

TEXAS COURTS

PUBLIC TRUST & CONFIDENCE STUDY



JULY 2018

METHODOLOGY

- The 2018 Texas Public Trust and Confidence Study was conducted via phone by SSRS, an independent research company on behalf of the Texas Office of Court Administration.
- Sample was obtained through prescreened households from the SSRS Omnibus who reported living in Texas.
- Data collection was conducted from June 8 – June 20, 2018 among a sample of 601 respondents age 18 or older who live in Texas.
- The margin of error for total respondents is +/-4.0% at the 95% confidence level.
- For some questions a split sample was utilized to reduce survey length, while still allowing a sample size large enough for analysis. The margin of error for Sample A (n=300) is +/- 5.66% at the 95% confidence level. The margin of error for Sample B (n=301) is +/- 5.65% at the 95% confidence level.
- A similar survey regarding the trust and confidence in the courts and legal profession was previously fielded among Texans in 1998.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a perceived weakening in the public's support of and respect for the courts and the legal profession, The Texas Office of Court Administration (OCA) conducted a Public Trust and Confidence Study in 2018. The goal of the Study was to gather baseline information about Texans' view of the courts and legal system in their state. The results from this study will help inform recommendations for systemic changes to the court system, provide a baseline for future research, and point to disparities among different groups in how they view the courts and members of the legal profession in Texas.

The Texas Public Trust and Confidence Study was administered to a sample of 601 Texas adults age 18 or older. The Study was conducted by telephone by SSRS, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted from June 8 – June 20, 2018. Sample was obtained through prescreened households from the SSRS Omnibus who reported living in Texas. The SSRS Omnibus is a national weekly, dual-frame bilingual telephone Study designed to meet the standards of quality associated with custom research studies. The Texas Public Trust and Confidence Study provides baseline information about how Texans view the courts and the legal profession in their state.

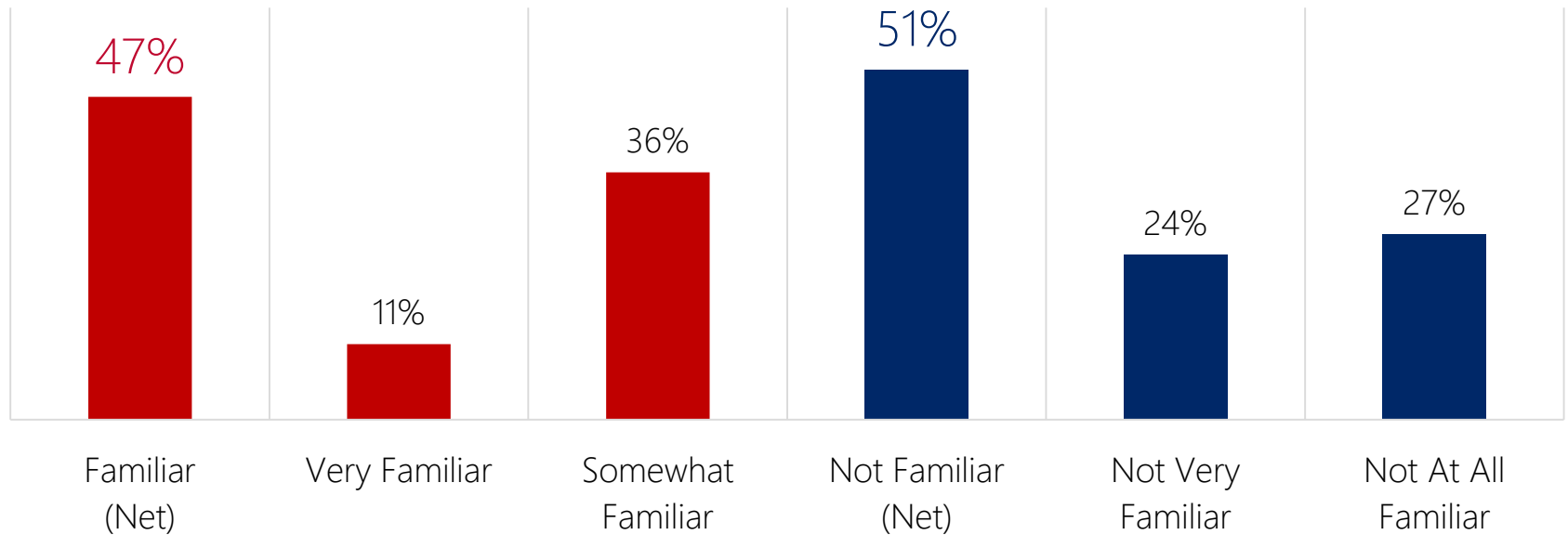
Within this report are comparisons between the Texas Public Trust and Confidence Study conducted by SSRS in 2018 and the 1998 survey regarding trust and confidence in the courts and legal profession.



FINDINGS

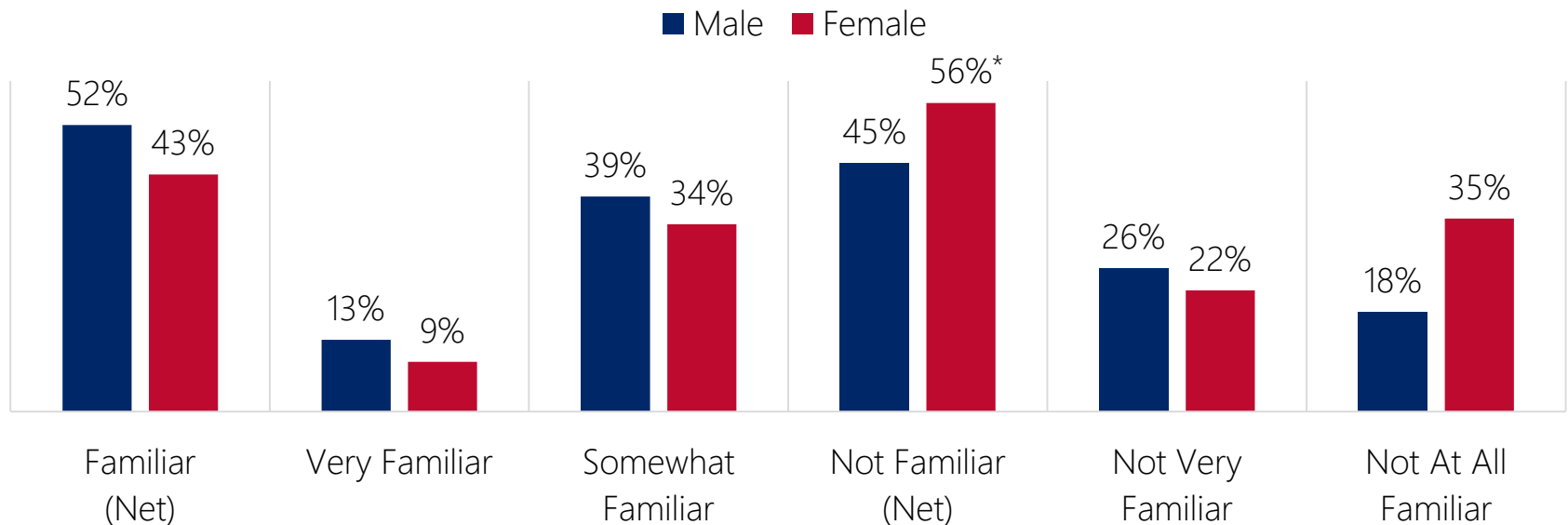
TEXAS COURTS PUBLIC TRUST & CONFIDENCE STUDY 2018

FAMILIARITY WITH TEXAS COURT SYSTEM



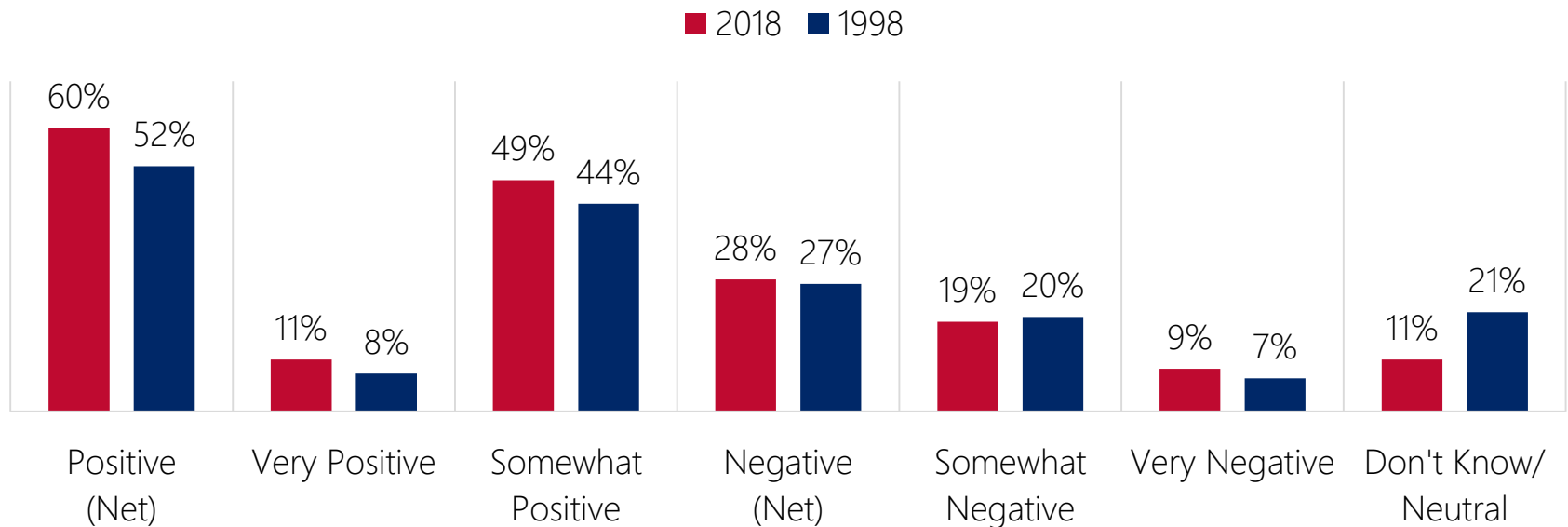
- Almost half (47%) of respondents said they were familiar with the Texas courts.

