

To: All Interested Parties
From: Brian Larkin – McLaughlin & Associates
Re: National Survey of Likely Voters about Proposed Reforms to the Justice System – Survey Summary

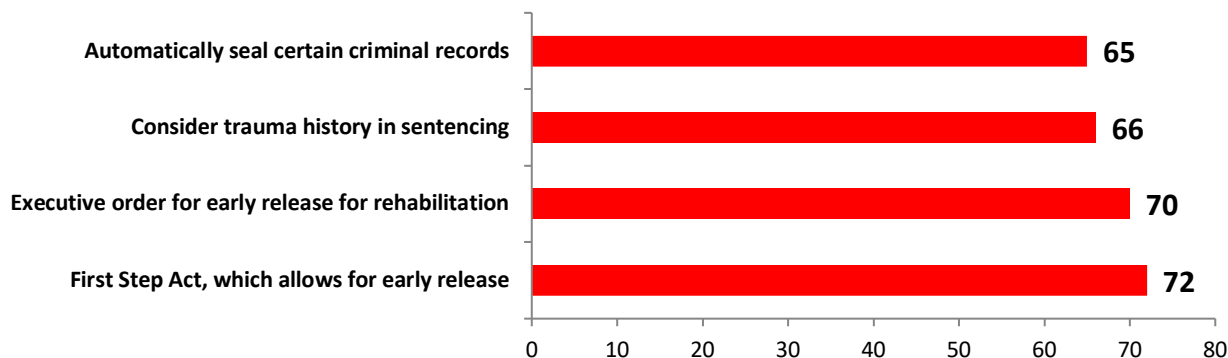
Survey of Likely Voters Shows Strong Support for Reforms to the Criminal Justice System

McLaughlin and Associates conducted a survey of likely voters across the US and found strong majorities support changes to the criminal justice system. One thousand voters were asked about their level of support for four criminal justice reforms. Voters expressed strong support for reforms across political divisions and expressed especially strong support for policies that allow for the early release of incarcerated people who complete programs shown to reduce crime.

Supermajorities of likely voters support all four polled reforms

1. 65% of likely voters supported “proposed state laws to automatically seal certain criminal records after a set period of time has passed with no criminal activity.”
2. 66% supported “providing judges with authority to consider prior histories of extreme trauma and victimization for combat veterans or victims of domestic violence and human trafficking who then go on to commit crime, and sentence these people to reduced sentences and proven PTSD therapy.”
3. 70% supported “a proposed federal executive order that would encourage states to offer earlier release to incarcerated people who complete proven rehabilitation programs.”
4. 72% supported “The First Step Act, which is a federal law passed in 2018 during President Trump's administration. It allows people in prison to earn earlier release by completing programs shown to reduce crime.”

Percent of Likely Voters Who Support Each Proposed Reform

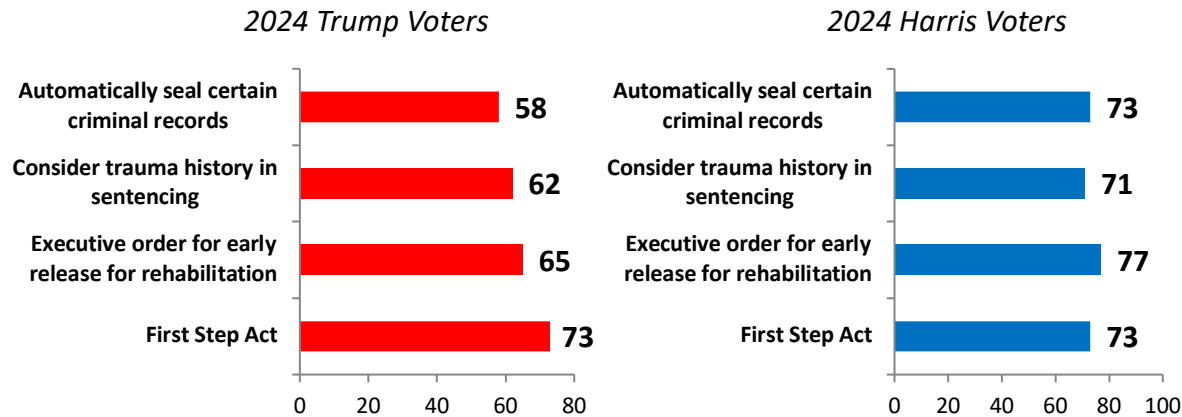


Majorities support reforms across political affiliations

Likely voters support these proposed reforms across political affiliation. Decisive majorities of people who voted for

Donald Trump in the 2024 Presidential Election support these proposed policies, as do decisive majorities of people who voted for Kamala Harris.

