

**SUMMER 2022**

**BLACK VOTERS VOTE BY MAIL SURVEY  
FOR VOTER PARTICIPATION CENTER**

AUGUST 5, 2022

# About the survey

- Sample includes 1,000 registered African American voters across eleven (11) states that permit voting by mail (AZ, FL, KS, IA, ME, MI, MN, NC, NM, PA, and WI).
- Half of respondents indicated having previously voted by mail (VBM Priors) and half said they had never voted by mail (Never VBM voters).
- The blended phone and online poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.1% for the full sample, +/- 4.4% for Prior VBM voters and +/- 4.4% for Never VBM voters.
- Poll was conducted from June 28 through July 10, 2022.
- To help develop questions, we assembled an expert advisory panel of Black faculty from around the country with expertise in African American civic engagement.

	Full	VBM Priors	Never VBM Voters
n	1,000	506	494
MOE	+/- 3.1%	+/- 4.4%	+/- 4.4%

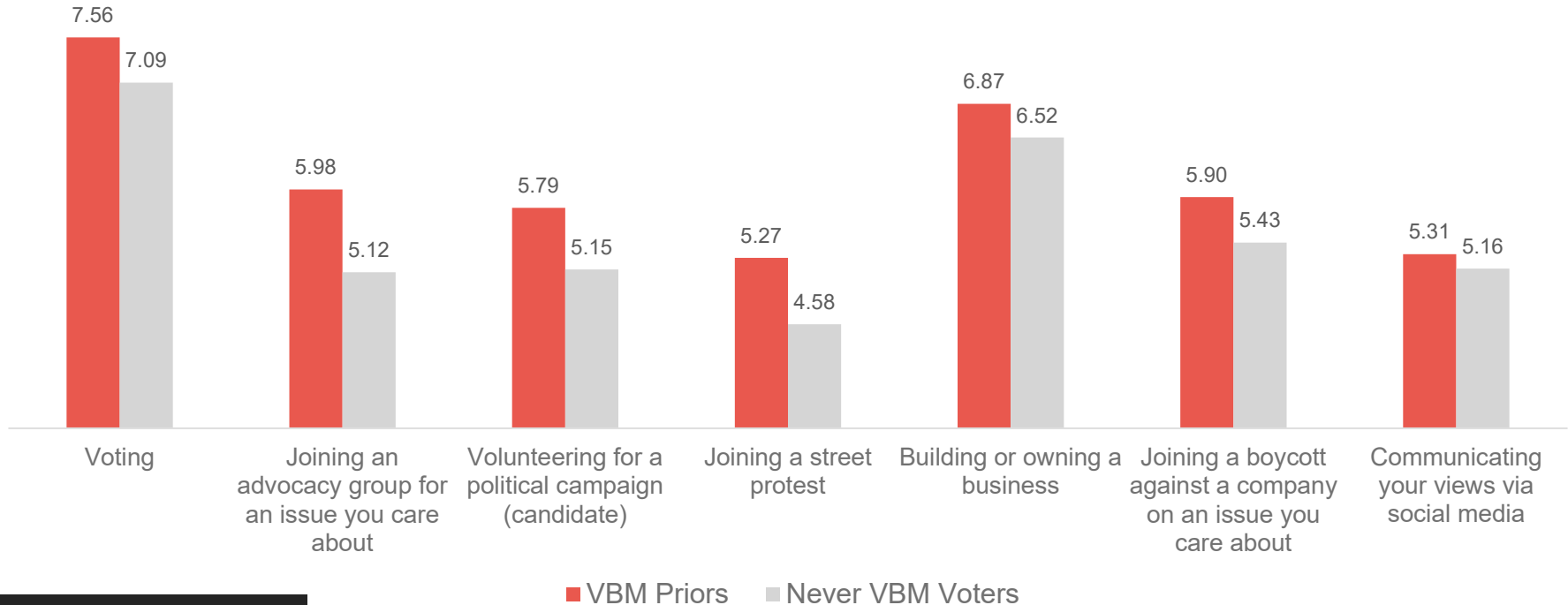
# Key Takeaways

- Never Vote By Mail voters are less active as voters in general and are less trusting of the vote-by-mail process.
- Messages that center ballot-tracking resources, reference threats to Black people's right to vote, and promote the process as a potential boost for Black voter turnout could sway more Black voters to vote by mail.
- Validation from Michelle Obama, Black elected leaders, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) could sway more Black voters to vote by mail.
- Black voters' top issue concerns are around inflation as well as mass shootings and gun violence. Economy, jobs, and abortion rights (for younger & women voters) are also important issues.

