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How Well Do We Understand Sexual Harassment?

According to recent polling by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, Illinoisans believe that there is a better understanding of sexual harassment (51 percent) and that those accused of sexual harassment are more likely to be held accountable (59 percent). Yet, there are significant partisan differences in these views and 34 percent of the 1,001 respondents sampled for the poll say that they would still consider voting for a candidate accused of sexual harassment.

Over the last year, the #MeToo movement has gained national attention as people have been speaking up about their own experiences of sexual harassment and abuse in industries such as film, food service, and politics.

Sexual harassment is broadly unwanted, sexually connoted behavior or intent that recipients find offensive or threatening to their well-being. Consistently, research has linked sexual harassment to psychological, health, and job-related consequences¹.

Within the last year, the issue of sexual harassment has emerged in the Illinois General Assembly and across the United States.

In October of 2017, over 130 people signed an open letter alleging widespread sexual harassment in Illinois politics. Since then, Illinois has become one of the first states to pass legislation inspired by #MeToo including creating a Senate Task Force on Sexual Discrimination and Harassment Awareness and Prevention.

The issue has resurfaced at the national level with the hearings for the Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. The Kavanaugh hearings began Thursday, September 27th, addressing allegations of sexual misconduct against Kavanaugh. The poll was in the field during the week of the hearing, making it especially timely to look at this national issue.

Fifty-one percent of voters surveyed agreed that people have a better understanding of sexual harassment given recent allegations of harassment in the news; 41 percent said no, there is not a better understanding. One in 14 voters, 7 percent, did not know or declined to answer.

¹ McDonald, Paula. "Workplace sexual harassment 30 years on: A review of the literature." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 14.1 (2012): 1-17.

Democrats Believe People Have Better Understanding of Sexual Harassment. Higher proportions of Democrats (59 percent) and Independents (48 percent) said that people have a better understanding of sexual harassment. Republicans were least likely to agree that people have a better understanding of sexual harassment at 41 percent.

Among political parties, Republicans were most likely to believe that people do not have a better understanding of sexual harassment given the recent allegations in the news these days – 52 percent. Nearly half, 45 percent, of the Independents said that people do not have a better understanding of sexual harassment. Democrats followed the Independents with 35 percent believing people do not have a better understanding.

Despite significant differences emerging by political party, there were no difference across region or gender.

“These results suggest that partisan differences are deep, even at the level of perceived understanding of what sexual harassment is,” said Shiloh Deitz, a Simon Institute scholar and contributor to the poll. “Each new case of sexual harassment that comes out, is undergirded by a larger national conversation over definitions - this is part of what makes this issue so sticky.”

When asked if people were more likely to be held accountable now for sexual harassment than they were before, 86 percent of voters said that people were more likely or just as likely. One in 12, 8 percent, did not know or declined to answer. Six percent volunteered that individuals are less likely to be held accountable for sexual harassment than they were before.

There were no major differences across party, region, or gender.

Overall, 34 percent of respondents said that they would consider voting for a candidate accused of sexual harassment by multiple people, while 38 percent said that they definitely would not. Significant differences emerged across region, gender, and political party.

Downstate Voters More Likely to Consider Voting for Accused Candidates. Voters in the downstate regions of Illinois, 41 percent, were most inclined to say that they would consider voting for a candidate accused of sexual harassment by multiple people. This was followed by 33 percent of voters in the city of Chicago and 31 percent of voters in the Chicago suburbs. A similar pattern emerged where 18 percent of respondents in the downstate regions of Illinois said that they would strongly consider voting for a political candidate with multiple allegations of sexual harassment. This compared to only 10 percent of voters in the city of Chicago and 9 percent of voters in the Chicago suburbs.

Voters in the city of Chicago, 43 percent, were the most likely to believe that they would definitely not vote for a candidate accused of sexual harassment by multiple people. Voters in the Chicago suburbs responded similarly at 41 percent. Downstate voters, at 30 percent, were the least likely to say that they would definitely not vote for a candidate facing multiple sexual harassment allegations.

Republicans More Likely to Consider Voting for Accused Candidates. Among Republicans, Democrats and Independents, Republicans were most likely, at 60 percent, to say that they would consider voting for a political candidate accused of sexual harassment by multiple people if they agreed with the candidate on the issues.

