

New Poll Shows Strong, Bipartisan Support for Ambitious Criminal Justice Reforms in Arizona

Arizona voters across the political spectrum and demographic groups support bold criminal justice reforms. In fact, four out of five registered voters believe it is important to reduce the number of people who are incarcerated and only one percent want to spend additional tax dollars on jails and prisons.

The results could not come at a more critical time for policymakers. Arizona has the fourth highest imprisonment rate in the country, and taxpayers spent over a billion dollars on the prison system in fiscal year 2019. This poll demonstrates that voters in Arizona overwhelmingly want state lawmakers to take bold action and reduce the jail and prison populations.

These are just some of the findings from a statewide survey of 800 registered voters in Arizona conducted by Public Opinion Strategies on behalf of FWD.us. The poll has a margin of error of + 3.14 percent and was fielded January 8-10, 2019.

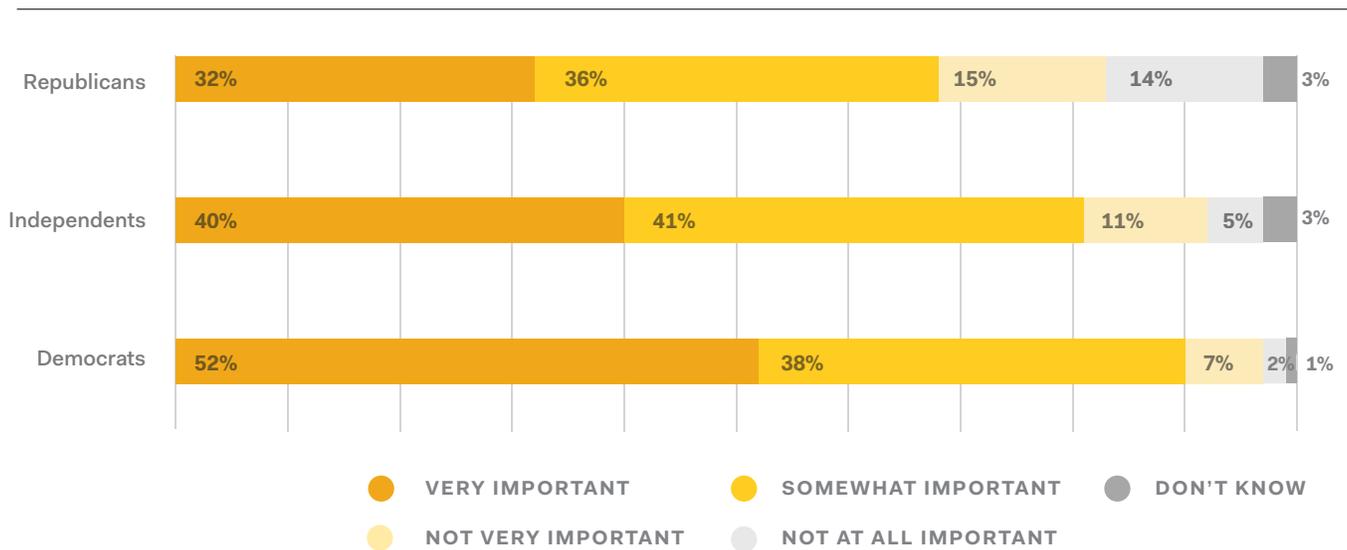
Key Survey Findings:

ARIZONA VOTERS BELIEVE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IS NOT WORKING AND ARE OVERWHELMINGLY IN FAVOR OF REDUCING THE STATE'S JAIL AND PRISON POPULATIONS.

- More than half (56 percent) of Arizona voters think the criminal justice system needs significant improvements.
- 8 out of 10 voters believe it is important to “reduce the number of people in jail or prison.”
- By a margin of nearly 2 to 1, voters believe being incarcerated makes people “more likely to commit crimes in the future” (47 percent) rather than “less likely” (20 percent).
- If lawmakers make additional funding available to prevent crime, voters strongly prefer investments in education (41 percent) and treatment (22 percent) to jails and prisons (1 percent).
- Contrary to popular belief, crime victims are just as likely as other voters to support criminal justice reform policies — 80 percent support reducing the jail and prison populations.

Figure 1

“HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE IN JAIL OR PRISON HERE IN ARIZONA?”



BY WIDE MARGINS, ARIZONA VOTERS SUPPORT COMMON-SENSE POLICY REFORMS AIMED AT REDUCING INCARCERATION. SUPPORT FOR REFORM CUTS ACROSS POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATIONS, WITH MAJORITIES OF REPUBLICANS, INDEPENDENTS, AND DEMOCRATS SUPPORTING EVERY PROPOSAL.

- **88 percent** support “allowing most people sentenced to prison to earn an additional 25 percent off their time behind bars if they maintain good behavior and participate in rehabilitation programs.” (85% GOP, 89% Ind, 91% Dem)
- **79 percent** support “allowing judges to determine the most appropriate punishment if they find that the mandatory minimum sentence is not justified based on the crime and individual.” (78% GOP, 76% Ind, 83% Dem)
- **75 percent** support “removing convictions from an eligible person’s record after they have completed the terms of their sentence, including probation and parole, and remained crime-free for a period of time.” (61% GOP, 81% Ind, 83% Dem)
- **69 percent** support “ending the practice of keeping people in jail before trial if they have been charged with a misdemeanor or non-violent felony crime.” (67% GOP, 67% Ind, 73% Dem)
- **67 percent** support “limiting the amount of time that someone can be sent to prison for violating the rules of probation, for example, missing a meeting or failing a drug test, if a new crime hasn’t been committed.” (58% GOP, 71% Ind, 73% Dem)
- **64 percent** support “punishing people convicted of drug possession with a misdemeanor rather than a felony sentence, punishable by up to one year in jail.” (57% GOP, 64% Ind, 72% Dem)
- **59 percent** believe “people should only be charged as a repetitive offender and have time added to their prison sentence if they have been convicted of a violent crime.” (53% GOP, 56% Ind, 70% Dem)