

ILLINOIS CRIME VICTIMS'

VOICES

THE FIRST-EVER SURVEY
OF ILLINOIS
VICTIMS' VIEWS ON



**SAFETY AND
JUSTICE**

**ALLIANCE FOR
SAFETY AND JUSTICE**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is no more important role of our justice system than promoting public safety. In the debate about how to design a criminal justice system that serves the needs of Illinois communities and makes them safer, the perspective of crime victims is essential.

Despite this foundational goal, safety and justice policy debates in Illinois have not been informed by a comprehensive examination of the experiences and views of Illinois' diverse crime victims.

For the past 30 years, Illinois prison populations have swelled—driven by increasingly long sentences, mandatory minimums, limited opportunities and incentives for rehabilitation during incarceration and numerous barriers to successful reentry. The result has been overcrowded prisons, soaring recidivism rates and tremendous fiscal and human costs. With 48,278 people imprisoned at the end of 2014, the Illinois prison population has more than quadrupled since 1980.¹

Today, Illinois is in the midst of reexamining the policies that have led to over-incarceration and a significant shift in its approach to public safety. For the first time in decades, criminal justice practitioners, lawmakers, and the general public are rethinking sentencing laws, prison spending, and the best ways to address crime and violence.

To inform this conversation, the Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) produced this first-of-its-kind study on the views and experiences of Illinois crime victims. In July of 2016, ASJ commissioned David Binder Research² to conduct focus groups with crime survivors in Chicago

and Peoria and field a statewide survey of victims. This research fills an important gap in understanding victims' experiences with the criminal justice system in Illinois, what they need to recover from crime, and their views on safety and justice policy.

These results reflect the views of a broad and representative cross section of Illinois residents and run counter to many of the prevailing narratives about what victims want from the criminal justice system. Survey findings paint a different picture of victims' priorities than is commonly portrayed. Perhaps most surprising to some, crime survivors prefer approaches that prioritize rehabilitation over punishment and investments in new safety priorities over more spending on prisons and jails.

These views are not always reflected accurately in the media or around state policy tables but are critical to the ongoing debate in Illinois. This research also took the unprecedented step of measuring crime victim support for a range of specific criminal justice policy reforms and found broad support for policies that reduce incarceration to invest in treatment, prevention, and community health.

There has never been a more important time to investigate and elevate the perspectives of those most commonly victimized by violence and crime. If new approaches to safety and justice do not incorporate the voices of crime victims, this new era of reform risks failing to deliver on the breakthrough that Illinois needs. The findings of this study can help inform efforts to safely reduce incarceration and align criminal justice reforms with victims' needs and preferences.



KEY FINDINGS

VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES



Illinoisans report being a victim of crime in the past 10 years.

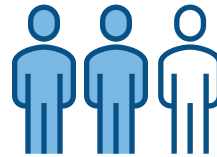
✓ 60 percent of crime victims surveyed reported being a victim of at least one violent crime in the past ten years.

✓ Latinos and black people are 26 percent more likely than whites to have been the victim of violent crime.

✓ People under the age of 30 and with incomes less than \$50,000, as well as residents of Chicago, are more likely to experience victimization.

✓ Many crime victims experience repeat victimization—roughly six out of 10 victims of violent crime were victimized three or more times in the past 10 years.

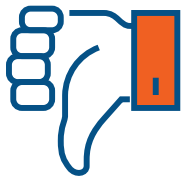
✓ Fewer than one in 10 crime victims received help or support accessing services from a district attorney or a prosecutor's office.



2 OUT OF 3

crime victims experienced symptoms of trauma as a result of being a crime victim.

VICTIM'S VIEWS ON SAFETY AND JUSTICE POLICY



6 IN 10

crime victims believe the criminal justice system is not working well or not working at all.

✓ Nine in 10 victims would prefer that Illinois invest more in schools and education rather than investing in more prisons and jails.

✓ Six in 10 victims prefer alternatives to prison such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment and drug treatment to putting people in prison.

7 IN 10



victims prefer shorter prison sentences and spending more on prevention and rehabilitation programs to prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible.

BROAD SUPPORT FOR SHIFTING INVESTMENTS AWAY FROM PRISONS

✓ For each of the questions above, there is majority support for reform across all demographic groups (age, gender, race and ethnicity).

✓ Regardless of political party affiliation or region of the state (Chicago or downstate), the majority of crime victims believe that the criminal justice system is not working well in Illinois.



The majority of victims of violent crimes, including the most serious crimes such as rape or murder of a family member, support proposals to reform the criminal justice system. In some cases, victims of violent crime are even more likely to prefer alternatives to prison.



VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES

According to survey results, one in three (32 percent) Illinoisans report having been the victim of crime in the last 10 years. Virtually all had been victims of property crimes (91 percent) and most have been victimized on more than one occasion. More than 60 percent of those surveyed have been victims of a violent crime.

Crime impacts people from all walks of life in Illinois and every demographic group experiences victimization. At the same time, there are populations that experience crime, in particular violent crime, at higher rates—people of color, people with low incomes, young adults, and residents of Chicago.

“

Violence is one of the biggest issues facing Illinois. There were so many shootings back to back. I have children who play outside and I fear for them. It's been happening more often.

— **WHITE WOMAN, VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, PEORIA**³

”

In fact, the violent crime rate increased in 2015 for the first time in a decade, mostly due to an increase in violence in Chicago.⁴ Homicides in the city rose from 411 in 2014 to 478 in 2015 and are on pace for 730 in 2016.⁵

The communities that have been most harmed by crime and violence have also frequently been left out of the debate on safety and justice policy. With upticks in violence threatening to undermine critical public safety gains over the past two decades, it's more important than ever to examine the views of a broad cross section of victims in Illinois and develop policy responses to crime that incorporate the perspectives of diverse crime survivors.

In order to design criminal justice policies that make Illinois communities safer we need to first understand (1) who victims are; (2) how crime impacts them; and (3) what experiences they have with the criminal justice system.

WHO ARE ILLINOIS CRIME VICTIMS?

Repeat victimization most common among victims of violent crime

National studies have found that the strongest predictor of victimization is having previously been a victim of crime.⁶ Survey results show that victims of violence are disproportionately impacted by crime and most likely to suffer from repeat victimization. Nearly four in 10 (39 percent) victims of violent crime have been victimized four or more times and they are three times more likely than victims of property crime alone to have been repeatedly victimized.

Violence is concentrated and unequal

While Illinois crime victims are as diverse as the state itself, our survey found that certain demographic groups disproportionately experience violence. Latinos and African Americans are 26 percent more likely than whites to have been a victim of violent crime and 37 percent more likely to have experienced the most serious crimes such as rape or the murder of a family member.

This finding is supported by data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) which finds that black people are nearly one-third (30 percent) more likely than white people to have been victims of violent crime.⁷ This is particularly true for homicides—more than half of all murder victims in 2015 were black.⁸

“

I can't walk down the street, I can't send my daughter to the store. I don't want to go out. I just want to stay home.

— **BLACK MAN, VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME, CHICAGO**

”

Survey results also align with national data demonstrating that young adults, people with low incomes, and residents of urban areas experience the highest rates of victimization. People under the age of 30 are 24 percent more likely to be victims of violent crime and 41 percent more likely to be victims of serious violent crime. Similarly, people with incomes of less than \$25,000 per year are 25 percent more likely to be victims of violent crime and 46 percent more likely to be victims of serious violent crime.

As noted above, the city of Chicago is in the midst of a violence epidemic. Survey results show that residents of the city are 23 percent more likely to be victims of violent crime and 41 percent more likely to be victims of serious violent crime than the rest of the state.

“

[There is a] lack of resources — if you had jobs, if you had something to look forward to maybe people wouldn't commit crimes, they aren't waking up to anything.

— **BLACK MAN, VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME, CHICAGO**

”

HOW DOES CRIME IMPACT ILLINOIS CRIME VICTIMS?

Crime impacts the quality of life for victims

Not surprisingly, the people most impacted by crime are more likely to report that it has an impact on their quality of life. Nearly one in two (46 percent) of victims report that the quality of life for them and their family is affected by crime in their area. Diminished quality of life is even

higher for people who have been victims of crime and those disproportionately impacted by violence—people of color, young adults, people earning less than \$25,000 per year and Chicago city residents.