FAMILIARITY WITH TEXAS COURT SYSTEM: SIGNIFICANCE BY GENDER



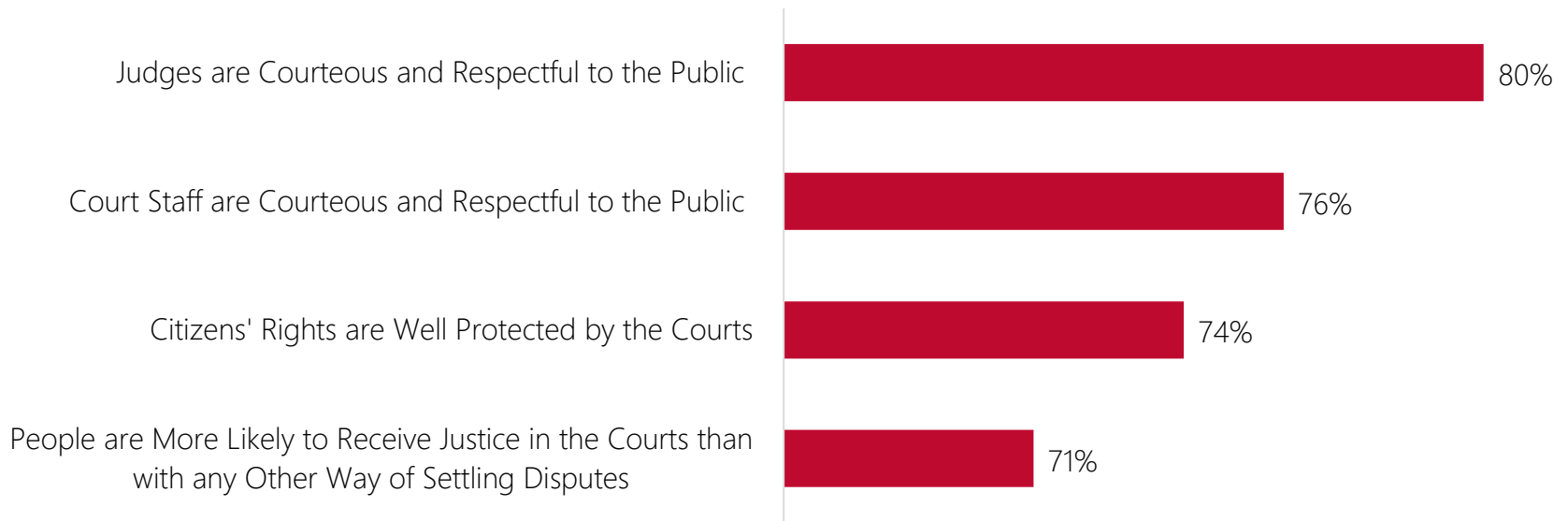
- Females were more likely than males to say they were not familiar with the Texas Courts (56% vs 45%).

OVERALL OPINION OF TEXAS COURT SYSTEM 2018 TO 1998 COMPARISON



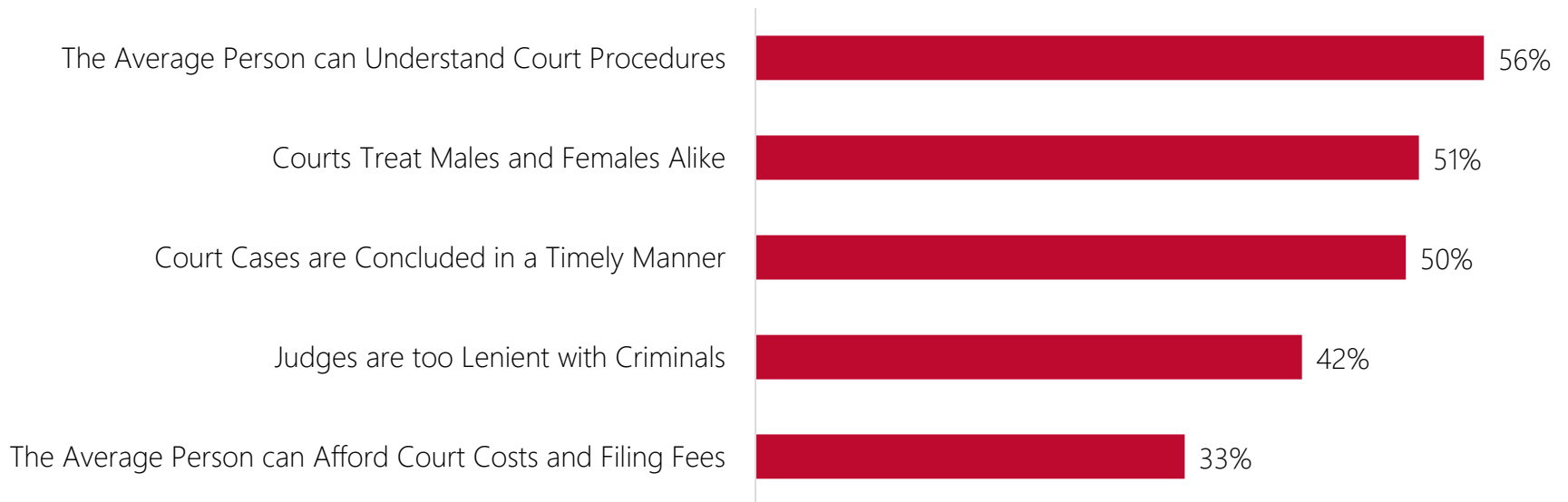
- In 2018 six in ten (60%) indicated an overall positive impression of the Texas court system, while only 28 percent had a negative impression.
- Respondents reporting an education level of high school or less (15%) were more likely to indicate a very overall negative impression of the Texas court system, compared to those with at least some college, (5%).

AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS



- In general, respondents felt that judges and court staff are courteous and respectful to the public. Judges (80%) and 76% for court staff.
- Almost three fourths of respondents (74%) agree that citizens' rights are well protected by the courts.
- Respondents 18-34 were more likely to strongly agree that judges are courteous and respectful than those 65 or older, 87% vs. 70% respectively.

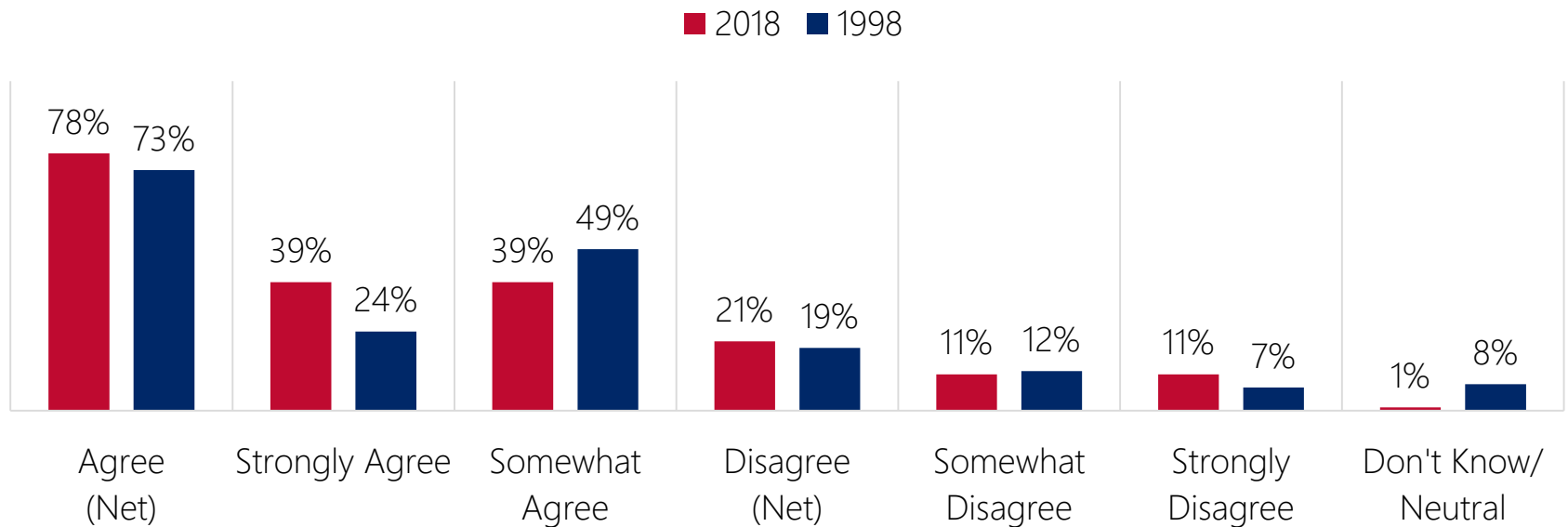
AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS



- One third (33%) agree with the statement that the average person can afford court costs and filing fees.
- African American (83%) and Hispanic respondents (65%) are more likely than Caucasian respondents (37%) to say that court cases are concluded in a timely manner.
- Respondents reporting an education level of high school or less (57%) are significantly more likely to agree that judges are too lenient with criminals vs. respondents with some college (32%) and college degrees or higher (33%).

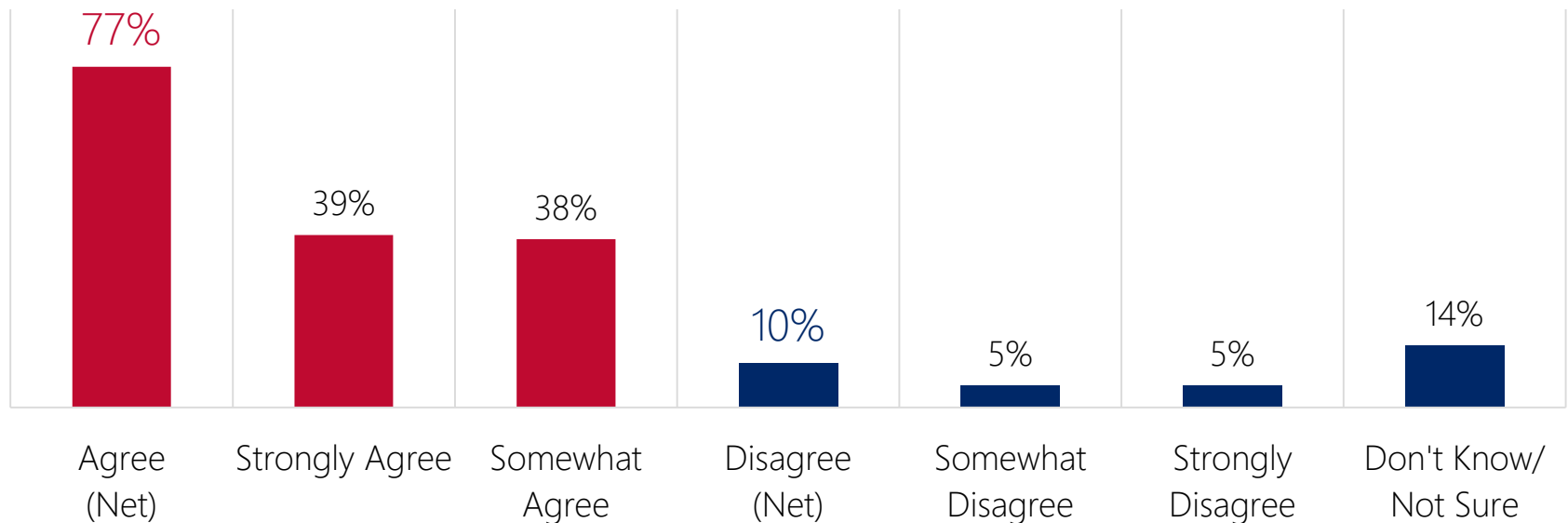
Q3. I am going to read you several statements. For each one, please tell me if you Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, or Strongly disagree:
Total Respondents = 300, 300, 301, 301, 301 Respectively

IF YOU HAD A CASE PENDING IN A TEXAS COURT, YOU BELIEVE YOU WOULD BE TREATED FAIRLY: 2018 TO 1998 COMPARISON



- Slightly more than three quarters (78%) agree that if they had a case pending in a Texas court they would be treated fairly.

