

General Attitudes

Q1. On a day-to-day basis, using a scale from zero to ten where zero means you do not feel safe at all and ten means you feel completely safe, how safe do you personally feel in your community? Of course, you can choose any number between zero and ten.

Zero	0
One	0
Two	1
Three	0
Four	2
Five	5
Six	5
Seven	10
Eight	24
Nine	17
Ten	33
Don't know	1

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about the prison system in South Carolina. I'm going to list some reasons why some people believe someone should be sent to prison. After each, please tell me if you think that is a very important reason to send someone to prison, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important. If you aren't sure how you feel about a particular item, just say so and we will go on.

The order of questions Q2-Q6 was randomized.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Too Important	Not at All Important	Don't Know	IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT
Q6. To provide justice for the victims	66	24	3	3	4	91	6
Q2. To punish the individual	53	33	5	4	6	86	9
Q3. To rehabilitate the individual so he or she might become a productive citizen	53	26	8	9	3	79	17
Q4. To keep him or her locked up in order to protect society from future crimes he or she might commit	53	33	6	3	5	87	9
Q5. To deter others who might commit crimes	45	32	8	9	6	77	18

Q7. Which one of those reasons you just heard to send someone to prison do you think is the single best reason of all?

To rehabilitate the individual so he or she might become a productive citizen	27
To keep him or her locked up in order to protect society from future crimes he or she might commit	25
To provide justice for the victims	19
To punish the individual	16
To deter others who might commit crimes	9
Don't know	5

Q8. Now I'm going to read you some arguments about the issue of sentencing nonviolent offenders. Which of the following do you agree with more?

South Carolina sends too many of its citizens to prison and makes too little use of alternatives for nonviolent offenders like treatment and supervision. These alternatives are much more cost-effective ways of preventing crime and keeping our communities safe.	58
Some so-called nonviolent crimes-like drug and property offenses-need to be punished with prison sentences. We need to show these offenders and others that there are serious consequences for breaking the law, and keep these criminals off the street.	33
Don't know	9

Q9. Which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view about non-violent offenders?

It does not matter whether a non-violent offender is in prison 15 or 20 or 24 months. What really matters is that the system ensures that when these offenders do get out, they're less likely to commit another crime.	75
Longer sentences for non-violent offenders have made our streets safer, and this is no time to be reducing prison sentences for anyone. As long as these criminals are behind bars, they cannot commit new crimes in our communities.	19
Don't know	6

Awareness of 2010 Reforms

Q10. In 2010, after years of rising prison populations, South Carolina lawmakers passed reforms designed to focus prison resources on those who pose the most serious threats to public safety, and reduce the likelihood that offenders commit future crimes and return to prison. Are you aware of these reforms?

If Yes: Would you say you know a lot about these reforms, or just a little?

Yes, a lot	9
Yes, a little	19
No	72
Don't know	0
TOTAL YES	27
NO/DK	73

Among those who answer, “Yes, a lot” or “Yes, a little”:

Q11. And from what you know, would you say you support or oppose these reforms?

After Either Response: Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Support strongly	42
Support, not so strongly	26
Oppose, not so strongly	11
Oppose strongly	15
Don't know	6
SUPPORT	68
OPPOSE	26

Sentencing

Q12. Generally speaking, would you say that people who are found guilty of drug crimes these days serve sentences that are too harsh, too lenient, or about right?

Too harsh	39
About right	27
Too lenient	20
Don't know	14

Q13. As you may or may not know, South Carolina is considering reducing penalties for low-level drug offenders while maintaining long sentences for serious drug traffickers. **Supporter and opponent arguments rotated:**

Supporters of this proposal say we need serious prison sentences for high-level drug traffickers, but research shows that harsh punishments for low-level drug offenders don't help make us safer.

Opponents of this proposal say that we need serious prison sentences for anyone who uses dangerous illegal drugs or brings them into our communities, even if they're only using or selling small quantities of drugs.

Given what you've heard, do you support or oppose the proposal to reduce penalties for low-level drug offenses?