# The Landscape: Black Voters' and Vote-by-Mail

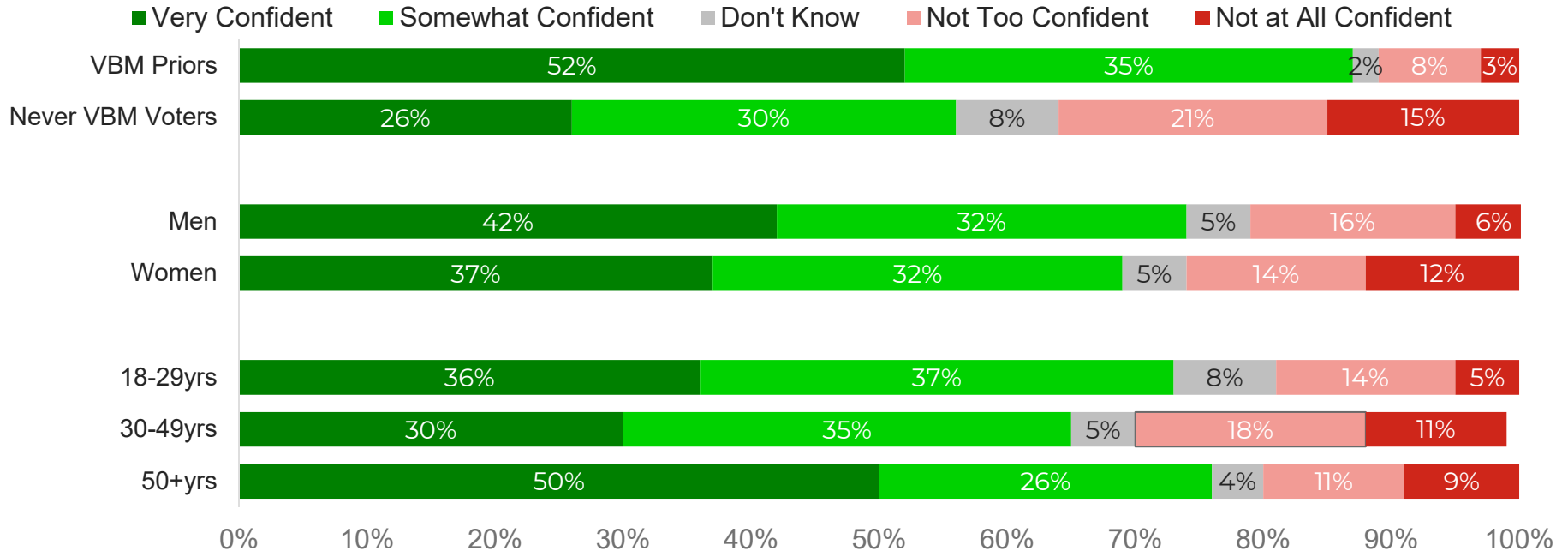
# Black Adults See Voting as a Necessity for Change

Q: If you wanted to change something you do not like in America, how effective do you think each of the following activities are at achieving change? Rate each on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “not at all effective” and 10 means “highly effective”



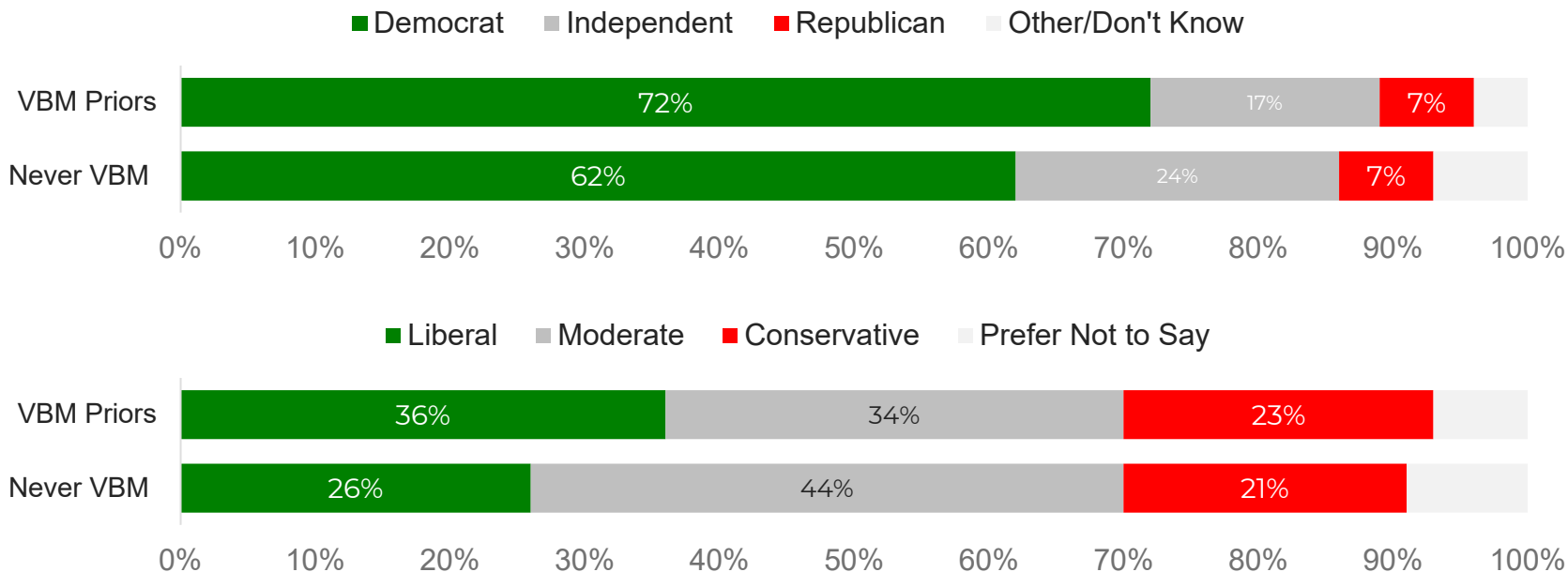
# VBM Priors & Older Black Voters Are Most Confident in VBM

Q: If [STATE] election officials mailed a ballot to you, and you filled it out and mailed it back in, how much trust and confidence do you have that your ballot would be counted in the election?



