

Public Attitudes on Crime and Punishment in Oregon

When asked about crime and punishment, voters strongly support policies that get results. They want evidence of the public safety impact of state policies and they want a solid taxpayer return-on-investment.

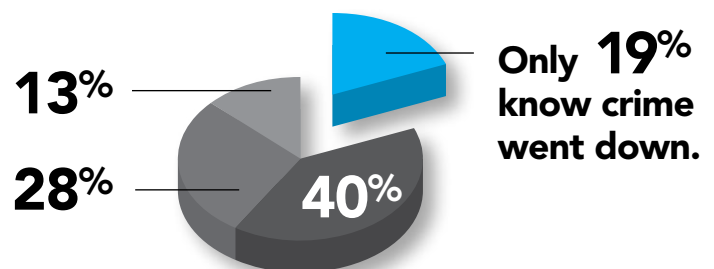
This preference for results-oriented policy was broadly voiced by Republicans, Democrats, Independents, crime victims, and law enforcement households.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

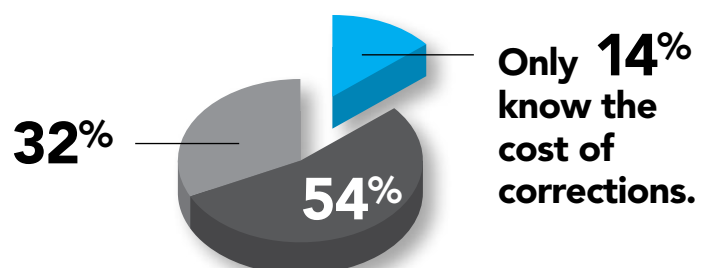
1. Oregon voters have little awareness of the state's crime decline or the size of the corrections budget.
2. Voters want corrections dollars to produce public safety results.
3. Voters prefer prison spending cuts to cutting funding for other programs or tax increases.
4. Voters demonstrate broad support for specific policies that reduce prison populations and spending.

1. OREGON VOTERS HAVE LITTLE AWARENESS OF THE STATE'S CRIME DECLINE OR THE SIZE OF THE CORRECTIONS BUDGET

Fewer than one in five voters (19%) know that Oregon's crime rate declined during the past decade. More than two-thirds said it increased (40%) or stayed the same (28%). The rest (13%) said they don't know.



A small minority of voters (14%) knows that the State of Oregon spends more than half a billion dollars annually on corrections, with a majority (54%) believing that the state spends less than that amount. Nearly one third (32%) said they don't know.

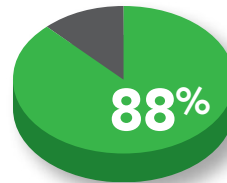


2. VOTERS WANT CORRECTIONS DOLLARS TO PRODUCE PUBLIC SAFETY RESULTS

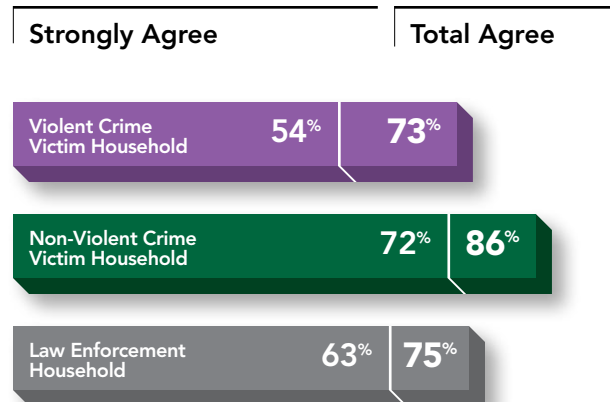
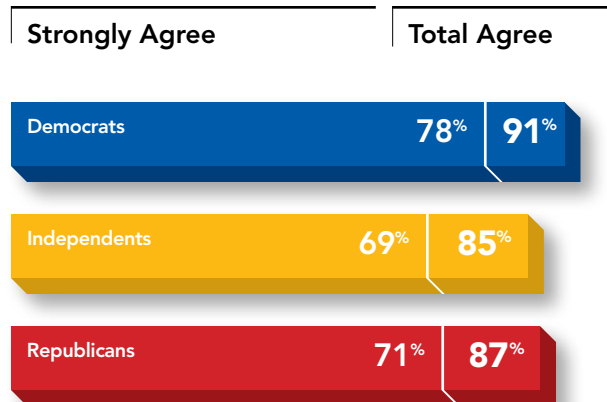
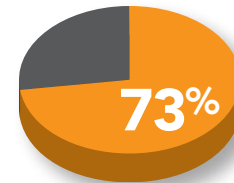
Voters strongly support results-oriented policy statements.