After Either Response: Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Support strongly	46
Support, not so strongly	22
Oppose, not so strongly	8
Oppose strongly	19
Don't know	5
SUPPORT	68
OPPOSE	27

Q14. As you may or may not know, in South Carolina today, many criminal offenses have mandatory minimum sentences, which require those convicted of certain crimes to serve at least a minimum amount of time in prison, regardless of the circumstances of the case.

South Carolina is considering eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent crimes, and instead allowing judges to decide the appropriate sentence for non-violent crimes based on the specifics of the case. Given what you've heard, which do you agree with more?

South Carolina should continue requiring mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent crimes, with judges having no real say in what the sentence should be.	24
South Carolina should no longer require mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent crimes, and instead let judges set the sentence.	73
Don't know	4

Community Supervision

Q15. People on probation or parole are usually under supervision by government officials for a number of years, to confirm they follow certain rules. South Carolina is considering a proposal that would expand people's ability to earn reductions in the amount of time they are under supervision by participating in programs like substance abuse treatment and job training, and by following the rules. This would free up resources that could be focused on those at the highest risk of re-offending. Do you support or oppose this proposal?

After Either Response: Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Support, strongly	73
Support, not so strongly	14
Oppose, not so strongly	3
Oppose, strongly	6
Don't know	4
SUPPORT	87
OPPOSE	9

Release Mechanisms

The order of questions Q16-Q19 was randomized.

Q16. As you may or may not know, South Carolina prisons have many inmates who are seriously ill and require intensive medical care. These inmates, if they meet specific criteria, would be eligible for a parole hearing that could lead to their release, but their release is almost never granted. South Carolina is considering requiring parole boards to prioritize hearings for critically ill patients and release them unless they find the inmate poses a public safety risk. **Supporter and opponent arguments rotated:**

Supporters of this proposal say it doesn't make us safer to keep seriously ill patients in prison. Providing intensive medical care inside prisons wastes money that could be used for real public safety threats. Most seriously ill inmates should be released and cared for at home, and if the parole board believes they're still a threat to public safety, they can keep them in prison.

Opponents of this proposal say that it doesn't matter how sick an inmate is; if a criminal committed a crime, they should do the time. Even if prisoners have real illnesses, that doesn't mean they aren't dangerous. It may be expensive, but we should keep dangerous inmates locked up and let them get treatment in the prison medical system.

Given what you've heard, do you support or oppose requiring parole boards to prioritize hearings for critically ill inmates and release them unless they pose a public safety risk?

After Either Response: Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Support strongly	39
Support, not so strongly	25
Oppose, not so strongly	10
Oppose strongly	20
Don't know	5
SUPPORT	64
OPPOSE	30

Q17. South Carolina's prisons have many elderly inmates. South Carolina is considering allowing elderly inmates who have served a significant portion of their sentence to petition for parole. The parole board would consider their petition on a case-by-case basis, and release them unless they find the inmate poses a public safety risk. **Supporter and opponent arguments rotated:**

Supporters of this proposal say we should allow elderly offenders to petition for parole, because research shows the chances of committing a crime drops dramatically as a person ages. Elderly inmates pose minimal risk and take up significant resources that we could focus on dangerous criminals instead.

Opponents of this proposal say that the only criminals who are still in prison when they're elderly are those who went to prison for the most serious offenses, including violent crimes. They need to answer for their crimes, and they belong in prison.

Given what you've heard, do you support or oppose allowing elderly inmates to petition for parole?

After Either Response: Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Support strongly	43
Support, not so strongly	25
Oppose, not so strongly	7
Oppose strongly	20
Don't know	5
SUPPORT	68
OPPOSE	28

Q18 was asked of half the sample

Q18. As you may or may not know, South Carolina is considering making changes so that more inmates can be released on parole, where they would be supervised after their release from prison. Under this policy, non-violent offenders who show good behavior while incarcerated and complete a personalized re-entry plan could be released under supervision without a parole board hearing. **Supporter and opponent arguments rotated:**

Supporters of this proposal say the best way to keep our communities safe is to ensure that more people leaving prison are supervised when they return to our communities, even if that means that non-violent offenders spend a few months less behind bars.