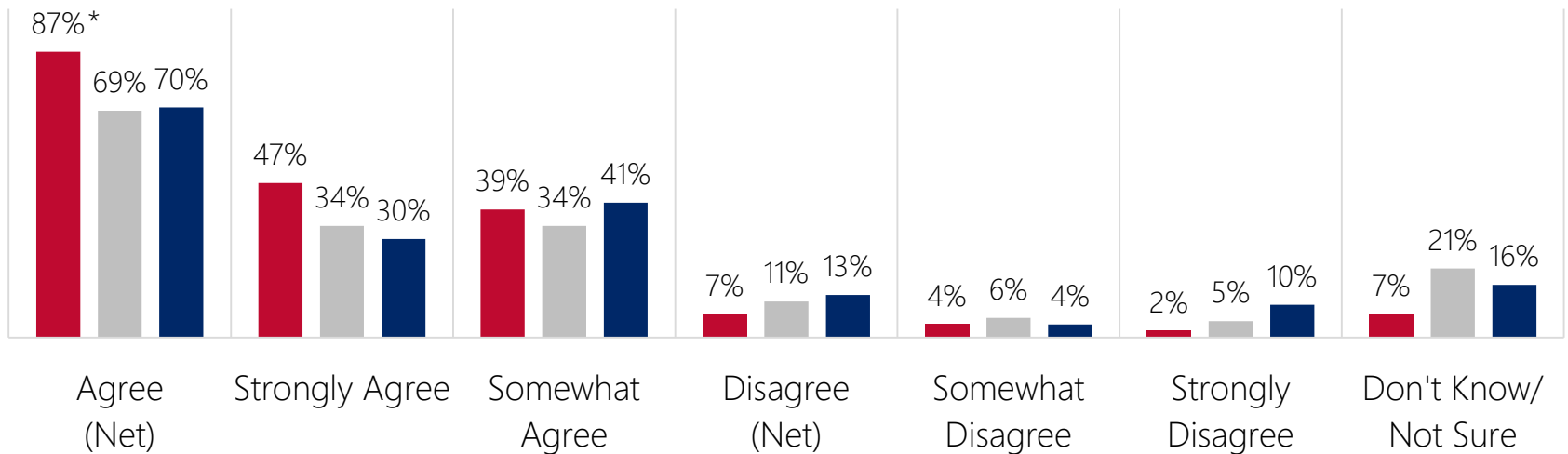
TEXAS COURTS ADEQUATELY ACCOMMODATE PERSONS WITH SPECIAL LANGUAGE NEEDS



- 77 percent agree the Texas courts adequately accommodate people with special language needs.

ACCOMMODATING PERSONS WITH SPECIAL LANGUAGE NEEDS: SIGNIFICANCE BY EDUCATION

■ High School or Less ■ Some College ■ College or Higher



- Those reporting an education level of high school or less (87%) are more likely to agree than those with some college (69%) and college or higher, (70%) that Texas courts accommodate persons with special language needs.

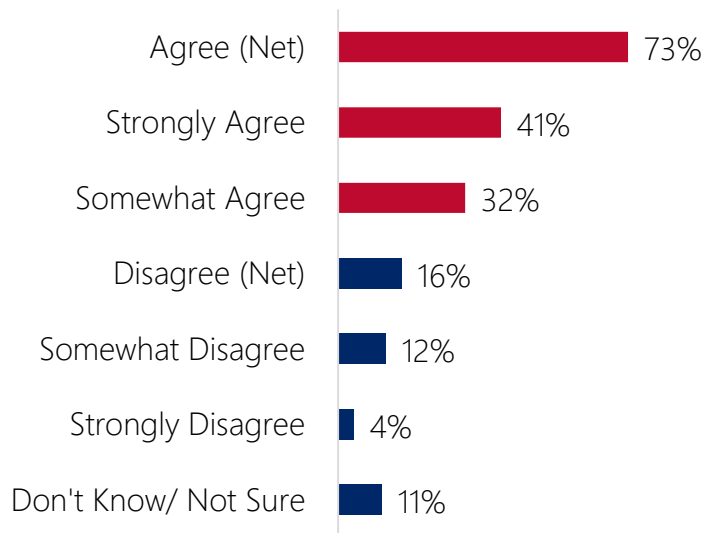
Q4c. I am going to read another series of statements about Texas courts and judges. Please tell me if you Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, or Strongly disagree with each of the following statements: * The Texas courts adequately accommodate people with special language needs *

Total Respondents = 601

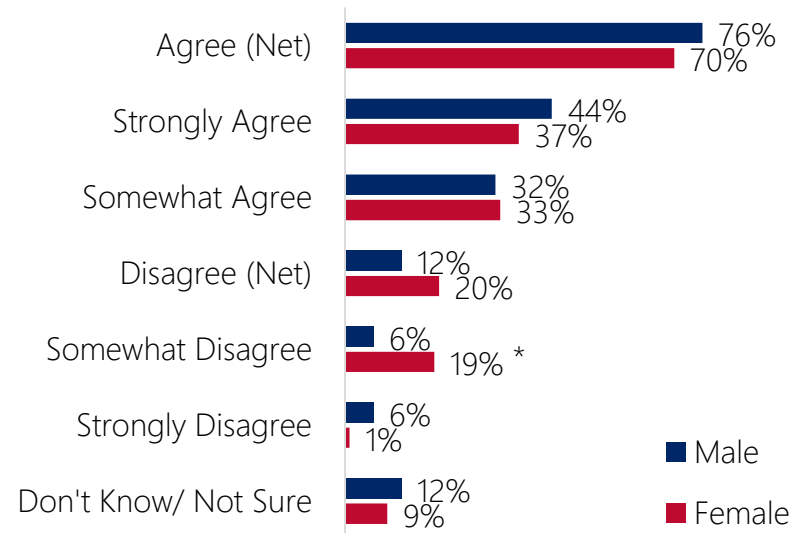
* = significant difference

AGREEMENT THAT TEXAS COURTS ARE OVERWORKED

Texas Court are Overworked



Texas Court are Overworked, by Gender



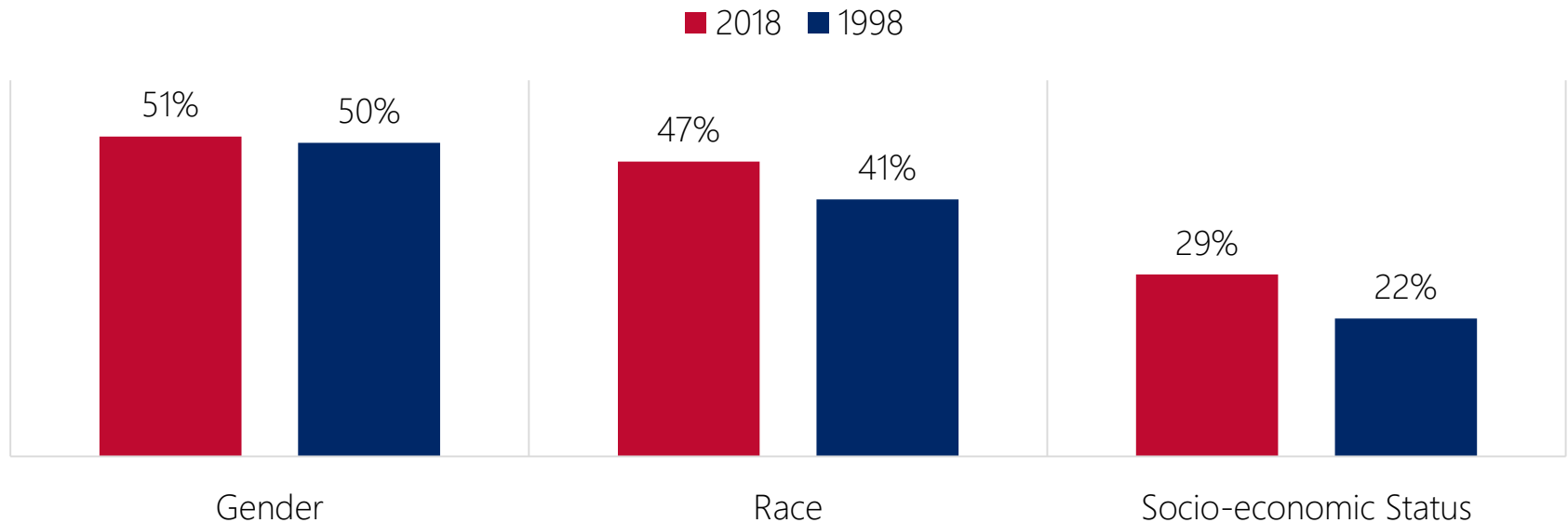
- The majority of respondents (73%) agree the Texas courts are overworked.
- 19% of females somewhat disagree, significantly more than the 6% of males who somewhat disagree.

Q4e. I am going to read another series of statements about Texas courts and judges. Please tell me if you Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, or Strongly disagree with each of the following statements: * Texas courts are overworked *

Total Respondents = 300

* = significant difference

AGREE THAT COURTS TREAT ALL PEOPLE ALIKE REGARDLESS OF GENDER, RACE OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS: 2018 TO 1998 COMPARISON

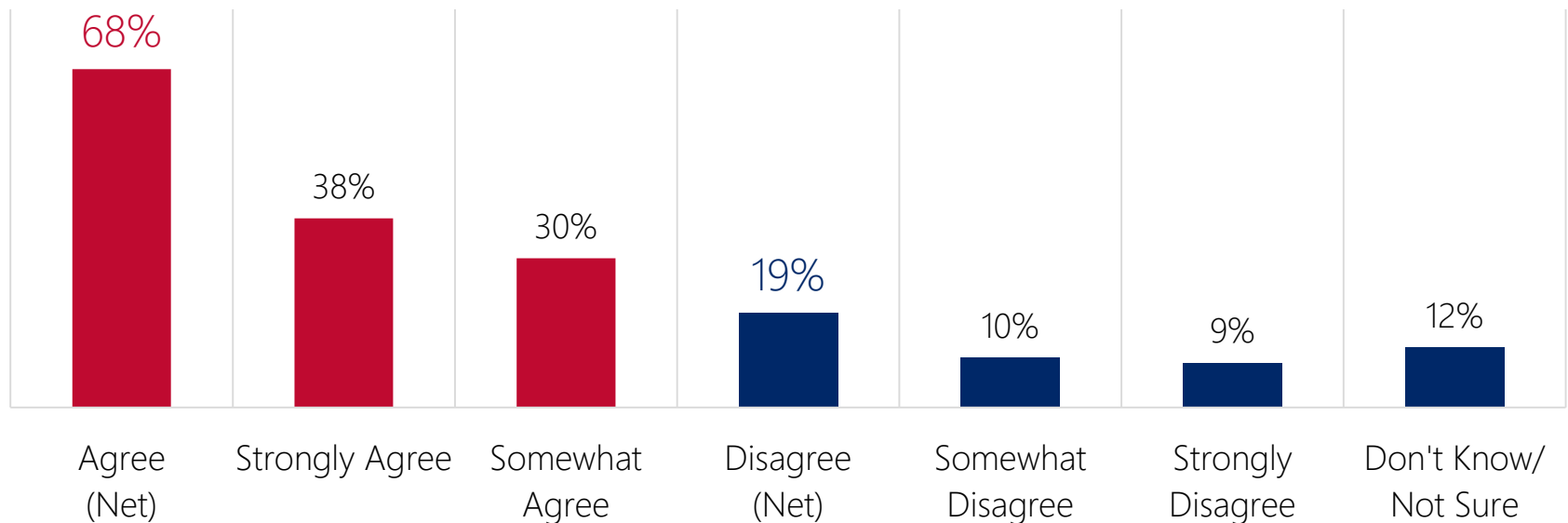


- Almost half, (47%) agree that courts treat all people alike regardless of race and just over half (51%) feel the same about gender.
- Slightly less than three in ten (29%) agree that Texas courts treat people alike regardless of socio-economic status.

