



TO: The Public Safety Performance Project Of The Pew Charitable Trusts
FROM: The Mellman Group & Public Opinion Strategies
RE: Oklahoma Survey Key Findings On Criminal Justice Reform
DATE: March 17, 2017

This analysis represents the findings of a survey of 600 voters representing the likely November 2018 Oklahoma electorate (based on participation in past elections) conducted by The Mellman Group and Public Opinion Strategies for The Pew Charitable Trusts. Interviews were conducted by telephone March 6 - March 10, 2017, and included both cell phones and landlines randomly selected from official voter lists. The margin of error is +/-4.0% at the 95% level of confidence. When design effects are accounted for, the overall margin of error is +/-4.3 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. The data were weighted to reflect the electorate. The margin of error is higher for subgroups (see final page).

Oklahoma voters support a variety of reforms to the state's criminal justice system, driven by the widespread view that too many Americans are in prison and the best way to reduce crime is to expand the use of alternatives to prison for nonviolent offenders. Consistent with that view, Oklahomans support shortening sentences for nonviolent offenders and using the money saved to strengthen probation, parole, and treatment for substance abuse and mental health issues. What's more, Oklahomans express strong support for a proposal to allow nonviolent offenders to earn shorter probation and parole time in return for good behavior like substance abuse and mental health treatment or getting a job.

VOTERS WANT TO SEND FEWER NONVIOLENT OFFENDERS TO PRISON & INSTEAD EXPAND USE OF CHEAPER ALTERNATIVES

This survey reveals that a strong 68% majority of Oklahoma voters agree with the view that too many Americans are in prison, that prison costs too much, and that we should expand the use of less expensive prison alternatives. Fewer than 1-in-3 take an opposing position.

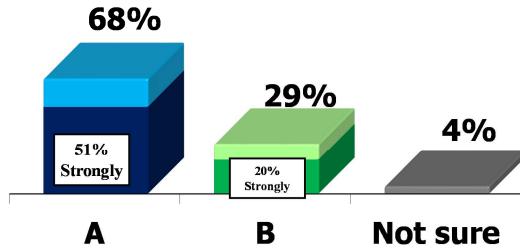
Respondents heard arguments on both sides of the debate. One, indicated by the green text and bar in the chart at right, was a strongly worded

A Large Majority Support Expanding Use Of Alternatives To Prison For Non-Violent Offenders To Reduce Crime

Which of the following comes closer to your point of view?

A: One out of every 110 American adults is in prison. That's too many, & it costs too much especially because there are more effective, less expensive alternatives to prison for nonviolent offenders. Expanding use of those alternatives is the best way to reduce crime.

B: People who commit crimes belong behind bars – end of story. It may cost a lot of money to run prisons, but it would cost society more in the long run if more criminals were on the street.



statement arguing that “People who commit crimes belong behind bars—end of story. It may cost a lot of money to run prisons, but it would cost society more in the long run if more criminals were on the street.”

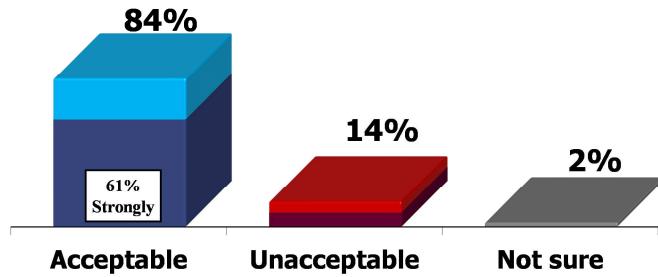
On the other side, voters heard the view that “One out of every 110 American adults is in prison. That’s too many, and it costs too much especially because there are more effective, less expensive alternatives to prison for nonviolent offenders. Expanding use of those alternatives is the best way to reduce crime.” By more than a 2-to-1 ratio, voters side with the argument for expanding the use of prison alternatives for nonviolent offenders.

These views extend across demographic segment and cross party lines, with large majorities of Republicans (57%-38%), independents (78%-17%), and Democrats (78%-20%) all siding with the view that too many are in prison and we need to expand less expensive prison alternatives. Moreover, this view is held by large majorities of voters across the entire state of Oklahoma from the urban centers in the Oklahoma City (68%-29%) and Tulsa areas (71%-26%) to rural areas in the rest of the state from the East (67%-30%) to the West (65%-31%).