“Prisons are a government spending program, and just like any other government spending program they need to be put to the cost-benefit test to make sure taxpayers are getting the best bang for the buck.”

% Total Agree

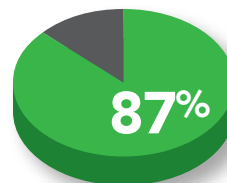


% Strongly Agree

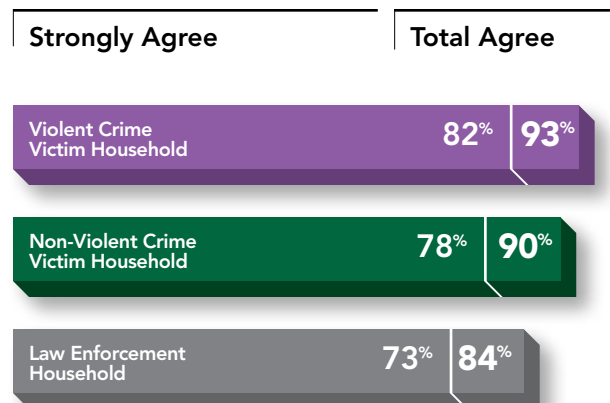
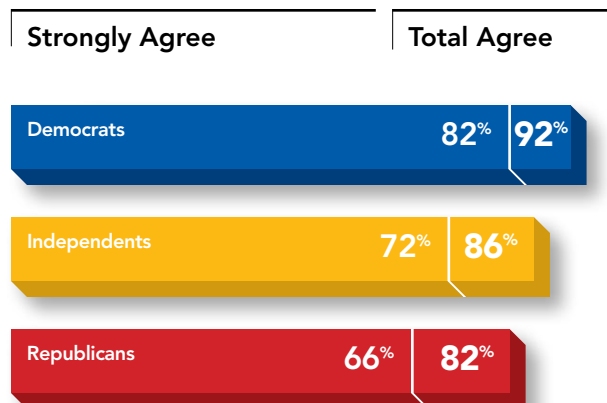
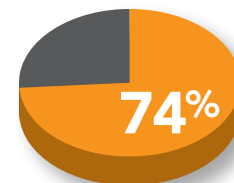


“It does not matter whether an offender is in prison for 10 or 15 or 21 months. What really matters is that the system does a better job of making sure that when an offender does get out, he is less likely to commit another crime.”

