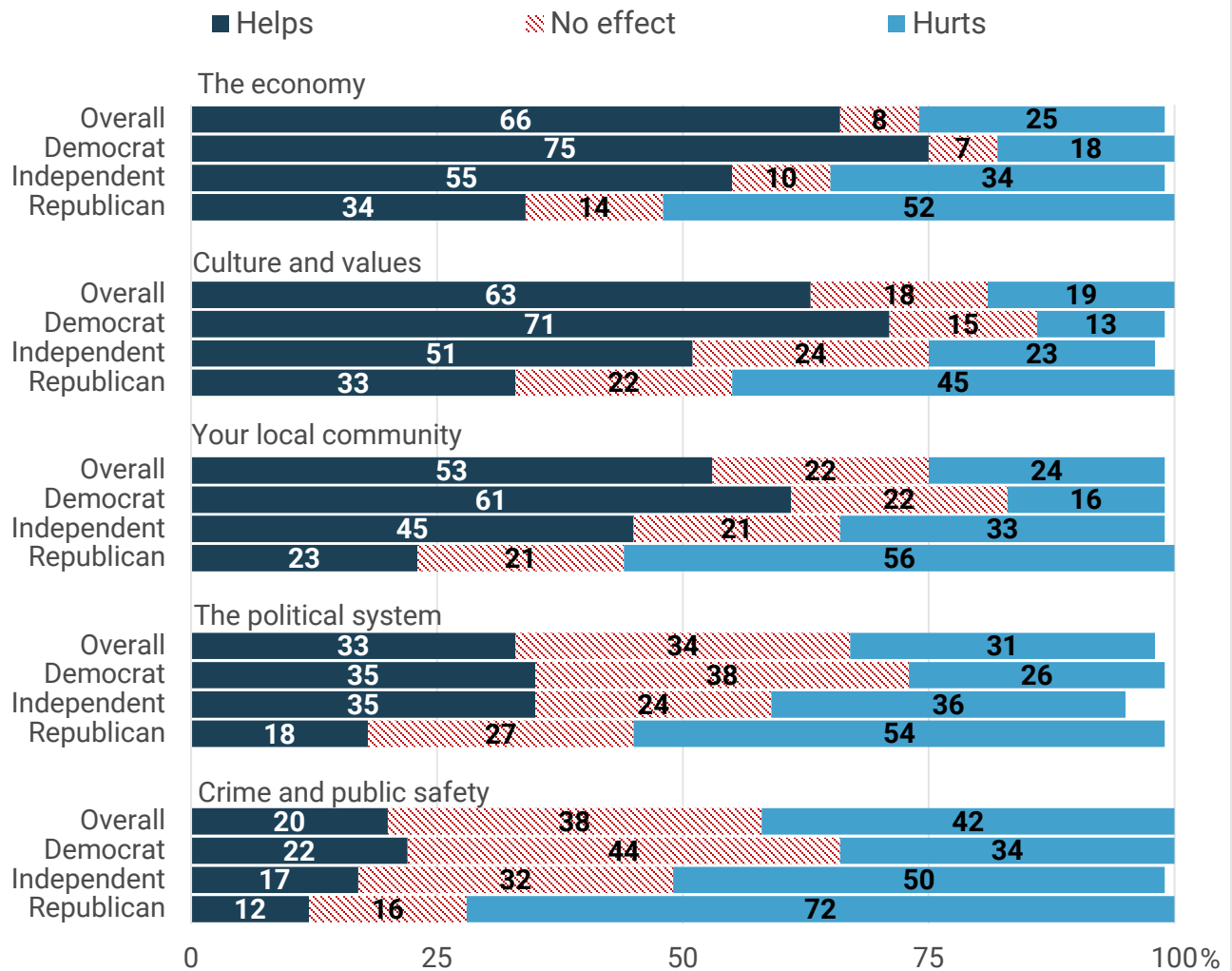


A majority of Chicagoans believe immigration benefits the city's economy and its culture and values.

Two-thirds of Chicagoans think immigration has had a positive impact on the economy and culture and values of the city, while about half agree that it has helped their local community. However, opinion is split regarding immigration's impact on the political system with similar shares saying it has helped, hurt, and has had no effect. Views on crime are also mixed with about 4 in 10 believing immigration has hurt and another 4 in 10 saying it has had no effect, but just 2 in 10 who think it has helped. Across all aspects, Republicans are more likely than Democrats or independents to view immigration's impact negatively.

