



The State
of
**State
Courts**

★
2016
★

★
POLL
★

NCSC
National Center for State Courts

SURVEY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Chief Judge
Eric T. Washington
District of Columbia



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West Virginia



Stephanie Hess
Ohio



PK Jameson
Florida



Jesse Rutledge
NCSC

METHODOLOGY



WHAT: NCSC nationwide telephone survey

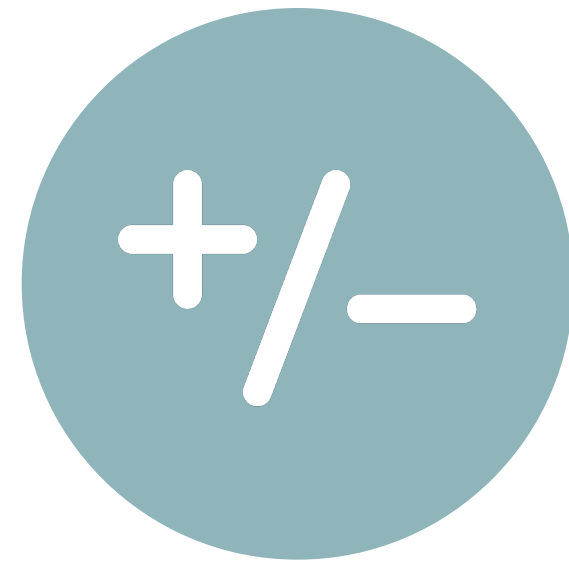
WHO: Conducted by GBA Strategies

WHEN: November 14–17, 2016

POLLED: 1,000 Registered Voters

STATS: MOE +/- 3.1% 19 times out of 20

KEY FINDINGS



There are signs of **positive momentum** in public trust—
but innovation and **technology concerns persist**

A glaring **lack of understanding about court funding** is reflective
of misperceptions about
government spending generally

If courts lead on fines
and fees reform, the
public will follow

The public believes that
the **ethnicity** of a judge
may impact fairness

FIGURE #1

Positive momentum on core public trust questions vs. 2015 data.

* Percentage “swing” from 2015 survey. Percentages represent gap between “Agree” and “Disagree” from same questions in 2015 survey.

Q: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”*

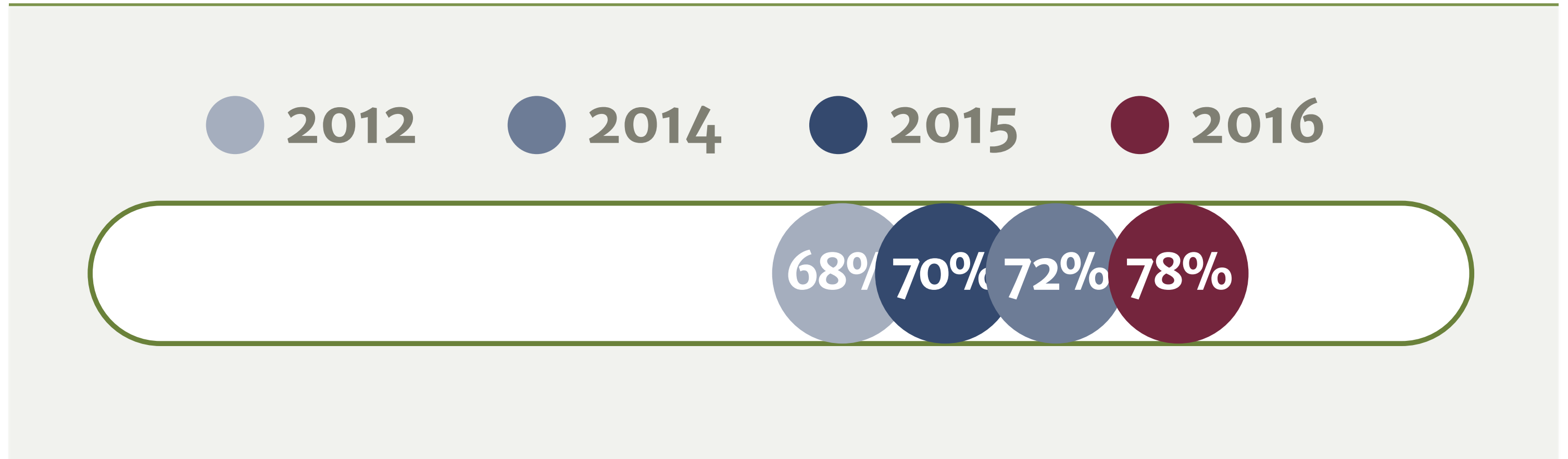


FIGURE #2

Procedural fairness is a hallmark of the court system.

Q: “Regardless of the outcome, were you satisfied with the fairness of the process in your dealings with the court system?”

