

LISTENING TO SURVIVORS

Voters' Views on Safety and Justice





Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a multi-state organization that works to advance public safety reform in states across the country through coalition building, research, education, advocacy, and grassroots organizing. Our Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice membership program represents more than 200,000 diverse survivors of crime from across the country.

For more information, visit allianceforsafetyandjustice.org.



Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (CSSJ) is a national network of more than 200,000 crime victims advocating for a justice system that prioritizes healing, prevention, and recovery. The organization represents a new victims' rights movement that centers the voices and needs of crime survivors in decisions about public safety. The movement's grassroots, member-led initiatives have successfully driven significant policy changes and opened groundbreaking trauma recovery centers across the country. CSSJ is a flagship project of the Alliance for Safety and Justice.

For more information, visit cssj.org.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2024, thousands of crime survivors from across the country marched on Washington. Outside the Capitol, they rallied to champion a new approach to safety and justice. Organizers decried the twin tragedies of America's public safety crisis: Our current system both inflicts mass incarceration that tears families and communities apart and also fails to provide people impacted by violence with the help they need, the dignity they deserve, and the right to heal they demand.

The Survivors Speak March on Washington laid out a new vision for public safety rooted in crime prevention, community health, rehabilitation, economic mobility, and trauma recovery for all. At the march and inside the halls of Congress, survivors advocated for an end to mass incarceration and the policies it depends on – long sentences, mandatory minimums, and punishment over all else – and the expansion of solutions that actually make us safe. They rallied for violence interruption, mental health and addiction treatment for all who want it, jobs, and housing.

This report shows that clear majorities of American voters support the policies that crime survivors traveled to D.C. to promote. It presents the results of a national survey of likely voters commissioned by the Alliance for Safety and Justice and conducted by David Binder Research in August 2024. Like survivors, voters support rehabilitation over punishment. They believe that jobs, housing, and mental health and addiction treatment are more effective ways to prevent crime than long sentences. And they believe that survivors of violence should be able to access the services they need to heal.

At the March in Washington, survivors chanted, "Listen to survivors" and "When survivors speak, change happens." The results of this national survey of likely voters demonstrate that the public has already begun to listen to survivors. When our elected officials do the same, the change that happens promises to bring about true safety and justice.

KEY FINDINGS

1 Supermajorities of voters support services for victims of violence.

- More than nine out of ten voters believe that victims of crime should be able to access trauma recovery centers and mental health counseling.
- More than four out of five voters believe that survivors should have access to emergency housing, addiction treatment, time off work and school to recover, and emergency financial assistance.
- More than two out of three voters believe survivors deserve protection from eviction.

2 Voters reject long sentences as the primary solution to crime.

- Nearly half of voters believe that more jobs and housing do the most to reduce crime, compared to just 16% who believe that long sentences do.
- Just one in four voters believes that long sentences are the most effective way to stop people from committing repeat crimes.
- Nearly two in three voters believe that mental health and addiction treatment or job training and placement are more effective strategies to stop repeat crimes.

3 Voters prefer investments in communities over spending on arrests and punishments.

- Three out of five voters prefer investments in prevention, crisis assistance, and communities over spending on arrests, punishment, and incarceration.
- A decisive majority of voters (54% vs 38%) prefer candidates who support shorter prison sentences and who would use the money saved for youth violence and treatment programs over a candidate who supports long sentences.
- When asked which public safety functions were most important to protect from budget cuts during a budget crisis, more than three out of five identify mental health and addiction treatment, violence prevention and school-based programs, or emergency shelters and crisis assistance. Less than 1 in 3 voters think that police patrols are the most important public safety service to protect from budget cuts.
- Nearly two out of three voters (64%) support spending as much or more on rehabilitation as on punishment for people who have been convicted of crimes.

4 Voters prefer laws that enable judges and officials to exercise discretion instead of mandatory minimum sentences and “truth in sentencing” laws.

- Nearly three out of four voters (74%) prefer sentencing policies that allow judges to consider the individual circumstances of the crime, the victim, and the defendant over sentences that require uniform sentence lengths for specific crimes.
- Three out of five voters (60%) prefer rehabilitation-focused policies that authorize corrections officials to provide earned credits toward release for people in prison with good conduct who complete education, job training, or behavioral therapy programs instead of truth-in-sentencing policies that require everyone to always complete 85% of their court-issued sentence in prison.

VOTERS SUPPORT SERVICES

FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

A supermajority of voters support access to **support and services for victims of crime**.

FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING, PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU THINK VICTIMS OF CRIME SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACCESS IT IF NEEDED.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Mental health counseling	93%	5%	3%
Trauma recovery services	91%	5%	3%
Emergency housing	85%	7%	8%
Addiction treatment	82%	9%	9%
Time off from work and school to recover	82%	10%	8%
Emergency financial assistance	80%	10%	11%
Restorative Justice	74%	8%	18%
Protection from eviction	67%	17%	16%

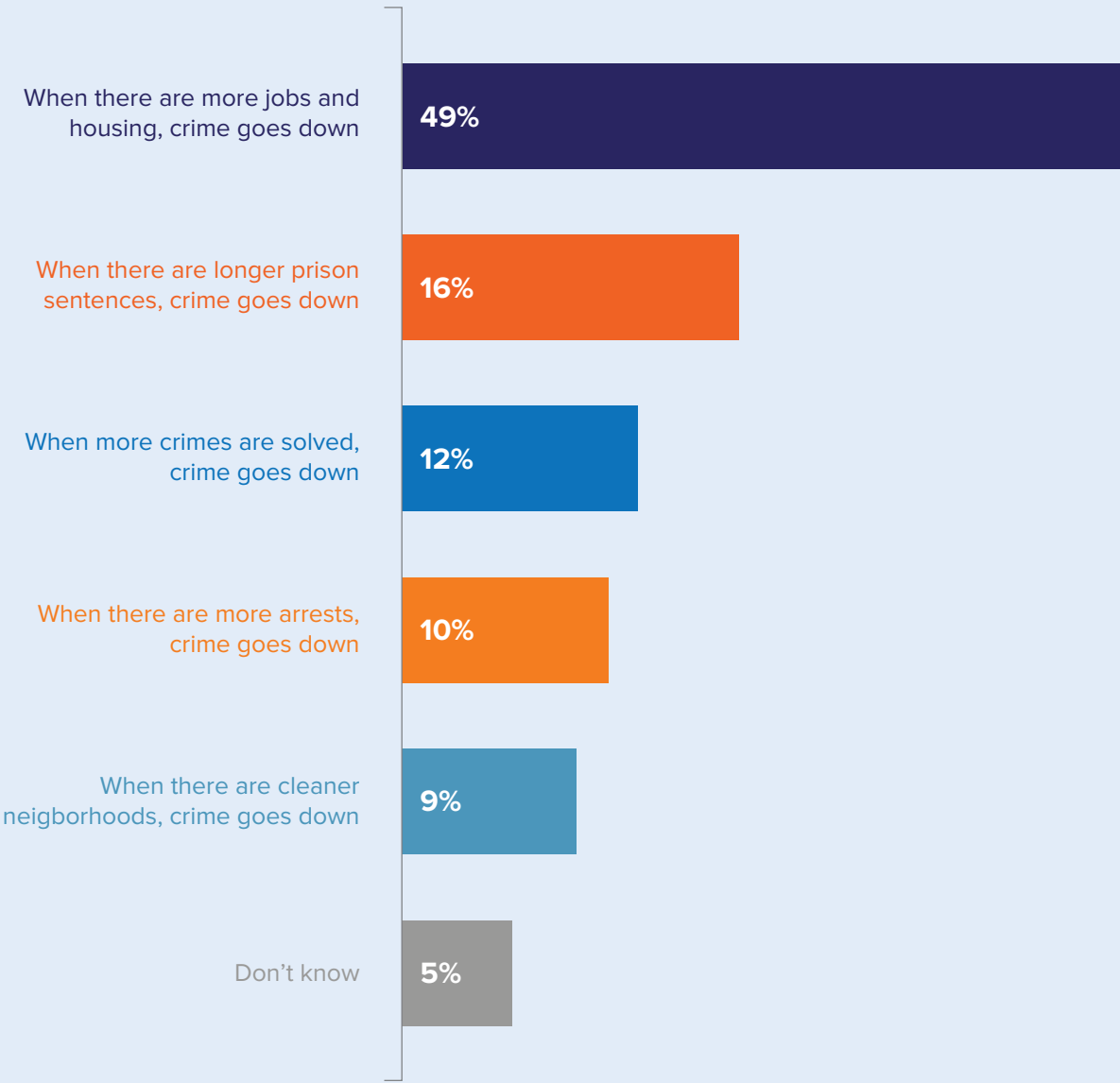
Voters believe that **access to jobs and housing** leads to less crime – not **longer prison sentences**.



For every voter who believes that **longer prison sentences** cause crime rates to fall, three voters believe that **more jobs and housing** causes crime rates to fall.



UNDERSTANDING YOU MAY AGREE WITH MORE THAN ONE, WITH WHICH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU MOST AGREE?



