



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

Oklahoma 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 five percent want to spend additional tax dollars on jails and prisons.

The results could not come at a more critical time for policymakers. Oklahoma has the highest incarceration rate in the country for both men and women, and taxpayers spent \$575 million on the prison system in 2017. This poll demonstrates that voters in Oklahoma overwhelmingly want state lawmakers to take bold action and reduce the jail and prison population.

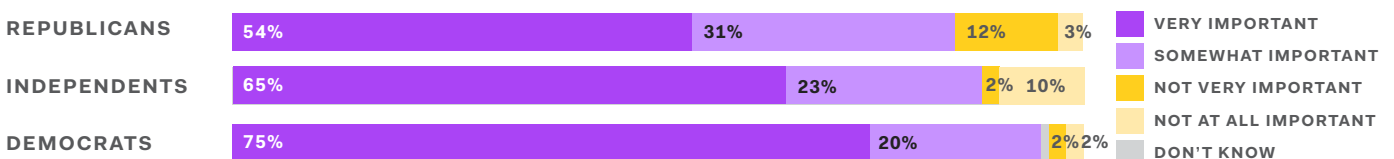
These are just some of the findings from a statewide survey of 800 registered voters in Oklahoma conducted by Public Opinion Strategies on behalf of FWD.us. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.4 percent and was fielded October 3-7, 2018.

Key Survey Findings:

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

- Nearly three-quarters of Oklahoma voters (72 percent) believe the state's criminal justice system needs “significant improvements.”
- A majority of voters (52 percent) — including 46% of Republicans — say they'd be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported reforming Oklahoma's criminal justice system, compared to just 3 percent who say it would make them less likely to vote for a candidate.
- 8 out of 10 voters (83 percent) believe it's important to “reduce the number of people in jail or prison.”
- By a margin of nearly 4 to 1, voters believe being incarcerated makes people “more likely to commit crimes in the future” (48 percent) rather than “less likely” (13 percent).
- By a margin of 8 to 1, voters prefer that “additional funding available to reduce crime” be spent on “schools and K-12 education” (42 percent) rather than “jails and prisons” (5 percent) or “courts and district attorneys” (1 percent).
- Contrary to popular belief, crime victims are just as likely as other voters to support criminal justice reform policies — 83 percent support reducing the jail and prison population.
- After hearing more about the issue, the share of voters who believe it is important to reduce the jail and prison population increases to 90 percent - including 85 percent of Republicans, 88 percent of independents, and 95 percent of Democrats (Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1:
“HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE IN JAIL OR PRISON HERE IN OKLAHOMA?”



BY WIDE MARGINS, OKLAHOMA VOTERS SUPPORT COMMON-SENSE POLICY REFORMS AIMED AT REDUCING INCARCERATION.

- **76 percent** support “allowing people convicted of simple drug possession in the past to be resentenced under a new law that changed the punishment from a felony to a misdemeanor.”
- **73 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.”
- **69 percent** support “reducing the punishment for failing to protect a child from a felony to a misdemeanor.”
- **68 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.”
- **66 percent** believe habitual offender enhancements should only be applied when a person’s current offense is violent.
- **61 percent** support “ensuring no one is returned to prison just for violating the rules of probation or parole, for example, missing a meeting or failing a drug test, if a new crime has not been committed.”

Support for criminal justice policy reforms cuts across political party affiliations, with majority support for these proposals from Republicans, Independents, and Democrats.

**FIGURE 2:
VOTER SUPPORT FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS BY POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION**

PROPOSAL	REPUBLICANS	INDEPENDENTS	DEMOCRATS
Allowing people convicted of simple drug possession in the past to be resentenced under a new law that changed the punishment from a felony to a misdemeanor	74%	73%	80%
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	68%	79%	79%
Reducing the punishment for failing to protect a child from a felony to a misdemeanor	66%	72%	73%
Ending the practice of keeping people in jail before trial if they have been charged with a misdemeanor or non-violent felony crime	64%	77%	71%
Applying habitual offender enhancements only when a person’s current offense is violent	57%	69%	77%
Ensuring no one is returned to prison just for violating the rules of probation or parole, for example, missing a meeting or failing a drug test, if a new crime has not been committed	57%	65%	65%