Most Chicagoans think immigration helps the city's economy.

Percent of Chicagoans



Question: Overall, do you think immigration helps, hurts, or has no effect on Chicago in each of the following areas?

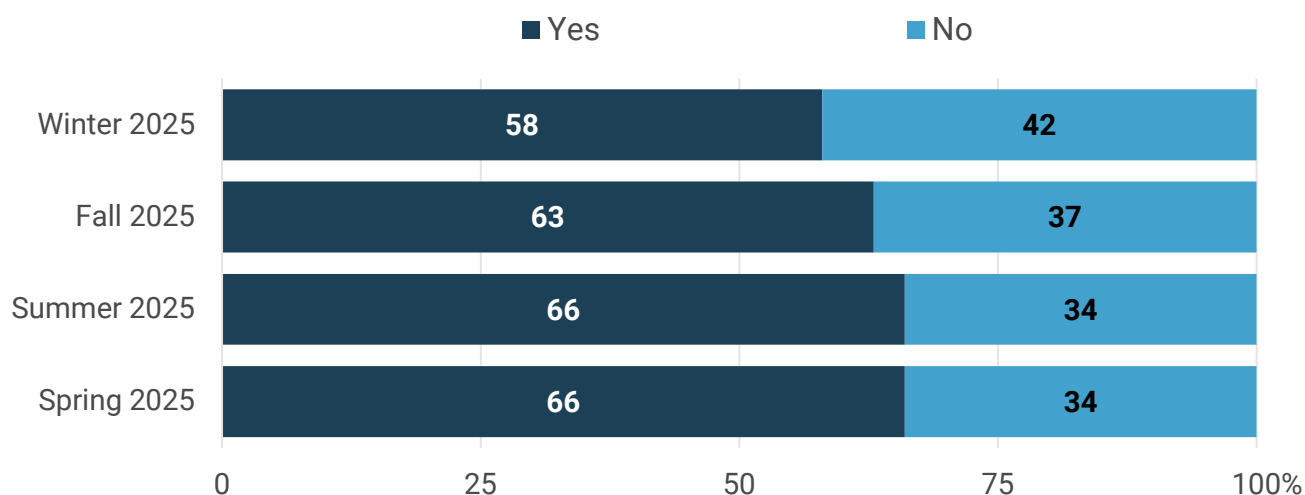
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



Concerns about safety persist, with 6 in 10 Chicagoans reporting they are afraid to walk alone at night in their neighborhood with worry about violent crime the most frequently cited reason.

More than half of Chicago adults report they are afraid to walk alone at night in the area around their homes, and the share saying so has remained largely unchanged throughout 2025. Like polls taken Spring, Summer, and Fall 2025, women are more likely to feel this way than men.

Six in 10 Chicago adults are afraid to walk alone at night around their homes. Percent of Chicagoans



Question: Is there any area around your home- that is, within a mile- where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?

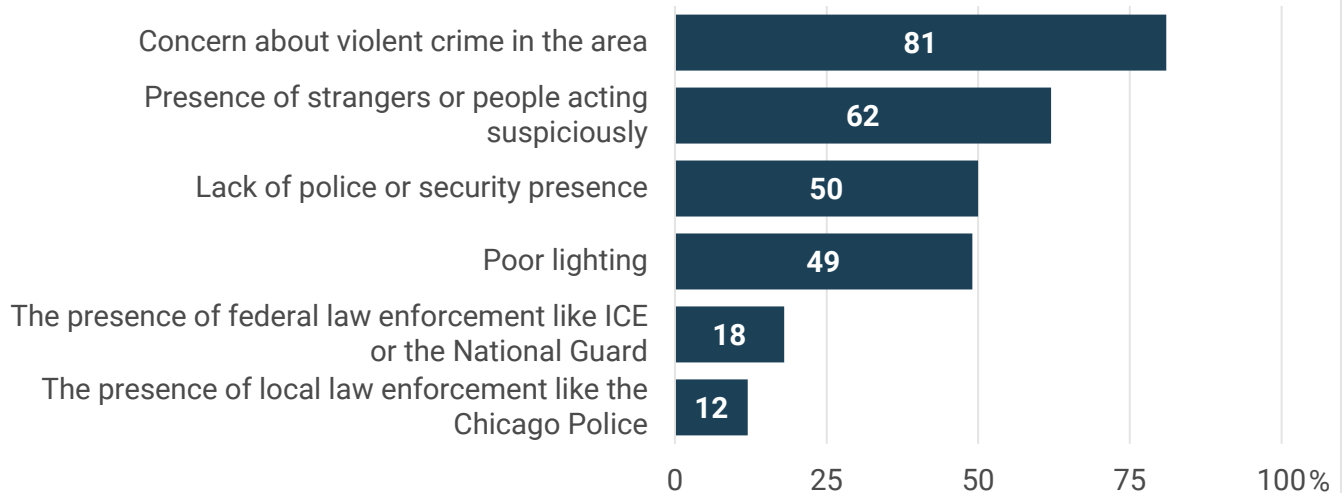
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 Chicago adult residents, September 16-29, 2025 with 1,361 Chicago adult residents, June 23-July 9, 2025 with 1,111 Chicago adult residents, and March 20-April 7, 2025 with 1,084 adult Chicago residents.



