

# Presumption of Innocence

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## Introduction

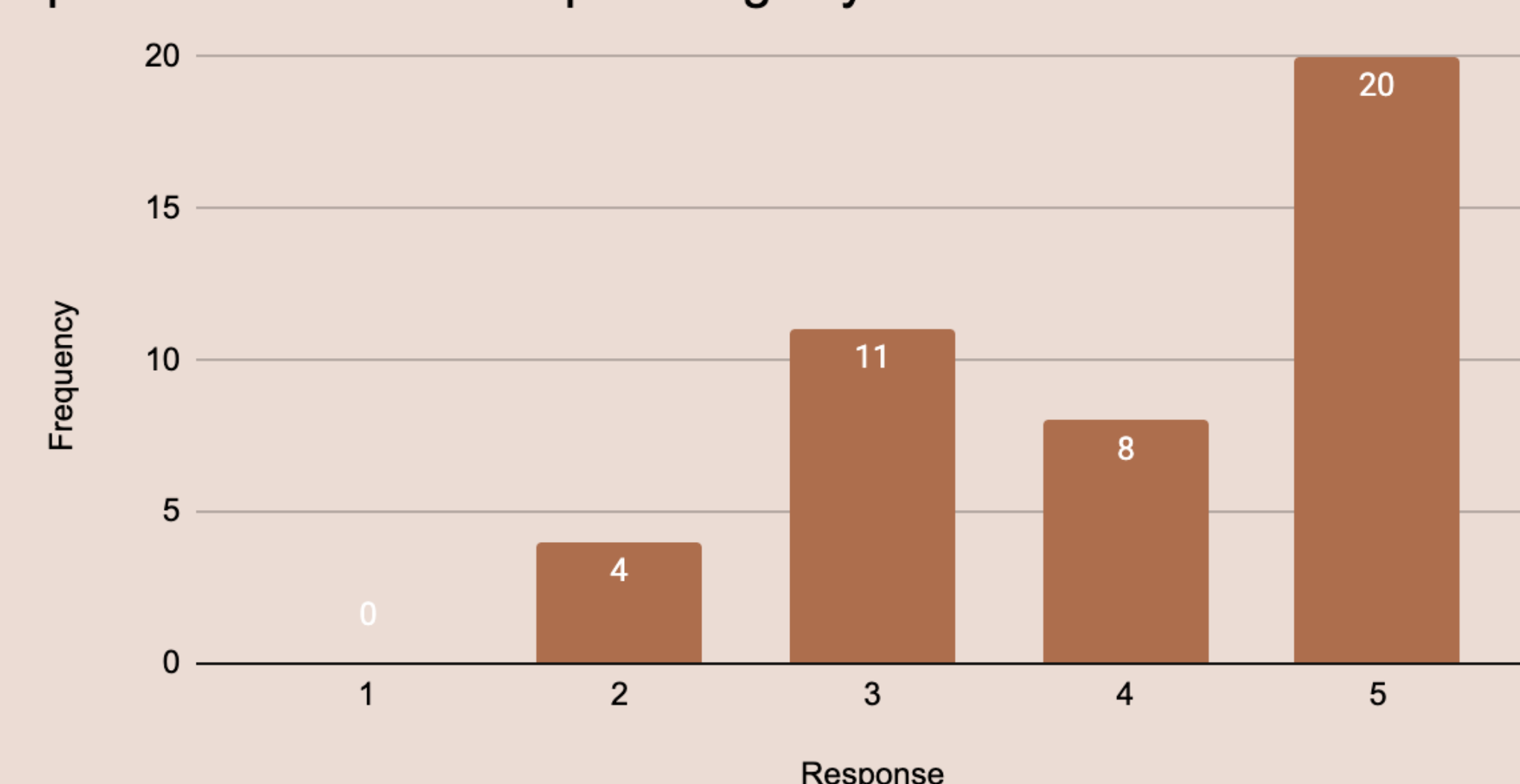
The presumption of innocence is the core foundation of the American justice system, going hand in hand with the fifth amendment to protect criminal defendants from self incrimination when testifying. It explicitly forbids jurors from using official suspicion or indictment as evidence of guilt in a criminal trial but people are bound to have bias and make their own conclusions before all evidence is presented. Through this research, I sought to understand the true beliefs of the American people on the innocence of those who stand before the court. I hypothesized that at least half of the participants would disagree with the idea of presuming the defendant innocent.

