

## Research Brief

While most Chicagoans oppose the federal government's immigration enforcement and express support for immigrants, they remain divided on overall immigration levels and prioritize neighborhood safety as a quality-of-life concern.

Chicagoans remain critical of the federal government's immigration enforcement practices, according to a new ChicagoSpeaks survey from NORC at the University of Chicago. Overall, nearly two-thirds (64%) oppose "Operation Midway Blitz," the name for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's use of federal immigration and law enforcement agencies to arrest and deport immigrants in the U.S. illegally, and residents express concern about the effects stricter immigration enforcement is having on the city.

Few agree with arguments in favor of strict enforcement, such as that it helps protect American jobs or resources, or that mass deportations make Chicago communities safer. Majorities say it has had a negative impact on trust in law enforcement, public safety, neighborhood stability, the local economy, and residents' access to public services. Most (56%) say that the statement "the federal government is violating constitutional rights in the way it is enforcing immigration laws" describes their views at least somewhat well.

Despite opposition to the federal government's handling of immigration, residents of the Windy City remain divided on whether the number of immigrants in the U.S. should be reduced, stay the same, or increase.

Sympathy for immigrants is widespread. Sixty-five percent support offering legal or financial help to immigrants facing deportation and 71% say they should be allowed to become citizens, provided they meet certain requirements.

When asked what would most improve quality of life in their neighborhood, two in ten cited safety concerns, the most common answer.

The Chicago poll was conducted March 16-23, 2026 using the ChicagoSpeaks® Panel, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online interviews were conducted with 1,147 adults. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points.

## Chicagoans are divided on immigration levels but broadly support providing a pathway to citizenship.

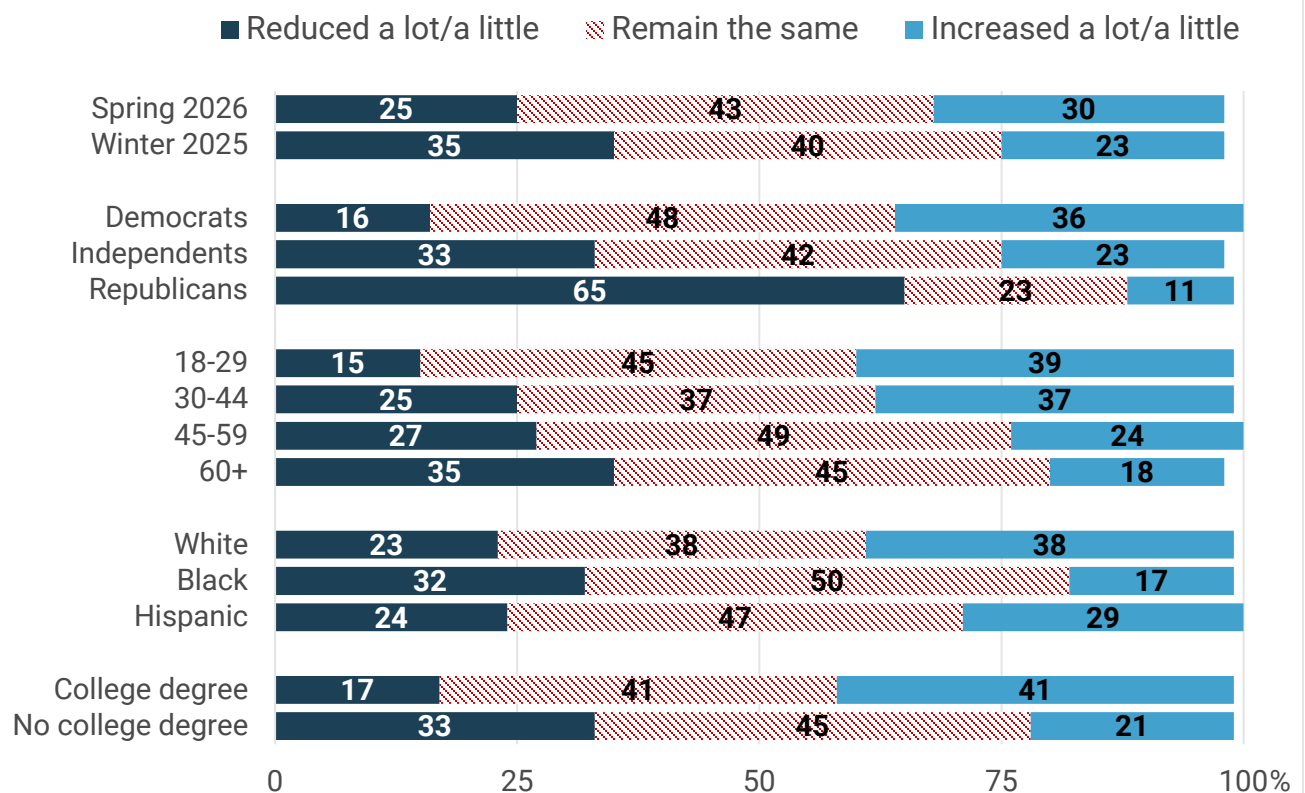
Chicagoans remain split on whether the number of immigrants to America should be increased, reduced, or remain the same. Fewer say the number should be reduced compared to the Winter 2025 ChicagoSpeaks Poll.

Republicans are more likely to think the number of immigrants in the country should be reduced compared to Democrats. About half of Democrats say the number of immigrants should stay the same.