This is particularly true for black people in Illinois—black respondents were twice as likely as white respondents to say that their quality of life was impacted by crime (53 to 26 percent). Victims of violent crime and repeat victims are also significantly more likely to report a diminished quality of life due to crime in their area.

“

Parents have to work a lot of hours and so they have to be away from home. Childcare has been cut out so children are literally at home babysitting themselves.

— **BLACK WOMAN, VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME, CHICAGO**

”

Crime is a traumatic experience for victims

Crime is a traumatic experience for nearly everyone who has been a victim. Nearly seven out of 10 victims overall (69 percent) and three out of four victims of violent crime (75 percent) describe their experience as traumatic. Regardless of their demographic characteristics or whether they reported their crime, most Illinois victims report being deeply impacted by crime and experiencing numerous symptoms of trauma. Below are some of the ways in which victimization has harmed the physical and mental well-being of those surveyed:

- 8 in 10 felt stress as a result of the incident
- 6 in 10 felt fear
- 9 in 10 felt anger
- 1 in 2 experienced trouble sleeping
- 1 in 3 experienced trouble with work or school
- 1 in 3 experienced physical or medical issues

These experiences are often magnified for victims of violence and repeat victims, who report even higher levels of trauma and challenges in recovering from the crime.

THE IMPACT OF UNADDRESSED TRAUMA ON VICTIMS

Being a victim of crime can have devastating effects on survivors and their families. Research has shown that people who are repeatedly victimized are more likely to suffer from mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and symptoms related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and chronic trauma.⁹

When left untreated, trauma can contribute to substance abuse, housing instability, loss of employment and other challenges that increase the risk of being a victim again or even engaging in crime. Victims living in communities experiencing concentrated crime suffer from greater levels of chronic trauma than those who do not. The compound effects of being a direct victim of crime and regularly witnessing violence causes

significant traumatic stresses that impact nearly all aspects of life, and can even contribute to the cycle of crime —up to and including victims’ increased likelihood of engaging in risky behavior or later becoming a perpetrator of violence themselves.

“ Fear will keep you from leaving the house, anger can fester and make you lash out, and commit crime. It starts off grieving and then it turns into anger.

— BLACK WOMAN, VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME, CHICAGO

One of the key elements to improving public safety and community health is helping survivors recover from trauma and the long-lasting impact of crime and violence. Fortunately, there

are proven solutions to addressing trauma and stopping the cycle of crime. Model programs — such as trauma recovery centers that provide wraparound services — are developing across the country and could be a powerful resource for victims in Illinois. Trauma recovery centers can provide everything from counseling, referrals to other service providers, orientation to the justice system, and financial assistance with costs stemming from the crime.

“ You have anger, you snap on people that shouldn’t even be attacked. You turn into this angry person that you never were.

— WHITE WOMAN, VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, PEORIA

IS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM MEETING VICTIMS’ NEEDS?

The criminal justice system plays a critical role in facilitating medical, economic, and emotional recovery for crime survivors. Despite this important role, few crime victims indicate that the criminal justice system provided assistance in addressing their victimization.

Most victims do not receive help recovering from crime

Despite the immediate and long lasting impact of trauma on crime victims’ lives, most do not feel supported by the criminal justice system. Nationally, two out of three crime victims report receiving no help at all and an even smaller number report receiving it from the criminal justice system.¹⁰ In Illinois, 27 percent of crime victims report feeling “not at all supported” by the criminal justice system and only 10 percent felt “very supported.”

“

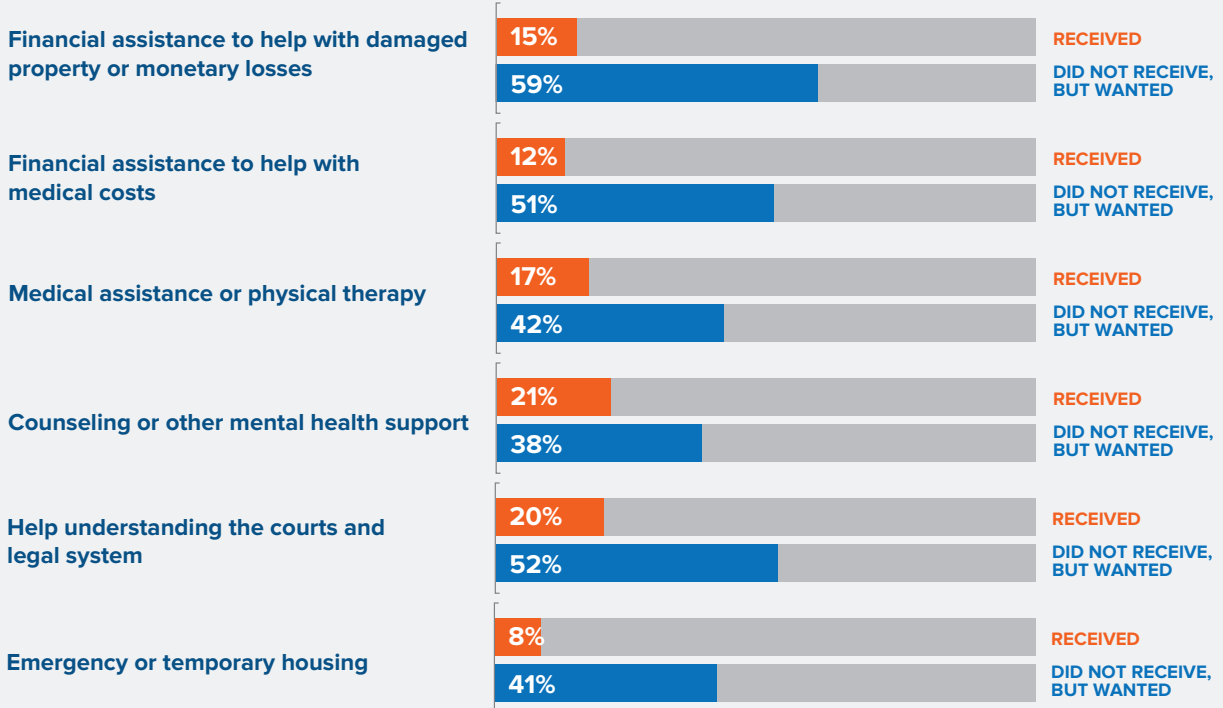
I was afraid he’d come back. For him the restraining order was just a piece of paper. He didn’t care.

— WHITE WOMAN, VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, PEORIA

”

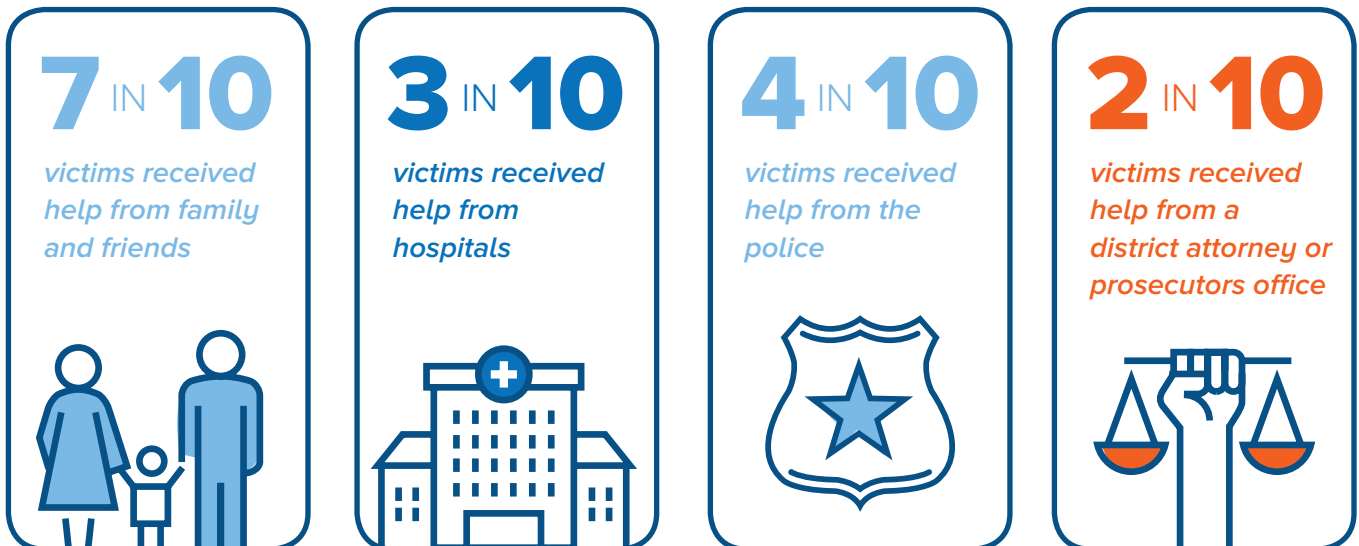
This lack of support means that victims have numerous unmet needs following the incident. When asked about victims’ services, crime survivors report large gaps between their needs and what they actually received. On basic needs such as emergency or temporary housing, or help understanding the court system, about half of victims did not receive the support they needed.