Thirty percent of Independents said that they would consider voting for a political candidate who had been accused of sexual harassment by multiple people, followed by 21 percent of Democrats.

Republicans were most likely to say that they would strongly consider voting for a political candidate accused of sexual harassment by multiple people at 24 percent. This was followed by only 5 percent of Democrats and 8 percent of Independents.

Lastly, over half of the Democrats (51 percent) said that they definitely would not vote for a candidate accused of sexual harassment by multiple people regardless of if they agreed with the candidate on the issues at. This was followed by 38 percent of Independents, and only 16 percent of Republicans.

Men More Likely to Consider Voting for Accused Candidates. Forty percent of men said that they would consider voting for a candidate that multiple people accused of sexual harassment. This is compared to 28 percent of women. Men were also more likely to say that they would strongly consider voting for an accused candidate

“The fact that the poll was in the field during the Kavanaugh hearings gives us an excellent look at how people are thinking about this issue right now. Our polling shows that there are differences in how sexual harassment impacts voting behavior. Republicans are more likely to consider voting for candidates accused by multiple people of sexual harassment. Downstate voters are also more likely to consider voting for accused candidates, which makes sense because there tend to be more Republicans in these areas. Overall, our results appear consistent with the party differences observed during the Kavanaugh hearings,” said Seyi Amosu the Celia M. Howard Fellow at the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute.

These questions were replicated from a national poll conducted by Quinnipiac in November 2017. Our results for the state of Illinois mirror the results of the national sample. Quinnipiac reported that 55 percent of respondents indicate that people have a better understanding of sexual harassment, 62 percent agree that people are more likely to be held accountable, and 27 percent report that they would consider voting for someone accused of sexual harassment.

“The national Quinnipiac survey was conducted a year ago when the #MeToo movement was just gaining traction, and yet, the Quinnipiac results mirror what we found in this Illinois poll almost a year later,” said Dr. Linda Baker, university professor and contributor to the poll. “This has been amidst heightened media attention and a flurry of new accusations. The partisan differences observed in The Simon Poll™ combined with the similarities between our poll and the Quinnipiac survey suggest a divide along party lines.”

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The margin of error for the entire sample of 1,001 voters is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. This means that if we conducted the survey 100 times, in 95 of those instances, the population proportion would be within plus or minus the reported margin of error for each subsample. For subsamples, the margin of error increases as the sample size goes down. The margin of error was not adjusted for design effects.

Live telephone interviews were conducted by Customer Research International of San Marcos, Texas using the random digit dialing method. The telephone sample was provided to Customer Research International by Scientific Telephone Samples. Potential interviewees were screened based on whether they were registered voters and quotas based on area code and sex (<60 percent female). The sample obtained 52 percent male and 48 percent female respondents. Interviewers asked to speak to the youngest registered voter at home at the time of the call. Cell phone interviews accounted for 60 percent of the sample. A Spanish language version of the questionnaire and a Spanish-speaking interviewer were made available.

Field work was conducted from September 24 through September 29. No auto-dial or “robo” polling is included. Customer Research International reports no Illinois political clients. The survey was paid for with non-tax dollars from the Institute’s endowment fund. The data were not weighted in any way. Crosstabs for the referenced questions will be on the Institute’s polling web site, simonpoll.org.

The Paul Simon Public Policy Institute is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s (AAPOR) Transparency Initiative. AAPOR works to encourage objective survey standards for practice and disclosure. Membership in the Transparency Initiative reflects a pledge to practice transparency in reporting survey-based findings.