White adults and Hispanic adults are more likely than Black adults to say the number of immigrants should be increased, as are adults with a college degree compared to those without one, and those under 30 compared to those 60 or older.

### Fewer Chicagoans want the number of immigrants living in the U.S. reduced compared to winter of 2025.

Percent of Chicagoans



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

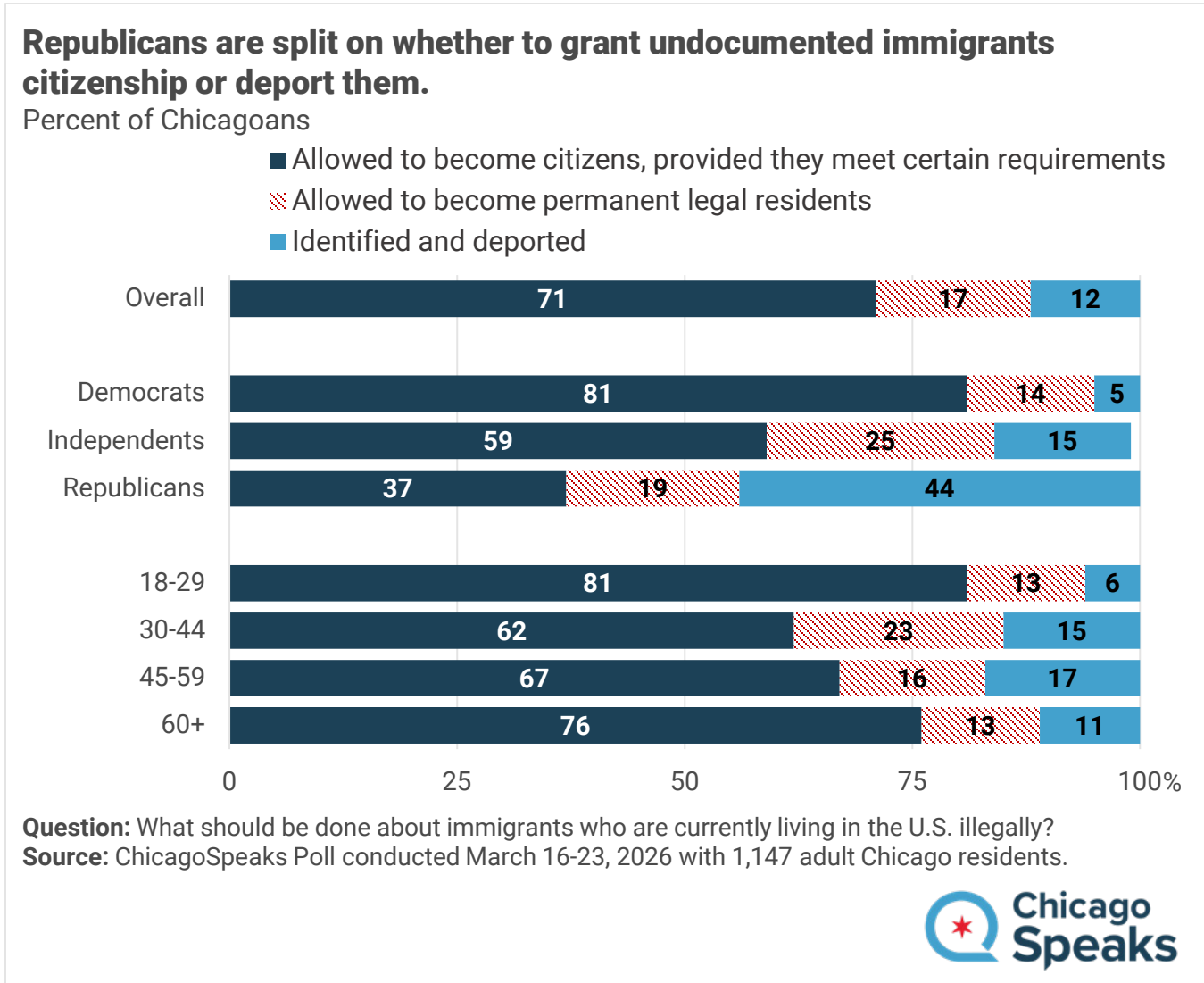
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Polls conducted November 24-December 8, 2025 with 1,230 adult Chicago residents and March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 adult Chicago residents.



Most Chicagoans (71%) feel that immigrants currently living in the U.S. illegally should be allowed to become citizens, provided they meet certain requirements. About one in ten say they should be identified and deported. These findings are similar to prior ChicagoSpeaks polling from 2025.

Similar shares of Republicans think undocumented immigrants should be granted citizenship as think they should be deported. Most Democrats say they should be allowed to become U.S. citizens.