Q3 & Q4f/g. I am going to read another series of statements about Texas courts and judges. Please tell me if you Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, or Strongly disagree with each of the following statements: *Texas courts treat males and females alike*, * Texas courts treat all people alike regardless of their race *, * Texas courts treat poor people and wealthy people alike *

Total Respondent = 300

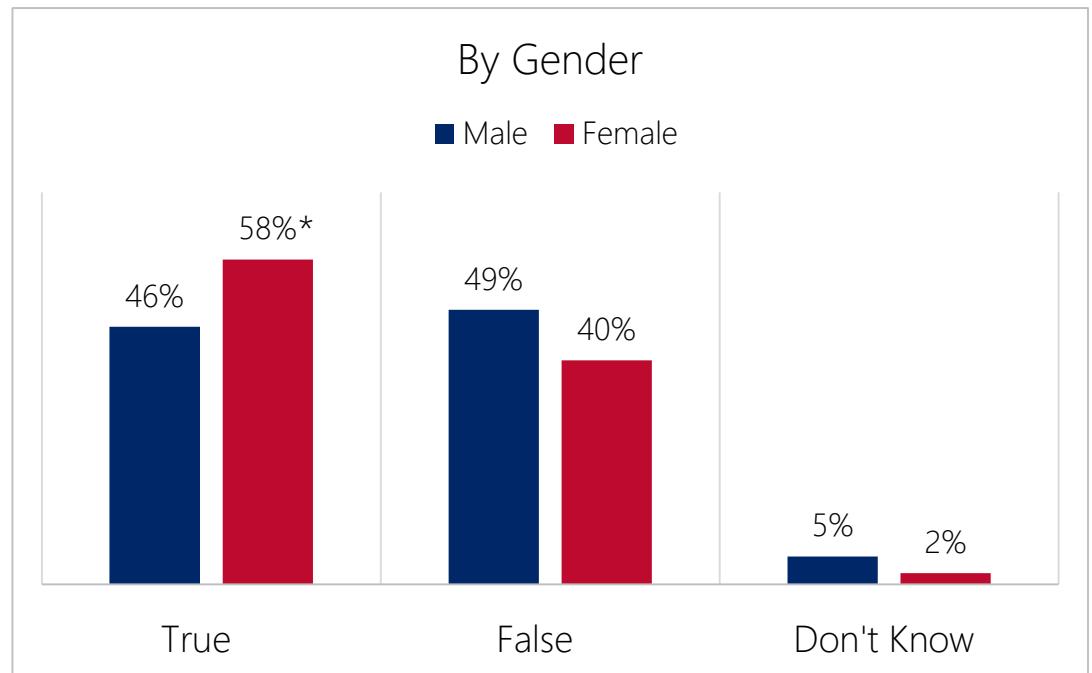
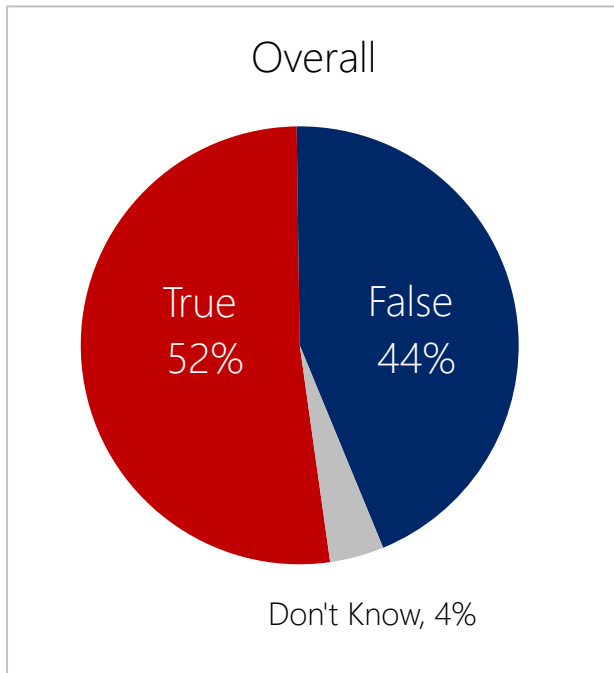
TEXAS COURTS ADEQUATELY ACCOMMODATE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



- Most respondents agree (68%) that the Texas courts adequately accommodate persons with disabilities.
- About half (52%) of respondents whose reported income is less than \$25K strongly agree vs. 30% of respondents whose income is \$75K+.

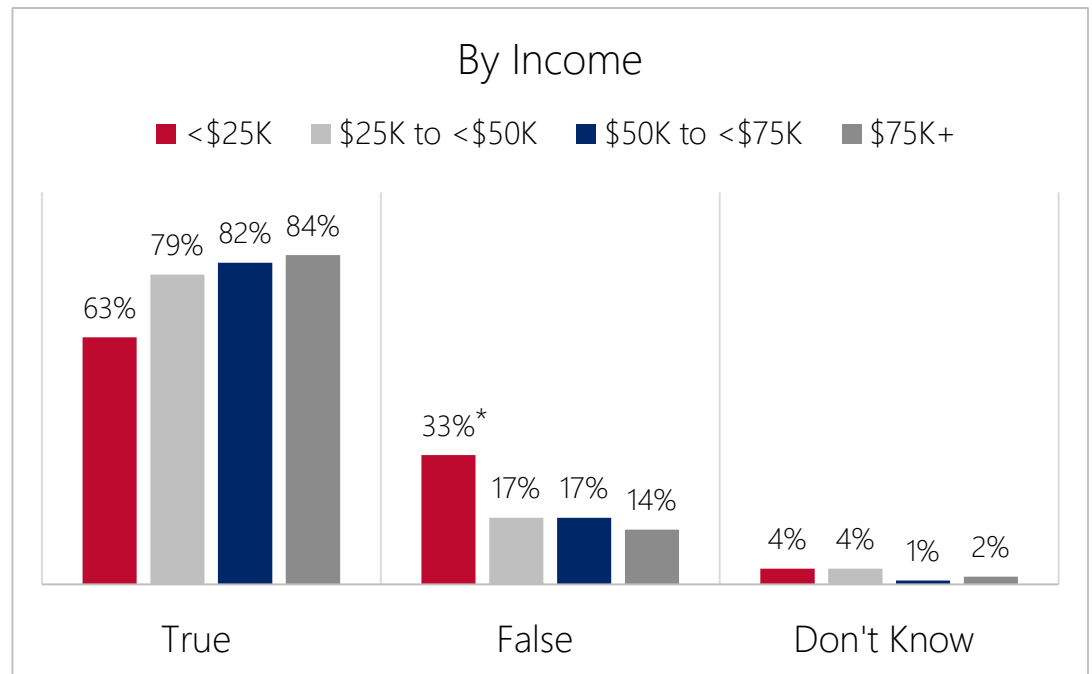
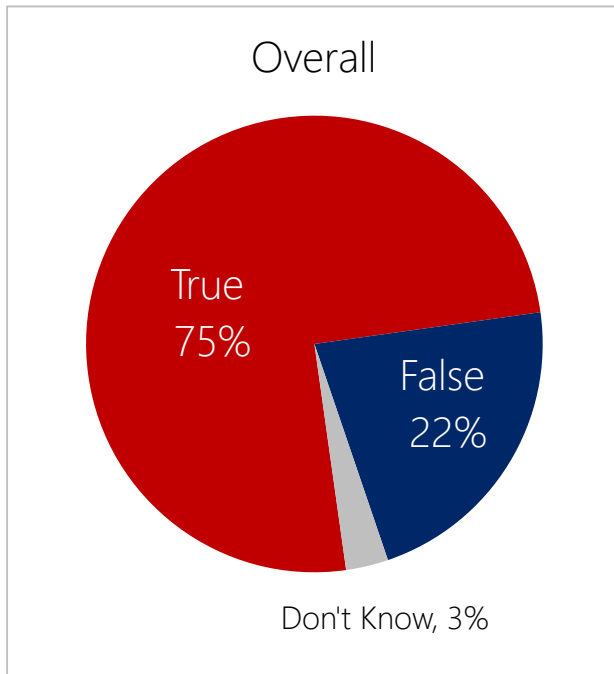
Q4i. I am going to read another series of statements about Texas courts and judges. Please tell me if you Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, or Strongly disagree with each of the following statements: * The Texas courts adequately accommodate persons with disabilities *
Total Respondents: = 301