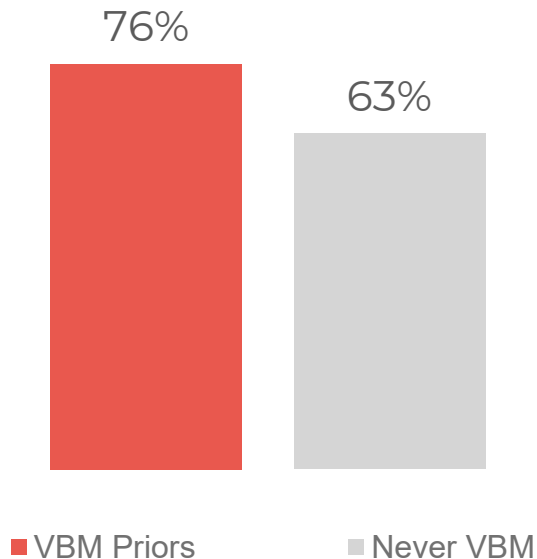
# Never VBM Voters Are Less Likely to Identify as Democrats or Liberal Compared to VBM Priors

Q: Political Ideology/Political Party

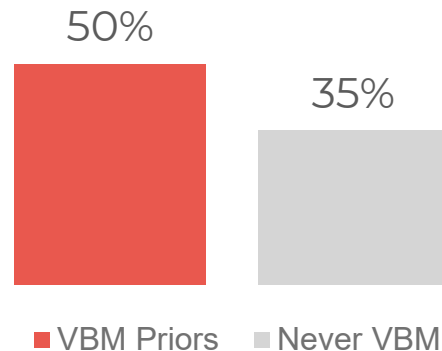


# Never VBM Voters Require Mobilization to Vote AND Vote by Mail

How often do you vote in the following types of elections: U.S. Presidential elections? (% Answering Always)



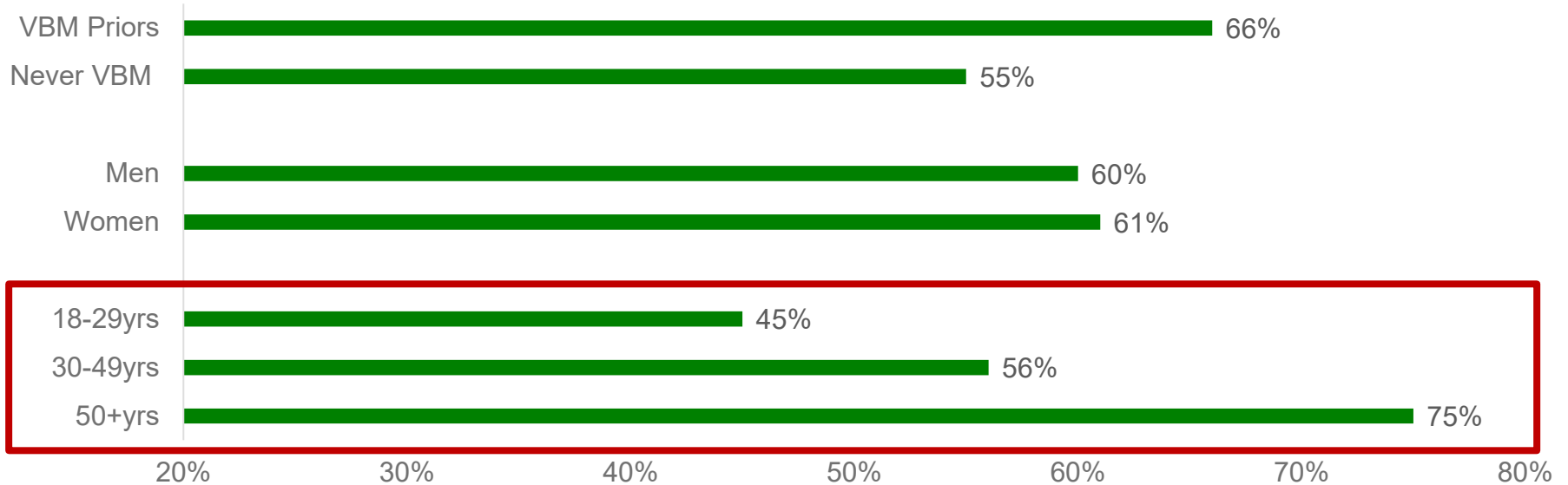
How often do you vote in the following types of elections: Mayor, Sheriff, school board, or state representative? (% Answering Always)





# Younger Black Voters Drive Midterm Voter Motivation Gap Between VBM Priors and Never VBM Voters

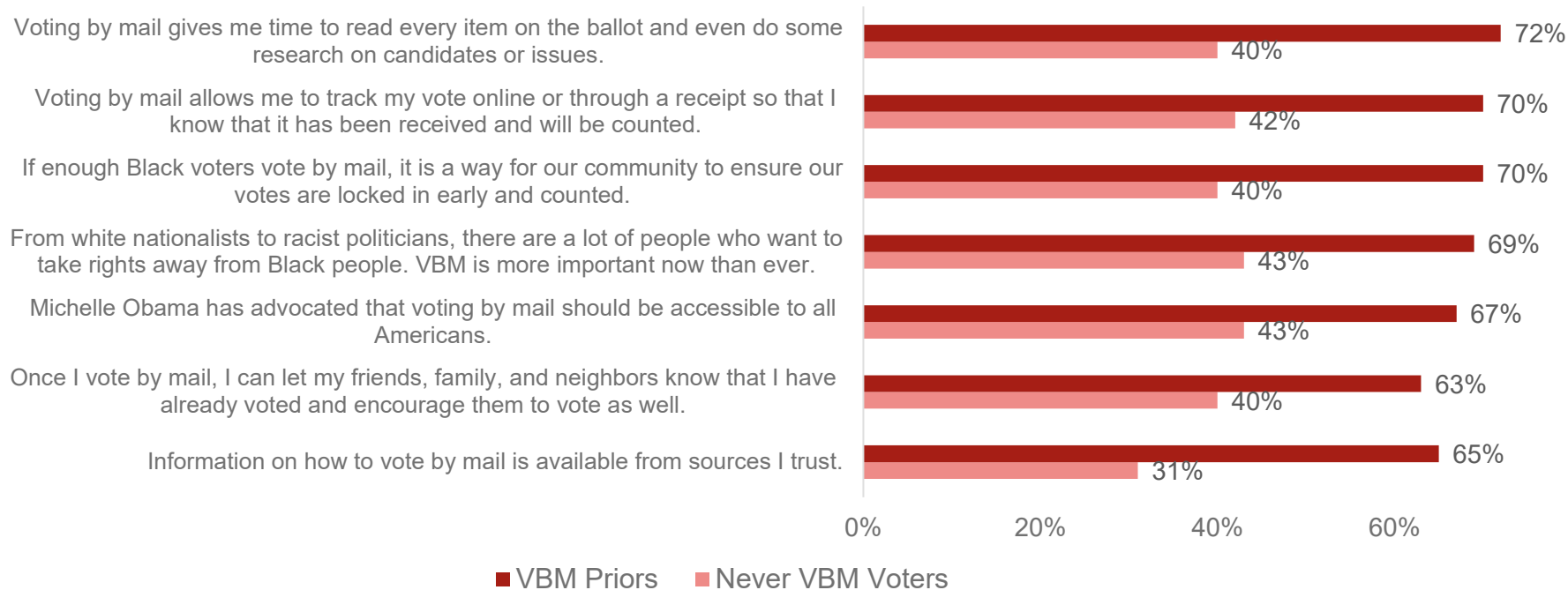
**Q:** Thinking ahead to the November election, how motivated are you to vote?  
Percentage saying, "I will definitely vote."