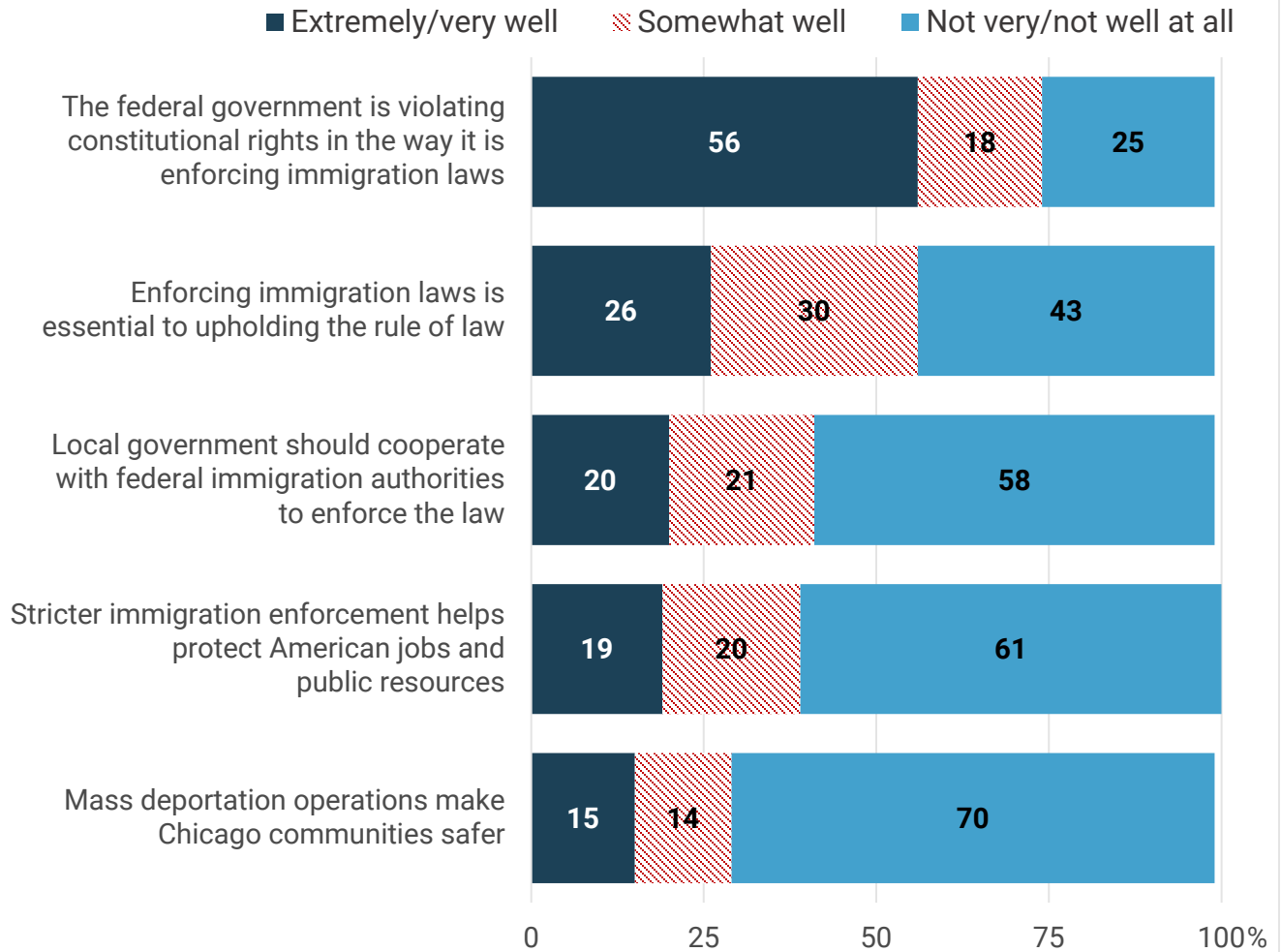
Fewer adults between the ages of 30 and 59 say that immigrants should be granted citizenship compared to those under 30.



When asked how well certain statements describe their views on federal immigration enforcement practices, 56% of Chicagoans say that the statement “The federal government is violating constitutional rights in the way it is enforcing immigration laws” reflects their views extremely or very well. Fewer share the sentiments that local government should cooperate with federal immigration authorities to enforce the law (20%), stricter immigration enforcement helps protect American jobs and public resources (19%), or that mass deportation operations make Chicago communities safer (15%). Chicagoans are split on whether enforcing immigration is essential to upholding the rule of law.

## Most Chicagoans say the federal government is violating constitutional rights in the way it is enforcing immigration laws.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** How well do each of the following statements reflect your views on federal immigration enforcement and deportation practices?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 adult Chicago residents.



Democrats are more likely than Republicans to feel the federal government is violating constitutional rights with how it is enforcing immigration laws (65% vs. 34%), while Republicans are more likely than Democrats to feel the other statements express their views, including the sentiment that enforcing immigration laws is essential to upholding the rule of law (77% vs. 16%).

Adults under 30 are also less likely than adults 60 or older to support pro-enforcement statements, such as that enforcing immigration is essential to upholding the rule of law (20% vs. 33%), but more likely to say the federal government is violating constitutional rights when it comes to immigration enforcement (64% vs. 46%).

## Chicagoans largely oppose Operation Midway Blitz and federal immigration enforcement efforts.

Two-thirds of Chicagoans oppose Operation Midway Blitz conducted by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, using federal immigration and law enforcement agencies to arrest and deport individuals without legal documentation. A similar share felt the same when asked in December 2025.

Seven in ten Republicans support the operation while 8 in 10 Democrats oppose it.