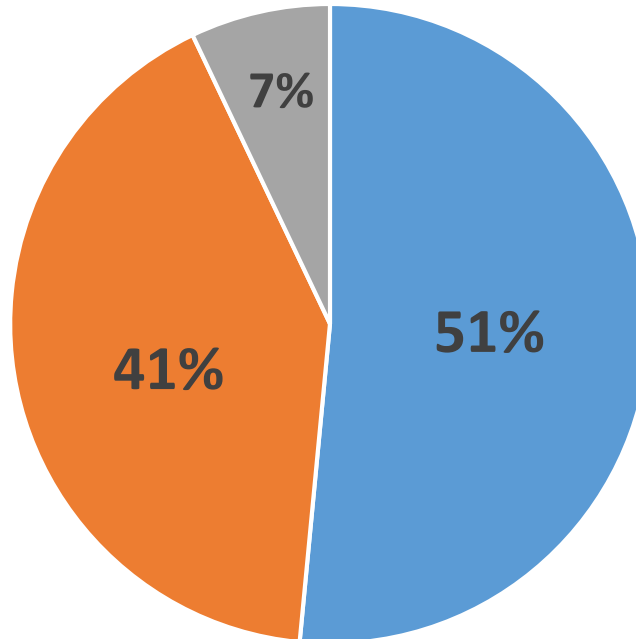
The Institute’s polling data are also archived by four academic institutions for use by scholars and the public. The four open source data repositories are: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (<http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/>), The University of Michigan’s Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (<http://openicpsr.org>), the University of North Carolina’s Odum Institute Dataverse Network (<http://arc.irss.unc.edu/dvn/dv/PSPPi>), and the Simon Institute Collection at OpenSIUC (<http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/ppi/>).

Note: The “Simon Poll” and the “Southern Illinois Poll” are the copyrighted trademarks of the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University. Use and publication of these polls is encouraged- but only with credit to the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIU Carbondale.

Frequency Tables¹

Given the recent allegations of sexual harassment in the news these days, do you think people have a better understanding of sexual harassment, or not?

Response	Percent (n=1001)
Yes, Better Understanding	51%
No	41%
Don't Know	5%
No Answer	2%

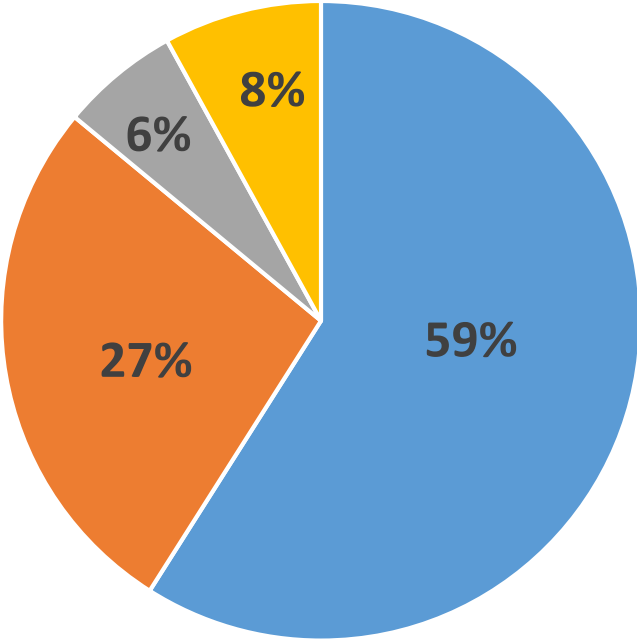


■ Yes, Better Understanding ■ No ■ Don't Know/Refused

¹ Values are rounded and may not sum to 100%.

Given the recent allegations of sexual harassment in the news these days, do you think people are more likely to be held accountable for sexual harassment, or do you think people are just as likely to be held accountable as they were before?

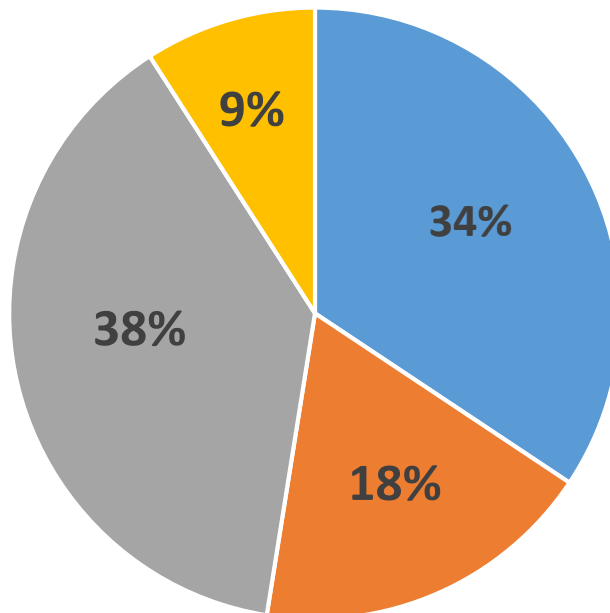
Response	Percent (n=1001)
More likely	59%
Just as likely	27%
Less likely	6%
Don't know	5%
No Answer	3%



■ More Likely ■ Just as Likely ■ Less Likely ■ Don't Know/Refused

If a political candidate has been accused of sexual harassment by multiple people, would you still consider voting for them if you agreed with them on the issues, or would you definitely not vote for them?