Percent who reported feeling satisfied with their experience.



(N=725 who reported they had been party to a family matter; or had been to court for a traffic or parking ticket; or had been involved in any way in a criminal case; or had filed a case, or had had one filed against them)

FIGURE #3

Courts continue to face their own innovation imperative.

Q: “Which statement comes closer to your own view?”

Statement 1

“Just like any business, (STATE) courts must *change with the times to meet the needs of their customers* and to keep up with new innovations.”

Statement 2

“(STATE) courts are not a bank or a department store—the court system is the ultimate protector of our constitutional rights and *shouldn’t significantly change the way it does business.*”

Don’t Know

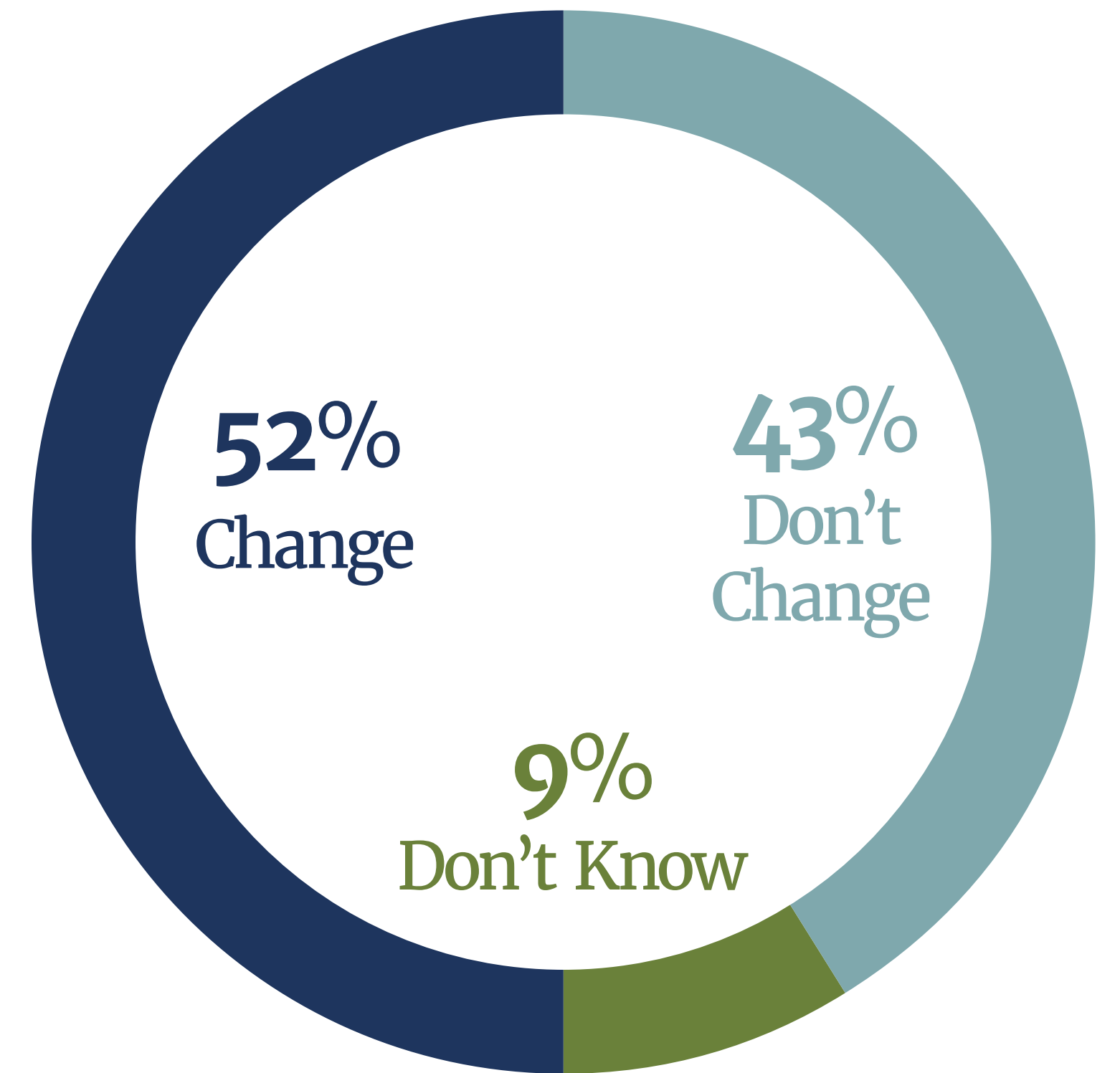


FIGURE #4

Americans are not familiar with government spending priorities...

Q: “On which of the following do you believe the federal government spends the most/least on an annual basis?”