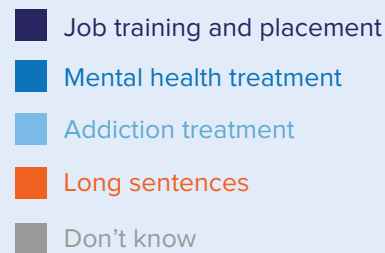
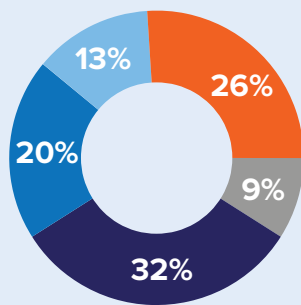
Even when considering repeat crime, voters overwhelmingly believe that **treatment and job training** are more effective than **long sentences**.

2 / 3 OF VOTERS

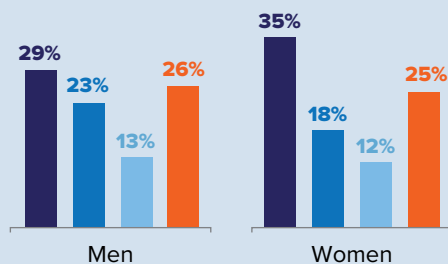
think that the best ways to stop people from committing repeat crimes are **mental health** and **addiction treatment** and **job training**.



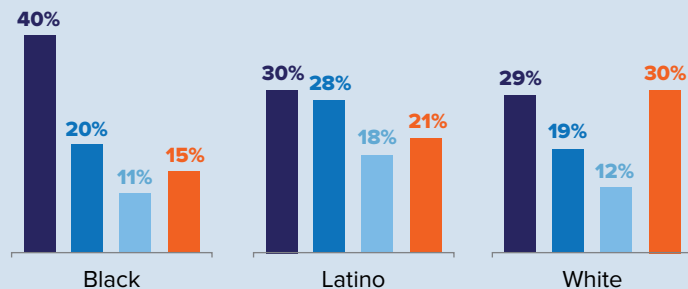
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO STOP PEOPLE FROM COMMITTING REPEAT CRIMES?



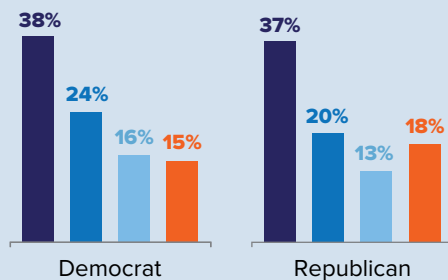
BY GENDER



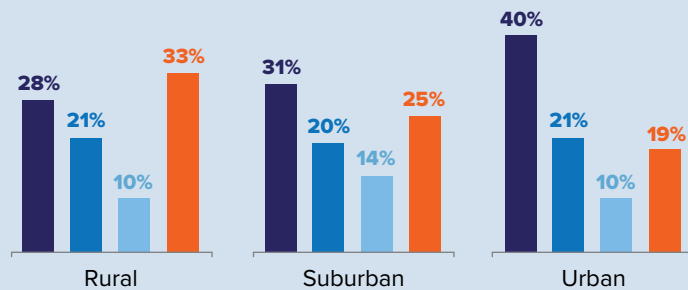
BY RACE



BY PARTY



BY NEIGHBORHOOD



These data were calculated from similar questions asked of a split sample. All respondents were asked about job training and placement, addiction treatment, and long sentences. One half of the sample was asked about "mental health" and the other about "cognitive behavioral therapy." The results were similar and are presented here under the broader category of "mental health."

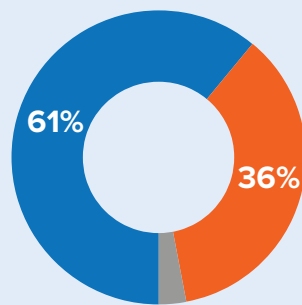
Voters prefer investing in crime prevention, crisis assistance, and strong communities over increasing arrests, strict punishments, and incarceration.

3 / 5 OF VOTERS

prefer investing in prevention and crisis assistance over spending on increased arrests, strict punishments, and incarceration.

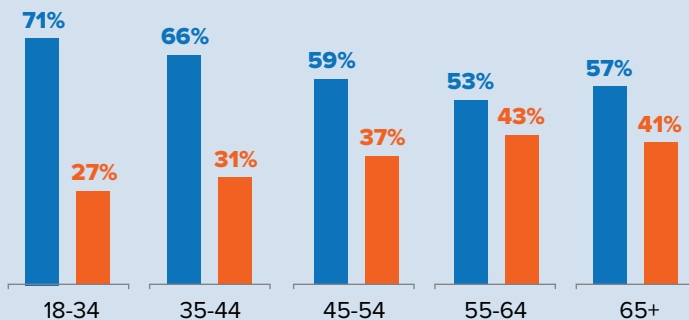


WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO SPEND TAX DOLLARS TO REDUCE CRIME?