LARGE GAPS BETWEEN VICTIMS' NEEDS AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT



Of those that receive help, it is not through the criminal justice system

Of the victims who do report receiving the types of help above, the majority received it from family and friends or the hospital, not the criminal justice system:



Most victims do not report the crime to law enforcement

“ If I am robbed I am not going to call the police because there is a good chance that they aren’t going to do anything about it and they are going to think negative things about me, the person reporting.

— BLACK MALE, VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME, CHICAGO

”

Many victims do not receive help from the Illinois criminal justice system because the crimes are not reported. Nationally, only 38 percent of crimes are reported to law enforcement, meaning most victims do not interact with the criminal justice system following the incident.¹¹

There are myriad reasons why victims do not report the crimes committed against them to law enforcement. Understanding why victims don’t report crimes can help Illinois policymakers better respond to the needs of victims and increase access to services provided through the criminal justice system.

In Illinois, concerns about retaliation and system trust are most often cited as factors that prevented victims from reporting to law enforcement.

FOR WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS HAVE YOU EVER NOT REPORTED A CRIME?





WHAT ARE THE

PERSPECTIVES OF VICTIMS

ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND PUBLIC SAFETY POLICIES?

In addition to surveying crime victims about their experiences with crime and the criminal justice system, this study also examined victims' views on criminal justice and public safety policy.

After decades of unprecedented growth in incarceration rates and prison spending, Illinois policymakers on both sides of the aisle are considering new approaches to safety and justice policy.

In this era of change it is important to reexamine the underlying assumptions that contributed to today's historic levels of incarceration. Many of the so-called "tough on crime" laws adopted in Illinois were passed as part of a highly politicized debate about the best way to protect public safety. In this debate, victims of crime were portrayed as strongly favoring tough sentencing policies and long prison sentences.

To inform the ongoing policy conversation in Springfield, this study sought to discern the perspectives of a more

comprehensive and representative group of crime victims. Contrary to commonly held beliefs about victims' views, the results demonstrate that most crime survivors believe the criminal justice is not working and would prefer new approaches that emphasize rehabilitation over punishment.

Victims believe prison makes people more – not less – likely to commit another crime and prefer investments in treatment and prevention to more spending on prisons and jails. Most importantly, victims support reducing prison sentences to pay for these investments and other options beyond just incarceration for holding people who commit crimes accountable.

These findings, described in more detail below, hold true across all demographic groups, including race, gender, age, income and political party affiliation. They also hold true for victims of violent crime, including the most serious offenses such as rape and murder of a family member.

Growth in Illinois incarceration and prison spending

The Illinois prison population has grown four fold since 1980, with more than 48,000 people imprisoned at the end of 2014.¹² Corrections spending has nearly doubled since 1985 and the state now spends one in 20 general fund dollars on its prison system.¹³ In fact, corrections spending grew at more than six times the rate of education spending over the past three decades and continues to increase while funding for higher education declines.¹⁴

This massive prison expansion was not due to rising crime rates. Statewide crime rates remain at the lowest level in a generation. Incarceration rates increased because of changes in state policy that increased the number of people sent to prison and the time they spend there. Over the past three decades, lawmakers in Illinois adopted stringent mandatory sentencing laws and policies that limit parole eligibility.

“The state cut programs in the prisons. Once you are released you are on your own and you are tagged with that label for the rest of your life.”

— BLACK MAN, VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME, CHICAGO

With the growth of prisons and decline of community-based crime prevention strategies, prisons and jails in Illinois have become the de facto service providers for individuals suffering from mental health issues. According to the Chicago Tribune, Illinois cut \$113.7 million in mental health services funding between 2009 and 2012 and Cook County Jail has since become the largest mental health provider in Illinois and even one of the largest in the country.¹⁵

With the tremendous investment in punishment and confinement as the primary safety strategy – recidivism remains at extremely high rates. According to a 2015 analysis conducted by the Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council, just one year of recidivism in Illinois costs the state more than \$3 billion.¹⁶

But criminal justice experts now agree that today’s levels of incarceration are not making us safer. In 2014 the National Academies of Sciences summarized the research on the causes and consequences of over incarceration and found that “long prison sentences are ineffective as a crime control measure.”¹⁷ Today, Illinois is joining a growing number of states that are reexamining their sentencing and corrections policies and taking steps to reduce crime and incarceration.

VICTIMS PREFER A JUSTICE SYSTEM THAT FOCUSES MORE ON REHABILITATION THAN PUNISHMENT

By a margin of nearly **3 to 1**, victims believe that prison makes people more likely to commit crimes than to rehabilitate them

More than half of all victims prefer that the criminal justice system focus more on rehabilitating people who commit crimes than punishing them

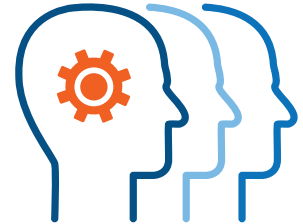
3 TO 1

PRISON MAKES PEOPLE MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT CRIMES



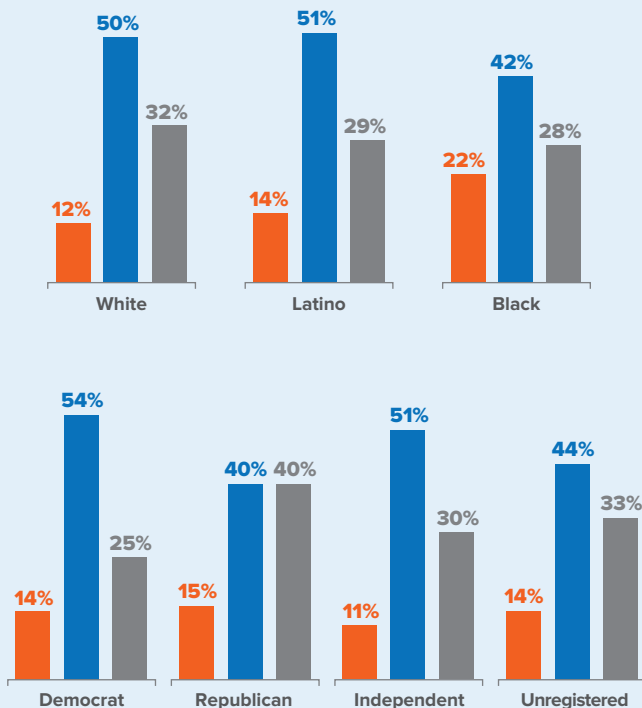
53%

PREFER FOCUSING ON REHABILITATION



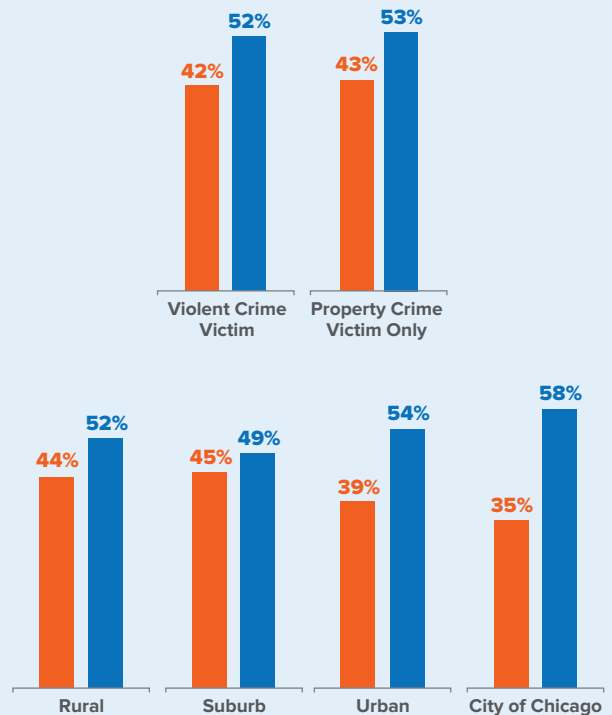
Thinking about people that go to prison, do you think prison...