Opponents of this proposal say that putting inmates back on the street without parole hearings puts our communities at risk. We should require parole hearings before any prisoner can be released early, even if that means that more prisoners will return to communities with no supervision.

Given what you've heard, do you support or oppose this proposal to allow more non-violent offenders to be released on parole and supervised?

After Either Response: Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Support, strongly	47
Support, not so strongly	18
Oppose, not so strongly	9
Oppose, strongly	20
Don't know	6
SUPPORT	65
OPPOSE	29

Q19 was asked of half the sample

Q19. As you may or may not know, in South Carolina today, many of the longest-serving prison inmates are not eligible to receive reduced sentences, even if they behave well in prison. South Carolina is considering allowing more inmates to earn slightly reduced sentences if they behave well and participate in programs designed to reduce their chances of returning to crime upon their release, such as substance abuse treatment or job training programs.

Supporter and opponent arguments rotated:

Supporters of this proposal say that in order to make our communities safer, we must prepare inmates for their return to the community by encouraging them to get treatment, education, and training to become productive citizens when they're released. 95% of inmates are eventually released, and we should be doing everything we can to make sure they return as productive members of society rather than hardened criminals who will end up back in prison.

Opponents of this proposal say that the best way to make our communities safer is to require criminals to serve their entire sentence instead of giving them an easy way back onto the streets just by taking some classes in prison. This is even more important for prisoners who committed serious crimes. We should encourage good behavior in prison, but not by putting dangerous criminals back on the streets.

Given what you've heard, do you support or oppose allowing more inmates to earn slightly reduced sentences if they participate in these programs?

After Either Response: Do you feel that way strongly or not so strongly?

Support, strongly	52
Support, not so strongly	21
Oppose, not so strongly	7
Oppose, strongly	16
Don't know	4
SUPPORT	73
OPPOSE	23

Demographics

I have just a few more questions for statistical purposes only.

D1. Have you or a member of your immediate family been a victim of a violent crime?

If Yes: And does that apply to you, to someone else in your household or both?

Yes, You	7
Yes, Someone else in your household	9
Yes, Both	2
No	80
Don't know	2
TOTAL YES	18
NO/DK	82

D2. Have you or a member of your immediate family been a victim of a non-violent crime?

If Yes: And does that apply to you, to someone else in your household or both?

Yes, You	12
Yes, Someone else in your household	14
Yes, Both	17
No	56
Don't know	2
TOTAL YES	42
NO/DK	58

D3. Have you or a member of your immediate family ever been in prison or on probation or parole?

If Yes: And does that apply to you, to someone else in your household or both?

Yes, You	4
Yes, Someone else in your household	14
Yes, Both	1
No	79
Don't know	3
TOTAL YES	19
NO/DK	81

D4. Are you or someone in your immediate family active in law enforcement?
If Yes: And does that apply to you, to someone else in your household or both?

Yes, You	2
Yes, Someone else in your household	6
Yes, Both	0
No	92
Don't know	0
TOTAL YES	8
NO/DK	92

D5. What is your age?

18-29	14
30-39	18
40-49	17
50-59	14
60+	38
Don't know/Refused	0

D6. What was the last level of schooling you completed?

Less than high school graduate	3
High school graduate	30
Some college	22
College graduate	30
Post-graduate	15
Don't know	1
HS OR LESS	33
SOME COLL	22
COLL GRAD	30
POST GRAD	15

D7. What is your current marital status?

Single	24
Married	55
Divorced	8
Widowed	9
Don't know	2

D8. Do you have any children, 18 years old or younger, living at home?
If Yes: Is one or more of those children between the ages of 13 and 18?

Yes, parent of a teenager (children between 13 and 18)	15
Yes, not parent of a teenager (children but none between 13 and 18)	11
No (no children under 18)	71
Don't know	3

D8A. How likely would you say you are to vote in the November 2018 general election for U.S. Senate, Congress, Governor, state legislature, and other political offices -- are you almost certain to vote in the election, very likely, about 50-50, not too likely, not at all likely, or aren't you sure?