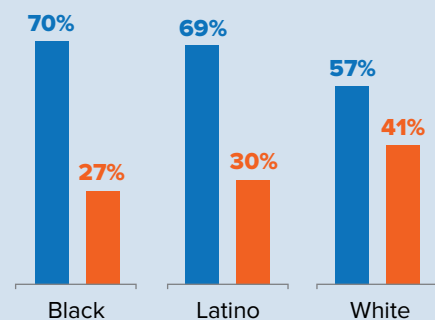


- Investing in crime prevention, crisis assistance, and strong communities
- Increasing arrests, strict punishments, and incarceration
- Don't know

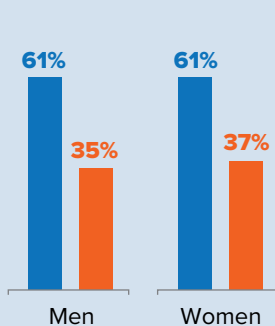
RESPONSES BY AGE



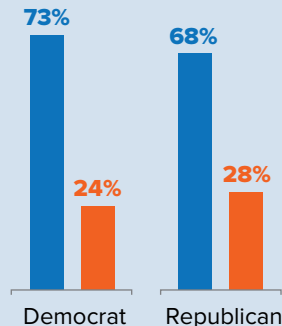
BY RACE



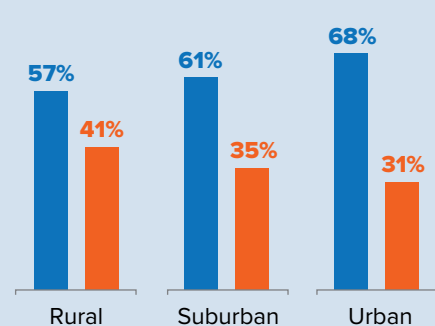
BY GENDER



BY PARTY



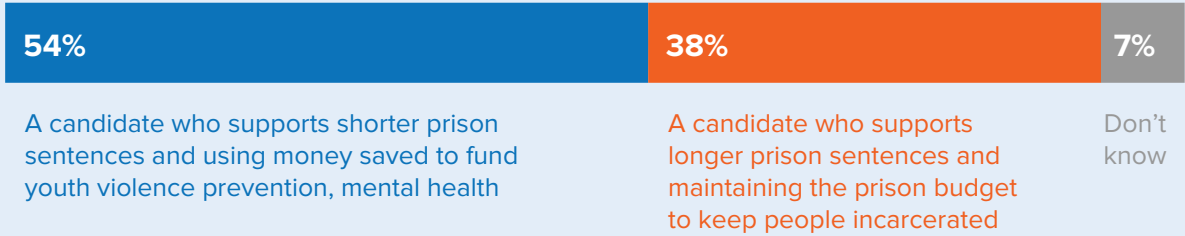
BY NEIGHBORHOOD



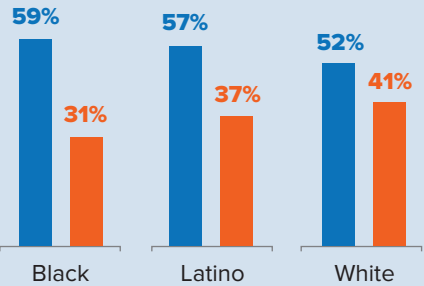
Voters support candidates who would shorten prison sentences and use the money saved to fund youth violence prevention, mental health and addiction treatment over candidates who supports longer prison sentences and maintain the prison budget to keep people incarcerated for the full length of their sentences.



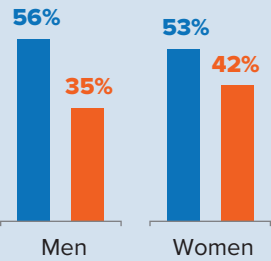
ALL ELSE BEING EQUAL, FOR WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CANDIDATES WOULD YOU BE MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR?



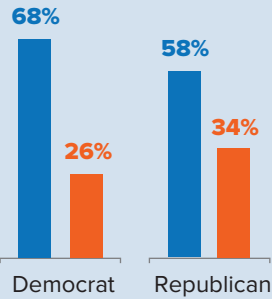
BY RACE



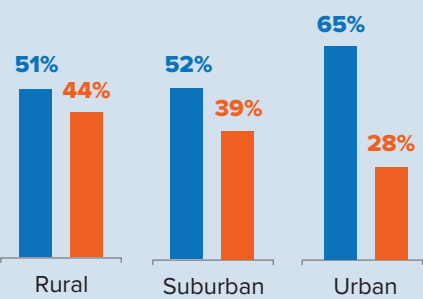
BY GENDER



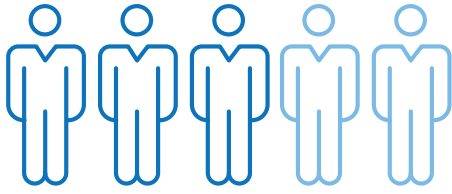
BY PARTY



BY NEIGHBORHOOD



Voters prefer policies that prevent crime by strengthening communities over policies that respond to crime by punishing people who commit crime.



