



## Research Brief

# Despite low feelings of safety, fewer Chicagoans own guns than US general public.

More Chicagoans feel unsafe within one mile of their home than people do nationwide, according to recent NORC ChicagoSpeaks™ data compared to the 2022 General Social Survey (GSS) national data. However, only 14 percent of Chicago residents own a gun with the vast majority owning a gun for protection. Despite safety concerns, only about half of Chicago residents think too little is spent on law enforcement.

Though more Chicagoans feel unsafe than the U.S. in general, fewer own a gun.

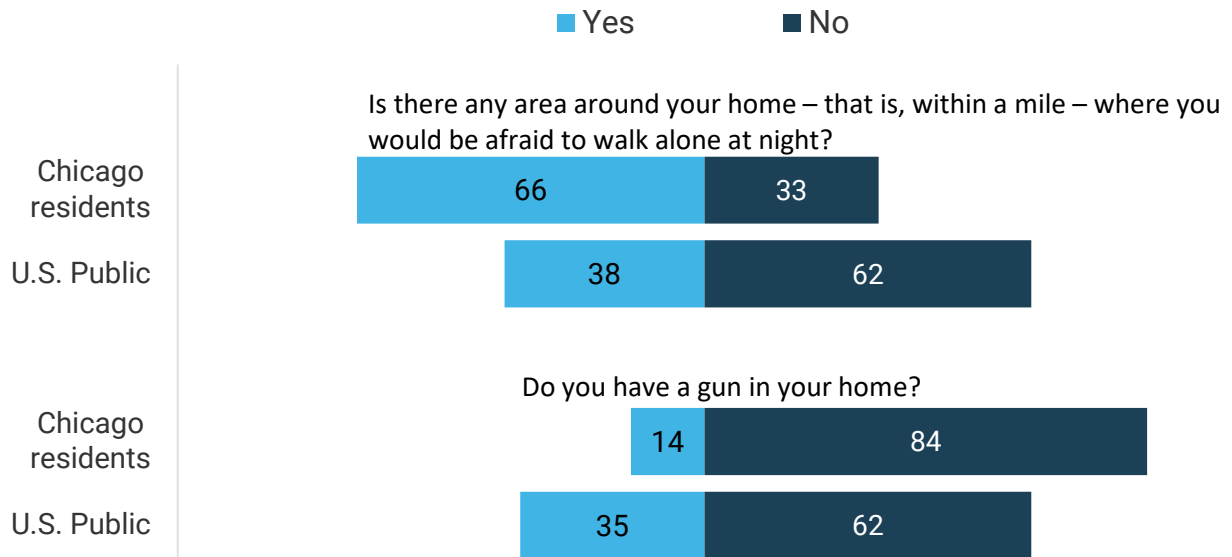
Two-thirds of Chicagoans feel unsafe walking at night in some area near their home, compared to 38 percent in national 2022 GSS data. This does not differ significantly depending on Chicagoans' income, race or ethnicity, gender, or partisanship.

However, these fears do not translate to increased gun ownership. Even though guns are often purchased to increase feelings of safety—94 percent of Chicagoans who own guns do so for protection—fewer Chicagoans own guns than the national average. Just 14 percent of Chicagoans report a gun in their home compared to 35 percent nationally.

Men (18 percent), Black (20 percent), and Republican (22 percent) residents are more likely to own a gun than women (11 percent), white (10 percent), and independent (11 percent) residents, respectively.

## Despite low feelings of safety, fewer Chicagoans own guns.

Percent of adults



**Questions:** Is there any area around your home – that is, within a mile – where you would be afraid to walk alone at night? Do you have a gun in your home?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks poll conducted June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents and General Social Survey conducted May 4-December 20, 2022 with 69,966 adults nationwide.