Response	Percent (n=1001)
Consider voting	34%
<i>Strongly consider</i>	12%
<i>Somewhat consider</i>	22%
Not vote	18%
Definitely not vote	38%
Don't Know	5%
No Answer	4%



- Consider Voting
- Not Vote
- Definitely Not Vote
- Don't Know/Refused

Demographic Crosstabs

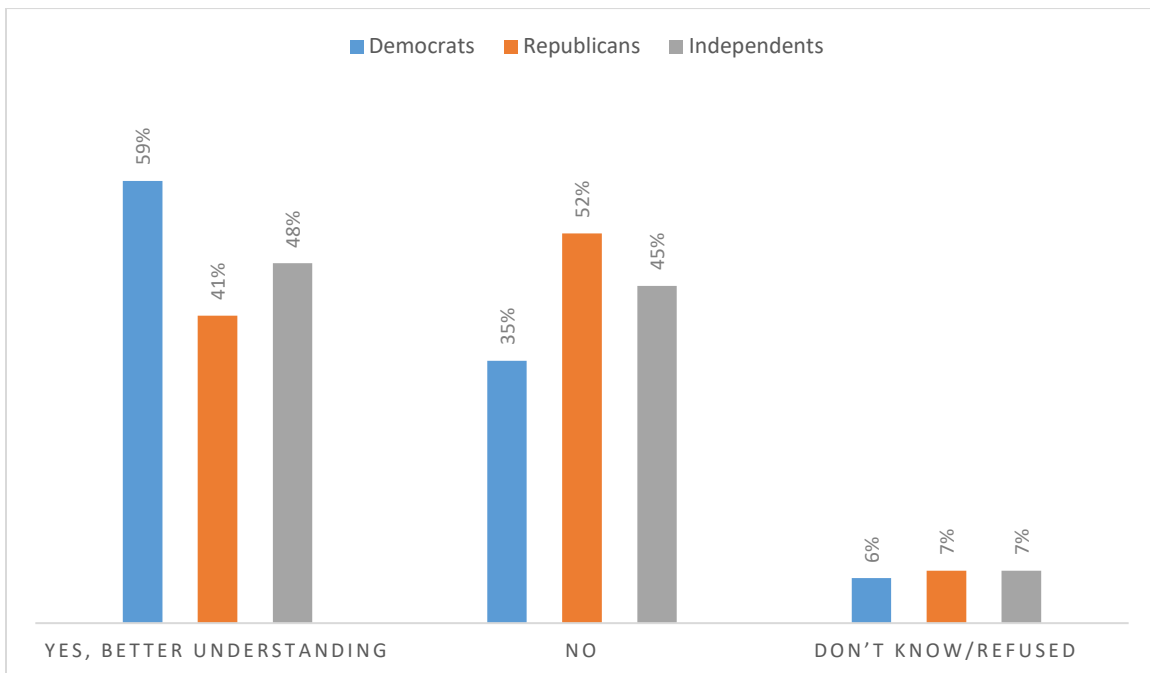
BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

By Area

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Yes, Better Understanding	55%	53%	47%
No	39%	40%	45%
Don't Know	5%	5%	5%
No Answer	1%	2%	3%