**Messaging:** Mobilize VBM among Black voters by emphasizing threats to the right to vote, ballot tracking, and trusted messenger validation

# The Most Effective Messaging Frames Will Cast Vote-by-Mail as Convenient, Validated, and an Asset for Black Political Empowerment

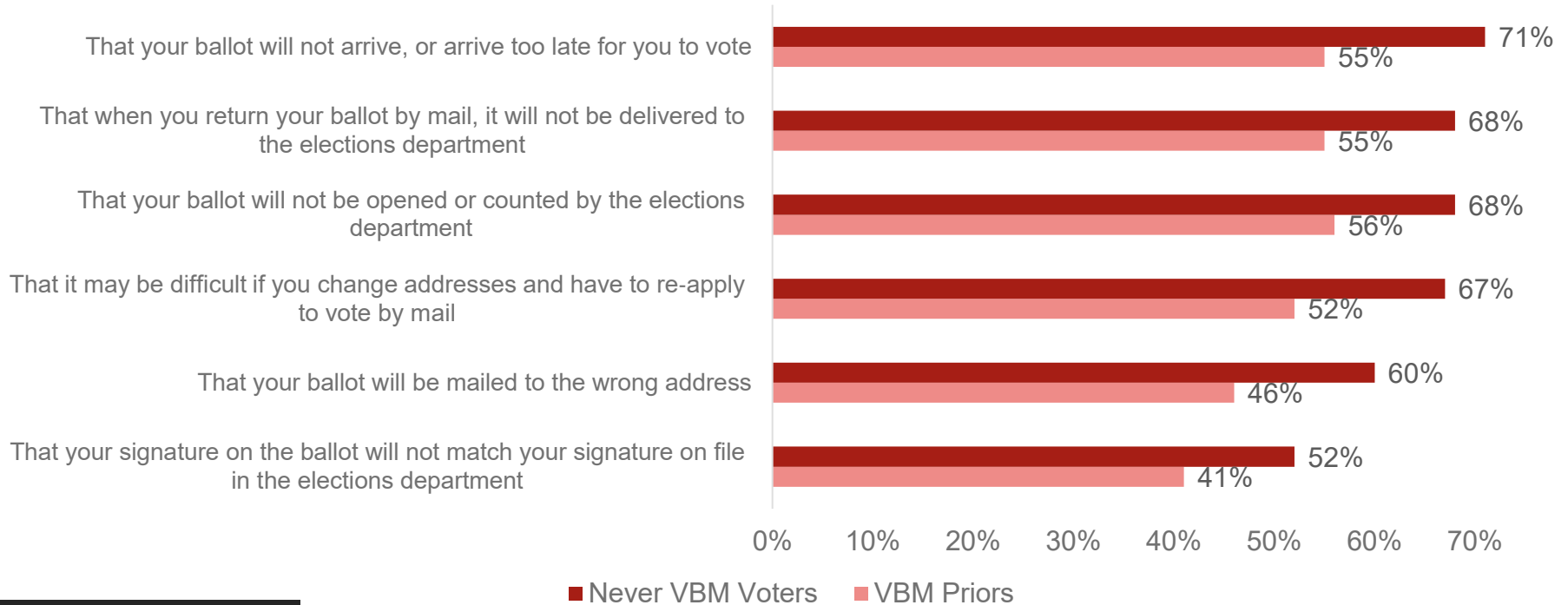
**Q:** Please indicate whether each of the following statements makes you more likely or less likely to vote by mail. (Shown below: Percent saying each argument makes them More Likely to vote by mail.)



# Top Concerns About VBM Relate to Ballot Handling

**Q:** How concerned or worried are you about the following issues coming up if you vote by mail?

(Shown below: Percent saying they are at least “a little worried.”)



# Prioritize Reassuring -- Especially Women & Younger Voters

**Q:** How concerned or worried are you about the following issues coming up if you vote by mail?  
(Shown below: Percent saying they are at least “a little worried.”)