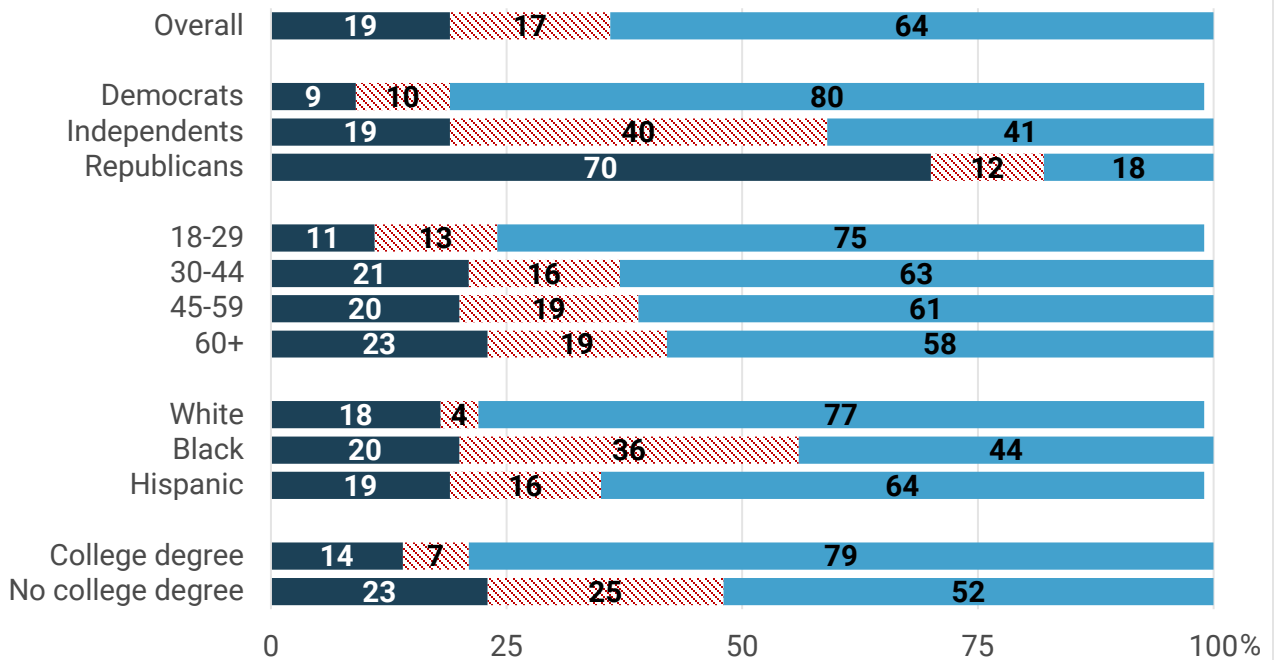
White adults in Chicago are more likely than Black adults and Hispanic adults to oppose Operation Midway Blitz.

Adults under 30 compared to those 60 or older are more likely to oppose Operation Midway Blitz, as are those with a college degree compared to those without one.

### White adults in Chicago are more likely than Black and Hispanic adults to oppose Operation Midway Blitz.

Percent of Chicagoans

■ Strongly/somewhat support   ■ Neither support nor oppose   ■ Strongly/somewhat oppose



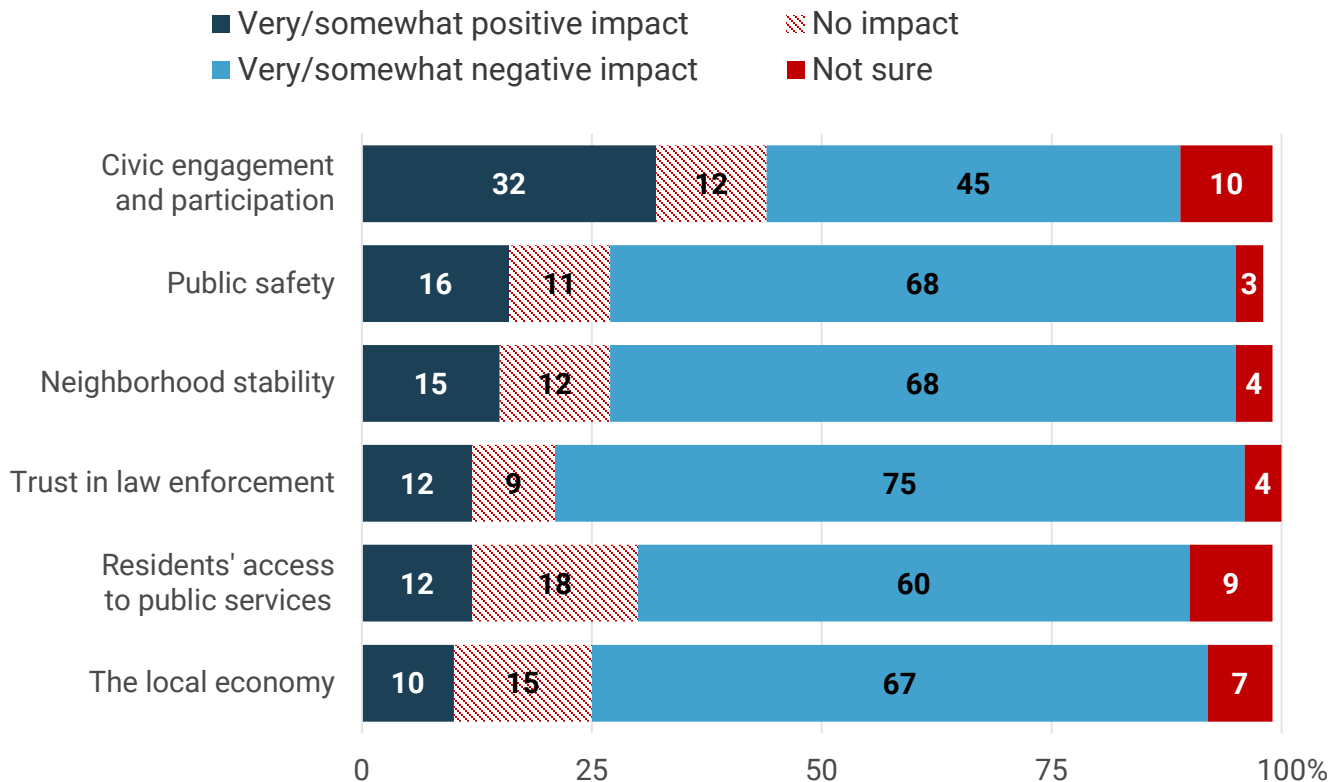
**Question:** Since September 2025, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has conducted "Operation Midway Blitz," using federal immigration and law enforcement agencies with the stated goal to arrest and deport individuals who are in the country without legal documentation. Do you support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose Operation Midway Blitz?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 adult Chicago residents.