MORE THAN **3** OUT OF **5**

voters prefer preventing crime over responding to it.



DO YOU PREFER TO INVEST MORE IN...

62%

Preventing crime by strengthening communities

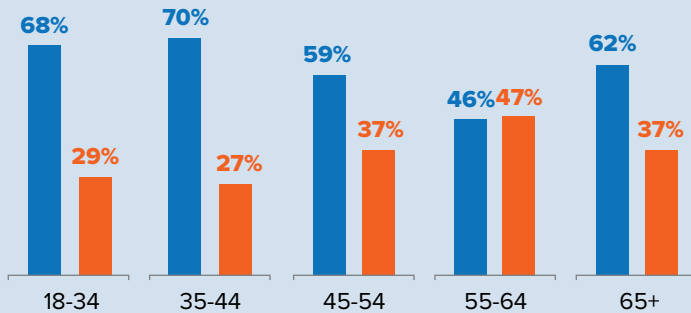
35%

Responding to crime by punishing people who commit crimes

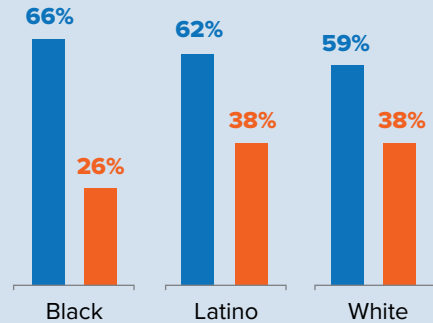
3%

Don't know

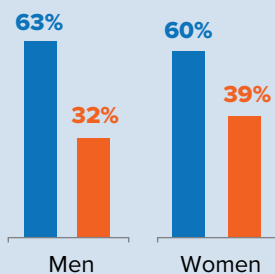
RESPONSES BY AGE



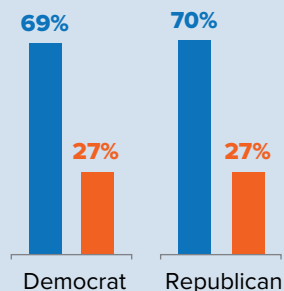
BY RACE



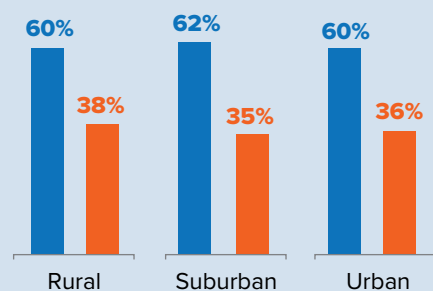
BY GENDER



BY PARTY



BY NEIGHBORHOOD



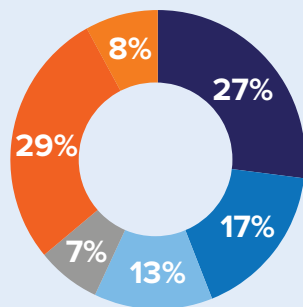
A majority of voters think that the most important public safety functions to protect from budget cuts are treatment, prevention, and crisis assistance.

LESS THAN **1** IN **3** voters think that police patrols are the most important public safety service to protect from budget cuts.



Many cities and states are facing a budget crisis as well as increased concerns about public safety.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO PROTECT FROM CUTS FOR YOU PERSONALLY?

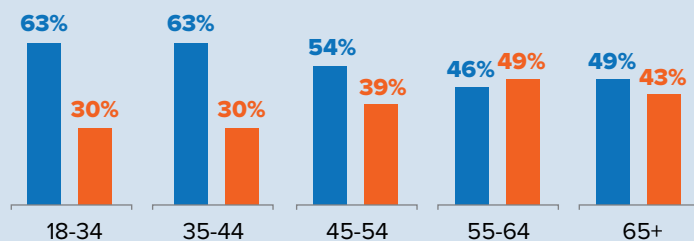


- Mental health & addiction treatment
- Violence prevention & school-based programs
- Emergency shelters & crisis assistance
- Police patrols
- Crime investigations
- Don't know

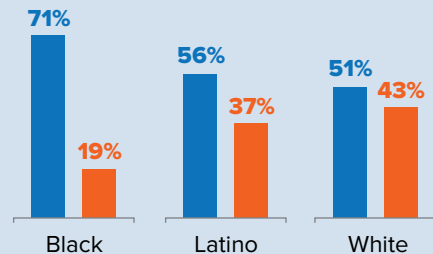
Treatment, prevention, and crisis assistance