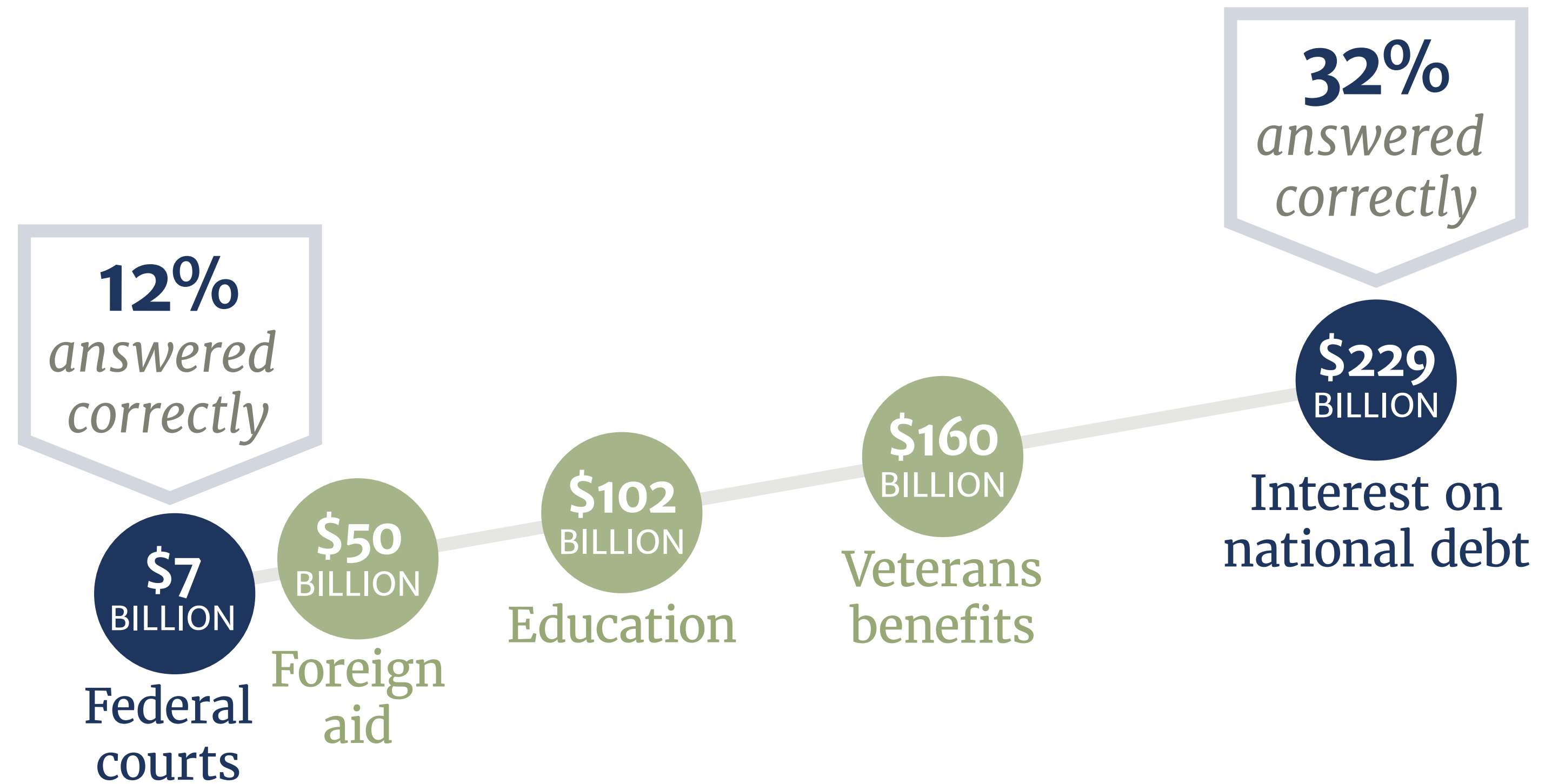
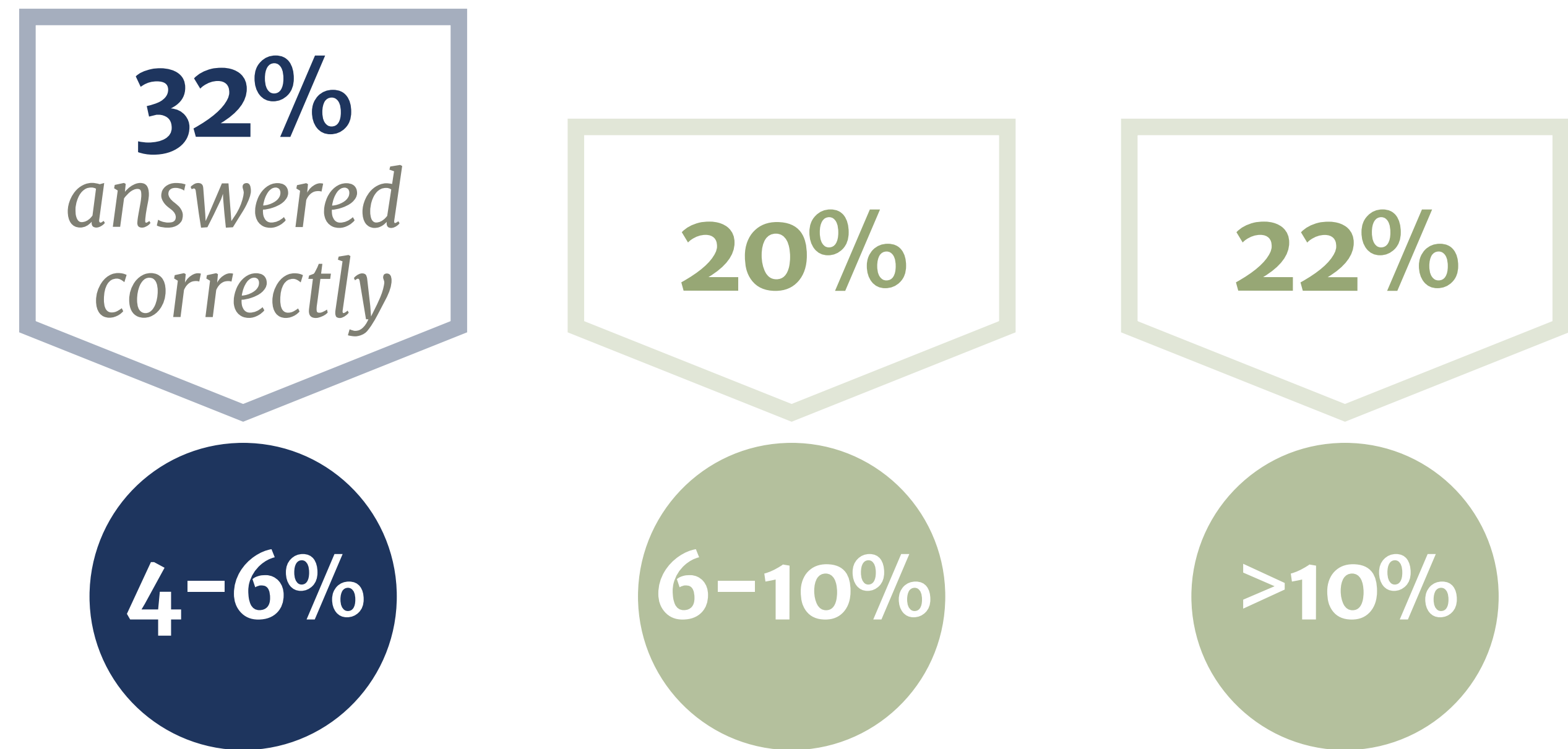