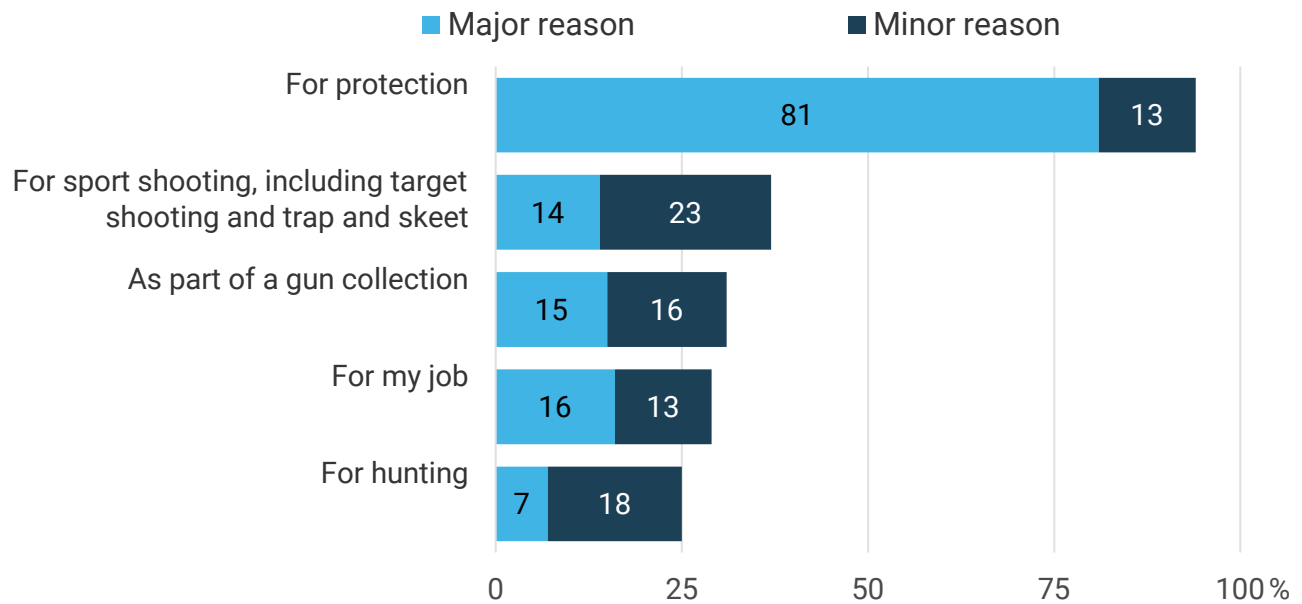


Of those who have guns in the home, 44 percent own one gun. Only nine percent own five or more guns. Half (48 percent) of those who have a gun in the home have purchased or had someone in their household purchase a gun since March of 2020.

Half (51 percent) of Chicagoans who purchased a gun since March of 2020 did so for the first time. Of those who own at least one gun, half (54 percent) rarely or never handle a gun, while 2 in 10 (22 percent) handle a gun every day.

Ninety-four percent of Chicagoans who have a gun in the household say that protection is a reason for having it, including 81 percent who say it’s a major reason. Far fewer of those with a gun in the household say that hunting, gun collecting, sport shooting, and job are reasons that they have a gun.

### Chicagoans overwhelmingly report protection as a reason they own a gun. Percent of Chicago adults with a gun in the household



**Question:** Below are some of the reasons that some people say they own guns. For each, please indicate whether it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why you own a gun.