Almost certain	51
Very likely	28
About 50-50	12
Not too likely	2
Not at all likely	3
Don't know	5

D9. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, an independent or something else?

If Republican or Democrat: Do you consider yourself a strong Republican/Democrat or a not so strong Republican/Democrat?

If Independent: Would you say that you lean more towards the Republicans or more towards the Democrats?

Strong Republican	22
Not So Strong Republican	10
Independent Leans Republican	4
Independent	19
Independent Leans Democratic	7
Not So Strong Democrat	6
Strong Democrat	18
Don't know	15
REP	31
IND	45
DEM	23

D10. Do you consider yourself very liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative or very conservative?

If Moderate: Do you tend to lean toward the liberal or conservative side?

Very liberal	6
Somewhat liberal	10
Moderate leans liberal	5
Moderate	26
Moderate leans conservative	4
Somewhat conservative	23
Very conservative	17
Don't know	9
LIB	16
MOD	35
CON	40

D11. Are you Latino, Hispanic, or of Spanish or Mexican descent?

Yes	2
No	94
Don't know	4

D12. Are you black, white, Asian, Native American or some other race?

Black	23
White	65
Asian	1
Native American	1
Other	4
Don't know	5

D13. What is your present religion, if any? Are you Protestant, Roman Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox such as Greek or Russian Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else, or nothing in particular?

Protestant (Baptist, Methodist, Non-denominational, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Reformed, Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, etc.)	53
Roman Catholic (Catholic)	7
Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints/LDS)	1
Orthodox (Greek, Russian, or some other orthodox church)	0
Jewish (Judaism)	1
Muslim (Islam)	0
Buddhist	1
Hindu	0
Atheist (do not believe in God)	2
Agnostic (not sure if there is a God)	4
Something else	9
Nothing in particular	11
Christian	7
Unitarian (Universalist)	0
Don't Know/Refused	5

Among those who answer, "Something else" or "Don't know":

D14. Do you think of yourself as a Christian or not?

Yes	54
No	13
Don't know	33

Among Christians:

D15. Would you describe yourself as a born again or evangelical Christian, or not?

Yes, born again or evangelical Christian	59
No, not born again or evangelical Christian	38
Don't know	3

D16. On average, how frequently do you attend religious services?

At least once a week	38
Once or twice a month	17
A few times a year	15
Seldom	13
Never	12
Don't know	5

D18. In which of the following ranges does your family income fall?

Below \$20,000	10
Between 20 thousand and 30 thousand	11
Between 30 and 40 thousand	9
Between 40 and 50 thousand	9
Between 50 and 60 thousand	8
Between 60 and 70 thousand	8
Between 70 and 80 thousand	4
Between 80 and 100 thousand	6
Between 100 and 150 thousand	8
Above 150 thousand	5
Don't know	19

D19. Do you have a family member or close friend who is or has been addicted to drugs, or not?

Yes	38
No	56
Don't know	6

D20. Gender

Male	47
Female	53

Methodological Statement

This survey of 649 registered voters in South Carolina was conducted by Benenson Strategy Group and GS Strategy Group on behalf of the Pew Charitable Trusts. Interviews were conducted by telephone from January 31 – February 11, 2018, and included both landlines and cell phones. 50% of interviews were completed on cell phones. The survey was administered in English using a CATI system. The margin of error is $\pm 3.8\%$ at the 95% level of confidence. When design effects are accounted for, the overall margin of error is $\pm 6.0\%$ at the 95% level of confidence. The margin of error is higher for subgroups. The sampling frame for this study is registered voters in the state of South Carolina. For the survey, a random sample of voters was pulled from the TargetSmart-managed South Carolina voter file. The survey sample included only voters with telephone numbers on the voter file (69% of voters). Within this probability sample, voters were called randomly. For each record, only the listed name from the voter file qualified for the survey. Quotas were applied for gender, congressional districts, and race based on counts from the South Carolina voter file to help ensure that the sample was representative of all registered voters in South Carolina. The data was weighted slightly to reflect the composition of registered voters in South Carolina for age, race, gender, party score, ideology, and the proportion of households with members in law enforcement, with weight targets based on the South Carolina voter file.

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