% Total Agree



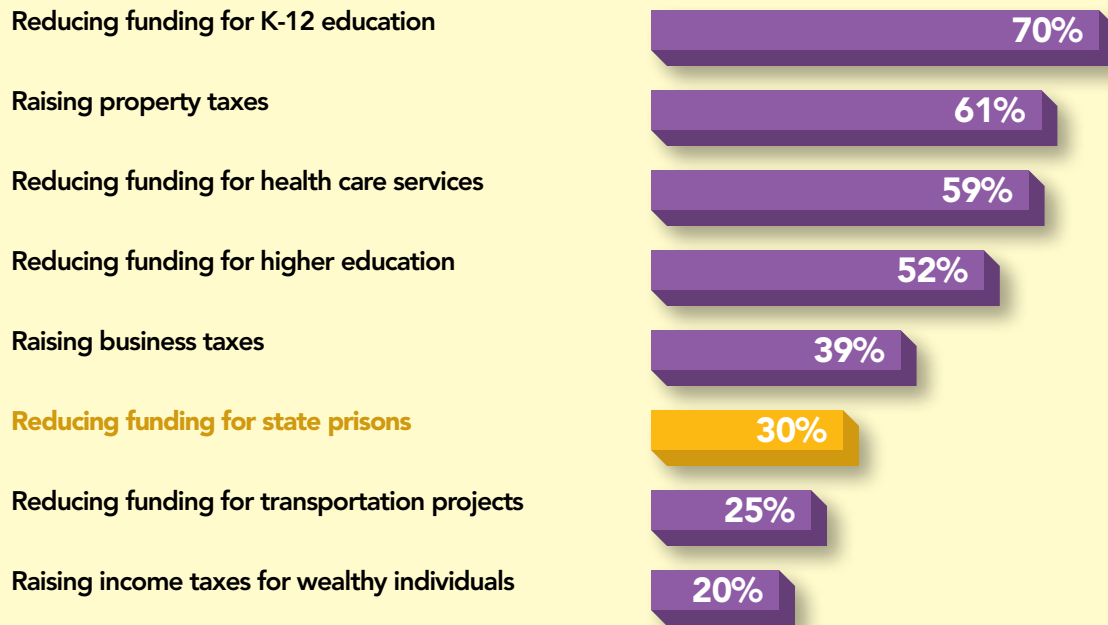
% Strongly Agree



3. VOTERS PREFER PRISON SPENDING CUTS TO CUTTING FUNDING FOR OTHER PROGRAMS OR TAX INCREASES

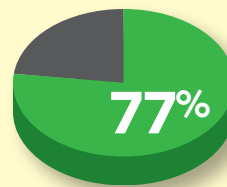
With Oregon facing a budget shortfall, voters would prefer to cut prison spending than cut K-12 education, health care services or higher education, or raise property or business taxes.

Percentage of Respondents Who Find the Following Statements to Be Strongly Unacceptable:

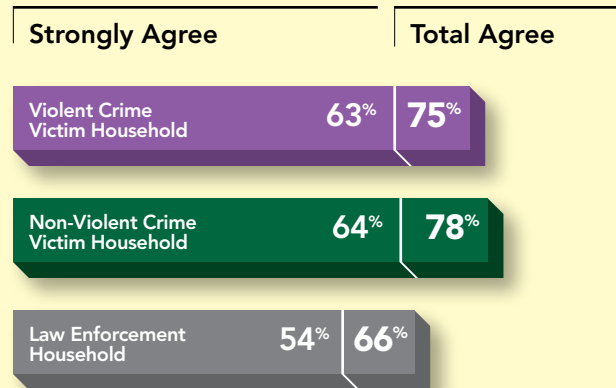
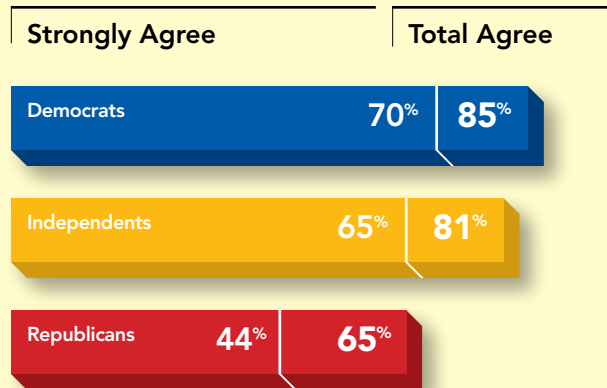
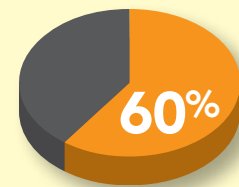


“Some of the money that Oregon is spending on locking up lower-risk inmates should be shifted to strengthening mandatory community supervision programs like probation and parole.”

% Total Agree



% Strongly Agree



4. VOTERS DEMONSTRATE BROAD SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC POLICIES THAT REDUCE PRISON POPULATIONS AND SPENDING

"I would support shorter prison sentences for offenders if that permitted the state to pay for a stronger probation and parole system, including swifter penalties for breaking the rules of supervision and more substance abuse and mental health treatment."

Strongly Agree	Total Agree	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Violent Crime Victim Household	Non-Violent Crime Victim Household	Law Enforcement Household
62%	82%	89%	82%	75%	83%	85%	87%

"Oregon law currently requires a prison sentence of a specific length of time for all who are convicted of certain crimes. Do you favor or oppose giving judges more say in deciding sentences?"