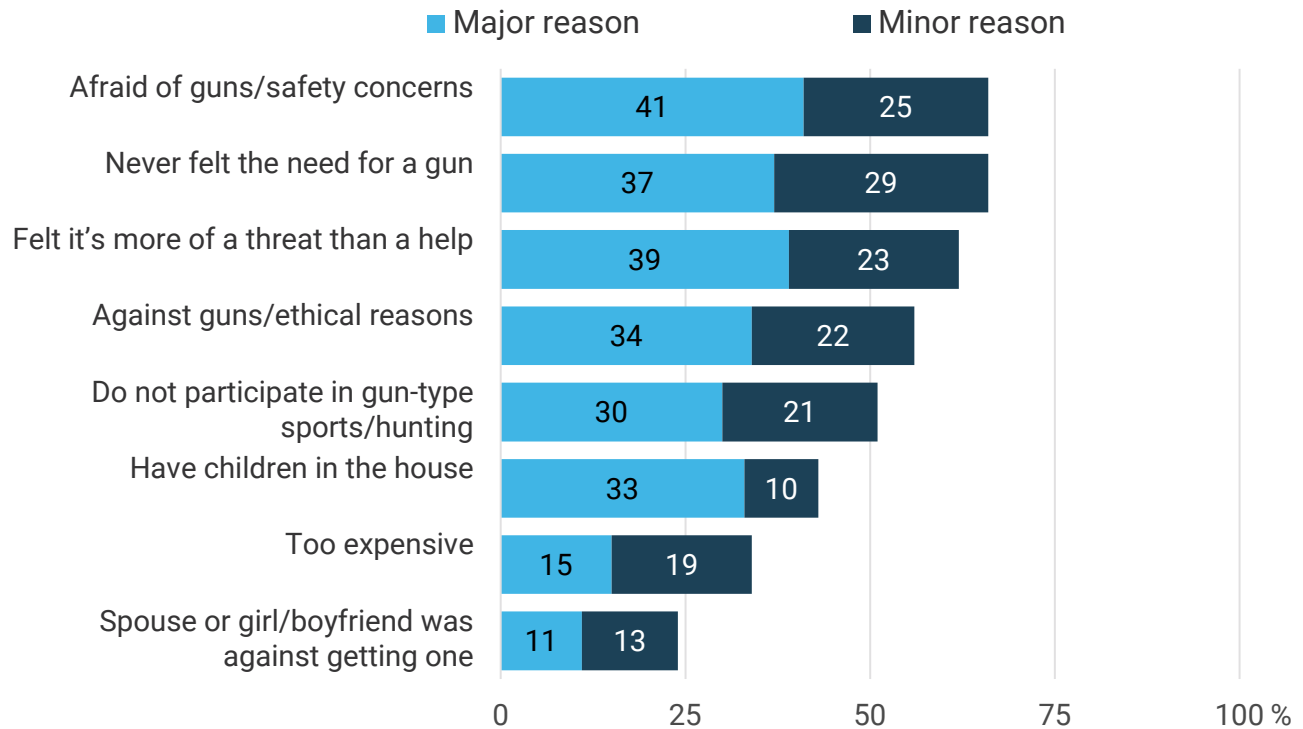
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks poll conducted June 24-July 10, 2024 with 212 adult Chicago residents.



Two-thirds of Chicagoans without a gun in the household do not have a gun because of safety concerns and an equal amount do not because they have never felt the need for a gun. More than half do not have a gun because they feel that a gun is more of a threat than a help, have ethical reasons for not owning a gun, or do not participate in gun sports. Only a quarter do not own a gun because a spouse or partner was against getting one.

## Fear of guns and lack of need for guns lead reasons Chicagoans don't own guns.

Percent of Chicago adults without a gun in the household



**Question:** Below are some of the reasons that some people say they do not own guns. For each, please indicate whether it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason why you do not own a gun.

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks poll conducted June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,024 adult Chicago residents.



Reasons for not owning a gun vary by demographic groups. Finances prevent some Chicagoans from purchasing guns. Hispanic (44 percent) and Black Chicagoans (42 percent) are more likely than white Chicagoans (20 percent) to not own a gun because of financial reasons, as are those with incomes under \$100,000 compared to those with incomes of \$100,000 or more (37 percent vs. 16 percent).

Hispanic Chicagoans are also more likely to not own a gun because of children in the house compared to white Chicagoans (60 percent vs. 30 percent), along with those who have incomes \$100,000 and over compared to households with incomes under \$100,000 (60 percent vs. 40 percent).

Black Chicagoans are less likely than white Chicagoans to report that they do not own a gun because of safety concerns (57 percent vs. 74 percent), not having a need for a gun (56 percent vs. 73 percent), or not participating in gun sports (37 percent vs. 59 percent).

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to not own guns because of ethical reasons (65 percent vs. 27 percent), not having a need for a gun (72 percent vs. 46 percent) or feeling it's more a threat than a help (69 percent vs. 36 percent).