Percent of Likely Voters Who Support Each Proposed Reform, by 2024 Presidential Vote

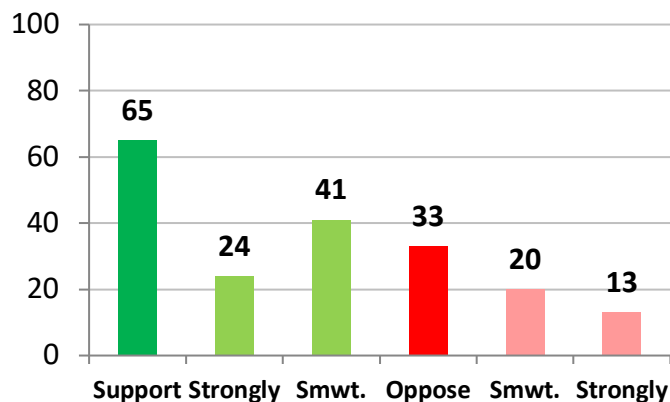


Question-level summaries:

Each of the four proposed policies was preceded by this prompt: “Some federal and state leaders are proposing reforms to the criminal justice system. Knowing this, do you support or oppose the following:”

1. Proposed state laws to automatically seal certain criminal records after a set period of time has passed with no criminal activity. Sealed records would still be visible to law enforcement, but would not appear in most background checks for jobs or housing.

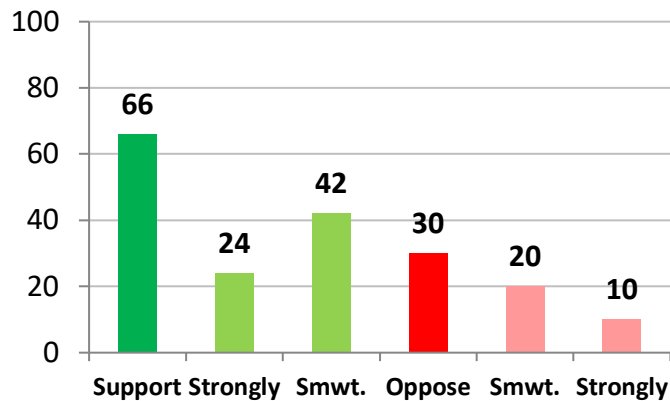
Detailed Support or Opposition among Likely Voters for Automatic Sealing of Certain Criminal Records



Takeaway: By a two-to-one margin, likely voters support proposals to automatically seal certain criminal records

2. Providing judges with authority to consider prior histories of extreme trauma and victimization for combat veterans or victims of domestic violence and human trafficking who then go on to commit crime, and sentence these people to reduced sentences and proven PTSD therapy.

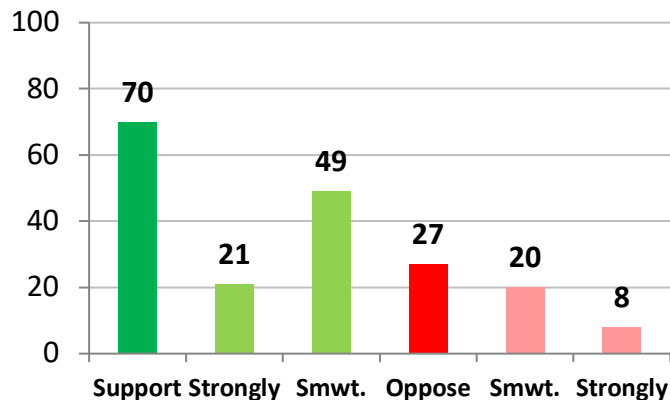
Detailed Support or Opposition among Likely Voters for Providing Judges Trauma Histories and Reduced Sentencing Options



Takeaway: Two-thirds of likely voters support policies that would allow judges to consider prior histories of trauma and victimization and impose reduced sentences.

3. A proposed federal executive order that would encourage states to offer earlier release to incarcerated people who complete proven rehabilitation programs

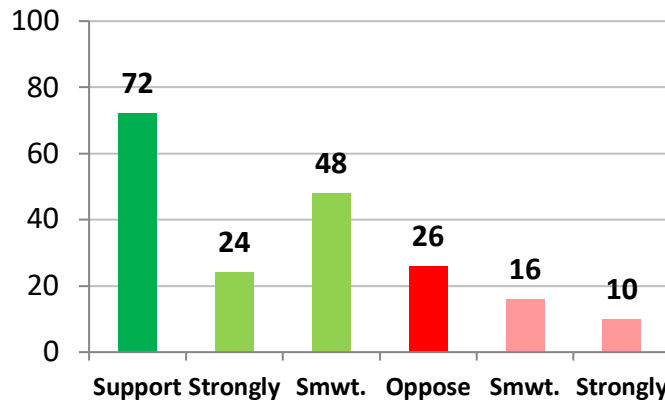
Detailed Support or Opposition among Likely Voters for Executive Order to Encourage Earned Credit Policies



Takeaway: Seven-in-ten likely voters support policies that allow for earlier release of people who complete rehabilitation programs.

4. The First Step Act, which is a federal law passed in 2018 during President Trump's administration. It allows people in prison to earn earlier release by completing programs shown to reduce crime.

Detailed Support or Opposition among Likely Voters for First Step Act



Takeaway: Nearly three out of four likely voters support the First Step Act after learning that it allows people in prison to earn earlier release for completing rehabilitation programs.