	Total	Men	Women	18-29yrs	30-49yrs	50+yrs
That your ballot will not arrive or arrive too late for you to vote.	63%	60%	65%	74%	68%	50%
That when you return your ballot by mail, it not be delivered to the elections department	61%	59%	64%	73%	67%	48%
That your ballot will not be opened or counted by the elections department	62%	61%	62%	75%	67%	48%
That it may be difficult if you change addresses and have to re-apply to vote vote by mail	60%	57%	63%	67%	63%	52%
That your ballot will be mailed to the wrong address	53%	53%	54%	64%	57%	42%
That your signature on the ballot will not match your signature on file in the elections department	46%	48%	45%	60%	58%	26%

# Black Voters Are Interested in Information on Ensuring and Verifying Their Vote Will Be Counted

**Q:** Some people are automatically mailed an application to vote by mail so that they can quickly apply to vote by mail. If you received a vote by mail application, what information would be helpful and encourage you to complete and return the vote by mail application?

	Total	Men	Women	18-29yrs	30-49yrs	50+yrs
A checklist explaining the steps I need to take to vote by mail and ensure my vote is counted.	37%	36%	38%	33%	37%	41%
A link with information about how to track my ballot after I've mailed it.	37%	37%	37%	31%	37%	43%
An explanation of how I know that my mailed-in ballot will be counted.	35%	36%	35%	31%	32%	42%
A reminder that voting by mail allows me to take my time and research who I want to vote for while I look at the ballot.	34%	32%	36%	32%	31%	39%
Calendar of key dates and deadlines for voting by mail.	29%	31%	28%	31%	28%	33%
A reminder that I or someone in my household has previously voted by mail	18%	20%	17%	20%	16%	19%
A postcard from someone I trust saying why I can have confidence in vote by mail.	15%	15%	15%	18%	14%	14%

# Messaging on Threats to Black Voters' Rights, Encouraging Friends & Family, Resonates with Younger Black Voters

**Q:** Please indicate whether each of the following statements makes you more likely or less likely to vote by mail.

(Shown below: Percent saying each argument makes them More Likely to vote by mail.)

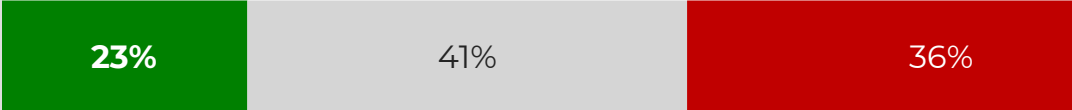
	Total	Men	Women	18-29yrs	30-49yrs	50+yrs
From white nationalists to some racist politicians, there are a lot of people who want to take rights away from Black people. Voting by mail is more important now than ever.	56%	56%	56%	62%	52%	56%
Michelle Obama has advocated that voting by mail should be accessible to all Americans.	55%	57%	53%	57%	47%	61%
Voting by mail allows me to track my vote online or through a receipt so that I know that it has been received and will be counted.	56%	56%	56%	54%	52%	62%
Voting by mail gives me time to read every item on the ballot even do some research candidates or issues.	56%	58%	55%	54%	53%	61%
Once I vote by mail, I can let my friends, family, and neighbors know that I have already voted and encourage them to vote as well.	53%	52%	51%	54%	51%	51%
If enough Black voters vote by mail, it is a way for our community to ensure our votes are locked in early and counted.	56%	60%	52%	53%	55%	58%

# Certain Messages Have Net Negative Impact on Voting By Mail Among Those Who Have Never Voted By Mail

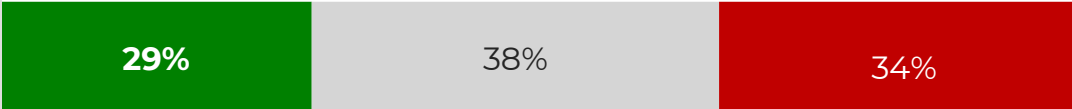
**Q:** Please indicate whether each of the following statements makes you more likely or less likely to vote by mail.

(Shown below: Voters who report having never voted by mail.)

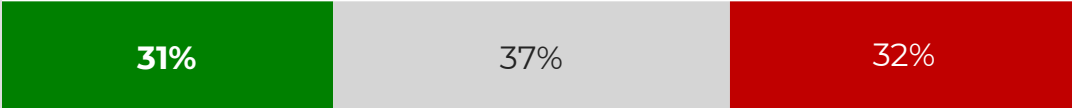
A significant portion of my community voted by mail in 2020 and will likely vote again by mail in 2022.



By voting by mail from my home, I've already done my part. I can simply look forward to election day and hearing about the results.



Voting by mail is not a permanent decision. You can try it out decide at each election whether you want to vote in person or by mail.