## Discussion

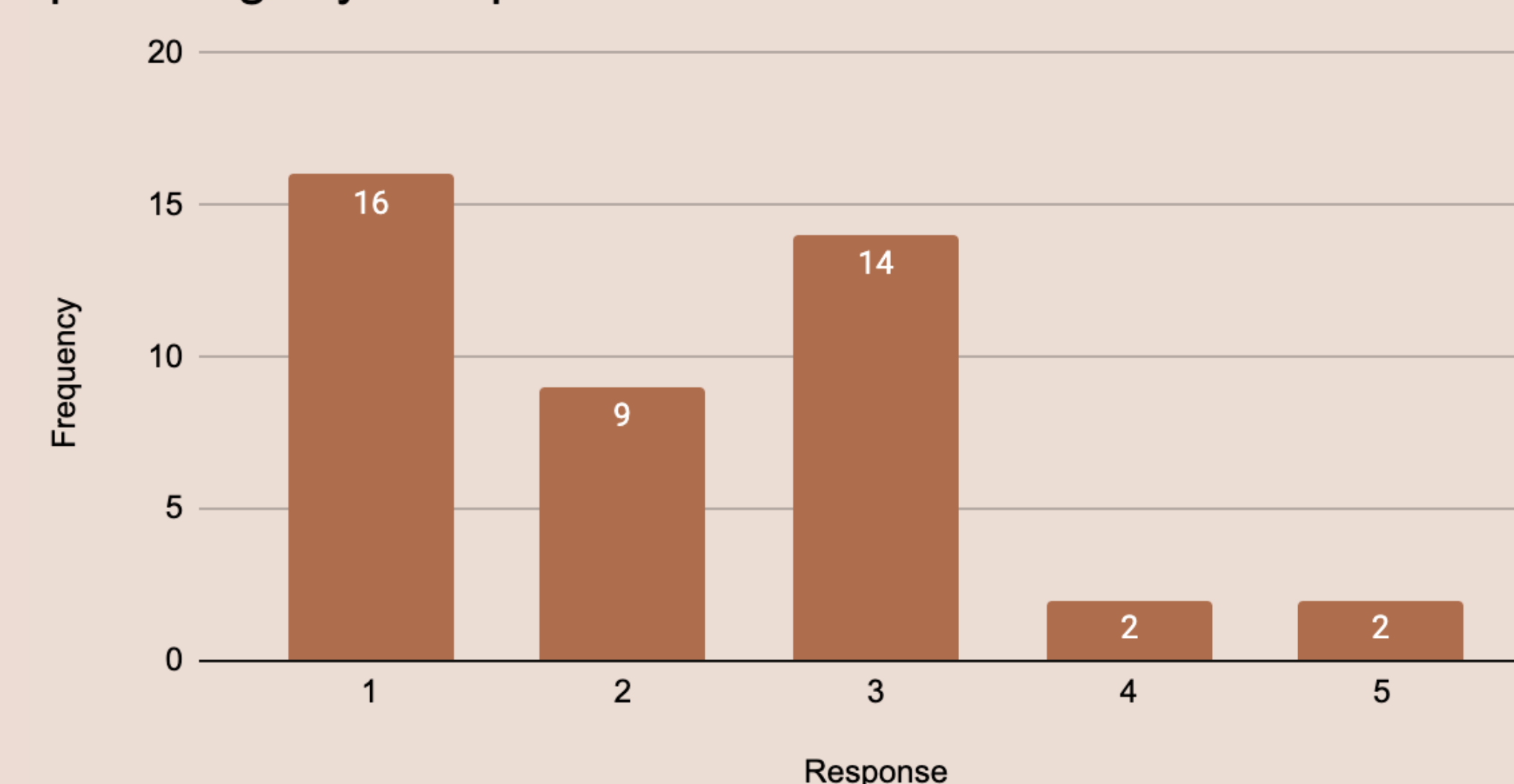
The survey method was a success in getting as many participants as possible. However, the pool of participants does not reflect the true population of the United States as a whole, since Sugar Land is one of the most racially diverse cities in the country. Therefore the data could be skewed from the opinions of those who were majorly immigrants. Half of the participants were below the age of 18 and they participated in order to gather data from those who will become jurors in the near future. Their data points could have also skewed the data, for minors are less experienced and do not understand the full purpose of the presumption of innocence.