Strongly Favor	Total Favor	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Violent Crime Victim Household	Non-Violent Crime Victim Household	Law Enforcement Household
59%	77%	82%	79%	69%	81%	77%	74%

"Give the parole board authority to keep dangerous offenders in prison longer and accelerate the release of lower risk prisoners."

Strongly Agree	Total Agree	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Violent Crime Victim Household	Non-Violent Crime Victim Household	Law Enforcement Household
66%	86%	89%	86%	82%	83%	85%	80%

"Send fewer low-risk offenders to prison and reinvest some of the savings to create a stronger probation and parole system that holds offenders accountable for their crimes."

Strongly Agree	Total Agree	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Violent Crime Victim Household	Non-Violent Crime Victim Household	Law Enforcement Household
61%	81	89%	80%	74%	78%	81%	69%

"Allow prison inmates convicted of non-violent crimes to earn more time off their prison terms for completing programs like literacy training and substance abuse treatment that are designed to increase their chances for success when they are released."

Strongly Agree	Total Agree	Democrats	Independents	Republicans	Violent Crime Victim Household	Non-Violent Crime Victim Household	Law Enforcement Household
67%	85%	91%	84%	78%	86%	88%	77%

Shorter Prison Stays with Supervision Preferred to Longer Prison Stays

Voters strongly prefer that inmates be subject to a shorter period of incarceration followed by mandatory supervision, rather than be held until their sentences expire and released without any supervision, regardless of offense type.

Violent Offenders

When given a choice between violent offenders serving a full 5-year prison sentence or 4 years of a 5-year sentence plus 1 year of mandatory supervision, voters prefer the mandatory supervision option.

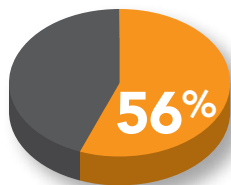
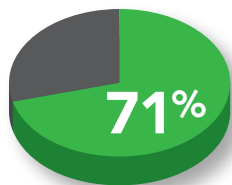
Non-Violent Offenders

When given a choice between non-violent offenders serving a full 3-year prison sentence or 2 years of a 3-year sentence plus 1 year of mandatory supervision, voters prefer the mandatory supervision option.

Shorter sentence, plus supervision

% Total Prefer

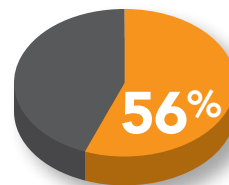
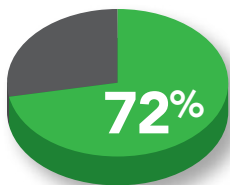
% Strongly Prefer



Shorter sentence, plus supervision

% Total Prefer

% Strongly Prefer



Strongly Prefer

Total Prefer



Strongly Prefer

Total Prefer



METHODOLOGY

On behalf of the Pew Center on the States, Public Opinion Strategies and the Mellman Group conducted phone interviews with 600 likely Oregon voters on January 19-22, 2012. The survey has a margin of error of ± 4 percent. The margin of error is higher for subgroups.

The full survey is available at www.pewcenteronthestates.org/publicsafety.

Poll Respondent Demographics

- 36 percent identified as conservative
- 33 percent identified as liberal

- 33 percent identified as a Republican or leaning Republican
- 23 percent identified as Independent
- 38 percent identified as a Democrat or leaning Democratic

- 16 percent identified as a violent crime victim household
- 47 percent identified as a non-violent crime victim household
- 11 percent identified as a law enforcement household



Public Opinion Strategies is a leading national political, public policy, and public affairs research firm. Public Opinion Strategies is widely recognized as the nation's leading Republican polling firm, listing 19 U.S. Senators, 6 Governors, and over 70 Members of Congress as clients. Public Opinion Strategies also works for some of America's largest corporations and associations in the public affairs realm.



The Mellman Group has provided sophisticated opinion research and strategic advice to political leaders, public interest organizations, Fortune 500 companies, and government agencies for over thirty years. Current clients include the majority leader of the U.S. Senate and the Democratic whip in the U.S. House.