- Helps to rehabilitate them into better citizens
- Makes them more likely to commit crimes
- Doesn't have an impact either way



Do you think Illinois should be more focused on...

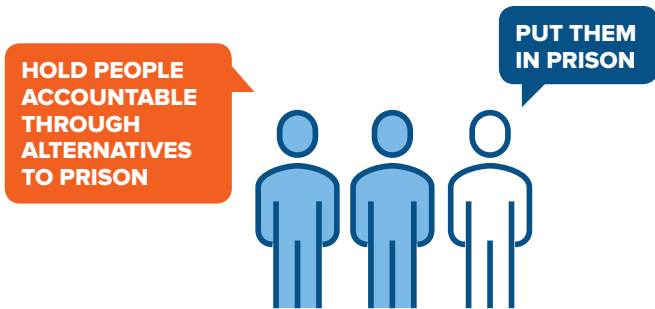
- Punishing people who commit crimes
- Rehabilitating people who commit crimes



VICTIMS PREFER ALTERNATIVES TO PRISON AND INVESTMENTS IN NEW SAFETY PRIORITIES

By a margin of **2 to 1**, victims prefer holding people who commit crimes accountable through alternatives to prison such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, or community service to putting them in prison

By a margin of **9 to 1**, victims think Illinois should invest more in schools and education rather than invest more in prisons and jails



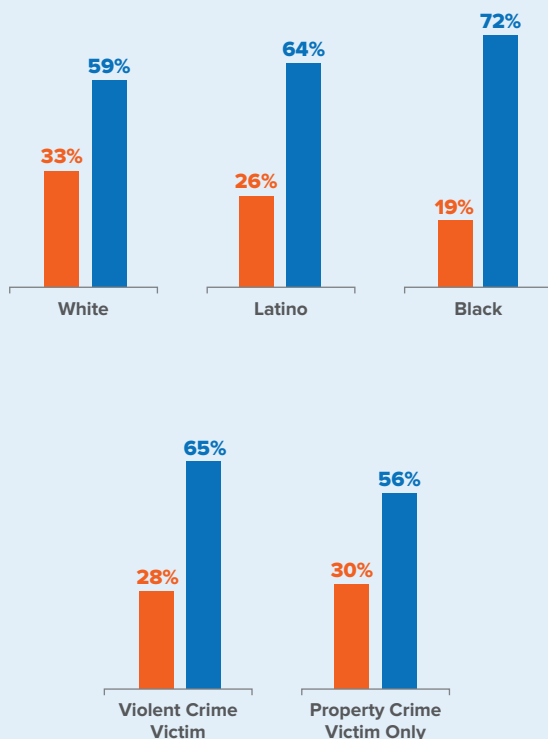
9 TO 1

INVEST MORE IN SCHOOLS



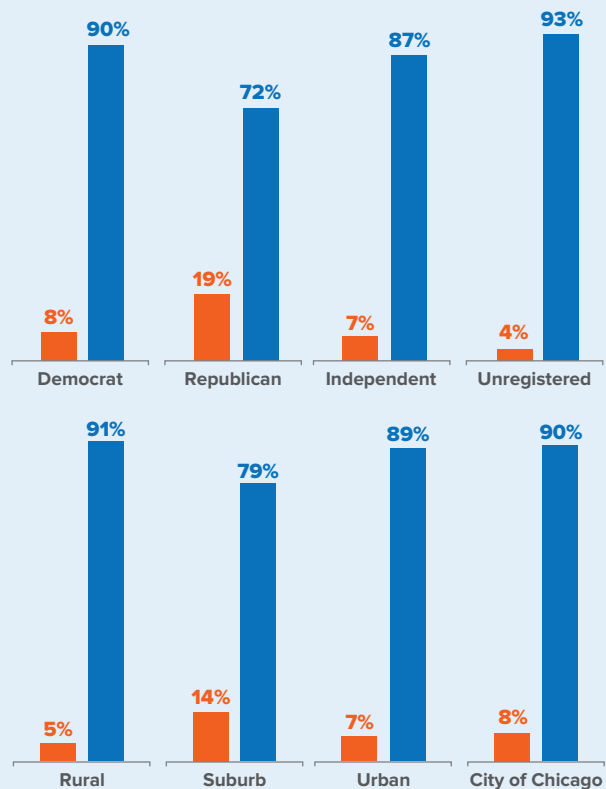
Which do you prefer as a way to hold people that commit crimes accountable?

- Putting them in prison
- Alternatives to prison such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, or community service



Do you think Illinois should...

- Invest more in prisons and jails
- Invest more in schools and education



VICTIMS PREFER SHORTER PRISON SENTENCES AND MORE SPENDING ON PREVENTION

7 out of 10 victims support shorter prison sentences and spending more on prevention and rehabilitation programs to prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible

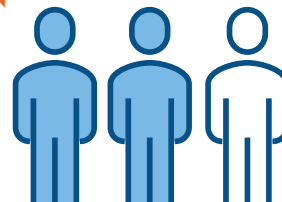
By a margin of 2 to 1, victims support reducing most sentence lengths for people in prison that are going to be released and reallocating these funds to crime prevention and rehabilitation

7 IN 10

- ✓ SHORTER SENTENCES
- ✓ PREVENTION & REHABILITATION

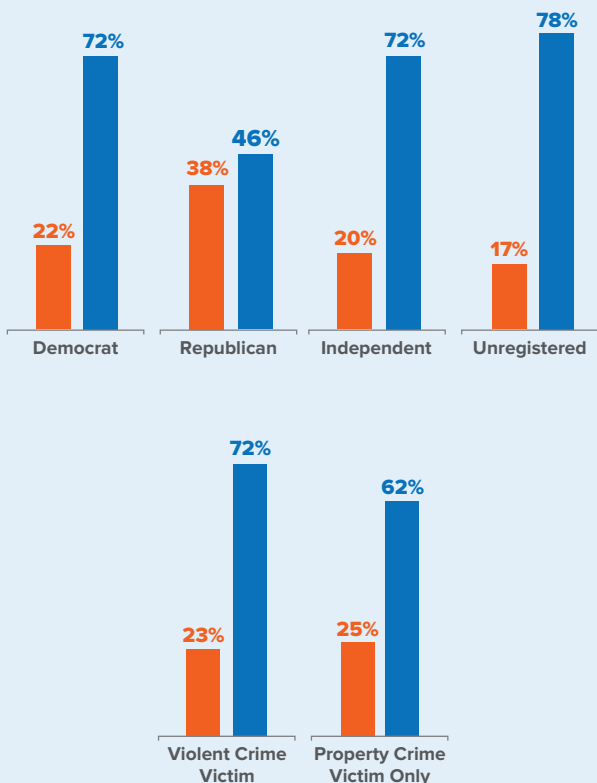


REDUCE SENTENCE LENGTHS AND REALLOCATE FUNDS TO PREVENTION



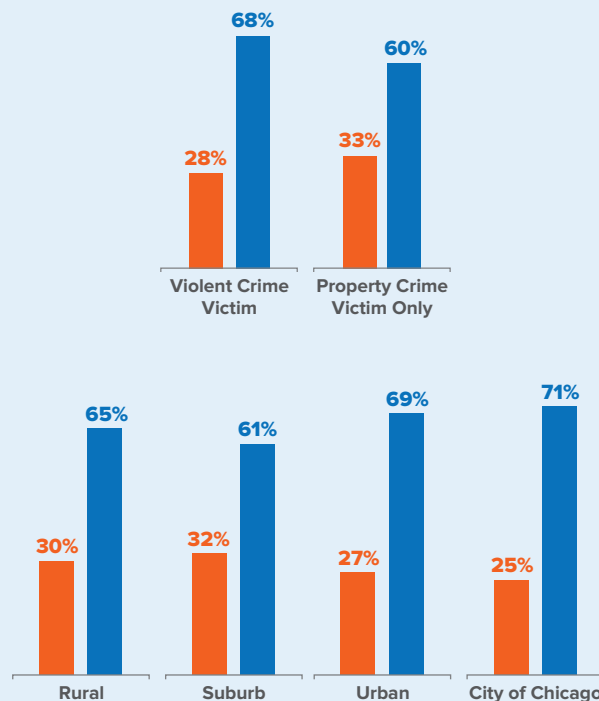
Which do you prefer...