Around 7 in 10 Chicagoans say that federal immigration enforcement is having a negative impact in Chicago on trust in law enforcement, public safety, neighborhood stability, and the local economy. Six in ten feel the same when it comes to residents’ access to public services. Around half feel that civic engagement and participation have been negatively impacted. Few Chicagoans say immigration enforcement has had a positive impact.

**Few say immigration enforcement has had a positive impact on Chicago.**  
Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** Overall, would you say that immigration enforcement actions by federal immigration and law enforcement agencies have had a positive impact, negative impact, or no impact on each of the following in Chicago? If you're not sure, you can indicate that too.

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 adult Chicago residents.



Democrats are more likely to say each factor has been negatively impacted compared to Republicans, including public safety (81% vs. 23%) and neighborhood stability (82% vs. 25%).

Younger adults under 30 are more likely than adults 60 or older to think neighborhood stability (75% vs. 63%), trust in law enforcement (81% vs. 67%), and residents’ access to public services (65% vs. 52%) have been negatively impacted.

White and Hispanic adults are more likely than Black adults to think neighborhood stability (76% and 72% vs. 54%) and the local economy (75% and 69% vs. 54%) are negatively affected by immigration enforcement. White adults are also more pessimistic than Black adults when it comes to impacts on public safety (73% vs. 63%), but they are more likely than Hispanic adults to say that civic engagement and participation are positively impacted (45% vs. 24%).

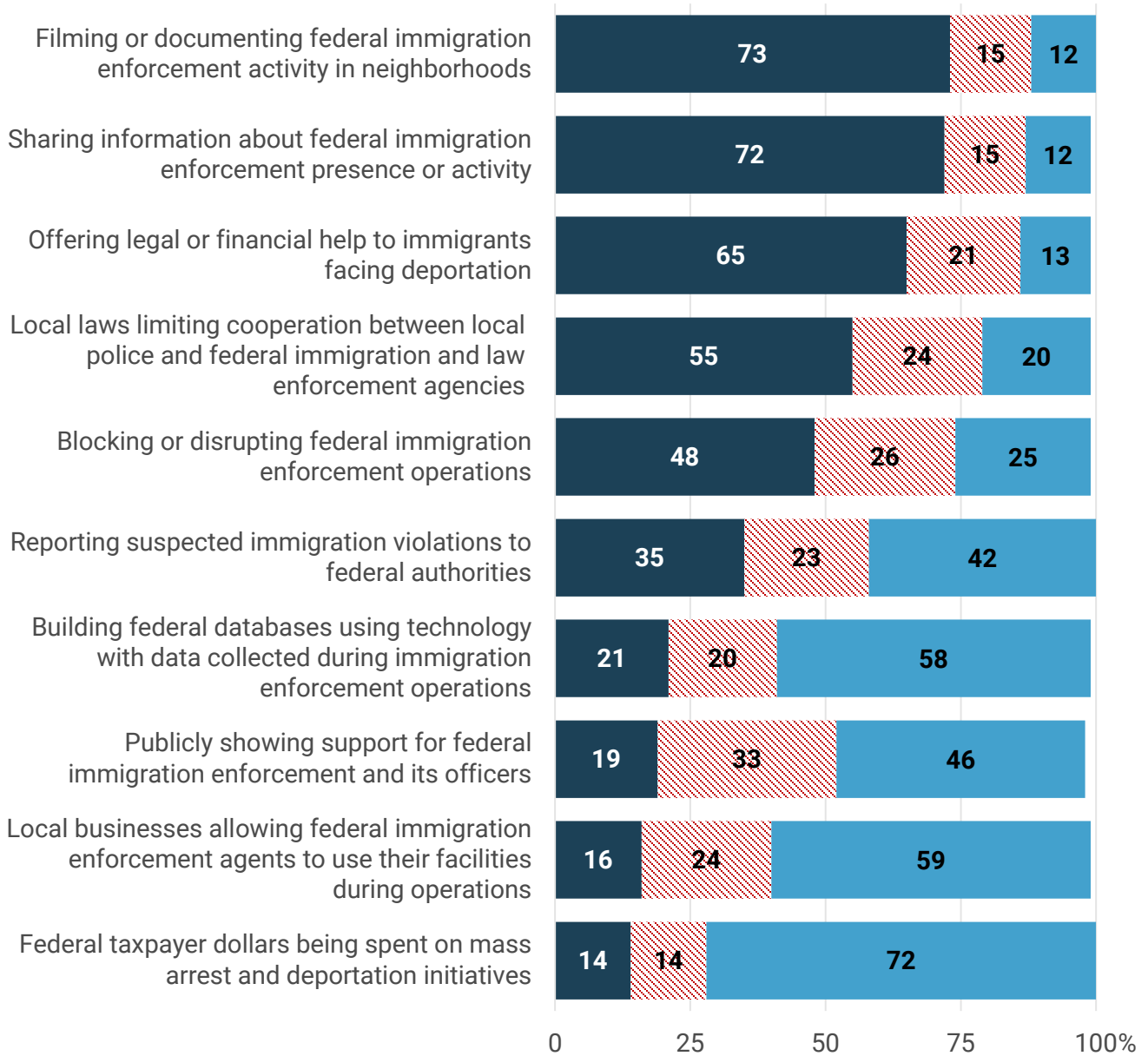
When it comes to efforts in response to immigration enforcement, three in four Chicagoans support filming immigration enforcement activity in neighborhoods and sharing information about its presence. A majority also support offering legal or financial help to immigrants facing deportation and local laws that limit cooperation between local police and federal immigration enforcement agencies. About half support blocking or disrupting federal immigration enforcement operations and *oppose* publicly showing support for immigration enforcement officers. Most also oppose federal taxes being spent on mass arrest and deportation initiatives, local businesses allowing immigration agents to use their facilities during operations, and building federal databases with data collected during immigration enforcement operations. Chicagoans are split on whether they support or oppose reporting suspected immigration violations to federal authorities.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to take anti-immigration enforcement stances.

