

# New Polling Shows Strong National Support for *Reducing Incarceration and Expanding Clemency*

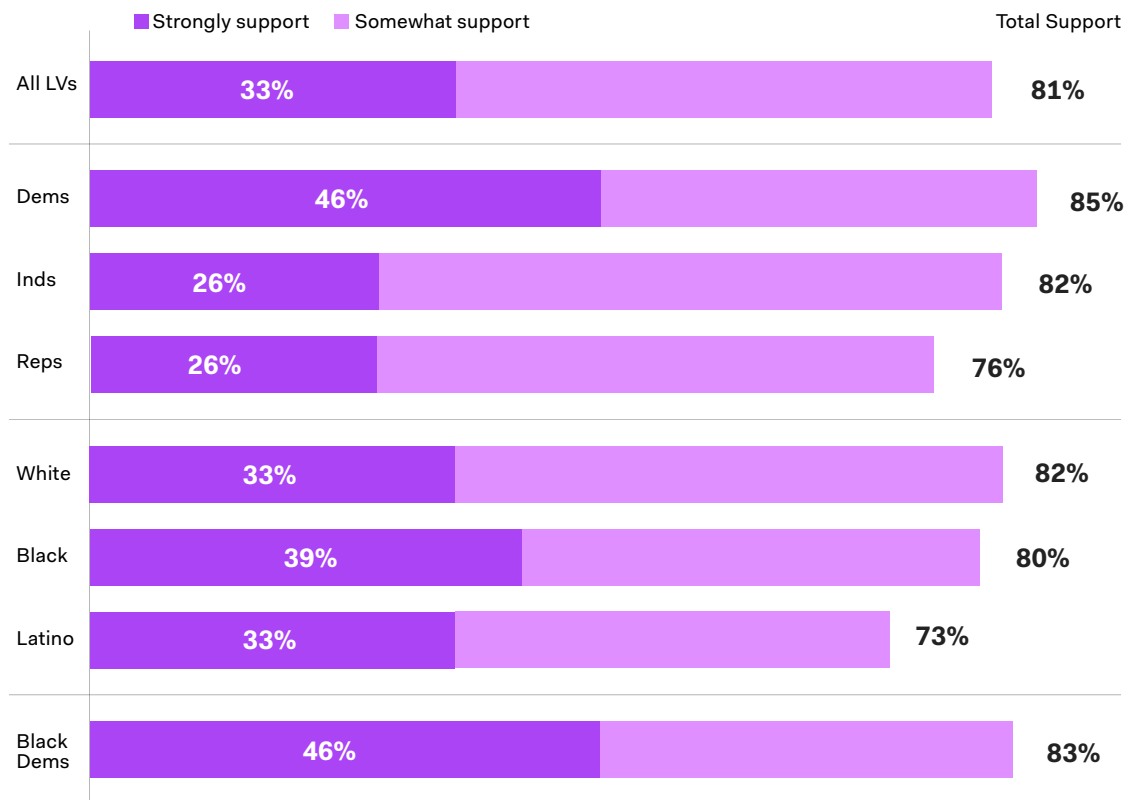
Recent polling by BSG on behalf of FWD.us shows that, even in the context of a tight and polarizing presidential election, **there is widespread, bipartisan support for criminal justice reform and, specifically, for reducing jail and prison populations.** There is also broad support for policies that would correct past and present sentencing disparities at the federal level, such as building on the successes of the First Step Act and passing the EQUAL Act, which would eliminate the 18:1 crack-powder cocaine sentencing disparity.

Notably, the polling also highlights the **tremendous opportunity President Biden has in the final months of his presidency to harness this support and use the unique power of executive clemency to advance racial justice, address disproportionately long sentences, and safely reduce the federal prison population.** Indeed, regardless of which candidate they prefer, overwhelming majorities of voters support an increase in the number of commutations through executive clemency. People of color, and Black men especially, have been disproportionately harmed by lengthy and excessive prison sentences. The polling shows high support for clemency and for reducing jail and prison populations among Black voters and Black Democrats, in particular.

