



To: Interested Parties
Date: September 17th, 2013
Re: Latino voters overwhelmingly favor a wide variety of proposals that would ease prison crowding

A recent survey likely 2016 voters in California, conducted by David Binder Research, included a representative sample of 342 Latino voters. Results indicate that an overwhelming majority of Latino voters support a broad array of proposals that will ease prison crowding.

Criminal Justice Reforms

Eight individual proposals each received support from a solid majority of Latino voters, with some proposals receiving support from as many as four in five voters. All of the proposals had at least twice the support as they had opposition. And none of the eight criminal justice reform proposals tested were opposed by more than 30% of likely California voters.

Latino Support for Criminal Justice Reform Proposals

Proposal	Support	Oppose
Expand effective treatment programs for mentally ill people instead of putting these people in prison	78	15
Establish a Public Safety Commission, made up of criminal justice experts, to streamline California's criminal statutes with the goal of safely reducing prison costs and maximizing public safety.	76	12
Allow offenders sentenced to lengthy prison sentences when they were teenagers the opportunity to earn the reconsideration of their sentence by a judge by demonstrating maturity and rehabilitation	66	23
Allow judges to consider, with victim input, releasing elderly and frail inmates that are no longer a threat to public safety, and who have less than life without parole sentences.	66	25
Require that at least the last six months of all jail sentences of 3 years or more be served on supervised probation in the community to reduce repeat offending and help former offenders become productive Californians	66	25
Reduce the penalty for drug possession from a felony eligible for prison to a misdemeanor eligible for treatment, probation, or diversion from the criminal justice system	63	29
Allow inmates who were not sentenced to life without parole or death to earn early release from prison by completing rehabilitation programs, paying victim restitution, and completing job training and educational programs	61	29
Financially reward counties that reduce the number of people sent to state prison and county jail through evidence-based community programs proven to reduce repeat offending and help former offenders become productive Californians	60	28

Examining support for each of these proposals reveals that support is strong across political parties.

Latino Democrats are overwhelmingly supportive of criminal justice reforms, with nearly two in three Latino Democratic voters supporting each of the reforms tested. Among Latino Democrats, there is little opposition to speak of to any of the reforms tested. None of them are opposed by more than one in three Latino Democrats.

Latino Republicans – as expected – are less supportive than Democrats, but the majority of Latino Republicans still support all but two reforms. Those two reforms – reducing the penalty for drug possession and allowing early release – have more divided support among Republicans.

Independent Latino voters – those without a political party – are more supportive than Republicans on all eight of the proposals tested, and are nearly as supportive as Latino Democrats. Two in three Latino Independents support 7 of the 8 proposals and 60% support the last one. Less than one in four Latino Independents oppose any proposal.

Latino Support for Criminal Justice Reform Proposals by Party

Proposal	Democrats (n=187)		Republicans (n=67)		Independents (n=70)	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
Provide treatment for mentally ill	81	12	69	22	81	16
Establish Public Safety Commission	78	13	67	19	81	4
Earn sentence reconsideration	69	21	55	33	74	19
Release elderly and frail inmates	67	26	63	27	71	20
Require supervised probation	67	24	58	31	70	20
Reduce drug possession penalty	65	28	49	43	71	21
Allow early release	66	27	46	46	67	20
County incentives	64	25	55	37	60	24

An analysis of Latino attitudes across California reveals that there is broad support for all of the criminal justice reform proposals, across geographies. Support for most proposals is strongest in the Bay Area, but the majority of Latino voters in Southern California and Inland California support each of the proposals as well.

Latino Support for Criminal Justice Reform Proposals by Geography

Proposal	Bay Area (n=49)		Southern California (n=217)		Inland (n=76)	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
Provide treatment for mentally ill	86	10	77	17	79	13
Establish Public Safety Commission	71	16	78	11	72	12
Earn sentence reconsideration	71	18	68	21	59	33
Release elderly and frail inmates	69	20	66	25	66	29
Require supervised probation	69	22	65	24	63	28
Reduce drug possession penalty	67	29	59	32	70	22
Allow early release	69	16	62	30	54	36
County incentives	61	33	59	24	53	35

Latino Criminal Justice Concerns

Latino voters were asked “which problems do you think are most important to address in California’s criminal justice system?” and were asked to select up to three problems. The most frequently mentioned problems among Latinos were the amount of money spent on prisons, and the use of incarceration for non-serious non-violent offenders.

Latinos are more likely to say there is too much money spent on prisons; and less likely to say that there are not enough rehabilitation programs, that judges have to follow fixed sentences, and that people with mental health problems get worse in prison.

Independent and Democratic Latinos are especially likely to focus on the amount of money spent on prisons.

	There is too much money spent on prisons	Incarceration is used for too many nonviolent offenders	Too many low risk people crowding jails cannot afford bail	There are not enough rehabilitation programs to help people	People with mental health problems get worse in prison
Whites	33	39	28	37	28
Latinos	46	36	28	28	27
Democratic Latinos	48	36	33	27	31
Republican Latinos	37	33	16	27	16
Independent Latinos	51	40	31	33	27

Latino Spending Priorities

When asked if one of the reform ideas passed and reduced prison spending, Latino respondents selected up to two ways that they would want the money spent. The top five spending priorities among Latinos were education, community college, mental health treatment, California universities, and violence prevention programs.

Latinos were more likely to focus on education than their White counterparts. They were more likely to select K to 12 education, community colleges, and universities, as well as early childhood education. They were less likely to select mental health treatment, victim services, and more police officers

Democratic and Independent Latinos were particular likely to focus on K to 12 education and community colleges.

	K to 12 education	Community colleges	Mental health treatment	California universities	Violence prevention programs
Whites	40	15	38	13	21
Latinos	52	30	28	24	24
Democratic Latinos	58	31	28	29	24
Republican Latinos	30	25	27	13	19
Independent Latinos	57	33	30	21	31

Methodology

A statewide survey was conducted from July 17th to July 20th with a representative sample of 1,600 registered California voters who are likely to vote in November 2016.

This includes 342 registered Latino voters who are likely to vote in November 2014.

The margin of error is 2.5% for all likely 2016 voters and 5.4% for likely Latino voters.

The survey was conducted online and screened by voter registration and voter likelihood. The sample is demographically representative of the likely voter universes for the 2014 and 2016 elections, respectively. This survey represents the broadest representation of the full diversity of Latinos of all ages, geographies, and other demographic groups.