IN A CRIMINAL TRIAL, IT IS UP TO THE ACCUSED TO PROVE HIS OR HER INNOCENCE



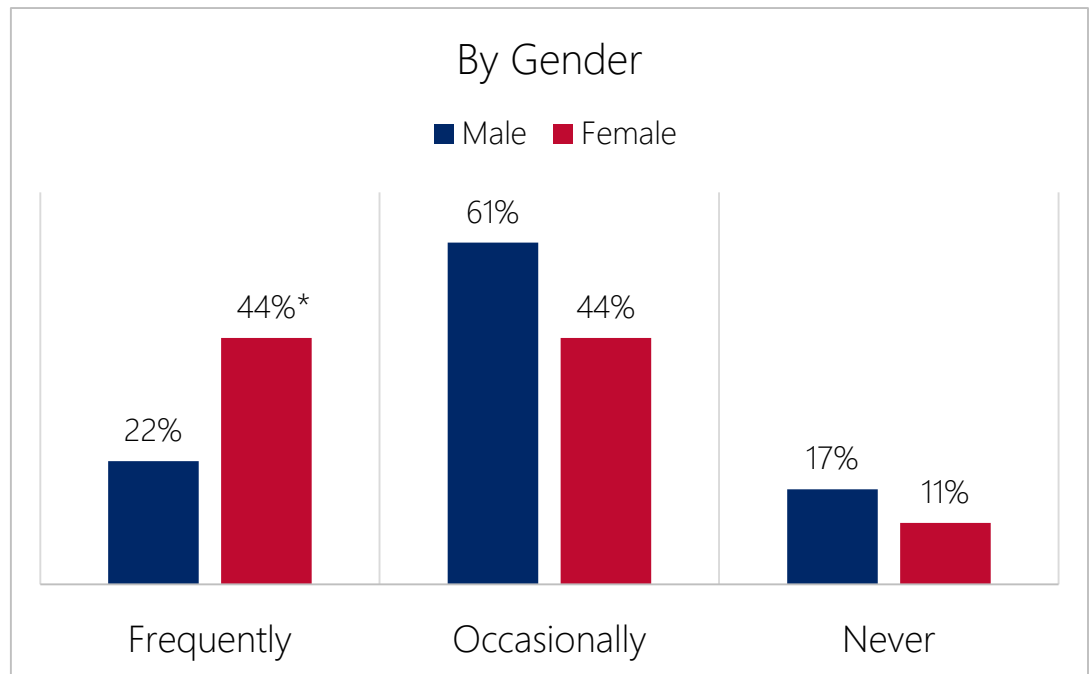
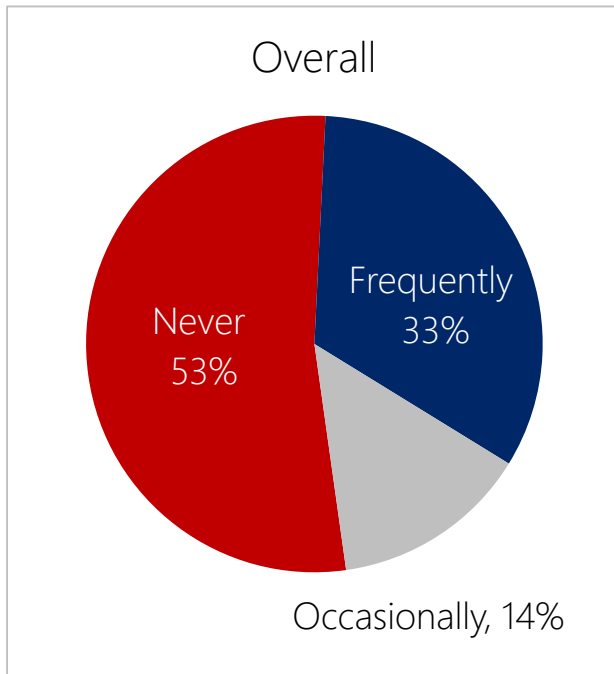
- The majority of females (58%) believe that it is true that in a criminal trial it is up to the person accused of the crime to prove his or her innocence. This is significantly higher than males (46%).

JUDGES IN TEXAS ARE TYPICALLY ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE



- Those reporting a lower annual income of <\$25K (33%) are significantly more likely than those reporting higher incomes of \$25K+ (17%), \$50K to <\$75K (17%) and \$75K+ (14%) to think it is false that judges in Texas are typically elected by the people.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU GET YOUR INFORMATION ON TEXAS COURTS FROM THE NEWS MEDIA?



- Women are more likely to get their information on Texas courts and judges from news media than men, 44% vs. 22% respectively.

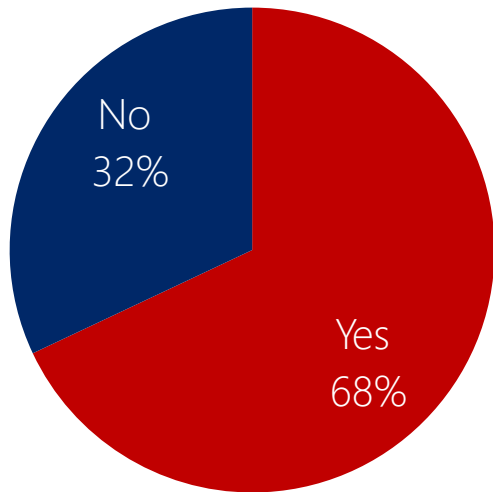
10b. I'm going to read a list of information sources and I'd like you to tell me whether you get information about Texas courts and judges from each source frequently, occasionally, or never. How about News media?

Total Respondents = 313

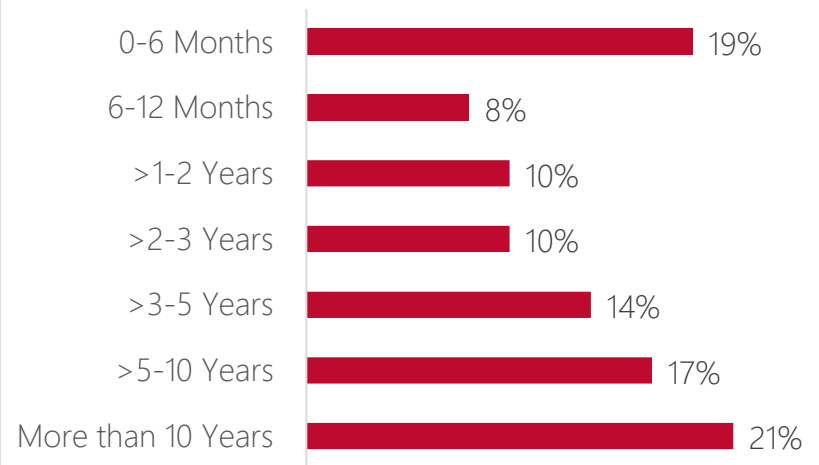
* = significant difference

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A TEXAS COURTROOM?

Ever Been in a Texas Courtroom



When was the last time you were in a Texas Courtroom?



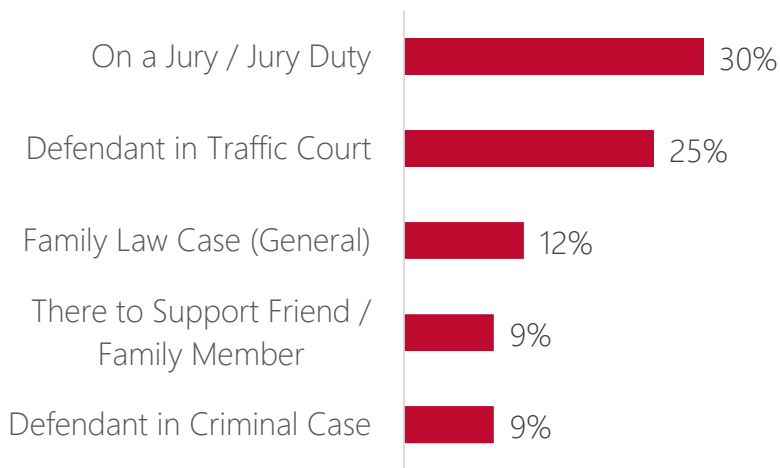
- About seven in ten (68%) report having been in a Texas courtroom for any reason.
- Of those who have been in a courtroom, 27% were there in the last year.

Q11. Have you ever been in a Texas courtroom for any reason? Total Respondents = 601

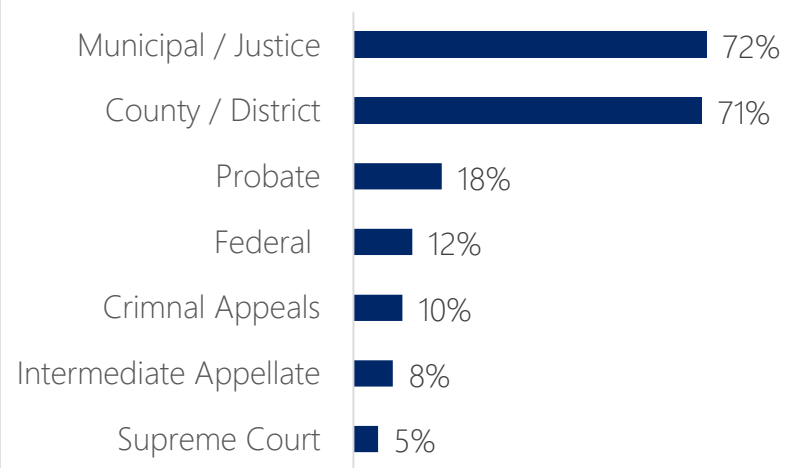
Q12. When was the last time you were in a Texas courtroom? Total Respondents who have ever been in a Texas courtroom n= 448

REASONS FOR BEING IN COURT & TYPES OF COURTS VISITED

Top Five Reasons for Being in a Texas Courtroom



Types of Texas Courtrooms Visited

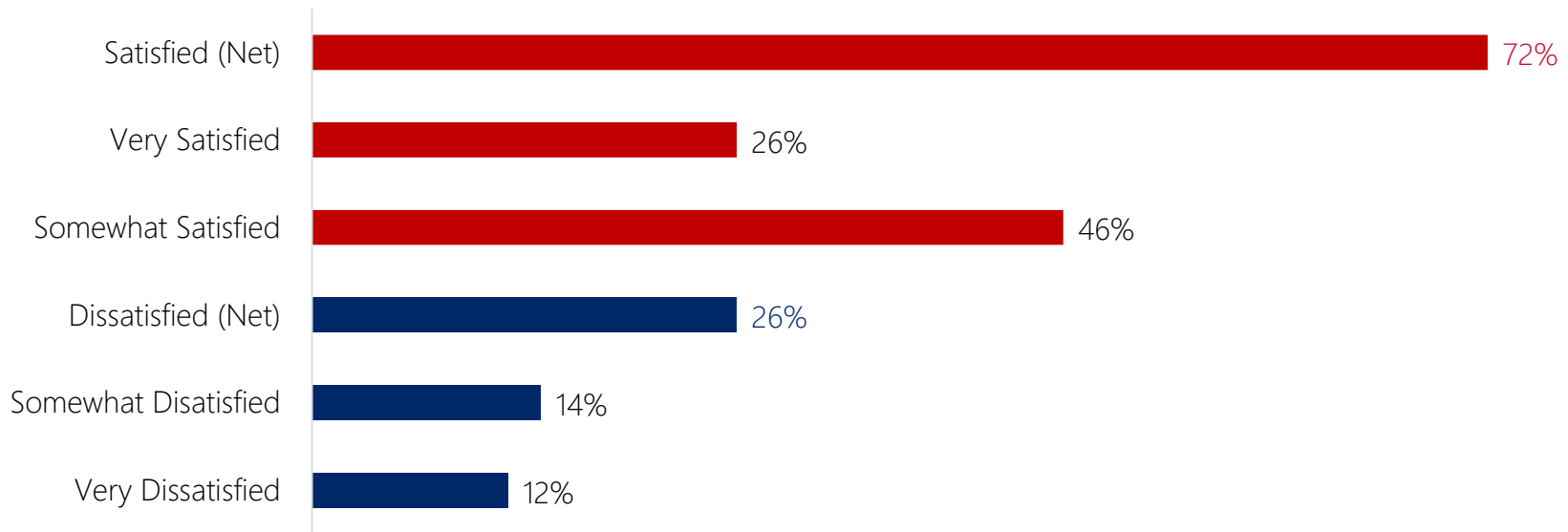


- The highest percent of respondents reported being in a Texas court for jury duty (30%), followed closely by being a defendant in traffic court, (25%).
- The majority of respondents, slightly over 70 percent, report being in Municipal/Justice Courts, or County/District Courts.