FIGURE #4, *cont'd*

...Or the unemployment rate.

Q: “What percent is the current official unemployment rate in the U.S.?”

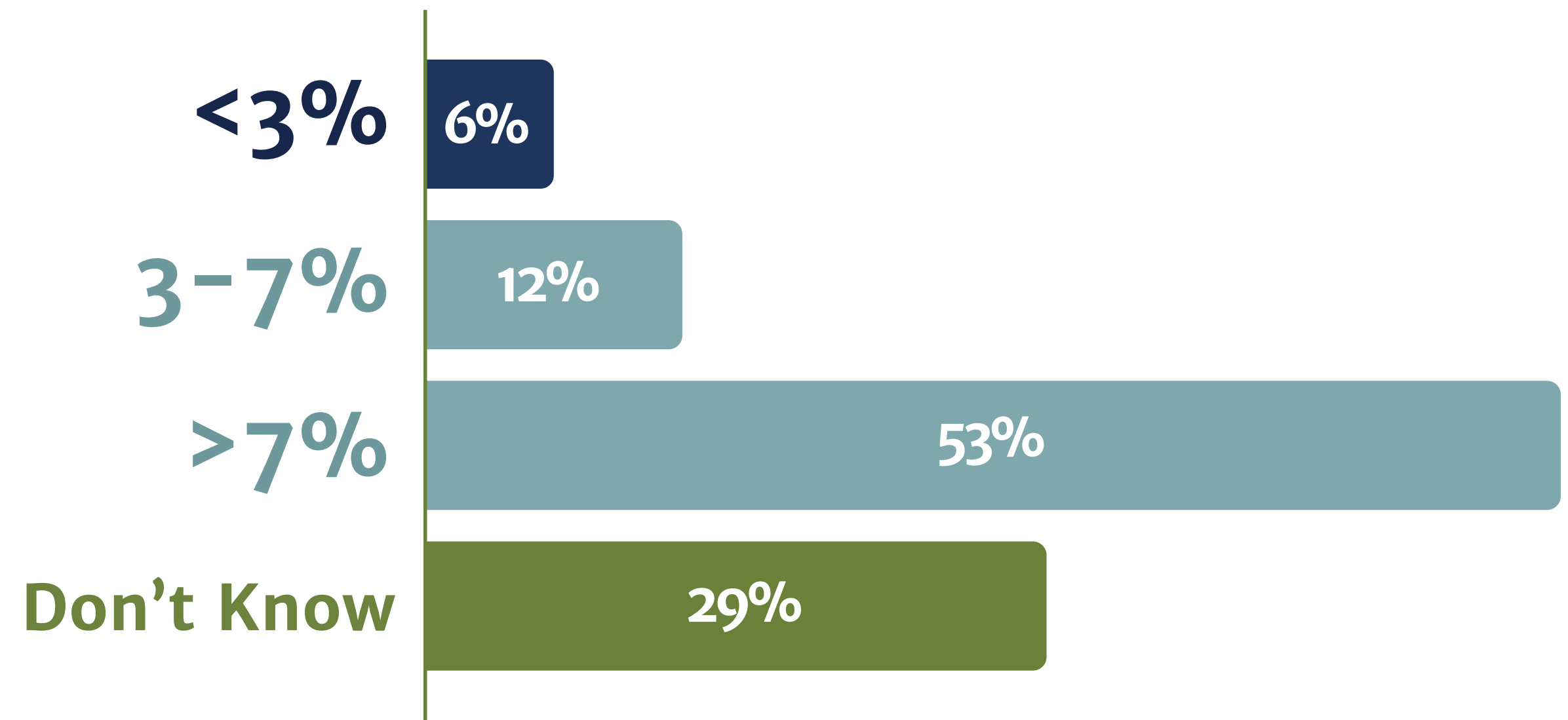


Correct answer at time of survey = 4.9%.

FIGURE #5

Americans think state courts are funded at much higher levels than they are.

Q: “If you had to guess, what percent of the state budget do you believe is spent on the state court system?”



↓ 13%

Respondents most knowledgeable about levels of court funding give lower ratings on job performance.

FIGURE #6

Voters want judges focused on fairness and ethics, not fines and fees.

Q: “Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?”