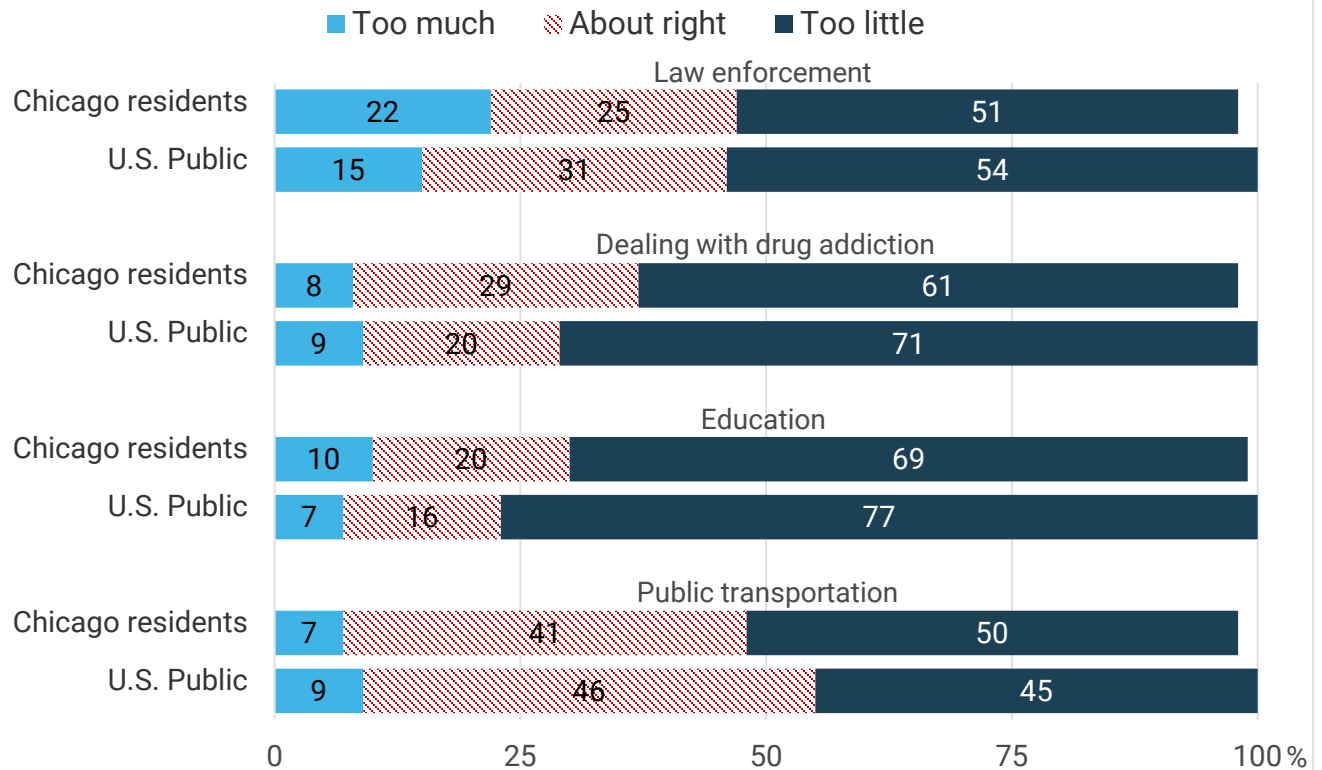
Men (31 percent) are more likely than women (19 percent) to not own a gun because a spouse or partner was against getting one. Meanwhile, women are more likely than men to not own a gun because they have children in the house (48 percent vs. 38 percent) or because they have safety concerns (74 percent vs. 56 percent).

Chicagoans' feelings about a lack of safety do not translate into a belief that the city should spend more on law enforcement.

Only half of Chicagoans think more should be spent on law enforcement, in line with the national average. Half of Chicagoans also think the city should spend more on public transportation. However, majorities of residents think more should be spent on dealing with drug addiction (61 percent) and education (69 percent). There are not significant differences between those of different races or ethnicities when it comes to how people think Chicago should invest in itself.

