



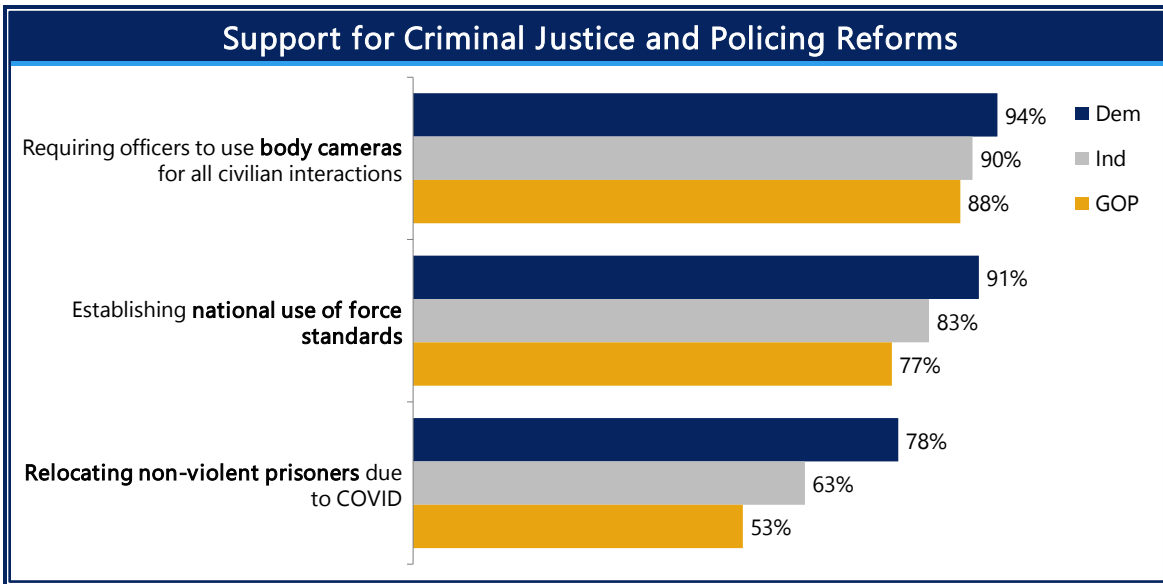
**TO** Dream Corps #cut50 and Justice Action Network  
**FROM** Chris Anderson and Andrew Schwartz, Beacon Research  
 Daron Shaw, Shaw & Company Research  
**DATE** July 31, 2020  
**SUBJECT** Key Findings from National Poll on Criminal Justice Reform

This document presents key findings from a recent national poll of 1,504 registered voters conducted under the joint direction of Beacon Research (D) and Shaw & Company (R). The survey was conducted July 23-27, 2020 by live interviewers calling a mix of landlines and cellphones. Results for the full sample have a margin of error of  $\pm 3$  percentage points. Results were weighted to match the demographics of the national electorate. Fully 82% of respondents indicated they were extremely likely to vote this fall; another 11% said they were very likely to do so.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Voters nationally view the criminal justice system as failing and support a wide range of reform measures. **An overwhelming majority of Americans across every conceivable divide want to see policing and justice reform, making this a rare area of bipartisan agreement between Republicans and Democrats.**

This bipartisan agreement extends to a range of specific policing reforms, as well as emergency measures to stop the spread of the COVID-19 in prisons.



The failures of the criminal justice system are viewed as most acute when it comes to dealing with addiction, mental illness and homelessness. Agreement that the criminal justice system is failing in its handling of these issues is bipartisan, and voters overwhelmingly believe that police alone should not be relied upon to deal with calls related to these issues.

Criminal justice and policing reform, and handling of COVID-19 in prisons are issues with potentially strong implications for the election this fall, as majorities of Democrats and Republicans say they are more likely to vote for Congressional candidates who champion criminal justice reform and to oppose those who block reform.

## BASELINE VIEWS ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

A 53% majority of voters believes the overall criminal justice system in America is failing. Even more see failures by the criminal justice system when it comes to rehabilitation (60%), dealing with those struggling with drug addiction (64%), mental illness (64%), and homelessness (64%).

On the most fundamental level, less than half (47%) say the system succeeds in keeping communities safe.