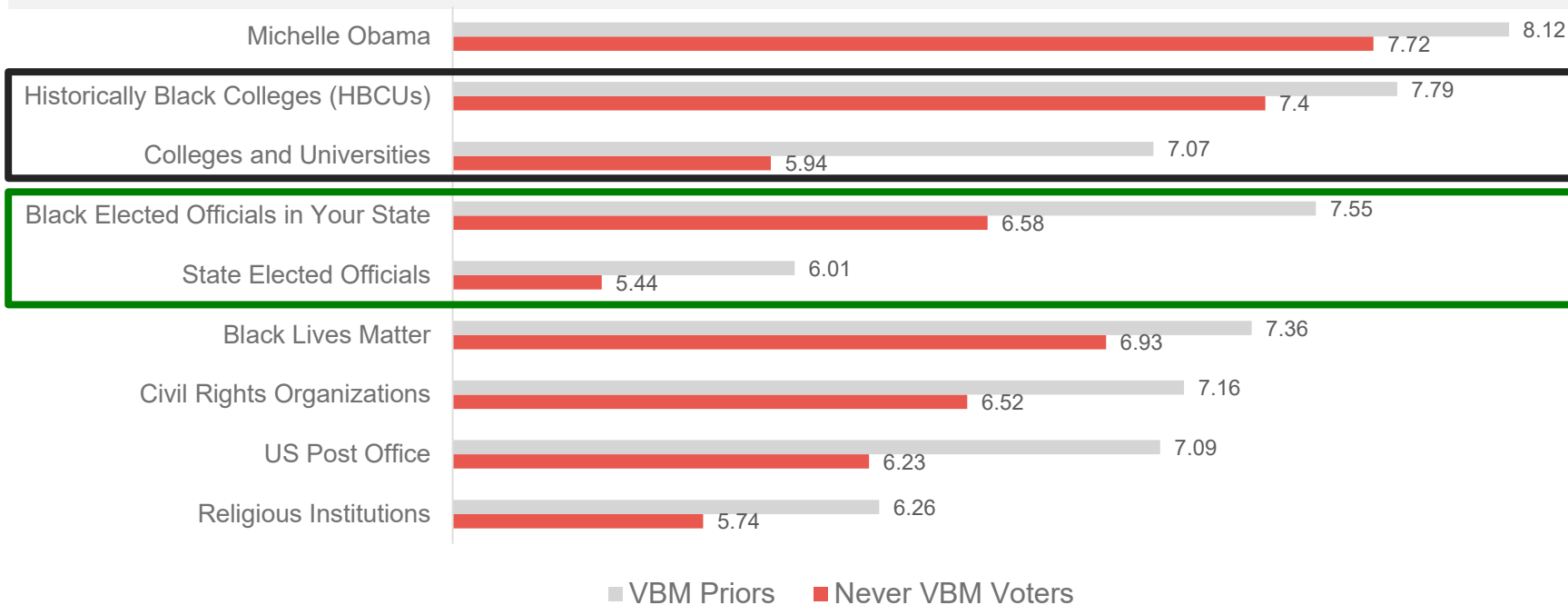
■ More Likely   ■ No Impact   ■ Less Likely



# VBM Validation From Black Political Figures & Historically Black Colleges (HBCUs)

Q: On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “I do not trust at all” and 10 means “I completely trust”, how much do you trust each of the following to provide accurate information about voting by mail to the [Black/African American] community?

Shown Below: Average rating)



# How and Whether to Vote: Signs advocates can activate Never VBM Voters

# About Half of Never VBM Voters Say They Would Consider VBM

Have you ever voted by mail? (Never VBM Voters)



■ No, and do not plan to in the future    ■ No, but I would consider doing so in the future.

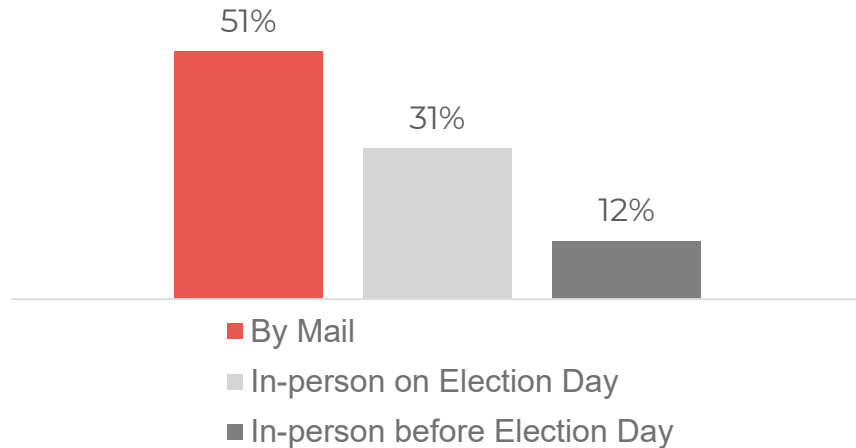
Have you ever voted by mail? (VBM Priors)



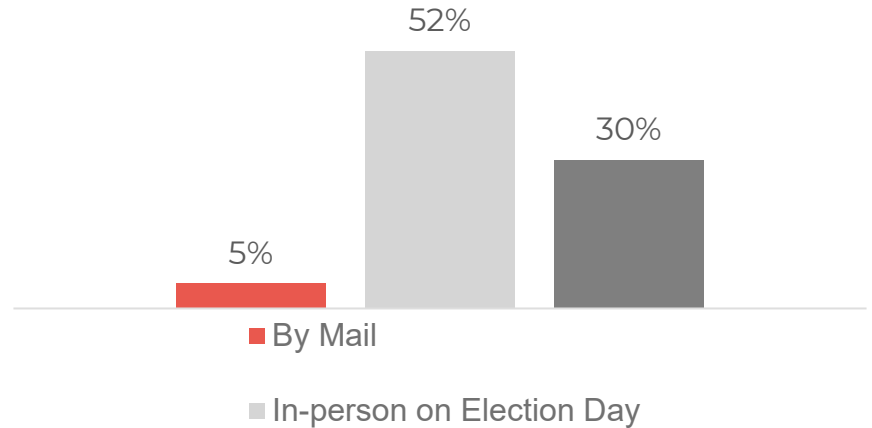
■ I always vote by mail    ■ I vote by mail, but not all of the time

# Few Never VBM Voters Intend to Vote By Mail in November 2022

How are you most likely to cast your ballot in the November 2022 election?  
(Shown below: VBM Priors)