Police functions

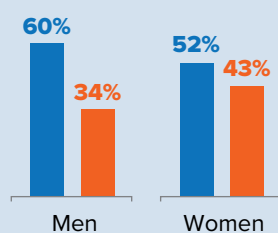
RESPONSES BY AGE



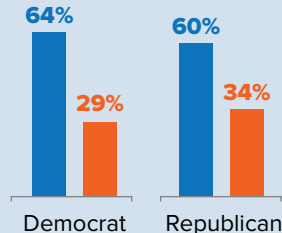
BY RACE



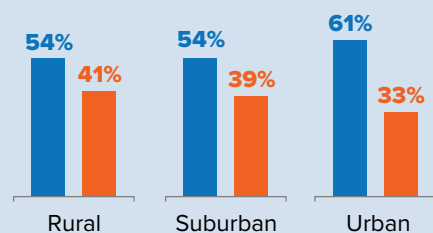
BY GENDER



BY PARTY



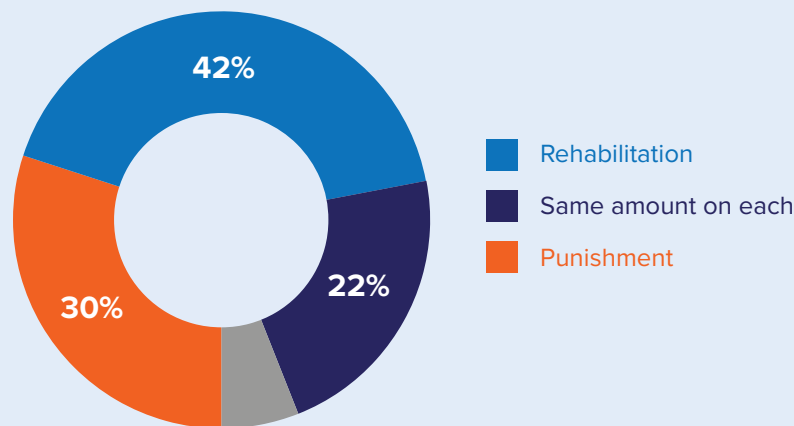
BY NEIGHBORHOOD



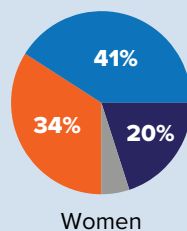
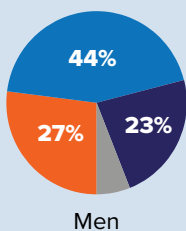
Voters support much more spending on rehabilitation.



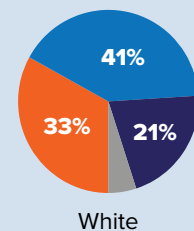
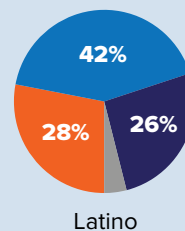
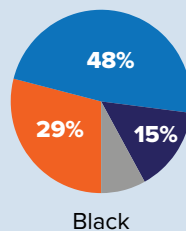
FOR PEOPLE CONVICTED OF CRIMES, WHICH DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD SPEND MORE ON? PUNISHMENT, REHABILITATION, OR THE SAME AMOUNT ON EACH?



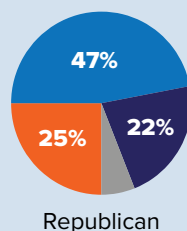
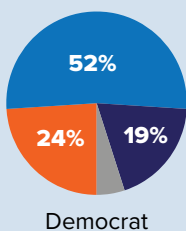
BY GENDER



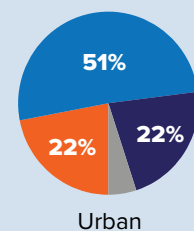
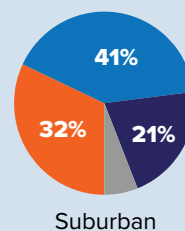
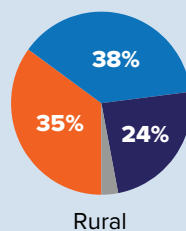
BY RACE



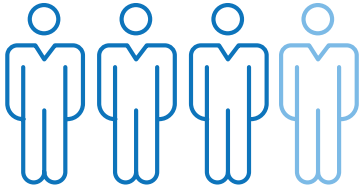
BY PARTY



BY NEIGHBORHOOD



Voters overwhelmingly prefer policies that allow judges to make decisions based on individual circumstances over mandatory minimum sentencing policies.

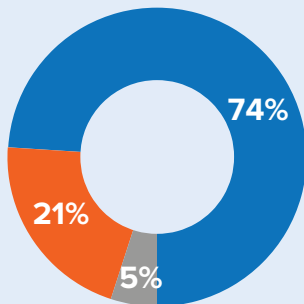


NEARLY **3** OUT OF **4**

voters prefer sentencing policies that allow judges to consider the individual circumstances of the crime.