## At least half of Chicagoans think too little is spent on infrastructure and public goods.

Percent of adults



**Question:** Generally speaking, is the City of Chicago spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on...?

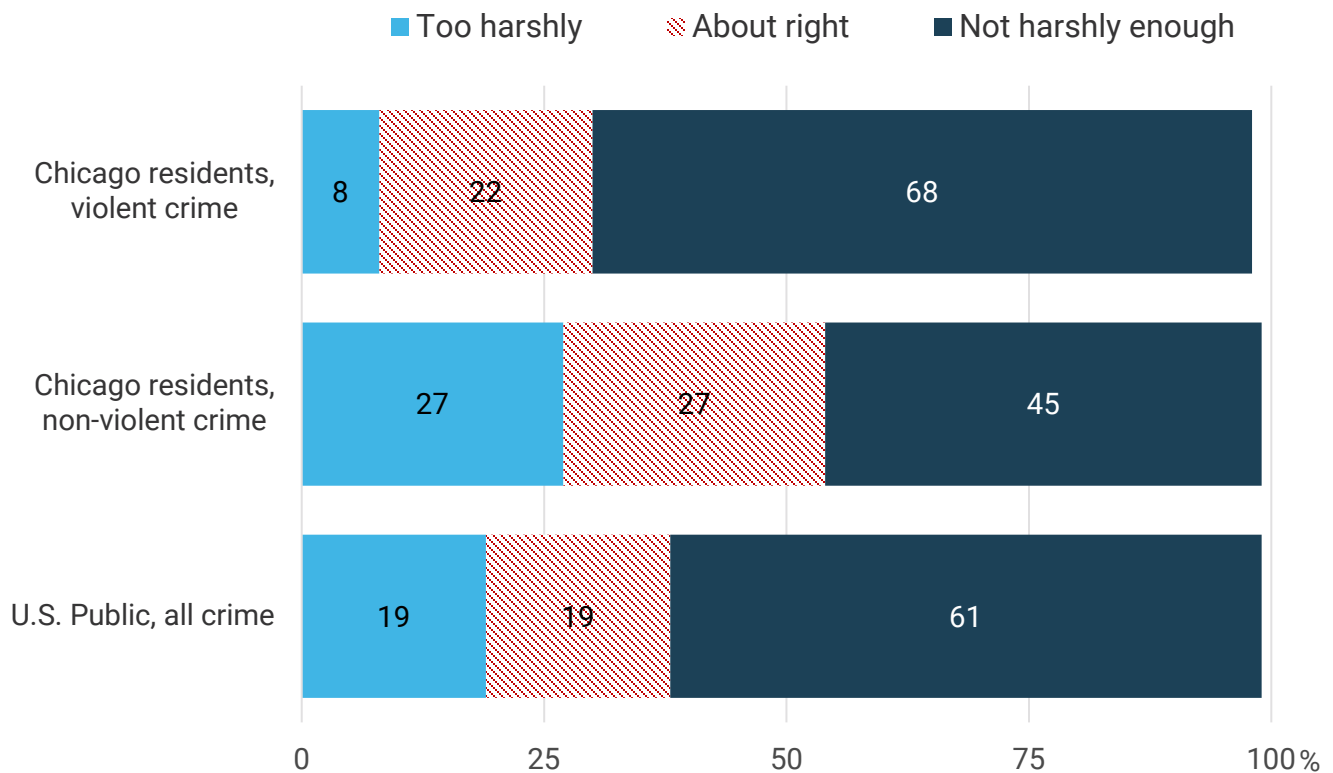
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks poll conducted June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents and General Social Survey conducted May 4-December 20, 2022 with 69,966 adults nationwide.



There is a sharp division between how Chicagoans think violent and non-violent crime should be handled. Two-thirds of Chicagoans say that violent crime is not dealt with harshly enough. Meanwhile, less than half of Chicagoans think that *non-violent* crime is not punished harshly enough. These numbers do not exist in the same form nationally, but when asked about crime generally, 6 in 10 (61 percent) U.S. adults say that crime in general is not dealt with harshly enough, more in line with how Chicagoans feel about violent crime.

### Majority of Chicagoans say violent crime isn't dealt with harshly enough.

Percent of adults



**Question:** In general, do you think the courts in your area deal too harshly or not harshly enough with criminals accused of...?