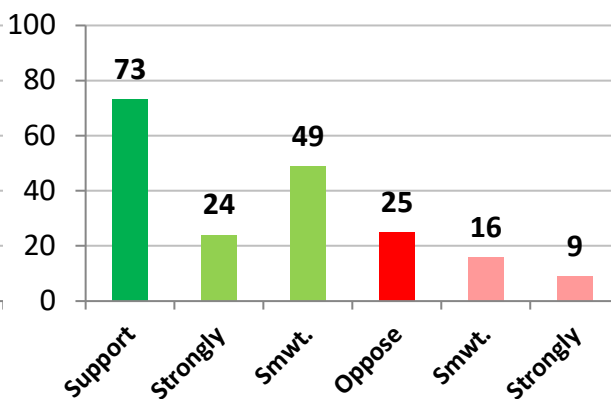
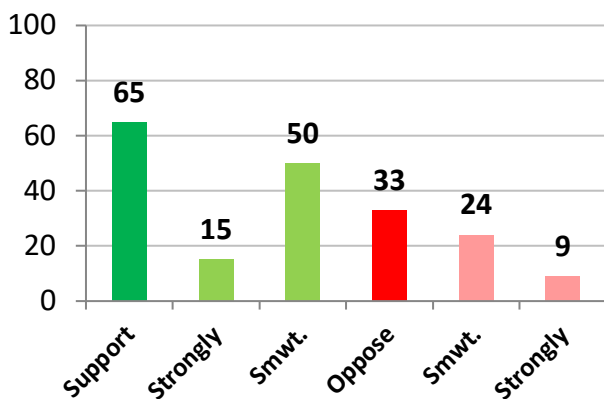
Likely voters across the political spectrum support earned credit policies

Two questions that asked about support for earned credit-like policies received particularly high levels of support from voters across the political spectrum. This survey described the First Step Act as a federal law that “allows people in prison to earn earlier release by completing programs shown to reduce crime.” It also asked about a proposed executive order that would encourage states to offer early release to people who complete rehabilitation programs. This section shows support for earned credit policies across political affiliation.

People who voted for Trump in the 2024 Presidential Election Support Earned Credit Policies

Trump Voters: Earned Credit Executive Order

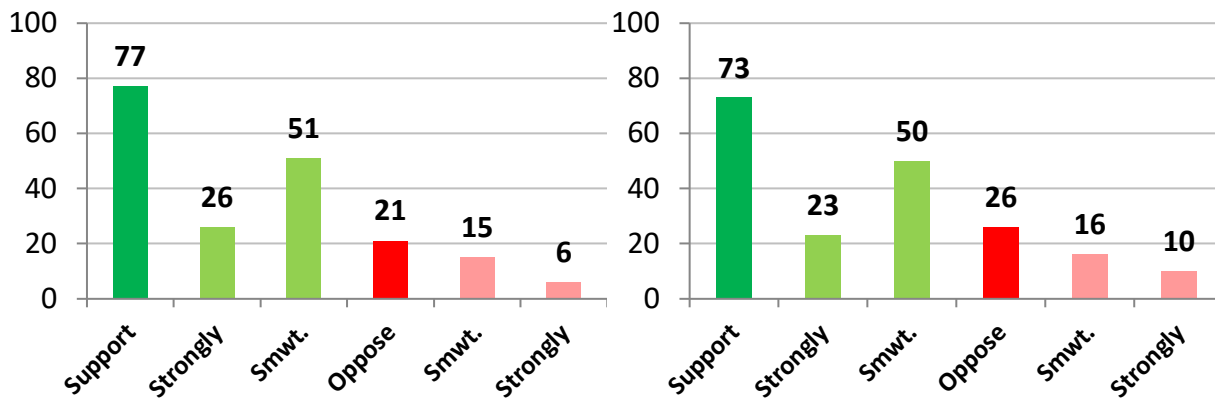
Trump Voters: First Step Act



People who voted for Harris in the 2024 Presidential Election Also Support Earned Credit Policies

Harris Voters: Earned Credit Executive Order

Harris Voters: First Step Act



Methodology:

McLaughlin & Associates conducted a national online survey of 1,000 likely voters from May 5 – 12, 2025, on behalf of the Alliance for Safety and Justice. A personalized text message invitation was sent to each respondent to complete the survey on a secure online platform. Interview selection was random and interviews were stratified by area, race/ethnicity, age, gender and vote history to correlate with actual voter turnout from previous even-year elections. In order to qualify for this survey, respondents had to indicate that they are likely to vote in U.S. Senate and House elections. The survey includes 468 participants who voted for Donald Trump in the 2024 Presidential Election and 451 participants who voted for Kamala Harris. This survey of 1,000 likely voters has an accuracy of +/- 3.1% at a 95% confidence interval. The error margin increases for cross-tabulations. Totals may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding errors.

Suggested citation:

McLaughlin & Associates (June 2025), *Survey of Likely Voters Shows Strong Support for Reforms to the Criminal Justice System*, Alliance for Safety and Justice, <https://justsafe.org/resources/mclaughlin-survey-of-likely-voters-shows-strong-support-for-reforms-to-the-criminal-justice-system>.