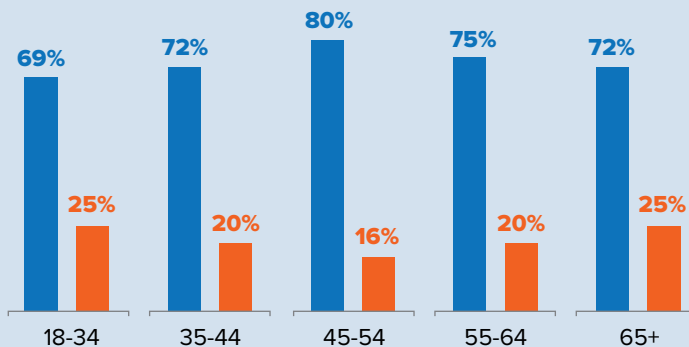


WHEN IT COMES TO SENTENCING POLICY DO YOU PREFER:

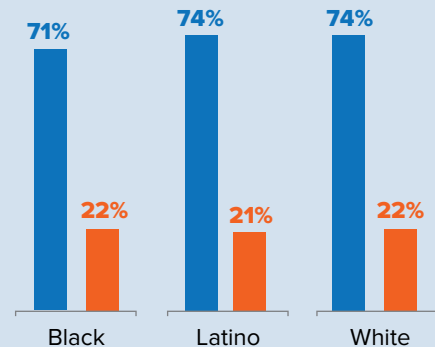


- Sentencing policies that authorize judges to consider the individual circumstances of the crime, the victim, and the perpetrator when determining the length of a sentence
- Sentencing policies that require uniform sentencing lengths for all people convicted for specific crime categories
- Don't know

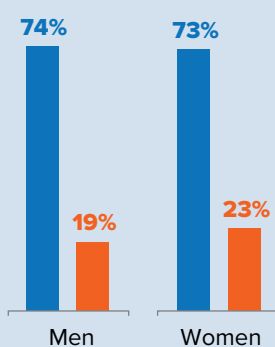
RESPONSES BY AGE



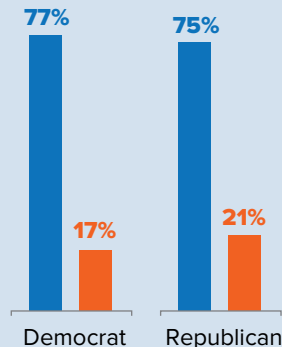
BY RACE



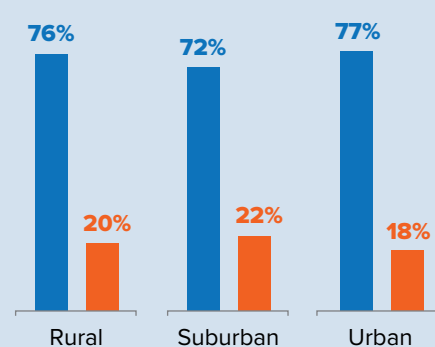
BY GENDER



BY PARTY



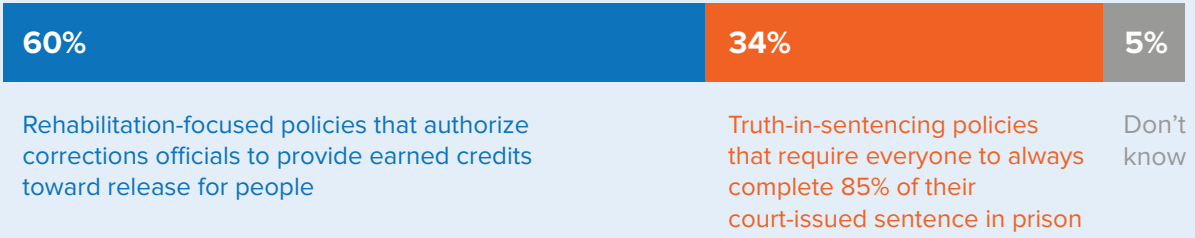
BY NEIGHBORHOOD



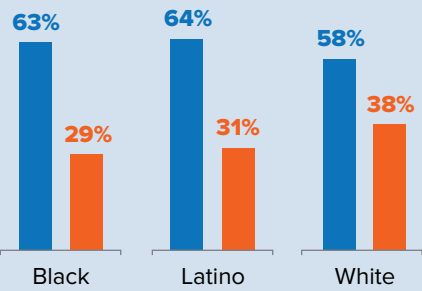
A clear majority of voters support **earned credit policies** that authorize corrections officials to provide people in prison credit toward release for participating in **education and rehabilitation programs**.