## Results

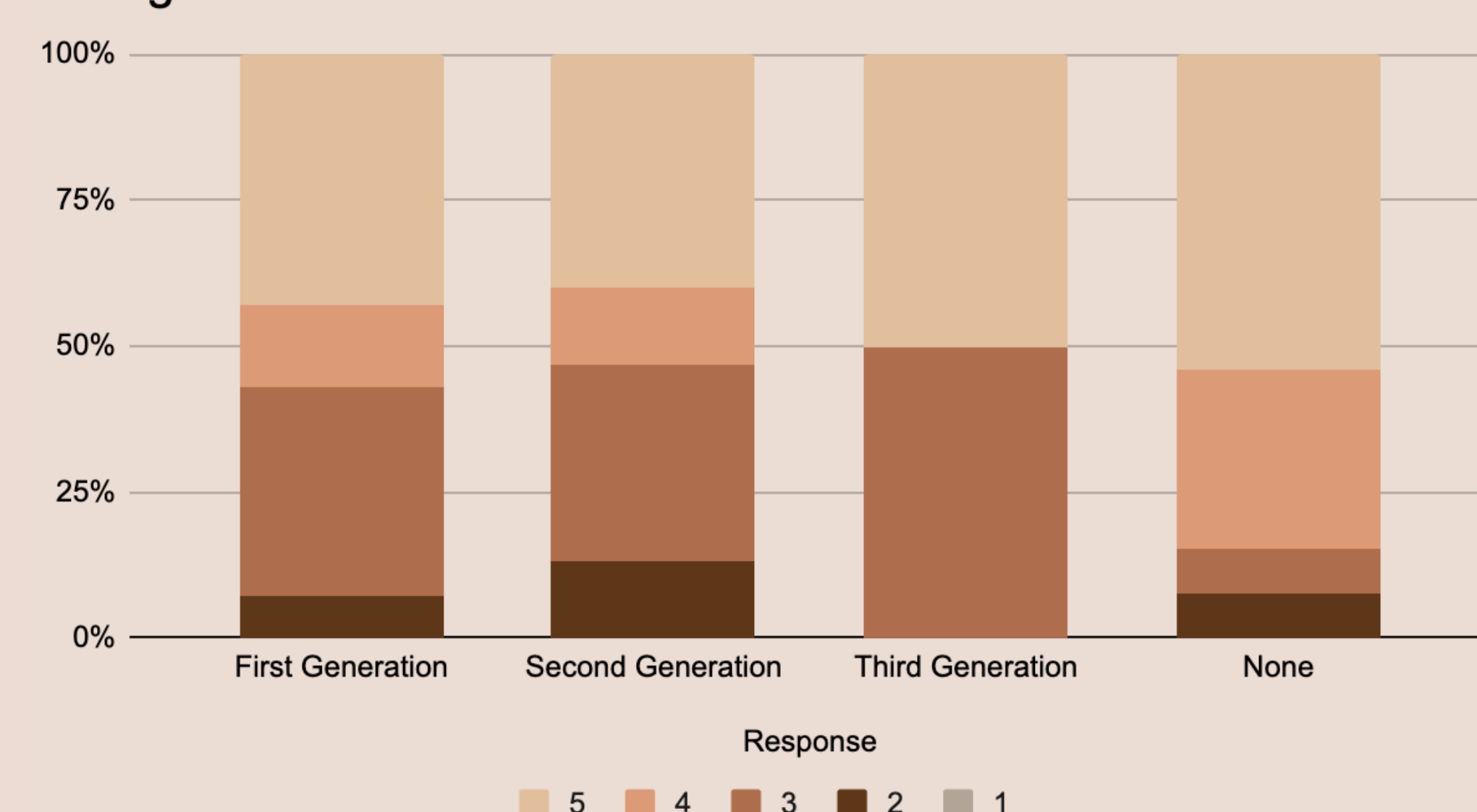
Response to "How strongly do you personally believe in the phrase 'innocent until proven guilty'?"