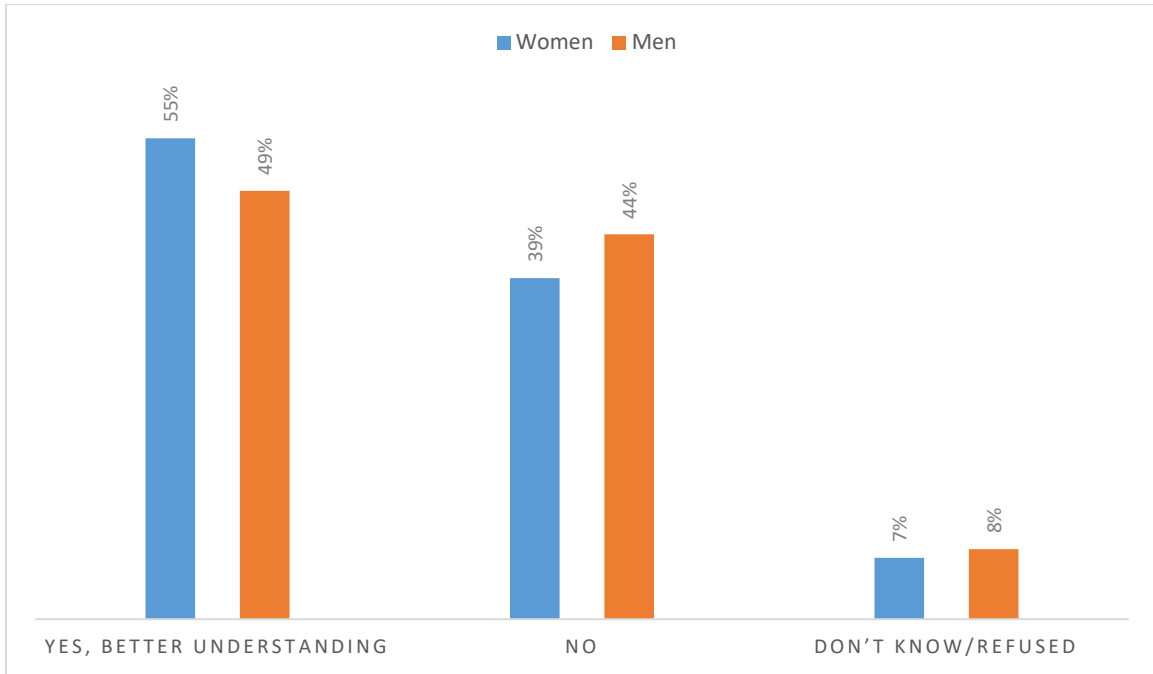
By Political Party

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Yes, Better Understanding	59%	41%	48%
No	35%	52%	45%
Don't Know	5%	4%	6%
No Answer	1%	3%	1%



By Gender

	Women	Men
Yes, Better Understanding	55%	49%
No	39%	44%
Don't Know	5%	6%
No Answer	2%	2%



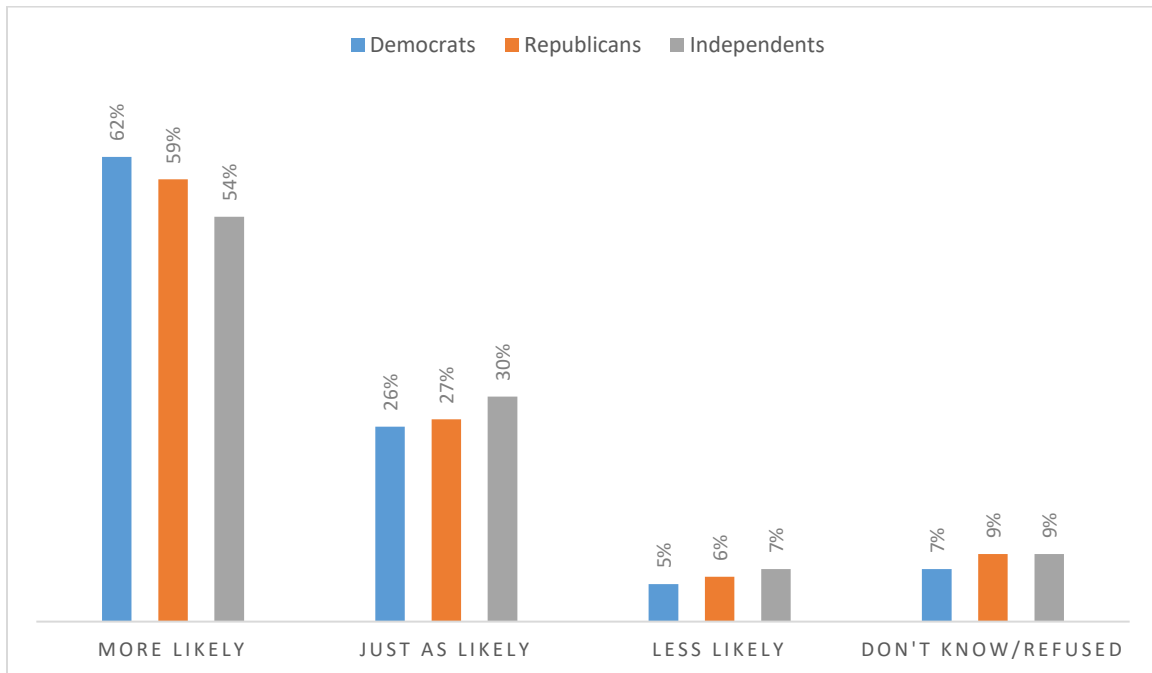
MORE ACCOUNTABLE FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

