



Poll: Voters Want a Reform-Minded County Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHOENIX — A poll shows that likely Arizona voters from a variety of political backgrounds want a reform-minded county attorney.

The poll was conducted by Change Research between February 4 and 7, 2020 and included results from 902 registered Arizona voters likely to vote in November 2020.

Among the key findings:

- **9 in 10** likely Arizona voters said it's very important for a county attorney to end corruption, prioritize transparency, and make data publicly available.
- **79%** of likely voters agree that racism is a problem in the criminal justice system, and a county attorney should work to eliminate racial disparities.
- **77%** of likely voters want independent investigations when police hurt or kill people to ensure officers are held accountable for misconduct.
- **Nearly 80%** of voters agree that county attorneys should reduce incarceration by prioritizing treatment for substance abuse and mental health problems and reduce extremely long prison sentences.
- Arizona voters do not want their county attorneys to focus on prosecuting non-violent drug crimes.

The results come ahead of contentious county attorney races across Arizona in November, including in Maricopa County and Pima County.

“Arizona voters recognize the damage mass incarceration has caused to the state and the role county attorneys have played in this crisis,” said ACLU of Arizona Campaign Strategist Analise Ortiz. “This crisis touches everyone. People watch as their loved ones serve long, unnecessary sentences. Once released, they struggle to find jobs and employment. Taxpayers are watching \$1.1 billion go toward maintaining a prison system that doesn’t work. Voters have the power to push county attorneys to vow to drastically reform the way their offices prosecute and to become a vocal advocate for meaningful criminal justice reform.”

A polling memo and crosstabs can be found at www.smartjusticeaz.org/reformready.



To: Interested Parties

From: Lauren Goldstein, Change Research

Date: February 14, 2020

Re: ACLU of Arizona Poll on Criminal Justice Reform

Key Findings

A poll from Change Research of 902 registered likely voters in Arizona from February 4-7, 2020 shows that Arizonans from a variety of backgrounds broadly support a variety of criminal justice reform. This includes **three key areas of reform: ending corruption and promoting transparency** in how County Attorneys conduct their offices; **combating racism in the criminal justice system** and holding police accountable for their misconduct; and **ending mass incarceration and the policies that sustain it**. While Democrats are overwhelmingly supportive of these reforms, the majority of Republicans are also supportive of most of the reforms we tested. Women more enthusiastically favor these reforms than men.

Ending Corruption & Promoting Transparency

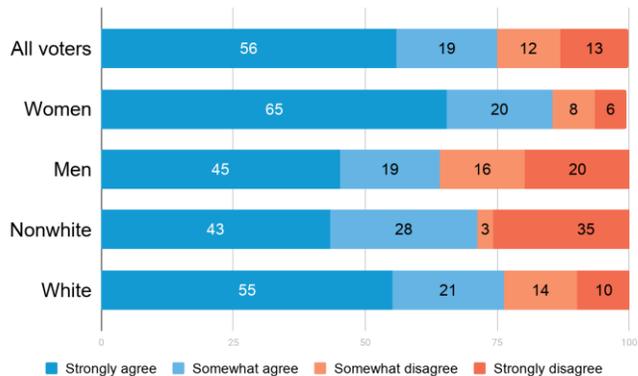
When asked what they want their County Attorney to prioritize, Arizonans overwhelmingly choose "ending corruption". Nine in 10 (91%) say it's "very important." Arizonans also prize greater transparency of the operations of County Attorney offices: 94% of Arizonans want a County Attorney to prioritize promoting transparency, and 93% of Arizonans agree that County Attorneys must demonstrate a commitment to transparency by making their data publicly available.



Combating Racism & Holding Police Accountable for Misconduct

A strong majority of Arizonans view racism in the criminal justice system as a real threat and support reforms to reduce racial disparities. 79% of Arizonans agree (56% *strongly* agree) that “racism and racial bias is a problem in our criminal justice system, and a County Attorney should be taking steps to identify and eliminate racial disparities” (56% *strongly*).

“Racism and racial bias is a problem in our criminal justice system, and a county attorney should be taking steps to identify and eliminate racial disparities.”

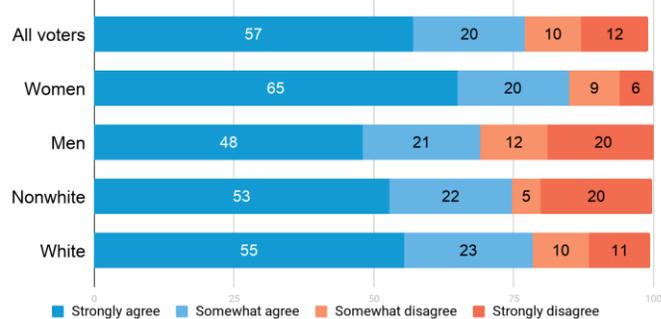


Though somewhat split on party lines, a slim majority (53%) of Republicans view this issue as important. Moreover, 85% of Arizonans want their County Attorney to prioritize combating racism in the criminal justice system, and this support is firmly bipartisan: 73% of Republicans view this issue as important.



A large majority of Arizonans (77%, 57% strongly) agree that “all too often, the people in charge just look the other way when police injure or kill civilians, especially black and brown civilians,” and want their County Attorney to assign an independent prosecutor to investigate cases where officers hurt or kill civilians to ensure that officers are held accountable when misconduct is found. Democrats express more enthusiasm on this issue but a majority (56%) of Republicans also agree with the statement.