- Prison sentences that keep people in prison for as long as possible
- Shorter prison sentences and spending more on prevention and rehabilitation programs



Do you support reducing most sentence lengths for people in prison that are going to be released, and reallocating these funds to crime prevention and rehabilitation?

- Oppose
- Support



VICTIMS PREFER PROSECUTORS FOCUS ON SOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS

8 out of 10 victims support prosecutors focusing on solving neighborhood problems and stopping repeat crimes through rehabilitation, even if it means fewer prison convictions, rather than getting as many convictions and prison sentences as possible.

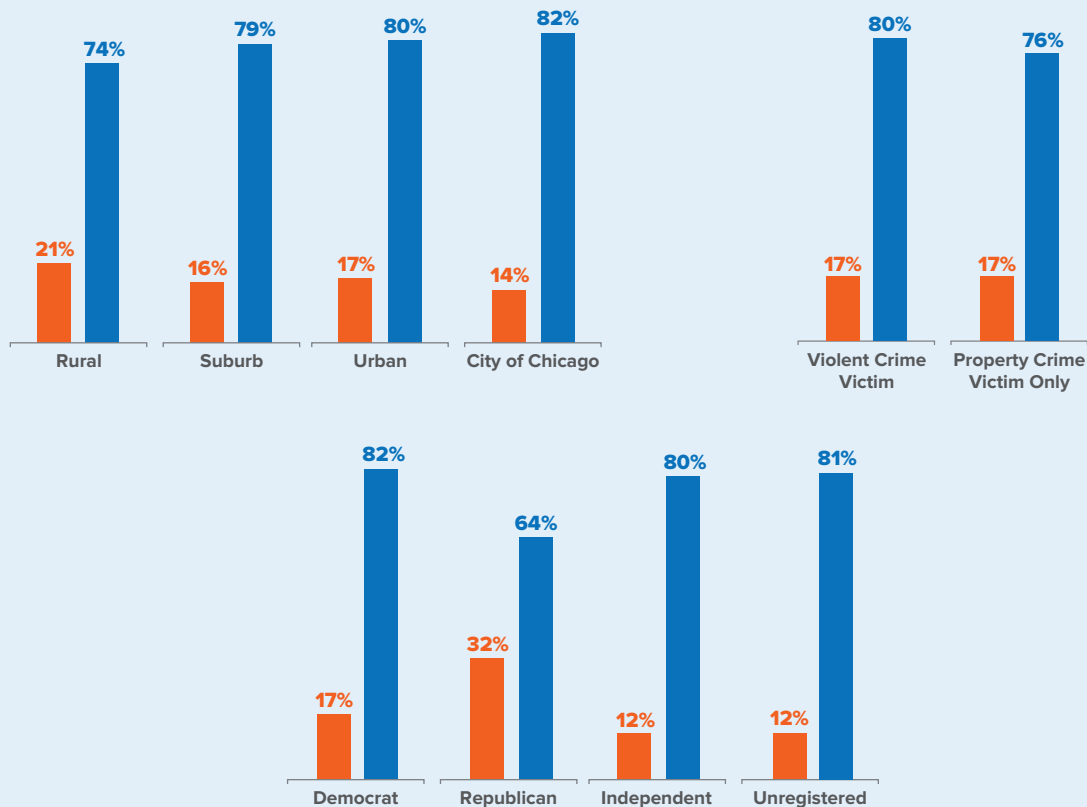
8 IN 10

- ✓ SOLVING NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS
- ✓ STOPPING CRIMES WITH REHABILITATION



Which would you prefer be the primary goal of prosecutors...

- Getting as many convictions and prison sentences as possible
- Solving neighborhood problems and stopping repeat crimes through rehabilitation



VICTIMS SUPPORT RESTORING JUDICIAL DISCRETION AND ALLOWING JUDGES TO DETERMINE THE MOST APPROPRIATE SENTENCE

By a margin of **2 to 1**, victims prefer allowing judges to decide the most appropriate sentence length in each case based on the circumstances of the individual and the crime rather than mandatory minimum laws passed by the state legislature that require judges to sentence people to minimum lengths for each category of crime.



2 TO 1

JUDGES DECIDE MOST APPROPRIATE SENTENCE

By a margin of **3 to 1**, victims prefer allowing judges to consider the individual circumstances and only add time to sentences for prior convictions when there are public safety concerns rather than automatically adding time to sentences for prior convictions no matter how old the conviction.



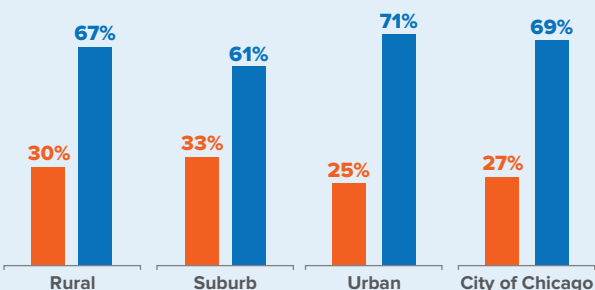
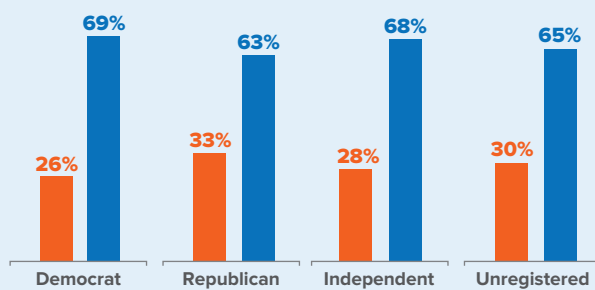
3 TO 1

JUDGES CONSIDER INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES



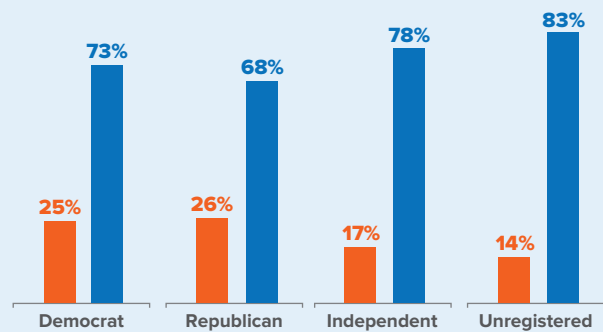
Which do you prefer...

- Mandatory minimum laws passed by the state legislature that require judges to sentence people to minimum lengths for each category of crime
- Allowing judges to decide the most appropriate sentence length in each case based on the circumstances of the individual and the crime



Which do you prefer...