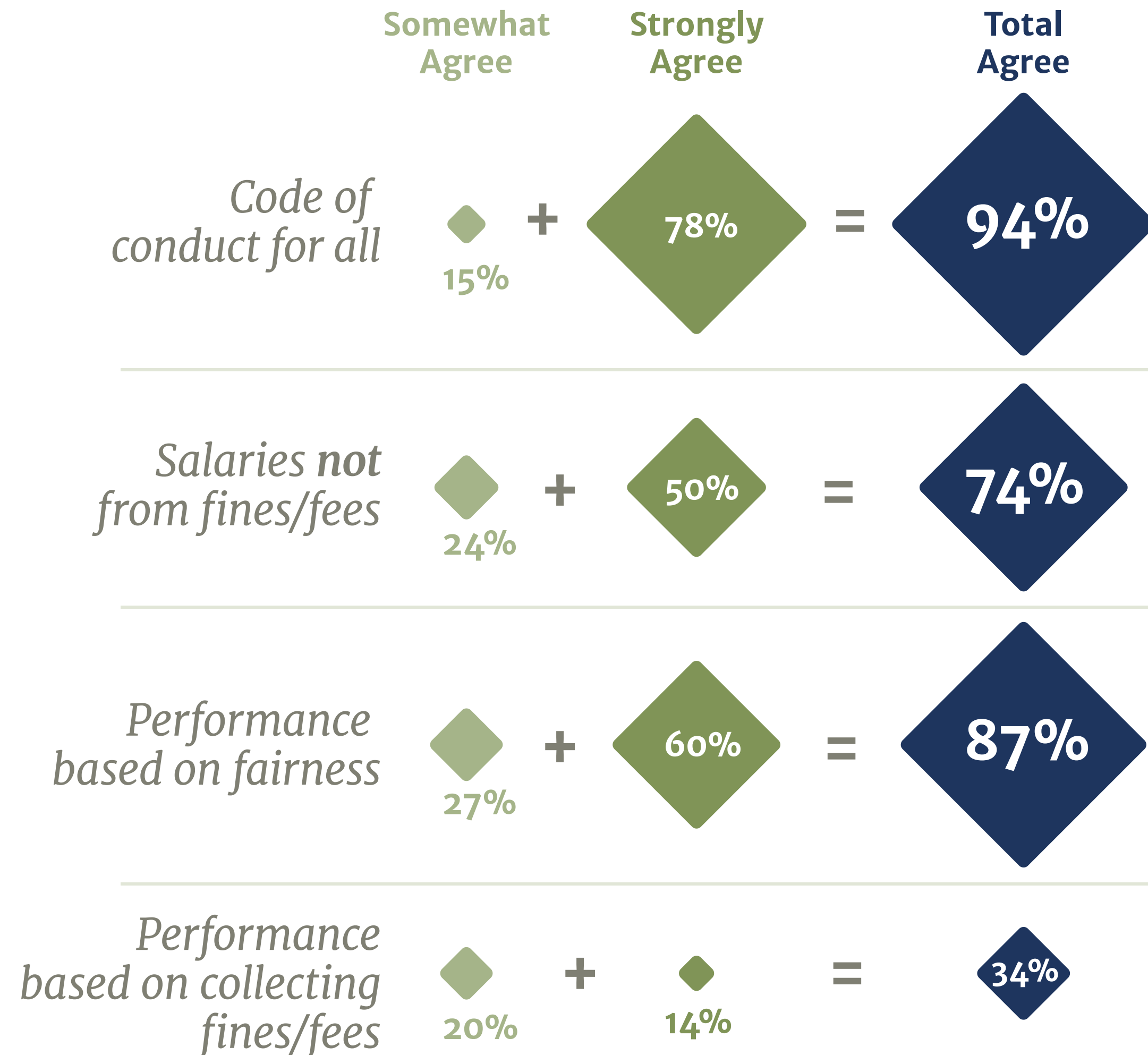


FIGURE #7

There is strong distaste for so-called “Debtors’ Prisons...”

Q: “Do you approve or disapprove of imprisoning a defendant who is poor due to an inability to pay court fines and fees?”



FIGURE #8

...And strong support for alternatives to incarceration.