Among Chicago residents who fear walking alone at night in their neighborhood, 8 in 10 cite violent crime as a concern and 6 in 10 point to the presence of strangers or suspicious individuals. About half attribute their fear to poor lighting or a lack of police presence, while very few say it stems from the presence of federal or local law enforcement.

Concern about violent crime and the presence of strangers are the most cited reasons why Chicagoans feel afraid to walk alone at night in their neighborhood.

Percent of Chicagoans who feel afraid walking in their neighborhood at night



Question: Are any of the following reasons why you feel afraid to walk alone at night within a mile of your home?

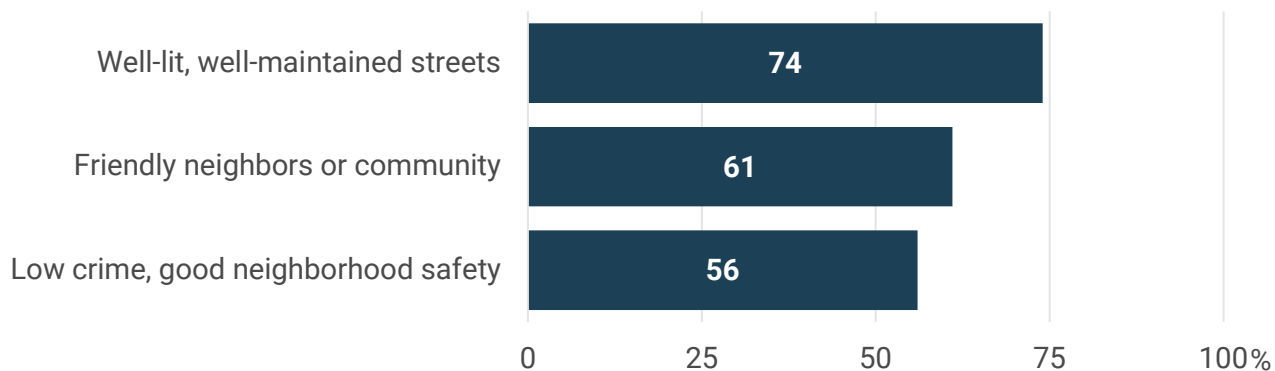
Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents.



Conversely, among Chicagoans who feel safe walking alone at night, three-quarters point to well-lit, well-maintained streets, while 6 in 10 credit friendly neighbors and a strong sense of community or low crime and overall neighborhood safety.

Well-lit, well-kept streets are the top reason Chicagoans feel safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night.

Percent of Chicagoans who feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night



Question: Are any of the following reasons why you feel safe walking alone at night within a mile of your home?

Source: ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 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 winter 2025 survey using two sample sources: (1) NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panelists who reside in Chicago and (2) NORC's ChicagoSpeaks Panelists.

AmeriSpeak and ChicagoSpeaks are probability-based panels. 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 November 24 and December 8, 2025 with Chicago residents aged 18 and older, the overall study target population. Overall, 1,230 Chicago residents completed the survey. 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. 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 +/- 3.9 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, 28 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.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included Chicago region, age, sex, 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 ChicagoSpeaks-BD@norc.org or visit go.norc.org/ChicagoSpeaks.

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