Q14. Why were you in a Texas court? Please think about all the times you were in a Texas court. Total Respondents = 121, 101, 50, 39, 35 Respectively

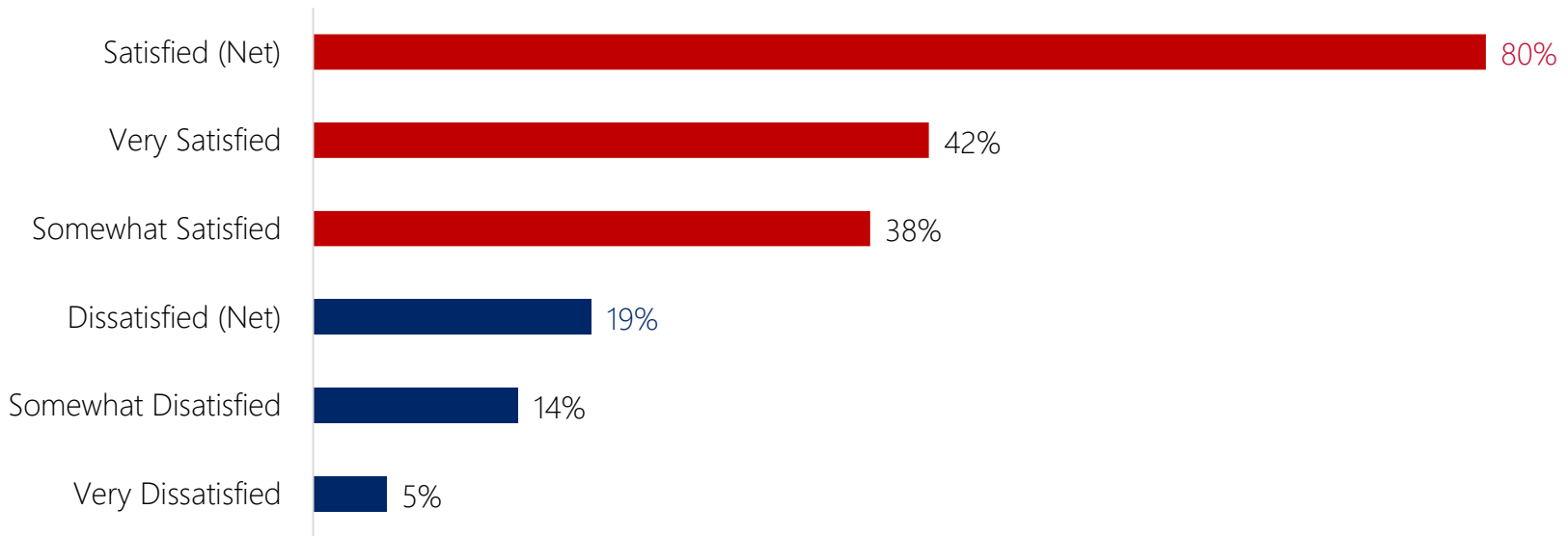
Q16. I am going to describe different types of courts you may have been in. Please say YES or NO as to whether or not you have been in any of the following courts. How about Total Respondents = 406

SATISFACTION WITH TEXAS COURT PROCESS



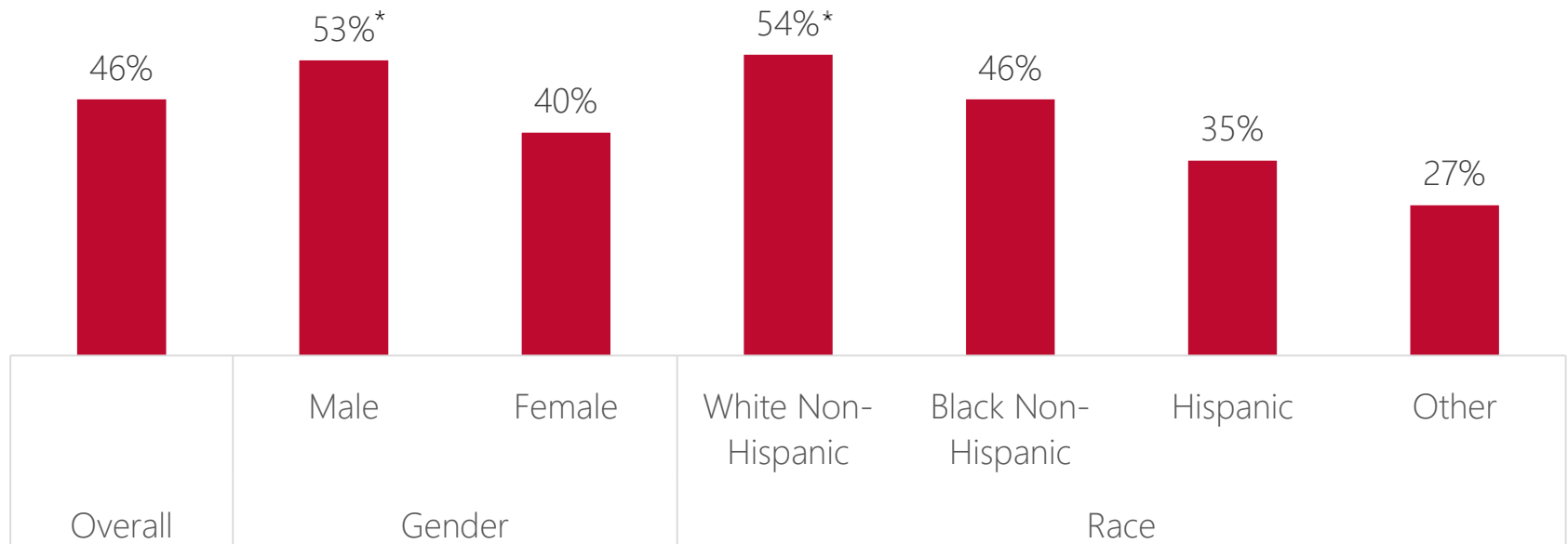
- Overall, 72% of respondents who have been in a Texas court were satisfied with the process they observed.
- Satisfaction with the Texas court process was not as high for those with a lower education level. 21% reporting high school or less were very dissatisfied, which is significantly higher than those with some college, 5% and college plus, 8%.

SATISFACTION WITH TEXAS JUDGES



- The vast majority (80%) were satisfied with the Judges that they observed in the Texas courts.
- Females were significantly more likely to rate the services they have received in a Texas court as “very good” than males, 37% vs. 24% respectively.

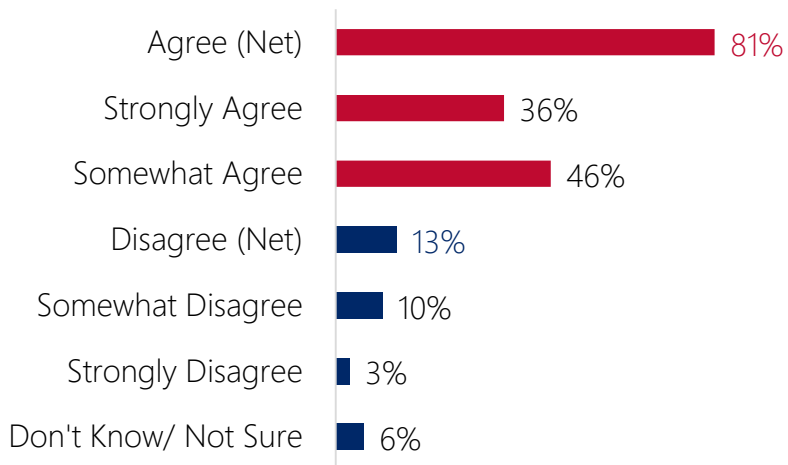
EVER SOUGHT LEGAL ADVICE FROM OR BEEN REPRESENTED BY A LAWYER



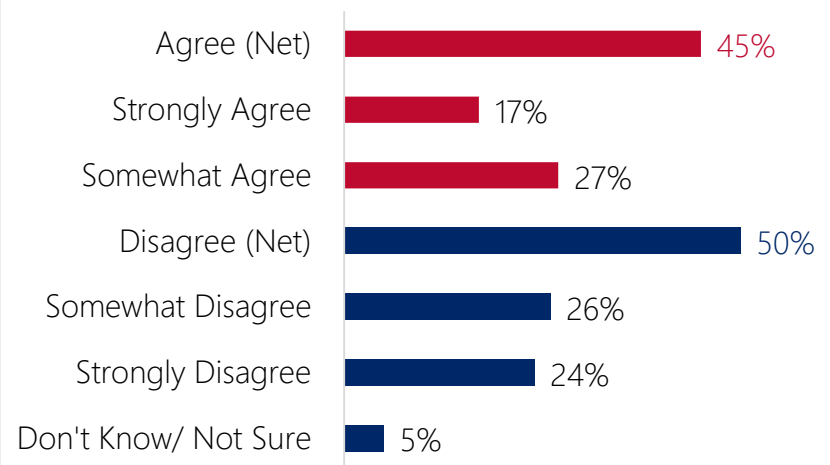
- Males are significantly more likely than females to have sought legal advice from or been represented by a lawyer (53% vs 40%).
- Caucasian respondents (54%) are significantly more likely than African Americans and Hispanics to have sought legal advice from or been represented by a lawyer, (46%, 35%).

OPINIONS OF TEXAS LAWYERS

Texas Lawyers Treat Clients with Respect



Texas Lawyers Manipulate Laws to Get Criminals Released



- The vast majority of Texans (81%) agree that Texas lawyers generally treat their clients with respect.
- Respondents 65+ are significantly more likely to agree that Texas lawyers manipulate laws to get criminals released than respondents age 18-34, 59% vs 36% respectively.

APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL OF JAILING DEFENDANTS

Do you approve or disapprove of jailing defendants who cannot afford to pay their court fines or fees?