By Area

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
More Likely	64%	60%	54%
Just as Likely	22%	27%	30%
Less Likely	6%	5%	7%
Don't Know	5%	6%	5%
No Answer	3%	3%	3%

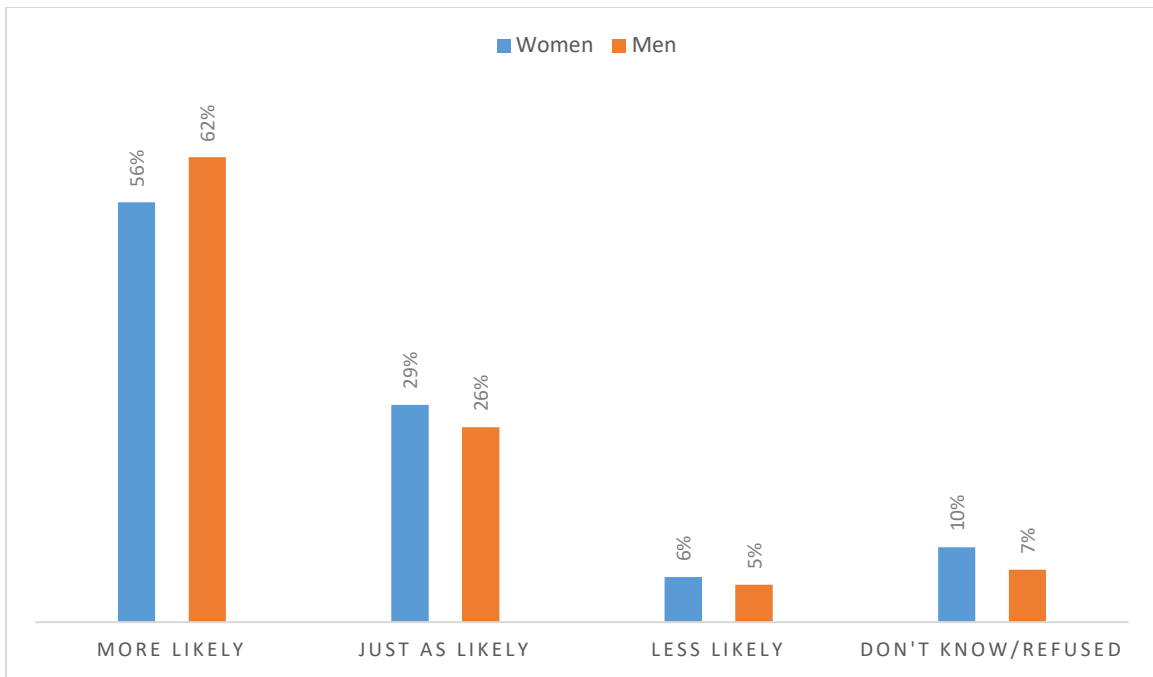
By Political Party

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
More Likely	62%	59%	54%
Just as Likely	26%	27%	30%
Less Likely	5%	6%	7%
Don't Know	5%	6%	7%
No Answer	2%	3%	2%



By Gender

	Women	Men
More Likely	56%	62%
Just as Likely	29%	26%
Less Likely	6%	5%
Don't Know	6%	5%
No Answer	4%	2%