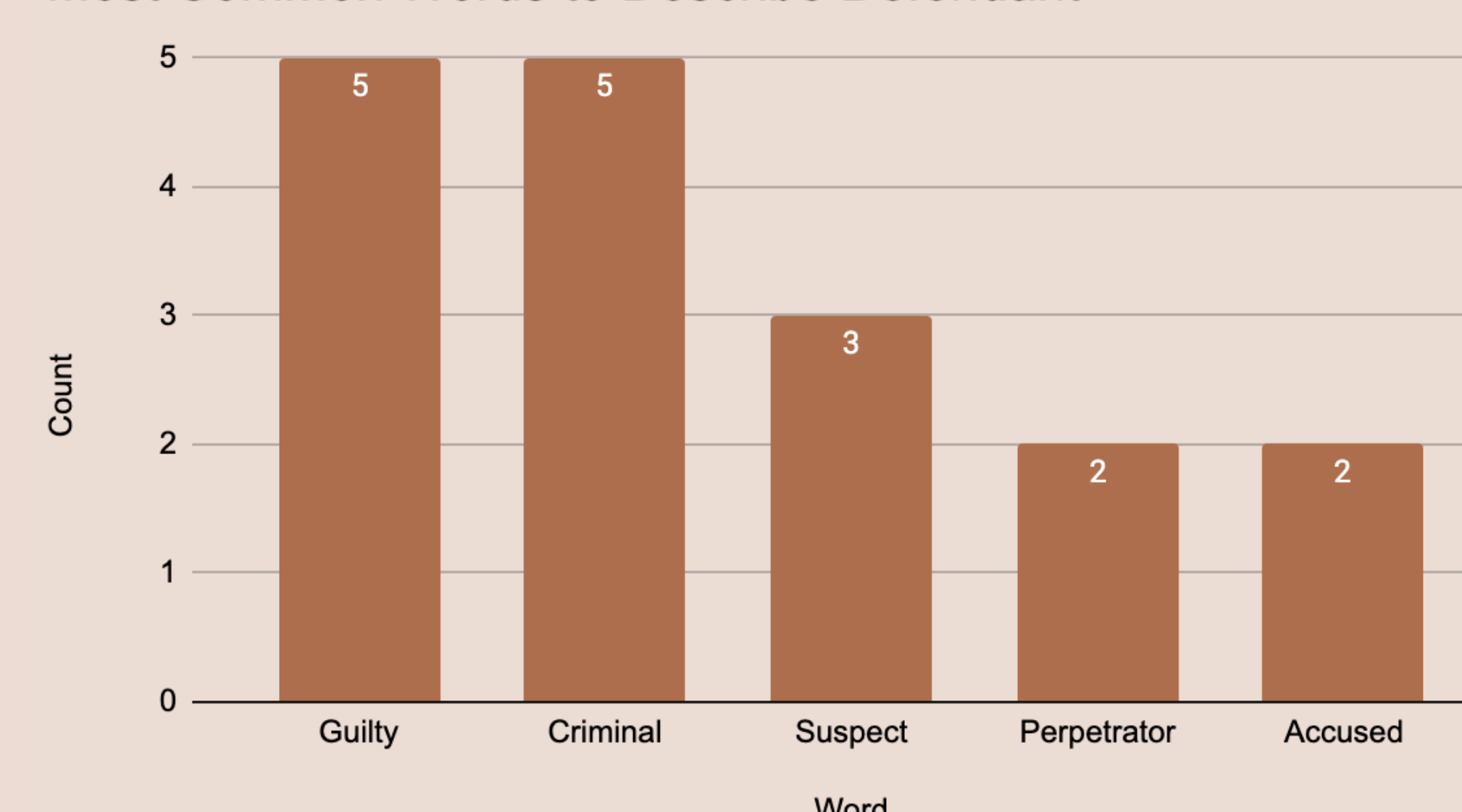
Response to "How strongly do you personally believe in the phrase 'guilty until proven innocent'?"