## Most Chicagoans support helping immigrants facing deportation and oppose federal taxes being spent on mass deportation initiatives.

Percent of Chicagoans

■ Strongly/somewhat support    ▨ Neither support nor oppose    ■ Strongly/somewhat oppose



**Question:** In general, do you support or oppose, or neither support nor oppose the following actions in Chicago in response to ongoing federal immigration enforcement activity?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 adult Chicago residents.



A third of Chicagoans support local or county police being used to enforce federal immigration laws in the city, and a quarter say the same when asked about federal immigration enforcement agencies, the national guard, and active-duty U.S. military. A majority oppose using active-duty U.S. military and the national guard while about half do not want federal immigration enforcement agencies or local policing used.

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to support the use of each entity.

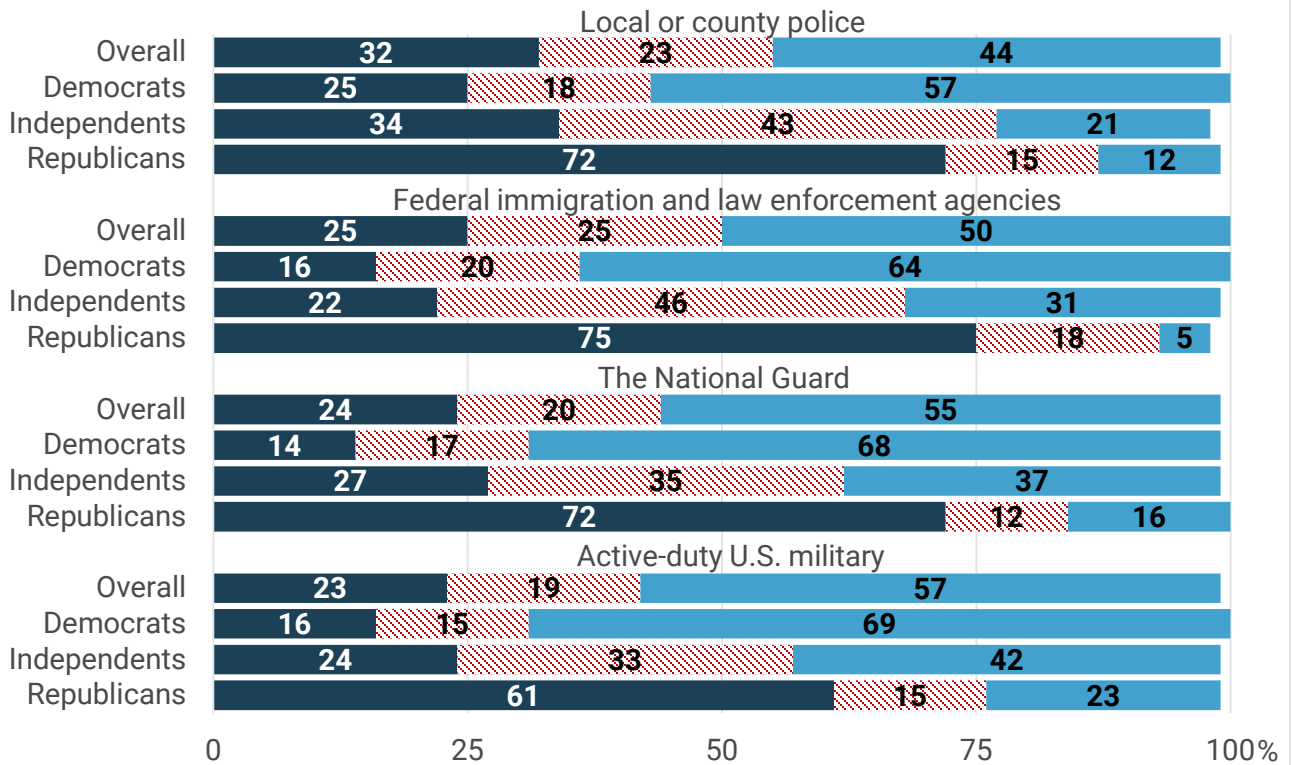
Those age 60 or older are more likely than those under 30 to support the use of federal immigration enforcement agencies (31% vs. 15%) and local or county police (39% vs. 23%).