Q: “Would you support or oppose (STATE) courts exploring each proposal as an alternative to prison for individuals who are unable to pay court fines and fees?”

Percent saying somewhat or strongly support

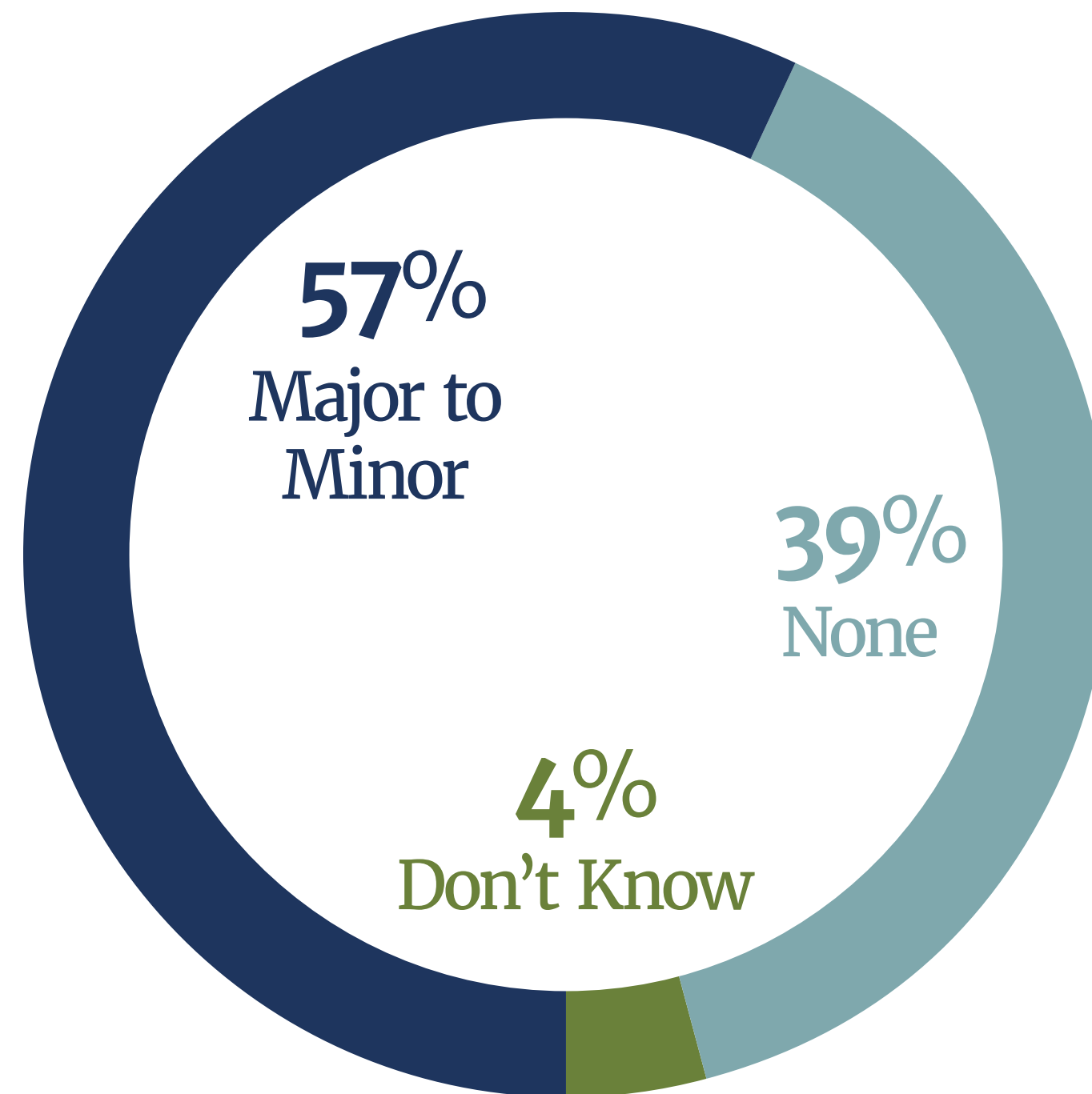
<i>Community service</i>	<i>Court-mandated training/certification</i>	<i>Allow judges to modify/waive</i>	<i>Set fines/fees based on income</i>
93%	93%	79%	76%