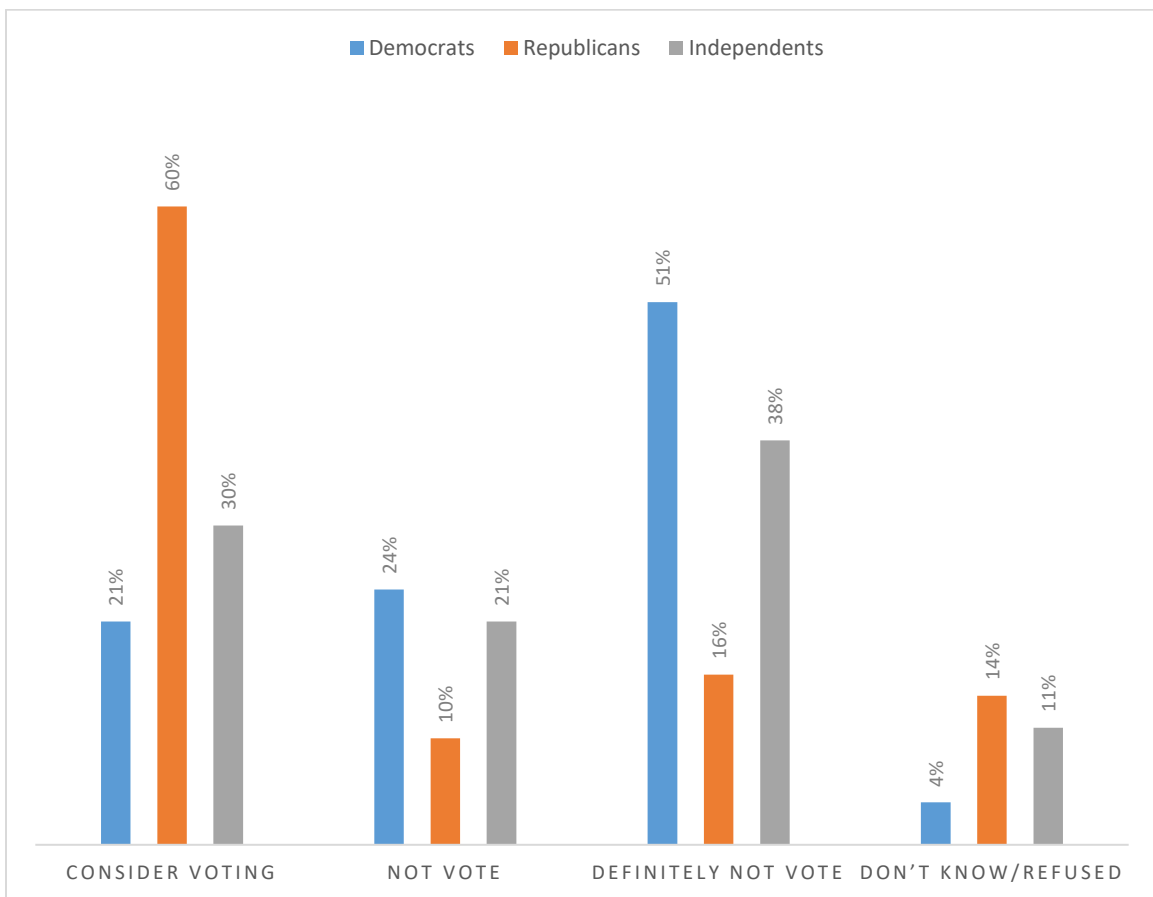
CONSIDER VOTING FOR PERSON ACCUSED OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

By Area

	Chicago City	Chicago Suburbs	Downstate
Consider voting	33%	31%	41%
Strongly consider	10%	9%	18%
Somewhat consider	23%	22%	23%
Not vote	17%	20%	17%
Definitely not vote	43%	41%	30%
Don't Know	5%	5%	7%
No Answer	1%	4%	6%

By Political Party

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Consider voting	21%	60%	30%
Strongly consider	5%	24%	8%
Somewhat consider	16%	36%	22%
Not vote	24%	10%	21%
Definitely not vote	51%	16%	38%
Don't Know	3%	8%	6%
No Answer	1%	6%	5%



By Gender

	Women	Men
Consider voting	28%	40%
Strongly consider	9%	15%
Somewhat consider	19%	26%
Not vote	20%	17%
Definitely not vote	45%	31%
Don't Know	4%	7%
No Answer	3%	4%