Approve, 29%

Disapprove, 66%

Don't Know, 4%

Low Risk Criminal Defendants Should be Released from Jail While Awaiting Trial Without Paying Money to be Released

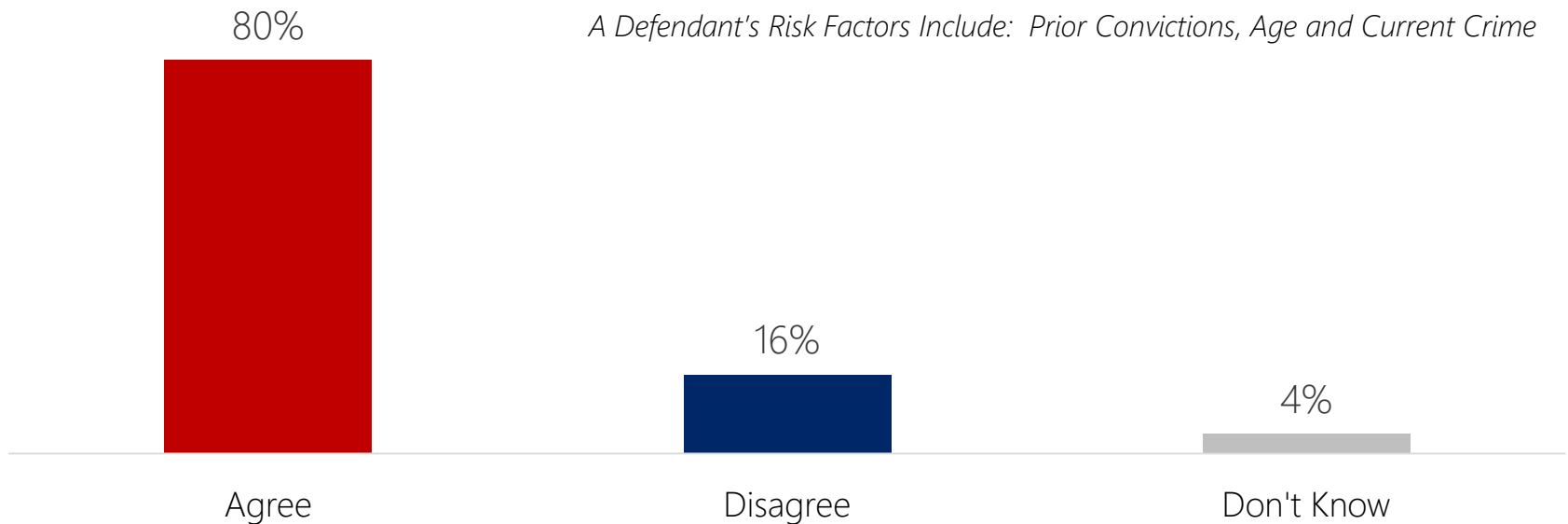
Agree, 58%

Disagree, 40%

Don't Know, 3%

- More than half (66%), disapprove of jailing a defendant who owes court fines or fees when the defendant cannot afford to pay them.

JUDGES SHOULD ASSESS RISK FACTORS TO DETERMINE THE BOND FOR A CRIMINAL DEFENDANT

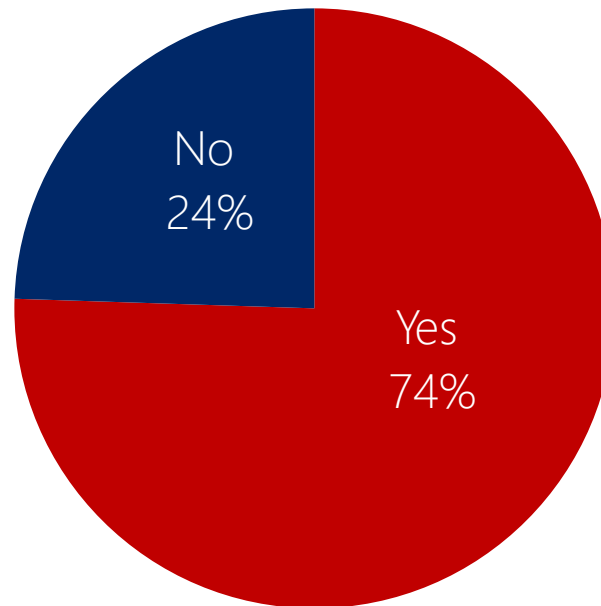


- A vast majority (80%) agree that judges should assess a defendant's risk factors such as age, prior convictions, current crime, etc., to determine the bond for a criminal defendant.
- Respondents whose reported annual income is \$75K+ (89%) agree significantly more than respondents with lower reported income of <\$25K (70%).

Q 26. Do you agree or disagree that judges should assess a defendant's risk factors such as age, prior convictions, current crime, etc. to determine the bond for a criminal defendant?

Total Respondents = 601

COURTS SHOULD OFFER TECHNOLOGY THAT ALLOWS PEOPLE TO INTERACT FROM HOME

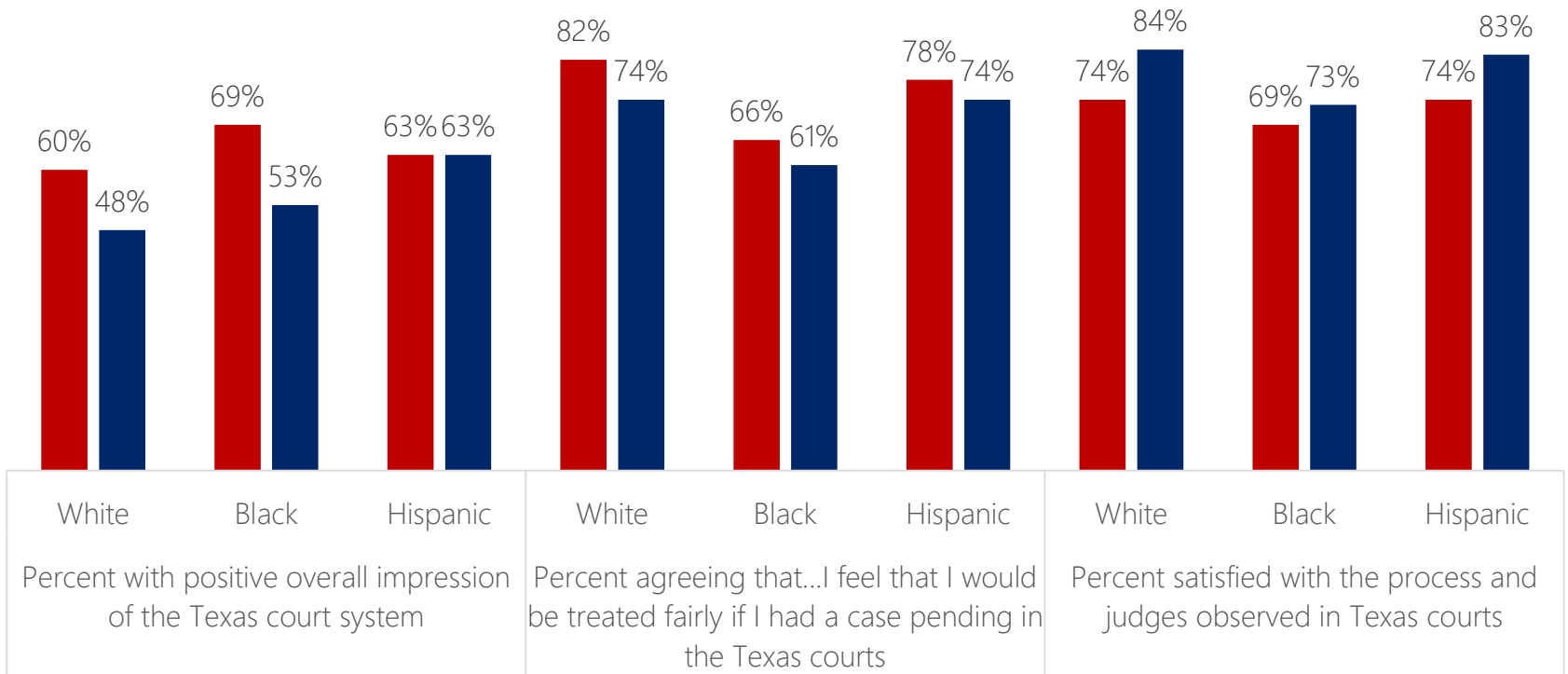


- 74% of respondents believe that courts should offer technology that allows people to interact with the courts without going to the courthouse.
- Not surprisingly, younger respondents 18-34 agree with this over all other age groups (89% for 18-34, 75% for 35-54, 60% for 55 to 64, and 52% for 65+).

Q27. Most courts have a website, but many do not provide services online. Do you think that the courts should offer technology that allows people to interact with the courts without going to the courthouse?
Total Respondents = 601

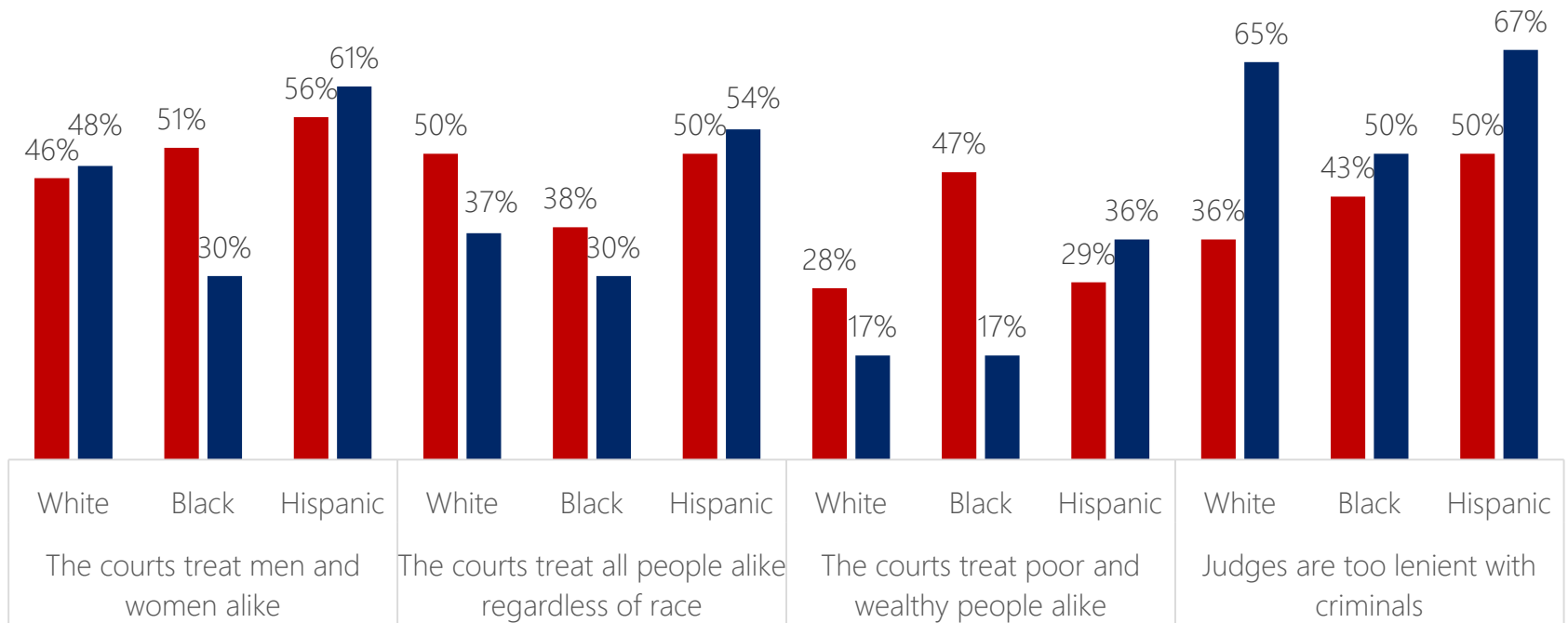
ATTITUDES ABOUT THE TEXAS COURT SYSTEM: 2018 VS. 1998 – DIFFERENCES BY RACE, 1 OF 2