## Key Findings

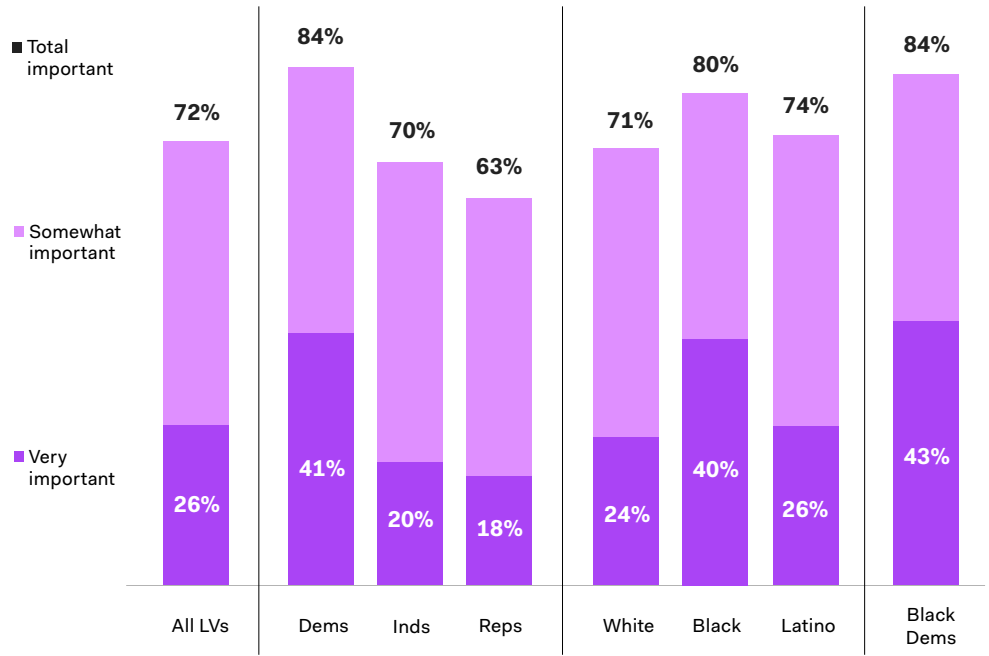
**FIGURE 1**

**8 in 10 likely voters support criminal justice reform.**



**FIGURE 2**

**Over 70% of likely voters believe it is important to reduce jail and prison populations.**

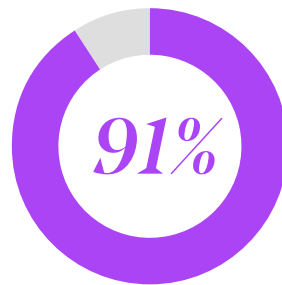


**FIGURE 3**

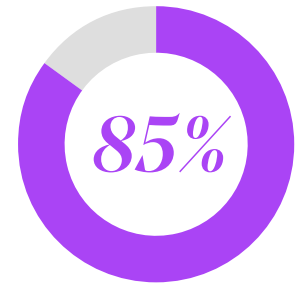
**There is widespread support for policies that would correct past and present sentencing disparities.**

***Building on the Success of the First Step Act***

In 2018, then-Senator Kamala Harris voted for and then-President Donald Trump signed the First Step Act, a bipartisan effort to reduce the size of the federal prison population and promote rehabilitation over incarceration. Research has shown that 30,000 people have been released because of the First Step Act and that reoffending rates are lower among this group than among people who did not benefit from the law change.



**of likely/leaning Harris voters**

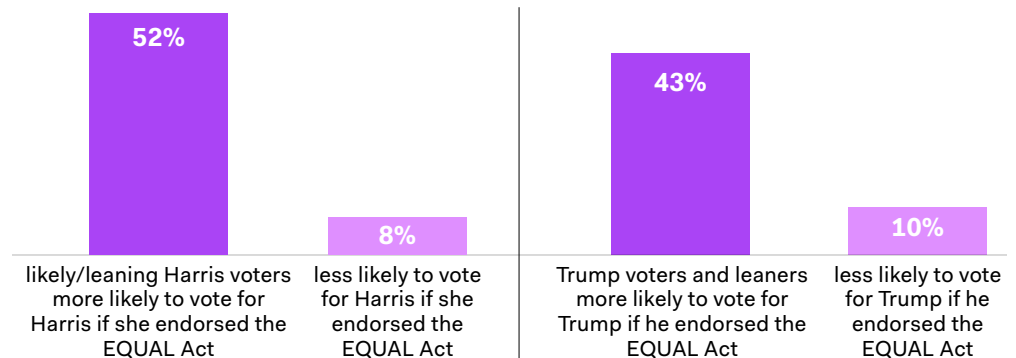


**of likely/leaning Trump voters**

**Support efforts to build on First Step Act reforms**, including by applying them retroactively and allowing people to apply for resentencing if they were convicted before the law changed.

