

To gauge national attitudes toward key crime and punishment issues, Pew commissioned research in 2010 by a bipartisan team of two of the nation’s leading opinion research firms, Public Opinion Strategies and Benenson Strategy Group. This fact sheet highlights some of the main findings related to recidivism. To learn more about the research, visit [www.pewpublicsafety.org](http://www.pewpublicsafety.org).

## Key Takeaways

### The bottom line... let's reduce crime.

*"It does not matter whether a nonviolent offender is in prison for 21 or 24 or 27 months. What really matters is the system does a better job of making sure that when an offender does get out, he is less likely to commit another crime."*

% Strongly Agree  
**75%**

% Total Agree  
**91%**

1. Voters are concerned first and foremost with keeping communities and people safe.
2. Without question, voters want a strong public safety system where criminals are held accountable and there are consequences for illegal activities.
3. Voters believe a strong public safety system is possible while reducing the size and cost of the prison system.

## Less Prison, More Accountability for Nonviolent Offenders

Prison is not always required and voters recognize the important role that probation and parole can play in reducing crime. There is strong support for reinvesting prison savings in alternatives that hold offenders accountable. Nearly 9 out of 10 voters (87%) favor reducing prison time for low-risk, nonviolent offenders and reinvesting some of the savings to create a stronger probation and parole system that holds offenders accountable for their crimes. Republicans, Democrats and Independents are all broadly supportive of a reduction of prison time if there are appropriate other consequences. Support is strong across regions of the country as well.

*"An effective probation and parole system would use new technologies to monitor where offenders are and what they are doing, require them to pass drug tests, and require they either keep a job or perform community service."*

% Strongly Agree  
**77%**

% Total Agree  
**95%**

## Strong Support for Reducing Prison Stays



The survey demonstrates strong support for reducing length of prison stays for nonviolent inmates when they participate in programs aimed at reducing recidivism, including literacy and substance abuse treatment programs (90% acceptable).

Voters also support shortening prison stays by six months for nonviolent inmates who have behaved well and are low-risk for re-offending (90% acceptable).

### Methodology

On behalf of the Pew Center on the States, Public Opinion Strategies conducted phone interviews with 1,200 registered voters (1,080 landline and 120 cell phone only respondents) on March 7-14, 2010 with a margin of error of  $\pm 2.83\%$ . For this survey, we used a replicate sample format. The total number of 1,200 interviews were segmented into replicate samples of 600 each. The samples thus mirrored each other in terms of demographic and geographic characteristics. Focus groups also were conducted in Michigan, Colorado and South Carolina.