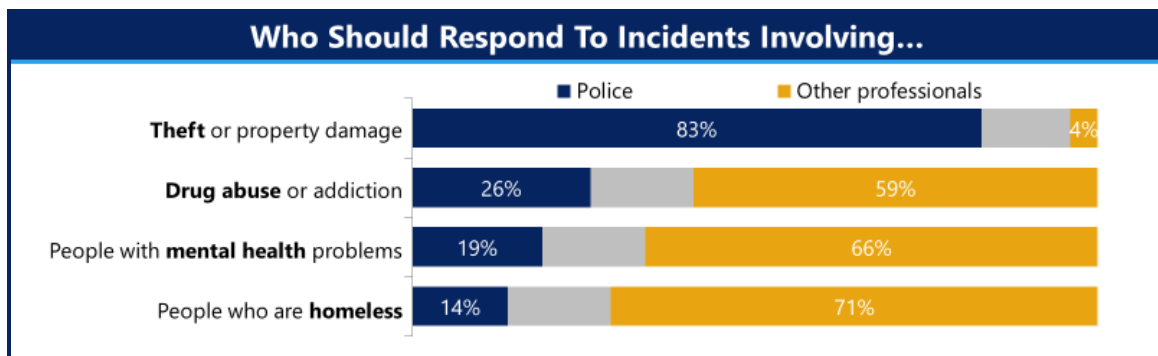
## VIEWS ON POLICE AND POLICING

Voters have largely positive views of their local police (78% favorable), but at the same time want to see consequences for officers who use excessive force or fail to intervene when it's occurring.

- Almost all voters (94%) say officers should have a duty to intervene when another officer is using force inappropriately
- Three-quarters (75%) think officers found to have used excessive force should be fired
- Two-thirds (65%) think officers fired for excessive force should never be allowed to work in law enforcement again
- Eight-in-ten (81%) believe officers should be liable in civil court when they violate civilians' constitutional rights

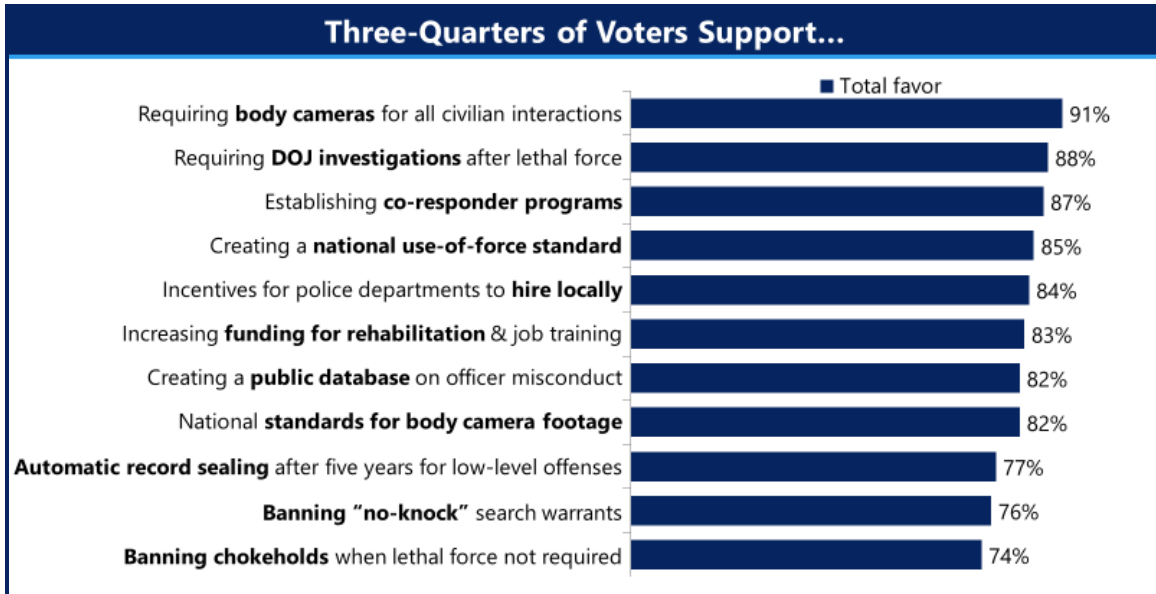
A majority of voters in every demographic group – whether by age, gender, ethnicity, education, region, or party identification – share these views.

Large majorities of voters would also like to see a non-police response to some issues typically handled by police, such as drug abuse, mental health problems and homelessness.



## WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR REFORMS

In the face of a system they believe is failing, voters back a wide range of criminal justice reform measures – most by overwhelming majorities.



Support for these reforms is both broad and intense. Each is backed by at least 80% of Democrats, two-thirds of independents, and two-thirds of Republicans. Moreover, majorities *strongly* support each proposal – and for each, strong support outweighs the totality of opposition by better than 30 points.

While each of these proposals is remarkably popular with the electorate at large, they tend to get the strongest support from women (especially college-educated white women and suburban women), voters of color, and those with college degrees.