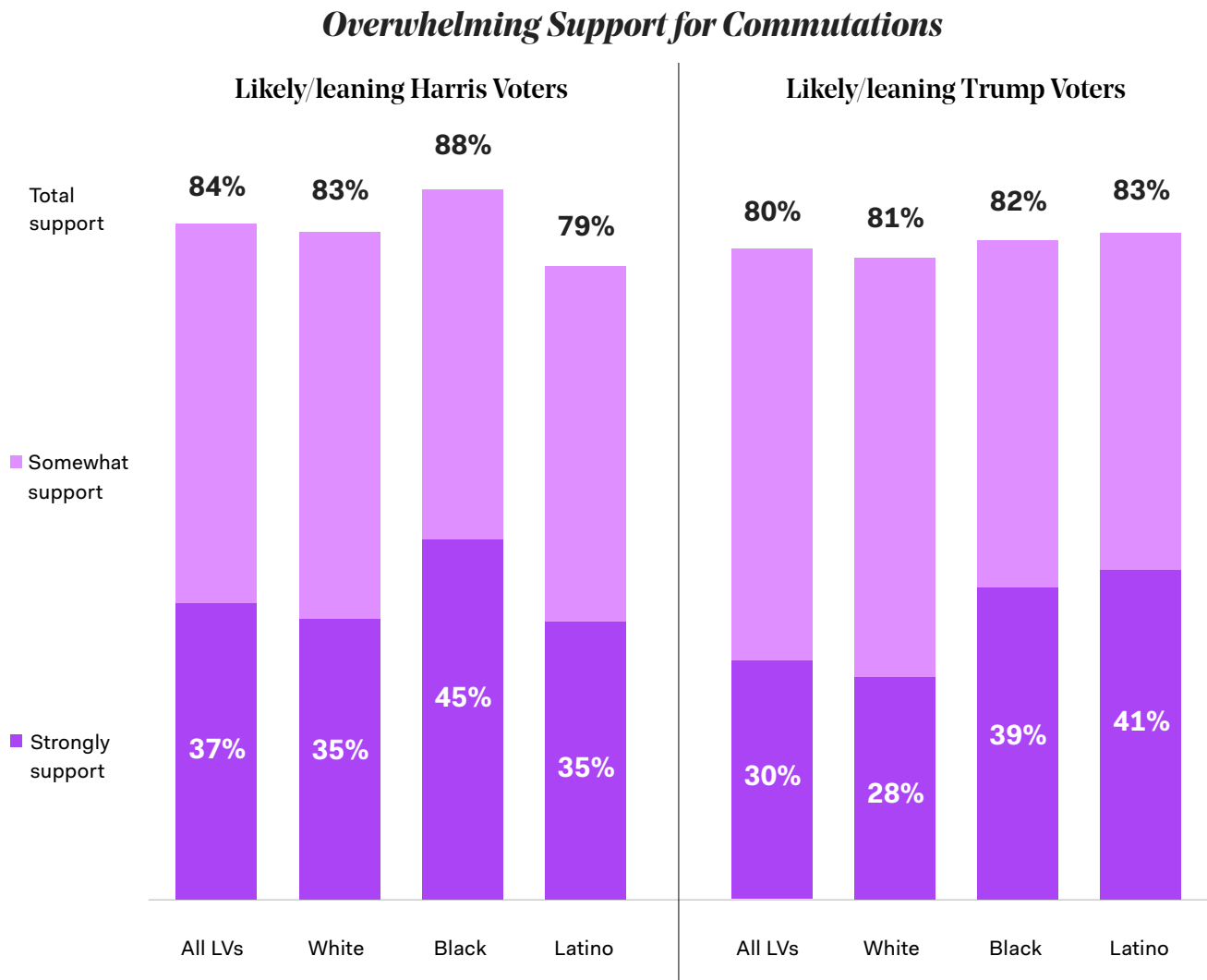
***Support for the EQUAL Act***

The EQUAL Act would end the federal sentencing disparity between crack cocaine and powder cocaine offenses.



**FIGURE 4**

**Significant majorities of voters, regardless of their preferred candidate, support them increasing commutations through executive clemency.**



## Conclusion

There are currently over 158,000 people in the federal prison system. Thousands of them—disproportionately people of color—are serving lengthy prison terms that would be significantly shorter today under current law and practice. These include people who would benefit if certain changes in the First Step Act were applied retroactively or the crack-powder cocaine sentencing disparity were eliminated.

This polling shows not only that there is strong national support for these policies, but that, regardless of which candidate they prefer, overwhelming majorities of voters support increasing the number of commutations through executive clemency. Between now and January 2025, President Biden can use executive clemency to safely return people to their families and communities.

[You can read more about clemency here.](#)