■ 2018 ■ 1998



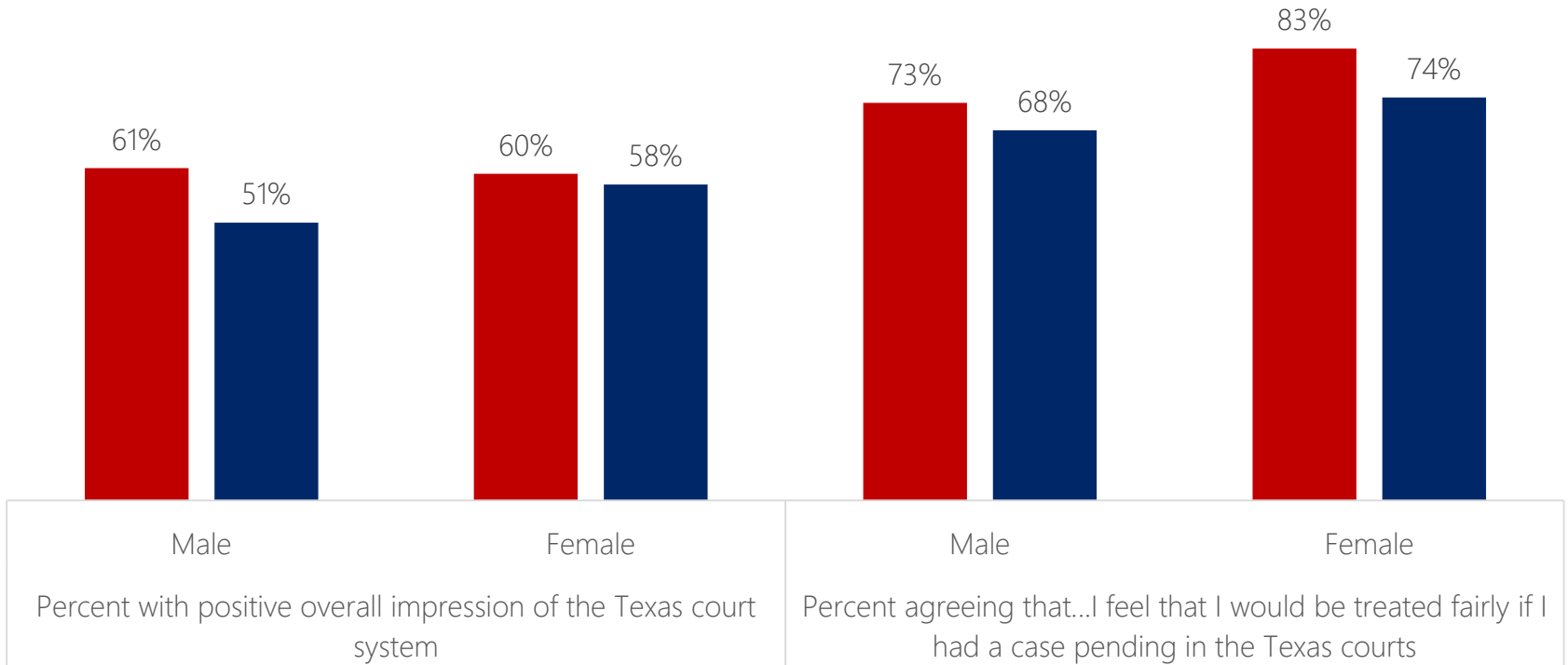
PERCENT AGREEING WITH THE STATEMENTS: 2018 VS. 1998 – DIFFERENCES BY RACE, 2 OF 2

■ 2018 ■ 1998



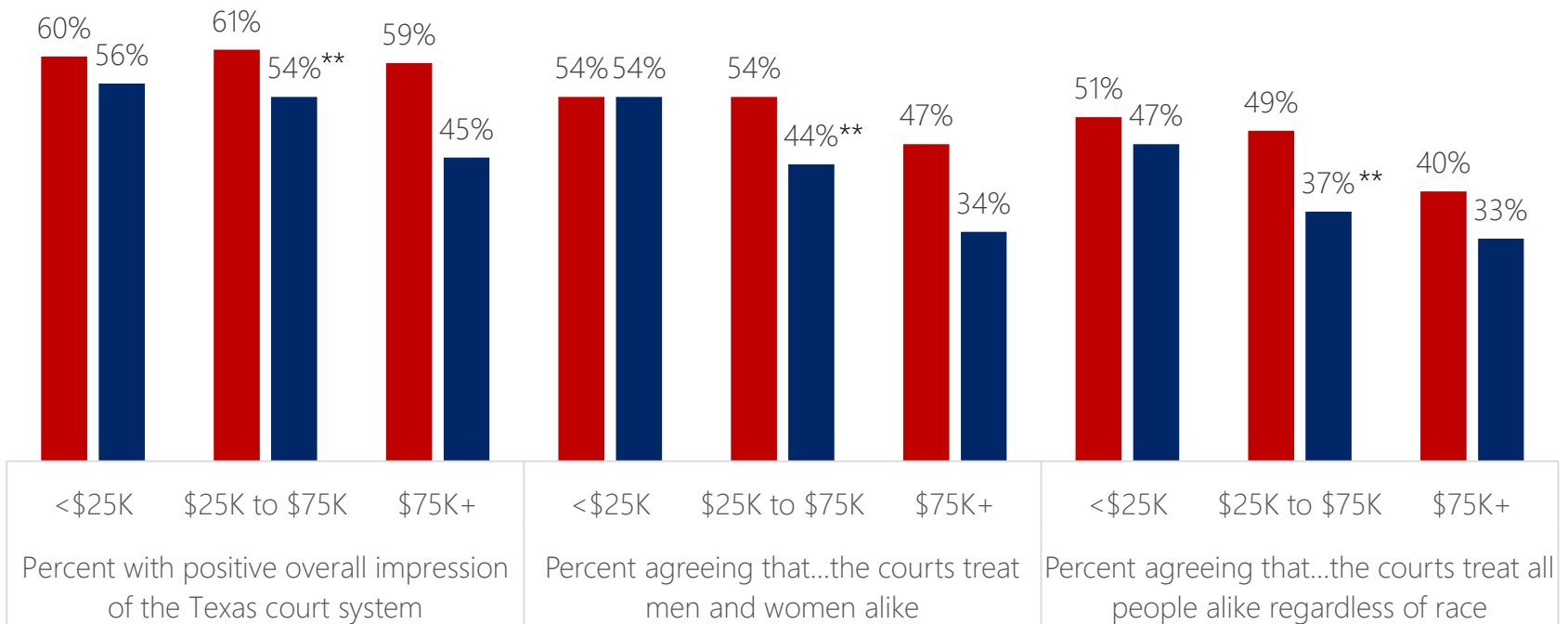
ATTITUDES ABOUT THE TEXAS COURT SYSTEM: 2018 VS. 1998 – DIFFERENCES BY GENDER

■ 2018 ■ 1998



ATTITUDES ABOUT THE TEXAS COURT SYSTEM: 2018 VS. 1998 – DIFFERENCES BY INCOME LEVEL, 1 OF 2

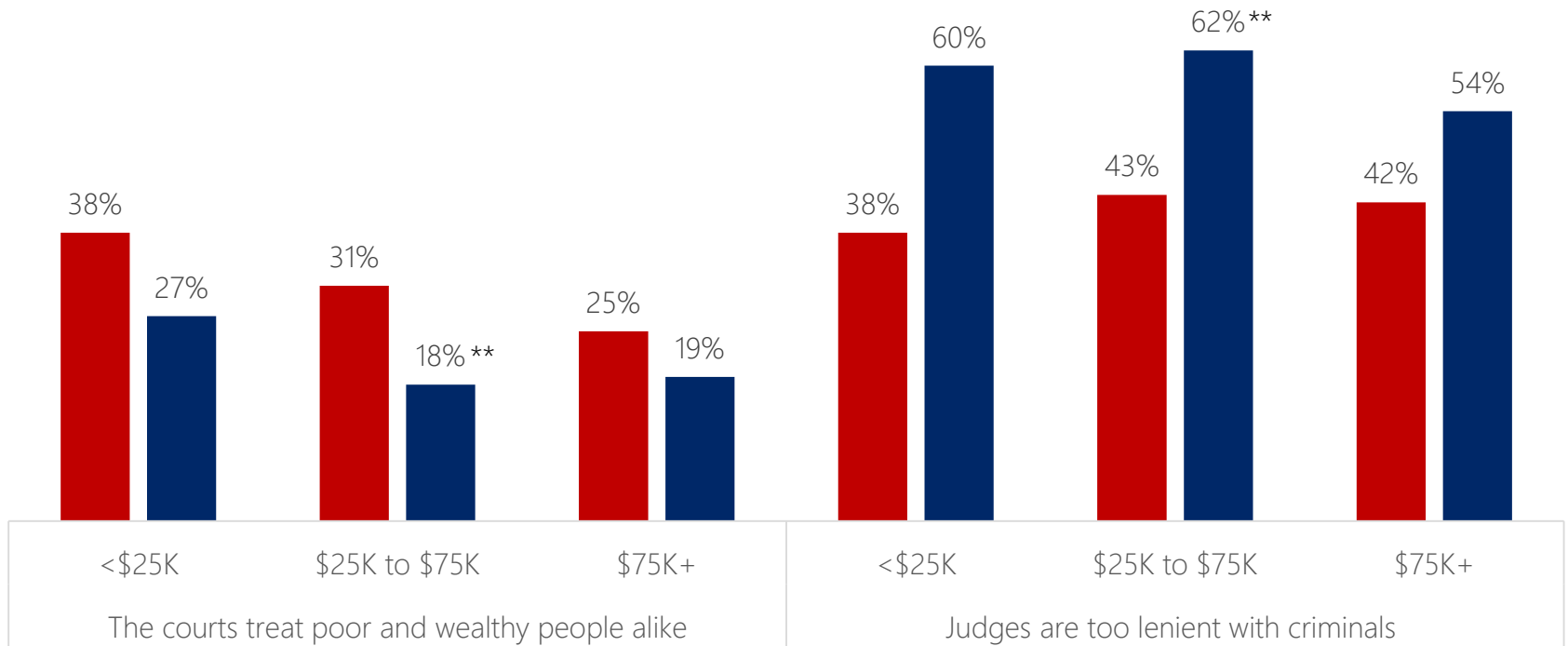
■ 2018 ■ 1998



**= Income Range for 1998 was \$25K to <\$75K

PERCENT AGREEING WITH STATEMENTS: 2018 VS. 1998 – DIFFERENCES BY INCOME LEVEL, 2 OF 2

■ 2018 ■ 1998



**= Income Range for 1998 was \$25K to <\$75K

PERCENT AGREEING WITH STATEMENTS: 2018 VS. 1998 – DIFFERENCES BY EDUCATION

■ 2018 ■ 1998