FIGURE #9

The public believes that the ethnicity of a judge may impact fairness.

Q: “Do you believe the race or ethnicity of a judge has a major impact, minor impact, or no real impact on how they decide cases before them?”

The majority see an impact...



...but that impact is primarily viewed as minor.

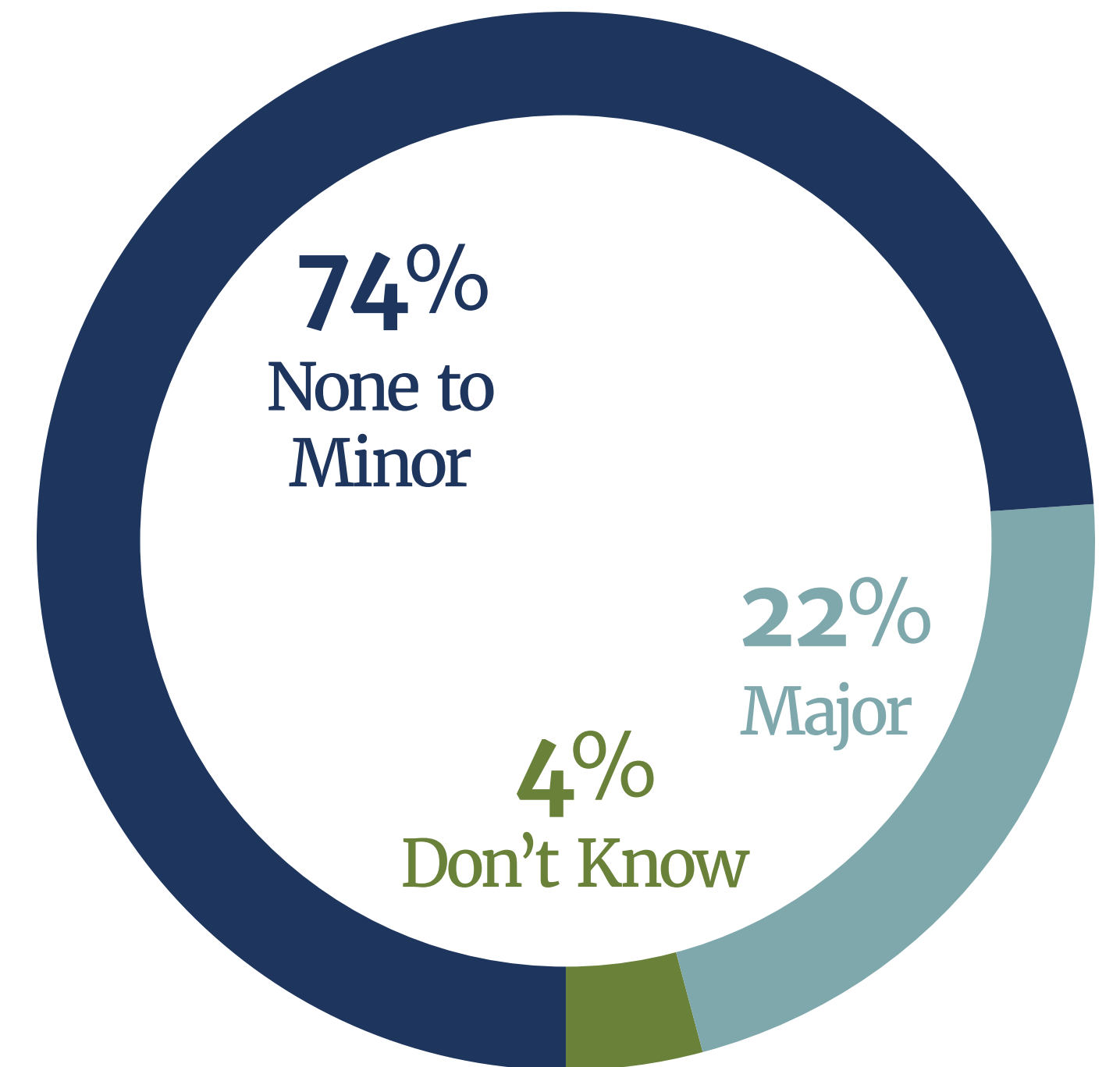
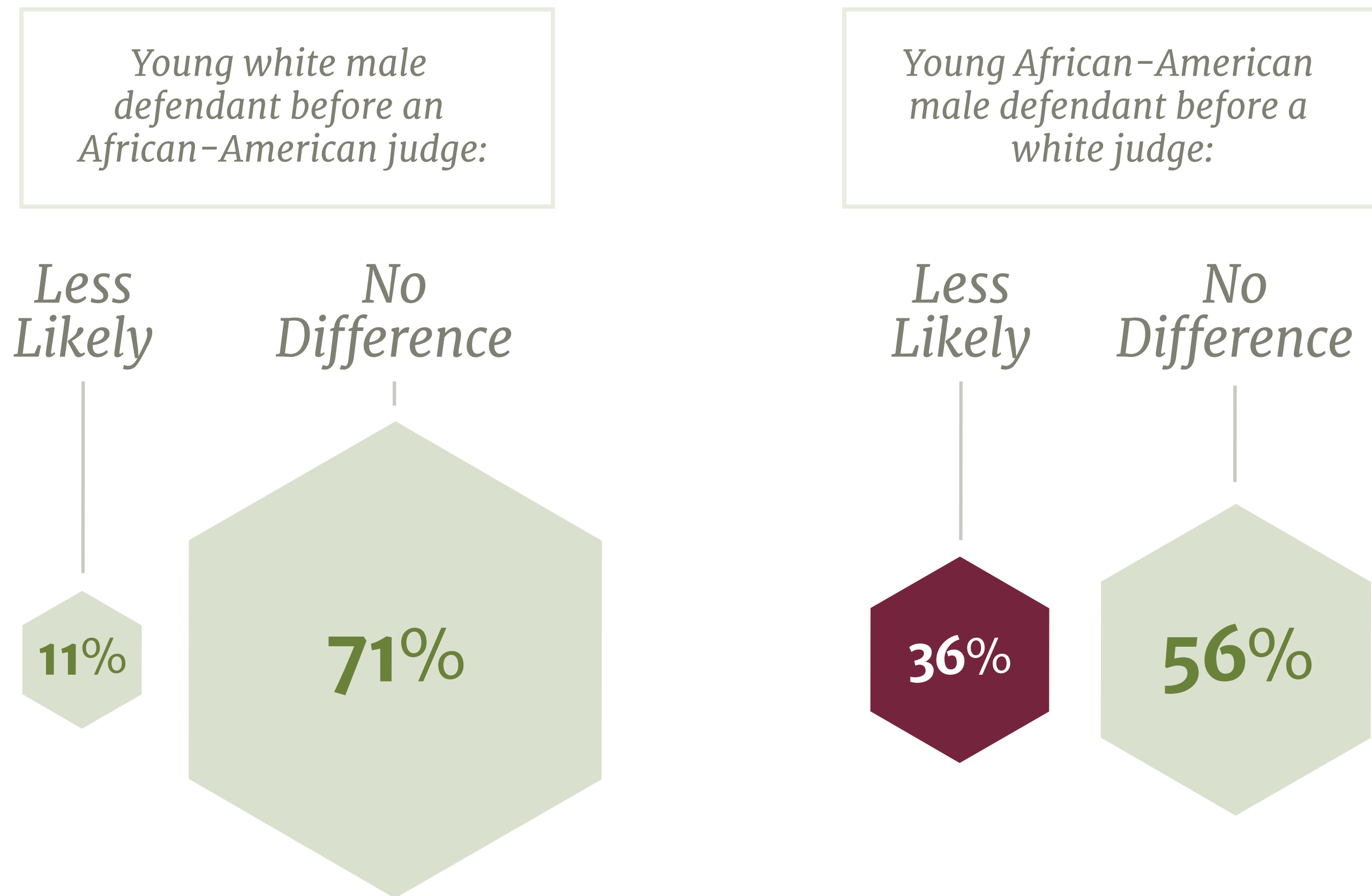


FIGURE #10

Moving from the abstract to the concrete, respondents perceive a greater impact.

Q: “Do you think that a young (African American/white) male would be more likely or less likely to receive a fair trial if the judge were (white/African American)?”



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For more information, visit:
ncsc.org/2016survey