A SUPERMAJORITY SUPPORT SHORTENING SENTENCES FOR NONVIOLENT OFFENDERS AND REINVESTING THE SAVINGS IN STRENGTHENED PROBATION, PAROLE, AND TREATMENT

A Large Majority Of Oklahoma Voters Support Shortening Prison Sentences And Using The Savings For Probation, Parole, And Treatment

One proposal is to shorten prison sentences for non-violent offenders and using the money saved to pay for stronger probation and parole and more substance abuse and mental health treatment for offenders.
Would you find this proposal generally acceptable or generally unacceptable?



An overwhelming majority of Oklahoma voters accept the view that prison sentences for nonviolent offenders should be shortened and the money saved reallocated to pay for probation, parole and treatment, while fewer than 1-in-6 reject that view as unacceptable.

Voters were told about “One proposal...to shorten prison sentences for nonviolent offenders...using the money

saved to pay for stronger probation and parole and more substance abuse and mental health treatment for offenders” and asked whether this proposal was generally acceptable or generally unacceptable. A huge 84% of Oklahoma voters deem that proposal as acceptable, compared to only 14% who find it unacceptable (2% not sure). What’s more, the intensity of

opinion is decidedly on the acceptable side with 61% holding that view "strongly" compared to only 8% expressing the opposing view strongly.

Again, there is widespread agreement across segments as 81% of Republicans, 85% of independents, and 88% of Democrats converge on acceptance of the proposal to shorten sentences and invest in probation, parole, and treatment instead. The popularity of this proposal, too, spans the length and breadth of the state, with very large majorities in the urban centers of the Oklahoma City (92%-7%) and Tulsa areas (84%-15%) joining Sooners in the rural areas in the rest of the state from East (76%-19%) to West (81%-18%).

A LARGE SUPERMAJORITY BELIEVE NONVIOLENT OFFENDERS SHOULD GET TIME OFF PAROLE AND PROBATION FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR

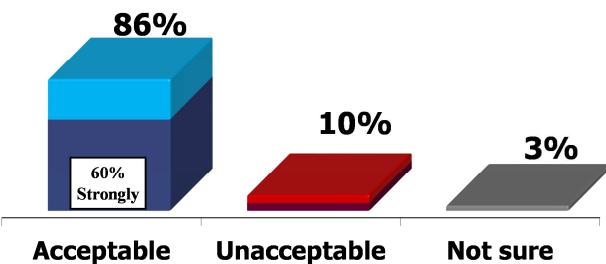
A supermajority of Oklahoma voters also find it acceptable for probationers and parolees who play by the rules and exhibit good behavior to have the time they spend under state supervision reduced.

An 86% supermajority said it is acceptable to allow people on probation or parole "to earn reductions in the amount of time they are under supervision for participating in programs

like substance abuse and mental health treatment, or for good behavior like getting a job." Just 10% find this proposal unacceptable (3% not sure).

A Large Majority Of Oklahoma Voters Support Shortening Probation Time For Good Behavior

People on probation or parole are under supervision by government officials for some time, usually a number of years, to confirm they follow certain rules. Some people have proposed allowing people to earn reductions in the amount of time they are under supervision for participating in programs like substance abuse and mental health treatment, or for good behavior like getting a job. Would you find such a proposal generally acceptable or generally unacceptable?



Support for this reform too extends across demographic segment and party lines, with large majorities of Republicans (86%), independents (85%), and Democrats (88%) in support. Once again, voters from every part of Oklahoma concur with this view, with huge majorities of voters in the Oklahoma City (88%-10%) and Tulsa areas (85%-10%) joining their more rural fellow residents in the Eastern (84%-13%) and Western (88%-8%) parts of Oklahoma.

APPENDIX

<u>Subgroup (with n-size)</u>	<u>Margin of Error at 95% Confidence</u>	<u>Margin of Error at 80% Confidence</u>
Democrats (n=193)	+/- 7.0%	+/- 4.6%
Independents (n=105)	+/- 9.6%	+/- 6.2%
Republicans (n=302)	+/- 5.6%	+/- 3.7%
Oklahoma City area (n=177)	+/- 7.4%	+/- 4.8%
Tulsa area (n=157)	+/- 7.8%	+/- 5.1%
West (n=150)	+/- 8.0%	+/- 5.2%
East (n=116)	+/- 9.1%	+/- 5.9%

**A full methodological statement is available upon request*