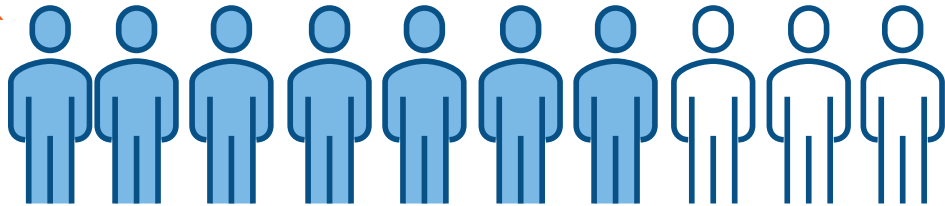
- Automatically add time to sentences for prior convictions, no matter how old the conviction
- Allow judges to consider individual circumstances and only add time to sentences for prior convictions when there are public safety concerns



VICTIMS BELIEVE TIME SERVED IN PRISON SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY THE RISK TO PUBLIC SAFETY AND REHABILITATION OF EACH INDIVIDUAL

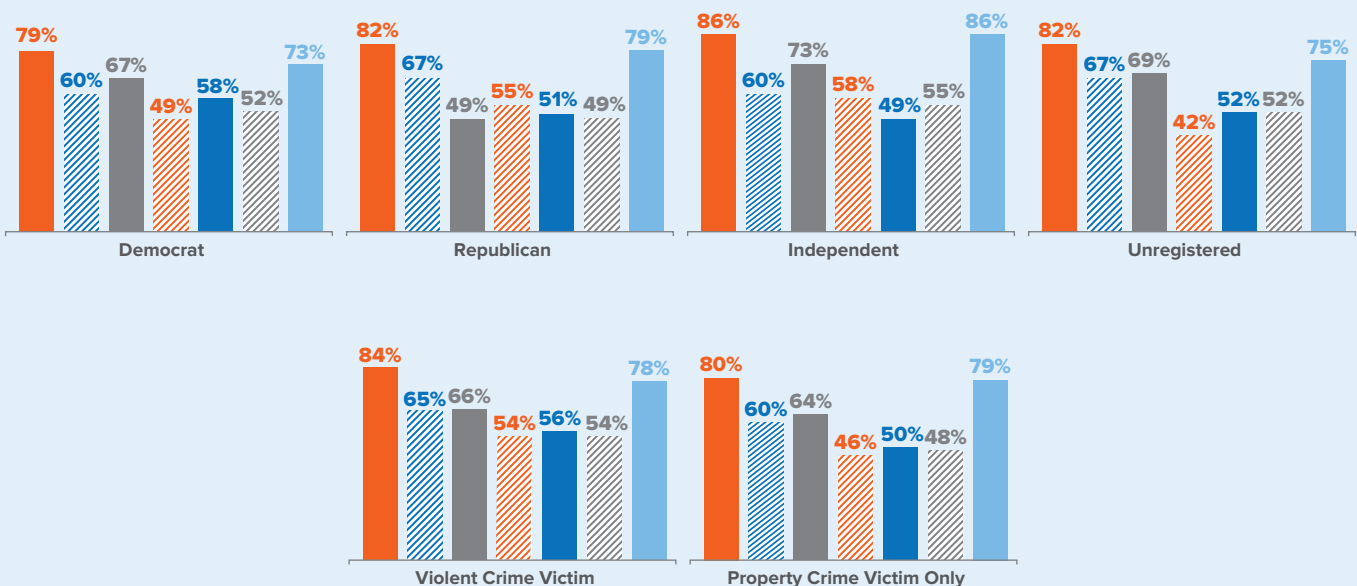
More than **7 out of 10** victims believe that the circumstances of the crime and how much of a the risk the person is to public safety based on a risk assessment test should be considered in determining the amount of time someone spends in prison. By a margin of 2 to 1, victims believe completing rehabilitation programs and maintaining good behavior in prison should be considered in determining how much time someone spends in prison.

RISK TO PUBLIC SAFETY SHOULD DETERMINE TIME SERVED IN PRISON



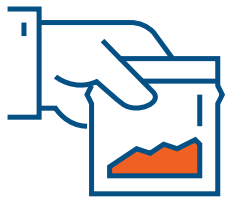
Which of the following do you think should be allowed to be considered in determining how much time someone spends in prison?

- The circumstances of the crime
- The background of the person who committed the crime
- If the person completed rehabilitation programs and maintained good behavior in prison
- The preferences of the victim of the crime
- The age of the person that committed the crime
- The number of years in prison the person has already served
- How much of a risk the person is to public safety based on a risk assessment test



VICTIMS SUPPORT REDUCING PUNISHMENTS FOR LESS SERIOUS DRUG OFFENSES

By a margin of **4 to 1** victims support authorizing shorter sentences for nonviolent drug sales crimes when the amount of the drugs is small.

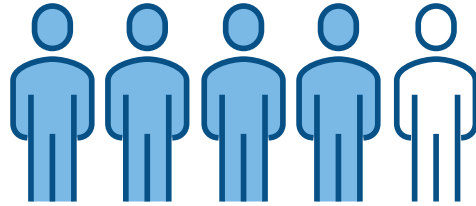


4 TO 1

SHORTER SENTENCES FOR NONVIOLENT DRUG SALES CRIMES

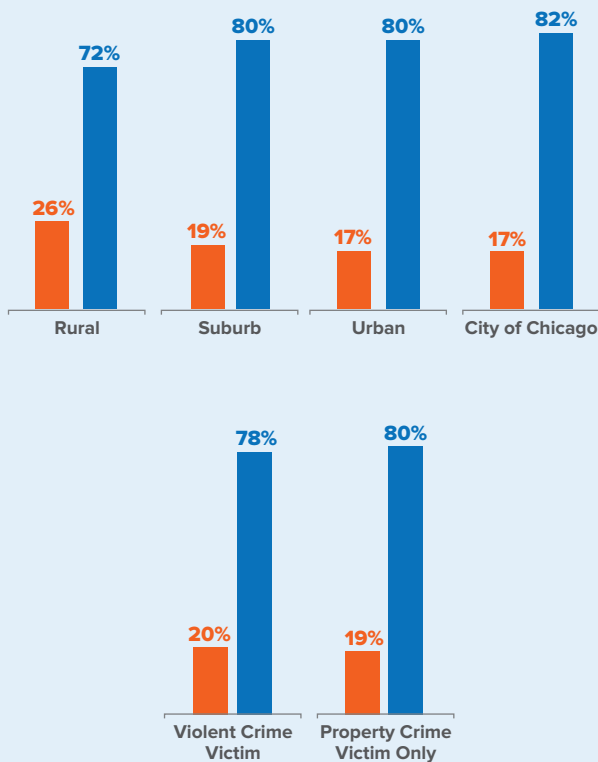
By a margin of **4 to 1**, victims support reclassifying crimes as misdemeanors instead of felonies for certain nonviolent crimes such as simple drug possession.

REQUIRE MISDEMEANORS FOR DRUG POSSESSION



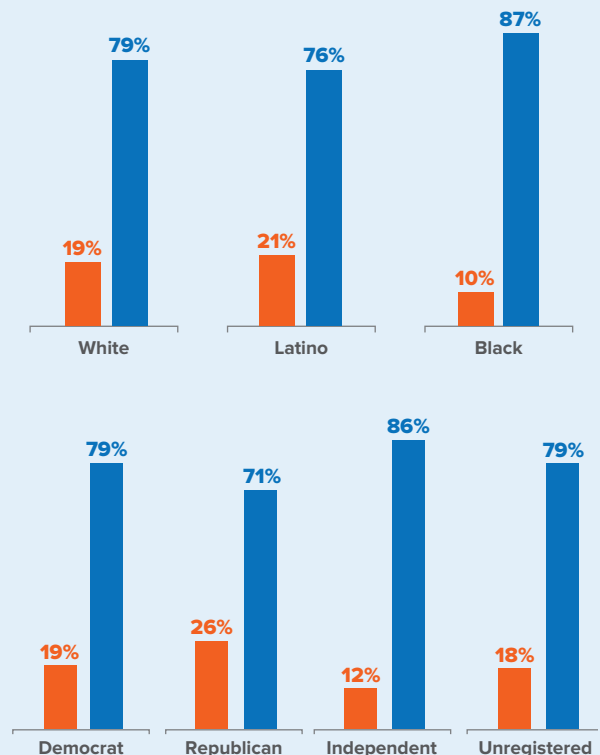
Do you support authorizing shorter sentences for nonviolent drug sales crimes when the amount of drugs is small?

Oppose
Support



Do you support requiring misdemeanors instead of felonies for certain nonviolent crimes such as simple drug possession?