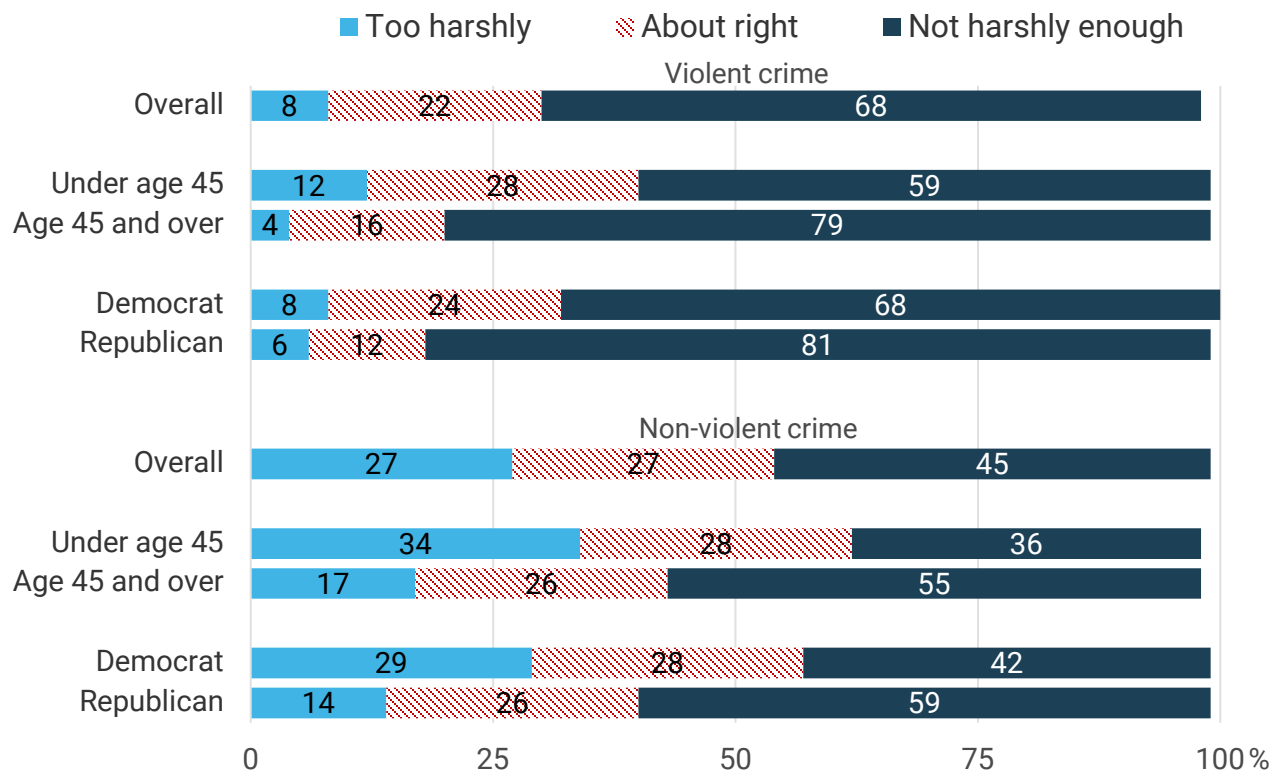
**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks poll conducted June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents and General Social Survey conducted May 4-December 20, 2022 with 69,966 adults nationwide.



Age and partisanship play a role in people’s views on punishment. Chicagoans under 45 and Democrats are less likely to say that crime of any type is not dealt with harshly enough.

For non-violent crime specifically, Hispanic Chicagoans are more likely than white Chicagoans to say that it is not dealt with harshly enough (53 percent vs. 41 percent), while Chicagoans who make \$100,000 and more are more likely than those who make less to say it is not dealt with harshly enough (54 percent vs. 43 percent).

### Democrats and those under 45 show more leniency toward punishment. Percent of Chicago adults



**Question:** In general, do you think the courts in your area deal too harshly or not harshly enough with criminals accused of...?

**Source:** ChicagoSpeaks poll conducted June 24-July 10, 2024 with 1,254 adult Chicago residents.





## Study Methodology

NORC conducted the ChicagoSpeaks Pilot 2024 study using three sample sources: (1) NORC’s AmeriSpeak® panelists who reside in Chicago, (2) pre-screened respondents from a previous NORC Center on Equity Research survey of Chicagoans who agreed to be recontacted, and (3) Chicago residents from Dynata’s web panel.

AmeriSpeak® is a probability-based panel, the respondents from the NORC Center on Equity Research survey were from an ABS probability-based survey, and Dynata is a non-probability panel. This research supported the initial stages of developing 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. In addition to the survey topics of importance to Chicagoans, the NORC Center on Equity Research survey respondents were asked if they would like to join a new research panel of Chicago residents called ChicagoSpeaks.

NORC conducted interviews between June 24 and July 10, 2024 with Chicago residents aged 18 and older. Overall, 1,254 Chicago residents completed the survey including 855 probability cases and 399 non-probability cases. AmeriSpeak panelists were invited through the password-protected AmeriSpeak Mobile App and received email reminders. ABS recruits received a combination of email and mail communications while Dynata used their typical panel recruitment methods. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference, using an on-line survey. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for completing the survey. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

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, 17 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50percent 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.

The final weights that are delivered with the data are developed through three stages. First, probability and nonprobability sample weights are developed separately. Second, small area estimation is leveraged to model core response variables and generate raking benchmarks. Finally, the two samples are combined through TrueNorth calibration to create the final weights. These final two stages make up NORC’s TrueNorth® Calibration. The sociodemographic characteristics are weighted to benchmarks from the American Community Survey 2022 1-year estimate.

For more information, email [AmeriSpeak-BD@norc.org](mailto:AmeriSpeak-BD@norc.org) or visit [AmeriSpeak.norc.org](http://AmeriSpeak.norc.org).