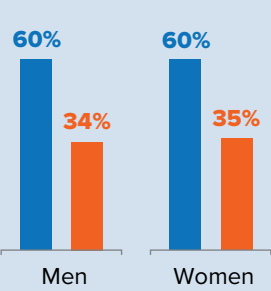
WHEN IT COMES TO SENTENCING POLICY,
WHICH DO YOU PREFER?



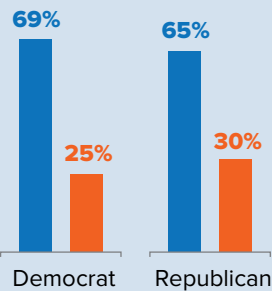
BY RACE



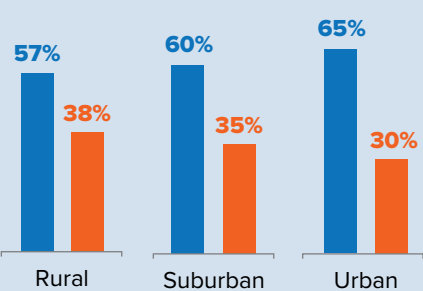
BY GENDER



BY PARTY



BY NEIGHBORHOOD



VOTERS SUPPORT

THE NEW VICTIMS RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The New Victims Rights Movement is about closing the gaps between what victims want and need from public safety and what our criminal justice system currently brings about. Victims want crime prevention, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, housing, and jobs instead of lengthy mandatory sentences, increasing arrests, and tough punishments. Victims want access to trauma recovery, protection from job loss and eviction, and support to stabilize their families.

The results of this national survey indicate that voters overwhelmingly support the vision of the New Victims Rights Movement. They overwhelmingly believe that victims of violence should have access to the

services they need to heal and recover; they believe the justice system should spend as much or more money on rehabilitation as punishment; they reject long sentences as the primary solution to crime; and they believe in protecting mental health and addiction treatment, school-based prevention programs, and crisis assistance from budget cuts.

The crime survivors marched on Washington after rallying at state capitols across the country, where, over the past decade, they have demonstrated that the voices of survivors guide all of us towards new solutions to the tragedies of mass incarceration and a lack of safety. The results of this survey show that voters are listening. Policymakers can, too.

DATA AND

METHODOLOGY

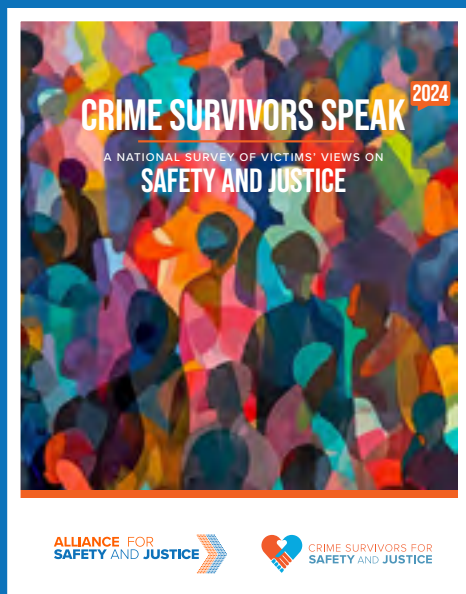
The Alliance for Safety and Justice designed this survey in collaboration with David Binder Research (DBR). DBR conducted the survey in English and Spanish, from August 6 to 15, 2024. The total sample size was 1,200 people. Four hundred people were contacted via phone, 400 via text, and 400 through an online panel. Respondents who completed the survey through phone or text were reached through random digit dialing. The margin of error due to sampling for the entire sample is 2.8%. Descriptions of neighborhood type are derived from Jed Kolko's [ZIP code classification](#) of urban, rural, and suburban areas. One thousand and two respondents were identified as likely voters. The margin of error due to sampling for likely voters is 3.1%.

Suggested Citation

MLA: *Listening to Survivors: Voters' Views on Safety and Justice*. Alliance for Safety and Justice, November 2024, <https://asj.allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/voters-views-on-safety-and-justice-2024/>.

APA: Alliance for Safety and Justice. (2024). *Listening to survivors: Voters' views on safety and justice*. <https://asj.allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/voters-views-on-safety-and-justice-2024/>.

Chicago: Alliance for Safety and Justice, *Listening to Survivors: Voters' Views on Safety and Justice*. (November 2024), <https://asj.allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/voters-views-on-safety-and-justice-2024/>.



A National Survey of Victims' Views on Safety and Justice

Crime Survivors Speak is the largest commissioned survey of victims of violence in the nation. Its 2024 results expose a gap between the safety investments victims of violence prefer and what government leaders prioritize. Aligning public policy with the needs and preferences of violent crime victims would cause a breakthrough in American crime policy and bring safety and healing to millions. Read the full report and other publications by the Alliance for Safety and Justice at allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/reports-and-surveys.