Oppose
Support



VICTIMS SUPPORT PAROLE CONSIDERATION FOR LOW RISK, AGING INMATES

By a margin of **3 to 1**, victims support authorizing parole consideration for people that are 55 years old or older, have already served 10 or more years of their sentence, and pose little risk to public safety



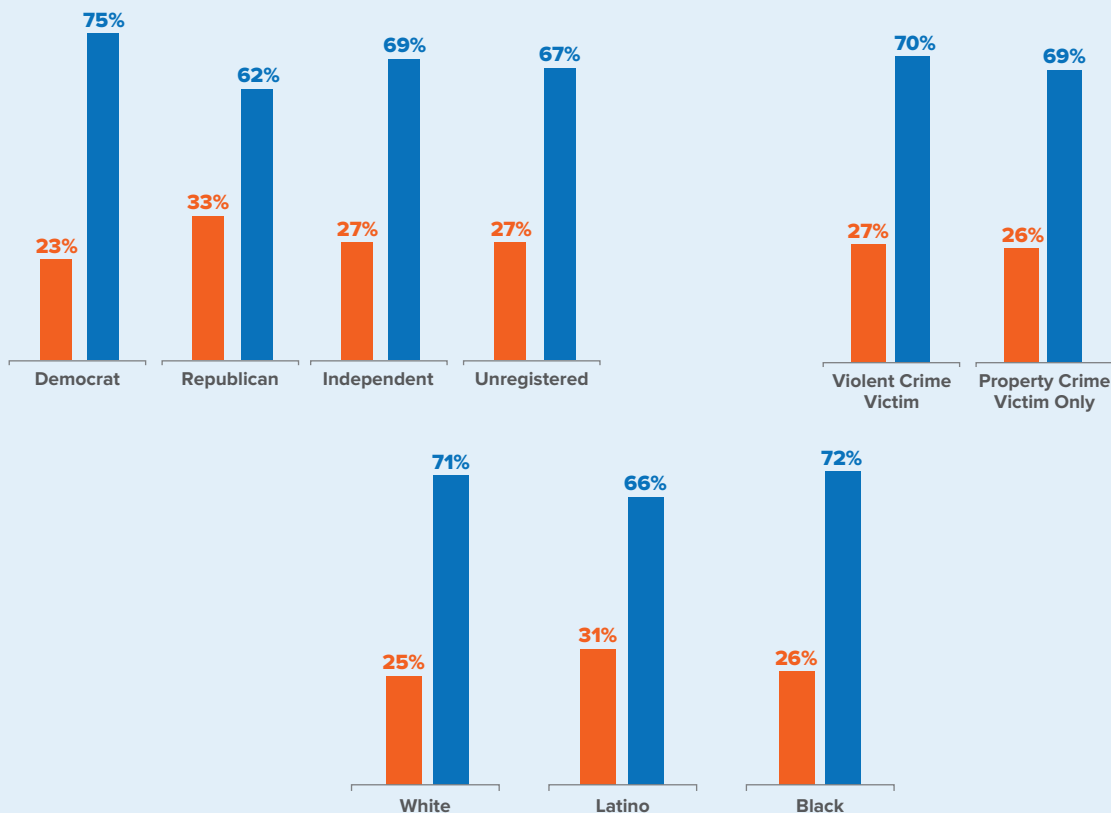
3 TO 1

PAROLE FOR LOW RISK,
AGING INMATES



Do you support authorizing parole consideration for people that are 55 years old or older, have already served ten or more years of their sentence, and pose little risk to public safety.

■ Oppose
■ Support



VICTIMS SUPPORT APPLYING POLICY REFORMS RETROACTIVELY

By a margin of **3 to 1**, victims believe that when lawmakers change laws to shorten sentences for certain crimes we should allow people currently in prison to be resentenced if a judge determines the shorter sentence poses little risk to public safety.



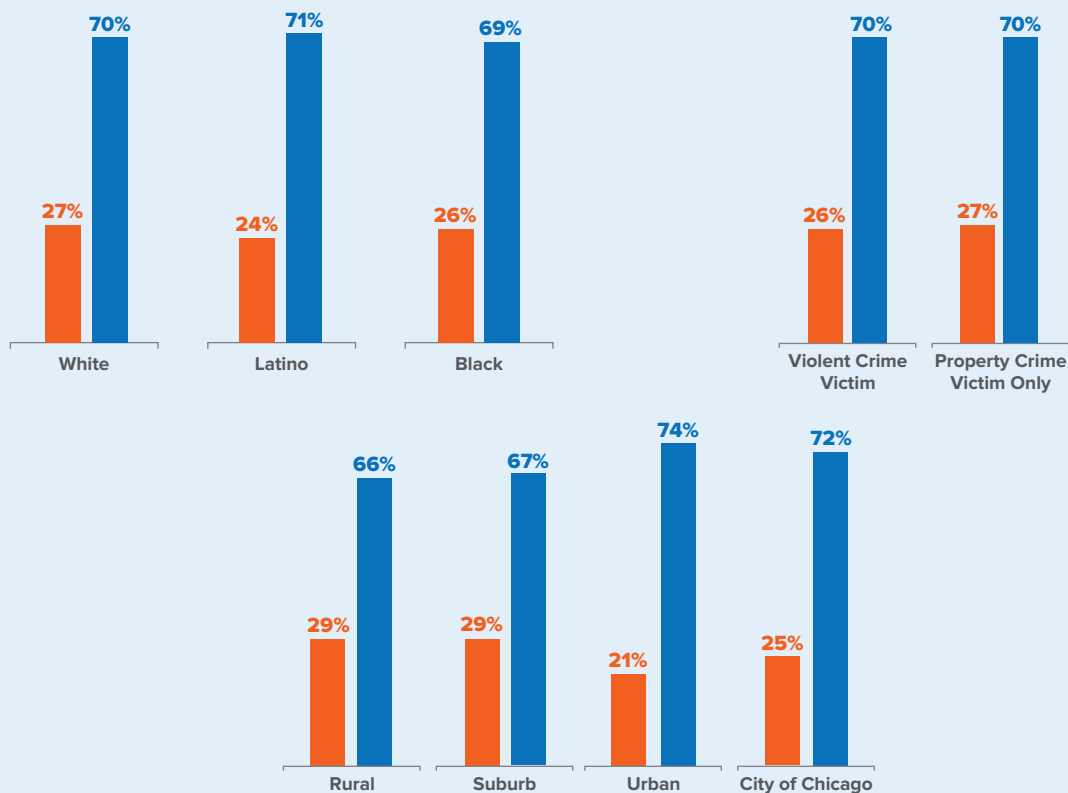
3 TO 1

WHEN LAWS CHANGE, RETROACTIVELY GRANT SHORTER SENTENCES



When lawmakers change laws to shorten sentences for certain crimes, do you support allowing people currently in prison to be resentenced if a judge determines the shorter sentence poses little risk to public safety?

- Oppose
- Support





THE ILLINOIS STATE COMMISSION ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SENTENCING REFORM

The Illinois State Commission on Criminal Justice and Sentencing Reform (Commission) was created in response to Illinois' growing prison population and poor public safety returns. The goal of the Commission is to make recommendations for sentencing and policy reform that will reduce the prison population by 25 percent while improving public safety. In 2015 the Commission produced its first detailed set of recommendations including reclassification of certain non-serious offenses and increased access to high quality, effective diversion programs. A number of advocates and organizations have now mobilized in the state to deliver on these recommendations, which include the following:

- ✓ **Provide incentives and support for the establishment of local Criminal Justice Coordinating Councils to develop strategic plans to address crime and corrections policy;**
- ✓ **Require all state agencies that provide funding for criminal justice programs to evaluate those programs and eliminate those programs for which there is insufficient evidence of effectiveness;**
- ✓ **Prevent the use of prison for felonies with short lengths of stay;**
- ✓ **Give judges the discretion to determine whether probation may be appropriate for certain low level, non-violent offenses;**
- ✓ **Expand eligibility for programming credits. Allow all inmates to be eligible to earn programming credits for successfully completing rehabilitative programming, with the exception of credits that would reduce a sentence below Truth-in-Sentencing limits;**
- ✓ **Ensure that use of adult transition centers is informed by the risk-and-needs research and evidence, which shows that residential transitional facilities, paired with appropriate programming, should be primarily reserved for high and medium risk offenders;**
- ✓ **Develop a protocol to provide for the placement to home confinement or a medical facility for terminally ill or severely incapacitated inmates, excluding those sentenced to natural life.**

The Commission's second set of recommendations will be released in the coming months and should build on its prior recommendations for reducing over-incarceration and improving public safety.