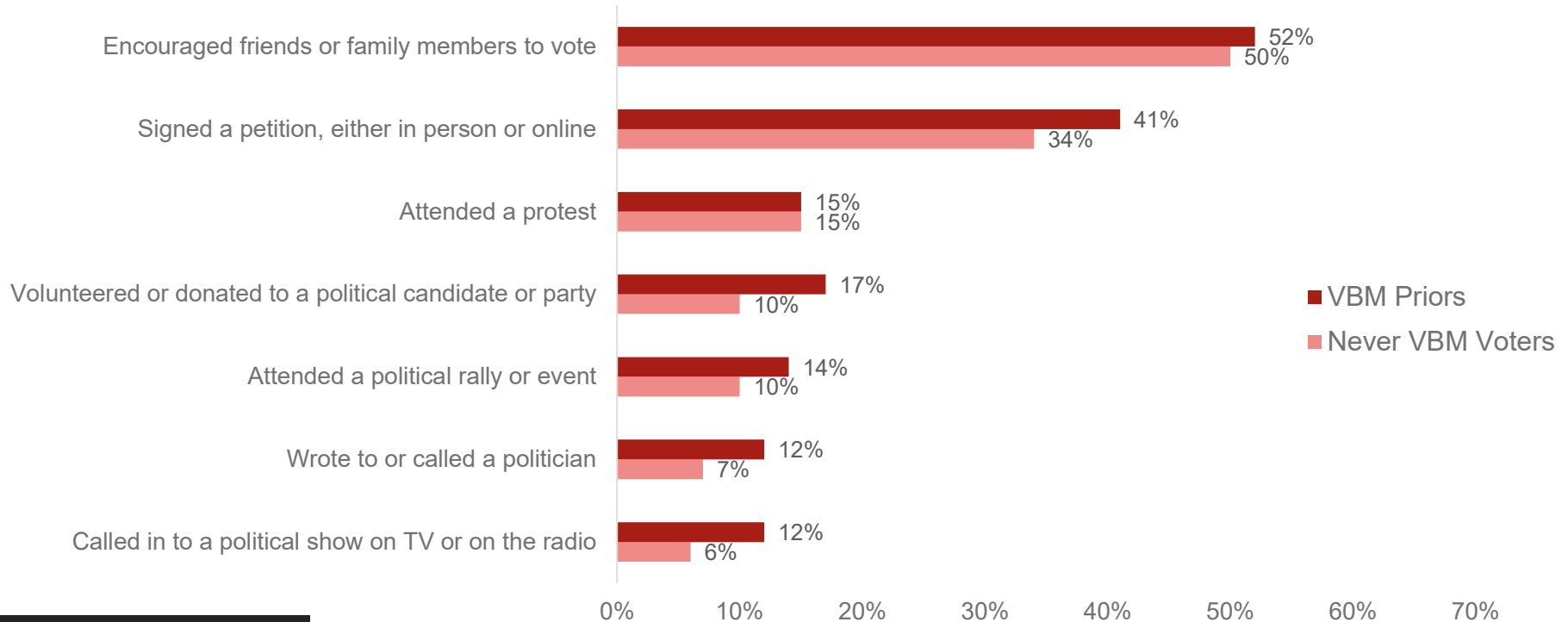


How are you most likely to cast your ballot in the November 2022 election?  
(Shown below: Never VBM Voters)



# Non-electoral Metrics Suggest Never VBM Voters Are Nearly As Politically Engaged as VBM Priors

Q: Which of the following activities have you participated in over the past two years?



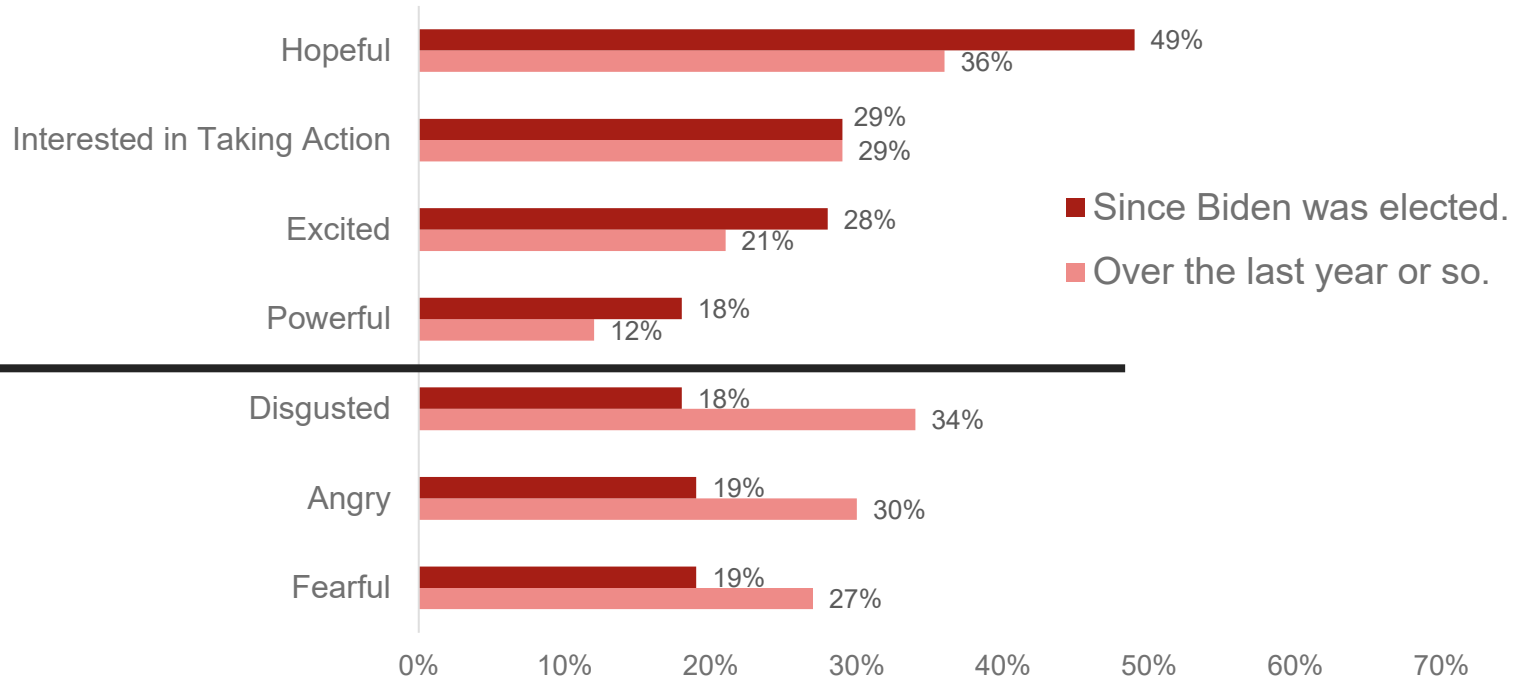
# Economic Issues Rise as Top Concerns, Especially Among Never VBM Voters; Mass Shootings/Gun Violence Also Break Through