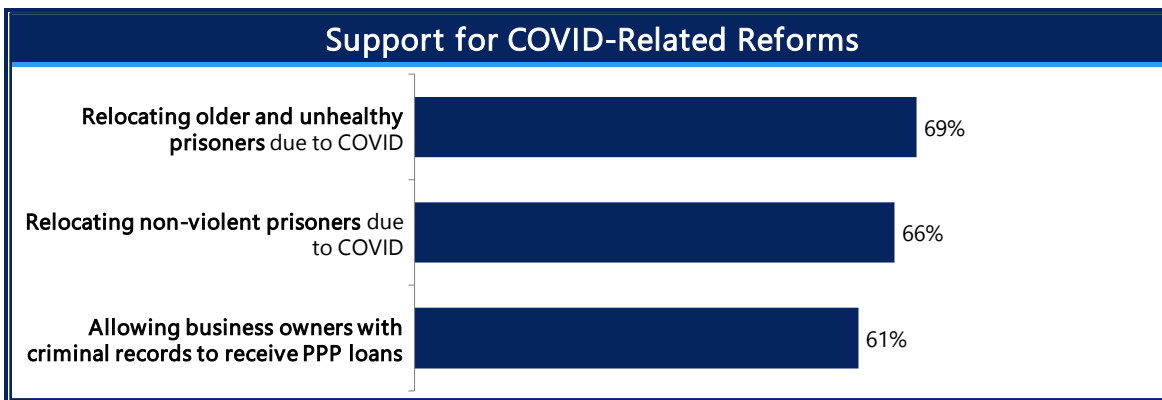
These reforms also have the backing of law enforcement professionals themselves. Better than 70% of voters in households with someone who works in law enforcement favor each of these reforms.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND COVID

Given the risks of coronavirus transmission in jails and prisons, two-thirds (66%) approve of moving non-violent prisoners out of prison and into alternative programs. Similarly, 69% approve of moving prisoners over age 60 who pose no threat into home detention.

Six-in-ten Republicans (59%) favor moving older prisoners into home detention, as do 65% of independents and 78% of Democrats. In the same vein, the idea has the backing of 60% of Trump supporters and 79% of Biden supporters.

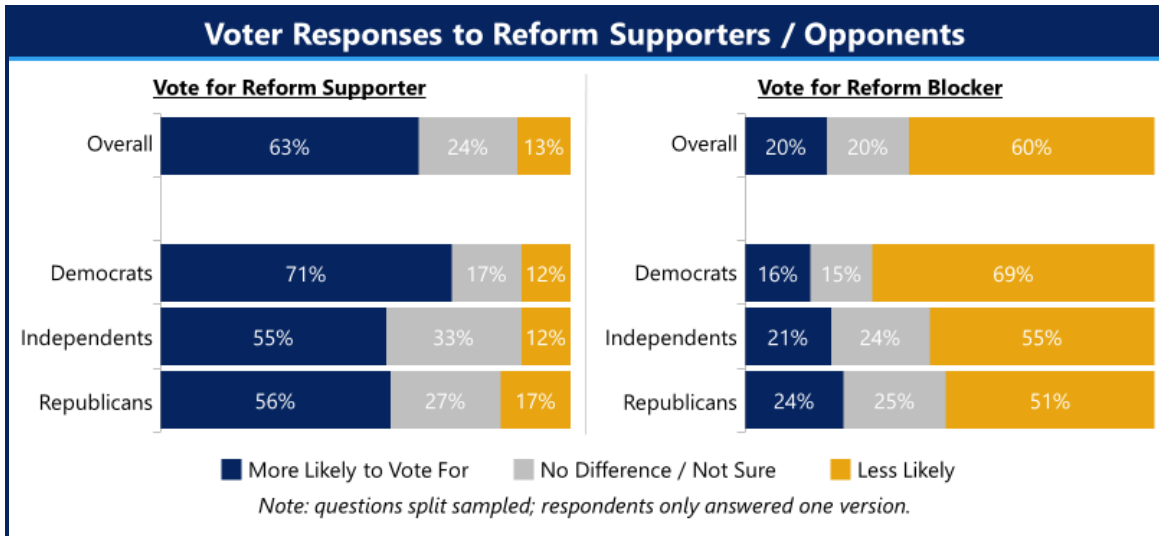
At the same time, six-in-ten voters (again, with bipartisan majorities) believe business owners with criminal records should *not* be prohibited from receiving Payroll Protection Program loans or other federal stimulus money.



## POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Voters want action on criminal justice reform, and they are prepared to reward politicians who champion criminal justice reform and punish those who stand in the way. Six-in-ten say they are *more* likely to vote for a Representative who *supports* reform – including bipartisan majorities.

Likewise, six-in-ten voters would be *less* likely to vote for someone who was *blocking* reform – with similar partisan splits.



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