RECOMMENDATIONS

“

Programs have been divested from in the communities and the environment in the community is uninspiring.

— BLACK WOMAN, VICTIM OF CRIME, CHICAGO

”

Results of this first-of-its-kind study point to numerous policy recommendations and criminal justice reforms supported by crime victims in Illinois. As state leaders debate the future of justice policy in the state, the perspective of diverse victims can help guide the conversation and offer a balanced approach to safety and justice policy.

Our survey demonstrates that (1) too many victims suffer from trauma with no help from the criminal justice

system; (2) victims prefer shorter sentences and more spending on prevention and treatment to long prison sentences; (3) victims support policies that restore judicial discretion, utilize risk and needs assessment in decision-making, and reduce the use of prison for less serious crimes such as drug possession.

These findings point to several recommendations that align with crime victims' views on safety and justice policy:

1

CONDUCT REGULAR VICTIMIZATION STUDIES IN ILLINOIS.

More data and research is needed to advance policies that are responsive to and effectively meet victims' needs. By regularly surveying victims, the state can best identify the policies and practices that will best protect victims, stop the cycle of crime, and help survivors recover from victimization.

2

INVEST IN EVIDENCE-BASED SERVICES THAT PROTECT VICTIMS AND STOP THE CYCLE OF CRIME, SUCH AS THOSE PROVIDED BY TRAUMA RECOVERY CENTERS.

A growing body of research demonstrates that untreated trauma, especially among those who experience repeat victimization, can contribute to substance abuse, mental health issues, housing instability, and other problems that increase risky behaviors and lead to further victimization or crime itself. Trauma recovery centers, and other programs that provide wraparound services, can stop this cycle by providing access to treatment, referrals, and other forms of assistance.

3

TARGET VICTIMS' SERVICES FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE BEEN MOST HARMED BY CRIME AND LEAST SUPPORTED BY THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

Illinois received \$88 million in Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding from the federal government in 2016. These dollars should go to programs that provide services to vulnerable populations and communities experiencing concentrated crime and violence.

4

ADVANCE SENTENCING AND CORRECTIONS POLICIES THAT MORE CLOSELY ALIGN WITH CRIME VICTIMS' PRIORITIES.

Many of the failed “tough-on-crime” policies that led to Illinois’ massive prison expansion were adopted under the premise that victims wanted harsher punishments. These survey results paint a much different picture and show overwhelming victim support for policies that replace over-incarceration with investments in new safety priorities that improve community health. Below are just some of the policies that Illinois could adopt to reduce overcrowding in prison and invest in programs that support victims:

- ✔ Tailor sentence lengths to public safety needs and restore judicial discretion in deciding when it is necessary to hand down long sentences;
- ✔ Incentivize participation in programs that reduce recidivism by expanding the ability of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) to provide earned-time credits to prisoners who successfully complete rehabilitation programs while in prison;
- ✔ Expand the power of judges to sentence people to community supervision and/or mental health and addiction treatment instead of incarceration when appropriate and allow judges to determine when and how to consider prior offenses that are more than 10 years old;
- ✔ Prioritize successful reentry of people returning from prison by tailoring the terms of mandatory supervised release to their risks and needs;
- ✔ Reduce the number of people sent to prison for technical violations of parole by adopting graduated sanctions;
- ✔ Give judges the power to sentence people to probation instead of prison when it is more appropriate.



METHODOLOGY

Alliance for Safety and Justice commissioned this survey to fill in gaps in the knowledge about who crime victims are, what their experiences are with the criminal justice system, and their views on public policy.

Some of the questions were informed by the largest and most comprehensive source of data on victimization — the annual National Crime Victimization Survey, administered by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics. This survey expands on questions related to the prevalence of victimization by deeply exploring victims’ experience with the criminal justice system, their views on sentencing and corrections policy, and their preferences related to law enforcement, prosecution, and incarceration. This study also builds on the first-ever national survey of victims’ views, commissioned by Alliance for Safety and Justice in April 2016.

David Binder Research conducted the survey in English and Spanish in July 2016. The poll was administered both by telephone — landlines and mobile phones — and online. The research methodology was designed to ensure the inclusion of harder-to-reach demographic groups, such as young people and people with less housing stability. Respondents self identified as victims and provided the types of crimes they have experienced in the past 10 years.

Furthermore, David Binder Research oversampled people who identify as black or Latino to ensure that their voices would be adequately represented in the survey. As a result, these findings reflect the opinions of a broad and

diverse Illinois: All ages 18+, all racial and ethnic groups, and all geographic locations are represented.

As part of this research, Alliance for Safety and Justice and David Binder Research also conducted focus groups with crime survivors from Chicago and Peoria. Five total focus groups were conducted with victims from diverse backgrounds including downstate crimes survivors of domestic violence and victims of gun violence and other violent crimes in Chicago. These focus groups were conducted with people across different racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and genders.

A common challenge in victimization research is the reluctance of people to discuss their victimization with a researcher. For reasons relating to the social stigma of being a crime victim and associated data collection challenges, it can be difficult to identify sufficient respondents in victimization research. For this reason the Illinois Survey of Victims’ Views used a 10-year reference period. However, just as many crimes are not reported to the police, some crime is not reported to researchers. Like NCVS and other victim surveys, the Illinois Survey of Victims Views likely does not capture the total number of crimes experienced by those surveyed. While David Binder Research informed people that their personal information is kept confidential and used for research purposes only, we anticipate that respondents may have under-reported their victimization in this survey.

The overall margin of error for the Illinois Survey of Victims’ Views is 2.2 percent, while the margin of error for crime victims is 3.9 percent.

ENDNOTES

¹ United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics' *Prisoners Series*: <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbse&sid=40>

² David Binder Research is a public opinion research firm with more than 20 years of experience in all types of research, from focus groups to surveys to online research, on behalf of clients ranging from businesses to government agencies to nonprofit organizations.

³ Quotes throughout this report are from focus groups conducted with crime survivors in Chicago and Peoria. David Binder Research facilitated these interviews with victims of a wide range of crimes including domestic violence and gun violence. Five total focus groups were conducted with people across different racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and genders.

⁴ United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Crime in the United States, 2015," September 2016.

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/11/01/chicago-surpasses-600-homicides-in-2016-and-is-on-pace-to-have-its-deadliest-year-in-two-decades/>

⁶ Weisel, Deborah Lamm. "Analyzing Repeat Victimization," Center for Problem Oriented Policing, 2005.

⁷ Truman, Jennifer L., Ph.D.; Morgan, Rachel E., Ph.D. "Criminal Victimization, 2015," Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, August 2015 (National Crime Victimization Survey).

⁸ United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Crime in the United States, 2015," September 2016.

⁹ Kilpatrick, Dean G.; Acierno, Ron. "Mental Health Needs of Crime Victims: Epidemiology and Outcomes," *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol. 16, November 2003.

¹⁰ Alliance for Safety and Justice. "Crime Survivors Speak: The First-Ever National Survey of Victims' Views on Safety and Justice," August 2016.

¹¹ Truman, Jennifer L., Ph.D.; Morgan, Rachel E., Ph.D. "Criminal Victimization, 2015," Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, August 2015 (National Crime Victimization Survey).

¹² United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics' *Prisoners Series* <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbse&sid=40>

¹³ National Association of State Budget Officers' *State Expenditure Reports*: <https://www.nasbo.org/publications-data/state-expenditure-report/archives>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/daily-southtown/opinion/ct-sta-kadner-mental-st-0529-20150528-story.html>

¹⁶ Illinois Sentencing Policy Advisory Council. "The High Cost of Recidivism, 2015," Summer 2015.

¹⁷ National Research Council. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*, Committee on Causes and Consequences of High Rates of Incarceration, J. Travis, B. Western, S. Redburn, Committee on Law and Justice, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, April 2014.

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