White adults are more likely than Black adults to oppose enforcement of federal immigration laws by active-duty U.S. military (68% vs. 49%) and federal enforcement agencies (57% vs. 38%).

### Most Chicagoans oppose using the military and National Guard to enforce federal immigration laws.

Percent of Chicagoans

■ Strongly/somewhat support    ▨ Neither support nor oppose    ■ Strongly/somewhat oppose



**Question:** In general, do you support, oppose, or neither support nor oppose the following entities being used to enforce federal immigration laws in the Chicago area?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 adult Chicago residents.

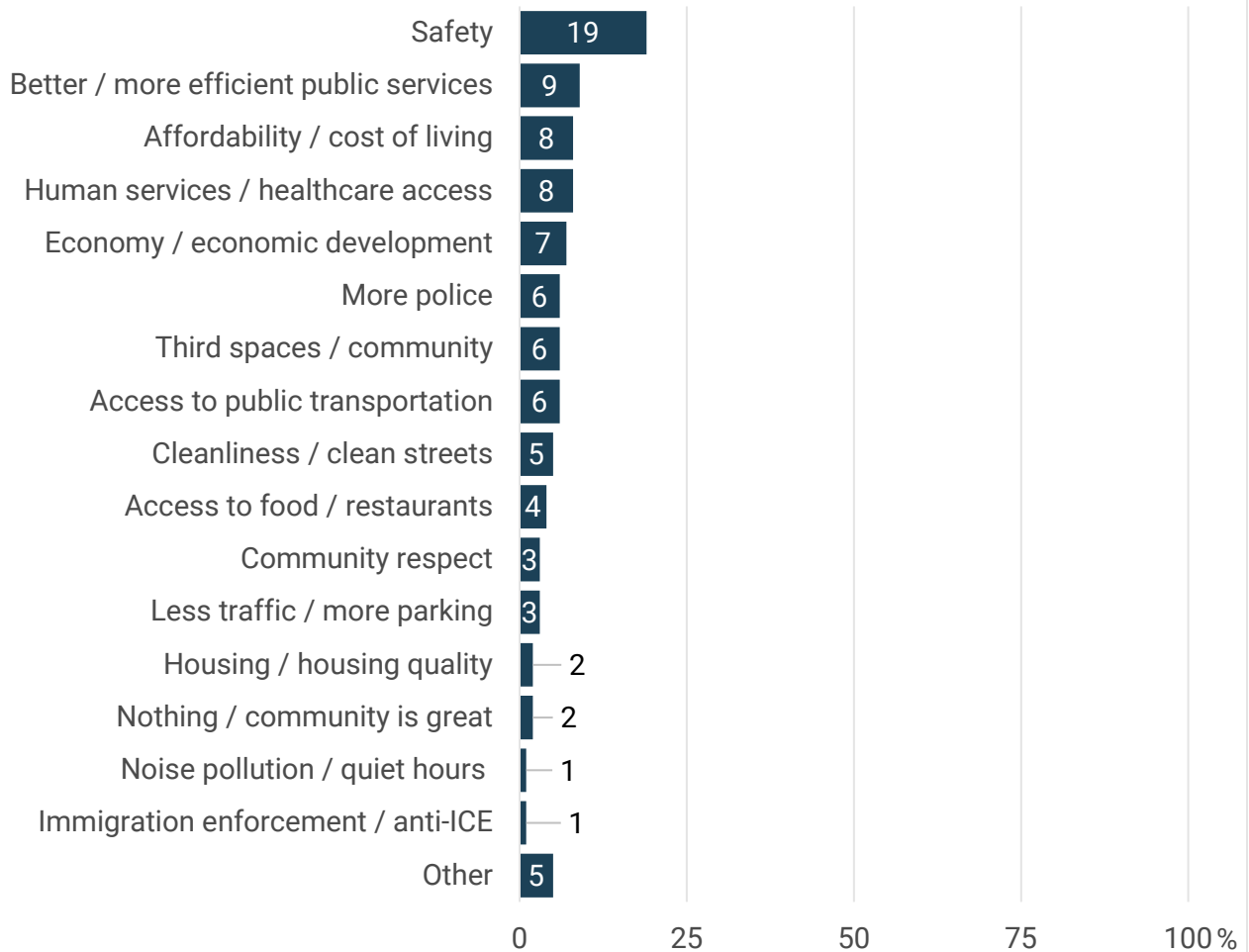


## Residents have a wide range of views on improving quality of life

Safety is the most common answer Chicagoans offer when asked to write what would most improve quality of life in their neighborhood. Other priorities include better public services, increased affordability, and additional human services (including access to health care and improved schools).