“All too often, the people in charge just look the other way when police injure or kill civilians, especially black and brown civilians. If an officer hurts or kills someone, the county attorney should assign an independent prosecutor to investigate the case so that, if misconduct is found, the officer is held accountable.”



Ending Mass Incarceration

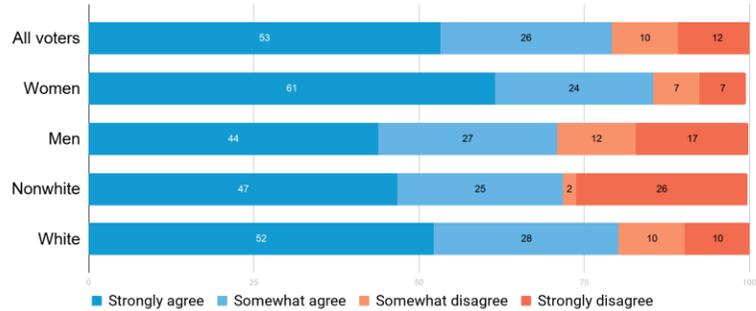
An equally powerful majority supports various means to reduce incarceration rates. We surveyed voters’ attitudes about diversion from prison to treatment programs, the system of cash bail, and prosecution of non-violent drug offenses and specifically marijuana-related cases, and found extremely high support for all proposed reforms to target this problem. Further, while Democratic support for these reforms is extremely high and well-consolidated, a small to modest majority of Republicans support most of these proposed reforms.



Treatment, Not Prison

79% of Arizonans agree (53% *strongly* agree) that County Attorneys should “reduce incarceration by prioritizing treatment for problems like substance abuse and mental health problems and reducing extremely long prison sentences, rather than putting people in jails or prisons where their problems only get worse.” 62% of Republicans agree with this statement.

“Too many people are locked up in Arizona’s jails and prisons. We should reduce incarceration by prioritizing treatment for problems like substance abuse and mental health problems and reducing extremely long prison sentences, rather than putting people in jails and prisons where their problems only get worse.”

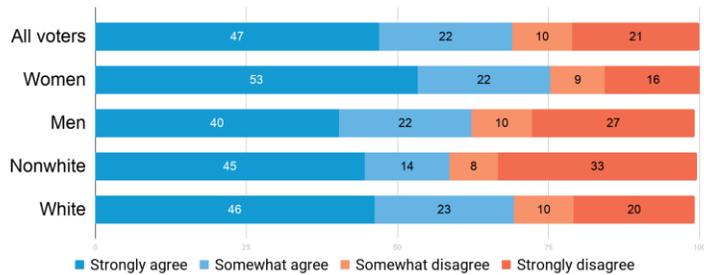




End Cash Bail

69% of Arizonans agree (47% strongly) that County Attorneys in Arizona should stop pursuing cash bail and that “wealthy people should not be allowed to go free while poor people stay locked up simply because of their inability to pay bail.” On this issue, partisanship divides support meaningfully-- Democrats all agree that cash bail should be ended (76% strongly), while Republicans oppose it (58% disagree).

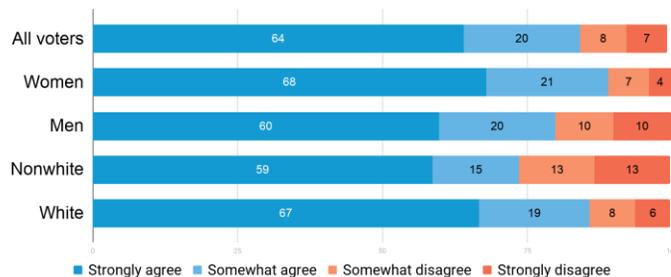
“County attorneys in Arizona should stop pursuing cash bail. Everyone—rich and poor alike—should be released while waiting for their court date unless they pose an immediate danger or are a flight risk. Wealthy people should not be allowed to go free while poor people stay locked up simply because of their inability to pay bail.”



End Prosecution of Non-Violent Drug Offenders

Eight in 10 (84%) Arizonans agree (64% strongly) that “people should not be prevented from getting a job or housing based on old convictions for marijuana use,” and that “county attorneys should stop prosecuting minor marijuana cases and clear the records of people with old marijuana cases.”

“People should not be prevented from getting a job or housing based on old convictions for marijuana use. Tens of thousands of people have been imprisoned and have a permanent mark on their records for something that is now legal in many states. County attorneys should stop prosecuting minor marijuana cases and clear the records of people with old marijuana cases.”



White women are particularly supportive of this reform, with 90% agreement (71% strong)



agreement) as are 72% of Republicans.

Arizona voters do not want their County Attorneys to focus on prosecuting non-violent drug offenders. This garners the *lowest* level of public support of anything tested. Just 44% of Arizonans feel this is important, and just 15% feel it is “very important”. Among voters aged 18-49, 65% say prosecuting non-violent drug offenders is not important.

Methodology

Using its Dynamic Online Sampling Engine to attain a sample reflective of the electorate, Change Research polled 902 people in Arizona, February 4-7, 2020. The margin of error is 3.73%. Post-stratification weighting was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, and 2016 presidential vote. Weighting parameters were based on voter file data, and 2016 presidential results were based on numbers released by the Arizona Secretary of State.