**Q:** Some people are automatically mailed an application to vote by mail so that they can quickly apply to vote by mail. If you received a vote by mail application, what information would be helpful and encourage you to complete and return the vote by mail application?

	Total	VBM Priors	Never VBM	18-29yrs	30-49yrs	50+yrs
Price of Gasoline	29%	27%	30%	25%	30%	30%
Inflation/Prices Going Up	29%	26%	32%	23%	33%	29%
Mass Shootings & Gun Violence	28%	28%	28%	31%	23%	30%
Jobs and Economy	20%	17%	23%	17%	23%	19%
Cost of Housing/Rent	18%	16%	20%	16%	23%	16%
Protecting the Right to Have an Abortion	18%	19%	17%	24%	15%	17%
Crime	17%	18%	17%	18%	16%	18%
Health Care Costs	14%	17%	12%	15%	14%	15%
Discrimination/Racial Justice	13%	11%	14%	14%	12%	13%
Homelessness	13%	12%	13%	12%	16%	9%
Coronavirus Pandemic	12%	12%	12%	11%	15%	9%

# For Black Voters President Biden is Associated with Positive Perceptions of Politics

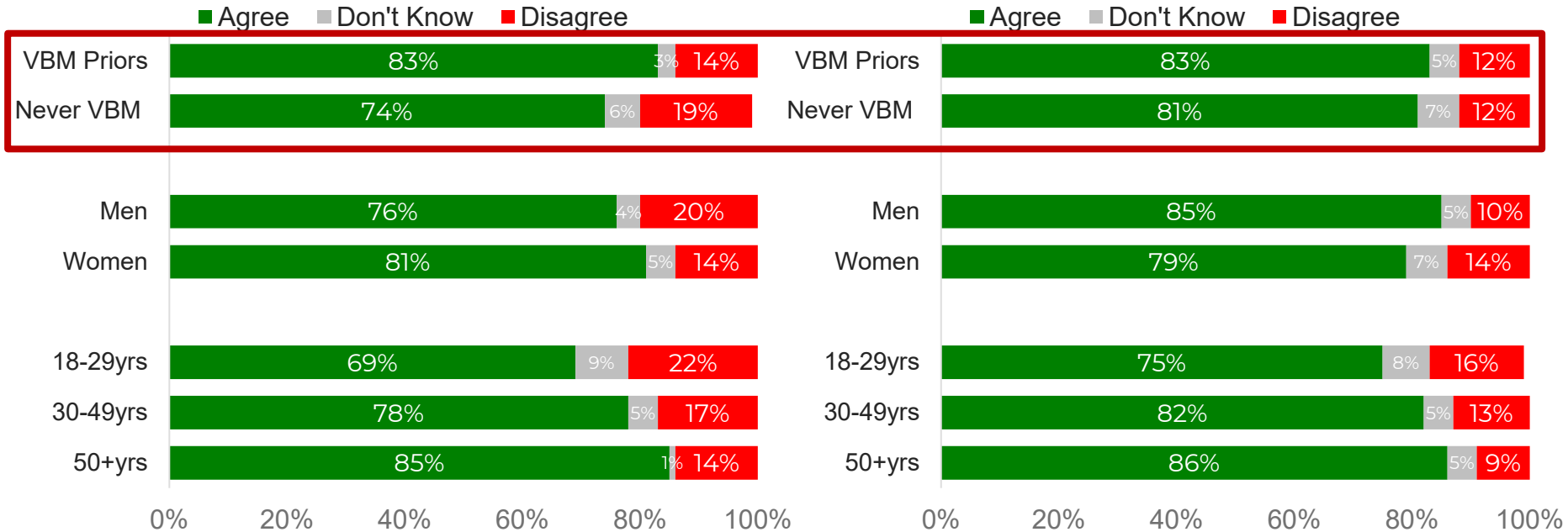
Q: Below is a list of emotions that some people feel about politics. Which have you felt about politics...



# Emphasize How Elections Impact the Community, not Individuals

Q: The outcomes of elections have a meaningful impact on my life.

Q: The outcomes of elections have a meaningful impact on my community.





# Recommendations

# Recommendations

- **Engage HBCUs, Michelle Obama, in-state Black elected officials and civil rights organizations** to explain why voting by mail can be trusted.
- **Use messaging that draws attention to the threat posed to Black voters' rights and lets voters know how to track their ballots** (in states where that is possible) and give simple steps to ensure your vote is counted. Messages that describe a serious threat to Black civic engagement move the needle for several groups. Efforts to undermine VBM translate to undermining Black political power.
- **Test a split mail approach:** (1) traditional VPC VBM application mail with info on how to ensure your vote is counted & tracked and (2) a separate mailing to test messages & messengers. “You should be receiving an application to vote by mail in the mail shortly. Here are 3 things you should know ...”

# Thank You!

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