### 2 in 10 Chicagoans say safety is the one thing that would most improve quality of life in their neighborhood.

Percent of Chicagoans



**Question:** What is one thing that would most improve quality of life in your neighborhood?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 adult Chicago residents.



## About one in four Chicagoans reported feeling depressed or having little interest in activities over the past two weeks.

Half of Chicagoans have not felt depressed or experienced little interest doing things over the past two weeks. Around 4 in 10 have been bothered by each at least several days over the same time frame.

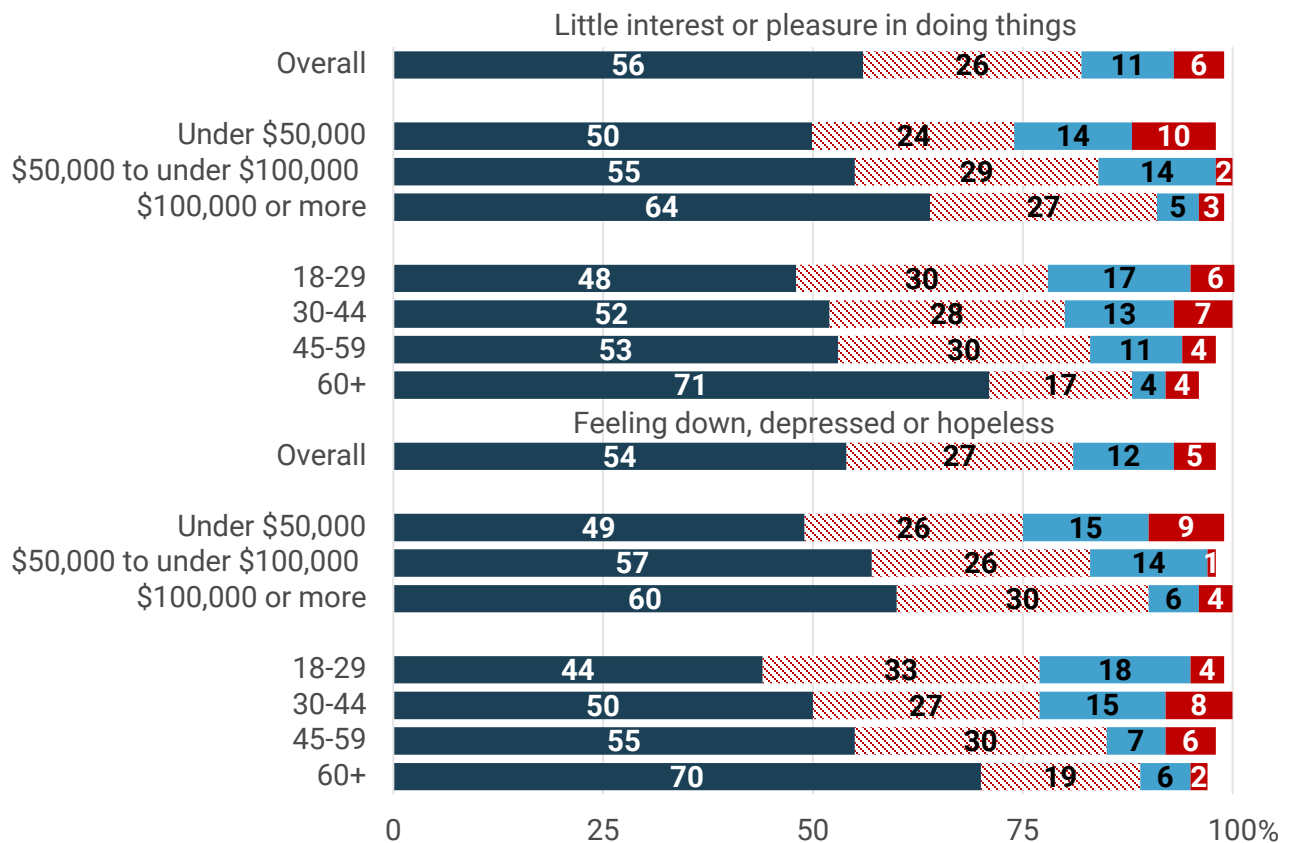
Sixty percent of adults under 30 have felt either little interest doing things or depressed at least several days or more over the past couple weeks compared to 34% of adults 60 or older.

Fifty-five percent of adults in households making less than \$50,000 have felt at least one of those symptoms several days or more in the past couple weeks while 45% of those in households making \$100,000 or more say the same.

### About half of Chicagoans have felt depressed over the last 2 weeks.

Percent of Chicagoans

■ Not at all    ▨ Several days    ■ More than half the days    ■ Nearly every day



**Question:** Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks Poll conducted March 16-23, 2026 with 1,147 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 2026 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 March 16 and March 23, 2026 with Chicago residents aged 18 and older, the overall study target population. Overall, 1,147 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 +/- 4.1 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, 12 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 2024 1-year estimates.

For more information, email [ChicagoSpeaks-BD@norc.org](mailto:ChicagoSpeaks-BD@norc.org) or visit [go.norc.org/ChicagoSpeaks](https://www.norc.org/ChicagoSpeaks).

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