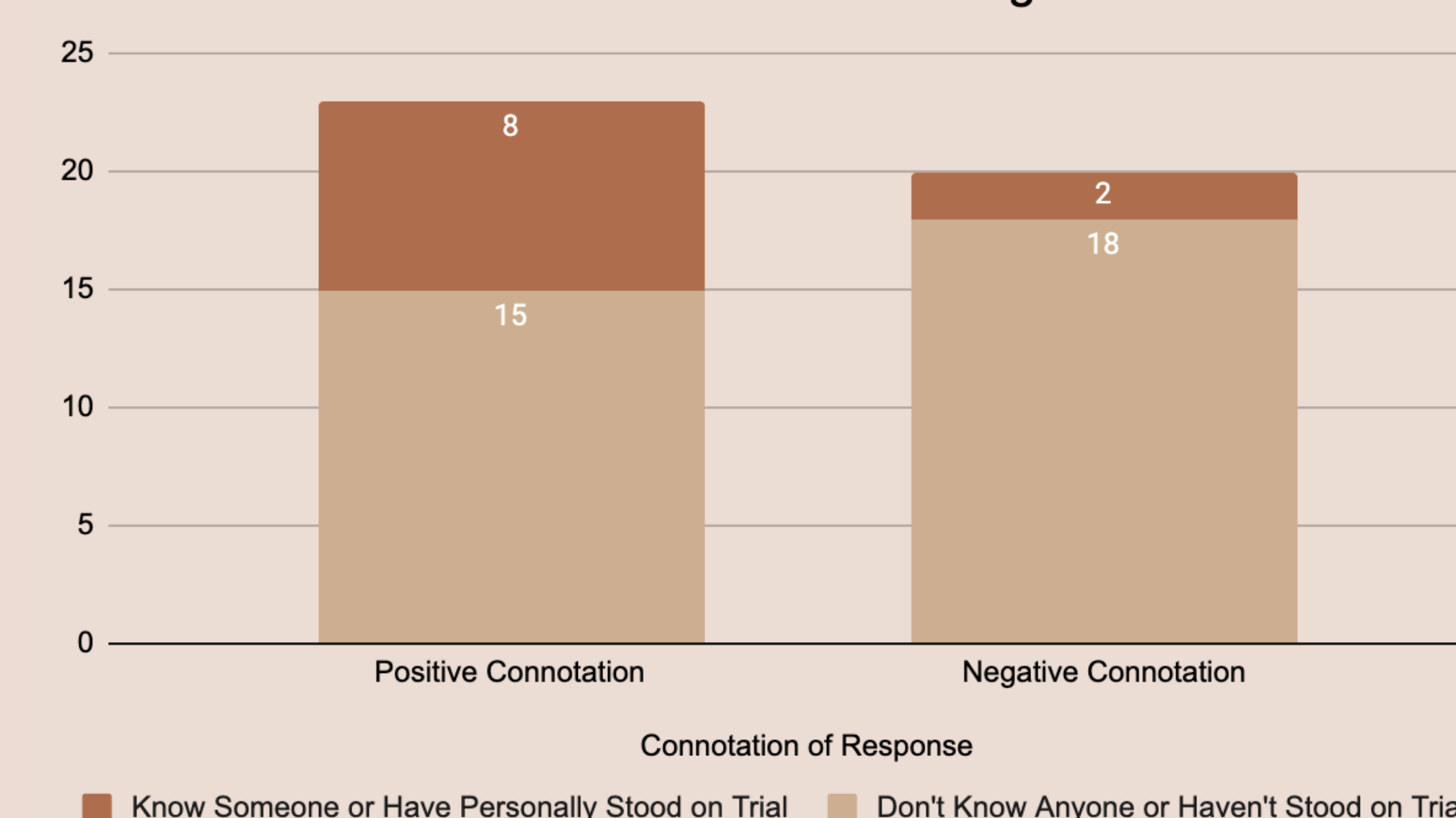
Immigration VS Beliefs



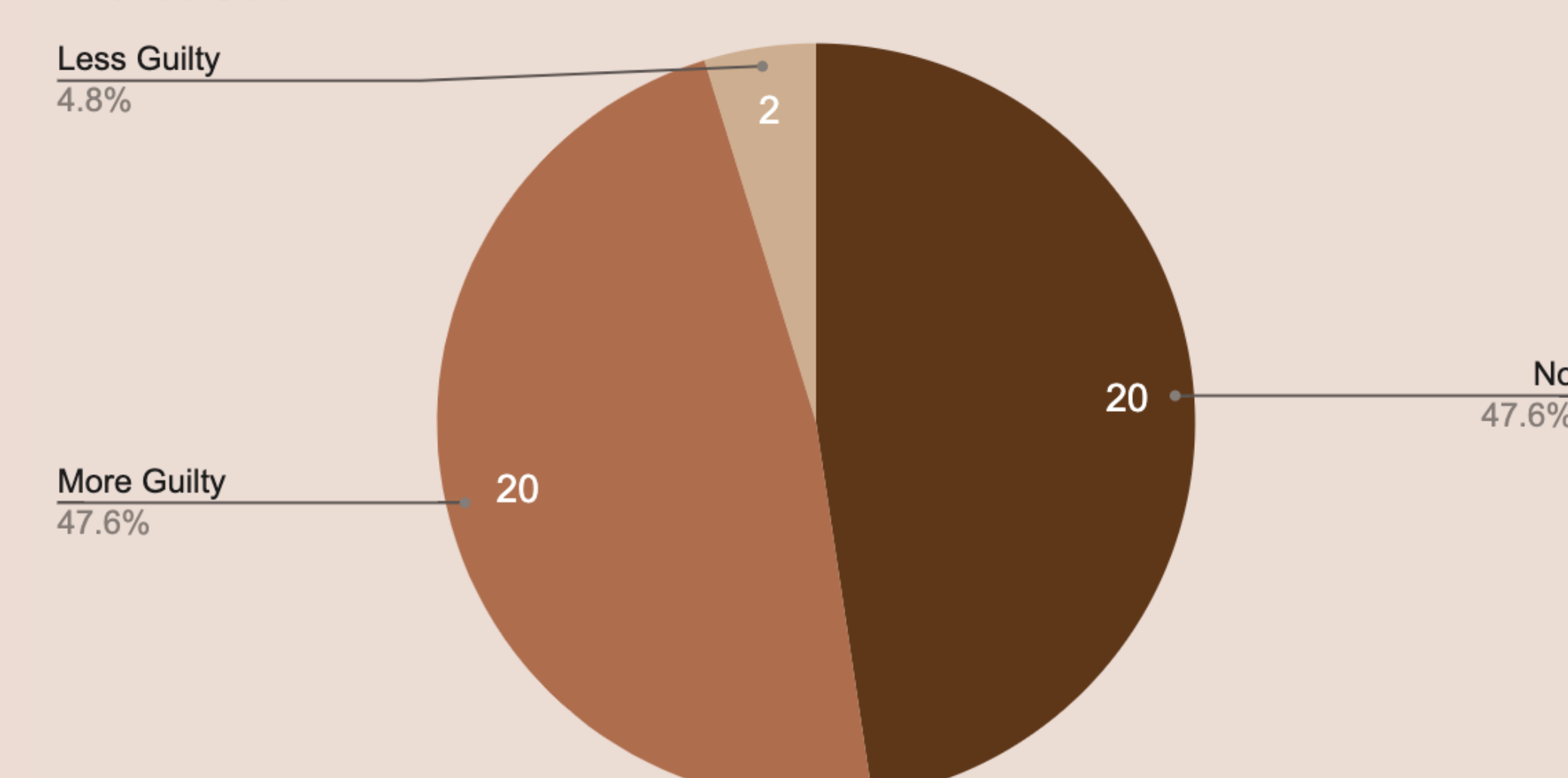
Most Common Words to Describe Defendant



First Word That Comes to Mind When Seeing a Defendant



Change in Initial Opinion of Defendant as Severity of Crime Increases



## Methodology

Data was collected through an anonymous survey through a google form. The survey consisted of Likert scaled questions ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions to understand the respondents' thoughts regarding previous questions. The survey was distributed via QR Code and links through online communications and social media platforms from April 5 to April 9. A total of 43 responses were collected.

## Findings

The amount of people who fully believe in the presumption of innocence (20) does not match with the amount of people who do not believe in the presumption of guilt (16). However, there were 20 responses that agreed that as the severity of a case increases, the innocence of the defendant does not change. This emphasizes that people cannot make up their mind on whether to believe or not to believe in the presumption of innocence. Additionally, when asked what word comes to mind when seeing a defendant, 20 responded with words that have a negative connotation while 23 responded with words that have a positive connotation. With basically half of the participants responding negative words, it is clear that the viewpoint on court trials and the court system need to be displayed in a less biased manner to give defendants a fair trial.